

window

July 2009 issue four

news and views from Ability Housing Association

welcome to your summer newsletter



tell us your story

This is your newsletter and we'd like to hear from you.

You can contact us by:



E-mail

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Letter

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This is the summer 2009 issue of the newsletter for customers of Ability.

The growth of Ability and therefore its number of customers, means we have more of you than ever reading this newsletter.

Earlier this year, Ability joined together with 'REAP', an organisation providing support to people in Reading, Slough, Bracknell and Hounslow. If you were a customer of REAP at the beginning of the year then you are now a customer of Ability. We hope you feel very welcome and that you enjoy this newsletter.

This issue includes a mixture of stories about you, our customers, and stories from within Ability to keep you informed about what we are doing. Also included are some facts and figures from our performance report.

As always, we want to hear from you about how we can improve what we do. There's lots of ways you can get in touch with us if you want to volunteer for our engagement review or simply to tell us what you think. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,
David Williams, Chief Executive

Winner of the lucky draw...!

Mr Stephen Hopwood from Witney in Oxfordshire is the lucky winner from our prize draw. A £25 voucher is on its way to you Stephen. **Well done..!**

inside

* **ANDREW'S STORY**
Ability Tenant appears on TV show 'Countdown'

PAGE 2

* **MIKE'S STORY**
Another successful move into independent living

PAGE 3

* **POUND HOUSE RE-DEVELOPMENT**
Demolition starts...

PAGE 3

* **PERFORMANCE RESULTS**
How well we are doing

PAGE 4-5

* **YEW TREE LODGE OPENING CELEBRATIONS**

PAGE 6

Ability Tenant appears on TV show 'Countdown'

Story by Andrew Mitchell

Following a serious car crash in 1982 which left me with left sided weakness, being unable to walk and severe short term memory loss, the main thing that kept my mind active was my daily word puzzle from my dad's newspaper, and the television programme 'Countdown'. I've watched 'Countdown' everyday since it started in 1984 almost without fail, coming home early from my Day Service so I could play along as the contestants did, often beating their scores.

When I moved into Summers Close, Adderbury in July 2007 my support worker Suzanne saw how much I loved the programme and looked on the internet to see if there was a fan club I could join. Suzanne found that Countdown was actively looking for contestants and she along with Alice and my main carer Laura helped me complete the application form.

In July 2008 I was offered a place at the regional trial in Oxford to see if I was good enough to qualify to go on the television programme. I was in fact one of the best applicants getting the 9 letter words!

A few weeks later I heard that I had been successful and that I would be contacted again to organise a trip to the studios in Leeds.

I was asked to go to Leeds on Monday 1st March and was provided with overnight accommodation for myself and two carers. The studio was how I imagined it to be but the lights and audience affected my concentration a little bit. Unfortunately I lost my game but would have won if some of the words I used were still in the new edition of the Collins Oxford English Dictionary.



It was an amazing experience and I enjoyed meeting Jeff Stelling, Rachel Riley and Suzi Dent and came away with a big bag of goodies including a Countdown paperweight, a mug, a huge copy of the dictionary and some souvenir photographs.

The edition I was in was shown on TV on 7th April. I enjoyed watching it together with some close friends and family at a small gathering at Summers Close.



If I could, I would love to go on again and suggest that anybody who enjoys a quiz show applies to see how they get on! The only downside was that I didn't get to meet Carol Vorderman or progress any further as I watched the rest of the

filming for that day and the following day playing along with my trusted notepad beating all the contestants from my space in the audience.

Another successful move to independent living

'Mike' has lived at Layton House in Wimbledon for 10 years. He started his tenancy agreement in May 1999 and up until he moved out, he was the longest standing tenant at Layton House. **Mike** never dreamt that he would one day have his own flat. He saw himself living at Layton House or another place like Layton House that maybe offered more support, for all of his life. But with encouragement from the staff at Layton House, his Care Manager from the Community Mental Health team and the Move-On floating support service that Ability provides in Merton, **Mike** moved into his own self-contained flat in March 2009.

This flat became the start of a new brighter and more independent life for **Mike**. He is supported by a

floating support package designed to meet his individual needs which is provided by Ability's dynamic Merton Move-On team. **Mike** receives regular visits from Ability's staff who help him to do things like, setting up his bills, assisting with his shopping and help with ordering his medication. **Mike** has now re-gained lots of his long-forgotten independent skills which he had lost before he moved to Layton House, and is looking forward to a brighter, more independent life. **Mike** said "at first I was scared of moving, Layton House has been my home for many years, I didn't want to leave there. I still occasionally go back to Layton House to visit my friends and the



staff, but now I have my own flat and lots more independence."

Mike's new flat was bought through the recent purchase and repair programme which delivered three new flats for move-on in Merton, and brings the total housing stock in Merton to 58 properties, 38 of which provide move-on accommodation.

Pound House re development

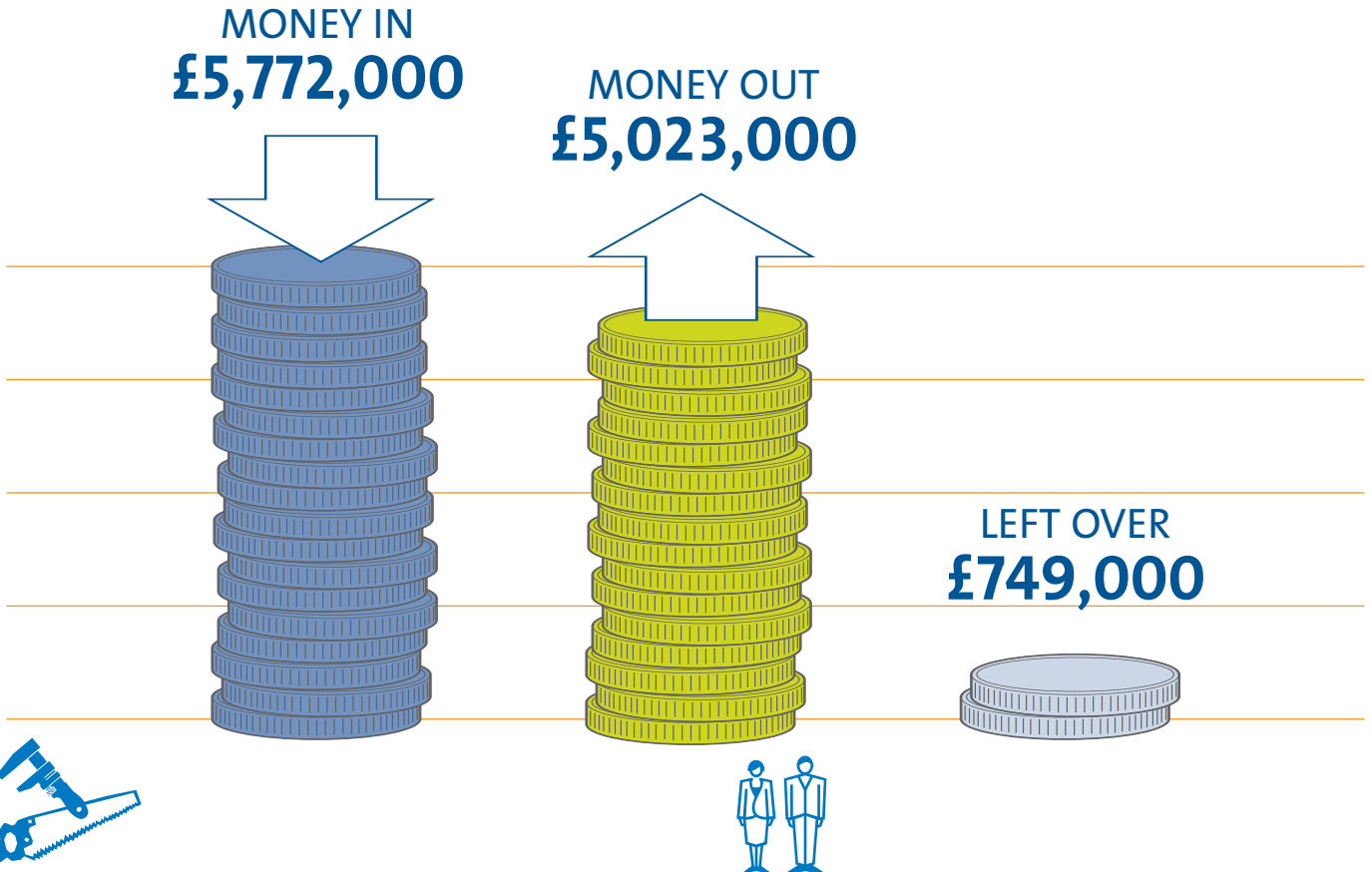
At Ability we are always looking at ways to improve and sometimes the only way to improve a building is to knock it down and build a better one! That is exactly what we have done at Pound House in Dorking. The 11 residents have moved out temporarily while we build them a brand new home of 12 high quality self-contained flats.



In March the bulldozers moved in and building work is now well under way. The residents will be able to move into their new homes next spring. We would like to thank the residents for their understanding and patience while we undertake this project. We are sorry for the disturbance but we think it will all be worth it in the end.

Performance Results 2008

Every year we must provide our tenants with some facts and figures about how well Ability is performing. We try to keep the numbers to a minimum, so if you'd like to see a bigger report just let us know and we'll send it to you.



REPAIR RESPONSE TIMES		
Emergency 24 Hours	98%	TARGET 98%
Urgent (5 working days)	97%	TARGET 98%
Routine (28 working days)	99%	TARGET 98%

% of repairs on target =

ETHNIC MONITORING OF LETTINGS		
White	61	82%
Asian or Asian British	1	1%
Black or Black British	2	3%
Mixed / Other	3	4%
Refused / Unknown	7	9%
TOTAL	74	100%



AVERAGE RE-LET TIMES			
	2007	2008	Target 2008
All	(35 days)	(41 days)	(28 days)



RENT COLLECTION		
	2007	2008
Collected as a % of Rent debt	100.50%	99.50%



NEW PROPERTIES

Number of properties by user group

No. of properties By user group	6 Staff Occupied (1 more 🏠)	174 Wheelchair Units (4 more 🏠)	87 Mental Health (25 more 🏠)	126 Learning Disability (18 more 🏠)	60 General Needs (No change)	11 Elderly (No change)	464 In total (48 more 🏠)
Ability Own	3	151	69	86	50	8	367
Others own	3	10	18	32	0	3	66
We own but don't manage	0	13	0	8	10	0	31



RENTS

Studio	1 bed home	2 bed home	3 bed home	4 bed home
Average Weekly Rent	Average Weekly Rent	Average Weekly Rent	Average Weekly Rent	Average Weekly Rent
Secure tenancy £44.56	Secure tenancy £56.57	Secure tenancy £69.28	Secure tenancy £74.92	N/A
Assured tenancy £70.87	Assured tenancy £76.90	Assured tenancy £84.46	Assured tenancy £94.91	Assured tenancy £104.08



ARREARS

	Overall 2007	Overall 2008	Gen Needs 2008	Supported 2008
Benefit Arrears	2.49%	2.92%	2.01%	3.39%
Tenant Arrears	0.84%	0.89%	1.27%	0.66%
Overall Total	3.33%	3.81%	3.28%	4.05%



RENT LOSS DUE TO VOIDS

	2007	2008	2008 Target
General Needs	0.94%	2.16%	0.5%
Supported	4.28%	4.12%	3.25%
Overall Total	3.01%	3.41%	

Yew Tree Lodge

Opening Celebrations

On the first of May the sun shone for a ceremony to mark the opening of Yew Tree Lodge in Ruislip, a new supported living service provided by Ability together with Look Ahead Housing & Care. The residents invited about 60 guests from Hillingdon

Council, Look Ahead and Ability as well as friends and family members to celebrate the opening. Tenants Peter and Ramsey gave speeches and Peter even helped the Mayor of Hillingdon to cut the ribbon.

A good time was had by all and there was a big thumbs-up for all the staff and residents who proved to be wonderful hosts.



The Housing Services Team has changed...

The **Housing Services team** at Ability is responsible for providing the landlord services to tenants and for managing our accessible housing register, Accessahome.

Our landlord services include all aspects of your tenancy with Ability. This includes letting a property to the new tenant, dealing with anti social behaviour and neighbour nuisance issues and dealing with all tenancy and rent matters.

We now have a new repairs service for all Ability tenants which was launched in March 2009. 'Kinetics' now carry out all the repairs and maintenance for Ability properties. As a reminder if you are an **Ability tenant** and need to report a repair, please contact Kinetics on: **0845 2300 051** : Press **1**, then press **1** again, then press **6**.

From July there will be more ways for **Ability tenants** to pay your rent.

All **Ability tenants** will receive an 'allpay' plastic card that will replace our current cash and cheque collection.



How does it work?

You can take your card to any post office or any retail shop that is showing the PayPoint sign



It will also be possible for you to make payments using the internet or your telephone.



Each card has an individual reference number so we know it belongs to you. Simply take your card to the counter with your payment. The Post Office accepts cash, cheque or debit card payments. Paypoint outlets only accept cash payments. You will be given a receipt as proof of payment.

You will also get a wallet with your card – you should keep your receipts safely in your wallet.

Also from July **Ability tenants** will be able to pay their rent by Direct Debit – this is probably the easiest way to pay your rent. This means that with your permission we will arrange to take your rent from your bank account on a weekly or monthly basis. Your rent is due weekly in advance so we could either take the money weekly or monthly in advance.

THE TEAM MEMBERS



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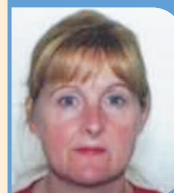
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Pound House tenants... ...get their walking boots on

We at Pound House walked miles and miles in March to raise money for people with Learning Disabilities like us. We helped Crossways Church in Dorking and people paid (sponsor) money for us to do the walk. Thirty pounds for each of us and there were nine of us. Bob and Marion (Staff) were there too. We felt great when we finished early and we got fish and chips. It was a good night.



Story by; Dominic Booth, Kevin Hayne, Jonathan Burke, Michael Beale and Leslie Tripp.
Norfolk Court at Pound House

We need
your help...!

This year we are reviewing our Tenant and Service User Participation Strategy and we need your help.

Tenant and Service User Participation is about how you can help us to make decisions and be involved with the work of Ability Housing Association.

We are looking for volunteers to sit on our working group. Would you like to help? If you would like to be involved in any way please contact Nichole Waller at nicholew@ability-housing.co.uk or telephone her on 07971 154636.



News Ideas?

If you've got any news or ideas for stories please get in touch, our contact details are on the front cover.

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