

Upper Street

Anti-graffiti team

Reports of graffiti from caretakers, estate services staff or members of the public are collated by our caretaker managers and programmed for removal or painting out.

Graffiti that is racist, sexist or otherwise grossly offensive is removed within 24hrs. Small or easily removed examples are dealt with by the caretakers and the remainder programmed to be



dealt with inside seven days.

Upper Street and Boleyn Road area offices share the services of a dedicated crew with a steam cleaning machine that can deal with most of the graffiti. Graffiti made using insoluble colours or on absorbent surfaces may have to be painted out.



The removal of graffiti is a time consuming and

labour intensive task which costs our residents a great deal each year. Housing staff and the police liaise closely to compile records in an attempt to identify and prosecute the culprits.

Members of the public may report graffiti on their estates by telephoning the assistant caretaker managers on 020 7527 5380 or by leaving a message on the 24hr antisocial behaviour line 020 7527 5346.

Window washing

Grubby communal windows make even the best of estates look uncared for. Although caretakers clean the insides of windows every 8-12 weeks, we have never been able to tackle the outsides of low-rise blocks.

Upper Street Area Housing Office ran a project during 2004 to evaluate different ways to tackle this problem. It was decided that the best value was to be obtained by employing outside contractors to carry out the work.

A rota has been set up and work has now begun, cleaning windows up to the fifth storey. Initial reaction from residents is very positive.

The other neighbourhoods are now following suit and a noticeable improvement in our services has been achieved.

Upper Street goes green - Lumber project

Over the past few years the amount of lumber dumped on our estates has grown dramatically. An increasingly consumerist society, combined with the charge for disposing of broken refrigerators and freezers, has made dumping a significant nuisance and an increasing problem and commercial fly-tipping has overwhelmed the old system of caretakers moving lumber to an estate store from whence it was collected every six weeks.

Upper Street and Boleyn Road area offices have pioneered a dedicated team that collects dumped lumber within 24hrs of it being discovered and takes it to a central store for sorting and recycling.



Work is also in progress to identify both residents and commercial organisations fly-tipping on our estates in order to prosecute or recover the cost of clearance.

Any resident wishing to dispose of lumber properly should contact the caretaking team on 020 7527 5380 for advice.

In the first six months of the project 275 tonnes of lumber have been collected, a huge increase on the projected 100 tonnes.

Learning from complaints



Despite our best efforts, things do go wrong.

Upper Street Area Housing Office has devised a system for analysing complaints we receive and actions taken to resolve them. As well as tracking complaints to check that they are properly dealt with, we analyse trends to ensure that we learn

from any mistakes or shortcomings.

This system has now been rolled out to other area offices and is also being considered for other housing services.

Upper Street



The New River Gardens between City Road and St Peter's Street

The 400-year old 'New River' was created by Sir Hugh Myddleton to bring drinking water from springs in Hertfordshire to the City of London. It remains an essential part of Greater London's water supply, carrying millions of gallons of water daily.

As Islington grew, the towpath here became a favourite haunt for murderers and pickpockets and so 150 years ago, the river was taken underground and gardens built where once the river ran. The gardens now running along Duncan Terrace and Colebrook Row make up part of the 45km long New River Walk running from Amwell in Islington through to the village of Amwell in Hertfordshire's open countryside.

Eighteen months ago, an association representing more than 75 households in Duncan Terrace created a group to help revitalise the gardens. During the course of the last year, volunteers from Colebrooke Row and other nearby streets joined this group which is fast becoming more representative of the local community. The council has given its full support to this group

and recently awarded grants to make further improvements. The council is also working with the conservation charity BTCV to find out how people, who live, work and play locally use the gardens at the moment and how they think the gardens and the links could be improved in the future.

The Friends of New River Gardens are always looking for more people to join the group. Volunteers meet every 3rd Sunday to work in the gardens. Why not go along and introduce yourself at the next working group, or come to the May Day meeting, when we hope something special, maybe maypoles, will be laid on.

If you are interested in talking about the gardens or if you would like to join the Friends of New River Gardens (City Road to St Peter's Street), please contact Community Engagement Officer Sheena Gladding (07903 003337), Park Ranger Derek Keig (07949 052064) or local resident Patrick Mackenzie-Gray (07710 081985).

Estate improvements - Tenants Compact

The budget for estate improvements during the year 2005/6 is £250,000 for each area office.

Bids for improvement schemes are submitted each year by tenants and residents associations (TRA's), by our estate services staff and by individual residents. The schemes are put before representatives of the TRA's who meet every six weeks as the area housing panel and vote on which schemes they wish to have carried out.

This year 40 schemes totalling over £1/2 million were submitted for consideration. They vary in scope from a suggested upgrade of the play area on Providence Court through the replacement of defective bollards on Pickford's Wharf to the installation of CCTV systems and additional security at Bentham Court.

In mid-March the final list will be drawn up and area housing panel members will vote to decide which schemes will proceed and with what priority. Before voting an opportunity is given for the proposer to explain the project to the panel

Our project team will then draw up a list of schemes to commission and work on the approved schemes will begin in April.

Customer Care

Upper Street Area Housing Office has the busiest reception counter in the borough, seeing 70% more members of the public than the next busiest housing office. Despite this, we have the same staffing resources as other offices, so we have to pay particular attention to customer care issues to ensure that enquiries are dealt with quickly and thoroughly.

Results from our exit polls and records of waiting times confirm that we achieve good results but we are always looking to improve.

Five members of the customer services team who provide the front-line staff on the reception counter have started training on NVQ qualifications. The training and assessment are carried out on the job, and the course is designed to train staff in customer care techniques and recognise their efficiency in their work.

The appointment system we pioneered is working well and has cut average waiting times by over a half.

If you wish to see a housing officer or housing benefit advisor please telephone 020 7527 5300 for an appointment.

