

Spring 2006

# NEWSLETTER

stonewallhousing

## YOU LOOK FABULOUS!

Everyone needs someone else's point of view from time to time, like checking how good we look in a new outfit. Stonewall Housing needs your views about what we do.

## DO WE?

Staff are more than happy to get your comments, suggestions and complaints at any time and Bob Green is at most schemes for his surgeries every 3 months to get your views face-to-face. Another way of getting your view across is by completing the Annual Client Satisfaction Survey, which is due out in the next few weeks. This newsletter was introduced following the last survey and our aim is to keep improving our service following your views. So please help us get better by filling out the survey when you get it and keep giving your comments, complaints and suggestions to Bob or your Supported Housing Officer.

## LET US KNOW...

There are other ways to get your voice heard.

We will be starting a **client forum** soon—to give all clients of Stonewall Housing the chance to meet and share their views.

The amazing **new website** will be launched in the summer, and will include a forum on the internet where you can communicate with other clients and staff—more details in the next newsletter.

You can also get involved in the Health and Safety **inspections** which take place at your scheme. See page 4 for more details.

## b and t?

In March, we carried out a survey about widening the client base of the Housing service to include bisexual and transgender people. Thanks to the 13 people who responded. A summary of the responses and the recommendations based on the responses will be out very soon.

## EUROPRIDE

Do you want to visit City Hall and let Euro Pride organisers know what you want to happen in this year's Euro Pride in London? They are holding meetings on 3 Wednesday evenings in April, May and June.

Ask your Supported Housing Officer for more details.



WELCOME

Amanda, Chudi, Saeed, Alisha and Rowan have moved in over the last 3 months. We hope your stay with us will be beneficial and the support offered will help you achieve your goals.

## THE FUTURE LOOK OF STONEWALL HOUSING

The new Business Plan has now been printed. It gives more details about what the main aims are for Stonewall Housing over the next three years. It looks fabulous and is a great read. It should be delivered to you along with this newsletter.

Stonewall Housing offices are **closed** on Friday 14th and Monday 19th April & Mondays 1st and 29th May 2006.

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Stonewall Housing provides support to 41 young lesbians and gay men, living 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 January and March 2006, in all 6 houses:

- There were 24 fire alarm tests
- There was 0 fire drills—see page 4 about how these are going to happen in future
- There was 2 incidents when a bedroom door was kicked in and a lounge TV stolen
- There was 10 formal complaints about noise (3), flatmate's/housemate's behaviour (4), maintenance (1), racism (1), and the support service/keyworker (1).
- There were 6 informal complaints concerning untidiness, noise, visitors, malicious texts and missing food.
- All complaints have been dealt with except for: 3 formal ones—2 about flatmates and a claim of racism. Bob is dealing with these complaints.

### MOVING...?

25 people moved from Stonewall Housing between April 2005 and March 2006—which means over half the clients were not in Stonewall Housing a year ago!  
 19 were planned moves:  
 12 to flats provided by Councils and other Housing Associations, 3 transferred within Stonewall Housing, 2 went to live with family and 2 to private accommodation.  
 6 moves were unplanned due to clients being evicted, abandoning the property or not moving in completely in the first place.

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 held 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 for the date of the next meetings.

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 January and March 2006 he carried out surgeries at 5 of the 6 schemes and saw 4 people individually, discussing a range of issues, such as rent arrears, new clients' introduction, repairs and local groups.

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

**Tenant Meetings** were held at 3 schemes in the last 3 months. Issues discussed included handover of housing management of one scheme, health and safety, maintenance and newsletter. The minutes were sent to the tenants of the relevant house.

We are arranging tenants' meetings in all houses during the next 12 months. It is hoped that landlords will be invited to most meetings to discuss management issues such as maintenance and rent collection.

Again, **invites** will be delivered ahead of any planned meetings.

## Anti-social Behaviour

Are you suffering because of someone else's noise (loud music, door slamming)?  
 Are you the victim of bullying or intimidation (verbal, written or physical abuse)?  
 Are you disturbed by a constant stream of visitors (and they are not even yours)?  
 Anti-Social Behaviour comes in various forms but there is help.



## Suffer in silence?

Stonewall Housing no longer provides any housing management in any of the 6 houses (we handed over the last one to the landlord in April 2006). We are now solely a support provider—but we can help in liaising with landlords and other tenants to reduce nuisance.  
 So if you are annoyed about someone else's behaviour mention it to your Supported Housing Officer in private, bring it up at a House meeting or mention it to Bob Green at one of his surgeries.  
 All of our Housing clients have tenancy agreements with one of the three landlords we are partners with (Circle Anglia, London and Quadrant or Mosaic Homes). These tenancy agreements give clients rights but also responsibilities around not causing a nuisance or annoyance to other tenants and neighbours.

## What can be done?

Since 2003, landlords have had more powers to tackle anti-social behaviour.  
 They can apply for injunctions or Anti-Social Behaviour Orders to prevent individuals engaging in annoying behaviour and a breach could be a criminal matter.  
 They can apply for a 'Demotion Order' - which reduces the tenancy rights of the perpetrator. Further nuisance would allow the landlord to apply to the courts to seek possession of the room.  
 Or they may seek possession straight away if there is enough evidence that a tenancy agreement has been breached.

But the aim of Stonewall Housing and the 3 landlords is to support all clients to achieve their goals so eviction is always a last resort. We will always try to work with victims and perpetrators of nuisance to reduce it without approaching courts or police.

## Last resort

Some landlords deal with all nuisance as anti-social behaviour. Others have antisocial behaviour teams to deal with severe cases of nuisance and noise is dealt with by housing officers.  
 All the landlords try mediation and behaviour agreements before applying for court action. All incidents will be investigated fully before action is taken and both parties interviewed.

So the best advice is to talk about it. To your Supported Housing Officer or the landlord's Housing Officer. They can then advise on what can happen next. Our aim is that people will be with us for up to 2 years to allow them to achieve their goals. You don't want to spend most of that time becoming more stressed because of someone else's behaviour.

## next issue

### THE NEW WEBSITE:

What's the difference? What will it mean for Housing clients? When does it go live? Got any questions? If so, pass them to your Supported Housing Officer by Friday 30 June 2006 and we will try to answer them.

... SPOTLIGHT



Stonewall Housing and each of the landlords have Health and Safety policies to ensure that we offer healthy and safe living and working conditions.

**What does it mean in practice?**

All houses and offices are inspected regularly to ensure they come up to standard. Housing staff are trained in basic first aid and other issues. All clients should be given basic information and know what the policies involve. All Stonewall Housing offices are non-smoking areas. The addresses and phone numbers of all the schemes are confidential to staff and clients and should not be given out to just anyone.

**Can I let someone else worry about it?**

All clients have a responsibility to report any defect or disrepair to the relevant landlord.

The fire safety equipment (extinguishers, fire panel etc) are checked regularly by the landlord.

Fire alarm tests take place on a weekly basis and a poster should be up in your house to say when it is tested.

Fire drills take place once every 3 months. If you are in, you must leave the building and staff will record who takes notice of the drill.

We apologise for the inconvenience in advance—but these tests need to be done for everyone's safety.



**How can you get involved?**

- \* Be sure you are aware of the Health and Safety Policies.
- \* Take part in all fire drills
- \* Report any disrepair
- \* In future when we do any Health and Safety Audits of the building we will be inviting you to take part to give us your point of view.
- \* We also carry out assessments of dangers and how we can reduce the risks in the building where you live and we will be asking your views on this.

**next issue**

The spotlight will be on the Diversity Policy.

What's it all about? Why do we have a Black and Minority Ethnic House? How do we ensure we offer equal opportunities to all?



**REMEMBER**



Dates of the next **Management Committee** Meetings: 6.30pm Tuesday 11th April, 23rd May 2006. Let us know if you want to observe so we can arrange food.

The next **newsletter** will be out in early July 2006. If you have any material for the next newsletter then get it to Bob Green by Friday 30 June 2006.

Stonewall Housing is hoping to have a stall at London **Pride** (which is Euro Pride this year) and maybe other prides too. Do you want to help? Let your Supported Housing Officer know.

Get ready for the 2006 **Annual Satisfaction Survey** which is coming out over the next few weeks—it lets us know what is going well and what needs to be improved.

Thanks to Nana and Dru who submitted great stuff for this issue. Here's Dru's take on money, mothers and even Stonewall—so good it's unedited. And a piece of Nana's art coursework on page 7. Anything to share? Get contributions in by the end of June 2006.

YOUR PAGE

**LIFE ISNT FAIR - BUT WHO EVER SAID IT WOULD BE??? D - R - U**

"Sometimes it seems as if some people dont now what they have til its gone. Im probably not the only one in stonewall that grew up not having much and always living on a budget. My mother was alone and had to support 3 children all by herself. In the past I have always settled for less cause thats the way i grew up. I always had the chapest shoes, cheapest clothes, basically cheap everything. But it was ok at the time cause i didnt know any better. When i hit the time that parents fear most, also know as puberty and was heading towards beeing a teenager things changed. Slowly but surely i was building up a social life, and when u socialize and want to be accepted in society and by the people you surround youself with, you cant wear the cheapest shit anymore. you have to look and act the part. Its bullshit i know, but thats how it often seemed when i look back at my early years. Teenagers will watch eachother with eagles eyes for a couple of reasons. Everybody wants to be in the in-crowd, but first you have to find out whos truely popular. And then once you've gathered whos in and whos not, you smile in the face of people whom you may not necessarely like but that are liked by others. And in the course of that you might even grow to like one of them or maybe you liked them all along and thought they was your friend. Anyhow, a popular name on my friends list always looked good on my resume, and it worked wonders against bulllys. But naturally i couldnt hang with the in-crowd and not look like one of them. So where do you turn to when your a teenager and you need money? Thats right, mum and dad, or in my case, just mum, cause dad wasnt around and he sure as hell wasnt paying no child support. Because my mum loved me and my brothers so much, she tried to grant us every wish, even when she couldnt afford it. So i got me a nice "STARTER" jacket (remember "STARTER"?) and a pair of "fila" steppers. I had tasted blood and since my mother had given in once to my never ending begging to give me some money for expensive clothes, i was sure I could convince her any time i wanted something. And it did work for some time, until it was just not affordable anymore. Hearing my mother say she couldnt afford to give me anymore money was something that i could not come to terms with. I had spent a lot of my time and a lot of my mothers money on making fake friendships with people whom i coud have cared less about but I had to be friends with them cause thats what was kewl and since i didnt have much character myself i needed to shine off of other peoples personalities. And of course there were peeps whom i genuienly liked, but little did i know that they wouldnt stick around for to long when i wasnt "as cool" anymore. I knew that there were other people waiting in their loop-holes ready to snatch my spot away from me like a rat over cheese, anytime they notice me slip, so they could move up into MY "hard earned" spot in my clique. Those are the people that constantly bad mouth you and have negative things to say about you in front of others and make themselves look like the "almighty jesus, our savior" himself, im sure we have all met one of those before. Well, to make a long story short, the supplies from my mother started getting less, i had to resort bk to wearing the same clothes multiple times a week and people started looking at me funny again so it was back to the drawing board for me. And whos fault was that? In my mind i blamed my mother cause it was her who wouldnt buy me nice things anymore and give me money to go to the cinema and eat at maccy D's with my "friends", while the rest of the family starves at home with no money. For a long time i was terrorizing my fam wid my moodswings and refusal to help in the household cause i was basically trying to blackmail my mother into giving me money that she just simply didnt have. What hurt her the most was how i acted as if i didnt like her anymore and in that sence of course didnt love her anymore. I had her exactly where i wanted and she was thinking what i wanted, surely she would start giving me money again in order to restore my love for her. Or would she? I had to put it to the test and one night nicely asked her if i could have some money.

P.T.O.

What i needed the money for i dont know, cause my so called "friends" had already forgotten about me long time ago, as in "out of sight, out of mind" but i was confident i would be with them again soon after my plans to suck my mothers funds dryer than a fatamorgana came together. But instead of throwing her last coins at me with her begging for my forgiveness like i had envisioned in my spoiled brat fantasies, she said she couldnt afford it. "How dare you?!" i thought. Now she was really gonna get it. So i screamed at her and blamed her for all the wrong in my life and told her that because of her i had no friends. Next thing you know theres tears running down her face. She started crying. But it wasnt the kind of cry that you receive from someone that has sympathy for you, no, this looked kind of like how u cry when youve had it up to here and are about to let out your anger on the person thats making u feel that way. "Uhm.....? Whats she crying for?" i remember thinking. earlier i had thought about squeezing out a fake tear or two, myself, to make my whole scenario seem a little more dramatic, but here i was looking at her crying?? Even doe it hurt me to see her cry i had to stand my grounds so in a cocky voice i asked her what she was crying for?! she calmly told me to go into my room and not come out until i thought about what i said to her, and as food for thought she rethorically asked me where my friends were now and told me, if those people were my definition of friends i wouldnt make it far in life. That night I stayed awake for hours in my bed thinking about what had happened and then it dawned on me: I was spoiled and ungrateful. And i had basically said things to my mother that made her cry and for what? for people who werent even around anymore. Soon after that my attitude changed and i became the great, loving and appreciative guy i am today :) !! all jokes beside, it taught me to always be grateful for what you have. clothes, jewellery, cd's and material things can only add to personality but you yourself have to build the ground foundation of your personality. And then the right people will like you for all the right reasons and at the right times when you need true friends.

In the wake of all the historic disasters that we have witnessed these last couple of months (tsunami, tube bombings, hurricane katrina), people have come together more than ever and its a shame that it had to come to this for us to realize that "eachother is all we have". There are thousands of familys who are missing members now and even more who have lost everything they have and ever had. In new orleans, a big city like london, people have lost it all, they dont even have a place to stay anymore, no roof over their heads, nothing! And isnt that kind of the same reason why we all stay with stonewall? We all have different reasons for needing accom from stonewall, and some of us were lost if it wasnt for stonewall. We should be grateful that there is a organisation that cares about gay people more than the president of the united states cares about his poverty stricken black people. Some of you guyz need to cut stonewall some slack, cause a lot of times i hear tenants moan "i want! i want! i want!" and it reminds me of how i used to act towards my mother and how ungrateful i was and where it got me. stonewall is occupied with current tenants, new tenants, repairs on various flats, finding flats for tenants that have been nominated to move on, social-work with some of our bad asses, ohh - and lets not forget they have a personal life to manage also. some of us can be lucky that stonewall even puts up with us, i for example am still working on getting out of my small amount of arrears, and stonewall has been very patient with me, much more patient than we are with them sometimes. So at the end of they day, ask yourself "who has more to loose, YOU or STONEWALL?" stonewall wants to help us but they dont have to help us and if you cant appreciate that then im sure theres 1 guy or girl out there, waiting to snatch away ur spot like a rat over cheese (sound familiar?) and who can appreciate what stonewall does, more than you can....."

Your fellow stonewall tenant, DRU!

for feedback, comments and constructive criticism, email me at [andrewlove-syou@hotmail.com](mailto:andrewlove-syou@hotmail.com)

PEACE