

**FEB
2015**

Tower Hamlets Housing Options Services Network Partners Newsletter



N

On the 26th November 2014 Tower Hamlets Council hosted their Landlord/agents Forum. The event was very successful in several ways:-

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- We had an attendance in excess of 90 landlords, agents and stakeholders;
- We had speakers who were directly involved in the planning of the policies and topics they were discussing.
- The speaker's topics were on matters contemporary and directly relevant to landlords, agents and stakeholders.

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From the feedback forms returned from Landlords/ agents the results were very encouraging;



- 95% of landlords found the forum material to be, good to excellent;
- 100% of landlords found the venue to be good, to excellent; and
- 82% of landlords found the speakers good, to excellent.

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Landlords, agents and stakeholders also commented on the professionalism of staff, organisation of the forum and the catering. We have taken on board comments to improve the forum.

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Our next forum will be held in the last week of March 2015. We are in the process of finalising the topics and confirming the speakers. The topics we are considering (but yet to confirm) are:-

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- Licensing of all rental properties in Tower Hamlets;
- Update on Immigration check for landlords;
- Universal Credit and how it affects tenants; and
- Working with Tower Hamlets Council.



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Our aim will be to better the last event by, engaging with more landlords, agents and stakeholders and ensuring our topics are relevant. The date of the next Landlord Forum meeting will be announced shortly.

(ALL PRESENTATIONS FROM THE FORUM ARE AVAILABLE ON THE TH WEBSITE

(CLICK ON THE LINK BELOW)

http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgs/701-750/717_landlord_accreditation_sch.aspx

CALLING ALL LANDLORDS

The Council is looking for properties for homeless households and is now able to work with individual property owners.

The Council's Rent Guarantee Scheme offers competitive rents for property owners who wish to work directly with us.

Other attractive terms include:-

- **No risk of rent arrears; the council pays you even if the tenant doesn't pay us**
- **No risk of housing benefit claw back – again, the council takes that risk**
- **No fees**
- **Compensation if malicious damage is caused**
- **No long-term contractual tie-in**
- **The council will undertake and pay for any repossession action**
- **Minimal void periods and no marketing costs**
- **A tenancy support service especially at the beginning of the tenancy**



The Council has another scheme which provides generous one-off, non-refundable cash incentives where landlords are willing to grant tenancies to people we nominate. More details are available on application.

If you are interested in working directly with the Council please check the terms of any agreement you may currently have with a Managing Agent to ensure you can do so.



For more information and advice, please call;

Mohon Miah on 0207 364 7298 or email him on

mohon.miah@towerhamlets.gov.uk

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 provide funding to temporarily make up the shortfall in Housing Benefit, giving families more time to find work and for the Council to find cheaper accommodation where this was not possible.

This funding will run out by March 2015, as a result of which we have again made contact with all the families who are still affected by the cap – around 250. Our message this time is 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.

The Government has since announced a limited roll-out of Universal Credit to begin in Tower Hamlets in March. This will not affect homeless households initially, and likely to initially affect a relatively small number of single people who will be making new claims for Job Seekers Allowance. The Council's Welfare Reform Task Group is preparing for this change and considering what support to provide people who will be affected by this change.



2014 HOUSING OPTIONS PARTNER SURVEY RESULTS

Overview

The Housing Options Service Partner Survey was conducted over a 4 week period (Aug – Sep 2014). This survey is used to help the Housing Options Service identify areas for improvement.

It was sent to over 300 of the Housing Options Service main Partners, some of these Partners included Housing Associations, Landlords and Agents and other key organisations.

We obtained feedback from 51 Partner Organisations . The weighted results, (based on the number of responses to each question), are summarised below.

Findings

Contact Frequency & History

- 73% of our Partners were satisfied or very satisfied with the time it takes to answer our calls.
- 82% of our partners were satisfied or very satisfied with our overall telephone service. This is level with the same satisfaction percentage we received for 2013.

Correspondence

- 72% of our Partners were satisfied or very satisfied with our response time to correspondence.
- 28% of our Partners said we could improve the way we respond to correspondence in comparison to 50% last year.

We acted on comments received from last year's survey to promote greater use of our generic email address, which appears to have contributed to an overall increase in satisfaction with written correspondence.

Meeting You

- 91% of Partners who met with the Housing Options Services were satisfied or very satisfied with the meeting(s).
- 93% of our Partners that had visited Albert Jacob House were satisfied or very satisfied with our reception area.

Website and Network Partner newsletter

We recently updated our Housing Options Service Website and have been sending our Network Partner newsletter out for over 5 years. We wanted feedback on how to improve both.

- 100% of our Partners were very satisfied or satisfied with the information we provide on our website.
- 98% of our Partners were satisfied or very satisfied with our Network newsletter.

Referring Clients

It was important that we gained information regarding the referrals we receive from our partners and the referrals we make to our partners.

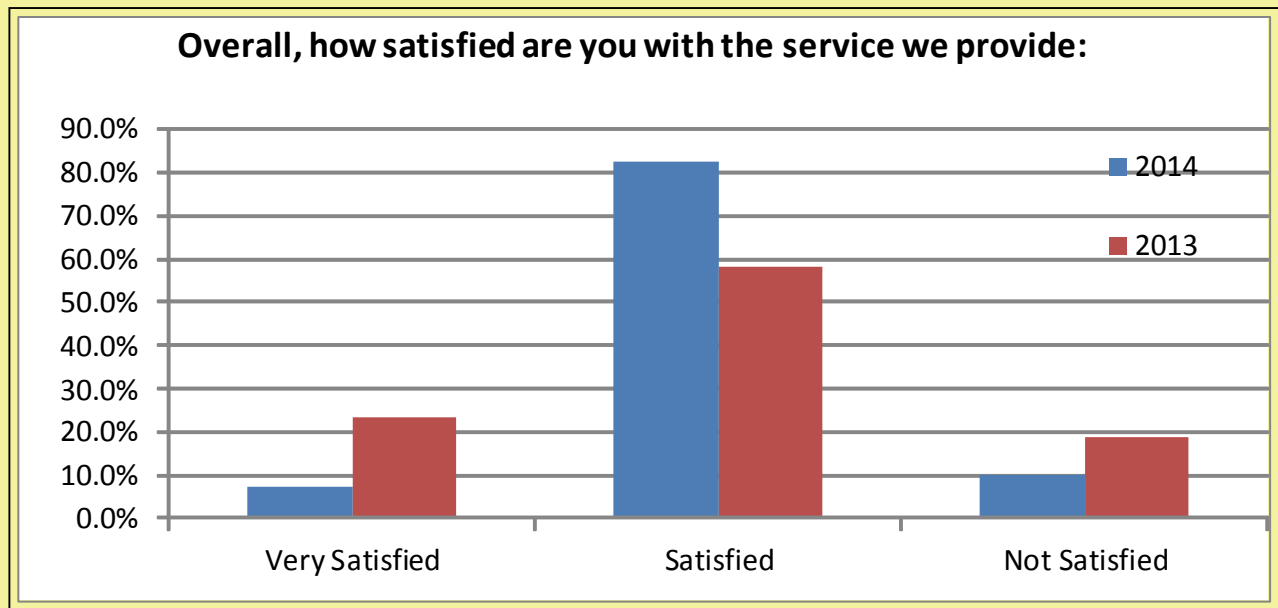
- 45% of the Partners who answered this survey said we referred to clients to them. 41% of the partners that answered this survey said they referred clients to us.
- 97% said that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the referral process Housing Options Service have. This is an improvement from 2013 when the percentage was 81%.

Making a Complaint

- 70% of our Partners that answered this survey knew how to make a complaint to the Housing Options Service compared to 42% last year.
- Only 15% of our Partners have made a complaint regarding the Housing Options Service and 80% who made a complaint were satisfied with the way we dealt with that complaint.

Overall Satisfaction

From the 51 Partners that took part in this Survey the overall Satisfaction level of the Service was 90% compared to the 81% from last year.



What's next?

It is gratifying to get such positive feedback from our Partners. Comments and suggestions for improvement submitted in the survey responses will help inform our plans for service improvements over the coming year.

[A full list of results can be found on our TH Website](#)

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk

tower hamlets
homeseekers

OPEN DAY

Saturday 21st March 2015

at Tarling East Community Centre

The themes for the day are...

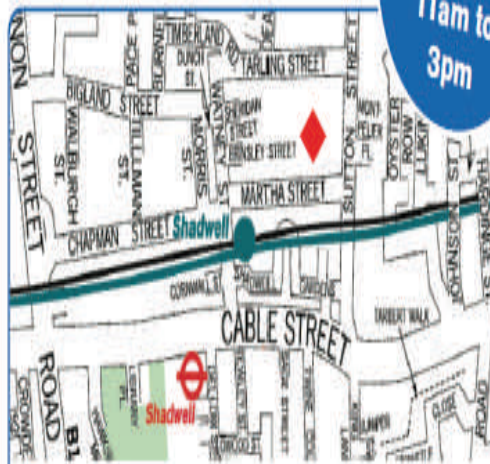
■ Bid Smart How to improve prospects of being rehoused by smarter bidding

■ Housing options for moving out of the borough

■ Mutual Exchanges

■ Money Management

We will have dedicated teams available to help you on the day.



◆ Tarling East Community Centre, 63 Martha Street, Shadwell, London E1 2PA.
Nearest transport: Bus: 339 and D3
DLR/Tube: Shadwell

The venue will be open from 11am to 3pm



CONGRATULATIONS

TO THE HOUSING OPTIONS SINGLES TEAM

Tower Hamlets awarded £330,000 for projects on rough sleeping

Tower Hamlets Council was today (December 9, 2014) awarded £330,000 to lead ambitious tri-borough projects to support vulnerable homeless people and rough sleepers.



What will this funding be used for?

Tower Hamlets, together with partner boroughs Hackney and the City of London, will use this funding to:

- provide a rapid intensive housing options service to prevent individuals from rough sleeping - No First Night Out
- provide a 'routes to roots' reconnection service for rough sleepers from other boroughs who end up rough sleeping in Tower Hamlets, Hackney, or the City of London

commission and publish research into common traits of local rough sleepers and disseminate findings; and develop assessment tools for spotting First Night Out rough sleepers.

'Routes to Roots' and the council's ongoing work to support rough sleepers is already taking place across the borough. This funding will help the council to become more ambitious in its aims to ensure no one has to sleep rough.

Routes to Roots

The existing Routes to Roots service was commissioned by Tower Hamlets Council and is delivered by Providence Row, a charity that tackles the causes of homelessness. It aims to address one of the key challenges faced by many of the capital's hospitals: sourcing a re-housing option for their homeless out-of-borough patients.

Patrick is one person who benefitted from Routes to Roots after he was treated at the Royal London in Whitechapel for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

The hospital put Patrick in touch with the service when they discovered he was homeless. He was secured temporary housing in Hackney, an area he knows well.

Speaking about the Providence Row support worker who helped him, Patrick said: "Paulina came to the hospital to see me every couple of days. She's been my mentor ever since. She took all my details and she helped me to sort out somewhere to stay when I left the hospital."

The Routes to Roots service was also recently highly commended at the Andy Ludlow Homelessness Awards.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE HOUSING OPTIONS SINGLES TEAM

Funding awarded

This funding was announced today by both the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), and the Greater London Authority (GLA). £250,000 comes from DCLG's Single Homeless Fund, which it is hoped will support around 22,000 single homeless people. An additional £80,000 will come from the GLA, to help the three boroughs prevent rough sleeping.

Mayor of Tower Hamlets, Lutfur Rahman, said: "This increased investment to support rough sleepers in the borough is extremely important. On the run up to Christmas we must remember that there are vulnerable people out there in the freezing cold. This extra funding will help the council to do an even better job to support them, and ensure that they have somewhere warm to stay at night."

Cllr Rabina Khan, cabinet member for housing and development, said: "Our officers have been working incredibly hard to support rough sleepers in the borough for a long time. This extra funding will help them to continue their vital work to ensure that no one in this borough has to sleep on the streets at night."

Praise from No Second Night Out

This is not the first time that Tower Hamlets has been recognised for its hard work with rough sleepers. Earlier this year, the Director of the Mayor of London's No Second Night Out programme praised the council in a letter.

Petra Salva said: "My observation is that the London Borough of Tower Hamlets is absolutely committed to trying to end rough sleeping. At the heart of their strategy is the fundamental belief that rough sleeping is harmful and dangerous, and it is an unacceptable condition for anyone to find themselves in.

"To this end, their commitment to tackling rough sleeping comes from the top and is a strategy that clearly translates into practice on the ground, including their work with us at No Second Night Out."



Persistence pays off - **Kath Dane,** **Street population** **Co-ordinator for the** **Housing Options Service**

Thanks to the efforts of Kath Dane, Street population Co-ordinator, many people are no longer sleeping rough on the streets of Tower Hamlets.

Kath works closely with Thames Reach, the Boroughs commissioned outreach service. They look for people that have been referred either by the public calling them or through the dedicated rough sleeper reporting line street link. 2 Reports get passed to our outreach service who then go out to look for the person. They find people that have a complexity of problems.

“The aim of my job is to reduce rough sleeping in TH to as close to zero as possible. We aim to ensure that any one that starts to sleep rough doesn't need to spend a second night out, gets helped right away and assisted out of rough sleeping. People who have been living on the street are also made realistic support offers and we try to ensure that people that are in hostels don't fall back onto the streets.”

“I go out with the team at times to look for particular individuals and check where the hotspots are (that's where there's more than three people sleeping out in an area together).

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Development and Renewal

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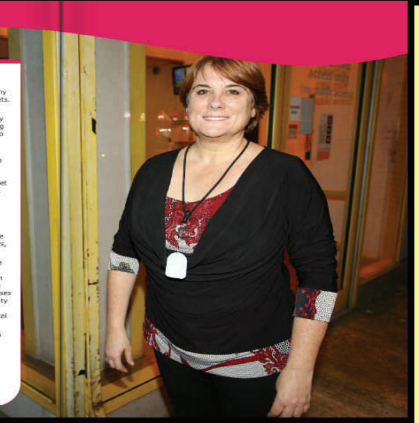
Kath's passion for her job and her persistence recently ensured that one particular homeless man who had been sleeping on the streets for years, is now getting the appropriate health care he needs.

“This particular person had been rough sleeping for about ten years. He was known as ‘the local tramp’. Attitudes, particularly from businesses and even some professional services, were ‘Why are you bothering him because he's not hurting anybody’ and ‘it's a lifestyle choice’. This is an incredibly outdated way of thinking. Anyone that sleeps rough and refuses to leave the street must have their needs investigated and their capacity to make decisions for themselves explored. There needs to be better understanding of this across all sectors, housing, homelessness, mental health, drug and alcohol agencies and the criminal justice system.”

“With this particular case, we had a hard time getting the magistrates to issue a section 135, which means we are able to take somebody off private property and bring them into hospital. However, after huge persistence and a great deal of co-ordination and effort, he is now in long-term treatment.”

“He is now creating a present to give to our outreach services to say thank you for our persistence and for not giving up on him.”

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Ways you can help homeless people in Tower Hamlets

Rough sleeping and homelessness is an issue up and down the country. Whilst the amount of people sleeping rough in Tower Hamlets is low due to the hard work of outreach and other services both in and out the Council, this doesn't necessarily mean that homelessness isn't something that residents and the Council should not worry about.

Here are a few tips on how residents can help homeless people in the area.

1. Keep the Streetlink website loaded on your phone

[Streetlink](#) enables the public to alert the Council about people sleeping rough in the area. This is the first step that someone can take to ensure that rough sleepers are connected to local services and get the support that is available to them.

You can also download the [Streetlink app](#) from the iTunes app store.

2. If not, let Tower Hamlets Council know

Make sure you are aware of the Council's [homelessness and housing options services](#).

If someone is homeless or sleeping rough, they can contact the council to find out what housing options are available to them. Once in touch with us, they can access useful help and advice.

3. Invest your spare pennies and pounds into charities that deal with homelessness

It might seem controversial but pressing a pound into the hand of a homeless person for them to buy a hot drink won't help them.

Rough sleepers are among the most excluded people in society. Many have been in care as children or in prison as adults and they often suffer with mental and physical health issues. Your spare change won't fix these problems.

It would be better to donate to charities like [Providence Row](#), [Thames Reach](#), and bigger national charities like [Shelter](#), [Centrepoint](#) and [Crisis](#).

All of these charities campaign long and hard with the government to explore ways of alleviating these issues. These charities also support homeless people – training them for work, providing resource centres, housing and feeding them.

Your money will go much further if you give it to these charities.

4. Buy only from licensed Big Issue sellers

[The Big Issue](#) is an independent charity that offers people who are homeless the opportunity to earn their own money. If you buy a copy, make sure you only use licensed vendors.

5. Volunteer your time and help people suffering homelessness

Volunteering to help people suffering homelessness is very satisfying. How you can help depends very much on your experience and the way to do this is to contact one of the homeless charities and offer your time. You may have specific skills that can be used but often it is about just being there – a friendly ear that doesn't judge.

Whatever you want to do, your contribution can have a real impact on the people who may be facing sleeping on the streets.

You can contact [Thames Reach](#) or [Providence Row](#) to find out how you can help locally.

6. Don't demonise these people! This could happen to anyone

The people sleeping rough are no different to anyone else. They've just had a hard time in their lives and are extremely vulnerable. Demonising them doesn't help.

Homeless Link have a [page of research](#) which shows what is happening on the ground, and identifies what is working and what isn't when it comes to tackling homelessness. Have a look at that page and familiarise yourself with this.

Tower Hamlets

Homeless Street Count 2014

The Tower Hamlets annual street count was conducted on Wednesday 26th November 2014 and many Tower Hamlets Housing Options staff took part. This is what Kath Dane Street Population Coordinator had to say about the count;

'I wanted to say a huge thank you to everyone who took part in the Street Count this year. Without you we would not be able to have achieved such a robust and authentic snap shot of how many people are rough sleeping on the streets of Tower Hamlets on an autumn night. I heard a number of stories on the night of teams checking and rechecking sites to ensure that no one was missed! I very much appreciated this dedication. It has produced a very reliable figure.

So ...the final count number this year was 6. Keeping the number in a single figure is not easy and it is indeed the result of a lot of effort on the part of many individuals and our willingness to work together. For example, HOST workers and advice workers at Providence Row Day Service work very hard to prevent homelessness, TH SORT work tirelessly to convince and bring people up off the street quickly and safely, mental health services alongside TH SORT's AMP focus on assessing and supporting complex rough sleepers with mental health issues; our THEOs, the Metropolitan Police, Home Office and ICE team work to support and disrupt those who are entrenched and are causing ASB or breaking the law; and of course our hostels such as Booth House accommodate and support former rough sleepers to reach a more settled and healthy lifestyle.

Given that some of our neighbouring boroughs' Count numbers went up considerably, we have much to be proud of. I very much hope that the coming year brings with it the same commitment, creativity, willingness to work in partnership and hard work.

Thank you very much again'



bite size

Training

RETAIL . HOSPITALITY . SECURITY

16 - 18 year olds

young
free2
learn

Have you tried Free2learn's bite size training?

Free2Learn are offering **short programs** designed to give you the skills needed to get you working!



RETAIL

Training and qualifications gained

- Retail knowledge
- Workskills
- CV and job hunting support

Eligibility

- Suitable for 16-18 year olds
- Resident in the UK/EU for the past 3 years
- Must not be in education, employment or training

Course length: 2 weeks



HOSPITALITY

Training and qualifications gained

- Hospitality knowledge
- Workskills
- CV and job hunting support

Eligibility

- Suitable for 16-18 year olds
- Resident in the UK/EU for the past 3 years
- Must not be in education, employment or training

Course length: 2 weeks



SECURITY

Training and qualifications gained

- Door supervision and SIA badge
- Workskills
- CV and job hunting support

Eligibility

- Suitable for 18 year olds
- Resident in the UK/EU for the past 3 years
- Must not be in education, employment or training

Course length: 2.5 weeks *extra days will be required for the practical

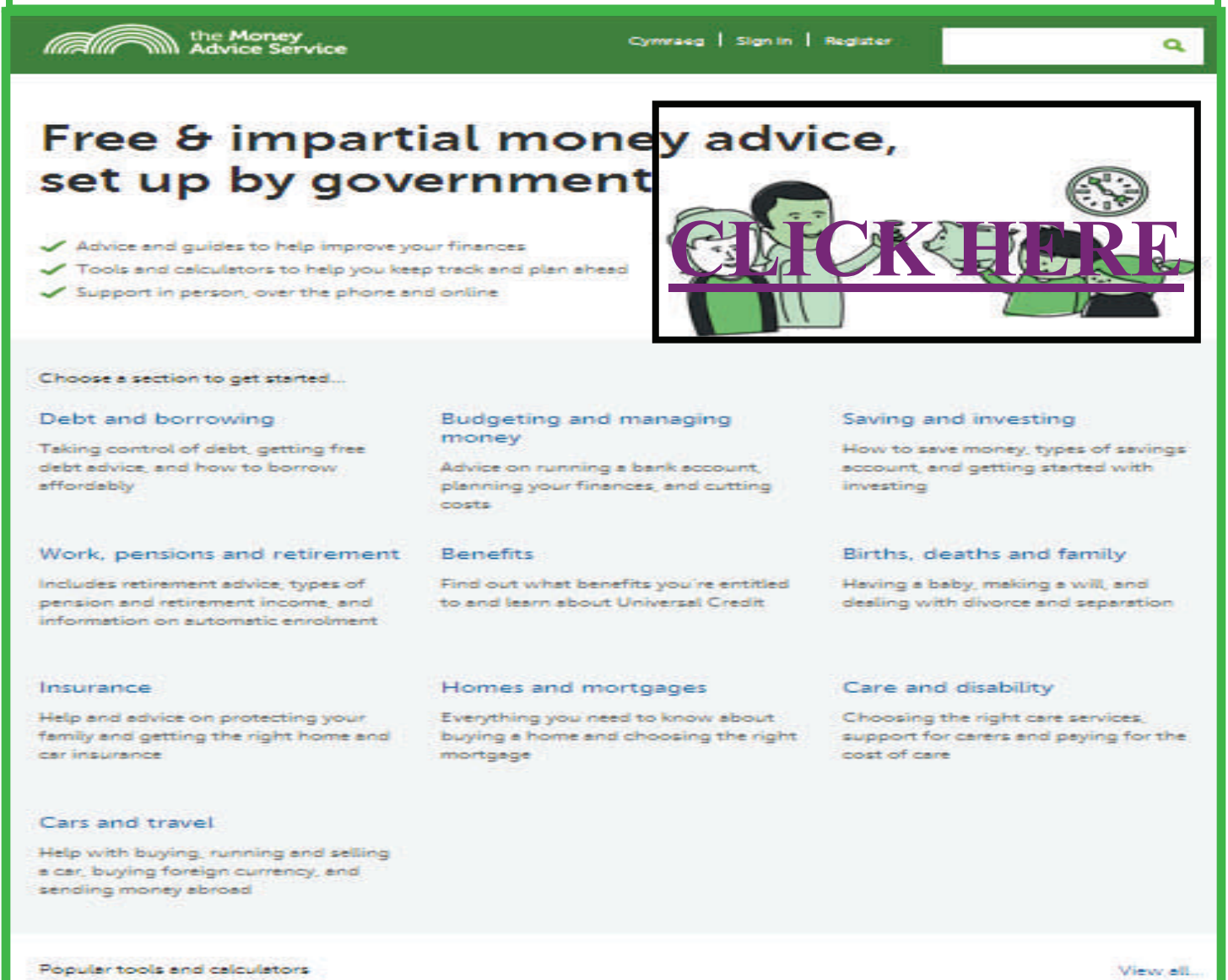
Meet our industry expert's on Mondays at 2pm at our Hackney branch.
Call directly on 0208 525 9430 (Ext. 1018) or email eliz@free2learn.org.uk

The Money Advice Service

The Money Advice Service is a website that has just been launched by the government to give free and impartial money advice. It is designed to help people with;

- Advice and guides to help improve your finances
- Tools and calculators to help you keep track and plan ahead
- Support in person, over the phone and online

Click on the picture below to enter website



the Money Advice Service Cymraeg | Sign In | Register

Free & impartial money advice, set up by government

- ✓ Advice and guides to help improve your finances
- ✓ Tools and calculators to help you keep track and plan ahead
- ✓ Support in person, over the phone and online

Choose a section to get started...

Debt and borrowing Taking control of debt, getting free debt advice, and how to borrow affordably	Budgeting and managing money Advice on running a bank account, planning your finances, and cutting costs	Saving and investing How to save money, types of savings account, and getting started with investing
Work, pensions and retirement Includes retirement advice, types of pension and retirement income, and information on automatic enrolment	Benefits Find out what benefits you're entitled to and learn about Universal Credit	Births, deaths and family Having a baby, making a will, and dealing with divorce and separation
Insurance Help and advice on protecting your family and getting the right home and car insurance	Homes and mortgages Everything you need to know about buying a home and choosing the right mortgage	Care and disability Choosing the right care services, support for carers and paying for the cost of care
Cars and travel Help with buying, running and selling a car, buying foreign currency, and sending money abroad		

Popular tools and calculators [View all...](#)

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.

[http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/
ignl/housing.aspx](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ignl/housing.aspx)

**NEXT EDITION OF
NETWORK IS DUE;
AUGUST 2015**

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

CONTACT ME

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

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