

# Welcome to Homes for Islington News!



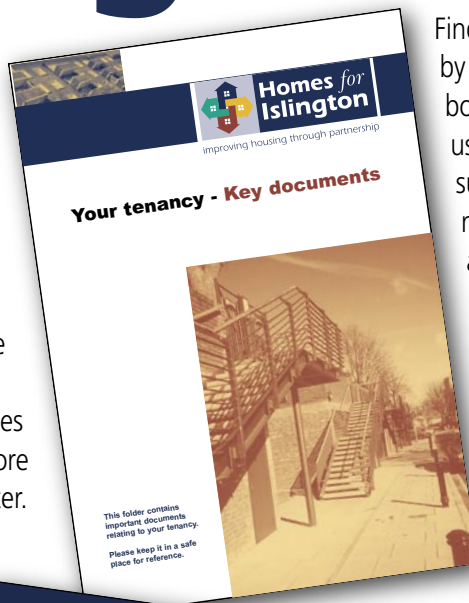
*Eamon McGoldrick,  
Chief Executive of  
Homes for Islington*

Homes for Islington (or "HFI" for short) started operations on 5th April and, without pausing for breath, began to put together the programme

for home improvements which will bring all council housing up to the Decent Homes Standard by 2010. You will be hearing more about this in future issues of this newsletter.

The new organisation brings with it many changes and many opportunities for improving housing and housing services in Islington. To keep you informed about these we have made it one of our early priorities to launch this newsletter, Homes for Islington News, which will be delivered to you four times a year. Your next issue will be out during mid October.

Every issue of Homes for Islington News will include news and information that relates to your tenancy, your home and the services provided for tenants and leaseholders by Homes for Islington. In this issue, for example, there is a useful summary that explains which housing services are now dealt with by Homes for Islington and which are still with Islington Council. This will help you know which organisation to approach for which services.



Find out also how you can get involved by attending Homes for Islington's public board meetings. These are examples of the useful information we will be including in subsequent issues. As in the previous tenant newsletters, there will also be information and news about your area.

In the future we will be looking at ways of getting feedback from you to ensure that Homes for Islington News continues to provide useful and relevant information and news for tenants and leaseholders.

In order to make the best use of money, we will frequently enclose other reading matter along with your newsletters.

With this issue, we have enclosed the new Key Documents folders containing tenant compact information and your new welcome packs. There is also information on our translation service. Whenever you see the translation symbol on a Homes for Islington document, it means that help is at hand for our service users who need to understand the message in their own language.

## Hang on to your key documents!

Over time, you will be sent or will pick up additional key publications from Homes for Islington. You should keep these key documents in a safe place where you can easily find them, as they have important information relating to your home and housing services. Your new Key Documents folder is an ideal place to store these documents.

## CHOICES - housing options

Choices, Islington Council's new housing options toolkit, is now available. It includes flow charts outlining the processes involved for the various schemes that we offer, tear out application forms, useful information about community centres, council offices, estate agents and lots more.



A 'jargon buster' is included to explain some of the terms we use. The Plain English Campaign has awarded the toolkit a Crystal Mark, so you should find the information clear and easy to follow.

Choices is available from your local area housing office, library, various other council offices or by telephoning the Housing Registration Team on 020 7527 4140 or 020 7527 4143.

## BETTER HOUSING OUR COMMON PURPOSE

Most organisations formulate vision and mission statements. Where this is done thoughtfully and there is real commitment to the principles laid down in those statements, the organisation will better succeed at achieving its purpose.

Homes for Islington was set up to provide, through continual improvement, the best achievable standards of housing and housing services for Islington Council's tenants and leaseholders. This is expressed in our vision and mission statements. We believe these statements express the common purpose that we have with you and we have published them here as part of Homes for Islington's commitment to let them guide everything we do.

**Homes for Islington's Vision:** Quality Homes for the Residents of Islington

**The Mission Statement of Homes for Islington:** to continuously improve housing for local residents, through sound investment, the effective management of resources and the relevant involvement of staff, residents and community partners

### Six themes underlie our vision and mission:

- Exemplary and sustainable homes – supported through sound investment, attention to quality and design for changing needs
- A place for people – safe, attractive neighbourhoods, where residents may have pride and confidence in where they live
- Accessibility and affordability – supporting residents' access to health, leisure, recreation, education and training
- Equality for all – where estates and neighbourhoods are tolerant of difference and where all forms of discrimination are abolished
- Doing it green – efficient use of natural resources, applying eco-friendly design, recycling waste and improved 'green' pace;
- Listening – consulting widely with our residents in the spirit of productive partnership



The Homes for Islington website is at [www.homesforislington.org.uk](http://www.homesforislington.org.uk). If you visit the site now, you will find it is still a single page with links to our pages on the Islington Council website. But all that is about to change!

**In September the full website will go live and that will just be the start.** Once the new site is up and operating smoothly, we will be looking for feedback from tenants and leaseholders to ensure that the site is responsive to your needs.

The website is being developed by a staff team called the Homes for Islington Web Group. The site outline that they have produced covers all the most relevant matters relating to your housing. Priority is being given to good website usability, including making it easy to find what you are looking for.

**A website is a great way to keep information up-to-date and easy to access.** For example, it will be a great place to keep you informed about works that may be carried out on your estate. It is also a wonderfully convenient way to access services and we plan to develop the site along these lines.

**Results of the recent tenant survey show that a high proportion of tenants already have access to the Internet through computers they have at home or at work.** All Islington Council libraries now have computers that the public can use free, so everyone who can get to a library can get Internet access. We expect that Internet access will continue to grow rapidly and the website could become the most popular way for tenants and leaseholders to contact Homes for Islington and tap into the information and services they require. The Homes for Islington Web Group will continue to monitor the growth of Internet access and we will keep you informed about website developments through this newsletter.

**Where to find us.** In the meantime, information about Homes for Islington can be found on the housing pages of the Islington Council website, which is at [www.islington.gov.uk](http://www.islington.gov.uk). Information about the housing services provided by the council, such as those provided by Housing Benefits and the Housing Aid Centre, is also on the housing pages.

# HOMES FOR ISLINGTON OPENS ITS DOORS

Homes for Islington, the country's newest and largest arms length management organisation (ALMO) is now full swing and recently held its first public board meeting.

Homes for Islington was launched on April 5, following an overwhelming 'yes' vote by residents to establish an ALMO to manage council properties. Homes for Islington has a budget of more than £47m to spend on housing stock this year and is set to receive £156m from the government to improve council homes in Islington, pending a successful Best Value inspection later this year, which means at least a two-star rating - based on the quality of the service provided. These funds will mean vital home improvements, such as new kitchens and bathrooms and may include central heating, new windows and roofs, improved home security, damp proofing and insulation.

The board of directors that manages the organisation is made up of seven Islington tenants and leaseholders, five council representatives and five independent members. The board has the final say on how housing services for more than 39,000 properties are provided. With representation at the highest level of the organisation, residents now have a more direct say in managing their homes, shaping the services they receive and improving standards.

As Homes for Islington is such a large organisation, serving over 35,000 residents, the board of directors needs to ensure it is in touch with the views of residents. So, in addition to the board of directors, there are two sub boards, made up of board directors and resident representatives nominated from the local consultative panels and forums. The work of the sub boards includes forming links with area housing panels and other consultative groups, developing

the resident involvement strategy and recommending capital works programmes.

The Managed Property Sub Board membership comprises six directors and six resident representatives; the Contracted Services Sub Board consists of six directors and four resident representatives.

Residents are invited to attend public board meetings. A programme of public board meetings is listed in this newsletter. (See Welcome to Homes for Islington Public Board Meetings) Advance notification of monthly board meetings is also provided through local media and area housing offices and sent to area housing panels, the Leaseholder Forum, tenant management organisations and tenant management cooperatives. Sub board meetings will be open to the public later this year.



*Homes for Islington Board Directors visit the Andover Estate. To see for themselves where improvements have been made and where there is need for more investment.*

## Welcome to HFI Public Board Meetings

**Homes for Islington's board meetings are open to the public.** Agenda and papers for this meeting are available 3 days in advance of the meeting through Homes for Islington's website **www.homesforislington.org.uk**

All meetings take place at **6.30pm** at **The Stephenson Hall** at the **NCH, 85 Highbury Park, London N5 1UD**

You are welcome to attend on the following dates: Monday 2nd August 2004, Monday 6th September 2004, Monday 4th October 2004, Monday 1st November 2004, Monday 6th December 2004, Monday 10th January 2005, Monday 7th February 2005, Monday 7th March 2005

For any enquiries please contact the **HFI Governance Team** on **020 7527 5148**

For any queries of if you require a **Sign Language Interpreter** please contact **Mary Switzer, Room 115, Highbury House, 5 Highbury Crescent, London N5 1RN**, telephone **020 7527 5148** or email, **Mary.switzer@islington.gov.uk**

## HOMES FOR ISLINGTON OR COUNCIL - WHO PROVIDES THE SERVICE?

Now that Homes for Islington (HFI) has started you will need to contact us for many of the housing services that you previously received from the council. This article explains which services are still supplied by the council and which are now supplied by Homes for Islington. It also tells you which services you can access through your area housing office and Repairline.

### You should still contact the council for the following services:

- Finding a home
- Services and information for landlords
- Tenant/landlord relations in private renting
- Housing strategy for Islington Council
- PFI2 (new stage of private finance initiative)
- Housing Benefits
- Empty homes
- Temporary housing
- Housing associations
- Council tax

Details can be found by going to the housing pages on the Islington Council website at [www.islington.gov.uk](http://www.islington.gov.uk)

### Contact Homes for Islington for:

- Adaptations (special arrangements in your home if you have a disability)
- Caretaking on your estate
- Elderly decorations scheme
- Estate parking
- Gas safety
- Grounds maintenance
- Leaseholder services

- Major works
- New River Green Project
- PFI monitoring
- Rent
- Repairs
- Right to Buy
- Service charges
- Transfers
- Translation (of Homes for Islington publications)
- Your tenancy

### Your local area housing office is a good starting point for most housing services:

- Tenancy matters, including information on rent account and initial form for transfer requests and Housing List registration forms.
- Information about mutual exchange and the up to date list of properties on offer.
- The reporting and investigation of antisocial behaviour in and around HFI properties.
- Estate parking, including permits, letting of car spaces, cages and garages.
- Issue of new and replacement communal door key fobs.
- Repairs to communal areas of estates, but please note that repairs to your own residence should be reported to the Repairline (See below).
- Housing Benefit forms can be collected from, verified and returned to your area office. Forms are not assessed by Homes for Islington, but an officer from the council's Housing Benefits department is based in each area office and can supply urgent Housing Benefit advice.

### Area offices do not deal with:

- Council tax.
- Assessment of Housing Benefit (though there is a council benefits officer in each area office).
- Street parking.
- Payment of rent – There are no longer cash offices at area housing offices, but you can ask there about alternative ways to pay. Information on ways to pay will also be sent to you with your new rent cards in the autumn.
- The issue of rent cards – This is dealt with by the Rent Accounts Section of Homes for Islington. Contact 020 7527 4092/4077/4048 or 4057
- Initial report of repairs to your own residence.

### Repairs to your own residence

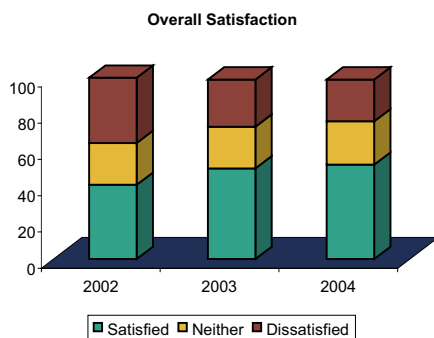
All repairs, other than for communal areas, should be reported to the Repairline on freephone 0800 694 3344. Both routine and emergency calls are dealt with from 8am to 8pm Mondays-Fridays and from 8am till noon on Saturdays. Emergency repairs only can be reported outside these hours. Please note that this freephone number is only for reporting repairs. If you have access to the Internet, you can report repairs online to the Islington website at [www.islington.gov.uk](http://www.islington.gov.uk). Go to the **Home** page and click the button for **Online repairs for council tenants**. Then follow the simple instructions. This service will be available from the Homes for Islington site when it goes live in the autumn.

## HFI TENANTS SATISFACTION SURVEY 2004

Results from the latest tenant survey will be sent to you in the annual report for 2003/04. Results of the leaseholders survey will be published in the next issue of Islington Home Owner.

Homes for Islington thanks every tenant who took the time to complete the survey.

The more of you that send in your surveys, the better the information we have to improve services. Congratulations to the winners of the survey prize draw:



to the winners of the survey prize draw: *Mr T Smith (Holland Walk area), Ms B Batchelor (Partners),*

*Ms J Sung (Central St area), Miss S Dennis (Isledon Rd area), Ms M Saromi (Isledon Rd area), Mr M Marucci and Mr D Cronin (both Upper St area).*

If you would like more information about the survey, please send an email to [performance.monitoring@islington.gov.uk](mailto:performance.monitoring@islington.gov.uk) or telephone **020 7527 4079**.

## Islington consumers GET SWITCHED ON



Local consumers will now be able to take advantage of a new Fuel Supplier Hotline, "Get Switched On", which is the first project launched by the Islington Consumer Support Network.

The Network brings together a number of advice agencies including the council's Trading Standards Service, Islington Law Centre, Islington's Citizen Advice Bureau and Age Concern in a scheme designed to ensure consumers in Islington know who to turn to for help with consumer problems and disputes.

Research carried out by the network identified gas & electricity mis-selling as the top area of local consumer concern. Residents are also missing out on savings that can be made in switching gas and electricity supplier.

The "Get Switched On" campaign can give advice & support to residents about:

- How to make savings by switching supplier
- Gas and electricity companies using hard sell tactics to persuade people to switch supplier
- Taking up complaints

The campaign is run in partnership with Islington Energy Centre, **energywatch** (the national consumer watchdog for gas and electricity customers) and Islington Language Service.

For free and independent advice, call the campaign hotline on **020 7527 2283**, email **energy.advice@islington.gov.uk**, or drop into the Islington Energy Centre, 159 Upper Street, London N1 1RE Monday-Friday 9am-5pm. Leaflets about the campaign are also available in other languages.

For more information about Islington Consumer Network contact Fiona Exley on 020 7527 3182 or email [csn@islington.gov.uk](mailto:csn@islington.gov.uk).

## Congratulations to Dave Hardcastle who celebrated his 30th anniversary of working for Islington.

Dave currently works as a Planned Maintenance Senior Surveyor but joined Islington Council's Housing Department on 2nd May 1974 as an assistant technical officer. He applied for the job after seeing an advert in a building magazine left by a tenant, during a voids inspection he carried out when he was working for Barnet Council. Hard as it might be to imagine, today Dave can remember working without computers and he has seen many changes to the housing services, right through to the present day with the creation of Homes for Islington. While it was commonplace for people to rise through the ranks when Dave started, he doesn't believe many people who start working for HFI today will be here in 30 years time as society has changed and people move jobs a lot more frequently than they used to.

Dave's most interesting memory is when there was a siege in one of the properties around 1976/77 which even received TV coverage. Dave also designed and built the Sadler's Wells Theatre booking office. Congratulations Dave - Here's to another 30 years!!

Here are some other important events that occurred in 1974:

- Lord Lucan disappeared.
- Pele retired from football.
- The Watergate trial began.

### COMPETITION:

*Can you guess which single was at the top of the music charts on 2nd May 1974?*

Please send your entries to Edward Richards, Performance and Partnership Officer, Holland Walk AHO, 85-88 Holland Walk, London N19 3XS. Winners have the choice of a cinema pass for up to five family members, or a free week long gym pass for up to 2 adults. (Please state which you would prefer.)

# Holland Walk

## ANYONE FOR TENNIS?

Glendale and Islington Greenspace and Leisure, as part of their commitment to promoting healthy living are currently offering free tennis on all courts between 9 - 11am Monday - Friday at Tufnell Park Playing Fields for the Over-60s, people with disabilities, the unemployed and students. They are also offering this service Highbury Fields, Spa Fields & Rosemary Gdns.



ID will be required in the form of a Freedom Pass for 60+ and Disabled, Benefits letter for Unemployed and Photo ID from college or Uni for Students. All these need to be in date.

All courts can be booked up to seven days in advance.

The number for Tufnell Park Fields is 020 7263 9368

For courts in other parts of the borough please use the following numbers:

Highbury 020 7226 2334

Spa 020 7837 3137

Rosemary 020 7226 6633

The keeper is available from 10 minutes to until ten minutes past every hour to take bookings. This scheme will continue until at least April 2005 and it will be reviewed then. Any comments that you have will help in this review.

So, no excuses – let's get practising and find the next Wimbledon champion!

## Caretaker update

*TRA reps nominated by FITA have been meeting with officers and GMB officials in a Caretaker Service Improvement Group to look at how to maintain continued improvement in the caretaking service. The second meeting, which took place at Holland Walk on the 28th April 2004, generated lively discussion.*

*It was agreed that service level agreements would be drawn up for an estate in the Holland Walk area and for another in the Boleyn Road area. The TRA, caretaker, GMB and officers would agree what sort of service would be provided within the hours of caretaking allocated to each estate. Whilst this will not mean an increase or reduction in the total hours worked, it will allow the TRA to identify those tasks they wanted carried out in an order of priority, along with a decision as to how frequently this should happen. This might, for example, include the lifts or entrances to the block being cleaned first thing in the morning and last thing in the afternoon at the expense of something else. It will be residents who decide what service they want within the service time available.*

*The agreements will operate as pilots for three months before any decision is made to extend this arrangement to other areas. Residents will be kept informed of changes in any current service provision and will be able to comment on success or otherwise and whether the service provided continued to meet their needs and priorities.*

*Watch this space for further updates.*

# HAT TRICK FOR HOLLAND WALK

*For the 3rd year in a row, Holland Walk has been judged to be the best performing housing office in comparison with the 4 remaining HFI offices, Hyde and Partners.*

*Their performance in March 2004 achieved a score of 9.12 points, making Holland Walk the first office to attain an "excellent" rating. This contribution to their performance over the year, resulted in Holland Walk reaching 1st place in performance for 2003/04. Congratulations are extended to all office and field staff for their hard work and dedication, during what has proved to be a difficult and demanding year.*



*Fresh challenges await during 2004/05 and all staff will seek to continue our improvements in the services that we deliver to residents.*



## MOBILE STEAMERS-COMING TO AN ESTATE NEAR YOU

Helping Holland Walk attack the scourge of graffiti

Changes to the current mobile steam cleaning service, mean that during the month of May 2004, there will be a machine and operatives solely covering the Holland Walk and Isledon Road Area Offices. As a result, both offices will have access to the service on a fortnightly basis and managers will shortly be drawing up rotas to cover all of our estates.

It is intended to try and increase the attack on graffiti, which will go hand in hand with the increase in quality controls on our caretaking service to a similar timescale.

# NEW TENANT VISITS

Holland Walk currently carryout a follow up visit to all of its new tenants, 4 weeks on from the start of their new tenancies. This is designed to ensure that the new tenant has settled in and to pick up on any outstanding management and repair problems. These are then followed through to completion at a very early stage, hopefully to the tenant's satisfaction.

Feedback from a recent Best Value inspection and scrutiny panel inspection at Holland Walk found that this service could be improved with the addition of the following:

All felt that it would be both helpful and sensible to include an introduction to the caretaker at the time of the 4 week visit. This has now been incorporated, and commenced on 4th May 2004.

Concerns were also raised in relation to heating and hot water problems within the first 4 weeks of new tenancies and officers at Holland Walk are currently looking at how these can be minimised and current procedures adapted to take ownership of these concerns.

Following on from the well received Holland Walk Information Pack, Edward Richards, the Performance & Partnership Officer at Holland Walk, is working alongside colleagues from other offices and centrally to produce a new Homes For Islington Welcome that will contain even more useful information. This will be mailed out to all Islington tenants and leaseholders and then given out to new tenants on sign ups.

# Holland Walk

## Your most frequently asked questions... answered!

Following consultation with the Homes for Islington Customer Focus team, Holland Walk AHO sought to identify the questions most frequently asked by customers contacting or visiting the area office. This information was gathered from a wide ranging survey and monitoring of the diverse make up of tenants who reside within the Holland Walk catchment.

The result is a new leaflet, titled "FAQ's," now available at Holland Walk Area Housing Office, which gives direct, relevant answers to the ten most frequently asked questions. In the autumn we will review the progress/success of the leaflets with customers and look at updating or improving them as necessary.

## U CHOOZ

Hilldrop Community Centre working with Islington Children at risk of homelessness

Hilldrop Community Centre in the Holland Walk Area have worked with All Change to help produce a website called U Chooz.

U Chooz is a showcase for an Islington-based project for young people with experience of, or at risk of, homelessness. U Chooz gives them an opportunity to work with professional artists, learning new skills and creating original digital artworks to share on the project website.

Take a look at the site! It can be found at <http://www.uchooz.org/main.php>

For further details, visit the site or contact All Change on 020 7689 4646 or [all.change@virgin.net](mailto:all.change@virgin.net).

**THANK YOU** to all those who attended the first ever Young People's Summer Opening Evening at Holland Walk Area Housing Office on July 15th. It was a great evening with face painting, mountain biking, a barbecue and loads of information about activities available to young people during the summer holidays. Further information about this and future events will be circulated to residents in the near future.



Face painting - Holland Walk



Open day - Holland Walk