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HOUSING SCHEMES
for
HOMELESS YOUNG PEOPLE

Community Action Projects Ltd.   50p

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I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years the extent of homelessness amongst young people has become a widely publicised cause for concern. Various responses can be made to the 'problem', ranging from global indictments of the social and economic structure, to attempts at specific small-scale provision for limited needs. In this paper we are concerned with describing our involvement in two housing schemes which fall into the category of small-scale and specific.

It is not the aim of the paper to provide an analysis of the causes of homelessness amongst young people, nor to predicate solutions. It is, however, written from the viewpoint that the provision of more and better accommodation is an essential element in any 'solution'. We are therefore concerned to explore what kinds of accommodation are most suitable for young people, and to use our experience of two different kinds of schemes to examine some of the issues which arise.

Nevertheless, it will be clear that this discussion is based upon certain assumptions about the processes involved in young people becoming defined as 'homeless' and the kinds of intervention which may be helpful. In these assumptions ideology and pragmatism combine to reinforce one another. From an ideological point of view we were keen to avoid the 'social work' or 'inadequacy' concept of homelessness, whereby homeless young people are seen as inadequate clients in need of social work support. Rather, we wished to emphasise the independence and self-sufficiency (potential or actual) of young people who happened to have fallen foul of external market forces. Pragmatically, we could only provide accommodation if it was geared to the concept of self-reliance, and avoided the paraphernalia and expense of attendant social workers.

The practical stance arose because of the nature of the organisation running the schemes. Community Action Projects Limited is a small charitable company which was formed in 1971, as the result of the work of a community action group at Manchester University. The group was concerned about the lack of after-care facilities, particularly accommodation, for ex-psychiatric patients, and set up Manchester's first group homes. The scheme was a small one, involving two adjoining houses, rented from a commercial landlord, and housing eight people. The importance of the scheme was that it was financially self-sufficient: income from rents covered expenses, and there were no paid staff. Subsequently the Social Services Department gave a small annual grant which helped to purchase additional items, such as a radio, and provide a holiday fund for tenants. Such support as the residents required, particularly in the initial stages, was given by volunteers.

CAP was formed to handle the legal and financial aspects of the scheme, but essentially it remains a group of volunteers committed to undertaking small housing experiments without the benefit of large resources. These experiments are not designed to be ends in themselves, but to demonstrate the feasibility of certain schemes, to test particular forms, and to give the lie to the idea that large-scale funding is required in order to initiate projects of this kind.

Soon after the company was formed, approaches were made to youth workers concerned with young people in the city centre of Manchester, to see if a scheme could be devised which would provide accommodation for homeless young people. A committee was formed which included representatives of CAP, the Youth Development Trust City Centre Project, Homeless in Manchester, Richmond Fellowship, Stopover (a short-stay hostel for girls), and interested individuals. This group was alarmed by the scarcity of cheap furnished rented accommodation suitable for young people who were unemployed or in low-paid jobs, and by the further continuing deterioration in the market. Young people who for various reasons were without friends, family, or job, were particularly vulnerable in the competition for scarce accommodation resources, and the most likely to become trapped by the vicious circle of no money, no accommodation, no money. Indeed, many young people who had started out eagerly to begin a new life found themselves failing time after time to find or keep a room, and the group was alarmed at the effect this had upon young people, who gradually redefined themselves as 'homeless', 'failures', 'hopeless', and so on.

At the same time as recognising the alarming scarcity of accommodation, it was felt that increased hostel provision was not the answer.

"The prime value here is one of independence, and this explains at least in part the resistance of young people to a hostel situation. Nevertheless there is observed a tendency to fail in achieving this independence and it is in the area of accommodation that failure can be most significant and devastating... Certainly there is a need for some kind of environment which is non-exploitive, yet which prepares the young person for the totally commercial and competitive world around him. An environment, also, which does not oblige the young person to define himself as being 'in need', as a hostel situation inevitably does in the minds of the young people described in this paper." *

It was decided, therefore, to attempt to buy a house which could be turned into five or six bedsits. These rooms would be rented out at a fair economic rent to young people who had had difficulties obtaining or keeping rooms, for a stated limited period of three or four months. This period was envisaged as a breathing space which would allow youngsters a chance to assess their situation and make decisions about their future. Some might decide to move on to another city; others would use the time to sort out their financial situation, to look for work and accommodation, to make friends. Such decisions as were made, however, should not be made under the pressure of having nowhere to live, or being pressurised by an angry landlord for rent which had not yet arrived from the Social Security.

The house should not only provide a breathing space. It should also be seen as initiating some young people (especially those who had just left home) into the kind of demands which bedsit living

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* Working paper prepared by Alistair Cox for the CAP sub-committee concerned with young homeless, January 1972

makes upon the individual: paying rent regularly, contracting workable relationships with other tenants, surviving on one's own.

"It would need to be stated explicitly that this was not a group work hostel of any kind; that there would be little communal living; that the young people would be tenants in relation to a landlord, whose rules would be similar to those of commercial landlords but who would be more tolerant and patient in the execution of these rules, e.g. payment of rent, noise, breakages."

A further feature of the house as envisaged by the group was that there should be a friendly adult resident in the house to provide a focus for queries and a link with sources of help and support outside the houses. In return for living in the house and acting as a resource person, the resident would receive free accommodation. He would, however, be expected to have other paid employment, and therefore his role would be of a minimal kind.

"His position in the house, it is emphasised, would need to be defined not in terms of social work assistance, but in terms of easy availability to the young people who chose to use him. Some, it is anticipated, would make no use of him. This is important if we are sincere in our resolve not to define the young person as in need of help as it is usually interpreted."

At that stage, therefore, four possible interpretations of the resident's role were suggested for consideration. Clearly in such a situation much depends upon the individual appointed, and variations in role are inevitable. Nevertheless, we would suggest a formulation of role and expectations for the resident are essential if he is not to become overwhelmed. The initial suggestions were:

"(a) The landlord role
We should note the advantages of this perhaps not immediately attractive role. While being seen to be fair and patient and willing to help, young people would expect such an individual to be concerned with control and he/she would therefore be able to deal more easily with crisis situations, e.g. abuse of rooms, breakages, etc. This would get away from a social work/ patronising orientation and come closer to life as it is outside the house.

(b) The caretaker role
In this role the worker could refer any issue of conflict to the 'landlord' above him and so concentrate on his relationship with the young people. A good, open, neutral role. Expectations on the part of the young people would not be highly formed, some danger that they might be too low. But a good worker could probably take advantage of this.

(c) The resident role
Here the landlord's functions would be assumed by a committee. No obligation on worker re rent or control. Greatest involvement with young people. But control would have to be imposed from outside the house; the worker would lack power to check disorder in the house.

(d) The married couple role

    Husband would be the landlord, wife the sympathetic
contact. Might be seen to combine the two functions
of control and sympathetic concern in one appointment."

Having stated the possible bases for action, the group started
work to look for a suitable house for purchase. This proved a
difficult task. The original idea had been to find a house in a
redevelopment area, which would not be costly, and which, with a
life of two to five years, would provide a reasonable period to
assess the effectiveness of the scheme. Raising sufficient money
for such a purchase was, however, a long term venture, and the group
was in the meantime offered low-interest mortgage facilities. To
satisfy the mortgagees, however, it was necessary to find a house
in good condition and with a long-term future. The group did, in
fact, consider a number of houses, but none of these proved entirely
suitable. In parallel to these enquiries, therefore, the group
pursued the possibility of renting a house, and this proved much
more fruitful.

Family Housing Association (Manchester) Limited had at that time
recently purchased a large house in poor repair which was unsuitable
for conversion to family units. They agreed to produce a design
for converting the house to single bedsitters in line with the scheme
proposed by the group. This was a lengthy procedure which required
architects' designs, planning permission, negotiation of grants and
loans, commissioning builders and decorators, and purchase of
equipment. The group was, therefore, particularly interested when
FHA indicated that it had also recently purchased three terraced
houses in another area (later to come under the control of Family
Housing Association (Salford) Limited) which it was unable to
modernise until plans for the street had been finalised. It was
agreed that CAP should rent these houses from FHA for one year in
order to commence the scheme whilst work was undertaken on the
larger house.

In the rest of this paper we will be describing the operation
of these schemes, and comparing the advantages and disadvantages
of each. We would be wary of suggesting that our limited experience
qualifies us to draw definitive general conclusions, but we would
argue that our experiences may prove helpful to others attempting
similar schemes, and we have ourselves come to certain conclusions
which we would wish to share with those concerned with the provision
of accommodation for homeless young people.

II. THE HOUSING SCHEMES

In this chapter we aim to briefly describe the schemes, in order to give a background to the discussions which follow. It must be emphasised, however, that these descriptions can only be the sketchiest of summaries, and in no way represent the wealth of happenings which made up our total experience of the schemes.

We are not looking for a cinema verite kind of recording, fascinating as this would be, but rather a minimal structure which will enable us to discuss later specific issues which stand out as being of general importance.

The Bowker Street scheme

The first scheme to come into operation was in Bowker Street, Salford.   Situated in a decaying area, Bowker Street is a cobbled street rising up a hill.   On the left are three-storey terraced houses, generally in a poor state of repair, with the occasional area of waste ground where an unfit house has been pulled down. On the right the houses are slightly smaller, though still of good size, and vary considerably in state of repair - from excellent to very poor.   It is on this side that the houses rented by CAP are to be found.

The large houses on the adjoining main roads are almost entirely multi-occupied, whilst in the street itself there are several which are let out as bedsitters, and others where lodgers are taken in. Prior to their purchase by FHA the three houses in question were rented to students, and their use as bedsits for young people was not therefore in marked contrast to their past usage nor to the general atmosphere of the street.

Two of the houses were adjoining, whilst the third was separated from them by one house.   Each had one large and one medium room and a large kitchen on the ground floor, with a small lobby beyond the kitchen which in two houses contained a washbasin and toilet and in the third a sink and cooker.   On the first floor were two medium-sized rooms, one large room, and a bathroom, whilst upstairs was a large attic room.

The houses were in a poor state of repair, and before handing them over FHA did some basic maintenance - mainly installing a damp course and undertaking some rewiring.   Such decorations as had been present were poor, and were in any case largely destroyed in the course of doing the repairs.   In February 1973 the caretaker, as it had been decided he should be called, moved into the first available house, and was faced with the task of decorating it from top to bottom.   Meanwhile the other two houses were gradually repaired, and these, too, required decorating throughout.

As the first tenants took up residence they joined in the task of papering the walls with chipboard and applying coats of emulsion and gloss in the appropriate places.   Many were able to choose their own colour schemes and decorate their own rooms. Each house was decorated throughout, though this decoration was not always of particularly high standard.

There was some furniture already in the houses, and it was typical of furnished accommodation - old furniture picked up in second hand shops, and varying from reasonable to shoddy. This had to be supplemented by further furniture bought second hand by CAP. The Company also bought sheets, blankets, and pillows, as well as cooking utensils, crockery, cutlery, iron and ironing board and other basic requirements which it was envisaged the tenants would share. Curtains and carpets were either already in the house or bought secondhand.

Each house had a small garden in the front and a large one at the back. Apart from the house occupied by the caretaker these were overgrown and neglected, and for a time occupied by builders' rubbish which had not been removed.

Heating was by electric or gas fires in each room, served from a central supply. The rooms were not fitted with separate meters, and at a cost of approximately £200 per house it was not felt that a year's tenancy warranted their installation. Each house had an electric immersion heater, and either a gas or electric cooker.

In fact, the tenancy lasted $2\frac{1}{2}$ years, rather than 1, due to delays in planning for the area as a whole. It was not until 1975 that a Housing Action Area was declared and the future of the houses became clear.

From February to November 1973, the first house was occupied solely by the caretaker and his family; and during that time houses 2 and 3 were completed and tenanted by young people. Each had potentially two double and three single rooms, with the attic available as a communal lounge if required. Kitchen and bathroom were shared by all tenants.

From December 1973 to June 1974 a single man acted as caretaker, and during this time he occupied the first floor of house 1, whilst a couple with their child occupied the two rooms on the ground floor. Bathroom and kitchen were shared. In July 1974 a caretaker with a family once more took up residence in the whole house, leaving houses 2 and 3 available for young people. House 3 was returned to the landlords at the end of 1974, and house 2 continued until August 1975.

The first caretaker was a youth worker employed by the City Centre Project, who had experience of working with homeless young people and saw the establishment of the houses as an opportunity to become yet more closely involved. This was a significant appointment, since it immediately undermined the minimal role envisaged by CAP. Indeed, the first caretaker consciously took on a dominant role in the houses - selecting tenants, collecting rents, intervening in crises, as well as his more general duties of seeing the houses ran smoothly - and he did this particularly because he was committed to the concept of the houses and keen to see them working as a helpful resource. As a youth worker he was also, however, keenly committed to helping certain individuals who were experiencing particular difficulties, and this subtly transformed some of the objectives of the scheme. For example, he was concerned about particular individuals whose difficulties in finding a niche for themselves were severe, and suggested the third house should be used solely for people who fell into this category:

"House 3 will differ from the existing house 2 in catering
for more severely disorientated individuals. It is envisaged
that the type of person occupying house 3 will be the kind
who for one reason or another does not fit into society.
These will be the individuals whom society attempts only to
contain rather than help." *

This concept, for example, conflicted with the original aim of not
defining tenants as 'problem' people.

This period could perhaps be described as an 'intense' period,
with the caretaker becoming closely involved with tenants and a
'social work' orientation taking precedence over a 'housing management'
one. Indeed, the resident found that as landlord-caretaker-youth
worker his role was too diffuse and inherently contradictory to be
viable. The houses had tended to become claustrophobic and inward-
looking, with tenants themselves seeing them as a social work project
rather than an accommodation scheme. Not only did this make life
difficult for the resident, but it was also eroding the 'self-
sufficiency' model of the house. Financial viability was threatened
by low rent payment, and the escalation of demands upon the
'caretaker' was threatening the concept of a low-profile, unpaid
adult resident.

Although the caretaker had personal reasons for leaving, it is
also probably true to say that it would have been difficult for him
to retreat from his high involvement role, and possibly the only way
to effect a rapid change was the introduction of a new caretaker.

In December 1973 a young single man took up a temporary
appointment with the City Centre Project, and also carried on his
predecessor's involvement with the housing scheme. His style was
markedly different, in that he was closely involved with only one
tenant in the houses, and retained only minimal contact with the
rest. Whilst he was resident in the first house, he did not regard
it as his home, since he returned to his parents' house every
weekend. As he was out of the house during most of the day on other
work, he was in effect mainly available only on weekday evenings.
This inevitably meant less interaction with tenants, and an increased
need for self-sufficiency on the part of young people.

In house 2 there developed a strong sense of community, with the
tenants co-operating well to clean communal areas, decorate and
repair the house (often with materials purchased out of their own
money), and to make and apply rules about things like noise and
visitors. In this house, therefore, the caretaker became largely
superfluous, since rent-collecting and other managerial functions
had been taken over by a member of CAP. Even rent-collecting was
undertaken by the group of young people themselves when the rent-
collector was away, and their commitment to the house ensured a
high level of rent-paying. A weekly tenants' meeting developed at
the times when the CAP member visited, and this meeting discussed
grievances, requests for equipment and repairs, and also met and
agreed upon new tenants. The group took upon itself the
responsibility for ensuring that new residents understood and abided

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* Working paper by Bernard Jobson, April 1973

by the norms of the house. Whilst it would be foolish to
romanticise this period as if it were ideal and problem-free,
nevertheless it represented the high spot of the houses' history,
and showed to a marked degree the extent to which young people
respond to being given responsibility and shown trust.

However, the third house exhibited none of these signs of self-
sufficiency, and here it would have been helpful to have had a
caretaker who was more available and therefore more able to step in
in a control function. In this house were a couple with a young
baby and severe domestic problems, and two young men who found it
difficult to maintain themselves (a hangover from the 'difficult
tenant' period), and between them they were unable to reproduce the
stability or the energy of house 2. There was also a succession
of other tenants, none of whom stayed long, and who were unable to
combat the general inertia and slovenliness of the house.

The situation of two markedly contrasting houses was the one
which met the third caretaker and his wife when they moved in in
July 1974. Whilst this caretaker was also a youth worker with the
City Centre Project, he was careful to define a role for himself
which he felt was consonant with the aims of the house and was
largely manageable in personal terms. This was much more of a
caretaker role than either previous resident had adopted, and to
some extent represented a middle ground between the two. Thus he
spent a good deal of time initially doing repairs around the houses,
and always took seriously the condition of the houses. At the same
time both he and his wife made friends with the young people, and
were used by them to differing degrees.

The situation in the houses changed for a variety of reasons.
The third house had an influx of new tenants who did much to ensure
its cleanliness and orderliness. From being a source of concern
about its physical condition, it changed to being a source of
financial concern, as rent payment was low, and this precipitated
a crisis later in the year, which finally resulted in the house
becoming empty just before Christmas. Neighbourhood vandals
immediately took advantage of this to remove the immersion heater
and several lengths of gas piping, rendering the house uninhabitable.
As FHA were beginning to draw up plans for modernising the property,
it was agreed that the house should not be temporarily rehabilitated
but should be returned to FHA.

Meanwhile, personal crises amongst some of the strongest members
of the second house undermined the stability of the house and
created an atmosphere of tension and uncertainty. Here the caretaker
was heavily relied upon, and found himself inundated with requests
for help. There were a number of months of heavy demands, followed
by some months of relative calm, during which new tenants were
introduced into the house and some abortive attempts were made to
reintroduce the degree of tenant control which had previously
existed. Gradually, during the summer of 1975, the house was run
down, prior to handover to FHA in August.

The Egerton Road scheme

Egerton Road is a pleasant street off a main road leading south
out of Manchester. Large trees overshadow the road, and the housing
is varied - mainly large detached and semi-detached houses. A number

of the houses are now let out as flats and bedsitters, but these
are mainly to students and young professional people, and there is
none of the rundown character of cheaper areas of multi-occupation.

The house purchased by FHA was a large semi-detached house in
poor repair. By the beginning of 1974 the building had been
transformed. Six self-contained bedsitters had been created, three
on the ground floor and three on the first floor. Each had a
kitchen unit comprising stainless steel sink, fitted cupboards,
small electric cooker and small refrigerator; and each had a
separate bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. The rooms
had fitted carpets and bright curtains, and furniture obtained from
the suppliers to university halls of residence. There was an oil-
fired central heating system, which also provided hot water. The
entire house, inside and out, had been decorated professionally.
On the top floor was a flatlet for the caretaker, with a large
bedsitting room, medium sized kitchen with fitted units, cooker and
refrigerator, and a bathroom.

These flats were bright and attractive and of a high quality.
During the final stages of preparation, many passersby called at the
house to enquire about the possibility of renting a room, and a
professional surveyor valued the rooms at about twice the rent which
FHA actually asked.

The house is attractively situated, set back from the road
behind a high hedge and a tree which between them screen it almost
entirely from view, and with a large front garden which in the
spring glows with an abundance of bluebells. Even the dustbin area
has been attractively designed and camouflaged.

The first caretaker moved in during February 1974, and the house
soon filled with tenants. The caretaker, a single woman, had also
been a youth worker and knew many of the young people before they
moved in. Her relationship with the tenants, therefore, was a
friendly one from the start, and she particularly emphasised the
mutuality of the relationships she formed - seeing herself as gaining
as much from the young people as they were likely to gain from her.

When this caretaker left after a few months there was an interim
period of four or five weeks before a new caretaker moved in. This
coincided with the arrival of a new tenant in the house who had a
number of friends who caused problems with minor thefts and breakins.
Tension grew in the house, and the atmosphere was unfriendly and
touchy. This problem was not really resolved until a couple of the
tenants, including the new arrival, left.

The new caretaker was a young single man who had almost instant
rapport with the tenants. He was both concerned about and
interested in them, yet without the kind of crusading zeal which
required him to intervene in their lives. He had a full and active
life outside the house, and involved many of the tenants in other
groups and activities with which he was concerned. This period was
one of relative calm, during which the main problem was police
harassment of some of the tenants. Tenants' meetings were started,
involving tenants, caretaker, CAP and FHA, and these were helpful
in sorting out some of the minor incidents in the house.

A year later another caretaker took over, in this case the man who had been the first resident worker at Bowker Street. Again, he was well known to a number of the tenants, and took an instant interest in their lives. It would probably be true to say that he has been the most critical of the low support structure of the house, and, after a year's residence, would argue that there should be a greater social work orientation to the scheme. One of the major problems during his stay has been a recurrence of the situation where friends of one of the tenants provide a constant source of annoyance and irritation to other tenants, and have been the originators of a number of minor breakins in the house.

At the time of writing the present caretaker is about to leave, and will be replaced by a young couple, one of whom is a student, and the other of whom has just completed a youth and community work course, during which time she was on a placement which enabled her to make contact with some of the young people living in the house. (During the time which has elapsed between initial writing and final publication, this couple have had a very positive impact on the house, generating an atmosphere of warmth and pleasantness, being sensitive in particular to the group dimensions of relationships, and initiating a number of events which have produced feelings of common interest and friendship.)

The Egerton Road house is clearly a long-term scheme which is now permanently established as a useful accommodation resource for homeless young people.

III. THE TENANTS

It is not CAP's policy to keep files on tenants, nor to require them to provide detailed information about themselves prior to, or during, their stay in the houses. The right to privacy is, we believe, a fundamental one. Nevertheless, we know a good deal about most of our tenants - either because they were known to us for some time before entering the houses, or because of the relationships they developed with caretakers and CAP members during their stay. We have, therefore, drawn together some of this knowledge, together with such basic data as rent records, to produce some simple figures which give some indication of the way in which the houses were used.

By coincidence our figures relate to equal time-spans for both housing schemes. The Bowker Street scheme ran for a total of 28 months from the opening of house 2 in May 1973 to its closure in August 1975. At the time of writing (June 1976) the Egerton Road scheme has also been running exactly 28 months.

Both schemes were designed for young homeless people, with a suggested age range of 16-25. In both cases a small number of people over 25 were admitted, mainly because they had experienced long periods of instability and it was thought they would benefit from the offer of a room. However, more than half the tenants in both schemes were under 20.

	Bowker Street		Egerton Road	
	No.	%	No.	%
Under 20	30	57.7	12	66.6
21-25	13	25.0	3	16.7
Over 25	3	5.8	3	16.7
Unknown (*5 of these around 20/21 mark)	6*	11.5	-	-
TOTAL	52	100.0	18	100.0

The Egerton Road scheme was specifically for single people, and during the 28 months 18 young people have lived there, 11 of them male and 7 female. In Bowker Street the situation was more complex, since the rooms were of varying sizes, and CAP was prepared to be flexible in the use of rooms (letting two together if necessary) and open to persuasion about housing need. Thus, in addition to 34 single people (24 male, 10 female) it housed 4 couples without children, 2 couples to whom a baby was born during tenancy, and 3 couples already with a young baby, one of whom subsequently had another. Since the partners varied in age we have shown each individual separately when discussing age, but for all other purposes we have denoted couples as one unit, making a total of 43 tenancies for the house.

By the time the Bowker Street houses were ready for occupation, it was becoming clear that the accommodation crisis was deepening, and that it was unrealistic to expect that suitable commercial accommodation would necessarily be available for young people to move into at the end of a 3-4 month 'breathing space'. CAP felt the accommodation provided at Bowker Street was poor, yet nevertheless it was comparable to, if not better than, much else on the cheap

rented furnished market, and had the added attractions of cheapness and landlord encouragement rather than harassment. It was therefore decided to abandon the idea that the houses should provide temporary accommodation, and to accept that long-term tenancies were possible (though not all young people would want this). The Egerton Road house, when it opened, was far superior to anything the tenants could expect to obtain on the open market, and this too, therefore, could not reasonably be offered simply as temporary accommodation.

Although both schemes were seen as offering long-term accommodation, there was considerable variation in length of stay between schemes and within schemes. The average length of stay in Bowker Street was 16.5 weeks, whilst the average for Egerton Road was 36.1, more than twice as long. (Moreover this considerably under-represents the real length of stay at Egerton Road, since at the time these calculations were done there were six young people resident in the house, none of whom planned leaving. Their length of stay can only, however, be calculated up to the arbitrary cut off point represented by the date of writing. Indeed, at publication time nine months later, four of those six tenants were still resident in the house.) The Bowker Street figure of 16.5 weeks masks wide variations between groups, as the following table shows:

	Average length of stay in weeks
Families	45.2
Couples	25.0
Single people	11.2

We would suggest these figures reflect clearly the greater need for security on the part of families in particular. A couple with a young baby cannot emulate the mobility of single people. Indeed, for the families the accommodation provided at Bowker Street was in most cases, at least initially, the only option open to them, whereas single people had the choice of moving on elsewhere.

We believe that there are a number of differences, particularly in physical condition, between Bowker Street and Egerton Road which partially explain the disparity in length of stay of single people. These we shall explore later in this paper. They are, however, only judgments on our part. They arise mainly from discussions between caretakers, and from the expressed views of young people. Our caution about claiming substantiation by figures stems from the fact that intake to the houses cannot be regarded as comparable. Because of the high standard of the Egerton Road house particular efforts were made to select tenants who both needed and desired long-term stable accommodation. Once tenants were established, the fact that there were only six rooms meant that vacancies did not occur very often. When they did occur, therefore, they were not likely to be filled by a young person who had just arrived in the city. On the other hand Bowker Street had far more rooms and was therefore more likely to be able to accommodate a new arrival. Since such young people were more likely to stay only a short time whilst they assessed their prospects in the city, turnover at Bowker Street was greater. These processes, therefore, produced a cumulative effect which made Bowker Street in part a place where young people 'tried out' living on their own, and Egerton Road a house with more stability.

One way of distinguishing this effect is to separate young people who were already known to CAP members from those who were

unknown.   This is an artificiality which we do not claim has
any particular meaning except that it distinguishes to a very
limited extent between young people who had been trying for some
time to settle in Manchester (who would tend to be known to workers)
and those newly arrived (who would necessarily not be known).
However, the division is clearly extremely crude, since many young
people unknown to the workers could also have been around for some
time wishing to settle.   If, however, this distinction is made
between the single people at Bowker Street, then the average stay
for 'unknowns' is 5.6 weeks, whilst for 'knowns' it rises to 21.5
weeks.   A similar sharp distinction can be seen at Egerton Road,
where 'unknowns' averaged 21.4 weeks and 'knowns' 48 weeks.   The
following table shows lengths of stay and the number of young
people in each of these categories.   The number of young people
not previously in contact with workers is shown in brackets, and
it is clear that they significantly depress the average length of
stay - many staying under 5 weeks.

No. of weeks stayed	Bowker Street		Egerton Road	
	No.	%	No.	%
1 - 5	14(11)	32.5	-	-
6 - 10	12(10)	27.9	3(2)	16.7
11 - 15	5(3)	11.6	2(1)	11.1
16 - 20	2	4.7	4(2)	22.2
21 - 30	2	4.7	2(1)	11.1
31 - 40	1	2.3	1(1)	5.5
41 - 52	5(3)	11.6	1(1)	5.5
1 year - 18 months	-	-	2	11.1
18 months - 2 years	2(1)	4.7	2	11.1
Over 2 years	-	-	1	5.5
TOTAL	43(28)	100.1	18(8)	99.8

It can be seen that whereas Egerton Road had only 8 young people
not personally known to CAP members out of a total of 18 (44%),
Bowker Street had 28 out of 43 (65%).   Moreover, only 2 of these
took up tenancies at Bowker Street during the first caretaker's
residence, as against 13 young people who had been around for some
time, whereas during the second caretaker's term all 13 new tenants
were new contacts.   In the final period of caretakership there were
a further 13 'unknowns' and only 2 young people who were known to
workers.   Thus, during the whole of 1974 and 8 months of 1975, there
were only 2 tenants admitted who were previously known to CAP members.
Such a situation may make it harder to assess not only a young
person's suitability for the house in terms of his ability to cope
with living on his own, but also how he will fit in with the existing
tenants.   This can be an added factor towards instability, though
not necessarily so.   For example, though unknown to CAP members,
some of these young people were known to each other, and this was
often an integrative factor.

In order to explore further the kind of young people who were
using Bowker Street it is interesting to note the source of referral:

Probation Service	3 (3 'unknown')
Social Services	5 (5 'unknown')
Self referred or through friend	11 (11 'unknown')
City Centre Project	24 (9 'unknown')

The small number of referrals from statutory agencies reflects not lack of demand but CAP's insistence that tenants in the houses should be regarded as able to cope on their own with only minimal support.   Many probation officers and social workers, when confronted with this demand, felt their clients required a supportive situation: whether these judgments were accurate or not it is impossible to tell.   The City Centre Project was a large source of referral not merely because the caretaker and CAP members had connections with it, but also because it was the one agency in the city particularly concerned with contacting and helping homeless young people.   All of the 'known' young people came from this source, and had been supported by City Centre Project workers for various periods in the past.   The City Centre Project and self/friend referrals also represent those young people who tend to fight shy of statutory bodies, and who may be most lacking in contacts to help them establish themselves, for example young people who have left home for the first time and are unsure of what to do next, or young people newly arrived in the city.

Whereas the referrals from Social Services and other agencies to Egerton Road again were (necessarily) unknown young people, only 2 of the other referrals were new young people, and this reflects the fact that Egerton Road was not used for 'passing strangers' but was much more a resource for young people who had been attempting for some time to find accommodation in Manchester, and were unlikely to leave on the spur of the moment.

Social Services	4 (4)
Other agencies	2 (2)
City Centre Project/CAP	11 (1)
Self-referred (through sister	1 (1)
- a tenant)	

It is clear, therefore, that CAP was in certain respects more selective in choosing tenants for Egerton Road, and for this reason the figures on length of stay cannot be regarded as comparable. This does not mean that CAP chose for Egerton Road 'natural survivors', who would have made a success of wherever they lived.   Indeed, in a number of cases young people were selected for Egerton Road who were not considered suitable for Bowker Street because of the number of sometimes extreme difficulties they had exhibited in trying to settle down in any one place.   Some had exhausted all the alternatives available and were described in 'problem' terms by other agencies such as the Probation Service (a number of 'known' young people were on Probation).   In this respect CAP was more selective as far as Bowker Street was concerned, in that the more intimate living situation there was held to place more stress on young people and would have been inappropriate for some of the young people who became tenants (for long periods) at Egerton Road.

What is important is that Bowker Street was more available to those young people who were, in fact, more likely to stay for short periods.   We would not like to suggest that this is a bad thing. Some young people wanted an independent life and left home on the spur of the moment, only to regret their decision and return within a week or two, with no harm done.   Others needed the chance to assess whether they were likely to be able to get a job in Manchester. Still others used Bowker Street as a means of trying out whether they wanted a bedsit existence or some form of hostel.   All these functions

fall within those originally envisaged for the houses, in that they provided accommodation whilst young people made up their minds on crucial issues.

Nevertheless, in spite of all these caveats, we cannot disguise the fact that we believe there is some significance in the differential lengths of stay in Bowker Street and Egerton Road. We feel that Egerton Road probably provided a better setting for young people seeking long-term accommodation, and we shall look at the factors underlying this belief in later chapters.

As a final point it is interesting to note the origins of the tenants of the schemes.

	Bowker Street	Egerton Road
Manchester/Salford conurbation	27 (63%)	10 (55%)
Towns around Manchester	2	1
Other parts of U.K.	10	5
Unknown	4	2
	43	18

More than half the young people came from the Manchester conurbation, and were attempting to settle down in their own home town. They were not anxious to leave for London or another big city. Yet the problems many of them had experienced in finding accommodation were immense. It would be wrong to consider that homeless young people are necessarily 'rootless' young people, wandering from city to city (though the pressures to move elsewhere in the hope of finding something better are great enough to cause many young people to do this). Homeless young people in Manchester are very much Greater Manchester's own home-grown problem: a problem which must be countered by creative provision of suitable accommodation.

IV. MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

Managerial and financial responsibility for the Bowker Street scheme lay with CAP, whilst at Egerton Road it lay with FHA. This was because of the different nature of the schemes. Bowker Street was essentially a short-term venture with FHA leasing the houses to CAP to ensure that they were used rather than unoccupied. In Egerton Road, however, FHA had made a long-term commitment, involving loans and grants and considerable capital expenditure. The house, therefore, represented part of FHA's stock in South Manchester, but with CAP co-operating closely over nomination of caretaker and tenants, and support of both within the house.

Bowker Street scheme

Before the Bowker Street scheme started much thought was given to its financial viability. The rent for each house was £7 a week and rates (with Section 40 relief for charitable status) were less than £1 a week per house. These fixed costs were, therefore, not high. The unknown factor was heating and lighting costs. Since it had been decided that it was too costly to instal meters, the company would have to charge tenants a fixed weekly sum regardless of variations in individual consumption, and meet bills from this amount. It was recognised immediately that unrestricted access to gas and electricity would lead to greater consumption than if young people had to pay for the power they used as it was wanted. With electric fires in each room, and an immersion heater, consumption could be high.

It was decided, as an initial experiment, to charge £3.50 for single rooms and £5.00 for double rooms, with an additional £1.00 heating charge for each room. It was assumed that, with a full house, electricity would be not more than £6.00 a week (at 1973 prices). The caretaker was responsible for his own bills, but a contribution of £3-£4 a week was made towards his rates, rent and phone rental. The initial expenditure involved in installing a phone, and decorating and equipping the houses, came from a generous grant of £1,000 from the Crosland Fund, a grant which also ensured a reserve fund should early budgetting prove faulty.

The situation at commencement, therefore, was judged to be as follows:

For one houses:	5 rooms	4 rooms	3 rooms
INCOME			
Rent	£20.50	£15.50	£10.50
Heating charge	5.00	4.00	3.00
	25.50	19.50	13.50
EXPENDITURE			
Rent/rates	8.00	8.00	8.00
Heating	6.00	5.00	4.00
Caretaker	1.50	1.50	1.50
	15.50	14.50	13.50
%age of rent required to cover expenses	60% = 15.30	75% = 14.60	100% = 13.50

The company was therefore required to let 3 rooms with 100% rent collection, 4 rooms with 75% rent collection, or 5 rooms with 60% rent collection. Anything below this would result in a loss, and anything above a profit (e.g. £10 a week profit with 5 rooms and 100% rent collection). The group estimated that it could expect 5 rooms to be occupied for a good deal of the time, and thought that rent arrears might average 30%. It was decided, therefore, that these charges represented a reasonable basis on which to proceed.

In fact, these estimates proved remarkably accurate. The highest quarter's electricity and gas charges during the period of the first caretakership worked out at £5.60 per week, occupancy rate was 90.4% and arrears averaged 31.9%. Theoretically, therefore, this represented breakeven point.

However, although the occupancy rate of available rooms was 90.4%, in each house the number of available rooms had been effectively reduced to 4: in one case by the use of a room as a storeroom, and in the other by the letting of 2 rooms for the price of 1 to a couple with a young baby. If these factors are taken into account the real occupancy rate would be 72.3%.

Clearly, therefore, the houses were running at a loss, and further loss could be envisaged as the second caretaker took up residence in house 1. A young family moved into the ground floor (paying £6) and the caretaker occupied the top floor (paying £5). Yet CAP now became responsible for electricity and gas bills for the house, as well as the full burden of rent and rates, with an estimated total expenditure of some £15 per week.

It was, however, decided to continue with the agreed rents for a further experimental period, bearing in mind a number of factors. Two young people who were heavily in arrears in house 2 were moving out, as were the young family who occupied 2 rooms, and the storeroom in house 3 was liberated for use as a bedsit. Efforts were to be made to increase the level of rent collection, as the caretaker relinquished this task to the secretary of CAP. There were two theories about the outcome of this changeover: with rent day being a fixed day of the week, young people who got paid a few days before might spend their money (previously the caretaker had approached them the day they were paid); alternatively, young people might be less able to manipulate a rent-collector whom they did not see in the same supportive role as the caretaker.

However, financial solvency was never achieved within the life of the project. During the time of the second caretaker rent arrears rose to 44.3%, although the occupancy rate was also high at 93.5%. During the period of the third caretakership arrears dropped to 31.3%, but occupancy rate also dropped, to 64.6% of available rooms. These figures for arrears, however, mask considerable internal differences, which we shall examine later. Whilst arrears grew, electricity charges also soared alarmingly under the impact of inflation, and several factors combined to inhibit CAP in finding a satisfactory financial solution.

Legal Inhibitions

By the end of February 1974 a review of the financial situation made it clear that CAP was making a loss on the houses, and it was decided to increase rents by £1 in order to cover the shortfall.

On 7th March the Secretary began typing letters to all tenants, giving them four weeks' notice of the increased rent. On the same day the Government announced its rent freeze. Whilst welcoming this measure in general terms, the company realised, with a sinking feeling, that it spelt doom for the chances of making the Bowker Street scheme financially viable. Without this government initiative CAP, recognising its rents were too low, would have raised them to a realistic level.

There is a certain irony about control of the rented housing market. CAP, for example, scrupulously adhered to the rent freeze, whilst many local landlords continued to raise their rents - often more than once. Those whom the controls are most designed to curb are those who flout them in the grossest manner - nearly always with impunity. A similar argument applies to eviction, the procedure for which CAP was always careful to follow, whilst private landlords, trading on ignorance or using varieties of harassment from subtle to blatantly violent, practised their age-old rite of summary eviction.

We believe it is important that the due process of law is followed in eviction cases. Nevertheless, there are times when this has led us into financial difficulties. Thus, during the second caretaker's time of office, a young couple with a baby made urgent pleas to us for a room. They said they were homeless, and indeed the mother and baby had been sleeping in the room of one of the other tenants for the past few days. The larger double room in one of the houses had just been vacated, and it was agreed they should move in. They were in many respects excellent tenants - clean, tidy, quiet and friendly - except that, having paid one week's rent they paid no more. For three or four weeks their apparently good excuses for non-payment were accepted, until finally notice to quit was issued. At the expiry of the 4-week period of notice, CAP then had to approach the County Court and arrange a hearing two months' away. The tenants left for an unknown address just before the hearing, having enjoyed over 3 months' tenancy at the cost of only 1 week's rent. Clearly this is a landlord's occupational hazard, and needs to be reserved for in budgets.

(In passing, it is important to note that we do not give this example in order to reinforce stereotypes about 'scroungers', and 'layabouts'. This family was trapped by homelessness into accepting one room in a house with two other families, where facilities were shared. They were determined to get out, and one way of doing so was to save their rent for a deposit and rent in advance on a flat. They were fighting for survival, to lessen the grip of the poverty trap at its most vicious. The fact that they drove us nearly hairless with worry over how to make ends meet is clearly of minor importance compared with the ultimate desperation of their situation. In these terms Bowker Street could be said to have made a positive contribution to the resolution of their problems, although not in a way we would have chosen!)

Families

Indeed, one lesson which began to emerge clearly at about this time was that it was unwise to accommodate families. Although the families who came to us were in desperate need of housing, and were glad of any shelter, the accommodation available could not be said to be very suitable for them. Two rooms (sometimes one) and shared

kitchen and bathroom might suffice as emergency accommodation, but was not the long-term answer to a family's housing problem. Understandably, therefore, families began to lapse with their rent as they saw prospects of better accommodation opening before them. Indeed, two families in particular created grave problems for CAP.

In December 1973 a young couple with a baby were given two rooms on the ground floor of the caretaker's house, on the understanding that this was a purely temporary arrangement which would not extend beyond June 1974. They were optimistic about their chances of gaining other accommodation, and about March 1974, after a perfect rent record, they stopped paying rent in the expectation that they would soon be leaving. They also managed to run up enormous electricity and gas bills. At the end of June they had found nowhere, and as the new caretaker was due to move into the house, they were given two rooms in house 3, where there were already two other couples with babies, one of which was in process of being evicted. Again rent was paid for a few weeks, until the prospect of council housing grew (actively aided by CAP). A further large electricity bill created a crisis. Two families remained in the house, both with increasing arrears, and it had been made clear to them that CAP could not pay more bills unless they paid rent (a previous large bill had been paid because of the children involved). With no money forthcoming CAP allowed the Electricity Board to disconnect the supply, and at least one of the families appeared to wish this to happen so it would accelerate their rehousing. During the last two or three months of 1974, therefore, the house was blacked out, no money was forthcoming, there were problems with illegal reconnection of the supply, and relationships were extremely strained and unpleasant.

Our conclusion from this episode was that it was unrealistic to expect families to pay rent for accommodation which was unsuitable and could only be temporary. In spite, therefore, of the many pressing claims made on their behalf (from social workers amongst others) and despite their urgent need, we should have refused to accommodate families. Moreover, although the average rent arrears for all families was not much above the average for all tenants, families were in fact far more costly to the scheme than single people or couples, mainly because they were given accommodation at reduced rates, and because their consumption of electricity and gas was markedly higher. As we pointed out in chapter 3, families tended to stay longer, but this does not mean they liked the accommodation - they simply lacked alternatives.

Arrears

The whole question of arrears appears to be linked to tenants' judgments on the suitability of accommodation. At first glance there seems little to support such a contention, since the figures on rent arrears are remarkably similar:

Average for all tenants	36.7%
Average for single tenants	36.0%
Average for couples	35.5%
Average for families	38.2%

Nevertheless there are considerable variations between houses and at different periods of time. These differences can be seen in the following table.

Period covered	House 1	House 2	House 3	Average
1st caretaker	(Caretaker)	31.3	34.7	51.9
2nd caretaker				
TOTAL	45.2	32.7	57.2	44.3
(December)		(55.8)		
(January-March)		(47.8)		
(April-June)		(9.8)		
3rd caretaker				
TOTAL	(Caretaker)	20.1	68.3	36.0
(July-September)		(10.7)	(56.7)	
(October-December)		(32.2)	(100.0)	
(January-March)		(26.5)		
(April-August)		(6.1)		

Once the first caretaker's period was over, there are clear
differences between houses. In period 2, house 1 was occupied, as
mentioned before, by a family, whose arrears mounted during the
latter part of their stay. House 3 was also high on arrears: there
was a family with fluctuating rent payments, another who paid only
one week, and a young man resident from an earlier period who was a
poor rent payer. Moreover, the house, as indicated in chapter 2,
was in a state of physical decline, and the high arrears also reflect
the lack of interest in the house of various young men who stayed
for short periods. It is probably true to say that during this
period there was nobody who _wanted_ to live in the house in any
positive way. House 2, on the other hand, was entering its strong
period, as the decline in arrears over time shows. Indeed, the
December to March figures are considerably distorted by the presence
of two young people from the earlier period who paid almost nothing
whilst they were waiting to move from the house. If these two young
people are removed from the figures, the average arrears for House 2
for December-June is 15.5%.

Whilst the third caretaker was in residence, House 3 experienced
the breakdown noted earlier, and which is clearly indicated in the
figures for arrears. House 2, however, also fluctuated. During
July-September the communal spirit of the house was still strong
(arrears 10.7%), whereas the October-December period was a time of
stress and conflict (arrears 32.2%). People who had liked living
in the house earlier, now began to dislike it. By January-March
considerable changes in tenants had occurred, and although some
efforts at communality were made, they did not match the earlier
ones. The final period represents the running down of the house,
when there were few tenants, and a major contribution in reducing
the arrears level was made by a young family who expected to be
rehoused by FHA when the scheme ended.

We would argue that these fluctuations in rent paying do not
simply reflect individuals' personal problems and ability to pay, but
are an indicator of how desireable the accommodation is thought to be
in relation to other alternatives, and such desireability reflects
not just physical conditions but a host of other factors such as
mixture of tenants, interpersonal relationships, general atmosphere,
and so on.

Heating

One of the major problems of the Bowker Street scheme was the lack of control of consumption of electricity (the predominant source of power). Whilst at the beginning of the scheme this was a manageable problem, the vast increases in electricity prices during the time the project operated turned this into an insoluble source of worry.

In July 1974 the charge for heating was raised from £1.00 to £1.50 per room, but this was only a minor relief. In order to meet bills a charge of at least £2.00 would have been necessary, yet this was clearly out of the range of most of the young people, who were either unemployed or in low-paid jobs. An increased rent which helped to cushion the heating charges (which were after all inherent in the nature of the scheme) would have been feasible, since rent is chargeable in full to Social Security, and is subject to rent allowances for the low paid.

We are not against the concept of fixed charges for heating. Meters are subject to abuse - thefts and tamperings - which results in loss of income without the chance of apportioning responsibility for making good the loss. So long as heating can be controlled (as with central heating) by the landlord, fixed charges can be workable, so long as they are realistically based on known heating costs and estimated arrears levels.

However, at present electricity prices we would strongly argue against anyone undertaking a scheme with heating arrangements similar to those in Bowker Street. This is one of the problems associated with the use of short-life property for single homeless people, which we shall examine in greater detail in our conclusions.

Egerton Road scheme : An Appraisal by Family Housing Association

Egerton Road is unique within the Association's total stock of approximately 1,600 units of accommodation. It reflects legislation current at the time of its creation, and as such, because of the enactment of the 1974 Housing Act, which introduced a greater degree of flexibility to Housing Associations with such projects, could not be repeated in the same manner.

Any financial review of the scheme would have to analyse expenditure under the headings (1) Development Activity (2) Running Repairs (3) Cyclical Maintenance (4) Arrears Control (5) Time expended by Management staff. In order to arrive at an accurate assessment, it would be necessary to make comparison between spending at Egerton Road with averages across other dwellings within the Association's ownership. As records have never been kept on a property by property basis, but costs always pooled, such a quantitative comparison is not practicable without very considerable research. It is possible to make a subjective assessment however, viz:

(1) Development Activity

A physical conversion into relatively small self contained bedsitters was a new departure for the Association. Equally it was outside the experience of the lending authority and, in consequence, a disproportionate amount of time was spent in convincing the

officers concerned of the validity of such a technique. If a further scheme were envisaged today the path would be well trodden, so to speak, and the precedent created by Egerton Road could be cited. Additionally, cash allowances payable under the "Housing Association Grant" system created by the 1974 Housing Act, would more accurately reflect the time commitment required to get such a project operational.

(2) Running Repairs

When making general lettings the Association would normally expect only to deal with repairs that arise as a result of normal wear and tear such as the periodic burst pipe, slipped slate, defective toilet cistern, etc. However, when we consciously elect to house a severely disadvantaged group, clearly this will make the probability of additional repairs greater. The experience at Egerton Road bears this out and repairs under two other headings have been necessary. There are those that arise as a consequence of the lack of ability of the tenant to effect their own solution to very minor problems, such as replacing loose knobs to cookers, changing a 13 amp fuse or tightening a loose screw. Small jobs in themselves, which are executed within seconds by the maintenance staff, but costly in organisational time and travelling. Additionally there are the repairs arising out of maltreatment of the property, such as premature redecoration, making good following 'break-ins' or the rifling of electric meters or reglazing when tenants have used the window to gain entry when door keys have been mislaid. Often delays, greater than those normally expected, have arisen in the execution of repairs. This in part is a reflection of general reluctance of most tenants to communicate the existence of a repair other than through the caretaker or a representative of CAP. Additionally, because of the irregular hours of a number of tenants, coupled often with the absence of the caretaker through the day, gaining access by repairing contractors has sometimes been a difficulty. This too has added to administrative costs. If it was possible to show the average repair costs, I feel sure it would be significantly higher at Egerton Road than for the remainder of the Association's dwellings.

(3) Cyclical Maintenance

Repairs of this type are those carried out on a routine periodic basis, mainly preventative in nature, such as repainting the exterior, redecorating the interior and a general examination of the fabric of the dwelling. I would not expect that Egerton Road would display any characteristics which would single it out from other properties within the Association's stock.

(4) Arrears Control

A speedy and a firm response at an early stage of any arrears problem is an essential ingredient to good housing management. This is particularly so when a group of like tenants are housed under the same roof.

They can readily register that one tenant is being treated leniently and mimic his arrears pattern, assuming it to be the accepted norm. This situation occurred at Egerton Road with one tenant making the running and the remainder quickly jumping on the bandwagon. To restore this situation is difficult as not only are you in effect dealing with a group as opposed to an individual but any tightening up is perceived at least initially by the tenant as

harsh treatment. In the early stages FHA were slow off the mark in responding suitably to early indications of future arrears problems, and in some cases large debts built up rapidly, this being compounded by the relatively high rents fixed at Egerton Road by comparison with those determined in other Association dwellings.

With family lettings the issue of Notice to Quit, which implies the Association is prepared to exercise the ultimate sanction of eviction, while being distasteful to the majority of management staff is, nevertheless, a useful management tool to regulate a severe arrears situation if used sparingly. When dealing with young single people, who have not the attendant responsibility of children and frequently no employment, sometimes having no allegiance to the district or city, some of the impact of the Notice to Quit is lost. When it has been necessary to carry out an eviction the time taken from the issue of the Notice to Quit to the Court Hearing, because of the delays in the legal system, meant that arrears of the offending tenant would escalate rapidly. As often no tangible evidence of an eviction, say in the form of a Solicitor's letter or Court Summons, was available until near the Court Hearing, other tenants came to regard Notice to Quit as a hollow threat, and there has been a tendency for their arrears to rise pro rata, at least until after the Court hearing.

(5) Time expended by Management staff

Egerton Road has always demanded a disproportionate amount of staff time in order that it be satisfactorily managed. This in part is a reflection of the severe problems which a number of the tenants have presented in the course of their stay at the house. Not that this was not anticipated as the agreement between FHA and CAP was to select tenants whose only qualification was a marked inability to cope with the vigours of daily living.

Additionally, significant inroads into management time have been made by the constant need for liaison with other bodies such as CAP themselves, the caretaker, neighbours, police, D.H.S.S. and Social Welfare agencies. In nearly all cases this has been to supplement the diligent work carried out by CAP and never to supplant it. It is important to stress that liaison of this type is a fundamental part of the Association's view of what good management means and it is the concentration of need at Egerton Road which is exceptional, not the need itself.

While theoretically an employee of the Association, the caretaker holds an unique position in that some of the time he acts as agent of the landlord in trying, for example, to secure regular rent payments, while at others he is tenants' advocate, maybe pressing the Association to execute a repair. Egerton Road would never have functioned effectively without a caretaker. The most successful has been the person who has never stood outside the dichotomy which the situation has placed him in. The Association is fortunate to have found individuals with the tenacity, practical skill, social awareness and sensitivity that all of the caretakers have brought to this extremely difficult job, which while providing free accommodation carries effectively nothing else of remuneration. Our only regret has been that good caretakers have had to leave, thus disrupting the continuity and stability of such a project. We recognise equally that it is only possible to sustain the level of commitment required over relatively short periods of time.

As indicated earlier, the legislative climate is now more conducive to experiments of the type Egerton Road represents. What I have said is an attempt to highlight some of the difficulties and problems which can arise for future guidance, and is not intended to warn others from ever attempting a similar venture. Because of the 'labour intensive' nature of such a project, however, it would probably be unwise for an Association, without the benefit of a bedrock of a large number of more easily managed dwellings, to undertake such a venture without some very considerable thought being given. The success Egerton Road has enjoyed in terms of providing a meaningful solution to a number of homeless or disadvantaged young persons is largely a reflection of the dedicated and constant support of CAP. It is the experience of this Association that Welfare Agencies, having found a satisfactory housing solution for their clients, will assume this represents the climax of their support. Often it will be the occasion for increased help as families or individuals start to cope, maybe for the first time, with the responsibilities attaching to having a home. CAP have always recognised this and never shirked the sometimes onerous responsibility which this represents.

V. DIFFICULTIES AND ISSUES

In this chapter we shall look at some of the difficulties and issues raised by providing bedsit accommodation for young people, and compare our experience of the two schemes. For example, one clear difference between Bowker Street and Egerton Road is their physical structure and condition, and we shall look at the impact this had upon the lives of the tenants, as well as other issues.

Sharing and Privacy

The concepts of intimacy and privacy were very much affected by the structure of the houses. In Bowker Street an important factor was the necessity to share kitchen and bathroom and, with potentially two couples and three single people using a house, this was a difficult task. Sharing such facilities is never easy, even between friends, but when total strangers meet the pressures grow. Nor is the situation helped by the fact that some young people have never perhaps had to cook for themselves before, and their experiments can be devastating. Standards of cleanliness vary, and so do opinions about how soon after cooking the pots and pans should be washed (varying from 'immediately' to three or four days!).

It is not easy to arrange rotas for cleaning, since competence varies considerably, and poor cleaners are held not to be pulling their weight. Moreover, who was it created the mess in the first place? What about cleaning the bath when you use it? The difficulties can be easily imagined, and it must be true to say that the young people in Bowker Street felt these pressures.

Moreover, in Bowker Street it was difficult to be private. Sound carried easily through the thin walls, and you would be either invaded by the noise of your neighbour's 'tranny', or feel that your every movement was capable of being monitored by the other residents. The passages and stairs were rather narrow, and if visitors came to the house as well, then the feeling of congestion grew. Clearly these houses were designed as family houses, not for multi-occupation, and there was little that could be done to overcome the limitations this design imposed.

Not that young people necessarily felt that this enforced intimacy was a bad thing. In spite of hassles over cleaning, or someone's late-night noisy visitors, many young people were glad of others around to take the edge off the loneliness of living on one's own. At times, indeed, the atmosphere was positive, and a good deal of sharing took place. One tenant would have a TV, and others would use his room for viewing, whilst he would have his meal cooked by one of the couples, within whose room there would appear to be an endless supply of tea, as well as a good stereo record-player. Tenants would borrow freely from each other, or collaborate in digging up the wilderness in the front garden and planting flowers.

In Egerton Road it is much easier to withdraw into one's own world. The flats are self-contained, and the only common areas are the wide stairs and lobby. Movement tends to be within one's own self-contained unit, rather than in the house as a whole, and opportunities to meet therefore have to be created rather than simply happening. There is no need to negotiate with others over cleaning

(the caretaker cleans the stairs and lobby) or over sharing of
facilities. This does not mean that tenants do not meet, but it
does mean that, apart from entering and leaving the house, they can,
if they wish, see nobody from one week to the next - an impossibility
in Bowker Street.

This degree of privacy is, we feel, important. It reduces
considerably the sources of friction and tension within the house.
Instead of spending all their energy in coping with the demands of
living with others, young people have the opportunity to develop
their own life-styles. It means that 'incompatibles' can live under
one roof with a degree of harmony which would be impossible to achieve
in Bowker Street. Thus, for example, a young girl was for a while a
tenant at Bowker Street, but she had almost a fetish for cleanliness,
and was constantly criticising everybody for failing to reach her
standards. At Egerton Road, however, she could keep her room spick
and span without being troubled by how other tenants lived. Indeed
it was possible to move in a young man who always lived in such a
state of perpetual chaos that it would have been unthinkable to move
him into the intimate conditions of Bowker Street. To the extent,
therefore, that it allows this privacy, Egerton Road is less restrictive
than Bowker Street, in that individuals are able to pursue those
goals which are most vital to them.

We believe this is an extremely important point. Many of the
young people we have known are highly individualistic, and groping for
the resolution of very personal dilemmas. Egerton Road safeguards
their right to work out their own salvation, free from the pressures
of sheer survival.

This is the positive side to privacy. The negative side is
isolation. The withdrawn can become more withdrawn, the depressed
more depressed. Freedom from harassment can also mean loss of
companionship. The camaraderie of a house like Bowker Street may be
lost, along with the strife.

There is here an almost irresolvable dilemma. The idea of
communal living is a very attractive one to many young people, but as
one caretaker at Bowker Street put it: "they like the idea but can't
stand the reality". The idea, of course, is an idealised one:
friendly, interesting fellow tenants, sharing of meals and chores,
visits to the pub together, music, laughter, warmth. The reality is
that the common atmosphere can be negative rather than positive;
that one person's problems may affect others; that homeless young
people are often broke, often unemployed and bored, often unskilled
in housekeeping, and, most important of all, often have no choice of
fellow tenants. The success of communal living depends to a large
extent upon the mix of tenants.

One caretaker felt that with communal living the dominant became
more dominant and the dependent more dependent: "Kenny's been here
eighteen months now and he's never bothered to get a teaspoon of his
own." Whether this is a good or bad thing depends of course upon
whether one considers dependence or dominance to be a priori 'bad'.
The symbiotic relationship may, in fact, be helpful to the young
people concerned.

One factor that seems to be important in communal living is that
there should be genuine sharing, rather than "taking what is there
because it is there". Young people should not take each other for

granted. This kind of sharing developed for a time at Egerton Road when three tenants combined to share food. Since they were all paid at different times of the week they worked out a system whereby the one with money bought food for the others. In this way they were sure of eating all week long rather than, as happens with many young people, having to survive on virtually nothing for the last couple of days before payday. This system finally broke down when two tenants felt that the other was overstepping his claims upon the system, i.e. he lost his job and refused to claim benefit, yet expected to be fed by the 'syndicate'.

We would suggest that there are certain elements of communality which are highly attractive to young people, and which can be extremely valuable in offsetting the potentially isolating and frightening experience of bedsit life. However, sharing between tenants should be a choice rather than an imposition. It should also be recognised that sharing is a highly complex business, and young people may need a 'midwife' and 'nurse' to help the process both at birth and thereafter. An important feature at both Egerton Road and Bowker Street during the times of good communal living was that the tenants had frequent meetings in the presence of the caretaker and/or CAP member. Such a forum allows young people to express grievances and problems within an acceptable framework, and it also allows the 'adult' to give strong support to helpful initiatives within the house.

Houses for young people must, we suggest, offer the kind of privacy which Egerton Road allows; i.e. self-contained units, with no sharing of facilities. But this in itself is insufficient, since it may result in young people being very lonely. The supportive function of the house, therefore, should be the encouragement of an atmosphere which allows and encourages tenants to develop a helping relationship towards each other.

In this respect it is interesting to note that Bowker Street had a room for communal use and Egerton Road did not. Indeed, at one stage tenants of Egerton Road requested the use of the basement as a communal lounge, but fire regulations made this impossible. The interesting thing is that at Bowker Street the communal room was little used, and the idea of going into someone else's room seemed much more popular. This may not be because a communal room is not a good idea, but because the upkeep of it demands, again, more investments of time and more negotiations between tenants. It can, therefore, be a source of friction as much as a means of encouraging tenants to meet. Other drawbacks are that if a communal room has a poor appearance this contributes to a very poor image of the house as a whole, and this can drag a house down. Communal rooms are also an open invitation to other homeless young people to bed down for the night, and this can be a real source of problems. One solution may be to have a room with a specific purpose (such as a workshop/craft room) which is kept locked and used only under certain specified conditions - thus creating space for communal activities whilst attempting to safeguard the general appearance and atmosphere of the house.

Cleanliness and Order

The minimising of communal areas serves another important function. As noted earlier, it is difficult to keep communal areas clean. It is unreasonable to expect the caretaker to undertake extensive cleaning, yet the whole atmosphere of a house can be undermined if it

is dirty and ill-kept.   For this reason, during the second
caretakership at Bowker Street, the rent-collector would spend four
to five hours a week cleaning kitchen, bathroom and stairs in house
3, which was undergoing a difficult period. This would render the
house temporarily clean, but within a few days rubbish would have
piled up again.   The situation was not helped by a persistent leak
under the sink in the kitchen - a leak which failed to respond to the
ministrations of a plumber on several occasions; and which resulted
in continual flooding of the kitchen. The physical state of repair
is, therefore, another important contributory factor to feelings of
decay, and was a problem which constantly recurred at Bowker Street.
Old, ill-repaired houses are in any case often harder to keep clean.

We would argue that the security which comes from feeling that
order prevails and someone is in control can be seriously undermined
if a house is shabby and dirty. An individual's room is less important,
since it is his own responsibility, but communal areas reflect the
atmosphere of the whole house. In Egerton Road it is an easy job for
the caretaker to brush and mop the stairs, and the impression the house
gives is therefore one of cleanliness and order.

Repair

In Egerton Road, moreover, the state of repair is very good. When
the house was specially converted it was extensively renewed, and
obviously FHA are committed to maintaining it in a good state of
repair. In Bowker Street the situation was completely different.
Since the future of the houses was uncertain FHA was unwilling to do
more than minimal repairs: if the houses were to be pulled down then
the money would be wasted; and if they were to be converted to family
units then major repairs would be best done at the stage of
reconstruction.

The poor state of repair, the generally shoddy furniture, and the
do-it-yourself quality of the decor did, therefore, give a general
impression of shabbiness. This meant that less respect was shown to
the house than in Egerton Road, where the furniture is new and the
decorations obviously professional. The situation is double-edged,
however, in that the poor state of repair in house 2 at Bowker Street
encouraged some of the young people to do a considerable amount of
repairs and decorating around the house, and this generated a good
deal of pride in 'our' house. Such a feeling of ownership is not
possible at Egerton Road, where tinkering with the fabric of the house
is obviously not encouraged.

The problem at Bowker Street was that tenants were almost too
ready to experiment on the house. With the best intentions they often
contributed to deterioration rather than combatting it, e.g. the
young man who took off a door and tried to hang it the other way
round, finally resulting in a door with so many screw holes in it that
it became almost impossible to hang at all. Moreover, tenants did
not always appreciate the individualistic murals or colour schemes
their predecessors had bequeathed to them. Attempts, however, to
enforce moderate and long-lasting decoration were not particularly
successful, perhaps because CAP did not feel strongly enough about
inhibiting the enthusiasm of the painters.

In Egerton Road the tenants do not break up old furniture to
repair a rotting door - partly because the furniture is new and partly

because the doors are not rotten. They do miss, however, the
excitement of actively manipulating their own environment. From a
managerial point of view the Egerton Road situation is favourable,
since it is less chaotic, yet we have to acknowledge that young people
need to feel they have put their individual stamp upon a room, and
find ways of doing this which are not destructive and which are not
repellant to following tenants.

Security

Another aspect of a well-maintained, well-repaired house is that
it provides a greater degree of security against petty theft and
similar irritations. In Bowker Street doors were secured with latches
and padlocks and these were fairly easily removed if anyone were
determined enough. Indeed, the rotten state of many of the doors made
them an easy target for anyone wanting to get into a room.

Since it was often difficult to know who was in the house, despite
efforts to control visitors, there were outbreaks of petty thieving
which were upsetting to the tenants. It is difficult to encourage
young people to take a pride in their room if it is subject to
violation, and this was another of the problems associated with the
short-term nature of the house.

Similarly it was difficult to regulate post, since there was no
secure post-box, nor could one reasonably have been fitted. Thus,
during at least one period, there was trouble over missing giros, and
some young people arranged for giros to be sent next door to the
caretaker's house. Whether the culprits are suspected to be tenants
or visitors, such episodes generate feelings of mistrust which can
undermine the atmosphere of the house.

We would argue that whilst the structure of a dwelling cannot
deter someone who is determined to be dishonest, it should not offer
temptations or opportunities to petty thieving. In this respect
Egerton Road is far more satisfactory, with stout doors with good
locks, and a padlocked post-box for which the caretaker has the key.
Only if a house has a substantially secure structure can young people
be expected to make it their home, rather than a temporary resting
place.

The control of visitors is also essential, and in both schemes
this has proved a problem. It is quite difficult to ensure that all
tenants co-operate in closing the front door, and unless this is done
then anyone can walk into the house. An ideal arrangement in such
houses, though clearly not always a feasible one, would be to have
automatic doors which require visitors to contact tenants through a
microphone before they can be admitted.

Rules and Sanctions

The question of rules and sanctions also affects how 'secure' a
house feels. It is obviously damaging if chaos reigns, yet
imposition of rules by caretaker or landlord is difficult. In the
first place it would be immensely stressful if the caretaker had to
regard himself as a policeman enforcing order - he would have to be
constantly on the alert for breaches of the rules and would feel
bound to intervene all the time in the life of the house. Since his
role is envisaged as minimal, this is not a viable demand. The making
and application of clear-cut rules may be possible in a hostel,

where there are far more staff, but it is impossible in the bedsit
situation. Moreover, what sanctions are there against those who
break the rules? The threat of eviction is the only one, and it is
not a very effective one, since eviction is such a lengthy process.

We have found that the only workable solution to this dilemma is
to involve all tenants in the process. Rules cannot be arbitrary,
they must either spring from the tenants' own grievances (e.g. a
fellow tenant's noise) or be the tenants' considered response to a
problem presented by the management (e.g. complaints from neighbours).
This means that rules are seen to be reasonable and necessary (not
imposed from outside) and tenants become committed to some degree to
the enforcement of them. This is not to suggest that overnight a
well-regulated self-governing community emerges, but the process is
an important one in developing accepted norms and structure for the
house, and in encouraging young people to accept responsibility.

Indeed, the concept of tenant rule has to be believed in or it is
fundamentally useless. If young people see this as a device of control,
then they are likely to give it only token allegiance. Attempts at
improvement must be taken seriously (buying paint, dustbins or new
brooms in response to promises to clean or decorate, rather than
implying "I've heard it all before, I'll believe it when I see it").
Tenants must feel that they have the backing of the management (e.g.
the ultimate sanction of eviction if someone refuses to abide by the
rules of the house). They must also feel that they are not just
being given responsibility, but also have power (e.g. the power to
veto new tenants, etc.). The whole area of encouraging self-
government among a heterogeneous group of often alienated young people
is a highly complex one, yet we have seen it work, and believe that
it is the only effective way to handle the problem of order within a
house.

Mix of Tenants

The issue of order again raises the issue of the mix of tenants.
There are good mixes and bad mixes, and often it is almost impossible
to tell how a new tenant will fit in: only time resolves that
question. Nevertheless it is clear that certain people may not be
suitable for this kind of situation. Thus a highly aggressive,
violent person would probably be unsuitable, or a heavily drug-
dependent young person (who might be hung around with homeless
friends who would pervade the house with a 'junkie' culture). We
would claim that for this situation a person must be considered
'self-sufficient'. However by this we do not mean that they must be
highly efficient in managing their lives, or exceptionally stable or
problem free. Many homeless young people have gone through
experiences which would scar the toughest, and some have all too
easily been intimidated into accepting the 'problem' label which
society has hung around their neck. Our emphasis on 'self-
sufficiency' is, after all, a reaction against the 'inadequate'
definition of homeless young people, and therefore contains an
element of prophecy about it. With some young people we stake
ourselves upon potential rather than 'reality', and this involves
risk. What we would suggest is that any house should not be totally
made up of 'gambles', but should also contain young people whose
lives have been less erratic and deprived and whose 'stability' is
more assured; unemployed and employed; older and younger (not that
age, in our experience, is any indicator of maturity and
responsibility in a tenant). Indeed, the ideal is to produce
heterogeneity rather than homogeneity - similar tenants may simply
reinforce each other's bad points.

A step which we have not yet taken would be to take the concept of 'a good mix' yet further and to try and develop a house with far more variety: a married couple, a single parent, a student, a young professional, older people, as well as young homeless people. This could help to counteract the 'ghettoisation' effect of having several homeless young people in one house.

Neighbourhood

Another important point in considering the 'ghettoisation' problem is the effect of the neighbourhood in which the house is situated. In this respect Bowker Street was probably better favoured. Situated as it was in the midst of multi-occupied territory, it did not stick out as alien or unusual. (This is not wholly true: there was a rather public overdosing episode in house 3, during its difficult time, which led the neighbours to protest vigorously that the house was full of drug addicts and undesireables, and for a while the project achieved a certain unwelcome notoriety in the area.) For the most part there was some inter-relationship between the houses and other multi-occupied houses, and also with the area as a whole. This linked the houses to the neighbourhood, and helped to reduce the feeling of apartness that can develop. Egerton Road was less fortunate, in that the neighbourhood was rather more bourgeouis and less accessible to the young people in the house. However, some young people developed acquaintanceships with students in the area, though fairly superficially, whilst others were able to make use of the greater accessibility to 'alternative' and 'community-group' networks which exists in South Manchester. The anonymity of the area, with the degree of multi-occupation by students and others, does however safeguard the house from the kind of unwelcome distinction which it would enjoy if situated, for example, in the heart of owner-occupier land.

VI. THE CARETAKER

In this section we shall look at the role of the caretaker in
schemes for young people, and attempt to draw conclusions from our
experience. Since both Bowker Street and Egerton Road have known a
number of caretakers, it is not possible to describe the individual
experience of each one. Rather we have tried to generalise from
the very diverse involvement and attitudes of the various caretakers
in both schemes.

From early in the thinking of CAP the caretaker role was envisaged
as a low-key one, which could reasonably be undertaken in someone's
spare time in return for accommodation. However, there are very great
difficulties in setting the limits to that role, both theoretically
and in practice.

Perhaps the greatest problem arises from the fact that there are
no clear boundaries which mark out who and what the caretaker is.
Since his personal life is lived out alongside the personal lives of
the tenants, his relationship with them is extremely ambiguous. The
simple role of caretaker is one which young people seem to understand,
and it is interesting that the kind of complaints that caretakers
generated were that they "weren't doing their job" in terms of cleaning
or reporting repairs or providing keys, etc. But young people also
see beyond this role to the person, to whom they relate in a variety
of ways - as friend, or sympathetic adult, or someone who is informed
and articulate, or even just someone with money. Each of our
caretakers has had certain social characteristics which have set him
apart from tenants, and which have made him a likely target for
queries, advice or requests for help, e.g. superior education, or a
'helping' job. Thus one caretaker in Bowker Street was used by the
tenants of another multi-occupied house in the street for advice on
tenants' rights and personal problems. He had no role in relation to
them, but was perceived to be a resource person.

It is therefore difficult to disentangle how and why young people
relate to caretakers in the way they do. A young person may call on
a caretaker for a cup of coffee and a chat about some dilemma simply
as a friend, albeit one from whom they may expect perhaps more
sympathy or advice than from others of their friends. What does seem
obvious, however, is that much of the exchange between tenant and
caretaker is perceived <u>by the tenant</u> not to be part of the tenant/
caretaker relationship. For example, one young couple in Bowker
Street used to regularly ask the caretakers to look after their baby
whilst they went out for an hour or so, yet it is highly unlikely
that they saw this as part of the caretaker's job. Rather, they
saw the caretakers as a friendly couple with a baby of their own,
who for some reason were willing to be used in this way. This kind
of interpretation is perhaps backed up by the observation that the
young single caretaker at Bowker Street was hardly ever used for
advice and help by young people, whereas the older married caretakers
were extensively used. The single caretaker was, in fact, less
available, but we would also argue that it was the 'personal' qualities
and characteristics of the caretakers which drew forth requests for
help, rather than young people seeing advice and support as inherently
part of the caretaker's job.

On the other hand, the caretaker would mainly see these exchanges as part of his brief - the ill-defined 'support of tenants' part. After all, he is aware that he is there for a 'purpose', however limited that purpose may be. He is separate and different from the other tenants, and is aware that how he reacts to them affects his impact as caretaker. Although, therefore, many exchanges have no 'supportive' element about them, nevertheless they are perceived to be part of the caretaker's role. Thus an exchange which may be common among neighbours and not stressful in content, may nevertheless become stressful for a caretaker because it is part of the 'totality' framework within which he is situated.

This strain is perhaps most felt as a lack of privacy. The caretaker is easily accessible, and therefore liable to be called upon at unsocial hours if a problem arises. This is tolerable in moderation, but intolerable in excess, yet it requires great skill to maintain a friendly relationship whilst also controlling such demands to a reasonable limit.

His close proximity to other tenants may involve the caretaker in other kinds of stress: he may find the house noisier than he is used to, or he may feel responsible for everything that happens in the house and therefore be edgy and suspicious about unusual noises. He may be concerned about the life styles of tenants, and feel he should be altering them in some way. Tenants may regard him as an arbitrator in disputes; neighbours or police may see him as someone who should be controlling the behaviour of tenants. In a host of ways, therefore, the caretaker may feel pressurised and harassed by his situation within the house. The degree to which he feels under strain will depend very much upon his own personal characteristics and outlook: some caretakers, for example, are less worried by noise or unusual life-styles, yet for others the very 'adolescence' of a house may be a source of stress. It is important not to have a dogmatic view of how tenants 'ought' to behave, but rather to value their individuality.

There is no way in which to eliminate stress from the situation of the caretaker. However, there are ways to reduce stress to manageable proportions, and one important element in this is to attempt a role definition which reduces some of the ambiguity surrounding the caretaker.

We have already noted that whilst tenants usually do not see support as inherent in the caretaker's role, the caretaker necessarily does, since his definition as a 'friendly resource person' takes him beyond concern purely with the physical functioning of the house. What does 'support' entail, however, and how consistent is it with the role of caretaker?

In the early days at Bowker Street the stance the resident adopted was left very much to the first caretaker. There were two reasons for this: CAP had no practical experience upon which to formulate suggestions; and the caretaker was a youth worker with experience of homeless young people and considerable enthusiasm for the concept of the scheme. There were close links with the City Centre Project, some of whose workers had been instrumental in getting the scheme off the ground, and initially it was envisaged that CAP would provide a straight housing scheme, whilst more sustained support

would be provided by City Centre Project workers. This concept was considerably undermined when the first caretaker was appointed, since, as a worker for the City Centre Project, he inevitably brought into the house a more supportive orientation than had been anticipated.

His period of residence made it quite clear that the whole gamut of managerial and supportive relationships could not inhere in one person. He attempted at one and the same time to provide considerable and very personal support for a number of people within the houses and to act as rent-collector, allocator of rooms, and general power figure within the houses. The two aspects are not incompatible if the role of benevolent despot is what is required of the caretaker. But this had two significant drawbacks from CAP's point of view: such a role required almost full-time involvement in the house, and it also completely negated the self-determinacy, self-sufficiency emphasis.

When the first caretaker left, therefore, CAP determined that management and support should be separated. For this reason the Secretary of CAP took over the managerial functions - selection of tenants, allocation of rooms, rent collection, etc. - whilst the caretaker was specifically freed from any involvement in management. Indeed, the second caretaker's role was minimal: he saw himself as supporting only one of the tenants. In a sense, therefore, support also passed to the rent-collector, in so far as she actively encouraged the formation of a tenants' meeting, tenant participation in decisions, and the efforts towards communal responsibility in house 2. She also partially undertook a caretaker role, in that she spent considerable time cleaning house 3. During this period, therefore, management and support were still not disentangled in a way which could allow CAP to see if the idea of separating the two was in any way feasible.

When the third caretaker took up residence it was agreed with him that efforts would be made to distinguish carefully between management and support. Thus the caretaker took no part in rent collection, even when the CAP member was away, though he would hold rents for young people if they specifically asked him to do so. He also made it quite clear to tenants that problems about rent arrears, notice to quit, or evictions should be referred to 'the management'. When he arrived he emphasised his caretaker role by undertaking a considerable amount of repair work in the houses, and began to establish relationships with tenants through these tasks. When personal traumas developed in house 2, he was heavily involved, finding both that young people turned to him for help, and also that his own sense of responsibility forced him to become immersed in the happenings of the house.

This, therefore, was the clearest attempt, within the Bowker Street scheme, to separate management and support. Whilst at times the demarcation seemed reasonable, at other points it broke down, and this period therefore allowed us to look again at the whole concept of support within the houses. It is unrealistic to attempt to pretend that the caretaker is not involved in some way with management. The very term caretaker implies that he is a representative of the management, although we would continue to argue that the caretaker should not have a position of power within the house. However, he must at times act on behalf of the management in a way that undermines the idea that he is simply and solely concerned with the welfare of the tenant. For example, when the electricity was

cut off in House 3, it was the caretaker to whom the Electricity Board representative came for the key, and as the custodian of keys and the person through whom CAP arranged access to the houses for repairmen, etc., it was clearly his duty to comply with CAP's wishes. This put him in a very difficult position vis a vis the tenants in House 3, a position which made it impossible for him to re-establish the friendly relationships he had developed with them.

Also, as someone living adjacent to the young people and therefore the one most aware of what was happening in the houses, he found it personally impossible to view their situation purely from the 'supportive' aspect. For example, when a homeless ex-tenant returned to the house, along with one or two other young people, and began using an empty room, it was the caretaker who initiated a confrontation with him and argued for taking a strong line, whilst the CAP member was more concerned about the outcomes for the young person. We are not saying that there was a right or wrong stance on the issue, which was highly complex and involved balancing the needs of the individual against the needs of the house. What is important is that in such a situation of stress it is ridiculous to expect people simply to act out a role - the caretaker arguing for support of the individual, and the management for a trouble-free house. Each person brings into the situation his own past experience, his feelings towards individuals, and his own particular prejudices and strains arising from the dilemma. It is, for example, in the caretaker's own interests that the house should not be conflict-ridden and vulnerable to crashers, and to impose upon him a role which he perceives to be against his own interests is impossible.

A similar reversal of roles occurred when the CAP member tried to re-establish and reinforce communal responsibility for House 2, and the caretaker argued that a hard line should be taken over rent payment before initiatives springing from the young people should be tolerated. He identified the rent-collector, therefore, as 'soft' and manipulable, and advocated what he considered a more appropriate managerial strategy. Indeed, he agreed that he sometimes found it difficult to relate to tenants because he knew, for instance, about their rent arrears.

In Egerton Road, too, the separation between management and support could not always be easily made, although here the distinctions were much clearer: FHA managed the house, whilst CAP provided the support. However, again the caretaker had an ambiguous role. He acted as agent of FHA in connection with keys, repairs, etc., and also collected rents from those tenants who did not wish to pay by giro. At the same time he was responsible to CAP for the supportive element. Whilst CAP members did a lot of work helping individual tenants with particular difficulties, the caretaker was often used for the more trivial, but none the less time-consuming problems of life. Most of the caretakers found the distinction between FHA and CAP easier to cope with, since they saw their caretaker role as that which related to FHA, and were more aware of the personal response to tenants which fell outside that role. Although they collected rent, they were merely agents, since it was clearly FHA's responsibility to chase tenants if payment was not forthcoming. Nevertheless one caretaker still became highly involved in viewing life from the management's perspective, and found rent arrears personally annoying.

However, CAP could not regard itself as purely a supportive body. It was also concerned with how the house was managed. It was, for instance, keen that the scheme should be financially viable, since a disastrous economic record would doom attempts to create more accommodation specifically for homeless young people. Moreover, it was also keen that certain individuals should retain their rooms, and therefore anxious that FHA should exert sufficient pressure on them to ensure that rent was paid. Soon after the house opened one tenant consistently evaded paying rent, and this naturally got the house off to a bad start, with other tenants aware of her 'success' in this respect. It was CAP, therefore, who continually nagged FHA to take firm action with the tenant, since it saw both the scheme and individual young people suffering if standards were not laid down.

CAP had to recognise, therefore, that even at Egerton Road it was concerned with housing management in some respect. It could not, for instance, support a tenant against management if the tenant was endangering the whole house. Nor could they simply see their role as supportive when they had to deal with such things as inter-tenant disputes, and the way in which such disputes might affect the house.

The third caretaker at Egerton Road argued forcefully that what was required was intensive support of individuals from CAP members outside the house: only in this way, he argued, could inadequate young people survive in the house. This is a situation, however, that CAP is unwilling to get into. If young people cannot cope with bedsit life, then they need to seek a more supportive situation elsewhere. CAP is not prepared to run a scheme which is based on the concept of inadequacy, thus enforcing an unhelpful stereotype. Rather it wishes to extend the offer of self-sufficiency to young people who have the potential to live an independent life. Moreover, it has already been made clear that CAP could not support tenants regardless of their impact upon the house in which they were living.

However, in many respects the issue of support has been side-tracked into considering only individual support. To a large extent this stems from the close involvement of youth workers, particularly at Bowker Street, where the caretakers also had jobs which required them to be concerned about the welfare of individual young people. The alternative is to jettison the idea of individual support, and to emphasise the need for considering the needs of the house as a whole. It is clear that young people from various backgrounds, some of whom have experienced repeated failure, cannot simply be expected to adjust to living in a bedsit without problems arising. Yet nor can the caretaker involve himself fully in their problems. Indeed, the more he shows himself willing to do so, the more inextricably enmeshed he becomes. Not only does he not have the necessary time and energy for such a role, but, as we have shown, it produces role-conflict, and can reinforce the negative image a young person holds of himself.

We would suggest, therefore, that a more viable support form would be to consider the functioning of the group. We are not advocating group therapy, or intensive groupwork, but that the caretaker should see his role as being concerned with how tenants interact together, and with encouraging them to undertake collective responsibility for the house. This concern for the whole, rather than the parts, can operate in various ways, according to the maturity of group expression. Thus initially it may be merely concerned with creating a happy

atmosphere in the house - emphasis on good aspects of the living
situation and of people themselves; reinforcing positive labels and
discouraging negative ones. Subsequently it may develop through
tenants' meetings into a sense of collective responsibility for the
functioning of the house, both in a physical sense and in terms of
how disputes are settled. In such a situation the caretaker must
refuse personal responsibility, not merely for the sake of his own
sanity, but positively, so that tenants are forced to accept the
responsibility themselves.

Indeed, the best times in both schemes have been those periods
when a friendly, happy atmosphere has been prevalent, and when tenants
have actively co-operated together. We are not advocating a communal
living situation, or continual sharing. We would continue to emphasise
the right to and the need for privacy - a need which exists to varying
degrees in different individuals. However, we would argue that forms
of sharing and collective responsibility can lessen the loneliness of
tenants, help them to survive practically, and provide a learning
situation for young people who will only 'make it' if they can learn
to come to terms both with themselves and with the world around them.

We are, of course, advocating nothing new. However, we feel
this is a position worth stating strongly, since it requires the
caretaker to determinedly limit his personal involvement with tenants
and at the same time pursue the goal of group functioning. Without a
clear objective, the caretaker role can fall between innumerable
stools. Moreover, if young people are to take over responsibility
in this way, then the caretaker must put all his efforts in this
direction. A half-hearted or ambiguous attempt is merely confusing
and dispiriting.

Such a model of support requires that individuals with particular
personal difficulties need to seek help outside the house, from
people who are not closely connected with its management, such as
social workers, probation officers, and detached workers. We would
continue to argue that management and individual support should be
separated, but would envisage that management and group support are
not incompatible, and indeed can be mutually and helpfully reinforcing.

VII.   CONCLUSIONS

Our major conclusion from our experience of two different schemes
has been that short-life property does not provide a viable base for
accommodation for young people, whereas the Egerton Road model is a
workable and constructive scheme.

Short Life Property

Continuing accommodation problems are faced by young homeless
people, who are a low priority for local government housing and are
the most vulnerable in the cheap furnished rented sector of the
commercial market.   In the face of this it is tempting to rush in
with ad hoc, short term solutions. Bowker Street was of this nature,
and whilst we would recognise that it had some value for some young
people, it is not the kind of scheme we would want to repeat.   In
short, it could not be regarded as a possible blueprint for
accommodation for young people.

One response to the accommodation crisis still, however, is to
press for the use of short-life housing in schemes for homeless young
people. Our experience suggests that this creates immense managerial
problems, and can produce stressful situations for young people. We
have noted the problems involved in sharing facilities and in the
general lack of privacy inherent in this kind of enforced communality.
Short life property is often in poor physical condition, and generally
does not warrant the kind of financial investment necessary to raise
standards. Allocation of responsibility for heating and lighting
costs can be difficult, consumption will probably be high, and
problems arise over payment. The commitment of young people to the
house may be minimal, and rent payments are therefore likely to suffer.
Considerable investment of time will be required on the part of
caretaker/landlord in terms of propping up a deteriorating physical
structure.

The total outcome of the various pressures and problems associated
with the use of short-life property is likely, therefore, to be the
creation of some stress for both tenants and management.   It is
important to weigh whether such stress is deemed to be justifiable
in relation to the other alternatives.   It is certainly arguable that
such a living situation is preferable to sleeping rough, using night
shelters or hostels, or parts of the commercial accommodation market.
Nevertheless we would be extremely hesitant about the use of short-
life housing unless there were no other options open, particularly
if it were to divert energy from the search for acceptable long term
provision or were to create the impression that adequate solutions
had been found.

We would argue, therefore, that schemes based on short life
housing (unless radically different in facilities and structure from
the usual kind of house awaiting either demolition or rehabilitation)
should be regarded as minimal and unsatisfactory gestures, however
pressing the situation.

Whilst noting the severe reservations we hold about the use of
such property, for those who do choose (or are forced to choose) to

use short life property in this way, we would suggest that there are certain areas which need close scrutiny and discussion before starting out.

1. Tenants

In view of the kind of stress involved in sharing facilities, we would suggest that the scheme should avoid letting rooms to young people who are known to have difficulty in surviving, who are violent, who have a history of prolonged petty thieving, who are involved with drugs in a consistent way, etc. Whilst this may appear a harsh policy, we would suggest that careful selection of tenants and a rigorous exclusion policy would help to minimise the kinds of friction and negative interaction which can occur when young people live at very close quarters.

This appears to be rejecting the very young people who are most in need of help, but we would argue that an 'unruly' house would not in fact help these young people anyway, and that a more realistic policy, having in mind the limitations imposed by the property itself, would be to help those young people whose chief problem is lack of accommodation.

2. Tenancy Agreement

In order to formalise the arrangements we would suggest that it is important to have a written tenancy agreement, laying out the conditions of tenancy. This helps to set the standards of the house and to make clear the management's commitment to an orderly functioning of the house. Points worth covering are: noise or other nuisance to tenants/neighbours; condition of room; co-operation in maintaining condition of house; control of visitors, especially at unsocial hours; use of room restricted to tenant(s) - no crashers, no sub-letting; no drugs; co-operation in any rules laid down by tenants' group as a whole. There should also be an inventory of furniture, for which the tenant should realise he is responsible.

3. Tenants' Meetings

We would suggest that regular tenants' meetings are an important part of the management of a house like this, and can be helpful and important in sorting out inter-tenant disputes, management-tenant disputes, arrangements for cleaning communal areas, group norms about behaviour in the house, consideration of new tenants, and so on.

Not only is this an important aspect of 'successful' management, but can be helpful to young people in that it encourages them to take control of their situation and to learn ways of handling the processes involved.

4. Electricity/Gas

Heating charges will be a crucial element of running costs, particularly now that power is so expensive. It will be necessary to decide
(a) whether to instal meters in each room (bearing in mind cost of installation, and possibilities of breaking into, fiddling, or bypassing meters);
(b) whether to charge a standard rate for heating and lighting and to instal a meter for hot water (with considerations as above);

(c) whether a 'standard charge' should be expected to recoup all
the electricity/gas costs - this may require a very large 'heating'
element and if young people are on Social Security this will eat
into their 'personal' allowance;

(d) whether to charge a fixed sum for heating which would not cover
costs and to recoup the balance in an increased rent (payable by
Social Security) on the grounds that these extra charges are
inherent in the nature of the house.

5. Finance

An important initial decision would need to be whether tenants
would be responsible for their own rent or whether as a matter of
policy the management group should seek direct payment by DHSS when
young people are claimants.

The arguments for the former course are obvious, and rest mainly
on the need for the young person to take his own decisions and learn
to handle his own money. However, such a policy would lead to higher
levels of rent arrears, and we would suggest that these should be
considered when fixing rents. One outcome of such a system,
therefore, could be higher rents.

The case for DHSS direct payment rests on lower rents, secure
income for the management and secure accommodation for the young
person. But it does take initiative and power away from the young
person, and DHSS are often loathe to make direct payments because of
the extra work involved. This may be a particular difficulty if
there is a rapid turnover of tenants.

We never received direct payment at Bowker Street but it is
arguable that for some young people it is more important at a certain
point of time that they should have secure accommodation than that
they should enjoy the 'freedom' of handling their own rent. (Certainly
at Egerton Road there have been some cases of direct payment when
arrears have accumulated and tenants have expressed their wish to
retain their room whilst confessing to problems over money management.)

6. Security

We would argue that it is highly important to make the house and
each room as secure as possible, even if this involves a high initial
expenditure. Control of keys is important, and the caretaker should
always have a set of spare keys which he refuses to relinquish (it is
less time-consuming, in the long run, to handle the cutting of
replacement keys oneself than to deal with the problems caused by loss
of the only remaining key to a particular door!)

7. Eviction Policy

A clear policy needs to be laid down about evictions, so that young
people know where they stand. Clearly conciliation is far preferable
to legal process, and eviction is a long and complicated process, but
nevertheless it is important to know the steps involved and to decide
at what point notice to quit will be issued (e.g. after three weeks'
consecutive non-payment, or a certain amount of arrears, etc., etc.).
We would suggest that the legal procedures may need to be set in motion
whilst conciliation is sought, since in intractable cases much time
will otherwise have been lost. It is important to take advice on the
wording of notices to quit, the rights of landlords and tenants, etc.

8. Caretaker

The group needs to carefully work out the duties of the caretaker and the way in which support is to be given, particularly bearing in mind the stressful nature of the caretaker's task in the kind of sharing situation necessary in the use of short-life property.

We would suggest that the caretaker's role must be seen as minimal, and that he should be able to refer anything beyond the trivial (keys, cleaning, etc.) to members of the Support Group, who would be willing to intervene in difficult situations and to exercise the necessary authority from outside the house. The caretaker's central task should be seen as attempting to create a positive atmosphere within the house.

These kinds of consideration are necessary preliminaries to any use of short-life property for bedsits for young people, and it is well to consider whether the kinds of time, effort and money required to establish a reasonable house are justifiable having in mind the time for which the house will be available and the less than satisfactory nature of the accommodation which will be provided. As we have indicated, we believe that efforts should be concentrated on longer-term, more acceptable, provision.

There is, however, a role for short life property in the provision of emergency overnight accommodation for homeless young people. Finding suitable places for young people to stay whilst looking for permanent accommodation is often extremely difficult. Hostels and shelters are not merely dreary and depressing, they are associated with a labelling process which can have very harmful effects upon a young person who sees himself as starting a new life, or making a break for something better. Many young people would rather sleep rough than make use of the general emergency provision for homeless people. We have found that the use of crashpads, whereby individuals put young people up in their own homes, provides an informal, friendly, non-stereotyping kind of situation which can be extremely helpful in gaining the confidence of young people and creating an initial relationship upon which the young person can often later depend. However, such a system relies upon the generosity and whims of individual house owners.

CAP is now experimenting with the use of pre-improvement property as crash houses. We believe it is unwise to have a crash house in constant use, and the model we are adopting therefore is to seek the use of three short life houses at no rent or a peppercorn rent. These would be let out to groups of 2 or 3 people who would pay a sum of about £6 to cover rates and electricity/gas charges. These groups would make the houses their homes, and in return for low-cost accommodation would be prepared to take up to four young people on a nightly basis for certain specified nights a week. In this way a dependable number of beds would be available each night, without any one crash house becoming overwhelmed. There would be a strictly supervised system of referral operated by the City Centre Project's information and advice service.

A pilot scheme on these lines has been tried and in principle appeared to work, but as both the electricity and gas supplies to the property (in this case an unusual property, not a recently vacated house) were found to be defective, the experiment was curtailed. It would clearly be helpful if CAP could attract funding for additional

costs over and above basic running costs, so that phones could be
installed, laundry costs covered, and better equipment and furniture
provided. This limited kind of use of short life property is, we
believe, a viable one.

Long Term Provision

In the provision of permanent accommodation, however, we believe
schemes such as Egerton Road have an important part to play. There
are probably four elements which contribute to the 'success' of the
house as we see it.

(a) Self-Contained Accommodation

It is extremely important that the accommodation provided is self-
contained. This minimises friction between tenants and reduces the
physical load on the caretaker. It also allows a wide range of 'mix'
of young people to be resident in the house without major conflicts
arising. Perhaps the most important feature of Egerton Road has been
the fact that young people have successfully lived there who would
never have been considered for Bowker Street and who have had problems
not only in retaining commercial accommodation but in fitting into a
variety of hostels and supported situations. In other words we have
been able to accommodate young people who have been considered too
extreme for some hostels, and whose only other outlook would be
sleeping rough or some situation such as mental hospital.

We are not suggesting that we are providing a total solution for
such young people, since clearly we are not providing them with the
full range of support many of them require. However, we are providing
stable accommodation and a friendly atmosphere with the possibility of
some mutual support, and would argue that further support should be
sought outside the context of provision of accommodation.

Not merely does self-contained accommodation reduce tension, it is
seen by most young people as highly desirable. Tenants comment
frequently on the quality of the accommodation, and most are keen to
retain their rooms (a helpful factor in rent collection and the
maintenance of the property generally). It is noticeable that many of
the tenants stay longer (far longer) at Egerton Road than at any other
place in their previous career and those who leave usually do so under
pressure of circumstances of various kinds (e.g. commital to prison,
marriage, admittance to hospital). This, we feel, is partly because
of the quality of the accommodation and partly because young people are
able to make their rooms their own in a very personal way.

Indeed, the need for privacy can be extremely strong, not merely
as an emotional and social need, but in order for the young person to
feel that he has indeed achieved adult status and is regarded as a
responsible person. This is something which a hostel can never
provide.

The right to privacy is, we feel, one which should be stressed
and safeguarded if we are serious in our desire to provide young people
with more than mere shelter.

(b) Resident Caretaker

The drawback about self-contained accommodation can be that it
breeds isolation and an important role for the caretaker, therefore, is

to encourage friendly relationships within the house. It is important
to recruit a caretaker who is able to fulfil more functions than are
usually required of a caretaker. At the same time it is essential to
avoid the situation where the caretaker becomes heavily involved with
individuals within the house. Personal qualities and attitudes are of
greater importance than training or qualifications.

Perhaps the ideal caretaker
(a) is able to understand and accept varying life-styles, and to live
    with the 'youthfulness' of the house;
(b) has a full and active life outside the house;
(c) is able to relate to young people in a friendly way and to
    initiate or maintain features which are helpful to the working of
    the house as a whole, e.g. tenants' meetings, informal get-
    togethers, gardening sessions, etc.
(d) is able to handle the routine 'business' of caretakership
    efficiently.

If a house such as this is to function successfully then the
supportive role of the caretaker is crucial; and this role we would
define as helping the house to function as a harmonious whole and
alerting people outside the house to problems which may be arising in
the house as a whole or with individual tenants.

It is important to note that under the Egerton Road model the
caretaker is not paid - his duties are performed in return for rent-
free accommodation, the cost of which is divided between all the other
tenants.

(c) Outside Support

A further important feature of the Egerton Road scheme is that
alongside the body which provides the housing management is a group
which is concerned for the welfare of tenants and caretaker.

The importance of this group is that it provides a forum of
experienced people who are able to take an interest in the house and
support the caretaker in formulating how to go about his various tasks.
Certain members can be relied upon to act if a crisis arises, and to
provide practical help with certain tasks. Members have access to a
number of resources, and some offer support to individual young people
during the course of their own work.

During our management of the Bowker Street houses we found that
social workers et al often went to great lengths to get a young person
into one of the bedsits and then promptly abandoned him. We would
argue that the task is not completed when a young person finds
accommodation, and that further support may well be necessary. We
therefore stress to referring agencies the need for continuing support,
particularly when the young person is presented as having problems.
It is often extremely difficult, however, to get this outside social
work support. For a body like FHA, therefore, the presence of an
intermediary or supportive body like CAP is an important safeguard
when setting up a house like this. It ensures that assistance is
available and that FHA will not be left with a houseful of difficult
tenants.

(d) Sympathetic Management

From CAP's point of view we cannot stress too highly the help we
have had from FHA (Manchester) Limited. As landlords they have been

tolerant, and sympathetic to the needs and problems of the young people who are their tenants. Whilst performing their own managerial functions they have consistently discussed matters such as eviction or complaints about tenants with CAP, and have been amenable to the use of youth work skills in the sorting out of problems.

The relationship between FHA and CAP has, therefore, been an enabling one. The input of youth work/social work skills has enabled FHA to undertake the provision of accommodation for a section of the community for whom they would not normally cater, and the input of professional housing management skills has enabled youth and social workers to tackle one of the basic needs of homeless young people - the need for accommodation - and to work from that to a closer look at the other needs of individual young people.

We would suggest that this kind of co-operation may be an important way of tackling the problems faced by homeless young people, and feel it could usefully be copied elsewhere.

In conclusion we would like to stress that the mere provision of accommodation cannot of itself be regarded as laudable. We need to be extremely sensitive to the processes which we set in train when we undertake accommodation schemes, and to ensure that the kind of image of himself which the tenant develops as a result of his involvement in a scheme is not a negative one. Too much discussion of housing provision in the field of the single homeless is still of a 'bed-counting' kind. This can result in rushed and ill-considered 'solutions' which serve to shift the anguish of young people from the street to some less public place. Now that young homelessness has become an established bandwagon we are beset on all sides by the kind of naivety which suggests that provision is all. This could all too easily result in a heritage of schemes which reinforce the inadequacy stereotype of homeless young people, creating a whole industry based on yet another 'social problem'. We cannot deny that many young people experience problems, but we would suggest that it is easy to become seduced into the kind of response which reinforces the negative processes set in train by failure to find accommodation, rather than looking for ways of countering these and emphasising the potential of young people.

It is clearly necessary for agencies to make strenuous attempts to create as many housing opportunities as possible for young people. We feel, however, that it is vitally important that these should be firmly rooted in the conviction of the essential dignity and individuality of each young person.

We would be happy to discuss our own experience in more detail and compare it with those of others. If you would like to get in touch with us please write to 38 Salisbury Street, Moss Side, Manchester 14.

For further reading...

... on how it feels to be a caretaker in a housing scheme, see
an Occasional Paper by John Roussel for the Youth Development Trust,
402 Moss Lane East, Manchester M14 4PX

... on the wider work with homeless young people in Manchester
undertaken by the City Centre Project (whose workers collaborated
closely with CAP over the housing schemes) see
'Borderlines' by Alistair and Gabrielle Cox, published by the
National Youth Bureau, 1977