

In 2023, Islington and Shoreditch Housing Association (ISHA) proudly celebrates 90 years of providing social housing; in the heart of London.

Our vision is to co-create homes and communities where everyone can flourish. We firmly believe that everyone is entitled to a quality, affordable and secure home. As of this year, we provide that for more than 5,000 people.





A word from our Chief Executive, Ruth Davison

Panels displaying images from ISHA’s past adorn the walls of our offices, powerful reminders of the challenges that the founders of the Islington and Finsbury Housing Society sought to tackle: poverty, overcrowding, and unsanitary conditions.

Given that these issues remain today, 90 years later, one could conclude little has changed. However, over the years our organisation, fuelled by the same unwavering purpose, has grown and evolved; providing homes and services for countless North Londoners. From offering homes to a handful of families near Islington’s Chapel Market, we’ve expanded to provide 2,500 homes for over 5,000 people across Islington, Hackney and Waltham Forest. As the capital has continued to change, welcoming newcomers from around the world, from the Windrush generation, to the Vietnamese refugees who fled conflict in the 1970s, we’ve adapted to

meet the evolving needs of our community. An important part of our journey was the incorporation of Lien Viet in 2019, an organisation founded by another group of pioneers, who shared our mission and values.

If our residents and communities still face many of the same challenging conditions, those facing our organisation have changed tremendously – particularly in recent years. Achieving the remarkable feat last year of delivering two new homes every working week for families who need them most is a testament to the exceptional stewardship of an incredible Board, our governing body, and those who went before them.

We would like to thank and honour those who have played a part in the first 90 years of ISHA. May our dedicated work continue.



A word from our Chair

Mervyn Jones, Chair of the Board, shares his insights about his time at ISHA, what motivated him to join the board and some of the behind-the-scenes work he's most proud of.

I have known about ISHA since 1975 when I joined the predecessor of Homes England and the Regulator of Social Housing. I lived in Hackney for 15 years, and still have family living locally. When I was looking to retire, I looked for an appropriate non-executive role and I applied for Chair of ISHA; I've always had a soft spot for this organisation.

One of the reasons I wanted to be Chair of ISHA was its development work with the North River Alliance (NRA), a consortium of smaller housing associations. Throughout my housing career, I've very often ended up creating consortiums of providers to do bigger things than they could do on their own. The NRA is a good

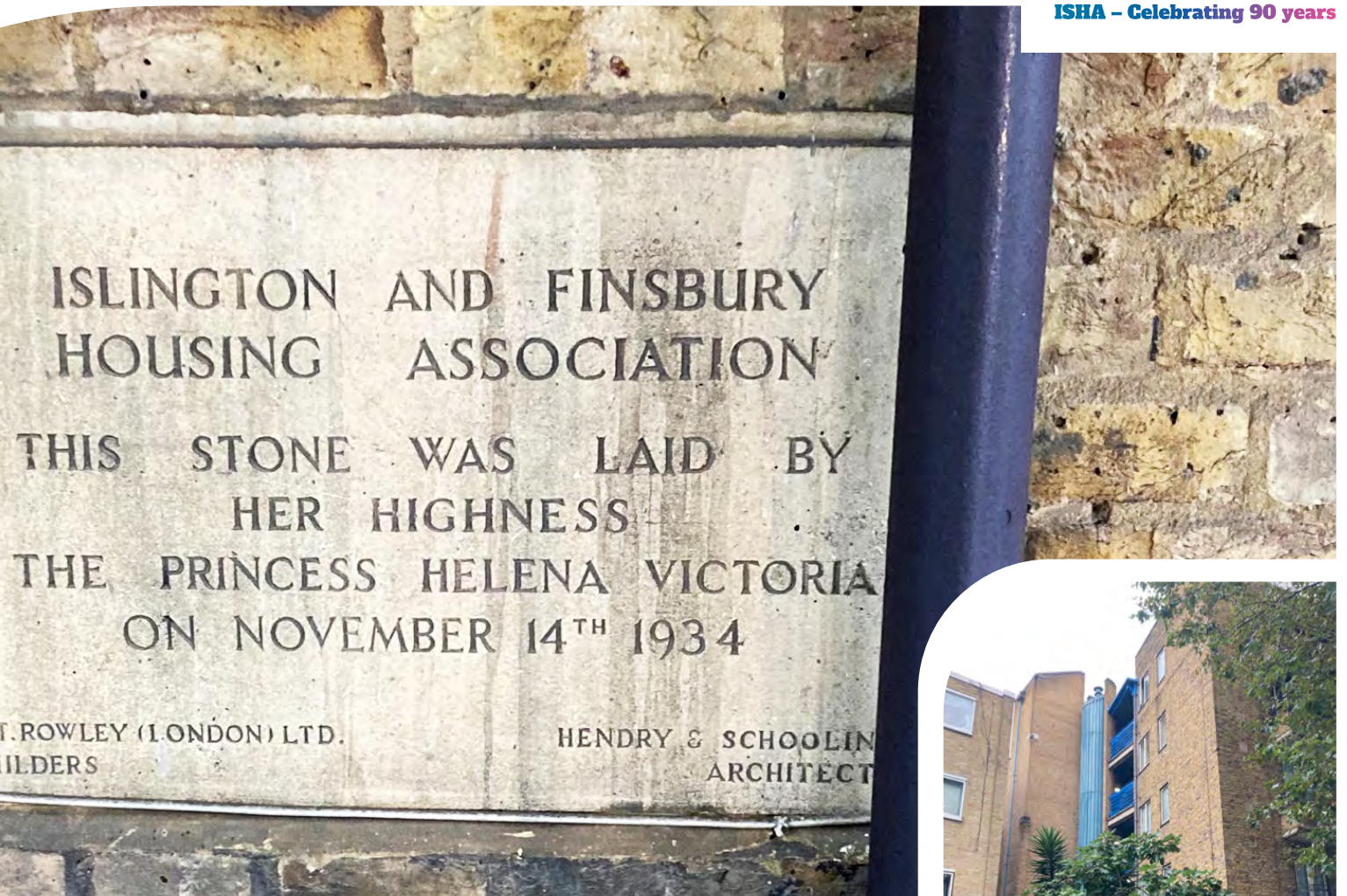
example of that and is quite long lived. I'm particularly proud of the contribution it's made to housing, doing those difficult little schemes that nobody else can be bothered with (alongside bigger projects) and delivering high quality homes across North London.

I'm also proud of the way the board and our governance, has been modernised. When I joined, we were somewhat behind the evolution of governance elsewhere. We still had a Finance Committee and a Development Committee, so we created the Audit and Risk Committee, which is frankly an essential addition these days. While most of that's very process driven, it means we can ensure we're still in place to support tenants and deliver housing in ten years' time.

We've also completed some new schemes in the time I've been here, which I'm very proud of. They're excellent homes and we should always aim to do more.

"I lived in Hackney for 15 years and have family living locally."

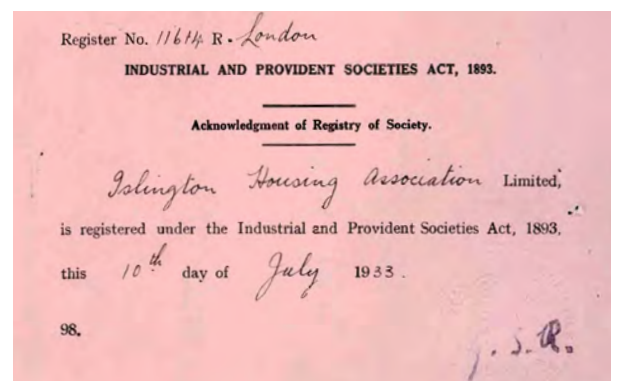




Our history – building homes and communities

In the early 1900s, the Islington and Finsbury areas were incredibly congested with families in homes that were not just overcrowded but, in some instances, disgraceful slums; run down and unsanitary.

Local authorities sought a solution as they worked on clearing those slums, and ISHA stepped in to address the challenge. We began our journey as the Islington and Finsbury Housing Association, in July 1933, starting with a small site on Penton Street in Islington. This site became St Katherine's House, which is still home to ISHA residents today. Remarkably, several of our earliest properties remain serving as essential social and specialist housing.





Burbage House

The demand for social housing was, and remains, enormous. While today our development relies on the now traditional bank loan, when, in the 1930s, ISHA was presented with the opportunity to acquire a larger site for Burbage House, we asked local people to invest in loan stock; offering a return not just on interest but in dividends of health and happiness.



Did you know:

Few people know that in 1576, Shoreditch became home to the first theatre in England, called simply 'The Theatre'. The Theatre was built by James Burbage, for whom Shakespeare wrote his first plays. Our residential block, Burbage House, is named after him and his enormous contributions to the cultural life, not only of London, but the world. Originally opened in 1937, Burbage House has since undergone redevelopment to modernise the homes and utilities.



Aberdeen Park

In 1947, we acquired Aberdeen Park. The estate was purchased with the assistance of the Lord Mayor's National Air Raid Distress Fund, to provide housing for older Londoners who had lost their homes during the war. We continue to maintain a block on the estate for older residents.



ISHA's longstanding community: a focus on our people



Meet the Rodwells - Tenants since 1943

Jean and Sidney Rodwell

Jean became an ISHA resident at just 19 months old after she and her family moved into an ISHA property. Her father was away in the army during the Second World

War and her mother had sadly passed away. Her aunt and uncle took her and her older brother in and the family were relocated to a four-bedroom home in Islington. Jean fondly remembers how the spare room became a play-area for local children, many of whom still live in the same neighbourhood today. Jean recalls children using the car park as a playground, the locals organising a coronation party for Queen Elizabeth II, and fun evenings on bonfire night celebrating with other families on the estate.

Jean met Sidney at the Strava Ballroom Club in Canonbury where Sidney played drums. Once they got engaged, they moved just over the road from Jean's childhood home to another ISHA property.



“We thought about moving when we got engaged, but I wanted to stay in Islington. There’s something going on all the time. If I left the house at three in the morning, I’d still see plenty of people out. I’ve always had a view of the church, and it’s the church I was married in, where my children were christened, and where my daughter got married. It’s a serene spot in a very busy area.”



Meet Yasmin Khan

Our longest-standing Board member shares her passion for housing.

I've always been passionate about housing; affordable housing particularly. I was born and grew up in East London and I've seen London change so much over the years, particularly northeast London. Housing has become so expensive that I saw a lot of my family and friends having to leave the area and move out of London. This made me want to do something about it because it seemed unfair that people couldn't stay where their home was or where they wanted to be, purely because there wasn't any affordable housing. Joining ISHA and doing something that would

make a difference to people's lives with a housing association was something that resonated and just felt right. I've been with ISHA for the past six years and I'm incredibly proud of the work we've done together.

In my role as a senior property lawyer at Islington Council, I'm involved in developing affordable housing and advise on a range of matters related to the council's New Build programme. I deal with the operational side, which



contrasts with my more strategic role when I'm at ISHA. This means I know the questions to ask, and I feel I have an in-depth knowledge of the issues that may arise when developing affordable housing. In terms of our size at ISHA, we are a small local community housing association. But in terms of our ambition and commitment to delivering affordable housing, we are huge. We want to do what we've set out to do and that's deliver more homes. That's how you make a difference.

“We want to do what we've set out to do and that's deliver more homes. That's how you make a difference.”

There's a significant shortage of affordable housing in London and we want to be a key player in providing housing. We have more than 2500 homes which we manage, and we have a continued ambition to deliver more affordable housing. It's no secret that housing makes a huge difference to people's lives in terms of their personal health, well-being, and for children, their educational attainment. It affects people's lives in a wide spectrum of ways. I think a perfect example of making a difference is the package of basic needs we provide when people move in, so they have the best start.





Expanding our community: welcoming Lien Viet

In 1978, following the end of the Vietnam War and the collapse of South Vietnam, refugees began arriving in Britain.

They found the Government's dispersal policy isolated many of them away from the support and provision of services that they needed. Despite this, they managed to create a few community groups, primarily in London.

The Lien Viet Housing Company (formerly An Viet), a subsidiary of ISHA, was established 1988 with a specific mission to provide a "safe haven" in the form of affordable, culturally sensitive housing for refugees from Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

ISHA has two dedicated team members who joined us when Lien Viet became part of ISHA, and who continue to support our Vietnamese community.

Tai Duc Huynh, Outreach and Support Officer



We've been working with Vietnamese communities in the UK for years and there's still a great need for support. The first issue many face is the language barrier, especially among older individuals. Because of the conditions in Northern Vietnam (where many of our tenants are from) during the Communist reign, many arrived with limited education and the language barrier hindered their access to jobs or further education. It can pose a big problem when it comes to getting access to housing or making sense of welfare reforms. It's very complicated, even if English is your first language. We can help support them with that and have offered life skill classes like IT classes and cooking classes. We're looking forward to resuming events with Lien Viet residents in the near future.

Many residents have lived in the UK for decades now, but it's still important that those communities receive culturally sensitive services. Together we've celebrated Lunar New Year (Tết) on many occasions and even had a few trips to the seaside.

As part of ISHA's integration of Lien Viet, we created a legacy fund, part of which was donated to the Museum of the Home, specifically to ensure that Lien Viet and the challenges faced by the Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian communities were not forgotten. During the summer of this year, that funding supported a free exhibition featuring works by a group of Vietnamese diasporic artists. Their exploration of the theme of Home through the Vietnamese cultural lens, emphasised concepts of belonging, community, conversation, and nostalgia.





Meet some of our Lien Viet Residents

Ms Man Dang has been a Lien Viet resident since 2005, having been forced to leave a council property.



She had been living in temporary accommodation and was offered a permanent tenancy in an unsuitable flat. When she declined, she was told to rent privately but received no help to do so. A friend introduced her to Lien Viet and she was able to collect a key the same day. She and her two children have been with Lien Viet since then. When Man moved in, we didn't provide carpets and curtains as we do now, and it's stories like Man's that continue to shape our mission and drive us to do better. Man's favourite memories after eighteen years in her home, like many of us, revolve around family. Big meals with the whole family, karaoke nights and card games on Tết.

Mrs Huong Tran fled to the South after Vietnam was partitioned in 1954, where she met and married Mr Rang Kim Tran, an officer in the South Vietnamese army.



They intended to leave Vietnam after the end of the Vietnam War but faced difficulties until the late 80s, when they and their four children relocated to the UK. Arriving in a refugee centre they were soon directed to speak to Lien Viet, and were promptly

found a home where they welcomed two more children into their family. Huong was unable to finish her education due to the conflicts in Vietnam, and struggled with language barriers presented when she arrived. She made every effort to learn English, so she wouldn't have to depend on her children. Now, she says, she'll go anywhere alone quite happily and she knows when she does encounter difficulties, she can always turn to ISHA to help. Mrs Huong remains close to her family and sees her grandchildren regularly, some of whom have pursued careers as teachers, bankers, and other professions. Huong's faith is very important to her and with a local Vietnamese church she's been on pilgrimages in France, Portugal and beyond.

Mr Phi and his family had been living in Vietnam before tensions began to escalate between China and Vietnam in 1979.



Being from a Chinese background himself, Phi's faced danger and discrimination as the government mistreated Chinese people living in Vietnam. With his family of eight he left in the 1980s, initially settling in Coventry. They were later advised to move to London

where there were more employment opportunities and a larger Asian community. Amongst other jobs, Mr Trinh and his wife My, went on to open their own restaurant in Plumstead. They're retired now but still often cook for family; though Phi says they're often harder to satisfy than customers. The Trinh's were frequent participants in Lien Viet's trips to the seaside and Tết celebrations, and he looks forward to their return, eager to meet other residents and staff.



Combining home and work: Meet Muriel, a long-term ISHA resident and former staff member.

I lived in Islington and my husband worked on buses and was based in Hackney. When ISHA advertised for a caretaker at Shakespeare House, I took the opportunity. It allowed us to relocate and enabled my husband to keep his job. When I moved to this area it was mostly large families living in the same block and lots of us still live here; my neighbour and I have been friends for 39 years. I always

liked the family atmosphere and the nice tenants who lived in the area. At Shakespeare House we had a big garden and I volunteered to take care of it all, with my husband too. When I first moved in, I held all the keys and people used to come to me if they were locked out. I was friendly with lots of people in the neighbourhood and I enjoyed the caretaker role and other odd jobs

“I always liked the family atmosphere and the nice tenants who lived in the area.”

too. We’d have bonfire nights and you’d see all the local children and grandchildren and we set up a table with food to share. I remember when ISHA arranged trips for tenants, we went to Hampton Court, London Zoo and a few others. Unfortunately, that stopped during Covid, but it would be nice to have some activities like that again. My sons don’t live in London anymore and they tell me I should move out towards them but no, I like Hackney. I love going on the high street and seeing how busy it is. Some people think Hackney isn’t a nice area, but I’ve always liked it.



Lord Best’s housing career took him to the highest levels of government as a British social housing leader and member of the House of Lords where he sits as a cross bench peer.

Here he shares his experiences from his time at ISHA and his hopes for the future of the housing sector.



As a student at Nottingham University in the 1960s I read what was called Social Administration and I wanted to do something in the social world, something philanthropic, charitable. The housing campaign Shelter had just started, and after attending their rally I was very much inspired.

was like for residents and what running an organisation entailed. I had the opportunity to do work experience at ISHA which in those days was run entirely by women. They didn’t have any toilet facilities for men, so I had to make use of the local café. In order to justify my frequent presence, I had

walking Citizens Advice Bureau. The housing managers were well equipped to give people good advice on any services that they might need or that they might be entitled to.

“I think it’s really important that we still have proper community-based housing associations that understand their own patch”

In the late 60s, I went to work for the British Churches Housing Trust, which is where my career started, promoting Church-based Housing Associations. I became the Chief Executive at 24, which sounds very grand, but there were only three of us in the organisation. I knew I needed to understand what the end product

to get a large mug of tea on each occasion; which rather ruined the purpose of the visit.

I shadowed the housing managers as they went on visits around Shoreditch, in order to collect the rents, see how people were getting on and to offer all kinds of general advice. It was a kind of

I think it’s really important that we still have proper community-based housing associations that understand their own patch, that are community-led and closely involved with local organisations and people who have signed up in terms of values to do the right thing, not always looking at the bottom line. The ultimate aim is to provide decent housing for people who really need it. ISHA has maintained that very powerful tradition and we need those voices to be loud and clear.



Our contractors are local too

Director of FDH, Tom Bishop, chooses to work with social housing associations for a reason.

I was born on a big estate in Hackney, so I know the value of Social Housing. FDH started as a family business, and we now have 37 employees. Over time, we've become tailored to tackling repairs in the housing sector and we pride ourselves on offering a 'familiar-face' service. With some bigger companies, all they care about is the money, but our mission is to make sure residents have safe homes and reliable utilities like heating and water.

We want to provide unrivalled customer service and offer the residents someone to rely on. I think we've had great success at giving people that reassurance, providing first time resolutions over 98% of the time.

You'll always see FDH at the resident involvement events and we offer apprenticeships for locals to learn a trade with us. Working together with ISHA, we've brought gas compliance up to 100% and



turned around the electrical programme to ensure every ISHA property is safe. I always say our relationship with ISHA is like a big family, because everything we do is a team effort.



Delivering on our mission of providing new affordable homes

We know that affordable housing can significantly improve the quality of people's lives and their outcomes.

We're committed to continuing to build new homes across the communities we serve to provide more people with the most basic foundation for a happy and healthy life. Last

year, for every week we worked, we delivered two brand new affordable homes. That means that each week, two more families are sleeping safely, with stability and better opportunities for improved outcomes.

Prospect House in Hoe Street

In June of this year, we celebrated the formal opening of one of our newest developments located on Hoe Street in Waltham Forest. Working closely with the local council, we put in significant effort to deliver 54 homes for social rent and shared ownership, to the community, even in the face of huge financial pressures. Home isn't just about the property, it's about the community too, which is why we were delighted to welcome a local nursery into the commercial space at the base of the building. Prospect House is also located next to an



excellent school, and affordable to local people. Not all associations do, but at ISHA, we now let all our social homes with carpets or laminates and curtains. This commitment, ensures people have

a comfortable and welcoming start when they move in. We're so proud to be on Hoe Street and contributing to this community.

Parkhurst

Our new development at Parkhurst Road in Islington, opened in January of this year. We worked with partners from Fairview and Islington Council to deliver 118 new homes. ISHA owns 59 of these homes, meaning half of the properties are available for social rent, ensuring that everyone has opportunities to thrive in North London.



Our work with the North River Alliance

Johnny Eveson, NRA Lead

We're extremely proud of our long-standing work to support and facilitate development in the community.

ISHA leads the North River Alliance, a consortium of 11 small housing associations, collaborating to build much needed affordable housing. Together, we've delivered nearly 4,000 homes over 19 years, across North and East London. This includes specialist projects for specific diasporas, and homes for those at risk of homelessness.

We work together to lobby for greater funding so we can provide more housing together than we could individually. We're delighted to say we recently secured more than £15million in funding, which will allow the NRA members to continue to build more quality and affordable homes.



Jay Jackson has been an ISHA resident for two years and is now a member of our Scrutiny Panel.

I've lived in Leytonstone my whole life, so I was very keen to stay local. I'm just down the road in Waltham Forest now. When I was younger, I worked with a London football club and I travelled the world doing that, but I wanted to settle down



somewhere I could be part of a community. I love the area and the people, there's a lot of independent boutiques here that people take a lot of pride in, so there's a strong sense of community. In my building, we have a chat group with about 75 members to discuss anything going on locally or anything we need to talk to ISHA about.

In my time with ISHA, I've seen things improve and I want to contribute to being part of that, so I put myself forward to join the Scrutiny Panel. Personally, I try to never see a downside but

instead look for ways I can be part of improvement and change. I'm really looking forward to working with ISHA's leadership team to ensure residents are heard and remain at the heart of the business. As a governor, I'm interested in children's development and giving them the best start in life so that's a priority for me, along with improving the experiences of people with disabilities. I think if we can do those things and still make sure we're helping the majority, we'll be in great shape.

Where do we hope to be at 100 years?

There's no doubt we've changed in 90 years, but our fundamental reason for being here has not.

We're still committed to providing new, affordable homes, and we're still committed to serving our residents and providing them with safe and secure homes.

As we look to the future, the safety of our residents remains our top priority and in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire and the tragic death of Awaab Ishak, we've looked inward to ensure we're delivering on this promise for residents. Long before building safety legislation passed last year, we were vehement in our views that residents should not be made to pay for redressing buildings that should have been built properly in the first place.

We're pursuing the developers who let us down to pay for the repairs and make good on the work that should have been right the first time. We've made huge strides to meet the new regulations on fire safety and building safety, becoming industry leaders in the process.

We've also redoubled our efforts to tackle damp and mould and in the coming years will be investing heavily in the upkeep of all our properties to guarantee their safety and quality. This work

will form the core of our budget spending for the next few years. But we haven't lost sight of our promise of continuing to provide new affordable homes in our communities. We'll continue to look for more development opportunities in our communities, and work with our partners to bring them to life.

We are also committed to improving the sustainability of our stock, making homes more affordable to live in. This year we successfully bid for funding to carry out retro-fitting works to improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel bills for residents in Newcombe estate in Islington. We're ahead of the curve amongst other housing associations and the private sector, with more than 80% of houses in EPC bands A – C. We remain committed to achieving greater energy efficiency

Currently, more than **80%** of houses in EPC bands A–C

in our homes as a key pillar of our strategic plan. We're excited about new technologies that improve energy efficiency in homes and ultimately put more money in residents' pockets.

Working with our Resident Scrutiny Panel, we're confident we can identify new ways to refine and improve our services and play a bigger part in the communities we're part of. Recently we've reintroduced resident meetings and look forward to offering even more ways for residents to share views and shape the issues that matter most.

The ACE Group

The ACE Group wishes ISHA heartfelt congratulations on their 90th anniversary!

We are very proud to be of assistance and work with ISHA and their residents and look forward to continuing to be of service for many years to come.



From one local organisation to another, FDH is proud to be part of celebrating ISHA's 90 years of service to the community. We're at the beginning of our journey and ISHA is an important part of our community focus. We look forward to supporting ISHA residents for many more years to come.





Chigwell
Construction

PART OF THE CHIGWELL GROUP

From the entire team at Chigwell Construction,
we'd like to wish you a very happy
'90th' birthday! A truly amazing milestone!

We look forward to working with you and
your residents for many more years to come.

In a world
where you can
be anything
be kind



**Thank you to everyone who has
been part of our journey over the
last 90 years.**

**We look forward to continuing
our mission to create homes and
communities where everyone can
thrive for many years to come.**

ISHA delivered 0.5% of the social rent homes built in England in 2022/23.

We are 100% compliant with the decent homes' standard

In areas like Islington, we've exceeded the requirement for provision of affordable rents.

Over 80% of ISHA homes have an energy performance rating of C or higher.

90
Year Anniversary

In some of our key boroughs, like Islington, we've proudly exceeded requirements for providing affordable housing.

ISHA was the first housing association to pay the London Living Wage.

Since 2019 ISHA rents all its homes with carpets and curtains, giving residents the best start when they move in.