

Annual Report 2006/07



বার্ষিক রিপোর্ট (Bengali)

Η ετήσια έκθεση (Greek)

Relatório anual (Portuguese)

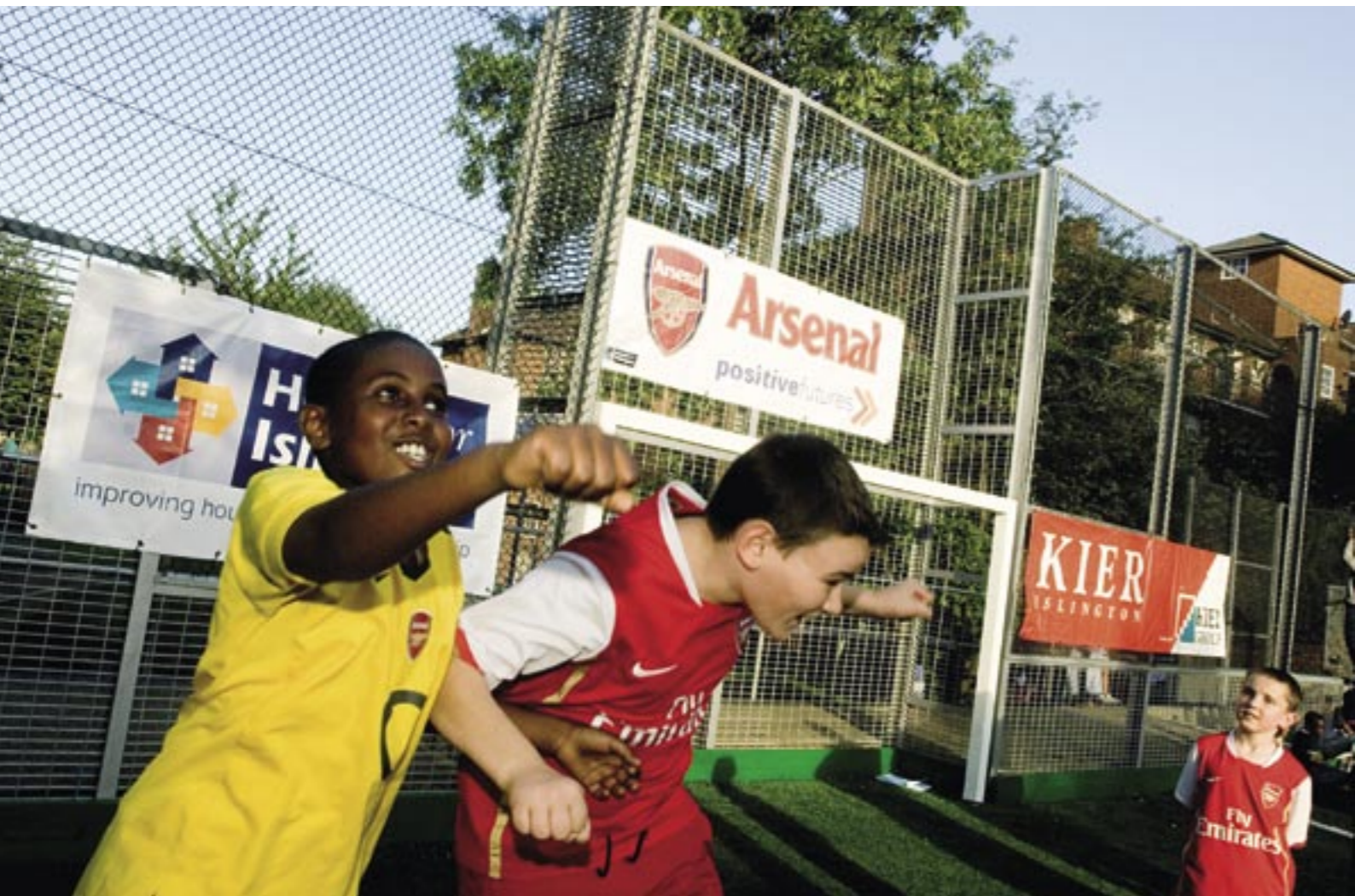
Warbixin sanadeedka (Somali)

El Informe Anual (Spanish)

Yıllık rapor (Turkish)

*Building
communities
together*





Building communities together



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Dear resident

Transforming people's homes



Welcome to the Homes for Islington (HFI) Annual Report 2006/07. We have just completed our third year of operation. It was another busy and extremely successful year in which much progress has been made.

The major building and home improvement works we're doing across Islington are transforming people's homes and lives. New bathrooms, kitchens and windows have been installed – and our surveys tell us that for the most part you're very happy with the work. Throughout the year we have worked hard with our contractors, and with you, to ensure high standards are met and that the year's programme is completed to budget.

It has been a year of significant achievements in many other ways too. We have introduced a mobile response team to deal with antisocial behaviour out of office hours, fully implemented our bulk refuse service so that unsightly rubbish is cleared quickly from estates, launched a major works guide and a welcome pack for leaseholders and met nearly all of our targets for services such as repairs and collecting your rent and service charges.

We are working with local communities to keep estates clean and safe. We work with the police, the

Council and others to tackle antisocial behaviour and have created apprenticeships and secure jobs for local unemployed people as part of the major building works going on.

The HFI Board of Directors continues to run the company efficiently and effectively whilst the two sub-Boards monitor performance and drive improvement. Residents of HFI sit on all these bodies, putting you at the heart of the decision-making process.

You will find more information about our work over the past year in this report. We are now looking towards the future and the opportunities open to us including building new homes for local people.

Many thanks are due to my fellow Directors for their commitment and hard work and thanks is also due to the Chief Executive, Eamon McGoldrick and his staff for their unstinting efforts and professionalism.

Ann Lucas

Ann Lucas

Chair

Homes for Islington



88%
satisfaction
with decent
homes work

■ Introduction

2007 is going to be a hugely important year for Homes for Islington (HFI). In November, Housing Inspectors from the Audit Commission are due to come back and inspect the services we provide. It is a key objective of HFI that we should receive an excellent services 'three star' judgement for that inspection. This will be a strong indication that we are travelling in the right direction in terms of the quality of services that we provide to you, the residents of Islington.

Last December we invited Housing Inspectors in to judge where we were succeeding and where we needed to improve further. To help them reach a view they spoke to many of our customers in focus groups and out and about on our estates. Their report has been very helpful in focusing us on the important things that we need to do over the coming year!

Whilst we hope the inspectors find that HFI provides excellent services, the very best endorsement we can get is from our customers.

In 2006, we carried out a customer satisfaction survey to capture tenants' views on all aspects of our service. 64% rated themselves as either satisfied or very satisfied. This is up from 52% in 2004. Satisfaction with the repairs service rose from 48% in 2004 to 65% in 2006. There were also high scores for:

- Overall satisfaction with accommodation 70%
- Finding HFI staff helpful 70%
- Keeping tenants informed 75%
- Ease of reporting a repair 80%
- Overall satisfaction with decent homes works 88%

Satisfaction with services has increased across the board in recent years:

Satisfaction levels	2002	2004	2006
Landlord services	41%	52%	64%
Opportunities to participate	26%	38%	53%
Repairs service	-	48%	65%
Keeping tenants informed	-	63%	74%
Taking views into account	-	64%	75%

"The Tenants Survey results are the best measure of improving services and we are grateful to those of our customers who participated", said Eamon McGoldrick, HFI's Chief Executive. "The improving results reflect the effort and commitment our staff have shown through another year of change and I would like to take the opportunity to pass on the thanks of both the Board of Directors and the senior management team."



99% of
repairs
completed
on time

■ Working to improve

Getting in touch

Homes for Islington (HFI) handled just over 304,000 telephone calls last year through our contact centre HFI Direct, a rise of 20% on the previous year. Our standard is to answer customers' calls within six rings and last year we did so on 95% of calls. This compares well with the best organisations, but we will keep trying to improve.

We also had over 50,000 visits to our Area Housing Offices, more than two thirds of which were to deal with queries about Housing Benefit. From April 2007 this service to residents is being provided from four offices as a further 4000 street properties are now managed by Partners for Improvement in Islington as part of the Private Finance Initiative.

HFI achieved a Charter Mark accreditation for excellent customer services in 2006.

Repairs

The service that customers tell us is the most important to them is the repairs service. In 2006/07 our partner organisation Kier Islington carried out 69,748 repairs. 84% of all repairs were completed on the first visit and nearly 99% within our standard time-scales.

We serviced gas boilers in over 99% of properties and took legal action to get access to the rest.

We improved the standard of the empty properties that we let and were again in the top 10% of housing organisations by bringing vacant properties to a lettable standard in an average of 24 days. This saves loss of rent, money which can be reinvested in services, and

makes a new home available as soon as possible.

HFI also introduced an incentive scheme for tenants when they move. The 'Just Rewards' Scheme gives £150 to tenants who leave their property in good order when they leave.

Rents

HFI's current rent arrears have fallen by £902,798 since March last year and rent arrears of former tenants of HFI reduced by over £2m.

We try to help as early as we can when tenants fall behind with their rent. We aim to maximise the amount of rent we collect and also to keep as many people in their tenancies as we can. To this end we have introduced an independent advice project, based at area housing offices. Over the past year HFI customers made over 600 appointments with this service, where they were offered free, professional and independent welfare rights and legal advice. Customers can access the service by speaking to their Income Recovery Officer or Tenancy Management Adviser.

The success of this arrears strategy can be seen. This year rent arrears are down substantially and we have evicted 49 tenants in arrears compared to 136 the year before.



■ Decent homes

It's a pleasure to be in my kitchen now!



The decent homes programme, which is now in full flow, is transforming homes and lives. In 2006/07 we spent a total of £102m on improvements to bring homes to the government's decent homes standard. Since the programme started Homes for Islington (HFI) has delivered:

- 7499 kitchens
- 4864 bathrooms
- 8273 electrical improvements
- 4930 window renewals or improvements

In total we have made improvements to over 14,000 homes, but there is still a lot to do – the works programme to 2009 will involve another 5067 properties!

Satisfaction with the works is very high with 92% of tenants and 70% of leaseholders being very or fairly satisfied.

What did you say

Les and Vera Hyde, whose new kitchen was installed this year, told us:

They came round with computers and planned out what it would look like. They gave us a choice of colours and tiles that we wanted. That was very unusual. They designed it just for us, I moved my washing machine round – I wasn't happy with where it was before. It's the most professionally done job I've ever seen!

Sonia Marshall, a busy mum of three, was also pleased

I'm thrilled, I'm in the kitchen cooking a lot. Now it's modern and spacious it feels like more of a family room, family functions are a lot more fun – it's a

pleasure to be in there. The workers who installed the kitchen were so professional and considerate, they cleaned up and left the property spotless each day before we returned from work.

What about leaseholders?

The increase in works and investment in people's homes has led to more leaseholders being recharged for the works and in some cases with high costs. However, the number of leaseholders with large bills forms only a small percentage of the total number of leaseholders recharged:

	2005/06	2006/07
Total number of leaseholders recharged	1519	2170
Highest bill	£41,500	£27,800
Bills £30,000+	35 (2.3% of leaseholders charged)	None
Average recharge to leaseholders	£6,000	£4,800

To help leaseholders pay their bills HFI introduced extended repayment periods and discretionary loans as well as the option to put a charge on the property which the Council can reclaim when the property is sold.



*Engaging
with the
community*

■ Safe and secure communities

We are committed to working with the community to ensure we provide safe and secure places to live.

ASB response team

In 2006 Homes for Islington (HFI) introduced an out of hours Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) Response Team. Working closely with the local police Safer Neighbourhood Teams the ASB team patrols estates and locations that are known crime and disorder hotspots.

They also deal with issues such as noise nuisance, neighbour disputes or loitering and arrange for graffiti, refuse and abandoned vehicles to be removed.

“The patrols are working to reassure our residents that someone is out there taking an interest in their estates late at night,” says Siobhan O’Donnell, team manager. “The patrols are looking to build up good local knowledge and to engage with the community and partners to challenge all forms of ASB which upset residents.”

Young people

We recognise the importance of good quality youth activities in diverting young people from ASB. The Sports Access for Everyone (SAFE) programme is helping to reduce ASB on estates through providing summer schemes of activities and sports competitions. In 2006/07 1120 young people took part in the sports activities including 336 girls and young women. A further 54 obtained nationally recognised sports

coaching and leadership awards.

The programme has won an award from the National Federation of ALMOs for best community initiative. But it’s the young people taking part whose opinion really matters:

If we didn’t have sports we’d be bored in our flats. It’s fun to do and keeps you healthy.

If it wasn’t for SAFE we wouldn’t have a basketball team, so that would mean I wouldn’t have anywhere to go, so I’d be outside just mucking about.

In partnership with Arsenal Football Club (AFC), we have also set up the HFI AFC Positive Futures project. Over 300 young people signed up to the project running on five estates. These provide after school homework clubs, IT classes and supervised football coaching sessions. Over the coming year the project will expand further, bringing sports onto our estates and maybe even discovering the next Charlie George.

Respect

In July 2007 HFI will sign up to the Government’s Respect Agenda. This is a standard for how to deal with antisocial behaviour. This Respect Standard for Housing Management will be published and widely distributed to tenants and leaseholders so that you can hold us to account in how we deal with the blight of ASB.

*Your priorities
at the centre
of our plans*



■ Listening to everyone

Your views are vital in helping us to deliver excellent services across the community, and so we work hard to find out about and then act upon your ideas.

What we do now

- Residents are involved in decision making via the Board, which is mostly made up of residents, and two sub-Boards, which are elected from our Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs).
- Each area office has a Consultative Panel elected from TRAs in the area. These bodies feedback on HFI’s performance.
- On the ground, our staff are in day to day contact with many active groups in the borough. We also work in partnership with the Federation of Islington Tenants Associations (FITA) to ensure that a wide cross section of opinion is heard.

In September 2006, residents attended a conference to tell us how we could improve our services. Many of their ideas are now in our business plan for 2007/08. We use resident surveys to gather opinions and also welcome your complaints, believe it or not – they’re a valuable way for us to find out about how we need to change.

Coming up

In 2007/08 we will build upon this work and:

- Carry out a door to door survey of our residents
- Launch a new leaseholder forum
- Renew our relationship with FITA

Of course, not everyone has the time to attend meetings or play an active role in their TRA. Therefore, over the coming year we’re setting up ways to gather opinions from as many residents as possible.

- We will expand and build relationships with our range of contacts in the community and voluntary sectors in order to get feedback on our services.
- We will develop an Involvement Register so that residents who wish to be consulted can be contacted for their views on any aspect of HFI services they wish to comment upon.

In 2007/08, HFI’s Board is determined that we will be a listening organisation that constantly evaluates and improves upon its performance.



■ Cleaner and greener estates

*Recycle
champions
called on
23,000
households*



Homes for Islington (HFI) has worked hard this year to make our estates cleaner, greener places to be.

Estate inspections

A new caretaker service was introduced in May 2006. Quality Assurance Officers (QAOs) now make fortnightly inspections of estates to check that communal areas are up to scratch. In addition, Tenants and Resident Association members and local ward councillors are invited to take part in a full inspection every quarter. The agenda for these inspections is set by residents. QAOs and caretakers can also now report communal repairs directly to HFI Direct. This means repairs can be made more quickly.

Cleaning up

Four brand new mechanical sweeping machines have been whizzing through Islington over the past year. You may have noticed one go by as they sweep our estate roads twice a week. This has given caretakers more time to undertake other duties including minor repairs.

Three steam cleaning teams are now responsible for removing graffiti and carrying out specialised pressure cleaning. Offensive or racist graffiti is removed by the next day. Next day collection of bulk refuse (like armchairs and mattresses) is now available across the borough bringing an end to unsightly piles of rubbish spoiling our estates.

Doing it green

We take recycling seriously. Door to door collection has expanded and all residents on estates have either this facility or a mini recycling centre on their estate.

Residents in street properties can take advantage of the Green Box Recycling Scheme. This allows you to leave paper, glass, tins and textiles for collection from your doorstep once a week. All residents who receive a caretaking service will receive a Residents' Service Statement, which will provide full details of their caretaking service and recycling facilities. Since June 2006 Recycle Champions have called on 23,000 households and spoken to almost 10,000 people.

Gardening work

In partnership with Groundwork, HFI again initiated and completed several improvement projects over the year.

On the Branston and Rollit estate a community gardening day helped to improve the area outside Rollit House. £35,000 has been secured and consultation has taken place with residents who have prioritised security improvements followed by planting at entrances to the estate.

Last year was the second year of open space improvements on the Mayville Estate, focusing on crime and safety. Residents were consulted and improvements have recently been completed. A launch event took place in May 2007.

Two playground areas have been completely rebuilt at the Brecknock Road estate using £153,000 that was raised by the Brecknock Road Estate Tenants and Residents Association (BRETRA), led by the redoubtable Judith Williamson. The project was highly commended at the National Federation of ALMOs awards for most inspired resident-led programme.



Providing equal services, valuing difference

■ Valuing all our residents

We know that our residents come from different backgrounds and have different outlooks – we will provide services that meet their different needs. This is crucial if we are to achieve an equal and excellent service for the community as a whole.

In 2006, we completed the first phase of a 'diversity mapping' exercise to find out more about you. We asked about your ethnic origin, language needs and any disabilities you have. We need this information so that we can provide you with the best possible service. For instance, we can provide useful information in languages other than English. The information we are collecting helps us to get in touch with those who may require a copy in a different language.

We will continue to collect this information where we can in order to match our services to your needs. Some examples of where we have already done this are:

- We provide light flashing smoke alarms for tenants who are deaf or hard of hearing. We won a special award from the London Fire Brigade for our work improving fire safety in the community, particularly for our work with the deaf and hard of hearing (see picture).
- We make annual repair checks for tenants who have a visual impairment, which means they may not recognise a repair need.
- We have met with Somali youngsters to investigate the low take up from this group of community sporting events and opportunities.

The information we've collected also allows us to check that all our residents are treated fairly and equally when we provide key landlord services. Last year we checked that our complaints service and rent collection

were being run fairly. These reports are being analysed and if necessary action will be taken. In 2007 we will check that our repairs service and the way we deal with antisocial behaviour are run fairly.

Working with the council and Kier Islington, we helped to deliver just under 300 major adaptations to homes such as installing stairlifts. We also made several hundred minor adaptations such as installing handrails. This has made life easier for residents with a disability and in many cases enabled them to continue to live in their own home.

Other features of 2006/07 were:

- Joint work with the council has meant that level 3 of the Equalities Standard has been reached, which is the Government's Charter Mark for measuring local authorities' performance on diversity issues.
- We have helped the council to comply with the Commission for Racial Equality's code of practice for social housing.
- We have delivered on our obligation to make all our offices compliant with the Government's Disability Discrimination Act and will do the same for community halls in 2007/8.
- We have an extensive range of links in the community and voluntary sectors and will extend this in 2007/08. An example of this was the successful partnership work with Disability Action in Islington over the past year.
- We will continue to measure our own performance in terms of employment and recruitment procedures and ensure that we report to the Board on our own record.

Working to keep on improving



■ Leadership

It has been another busy year for the Board of Directors. Homes for Islington (HFI) said goodbye and many thanks to three council nominees to the Board, Euan Cameron and Steve Burd and also to Jyoti Vaja, who went on to have a very successful year as Mayor of Islington.

These departures allowed the council to nominate John Gilbert, Paula Belford and Barbara Sidnell who are welcome additions to the Board.

The other change was the introduction of Caroline Jenkinson who has brought her wealth of experience as a new residents board member in place of Richard Rosser.

During the year board members examined ways to improve how the organisation is run and how HFI's managers are held to account for performance. This governance review was reported to the Board in April 2006 and most of the review recommendations were agreed.

As ever, the Board were at the heart of the business planning process helping to ensure that customers' wishes and priorities are reflected in the objectives for the coming year.

Throughout the year, board directors have continued to raise the profile of HFI through attendance at community events and consultative forums and throughout the three days of our staff conference. HFI also held its first open forum event at which members of the public were invited to put their questions to the board. There will be two open forums each year.

The senior management team remains unchanged and continues to work with all HFI staff to improve services, increase resident involvement in decision making and ensure value for money. The ALMO reinspection that will be conducted by the Audit Commission in November will be a great test of these ambitions. All at HFI are hopeful that the Audit Commission will return a verdict that says HFI is a three star excellent service provider in 2007/08.



This is Homes for Islington's annual report. It looks back at our achievements of the past year.

If you need a translation or more information in your own language, please contact your area housing office. Telephone numbers are below.



improving housing through partnership

এটি ঐসশপি ফসা ওলিমযবীসয় এর বার্ষিক রিপোর্ট।
এই রিপোর্টে গত বছরে আমাদের অর্জিত কৃতিত্বগুলির
পর্যালোচনা করা হয়েছে।

আপনি যদি নিজের ভাষায় এটির অনুবাদ চান অথবা আরও
তথ্য চান, তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে আপনার এলাকার আবাসন
অফিসের সঙ্গতে যোগাযোগ করুন। টেলিফোন নম্বর নচি
দেওয়া হল। (Bengali)

Αυτή είναι η ετήσια έκθεση του Homes
for Islington. Η έκθεση αυτή παρουσιάζει
τα επιτεύγματά μας κατά τη διάρκεια του
τελευταίου έτους.

Εάν χρειάζεστε μετάφραση ή περισσότερες
πληροφορίες στη γλώσσα σας, παρακαλούμε
να επικοινωνήσετε με το στεγαστικό γραφείο
της περιοχής σας. Παρακάτω θα βρείτε τους
σχετικούς αριθμούς τηλεφώνου. (Greek)

Este é o relatório anual de Casas para
Islington. Reflete o nosso desempenho do
ano passado.

Se precisar de uma tradução ou de mais
informações no seu idioma, contacte o
gabinete de habitação (housing office) da
sua área, pelos números indicados abaixo.
(Portuguese)

Tani waa warbixin sanadeedka Homes
for Islington. Waxaa dib loogu eegayaa
waxqabadkii sanadkii lasoo dhaafay.
Haddii aad u baahan tahay tarjumaad
ama warar dheeraad ah oo luuqaddaada
ah, fadlan la xiriir sarkaalka guriyeynta
nawaaxigaada. Lambarada telefoonadu
waxay ku yaalaan hoos. (Somali)

El Informe Anual de Homes for Islington
constituye un repaso de los logros
alcanzados a lo largo del año pasado.
Si necesita una traducción o más
información en su propio idioma, por favor
póngase en contacto con la oficina de
alojamiento de su área. Encontrará los
números de teléfono abajo. (Spanish)

Bu Homes for Islington'ın yıllık raporudur.
Geçen yılki başarılarımız gözden geçirilir.
Türkçe'ye çeviri gerekiyorsa ya da daha
fazla bilgi almak istiyorsanız, yörenizdeki
konut bürosuna başvurabilirsiniz. Telefon
numaralarımız aşağıdadır. (Turkish)

If you require this information in English
recorded on tape or compact disc or in
large print or braille please contact your
area housing office.

Central Street	020 7527 6250
Holland Walk	020 7527 7480
Lyon Street	020 7527 6880
Upper Street	020 7527 5300