

Welcome to Homes for Islington News!



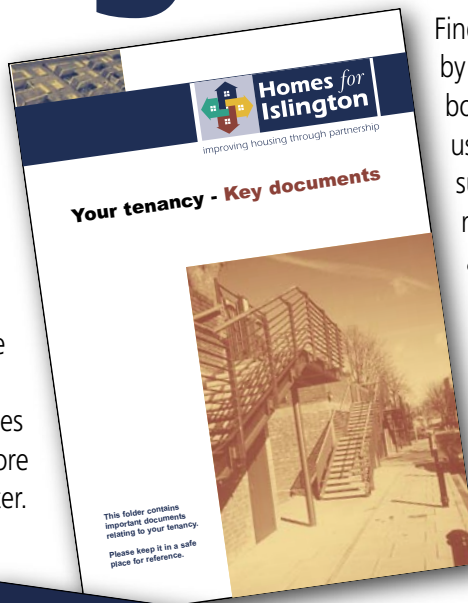
*Eamon McGoldrick,
Chief Executive of
Homes for Islington*

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. 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. 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

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

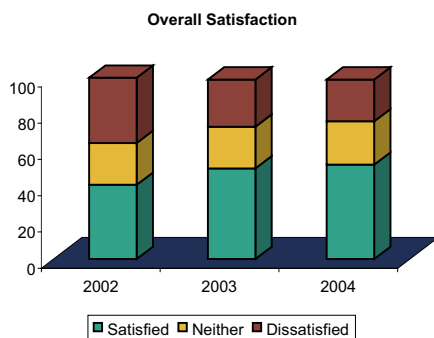
All repairs, other than for communal areas, should be reported to the Repairline on freephone 0800 694 3344. Both routine and emergency calls are dealt with from 8am to 8pm Mondays-Fridays and from 8am till noon on Saturdays. Emergency repairs only can be reported outside these hours. Please note that 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. 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:



we have to improve services. Congratulations 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 or telephone **020 7527 4079**.

RACIAL HARASSMENT - ARE YOU A VICTIM?

a message from David Salenius, Isledon Road Area



“ An essential part of our local housing service to the community is to positively respond to allegations of racial harassment. This is also a statutory requirement. ”

David Salenius, Area Housing Manager

According to our records, we do not appear to have received many complaints concerning this subject. While this may indicate that racial harassment in the Isledon Road Area is not a problem, it may well be that, victims are unaware of our obligations to deal with allegations of this kind.

We do appreciate that to suffer from this type of unacceptable behaviour is traumatic and there is a temptation not to report such activities, as the outcome can be uncertain. However, the Isledon Road area office can be of help. We urge victims to telephone the Isledon Road Area Housing Office on 020 7527 6567. This dedicated line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Simply leave your name and contact number on the voicemail system and an officer will get back to you. Given the nature of the allegations, confidentiality and sensitivity will be a pre-requisite for members of my staff, when dealing with a victim.



Isledon Road

Isledon Road AREA ESTATES IMPROVEMENTS



Isledon Road area estates improvements



Vaudeville Court should look great in a couple of weeks when the scaffolding is removed, the block, having undergone:

- Concrete repairs
- Replacement of brick work, where appropriate
- New roof covering
- Complete redecoration of the internal communal parts, inclusive of residents' own front entrance doors
- Comprehensive external redecoration and repair in line with the cyclical repair and maintenance programme.



Blackstock Estate



As you can see from the pictures, Blackstock Estate is also currently benefiting from a great deal of refurbishing works. Works to Hurlock House and half of Twyford House are progressing well and the whole estate had new windows to one elevation only some years ago.

The current programme of works includes:

- New windows to the other elevation,
- Internal and external decorations
- Rainwater goods being overhauled and cleared
- Roof repairs
- Concrete repairs

Harvist Estate special feature!



A concierge scheme

Following consultations with Islington Council, residents of Harvist Estate will soon benefit from having a concierge service.

The service will bring about a significant improvement to the quality of life on the estate. It is designed to deter unwelcome visitors from entering the estate and getting into high-rise blocks and make it easier for staff to maintain the cleanliness of communal areas.



One of many improvements

The estate has already benefited from a number of substantial improvements to both buildings and the on-estate environment.

In May 2001 a fear of crime questionnaire was sent to all residents asking how they felt about crime and its affects on the estate. The figures we received back indicated that a concierge was what most residents requested.

Thereafter, an approved contractor working on behalf of Islington Council carried out a door-to-door survey seeking the views of residents. The responses received fully supported the scheme. We also had the survey translated into 13 different languages, so the results could reflect the diversity of the community.



The proposals include:

- 32 Cameras to be located around the estate
- Door Entry systems to all high-rise blocks
- New entrance doors to high-rise blocks front and rear.
- Hand sets to each dwelling located in high-rise blocks connected to the concierge.
- 32 Internal fixed cameras to high-rise blocks, inclusive of 8 lift cameras.

The concierge will be located in one of the high-rise blocks and will operate 16 hours a day, seven days a week. The hours of service will take into account residents requirements.

Any resident on the estate who would like to get an idea of just how the concierge will operate, has the opportunity to be taken on a mini bus tour of the 'live' Finsbury estate concierge.



If you are interested in taking up this offer, please contact Colette Clail, Project Officer, on 020 7527 7468 during normal working hours.

Isledon Road

Parental Support Service



Please contact Talibah for more information on 020 7527 6544

Is this service for you?

- Is your child aged between 5 and 16 years old?
- Are you a concerned parent, worried about your child's involvement in antisocial behaviour and crime?
- Is it getting harder for you to deal with your child's behaviour?
- Do you need someone to talk to about your concerns?

If you have answered yes to any of the above, then this service is for you!

This is not a service provided by Islington Social Services. Information shared will be treated in the strictest confidential.

- What is it? How can it help me?

The Antisocial Behaviour Team recognises the difficulties parents are faced with when bringing up children and young people in the inner city borough of Islington. Therefore, a new service has been commissioned to support parents, carers, children and young people.

Aims of service

The aim of the service is to support parents whose children are at risk of becoming or are already involved in antisocial behaviour and crime.

Through early intervention, we aim to divert children and young people away from criminal activity and towards positive environments. The service is voluntary and is there for parents, carers, children and young people to access at any time.



Lucky residents in Citizen House in the Isledon Road area have a great view of the development under construction of the new Arsenal stadium complex. The development will result in a state of the arts venue and should contribute a lot to the regeneration of the area.