

HACKNEY HECKLER



Saving the Empire



Films of Hackney



2012: Police state

Newsletter of the Hackney Solidarity Network

free/donation

Issue 3, Summer 2010

OUR HOSPITALS ARE BLEEDING



But campaigners plan to stop cuts by any means necessary

Hackney's NHS faces cuts of up to £187million over the next three years – part of a forecast cut to London's NHS services of £5.1 billion by 2017.⁽¹⁾

City and Hackney Primary Care Trust, responsible for all health care in the borough, is already preparing for these cuts and planning "efficiency savings" (cuts and privatisation).

These cuts arise from taxpayers' bailout of the banks last year. All the major parties have backed plans to cut and privatise public services to compensate for the massive cash injection into the banks.

This crisis follows years of government imposition of the market on the NHS nationally and locally, which has manifested itself in a series of major restructurings.

These started under Thatcher's Tory government with the division of the previously integrated NHS into a section that bought services, and a section that provided services – the

purchaser/provider split. This opened the door for commercial companies to bid to supply NHS services.

The restructurings continued under New Labour, the latest being the Darzi plan for the NHS.

The parliamentary Health Select Committee reported in March that the government's imposition of the market on the NHS now costs £14 billion a year – £4 billion more than is needed to fill the hole in the health service's budget.

All the evidence emerging on privatised NHS services show that they cost more and are of lower quality than publicly provided services.

In Hackney, cuts arising from the credit crisis, from the resulting cost-cutting measures (which will involve mass privatisations), and from the Darzi plan mean:

■ There is huge pressure for local general hospitals like the Homerton to lose essential departments like Accident &

Emergency, stroke and maternity, to be replaced by "GP-led health centres, polyclinics and a much smaller number of specialist hospitals.

This crisis follows years of government imposition of the market on the NHS nationally and locally

■ Existing local GP surgeries and new "polyclinics (or polysystems) must be offered out to big private healthcare companies.

■ Community health services have just been restructured to open them up for contracting out to private firms.

We are looking at an avalanche of NHS privatisation over the next few years in our local services.

During its campaign against the sell-off of GP surgeries to private companies, Hackney Keep Our NHS Public collected 2,000 signatures from local people expressing their opposition to privatisation and cuts.

The group is now mobilising again and invites all those who want to ensure that the NHS is not forced to pay for the banking crisis and who want to keep our NHS publicly funded, publicly accountable, and publicly provided.

■ Contact hackneykonp@aol.com, or mail c/o 26 Framlingham Close, London E5 9PR.

1. John Lister, London On The Brink (<http://tinyurl.com/lonbrink>)

HEALTHCARE TO GO

■ The seven boroughs of north-east London would keep two "major acute" hospitals, one at the Royal London in Whitechapel and one out in Romford, 17 miles away – both PFI hospitals.

■ 832 beds to close, including over 200 at the Bart's and London Trust.

■ Other hospitals in the sector would be downgraded to "local hospitals" including Whipps Cross, Homerton and Newham or virtually closed (King George's in Ilford).

■ Community services, primary care and mental health could all be subjected to competitive tendering designed to slash between £200m and £500m from spending.

■ Hospitals would face a 3 per cent per year reduction in the "tariff" that determines how much they get paid for patient care.

■ Up to 37% may be cut from nursing and up to 43% from spending on doctors.



www.hackneysolidarity.info



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UBS has a dirty little secret

Swiss bank UBS is keen to shout about its community work, in particular its sponsorship of Bridge Academy Hackney.

But for all the talk of helping the local community, UBS is not so keen to support some of the most unprivileged people in London, the cleaners who work at its fancy offices in the City.

When UBS transferred cleaning duties from Mitie to another cowboy contractor, Lancaster, the cleaners were told they would have to do the same amount of work over less hours – an effective 10.75% pay cut for the same job.

Moreover the changed timetables are simply impossible for those workers who have to go and pick up their kids from school, an indictment of the bank's claim to support education. When the workers protested their elected shop steward was simply sacked.

This penny-pinching comes even though UBS is the second biggest bank in Europe, with profits of £1.3 billion in the first three months of this year. And it is UBS who should be blamed – they switched contractor to push down costs.

However this has not gone unchallenged. Workers refused to turn up for the new timetabled hours for almost three months, and four solidarity demonstrations with as many as a hundred people had the company running scared. Talks continue but it looks like the cleaners' standing up for themselves may yet reap rewards and make the company back down.

■ To find out more go to lawas.org.uk

An icon ruined by City men

The Hackney Empire's future is threatened by "a board that represents City bankers and market forces," according to Roland Muldoon, the theatre's ex-director and chief executive credited with its success.

Back in 1986, with the CAST theatre company, Roland resurrected the crumbling old Mecca bingo Hall, transforming it into a stunning space for diverse, exciting and popular theatre. "As the reputation of the theatre grew we were able, bit by bit, to introduce different aspects of theatre, pantomime, drama, opera, and concerts. We became the countries leading black theatre and brought Russian clowns and new circus to town. It was hard work but what was so exciting was the popular support we were winning from the wide variety of new audiences."

It was this unconventional attitude and independent approach to theatre that led to its unique success over the last 20 years, attracting a wide-ranging audience. The Empire became a space for creative programming and grass-roots activities. Famous for its hugely popular panto, the venue has also hosted New Act of the Year to promote new stand up comedy (previous finalists include Russell Brand, Catherine Tate and Gina Yashere), and trained young performers through its Artist Development Programme.

The success of the Empire is now threatened by severe financial difficulties. Since its £19 million refurbishment in 2004, Roland explains the Empire was compromised by a board of directors "which instead of fighting for support, we have seen them sell off the assets, remove the loyal staff and head for a corporate future." A public meeting in March saw hundreds of the theatre's supporters angrily confront the board's management capabilities, its decision to sell off the Empire's Ellison Rooms on Wilton Way, and its failure to consult the public over its future plans.

Roland believes their plans "won't fit into the culturally rich and demanding Hackney." The independence of the Empire which created the freedom to produce exciting and creative programming will now be compromised by a board of directors who won't represent the interests of theatre goers, and will waste its links with the community.

"It would be so shameful and such a sad waste of the public support it has received, and of the great effort made by all the people involved over the past 20-plus years," he says. He urges those who want to help continue the success he created, to sign up to their mailing list, petition about the proposed privatisation of the Marie Lloyd bar and generally get involved.



Hackney Labour's promises

Now Labour have confirmed their majority in the borough, Heckler brings you a short summary of the promises they've made.

Stick it on your fridge and tick off what they manage to achieve...

- Expand the council's services dealing with anti-social behaviour, gang violence, domestic violence, rape victim support, drug/alcohol support services.
- Planting of more street trees and improvement of 50 public spaces. More food-growing spaces for residents borough-wide. Improvements to sports facilities. Reopen bowling greens.
- Bring in a 20mph zone across the borough, everyone in Hackney to live three minutes from a car club by 2014. Stoke Newington gyratory to go, expansion of facilities for cyclists.
- Improve environmental reporting, "work with" Hackney Homes to up energy efficiency standards in social housing and produce a plan to provide renewable decentralised energy sources within the borough.
- Restore East Marsh for 11-a-side football after the Games. Rebuild six primary schools and improve all to "good" or "outstanding" status by 2014. Build five new youth centres.
- New developments to be 50% affordable housing. Regeneration on Kings Crescent, Colville and the Six Estates. Use of "all powers available" to bring empty properties back into use. Every estate to feature a public "improvement plan."
- Improve community halls so they are "fit for purpose."
- Campaign for the London Living Wage to be brought in borough-wide and retain permanent in-house staffing in council departments (coops, this one already failed – mayor Pipe recently signed off a contract paying less than the Living Wage for the Learning Trust).

Top Ten films from Hackney

Sometimes living here is like being an actor in a horror film, but on good days it can combine the best bits of an action adventure or romantic comedy. Below are a few flicks that have been made in the borough – get in touch with your own suggestions...

1

Meantime
Mike Leigh (1984)

Gritty, brutal, dark. Three words which have been used to describe Hackney Council. Coincidentally they also apply to this film by Mike Leigh which was shot in Fellows Court, Haggerston.



2

Die Another Day
Lee Tamahori (2002)

James Bond! Explosions! Girls! Baddies! Exotic locations! Except, the scenes in a Cuban cigar factory were actually shot inside Kingsland House and Simpson House on glamorous Stoke Newington Road.



4

Trail of the Spider
Kirschner and David Panos (2008)

A Western set on Hackney Marshes with a plot concerned about gentrification. Many of the actors in the film are ordinary people who had previously been involved with the occupation of Tony's Café in Broadway Market in 2006.


In fact the film is more about Hackney Council selling off community facilities to faceless property developers than it is about the rush for gold and land in the early days of the USA.



9

Rude Boy
Jack Hazan and David Mingay (1980)

Ray Gange is an annoying fan of punk band The Clash and this is the story of him blagging his way into their inner circle as a roadie. Some great footage of London thirty years ago, which just about makes up for the rubbish acting and stilted semi-fictional plot. The climax of the film is the band's outstanding performance at the huge Anti-Nazi League gig in Victoria Park. By our reckoning the stage was in Hackney, but most of the audience were in Tower Hamlets!



8

Bullet Boy
Saul Dibb (2004)

Shot (no pun intended) largely around Clapton and Hackney Downs, this is a surprisingly well executed (no pun intended there either) tale of young people getting caught up in gang culture and gun crime. Much better than its west London equivalent, Kidulthood.



5

Odd Man Out
Carol Reed (1947)

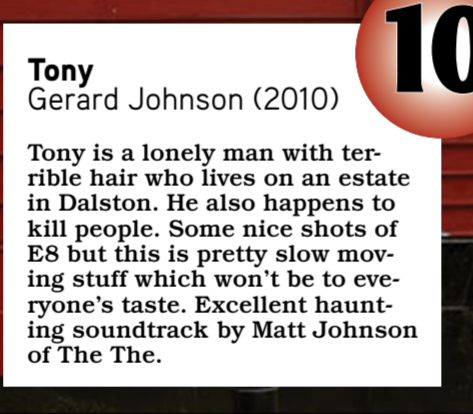
James Mason plays an Irish Republican who is in hiding after a hold-up goes badly wrong. Thing is, he's not actually in Belfast, but around Broadway Market and Haggerston Park. This film greatly inspired Harold Pinter who went on to write...



10

Tony
Gerard Johnson (2010)

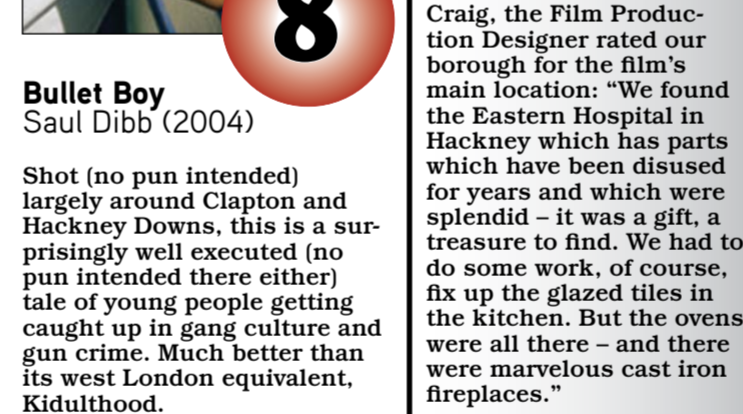
Tony is a lonely man with terrible hair who lives on an estate in Dalston. He also happens to kill people. Some nice shots of E8 but this is pretty slow moving stuff which won't be to everyone's taste. Excellent haunting soundtrack by Matt Johnson of The The.



7

Elephant Man
David Lynch (1980)

The tragic and monstrous John Merrick was prodded about in the Royal London Hospital in the 1880s. Stuart Craig, the Film Production Designer rated our borough for the film's main location: "We found the Eastern Hospital in Hackney which has parts which have been disused for years and which were splendid – it was a gift, a treasure to find. We had to do some work, of course, fix up the glazed tiles in the kitchen. But the ovens were all there – and there were marvelous cast iron fireplaces."



6

The Caretaker
Clive Donner (1963)

Mick (Alan Bates) takes on a tramp; Davies (Donald Pleasance) as a caretaker – after his invalid brother Aston (Robert Shaw) invites him to stay in his room. Set pretty much entirely inside 30 Downs Road (which was subsequently demolished) with the odd interlude on Clapton Terrace. Classic "three blokes in a room talking, pausing, and not much else" material.



Will Labour fill empty houses?

The issue of housing has been getting worse over the last 10 years. While investment via Decent Homes has improved council estates and a huge building programme of private flats has increased the overall number of homes (and people) in Hackney, homes for people with low incomes have disappeared.

Massively increased house prices have made it impossible for all but the well-off to buy homes here and the sell-off of council estates (on top of right-to-buy) has decreased the number of social rented homes in the borough. And when estates are redeveloped the amount of social rented property is always reduced.

But two recent reports show Hackney has one of the highest levels of empty homes in the country. A Freedom of Information request found 2,566 homes empty for more than six months, while the Eastlondonlines website reported 15,500 people on the council housing waiting list and 2,000 registered as homeless.

There are also more than 17,000 people living in "unsuitable" housing. This includes overcrowded homes; in Hackney almost 10% of households are overcrowded compared to 2.5% nationally.

The empty properties have been mapped and many are on council estates being redeveloped and sold off by the council.

Heckler has reported how Woodberry Down Estate is being sold off and also how people there have solved housing problems by occupying long-empty council flats, which the council soon evicted.

Now Hackney Labour Party has promised in its 2010 manifesto that "We will use all the powers available to us to bring all empty properties – irrespective of ownership – back into use for local people to live in." Lets see if they do.



Fascism: You shall not pass

A special themed night is being put on in June on fighting fascism, from then 'til now.

Including films on Cable Street, the biggest defeat ever inflicted on organised fascism in Britain, through the post-war 43 Group and onto contemporary events around the English Defence League, it's a night to make your hairs stand on end.

There will be a Reel News update in July and we're off on holiday in August.

SECOND SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH AT THE MOTH CLUB, VALETTE STREET, HACKNEY, FROM 7PM

LCAP: Fast for housing

The London Coalition Against Poverty has been stepping up its work trying to get the council's draft housing strategy rewritten to priorities social housing over market solutions.

Ten members of the group have held a fast outside Hackney Town Hall to highlight the campaign and show Hackney "that we are so desperate for decent housing we will go on hunger strike."

One participant said: "We had a great time! There was facepainting for the kids (and adults!) and we had a great art project, paint the houses you would like to live in a happy Hackney."

"It was a really good way to show Hackney, both the Council and fellow residents and passersby that we are really serious about our aims."

When we broke our fast at 6pm with delicious curries made by members of the housing group we were pleased how many people came and joined us!"

London Coalition Against Poverty has an active housing group, whose members are all in Temporary Accommodation Hostels, homeless or precariously housed. Aims include:

1. An end to Gatekeeping by the Council.
2. Dignity for survivors of domestic violence.
3. Hackney Council need to make Temporary Accommodation Temporary not leave us on hold for years.
4. An end to extortionate rents and service charges for hostel residents.
5. Conditions in Hostels to improve dramatically.
6. Hackney needs to use existing empty homes for people rather than profit.
7. The Hackney Draft Housing Strategy to prioritise social housing not market solutions.

■ For more go to londoncoalitionagainstopoverty.org.uk or call the LCAP Housing Mobile on 07931 698438.



Banned for asking a question

Elected Hackney Unison branch chair Brian Debus has been banned from office in the union for five years after he lost his final appeal at an employment tribunal recently.

Unison have put an unelected regional organiser (and chair of Walthamstow Labour Party) in his place.

Brian is one of four activists banned in what is being widely condemned as a political witch-hunt against members of the Socialist Party within the union – which is thought to have cost more than £250,000.

In 2007 several London branches of the Unison public sector union, including Hackney, sought to challenge the standing orders committee's refusal to allow discussion at its major conference on issues like why democratically-elected strikes kept getting barred.

They produced a leaflet that complained about the manipulation of conference agendas by the committee, using the globally well-known Buddhist proverb and cartoon of the three wise monkeys – see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.

Despite the leaflet making no derogatory remarks about any individual member of the committee, Unison announced an investigation and then backed an allegation of racism – because of the use of monkeys – without giving the branches the right to respond.

Despite the fact that the rules of the union protect the democratic right of members to campaign they were investigated for producing the leaflet. One black delegate retorted: "They will not be allowed to use the colour of my skin to hide behind their undemocratic attempts to control the conference or the delegates."

The leadership's attack had little to do with taking the issue of racism seriously, but was to do with attacking branch officers who all have a track record of challenging the leadership and fighting racism.

■ For more information visit stophewitchhunt.org.uk



Nurseries fight is gearing up

The Friends of Hackney Nurseries group has reactivated recently in response to big cuts in nursery places planned by the Learning Trust (LT).

LT is the body that looks after education for Hackney Council, which is convenient for them, as it allows the council to deny responsibility for cuts like these.

The trust has said it will cut between £40,000 and £50,000 out of the budget of many nurseries with immediate effect. For many nurseries that represents losing over 50% of their grant.

There are three types of nurseries in Hackney – community (of which there are about 23), council-run (about 10) and private (maybe another 10). It looks like it's the community nurseries that are being targeted at the moment.

Until around 10 years ago there were no private nurseries in the borough at all, but over the past few years, the council has been forcing even the community nurseries to function more and more like businesses.

LT has tried to use the election as a veil to push through its cuts; it thinks no-one will notice. It's tried to pick nurseries off one by one, sending them individual letters without talking to anyone, or informing them verbally without writing a letter.

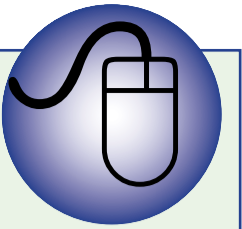
A lot of nurseries didn't know the cuts were taking place, and certainly not on this scale. The trust was hoping that by employing these stealth tactics no-one would make a fuss, but we've been able to expose the scale of the cuts, which the LT is still denying.

Hackney is relatively well-endowed in terms of nursery places. A lot of that is to do with struggles that were fought and won in the 70s and 80s by feminists and community activists, who set up community nurseries and got funding for them.

Since then it's been a constant struggle to defend those gains.

Everyone in Hackney has always valued our nurseries; our communities are very diverse, but we all have children, so this is an issue that unites us. The Friends of Hackney Nurseries has always been at the forefront of fighting on this issue.

■ The campaign aims to mobilise parents, nursery workers and community activists. Contact fnh@live.co.uk.



Woodberry Down update

It looks like the emptying of the estate is speeding up as local shops have been told to vacate their premises. For people still living in the area this is another blow as it takes away work, forces them to travel to get basic supplies and further destroys the area's community. If our Labour council are serious about housing, here's a place to start...

Save the Ocean campaign

Built as the most 'advanced music venue in the world', the Ocean was mismanaged and then closed in 2005 by Hackney Council. Now they want to throw that investment away and hand it over to a cinema chain without consultation.

savethehackneyocean@gmail.com

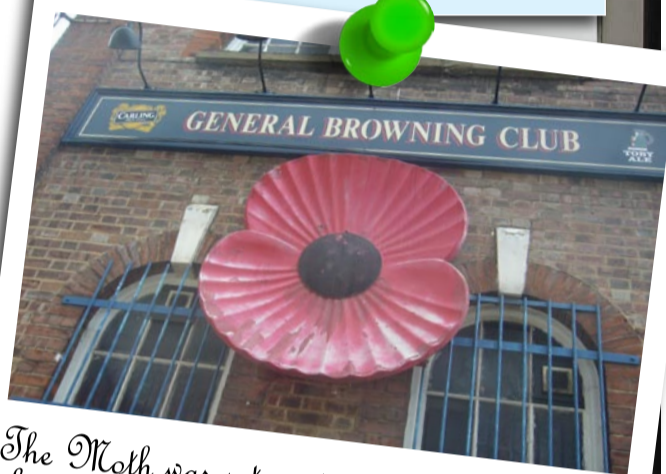
Tenants' associations

Residents and tenants are always at their strongest, and get the best facilities and contracts when they are organised and strong. Hackney famously had one of the strongest tenants' federations in the country until the 1980s.

Many estates and streets now do not have associations or committees. Maybe we need to look at Haringey where after a concerted campaign by activists the Haringey Federation of Tenants and Residents' Associations now have over 150 groups.

The Memorable Order of Tin Hats (MOTH) club on Valette Street hosts Hackney Solidarity Network meetings the 4th tuesday of every month.

It's a fairly laid-back space but is in need of a bit of support at the moment - so if you come to an HSN meeting you'll be helping them stay open!



The Moth was set up to support the veterans of war in 1927.

HACKNEY TRADE UNION COUNCIL

The local TUC branch has some of London's most experienced labour reps working with it and is dedicated to helping organise workers in east London.

T: 07960-798399
E: j.holgate@londonmet.ac.uk

The Hackney Citizen newspaper is being bullied over its coverage of local elections and has set up a fighting fund.
hackneycitizen.co.uk

Hackney wicked are setting up for a big celebration in June, with art installations, music and the wild and wacky stuff which can only go on in an ex-industrial estate. Check out hackneywicked.com for details.

Hackney Hero

Brian Debus



There's a reason Brian has been banned by the Unison high ups - because he won't sit back and let them do just what they want. Good on ya Brian!

Previous hero: Spirit of Broadway Market for putting his time into the community and standing up to the council.

Hackney Community College Strike

A dispute has been raging at Hackney Community College which recently saw picket lines as teachers and students walked out along with 10 other schools across London.

The college is looking to make a 14% cut in staffing, which will severely reduce the number of courses the college can run next year. Plumbing courses are set to be particularly hard hit, losing over two thirds of places.

- freelondonlistings.co.uk
Decent listings service.
- londoncitizens.org.uk
Members include faith groups, schools, student organisations, unions and residents' groups.
- icap.org.uk
Direct, grassroots action against poverty.
- hackneycitizen.co.uk
The Hackney Citizen is an independent quarterly.
- hacknepodcast.co.uk
Your monthly serving of Hackney-driven fare.
- pogocafe.co.uk
Vegan cafe and alternative political hotspot.
- groupsnearyou.com/groups/hackneycommunitynews
Hackney Community News.
- hackneysocialists.org.uk
Hackney Socialist Party.
- rwca.org.uk
The Refugee and Workers Cultural Association.
- hrmsg-online.ning.com
Hackney Refugee and Migrant Support Group.
- greendrinks.org/London/Hackney
Hackney Green Drinks.
- hackney-environment-network.org.uk
Hackney Environment Network.
- daymer.org
DayMer in Howard Road.
- hackneytuc.org.uk/node/433
Hackney Keep Our NHS Public.
- samhallam.com
Sam's case is discussed here.
- finsburypark.wordpress.com
Blog to share campaign information.
- opendalston.blogspot.com
Campaigning blog on planning policy in Dalston.
- paulstott.typepress.com
Musings on sport, racism and politics.
- nohackneyhighrise.org.uk
Opposing the construction of towers round London Fields.
- uncarved.org/blog
John Eden on politics and culture.
- stropblog.blogspot.com
Some feminism, some socialism and some laughs.
- bloodandproperty.blogspot.com
On local politics and current affairs.
- hackneyunemployedworkers.wordpress.com
Organising the borough's jobless.

HACKNEY ON FACEBOOK

- Save The Great British Pub
Hic!
- I'm From Hackney... Booooo! That scared You!
A page to bring all of Hackney's people together, You Know When You Live/Or Have Been Brought Up In Hackney When...
- Thoughts on the borough.
- Springfield Massive
Memories from the '80s and '90s.
- Stamford Hillies the Original ghetto!
For anyone who has had a past with the hill.
- Save Ridley Road Market
Traders versus a council determined to sell off their patch.
- I love Hackney
You sappy old gits.
- RIP Etem Celebi
17-year-old Etem Celebi was gunned down by two cowards.
- Hoxton Reunion
To reunite people from Hoxton.

About the Heckler and Hackney Solidarity Network

Hackney Solidarity Network (HSN) was set up in early 2008 to:

1. Help Hackney residents and groups to network, exchange information and share their skills and knowledge with others.
2. Improve communication between campaigns, groups and individuals in Hackney and beyond.
3. Encourage joint working and campaigning.
4. Give people the opportunity

to meet and socialise with each other.

We believe that the solidarity network will over time come to play a key role in resisting the continued attacks on our communities by the council and others; and indeed come to play a positive role in helping to build a strong, peaceful and united Hackney.

WHAT DO WE DO ?

- We hold monthly open meet-

ings at the MOTH Club on Valette Street (off Morning Lane).

- Hold monthly film/discussion evenings with the Reel News activist video collective about a wide variety of issues.
- 5,000 copies of this newsletter are printed and distributed across the borough.

If you want to publicise your campaign, group or community activity then get in touch with the details. It's 5,000 free adverts!

Or if you want to write an article, have your say, take photographs or draw some cartoons for us - again get in touch. Take some copies to give out to friends, family or neighbours on your estate or in your area.

STAY IN TOUCH

If you would like to receive invites to our varied activities - email us and we will add you to the mailing list. Details on the front page.

2008'in ba ında kurulan Hackney Solidarity Network (HSN) amaçları arasında u dört nokta var:

1. Hackney'deki örgütlerin arasında birikim, bilgi ve teknik alanda yeteneklerin daha kolay payla ılabilmesi. Faaliyetlerin halka tanıtımı daha kolay olması.
 2. Hackney'nin içinde ve dı ında olan örgüt ve bireyler arasında irtibat ve yakınlılı ının geli mesi.
 3. Örgütlerin birlikte çalış ıp, ortak mücadeleleni olu ması.
 4. Birbirimizi sosyal alanda tanıyabilmek ve e lenmek.
- Hackney Solidarity Network, zaman ile, Belediye'nin ve di erlerin halkimizi hedef alan te ebbüslerine kar i direni imizde önemli rol oynuyor olabilir.
- Bunun ötesinde, halki birle ik ve kayna mi , güçlü ve güvenli bir Hackney'i kurmakta bir rol oynayabilir.

