



Inner city head space

When we learned that Jewish mental health charity Jami needed a stable home in the London borough of Hackney, we knew we could help.



Suzanne Wolfe
Chief Executive
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The Industrial Dwellings Society is a housing association established by Lord Rothschild in 1885 that provides homes to London's diverse communities within our Jewish heritage framework. From the outset, changing lives was our business.

Our founders placed an emphasis on supporting communities to achieve their potential. As early as 1896, we provided a resident-managed club at the Stepney Green estate, providing social and educational opportunities such as free newspapers; and creative performance space for activities such as piano concerts.

We leased our previously under-utilised facilities in Stoke Newington to Jami, which now delivers its recovery-focussed support services and outreach work from its new hub.

We recognised the power of partnership working in community spaces and how crucial it is to come to an agreement that suits everyone.

Under the agreement, we can still use the space to meet with residents, but we have handed the daily running of the facilities to our new partners. It has already become a more vibrant place, providing learning, social, and physical activities to Hackney communities – both Jewish and otherwise.

The Hackney Hub, as it is now known, offers benefits advice, employment and young people's services, and fitness classes. It is also used by other community groups, with the overarching aim of promoting mental wellbeing and tackling mental health stigma.

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Research conducted by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research in 2017 indicates that, of all the London boroughs, Hackney has the “most acute” problems. The study revealed 9% of households experience at least three out of four indicators of deprivation, calculated using information from national censuses and other data.

Almost a quarter (23%) of Hackney's Jewish households have issues relating to ill-health or disability, and 27% have issues with housing conditions – many being priced out of decent homes. In 2013, for example, a semi-detached house in the borough of Hackney cost 11.6 times the median income of a local Jewish couple.

We recognised that partnering with Jami would offer a great opportunity to help address the mental health problems often associated with such economic and social pressures, and through our partnership, we have strengthened connectivity with other important local stakeholders.

More than 100 years ago, Industrial Dwellings Society's founders knew providing quality affordable homes gives individuals the stability needed to pursue opportunities. Now, we've given Jami the space it needed to be able to help our residents and others to take control of their mental health and wellbeing and move forward in life. ■