

Oct
2014

Tower Hamlets Housing Options Services In Touch Customer Newsletter

CONGRATULATIONS



CONGRATULATIONS to
Mathias Sylvester



who won our prize draw and received £250.00 shopping vouchers for completing the 2013 Tower Hamlets Housing Options Customer Survey.

For your chance to win this year then please complete the 2014 survey that has been posted to you all.



IN TOUCH

The Housing Benefit Cap – Important Update

When the coalition government introduced its programme of Welfare Reforms, one of the most significant was the £500 cap. The Cap came into force in October 2013 and, at a stroke, up to 300 families living in temporary accommodation were seriously affected because their housing benefit was simply not enough to cover their rent.

Housing Options staffs visited all of these families to talk about their options. For some, the option was straightforward – gain employment and avoid the Cap completely. For others though, mainly those with little prospect of a job, the outlook seemed bleak because, if rents locally were unaffordable, families would need to be moved to cheaper accommodation and, of course, cheaper inevitably means outside of Tower Hamlets.

Concerned at families being moved away at relatively short notice, the Mayor agreed to the proposal to temporarily make up the shortfall in Housing Benefit, this giving families more time to find work and for the Council to find cheaper accommodation where this was not possible.

We originally thought the fund would only last for a few months but, with many families getting a job, less people needed the temporary financial support and we were therefore able to stretch it out. However, the fund will not last forever and we now estimate that it will run out by March 2015.

Between then and now, it is our intention to again make contact with all the families who are still affected by the cap – around 250. Our message this time will be less optimistic – any family who, for whatever reason, is not in work by the time the Mayor's Temporary Accommodation fund runs out will likely be moved to cheaper accommodation and, inevitably, that means further and further away from Tower Hamlets. Affected families will be contacted during November.

However – don't wait for your housing officer's visit.

Visit the SkillsMatch website at:-

http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/jobs_and_careers/employment_and_training_initia/skillsmatch/contact_details.aspx

or contact SkillsMatch on 02073 443727 or at

skillsmatch@towerhamlets.gov.uk



HOMESEEEKERS

OPEN DAY 2014

The Homeseekers Open Day took place on Saturday 15th March 2014. The venue chosen was the recently opened Spotlight Centre in Poplar, E14. This multi-million pound leading creative youth destination space is located directly beside Langdon Park DLR station and a short walk from Chrisp Street Market. The Open day was the first major event to be hosted in the building.

The Open Day was extensively advertised on the Homeseekers web site (home page), in East End Life newspaper, and at Council and partner RSL offices.

The planning and running of the event was a collaborative effort by staff from the Council and its RSL partner Landlords, something that happens each year and affords the public the opportunity to meet face to face with Lettings/THH and RSL staff.

Turnout on the day from the public was much lower than in previous years. A total of 63 people signed in at our reception and although some came with their friends and family, the overall attendance was under 100 people. The low turnout may have been due to the location chosen, and possibly the good weather and sporting events (rugby) on TV that day.

A Homeseekers Open day has not been held in the E14 area for several years so it was key that the Open day be located in the heart of E14 for the event. Interestingly 35% of those that attended said their address post code was in the E14 area.

The stalls at the event gave information on;

- General housing advice
- Advice for those who have more bedrooms than they need (under-occupiers).
- Homeless and welfare reform in relation to rents.
- Shared ownership and market/intermediate rents.
- Mutually exchanging your Council or Housing Association tenancy with another tenant (Homeswapper and House Exchange).
- Tower Hamlets Energy (T.H.E.) information on getting cheaper energy bills for Tower Hamlets residents including signing up for the T.H.E. energy consortium.
- East End Energy Fit – practical help and advice to manage your energy bills and heat your home.

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HOMESEEEKERS OPEN DAY 2014

Feedback received after the event from House Exchange was that they managed to get 11 tenants signed up to the scheme on the day and helped another 4 improve their existing mutual exchange applications. They also got another 5 tenants to start the application process.

Visitors to the event were invited to complete a survey form to give us feedback about the event before they left the venue, or they could complete a survey online (link from Homeseekers web site) for up to 7 days after the event.

In total 36 people took part in our survey, which was a 57% survey participation rate of the 63 people that attended the day.

The general feedback from the day was that visitors found the day useful for them, learnt something new about the Homeseekers service and enjoyed the day.



Housing Options Service recognised for innovative work



Routes to Roots', an innovative project that was pioneered and commissioned by Tower Hamlets Council Housing Options Service, has been shortlisted for a prestigious Andy Ludlow Homelessness Award.

Routes to Roots was launched in 2012 to secure housing for hospital patients who were street homeless and not linked to the borough before their illness.

It addressed one of the key challenges facing many of the capital's hospitals – the struggle for Hospital Discharge Teams trying to source a rehousing option for their homeless out-of-borough patients.

If Tower Hamlets wins the award, the borough will work as a beacon for London to implement the project in other local authorities.

The Mayor of Tower Hamlets, Lutfur Rahman, said: "We know that homeless people have difficulty accessing primary healthcare services in a planned way. Many receive treatment only as a result of emergency admissions to A&E.

"I am pleased that this important project has received recognition for the work that the team do to mitigate the difficulties faced by homeless people upon discharge."

Riad Akbur, one of the Team Managers in the Housing Options Service is responsible for developing 'Routes to Roots' a pioneering and innovative project that has been shortlisted for a prestigious Andy Ludlow Homelessness Award

Riad said: "I started working on the Routes to Roots project at the Royal London Hospital in 2012, where we identified a group of very discharged onto the streets if we couldn't find a housing solution for them.

vulnerable homeless people who weren't from Tower Hamlets, and who were at risk of being

"Some of the people had lived itinerantly, they often had scraps of official paperwork, and they were often challenging - sometimes due to substance misuse or underlying mental health conditions, sometimes they were disoriented due to an acute emergency admission or sometimes they presented with all three issues!

"I came up with the idea of Routes to Roots to ensure that they had a clear route out of hospital. It involved talking to patients whilst they were still on ward, collecting ID and official documents, and collating their address histories. Patients are helped to talk about barriers to returning to their home area, which helps to dispel their fears.

"It's important work for a number of reasons, and we are rightly proud of it in HOST. Not only does it provide a real way to break the cycle of homelessness faced by the people, it builds on the rehabilitative momentum from a time where a homeless person may be able to detox, have a period of stability whilst on ward where they can be open to talking about change with health and social care professionals.

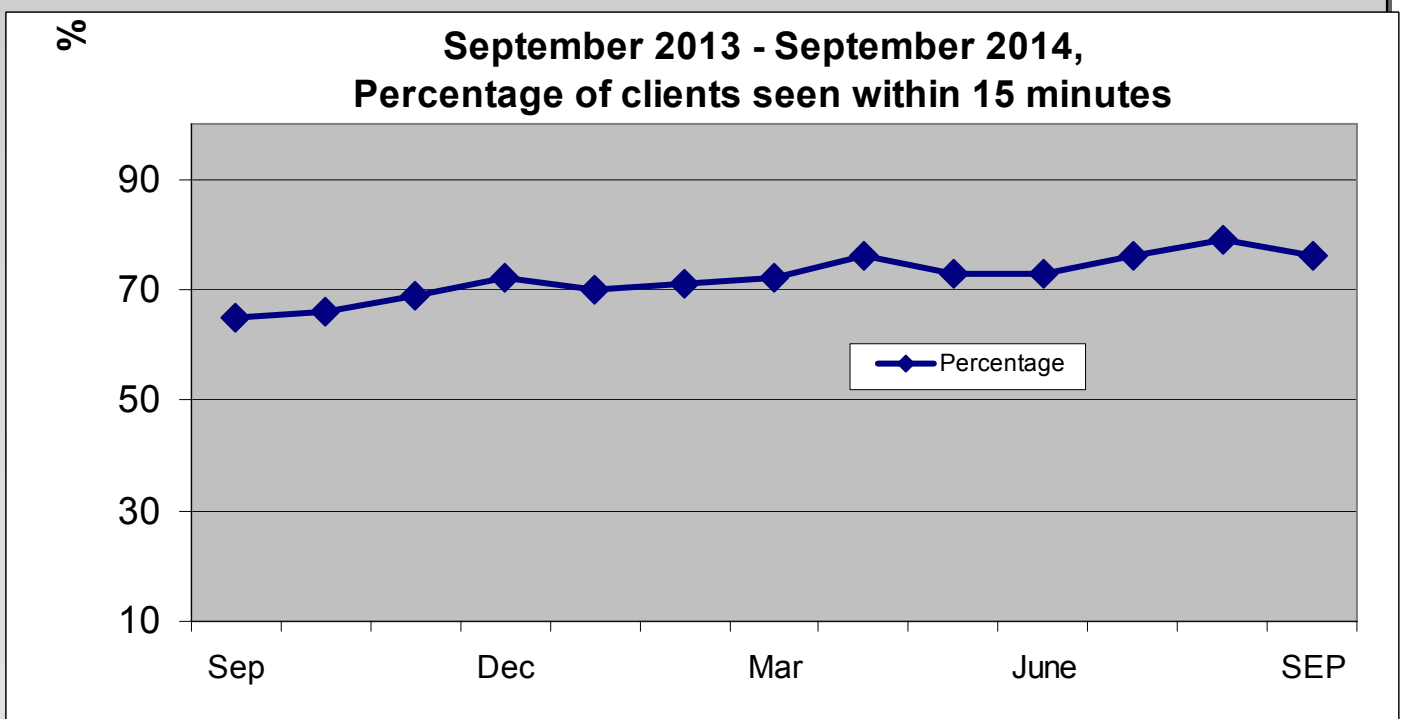
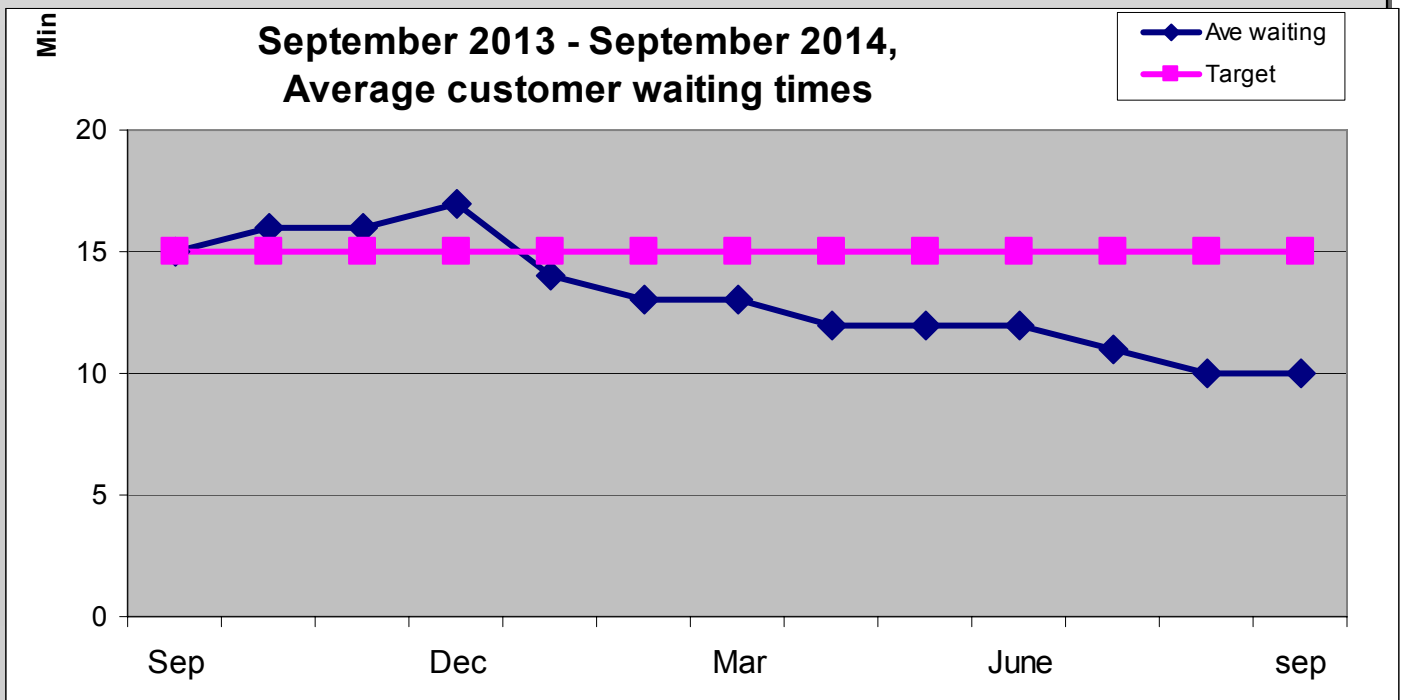
"Me and my team know that this work is important and it's great to receive the recognition by such a prestigious awarding group.

"More importantly though, there is the opportunity to perfect and build on our work as - if we win - there is prize money to fund further enhancements to the project. That's a very exciting prospect!"

The Housing Options Services are still improving their waiting times.

Our target is to keep our customers waiting for no more than 15 minutes, within the last 12 months the Housing Options Services waiting time Stats are now on target, we are now reaching our 15 minutes target levels.

As you can see from the graphs below we have been steadily improving each month, we aim to keep these high standards and continue to keep waiting times to a minimum.



'HOW TO GET A COUNCIL HOUSE' CHANNEL 4

Sam Grace the Series producer from 'How to get a Council House' had this update to all Staff from Housing Options Service.



"I just wanted to drop you all a line to say that the series "How to Get a Council House" was a success on Channel 4 and the reaction has been very very positive.

An average of 2.1 million people watched the first episode climbing to a peak of 2.4 million by the end of the hour. This is a really great number of people who sat down to watch our programme and learn about the work that you all do. The 2nd episode figures were almost identical - and in the process beat Ricky Gervais' Derek by over half a million viewers.

The reviews have also been very kind, though entertainingly the Daily Mail thought we were too liberal while the Guardian thought we were too right wing - so maybe that suggests we managed to find the right balance!



The powers that be at Channel 4 are delighted with the series and so whilst we as producers are very happy to bask in this glow, we all know that it is only thanks to your hard work, cooperation and courage in allowing the cameras into your daily lives, that we have achieved such a successful series.



Thank you to all of you for your help and support. I do hope that whether you featured or not, that you are all happy with our portrayal of the work that you do".

Budgeting for Your New Home

One Step Ahead Workshops

Are you...

- On the housing register?
- Living in temporary accommodation?
- Bidding for social housing?

Attend our **FREE** workshops to learn how to **make your money go further and prepare, save and plan for your move.**



GETTING
ON WITH
MONEY

A Financially Inclusive Tower Hamlets Initiative

Who should attend?

If you are on the Tower Hamlets housing register, currently living in temporary accommodation, currently at the bidding stage for social housing—or even if you would like some simple tips on how to make your money go further, our workshops are for you!



Why should I attend?

It may feel like a long time until you move, but if your bid is successful, you may have as little as 48 hours to move into your new property!



When you move, you will need to pay for moving your belongings and new furniture, or white goods (such as fridges and washing machines).

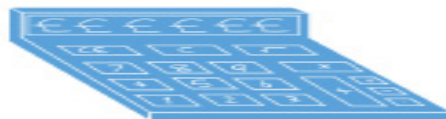


This is a significant, one-off event, and the costs can really add up over a very short period of time.

Planning for this expense **NOW** will help you manage expensive credit and repayments later, and give you the information and knowledge you need to be able to set up your home without experiencing financial hardship.

What will I learn?

Our One Step Ahead workshops will give you tips on managing your money in the run-up to moving, including:



- Furnishing your home on a budget
- How to cut your energy bills
- Where to access affordable credit
- Where and how to save
- How to complete a budget sheet
- How to make your money go further

We will also cover other money topics such as how to prioritise your payments, where to get money advice and other top tips for saving.

And... there's more!

Not only will you pick up some great hints and tips around making your money work for you, you will also receive:

- Useful information, resources and a goody bag
- A course handbook
- FREE refreshments!



(Please confirm your attendance in advance so that we can ensure there is enough).

These bite-sized workshops will be taking place at:

Housing Options
Room AJH101, Albert Jacob House
62 Roman Road, London E2 0PG

If you are interested in attending, please contact Sabrina on:



sabrina.pathan@toynbeehall.org.uk



07930 810127

Please quote PT01 when booking your workshop.

Visit our website for more information and tips on:

- How to get the best energy deals
- Easy ways to save money
- How to make the internet work for you
- Great support in your area



www.fith.org.uk

The workshops are supported by Tower Hamlets council.



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LOTTERY FUNDED

DON'T GET IN WITH A LOAN SHARK...IT WILL COST YOU AN ARM AND A LEG

Have you or anyone you know:

- Been offered a cash loan without paperwork?
- Been threatened when you couldn't pay?
- Had your benefit or bank card taken from you?
- Had a loan which keeps growing even though you are making payments?

If you can answer yes to the above you may have been bitten by a Loan Shark.

For confidential help and advice contact
the Illegal Money Lending Team

0300 555 2222

(local call rate, including inclusive minutes from mobiles)

Email: reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk

Text: loan (space) shark (space) + your message to 60003.

Web: www.direct.gov.uk/stoploansharks

BIS | Department for Business
Innovation & Skills

Stop Loan Sharks
Illegal Money Lending Team
Working with Trading Standards - funded by BIS





Search for information about health services, local groups, clubs and organisations with the Idea Store Online Directory



SIGN VIDEO IS AVAILABLE AT OUR ALBERT JACOB HOUSE, 62 ROMAN ROAD, LONDON E2 0PG OFFICE.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS PLEASE CONTACT THE BUSINESS SUPPORT TEAM ON 0207 364 7262.

Social Welfare Information and Advice Agencies

Free confidential Community Legal Advice Services is provided by the following local voluntary organisations at their offices and outreach centres across the borough. A range of drop in and appointment sessions are offered by the different agencies, so please phone or check online for details. All of the agencies provide advice on welfare benefits, housing and debt problems and can refer you to specialist support services

Account3

Drop in and appointment sessions provided at their main office in [Bethnal Green](#)
Outreach sessions at Bow Idea Store, [Roman Rd](#) and Old Ford Housing Association office

[9 Birkbeck Street, Bethnal Green, E2 6JY](#),

Tel: 020 7739 7720,

www.account3.org.uk

Bromley by Bow Centre

Drop in and appointment sessions provided at main office in Bromley by Bow

Outreach sessions at the Linc Centre Fern St E3 and Burdett Centre, [Wallwood St E14](#) and local GP surgeries

[St Leonard's Street, E3 3BT](#),

Tel: 020 8709 9737

www.bbbbc.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

Drop in and appointment sessions provided at main office in Whitechapel. Outreach sessions provided at: Cheviot House One Stop Shop, [Commercial Rd, E1](#) and Chrisp St Market Idea Store, [E14](#) and Gladstone Place One Stop Shop, [Roman Road, E3](#)

[32 Greateorex Street](#),

[Whitechapel E1 5NP](#)

Tel: 020 7247 1050

www.eastendcab.org.uk

Island Advice Centre

Drop in and appointment sessions provided at main offices in Isle of Dogs and at outreach offices in other areas in the borough. Specialist debt advice, welfare benefits and housing staff

[Island House, Roserton Street Isle of Dogs, E14 3PG](#)

Tel: 020 7987 9379 (Isle of Dogs office)

www.island-advice.org.uk

Legal Advice Centre

Drop in and appointment sessions provided at main office and outreach venues during the day. Free evening legal advice sessions also provided
University House,

[104 Roman Road, E2 0RN](#)

Tel: 020 8980 4205

www.legaladvicecentre.org.uk

Limehouse Project

Advice on welfare benefits, housing and debt problems Drop in and appointment sessions provided at main office in Copenhagen Place .Outreach sessions provided in Poplar, Lansbury and Wapping and in local GP surgeries

789-791 Commercial Road | London E14 7HG

Tel: 020 7538 0075

www.limehouseproject.org.uk

Tower Hamlets Law Centre

Specialist advice and representation by appointment on housing, welfare benefits, employment, 214 Whitechapel Road, E1 1BJ

Tel: 020 7247 8998,

www.thlc.co.uk

Toynbee Hall Debt Advice Service

Specialist advice on debt and money management issues including fuel debt problems .Free evening legal advice surgeries also provided

28 Commercial Street, E1 6LS

Tel: 020 7392 2953

Email advice@toynbeehall.org.uk

www.toynbeehall.org.uk

There are also a number of other voluntary organisations who provide advice services to particular communities as listed below

Bangladesh Youth Movement

21/23 Henriques Street E11NB

Tel: 020 7488 1831

Chinese Association of Tower Hamlets

Sailor Place, 680 Commercial Rd E14 7HA

Tel: 020 7515 5598

Wapping Bangladesh Association

Tench Street E1W2QD

Tel: 020 7702 1708

OSCA Somali Advice Project

Concordia Community Centre, Railway Arches

420 - 421 Burdett Rd E3 4AA

Tel: 020 7987 5833

South Bromley Forum

27 Aberfeldy Street E14 ONU

Tel: 020 7987 9584

Praxis (New Residents Service)

Pott Street E2 OEF

Tel: 020 7729 7985

www.praxis.org.uk

Stifford Community Centre

2-6 Cressy Place E1 3JG

Tel 020 7790 3632

www.stifford.org.uk

St Peters Bengali Association

Minerva Centre, 10 Minerva Street E2 9EH

Tel 020 7729 1036

National telephone helplines and websites - information and advice on benefits, housing, money and debt problems

Debt Advice Foundation 0800 644 60 89

www.debtadvicefoundation.org

National Debt line 0808 808 4000

www.nationaldebtfline.co.uk

Step Change Debt Charity 0800 138 111

www.stepchange.org

Payplan 0800 280 2816

www.payplan.com

Citizens Advice Bureau

www.adviceguide.org.uk

Turn2us www.turn2us.org.uk (includes an online benefits calculator

Shelter the housing and homelessness charity -

0808 800 4444 www.shelter.org.uk



Health Wisdom Group

Would you like to be a part of the change that is happening in your area?

Join your local Health Wisdom Group and have a voice.

Learn how to change things for the better

What Happens Next?

Your issues and discussions are captured and reported to your service providers. The providers we are working with include: **TH Council, TH CCG and Public Health.**

For information on your nearest group and dates for the next meetings please contact :

Nurun Nessa
Mobile: 07949 304 274
Email: nurunn@safh.org.uk

Please join us at your local wisdom group.



Health Wisdom Group

Social Action for Health have set up Health Wisdom Groups around Tower Hamlets and would like to introduce you to your local group. This group will sit together regularly and discuss issues that locals are facing and how to tackle them. They will also sit in key stakeholder meeting to represent the views of the local community.

Members also have the opportunity to take part in training which will help towards your own personal development.

The aims of the group is:

1. To enable local people to take control
2. To overcome barriers effecting local people's health
3. To tackle health inequalities and to improve lifestyle

Health Wisdom Groups have currently been set up in the following areas:

Globe Health Wisdom Group
Globe Primary school
Gawber Street
London
E2 0JH

Brady Health Wisdom Group
The Brady Centre
192 Hanbury Street
London
E1 5HU

Stepney Health Wisdom Group
Exmouth Community Hall
39 Cornwood Drive
Next to Dr Verma Surgery





Free Training Courses Available Now:

- CCTV Operator SIA Training
- Door Supervision SIA Training
- Close Protection SIA Training
- Forklift Counterbalance or Reach Training

All courses include fully paid Forklift or SIA Licence.

As part of your programme you will also achieve BTEC qualifications in Customer Service, Retail Knowledge and Team Leading.

**Free2Learn, 263-265 Mare Street,
Hackney, London E8 3NS**

To be eligible for this FREE training you must be:

- Over 19 years old
- Currently receiving JSA, ESA or Income Support
- A resident in the UK or EU for the past 3 years with the right to work in the UK

Traineeships

We also have spaces for traineeships for 19 - 23 year olds in security, hospitality and retail where we offer tailored training coupled with the opportunity to gain work experience with leading brands.

Call us now to enrol on 0208 5259430 (ext 1000)
Register for free online www.free2learn.org.uk/training

Bring along with you the following documents:

- Proof of ID (Passport or Birth Certificate)
- Proof of Benefit (Your Award letter or Bank Statement showing your payments; dated within the last 3 months)

NOTICE BOARD



All previous editions of the In Touch Newsletter can be found on our website click on the link below to view.

<http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ignl/housing.aspx>

CONTACT ME

If you have any stories or information you wish to have published in the In Touch Newsletter please contact me

Jamie Jackson

Business Support Team

Housing Options Service

Albert Jacob House

62 Roman Road

London E2 0PG

Tel: 0207 3647262

Jamie.jackson@towerhamlets.gov.uk

The best way to contact the Housing Options Service is via our generic email box at homeless@towerhamlets.gov.uk