

WINTER 2006

# newsletter



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## FIRE SAFETY – A PERSONAL STORY FROM MELVIN DAWSON, TECHNICAL SERVICES DIRECTOR

**It was 2005 and just two weeks before Christmas. I had completed the five hour round trip to Heathrow to pick up my sister who had arrived from America to celebrate my mother's 90th birthday.**

I received a call on my mobile phone from my eldest daughter. Instead of the usual question asking when I would be home she was screaming "Fire, the house is on fire!". I was still some forty minutes away from home but at least the Fire Brigade were working on putting out the fire. My wife was about to go to the hospital as she had burnt her hands leaving the children with the neighbours.

The fire had started in my youngest daughter's bedroom; searching for the special Christmas table cloths had caused her reading light to be moved and left touching the curtains with the resulting fire starting within 20 minutes.

The fire had been contained mainly within one room, but most of the other rooms had smoke or water damage.

I tell this story with a hope that you each take the extra care needed to avoid a fire. We should have followed the instructions clearly marked on the halogen reading light when we got it 'This light gets very hot, keep away from flammable items'.

We had home and contents insurance and three months later all the building and decorating works were completed. It is impossible to replace the items of minimal monetary value – photographs, drawings and her treasures – that she had collected over the years.

I am concerned how few of our tenants have contents insurance – you need to consider this most carefully. **Can you afford not to have it?**

In the last eighteen years there have been five fires in IDS properties – four in tenants' homes and one in the staircase at Evelyn Court just a few weeks ago. In almost all cases the tenants did not have insurance cover. The cost to replace all your furniture, clothes and other items is considerable – take a few minutes to add it up. IDS have an arrangement with an insurance company to provide low-cost contents insurance for tenants. For an application form, contact head office.

The police are investigating the fire within the stair case at Evelyn Court and if you have any information which may help them, please contact them at the Stoke Newington Police Station. I am pleased to report that although the fire caused major damage within the staircase little or no damage was caused inside any of the flats.



Fire damage at Evelyn Court

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

**IDS appointed PPCR, a specialist independent research organisation, to conduct a tenant satisfaction survey. This is YOUR chance to give your views about IDS – good or bad!**

PPCR sent out questionnaires by post, with a Freepost reply envelope. So far replies have been sent by 650 tenants, just about half.

We want to hear from more of you!

By taking part, you can help IDS improve its services – your help is essential in this task.

It will only take you about 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. If you've mislaid your questionnaire, or would like to give your views over the phone, contact PPCR on their Freephone 0800 317 066.

We hope you will be able to take part, it's important that we hear from as many tenants as possible. There is also £450 in cash prizes to be won.

If you have any difficulty in completing the questionnaire, would like a large print version, or a telephone interview, please contact PPCR by ringing Freephone 0800 317 066.

# GETTING YOU MORE

## IS YOUR HOME TOO BIG?

**Unfortunately, a common response to that question is 'You must be joking!' because overcrowding is the biggest single problem faced by council and housing association tenants. There is a chronic shortage of family sized property in London which means that homeless families and families needing transfers to larger property face very long and frustrating waiting times.**

The government is beginning to look at reducing levels of under occupation in social housing as a way of making more family sized property available for those who desperately need the space. At some point in the future we are likely to see local authorities and housing associations offering incentives to under occupying tenants to move to smaller homes.

The good news for our Hackney tenants is that you don't have to wait for the government to act because Hackney Housing is operating an excellent incentive scheme already. A lot of local authorities offer incentives to their own tenants but Hackney's scheme has been extended to include housing association tenants too and it's quite likely to be used as a model for other authorities in the future.

IDS has been working closely with Hackney Housing this year to promote the scheme and it has proved very popular and successful. Hackney held several open days on Evelyn Court in the summer and as a result fifteen tenants (so far) have been re-housed using the under occupation scheme.

To qualify you must be prepared to give up at least one bedroom but you will be offered lots of incentives to help you move. For instance, Hackney will pay all your moving expenses and give you a cash payment for every bedroom that you give up.



**Is your home too BIG?**

The Underoccupation Cash Incentive Scheme

**For friendly, helpful advice about your options, contact:**  
The Special Projects Officer, Christopher Addison House,  
72 Wilton Way, London E8 1BJ. **Phone: 020 8356 5769/5752**

**Please note.** We cannot help you if you live in a high floor home unless you are 55 years or older

**Money to help you move**

We are hoping that there will be an open day on the Stoke Newington Estate in the New Year, but you don't have to wait. Any of our Hackney tenants who can give up at least one bedroom can apply directly by contacting the Special Projects Officer on 020 8356 5765.

## MOBILE FRUIT AND VEG

**During October, as a trial, ELFA (East London Food Access) set up a stall of fresh fruit & vegetables at Evelyn Court, Navarino Mansions, Imperial and Coronation Avenues.**

The food is delivered by a mobile bus which is operated on Thursdays allowing IDS tenants to buy fresh produce with minimal distance to travel. Some of our elderly tenants

found this experience beneficial as it eliminated crowded buses, shops and walking long distances with heavy shopping bags.

ELFA is currently evaluating whether it can continue to provide the fruit and veg stall. Ideally they would like to hear from any local tenants who would be willing to assist in some way. Please call Ernest Lee, IDS Tenant Participation Officer for more information.



Stall at Stokenewington Estate

# INVOLVED

## A VERY BUSY SOCIAL LIFE AT THE SHELTERED SCHEMES



Evening entertainment at Sheltered Scheme

**IDS provides funding for social activities for our sheltered housing tenants. In the winter, the tenants, with the assistance, of their Scheme Managers arrange entertainment evenings which take place at the larger schemes. In the summer the Scheme Managers organise coach trips to various places on the South and East coasts.**

The evening entertainment is very well attended with a professional entertainer

booked to perform for at least three hours. Each act is of a high standard and arranged through a professional agent. Tenants usually only have to pay for their transport to the venue.

Special dietary requirements are always catered for and some tenants cook traditional food and donate it to the party. Every event is a very happy occasion and is a perfect opportunity for tenants to mix within the wider community and meet their friends.

The summer outings are equally successful. IDS arranges at least six summer day trips. Destinations include Brighton, Southend and Eastbourne. We use an excellent local coach company who provide air-conditioned, comfortable coaches. The coach picks up at Stepney Green Court, Navarino Mansions and Clifford Lawton House and travels to the coast where tenants are dropped off to enjoy a day of their own choice. The coach then picks up again at the end of the afternoon.

Each tenant makes a small contribution towards the cost. All IDS sheltered tenants as well as friends and family are always welcome to join in.

If any tenants who are living in IDS sheltered schemes would like more information about these social events then please contact either Nicky, Merle or Jan via IDS on 020 8800 9606.

## ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR UPDATE

**IDS is continuing its work with tenants to combat anti-social behaviour. Consultation with tenants at Evelyn Court has begun with an open meeting with IDS and Safer Neighbourhood Teams. A survey to gather information on the perception of living on Evelyn Court has also been completed. The information will be analysed to identify the major concerns for the area and we will work with individuals, Evelyn Court Tenant Association and partners to provide an effective strategy to continue the improvements to the estate. We will continue this process for all of our estates and continue to improve services and estate life.**

IDS has also undertaken court action to assist tenants who have been suffering from anti-social behaviour. Recent action resulted in a tenant agreeing in court to conditions which restrict particular behaviour for a period of two years. Should the terms of the Undertaking be broken then the tenant could lose their property and serve a custodial sentence. IDS would like to thank all tenants who supported the action for the good of all the tenants.

## WINTER FUEL PAYMENTS

**Residents that are 60 or over can look forward to a little extra help from the Government this winter in the form of a Winter Fuel Payment. The Department of Work and Pensions is responsible for making the automatic payments which normally come as part of your pension.**

The Winter Fuel Payment is an annual payment to help people aged 60 and over with their winter heating bills.

If you are aged 60-79 and you are entitled to receive a Winter Fuel Payment, you will get either £100 or £200, depending on your circumstances in the qualifying week (18 September 2006).

If you are aged 80 or over and you are entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment, you will get an extra £50 or £100, depending on your circumstances in the qualifying week.

So, if you are aged 80 or over, you could get up to £300.

If you are concerned about your payment you can contact the winter fuel payments helpline on 08459 151515.

# THE DIGITAL SWITCHOVER AND IDS COMMUNAL AERIALS

**If you watch TV it would be unlikely for you to have missed the governments' information and advertisements about the digital switchover in 2008. If you do not have a digital TV you will need to purchase a set top box or a new digital TV to view programmes. These boxes can be purchased from many of the high street electrical shops and supermarkets for around £40-£60. You will need one of these for each TV.**

If you obtain your TV programmes via a cable provider it is unclear at

present when they will switch over to a digital service. Some have already switched from analogue to digital while others have not.

In 2005 IDS completed a three year programme of installing a combination of new satellite dishes with cables to each flat within our estates. Each flat now has a new TV and radio connection point with three outlets. These are for; digital radio, analogue/digital TV (with a set top box), and the third one for digital TV via Sky or the 'Hotbird' service. Details of these are available from your local estate office.

You may have seen advertisements for high definition televisions and are thinking of purchasing one. A word of caution, however. If you wish to view and record at the same time, most boxes provided by TV providers like Sky require two input leads, one for recording and the second for viewing. Our cabling does not support this function.

To help us plan for the changing digital and high definition TV services it would help if you could complete and return the questionnaire opposite.

✂

Flat .....	We are connected to the 'hotbird' services <input type="checkbox"/>
We have 0 / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / other amount ..... of televisions	We are connected to cable services <input type="checkbox"/>
We already have ..... high definition televisions	We are proposing to purchase a high definition TV in the next 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-5 or 5+ years
We would like to view digital TV in more than one room <input type="checkbox"/>	Please send this slip to your estate office or: IDS 5th Floor, Ockway House 41 Stamford Hill London N16 5SR
We are using a set top box to obtain 'Freeview' digital TV <input type="checkbox"/>	
We are connected to the sky services <input type="checkbox"/>	

## CHRISTMAS OPENING HOURS

Normal Head Office and Estate opening times will apply up to and including Friday 22 December 2006. If you have a maintenance emergency when the Estate Offices are closed (and no Duty Caretaker is on duty), please contact Barry Stewart on the out-of-hours emergency line: **07050 053807**.

### Dates

18 to 22 December 2006  
25 to 27 December 2006  
28 to 29 December 2006  
30 December 2006 to 1 January 2007  
2 January 2007 onwards

### Head Office

Open  
Closed  
Open  
Closed  
Open

### Estates

Open  
Closed/Out-of-hours service  
Open  
Closed/Out-of-hours service  
Open