

NEW TENANT PARTICIPATION LEAFLET LAUNCHED



Ernest Lee - Tenant Participation Officer

IDS has published a leaflet outlining the broad range of tenant participation activities at IDS in the hope that the information will inspire more tenants to get involved in their community.

The leaflet explains that tenant participation is all about making sure that all tenants have the opportunity and choice to have a say in the decisions that affect your homes and communities. It demonstrates how participation may be about attending meetings, taking part in surveys or even forming a tenants' association.

The benefits to getting involved are diverse. Not only will you have a say in important decisions that IDS takes, you can learn new skills, many of which are transferable to the workplace. These would include things such as communication skills, how to run meetings, administration and speaking in public. Tenant participation helps

build your confidence and means that you get to give something back to your community.

IDS tenant participation and community development officer Ernest Lee says "We have given a copy of the leaflet to all of our 1,400 tenants. Its really easy to get more involved with IDS from becoming a tenant representative to taking part in the various meetings and community activities that are run throughout the year".

The leaflet will be in every tenancy pack for new tenants. If you don't have your own copy yet please pick one up from one of the estate offices.

NEW TENANTS ASSOCIATION AT NAVARINO MANSIONS

A party was held at Navarino Mansions on 8th November 2007 to celebrate the launch of the new Tenants Association. Sheron Harper, the Chairperson welcomed those present informing them of the priorities for the TA in the coming months and encouraging them to become involved.

Members of the Makin it Happen Youth Committee spoke about how they intend to work with the TA in encouraging young people on the estate to become involved. They are proposing to run a weekly youth club in the community hall in the new year.

After the speeches everyone enjoyed food, provided by members of the TA Committee, whilst listening to music.

If you are interested in becoming involved with the TA or attending one of there future events you can either email navmansions@hotmail.com, or

contact David Donovan, Estate Manager, who will put you in contact with Sheron.



Richard Hawkins presenting 1st prize in the raffle

ADAPTATIONS FOR THE DISABLED

Over the last four to six months we have not been able to obtain funding from the Housing Corporation for adaptations for disabled people. At this point in time we are not sure if this is just a temporary funding issue or as previously announced by them the end of funding for adaptations for disabled people within housing association properties.

Over the years following a recommendation from an occupational therapist we have been able to install such items as level access and over-bath showers, stair-lifts and many other adaptations. All of this work was arranged and supervised by IDS staff and funded by the Housing Corporation.

It is now necessary for all those requiring adaptations for disabled people to apply to the local authority for a grant. These grants "Disabled Facilities Grant" (also known as DFG)

are mandatory but subject to "means testing" which means that if you are applying for funding you would need to submit details of your income and any savings etc.

The local authority will then assess your application to determine how much funding, if any, you are entitled to. You are also able to claim for any surveyors fees that may be incurred as part of the works.

There are external agencies that you may approach for these services such as Care & Repair or the Anchor Trust. IDS Welfare staff and Sheltered Scheme Managers will be able to provide initial assistance with making claims and IDS staff may be able to assist throughout the process. Any adaptation to your property will have to be approved by IDS prior to installation.

Should applications for funding to local authorities be refused IDS may be able to fund works from its

own resources so please discuss any concerns that you may have with IDS Welfare staff or your Sheltered Scheme / Estate Manager.



Level access shower fitted in one of the tenants flat.

PANTOMIME

Some of our Evelyn Court tenants with their children attended the pantomime, Dick Whittington at the Hackney Empire in December. Tenant Rebecca Joseph said "The pantomime was brilliant. The theatre was packed mainly with children. I have never seen kids have so much fun, shouting their responses at the actors and dancing in the aisles, their faces lighting up and jumping with excitement. It was worth being there just to watch the kids."

Sam Rohleder Cooke, age 11 wrote us a review of the performance "It was really good and very exciting, it was also extremely funny. The theatre was packed as we made our way to our seats. We all joined in with some of the songs and it was really fun. The show was quite long, I think it was

2 hours or something, but we all had a great time!

My favourite character was Sarah Whittington, she was the funniest. Pantomime is strange the lead man

is a woman, and the lead woman is a man! They also mentioned us in the "We love Hackney" list. It was great!! When it was finished, we all went home with a big smile on our faces. Roll on next year."



Opening curtain

RENT INCREASES FOR 2008

The rents that housing associations and local authorities charge for their properties are monitored by the government with housing association rents monitored by the government's agent, the Housing Corporation.

Each individual property has a target rent which is set using criteria including number of bedrooms, location and amenities. All housing association and local authority rents should reach the target rent by 2010.

This means that all social housing tenants should be paying similar rent for the same size property in the same area.

Rents are increased once a year. The government controls the level of increase and has announced that rents will be increased by 4.4% in 2008. In addition to the percentage increase, those organisations whose rents are below the target rent must increase their rents by a further £2 a week to ensure that they meet the target rent by 2010.

Approximately 50% of IDS' rents are below the target rent. This means that half of our rents will be increased by the full amount.

On average this means that our rents will be increasing by between £5 - £6 a week in 2008.



Evelyn Court tenant Alix Wondjade with some of her artwork displayed during October's Black History month at Evelyn Court.



A mini carnival costume display by the local Soca Mas Cultural Group called Beeraahaar at Evelyn Court during Black History Month. Thanks to Beeraahaar, Evelyn Court parents and the Starburst Parents & Toddlers group who all donated food, drinks & equipment freely on the night.

EXHIBITION

An exhibition of paintings by Leila Abrahams, resident of Ajex House since 1998 has gone on display at Homerton University Hospital. The exhibition is inspired by a time Leila spent at the hospital as a patient where she found herself very confused as to who was who as she could not easily read the staff identity tabs. Having previously worked as a fashion artist, Leila met with the Director of Nursing and volunteered to paint pictures of all the different staff uniforms so that patients would be able to distinguish the different roles of staff by the clothes they wear. Leila hopes that it will help patients know who is who so that they are no longer asking the matron for a bed pan or a domestic to change a dressing.

Leila is 87 and has had a fascinating life. She trained as a fashion artist and dress designer at Manchester College of Art, volunteered in 1941 to serve in the forces where she became a sergeant in the ATS and worked as a draughtswoman with the Royal Engineers. After the war she married and opened her own gown business in Southport and soon became famous for her original designs.



Homerton University Hospital NHS

An example of one of Leila's paintings

Leila had three children and when her youngest started school she decided to train as a teacher which led to rapid promotion and at the age of 52 she progressed to the position of head teacher of the North Cheshire Jewish Primary School in Southport. Retiring in 1983, Leila became a volunteer teaching art and creative writing. Currently she volunteers at the Jewish Day Centre in Stamford Hill.

You can see Leila's paintings throughout December in the Sanctuary corridor at the Homerton Hospital.

WINTER FUEL PAYMENT

A Winter Fuel Payment is an annual payment to help people aged 60 and over with the costs of keeping warm this winter.

If you are aged 60 to 79 you will get either £100 each if a couple, or £200 if you live on your own. You must be 60 or older in the qualifying week 17-23 September 2007.

If you are aged 80 or over, you will get £150 each if a couple, or £300 if you live on your own.

Payment are made automatically for those in receipt of state pension or other benefits in the qualifying week. Some payments are made before Christmas, others after.

WINTER FUEL HELPLINE - 08459 51515

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A SHELTERED SCHEME MANAGER

We asked Merle Donovan, Sheltered Scheme Manager at Navarino Mansions, to give us an insight into a typical working day.

I come down to the office at about 8 o'clock. There are normally about three of our 44 tenants already waiting for me but one of them always makes me a cup of tea before I start work. The first thing to do is to sign in with Basildon - they provide the off duty warden cover. Last night a fire alarm went off so they let me know if there have been any problems.

The tenants normally have something that has come in the mail which they need help with. Today I needed to sort out a mix up with Hackney Council where they had been trying in error to charge tenants for Supporting People costs. Obviously tenants find this sort of thing very worrying so its good to be able to help sort it out for them.

Later in the morning we had a visit from Comfort Plus. They are a company specialising in all sorts of products to help elderly and disabled people. They demonstrated some of the products and did a free raffle which was nice as everyone went away with a prize. One of the tenants bought a bed.

The barber also visited today so all the men in the scheme were able to get a haircut. We have a hairdresser coming in regularly for the ladies as well.

My next job was to write our monthly newsletter. This lists all the activities that are going on in the scheme - the big one this month is our Christmas party on the 13th December where we'll have residents visiting us from five other IDS schemes. As well as the social activities, the newsletter covers any issues to do with the building and reminds people about things that they should know.

After that I chased up some Housing Benefit rent arrears which meant another phone call to Hackney Council. I then booked transport and appointments for two of our tenants who need chiropody at a local clinic.

The electrician arrived to carry out some maintenance work on the communal aerial as well as some wiring and lighting problems.

I also booked to have the locks changed on a flat which is being re-let next week. We always swap the locks on flats when tenants leave just in case not all the keys have been returned.

It was then time to do some of the regular admin so I brought all the tenant files on the computer up to date. I keep a file for each tenant which as well as holding emergency contact and other essential information has a daily log containing records of everything I have done for the tenant. It's a good way of checking up if a few days have lapsed and

a tenant wants to know where things are on an outstanding action or query.

I helped a couple of tenants fill out some financial assessment forms. This kind of paperwork is needed to obtain funding for their home carers.

Somewhere between all that I went out for a walk during my lunch break. Often I'll go back to the flat upstairs but its nice to get out sometimes.

Finally, towards the end of the day, Richard Hawkins, the Director of Housing at IDS rang to ask if I would help out with a newsletter article. I've spent the last few minutes chatting to Marie who writes the newsletter telling her all about my day.



Merle Donovan, Sheltered Scheme Manager at Navarino Mansions

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR OPENING HOURS

Normal Head Office and Estate opening times will apply up to and including Friday 21 December 2007. 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

17 to 21 December 2007
24 to 26 December 2007
27, 28 & 31 December 2007
1 January 2008
2 January 2008 onwards

Head Office

Open
Closed
Open
Closed
Open

Estates

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