

July
2014

Tower Hamlets Housing Options Service Network Partners Newsletter

NETWORK

2014 HOUSING OPTIONS SERVICE PARTNER ORGANISATION SURVEY

We have identified your organisation as a 'partner organisation', working with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. As such, we want your opinion of the Housing Options Service, along with any comments you have regarding how we can improve our service to you and your clients.

Our 2012 & 2013 Surveys were very successful and we took your comments and views on board to improve the way we work with our Partner organisations. To carry on the excellent relationship with our Partners we would like your views and comments to see if as an Organisation we have kept improving.

Please see the link below to our Partner Survey, we would be very grateful if you would take 5 minutes of your time to complete the Survey as the results are very important in how we can improve relationships and the way we work with our partners.

www.surveymonkey.com/s/THHousOptPartnerSurv2014



HOMESEEKERS 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 vulnerable homeless people who weren't from Tower Hamlets, and who were at risk of being discharged onto the streets if we couldn't find a housing solution for them.

"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!"

IMPROVED CASH PAYMENTS FOR LANDLORDS*

Due to popular demand Tower Hamlets Homefinder has extended its special offer for landlords signing up to its financial incentive scheme.

This scheme provides one-off, non-refundable cash payments for council-vetted nominations for Assured Shorthold Tenancies – and this incentive payment is just that – it doesn't need to be paid back!

The council has increased its incentive payments for properties in Tower Hamlets. For 2-year Assured Shorthold Tenancies landlords will receive a £4000 lump sum for properties with two or more bedrooms; and £2,500 for 1-bedroom properties.

But hurry! This offer is only available while funds last.

The council also needs properties of all sizes under its rent guarantee scheme for homeless households

This scheme offers the reassurance that the rent is collected by us whatever the circumstances of the tenant and you will receive a guaranteed competitive monthly income backed by the council.

The advantages of this scheme are:

- No more letting agency fees
- No lengthy contract tie-ins
- Higher rents and rent guarantees
- Hassle-free lettings

*conditions apply



To find out more contact
020 7364 7298 or email

accommodation.procurement@towerhamlets.gov.uk



TOWER HAMLETS LANDLORDS FORUM

Tower Hamlets Landlords Forum took place in partnership with the National Landlord Association (NLA) and Queen Mary University (QM) on Wednesday 21 May 2004 at the University Mile End site.

We had the following speakers;

Barbara Ashcroft, Housing Services Manager

- QM Private Letting (who spoke about Student Lettings with the University)

Richard Blanco, NLA London Representative

- NLA News & Update (who spoke about Immigration bill, licensing, campaign for longer tenancies and Housing Market Update)

Lorraine Douglas, Snr Manager, Housing Management & Procurement

- Tower Hamlets Private Letting Scheme (who spoke about how Landlords can let their property with the council)

Rhona Brown, Snr Housing Policy Officer, GLA

- (Who spoke about the Mayors Launch Of London Rental Standard)

**If you would like information about the Forum contact the Housing Advice team
on 0207 364 3558.**

**Check out the link below for information regarding future Landlord Forums forthcoming
dates will be published soon.**

[Tower Hamlets Landlord Information](#)



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



‘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”.

The Idea Store Directory

idea
Library Learning Information

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

Register Your Group, Club or Organisation

If you provide services, activities or events, why not register and get an account that will enable you to get listed on the directory? You will also be able to return and keep your listing up to date.

By including your details within the directory you will be signposting your service to other local organisations and service providers, and the 2 million plus Idea Store visitors.

The Idea Store Directory is managed by Idea Store, the public library and learning service for Tower Hamlets, in partnership with local health information providers.

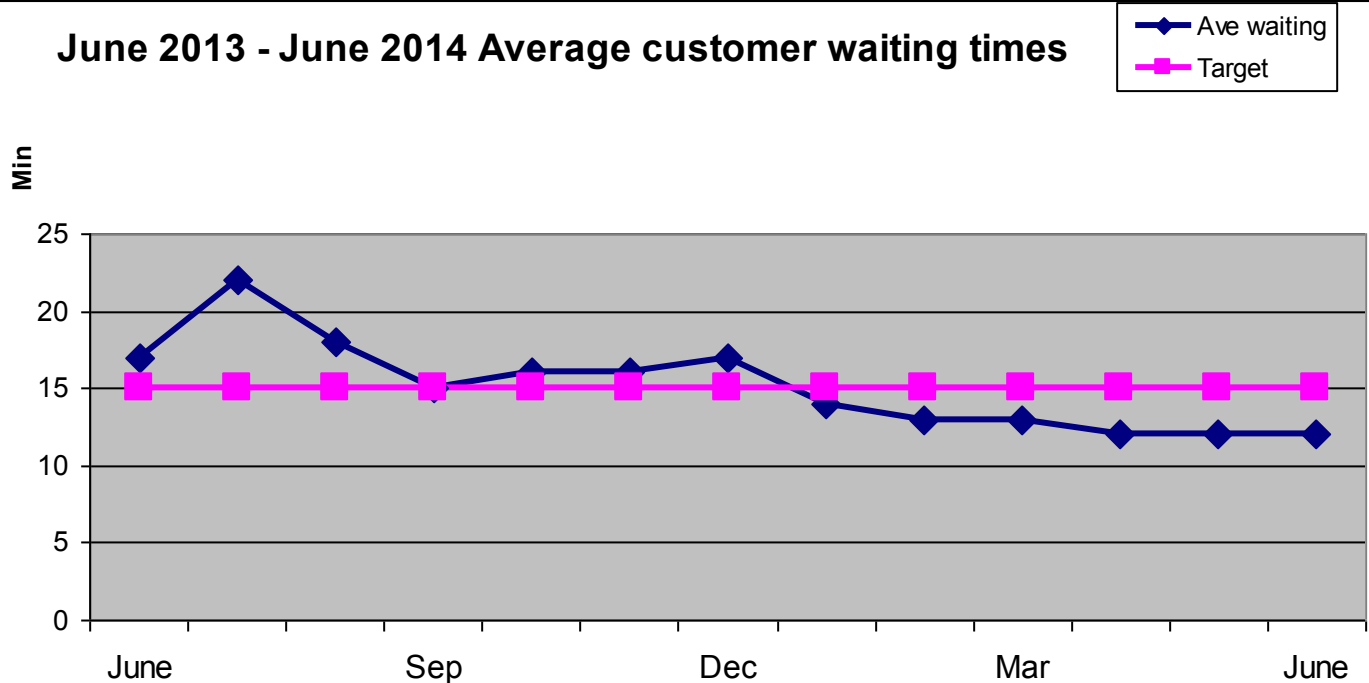
(CLICK ON THE PICTURE BELOW TO TAKE
YOU TO THE WEBSITE)

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Idea Store Directory. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the 'idea' logo and 'Library Learning Information'. Below this is a search bar with a dropdown menu for 'All Categories', a text input for 'Keyword(s)', and a 'Location' field. A 'Search' button is to the right. The main heading is 'Idea Store Directory' with a subheading 'Welcome to the Idea Store Directory.' and a brief description: 'Discover up-to-date information about health services and local groups, clubs and organisations in Tower Hamlets.' Below this is a 'Select a category' section with eight colorful buttons: 'Information & Advice' (pink), 'Children & Young People' (blue), 'Education & Learning' (brown), 'Business & Employment' (red), 'Leisure & Sport' (purple), 'Health' (green), 'Housing' (orange), and 'Community Organisation' (dark blue). At the bottom, there are three sections: 'Links' with a list of links (Cookies Policy, Accessibility, Disclaimer), 'A to Z of Services' with a grid of letters (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N), and 'Partners' with logos for various organizations.

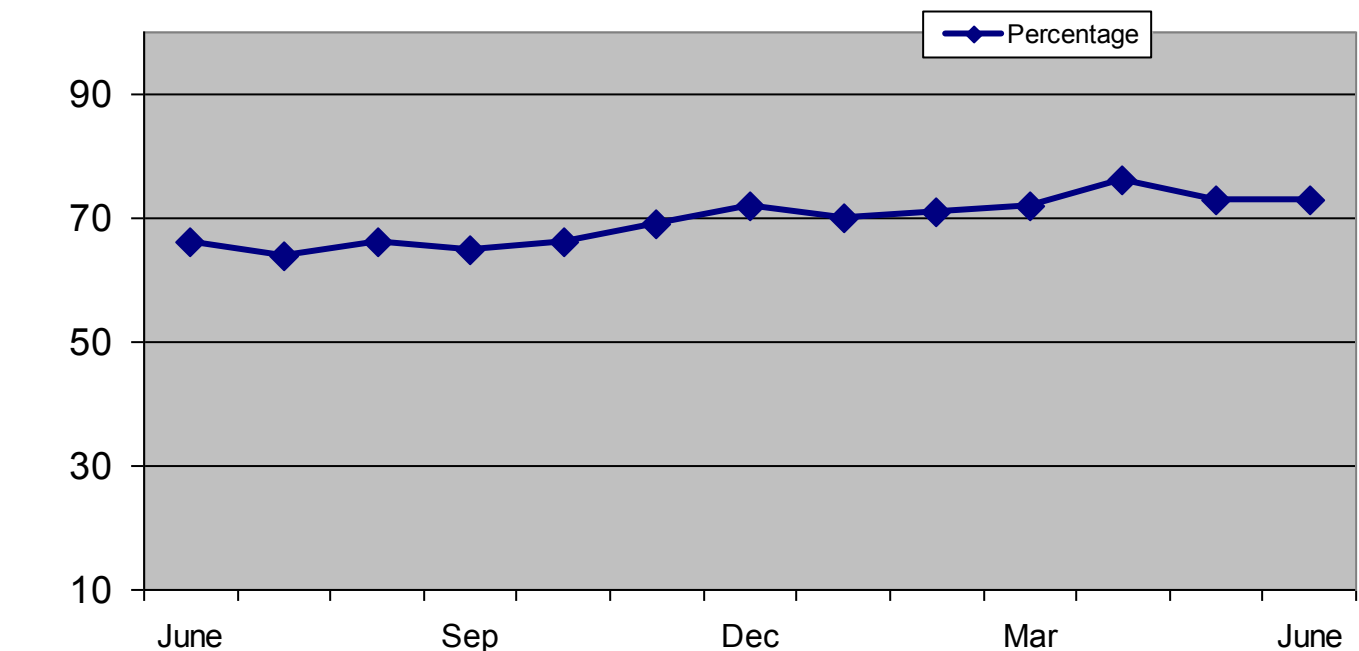
The Housing Options Services are still improving **their waiting times.**

Our target is to keep our customers waiting for no more than 15 minutes within our reception area. The average waiting time is now 15 minutes, however we are only achieving this in around 70% of cases. Our aim for 2014 will be to achieve the 15 minute target for all our customers.

June 2013 - June 2014 Average customer waiting times



June 2013 - June 2014 Percentage of clients seen within 15 minutes



NOTICE BOARD



We would love our
Partner Organisations to
get involved in
future editions of this
newsletter, so if you have
any ideas or
suggestions for
content
please contact us.

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

[NETWORK PREVIOUS
PUBLICATIONS](#)

CONTACT ME

If you have any stories or
information you wish to have
published in the
Network 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