

BARONESS DEAN SURFS THE NET WITH IDS TENANTS

Baroness Dean, Chairman of the Housing Corporation, toured new properties built by IDS, visiting homes at Vartry Road, Hackney where she met one family who had waited 18 years for a permanent home. One little boy told her how wonderful it was to be in a home without cracks in the walls and a leaking roof.

Baroness Dean also called into IDS's UK Online Centre where she joined tenants and other local people surfing the net and using the computers free-of-charge at the former shop in Stoke Newington Road.

In her speech, the Baroness was highly complimentary about IDS and stressed the important role that smaller, specialist housing associations play. She said, "Having met your tenants, it is clear that IDS works hard to encourage tenants to have a say in how their association is run. You have a reputation as a well-

managed association that has remained committed to its roots in the provision of quality housing to Jewish people as well as the wider community".



Baroness Dean at the Stoke Newington UK Online Centre

Stoke Newington's Centenary

Stoke Newington Estate celebrates its 100 year anniversary in 2003. The Tenants Association will be meeting soon to discuss how best to celebrate the landmark.

Ken Hammond, now the Secretary of the Tenants Association, has lived on the estate since 1972 and recalls how he was living in the next block of houses as a boy. Ken remembers the outdoor communal washing lines, as well as the public bathhouse that was situated in what is now the porters' workroom. Ken says, "There was a notice saying 'Women and Children on Thursday and Friday mornings, Men on Friday evenings and Sundays'. Because there were a lot of Jewish

people living in the area, it meant that they could be nice and clean for the Sabbath. One bath a week was included in the rent!"

Ken remembers that the baths were huge and, as a consequence, the coal fires had to be started early on Thursday mornings in order for the water to be hot enough for the Friday bathers.

The estate has had its share of tragedy over the years too. During the war, a landmine was dropped at the front of the building blocking the exits to the shelters. The gas and water mains supplies were fractured and many people died. It is still possible to see the scars of the war at the front of the buildings.



Mr Joseph Heller, who lived at 82 Imperial Avenue. It was taken before 1914 outside the Avenue.



Princess May Road School, c1932-36

Walking to work with Margaret Pitt

I have been an Area Housing Manager with IDS for three and a half years now and have lived in Hackney for over six years. One perk of working in Stamford Hill is that I can walk to work. Coming through Abney Park Cemetery this spring with the birds singing and the daffodils coming into bloom sets me up nicely for the day!

In 20 years, IDS is the fourth housing association I have worked with and, when I compare it to other housing organisations, I believe IDS's tenants have a big advantage living on estates with resident staff. They get a great service compared with other housing providers. Having two housing welfare managers who are hard working and caring is also a big bonus.

I am responsible for the day-to-day management of half of IDS's housing stock and lead a team of three estate managers, two sheltered scheme managers, a housing welfare manager, team administrator and six caretakers. I am involved in managing two

sheltered housing schemes - Ajax House and Hilary Dennis Court. I am also responsible for the shared ownership homes in Stoke Newington.

As IDS is a relatively small organisation, I tend to be very 'hands-on' in my work and get involved in many day-to-day matters. This includes helping my team to let empty properties, chase rent arrears, deal with housing benefit problems, set new rents, liaise over maintenance, deal with neighbour disputes and anti-social behaviour. I tend to get involved only when things get more difficult. There is a lot of pressure on housing associations these days - tenants' expectations are rising and the Government expects us to deal more effectively with anti-social behaviour. This is the hardest part of our job and we have been looking at how we can handle this better. Often it is a matter of needing more time to concentrate on the problem, and this I just don't have!

I always have a lot of tasks on-the-go and more to do than I can cram into my working week. For example, I am responsible for IDS getting the new Supporting People

funding system up-and-running to provide support costs for our tenants in sheltered housing schemes. This has involved lots of meetings in Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Redbridge and also going out to talk to our tenants about how it will work.

I always enjoy meeting and working with tenants and sometimes I feel frustrated that the amount of paperwork we are involved in these days keeps me at my desk more than I like. It is very rewarding to see happy tenants moving into new homes and problems resolved for existing tenants.



Area Housing Manager, Margaret Pitt

Congratulations to Cathy

Catherine Burnell at Head Office accepted a proposal of marriage from Ben Gibson on Valentine's Day at the Cambridge Valentine's Day Ball. We are told that posh frocks and dinner jackets were worn and, yes, he did go down on one knee! The wedding will take place in July in Hatfield.



The future Mrs Gibson

Training whilst the children play at Evelyn Court

Local training company, Ixel Ltd, is hoping to refurbish one of the bays at Evelyn Court to provide computers and I.T. training for local

people. An after-school project located in adjacent bays means that parents can be offered childcare while they complete their training.

Rent card change!!

IDS is changing the supplier of our plastic rent cards. We are moving to 'allpay.net', one of the largest rent payment handling companies in the UK. Every tenant will be receiving a new rent card in April. The new card will have a different design and should be used instead of your current card.

The new card allows rent payments to be made at any outlet displaying the PayPoint or PAYzone sign, as well as the Post Office.

We are also introducing Direct Debit payments from April. If you wish to pay your rent by Direct Debit, please contact Head Office for information on how this can be set up.

Family learning

Navarino Mansions has been chosen as the venue of a Sure Start family learning project where parents and grandparents are encouraged to become involved in their children's education. The course focuses on literacy, numeracy and science.

Tenants' survey

You should by now have received at least two copies of the questionnaire from Kwest, our consultant carrying out the survey. So far only 46% of questionnaires have been completed and returned. We need the information obtained from the survey to establish what you think of the current services provided by IDS as well as how and what you would like us to provide in the future. The key findings will be published and sent to all tenants.

A third and final copy of the questionnaire will be sent to those of you who have not yet responded within the next few weeks. Please take the time to complete the form, as much as possible, and return it in the prepaid envelope.

Win £50

REMEMBER THERE IS A £50 PRIZE DRAW ON EACH ESTATE. TO ENTER THE DRAW, THE FORM MUST BE COMPLETED AND RETURNED!

New tenants

IDS is now managing 26 tenancies on behalf of Otto Schiff Housing Association at Eleanor Rathbone House, Crouch End and Otto Schiff House in Hampstead. Otto Schiff specialises in housing for Jewish refugees and victims of the holocaust. The handover took place on 1st January and Mary Ellen Coyte has been recruited to manage the work.

Cash for Stepney Green Court

The Clocktower Parents and Toddlers Group has been awarded £1,000 from the Ocean New Deal for Communities Community Chest to purchase toys and equipment for use in the community hall.

Surviving & thriving at work

'Getting together is good for you' is feasibly the conclusion of the majority of the staff who attended the 2003 annual staff conference on February 10th at the Holly Street Community Centre in Stoke Newington. It was an opportunity for staff to meet and talk to colleagues whom they rarely see - due to many being based where they can do most good - on the estates. But the primary purpose of the day was to help staff to function more effectively and address issues that sometimes are not aired in the hurly-burly of everyday business.

Seeing the wood from the trees

The theme for the day was 'Surviving & Thriving at Work' and it involved 45 enthusiastic members from all areas of IDS life. After a brief welcome and introduction from chief executive, Paul Westbrook, we were led on a team-building exercise by occupational psychologist, Naomi Brandler. This tested the ability of the four teams to prioritise the items they might need when trying to survive in the Arctic - not too much use, even in London weather! but helpful in testing staff's ability to 'see the wood from the trees' in doing their jobs.

Planning for retirement

Robin Ellison, vice-chairman of IDS, then introduced us to the realities of modern day pension

planning which many found to be extremely illuminating, cautionary and, at times, entertaining.

Developments and decent housing standards

Paul Westbrook took us on a photo-journey through the association's new developments, following which Melvin Dawson dealt with the survival of housing stock and talked in some depth about the issues affecting, and importance of, decent housing standards.

Stress at work

After lunch, Naomi gave us some insights into the causes and effects of stress - not just at work but also how domestic life, relationships and other personal issues affect us in doing our jobs.

Everyone broke into job-related groups to talk about the things that cause us stress and the measures we can take to reduce its effects. Topics that emerged included how to cope when several tenants are making demands all at once and how to prioritise their problems, plan work better and what to do when the plan doesn't work out! Most found these discussions extremely helpful, although all agreed that it would only be useful in the long run if everyone took individual responsibility and followed through on what they had learned. You, as residents, should be able to help us judge over time how effective the conference has been in improving the service provided by IDS.



Learning to deal with stress at the IDS staff conference

Will you rise to the challenge?

Ken Hammond, Secretary of the Stoke Newington Tenants Association, brings a convincing argument in favour of more tenants getting actively involved in their communities:

“In December, our Association held the first event in the newly opened Community Centre. We celebrated with a Christmas party for nearly 40 children - it was fun, successful and it even had a moment of magic as, when Santa Claus arrived to distribute the presents, two little girls, each about four years old, believed that the tenant in the red suit and false beard was the real thing. Their excitement and delight even charmed our sophisticated children and teenagers who were at the party and justified the hard work put in by members of our Committee.

On this Estate there are 277 flats and over 300 adults live here. However, our Committee has only 10 people on it - less than 3% of the tenants. I do realise that many people are unable to participate in our Tenants Association Committee because of pressures from work and/or other voluntary occupations they may be involved in but, even taking this into account, it is still a very low percentage of the possible numbers.

Is it the time factor? Our Committee meets once every four or five weeks, a couple of us help once a week when the IT centre opens so that children and young people can use the facilities for their homework, games and internet surfing. Once a year we hold the AGM which just 20 to 30 tenants attend. Activities at the moment focus on trying to get staffing so that we can run a club for our children and young people

and are applying for a grant to run a first aid course for the tenants.

Why should anyone bother with tenant participation? You pay your rent and keep yourself to yourself and, if anything goes wrong, you can always complain to IDS Head Office. And besides, there is bound to be someone else who will do something. When the news about the provision of an IT centre reached the ears of some of our tenants I, as secretary of the Committee, was approached by a number who had heard rumours that the IT centre was going to be an all-night cyber cafe and, if this was so, I and the rest of the Committee should do something about it.

People talk about the lack of Community spirit as if it is something that comes out of a bottle. It does not!

It is also not provided by the government or the local council. Community spirit comes out of people; participation, caring about the environment and the well-being of the estate on which you live, it will deliver a tremendous reward for a small amount of time. Our landlords, IDS, actively encourage this, there is an inter-estate tenants forum, tenants are on the IDS board and other IDS committees. **You** are the person who can help to turn a housing estate into a community.”



Ken Hammond, Secretary of the Stoke Newington Tenants Association

Advertising IDS

In December and January, IDS ran a series of advertisements in the Jewish press aimed at raising the profile of its website amongst the Jewish community. The website, which can be found at www.ids.org.uk, includes a unique on-line survey aimed at revealing the genuine housing needs of Jewish people.

IDS will use the survey results to gauge the level of housing need amongst London's Jewish population and build a stronger case for prioritising funding from our local authority funders.

The advertisements appeared in the Jewish Chronicle and the London Jewish News and resulted in a significant increase in “hits” to the website as well as people completing the survey.

Jewish housing - your chance to contribute

Take part in an on-line survey of Jewish housing needs at www.ids.org.uk

IDS, the London based housing association, has identified a new website offering a unique online survey. It hopes to determine a nationwide picture of housing needs for the Jewish community.

The government wants to understand the housing needs of Jewish people. The online survey will help us to understand the housing needs of the Jewish community in London and help us to provide a better service to our tenants. The survey will also address the 2004-2006 programme when specialist expertise will be provided to improve the quality of housing for Jewish tenants.

Help of accommodation to the needs of the local community since 1988.

There will also be the chance to get a chance to win a selection of vouchers for the survey.

With your support we can improve the provision of Jewish housing for the Jewish people. For more information on the survey or to register your interest, please contact us on 020 8800 9606 or visit www.ids.org.uk and fill out the survey. It is a quick and easy task to complete.

IDS Housing Group
11 South Hill, London, N16 5SR
Tel: 020 8800 9606 Fax: 020 8800 9607
Email: ids@ids.org.uk Website: www.ids.org.uk

Jewish Chronicle advertisement

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