

An **Núacht** “The **News**”

“Go n-éiri an bóthar leat... (May the road rise up to meet you)”

Doing things differently

Welcome to our latest newsletter in which we highlight some of the different ways we are planning to do things.

There are two main reasons for us doing things differently. First, you have told us through the satisfaction surveys and other feedback mechanisms that you would like to see improvements to the service in certain areas and we are responding to that.

Second, we need to make sure that we get the most value from

every penny of income we get. This will enable us to do more for existing tenants and help more people.

It is important that among these changes we continue to do the things that we do best – providing a personal service to our tenants and being there to support people in need.

We are all sometimes a little wary of change, but I am confident that you will notice a positive difference in the coming months.

John Delahunty, Chief Executive

Inside this issue...



Listening to you... see page 3 for new services we are introducing having listened to what you have to say about what you would like from our service.



Page 4 sees the start of our **Repairs and Maintenance section**. This covers our new approach to repairing and improving your homes to make sure we – and you – get the best value for money.



For the results of our 2014 garden competition see Page 10 and for an update on our allotment project see Page 9.

Focusing on service

Doing things differently also means, in some cases, that we need different types of skills and new roles.

As a result, we are saying goodbye to a number of people, some of whom will be well-known to you. It is only right that we take this opportunity to thank them for the service they have given to Innisfree and its tenants.

Back in May, Housing Officer, Jean O'Rourke, left Innisfree for a new job in another housing organisation. Many of you would have had dealings with Jean over the years.

In June, we had a number of people leave. Some of them you may have had contact with but others had roles in the office that

might mean you did not have direct contact with them. They are: Mairead Mooney, Technical Services Director; Cass Kelly, Office Services Manager (job share); Devon Stewart, Technical Officer; Brenda Hirst, Senior Admin Officer; Deidre McGale, IT Systems Manager.

Finally, most recently, Matthew Wicks, Housing Director left Innisfree to take up a role in another local Housing Association.

We wish them all well and thank them for the service they have provided on behalf of Innisfree over the years.

Part of our plan was to reduce the total numbers of staff we have at Innisfree, but there are some vacant roles. We will be recruiting for these roles in the coming months and we will keep you updated as we have new people joining.

During this time, we will still be providing you with the service that you need. Along with some of the other changes described elsewhere in the newsletter, we expect that you will start to see a real improvement in the service we provide to you.



Homes for people in housing need

As a not for profit housing association, our purpose is to provide homes and services for people in housing need.

It is therefore important that we make sure that the people living in our homes are those we have housed and not people who are sub-letting. If a tenant sub-lets their home to someone else,

they are not in housing need and are preventing that home from being available to someone who really needs it. In these cases, we will refer the matter to the local authority's fraud team.



Improving services

Listening to you

We have been studying the tenant satisfaction results we have had and have put together a number of plans to improve the services we provide. In this page, we detail just some of those plans.

Estate and street inspections

You have told us that you want us to keep a closer eye on the condition of the streets and estates where we have homes.



In the early autumn we will be launching an estate and street property inspections programme. We will carry out full estate inspections every 3 months on estates with more than 5 homes and every 6-12 months on stand-alone street properties. These inspections will check on cleanliness, standards of grounds maintenance, untidy gardens, litter, graffiti, vandalism, illegal

parking, abandoned vehicles and nuisance.

We will involve you in monitoring the standards of cleaning and grounds maintenance, inviting residents on the estate to take part in estate inspections. We will tell you what actions we have taken following the inspections. You can also be involved in helping to set cleaning and grounds maintenance standards when we

hire contractors or review caretakers' work plans. We will promote when the inspections are to take place. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel will be reviewing this in October following a pilot in September.

If you are interested in taking part in the inspection for your area, please contact Kathy MacDonald **020 7625 1818** or kathy@innisfree.org.uk

More effective communication

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel said that we could do more to improve our electronic communications.

In response, we are launching a texting service for tenants. We will be using it to confirm appointments or send reminders of events and you will be able to use it to send us information or requests too.

It will be important for us to have your correct mobile number, so please call Anna Ferdinand, **020 7962 1248** and leave a message or email anna@innisfree.org.uk



Important change to gas works

At the moment if you have a gas problem in the evenings or over the weekend, we are only able to “make safe” rather than complete a repair. We want to improve on this service and, from 1 October, will be aiming to complete the repairs 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

To help us achieve this we have contracted all of our gas servicing and hot water/heating maintenance to Liberty Gas Group. They are very experienced and you can contact them direct to report a repair or make an appointment. If we have a mobile number for you, they will send a text to confirm appointments, a reminder the day before and one on the day of the appointment to say that the engineer is on their way. The number you need to call if

you have a problem with your gas hot water or heating is **03303 338390**.

For annual servicing of your gas appliances, Liberty Gas will send you a letter at least two weeks before the service is due. Look out for Liberty Gas’s vans with the Innisfree logo on the side.

Sean Moloney, who has worked closely with Innisfree for years and will be familiar to many of you, will still be part of our team, focussing on our plumbing work.

The other key area that we were keen to explore was the opportunity of choosing a company that supports young people and in particular apprentice schemes. Liberty is very committed to working with young people and currently across all of their contracts they have 47 apprentices/trainees on their schemes.

Liberty Gas

A TRUSTED PARTNER
Working in Partnership with

Riversmead
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Innisfree



A sense of place...

In the first in a new series of articles looking at the history of some of the places where we have homes, we look at Brent.

The area known as Brent has been settled since prehistoric times. The name Brent is Celtic, coming from the name of the goddess Brigantia. The river Brent flows through the borough but mostly underground. It feeds the Welsh Harp reservoir which feeds the Regents Canal. By the second half of the 20th century, the borough had become one of the most ethnically diverse in London. Many Jewish people had moved here, either to escape the pogroms of the 19th century or in the 1930s to escape Nazism.

Kilburn and Cricklewood had welcomed Irish migrants since the early 19th century. However, the Irish labourers who carried out much of the post-war slum clearance were responsible for the name "County Kilburn".

Today, about 4% of the population of Brent describe themselves as 'White Irish', the highest proportion of any area in England.

..... Community

An allotment means a lot

Innisfree's allotment project started small but has grown - just like some of our vegetables! In early 2013, we rented an overgrown allotment space in North Wembley from Brent Council.

With the help of a few friends and volunteers, Innisfree tenants cleared the weeds, built some raised beds, worked the soil and now we're enjoying our second annual crop of healthy, locally-grown produce. We have a second site and several of our volunteers are even renting their own plots while helping new gardeners to develop the Innisfree sites.



What's important about this is tenants are getting out and about. Michael walks more than 5 miles every day to visit friends and help others grow their own food. He can carry out tasks when he feels able and visits the Doctor when he feels ill; no pressures. Patrick meets new people and avoids an isolated life in central Wembley. He feels more part of the community and has somewhere to go now he is retired.

This is all great stuff but we want to do more. We want to help people develop growing spaces wherever there is neglected land. We want you to feel more able to grow something for yourself and to make new friends. If you have a place for a window box, a piece of unused space or would like to join a small group growing things, get in touch with Jim Sheeran – Community Initiatives Officer on **020 7692 1252** jim@innisfree.org.uk and leave a message. Let's have a chat about what we could do to help make this happen.

You can also get more information on becoming an allotment holder by visiting your local council website and searching for 'Allotments', or give Jim a call to get more help.



The gardening competition results are as below:

Overall winner

Mary and Gerry Shanahan, Erconwald Street – *Most creative use of design and space, which attracted wildlife to this beautifully kept garden - £100 gardening vouchers*

Best Communal garden

Margaret Carroll, Seamus Harvey and Clochar Court tenants – *Great outside living space - £50 vouchers*

Most improved and best individual effort

Sue O'Connor, Belsize Park – *Great floral display - £50 vouchers*

Best healthy eating garden space

Jennifer and Foieg Rahman, Aerynn House – *creation of a pond and good use of recycled materials - £50 vouchers*

Best use of a wide variety of planting

Des Brittain, Mowbray Road – *Good long term use of slow growing plants in a mature communal garden - £50 vouchers*

Thanks to Paul Dixon, Operations Manager, Cleanscapes for donating the vouchers for the prizes.



Summer food academy

As part of our allotment project we have developed important partnerships with agencies helping some of the most vulnerable people in Brent.

Over four days in July and August we worked with Sufra Food Bank to run a Summer Academy.

The idea was for people to come and see where their food comes from. A number of young volunteers visit the allotment and collect vegetables for the table. We returned to Sufra and, with some help from Innisfree tenants, volunteers made their very first meal.

Everyone joined in and we enjoyed a feast outside Sufra's kitchens. We ate our very own potatoes, cabbage, lettuce, carrots, onions, kale, beans and rhubarb.

