Homes for Islington
improving housing through partnership
Issue10 Autumn 2006

news

Satisfied customers
tell us about their brand new kitchens

Residents decide
how £1.5 million should be spent through the tenants' compact

Meet Islington's
prize-winning caretaker

The kids are alright
At the all new Brecknock playground

TRANSLATION AVAILABLE

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Stonewall
Diversity Champions
PROMOTING DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Homes for Islington
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Fun in the sun

King Square residents come out to play at Kier Islington and Homes for Islington fun day

Over 3000 residents attended the Kier Islington and Homes for Islington (HFI) fun day that took place on 2 July at King Square. Arsenal set up a penalty shoot out zone where England footballs could be won and HFI contributed to a beach party atmosphere by giving away frisbees, beach balls and sticks of rock. The fun day was opened by the Mayor of Islington, Jyoti Vaja and there were a range of activities and competitions focusing on building our communities.

Readership survey

What do you like and dislike about the newsletter and what are we going to do about it?

In the previous issue we asked you a series of questions. We wanted to find out how interesting and useful you find the newsletter at the moment and what sort of stories you'd like to see in the future.

The figures

About 50% of those who responded currently read the newsletter from cover to cover, 93% of you found the articles both relevant and informative and 92% of you found it a useful way to find out about Homes for Islington and its services. When we asked you whether the newsletter provides enough information on local issues and specific groups (such as the elderly, disabled people, young people etc) 28% thought we should delve into local and group issues more.

Resident profiles

This was backed up by the ideas you sent us for future articles. The overall view was that you'd like more features focusing on readers and their issues. One suggestion that we've taken up in this issue is that we "interview one person from an estate that may have done something to improve or change where they live. A personal account may motivate others." See page eight for our interview with a Brecknock resident who raised £153,000 in order to rebuild her estate's playground and gardens.

Reader contributions

You also suggested that residents themselves should contribute to the newsletter. This is something we plan to put in place soon with the first of our guest editor slots. Part of the newsletter will be written, photographed and edited by a group from our community. Get in touch if you'd like to get involved.

Local history

Local history was also a key suggestion. The regular feature 'Down our way' will continue. Let us know if there's a particular area you'd like us to investigate.

Thanks to everyone who responded. M Pearson won the prize draw and will be receiving their prize in the post. We hope that in future issues you'll see more of the regular features you like and some new items you'll enjoy as well.

Keep in touch

Send us your email address and win a £50 prize

We want to improve the way we communicate with our residents. One way of doing this is to collect email addresses – then if you'd like us to, we'll be able to keep you up-to-date and contact you by email.

Fill out the form right and send it back to **Performance and Service Development, HFI, Highbury House, 4 – 5 Highbury Crescent, London N5 1RN** or by email to **email@homesforislington.org.uk**.

We'll be holding a draw from the addresses we collect so you could win a prize – we're offering one **£50** voucher, two **£25** vouchers and five **£10** vouchers.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Email address.....

Prize-winning garden means Mayville's getting greener

New plants, benches and bins are just the start as the Mayville Gardening Club is born

Residents of the Mayville Estate worked with Homes for Islington and the environmental regeneration charity Groundwork to further improve the estate's open spaces and now the project has been short-listed for the Horticulture Week Awards 2006! Residents wanted Groundwork to focus on re-vamping the garden behind their community centre. The garden was transformed from an unattractive no-go area into a colourful community garden. Shrubs which had grown too large or had died were replaced with scented flowers and herbs such as lavender. New benches and bins designed and constructed by community artists were installed, the path and pergola were given a new lease of life and four raised community planting beds were installed to be looked after by the newly formed Mayville Gardening Club.

The refurbished garden was officially opened by local MP Jeremy Corbyn in June 2006. We'll have to keep our fingers crossed until 3 October when the award winners will be announced…

If you would like to find out more about the gardening club please contact **Dragana Rakas at Groundwork on 020 7239 1288**.

Pay your rent and service charge over the phone

Fed up of queuing to pay your rent or service charge at the post office or paypoint? Well now you can pay by phone

You can now pay your rent or service charge over the phone with your credit card or debit card (Visa, MasterCard, Switch, Solo, Visa Delta) when you phone **HFI Direct** on **0800 694 3344** or by minicom on **0800 073 0536**. Please have your rent payment number and credit card or debit card details ready and we will do the rest.

From **4 September Homes for Islington's municipal office at 222 Upper Street** is no longer able to take rent and service charge payments. However, you can still pay at your local paypoint or post office with the presentation of your rent/service charge payment card.

Estate parking discounts for blue disabled badge holders

Are you entitled to a discount?

If you hold a blue disabled badge issued by Islington Council and rent an estate parking space, you may be entitled to a discount on your parking charge. The level of discount depends on your age and type of disability. If you already have a parking space and are not already receiving a discount or if you would like to apply for a parking space or garage, drop into your local Homes for Islington office with proof of your disability and we will complete the necessary forms to send off. Discounts will be valid from the date we receive this information and cannot be backdated. Disability information will also be required if you hold a blue badge for someone else. In addition, you will need to provide proof of where they live.

The Whittington hospital of the future is here

This Autumn sees the opening of the long awaited £40 million new building at the Whittington hospital

Artist's impression of the new building

Regrettably, the construction of the building was delayed, which put back its opening, but the hospital will now finally be able to provide the people of Islington with healthcare in twenty-first century surroundings.

The Whittington hospital would like to thank local residents for their understanding and cooperation during the extended period of building works and apologises for any disturbance and inconvenience that you may have experienced.

New facilities

A brand new formal entrance and reception area on Magdala Avenue will provide access to all wards and departments in the hospital. The Highgate Hill entrance will now only be used for emergency access.

From the foyer, escalators, lifts and stairs lead through into the outpatients department and the rest of the hospital where three floors will be home to several new areas including a respiratory ward, thalassaemia unit, and cancer ward and chemotherapy unit. Catering and retail areas, including a new pharmacy shop will also be available.

The critical care department, medical admissions unit and cardiac ward will now be on the same level as the emergency department to ensure that emergency patients can be transferred for high dependency care and observation as smoothly and quickly as possible.

A new radiology and imaging unit will also open, completely replacing the cramped one used currently. The new unit will include state-of-the-art digital x-ray equipment including brand new CT and MRI scanners.

Shortly after opening, work will begin on phase two of the redevelopment project. Areas that have been vacated by the opening of the new building will house a new day treatment centre that will give more patients the opportunity to have their procedure and return home on the same day.

Down our way

the Lyon Street area

What do the pubs The Lamb, The Lion, The White Horse and The Black Bull in the Lyon Street area all have in common? (OK granted, you may not know the black bull as it burnt down in the 1930s.) Well they marked the four corners of the Caledonian Market which was sandwiched between the Caledonian Road and York Way, and which had its final day of trading at the outbreak of the second world war. This brought to an end almost a century of trading on the site.

800 years ago...

The market itself dated back 800 years in various guises, starting out in the reign of Henry II back in the 12th century where it was located at Smoothfield (now Smithfield) and was known as the Fair of St Bartholomew which took place over three days once a year. This evolved into a weekly, Friday market, selling meat, clothes and haberdashery. By the middle of the 19th century, Smithfield's was deemed too small to cope with London's demand, with the stench and noise created too much to bear, so the Corporation of London had to find pastures new.

It settled on a pleasure resort in the countryside to the North of London – Copenhagen House – and promptly bought up the grounds and 75 acres of adjoining land.

The house was knocked down and on the new site the new market emerged. Bank Buildings, designed by J. B. Bunning, housed offices for banks, telegraph companies, railway companies and the clerk of the market, and as the market's centrepiece, a 160ft clocktower was erected. (It is still London's largest turret clock.) Five acres were set aside for cattle lairs and three for pig lairs to accommodate up to 7000 cattle and 42,000 sheep. Around 3,000,000 blue Staffordshire bricks used in the building of the market gave the market one of its nicknames "the stones".

The Metropolitan Cattle Market was given its grand opening in 1855 by Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's consort and straight away the new market was a success with more animals being sold in the first three hours than had been possible at the old site in Smithfields in a day!

Within 25 years, pedlars selling curios had joined the relocated meat market. With their stalls surrounding the animal pens the Cally market became known as a place to pick up great bargains and hidden gems. At its peak, this market had over 2000 stalls.

The war years

However, the market closed in 1939 and the market space was requisitioned by the army during the war. By 1949, the market had not reopened and the antiques part was moved to Bermondsey, though the slaughter houses were used up until 1953. In 1965, the building of council homes was started and three years later the Market Estate was complete. The southern part of the old market became astroturf football pitches. However, at the far side of the pitches the original arched walls of the animal lairs with a couple of the old iron tethering rings remain as does the old clocktower.

Quiz

To win a book on the history of Islington simply answer the following question.

Question: **What is the old name for Smithfield?**

Send your answers via email to **communications@homesforislington.org.uk** or by post to:

HFI Communications,
4th floor, Highbury House,
4 – 5 Highbury Fields,
London N5 1RN

Vital repairs

How can we improve your repairs service?

If your property becomes damaged and you need it to be repaired then you'll probably have come into contact with our repairs service. We want to help you keep your home in a good condition so we know the service needs to be good. One way we're making sure of this is by asking you what you like and dislike about the service and how you think it could be improved. At Kier and Homes for Islington's (HFI's) annual King Square fun day in July residents filled out a survey on how they found the repairs service and what improvements they'd like to see.

All the information we gathered will be used in a review we're now doing of the service.

There was a prize draw from the surveys and Leanne Trent won a DAB digital radio. Theresa Coyle, an HFI resident and board director, presented Leanne with her prize.

Leanne Trent receives her prize from Theresa Coyle

Get on board

Homes for Islington's board and sub-board meetings are open to residents. The board will also hold two open forums in November - why not come along and make your views heard

Board and sub-board meetings have always been open to the public and continue to be so. However, the board has set up two open forums to be held in November to allow greater communication with residents. The forums will take place between 7pm and 8.30pm and it will be a great opportunity to ask a panel of board directors about issues that affect all residents. You are welcome to attend meetings on the following dates:

2nd November 2006
Andover Community Centre
Corker Walk
Andover Estate
London
N7 7RY

7th November 2006
Packington Estate
Community Centre
1a Packington Square
London
N1 7UF

When and where

All meetings take place at **6.30pm at Highbury House, 5 Highbury Crescent, London N5 1RN.** You are welcome to attend meetings on the following dates:

Board

23rd October 2006 (This is also HFI's annual general meeting)

4th December 2006

15th January 2007

26th February 2007

Contracted Services Sub-Board

17 October 2006

12 December 2006

13 February 2007

Managed Property Sub-Board

18 October 2006

13 December 2006

14 February 2007

For inquiries about meetings, translation, sign language, induction loop or crèche facilities, please contact the **HFI Governance Team at Room 115, Highbury House, Highbury Crescent, London N5 1RN**, telephone **020 7527 4033** or email **governance.team@homesforislington.org.uk**.

New board directors

Four new members have joined HFI's board. They are Paula Belford, a Councillor in the Canonbury ward, John Gilbert, a Councillor for Highbury East, Caroline Jenkinson, a leaseholder representative and Barbara Sidnell, a Councillor representing Finsbury Park.

Paula Belford

John Gilbert

Caroline Jenkinson

Barbara Sidnell

Is your home too much to handle?

Our under-occupation scheme offers a tailor-made package of information and advice to help you move to a smaller, more manageable home

Have your children flown the nest? Are you living on your own after many years? Whatever your change in circumstances, we can help you to find a home that fits you better than your current council property.

As well as being easier to clean and manage, a smaller home could mean less rent, council tax and heating. You could also get a cash incentive of £500 for each spare room that you give up and money to help with the cost of your move. If you have a child aged 18 or over still living with you, we may consider offering them a home of their own, as well as finding a property that is more suitably sized for you.

We will help you to find a removal company and will pay up to £300 towards the total cost of your move. And you may be able to keep one of your spare rooms if your property has four bedrooms or more.

How does it work?

You will need to register on Homes for Islington's transfer list. Forms are available at your local area office or from the rehousing hotline on **020 7527 4140**. We will show you how to bid for a smaller property through the Home Connections system which lets you choose which of the properties advertised you would like to live in. You will have more points to bid with if you qualify for and register on the under-occupiers scheme, but you will have to bid for a property that is a suitable size for your needs.

You can bid for both council and housing association properties in Islington and you can choose up to three properties each time you bid.

If you are over 60 years old you can ask to be considered for sheltered accommodation.

"Thank you for making my mum's move as smooth as possible. Not living in the area your involvement was a weight off my mind."
Maria Sargent, whose mother moved from a three bedroom property to a one bedroom property.

Community safety day

Residents get together to create safer neighbourhoods

Crime prevention, fire safety and tackling anti-social behaviour were on the agenda at a community safety day held on Saturday 29 July at Barnard Park. Homes for Islington's out-of-hours anti-social behaviour (ASB) response team, the police safer neighbourhood teams and the fire brigade along with other agencies were there to offer local residents advice and support. Uniformed ASB officers talked with residents about how we carry out our patrols and report ASB to the appropriate services. Leaflets on HFI services were given along with contact numbers. The location made it easy for local people to pop-in for a visit, some with their children. Mounted police were a big attraction for some of our younger visitors. The day was a great success.

Information rules

What personal information does Homes for Islington process and how can it be used?

The Data Protection Act is a law that sets conditions as to how an organisation can collect and use your personal information. We have to be open with you and follow the rules of good information handling, known as the data protection principles, and other conditions that may apply.

The rules say the information held about you must be:

- **collected and used fairly and lawfully**
- **used only for the reason(s) it was collected**
- **adequate, relevant and not excessive**
- **accurate and kept up-to-date**
- **not kept for longer than necessary**
- **easily accessible to you**
- **kept safe and secure**
- **not transferred outside the UK without protection.**

You have the right to be told why we want your information, why we are going to use it and who else will (possibly) see or use it. Under the Data Protection Act individuals can only access personal data about themselves, they cannot request to view or have a copy of information relating to third parties. Anyone other than the individual who has requested the information is deemed a third party, a third party could be your husband, wife or partner. In summary you cannot request to view or have a copy of personal data that is not yours and nobody else can view or request a copy of your personal data other than you.

Brecknock's playground before the refurbishment

the kids are alright!

At the all new Brecknock playground

Judith Williamson in the brand new playground

Judith Williamson meets us in one of the inner courtyards of the Brecknock Road Estate. We walk to one of the two playground areas which have been completely rebuilt using £153,000 that she has raised as chair of the Brecknock Road Estate Tenants and Residents Association (BRETRA).

The history

The association, which she started in 1983, has been working for years with Islington council and then Homes for Islington (HFI) to improve the estate. During the 1980s the estate had a massive refurbishment as central heating and lifts were installed for the first time and kitchens and bathrooms were revamped. BRETRA worked closely with the council on the refurbishment. Judith remembers the scale of the operation as everyone was moved out block by block whilst the works took place.

Over the years though the estate's play areas fell into disrepair. The exterior of the buildings was repainted but this didn't extend to the green spaces and by 2005 they were really beginning to show their age.

Judith takes out the photos she used to apply for grants for the playgrounds. They show a solitary piece of play equipment in a big concrete space, rotted wooden benches and rusting equipment. "It was awful, there was almost nothing there and what was there wasn't fit to be used. Everything had broken down and even the surfaces weren't safe."

Tina Robinson, the mother of a little girl now happily scooting, climbing and sliding around the new playground agrees. "There wasn't anything for kids to play with so they'd mess around with bikes, playing football, on roller skates. Now you can see, some evenings it's jam-packed. Especially now it's the summer, it's hot and they're all outside, they can be out playing till eight or nine."

There are two playground areas stocked with roundabouts, slides, swings, a climbing frame and monkey bars. There are separate toddler zones with slides and talking flowers – giant painted metal flowers sticking up out of the ground that act like walkie-talkies – children can talk to each other through them.

How did they do it?

How did they get from rundown play area to what they have now? It took a lot of hard work starting last summer when they successfully bid for a £40,000 council grant. A lottery grant of £5,000 followed and then a community chest grant of £3,750. At this point Groundwork, an environmental charity they'd been working with on the project, came back to them with the plans for the playgrounds, mapping out where everything would be and what it would look like. Judith found this both "exciting and frustrating – we still needed a lot more money."

But she persevered and the project won £63,000 from a GMTV viewers' vote and £42,000 came from HFI's tenant compact scheme, in which tenants vote for projects in their local area that money should be spent on. Another £15,000 came directly from HFI to maintain the playground.

Has it been worth it?

Of course it has. The children definitely enjoy it. Lucy says the swings are her favourite, her friend Rosie agrees but points out that she'd prefer the playground to be girls only: "The boys always do stuff when you're trying to do something else. They try and take over." Lucy's brother Tommy disagrees "It's not true, I like the monkey bars, I can go on them backwards, with my eyes closed, on top…" Deborah, riding at high speed on a stylish pink bicycle, also prefers the monkey bars to anything else. She's not afraid to fall off them "because the floor's soft now, it's not concrete, it doesn't hurt if you fall off."

If anyone is thinking of embarking on a similar project Judith has a key piece of advice: "Start a tenants and residents association. Get people who want to get involved and who care about where they live. You'll always have to face some negativity but it's worth it… You can see the estate's been completely transformed."

A Brecknock resident enjoys the new climbing frame

Setting up a tenants and residents association

HFI offers support and encouragement to residents who want to set up tenants and residents associations (TRAs). There are about 100 associations in Islington which are recognised by HFI and the council. The TRAs exist to:

- represent the views of council tenants and leaseholders
- provide community facilities and encourage community spirit
- campaign to improve housing services
- be consulted by HFI on improvement programmes and other major issues

TRAs can give you a greater say in the way the housing service is run. They can also be a good way to start organising activities like outings or events for children or older people, or simply to enable residents to get to know one another.

For advice on setting up a TRA

- visit the HFI website at **www.homesforislington.org.uk**
- contact your local HFI office:

Boleyn Road – 020 7527 8380

Central Street – 020 7527 6250

Holland Walk – 020 7527 7480

Isledon Road – 020 7527 6580/1

Lyon Street – 020 7527 6880

Upper Street – 020 7527 5300

- contact the Federation of Islington Tenant Associations (FITA) on **020 7226 8934/9246** or via email on **fita@btconnect.com**.

Mick Padfield and
Bob Bright celebrate Bob's win

mr Brightside

Meet Bob Bright, the prize-winning caretaker who keeps the Mersey Estate looking good

Step out of your front door and you're at work. That's what it's like for Bob Bright, Homes for Islington's (HFI's) caretaker of the year. He's worked at the council and then HFI for 32 years and has been caretaking on and off for 25. "I've finally learnt the job I think." We went along to visit him and find out what makes Islington's best caretaker tick.

We sit down in the sunshine on the Mersey Estate, the small estate off the Holloway Road where Bob lives and works. He follows a set routine most days: picking up the tools of the trade first thing, then spending the first couple of hours checking everything out on the estate, running up and down the staircases "keeps me fit – I treat it as exercise – running up and down", looking out for hazards and deciding what needs doing that day.

After all this time he knows what makes the estate tick: what he needs to do to keep residents happy. "I've got a system, that way I know what I'm going to do – I keep on top of it. I like the open air, meeting people, I'm self-supervising – the buck stops with me."

On the rounds

The set routine doesn't make it boring. "Time goes quick – you're helping people out all day." Older residents particularly can rely on Bob to sort things out. "If older people have got a problem, I don't just give them the repairs line number, I'll call through for them, see it through from start to finish. People know where I am on the estate, they know where to find me. You help people out as much as you can."

Does he find that he's never off duty: living on the estate does he get people knocking on his door on a Saturday morning? "Not so much anymore, if I can help I do. I don't come and hang around the estate on my time off though. I like going up to Scotland, it's a hassle going abroad. Up in the highlands you get fresh air, I like walking and the open air up there."

Dealing with trouble

Does he get any trouble on the estate: is anti-social behaviour an issue? Not much. "I get on with most – more people like me than dislike me. Some of them never see me; they're out all day. But they see what I do – they know I do a good job. Sometimes we get kids hanging around but we don't suffer greatly. We get late night football sometimes [on the estate's football pitch] but that's not major."

Years ago they suffered with squatters. "That's 20 years ago now. I found one sitting in a door dead with a needle in his arm. I said 'You didn't wanna do that did you?' Now, as soon as a property's empty, we get someone moving in – so we don't get squatters – it doesn't happen anymore."

How about other inhabitants? Are rats, foxes and other creatures a problem? "The odd fox and plenty of squirrels, foxes are quite common as it goes and they're getting big now – around Holloway Road there's a lot of food shops so the foxes are getting fat."

As for rats, Bob knows no fear. "If I can, I'll kill 'em. I saw one in the bin shoot – it must have been stupid it kept running round and round but they don't bother me."

Why is Bob the best?

Mick Padfield comes over to join us, an ex-tenant rep and one of many who nominated Bob as caretaker of the year. "You're supposed to be working… All I can say is Bob is the true meaning of the word caretaker – he cares for his estate truly. He'll deal with problems there and then. If he can repair it he will."

As for graffiti they get a little bit on the estate but as soon as it appears Bob gets rid of it. "Then a bit more appears and I get rid of it again. It's a war of attrition!" We walk over to the football pitch where Freddy Ljungberg's name's been sprayed on a wall along with another couple of Arsenal related slogans. Bob explains "There's nothing naughty here, nothing bad so I leave it here. It's like their own space, I leave it here and we don't get it too bad anywhere else."

Being on the pitch reminds him of the five-a-side team he used to run. "They were the Mersey Marauders, when my kids were young, we're going back 20 odd years now, I can't remember if we won any matches."

Has he ever been threatened? A few times but you learn how to deal with it. "The best advice I ever got was 'Walk away, run away, go and lock yourself in a cupboard, just let it go over your head.' A lot of it's bravado though, when they know they're in the wrong they start shouting. I've been on courses now learning how to defuse the situation."

Detective work comes into his job too. "If there's rubbish dumped I can trace it back. I found some – I could tell what brand of cigarettes they smoked, that they had a cat, what they ate – I knew who it was. There's no need to do that though, dump rubbish – I'm happy to help and we've got bins, a lumber service."

Overall he keeps the place looking as good as he can. "I'd never move off here as a caretaker. I don't know of a better estate to live or work on and I've been around."

Next year's winner?

In the next issue we'll be asking you to nominate for 2007's caretaker of the year award so start thinking about who you could nominate.

you say we pay

Residents decide how £1.5 million should be spent through the tenants' compact

The tenants' compact is an agreement between Homes for Islington (HFI) and its residents, setting out ways for residents to become involved in the management of their homes.

Tenant and resident representatives that meet as the Area Housing Panel can control the environmental and capital improvement budget, the estate security budget and have input into the spending of the caretaking and cleaning budget. This means that residents decide which improvements happen in the communal areas of estates.

How the budget works

The Area Housing Panels have an annual budget of £1.5 million for improvement schemes (£250,000 for each of HFI's housing areas), and £100,000 for estate security. They also have input into the allocation of the cleaning and caretaking budget as well as other money which becomes available throughout the year for specific purposes like paving and CCTV.

Improvement projects are suggested by individual residents, tenants and residents associations (TRAs) and estate services staff. Proposals receive an estimated costing and are then put to the panel. Members may decide to go out and look at the sites or ask for photographs and plans to help them understand the proposals. They may also ask the resident or member of staff making the proposal to attend a meeting to present their ideas. A vote is then taken on which proposals will be funded.

Upper Street

HFI's Upper Street Area Housing Panel decided to prioritise works to improve security on estates. They also agreed to support local youth groups, improve railings around the Haslam Close Estate and improve lighting on the Mersey Estate.

Lyon Street

Over 20 schemes in the Lyon Street area have been allocated funding including safety and environmental works to the Lorraine Estate, lighting improvements to the Boston Estate and door entry systems to Cloudsley Place and Geary House. The panel are also aware of how important it is to engage young people on our estates in positive activities and so £10,000 has been made available to local community group Prospex who have a history of working effectively with young people in Islington.

Central Street

Security, health and safety and the local environment were at the top of the agenda in the Central Street area. Tenant representatives have allocated funding to 58 schemes in the area, benefiting 24 blocks and estates. Schemes include installing security doors, barrier gates and bollards (preventing illegal access and nuisance parking), lighting improvements, estate bins, garage refurbishment and pigeon deterrents. Planting, gardening and works to play areas were also high on the list. The year-long programme began this summer.

Holland Walk

In the Holland Walk area almost all of the TRAs put forward schemes to be considered by the panels. Schemes that were agreed included: upgrades or renewal of door entry systems, lighting improvements, safety ramps, floor covering, anti-moped barriers, signage, upgrades of play areas and equipment, litter bins, picnic tables and benches. One of the estates to benefit is at Brecknock Road where funding was given to help renovate a children's playground. Almost half of the schemes have now been completed and all schemes are expected to be finished by the end of year.

Boleyn Road

Schemes funded in the Boleyn Road area include upgrading lighting on the estates, installing security measures such as anti-scaling spinners, making repairs to concrete in stairwells and tarmac on roads and paving and securing unused areas. Further works that have been agreed range from securing loft hatches in communal areas to re-laying floors in stairwells, overhauling barrier gates, re-tarmacing car parks and re-lining and numbering parking bays. Works have begun on many of these schemes and have been completed on some.

New gates at Haslam Close

Isledon Road

In the Isledon Road area a football pitch on the Andover Estate has been funded and will be put to good use with Arsenal coaching and a homework club available to residents of the Tollington Estates. At Holly Park Estate a new door entry system will be installed. Six Acres Estate will get a general upgrade with all broken paving to be fixed and bin areas to be painted and refreshed where necessary. Play equipment will be provided for young children at Bavaria Road. Elsewhere in the area opportunities for young people were a priority along with improvements to community centres, installing and repairing door entry systems and general improvements to communal areas.

How to get involved

Ideas for improvement projects can be put to the panel through your TRA representative, or the estate services department at your local housing office. See page nine for further information on setting up a TRA.

Les and Vera Hyde
in their new kitchen

Sisters Marge Hayford and Vera Hyde
outside Vera's home

kitchen sink drama

Vera and Les Hyde tell the story of their brand new kitchen

Vera and Les Hyde have been in their Archway home since 3 November 1976. Vera's sister had moved in next door three days beforehand and another neighbour moved in the same week so when Vera says that she's well known in the area you believe her. After all they've been there for almost 30 years. "We're Islington born and bred" says Les "our grandparents and great-grandparents were from Islington".

Their house is lovely. Flowers flourish outside the front doors, hanging from baskets and in window boxes so the estate feels like a countryside retreat in the heart of Islington.

We're here to talk to them about the new kitchen that they've just had fitted. It looks great with state of the art units, wiring and radiators. Even the plastering and paintwork is brand new. But the key question is are they pleased with the end results and the work it took to get there?

In the begining

The process began last year in late November when they heard that Homes for Islington (HFI) would be installing a new kitchen for them. "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!"

After the planning they were told the works would take two or three weeks. Everyone who's dealt with builders knows how they can overrun and that two weeks can turn into two months but in fact they stuck to the schedule. New radiators went in first and Vera was pleased to see that all her furniture was moved back to its original place after the builders had finished. They moved on to fit new electrics, the new kitchen and then plaster, tile and paint throughout the kitchen as well as putting in a new floor.

As for clearing up after themselves, Vera couldn't fault them and neither could her husband. "We couldn't believe it – one walked round with a dustpan and brush everywhere he went!" Vera agrees: "I'm well pleased. I've got no complaints – if I did have you'd know about it!"

Vera's sister Marge appears. Her kitchen's also recently been replaced and she seems equally happy with the works.

The final verdict

All in all it sounds like having the builders in has been an almost enjoyable experience. "They were good boys – you could have a laugh with them. I'm not saying they were messing around but you could have a bit of a joke you know."

As for the final verdict, that will have to wait for Vera and Les's 10 year old grandson. "He takes in everything, when he comes and has a look we'll get a thorough inspection." Until then though it seems like it's been a job well done.

Improvements to your home

HFI is making improvements to housing. This includes installing over 2000 kitchens and bathrooms so far and making improvements to the outside of blocks by replacing roofs, windows and doors as well as redecorating.

To find out what works could be taking place at your block and when they're taking place you can visit HFI's website at **www.homesforislington.org.uk** and click on the link 'getting it right… online'. Alternatively you can call your local representative:

Central Street area: Mike Rees on 020 7527 6226

Upper Street and Boleyn Road area:
Jenny Greenfield on.....020 7527 5342

Holland Walk and Isledon Road area:
Wesley Jolly on 020 7527 7438

Lyon Street area: Lyn Edwards on 020 7527 8440

welcome home!

A new kitchen and bathroom welcomes one Islington resident

Mrs Gallagher arrived back from Ireland to find a new kitchen and bathroom waiting for her. Over the past few months she'd watched as her building in Highbury Quadrant was restabilised – the builders dug 15 metres into the ground in order to underpin the building – and then as her flat itself was worked on with new windows and a new kitchen and bathroom being fitted.

Due to the extensive structural work that took place the family moved out for several months so their homecoming was quite an occasion. "It was really nice actually, we got a really good welcome. Everyone was pleased to see us!"

So what does it feel like finally to be settled in again? "We're very glad to be home. In fact it's like still being on holiday!"

JUST R£WARDS

Homes for Islington
improving housing through partnership

just for you!

Pay your rent on time and you could win £500

Keeping down the costs of collecting rent and dealing with vacated properties means Homes for Islington (HFI) has more revenue for supplying other services. So everybody benefits.

To reward – and thereby encourage – tenants who keep their rent paid up, change their method of payment to direct debit and, when they move, leave properties in good order, HFI has decided to set up some new reward schemes call ***JUST*REWARDS**.

What you can get if your rent is paid up

If your rent is fully paid up on 5 November this year and you answer a simple competition question correctly, you will qualify for a draw which could win you one of six great prizes: first prize £500, second prize £250 and four third prices of £50 each. If you think you'll be paid up, simply fill in the competition form enclosed with this issue of HFI News. You can also enter by filling in the online form on the HFI website at **www.homesforislington.org.uk**.

This competition will be repeated once every three months and will be announced in future issues of this newsletter and on the HFI website.

"I think this is a good idea, if tenants pay their rent on time and leave their homes in a decent state when they move out it means Homes for Islington has more money to spend on improving the places we live in."

Canonbury resident.

And if you pay by direct debit

Paying by direct debit is safe and such a great convenience that you will wonder why you never did it before. On top of this, HFI will give you £20 on your rent account as a reward for completing a direct debit application form. Application forms are available from your area housing office or the HFI website. In the A-Z section click Direct debit form (to pay rent).

And if you move... don't get recharged... get rewarded

All it takes is a little foresight and care. Turn in your keys, leave everything in good order and avoid making changes in the property that HFI would have to undo or make good. You will avoid recharges and HFI will give you £150.

For more information

Details of these ***JUST*REWARDS** can be found in the leaflets enclosed with this issue of HFI News. Details are also on the HFI website at **www.homesforislington.org.uk**. Look for the ***JUST*REWARDS** link on the home page or in the A-Z. If you have further questions, contact your area housing office.