

'Frankie the Flame' launches gas safety campaign

Gas safety mascot 'Frankie the Flame' was on hand on 15 November to launch an innovative new mobile service unit (MSU) at Highbury House, Homes for Islington's head office. A London Leyland Olympian double-decker bus has been refurbished to serve as a mobile office and help Homes for Islington and Caxton Islington provide a mobile gas servicing and repair operation. Frankie, whose hair looks like a blue flame – because a blue flame is a safe flame – was on board to promote gas safety awareness.

The mobile unit is kitted out with information leaflets, surveys and IT equipment, including PCs with internet access and manned by customer service staff from Homes for Islington and Caxton Islington. They will visit housing estates in different parts of the borough two days a week. The bus will also serve as a base for a Caxton gas technician who will be working in the same local area conducting gas safety inspections.

Islington Council tenants are invited on board the bus to make appointments for free gas boiler and appliance safety checks, request repairs and



investigate existing repair orders.

Visitors can also pick up information leaflets, browse the Homes for Islington and Caxton websites and enjoy a cup of tea or coffee.

Be safe – get tested

Last year, 1,250 tenants had their gas boilers and pipes tested for safety but there were 1,800 additional homes the gas engineers weren't able to get into.

The servicing to gas boilers and pipes is free and ensures tenants' safety. Broken boilers can leak a deadly poisonous gas, carbon monoxide, which you can't see, hear or smell and which kills around 30 people every year. And although the gas engineers won't service the tenants' cookers, they will test for leaks and will check the tenants' own gas appliances for safety.



Tackling antisocial behaviour in Lyon Street housing area

Antisocial behaviour has been in the news recently as the government announced new proposals to deal with the problem. The problem is broad and covers all types of behaviour, which interferes with the quiet enjoyment of your home. Although such behaviour may not be criminal, it has a bad impact on the quality of life of local people. Examples of antisocial behaviour include making noise, verbal abuse, harassment, neighbour disputes, vandalism and using and selling drugs. The council, Homes for Islington and Hyde Northside take these problems seriously and want to curtail them.



If you live in the Lyon Street area and are troubled by some of these problems, speak to your estate manager at Lyon Street Area Housing Office (telephone 020 7527 6800) or during out of office hours you can leave a confidential message on 020 7527 6853. They will

arrange an early appointment with you in order to gather details, so that investigations can be quickly started. Hyde-Northside follows the policies and procedure of Homes for Islington (HFI) and these are available from your local office. (HFI is the arms length management organisation that manages council housing on behalf of the council.) Staff at Lyon Street have been trained in these procedures. You are also encouraged to report any sort of criminal activity to the police.

Where there is evidence, the following action can be taken against culprits:

- Send warning letters spelling out the consequences such as injunctions or eviction.
- Get the culprit to sign antisocial behaviour contracts (ABCs).
- Court orders or injunctions
- Antisocial behaviour orders, which can prevent any one over the age of 10 years old from behaving badly.
- Eviction from council homes
- Demote council tenancies so that they lose rights such as the right to buy.

All housing areas have antisocial behaviour hotlines as featured in the Autumn 2004 issue of this Newsletter. Further information is on the HFI website - look up antisocial on the A - Z.

Future of housing management services in the Lyon Street housing management area

Hyde-Northside has been managing council housing in the Lyon Street area since July 2000 under a five-year contract with Islington Council. In February 2004 Hyde Northside told the council that they did not want to negotiate an extension to the contract when it comes an end in June 2005. This meant that another provider had to be found to run services in Lyon Street from July 2005. There were two options: either re-tender the contract and find another contractor (such as a housing association or private housing company) or transfer the management to Homes For Islington (HFI).

Homes for Islington is an arms length management organisation set up by the council to run Islington's council housing and has been doing this since April 2004. Although housing in the Lyon Street area is run by Hyde Northside, HFI is responsible for checking that Hyde's work and performance complies with the contract. In five other housing areas in Islington, HFI is responsible for running them directly.

On 9 September 2004, the council's Executive made the decision to transfer the management of Lyon Street's council housing to HFI. Staff at Lyon Street will be transferred from Hyde Northside to HFI in July 2005. In the meantime Hyde Northside will be working with HFI to ensure that there is a smooth transition and that services continue to perform at a high standard.

FEEDBACK

We hope that the news and information we provide in this newsletter will be useful and of interest to you. To make sure we keep it relevant, the editors of the newsletter are planning ways to get feedback from readers. These will certainly include a readership survey in the New Year. In the meantime, we invite you to contact us by writing to the editorial team with your comments or suggestions.



To contact the editorial team, write to:
Homes for Islington News Editorial Team,
Highbury House,
5 Highbury Crescent, London N5 1RN.

An email address for the newsletter will be set up in the near future. In the meantime, HFI staff members can be emailed using the following formula:

firstname.lastname@homesforislington.org.uk.

This newsletter will be on the Homes for Islington website under the Publications main heading. Click the blue publications tab at the top of the web page.

Special supplement with this issue

In place of our usual area supplement, this issue of Homes for Islington News comes with a special supplement on Decent Homes.

CHOICE-BASED LETTINGS

What is Choice-based lettings?

Choice-based lettings is a new approach to giving housing advice and letting council properties. It aims to give an element of choice in area and type of property to those households that are housed by the council as well as making the whole allocation process more transparent for housing applicants.

After a year long pilot in the Holland Walk area the council decided to adopt this approach to allocation for all council vacancies except wheelchair, mobility and sheltered housing. The scheme was rolled out area by area and is now in operation across the whole of the borough. Some Housing Association properties are also included in the scheme.

Vacant properties are advertised each week on the council's website, in the Islington Gazette and a property sheet is available at all council housing offices. Properties are open for bidding each Thursday until midnight on the following Monday. When the bidding period closes, the Rehousing Team will contact the five applicants with the most points who have bid for the property to invite them to a viewing. The property is then offered to the highest pointed applicant who is interested in the property. Applicants with the same number of points are listed according to the length of time they have been waiting. There are no longer any restrictions as to the number of properties an applicant can view or refuse.

Who can bid?

Anyone with a current housing application with 30 points or more or any homeless households that has been accepted by Islington

can bid. At the moment there are around 5,000 households in Islington who are eligible to bid for property on the scheme. To bid for a property you will need two identification numbers. If you have not yet received these numbers you can call the Rehousing Section on 020 7527 4140 where a member of staff will be able to help you. This scheme is the only way applicants can access council housing in Islington. If you are eligible to bid and do not bid you will not be housed.

How do I bid ?

You can bid for property in the following ways:

1. Logging on to the Home Connections website at www.islington.gov.uk/homeconnections, and clicking on I'm already registered.
2. By ringing 020 7974 5581 and following the instructions. The instructions are available in several languages. You will need your identification numbers and the advert number of the property you want to bid for.
3. By text – a leaflet is available at your local housing office to explain how to bid by text.

Where can I get more information or help?

A leaflet which explains the scheme is available at your local housing office. You can ring the Rehousing Team if you would like more information or if you are having problems using the scheme. If you or someone you know cannot easily use the scheme because of a disability, please ring the Rehousing team on 020 7527 4140.

Training and funding open evening

The Residents Involvement Team, Homes for Islington (HFI), in partnership with the Islington Strategic Partnership, Housing Theme Group Panel, recently coordinated and participated in an open evening event on training for resident representatives and funding for tenants and residents associations (TRAs) and community centres. Other facilitators present at the event were the Federation of Islington Tenants Associations (FITA), Groundwork Camden & Islington, U.K Online, and the Priority Estates Project (PEP).

The purpose of the open evening was to raise the profile of training and funding that is available for residents involved in representation work and/or the management of community centres. Evaluation



forms received confirm that resident representatives attending the event thought it was excellent and found it very useful.

The Resident Involvement Team are to undertake an analysis of responses to the training and funding questionnaire, given to all resident representative attending the event, for the purpose of identifying the training and support needs of resident representatives.

The questionnaire will also be sent out to those resident representatives who were unable to attend. This is also a reminder to those reps who have not returned their completed forms to please do so. This would then enable their training and funding needs to be considered in any future programme.

For more information contact Steve White on 020 7527 8632.

DOING IT GREEN

'Doing it Green – efficient use of natural resources, applying eco-friendly design, recycling waste and improved green space'

This is one of the six themes that underline the Homes for Islington (HFI) vision and mission.

HFI is tackling the problem of energy efficiency through new works which raise standards of insulation and, when boilers, windows and other replacements are made, energy efficiency gets top priority.

Recycling is another part of this theme. In HFI's offices paper-recycling bins are a familiar sight. As residents you can get involved with recycling in a number of ways. Residents in street properties can take advantage of the Green Box Recycling Scheme. This allows you to leave paper, glass, tins and textiles for collection from your doorstep once a week. Residents living on 120 estates have access to recycling points, where you can offload mixed paper, glass and cans. There is also an Oxfam book bank and eight SCOPE textile-recycling points.

The Reuse Recycle Centre (RRC) is a state of the art facility designed to receive reusable and recyclable materials delivered by householders in cars. Public access to the RRC can be gained from Hornsey Street off Holloway Road and is open Monday to Saturday from 8am to 8pm and Sundays and public holidays from 8:30am to 8pm. Among the items accepted by the RRC are organic garden waste, kitchen electrical items and scrap metal. For full details of



what materials will be accepted you can call the RRC on 020 8884 5645.

The 'immediate collection' of bulk waste on estates pilot scheme continues to be a great success in the Boleyn Road and Upper Street areas. If residents in those areas report bulk waste their local area housing office or caretaker before 9am Monday to Friday, it will be collected within 24 hours. After 9am, it will be collected by the end of the next working day. Some of the items collected can be recovered and passed on to one of our recovery, recycling or reuse partners such as the Kings Cross Furniture Project, which provides furniture and household items at low cost or without charge to people in need. Upper Street residents call 020 7527 5380. Boleyn Road residents call 020 7527 8309

At this time of year it is also worth noting that Islington offers a doorstep collection of Christmas trees during the first two weeks of January. The trees are chipped and used as path resurfacing and mulch in the borough's parks and gardens.

For more information on recycling in Islington, including fact sheets, you can call 020 7527 2000. See also the Islington Council website's Environment pages and the Homes for Islington website for policy on recycling. Look up the keyword recycling in the A-Z.

Residents get involved in Homes for Islington's Board and Sub-Boards

Homes for Islington's Board of Directors, which is made up of seven Islington tenants and leaseholders, five council representatives and five independent members has the final say on how housing services for more than 39,000 properties are provided. The Board has regular monthly meetings open to the public.

Keeping in touch with your views

As Homes for Islington is such a large organisation, 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. 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

The Managed Property Sub-Board

The Managed Property Sub-Board membership comprises six

Directors and six resident representatives and monitors the work of the area housing offices.

The Contracted Services sub-board

The Contracted Services Sub-Board consists of six Directors and four resident representatives; it oversees the Homes for Islington's contractors, such as Hyde Northside and Partners for Improvement in Islington. Residents and the public are invited to attend Board and Sub-Board meetings.

Meetings

Homes for Islington Board meetings take place the first Monday of each month, while the Sub-Board meetings are held every six weeks. All meetings are held at 6.30 pm at Stephenson Hall, NCH, 85 Highbury Park, N5. (Please note: No January Board meeting)

Advance notification of meetings is provided through local media and Area Housing Offices. Also, information about the meetings is sent to Area Housing Panels, the Leaseholder Forum, Tenant Management Organisations and Tenant Management Co-operatives. Agendas and papers are available three days in advance on the Homes for Islington's website: www.homesforislington.org.uk

Islington residents pledge to become greener!

Islington residents have pledged to save energy, money and help the environment by reducing the amount of carbon being emitted into the atmosphere. Islington residents have pledged to reduce carbon emissions by 173,776 Kg, enough to fill 34 hot air balloons!

A staggering 2,000 Home Energy Checks were completed during Energy Efficiency Week (25-29 October). In Islington residents pledged to reduce carbon emissions over the next year by promising to do one or several of the following activities:

- Replacing an existing fridge or fridge freezer with an A-rated one
 - Turning the TV off at night rather than leaving it on standby
 - Buying and using six energy efficient light bulbs
 - Turning the work PC off at the base when it is time to go home
- If you would like more information on how you can save money off your fuel bills, reduce carbon emissions and help the environment please call **Islington Energy Centre on 0800 512 012**, we are open Monday- Friday 9am-6pm.



HFI Direct – a new name for Repairline

HFI Direct is the new name of Islington Repairline. The freephone number remains the same 0800 694 3344.

Residents who received their repairs services direct from Homes for Islington via the Repairline will now access their services through the newly named **HFI Direct**. They include those who live in the Boleyn Road, Central Street, Holland Walk, Isledon Road and Upper street Housing areas (and who is not in a PF11 property or part of a TMO or Coop that manages its own repairs). They can report repairs, pay rent or service charges and make an appointment for gas servicing. **HFI Direct** is open Monday to Friday between 8am and 8pm and Saturday mornings between 8am and 12 noon. Emergency repairs can be reported outside of these hours.

Customers may also report repairs by the following methods:

Text 07781 472 556
Mini com 0800 073 0536
email repairs@homesforislington.org.uk
website www.homesforislington.org.uk

Click the blue Repairs & Improvements tab on the top of the web page and then the green Repairs tab on the left

For further information, please contact Jo Knight Contact Centre Manager on 020 7527 5390 or email jo.knight@homesforislington.org.uk

HFI Competition Prize Draw

In the spirit of goodwill fostered by the festive season we are pleased to bring you this simple to enter competition. You'll find all the answers to the following questions concealed within this newsletter and all you need do is complete and send us the entry coupon for your chance to win a gift voucher worth up to £50. Answer all three questions correctly and your coupon will be added to our prize draw for a share of gift vouchers worth up to £50.

Prizes

1st £50 gift vouchers redeemable in many leading stores.

2 runner up prizes of £25 gift vouchers redeemable in many leading stores.

Questions

1. What is the address of the new Homes for Islington website?
2. What is the name of the character with blue hair that launched the new gas safety campaign?

3. What is the new name for the Repairline?

Mr/Mrs/Ms Forename.....Surname.....

Address.....

.....Post Code.....

Contact telephone number:.....

Answer one:.....

Answer two:.....

Answer three:.....

Competition closing date is 28 January 2005 and no late entries will be accepted. Entrants must be Homes for Islington Tenants and only one entry per household is allowed. Prize winners will be announced in the next tenants newsletter. The decision of HFI will be final and no correspondence will be entered into.



Election of Representatives to the ISLINGTON LEASEHOLDER FORUM

The following leaseholders were elected to the Islington Leaseholders Forum, following the elections conducted by the Independent Scrutineer, Electoral Reform Services Limited, in October 2004.

BOLEYN ROAD	Lorna HYNES Shenay RIGAT
CENTRAL STREET	Suzanne CAMPBELL John WARBY
HOLLAND WALK	Gideon FELDMAN Andrew JEX
ISLEDON ROAD	Dan OAKEY Amanda RICE
LYON STREET	David CURTIS William WOODS
UPPER STREET	Joy BAILEY Linda MARZOLINI
PF11/PARTNERS	Chris RADWAY Michael READ

In addition to the elected area representatives, statutorily recognised leaseholder associations are invited to send a representative to the Forum. These are

**Pleasant Place LA, Charteris & Moray RA,
Kings Square LA.**

ILF meetings are open to the public and other leaseholders in the borough who can attend as observers. All meetings are held at the Town Hall in Upper Street, N1 and commence at 7.00 p.m. Future meetings are scheduled for 19 January 2005 and 16 March 2005.

Leaseholders can contact the Islington Leaseholder Forum (ILF) representatives for their area by writing to the Freepost address. Post received at this address will be forwarded to the ILF representative for that area. Please write to:

**Islington Leaseholder Forum
FREEPOST NAT 20609
London N5 1BR**



Come and join Islington's car club!

Up 20 cars will be available to Islington's car club members in the next few months. "I hadn't driven much since passing my test eight years ago - you just don't need to in London, but being a member of the car club is great for getting my shopping and traveling to other events when it is too wet to ride my moped!" says, Islington's newest car club member Councillor Laura Willoughby, executive member for communities who took refresher driving lessons so she could join the new car club.

She continued: "I'm really delighted with the success of our car club so far. We have more members than any other London borough and within the next few months there will be around 20 cars for people to use. If you don't want the burden of car ownership, storage or maintenance, City Car Clubs are perfect. They can be used all day and they reduce the numbers of cars on the road and the demand for parking in Islington."

Islington has four vehicles, two at Highbury Crescent and two at Finsbury Park and the car club currently has 52 members.

For a yearly subscription and an hourly fee, residents can hire either a 1.6 ltr Vauxhall Astra or a 1.2 litre Vauxhall Corsa. Both cars are 'dual fuel' - designed to run on petrol or liquid petroleum gas (LPG).

The scheme benefits people who need occasional use of a car but do not want the hassle of car ownership and overnight parking. The cars are returned at the end of the booking (from 1 - 72 hrs) to their location at Highbury Crescent outside Highbury Pool.

Membership costs £12 per month or £140 per year and includes comprehensive insurance cover. Cars can be booked from £2.30 an hour, plus 15p per mile including fuel and VAT. Members also pay a £100 returnable deposit to protect the car club against any unpaid fees or fines.

Car clubs make good environmental sense. A Car Club vehicle can be used up to five times by several members each day - reducing the total number of cars on the streets and the demand for parking as they are returned to their special bays in Highbury at the end of each booking.

Dual fuel cars will also be exempt from the congestion charge which affects the far south of the borough.

For more information call 0845 330 1234 or email enquiries@citycarclubs.co.uk

HFI's Performance Monitoring Team awarded BSEN ISO 9001:2000

The Performance Monitoring Section of Homes for Islington (HFI) has been awarded BSEN ISO 9001: 2000 certification. This allows it to register with the Department of Trade and Industry as a quality assured firm and Performance Monitoring staff to become qualified lead auditors in their own right, registered with the International Register of Certified Auditors.

The award is good news for HFI's service users. The Performance Monitoring section's key role is to develop effective performance management systems needed by Homes for Islington (HFI), its Board of Directors, senior managers and staff to manage performance successfully and deliver better services.

In order to improve the quality and effectiveness of the work carried out by the Performance Monitoring section, it has recently developed a Quality Management System (QMS) to comply with the requirements of BSEN ISO 9001:2000 quality standards. A recent independent verification of its process and systems by the Lloyds



Register for Quality Assurance (LRQA) (a key requirement of ISO) has confirmed certification of the PMS QMS to the internationally acclaimed ISO 9001:2000 standard.

For further information contact: performance.monitoring@islington.gov.uk

And an ISO award for the HFI Property Services division

Homes for Islington's Property Services division has also been recommended for BS EN ISO9001:2000 certification to Quality Management Systems following a recent three-day inspection by BM TRADA an external multi-sector certification body accredited by UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service). The accreditation covers all aspects of the work undertaken by staff within Property Services.

The auditor was impressed with the new structure being developed and the arrangements being introduced to meet the challenge of the Decent homes Standard. He also considered the Property Services division to be a very well organised and managed organisation.

HFI performance information is on our website. Use the A - Z and click Performance.

Annual Report to tenants

This year's Annual Report to tenants has gone out to all tenants with your rent statements. If you have not received your copy and would like to have one, please contact:

**Homes for Islington Ltd
Performance and Procurement
Highbury House, 5 Highbury
Crescent, London N5 1RN**

email performance.monitoring@homesforislington.org.uk or look for the report on the Homes for Islington website. Click the blue Publications tab at the top of the web page.



Garry Bates

David Salenius

Management movement!

As residents in the Holland Walk and Isledon Road areas should be aware, the area managers for these offices recently swapped places. David Salenius is now at Holland Walk while Garry Bates headed in the opposite direction to Isledon Road.

Changing places is common practice in many organisations and allows each office to benefit from the different skills and approaches each manager brings with them for the duration of the swap. When asked about the move David Salenius said "I'm happy to be joining such a strong performing office and am looking forward to working with the staff here to maintain their impressive record."

Garry Bates explained how he was looking forward to being at Isledon Road because: "I welcome the opportunity of renewing my acquaintance with both staff and residents over the next three months and look forward to the challenge of moving Isledon Road up to its true position in terms of performance and customer satisfaction. Most of all, I want it to be a happy office, working hard with a smile for the mutual benefit of all."

Both David and Garry brought their customer services managers with them, so Winston Morris is currently at Isledon Road and available on 020 7527 6511 while Connie Taplin is now at Holland Walk and available on 020 7527 7461.

Beware the dead pigeon scam!

PC Sheppard gave us the details. Victims are mainly elderly. The perpetrators come to the door and say there is something wrong with the water, such as a dead pigeon in the tank. They ask the resident to run the water for them. While they are doing this, the villains rob them.

Stay safe

The police remind you to put the chain on your door before you open it. Do not let in anyone you do not know or are not expecting. If the caller is legitimate, they will understand and will rearrange an appointment and show ID. Phone 999 to the police and then inform

REPAIRS – IT'S ON THE WEBSITE

Just about everything you need to know to get repairs done is on Homes for Islington's new website. Most of you can even order a repair online. Our address is www.homesforislington.org.uk. Look for the blue Repairs & Improvements tab at the top of the web page. This will bring up the following page.



Who does your repairs?

Where you live determines who carries out your repairs and how and when you can order repairs. It is all explained on the Homes for Islington (HFI) website.

This page is your gateway to both day-to-day repairs, which is probably what most people think of as repairs, and major improvements to properties that are going on all over the borough. If you want to order a repair this page tells you to click the green tab on the left labelled Repairs. If you want to find out about major improvement works in general or at one of many sites, there are green tabs to click for those too.

Day-to-day repairs – It depends on where you live.

When you click the green Repairs tab you will get the following page.



Look at the four bullet points. They tell you where to report repairs depending on where you live. One of them will be the one of interest to you. So, for example, residents in the Lyon Street area have their repairs carried out by Hyde Northside, residents in PFI1 properties have theirs from Partners for Improvement in Islington and many TMOs and cooperatives manage their own repairs. They tell you where to report repairs depending on where you live. So, for example, residents in the Lyon Street area have their repairs carried out by Hyde Northside, residents in PFI1 properties have theirs

from Partners for Improvement in Islington and many TMOs and cooperatives manage their own repairs. Wherever, you get your service from, there is a link to further information near the relevant bullet point. These links are shown in blue letters. Click them and they will take you to more specific information,

For example...

The first bullet point: Your repairs service is provided directly by Homes for Islington if you live in the Boleyn Road, Central Street, Holland Walk, Isledon Road or Upper Street housing areas and your home is not part of PFI1 or a tenant management organisation (TMO) or cooperative that organises its own repairs. It also has the words Homes for Islington as a link to the third page shown here. So, for example, if your service comes from HFI your service provider, formerly known as Repairline, is now called HFI Direct. Click the blue link labelled HFI Direct and you will now get the following page that tells you how and when to report repairs by telephone, fax, email or online.



Reporting online.

Note that an online repairs button is prominent in the repairs pages. It is for the online service available to residents whose repairs come directly from Homes for Islington via HFI Direct.

Looking for something and not sure where to look?

Most of the key subjects covered on the site can be found by clicking one of the always-on-top blue buttons, but if you are ever lost, you will also find help in the alphabetical index called A-Z, which is also accessed from one of the blue tabs. The A-Z is designed to make finding things easier and it will be expanding rapidly over the next few months to make it easier for you to find what you are looking for on the Homes for Islington website.

New material and updates are added to the HFI website every working day, so get the information you need by visiting the site.

ASBESTOS – ADVICE FOR RESIDENTS

As part of Homes for Islington's continuing commitment to safety we would like to provide our residents with information about asbestos materials.

What is asbestos and why was it used?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral, which was imported from Russia, South Africa and Canada. The rock is crushed and processed to produce long thin fibres, which has been added to thousands of different types of building materials. Asbestos has excellent tensile strength, is heat and fire resistant and in the past was relatively cheap to produce.

The Health and Safety Executive estimates that over 1.5 million non-domestic premises in the UK contain some asbestos materials. If domestic premises are taken into account, the total of buildings affected is likely to be more than four million.

Is there a risk to my health?

Asbestos-containing materials, which are in good condition, do not pose a risk to your health.

Ensure that anything you think may contain asbestos remains in good condition and is sealed with paint. Damaged asbestos-containing materials can be repaired; removal is generally a last resort.

Home improvements, repairs and DIY

- Always refer to your tenancy conditions before carrying out any improvements, repairs or DIY. Remember you may need to get permission from Homes for Islington first.
- Don't drill, sand or scrape anything you think may contain asbestos when you are carrying out any home improvements, repairs or DIY.
- Always soak wallpaper before removing. If possible use a steam stripper and then gently peel away the paper before re-decorating.
- Don't try to remove textured coatings from ceilings. Wash any areas of flaking paint before repainting.
- Don't try to remove old floor tiles or linoleum. Leave them in place and lay new floor coverings over them.
- If you suspect that asbestos-containing materials have been damaged please contact your local area housing office.

Advice for leaseholders

Leaseholders are responsible for the repair and maintenance of their own properties, including any materials that may contain asbestos.

Specialist laboratories can sample suspect materials to confirm or refute the presence of asbestos. If you wish to have any suspect materials sampled contact the United Kingdom Accreditation Society (UKAS) at 21-47 High Street, Feltham, Middlesex or by telephone on 020 8917 8400. They will be able to provide you with details of your local accredited analysts.

If you wish to have any asbestos materials repaired or removed, contact the Asbestos Removal Contractors Association (ARCA) at 237 Branston Road, Burton Upon Trent, Staffordshire or by telephone on 01283 531126. They will be able to provide you with details of your local licensed asbestos removal contractors.

Typical locations for some common asbestos-containing materials

Exterior

- 1 Roof sheets, tiles or roof felt
- 2 Gutters and down pipes
- 3 Fascia and soffit boards

Interior

- 4 Panels beneath windows
- 5 Cupboards around domestic boilers
- 6 Panels behind electrical equipment
- 7 Panels behind fires or heaters
- 8 Panels on or inside fire doors
- 9 Partition walls
- 10 Floor tiles and linoleum products
- 11 Textured coatings (Artex)
- 12 Gaskets and rope seals inside gas appliances
- 13 Cement Cold water storage tanks
- 14 Toilet cisterns & seats
- 15 Panels lining service ducts

Security and safety information is on the HFI website. Click the blue Safety & Security tab at the top of the web page.



DON'T GET INTO RENT ARREARS

If you are a tenant in an Islington Council property, keeping on top of rent payments is important. See the leaflet that accompanies this issue. It outlines in brief the consequences of getting into arrears and offers advice. The most important thing is to avoid getting behind with your rent. It is easy enough to do if you are spending extra money around Christmas. Our poster campaign (see below) is a reminder to keep rent on the top of your spending list and to contact Homes for Islington without delay if you should fall into arrears.



Ready for the New Year

We are in the process of producing a statement and summary of HFI's policies and procedures on antisocial behaviour. This will be available soon from your area housing office and will provide you with information about the potential solutions we can use to prevent antisocial actions.

Tenants handbook

We are changing the style and some of the content of the tenants handbook. Instead of being a folder composed of a series of booklets we will be producing a single book. This will be available for new tenants early in the New Year. If you are interested in finding out more, the new handbook will be on our website at www.homesforislington.org.uk or you can ask for a copy at your area housing office.

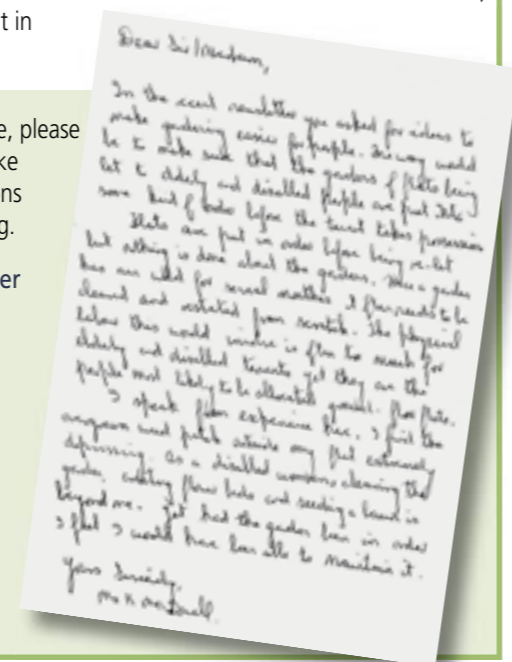
Gardening suggestion

Congratulations to Mrs. Mc Dowell who's suggestion to Homes for Islington News wins her a £50 voucher. She raised the problems that some older or disabled tenants face when they takeover a property with a much overgrown garden. If gardens could be put in reasonable order to begin with when the properties are newly let, more residents would find it possible to manage them.

Happily, we are able to report that Homes for Islington revised its standard on relet property as of the beginning of November. In addition to clearing rubbish and any hazardous materials, grass will be cut and fences maintained. Consultation is going on at the moment to find ways of and means for managing gardens where a tenant finds it difficult to do so. We hope to announce the results of this consultation in the next issue of this newsletter, which is due out in mid March.

In the meantime, please continue to make recommendations about gardening.

There is another £50 voucher to be won!



Need access to a computer?... Don't know how to use the Internet?

Free access to the Internet

Help's at hand. You can use computers available at all Islington libraries where staff can help you.

Free training from neighbourhood learning centres

Islington Online is a network of 20 neighbourhood learning centres and a mobile computer bus. Islington Online is part of the national UK Online campaign and were developed in partnership with Islington's voluntary sector, City and Islington College, City University, Islington Training Network, Central Library, Islington Regeneration and Education Department, Finsbury Park Partnership, New Deal for Communities EC1 and Arsenal Football Club.

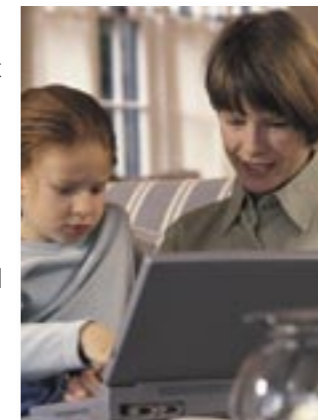
All the centres have been fully refurbished and installed with the latest PCs, interactive whiteboards, printers and have broadband internet access. Best of all they are all located in your community; in schools, libraries and community centres.

What are the centres for?

The centres have been set up to interest local people in the use of new technology and help them learn locally.

Who can use them?

- Anyone that lives or works in the London Borough of Islington.
- Anyone who has never used a computer and wants to learn for fun or for more formal reasons can go along to their local learning centre.
- If you are an experienced user, you can still use the centres. There are 'open access' sessions where anyone is free to use the equipment in the centre, whether it be checking



your email, writing a letter or just practicing your skills. If you have any problems, while you are there, just ask. The staff are very friendly and are there to help you have some fun and learn at the same time. The centres are also able to update individual's skills and improve job prospects.

How much does it cost?

Use of the centres is FREE! However, some accredited courses and printing facilities may have a cost involved

Where are they?

There are 18 sites scattered around the borough:

- The Online Learning Bus
- City and Islington Local CSV Media Clubhouse
- Durham Road Lifelong Learning Centre
- The Elfrida Society
- Elizabeth House Lifelong Learning Centre
- Islington African Project
- Film & Video Workshop
- First Steps Lifelong Learning Centre
- The Goswell Centre
- Hanley Crouch Lifelong Learning Centre
- Hilldrop Online
- HNG Multimedia
- Market Online
- Mayville Community Centre
- Platform 1
- Arsenal Red Zone
- Thornhill Neighbourhood Centre

Find out more on the following website: www.learneasy.net and click on the link there for Islington Online.



If you don't pay, you can't stay. Rent arrears can lead to eviction.

If your rent is in arrears, don't delay. Contact your area housing office.



PFI update

PFI stands for Private Finance Initiative. There is a housing PFI scheme, PFI1 already up and running in Islington, improving council street properties in the south of the borough. It is managed by our contractor Partners for Improvement in Islington.

The second housing PFI scheme is called PFI 2, and is being negotiated now between the council and the contractor. It is planned to be up and running in 2005, and will affect most of the other council street properties in Islington. Information is available on the Islington Council website.



Now you can pay your rent online!

There are now so many ways to pay your rent and service charges, but you can avoid the journey to the post office and standing in a queue by paying online. You can pay at any hour that best suits your schedule. What could be more convenient? To find out more, go to the Homes for Islington website and click the blue Rent & Service Charges tab on top of the web page. Look for the little green ipay button on the page and click to go straight to the payment pages. Leaseholders may wish to click the blue Leaseholders tab on top and that will also get you to a page with the ipay tab.

QUESTION TIME – ANN LUCAS

Ann Lucas, Homes for Islington Board Chair

Ann Lucas was appointed as Chair of the Homes for Islington Board on 1st December 2003. She is a qualified accountant with more than 20 years experience of financial management in the public sector. In addition to her unpaid post at Homes for Islington, Ann is Chair of a community based regeneration registered social landlord, and Vice Chair of its parent group, Circle 33, also based in Islington. She was a consultant with Hounslow Homes, a 1st round arms length management organisation (ALMO), where she was responsible for the investment programme. Ann worked closely with the ALMO board and resident representatives on the organisation's Best Value Inspection, which resulted in the organisation being awarded 2 stars, with good prospects for improvement. She is continuing to provide advice to Hounslow Homes on developing new business opportunities.



The Board is responsible for the strategic direction of the organisation and all policy decisions. Because of the size of Homes for Islington - the largest ALMO in the country - we have set up two sub-boards to concentrate on the performance of the housing services that are directly managed through the area offices, and of those that are managed by third parties, such as Hyde Northside, Partners for Improvement and the 35 tenant management organisations. The sub-boards also give the opportunity to involve more residents directly in the management of Homes for Islington, through the ten associate directors nominated by the various consultative forums.

The Board has also established a number of committees to examine in detail and report to the Board on the more technical aspects of its responsibilities. These are Human Resources (looking after the 850 staff employed by Homes for Islington), Finance (making sure that we spend our budget wisely) and Investment (planning and delivering the improvements to your homes).

Why did you get involved in HFI?

As a voluntary board member of a Housing Association that operates in Islington for the past 10 years and through working with one of the first ALMOs to be established, I have seen first-hand some of the benefits that can be achieved with tenants and leaseholders being at the heart of decision-making and with improved service delivery. The establishment of Homes for Islington offered the opportunity to bring these two aspects together.

What do the Board, sub-boards and committees do?

The Board of Homes for Islington, with its seven tenant and leaseholder representatives, five council nominees and five independent members, is entirely voluntary – we do not receive any payment for our input but give our time because we believe that we can make a difference in improving the services to the tenants and leaseholders that we are all there to serve.

What is the inspection about?

As an ALMO, Homes for Islington will be able to access an additional £157m of government funds, provided we are assessed by the Audit Commission as providing a "good" service in the inspection which started at the end of November. We have spent the last few months ensuring that we are best placed to achieve this important rating by making sure that we do what we say we will and implementing all previous recommendations and promises.

We are confident of achieving the 2 stars that are necessary to access the additional money, which will enable HFI to improve your homes.

What next?

The 2 stars are just the beginning. Our aspiration is to be, not just the biggest, but also the best ALMO in the country, providing excellent housing services where all residents have the opportunity to be involved. Our mission statement says that HFI will continuously improve housing through sound management and community involvement. Homes for Islington is here for you."

New Housing Management Structure

The 15th November saw a large restructuring in the Homes for Islington area housing offices. There are now two teams – tenancy management advisors and rent arrears officers. The new teams will provide a more consistent and specific service. Residents should see an improvement in customer focus and quality of service as a result of this restructuring.

Letters advising all residents of the changes and contact details were delivered on the weekend of the 13th November. If you did not receive a letter, or are unsure how these changes affect you, please call your local housing office on the relevant number below:

Boleyn Road – 020 7527 8380
Central Street – 020 7527 6250
Holland Walk – 020 7527 7477
Isledon Road – 020 7527 6580
Upper Street – 020 7527 5300
Lyon Street – 020 7527 6880