



ISHA in our Community Report



ISHA in our Community Report

With the economic downturn and implementation of the Welfare Reform Act many of our residents have encountered uncertainties and difficulties in the last few years. Like many social landlords, ISHA and Lien Viet, being rooted in the community responded to these challenges. Our Operations Team has developed new ways of working to meet the challenges and additional resources have been allocated to provide support to our residents.

The in depth knowledge and experience of our Outreach and Support Team allows them to tap into a wide range of specialist support available in the areas where we work. Partnerships are key to much of what we deliver and we are active in developing these with statutory services and a variety of local organisations and charities.

We think that now is a good time to take stock and record some of the positive work we have been able to do with our residents in the last few years. This report details some of the work that we have been doing.



Outreach and Support Officer

ISHA's Outreach and Support Officer started work in November 2013. The post was created in response to the effects of the economic downturn and Welfare Reform on our residents. Networking in the communities where we work the Outreach and Support Officer raises the profile of ISHA and maintains detailed knowledge of resources and services available for our residents. As well as working on a one to one basis with many of our most vulnerable residents, they manage projects and initiatives that are part of our Community Development programme.

One to one support has been provided to over a hundred residents. Residents with a wide range of needs have been helped to access specialist services and charitable funds, maximise benefits and sustain tenancies.



ISHA Testimony

“ The help from everyone at ISHA has been really good. Staff are friendly and helpful. The outreach worker, revenue officer and reception staff who I have spoken to recently have respected our situation and treated us like individuals, not just ‘tenants’. We’ve had help to get my Mum her Freedom Pass, sort out our money problems and improve our home. We really appreciate the help and the fact it has all happened so quickly. ”

Ricky,
Islington resident

- ◆ Support in claiming Discretionary Housing Payments and making appeals against bedroom tax decisions has resulted in almost £15,000 of payments to residents.
- ◆ An extra £328.35 per week has been claimed by residents supported to take up their full benefits entitlement. That's £17,074.20 per year.
- ◆ Residents have been supported in accessing £10,000 of charitable grants funds and other payments.
- ◆ 7 residents have been referred to organisations providing training, support and employment. We continue to work with residents on an individual basis to see if we can actively signpost them into appropriate services.

Health and Wellbeing Fun days

In April 2015 the Outreach and Support team held a series of health and wellbeing fun days in Islington, Waltham Forest and Hackney. Residents were invited along to participate in a number of activities including healthy Vietnamese cookery, sporting and fitness activities and indoor gardening. A range of partners attended and residents were able to access health information including dietary advice, smoking cessation and how to access local sports facilities. Dr Bike attended and was able to service a number of bicycles belonging to our residents for free. 70 residents and their families and friends came along and we think the events were a great success. Over the summer of 2015 we'll be running some similar events in communal areas of our estates.



Education and Training

In the coming year we're launching a scheme to help residents achieve their individual training and educational aspirations. We're allocating an amount of money to assist residents with the cost of training and education of their choice.

Our partners:



Supported Housing

Our Supported Housing Officer works solely with 35 older residents living in our three supported housing schemes in Hackney and Islington. A wide range of support is provided to these residents with the aim of helping them live as independently as possible.



We make sure all residents in our schemes are in receipt of their full benefit entitlement. In the last year this has resulted in our residents in these schemes maximising their benefits by around £3000 per week. This is made up of uplifts to Pension Credits, Attendance Allowance and Disability Premiums.

We help residents access local activities and community facilities and during the year we hold various events including tea and coffee meetings, film clubs and Christmas and summer parties. We support these residents to access ISHA activities such as the Resident's Forum AGM and annual trips.





Lien Viet
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Lien Viet Housing Association Outreach and Support

Our Lien Viet Outreach and Support Team provides a range of housing related support to our residents and members of the wider Vietnamese community. They also run a number of groups, projects and activities.

Lien Viet Housing Association runs 2 hostels for homeless Vietnamese people. Residents from hostels have participated in a cook and eat course where they have learned some healthy cookery skills and gained confidence in using English. All our hostel residents have an allocated Outreach and Support worker who works closely with them to make sure they can access all the support they require.

We've facilitated a smoking cessation course open to our residents and community members and have done outreach with residents over the age of 60 and with all residents on housing repairs.

Housing Advice drop-in sessions

Every week we visit a local Vietnamese community venue to provide housing related advice to members of the Vietnamese community. At these sessions our Vietnamese speaking Outreach and Support Officers have supported over 100 members of the community with benefits claims, housing applications, tenancy issues and a wide range of other matters. Where possible we provide support but we also refer clients to a range of other providers.

Women's and Men's Groups

In partnership with a Family Action project worker we run monthly Women's and Men's groups. These meetings provide members of the community not only a great opportunity to meet and socialise but also access to help and advice on a wide range of matters including statutory and specialist services. With our Men's Group through work on diet, healthy eating and budgeting we are working to develop skills and confidence in English language.

Training for residents and Vietnamese colleagues

We've arranged a number of training courses and 9 residents gained a food hygiene qualification in 2014. We also lead a network of Vietnamese Community workers and we have facilitated a number of training courses for our colleagues.

Annual events



For many years Lien Viet Housing Association has held an annual Lunar New Year Event and a summer trip. We have continued this tradition and this year the events have been a great success, enjoyed by a growing number of residents and their families. At our Lunar New Year event we had a range of entertainment including traditional dance by the Vietnamese Women's Group, music and food provided by one of our partners, The Social Kitchen. In August 2014 Lien Viet residents were lucky enough to get fantastic weather for their day out to Margate.



Partnerships

Details of all our services for our Vietnamese residents and the wider community can be found at our website www.isha.co.uk/lien_viet/en. If you'd like to work in partnership with our Vietnamese Outreach and Support Team please contact us.

Lien Viet Testimony

“ I came to England in 2004 and lived in Manchester then Birmingham working in various jobs, petty and humble ones. Living in a foreign country where your mother tongue is not the main language it would not help at all. Besides I had no family, no friends around me... and no home. I felt very sad and sometimes really depressed

In 2010 as the living conditions were getting more and more difficult, I came to London and stayed with friends. Not long after that I had to move out to stay with another friend, in fact a colleague at work since my friend's accommodation was too cramped.

Since I was in England I did not have an accommodation of my own. I remember

some of my friends advised me to apply for a Council flat. On numerous occasions, I was rejected because of 'not enough of points'.

Then I applied for housing at Lien Viet Housing Association and was given a room in a hostel. At the time I did not know how to describe my feelings, my joy of a homeless Vietnamese, after 7 years owns a property, a small room of my own. I finally was granted last year a flat, a cosy flat in a nice environment. I had never thought of having a nice flat like that in a million years. It is really a dream comes true. ”

Ms Nguyen,
Haringey Resident

Helping residents affected by Welfare Reform

Many of our residents have been affected by the bedroom tax implemented as part of the 2012 Welfare Reform Act. Our Revenue Team have worked closely with many of these residents to help them understand the implications of changes to the benefits system and to help them take full advantage of measures put in place to assist those affected.

Within the last year we have assisted our residents with 150 Discretionary Housing Payment applications with residents gaining £80,000. This has significantly limited arrears our residents could have accrued as a result of the bedroom tax.

The team also makes referrals to specialist support agencies including Step Change and Help on Your Doorstep who have helped 10 residents with long term financial support so they can sustain their tenancies.

We know that changes to the benefits system have had a negative impact on household finances and we try and help as much as possible. We work closely with support agencies to prevent evictions.

Last year we made arrangements with residents and agencies such as Credit Unions, local authorities that prevented 10 evictions going ahead.

Resident Welfare Fund

Every year we allocate a small amount to provide immediate help to residents who find themselves in severe difficulties. This is often given to new residents who have very little resources to get started in their new home.

Bid for Better

Every year our Residents' Forum has a budget of £12,500 to award for residents to use on making improvements to the communal parts of the building and outside spaces where they live. Residents work with their Resident Service Managers to identify and bid for up to £1,500 to spend. In the past year we have seen residents making various improvements to planted areas and gardens, buying gardening equipment, making changes to outdoor spaces and buying pictures to brighten up shared internal spaces.

**ISHA, 102 Blackstock Road,
London, N4 2DR**

Tel: 020 7704 7300

Email: isha@isha.co.uk