

Stonewall Housing has a number of policies which aim to protect clients and visitors from abuse.



... SPOT-

**What is abuse?**

'An expression of dissatisfaction made by a service user about Stonewall Housing's services'.

**What do I do if I think someone may be being abused?**

Anyone who makes a complaint will not be evicted or receive a poorer service just because they have made a complaint. Rather, we value complaints as a useful form of feedback on the way we deliver our service.

**What is Stonewall Housing doing to prevent abuse taking place?**

Just mention any grievance to a Supported Housing Officer. They will try to resolve the issue and record it in their Informal Complaints Log.

If the issue is not resolved informally, or you wish to take the complaint directly to the formal stage, then it is directed to the Director and investigated by a Services Manager. The complaint can be registered in person, in writing or over the telephone. If you are not happy with the response then the Director investigates.

If you are not happy at this stage then the complaint is passed to the Management Committee, which is the final stage of investigation within the organisation, but a complaint can then go to the Independent Housing Ombudsman.

All complaints (formal and informal) are recorded and action taken is reviewed every 3 months to ensure policies are being followed. Also, the outcomes of complaints are feedback to clients, via this quarterly newsletter, and the Management Committee, via their regular meetings.

**next issue**

**The spotlight will be on the Protection from Abuse Policy.**

What is abuse? Are there any clues to look out for if you suspect someone is being abused and how do you go about telling someone?



From December, same-sex couples can register a **civil partnership**, that is have their relationships legally recognised and have the same rights as married couples in tax, social security, inheritance and workplace benefits. Ask your Supported Housing Officer for further information.

The next **newsletter** will be out in early January 2006— so have a very merry Christmas.

**WATCH OUT!**

Remember the **clocks** go back one hour in the early hours of Sunday 30 October 2005.



The next **Management Committee Meeting** is at 6.30pm on Tuesday 6 December 2005. Let us know as soon as possible if you want to attend so that we can arrange food.

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Is it a bird? Is it a plane?

No, it's the 2004/2005 Annual Review. (You should receive a copy along with this newsletter - if not, just ask your Supported Housing Officer).

To describe the review as amazing would be an understatement - as well as the totally sensational comic-book look, the achievements described inside are incredible too. Thanks to everyone's hard work for making last year a success and to our very own Carla Owen, who conceived and wrote the Review.



Two of the 4 London Boroughs in which Stonewall Housing works have now reviewed the quality of our support service.

The initial response is good, with both highlighting our systems around complaints and protection from abuse for praise. We will keep you posted on the outcomes of these and other reviews.



There have been some staff changes over the last three months:

NEW

Jon Brew, Supported Housing Officer, has left to go travelling. Abe Eburajolo, Finance Officer, has resigned. Anne-Marie Wignall, Supported Housing Officer, is now working part-time at one of our Hackney schemes and part-time as a Housing Advice Worker. Nick Wallbridge is moving to be the Supported Housing Officer in our Haringey scheme.

Recruitment is under way for the replacement posts.

4 new clients moved into Stonewall Housing's supported accommodation over the last 3 months. Welcome! We hope your stay with us will be beneficial and the support offered to you will help you achieve your goals.

OLD

A couple of Stonewall Housing clients have said they are keen to put something into the newsletter, so we can't wait to see what they produce.

Let us know if you want to submit a diary, story, poem, article, drawing or photograph, or maybe you want to share your experiences of the support offered by Stonewall Housing - all submissions will be considered.

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## ... DOWN TO BUSINESS

Stonewall Housing provides support to 41 young lesbian and gay men. They live in 6 different houses, which accommodate between 5 and 9 people, across 4 London boroughs. Stonewall Housing does not own any properties itself, rather it works with various landlords to provide supported accommodation.

In each issue we will be updating you with information that we keep about the schemes. If there is other information you are interested in finding out then just ask...

During the three months between July and September 2005, in all 6 houses:

- There were 23 fire alarm tests
- There was 1 fire drill
- There was 1 incident when police came to a scheme looking for someone.
- There were no formal complaints.
- There were 3 informal complaints concerning noise, people sharing the same house and a repair issue.
- There were 3 risk assessments carried out for all schemes to reduce the risks faced by staff working alone and prevent staff from abusing, or benefiting from, vulnerable clients.



## what do you think?

Did you know that all clients are invited to observe the Stonewall Housing's **Management Committee Meetings**?

They take place every 6 weeks usually on a Tuesday evening from 6.30pm for about one hour and are usually at the Head Office on Essex Road.

Refreshments are provided so let us know if you want to attend so that we can meet all dietary requirements.

See Page 4 of this newsletter for the date of the next meeting.

Bob carries out his '**surgeries**' at most schemes at least once every three months. This is an opportunity for you to talk to him directly and in private.

In August and September he carried out surgeries at 5 of the 6 schemes and saw 4 people individually, discussing a range of issues, such as, the repairs, security, financial management, rent arrears and Welfare Fund applications.

Keep an eye out for the **invite** to the next surgeries in November/December which will be delivered through your door.

**Tenant Meetings** were held at 2 schemes in August 2005. Issues discussed included health and safety, resettlement, the change of Supported Housing Officer, cleaning, spare rooms, newsletter and visiting other agencies. The minutes were sent to the tenants of the relevant house.

Would you like a Tenant Meeting at your scheme? If so, let us know and we can help you arrange one. We can invite landlord representatives to the meetings if required.

## ... HOT TOPIC

## When can I move?

The target length of stay for Stonewall Housing clients is 2 years. It is hoped that within this time clients will receive the support necessary to enable them to move to more permanent accommodation. It is recommended that clients keep up to date with their weekly rent and service charge payments and inform Housing Benefit of changes in circumstances to prevent rent arrears which can put the resettlement process on hold.

MOVE ON

## Where are all the flats?

All clients should register with their local council for housing but waiting lists are very long due to high demand and low numbers of flats/bedsits available.

Stonewall Housing does receive nominations from Hackney, and Haringey has offered some one accommodation in the last few months, but there is no guarantee as to how long this will continue. Newham and Islington no longer offer nominations but we can help with applications for those in priority need (e.g. for health reasons or if you are under 18),

We also receive nominations from Housing Associations, but again these may not be guaranteed in future. London and Quadrant currently offer one nomination per year. Mosaic Homes offer a waiting list for those ready to move on who are not in arrears. Circle Anglia operates a points system for bidding for available properties, but no new clients have been able to get on their list in recent months, though this may change soon.

## What other options are there?

Stonewall Housing now informs all new applicants that the chances of getting a council or housing association flat are getting slimmer and they should be thinking of other ways of finding accommodation when they no longer need the support on offer. Currently some of the London Boroughs in which we work are looking into setting up Rent Deposit schemes to allow tenants in temporary housing to move to private rented accommodation, which often require a month or two's rent up-front.

Islington Housing Officers have expressed an interest in meeting Stonewall Housing clients to discuss the (lack of) move-on options and we will inform relevant clients when this meeting is to take place.

We are also contacting other Housing Associations who have offered flats to clients in the past to see if they are willing to continue doing so. If this is the case then we will offer these initially to schemes who have fewer current move-on options.

We also offer clients support after they move to help them settle into their new home.

If you would like to discuss your move-on options then contact your Supported Housing Officer, and we will also keep you updated of any changes through the newsletter.



## next issue

## ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR:

Do you suffer distress, fear or insecurity due to someone else's anti-social behaviour? Have you any thoughts on how such behaviour should be dealt with? If so, pass them to your Supported Housing Officer by Friday 30 December 2005 and we will try to answer them in the next issue.