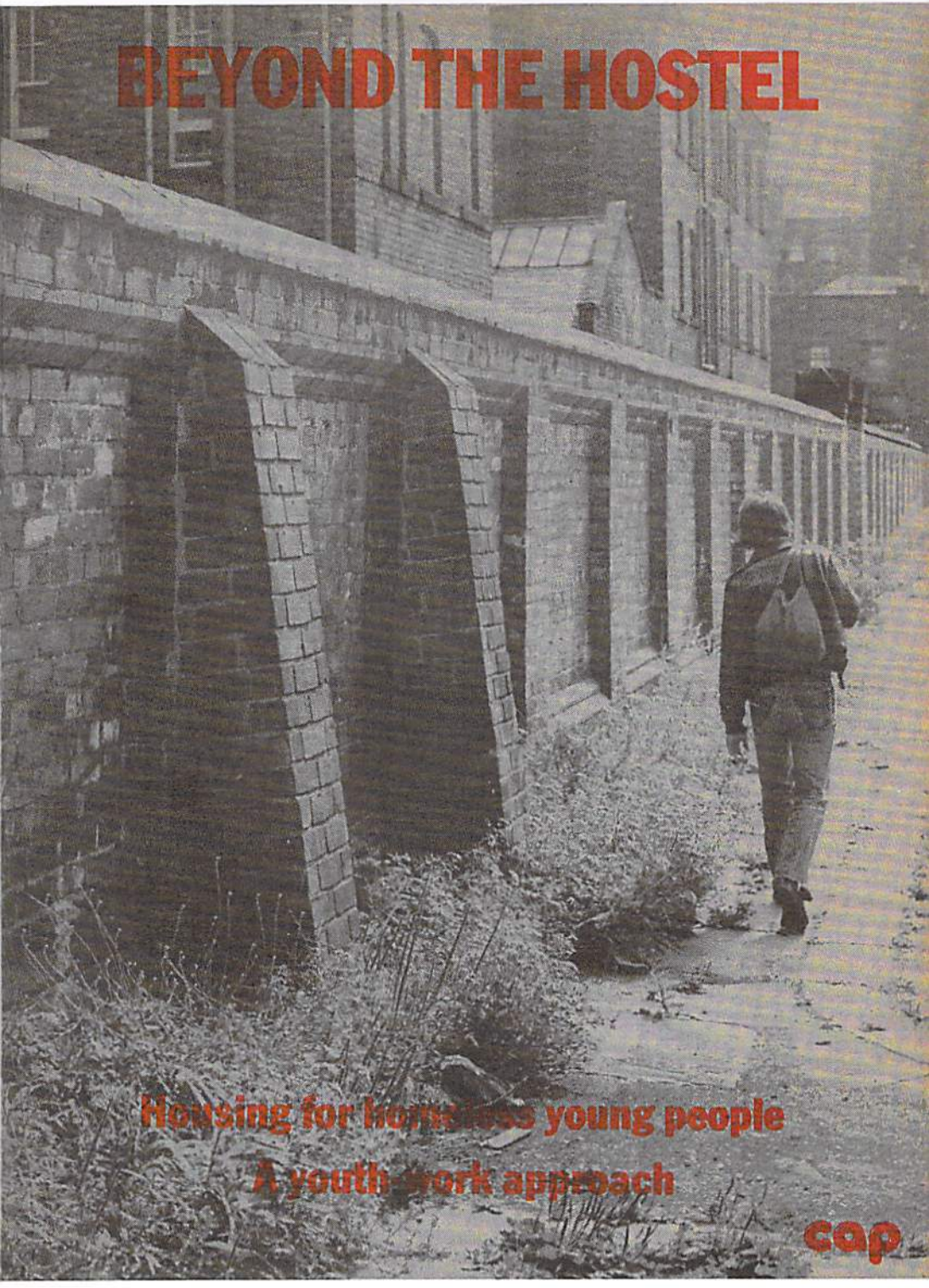
BEYOND THE HOSTEL
Housing for homeless young people
A youth work approach
cap

BEYOND THE HOSTEL

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CONTENTS

This book is dedicated to:
DAVID CRAWFORD

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book originated as a pamphlet first published in 1977 which compared two housing schemes run by CAP. In 1981 we decided to update the report and because we felt that the lessons learnt from running the Egerton Road scheme deserved a wider audience we have published it as a book.

The book was made possible through the work of many people connected with CAP particularly in providing advice, for typing, researching and all the other tasks associated with self-publication.

We would especially like to thank the tenants and caretakers of Egerton Road and the housing workers for their willingness to have their views of the housing scheme published. In doing so they have greatly increased the value of this document by providing a balance to the thoughts of those people running the scheme.

We would also like to thank; the contributors to Part One — Paul Baker, Alistair & Gabrielle Cox, Mel Godfrey and Pauline White; Andy Wiggans for the interviews with tenants; Dave Rogers for the cartoons and graphic work; Derry Kelleher for co-ordinating the reading, corrections and suggestions of improvement; and Tony Baldwinson for organising the production of the book.

We are grateful for the financial support of the National Association of Youth Clubs, Greater Manchester County Lotteries, Family Housing Association (Manchester) and the Youth Development Trust.

FORWARD:

Over recent years, growing numbers of young people have looked for independence, a flat of their own, either by choice or from necessity. Suitable accommodation is very limited in quantity, and in quality. More accommodation is needed, but it is not enough to provide more hostels and more single person flats.

Community Action Projects have done a valuable service in developing the provision of an intermediate type of accommodation, houses in which young people can establish their independence not in isolation but not cocooned by social support. They have done a further service in publishing their experience, and the experience of the residents, in this report.

The message, of encouraging people to develop confidence and initiative while providing encouragement and advice when needed, is one which applies not only to housing young people. A person who has been seen as a problem can easily accept a role of dependency, and advice can become protection.

Any reader will recognise the difficulties of gaining independence: of finding a balance between privacy and isolation, of taking responsibility for neighbours without intruding, and of recognising that some people in a group will become friends and others simply be there. One resident describes this as 'surviving'. That is more of an achievement if you have grown up expected – and expecting – to sink.

Characteristic of the discussion in the report is that on the relation between the resident and the landlord. The Housing Association appears to have created separate images for itself between the firm requirement of rent and the concerned involvement in management. A measure of success for CAP is that many residents appeared to be unconscious of CAP's existence without prompting. As an indication of acting as a catalyst – of not creating dependency – this is much to their credit.

George Morton, M.P. (Moss Side)
Secretary,
CHAR All-Party Parliamentary Committee.

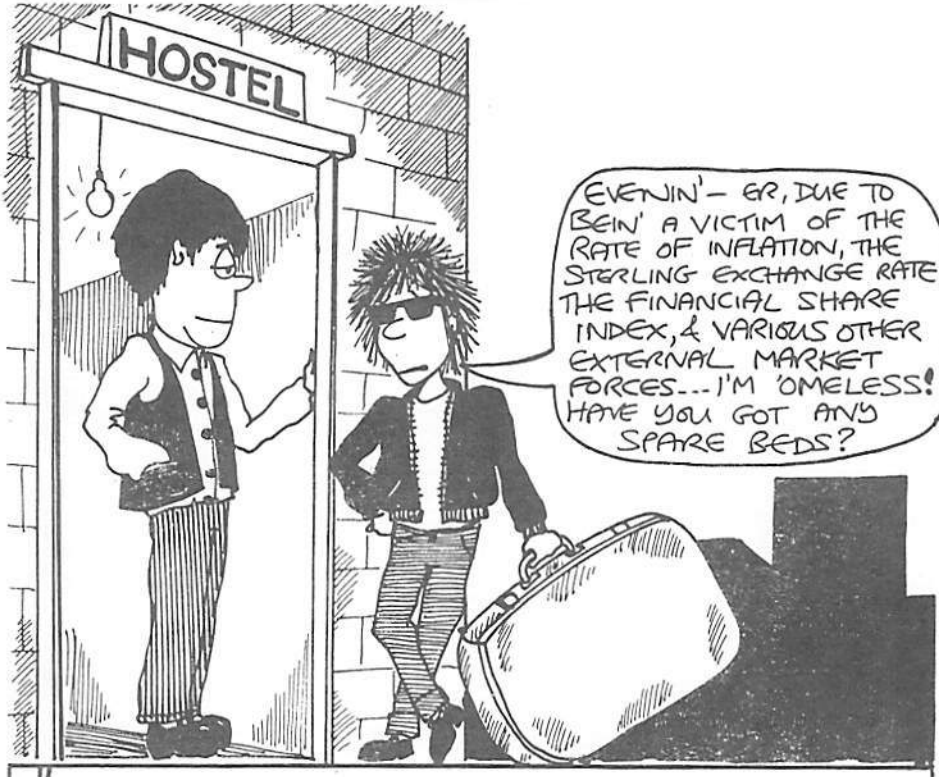
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

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. This book looks at our experience of small-scale provision to meet the specific accommodation needs of homeless young people in Part I, and then looks at the consumer's view of this provision in Part II.

It is not the aim of the book 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 which types 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.

This practical stance arose from 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 CAP 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". From a working paper prepared by Alistair Cox for the CAP sub-committee concerned with young homeless, January 1972.

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. Initially it was envisaged that this would be for a limited period of three or four months, to provide a breathing space which would allow youngsters a chance to assess their situation and make decisions about their future.

Later, as the accommodation crisis became more acute, CAP decided to make the scheme long-term, since it seemed pointless to provide good accommodation for a short period and then push people out to seek vastly inferior accommodation. The house was also seen as initiating some young people (especially those who had just left home) into the kind of demands which bedsit living make 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." (as above).

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 house. In return for living in the house and acting as a resource person, the resident would receive free accommodation. He or she would, however, be expected to have other paid employment, and therefore his or her 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 choose 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." (as above).

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 or she is not to become overwhelmed. The initial suggestions were:

> "**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.

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 two low. But a good worker could probably take advantage of this.

The resident role. Here the landlord's function would be assumed be highly formed, some danger that they might be too low. But 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.

The married couple role. Husband could be the landlord, wife the sympathetic contact. Might be seen to combine the two functions of control and sympathetic concern in one appointment." (as above). (Where we writing this now, we would choose a different wording).

A combination of roles was chosen. Having stated the possible bases for action, the group started work to look for a suitable house for purchase. There were many difficulties involved in purchase, and in parallel to these enquiries the group pursued the possiblity 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.

The rest of this book draws upon our experience of providing accommodation in these properties. Our major focus will be the larger house, which has now been running for over seven years. We consider this a useful and largely successful model for a housing scheme for young people. However, a lot of our views on the issues raised were formed by our varied, and often negative, experiences in the three short-life properties which we also used. We therefore intend to devote the next chapter to a brief description of the short-life scheme, as a contrast to the more detailed examination of the larger house.

CHAPTER TWO: BOWKER STREET A COMPARATIVE MODEL

This chapter gives a brief outline of the operation of the scheme based on short-life property. This experience was particularly useful to CAP because the problems it raised helped to clarify our thinking on suitable provision for homeless young people.

In February 1973 CAP took over three houses in a decaying area of Salford. Many of the houses in the area were in multi-occupation and two of the houses taken over were previously used as rooms for students. 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. 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 (M/cr) 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 wood chip 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. Curtains and carpets were either already in the house or bought second hand.

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 two and a half years, rather than one 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.

During this two and a half years the houses claimed large amounts of time and energy from caretakers and CAP. For some young people they provided a stable and relatively happy base for a number of months, for others they provided shelter but little else, whilst for some they were merely a temporary stopping place. Generally speaking, we regarded the operation of the houses as unsatisfactory in terms of the input they required to keep them ticking over, the stress they generated for tenants as well as ourselves, and the financial burden they proved to be.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the houses was their unpredicatability and volatility. A number of factors contributed to this, as we shall discuss briefly later, and often they reinforced each other. First, however, it may be helpful to describe the many changes which took place within the houses within the short space of time during which the project operated.

From February to November 1973, the first house was occupied solely by the caretaker and his family; and during that time the second and third houses were completed and tenanted by young people. Each had 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 the first house, 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 the second and third houses available for young people. The third house was returned to the landlords at the end of 1974, and the second house 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 three will differ from the existing house two in catering for more severely disorientated individuals. It is envisaged that the type of person occupying house three 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." Working paper by Bernard Jobson for CAP, April 1973.

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

This phase 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 caretaker 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 caretaker, but it was also eroding the 'self-sufficiency' model of the house. Financial viability was threatened by rent arrears, 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 the second house 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 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 several 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 the second house. 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 this 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 cleanlinesss and orderliness. From being a source of concern about its physical condition, it changed to being a source of financial concern, as rent arrears were high, 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 (M/cr).

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 (M/cr) in August.

What was it which caused so many changes and difficulties within the houses? The most important single factor, we would suggest, was the actual physical structure and state of the houses themselves.

These houses were not designed for multi-occupation. They were basically large family houses. They were also in a fairly poor state of repair. Thus a young person being offered accommodation might find him or herself sharing a house with two couples and two other single people, with sometimes even a baby as well. All facilities had to be shared, and everybody was on top of everyone else. The house would tend to be noisy, claustrophobic, untidy and lacking in privacy.

Into this situation were introduced predominantly very young people. The suggested age range was 16-25, but 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 were 20 or under.

	No.	%
20 and under	30	58
21-25	13	25
Over 25	3	6
Unknown (5 of these around 20/21 mark)	6	11
	52	100

The situation was further complicated by the fact that CAP saw itself as aiming to house **young** people rather than specifically **single** people. Since the scheme operated before the introduction of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act, there were a great number of homeless young couples and even homeless young families for whom accommodation was urgently needed. Thus CAP found itself housing not only 34 single people (24 male, 10 female) but also 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.

The accommodation needs of these couples and families were so pressing (some were literally on the streets) that CAP would have found it difficult to reject them when vacancies existed. But in retrospect the introduction of couples and particularly families probably added considerably to the stress of the houses, because often their needs and wishes conflicted considerably with those of the single tenants. Some couples and families were exceptionally young and immature and ideally should have been receiving intensive social work support and proper housing. Families also put physical strains on the houses in terms of overcrowding and demand for use of facilities. Within a different physical setting, where facilities were adequate and not shared, a mixture of tenants may well even be desirable, but in the context of Bowker Street it tended to be unhelpful.

Because the houses offered a number of rooms they became well known to social service agencies and there was great demand for places. The City Centre Project, whose workers were closely connected with the houses, were also in touch with large numbers of homeless young people. The financial problems of running the houses meant that rooms could not be left vacant. With hindsight CAP was probably insufficiently selective in terms of who became tenants, and this sometimes led to unhelpful mixes of tenants or the introduction of particularly difficult individuals. Many young

people were unsure of what they wanted in the long term. These factors also worked against the stability of the houses, and there was considerable turnover of tenants.

Indeed, the average length of stay was 16.5 weeks, though this masks wide variations between groups:

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

Obviously the families were 'stuck' with Bowker Street. A couple with a young baby cannot emulate the mobility of single people. Indeed, for the families the accommodation provided was in most cases, at least initially, the only option open to them, whereas single people had the choice of moving on elsewhere. At the same time the accommodation provided was markedly unsuitable and unsatisfactory for families, leading to some major problems over rent collection.

The 11.2 weeks figure for single tenancies also hides great differences between individuals. However, it does point to the problems of turnover which CAP experienced, and these in turn were closely connected with the other problems so that it was difficult to break into the cycle by which each problem fed upon another.

Over time, of course, CAP made efforts to constructively alter certain conditions in order to mitigate some of the problems. In particular a lot of time was spent on maintaining the physical condition of the houses (both in terms of repairs and cleanliness) and also on creating and supporting tenants' meetings which took positive action to maintain the houses and develop rules and enforce standards. CAP refined its view of the caretaker's role and became much more explicit in requiring the caretaker to fulfil that role. It also recognised that it should initially have adopted far more formality in its role as landlord, particularly so far as producing tenancy agreements, etc., was concerned, and it had to come to terms with the necessity to use eviction procedures to deal with intractable rent arrears problems.

These efforts did change the character of the houses over time, and bore fruit on some occasions more than others. It must be stressed, however, that it was an uphill struggle because of the inbuilt problems of using small, unadapted, poorly repaired houses. The influence of the structure of the houses became particularly apparent when we compared them with the operation of Egerton Road, and we will go into some of the issues this comparison raised when we have described Egerton Road itself.

Before leaving this description of Bowker Street, however, it is necessary to look at its financial problems, since these were also a fundamental difficulty.

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 a Section 40 rate rebate 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, CAP 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.

Rates were fixed, therefore, on the basis of a fairly high estimate of energy consumption and a degree of rent arrears. Whilst the estimates made turned out to be remarkably accurate, variations in use of the houses seriously affected income, and rent arrears were variable.

The need to evict, a process to which we only gradually became reconciled, also created financial problems. This was mainly associated with families, some of whom paid very little rent and then sat tight to await the lengthy process of eviction, departing just before the County Court hearing. From their point of view this made sense, since it enabled them to save for better accommodation – from CAP's point of view it was nightmarish. We came to realise that we should never have accommodated families, however desperate their need, since there was little incentive to them to pay for accommodation which was obviously unsuitable.

It was also clear from a detailed analysis of rent-paying that it was closely linked with tenants' feelings about the desireability of the house. During 'good' periods, rent paying was good, during 'bad' periods it tended to be abysmal. And the accommodation offered was insifficiently attractive in itself to induce young people that it was worth paying for.

It became clear that CAP had set rents too low to provide adequate margins for the many fluctuations in rent payment caused by changing circumstances and tenants, and for the financial demands of decaying houses.

CAP was not able to raise rents to the necessary levels, however, because of the rent-freeze announced by the Government in March 1974. 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 seem to be 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.

One of the other major factors contributing to the financial 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 increase 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 by 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 needs careful consideration when contemplating any such scheme.

With such financial problems we were glad, therefore, to see the end of Bowker Street, and looked forward with much more optimism to the operation of Egerton Road. In the next chapter we will briefly describe the house, before looking at some of the issues which arise from a comparison of the working of the two schemes.

CHAPTER THREE: EGERTON ROAD — THE ISSUES

Physical Layout

Egerton Road is a pleasant residential road in South Manchester. It is in a mixed area, with students and young professional people inhabiting multiple occupied bigger terraced and semi-detached houses, and some family terraced property.

In March 1974, FHA (M/cr) and CAP opened the newly-converted house of bedsitters which had been planned over the past two years. The house is a large semi, set back from the road, with a front garden, and screened by hedges and trees. On the ground floor are three bedsits (front, side and back), with three more on the first floor. The caretakers' flat is on the second floor, and comprises a large bed-sitting room built into the attic space, and small bathroom and kitchen separately.

The size and shape of each bedsit obviously varies according to the design of the house, but each has a bed-sitting area, with kitchen units on one wall or corner, and a small separate bath-room comprising shower, washbasin and toilet. Each room is furnished with curtains and carpet, small fridge and electric cooker, bed, armchair, table, dining chair, wardrobe and cabinet. The furniture was obtained from suppliers to university halls of residence, so is similar in appearance and quality to that found in student accommodation. Each room is centrally heated, with temperature and timings operated for the whole house by the caretakers in liaison with FHA (M/cr). Each room also has its own individually metered electricity supply, for which the tenant is responsible. There is a coinbox telephone on the first floor landing, and each tenant has his or her own bell at the front door. There are no communal areas apart from the stairs and landings.

Relationship with the housing association

CAP is responsible for finding tenants and caretakers, whilst FHA(M/cr) takes on the more formal landlord role. In seeking caretakers CAP looks for caring, flexible people, who are mature enough to cope with the demands of living in the house, yet with a youthful approach which makes them acceptable to the tenants. Caretakers are expected to enter into a formal undertaking which sets out the terms upon which they receive rent-free accommodation,

and the duties required of them. From FHA (M/cr)'s point of view these include overseeing the physical condition of the house, including regular cleaning of communal areas and reporting of repairs; responsibility for the central heating system, including ensuring a regular supply of oil; and administrative duties in connection with new tenancies, etc. The question of whether caretakers should be responsible for collecting rent has been the subject of some debate, with the feeling being at some stages that rent collection should be part of the caretakers' duties. However, it has generally been agreed that caretakers should not be expected to do this, as it can upset the relationships with tenants upon which so much of the success of the scheme rests. Much more emphasis is now placed upon the need for tenants to accept responsibility for ensuring their rent is paid, and FHA(M/cr) has at times helped in this process by sending round a regular rent collector, whilst caretakers have sometimes been willing to hold and pass on rent money on behalf of tenants.

Rents and Rates

The question of rents has always been a difficult one. Many young people are unused to handling money, and find problems in budgetting properly. Because the standard of accommodation is good, rents tend to be relatively high (i.e. nearly £10 when the scheme started, and averaging £14 per week in 1982). The rent covers rates, central heating/hot water, and a service charge aimed at covering depreciation on furniture and fittings, and the shared element for the caretakers' accommodation. The rents are by no means unreasonable for what is offered, but arrears of two or three weeks can amount to alarming sums which often appear very daunting to a young tenant. Most tenants, therefore, have at some time or other had arrears problems, and for some this has been solved by persuading Social Security to pay rent direct to FHA (M/cr). Although the DHSS are usually reluctant to do this, in eight cases tenants have had rent paid direct in order to prevent arrears problems which would have resulted in eviction. For those tenants in employment (sadly a diminishing number) rent allowances have been available to enable those on a low wage to be able to afford the accommodation.

Historical development

Since 1974 the house has had six different periods of caretakership. On average, caretakers tend to stay for about a year, and it is recognised that after this time most are ready to move on to a less demanding housing setting.

The most recent caretakers have, however, stayed more than three years, and this has undoubtedly helped the stability of the house. Apart from one caretaker in his late teens and one in his late twenties, all the caretakers have been in their early twenties. The first three caretakers were single, but since 1976 all caretakers have been couples, and it is arguable that this arrangement is preferable. It is sometimes easier for one member of a couple to relate to a tenant than the other, and it is possible for the demands of the job to be shared. However, the most important aspect is the fact that a couple's own relationship provides stability within the house and to some extent insulates the caretakers from the stress which coping with tenants' demands on one's own tends to generate. It is certainly true that each caretaker couple has been particularly successful at creating a centre of warmth within the house, and at initiating group events which tenants can enjoy. Our view from experience is, therefore, that it is preferable to have a couple as caretakers rather than a single person.

Tenants – their background

So far as tenants are concerned, the house has had 31 in the nearly eight years up to the end of 1981. This is an average of five tenants for each room over the period. However, the turnover of tenants does not show a regular pattern. There was far more turnover in the early years compared to latterly, as the following table shows.

Year	No. of new tenants
1974	10
1975	5
1976	8
1977	3
1978	3
1979	2
1980	0
1981	0

Even allowing for the fact that the first year has to show at least 6 new tenants, there is a significantly higher turnover in the first three years (23 new tenants as opposed to eight new tenants in the last five years). The reasons for this are not particularly clear. It could be argued that the longer stay of our present caretakers has contributed greatly to the stability of the house. Or that we have become more adept at choosing suitable tenants. It is also the case that of one tenant settles into a room and becomes a long-term tenant, then this reduces the possibilities of turnover, and if this happens in two or three cases then turnover will be dramatically

affected. Long-term tenancies also contribute to the stability of the house and may make it easier for new tenants to fit in.

More than 60% of tenants have been aged 16-19 when they moved into the house. Some have been in care, and others have been drifting around since leaving home, either trying to survive in commercial accommodation or trying various forms of hostel accommodation.

Length of stay

The following table shows the length of stay of tenants according to sex and age at which the tenant entered the house.

Women tenants

There are two features of this table that are of particular significance. The first is that of the thirteen female tenants, six moved out in under six months. The other is that tenants under 21 are the most likely to stay for longer periods, i.e. over 18 months.

On the first point, we can only speculate as to the reasons why such a large proportion of girls stayed only a short time. It is certainly true that the house has been predominantly male, in that we have never had more than two female tenants at any one time, and sometimes only one. It may be, therefore, that girls find the house less attractive because they are in a minority. CAP has sometimes felt that it is difficult to find suitable female tenants. Another factor is that possibly in the early years (when most of this turnover occurred) CAP did not pay sufficient attention to the needs of female tenants — two successive single caretakers were male, and support from outside the house was also mainly male. Now, however, the support group has a committed female membership and this, together with the female caretakers, may well have provided a more sensitive response to the girls who take up residence. This has been borne out by the longer tenancies by young women during the last three years. We believe that this has contributed to a change of culture in which young women are more confident about asserting themselves.

We are glad to note the impact that the house has had on young tenants, in that many have stayed significant periods of time. It is clear that for some young people the house has provided, as was hoped, an important staging post in the growing up process. Many tenants have come to the house young, inexperienced and unsettled, and have used their time in Egerton Road to sort out the

Age when moved in	Length of stay															
	Total		0-5 months		6-11 months		12-17 months		18-23 months		24-35 months		36-59 months		five years plus	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
16	2		1										1@			
17	4	6		2	3			3				1@	1@			
18	4	2		1					2	1			1		1@	
19		1		1												
20	1	2		1					1	1						
21	2		1												1@	
22	2		1				1									
23																
24		1		1												
25																
26	2	1			1	1	1									
Total: 17		13	3	6	4	1	2	3	3	2	0	1	3	0	2	0

@ indicates a present tenant (only five are shown as one moved out at the end of December 1981 and their replacement does not show on this table).

HOW LONG DOES A TENANT STAY? by age and sex.

direction in which they wish to go. Quite a number have moved on to marriage, parenthood and council accommodation. There is absolutely no doubt in our minds that there are very significant numbers of young people in the 16-20 age group who desperately need this kind of independent accommodation within a basic framework of generalised support and concern.

Egerton Road has, therefore, proved a far more successful scheme than Bowker Street. It has provided stable long-term accommodation for a number of young people and has avoided the extreme unpredictability and volatility of Bowker Street, though of course there have been periods of stress and tension. These, however, have never reached the proportions of Bowker Street.

For the rest of this chapter we propose to look at some of the factors which influence the success or failure of a scheme, drawing upon our experience of Bowker Street and Egerton Road. From this it will be clear that much depends upon the physical layout of the house and the facilities it provides. The essential basis for a successful scheme is well-maintained, attractive, self-contained accommodation. Given this foundation, it is essential to look carefully at other issues such as mix of tenants, management, caretakers' role and support. We begin, however, with the influence of the building itself upon the development of a scheme.

Sharing and Privacy

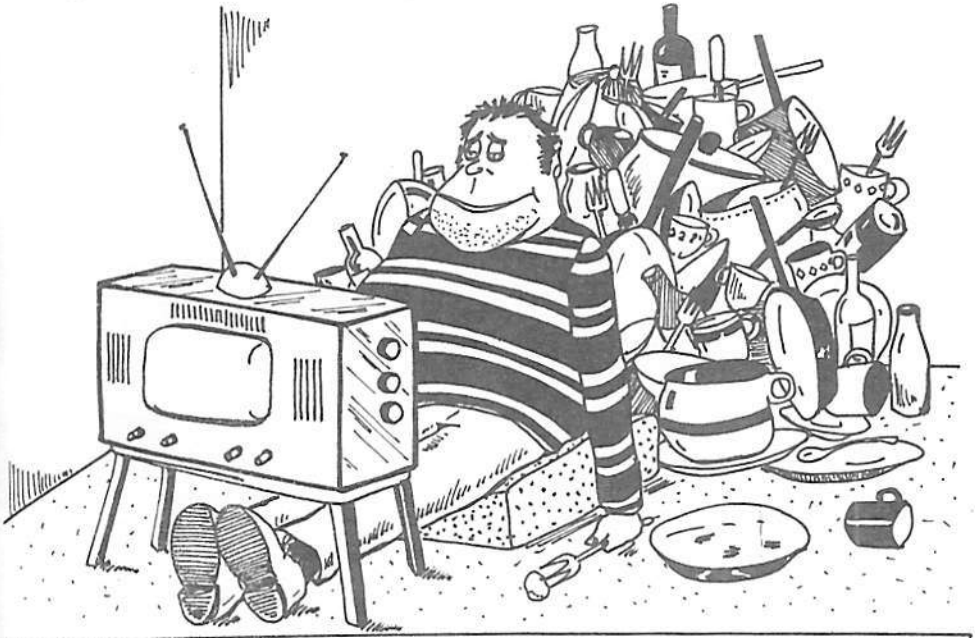
The concepts of intimacy and privacy are very much affected by the structure of any house in which people are expected to live together. In Bowker Street an important factor was the necessity to share kitchen and bathroom and, with two couples and three single people using a house, this was a difficult 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, but it must be true to say that the young people in Bowker Street felt these pressures. After all, this is as true for any group of people, e.g. students or young professionals.

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 for families, not for multiple 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.



"STANDARDS OF CLEANLINESS VARY, & SO DO OPINIONS ABOUT HOW SOON AFTER COOKING THE POTS & PANS SHOULD BE WASHED...."

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 solutions, 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. Again, this is clearly the experience of all groups expected to share accommodation.

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 or a CAP member or both. 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 helping relationships towards each other.

In this respect it is interesting to note that Bowker Street had a room for communal use and Egerton Road does not. Indeed, at one time 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.

In Egerton Road the idea of communality has to be fostered — and in this successive caretakers have played a crucial part. We now have a small budget devoted to encouraging group activities, e.g. Christmas dinner, Bonfire Night party, outings to the country, etc. Not everyone participates — nor should anyone be forced to — but the camaraderie such activities generate tends to spill over into the general life of the house. Some tenants, too, are naturally generous and gregarious. Undoubtedly, however, good caretakers are the most important factor in creating a good communal

atmosphere within the house. And tenants retain the right, which some clearly guard jealously, to have nothing to do with the rest of the tenants and to live their own lives with their own friends and activities.

Cleanliness, Order and Repair

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 the third house, which was undergoing a difficult period. The 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 – 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.

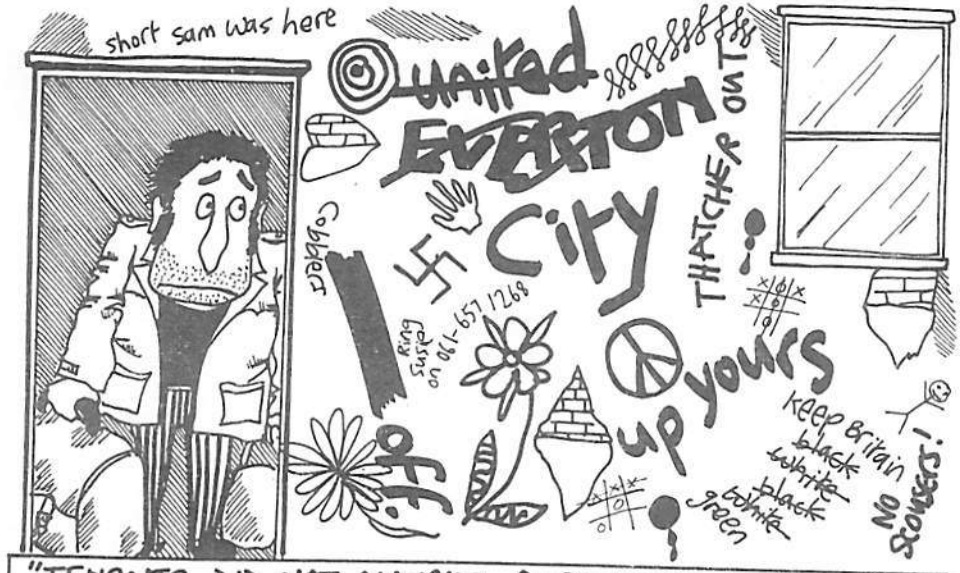
We would argue that the security which comes from feeling that order prevails and someone is in control can be seriously undermined if a house is shabby and dirty. An individual's room is less important, since it is his or her own responsibility, but commual areas reflect the atmosphere of the whole 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.

In Egerton Road, moreover, the state of repair has generally been good. When the house was specially converted it was extensively renewed, and obviously FHA (M/cr) 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 (M/cr) 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 in Bowker Street. This meant that less respect was shown to the house than in Egerton Road, where the

furniture was new and decorations professional. Although certain parts of the house have at times shown signs of neglect (e.g. some tenants' rooms and for a time the hall and stairway), tenants have been aware that there was a general commitment to maintain the house and, of particular importance, that it had a long-term future. The situation is double-edge, however, in that the poor state of repair in the second house 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.



"TENANTS DID NOT ALWAYS APPRECIATE THE INDIVIDUALISTIC MURALS 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 — because the furniture is relatively new and 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. Many tenants do this by painting their own rooms (with FHA (M/cr)'s permission) and by adding their own furnishings to the existing basic furniture of the room.

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 was 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 rooms if they are 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 mail-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 these 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 mail-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 self closing automatic doors which require visitors to contact tenants through an entry phone before they can be admitted.

Rules and Sanctions

The question of rules and sanctions also affect how 'secure' a house feels. It is obviously damaging if choas 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 him or herself as a police officer enforcing order—he or she 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 this role is envisaged as minimal, this is not a viable demand. The making and application of clear-cut rules may be possible in hostels, which are staffed and regulated, but it is impossible in the bedsit setting. 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 through the management (e.g. complaints from neighbours). This means that rules are seen to be reasonable and necessary (not imposed from above) 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 etc.,). 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. 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. 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 simple 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 some respects Bowker Street could be thought to be 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 the third house, during its difficult time, which led the neighbours to protest vigorously that the house was full of drug addicts and undesirables, 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. In this respect Egerton Road is less fortunate, in that the neighbourhood is rather more bourgeois and less accessible to the young people in the house. However, some young people have developed acquaintanceships with students in the area, whilst others were able to make use of the greater accessibility to 'church', 'alternative' and 'community-group' networks which exist in this part of south Manchester.

It is arguable, however, that a more conventional neighbourhood can be an asset. Young people often like to live in an area perceived by them as respectable rather than run-down. This in itself may be a stimulus and a pressure to maintain the house in a way which fits the neighbourhood, whereas in an area of multiple occupation standards may be perceived to be low and this may adversely affect a house.

In this sense the Egerton Road situation is probably ideal. It is not in the heart of owner-occupier land, where it could enjoy an unwelcome distinction, but it is in an area used by students and young professionals, with whom many of the tenants would not be unhappy to identify.

In the development of a successful scheme these issues are important. Two other areas of equal significance are the role of the caretaker and the way in which management and support are provided. In the next chapter we shall discuss the key post of caretaker, before looking in chapter five at the management and support structures.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE CARETAKERS

The caretaker post was established as a means of providing limited support to a housing scheme for young people. The house offered tenancies to young people, many of whom would probably still be living in hostel type accommodation without this opportunity because of the failure or absence of (usually) family support at some time. The recognition that 'housing need' should determine the role of the scheme had to be balanced by the equal attention paid to the needs of inexperienced tenants. The installation of the caretakers was meant to assist the creation of an environment which would encourage their growth towards independence. This chapter explores the challenges this role set for CAP and the individuals who became caretakers, and how the post has evolved over the eight years the house has been open.

Selection

CAP screens all potential caretakers before filling the post. This takes the form of an informal interview with the current caretakers and representatives from CAP. The formal duties of the role are outlined and some effort is made to indicate the amount of time involved in the development of relationships with the tenants. Of course, every caretaker brings to the project his or her own personal interpretation of the role and CAP encourages caretakers to develop their own ideas and to work out their commitment accordingly. What is made clear is that the role is mainly one of 'befriending' and not that of a social worker, hostel warden or therapist. The powers of the caretakers are strictly limited both by design and by the nature of the housing scheme. As the residents have protected tenancies, disputes cannot be resolved by summary eviction (as in many hostels) but must be dealt with in other ways. It would be extremely difficult for the caretakers, living in such close proximity to the other residents, to sustain a 'professional' relationship. Instead, as a result of the experiences they share as part of a household they become something different: part good neighbour/friend and guide.

After this initial interview, if both CAP and the prospective caretakers are agreed, the appointment is confirmed at a meeting with the Area Manager of the Family Housing Association (Manchester) Limited. Here the terms and conditions of the post are

laid out and a formal contract is signed by both parties (a copy of which is reproduced in the appendix).

Since the house opened in 1974 there have been six caretakers. The first three caretakers were single people, whilst the last three have been couples. Our experience of couples as caretakers has been a positive one and it is our intention to continue using them in the future. The advantage of using couples in this kind of scheme is most apparent in the mutual support couples can offer each other. They are able to create more distance between their private lives and their role as caretakers, which is difficult to maintain as a single person. Couples also have the ability to complement each other as caretakers, especially in the division of tasks and in the way individuals in the house relate to them.

So far we have not found advertising the posts necessary; instead word has been spread through an existing network of people known to the project. We are not arguing that advertising the post is unnecessary or that we would not rely on some form of advertising ourselves in the future, though we have found that there are distinct advantages in recruiting caretakers who are already known to the house. It has for instance enabled the housing scheme to undergo change of caretakers without too much upset. In fact, as both parties have been able to build on relationships that have been formed before the move into the house this has prevented the caretakers being pushed into an institutionalised role. As one caretaker put it:

> "I think its good if the people are known to the house. We were known before we moved in as caretakers. I think it would be more difficult if you just moved in and didn't know anybody, because then you'd become like wardens."

What is certainly apparent is that a necessary part of the selection procedure is an introduction to the house of the new caretakers. This will help counter the feelings of insecurity which build up as one set of caretakers prepares to move out and new caretakers move in. Secondly, it enables everyone to adapt and even greet the change with enthusiasm.

So though this process of selection is something of a random affair, it is possible to cut down on some of the potential problems. The comprehensive information given about the role satisfies the interviewing group and the prospective caretakers that the role is realistic and can be taken on, while also ensuring that the underlying philosophy of the scheme is understood by those who will be on the front line.

The Caretakers' relationship with FHA (Manchester)

The caretakers are technically employees of the housing association and are bound by contract to fulfil the duties outlined in the conditions of service (which are signed at the outset of the appointment). In the main the 'contract' covers all practical responsibilities in the house, including the cleaning of common areas, the control of the central heating system, reporting repairs and holding rent for the Association. It also outlines the intended supportive role as follows:

> "The caretaker is expected to make him/herself available to the tenants in a friendly, helpful way. He/she is not expected, however, to provide 'social work support' or 'therapy'. He/she should liaise with members of CAP if any tenant appears to be getting into difficulty or if a crisis appears imminent. At all times he/she should respect the right to privacy of the tenants." (for full copy see appendix).

In return the caretaker is paid in kind through the occupation of a flat in the housing scheme together with the heating and hot water, all free of any charge. Although the conditions of service form the basis of the relationship between the caretakers and the housing association, no contract can fully reflect its importance. The caretakers deal mostly with the housing officers from the local area office of the association and consequently get to know the housing staff well. It is the quality of this relationship in this context which matters. FHA (M/cr) manages a great deal of rented accommodation in Manchester, which is partly why it can take on a housing scheme like Egerton Road. But it is important for CAP to keep in mind that the scheme is only one unit amongst many, so inevitably the area office, with administrative responsibility for the house will be aware of any additional problems that it may cause them. The role of the caretakers here (supported by CAP) is to ensure that the management of the scheme does not take up a disproportionate amount of their time. If it did FHA (M/cr) would inevitably lose sympathy and patience for the scheme. This means ensuring good communications with FHA (M/cr) in order that particular stresses and difficulties can be promptly aired, whilst also informing CAP if further action needs to be taken.

Though the relationship between the house and FHA (M/cr) is generally a good one, there are occasions when conflict does occur. Given the nature of the housing scheme and the divided responsibility of the housing association and CAP this is in some ways inevitable – especially over issues like rent arrears. As one caretaker noted:

> "The link with FHA (M/cr) estates manager has become

stronger over the last few years. At that time Anne didn't really like the house very much. They just looked upon it as something that cost them money. There were always arrears."

There still are! But the relationship between FHA (M/cr) and CAP has improved over the last seven years as an understanding of what CAP has been trying to do has become more accepted. Belief in the scheme's contribution to young people's growth towards independence can too easily be obscured by the very real short term problems set by non rent payment or hostility towards the housing managers. With the caretakers having most involvement in these issues, they have to be sensitive to the demands being made on the FHA (M/cr) area office by the house but have also to retain a belief that in the long run the house has a real part to play in giving young people some stability in their lives.

Most of the strains imposed on the relationship between the house and the housing association revolve around the issue of non-payment of rent and 'high' arrears which tenants can build up. The caretakers are involved in this issue because one of their roles is to hold the rent for the tenants (this does not mean actively collecting rent) and then to pass it on to the landlords. Most tenants opt for this means of payment, so caretakers usually know fairly accurately the state of rent payment in the house. Unlike hostel schemes, the only way to act against a protected tenant is to reclaim arrears through the court, most often through applying for a direct payment order or ultimately through eviction. Since the scheme's inception no one has been evicted from the house for any reason. Court orders have been applied for, though tenants commonly feeling victimised or feeling that FHA (M/cr) is inconsistently, have responded to this kind of action positively, often dramatically improving their rent payment. For tenants in this situation the issue often becomes one of commitment to the house against the short-term advantages of 'moonlighting' from the house while owing money or threatened by eviction. On the whole tenants do stay on. It is on these occasions that the caretakers have to be most careful about their role. For the sake of the house it is important that the caretakers are not seen as henchmen of FHA (M/cr), so the role of encouraging payment is a delicate one. If arrears are allowed to rise too high they can become an unacceptable burden to the tenant, something which they cannot see themselves paying and which can become an incentive to leave.

One way in which this has been overcome in the last two years has been the development of the role of a visiting housing worker.

As one of the present caretakers comments:

> "When we first moved into the house there was no direct link between FHA (M/cr) and the house at all . . . There was no physical contact. Nobody knew who this 'FHA' was unless they were serving a court order. So we felt the link needed to be tightened up . . . It was suggested that Anne ought to come round and collect rents and attend tenants' meetings."

This policy has considerably improved the relationship between the area office and the house. Anne now has:

> "the respect of the tenants. They actually feel very warm towards her. They didn't feel that way two years ago. They've changed their attitude. They know what she's doing and what she's about."

What we have found is that the formal role of the landlord as consistent but fair rent-collector affords most respect, but that it should be tempered by the use of a housing worker to collect rents and attend some of the tenants' meetings. The rent collector with a human face (as opposed to a giro book) provides a reminder of the commitment to pay rent! Though 'distancing' is important, it is achieved by the area manager limiting contact with the house to correspondence or formal appointment at his office, leaving Anne, the estates manager, to carry out the day to day tasks like the important visit on Fridays to collect rent and to talk to the tenants about issues that concern them regarding the house.

The relationship between the caretakers and the housing association is one that needs to be worked on continually by CAP. Because the housing scheme was set up to give tenancies to young people who may otherwise be in hostels or homeless, there must be an element of financial risk for the housing association. FHA (M/cr) have accepted this but need to be reassured that the level of risk is acceptable and is balanced by the belief that the young people are committed to living independently and that adequate support exists to enable them to achieve it.

The Caretakers' relationship with CAP

Though formally employed by FHA (M/cr), the caretakers are far more closely identified with CAP, both by those living in the house and by CAP itself. Because there are no more than twenty people involved in CAP, all in an individual capacity, it does not have the same kind of bureaucratic structure as the housing association. For most of the last seven years the house has been supported by a contact person from CAP, who to a large degree is CAP to the tenants and the caretakers. The role of 'contact person' is a very demanding one, which has required a great deal

of commitment and hard work. As the main support for the scheme, this role, backed up by the regular CAP meetings, has been crucial. As one caretaker said with conviction:

"Who else comes round, asks questions or wants to know?"

But more recently this role has been bolstered up by the regular convening of a support group for the house. This group meets monthly, and has done so now for three years. In that time it has become more important to the house, especially as the people in the group have increasingly shared the responsibility of maintaining close contact with the house (rather than leaving it up to Alistair, the contact person). The support group is meant primarily for the caretakers, but its role is increasingly widening. The support group was set up soon after Chris and Gary moved in as caretakers, with the former caretakers and other members of CAP. Chris and Gary explained why the group was formed:

"At that time there was no support group . . . We would just phone Alistair to come out when things happened . . . Which is why we started the group.

Alistair was always very supportive. He always came out. . . but I think that was a lot for him. . . which is another reason why a support group was needed."

The support group, which has become the main prop in the relationship between the caretakers and CAP, grew out of the need to talk about the state of the house, its difficulties and successes, with a group that was both knowledgeable and concerned. It also acts as a group which has contact with the people living in the house and supplements the work of the caretakers. In this capacity the group has taken on practical tasks such as providing cover in the house when the caretakers are on holiday, as well as visiting and befriending individual tenants. The caretakers (and the tenants) use this group as a first line of support. The caretakers particularly appreciate its role as a forum, using it as a way to distance themselves for a while from the often complicated dynamics within the house.

Perhaps the most useful description of CAP as a group is that it's a small self-motivating, independent organisation which because it has no full time workers is dependent upon the interest and involvement of the volunteers. Certainly the tenants have great difficulty in relating to it as a formalised bureaucracy, instead it's Maureen, Geraldine, Suresh, Derry, Alistair, Gary, Chris, Gay.

". . . It's people we're talking about. The support group is the ex-caretakers, Alistair, Suresh and Derry. The CAP committee is the same people plus half a dozen more . . . which is why

people don't really know what CAP really is. It's just a group of people who are about, a network really."

From the caretakers' point of view it's important that there is support, which they can call on when they need it. The need for support is variable, though increasingly it takes place within the 'support group' setting, with additional individual support being provided if and when it's necessary.

The key to the relationship between the caretakers and CAP is in this area; the caretakers give a lot of their time and energy to the housing scheme. To do this without a group of people around them providing support, insights and perspectives on their role and the house as a whole would be impossible. The scheme relies heavily on a well developed support network, which in a benign way bolsters the philosophy behind the project by ensuring that the balance between independence and support for the tenants is matched by support for the caretakers too.

Developments

The role of the caretakers in the housing scheme was determined by CAP's experience of running the Bowker Street project in the early 1970's (see Chapter 2). Therefore the role of the caretaker was deliberately limited to a support role which would not undermine the young people's journey towards independence.

The accommodation scheme was set up offering full tenancies to young homeless people in the form of self-contained bedsits. This was seen as 'long-term provision' as the development of self-reliance clearly cannot be timetabled. Stability, for those who may have lacked it for long periods, was a main consideration. It was this model that determined the character of the caretakers' role. The other main influence on the caretakership was CAP's decision not to employ full-time workers. Instead the scheme would be run by 'volunteers' who had jobs outside the house and would regard the house as a home not employment. This had two main repercussions: philosophically it would help protect the caretakers from becoming too much of a focus for the house and thus prevent the tendency for such schemes to become introspective and therapeutic in nature; and secondly it liberated the scheme from a reliance on insecure funding which could mean financial collapse if money was not found to employ a worker to support it. Instead CAP opted to offer the 'volunteer' caretaker payment in kind in the form of a flat with central heating, etc. which the other six flats funded by a small service charge within the rent.

The move away from the social work model (usually associated with wardenships) towards a more normal relationship with the

tenants has not lessened the degree of commitment necessary to make the scheme work. The caretakers have a demanding and responsible role which they interpret in an individualised way. Their skills as such are based in their approachability rather than any formal ones they may have. CAP has provided a clear minimal role for the caretakers, which must be adhered to to ensure that the house functions and which also recognises that as a caretaker's enthusiasm inevitably ebbs and flows the continuity and balance of the house depends as much on the upkeep of the house as anything else. The caretakers have no clear working timetable. Unexpected demands can and are made on them as domestic crises occur within the house. Incidents such as pilfering mail, angry shouting matches, emotional breakdowns and in one case the trauma of a tenant burgling the caretaker's flat, will of course prompt action by the caretakers, but CAP has limited this, again placing the responsibility for further action on the support group. Over the seven years of the scheme the caretakers have developed an interventionist role which is very different from social work support as its basis is the caretakers own involvement in the dynamics of such events. Because they live in such close proximity to the other residents, as a neighbour if nothing more thay have a right to intervene in such events when they affect them personally.

The following quotes by caretakers illustrate this issue:

"Fights etc. . . . don't have to make a difference to the relationship. I was over-wary after a crisis as to how I should behave afterwards. This can perpetuate feelings of intervention."

"Who in fact can you turn to when you're worried about a tenant's behaviour? At least initially it is up to the caretaker to sort out the tenant's immediate problem or crisis – again if only for the sake of the other tenants."

The pressures this puts the caretaker under should not be underestimated and in this context the mechanisms of support are crucial if the role is to remain manageable. The key to the caretaker's success has been limiting them to a 'broad' befriending role which emphasises individual responsibility amongst tenants, with a wider group within CAP ensuring that tenants in difficulty are supported from outside the house.

The other important aspect of this befriending role is the caretaker's importance in developing a group feeling within the house. Without any formal communal areas in the scheme (a deliberate act) the caretakers have responded to this need by encouraging occasional house events such as meals, organised trips and parties. These are not obligatory or enforced and in general the decisions about the nature of events are made by the 'house' as a whole.

This is important because it pervades the culture of the house, combating the danger of isolation which can arise when a young person is offered the opportunity of privacy and independence. But retaining the individual's right to participate or not is also important and some tenants have not taken part in such events. Without communal areas social activities take place in people's rooms or even in the hallway of the house, and the complex inter-relationships between caretakers and tenants, and tenants and tenants, often overflow continuing outside the house as well. This is of great value since the young people often have few relationships outside the house when they first arrive and the need to meet people outside the house is very important. Having an open house which is regularly visited by friends and has occasional group activities which involve people from outside encourages this process of building up networks in the community.

To further illustrate the caretaker's role, the final part of this chapter is given over to the views of the caretakers living in the house at the time of the taped interviews. As part of the initial exercise of recording the views of the tenants, the caretakers were interviewed too. What follows are extracts from the transcript which we hope will show the importance of the caretakers' relationship with the tenants. We also hope that these extracts will provide the reader with a snapshot picture of the caretakers' attitudes at the time to compare against the tenants' comment. This may give both more meaning.

The Role

Q. Were you conscious when you took the job what you were letting yourselves in for?

Paul: When we first took it on, we took it on the basis of an agreement between us that I would be doing most of the work – the more practical things. The rest of it is intangible, you can't put your finger on it. So for the first eight months or so I was considered to be the first line caretaker because I would be coming to the door. That was because Pauline was working in a residential setting and moved in on the basis of being in the background, though that's changed now.

Q. Your role is interpreted in different ways, sometimes being seen as a guide or friend or just responsible for cleaning or even not being necessary. How do you handle these different expectations?

Pauline: Well sometimes it's difficult when people project onto you some expectation you don't have anything to do with. Sometimes I think they want me to be mummy – that's difficult. We

talk about it and can be quite direct with people, arguing it out or talking about it together.

Q. How do you see the role of the caretaker changing?

Pauling: It depends on your lifestyle and your personality. We vary what we are in a sense. Paul often deals with the day to day things, but I prefer to sit and talk to people about other things. Rather than having two people bogged down with practical jobs. That's just because of our personalities. Any other couple it would be totally different.

Q. Can you manufacture a set of relationships among a group of people?

Pauline: I don't see it like that. I see it as a group of people and you're nosying in — and there's activity going on all around you and you're just part of it really and anything that's changed within the house, physically, has happened not because of one person saying this has got to be done, that has got to be done, it's because people sat around and talked.

Q. How does the caretakership affect your personal lives?

Pauline: Yes, if you want to be on your own, if you want to make sure you won't get any interruptions, then I suppose it's changed our lifestyle in that we won't stay in, we'll go out more. That's easier than having people knock on your door and not answering — but that's natural. You adapt to what's around you.

Paul: All our friends know what the situation is in the house and are aware of our position in the house. If we have friends round and people in the house come up to see us it doesn't bother me at all. But when I first moved in I thought, 'Oh God, how are these two groups going to get on . . ?' We do spend a lot of time talking about people in the house, how we relate to them, what's been going on, how we're involved, should we get involved. That does interfere with our personal lives because we're spending a lot of time and energy thinking about the house. But I also think we've grown a lot as a result. I feel I have. I've never before been this involved with people growing up and just human dynamics . . . We know if people are having a screaming fit, they know if we are. You couldn't sustain a social worker role in this kind of house. If you're living as a couple everything has to be fairly open. People are aware of what's going on in your life and you're aware of what's going on in theirs . . . It's a big part of our lives. I can't separate it out from other parts of my life at all. I can't treat it like a job.

Q. What about FHA (M/cr), I'm thinking about several comments made by tenants about the fact it would be better if FHA (M/cr) were harder in their policy towards tenants.

Pauline: Sometimes when we hear tenants knocking on the doors, we know with knocked knees that the tenant wants to shout at somebody and we're the first people to get it and FHA (M/cr) are next. Everybody wants somebody to shout at, we do sometimes. It makes it a lot easier if FHA (M/cr) were really nasty all the time, because then they wouldn't feel guilty about shouting. That's how I think it is.

Paul: The other thing I'd like to comment on is occasionally there are fights in the house. They are maybe emotive rather than physical – big shouting matches. Our role in how we get involved in that has changed quite a lot . . .

Pauline: We decide now very consciously when we're going to get involved . . . When we feel people are going to work it out on their own . . . just through talking . . . then we'll say, "Do you fancy talking in our flat?" Perhaps they'll feel that it's less easy to start shouting again. That's changed from the beginning when we used to go straight in and hold people apart.

Pauline: I think the ratio of women to men affects the house very, very much and I think that the women in this sense have to be together, have to give each other support, because there's a heck of a lot of screwy ideas about what women are about. I feel that it's very important that we get much more balanced and do have more women in the house, because CAP haven't really talked about it.

Q. How does CAP fit into this? Are they an important part of the operation?

Pauline: I think it's important for our support, the support that exists within the house, we're part of that . . . We maybe distance ourselves by talking about the house, wondering what's going on, being dubious and doubtful. CAP for me is my support, Alistair is my support. He doesn't have to do anything, just the fact that I know he's around, or that I know I could ring him up.

Paul: I think, quite rightly, CAP has adopted a low profile in the house. In the sense that people in the house don't know what CAP is about, I think that's good because the house doesn't feel itself to be part of some huge scheme.

Pauline: It's changed since we first came into the house. I remember Alistair coming round every Sunday and I had this awareness that somebody was going to see that things were all right. There was quite a lot of CAP involvement at the start when we needed it and gradually its tailed off. I really appreciate that.

CHAPTER FIVE: INTER-AGENCY ISSUES

MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES – FHA (M/CR)

The Family Housing Association in Manchester has been letting furnished accommodation to the young single homeless in its premises at Egerton Road since 1974. In writing this chapter of the book I shall address myself largely to the housing practitioner or voluntary group member who wishes to understand the financial and management structures that underpin Egerton Road.

The relationship between Community Action Projects and Family Housing Association (Manchester) has changed a little since the formal agreement was forged in October 1973, but the fundamental principal that the Association sees Egerton Road as part of its normal stock of accommodation remains constant. Each flat is self-contained and each occupant should have security of tenure (i.e. a tenancy as opposed to a licence). The original agreement of October 1973 called for (to quote the minutes);

"1. FHA to treat the property as a 'straight' management job i.e. be responsible for
   (a) lettings and letting procedure;
   (b) rent account and control;
   (c) arrears and arrears control including evictions should this prove necessary;
   (d) maintenance;
   (e) general management.
2. That CAP would be responsible for collecting rents, the duty to lie with the warden/caretaker.
3. That CAP, in the person of the caretaker/warden would perform a 'front line' management role, handling such day-to-day problems as
   (a) advising FHA of maintenance required;
   (b) supervision of cleaning common parts;
   (c) provision of light bulbs etc. to common parts;
   (d) supervision and control of furnishings;
   (e) flat cleaning when flat vacated.
4. The nomination rights will lie with CAP."

There have been adjustments and clarifications made to this agreement over eight years, e.g. the caretaker now has a formal tenancy agreement which identifies the associated flat as tied

accommodation. The changes that have been made are changes in emphasis and essentially involve the role of the caretaker. This is no accident as it exemplifies the extraordinarily sensitive role the caretaker has.

Theoretically the caretaker (often in fact a couple) is the employee of FHA (M/cr) as he or she undertakes duties in reward for a flat free of rent, rates or services. However, the caretaker is also the "good neighbour" and advocate for the young people who are tenants. The duality of interest is unavoidable and the best caretakers have known and understood the dilemmas this imposes. Through CAP the Association has been lucky in finding a number of excellent people who with great patience and commitment have filled this role.

In the mid 1970's the rent collection function was taken from the caretaker and placed with a weekly visitor from the FHA (M/cr) area office team. This helped to identify FHA (M/cr) much more clearly as the landlord and sharpen the lines of responsibility. The pendulum, however, swung too far in this direction for a time in that the advocacy role of the caretaker lost almost all involvement with rent payments. For a period the rent collection record of the Association was very poor.

Time has, however, shown that it is essential that the caretaker understands the importance of counselling young people to meet their rent commitments. If a young person abandons a tenancy after a rent free holiday then Egerton Road has failed to break the cycle of temporary solutions that he or she may well be trapped in. Thus the caretaker has a delicate and important role to play.

The lettings and nomination process has not changed in any way. CAP nominate the prospective tenant who is usually referred to CAP through one of the agencies who meet or advise the young single homeless in Manchester. In theory FHA (M/cr) could veto the choice of tenant, i.e. reject the nomination. In practice I do not think this has ever happened. FHA (M/cr) is responsible for the formal details of letting, i.e. signing up the young person as a tenant of the Association and providing him or her with the necessary supporting information.

The small adjustments that have been made reflect two important points. Firstly, that regular meetings and communication with representatives of CAP have ensured that problems are understood and their resolutions shared. In other words communications with CAP have been good and in my estimation this is an important factor in the balance sheet of success or failure in such a project. Secondly, the principle that FHA (M/cr) should not regard Egerton Road as a hostel and its tenants as clients of CAP has been clearly understood throughout, thus preventing fundamental differences of opinion from developing.

The financial relationship with CAP has also been clear from the beginning. The Association makes an allowance to CAP in so far as the caretaker in return for specified tasks occupies a flat free of rent or rates. The Association is responsible for all other charges, including the depreciation and replacement of furniture and provision of central heating via a boiler located in the cellar. In this way both CAP and FHA (M/cr) receive reasonable remuneration for their tasks in managing the accommodation.

The Financing at Egerton Road: Capital Expenditure

The improvement of the semi detached Edwardian house that is in Egerton Road was financed through grant aid provided for in the 1969 Housing Act. This in fact leaves the Association with a large mortgage commitment to meet annually. Given that the rents charged are Fair Rents (i.e. set by the Fair Rents officer independently of the Association) then this would lead to a substantial loss but for further legislation in 1974 which recognised the difficulties being created by the earlier legislation. The 1974 Housing Act provides for a Revenue Defecit Grant payment, whereby losses are made up in income that cannot cover mortgages created before 1974 due to the Fair Rent structure.

In practise any new house in the style of Egerton Road would not be faced by this difficulty as Housing Association Grant provided for by S.29 of the 1974 Housing Act is a far more generous means of financing such work. What in effect becomes the mortgage commitment for the building is reduced to the amount that can be covered by a Fair Rent (having first made allowance for management and maintenance costs). In practise this means the mortgage commitment will be very small or even nil, thus the rents very largely are left to cover the management costs and repair costs. The 1974 Housing Act puts Associations into a position whereby their capital debts do not have a serious impact on the ability to run a scheme effectively.

A body called the Housing Corporation acts as the banker for the Housing Association Movement. (Funds are also available from Local Authorities through powers conferred on them by the same 1974 Housing Act, although in practice very little is currently available). A recent policy decision by the Housing Corporation means that the potential for repeating schemes similar to Egerton Road has been considerably enhanced, despite the general climate of fierce cuts in the housing sector. The Housing Corporation has decided from Financial Year 1980/81 forwards that it will set aside annually the sum of £12 million for investment in what is called the Hostels Initiative.

To obtain a part of this annual allocation a Housing Association needs to identify potential projects jointly to be entered into with a voluntary group(s) and satisfy the Housing Corporation that the project(s) meets one of its categories of housing need, for example accommodation for the "young single homeless at risk". The Association can then make a bid for this annual allocation and if accepted be assured of capital financing and grant aid.

Briefly, the Association will then need to satisfy certain administrative and planning criteria plus the following three points:

(i) demonstrate that the Association has adequate links with the voluntary group and that the group is a viable concern with the commitment and organisation to give it longevity. A written management agreement defining the roles and responsibilities of both sides is also required before the premises are eventually let.

(ii) it is necessary to show a caring element to the project. This means some degree of supervision by one or more individuals e.g. a warden in a hostel, or a caretaker/good neighbour as at Egerton Road. The intention here is to "afford people currently living in institutions (or similar) the opportunity of instead living in a supported environment."

(iii) the Hostels Initiative also looks for evidence of a sharing element e.g. a communal room as in a hostel, shared facilities as in a group home.

The third condition above would seem to exclude schemes for self contained accommodation such as Egerton Road as does the relevant Housing Corporation Circulars which explains that accommodation falling "within the initiative will normally be classified either as a hostel, a cluster or a group home" and must provide a caring environment. There is however evidence that this classification will not be too rigid. A scheme has recently been approved in Manchester (November 1980) that is very similar in characteristics to Egerton Road, i.e. has a caring element amongst self-contained flats, but no shared amenities. This one approval may not set a precedent, but there is hope that a rationally argued case that emphasises the substantial caring element and the strong case for providing self-contained accommodation will be accepted by the Housing Corporation. In this way the Egerton Road model could hopefully become seen as a legitimate part of the Hostels Initiative.

We would like also to take issue with the umbrella title of Hostels Initiative. We believe that this book establishes the case that hostels are not the most appropriate solution for the "young single homeless at risk" and *should not be seen to be.* The assumption that difficult people of any sort are best housed in hostels is wrong headed and unjust. Therefore it is to be hoped that the

title will serve only as an umbrella and that flexible decisions by the Housing Corporation will allow for voluntary groups to exercise their discretion and expertise in a particular field of need to the ultimate benefit of their clients and not a new rule book. Unfortunately the very umbrella title will set any Housing Association inexperienced in this type of provision to think in terms, at least initially, of hostel provision and therefore possibly influence the product of its collaboration with a voluntary group to their mutual detriment.

In order not to provide a misleading position it should be pointed out that self-contained flats can also be provided through the mainstream Fair Rent allocation available to Housing Associations. That most associations will choose not to is partly due to the pressure upon them to provide accommodation at the mainstream of their activities (usually for families). There is also a reticence in many quarters to undertake schemes in "difficult" management areas unless so encouraged by local/central government pressure or specific financial arrangements. Thus the arguments put above are pragmatic in that the Hostels Initiative is probably the most likely channel of funding for future schemes for the single homeless at risk.

Revenue Expenditure

It is extremely difficult given the complexity of Housing Association accounting and the difficulty of apportioning time spent on a particular project or tenancy to establish the true income and expenditure costs of Egerton Road. To these complexities can be added often large variations from year to year in the percentage of rent collected and rent loss through reletting periods. It is in the experience of the Association to have collected less than 80% of the rent in a bad year in the middle 1970's, as against almost 100% in the early 1980's.

Income and expenditure figures for the early 1980's show that in crude terms the Association spends a few hundred pounds more on caretaking, management and administration time than it receives in income. However, there is an element of cross subsidisation whereby other tenancies or housing projects that require less management time effectively subsidise this expensive scheme. There are also a number of devices that allow the Association to recoup losses on rent and service charge income through Revenue Defecit Grant. In this way Egerton Road can be regarded as a somewhat expensive scheme. However, once certain losses have been recouped through Revenue Deficit Grant then the loss is so small it becomes of no consequence to Family Housing Association (M/cr).

	1 April 1978 – 31 Mar 1979	1 April 1979 – 31 Mar 1980	1 April 1980 – 31 Mar 1981	1 April 1981 – 31 Mar 1982
Total Rent Recoverable (100%)	£2987.50	£3084.50	£3496.74	£4001.02
Percentage Rent Received	77.9	90.9	98.7	84.4
Percentage Voids in Year	10.9	1.3	NIL	8.2
Irrecoverables in Year	£445.73	£31.49	NIL	£292.64
(Rent Received + Voids) x 100 ÷ Rent Recoverable	88.8	92.2	98.7	92.7

RENTAL ANALYSIS OF EGERTON ROAD
1978 – 82

Furniture

Providing furniture at Egerton Road has only occasionally caused difficulties, e.g. through theft or fire. The Association allows a provision in the service element of the rent to cover depreciation and replacement of furniture. There has been both fire damage and theft but no serious loss or replacement has occurred. The process of replacement as items have reached the end of their useful lives has occurred in a natural and orderly fashion. The Association has always allowed a four year depreciation period on the original capital cost of the furniture items provided. Making allowances for inflation then this might enable full replacement after, say, six years. In practice some furniture lasts much longer, e.g. wardrobes, and some much shorter, e.g. mattresses, and is replaced if there is reasonable need to do so.

The provision of furniture in a newly completed scheme can be assisted by obtaining grants from charitable bodies or through applications to Urban Aid funds and similar. However, the main capital cost can be carried by the Housing Association including a provision for furniture into the conversion and improvement scheme, in this way Housing Association Grant will be paid on

some part of the initial provision. Should a substantial capital cost remain then the Housing Corporation may provide a loan to assist in purchase.

Following the successful management and support over the last eight years, CAP is currently involved in establishing a replica of the Egerton Road house in Salford. Furniture costs are still one of the initial areas requiring attention for the voluntary group. It is important not to commit the group to major fund-raising efforts when, at this time, it should be concentrating on selecting the caretakers and tenants, establishing the support group, and getting to know the people in the housing association. The Bowker Street experience in chapter two shows why second-hand or less than robust furniture must be avoided.

Heating

Heating at Egerton Road is provided via a centrally controlled boiler which supplies radiators in each flat. Central heating has been a successful choice and the control exercised by the caretaker over the programme and time clock in the boiler room means that heat is not wasted by careless use. Central heating has provided a warm and comfortable environment which is paid for through a service charge in the rent. The tenants pay for their heating *weekly* and avoid large additional bills from the gas and electricity companies helping to provide stability and reduce the load of advocacy work that falls on the CAP volunteers. The boiler at Egerton Road consumes oil. This is no longer a cheap fuel and alternatives should be examined.

Usage

Occupancy levels have occasionally caused concern. The house and the facilities in the flats do not readily absorb extra bodies and where this has happened FHA (M/cr) has usually put on pressure to prevent this overcrowding. Often there is plenty of internal pressure from other tenants who dislike the change of balance this can create in the house and is not always difficult. Where a boy or girlfriend moves in or a baby is due the situation can be more difficult and is likely to involve housing aid advice on alternative accommodation or occasionally have a rehousing implication.

Telephone

To put a telephone into a scheme such as Egerton Road may be to court trouble. The coinbox has sometimes been misused, particularly if used for transfer-charged calls. This was a grave problem for a period early in the scheme but now an implicit

agreement exists between all parties. The telephone is not to be misused otherwise it will be removed and CAP acts as a buffer in that on the odd occasion when a transfer-charged call is made and not identified then CAP will reimburse the Association for the total involved and recover the cost by taking a contribution from each tenant. There is, of course, another option available if a telephone is being installed for the first time, which is to ask the GPO to provide a unit without an incoming call facility.

However, CAP feels that despite difficulties, it is more important for the young people to develop responsibility for their actions.

On a personal level my own experience of managing Egerton Road is a mixed one. Managing the tenancies of six young people who are frequently penniless and usually diffident when faced by the landlord is not an easy business. You have to be consistent in your approach and set up lines of communication even when these are not willingly made. The most frequent area of difficulty is non payment of rent, particularly as "understanding" on the part of the landlord is seen by tenants as leniency and is rapidly communicated! A Notice of Intention to seek possession will usually be served if a tenant is four weeks in arrears, and if arrears persist or rise then the Association has a small range of options. The Association has been fortunate to have developed a good relationship with the local DHSS office, who seem to understand what Egerton Road is trying to achieve. This has been useful since payment of the rent portion of a tenant's supplementary benefit directly to the Association has resolved several difficulties over the years. Time, however, has shown us that collecting rent from the tenants by the personal attendance of a member of staff on a regular day and time is most important. This is usually done by the Housing Officer responsible for the scheme and creates for the landlord a sense of identity that becomes difficult for the tenants to ignore. It should as far as possible be the same person in order that a certain rapport is set up between landlord and tenant. Where this occurs the Area Manager or supervisor is better off remaining remote and being responsible for the decisions and administration of any serious problems with rent or tenancy matters. In this way the Housing Officer can continue to call at the premises without animosity, without hindering the Association's contractual responses to any tenant default.

One consequence of CAP's role in providing the tenants for Egerton Road is that CAP must also support the tenants chosen however difficult they may prove to be. This has been another object lesson from the past that has led CAP to consider the mix of persons in the house when a vacancy occurs, probably to the

benefit of tenants, CAP and FHA (M/cr) in the long term. It is in this area of advocacy that CAP ensure that the Association's arrears recovery procedure is scrupulously fair and consistently applied (and in doing so do not make the Association's task easy in what is in any circumstances a difficult process). For me, however, the most difficult area of all is convincing tenants who have defaulted on rent that the Association can and will use its contractual powers of eviction. This is because of the somewhat long winded and time consuming process of making an application to the County Court. To have come to the conclusion that this is necessary will mean that the Association will already have put some effort into arrears recovery, including making arrangements and setting deadlines which have been subsequently broken. The fact that swift retribution is then not taken has sometimes in the past been construed as an unwillingness on the Association's behalf to act. However, no tenant has yet been evicted by the Association. I assume this to mean the young people have come to see Egerton Road as home and believe this to be justification enough for making the young people tenants of the Association (as opposed to licensees) who have rights and obligations as much as the landlord does. This point is perhaps hard to accept from a housing management perspective. The argument goes that "surely if it takes time to obtain court dates and court orders then the Association loses by not being able to react quickly and severely to non paying tenants?" This is the argument for creating licenses rather than tenancies. However the Association's experience has been that the time provided by the usual County Court procedures has allowed for clear communications with the tenant involved that have resulted in that person having to come face to face with his or her priorities, e.g. does he or she wish to continue living at Egerton Road, probably the first accommodation he or she has ever had that has been independent of a difficult family environment, or houseparents, or a warden etc.?

The above is not an argument for reacting slowly to non payment of rent nor an argument for not using the other advices available to a landlord to secure rent, e.g. by requesting direct payments from DHSS. It is the argument (that I have come to believe in from experience) that the young adults I deal with are merely going through some of the same processes I once went through in establishing for themselves identity and a place in the world. The leap for them – given the difficult backgrounds they come from – is more difficult than for myself who was able to do this in the relatively sheltered environment of a university. What is required is a firm and consistently applied policy for rent default (and damage to furniture and fittings) where the rules are

quite clearly laid out. In this manner the young person has a number of occasions, each under increasing pressure, to think through his or her priorities. It seems that the self esteem and stability provided by having a key to your own front door is in fact a high priority when you are forced to confront it. Clearly the advocacy and advice work done by CAP is an important part of this process.

CAP make no attempt to pressurise tenants into moving on from Egerton Road into alternative accommodation. Given the accommodation provided is a scarce resource I did for some time have difficulties in coming to terms with this policy. I now, however, see the sense of this. Young people learn at their own speed and to set arbitrary periods of stay, for example six months, gives little time for people to adapt from earlier modes of thinking. If one has spent several years in a local authority children's home or care institution then the intellectual leap to looking wholly after oneself must be enormous and simple skills like cooking, changing fuses, washing clothes, etc. all take time to acquire. It is pointless and probably counter-productive to try to accelerate this process. Thus allowing the tenant to define his or her own need of the support of Egerton Road must be the best policy.

Writing the above perspectives is easy enough, but of course one often loses sight of such perspectives in the continuous daily hustle of running a busy area office. Supporting a Housing Officer who has been insulted, watching the young people break payment arrangements, is often galling and ennervating. However, there are occasions when one notices new self respect in a young person or hears about the present circumstances of an ex-tenant. These occasions do provide a reward that reinforces one's sense of purpose.

MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES – CAP

CAP's relationship to FHA (Manchester)

The history of the Egerton Road scheme clearly underlines the crucial nature of the relationship between management (FHA (M/cr)) and support (CAP). The quite clear conclusions from our work is that only when this relationship is defined and mutually understood can effective provision for homeless young people be achieved. FHA (M/cr)'s contribution in the first part of this chapter illustrates the complexity and difficulty of such a relationship. Some conflict seems to be inevitable – FHA (M/cr) rightly insists, for example, on the need to maintain credible rent levels at times when CAP might be more sympathetic to the circumstances and traumas faced by individual young tenants and the reasons for the non payment of rent. But the comparative success of the present

scheme lies to a great extent in the fact that neither party's view automatically assumes priority. Such issues are debated between the organisations and decisions made which attempt to reflect the complex needs of individual tenants, management and support agencies. The bad times at Egerton Road can usually be pinpointed as times when the relationship becomes unequal – when management lacks clarity and consistency, or when support is inconclusive and erratic. The balance is a fine one which requires a strongly articulated commitment from both parties if it is to be effective. It is not helped by the cosy parochialism of so many housing schemes. Consistently CAP and FHA (M/cr) have asserted their individual identity and individuality and have attempted to confront positively the inevitable conflicts this may produce.

CAP's relationship to the Caretaker

The task of acting as caretaker in a housing scheme is a complex and demanding one. CAP has found little difficulty in attracting suitable applicants for the post and working alongside the six caretakers (three single people and three couples) has been a humbling experience. Individual styles have varied enormously but without exception the caretakers have displayed great commitment to the tenants group and to the ideas behind the scheme.

Their job is potentially extremely isolating. At its worst the house can become a dumping ground for young people with a wide range of personal difficulties and it is all too easy to tacitly allow a ghetto type existence to develop. CAP has tried to counter this tendency in two ways. Firstly, it emphasises the limitations of the role when caretakers are appointed. The contract they sign concentrates on a range of practical tasks – keeping the common area clean, emptying the letter and phone boxes, checking the central heating, etc. It is emphasised that they are not expected to act as individual social workers to the tenants, nor to sort out individual traumas. Their task rather is to warn CAP of possible individual difficulties and then to assume that CAP will mobilise appropriate resources from outside the house. Their involvement with the tenants is described in terms of fostering a positive group atmosphere in the house rather than with a concern for any individual pathology. They are encouraged to pursue full time jobs or interests outside the house.

But as important as these emphases are, the fact remains that it is the caretakers who are most accessible and vulnerable to individual tenant's crises or conflicts. Living closely alongside six people – overhearing their quarrels, sensing their despair, being awoken by their music – harshly tests the theory of minimal involvement. It is crucial, therefore, that CAP can provide a sense of continuity

and reality, particularly when the going is hard. In the early days of the scheme this was provided in the form of one CAP member taking responsibility for visiting the house and caretakers on at least a weekly basis (in addition to more frequent contact with individual tenants). Part of this member's role included a willingness to be called upon in emergencies and when necessary to call at the house at short notice to provide on the spot advice or assistance. We would argue that any scheme would require at **least** this degree of involvement from the support agency.

More recently, however, CAP has established a wider ranging support group for the caretakers which meets on a monthly basis. This is currently made up of the caretakers, the CAP 'visitor', an ex-caretaker couple (who themselves became qualified youth workers following their caretakership), a detached youth worker, a social worker member of CAP, and an interested lay person. This we believe to be an increasingly important group which broadens the relationship between caretaker and CAP 'visitor', and allows for a more wide ranging discussion of life in the house. It needs to be a group which is both supportive and critical of the caretakers' involvement — we are at present, for instance, trying to correct a tendency to be under-challenging of the caretakers' attitudes and perceptions of life in the house. The group also needs to ensure that caretakers are not drawn into over-complex, crisis-solving relationships with the tenants, and to take responsibility for ensuring that other agencies are brought in to provide more appropriate individual support. To this end it is important that membership of such a group is restricted to individuals who are seen to have a sustained interest in the house. We have strongly resisted the tendency to overwhelm the group with mystifying professional gurus from whatever discipline.

CAP's relationship to Tenants

Recent interviews with the tenants by an outside 'researcher' revealed that for most of them CAP is almost exclusively identified with the person of the CAP 'visitor'. This is hardly surprising given CAP's original objective of setting up an organisation which was intrinsically human and which didn't have a bureaucracy or formal hierarchy. It also provides an important extra element in the tenants' understanding of their position vis a vis support and management. Essentially CAP's role is to do with negotiating/arbitrating/advocacy roles. This can involve arbitrating in tenants' disputes with caretakers as well as in their disputes with FHA (M/cr). Again we believe it is important that tenants feel they can rely on CAP to intervene fairly in areas of dispute and to this end the CAP 'visitor' is a regular attender of monthly tenants/caretakers meetings.

CAP's relationship with other agencies

There are also instances where a tenant requires some other support from outside, though not from their referring agency, such as a home help or a district nurse. Without wishing to diminish the potential for a tenant to gain independence, there have been times when such support has been needed. This is important because the caretakers should limit themselves to their 'minimal' role and not take on these responsibilities thereby substituting for the various statutory services.

Relationship with Referring Agencies

CAP has learnt over the years that an awful lot of social workers/probation officers/housing workers regard the placement in housing of one of their more problematic clients as the end of their involvement. After waxing eloquently over the phone about the appropriateness of young X or Y, all too often CAP never heard from the worker again. We are therefore now quite explicit about our expectations of a "referring" worker. That is, that our scheme has no full-time staff, that we expect referrals to be relatively self sufficient and able to cope with living independently. We also insist that any referring agency agrees to continue its involvement with the young person, and to agree to be called upon at times of crisis or difficulty. At their best, such agreements have resulted in the active participation of the worker in assisting young people to develop within the scheme. So, the social worker who attends our support group joined CAP as the result of referring a young person to us and his taking much responsibility for helping us to work out the implications of housing his young client. A local probation officer has provided a high level of assistence in his continuing relationship with three of the tenants. But these remain exceptions rather than the general rule. Other groups setting up housing schemes need to be aware of the tendency for them to be used as a dumping group for difficult clients and to resist this most assertively.

Another area of difficulty is in the actual referral system itself. When talking to workers about prospective tenants we often feel that they are giving us far too much information about the client. This for CAP is a difficult area. On the one hand we want to be assured that we are not accepting someone who is beyond our skills and resources, and yet on the other would not want a young person to be prejudged in our eyes by a complicated case

history. For example, a girl who eventually achieved a great deal through living in the scheme was almost rejected because of her social worker's emphasis on her tendency to pick up men on a casual basis. We could appreciate the worker's motives but felt the girl had other qualities and potential which persuaded us to take the risk. But we almost didn't! Generally, therefore, we don't request case histories but instead emphasise the need for the young person to be able to survive on his or her own and to rely on our own interviews to assess the degree of motivation to live independently which the young person displays.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

When we began work with homeless young people we fondly hoped that ensuing years would see considerable improvement in facilities available to them. In the decade which has passed recognition of the problem of homelessness amongst young people has certainly grown, and there are more projects specifically aimed at such young people. Nevertheless, we do not feel that any *significant* steps have been taken to deal with the housing problems of single young people. Nor, in the face of continuing pressure on public sector house building and public sector spending generally, does there appear to be particular hope for the future.

One reason for the lack of urgency in dealing with the situation seems to be that it is still regarded by many as an 'artificial' problem, i.e. one which is not really a serious social dilemma but one somehow caused by the wanton and irresponsible behaviour of certain young people in leaving home. It is important to make clear that such a simplistic understanding of the situation is not merely naive but positively harmful. It places on young people a burden of guilt for the failure or lack of home life which it should not be theirs to carry. Social workers, probation officers, teachers, youth workers and others will testify to the appalling conditions and stresses which some children have to endure as they grow up — for such youngsters to move away is not only often necessary but usually a very positive step. For others, leaving care means finding somewhere else to live. Also, the economic pressures to leave home in search of work are often under-estimated, even at a time when senior political figures blandly urge mobility as the answer to unemployment. It would be a helpful first step if society would accept that the provision of suitable accommodation for homeless young people is necessary, and not some luxury of an over-indulgent state.

Within the context of accepting the need to provide accommodation for young people, CAP has had two aims. The first has been to explore what kind of accommodation most meets the needs of such youngsters; the second has been to look at ways of providing accommodation which fit more into the housing management model than the social work model. This does not mean that cost is not involved, but it does obviate the need for highly supportive, and thus costly, labour-intensive schemes.

The Egerton Road house has proved that a housing association and a voluntary agency, *working together*, can produce a particularly successful blend of skills and resources. Whereas so often lack of money is cited as the root cause of failure to provide suitable accommodation, it is our experience that the most significant lack is that of human resources. Funding for housing associations is such that it is currently relatively easy for them to attract funds for the kind of scheme we have described, since it falls broadly within the definition of a hostel for funding purposes. What is needed is a group committed *long term* to the kind of involvement required to make the house function effectively.

Unfortunately, too many groups interested in the housing needs of young people try to ensure continuity and involvement by creating paid posts within a house. This is extremely expensive and therefore often dooms ideas from the start. It is also, we would argue, both unnecessary and unhelpful. The other stock response is to utilise temporary resources in an ad hoc way, such as we did at Bowker Street. In the face of the accommodation crisis it is tempting to use short-life property in this way, but whilst we would recognise it had some value for some young people, it is not an experience we would want to repeat.

The use of short-life property 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.

In arguing for long-term, specially-designed accommodation, we are not arguing for the impossible. Whilst Egerton Road has known its problems, we are convinced that it provides the best model we have seen and, after eight years' experience of one scheme, we are now embarking on a similar scheme in Salford with no modification to the general concept. There are probably four elements which contribute to the success of the house.

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 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 hospitals.

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 desireable. 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 for particular reasons such as marriage, pregnancy or the move into the 'ordinary' rented sector. This, stability, 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 or she 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.

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

* is able to understand and accept varying life-styles, and to live with the 'youthfulness' of the house;
* has a full and active life outside the house;
* 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.;
* 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 or her duties are performed in return for rent-free accommodation, the cost of which is divided between all the other tenants.

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 or her 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. This group, therefore, keeps in touch with what is going on in the house, and can perform such tasks as covering for the caretaker at holiday times or providing a sounding board for new ideas about how to tackle problems within the house.

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 or her. 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 (M/cr), 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 (M/cr) will not be left with a houseful of difficult tenants.

It is important, therefore, that the voluntary group is clear about the degree of involvement required and its ability to sustain this over the years. We have found that an understanding that people who leave the group will find others to replace them has been a remarkably effective way of ensuring continuity. It has also been helpful that a lot of the group in their professional lives have been involved with young people, so that some of the supportive work is legitimately bound up with the work of social services department, youth work agencies, etc. This means we are not talking about simply the spare-time activities of a group of well-meaning amateurs. Whilst CAP is a wholly voluntary group, it nonetheless has a strong network of members and contacts which utilises and overlaps with the professional caring services. It has also been immeasurably strengthened by having members who also work for the housing association which has provided the house.

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 (M/cr) and CAP has, therefore, been an enabling one. The input of youth work/social work skills has enabled FHA (M/cr) 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 him/herself which the tenant develops as a result of his/her 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 streneous 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 47 Upper Lloyd Street, Moss Side, Manchester 14 4HY.

APPENDIX I:
POST OF CARETAKER
for Cromwell Road, Eccles

OUTLINE OF THE SCHEME

Cromwell Road is a joint project between Irwell Valley Housing Association Ltd. and Community Action Projects Ltd.

Ultimate responsibility for the scheme rests with the Management Committee which consists of representatives of both IVHA and the CAP Support Group. The Management Committee is responsible for the appointment and termination of the caretaker's appointment.

On a day to day basis the caretaker is immediately responsible to the Support Group who will provide support and advice to both the caretaker and the tenants. The Support Group is responsible for the selection of tenants.

Irwell Valley Housing Association is responsible for the collection of rent and the provision of a maintenance service. The caretaker should liaise with the housing officer over day to day housing management issues.

CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

A. **REMUNERATION** this will be in kind, and will be:
The occupation of Flat F, together with the heating and hot water, both free of any charge (the right to these will terminate with the employment).

B. **DUTIES OF CARETAKER**
These will be as directed by IVHA and the CAP Support Group. The principal duties are listed below.

1. **Holding Rent**
The caretaker is not required to collect rent, but should offer to hold it for tenants, following agreement with IVHA. A receipt must be issued on each occasion from the receipt book provided by the Housing Association.
2. **Repairs**
   i) those of an urgent nature must be reported to IVHA,
   ii) those of a non-urgent nature to be reported as soon as possible,
   iii) It shall be the caretaker's duty to arrange suitable access with contractors for the carrying out of repairs, as directed by IVHA.

3. **Cleaning of Common Parts**
   i) this should be done by the caretaker at least weekly,
   ii) the caretaker should encourage tenants to assist in this task.
4. **Heating**
   The caretaker shall regulate the heating daily in a manner required by IVHA.
5. **The laundry room**
   The caretaker will supervise the use of the laundry room as directed by the CAP Support Group and IVHA.
6. **Keys**
   The caretaker must ensure at all times he/she has a spare key to each flat, and to the laundry room.
7. **Support of tenants**
   The caretaker is expected to make him/herself available to the tenants in a friendly, helpful way. She/he is not expected to provide social work support or "therapy". She/he should liaise with members of the CAP Support Group if any tenant appears to be getting into difficulty or if a crisis appears imminent. At all times he/she should respect the right of privacy of the tenants.
8. **Petty Cash**
   The caretaker will be provided by IVHA with a petty cash float to purchase sundry items such as cleaning materials. He will keep records and receipts of all transactions as directed by IVHA.
9. **Vacant Flats**
   i) The caretaker must obtain from the outgoing tenant the keys to the flat and front door.
   ii) She/he must then thoroughly check and note missing items, breakages, and repairs required.
   iii) She/he should then clean up the flat, and liaise with IVHA and CAP Support Group in order to arrange for the flat to be re-let.
   iv) She/he should ensure that the electric meter is emptied and read by the Electricity Board.

C. TIME OFF
   i) The caretaker will notify IVHA or the CAP Support Group when she/he intends to be away from the house for a period longer than three days.
   ii) If she/he intends to be away for a period exceeding seven days he must notify IVHA or the CAP Support Group in writing at least 28 days beforehand.
   iii) It is expected that in any six month period the caretaker's absence from the house will not exceed 21 days.

D. TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

i) This employment can be terminated on either side by the service of a written notice to run for one month.

ii) If the caretaker fails to observe any of the above conditions the joint IVHA/CAP Management Committee can terminate the employment.

iii) There will be an initial trial period of six months.

E. GENERAL

The caretaker shall at all times behave in a manner conducive to the well-being of the house and in a way that befits the aims and objectives of IVHA and the CAP Support Group.

We ..... have read the above conditions and agree to abide by them at all times.

Signature ..... Caretakers.

Witness ..... Position .....

Date .....

APPENDIX II
MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

THIS MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT is made this day of 1982, BETWEEN Irwell Valley Housing Association Limited, whose registered office is Brunswick House, Broad Street, Salford M6 5BZ, and Community Action Projects acting through its Management Committee.

WHEREAS

Irwell Valley Housing Association Limited is a housing association within the meaning of Section 189 (1) of the Housing Act 1957 and is registered with the Housing Corporation under Section 13 of the Housing Act 1974.

AND

Community Action Projects is a voluntary group registered with the Charity Commissioners, amongst whose objectives is the provision of care and support for homeless young people.

Irwell Valley Housing Association Limited (the Housing Association) is the freeholder of Cromwell Road, Eccles which by an Agreement and Legal Charge dated the day of 1982 was charged to the Housing Corporation.

The Housing Association has agreed that to enable Community Action Projects (the Agency) to fulfil its obligations under this Agreement, it will make available the property, namely Cromwell Road having regarding to the special housing and welfare needs of the persons to which it is intended the property will be let, and the particular expertise and resources of the Agency.

The Housing Association has satisfied itself that in consideration of the property covered by this Agreement, the Agency has at its disposal sufficient resources to discharge the additional costs and responsibilities arising from the category of persons to be housed in the property.

IT IS HEREBY AGREED

1. Irwell Valley Housing Association Ltd appoints Community Action Projects for a period of five years from the date agreed to be its manager of and agent for the dwelling. At the end of this period the Agreement will be deemed to continue a further five years, without alteration, unless six months notice has been given by either party.
2. In carrying out its management and agent's functions, the agent shall:—
   (a) be responsible for the selection of applicants solely in accordance with its objectives, and the nomination of applicants to the Association.
   (b) be responsible for the appointment and employment of a person (to be known as the "caretaker") to live at the property, who shall provide a necessary care and support to those tenants rehoused. The Agency shall also be responsible for the prompt re-appointment of the caretaker following the resignation or termination of the caretaker's appointment.
   (c) in the Housing Association's name abate nuisances and remedy any breaches of covenant.
   (d) take all possible steps to nominate promptly applicants to the Housing Association for any flat in the property which may become vacant.
3. IRWELL VALLEY HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD. shall:
   (a) accept nominations exclusively from Community Action Projects for the accommodation available.
   (b) be responsible for:
      i. the granting or termination of tenancies of those so nominated.
      ii. collection of rent, rates and service charges
      iii. the decoration, maintenance and repair of the exterior and the structure of the property and keeping in good

repair and working order the installations for the supply of water, gas, electricity and sanitation; additionally the decoration and repair of common areas.

(c) provide accommodation on a rent, rates and services free basis for the caretaker appointed by the Agency.

(d) insure the property and fixtures against loss and damage by fire and such other risks as required by the Housing Corporation.

4. Community Action Projects shall:
   (a) make available to the Housing Association such annual accounts as relate to the property within 28 days.
   (b) give the Housing Association 28 days' notice of any change in its constitution.
   (c) use its best endeavours to protect all monies in its possession at the property, and effect such fidelity insurance as is appropriate and approved by the Housing Association.
   (d) maintenance of the property.
   (e) in an emergency affecting the preservation of the property or safety of residents, take such measures as may be necessary for that purpose.
5. Community Action Projects and Irwell Valley Housing Association Limited, shall each nominate two persons who shall form a joint Management Committee. The joint Management Committee shall be responsible for the overall supervision of the project and reviewing the operation of the Management Agreement. The Committee meeting can be convened by either party but must meet at least three times a year from the commencement of the Management Agreement.
6. This Agreement may be determined by Community Action Projects by giving six months notice in writing to expire at any time.
7. If at any time Community Action Projects is in the opinion of Irwell Valley Housing Association Limited guilty of misconduct or negligence in carrying out the duties outlines in this Agreement, the Housing Association may, with previously obtained consent of the Housing Corporation, determine this Agreement by giving three months notice. Prior to the issue of any such notice, a meeting of the joint Management Committee shall be called.
8. The Agency undertakes that in connection with the carrying out of its duties under this Agreement, it will at all times have regard to the rules or constitution of the Housing Association, the terms and conditions of the mortgage, the statutory powers of the mortgagee and any other rules and regulations statutory or otherwise affecting the Housing Association, and not at any time to act in contravention of the same.

PART 2: THE TENANTS PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION

When the preliminary discussions were taking place to update the history of CAP's involvement with housing schemes for young single people it was suggested that the tenants' views should this time be included in any revised publication. The question was, however, how and by whom this should be done. I was aware of this dilemma since members of CAP and FHA (Manchester) are closely involved in the management committee of the GMYA/ NAYC Homelessness Project, of which I am the Co-ordinator.

I suggested that taped interviews could form the basis of this section and that given my lack of involvement with either the tenants or CAP I would be a suitable person to conduct them. I thought that, if I was accepted by the tenants, my neutral position would enable me to ask quite pointed questions which could be answered without fear of contradiction or judgement on my part. CAP's view at that time (early May 1980) was that short extracts could perhaps be taken from the tape transcripts to be included in a short section in the revised publication. I hoped, and expected, that far more material of wider scope and interest would emerge from the interviews and the fact that we subsequently decided to reproduce these interviews almost verbatim is evidence that these hopes were not unfounded.

Structure of the interviews

I first visited the house in May 1980 when I spoke to most of the tenants at a meeting specifically convened to explain the purpose of the tape sessions and to establish that I was only prepared to do the interviews on the following conditions:

(1) that I would accept what I was told at its face value and would not attempt to verify its accuracy by cross-checking with other tenants or outside agencies. I would use only my common-sense and gut feelings to guide my responses and questions.

(2) that the tape transcripts would become the property of the tenants; would only be used with their permission and that they had the right to veto any remarks when they read the transcript.

(3) that my brief was to explore the tenants' attitudes to CAP, their relationship to the caretaker and with each other and not to ask questions aimed at acquiring a potted biography of their "problems". Some of these details did emerge quite freely during our discussions but they were not pursued in any real depth.

I believe that the honest and lively quality found in these transcripts vindicates the position which I took. Those who know the tenants at Egerton Road much better than I share this feeling. It took about two months for all of the interviews to be completed. Some of the tenants proved more elusive than others in arranging to be interviewed! Almost from the outset I realised that my initial worries about whether or not I would be trusted were unnecessary. Although I had worked out in advance certain basic themes which I wanted to explore during the interviews I did not follow these in any rigid sequence, as a read of the transcripts will show. I saw myself more in the role of "chat show host" than "clipboard sociologist" and only on one occasion did I experience any real difficulty developing a conversation.

The interviews themselves were conducted in a variety of settings. The first one took place in the presence of another tenant in her own room (my interviewee's electricity had been cut off and I couldn't power my tape!); another was recorded alone in a small office; the rest were conducted in privacy in the tenants' own bedsits. They are reproduced here in the order in which they were conducted.

The transcripts have been very slightly edited to improve their flow and to cut out repetition and chat, indicated in the text by three dots and bracketed comments. Although the tenants have all consented to the transcripts being reproduced in full the editorial group responsible for the book's publication decided to omit a very small number of more personal comments which might have embarrassed tenants or created unnecessary tension amongst them.

The tenants' names have also been changed for the same reason as well as to preserve a degree of anonymity.

What the transcripts reveal

Each of the following transcripts reflects the different perspectives, attitudes and expectations of the six tenants whom I interviewed. It should be emphasised that the interviews reflect the views and experiences which the tenants expressed *at that particular time* and that the dynamics within the house are constantly changing.

Taken individually each transcript offers a valuable insight into the chemistry of running a small housing project aimed at meeting the needs of a number of young people who, in one tenant's words, "all have problems". Taken collectively these transcripts are a vindication of CAP's view that a small scale project, operating with no paid staff, and with the backing of an understanding and supportive Housing Association, can provide accommodation and security and can test personal responsibility and develop awareness of others amongst young people who may previously have been unable or unwilling to do this. The astonishing fact that each of the tenants I interviewed had been resident in the house for almost two years — some for far longer — is perhaps the strongest evidence of all to substantiate this view. Very few organisations, statutory or voluntary, can boast such a proud record.

The six tenants' transcripts clearly reveal that the inter-relationships within Egerton Road are complex and subtle. The pattern of these relationships reflects the fact that there are six separate tenants living in this large house, each in a separate bedsit flat. It would be pointless and foolish therefore to attempt to draw any blanket conclusions about how the house "works" in an absolute sense because it obviously depends on its composition at any given moment in time as well as on the varying fortunes and feelings of each tenant. Perhaps the house as a whole could best be described as being in a state of unstable equilibrium. The actions and attitudes of various individuals may from time to time threaten and even destroy this equilibrium but the underlying support from the caretakers, CAP and FHA (Manchester), not to mention the efforts of the tenants themselves is sufficient in such circumstances to restore a working balance.

No attempt has been made in the transcription process to deny the value of the words spoken by inserting appropriate footnotes as to what precisely "Ian" *really* meant when a certain remark was made. These transcripts do not constitute a sociological study of a voluntary agency's ideology and practice but they will help to fill the gap which currently exists in the literature on the young

homeless, namely the shortage of material about the "consumers perspective" of the issues of institutional care, personal development and responsibility and the homeless stereotype. There are undoubted contradictions and differences of opinion reflected here, as well as problem areas which continue to cause difficulty. Some of these were subsequently examined at a tenants' meeting after the transcripts had been produced. In attempting to reflect these differences honestly I hope to have been able to share with CAP their wish to encourage debate about the accommodation and personal support needs of homeless young people.

Key Themes

There are certain key themes which seem to recur throughout these tapes and which might help the reader to reconstruct more easily the whole picture from the tenants contributions to this particular human jigsaw:

(1) The crucial role of the caretakers and the variety of perceptions as to what this is.
(2) The differing attitudes towards Egerton Road itself: A proving ground; a permanent home; or a stop along the way?
(3) The search for independence and the probing of previously untested responsibilities.
(4) The subtlety of contact between tenants and the vital role which particular tenants play in the house.
(5) The element of chance and the role of outside agencies in directing their tenants to Egerton Road.
(6) The difficulty in providing a housing management approach which adheres to a certain line and yet is flexible enough to allow for individual needs.
(7) The role which social services residential homes play in the preparation for independent living.
(8) The way in which different tenants cope with depression and confront their own situations.
(9) The relationship of tenants to their families.
(10) The unwillingness of CAP to adopt a conventional social work approach to the tenants and the benefits and, sometimes disadvantages, of working within a formal, legalistic housing framework.
(11) The role of CAP in supporting tenants and caretakers and liaising with FHA (Manchester).
(12) The tenants willingness to accept responsibility, on the whole, for their actions and their views on "finding out the hard way".
(13) Where will the next move be for all these people?

Conclusion

I would like above all to offer my sincere thanks to all the tenants who answered the difficult and sometimes personal questions which I asked. I am sure that I took away far more than I gave to these encounters. The insight which I gained during my discussions with the tenants has greatly influenced my own thinking about the housing needs of young single people, particularly in the critical area of providing security of tenure in a non-institutional, and supportive, setting.

Although the arduous task of transcribing the tapes has been shared I have to accept the responsibility of checking them and thus for any transcription errors which may appear in this publication. The spoken word does lose some of its richness – dialect, tone, pace – in the process of transcription, nevertheless, I hope that the reader will learn from and enjoy these conversations as much as I have done.

FIRST: 'JOHN'

Andy: How long have you lived here?
John: I've been here since January 29 1979 – just over a year . . .
A You seem to be very precise on the date!
J I kept my records – make sure I knew the date.
A How did you get here in the first place? . . .
J Well, my brother lived here before I did, and I'd just been kicked out of a place, so I stayed at my brother's and my brother got me in contact with Alistair, who helps people to get into places like this. And I had a word with Alistair and he said he'd see what he could do, and it went from there!
A So you came to live here unofficially with your brother . . Did they mind you doing that?
J They didn't mind me staying for a couple of weeks, but I stayed for a bit longer than that!
A Did that happen quite a lot before?
J Yes. Girls usually bring their boyfriends back to stay with them for a while, and lads usually do the same . . .
A Is there something in your rent book about that?
J Yes. It's part of your contract not to have people staying, especially if you're making them pay.
A So you stayed with your brother for a while and then . . . did you have to go out and come back again?
J When I was kicked out of the other place – that was the YMCA in P.... Street – I come down here and asked my brother if he could put me up until I found a place, and he said he thinks he can get me in a place because somebody's moving out.
A Where would you have gone if you couldn't have come here?
J I would have probably ended up on the streets.
A Have you been there before?
J Yeah – I've been living in Birmingham for part of the time, in a park between Birmingham Central and Erdington . . .
A But you're not from Birmingham, are you, you're from Manchester.
J I'm from Manchester, yes . . . I was gonna leave here once. I've been on the streets before about four years ago. I was on the road for three months then. I was in a home at that time and I'd absconded: R..... in Northenden.

A How did you manage to stay out of their hands for three months? Did you have friends . . . ?

J I had a few friends who put me up, and if the police came round, I moved on to someone else's place.

A Did they catch up with you?

J Yes, they caught up with me. I was up at the crossroads of Barlow Moor Road and Palatine Road. There were police coming from all four directions.

A How old were you when you were on the streets for those three months?

J 14.

A How did you see yourself then? Just in between places to live, or did you really think that you were homeless? And has your attitude changed since then?

J Well I didn't think I was homeless, 'cos I had friends who would put me up. But when you think of it now, it was really homeless: you had nobody there to help, to take the parents' role, if you know what I mean.

A Your friends would only say right you can stick round for a couple of weeks and then, you know, two's company three's a crowd sort of thing?

J Yes — that's happened a few times. Well, it's happened twice.

A It's a good way of losing friends, I guess?

J Yes. One friend I've told not to come round again!

A You said you went to Birmingham. What prompted that move? . . .

J Well, I wasn't getting on too well in our house, and my own brother I'd just had a row with him . . . and my family had told me they never wanted me to visit them again. So I decided to go off to Birmingham to see what I could do up there. See if I could find a place to live. I slept in a park, on the park-keeper's doorstep.

A Why Birmingham?

J I had a girlfriend that went to a secure home there — G.....

A In the hope you might be able to stay with her?

J No — she was in the secure home. I was gonna see if I could get a place up there and visit her most days . . . I visited her quite often, but I couldn't sign on for the fortnight, and I'd run out of money with paying the train fare. I had to go a fortnight on £4.00.

A How did you manage?

J I went into Motorists' cafes. The ones up there are pretty cheap.

A Then you finally came back?
J Yea, cos I'd run out of money.
A Did you come back here?
J Yes. I still had my key . . . I hadn't told them I'd left until I'd found a place.
A Do you think that leaving was a good idea?
J No – not when I think of it now.
A As you get older, you get a bit wiser. Is there anything – other people could do – for instance, Social Workers, Youth Workers or parents? What can other people that have had more experience of life do to try and help you to see the pitfalls? . . .
J Me personally, I usually just try and find out the hard way, but I think other people, a lot of them find it easy to be able to talk em out of it. But it's not like that with me.
A Because you're just stubborn?
J I can be at times.
A But now you're been through those experiences, you wouldn't do it again or would you? . . .
J I think if I got fed up enough I'd do it again. I might try something different, but it's thinking about what to do different.
A But you must be more conscious now that you need quite a bit of dough if you're gonna just disappear somewhere?
J I worked that out before I went this time – save some money up and then go.
A But it must be virtually impossible to save money in your position, or is it?
J It's pretty difficult at the moment. I've got high rent arrears and I've got a court fine at the moment. Got my electricity cut off – I've got to try and get that put back on. And I have to borrow money off other people so I can still live after paying those off . . .
A Is it your fault that it's like that or is it that you're just not getting a fair deal out of society? . . . How do you see yourself?
J A lot of employers, they don't like people with long hair? Mine's not that long, but employers seem to think it is.
A Before, you said that you'd been in a kid's home, and for a lot of people – you might be considered to be a typical case of a young lad that's gone into a kid's home . . . and make it sound like as if the dice was loaded against you from the day that you were born. Do you see yourself as a victim of some rotten system or is it your fault? . . .
J It's only about well six months ago that I actually did start looking for work but since then I've been looking pretty hard. I wanted to go in for engineering; got on a course and a person I won't name promised to get me up at the time I was

supposed to go and he got me up half an hour late so I had no chance of getting there . . . It was a TOPS course.

A Surely you could go back!

J I went to the Job Centre for advice on that and they've advised me to go for the same course again, but they've said I've got to prove that I would go, and I don't see as there's anyway I can prove that, now I've not gone for the first time.

A The last six months you've tried to look for work — Does that mean to say that before then —

J I wasn't looking.

A Can you say why?

J I'd looked for a job before that . . . when I come here I was looking for about seven weeks and I just gave up.

A You've got rent arrears, you've got electric cut off . . . A lot of people would say this young lad here he's not interested in earning his living, he's a scrounger basically . . . Do you feel that you want to contribute but that you're not being given the chance? . . .

J I do feel that way!

A What about when you were younger?

J When I first left school, I did have a job, doing kitchen work in the Milkmaid Restaurant in Piccadilly. But, so my gran's told me, I've had a temper since I was pretty young and there was a lad there that really used to work on me, and I lost my temper with him one day so I had to get out quick. So I just walked out: had to sign on again . . .

A Now that you've been here for over a year, what's your feelings about this place?

J Well, they take a lot longer than normal places to get repairs done. They're starting to move a bit faster now but they used to take quite a while. I was waiting for a window repair for two months, but that was partly my fault, but other people have been waiting ages for just a cooker repair . . . That's improving now.

A Why's that?

J Well, we hold meetings here, I think it's every month now, and they talk about the problems in the house, with maintenance or anything like that. And we talk about the social side of the house.

A Who's idea was that?

J I'm not quite sure. I think it was Alistair's or CAP's. I don't think it was FHA.

A Do they actually work, the meetings? Do people come and do people say what they say behind closed doors or are they held back a bit?

J I think a lot of them are held back a bit, but some just come out with what they think.
A What about yourself? Do you hold yourself back?
J I usually lose my temper! They work to an extent.
A Are they more for the practical side or the social side?
J The practical side.
A Is that the only time that you all get together?
J No. Sometimes if somebody's passing, or something like that, some of us ask people in for a cup of tea, sit and talk.
A But – not everybody – not in everybody's back pocket?
J I think, well I've always been a person to stay on my own. Since I've come here I've made a few friends and felt a lot better for it.
A Is that one of the good things about this place? . . .
J Well, you've got somebody to look back to, help you with any problems you've got, with having meetings and that . . .
A When you want a bit of support, would you be more inclined to go to one of . . your fellow tenants or to CAP or –?
J Well the others would go to anybody, but me, I just wait for people to come to me.
A So you find it hard to push yourself and say look give us a hand . . . ?
J Mmm. But sometimes I just push that way as well . . .
A What are the bad things about this place. . . ?
J There's not much room to move about in your flats; that's obvious, it's gonna happen in any bed-sit.
A What about privacy? . .
J You're mainly on your own most of the time, unless you go up to someone else. It's not often you get people breaking your privacy . . .
A You said that you've got your electricity cut off at the moment. These places are all electric aren't they?
J Yea. That's a disadvantage.
A That must make life difficult . . . It seems to me in that situation you're obviously going to have to rely on people here to make you a brew if you're gonna have a brew.
J I don't drink much tea or coffee! I usually drink orange or something like that . . . I go out to a cafe, or if people like Louise is in, she offers us a drink.
A It must be hard in a situation like this, where you've got people who are out of work, to avoid being seen to be scrounging on people. Does that come out sometimes?
J I've got to admit sometimes I feel a bit guilty at taking money off these 'cos a lot of these are on Social Security.

A But I don't suppose they begrudge it otherwise they wouldn't give it you in the first place?
J They don't seem to but you can never tell!
A What about the caretaker and CAP and FHA? Where do they fit into the picture?
J They push a bit, but it's obvious, as I said before, that's going to happen a lot.
A Push — what do you mean?
J Well with rent — they've got to push with that.
A Who does the pushing?
J I think he's the director, Mel Godfrey. Since he's been there, things have gone a lot worse from my point of view, and possibly from some other tenants' points of view.
A In what respect?
J They didn't use to push us as hard as he does. More notices to quit have been coming out since he's been there than in the whole time the other director was there. I mean I've had four since I've been there, but he's only been here three months and I've had two off him, and I've been here a year and a half.
A Do you think that's not fair?
J No I don't think it's fair. I think people should be given time to work themselves out. Work their own ways out of paying things off if they've got arrears. I think they should be given at least three months to work it out if they've got things like, as I've told you, electricity and court fines to pay.
A So that doesn't involve Paul Baker though or CAP. That's coming straight from FHA is it?
J Paul Baker does get involved in it. He seems to stick up for FHA a lot.
A What about the other caretakers?
J I only knew Gary and Chris and I only knew them for a few weeks but from what I saw of them they were OK. They stuck up for whoever they thought was right.
A Can you say how the caretakers work? Is he here as a nursemaid or is he just here to sweep the stairs or what?
J Well, he gets involved in the problems here, but if it's something like you've done something stupid and you've landed yourself in it, he's just going to say that was stupid of you to do it and he won't try and help you.
A Do you think that he should?
J I think that he should talk about it, not just say it's stupid, because I think that makes people a bit embarrassed to talk to other people about their problems.

A But then wouldn't you feel if that was to happen that maybe he'd be prying into your business too much, and that instead of getting on with the job and learning to live on your own two feet, he'd be there to prop you up all the time?

J Well that's up to the individual tenant isn't it 'cos if they need help, they've got to lean on somebody. If people want to get on their own, well they shouldn't be here in the first place anyway. Unless they're just getting used to getting a place of their own — if it's the first place they've got — then they will need somebody to talk to, someone to lean on.

A What do you think the function of this house is then as regards providing accommodation?

J Well it's a mid-point between being on the streets and getting your own place, I see it as.

A You don't see yourself staying here for quite a long time then?

J Well maybe for a few years.

A Ideally how would you like to see things in say a couple of years time?

J I couldn't really say . . . I think eventually I would try and stay with a girl, something like that. But at the moment, I don't think I'd be up to it.

A What do you think CAP could do to improve this place, or you could do? Do you think you could be more involved in it? . . .

J I think another tenant should answer that one. I can't say I'm happy, but I can't really say that it's doing me any harm.

A When you were saying about pressure from FHA as regards rent. Is there any other kind of pressure to say get a job from CAP or from Paul Baker?

J Well there is from Alistair, but he's not really in the top line, if you know what I mean.

A Do you see Alistair as the main guy then in CAP? . . .

J In a soft sort of way, yes.

A What do you mean?

J Well, he doesn't really tell you — 'Go and get a job'; he just either hints at it or asks you 'Why haven't you got one'.

A Do you think he's too soft then?

J Well, I get on with him all right!

A That's not what I asked you!

J He's not too soft — he can be pretty difficult to get on with at times.

A What about yourself. What have you learnt about yourself here? . . .

J Well, it's helping me to stand on my own two feet, as I didn't used to. I've just been getting used to living in a place of my own, instead of having people behind me like when you're in a home, where they're pushing you to do this or that. I don't have that here – well not too much.

A So, because they're pushing you you kind of rebel against it you mean, or what?

J Yes.

A One of our guy's is staying in a home at the moment in Stockport, B..... it's got a unit there for young people that are in care.

J I was in a place in M....., the young people's unit, and they did a lot of good for me at that time . . .

A Is that one of these places that tries to encourage you, when you've been in care, that's trying to encourage you to –

J No. It was for help with my social life. But the trouble was I failed the point system, this was the stupid thing about it. You was on a point system, whereas to stay in the place – people got to like the place a lot – and to stay in you had to gain a certain amount of points. Say you was in there for temper or social involvement, you'd have to really become involved with other people, in the place and you'd get points according to how well you do. But if you didn't become involved, you'd lose points, and if you didn't get so many at the end of the week, you were kicked out for the weekend then you went back. If you did that three times, you were kicked out, which was pretty stupid – kicked out altogether. I did that, but when I come out I was OK for about three months, and I just started getting bored and going back to my old tricks and my old self.

A Does that give you any help? . . .

J Sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't. If you're upset about something, as I've said before, you can talk to somebody here. We have got a marriage guidance counsellor! Well she's not really, but she pretends to be.

A As far as kids' homes are concerned, when people do finally leave care for good, do you think they could do more to make the transition into independent life, where you have to fend for yourself? . . .

J Well I don't think they need so many kids' homes as they've got. I think they could transfer some of them into bedsits like this. From there, people would be able to go out knowing they've had a place of their own, knowing they can look after it, or knowing they can't look after it, or go back to their parents, if they can't look after it.

A Everybody here is 18, aren't they?
J I think the least amount is seventeen.
A I was thinking say 15 and 16 year-olds who are in care couldn't come to a place like this?
J That's what I mean about them setting their own establishments up . . .
A Like a separate wing or something?
J Where they've got their own freedom, their own keys, their own cooking facilities, but there's somebody there to teach them about it.
A You don't know of any places that exist like that?
J I don't.
A When you were in care was that a pretty bad experience when you finally left? What did they say – 'There's the door, goodbye.'? . . .
J Well, they just says 'You've been here long enough now; you should be able to look after yourself.'
A How old were you then?
J I think I was fifteen and a half.
A What did they do – just throw you on the streets? Send you back home? . . .
J I had a Social Worker at that time. They got in touch with my Social Worker who gave me two weeks to get somewhere to live. So he couldn't find nowhere, in that time, so I had to go to the YMCA . . .
A And that's where you got chucked out when you came here?
J Yes.
A How long were you in the YMCA for?
J About two and a half years.
A What's it like?
J It must be one and a half years . . . For people coming out of homes, things like that, it can be a good thing, as long as they're OK on the social side.
A You had to be in by a certain time did you?
J Yes, you had to be in by twelve o'clock otherwise the gates were locked, which some people don't like that. Mind you, I used to stay out until 7 o'clock the next morning when the gates reopened, and sleep all day.
A So you eventually just jacked in that and came to stay here?
J Well I got booted out of there.
A Do you think that's what's going to happen here? . . .
J Well, I'm close enough to that now at the moment, 'cos I've got arrears of £–. I don't know how they've got that figure actually.
A How much a week is the rent here?

J It's £11.72 now.

A You must be aware of how difficult it is to get a flat on the open market. How much in touch with that scene are you?

J I'm not really in touch with it. I do know that it's pretty difficult. I've had a few mates going for flats; but one of them it only took him six weeks to get a Council, which I didn't understand!

A That would be a joint tenancy would it? . . .

J I think it was, yes.

A You were saying that the caretakers' role wasn't so much for you anyway to give support, it was more pay your rent otherwise you get kicked out or something like that. Perhaps not as crude as that but why is there a caretaker here, why not just have another flat?

J If something goes wrong in the house and you don't know what to do about it, he seems to know a pretty lot about life. I don't know how — he's pretty young for a caretaker! And I think him working with CAP is a good thing, because he gives us a link with CAP.

A How much do you see of them from week to week?

J Well recently we've started somebody from here going down to the meetings of CAP.

A The management meetings?

J Yes, and coming back with what they've said about our house, or anything like that. But it's not been working out.

A Who is it?

J Brian, my brother!

A Does that swap around? . . .

J Brian's been going all the time . . .

A When you have your monthly meeting here, does Mel Godfrey or somebody come to that?

J Yes, and Anne King. She's under Mel Godfrey, but she collects the rents.

A Who runs these meetings?

J They are run by the tenants . . . We have turns each with a chairman, that's for people that want to chair it.

A What about the outside of this house. Who's responsible for that?

J The caretakers.

A Have you ever tried to go on a Council waiting list since you've been here?

J I've no idea how to get on it . . .

A You've been here for fifteen months or something like that which is a fairly long time in terms of being between your *own*

place and say a home or the streets. As far as other kids who may have been in the position that you were in in the past . . . What do you think should be done for them? . . . If you were in their position now what would you be doing?

J Well, I'd go to Social Services now first and see if they could do anything. Then if they can fix you up with a place, go to Social Security and try and make a claim.

A Thanks a lot, John. We'll leave it there.

SECOND: 'LOUISE'

Andy: What do you get out of this place and what do you put into it?. . .

Louise: I don't put anything into it. The only thing that sort of I put into it is friendship. Like any of them can knock on my door anytime day or night if they want to and talk, right. It's like when I first came in the house everybody used to come up all at once and I used to sort of make everybody tea. I used to sort of cook Steve's dinner for him at one time but then with me cooking Steve's dinner he was relying on me cooking instead of himself cooking. It's just like a big happy family, you know, they do for you and you do for them. Like odd times, I'll go out to the pub, right, and if I've got the money I'll ask anybody else if they want to come. I like sort of being with people round me, can't stand being on my own . . .

A Do you think this house needs a 'Steve'?

L You need somebody like Steve because it's like when you're on your own and you sit thinking, right, at least there is somebody worse off than you and he's there to prove it . . . It's like looking at people who live at home with parents — you often sit and dream about that but you know you can't have what you can't get . . . It does a lot for the house having Steve here. Everything he does you have to laugh at — like one bottle of cider and he is out for the count . . . When I first come here we used to give him lessons. He used to come in here and I used to make him a cup o' tea and we used to have to learn him. If he asked a question and we couldn't understand if we'd ignore him until we could understand the question. We wouldn't give him — if we knew what it was, right, sort of by his actions — we still wouldn't give it him until he spoke properly to us to get it . . . if he gets to learn to speak more properly here when he's gonna be alright outside.

A Can you say how long you've lived here?

L A year just about.

A And how did you get here?

L Through Pauline, I used to live at B..... (a hostel) and Pauline used to work there . . .

A Where would you be now do you think if you weren't here?

L I don't know. Probably back down home — I wouldn't be back in a children's home.

A Back down home?

L Yorkshire, which was doing me no good. Anyway that's why I came up here to start work.
A Would you say you were homeless now?
L No.
A When you lived in a Kid's home would you say you were homeless then?
L The children's home was my home. It was only until I started running away that I classed myself as homeless, but I wasn't in a sense because I still had a children's home there when I wanted to go back . . . I used to walk the streets but then after about two days I used to go back. I'd had enough. I just wanted to see what it was like on the opposite side.
A And what was it like?
L Horrible! You, like, go and see your mates and tell them you know 'I'm not going back' . . . and they just turn round and they won't have anything to do with you for the simple reason you was absconded and the Police would be after you. And they used to say well, you know, we don't want you. And you used to go out with them one night and they used to say 'Well don't go back at a certain time; come out with us, you can stop at our place'. That was the difference . . . When they wanted to it was allright; when you wanted to it was no go.
A Were you prepared when you were in a Kid's home? How old were you when you left there?
L I left about 14 – went to assessment centre, left there, went back to a children's home. Left the children's home and went into flats run by Social Services for working girls.
A Were you prepared in any of that for moving on to being a kind of adult, independent –
L Only when I was in my flat . . . they didn't do anything – just paid £5 rent and the rest was up to you. We didn't have any bills to pay you just had your food. To keep your place tidy. Come in a reasonable time . . . I think that's really where I grew up a lot going into the flats 'cos you've got other girls that have been there for ages and they're doing well and you go in, you find a job and you're earning your own money and then you can do what you want . . . And then that fell through, I lost my job, so I went back to a children's home. Then left children's home, then ended up going back to Social Services, went to live with my friend, then walked out of there and went back to Social Services and then they put me in another Assessment Centre which was for kids between 11 and 14, just for somewhere to stop.
A How old were you then about?
L 16. And then I came to Manchester and went to B..... and I

came here . . . It give me a break and, sort of, grown up within about nine months time . . . You see my favourite password for about two years was 'I couldn't care less' and everytime anybody said owt to me I said 'I couldn't care' and I did what I wanted, which was doing me no good. Then when I came to B..... I still said my favourite password there was 'I couldn't care less' until I'd sort of been there about three months and knew there was alcoholics, people who'd had nervous breakdowns and that gave me a shock 'cos I knew I was living with them and I'd never even dreamt of people like that before I went there. So it was sort of buck your ideas up, act responsible or you might end up like them . . . It frightened me being there.

A Do you have any plans or hopes as to where you want to be in two or three years time?

L No . . . It's not worth sort of saying I'm going to do this in so many years time. I'm going to do so and so 'cos if you don't do it you sort of dishearten yourself and get depressed again. I used to sit in B..... and I used to say I'm gonna be out of here in three months, search for a flat. Couldn't find one. Three months time came up I'd sit there and think I'm back to square one again.

A On a day to day level with running this place where do CAP and FHA fit into the picture?

L They don't, not in my point of view. Well, CAP, I don't know all that much about CAP only that Paul's involved in it and they've got so much into running this place and the other houses. But FHA are alright to a certain point but you don't see much of 'em.

A What about the monthly meetings? Do you think they work?. . .

L To a certain point they're alright 'cos you get over sort of — say you've had an argument with somebody, at least that's brought up and it gets sorted out. But it's not in a sense 'cos say you've had an argument with somebody and you want to keep it quiet and you want to sort it out between your two selves, you don't, it gets blown up into a big thing and brought up in a meeting and everybody knows about it . . . It's supposed to be us that runs it but whenever FHA start you can never get a word in edgeways.

A And what about the role of the caretaker?

L Well with me, the first day I was in Manchester the first two people I ever got to know was Paul and Pauline, so to me they're sort of friends that anytime I want any help or talk to instead of talking to other people in the house I go upstairs and talk to them. Like if I have any difficulties with my

money from the Dole Office, just go upstairs talk to Paul and Pauline and they'll relay it into FHA. They're just sort of good friends to me.

A Do you think it needs somebody like that there to make it function?

L Well, with it being the kind of house it is – it's like a sort of by-way from coming out of care, moving to a place like this, learning every day and moving out again – You still need somebody in the middle . . . Here, a landlord's different in a sense but a landlord is a landlord when you're out and you can just sort of pay your rent and that's it, you've just got your own circle of friends.

A Is it more important just to have a kind of instinct for survival or do you actually need to know things or need to have a bit of luck? What do you think is the most important of those things?

L A bit of knowing to survive, but, on the other hand you sort of – it's your own initiative that does it in a sense 'cos you know what wants doing and you know what doesn't need doing. You know what you have to do and what you don't have to do. Sort of yourself that builds it up day by day . . . You don't know until you try it doesn't take much trying anyway 'cos once you get in a place on your own you must build it up there and then. I was looking round the other day. When I first come in here there was nothing – I didn't have anything, you know, just the furniture that was in here. I sit and think that in a year I have come further than what I thought I would have done.

A You can't teach somebody to have initiative can you? So how do you convince say somebody that's 16 that it is worth their while to make the effort?—Thinking back to your experiences, is it just a matter of the only way is the hard way?

L I'll sit there and I'll say I learnt the hard way for a lot of things and I'm glad I did 'cos it is made me stronger about them points and if you do learn the hard way then if you're determined to ignore advice and that . . . if you can persevere with it you'll get through it. But if you don't persevere with it and just sort of give up and think nobody cares you go back to square one and start again . . . It's sort of a disease one person gives up and everybody else gives up and it just catches.

A When you need support now, do you find that you actually in some mysterious way get some support by being with these other people here anyway?

L I can give myself support to a certain point. You know if I think I can do a thing instead of saying I'm not having a go I

don't think I can do it, I'll have a go at it, right. And if I can do it then that's sort of enough support for me. If I can sort of sit there – say there's a job going somewhere and I'll think well I'm not gonna get it but just push myself that little bit extra to go and do it, even if it's just going for an interview, at least it's experience of interviews. I was ill in bed one week and he John was in here 24 hours a day, cooked me my meals, tidied up and everything, washed for me and the lot.

A But you didn't have to ask him to do that presumably?

L No. He just thought I was ill and nobody had seen me for about two days and he just knocked on my door and I shouted come in and that was it. He was in here; he used to leave about 1 o'clock in the morning, be back at 9 the next morning. But the last day he did that we ended up having a fight.

A Presumably from time to time there are people who move in and out.

L Well from when I've been here nobody's moved in.

A I wondered how that might upset the balance of the house as a family?

L Nobody's moved out since I've been here. Mind you from the amount of people that's in it I'd say three of them was a family. You can't sort of relate to everybody – OK it would be lost in this house without Steve, it would be just impossible, the phantom streaker of Egerton Road . . . That's one thing, you've still got your own privacy. Like I can have John and Ian or anybody in here and say a friend comes round to see me that's it – they'll all go . . . They always know when I get depressed 'cos I'll leave my door locked all day. I won't let nobody in. Then they'll know. They know that summat's up so they'll just stand outside talking for about half an hour and in the end I get fed up of hearing them so I'll let 'em in. It's just that say somebody comes round to see you then they'll all scat out of the room.

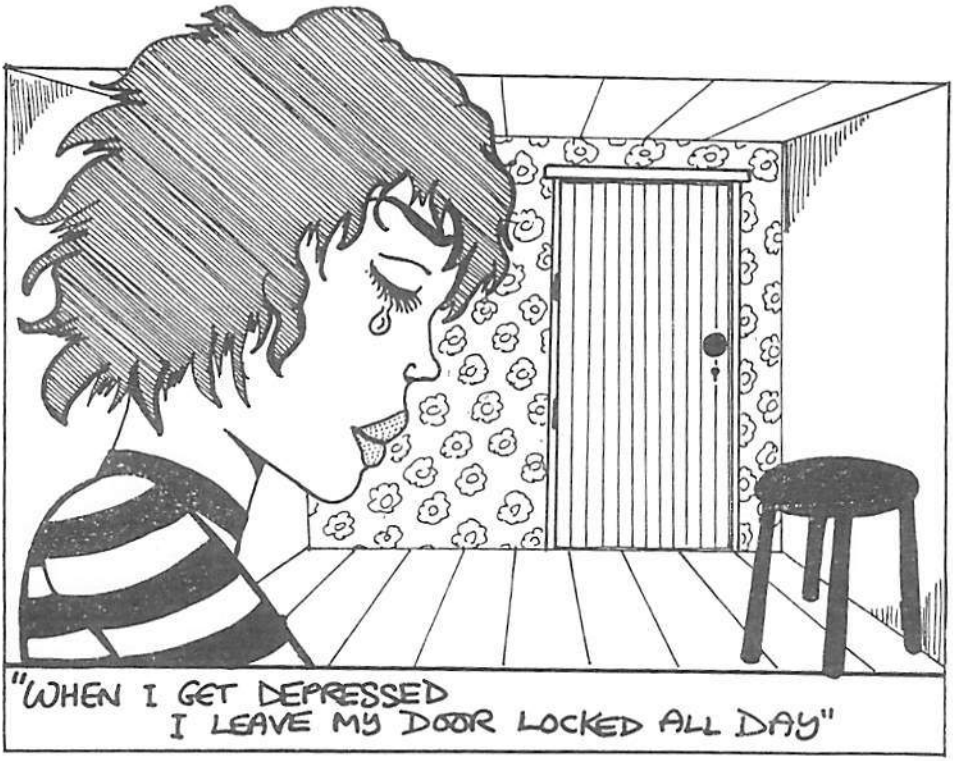
A If you were given the job of trying to make provision for people that had been in your situation – young people who for one reason or another had been in some kind of institution – what would you do? What sort of a place would you build? .

L One like this. If I wasn't here I don't think I would have got as far as I have got. I've got enough confidence in myself now to know that I can do things that say last year I didn't think I could do.

A How important is it that what you do here you're responsible for – if you see what I mean?

L Say you don't pay your rent like, I didn't last week, right. You get a letter through saying if you don't give a suitable answer you're going to get an eviction order, right. Well Paul and

Pauline, every letter that gets sent to a resident a copy gets sent to caretakers – so if you get depressed about it they know what's the matter. So I went upstairs, . . . they sat down and talked to me and said what was up and I sort of didn't give 'em any excuses or nothing right – just said spent it. Which if I started giving out excuses it would do me no good and them no good – so I just said 'spent it' – 'went to London'. So they sort of accepted that 'cos I know you hardly ever go anywhere



anyway . . . My arrears are now – you know . . . I've got – and got an eviction order, sort of like, being picked on. But I don't look at it like that in a sense 'cos you get an eviction order and they give you a month. Within that month you could have paid so much of it off so they can't touch you – they give you a certain limit to get it down to within a month . . . It's not threatening you, nor nothing, it's just sort of making you realise that you can't get away with things that you think you can get away with . . .

A Let's say you lived out there and some horrible landlord –

L Well, wouldn't get into rent arrears you see — that's the difference of living in a place like this. They mess you around with sort of collecting rent. Your landlord in a normal private place will make it the same every week like a rent collector, right, but in here she messes it around that much, right, that you don't know when she's coming round or anything.

A You know, how shall I put it, you know that you've got a lot of chances before you're finally given the boot, if you see what I mean, whereas perhaps a private landlord's gonna say 'right, out you get' . . . If that is the case —

L Well I wish that FHA would do the same as a normal landlord. At least it's gonna make sure you're not gonna get in arrears isn't it.

A What happens if somebody actually gets evicted, that would upset surely the atmosphere of the house wouldn't it?

L It would because it would snowball. Because you see everybody in this house has got rent arrears except for Steve, right . . . he pays his rent direct. He complained in the last tenant's meeting that he didn't have an eviction order . . . So I said 'we'll send you one out don't worry Steven!' If they sort of clamp down it'll make it feel a lot better — well it would me. I'd love 'em to sort of say you know if you get 3 weeks arrears or summat like that then you're out, right. 'Cos in a simple sense you come in here and you know other people have got arrears so you're gonna join on the end of the bandwaggon. But it's doing no good 'cos you do it here and you move out into another flat with a private landlord, you're gonna think, well if I can do it there I can work my way and wrangle it round him. We all get classed as the same in here . . .

A What do you mean you all get classed as the same?

L Well there's no VIP treatment for anybody special except for Steven. He gets VIP treatment off the lot of us. From the landlord and that we all get treated the same, except for John at one bit. If he didn't clean his room out no repairs would be done, but he cleaned his room out last week . . . We all get letters saying your electricity's gonna get cut off. I got mine this morning. It costs you 48 quid a month in here and you only get 100 quid a month off dole; which ain't all that much in a sense. After you've sort of paid your bills and got your food in you've got nothing left.

A I can't see this place functioning as it does if there was a very strict policy. You know, OK, all rules are made to be broken, maybe that's what you need to say but I'm interested in trying to see what would be the result. If there's been 12 months now and there's been a stable group, over that period you can develop friendship and you can develop trust. What

happens when that starts to break up, when people begin to move on?

L It'd be rotten to lose anybody from here now but if you lose 'em you lose 'em. You just have to sort of make room for somebody else, which I think is a tough task anyway.

A You know like the idea of a place like that on the TV last night: you give somebody a few months to get on their feet and then they can go and find a place of their own and give somebody else a chance to get on their feet –

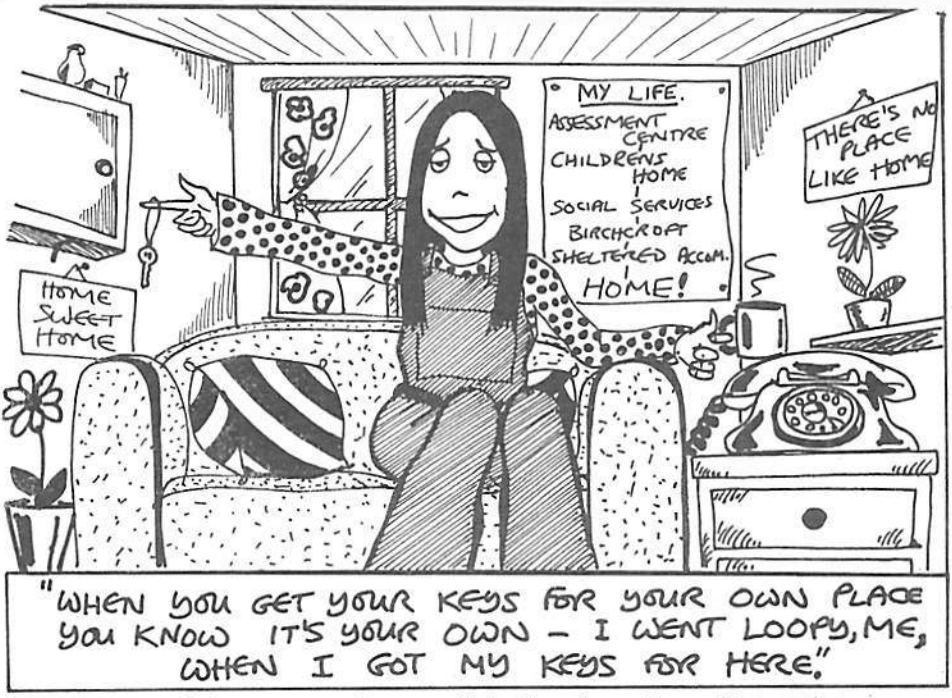
L Well you get moved into a sort of institution – community schools, assessment centres or anything right, you've just got to grab what you can get in the short time you're there. If you don't grab you're not liable to get anything.

A If all of you here one way or another have been through institutions, . . . then perhaps the last thing that you need is to be moved on every few months –

L You get used to it though –

A But is it a good thing that you should . . . ?

L I don't know . . . When I was in the assessment centre . . . in there I thought it was the end of the world. You know you couldn't go out, you never went out all the time you was in there. You was in there three months but you ended up being in there six months. It was the time that did it. After three months you could've got through your assessment, they could've assessed you and seen what was good for you and what wasn't good for you, what place was best. But it was finding a place in a place that they thought was good for you that you had to wait for. After the first three months, you know, it's then four months and you think God I'm never gonna get out of this place; then five months and you just go back to square one . . . A place like this – you've just got to have an aim or a goal you wanna go for. Like I proved to a lot of people that I could do what they didn't think I was capable of doing. Right, Social Services didn't think I could keep a place of my own for a length of time which neither did I and I think I proved to myself more than I proved to anybody else that I could do what I dreamt of years and years ago like have a place of your own. The funniest part of it is when you get your keys right, you don't have no keys anywhere else but when you get your keys for your own place you know it's your own. I went loopy me, when I got my keys for here. I had keys for a week before I come here. I was over the moon: I misbehaved all I wanted 'cos I knew I'd got a place of my own. When you come here it's sort of a big shock sort of you're on your own, like. When I came out of care I didn't like it one bit . . . I couldn't wait till I was out of care, it was



sort of the support that you'd had and you knew it was always there whether you wanted it at the time or not . . . I was classed, sort of a failure anyway but I knew I wasn't. I knew I could do what they wanted me to but the total point of it was I didn't want to do what they wanted me to do. You see I was awkward – I still can be but –

A We all are I think, I know I am.

L Yes, they used to say to me, you know, you can do certain things. I said I can't – just sit there and be stubborn. I think I proved to a lot of people but I think I gave myself a shock proving it to myself that I could do what I didn't think I could do . . . I could still sit around dreaming about when I'm going to meet my rich millionaire and have everything that I want.

A But you've stopped doing that now presumably?

L Yes, you don't need it. If you want something then that's an aim, or a sort of goal and if you work for it then you'll get it.

A The interesting thing about the chemistry of this house is that behaviour here which you know might otherwise be penalised – it would be elsewhere – is accepted as OK because you're the ones that are doing the – you're the ones that judge it. You were saying before about you don't think much about the future in terms of like two or three years time. But how

conscious are you of the current — I mean have you got a job at the moment?

L No.

A How conscious are you of the current situation facing young people that have had a pretty institutionalised life? . . . Does it make you feel very depressed at times or do you just think 'sod it, I'll get by'?

L Oh I used to get depressed about it, I think I still do. I don't think anybody can turn round and say they don't but . . . if I go for a job and I just come out with the flat truth then if they want me they're gonna have to accept me how I am 'cos I ain't gonna change. Changing takes time and that's a part of growing up anyway so if they want to employ you they're gonna have to accept you how you are and what you've sort of been through . . . You fill in the forms and they say next of kin, huh!, and you leave it blank and sort of say 'who's your next of kin' and you turn round and say 'nobody' you know and they'll say 'huh?' and you tell 'em and sort of they'll say 'oh, we'll let you know' and you can know by the tone of their voice you're not going to get one anyway. I sort of work behind bars most of the time — it's summat that I do enjoy anyway 'cos it gets me out at night and at least I'm meeting other people. Like at the moment there's hardly any jobs going anyway, even in bar work . . . If I don't get one within about six months I'll sign up, go through another load of rules . . . To top it all up, to round it all up I need a job — get a job and I've sort of cracked it.

A What's the most important thing that you would say is what keeps your head about the water . . . Self-respect?

L Sort of right, you've got your head above water right, if you know you're going down something's gone wrong. There's some certain things you've got to do anyway to keep your head above water.

A And you think that you should be held responsible if you are going down . . . you have to accept some responsibility?

L You have to accept it all to a certain point . . . you've got your own mind, like I used to blame all my mates for me running off but it was no good I could have turned round and said to 'em, . . . no I'm not going and then whether they, sort of, come round for you the next day to go out showed how good mates they were.

A So being responsible for your own actions, that's what you'd think is the most important thing or trying, learning how to be responsible for your own actions?

L The easiest part is learning, the hardest part is accepting.

A That's great Louise. Thanks very much.

THIRD: 'IAN'

Andy: How did you come to stay here? What process of events led you to be in the house in the first place?

Ian: Well – it started really when I was drifting in Church Army Hostels – place like F..... Street (Salvation Army Hostel) doss houses, horrible places – then I'd be on the streets. I was on the streets for about six months.

A In Manchester was that?

I Yes in Mancheser. And I got told about S..... Information (a youth work agency) that was in Piccadilly. Alistair worked there and he got me into this house . . .

A What led you to start drifting?

I I just couldn't find a flat suitable. I needed money to put down in advance, I couldn't do it. Most landlords won't give you a letter for the Social.

A When did you start?

I When I was about 14, I left home and I just drifted about first in London, Birmingham, places like that.

A What made you go there? Just to get away, or the excitement?

I Well, just to get away mainly.

A What was it like?

I Well, I lived in the hippy area; I used to be with loads of people. It was good though. Eventually I did get a job. But when you were with the other people – most of them were junkies and things like that – it was a pretty good life. Then I met a girl and got a job and I lived in Earls Court.

A So it wasn't like the image of a lot of kids who are regarded as desperate and destitute and on their last legs. You say you had a good time, you must have had bad times as well, but on the whole it was a good time?

I Yes there were bad times, but I'm talking about a few years ago now. When I was that age it was different to what young people are now.

A What's the main difference, then, now would you say?

I I don't know. I just seemed to know a lot of people, but they were in the same boat really. We had nowhere to live, I mean we used to live in fields, stations, and sleeping bags and things like that. But nowadays it's all completely different. I've had the rough and the smooth. I used to drift around a lot.

A How would you say it is different now? . . . Is there more pressure or less accommodation; a different scene? What's the difference?

I I'd say there's more accommodation now. There was a lot more jobs. I mean I could get a job anytime I wanted. Jobs are really bad now aren't they. In 1969 — say about that kind of year — a job was pretty easy to get hold of. I've got no qualifications, but I had a few jobs in London. You'd have to work really hard though to get accommodation: It wasn't cheap by no means; Earls Court is not a cheap place though. It would be twice as bad now — the rent.

A Jumping on a bit — maybe we can come back to that — you've been here for five years which is a long time to stay anywhere, I suppose . . . Why have you stayed here this long? What's the attraction of this place for you?

I Ha! A lot of people ask me that. I don't really know. I don't know, I suppose it's just somewhere to live because my parents have broke up see, and it's not easy for me to go down and see them in Gloucestershire where I originate from. My step father, he gets in funny moods and drinks a lot, you know pretty violent as well. I don't know: it's like kind of a security, you know.

A So would you say this is your home then, in the special sense of the word 'home'?

I I would do. Cos I mean it's somewhere isn't it; I know I've got somewhere to go whereas for years before I'd never had a room or anything like that.

A You must have seen quite a lot of people come and go here in that time?

I I have, yes.

A What impact have those changes made on the house? . . . I have found out that it's over twelve months since anybody moved on, or was moved on from here and I wondered how disruptive that might be of the atmosphere in the house. Do you see that much of each other?

I Well, to be quite straightforward, you know getting to the point, I don't particularly get on with most people in this house as Paul will tell you. I find John's OK but I can't seem to get on with Louise. Brian's OK sometimes; sometimes he isn't. Steve, anybody could get on with him; I've known him more than five years. But most people I just can't get on with. I mean I keep myself to myself most of the time.

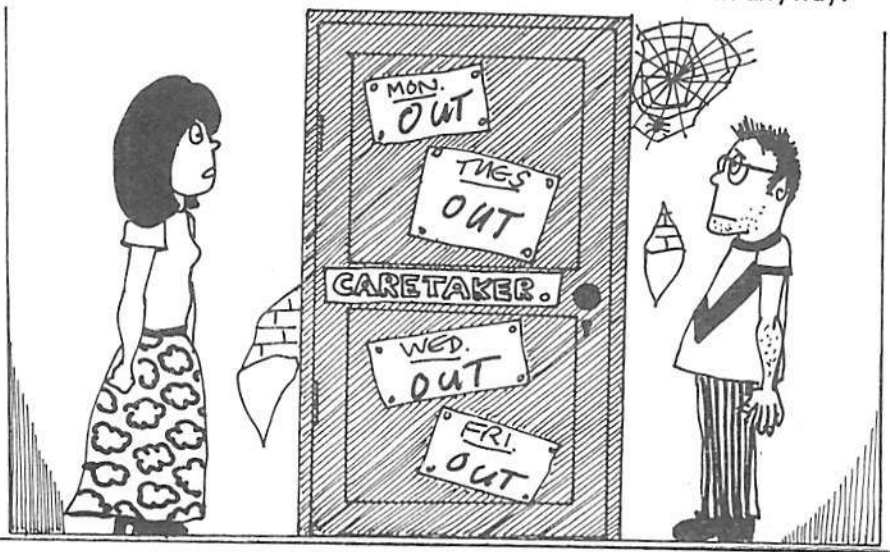
A Does that mean you never make demands on other people here? . . .

I No, I don't use the other people.

A So you've got your own network outside of this house? You don't look to the people in here for support in that sense?
I No.
A They're just people that you happen to be living with?
I Yes, they're just like, I don't know how you can put it really. Like a house full of flats, it's not the sort of house where, if I got on well with people — I've lived in a flat before, I could get on with everybody in the house. You know, knock on the door, go in for a coffee, have a chat for an hour, you know things like that, but here I find it quite different.
A If say one of the tenants was evicted for rent arrears. What impact is it going to have on the house? . . . Has anyone ever been evicted?
I Yes I know a girl called June that lived next door to where I live. She got evicted, but I always put her down as a public nuisance. She was always phoning blokes up at midnight, she was depressed and lonely, stuff like that. But there's Brian — he's working. Mike, I'm not sure if he's working, but he was. I mean I haven't worked since my operation. Somebody's looking out for a job for me, but it's heavy work; I'm trying to get a job to get a bit more money.
A Is that a worry that really gets at people here?
I It is actually. People that have visited me have said '£10.50 a week? You must be joking.' They don't believe that it costs that much for a week. . . .
A To be like a devil's advocate . . . I wondered whether or not in a way people might screw FHA (M/cr) knowing that CAP would be there to pick up the pieces? . . .
I What, does CAP work with FHA (M/cr)?
A Yes.
I I find that rather hard to answer actually.
A Can you say a bit about the caretakers that you've known over the time? Does that role change as the person changes or do they all do roughly the same thing?
I Yes, they have mostly done the same thing. I mean there was Bernard Jobson, he was here. There was only one caretaker I never really got on with.
A What do they offer to this house? Do they need to be here?
I No, I don't think they should. I don't really think there's any need for caretakers in this house. Alistair comes round quite a lot. As far as I am concerned, they don't seem to contribute to the house. I mean, they put on a day out once every six months or whatever, but as far as I am concerned I don't think they really need any caretakers.

A Presumably the idea of a caretaker here is to have somebody here on the spot in case anybody wants any information, or what; what is it?

I Well there's Family Housing Association (Manchester), the phone number. Most people know Alistair's address or phone number; he comes round quite a lot. I don't really think they need a caretaker. Most times the caretaker's never in anyway.



"MOST TIMES THE CARETAKER'S NEVER IN ANYWAY."

A Have there been times in the past when the caretaker's intervened in what you might call domestic disputes or without the caretaker being there maybe the whole thing might have blown up? Have they contributed at all there do you think?

I Oh, yes there was one case about two and a half years ago. Two tenants who lived here, I had a go at them — I was in a bit of a mood.

A You had a go at them?

I Yes. I felt like breaking their necks, you know. This one caretaker he stepped in and it was over within five minutes. It could have been a horrible do.

A So you think then that this place, that they could just as easily get another tenant in the other flat — the caretaker's flat — and just give somebody else somewhere to live?

I Yes I would, I would say that, yea.

A Where does FHA (M/cr) fit into the picture then? . . .

I FHA (M/cr)? They're quite reasonable.

A Are they hard enough on you?

I Oh yes they are hard enough on them. I think they're hard enough on anybody.

A They actually treat you as tenants and not as — again I'm being deliberately provocative — and not as poor down-trodden depressed people? They treat you like they treat anybody else?

I I think that yes. . . . I think they treat you as they would anybody else; they've got people that work and people that don't, so I think they're pretty fair in that respect.

A How do they actually manage the property? I gather that you have a meeting every month?

I Yes, someone comes to that meeting. I haven't been for a couple of months.

A What's the purpose of that meeting?

I I don't know — it's repairs — all different things.

A It's not a kind of a house meeting where all the tenants share things?

I What, bring things out of their system?

A Yes. That doesn't happen does it?

I Yes you can, you're free to say what you want really.

A But I wondered if that might be a bit too formal or a bit too difficult to say to somebody 'Will you just cool it' 'cos you're getting on my nerves?' Does that actually ever happen or do you just do that outside the meetings in your own way.

I Well, I've done it on both occasions actually to a certain tenant. It was about the noise — stuff like that . . . . . I told her to her face. I told her to cool it; but it has gone, it's cooled down a lot now.

A Where would you see yourself if you weren't here?

I That'd be an easy question that: I'd probably be drifting; going from place to place.

A Why would you be drifting?

I I'd probably find it hard to get another place.

A So you are pretty committed to this, to where you are? You want to stay here?

I Yes. I suppose I do really.

A Over the years, the last ten years or so — however long it is — that you have been either drifting or settled, have you changed your attitude about this word called 'homelessness' or 'drifting'? . . .

I My attitude hasn't really changed. It's a pretty hard question that because I never really got bored with drifting around. I must admit it was fun — except when you got stuck on the motorbike drenched. No, I wouldn't be fed up of it.

A You're saying now you're obviously pretty settled here. Whereas five or six years ago you maybe wouldn't have thought

that maybe you'd want –

I I never really thought I would settle actually. I mean, living here five years or whatever.

A When you first came to live here did you think 'right this time I'm going to settle'? Which was it?

I I thought I'd give it a try – to settle.

A So it was a kind of conscious thing?

I Yes. ––

A You've obviously known Steve more than anybody else, longer than anybody else.

I Yea. I knew Steve before he came here, actually. I've known him a long time. He goes to a couple of meetings that I go to. Yea, I think this house would be lost without Steve, I think it would. I mean, thinking of it, because I've known him so long, if he just happened to leave, the place just wouldn't be the same I don't think without him because he's been here so long.

A What special thing does Steve add to the house, presumably if it is an addition?

I I don't know – maybe it's because he's worser off than me. I thought I would be worser off after an operation, but he's a very good person to get on with; it's a shame about his background, his speech but he is pretty intelligent. I talk to him quite a lot. My opinion is that if he left, I don't know, I just think it'd be a bit boring. Well I can't really answer any more than that . . .

A (People in the house keep an eye on Steve.) So how does it work? . . .

I A lot of people – this is my opinion, a lot of people might disagree – but when I had a television, I used to let Steve watch television. Now there used to be people that used to come and see me, but I didn't bother, and if I went out, I'd leave him in my room to watch TV, you know, he likes watching TV. I noticed that Louise's got a TV but she wouldn't let him watch TV. I did have a TV – unfortunately, I haven't got it now – I used to let him watch TV. He does the same for me. If he's going out and I want summat on the radio, he'll let me borrow the radio. So I find him the best in the house actually even though there's disabilities. He's got a lot in common with me.

A You know this project I'm involved in. Some of our work is working with younger kids that maybe haven't left home but perhaps are there or there abouts . . . Where do you think effort needs to be put in with those kids, to help them be a bit more aware of what it's all about?

I Ha! That's a question isn't it. I don't really know actually to

be quite honest. I went through my years from when I was fourteen, been inside, all different things. I've had what you'd call a mixed life really.

A Presumably if you left home at fourteen you were chased up and down by police or parents or one thing and another?

I Well, not parents, no.

A Would you want to say a kind of a shock thing: 'Don't do it kids because it's not what it is cracked up to be.' Or would you be saying something different about yourself and, like: 'Well, it's not all that bad.'

I I wouldn't say: 'Leave.' I'd say: 'Stick your guns. Keep at home if you can; try and make something out of your life.' I mean I just left 'cos I just dropped out. I had long hair then; step-father didn't like the idea of me having long hair. I wouldn't get it cut 'cos he wanted me to get it cut. But it was a broken-up sort of family.

A Do you think it would be important to try and stick it out then?

I Yes, I would; I can't go back, those years are gone. That would be my message, 'Try to stick it out,' try to make something out of their lives.

A What if they say, 'I can't do, it's too bad I've had enough.'

I If it's too bad — I just don't really know. It's very hard when the cards are stacked against you like that, 'cos unless you've got relatives or anything like that, it can be pretty difficult . . .

A Can I go on from that and ask you another of these pretty awkward questions — again playing a sort of Devil's Advocate role. In many respects, not necessarily for yourself, but for the other people who live here, it could be said that you were victims of society. Let's say put it in a caricature, I could say, 'ah well you have to understand that he's not paying his rent for this reason. Really he's under a lot of pressure etc. etc.' How much are you responsible for what you are today and for what you do?

I Well, as people get on, they've got to feel responsible, haven't they? There's only one thing to do really if you've got rent arrears and they are getting bad. You've just got to put your foot down and say if I keep leaving it and leaving it, it's going to pile up. Somewhere along the line you've got to stick your neck out a bit haven't you? And say well, it's going on and on but you've got to pay so much off, otherwise you'll get chucked out.

A But does that apply for the way in which you live your life, not just like in terms of the rent, but right across the board?... Are you a victim of your past or are you your own boss?

I I don't think the past really has anything to do with it. It does with some people. No I don't believe in that. I believe you can't really blame your past for what's happened. I mean you can blame it but when it comes to rent and rent arrears, I mean the person themselves got somewhere to live; they just got to pay their rent, rent arrears, otherwise they've gonna be back to where they started. That's how I see it.

A So your image of yourself is that you should be treated as being responsible and not as a kind of a victim, a kind of innocent person that needs saving? You said at the beginning you'd been in some Church Army Hostel, is that right?

I Yes.

A Did you feel any pressure to join in the Church activities?

I No, I was in a hostel, but I'm not a religious person!

A It would be interesting to see how CAP think *this* place should run and whether that ties in with the way you and the other tenants that live here feel.

I I don't think you should blame your past really. I was grateful for Alistair for getting me this place. I believe if you want to keep the place on, you've just got to pay your rent and pay your rent arrears, otherwise you're going to be back to square one. You're going to have nowhere to live; you could end up worse.

A Have you ever felt isolated living here? Sort of lonely?

I Yes, I do actually. I feel depressed a lot of times. It's got a lot to do with the operation that I had – the two that I had. I suffer from a nervous disposition mainly through the operation.

A You don't seem very nervous.

I I don't, but I do really. I don't get it all the time. It doesn't show in a lot of people.

A Does living here make that worse, or not really do anything to it at all? You said that you keep yourself very much to yourself. So that ties in with it, I assume?

I I do get out to the UMIST. Socialise with other people that I know by sight or just actually know: Thats my way of getting out. It's the only way really. I can't socialise with people in the house.

A Are there ever any social occasions here, Christmas party or a bonfire?

I There is, yes. I don't seem to go to them.

A Why?

I I don't really know, I just don't enjoy Christmas and bonfires and things.

A So what do you do on Christmas Day then? Sit in your flat on your own and get depressed?

I Yes. I go to sleep or something. It doesn't really matter. I don't care for Christmas. I don't care for bonfires either. Other people are probably different to that, but that's just my way of thinking . . .

A What hopes have you got for yourself, I won't say in your lifetime, but in the immediate future?

I None.

A None. Just to get better or something or what?

I I don't think I'll get any better. I don't really know what's going to happen. I just live day to day. I don't really know.

A I would have thought most people in this house live day to day. At least the impression that I've got so far is pretty much like that.

I Put it this way I haven't really got anything to look forward to in six months time or a year's time. . . .

A You know when you've got no targets to aim at, or whatever you want to call it, nothing to look forward to. Is it because you don't want to, that you don't seek those goals or that you don't know how to or that you don't, you know, you just can't give a damn?

I I couldn't give a damn. It's partly because of the operations I had. Before then, I was pretty fit, I could get a job. But now I've got to the stage where I don't give two hoots. I don't know. Summat might turn up, I might just get a job or something like that if I can. I can't do heavy work though like I used to do.

A What sort of work did you used to do?

I Manual, heavy manual work. When I used to work, I used to get about ninety quid a week. You know, really hard work, though – heavy labouring.

A Building sites?

I Yes, things like that. Factories and all sorts. A good stomach – I can't lift like I used to . . .

A To come back to the FHA (M/cr) I was wondering about repairs and stuff. How are they in that respect?

I Very slow. I think they were very slow to get the repairs done.

A Are you ever given an explanation for that at these monthly meetings, or not?

I Well the bloke's come once. He's been about three times now. There is something wrong with my cooker – the ring top. He keeps saying he's got to get a spare part for it, you know. He's been about three times to do it. Apart from that, I've had other things done.

A Anything else you want to say?

I I hope it stops raining! Ha, ha! . . .

A Maybe I could say a bit about CAP and the extent to which you think it is important that other people should try and do what's happening here. Put yourself in the position of being the drifter on the streets, like you were, say five years ago. You walk into S..... Office tonight and say, 'is there any chance of getting us fixed up?' and I say, 'no, because there's no Egerton Road around'. So that kid's presumably not going to get the kind of break that you had some years ago. Do you think that it's important that more Egerton Road's should be around?

I Yea, I do. The way you put that then, I look at myself and I think I was very lucky. At that time they actually did have one empty room.

A There's a lot of luck always in this isn't there really?

I There is, yes. You got to get a break. S..... isn't like it used to be when I got my break. They've hardly got anything, any places. All they've got is hostels and things like that. But they definitely could do with more Egerton Roads, or even squats or something, if they could get some of them.

A Are you in touch at all with the sort of drifting homeless scene in this area. Or because of the fact that you've been settled for so long, is that out of your experience right now?

I I said to S....., I'd look round shop windows and put addresses down and things like that, for places to live, because they are thinking of doing that themselves . . . in Didsbury, Withington, Rusholme, and maybe up to Chorlton in my spare time. Take them down write them on cards – it's a start. They did that at S..... and before at the one in Piccadilly. Some kid might come in and say 'Oh I don't want to go into a hostel'. And if you've got some cards there, they could ring up, they've got phones at S..... you can look through some cards. They've got money on them. Some cases they haven't but there might be some cases where some people might and they stand more chance of getting somewhere.

A Do you see yourself as an advert for the success of that kind of, for the Egerton Road place? That you've actually managed to be stable after years of drifting around?

I Well I'm still here! I just thought it might help some people 'cos if anybody knows what it's like, it's me. Being on the streets is no joke. Sitting in the Snack – sometimes all night. It's no joke really. I just thought it might help. Better than sticking kids in horrible hostels.

A Could you say a bit about your experiences in those hostels; what they were like, were they all – there were good ones and bad ones, or what?

I Well you get drunks shouting at you. You get ripped off. I remember when I went to F..... Street first time.

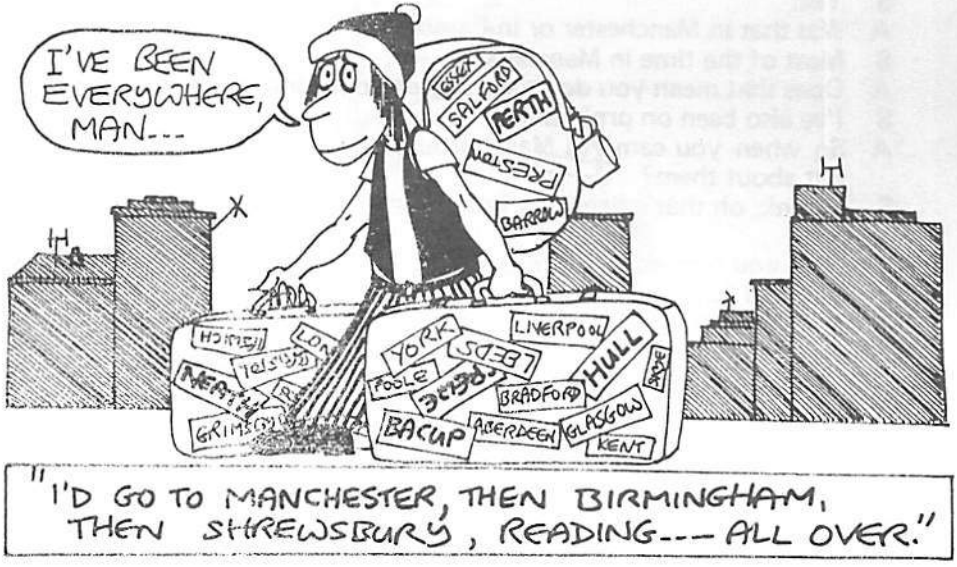
A How old were you then?

I Maybe twenty-one, I can't remember. But I've been in there – you get loused up and all sorts. I wouldn't stay there. I had a load of clothes, I had shirts, a suitcase. And while I was asleep someone jumped over the cubicle and nicked my suitcase and shirts and all sorts. That's the sort of things that happens.

A When you first started drifting around and you were hitting the road and knocking around in the hippy scene and one thing and another, the good times that you got with the bad times – did that teach you to be pretty resilient? . . .

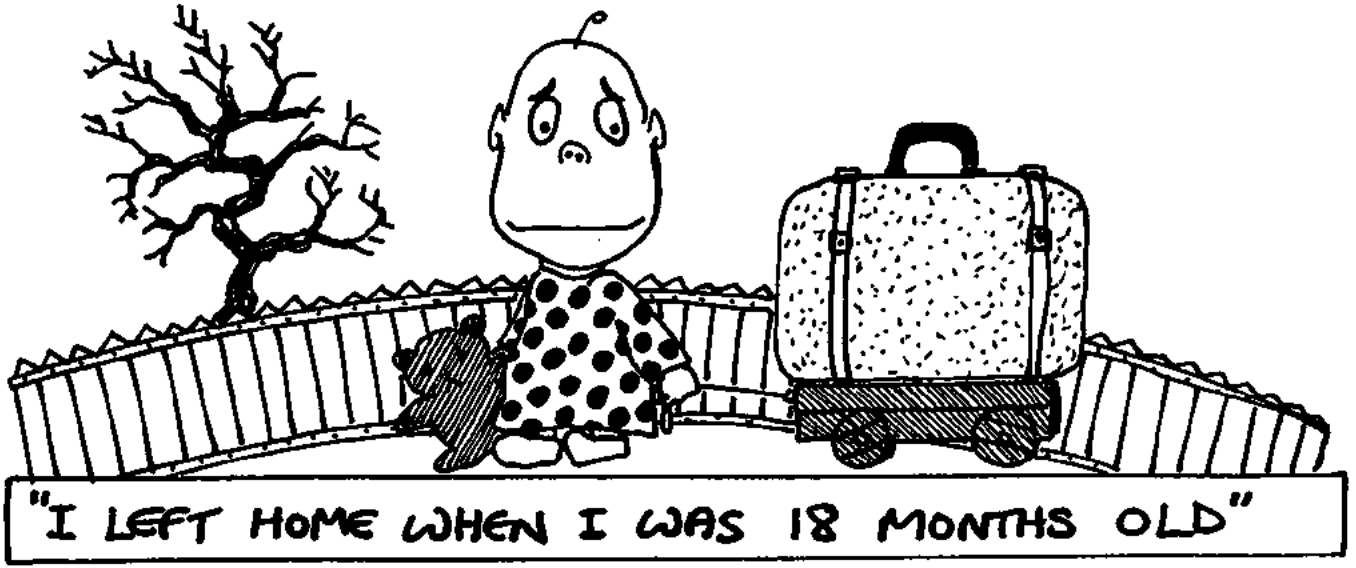
I I don't know really . . . Those times were a bit different to F... Street. I didn't live in hostels and things like that, I just went around with people much the same as me. We seemed to do OK. Squats and things like that; anywhere practically. It was just a few years onwards when I got older, it just seemed – I'd probably go to Manchester, then to Birmingham and then drift to Shrewsbury, Reading, all over the place. It's hard to explain the detail, it's so long ago.

A We'll give it a rest there. Thanks very much.



FOURTH: 'STEVE'

Andy: OK Steve. You've been here the longest haven't you, in the house – seven years. Is that right?
Steve: Six years.
A How did you come here in the first place?
S Through Alistair and Cathy. She was the first caretaker.
A How did you meet Alistair and Cathy then?
S I first met Alistair when I came back from Cambridge. I met Cathy, oh that's right, when I first went to S..... (a youth work agency) to meet Alistair.
A What were you doing in Cambridge? Did you used to live there?
S Yes, in a kind of hostel.
A Had you already left home when you were in Cambridge?
S Yes. I left home when I was eighteen months old.
A Were you in care or something?
S Yes.
A Was that in Manchester or in Cambridge?
S Most of the time in Manchester.
A Does that mean you don't see any of your family at all?
S I've also been on probation.
A So when you came to Manchester to S....., how did you find out about them?
S I think, oh that's right, my Probation Officer he told me about S.....
A Were you homeless before you went to S.....?
S Yes, and S..... helped me find a flat.
A You've been here the longest, so you've known just about all the caretakers. What do you think about the caretakers here?
S We've been lucky, because I must admit they've all been very good.
A In what respect would you say that – that they've had a lot of patience?
S That's one of the reasons. Cathy, she was nice-looking, and yes, another reason, they've all smoked.
A I hope you don't mind me asking this, but you've obviously not as mobile as the rest of the people in the house . . . You're aware of that, aren't you?
S What do you mean by that?


"I LEFT HOME WHEN I WAS 18 MONTHS OLD"

A You're not able to get out and about as much as everybody else.
S Why not?
A Well is that so?
S No!
A How do you get on with the rest of the people in the house. Do you see much of them?
S Yes, especially John and Ian.
A Do you go out together?
S Yes, usually to the pictures and the pub usually 'The Station'.
A Do you swap much here in the house?
S Not really.
A Has that ever happened in the past?
S Yes.
A But not now.
S No.
A What do you feel about that?
S It's just one of those things.
A Do you see yourself staying here then for as long as you can?..
S Yes, it's my home.
A Have you ever had a home before, that you'd call a home?
S Not really.
A So what's so special about this place?
S I don't know. Probably because of the caretakers; they've helped a lot.
A Helped to do what?
S Everything!
A How would you describe it though?
S Friendship really.
A A lot of the people who live here are out of work and maybe they've been through, like yourself, have been in care. Does that bring you together some more?
S Well it does with Ian and John, we've got things in common.
A How do you run the house? Do you have house meetings?
S Yes.
A What happens there?
S Well, they're very like the meeting you went to, except we have Anne King from FHA (M/cr) she collects the rents.
A Do you get things off your chest at the meetings or do you sort those things out yourselves?
S No, it does come up at the meeting – if you want it to, but mainly it deals with things like repairs.
A What do you think about the house?
S It's OK.
A Are you satisfied with the conditions here?

S Yea. I must be, mustn't I.
A Where do CAP fit into the picture?
S I'm not too sure, though Alistair always attends the tenant meetings.
A You are not working at the moment, are you?
S No, but I am involved with N..... (an educational unit) on Wednesdays and Thursdays. I go to the Education Unit in town.
A Have there been many changes in the house while you've been here?
S Not really.
A What about the people who live here — have they changed?
S Well, it is mainly for young people. I'm twenty five now, though Ian's older. . . .
A Do the younger people look towards you for advice or experience?
S No, they learn the hard way.
A How do you feel about that — you don't pass judgement on them?
S No.
A When you were living in Cambridge in this hostel. What kind of a hostel was that?
S It was alright. I got bored there though so I kept running away. It was a care-home, with its own kitchen. It was a bit like a farm.
A Had you lived on your own before you came to live here?
S Yes, the last place I lived in was a flat in Clarendon Road.
A If you were in a position to give advice to homeless young people, what sort of things would you say to them.
S . . . I really enjoy living here, I have an awful lot of friends round here . . . I used to be in a kids' home and they never taught me to cook. All they did was feed me and took me to school. It was a long time ago though.
A How do you do for money?
S I'm lucky. I get my rent paid directly; my arrears were so high I decided to start paying it direct.
A That's fine, thanks Steve.

FIFTH:
'BRIAN'

Andy: How long have you lived here Brian?
Brian: I came just before I was 16, well just after I was 16 and I'm 18 now.

A And where did you live before you came here?

B About one hundred yards down the road, two hundreds yards down the road! . . . with my parents, well, my dad, my gran but we didn't get on, see eye to eye so I left.

A How did you find out about this place?

B Well I got told some place S..... (a youth work agency) while I was looking round but then I just give up the idea and then someone mentioned it again. A girl running S..... happened to be the caretaker of this place.

A So in between like leaving home and coming in here were you ever sort of on the streets or did you just hit lucky?

B I think I hit lucky . . .

A Had it been brewing up for a long time that with your gran or was it something that just happened out of the blue?

B Been in and out of homes and . . . he (John) was getting a load of aggro and when he went away I felt I was getting it all. So when I was 15 I said I wanted to go in a home, you know, for my protection 'cos I didn't like what I was getting. So I left at 15 came home for a few months and then I got a flat.

A Did you get taught how to fend for yourself when you were in care?

B No, my gran did that, most of it anyhow, for me she did anyhow . . . My family got to the stage where she was saying 'right unless you do like go and sweep the path you're not getting any tea.' So I said 'I'm giving you money for bed and breakfast and board,' so she got stroppy. She says, 'right there's your food and you've got your bed upstairs, cook it yourself'. She says, 'that's twenty minutes, that's half an hour, that's fourty minutes get it done.' So that's where I started off.

A I wondered what you thought would happen to the house here if somebody was either to leave of their own accord or else they were thrown out? How would that affect the atmosphere of the house?

B Well, the atmosphere's bad as it is but I don't think it would affect it in anyway. I mean, yea, you miss whoever's gone but they'll come round visiting.

A So then do you see this place now as your home or is it just like somewhere where you're in-between?

B Sort of in between home and in between. I see it as my home yet I'm sort of all geared up ready to go even though I've been here for a while. As soon as I came here I was thinking where's my next place. . . . I think my next step from here is settling down with someone. I want summat with bedrooms 'cos I'd love to get a dog and you can't in this place.

A Do you still have contact with your Dad?

B No, I've not seen him in ages. I'm not allowed round the house because I think my gran sort of being old fashioned, once she says summat she does not like to back down. And she swore never to have us back in the house because all the arguments and decided she is gonna stick to it.

A Do different caretakers do a different job or do you think they have a set job whoever they are?

B They have a set job, I know that . . . they're supposed to, sort of, check the oil, make sure we're in heating and general maintenance . . . things like keeping the stairs clean, looking after Steve mainly or anyone in the house who's got problems, listen to our problems.

A Do you use them for that then?

B Well I don't suppose anyone sees it as talking about problems but yea I think I do, just sort of nattering.

A Do you find that helpful?

B It is helpful but then again I don't have any difficulty about talking about anything, personal or anything, to anyone.

A But if they weren't here would that make life more difficult for you or for the rest of the people in the house do you think?

B It would be difficult in the way that, you know, no governing body. I mean like if John was beating hell out of Steve's door and he was drunk, I mean if I says leave it, get away, you know he'd just start yellin at me, but if Paul came down because he's higher, he's the governing body I mean that, he'll umm and ah and go . . . I do see them as equals but I see the last caretakers more of an equal to us tenants than Paul and Pauline.

A Yeah?

B I don't see Pauline as an equal. She's too dominant . . .

A What about CAP? Do you ever have any contact with them officially or not?

B CAP? That's Alistair isn't it? CAP?
A Yea.
B I'm in CAP. I represent the tenants. I mean I used to be a right naughty boy before I came here and since I've been here I've gone straight, not done owt naughty. In a way moving here sort of lifted me a bit. I know that people know what I was like before and yet I took on a lot more responsibility which I wouldn't have got if everyone else knew my record like. I got the key to the cellar whereby I do all the checking and some maintenance in the house and I empty the mailbox which I wouldn't have got anywhere else . . .
A You welcome that responsibility?
B Yeah. I'm dying for Paul to leave so I can have the caretaker's job!
A What about the tenants meeting? Do they actually work (your tenant's meetings)?
B No . . . I think it's just an excuse for a big gathering to pick out on someone for what they've done recently . . .

A Is that a better way of doing it do you think, to bring it out in the open than just to get your own back privately?
B I don't think anyone gets their own back privately 'cos they can't But in a sense . . . once its forgotten, over and then sort of tenant's meeting comes up (a few days) maybe a week later, I mean it's all brought up again.
A So, are tenants meetings more of a, for you anyway, are they more of an opportunity to get things off your chest or are they actually about running the house as well? . . .
B I think the house is left to run itself. I mean it is flats, who's in the flats is a different thing. But it's left to run itself. I mean in tenant's meetings, discuss things like repairs.
A Somebody from Family Housing Association (Manchester) comes to that meeting don't they?

B Yeah, which I'm trying to stop. Because you know we invited Family Housing Association (Manchester) round for one tenants' meeting and they've been coming ever since!

A Why do you think they should stop?

B Because we're getting too much of a good relationship. You know in terms of knowing 'em. I mean we're getting to know 'em too well and we know how far we can push our luck whereas the rent arrears gone right up. Partly because of me . . . I mean me bein' on CAP and knowing how far I can push Family Housing I know when the brake lines gonna come on me.

A You think if they're less involved then it's more of a –

B They've got more sort of control . . . 'Cos it's like sort of another friend

A Louise said that

B I said it to Mel and they dragged me down there. I says to 'em – she says can you give me any idea why the rent's gone up. I says to Mel has all the rent arrears gone up since Christmas? He says yeah. I says how long you been here. He says since Christmas! The other guy he sort of sat back an' give you a warning and then booted you out but this guy keeps pressin' you and pressin' you. I think it has a bad affect.

A What would happen then if you had've got booted out?

B Me. I'm a person who looks at that when it comes. I don't really think about it.

A I've suggested . . . that in spite of the fact that this house is supposed to be just like any other place, like any other tenancy, right, that you know that you've got a soft option . . . You know that you've got CAP behind you and an FHA (M/cr).

B Everyone knows that.

A – and therefore you're gonna screw it.

B . . . Well everyone in the house knows sort of vaguely that they can push it a bit. I mean me being in CAP I know that they get worried after £100 quid and sort of if you're getting to the £200 mark they sort of onto the Courts.

A From what I can gather CAP would argue that the aim of this house is to provide just accommodation, just like anywhere else . . .

B Well when we had a confrontation with next door neighbour and she turned round and she says 'is your warden in'?

A Really?

B And I says 'warden? – what do you think it is a loony asylum!' I mean that's how other sort of neighbours look at the place. And yet I can't see any relevance – it's just like another flat.

A Are there often occasions like bonfires where you all muck in and do things, or like Christmas?

B Well that's the idea of tenants' meetings. We talk about things what we're gonna do together like. Christmas go out take, get the minibus from CAP, not CAP, CA in UMIST. Get that. 'Cos we need money we're havin' – I was gettin' a sponsored cycle ride but I smashed my best racer up and we're havin' a sponsored disco. Things like that. I mean there are things we do muck in on, like gardening parties. Sometimes we have like gardening parties, whether they scive out of it is up to them. . .

A What are the good things about living here?

B Good things! You've got me there. Mmm, in my point of view it's freedom. You know, not having to come in for your tea; not having to say to your best mate I got to be in by 10.00 tonight. But basically everyone feels that. Good things – you got friends whenever you want then. I know I can go and talk to Paul, Pauline, Louise and Mike. I don't bother talking to John, Steve or Ian. You've always got someone to talk to here and you can always – you've got Alistair I've got my own friends to talk to.

A You've lived in Manchester most of your life have you?

B All of my life, apart from when I lived up on Didsbury Road but that's more or less Greater Manchester isn't it?

A So you've never actually . . . drifted around?

B No! If I feel as if I've got to get away I just take one of my good bikes out and go up to Cat and Fiddle, Macclesfield or Buxton.

A To get it out of your system?

B Just for a ride, yeah.

A Can you sort of imagine where you might be if you weren't here right now?

B Mmm. I think I'd either still be at home or I might be in another flat. 'Cos I know she wouldn't boot me out, she wouldn't see me on the streets. I came back 'cos you had to leave your home at 16 and I come out of there and she sort of soft-soaped it an' everythin'.

A She's your gran?

B Yea. My dad lives with his mum now. And she says 'Look you don't want to really leave do you. Do you want to stay here and pack in and all this?' I says, 'yea alright'. And then a month later the arguments got really bad again and she turned round and she says, 'Look I told you to go last month and you still haven't found a place'. She backed down on what she said before about staying. So that finally did it, thought right I'm gonna look . . .

A How would you define a home life for yourself? . . .

B I never think about how I would have liked it to have been because the way it was is the way it'll always be now. But I

always make it a point if I ever do get married and settle down one thing I'd do is try like hell to make sure my kids had a better life than I had. I mean I don't think I've had a bad life, I've been happy, although you always get some bad occasions. I always look through life. . . . I wouldn't be starting out on my own now if it wasn't for the past difficulties which I'm pleased about really.

A 'Cos you're more independent you mean, then perhaps other people your age or what?

B Oh aye, yeah . . . I mean at home she says . . . you can't do this you can't do that . . . But when you get out on your own you can prove to yourself you can do it.

A Have you had any contact with social workers at all then since you came here? . . .

B When I left the hostel at 16 I had to change social worker . . . and I got a guy called Jones and he reckoned until I was 18 all he could do was give us information 'cos I'd put myself in care and I wasn't sort of put in care. I says, you're a fat lot of help you are — so I never seen him. I only seen Jones once, that was a few weeks before he moved in here 'cos the social worker was looking for him and I've never seen him, social worker, apart from my first social worker who came round on a birthday or summat, brought a cake or a card. That's about all I've seen . . . I mean they're only keen to see how, if their work has had any significance on me. Am I dropping in the world! But I don't really bother with social workers now.

A How much in touch are you with the housing market? . . .

B I don't want a Council house, no . . .
I've got my eye on two sort of like 54,000 houses. That's quid. 54,000 pound but I don't think I'd ever — it's just a dream.

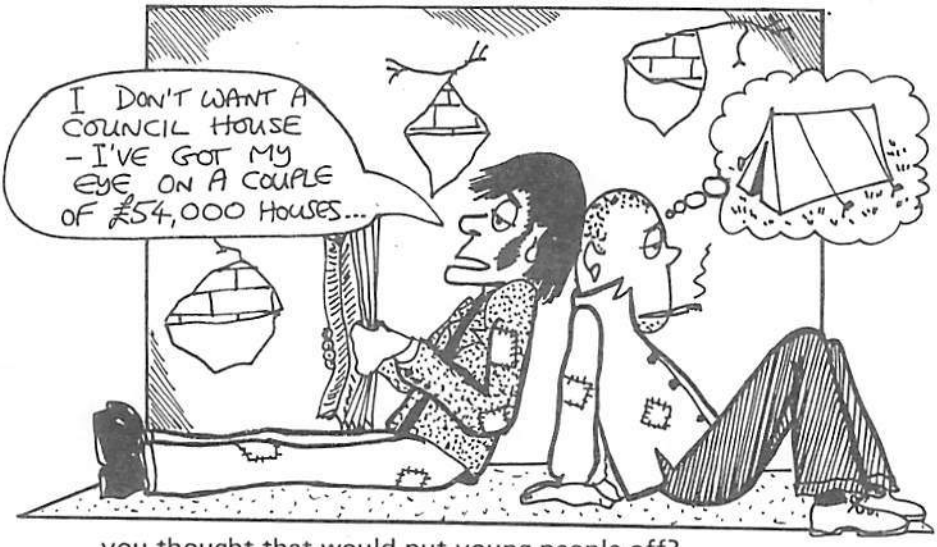
A Presumably you're a lot more conscious that if you went into the real private market, so to speak, you would not be able to play games like that?

B Yeah, I know. I mean the thing about me, I know my limits an' sort of, I know when I can get out of it. Like I know the price they're gonna stand before they start pushin really heavy . . .

A What if they say made an example of you? And said 'right that's it'. Do you think that would be a good thing?

B Yeah, I think it would be a great thing! . . .
Family Housing Association don't listen to this do they! . . .

A A lot of people would object to being referred to as say a 'problem child' or a problem young person . . . and yet you said half an hour ago that probably everybody here you could describe as having had problems, if not, they've still got them so to speak. I wondered how you'd react to that and whether



you thought that would put young people off?

B Oh, I dunno, I mean I'd say openly I was a problem child. I mean that doesn't bother me. Some people get very touchy. I mean John knows that he is but when you say it to him he gets stroppy. I mean Ian's got bad guts and he won't get a job and my problem's I got booted out – bad relations with family. Mike's is (too). John's is . . . well John's not got any domestic know-how. Louise's got family problems. Steve's got big problems, handicap problem. An' we're all in the same boat.

A Do you ever stop to think how you actually do manage to co-exist – you people here? I mean does it not strike you as being a bit unusual; not a problem but unusual?

B You're making us sound as though we're sort of a small corner. I mean there's thousands of people with problems. You say 'you people', you sort of making it sound as though it's only a small corner. Probably right on the corner of Egerton Road!

A And there's thousands of people what?

B There's thousands of people with problems.

A But not all necessarily living under the same roof?

B Well that's a good thing about problem people being under the same roof. I mean you talk about your problems and get it off your chest. I mean I know why everyone's in here. I know all their problems. They probably know mine.

A And that's good that you can share that?

B Yea, I suppose it is.

A We'll leave it there. Thanks.

SIXTH: 'MIKE'

Andy: Can you say how long you've lived in Egerton Road, Mike, first of all?

Mike: Two years, about two years.

A And where were you before then?

M I was at my mums – Went back to my mums and then after moved on to try and get my own place, sort of temporary sort of house – housing place sort of where youngsters went but they only could stop for so long. Then after, what do you call it, sort of just had an interview for the place at Egerton Road.

A How did you find out about it Mike . . . ?

M Through a social worker. I was lucky cos I was sort of buggin 'im for a place and he found one – if they were prepared to take me cos I was a bit young.

A How old were you then?

M 16 at the time . . .

A You must have found that pretty strange then?

M Yes, I always wanted to live on my own. Sort of come in when I want and go out. It's much harder to buy odd bits and pieces. The flat was – well they say it was furnished but it's not really – sort of bed, sort of table and one easy chair, which wasn't bad. But after that you've just got to start buying odd bits and pieces if you want to make it the way you want it.

A When you said that you'd been in a home or something before, what was that like?

M Well the home I was at sort of – like luxury really. Sort of, wasn't one of these heavy places, it was just teachin' you wrongs and rights. It sort of prepared you for leaving – when you had to sort of go out in the big wide world.

A So how did they do that?

M Teach you all sorts . . . Doing normal jobs, sort of like you do, every day life on your own.

A Did they ever put you in a room of your own and say right you've got to fend for youself . . or were they there all the time?

M They were there all the time but you was more or less running the place. You had rules which you had to keep within. Only the odd one or two lads had their own rooms but it was normally sort of four. I had my single room. You sort of had your dressing table and all sorts, sort of just private things. It was always clean and tidy.

A Is that what you liked about it most, that you got a bit of privacy?

M Yea because you used to always get the other lads messin about and when one messin about you all got done for it, which wasn't on sort of thing. My ways were tidy an' all that, sort of cleanest in the Unit, which they always give me credit for . .

A Was that in Manchester? Is that your home from Manchester or?

M Yea, but the place where I was stoppin at the time at home was in Liverpool, Cheshire.

A That's where you're from really Liverpool, is it?

M No, I was born in Manchester, it's only that I went there for a spell, hol 12 months or something like that and came back. It went pretty quick actually.

A So you've never actually, like some of the people in Egerton Road, . . . been on the road . . . you've never had that experience have you?

M No, I've never had that experience on the road. I don't know what that's like. I've always been a bit more organised, sort of better off than the others in the house really. Sort of got more people to turn to, parents and aunts and uncles; . . . much better off.

A Better off because you've got more support you mean, you're not as cut off?

M Yea. I've got more support than everyone else in the house, that is. Yea, 'cos some of them can't go round to see their parents and all that – it's too far or things are not all that well at home with 'em which I haven't got. So big difference.

A You've been at Egerton Road for a couple of years. Did you imagine when you first moved here that you'd be here for that long?

M Well, umm, . . . sort of not gonna be here for ever but like, at first when I came here it was sort of hard, had to be in work all the time you know to get the things you want and all that and buy things for the place; like at the moment I'm having a lot of trouble with my repairs and all that and I'm thinking of just move an' get another place which you know a lot of the tenants in the house couldn't do so easy. Now I've been here for quite a bit I sort of know the score. I know that I could go out and get another place. All it means is having a deposit, you know, that's it.

A So you say that you've learnt how to run a house from being in Egerton Road?

M I've sort of had it in me to always – sort of didn't teach me

much in a way because I always thought I had it in me to run my own place anyhow. Sort of, dead certain about it.

A What would you say are the good things about Egerton Road, if there are any?

M Ha! It's not bad — it's just that the only things I don't like is the way they've sort of built it. Like everyone in the house except for me and Steve upstairs have got single doors and the noise is pretty bad so like if you're sleeping someone's walking through the hall and they're talking you can hear 'em . . . If they had a double door, you know, this cut the noise down quite a bit.

A Do you have much to do with the other people in the house or not?

M I did at one time but, sort of really only three people I talk to — that's Paul and Pauline and Brian. Now and again we see each other on good terms and sometimes we argue! Nothing serious though but the others I don't really bother with 'em.

A You said Paul and Pauline just then. Can you say a bit about the caretakers. How do you think the caretakers function in this place, in Egerton Road? . . .

M They're doing a good job — both of them, Chris and Gary and Pauline and Paul are similar. They're doing a pretty good job . . . really friendly and all that.

A What do you see their job as though, Mike?

M I don't really see 'em as a, say, caretaker; sort of like a guide sort of thing. They help you out — if you're short of money you can borrow so much off 'em so long as you pay it 'em back. You know any information you want, such an' such a letter explainin' or you're not sure about something they're always willing to help, which I think is really good. You know sometimes they go out of their way and they get hassled a lot!

A Do you think if there wasn't somebody there like say Paul and Pauline that the house wouldn't function at all, it would end up falling to pieces or something?

M Yea, I think it would in fact because it's — say the people who live in here they're sort of . . . they're grown ups, but they're not mature. You got 'em shoutin' down the landin' and all that — runnin' up and down, and arguin! . . . House on the outside — private landlord, similar set up to ours where you've got working people and all sorts, you know arguin' and whistlin' when you come in — you'd just be out. The landlord would say right, any more of this you're out . . . The things they get away with here you couldn't in an outside flat.

A So you're very conscious then . . . of the fact that in a way

they give you a lot of rope then. Let me put it this way, you can get away with things here that you couldn't get away with anywhere else?

M Yea, that's correct, yea.

A Do you think that's a good thing or a bad thing?

M I think it's pretty bad – I think it's you know, terrible actually. Like I say, the thing what I'm beginning to feel like which I've talked to Paul about many times, I get the impression it's just time to move. Egerton Road's you know not the place for me any more, it's sort of just a thing where you get somebody who's come from home or come from approved school or something like that and doesn't know what it's like and you know just learns from being in that place . . .

A I've said to people that you can get away with a lot here, like you've just said, and do in a way. I've said, you take advantage of it, like you don't pay your rent as often as you should do . . Where do you stand in there Mike?

M I have got rent arrears. Sort of I don't look at it as sort of taking advantage of it 'cos I mean they can have you out in no time. The reason I look at it, I've got rent arrears really – like when I first come I didn't bother paying it an' all that and sort of wasn't established, didn't know what I wanted to do or not. And I had to get – I needed a few things so, you know, missed a couple of weeks rent . . . My arrears got a bit high when the Social stopped paying it for some reason when I wasn't working . . .

A Are you in close touch with FHA? Can you say a bit about how you see them and how you see CAP? . . .

M Mind you, I don't sort of deal with any of them really all that much. I wouldn't know too much about that. Don't really know too much about that side of it really . . .

A Are there are occasions when you've been with all the other people in the house, doing things. Some of the others have talked about bonfire dos, Christmas parties and all that. Do you ever get involved in that or do you not bother.

M No, I don't really particularly bother with things like that. I just don't bother with that, no, I'm not into that . . .

A I'm sure when you were 16 there must have been some people, even if not yourself, who said 'O God this lad he can't possibly do this you know, he's not capable of doing it.' I wonder how you reacted to that?

M Umm. I didn't hear much about that because sort of I wasn't led on. You know, he's in such and such a state – he did it because such and such. I mean to say anything I do, sort of responsible, . . . it's just sort of me sort of thing . . . I know

what I'm doing!

A You're not looking for excuses?

M Yea, I'm not looking for excuses sort of thing, unless there's such and such an' it's really gettin' to me. Anything I do I take the responsibility for doin' it. Kick the front door open you know. You know I kick the front door open and that's you know the end of it. Take the stick for it or what's ever to come.

A You got to Egerton Road via this Social worker that knew about it . . . Where do you think you'd be now if on that particular day the Social worker hadn't got lucky?

M I would have found somewhere anyway. That was a cert that. I would have found somewhere. I didn't really think about it but I know I would find somewhere – dead confident to find somewhere. There wasn't many places at the time but there were some, it's just waitin' and lookin' for them and that happened to come up . . .

A Where were you staying in the meantime when you were waiting to go into Egerton Road?

M I was stoppin' at my dad's at one stage.

A But you weren't happy to stay there?

M No I wasn't even happy to stay there at certain times. I just wanted my own place. Go out. You see, there's one thing, my parents an' all that went to bed pretty early: that was the main snag. Say about 12 and things like that. You know, I'd be just – night life's just startin' at that time! So I just had to get out.

A You wanted the night life did you?

M Yea, now I've got it, right, I don't even get out. It's really funny that, I don't even stay out till late, only the odd occasions. Maybe 5 or 6 weeks say – I might stay out once till about 4 o'clock in the morning you know. For the next couple of weeks it will just be you know regular time about 12 o'clock in. Just like it was at home, it's sort of dead funny . . .

A Does that make you respect your parents a bit more?

M It does in a way 'cos I mean it's sort of same with my parents. On odd occasions you know certain weeks they'd go out, stay out till late but that wasn't an every night thing. When . . I got my own place and I went out they (me mates) told me how it was great and all that. There wasn't much to do unless you went out to a club about two in the morning.

A A lot of young people, perhaps not so much from Manchester, but if you can imagine you lived in a little town and saw the adverts on the telly and the sort of film stars jetting around London, the kind of image of the glamour and the night life. You obviously must have felt that same appeal . . . when you

were younger. What was the appeal Mike? . . .

M There were certain things that I was interested in going out. I didn't sort of look at the thing on the telly, adverts and stuff like that. Just wanted to go out. There wasn't much doin', I mean most of the time they're either gettin' in trouble, you know late at night and things like that . . . sort of didn't appeal to me all that stuff. I just wanted to get out there, see what it was like in other words. There wasn't much goin' on anyway, just borin' late at night . . . When I was at home it wasn't goin' out — my mum sort of knew what would happen when I go out late and hang about on the street. Police would pull you up — 'what you doin'?', such and such. You know you can end up gettin' in trouble. They don't want to sort of comin' down to Moss Side nick to bail you out or something like that. You know, the Police knockin' on your door which is really bad. You get neighbours talkin', sort of, really bad . . . No, she didn't want any of that. 'Cos I mean the place had a bad name anyway.

A Moss Side, you mean?

M Yea . . . put in this way, if I was goin' on, if I stopped out and sort of hanged around with the guys . . . I most probably would have been like them, but I think when I went away to Liverpool it was a big change. Sort of enjoyed it — you know — somewhere I'd never been before. Also been to quite a few other places, parts of the country which — big change. My language changed, talking Scouse — Scouse accent an' all that. Sort of really funny. Sort of enjoyed it, I sort of didn't miss Manchester at all. Did my parents a bit . . .

A What was the place you were in over there?

M Sort of like approved school. You know they got classrooms an' all that. It was open . . . The only part of it what was locked up was what do you call it — they call it school. Just a grey old building like. Stony building . . . The day to day absconders got locked up under lock and key routine.

A Did you have any spell of that, absconding?

M No. I was near to it but teacher talked me out of it. Well he didn't talk me out of it, it's just you know common-sense because I mean to say bein' there all that time an' I never thought about runnin' away . . .

A So . . . being moved out of Manchester for a year or so, it helped you to break away from the little scene in Moss Side with your mates and they were going one way and you didn't want to go that way?

M Yea, it was sort of that thing really because I could have seen myself bein in more trouble really if I kept on, if I followed

them . . . I sort of got shifted off there. They says, oh yea, send him there and it was all for the best I think . . .

A Did you resent it at the time?

M I didn't want to go but once I was there I was there and that was it. I mean you run away and just make things worse and you know you end up in closed units . . .

A You must feel down sometimes. How do you get out of it, how do you snap out of it? . . .

M When I'm feeling down it's either through work or something like that and you know I want something right and I want it you know, I'm havin' a hard time gettin' it sort of thing. I don't really feel that bad. I don't really look at anyone else sort of thing. Sometimes it does cross my mind about Steve – that's the only one I do think about you know . . . in other words, God, how does he cope! . . . Just work my way out of it. I mean you carry on just thinkin' about it, you sort of get nowhere.

A You feel that the time's come maybe for you to look around and break out of that place?

M Yea, one thing Paul says – I think it's a good idea – like I'm havin', makin' my mind up about furniture 'cos I've had a fire and I mean to say I had bits and pieces but you know bought some new chairs . . easy chairs, like a 2 piece settee sort of thing. An' I've got a new bed to come which I'm waitin' on an' I've got a large sum of money on a Schrieber unit but before I move this is the sort of thing I've got to stock up on. 'Cos if you're talking of furnished flat you're talking about 20 pound a week 'cos one of my mates got one. I'm lookin' at unfurnished so I can say everything's mine sort of thing, when I want to move I've got no hassles about such and such. So my main worry's just gettin' all my furniture . . . I just want to get everything and be able to say, this is mine and I'm taking this. Unfurnished accommodation I've got no hassle. Just pay my rent and that's it . . .

A You wouldn't move out of Manchester or would you?

M No I don't think I would. I'd like to actually, I'd like to leave the country – ha!

A Why not?

M I don't know. It's just the way things are at the moment. Depression an' all that – jobs goin'. There's other countries where you can get work. It's just sort of settin' yourself up over there that's the hardest thing really.

A Have you got anywhere particular in mind?

M No not really . . . I've got America and Canada but I don't

want anywhere like that cos I mean . . they've got guns over there which is really bad . . . Countries like that, Police, over there you've got two choices. They say to you stop – you can either stop or keep runnin'. In America it's either stop or get shot. You know that's why we've got one of the best, you know, police forces in the world sort of thing. You think oh how could we but it's sort of true. You've got to think about all these things . . . I'd like to move anyway, somewhere where I could make a livin'. Everyone's just survivin' – that's what it is really, to survive. It's all surviving, that's it really.

A That's great Mike, thanks a lot.

BEYOND THE HOSTEL

Housing for homeless young people

A youth-work approach

"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'."

This book looks at two schemes to provide accommodation for homeless young people—one in short life property and one specially converted—and draws important lessons and conclusions about how best to provide for this vulnerable section of the community. The book includes a valuable collection of interviews with a group of young tenants in which they make their own assessment of housing provision.

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