

Stoke Newington Centenary

Several months of hard work by the Tenants' Association at Imperial and Coronation Avenue came to fruition on Sunday, 31 August, when the centenary of the landmark blocks in Stoke Newington was celebrated. Food, entertainment, a raffle and a project on the history of the estate had all been organised by the TA.

With the fine weather, large numbers of tenants and local residents turned out for the occasion. Amongst the special guests was 89 year old Renee Schwartz, one of several former residents present, who produced her father's letter of tenancy dating back to September 1903.

Entertainment was provided by AB4 (dancers/children from the estate), Blow Crazy (a Jazz band) and Caribbean Express (a steel band). An exhibition of the estate's history included moving descriptions of the World War II tragedy when a bomb struck the front block killing many people in the public shelter beneath it. On a happier note, there were pictures of the Coronation celebrations in

1953 which were attended by Richard (now Lord) Attenborough. Ken Hammond, Secretary of the Tenants' Association wrote (in poetic verse) to local stores for donations. To the right is his poem.

Ken Hammond writes:

My main activity these last few months has been the Centenary of the Estate where I live. Our landlords, IDS, gave the Tenants' Association £1,000 for the celebration, the TA raised some extra cash via grants and we've spent the last four months planning it.

A number of brilliant ideas did not come to fruition; one of these was to produce a special, limited edition mug. Alas, this was too expensive, the National Portrait Gallery wanted £400 for a copyright fee to put a picture of King Edward 7th on the mug. When I pointed out that these mugs were not going to be sold, they said that, if the mugs were for sale, the copyright fee would double.

The final decision was for a party with an exhibition about the Estate's history and, by the end of the year, to produce a 'history' book. A group of teenagers are

working on this and have been interviewing many old tenants.

About 150-170 attended the party on August 31st, about 30-40 were ex-tenants and included a number who were born on the estates. It was a shame that so many of the present-day tenants did not attend, even though we had sent three letters to them and a proper invitation. We did invite Richard Attenborough and his wife, Sheila Sim, both came to the Coronation party, and I wrote apologising that we had waited 50 years before inviting them both back. His secretary phoned to say that he did not come back from holiday until the day after the party but he loved the fact that we remembered after 50 years.

Ken Hammond's poem

It's our Estate's Centenary Year
August 31 is the date
For our party just to celebrate
In one hundred years, we won't be coy;
There's been some tragedy and joy.
Think of the change these flats did see,
Four Kings, one Queen, three Jubilees
A direct bomb-hit in World War Two
Adds to our past a sombre hue.
This letter to you hopes you will
Be kind and help us to fulfil,
For tenants present and tenants past,
Celebration memories that will last.
And, "Why", I ask, with trepidation,
"If you could help, with a donation?"
What am I after, you might think?
The answer is for food and drink,
So can you help us? Say you will
Help us make our party thrill
I'll make this promise, without fears,
We won't be back for one hundred years.



Photos from the Coronation celebrations

Repairs Service - We Welcome Your Views

We are looking for about eight tenants to be part of a group that will review the repair service being provided to all our tenants. If you are interested, your views are very welcome and will help shape the service being provided.

As a Registered Social Landlord, we must achieve 'Best Value' in everything we do. This means providing the best possible service, at the best possible price, and always trying to improve.

We are about to appoint a consultant to assist us in the review of the repair service. Two review groups are proposed, one formed of mainly staff to review internal policies and procedures, and the other consisting of tenants, contractors and staff to review the repair service as delivered to tenants.

The review will take place over a six-month period starting in November 2003, and it is expected that the review group will meet

three times during that period.

IDS will meet all reasonable costs of the group members for childcare, travel etc.

If you are interested in joining the review group or would like some more information, please contact Jane Patterson by 31 October 2003 on telephone number 020 8800 9606 or by post to IDS, 5th Floor, Ockway House, London, N16 5SR

Inspection

IDS has very recently been inspected by the Audit Commission. This involved a five-person team looking through our policies, procedures and paperwork as well as talking to tenants, staff, local authority partners and contractors. You may have seen some of the inspectors on the estates during September.

The inspections are scheduled to take place every three years, and every registered social landlord is inspected. Inspections form part of

the government's drive to improve quality across all the public services. At the end of the inspection, as well as a detailed report, the inspectors provide one of four overall gradings:

- Good
- Satisfactory
- Scope for considerable improvement
- Fails to comply with regulatory guidance

Our inspection was looking in detail at a number of areas including:

- The repairs service
- The lettings service
- Tenant involvement
- Complaints
- Customer services
- Nuisance
- Anti-social behaviour
- Sensitivity of our services to the needs of all residents
- We will inform you of the results of the inspection in the next newsletter.

Me and My Job - Margaret Hartley



Margaret Hartley

Margaret Hartley is one of IDS' newer employees, having been working here for just a year. However, she was in close contact with IDS for the five years of her previous job as her employer was a partner organisation of ours. Margaret says, "I thought - what a lovely bunch of people they are at IDS - and when the

opportunity of a job with them came up, I jumped at the chance".

Margaret has not been disappointed and loves her job as Scheme Manager at Charlotte Court. She has found IDS to be a sympathetic and supportive employer, and feels that this caring ethos is also shown in the commitment it provides its tenants.

"As well as enjoying the work, my job at Charlotte Court suits me very well as I have a 12 year old daughter. If she is ill at any time, it is very reassuring to know that I am working in the office just downstairs from our flat", says Margaret.

Margaret's job entails ensuring the smooth day-to-day running of the scheme, as well as handling any emergencies that the tenants may have. She is also responsible for nearby Abraham Cohen Court, where 15 new residents have recently moved in. When Margaret

is off duty, tenants can buzz the 24-hour Careline if they have any serious problems.

A recent initiative has been to set up a recycling scheme. Tenants are invited to sort their rubbish into boxes of old paper, plastic and tins which are then collected by Redbridge Council. Margaret says, "Most of the tenants have been keen to participate in the recycling scheme - they like the thought that things can be re-used rather than just thrown away."

Another activity Margaret has initiated is a weekly coffee morning. She is currently organising a programme of speakers such as the community police, fire brigade and a representative of the Jewish Deaf Association. However, she also actively encourages tenants to arrange activities themselves - there have been several day trips by coach this summer as well as bingo and a regular women's get-together.

HELP US TACKLE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

IDS was delighted with the positive feedback from the recent Tenants' Survey but one area of concern is the growing problem of anti-social behaviour on our estates and in your neighbourhood.

We have recently adopted a new policy and procedure to help deal with anti-social behaviour. We want to work closely with our tenants and agencies such as local authorities, the police and mediation services to improve the situation.

What do we mean by anti-social behaviour?

Anti-social behaviour is any conduct (including speech) that causes, or is likely to cause, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household. Sometimes the perpetrator may be another tenant or one of their visitors or family members. Examples of anti-social behaviour may include noise nuisance, harassment (including racial harassment), drug dealing and abusive or threatening behaviour.

What should I do if I suffer from or witness anti-social behaviour?

Sometimes a quiet word with your neighbour can be the best way to deal with problems if they are not too serious. If this doesn't work, you should report details of any incident to your Estate Manager/Scheme Manager.

What will IDS do to help?

We will investigate the incident and either visit or ask you to write to us. We will want to find out as much information as possible, including names and addresses of any witnesses. Interpreters will be used if needed.

Our aim is to resolve the problem as quickly as we can. We try to interview the alleged perpetrator and seek an explanation on each allegation. We will keep you informed about what action we are taking.

We explore all possible solutions including independent mediation and liaison with the beat officer. We might suggest that the perpetrator signs an acceptable

behaviour contract, confirming that they agree to behave more responsibly in future. Other options open to us range from court action for breach of tenancy (this could ultimately lead to eviction) or working with the police to obtain anti-social behaviour orders - ASBOs have been in the news lately. We can also use CCTV evidence in support of our action. Whatever steps we take, we need your support and help.

We plan to hold a series of meetings for tenants on our estates in the coming months to help launch our anti-social behaviour policy. As part of this, we will invite your local beat officers. We also hope to adopt a 'good neighbourhood declaration' - more details on this to follow soon about how you can help us to improve your estate.

If you would like a copy of our new anti-social behaviour policy and procedure please contact our head office tel 020 8800 9606 or email housing@ids.org.uk

An exhibition with a difference

The Building Exploratory at the Professional Development Centre, Albion Drive, Hackney is reputed to be the only "hands-on" exhibition in the UK where you can explore the built environment. The exhibits and installations are all designed to be touched by visitors, and many were built with the help of the local community.

The exhibits present complex information in an accessible, easy-to-digest and fun way and show how subjects such as planning, urbanisation, housing and population are relevant within the local context. Timelines show how Hackney looked from pre-historic

times to the present day.

A particularly exciting feature is a Geographic Information System (GIS), something which is usually only available to professionals. The GIS has mapped the history and archaeology of Hackney to give local people a picture of how the area has developed over time and what its main features are today. It includes a map of World War Two bomb damage, allowing visitors to explore areas of the Borough destroyed and damaged during the Blitz. It is possible to overlay this bomb damage layer with a second map showing the dates at which homes were built. In combination, the two layers help to build a picture of a Victorian suburb rebuilt

throughout the 20th century following bomb damage and slum clearance.

You can also have the chance to be the ultimate nosy neighbour! By standing next to the model tower block, you can look through windows and listen to the residents talking about life on the fifteenth floor.

IDS made a donation to the establishment of the Building Exploratory, and one of our estates is pictured in the exhibition. Valdis Belinis would be very happy to accompany any group of tenants for a guided tour which take place on Thursdays at 4pm and Fridays at 2pm. Otherwise call 020 7275 8555 for more details.

Transparent Transfers

In April 2002, IDS made radical changes to the way empty property is let. This was done in response to the Best Value review of allocations, carried out in consultation with tenants. The purpose of the review was to improve the service we provide to you, our customers. The review discovered that the area that tenants found most frustrating and mystifying was transfers.

How the system was changed

Our transfer list was changed from a system of points to a date entry system. This was done in order to make the way transfers are offered transparent and easy to understand with no complicated rules and regulations. We promise tenants that once they are on the list, the only way is up!

When a tenant applies for transfer, they are given a leaflet. This explains how the system works but it may be that, if you have been on

the waiting list since before the introduction of the date entry system, you do not know how the new system is operating.

IDS' obligations

As a Registered Social Landlord, IDS must meet housing obligations from many sectors, including local authorities, mobility schemes, key workers and community lets. It is important to remember that, when we promise you will not be overtaken on the transfer list, this only refers to lettings that have been allocated to transfer, which accounts for 23% (or just over one in five) of new lettings.

In addition to the date entry list, we maintain a 'management transfer' list. This deals with a variety of problems that inevitably arise from time to time. While this is a very short list - at the time of writing, there are just 18 tenants with management transfer status - this list will be given priority over the date entry list as the people on it represent emergencies. Even so, people on this list can only transfer

to property of the same size that they already occupy which means their property will become available to offer to someone on the date entry list. As these moves are often made for medical reasons, it can be true that, if you are waiting for transfer to a particular flat or a ground floor property, they could significantly increase the amount of time you are likely to wait for transfer.

Progress

Since the system was introduced 18 months ago, we have managed to make more offers to people who had been waiting for many fruitless years under the previous system. We believe that this system is working far better for the great majority of tenants while still allowing us to respond to emergencies.

This article only gives a brief summary of how the system operates. If you are unclear about any aspect of transfers, or would like more information, staff will be happy to offer any further information you require.

BENEFITS INFORMATION - Pensions Credit

Pensions Credit comes into force on 6 October 2003 replacing Income Support for people aged 60 or over. It will ensure that people over 60 have a guaranteed level of weekly income and also reward those 65 and over who have more than the basic state pension, i.e. those with savings or a private pension plan.

Those on Income Support will automatically be transferred onto Pensions Credit, all other pensioners will be sent a letter between April 2003 and June 2004 inviting them to claim.

For the first year, a claim made between 6 October 2003 and 5 October 2004 can be backdated to 6 October 2003. Those with savings and/or a private pension may be entitled to this new credit. Please contact the Pension Service claim line on 0800 991234 where a form can be filled in over the phone. Although the Pensions Credit will count as income for Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit purposes, there is an increase in the figures used by the Council in calculating your benefit and so it will still be worth claiming Pensions Credit.

IDS Annual Report

The IDS Annual General Meeting (AGM) took place on 29 September with heads of departments reporting back on activities over the last year.

The AGM also marked the publication of the 2002/2003 annual report, a copy of which is sent to all tenants. As well as reporting on new developments, maintenance and information about whom we housed this year, the annual report also includes information on the results of our tenants' survey. This showed that our overall service to tenants is rated in the top 10% of providers of social housing in London.

