

Newham Local Business And Community Initiatives

"Access to information and ICT is vital to the development of any community as it breaks down barriers and enhances social inclusion - we pride ourselves on our pioneering work in this field."

Sir Robin Wales, Mayor of Newham

DESCRIBED BELOW ARE A FEW OF THE LATEST examples of this pioneering work

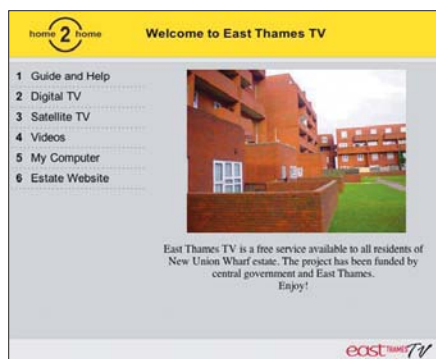
REGENTV

Offering residents the opportunity to access community services, digital TV channels, web and Internet services from their existing TV set, RegenTV has been developed from a prototype system running on the Carpenters Estate in Newham. This service has proven highly popular and is in use in over 300 homes. A local community TV channel, offers nearly 100 videos on local issues, many of which were produced by local people.

RegenTV is being rolled out on an estate in Tower Hamlets run by East Thames. Users are able to access a wide range of interactive services including: local community TV; interactive advice channels; Freeview and foreign language TV channels; PC applications; council information and online services; web and email; self help and ICT learning channels

All services are delivered over IP (Internet Protocol) via building-wide Ethernet cabling or standard TV coaxial cabling to the homes. The in home system comprises a set top box, a wireless keyboard and a remote control. RegenTV software runs on Linux, and offers a low cost, single platform solution that reduces on-going support and licence costs. The system is resilient, scaleable and can be replicated elsewhere across London and the UK.

RegenTV project partners include Newham Council, East Thames Group, IBM & Newham.net. It has been co-funded by the partners and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's e-Innovation programme.



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NEWHAM AND LOCAL COMMERCE - 'KICK START'

Supporting the local community through encouraging local commerce is also high on Newham's agenda. The Council prefers local suppliers where possible, but also needs to adopt e-procurement mechanisms in order to achieve its efficiency targets.

There are some 18,000 suppliers in Newham, some of which would go out of business if the Council stopped trading with them. Kick Start has proved a pro-active advice service, to help small suppliers understand the Council's needs as a purchaser and its requirement to trade on-line, and the business benefits of on-line trading generally.

The aim is to develop the project as a pilot in Newham to cover all SMEs (not just those trading with the Council) with the longer-term intention of rolling it out nationally.

NEWHAM AND EMPLOYMENT - 'SLIVERS OF TIME' / NEIGHBOURHOOD E-MARKETS (NEMS)

Facilitating local employment is an essential element in regenerating a community, and Newham is now working with London Connects on another e-Innovations project funded by the ODPM to match employers' staff shortages with employees' availability.

NEMS is an online marketplace that enables individuals to sell slivers of their time to employers who need staff for an hour or two (for example) at a time. eBay is where you go to sell spare items; NEMS is where you go to sell spare hours.

Ultra-flexible working is a section of the labour market that barely exists in the legitimate economy. Local government has a pressing need for this kind of economic activity to take off.

With NEMs, any employer can book extra staff for precise times. The process takes under a minute and the system itself underwrites the proven reliable individuals.

NEMs is for anyone whose availability for work is constrained by other commitments, such as childcare needs, studying or existing part time employment.

Recruitment agencies and Jobcentres simply can't cater for someone whose availability is highly variable or constrained.

Many employers such as caterers, retailers, contact centres and the leisure need top-up workers at peak times and can't find them.

This article outlines just three of the many ways that Newham is engaging with its community in order to improve social cohesion, local business efficiency and employment opportunities. ■

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Geoff Connell, Head of ICT

w: www.newham.gov.uk