

window

2008 issue one

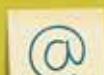
news and views from Ability Housing Association



welcome to your newsletter

tell us your story

This is your newsletter and we'd like to hear from you. Contact us by:

 **Email**
window@ability-housing.co.uk

 **Telephone**
01784 490910

 **Letter**
The Coach House, Gresham Rd,
Staines, Middlesex, TW18 2AE



Welcome to 'Window', Ability's new newsletter for tenants and service users. The name was chosen as the winning entry in the last issue's competition to find a name for the publication and many congratulations to Ability tenant, Michael Beale (pictured left), who suggested it.

In this issue we bring you up to date with the latest developments on our new Disability Equality Scheme and policy on home ownership as well as the results of the Tenant Survey and last year's Performance Figures.

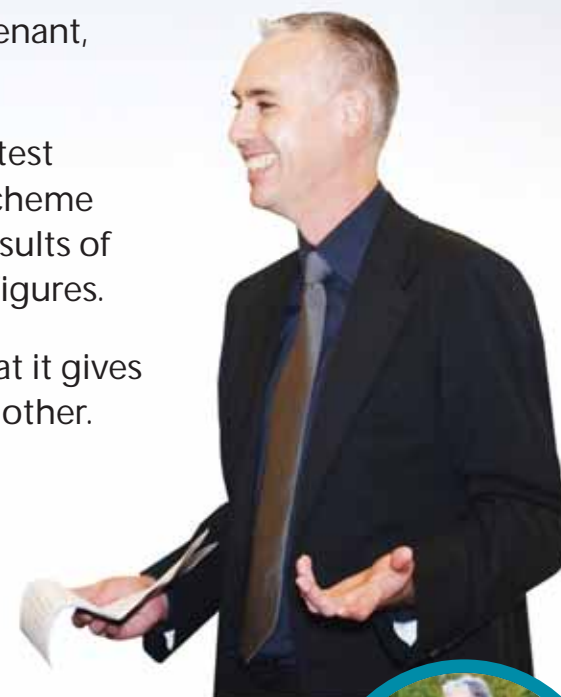
I hope that you enjoy reading Window – and that it gives us the opportunity to have a good look at each other.

We look forward to receiving your feedback.

David



Ability
HOUSING ASSOCIATION



inside

Results

What you say
about us



Best in show

Tenant Conference
Success



Wedding Bells

Love is in
the air





Ability's new housing development at Mason Way in Waltham Abbey, Essex welcomed its first five tenants in October. The story of Mason Way is a shining example of exactly what Ability stands for. We passionately believe that disabled people should enjoy the benefits of a home they can call their own and a built environment that enables them to live independently and participate fully in their community.

The one bedroom bungalows have been specially designed and built for wheelchair users with all the features needed to live an independent life. Mason Close, together with Ability's four bungalows at Lakeside Close in Chigwell, are all now let as self-contained homes to tenants who receive support that is tailored to their individual needs.

thanks

At the opening ceremony attended by all the tenants, David Williams paid tribute to the 'commitment and determination of several people' without whom the project would not have got off the ground. These included Alan Hall, David Stallan, and Caroline Pond of Epping Forest District Council, Gerald Long of Louis De Soisson architects, the Philip Pank Partnership and Clarkfields, the builders.

David also thanked Margaret Gillet, the Team Leader and Housing Officer who had been 'outstanding' in her work to support and prepare the five tenants for their move to Mason Close and the Ability development team who have worked on the project for over eight years.





ability **not** disability

Ability's new scheme for Disability Equality was approved by the Board at the end of last year following extensive consultation and involvement of our tenants, service users, staff and Board members. The draft scheme was presented at the Tenant Conference where everyone attending was invited to give their anonymous feedback and suggestions.

The scheme sets out a vision for equality within Ability as an organisation without barriers, where people with impairments can take part and contribute fully and equally with their non-impaired peers.



Nazlee Aziz, an Ability Board member who is a user of Ability's support services has been appointed as 'disability equality champion'. She says "I see my role as ensuring that disability equality is treated as a business priority by the Board. I aim to ensure that the Board always considers the impact of its decisions on disability equality for customers, staff and the wider public".

David Williams, Chief Executive says, "We recognise that there are still some barriers within our organisation that prevent the realisation of our vision but our action plan starts now to put in place a systematic and continual process of identifying and removing those barriers".

Find out more about the scheme from the public news section on our website at www.ability-housing.co.uk

Tenant Conference **SUCCESS**

This year's Tenant Conference was attended by almost 100 tenants and services users, making it our best attended yet. Held at the beginning of November at the Hythe Centre at Egham, the day was designed to make sure that there was something of real interest and enjoyment for everyone. The packed programme included a mix of workshops, discussions, an excellent lunch and even the chance to dance to the ever-popular Firestone Rock Band.

But even the FRB were outshone on the day by the star attraction, Merlin (above), who delighted everyone by showing off his skills as a 'Hearing dog in training' and demonstrating how dogs can support people with hearing impairment.

Chief Executive, David Williams, brought the event to a close by thanking everybody for contributing to a wonderful, enjoyable and inspiring day that is always one of the most important in Ability's busy calendar.



performance results

in **£4,721,000**

out **£4,014,000**

left over **£584,471**

Ability enjoyed another successful year. Our income went up by 3.7% to £4,721,000 giving us £584,000 left over. This means that we have got enough money to provide all our services to you and to look after our homes. We've also got enough money to build or buy some more homes... which is good news for the people on our housing register.

We are getting better in lots of ways. For example, tenants are more satisfied; rent arrears went down; repair response times got better; and we now have only 23 homes that do not meet the decent homes standard.



99%

repairs on target

Repair response times

Emergency (24 hrs)	100%	target 98%
Urgent (5 working days)	99%	target 98%
Routine (28 working days)	100%	target 98%



Ethnic monitoring

White	54	75%
Asian or Asian British	4	6%
Black or Black British	4	6%
Mixed/Other	10	14%
Refused/unknown	0	0%
total	72	100%

Average re-let times

	2006	2007	target 2007
All	49 days	35 days	28 days







Rent collection

	2006	2007
collected as a % rent debt (97%)	99.70%	100.50%

26 new properties

performance **focus**



Number of properties by user group	 5 Staff occupied (1 more!)	 170 Wheelchair units (3 more!)	 62 Mental health (11 more!)	 108 Learning disability (11 more!)	 60 General needs (no change)	 11 Elderly (no change)	416 in total (26 more!)
Ability own	3	150	62	77	50	8	350
Others own	2	7	0	23	0	3	35
We own but don't manage	0	13	0	8	10	0	31



studio

Average weekly rents
Secure tenancy 44.56
Assured tenancy 66.78



1 bed home

Average weekly rents
Secure tenancy 56.57
Assured tenancy 73.27



2 bed home

Average weekly rents
Secure tenancy 69.28
Assured tenancy 80.86



3 bed home

Average weekly rents
Secure tenancy 74.92
Assured tenancy 90.17



4 bed home

Average weekly rents
Assured tenancy 88.45

Arrears

	Overall 2006	Overall 2007	Gen needs 2007	Supported 2007
Benefit Arrears	2.91%	2.49%	2.10%	2.65%
Tenant Arrears	1.08%	0.84%	1.65%	0.31%
Overall total	3.99%	3.33%	3.76%	2.96%
Target 2007		5.0%		3.0%

Rent lost due to voids

	2006	2007	target 2007
General needs	1.05%	0.94%	0.75%
Supported	3.26%	4.28%	3.75%
Overall total	2.38%	3.01%	

feedback results

93%

satisfied with quality of repair work

92%

satisfied with your home

85%

satisfied with our service

As an Ability tenant or support service user, you already know that we really do value your feedback. Last year we asked our tenants what they thought about their housing and services. The overall results were very good. A massive 92% of you said that you were satisfied with your home.

Overall satisfaction with the services we provide was 85%, which is a great result, but with your help we are confident we can make this even better.



Repairs

% that agree

Satisfied with repairs service	85%
Satisfied with speed of repairs	87%
Satisfied with quality of repair work	93%



Communication

% that agree

Satisfied that tenant views are taken in account during decision making	75%
Satisfied with chances to get involved in management and decision making	81%



Home and value for money

% that agree

Satisfied the rent is value for money	78%
Satisfied with accommodation	92%
Satisfied with the area you live in	90%
Staff are able to deal with problems	86%



thanks

Your views are really important to us. We'll talk with you more at the Tenant Consultative Group meetings later this year, so that we can monitor how we are doing and keep improving our service.

wedding bells

Ability tenants Patrick O'Connell and Sally Pinniger met in 2004 when they became neighbours at Summers Close, Adderbury in Oxfordshire. They quickly became friends and, when their friendship deepened, they celebrated their decision to move in together with a bottle of champagne.

By October 2006 Patrick and Sally had moved into their own flat in Banbury and started planning their 2007 wedding. The couple's Housing Support Workers, Suzanne Green and Catherine Wells, together with Sally's sister, helped them to find a wheelchair-accessible venue, book a registrar, send out wedding invitations and sort out their flowers, outfits, rings, menus, honeymoon and all the other arrangements for their big day.

After a lot of hard work, Patrick and Sally celebrated their dream wedding in September.



quick news



great day out



Kevin Haynes from Pound House sent us this report of a good day out.

"I recently took part in an exhibition at the 'Opening Doors' show at the Runnymede centre in Chertsey. The exhibition was a showcase of all employment-related services for

people with learning disabilities, and was designed for people to see what others are doing in Surrey.

"I went along with Michael Beale who works at Office Services, Fetcham. We had a display stand showing what we do at the Office Service – photocopying, laminating, binding and other office jobs. I really enjoyed the day."

buying your home

Ability believes that disabled people should have the same opportunities as non-disabled people to own all or part of their home should they wish to do so. Ability's Board has recently approved a new policy that sets out ways in which we can assist Ability

tenants to get on the home ownership ladder. If you would like to know more, please contact us by phone on **01784 490910** or by email on **info@ability-housing.co.uk** with your details and one of our housing services' staff will get back in touch with you to discuss your options.



meet the team

The Housing Services team at Ability is responsible for providing our landlord services to tenants and 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 and dealing with all tenancy and rent matters. Also dealing with the repair and maintenance of our homes, through to dealing with empty properties and getting them ready for the next tenant to move in.

Accessahome is our housing register for disabled people looking for a new home. It helps us to match people's housing needs with a suitable home and is used by Ability and other housing associations and councils.

If you know anybody who would like an Ability home, please ask them to contact us.

From the top:

Isobel Chalcraft – Head of Housing Services
Joan Williams – Housing Manager
Steven Cleary – Maintenance Manager
Jill Rush – Housing Officer
Margaret Gillett – Housing Officer

useful **info**



nice idea

After the London bombings in 2005, a paramedic came up with the idea to help the emergency services quickly contact a victim's closest relative or friend.

It's very simple. Just store the telephone number in your mobile phone of the person that you want to be called should you have an accident or need help. But instead of storing it under their name, store it under the heading ice - in case of emergency.

Then even if you were unable to tell someone who to contact in an emergency someone could contact your relative without having to know their name.

take cover

The right type of home insurance is absolutely vital to cover you in the event of a water leak, a fire or even a burglary. The National Housing Federation (NHF) offers a special insurance scheme designed to provide the right cover for you.



You should always ask around for advice when buying insurance but the 'My Home Contents Insurance Scheme' is well worth looking at.

You can call them for an information pack on **0845 337 2463** or find out more from the Services section on the NHF website at **www.housing.org.uk**

news ideas?

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