

# The Informed

The newsletter for the residents of  
Irish Centre Housing

Issue 10

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## A GREAT START FOR RESIDENT REPS

ICH has successfully started a process to ensure that residents have a better role to play in the management of their own homes. A group of resident representatives are developing a way to work together to achieve the best possible service in housing and support.

The first Residents Conference was held last September, to explore meaningful participation. A second Conference was held in April to examine in more detail the role of the resident reps and a new customer charter, with a follow-up workshop at Head Office in May. By this time they were becoming much clearer about their roles and what they wanted to achieve.

### What does a rep do?

A rep at ICH is someone who has been elected by other residents at their scheme. The rep will seek and consider views from everyone in their scheme. This may be for example what activities should be organised or what food should be on the menu. A rep will meet with scheme managers and staff to put your points of view across and they will provide you with feedback. A good example of how resident reps and staff worked together is at Townsend House, where the majority of residents wanted to ban alcohol at the scheme. Reps and staff worked together to produce a new policy.

If you would like to find out more about the work of a resident rep or how you can become more involved, please see your scheme manager or contact one of your reps directly.



Antonia Watson (far left) with some of the reps and a TV/DVD player which was up for grabs in the prize draw.

### What next?

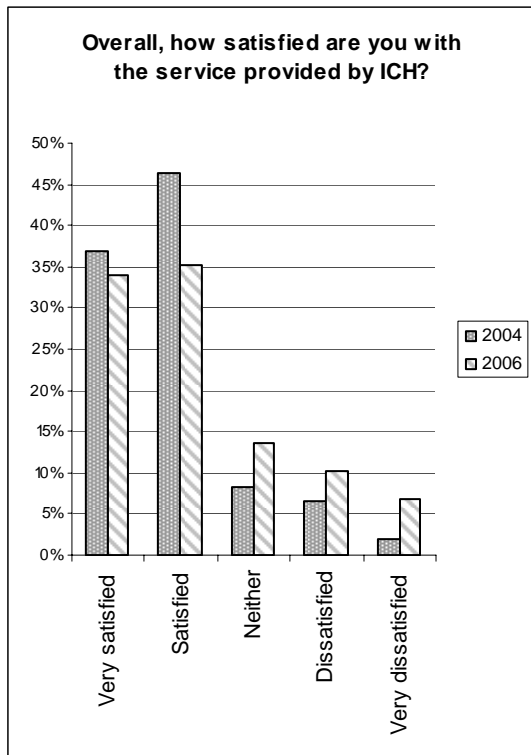
A few schemes have still to elect reps, but for those already elected and who are looking at even greater involvement; training is taking place on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> August at 1 Holmes Road, on *what it takes to be a Board Member*. The course is being run by the National Housing Federation. Places are going quickly, for anyone who is interested in finding out more (and who is not an elected rep) please contact Antonia Watson, Chief Executive, "We are looking at how we can improve involvement across the organisation, from scheme level to Board level.

"I will be working with reps to look at more structured strategic engagement. Already, reps have been hugely successful in reviewing policies, presenting their work at the Staff Conference, and visiting each others scheme; and the next stage is to form a 'resident council' from elected reps who will take on an organisation wide role."

# Customer Satisfaction Survey

In March we conducted our third periodic Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The response rate was slightly lower than previous years. "Overall Satisfaction" is the most important question on the survey and unfortunately we performed less well this year. The bar graph shows your response to this question, and the response from 2004.



However, as a general indicator of overall satisfaction, when we add Very Satisfied to Satisfied, and we add Very Dissatisfied to Dissatisfied, the results are:

	2004	2006
Overall Satisfied	83.3%	69.3%
Overall Dissatisfied	8.4%	17%

This year for the first time we asked our residents to tell us how *important* certain aspects of the service are to them.

## The Top 10 Most Important:

1. The building security
2. The building cleanliness
3. Being treated with dignity and respect
4. Feeling safe and secure
5. ICH is an organisation that understands your needs
6. ICH values and supports diversity of peoples backgrounds and lifestyles
7. Talking to the right person
8. Efficiency and friendliness of your keyworker / warden
9. Having your issues dealt with in a timely manner
10. The time it takes to respond to reported maintenance work in your flat / room.

These are the things that matter most to you. Every one of our staff can have a positive effect on one or more items from this list and improve the experience that our residents have with ICH.

We hope to do better in the next survey.

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## Irish Flames

*The Informed* was recently contacted by author, John Waller, regarding his new book, Irish Flames. It is his half-brother Peter Waller's true story of the arrival of the Black and Tans.

Irish Flames is a thriller. It is based on Peter Waller's memories of his childhood and the 1920 arrival of the Black and Tans. It is set in heart-wrenching times, intertwining flames of freedom, flames of hate and flames of love.

The white of peace links the Green and the Orange in the tri-colour, the flag of free Ireland. Irish Flames brings together, in tender affection, the Green and the Orange in the Irish War of Independence - the Anglo-Irish War. They unite against the barbaric Black and Tans, brought over by the British to "beat the hell out of the Irish".

The book is priced at £8.99 and has ISBN # 0-9547887-2-9. Steve Webb at Head Office has a copy if anyone is interested.

# ICH Herts Expansion

ICH is delighted to announce that we have added another property to our assets in Hertfordshire. In March we took over ownership and management of Hepburn Court. This scheme is located at South Mimms and is not too far away from Townsend House.

The scheme offers temporary accommodation and support to homeless parents and their children. It consists of one 3-bedroom house and ten bedrooms/studios with kitchens and shared bathrooms. Each room can accommodate 1 or 2 adults with 1 or 2 children.



Bosede with one of our youngest residents

Bosede Jonah is the keyworker there on secondment from St Louise and Kim Jeffs from Townsend House manages the scheme.

A Health Visitor is on site very Monday to check on how the babies are doing, and when *The Informed* dropped in to take pictures, all the mums, babies and children seemed happy and were all getting along just fine (the children were proper little stars in front of the camera.) Ad-hoc social events are planned from time-to-time, the next one being a coach trip to Southend. “Days out are good for getting residents involved,” says Bosede, “as some can feel quite isolated at times.”

Housing Services Manager, Aidan O’Kane says, “ICH has developed a good working relationship with the council and local providers. The acquisition of Hepburn Court is a natural progression for us. We have a solid reputation and a long history of providing support and hostel accommodation. The close proximity of the scheme to Townsend House is an efficient use of management time.”

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## Theatre Workshop

The residents of St Louise had a fun and rewarding evening when Cardboard Citizens – the homeless people’s theatre company – held a theatre workshop there a few months ago.

They started with warm up and games to get the energy going, and then continued with getting to know each other and team building. They collectively acted out the dynamic of group focus using co-ordination and concentration or ‘Tablo Images’. The evening ended with improvisation. Not that any improvising was needed when the popcorn came out!



Residents create a “Tablo Image”

For those who are wondering, Augustus Boal was a theatre practitioner who used Tablo Images. Cardboard Citizens are famous for basing their forum theatre on this technique.

# A birds eye view of Social Inclusion

The series of daytrips organised by ICH Social Inclusion Unit that have taken place over the summer period are proving to be a big hit with ICH residents with more planned for August and September. These trips, funded by the Ireland Fund of Great Britain, are aimed at reducing the isolation encountered by the more socially excluded Irish residents living in Camden and Brent.



Pat helps the barge dock at Camden Lock

Brendan McConville, ICH's DION funded Social Inclusion Worker, says, "The overall aim is to support and encourage the more vulnerable and socially excluded Irish residents among the Irish Community in North London to engage with and access appropriate services and cultural activities."



Residents enjoy Little Venice where Mick gets familiar with a statue!

The first of these trips took place on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June with a canal barge trip from Camden Lock to Little Venice and back again. Working in partnership with cultural specific agencies and housing associations, ten ICH and Arlington House residents accompanied by two ICH



Mick gets over-friendly with a meat eater!

workers spent the day navigating the Regent's Canal on a rented barge. Lunch was taken at Little Venice. It proved to be a very rewarding and positive experience for all involved, so much so that another barge trip heading east to City Rd Basin took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July, this time with two Cara residents joining the crew.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of July, Conway House residents and ex-residents enjoyed an outing to Eagle Heights, a bird of prey centre in Orpington Kent where we were treated to an extraordinary demonstration of eagles, hawks and owls on show there. In fact some of us were lucky to get back in one piece such was the bravery of some of the residents in acquainting themselves with the larger of the species on display.

The latest trip for Conway House residents was on 27<sup>th</sup> July to Brighton Beach. The sea breeze and cool waters of the English Channel provided a welcome relief from the incessant heat of London.



"Mitch" saves the dame!

Any Irish residents interested in future trips should contact Brendan at Head Office.