

INNISFREE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT

1987 - 1988



Innisfree Housing Association

ELECTRIC HOUSE

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CHAIR'S REPORT

Innisfree Housing Association was established in May 1985 because of the large number of Irish people in Brent and the serious shortage of housing for single people in the area.

The 1981 Census showed that almost 18,000 Brent residents were born in the Irish Republic. There are no figures for Northern Ireland. A recent report to Brent Housing Committee showed that 27% of those who sought assistance with housing were Irish. Comparing this with the percentage of Irish-born people in Brent (11.3%), one can see the comparable need for housing among Irish people especially those categorised as non-priority under the 1985 Housing Act.

Reports by the GLC and other bodies show that the Irish are least likely to be owner-occupiers, live in the worst housing conditions and suffer the most homelessness throughout London.

Innisfree Housing Association aims to assist the housing needs of homeless Irish people in London and is particularly concerned with the older single homeless with a history of living in hostels, lodgings or sleeping rough. We are especially concerned with the plight of young Irish emigrants, whose housing difficulties present them with severe problems and who do not qualify for Local Authority housing.

Innisfree currently manages a number of short-life properties owned by PCHA. In addition we manage a 6-bed mixed hostel for single homeless Irish people, owned by Brent Peoples Housing Association which opened in July 1986.

We are a registered Friendly Society and currently awaiting registration with the Housing Corporation. Innisfree is a non-sectarian Housing Association which aims to meet the housing needs of Irish people irrespective of their religious views or way of life.

Innisfree maintains an Equal Opportunities Policy in line with current legislation and the principles of equal opportunities for all.

To date Innisfree has helped over a hundred Irish people with housing. Our ability to expand and our commitment to assist the thousands of Irish people in housing need has not been fully implemented because of a serious lack of resources. Some funding authorities have not been as forthcoming as was anticipated from their initial responses in the past.

In continuing our work within the Irish community we may have to consider seeking support from a wider range of sources. In the area of funding we shall be approaching the well established Irish companies and businesses to donate or contribute to the work of Innisfree Housing Association.

Marie Dalton

I wish to thank those Associations who have helped to provide accommodation, PCHA, BPHA and Brent Council. I would like to thank all the officers and staff in these Housing Associations, Brent and Ealing Councils who have devoted much of their time in assisting Innisfree. Housing remains the biggest problem for Irish people in the area, and through working with these Associations and Councils we can hopefully alleviate some of the housing difficulties faced by Irish people.

Michael Bell (Treasurer)

A special thanks to all members of the Management Committee who have met regularly in the past year and the level of participation especially of the sub-committees has been commendable, they have given up their spare time to help develop Innisfree as a Housing Association and hopefully we can rely on their commitment and support in the future.

Alan Danning (Housing Worker)

T. HARTNETT, CHAIR. (Housing Worker).

Padraig Kenna (Secretary)

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Innisfree Housing Association was formed in May 1987 by members of the Irish community in Brent with the assistance of Brent Irish Advisory Service. The Association is a registered Company and registered under the Industrial and Provident Society's Act 1945. Innisfree Housing Association is primarily concerned with solving the acute housing needs of many homeless people in the Brent area and through London, especially those who are categorised as

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 1987/8.

Michael O Callanain

Mary Connolly

Marie Dalton

Fr. W. Dempsey

Tony Donlon

Margaret Gallagher

Tim Hartnett (Chair)

John Keene

Donal Mac Craith

Noel Magee

Colum Moloney

Nora O Donnell

Michael Smith (Treasurer)

Jim Smith

Jim Sweeney

STAFF

Sean Canning (Housing Worker)

Kathleen Carr (Hostel Worker).

Padraic Kenna (Secretary)

The last year has seen Innisfree Management Committee co-operate with the Housing Corporation in its application for registration. Following a monitoring pre registration visit by the Housing Corporation the general assessment by the Corporation's representatives, in their report was that their assessments and conclusions were one of satisfaction.

"Innisfree is making a sound job of managing the Coleman House hostel and short-life properties. We felt that the Committee set the criteria for registration and appreciated the responsibilities that would fall to the Association if registered" (Report on Monitoring Pre-Registration Visit, March -5-7).

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Innisfree Housing Association was formed in May 1985 by members of the Irish community in Brent with the assistance of Brent Irish Advisory Service. The Association is a registered Company and registered under the Industrial and Provident Society's Act 1965. Innisfree Housing Association is primarily concerned with meeting the acute housing needs of many homeless and badly housed people in the Brent area and throughout London, especially those who are categorised as non-priority under Part III of the Housing Act 1985.

Throughout 1987/88 Innisfree expanded in its housing provision and management. The Association now manages ten short-life properties housing 31 single people, one hostel on licence from London borough of Brent at North Wembley housing 25 people, mainly teachers employed by Brent. Innisfree currently manages Catherine Coleman House at 80 Anson Road, NW2, a long-stay mixed hostel for single Irish people aged between 35-59. The increased turnover resulting from the larger number of short-life properties being managed by the Association has necessitated the employment of a housing worker. Sean Canning took up this appointment on Monday 29th February 1988. Innisfree also employs a hostel worker, Ms Kathleen Carr, who manages the special project for older Irish people at Catherine Coleman House.

Financially, our income and expenditure has increased and control has been strengthened by the election of an accountant, Mr Michael Smith, as Treasurer. The Association has appointed Smith & Williamson, Chartered Accountants as its Auditors.

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"Innisfree is making a sound job of managing the Coleman House hostel and short-life properties. We felt that the Committee met the criteria for registration and appreciated the responsibilities that would fall to the Association if registered" (Report on Monitoring Pre-Registration Visit, March 1987).

Our programme for 1988-89 is based on a continued expansion to meet the acute housing need of Irish people. We hope to expand our short-life provision and develop and manage two more hostels for young migrant workers in conjunction with local Housing Associations.

PADRAIC KENNA
Secretary.

Table 1. Housing of the Irish in London: by sex, age and birthplace of the Head of Household

Type of housing	Total Irish	Birthplace of Head of Household			
		UK	NI	Other	Total
Private rented	40	41	26	41	108
Local authority	25	27	18	19	64
Other social	24	27	26	13	70
Homeless	10	1	25	27	53

Many Irish people in London have traditionally relied on the private rented sector accommodation, often associated with the lack of availability of housing. The Irish as the ethnic group are likely to use private rented accommodation in London, with 49% of Irish households relying on private rented and unfurnished accommodation. This compares with the 1981 Census which shows that the reliance on private rented accommodation is an average of 7% among UK households.

BACKGROUND

The special housing deprivation of the Irish in Brent and indeed throughout London has been analysed in a number of reports on housing in London. Altogether, the research carried out highlights the disproportionate need for housing among Irish people of all ages and particularly among single people.

The 1981 Census on Table 1 Chart shows that in London only 26% of those households where the head of household was born in the Irish Republic are owner-occupiers. This is much lower than any other nationality or ethnic group and compares to 40% of all UK households. It is difficult to estimate the rate of home-ownership among people from Northern Ireland. The low rate of home-ownership among the Irish in London cannot be attributed to any cultural aversion to home ownership since the Irish Republic has the highest rate of home-ownership in Western Europe. Clearly the option of owner-occupation for Irish people in housing need is not widely available.

Table 1 Housing in London by Tenure Type and Birthplace of the Head of Household

Tenure Type	Birthplace of Head of Household				
	ALL	UK	RI	CARIB	MED
Owner occupier	40	41	26	41	49
Council rental	25	27	25	19	15
Private rental					
Unfurnished	24	25	26	13	18
Private furnished	10	7	23	27	18

Many Irish people in London have traditionally relied on the private rented sector accommodation, often associated with the lack of security of tenure. The Irish are the ethnic group most likely to use privately rented accommodation in London, with 49% of Irish households renting furnished and unfurnished accommodations. This compares with the 1981 Census which shows that the reliance on private rented accommodation is an average of 34% among UK households.

For privately rented accommodation, Table 2 taken from the 1981 Census shows that the Irish were least likely to have exclusive use of bath and inside w.c. (72.9%) compared with the average (82%). Again this shows the Irish households in London are disproportionately represented amongst those living in the worst housing conditions.

TABLE 2
Amenities; Other rental tenants (mostly private)

Amenity/lack of Exclusive use of bath and inside WC	Birthplace of head of household					
	ALL	UK	RI	CARIB	MED	NC NC/P
inside WC	82.0	82.5	72.9	80.1	76.5	76.9 76.6
Lacking bath	7.3	7.9	6.2	2.7	3.6	2.6 2.8
Lacking inside WC	8.5	9.2	5.4	2.0	3.1	2.4 2.7

(Tables 1 and 2 compiled from data in the 1981 Census, Housing and Households Volume, Table).

THE IRISH IN THE LABOUR MARKET

The acute housing need of the Irish in London must be seen in the wider context of general disadvantage which the Irish experience in the capital. Historically, the Irish have been viewed as immigrant labour.

According to Tom Connor,

"...correlation of immigrant labour and manual jobs in the London Labour market is reflective of the Irish labour market experience". (The London Irish, 1987).

In recent years changes in the British economy have threatened the employment prospects of immigrant labour. The world recession in the early 1980's has led to an accelerated decline in manufacturing industry - a process described by social scientists as de-industrialisation. A dramatic increase in unemployment has taken place in the capital and throughout Britain since 1979 (The London Irish 1987).

An examination of the unemployment rates calculated from the 1981 Census shown on Table (3) for London shows that the Irish and other ethnic minorities suffer much economic disadvantages. Respectively, the Irish and the Caribbean groups have unemployment rates of 10.5% and 14.9% compared with the average of 7.7% for the London population as a whole.

Both Irish men and women are seriously disadvantaged in the labour market often working in low-skilled manual and non-manual work. Traditionally, Irish men have worked in the construction industry often associated with the lump system, poor working conditions, standards and practises and low unionisation. Women tend to be represented in the nursing and teaching professions, secretarial\clerical, catering, cleaning and domestic services.

In broad terms, the position of the Irish community in relation to the labour market is one of serious economic disadvantage. In short, the Irish are over-represented in semi-skilled and unskilled work and have a low rate of social mobility.

Table (3) which looks at socio-economic groups according to the head of household shows that the Irish are heavily under-represented in the managerial and professional groups. Clearly, the Irish community, both men and women, experience disadvantage and acute deprivation in the labour market.

An understanding of these difficulties faced by the Irish people is necessary to understanding the role of Innisfree in dealing with the problems of housing experienced by the Irish community. Many of Innisfree's short-life residents experience the disadvantages highlighted above.

A look at the issue of homelessness below will again illustrate the problem of acute economic and social disadvantage which the Irish experience.

	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975
Managers and professionals	4.0	4.2	4.5	7.0	8.7
Intermediate occupations					
Professional					
Technicians					
Supervisors	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.9	2.1
Junior staff					
Managers	1.0	1.0	1.1	14.4	15.1
Professional					
Technicians					
Supervisors	1.2	1.1	1.2	2.6	2.8
Junior staff					
Managers	0	1.3	2.3	1.8	1.5
Professional					
Technicians					
Supervisors	1.5	1.7	2.0	14.0	13.8
Junior staff					
Managers	9	14.3	21.5	14.8	17.0
Professional					
Technicians					
Supervisors	1.7	1.4	1.9	1.3	1.2
Junior staff					
Managers	1.6	1.9	3.0	9.8	7.0
Professional					
Technicians					
Supervisors					
Junior staff	0.3	0.2	1.1	1.1	0.2
Managers	17.8	12.2	9.1	8.1	7.8
Professional					
Technicians					
Supervisors					
Junior staff					
Managers	100	100	100	100	100

Source: (1971) G.S. Census Statistics (1974) The Labour Force

The figures for Ireland include only those who are resident in Ireland and not those who are resident in other parts of the United Kingdom.

TABLE 3
Socio-economic group by birthplace of head of household,
1981 (percentages).

	UK	Ireland	Carib	Asian	NCW
Employers/ Managers large estab.	5.4	2.5	1.2	3.5	3.1
Employers/ Managers small estab.	9.8	6.2	2.2	10.0	12.1
Prof. Workers self-emplyd.	1.0	.5	.2	1.8	1.4
Prof. Workers employees	3.9	1.4	.9	5.5	6.9
Intermediate non-manual workers, aux and artists	8.0	5.0	8.5	7.2	8.7
Intermediate non-manual Int foremen and supervisors	1.2	.9	.7	.9	.9
Junior non manual	16.1	10.6	11.1	16.4	15.6
Personal service workers	2.2	4.9	5.6	2.6	5.4
Foreman/ supervisors manual	3.0	4.3	2.3	1.8	1.5
Skilled manual	15.5	17.7	24.0	14.8	13.8
Semi-skilled manual	9.9	14.3	21.5	16.8	12.0
Unskilled manual	4.7	12.4	9.9	4.3	3.2
Own account workers	5.0	6.9	3.0	5.8	7.6
Agricultural workers	-	-	-	-	-
Armed forces	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2
Other	13.8	12.2	9.1	8.4	7.6
	100	100	100	100	100

Source: 1981 GLC Census Tabulation DT5741
(The London Irish)

The figures for Ireland include only those born in the Republic of Ireland - those from Northern Ireland are included under UK in this Census data.

HOMELESSNESS

The extent of homelessness among Irish people in London is not completely measurable.

"... the very concept is difficult to define because it ranges from the visible homelessness of those sleeping rough or being evicted to the concealed homelessness of people unable to leave unsatisfactory physical or social situations". (Watson & Austenberry, Housing & Homelessness 1986).

The research carried out by many agencies shows that there is a disproportionate level of homelessness among Irish people. A survey by Brent Council on Homelessness and housing need among single people in Brent carried out in the two months March-May 1986 showed that of the non-priority homeless who sought assistance from Brent Housing Aid Centre, 27% were Irish. This figure when compared with the percentage of Irish born people in the borough (11.3%) shows that single Irish people are highly likely to become homeless.

Research has shown that two out of every seven people sleeping rough in London are Irish (29%) even though the Irish-born people account for only 5% of the London population.

One quarter of those who use hostels in London are Irish and 38% of casual users of DHSS resettlement units were Irish (JART Report 1985).

Over 16% of those registering on L B Brent waiting list in the year October 1985 to October 1986 were Irish compared with an Irish population of 11.3% of the borough.

The problem of the non-priority homeless brings about a number of other difficulties. The demand for services and the extent to which this can be measured shows that Irish people suffer great personal distress through lack of secure and adequate housing. The isolation and difficulties which homelessness and poor housing brings about especially among single people can lead to further problems. Older Irish people are more likely to be isolated and single than other foreign migrants and therefore are more vulnerable to mental illness.

The vast majority of Irish Applicants to L B Brent and other London boroughs -13-
accommodation.

THE HOUSING NEEDS OF THE IRISH COMMUNITY

The Irish community is made up of a plurality of different groups with different housing needs. In order to service these needs Innisfree has taken important steps to increase its Equal Opportunities Policy and practises. As the first Irish housing association in London we are primarily concerned with tackling the acute housing needs of Irish people who do not qualify for local authority housing or are not likely to be housed by other housing bodies. The success of Innisfree in alleviating the problems of homelessness among Irish people would be advantageous for the whole community of Brent by easing the housing shortage and allowing other groups to benefit from scarce resources. Innisfree Housing Association has adopted the following equal opportunities policy.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

The aim of our policy is to ensure that no applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, disability or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be seen to be justifiable. Selection criteria procedures will be frequently reviewed to ensure that individuals are selected, promoted or treated on the basis of their merits and abilities. All employees will be given equal opportunities and where appropriate special training to progress within the and where appropriate special training to progress within the organisation. Innisfree Housing Association is committed to a programme of action to make this policy fully effective.

TYPE OF HOUSING NEEDED

The type of accommodation expressly required by Irish people without special needs can be determined from a number of sources.

The vast majority of Irish applicants to L B Brent and other London boroughs sought bedsitting or one bedroom accommodation.

Tables 4.5 show that over 60% of Irish applicants sought this type of accommodation.

TABLE 4 HOUSING REGISTER APPLICANTS TO L B BRENT SINCE 1-4-1985 BY SIZE OF ACCOMMODATION

Bedsitting room	198	51.6%
One bedroom	56	14.6%
Two bedroom	87	22.7%
Three bedroom	31	8.1%
Four or more bedroom	12	3.1%

TABLE 5 APPLICANTS TO LONDON BOROUGH OF IRISH PEOPLE BY ACCOMMODATION SIZE OF ACCOMMODATION

	IRISH	AVERAGE
One bedroom	63%	58%
Two bedroom	32%	29%
Three bedroom	0%	10%
Four or more	5%	3%

Source - London Research Centre 1987.

Although these figures demonstrate the type of housing need amongst the Irish people who register on Council waiting lists many Irish people do not register on these lists. Many Irish people also have special housing needs which would not be met by Local Authorities. (Report to Irish Women in London Conference, 1984)

Traditionally, women from Ireland have taken employment with "tied" accommodation in private domestic service, in hotels etc. They became particularly vulnerable to homelessness later as when the job disappears so does the accommodation.

Our knowledge of women and homelessness is also handicapped by the lack of demand made by women on formal agencies compared to men. Irish women outnumber Irish men in London yet they comprised only 6% of those interviewed with housing problems at the Irish Welfare Bureau in Hamersmith in 1983 (Irish women in London, 1988). In a report on Irish Youth in London (1985) Connor et al found only a few women using the advice agencies frequented by young Irish people. The London Irish Centre reported that among its new clients in 1986 and 1987 25% and 26% respectively were women. (Irish Women in London (1987).

It is clear that at a time when emigration from Ireland during the 1980's is high the number of women presenting themselves to welfare agencies is very low and Irish women's housing need is not fully recognised. Women

IRISH WOMEN

Many reports have highlighted the problems of homelessness among Irish women. Although homelessness is a huge problem for the Irish, statistics on homelessness amongst Irish women are scarce. Local authorities are not obliged to keep ethnic records.

It remains very difficult for Irish women without children to get local authority housing. This

"The absence of statistics and an unwillingness to acknowledge the position of the Irish with regard to housing and homelessness makes the problems even more difficult for us (Report from Irish Womens' Conference, June 1984).

Irish women are especially vulnerable to homelessness in the early stage of their arrival in Britain with an inadequate support system and later in their lives as low-paid workers (Irish Women in London, 1988).

In a report by the Irish Womens' Conference in 1984, Irish women on their arrival in Britain,

"...are forced into shabby private bedsits. We are usually overcharged and exploited by the landlords. Women often find themselves totally isolated in these rented rooms, and with no knowledge for women who've come from institutions in Ireland (e.g. orphanages)" (Report to Irish Women in London Conference, 1984).

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It is clear that at a time when emigration from Ireland during the 1980's is high the number of women presenting themselves to welfare agencies is very low and Irish women's housing need is not fully recognised. Women suffer from the lack of organised informal network arrangements which are available to men. These include the Gaelic Athletic Association Clubs and certain pubs which are male dominated and women often are very excluded from these networks. As a result, women are forced to seek their own solutions to housing problems, relying on friends and relatives.

It remains very difficult for Irish women without children to get local authority housing. This difficulty is enhanced through lack of knowing the system of allocations.

"a knowledge of housing rights, housing departments and social security is essentialagencies seem obstinate in releasing any of that information. Women said they've found some agencies over-bureaucratic or hostile, or obstructive" (Report from Irish Women in London Workshop 1984).

Clearly, then, there is a great need for housing provision for Irish women in London. This includes both the newly arrived and long-established migrant workers. Innisfree Housing Association has endeavoured to alleviate the housing plight of Irish women, approximately 50% of our short-life residents are women including a teachers' hostel which includes many migrant teachers recruited by Brent from Ireland. A six-bed hostel for young Irish women is being developed in conjunction with Brent Peoples Housing Association.

A major concern for many welfare agencies is the number of 16-18 yrs old who are experiencing homelessness. The terms of the Housing Act 1985 stress that single people have no statutory right to housing unless they can prove that they are in priority need or vulnerable because of mental illness or handicap, physical disability or other special reasons. The responsibilities of local authorities towards single people who are judged as non priority is reduced to giving advice and assistance. Some local authorities, including Haringey and Lewisham regard any young person between the ages of 16-18 who present themselves as homeless as vulnerable and in priority need.

The provision of housing through housing associations is an important aspect of meeting the housing needs of vulnerable young people at risk from moral or financial exploitation. Innisfree Housing Association can deal with the cultural and social issues involved in housing young Irish people.

YOUNG PEOPLE

The 1980's has seen an unprecedented wave of emigration among young Irish people from both parts of Ireland under 26 years of age. Much of this emigration has been caused by the difficulties experienced by the Irish economy, similar to other British Colonies since independence. Many young people from Northern Ireland also emigrate to escape not only from high unemployment but also a stressful political environment.

An increasing number of these emigrants from all parts of Ireland have arrived in Brent. Given the limited possibilities of permanent housing many of these newly arrived emigrants experience homelessness. Welfare agencies in London have reported an increase in the number of Irish clients. In 1984 the London Irish Centre in Camden interviewed 1145 Irish clients under 26, in 1986 the numbers had risen to 1876, an increase of 39%. In the same period the Irish Welfare Bureau recorded a 64% rise among Irish clients. The Action Group for Irish Youth in a report on Irish Youth in London highlighted that in a sample of 248 young people interviewed they found that 27% had spent some time sleeping rough since their arrival (Irish Homeless & Rootless Project 1987). Many young Irish people are forced into illegal and unsafe housing options because of high rents and shortage of accommodation. The risks to health and other risks associated with squatting often have a detrimental effect on young Irish people who are forced to take this option.

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THE OLDER PEOPLE

Since its existence Innisfree has identified an acute housing need among the older Irish, particularly those in the 35-59 age group. This group is characterised by a long history of bed & breakfast, bedsit and hostel accommodation. They have been particularly affected by the decline in private rented accommodation. The surge in house prices in London and the consequent decision by many landlords to sell their properties exposed many older Irish people and many pensioners to the risks of homelessness.

It is necessary to recognise the need among this group for secure and adequate housing. It was they who made a positive contribution to the post-war construction in London. They have also been the victims of a system which encouraged and recruited cheap labour characterised by lump system where tax and insurance payments were avoided and permanent job insecurity. The lack of secure employment made it impossible for this group to own their own home. It is not surprising that this group experiences acute social problems. Older Irish people are more likely to be single than other London residents: 16% of Irish men and 12% of Irish women in Britain over 45 are unmarried compared to the British average of 9%. There is a disproportionate number of single Irish people in London.

A comparison between Irish and UK totals of male and female single people shows that Irish males are the highest group with 42.8% single compared to 31.8% among UK males. Among the female population Irish women have a higher proportions of single people (33.7%) than UK women (25.2%). In short these comparisons point to a strong tendency among Irish immigrants to remain single as they get older, especially Irish men (The London Irish 1987). Given the lack of adequate community support it is likely that a large number of Irish people will become homeless in addition to those with mental health problems who are already homeless.

The lack of adequate aftercare and community based services for the ethnic minorities has meant that a high proportion of Irish people spend time in psychiatric hospitals and on discharge often become homeless or at a later stage become permanently homeless.

Clearly there is a need to address the increasing need of health problems. This need is being met in the light of the present move from hospital care towards community care.

MENTAL-ILL HEALTH

A proportion of Innisfree's clients have mental health problems. Research indicates that within the Irish community there are serious problems of mental ill health. The rate of mental hospital admissions of Irish people in London is much greater than that of any other ethnic group or nationality.

There is a very high rate of suicide among Irish emigrants which is indicative of the stress experienced by this ethnic group. The suicide rate of the Irish in London is 50% above the London average and greater than that of any other ethnic group or nationality except Poles and Germans. Polish and German people in London came as refugees from Hitler's Germany, so that the high suicide rate may be caused by an earlier experience.

The most common mental health problems among Irish people is alcoholism. Researchers also point out that 50% of users of John Wilson House a drop-in centre in Kilburn used by people who are part of the Care in the Community Project are Irish (BIMHG Report 1985).

Irish people suffer from depression and schizophrenia. The stereotypical focus on alcoholism has led to a neglect of these other mental health problems. In short, the problems of the Irish alcoholic stem from loneliness and inadequate housing.

The housing needs of the mentally ill have to be addressed. State policy over the last two decades has stressed the importance of community care for the mentally ill. The closure of Shenley hospital which caters for a large number of Irish psychiatric patients is forecast to take place in 1994. Given the lack of adequate community support it is likely that a large number of Irish people will become homeless in addition to those with mental health problems who are already homeless.

The lack of adequate aftercare and community based services for the ethnic minorities has meant that a high proportion of Irish people spend time in psychiatric hospitals and on discharge often become homeless or at a later stage become permanently homeless.

Clearly there is a need to address the housing need of those with mental health problems. This need is more urgent in the light of the present move from hospital care towards community care.

Innisfree will be looking towards the provision of specialised housing for Irish people with mental health problems and especially towards those whose problems of mental health are aggravated by homelessness.

Homeless Irish families in temporary accommodation by Brent and the situation is the same in most North London boroughs. Innisfree considers daily many cases of families who have just arrived from Ireland or who have become homeless in London.

Over 20% of the homeless families who applied to L.H. Brent for housing in February 1981 were Irish, compared with an Irish population in Brent of 12% of the total population.

The type of difficulties encountered by these Irish homeless families in temporary accommodation can be understood from the following account given by one such family:

"We shared a bathroom, there was loads of people going there and there wasn't even a lock on the door. You were lucky if you'd get into a bathroom with a lock on the door, and even so, people would be coming up pushing the door, etc.

The cooking facilities here are good but it's hard to get in there. The kitchen's so small, and two people might be using the same gas-ring. And it's really hard to get around, like, when someone's trying to get into the sink or the 'dubbin. Yeah, it's really bad.

We cook there and eat it - about seven o'clock, usually, because that's the time there's hardly anyone down there.

In the morning we usually just have cornflakes up here. It's not worth going down for breakfast. It's only one slice of toast, you know. And a cup of tea. I mean, it's not worth getting up that early for.

People just look down on you automatically if you say you're homeless - most people, anyway. They look down on you straight away, like.

Well, see, if I work here, -21-ve to pay half my earnings towards this place. I know that's not worthwhile" (University of Bristol Research 1987)

MIGRANT WORKERS

HOMELESS FAMILIES

In recent years the demand placed upon Brent Council by homeless families has accelerated. The housing needs of Irish families with young children presently living in B & B accommodation in Paddington\Bayswater has been highlighted by the media. There are approximately 130 homeless Irish families in temporary accommodation by Brent and the situation is the same in most North London boroughs. Innisfree encounter daily many cases of families who have just arrived from Ireland or who have become homeless in London.

Over 20% of the homeless families who applied to L B Brent for housing in February 1988 were Irish, compared with an Irish population in Brent of 12% of the total population.

The type of difficulties encountered by these Irish homeless families in temporary accommodation can be understood from the following account given by one such family:

"We shared a bathroom, there was loads of people going there and there wasn't even a lock on the door. You were lucky if you'd get into a bathroom with a lock on the door, and even still, people would be coming up pushing the door, like.

The cooking facilities here are good but it's hard to get in there. The kitchen's so small, and two people might be using the same gas-ring. And it's really hard to get around, like, when someone's trying to get into the sink or the dustbin. Yeah, it's really bad.

We cook there and eat it - about seven o'clock, usually, because that's the time there's hardly anyone down there.

In the morning we usually just have cornflakes up here. It's not worth going down for breakfast. It's only one slice of toast, you know. And a cup of tea. I mean, it's not worth getting up that early for.

People just look down on you automatically if you say you're homeless - most people, anyway. They look down on you straight away, like.

Well, see, if I work here, I have to pay half my earnings towards this place. I know that's not worthwhile" (University of Bristol Research 1987)

MIGRANT WORKERS - N. HOUSE

A large number of Irish migrant workers are recruited to the North-West London area and Brent in particular, directly from Ireland. The London Borough of Brent has advertised and recruited teachers from Ireland to fill its teacher shortage. The Health Services have actively recruited nurses and other health workers from Ireland. The housing difficulties of these and other migrant workers have created problems in retaining these workers in the area and indeed many have left their jobs because they were unable to secure adequate accommodation.

Innisfree currently manages a hostel for 25 teachers mainly recruited in Ireland to fill the shortage in Brent.

The nature of the construction industry in London has drawn many Irish migrant workers to London. Tradespeople and others often move where the work is available and the large numbers who come to London and especially Brent who rely on lodging houses for accommodation shows the need for temporary accommodation for migrant workers.

The traditional providers of temporary accommodation such as Irish "landladies" are fewer and fewer so that many migrant workers are literally homeless although they may be employed.

The Hostel Worker offers support and assistance of welfare benefits, etc. The worker also undertakes the care and management of the property in conjunction with BPAW i.e. state of internal repairs and decoration and the purchase of household supplies and supervises the residents in their responsibility for keeping the property clean.

House meetings are held with the residents every month, so that each resident can air their views, ideas and any other problems that may occur.

Generally this type of hostel is small sized, mixed and with regular support from the worker offers a housing option for people which is neither perceived as a hostel environment or which would appear to demand total independence from each resident.

Innisfree would wish to develop similar type hostels as a solution to the housing difficulties of Irish people in this category of housing need.

CATHERINE COLEMAN HOUSE

Catherine Coleman House is a medium stay mixed hostel for older Irish people. It was developed by Brent Peoples Housing Association in May 1985, and is managed by Innisfree Housing Association. It was opened to residents in July 1986. Catherine Coleman House is a six-bed hostel for homeless Irish people between the ages 35-59 years who are not considered in priority need under the Housing Act 1985. Each resident has their own bedroom, kitchen, lounge and other facilities are shared.

All of the residents - currently there are four men and two women, all have had a history of living in tied accommodation, lodgings, sleeping rough or living in hostels providing temporary short-term accommodation. The project is designed to enable people to develop the skills required to manage their own homes. Innisfree has 2 nominations per year from Brent Peoples Housing Association for permanent one-bedroomed accommodation for hostel residents. So far two people have moved from the hostel to permanent accommodation, and there have been no difficulties of adjustment.

Each resident's needs can be met by the environment the hostel provides. The hostel has a part-time worker who does not live in, and consequently the residents themselves take much of the responsibility for the day to day running of the house. The Hostel Worker offers support and assistance on welfare benefits, etc. The worker also undertakes the care and management of the property in conjunction with BPHA ie, state of internal repairs and decoration and the purchase of household supplies and supervises the residents in their responsibility for keeping the property clean.

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eligible for Council housing because they have children or suffer from ill-health.

Innisfree H.A. equal opportunities policy ensures that no one is discriminated against in allocation of housing units. Eligible applicants are housed from the waiting list in order of date of application. Once offered accommodation each resident in an Innisfree house has a separate licence agreement with the Association. This agreement sets out the terms of the occupancy and the amount charged to cover rates, fuel, heating and administration costs.

The licence agreement forms the basis of the relationship between Innisfree and each resident but naturally in a community based Association the goodwill of both parties means that many residents and members assist the new resident with furniture, advice, shared information and

SHORT-LIFE PROPERTIES

The management of short-life properties has expanded in the past year. At present over 40 Irish people are housed in the ten short-life properties managed by Innisfree Housing Association. This type of accommodation provides for many people the only housing option and the opportunity within short-life accommodation to save for permanent accommodation can be an advantage.

Short-life property residents are expected to carry out minor repairs and decorations of their accommodation. For most residents the choice of accommodation available outside short-life has been very limited. Many having been forced to squat or live in hostel accommodation prior to living in short-life.

Through the assistance of Paddington Churches Housing Association, Brent Peoples Housing Association and Brent Council's number of empty properties are being used to accommodate single Irish people by Innisfree Housing Association.

Applicants for short-life housing are referred from BIAS and other agencies and a waiting list is compiled. The allocations Sub-Committee of Innisfree meets regularly to review the list and accept suitable applicants.

The criteria for acceptance are that applicants satisfy a number of conditions:

(a) they must be homeless, threatened with homelessness, or badly housed and not be in an economic position to purchase accommodation;

(b) they are aware of the fact that they may have to share kitchen and bathroom with other residents and that the accommodation is temporary;

(c) they do not have an existing tenancy;

(d) they do not qualify for housing under the Housing Act 1985 for Local Authority housing ie they are eligible for Council housing because they have children or suffer from ill-health.

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At the end of the licence period when the property is required by the owners for redevelopment the Association tries to arrange further accommodation for the residents. This can be either within our existing properties or through referrals to other Associations or through the Local Authority.

The goodwill of residents has ensured that Innisfree has few management problems and the encouragement from former residents together with the housing need of new applicants prompts the Association to strive further in meeting the housing needs of Irish people.

Innisfree has also received many enquiries about accommodation for teachers who are taking up posts in September.

The project at North Wealdley illustrates the ability and flexibility of Innisfree Housing Association in cooperation with Brent Council, to look outside its own community and attempt to alleviate the housing plight of other groups in the Brent area.

APPRECIATION AND THANKS

ANDY BARTLETT - BRENT HOUSING AID
BRENDAN BIRD - BRENT PEOPLES HOUSING ASSOCIATION
HARROWDENE ROAD, NORTH WEMBLEY
BRENT COMMUNITY HOUSING

The teachers' hostel at 88 Harrowdene Road, North Wembley has been licenced by Brent Council to Innisfree Housing Association for approximately twelve months.

MICHAEL CARR

There are currently twenty-five teachers living there who are employed by the London Borough of Brent. Approximately half of the teachers have been recruited from Ireland while the rest have come from different areas of the United Kingdom to work in Brent.

IRISH POST

Hitherto, the project has been very successful. Innisfree has also received many enquiries about accommodation for teachers who are taking up posts in September.

L.B.B.U.

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DEPT MCNUALLY

PETER O'DALLAGHAN - L B BRENT
JIM O'GARA - L B BRENT
PADDINGTON CHURCHES HOUSING ASSOCIATION
BERALDINE, JACKIE, DIANE - PCHA
CLLR. PETER HENDSAY - L B BRENT
MARK ROBINSON - BRENT PEOPLES HOUSING ASSOCIATION
MARTIN SHAW - PCHA
SHIRLEY AND ALAN - SPENCER HOUSES
ST. JUDE'S SOCIAL CLUB
EILEEN WAPSTAFF
CLLR. YACOB - L B BRENT

APPRECIATION AND THANKS

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BRENDAN BIRD - BRENT PEOPLES HOUSING ASSOCIATION
JOE BOSKE
BRENT COMMUNITY HOUSING
BRENT COMMUNITY LAW CENTRE
BRENT PEOPLES HOUSING ASSOCIATION
COLIN BUCKLEY - L B BRENT
MICHAEL CARR
CRICKLEWOOD HOMELESS CONCERN
FRANK DALY
COLM DIEGNAN
NIGEL HOOPER
HOUSING DEPARTMENT - L B BRENT
IRISH POST
CAROLINE JACOBS - PCHA
MRS KING
JOE LENSON
KEN LIVINGSTONE M.P.
L.B.G.U.
LONDON IRISH NEWS
CLLR. M. MAGLOIRE - L B BRENT
THERESA MALONEY
CHRIS MULLAN
MARY MCNAMARA
BERT MCNULTY
PETER O'CALLAGHAN - L B BRENT
JIM O'GARA - L B BRENT
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ST. JUDES SOCIAL CLUB
EILEEN WAGSTAFF
CLLR. YACOBI - L B BRENT

Mary Connolly

Jim Smith

Hora O'Donnell

Michael O'Connell

Padraic Kenna

Padraic Kenna

CONCLUSION

The last year has been a very successful year for Inisfree Housing Association. An increasing number of short-life units and projects are coming under Inisfree's management. The fact that an Irish Housing Association with a committee which has a sound knowledge of the housing needs of Irish people in the area demonstrates that the Irish community recognises the special needs of its members.

The cooperation and support of local housing associations, the London Borough of Brent and LBSU show that many organisations understand that the acute housing needs of Irish people can be more effectively met through an association such as Inisfree Housing Association.

AFFILIATIONS

1987/8.

BRENT CHAR	DELEGATE	Mary Connolly
BRENT COMMUNITY RELATIONS		
COUNCIL	"	Jim Smith
KILBURN SQUARE YOUTH &		
COMMUNITY CENTRE	"	Nora O'Donnell
LONDON HOUSING FORUM	"	Michael O'Callanain
NATIONAL FEDFERATION OF		
HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS	"	Padraic Kenna
SHELTER	"	Padraic Kenna

the Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities in the allocation of scarce resources. The relative deprivation of Irish people in housing has been in existing research and the initiatives of Irish people in addressing this deprivation must rank as a priority within the provision of Housing Association funding.

The success of Inisfree Housing Association in addressing the disproportionate housing need of the "non-priority" homeless single Irish will continue in 1988/89. It's hope to appoint a new Housing Worker very soon. We also hope that 1988/89 will see Inisfree registered with the Housing Corporation.

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The co-operation and support of local housing associations, the London borough of Brent and LBGU shows that many organisations understand that the acute housing needs of Irish people can be more effectively met through an association such as Innisfree Housing Association.

The difficulties experienced by Irish people in the past through racism and lack of organisation points to the need for Irish organisations to be treated equally by statutory and funding bodies as part of their commitment to Equal Opportunities. The cultural factors and strong identifications of Irish people including those who are regarded as second or third generation Irish with Irish organisations shows the need for these organisations to be treated equally alongside the Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities in the allocation of scarce resources. The relative deprivation of Irish people in housing has been in existing research and the initiatives of Irish people in addressing this deprivation must rank as a priority within the provision of Housing Association funding.

The success of Innisfree Housing Association in addressing the disproportionate housing need of the "non-priority" homeless single Irish will continue in 1988\89. We hope to appoint a new Housing Worker very soon. We also hope that 1988\89 will see Innisfree registered with the Housing Corporation.