

MANUAL IN SUPPORT OF THE ORGANISATION

Open Jewish Homes – A Manual

Why Open Jewish Homes?

During Open Jewish Homes we commemorate the Jews who were persecuted during the Second World War. This takes place by means of small-scale gatherings on site. The focus is on their lives before, during and immediately after the war, in their own neighborhood. Stories of pre-war daily happenings are being told, in addition to stories about persecution, hiding, resistance, deportation and return. We commemorate those who were killed, but also talk about and with those who survived and/or their descendants.

The Amsterdam poster campaign in 2011, the Open Jewish Homes in Amsterdam in 2012 and the increase in the number of cities in which Open Jewish Homes takes place, demonstrate that many present (neighborhood) inhabitants are interested in pre-war Jewish life in their house, street or neighborhood. In the run-up towards 4 May, meetings result in new contacts and knowledge. Personal contact is the key, and chance plays a large part in addition to that. At every commemoration, the story, narrator, present resident or location holder come together. The local work group, in consultation with the project coordinator, assembles the various commemorations in the city into one programme.

The story

We can and would like to commemorate everyone, but during Open Jewish Homes it is important to make the connection between the location where we commemorate and the people who are central to the story. On the Digital Jewish Monument, www.joodsmonument.nl, the Dutch Jews have been mentioned who did not survive the war. The addresses where Jews lived during the war are also displayed. This monument of names and addresses is the starting point for Open Jewish Homes. Important sources of stories of survivors are Jewish Monument, joodsmonument.nl, and *2000 Getuigen Vertellen* [2000 eyewitnesses talk], to be consulted in the Knowledge Centre of the Jewish Historical Museum. In addition to video fragments, photographs and documents can be accessed here as well.

Which story to tell?

No two stories about the same event will be exactly the same. Every witness mixes facts and memories to form his or her own story. No story is completely finished; every listener shall add his or her own elements to the story. The next storyteller, be it a family member, a researcher or a random listener, uses his or her own words to express the story. Even if a house participates in the programme twice or more often: during every gathering the focus can be on another aspect of the story. Your own research into the former residents may give new information as well. Please mail any additions to the [Jewish Monument](http://www.jewishmonument.nl).

The storyteller

The direct narrators of the story about the houses are the witnesses and/or their descendants, personally or through video pictures. There are also collectors of stories who are otherwise involved, such as (amateur) historians, who are great at telling stories. In addition, the present resident or location holder is often the narrator of the story on the search into the past of his or her own house. A volunteer may be asked to serve as interviewer.

During the period prior to the commemoration, the storyteller and the resident or location holder get to know one another. They establish, in consultation with the work group, the contents of the programme: who will be commemorated, and what has happened here in this house, street or neighborhood? Giving an insight into the process from discovery to commemoration is a valuable story that fits into the framework of Open Jewish Homes.

A gathering starts on the hour and takes a maximum of 45 minutes. During the first five minutes there is opportunity for a brief word of welcome and for naming the victims.

During the next 15-20 minutes, the narrator speaks, who may first take a moment to explain his or her personal motivation: why he or she wants to share this story during this commemoration with the persons present.

After the story has been told, there will be the opportunity during 15-20 minutes for responses, questions, interactions and other contributions from the visitors. After 45 minutes the gathering comes to an end, so that visitors can be on the next location in time.

The second gathering in a house will also start on the hour and take a maximum of 45 minutes.

The location holder

The present residents of 'Jewish houses' open their house on behalf of the commemoration and make a very useful contribution to the programme. It is important that the present resident feels free to attach his or her own conditions to the opening of the house. Therefore, the work group carefully discusses the opening and any possible conditions with him or her. In the event that the location holder wants this, he or she will, in consultation with the work group, take the lead in the gathering.

Location holders usually have questions such as: how many visitors will come to the house? May a door policy be applied? Do I need to offer the visitors tea and coffee? Will visitors walk around the entire house? The work group members and the location holders will make agreements on this kind of practical matters prior to the opening. This generally takes place during a participants meeting.

The volunteers

The support tasks, which are essential to the success of Open Jewish Homes, are generally performed by volunteers. Members of the work group, volunteers themselves, shall each take a number of addresses/stories under their wing. This implies among other things that they maintain contact with the host or hostess of those addresses and/or the storyteller and that they supply the required materials (such as chairs, a beamer, cups, etc.).

On the day itself one or more extra volunteers are required to support the hostess or host. These are often family members or friends of the hostess or host. The tasks of these volunteers vary from welcoming visitors and showing them out to putting up chairs.

The visitors

Open Jewish Homes is about Jewish houses, streets and neighborhoods and attracts visitors who are interested in listening to these Jewish histories. Some visitors bring in their own stories about the house where the commemoration takes place.

The number of visitors is unknown in advance. It is an open event with a maximum number of visitors per location. When this maximum is reached, the door closes. No minimum number of visitors has been set, bearing in mind the rabbinic motto: "He who saves a single life, saves the entire world". In special cases a commemoration shall have a more closed character: in that case, visitors will have to be registered in advance by email.

The work group

The initiative to form a work group is usually taken by an inhabitant of a municipality or a city in consultation with the project management of the Jewish Cultural Quarter. Both the initiator(s) and the Jewish Cultural Quarter shall recruit volunteers for the work group. These volunteers are often already involved in activities in the field of commemorations of the persecution of the Jews (local historical associations, memorial committees, monuments, etc.). In every city, the work group organizes several commemorations on various locations. Every location requires a resident or location holder, a storyteller and a volunteer from the work group to come to a common story. Together they prepare the opening of the house for the visitors. The commemorations on the various locations together form Open Jewish Homes. The work group oversees the larger picture and prepares the programme per town or village, makes internal arrangements, establishes if necessary the contact between a location holder and the narrator, recruits volunteers for the day of opening of the Jewish houses, monitors the timeline and takes care of publicity and visibility.

Visibility

To make the public aware of the project, the Jewish Historical Museum produces flyers and broker boards that are submitted to the work groups. They distribute the flyers that contain the programme on the various locations, and attach the broker boards to the exterior façades of the participating houses. The JHM contacts the national press; the work groups contact the local press.

Timeline

The document [Timeline](#) gives an overview of the key points of attention during the preparation stage and on the day itself.