

The Informed

The newsletter for the residents of
Irish Centre Housing

Issue 11

October 2006

MEANINGFUL OCCUPATION

Since she started in her role as Meaningful Occupation Worker (MOW) last year, Natasha Gray has had a challenging, yet rewarding, time defining the service and getting it operational in Bethany House, Conway House and St Louise.

The MOW builds partnerships with external agencies to develop training and educational opportunities for the benefit of our residents. The main objective is to motivate residents into formal education or employment; this is achieved by encouraging residents to engage with the external agencies outside their homes.

Natasha, a former project worker at St Louise, said, "I identified as a project worker that there was a gap in the service provision and I wanted residents to realise their full potential. I was given a blank sheet of paper when starting this job and needed to spend time researching how it could be filled, which was both a challenge and a great opportunity. It's also been an excellent way of strengthening and expanding my skills."

While developing the service Natasha attended resident meetings, coffee mornings and staff meetings to understand the service requirements and to generate interest. There is a keyworker at each site that acts as Natasha's link-worker and is the local point of contact. The link-worker will discuss at team meetings forthcoming MO events and liaise with other keyworkers to ensure that the service is well utilised. Each of the three hostels has a MO File which is a reference file for the MO services available. Residents can access the MO services through their keyworker and look through the MO file to see if any of the activities appeal.

Now that the partnerships are delivering, it is important to monitor how much benefit ICH residents are getting. Natasha points out that to



Natasha Gray (far left) with residents at
Kew Gardens

ensure that the service continues, it is essential that residents attend the activities they have signed-up for. She also reassures that "Residents need to understand that the activities do not always mean regular commitment. Capital Arts do a fun one-day tour of art galleries which is very popular for residents who feel unable to commit more time."

St Louise resident, Bojana Grujic, participated in the Capital Arts Fashion-ology and Paths to Abstraction, said, "It was a great learning experience, a good way to bond with people." She also said, "I am very proud of myself for making what I did."

Natasha is collaborating with many different organisations and has now got the service pretty much where it needs to be. But the service is only useful if it is used.

So remember:

1. MO service is available to help you into employment or education.
2. Talk to your keyworker and find out what opportunities exist at your hostel.
3. This is a new service, so do please use it!

Training with The Prince's Trust

In August, Townsend House residents successfully completed a three week long Prince's Trust residential training course on care work. This is a continuation of ICH working with other organisations to develop resident's skills, with the aim of preparing them for work and independent living.

'Get into Social Care' was the exciting training programme organised by The Prince's Trust, together with St Elizabeth's Centre. The aim of the training was to give unemployed young people a taste of care work, and through a combination of training and work experience, develop skills to help them find work in the sector. The applicants were assessed and interviewed, and two of our residents, Katie Upjohn and Kelly Chew, beat the stiff competition to make the six that completed the course.

St Elizabeth's Centre, situated in Much Hadham in Hertfordshire, hosted the course. The centre offers specialised residential care for people with epilepsy and learning disabilities. The 'trainees' spent 10 days working shifts — some days starting at 6.45am, and other days working until 10pm! Duties included getting residents up, personal care, cooking for them and helping them with their day to day activities. St Elizabeth's Centre say that, "The training we offered is in line with care standards and will provide these young people with the knowledge and skills to take the first step on the ladder to achieving an NVQ in care."

Our Resident's opinions of the training

Kelly Chew:

"My time at St Elizabeth's was a great time and fun too. We all learnt new things and made new friends with all of the residents and staff. I saw 2 epileptic seizures...it was upsetting but I learnt how to handle it, and I would do it all again."

Katie Upjohn:

"I recently attended a course organised by the Prince's Trust, Get Into Social Care, at St Elizabeth's Centre. It was a residential course where I lived and worked. Whilst I was there I learnt so much about myself, I didn't know I



Kelly, Kim (manager) and Katie at the awards ceremony

could hold such a big responsibility, but now I know I can. If it wasn't for the Prince's Trust setting it up and my key worker Susan Mbugua helping to put me on it I wouldn't know what I know now.

When I was on my residential training I was living with five other girls, we had laughter and sadness. I would describe it as the Big Brother house, it was great. Doing this kind of work is a big responsibility. At first I thought to myself, 'no I can't do it' but Kim Jeffs, my keyworker and other staff at Townsend House supported me 100% throughout the whole course.

My presentation day was on the 7th September 2006. Myself, Kim Jeffs and my partner Charmaine had great difficulty getting there, so I would like to say a big thank you to ICH who kindly offered to pay for us.

All my life I wanted to do childcare, I didn't really explore other options in life. Since doing this my mind has changed and I want to work in the sector of vulnerable adults with epilepsy. Thank you."

Oxford Success

The Informed is pleased to write that one of our (now former) residents has just started her degree course at Oxford University. Emma Cullen is 18 years old and lived at Townsend House from April 2005 to October 1, 2006. She is at Somerville College in Oxford, reading physics. We wish her every success!

What's Going On?

Are you aware of the assorted events that are available in your housing scheme? *The Informed* has compiled a summary of some recent events and others that are scheduled. Some details are still to be confirmed, but if you are interested in any speak to your keyworker, warden or housing manager for details. The same services are not available in all schemes, however if there is something that you are interested in doing, please talk to your keyworker who may be able to look into alternatives for you.

St Eugene Court

Recent events:

During afternoon tea sessions there has been a guest speaker from Brent Council Waste Management to speak about recycling, another one on mental health issues from which a lively discussion ensued. Two ladies from Timebank came to talk about "Befriending" which is a scheme run in conjunction with Age Concern and were looking for volunteers to befriend other older people in their homes and hopefully to encourage cross community involvement. (The only Irish befriender they have to date is St Eugene Court Warden, Rosemary McCloskey.) There have been two big birthday parties for tenants; Marie Sargent who was 96 in July and Bridie Lane who was 85 in May. There was also a special morning coffee session earlier this month to celebrate Rosemary's 60th birthday.



Marie Sargent celebrates her 96th birthday with fellow resident Eugene O'Rourke.

Up and coming events:

November brings Vicky Smith, health worker from the London Irish Centre who has agreed to speak about circulatory problems, as there has been a lot of interest in this topic. In November there will also be a Remembrance Mass for deceased residents and friends with tea afterwards. This will be open to the local Irish community as well as to the tenants of An Caislean. Rosemary likes to open events to the local Irish community as some of the tenants get to meet others and enjoy the chat.

In December there will be the Christmas Carol Service which was a great success last year and a special Christmas lunch which may be held in-house this year (the tenants are to vote on this.)

There is a Communion Service here on average twice monthly for those who are elderly and have difficulty in going to church. Rosemary has been appointed Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist and brings Holy Communion down from Sunday Mass in Quex Road church to those that want this and there's a little service in Flat 21 for those who wish to come with tea and a chat afterwards.

Coffee Mornings are held twice a month, and usually alternated between morning and afternoon. The dates and times vary depending on guest speakers and residents availability, and are notified to residents some days before.

From November, for the duration of the winter, Rosemary will be making soup every Tuesday lunchtime, which provides another way to bring residents together for a chat and a bite to eat.

Rosemary is keen to point out that a cup of tea and a chat is usually available to all St Eugene Court residents whenever they feel like it.

Bethany House

SAFE - Financial Literacy started on 9th October. It's a 6 week class on a Monday evening that addresses budgeting and money matters, and is run by Toynbee Hall.

Fitness Class, in connection with Street League, runs every Thursday evening with a professional trainer.

Nutrition - A nutritionist who gave a talk in August is going to be back in January to do this again - giving residents information about healthy eating and good diet.

Eid will be celebrated on Friday 27th October, with lots of food and music.

Also at the end of October a celebration will be held to mark the end of Black History Month.

Coffee Mornings are run by Lifeskills worker Tessa Look, on alternate Tuesday mornings and evenings. A librarian visits on a Tuesday morning and residents can borrow books, CDs and DVDs. Because of Ramadan some residents cannot eat or drink at coffee morning, so Coffee Evenings started this month, and will continue to run every other week. Simone Smith the Resettlement Worker will also run a Resettlement Open Surgery at coffee evenings to address any queries about housing. Recent guest speakers at coffee morning have included Patrick Strahan from Training For Life and Glen Thompson from Brook Sexual Health.

St Louise

Horse Riding at Trent Park Equestrian Centre is on 20th October. Experienced riders or complete novices are welcome.

Diversity Cultural + Nutrition workshops run monthly and examine the Balance of Good Health. Earlier this month Ethiopian + Eritrean traditional dishes were featured.

Leith's Cookery courses are ongoing. 6 residents at a time can attend and each course lasts 10 weeks. On completion, residents get a Certificate and a Leith's Cookery Book.

ESOL – Tuesday morning 10 to 12.30. Any resident who needs to improve their English literacy are encouraged to attend.

Money Club – every Wednesday 5 to 6.15pm. This is a 6 week rolling course that all residents are expected to attend as part of their progression to independent living.

Aerobics – by Street League Wed 7 – 8 pm

Clothes design – running every Thursday 5 to 7pm. A full year's funding has been secured. All welcome.

Eid celebration on 23rd October. This will include food in the afternoon and henna tattoos.

Black History celebration on 30th October. East African, other African and Caribbean get together with national dishes, traditional dress and different types of music. Celebrate in style.

Pre-tenancy training with Natalie Eisel starts soon. This incorporates 6 workshops ... ask your keyworker for a referral.

Christmas Theatre – 19th December

Coffee morning is run by Lifeskills worker Lia Leonis every Friday morning from 10am onwards. All residents are very welcome as this



Leith's cookery students at St Louise

is a good way to meet new friends. There's an occasional visiting speaker.

Bethany House and St Louise day trip

Tessa and Lia are planning a day out at Chessington World of Adventures. Let them know if you are interested.

Conway House

Lifeskills at CHSE are run by John and Lindon of City of Westminster College (CWC) every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday during school term. Everyone who attends has the opportunity to join CWC and receive a student card which gives them various concessions, including discounted cinema tickets, travel and gym memberships.

Up and coming events on site at CHSE includes converting part of the games room into a computer suite. This will be organised by CWC with the construction of the computer room by CHSE residents.

John and Lindon plan activities on a day-to-day basis. They include cookery, art and craft classes, cinema & gallery trips, 5-a-side football, swimming and trips to the gym. They have organised BBQs and computer classes.

Primary Care Trust (PCT) – every Thursday. Chris is a nurse who provides a medical service to clients that have a problem accessing their GP or have no GP. He will link the clients with the relevant local services such as TB screening and treatment, mental health services and social services.

Coffee morning every Wednesday morning, 11.00am to 1.00pm provides an opportunity to meet informally with other residents and staff within the scheme over a cuppa.

Smoking Cessation officer funded by Camden will be attending the scheme to facilitate peer

group education and supply nicotine patches and support. She has already attended a resident's committee meeting and full residents meetings to explain the service personally.

Benefits Advice is available every other Tuesday. See your keyworker for an appointment.

Hackett House

Derek Heath and the residents organise a weekly video night.

Wednesday mornings is a house trip to the local gym.

There are plans to discuss a group jogging session each week.

A day out to Thorpe Park is planned for Halloween.

Borehamwood

In addition to house meetings, regular Film and Pizza nights are organised at Townsend House and there are plans to do the same at Hepburn Court.

Cardboard Citizens were at Townsend House in August for a 2 day drama workshop and they have agreed to return to run another.

Hepburn Court has a health visitor on site every Monday.

Hepburn Court residents had trip to Southend-on-Sea in the summer.

Planned events at Townsend House include a cultural night to celebrate the resident's diversity, healthy eating cookery classes run in conjunction with the Community Shop and the PCT, plus Drug Awareness run by the Police.

Residents of both schemes are welcome to attend a trip to a Christmas pantomime. (Oh no they're not! Oh yes they are!!!)

Caulfield Court, Dunne Mews and Highgate Road

These housing schemes are *General Needs* and therefore do not have the range of activities available elsewhere. However, there is a *Coffee Morning* every Thursday at ICH Head Office in Kentish Town, run by Philippa Pipe of St Mungo's. All residents from these schemes are welcome to attend for a chat and some refreshments.

ICH and *The Informed* would like to thank Paul McCarron who kindly volunteered to help with the production of this newsletter.

Peer Education at Conway House

During July to September a programme of peer education has been conducted at Conway House by Angel Drug Project (ADP).

The purpose was to raise awareness on issues such as safe use of drugs, why needles should not be shared, the law on cannabis, diet, sleeping soundly ... basically how to remain relatively healthy while using drugs, and how to break the cycle of drug dependency.

There was an award ceremony on 28th September where the participants received certificates of attendance and vouchers as their reward. Congratulations to the five attendees.



L-R Mark Hamilton, Des O'Donnell, Peter Kelly, Sahal Meheryne
(Joe Wiltshire not pictured)

Ramadan and Eid

Many of our residents are Muslim and will currently be observing the holy month of Ramadan. But what is Ramadan?

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar; it is the holiest month and during this month a fast is held from sunrise to sunset. It is a month of worship, and fasting is a means of fostering piety (belief in religion.) Muslims celebrate the glory of Allah (God) and thank Him for revealing the Qur'an (the Muslim "chart for life.")

Muslims have a meal, called sahur, shortly before dawn during Ramadan. After sunset they break the fast with another meal, iftar. Iftar should be a light meal, taken before sunset prayers. Providing iftar to others, especially to the poor, is considered very praiseworthy.

Ramadan is a month marked by worship and charity. Many Muslims say nightly prayers known as taraweeh throughout Ramadan. Over the course of the month, the entire Qur'an is recited as part of the taraweeh prayers.

A special night of prayer called Laylat al-Qadr (Night of Power, or Decree) occurs on the anniversary of the night when the first revelation of the Qur'an took place. The Qur'an describes the Laylat al-Qadr as "better than a thousand months," the night in which "angels and the Spirit descend, by the leave of their Lord, and it is peace till the rising of dawn."

Eid ul-Fitr, often abbreviated as simply Eid, is a well-deserved celebration for Muslims, as it marks the end of Ramadan. Fitr means "to break" and therefore symbolizes the breaking of the fasting period and of all evil habits. This year Eid ul Fitr falls on Monday, October 23, depending on the sighting of the new moon.

Residents working together

Resident committee members from all other schemes were invited to attend the CHSE Resident Committee Meeting on 13th September with the objective of organising future joint tenant events.

The meeting was attended by reps from Conway House and Townsend House. A number of events were discussed and go-karting and paintballing were voted as the two most popular and are currently being planned. Look out for posters at your scheme.

St Louise Summer BBQ

St Louise got into the party mood on 18th August when residents and staff enjoyed themselves at their annual summer barbeque.

Residents and staff contributed to the mouth watering feast. The delicious menu of jerk



Nicola Williams cooks up a fine feast

chicken, rice salad and punch, etc was prepared by residents led by Nicola Williams.

"The best part was stuffing myself with delicious food, and boy did they cook." said resident Gardannia White, which just goes to show what a good job was done when catering for all taste-buds, including halal and vegetarian.

The dance competition was popular and there was also a *dance off* between staff and residents (oh yes the staff have still got what it takes). "The music was designed for all shapes and sizes, I danced till I dropped." commented Aminata Budu-conteh.

First prize in the resident dance competition was a month's personal charges paid. This was won by Landa Wanliss who added, "It was lots of fun and brought staff and residents together, who worked hard to make the day a success."

The whole event was enjoyed by everyone, even the weather put on a brave face. Residents sang and danced the night away. Thanks to everyone that made the day a huge success.

Employee of the Year Awards

This award is designed to reward staff who go above and beyond the call of duty and strive to provide the best possible service. We need your help to identify and reward those staff.

If you know of a member of staff who has really made a difference to you personally or to the service where you live, now's your chance to say thanks ...nominate them for the Employee of the Year award!

Look out for the nomination forms which will be circulated very soon.

Black History Month

October is Black History Month. This is a time designated to highlight and celebrate achievements of the black community as well as uncovering its history.

Black History Month has been celebrated in the UK for over 30 years.

There are events happening all over London ... including in some of our hostels.

For more information, refer to the following:

<http://www.blackhistorymonthuk.co.uk>

<http://www.black-history-month.co.uk>