

Islington community threatened by eviction offers lessons for housing vulnerable says LSE

A housing community in Islington, which is under threat of eviction, provides a useful model for tackling the social isolation of vulnerable and older people says a new report from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), published today (Monday 21 September).

The research⁽¹⁾ focuses on the Islington Park Street Community (IPS), which was founded in 1976 and is probably the oldest cohousing-style project in London.

At IPS 18 single people with different backgrounds, needs and abilities live and eat communally and provide mutual physical and social support to one another. Older residents in particular benefit from a social environment that prevents isolation.

Dr Melissa Fernández Arrigoitia, an expert in alternative housing and author of the report, said: “In the context of the UK’s ageing population and a growing need for affordable housing for single people, Islington Park Street Community provides a model that could help those facing mental or physical challenges to carry on living healthy, independent lives in the middle of the city.

“Studies also suggest that senior co-housing could bring financial savings to local councils because the people who live in such communities may be less dependent on social services.”

At IPS residents support each other with daily tasks such as cooking. Intergenerational living, along with the community’s self-management, also means that tenants benefit from learning practical skills from one another.

IPS provides lessons about the size, density and layout of living space that can support mutual-support living and minimises the use of resources. Shared cooking, DIY and gardening, as well as the shared use of water, heating and tools all help to avoid waste, consume less energy and reduce the negative environmental impact of one-person households.

The report says that IPS could serve as one model for the effective and low cost reuse of obsolete sheltered housing and care homes.

Dr Fernández Arrigoitia said: “We understand that housing associations such as One Housing Group - which owns IPS - are under increasing pressure to build more homes with fewer resources, and that this can place them under considerable financial pressure. But there is also a need to recognise and celebrate success. IPS could provide one way to help alleviate some of the capital’s most pressing social, economic and environmental issues, while also retaining the richness and diversity of London’s communities.”

Notes for Editors

The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) studies the social sciences in their broadest sense, with an academic profile spanning a wide range of disciplines, from economics, politics and law, to sociology, information systems and accounting and finance.

The School has an outstanding reputation for academic excellence and is one of the most international universities in the world. Its study of social, economic and political problems focuses on the different perspectives and experiences of most

countries. From its foundation LSE has aimed to be a laboratory of the social sciences, a place where ideas are developed, analysed, evaluated and disseminated around the globe. Visit <http://www.lse.ac.uk> for more information.

(1)A pre-embargo copy of the report 'Islington Park Street Community: a model for alternative housing in London' is available from the press office.

LSE London's 'Housing in London: Addressing the Supply Crisis' project: <http://londonhousing.org/>

Islington Park Street Community's website: <http://islingtonparkstreet.org/>

For more information

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