

Independent living for two

In September 1981 the Association bought a small plot of land in Cromwell Road, Eccles. At the time we knew that six flats would fit onto it but we had little idea of building anything unusual.

The idea of creating flats for severely disabled people to live independently, arose through discussions with the Greater Manchester Housing & Disabling Group chaired by our director. We had provided a number of flats before but we decided to create two flats for severely disabled tenants and to set the design of the six flats to use people who would look after them. The first two floors were designed to house severely disabled people. The remaining second floor flat is for general letting. Five are for severely disabled people and one is for a wheelchair user. The wheelchair user is provided with a bathroom and a kitchen.

Volunteers

Building took from May 1983 to July 1984. In this period discussions took place with the Social Services Department to arrange for three Community Service Volunteers (CSVs) to be provided under the Independent Living Scheme. The independent agency which provides suitable young helpers. The role of the volunteers is to help the two physically disabled people to live independently in the community. For tasks such as washing, dressing, housework and shopping they should be available to help as required but without taking over. Social Services have to pay about £3,000 per year for each volunteer including their rent but the total involved is considerably less than the estimated £12,000 a year it would cost to keep Neville and Gerry at Willowbank. This helps in a small way to implement current government policy known as 'Care in the Community'.

It was very complicated to pull together the many strands of the design of the building and sort out the constructional problems on such a small infill site. Architectural services have been carried out by Graham Bennett one of IVHA's in-house architects. His input has been far from low energy in terms of the time expended on the scheme and sorting out unforeseen problems as they arose. He had the help of the quantity surveyors Poole Stokes & Wood and the structural engineers Consulting Engineers Co-Partnership. The building contractor was H & D Dickinson Ltd and the cost of the work was £153,380. Of this some £9,000 is the extra cost of the wheelchair features.

Benefits

The process of providing living accommodation and help for disabled people requires much forward planning co-operation and involvement from many different agencies. Housing associations are well suited to initiate and carry through the process although extra resources are required. The benefits are well expressed by the two tenants who have moved into independent living—a state which many of us take for granted. 'It's wonderful just to wake up naturally in your own room. At Willowbank you were woken up by the sound of trolleys and people moving around. Here there is no routine. I can suit myself,' said Neville. Similarly pleased with the change, Gerry commented, 'When I got into my own flat I just heaved a sigh of relief'.

New Task

Since our last report in 1981 a major new job for IVHA has been the management of 451 flats built by New Urban Housing Association. Mike Creamer heads the Trafford team responsible for management of the flats and for organising the major repairs which they require. Finance and Maintenance sections too have expanded to cope with the extra work.

Although the tenants have been very patient as their homes have been rebuilt around them, the whole process can be very distressing—especially for old people—and very intensive work for the staff. So Committee has agreed to an extra Housing Officer in the Trafford team. Work is finished.

For the future IVHA expects to extend the management agreement to give time for the remaining difficulties with the flats to be sorted out.

Office Overhaul

New offices at Bury 'a facility' at our offices in Salford and the purchase of a maintenance

Camp Street kids enjoyed a great day out at Alton Towers this summer see back page

depot at Brunswick have helped to cope with the expansion of staff and services. But we have tried to keep the benefits of a small scale style of working despite this rapid growth. A new telephone system links extensions directly in all three of our buildings and a large new meeting room enables all staff and committee to get together when required. To avoid people getting out of touch we have had a number of staff committees, seminars and site visits. And next a joint day trip to Alton Towers.

Policy Reviews

In discussions of policy the staff of IVHA have concentrated mainly on equal opportunities. As employer and landlord and developer IVHA must be sure that people are not discriminated against either intentionally or by mistake whether they come to us for a house or for a job. We are taking practical steps to give people equal access regardless of race, sex or disability.

Reward

Robert Fildes, Chairman, IVHA Management Committee.

IVHA's

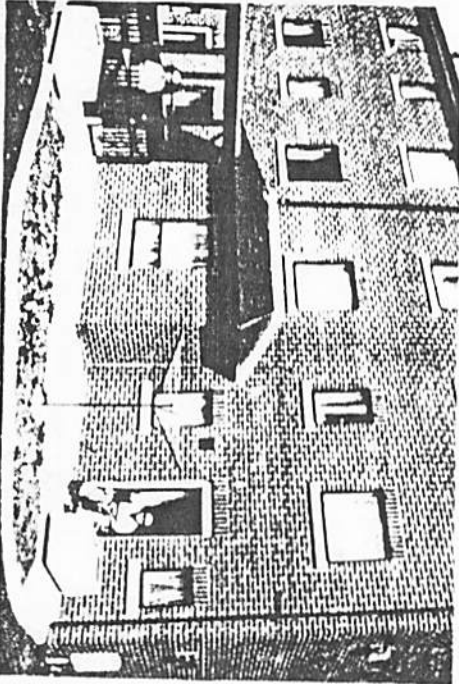
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1984

Tuesday 25 September 1984

at 7.30 p.m. at the Elizabethan Suite Bury Town Hall

All tenants are welcome. Please bring your 1983/84 Officer's card. You should like to come—bar and free buffet.

Audited accounts for 1983/84 are available at Bury Town Hall.



Wheelchair tenant Neville planning his garden at the rear of the Cromwell Road flats