



ANNUAL
REPORT
1986/87

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CHAIRS INTRODUCTION

This year has been a milestone in the development of Cara.

There are now a number of properties in management, beginning to address the different declared needs of homeless people within the Irish community.

In addition it is likely that a decision will be taken over the next few months to register as a housing association, so potentially enabling the consolidation of Cara's role as the prime Irish community initiative in the field of special needs housing. Cara is the first London-wide Irish organisation to be offering vulnerable single Irish people a range of supported housing. This is, as has often been remarked upon by outside agencies, a remarkable achievement given the fact that we were founded less than three years ago.

The recognition of the need for Irish culturally sensitive provision has been late in coming. This is one factor contributing to the disproportionately high number of Irish people on the homeless scene and in mental hospitals. We believe that the lack of such provision is founded less on prejudice against the Irish and more on the failure of the statutory and non-statutory sector alike to consider what the needs of the Irish are.

As a consequence Irish community based organisations have been late in entering the field of special needs housing development and a lot of ground has to be made up before we can make any real impression on the needs of homeless Irish people. Objective research data is fundamental to Cara's development programme. As a consequence of, and to complement the individual borough studies, this year we have embarked upon a major detailed study in Westminster which will explore and analyse the patterns of Irish homelessness in this local authority area.

An important issue for Cara during the year concerned a report written by some of the staff who manage Arlington House in Camden.

The way in which this report was produced was unfortunate and potentially damaging to the interests of Irish men in the hostel, and to the Irish community at large. We were particularly disappointed at the inadequacy of the responses from United Kingdom Housing Trust and Camden Council to the very real and legitimate concerns expressed by Irish community groups. This is a sad reflection on the attitude of the local authority and a major Housing Association to our community.

Nevertheless, the needs of Irish people in Arlington House and other hostels in Camden must not be forgotten, and I would hope that the good will and resources can be found to facilitate the development of services and provision which respond to those needs.

As I stated in the introduction to the report on homeless Irish youth the massive increase in emigration needs to be addressed, within the context of the very different circumstances they are confronted with to those of their forebears. The community structure is not as vibrant; family links are not as strong; the Church not considered relevant; their employment opportunities very different and housing prospects often quite grim. I would go some way down the road with those who assert that very many of the recent immigrants are doing well, but our research tells another tale of deprivation, homelessness and lack of preparation on the part of others which contrasts with the comforting reassurance of that assertion.

While as a community we share a moral responsibility to assist new arrivals in settling in Britain, we should not dash into ill thought out panic measures with scant regard for appropriate safeguards. Rather we should support a well balanced development programme managed by agencies experienced in the field, and continue to put pressure onto local authorities and housing associations to acknowledge and address the growing crisis of Irish homelessness.

I welcome the not inconsiderable efforts by Irish based non-statutory and statutory bodies in attempting to provide well researched information packs for the would-be emigrant.

Cara's youth report, which I consider to be a significant contribution to the debate on the responses needed to address the needs of newly arrived Irish immigrants, should now be on the agenda for negotiation with all relevant bodies. Our requirements are well documented, and as a community we are well placed to facilitate appropriate responses.

While Irish youth homelessness is beginning to gain the profile it requires, the enormous numbers of middle aged and elderly Irish men and women who are homeless or living in mental hospitals must not be forgotten. They have urgent and far-reaching needs which can all too easily be overshadowed.

In the current climate of financial constriction it is possible that what are commonly referred to as "minority interests" will be ignored or forgotten. I call on all our funding bodies to honour commitments given, to renew their support for our development programme, and not to abandon disproportionate numbers of Irish people to the continuing ravages of homelessness and deprivation.

In the coming year it will be incumbent upon us to strengthen our links with other ethnic minority agencies so as to minimise the damage to our communities, and to avert falling into destructive squabbles over the crumbs offered to us.

During the year Cara's staff doubled, and I would wish to extend a particular welcome to Ada, our new Director, Don and Liz, project staff at Bardolph Road, and Cora and John, project staff at Amhurst Road. I hope that we can grow and learn together, maximising our individual and joint skills for the benefit of those we serve.

I wish to record our thanks and appreciation for the efforts of Housing Associations on our behalf. Many of their Special Projects Officers have demonstrated a genuine interest and commitment to ensuring that the imbalance in provision for the Irish is redressed.

To my colleagues on the board of management of Cara can I express my gratitude for their generous commitment and support. May I also welcome Breifne O'Reilly, the latest member to come onto the board.

I would like to record our appreciation for the continued support from members and officers at the London Boroughs Grants Scheme, and in particular thank Gordon Campbell and Gerald Oppenheim.

Thanks must also go to Diana Wilcocks, Director of Research and Consultancy at the Polytechnic of North London, for her valuable advice and support to Cara's Researcher, in designing the Westminster Research Project.

I would also like to thank Margaret Hodge, Leader of Islington Council and Andrew Puddyphat, Leader of Hackney Council, for officiating at the opening of our hostels in Islington and Hackney.

Finally, Cara has come a long way in a short space of time, and our achievements should act as a fillip in galvanising us into continuing to press the arguments and statistics, based on objective research, which will win over our critics and attract the resources to grow and develop.

Gearoid O'Meachair, Chair.

WHAT IS CARA?

Cara is a registered charity, and a company limited by guarantee. It was established in 1984 by members of the Irish community active in social and community work, who were concerned about the plight of the large numbers of Irish single homeless women and men whom they met in the course of their work. It appeared that while there was an acknowledgement that a very large proportion of single homeless people are Irish, little consideration had been given to the reasons for this, or to the appropriateness of existing provision to meet their particular needs.

The principle aim of the organisation, (Cara is the Irish word for 'friend'), is to provide supported housing for single homeless Irish women and men, wherever in London a need is identified. This is achieved by working in partnership with registered housing associations, which purchase and rehabilitate properties for management by Cara.

A second aim is to carry out research which explores both the scale and nature of the experience of homelessness amongst London's Irish community.

Amongst the statutory and non-statutory sector there is a growing awareness of the legitimacy of recognising the specific ethnic needs of Irish people in Britain. The needs of single homeless Irish women and men are shaped by their experiences as migrants to a culture which is different and potentially unsympathetic to their own.

Cara extends that recognition to the provision of housing and support services which are specifically geared to addressing these needs, and to giving Irish people a voice to express them.

HOUSE REPORTS

Towards the end of 1986, the first of Cara's hostels was due to come into management. Bardolph Road, Islington, developed with Circle 33 Housing Trust, and Amhurst Road, Hackney, developed with New Islington and Hackney Housing Association Trust.

In late October we were appointed to manage Bardolph Road. Our initial tasks were to prepare a paper for the management committee, detailing how the hostels would be organised, and to make contact with referral agencies. Our guiding principle was to provide an environment for a temporary period where residents would obtain the skills needed to maintain their own independent accommodation and establish a more settled way of life — that support to be given in line with individual needs.

In the run up to handover we made contact with over 16 agencies throughout London, both voluntary and statutory, mainstream and Irish. Overall the response was very positive and this was reflected in the number of initial applications for housing we received — 40 in all.

Some scepticism was expressed about the need for provision especially for Irish people. In answering this the research undertaken by Cara proved to be useful in its clear demonstration that homeless Irish people are expressing a desire to live within an Irish environment.

The residents who moved into the houses were themselves very positive about the idea of Cara particularly, it should be said with regard to its stated policy of being secular and non-sectarian.

In January 1987 we were joined by the workers for Amhurst Road and as a group we continued the work of interviewing prospective residents and preparing the houses for occupation.

A major issue for both projects will be access to permanent housing for men moving on. We have a small (although very welcome) quota from each housing association and are negotiating a similar quota from the local authority.

Together these will be barely sufficient to meet our needs and continuing efforts will have to be made to identify alternative resources. To give men the benefit of twelve months supported housing and then leave them at the mercy of an over-priced and exploitative private sector is contrary to the very aims of Cara.

BARDOLPH ROAD HOSTEL

Bardolph Road is situated in the London Borough of Islington, just off the Holloway Road, with eight bedspaces for men between the ages of 30 and 60. The Hostel was officially opened by the Leader of Islington Council, Margaret Hodge, who expressed the council's support for the Irish Community. Wide support for Cara's work was reflected in the unusually high turn out for the opening which was a great source of encouragement for all concerned.



Margaret Hodge, Leader of Islington Council, 'opens' Bardolph Road, N.7. With her are (from left) Bobby Gilmore, Gearoid O'Meachair, Sr. Joan Kane, (officers of Management Committee) Colin Sheriff of Circle 33 Housing Trust and Ada Burns, Cara's Director.

The hostel was completed to a high standard, particularly in the communal areas, something that was continually remarked upon by prospective residents who were keen to move in.



The living room, Bardolph Road, N.7.

In choosing residents we wanted a group of men with a range of backgrounds and needs. Our first intake included men who had been discharged from hospital, some who had been living in large over-crowded hostels and others who had been sleeping rough.

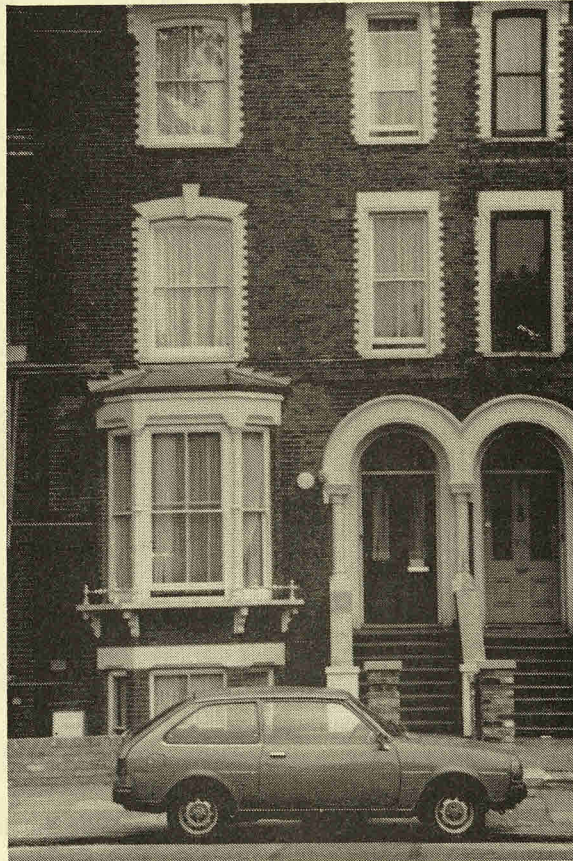
Because of the volume of referrals the hostel was full within a few weeks and residents (and staff) have settled in well.

Don Magee, Liz Blanche and Cora Dean

AMHURST ROAD

Amhurst Road is situated in Hackney with 8 bedspaces for men between the ages of 30 and 60. The hostel was officially opened by the Leader of Hackney Council, Andrew Puddyphat who commended the work of Cara and pledged his support for such initiatives within the community. The opening was very successful and well attended by representatives of the Housing Association, funding authorities and referral agencies.

As with all new projects, there were the inevitable delays and Amhurst Road was no exception, so there was a great sense of relief when all the work was completed in time for the opening.



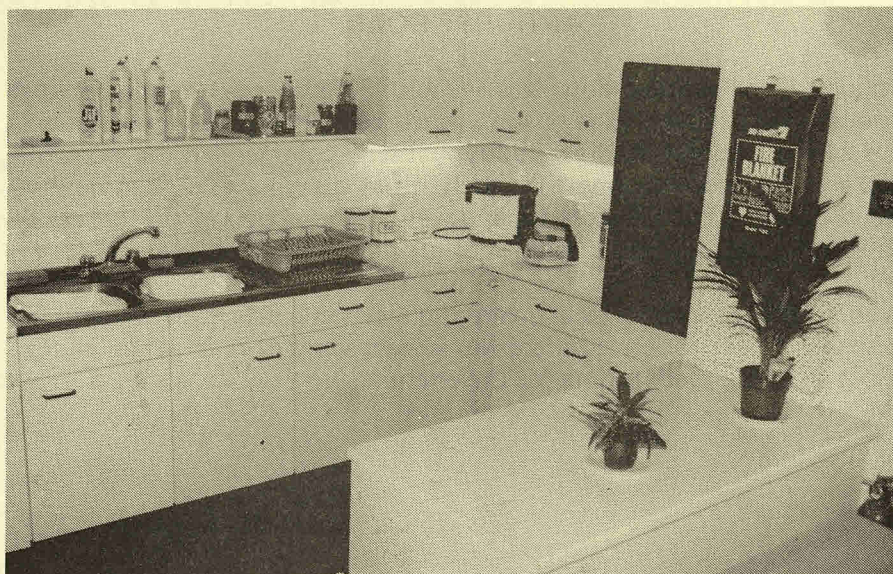
However, because of the delays some of the prospective residents had moved on which was disappointing for all concerned.

Although we did have a long waiting list, our energies had then to be divided between further interviewing and settling the new men. Some of the men experienced difficulties in settling in Hackney, having lived for years in hostels in central London.

A continuing priority for us therefore will be developing links with the local community to help ease this process. As with Bardolph Road, the residents expressed enthusiasm about a provision specifically for Irish people and one which was not religious based.

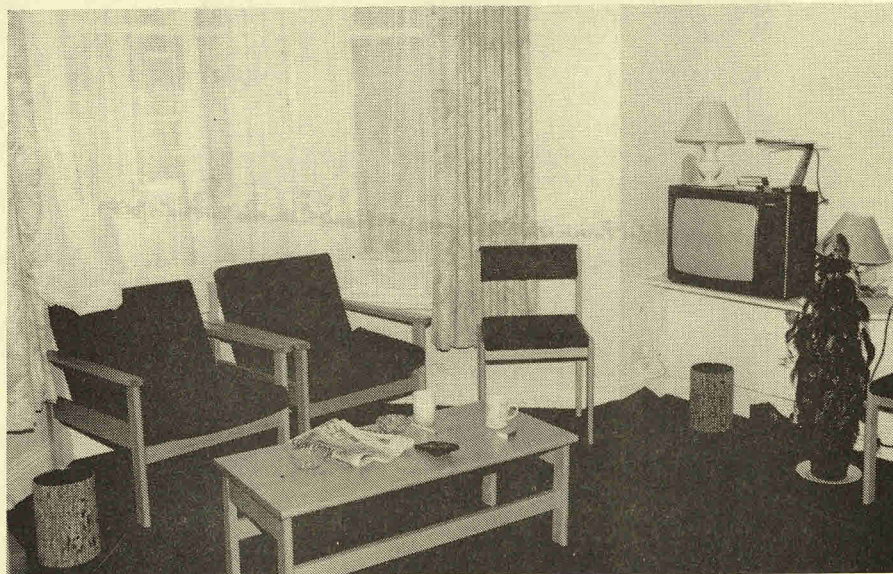
We would like to thank Hackney Council, and Rev. Woods for their generous grant and donation which enabled us to provide the men with a homely environment.

John Dickinson, Cora Dean.



The kitchen Amhurst Road, E.8.

The living room, Amhurst Road, E.8.



From December 1986 to 31 March 1987, the hostels at Bardolph and Amhurst Road received a total of 54 Referrals.

Referral Sources:

| | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Day Centres | 19 |
| Hostels | 14 |
| Nightshelters | 2 |
| Hospitals | 2 |
| Advice Centres | 6 |
| Probation | 2 |
| JART | 2 |
| Social Services | 1 |
| Self | 6 |
| Total | 54 |

DEVELOPMENT REPORT

As described elsewhere, 1986/87 saw the opening of Cara's first two housing projects, with a third due early in the new financial year. The completion and handover of Bardolph Road and Amhurst Road gave an enormous boost to Cara. Obviously it was satisfying to be in a position at last to offer 16 Irish homeless people an opportunity to experience a more settled way of life.

At the same time the experience of management will feed into and inform future developments. Work is underway to produce a standardised design brief, with details of basic minimum standards which Cara would want to see in any of its projects.

These would include size of rooms, ratio of residents to facilities, and other design features which provide a more comfortable and easy to management environment. In addition negotiations for new projects must bear in mind the locality; access to public transport, shops and recreational facilities, and safety (especially with regard to women).

The production of a standardised development and design brief is particularly important given that Cara works across a number of London boroughs where property types vary enormously.

The base reference point for any development must be a respect for the privacy and autonomy of the individual. Given the scale of the need, it is sometimes tempting to neglect this in favour of increasing the number of bedspaces. It should however be remembered that an experience of homelessness can be devastating to a sense of self-worth. Offering a high standard of accommodation, with respect for individual privacy, is one element in the process of enabling the woman or man to re-gain that self respect.

Development Programme

Although preparation for, and the experience of, project completion was inevitably staff intensive, the year saw a continued growth in the development programme, which at the end of March included eight schemes in five London boroughs.

These can be divided into those which entered the programme in 1985/86 and those which followed during the course of the year (with a view to finance being available in 1987/88).

Continued from 1985/86.

Haringey

1. Stroud Green Road, N.4 (London & Quadrant Housing Trust). Eight bedspace cluster scheme for men aged between 30 and 60, and adjacent to the Haringey Irish Community Care Centre.
2. Victoria Terrace/Woodstock Road, N.4 (Circle 33 Housing Trust). Eight bedspace scheme (four for men, four for women), and intended for the 25 to 40 age range.

3. Craven Park Road, N.15 (Family Housing Association). Due for completion in June 1987, this scheme will house six young women.
4. Barnet (Metropolitan Housing Association). Site not yet identified. Six/eight bedspace cluster scheme for men aged between 30 and 60 in the Cricklewood area of Barnet and close to Cricklewood Homeless Concerns Centre.

New Additions to The Programme

Hackney

5. Portland Rise, N.4 (New Islington & Hackney Housing Association). A twelve bedspace dispersed scheme for young women and men within this large new-build site.

Islington

6. With Circle 33 Housing Trust, a six bedspace move-on scheme for residents of Bardolph Road, N.7.

Haringey

7. With London and Quadrant Housing Trust, an eight bedspace cluster scheme for older women.

Hammersmith and Fulham

8. Southerton Road, W.6 (Notting Hill Housing Trust). A six bedspace cluster scheme for older men, located close to the Irish Welfare Bureau.

Other Developments

In addition Cara has continued negotiations with Community Housing Association in Camden for an eight bedspace scheme for older women.

The closure of Friern Barnet psychiatric hospital in Haringey will require an ambitious programme of replacement and resettlement. Cara is involved in, discussions on the form and nature of the non-statutory sectors contribution towards this, with a view to developing schemes for Irish people in the hospital.

Future Development

Cara will continue to focus on its identified target groups; the middle-aged to elderly Irish born; women; young people; and the mentally ill. It will continue to focus on those boroughs where research and the experience of local voluntary agencies identifies a need.

An important aim is to achieve parity of provision, particularly with regard to gender, for the target groups. It is recognised that as homelessness amongst women is often difficult to quantify, development of schemes for women must to an extent be based upon a commitment which cannot always be substantiated by statistics. As women's schemes come into management, it will be easier to develop a statistical picture of housing need which can inform future negotiations. In the short term housing associations and funding authorities must accept a different formula to that employed when arguing the case for men's provision.

The issue of move-on, a critical one for every special needs housing organisation, will also receive special attention. The value of developing more shared housing must be debated, particularly where residents will inevitably stay for longer periods than originally intended and where the communality of the provision exerts special pressure upon the individual.

The implications of changes to HAG, must also be discussed with regard to future developments.

Cara has been grateful for the support given to it by housing associations and local authorities, and we are hopeful that they will continue to support our work in the coming year.

Ada Burns

RESEARCH

An important element of Cara's work is research to clarify the scale and nature of homelessness amongst Irish people in London. This is of value in negotiating new developments and in demonstrating to both statutory and non-statutory agencies that there is a large and unmet need which they have a responsibility to respond to.

The main focus of the Cara Research Programme from April 1986 up to the present time has been on the homeless Irish living in hostels in the Borough of Westminster. Other research enquiries carried out in other boroughs or exercises undertaken in connection with development or other similar activities have been quite short-term and secondary to the work in Westminster.

The Westminster Cara Hostel Research Project was conceived as a two-phase exercise. The first phase involved two one night censuses of all residents of Westminster hostels that admitted unemployed people and those in casual work. These censuses were administered on occasions six months apart to allow for seasonal variations. The first took place on June 30, 1986 and the second on November 1986. Before each of these censuses discussions relating to the objectives of the exercise were carried out with management personnel from 23 hostels. Altogether 19 hostels took part in each census and there were 17 hostels that participated in both. Once both of the censuses were completed and the results analysed, the second phase of the project then began with an indepth study of the most representative groups of Irish hostel users identified during the two censuses. This indepth study is being carried out by first arranging discussion groups with hostel residents and then interviewing them individually. The object of this phase of the project is to measure the impact of cultural and situational factors on the experience of homeless Irish people.

The results of the census will be available during the autumn of this year with the completion of the project due for the end of 1987/88.

Noel Clarke.

POLICY AND CAMPAIGNING

"The Housing Position of Young Irish People in London"

Cara was represented at a meeting in October 1986 between Irish community groups and the then Leader of Haringey Council, Bernie Grant. As a consequence of discussion around the increase in emigration from Ireland and the resulting problems of homelessness experienced by many new arrivals, Cara was asked to write a report on the situation which the council could refer on to the Association of London Authorities.

"The Housing Position of Young Irish People in London" was produced in early March 1987. It considered and makes recommendations on a range of aspects of the problems, including preparation for emigration, emergency services in London, options for permanent housing, and the role of specialist provision for Irish people.

The main thrust of the recommendations demand that local authorities in London accept a leading role in developing a range of responses to tackle the crisis. It must be their responsibility to ensure that the young immigrants, with all their courage and talents and potential, do not in future years become the neglected and isolated Irish people who populate London's Victorian Hostels, its park benches and streets.

The Report has been circulated to a wide range of statutory and non-statutory agencies both in Britain and Ireland, with welcoming comments received from many.

Wide coverage of the report was given in the Irish press. Particularly welcome was the interest shown by newspapers and the television in Northern Ireland, where the constitutional status of the province creates its own problems for emigrants to Britain. Ulster Television sent over a crew to film an issue of its weekly current affairs programme "Counterpoint" on immigration from Northern Ireland.

On St. Patrick's night, Haringey Housing Policy Sub-Committee considered the report. It agreed that the Council support the recommendations and that the new Irish Policy Unit within the council should regard responding to these as an immediate priority. It was further agreed that the report be referred on to the A.L.A. and to the London Boroughs Working Party "Single Homelessness in London". It is hoped that this will take place during the summer, 1987.

Research which Cara is currently doing in Westminster is pointing to a significant increase in the number of young people using provision for the homeless in the borough. Many other agencies across London are reporting increased pressure on their services. Although Cara is nowhere advertised as an advice agency it receives at least a dozen calls each week from young Irish people seeking help with accommodation. Many of those who call are obviously very distressed by their situation.

It is vital, and urgent, that statutory and non-statutory agencies in London appreciate the seriousness of the situation, and act to minimise the damage which will be done to these young people if assistance is unavailable to them.

In considering its own response to the situation Cara management recently decided to re-designate its forthcoming scheme in South Tottenham, Haringey for young Irish women.

The Manager will, furthermore, be recruited on the basis of a job description which is split between management of the project, and outreach and development work on behalf of young homeless Irish men and women. Cara has 28 bedspaces in its development programme for young people. Obviously this is just a drop in the ocean and a major thrust of the bids for 1987/88 and beyond will be for schemes to meet the needs of new arrivals.

It must be stressed once again that while non-statutory agencies can contribute, the major responsibility must remain with local authorities, and work will continue to achieve this.

A. Burns.

Affiliations and Meetings Attended

CHAR — Campaign for Homeless and Rootless People.

CLSSAF — Central London Social Services Advisory Forum.

London Special Needs Housing Group.

London Borough of Hackney:

- Single Homeless Working Party
- Direct Access Working Group.

London Borough of Islington:

- Irish Workers Group
- Special Needs Housing Working Group
- Direct Access Working Group.

London Borough of Camden:

- Womens Hostel Provision Sub-Committee.

London Borough of Haringey:

- Single Persons Housing Group
- Haringey Womens Committee (as advisory member).

Irish Mental Health Group.

Action Group for Irish Youth, (rep. on Management Committee).

Haringey Irish Cultural and Community Centre (rep. on Management Committee).

Haringey Care in the Community Group.

Irish Studies Forum — Polytechnic of North London, Irish Studies Centre.

An Teach Irish Housing Association (rep. on Management Committee).

Circle 33 Housing Trust — Special Projects Forum.

New Islington and Hackney Housing Association — Special Projects Forum.

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The living room, Bardolph Road, N.7.

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Because of the volume of referrals the hostel was full within a few weeks and residents (and staff) have settled in well.

Don Magee, Liz Blanche and Cora Dean

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FINANCE

Financial control for Cara's work is carried out at central office. This year has seen a sharp increase in both income and expenditure, due to the opening of the first two housing projects and consequent doubling of staff. Inevitably this has required a review of procedures for book-keeping, so as to ensure that Cara complies with the different requirements of the funding authorities.

In addition the opening of our projects has meant that the quantity of finance work increased. Therefore we are currently developing accounting methods to assist us in coping with the extra work.

During the year Cara appointed new Auditors, Sayer Vincent, Chartered Accountants, who are based at Community Accounting Services, a firm specialises in offering accounting services to the non-statutory sector.

The accounts for the year ending 31 March 1987 indicate a healthy financial position.

The surplus shown on the balance sheet was achieved by savings in central office expenditure, with a view to moving to new office premises during the coming year.

As of May 1987 four staff will occupy two very small rooms, and it is acknowledged that this situation will be intolerable.

An urgent priority for the coming year will be the identification of large office premises. Aside from the inevitable increase in rental and services, the actual move will incur considerable additional expenditure in terms of changing letterheads, installing telephones and transporting equipment. The surplus shown on the balance sheet has been earmarked for the purpose.

We acknowledge the financial support of the following authorities during 1986/87, and we are hopeful that their generous support will continue in the coming year.

London Boroughs Grants Scheme — central office, topping up and furniture costs.

Dept. of Health & Social Security — topping up under Camberwell Replacement Scheme.

Dept. of Environment — Hostel Deficit Grant.

London Borough of Hackney — Inner City Partnership — furniture costs.

We would also like to thank all those agencies and individuals who contributed towards the printing and distribution costs of the youth report.

Ada Burns, Catriona Kelly.

CARA IRISH HOMELESS AND ROOTLESS PROJECT

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 MARCH 1987

| | Notes | £ | £ | 1986 £ |
|---------------------------------------|-------|--------|----------|-----------|
| FIXED ASSETS | 5 | | 17,504 | 9,343 |
| CURRENT ASSETS | | | | |
| Sundry Debtors | | 9,682 | | 979 |
| Cash at Bank and in Hand | | 3,440 | | 5,510 |
| | | 13,122 | | 6,489 |
| CREDITORS: | | | | |
| Amounts payable within one year | | 8,279 | | 4,374 |
| Net Current Assets | | | 4,843 | 2,115 |
| Total Assets less Current Liabilities | | | 22,347 | 11,458 |
| CREDITORS: | | | | |
| Amounts payable after one year | | | | |
| Deferred Income | | | (19,537) | (9,391) |
| Provision for Internal Decorations | | | (245) | — |
| | | | 2,565 | 2,067 |
| CAPITAL AND RESERVES | | | | |
| Accumulated Surplus | | | 2,565 | 2,067 |

The Accounts were approved

on 9th July 1987

Paul M. R.
..... Director

Joana Kane
..... Director

Companies Registration Number: 1833268. Charities Registration Number: 290182.

**CARA is a Company limited by guarantee
Registered office: 72, Stroud Green Road, London N4.**