



LEEDS IRISH HEALTH & HOMES

ANNUAL REPORT 1997-98

LIHH is a voluntary organisation providing culturally sensitive housing and support services to single Irish people. We recognise how this community's experience of factors such as homelessness, poor quality and transient housing, discrimination, isolation and heavy manual labouring have contributed to a marked deterioration in Irish people's mental and physical health in Britain.



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WHO ARE LEEDS IRISH HEALTH & HOMES ?

Leeds Irish Health & Homes (**LIHH**) has developed from a steering group set up in 1992, which was made up of service users, and professionals from the voluntary and statutory sector working in mental health, housing, and community research and development.

Formed in an attempt to respond positively and innovatively to 'The NHS and Community Care Act' (1990) and the Government document 'Health of the Nation' (1991), **LIHH** was officially constituted in 1996 as a member of the National Housing Federation and as an Industrial & Provident Society with charitable status.

Specifically, **LIHH** are responding to:

- The high number of homeless Irish people in Leeds:
- The over-representation of Irish people in Leeds admitted to hospital and referred for assessment under the Mental Health Act 1983:
- The lack of culturally appropriate support and services to Irish people in the community setting

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- We will provide accommodation and associated support services to single Irish people who are homeless, insecurely housed, experience or are vulnerable to mental or physical ill-health.
- We will support and assist our tenants to develop their skills for independent living.
- We will raise awareness within the public and voluntary sector to the specific needs of Irish people in terms of their housing and health needs.
- We will bring to the attention of the wider public, the needs of vulnerable Irish people.
- We aim to establish a network of Irish people who are interested in the need for culturally sensitive support and mental health issues surrounding Irish homelessness.
- We have a commitment to lobbying for an Irish category in all ethnic monitoring. We will act as an information exchange, providing a network for the various agencies concerned with Irish mental health issues.
- To work in counteracting direct and indirect discrimination in the mental health service.

CHAIR'S STATEMENT

This year has been an exciting and challenging year for Leeds Irish Health & Homes. We are steadily building up a reputation as a quality organisation committed to the needs of our tenants and our funders.

The Commission For Racial Equality Research, published in 1997, showed that Irish people in Britain suffered widespread discrimination in terms of their housing and employment. Further research has shown that admission for all types of mental illness are almost twice as high for Irish people than other minority populations.

I want to commend **Leeds City Council**, who several years before the research findings, recognised that the needs of some of their Irish community were not being met. **LIHH** welcomes the opportunity presented to us by the "**Vision For Leeds**". This vision will allow the most vulnerable in our community to have their voice heard.

During the year we have worked in partnership with the Department of Social Services, The Department of Housing, the Ridings Housing Association and North British Housing Association. **LIHH** has been delighted to be given the opportunity to contribute towards Leeds City Council's "**Housing & Community Care Strategy**". These partnerships have enabled us to influence attitudes and push for a greater awareness of the needs of some of our community.

The success of **LIHH** has been built on the efforts of many people. I want to thank Anthony Hanlon, our Manager, whose energy and commitment is huge. My final comments are directed at **LIHH's** Management Committee whose time, expertise and effort are greatly appreciated.

MARY SHEARD
CHAIR

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS 1997-98



**MARY SHEARD
(Chair)**



**Lorraine Mangan, Clodagh Murphy (Vice-Chair), Brigid O'Callaghan,
John Melaugh, Mel Nally (Treasurer), Peter McHale
Patrick O'Connor, Aggie Northard (Secretary), Gary Burns, Clare Whelan**

STAFF TEAM

ANT HANLON, JANET STEPHENS
KAREN MALLON, KEVIN PONTING



The first member, Ant Hanlon, was appointed in July 1996 as Project Development Manager. The organisation now employs two full-time Housing Support Workers, Karen Mallon and Kevin Ponting, and a part-time Administrator, Janet Stephens.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT MANAGER'S REPORT

1997/98 has seen very positive developments for us at LIHH. We have grown in strength in a variety of ways whilst maintaining our core focus which is the provision of an innovative and quality service to single Irish people who require our support.

Our exemplary record on our voids and arrears, and the increasing recognition in the type of service we are providing are among the reasons other service providers are seeking partnerships with us.

I have seen a welcome growth in the number of properties we manage and thereby the number of people we have been able to rehouse. We have had 105 people seeking our housing service, with 31% of these being self-referrals. This speaks for itself when looking at how and why Irish people do not access other support services.

We have also had a large number of people requesting support in addition to housing, which has given us development plans on how to meet these needs, especially with vulnerable and isolated Irish elders in Leeds, and isolated Irish women.

Our objective of raising awareness of the needs of the Irish community has been established in many different forums and settings, in both training sessions and information giving. Our "Green, White and Invisible" report on the Irish community in Leeds, written together with Cllr Patrick Hennigan has been presented to Leeds City Council for its consideration.

At LIHH, we are lucky to have a management committee which has been committed enough to see its vision through. Many are members of the original steering group formed 6 years ago. This provides a very strong backbone to the organisation and has allowed us to attract additional members with a variety of different skills, including a service user representative. I would like to thank them for their guidance, support and hard work throughout this past year.

The next year brings the challenge of uncertainty of funding, changes in social policy and an increasing awareness in this organisation of the needs to provide additional support services for our community. We at LIHH will endeavour to deal with these challenges with integrity, innovation, resolve and commitment.

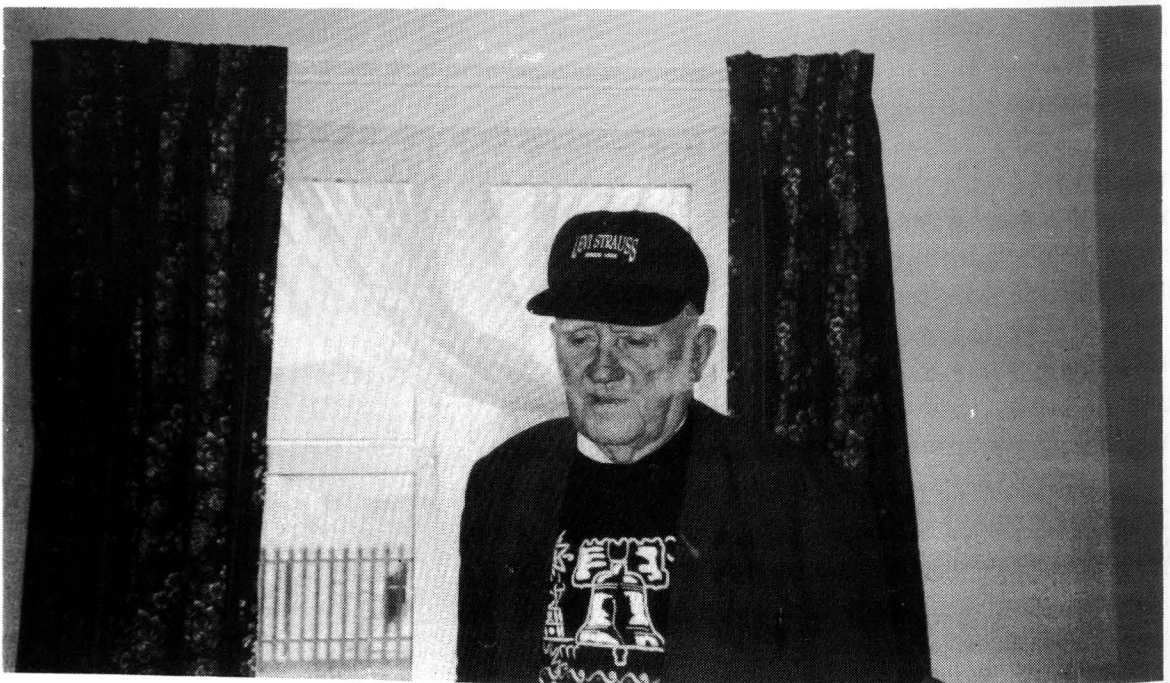
Finally, I would like to thank Karen, Janet and Kevin for the effort, commitment and humour that they bring to their work and therefore, this organisation; all are much needed and valuable strengths to keep us going.

ANT HANLON - PROJECT DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

These have been:

- Being presented to President McAleese on her first official visit to Britain
- Increase in the strength and skills of our staff team
- Increase in the number of properties managed by LIHH
- Presentation to Leeds City Council of report co-written with Cllr. Patrick Hennigan entitled 'Green, White and Invisible: The Irish Community in Leeds'
- Positive responses to awareness raising activities
- Greater confidence in negotiations with our partners
- Securing service user representation on our management committee
- Continuing longevity of management committee membership
- Interview with Radio 5 for a programme on Irish Mental Health issues
- Being the only non-London based member of the Irish Housing Forum
- Seeing the inclusion of the Irish Community in the Housing Corporation's 'Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy' for the first time
- Welcoming the CRE report 'Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain', to underline the awareness raising issues we highlight.



John Rattigan (85 years old) from Co. Mayo is our oldest tenant and has lived in his flat for two years now. He's the hottest tipster in the business !!!

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Ridings Housing Association

1997/98 has been another successful year for Irish Health & Homes, working in partnership with The Ridings Housing Association.

The association monitors the work of its managing agents and was pleased with the results from Irish Health & Homes. Referral rates quadrupled in the year indicating a strong base of demand for the services of the project. Irish Health & Homes understandably responded to this by increasing their provision of accommodation. During this period, The Ridings main concern was the management of the properties managed on our behalf by Irish Health & Homes. The project continued to carry this out successfully whilst also handling their growth.

The tenants in our properties have settled in well and sustained their tenancies during 1997/98 with only 1 out of 8 moving in a planned way to alternative accommodation. Losses from voids and bad debts remain well within the target of 5%. Staff from the project have liaised well with staff from the association in managing the scheme.

The association looks forward to continued success with Irish Health & Homes in 1998/99.

Helen Lennon
Supported Housing Manager
Riding Housing Association

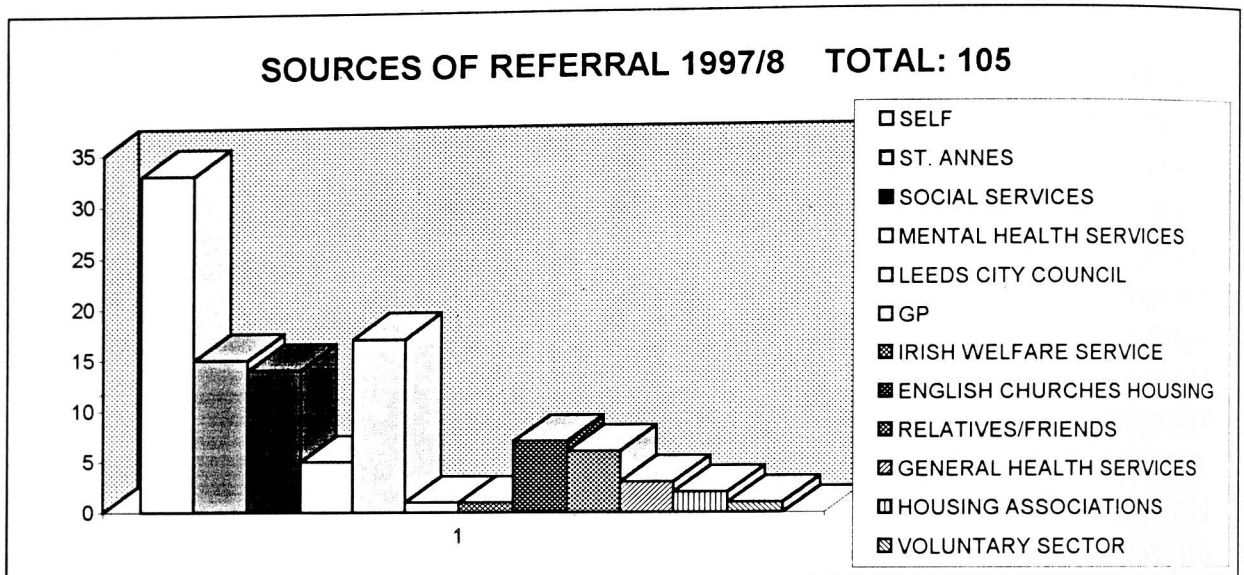
Leeds City Council

Leeds Irish Health & Homes working in partnership with the local authority and housing associations have established themselves within a relatively short period of time as providers of a much needed supported housing service for Irish people living in the city.

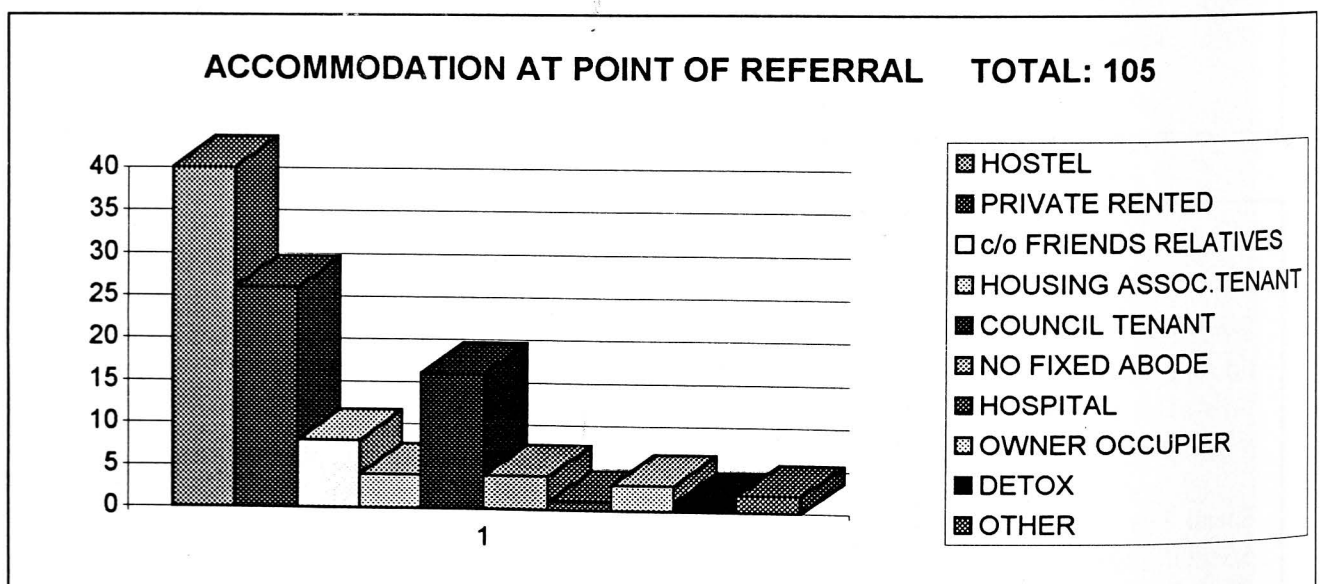
Sarah Best
Special Projects Services
Homelessness & Advisory Services

HOUSING MANAGEMENT REPORT ALLOCATIONS POLICY

LIHH is committed to housing single Irish people in greatest need. We meet these needs by working with a wide range of referral agencies, making a full assessment of someone's support needs and working with the individual to secure the most appropriate support services.



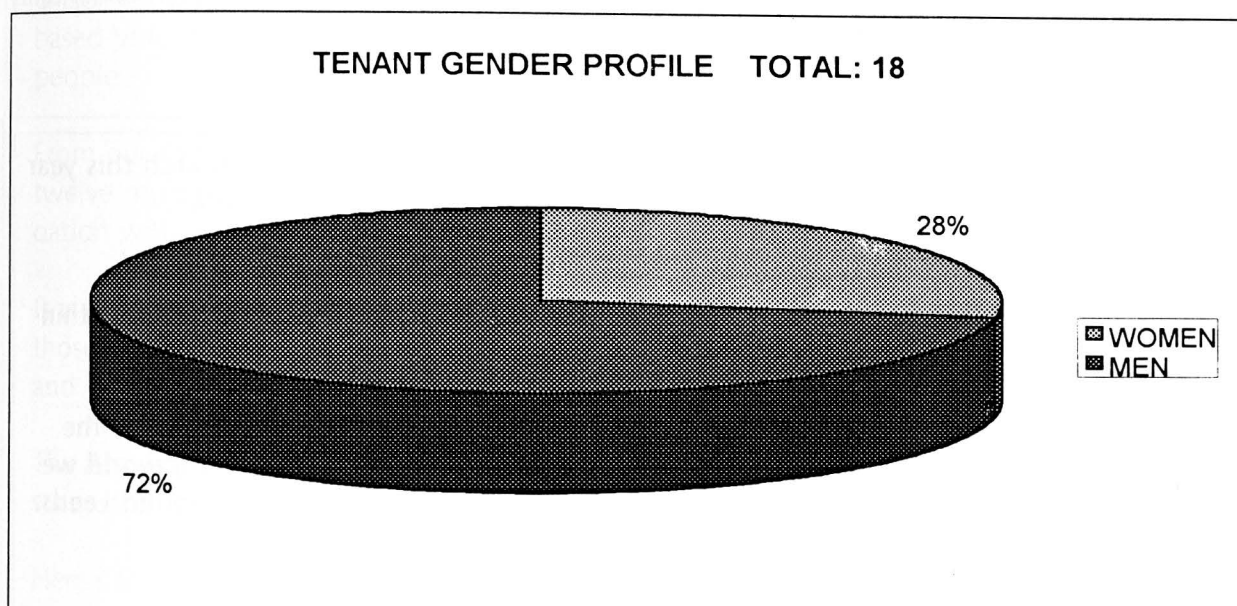
Our referral statistics show that most people who are referred to our service find themselves in very transient, insecure and unsuitable accommodation where their mental and physical health is at risk.



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

LIHH acknowledges that in society certain groups and individuals are unfairly discriminated against. We are committed in taking positive steps to help to redress the effects of unfair discrimination and disadvantage in order to ensure that equality of opportunity becomes an integral feature of all its activities. LIHH aims to eliminate discrimination on grounds of race, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, Aids/HIV status, disability, age or history of mental health or addiction problems. The Equal Opportunities Policy of this project is applicable to all Tenants, Committee Members and Staff. We also aim to encourage co-operation from consultants, suppliers and associates.

Within LIHH, we monitor gender, ethnicity, sexuality and disability. We will endeavour to balance access to housing for men and women and ensure that a percentage of our stock meets disability standards.



SERVICE DELIVERY

LIHH continues to improve and develop its housing management policies and service delivery.

We would not be as rich without the input, experience and voice of our tenants. Our aim is to recognise the individuality of our tenants in addition to their Irishness and to try and provide a service according to that need. Our tenants views are gained both formally, in a quarterly Tenant's group, and informally in one-to-one discussions which take place on an everyday basis. We find at LIHH, that once Irish people are given a voice, they will use it effectively ! !

We have an exemplary record on our arrears figures with **100%** of rent due being collected for this financial year.

Only **1.5%** voids which was incurred during the handover of properties by Leeds City Council. Our scheme with the Ridings Housing Association incurred 0% voids which compares excellently with other supported housing providers.

RAISING AWARENESS AND DESTROYING THE MYTHS

Much of our work centres on highlighting the needs for services to include an Irish dimension to their provision in order to meet this community's needs in a culturally sensitive manner.

Throughout the past year we have been involved with many different forums, attended service planning discussions with **Health, Housing, Social Services and Voluntary Sector providers** and spoken both formally and informally with many groups and organisations about the issues affecting a disproportionate number of Irish people here.

We have provided training sessions on the needs of some members of the Irish community in Leeds. From one such session we received this feedback:

"Social Services staff who attended Cultural Awareness courses in March this year were offered a new perspective on the lifestyles of older Irish people.

Anthony Hanlon joined representatives of the Jewish and African-Caribbean community to raise awareness of the specific needs of older people living within Leeds Irish community.

Eyes widened and gasps were heard as Ant destroyed the myths, overruled the assumptions and refuted the statistics. He gave us new insights into a world we thought we knew about from the media and our own observations around Leeds.

Feedback from the courses included comments:

- **"I didn't know the Irish were different"**
- **"You don't know about these things, no one tells you"**
- **"I wouldn't have thought of that"**

What Ant did was make us think.

The information he gave the group is still being talked about several weeks later and I am now the trainer who ran the course that the Irishman came to ! !

Thanks Ant !"

Janet Testerton - Training Section, LEEDS SOCIAL SERVICES

WORKING WITH NORTH BRITISH HOUSING ASSOCIATION

North British Housing Association welcomes the opportunity to work in partnership with Leeds Irish Health & Homes.

North British Housing Association, as both employer and service provider, is aware that the Irish are Britain's largest ethnic minority group and the partnership is a positive step towards the Association's commitment to equality of opportunities for all.

The partnership between North British Housing Association and Leeds Irish Health & Homes, also provides the opportunity for the Association to work with a locally based Voluntary Agency, providing a culturally sensitive service to single Irish people.

From our initial discussion in October 1997, North British have agreed within a twelve month period, to provide five units of General Needs/Sheltered Accommodation within the Leeds 8 and 9 areas.

It is good to see how Leeds Irish Health & Homes as a project has developed from those early beginnings as a steering group first set up in 1992 to today with 4 staff and 18 units of accommodation in management.

The Association is positive about the future and looks forward to a long and successful partnership.

Here's to 1998/99.

Valerie Barton
Supported Housing Manager
North British Housing Association.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FUNDERS : This year our funders have been:

Leeds City Council

Housing Corporation

Dion Fund

Community Chest

Allied Irish Bank

Leeds Irish Centre

Dunnes Stores, Bradford

AUDITORS:

IME Omar & Co.

St. Albans House, 577/587 Harehills Lane, Leeds LS9 6NQ.

BANKERS:

Bank of Ireland

31 King Street, Leeds LS1 2HL.



A member of the
National Housing Federation