



Lest we forget

Highbury View salutes 80 years since guns fell silent over Europe

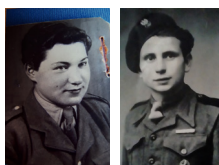
Highbury View's **VE Day celebration** on 8 May was a packed event and a fitting way to remember the huge sacrifices made by so many during World War II



Joe, Dot and the Pearlies



Janice, Linda and Liz



Guests at VE Day, Roma's sister Stasia and Mirek and, front row 2nd right, Roma

Star of the show was a memory wall with photos and tales of relatives who served in the war. Krystine's family in rural Poland had in 1940 been ordered by Russian soldiers into cattle trucks and taken to a labour camp in freezing north Russia.

Labour camp to allied forces

In 1942 a brief amnesty by Stalin, now fighting Germany, saw Krystine's grandfather pay the family's way out of the camp by selling his only suit.

A perilous journey took the family to Zimbabwe where Krystine's aunt Roma, now 17, joined the Women's Auxilliary Airforce. Her sister Stasia also joined the forces, later marrying army veteran Mirek (*both pictured*) who was awarded two medals for his role in helping liberate France.



In 1948 the family sailed to Britain in search of work. Roma settled in Redditch where she still lives and, at nearly 101, is its oldest citizen.

This was just one of many tales of bravery recalled at our event which naturally also included a sing-a-long led by Finsbury's Pearly Kings.

'One resident said the war-time songs took him back to childhood,' says independent living coordinator Colette. 'He could be heard singing at the top of his voice!'

INSIDE THIS ISSUE YOU WILL FIND ...

2 New menu offers choice of ways to shape our services

Launch of new guide to a happier neighbourhood

3 High praise for one of our new kitchen replacement teams

Six-year review by our retiring board chair Sean McLaughlin

4 Tribute to Robin Don of Barnsbury Mews

Summer health tips, and food vouchers for when money is tight

5 Shake up in the staff room: new line-up and some farewells

6 First completions for 81 homes getting our energy efficiency measures

Narrow escape for three tenants found illegally subletting

7 Wayward plants bedded in at their new mews home

8 Home swaps: looking for a home that's a better fit for you?

NEWS IN BRIEF

NEW AND CHANGING ROLES ON OUR STAFF TEAM

On page five you can read about our new staffing set up. Sadly two staff chose not to take on a new role in this. Michael Bunker leaves at the end of this month and Lorraine Sindrey left in June. Both gave us many years of fine service. We wish them a bright future and thank them for all they have done for BHA.

CALL OUT FOR VOLUNTEERS AND STALL HOLDERS FOR 20 SEPTEMBER FUNDAY

We have been busy planning this year's funday on Saturday 20 September. We'll be offering activities for all ages this year and would welcome your help. We're thinking of a safe soft play area for toddlers, for starters, but will need volunteers to keep an eye on the toddlers' safety.

If you'd like your own stall let us know. We can provide a table and, in the run up, space for drop-offs or to store materials.

If you want to volunteer, have a stall or have suggestions email chelsea@barnsbury.org, pop a note in a suggestion box or use our online form at <https://barnsbury.org/get-involved/>

PASS JUDGMENT ON US IN THIS YEAR'S BIG SURVEY!

A reminder that the survey that lets you pass judgment on our services and standards is coming up. All of you get a chance to take part and what you say will be keenly scrutinised by our regulator and others. Look out for a letter, email and/or phone call from independent survey firm Acuity Research & Practice.

Hungry for us to change tack or barely room for a nibble? Take your pick from our menu

More of our younger residents speaking up, clear evidence that our board's decisions over the year took your views into account and at least half of you sampling our new 'menu' of tenant involvement choices

These are some of the outcomes we're hoping our new resident engagement strategy will deliver.

Light snack or all you can eat?

Posted with this newsletter is a booklet explaining our new strategy and setting out our menu of ways you can play your part depending on your appetite for the task ahead.

Our strategy gives you and us ways to measure how seriously we take this work. It also demands we show you solid proof of how your views are driving change.

So dig in and don't forget to tell us what you think of the strategy. If you think we've left anything off the menu that you and others might enjoy please let us know.

CALLING ALL OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

✓ Are you a big fan of music?

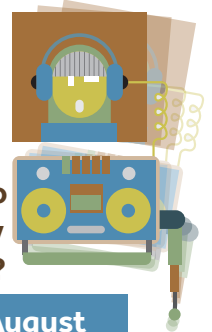
✓ Are you an aspiring DJ?

✓ Do you want to learn about DJ equipment?

Why not join our summer programme with an international DJ, coming to the mews to show you how to start your music career?

Once a week starting in August

If you're interested, email chelsey@barnsbury.org for more information.



Islington Council's experience inspires new guide to happier neighbourhoods

We've taken a leaf out of Islington Council's book for our new guide to making your neighbourhood a place you are proud to live in.

Islington's new approach to disputes between neighbours has transformed life on some estates.

One big change came after asking tenants to think about their own activities. Could they be upsetting neighbours too, not because of what they do but when, such as using a washing machine late at night.

Our guide focuses on issues that are reported to us weekly. These are rarely what we'd call antisocial but, if part of a regular pattern, can do a lot of damage to an otherwise happy relationship with neighbours.

We have posted our guide on our website at barnsbury.org where you can read it or download a copy. If you'd like us to post you a copy call us on 020 7704 2324 or email us at info@barnsbury.org

Plaudits rolling in for new kitchen contractors

If you're in line for a new kitchen this year, we are pleased to see very positive reviews for our **new contractors**

A Barnsbury Street tenant has told us FERInteriors, who fitted her new kitchen, 'are the best builders BHA has ever had'.

Space was a big challenge, she rightly adds. Most of our Barnsbury Street flats are in large family houses, long ago split into smaller homes.

'It's not a natural kitchen space but the kitchen is looking great,' she says.

'The builders really excelled themselves. They did a lovely job and were very considerate.'

She adds: 'I also want to thank BHA. I know it's difficult with listed buildings but the flat now looks so much nicer and modernised.'

FERInteriors is just one of several new contractors now fitting new kitchen and bathrooms for us.



This lovely new kitchen works well despite a small and awkward space. Each year we replace as many kitchens and bathrooms as our modest budget allows, offering you a choice of styles, colours and materials.

Farewell from board chair Sean McLaughlin

My six-year term as BHA chair ends in September, **writes Sean**. I have seen my job as helping BHA achieve its founding mission: sustainable homes in Islington for people on ordinary incomes.

Despite growing pressure on housing, especially in Islington, we have stayed true to that aim.

Tenants played a vital role in our early days, a legacy we have built on. During my time we brought tenants onto the board and found new ways to hear your voice. We know there is more to do but the board is committed to making your involvement in our work strong and meaningful.

Despite huge financial pressure careful management has meant we can still build new homes, cut your energy costs, make homes more comfortable and safe and get to know your needs better.

We adapted to the pandemic and, after the Grenfell fire, to new, tougher regulations. Today your homes are in better shape and our future is more secure. That is down to a brilliant team, past and present. I have never worked with a better leadership group.

BHA also genuinely wants to hear your views so please keep sharing them. Your voice really is what makes BHA different.

New faces and some farewells on the BHA board

A 'six years maximum' rule for housing association board members has in the last year meant the loss for our board of two excellent members: **Chyrel Brown** and **Jonathan Bunt**.

Both have made a real difference to how we are run. Chyrel has drawn on her long experience of housing management and building safety, working for large housing associations, while Jonathan brought to our board top flight finance skills, most recently as chair of our audit committee. We want to take this opportunity to thank them for giving us their time and expertise.



Joining: Liz Curran and Richard Hill

New faces

We have been lucky to recruit **Liz Curran** as the new chair of our audit committee. Liz, *pictured above left*, has worked as finance director for a large, supported housing provider and lives locally.

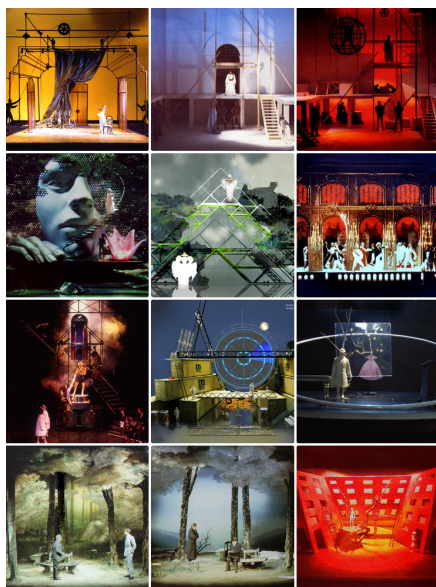
Change of hands as chair

In September our fantastic board chair **Sean McLaughlin** also leaves us after six years in post. Again, we have been lucky to recruit **Richard Hill** to fill this role. Richard, *above right*, runs bpha, a larger housing association outside London. Richard previously headed up One Housing so knows Islington well.

You can find out more about our board members and what they do for BHA on our website here.



Portrait of the artist at home taken by Franck Le Maze, above, and images from Robin's website of some of the many exquisite sets he designed



Remembering friend and neighbour Robin Don

In late spring we heard with great sadness of the death of Robin Don of Barnsbury Mews. Robin's achievements, professionally, as an active tenant and as a neighbour were exceptional. We are sure many of you, like us, will remember Robin with affection and respect

Some of you may remember Robin as the green-fingered genius responsible for Barnsbury Mews' most spectacular balcony garden.

Gold award winner

This lush tropical paradise, created from cuttings, won Robin a richly deserved gold in 2020 in the annual *Islington in Bloom* awards.

Perhaps you recall Robin as the lockdown barista, lowering cups of coffee in a basket by pulley to thirsty neighbours.

Or you may have known Robin in his role as secretary of the BHA tenants and residents association. For our part, even when critical of our services, Robin was consistently courteous and good-humoured.

What maybe fewer of you know is that Robin was an extraordinary talent as an artist and set designer.

Barnsbury Mews neighbours Diane and Franck, who helped Robin's family clear his flat, tell us it was packed with Robin's artworks and set designs.

'Most should have been sent to the theatre design museum as they were mock ups of award-winning productions world-wide,' Diane says.

Our thoughts go to Robin's extended family in the small town of Tayport in north-east Fife, Scotland, where Robin was born.



On Robin's website you can see some of the exquisite sets and costumes he designed for theatre and opera, many for a world premiere. You can also see Robin's sculptures and other artworks: robindon.com

FINANCIAL HELP ON OFFER IF YOU'RE STRUGGLING WITH THE COST OF FOOD OR OTHER ESSENTIAL ITEMS

If you are struggling with the cost of food, basic toiletries or clothes we have £8,000 from Islington Faiths Forum to pay for items like these. Head of operations Asif says: 'We can give out food vouchers for local supermarkets and small amounts for clothing, shoes or toiletries.'

If you need help call ☎ 020 704 2324 or email info@barnsbury.org. You could also call in at 60 Morland Mews to speak to Nicky or, at Highbury View, to Colette.

Stay in shape doing more of the things you love and enjoy, says Islington's Healthy Generations

Healthy Generations has for nearly 20 years been running - in person and online - its exercise, music and digital skills events, sessions and classes right across Islington.

Activities open to all

Aimed mainly at older people and people who use mental health services, its classes are open to anyone wanting to pop along.

The end goal is better physical

and mental health, delivered in way you'll enjoy. For example, there are:

- local walks, in an Islington park or around our borough's interesting historical spots
- exercise classes for varied health conditions or after surgery
- musical performances
- ways to learn new gardening skills and/or use them
- fitness classes, from yoga and tai chi to line dancing.

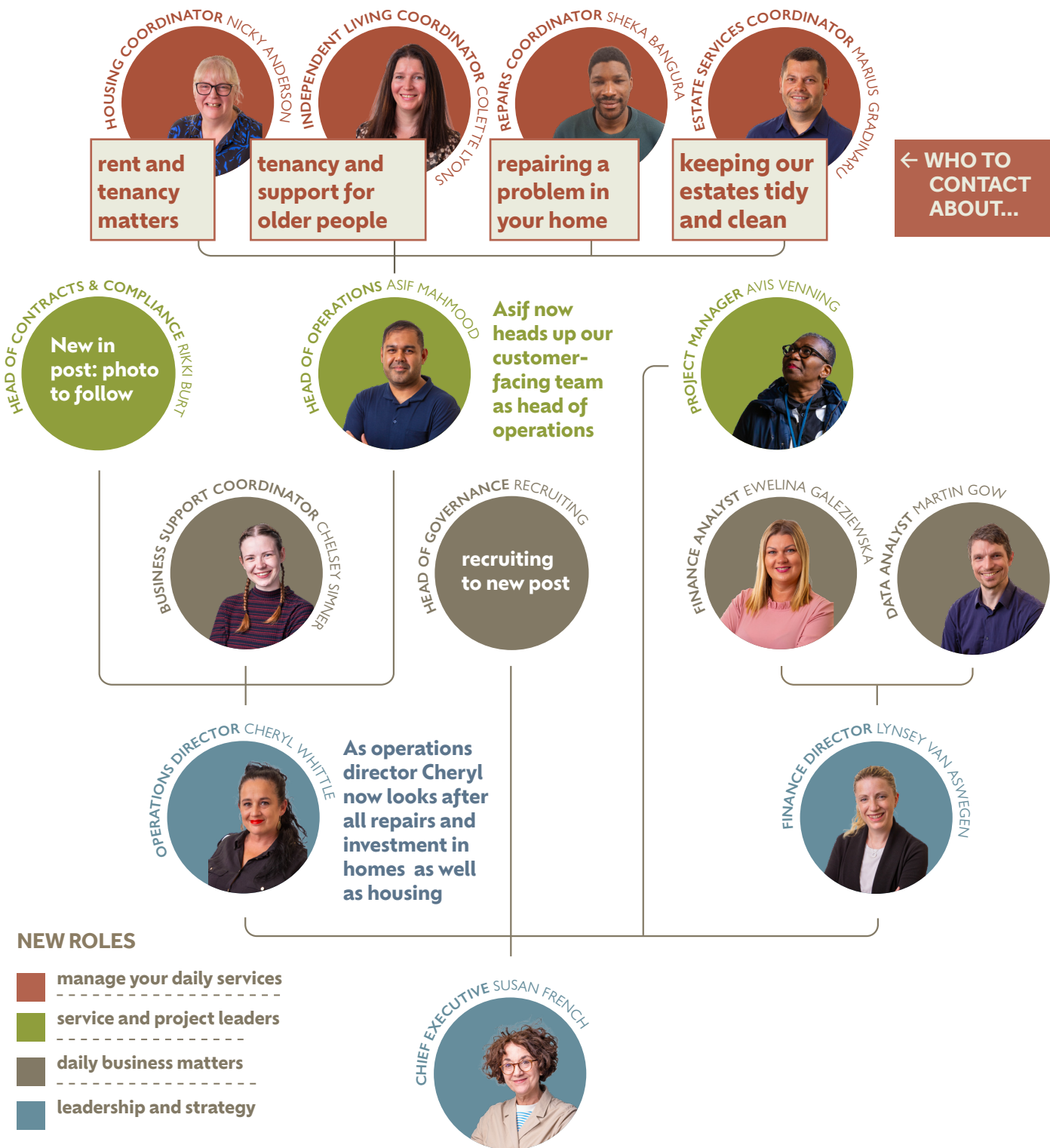
Activities take place in locations across Islington. To find out more go to healthygenerations.org.uk or call ops manager Sam ☎ 07981 142 376.

Changing priorities drive staff changes

Over the last six months, we have looked at how we manage our estates and homes. **We want to be sure we are working in a more planned way.** By way of example we're seeing many new regulations for health and safety so think it

better if we can show most are already something we do routinely. Another driver was bringing our day-to-day repairs service into our customer-facing team so you get a **responsive and consistent service** no matter what you call us about.

The result is a rejig of some jobs and a single team now managing property and housing. Four posts have now gone and four created, with no change in staff costs. Everyone in a new or changed job has been interviewed for their new post, among them Cheryl and Asif. Day-to-day repairs are being dealt with by Sheka Bangura. Two staff sadly decided not to take on a new role (see story on page two).





TENANCY SERVICES

HOME SECURITY DURING HOT SUMMER DAYS REMINDER

Summer holidays often see a rise in break-ins, housing coordinator Nicky warns. Keep spare keys in a safe place, Nicky advises, noting that if something is sold as a safe gadget for hiding keys then thieves will know about it too. Outdoor lighting that detects movement may help as will keeping garden tools locked away. Lastly don't broadcast your holiday on social media, letting everyone know you've left an empty home!

TOUGH ACTION ON ARREARS

With rent arrears now at £206,000 we are actively chasing current and former tenants who owe rent for their home, a garage or a shed.

One problem is an eight-week gap in payments from tenants moving from housing benefit to universal credit. This won't be solved soon.

If you are struggling to pay your rent get in touch so we can help (see below). Legal action is a last resort, taken against tenants who make no effort to pay back the money they owe us.

TWICE A WEEK: HELP WITH RENT AND TENANCY MATTERS

Our **Wednesday and Friday morning drop-in sessions** at 60 Morland Mews offer a quick fix. If your query can't be sorted quickly we will book you an appointment for a follow-up session.

Drop in on Wednesday or Friday mornings between 10am and 12 noon or book a time for advice that suits you. If you live at Highbury View contact Colette. To book a time: ☎ 020 7704 2324 or email info@barnsbury.org
You can now report or discuss your repairs in person. See page seven.

FIND OUT MORE | barnsbury.org

First completions for Barnsbury Mews energy efficiency works

Much of the works being done to make Barnsbury Mews homes more **energy efficient** have now been completed and thank you to all affected for your patience, writes Susan French

Still outstanding are some of the more major works including Pugin Court's new heating systems and solar panels. These will start after the summer taking the expected completion date to next spring.

Early dividends

Some of you have told us you can already feel the difference thanks to works done to improve failed cavity wall insulation on some outer walls.

We have done a lot of work to improve ventilation in homes where insulation has been upgraded. It is really important to do both these measures together to make sure damp and condensation will not be a problem at some future point.

We are also using a new pot of government funding we have been awarded for the works and that means lots of time-consuming form-filling and checking.

PURDY'S APPOINT NEW LIAISON OFFICER

In other news, Purdy resident liaison officer Nicky Hobbs has moved to a new building site. Taking her place is **Dan Baldwin** who will be at **60 Morland Mews, Tuesdays to Thursdays**. Email Dan with any queries at daniel.baldwin@purdycontracts.co.uk or ☎ 07385 229 765.

Contractors Purdy have also recently joined retrofit specialists the SureServe Group. We are told that some works may be delayed briefly to allow for company restructuring.

Swift legal action taken against three tenants found subletting their home

We recently took legal action against three tenants we found subletting their home.

Grounds for eviction

This is a clear breach of your tenancy agreement, only allowed in rare circumstances and only then with our written permission.

All three came close to losing their tenancy, and home, after getting a notice of seeking possession from the courts.

After coming clean about their tenancy breach all three have put matters right. For now, there will be no further legal action.

A reminder that if you want to take in a lodger you must get our permission in writing first. Under no circumstances may you move out, leaving the lodger as the only occupant of your home. If you do we can and will take your home back and end your tenancy with us.



HOME REPAIRS

NEW ARRANGEMENT FOR REPORTING YOUR REPAIRS

Please report to your new **repairs coordinator Sheka Bangura** all repairs that are our responsibility.

REPORTING REPAIRS DIRECT TUESDAYS TO THURSDAYS

To report or discuss repairs with Sheka in person book an appointment or drop in to see him at 60 Morland Mews, Tuesday to Thursday. At other times during the week call ☎ 020 7704 2324 or repairs@barnsbury.org

WHO DOES THAT REPAIR?

A reminder that we are responsible for some repairs your home may need and you are responsible for reporting problems to us promptly, including damp and mould.

You should all have our booklet *Taking good care of your BHA home* but you can also find it on our website at barnsbury.org.

It tells you, room by room, the repairs we will do and those we usually expect you to get done.

As a general rule we repair faulty:

- walls, floors and ceilings, and the outside parts of your home
- fixtures and fittings that supply your water, gas, electricity and heating or which you need for good sanitation
- gas-fired appliances we have fitted, like your boiler.

REPORTING EMERGENCY REPAIRS OUT OF HOURS

Out-of-hours emergency repairs *only* should be reported to our emergency service run by ISHA on ☎ 0300 131 7300.

Wayward plants rescued at Chelsea flower show!

When big-hearted estate services coordinator Marius came across plants at the Chelsea flower show that were doomed to end up as compost his instincts kicked in

Scooped up by Marius, the plants have been carefully bedded in on some of Barnsbury Mews' barer green spots. A month later, despite scorching weather, all are still alive and the hostas are even feeding the local wildlife, as we call the snails.

Birds, bees and butterflies

Among the rescued plants are some certain to attract interesting visitors. The tall yellow spikes of verbascum mullein, pictured behind the yellow achillea right, risk ending up as dinner for the distinctive black and yellow caterpillar of the mullein moth.

With new tree saplings and many new flowering plants it's a big step forward for mother nature in this corner of Islington.



In just weeks the Morland Mews window box's new hosta already has its first bloom, above. Centre left, the verbascum mullein has its own unusual caterpillar

IF WE'VE REPAIRED A FAULT FOR YOU LATELY TELL US ABOUT IT TO GO IN OUR PRIZE DRAW

Use our **online survey** to tell us what we did well and what could improve if we organised a repair for you recently and you could win a **£50 Love to Shop voucher** in our regular cash draw.

To fill in the online survey go to <https://tinyurl.com/yc8ybhhs>



You can also send feedback to: repairs@barnsbury.org

4-6 Colebrooke Place, N1 8HZ

Colette's office if you live at Highbury View or Ronalds Road

call us on ☎ 020 7704 2324.

SMOKE, HEAT AND CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTOR ALARMS

Please test all alarms we have fitted in your home monthly, following the manufacturer's instructions. If an alarm is faulty we will replace it. If you do not have all these alarms tell us and we will fit any that are missing.

SUSPECT A GAS LEAK?

THIS IS AN EMERGENCY!

Call the National Gas Emergency Service **NOW** on ☎ 0800 111 999.

If the service thinks the situation warrants an urgent investigation they will quickly send out a Cadent engineer.

Cut price tickets for fans of dance with Sadlers Wells' Get Into Dance

If you love dancing or watching dance why not join Sadlers Well's fabulous **Get Into Dance**. You can do it through us and joining is free.

All tastes catered for

Get Into Dance covers all forms of dance, from classical ballet to hip hop and tango, performed at Sadlers Wells, the Peacock Theatre or the Lilian Baylis studio.

Members can book up to four tickets for each event, up to four times a year, at the knock-down price of £3 per ticket.

Performances now lined up truly cater for all tastes, among them heavy metal ballet with Black Sabbath, adventures in Narnia with family classic *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, a new musical based on Chaka Khan and a mod ballet version of *Quadrophenia*.

Is there a catch? Just one. All communication is done online so you'll need to be happy using email.

If you're not a member already contact chelsea@barnsbury.org and she'll fill out the form needed to refer you for membership.

DOMESTIC ABUSE
IS A CRIMINAL ACT



SOLACE IN ISLINGTON

☎ 0808 802 5565

advocacy@solacewomensaid.org

If you need free, confidential support because of domestic abuse call Solace in Islington. Solace helps women and men.

Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm.

**IF YOU ARE IN DANGER
RIGHT NOW CALL THE
POLICE ON ☎ 999**

BARNSBURY HA HOMES ON OFFER FOR A SWAP

Now on offer	Size/style of home	Tenant wants...
Lofting Road three-storeys with shared entrance 	two tenants, both now in a one bed flat, need a move for health reasons, one urgently	both tenants need a one bedroom ground floor flat
	one bedroom flat	two bedrooms for a growing family
	one bedroom flat	same size flat but new location
Morland Mews (in three-storey blocks with shared main entrance) 	one bedroom flat	one bed flat for health needs
	two bedroom ground floor flat	three bedrooms for growing family
	first floor studio flat	one bedroom flat
	studio flat	one bed flat for health needs
Claringbull Court 	two bedroom ground floor flat	one bedroom ground floor flat for health needs
	two bedroom ground floor flat	three bedrooms as now overcrowded
Gissing Walk	two bedroom flat with own entrance needed urgently	three bed home as now overcrowded and health needs
	studio with own entrance	one bedroom flat
Barnsbury Park	two bedroom flat	three bed home as now overcrowded
Barnsbury Street 	large five bed home with a shared entrance	two bed home with garden, ideally on the ground floor
	three bedroom flat	one bedroom townhouse or flat with garden
Milner Square	two bedroom flat	three bedrooms for growing family
Pugin Court	Ground floor studio flat	one bedroom flat
Highbury Terrace	studio flat in listed building with shared walled garden	one bedroom flat as need more room

We keep a list of tenants wanting a home swap, with another of our tenants or elsewhere in the UK, so get in touch if you want a swap. If you want to move to a smaller home we have an excellent package of incentives and more ways to help with the move and settling in. For more details, email Asif on info@barnsbury.org or call ☎ 020 7704 2324.

DO YOU HAVE A STORY, PICTURE OR LETTER FOR US?

If you have a story, letter or picture for *Barnsbury News* email Lisa Thompson at Lisa@barnsbury.org or call ☎ 020 7704 2324. We edit contributions to fit a tight space. We do not publish personal attacks.