



newsletter

Summer 2019



THIS IS THE NEWSLETTER FOR TENANTS OF HARROW CHURCHES HOUSING ASSOCIATION

HCHA's Single Persons Housing Project - a perfect partnership with Firm Foundation

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Above left, tenant Gareth with support worker Laura Lindores from Firm Foundation

HCHA has been working closely with our partner, Harrow based homelessness charity, **Firm Foundation** for the past 8 years. Firm Foundation supports local single people who are homeless to find practical solutions to access both emergency (short-term) and more secure long-term accommodation.

We met Firm Foundation Support Worker, **Laura Lindores** and her client Gareth, whom she helped to support to secure his current HCHA home. (More on page 5.)

Laura explains, 'I meet clients face to face and find out what their situation is. If I feel HCHA accommodation is suitable for them, then I make a referral and bring them to their appointment and viewing. Once signed up, I support them in claiming Housing Benefit and help them with a starter pack which consists of bedding and kitchen equipment. So that's pretty full on!

Each year there are about 25 people that come to the Firm Foundation Winter Night Shelter from January to March and our aim is to get as many people housed as we possibly can while the shelter is running. Where we don't find long-term accommodation for people, for many reasons, they then often end up back on the street. This winter we housed a total of 18 people. So that's a great success rate. Once housed, people tend to stay quite a long time. We supported one woman that we housed in shared accommodation with HCHA for a couple of years and she has just moved into her own permanent place now.'



Raph Abum, HCHA's Housing Manager said, 'I work closely with our strategic partner Firm Foundation to tackle street homelessness in Harrow. We've successfully housed over 20 homeless people that they've referred to us.'

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I am really delighted to report that at the end of March we took handover of the site of what was Watkins House in the centre of Harrow from Harrow Council and began work. You can see our feature about it in this newsletter, but I really wanted to take this opportunity to thank our Development Team, the HCHA Board, the Greater London Authority and our partners Octavia who have all worked so hard to make this development a reality. We will be keeping you informed as we begin to build on our success at Ewart House

and provide the local community with yet another much needed Extra Care scheme. The site is not without its challenges including a very interesting World War II air-raid shelter and will need a lot of work before our tenants move in, but the team are already busy planning ahead for that very day.



Christopher Holley, Chief Executive.

Demolition begins to make way for new HCHA Extra-Care scheme in Harrow



Left to right: Mathew Ball, Christopher Holley, HCHA CEO and Bryn Davies of Wilmott Dixon, photo Lucy Baker



Computer-generated image of the new building by project designers TM Architects

The demolition team from Willmott Dixon is busy flattening the former local authority owned building that was called Watkins House. The new development will provide Extra Care housing with 56 self-contained flats for people over the age of 55 and 2 independent wheelchair flats. Octavia Housing will be offering an additional 20 shared ownership properties.

Expected to open its doors in 2021, **Christopher Holley** the CEO of Harrow Churches Housing Association said, 'We are delighted to not only yet again be at the forefront of providing Extra Care, a much needed alternative to care homes in the borough, but also offering beautiful lifetime homes that people will really want to live in.'

Extra Care offers the privacy and independence of a self-contained home with space standards that make wheelchair accessibility easy throughout the property. At the same time it promotes a sense of real community with spaces to meet, socialise and to enjoy time with neighbours, family and friends and can facilitate a range of services where staff can be on hand to offer extra support and where needed care. Extra Care has been proven to offer people with long-term health conditions and disabilities a better quality of life as well as real savings to the public purse.

Chris Tredget, Managing Director of Willmott Dixon in North London and the East added: 'We are delighted to be creating extra-care housing for Harrow enhancing people's quality of life through more independent living. As with all our projects, we aim to leave a lasting positive legacy in the local community through local spend and our social value activities.'



The old Watkins House site before demolition

Octavia Development Director **Dave Woods** said: 'We are pleased to continue our successful relationship with Harrow Churches through being their partner with this project. The development will provide 20 shared ownership homes for local people, offering them a more affordable opportunity to buy their own home.'

Understanding Ramadan

Pictured left to right Paxfold tenants Mazina, Shiffa, Tariq, Activities Coordinator Ekky and volunteer Laura.



At HCHA we are privileged to serve a very diverse community of tenants. The Embracing Diversity project is designed to showcase the heritage and traditions of our tenants so as to increase understanding and improve shared experiences.

As part of this project our Activities Coordinator Ekky Archibong, organised a series of talks at Paxfold and Ewart House to share the meaning of Ramadan and the importance of the holy month to our Muslim tenants and those fasting around the world. Ekky said, 'After having participated and shared activities around Christmas, Easter, Hanukah, and Diwali it was good to also focus on the Islamic month of Ramadan. The talks included a video presentation, discussion and a small exhibition of artefacts donated by tenants and staff of the faith. We even had delicious dates!'

Shiffa, Paxfold tenant, pictured right with some typical things used in Ramadan: a prayer mat, the holy book, a timetable with fasting times, and dates with which to traditionally open the fast. Shiffa joined in the conversation and explained, 'We fast for the whole month and I really enjoy this special time.'



Wolstenholme – calling all art enthusiasts!



PHOTOS: SONI SHAH

Wolstenholme tenants have been running an art group for enthusiasts for the past 5 years. Tenant Peggy says, 'We don't have a teacher, instead we are 'self critiquing', offering members of the group friendly advice and appraisal.'

Initially the art group was for Wolstenholme tenants, but now they are widening the invitation to all residents living in HCHA sheltered schemes. It is free to join, so why not bring along your pencil and paper to Wolstenholme communal lounge on a Friday at 10am and join in!



Upcoming maintenance works at Woodforde Court in Harlington



James Warne
our Head of Asset Management & Development updates us on

new works to be carried out at Woodforde Court, general needs housing scheme.

HCHA will carry out the following maintenance work at Woodforde Court over the summer:

Heating system repairs

During the summer we are proposing to drain the heating system and carry out essential maintenance works to it. Currently some flats are unable to control the heating from the radiators and we intend to replace the thermostatic and lock shield valves on all radiators in the block. The system will then be flushed through and

refilled and commissioned. Hopefully, this will mean that all flats will be able to control the heating properly.

Fire safety improvements

We are also going to be carrying out some fire safety works in the block. The work will involve fitting a new overhead door closer, intumescent fire/smoke seals to the flat

doors and a new letterbox which will also be fire rated.

In the corridors we will be plaster boarding the ceilings on the upper floor and sealing heating pipes concealed within duct on the ground floors.

We will shortly be organising a tenant meeting at which dates and more information will be provided.

Hello and Goodbye



Linda with 8 month old granddaughter Lily and daughter Emma

4 Goodbye to Linda from Wolstenholme

After ten years of service with HCHA, we would like to say farewell to Linda Jackson. Linda started out as a part-time member of our sheltered housing team and became a full-time scheme manager at Wolstenholme 7 years ago.

Reflecting on the highlights of her work, Linda says, *'I signed up 20 new tenants at Wolstenholme, which has 31 homes. My favourite part of the job was to help and support new tenants move in, help them settle down, meet their neighbours, invite them to social events, and generally welcome them to the Wolstenholme community. I also enjoyed working with other agencies such as the hospital discharge team and carers to enable our tenants to come home sooner after a stay at hospital, and to live longer in their homes.'*

Linda wants to spend more time with her 8 month old granddaughter Lily, and help with childcare as her daughter Emma returns to full-time work this summer.

Barry Ingate retires from HCHA Board

Barry Ingate, Board member of Harrow Churches Housing Association stepped down at the Annual General Meeting in March after 34 years of volunteering for housing associations.

Barry Ingate, pictured right, with Christopher Holley, centre, and wife Jean Ingate, said,

'I would firstly like to thank the Association for their kind gifts to both myself and Jean. I assure you that they will be well used! Secondly and more importantly, I would like to say thank you for the time that I have been involved with HCHA, since it was agreed that Stanmore Christian Housing Association would merge with HCHA some 10 years ago.



I have been privileged to work with a great group of people, both Board members and staff, who have given such a lot to the Association in many different ways. It has also been exciting and fulfilling to see how the Association has grown and to be part of that development.

A lot has changed over the past 10 years, including the development at Paxfold, the addition of Harlington Rectory HA, a new homes to rent scheme and our latest development taking place at Watkins House. It has been exciting and encouraging to see so much happening in a relatively small association and I would just wish you all every blessing in everything you do in the future. May we continue to provide good, safe and affordable accommodation for all our tenants in a loving and caring way.'



Hello to Maureen Wallace

We welcome Maureen Wallace as the new scheme

manager for Wolstenholme. Asked how Maureen is settling in, she replies, *'I am getting to know everyone through doing the morning call round to tenants, attending coffee mornings and generally leaving my office door open, so people can feel they can pop in for a chat.'*

If you haven't met Maureen yet, she is planning to organise a social event for Wolstenholme tenants this summer in the garden. Please check the notice board for details.

In addition to supporting her family, Linda says, *'I have a whole bucket list of things that I want to do with my free time, including getting my children's picture book of rhyme published, that's something I started 10 years ago when I was a playgroup leader. I also want to do other things like wine making, try my hand at more adventurous cooking, travel and visit family and friends.'* We wish Linda every success with moving forwards.



Goodbye to Majek Akande

Majek joined HCHA as a scheme manager at Paxfold in

April 2016. With three years of management experience under his belt and an interest in business, Majek has decided to invest in higher learning and undertake a one year Procurement and Supply course. We are sorry to see him go, but wish him every success on his new career journey.

Majek said, *'Working at Paxfold has been a good experience for me, it's a lovely scheme to work in and I will miss the tenants.'*

Our tenant, Gareth shares his story...



support that is available until I became homeless. Other rough sleepers told me about the Winter Night Shelter and Laura helped find me this place at Harrow Churches.

What's been your experience of living in a HCHA single persons shared house?

It affected me in a great way, I'm not on the street. We all get on, we all clean-up. Health wise I have an opportunity to cook, to eat properly, to shower properly. On a social level it helps with my depression because you're not singled out on your own, or just isolated wondering what you're going to do day-to-day. Though if I want to sit in my room all day I can, no one bothers me and there's no issues. And for me there's always someone here to talk to which is a very nice feeling.

I'm on Universal Credit. I get money and they pay my rent so it's something. And for me having this starting point is a huge thing. Before all this happened, I went through a very bad period where I couldn't really work. The way I see it is it's little small steps, I've got a place to stay now, I've got income coming in, once I get on top with my medication and get back into the reality of being somewhere, I can start taking on small amounts of work. With Universal Credit I'm allowed to work which is even better so I can start off with small jobs and build on it.

Firm Foundation's services include Harrow's Single Homelessness Signposting Drop-In, a weekly Day Drop-In, Hope Place - a supported accommodation for three people, and a Winter Night Shelter that runs from January to March every year providing approximately 25 bed spaces.

How did you end up sleeping rough in Harrow?

I was a chef for 26 years then I stopped. There was a big turnaround in my life where things didn't work out, I had some mental health and drug and alcohol problems. I started sleeping rough last year, and was in a very vulnerable position, because you don't know what's coming, if you're going to get moved on, or if you're going to get robbed.

What was it like?

This January was extremely cold, and I was layering up to stay warm. I've got a super dry jacket which helps, and was wearing jeans and a tracksuit bottom and a couple of

pairs of socks. But once you get cold in your bones, that's it. So it's handy if you can find somewhere dry. I slept behind Tesco's and got food from there. I couldn't beg for money because I don't have the confidence to talk to people I don't really know because of my anxiety and depression, so you are literally living on handouts or going through the bins behind Wenzel's because they throw away so much food. I also used to go to drop-in centres and churches.

How did you find Firm Foundation's Winter Night Shelter?

I have lived in Harrow all my life and I'd never heard about the

PHOTO: LUCY BAKER



Introducing HCHA's new Pet Policy

written by Chris Roberts, HCHA Interim Operations Manager

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We have just launched our new pet friendly policy which can be found on the HCHA website as we believe having a pet can be really beneficial.

Pet owners know how much their furry friend improves their quality of life. On an emotional level, owning a pet can decrease depression, stress and anxiety; health-wise, it can lower your blood pressure, improve your immunity and even decrease your risk of heart attack and stroke.

Quite aside from the joy of having a cat or a dog, studies show that pets can have a beneficial effect on our health and wellbeing. Owning a pet can improve

our general health in less than a month, with pet owners reporting fewer minor ailments such as headaches, coughs and colds.

According to the Pet Health Council, simply stroking a pet or watching fish swim can help us to relax, thus reducing our heart rate and lowering blood pressure. Other studies indicate that owning a pet can reduce cholesterol and the risk of heart attack. Not only that, pets can help to lift depression, as well as reducing loneliness and isolation. This is true for some pets more than others.

'There's no doubt that keeping any kind of pet can help us to feel happier,' says Elaine Pendlebury, Senior Vet at PDSA. 'They can help us in all sorts of ways, but it's a two-way thing as we have a responsibility to take good care of them too.'

So if you are thinking of getting a pet, it makes sense to plan for the future so discuss this with your scheme manager and read the Pet Policy. Think carefully about which one best suits your lifestyle.

Different types of pets require different levels of care:

- a dog needs regular exercise
- birds and small animals like rabbits and guinea pigs have to be cleaned out regularly
- cats need little more than regular meals and affection.

Come along for free hot meals at Soul Kitchen



Soul Kitchen is a new community run project serving free hot meals in Harrow & Hounslow. HCHA tenants are welcome to drop in for a free meal - it is open to all faiths and backgrounds.

Cllr Sue Anderson for Harrow Greenhill Ward, who is a supporter of Soul Kitchen said, *'I have visited Soul Kitchen in Harrow a couple of times and have been really impressed by the friendliness of the volunteers and the welcome to all the people who attend. This initiative not only provides visitors with a delicious meal but also reduces social isolation by helping people to get to know their neighbours, whatever their age, race or religion. I am really pleased that it will now be running twice a month in Harrow.'*

Soul Kitchen runs **twice a month at Harrow Central Mosque Function Hall, 34 Station Road, Harrow, HA1 2SQ**. Bus routes are 140, 182, 186, 258, 340 and 640. The stop near Harrow Civic Centre. Open Saturday from 12-2pm on the following dates: 6th & 20th July, 10th & 24th August, 7th & 28th September, 5th & 19th October, 2nd & 16th November, 7th & 21st December.

Soul Kitchen runs **once a month at St Leonard's Church, St Leonard's Parish Hall, Heston Road, Middlesex TW5 ORD**. Buses 111 and 120 stop right outside St Leonard's Church. Open Sunday from 12-2pm on the following dates: 28th July, 18th August, 22nd September, 27th October, 24th November, 1st December, 22nd December.

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