

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO HOUSING ASSOCIATION
RESPONSES TOWARDS WOMEN WHO HAVE
BECOME HOMELESS BECAUSE OF DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE**

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ABSTRACT

The research undertook to discover how housing associations considered housing applications from homeless women who had left domestic violence. A case-study approach was adopted with three associations participating - a small black association, a medium-sized local association and a larger multi-regional association. Processes relating to initial access to housing services, assessment of housing applications and allocation of property were considered. The associations operated within one local authority whose homeless service and broader "enabling role" were also drawn into the analysis. Different perspectives were obtained from white and Asian women who were association tenants, having been rehoused because of domestic violence.

The study found that the local authority's influence in relation to domestic violence was limited. Its control over homeless women's nominations appeared to be partial and its influence over association management practices virtually non-existent, except through the occasional intervention of councillors. Association staff independently assessed homeless women who had been nominated as well as those who had applied directly or who were transfer applicants. Two out of three associations assessed a woman's "housing need" and then expected her to supply "support letters," proving what she had told them. They undertook "landlord checks" for rent arrears, damage to property and housekeeping - in many ways resonant of "housing visitor" practices from the 1950 and 1960s.

Women were not always allocated property even though they may have been the most urgent applicant and been waiting the longest. Housing staff considered "suitability" for vacancies: often using value judgements which restricted women's options. Women were treated more like "supplicants" than "customers" or women with rights to be rehoused. Once rehoused, housing management was distant: staff focussed on arrears, voids and anti-social behaviour not support. Women were happy with their new homes but had to deal with their fears about their safety by themselves.

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CHAPTER 1 WORKING TOGETHER: LOCAL AUTHORITY AND HOUSING ASSOCIATION RESPONSES TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

For nearly twenty-five years, it has been recognised in England and Wales that many women need access to rented council housing in the short and long term to enable them to leave violent men (Smith, 1989). Since the enactment of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, local authorities have had an important role to play in providing accommodation when women have become homeless because of domestic violence. However, the role of local authorities in providing rented accommodation is changing. Some of these changes were initiated by the former Conservative Government although they are continuing under the current Labour administration (DETR and DSS, 2000). This study examines the implications of moving away from the local authority as a direct provider of council housing to be replaced by market or (semi-market) provision by privatised housing associations. It examines how this may affect access to permanent accommodation for women who have become homeless because of violence in a personal relationship with a man. The research is undertaken through three case-study housing associations which are considered from three main perspectives: from that of the local authority, the associations themselves and from women who have been rehoused by associations because of violence.

The present Government's "Break the Chain" leaflet campaign (Home Office, 1999) and "Living Without Fear" report (The Women's Unit: Cabinet Office/Home Office, 1999) are some of the most recent indications that official attitudes towards relationship-based violence and abuse are changing. It is the intention of the Government to encourage people to obtain help and to make this type of violence unacceptable. In one sense, this is not unexpected. It is currently recognised that between one in eight and one in ten women will be abused in any one year (Mooney, 1993; Stanko, Crisp, Hale and Lucraft, 1997) and that two women a week are murdered by partners or ex-partners (Home Office, 1998). Research has also started to reveal the cost of providing the range of services necessary to respond to various aspects of this problem: in one London borough alone, it was estimated that it cost £5 million annually (Stanko, Crisp, Hale and Lucraft, 1997).

At a theoretical level, over the 1990s there has been continuing discussion about the relationship between the state and the market in different welfare state regimes. Classifications based on the extent to which welfare state provision has been able to decommodify labour have been very influential (Esping-Anderson, 1990) although arguably Esping-Anderson's classification was based around presumptions more appropriate to male workers in full-time employment than to women (Lewis, 1992). More recent contributions to welfare state theory have concentrated on extending the analysis to include the family. This has been attempted to ensure that the contribution made by women as unpaid carers within the family, and their differing relationship to the labour market, could be included in analyses (Bussemaker and van Kersbergen, 1994; Daly, 1994; Taylor-Gooby, 1991). Other writers have looked at the strength (or otherwise) of the model of the strong "male breadwinner model" within different welfare states, as a different way of comparing regimes which brings women more fully into analysis (Lewis, 1992).

In the strong "male breadwinner model", the woman has been assumed to occupy a "dependent" position as a wife and mother. Lewis made the point that the position of lone parents in welfare states which are built around this model has been ambivalent: should they be encouraged to enter the labour market or be full time mothers? This is not the only ambivalence. The response of the state to relationship breakdown - especially in relation to women who have left violent men - has also been contradictory. Their experience flies in the face of dominant welfare assumptions and provision. (See Pascall (1986), Watson (1986 and 1988) and Watson with Austerberry (1986) for complementary views in relation to the dominance of the provision of housing for families rather than single people in the local authority sector). This study attempted to analyse the relationships between the state and market in relation to social housing provision to women who were homeless because of the violence of a male partner/ex-partner. It did this through exploring the work of three case-study housing associations, all of which worked within the boundaries of one local authority. Local authority perspectives, housing

association perspectives and the views of women who had been rehoused because of domestic violence by associations in this study, were all considered.

Consequently, this Introduction is divided into three parts which provide a broad overview for the study as a whole. Firstly, the role of the local authority is outlined, concentrating on what authorities have directly achieved in responding to homelessness. The new “enabling role” of authorities is described, concentrating on how this might be put into practice in relation to housing associations which operate locally. The second part goes on to describe the changing position of housing associations. From being small organisations which provided rented housing which complemented the stock of the local authority, they have moved (with the support of successive Conservative and Labour governments) to being much larger organisations which may replace authorities' role as direct providers, in whole or in part. Their responses in relation to homelessness have been ambiguous for a number of reasons which are explored in this study. The study set out to show how staff responses to homeless women who have left violent men may be affected by changing legislation, institutional traditions and managerial priorities (linked to ideas associated with “new public management” - about financial risk, controlling costs, maximising income and competition) as well as dominant ideas and assumptions which relate to gender roles within the family. These dominant ideas may also be affected by ideas and practice associated with “race” (in terms of institutional racism and the “racialisation of space”) and class (especially in relation to ideas about “the deserving” or “the genuine” applicant, which only in part derive from an applicant's labour market position). Finally, the experiences of women who have obtained help from local authorities because they were homeless, are described. Issues derived from their experience of dealing with staff, predominantly in local authorities are highlighted since it was likely that a number of these issues would recur in the experience of women rehoused by the three associations in this study because of similar managerial cultures.

THE LOCAL AUTHORITY ROLE

Homelessness

In the past, local authorities have provided far more rented housing for homeless people than housing associations. In large part, this has been due to the fact that local authorities have had more property available for letting than associations and they have had the statutory responsibility for providing temporary and permanent accommodation for certain groups of homeless people. There continue to be significant differences in terms of the relative size of the two sectors despite association growth from the mid 1970s onwards and, more recently, large scale stock transfers from councils to associations. The number of homeless applications made to local authorities each year from homeless women leaving violent men has varied each year (and by type of local authority). Generally, between 10% and 20% of women in this situation are recorded by the Department of the Environment (DoE), latterly the Department of Environment, Transport and Regions (DETR), each year (DoE/ latterly DETR Annual Statistics and see Chapter 2). In the authority in this study, the number of homeless people accepted as statutory homeless was about two thousand a year. About 30% of those were women who were homeless because of domestic violence.

Most research in relation to women's access to accommodation has concentrated on homeless women's experiences of applying for local authority housing (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Homer, Leonard and Taylor, 1984; Charles with Jones, 1993; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). Charles with Jones (1993) and Bull (1993) have also considered local authority staff perspectives, essential in beginning to understand why they have made particular decisions. For example, in local authorities which had few vacancies each year, Bull (1993) and Charles with Jones (1993) identified practices which staff felt were appropriate to deter a woman from applying. This included the insistence by staff that other legal remedies in relation to a woman's former home be pursued and completed before they would consider the application. Judgements were also made about the violence which women had experienced. Staff had views about what was "serious enough" to merit rehousing

and they wanted "proof" of the violence. Staff in other authorities which Charles studied were reluctant to accept women whom they regarded as "incomers" and councillors reinforced this tendency. The "local connection" provisions were often used to refer women to other authorities. Other local authorities were more sympathetic, possibly because they had more vacancies each year. They were more likely to accept what a woman told them and less likely to expect women to use legal remedies (like injunctions/ouster orders) to resolve their housing difficulties.

These differences in response were possible because of the extent to which staff had discretion within the homeless legislation to assist or prevent an application. Nevertheless, there have been two potential limitations to the use of discretion within the statutory framework provided by the legislation: the Code of Guidance and case-law. The Code of Guidance (DoE/DETR, DoH and the Welsh Office, 1977, 1983, 1991, 1997) has been available to local authorities to help with the interpretation of the legislation. It has not had statutory force but authorities have been expected to "have regard" to its suggestions, although they could then choose to ignore them. Niner (1989) commented on this in her study of homeless service provision in nine local authorities.

"...it is apparent that compliance with the Code coincides with the authorities' own assessment of their "liberality." Authorities chose to act in rather different ways and there is sufficient leeway in the legislation to make such differences legal."

Niner, 1989, p30

Local authority interpretation of the legislation has also been affected by the Courts and the body of case law built up over the years, some of which has specifically related to women who have become homeless because of domestic violence. For example, *R v LB Ealing ex p Sidhu* (1982) determined that refuges could not be regarded as a solution to homelessness; they were merely a temporary expedient. This decision has continuing relevance as refuges cannot be regarded as "suitable" accommodation, under the Housing Act 1996 (Arden and Hunter, 1997). This case was also important in deciding that local authorities could not insist on a custody order before determining "priority need." The finding against the local authority's

requirement that the applicant obtain a custody order (to confirm that the mother would continue to be responsible for her children) still applies, although it now relates to residence orders (Arden and Hunter, 1997). *R v LB Ealing ex p Sidhu*, the Code of Guidance and the current legislation would also suggest that excessive “proof” of violence should not be required by a local authority. However, one limitation of the current framework for decision-making is revealed clearly here, as a number of authorities do demand excessive “proof” of violence before making a favourable decision (Bull, 1993; Charles with Jones, 1993; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). For this study, it was important to try to find out how local authority staff interpreted the statutory obligations in the Housing Act 1996 and the extent to which they used discretion in relation to women's applications. This would affect the numbers of women who might be nominated to housing associations compared to those who might apply directly to associations to be rehoused.

The Conservative Government's view throughout the 1980s and 1990s was that local authorities should stop directly providing rented housing. There were a number of ways in which they pursued this objective. Firstly, the right to buy (Housing Act 1980) led gradually to significant losses of desirable family accommodation. Development funding for local authorities was gradually reduced to virtually nothing. The Housing Act 1988 introduced the possibility of council tenants selecting alternative landlords and estates being taken out of the sector for improvement through Housing Action Trusts. Finally, there was an increasing emphasis on local authorities transferring stock, in whole or in part, to housing companies or housing associations and concentrating their efforts on developing their “enabling” role (Local Government and Housing Act 1989). There was never any clarity about what “enabling” actually entailed (Goodlad, 1994) but the message was clear: local authorities should not see themselves as long-term landlords.

As the decade progressed, many local authorities (especially those in London) reported to the Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA) and Association of District Councils (ADC) that they were finding it increasingly difficult to rehouse the statutory homeless (AMA, 1990). The paucity of new building and renovation

work (especially in relation to family homes) was the issue here not the obligations of the homeless legislation per se (Wilmott and Murie, 1988). Most local authorities regarded the legislation as an important safety net for homeless people. Some authorities wanted it to be extended in a number of ways, for example, to include single people (Institute of Housing (IoH), 1988; AMA, 1990). The Conservative Government had previously decided not to amend the homeless legislation (DoE, 1989). Four years later, and a changed political context led it to decide to reduce the rights of homeless people to permanent accommodation. Not surprisingly, its proposals, which were contained in the consultation document "Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies" (DoE, Consultation Paper, January 1994) were widely opposed by local authorities (AMA, 1995 with the support of the ADC). Authorities also provided no support for the Government's view that lone parents were "jumping the housing queue" through using the existing homeless legislation to obtain housing priority (Institute of Housing, 1995). Nevertheless, the Government proceeded to legislate: the Housing Act 1996 replacing the Housing Act 1985 (Part III) (see Arden and Hunter, 1997 for a more detailed account).

The Housing Act 1996 reduced local authorities' statutory obligations towards the homeless from the provision of permanent accommodation (in certain circumstances). The responsibility became one of the provision of temporary accommodation (which might be renewed every two years). These obligations were limited to certain groups of people in certain circumstances. The groups of people concerned were very similar to those in the 1985 Act. There were two improvements which related to women who had left violence. A much broader range of relationships in which violence might occur was indicated (s178) and violence from outside, as well as inside the home, was put on a firmer legislative footing (s177(1)). Having said that, these obligations were to provide *temporary* accommodation and *only* when the local authority considered that there was no housing in the private sector which might be available for the applicant (Housing Act 1996, s193(1) and 197(1)). The aim here was twofold. Clearly, this approach reinforced the authorities' "residual" role by attempting to reduce their contribution to resolving the problem of homelessness. Secondly, these changes fitted into

Conservative “family policy,” if it may be called such (Durham, 1991). The Government sought to further stigmatise homeless lone parents and exclude them from permanent social housing by claiming that their supposed abuse of the former legislation had led the Government to change the law (Phoenix, 1996, pp177-178; DoE, Consultation Paper, January 1994, para 2:8). This was in the context of a continuing debate in certain national newspapers, on the television and in housing policy circles about the possible existence of an underclass in Britain and whether Government policies were contributing towards its construction (Rex, 1988; Murray, 1990; Mann, 1992; Dennis and Erdos, 1993; Page, 1993; Roseneil and Mann, 1996; Field, 1998). To reinforce this point, the assessment of whether an applicant was statutory homeless was separated from assessment of priority for the local authority housing register. The former was only significant in relation to access to temporary accommodation. The latter determined access to permanent secure council tenancies (or “assured” tenancies from housing associations through the nominations process). The housing register priorities (which local authorities were expected to agree) were set out centrally in Government Regulations (DoE,1996). At the time of this study, homelessness was not named as a priority. Homeless applicants might be assessed and given priority because of their *other* circumstances (for example, whether they were ill or overcrowded). The Government emphasised that it saw the social rented sector (“subsidised housing for rent”) catering for “couples seeking to establish a good home in which to start and raise a family” (DoE, Consultation Paper, January 1994, para 3:1) rather than what they saw as queue-jumping lone parents, intent on leapfrogging the waiting list by claiming to be homeless.

Surprisingly, since coming to power in 1997, the Labour Government has not abolished the Housing Act 1996 (as the party promised before the general election). It has merely changed its guidance to local authorities (via the Housing Regulations) so that they are now expected to include homeless people as a “preference group” within their housing registers (DoE, 1996). More recently, the Green Paper (DETR and DSS, 2000) suggested a number of proposals to extend the priority groups within the Housing Act 1996 PartVII which may help single women leaving domestic violence. It has also suggested the introduction of more “choice” in

allocation practices. These will be small incremental changes, if implemented in the future.

In most research to date, housing associations have been shown to have played a small role in relation to rehousing homeless women in these circumstances. The only exceptions have been in some areas of the North East and in Wales (Homer, Leonard and Taylor, 1984; Charles with Jones, 1993). In both areas, local authorities were conservative and antagonistic to the prospect of what they regarded as "outsiders" being rehoused. Housing associations have taken on that role instead. In most studies, housing associations have been unable to provide accommodation quickly enough or in the right locations for homeless people: both these features tending to illustrate the difficulties of a much smaller sector, numerically and spatially (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Niner, 1989; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). Despite this lack of experience, one objective of the Conservative Government was to transfer the management of council housing into "the independent sector." Whether that sector, which includes housing associations, would be expected to deal with homeless households to any great degree was a debatable issue. Immediately after the Housing Act 1988, it seemed that this might be the case. The Housing Corporation expected associations to rehouse statutory homeless households in the new property which they were building. By the mid 1990s, this was more doubtful.

Housing association management difficulties (real or imagined) emerged on some of the new estates which had been built using public and private finance, following the Housing Act 1988 (Cole, Gidley, Ritchie, Simpson and Wishart, 1996; Page, 1993). The numbers of statutory homeless households fell, thus reducing the pressure on many authorities to find other landlords to help rehouse them. In certain parts of the country, voids and low demand also became a notable problem for local authorities and housing associations: the homeless could more easily be rehoused in these areas. Against this background, an important question for this study was whether homeless women continued to be nominated to and rehoused by housing associations. To obtain a clear picture of this, it was necessary to consider how women's applications

were assessed by the local authority using the new homeless legislation, how women who were statutory homeless were prioritised within the housing register and whether they were nominated.

The “enabling role”

There has been little clarity or consensus about “the enabling role” which local authorities have been expected to develop since the late 1980s. It has seemed to entail the promotion of the private sector as an alternative to the public sector, the gathering and analysis of information about housing needs and the monitoring of other organisations' work in the field (Goodlad, 1994). In the context of this study, there were three aspects of local authority work which were considered as falling within “the enabling role.” Firstly, there was the extent to which women were nominated to housing associations for rehousing. The authority in this study actively participated in a consortium of local associations to ensure the construction and management of several thousand new family homes in various locations. Of particular interest was the extent to which the authority used its nomination agreements to rehouse women who had become homeless because of domestic violence. Secondly, was the development of the authority's domestic violence policy for its own work and whether that extended to policy development with associations in the area. Thirdly, the extent to which the local authority encouraged inter-agency co-operation in responding to women in this situation was relevant especially in relation to association's role.

An important aspect of “enabling” which was considered in this study was the extent to which the local authority encouraged housing associations' building programmes and used nominations to gain “extra” social housing which it could not have built itself. In theory, local authority encouragement could involve small scale or large scale stock transfer to associations, encouraging new association building through a contribution to development costs or encouraging and assisting associations to work in consortia, undertaking building projects which were bigger and more complicated and spread over several years (Fraser, 1991). In this study, the nomination agreements for the new housing which was built in the city in the early 1990s were

the focus, especially those for the consortium-built estates. Questions for this study included considering the extent to which nomination agreements were monitored by the local authority and adhered to by the associations? Did homeless women gain access to new consortium properties through nominations?

This authority had developed a domestic violence policy in relation to the work of its housing staff. As far as domestic violence policies in organisations is concerned, Mullender has argued

“Coherent policies and consistent guidelines represent a major advance over individual workers either ignoring the problem entirely, or taking inappropriate action, or happening to be able to give useful assistance but without consistent support from their agency.”

Mullender, 1996, p82

She discussed organisational developments within Social Services Departments in some detail but the reality of shifting organisational priorities (because of the increasing impact of managerialist practice (Pollitt, 1990; Hood, 1991) or staff indifference to or resentment of the problem were not discussed. Whilst a policy or set of guidelines might be an important step in “raising the profile” of domestic violence and might encourage a consistent approach from staff, there remained the question of whether or not a policy or set of guidelines might change a dominant organisational culture or the working practices of staff, who might have different views and alternative priorities (Lipsky, 1980). The present study concentrated on a Housing Department and deliberately probed to try and determine how a policy was constructed and how it might be used in a large local authority Housing Department. The questions asked for this study related to determining the extent of the policy’s influence within the Department. What was its status? How had it affected the working practice of staff (especially in decentralised offices)? How was it monitored? The way in which the policy was regarded by staff in the Department was important. What staff did, or did not do, affected whether women were assessed as statutory homeless, whether they joined the housing register and whether they were nominated to housing associations. The local authority’s domestic

violence policy also might be able to provide an example of more appropriate management practice for local associations to emulate.

Domestic violence inter-agency initiatives were another aspect of “enabling” since the local authority might use a domestic violence forum or inter-agency staff to pursue particular objectives (Home Office/Welsh Office, 1985). In other policy areas, like community care, practical co-operation between organisations on specific projects has a long history (Hambleton, Essex, Mills and Rassaque, 1996). Domestic violence inter-agency work does not appear to be so well organised or well established (Malos and Hague with Dear, 1996) possibly because no one organisation is ultimately responsible for service provision. Domestic violence forums across the country have tended to concentrate primarily on networking and information exchange between staff and occasionally the provision of domestic violence training (mainly of the “awareness” variety) in different organisations (Hague and Malos with Dear, 1996). Encouraging the co-ordination of different organisational responses to women who have experienced (or are experiencing) domestic violence has been another element of domestic violence forum work in some areas. The effectiveness of inter-agency co-operation between the local authority and housing associations was considered in this study through the nature of contact between staff in the different organisations, whether local authority and housing association staff had been trained and whether housing association staff liaised with other organisations to help women to resolve their difficulties.

THE HOUSING ASSOCIATION ROLE

Although many housing associations had been growing since the 1970s, most were very small organisations even in the 1980s. Some associations in pre-Housing Act 1988 days had a reputation for being selective in relation to new tenants (Audit Commission, 1989) and the Commission for Racial Equality and others found that some local authorities were known to have kept nominations for their “better” tenants (CRE, 1989). Associations drew criticism from local authorities in the period

immediately after the Housing Act 1988 since their new pre-eminence in social housebuilding came despite a comparatively poor record in rehousing homeless people (AMA, 1990). Housing associations traditionally housed far fewer homeless people than local authorities, the justification usually being put that the associations had vacancies less frequently than local authorities and were less likely to have family homes to rent (Niner, 1989; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993).

The Audit Commission (1989) pointed out that associations should improve their performance in relation to rehousing homeless people. It identified three problems which associations would have to tackle to do so. The first related to the differences in the type of housing stock held by associations compared to local authorities. Many associations had developed property to complement that of the local authority, for example, concentrating on single person accommodation or sheltered housing for older people. Most statutory homeless households were families and the new housing developed would have to reflect that. Secondly, the Commission felt that the attitudes of staff in associations needed to change. It had identified a widespread unwillingness to accept nominations of people who were statutory homeless because they might cause "management difficulties." Finally, even at this early stage in their changing fortunes, some associations were identified as having rent levels which put their accommodation out of the reach of working households.

These differences underpinned the expansion of associations' housebuilding in the early 1990s. But it was also evident that the way in which associations were managed was changing - commensurate with their move into the private sector. In general terms, associations were expected to be financially more "efficient". Financial control was accorded primary importance in all aspects of associations' work because, as organisations, they were increasingly dependent on private finance to fund new building. "New public management" ideas were current at the time in central and local government - in their economic and managerialist strains (Pollitt, 1990; Hood, 1991). Various management responses derived from this set of ideas about the appropriate role of management would become evident. The consideration

for the study was to what extent these different management approaches affected the service available to women?

The Housing Corporation, (the quango charged with the public funding and performance monitoring of registered associations), had responded to concerns about who associations were housing by insisting that from 1991/1992, associations specifically target a proportion of their lettings towards the statutory homeless on all new schemes which had Corporation funding. The aim was to ensure that associations housed more statutory homeless households. It is difficult to know whether associations' paper commitments were translated into reality when schemes were actually let for the first time. They were not effectively monitored by the Housing Corporation. In any case, this targeting initiative was short-lived, being abandoned after three years. One reason for this (ironically) was growing controversy about who associations were rehousing in newly built homes. David Page's ill-researched report (Page, 1993) was largely responsible for initiating and fuelling this debate. He claimed that local authorities had been "dumping" "difficult" tenants on to housing associations ill-prepared for the task of managing them.

At the time of the study, associations' expanded development programme had been curtailed, partly due to subsequent Government displeasure at what it perceived as association mismanagement of new estates. Even though research on new estates in Yorkshire and Humberside failed to find similar problems (Cole, Gidley, Ritchie, Simpson and Wishart, 1996), some housing managers became more cautious about housing lone parents (Griffiths, Park, Smith, Stirling and Trott, 1996). There was more discussion in housing management circles about the need to provide "support" especially for people who had been homeless (LFHA, 1995); NFHA, 1995 and 1996). At the same time, there appeared to be more interest in finding ways in which associations might be able to create "balanced communities" through allocations practices. This idea had been promoted by Page as one way of avoiding the management problems which he thought he had identified. Research was completed on local lettings schemes (Griffiths, Park, Smith, Stirling and Trott, 1996) but they were not found to be the panacea which some associations sought.

In many ways, the Conservative Government was responsible for creating the ideological climate in which it could be considered legitimate by some associations to move away from priorities based on "housing need." Antagonism towards lone parents had contributed towards the justification for the Housing Act 1996 changes: much concern had been expressed about rehousing lone parents in any numbers on new estates. It was claimed that this led to problems because of high child densities and the paucity of men on estates. The argument was put that it would be more difficult to control children (because there were fewer adults to do so) and there would be an absence of appropriate role models for them relating to the family and men's role within it. These were familiar themes in discussions about the "underclass" (Murray, 1990; Dennis and Erdos, 1993) but they failed to acknowledge the prevalence of male violence which had often led to the breakup of families - not to mention the injury of women and children.

This was the background to the investigation of associations' assessment and allocation practices in relation to women who had left domestic violence. How would applications from women who were nominated, were direct applicants or were transfer applicants be considered - formally and informally? How would allocations of accommodation be made to them? What would staff consider to be important?

THE VIEWS OF WOMEN WHO WERE REHOUSED

Many studies have concentrated on local authorities as the main housing provider (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1991; Mama, 1989; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). One notable exception to this general approach was Charles with Jones (1993) who examined the role of local authorities and housing associations, working in Wales. Other, more broadly based research on housing after relationship breakdown has also been useful in identifying the main issues for women in being housed by local authorities (Bull, 1993; McCarthy and Simpson, 1991).

There have been two main issues in relation to access to accommodation through the homeless legislation. A long-standing criticism of the legislation has been the way in which priorities have been constructed. Single women without children have been less likely to be regarded as in "priority need" than women with dependent children. Single women were excluded from the original Bill (for the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977) as it passed through parliament as a concession to its opponents to enable the Bill to reach the statute book (Thompson, 1988; Richards, 1981). Homeless single women were largely expected to be able to make their own arrangements. They only gained "priority need" status if they were considered to be "vulnerable" because of the violence which they had experienced. This has caused difficulties for single women, even in local authority areas considered to be sympathetic to single women's circumstances because women have not known that they could obtain help (Thomas and Niner, 1989).

Secondly, the degree of discretion integral to decision-making within the framework provided by the 1977 Act (and subsequent homeless legislation) has also created problems for some women. The need for discretion was regarded as essential by local authorities and was "built into" the legislation to ensure their co-operation (see Chapter 2). Women with the same circumstances may be treated differently, depending on which local authority they apply to for help. Concerns have been expressed about whether staff have judged women to be homeless, have needed external "proof" in excessive amounts, have insisted on women following their advice even though this might put the woman at serious risk of assault and have needed women to have a "local connection" to the area (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Charles with Jones, 1993; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993).

There have also been concerns associated with the allocation of property, once a woman has been assessed as statutory homeless. Some women have had to wait a very long time before being offered permanent accommodation. With the prospect of waiting for years in temporary accommodation in some areas, they have either accepted an offer which was clearly unsuitable (because of its condition and/or

location) or they have given up and gone back "home" to their violent partner (Charles with Jones, 1993; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). The quality of accommodation offered has varied - a minority being offered very poor housing in areas which were unsafe for themselves and their children. On the other hand, most women who have been offered housing association accommodation, have been satisfied with it since it has generally been of better quality than local authority offers (Charles with Jones, 1993; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). The experience of women in different circumstances needed to be considered especially in relation to how discretion was used in associations in assessment and allocation.

Women have established themselves in their new homes, but not without some difficulty. Firstly, there has been the impact of poverty and the difficulties of re-establishing a home with a very limited income. Most women who have been rehoused by local authorities because they have been homeless have been working class women whose financial options have been very constrained. Their only realistic alternative to living with a violent partner has been to try to obtain rented accommodation from a local authority or a housing association. Women who have been financially better off have tended to be able to find alternatives to refuge accommodation, bed and breakfast or other hostels (see Pahl, 1985a, p81) and have been less likely to apply for social housing. It is not possible to be sure about this: other studies have shown that women's position in owner-occupation is more tenuous than men's (Smith, 1990). Relationship breakdown may precipitate a transition for women from owner-occupation (which they can no longer afford without a partner) into the social rented sector (McCarthy and Simpson, 1991). Recognising that women are likely to have lost everything through becoming homeless, questions have to be asked about how appropriate it is to offer women vacancies which need substantial cleaning, redecorating and repairs? This has been the experience of some women in the local authority sector (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Charles with Jones, 1993; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). Would this be replicated in the housing association sector?

The second issue, and a long term concern, has been the need to be able to maintain personal safety (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Charles with Jones, 1993; Kirkwood, 1993). Women have described being afraid to move from a refuge into permanent accommodation because of fear. They may be fearful of moving away from the support networks which they have built up in the hostel and be afraid of living by themselves. They may be terrified of being found by their ex-partner and the prospect of having to deal with his violence by themselves. Linked to this, is the need for some women to be rehoused near the refuge so that support networks can be maintained (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Charles with Jones, 1993). Women in this study would be asked a range of questions about safety. How did they feel about living in their new homes: did they need help and personal contact once they moved? How near were shops, religious centres and cultural activities and could they use them safely? Did they need to be near a refuge or near family or friends? To what extent were they able to rely on neighbours? Did they need particular assistance from other agencies or the housing management service?

CONCLUSION

This Chapter has briefly outlined the main areas which formed the context of the study. At the time of the interviews and analysis (1997 to 2000), no research had been completed looking at the implementation of the Housing Act 1996 in relation to homeless women leaving domestic violence. It was likely that the local authority assessment and allocation process would now be more complicated because of the way the new legislation was structured. Having said that, the main focus of the study was the role of housing associations. When the interviews were undertaken for this work, it was not clear whether they would be rehousing homeless women who had left violent men. Associations' ability to do so depended in part on whether the local authority decided that women in this situation merited sufficient priority on the housing register to be nominated to them. Alternatively, women might still apply directly to associations or they might be association transfer applicants. How associations assessed such applications and allocated property to women remained

very much an open question. Would their new privatised status affect the ways in which their management services responded to women in relation to initial access to association services, assessment of housing applications, allocation of property and its longer term management?

Chapter 2 provides more historical detail of the development of housing services in the local authority and housing association sectors for women who have become homeless because of domestic violence. It concentrates on waiting list and homeless procedures. Chapter 3 describes how the study was undertaken with detailed case-studies of three housing associations working within the boundaries of one local authority. Chapter 4 describes the local authority role in some detail: outlining the homelessness procedures as well as elements of the authority's "enabling role" which are relevant to understanding the relationship between the authority and the local associations. Chapters 5 to 7 describe the housing associations' role in rehousing women. They present a broad overview of the associations' current position in the housing market and the pressures on their housing management services, followed by more detailed analysis of their assessment and allocation processes. Chapter 8 is based on interviews with women who, with one exception, had become tenants of the associations in this study. It explores how they dealt with homelessness, how they were rehoused, what they thought of their current homes and how they maintained their own and their children's personal safety. Chapter 9 then ends this work with an evaluation of the role of associations in rehousing women who have left violent men. It comments on the way in which association management responses seem to rely in part on stereotypical attitudes towards the family and women's role within it. Having said that, the associations in this study were constrained by the expectation that they would be financially efficient and would control or minimise risk. The study illustrates the often complex relationship between these two ways of considering homeless women who have left violent men.

CHAPTER 2 THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILISM ON THE WAITING LIST AND HOMELESS ROUTES TO REHOUSING - A LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The literature reviewed in this Chapter concentrates on research on the rehousing of women who have become homeless because of domestic violence. It includes research which has been undertaken in England and Wales from the 1950s to the late 1990s, the aim being to understand the context against which current developments are occurring and to identify issues which first came to light in the earlier period and have proved to be remarkably resilient. The review looks in detail at how the homeless legislation has been implemented by local authorities, the role of associations to date and the effects of the decisions made by staff on the women who have applied for help. The review also highlights the ways in which familism in various forms has affected the access and allocation to social rented housing of women who have left violent men. The ways in which waiting list applications have been considered by local authorities have also been included since the Conservative government's changes to the waiting list (which became the housing register post Housing Act 1996) heralded additional difficulties for women who had left violent men. The strength of the familist ideology and, in particular, the "dependent" role of women encapsulated within it, has structured the possibilities available to women to obtain council housing (see Austerberry and Watson, 1983). This may be seen in both routes to accommodation, though in different ways.

Most of the literature in this review relates to local authorities since they have had statutory duties in relation to homelessness and have generally managed far more extensive housing stocks than housing associations. Associations have generally been small organisations until recently and have not had a statutory role in relation to homelessness. They have only been required to give local authorities "reasonable assistance" with rehousing homeless households, when requested by them to do so. With Conservative government support from the late 1980s, some associations

began to grow in size. As a consequence, by the early 1990s (just before this study) associations were expected to rehouse more statutory homeless households.

Familism was the set of processes and practices which attributed merit and reward to a particular family form, the white nuclear family. It could influence both the built form (for example, the relative balance between homes of different sizes) and/or their design and layout (Roberts, 1991). Local authorities have concentrated on providing housing for families to the disadvantage of small single person households or couples. Creating distinctions between household "types" has also been a part of what was meant by familism. This has involved judgements about different "types" of household which may involve considering attributes associated with class and "race" as well as gender (as will become clear later in this Chapter). Those practices which favoured (white) nuclear families diminished the opportunities of other "types" of household to obtain welfare services of various kinds, including council housing.

The historical roots of familism are probably twofold: Fabianism and later nineteenth century attempts to re-moralise the poor (Damer, 1974 and 1976; Schifferes, 1976; Mann, 1992). Specifically in the housing management context, housing managers in the past have been officially encouraged to "educate" tenants by the governmental advisory panel, the Central Housing Advisory Committee (CHAC, 1949 and 1955; Philp and Timms, 1957), to make them "respectable" or "good" tenants (in a similar way to that of welfare departments in relation to the homeless, before 1977). By the late 1960s, in the face of a growing housing crisis, good practice issued by the government of the day tried to change the preferences of staff for "respectable" or "deserving" applicants (CHAC, 1969). The CHAC emphasized the importance of local authorities' rehousing applicants on the basis of "housing need". Particular concern was expressed in relation to lone parents whom many authorities treated as "undeserving", despite the very poor housing conditions in which many were living. It recommended that local authorities extend the range of households which they rehoused. Research in the 1970s found that housing managers had no consistent ideology based on their occupational position (Norman,

1975a and b; Flett, 1979). Norman (1975a, p80) suggested that managers simply had "a set of operational stereotypes" with which they judged applications. Flett discovered that local authority lettings staff created moral boundaries for themselves beyond which they placed applicants of whom they disapproved (for example, lone parents or black people). They received poorer quality offers than those applicants who met with their approval.

Although time passed, housing management continues to be weakly professionalised (Cole and Furbey, 1994; Clapham, Kemp and Smith, 1990). Authorities tend to ignore generalised good practice recommendations (Cole and Furbey, 1994; Kemp and Williams, 1991; Spicker, 1983) and staff continue to be vulnerable to local political pressure from elected members or the local press (Bull, 1993; Welsh Women's Aid, 1986). An Institute of Housing (IoH) survey in 1990 of local authority practice found that although the range of applicants considered had changed to include more lone parents and single people (possibly because of the changing market position of council housing rather than managers' specific activity) nearly a half of the 281 authorities which responded still assessed the standard of housekeeping in applicants' homes and over a third considered the decorative state (IoH, 1990). The Institute concluded

"...many local authorities still appear to distinguish between deserving and non-deserving applicants."

Institute of Housing, 1990, p59

It seemed likely that external and internal pressures might push staff to act in particular ways: for example, they might believe and have the discretion available to them to act on the presumption that lone parents and single women might create management problems (especially if they have been homeless because of domestic violence). On the other hand, statutory obligations, increasing vacancies and changing demand for council housing might push them the opposite way: rehousing poor lone parents and single people whom they might previously have neglected.

The first section of this literature review looks at the way applicants to the waiting list have been considered. It examines how management staff have used particular attitudes towards the nuclear family as a "baseline" or "ideal type" against which to exercise their discretion in considering applications from all kinds of household. It is important to consider this literature since the Housing Act 1996 marked a re-emphasis of the importance of access through waiting lists (in the form of the new "housing register"). The second, more detailed section in this review concentrates on local authority practice in responding to homeless women leaving domestic violence. It is divided chronologically. The first part deals with relevant literature from the period when the National Assistance Act 1948 was in force (important since some argued that the Housing Act 1996 marked a return to this minimal approach). The second part deals with findings from research conducted relatively soon after the enactment of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977. The third part of this section on homelessness covers research completed following the consolidation of the 1977 Act into the Housing Act 1985. These two sections were important as background to considering the local authority's role in this study.

The literature review then focuses on the work of housing associations in responding to homelessness. It then concludes with a brief consideration of the way the last government changed the legislation dealing with homelessness, despite widespread opposition. The possible implications of the Housing Act 1996 are set out in relation to the research which was undertaken.

THE LOCAL AUTHORITY WAITING LIST

A number of feminist writers identified the significance of the nuclear family form in structuring women's access to council housing (Austerberry and Watson, 1983; Pascall, 1986). The importance of the nuclear family in obtaining good council housing had also been identified by other writers, although differences in its significance for women and men had not been emphasized by them. Their interest had been in the ways in which ideas about an applicant household's "respectability"

(including the contribution made by the mother/ wife) were constructed by staff. According to Cole and Furbey (1994), the emphasis on the housing of nuclear families (and if necessary "disciplining and controlling them") was evidence of the influence of Fabian thinking which emphasised the importance of the efficient reproduction of the labour force (see also, Williams, 1989). This focus might be reinforced by local authority waiting list practices of various kinds (Matthews, 1983). For example, in Birmingham, in the 1980s, the authority could not (or would not) consider large extended families for a single council home. Staff expected such households to split up and apply as a number of smaller households, whether or not they wanted to live separately. The nature of the local authority stock was such that large families or single person households were effectively excluded or marginalised (Ungerson, 1971; IoH, 1990; Power, 1987).

Small nuclear families could also be treated in different ways depending on their perceived class position and "race". Early research emphasised how allocations staff and housing visitors created and maintained class distinctions between applicants and tenants to help them decide who should be allocated the better property (Damer, 1974; Norman, 1975a; Gray, 1976; Tucker, 1966; Byrne, 1974). Staff seemed to rely partly on an evaluation of the presumed class position of the household. Initially, staff considered the "type" of household which had applied. Nuclear families were preferred and an assessment could be made starting with the (male) breadwinner's income and status. Women contributed to the overall view of the application held by staff primarily through their skill as housewives (Macey, 1982; Tucker, 1966) and mothers (CHAC, 1969; Henderson and Karn, 1987, Mama, 1989).

Tucker (1966, p52) illustrated how complicated these gradings/assessments of applicants might be. Using his experience of Bristol as an example, he described how class distinctions, hygiene and home management were very strong considerations in assessment decisions about families who applied. He was also aware that they related in unexpected ways. A grading of "Very Fair" meant that an applicant had been assessed as either "clean and working class or dirty but above

working class". "Very Good" meant an applicant had both "cleanliness and class". In a household other than a nuclear family (in which the man and woman were married) where the household's class position was ambiguous, cleanliness in itself "was only good for a Good". Households which were given low grades were more likely to be black families, "problem families" or those who were rehoused with low gradings.

"...after some behaviour or financial misdemeanour. In both cases, rent-paying ability would be of comparable importance with specifically "social gradings" or "house-keeping" standards."

Tucker, 1966, p52

Many black and Asian households lived in very poor housing conditions but did not apply for council housing. They may have thought that they were not entitled to it or that it was unsuitable for their requirements. The attitudes of staff would not have been encouraging at this time (Flett, 1979). If black and Asian families applied for council housing, they might find that their applications were treated less favourably than their white counterparts. In part, this may have been because of the form of their household. Even so, black nuclear families usually received poorer offers of council accommodation than their white counterparts. This could have been because of direct racial discrimination. Alternatively, it might have been the result of indirect discrimination, produced by the ways in which staff built up conceptions of "respectable" or "good" applicants and tenants. These often downgraded black and Asian applicants' circumstances (Burney, 1967; Rex and Moore, 1967; Duke, 1970; Rex and Tomlinson, 1979; Henderson and Karn, 1987).

Lone parents were disadvantaged compared to nuclear families and staff regarded them as problematic in terms of where they might be rehoused. They were regarded as "problem" families largely because of the poverty in which they were known to live (and the presumed difficulty they would have in paying the rent). Research discovered that if staff rehoused lone parents in good property in Birmingham, they

received complaints from neighbours (Henderson and Karn, 1984). Women in lone parent families were regarded as potentially or actually promiscuous whether they were divorced, a widow or had never married (Henderson and Karn, 1987). These views were not specific to Birmingham. They had been discovered by researchers in other authorities (Daniel, 1968; Gray, 1976). There were, of course, specific racial implications associated with these attitudes (Daniel, 1968; Henderson and Karn, 1987; Mama, 1989; Parker and Dugmore, 1976). For example, treating lone parents as stigmatised in this way would have more impact on some ethnic groups than others depending on the variable incidence of this household type and dominant stereotypes about women from different ethnic groups (Bryan, Dadzie and Scafe, 1985; Rao, 1990). An IoH survey in 1990 (IoH, 1990) found that authorities rehoused far more lone parents than they had done in the 1970s and this was confirmed in the study by Prescott-Clarke, Clemens and Park (1994) where 12% of those on local authority waiting lists across the country were found to be lone parents. In part, this must have been due to changing demography. It is likely that attitudes also would have changed, especially in the larger local authorities although where lone parents were rehoused was a moot point (see Chapter 4).

Single person households (including single women who may have been divorced, widowed or never married) were marginalised in relation to access to local authority housing because of the sector's emphasis primarily on providing housing for families. In some parts of the country, authorities had insufficient vacancies to be considered seriously as a rehousing option by single people. Nevertheless, research consistently showed that most single people wanted to live independently in their own home (Drake, O'Brien and Biebuyck, 1981; Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993). Most expressed a preference to rent from the local authority or housing association because private renting was insecure and expensive in comparison (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993). Although this might be what they wanted, the actual process of applying and waiting might have deterred some applicants. Other restrictions (such as age limits or residence requirements) entailed a much longer wait than families before they qualified for the "active" waiting list. The

position for homeless single people, and homeless single women in particular, was even more difficult and complicated, as will become clear later.

In summary, the familist ideology has been pervasive in the exercise of discretion by staff in local authorities. It has influenced staff views about the different "types" of household in which a woman might be living (nuclear, lone, extended or single). Beyond that, other features have contributed to staff building up a picture of how "respectable" or "deserving" an applicant household might be. These have included views about the economic status of a woman's presumed male partner (or negative judgement if she was a lone parent), the woman's marital status (Gray, 1976; Henderson and Karn, 1987), her colour (Burney, 1967; Mama, 1989), her income - if she was a lone parent (CHAC, 1969; Committee on One Parent Families, 1974), her housekeeping standards (Henderson and Karn, 1987; IoH, 1990), the number of children she had (Gill, 1977), the nature of the relationship with the father or fathers of her children (Parker and Dugmore, 1976; Simpson, 1981), her immigration status (Arden and Hunter, 1997; Mama, 1989; Simpson, 1981) and whether English was her first language (Parker and Dugmore, 1976; Simpson, 1982). These features might inter-relate in different ways for different applicants. The purpose of these discretionary assessments was to enable staff to decide who should receive the best (and worst) offers of accommodation. Lone parents, unsurprisingly, were poorly served by these processes but black lone parents have been allocated even poorer accommodation than their white equivalents (CRE, 1984a).

It was clear that familism was not simply an ideology built on ideas of what a woman's role within a family should be. These ideas were imbued with racism and also presumed a male partner's (husband's) role in terms of economic support. There was very little direct mention in the literature of staff views about domestic violence but where there was (Tucker, 1966) its known occurrence was treated as an indicator of a "problem family" rather than a violent man (Baldamus and Timms, 1955). Since that time, influential Government Committees, pressure groups and changing demography have produced a less vindictive approach to lone parents in local authority allocation but discretion still remains an essential element in local

authority assessment. For example, Bull (1993) found that relationship breakdown and domestic violence might be dealt with in different ways by local authorities but that the exercise of discretion and over-reliance on family law remedies was common. This was confirmed more generally in Prescott-Clarke, Allen and Morrissey (1988, p33) for waiting list assessment. This was the hidden side of housing management: the side which found it difficult to recognise the current reality of extensive nuclear family breakdown. The remainder of this review is devoted to throwing some light on what happened to women when their personal relationships broke up because of their partner's violence.

THE NATIONAL ASSISTANCE ACT 1948, PART 3, PARA 21(1) (B)

Local authorities' responsibilities to homeless people were very limited until 1977. The National Assistance Act 1948 obliged local authorities

"...to provide ... temporary accommodation for persons who are in urgent need thereof, being need arising in circumstances which could not reasonably have been foreseen or in such circumstances as the authority may in any particular case determine."

National Assistance Act, 1948, section 21(1)(b)

Local authority welfare departments were responsible for providing temporary accommodation to certain groups of homeless people. Help was only given if the adult(s) in the family could show that they were not in any way responsible for their situation. Very few homeless single people were helped since local authorities emphasized the provision of accommodation for nuclear families. Only households with children were housed temporarily in hostel conditions often of very poor quality and with harsh management regimes.

There were two differing views about the causes of homelessness which were prevalent during this time in organisations which worked with homeless people. Many considered that the family was responsible for being homeless. Others saw

homelessness as predominantly structural (that is, the result of a lack of appropriate housing which could be paid for by people living on very low incomes). These different views were evident in welfare departments. But attitudes emphasising personal responsibility were much more pronounced among housing staff, where worries over "irresponsible" families predominated (Greve, Page and Greve, 1971, pp82-85). "Re-education" was emphasized with the expectation that welfare and housing departments would co-operate in this process - the former providing the "re-education" whilst the latter provided the housing (Richards, 1981 citing a 1950 joint memorandum of the local authority associations which was endorsed by the Central Housing Advisory Committee, 1955 and by a Ministry of Health, Circular 4/59). However, the relationship between social/welfare workers and housing staff was often difficult and not conducive to working in this way (Flett, 1979; Tucker, 1966; Greve, 1964).

The possibility of a homeless family obtaining a permanent council tenancy varied considerably between local authorities. Greve (1964), Greve, Page and Greve (1971) and Glastonbury (1971) reported that housing managers were not keen to rehouse homeless families. A homeless woman with children who had left her violent partner would often be sent back "home". They would not be considered to be homeless (because they had a "home" to go to) and they would be held equally responsible (at least) for the violence (Freeman, 1979; Glastonbury, 1971; Greve, 1964 and Greve, Page and Greve, 1971).

Although many women never sought help (Hague and Wilson, 1996), not all women stayed in the family home or went back if they had actually left. It is clear that research undertaken on the extent and nature of homelessness in the 1950s and 1960s identified domestic violence as a problem though it might be called something different (for example, "marital discord" or "family dispute") and it was not singled out for special attention. Through looking at these reports, it seems clear that women's need for help with housing and the attitudes and practices of local authorities were at odds with each other, well before the 1970s. With the growth of the women's movement, domestic violence was "rediscovered" in the early 1970s

(Dobash and Dobash, 1979, p8; Hague and Wilson, 1996; Kelly, 1988, p62; Timms, 1975) though the processes through which it became gradually recognised officially as a social problem were complicated and not straightforward.

Women with dependent children

A picture may be drawn across the country for this early period. Greve (1964) first researched sixteen local authorities (eight of which were in London) between 1957 and 1961. He then completed more research in London (Greve, Page and Greve, 1971) for the period 1966 to 1969. This included a survey of households admitted to temporary accommodation in eight London boroughs between 1966 and 1969, a survey of applicants to all London boroughs in a four week period in the middle of 1969 and a much smaller scale survey of housing associations. Glastonbury (1971) investigated the extent and nature of homelessness in South Wales (Swansea, Cardiff and Glamorgan) and the West of England (Gloucestershire, Bristol and Somerset) covering a variety of local authorities and industrial settings during May to October 1969.

Glastonbury and Greve both identified similar difficulties which women with children might face in trying to obtain temporary and permanent accommodation. Both discovered that a very significant proportion of admissions to temporary accommodation were households leaving "domestic friction", though both knew that official homeless figures were an underestimate of the problem. For example, staff made judgements about whether or not an applicant was "blameworthy" (Glastonbury, 1971, p17). Croyden, for example, would not admit any "blameworthy" families ("homeless due to quarrels, rent arrears etc.") unless they had children under five years old. Their stay was strictly limited to six months (Greve, Page and Greve, 1971, p126). As Greve et al pointed out, it was difficult for an applicant to prove one way or the other in situations relating to private violence (Greve, Page and Greve, 1971, p60). Greve et al found that fewer than a third of applications for emergency accommodation from women who had left a violent partner were accepted. This was even less than lone parents in different

circumstances. Women were housed temporarily if they turned up in the middle of the night or when it was reasonably clear that their marriage had ended some time previously.

Out of the 493 families which Glastonbury found in temporary accommodation in the six authorities which he studied in 1969, 116 had been affected by domestic violence (whilst 255 had been affected by marital breakdown generally). 75 families (or 13.7% of the total) gave domestic violence as the primary cause of their homelessness whilst 202 (or 36.9% of the total) said the primary cause was marital breakdown (Glastonbury, 1971, p70). More generally, Greve (1964) found that lone parents accepted for temporary accommodation in 1959 because of "marital friction" accounted for 34% of the total accepted (52 out of 152). This reduced to about 17% in 1961 (27 out of 161 for a 9 month period) and by 1969 had "stabilised" at about 18% in the inner boroughs of London (325 out of 1803). His view was that the reduction had taken place not because there was any reduction in "marital disputes" but because local authority policy had become more restrictive over that period in the face of overwhelming numbers of applications by people who needed emergency help.

Many women, faced with poor conditions and unsympathetic staff, must have decided to return "home". Greve et al found that 37% of lone parents who were given temporary accommodation because of "domestic disputes" stayed for less than a week. Over a half had left within a month (Greve, Page and Greve, 1971, p81). Greve et al were not gender specific but it is likely that most of these families were women-headed. They quoted specific data from LB Camden which showed that of those who left within a month, the majority returned to their former home. Greve et al found that only 40% of the lone parents in temporary accommodation were rehoused into permanent council housing. It was not known how many of these women had left a violent partner.

By the early 1970s, homelessness was growing and becoming more of a public issue (Bailey and Ruddock, 1972; Shelter, 1976; Thompson, 1988, Chapter 1). It had

become clear to the DoE that it would be administratively more appropriate to transfer the legal and practical responsibility for dealing with homelessness to housing departments (see Greve, Page and Greve, 1971, pp126-129 for a discussion of this). This change in approach had previously been advocated by the CHAC (1955), the Ministry of Health (Circular 4/59) and had been recommended in the Seebohm Report (Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services, 1968). In some local authorities, at this time, the various functions of what might be called a "comprehensive housing service" were dealt with by different departments in the authority so this potential transfer was not necessarily straightforward politically (Minns, 1973; Brion and Tinker, 1980; Kemp and Williams, 1991). To add to the difficulties, the Local Government Act 1972 (s195 and Schedule 23) reduced the statutory obligations in the National Assistance Act Part 3 s21(1) to discretionary ones. A Joint Circular (DoE, 18/74) formally recommended that housing departments take on the responsibility for providing "suitable accommodation". A subsequent DoE survey in April 1975 (not published but referred to in Richards, 1981 and Evans and Duncan, 1988) found that only 30% of housing departments had accepted sole responsibility for dealing with homelessness. Another 30% accepted the main responsibility for the problem. These difficulties with jurisdiction between departments continued after the enactment of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, when legally the responsibility was placed with housing departments, whether they liked it or not (Hazelgrove, 1979).

The DoE's survey confirmed the information provided by Greve and Glastonbury. It found that 60% of local authorities refused to provide temporary accommodation to people whom they regarded as outside the priority groups. "Battered women" had not been included in the guidance on priority groups (Greve, Page and Greve, 1971). In their small community survey, Marsden and Owen (1975) found that none of the women who had tried to leave violent partners identified the housing department as a source of help. This was confirmed by Pahl (1985, p80) and by Binney, Harkell and Nixon, (1981) reporting on women's experiences of trying to leave violent partners, mainly in the time before the enactment of the Housing (Homeless

Persons) Act 1977. Pahl's longitudinal study of Canterbury Women's Centre (1978 and 1985b) found that of the 42 women she interviewed, a half (21) wanted to live independently in a council house but only a third of them (7) actually achieved what they wanted. Although these authors are not specific, it is likely that most of the women were white. The situation was more difficult if women were black (Committee on One Parent Families, 1974), because of the direct racism they were likely to encounter from staff in this period (Runnymede Trust, 1975; Flett, 1979).

This early period illustrates the inadequacy of the local authority response to women who had fled violent partners and were homeless. Women were blamed for the violence - which was minimised or disregarded. "Educating" women in this situation (presumably about *their* behaviour) was officially the preferred social work option at this time though it is clear that often nothing was done practically to help the women (Borland, 1976; Scottish Education Department, 1982; Maynard, 1985). The most common response to women's homelessness was to send them and their children back to their former "homes". Some women would themselves be ambivalent about what they wanted in the longer term since lone parenthood was an extremely difficult option to pursue at this time (Wynn, 1964; Marsden, 1969; Lewis and Piachaud, 1987). Nevertheless, a smaller number of women must literally have feared for their lives. Hence they braved punitive hostel staff and stayed, hoping to be rehoused.

Single women

If this picture seems bleak, the situation facing single women who were homeless because of domestic violence was worse. The DHSS provided Reception and Resettlement Centres for people without a "settled way of life." Some local authorities managed large hostels but most of these were for men. As Drake, O'Brien and Biebuyck commented, rather than being seen as people with a need for a permanent home, the

"... single homeless as a group were widely perceived as people with problems"

Drake, O'Brien and Biebuyck, 1981, p9

There were changes to this picture during the 1970s. Drake, O'Brien and Biebuyck (1981) believed that this was because of the impact of research findings and pressure from campaigning groups such as CHAR (as it was then). Nevertheless, the extent to which change occurred is debatable. Drawing an adequate picture of what happened to women in this period was difficult. There were a number of reasons for this, not least the indifference of staff in local authority hostels. Glastonbury expressed concern about this in his report.

"No-one ... seemed to bother much about the unattached women who appeared from time to time and asked for hostel accommodation. As far as the local authority was concerned this was generally a problem to be passed on to someone else... Only brief interest was shown in these people, and it was often tinged with regrets at the inconvenience they caused by coming along wanting accommodation in the middle of the night. Rarely was there any follow-up, rarely any referral back to the woman's town of origin for further information..."

Glastonbury, 1971, p152

He cited a number of examples of single women across the age range, with varying levels of mental health. Some were clearly trying to escape violent family members: for example, Hannah who was trying to leave her violent husband (p72) and Myra who left home when she found she was expected to stimulate her father before his intercourse with her mother (p75).

The DHSS national survey in 1972 provided a picture of the temporary accommodation which might be available for single men and women in hostels, lodging houses and shelters across the country (Digby, 1976). The 1972 survey built on a previous National Assistance Board survey (National Assistance Board, 1966) which had been undertaken in 1965. Unfortunately, the 1965 survey had not asked for information on men and women separately and, therefore, could not look at women's situation separately nor could a retrospective comparison of provision for

women between the two dates be undertaken (see Watson with Austerberry, 1986, p56 for a more critical, if less detailed, comment on the absence of women from the original survey). The 1972 survey improved on this and there is a separate chapter within it on the accommodation available for women. The researchers in 1972 found an overwhelming predominance of beds available for men in lodging houses and large hostels (many of the latter provided by local authorities). There was much less accommodation available for women and most was provided by the voluntary sector and tended to be small scale. Over a half of the women in Salvation Army or Church Army hostels had lived there for over two years but fewer than a quarter of women who were living in "other voluntary" hostels and shelters could say the same. "Marital problems" were cited as a significant cause of homelessness for just under one third of the women in this survey. The possibility of their obtaining permanent council accommodation was very limited.

A more comprehensive picture was provided by Drake, O'Brien and Biebuyck (1981) undertaking research on single homeless people in the mid 1970s. Part of their work was to interview 521 single homeless people in April and May of 1978 in seven local authorities - Manchester, Stoke-on-Trent, Bedford, Brighton and the London Boroughs of Camden, Tower Hamlets and Haringey. They found that 23% of the interviewees were women - a higher proportion than had been obtained by Digby (1976). They thought they had achieved this through their strategy of including small hotels and friends' floors/spare rooms within their definitions of homelessness as many homeless women would have otherwise remained invisible. 18% of men and 18% of women reported that they had left their last settled address because of a "marital dispute" though there was no further analysis of exactly what that meant (p57). Most of the single homeless were sharing with friends or living in hostels or lodgings. Local authority accommodation was "insignificant" (p54). If they were living in local authority accommodation, they were there as an illegal lodger of a legal tenant. The single people interviewed had found their current accommodation primarily through personal contacts (54%). Local authority allocation was "almost non-existent," at less than 1% (p54).

The extreme marginalisation of homeless single people's housing needs in the "grand picture" of permanent council housing is clear from the research undertaken at the time. If homeless single women needed emergency accommodation, they had to rely on the voluntary or private sectors. Lone parents did not fare much better although small numbers were able to resist being sent back "home" to violent partners (see Marsden and Owen, 1975 and May 1978). Given the inadequacy of the local authority response in a time of considerable housing stress, it was clear that only a voluntary sector response from women's groups could provide specific practical help and an alternative view of what was happening to women (Miller, 1975; Timms, 1975; Marcovitch, 1976; Melville, 1977; Weir, 1977). A different understanding of male violence and why it occurred was necessary to begin to challenge the dominance of familism and the continued perpetuation of a model of homelessness which blamed the victims, by emphasising their personal inadequacy. Nevertheless, there was no unanimity about why violence occurred and what should be done, even amongst women's groups (for example, see Gayford 1975 and 1976 and, setting his analysis in context, Dobash and Dobash, 1992, pp25-35).

THE HOUSING (HOMELESS PERSONS) ACT 1977

Concern about "battering" and "battered women" became a media issue from the early 1970s (thanks to publicity and concern generated in part by Erin Pizzey and feminist activists from the Women's Movement and in part derived from a number of highly publicised child battering cases at the time). As far as practical help was concerned, the first refuges for women leaving violence were established from 1971 onwards. The earliest were established out of women's centres (Pahl, 1978; Pizzey, 1974; Sutton, 1978) though the idea quickly took root of establishing a specific refuge. They were open to any woman who needed to escape from violence. It was against this background that the private members bill which subsequently became the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 was introduced in the parliamentary session 1976 to 1977 (Thompson, 1988; Richards, 1981). There was now a sufficient groundswell of opinion to ensure that women with

children who were homeless because of domestic violence were included as a "priority need" in the new legislation. Unfortunately, homeless single women were treated differently - only being in "priority need" if the local authority saw them as "vulnerable." Efforts to improve this had not been successful in the Committee stage of the bill so these different approaches to women became law (Richards, 1981). The Code of Guidance, which local authorities were to use as additional help in interpreting the Act, indicated that in situations involving domestic violence, single women should be regarded as "vulnerable" and consequently in "priority need." However, the Code (s5) did not have statutory force. Authorities could consult it and then disregard it.

The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 has been called "an act of compromise" (Thompson, 1988). It received all party support, but at a price. Although local authorities now had obligations to certain groups of homeless people, they were given a degree of discretion in how they could implement the legislation. This was a concession to reduce the opposition to the bill during its passage through parliament (Thompson, 1988; Richards, 1981). For example, authorities had to consider whether an applicant was "intentionally" homeless or not. If the former, they could simply be offered "advice and assistance" rather than accommodation. In this way, the division between the "deserving" and "undeserving" homeless was inserted into this new legislation, from previous practice. The Code of Guidance recommended that women leaving violent men should not be considered to be intentionally homeless but some local authorities chose to interpret this provision in a particular way. If a homeless woman chose not to follow their advice (for example, to get an injunction), she would be regarded as "intentionally homeless." The different ways in which some authorities exercised discretion and chose to ignore the Code's guidance, proved to be a major difficulty for women leaving violent men. Research showed this to be the case in the years immediately after the Act's enactment (Joint Charities Group, 1978) as well as later (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993).

This variable response was also evident when local authorities were approached by campaigners for help (to provide a building for a refuge or permanent accommodation for individual women). Many authorities claimed that domestic violence was not a problem in their areas. They expected campaigners to provide statistics to "prove" the need. This was ironic given that many of them had only provided minimal accommodation for the homeless with their existing powers, provided by the National Assistance Act 1948 (Sutton, 1978). Some local authorities were reported as claiming that the existence of a refuge encouraged relationship breakdown, and left the authority in the position of having to provide two rented homes instead of one. They argued that this was untenable in a period of government cutbacks in housing expenditure and accommodation shortages (Freeman, 1979; Gregory, 1976; Housing Services Advisory Group, 1978). Nevertheless, some agreed to provide a house for a refuge although they occasionally insisted that only local women should be accommodated (Homer, Leonard and Taylor, 1984). The variable responses of local authorities towards these requests for help were another sign that their official institutional responses towards women who had left violent men were far from sympathetic.

Women with dependent children

The new legislation seemingly provided a straightforward route to permanent council housing for homeless women with children. That had been parliament's intention. Yet, it was evident from research that there continued to be difficulties in relation to finding help generally (Freeman, 1979; Borkowski, Murch and Walker, 1983) and finding alternative housing. The most extensive, early research undertaken on how the Act was working in relation to women with dependent children who were leaving violent men was undertaken by Binney, Harkell and Nixon (1981) between September 1977 and September 1978. They contacted one hundred and fifty refuges in England and Wales and interviewed a national sample of 636 women who had experienced violence. The researchers were clear that one of the main needs of "battered women seeking help" was alternative permanent accommodation. Their inability to find any often led them to return to their former

home and their violent partner. The majority of the 636 women interviewed in refuges had left their violent partner before. Women had left, on average, three times though "some women had left so often that they couldn't remember" (p6). Women who had left their violent partner before and then returned to him, gave a number of reasons for doing so. The most usual were "problems with accommodation" and "to give [their] partner another chance" (p6).

514 women were trying to find alternative accommodation. 184 (44%) of the 418 women who had applied to a local authority actually obtained a permanent council home and moved out of the refuge (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981). Other women applied and were successful in obtaining housing association or privately rented property (57). These figures marked an improvement on the rehousing rate discovered by Pahl (1978 and 1985) especially in relation to local authority accommodation. Binney, Harkell and Nixon (1981) found that the main difficulties which women faced when applying to local authorities were the attitudes of staff towards domestic violence, whether they were accepted as statutory homeless under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and the nature of extra conditions imposed on them as part of giving them a council tenancy. There seemed to be continuing pressure from staff in local authorities to keep families together - whether for moral or for housing management reasons (or both) was not clear. Certainly, this meant denying the level and extent of violence which women and children had experienced. As far as the interpretation of the Act was concerned, the researchers found that women in refuges had been told that they were "not homeless," "not in priority need," were "intentionally homeless" or were the responsibility of another authority (through the "local connection" provisions). The researchers discovered that lobbying by Women's Aid helped women to obtain council tenancies.

A worse situation was uncovered in the north of England. Research in the Cleveland refuge in the first half of 1982 included contacting as many women as possible who had used the refuge for at least three nights in the period January 1977 to December 1981 (Homer, Leonard and Taylor, 1984). 80 women came forward and were interviewed. 29 women (36.2%) in this study group had been rehoused by

a local authority, proportionately fewer than in the national study conducted by Binney, Harkell and Nixon (1981) over approximately the same period (where 44% of the sample had been rehoused by the local authority). Only 6 women (7.5%) in this group had been rehoused by housing associations.

The 80 women identified similar problems to those already identified by Binney, Harkell and Nixon (1981). Staff in a number of local authorities refused to consider women's applications under the terms of the Act. They were regarded as potential waiting list applicants instead. Another problem emerged with some local authorities expecting women to provide independent proof of violence beyond what might be considered reasonable, in the circumstances. Staff in other authorities assessed women in relation to the Act's provisions and then added their own extra conditions before considering women for vacancies. One example of this was insisting that a woman get divorced before rehousing her.

In total, 393 women had used the refuge between 1 January 1977 and 30 June 1982. Proportionately fewer of them were rehoused by local authorities than had been revealed in the more detailed study of the 80 women who had come forward to talk to researchers. Only 50 (12.8%) of the 393 women were rehoused by a local authority while, surprisingly, 66 (16.8%) were rehoused by housing associations (p130). Unfortunately, no analysis of these data was provided. The researchers made the point that the long period of time covered by their study presented difficulties in analysing the responses in particular local authorities, in any detail. They argued that over that time there had been changes in legislation, and in local authority practices as well as growing Women's Aid influence over local policies and practice. The presumption to be drawn from this was that they felt that the situation had improved in relation to local authority attitudes and rehousing.

In summary, Binney, Harkell and Nixon (1981) estimated that 44% of the women whom they interviewed who wanted to live independently actually managed to move to a permanent council home. Another 11% found a housing association or private rented home of their own. Homer, Leonard and Taylor (1984) presented a

worse situation in Cleveland: 13% of women using the refuge over 6 years had been rehoused by the local authority and 17% by housing associations. In this period, it seemed that across the country, some local authorities were avoiding their responsibilities, whilst others were interpreting the statutory requirements very strictly. Others were adding extra conditions before allocating council accommodation. The situation had improved compared to before 1977 and advice was available to authorities in dealing with the problem (through the Code of Guidance and other publications - the Housing Centre Trust, 1983 and Tuckley, 1985). Nevertheless, it seemed clear that some authorities did not want to rehouse homeless families and used various strategies to avoid it. This had the effect of forcing the women affected to make other arrangements, including returning "home". Having said that, not all women who used a refuge wanted to find alternative accommodation. Many needed time to think over their situation: some then returned "home" or moved in with friends or relatives.

Single women

Although there was no statutory obligation on local authorities to rehouse single women who had become homeless because of violent men, the Code of Guidance recommended that authorities should "secure that whenever possible accommodation is available for battered women without children who are at risk of violent pursuit or if they return home at risk of further violence" (para 2.13). In the late 1970s/early 1980s, there was very little information available to see whether authorities were offering housing to homeless single women. What research there was, indicated that this was not happening. There was minimal pressure on authorities to change from single homeless people themselves, as most knew nothing of the legislation.

Austerberry and Watson (1983) interviewed 102 women who lived in a variety of hostels in London in 1980 to 1981. All were over 25 years. The researchers felt that younger women's experiences and options might be different, so had excluded them. Only fifteen women had ever heard of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act

and only one knew about her rights under the Act. It was not clear whether or not hostel staff were expected as part of their jobs to provide housing advice and information to women residents.

"Only in hostels where the staff had gone out of their way to explain the situation, notably in Women's Aid refuges, did the women have any notion of what their rights were."

Austerberry and Watson, 1983, p37

They found that a number of the women whom they interviewed might have been considered to be "vulnerable", although none had been accepted as such by the local authorities concerned, including women who had left domestic violence (p44). One difficulty identified by Austerberry and Watson (1983) and Thomas and Niner (1989) was that people did not know what their rights were and were often demoralised by their experiences to such an extent that they accepted staff views without question. Unless staff in hostels could advise them, they would continue to be at a disadvantage. Austerberry and Watson found that Women's Aid refuge staff had helped single women when they had stayed in refuges but few actually did so. The numbers of children living in refuges and the obvious differences between their own lives and the lives of women with children may have been too great to bridge (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Pahl, 1978 and 1985a). It may also have been easier for women without children to find friends who were willing to accommodate them temporarily (although some would not be willing to put themselves at risk of assault).

THE HOUSING ACT 1985 (PART III)

The 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act (along with a number of other pieces of legislation) was consolidated into the Housing Act 1985. Part III of the Act dealt with homelessness (and was subsequently amended by the Housing and Planning Act 1986). A useful postal survey of all local authorities in England and Wales was carried out in 1986 to 1987 to find out how authorities were implementing Part III of

the Act (Evans and Duncan, 1988). A response rate of nearly 90% was obtained. The survey included questions about how the authority responded to domestic violence and was useful in establishing the broad range of possible responses. Because the survey was quantitative, it could not explore why local authorities responded in the ways they did. There might also be differences between what front line local authority staff actually did day to day and what senior management (who may have completed the survey) thought they did. Nevertheless, the survey did reveal that a woman's situation might be assessed in different ways. About a half of local authorities expected a woman to return "home" to take all possible action to remove her partner (temporarily or permanently). They would only consider her to be homeless when these attempts had failed, even though this meant exposing women to additional assaults. It also contradicted the advice in the Code of Guidance. Even if a woman was living in a refuge, only 78% of local authorities accepted her as homeless. The issue appeared to be that staff believed that a woman had a home to return to. "Proof" of the violence was an issue in some local authorities more than others. 36% of authorities required independent proof of violence. 41% would accept what a woman told them as the truth, although they felt that independent proof was useful.

Goss (1983) had found a similar situation in research into the practices of six London boroughs. However, having studied actual homelessness practice in nine case study authorities, Niner reinforced the point that there might be differences between what local authorities reported officially and what staff did in practice.

"...all authorities accepted as homeless those subject to violence within the home or those in fear of such violence. However, since the authorities seemed to vary considerably in the supporting evidence they required particularly in cases where violence had not yet occurred, such agreement on paper was misleading in practice."

Niner, 1989, p28

More positively, 80% in the survey (Evans and Duncan, 1988) said that they would accept a single woman who had left violence as being in "priority need."

Nevertheless, other research found a more variable picture than this (Welsh Women's Aid, 1986; Niner, 1989).

Women with dependent children

Three important research reports, Malos and Hague with Dear (1993), Bull (1993) and Charles with Jones (1993), were published in the period up to 1996. Other research, conducted more broadly (Brailey, 1986; Welsh Women's Aid, 1986; Mama, 1989; McGibbon, Cooper and Kelly, 1989) also contributed to the overall picture. It became clear that authorities' responses to homeless women could be broadly grouped, based on their responses to particular parts of the legislation and on how women felt they were treated as homeless applicants.

Malos and Hague with Dear's work (1993) provided a detailed picture of the housing options available to women who were homeless because of domestic violence. Their main focus was the detailed study of four local authorities - one in Wales and three in England. 80 women (20 in each area) were interviewed. 62 women had dependent children with them. Staff in three out of four local authorities, in housing associations and in the refuge(s) in each study area were also interviewed. The women were interviewed again, if possible, six months later to discover what progress they had been able to make in relation to rehousing. 52 women were rehoused within six months in this study. 39 women were rehoused by local authorities and 13 by housing associations though only 3 of these were rehoused through the nominations process. This was a much higher rate of success than had been reported in previous research.

Malos and Hague with Dear found that stated policy and actual practice in a local authority could often diverge (see also Evans and Duncan, 1988; Bull, 1993; Bull and Stone, 1990). They also found that measuring practice against policy was difficult when staff themselves were not clear about what the authority's policy was. Malos and Hague with Dear decided to concentrate on authorities' actual practices. Through this, they identified three differing groups of authorities (p25). Some were

generous (often using policy guidelines/manuals). Some were legal, keeping within the spirit of the law and the Code of Guidance (though sometimes being selective or inconsistent). Finally, there were those which were restrictive, adopting an approach of "minimal compliance" with the legislation. The situation was even further complicated as different authorities were sometimes not internally consistent in their approach. For example, there were certain features of situations which would lead a "generous" authority to be "restrictive" (often involving women who were owner occupiers or women who had come from other parts of the country).

They found that different local authorities responded differently to similar circumstances. Women's circumstances were generally more likely to be taken seriously if they had experienced physical violence rather than sexual or psychological violence. An important difference in response lay in whether the authority accepted what a woman said, and her wish to live independently. The most restrictive authorities were more likely to expect and require women to take other legal action against their violent partners, whether or not this was personally appropriate for the woman concerned.

Some authorities expected women to use injunctions to exclude violent partners from their previous home rather than give them statutory homeless priority and rehouse them (p36-37). Many women did not regard obtaining or using injunctions (now exclusion orders) to return to their former home as realistic or safe. (Barron, 1990; Law Commission, 1992). Nevertheless, women might be found to be "intentionally homeless" if they refused to accept the advice of local authority staff in these authorities.

Some black women in this study raised the issue of local authority staff imposing their own views about marriage on applicants, especially when they insisted that women start divorce proceedings (Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993, p52-53). This was especially the case with Muslim women. This practice had already been identified as problematic for some white women in other research (Welsh Women's Aid, 1986). Mama (1989) had argued that to make divorce a condition of rehousing

[or an indicator of the seriousness of violence] for "black women from traditional backgrounds" meant that

"...the housing bureaucracy was imposing very limited and parochial notions of marriage and the family on people from complex and varied familial and marital systems. It amounts to using people's cultures against them to exclude them from housing."

Mama, 1989, p124

This was clearly an example of how a particular institutional practice might affect women differently depending on their "race" and religion. Henderson and Karn (1987) and others (CRE, 1984a, 1984b, 1985, 1989a, 1989b and 1993; Parker and Dugmore, 1976; Simpson, 1981; Smith and Whalley, 1975) had shown previously that the systematic effects of formal procedures and the use of staff discretion might produce racially differentiated housing outcomes. These might reflect dominant attitudes towards particular kinds of household which were racist, sexist or imbued with intra-class status differentiation.

Given these differences in the way the legislation was generally interpreted by local authorities, it was not surprising that Malos and Hague with Dear found that there were significant differences in the manner in which interviews were conducted by local authority staff. Varying amounts of detail were required of the applicant. Some women reported that their interviews had been conducted with sensitivity and efficiency but a number of women felt that staff identified them as "undeserving." This was particularly the experience of women who had approached the rural Welsh authority for help. Few black women recalled examples of overt racist behaviour or attitudes exhibited by housing staff in this study. The housing staff in the London borough case-study (a "minimal compliance" authority) were generally more overtly nasty towards any women whom they interviewed and it is very likely that they were following instructions.

"A majority described their interviews as humiliating and degrading experiences. Women variously summarised the experience as one of "being treated like dirt" or feeling as if they were regarded as coming "out of the gutter." One woman described being "bombarded" with questions which were repeated over and over until her head spun."

Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993, p52

Bull (1993) examined the broader question of the housing consequences of relationship breakdown and included violent breakdown within that. Fieldwork was undertaken during June to September 1989. There were a number of elements to her study but of relevance to this literature review was her analysis of a telephone survey of fifty two local authorities (chosen to represent a stratified random sample which included different types of local authority) and her subsequent examination in depth of the policy and practices in six local authorities. Case study authorities were chosen on a number of criteria the main one of which was the policy approach which they had indicated in the original telephone survey (p8).

One of the intentions of the case study approach was to explore the differences between policy and practice in a range of local authorities. The telephone survey had discovered "a wide diversity" of policy and practice in responding to relationship breakdown in homeless and waiting list applications. There were few examples of written policy (this was not unusual more generally). When talking of the local authority's policy, officers variously referred to committee papers, internal notes and guides, procedure manuals, written policy documents or "received wisdom or common understanding of "how things are done"" (p33). There was strong support for the use of discretion in relation to applications because it was argued that no two cases were the same. Discretion was regarded as a way of using professional judgement in decision-making.

"This was viewed to be particularly important in developing a sense of the "*genuineness*" of particular cases." (my emphasis)

Bull, 1993, p35

Bull found that whether a woman could pursue legal options in relation to her home was an important consideration in how different local authorities responded. Most of the 52 local authorities which were contacted in her telephone survey (and all but 1 of her 6 case-study local authorities) initially advised women leaving violent men to get an injunction and return "home." Almost a half of the local authorities said that they would regard a woman as "intentionally homeless" if she did not follow this advice even if the woman felt that she was putting herself in considerable danger by relying on an injunction (p48). However, more "liberal" authorities allowed staff to exercise discretion sympathetically. In the less "liberal" authorities

"...they [that is, injunctions] were usually part of an overall requirement that an applicant should demonstrate serious attempts to return to their property or prove that their case was *genuine*." (my emphasis)

Bull, 1993, p49

Among her six case-study local authorities, one authority expected women to pursue their long-term legal remedies and would not rehouse them until legal options had been exhausted. In the second authority, the woman could decide whether legal options were appropriate. In the other four authorities, long term rights to the home had to be pursued as an alternative to rehousing. This was *usually* a requirement. If a women did not follow this advice, she might be considered to be "intentionally homeless." In some authorities, there were exceptions to this for example, where there was "extreme" or "severe" violence or where women could not divorce for religious or cultural reasons (p48). Where there was "widespread" use of discretion, there was uncertainty (for women and for advice agencies) about how it would be applied. Bull remarked that, in such situations

"...the "gut-feeling" of officers appeared to play an unduly large role in determining the progress of the case."

Bull, 1993, p35

She reported that other agencies saw local authorities' insistence on the use of family law remedies as a way of deterring applications. If women followed the advice, they might conceivably not return to be rehoused. If they did not follow the advice, the

authority might be minded to consider them as "intentionally homeless." In either scenario, the rehousing obligation on the authority was reduced.

Charles with Jones (1993) and Charles (1994) found similar difficulties for women in her research into thirty seven Welsh local authorities and thirty housing associations. The rehousing rate in this part of the country was poor. 140 women (and their children) who lived in refuges during 1990 to 1991 were rehoused into permanent accommodation by a local authority or housing association. 100 women were rehoused by a local authority (92 of whom had statutory homeless status). 40 women were rehoused by associations (only 10 were nominated because they were statutory homeless because of domestic violence). These 140 women represented 12% of the total of 1219 women who moved out of refuges in Wales in that year. Far more returned to their former home to rejoin a violent partner (30.5%), to return with an exclusion order or to return because the violent partner had moved out (15.3%). 28% moved to different other temporary accommodation from which they may have been rehoused by the local authority, although this was only one of several options (Charles with Jones, 1993, pp 49-51).

Of particular interest in this study was her discovery that councillor involvement and control of the lettings process (for waiting list and homeless applicants) in some north Welsh local authorities was widespread. This had been commented upon in other studies on allocation practice in local authorities (IoH,1990). Research by the Institute of Housing (1990) had discovered that councillors had a significant influence over individual allocations in Wales (43.3% of authorities) with the practice also being common in the East Midlands (34.8%), Yorkshire and Humberside (33.3%) and the South West (33.3%). Bull (1993) had commented that most local authorities had expressed concern that the way in which the "local connection" provision in the Act worked could be detrimental to "locals".

"There was a concern which was often generated by elected members about opening the floodgates..."

Bull, 1993, p54

Charles with Jones (1993, p78) revealed how women's rehousing opportunities from refuges in four local authorities were affected by the way in which local councillors were involved in deciding who should receive offers of property. Officers drew up shortlists for them to consider. Their main concern appeared to be to reduce the numbers of "incomers" being rehoused - including women who had fled violence. They felt that strong distinctions, based on views about "deserving" and "undeserving" applicants, underlay this practice and that these were reinforced by language differences in some areas. In a sense, this is another variation on the theme of "Englishness" which Flett (1979) had identified as part of the "moral boundary" used by some officers to help them in their discretionary decision-making in relation to applications from black and Asian people. In this instance, however, it was "Welshness" which was identified and it was councillors who were making the decisions to include some applicants and exclude others on the basis of applicants "localness" or "belonging" to the area and their ethnic origin (see Charles with Jones, 1993 and Charles, 1995 for more discussion of this process).

To conclude this section, the particular feature of local authority practice in this period which stood out was its variability, partly an outcome of the discretion inherent in the Act and partly due to different local authority staff/member attitudes towards women, domestic violence, the family and housing. Local authorities fell roughly into three types - generous (or sympathetic), legal and "minimal compliance" authorities. The majority of authorities seemed to prefer an approach which first tested the civil remedies available to a woman with a violent partner whether or not this put her in greater danger. They might reinforce this by warning women that they would be regarded as "intentionally homeless" if they did not comply with the authority's advice. Why did they do this? There are a number of possible reasons. They might have thought that women were trying to queue-jump by inventing violence. Requiring external proof clearly illustrated the fact that women were not automatically believed: they were automatically disbelieved. Alternatively, officers might not understand or appreciate the level of violence and the situation of women trying to escape it. They might be wary of intervening officially in what they might regard as a private matter, best sorted out in the family

itself (or if necessary by the law). Finally, officers might be determined to reduce the rehousing responsibilities on the authority towards the homeless. They might be regarded as "undeserving" compared to legitimate, waiting list applicants.

Not all authorities were as stringent as some of the "minimal compliance" authorities described by Mama (1989) or Malos and Hague with Dear (1993) but sympathetic authorities seemed to be rarer. Although the rehousing rate had improved for women, it was patchy across the country. It was clear from Bull's research that a more sympathetic approach was not directly linked to the pressure on the housing stock. The relationship was more complex. It is also unlikely that more stringent approaches had been developed because of overwhelming demand from applicants generally. This might have been part of the explanation but some local authorities had housing management cultures where attitudes and support for "local" "respectable" families was strong (including ward member support). Lone parents and the reality of relationship breakdown because of a man's violence did not easily fit into this picture. It was too potentially controversial. Officers might be concerned about potential abuse of the system (hence their concern about identifying "genuine" applicants). Members would be concerned about the political repercussions of being associated with family breakdown and the rehousing of "outsiders."

Single women

Throughout the 1980s, it was widely believed that the numbers of single homeless people had increased (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993). The prospects for single women of being rehoused by local authorities (if they were homeless because of domestic violence) seemed to improve from the mid 1980s. Evans and Duncan (1988) had found that 80% of local authorities claimed that they considered single homeless women as "vulnerable" if they had left domestic violence, but other surveys revealed that the reality was more complex.

The evidence that practice might be changing was mainly drawn from research which looked specifically at local authority practice and the housing experiences of those who had left domestic violence. When wider surveys were undertaken, the particular experience of women (and especially the issue of violence) tended to be obscured. A particular example of this may be seen in the large national survey of single homeless people undertaken in 1991 (Anderson, Kemp and Quilgars, 1993). They limited their interviewing to hostels, bed and breakfast hotels, day centres and soup runs and unsurprisingly, obtained an overwhelming male interviewee population. The highest proportion of women interviewed were living in hostels and bed and breakfast hotels (23%) and a half of them were black. Only 5% reported that domestic violence was the main reason for leaving their last permanent address, a remarkably low figure given previous findings and the known incidence of domestic violence in the general population.

Having said that, this survey found that homeless women were becoming younger and that many had left their parental home because of violence from parents/carers. 50% of the women were under 24 years old: double the proportion of men of that age. This was a much younger homeless female population than had been found in previous surveys (see also Dibblin (1991) which illustrates that this was an issue which was being raised by pressure groups). A third of the women had left the home of their parent (s) immediately before moving to their current accommodation. Over 8% had left because of "conflict" with parent(s)/step-parent(s) which included physical and or sexual assaults. (The level of abuse experienced by young people, especially in "reconstituted" families has been analysed in greater depth in Smith, Gilford and O'Sullivan (1998)). Most women in hostels and bed and breakfast hotels were looking for permanent, self-contained accommodation and felt that they had low priority with the council and would have to wait a long time if they were going to obtain a council or housing association home. Unfortunately, there was no discussion in the report of the issue of "vulnerability" and how local authorities were interpreting the homeless legislation in relation to young single people especially those young women who had left home because of violence (see Douglas and Gilroy (1994) for a wider discussion of this issue.

More specific research illustrated other changes. Welsh Women's Aid (1986) found in their survey conducted in April 1985 that twenty one out of thirty seven Welsh authorities automatically considered a single woman to be "vulnerable" if she was homeless because of domestic violence but fourteen would require evidence of vulnerability (for example, letters from doctors or social workers). Two authorities commented that their response depended on the circumstances. This split response was replicated in another survey undertaken with the thirty five London boroughs. Fifteen said they would automatically accept a single woman as "vulnerable" in these circumstances whilst the others were more cautious in their responses (London Research Housing Group, 1987 cited in Thompson, 1989). Bull's telephone survey of fifty two authorities in 1989 suggested that a half of them automatically accepted a single women as "vulnerable" if she had left a violent man and this was also found by Niner (1989). More detailed case-studies reinforced this variable picture. Malos and Hague with Dear (1993) found that their case-study London borough and rural authorities did not accept single women as "vulnerable" and in "priority need" under the Act's provisions. Bull (1993) found that only two of her six case studies routinely accepted single women. The others varied - one never did, one would consider the case "sympathetically," one would send the woman's details to be considered by a discretionary panel and one would offer temporary accommodation.

There did not seem to be a pattern to this - London boroughs, Welsh authorities and English authorities apparently being equally likely to respond positively. It was not clear why some had changed whilst others had not. Some might have genuinely reconsidered their allocation priorities for single women, perhaps following local pressure from Women's Aid or CHAR (CHAR, 1986). Alternatively, they might have seen this as a way of filling otherwise hard-to-let family dwellings or of fulfilling their nominations strategy to local housing associations (Gilbert, 1986). Whatever the actual reasons, this response to single women represented a change in the way that authorities interpreted the homeless legislation, although it was not widespread.

There were caveats to this more sympathetic picture. Some local authorities still expect "proof" of violence or of "vulnerability." This might be difficult to provide. It was also likely that many homeless single women did not know that they could obtain priority for housing because of their "vulnerability" (Thomas and Niner, 1989). Others might be put off applying to the local authority in their area because they anticipated a poor response or because they had already been interviewed unsympathetically by local authority staff. Rao (1990) identified this in her study of black women's experiences of public housing. Some single women whom she interviewed had been treated poorly in local authority interviews with "rude and abusive" staff being cited as reasons for not pursuing council housing as an option.

HOUSING ASSOCIATION RESPONSES TO HOMELESSNESS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Housing associations were generally very small organisations in the 1960s. A minority grew in size and influence in the 1970s as they played an important part in renewal strategies in inner cities. Little research is available on association allocation practices during this time. Greve's small scale survey of housing associations in London in the late 1960s was the only information which could be found on associations and homelessness in this period. He found that the policies of associations varied widely but relatively few assisted homeless people. Greve, Page and Greve felt that most associations were

"...neither equipped nor inclined to select in favour of the most severe or desperate cases of housing need, for example, large, low income or unsupported families with a history of rent arrears, "anti-social" behaviour or unstable domestic arrangements."

Greve, Page and Greve, 1971, p237

Throughout the 1970s, the role of associations in rehousing women with dependent children who had left domestic violence was small (Miller and Filkin, 1971; Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981) although in some areas associations could be more

important simply because the local authority chose to respond restrictively. Housing associations might be able to rehouse women instead (Homer, Leonard and Taylor, 1984). There is very little research to illustrate how single women were treated by associations. Only a few had been successful in obtaining accommodation from associations in the study by Austerberry and Watson (1983) of single women who were living in hostels in London. More women in that study had been turned down by associations (because waiting lists were closed) or, alternatively, had refused vacancies because they were unsuitable (being very poor quality, with limited storage space and located in unsafe areas of the city).

During the 1980s, a number of associations began actively to develop hostels - usually with "managing agents" (such as Women's Aid groups) providing the subsequent management. In part, this was a response to the government's "hostels initiative" which was designed to provide smaller scale hostel accommodation for single homeless people. Since that time, there has been tension between associations (managing permanent accommodation) and "managing agents" about "move on" accommodation from hostels. Both Malos and Hague with Dear (1993) and Charles with Jones (1993) reported that few women were rehoused from refuges by the associations which had developed them. Why this occurred is not clear.

The late 1980s was also marked by a number of broader trends which affected the working relationship between associations and local authorities (English, 1979 and 1982; Flynn, 1988; Forrest and Murie, 1983 and 1986; Malpass, 1983 and 1990). Ultimately, these made it seem more likely that a woman leaving violence would be rehoused by an association. The most important were continuing reductions in housing capital expenditure for both sectors in the first part of the decade, the introduction of the right to buy for council tenants with consequent losses of stock for local authorities and the rapid growth in the numbers of homeless people being rehoused up until the 1990s (see Hills (1987) and Best (1991) for broad summaries).

Towards the end of the decade, the Housing Act 1988 marked a change in the role of associations. They were now expected by government to become the main

providers of new social rented housing (Randolph, 1993). Local authorities development programmes had dwindled to virtually nothing, their new role being conceived as that of "enablers" rather than providers of rented housing. This change of emphasis was not without its critics - particularly from within local authorities. This was not surprising as some authorities in London were finding it almost impossible to permanently rehouse those whom they were obliged to rehouse as statutory homeless (AMA, 1990). In response, two policy developments were initiated by the Housing Corporation: improved nominations arrangements and the targeted rehousing of homeless households on new association estates.

The Housing Corporation issued Circular 48/49 "Access to Housing Association Homes." and together with the "Performance Expectations" (1989) (the guidelines the Corporation used for monitoring associations' performance), these ensured that at that time greater priority was given to responding to homelessness in associations' work. The Circular emphasised the importance of establishing and maintaining good nomination arrangements, the level of which was usually expected to be 50%. A formal working agreement on nominations was also produced in 1989 – "Joint Guidance on Nominations Arrangements" (National Federation of Housing Associations, 1989). This had the formal backing of the NFHA, AMA and ADC and was intended to be used to review and improve arrangements between associations and local authorities. A good practice guide "Tackling Homelessness" was produced by the NFHA (Randall, 1989) which included detailed guidance for associations in relation to nominations, the waiting list and internal transfers. The Housing Corporation subsequently came under renewed pressure in 1991 from a critical Public Accounts Committee and the National Audit Office (1991) in relation to its monitoring and resource allocation to associations. They were particularly concerned about the small numbers of homeless households which associations were housing at that time. The Housing Corporation subsequently devised a system of targets for its development programme starting in 1991/1992. Half of all the lettings in new rented estates were to be targeted towards the homeless. Of these, a minimum of 60% had to be let to statutory homeless households. Each region had to

establish its own set of targets to enable the national targets to be reached - some were higher than others.

Nominations and homelessness

Given growing criticism, research was undertaken on the nominations performance of 138 associations in London in 1987 to 1988 (Levison and Robertson, 1989). It was discovered that 45% of housing association "true voids" (net lettings after deducting transfers, decants and mobility lettings) had been let to local authority nominations but only 34% of those nominated by local authorities were statutory homeless households. There was wide variation between associations (with the larger associations performing better) and between London boroughs (in relation to the numbers of statutory homeless households whom they nominated). The rate at which statutory homeless households were being nominated and rehoused ranged from on average 9% in small associations to 15% in large associations. Three boroughs failed to nominate any households at all whilst at the other end of the scale, 60% of the nominations made to housing associations by four London boroughs were of statutory homeless households.

There were other practical difficulties in improving the nominations performance of associations. There were genuine mismatches between the size of the housing stock which some associations managed and the particular housing requirements of the majority of statutory homeless households. There was also a lack of monitoring of the system on both sides in the majority of boroughs, so it was difficult to identify if racial discrimination was occurring in the nominations process (CRE, 1989a). This was important given that the CRE's formal investigation of the nomination system used by Liverpool City Council (CRE, 1989b) had discovered discrimination in all of the possible routes to being nominated at that time (including being recognised as statutory homeless). This lack of monitoring continued and was found again in another study undertaken by the CRE (1993) into associations' race equality policies and practices.

Subsequent research on nominations moved outside of London. Parker, Smith and Williams (1992) undertook research into six case study local authorities - Bolton, Bromley, Camden, Derby, Exeter and Leeds in October 1990 to March 1991. They examined local authority and housing association practice in rehousing nominated households. They found that local authority housing staff had little difficulty in ensuring that sufficient numbers of households were nominated and rehoused in newly built housing estates. Yet they did not know when association property became available as relets. This meant that they could not nominate the same numbers of households to these vacancies, even though they represented the majority of associations' overall lettings. It was not clear why authorities found it easier to nominate to new estates. Administratively new schemes may have been easier to deal with or it may have been that the property being built (which was often for families) was more suited to local authority needs.

Across the six case study areas in this research, about 20% of nominees were single people, 40% were families with children and 33% were elderly people. Association staff who were interviewed reported that local authorities sometimes had difficulties providing nominations to sheltered housing, bedsit property and to certain unpopular areas. Local authorities reported that housing associations were not as popular an option as they had been in former years partly because of the high level of their rents. Interest from council tenants in transferring to association property had also declined because they lost the right to buy if they transferred. The researchers remarked

"This is in marked contrast to a few years ago when it was frequently said that nominations were highly sought after and reserved for tenants of "good standing."

Parker, Smith and Williams, 1992, p49

The local authorities did little or nothing to check that associations were housing sufficient numbers of nominated households. Neither did authorities monitor the process more generally. At that time, the shortfall in numbers for the local authorities in this study was not great. The authors felt that this might have been the

reason why the local authorities had done nothing to improve the situation. Associations were equally inactive in relation to monitoring.

"Housing associations were asked if they monitored the characteristics of nominees in any way to ensure that local authorities were being fair over who they nominated. None did so, though a few expressed the view that they felt that more homeless people and more people from ethnic minorities could have been included."

Parker, Smith and Williams, 1992, p51

Responding to homelessness

Research undertaken by Withers and Randolph (1994) into housing associations and homelessness provides a more general picture of association activity. Two postal surveys of associations and local authorities were undertaken in April to June 1993 in the one hundred "homelessness stress" areas which they had identified. Interviews with local authority housing department staff and housing association staff in ten sample local authorities supplemented this information. Statistical data were derived from CORE and HIP data for the relevant periods.

They found that some local authorities were facing "severe pressure" since the number of homeless households whom they anticipated having to rehouse as statutory homeless exceeded their likely available vacancies. This was more common in London boroughs and was also "widely spread" in non-metropolitan and rural districts. Surprisingly, they found that relatively few metropolitan districts outside of London were in this situation. Associations had increased the rate at which they rehoused homeless applicants in the period 1990 to 1993, in some instances many times over. Most authorities were satisfied with the way the nominations process worked in their area and the role of housing associations. Their "greatest concern" was the level of association rents and the inappropriate size of some association property offered (p73). They were also unhappy that some nominees refused housing association offers. Over 90% of the local authorities in this study made only one offer of accommodation to homeless households (following a "one offer only" policy) whilst they made multiple offers to people on

their waiting lists. They expected associations to do the same (although a number of associations would not).

From the associations point of view, local authority nominations did not always appear to be in more "housing need" than applicants from the associations' own waiting lists. Over a half of the associations surveyed (forty six out of eighty five) said that homeless households would not necessarily get priority over other applications (p101). One of the exceptions, cited most often was the need to give most urgent priority to those existing association tenants who needed to move urgently because they were "fleeing domestic/racial violence" (mentioned by 36%). The researchers concluded

"While there is undoubted scope to improve the level of homeless nominations overall, it seems that both the nature of housing association stock, the geography of homelessness and local authority policy clearly set basic limits to maximising the full potential of the nominations system for alleviating homelessness."

Withers and Randolph, 1994, p30

Domestic violence and homelessness

The two main studies which were completed on the housing options of women leaving domestic violence need to be considered against this changing association background. 13 of the 52 women who were rehoused in Malos and Hague with Dear's study (1993) were rehoused by housing associations. They tended to have particular characteristics, the majority either not being in "priority need" or not having a "strong local connection." Women compared the quality of accommodation received from associations favourably against what they thought they would have been offered by the local authority but "concern was widely expressed" about the high level of rents which associations charged. Malos and Hague with Dear believed that associations' role would continue to be complementary to that of the local authority although they recognised that associations had increased the numbers of nominated homeless households whom they rehoused.

In Charles with Jones' study (1993) of Welsh local authority and housing association practice, 40 women were rehoused by associations in the period 1990 to 1991. 10 women were rehoused by associations because they were nominated by the local authority. 27 were rehoused as direct applicants from the associations' waiting lists. 3 were nominated by a Women's Aid refuge to an association. She explained the differences in the rehousing performance of the local authorities and housing associations in terms of the relative size of their housing stocks and the fact that associations did not have a statutory duty to rehouse homeless households. She found that even associations which had developed refuge provision for Women's Aid groups did not necessarily rehouse more women into permanent accommodation than other associations. Nevertheless, although the figures were low, Charles with Jones found that in some local authority areas, associations housed more women than the local authority (pp55-56). In these areas, they had effectively taken on a statutory rather than a complementary role.

A good practice guide "Women and Violence at Home" (Davis, 1993) was subsequently published by the NFHA to help associations which wanted to develop policy and practice in this field. No research into association activity since then has shown how, why and under what circumstances women who have left violent men obtain nominations or apply directly to associations for rehousing. The research which follows attempts to do that.

CHANGING THE LEGISLATION: THE IMPACT OF THE HOUSING ACT 1996

The Conservative government reviewed the way in which Part III of the Housing Act 1985 was working in November 1989. It concluded that the legislation was working "reasonably well" and should not be changed. By January 1994, it had changed its mind and published a consultation paper "Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies," proposing new legislation (DoE, 1994). It claimed that homeless people were using the Housing Act 1985 Part III to "fast-track" into

social housing to the detriment of those on the waiting list (2.8). It proposed to minimise local authority statutory obligations. Authorities in future would be expected to provide time-limited temporary accommodation to those who could find no alternative themselves and who were literally roofless. They would have to integrate homeless applicants within waiting list priorities (to be specified by central government) and to provide housing advice services to help people to find their own accommodation.

The majority of responses received by the DoE as part of the formal consultation exercise were very critical of these proposals. For example, the NFHA's response (NFHA, March 1994) was uniformly critical of the reduction in rights for homeless people and the proposals for "unified waiting lists" with centrally determined priorities. Its view was that local authorities had the "strategic responsibility" for assessing housing need in their areas, that central government intervention would be inefficient and that associations were independent organisations which were constitutionally obliged to determine and work to their own "housing need" priorities. Nevertheless, the government proceeded to legislate.

The subsequent White Paper "Our Future Homes" (DoE, 1995a), made few changes to the proposals - which became the Housing Act 1996. The intention of the legislation was that certain groups of homeless people might be assisted by local authorities with temporary accommodation if there was nothing available from the private sector. Their housing application for permanent accommodation would be considered alongside others on the waiting list (or housing register as it became). The government was to provide guidance on local authority housing register priorities. This did, in effect, mark a return to the situation before 1977.

Subsequent guidance on the priorities to be followed in housing registers, "Allocation of Housing Accommodation by Local Authorities" (DoE, 1996), provided more detail on the "unified waiting list." Women who were homeless because of domestic violence (whether or not they had dependent children) were not

one of the priorities. Their circumstances would have to be dealt with by local authorities under another priority heading (for example, insecure accommodation).

At the beginning of this Chapter, it was emphasized that local authority access and allocation have been predicated on the nuclear family and the ideology of familism. The various ways in which discretion based on this was used in relation to waiting list applications was described and the complexities identified - especially in relation to the meshing of class, "race" and gender divisions in decision-making. The contention that women were rehoused because of their role in the family (and in relation to dependent children) was explored. A similar critical review of the literature on local authority rehousing practice on homelessness (especially in relation to domestic violence) was then undertaken. Relationship breakdown and domestic violence - and the frequent lack of policies and consistent practice - to assist people in this situation - were the invisible side of familism.

However, changes have occurred over fifty years. Whilst some authorities have continued to send women back "home" to rely on civil remedies for their protection, others have rehoused women, recognising the dangerous situation they had survived to date and their wish to leave. It is not stretching what has happened too far to say that there has seemed to be a spectrum of attitudes towards women in this situation. At one end, women have been treated as individuals with their own volition and, whether or not they have dependent children, they have been rehoused. In the middle, women have been treated as mothers or as "vulnerable." They have been rehoused if they have remained homeless and at risk despite following the local authority's advice. Finally, at the other end of the spectrum, women have been treated as mothers and "wives" and have been sent back "home" to their violent partner with the instruction that they exhaust all legal avenues to their former "home." Where a local authority fell within this spectrum and why it occupied that particular position was not possible to tell from the research to date.

The Housing Act 1996 had the distinct potential to undermine any possibility of women being rehoused by the local authority if they were homeless. It was not clear

at the time of this research exactly how local authorities would respond. Housing associations similarly were put in a difficult situation. Would they continue to be able to rehouse from their own waiting lists or would nominations take over with government-determined priorities via the housing register? The research which follows sought to explore these questions through investigating what happened to the housing association applications of women who were homeless because of domestic violence.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study of three case-study associations' management practice was designed to answer a number of research questions about how women might obtain association accommodation if they were homeless because of domestic violence. The interviews and observation were undertaken in 1997 and 1998. The first research questions asked about the nature of the informal and formal processes through which direct waiting list applications, nominations and transfer applications would be considered. The next research question asked about the nature of the management service provided to women who had been rehoused because of domestic violence, especially in relation to their support needs. This linked with the third main question which enquired about the role which associations may have in relation to inter-agency developments and co-operation. The final research question sought to discover what women thought of associations as landlords (in relation to the management service) and what they thought of their new homes and the areas in which they now lived.

Changing management practices introduced because of privatisation, including the increasing significance of managerialism (Pollitt, 1980; Hood, 1991), were affecting access, assessment and allocation processes in associations. To understand what the study might unearth and to ensure wider applicability, the case-study associations had to be situated within a dynamic framework of power relations. The study became a materialist analysis of the way class relations and patriarchal assumptions about families and women's roles within them were structured within the decision-making processes relating to access and allocation of association housing. These might also be affected in different ways by racism. Women would have varying experiences of direct and indirect racism or harassment or exclusion, perhaps (but not necessarily) through experience of local and/or transnational mobility (for marriage and/or work).

All of these would become evident through staff attitudes (which women might encounter), organisational practices (which might affect women in different ways depending on their relationship to "the family") and in the way legislation worked (to ease, inhibit or prohibit women's access to social rented housing). At a micro-level, differences in power were most clearly discernable in this study at the interface of organisations (between the local authority and the housing associations), internally within staff hierarchies within the associations (front line staff compared to senior staff in housing associations) and between association landlords and tenants/ applicants.

THE CASE-STUDY APPROACH

A number of studies of the nature of housing management services in local authorities and housing associations have been quantitative in nature, concentrating on the service in general (Bines, Kemp, Pleace and Radley, 1993; Clapham, Goodlad, Kemp, MacLennan, Malcolm, Satsangi, Stanforth and Whitefield, 1989) or particular aspects of it (Withers and Randolph, 1994). These could not provide the information which was needed for this study. The case-study approach was used because the complexity of the housing management processes involved needed to be captured and this approach enabled a number of methods to be used so that "reasonable judgements about causal relationships" could be made (Hammersley, 1992, p196). This approach to studying housing organisations is reasonably well established, certainly in relation to homelessness and the local authority response to domestic violence.

Three case-study associations were selected for the main part of this research. Each of the associations worked within the boundaries of one local authority (though, in one instance, not exclusively). They were selected on the basis of their differing organisational histories and stock size (detailed later in this Chapter). Some studies have been based on case-studies of particular organisations (usually local authorities), concentrating on a particular aspect of management (Niner, 1989;

Parker, Smith and Williams, 1992). Others have used case-studies in studying local authority responses to domestic violence, where the aim has been to find out how and why local authority housing staff have responded to homeless women in particular ways (Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993; Mama, 1989). Little has been undertaken in relation to housing associations but the case study approach was chosen so that it would be possible to illuminate the reasons why association staff behaved in the ways they did, including identifying whether their attitudes towards the family or women's role were influential in assessment and allocation within the associations.

The selection of local authority case-studies in the research conducted by Malos and Hague with Dear (1993) and Bull (1993) were two examples of what Bryman (1988) has described as picking a case-study which is "typical" of a certain cluster of characteristics. This has been a response to the criticism that the case-study approach is too particularistic, producing findings from which it is hard to generalise. Bryman suggested that case-studies should not be looked at in statistical terms, but that they

"...are indeed capable of addressing generality if this is understood in theoretical rather than statistical terms."

Bryman, 1988, p18; see also Yin, 1984)

Malos and Hague with Dear (1993) selected four local authorities as case-studies based on their geographical location, population characteristics, known policy and practice in relation to homelessness and domestic violence, political control and the presence (or otherwise) of a local refuge and other appropriate temporary provision. Bull (1993) selected six local authorities mainly on the basis of "broad brush" indicators of their "liberalness" in relation to relationship breakdown. A stratified random sample of local authorities had previously provided information about local authority attitudes towards relationship breakdown as a management problem, their practice in relation to the disposal of tenancies and the authorities' use of refuges and bed and breakfast hotels.

Three associations agreed to become case-studies for this research. They were a small black housing association, a medium-sized city-wide association and a large multi-regional association. Semi-structured interviews with staff, consideration of formal policy and other documents and observation sessions were all part of the analysis of how access to associations might be negotiated/obtained by women, how their applications for housing might be considered and how property might be allocated to them. Each of the associations worked within the boundaries of one local authority. Considering the local authority's role in relation to the associations was also essential - in relation to its decision-making on homelessness, the impact of its changing housing register priorities, its nominations practice and the nature of its "enabling role" (including influencing policy development in the associations). Senior staff who worked in the central homeless teams and in three Neighbourhood Offices were interviewed. A number of senior policy officers were also interviewed about the development of the domestic violence policy, the way waiting list priorities were changed and how nominations performance was monitored by the local authority. Committee reports and other documents were considered on the way the authority responded to homeless applications and the implementation of the domestic violence policy. Staff who worked within the refuges and in two women's hostels in the city were also interviewed to discover their views of housing associations. Finally, women who had become association tenants were interviewed. They provided different insights - about being homeless and the nature of temporary accommodation, being rehoused by associations and their ongoing concern about personal safety. Apart from considering the local authority's "enabling role" from different perspectives, it was not intended to triangulate the data (Denzin, 1970) as the social realities being commented upon were too complex, had occurred over slightly different periods of time and involved different actors.

THE LOCAL AUTHORITY CONTRIBUTION TO THE CASE-STUDIES

Aspects of its work which were considered

A number of specific aspects of the work of the local authority were considered. These were its assessment of homeless women, its domestic violence policy, nominations practice and inter-agency work. The local authority's service to the homeless was decentralised. Staff dealt with single homeless people centrally but families were largely the responsibility of the Neighbourhood Offices. A small central team of specialists provided advice to these Offices and a much reduced service to homeless families who applied centrally. Relatively large numbers of women who were homeless because of domestic violence were accepted as statutory homeless each year. One question for this study was whether there were differences in approach between the centralised specialists and Neighbourhood Office generalists.

The Housing Committee of this local authority had agreed a policy in relation to responding to domestic violence, giving guidance to staff on the circumstances to consider, the nature of "proof" of violence required, the issue of rent arrears and a number of other matters. It was expected that homeless women would be assessed sympathetically but how was the formal policy actually interpreted by staff? Would women in certain situations or with particular circumstances be treated differently from the ways the policy specified? Although the authority recognised women as statutory homeless in these circumstances, would they be registered with sufficient priority on the housing register to be nominated to associations? Would they want to be? Finally, how would women assessed as a priority by the local authority (presumably following the policy guidelines) be considered subsequently by housing association staff who might have different views?

Finally, this local authority supported inter-agency work in an area of the city in which all the associations worked and in which a local authority inter-agency project team had concentrated its resources over several years. This made it possible to

consider the extent to which the authority had adopted an “enabling role” in relation to association policy development and inter-agency work.

Obtaining access to staff for interviews

Bulmer has commented that there needs to be more discussion about how researchers gain access to organisations - their initial and subsequent contacts and the ways in which they establish their presence, since this may affect the perspectives they obtain (Bulmer, 1988, pp152-153). Permission was sought for interviews with local authority staff in different ways. The eight staff who were administratively regarded as part of the client side of the local authority were approached individually by telephone or letter. The staff who were contacted in this way were the Principal Officers for the two centrally based homeless teams, the Women's Officer who had developed the domestic violence policy, staff who were engaged in inter-agency work (who were technically in another Department), a special needs officer who oversaw the development of emergency accommodation and the Principal Officer who oversaw the nominations function and changes to the housing register. Information from the Research Manager was obtained over the telephone and helpful reports were forwarded. All of these interviews took place between July and December 1997 and were taped. The researcher was known to a number of staff through previous professional work. They agreed to be interviewed and spoke to other colleagues to ensure that they agreed to be interviewed.

A different approach was adopted to gain access to Managers who worked in the Neighbourhood Offices. Their perspectives were needed on how homeless women were assessed and allocated council property and the nature of the working relationship with associations in their management areas. A formal letter was sent to the Contract Services Manager who oversaw the contracted-out housing management service. It outlined the research, explained its relevance to the Department and emphasised the confidentiality of findings. The letter also made reference to the researcher's professional background and CIOH membership as a way of ensuring that the request was treated seriously. Within six weeks,

permission had been given and a discussion had produced agreement about the three Managers whom the researcher could contact. The Contract Services Manager sent them a memo outlining what the research was about and asking them to make time available when contacted. These interviews took place in November and December of 1997. The Contract Manager who oversaw the work of two of these Managers was also interviewed during that time. All of these interviews were taped.

Ethics in interviewing local authority staff

All of the staff interviewed worked at a senior level and had been doing their particular jobs for over five years. Their responses to the interview questions were used in two ways. Firstly they provided information in a literal way (for example, in relation to how the homeless legislation was interpreted or the housing register changes were undertaken). They were also used to obtain local authority perspectives on associations and how they worked in rehousing women who were homeless having left violent men.

All of the interviews were taped. The tape recorder was turned off when client side officers requested this or were clearly uncomfortable with some of their comments being recorded. The views they expressed or information given when the tape recorder was turned off were not formally noted at the time by the researcher but they acted as clues to what might subsequently be usefully asked at interviews with other staff, in different parts of the authority. Data identifiable to particular staff and their personal histories were not used in the subsequent analysis to preserve anonymity. If two or more staff made similar comments (as they did about ward member influence and the previously centralised homeless service) this was used as data in the analysis. Care had to be exercised to distinguish which associations the various local authority staff members were most familiar with and which associations they were making specific or general comments about. To preserve the anonymity of the case-study associations, no staff member was given any inkling of which associations were the case-studies in this study.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE REFUGES AND WOMEN'S HOSTELS TO THE CASE-STUDIES

There were two refuges in the city - a Women's Aid refuge and a black women's refuge. Interviews with representatives of the refuges were arranged because the refuges provided temporary accommodation for women who were homeless and who had left violent men. Interviews with staff in two women's hostels were also included in the research as they were owned by two of the associations which were case-studies in the research so were part of the associations' responses to homelessness. Only a minority of women who lived in the associations' hostels had left violent men, but the views of staff were valuable none the less in relation to their rehousing prospects.

Obtaining access to staff for interviews

Obtaining an interview from a representative of each of the two refuges was a difficult task. There were long delays, messages were not responded to and arrangements were not kept by staff contacted in both refuges. A letter to the Manager was sent to the Women's Aid refuge. It proved very difficult to speak to her. Numerous messages were left unanswered although staff who answered the telephone reassured the researcher that they had been passed on. Sheer persistence eventually succeeded. The Manager nominated the Assistant Manager to be interviewed who was more helpful. Personal contact via a Committee member was used to obtain an interview with a staff member from the black women's refuge since there was no Manager in post. Staff had to be instructed by a Committee member to give interviews such as this. One staff member was interviewed over two sessions. By contrast, contacting staff in the two women's hostels owned by Bluebell HA and Foxglove HA respectively was a straightforward task. They were employed and managed directly by the associations. Staff were contacted over the telephone to arrange appointments and these were kept. In both instances, they had been already informed about the research by their managers.

The difficulties in contacting particular staff in the refuges did not appear to be as a result of their having too many demands on their time. Both refuges were experiencing voids problems at the time. The amount of time it took for simple requests to be dealt with and the problem of broken arrangements (not notified in advance) indicated management problems rather than insufficient staff. None of the interviewees in the refuges could be told which associations were case-studies to maintain their anonymity. The staff in the women's hostels knew that their own association was participating as a case-study because they had been told by senior staff (and later the researcher). Care still had to be exercised to maintain the confidentiality of the other two case-study associations.

Ethics in interviewing refuge and women's hostel staff

It was recognised that safety and confidentiality would be central concerns in arrangements for interviews with staff. Three separate interviews were undertaken with refuge representatives. All of them took place in public places of their choosing to ensure the continuing secrecy of the refuges' locations. Care was exercised to ensure that the interview could not be overheard by anyone sitting nearby. The interview with the Women's Aid representative was taped. Two interviews with a woman from the black women's refuge had to be noted rather than taped as she was reluctant to be taped. Three separate interviews with staff members were arranged for one afternoon in one of the women's hostels since its location was not kept secret (although access was carefully controlled). In the other women's hostel, the staff member came to the association's Office as the hostel address was kept secret. These were all taped.

As far as the refuges were concerned, the interviews were important because of the general opinions of associations which emerged. Staff also revealed that, at that time, few women were being rehoused by associations. Tulip HA was the exception to this. The women's hostel staff commented similarly. In all instances, the local authority was rehousing the majority of women who wanted to be rehoused - although not always into reasonable quality accommodation. The interviews with

refuge staff were also useful in confirming the picture of difficult circumstances which emerged from the interviews with women who had used them.

There were other potential difficulties with the interviews with refuge staff which had to be thought through by the researcher before the actual interviews. By the time they were arranged, a number of interviews had taken place with women who were association tenants who had lived in one or other of the refuges. These had been critical of the refuge provision. The content of these was not divulged at all to the refuge representatives but they alerted the researcher to the need to be careful in asking questions about staff training and supervision, occupancy rates, support for women, assistance with finding alternative accommodation and safety. In particular, the researcher asked for refuge interviewees' opinions about the rehousing prospects of women in the past. In this way, it was hoped to obtain information about the work of the various associations in the city and the work of staff in the refuges to help women obtain housing.

It emerged that there had been staffing difficulties and poor physical conditions in both refuges over the previous few years. This had particularly been the case over the period in which the women who were interviewed for this study had used the refuges. These difficulties were also independently remarked upon by a local authority member of staff and an independent advice agency. Consequently, women's views of the refuges which were very critical were included in the subsequent analysis as data. This was the second way in which data was triangulated (Denzin, 1970). It had not been in the original plan but had to be undertaken given the critical comments which had been made by women.

HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS AS CASE STUDIES

Selecting associations

The associations in this study were selected primarily because they were examples of associations of different sizes and histories and it was anticipated that they might

illustrate a range of possible responses to women leaving domestic violence. One was a small black association (established in the late 1980s), the second was a medium sized community-based association (which had been set up in the 1970s) and the third was a large multi-regional association (which had been established in the 1960s). They owned and managed about 700, 1,700 and 41,000 homes respectively (though the multi-regional association managed about 1,500 from the Area Office in this study).

The location of their Offices and some of their housing stock was important. They were all based in a part of the city where inter-agency initiatives had been supported by the local authority. Each of the associations had participated in a consortium with the local authority to provide over 2000 new association homes, in various parts of the city. This meant that all of the associations had grown rapidly in size in the immediate past. The consortium estates which they managed had to be let at higher nominations rates than the association's older stock. Because of this, the relationship with the local authority was important, especially in relation to the rate at which the authority nominated households and the housing associations rehoused them.

Each of the associations appeared to have different management approaches in responding to domestic violence and this was another reason for their selection as case-study organisations. The multi-regional association had a formal domestic violence policy which was sympathetic towards women but its practice was unknown. The community-based association had failed in its attempt to write a formal policy but its staff seemed broadly sympathetic. Again, its actual practice was unknown. The small black association had no policy. It had acquired a poor reputation in responding to women in this situation. It had requested help from the local authority to improve its service.

Deciding whether to participate

Permission from the associations to participate in the study was obtained formally and was a far more complex task than obtaining access to local authority staff. Formal permission (and the discussions associated with obtaining it) was necessary since many staff would be involved and there were points at which it was planned to observe their work. The researcher had previously obtained the informal agreement for involvement from the Chief Executive of the community-based association and the Housing Manager of the black association. The likely response of the multi-regional association (where a new Area Director had recently come into post) could not be guessed. A formal letter with an outline research brief was sent to each of the associations in May 1997.

When they realised from the research brief what might be involved, the staff who were contacted initially in the three associations responded in different ways. These responses seemed to be illustrative of the ways of working later found to be commonplace within the three associations. Each had repercussions for the research.

The black association's staff seemed unsure of how to proceed. The Housing Manager in the black association felt that the Chief Executive and Committee needed to decide, given the staff time which would be involved. The researcher was asked to write a report for the Board and to attend its next meeting (two months hence) to present the research proposal and answer questions. The paper was sent in although eventually the Housing Manager decided that attending the Board meeting was not necessary and agreement was given. The researcher was asked to attend a staff meeting before the interviewing started, as a personal introduction to staff and to answer any questions about the research.

The Chief Executive of the community-based association was also bothered by the implications of the brief. His immediate concerns were threefold: the use of staff time when everyone was already over-worked; the likely response of Committee members to the research and finally, whether the association would get anything

useful in return. Subject to acknowledging these, and agreement from the researcher that elements in the research brief could be changed in recognition of staff workloads, he delegated detailed discussions to three senior staff. The association had a culture in which excessive meetings and pressure on time seemed to go hand in hand. Three meetings totalling three hours, over two weeks, then took place with them. In theory, these were to discuss the details of what could be done but this never emerged as an issue. The brief remained unchanged except, at their suggestion, interviews with staff at the association's new women's hostel were also included.

The Housing Manager rather than the Area Director in the multi-regional association had been sent the formal letter. This had been insisted upon by the "customer services" staff whom the researcher contacted to find out the new Area Director's name. In practice, the Housing Manager proved to be very elusive. Eventually, after numerous telephone messages had been left unanswered, the Area Director rang back. He explained that the details had been passed to him by the Housing Manager. He pointed out that the letter should have been sent to him in the first place! The multi-regional association had given senior staff in the local authority a new delegated authority which the new Area Director was happy to exercise. A meeting was arranged and agreement was reached in three-quarters of an hour on all the elements of the research brief without any changes. Interviewees were agreed. He subsequently sent a memo to staff (with a note prepared by the researcher attached) asking them to set aside two hours for an interview. He suggested named interviewees in HQ and wrote to them, indicating his Office's involvement and asking them to see the researcher.

All of the association's senior staff insisted that the association should not be identified in any report or study subsequently produced. Consequently, in this thesis, the associations are given pseudonyms: the black association became Tulip HA, the community based association became Bluebell HA and the multi-regional association became Foxglove HA.

Interviewing staff in associations

Selecting who to interview and informed consent

There were a number of possible difficulties in selecting staff to be interviewed. This has been recognised to be an issue in the literature although in organisational research it is difficult to deal with. It has been suggested that there is a danger that interviewees picked by senior management may be unwilling, resentful and less inclined to speak openly about organisational matters (Buchanan, Boddy and McCalman, 1988, pp56-58). An alternative view is that staff might be selected to try to ensure that a positive picture of the organisation is presented. In this study, the senior managers expected to select interviewees. The research could not have proceeded without their involvement. In reality, the selection was the result of discussion between the researcher and senior management. The researcher's known preference was to obtain interviews with staff who had been doing the job for several years (and would therefore be expected to understand the process and have relevant experience). Staff needed to be interviewed who were situated at all levels of the housing management hierarchy in each association. This range of experience was successfully obtained from Chief Executive and senior management to front-line staff. If choices had to be made between different staff, the Chief Executive/Area Director selected whom they thought should be interviewed.

Twelve staff were interviewed in Bluebell HA ranging from the Chief Executive, one Director of Housing, three Managers and five Housing Officers/hostel workers and the two staff who administered the waiting list. Staff who worked in the women's hostel were interviewed in the hostel. Ten staff were interviewed in Foxglove HA ranging from the Area Director, two Managers, three Housing Services Officers, one women's hostel worker, a support worker and a Customer Services Officer. Two staff were interviewed at the association's headquarters - the Equal Opportunities Advisor and the Business Support Manager. The Vice-Chair of the association and six staff were interviewed in Tulip HA - the Chief Executive, the Housing Manager, Senior Housing Officer, two Housing Officers and the Housing Services Administrator who administered the waiting list.

There was also another important issue: the need for the researcher to be seen as independent of senior management (Blau, 1963; Buchanen, Boddy and McCalman, 1988, p57; Crompton and Jones, 1988, p70). This was emphasised in different ways. Firstly, interviews were entirely confidential (and this was emphasised with staff). Secondly, information about the research was given to them before the interview (in "staff-friendly" rather than academic language). Thirdly, staff were invited to contact the researcher with any queries or comments before the interview.

The Chief Executives and senior staff in this study gave their informed consent to be interviewed. They had been given information about the research and had discussed (and in some instances changed) the research programme. Front-line and hostel staff were not so directly involved, initially. They were informed of their participation by senior staff. As a way of trying to ensure that their consent to be interviewed was informed, the researcher sent information for internal distribution to each staff member about the study with an invitation to them to contact her for further discussion before the interview. No-one contacted the researcher in this way. To ensure clarity, the aims of the research were outlined again at the beginning of each interview and the researcher sought individual confirmation that the staff member was happy to proceed. Additionally, the researcher emphasised the confidential nature of the interview at the beginning and end of the interview. It was important to have all these possible ways of discussing and, if necessary, choosing not to be interviewed, given the nature of the subject under discussion. Staff might have experienced domestic violence themselves and might find it difficult to talk about the subject.

Senior managers were less willing for Committee/Board members to be interviewed. In two associations they felt that interviewing Committee members would provide little or no useful information. In one, this was because the local Committee was new. In the other, it was because the Committee had not considered domestic violence as a policy issue and the Chief Executive feared that they would ask for more work to be done in relation to the issue. Interviewing them might create a

momentum of interest - which would create additional unplanned work for staff. Given these views, the researcher decided that it would not be useful to pursue policy development at this level.

Interview times with staff in two associations were arranged internally. A schedule was then sent to the researcher. Whilst it might have been seen as potentially undermining of an independent position, it seemed churlish to refuse this offer of help and it might have created difficulties. In the multi-regional association, the researcher contacted staff herself to arrange interview times. Half the interviewees were relatively easy to contact and made an appointment time for the interview time straightforwardly. The other half were not: proving to be very elusive. When they finally responded to the researcher's numerous telephone calls/messages, they appeared less than keen to spend time being interviewed. Comments included, "I suppose I'd better get this over and done with" and "I don't need two hours I can tell you in ten minutes - the policy's rubbish!" This might be interpreted as confirmation of Buchanan et al's warning. It might equally have been a reaction to work pressures or the way the decision to participate had been made and staff involvement communicated unilaterally by the Area Director. The researcher was not aware of similar comments from staff in the other associations, possibly because she had not directly arranged them. It might be guessed that less than willing staff only participated because they were told to do so by their managers, who decided that it was a legitimate part of their work. Whether consent was informed and entirely willing in these instances was not known although no interviewees appeared to be reticent in answering questions and a number who had been reluctant, later said that they had enjoyed the experience (meaning that they had found it useful to reflect on what they did).

The interviewer/interviewee relationship

There were particular ways of approaching the interviews with staff which made it more likely that "rapport" would be developed although this had to be seen in the context of establishing trust and acknowledging the power relationships between the interviewer and various levels of staff (see Jones, 1985 for a longer discussion; Buchanan, Boddy and McCalman, 1988, pp58-63; Crompton and Jones, 1988, pp68-

70). Interviewing in an appropriate style and pitching the content of the interview correctly was important. Assuring interviewees that confidentiality would be maintained in an active and responsive fashion was also crucial. Active consideration of the interviewee as a member of staff with a job to do was also helpful - for example, acknowledging and respecting the constraints of time and other work demands on interviewees. Establishing and maintaining a professionalism in language, "tone" and dress and putting people at their ease when it appeared that they were doubtful, anxious or uneasy were also essential.

Two different types of interview schedule and styles were used in the interviews with association staff. These were developed after a standard semi-structured questionnaire had been piloted with a senior manager and Chief Executive in two other associations (comparable to the case study associations in size and history). It became clear that most senior staff would not be able to answer operational housing management questions. They could identify and discuss the repercussions of a range of issues relating to the operating environment in which the association was situated and organisational changes which had occurred since 1988. Using topic guides for senior staff interviews instead of a questionnaire enabled the complexities of the association's position to emerge. The semi-structured questionnaire was used in interviewing front-line management staff. The piloted version was shortened and sections were structured so that they could be left out, if they were found to be inappropriate to a particular staff member's actual job. In this way, a certain amount of comparison could also be undertaken between responses of staff in the three associations.

Maintaining confidentiality and putting staff at ease in their interviews was important because it was likely to make them less reticent about discussing what they actually did in work. Senior staff agreed that the interviews should be confidential. The researcher had tactfully made it clear that confidentiality was essential. (Difficulties which might have occurred with this requirement may have been pre-empted by promising a detailed report to help them with their policy and practice development). At certain points in particular interviews the tape-recorder

was switched off - either on the suggestion of the researcher or the request of the staff member being interviewed because it was clear that they were speaking "off the record." From the point of view of the researcher, these disclosures were sometimes interesting for what they signified in a wider sense, rather than for the particular details which were recalled. They were often illustrations of "the way things are done here."

Surprisingly, the amount of time to be set aside by staff to complete the interview did not become a problem. The researcher was clear with front-line management staff that about two hours was needed. Some were shorter than this. One or two lasted longer than this. The maximum was four hours because the member of staff gave very long answers! Middle managers also had an interview which lasted about two hours and (apart from one person) they fitted this into their schedules. Interviews with Chief Executives (or their equivalents) were never longer than one hour.

Language, "tone" and dress are features associated with maintaining a particular stance in relation to staff in organisations.

"Members of organisations become adept at judging the personalities of those with whom they work closely, and the same applies to researchers with whom they come into contact."

Bulmer, 1988, p153

The appropriate use of language in organisational settings - being able to understand and use the jargon and shorthand - is important for researchers trying to "blend in" so that they might understand how the work gets done. The researcher's professional background was housing management so she was used to talking about "units," "noms," "hb," "voids," "the Corporation" and so on and could gear it to the particular experience/work setting of the staff member being interviewed. Similarly, the researcher dressed to blend in rather than stand out! The "tone" in which the interviews were conducted may have helped with these different discussions. It is

likely that an apparently shared housing managerial view of the world between the researcher and those being interviewed helped in establishing a productive conversation. Bulmer referred to this as "the ability of the researcher to tune into the environment being studied and pick up clues despite pre-conceptions that they may have" (Bulmer, 1988, p154). Smart (1984) raised this in her discussion about interviewing members of the legal profession. She noticed that there was an assumption on the part of the interviewees that they all shared a particular "world view." She felt that it was this presumption which enabled her interviews with them to proceed smoothly. She believed that her gender was less important (even when interviewing men) since the assumption was that they shared a common legal way of looking at problems. Understanding this, and not consciously undermining it, established "rapport."

In many senses, it is likely that this occurred in the researcher's interviews with management staff. For the white woman researcher, this meant putting personal views into the background, in order to enable a smooth flow of conversation about issues which staff felt were important. Men (Asian and white) and women (African Caribbean, Asian and white) were interviewed for this study. All of them seemed willing to discuss their views on rehousing women although only front-line staff and a minority of senior staff were able to discuss the issue in detail. Senior staff (men - Asian and white; women - African Caribbean and white) tended to discuss the issues in broader terms. Some senior staff (one African Caribbean and three white) had more knowledge of the subject area even though all senior staff had worked in front-line housing management at the start of their careers. The more knowledgeable were the two white men who were the most senior staff in Foxglove HA and an African Caribbean woman and a white woman who were both managers in Bluebell HA. In the former instance, the association's policy had made them both familiar with the issue whilst in the latter instance, the women had experience derived from working in the local authority's homeless section (when it had been centralised) and in a number of hostels across the city.

In the interviews with the Chief Executives/Area Director, it was clear that detailed questioning about the housing management implications of domestic violence would produce an embarrassing series of "don't knows." Rather than have the interview become an entirely negative experience for these staff, the subject matter was broadened out in the topic guide so that all senior staff could discuss their understanding of the association's experience of dealing with homelessness, nominations, ward member influence and the development programme. This provided strategic information which was valuable in situating the association relative to the local authority and gave an overview of the association and how its work had changed since the Housing Act 1988.

Observing staff

The role of observer

Two areas of work in the three associations were observed as part of this study. The first was the work undertaken in the reception areas of the three associations. The second was allocation meetings and decisions in relation to particular vacancies. In both work areas, the researcher's role was that of a non-participant observer - a position which had to be adopted because of the relatively short period of time over which it was possible to observe what was happening (see May, 1993 pp138-141 for more discussion of this). Both sets of observation sessions were arranged after the staff interviews had been completed in each association. It was hoped that in that way staff would be familiar with the researcher's presence in the association, would be reasonably familiar with what she was doing and consequently would not change their behaviour because of her presence.

Although the intention had been to reduce the effects of researcher presence as much as possible, there were particular situations in which this was not possible for ethical as well as practical reasons. The key to involvement (limited though it was) was whether there was an immediate threat of physical violence to the staff or members of the public. Whilst observing reception services in Tulip HA, the researcher offered advice to try and calm a potentially physically violent man. Similarly, a

reminder to staff was given to check on a woman colleague in an interview room. She was interviewing a man who had been very threatening in the reception area.

Selecting times to observe

The observation in association reception areas was undertaken for two hours on two separate occasions in each association between August and November 1997. The staff who worked there were consulted about whether they would be happy for the researcher to observe what they did. The researcher made it clear that she was independent of senior management and would not be reporting back (see Blau, 1963; Buchanen, Boddy and McCalman, 1988; Crompton and Jones, 1988 for a discussion of this). When they agreed, they were asked to select two times for the researcher to "sit in," during which they were likely to be busy. There were a number of reasons for this. Firstly, it was hoped that staff would be sufficiently busy to tend to forget that the researcher was present and consequently not act in a constrained fashion. Secondly, it was hoped that the nature of the service would become reasonably clear over a short period of time. Thirdly, the way in which staff thought of busyness was relevant information for the analysis. They identified the periods when they expected to be handling the maximum number of individual requests from callers by telephone or personally. They did not include any "follow up" work in this assessment, which suggested that this was kept to a minimum or was accorded lower priority.

Observation of allocation meetings was more difficult to arrange and took place after the observation of the reception services (in August, October and December 1997). One problem with arranging attendance in each of the associations was that these meetings took place when they were needed rather than at prescribed times. It was necessary for staff to contact the researcher at short notice to check whether a meeting could be attended both by staff and the researcher. Staff in two associations were happy to do this. The Housing Manager in the multi-regional association was not, the reason given being that the discussions were very speedy and unpredictable (in terms of timing). By chance, he moved jobs internally midway through the research and his successor was more helpful. It was a pity that no more than one meeting could be observed in each association. The original

intention had been to observe three but that had not been possible within any of the associations. This meant that the analysis of the allocation meetings had to be tentative - especially in relation to how attitudes towards women were used by staff in making decisions.

In two associations, these meetings involved discussions between two members of staff. In one association, only one member of staff was involved, because the other was ill. In the latter instance, the staff member talked through the process of making decisions out loud (for the benefit of the researcher). Again, this is not quite what the researcher had in mind when asking to observe meetings but two other allocation meetings in this association had previously been cancelled by staff so this meeting was valuable. The Senior Housing Officer commented that making allocation decisions by herself like this was not unusual so the data derived from this meeting had authenticity in that respect. Having said that, it was important to recognise that there were limitations to the analysis of the data, simply because of the time which was available to observe staff.

What was recorded?

The researcher took no part in any of the work in the reception areas which she observed although she occasionally asked questions about the procedures being followed or whether something was typical or unusual. The purpose of this observation was to find out the nature of enquiries and how staff responded to them. She noted who was working in the area and what they did. The number of enquiries and time involved in answering and responding to personal callers and telephone callers was noted. The perceived ethnic origin, gender and language use was noted for personal callers. If the nature of the enquiry could be identified (and a high percentage could) it was noted. These notes were then written up in full immediately afterwards.

In each allocation meeting, the researcher was interested in the features in applications which staff used in discussion and the ways in which they considered the applications - by date order, by gradually discounting applications through the

application of already agreed criteria, by comparing and contrasting applications on their own "merits" or by some other method. She particularly noted how they discussed applications involving violence. The researcher made notes on the general details of the applicant (household size and circumstances) which staff used in discussing particular applications. They made no reference to particular addresses - identifying applicants by their last names in discussion. The researcher could identify whose applications was being discussed but did not use the names subsequently to ensure confidentiality. All of the comments made by staff were noted contemporaneously. Again, notes were written up in full immediately after these meetings and subsequently analysed.

Documentary analysis

Another method which was used in this research was documentary analysis. There were two sets of documents which were considered - the associations' application forms (and accompanying guidance notes) and formal policy statements in relation to responding to domestic violence. Understanding these, in different ways (because they had different purposes) was important because this contributed to understanding the extent to which the associations in this study might be accessible to women who were homeless because of domestic violence.

The application forms and any accompanying information for applicants was evaluated to build up a picture of how easy or straightforward they might be for women to use. What information were women asked to provide on the application form about why they wanted housing? Were women asked to provide "proof" of violence and, if they were, was a particular form of "proof" specified? Was the application form provided in different formats and the information available in different languages? Was help available for women who did not read English? More generally, was information provided about interviewing arrangements, for example, information about private interviews, being interviewed by a woman if preferred, the availability of interpreters?

One association had a formal harassment policy (which included domestic violence). In a second association, a member of staff had prepared a draft policy but it had been abandoned before completion. These documents were considered in a number of ways. How had the policy been written? Who had been involved? If the policy had been agreed, had any changes subsequently been found to be necessary and how had they been made? Were there any points at which the policy and practice differed in the association and what were the reasons for this and the repercussions? The policy content was compared to that recommended by the NFHA (Davis, 1993) and the local authority's policy. The local authority's role in relation to the development of these policies in the associations was also considered (as part of its "enabling role").

THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN AS ASSOCIATION TENANTS

Understanding women's experiences and views about their search for housing was essential to developing a perspective on the ways in which the case-study associations responded to women who had left violent men. It had been planned to interview thirty women who had been rehoused because of domestic violence and who were tenants of the three case-study associations: ten African Caribbean, ten Asian and ten white women. In the event, eight women were interviewed: three Asian and five white women.

Contacting women through their association landlords

It had been agreed that housing management staff would contact women tenants who had been rehoused because of domestic violence. This was originally going to be the only way of contacting women. It had been planned that staff would identify women who had been rehoused because of violence and explain to them what the study was about through a letter or a visit to them at home. A letter from the researcher would be sent or left with the woman including a sheet (an "Invitation") which the woman could complete (with contact details) and return (in a pre-paid and addressed envelope) to the University. This way of contacting women had been

devised for three reasons. Firstly, it seemed to be a straightforward way of contacting the associations' tenants. Secondly, associations could maintain the confidentiality of their tenants. Finally, this approach maintained the privacy of women who were tenants. The association would not know who had subsequently responded and been interviewed. This was designed to enable women to be free to speak openly about their landlord without fear of repercussions.

The letters and "Invitations" were prepared in English and translated into Punjabi and Urdu by a professional translation service. Each association was given twenty copies of each to use as they needed. The "Invitations" were colour coded so that the researcher knew which association was involved when they were returned. The different associations approached the task of contacting women in different ways, with varying degrees of success.

The black association had a chronological list of people who had become the association's tenants. The list included each tenant's name, address and the main reason why they had been rehoused. The staff member who oversaw the administration of lettings volunteered to go through the list. She sent letters out to women on the list (ten to black women, eight to white women). She also visited them, where she knew the woman was Asian and could not read English, Punjabi or Urdu (three women). She explained the nature of the research and left the letter and "Invitation" sheet with the woman to return if she wanted. Neither of the other two associations had an equivalent list of tenants. The Manager in the multi-regional association had difficulty identifying women. Staff memories had to be relied on as there was no time to go through hundreds of tenancy files. He sent out eight letters and promised to send out others, if additional women could be identified. The Housing Manager in the community-based association appeared less than keen as this stage of the project arrived. When telephone calls were made to check on progress (three weeks and six weeks after the letters should have been sent out) he gave different reasons for not having done so. It is doubtful whether the letters were ever sent out from this association. No women came forward even though different

staff had said that they rehoused a reasonable number of women in this situation each year.

Ten weeks after the first letters had been sent to associations, a total of six women from two associations had come forward and been interviewed in their own homes: five who were the tenants of the black association and one who was a tenant of the multi-regional association. All but one had been rehoused because of violence from a partner or ex-partner. The fifth woman had been rehoused because a male neighbour had sexually abused her young daughter. Social Services had become involved and she lived in fear of him, personally and for her daughter's well-being. She had been rehoused due to "violence/harassment/abuse" and so had been contacted by the association's staff member. Given her particular experience (especially fearing assault) she was included in the study. Another woman sent back the sheet with details and a telephone number to arrange a visit. Several messages were left with a message taking service which were very carefully worded asking her to "get in touch"/ "give me a ring" about "calling round to see her." She never made contact.

Contacting women through the refuges and others

The researcher decided to extend the search to other organisations. The refuges were asked if they would be willing to contact women who had been rehoused as association tenants. This request was made during the interviews with representatives from the refuges (December/January 1997/1998). Extending the search in this way was potentially problematic for the original research design in that the refuge staff could not be told which associations were participating in the study. If women from different associations came forward, analysing their views about the management service in their associations might be problematic. In the event, however, this did not happen.

The Assistant Manager of the Women's Aid refuge decided that the easiest way to find out if women wanted to participate in the research was to ask the refuge support

workers to contact them directly. If a woman told support workers that she would be happy to be interviewed, the staff would send her name and address to the researcher. She declined to use the researcher's letter explaining the research and the "Invitation" contact sheet, despite the researcher explaining the need for confidentiality for the women. The Assistant Manager clearly assumed that the refuge staff and the women's interests were as one - although this was not necessarily the case. In the event, the name and telephone number of one woman was passed to the researcher a few weeks later in January 1998. The woman proved difficult to contact on the telephone but finally an appointment time was agreed. When the researcher called the woman was not at home. Numerous telephone calls (which were never answered) and a letter asking her to contact the researcher again, produced no response.

Staff in the black women's refuge sent the letter (and contact sheet) to women who had been rehoused by associations. They must have sent it to others as well because three months later (in March 1998) an Asian woman contacted the researcher. An interview was arranged and she was discovered to be a council tenant. Given her experience, where she lived and the fact that she needed help, the researcher decided to carry on with the interview and provide the help that she needed. Some data from the interview were included in the subsequent analysis (her experience of homelessness, views about the refuge and current safety).

Finally, the interpreter with whom the researcher worked offered to ask the small number of women in this situation whom she knew to have been rehoused by associations. One Asian woman agreed to be interviewed. Fortuitously, she was a tenant of Bluebell HA. This interview took place in June 1998 and was the last one which was undertaken.

There seemed to be a number of reasons why it proved so difficult to obtain interviews. In part, this was because contacting women could not be directly undertaken by the researcher. She relied on housing associations or refuges to do this. Apart from the black association, they had other priorities and only that

particular association appeared to have a straightforward way of identifying women who had been rehoused because of domestic violence. This association also delegated the task of contacting them to someone who made it a priority. The refuges had maintained contact with relatively few women who were association tenants because the numbers of women being rehoused by associations at that time were small. Women contacted by Women's Aid staff also did not see the letter detailing the research so it was surprising that there had been any response at all.

The original plan of interviewing thirty women from three ethnic groups had to be scaled down as a consequence of relying on these organisations. No further efforts were made to contact women via other organisations because time to complete this stage of the study was limited. One final point could be made. It seemed odd that no African Caribbean women came forward to be interviewed. The reasons for this can only be guessed. The relative size of the African Caribbean "community" in the city, the determination of African Caribbean women to maintain their privacy, a reliance on organisations to contact them which they did not trust or a suspicion of the researcher's experience (which in the letter mentioned previous work within Asian communities). It could have been for any, or all, of these reasons.

The interviewer/interviewee relationship

One of the themes in feminist writing on methods is the nature of the relationship between the woman interviewer and the woman interviewee. It has been suggested that the possibility of establishing and maintaining a disengaged objective interviewing relationship is not possible or desirable (in its objectification of women simply as sources of data). Both parties are women and there is an expectation from interviewees at least, that some experience will be shared or mutually understood (Oakley, 1981; Finch, 1984). It became clear that a number of the women in this research expected the researcher to understand what had happened to them and to be sympathetic.

One woman referred to how upset she was when a Housing Manager clearly did not "care" about her or her circumstances. An acknowledgement of the difficulties they

had experienced and sensitivity towards their feelings was important to all the women who were interviewed, though to varying degrees (see also Oakley, 1981, for a discussion about the range of questions she was asked and her views of their significance). Most of the women directly asked why the researcher was interested in domestic violence. This was a way of checking the researcher's "credentials." If traditional guidance had been followed, the researcher would have referred to a research project or something similarly neutral. There were two major problems with this suggested approach - one was personal and the other was practical. On a personal basis, the researcher told them that her interest derived from her own experience of violence, having grown up in such a situation. To do anything less would have been dishonest. In effect she positioned herself on an equal footing in terms of similarity of experience in this respect. On a practical basis, if she had not revealed this personal information (or given a formal answer about a research project) it is likely that women would have been less open about their own experience. In that sense, it improved the possibility of some degree of "rapport" although there were limitations with this (which were variously due to differences in class, education, ethnicity and age). The researcher also made it clear to each of the women that they did not have to talk about the violence they had experienced (unless they wanted to) as the purpose of the research was to find out how women had found their new homes and what they thought of them, not to focus on the violence they had survived, before leaving their previous homes (Jones, 1985).

Women were interviewed using topic guides to ensure that there was the opportunity for them to talk about what had happened to them without being constrained by too many predetermined questions. Six interviews were taped. Two women were unhappy about the prospect of being tape-recorded, so notes were taken and written up in full immediately after the interview. It had been anticipated that women's circumstances would vary widely and this was, in fact, the case. Some women talked about their violent ex-partner by way of explanation, others did not - or made the briefest of references. Nevertheless, women's comments were bounded by the researcher's overarching interest in finding out how they had arrived at their current address, what they thought about staff they had met and whether they felt safe. The

last part of the interview was always devoted to asking women to sum up the advice they would give to women living with violent partners, the local authority and housing associations. This was a way of giving them a chance to make a positive and valued contribution, to be taken beyond the thesis itself. A number of these points (carefully anonymised) were included in the reports which were written and sent to each association when the interviewing had finished. Consequently, each interview always ended positively, whatever had been discussed before.

White women interviewing black and Asian women

A common recommendation contained in various good practice publications is that it may be preferable to offer women who apply for social housing the possibility of being interviewed by a woman (if she is white) or by a black or Asian woman (if she is black or Asian). (For example, see Malos and Hague with Dear (1993) and the NFHA's guide to responding to domestic violence - Davis, (1993)). The presumption has been that shared ethnic origin or "race" would put a woman more at ease and lead to fewer misunderstandings. In this research, the researcher felt that women would be more likely to talk with someone who understood their own cultural and religious background and who might be presumed to have had some direct experience of racism. Being interviewed by someone directly in their own first language might also make the interview situation less artificial for women whose first language was not English. Consequently, external funding was sought from three different grant-giving organisations to pay for translations (of letters and "Invitation" sheets) and to pay for two interviewers to be available to interview black and Asian women if they came forward. The option of being interviewed by them would be offered to any black or Asian women. All of these applications for funding were unsuccessful.

The only way in which these interviews could be completed was by the white researcher interviewing the black and Asian women who came forward. Although this had not been intended, it provided an opportunity to reflect on the impact of differences based on ethnicity and language and, in the event, this focussed on

working through and with an interpreter. In the event, the number of interviewees was small. Five were white and three were Asian. The Asian women all asked to be interviewed in Punjabi. The researcher had arranged to work with a local interpreting service and a specific interpreter to interview the Punjabi-speaking women. The organisation was experienced in working with statutory and voluntary sector clients, worked confidentially and was able to respond to callers over the telephone or in person in the languages concerned. The interpreter initially contacted the women to ensure that she spoke the appropriate dialect and then arranged interview times.

Interviewing with an interpreter

The nature of the professional working relationship between the researcher and the interpreter was crucial in a number of ways (see Edwards, 1995 for further discussion of this). Firstly, it was important that the relationship was professional but relaxed and mutually supportive. Secondly, mutual understanding of each other's role was essential. The particular implications of working with an interpreter in this "field" had to be carefully thought through. The researcher had to check to ensure that the interpreter was experienced in interpreting in situations involving domestic violence and that she would be neutral (or supportive) of the women concerned and their decision to live independently of their husbands. Confidentiality was also crucially important given the inter-connectedness of families within the different Asian communities. The possibility of any of the women becoming upset was discussed and agreement reached about how to respond if that happened. Thirdly, and most importantly, the researcher had to trust the interpreter's judgement. For example, the interpreter in this study generally worked in two different ways. Sometimes it was possible for her to virtually simultaneously translate in a low voice so the conversation could "flow." She was so effective at this that even the occasional joke could be shared with little loss of momentum. However, there were parts of the interviews which were more serious. It would not have been appropriate to translate whilst the woman was speaking so the researcher

was left in the dark whilst the interpreter listened. She translated when it was appropriate to do so.

Suggestion has been made that interpreters should not be regarded as simply a vehicle through which one language is straightforwardly interpreted into another. The process is more complicated in terms of understanding meaning and nuances and being able to appreciate different philosophical perspectives: in this instance, the differences between Muslim perspectives on the family and community and those of dominant Protestant individualism.

One example of trusting the interpreter's judgement in this regard occurred in relation to the shared understandings of the interpreter and the woman interviewed, both of whom were Pakistani. They were familiar with living in close proximity to other Pakistani families and being part (or feeling part) of that "community" whilst the white researcher did not have that experience. Certain aspects of the impact of "the community" on women trying to live independently, became clear to the researcher through the help of the interpreter. One woman had considered moving house to be nearer shops but her children had persuaded her not to apply for a transfer because of "the community." When this was translated, the researcher thought that this might be a reference to the local white working-class community (which had a reputation for racial harassment) and asked a follow-up question about safety and possible racial harassment. The interpreter explained to the researcher that "the community" the woman had referred to, was the Pakistani community. She pointed out the researcher's mistake in understanding, without translating back in Punjabi. The researcher then asked a more appropriate question. It turned out that the woman's children were concerned that too many enquiries would be made (in shops, by neighbours, on the street) if they moved. "The community" was always curious to find out the circumstances of women living independently without husbands. The children did not want to have to deal with that. The correct question had kept the "flow" of the conversation in the right direction. Avoiding misunderstanding like this was a recognised part of the interpreter's role and was crucial to maintaining the "rapport" which had built up to that point.

The nature of "the community" exhibited itself in another way. Part of the way through another interview, the interpreter realised that she was related to the woman being interviewed. She immediately discussed this with her and reassured her that everything which had been said, and her personal details, would remain strictly private. The woman was happy to proceed. This way of dealing with possible family connections had been agreed between the researcher and interpreter before the interviews started. Privacy and confidentiality has many aspects. In this instance, there was a comparatively distant family relationship (on the husband's side) which needed to be acknowledged.

Maintaining women's safety

All of the interviews with women took place in their own homes. Care was exercised in what the researcher wore and carried and in how she reached the woman's home. The aim was to be as unobtrusive as possible so that neighbours' curiosity would not be aroused. Letters to women never specifically mentioned research or domestic violence, just in case it was delivered to the wrong address and opened by a neighbour. Similarly, the researcher left messages with answering services which were friendly in style, gave the researcher's home telephone number for the woman to ring back and never specified the purpose of the call.

Some women came forward who were clearly concerned about their own immediate safety. They needed advice. This ranged from discussing the problems which had arisen with a neighbour, trying to calm anxiety and doubts about being found and forced to return to an ex-partner, acknowledging and advising what might be possible to do about a man who was watching the house and listening to accounts of how a woman's husband had recently tried to run her over in his car. This was another example of the impossibility of obtaining an unbiased interview - especially in relation to certain subjects (see Oakley, 1981, for examples about questions about childbirth which, similarly, had to be answered honestly).

Establishing and maintaining a safe environment for interviewing has been mentioned before in relation to interviews with refuge staff but this also extended to a woman's own relationships and need for privacy. One woman was living with her teenage daughter who wandered, from time to time, through the room where her mother was talking. Another was visited by her father at the same time as the researcher (whether deliberately or not was not clear). In both of these instances, a quick private conversation with the woman established that she was happy to continue to talk with them present. Most women were either alone or caring for very young children at the same time as being interviewed. It was important to acknowledge the researcher's (and interpreter's) position as a guest in the women's homes. Refreshment was always accepted when offered. This was particularly important in relation to the Asian women in this study, where a refusal would have been regarded as very rude.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The way in which this research was conducted, enabled the nature of the associations' housing management service and the ways in which decisions were made about applications, to become clear. This was possible through considering interview material, documents and CORE statistics from each association as well as different perspectives on their work (from the local authority and from women). The analysis possible from these different data sources is presented in the Chapters which follow - the first concentrating on the role of the local authority.

CHAPTER 4 THE LOCAL AUTHORITY, THE “ENABLING” ROLE AND HOMELESSNESS

THE NATURE OF THE “ENABLING ROLE”

The local authority in this study owned and managed 70,000 properties at the time of the research. The three case-study associations all worked within its boundaries and up to the Housing Act 1988, they had a complementary role to that of the authority. The Conservative government of the time had made it clear that it saw a future for local authorities in “enabling” other organisations to supply housing services rather than continuing as direct providers and managers themselves (DoE, 1987). There had been some discussion of what the “enabling role” might entail (Fraser, 1991; Goodlad, 1994) but no particular consensus. It is possible that this was because, at the time, the idea seemed more rhetorical than practical - especially for authorities with very large housing stocks and a comparatively small housing association sector. Nevertheless, a local authority might be expected to influence associations' work in a number of ways.

The authority had 19,000 households on its housing register (waiting list) in 1997 and accepted approximately 2000 households in 1996/1997 as statutory homeless. Following the 1988 Housing Act and the 1989 Local Government and Housing Act (which changed local authority funding) it had decided to work with a number of associations to build new housing. A consortium or partnership was established between the authority and five associations (with a number of “beneficiary associations” working in conjunction with them on certain sites). It operated from 1991 to 1994. The “free” land which the local authority contributed to the consortium enabled the available Housing Association Grant from the Housing Corporation to be “stretched” over a larger number of schemes than would otherwise have been possible to develop. In this way, the local authority had helped associations to undertake a large building programme in a manner which was more

politically acceptable to this Labour authority than the alternative of a large number of individual associations “freely” competing for development opportunities. Consequently, the “dispersal of power” (Clarke and Newman, 1997) represented by the associations' development programme was not quite the pure “quasi-market” envisaged by le Grand and Bartlett (1993).

Nearly two thousand new rented homes in a wide variety of locations were built. The majority were built for families as this was the preference of the local authority (see Watson, 1986 and 1987 for a broader discussion of this tendency). Although the associations subsequently owned the properties, the local authority retained 75% nomination rights to the lettings made by the associations over the next twenty years. A new hostel for homeless women was also built. Although it was owned and managed by one of the associations in the consortium, the same nomination agreement applied there.

Nearly one third of those accepted as statutory homeless by the local authority were women fleeing domestic violence - and the numbers of women applying for help had steadily increased from the early 1990s (Principal Officer and a Committee report). The authority let 10,600 properties in the year of this research - 18% of which were let to households who were statutory homeless. One consideration for this study was whether local authority “enabling” could extend to being able to influence the management policy and practice of associations in relation to women leaving domestic violence so that it could broaden its range of housing vacancies available for the homeless.

There were a number of ways of looking at this and the Chapter is structured around these. Firstly, it was essential to consider how the local authority in this study had decided to prioritise domestic violence under Parts VI and VII of the Housing Act 1996. The interviews for this study were undertaken only a few months after the enactment of the new legislation and it was by no means clear how local authorities were going to respond to it, in practice. Linked to this, the authority had a domestic

violence policy which was designed to affect decision-making. Its influence was considered from the perspective of those who had been responsible for designing it, as well as those who were supposed to hold it in mind when making decisions. Secondly, the way the local authority organised its homeless service also affected decision-making. The service had to be viewed from the perspective of centrally based and decentralised staff. Thirdly, the ways in which local authority staff decided homeless priority were considered. The way in which the legislation was applied and the influence of the domestic violence policy were considered. The role of ward members was also considered here.

Finally, it was possible to consider the ways in which the local authority influenced or “enabled” associations’ housing management practice in relation to domestic violence. As may be appreciated, there were different views to accommodate from centrally based and decentralised staff. Three aspects of “enabling” were considered: whether women were nominated to associations, the influence of the authority’s domestic violence policy on associations’ practice and the way in which inter-agency working had developed in recent years. Focussing on these aspects of the local authority’s work would enable the research questions on access (in relation to nominations) and association management practice (in its broadest sense) to begin to be answered.

INFLUENCES ON HOMELESS DECISION-MAKING

The authority’s response to the Housing Act 1996 (Parts VI and VII)

One of the most significant changes to affect housing management at the time of the research was the enactment of the Housing Act 1996. The underlying intention of the legislation had been to provide a barrier between assessment of a household as statutory homeless (Part VII) and the provision of permanent accommodation for them from the council (Part VI). The Act potentially made it more difficult for any homeless people to be rehoused by local authorities into permanent accommodation (Arden and Hunter, 1997).

Some homeless applicants were excluded from practical help under Part VII of the new legislation. These were "persons from abroad" (as defined in the Act) and asylum seekers. They were eligible for "advice and information" but no more than that. This was a major difficulty for women from abroad (for example, Pakistani or Bangladeshi women) who came to this country on marriage. They were excluded from most welfare services for the first year after arrival. This exclusion extended to the provision of council housing and housing association housing. Other applicants, with British citizenship, might be considered to be "homeless," in "priority need," not "intentionally homeless" and they might have a "local connection" as defined by the legislation. Nevertheless, the authority might simply now decide that there was suitable accommodation available in the private sector for the applicant (S197(1) and S197(2)) and give them whatever "advice and information" considered necessary for them to make their own arrangements. In the absence of any other alternative, an authority could provide its own accommodation but only on a temporary, two year (but renewable) basis. This new framework for responding to homelessness was strongly reminiscent of the arrangements which had been in place before the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, although it was now more strongly bounded with exclusions and restrictions based on immigration status and nationality (though see Cohen (1985), Ben-Tovim and Gabriel (1987) and Gilroy (1987)).

Each local authority was obliged to establish a "housing register" (Part VI) to replace the housing waiting list. No applicant could be rehoused into a permanent council home, or be nominated to a housing association for a permanent home, unless they were registered on the housing register. Applicants accepted as "unintentionally" homeless under the Housing Act 1996 (Part VII) were "qualifying persons" for the housing register (unless the authority had decided that there was other accommodation available for them in the area). The Government issued a Consultation Paper on priorities, "Allocation of Housing Accommodation by Local Authorities" (Department of the Environment, January 1996). Formal Regulations were then published to enable local authorities to establish housing register

priorities. The most significant omission from the Regulations' "preference groups" was homelessness. Homeless applicants had to be fitted into the other categories of "housing need" which the Secretary of State had specified.

Changing waiting list priorities was not a straightforward matter in the local authority in this research. Members of the Housing Committee had become very familiar with the existing system. It had been in place for over twenty years. They had considered the case for a new allocation system in 1995 and had rejected the proposal. Changing council waiting list priorities was

"... a very, very contentious issue ... Local members would need to be reassured that the needs of their constituents were being met quite fairly - or how they see as quite fairly. But yes, it's always been quite contentious."

Principal Officer

When the Housing Committee considered the impact of the Consultation Paper on their waiting list priorities, they continued to see no local reason to change. They had to agree an interim policy (because of statutory necessity) but it involved minimal changes to comply with the new legislation. This was done partly to save money (to avoid printing new forms) and partly because they wanted to ensure that ward members could continue to exert influence over allocations (Principal Officer).

The authority used a group scheme to determine priority with four groups (A the highest group to D the lowest). Within each group, there were several sub-categories. Applicants were slotted into a category depending on their main reason for rehousing. Of relevance to this study, was the renaming of the "statutory homeless" sub-category in the highest priority group (Group A). This became "temporary and insecure accommodation" to reflect the Secretary of State's Regulations. In this authority, any applicant assessed as statutory homeless under Part VII of the Act would be given Group A priority, as someone who was living in "temporary or insecure accommodation." A number of other minor changes were

made so that the other "preference groups" named in the Regulations as mandatory were included. This incrementalism ensured that the authority's long-established group scheme priorities were actually retained, although they were now disguised (Lindblom, 1959 and 1979).

The domestic violence policy

Local authority staff decision-making on homelessness was also affected by the Housing Department's domestic violence policy which was adopted officially in 1993. The policy contained a number of important features. It expected staff to use a broad working definition of domestic violence when assessing homeless women (considering physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence). It stated that staff should not request or consider corroborative proof of violence from women approaching the Department for help with rehousing because of domestic violence. A previous Committee decision was reaffirmed and included in the policy. This stressed the need for staff to terminate joint tenancies if women had been forced to leave because of a violent partner. The policy also included guidance about dealing with rent arrears and was clear that arrears should not preclude assessment and rehousing if a woman was homeless. This was supposed to happen independently of arrears control action. Finally, the importance of the work of other agencies in this field, including housing associations, was generally re-emphasized in the policy.

The domestic violence policy had been written by the Women's Officer with the help of a group of "significant women" from the Housing Department (Women's Officer). There had been no formal consultation with housing staff when the policy was being written since this was not how policy was constructed in this authority (Women's Officer). A number of consultation meetings with the voluntary sector had been held in 1992 at a mid-way point in its preparation. The Regional Officer from the National Federation of Housing Associations (NFHA) attended one of these meetings and commented on the proposals. Refuge staff were consulted separately. Generally, other

responses were minimal (Women's Officer). Suffice to say, despite the NFHA input, the final policy document contained no specific recommendations for housing associations. Its emphasis was entirely local authority oriented. Anything other than general statements about co-operation with associations would have introduced potential difficulties in obtaining agreement for the policy.

Getting the policy agreed was not an easy process (Women's Officer). This was not surprising given its subject matter so the way it was to be implemented was important (see Young, 1990, pp22-44 for equivalent difficulties in introducing race equality policies). More senior staff felt it would be too controversial and insisted on changes before the report went to the Committee. These reduced its length and potential impact. It also probably helped that there were no accompanying financial commitments. The policy was agreed in 1993 by the Tenancy Sub-Committee and endorsed by the Housing Committee. The Director issued a circular to all Managers informing them of it. A copy of the Committee paper was made available to staff within the Allocations and Lettings Procedure Manuals kept in each Neighbourhood Office and the offices of the central homeless teams. No arrangements were put in place by the local authority to enable it to check whether or not staff were working within the policy. Monitoring the implementation of the policy was essentially passive and negative: voluntary organisations were asked to forward any complaints from women. Action would then be taken to rectify the situation (Women's Officer).

By 1996, the Women's Officer had received reports of a number of "bad practice issues" (Women's Officer). She defined these by reference against the policy recommendations. There were three main issues. Firstly, some Neighbourhood Office staff expected homeless women to provide "proof" of violence. Secondly, staff only considered women to be homeless where physical violence had actually occurred. Thirdly applications from homeless women who had rent arrears would not be considered by some staff. In a number of ways, it was not surprising that this had happened. No mandatory training programme had ever been organised. It had

been left to Managers to decide priorities for staff training and few chose domestic violence training. More generally, the nature of the Housing Department had changed since the early 1990s. The housing management service was now "contracted out," and the Department was run on "new public management" lines (Pollitt, 1980; Hood, 1991). Because of this, a questionmark could be raised over the nature of any compliance with centrally originated, equal opportunities-type initiatives (Clarke and Newman, 1997) since the managerialism implicit in "new public management" arrangements was predominantly concerned with financial performance and response times for various measurable services. Work like the assessment of "housing need" or homeless "investigations" was marginal to these objectives.

The Women's Officer responded in two ways to the reports she had received. Her responses were intended to raise the profile of the policy, through a reminder of the sanctions attached to non-compliance. Firstly, she engaged the Committee system. Renewed interest from the Housing Committee was generated through an officer report on progress with the policy (Women's Officer). One outcome of this was that an Assistant Director was instructed to issue a formal memorandum to staff, reminding them of the policy. It identified the three areas of practice which gave "great cause for concern." It reminded staff about information and training available and warned them that any "variations" from the policy "will be vigorously pursued." In this sense, sanctions for breaching the policy had become more transparent. Secondly, the Women's Officer encouraged a formal complaint to be made by a voluntary organisation (Women's Officer). The Department's disciplinary procedures were then used to deal with it. This was to ensure that staff understood that the memorandum was not "mere words" (Women's Officer). Two members of staff were subsequently "reprimanded."

"... although it wasn't particularly made public knowledge about who had been reprimanded, word on the street soon got round and basically it just sent out a very clear message. "You needn't think, stuck out there, wherever you are, that you are a law unto yourself. *One* - you shouldn't be doing it and *two* - be sure if you do,

there's a whole network of people, *women*, who will make sure that you're found out. So get your act together, mate."

Women's Officer

She had not received any reports of "bad practice" in 1997 (the year of the interviews for this study).

". . . it seems to be OK ... Every so often I would just like to dip into a housing office and pull a file out and see what's going on, but that would be difficult for me to do in terms of - like my position vis a vis other issues which I *do* need housing managers' cooperation on."

Women's Officer

This comment implied that the strategy she had used to ensure compliance had not been popular. Lipsky's view of the behaviour of front line staff comes to mind.

"Managers are interested in achieving results consistent with agency objectives. Street level bureaucrats are interested in work consistent with their own preferences and only those agency policies so salient as to be backed up by significant sanctions."

Lipsky, 1980, p19

The suspicion was that the sanctions which were attached to the domestic violence policy were not very strong (despite the previous "reprimands" to two members of staff). Variable responses might be expected because of the lack of comprehensive training and monitoring. The specific interest of this research was how the domestic violence policy was actually considered and used by staff "on the ground" and the extent to which the local authority's commitment to the policy extended to influencing associations in the area to act similarly.

THE ORGANISATION OF THE HOMELESS SERVICE

The housing service for homeless people in this authority was partly provided centrally and partly provided in the Neighbourhood Offices. The service to households with children was mainly provided by staff in the Neighbourhood Offices with a small centrally based advisory team to assist them, if necessary. The service for single people was centrally based and provided by specialist staff. There were three initial considerations for the research. Firstly, why were services organised like this? Secondly, what were the effects of changing the nature and the status of the specialist staff role in responding to homelessness? Thirdly, could generalist staff provide a satisfactory service from the Neighbourhood Offices?

The homeless service up to the late 1980s had been run as a deterrent to homeless people although this had not been done without protest from senior staff in the department. They had become "a thorn in the side of the Directorate" complaining about conditions in the authority's temporary accommodation (Contract Manager). The Contract Manager also remarked that there had been considerable political difficulties with certain senior councillors who did not want homeless people rehoused in their constituencies because they believed that they were not "local." Homer, Leonard and Taylor, (1984), Welsh Women's Aid (1986), Charles with Jones (1993) and Charles (1995) reported similar problems for homeless women leaving violence.

The public reason for the decentralisation of the service to homeless families in 1991 had been that generic management staff in Neighbourhood Offices could provide a more accessible service to families. An alternative view was that this was the way in which senior councillors dealt with the challenge from staff mentioned previously (Contract Manager and Principal Officers). The senior staff who had worked in the formerly centralised teams (a Contract Manager and two Neighbourhood Office Managers who were interviewed) thought that councillors had not understood the nature of the service provided by the centralised teams and

the need for staff to have specialist knowledge (of the legislation and case law) to provide a service. In confirmation of this, it is notable that very few local authorities have decentralised specialist services for the homeless because they have recognised the need for staff with specialist knowledge (Niner, 1989).

“They viewed the decision-making process and how you helped homeless people as so simple. You could do it in between sorting out a few arrears cases and what have you. Completely beggared belief, did that view, to me.”

Contract Manager

The service for single homeless people had been established in the late 1980s to oversee the closure of a very large local authority hostel. It had since expanded to encompass work with other hostel providers. There had never been a suggestion that this service should be decentralised since most of its work was with other hostel providers.

The central homeless teams

The centrally based team for homeless families was now a small residual specialist team of five Advisors and one Principal Officer. This part of the Housing Department might be characterised as “bureau-professional” (Clarke and Newman, 1997). It had a number of functions. Firstly, the team handled “cases” if a Neighbourhood Office referred them. The Office might be short staffed or might not have anyone who spoke the homeless person’s language. Applicants might also be referred if the Neighbourhood Office Manager identified a possible “conflict of interests” in handling the “case” locally. For example, there might be disagreement in a local Office about whether to prioritise a family with very high rent arrears. The “specialists” in the central homeless team did not manage property and could not experience such conflicts of interest. The central team also worked with families who applied to them directly (but on a much reduced scale) and worked directly with the hostels which rehoused homeless families. A specific member of staff undertook all the “investigations” of women living at the Women's Aid refuge and

the black women's refuge. The Principal Officer made the formal decision as to whether or not to "accept" applicants as statutory homeless (whether they had applied directly or had been referred).

The decentralisation of the service to families was potentially problematic for the specialist staff as it challenged their role. The Principal Officer recalled that his team had dealt with about seven hundred "investigations" in the previous year (1996/1997) and about one third of these had been women who had approached them because of domestic violence. It was clear that he felt that his specialist team provided a service to women which the generalist Neighbourhood Offices could not match.

"We've got years of experience here. We've got connections with good solicitors. We're aware of all the other agencies involved around women and violence so if somebody comes to us then we don't just deal with the situation as it stands and rehouse. We look at all the support mechanisms that are needed, which other people the woman should see, what solicitors are appropriate for her and so on."

Principal Officer - Families Team

The service for single homeless people was organised differently. There was a centrally based team for single people of ten Advisors and two Principal Officers (one temporarily "acting up"). The Advisors undertook all of the formal "investigations" relating to single people who applied to the authority for help because they were homeless or threatened with homelessness. Applicants might apply directly to them or be referred by the Neighbourhood Offices. The staff liaised with the large number of hostels in the city, advising on applications and assessing priority under the Act. Its work had continued to be run centrally despite the decentralisation of the service to families. The Principal Officers who managed it were happy that this was the case because they felt that the quality of investigation and decision-making was better in a specialist team than in the generalist Neighbourhood Offices. They made the formal decision about whether a homeless single person should be accepted as statutory homeless (Housing Act 1996 Part VII).

The authority still recognised the need for specialist intervention, but in limited ways. Firstly, families and single people who might not be eligible for help with accommodation because of their immigration status (s185 and s186, Housing Act 1996) were the responsibility of the Principal Officers in both centrally based homeless teams. They liaised with the Social Services Department to provide accommodation whilst women were helped with their difficulties. Women from Pakistan and Bangladesh sometimes fell into this category. Secondly, they also dealt with applicants who wanted to be formally referred to another local authority (or be accepted by this one having come from elsewhere) through the referral mechanisms agreed by local authorities (s198). Most of these were women leaving violence. At the time of the research, more women were leaving the area than were coming to it (although one Principal Officer felt that this might change as different local authorities came to interpret the Housing Act 1996 more stringently).

The service to homeless families appeared to have been seriously weakened politically and effectively marginalised through decentralisation. The service to single people was different. It remained a specialist one (see Drake, O'Brien and Biebuyck, 1981 for recommendations along these lines) and it had a good reputation. This clearly benefited single women who had experienced violence. Even though there was a recognition that some degree of specialisation was necessary, there had been no centrally organised training programme for any staff in the central teams or Neighbourhood Offices. The Principal Officers had arranged their own ad hoc briefing/training for their staff on the implications of the Housing Act 1996 for their work. The Neighbourhood Offices had received none. The view of the specialist staff (which derived from helping families who had been referred by the Neighbourhood Offices) was that the service provided by the Neighbourhood Offices was often limited and poor. The nature of this service will be considered next.

The Neighbourhood Offices

Staff in the Neighbourhood Offices were primarily responsible for managing the stock of council homes in their respective areas. Compulsory competitive tendering had forced the local authority to contract out the housing management service and manage it along "new public management" lines (Pollitt, 1990; Clarke and Newman, 1997). The day to day priorities of staff were arrears control, voids management and the repairs service. They had a range of performance targets which they had to meet in relation to these functions. Undertaking the homeless service to families had been added to this "portfolio." In these circumstances, the Contract Manager believed that the homeless service provided by the Neighbourhood Offices was "an appendage." The Neighbourhood Offices saw and agreed homeless priority in relation to about one thousand three hundred families each year - a third of whom were women leaving domestic violence (that is, double the number that the central team prioritised). The question which was explored in interviews with a Contract Manager and three Managers was whether the generalist service which was provided from Neighbourhood Offices could adequately respond to the needs of homeless women who were leaving violent men.

Each Neighbourhood Office was staffed by a Manager, Assistant Manager, Estate Management Officers (EMOs) and Customer Service Officers (CSOs). Three adjacent Neighbourhood Offices were usually grouped together to make a Contract Area. Some of the thirteen Contract Areas were distinctly different from others in the nature of the housing within their boundaries (including the council housing) and the situations which staff might encounter in providing a service. The Contract Area which formed part of this research was made up of three inner city Neighbourhood Offices which together managed about five thousand properties, including multi-storey blocks of flats. The Contract Manager and two Neighbourhood Managers (for Offices 1 and 2) were included in this research. A third Office (in a different Contract Area but adjacent to the area managed by Office 1) was also included in the study (Office 3) as a number of consortium schemes had been built within its boundaries. All of the Offices included in this study were regarded as "high

pressure” Offices for family accommodation, with demand for housing outstripping suitable supply for high priority applicants (including homeless families). All of them had seen significant growth in housing association schemes in their management areas in recent years mainly because of the consortium.

The circumstances of homeless families were investigated initially by the EMOs who prepared a report with a recommended decision. EMOs were often under pressure from Managers to achieve other targets, as well as complete homeless investigations.

“They haven't got the time to go out and do the homeless investigation fully anyway because we're screaming at them because the repairs are behind, because we're overspending on this budget, because the arrears are going up ...”

Contract Manager

The final decision about an applicant's homeless priority was made by the Contract Manager. Neighbourhood Office Managers did not have a formal role in this. The Contract Manager felt that this arrangement had been put in place because ward members had thought that Contract Managers (rather than Managers) were more likely to be influenced by ward members' views about allocations to the homeless. Another view was that this might be a recognition that there could be very strongly felt conflicts of interests at this level of the housing management service and that the decision needed to be taken out of the Neighbourhood Offices.

The three Managers interviewed for this research felt that *their* staff did a good job but that generally the service to homeless people provided by Neighbourhood Offices in other Contract Areas was “patchy.” EMOs often did not have enough time to deal with homeless “cases.” They could be time-consuming and were sometimes traumatic (especially when domestic violence was involved). It was hard for staff to build up sufficient experience and knowledge in dealing with domestic violence because only a handful of women in this situation were seen every month

(Managers) and there had been no formal training on homelessness in the Department for several years. Only Office 1 had undertaken training on domestic violence awareness on any scale, as it was in the inter-agency “good practice pilot” area (which will be considered later in this Chapter). The Manager of Office 1 remembered that they were “bombarded initially” by homelessness training in 1991 when the service was first decentralised. They had received domestic violence awareness training in 1993. (Neither of the other two Offices had been able to obtain domestic violence training because they were outside the local authority’s self designated inter-agency “good practice pilot” area). New staff in Neighbourhood Offices had to rely on brief induction training, the Manuals and other more experienced colleagues to help them to give advice and to complete homeless “investigations.” To add to the difficulties, staff turnover below Assistant Manager level was a continuing problem in all of the Offices (Managers). The jobs in the Offices (including EMOs’ jobs) were difficult and not very well rewarded. In this situation, the service to homeless women could almost be guaranteed to be variable.

DECIDING HOMELESS PRIORITY

Interpreting the legislation

The Housing Act 1996 Part VII seemed to have had little impact on what staff in this local authority did when assessing an application from a homeless woman who had left domestic violence. The way in which the housing register priorities had been changed generally enabled them to continue with their pre-existent approach to women who were homeless because of violence. There were exceptions to this, relating to people who possessed a particular immigration status which precluded any help from the welfare state. In relation to the Housing Act 1985, staff had been obliged to consider how to respond to women who came within the remit of the Immigration Act 1971. This had determined that applications under the homeless legislation would be treated as an application for “public funds.” Such applications might precipitate major problems with immigration status for women who had

recently arrived in this country. The powers under this Act continued to apply to the implementation of the Housing Act 1996 (amendment to make these rules more humane was introduced in 1999 though was still problematic in their requirement of formal "proof" of violence). The Housing Act 1996 was also affected by the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996. Staff were now legally obliged to exclude women who were considered to be "persons from abroad" and subject to immigration control under this Act (s185 and 186). In summary, these two Acts primarily affected black and Asian people, penalised mobility and created barriers to settlement within these communities in England and Wales. The Principal Officers in the central teams dealt with these situations with the assistance of the Social Services Department.

Subject to these exclusions, if a woman was homeless and had dependent children she would be regarded as in "priority need." If she had no dependent children, she had to be assessed as potentially "vulnerable" to obtain "priority need" status. This difference between women, dependent on whether or not they were caring for children, had been cited by some feminists as an example, within the welfare state, of women being regarded as important primarily as mothers rather than as women (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Pascall, 1986; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). In this authority, however, the distinction did not hold in practice as both were given statutory homeless priority (if they were not excluded because of their immigration status).

As far as the other legislative provisions in Part VII were concerned, the Principal Officers in both teams and the Contract Manager rarely excluded women from help on the grounds that there was suitable available accommodation for the applicant elsewhere in the city (s193). They also rarely used the "intentionality" sections of the legislation in relation to women leaving domestic violence (s191(1)). The "local connection" provisions (whereby a woman might be referred to another authority) were used when women themselves wanted to move elsewhere (s200(4)). One

Principal Officer remarked that the authority had good working relationships with surrounding authorities, so there was rarely any difficulty with this.

The only grey areas reported by senior staff in relation to the interpretation of the legislation related to single women. These related to unease about defining "vulnerability" and the definition of homelessness. Some women seemed to be continuously mobile ("doing the hostel circuit," staying on friends' floors and sleeping rough, in turn). Sometimes there might be a question about whether "vulnerability" could exist some time after a woman had experienced violence from a partner(s) or whether they found it difficult to cope for other (unstated) reasons. Some women were clearly very vulnerable but the Principal Officers had doubts as to whether self-contained accommodation was what they could manage. This was in line with the findings of a number of surveys of single homeless people (Drake, O'Brien and Biebuyck, 1981, p107). The provision of supportive hostels or the allocation of long-term support workers to them if they were rehoused into self-contained accommodation had been suggested (Pleace, 1995, p48-60).

The effect of the domestic violence policy on decision-making

The domestic violence policy was intended to ensure a uniform and sympathetic response to homeless women who had left violent men. The authors had drawn from a body of knowledge about domestic violence from feminist writers (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Kelly, 1988; Kirkwood, 1993). The policy defined domestic violence widely: far more widely than most authorities had done (Evans and Duncan, 1988; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). The definition which staff were expected to work with included physical, sexual and psychological violence, damage to belongings and economic violence (for example, withholding money). Its guideline about "proof" was based on an awareness of the difficulties which women might experience in relation to providing corroborative evidence and a recognition that they might be embarrassed and feel shame or fear in speaking to strangers about what had happened (Mama, 1989; Pahl, 1985a; Smith, 1989). Unfortunately,

it did not appear to have been drawn up with much awareness of the homeless legislation and how housing management and homeless staff actually worked. This was probably due to the lack of consultation with housing management staff before the policy was agreed. One Manager remarked that the policy had

“. . . been written by someone who hasn't worked in a housing office.”

Housing Manager - Office 3

The Contract Manager felt that it had been helpful because it had “raised the profile” of the issue but

“... the policy itself is a wee bit too simplistic or it's been interpreted in a simplistic way.”

Contract Manager

All the senior staff interviewed felt that the policy objective of obtaining a sympathetic response for women had been only partly achieved. There were a number of reasons for this including the relative status of the policy compared to the legislation and the Code of Guidance, the enduring value of professional judgement to staff, the competing pressures of other priorities on EMOs who completed the “investigations” in Neighbourhood Offices and the lack of training in the legislation and case law.

The status of the domestic violence policy appeared to be ambiguous for all staff who made the formal decision about a woman's homeless status (Principal Officers and the Contract Manager). The legislation and Code of Guidance were the primary source of guidance for them. Consequently, they had to “interpret” the policy selectively. The main reason for this was that the authority's discretion in making decisions under the Housing Act 1996 Part VII could not legally be fettered by the blanket approach represented by the policy. The Principal Officer (Single People) gave the example of how they assessed single men (and occasionally women) who

had a history of being violent towards women in their personal relationships. A man might have become homeless because a former partner had terminated their joint tenancy when she had left because of his violence. The domestic violence policy advised staff

“...not ... [to] offer rehousing support to the alleged perpetrator once the joint tenancy was ended.”

Tenancy Sub-Committee, 2 February, 1993, p2

The Principal Officer (Single People) pointed out that the man might be “vulnerable” as defined by the Act. He might be an alcoholic or mentally ill. If this was the case, he would be considered to be statutory homeless and would be rehoused despite the domestic violence policy.

The domestic violence policy in this authority prohibited staff asking for “proof” of violence. If women gave them evidence (in the form of letters, copies of exclusion orders and so on) they were supposed to thank the woman, read the document(s) but not take them into account in making a decision. On the face of it, this placed the authority at the more sympathetic end of the spectrum of approaches towards women and the family which were tentatively set out in Chapter 2. However, it emerged in interviews that the Principal Officers and Contract Manager used documentary evidence given to them by women, despite the domestic violence policy. (The Managers pointed out that their staff did not ask for or expect to be given “proof” of violence, whilst staff in other Offices did). They preferred these situations to those where there was no external evidence. They felt that acting in this way complied with the legislation, made it easier to make a decision and was a safeguard against being misled by women who invented violence to obtain priority on the waiting list. The Contract Manager identified a further problem for staff in relation to not considering corroborative evidence.

“. . . there's an acceptance amongst our client group that if you go along and say that your boyfriend's knocking you about a bit, they'll give you priority ... which we will. And that's counterproductive in some ways...

... it tends to clog up the system so that when the genuine one comes along we're at risk of not spotting it because there's a degree of cynicism creeps in "Oh here we go with another one" and that's a problem, I fear. The other thing that worries me about it is that because we get too familiar with it ... sometimes we don't respond adequately. I think the policy has contributed to that in some ways ... We don't filter the risk factor."

Contract Manager

The Contract Manager felt that this occurred particularly when women were given priority because of the risk of violence occurring. The Code of Guidance, which he referred to as one source of guidance on interpretation, had recommended that local authorities sympathetically consider applications from women who were being threatened with violence, where it was likely that the threats would be carried out (Code of Guidance S13.9). The authority's domestic violence policy did not make this distinction: staff were not expected to assess the risk. (In any event, EMOs would probably not have the time to do so). The Contract Manager felt that, in these circumstances, the impact of the domestic violence policy was such that there were situations where

"...we almost certainly give people too much priority in some instances and probably not enough in others."

Contract Manager

Housing Managers could not make the decision about homeless priority, but they did have control over the type of housing offers subsequently made to women. Occasionally, poor offers might be made deliberately as a reflection of what the Manager thought of the woman (or her family). The Contract Manager remarked that he sometimes received "investigation" reports on applicants where there was no evidence of violence except what the applicant had told the EMO. In these situations, he gave the applicant statutory homeless status but

"I might also say to the Manager "Make an offer that you might expect will be turned down and let's see if that gives us any more information"...In that sense, you've complied with the legislation rather than argue about access to it, which can go on and on for ever."

Contract Manager

More generally, women might be advised to consider particular areas because vacancies would occur more quickly there. These were usually poorer areas. Having said that, one Manager recounted how she had been able to offer a particularly good quality home, in a much sought-after area, to a professional woman who was trying to escape from her violent partner.

These practices in relation to offers were reinforced by women's lack of choice. There was a "one offer only" policy: women lost their priority if they turned down what a Manager regarded as a "reasonable" offer. Guidelines about housing offers had not been included in the domestic violence policy, nor was this monitored separately.

The three Neighbourhood Office Managers felt that the policy ensured a degree of consistency in their Offices in assessing applications but it became clear that they had different approaches. There were differences of opinion between the Managers as to how practically helpful the policy was. One considered the policy to be part of "customer care." A more critical view was expressed by another Manager. She felt that the policy had created difficulties for her because it potentially conflicted with her broader management responsibilities. For example, should someone with rent arrears or who was known in the Office for "anti-social behaviour" be rehoused because of (supposed) violence when other applicants would be expected to address these problems before getting a transfer? (Manager - Office 3). She was "very cynical" about women who wanted to move to housing which she thought was too near their ex-partner or who were prepared to wait a long time for much better accommodation than they had previously lived in. More fundamentally, however,

she doubted the resolve of any woman to live apart from their ex-partner for any length of time.

“I do wish women would learn, but women are women. We never do, do we?”

Housing Manager - Office 3

The domestic violence policy did not tackle any of these attitudes, which were grounded in housing management concerns - judging the likelihood of property being abandoned, a determination to prevent possible abuse of the housing register priority system and concern about the impact of housing mobility (wasted staff time and voids).

The differences of view about the value of the domestic violence policy when applied to practical housing management illustrate the point which Lipsky (1980) made about the danger of assuming that policy application in any organisation will be uniform and uncontentious. He also made the point that “street level bureaucrats” themselves make public policy, in the sense that the ways in which they respond to their work becomes the working policy of the organisation. Viewed in this way, in some respects the authority had two policies. The formal one was represented by the domestic violence policy. Principal Officers in the specialist central homeless teams probably kept closer to the policy because they did not have such a diverse range of demands on their time. They made individual decisions which were not “fettered” by blanket policies (such as the domestic violence policy) although it was clear that they appreciated its spirit. The informal domestic violence policy in the authority was represented by what Neighbourhood Office staff did in practice, drawing on the policy in some respects but ignoring or tailoring other aspects to fit their particular requirements.

Housing management staff held views about the role of housing management, the nature of the violence which occurred and the trustworthiness of women when faced

with a possible long wait for alternative housing. They were also subject to strongly competing pressures on their time and looked for “shortcuts” (like “proof”) to decide what had happened. In relation to domestic violence, judgements could be made about which situations were legitimate in their eyes - through the availability or otherwise of “proof”, the presence or otherwise of physical violence and the absence or otherwise of other management problems. Staff worked within a management tradition which valued the use of judgement especially in relation to allocations. Making judgements about applicants' or tenants' personal circumstances was rooted in the housing visitor tradition. It was common practice on housing visits to draw social distinctions between different “types” of applicant to help managers decide the type and location of property considered appropriate for them (Tucker, 1966; Daniel, 1968; Gray, 1976; Simpson, 1981; Henderson and Karn, 1987). In the local Offices, these attitudes towards women and violence found a physical expression in the nature and location of properties which were offered to them. It was unlikely that these practices would change without effective training/guidance, monitoring of the policy and clear consistent sanctions if necessary. None of these were in place.

Working with ward members

One of the difficulties with managerialism is that it has not understood the political role of local ward members. They have rarely been acknowledged nor their role understood in relation to council staff, local constituents and council services (Pollitt, 1990, p120).

More generally, there has been little research on the relationships between staff and ward members following the decentralisation of housing management services (but see Lowndes and Stoker (1992a and 1992b) for one example). This is surprising because elected members have tended to intervene more in relation to housing services than any other service area (Cole and Furbey, 1994). Cole and Furbey suggested that one reason for this was that, unlike planning or environmental health (which are seen as more technical and professionalised), housing seems

“...a matter of common-sense and of particular immediacy to the individual households and communities comprising their own electoral power-base.”

Cole and Furbey, 1994, p122

This was an omission which could not be replicated in this study since it had become clear from research already undertaken (Charles with Jones, 1993; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993) that ward members often intervened in relation to allocations to women who had left violent men. In some senses, it was not surprising to discover that there had been a difficult history of ward member involvement in issues relating to homelessness in this city. All of the Managers were aware of it. They were also aware that they might be compulsorily moved to different Offices (or, at the worst, sacked) if relationships between themselves and ward members became too strained (Managers and Contract Manager). This was the background to their different comments about ward members.

One Manager found her ward members “very very difficult” especially when they decided to support a constituent whom she felt had no case (Housing Manager - Office 3). A different view was presented by another Manager who said that two out of the three ward members in his area were very supportive. He felt that they respected his position.

“You've got to be aware that they've got a standing in the community as well and you've got to - I won't say let them win - but let them be seen to be doing their stuff. And it's not difficult because the stuff they usually bring to us are cases which we should be picking up anyway.”

Housing Manager - Office 2

The Manager in Office 1 worked with three ward members who were “generally OK.” One worked well with the staff in the Office. He had been a councillor for many years and currently chaired an influential Committee. The other two members

were more difficult. They had been elected two years previously and neither “understood the system” (Manager). One expected the Office staff to do what he wanted and regularly promised things to constituents at surgeries without any consultation with the Office. The Manager felt that such situations had to be handled carefully. It was important to avoid the ward members losing face with their own community (in this instance, the local Pakistani community) but at the same time they did not necessarily do what he wanted. The Contract Manager saw the situation more strategically than the Managers.

“It’s the influences that are on ward members to do things ... As far as the Labour Group in that ward is concerned, I’m aware of power struggles going on - factions within the Asian community which are trying to exercise authority. We can see ward members leaping one way or another in relation to what’s going on beneath them.”

Contract Manager

More generally, the approach of ward members to staff varied across the city. He felt that some of the differences were simply the result of the different personalities of ward members.

“... [there are] the personality issues which are there. If you drift across the city, the further you go east, the hotter it becomes because it’s more personality driven. It’s about individuals and it’s about just shouting at people.”

Contract Manager

Ward members could and did exert considerable influence, on occasions, to ensure that they got what they wanted. There was a political advantage to them in ensuring that their existing constituents received priority in relation to housing services because they were “local” (see Charles with Jones, 1993 and Charles, 1995 for discussion of the same problem in Wales). This had been a serious problem in some areas in this authority when the homeless service was centralised. Certain ward members were clear that they did not want homeless “outsiders” to be rehoused in

their constituencies (Contract Manager). Alternatively, male ward members might be strongly linked with male "community leaders" in different local communities (Manager). They might not be supportive of women in "their" communities leaving violent men. This had been identified by Rai and Thiara (1997, p70) in their research on black women's use of refuge provision and might recur here given the close links between Asian ward members and dominant political factions in their community.

More positively, ward members might also intervene in relation to general issues in their areas. One ward member had insisted that the Department's senior staff and the senior staff of a local association meet to sort out major management problems which had occurred in consortium schemes in the areas of Offices 2 and 3. On the other hand, ward members might fail to take an interest in developments on the ground, which the authority had contracted the management service to develop. The Contract Manager had been expected to establish a tenants' forum in Office 1's management area. At that time, he felt that the three ward members were not interested in the initiative. Possibly, they felt that it might undermine their influence. This obviously created difficulties for him.

"You can see all these various influences moving - so nothing that members do surprises me. It's a question of trying to work out why."

Contract Manager

It had become clear that despite targets, performance indicators and managerialism, ward members continued to be very influential in the council setting. The issue for this study was whether they had the same influence within housing associations.

THE "ENABLING" AUTHORITY AND HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

At the beginning of this Chapter, the point was made that although the authority in this study seemed to have developed its "enabling role" in relation to housing development (through the consortium) it was not so clear that it had done so in relation to influencing housing management practice in associations. The consortium had given the local authority an ideal opportunity to develop its "enabling role" in relation to associations' management practice. 75% of vacancies had to be filled with local authority nominations - both in new lettings and in subsequent relets, twenty years into the future. Associations' existing properties had to be filled with 50% nominations. Any of the Neighbourhood Offices or the central homeless teams could nominate applicants to particular associations, if the applicant's housing priority fell within Groups A or B on the local authority's housing register. Nominations could be made outside of those groups if the association had a definite property(ies) which would be available for particular applicants (for example, because of high turnover on a scheme). Individual vacancies were then filled by associations selecting a nominated applicant from the "pool" which they had received. Local ward members could not nominate applicants but could "intercede on behalf of the applicant" (Principal Officer). Nominations were conceived as the "vouchers" through which the local authority had purchased 75% of the consortium housing associations' tenancies (le Grand and Bartlett, 1993). Yet, nothing had been included in the domestic violence policy requiring associations which were part of the consortium to develop comparable domestic violence policies to the local authority's.

Bramley (1993) established that for "enabling" generally to be effective, there had to be a broad consensus about objectives and trust between the parties concerned (see Webb, 1991 for a broader discussion of this). Local authority senior staff were asked for their opinions about local associations and the relationship between them and the local authority in relation to nominations, housing management practice and inter-agency working. Different perspectives emerged depending on whether the

respondent worked in the central homeless teams or in one of the Neighbourhood Offices.

The central homeless team view of nominations

There were critical comments about associations' nomination practices from the centrally based Principal Officers who were interviewed for this research. The Principal Officers' views on the role of housing associations were similar. They identified two general problems. Firstly, they felt that staff in associations gave insufficient advice to homeless applicants. This criticism particularly applied to associations in responding to their own tenants' housing difficulties. On many occasions, the central homeless teams had been expected to assist when the association had itself done nothing to help (Principal Officers). Secondly, the associations then expected their tenants to be nominated back to them for rehousing.

"...we have a statutory duty towards women who are becoming homeless. Housing associations don't have that statutory duty so I think it is often... too easy to refer women to us and it's also obvious that housing associations do not even consider how they are going to assist that woman by a tenant transfer, by contacting other housing associations ... It just seems ... not too easy but it seems - well, it is easier for the housing association to refer them to us. We do a homeless investigation and for some unknown reason housing associations will ask for a nomination back for their own association tenants. A statutory homeless nomination!"

Principal Officer - Families Team

The Principal Officers of both central teams felt strongly that this was a waste of their resources. It took up their Advisors' time in undertaking "investigations" which were unnecessary. They believed that the associations could have arranged a transfer in most instances, as had been recommended in the NFHA good practice guide (Davis, 1993). In 1995, this had been circulated to Principal Officers internally by an Assistant Director so they were familiar with it. Every time an association tenant applied to the central homeless team for help, a Principal Officer now formally wrote to an association asking why the association itself could not

help. They remarked that the usual response from associations was that the tenant wanted a "high demand" area, there were no appropriate vacancies and that the waiting list was too long.

The general impression of the Principal Officers in the central homeless teams was that associations were now housing fewer homeless people. Few associations (Tulip HA being the exception) now rang them directly with vacancies. This compared to their remembrance of a much more pro-active period a few years previously when associations had contacted them regularly (this being the period when associations had homeless targets to achieve).

The Neighbourhood Office view of nominations

The Neighbourhood Office Managers had slightly different experiences in getting people whom they had nominated rehoused by the associations in their areas. One reported no problems (Office 3) though nominating over one hundred households in a few weeks for a newly-built consortium estate had created serious voids problems for the staff in the Office. The other two Managers had different problems. The Manager of Office 2 could not recall many of his nominees being rehoused into new consortium schemes in his area. He had no idea whom the two associations (a non case-study association and Tulip HA) had rehoused in those schemes and believed that the local authority had generally been "taken for a ride" in relation to nominations on consortium schemes. The rent levels were prohibitive for many working families and he did not feel that he had any influence over who associations subsequently housed - nominations or otherwise. Like the Principal Officers in the central teams, his staff had encountered association tenants who had been sent to his Office for help and a nomination. He took a dim view of the practice. The Manager of Office 1 remarked that local association staff referred people to his Office to obtain a nomination, whatever their circumstances: people with low priority circumstances as well as high priority circumstances were sent.

"I would have thought it was good practice to find out an applicant's housing need first."

Housing Manager - Office 1

The Manager remarked that these applicants said that association staff had told them that they would not be accepted on to the associations' waiting lists without a nomination. This created work for his staff interviewing people who would not obtain a high enough priority to be nominated. He felt that there was no point in associations sending his Office the low priority applicants, unless it was to make it appear that the local authority (rather than the association) was refusing the applicant access to an association's waiting list. Bluebell HA, Foxglove HA and Tulip HA were named in relation to this practice although Tulip HA was the worst, in his opinion (see Chapter 7 for an example). He had also come across situations where low priority applicants had been rehoused into schemes by associations, whilst high priority applicants had not. In addition to this, he had been "horrified" about a year previously when without warning Tulip HA had sent back over one hundred nominations which had not been rehoused (see Chapter 5 for Tulip HA's version). He felt that the association had flouted all agreements about who it should be housing (that is, Group A and B nominations) and had complained to his Contract Manager about it.

The Contract Manager also identified the tendency of associations to refer applicants and tenants to the local authority to deal with their problems and return them with a nomination (see Chapter 6). His view was that applicants should be nominated if they fell into Group A or Group B on the local authority's housing register and they wanted to be nominated. What he felt "uncomfortable" with was

"... that quite often a housing association will send people to us to get priority because it looks good on their record and I feel that sometimes we're being used by housing associations ... They're unwilling to try and resolve things for themselves ... I think that messes the person around unnecessarily. Quite often they can help ...

The larger ones *certainly* can but they choose not to - because they think that it's better to have a nomination from us ... They'll force somebody to jump through all the hoops here."

Contract Manager

The Neighbourhood Office view of associations' housing management

Housing associations' housing management performance was also viewed critically at the Neighbourhood Office level. None of the Managers had been consulted by associations about the consortium developments in their areas before or after they had been built. (To put this in context, they had not been consulted internally either). The consortium seems to have operated at a very senior level in the local authority and in local associations, with little thought as to how the schemes would be managed. This had serious repercussions for the management staff in the Neighbourhood Offices as well as the associations.

One Manager (Office 3) talked about the problems which had occurred in a large consortium scheme of about one hundred and seventy properties. The houses had been built by an association which was not one of the case-study associations in this research and Tulip HA (as a "beneficiary" association in the consortium). Most of the properties were for families and the child density was high. She was aware that the authority's Assistant Director had requested a meeting with the non case-study association to discuss what was being done about serious management problems which had occurred in its part of the scheme. The Manager of Office 2 also had a large consortium scheme in his area which was owned and managed by the same non case-study association. He thought that their management performance was poor. He had a similar view of Tulip HA. He knew that the Assistant Director had intervened, because one of his ward members had asked for this action.

The problems which had been reported to his Office relating to the non case-study association included persistent harassment (carried out by one tenant on a number of other tenants) and situations involving domestic violence (where the association had

apparently done nothing). The Manager said that one woman tenant had approached his Neighbourhood Office for help. She was afraid that if she went to the association, a particular member of staff would pass on details about her circumstances to the man who was being violent towards her. The association concerned had formal racial harassment and domestic violence policies. This particularly irked the Manager because of what he regarded as the hypocrisy of the situation.

“They’re social landlords. They should practice what they preach if they’re proclaiming equal opportunities and they claim to be socially aware, as they do *very* loudly. And then they don’t deal with those kinds of issues...”

Housing Manager - Office 2

Inter-agency working and domestic violence

Guidance from the government issued in 1995 (Home Office, 1995) emphasised the need for different agencies to work together to provide services to women who lived with or had left violent men. In this authority, an inter-agency project had been established in 1991 to improve organisations’ responses to women who had left violent men. A “good practice pilot” area was designated in 1992. The aim of the work in the “good practice pilot” area was to encourage inter-agency working. The project did this through running quarterly forum meetings and domestic violence awareness training. The “good practice pilot” area included the management area of Office 1. The three case-study associations’ offices and some of their housing stock were also located within its boundaries.

Two of the Managers in the Neighbourhood Offices had strong views about the associations which worked in their areas. The Manager of Office 1 (which contained the inter-agency “good practice pilot” area) thought that relationships between the associations and the local authority had deteriorated since the Housing Act 1988. He felt that associations operated “commercially” whereas the authority’s

“culture” was different and genuinely more concerned about “customer care” and responding to “housing need.” He was “very annoyed” that a sector which had all the development funding and whose staff typically managed three hundred units expected the local authority to “do all the work” (including homeless “investigations”) when his staff managed seven hundred units each. The Manager in Office 2 said that he found it depressing that the local authority and housing associations were supposed to be “working in partnership” but associations appeared to be working entirely “to their own agendas.” The Manager of Office 3 had no idea what the associations were doing. She explained that this was because her job had become increasingly stressful and demanding and she now had no time for networking. The local authority project worker for the “good practice pilot” area appeared to be unaware of the strained working relationships between the local authority and local associations. She sent information to agencies in the area through the post every three months. This was predominantly to advertise a forum meeting.

“We send it out but we do not know whose bin it goes into.”

Project Worker

She said that she had prioritised work with the local authority’s housing staff rather than the associations in the area because she believed that local authority staff were likely to see more women - as applicants and tenants.

“I’ve had endless meetings with Housing Managers and they look nice, and say nice and then do nothing - that’s the pattern.”

Project Worker

It was not exactly clear what had been prioritised since the Housing Manager of Office 1 remembered attending domestic violence training in 1993 with staff but this had not been offered since. No work had been undertaken by project staff in relation

to developing domestic violence policies within associations in the "good practice pilot" area. The Women's Officer from the local authority and the Regional Officer from the NFHA had addressed a forum meeting in 1993 to publicise domestic violence policy development but that had been the only forum meeting specifically on housing. Local authority staff had not attended the forum meetings nor attended the domestic violence training in great numbers over the years 1993 to 1997. Housing association staff had been even scarcer at meetings and training (Project Worker and minutes of forum meetings).

The Contract Manager felt that the Project had made little impact on what the housing management staff in his Contract Area were doing already. In Office 1 and 2, he felt that they were "already there" as far as domestic violence was concerned because of the domestic violence policy. He believed that the Project was largely "plaiting fog" and making more of what it had achieved than was the case. Two Managers (1 and 2) spoke more positively about the Project's influence although neither they, nor their staff, had time to attend forum meetings.

The Contract Manager's overall view of the working relationship between the authority and the associations in the area was necessarily more strategic than the Managers.' He believed that the relationship between the authority and local housing associations was

"...a passive one. It's good because it's not bad In terms of role, there's a huge amount we could do together. Really make a difference by pooling information sometimes and by sharing work sometimes but politically there isn't a will to make that happen."

Contract Manager

This was clearly not "enabling" in the sense of the local authority influencing associations' management practice, nor inter-agency working. Local authority staff had critical views about nominations practices and the quality of association housing

management. Too often, they seemed to be dealing with people whom associations had referred but not helped. This enabled associations to be more competitive by reducing association staff time spent on interviewing and advice to applicants and tenants. This "cost" was being transferred to the local authority. It appeared to local authority staff that associations' only interest was to be in obtaining nominated applicants - to the extent of sending their own transfer applicants to the authority for a nomination, before rehousing them. It was no surprise that local authority staff believed that inter-agency working did not exist. Relationships, from the local authority point of view, were distant and strained. That did not mean to say that contact was not maintained with "like-minded individuals" in associations, but that was personal networking not inter-agency working (Contract Manager).

CONCLUSION

The local authority in this study played a major role in relation to assisting women who were homeless because of violence in the home. Nevertheless, that role was changing - although it was hard to capture exactly how this might affect women. A number of issues had to be considered, as has become clear in this Chapter.

Firstly, the local authority had to respond to the changes to the homeless legislation which were represented by the Housing Act 1996. Given the opposition which had been generated by local authorities and other housing organisations before its enactment, one would have anticipated greater difficulties than seemed to occur, at least in this local authority. The waiting list was changed to become the housing register, with minimal consultation with outside bodies or tenants. The Government's "reasonable preference" groups were integrated within the existing priority system by changing names (Group A "homeless" became "temporary and insecure accommodation"). This incrementalism was deliberate: councillors did not want to change the system and did the minimum to ensure that their political power in relation to allocations did not diminish. Another example of this was provided by

councillors in the local authority's inter-agency "good practice pilot" area who did not appear keen to develop this sort of work (through the forum mentioned by the Contract Manager), possibly because it would undercut their personal authority in their constituencies.

The role of ward members was clearly important in the local authority context in relation to the housing register and to homeless allocations in particular areas. Whether they occupied a similar influential position in associations' work or whether the transfer of importance to associations represented a "democratic deficit" was an issue to pursue with associations later. Another important issue for this study, were the ways in which decisions were made by staff in relation to the statutory responsibility towards the homeless. Although the local authority had a domestic violence policy to provide a framework for staff decisions, its limitations became clear. It would be easy, yet simplistic, to claim that some of its limitations were due to its drafting. (For example, it would have helped if there had been greater guidance to staff in the Neighbourhood Offices about allocations to women). The real weakness, however, lay in its (almost) advisory status compared to the statutory obligations in the Housing Act 1996 and the organisational arrangements for making homeless decisions under the Act. In many senses, these two aspects were more important and had to be considered together.

The domestic violence policy was important for "raising the profile" of the issue and challenging staff views about the appropriate response to domestic violence. Its value in that regard could not be underestimated (although it was impossible to tell whether the increases in the number of women being recognised as statutory homeless was a function of increased applications by women or more sympathetic decision-making by staff). Its weakness was its relationship to the legislation. Staff had to make individual decisions based on the circumstances of individuals - which may or may not have fallen within the policy's parameters. This was a statutory obligation: it was not simply another aspect of staff discretion in housing management. However, because a large part of the decision-making took place in

Neighbourhood Offices, discretion in interpretation was exercised *beyond* the policy's boundaries. There were differences between what staff thought was legitimate to consider as "domestic violence" (concentrating on physical violence) and what the policy expected. Another weakness was the somewhat vexed question of "proof" - with the formal policy undermined, even by staff who supported it. It was clearly unrealistic for staff to look at documents which women might offer to them as "proof" as a matter of politeness but then, as the policy expected, forget their contents (or not contrast these situations with those of women who had no documentary evidence).

This leads naturally to consideration of the extent to which staff were informed, trained and monitored in relation to the policy and consequent homeless decision-making in relation to domestic violence. This was especially important given that the service to homeless families had been decentralised. Only three Neighbourhood Office Managers were interviewed for this study but it became clear that there might be important variations in the way the legislation was interpreted. Assuming that the woman obtained statutory homeless status, the nature of housing offers which were made might also vary. This variation in responses seemed to be for a number of reasons - a lack of specialisation of staff (both in knowledge and experience); possible pressure from ward members and individual personal attitudes and conflicting management pressures on EHOs, Managers and Contract Managers. Decision-making in relation to homelessness seemed to be less problematic, and more likely to be in line with the domestic violence policy, if it had been undertaken by specialist staff who had no housing management responsibilities. The extent of the conflict between homeless decision-making and housing management was difficult to gauge - but it seemed to be bedded in suspicions about women's motivations, a prioritisation of rent arrears over personal circumstances and a concern to maximise rental income at all costs (through offering the poorest quality property to the most vulnerable of applicants, who had minimal choice in refusing it). All of these management concerns had become increasingly important with compulsory competitive tendering (and were not going to diminish with the advent

of Best Value). It is this management context which provides a link with the experience of associations in this study.

The working relationships between the authority and associations in this study appeared to be distant and somewhat strained. This was so whether measured by the experience of the process and the success rate of nominations (especially homeless nominations) and more individual attitudes and opinions about associations' housing management. Women might find that they received a high enough priority for rehousing with the local authority (accepting the provisos noted above). They might also be nominated. The question raised by Neighbourhood Office staff was whether they would be rehoused by associations? When associations had targets to meet in relation to rehousing statutory homeless people, they had regularly contacted the central homeless teams for homeless applicants. Without that additional pressure, two out of the three associations in this study did not. This is surprising in one sense: associations were expected to fill 75% of their consortium vacancies with nominees (and the figure was 50% for their remaining stock). In another sense, however, it was not surprising. The atmosphere surrounding rehousing homeless people was quite negative at the time of this research. Page's report (Page, 1993) had generated doubt in the association world about the practical wisdom of rehousing homeless people together on new estates. The argument had been made that concentrating vulnerability like this created management problems which associations were not equipped to respond to. A more cynical view might claim that many associations did not want to house homeless people whom they regarded as stigmatised and unsuitable tenants, and Page's report gave them a reason to avoid doing so.

The impact of competition between the local authority and housing associations was also becoming evident to local authority staff, in a number of ways. This affected the possibility of any inter-agency working in relation to providing service(s) to women leaving violent men. In the Neighbourhood Offices, staff had other priorities - so that even homeless "investigations" were affected by other demands on

their time. Association staff seemed to have an easier time of it (according to local authority Managers) and seemed better able to shift at least some of their workload on to their counterparts in the local authority. This kind of behaviour did not make for good working relationships between local authority and housing association staff let alone inter-agency working. The next three Chapters take up some of these issues and explore them in more depth with housing association staff. Chapter 5 which now follows, looks in broad terms at the changing, privatised world of the case-study associations and examines how housing management services were being transformed, not necessarily to the benefit of homeless women who needed to be rehoused.

CHAPTER 5 THE HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS - GROWING INTO A NEW ROLE

INTRODUCTION

The Housing Act 1988 introduced new funding arrangements for associations' development programmes. It reduced security of tenure for new association "assured" tenants and removed the requirement to set "fair rents" on new tenancies. These measures were expected to contribute to a working environment for associations in which they could use private rather than public funding to provide more association, social rented housing. In effect, the Act privatised housing associations.

Each of the case-study associations in this study had grown in stock size to varying degrees since 1988. The local authority had given preferential treatment to local, rather than multi-regional, associations in the consortium. Two out of the three associations in this study had recently restructured but this was not a response to growth - it was primarily due to the perceived need to become more financially efficient. Although the local authority's "enabling role" had been pursued through housing development opportunities (especially in the consortium), it had become clear that its influence was much weaker in relation to association housing management (Chapter 4).

The nature of the housing management service in associations was driven by different concerns than those which the local authority might regard as acceptable. The impact of shifting organisational regimes (Clarke and Newman, 1997) and the growing influence of "managerialism" was becoming much more evident within association housing management (Walker 1998 and 2000). This does not mean that these new emphases completely replaced older practices or attitudes. They both appeared to exist - at different levels of the organisation - in an uneasy relationship. This Chapter makes use of information from interviews with senior staff in the

associations, an interview with the Vice Chair of one association, Annual Reports, policy documents, statistical information from CORE and other documents. This is analysed to provide a dynamic account of the changing management service which women might receive from the three case-study associations.

The Chapter is divided into a number of discrete but inter-related sections which provide a detailed overview of the work of associations in the study. The first section provides a brief description of the associations, by way of introduction. This is followed by an analysis of the changing housing management service, with information provided in part by senior staff drawn from each association. There is then further discussion of the role of ward members relative to associations - continuing the analysis first started in Chapter 4. This is followed by a discussion of policy development in each of the associations in relation to domestic violence - providing comparisons with the local authority and illustrating the limitations of its "enabling" role. The remainder of the Chapter looks in more detail at who these associations were rehousing, drawing on statistical information provided by CORE. This section complements the more general comments of senior management and provides very interesting insights into the role of the associations - in relation to assisting the local authority in rehousing homeless people and providing homes for homeless women who had left violent men. A number of concluding remarks sum up the general picture of change, and provide the appropriate precursor to Chapter 6 which begins to look in more detail at how easy or difficult it might now be for women to obtain an association home through being nominated by the local authority, by applying directly through the waiting list or applying as a transfer applicant.

THE CASE-STUDY ASSOCIATIONS

Bluebell HA - the local association

Bluebell HA had been a small, predominantly inner city association in 1987 although a few housing schemes had also been developed or acquired

opportunistically in outer areas of the city. It had owned and managed four hundred and fifty properties in 1987. In 1997, this figure had increased to one thousand seven hundred properties. Staffing levels had increased over this period from twelve to sixty. The association's continuing independence had been assured because of growth possible through the consortium (Chief Executive). The association had built between two and three hundred homes each year over the consortium's five year life. It had also built a twenty two unit hostel for homeless women and children at the request of the local authority. Bluebell HA's growth had shifted its geographical focus away from the inner city. This was deliberate - inner and outer city sites had been balanced to contribute to the association's financial viability. Ten years before, 60% of its property had been in inner city locations. Now only about 25% of its properties could be described as inner city housing.

Bluebell HA was the only association in the city not to have recently reorganised. This might have been considered to be unusual given the extent of its growth. The reason for this lay in the strongly held views of the Chief Executive. He thought reorganisation would be more disruptive than beneficial to the association. Certainly, it would interrupt the day to day work. He had a very strong task-oriented focus: what he called "getting things done" and he expected the rest of the staff to work similarly. Quite simply, in the face of more work staff were expected to work harder. He had been in charge for many years and described himself as having a "detailed" understanding of most of the association's work. He had a "controlling" approach and thought that it took a strong manager to contradict him. Although he identified a need to move to a "more collegiate style" with his senior managers, he was "not prepared to sacrifice service standards in any moves in that direction." He also thought that the organisation had moved forward up until then through the contributions of "talented individuals." He firmly believed that private sector methods could be used to attain social objectives like the provision of housing for poor people. Nevertheless, changes in the ways in which work was now expected to be undertaken in the association, did not sit easily with approaches and attitudes from a previous decade.

More housing was coming into management in Bluebell HA in the next financial year. The Management Committee had decided *not* to appoint new staff but to increase Housing Officer management patch sizes (which were presently three hundred and fifty homes each). This would reduce unit costs and make the organisation more competitive. Performance related pay had been agreed for senior staff and was currently being considered by the Management Committee for all staff. This would emphasise the existing approach which the Chief Executive described as "more work with less resources" (a well known managerialist phrase - see Hood, 1991).

This senior management approach fitted into the "competitive regime" described by Clarke and Newman (1997) but it had not been accepted without challenge by other staff. "Tensions" were emerging from housing management staff about the declining standard of service in the face of relentless increases in work (Chief Executive). He felt that many housing management staff wanted the growth and increased work to stop but *he* believed that the association "has to grow to survive." These differences of opinion about the direction in which Bluebell HA's services were developing reflected competing attitudes and practices (Clarke and Newman, 1997, pp62-63) though it was clear that front-line staff had little influence over the direction of change.

Foxglove HA - the multi-regional association

Foxglove HA was a multi-regional association which had owned and managed about one thousand properties in different parts of this local authority in 1987. It was the second largest case-study association working in the city. Housing management staff who were based in this Area Office worked with the authority in this study and four neighbouring authorities. The association had only expanded slowly in this local authority over this period because it was not given preferential treatment by the local authority. It had developed between four and five hundred rented homes over the five years to 1997. This represented an increase of about a third over its stock

numbers in 1988. Staffing levels had remained static. The increase in properties was considered "marginal" because of the association's overall size (Area Director).

This association had reorganised at HQ and in its Area Offices. The aims of the reorganisation were wide ranging. It wanted to increase its competitiveness against local associations, improve working relationships with local authorities, improve the service to "customers" and increase "accountability to the local community" (Area Director). By January 1997, most new staff were in post in the Area Office. They worked within the framework of an Area Plan which linked to the association's corporate objectives. Decision-making and budget *holding* which had previously been quite tightly controlled from the Head Office was partly decentralised to the Area Offices. The central Head Office retained control over policy development, budget *setting* and strategic control and monitoring. The reorganisation followed the "new public management" model (Pollitt, 1990).

Several staff remarked that the process of reorganisation had severely undermined staff morale. It had taken over two years and involved too many difficult staff discussion sessions (Team Leader). The Team Leader was not alone in commenting that the association, which had previously been a very stable bureaucratic organisation, had now lost its "family feel." As a Manager, he thought that staff in the Area Office were no longer prepared to "go that extra mile now" (for example, working extra hours when necessary to ensure that work was completed on time). This was ironic, given that the new structure relied on giving Area Office staff more responsibility to make decisions, without referring to more senior staff or to HQ for approval.

Tulip HA - the black association

Tulip HA had registered as an association in 1987. It had been established primarily to rehouse black and Asian people who were either homeless or were living in poor housing conditions. Since that time, it had been given a "great opportunity" for growth through its involvement in the consortium (Chief Executive). About five

hundred of the association's seven hundred homes had been built through it and the staffing complement had increased from one to seventeen, over ten years. Having said that, the association had been given little choice in relation to where it developed in the city (Chief Executive). It had been a "beneficiary" association in the consortium - and had less leeway in selecting development sites than the five full members. The Vice-Chair believed that the association had been given the worst sites to develop. Some sites were in predominantly white areas which had a known history of racial attacks. Some black people had refused to consider the areas in which the new housing was located because they feared racial attacks. How these developments could be reconciled with the association's aims was impossible to say. This must have contributed to the growing distance between the association and the local communities it was primarily established to help.

Tulip HA had restructured in 1996 to make the association

"... "fit" for an increasingly competitive future but also to achieve a more customer-focussed housing service with quality and performance as the key components."

Annual Report, 1996, p5

Privately, the reorganisation was in response to previous inadequate financial controls and concerns about the association's viability. The reorganisation had precipitated the departure of most of the pre-1996 staff complement. All the staff were new, with the exception of the Chief Executive. This was viewed positively by the Vice-Chair and the Chief Executive, though they both said that it had been "a difficult time." There had been problems with recruiting to a number of the new posts and work had consequently "piled up" (Vice Chair). The Board was trying to create "a changed ethos" and practice in the association (Vice-Chair). This was similar to the "competitive regime" outlined by Clarke and Newman (1997). The association's most important priority now was financial: to ensure that rent was paid by tenants and that arrears were dealt with promptly by staff. Arrears had been unacceptably high two years before. The Board felt that tenants' perceptions of what

might happen if they were in arrears with their rent *had* to change because it affected the association's financial viability (Vice-Chair).

"The emphasis *had* to be on getting the records straight, getting the money in and issuing notices to quit, if necessary."

Vice-Chair - Tulip HA

The association's links with the local community had been put under considerable strain because of this change of emphasis and because of the nature of some of its housing management practice (for example, evictions). Given that it was a recently established black association, this was a dilemma. A number of staff were critical of previous poor recruitment practice and the work which had been left outstanding. They had been obliged to "catch up and sort out" work which, in their view, should have been done by their predecessors. (This was the background to the comment by one of the Managers in Chapter 4. Old nominations had been found in a pile and returned to the Neighbourhood Office, without explanation).

THE CHANGING HOUSING MANAGEMENT SERVICE

Introduction

The housing management service in all of the associations had changed a great deal over the preceding ten years. There was a consensus amongst long-serving staff that it had deteriorated. There had been overt moves by senior management in all of the associations to create new "competitive regimes" (Newman and Clarke, 1997).

In all of the associations, Housing Officer jobs had changed. In Bluebell HA, the professional autonomy of housing management staff had declined. Even though some HOs might still try to offer a more personalised service, lack of time and knowledge minimised the continuance of this alternative, older approach. A similar process was evident in Foxglove HA. It had previously been much more bureaucratised than Bluebell HA but had recently adopted what might be called the

neo-Taylorist version of housing management (after Pollitt, 1990). Housing Services Officers now had little discretion and were closely monitored in all aspects of arrears and voids control work. Tulip HA had restructured and senior managers were now trying to change its "ethos" so that it would become a predominantly "competitive regime" with financial priorities to the fore. Applicants' or tenants' requests (including those about housing applications) were either dealt with at the lowest level possible in the organisational hierarchy (Customer Service Teams in Foxglove HA and Tulip HA) or had to be squeezed into the time available by hard-pressed Housing Officers, whose priorities were arrears and voids work (Bluebell HA). In all of the associations, this was part of the "core business" of the organisation (Clarke and Newman, 1997, pp78-79).

Changes in the nature of housing management jobs were reinforced by changes in the dominant organisational cultures in all of the associations. In "competitive regimes" there is an overt emphasis on financial "performance" and an accompanying lack of priority for more intangible processes like the provision of advice and/or "support" to applicants and tenants (Clarke and Newman, 1997; Pollitt, 1990; Hood, 1991). All of the recent changes in the three associations were commensurate with this - that is, a focus on maximising rental income and minimising the costs of staff and overheads in the housing management service. The underlying consideration for this research was how these changes would affect the nature of the service available to women who had left violent men? This will first be considered in the context of the overall direction of the housing management services provided by the three case-study associations.

Bluebell HA - the local association

Bluebell HA's housing management service had changed over the previous ten years. Staff who had been in post before or around 1988, could remember being able to spend time with tenants and applicants and being able to provide a very personally-tailored service. Staff were generic then: dealing with all aspects of housing management. Managers said that longstanding tenants still expected the

same service, and complained when they did not get it (Director of Housing and Housing Manager). Unlike Foxglove HA, senior staff in Bluebell HA were positive about rehousing homeless people. The association had set its own targets for rehousing homeless households. These were higher than those expected by the Housing Corporation and had been exceeded. Ironically, tenants now had more complex problems than in the past, but staff did not have the time to help (Director of Housing). The Director described how, over the years, incremental changes to the job (reducing its breadth as specialist staff took over specific tasks) had produced a situation

"...which leaves the Housing Officers with probably the dregs - the least desirable elements of the post. So they've got arrears, they've got voids, anti-social behaviour..."

Director of Housing - Bluebell HA

The main priorities of Housing Officers were arrears control, voids and dealing with "anti-social behaviour." Housing Officers met with the Housing Manager every six weeks to review "the things that can be measured." This was mainly arrears and voids - to make sure that they were "under control" (Housing Manager). The emphasis was on work which produced measurable results rather than the more intangible aspects of housing management such as building good working relationships with tenants and other organisations and helping applicants with advice about finding a new home (Walker 1998 and 2000).

"...Dealing with applicants is far more geared to "Do we have a vacancy? Can we let it?" than "Here's someone who needs housing. How can we provide the best form of advice?"

Chief Executive - Bluebell HA

Staff attitudes towards applicants and tenants remained as sympathetic as was possible, given constraints on staff time (Director of Housing and the Housing

Manager). On the other hand, relatively new and more intense monitoring of arrears and voids performance by Managers had not been particularly well received. There was resentment and a belief that senior management was only pursuing improvements to the arrears and voids performance to obtain financial bonuses for themselves (Director of Housing). The irony was that the performance-related pay for senior staff had yet to be implemented although it had been agreed by the Management Committee. This change of attitude was a source of regret for senior managers.

"I've understood the [association] as ... a very supportive environment and there have been quite significant changes over the last couple of years - in terms of a more business-like environment, pressure to perform and different management styles being seen in the organisation.....Suddenly it all seems to be changing - from being a very "touchy-feely-supporty" kind of environment to suddenly the whip's being cracked. That's produced difficulties, I think, for all the managers in some way or another."

Director of Housing - Bluebell HA

Because of the demands on their time, it was also proving difficult for senior staff to maintain good "communication" between staff about what was needed and the reasons for this (the pay issue being a good example of this). Staff were becoming reluctant to contribute at staff meetings for fear of being asked to take on work or because they were unhappy about certain aspects of the work (Manager). Staff were encouraged to ask colleagues if they were unsure about how to deal with any given situation. Managers recognised that front-line staff might receive different responses, depending on who they spoke to rather than an authoritative association response. Limited training and a lack of staff guidelines was producing a situation in which different staff were probably making different decisions about the same issue (Managers).

Foxglove HA - the multi-regional association

The association had undergone a role change in the 1980s and housed more people who were reliant on welfare benefits as their sole source of income or as the Team Leader put it "...more problem families and the homeless." Yet there was far less general contact with tenants and the housing management service had not developed to assist them with their problems. As far as the service went, there was a

"...very great difference between what senior managers *think* they're doing and what *is* actually happening... I know that this image we have about how close we are to tenants and how responsive we are to their demands - it's not there. We were achieving a great deal more when we were doing door-to-door rent collection because you were *there*. And you *saw* people and you were *aware* of conflicts within families and difficulties that people had. And you saw improvements that people were making in their standards and you saw standards that were deteriorating. Because you were there regularly, you could follow things up... You could operate on two levels with people. You had an official line but also an unofficial, supportive-if-necessary kind of behaviour. And that's gone. We spend a lot of time *within* organisations talking about customer service but I'm *not* convinced that it's there."

Team Leader - Foxglove HA

The Team Leader thought that the Housing Officer job was more difficult than it had been in the past. Staff now worked within a complicated legislative framework. They also had to deal with more anti-social behaviour. Housing Services Officers' priorities now were dealing with rent arrears, voids, waiting list visits and dealing with nuisance/neighbour disputes. Work was closely monitored by the Team Leader and staff performance was recorded (in considerable detail) on the computerised housing management system. This reflected Pollitt's belief that the early stages of "new public management" unleashes a new form of Taylorism via new technology (Pollitt, 1990). There was a tougher approach to arrears and anti-social behaviour, including speedy eviction. This represented a change in dominant attitudes within the association. Until a few years previously, Foxglove HA could have been described as "liberally minded" and had rarely evicted tenants for arrears or anti-social behaviour (Area Director). The focus on arrears, voids and anti-social behaviour meant that other work had not been pursued.

The Team Leader referred to inter-agency working as "window-dressing." It had never been developed in this Office in relation to any work in the past.

"There's not a year goes by without some other new initiative ...that calls upon more time being spent and *they can't do it*. ...It's sad but true. However we want to dress it up ... the amount of practical assistance we give to people, the amount of useful advice we give, I think it is very limited."

Team Leader - Foxglove HA

In contradiction to this, the Area Director expressed interest in developing links with other organisations and delegated a member of staff in the Area Office to investigate further after the interview with the researcher. This fitted in with the Area Plan. It was ironic that if links developed, they would be working within a housing management service which seemed to be less tolerant of individual needs. This became clearer in relation to the review of the harassment policy in this association, discussed later.

Tulip HA - the black association

In Tulip HA, no member of staff could reflect back to a time when the housing management service in the association had been differently organised, with different priorities. They had all been appointed within the previous eighteen months. The "new" staff were, in the main, black and "very young" (Vice-Chair). Tulip HA expected staff to "learn on the job." In the eighteen months since the reorganisation, no training had been provided internally within the association (except, free "in house" domestic violence awareness training provided by a Committee member). Staff had also been refused attendance on external training courses. The Housing Manager said that there was no budget for training.

Attempts to change the "ethos" and work priorities of the housing management staff in Tulip HA had different repercussions for this association compared to the others. The new approach to arrears had ultimately meant a significant increase in evictions for arrears and abandonment of tenancies. This had affected the perception

held of Tulip HA by certain community leaders in the different black and Asian communities and some local ward members. The Vice-Chair could remember the beginning of the association and spoke with regret

"It's become much more of a business. The pressures on the organisation have changed it immensely. It's lost its community base."

Vice Chair - Tulip HA

The Housing Manager remarked that the priorities for Housing Officers were controlling arrears and reducing voids. Sometimes, other issues, for example, dealing with racial harassment might be equally important (since Tulip HA's reputation as a black association hinged on dealing with this effectively). The housing management staff in Tulip HA had to be very task-focussed. Although the Housing Manager said that Tulip HA's culture was intended to be "open" and "customer focussed," he also remarked that the Housing Officers might not agree with that description. They had large workloads (and insufficient time) and there was an overwhelming emphasis on rent arrears and voids work. Housing Officers currently met every two to three weeks with the Senior Housing Officer to discuss the progress made on arrears and voids.

A difficult issue for staff was who to rehouse. Tulip HA rehoused large numbers of homeless households and the association's staff maintained good working relationships with Bluebell HA's women's hostel, the black women's refuge and the central homeless service. Those organisations had also spoken highly of Tulip HA, as the only association which continued to rehouse large numbers of homeless people. Nevertheless, the relationship between the association and some Neighbourhood Offices was not on the same footing. Disputes with ward members over arrears action or whether particular applicants should be rehoused also created considerable anxiety for some of the housing management staff.

The possible effects on homeless women leaving violent men

Rehousing more homeless people coincided with a period in the development of housing associations when they were least able to respond to the variety of difficulties which applicants and tenants might face. In two of the associations, staff were positive about their association's strategy of rehousing more homeless people. In the third association, this cannot be said to be the case. In all of the associations, it was clear that housing management staff had less time available to give to applicants or tenants. Their position paralleled that of the EMOs in the Neighbourhood Offices who also had other priorities which senior management regarded as more important.

It was clear that Housing Officers actually spent most of their time dealing with what may be called the overt social control elements of housing management. Apart from making their jobs particularly unattractive, it was also unlikely that they would be keen to add any more problems to their workloads since day to day they were dealing, day-to-day, with more difficult circumstances. The Housing Managers in Bluebell HA and Tulip HA were open about this possibility whilst the Team Leader in Foxglove gave greater emphasis to the way in which the computerised management system now ensured that staff stayed focussed on arrears and voids control work. Housing Services Officers in Foxglove HA probably had clearer "cut-off" points in relation to intervention because of the way they were managed. It also became clear later that some applicants with more difficult circumstances (including women who had left violent men) would not be registered on the waiting list. This will be considered in more detail in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

THE RELATIONSHIP WITH WARD MEMBERS

The relationship between the three associations and local ward members seemed at best to have been ambivalent (see Goodlad, 1994 for further commentary about this type of problem). In an authority where ward members had a strong history of intervening on council housing issues on behalf of constituents, it was to be

expected that they would do the same in relation to housing association developments (for example, Audit Commission, 1986; Cole and Furbey, 1994, pp120-128 for more detail of ward members' interventions in council housing). Ward members had the same representative role to play for their constituents in approaching housing association Managers. It was clear, however, that demands which might have been acted upon by Neighbourhood Office Managers were not necessarily responded to in the same way, by their association equivalents. This "dispersal of power" from local authorities to housing associations was one formal example of a "democratic deficit" (Stewart, 1993) but whether this actually represented a significant diminution in the role of elected representatives is a moot point. Certainly, they had a less direct formal role. The nature of association accountability was different. Housing association staff were ultimately accountable to their Boards/Management Committees and the Housing Corporation. They were not directly accountable to elected representatives. Nevertheless, local ward members in this authority did not appear to be slow in coming forward on general issues or in support of particular constituents.

The extent of housebuilding which had been taking place as a result of the consortium seems to have led to ward members paying greater attention to associations' work. Most of the homes developed through the consortium were newly built. As such, they might have been considered to be in great demand. In fact, this was not always the case. Development staff had expected the new housing to have regenerative effects on the surrounding poor council housing, but the reverse seemed to happen with a small number of schemes. Few local council tenants were rehoused in the new schemes and a small number were vandalised and became virtually unlettable (Bluebell HA and Foxglove HA's experience). In one sense, these new properties were not part of the local community. Local council tenants living nearby did not feel they should necessarily protect them, so any empty homes were vandalised (Chief Executive - Bluebell HA).

Senior staff in all of the associations thought that there were particular schemes where it would be unwise to rehouse women who had left violent men. They would

be too vulnerable to survive long in an unwelcoming environment. They felt that any lone parents (Asian, black or white) with black or Asian children might become targets for racial harassment in some areas. In others, single women or lone parents (whatever their colour) would be vulnerable, if they were seen as "outsiders". This is a different, more complicated picture of the range of difficulties which associations might face with new developments than that painted by Page (1993) or Cole, Gidley, Ritchie, Simpson and Wishart (1996). It is also one which raises awkward questions about the somewhat rosy nature of the "communities" which associations are now expected to create (Page, 1993 and 1994; Cole, Gidley, Ritchie, Simpson and Wishart, 1996; Griffiths, Park, Smith, Stirling and Trott, 1996; DETR and DSS, 2000).

This was not the main concern of ward members, however. Senior staff reported that ward members had complained about high rents, the lack of priority for local council tenants, the condition of the stock when it was vandalised or left empty and the rehousing of "outsiders" into their areas. A small number of schemes had generated the most critical comments: usually the "low demand" consortium schemes which had been vandalised and mainly left empty. The case-study associations seemed to have experienced different levels of intervention from ward members. This might have been because of the different areas they worked in, the particular interests of ward members or the tendency of different members of staff to emphasise (or otherwise) the difficulties they had experienced. It was impossible to say which factor was most important in each of the three case-study associations.

The Area Director of Foxglove HA reported few difficulties. Ward members in one area were critical of one of the association's consortium schemes because of vandalism and voids but he provided little information, apart from that their complaints had been dealt with.

Bluebell HA had experienced more difficulties. The Chief Executive remarked that a number of ward members had a somewhat critical view of the association's consortium homes, because of the rents charged for them. They were higher than the

equivalent local authority rents and families in paid work could not afford them. Ward members were also unhappy about who the association had actually rehoused. They wanted local council tenants to be rehoused since they knew that it would be some time before the local authority could refurbish their council homes (many of which needed improvements). There had been no local discussions about these new housing developments with ward members, Neighbourhood Office staff or housing management staff in the associations. Ward members had mistakenly believed that the new association homes would be a shortcut to good conditions for their constituents (Chief Executive - Bluebell HA). Unfortunately, local families often obtained low priority on the local authority's housing register transfer list (since they did not have any "housing need"). Often they could not be nominated because they did not have sufficient priority, whether or not ward members were supporting them.

Tulip HA seemed to have experienced the most difficulty with ward members. The Vice-Chair felt that ward members had usually been unsupportive of the association's work. One had refused to intervene or show public support to Tulip HA in relation to a site in an area of the city new to them and where they had wanted to develop. The site had been earmarked by the local authority for the association to build new homes. A local Muslim association also wanted the land to build a community centre. The ward member (who, the Vice-Chair pointed out, was white) chose to "sit on the fence" (Vice-Chair) rather than get involved in the ensuing arguments between two black organisations about which one should have the land.

The Chief Executive felt that with ward members "...the biggest cause of friction is over who gets housed." He believed that the local Pakistani elders in the community had learnt how to "play" the political system and engage the support of the local Pakistani ward members. This had produced considerable difficulties for staff when ward members promised Tulip HA houses to their constituents (Chief Executive and Senior Housing Officer). The Chief Executive believed that local authority nominations were "...a complete and utter shambles." This was because of ward member influence over Neighbourhood Office Managers. He believed that some

Managers would give an applicant a high priority nomination if they were being supported by their ward member (sometimes in circumstances which did not merit it). The association's staff assessed applicants independently, whether or not they had been nominated. Sometimes they awarded a much lower priority to high priority nominations and, consequently, did not rehouse them. This had led to considerable difficulties for the association in some instances. Of interest, is that Foxglove HA did exactly the same but sent back nominations where there was a discrepancy in assessments (especially in relation to homeless women who had left violent men). They had not had similar difficulties with ward members or the Neighbourhood Offices.

This illustrated two issues. Tulip HA was closer to particular black and Asian communities than the other two associations. This might be an advantage in some respects but it produced difficult contradictions when Asian ward members misunderstood or misused their positions. Secondly, it was possible that Tulip HA staff could have been more subtle in dealing with the nominations process. They should have returned nominations with an explanation of their concern about the way in which particular circumstances had been assessed (as Foxglove HA staff did). Although they were correct in their assertion of independence, simply reassessing nominations with no discussion, merely antagonised Neighbourhood Office Managers (not to mention the ward members concerned).

Worth noting from this discussion is the apparent parochialism of ward members' complaints. It is likely that some at least tried to exert considerable pressure on behalf of particular constituents. This was in one way commendable - since local people sometimes needed an ally in dealing with large organisations. Nevertheless, there was a problem when they overstepped the mark, and tried to force through their candidates by undermining formal procedures or by trying to introduce an element of nepotism or favouritism unacceptable in housing associations. Women trying to get rehoused and settled in a completely new area might find it difficult to obtain help from some ward members. This was not a surprising conclusion given research to date (Charles with Jones, 1993; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993) but it

raises a wider question about political representation. Why was it that ward members failed to pursue the issue of women's safety in their concerns about some of the consortium schemes which had been built by the associations? Given that the authority had a domestic violence policy and that homeless women were being nominated to associations, it is surprising that this was never raised. Ward members seemed to be far more concerned about their immediate local interests, perhaps because, given the nature of local politics, they had to consider where their political support would come from in the next local election. Davies pointed out some time ago

"It is of the essence of intra-ward politics to be able to claim credit for everything and to permit no rivals for public esteem"

Davies (1972) quoted in Malpass and Murie, 1987, p218

It might be suggested that rehousing homeless women locally (and the associated issue of domestic violence) were potentially controversial issues. Women who had left violent men were a stigmatised group with the general public and within particular communities. It seemed to be the case that this was an issue with which ward members were reluctant to engage publically, for fear of alienating established interests in their local communities.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

A domestic violence policy had been agreed for the local authority's housing service but (as was pointed out in Chapter 4) there had been little reference within it to the work of housing associations. This was a lost opportunity in terms of local authority "enabling" both practically (especially in relation to consortium housing) and symbolically. However, there was a second external influence on associations which may have encouraged them to develop policy and procedures. This was the expectation that associations would develop "good practice" ways of working -

especially if these had Housing Corporation backing through the "Performance Expectations" and the monitoring system. In relation to domestic violence, the NFHA had published good practice guidelines in 1993 (Davis, 1993), four years before the interviews for this research but senior staff in the NFHA had not been prepared to formally request that these be included in the "Performance Expectations" (NFHA Women and Violence Working Group minutes 1995). However, the guide sold reasonably well (500+ copies according to the NFHA's Publications Manager). It was clear that there was some interest in the issue from associations across the country. Nevertheless, developing policy guidelines for staff remained discretionary.

There were a number of questions to ask of the associations in this research. What importance had been attached to developing policy and practice in relation to domestic violence in their associations? Had the local authority's policy or the NFHA guide been influential in this process? How had policy been developed (if it had) and had any changes been made later? It is worth establishing at this point that all of the associations prioritised domestic violence in their own waiting lists. They called it different things (as will become clear in Chapter 6) but the important point was that women would be given very high priority because they had experienced violence. The question here was whether staff had any guidelines in responding to these situations.

Bluebell HA - a policy in the making?

In Bluebell HA, the approach to writing policy documents was claimed to be open but was actually dependent on individuals being willing to spend extra time undertaking the necessary work. There was no tradition of establishing working groups or teams to undertake various aspects of the process. Most of the policies in Bluebell HA had been written by the Chief Executive. Occasionally, they had been written by other senior staff. The Chief Executive believed that there was always the opportunity for "a talented individual" to contribute in this way. In practical terms, researching and writing formal policy documents required an individual staff

member to have time, knowledge, persistence and power in Bluebell HA. Most draft policy documents had to be considered in staff meetings (sometimes several times) before being considered by the relevant sub-committee of the Management Committee (Director of Housing and Housing Manager).

The reality of the supposed meritocracy in operation in the association was provided by the attempt by a member of staff to write a policy in relation to dealing with domestic violence. A Housing Officer had started work on a domestic violence policy in 1996, on her own initiative, because of personal interest in the issue. The process had proved more time-consuming than she had anticipated. She had presented a draft to a staff meeting, received a number of comments which had to be followed up and then ran into difficulties. Although she had tried to complete the work, she had eventually been forced to abandon it, because of other work pressures. This was not surprising given the nature of her job and the fact that she was not allocated time to complete the draft policy but had to fit it around her main duties (Housing Officer). Her task had not been made any easier by only having partial information. She knew about the local authority's policy but did not know that the NFHA had produced a good practice guide which might have helped her (Housing Officer). Ironically, the Chief Executive knew about the NFHA guide but did not know that any work had been done in creating a policy in Bluebell HA (Chief Executive). Clearly, information had not been passed up to him by senior staff in housing management (possibly because the policy had not been completed). This was another example of poor communication in the association, which senior staff themselves had contributed to.

The reality of relying on individual efforts - with no formal organisational backing or power - was evident in the fate of the draft domestic violence policy. It was not developed subsequently by more senior staff in housing management. In fact, they each reported differently to the researcher on what had happened to the draft and its current progress: another example of poor communication. This also illustrated the actual lack of priority accorded the issue. There was a consensus among senior managers that abandonment was a common fate of draft policies unless a Committee

had requested specific work. The reality was that most staff had too many other, more immediate demands on their time to voluntarily take on researching and writing policy documents.

Foxglove HA - formal policy

There were two themes which emerged in the account of policy development in Foxglove HA. The first was the way in which domestic violence initially perceived as a marginal issue in the association's waiting list priorities but had later become "mainstream" and acceptable. The second theme was how, in considering the process of defining "housing need," the changing management of the organisation took precedence over the needs of women.

In 1990, the association had come under external pressure to change its former waiting list priorities (Business Support Manager - HQ). This was the time in which the Housing Corporation was expected by government to put more pressure on associations to help local authorities to rehouse homeless people (see Chapter 2 for an account of this) and it is likely that this was the reason for the changes. The association established a review team: an essentially rational approach to the possibly contentious issue of reconciling existing waiting list priorities with new ones, which had been forced on the association by wider political considerations at that time (Business Support Manager - HQ). The Equal Opportunities Advisor at HQ had been part of this team.

The association had been required to prioritise homelessness: it had not done this in its previous waiting list priorities (Business Support Manager - HQ). It developed a formal policy and procedures in relation to harassment, as part of its response to homelessness. At that time, the Equal Opportunities Advisor had felt that it was necessary to link domestic violence with another issue to ensure that it was included in the new waiting list priorities. She linked domestic violence to a broad definition of harassment because she knew that senior staff wanted "an equal opportunities slant" in the review's recommendations. "Harassment" had more provenance within

the association at that time (Equal Opportunities Advisor). Certainly, by 1990 a series of reports had been published (for example, Commission for Racial Equality, 1987) including one from the NFHA (Davis, 1989) highlighting the problem. Additional weight was given to it by the Housing Corporation which decided to monitor associations on how they dealt with racial harassment from 1989.

The Equal Opportunities Advisor believed that if domestic violence had been presented as a separate issue to the review group it would not have been given the same priority. It was clear that the political opportunity provided by external expectations (being seen to be responding to homelessness) combined with organisational power (senior staff interest in being seen to respond effectively to "harassment") was used by the Equal Opportunities Advisor to ensure that domestic violence was accepted as a priority for rehousing. Nevertheless, domestic violence only had contingent status - as part of the harassment policy. This became a problem later on (revealed in Chapter 6).

A copy of the harassment policy (and associated procedures) was to be found in the Procedure Manuals for lettings and estate management which were kept in each Area Office. As far as domestic violence was concerned, its key features were that "a supportive and positive approach" and a "victim-centred approach" should be offered to each woman. Applicants were to be offered an interviewer, where possible, of the same sex and ethnic origin. "Evidence" was not required to award priority (Procedure Manual, 1992). An "harassment pack" for staff use was also available.

By 1995, it was clear at HQ that Area Offices were having difficulties with the harassment policy. The main problem was that the application form for housing asked applicants to indicate (through tick boxes) their main reason for wanting to be rehoused. Many ticked the "harassment" box. This meant that the application was prioritised for a Housing Officer visit. When applicants were visited at home to discuss their circumstances, it became clear to Housing Officers that many were experiencing simple neighbour disputes not racial or other harassment (Customer

Services Officer and former Lettings Officer). This created bad feeling between the Lettings staff and Housing Officers because the latter regarded these visits as unnecessary and a waste of their time (Customer Services Officer and former Lettings Officer). In what was a bureaucratically-run association, there was a need for consistency. Rather than change the tick boxes and provide more information for applicants on completing the form, the form and the way of dealing with it was changed. Lettings Staff were instructed to ask applicants to provide further details on a new separate sheet ("the harassment assessment form"). The application was to be held in "pending" until the second form was completed and returned. The housing application would then be awarded points and join the waiting list to be visited by Housing Officers. It is worth pointing out that this problem had not been generated by women leaving violent men but that their assessment was caught up in the different problem of neighbour disputes and harassment. This was one of the disadvantages of domestic violence being associated with the harassment policy.

The Equal Opportunities Advisor justified this policy change to staff at the time (internal memorandum, June 1995). She emphasised that the association had to be satisfied of the women's circumstances (to be fair to other applicants) and had to be convinced that moving house would resolve the problem. This seemed to represent the re-establishment of the bureaucratic needs of the association (consistency through "proof" or evidence) and professional judgement (staff deciding whether a woman would benefit from rehousing) over the acceptance of the legitimacy of the woman's situation on the basis of her statement alone. This new approach would create difficulties for some women who would have no "proof" and ignored the NFHA's good practice guidance (of which staff were aware).

A second review of the lettings policy was due to be undertaken in 1998. The Equal Opportunities Advisor felt that the association's harassment policy would be "looked at" in the review but that it would be "pretty safe." She suspected that "homelessness" would come in for closer examination as it had only acquired the highest priority in the lettings policy in 1990 "due to political pressure." She planned to position the harassment policy within the broad framework of "anti-social

behaviour" work and "include domestic violence somehow" within that. She was concerned that domestic violence might become marginalised unless she was successful in linking "harassment" in broad terms with the associations current concern to deal with anti-social behaviour. What the implications of this possible linkage for women leaving violent men might be was impossible to anticipate at this stage, but again it was clear that domestic violence, by itself, would not be acceptable as a "housing need" category in its own right.

Apart from the forthcoming review, other changes were going to directly affect the response of the association towards women. The Equal Opportunities Advisor thought that the association might "have to bite the bullet" at the application form stage and ask for more detail and supplementary evidence about the violence which had occurred. She acknowledged that some women did not like writing these details down, but she felt that it was "unrealistic" to expect staff to personally interview each woman to obtain a detailed statement. The trend in the association was to move to a more telephone-based service.

"The issue is time...If something is not practical it is not going to be used at all. Women may visit an Office personally if *you're* lucky. Staff may have a few minutes if *she's* lucky. The emphasis now is on getting information on the telephone or through an application form. So staff need guidance on how to ask the right questions and get the right information from applicants. They need to know what to ask applicants to supply."

Equal Opportunities Advisor - Foxglove HA

It was clear that the management requirements of the organisation were taking precedence over what might be appropriate for women in these circumstances. This represented a facet of the "new public management" which was growing in importance. In this instance, there was more of a concern with turnover (that is, getting answers quickly) rather than process or as Clarke and Newman put it

"Where need was once the product of the intersection of bureaucratic categorisation and professional judgement, it is now increasingly articulated with and *disciplined* by a managerial calculus of resources and priorities."

Clarke and Newman, 1997, p76

Clearly, helping homeless women could not be regarded as a practical priority for Foxglove HA staff if this approach was pursued, even if the waiting list priority appeared to indicate otherwise. Although it is known that women have found personal interviews difficult especially where they have been conducted insensitively (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Mama, 1989; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993), it was likely that standard questions on the telephone from an unknown member of staff or standard questions on the application form would prove to be a deterrent to women considering whether to apply for housing. This was an example of the management needs of the association overwhelming any notion of sensitivity or appropriateness in dealing with what for women was a very traumatic situation. It might also be considered to be an example of the association effectively transferring costs elsewhere - as women might apply instead to landlords with a more "human" approach. This was a practice which was identified in Chapter 4 when local authority views of association practice were considered in detail.

Tulip HA - no policy yet

The situation in Tulip HA in relation to policy development was different again. All of the existing policies in the association were currently being reviewed and, where the Senior Management Team identified "a gap," new ones would be written. The Housing Manager was undertaking this task for housing management. He said that there was a greater emphasis on "customer care" than in the past. He had no plans to specify particular policies on the basis of ethnic origin or gender since everyone was "a customer." This seemed odd given that racial harassment might be an issue which was more likely to affect Tulip HA's black and Asian tenants and domestic violence its women tenants.

It seemed that "customer care" and ethnic/gender specific work had not been reconciled in the Housing Manager's mind because work on writing a domestic violence policy was planned for the spring of 1998. Nevertheless, the establishment of this date seemed to be largely arbitrary and a reactive response to complaints which had been received from the local authority. The Vice-Chair thought that it was likely that the Board would be receptive to a domestic violence policy although most of the Board members were black men. She felt that they understood race issues, but did not understand domestic violence. However

"...as liberal men they might be guilt-tripped into accepting a domestic violence policy."

Vice-Chair - Tulip HA

The Vice-Chair believed that the Housing Services Committee was likely to be more difficult to convince than the Board, since members of the former tended to get too "bogged down" in detail. Attendance at meetings had also been poor over the previous year: a number had been inquorate (Housing Manager).

None of this suggested speedy progress for a draft domestic violence policy and, in fact, by the autumn of 1998 no work had been started. Although the local authority had complained about the way in which staff had dealt with a particular tenant, it seemed that once local authority attention had moved away, other more urgent issues came to the fore in the association. Writing a policy might have helped staff in their work because it would have established guidelines for what was expected. As it was, staff were expected to respond as they felt was appropriate. They had all received domestic violence awareness training (from the local authority project referred to in Chapter 4 and a member of the Committee) but a major problem with it was that it had not been housing-specific and gave staff no idea about how to relate the content of the training to their own jobs. This, combined with their age and experience, meant that they would be likely to find dealing with women, stressful and complicated. This situation also illustrated the difficulty which the

local authority had in influencing other organisations: simply complaining without helping was clearly not adequate. This illustrated the limits of "enabling."

It was clear from looking in detail at what had happened within each association that reasons other than rational ones precipitated policy development (or attempted policy development) in the three associations - political opportunity, personal interest or managerial panic. None of the associations had started to develop a formal policy because of the numbers of women they were rehousing in these circumstances. None of the senior staff in any of the associations knew about the local authority's policy on domestic violence and few had heard about the NFHA's guide. They were not aware of the increasing numbers of women who were being rehoused by the local authority (or associations because of nominations) because of domestic violence. In that sense, senior staff in the case-study associations were not aware of the gender dimensions of their rehousing practice (although front-line staff might have a better idea).

WHO WAS BEING REHOUSED?

The main concern of this research was the nature of the rehousing processes for women being rehoused by housing associations. One way of beginning to look at this was through the statistics which were available from CORE, setting them in the context of local authority figures in relation to the homeless. The CORE data showed (amongst other things) the route to rehousing which applicants had followed, whether or not they were homeless and their ethnic origin. Of particular interest to this research was the number of women being rehoused because of domestic violence, whether women from different ethnic groups were being rehoused, whether or not they were statutorily homeless and whether or not they had been nominated to the association by the local authority.

To begin to answer these questions, the last part of this Chapter is primarily taken up with an analysis of the statistical data available in relation to applicants who were rehoused between April 1997 and March 1998. This was the period over which most of the interviews for the research were conducted. It was possible to consider the number of women who were rehoused because of domestic violence. More generally, the ethnic origin of all those rehoused by the three case-study associations, their homeless status and whether they were nominated or applied directly to the association could also be seen. These data could not be broken down any further - for example, to see these features *just* in relation to those rehoused because of domestic violence.

None of these statistics were available during interviewing for obvious reasons though previous years statistics were considered for two of the associations before the interviewing started in associations. The data for 1997/1998 were requested and sent to the researcher in the summer of 1998 when they became available to each association. In addition, the local authority provided statistics on homelessness and nominations for the same period.

The statistics for the two local associations (Bluebell HA and Tulip HA) were broadly comparable but those for the multi-regional association were incomplete. Foxglove HA was unable to provide CORE statistics at a local authority level since all their CORE returns were centrally aggregated at HQ and were not immediately available at HQ or in the Area Office at a local authority level.

Homelessness and nominations

Just over two thousand households had been accepted by the local authority as statutory homeless over the previous year. Over 70% of these were women-headed households (most being lone parents or vulnerable single women) and 14% of these were black (that is, either African Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Indian or Pakistani - the categories used then by the Department of the Environment in monitoring homeless returns from local authorities). From the early 1990s, increasing numbers of women

had approached the local authority for help with emergency housing. This included steady increases in the number of women who were applying as homeless because of domestic violence. 295 women were accepted as homeless for this reason in the year 1990/1991. This represented 14% of the total accepted as homeless in that year. The figures for the following years were 345 (14%) in 1991/1992, 588 (19%) in 1992/1993, 586 (21%) in 1993/1994 and 641 (28%) in 1994/1995 (Housing Information Review, 1996/1997).

In 1996/1997, the year before this study, 630 women (30% of the total number of applicants accepted as statutory homeless) had been given that status because of domestic violence. The view of the Research Manager responsible for collating these data was that they were "almost certainly an undercount" because of the difficulties of maintaining reporting accuracy across thirty eight Neighbourhood Offices, two central teams and ten directly run hostels. No data was available during the course of the year to indicate that the numbers of women applying and being accepted would fall.

In 1997/1998, a total of 2041 association lettings were made across the city. The lettings made by the three associations in this study represented about one third of that total lettings figure (716 out of a total of 2041). The total number of households nominated and rehoused by associations across the city in the same year was 723. The three case-study associations housed about a half of the total of nominated applicants who were rehoused (361 out of a total of 723). Of the nominated households rehoused by associations across the city, 179 were statutory homeless and 93 were non-statutory homeless. (37% of the all the nominations rehoused by associations in that year).

The local authority did not keep information on the total number of nominations which Managers made to associations each year. This would be much higher than the figure for those nominated households who were rehoused. Nevertheless, associations did not appear to be rehousing sufficient nominations to meet their targets for consortium schemes. Whether this was due to local authority Managers

not nominating sufficient applicants or housing associations not rehousing them is impossible to say. There were two other possible explanations. On the one hand, applicants might not want to be nominated (because of the higher rents in housing associations, the longer waiting time or the limited choice of areas). On the other, associations might not agree with local authority priorities (or be doubtful about the management of some applicants). The critical comments of the Neighbourhood Office Managers in Chapter 4 come to mind here specifically in relation to associations sometimes housing low priority rather than high priority nominations.

More households (983) were rehoused by associations in the same year as direct applicants. 17 of these were subsequently assessed as statutory homeless and 177 were non statutory homeless. (This latter figure was a reflection of the large number of single homeless people whom associations rehoused from hostels in the city). In this sense, the marginalisation of single homeless people (a common feature in local authority allocations) was not replicated in the associations in this study.

Lettings

The most immediately noticeable feature in relation to lettings in the three case-study associations, was the difference in numbers of lettings made over the year 1997/1998. It was possible to directly compare all three associations in relation to this as the local authority supplied information about Foxglove HA's performance (from CORE statistics it obtained on a local authority wide basis).

As far as numbers were concerned, the local Bluebell HA was handling twice as many lettings (353) as the multi-regional Foxglove HA (174). Surprisingly, the smallest association in the study, Tulip HA, was also handling more lettings annually (189) than Foxglove HA in this local authority area. The staffing complement to deal with this work was similar in these associations. This meant that staff in Bluebell HA were being expected to cope with far more allocations work than the staff in the other two associations.

More women leaving domestic violence were rehoused by Tulip HA than the other two associations (Tulip HA - 31 out of 189; Bluebell HA - 14 out of 353; national Foxglove figures - 181 out of 4796 applicants). This represents 16.4%, 3% and 3.8% of the total applicants rehoused within each association, respectively. (Tulip HA's figure represented an increase from 1996/1997 when the equivalent figures were 21 or 11%). Whether or not women were statutory homeless and had /had not been nominated was not possible to say from the data available.

Ethnic origin

There were significant differences in the ethnic origin of applicants rehoused by the two local case-study associations. Just looking at the information available on those new tenants who were black, white or of "mixed" ethnic origin, 59% (113 out of 189) of Tulip HA's new tenants were black. Another 11% (22 out of 189) were of "mixed" ethnic origin. 22% were white (43 out of 189). Bluebell HA rehoused 15% (56 out of 353) of applicants whose ethnic origins were grouped within this classification as black. 3% were of "mixed" ethnic origin (13 out of 353). 74% were white (263 out of 353). There were no local statistics available for Foxglove HA. (It is worth noting here that the CORE data is broken down by ethnic group in more detail - Asian, Caribbean, African, South East Asian, British/European, Irish but these categories were not used here: the point being clearly made through the categorisation based on new tenants' colour).

There may be a number of reasons for these differences. Tulip HA was known as the black association in this local authority area so it is possible that black and Asian applicants deliberately chose this association. Alternatively, Asian and black applicants might have been selectively channelled to Tulip HA by agencies or the local authority through nominations. Bluebell HA's figures for rehousing black and Asian people were lower, possibly because its new property was now predominantly in areas where few Asian and black people currently lived. They might be reluctant to consider moving there for fear of harassment and/or isolation. It was not possible to comment on Foxglove HA's performance since local figures were not available.

(Information such as this would be essential if the association was to improve its working relationships with the local authority).

It was not possible to consider which applicants (by ethnic origin, gender and household type) obtained particular types of property in particular areas. The associations did not have these data. This meant that it was not possible to obtain data on the type and quality of housing which women were offered for this study. This would have been one way of monitoring to ensure that black and white households were being allocated a similar range of property. It would also have revealed whether homeless women leaving domestic violence were being allocated good quality, new consortium housing in reasonable numbers, compared to other needs groups. This detailed analysis of ethnic monitoring data had been recommended to associations as a way of preventing inadvertent racial discrimination (CRE, 1993). It would also provide a detailed illustration of the racialisation of space described by Smith (1987, 1989 and 1993).

Homeless or not homeless?

Each of the associations in this study had responded differently to the rehousing of homeless applicants. The only association which was rehousing homeless applicants in significant numbers was Tulip HA, the small black association. It was exceeding both Bluebell HA and Foxglove HA - *numerically* (109 compared to Bluebell HA's 64) and *in the proportion of its total lettings* which were made to homeless applicants (58% compared to Bluebell HA's 19% and Foxglove HA's 20%).

Homeless Status	Numbers	Percentage of Total
Statutory homeless	35	10%
Non-statutory homeless	29	9%
Not homeless	289	82%
Total	353	100%

Table 1 Bluebell HA : Numbers of homeless applicants who were rehoused in 1997/1998

Homeless Status	Numbers	Percentage of Total
Statutory homeless	406	9%
Non-statutory homeless	541	11%
Not homeless	3849	80%
Total	4796	100%

Table 2 Foxglove HA: Numbers of homeless applicants who were rehoused in 1997/1998 (national figures)

Homeless Status	Numbers	Percentage of Total
Statutory homeless	54	29%
Non statutory homeless	55	29%
Not homeless	80	42%
Total	189	100%

Table 3 Tulip HA: Numbers of homeless applicants rehoused in 1997/1998

Tulip HA rehoused nearly one third of the *total* number of statutory homeless nominations (54 out of a total of 179) made by the local authority to *all* associations in the city in 1997/1998. It rehoused nearly one half (109 out of a total of 272) of the total statutory/non statutory homeless rehoused by *all* associations in that year. This finding was astonishing, given that Tulip HA was the smallest and most recently established association. The differences in performance in relation to rehousing homeless applicants will be explored in more detail in the next two Chapters. The nearly 20% difference between Tulip HA (29%) and Bluebell HA and Foxglove HA (10% and 9% nationally) is even more surprising given that Tulip HA had no directly or indirectly managed hostel accommodation for women. Foxglove HA had a four bed hostel (for single women) and Bluebell HA a twenty two bed hostel (for women with up to two children).

There are a number of ways of interpreting these statistics. Tulip HA might have been rehousing more homeless people because it was building more new properties and it was easier for the local authority to nominate households to them. However, both Bluebell HA and Tulip HA were building new property and letting it for the first time. In Bluebell HA, 132 newly built homes were let in 1997/1998 (representing 37% of the lettings made in that association). The equivalent figures in Tulip HA were 64 (34%). Alternatively, the rate at which property was relet might have affected the rate at which homeless applicants were rehoused. Tulip HA

might have found it easier to fill voids with homeless applicants and it might have had a higher relet rate than Bluebell HA due to its new approach to rent arrears. In fact, this did not appear to be the case with both Bluebell HA and Tulip HA having similar proportions of relets (63% and 66% respectively) compared to new lets over the year (No local figures for Foxglove HA were available for this comparison).

Another possible explanation derived from the working relationships which the associations had with hostels. Homeless single women and lone parents in association-managed hostels had no mechanism through which they obtained extra priority for rehousing within that association. Even though Bluebell HA and Foxglove HA had hostels for homeless women, neither of these associations rehoused many homeless women from them. They were either rehoused more quickly by the local authority, or the women preferred areas where the two associations had no accommodation (Housing Managers and staff in the hostels). Tulip HA had a more positive approach even though it owned no hostels. Its staff regularly contacted hostels and the central homeless teams for nominations. Bluebell HA and Foxglove HA staff did not do this. They relied more heavily on their own waiting lists. This may have been problematic for homeless applicants (including women who were homeless because of domestic violence) because of the ways in which they were administered. It seemed as if Tulip HA was rehousing far more homeless people because of its contacts with homeless agencies. This will be considered in more detail in Chapter 7.

Routes to rehousing

The rate at which nominated applicants had been rehoused varied between the three associations. Firstly, the figures for Bluebell HA (56%) and Tulip HA (55%) may be compared favourably against Foxglove HA's performance (34%). However, these figures did not show each association's performance in particular housing schemes. All new schemes managed by these associations had been developed through the consortium, and 75% of vacancies had to be let to households who had been nominated. In pre-consortium developments (funded by HAG from the Housing

Corporation) 50% had to be let to nominations. From these averages, it looked as if both Bluebell HA and Tulip HA were achieving the 75% (at least on some schemes) whilst Foxglove HA's performance must have been poor throughout its stock to average at 34%. It is no surprise that one of the aims in Foxglove HA's Area Plan was to improve working relationships with the local authority.

Route to Rehousing	Numbers	Percentage of Total
Nominations	198	56%
Direct applications	99	28%
Internal transfers	37	11%
Others	19	5%
Total	353	100%

Table 4 Bluebell HA: Routes to rehousing in 1997/1998

Route to Rehousing	Numbers	Percentage of Total
Nominations	59	34%
Direct applications	94	54%
Internal transfers	21	8%
Total	174	100%

Table 5 Foxglove HA: Routes to rehousing in 1997/1998 (local figures)

Route to Rehousing	Numbers	Percentage of Total
Nominations	104	55%
Direct applications	54	29%
Internal transfers	23	12%
Other	8	4%
Total	189	100%

Table 6 Tulip HA: Routes to rehousing in 1997/1998

The issue of importance here, however, related to how women might obtain housing. Did they have to be nominated or could they apply as direct applicants? There were two considerations here. Firstly, obtaining a nomination was important for access to associations because of the nomination targets which associations had to reach in rehousing. Potentially, the Housing Act 1996 had created a difficulty for homeless women leaving violent men because they might not obtain sufficient priority on the housing register to be nominated. (Only those registered and in high priority groups (Groups A and B) could be nominated). In this authority, because the Housing Committee had decided to keep changes to a minimum, women who had been assessed as statutory homeless would be placed in Group A of this authority's housing register and could be nominated. This meant that women would have a better chance of being allocated new consortium homes.

Secondly, there would always be women who wanted to apply directly to associations. For example, women might not want to apply to the local authority for fear of being allocated poor property or they might be unlikely to obtain statutory homeless status. Although the authority's domestic violence policy was such that women were supposed to be treated sympathetically, Chapter 4 illustrated some of the possible difficulties. The statistics on the numbers of direct applicants who were

rehoused indicated that women might still apply directly to the case-study housing associations and be rehoused. However, their chances of being rehoused would depend on where they wanted to live, the vacancy rate and the nominations target to be achieved in that area or housing scheme (and whether any vacancies could be let to direct applicants). Women stood a better chance of being rehoused by Foxglove HA if they applied directly whilst with Bluebell HA and Tulip HA their chances improved if they had been nominated by the local authority. One issue for consideration with staff was whether information about these differences were available to women applicants or used practically by staff in the associations.

CONCLUSION

The local authority in this research had "enabled" certain associations to grow although all remained small compared to the authority itself. Two associations had restructured to become financially more "efficient" and the third hoped to introduce performance related pay as an alternative to restructuring. The housing management service in all of the associations was undergoing profound changes. The nature of the housing management job had shifted as it had been infiltrated by the more overt managerial concerns which accompanied each association's determined drive to become more competitive and "business-like." This process had not gone unchallenged, but Housing Officers did not have the benefit of being strongly professionalised and were particularly vulnerable to managerial redefinition of their work. The intensification of the labour process which Housing Officers had experienced meant that with the same resources, they were expected to process larger numbers of applicants, deal more promptly with rent arrears and respond to "anti-social behaviour" in an apparently more determined fashion. Staff, seemingly, had little or no time to build positive relationships with applicants and tenants. They also could not easily provide help to applicants or tenants who might be in difficult, unsafe circumstances. Working relationships with staff in other organisations remained non-existent or embryonic, in most instances. Inter-agency work might have proved useful in assisting women who had left violent men but it was not

possible: indeed, one senior member of staff went so far as to call it "window dressing," given what to them were more pressing concerns.

It was not surprising that little had been done to develop a domestic violence policy in two of the associations. Only Foxglove HA had developed a harassment policy (which included dealing with domestic violence). This had largely been a response to external political pressures and the foresight of the Equal Opportunities Advisor, who had linked domestic violence to harassment to ensure that it became one of the highest priorities in the association's waiting list. An individual attempt had been made to develop a policy in Bluebell HA but no senior management help had been made available and the attempt faltered because of lack of time and information. Tulip HA intended to develop a policy in the near future but it was one of several priorities. The association was housing far more women in this situation than the other associations. Clearly, access to association accommodation in Tulip HA was not a major problem, but longer-term help might be. Again, this variety of response was illustrative of the weak position of the local authority in relation to "enabling" and was the result of leaving this area of management to the good will of associations, rather than having it as a Housing Corporation requirement (as "harassment" was).

Senior association staff acknowledged that applicants and tenants were facing far more acute and difficult circumstances than had been the case in the past. One element of this (of which they were actually unaware) was the increasing "feminisation" of applicants to the local authority for help with emergency and permanent rented housing. This was particularly so in the instance of women leaving violent men. Although this *was* reflected in Tulip HA's allocations, it did not appear as a noticeable feature in Bluebell HA's or Foxglove HA's. Despite the fact that they both directly managed hostels for homeless women (some of whom would have left violent men), in the year of the study they appeared to be curiously unresponsive to women leaving domestic violence. The local authority did not appear to be making sufficient nominations for housing associations to keep to their lettings targets for nominations. Alternatively, it might have been that housing

associations were refusing them or keeping them in the "pool" for specific vacancies. Only just over 35% of the total nominations across all the associations in the city were homeless. Ward members appeared to be unaware or indifferent to this. Their intervention seemed to be concentrated on supporting particular constituents or actively preventing others from being rehoused. They also complained about vandalism and association voids in their constituencies. The smaller the association, the more difficult it appeared to be for staff to respond effectively (perhaps because of staff inexperience in dealing with issues and responding to councillors). Tulip HA seemed to receive the brunt of complaints and they seemed to be more serious, in terms of the impact on staff, at least.

Tulip HA was the smallest association in the study and had the fewest resources, yet it was housing far more homeless applicants than the other two associations. One third of all of the statutory homeless applicants who were nominated across the city in the year of the study were rehoused by this association (54 out of 179 statutory homeless applicants). It housed nearly a half of the total of statutory/non-statutory homeless nominations (109 out of 272) across the city. Far more women leaving domestic violence were rehoused by Tulip HA numerically and as a percentage (16% of total lettings compared to 3% for the other two associations). Many of these were black and Asian women or women of "mixed" ethnic origins. This was astonishing and clearly raised a number of questions about the assessment and allocation practices in all of the associations. Were homeless applicants being channelled to Tulip HA whilst the other associations could more easily "pick and choose" applicants? Had Tulip HA developed in particularly popular areas for Asian and black people or were there other reasons for the significant differences in ethnic origin between the people rehoused by the three associations? What were the attitudes and skills of staff in each of the associations, especially in relation to homeless women who had left domestic violence? The way in which women's applications were considered in the three case-study associations, whether they were nominated, direct waiting list applicants or transfer applicants will be examined in more detail in the next two Chapters.

CHAPTER 6 APPLYING FOR ASSOCIATION HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

Senior staff in the case-study associations felt that increasing pressure on their associations to become more competitive necessitated a predominant concern with the organisations' financial performance. As was clear from the analysis in Chapter 5, the growing influence of various forms of managerialism had accompanied the de facto redefinition of Housing Officer jobs in the housing management service. No longer could they spend time building what they regarded as a positive landlord/tenant relationship amongst association tenants as a whole. Increasingly, their role was simply to deal as quickly and effectively as possible with arrears, voids and anti-social behaviour, to minimise the cost to the association in rent loss, arrears or damage to association property.

Foxglove HA and Tulip HA had restructured recently whilst Bluebell HA continued with a staffing structure which had only undergone incremental changes over the previous ten years. Accompanying Foxglove HA and Tulip HA's "new look" was an apparently new way of responding to applicants and tenants - "customer care." "Customer care" was supposed to usher in a more responsive approach to "customers" - in this context, applicants and tenants. Potter (1987) identified a number of elements which he felt provided the "structural underpinning" of consumerism - including "access," "choice" and "information" but he made no direct reference to power. This new ideology had not yet penetrated Bluebell HA (in fact, the Chief Executive was antagonistic towards it).

The first part of this Chapter looks at the nature of the services provided to applicants ("customers") when they initially approached the association. It focuses on how the reception services were provided, including the role of Customer Services staff and Housing Officers. It looks at how changes to the ways in which reception services were organised, would affect homeless women who applied for

housing. The second part of this Chapter then moves on to consider the first part of the housing application process. Two sources of data were used for this. Firstly, the information given to applicants was analysed. Secondly, staff who initially assessed applications and registered them on the association's waiting list were interviewed. Again, consideration is given to how changing procedures and staff attitudes would affect homeless women who had left violent men.

RESPONDING TO ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS

All of the housing associations in this study had offices in one particular area of the city although not all of their rented housing stock was situated there, as had become clear in the previous Chapter. This area was where the city's large African Caribbean and Pakistani communities could be found as well as many other minority ethnic communities. Establishing a local presence had been a trend within the housing association movement from the mid 1970s. Each of the associations had been based in the area a long time - Foxglove HA over 15 years and Bluebell and Tulip HAs over 10 years each. Having a local Office had been regarded as an important element in providing services in an easily accessible way: the assumption being that many applicants and tenants would want to call into the Office personally (NFHA, 1987; Housing Corporation, 1989).

Alongside this was an expectation that the ethnic origin of staff, especially those who worked with the public, should reflect that of the areas in which associations worked. This would not only show a willingness to provide an appropriate service but also one which was perceived to be fair in the nature of its employment practice (NFHA, 1982; Housing Corporation, 1989).

There were two ways in which the associations in this study organised staff to answer queries and to undertake the first stage of registering an application on to the waiting list. Firstly, Foxglove HA and Tulip HA had recently introduced "customer services" staff into their reception areas. Tulip HA also retained a Duty Officer

system for more complicated enquiries. Secondly, Bluebell HA employed a receptionist to "sign-post" enquiries and ran a Duty Officer system to deal with housing management enquiries. This was staffed predominantly by experienced and/or qualified Housing Officers. The reception service had been organised like this since the association's establishment. The question considered here was how accessible might these associations be to women who had left (or wanted to leave) violent partners?

THE CASE STUDY ASSOCIATIONS - RECEPTION SERVICES

The reception service for applicants/tenants was observed on two occasions in each association. Staff had been asked to select times for the researcher which were known to be busy. This has to be remembered in the accounts which follow: fewer telephone calls and visitors would mean that staff could work on administration tasks. This side of their work was not observed. Observation was supplemented with interviews with particular staff about their work in this setting (Bluebell HA - Housing Officers and the waiting list staff; Foxglove HA - Customer Services Team leader; Tulip HA - Housing Officers and the Housing Services Administrator). This section of the Chapter starts with a brief outline of the main features of the service in operation. It describes how the service was provided, who staffed it and who used it. This is then followed by a more detailed discussion of a number of themes drawn from the observation, which are relevant to the research.

Bluebell HA - The receptionist and the Duty Officer system

In Bluebell HA, the Duty Officer system dealt with the majority of enquiries from applicants and tenants, related to housing management. The rota of staff who covered the Duty Officer job included the Housing Officers, Housing Assistant and the Clerical Assistant who dealt with waiting list matters. Staff included black, Asian and white men and women. Two of the men could speak Urdu and Punjabi

but everyone else was limited to English. All of these staff were very experienced and a number were professionally qualified. Some had previously worked in the local authority's homeless section (when it was centralised).

The receptionist initially welcomed personal callers and she also answered all incoming phone calls. In a busy period (for example, Monday mornings) the rate of incoming telephone calls ranged from 30 an hour (4 August between 10 and 12 noon) to 47 phone calls an hour (11 August 1997 between 11am and 1pm). She said that other times of the week were nowhere near as busy and she then completed other administrative tasks. A recent Tenants Survey in this association had shown that 75% of those responding (who represented 61% of the association's tenants) had contacted the association by telephone, rather than any other way over the previous year.

In the observation undertaken over a three hour period on 4 August 1997, 9 applicants/tenants an hour called into the Office. The following week this was 10 an hour (11 August 1997, 11am to 1pm). Most tenants who called in, lived locally and a majority were black or Asian. 88% of personal callers remarked how friendly the reception service was in the association (Tenants Survey, 1998). There were other callers including contractors, staff from other associations and Committee members so the actual number of visitors was higher than this. The receptionist said that the association's rule, which she worked to, was that no-one had to wait more than ten minutes to see a Duty Officer. If a person appeared to be upset or unhappy, she called the "back up" Duty Officer to come and see them before the ten minute deadline. Some Housing Officers were easier to persuade to do this than others in this situation: it depended on their workload. (Spontaneously, she remarked that she never did this if a male caller tried to intimidate her into getting instant service. This gives some insight into the potential dangers of the job).

The majority of personal callers were black and Asian women in the two observation sessions which were undertaken in August 1997. They were often accompanied by children. Most of the Asian people who visited the Office could

speaking English especially if they were young women (or men). Older women relied on other relatives or their own children to translate or send messages. Edwards (1995) has remarked on Asian women's reliance on other family members/children to translate - a situation which might prove problematic if they decided to try and find help to leave a violent husband (see Chapter 8 for further discussion of this point). The receptionist and other staff said that they were able to understand the straightforward situations (and this was confirmed in the observation sessions). Interviews with Housing Officers revealed that they knew that an interpreting service nearby could be used if a more complicated situation arose in a Duty interview (or on other occasions).

Any applicant or tenant who needed help was referred to the Duty Officer - whether they had come to pay the rent, report a repair, talk about a housing application or complain about a neighbour. Housing Officers were expected to deal with queries from tenants in their own management patches (the Duty Officer only dealt with them if they were away from the Office). All personal callers were seen in private in one of three interview rooms which were available. These opened on to the main reception area and could be observed by the receptionist. A caller always had a confidential interview (including for rent payments). They did not have to ask for one. During the observation sessions, most private interviews seemed to last between fifteen and twenty minutes (though rent payments were dealt with in a few minutes). At one point in the observation session on 4 August, the Duty Officer moved from one interview to the next over a period of two hours without a break.

Foxglove HA - Customer Services Teams

A few hundred metres along the road from Bluebell HA, Foxglove HA's Area Office provided a different example of organising reception services. The association had established new Customer Services Teams in all of its Area Offices. They all wore distinctive and smart uniforms. The Team of four Customer Services Officers (CSOs) was expected to provide a service to all applicants, tenants and members of the public who approached them. They did this either via the seven telephone lines

or personally if people called in. They dealt with queries about applications, ordered day to day repairs, dealt with arrears (up to a certain level) and dealt with any other queries which arose. They did not deal with rent payments. Tenants paid at the Post Office or through their bank. They were not expected to refer queries to Housing Services Officers except in circumstances which were complicated.

On any one day, there were generally two CSOs working at the public counter which faced into the reception area. They provided the first response to queries from telephone calls and from personal callers. There was a perspex screen between the CSOs and any personal callers to the Office. Two seats were pulled up to the counter on the public's side (separated by a narrow perspex divider) so that conversations could be held sitting down. The screen had been installed five months previously after two minor incidents. There was a security camera trained on to the counter area which connected to screens which could be viewed upstairs. All of the CSOs were white. This was reflective of the staffing of the housing management service based in this Office at this time. The researcher was told that this was unexceptional historically (Customer Services Officer). No-one in the Office spoke any other language but English.

The observation of the Customer Services Team took place in October 1997 when it had been operational for nine months. In the observation session on 6 October (10am to 12 noon) the four CSOs dealt with approximately 55 incoming and outgoing phone calls an hour. This included those they made themselves to contractors and to tenants. In the following week (13 October, 10am to 12.30pm), there were 71 calls (that is 28 an hour). 80% of the telephone calls could be identified as calls about repairs, applications, rent account queries or calls for particular members of staff. Most of the identified calls, in both observation sessions, related to repairs. Most telephone enquiries about applications seemed to be about the areas in which Foxglove HA worked, the likelihood of vacancies occurring, visit arrangements to view particular areas or properties or details of a new housing scheme. None of these conversations were very long or detailed.

Telephone calls usually took precedence over personal callers - to the extent of CSOs sometimes automatically answering the telephone in the middle of conversations they were having with personal callers (giving the personal caller no option but to wait). On 6 October, 9 tenants/applicants called into the Office personally (that is, just over 4 an hour). On 13 October 16 tenants/applicants called into the Office (that is, 6 an hour). Most of the applicants and tenants who called into the Office were white women. A small number of African Caribbean women also called in. No Asian men or women called in. Contractors and staff also visited, so the numbers of people coming to the Office were actually higher than this. A query from a person who called into the Office usually took longer to respond to than telephone enquiries.

Most personal callers in the two observation sessions did not overlap with one another. If they had, it would have been impossible to maintain confidentiality. Several people who were enquiring about applications lowered their voices when speaking through the screen to a CSO. None were offered a private interview. The one private interviewing room adjacent to the front door could not be seen from the reception area and was not used in either of the two observation sessions undertaken in October 1997.

Tulip HA - Customer Services Officers and Duty Officers

Located in an Office in a different part of the same area, two Customer Services Officers (CSOs) worked in the reception of Tulip HA. Their main task was to respond to initial enquiries from applicants and tenants, whether they called into the Office or telephoned. One CSO tended to concentrate on dealing with repairs queries while the other concentrated on application queries. They both took rents across the counter. Both were Asian women - one of whom spoke English and Punjabi while the other spoke English, Urdu, Punjabi and Batwari. The CSO who dealt with applications (who spoke four languages) was helped in her task by the Housing Services Administrator (HSA). She worked in an office behind the reception area and could be called upon to help out when reception became very

busy or a more detailed and private interview was required. The HSA spoke English, Urdu and Punjabi.

There was also a Duty Officer system in place which was staffed by the Housing Officers on a rota basis. At that time, the Housing Officers were a black woman, an Asian man (who spoke Urdu and Gujarati) and a white woman. One was professionally qualified. The Duty Officer dealt with complicated issues from applicants who called in or queries from tenants, if their own Housing Officer was not available. The Duty Officer system was not always available as staff who were supposed to take a turn made arrangements outside of the Office at the same time (Customer Services Officer and HSA). (This occurred on one of the days which were observed and the HSA was asked to stand in by a Housing Officer who had to go to Court for a possession hearing).

Approximately 43 incoming and outgoing telephone calls were noted on 20 October (that is, just over 20 an hour). About a third of these could not be identified by the researcher, either because they were very short, they were in languages other than English or because the content was obscured by another conversation in the reception area between staff and a personal caller. A third of those which could be identified were connected with repairs (and nearly as many again were for specific staff). Only 4 were for applications. The same pattern occurred the following week although the number of telephone calls increased to about 53 (about 26 an hour). The CSO (Lettings) said this was an unusually low number of application enquiries.

During this same two hour period (on 20 October) 13 tenants or applicants called into the Office (just over 6 an hour). The equivalent number the following week was 11 (just over 5 an hour). Most tenants and applicants who called in to the Office in both these observation sessions were black. Only 3 enquiries were directly from women - although some women came in with women friends and some men were accompanied by women. This may have reflected a reluctance to call in because of doubts about walking in the immediate area around the Office. It had a

reputation for muggings: one of the women interviewed for this research had been accosted opposite the Office.

In the observation sessions, as many people called in to apply for housing or to discuss housing offers which had been made, as called in about repairs. Their enquiries generally took much longer to deal with than others. All of the CSO discussions with applicants and tenants took place across the counter in the reception area. They felt that they could not provide confidential interviews (even though the Housing Manager wanted them to) because they had a responsibility to answer the telephones, speak to other personal callers and help each other provide the service from the counter. Applicants and tenants could have private interviews with the HSA or Duty Officer. Tulip HA reception staff appeared to be potentially more vulnerable to verbal abuse than staff in the other two associations. The researcher was told that this was not particularly unusual. Unfortunately, none of the three private interviewing rooms could be seen from the reception.

DISCUSSION OF ISSUES - RECEPTION SERVICES

The way staff were organised

The most obvious point to make about the associations is that they organised their reception services for applicants and tenants in different ways. There were two main ways in which this service was provided - through a Duty Officer system in Bluebell HA and through a Customer Services Team in Foxglove HA. Tulip HA appeared to have a hybrid arrangement in which the Customer Services staff (and Housing Services Administrator) predominated but in which a Duty Officer system had been retained and was working, though somewhat half-heartedly. These ways of organising had been set in place for different reasons and with different implications.

All of the associations were responding to far more telephone enquiries than personal callers than had been the case even in the recent past. This was very clear from the observation sessions. This might be due to association housing becoming

more dispersed as the organisations had grown larger. Two associations, Foxglove HA and Tulip HA, had reorganised their services partly in response to these changes. Ironically, Bluebell HA had not reorganised - though on the evidence of the observation sessions this association's staff were dealing with far more telephone calls and personal callers than the other two associations.

The associations had not simply reorganised because of the changes in the way the public contacted them. It was clear that the financial implications of providing a reception service were important considerations in pushing through change in Foxglove HA and Tulip HA. This was not to say that the financial implications of organising in particular ways were not considered in Bluebell HA - it was simply that priorities were slightly different. The issue here was not simply how the service was provided (and whether it could be done more cheaply) but *what* was provided. The forms of service had effects on the relationship between staff and applicants and tenants. This was also particularly important in considering what kind of service response homeless women might receive.

The Duty Officer systems were staffed with Housing Officers. Their aim was to provide a knowledgeable service to tenants or applicants who called in or telephoned. Tenants might speak to their own Housing Officer (if he or she was immediately available) but if not, the Duty Officer was the substitute. This system complemented the patch system of housing management and it presumed that there was a body of knowledge and experience which staff needed in order to manage property and people appropriately. In Bluebell HA, the system provided for automatic confidential interviews with someone who had authority and broad knowledge. Interviewing like this took time, but women with complicated problems might receive help.

Customer Service Team staff were actually reception staff with extra responsibilities - usually minor repairs ordering and the first stage of the application process. They had no direct housing management responsibilities, knowledge or experience. It was clear that providing Customer Services staff instead of Housing Officers in

reception to respond to callers was cheaper and thus entirely in keeping with senior management concerns to reduce overheads and/or control costs (especially staffing costs). Nevertheless, to make it possible for the CSO staff to provide the service, the expectations of that service had to change. For example, the possibility of private, possibly longer personal interviews had to be minimised and the level of advice expected to be given by staff also had to be standardised and minimised (to suit the grade of staff). Senior management presumed that CSOs could deal with most enquiries which were straightforward - releasing Housing Officers to get on with chasing arrears and so on. In reality, it was clear that the range and detail of enquiries which "Customer Services" staff were dealing with was actually more complicated than had been anticipated and their training had been inadequate. They might be able to answer simple enquiries (like where a particular housing scheme was) but it was doubtful that they could deal with complicated ones - like those from homeless women who were leaving violent men?

Staffing - ethnicity and gender

Since the early 1980s, associations had been urged to ensure that they operated fair employment practices (NFHA, 1982). Given the location of these Offices in the heart of various black and Asian communities in the city, this was particularly important. As far as this research was concerned, there were two issues. Were black and Asian staff employed in the housing management service? If they were, could women exercise a choice of who interviewed them, based around the practice of "matching" interviewer/interviewee by gender and/or ethnicity?

Foxglove HA employed white staff whilst Bluebell HA and Tulip HA employed Asian, black and white staff. Very few black people had ever worked at Foxglove HA's Area Office and then they had worked in the finance section not housing management (Housing Officer). This was surprising given staff turnover and the reorganisation (which had also seen new staff recruited as well as staff leaving). Bluebell HA employed Asian, black and white staff in housing management - the most senior being the Housing Manager who was an Asian man. At the time of the

research, no Asian women were employed despite a number of efforts to publicise vacancies widely. This was seen as a weakness in the service by the Director of Housing, which she hoped would be rectified over the next year. Tulip HA, the black association, had far more Asian and black staff working in housing management than Bluebell HA. The most senior position in housing management was the Housing Manager's post which was held by an Asian man. The Vice-Chair of the association had remarked that it had been essential to recruit Asian and black staff to housing management - not least because it was the most visible part of the association's service to local Asian and black communities. The association had more difficulty recruiting Asian and black staff to the association's other departments - and the concern was that the direction and priorities of the association would be affected, if and when more white staff were recruited (Vice-Chair - Tulip HA).

In theory, employing Asian, black and white staff to work in the reception area enabled women to have a choice of interviewer in these difficult circumstances. This had come to be recognised as "good practice" in interviewing in certain circumstances. The NFHA's good practice guide (Davis, 1993) had suggested that associations offer gender and ethnically matched interviewing, in certain circumstances. The Code of Practice (Department of the Environment, 1996, para 11.4) to the homeless legislation had recommended a "same sex interviewer wherever possible" in situations involving domestic violence. The Code also recommended interviewers preferably "trained specifically in dealing with circumstances of this kind" (para 11.4). It might put a woman at ease if she felt that her interviewer shared some common ground with her (for example, as a woman or as a Punjabi Sikh). There were, of course, a number of caveats to this - not least that "women" do not have shared perspectives on male violence. Nevertheless, some women might prefer to be interviewed by a woman or someone from the same ethnic background. These choices would vary depending on individual experience and circumstances. Could the case-study associations offer a choice of interviewer to women who were being interviewed about their experience of domestic violence?

Foxglove HA had a harassment policy which expected staff to offer ethnically and gender "matched" interviews. All the CSOs were women so women would be interviewed by women but if a black or Asian woman preferred to be interviewed by a woman of their own, or similar, ethnic background, this would not have been possible. This possibility was not actually offered by "Customer Services" staff: a woman would have to ask herself. Both Bluebell HA and Tulip HA could offer different interviewers but in Bluebell HA, Asian women could not be offered interviews with Asian women members of staff because there were none in post. There were two Asian men - who spoke Urdu and Punjabi and who could translate if necessary - though they might not be acceptable because of women's reluctance to speak to Asian men because of fear of criticism, their location being passed to family members, shame and embarrassment (Mama, 1989; Rai and Thiara, 1997). Having said that, the attitudes of Asian women to male Asian Housing Officers could not be assumed. One Pakistani Muslim woman interviewed for this research had found it acceptable to be interviewed (and accompanied to view vacancies) by one of Bluebell HA's male Punjabi Sikh housing management staff and a female English-speaking hostel support worker.

The possibility of having a woman interviewer (or an Asian or black woman interviewer, if preferred) was not advertised in any of the associations. Women would have to take the initiative and ask. It seemed unlikely that this would happen often. More commonly, staff used their own judgement in particular interviews. If a woman was clearly reluctant to speak or was embarrassed or distressed - a male interviewer (for example, a Housing Officer) might suggest that a woman colleague interview instead. Staff in Bluebell HA and Tulip HA all felt that it was important to be sensitive to women's feelings. They identified other issues in relation to interviewing which went beyond simple "matching." They extended to the importance of shared language and culture, the impact of kinship networks and the effects of the location of the "community" on women's perceptions of safety and privacy. These will be considered next.

Languages other than English

Employing multilingual staff who spoke the main community languages (Bengali, Punjabi and Urdu) was particularly important for those whose first language was not English. Tulip HA, the black association, was the best able to respond in this way given the number of languages which staff spoke between them, although no-one spoke Bengali. In Bluebell HA, the Housing Manager spoke Urdu and the Housing Officer spoke Urdu and Punjabi (as an Indian Sikh). This was not entirely satisfactory for women who spoke Punjabi and came from Pakistan because words and dialect were different but it was just manageable (Housing Manager and a woman who was interviewed). Bluebell HA staff could use an interpreting service not far from the Office if they needed to - although there were delays because of having to make specific arrangements.

The situation in Foxglove HA was completely different. Foxglove HA staff appeared to be unaware or indifferent to the difficulties which people have in obtaining information and services if they do not speak English (NFHA, 1982; Modood, Lakey, Nazroo, Smith, Virdee and Beishon 1997). Senior managers made reference to the telephone interpreting service when asked about language provision (Team Leader and Area Director) although neither thought it had been used often. There was no-one in the Office who spoke any of the main community languages in the area. Surprisingly, the CSO interviewed did not think that this created any difficulties for people in approaching them. If someone did not speak English they could use the telephone line installed in the Office which connected to a national organisation which provided telephone interpreting. She recalled that this had been "very, very useful" on the few occasions she had used it for repairs queries. Usually, Asian callers were asked to bring a friend to translate (CSO). On one occasion an Asian man had asked a passer-by in the street to translate for him. This was recalled as an example of the straightforward way in which these situations were handled (CSO and Housing Services Officer). (One can scarcely imagine a homeless woman with no English doing the same because of fear of being found and shame about the violence).

It is also worth noting (although it was not a main focus of this study) that few arrangements were in place at this time to make any of the associations more accessible to women who were blind/partially sighted or deaf/partially deaf. Foxglove HA had a minicom system in place although the staff were not familiar with how it worked: it had hardly been used since installation. The other associations did not have minicomms. None had larger type information for applicants.

Given the location of the Offices and some of the associations' housing stock, it seemed clear that non English speakers were effectively being channelled to two associations - Bluebell HA and Tulip HA (particularly Tulip HA). The largest association in the study, with the greatest resources at its disposal, in practice appeared to be distant from non-English speakers and the local black and Asian communities. Policy emphasised accessibility but practice indicated the reverse. This was mainly because its recruitment practice had been such that there were no multi-lingual and/or black and Asian staff in post and the nature of the service provided was not welcoming to people who did not speak English.

Staffing - employing local people

Recruiting Asian and black staff had also been promoted as a way of fostering a greater sense of connection between associations and local Asian and black communities. None of the associations engaged in "housing plus" initiatives (designed to enhance the facilities in particular areas) but it was clear that some staff (especially black and Asian staff who lived locally and who worked in Bluebell HA and Tulip HA) were actively involved in other local community organisations and activities in their own time. Foxglove HA was the exception where none of the CSOs lived locally or were involved in local projects. Clearly Tulip HA was anxious to develop these connections given that its reputation had been undermined by its change of focus in becoming more "business-like" (Deputy Chair). Bluebell HA was also anxious about this, because it wanted to improve access to its accommodation for Asian applicants generally (Director of Housing).

Nevertheless, these connections with the local community might have negative as well as positive implications. Local black and Asian women who were experiencing domestic violence might be reluctant to approach staff who lived locally, because of the possible influence of kinship and friendship networks. Women might worry that their private circumstances would become public knowledge or that their social standing would be undermined (HSA - Tulip HA). An African Caribbean woman Housing Officer in Tulip HA was personally aware of this. She was a member of one of the large extended families in the area but had rarely been approached by other African Caribbean women about personal problems due to domestic violence. Instead, local African Caribbean women talked to the Asian HSA who did not live in the immediate area (Housing Officer and HSA - Tulip HA). A clear professional distance between the association's staff and local women applicants seemed to be the most acceptable arrangement for women. The "matching" of a staff member's gender and ethnic origin with that of the applicant was clearly not straightforward.

Privacy and confidentiality

Given the danger and difficulty which many women faced when making arrangements to leave their home and/or trying to find another one, the importance of privacy to discuss their situation cannot be over-emphasised. Only in Bluebell HA, were private interviews automatically provided for personal callers. In Tulip HA, although a private interview had to be requested, it was routine and straightforward. This was especially the case as the HSA was involved in the applications procedure at an early stage. Foxglove HA, however, was a different situation. The association's formal harassment policy indicated that applicants experiencing these difficulties would be interviewed confidentially, but private interviews in this Area Office appeared to be an unusual occurrence. The CSOs preferred to conduct "interviews" with applicants through perspex screens, in the public reception area. One example was provided in an observation session where an African Caribbean woman called in to apply for housing. She wanted to move

because she was being racially harassed in her council home. She was not offered a private interview.

Interviewing across the counter in Foxglove HA indicated not only a lack of care about people's privacy. It also revealed disregard for their feelings. The African Caribbean woman was interrupted twice in the middle of what she was saying, whilst the CSO unnecessarily answered the telephone in front of her and proceeded to deal with ordering minor repairs: tasks which should have been handled by a colleague. At another point in this "interview," the woman found she could not be heard as another CSO slammed her telephone down, swearing and complaining loudly about a heating contractor. All of this was a graphic illustration of a point which the HSA in Tulip HA had made. In her view, many black and Asian women were wary of white agencies because they interpreted the body language of white staff, and the lack of time and consideration they received from them, as racist.

A further point may be made about the need for confidential interviewing in these situations. Some women will not reveal their experiences when they are first interviewed because of fear, shame or embarrassment. They might say more to staff as they become more familiar or trusted - perhaps at a subsequent interview. This had been identified in the NFHA's guide (Davis, 1993) and was later confirmed/acknowledged in the DETR's guide (1999). For example, the HSA in Tulip HA had remarked that African Caribbean women whom she had helped had often been embarrassed or unwilling to give information directly about the depression and anxiety they felt because of the violence they were experiencing from male partners/ex-partners. She only became aware of this when a "support letter" from a local black mental health project arrived for her, in connection with a housing application. The embarrassment may have been because the situation contradicted stereotypes of "strong" black women as well as worries about being seen as mentally ill (Lawrence, 1982; Bryan, Dadze and Scafe, 1985).

In this situation, it might have been thought that telephoning would be more likely to ensure a private conversation. The observation session revealed a different situation.

Telephone calls to Foxglove HA and Tulip HA showed that applicants tended to ask straightforward questions (for example, where the association's property was located). The nature of the service they were expected to provide was such that CSOs did not expect or encourage applicants to engage in long conversations on the telephone. (In Tulip HA, they were encouraged to call in to obtain help in filling in the application, as will become evident shortly. In Foxglove HA, this was not done).

Another issue was revealed in the observation of Foxglove HA staff. The nature of the pressure to deal with telephone calls and the CSOs desire to resolve telephone calls as quickly as possible meant that insufficient care was paid to issues of confidentiality (Davis, 1993 and DETR, 1999 for more discussion of this). One CSO confirmed to a telephone caller that an application was held and then asked who she was speaking to. Another asked for a date of birth from a telephone caller when they could not give their application reference number (which officially was the only way in which application information could be obtained). In either of these situations, the caller could have been an ex-partner trying to locate a woman who had left because of violence. The intense focus on immediately responding to telephone calls with an answer was not present in Bluebell HA (where the receptionist handled incoming calls) but it might have been replicated in Tulip HA. This was actually not observed - and staff seemed to be very clear about not divulging any information to other agencies/enquirers. Bluebell HA staff understood the need for confidentiality, especially in relation to women leaving violent men, but they were not clear about whether there were any limits to confidentiality. Confidentiality could be broken in some circumstances, if certain external agencies enquired about an applicant or tenant. These requests for information were dealt with by the Director of Housing on a ad hoc basis. The formal written policy which said that applicants'/tenants' personal details were confidential to the association had not been changed to include these exceptions. No staff interviewed were familiar with the written policy. The Customer Services Coordinator was asked about the confidentiality policy.

"Yes, there is a confidentiality policy. It's probably kept in somebody's drawer, in a file...Again, it's one of those procedural things which we have, which nobody knows about."

Bluebell HA - Customer Services Coordinator

Associations are expected to have policy and procedures which ensure that information given to them is retained confidentially. If there are exceptions, these need to be identified and applicants should be told of them in advance (Housing Corporation, Performance Expectation G3.3). The ways in which services were provided - and a lack of emphasis on strict confidentiality - meant that women might well be vulnerable to discovery by determined or devious ex-partners. They might have been wise to be cautious in what they revealed to staff.

The DETR guide emphasised the importance of "flexibility" in applications procedures and assessment to ensure that women were not excluded because of possible initial reticence in speaking in detail about what had happened to them. Whilst the government might be producing guidance for social landlords which drew on good practice, it was clear that housing associations were operating in an environment which was inimical to it. With the growing emphasis on telephone contact (and diminution of personal interviewing) and lack of clarity about confidentiality how could this level of individual sensitivity be attained? It was unlikely that standard questions would be possible or acceptable to women (as described in Chapter 5, as the future direction of Foxglove HA). "Interviews" over the counter were similarly unacceptable. Associations were in danger of becoming inaccessible to women in these circumstances.

APPLYING FOR HOUSING

The application form

Women could apply for association housing in a number of ways. They could go to the association's Office personally and fill in a form there. They could send a form

by post. They could be nominated by the local authority - and subsequently be sent a form to complete by the association. The application forms used by the three associations were of varying length and complexity. The information which all three associations issued with their application forms was very general with different kinds of information to applicants about how they assessed applications. This varied in quality, some being very wordy, out of date or inaccurate (Bluebell HA). None of the associations gave applicants any information about how they should complete the application form, if they had experienced violence.

None of Tulip HA's forms (or the accompanying letter) were written in different languages even though it was a black association and one would have expected this, as a matter of course. The front-line staff encouraged applicants to visit the Office to complete the application forms. This was association policy, devised to ensure that applicants who were not literate in their own languages (nor English) could obtain sufficient help, without having to make special arrangements. Staff could speak most of the community languages and had access to interpreters for Chinese and Bengali so could help most applicants who called in. It is perhaps worth pursuing this point. Many people who spoke languages other than English were not literate in their first language. For them, perhaps, it was not so important that there were translations about help on the forms. It was more important that they had staff members to speak to. However, having different languages on the application form has symbolic significance.

Ironically, given the ethnic origins and languages of their staff, Bluebell HA and Foxglove HA engaged with the symbolism even though they actually had no way of responding personally to applicants, if they did approach the Office staff for help. Both had translated information for applicants into different languages and said that help was available from staff in the local Office to complete the forms. In Foxglove HA, none of the staff spoke anything other than English. Bluebell HA could only offer interviews in Punjabi and Urdu (if the Manager was available) without having to employ external interpreters.

It was not clear whether women who had experienced violence would be deterred from applying by the prospect of writing in some detail about their experiences on an application form. Given that research has illustrated the difficulties which women experience in talking about the issue (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Pahl, 1985a; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993) and in seeking help, it seems likely that they would be reluctant to write about it. They would also be unclear about exactly what was required, given the lack of guidance information. This illustrated an aspect of the relationship between associations as landlords and women as applicants. Women had very limited information about their position (contrary to Potter's view of the structural underpinning of "customer care"). Their position seemed to be that of "supplicants" (Lambert, Paris and Blackaby, 1978) rather than applicants or "customers."

Priority on the waiting list

All of the associations gave a very high priority to applications from people who were homeless because of domestic violence although domestic violence was included in a broader "housing need" category in two associations. This, perhaps, was evidence of the marginality of the issue compared to racial harassment. The latter was a Housing Corporation monitoring issue whilst domestic violence was not - and had simply been added on. Much emphasis has been placed within feminist circles on appropriate naming of the violence which women experience in personal relationships (see the discussion in Dobash and Dobash, 1992). There was no such emphasis in associations (and it is also worth remembering the fate of the definition of violence in the local authority's domestic violence policy). In Bluebell HA, the waiting list description was "violence in the home." In Tulip HA, it was "violence/harassment/abuse" and in Foxglove HA, it was "harassment." Tulip HA had included domestic violence in a category which originally had been expected to deal only with racial harassment. This had been a primary concern, rather than domestic violence. Foxglove HA's category of "harassment" included domestic violence, although homelessness (or potential homelessness within twenty eight days) was the underlying requirement in obtaining this priority. Associations

appeared not to distinguish between lone parents and single women in determining priority: both could obtain this priority. Associations did not prioritise women who were mothers, over and above women who were not.

Bluebell HA told applicants that "violence in the home" was an association "housing need" priority. The association used a merit system to decide priorities, but it had been partly formalised by using the local authority's priorities as a template. This meant that women would receive the highest priority in the association as long as the local authority accorded them the highest priority. Both Foxglove HA and Tulip HA operated points systems to assess priority. They could give an applicant a priority which, in certain situations, could be very different from the local authority priority (and the local authority's nomination). For example, Foxglove HA might reassess and return a nomination to the local authority of a woman who had Group A priority (because of homelessness due to domestic violence). In the view of the association, this priority would not be acceptable if the woman had made interim accommodation arrangements which they regarded as secure. This could include her living in a shorthold assured tenancy. This was another illustration of the limits of local authority influence, and it also revealed a limited view of the help the association could make available to women in this situation.

There were some circumstances in which none of the three associations would accept an application. The two main ones were the length of time it might take to rehouse an applicant and rent arrears. Each association would accept an application if there was a reasonable chance of the applicant being rehoused within a year. The attitude towards applicants with rent arrears differed between the three associations. They would not be accepted by Tulip HA whatever their circumstances. The reasons for this were the association's own recent financial situation and the level of arrears it was currently dealing with. Bluebell HA and Foxglove HA (both of which were larger and financially stronger associations) stated in their literature to applicants that they would accept applicants with arrears but only if they were repaying arrears regularly. None of these responses is surprising given the current importance attached to maximising rental income in associations (Ford and Seavers,

1999). In this way, the associations maintained the landlords' interest rather than recognised the difficulties which some poor applicants would face. This was contrary to the local authority's policy - another example of the limitations of its "enabling" role. It also ignored "good practice" advice (Davis, 1993; DETR, 1999) and the reality of some women's financial difficulties (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Pahl, 1980 and 1985a; Davis, 1993).

THE FIRST STAGE OF ASSESSING THE HOUSING APPLICATION

The three associations had developed three different ways of initially assessing applications. Two employed staff who specialised in this task (Bluebell HA and Tulip HA) whilst Foxglove HA saw this as a function of the generalist CSOs. (The specialist lettings staff in Foxglove HA had been redeployed/made redundant in the recent reorganisation. Their duties had been transferred to the four Customer Services staff). The specialist staff could help personal callers to fill in the application forms and then they assessed the details in the form against the associations' priorities. In Bluebell HA, this was a job for the Customer Services Coordinator and her two Clerical Assistants. In Tulip HA, the Housing Services Administrator did the equivalent job. In these associations they were also able to give advice to applicants about what to do.

Tulip HA had a two stage formal application process. It was designed to give applicants a quick idea of whether it would be worth their while to fill in the full form. The Initial Assessment Form (a 2 sided A4 form) was completed when applicants first enquired about housing with Tulip HA. The HSA calculated the applicant's points total and could tell them immediately if they would have sufficient points to join the waiting list. If that was the case, they were given an application form to complete. The other two associations simply used an application form to initially assess an applicant's circumstances.

In all of the associations, a woman was expected to provide information on the application form about domestic violence in different ways - either through writing details in a blank section of the form or ticking a box. No information was provided in a written form to help a woman decide what information or detail to include. If she was completing the form by herself, this might create difficulty in deciding what to write and how much personal detail to provide.

The associations used two different ways of assessing applications - points schemes and merit schemes. Bluebell HA's merit scheme was strongly influenced by the local authority's own priorities so it was not entirely reliant on the discretionary judgement of staff. Previous research had identified the problematic influence of personal judgement in merit schemes (Niner, 1985) but it emerged that this was also a significant feature in the points schemes. Even in an association with a formal policy (Foxglove HA), staff made judgements about women who had experienced domestic violence. These were based on whether or not a woman had been physically assaulted and whether or not an agency could write a "support letter." This was because the "harassment assessment form" stage had introduced this discretionary element into the assessment procedures.

DETAILS ABOUT THE VIOLENCE – "PROOF" OR "SUPPORT LETTERS"

The extent to which associations could act independently of the local authority was illustrated by the requirement that women provide "proof" or "support letters" to supplement their housing applications in Foxglove HA and Tulip HA. This applied to women who had been nominated with Group A priority, as well as direct applicants. Women would only become aware that they needed to give the association staff supporting evidence of violence after they had applied to the association.

In Foxglove HA, a CSO would send a women applicant an additional "harassment assessment form" if she had ticked the "domestic violence" box on the application form. A woman had to complete this and return it, before the application would be assessed and registered on the waiting list. Although Foxglove HA's policy emphasized that women should be believed and that "proof" was not necessary, the completion of the "harassment assessment form" required more details and "supporting evidence." The CSO (who had previously worked in the lettings section and who had "trained" the other CSOs in how to assess applications) regarded "proof" as essential.

"Regardless of what the policy says, what my problem has always been *and still is* with harassment or with domestic violence, is proving it. If we were to believe everybody who claimed it and *especially* if somebody had concocted a story and got rehoused, it spreads like wildfire."

Customer Services Officer - Foxglove HA

The CSOs would not accept applications from women where there were threats of violence. One remarked that they received many applications from women who said that an ex-partner was threatening violence but unless the woman had been physically assaulted she (and the other CSOs) would not consider the application. It would be cancelled. This was contrary to the association's formal policy.

In Foxglove HA, a woman needed to send in "support letters" from agencies. The CSOs would not accept such letters from relatives or friends. The CSO felt that she was, as she put it, "...more *lenient* than people have been in the past" (my emphasis). Interestingly enough, it seemed as if this view about what a woman would (or would not) have done had become part of the association's informal interpretation of the formal policy. Even the association's Equal Opportunities Advisor felt that if a woman was *really* serious about leaving she would have already approached a number of agencies for help before approaching the association. Consequently, obtaining "support letters" would not present a difficulty. Once "support letters" had been provided, the CSOs calculated the "provisional" points total for each housing application.

The CSOs were not monitored on the way they dealt with applicants or applications. For example, there was no check on applications which they cancelled. The way in which the association's formal policy was being undermined had not been detected. It might be suggested that there was a formal and an informal policy in Foxglove HA: a situation reminiscent of the local authority. In both, the amount of importance attached to the proper implementation of the formal policy seemed to reduce, the further staff were located from the centres of power. In addition, there appeared to be minimal sanctions if the policy was broken, so staff used their own judgement in situations which they found difficult or with women they did not take seriously or did not believe. The next part of the process was the HSO "home visit." This would be used to confirm an applicant's circumstances - or as CSO put it, the HSO would decide who was "genuine" and who was not.

At the application stage in Tulip HA, there was no indication in the information for applicants that "proof" of domestic violence might be required for the housing application to proceed. The Housing Manager in Tulip HA had said that such "proof" was not necessary, but he was not the person who made the final decision about priority and allocations. The Senior Housing Officer (SHO) was. The SHO was keen on "proof" whilst several Housing Officers, the HSA and the Housing Manager did not regard it as essential. This was an unresolved issue within the association at the time of the research. In practice, the HSA made sure that women sent letters in from agencies or from relatives or friends. The staff recognised and allowed for the fact that occasionally some Asian women would not be able to do this, because they would not have approached anyone else for help.

The response of Bluebell HA was different: "support letters" were not generally required. The Customer Service Coordinator (CSC) found the idea of asking for "proof" shocking and inappropriate. Most other staff interviewed felt the same, although the CSC's Assistant told women that letters were "helpful but not essential." Several staff had worked for the local authority and had asked applicants for "proof" in the past. They now believed that it was inappropriate in most

circumstances. A woman would only be asked to provide extra corroboration in situations where there were very strong doubts about what she recounted. Even then, she would probably be given the benefit of the doubt, if she could not provide any other corroboration (Housing Manager). The staff in Bluebell HA erred on the side of the woman because they believed that to do otherwise ran the risk of being wrong. This might seriously jeopardise a woman's safety.

There were a number of reasons why staff in Foxglove HA and Tulip HA were keen to obtain "proof" or corroboration of the violence which women had experienced. The CSO in Foxglove HA had little sympathy personally for women in this situation. She believed that they created work for others when they applied for housing and then they returned to the man. She did not trust women to tell the truth and she wanted to protect the association's waiting list from potential abuse. The SHO in Tulip HA was also keen to protect the waiting list priority system from abuse. At the same time she wanted to protect herself from possible criticism of her decisions (internally from more senior staff or externally from councillors). None of these acknowledged the difficulties which this might present for women either personally (the effects of not being believed) or practically (having to re-approach probably hard-pressed advice organisations for "support letters"). Bluebell HA staff, including senior staff, were personally more sympathetic towards women and a number of staff had many years experience of working in the local authority's formerly centralised homeless service. They had been embarrassed about asking for "proof" (when the authority had a less sympathetic approach than currently) and did not favour repeating the practice in the association. Staff in the other two associations did not have that knowledge or experience.

HELP AND ADVICE

Senior staff expected the nature of help and advice given to applicants to reduce. However, those who were interviewing on "the front line" might have a different view. This was particularly the case in relation to the Duty Officer services which

were staffed by professionally qualified and semi-professional housing staff. Part of their job satisfaction might well derive from positively helping an applicant in a difficult situation. This was evident from the amount of time which some Duty Officer staff took in interviewing in Bluebell HA. Having said that, the CSOs and HSA in Tulip HA (none of whom were professionally qualified) also spent more time with applicants. This was largely due to the fact that many of their tenants and applicants could not read or write English, and might not be literate in their first language either. Everything had to be explained orally. Staff in Tulip HA did refer applicants to other local agencies for help although the main emphasis of their work was to obtain an accurate picture of applicants' circumstances, so that their applications could be assessed quickly.

The situation in Foxglove HA was different. CSOs were expected to simply concentrate on telling applicants what the association itself could offer. They did not make referrals to any other organisation including the local authority's central homeless teams (Customer Services Officer). As an example of what this meant in practice, the African Caribbean woman referred to already was not advised about agencies she could approach for help. No concern or interest was expressed about her circumstances. She was simply told "You will have to fill in another form." (This was the "harassment assessment form" which has already been mentioned in Chapter 5).

Local authority staff had commented about the increasingly common practice of housing association staff sending applicants to them without giving them advice or help. They had been critical of the assumption that the authority would, in effect, "carry" associations in relation to providing advice and help. In their view, the relationship between the local authority and housing associations was not a partnership, nor "enabling." Housing association staff who were observed and interviewed for the research revealed that this practice was indeed the case, in many instances. Because of other demands on their time, they simply gathered information which was necessary to the association itself, in the minimum of time possible. Of course, this was not always the case. Women who were distressed or

who were very determined to be interviewed fully (see Belle's account in Chapter 8) might find that personal interviewers spent longer with them (especially if there was a Duty Officer system in place) but the trend was not to do so. The emphasis was on introducing ways of working (including standardising procedures) that reduced to a minimum the time which had to be spent with each applicant. This was another aspect of managerialism - specifically, the maxim to do more with less resources!

THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

The local authority's role has already been referred to in passing in relation to nominations. Perhaps it needs to be emphasised here that staff in the three case-study associations regarded local authority Neighbourhood Offices and/or the central homeless teams as firstly, a source of nominations for applicants and secondly, a place where applicants might obtain useful information and help. The extent to which this affected practice varied between the associations. There was a very strong emphasis in Bluebell HA and Tulip HA on insisting that all women who applied to them, also obtained a nomination from the local authority. For example, Bluebell HA's covering letter with the housing application told applicants that a nomination was "essential" if they wanted any chance of being rehoused. In reality, this was not strictly true. A woman with children needed to be nominated more than a single woman because the demand for family accommodation was higher than that for single person accommodation. An alternative picture was presented by Foxglove HA. It mentioned (but did not emphasise) nominations from the local authority as a route to association accommodation, in its literature for applicants. The Area Director commented that the association "struggled" to reach its nominations targets each year (see Chapter 5 for confirmation of this in the CORE statistics). This was reflective of very weak links between the association and the local authority's staff generally.

If a woman who was homeless (or about to become homeless) approached the case-study associations, she would receive different responses from staff. The staff in

Bluebell HA would send women to the central homeless teams. They did this because they thought that women would get a better service there than in the Neighbourhood Offices. The staff in Foxglove HA and Tulip HA told women to go to the central teams because they mistakenly thought that the homeless service was centralised. They did not know that the local Neighbourhood Offices provided a service to homeless families. This clearly indicated the poor level of knowledge and training in relation to homelessness in these two associations. No staff formally referred a woman - or checked to make sure that she had arrived (Davis, 1993).

Women's dependent position and lack of choice was reinforced in these arrangements. Even if they were already association tenants or only wanted to apply to an association, they were obliged to approach the local authority to obtain the required nomination. This was especially the case if they had dependent children: because of the demand for particular areas and the infrequency with which vacancies occurred within them. This applied even when particular circumstances might have precluded the authority (if they had council arrears or had abandoned a council tenancy in the past, they would probably not be keen to apply again). Similarly, women who were association tenants might have wanted to stay as association tenants (see Fleur's account in Chapter 8). It was clear that the remarks of the Contract Manager in Chapter 4 about association's making women "jump through hoops" to obtain a nomination rather than helping them directly, were accurate.

CONCLUSION

Whatever her housing status (including if she was the association's own tenant), it could be argued that the response which women received in Foxglove HA and Tulip HA reflected a housing management unease when dealing with a social situation which challenged the dominant view that familial relationships were private and uncontentious. Staff in Bluebell HA did not have these doubts, partly due to their professional experience. Housing management staff were being asked to intervene in support of the injured party - a gendered response since most people who became

homeless because of violence were women. The association staff concerned responded differently. They did not have the benefit of a legislative framework (Housing Act 1996 Part VII) to help them decide priorities. Most had not received training on domestic violence or where they had, it was not specific enough to directly apply to their jobs. Very few staff in the case-study associations knew about the local authority's domestic violence policy or the NFHA good practice guide (Davis, 1993).

That aside, the relationship between formal policy and actual practice was not straightforward. For example, there was a progressive policy in Foxglove HA but in practice this association's staff responses to women were restrictive and moralistic. The Customer Services staff were not monitored on how they interpreted their responsibilities in registering applications on to the waiting list. A situation had arisen where they were acting in contradiction to the association's own formal policy - in refusing to register applicants from women who were being threatened with violence or who could not provide letters of support from other organisations or professionals. This was an indication of their ignorance of the situation in which women might find themselves. It also illustrated what might happen if a policy was not monitored by senior management. The other two associations provided a more sympathetic service even though there was no formal policy. It is likely that the way in which senior staff in Bluebell HA guided staff about acceptable attitudes towards domestic violence and the professional experience of front-line staff affected the nature of the service provided. Beyond that, however, none of Bluebell HA's or Tulip HA's front-line staff were being given a clear line on what was acceptable management practice and what was not by senior management. This would affect the service provided to women. There were general tensions over the length of time taken in interviews, the amount of help and advice which could be provided to any applicant, whether there was a need for "proof" from women (in Tulip HA) and what might be expected of the local authority in relation to advice.

In responding to their new competitive working environment, associations had created practices which reinforced the dependency and lack of power of women on

the waiting list (making applicants apply to the local authority, reassessing applications from women who had been nominated, expecting "proof"). These requirements were also another illustration of the lack of power and influence attached to the local authority's "enabling" role. Two of the associations in this study had also claimed to be providing "customer care" services, but it was clear that in practice they could not do this. There was, in fact, a possibility that generally the application of consumerism in housing associations disguised or masked worsening relationships between the associations and applicants/tenants (Clarke and Newman, 1997).

"Welfare" organisations such as housing associations are not entirely like "customer oriented" private companies: the ways in which they are expected to respond to "housing need" preclude such ideologies from the private sector being carried very far. Applying for housing as a "customer" (applicant) is far more complicated in a social welfare setting (like a housing association) than in a purely commercial one (like an estate agent). For a homeless woman who has left a violent partner it is not just a case of exercising "choice" through walking, customer-like, through the Office entrance or picking up the telephone (see Clarke, 1998 for a wide discussion of this issue). The transaction is not dependent on how much she can pay, but her particular personal circumstances and how these are formally and informally assessed by housing management staff. She might find it embarrassing or shameful to relate what has happened to her or she might be afraid of saying too much, being concerned to maintain her own safety or being fearful of the potential reaction of staff (see Fleur's comments in Chapter 8). It is very likely that the nature of the personal response of the staff member will affect the woman's confidence in giving information about her circumstances. If staff are knowledgeable and have the time to discuss her circumstances sensitively, they will be more likely to obtain relevant information for the housing application and provide a helpful service to women. The difficulty for women lies in the reality that association staff increasingly did not have the training and/or time to do this effectively whether or not they were regarded as "customers."

Consequently, although women leaving domestic violence would formally receive the highest priority for housing in these associations, it would remain more difficult for anyone in this particular situation (compared to any other) to proceed through the application process. Their past experience and the lack of specific information about violence provided by associations (to help them overcome possible embarrassment, shame and fear) meant that the violence which had precipitated them into homelessness remained as a personal barrier which had to be overcome before being considered by the associations in this study. Other women with different housing circumstances did not have to overcome such difficulties in talking about their circumstances or "proving" them. Black and Asian women who were homeless because of domestic violence might also have difficulties because of institutional racism. This was most obviously apparent for those women who did not speak English, but there were other difficulties including inappropriate staffing and a lack of knowledge and understanding about the situation in which black and Asian women might find themselves. (Only Tulip HA was able to provide a service for women in these circumstances).

Finally, senior staff in associations emphasised the importance of minimising time spent on particular tasks and front line staff worked within those expectations and constraints. One to one contact with individual applicants and advice and liaison with other organisations was vulnerable in this situation (Chapter 5). As was clear from Chapter 4, the local authority was being expected to take on these responsibilities. Unlike

"...[private] companies vying for consumer loyalty, customers of one [social housing] service will also be customers of another; and that, especially for stretched services, far from seeking to *retain* customers, they may wish - and plan - to pass them on."

Harrow and Shaw, 1992, p120

From the women's point of view, their "room to manoeuvre" could be very constrained. They might have difficulties with the application process itself in particular associations. More generally they would find that they were obliged to go

from one organisation to another in search of appropriate help, a nomination and a permanent home. Women in this situation were not "customers" with a "choice": they were often treated as "supplicants" (Lambert, Paris and Blackaby, 1978). Whether they were Asian, black or white, they were marginalised female members of the urban poor - or lower working class - with the commensurate lack of power associated with that position. This will be elaborated further in examining the ways in which staff assessed applications and allocated property: the subjects of Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7 ASSESSING APPLICATIONS AND ALLOCATING PROPERTY

INTRODUCTION

Women who were homeless because of domestic violence would initially receive the highest points total in the association's waiting list (and/or a Group A priority nomination from the local authority) but it could not be assumed that assessment of their housing applications would be straightforward. This Chapter looks at the way in which applications were assessed, identifies a number of features of the process and looks at the ways in which attitudes towards women, violence and the family influenced staff judgement and decisions. Some of these features were already known to be influential in housing management practice and had been identified in good practice guidance (Davis, 1993), housing management literature (Henderson and Karn, 1987; Parker, Smith and Williams, 1992; Withers and Randolph, 1994) and research on women's access to social housing in these circumstances (Mama, 1989; Bull, 1993; Charles with Jones, 1993; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). Assessment and allocation processes might also be affected by familist attitudes. The resurgence of "managerialism" meant that it was also likely that financial considerations would affect assessment and allocation (Ford and Seavers, 1998; Walker, 1998).

The Chapter then moves on to consider how allocations were made in the three case-study associations. Three allocation meetings were observed in the associations in 1997. Although some research had been undertaken in local authorities, very little had been undertaken within associations (Niner with Karn, 1985). This was one opportunity to see if stereotypical attitudes about violence and gender and an emphasis on familism was evident in associations' allocation practices.

THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

After registration on the waiting list, the next stage of an application's assessment was "the home visit." The way in which association staff organised "home visits" to interview applicants varied between the associations. This was important because it either made it possible for the applicant to be considered for appropriate vacancies relatively quickly or, alternatively, the process, literally, kept them waiting despite their urgent circumstances.

In Foxglove HA, when a vacancy occurred, Housing Services Officers (HSOs) visited applicants who had the highest points total and had been waiting the longest for a vacancy in that area. They visited four applicants: two who had been nominated and two who had applied directly. This approach was justified by staff as an effective use of their time: looking at all the highly pointed applications would have been fairer but "too time consuming" (Housing Services Officer). Staff could not visit the most urgent and highly pointed applicants first. They had to wait their turn. (Making homelessness a high waiting list priority had been forced on the association by external pressure but it may be that the procedure followed here effectively ensured that the association rehoused few homeless people because they could not wait the length of time deemed necessary).

In Tulip HA and Bluebell HA, Housing Officers (HOs) tried to visit all applicants (direct and nominated) whether or not there was a specific vacancy to fill. This created a pool of applications which had a visit report attached and which could be considered when particular vacancies arose. Staff could prioritise visits on the basis of perceived urgency rather than date order. They often used the local authority's nomination grade as a guide. This meant that women who were homeless because of domestic violence could be assessed more quickly. They could then be considered for any suitable vacancies more quickly than other applicants who were less urgent. Ironically, there was one exception to this: the associations' own tenants. At this time, if staff in any of the three associations in this study were

approached for help by one of their tenants they sent them to the local authority for help. They had to obtain a nomination and be considered as homeless, rather than be treated as an urgent transfer. The aim of this from the associations' perspective was to increase the number of people whom they rehoused with nominations. It helped them attain their nominations targets (see Chapter 4) although it disadvantaged tenants because of the delay in being considered for vacancies in the association. Clearly, associations did not seem to be particularly focussed on the needs of the applicant, especially if they were already tenants of the association: management priorities were more important.

All applicants who applied to the associations in this study were interviewed and assessed by association staff whether or not they had been interviewed and assessed as homeless by local authority staff. They had all been nominated with a Group A nomination. Good practice guidance issued by the NFHA, AMA and ADC (NFHA,1989) had recommended that associations simply rehouse homeless nominees without assessing their circumstances again. It had been considered to be important that they were offered a permanent home as quickly as possible and it reduced the costs of providing temporary accommodation. This recommendation was not followed by the three case-study associations in this research. No property could be allocated in any of the three associations to anyone who had not been assessed by each association's staff (against each association's own waiting list priorities). Senior staff in all of the associations explained that associations were independent organisations with their own housing need priorities which might be different from the authority's (Foxglove HA and Tulip HA). Additionally, there was a need to establish the landlord/tenant relationship with applicants: this was the first part of that process (Bluebell HA).

Any system which expects applicants to wait and which cannot respond flexibly in urgent circumstances is problematic for households who are living in difficult situations - such as women fleeing violence (Bull, 1993; Charles with Jones, 1993; Greve, Page and Greve, 1971; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993; Niner, 1975, Smith and Whalley, 1975). The most inflexible system in this sense was Foxglove

HA's - and it was no surprise that this association rehoused relatively few women who were homeless because of domestic violence (Chapter 5). Associations had devised these ways of assessing applicants when the demand for housing for rent had been high and they could "pick and choose" between applicants. Demand for social housing was decreasing now in some areas and associations were effectively competing for applicants - especially with the local authority whose accommodation was cheaper. The time-consuming investigation of women applicants' applications in Foxglove HA and Tulip HA (involving interviews and information gathering) was unlikely to continue for much longer in this form, in the changing environment in which these associations worked (see Chapter 5).

The "home visit" or office interview

Women could be interviewed in the associations' Offices or at another location of their choosing (for example, a "care-of" address): staff recognised that women leaving violent men needed to be safe. Yet, it is doubtful whether different arrangements were made very often as this option was not advertised in the literature to applicants. One woman who was interviewed for this research was afraid that if she was interviewed in her home she would be considered to be satisfactorily housed. She was living in a temporary self-contained furnished house which was managed by another association. She asked staff in Tulip HA if she could be interviewed in the Office "for safety" but in fact it was her anxiety about how staff would respond to her circumstances which prompted her request. Other women interviewed for this research were interviewed in the associations' Offices (if they were living in one of the refuges) or in their current homes.

All of the associations prioritised women's applications on the basis of "housing need" but there were significant differences in how they assessed this. The staff in Bluebell HA had no difficulty in assessing women's housing applications because they believed what they were told. In this, they were not being disingenuous: they recognised the difficulties for women in talking publically about their circumstances. On occasion, when under particular time constraints to let property,

they would completely forgo the "home visit" or office interview for applicants who had been nominated. The association's "ethos" publically emphasised treating applicants as "individuals whose needs and wishes were to be respected" and who should be "treated fairly and equally" (Annual Report). Their practice of not requiring "support letters" or additional corroboration of violence fitted into this approach.

The other two associations exhibited a different approach which was reinforced by the senior staff. The "customer care" ethos of Foxglove HA and Tulip HA did not extend to the process of face-to-face interviews and acquiring "support letters." These were undertaken to distinguish between women applicants who were "genuine" and women applicants who were not. There were a number of issues which staff regarded as important to varying degrees, depending on the association. These are considered in turn, below.

Prioritising the violence or the homelessness

There were two important differences in the way in which the associations initially considered women's applications. The first was whether HOs/HSOs regarded the violence or the homelessness to be the most important feature. The second related to the "types" of violence which staff felt were legitimate to be considered within the definition of "domestic violence."

Prioritising the violence (rather than looking for actual homelessness as a result of violence) enabled women who were still living with violent partners to be considered as high priority applicants. Bluebell HA and Tulip HA staff prioritised the violence. They felt homelessness was a secondary issue in this particular situation. In this study, this approach had helped a disabled woman (whose alternative home had to be adapted for her before she moved) and an Asian woman who could not use the local refuge (because her eldest son was too old to be accepted).

Foxglove HA staff would only prioritise women if they were homeless (or about to become homeless within twenty eight days:the minimum legal requirement in the Housing Act 1996). Staff would return Group A nominations to the local authority for reassessment if they believed the applicant was not homeless (Team Leader). Staff gave the example of a woman temporarily living in an assured shorthold tenancy (who had moved there having been made homeless by a violent partner). She would not be regarded as homeless by this association and would not be given the highest priority. This was a narrower interpretation. It meant that some women would find that they were excluded from help from Foxglove HA . It precluded women making any plans to move away from a violent partner and seemed to be pushing women into becoming literally homeless.

The "types" of violence considered

The second difference between the associations related to how staff evaluated the violence which had occurred. In recent years, broader definitions of violence have been endorsed - in the Code of Guidance to the homelessness legislation (DoE), in the NFHA's good practice guide (Davis, 1993) and in a number of housing department's policies on domestic violence (Hackney Council, 1993), including the policy of the authority in this research. All of the staff in the three associations viewed physical and sexual violence seriously but the legitimacy of intimidation and threats - or the extent to which it was considered as serious - varied. (This had also been found in the local authority despite its formal commitment to a broad definition of violence). Bluebell HA and Tulip HA staff felt that psychological intimidation, threats and abuse were equally damaging. Foxglove HA's formal policy emphasised the broader view but HSOs felt that, in practice, women who were being physically attacked would get priority over women who were being threatened and intimidated. They regarded the former situation as more urgent and possibly, more serious. Ironically, HSOs would probably not have to make a choice in these circumstances because (unknown to them) the Customer Services staff cancelled applications where women were being intimidated and threatened. They thought they were not serious enough to merit consideration (see Chapter 6).

Housekeeping standards

Staff from Foxglove HA and Tulip HA collected information about applicants' housekeeping standards when they visited them in their home. They thought that this was a useful indicator of whether an applicant would make a "good" tenant. At the other end of the spectrum, Bluebell HA staff did not collect such information, regarding it as not relevant to assessing "housing need." In the past, local authority housing visitors collected this information and their class and race bias in doing so has been amply illustrated (Burney, 1967; Damer and Madigan, 1974; Grey, 1976; CRE 1984a; Henderson and Karn, 1987). Using an evaluation of housekeeping as part of the assessment process had not been recommended as good practice (Davis, 1993; Institute of Housing, 1990) although the latter survey of local authority waiting list practices acknowledged that a significant number of authorities still assessed housekeeping and/or the state of decoration in the home.

In the two associations which did this, comments recorded in "home visit" reports could be shorter or longer depending on the circumstances which staff found and their attitude towards them. Staff in Tulip HA made comments on visit reports like "neat and tidy" or "reasonable." In Foxglove HA, although written comments were not observed (because reports were not seen by the researcher) it is likely that they were more detailed. An example of the effects of this approach is provided below, illustrating greater staff concern about housekeeping than about violence.

The assessed standard of housekeeping and/or decorations had been used by local authority staff to decide what standard of property an applicant would be allocated (Burney, 1967; Damer and Madigan, 1974; Tucker, 1966). It seemed likely that it was used similarly in Foxglove HA and Tulip HA, although its use in an allocation discussion was only seen on one occasion. A family which had kept their Tulip HA tenancy in an immaculate condition was offered a transfer to a new property. Formally, at that time, no internal transfers should have been arranged. The family had also turned down two offers and was not supposed to be offered a third. The SHO justified her decision by reference to the condition of their current home and the fact that once they moved, their old home would be easy to let.

Most women who had left violent men were homeless and living in temporary accommodation. In these circumstances, it was difficult for staff to make a judgement about their housekeeping (because of shared kitchens and bathrooms and cramped living conditions). In this situation, the HSOs in Foxglove HA were expected to find out what an applicant's housekeeping had been like in previous tenancies. The Team Leader in Foxglove HA explained that they considered this evidence carefully. It was usually difficult to obtain (especially from private landlords) but he felt that "past behaviour" was likely to be a good indicator of "future behaviour."

"I'm looking at it in terms of the applicant's ability and willingness to care for the property that they're in and I don't necessarily agree that *because the way of life between the partners is of a poor standard that necessarily means the house is kept to a poor standard*. I don't think they go hand in hand at all." [my emphasis]

Foxglove HA - Team Leader

The irony was, that out of all the associations in this study, Foxglove HA was the only one to have a "woman-centred" formal policy on harassment (which included domestic violence). Yet this did not appear to have had a significant impact on attitudes. This Manager saw women as equal participants in what he believed to be "poor standard" relationships. It also seemed curious that housekeeping was regarded as being of equal importance as violence. A particular example of this way of thinking was provided by the Tenant Support Officer (TSO) in the association. A woman had applied because she and her daughter were being physically and sexually assaulted by a male friend of the mother's son. The Team Leader and Area Director had been more concerned about poor decoration, disrepair, the standard of housekeeping and the pets (large alsatian dogs and a large cage of birds in the kitchen). They recommended to the Area Committee that the application be cancelled because they were unhappy about all of these. The Committee had not agreed and had asked the TSO to visit to assess the situation.

"I just know that it was this tangled web of this one person coming at any time of the day or night, getting into the house, abusing the daughter. Saying what he wanted to her, touching her where he wanted. Also to the mother. When I visited, she had scratches down both sides of her neck where somebody had got her by the neck. Bruises on her leg. That had happened that Sunday before I went. But the report [by the Housing Services Officer] was very much geared to the state of the property...I found it really judgmental and I was thinking, "For God's sake!"

Foxglove HA - Tenant Support Officer

The Area Committee accepted the recommendation of the TSO and the application was reinstated. Ironically, the Committee also recommended that the woman be approached and offered advice about her housekeeping when the household was rehoused.

The role of "support letters"

Staff in the three associations varied in whether they required "support letters" to supplement a woman's account of what had happened to her. This was indicative of differences in the extent to which women were believed. "Support letters" might be written by doctors, solicitors, advice agencies, social workers, family members or friends. Bluebell HA staff did not need "support letters" to back up what a woman applicant said. They believed her account. This view was held by senior staff and extended to most of the housing management staff. Only one staff member told women that letters would be "helpful but not essential." Generally, staff felt that it was difficult for a woman to approach an organisation for help because of shame, embarrassment and/or fear (Kelly, 1988; Mullender, 1996, Pahl, 1985a). They were usually pragmatic about the possibility of women abusing the system through inventing violence. An HO who had previously worked in the centralised homeless service, remarked

"I don't think you can have any doubts. I've seen too many cases, especially girls in here. I mean fine - you may be rehousing someone who may not be experiencing domestic violence. But for every *one* [that has not] there's *twenty* that have. It's better doing that, than asking people [for proof]."

Bluebell HA - Housing Officer

A contrary position was pursued by the senior staff in Foxglove HA and Tulip HA. They expected staff to insist that women provide "support letters." The Team Leader in Foxglove HA believed he was protecting the association from abuse. The SHO in Tulip HA felt similarly. They feared that otherwise women would invent violence to gain priority. The housing management staff would be challenged by their respective Managers if they failed to ensure that there were "support letters" with the "home visit" report and the application. The staff appeared to have no difficulty with this approach. For example, in Foxglove HA, the status of the formal policy seemed to be barely relevant.

"What occurs to me straightaway when you talk about judgement is the fact that - you can't get away from the fact - that there are women out there who know that it can be a quick route to being rehoused, by claiming it. But again, our policy *does* state that women should be *believed* and that's the bottom line. But we know, in reality, we can't house everybody and we can't transfer everybody. So although women should be believed, because of the difficulties involved in rehousing, you've got to go into it in more detail and try and get some hard and fast proof if you can. Some more information. Something that is the proof that this is a genuine case. I'm not talking about bruises and so on but perhaps doctor's information, information from the police or solicitors or whatever. Those would be the main ones."

Foxglove HA - Housing Services Officer

In Tulip HA, staff were more divided about the use of "support letters." The Housing Manager and most of the management staff were not keen but the SHO and one HO were very determined to make sure that there were "support letters" with all applications from women in this situation. In part, this was because a recent applicant (who had no "proof") had been rehoused. She had been immediately joined by her husband, who put their former home up for sale. Staff believed this was a flagrant abuse, but could not prove it. Additionally, the SHO might have to

justify allocations (to more senior staff, Board members within the association and local authority ward members) and "proof" gave her more confidence in her decisions.

In Foxglove HA and Tulip HA, some "support letters" were considered to be more useful than others: they were considered to have a greater legitimacy. Their relative status seemed to depend on whether a letter had been written by a family member or friend, a member of staff in an organisation or a professional acting on behalf of the woman. It was felt that the former would necessarily be biased whilst the latter would not. Foxglove HA entirely disregarded letters from family and friends for that reason and they were given lesser weight in Tulip HA. Having said that, some staff remained suspicious. One HO in Tulip HA was critical of letters from solicitors. She believed that they "just write what they are told to write" [by women]. Consequently, she ignored them when evaluating an application. More generally, a HSO remarked that she was aware

"...of the fact that some women are very good at getting support. They're very vocal and they're all too happy to go everywhere to get supporting letters because they know the system...It's a minefield."

Foxglove HA - Housing Services Officer

The staff in these two associations also believed that letters from agencies or professionals indicated that the woman was, as they put it, "making an effort" to resolve her problem. In Foxglove HA and Tulip HA, some staff seemed to be making a moral virtue out of what for women could be a confusing trawl between different organisations (Bull, 1993; Dobash and Dobash, 1979). Other staff (in Tulip HA) only asked women to supply "support letters" because they were expected to by senior staff (even though they recognised the difficulties). The insistence that women provide "support letters" or "proof" of the violence which they had experienced, represented a misunderstanding of the impact of violence on women (in terms of fear, anxiety, depression, isolation). It also revealed ignorance of the difficulties which women might experience in obtaining help (Hanmer and

Saunders, 1984; Pahl, 1985a; Dominy and Radford, 1996; Mullender, 1996; Bewley, Friend and Mezey, 1997) especially if they were black or Asian (Mama, 1989; Edwards, 1995). In the area of the study, there was a large number of black and minority ethnic advice organisations. Black and Asian women might use them although they might be worried about doing so, fearing that they might not be able to be independent from the dominant interests within their local communities. They might also be unsure or anxious that private matters might not remain confidential within the networks of contacts on which community organisations are built. Black and Asian women might also be very reluctant to use white organisations for fear of an unsympathetic response to themselves, their families and/or their community (Rai and Thiara, 1997).

In many instances, the local authority had already assessed women and given them the highest priority without the need for them to provide letters or "proof" of various kinds. Associations were giving women a different message, however. It illustrated another aspect of the landlord/tenant relationship. Essentially, staff were educating women applicants into their future supplicant role (Lambert, Paris and Blackaby, 1978) rather than treating them as applicants with rights to be rehoused or, indeed, "customers".

The "landlord check"

In Foxglove HA and Tulip HA, more detailed enquiries were made by staff about an applicant's past housing history as well as their present circumstances. These investigations were carried out in relation to every applicant who reached the "home visit" stage. These investigations were designed to give staff some idea of what the applicant might be like as a future tenant: identifying those who were potentially "good" tenants from those who might be "poor" tenants. As the Team Leader in Foxglove HA put it, "past behaviour was usually a good indicator of future behaviour." In Foxglove HA, staff routinely called these "conduct of tenancy" investigations (Housing Services Officer) though the Team Leader also referred to

this as "taking up references." Tulip HA staff thought similarly: that they were "taking up references" (Senior Housing Officer). This seemed identical to practice which had been uncovered in the local authority sector, though not in the local authority in this study (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Bull, 1993).

Underlying all of this was the assumption by staff that the past should be used to judge applicants in the present. Their action also represented a refusal to acknowledge that a woman might have had no control over the actions of her ex-partner, for example, in relation to rent arrears, damage or abusive behaviour to neighbours (see Davis, 1993 and the DETR, 1999 for good practice which recommends distinguishing between the two). Raking up what had happened in the past, moved attention away from the man's violence which had made the woman homeless. These "findings" could then be used to prioritise the interests of the landlord, over and above those of the woman concerned. An applicant appeared to have little control over what housing management staff required, apart from withdrawing the application (that is, in the language of "customer care," they had the "choice" of "exiting" the system).

Rent arrears

Research has shown that women have faced considerable difficulties in obtaining accommodation from local authorities if they (or their violent ex-partner) have had rent arrears (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Bull, 1995; Charles with Jones, 1993; Welsh Women's Aid, 1986, revised 1989). Women who have been joint tenants might have had difficulties if their violent ex-partner controlled the family finances. Alternatively, their ex-partner may have been the sole tenant but arrears might have been attributed to the woman (especially if her partner disappeared). Recent research has indicated that associations have become more interventionist and less flexible about arrears than they might have been in the past (Ford and Seavers, 1998). This research indicated what this might mean for some women.

All applicants with rent arrears were expected to be able to show evidence of repaying this debt, whether or not they were legally liable. The reasons why arrears had built up were not important: the fact of the arrears was. The two larger associations had a more flexible attitude to rent arrears, possibly because they were financially more secure. In Bluebell HA, women were expected to come to an arrangement about the arrears but this did not affect their housing priority. Officially, this was the same in Foxglove HA. Unofficially, the staff used arrears "flexibly." If they wanted to cancel an application, arrears (of rent or other utilities) could be used as the justification, without consulting the Area Committee. Tulip HA, the smallest association in the study, would not rehouse anyone with outstanding rent arrears with another landlord. The view of the Board was that they could not rehouse anyone who might be regarded as a "poor risk," given the financial circumstances of the association and the fact that their tenants' rent arrears had become unacceptably high in recent years. One woman interviewed for this research had been told by the HO in Tulip HA that she could have a particular vacancy but only if she cleared her £100 council arrears within a few days. If not, it would be offered to another family. As she lived on income support, she had borrowed the money to do so, getting further into debt in the process.

Vulnerability

Senior staff in Foxglove HA and Tulip HA judged that some women could re-establish themselves and their children in a new area with relatively little difficulty. They did not want or need extra help from formal sources. Other women were more vulnerable but might not want to ask for help, for fear of being stigmatised further. The Team Leader of Foxglove HA believed that "the greater percentage" of women whom Foxglove HA rehoused were in this situation.

"They bring with them a whole range of vulnerability...[and]...have great difficulty in being able to manage their own affairs - [they] probably have a history of not only a single violent relationship but a number of violent relationships - a repeated pattern, if you like, of behaviour. Perhaps it's the social group that people come from that produces that effect ... I do think a lot of our tenancies fail because there are a lot of people who can't make it on their own either financially or because they've lost something. They've lost a partner who, however aggressive and unpleasant that person might have been, he sort of made the decisions and organised

the family in whatever slipshod, nasty way that might have been."

Foxglove HA - Team Leader

What the Team Leader was describing was the lack of confidence, insecurity and fear which many women experience and come to terms with over time (although the view that many women have multiple violent relationships and that violence only occurs in the working class is mistaken - Mullender, 1996; British Medical Association, 1998). These were surprising views to find in this association, where the association's formal policy pointed out that domestic violence extends across social classes and ethnic groups.

Several of the women interviewed for this research spoke of the long-term impact of their experience of violence and how hard it was to establish themselves independently. That did not mean that they could not succeed in that attempt (which was the implication of the Team Leader's comments) although they might need to try several times before establishing themselves independently (see Chapter 8). Some might need additional help to do so. Staff in both associations were reluctant to consider applications from women who had returned to a violent ex-partner in the past. They did not want to make an offer of accommodation to a woman who was likely to return to an ex-partner after a short period because it created work for themselves.

Inventing violence

Staff in Foxglove HA and Tulip HA believed that some women invented violence to obtain sufficient priority to be offered another property. Their circumstances otherwise would not justify a high enough priority. Staff thought this, because they could cite examples of women who had been rehoused but had then been joined by their "supposedly" violent ex-partner.

"*In many cases*, the length of time between the woman signing up for a property and the man being present in the home is 24 hours. It's as quick as that. So it makes one very distrusting - often to the detriment of the *genuine*." [my emphasis]

Foxglove HA - Team Leader

What can be made of this view? Firstly, it has to be acknowledged that there are women who lie about violence in order to gain sufficient priority to be rehoused. Nevertheless, this is a risky strategy. Women ran the risk of being offered very poor property (which was the reality for most in this situation according to refuge and hostel staff interviewed for this research). Secondly, staff might have thought that moves have been planned but they were not in the best position to judge. They were likely not to have been. For example, staff in Foxglove HA rehoused relatively few women in this situation and they were never involved in the practical arrangements made by new tenants to move into their new homes. They did not visit new tenants after they had moved in. The reality for a woman if she was found, her fear of her ex-partner and what he might do (and consequently her lack of choice about whether he moved in) was not understood by staff because of the distance between themselves and tenants (see Chapter 8 for women's views which illustrate this).

The staff view seemed to be limited to believing that a woman could simply end the relationship with her violent ex-partner and leave. They did not understand that women were likely to have to make many attempts at independent living before finally being free. The instances which had occurred were used by staff to justify a general suspicion of all women who applied because of domestic violence. This occurred in Foxglove HA and Tulip HA - even though the former had a formal policy and training on the issue (which illustrates the limitations of a formal policy which is not formally monitored or implemented by senior as well as front-line staff).

Being forced to move several times

Another issue emerged in discussion with staff in Foxglove HA. Some staff felt that even if a woman was "genuine," there was the possibility that she might not stay in a

property long or might bring problems with her (for example, her ex-partner might find her). This might create instability in the neighbourhood, more work for staff and possible problems with rent loss (if a home was later abandoned). One HSO in Foxglove HA remarked

"...the only other consideration would be what sort of tenant we believe they would be. To be harsh, you're looking at management in the future. When I do an application visit, if I see over the last three years that somebody has had six or seven addresses and they'd fled violence from every single one, I would be thinking about that seriously, really."

Researcher: "In terms of cancelling?"

"Yes...because it could be a potential management problem and you can't always do something about it."

Foxglove HA - Housing Services Officer

These attitudes towards women were bedded in a misunderstanding of the nature and seriousness of the violence which men have used to intimidate and control women and their persistence in finding women who have left them. In effect, women were being held responsible for being forced to move. In housing terms, they suffered the consequences of moving several times by having one route to rehousing withdrawn from them. These staff attitudes also reflected a concern to minimise the risks to association property which rehousing some women might entail.

Honesty

One final aspect of the "landlord check" details was to confirm the accuracy of the applicant's "housing history" or any other details on their application. If an HO/HSO in Foxglove HA or Tulip HA discovered that there were discrepancies between what they had been told by the woman applicant and what they had discovered through their own enquiries, it was possible that the application would be cancelled. Staff believed that the issue here was honesty. One example of this was given by a HSO in Foxglove HA. A woman had failed to give details of one of the

homes she had abandoned because she was being tracked by her violent exhusband. Her former landlord could not immediately confirm this as the the reason why she had left. Her application to Foxglove HA was cancelled because she had "misled the association" (Housing Services Officer). In their view, she had left a tenancy, could not confirm why and had not been open with Foxglove HA staff about it. As it happened, the woman subsequently obtained the necessary confirmation and was rehoused by another association.

Why were staff so concerned about something that had happened in the past, when the woman had applied because of current fears about her violent expartner? It is difficult to be definitive. The reaction might derive from the underlying suspicion of women which was commonplace in Foxglove HA and with some staff in Tulip HA. Alternatively, it might reflect a staff concern that association priorities and their own position as staff/managers was being undermined or challenged by applicants who did not keep to the rules. Again, this reflected a greater concern to establish the "suppliant role" of the applicant/future tenant rather than recognise the applicant as a woman trying to find a new home, either as an applicant with rights to be rehoused or a "customer."

THE ALLOCATIONS PROCESS

Vacancies of property were allocated by staff following discussions in allocations meetings. In this study, these proved to be the most difficult to describe adequately because they were essentially discussions based on bargaining or negotiation, where facts and opinions could be raised, acknowledged or discounted in quick succession. This possibly accounts for why Niner and Karn (1985) had difficulty in retaining concepts of "housing need" in their minds when listening to staff discussions. This study benefited by simply concentrating on how the applications from women leaving domestic violence were considered.

The nature of allocation meetings

Allocation meetings were arranged as and when needed. They were supposed to involve a minimum of two staff to ensure fairness (Housing Corporation, Performance Expectations, 1989). The Team Leader in Foxglove HA and the SHO in Tulip HA always attended the allocation meetings, with one or more HOs/HSOs. Senior staff attended to ensure consistency in the decisions which were made. They also hoped to obtain a broad view of the way allocations were being made across the associations' stock. In Bluebell HA, there was no equivalent emphasis on more senior staff involvement in allocation meetings. The HOs or Customer Services Co-ordinator undertook this task. The Housing Manager would only become involved if there was a difficult decision to make or a problem arose. It is worth noting that in Tulip HA, the SHO sometimes made decisions by herself if HOs were busy or ill. This was contrary to the Housing Corporation's Performance Expectations (1989). The HO/HSOs in all of the case-study associations attended allocation meetings because they managed the property and could contribute "local knowledge" to the discussion: of neighbours, the surrounding estate or neighbourhood. The number of applications actively considered for each vacancy varied between the associations. Bluebell HA and Tulip HA's allocation practice involved considering all the highest priority assessed applications whatever their original date of application. In Foxglove HA, the Team Leader and appropriate HSO considered a maximum of four assessed applications.

When Niner and Karn (1985) attended two associations' allocation meetings, they had found it difficult to follow the discussions which preceded the decisions which were made. They found it hard to keep a firm definition of "housing need" in mind. They noticed that applications where there were deadlines (for example, an eviction notice) often obtained priority over serious long-term situations (for example, chronic health problems). They found that staff weighed priority with suitability. The balance between the two depended on the vacancy. If it was a sought-after property, priority would be uppermost in managers' minds when making a decision. For more frequent lettings of less attractive property, suitability was more important. The staff also considered whether the applicant was likely to accept the offer (even

if they did not have the most urgent need). The issue here was to minimize refusals (and consequent rent loss if the property remained untenanted).

In the meetings in this study, it was not possible to distinguish between allocations of property which were in greater or lesser demand since that information was not offered. Most of the vacancies seemed to have more than sufficient applications which could be considered for them. In allocating property, staff considered the details of the particular vacancy, the neighbours and the area in which it was located. They then looked at the "facts" in the assessment report and on the application form. In two associations (Foxglove HA and Tulip HA) these were supplemented by "support letters" and "landlord check" details. It was at this point that staff judgement and discretion became particularly important features of the process (see Bull (1993) and Parker, Smith and Williams (1992), for further comment). In this, they appeared to have an approach which was similar to that described by Henderson and Karn (1987). Staff judgement about women who had left domestic violence fell into three broad areas: views about the nature of the household, attitudes towards domestic violence and concerns about how the relationships between the possible new tenant and their neighbours might be managed. Some of these judgements derived from the information gathered as part of the assessment process. Some were based on the personal views of staff. These applicants' circumstances were then compared and contrasted with those of the other applicants.

Attitudes to household types - the influence of the "ideal" nuclear family

Feminist writers have identified living as a nuclear family and/or women's role as "active mothers" as important in determining women's access to council housing, especially if they were homeless (Pascall, 1986). The literature review revealed that the ways in which women applicants had been considered by local authority staff were more complicated than this. The same was found in the associations in this study. In the association allocation meetings observed, the applicants' household type per se was not usually the first concern of the staff. Lone parent families did not appear to be regarded as less "in need" (or less "respectable") than nuclear

families per se. They were not regarded as "problem families" by association staff. The staff concentrated on judging whether the applicant's household was suitable for a specific vacancy.

Their circumstances were only regarded as problematic in certain situations. The feature which emerged as important for staff, in relation to particular vacancies, was the presence or absence of a man in the household. Staff presumed that a man living with a woman would possess certain attributes - in particular, an ability and willingness to physically protect his partner and their children. This was important as some vacancies had occurred in areas where staff felt that neighbours would be unfriendly or hostile. Women living as lone parents were regarded as too vulnerable to be seriously considered for these vacancies (see Chapter 5).

This way of stereotyping men in nuclear family relationships was most clearly evident in the allocation meeting in Bluebell HA. A vacancy had occurred in a property because the association had transferred its existing tenant. She had been assaulted by the man *and* woman living next door. The staff were searching for a household which in their view would be strong enough to live next door to neighbours who might be violent or aggressive. In the allocation meeting, a female lone parent was excluded from consideration at an early stage. It was presumed that as a lone parent (who had been homeless because of domestic violence) she was too vulnerable for this vacancy. By contrast, the allocation was actually made to a homeless nuclear family. The woman had previously escaped a violent ex-partner and had left the city with her two children to live in temporary accommodation, in another part of the country. She had met another man who had moved in. They had returned to the city and now all lived together as a family, in a hostel. The character of the woman's new partner was not known by staff although it was assumed he would be capable (and willing) to protect her from their future neighbours. Ironically, staff also did not know where the woman's ex-partner lived. They would have preferred this information (to avoid rehousing the family near to his home) but its absence did not stop the offer being made. The new partner was expected to

protect the family from the immediate neighbours (and the woman's ex-partner, if he found her new home).

There did appear to be limits to the view that men would act in a protective way. A nuclear family in which the father was seriously mentally ill (and who had tried to murder his son) was set to one side in considering this vacancy. Staff believed that because he was mentally unstable he would not be able to deal with a violent neighbour. The male protector role also did not seem to lend itself easily to other male relatives. In Tulip HA, a woman who had left a violent partner wanted to be rehoused into a property which the SHO thought was too near her former partner. The woman had then added her homeless brother to her application, explaining that she wanted him to live with her (and her children) as a protection against her former partner. These circumstances were regarded with suspicion by the SHO who questioned whether the brother would protect her or whether he had just been added to the household's application to ensure that she was offered the property. It was a new three bedroomed property and without her brother on the application, she and her child would only be considered by the SHO for a two bedroomed property. The SHO decided that she would not actively consider her for the three bedroomed property even though the woman had the highest priority (and a Group A nomination), had been waiting for over a year and (because of the presence of her brother) had sufficient people in her household to justify being allocated a three bedroomed house.

It was surprising that there was a stereotypical assumption by housing management staff that a husband or cohabitee in a nuclear family would protect his partner and the children. Staff did not check with the woman or man to find out what they thought. There was no reason to presume that the man would be willing to deal with aggressive neighbours. He might also be violent towards his partner rather than protective, given the estimated incidence of domestic violence in personal relationships (Mooney, 1993). It was unclear what housing management staff actually expected men in these situations to do in the face of a hostile environment.

This was a general concern but one which had particular resonance for black and Asian families in relation to possible racial harassment (Chahal and Julienne, 1999).

The other problem with this was the resultant status of lone parents. Would they only be considered for particular vacancies or areas - especially if they had been homeless because of domestic violence? Henderson and Karn (1987) believed that grouping "problem families" in the poorest quality council housing was a way in which housing managers in local authorities tried to reduce the potential conflict from existing residents, when making allocations to supposedly "difficult" households. This finding built on what Burney (1967), Damer (1974 and 1976), Gray (1976) and Tucker (1966) had already discovered. Lone parents had been regarded as "problem families" in some local authorities, whatever their individual circumstances (DHSS, 1974; Henderson and Karn, 1987). In this research, the "problem" with lone parents seemed to be that they were assumed not to be able to protect themselves from violence. Their status in the "pecking order" of household types seemed to be lower than nuclear families' because of the absence of a protective man.

Apart from assumptions about men's role in nuclear families, a direct preference for nuclear families over lone parent families was also seen in Tulip HA (although only one instance was observed). Two lone parents who had left violent men had the highest priority and had been longest on the waiting list for a property in a particular area. They each had one child and were both living in temporary accommodation. The property was allocated to the lower priority "split" nuclear family rather than either of the lone parents because the "split family" was considered to be a better "fit" for the small, three bedroomed property. The male applicant was living separately from his partner and their child. She lived with her parents, who had refused to allow him to visit as they disapproved of the relationship. He had two other children from two former relationships. One child visited him regularly. The man was regarded positively by the SHO: she noted from the HO "home visit" report that his existing one bedroomed, privately rented home was "very well kept." She decided that the split nuclear family was more "suitable" for the vacancy. She

believed that the small third bedroom would be used by the daughter who visited her father. She also thought that any tenancy would be kept in good condition by the man. By comparison, the higher priority lone parents each had one child. The property would have been under-occupied if they had been offered it, although the SHO had previously said that she wanted to select a small family, because of the size of the third bedroom. The example here occurred in Tulip HA, the black association, and involved black applicants. This was ironic given that the research literature has shown that preferences of this sort have occurred on a significant scale in local authorities. Black lone parents have been discriminated against in allocations which have been made preferentially to white lone parents and white nuclear families (CRE,1984; Henderson and Karn, 1987).

Attitudes towards domestic violence

In the three allocation meetings which were observed, all the applicants who were homeless because of domestic violence were women. This was not always the case, but men trying to escape violence from a partner/ex-partner was much rarer as far as association staff were concerned. All but one of them had experienced (or were experiencing) physical violence. Most had been assaulted and/or harassed by male partners or ex-partners but not all of them were in this situation. One woman had been seriously injured in a car accident and been obliged to move back to her mother's home. She could not live by herself because of mobility problems. Her mother was an alcoholic and was physically violent towards her. Another woman had been assaulted and was still being seriously harassed by her brother, at the time of the allocation meeting. She had received by far the larger share of their late father's inheritance and her brother disputed this.

Out of the six vacancies considered in the three meetings, one was actually allocated to a woman leaving domestic violence (in Tulip HA). Two women in this situation were considered for one vacancy in Bluebell HA. In Foxglove HA, one woman was considered for one vacancy. In Tulip HA, two women were considered separately for two vacancies. Some women had been waiting many months: one,

over a year. Their applications were set aside despite their having higher formal priority than the applicants who were finally selected for vacancies in these allocations meetings, and their situations being more urgent. Other features were regarded as more important than domestic violence. These situations contradicted Niner and Karn's work (1985) which had found that association staff allocated the best property to the most urgent applicants and then judged applicants' "suitability" for the other less desirable properties.

Why were women's applications set to one side? There are two ways of considering this. Firstly, it is possible to compare the circumstances of the applicant who was allocated the property with those of the lone parents who had left violent men. Looked at in this way, staff did seem to prefer other applications because they were more "suitable" for particular vacancies. For example, for the Bluebell HA vacancy next door to aggressive neighbours a homeless nuclear family (where the women had previous experience of domestic violence with another partner) was preferred to a lone parent (who was homeless because of domestic violence). The lone parent was considered to be too vulnerable in that situation. A lower priority "split" nuclear family was selected for a vacancy in Tulip HA rather than either of the two higher priority, homeless lone parents. The "split" family was considered to be a more appropriate "fit" because of the number of children who were possibly permanently or temporarily living as part of it. The man was looked upon favourably for maintaining his current home to a high standard. The SHO in Tulip HA could have allocated the property to either of the higher priority lone parents (one of whom was the only applicant with a Group A priority nomination). Managers could and did under-occupy property (especially on estates where they wanted to reduce the number of children in the area). In this instance, the SHO also appeared to have little sympathy with either of the women. A decision was made on the basis of "suitability" which could probably not be justified externally.

Another way of looking at the way decisions were made was to consider the circumstances of the other applicants, to see if there was any particular pattern to these decisions. This was not possible in Foxglove HA. No other applications were

considered for the vacancy apart from a woman who was disabled. She was described by the HSO who had visited her as "a sad case" but, by the time of the allocation meeting, she had already been rehoused by another association. In Bluebell HA, the allocation meeting had also been organised to allocate one property. Six highest priority applications were considered, all of which had been nominated. The staff decided at the beginning that the vacancy would not be suitable for a lone parent because of the violent neighbour. They went through all of the applications and considered how urgent each application was (to retain the most urgent for the final discussion) and whether the local authority could help. This was a way of identifying applicants who could be set aside. For example, a lone parent who needed to move to be near her very ill mother had ward member support but was not as urgent as other applicants. She was set aside first. A family who needed to move because they were living in a local authority clearance area was also set aside: the authority had a responsibility to rehouse them. The nuclear family with the mentally ill father was then excluded because of his instability.

After the staff had set these aside, they specifically looked at the suitability of the remaining two applications. They considered the household composition. The homeless nuclear family had been selected as first choice and a lone parent who was severely overcrowded and whose family had health problems, was the second. When staff realised that their reserve was a lone parent they set the application aside and instead selected a nuclear family. (This family needed to move because of a local authority clearance programme. Their application had previously been set aside). The meeting took forty minutes to allocate this property. Other meetings took less time, especially when there were only two or three applications to consider (Customer Services Officer). The HO for the area had expressed a preference for the property to be let to a nuclear family with young children, because this house was on an estate with many older teenage children. This was not considered by the staff. Neither was the potential impact on children of living next to such neighbours. The combination of household type and individual circumstances had led to the exclusion of the homeless woman who had left a violent partner. The lone

parent whose family was severely overcrowded and ill was also excluded because of her household type.

In Tulip HA, the allocation meeting which had been observed dealt with four properties in two and a half hours (and began to consider applications for a fifth before running out of time). One property was allocated in a similar fashion to that in Bluebell HA - applications were set aside (many for administrative reasons) until only four were actively considered in detail. Another property was allocated to someone who had only recently applied (in the previous week) because there were no other applicants and she was a Group A nomination. A third property was allocated to a family who were recommended for the vacancy by the HO in the area. This was the family who were transferred, mentioned before. (If the SHO had not accepted the HO's suggestion, her alternative would have been to compare and contrast twenty-one other applications). Finally, another property was allocated to a lone parent who was leaving a violent ex-partner and who had been nominated by the local authority (Group A). Again, she was recommended by the HO who had looked through thirty-eight, highest priority applications for the area before the meeting. The SHO simply confirmed the selection suggested.

The pointing in Tulip HA's waiting list was very broad and widely divergent circumstances could receive similar points totals and lead to large numbers of applications with the highest points. Examining the decisions which were made (especially in relation to the other applications) considered, revealed that there was also an element of chance at work. Women might receive an offer if there were no other applicants or if the HO/HSO supported them or if the SHO could not face going through very large numbers of applications in detail to make a decision. There was also a degree of discretion in Tulip HA which was inadvisable. The SHO appeared to have an ambivalent attitude towards nominations: she could (and did) pick lower priority applicants in advance of those applicants who had higher points totals and Group A nominations. There were a number of instances where it was clear that she was very suspicious of what applicants had said about their circumstances: unfortunately these were all applications from women who had left

violent men. It may have been that the SHO was right to be suspicious but the difficulty was that there was no effective check on how she was allocating property. The decisions did not have to be confirmed by the Housing Manager and she often allocated property by herself (a clear contravention of the Housing Corporation's Performance Expectations).

The impact of the neighbours and the area

The reluctance to rehouse lone parents in certain properties extended to particular areas in some situations. No staff would allocate homes to lone parents which were near to where former violent partners lived - even if friends or family members were nearby. Staff believed that the woman would be found - thus defeating the object of rehousing. More generally, there were a number of new consortium housing schemes in management in Bluebell HA and Foxglove HA where lone parents generally would not be actively considered unless they were very familiar with the area and already had relatives living there who would help them. The reason given for this was that unless they had such support they were likely to find living in these housing estates difficult because of antagonistic, unfriendly neighbours. They would be likely to be considered to be queue-jumping outsiders (Bluebell HA - Chief Executive). Staff suspected that this would happen because of complaints from residents in surrounding estates and intimidation which had occurred. Research studies have also discovered that some women have been attacked and harassed by male neighbours following rehousing in other areas (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Charles with Jones, 1993; Cole, Gidley, Ritchie, Simpson, Wishart, 1996).

The staff in all of the associations (particularly Bluebell HA) asked women to visit areas/schemes before deciding which area they wanted to live in. This was important because once a property was allocated, an offer was made and applicants had very little time to decide (see Chapter 8). None of the associations produced information about local services or facilities which might be useful for women who were unfamiliar with an area. If they had not visited it before, they were reliant on comments from friends or advice workers and what they found when they went to

see it. Staff concern about women's "vulnerability" did not extend to providing "support" or help in making is very important decision. Senior staff in each of the associations said that providing "support" or help to decide whether to accept a property or help tenants move in had been a feature of housing management practice before the Housing Act 1988. Since then, the workload of housing management staff had increased to such an extent that they could no longer do this, even though it was evident that it enhanced the landlord/tenant relationship.

"I don't think we tackle that [support needs]. I think we'd like to think we do but in reality we don't. Coming back again to the reason why we don't do it, it's because it's not a priority for us. Once we've let a property...then the HOs move on to let the next property or they move on to collect their rent arrears. They haven't got the *luxury* of being about to go round and see people, to talk to people, identify what their problems are, contact other agencies to bring in support. It's just not something that we can cope with, given the resources that we have."

Foxglove HA - Team Leader

Although women might not be considered for particular areas, this was not because they were regarded as "problem families" to be allocated the poorest property (Henderson and Karn, 1987). Association staff acted to ensure that if an allocation was made, a woman was likely to be able to re-establish herself and her children without being discovered by an ex-partner and without coming under extra pressure from antagonistic or unfriendly neighbours. Nevertheless, this seemed to be the limit of their assistance. A woman would receive no help from the association in terms of moving in or settling down into their new home. This was another indication of the changed priorities of housing management staff and the changed relationship between landlord and tenant (see Chapter 8).

CONCLUSION

Even though women who had left domestic violence had the highest priority, the commitment in the three associations towards accepting their applications and rehousing them was more complicated than this. Association staff were able to

consider women's circumstances in a more or less restrictive fashion. Access to accommodation was not dependent on a woman being an "active" mother (as some feminist writers had emphasised in relation to access to council housing) and attitudes to nuclear families and lone parent families were more complex than might have been anticipated.

The use of discretion varied in the three associations in this study. At best, women were treated with consideration and were trusted to talk honestly about their circumstances (Bluebell HA). At worst, association staff were only willing to accept certain kinds of violence as legitimate in relation to women wanting to be rehoused. This meant, by implication, that staff felt that women should tolerate certain kinds of violence in personal relationships (for example, threats and intimidation). In two associations, women were suspected potentially of being less than honest. They were only taken seriously if their fear and distress had been regarded as "legitimate" by another organisation (through the provision of "support letters") and if they were actually homeless because of domestic violence. A smaller number of women, applying to Foxglove HA or Tulip HA, might also find that they would not obtain confirmation of their high priority for rehousing for purely housing management considerations: arrears, previous mobility, housekeeping standards or "honesty." All of these reflected association staff anxieties about their own housing management responsibilities rather than concern about the woman applicant: staff were more bothered about void levels, the condition of the property and the attitude that "dishonesty" implied towards them and the association's waiting list priorities.

Although feminist writers identified the importance of women being part of a nuclear family to obtain access to good council housing, association practice was more complex. Nuclear families per se were not usually directly compared with female lone parents. The comparisons were more subtle and rooted in housing management experience. Firstly, female lone parents were regarded as more vulnerable than women living with men in nuclear families especially if the female lone parent had experienced violence. This was noticeable in relation to *individual* allocations of property, where there were difficult neighbours. Secondly, lone

parents would not be considered for *any* vacancies which occurred near the ex-partner's home because staff feared a repetition of the violence. Finally, lone parents could be excluded *across the board* for vacancies which staff felt would be inappropriate because of the possibility of harassment or violence in the area. This was because they were regarded as particularly vulnerable as women. They had already experienced violence and were living independently of a man as a lone parent. In some neighbourhoods, they would be regarded as "outsiders" and would not be made welcome. This applied to white and black lone parents.

The allocation meetings which were observed illustrated the complications for staff in making these decisions. The limitations of the housing management role and the difficulties for staff in providing any "support" to applicants were also revealed. It was clear that "anti-social behaviour" had become an issue in some areas. This indicated a certain side to "communities" or neighbourhoods which was very problematic to women living without "a man in the house." In the associations in this study, there was no evidence that firmer measures were being taken to deal with anti-social behaviour and violence, at this time. It seemed that allocations could be made which accommodated it rather than challenged it. More generally, it was also clear that the emphasis on the "customer" (and the impact of consumerism more broadly) had largely been rhetorical in the housing management service. Its concentration on measurable features of the housing management service through "performance indicators" rather than active monitoring and management of the processes which rationed and produced them, was illustrative of the individualism implicit within consumerism. This ideology (and its associated practices) could not account for the ways in which the broad inequalities towards women were reproduced in associations' assessment and allocation processes.

A great amount of detail has been synthesised for the analysis contained in Chapters 6 and 7 in this study. The housing management service in three associations has been thrown in sharp relief in relation to staff attitudes and practices which affected women applicants who had become homeless having left violent men. The focus of this study changes for Chapter 8 to include the opinions and voices of women who

have been rehoused by associations. Their perspectives provide the final piece of the jigsaw in evaluating the nature of the housing management services provided by associations.

CHAPTER 8 WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF FINDING A NEW HOME: TEMPORARY HOUSING, INTERVIEWS AND OFFERS, A NEW HOME AND SAFETY

INTRODUCTION

The final part of this study concentrated on the views of women who had been rehoused by associations because of domestic violence. The research sought to discover what they thought about the services they had received from temporary and permanent providers of accommodation and their opinions about their new homes and the areas in which they were now living. The first part of the Chapter considers the nature of the temporary living arrangements which some women made when they left their former home. It also looks at the position of women who were not able to do this.

The women interviewed for this research experienced practical and emotional difficulties in trying to obtain help. Certain routes to help and accommodation (temporary and permanent) were blocked through lack of income, language differences, distance between family members, family size, the age and sex of children, ill health and disability. Women's fear of their ex-partners (or their daughter's abuser in one instance), their desire to maintain ties with their wider family if possible and their own personal beliefs and values, self esteem and self confidence influenced their actions and choices. The importance of these influences varied between the different women in this research because of their personal circumstances and the nature of the responses which they encountered from staff in organisations which they approached for help.

The Chapter then moves on to consider women's views about how they were interviewed by housing staff and the offers of accommodation which were made to them by the local authority and housing associations. Women's views about the staff they encountered and the quality of the help they received were considered in

different ways depending on the organisation involved. As survivors of violence who had taken the very serious step of leaving home, the help they received from the refuges should have been supportive and positive. Unfortunately, the women who had used the refuges spoke very negatively of the service provided by staff and the physical conditions they endured. Their views of the local authority and housing association staff they dealt with were also mixed. They might have been treated as “customers” or women with rights (given that they were high priority nominees of the local authority). In practice, the supplicant role emerged again in various ways and for different reasons.

Finally, women's attitudes to their new home and views about whether they now felt safe were considered. Their personal safety and that of their children was their predominant concern. Whilst a number of women were very positive about their new homes, they all feared being found by ex-partners. The ways in which they protected themselves, and the role of housing management staff in this, were explored.

THE WOMEN WHO PARTICIPATED

Eight women were interviewed. Seven were rehoused by housing associations and one by the local authority. Seven women had left violent partners or ex-partners. One woman had moved to get away from a former male neighbour who had sexually abused her daughter. She had lived in fear of being assaulted by him. Further details about them are included in Table 7. All the names used in this Chapter have been changed (along with the omission of certain details which might identify the women who participated in this study).

The woman	Former tenure	Former living arrangements	Age	Ethnic origin	Ethnic origin of children (of violent ex-partner)
Lily*	OO	By self	Late 40s	White	White(4)
Iris*	HA	By self	20s	White	Black (1)
Rose*	LA	By self	20s	White	Not applicable
Zahrah	OO	With partner	20s	Asian	No children
Raihaanah	OO	With partner	Late 30s	Asian	Asian (5)
Fleur*	HA	By self	30s	White	Black (2)
Zaahirah	OO	With partner	20s	Asian	Asian (2)
Belle	PR	By self	20s	White	Black (1)

Lily* = Her children were 16 to 30 years old. Her daughter lived with her and two sons lived with their father. Her oldest son lived independently.

Iris* = She also had one young child with a “new” white partner

Rose* = Her daughter was sexually abused by a male neighbour

Fleur* = She also had one young child with a “new” white partner

Table 7 The women who were interviewed

Research over the last thirty years on domestic violence has revealed the wide range of relationships in which violence may feature, the different kinds of violence which can occur and its effects, short-term and long-term. Staff comments in Chapters 6 and 7 revealed that the information provided by research has not necessarily reached housing organisations. Nevertheless, it has been reflected in the Code of Guidance to the homeless legislation: authorities are expected to consider different forms of violence within the generic term “domestic violence” including a range of physical violence and threats and intimidation (DoE Code of Guidance, March 1997, s13.10). The Code also points out the wide range of relationships which may be affected by violence (s13.9).

This diversity of experience was reflected in this study. The Asian women had been living with husbands (Raihaanah and Zahrah in a nuclear family and Zaahirah in an extended family). The white women had all been living as lone parent families with their children. Their circumstances varied. Iris and Fleur had been rehoused before because of violence. They had lived safely and independently for many years until their whereabouts had been revealed by chance to their ex-partners. A relative revealed Fleur's location. An association allocated a property nearby to the ex-partner's mother, and exposed Iris to further violence from him and the rest of his family. Belle had left her home because it was the only way that she could end the relationship with her ex-partner, who did not live with her. Lily also had found her former husband (who lived nearby) to be too intimidating and frightening. Rose had to move away because of a neighbour who had sexually abused her daughter. Her experience was the most obvious example of a woman moving to protect her children. This also had been important for the other women in this study. All expressed concern about the potentially damaging effects on their children of witnessing violence. This was not surprising. Early research identified the frequency with which children might see violent attacks against their mother (Dobash and Dobash, 1979, pp154-156). More recent research (Abrahams, 1994; Morley and Mullender, 1994; Hester, Pearson and Harwin, 2000; McGee, forthcoming) has shown the wide-ranging but variable impact of violence on children (depending on personality, age, gender, ethnicity and the support network which the child has). The possible link between domestic violence and child abuse is also becoming more recognised by child care professionals (Mullender and Morley, 1994; Mullender, 1996, pp144-150; Local Government Association, 1998). Belle and Iris had left because they feared that their young sons would grow up and copy their fathers' violent behaviour if they stayed. One of Lily's sons had become "uncontrollable". Boys are widely believed to be directly influenced in this way although such a strong link has not been substantiated by research (see the discussion in Mullender, 1996, pp 40-42).

THE NEED FOR TEMPORARY ARRANGEMENTS

Immediate protection from the man's violence and the need for temporary accommodation have been the most important requirements of women when they have left their violent partners (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Bull, 1993; Charles with Jones, 1993; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). Many women have left their homes suddenly because they fear for their lives and/or the safety of their children (Bull, 1993; Rai and Thiara, 1997). Some have returned after a few days or weeks for a variety of reasons which can include to give their partner "another chance," "for the sake of the children" or because the prospect of obtaining permanent alternative accommodation has looked remote (see British Medical Association, 1998, pp 16-19 for a discussion of reasons). Women have used a wide variety of temporary accommodation: the homes of family or friends, bed and breakfast hotels, hostels and refuges (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Bull, 1993; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993; Mama, 1989; Welsh Women's Aid, 1989). Women who have relied on the local authority's help have been more likely to be council tenants with few resources at their disposal - that is, they have been working class women (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993).

The women in this research were no exception to this general picture. Acute fear of their violent partner/ex-partner was a significant influence in their deciding to leave suddenly, usually after being assaulted. Not all the women were able to leave like this as can be seen in Table 8. Women found immediate temporary safety (or the hope of safety) in a number of ways: staying put (but taking practical steps to find alternative accommodation), moving in with family members, moving into refuges or hostels or a combination of these. Three women moved to a completely different part of the country to escape their ex-partners. The possibility of women making alternative arrangements depended on their income, the understanding and resources of other family members and/or the availability of refuge/hostel accommodation.

Woman	Temp accom 1	Temp accom 2	Temp accom 3	Perm accom
Lily*	Son's house			HA flat
Iris	Parents			HA house
Rose	None used			HA house
Zahrah	Aunt and Uncle	Black Women's Hostel		LA house
Raihaanah	None used			HA house
Fleur*	Women's Aid Refuge x2	Second stage house		HA house
Zaahirah*	Hostel	Black Women's Hostel	Women's Hostel	HA house
Belle*	Black women's Hostel			HA house

NB * indicates that the woman moved across country

Table 8 Temporary accommodation used

Having to "stay put"

Most of the housing research which has been undertaken in relation to domestic violence has concentrated on the experiences of homeless women who have left violent partners/ex-partners (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Pahl, 1985a; Charles with Jones, 1993; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). This is important because women in this situation are very vulnerable but there are many women who decide to make arrangements to leave or end the relationship which do not involve becoming homeless. Mama (1989) found that many of the black and Asian women whom she interviewed had tried to resolve their difficulties themselves or received inadequate help from organisations, forcing them back on to their own resources. Middle class women may have more money and family resources immediately available to them to avoid homelessness. Three women in this study had "stayed

put” because they had no help from their families or because the temporary homeless accommodation available in the city could not be used.

There were a number of reasons why women might not have any help from members of their wider family. There might be differences of view about the importance of maintaining the relationship or women might be blamed for the violence. Some family members might live too far away to be helpful (for example, in another country) and women might not have sufficient money to pay to travel to them. In this study, Asian women mentioned these difficulties. For example, Raihaanah had been regularly and violently assaulted by her husband over nearly twenty years of marriage. She had stayed because as a Muslim she wanted to keep the family together and she believed that her parents would blame her for the violence. She would have preferred to return to the country of her childhood, where her parents lived, but had no money for the air tickets. Neither did she have any of her own family members in this country.

Some women also faced difficulties in obtaining hostel accommodation - related to language differences, the age and gender of children, physical disability and mental ill health. These issues affected Asian and white women in this study. Raihaanah had found that there was insufficient space available in the local refuges for her family and her seventeen year old son was too old to be accepted within a refuge setting. A disabled white woman (who was not interviewed but whose circumstances were mentioned by a Housing Officer) was unable to leave her abusive husband/carer because there was no suitable local temporary accommodation available. The home of a local trusted friend was used as a “care-of” address for contact between herself and association staff. Lily, the older white woman interviewed for this study, was physically ill and mentally close to a breakdown when her son persuaded her to leave her home and live with his family. It would have been practically impossible for her to have lived in a refuge or hostel because of her very poor health and her need at that time for intensive care and support.

Staying with other members of the family

Dobash and Dobash (1979) had felt that women were likely to approach their own family members (especially their parents) for help. They recognised that in doing so women had to overcome feelings of shame, reticence and self blame. Parents tended to be approached initially to talk about the violence privately. As the violence became worse, the Dobashes found that women were more likely to approach their parents for temporary accommodation. They had found that parents were more likely than anyone else to be helpful though if the daughter moved back to their home it was on a temporary basis.

In this study, the women who were interviewed had not always approached their parents. Whether they did or not seemed to depend on the woman's judgement of what members of their family might think about marriage/relationships and/or the family's reputation if the violence became public knowledge. Women felt that family members' attitudes to their husband/partner and his violence were mediated through views of what was acceptable behaviour for men in personal relationships with women and/or their views about the position or status of their daughter in relation to the marriage/relationship. Their view hinged on where they thought that the family's obligations lay. The woman (their daughter, mother or niece) might be regarded as part of her birth family or part of her partner's or she might be seen as independent from both. Sometimes the views held by parents or other relatives who were approached were framed by religious beliefs (Muslim or Christian) but more usually they were not. The women in this study knew what to expect and only approached family members when they felt that they had a reasonable prospect of receiving help.

Dobash and Dobash (1979) found that parents might be ambivalent about their role although this was not apparent in the experience of three women in this study. Iris, Lily and Zahrah were offered a temporary alternative home by other members of their family - their mother and father, their adult son from a previous marriage and their aunt and uncle. Zahrah's aunt and uncle actively tried to intervene because the success (or otherwise) of the marriage was a matter of the family's reputation. They

did not want their niece to move to a refuge because of the damage to her reputation (and that of her family) that this would entail. Iris's parents took their daughter's side. They were practising Catholics and were very critical of her ex-partner and his violent behaviour. They would have contacted the police if he had attempted to threaten or attack her whilst she was living in their home. Lily's son had left home when he was fifteen. He could not tolerate his step-father's behaviour and had never accepted his authority. He had only kept in touch with his mother during the intervening fifteen years. Offering her active help did not create a situation of divided loyalty for him.

Moving into the home of another family member led to overcrowding so none of them expected the arrangement to be permanent although all were willing to accommodate their daughter/mother/niece for as long as it took her to make alternative arrangements. Other help was also provided although the reasons for this varied. The white women's relatives presumed that they should live independently and actively helped with this. For example, Iris's mother accompanied her on visits to housing offices and to view offers of accommodation. Zahrah's aunt and uncle based their help on a different premise - that a reconciliation was desirable. They went to Pakistan to discuss the situation with the parents of her husband but were unsuccessful. Her husband had no interest in his wife and moved in with a white woman he had been seeing before the arranged marriage. These differences of approach are indicative of particular philosophies (Muslim, Christian and liberal individualism) which regard the relationship between the individual and the family differently (see Imam, 1994 , pp 188-199 for a discussion of this from a Muslim perspective).

Four women in this study received minimal help from members of their own wider family (Rose, Raihaanah, Fleur and Zaahirah). Raihaanah, Fleur and Zaahirah never asked members of their wider family (including their parents) for help because they did not expect to get any. Fleur did not want to involve her family. Raihaanah and Zaahirah's parents lived in Pakistan and both women believed they would not be sympathetic towards them but would hold them responsible for the violence. Rose

did not ask for help because she felt that she did not need any. Not telling family members about the violence could bring other difficulties. Fleur's sister met her violent ex-partner by chance and told him where she was living without realising how dangerous that was.

Staying in refuges and hostels

The main purpose of Women's Aid and black women's refuges is to provide safe temporary accommodation to women leaving violence. Staff are expected to help women while they live there in a way which will support women's own decisions. Women are given a room of their own but are expected to share facilities with the other residents. They are also responsible for keeping the refuge clean. This approach was designed to encourage women's self confidence and ability to find information so that they might better be able to deal independently with problems once they moved out (Dobash and Dobash, 1992). Women may use the time in the refuge to decide what they want to do next - return home, apply for housing from the local authority and/or housing associations or move to another town/city for their own safety (Bull, 1993; Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Rai and Thiara, 1997). Because facilities are shared, a woman also has the opportunity of meeting other women who have experienced violence (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Bull, 1993; Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993; Rai and Thiara, 1997). This might help her to begin to overcome the anxiety, isolation and/or self-blame which she may have felt in her relationship with her violent ex-partner.

In research to date, many women interviewed had lived in refuges which they had particularly valued because they provided a safe temporary home (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Charles with Jones, 1993; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). Black women living in black women's refuges had generally been very positive about the acknowledgement and validation by staff of language and cultural differences between women who lived there (Rai and Thiara, 1997) although a broader picture was provided by Mama (1989) of some of the tensions implicit within the idea of black refuges and the relationship between them and longer-

existing white or mixed refuges (see Dhillon-Kashyap, 1994 for a broader positive perspective). Four women were interviewed in this study who had lived in a Women's Aid refuge or a black women's refuge. One had also lived in a women's hostel. Their stays occurred between 1991 and 1998 and lasted between four and twelve months. Zaahirah had lived at the black women's refuge for one month before being moved for her own safety to a women's hostel where she lived for a further four months before being rehoused. All the women, except for Fleur, had only used the refuge once.

Their own personal safety and that of their children was the feature of living in refuges which the women in this study valued above everything else. Fleur, Belle and Zahrah believed that they could not be found because of the secret location of the refuges. This was not always the case. Zaahirah's husband used his professional contacts to find her and she was immediately moved to another hostel. Belle (who had stayed in the black women's refuge) spoke of the mutual support which was possible between women in the refuge (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Bull, 1993; Charles with Jones, 1993; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). She spoke retrospectively, after moving to her new home.

"It's hard moving from a hostel environment into a house because with stress I don't sleep much. I'm up at 3 in the morning having a fag and pacing around whereas when you're in the hostel you can go and sit in someone else's room. Someone else is awake...like I'd be asleep and one of the girls would knock on my door "Come in." "I can't sleep." "Oh it's alright. Just sit there." Next night I can't sleep so I sit on the end of her bed or if she's feeling really lonely she'll just get all her kids and we'll all sleep in bed together even if there's not enough room but you're just *there* for each other..."

Nevertheless, it was clear from the research to date that there had been potential/actual tensions implicit in service provision in refuges although these had not been emphasised. Malos and Hague with Dear (1993) interviewed two women who refused to use refuges because of the "poor reputation which some refuges have" (p60). Rai and Thiara (1997) interviewed black women who had been put off using refuges because they thought that they were only for white women, were

overcrowded or would mean living in very poor conditions (pp16-17). The extent of sharing within refuges was problematic - with children finding it difficult to get space to do homework quietly and women getting frustrated at having to clean up after others with different standards (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993; Rai and Thiara, 1997). Another possible tension was the extent to which women had been helped during their stay (Bull, 1993) and this included whether different women's language, cultural and religious needs had been recognised and supported by staff (Mama, 1989). Finally, a number of black and Asian refuges had been set up by "community leaders," the intention being to reintegrate women back into the family (Sahgal and Yuval-Davis, 1992, p21). This could present serious difficulties for the women who used them. Were any of these potential tensions or criticisms made by women in this study?

All four women were very critical of the facilities, services and cleanliness in the refuges. It was clear that some women did more than others. It seemed that despite efforts made, the lowest common denominator prevailed and the staff seemed unwilling to change this during the time in which women in this study used the refuges. The women who were interviewed equated the cleanliness and quality of the refuge with others' views about their personal worth. They also thought that it was unlikely that middle class women would tolerate such an environment. Belle felt that the underlying attitude of those who provided refuges was that women "like her" deserved no better. Similar comments were made by Fleur about the Women's Aid refuge. She had felt "Is this all we're good for? Is this all we can expect?" They had only stayed because there was no alternative for them, which would be entirely safe.

Belle's immediate reaction on being asked what she thought of the refuge was

"They're disgusting. Whoever provides them. Really. It makes you feel - because they're so disgusting - they *are* disgusting. It makes you feel that you're being punished for the choice you've made. I mean, the frustration I went through over those months and anger because I felt I'd made the right choice. But because of the circumstances you're put in, it's as if you're some sort of ...um...Oh, what's the word I'm looking for?... Outcast of society. I mean, look at me. I'm in this place and the people - they're trying to make a token effort saying "We'll provide this place. But

they're so disgusting that - what do they think? Because I'm suffering domestic violence that I'm some sort of depraved person? I'm the sort of person who doesn't deserve...? I think it must make it so much harder...Well, it made it so much harder for me. You're sort of there and it's horrible..."

Fleur, who stayed in the Women's Aid refuge in 1995 to 1996, spoke of women who had returned to violent partners rather than live in "dirty" conditions with staff "who didn't like their jobs." She had found it very difficult indeed to share a bedroom with her two teenage sons. This had been exacerbated by an ongoing acute shortage of sheets available to residents during the period of her stay. She had also been disturbed to find some women and their children sleeping on the floors. Belle, Zahrah and Zaahirah commented similarly for stays in the black women's refuge which spanned the period 1991 to 1998. Belle described conflict between residents and staff over rubbish and cleaning rotas for the communal areas, with residents' views being over-ridden. The three women separately reported that the cookers in the shared kitchen were damaged - with knobs missing, some faulty burners and an "unusable" oven. Pots and pans were dirty or missing and personal food and equipment was often stolen.

By the mid 1990s, the refuges in this city had been long-established and had secure funding for maintenance and management. In theory, the main difficulties for residents should have been finding somewhere permanent to live. However, this had not been the case for the women who were interviewed. Refuge staff were viewed critically - in sharp contrast to previous research (for example, see Rai and Thiara, 1997). Zahrah, Belle and Zaahirah, all of whom had lived in the black women's refuge, variously described staff as "useless," "unmotivated" and "authoritarian." Fleur, who had stayed in the Women's Aid refuge, felt that women "were left to their own devices." Only Zahrah (who could speak no English at the time) provided a very positive example of help from a refuge worker which involved learning how to travel on the local buses.

Two specific areas of concern could be identified. Firstly, women felt that there was no support provided to women. Fleur commented that one woman in the Women's

Aid refuge had been left crying in the living room for some time. Other women eventually felt they had to approach staff (who had remained in the staff room throughout) to ask them if they would help. She remarked that women were never left like this when she had lived there before. Belle remarked that she had spent a lot of time by herself when she was in the black women's refuge. She had used this to reflect on what had happened and what she was going to do. She remarked that refuge staff had not helped in that process.

The second criticism was that staff appeared to provide little or no help with housing applications.

Fleur commented that staff did not help women with their housing applications when she lived in the Women's Aid refuge unless a woman asked them to. Even then, there was no advice about particular areas of the city. She felt that some women had little or no confidence and would not ask for help (even though they needed it), believing that they were "imposing on staff." She thought that more help had been given when she had stayed in the refuge before. Belle received no help with her housing applications from the staff in the black women's refuge. She recalled that even though she had completed applications to associations when she first moved to the refuge, six weeks later she discovered that none had been received by the associations concerned. She found all of them on the desk of the refuge worker (who had to complete particular sections before sending them off). Apparently, the refuge worker's explanation was that she had not got round to doing them. Belle recalled that she had been very angry at discovering this and had told the refuge worker

"It may be a job to you but it's *my life*."

She had decided to telephone and visit association offices by herself after that. Zahrah (who lived in this refuge before Belle) was also critical of the help she received. One example she cited was that letters giving her an appointment to see the local authority Housing Manager (which were received via a post office address)

were given to her too late to attend because staff collected post erratically. On one occasion, a refuge worker forgot that she had arranged to drive Zahrah to an interview at 9.00am to act as an interpreter for her. The refuge worker arrived at work at 9.10am - too late for them to get there in time.

One of the potential difficulties with this approach to organising advice and building women's confidence emerges clearly with these examples. If assistance from refuge staff was dependent on women asking, a number of women who needed help would not receive it. They might lack the confidence to ask (as Fleur identified) or as Rai and Thiara (1997) noted, older women might feel embarrassed to ask younger women for help. Some women would make a judgement about how much help they would receive and its usefulness. They might decide not to ask staff or, like Belle, decide to do without staff help because they had been let down. This seemed to be more akin to the supplicant role identified in relation to housing management practice in the local authority and housing associations. Zaahinah's experience illustrated this in another way. She was moved to another women's hostel from the black women's refuge and was therefore in a position to compare them. She described the black women's refuge worker whom she had dealt with as "useless." The staff in the women's hostel were, in contrast, described as very helpful and friendly and always willing to get an interpreter to assist. Some staff went with her to local offices and shops. In this directly-run association hostel, each woman was helped to apply for housing from a range of possible landlords. Hostel support workers checked progress regularly with women and additional help was provided if necessary. This approach was nearer to the rights-based style where staff expertise was built up, recognised and actively made available to residents.

Zaahinah's experience and that of the other women who stayed in refuges illustrated what was important to them in the services provided by refuges/hostels. Having left violence, they needed a secure, clean and supportive environment and help from trusted staff, preferably in their own first language. The refuges had managers and a hierarchical staff structure although it appeared that the crux of the problem experienced by the women in this study was the attitudes towards them - either

implicit or explicit - and the standard of the services provided as an apparent consequence of these. This is different from the usual account of the work of refuges (see Charles, 2000, pp135-155 as an example). The problems identified by women reflected poor management generally but in particular an inadequate way of providing advice and help. Interviews with staff in both refuges later in the research revealed that the comments made by the women in this study were justified. One refuge was subsequently transferred to another managing agent and the existing staff were made redundant. The other changed its service provision (employing staff to clean and do the laundry) although other difficulties remained.

HOUSING INTERVIEWS

Women who have become homeless because of violent men have sometimes been interviewed insensitively by local authority housing staff despite the recommendations in the Code of Guidance (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). A number of local authorities have adopted policy guidelines on how to handle these situations appropriately, including the local authority in this study. Research showed that there can be differences between the intention of formal organisational policy and the actual practice of front line staff (Lipsky, 1980) . This has affected homeless services for women leaving violent men (Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). The women in this study made comments which illustrated divergence between local authority policy and practice and differences between individual local authority staff. However, these were not the main focus of their comments.

All but Rose had been interviewed and assessed by a central homeless team staff member. They were generally satisfied with these. Most comment was made about the interviews they had subsequently when their papers had been forwarded to housing management staff in the local authority Neighbourhood Offices or staff in housing associations. Formal housing waiting lists might prioritise domestic violence but women identified issues which hinted at a more complicated reality.

They identified three features of the process which were important to them: the extent to which women were personally able to push their applications forward; whether staff were sympathetic or indifferent to their situation and whether women should provide "proof" of the violence. All of these might affect the possibility of their being rehoused.

Pushing their applications to the forefront of staff attention

Research has shown that obtaining help from agencies has been far from straightforward for women who have left violent partners/ex-partners. It has often involved contacting a large number of different organisations before appropriate help has been found (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Homer, Leonard and Taylor, 1984; Dominy and Radford, 1996; Rai and Thiara, 1997). All of the women except Zahrah had applied to the local authority and housing associations to increase their chances of being rehoused quickly. Fleur, Belle, Rose and Iris dealt with housing staff themselves. Lily, Raihaanah, Zahrah and Zaahirah were assisted by an advice worker or support worker (from the local authority, an advice centre, the black women's refuge and the women's hostel respectively). Generally, women in this study were reluctant to push themselves forward over and above completing housing applications and being interviewed by staff. This was because their confidence was at a low ebb due to their past experience of violence (Mullender, 1996, pp 23-26; British Medical Association, 1998, pp 30-32). Only Belle thought that it was important for women to draw the attention of staff to their own housing applications, by telephoning and visiting the Office. She thought that they might otherwise be overlooked, given the numbers of applications which staff were dealing with.

"They're all bits of paper with a name on and they don't know really what's going on unless you are there, jumping up and down."

Women in this study did not find finding out what progress had been made with their housing applications to be an easy task. Having to tell people about the violence they had experienced was a personal strain, especially when the likely response was unpredictable and might be critical (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981;

Homer, Leonard and Taylor, 1984; Mama, 1989; Kirkwood, 1993; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). The amount of emotional energy used up in following up housing applications was described by several women. Belle and Fleur's comments illustrated two different approaches and the reasons for them. Both of them used fear of possible violence to explain whether they would (or would not) approach staff. This revealed their past experience and the effort they had to make to overcome it. Belle commented

"One thing I found very hard is that you need to mention all the time that you've suffered domestic violence and then you feel as if you're harping on about it...You feel like you need to be going "Hello, I've been abused, I've been *abused*." You need to mention it every time...You might seem like you're being a nuisance and that's a hard thing because you've been conditioned into not wanting to bother anybody and to be quiet. You know, don't disturb, don't rock the boat - but **rock** the boat. You know these are people that aren't going to turn around and beat you up because you've got on their nerves..."

Fleur found it too upsetting to recount the details of the violence which she had experienced. She had been relieved that staff had not wanted too many details. She also did not want to put herself in the position of "opening up" about the details and then "getting kicked" (that is, being criticised) by staff. Fleur had already experienced hurtful criticism from her present partner. He had said that the violence she had experienced reflected poorly on *her* rather than her former partner, as she should have left him sooner than she had done.

Although Belle had probably benefited from this approach in relation to Tulip HA's allocation system(see Chapter 6), women who regularly sent in "support letters" and/or often visited the Offices of any of the associations, ran the risk of being considered negatively by staff. They took up time, which staff might feel could be better used on other applicants. They might also be seen as trying to challenge the supplicant role which staff by implication attributed to applicants (see Lambert, Blackaby and Paris, 1978). For example, the Housing Services Officer in Foxglove HA (in Chapter 7) characterised such women as "very vocal" and adept at obtaining "support" being "all too happy to go everywhere to get supporting letters because they know the system." The SHO in Tulip HA would not consider a woman who had

fled violence and who had been waiting over a year. The woman had numerous "support letters" and correspondence in her file but the SHO did not think the woman was telling her the truth (Chapter 7).

How sympathetic were staff?

The nature of the personal approach of staff who interviewed women was important, given the difficulty which women might have in talking about violence. Women's experiences of housing association management staff were mixed - an illustration of the varying degrees of pressure on staff in terms of time available as well as their personal outlook, experience and/or training on the subject. At one end of the scale, Belle believed that she had talked to a member of Tulip HA staff who was sympathetic, because she received an offer of the last vacant house on the housing scheme she had applied for. She had only been interviewed four days previously and felt that she must have convinced the Housing Officer how desperate she was to leave the black women's refuge. It is worth recalling here the tendency in merit schemes to allocate "high demand" vacancies to applicants whose circumstances have been seen to be the most immediately urgent (Niner and Karn, 1985). Belle's approach would have helped to keep her circumstances in the minds of Tulip HA staff. This association allocated property after considering *all* the highly pointed applications, in a similar way to merit schemes (see Chapter 7).

At the other end of the scale, Lily, Fleur and Iris felt that they had often been treated very impersonally. Staff appeared to be more concerned about application form details and whether they had a nomination, rather than how they were as people. Lily remarked that even though she had homeless priority one local authority Housing Manager who interviewed her "...didn't seem as though she cared one bit really." This view was reinforced by the poor housing offers she received from that Office. She "despaired" of the local authority. Sometimes it was difficult for women to accurately judge staff especially when they had a sympathetic personal approach but actually did things which were unhelpful. For example, Raihaanah believed that the staff in Tulip HA were "very nice people." They had always been

courteous and helpful when she had telephoned, even the staff who did not speak Punjabi! She felt that they had given her a new life through the offer of housing which she had received. Similarly, Lily praised the staff of Bluebell HA. Each time she had called in to check progress she had ended up in floods of tears. Staff had always responded sensitively. The irony was that both Raihaanah and Lily needed the help of skilled advocates to deal with what staff in these associations *actually did (or did not do)* in relation to their housing applications. Raihaanah was first offered a very poor property in a very unsafe part of the city. She said that she had been so desperate she would have accepted it but her advice worker/interpreter insisted that she refuse it as unsuitable. Immediately, a second offer was made to her of a newly-built four bedroomed house. She attributed this change of fortune to Allah.

“In our religion, it’s like God maybe shuts one door for you and opens a hundred more for you and I thought that was true then.”

A more earthly interpretation would place the emphasis more on the role of the advice worker/interpreter! Lily also had difficulties, although she did not recognise them as such. Bluebell HA staff expected *her* to sort out a muddle which had occurred in the local authority about her nomination to the association. This was despite the fact that she had already asked the local authority Neighbourhood Office (several times), it had been “lost” (several times) and she was clearly emotionally very vulnerable and likely to become increasingly upset in dealing with this. Eventually, she asked her support worker to help. It would not have been unusual in the past for a Bluebell HA staff member to obtain the nomination but this was one area of work where the staff had shifted responsibility to applicants to save time.

The housing management staff whom women saw were part of a wider housing management service in associations which was being provided in increasingly pressurised and cost-conscious circumstances. Women were most likely to see the effects of this in interviews. If staff were under pressure, they would be unlikely to spend more time talking to them than was absolutely necessary to do their job. They would need sufficient detail from the application and interview to write an

assessment report and would expect women to obtain a nomination from the local authority. They would be unlikely to offer support and/or advice unless they found themselves with someone who was distressed (like Lily) or determined (like Belle). Women in this study interpreted the more usual approach of staff personally, as hurtful indifference.

Additional corroboration or “proof”

The local authority in this study did not expect women to provide external corroboration of the violence to obtain priority for rehousing. It was clear from previous research that excessive demands for “proof” had been used by authorities in some parts of the country to reduce the numbers of women accepted as priority homeless (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). The homeless Code of Guidance did not recommend that “proof” be sought in relation to domestic violence and the DETR’s guide on relationship breakdown was non committal - although citing two examples from practice where “proof” was not sought (DETR, 1999) Nevertheless, two out of the three case study associations did expect women to provide documentation or “support letters,” whether or not they had been nominated to them by the local authority. This was a reflection of the degree of independence with which associations operated and the limitations of the local authority’s influence in this sphere, despite Home Office/Welsh Office guidance about inter-agency working (1995). At the centre of the issue of “proof” lay the question of whether women could be trusted to tell the truth about what had happened to them. Not being believed might increase a woman’s embarrassment, shame and sense of being stigmatised. Yet, the women in this study who commented on this (Belle, Lily and Rose) did not emphasise these aspects of the issue. They thought that being asked for extra information would help them, but they did not think of the implications for women who could not provide any.

Lily felt that housing management staff would have made much better quality offers of accommodation to her if they had received letters from her psychiatrist, social worker and solicitor about the violence and her subsequent ill-health. This was

actually doubtful given the pressure which staff were under to relet voids, though individual Housing Managers might exercise a degree of discretion in relation to the quality of offers made (see Chapter 4). Belle and Rose felt that asking for corroboration was a protection against abuse of the system. Rose, whose daughter had been sexually abused, had been asked by Tulip HA to provide a letter from the Social Services Department. She thought that this was fair.

“It’s not a nice thing to say but people would - so they could get moved.”

Belle's view that “proof” of violence should be asked for was largely the result of her annoyance with a neighbour whom she said had lied about domestic violence to get a new house. The neighbour had been rehoused quickly, ahead of women in the refuge (whom she knew had told the truth, but who were still waiting to be rehoused). Belle herself had survived violence for a long time, without telling anyone because she was too frightened of possible repercussions from her partner. Following a serious assault and threats, she had rung the police who had visited her but not been very helpful (making racist comments about her partner and being unsympathetic towards her). She had felt that calling them again was not worth the risk of her partner finding out. She had secretly planned to leave and had left suddenly. Nevertheless, the call to the police had been recorded and she was able to use it as “proof” of what she had experienced. Many women, however, do not get that far. Mooney's (1993) study in London found that 45% of the women who had experienced domestic violence over the previous twelve months had told no-one about it. It was clear that some women would find it straightforward to provide letters, copies of injunctions/exclusion orders, “support letters” and so on but some would not. The comments of women in this study illustrate some of the difficulties of asking/not asking for corroboration. Asking for “proof” might reinforce women's position as supplicants. Not asking for “proof” might lead to perceived unfairness in the waiting list system.

HOUSING OFFERS

All the women in this study (with the exception of Rose) were assessed as statutory homeless by the local authority and had been nominated to housing associations of their choice. The policy in this authority was that one reasonable offer of accommodation would be made to applicants who were statutory homeless. If the property was refused, and staff felt that the offer was "reasonable," the application would be reassessed as not homeless (that is, it would be downgraded such that the woman would be unlikely to be rehoused). This complied with the authority's minimum obligation in the Housing Act 1996. It expected associations to act similarly. Homeless people were likely to receive fewer offers and far less "choice" with this approach than other housing register applicants (see Niner, 1989, p 73-74 for a discussion of this practice). A number of issues emerged in relation to allocations practice - the nature of offers made, their impact on women and the nature of their housing "choices."

Offers of accommodation

Although the policy stated one offer only, council staff could make more than one offer if applicants could convince housing staff that the original offer was "unreasonable." The most usual reason women gave for refusing offers was the very poor state of repair of the property which was offered to them. Table 9 shows the number of offers of accommodation which women in this study refused.

Name of woman	LA offers turned down	HA offers turned down	Rehoused by LA or HA?	Time it took
Lily	7	0	HA	12mths
Iris*	N/A	0	HA	5mths
Rose*	N/A	0	HA	9mths
Zahrah*	1	N/A	LA	12mths
Raihaanah	0	1	HA	4mths
Fleur	4	1	HA	18+mths
Zaahirah	1	0	HA	5mths
Belle	0	2	HA	8mths

Table 9 Offers of accommodation which were refused

Rose* applied initially because of the poor condition of her council home. She did not apply to the council for a transfer. She discovered after she applied that her daughter had been abused by a neighbour and she was rehoused because of that.

Iris* only wanted to be rehoused by Foxglove HA.

Zahrah* did not apply to associations because they did not have single person property in the area she wanted to live in.

This local authority's policy on domestic violence might have left the impression that women received a sympathetic service. The practice - especially the allocation practice - and the policy needed to be considered separately. It is not possible to know how many vacancies there were in the different local authority Neighbourhood Offices which were in a reasonable condition with the appropriate number of bedrooms. Whatever the numbers, women in this study had been exclusively offered poor property by local authority Offices (see Prescott-Clarke, Clemens and Park, 1994, pp96-97 for similar findings for homeless applicants in other local authorities). All of these had been turned down apart from the property which Zahrah accepted because it was large and near her relatives' home. (Housing associations had not generally made offers like this - apart from two examples

involving Tulip HA). It is possible that homeless women were offered accommodation which was in serious disrepair because staff thought that they would accept it, as they were regarded as "desperate." Alternatively, offering poor quality housing could be used as a test of women whose "stories" were regarded as "doubtful." The intention was to push the woman into providing more information about her circumstances to show how "unreasonable" a particular offer was (see the Contract Manager's comments in Chapter 4). This would account for the experience of Fleur and Lily. Using homeless applicants to fill otherwise unlettable voids might be justified by negatively stereotyping women who had left violence as potentially "undeserving" or "queue-jumpers." Women in this study had not directly encountered attitudes like this although other women in similar circumstances have (Binney, Harkell and Nixon, 1981; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993, p50).

The impact on women of offers of poor property

These properties made a strong impression on the women who went to view them as potential new homes, even though they were later withdrawn as "unreasonable" by the local authority. They were shocked at the condition of houses they were being expected to consider. Fleur, Lily and Belle wondered if they were a reflection of how local authority and housing association staff thought of them. Worse still, it had made them question whether they had been right to leave when it looked as if they would only be offered unfit houses in particular areas. For example, Zaahirah had two children both of whom were under three years old. She was offered a boarded-up, semi-derelict local authority house in a street which formed part of a pre-clearance area. Many of the houses were boarded up and the street was littered with bricks, rubble and wooden planks, where vandals had broken into property. Lily felt forced to turn down seven council offers. She had a medical history which included five breakdowns. The council houses which were offered

"...were appalling...They were trying to put me in houses that were boarded up on each side. Ten feet high of rubbish. You couldn't get round the back. Windows smashed and houses unoccupied in the street. I would have been a nervous wreck

after one night... I felt as if I had to make up an excuse to justify it [turning properties down] and I should not have had to justify myself.”

An equally important reason for turning property down was personal safety. Fleur refused a house in an area which she discovered had a reputation for racist attacks. Zahrah turned down a council flat in a converted house where two other male tenants lived, because she would not have felt safe living there by herself. It was clear that constructing a domestic violence policy in the local authority which did not include advice/instructions about the nature of the housing offers to be made was, at best, only a partial response to women trying to leave violent partners/ex-partners.

The nature of women's decisions

Researchers have spoken of homeless applicants “making choices” in relation to social rented housing and have identified the apparent paradox of applicants seeming to “choose” poor areas (English, 1975 and 1979; Clapham and Kintrea, 1984 and 1986). Whether the decisions made by women in this study may be called “choices,” given the condition of the property and women’s fears about being reassessed, is very doubtful. After she turned down four council houses, Fleur had been told by council staff that her application would be reassessed, if she refused the next offer. She subsequently received two at the same time (one improved and one newly built house) from two different associations. Nevertheless, she was very clear that she was not making a “choice” between the two: the threat of her application being downgraded, forced her to accept one of the properties. For Belle, the pressure to accept an association home derived from the desperation and frustration of having spent eight months in a refuge. For Raihaanah, the absolute priority was getting away from the danger of having to continue to live with a violent husband. For Iris, the constraint was the rules of the Housing Act 1996. If the local authority had offered her a “reasonable” property before Foxglove HA, she would have been obliged to take it, even though she only wanted a Foxglove HA house.

The priorities of housing management staff were to fill vacancies quickly. The priorities of women were to find a safe, well repaired home. These priorities sometimes contradicted one another. The quality of the local authority stock was very variable and local authority staff had to decide who should be offered the worst property. Poor quality council vacancies were likely to be offered to applicants who were less likely to refuse them because staff needed to minimize rent loss from vacant property (Henderson and Karn, 1987). Associations' position in the housing system and their relative size were different. Research in the past has commented that housing associations have not housed many homeless applicants because they have had fewer suitable vacancies (Niner, 1989; Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993). This study indicated slightly different issues. The local authority, because of its size and turnover, could usually make offers first but if it could not offer suitable accommodation, associations might provide an alternative if women had been nominated and if they could wait. They also had to be prepared to turn down "unreasonable" local authority offers (and take the risk of being reassessed). Some women were better placed to do all this. Fleur and Lily (who turned down far more offers than anyone else) were living in more secure and manageable accommodation (a "second stage" self contained house and a son's home respectively) rather than in shared, poor and stressful conditions in the city's refuges.

A NEW HOME AND NEW AREA

The conflict between housing management priorities and the needs of women to be given a management service which was sensitive to their circumstances and requirements was also seen in a number of other ways. Staff were being managed more closely in relation to dealing with voids and were expected to maximise rental income by ensuring that properties were tenanted as quickly as possible. In practice, this meant that women were given the minimum of time by staff to decide whether they wanted a property. If a positive decision was made, women were expected to sign tenancy agreements (and become liable for rent) immediately. The lack of

contact with management staff once women became tenants was also a feature of the new management style which affected women in this study.

The new home

Iris, Lily, Raihaanah and Zaahirah were shown properties by Housing Officers who retained strict control over the amount of time women could spend looking around before deciding whether to accept the offer. A few minutes was literally all the women were given. Iris, who was rehoused by Foxglove HA, commented that she had

“...never known somebody so arrogant in all my life...he showed me round this house in three minutes - three minutes! That's the God's honest truth - three minutes. He was in the house a total of seven minutes from the moment we opened the door, to me signing up, to him getting into his car.”

Zaahirah, who was rehoused by Bluebell HA, had ten minutes to look round and decide whether to accept a house in an area she did not know. Other women collected keys from the association's Office and went and looked round the property themselves. Although they had longer to look round the property, if they decided to accept it, they also had to sign the tenancy agreement on the same day. The purpose of this speed for Housing Officers was to ensure that vacancies were let and rental income was generated, as quickly as possible. Staff were sometimes anxious for new tenants to move in very quickly, to prevent vandalism. Iris was offered a three bedroomed (rather than a two bedroomed) new property on a consortium estate on the proviso that she moved in immediately, as all the empty houses had recently been spray-painted by vandals.

Women were affected by this pressure for a decision in different ways. There was little time to think, or find out much, about the specific area or the facilities. The way in which staff offered property to women, disadvantaged those who were new to the city or the area, whose first language was not English or who could not obtain independent help quickly. “Signing up” for the tenancy meant that women who were living in refuges, hostels or “second stage” homes were immediately liable for

two rents from that day (for their current temporary home and their new permanent home). They often could not move in until they received a community care grant from the DSS for furniture. The delay of three or four weeks meant that most women moved into their new homes with rent arrears of several hundred pounds. They paid these back by using part of the grant they had been awarded for furniture, pots and pans and carpets. It was clear that the priority for staff was to establish a rental stream for the association rather than to manage property without impoverishing women. Having said that, most of the women in this study were pleased with the housing they had finally been offered and accepted. Many women spoke of being able to start "new lives" or lead "normal" lives because of their new home. Lily recalled that when she first went to see her current home, she had thought she would find another "dump" similar to the council properties which she had rejected.

"I was *so* excited when he [the Housing Officer] brought me to see this [the flat] that I gave him a hug! I've not seen the man since!"

Belle was even more enthusiastic.

"I'm happy and part of that happiness is I love my house, my little back garden and my shed. I kept going on to my Mum, "Mum, I've got *a shed* in the back garden and she sent me a card saying "Welcome to your new home" and then she said, "Are you sure you're not *actually* living in the shed, Belle? Because I'd gone on about this shed more than anything. It's such a picture of normalness to me - everything about this house is such a picture of normalness. I've got my house. I've got my driveway. I've got my fence. I've got my shed. It's just such a picture of normalness. We are so lucky to have these houses."

All of the women in this study lived on welfare benefits (because they were unemployed, caring for small children or were very ill). They had been able to accept their tenancies because they were entitled to full housing benefit to pay the rent. Two women, Zahrah and Belle had started working but it was part-time work for very low wages (sewing and working in a fast-food diner). The high levels of rent charged by the associations for their new property was remarked on by Belle, Fleur and Iris - all of whom felt they would never find a paid job in the future which

would enable them to pay the rent themselves (even though two of them had been in well paid jobs before their children had been born. Effectively, the associations were contributing towards women's continued reliance on welfare benefits as the main household income (see Crompton, 1993, for discussion of women's changing economic position).

The new area and staying safe

The Government's current interest in building "communities" in social housing and strengthening them predominantly through allocations practices (DETR and DSS, 2000), bore little relevance to the needs of the women in this study. Most moved to areas of the city which were previously unknown to them. They deliberately "kept themselves to themselves." They thought that they would be less likely to be found by their ex-partner if they protected their privacy in this way. They did not like doing this, and there were risks attached involving personal isolation and possible threats to their own safety, through being regarded as "outsiders" by neighbours or people in the area (Phizacklea and Miles, 1979; Charles with Dear, 1993). Kirkwood (1993, pp117-121) has remarked on the anger which women may feel in comparing their circumstances with their former abuser's, especially if they are going through difficulties or are allocated poor quality accommodation. As Iris angrily said

"I think that the likes of me and the people like me get the short end of the straw because why should *we* move, isolate *ourselves* right over here...."

Raihaanah and Zaahirah had moved to areas which they did not know and where few Asian families lived. In doing this, they had followed the advice given to them by support workers/advice workers who had reassured them that they would be safe from racist attacks (which they had been). Zahrah accepted a council property in an area she knew and had lived in before. Her aunt and uncle lived on the same street, although there appeared to be minimal contact between them following disagreement about whether she should have moved to the refuge.

Always being careful about their safety meant that women in this study only used local or near-local shops, schools and surgeries. They felt safe or reasonably safe in doing so. Raihaanah and Zaahirah had difficulties with shopping for Asian food and clothes because of the distance involved, but they preferred to be further away from "the community" because of the privacy which they and their children had found. Other Asian families would be likely to ask questions about a woman living by herself with her children. These could potentially be very dangerous as well as ill-informed and hurtful (Ballard, 1979). Having said that, there was the problem of isolation and safety. Zaahirah thought that she was being watched by a man in a parked car. Her husband knew where she lived and she thought that he had arranged this surveillance. She was frightened of the prospect of being by herself if the man ever approached the house.

Most women in this study usually had little or no contact with neighbours because they wanted to ensure their privacy and their safety. Fleur's experience showed the wisdom of this. She had discovered that her new next-door neighbour had come from the same area as herself. Their children knew one another: her children had stood out because they were black in what had been a predominantly white area. The neighbour was "a gossip" and kept in touch with people she had known. Fleur thought that it was only a matter of time before her ex-partner discovered the connection and found her again. She was now fearful all the time, living in the back room during the day and not sleeping because of anxiety at night. Fleur blamed the Housing Officer for this situation. "He could not have been listening" to her when she had told him about her violent ex-partner. As far as a transfer or other arrangements being put in place, she said that the Housing Officer was "approachable" but she was afraid of the situation "being thrown back in my face" and turning into "a shouting match." She could not deal with that. (See Kirkwood, 1993, for a discussion about fear in abused women's lives).

Despite vigilance, chance encounters might still happen. Iris' father had bought her a second hand car and while driving home from tea with her parents, she pulled up

at red traffic lights only to see her ex-partner and his friends walking along the pavement. To avoid him seeing her and coming over and “killing her,” she “jumped” the lights and turned left away from them, risking an accident and/or a police caution but determined to get away quickly. Zahrah’s husband had also discovered where she lived and had recently tried to run her over in his car. She felt that this was in retaliation for her starting divorce proceedings.

Keeping safe from families

Simply from the incidents reported by the women in this study, it was clear that the men they had tried to escape actively sought ways of finding them and/or threatening them, even if they had left years before. In this situation, maintaining links with other family members could be fraught with difficulties and possible danger for the women. Fleur’s sister had revealed her address to her ex-partner. He was trying to find her, even though she had left him nine years before. Belle’s experience illustrated different problems. She kept in contact with her ex-partner’s mother, because she wanted to keep in contact with her only grandson. Belle thought this was the right thing to do. Her ex-partner’s mother had then put Belle at risk by telling her son the name of the city in which Belle currently lived. He now had her telephone number and rang up, alternately “sweet talking” or threatening her. She felt that it was only the physical distance between them which had ensured her continued safety. She spent long hours on the telephone to her parents and friends as a way of dealing with isolation. Her father (who paid the ever-increasing telephone bill) had recently told her to “come home” to get more support. He had decided to stop paying the telephone bill. She interpreted this as his way of reinforcing the point and it further undermined her sense of security.

Deciding how to balance the needs of their children against their own need for peace of mind and safety was a concern for two women in this study. Zaahirah and Iris were both anxious about what they saw as their ex-partner’s attempts to use the children to undermine them. Zaahirah’s husband looked after the children at the weekends. She felt that he was trying to emotionally influence them and worried

that her husband (and her mother-in-law) were looking for ways to take the children from her. Iris was worried because her ex-partner had recently approached her (via a solicitor) about seeing their child. She thought that it was a ploy to find her, as he had shown no interest in the child before. She said that she would disappear again rather than have any contact. Hester and Radford (1996) found that fifty out of fifty three mothers in their study had experienced violence from their ex-partners, following arrangements made to continue contact with children, after the partners had separated.

Whilst women were rebuilding their lives, it was clear that the men they had escaped had no intention of letting them be. This was the grim reality for women in this study and it contradicted the view of the Team Leader in Foxglove HA about women “needing” violent ex-partners (Chapter 7) and the Neighbourhood Office Manager (in Chapter 4) who believed that women “never learn” and always go back to violent partners. The women in this study had changed or modified their lives to avoid violence from these men (Stanko, 1985). Their fear of being found depended on the physical distance between them and their assessment of how difficult it might be to find them, given all that they had done to remain “invisible” or unnoticed. Women had taken care over where they lived, their contact with neighbours, where they shopped, where and when they walked in public places and the supervision of their children.

In all these emotional and practical difficulties, maintaining family ties might also become dangerous or strained, because of differences in others’ understanding of the situation. This meant that women might not receive help or that help might be conditional (further complicating their efforts to rebuild their lives). Belle, Iris and Fleur had relationships with “new” male partners. Iris and Fleur had children with them. This is a reflection of the years which had elapsed since ending the relationship with their violent ex-partners, although they were still being pursued (with greater or lesser determination). Each woman said that her current relationship had been adversely affected by their past relationship with an ex-partner who had been violent towards them. They found it difficult or impossible to fully

trust their new partners. Doubts about whether their “new” partners would become violent or whether they would help if their ex-partner found them, caused them the greatest anxiety (Kirkwood, 1993, p115).

CONCLUSION

The different ways in which women found an alternative home were affected by the violence which they had experienced. This was in part because of their intense fear of being found by their ex-partner and their belief that the violence would start again. It was also partly because the personal violence they had experienced had left them lacking in self confidence and self esteem. They were unsure of how other people would react to their situation. They often found it difficult to obtain help because staff were not sensitive to their situation and/or had little time to talk to them about what they needed.

The temporary arrangements which they made to escape from the violence were limited to what was immediately possible. They were a reflection of their limited resources. If their wider family could not help, then the local authority was approached to provide safe temporary housing. Staff usually referred women to one of the refuges. Women had no “choice” or control over these arrangements: their main priority was safety. The assumption in the Housing Act 1996 that homeless applicants might avail themselves of the private rented sector seemed singularly inappropriate in these circumstances.

The violence also affected their experience of housing interviews and the way offers of property were considered. In many ways, the comments which women made about staff needing to be sensitive and offers needing to be appropriate, were not unexpected. These issues also have been identified as important in good practice reports, policy documents and research on this subject. The unexpected aspect of women's views was the way they interpreted the nature and quality of services from staff and the property which they were offered with people's views about what they

were worth as women. The refuges and the local authority Neighbourhood Offices had a negative impact on the women in this study because of the quality of the personal service and the housing offers made to them. A women's hostel and the associations which had rehoused them had a positive effect because they responded more appropriately to what women needed.

The women interviewed had established themselves in their new homes for varying lengths of time. It was clear that although they spoke of "new lives," these were only possible if they felt completely safe from their ex-partner. They felt safe to varying degrees: the most noticeable feature of their accounts being the different ways in which ex-partners still threatened their children and themselves. Some women were able to speak more positively than others: they had a new house which they loved, they had a new job, the children were doing very well at school, they had a new relationship with a man who was supportive, their health had improved. Others were haunted by fear, isolation and worries about the long-term damage which their ex-partner's violence had done to their teenage children.

All of the women in this study had come through traumatic violence and most had become homeless because of it. It was notable that they sometimes used language referring to their fear of being killed, beaten up, criticised or shouted at when they were talking about situations where they needed help (or might have to ask for it). This illustrated the long-term impact of the violence which they had experienced and their lack of belief that anyone would help them. For example, on occasion, Fleur seemed to be immobilised by fear of her ex-partner. She thought that the association would criticise or blame her for the situation with her neighbour.

Rehousing women who had experienced violence required a more sensitive and appropriate housing management practice than appeared to be currently available. Association housing management staff appeared to be distant figures on the landscape of women's helping networks. Only Iris had recently talked to housing management staff specifically about her safety (wanting reassurance that her address would be confidential). None of the women had seen a Housing Officer since

moving in apart from Raihaanah, who had been visited for a routine building defects check on her new home. If women wanted to talk to a Housing Officer or report a repair, they had to telephone the Office. It seemed that housing management staff had little or no idea what was happening in the lives of their tenants. Their effective withdrawal from estates and areas because of the pressure on their time meant that women who were vulnerable were not given the opportunity to build up workable relationships with the staff who managed their homes. This would create difficulties in the future if the violent ex-partner reappeared, since staff would not be able to act quickly or with any knowledge of the woman's immediate circumstances. The associations' stance against domestic violence seemed to barely extend beyond prioritising domestic violence, in various ways, within their waiting lists and rehousing women, in certain circumstances. Once rehoused, women seemed to be left to left to "sink or swim."

CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSIONS

This study examined how housing associations rehoused women who had become homeless because of violent men. It was undertaken through three case-study associations which worked within the boundaries of one local authority. The way in which the local authority worked provided the background, but the study concentrated on the rehousing processes in the three associations. These included those involved in women's initial access to associations, the assessment of their housing applications and the allocation of property to them. The overall purpose of the study was to find out whether there were (gender-specific) aspects to housing management practice in housing associations which might inhibit or, alternatively, assist women who needed to find a new home because they were homeless because of violent men.

This final Chapter summarises the findings from the study and is divided into a number of sections. The first focusses on the role of the local authority in relation to helping women who left violent men. It looks at how the local authority in this study assessed women's housing priority under the Housing Act 1996 and the relationship of the authority with housing associations which might provide alternative sources of rented housing. It then moves on to look at the housing management service provided by the case-study housing associations, examining the way in which housing management services were changing because of their effective privatisation following the Housing Act 1988. The third part of this Chapter concentrates in more detail on how women's housing applications were registered on association waiting lists, how their initial priority was confirmed and how their applications were considered, when property was allocated. It looks at how association management practice drew on and reinforced gender-specific assumptions about men's and women's roles in the family to make housing management decisions. The fourth section marks a change of perspective and concentrates on women's views about what they had to do to find somewhere to live, the impact of association housing management on them and the issue of safety in

their new homes. A concluding section summarises the findings and draws out their implications, given the current social housing management context of continuing privatisation.

THE LOCAL AUTHORITY'S "ENABLING ROLE"

The Conservative government in power at the time of this research, preferred that local authorities stop being direct providers of council housing. They had suggested various ways in which a local authority might develop what was essentially a residual role. There were a number of privatisation options available for the existing stock and authorities could also develop their "enabling role" in relation to other providers. Although there had been some interest in developing the "enabling role" in the authority in this study, it became clear that this had been limited, especially in relation to housing management. The authority generally failed to use its influence directly or indirectly, in relation to associations' management responses to homeless women. It is likely that this limited "enabling role" in relation to housing management would also be found in other local authorities since at that time, there was considerable interest in finding ways in which local authorities and housing associations could continue to build social rented housing, given the decreasing availability of Housing Association Grant. Far less attention was given to how the accommodation would be managed.

In this local authority area, it may have been more straightforward (and possibly more exciting) for the local authority and housing associations to build new rented housing through a new consortium. The clear, short-term objectives involved in building property probably made it easier for senior councillors and staff from the local authority and a small number of housing associations to work together (Fraser, 1991). This was not quite the "quasi market" envisaged by le Grand and Bartlett (1993), since there was no competition over development funding. There appeared to be less interest in the nature and quality of the long-term housing management in the associations which managed the housing which was built. No consultation with

Neighbourhood Office Managers had taken place within the authority to determine whether particular housing schemes were needed. Neither had the associations consulted them. The consequence of this was that in some areas, housing schemes were built for which there was little or no demand. More generally, the way in which the housing schemes had been developed and managed had done little to foster a sense of involvement or trust between staff in the local authority and the housing associations. This would have created a sound basis for inter-agency co-operation, but involvement and trust appeared to be absent here (Bramley, 1993).

The local authority in this study could have influenced associations' housing management in a number of ways. Firstly, the local authority assessed applications from homeless women, when they had left violent men, and staff prioritised them within the new housing register. The way the local authority did this, affected the numbers of women who were registered (including those who wanted to be nominated and rehoused by an association). Secondly, the authority's domestic violence policy was intended to ensure that local authority staff responded sympathetically to women in a wide range of circumstances. It also seemed likely that this would be reflected in the nominations which were made to associations. Thirdly, the authority might influence associations' management through domestic violence policy development and the provision of domestic violence training. This especially might be the case in the "good practice pilot" area in which the three case-study associations worked. It emerged in the study that these possibilities had been pursued only in a very limited fashion, if at all.

The local authority response to homeless women

The manner in which changes to the homeless legislation had been implemented in this authority and the variable impact of its domestic violence policy on staff action illustrated the necessity in policy analysis not to assume that legislative change and policy implementation are straightforward. In both instances, different policy makers had implicitly assumed that simply changing the law and issuing Regulations (in the case of homelessness) and obtaining the agreement of the local

authority Committee (in the case of the domestic violence policy) would almost be sufficient, in itself, to produce the desired changes to practice. In reality, this was not the case. Existing interests or conflicting pressures on staff affected the ways changes were made, if they were made at all.

In the case of the Housing Act 1996, the Conservative government had issued central Regulations to provide a framework for local authority housing register priorities which was to be adopted across the country. One of its central objectives had been to ensure that local authorities prioritised young couples who were starting families and penalised homeless lone parents. The Government of that time regarded lone parents as waiting-list queue jumpers (Phoenix, 1996). Feminist analysis had identified the nuclear family form, and women's role within it as mothers, as important features of social housing allocation, including the assessment of the statutory homeless. The Government's stated objective was to strengthen these features, to the detriment of lone parents. Yet, in practice, in the local authority in this study, the Conservative's intention was undermined, even though the legislation and Regulations had statutory force.

When confronted with the mandatory requirement for change, Housing Committee members in the local authority in this study were prudent in their desire to avoid unnecessary expenditure and conservative in their commitment to the authority's long-standing waiting list priorities. It could be argued that their interest seemed to be to retain a system which they were familiar with, within which they could exercise personal influence in relation to allocations. Existing waiting-list priorities had been structured in a way which enabled them to exercise influence over council allocations. Through a small number of incremental changes, this remained the case within the new housing register. Statutory homeless status was one of several top priority categories in the old waiting-list system and it remained in that position in the new housing register, although it was renamed to accommodate the Conservative government's mandatory "preference groups." In this way, the housing prospects of homeless lone parents and single women who had left violent men were not diminished in this authority, but protected. The "statutory homeless" category in the

old waiting list straightforwardly became (in the new housing register) those living in “temporary and insecure accommodation.”

The emphasis on families rather than single people in the construction of the priority groups in successive homeless legislation had been identified as an example of women users of the welfare state being regarded as more important as mothers rather than as women (Pascall, 1986). The policy and practice within this authority did not support this analysis. The local authority's domestic violence policy was intended to ensure a sympathetic response to all homeless women (with or without dependent children). It encouraged staff to consider them as statutory homeless, if they had become homeless because of domestic violence. In this sense, the policy challenged the familism implicit in the legislation. However, the implementation of the policy proved to be more complicated than this might suggest, mainly because of the way the service to homeless people was organised.

The housing service for the homeless was partly decentralised in this authority. The centrally-based specialist staff tried to keep to the spirit of the domestic violence policy, despite their legal obligation to make decisions on an individual basis. The specialist teams were better trained and more experienced in dealing with domestic violence. They also did not have conflicting housing management responsibilities: they did not have to consider the possible longer-term implications of their decisions. The generalist housing management staff in the Neighbourhood Offices, who also made decisions under the homeless legislation, were in a different position. They were often more concerned with wider housing management issues. The nature of violence (identifying some types of violence as legitimate and ignoring other manifestations), the use of “proof” and the exclusion of women with rent arrears were all concerns which were generated from day-to-day housing management. In part, these issues indicated housing management unease in having to “take sides” in personal relationships. Neighbourhood Office staff wanted to be confident in their homeless decision-making and were suspicious of women who could not corroborate their statements. They preferred to have “proof”. They also needed to respond to their other work priorities (like dealing with rent arrears).

These were more closely monitored and regarded as more important within the managerialist priorities which predominated in the work of the Neighbourhood Offices.

In some Offices, at least, the potential impact of the domestic violence policy had been diminished, as housing management concerns tended to distort the policy's original intentions. This had happened because of a lack of effective monitoring, training and sanctions. Indeed, it could be argued that the authority had two policies, an official one and an unofficial one which, de facto, had been created by front-line housing management staff (Lipsky, 1980).

Nominations, domestic violence policy development and training in associations

There were three ways in which the local authority might have a more direct influence over housing associations' housing management: nominations, domestic violence policy development within associations and training in relation to dealing with domestic violence. All of these could be considered to be aspects of the local authority's "enabling" role.

Le Grand and Bartlett (1993) conceptualised nominations as "vouchers" through which the local authority "purchased" accommodation which was provided and managed by associations. The reality of what was, essentially, "arms length" rehousing was more complicated than the theory implied. 75% of consortium and 50% of other association lettings had to be made to local authority nominees. There proved to be considerable variation in the nominations performance of the three case-study associations and dissatisfaction from many senior local authority management staff about who associations were actually rehousing. Yet, the authority itself had not developed detailed organisational monitoring to discover whether it was getting the vacancies it was entitled to and Managers relied on their own personal knowledge to judge individual associations. The local authority also did not know the detailed circumstances under which nominees were being rehoused by associations. This lack of information made it impossible for the local authority

to monitor the extent to which homeless women who had left violent men were being rehoused by associations across the city.

Although the local authority itself had a domestic violence policy, it had not influenced policy development within associations. This appeared to be a self-imposed restriction, especially in its own self-designated, domestic violence "good practice pilot" area. The NFHA had produced a good practice guide for associations which was available from 1993. Local authority staff could have used this to encourage associations to develop policy guidelines but they had chosen to offer general domestic violence awareness training and forum meetings. Association staff hardly ever attended these, either because they did not know about them or they did not regard them as a priority. Most staff in associations did not know about the local authority's own policy or the NFHA guide (unless they were at Chief Executive level). The multi-regional Foxglove HA had developed its own harassment policy (which included responding to domestic violence) independently of the local authority. The other two local associations had not developed a policy and seemed unlikely to do so, in the short term at least. They believed that they had more pressing housing management concerns.

THE HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS AND THEIR CHANGING HOUSING MANAGEMENT SERVICES

The three associations in this study were distinctive in terms of their size and histories. Each had experienced slightly different pressures in the new working environment ushered in by the Housing Act 1988. They had all made attempts to become more competitive and financially efficient but they were each working from different starting points. For example, Foxglove HA (the largest multi-regional association) had been run very bureaucratically until recently whilst Bluebell HA (the largest local association) had been run by a very strong leader and had a more "meritocratic" culture. The ways in which these associations were managed (in terms of their organisational cultures and the expectations of staff) were important in

understanding the nature of the management service provided to women applicants and tenants.

Foxglove HA and Tulip HA (the local black association) had both recently been completely restructured. Housing management had changed to enable front-line Customer Services staff to deal with initial and routine enquiries (including housing applications) leaving Housing Services Officers/Housing Officers to focus more exclusively on arrears, voids and anti-social behaviour. In Foxglove HA, the work of housing management staff was closely monitored by more senior managers through a computerised housing management system. This was a development commensurate with the "new public management" model which the association had adopted for its operations (Pollitt, 1990). In Tulip HA, management of the Customer Services Officers and Housing Officers seemed less consistent, although their workloads must have been very great. The number of lettings they made, the problems in dealing with arrears and the fact that many applicants and tenants did not speak English (so responding to them might potentially take longer) were three elements of the housing management task which the other two associations did not face - or face to the same degree. Bluebell HA maintained its long-standing "patch" management and Duty Officer system for dealing with routine enquiries and issues. This seemed to be largely the result of the Chief Executive's judgement that reorganisation would be more disruptive than useful. Nevertheless, it was clear that existing arrangements were under considerable strain. Staff were expected to deal with significant increases in their workloads and changing priorities for their work. They had less time available for interviewing and found it increasingly hard to provide an individually responsive service, although some of them still tried to do so.

These changing organisational arrangements and priorities for housing management had implications for the nature and quality of service provided to every applicant and tenant. The restructuring in Foxglove HA and Tulip HA had been justified by the apparent need to provide a more responsive service to "customers" especially those who contacted the associations by telephone. This bucked the trend of the

previous decade, which had been to provide “walk-in” offices, within easy reach of tenants. It was clear, however, that a more important objective of restructuring was to provide financial savings and greater “efficiency” in the future. For example, “Customer Services” staff replaced Duty Officer systems (in whole or in part). They were not qualified and experienced housing staff: they were simply administrative staff with increased responsibilities. These included being the first staff to consider applications for housing. The expectation by senior management was that giving help and advice to applicants would reduce and be provided in a minimal, standardised way (commensurate with the grade of staff providing “Customer Services”). Passing people to the local authority automatically (for a nomination and advice) and dealing with enquiries as quickly as possible (perhaps because of the apparent increases in telephone work) was also emphasised. Increases in workloads and a lack of management guidance in all the associations also resulted in breaches in confidentiality and confusion about the limits of confidentiality for staff. These had the potential to have devastating effects on women applicants who might be trying to keep their whereabouts absolutely secret. None of this was illustrative of service responses which were sensitive to the circumstances of women who had left, or were trying to leave, violent men.

Other general issues emerged in considering the reception services in the three case-study associations. All of them combined in various ways to make it easier or harder for black and Asian women to approach staff. Issues included the nature of staffing (especially the gender and ethnic composition of the service), whether staff spoke the main languages of black and Asian people in the city and whether staff had knowledge of and/or personal links to the local black and Asian communities in the city. Some commentators have spoken of the housing association sector being “racialised,” in the sense that the development programmes (especially for inner city renewal) have been concentrated on improving/replacing homes in the inner city areas (Smith, 1989). The location of most association homes in inner city areas has restricted the opportunities of black and Asian families, by default or more deliberately. They might aspire to areas with better quality accommodation and a more desirable environment (Henderson and Karn, 1987). In this study, the three

associations owned property in areas other than those traditionally lived in by black and Asian families. No monitoring had been undertaken to show whether those families were applying for that accommodation. Similarly, it was also impossible to determine whether families were "steered" wittingly or unwittingly to inner areas (as in Henderson and Karn's study).

Nevertheless, it seemed questionable why so few black and Asian applicants (including women) were being rehoused by the multi-regional Foxglove HA. One reason might have been that it was a "white" association with white staff working in "customer services." Would black and Asian women want to be rehoused by an association which did not employ black and Asian staff and where "Customer Services" staff might appear unwilling to help or give them much time? Bluebell HA represented a more varied staff profile although its recent growth had changed its focus away from providing inner city housing. Black and Asian women might prefer Tulip HA because of the association's staffing profile and the location of many of its homes to rent. Having said that, the relationship between various community "leaders" and the association was strained because of its new approach to arrears and not all of its newly built property had proved popular with black and Asian applicants who feared isolation and racial harassment in particular parts of the city.

So whether black and Asian applicants were exercising a "choice" when applying to Tulip HA or whether they were, by default, being channelled to Tulip HA is debatable. This was an important issue for black and Asian women (lone parents and single women) who needed to be rehoused away from violent partners/ex-partners/relatives in areas where they could maintain their privacy. They might feel that they had a stark choice between black and Asian areas and areas where only white households lived. Both might bring their own problems. This came out in this study. Asian women had to carefully select areas away from the main settlement of different Asian communities (to maintain privacy). Areas had to be chosen where the existing white community was not known for harassment. White women with black children also had to be careful in selecting areas. In predominantly white

areas, black children might be racially harassed or the family might be found more easily by an ex-partner through looking for the children, simply because they were different.

ASSESSING APPLICATIONS AND ALLOCATING PROPERTY

Associations in this study rehoused direct waiting list applicants, those who had been nominated by the local authority and those who had applied for a transfer internally. Although the policy emphasis in the association sector in the first half of the 1990s had been to increase the rate at which homeless nominations were rehoused, the associations in this study had difficulty reaching their nominations targets, even in some of the new consortium housing schemes. In the year of this study, this was partly because the local authority did not nominate sufficient numbers of applicants, although the impact of this varied between the associations.

There were noticeable differences between the associations in the rate and numbers of homeless households they rehoused who had been nominated. Associations also varied considerably in the rate and numbers of women they rehoused because of domestic violence. Tulip HA, the smallest association with the least resources, rehoused far more homeless people than the other two associations (including women who had escaped domestic violence). This may have been because they maintained close working links with the local authority's central homeless teams, the hostels and the refuges. The other two associations did not. It is worth noting here that although many women rehoused by Tulip HA were black or Asian, the association also rehoused white women in these circumstances. Another outcome of the lack of detailed monitoring by the local authority or housing associations was that it was not possible to know the specific ethnic breakdown of women rehoused because of domestic violence and the type/quality/location of accommodation they were offered.

Feminist analysis has emphasized the importance of the nuclear family for women's access to welfare state services, including access to social housing. The importance of women's role as mothers, rather than as homeless individuals, has also been identified in relation to the way in which the "priority need" groups were structured within successive Acts dealing with homelessness. In this study, the influence of familism in relation to women's access to accommodation in housing associations could be identified in a number of ways, but none of them were straightforward. The influence of managerialism on housing management practice in associations - and particularly the increasing importance of financial priorities - was far more dominant in these settings.

The initial registration process

All of the associations in this study appeared to operate open waiting lists but there were two circumstances where applicants would not be accepted. Firstly, associations estimated whether vacancies were likely to occur in the area an applicant wanted. If they thought that vacancies were unlikely within a year, an application would not be accepted. This might not affect homeless women who had left domestic violence to any great extent: they were more likely to be rehoused by the local authority within that time. More relevant was the second reason why associations might not accept applications. This was because of the existence of rent arrears.

The exclusion of all applicants with rent arrears in Tulip HA was automatic because of its financial situation and reputation. In Tulip HA, organisational interests would predominate over an individual woman's circumstances, however serious. Bluebell HA and Foxglove HA staff could be more flexible because these organisations were financially stronger. They often accepted an application if a woman had come to an arrangement to repay any arrears attributed to her (rightly or wrongly). The local authority's domestic violence policy and the NFHA's good practice guide (Davis, 1993) had both emphasised the need to deal with a woman's housing circumstances first and any arrears separately, and later. Clearly, this was ignored by associations

in practice and showed the limitations of the local authority's and NFHA's influence. It also showed how financial considerations were affecting responses to applicants' housing circumstances.

In looking at the application process itself, there appeared to be no distinctions between nominations and direct applicants in terms of procedures (transfers at this time were encouraged to apply to the local authority and obtain a nomination). It had been expected that associations would accept local authority nominations of statutory homeless households without investigating their circumstances themselves (NFHA, AMA, ADC, 1989). This would speed their rehousing. However, the associations in this study continued to assess them. Their justification was that as organisations they were independent of the local authority and they needed to establish the landlord/tenant relationship, at this point. In the context of this study, this meant that women who had been assessed as statutory homeless and nominated to the association by the authority would be reassessed by association staff. They sometimes used criteria which were not relevant in the authority's homeless decision-making (for example, considering housekeeping standards).

None of the ways in which associations assessed women's applications was devoid of discretionary elements, whether the association used a "merit" or points system. There were different points at which staff discretion might be a factor and it was clear that staff used assumptions and values about women in different ways. Staff responses to the particular circumstances of women applicants had to be considered within the particular association's organisational milieu - its formal and informal policies, the management culture and the nature of its relationships with external organisations. In Foxglove HA and Tulip HA the "Customer Services" staff were expected to make an initial assessment of housing applications to the association and to register them on the associations' waiting list. There was no equivalent assessment stage in Bluebell HA: applicants were simply registered on the waiting list, by staff in the specialist waiting list team.

"Customer Services" staff in Foxglove HA and Tulip HA used discretion in two ways. Firstly, they made judgements about what kinds of violence were legitimate in relation to the term "domestic violence." For example, in Foxglove HA, CSOs registered women's applications if women had actually been physically assaulted. They would not accept applications where women feared being attacked (or had been threatened). This was contrary to the association's formal policy and illustrated a lack of understanding of the nature of domestic violence, including the considerable fear in which women can sometimes live. They were not managed in relation to their work in registering applications. They had no knowledge of the Code of Guidance advice or the local authority's policy and they used their own prejudice to exclude women in these circumstances. (The emphasis on "proof" in this association might have reinforced these distinctions since it would be very difficult for women who lived in fear or who were being intimidated to obtain any). This was a clear example of front-line staff creating the association's actual policy in this Office (Lipsky, 1980).

The second way in which "Customer Services" staff exercised discretion was in relation to the requirement that women provide "support letters" with their applications. The "Customer Services" staff in Foxglove HA would only register an application if a woman could supply such evidence from organisations or professionals. Tulip HA staff would consider letters from organisations and family and friends (although the latter were given less weight because staff thought that they would be biased). The requirement to provide "support letters" illustrated a number of organisational and attitudinal features in relation to homeless women who had left violent men. From an organisational point of view, it again showed the limitations of the local authority's "enabling role." Women who had been assessed and nominated by the local authority without the need for "proof," had to provide "proof" for associations. Secondly, it showed that staff felt that protecting the association's waiting list priorities from potential abuse was more important than responding to individual women's circumstances. As far as attitudes were concerned, it showed that women were not trusted to tell the truth. There were possible racial implications to this practice. Asking for "support letters" from

women had different effects on women depending on their ethnic background and religious beliefs. Black and Asian women might be less likely to seek a divorce or legal protection (because of the impact of these on the family's reputation - see Mama, 1989). They might also be reluctant to approach advice organisations for help because of their concern about how they and their families might be considered (in white dominated organisations) or worries about their own privacy and safety (if organisations had their roots in the black or Asian communities - see Rai and Thiara, 1997 for a discussion about help and support provided in black refuges). Asian women (especially Muslims) might be less likely to approach family and friends, especially if they wanted to leave and live independently because it was not likely that this would be regarded as acceptable (Mama, 1989; Imam, 1994). This had been clear in the accounts of the Muslim women in this study.

The front-line staff in Tulip HA appreciated that some women might have more difficulties in obtaining "support letters" than others. They were prepared to work flexibly, in certain situations, (although the white Senior Housing Officer was less amenable to this). In Foxglove HA, "Customer Services" and other management staff were not aware of these differences between women. If a woman could not provide appropriate "support letters," her application would be cancelled.

Confirming applicants' priority

The associations in this study used different ways of confirming the priority of applications. In all of them, the applicant was interviewed about their housing circumstances and housing history. Bluebell HA used a merit scheme and Foxglove HA and Tulip HA used points schemes to prioritise applications. Although points schemes seemed to be more objective, there was the possibility that a great deal of discretion could be used by Housing Officers/Housing Service Officers (within the expectations laid down by their respective managers).

Bluebell HA Housing Officers simply arranged a "home visit" or office interview. They accepted what the applicant told them. Women did not have to approach other

organisations or professionals for “support letters.” Foxglove HA and Tulip HA Housing Services Officers/Housing Officers interviewed women, looked at “support letters” and obtained information from previous landlords and others to try to identify “genuine” women who would become “good” tenants. They considered information about the woman’s current housing circumstances, her housekeeping (current or past), past rent payment record (or record with other payments), whether she had been rehoused before because of violence (and what had happened) and whether her housing history could be substantiated (especially if she had been a tenant).

The influence of familism was not clear-cut in these considerations. The information which management staff gathered could, in part, be related to attitudes towards women and their role in the family. Considering housekeeping standards was likely to be one obvious way in which this occurred. There was also the possibility that past debts (especially rent arrears) which may have been built up by the woman’s ex-partner, would be attributed to her if she had been a joint tenant. A woman would be regarded as having been equally responsible for the debt (as she was legally) although the relationship might have been far from equal, in terms of control of the family’s finances and the man’s violence. Both of these were not just illustrative of staff attitudes towards women and their relationship to the family. They were also indicative of specific housing management concerns about women as potential tenants, the possible security and duration of rent payments and the future care and maintenance of the association’s property.

The impact of these ways of assessing women’s applications was difficult to predict. It might have been thought that it would restrict access. It is likely that it did, for some women (who remained effectively lost to the study). Having said that, the two associations which operated in this way had rehoused very different numbers of women. Foxglove HA had rehoused few women whilst nearly 16% of those rehoused by Tulip HA in the year of this study, were women who had left domestic violence. The issue of access appeared to hinge around how pro-active an

association's staff were in contacting and working with agencies which helped homeless women. Only Tulip HA staff did this.

The allocation of property

Homeless women who had left domestic violence were not necessarily regarded as the most urgent applicants even though formally they had the highest priority on the associations' waiting lists. When a vacancy occurred in Foxglove HA, staff would only consider those who had been waiting the longest, selecting two highest priority nominated and two direct waiting list applicants for consideration. Its system was inflexible to urgent situations. On the other hand, Bluebell HA and Tulip HA staff considered all the highest priority applicants who had requested an area in which a vacancy occurred, whatever the date of application. In this way, an urgent application could be considered and rehoused quickly (even if the allocation meetings took much longer). Having said that, the most urgent application was not always allocated vacancies in these associations. These findings differed from those of Niner with Karn (1985) who had found that staff selected the most urgent applicant for the best property and the most suitable for what remained, in an effort to minimise rent loss.

Deciding whether a woman's application was suitable (rather than acting on its urgency), involved different things depending on the vacancy and the woman's particular circumstances compared to those of other applicants. In Bluebell HA, the lengthy allocation meeting discussion revealed that staff judgement about the applications from women who had left domestic violence fell into three "groups." These were views about the nature of the woman's household, attitudes towards domestic violence and concerns about how the relationships between the possible new tenant and the neighbours might be managed. In Tulip HA, there was more limited discussion (although useful). A number of vacancies were also allocated to applicants who had been pre-selected by Housing Officers. In Foxglove HA, the discussion about specific applicants was very limited - simply outlining details to

confirm whether an offer should be made. Consequently, the findings relating to attitudes towards women who have left domestic violence are tentative.

The closest any discussion came to familist ideas was that observed in Bluebell HA. In relation to the vacancy which staff were allocating, a decision was made before the discussion that the vacancy would have to be offered to a nuclear family. Staff assumed that a woman living with a male partner would be protected by him. Women who lived as lone parents did not have such a protector and were regarded by staff as "vulnerable" because of this, especially in relation to living in certain housing schemes. These assumptions became particularly clear when staff were allocating a house where the neighbours were known to be violent. The property was offered to a nuclear family because it was believed that the man would act protectively in this situation. Other applicants, including a lone parent who was homeless because of domestic violence, were set aside. Nevertheless, there were limitations to the protector role. For example, if the woman's partner was mentally ill or if a male relative lived in the woman's household, he might not be viewed in this light (although, in the latter instance, this depended on whether his presence appeared to be contrived rather than genuine).

A second way in which women were considered only as part of a relationship (and the weaker part) was in relation to vacancies which occurred near to her former partner. None of the associations would consider a woman for vacancies which occurred in an area which housing staff believed was too near her former partner. They believed that she would be quickly found and forced to move again, defeating the purpose of rehousing. A woman requesting a house nearby would be regarded with suspicion by some staff (see Chapter 7) but there was another way of looking at this situation. Whilst most women wanted to move away completely to a new area, there would always be a smaller number who wanted to remain in the area they knew (or adjacent to it). They might have strong family ties and friends. Their children might go to good local schools. They might genuinely believe that they would be safe: their ex-partner would not be violent outside the home. Women in

this situation were effectively being denied a view about where they were rehoused: housing management staff judgements over-riding their preference.

Thirdly, there were a number of consortium housing schemes in Bluebell HA and Foxglove HA where there had been serious management difficulties (variously harassment, vandalism, voids and abandonment). Housing staff would not offer vacancies in these to women who had left violence because they believed they were particularly vulnerable. They thought that women living by themselves as lone parents would not survive long in such property. In some areas, staff believed that lone parents would be resented as queue-jumping outsiders. The only exception to this would be if the woman knew the area well and had family members and friends nearby to support her, but it was clear that staff would not be happy with the situation.

Lone parents who had left violent men were regarded as vulnerable households by staff in Bluebell HA. They were not regarded as "problem families" and viewed negatively compared to nuclear families, as had happened in the council sector in the past. The general attitude seemed to be that they might experience problems living in certain properties, in certain neighbourhoods because they were "vulnerable." If a woman lived with a man (a protector) the household would be thought to be more likely to survive in that property or area. It was not clear whether these assumptions would apply to Asian, black and white lone parents equally. (It was likely that the same assumptions would apply to single women although no allocations to single women were observed). In effect, staff seemed to have drawn a line in relation to what they could do to stop harassment and violence. They seemed to lack the means to tackle domestic violence and intimidation. However, they did not want to knowingly place a family in difficult circumstances.

There were no equivalent long allocation meeting discussions in Foxglove HA or Tulip HA, so it was impossible to say whether the same attitudes were influencing allocations in those associations. Given the number of women rehoused by Tulip HA, it was odd that, in the allocation meeting observed, the Senior Housing Officer seemed less than keen to rehouse women who were homeless because of domestic violence. For example, she directly compared two lone parents who were homeless because of violence and a split nuclear family. The nuclear family was preferred, even though the lone parents had higher priority. Observation over a longer period of time would have revealed more detail and firmer conclusions but this was not possible in any of the associations in this study.

WOMEN'S VIEWS ABOUT LEAVING HOME, ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY

Eight women were interviewed as part of this study. Seven were tenants of the case-study associations and one was a council tenant. They all had become homeless because of domestic violence in the past and been rehoused as a result. Their perspectives on what had happened to them when they decided to leave their old homes and how helpful different agencies were, provided a very distinct counterpoint to the views of some staff in the local authority and housing associations. Their experiences illustrated what happens when a policy is not monitored or reviewed regularly - in the local authority and in housing associations. It also showed what the new style of management in associations actually meant to women as applicants and tenants.

Many women who become homeless in these circumstances leave their former homes suddenly, often following an assault. The women in this study who left suddenly either went to live with relatives (by preference and if they felt safe there), or they went to stay in refuges and/or a women's hostel in the city. Women could not always leave like this, however. Some women had to stay with their violent partners

until permanent accommodation could be offered to them. They could not use temporary accommodation because of language differences, health and the age and gender of their children. They did not have family members who could help either. Their own family was too far away or the women thought they would be unsympathetic.

Women who have returned to their birth families, have usually returned to live with their parents. This might be an indication of their age and ethnic origin because the experience of the women in this study was different. Several women in this study were older and several had no-one from their birth family in this country, having moved to England from Pakistan on marriage. One white woman in this study (who was in her 20s) returned to live with her parents and another white woman (in her late 40s) went to live with her adult son. Their families proved to be very helpful especially in their search for another home. One Asian woman (in her 20s) went to live with her aunt and uncle. They tried to help by obtaining a reconciliation, but were unsuccessful. She later left to live in a refuge for her own safety, against the wishes of her relatives.

The women who lived in the refuges in the city valued the personal security they felt whilst living there. The refuge locations were kept secret and they felt confident that they would not be found. This was the limit of their positive comments, however. Contrary to other research findings, the ex-residents in this study thought that the cleanliness and maintenance of facilities in the refuges was poor. They were also very critical of the refuge staff whom they regarded as unhelpful in the personal support they offered residents and the practical assistance they gave to women who were trying to find a new home. They believed that middle class women, with greater financial and other resources at their disposal, would not have tolerated such an environment. They had to stay because they had no other realistic choice, if they wanted to remain safe. They believed that the refuge providers must have had a very poor view of the women who used the refuges, to think that such conditions were acceptable. The comments of refuge staff interviewed later confirmed this picture of poor management and service provision. It was clear that the refuges had

disappointed the women in this study and, given the problems they were experiencing, would be unlikely to exert much influence on the local authority or housing associations in relation to management practice.

The effects of association housing management on women

There were two ways in which the housing management service affected women. Firstly, it was clear that staff were not being as helpful as they might have been, although women often were not in a position to judge this accurately. What appeared to matter most to them was the way they were treated as people. If staff appeared to be sympathetic and considerate, they were regarded positively, even if they subsequently did or failed to do something which adversely affected the woman. This was understandable given that there were no clear guidelines available to women about service standards. Secondly, contrary to what some staff felt, the women in this study found it difficult to talk about the violence which they had experienced and some of them had found it hard to obtain help (especially the Asian women and the older white woman). Only one woman believed that it was important to keep in regular contact with associations she had applied to, to keep her application in the minds of staff who were allocating property. This was, in fact, a very sensible strategy as she had applied to Tulip HA, where all high priority applicants were considered for each vacancy. It was likely that she *was* remembered by staff when they allocated property on the estate to which she wanted to move.

The women in this study had also received offers of accommodation from the local authority. Most of these had been turned down because of their condition. The women felt that the poor quality of the accommodation offered was an implicit reflection of what local authority staff thought of them as people. This did nothing to build their self confidence (see Malos and Hague with Dear, 1993 for similar comments).

The offers of accommodation from housing associations were much better although women were given little time to think about whether the offer was suitable for them. This was another aspect of the changing nature of association housing management: specifically pressure on staff to reduce the period of rent loss between lettings. Women were expected to sign tenancy agreements at the same time (or on the same day) as viewing the property. They became responsible for the rent immediately, whatever their personal and financial circumstances, including if they were paying double housing costs from this point (for their existing temporary accommodation and the new house). All the women in this study were reliant on state benefits and had to wait for a community care grant to buy furniture and carpets before moving. The delay often meant that they moved in with substantial rent arrears which had to be paid back to the association. Clearly, housing management staff's financial priorities were impoverishing women.

Women's safety and their relationship to the "community"

Women had moved to areas which were unknown to them in order to escape being found by their ex-partners. To maintain their safety, they had to exercise continual vigilance in relation to what they told neighbours, their own and their children's use of local facilities and more generally the areas they visited. Even given this, they could find their safety threatened by the unthinking behaviour of their neighbours or other family members or simply by chance. Women in this study did not have the luxury of becoming actively involved in their "communities" since it was too dangerous for them to do so. Current discussions about developing "communities" through local lettings schemes (DETR and DSS, 2000) or mutual aid agreements (Lemos and Goodby, 1999) fail to take this reality into account.

It was clear from women's accounts that their vigilance was necessary. Several women were under considerable pressure from ex-partners who were actively searching for them. They felt that, sooner or later, they would be found and were terrified of the consequences. Some women had maintained contact with other family members and friends but none had discussed their situation with housing management staff. Women were not confident in asking staff for help. None had

been visited in their new homes by association staff, even though at least one had been an association tenant for several years. The association management staff had no idea whether women were having difficulties. This might prove to be a major problem for women, if they were found by their ex-partners, in the future.

CONCLUSION

The local authority in this study found that about one third of all the statutory homeless households whom it rehoused each year were women leaving domestic violence. It had developed a progressive domestic violence policy which hoped to ensure that single women as well as those who obtained priority because they had dependent children, would be rehoused. Nevertheless, the practice did not always match the policy for a number of reasons including a lack of monitoring, training and competing priorities for housing management staff. Yet, it did seem reasonably clear that women would receive help from the local authority. The same could not always be said of the associations in this study, whose responses illustrated the limited role of the authority in terms of "enabling" associations to develop their housing management service in broadly the same way as the authority.

Associations' housing management was changing under pressure to be more financially efficient. For example, the reception services in two associations had become more standardised and lower grades of staff (who had less experience and training) were now expected to handle work previously undertaken by Housing Officers. Housing Officer jobs had reduced in scope - dealing with arrears, voids and anti-social behaviour were the priorities now. The increasing importance of financial priorities in addition to increasing workloads, pressured staff into off-loading work where they could - either by no longer doing it (as a recognised part of the job) or by sending "customers" to the local authority or advice centres for help (when they might previously have provided help themselves). The way in which applications were assessed and property allocated did not appear to have changed so markedly, even though staff were handling more applications than they had done in the late 1980s. A question could be raised about the range of the enquiries which

staff made of applicants, particularly women who had left domestic violence. Many women applicants already had the highest priority nomination from the local authority. As the problems associated with low demand became more marked (which they were not at this time) it was likely that these procedures would be revised and relaxed to encourage applications but at the time of the research allocations procedures seemed to have changed least of all. Staff considered a woman's "housing need" and combined this with "commonsense" views about their lives compared to those of a nuclear family. Their degree of "vulnerability" seemed to be the main staff concern about women as lone parents, especially if they had left violent men. There were other concerns - like the possibility of a woman being forced to move if she was found, damage to property and arrears - but these were only likely to affect a relatively small number of women. None of these, however, indicated that the actual situation in which women found themselves because of violence was being accorded sufficient importance.

It has been argued in the past that women's role in relation to the family - the nuclear family especially - was the key to understanding their access to council housing, particularly through the homeless legislation. This study of associations' work revealed a more complex set of relationships. Attitudes towards the women themselves, the nature of the violence which they had experienced and whether they were suitable for a particular vacancy were all considerations in association assessment and allocation processes. Lone parents were not regarded as "problem families" as had been the case in the past in the council sector. If they had left violence, they would be regarded as "vulnerable." By contrast, women living with men in nuclear families were regarded as "protected" (because of the presence of the man). Statistically, this is far from the case (Mooney, 1993; Home Office, 1998). It also seemed likely that these assumptions were also used in relation to single women in this situation. This was detrimental to women's chances of access to property in a number of different locations. Firstly, they would not be offered property near their ex-partner. Secondly, they would not be offered vacancies on estates where there had been violence or harassment. Thirdly, they would not be allocated a vacancy next to a violent neighbour. Staff had no time to help new tenants to move into their new homes or provide any assistance once they had done so. Similarly, they

appeared to have minimal capacity to deal with violence and harassment - hoping, through allocations, to avoid contributing to tenants' difficulties. These attitudes towards women were in part intended to protect women - and must not be criticised for that. Unfortunately, they also represented a recognition by staff that their role in the day-to-day management of estates was now greatly diminished compared to what they had been able to do in the past.

The housing management service in the 1990s had become imbued with management ideas and practices derived from the private sector: "new public management" in various forms. This was clearly evident in the service to homeless women who had left domestic violence. Nevertheless, there were important tensions in the management service in the local authority (which had a "contracted out" service) and the different services provided by the three case-study associations. For women applicants, these tensions focussed around whether they were treated in ways which were essentially paternalistic (the "suppliant" role), or "customer" oriented or whether they were treated as women with rights to be rehoused.

In considering questions of access, assessment, allocation and housing management, it became clear in this study that applicants and tenants were most usually being treated as "customers." This was happening within management services which were becoming much more limited in scope than they had been in the past, as associations (and the local authority) strove to become more financially "efficient." This new concern, or emphasis, had become more dominant through the privatisation of housing associations (especially in relation to their development programmes) and local authorities (through compulsory competitive tendering). The current Government has shown no sign that it wishes to reverse these trends. In fact, the privatisation of public investment in housing is due to continue and speed up. For example, the Government has proposed a local authority annual stock transfer programme of 200,000 council homes being transferred to associations and housing companies from 2001/2002 (DETR and DSS,2000). This is an increase on previous years (though it still may be slowed by tenants voting against such transfers). The growing propensity in social housing to consider applicants and tenants as "customers" is the ideological accompaniment to these different modes of

privatisation. "Customer services," in fact, hide the procedures and processes through which inequalities are constructed and maintained in housing assessment and allocation. The women in this study, along with most applicants and tenants (Thomas and Niner, 1989; Bull, 1993) had little idea of how their applications were considered by staff and how the management service was changing in nature and diminishing in scope.

There has been some discussion about the possibilities of a new public service management being constructed to provide an alternative to the "new public management." At its centre, would be the recognition that applicants and tenants are people with rights who pay to receive a service, tailored to what they require in their particular circumstances (rather than receiving a diminishing "core" service which a local authority or housing association is prepared to provide). (See Clarke and Newman, 1997, Chapter 7; Newman, 1998 for useful summaries of the issues).

There were few signs of such an approach in any of the associations in this study and without external "prompting" it is unlikely to develop. Indeed, the Government is committed to introducing "Best Value" into local authority service evaluation - and housing associations are being expected to voluntarily participate (DETR, 1999). This will entail a five-yearly review of "in house" services, comparing their competitiveness and financial "efficiency" with that of other providers in the private sector. There are possibilities to develop this approach (emphasising service quality, equity issues and accountability, for example) but this will be difficult as these issues are not central to the "Best Value" regime (Centre for Democratic Policy Making/Red Pepper, 2000). The Government has also limited its options for change in social housing management in the recent Green Paper. It has simply suggested that allocations in social housing should be based more on "choice" rather than on a "take it or leave it" basis (DETR and DSS, 2000) and proposed a number of pilot schemes to investigate the ways in which this might be achieved. This barely touches the wider issue of the role of public services in protecting and supporting people who are in the weakest positions in society (through their class position, their relationship to "the family" and/ or through the impact of racism). This study shows how far the housing management service in associations needs to change in relation

to one group of applicants and tenants, who became homeless because of domestic violence. Other applicants and tenants equally need a more responsive housing management service. Only through acknowledging this, can associations begin to consider how their management services may positively assist applicants and tenants in the difficult personal task of rebuilding their lives.

**APPENDIX 1 INTERVIEWS UNDERTAKEN WITH SEMI-
STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRES AND TOPIC
GUIDES**

LOCAL AUTHORITY INTERVIEWS

Single homeless team Principal Officers (2)
Family homeless team Principal Officer (1)
Neighbourhood Housing Managers (3)
Contract Manager (1)
Principal Officer (Nominations) (1)
Women's Officer (1)
Interagency Project Co-ordinator (1)
Interagency Pilot Project Area Workers (2)

HOUSING ASSOCIATION INTERVIEWS

Vice Chair-Committee (1)
Area Director (1)
Chief Executive (2)
Senior Management Staff (5)
Business Support Manager (1)
Hostel Manager/Assistant Manager (2)
Supported Housing Manager
Resettlement Worker (Hostel) (1)
Hostel Support Worker (1)
Front Line Housing Management Staff (6)
Equal Opportunity Advisor (1)
Tenant Participation Officer (1)
Tenant Support Worker (1)

WOMEN TENANTS OF ASSOCIATIONS (8)

REFUGES (2)

**SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE
LOCAL AUTHORITY SINGLE HOMELESS TEAM PRINCIPAL
OFFICERS**

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. How is the homeless function handled in the local authority? Who does what? What is your job title and broad features of responsibility?
2. Why is there a split between singles and families?
3. How do members of the public know where to come? What information is available about domestic violence? What referral arrangements are in place? What about referrals from housing associations? How do they work?
4. How do you make decisions? What do you take into account? (impact of Housing Act 1996?) What are the problematic decision making points?
5. Temporary accommodation - when is it used? Are housing associations involved in its provision?
6. What action does the authority take against violent perpetrators, if any?
7. Who is nominated to associations? How are they selected? Any problems?
8. What happens to people who are not nominated?
9. Do you have any views on housing associations - specifically in relation to their response to homelessness?
10. Future work?
 - * the common waiting list?
 - * support?
11. Any other comments?

MANY THANKS FOR TALKING TO ME

**SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE
LOCAL AUTHORITY FAMILY HOMELESS TEAM PRINCIPAL OFFICER
CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT**

1. Job title and range of responsibilities?

2. How is the responsibility for dealing with homeless families organised? (and why the split between singles and families and the decentralisation of families?)

3. How do people know where to come? Proportions/numbers applying at Neighbourhood Offices and centrally? What is the nature of the service at each?

4. Referrals from housing associations - views?

5. What do you take into account in relation to women leaving domestic violence?

* eligibility?

* homeless/threatened with homelessness? What about perps. outside or never lived with?

* priority need? What about children not with?

* intentionality? What about initial advice ignored?

* local connection? When used?

Any problems with these? Reviews?

6. Temporary accommodation - what is used for women leaving domestic violence? How are housing associations involved in this provision?

7. Action against perps.? What is done?

8. Nominations to associations? How selected? Success rate? Which associations tend to house the most women? Why? Problems?

9. Views on associations generally in relation to their handling of homelessness?

10. Future developments?

MANY THANKS FOR TALKING TO ME.

**SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE
LOCAL AUTHORITY NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSING MANAGERS**

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. Area covered by the office? Nature of the area?
2. How are homeless applications handled?
 - * which staff are involved?
 - * what do they do?
 - * numbers?
3. Any problems or advantages in dealing with homelessness in the local office?
4. The domestic violence policy
 - * how is it implemented?
 - * differences between Asian and African Caribbean women in approaching the office for help?
 - * training in the policy - then and now?
5. Are there advantages/disadvantages in having the policy?
6. Nominations (generally and domestic violence noms.)
 - * which associations do you most usually nominate to?
 - * opinions on performance of associations - especially those in immediate local area
 - * impact of voids on nominations?
 - * impact of councillors?
7. Views on inter agency working and project?
8. Any other comments - especially on associations/local authority working relationships?

THANKYOU FOR TALKING TO ME

SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE CONTRACT MANAGER

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. Area covered by contract? What role (does he have) in relation to the contract?
2. What role in relation to homelessness?
3. Advantages/disadvantages compared to the old system?
4. Role in relation to the domestic violence policy?
 - decisions - main issues (if there are any)
 - appeals - on what? (in relation to domestic violence)
5. Is this the same in other contract areas?
6. Nominations - role? Perception of housing association performance?
7. Domestic violence and inter-agency working
 - in general in this area?
 - role of the inter-agency project?
8. Training for staff? The impact of changes?
9. Any other comments - especially on the working relationship between the local authority and housing associations locally?

THANKYOU FOR TALKING TO ME

**SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE
PRINCIPAL OFFICER - HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS NOMINATIONS**

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. Job title? Range of job?

2. The formal nominations system

- * who can nominate and what is the process?
- * how is this monitored?

3. Housing association nomination performance

- * how is it assessed?
- * how is it monitored? can domestic violence noms be identified?
- * good and bad performance? reasons?
- * changeover following 96 Housing Act - any problems?

4. Housing associations requesting nominations

- * reasons for this and views on this?

5. Future developments

- * monitoring?
- * common waiting list?
- * HOMES performance?

6. Any other issues?

THANKYOU FOR TALKING TO ME

SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE LOCAL AUTHORITY WOMEN'S OFFICER

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. Job title? Range of job? Where located in housing department hierarchy?
2. The origins of the domestic violence policy? How did it come about? Who helped? Who hindered? How did it become departmental policy? Role of associations in it?
3. How has the policy on domestic violence been implemented? Any problems? Impact of decentralisation? Advantages with current arrangements?
4. Monitoring the policy – how is this done?
5. What is the role of associations? Views about them in the light of the policy?
6. Involvement in the inter-agency project? Why? How?
7. Future work?

MANY THANKS FOR TALKING TO ME

**SEMI STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE
INTER-AGENCY PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR**

A. The range of work

B. Links with local authority housing department

C. Links with housing associations

D. Innovative work

E. Dealing with poor practice

F. Training

G. Future work

H. The work of the pilot good practice area

I. Other comments

A. THE RANGE OF WORK

1. Looking at the Project chart - the emphasis of work seems to be in areas related to but not specifically focussed on housing. Is there an historic reason for this?

B. LINKS WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING DEPARTMENT

2. What links are there between the Project and the Housing Department? Formally? Informally?

3. What work has the Project done with the local authority housing department?

C. LINKS WITH HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

4. What is the relationship between the Project and housing associations in the city? (not necessarily in the good practice area)

5. What work has the Project done with housing associations?

D. INNOVATIVE WORK

6. What specific innovative work has been done in housing?

E. POOR PRACTICE

7. How does the Project generally deal with instances of practice which are poor? How do you find out?

F. TRAINING

8. What does it involve? Is it specific for housing associations? Who has attended over the years? Has it been monitored?

G. FURTHER WORK

9. Is there any further work which is planned that is housing oriented?

H. THE GOOD PRACTICE PILOT AREA

10. What has been the nature of work with associations in that area?

11. What work has been done in relation to the women's groups which were set up?

12. What work has been undertaken in relation to the black outreach project?

I. OTHER COMMENTS

13. Do you have any further comments about associations work?

**SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE
INTER AGENCY GOOD PRACTICE PILOT WORKERS**

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. What were the original aims of the pilot project area?
2. What was the relationship with the local authority's Housing Department?
 - * centrally?
 - * locally?
3. What specific work was done with the Housing Department in the area?
4. What was the relationship with the housing associations in the area? How was contact organised and maintained?
5. What specific work was done with housing associations?
 - * training?
 - * advice?
6. Was it possible to identify poor practice? How? What happened? What was the role of the pilot project in this?
7. Was it possible to identify good practice among the associations? What was the role of the pilot project in this?
8. What other housing related work has the project been involved in since it was established? eg black outreach project, women's groups? How were these developed?
9. Future work?
10. Any other comments?

THANKS FOR TALKING TO ME

SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE COMMITTEE VICE CHAIR

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. Role on Committee?
2. Committee structure? Role? Its strengths and weaknesses?
3. How would you characterise changes in the association since the Housing Act 1988? How did the Act affect black associations? Has the relationship with the community changed as a result? What other influences have shaped these relationships?
4. Consortium role? Implications for the association?
5. Staff growth? Changes? Reorganisation? Why?
6. Relationships with the local authority?
 - * development issues - the future?
 - * nominations issues?
 - * councillors?
7. Relationships with other organisations?
 - * main ones?
 - * inter agency project?
8. Development of domestic violence policy and practice in the association? How?
9. Monitoring staff performance and policy implementation? How?
10. Any other comments?

THANKYOU FOR TALKING TO ME

SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE AREA DIRECTOR

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. Job title? Range of job?
2. How would you characterise the changes for the association since the Housing Act 1988?
3. Why reorganise?
4. The housing management service - how has it changed in that period?
 - the way it is organised? who does what?
 - who is housed?
 - tenure diversification?
 - areas now working in?
5. Staff growth? Reorganisation? How was it done?
6. Own personal management style?
7. How does management structure the work eg meetings
 - how is work organised/monitored?
 - where would policy development/change fit in?
8. Implications of consortium?
9. Relationships with the local authority generally?
 - development - and the future?
 - housing management - and the future?

What influence do councillors have - especially on consortium schemes?
10. Role of Board and Area Committee?
 - strengths and weaknesses?
 - in relation to housing management issues?
 - monitoring role?
11. Any other issues?

THANKYOU FOR TALKING TO ME

SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. Job title? Range of job?
2. How would you characterise the changes for the association since the Housing Act 1988?
3. Implications for the association?
4. Implications for housing management?
5. Staff growth over that period? How?
6. Dominant management culture? Changes? Different management styles in senior staff?
7. Own personal management style?
8. How do you supervise/manage/oversee the housing management function?
9. Implications of consortium for the association?
10. Relationships with the local authority generally?
 - development - and the future? How did hostel (named) come about?
 - housing management - and the future? Influence of councillors?
11. Role of Management Committee and subcommittees?
 - strengths and weaknesses?
 - policy development role?
 - monitoring role?
12. Any other issues?

SEMI STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SENIOR MANAGEMENT STAFF

CONTENTS

A. Respondent details

B. The working environment

C. Association policies

D. Staff management

E. Service delivery

F. Income and expenditure

G. Working with other agencies

H. Board/Committee involvement

I. Other comments

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

A. RESPONDENT DETAILS

I would like to start by asking you for a few details about yourself and your job.

1. Could you say what your job title is and what your main areas of responsibility are?

2. How long have you been doing this job? General background?

3. How many housing management staff do you manage overall?

- * On site?
- * Off site?
- * Hostels?

4. In general terms, how would you characterise your approach to managing staff?

- * formal supervision?
- * formal/informal briefing?
- * maintaining standards?

5. Do most senior staff have the same approach? Are there similarities/differences?

6. Do you think that the association has a strong internal culture? How would you describe it?

B. THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

I think it would be useful to start with the changes which have occurred since the 1988 Housing Act and the way the association has responded to it.

7. Is the housing management service the same as it was or has it changed? How has it changed? What are the effects of those changes?

- * the way it is organised?

- * what staff do?
- * the nature of the people rehoused?
- * dealing with homelessness?
- * housing benefit changes?

8. Has the 1996 Housing Act affected the ways the association helps the homeless?

9. From your position in the association, do you have an idea of

- * approximately how often staff have to deal with violent situations? domestic violence?
- * Is dealing with violence/domestic violence increasing/decreasing as part of the job of front line staff?
- * Is it something that occurs most often with tenants? applicants? Why do you think there is a difference?

C. ASSOCIATION POLICIES

Moving on to think about whether or not the association has policies relating to domestic violence and associated issues...

Domestic violence

10. Depending on whether the association has a policy or not -

(if there is a policy on domestic violence)

- * Do you know how the policy came about? Is it possible to describe the process and who was involved?
- * What do you think the advantages/disadvantages to having one are?

(if there is no policy on domestic violence)

- * Is there any particular reason(s) why there isn't one?

* Do you think that there are advantages/disadvantages to not having a policy?

11. How do staff know what to do in domestic violence situations? Where does their knowledge come from?

12. Although you have got/have not got a formal policy, do you have an idea of whether staff use any external good practice/advice in dealing with domestic violence? (prompt)

* from the inter-agency project?

* from the NHF?

* from other local authorities/housing associations?

Dealing with violent men

12. Are there specific guidelines for staff about what to do with people who have been violent towards their partners? (eg waiting list applications, underoccupancy, giving advice on options)

* Where do staff learn about what to do in these situations?

13. When would you, as a senior manager, get involved (if at all)? What is the nature of senior management involvement and what are the limits?

Confidentiality

14. Does the association have guidelines which have to be followed in relation to confidentiality issues? How do staff know about them?

15. Do you think that there are particular reasons for confidentiality when domestic violence is involved which are different from the need for confidentiality in general? Examples?

16. How do staff learn about these differences?

Information

17. Is a particular member of staff responsible for the information which is available in the reception area? Who decides what is displayed? Who checks it?

D. STAFF MANAGEMENT

18. How is the supervision (and briefing) of management staff organised?

19. What issues would you usually discuss with your Housing Managers? Would domestic violence situations ever arise in those discussions?

20. Would you become involved in dealing with domestic violence in any other way?

21. Do you think that other work priorities which staff have may affect their work in relation to people leaving domestic violence? How would this happen?

* dealing with other emergencies?

* referring people and not acting themselves?

* limits on "support?"

22. Do you think that the personal experience of individual staff may affect the way they respond to domestic violence?

* backing off? What are the expectations?

* getting too involved? What are the limits?

23. What is the range of training, support or supervision provided to staff in dealing with violence in general and domestic violence in particular?

24. How would you spot poor performance in relation to handling domestic violence situations? What's the difference between these situations and other work situations? Can you monitor them?

E. SERVICE DELIVERY

Moving on now to thinking about what staff might actually do if they were dealing with domestic violence....

25. If someone came into the office saying that they had to leave because of domestic violence, what in broad terms, would you expect a staff member to do? (the list is a prompt)

- * nature of interviews - any views?
- * nature of violence - what circumstances gain what priority?
- * nature of relationship - what is acceptable?
- * evidence - what is needed? Why?
- * referral - when, to whom and how?

26. How much discretion do staff have over these various aspects?

27. Is there or has there traditionally been a split between supported and general needs accommodation in the association?

- * Why is/was this?
- * Who is able to get "support" now? Have the barriers eroded?
- * Would women who had resettled following violence be able to obtain extra "support" from the association?

28. What are the main difficulties for association staff in rehousing women who have left domestic violence? (the list is a prompt)

- * the need for support?
- * arrears?
- * recurrent violence?
- * isolation?
- * poverty?
- * impact of single parents on the community?

29. What is the range of possible work which staff can do in relation to these problems? Do staff get training on these?

30. Has the association ever refused an application because of any of these possible problems or rehoused in particular areas only? Examples would be useful?

F. INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Some of the circumstances which occur when women leave domestic violence or when they are experiencing it have financial as well as personal consequences. I would like to discuss this aspect in terms of how that is handled in the association.

31. Could you tell me what responsibilities you have in controlling costs and maximising income? How does your job relate to the finance staff in the office?

32. What procedures do you have in place to monitor

* arrears?

* voids?

33. Are there particular types of housing or specific areas where controlling these is likely to be more or less of a problem? Why?

34. Are there any particular arrangements in place to deal with exceptional circumstances eg double rent problems, damage, arrears in joint tenancies? (are they regarded as exceptional?)

35. Would you ever identify types of household which may be more challenging in terms of rent arrears or voids or damage or violence than others and vary management practice accordingly? Why would you do that?

G. WORKING WITH OTHER AGENCIES

36. Which external organisations do you have most contact with? Why?

37. Which agencies does the association most often work with in relation to dealing with domestic violence?

38. How would you describe the working relationships which the association has with them (use table)

39. Do you know whether the association has ever refused to work with any agency? What were the circumstances?

TABLE - WORKING WITH OTHER AGENCIES

	Not helpful	Helpful	Very helpful
----- Police -----			
----- Social workers -----			
----- Women's Aid/ black women's refuge -----			
----- Advice centres -----			
----- Solicitors -----			
----- Housing department -----			
----- Victim support -----			
----- Any other -----			

40. How useful has the inter-agency project been in relation to the association's work (the list is a prompt)

* training?

* meetings?

* other work?

41. Who has been involved from the association? How was that decided? Is attendance monitored?

42. How is the information provided at inter-agency "events" of one kind or another used in the association?

H. BOARD/COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT

43. How would you describe the role of the Board/Area Committee?

44. How does your job relate to the Board/ Committee?

45. What involvement has the Board/Committee had in discussing/devising policy or practice guidelines for -

* Harassment and/or violence generally?

* Domestic violence in particular?

46. How do they monitor these policies?

47. Do you think that there are any difficulties in monitoring these types of situations?

I. OTHER COMMENTS

48. Do you have any other comments about how domestic violence is dealt with in the association?

49. Have you any other comments or questions about the research?

MANY THANKS FOR SPENDING TIME IN TALKING TO ME

SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE BUSINESS SUPPORT MANAGER

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. Job title? Range of job?
2. Impact of re-organisation on her job?
3. Relationship with divisional and area offices
4. The policy process (conducted by discussing in detail the policy process diagram she had previously forwarded to me)
5. Review of the lettings policy -
 - * why?
 - * likely process/timetable? how does it fit with discussion undertaken previously about the policy process?
 - * possible outcomes?
6. Where will the domestic violence policy fit into the review? How will it fare?
7. Any other comments?

THANKYOU FOR TALKING TO ME

SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE HOSTEL MANAGER/ASSISTANT MANAGER

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. Job title? Range of job?
2. How long have you done this job? What did you do before?
3. The hostel (named) - what does it comprise?
4. How was it developed?
 - * relationships with the local authority?
 - * relationships with refuges?
5. Any problems since it opened? Voids?
6. Referrals
 - * where do they come from?
 - * criteria for acceptance? the process generally?
 - * specific route - central homeless teams?, Neighbourhood Offices?, the association? other?
7. How is confidentiality handled in these instances?
8. Role of workers vis a vis residents? Who does what generally?
9. The process of rehousing
 - * with the local authority?
 - * with associations?
 - * with others?
10. How is confidentiality handled in these instances?

11. Are arrears or the potential need for "support" ever issues with any of these landlords? How handled?

12. Support needs on rehousing

- * is there any provision for "support" from the Project?
- * how?
- * liaison with other "support" workers in the field?
- * does it affect rehousing?

13. What links are there with other agencies and views on these?

COMPLETE TABLE OF AGENCIES HERE

14. inter-agency project - what contact? links? usefulness?

15. Training - what have you had? what would be useful?

16. FOR ASSISTANT MANAGER ONLY What role did you have in the development of the draft domestic violence policy? What happened with it? What would now be useful to give it renewed impetus?

17. Any other issues?

SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE SUPPORTED HOUSING MANAGER

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. Job title? Range of job? Half time?
2. How long have you been doing this job? What did you do before?
3. Has the post always been the same? The effects of reorganisation?
4. Range and type of projects involved?
5. The hostel
 - * how/why developed?
 - * how managed?
 - * how are referrals organised?
 - * turnover/voids?
6. Example of resident rehoused into the hostel?
7. Rehousing - where do women go? Confidentiality - how is it handled?
8. What happens if the association rehouse?
9. Support needs on rehousing
 - * are there any necessarily?
 - * who provides support?
10. Example of someone who has been rehoused?

11. Links with other agencies? USE TABLE

12. Inter-agency project - any contact? views?

13. Any other issues?

THANKYOU FOR TALKING TO ME

SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE RESETTLEMENT WORKER - HOSTEL

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. Job title? Range of job? Housing management or "support" emphasis?
2. How long doing? What did before?
3. How are women referred to (named) hostel? What criteria for acceptance? Average (or range) length of stay? How is confidentiality handled at this stage?
4. Voids? Why? What to do?
5. Work with residents?
6. Rehousing - where do women go? How is confidentiality handled?
 - a) council rehouse? what's the process?
 - b) The association rehouses? what's the process?
 - c) others? what's the process?

Are arrears or "support" issues in this process?
7. "Support" needs - how identified? how provided for? (or not!)

Do "support" needs ever affect rehousing?
8. Links with other agencies?
 - Links with inter-agency project?
 - Use TABLE for other possible links?
9. Discussion of someone who has stayed in the hostel and been rehoused successfully. What happened?

10. Discussion of someone who has stayed in the hostel and where they did not get rehoused. What happened?

11. Training - What specific training/support have you had to help you deal with domestic violence issues?

- stress management?
- law on injunctions?
- law on divorce?
- homeless legislation changes?
- inter-agency work?
- domestic violence awareness training?
- handling violence?
- immigration law?
- child abuse law/social work practice?
- counselling skills?
- benefits advice/debt counselling/money management skills?

12. Any other issues?

THANKYOU FOR TALKING TO ME

SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE HOSTEL SUPPORT WORKER

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. Job title? Range of job? Emphasis on support or management?
 2. How long have you been doing this? What did you do before?
 3. Has the post always been the same? The effects of reorganisation?
 4. How are referrals made to the hostel? What criteria are there for acceptance? Average length of stay? How is confidentiality handled?
 5. Voids? Why? What did you do?
 6. Rehousing - where do women go?
 - * the council rehouse - what's the process?
 - * the association rehuses - what's the process?
 - * other solutions?
- Are there any advantages/disadvantages to any of these? What is their attitude to arrears?
7. Support needs - How identified? Are they provided for? Has this ever been a problem with rehousing?
 8. Links with other agencies?
 - * USE TABLE
 - * Inter agency project?
 9. Example of someone who has been rehoused from the hostel and example of someone where they have returned to their former situation or become homeless again?

10. Training/support needs? What specific training/support have you had to deal with domestic violence issues?

- * stress management?
- * law on injunctions?
- * law on divorce?
- * homeless legislation changes?
- * inter-agency work?
- * domestic violence awareness training?
- * handling violence?
- * immigration law?
- * child abuse law/social work practice?
- * counselling skills?
- * benefits advice/debt counselling/ money management skills?

11. Any other issues

THANKYOU FOR TALKING TO ME

SEMI STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FRONT LINE HOUSING MANAGEMENT STAFF

CONTENTS

- a. Respondent details
- b. Association policies
- c. The meaning of domestic violence
- d. The impact of domestic violence
- e. Applying for an association home
- f. Allocating an association home
- g. The association management service
- h. Working with other agencies
- i. Individual staff training and support needs
- j. Other comments

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

RESPONDENT DETAILS

I would like to start by asking you for a few details about yourself and your job.

1. Could you say what your job title is and what your main areas of responsibility are?
2. How long have you been doing this job? What other housing experience have you had before doing this job?

ASSOCIATION POLICIES

I think it would be useful to start with talking about the work of the association generally – especially whether or not it has policies which relate to dealing with domestic violence.

3. Does the association have policy guidelines for staff relating to what to do when approached by a woman who is experiencing domestic violence?
(change phrasing depending on term used)

Yes – how helpful are they in your work?

No – would a set of guidelines be useful or would you prefer to handle situations as you do now?

4. Are there specific policy guidelines for dealing with people who have been violent towards their partners or are decisions made as and when a situation arises?

Yes – how useful are they in your work?

No – would you find guidelines useful or would you prefer handling things as you do now?

5. Does the association have guidelines which you have to follow in relation to confidentiality issues?
6. Do you think that confidentiality is a different issue when dealing with domestic violence situations compared to other situations? How is it different?
7. What information/publicity is usually available for people coming to the office on domestic violence? Is it useful? Could it be better?

THE MEANING OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Kinds of violence

The term "domestic violence" can mean different things to different people. I'm interested to know what you would include in the term – especially in relation to prioritising applications.

8. What kinds of behaviour would you think of as domestic violence? (the list is a prompt)

Physical violence?

Sexual attacks and/or abuse?

Psychological/mental cruelty?

Relationships

The most usual situation you are likely to deal with is when a woman is living with or has left a violent man, but I'm also interested to know about other situations.

9. Could you say what other kinds of relationships you have known where domestic violence occurred? (the list is a prompt)

Living apart – separated? Divorced?

Never lived together?

Other family members?

Men needing help?

Gay men or lesbian women?

Carers?

10. Why do you think it is that it is almost exclusively women who approach the association for help because of domestic violence?

Different backgrounds

11. Do you think that a woman's cultural background and beliefs, including religious beliefs, can affect the ways in which she might try and find help including help finding another home? e.g. Jewish women, Muslim women, Catholic women?
12. Do you think that black women's opportunities for getting help (including help from housing associations) are likely to be different from white women's? e.g. African Caribbean women, Pakistani women, Chinese women?

CONSIDERING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

13. When are you most likely to have to respond to domestic violence situations?
(the list is a prompt) How often approximately is that?

Waiting list applications?

Nominations?

Transfer requests?

Own tenants – not wanting to move?

14. Thinking about all the situations you have been involved in, what do you think causes domestic violence?
15. When do you have to use your own judgement in situations involving domestic violence?
16. Do you have worries or concerns about becoming involved in domestic violence situations? If yes, how do you deal with them?

17. Are there situations where you think the association shouldn't get involved?
18. Do you feel that your approach is fairly typical of staff in the association? If not, how does it differ?

APPLYING FOR AN ASSOCIATION HOME

I would like now to concentrate on how women might apply for an association home. We'll look at general features first (eg interviews) and then focus on the waiting list, nominations and transfers in turn.

Approaching for the first time

19. What are women's expectations when they first approach the association? How different are they from what you can actually provide?
20. Do you think that there is anything that is likely to put some women off applying to the association? (the list is a prompt)

Lack of knowledge of the association?

Location of the office or property?

Rent levels?

All white staff?

Male staff?

Interviews

21. Is there anything about interviewing women in this situation which makes these interviews different from others?

Are they difficult in any way? If yes, why?

22. How do you think the woman feels in this interviewing situation? What can you do about that?

Can a woman choose who she is interviewed by to make her feel more at ease in discussing the violence? Do you think that offering this choice is important? Why?

What do you do if English is not the woman's first language?

Proof

23. Do you need "proof" or external corroboration of domestic violence for a direct application or transfer application to get priority?

If none is needed – why not?

If some is needed – what counts? Why is it needed?

Legal Action

24. Are there circumstances in which you have advised a woman to get an injunction? Why give this advice?

Did housing priority depend on their following this advice?

25. Have you ever advised women to take other civil or criminal action against their violent ex-partners?

Why was this advice given/not given?

Referring to the local authority

26. When and in what circumstances do you refer a woman to the local authority for help under the homelessness legislation?

What happens to her application to you in the meantime?

What if she is nominated back to you? What happens to her application?

What if she does not get homeless priority? What happens to her application?

27. Are there ever occasions when you don't refer women to the local authority?
Why not?

Direct applications

28. What kinds of domestic violence situations are usually dealt with through the association's waiting list as direct applications?
29. How long roughly do women have to wait on the waiting list before getting an offer? Do you think that this affects them? What can you do about it?

DISCUSSION OF A DIRECT APPLICATION WHICH COMES TO MIND

Discussion of issues from this application. How typical is this application? If it is different – why is this?

Nomination issues

30. What are the main domestic violence situations which come to you through nominations from the local authority?
31. How much control does the association have over who is nominated? Does this cause any problems?
32. How long roughly does it take for a woman who has been nominated to get rehoused? Do you think that this affects the woman? What can you do about this?
33. Do you think that this likely waiting time might affect the local authority view of who to nominate to the association?

DISCUSSION OF A NOMINATION WHICH COMES TO MIND

Discussion of issues. Is this a typical case? If it is different in any way – what are the differences?

Transfer applications

34. If one of your tenants approaches you for help because of violence, what are you most likely to be asked to do? How do you usually deal with these situations? (the list is a prompt)

Damage done?
Upset neighbours?
A transfer request?

35. In your experience with your own tenants, in this situation what role do-

Friends and relatives play or
Neighbours have?

36. Have you ever received an application from HOMES asking for help to rehouse a woman leaving violence?

If yes, how was her application dealt with?

DISCUSSION OF A TRANSFER APPLICATION WHICH COMES TO MIND

Discussion of issues arising. Is this a typical case? If it is not, how is it different from most transfer cases involving domestic violence?

ALLOCATING AN ASSOCIATION HOME

I would like now to focus on the process you go through when allocating properties and concentrate on what happens to applications from women who have left domestic violence.

The area

37. Do women get offer(s) only in the area(s) they have asked for?

If yes – why?

If no – why not?

38. Are there any areas, estates or types of housing which would not be offered to women who had left violence?

If there is a restriction, why?

39. Is it management practice to avoid concentrating single women or lone parents in any areas?

Why do you do that? How do you actually achieve that?

Do you think that this affects the ability of the association to rehouse women who have left domestic violence?

Making offers

40. When a vacancy occurs how do you decide between competing priority cases? (i.e. when two or more applicants have the same number of points or same priority). What factors do you consider?

41. What are the most important factors when you are considering someone who has become homeless/had to be rehoused because of domestic violence? (the list is a prompt)

Living near a friend?

Social mix?

Security?

42. What factors do you think a woman considers most important when she is deciding whether or not to accept an offer? (the list is a prompt).

Local contacts?

Security?

Friends nearby?

43. What importance is placed on the process of signing up a new tenant? Is there a clause on domestic violence? If yes, how is that received?

THE ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT SERVICE

This section concentrates on the housing management service available to women once they have become tenants. It looks firstly at the support which you may be able to give women and then secondly looks at possible action against the men who have been violent.

Providing support

44. Across all the cases you've dealt with, what help/advice do you tend to be asked for by women when they first move in?
45. From your experience, do you think that women who have left domestic violence and been rehoused need "support" over and above the usual management service?

If yes, do you have discretion to provide it yourself or do you refer on? (if refer on, move to question 47)

46. What would you do if a women came for help to you because of:

Isolation

As a white woman moving to a new area

As a black woman moving to a new area

As an Asian woman moving to a new area

No furniture (ask to be specific)

Money management (ask to be specific)

No knowledge of local facilities/services

Mental health problems especially depression

Problems with the children (ask to be specific)

Sexual harassment from men/youths in area

Racial harassment

Any other problems

47. Do you feel with any of these situations that you get asked or have to do things which other agencies should be doing? Examples

DISCUSSION OF AN APPLICANT WHO COMES TO MIND WHERE YOU REHOUSED A WOMAN AND THEN GAVE HELP WHICH ENABLED HER TO SETTLE IN HER NEW HOME AND AREA

Discussion of issues arising. Is this typical? If not, how does it differ from others?

We talked about policy guidelines for staff to deal with violent men in these situations at the beginning. In this section of the interview, I would like to concentrate on what usually happens in relation to men who are violent and look at different aspects of this.

Dealing with violent men

48. Is it possible for a man with a known history of violence towards a partner(s) to register on the waiting list and be rehoused?

Yes/No – what do you think about that?

49. What usually happens when a woman leaves her partner because of violence and he remains in the association home?

50. What action do you take against men who find out where their former partners are living in association tenancies and start to harass them?

51. What are you able to do for the woman in these situations? (the list is a prompt)

Security measures?

Emergency repairs? (what about broken windows?)

Personal support?

Injunctions?

What about neighbours?

52. What view would you take if the man moved in?

WORKING WITH OTHER AGENCIES

There are a range of other agencies which work in this field. I'm interested to know what your experience has been of them.

53. Of the organisations you do work with, how do you rate them in terms of willingness to work with you in a helpful way?

In what ways were they helpful or otherwise? Extent of contact? (Explore their particular experiences here).

USE TABLE TO HELP WITH REPOSSES

54. In your experience, do black women tend to use agencies as much as white women or do they tend to get help from other sources?

55. In dealing with domestic violence, have you ever had to refuse to work with an organisation? Why?

56. Has confidentiality ever been a problem? If yes, how?

57. Thinking about this more generally, how would you describe inter-agency co-operation in the city in relation to domestic violence?

OUT OF ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES DISCUSSED TODAY – WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST DIFFICULT SITUATION YOU HAVE EVER DEALT WITH AND WHY WAS THAT?

INDIVIDUAL STAFF TRAINING AND SUPPORT NEEDS
(Ask if not mentioned as an extra organisation at q51)

58. Do you know anything about the work of the inter agency project? (the list is a prompt)

Training?
Meetings?
Other work?

How useful has the contact been personally?

59. Do you know about the National Housing Federation's good practice guide on dealing with violence in the home? How useful is that?
60. What specific training have you had in handling the range of issues likely to come up when dealing with domestic violence?
61. What training do you think you need? (the list is a prompt)

Stress management?
The law on injunctions?
The law on divorce?
The homelessness legislation changes?
Interpreting waiting list priorities?
Providing and funding support?
Inter-agency work?
Domestic violence awareness training?
Handling violence?
Immigration law as it affects housing associations?
Child abuse law and the role of social workers?
Counselling skills?
Benefits advice/debt counselling/money management skills?

OTHER COMMENTS

62. Any other comments – about the questions or more generally?

Thank you for your help in completing this interview

TABLE – WORKING WITH OTHER AGENCIES

	Not helpful	Helpful	Very helpful
Police?			
Social Workers?			
Women's Aid/Sahara			
Advice Centres?			
Solicitors?			
Housing Department?			
Victim Support?			
Any Other?			

SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES ADVISOR

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. Job title? Range of job?
2. Has it changed following reorganisation?
3. Advantages/disadvantages of reorganisation for the work?
4. In an equal opportunities framework - what powers do area offices have over
 - * recruitment? internal appointments? targets?
 - * lettings? targets?
5. Training on the policy - how organised?
6. Development of the policy in the first instance -
 - * how did it come about?
 - * who was involved?
 - * advantages of having one?
 - * disadvantages of having one?
7. Issues which have emerged from area office
 - * points issue
 - * evidence issue
8. What will happen when the lettings policy is reviewed? (specifically relating to impact on domestic violence)
9. Any other issues?

THANKYOU FOR TALKING TO ME

SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE TENANT PARTICIPATION WORKER

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. Can you tell me what your job title is and the main features of the job?
2. How long have you been doing the job and what did you do before?
3. What are the main areas of the work now?
4. How do people find out about "projects"/ how do they get involved?
5. Who gets involved? How do they get involved? What aspects of the associations work do different people tend to get involved in? What about "vulnerable" people?
6. What is the relationship with housing officers?
7. What about the relationship with supported housing?
8. What is the role of the Yorkshire Group?
9. Any other thoughts?

MANY THANKS FOR TALKING TO ME

**SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE
ASSOCIATION TENANT SUPPORT WORKER**

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. Job title? Range of job? Support or management?
2. How long been doing? What did before?
3. Where did the idea for the job come from? Has the reorganisation affected it in any way?
4. How are people identified for TSW support? What is the working relationship with housing management staff?
5. Range of people supporting now?
 - * Examples?
 - * Where does domestic violence fit in?
 - * How many black or Asian people are helped?
6. What range of help can be given to women leaving domestic violence?
7. Working with other organisations
 - USE TABLE
 - * What about the inter-agency project?
8. How do you deal with violence yourself?
9. Training and support needs?
10. Any other comments?

THANKYOU FOR TALKING TO ME

TOPIC GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS WITH WOMEN TENANTS OF ASSOCIATIONS

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. Family and home

By self or with children?
How long here?
Where wanted to be or not? Reasons?
What wanted? (type of house/flat)
* Good points?
* Bad points?
Feel safe or not?

2. Housing staff

Do they deal with bad points? (as above) Opinion?
What contact/help did you get when applying?
What help when moving in? and after moving in?
What about attitudes?

3. Other housing organisations

Any help from the council?
Any help from other housing associations?
Nature of help?
Was it any use?

4. Area

Happy with area? Did you have a choice?
Good/bad points?
Safety and the area - eg burglaries

5. Advice for other women and the association (and council)

THANKYOU FOR TALKING TO ME

SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE WOMEN'S AID REFUGE - ASSISTANT MANAGER

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. Job title? Range of job? How long doing?
2. Where does it fit in the refuge job structure?
3. Referrals to refuge
 - * criteria for acceptance?
 - * referring to another refuge/agency?
 - * confidentiality?
4. Where do women come from? Range of backgrounds and circumstances?
5. Work with women while in refuge - what help is provided especially on housing?
6. Applying to the local authority
 - * what is the process?
 - * good and bad points?
 - * is support or arrears a problem?
7. Applying to housing associations
 - * what is the process?
 - * good and bad points?
8. Links with other agencies including the inter agency project? Views on how helpful they are?
9. Staff training and support - what is provided?
10. Any other issues?

**SEMI STRUCTURED TOPIC GUIDE
BLACK WOMEN'S REFUGE WORKER**

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

1. Job title? Range of job? How long doing?
2. Where fits in refuge job structure?
3. Referrals
 - * where do they come from?
 - * criteria for acceptance?
 - * referring on?
 - * confidentiality?
4. What backgrounds and circumstances do women come from?
 - * different ethnic groups?
 - * languages?
 - * children? Black children and white mothers?
 - * single women?
5. What housing work can you do while a woman is in the refuge? What about once she is rehoused?
 - * applying to the local authority?
 - * applying to housing associations?
6. Links with other agencies - including the inter-agency project?
7. Staff training and support?
8. Any other comments?

THANKYOU FOR TALKING TO ME

APPENDIX 2

**INVITATIONS TO WOMEN TENANTS OF
ASSOCIATIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE
RESEARCH**

(Prepared in English, Punjabi and Urdu)

February 1998

AN INVITATION FOR WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN REHOUSED BECAUSE OF
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

This letter is to ask you if you would be willing to talk to me about how you found your new home and how you feel about the area in which you now live. I am doing research on what happens when women have to leave their homes because of domestic violence - concentrating on talking to women who have been rehoused by housing associations.

To tell you a bit about myself - I am a white woman who lives in Leeds but works in York - at the University. I have worked in housing for over 20 years - doing advice work, housing management, research, campaigning and writing. I have written guides for housing association staff on how to respond to domestic violence, homelessness, racial harassment and racial equality in employment. I have also researched the housing needs of the black and Asian communities who live in Calderdale.

After I have spoken to a broad range of women I hope to write a report which will clearly present what women would like from housing associations. I hope to include women from the different Asian communities, African Caribbean and African women and white women.

Everything we talk about will be kept confidential. This research is being undertaken independently of the refuge and housing associations although they have both agreed to help by sending out these invitations. I do not know who you are or where you live - if you would like to talk to me those details have to be included in the form attached to this letter.

So I hope very much that you will contact me. I am happy to work with an interpreter if English is not your first language. She will be experienced and will also work confidentially. I estimate that we would need about one and a half hours although that depends on what you would like to tell me.

If you would like to be involved please complete the letter which is attached to this one and return it to me. A pre-paid envelope is enclosed.

I hope very much that you will talk to me.



Cathy Davis
Centre for Housing Policy

AN INVITATION

Yes, I would like to be involved in your research

My name is

My address (or "care of" address) is

The best way to contact me to arrange a time for us to talk is (please tick which one)

By letter
By phone My number is

The best days to call/contact me are (please tick)

Mon Tues Wed Thurs Fri

The best time usually is:

Morning Afternoon Either

I would like you to arrange an interpreter (please tick if needed)

I speak (please tick the main language which you speak)

Punjabi Gujarati Urdu
Hindi Vietnamese Chinese

Other (Please say which)

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS. PLEASE NOW POP IT IN THE POST!
(ENVELOPE/POSTAGE PROVIDED)

ਘਰੇਲੂ ਹਿੰਸਾ ਦੇ ਕਾਰਣ ਦੁਬਾਰਾ ਵਸਾਈਆਂ ਹੋਈਆਂ ਔਰਤਾਂ ਲਈ ਇੱਕ ਸੱਦਾ ਪੱਤਰ

ਇਹ ਚਿੱਠੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਪੁਛਣ ਲਈ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਮੇਰੇ ਨਾਲ ਗੱਲ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੋਗੇ ਕਿ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਆਪਣਾ ਨਵਾਂ ਘਰ ਕਿਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਲੱਭਿਆ ਅਤੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਉਸ ਏਰੀਏ ਦੇ ਵਾਰੇ, ਜਿਸ ਵਿੱਚ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਹੁਣ ਰਹਿੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਕੀ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਕਰਦੇ ਹੋ? ਮੈਂ ਇਹ ਰਿਸਰਚ (ਖੋਜ) ਹਾਊਸਿੰਗ ਐਸੋਸਿਏਸ਼ਨ ਦੁਬਾਰਾ ਵਸਾਈਆਂ ਹੋਈਆਂ ਔਰਤਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ ਗੱਲਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਧਿਆਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਰੱਖਕੇ ਕਰ ਰਹੀ ਹਾਂ - ਕਿ ਜਦੋਂ ਔਰਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਘਰੇਲੂ ਹਿੰਸਾ ਕਾਰਣ ਆਪਣੇ ਘਰ ਛੱਡਣੇ ਪੈਂਦੇ ਹਨ ਤਾਂ ਕੀ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ?

ਮੈਂ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਬੜਾ ਜਿਹਾ ਆਪਣੇ ਵਾਰੇ ਦੱਸਾਂ- ਮੈਂ ਇੱਕ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਔਰਤ ਹਾਂ ਜੋ ਲੀਡਜ਼ ਵਿੱਚ ਰਹਿੰਦੀ ਅਤੇ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਯੋਰਕ ਵਿੱਚ ਕੰਮ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਮੈਂ 20 ਸਾਲ ਤੋਂ ਉੱਪਰ ਹਾਊਸਿੰਗ ਲਈ ਕੰਮ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੈ, ਜਿਹਦੇ ਵਿੱਚ-ਸਲਾਹ ਦੇਣ ਦਾ ਕੰਮ, ਹਾਊਸਿੰਗ ਮੈਨੇਜਮੈਂਟ, ਰਿਸਰਚ, ਕੈਂਪੇਨਿੰਗ ਅਤੇ ਲਿਖਣ ਦਾ ਕੰਮ ਸ਼ਾਮਿਲ ਹੈ। ਮੈਂ ਹਾਊਸਿੰਗ ਐਸੋਸਿਏਸ਼ਨ ਦੇ ਸਟਾਫ਼ ਲਈ ਗਾਈਡਾਂ (ਹਿਦਾਇਤ ਦੀਆਂ ਕਿਤਾਬਾਂ) ਲਿਖੀਆਂ ਹਨ ਕਿ ਘਰੇਲੂ ਹਿੰਸਾ, ਬੇਘਰ ਹੋਣਾ, ਜਾਤਪਾਤ ਦੀ ਪਰੇਸ਼ਾਨੀ, ਕੰਮਕਾਰ ਦੇਣ ਲੱਗੇ ਜਾਤਪਾਤ ਦੀ ਸਮਾਨਤਾ ਵਾਰੇ ਕਿਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਜਵਾਬ ਦੇਣਾ ਹੈ। ਮੈਂ ਕੈਲਡਰਡੇਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਰਹਿਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਕਾਲੇ ਅਤੇ ਏਸ਼ੀਅਨ ਕੌਮਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਘਰੇਲੂ ਜ਼ਰੂਰਤਾਂ ਵਾਰੇ ਵੀ ਰਿਸਰਚ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੈ।

ਕਾਫੀ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਔਰਤਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਗੱਲ ਕਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਦ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਉਮੀਦ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਮੈਂ ਜੋ ਰਿਪੋਰਟ ਲਿਖਾਂਗੀ ਉਹਦੇ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਾਫ਼ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਆਏਗਾ ਕਿ ਔਰਤਾਂ ਹਾਊਸਿੰਗ ਐਸੋਸਿਏਸ਼ਨ ਤੋਂ ਕੀ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਉਮੀਦ ਕਰਦੀ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਇਹਦੇ ਵਿੱਚ ਅਲੱਗ ਅਲੱਗ ਏਸ਼ੀਅਨ ਕੌਮਾਂ, ਅਫਰੀਕਨ ਕੈਰੇਬੀਅਨ ਅਤੇ ਅਫਰੀਕਨ ਔਰਤਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਔਰਤਾਂ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਹੋਣ।

ਹਰ ਉਹ ਚੀਜ਼ ਜਿਹਦੇ ਵਾਰੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਗੱਲ ਬਾਤ ਕਰਾਂਗੇ ਉਹ ਗੁਪਤ (ਭੇਤ ਵਿੱਚ) ਰੱਖੀ ਜਾਏਗੀ। ਇਹ ਰਿਸਰਚ ਨਿਰਪੱਖ ਰਿਫਊਜ਼ ਅਤੇ ਹਾਊਸਿੰਗ ਐਸੋਸਿਏਸ਼ਨ ਦੁਬਾਰਾ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਏਗੀ ਚਾਹੇ ਉਹ ਦੋਨੋਂ ਸੱਦੇ ਪੱਤਰ ਭੇਜਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਦਦ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਰਾਜ਼ੀ ਹੋ ਗਏ ਹਨ। ਮੈਂ ਇਹ ਨਹੀਂ ਜਾਣਦੀ ਕਿ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਕੌਣ ਹੋ ਅਤੇ ਕਿੱਥੇ ਰਹਿੰਦੇ ਹੋ - ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਮੇਰੇ ਨਾਲ ਗੱਲ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਵੇਰਵਾ ਇਸ ਪੱਤਰ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਭੇਜੇ ਫਾਰਮ ਤੇ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਕਰਨਾ ਪਵੇਗਾ।

ਸੋ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਪੂਰੀ ਉਮੀਦ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਮੇਰੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋਗੇ। ਮੈਂ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰੇਟਰ (ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲੇ) ਨਾਲ ਕੰਮ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਤਿਆਰ ਹਾਂ ਜੇ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਨਹੀਂ। ਉਹ ਤਜਰਬੇ ਵਾਲੀ ਹੋਵੇਗੀ ਅਤੇ ਭਰੋਸੇ ਯੋਗ ਕੰਮ ਕਰੇਗੀ। ਮੇਰੇ ਅੰਦਾਜ਼ੇ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਡੇਢ ਘੰਟੇ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੋਵੇਗੀ ਹਾਲਾਂ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਇਹਦੇ ਤੇ ਨਿਰਭਰ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਕੀ ਦੱਸਣਾ ਚਾਹੋਗੇ।

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹਦੇ ਵਿੱਚ ਹਿੱਸਾ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਪੱਤਰ ਨਾਲ ਲੱਗੇ ਦੂਸਰੇ ਪੱਤਰ ਨੂੰ ਭਰਕੇ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਭੇਜੋ। ਸਟੈਂਪ ਲੱਗਿਆ ਲਿਫ਼ਾਫ਼ਾ ਇਹਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਹੈ।

ਮੈਨੂੰ ਪੂਰੀ ਉਮੀਦ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਮੇਰੇ ਨਾਲ ਗੱਲ ਕਰੋਗੇ।

ਕੈਥੀ ਡੇਵਿਸ (Cathy Davis)

ਸੈਂਟਰ ਫੋਰ ਹਾਊਸਿੰਗ ਪੌਲਿਸੀ .

ਇੱਕ ਸੱਦਾ ਪੱਤਰ

ਹਾਂ, ਮੈਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਰਿਸਰਚ ਵਿੱਚ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਹੋਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੀ ਹਾਂ ।

ਮੇਰਾ ਨਾਮ ਹੈ

ਮੇਰਾ ਪਤਾ (ਜਾਂ ਕੋਅਰ ਓਫ ਐਡਰੈਸ) ਹੈ

ਸਾਡੇ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਟਾਈਮ ਸੈੱਟ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਸੱਭ ਤੋਂ ਵਧੀਆ ਤਰੀਕਾ (ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇੱਕ ਤੇ ਟਿੱਕ ਲਗਾਓ)

ਪੱਤਰ ਦਵਾਰਾ ਫੋਨ ਦਵਾਰਾ ਮੇਰਾ ਨੰਬਰ ਹੈ.....

ਮੈਨੂੰ ਫੋਨ ਕਰਨ ਜਾਂ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰਨ ਨੂੰ ਵਧੀਆ ਦਿਨ (ਟਿੱਕ ਲਗਾਓ)

ਸੋਮਵਾਰ ਮੰਗਲਵਾਰ ਬੁਧਵਾਰ ਵੀਰਵਾਰ ਸ਼ੁਕਰਵਾਰ

ਆਮਤੌਰ ਤੇ ਵਧੀਆ ਟਾਈਮ-

ਸਵੇਰੇ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ ਬਾਦ ਜਾਂ ਕੋਈ ਵੀ ਵਕਤ

ਮੈਂ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੀ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰੋਟਰ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਕਰੋ (ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਟਿੱਕ ਲਗਾਓ ਜੇ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ)

ਮੇਰੀ ਬੋਲੀ (ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਖਾਸ ਬੋਲੀ ਜਿਹੜੀ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਬੋਲਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤੇ ਟਿੱਕ ਲਗਾਓ)

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ Gujarati Urdu
Hindi Vietnamese Chinese

ਦੂਸਰੀ ਕੋਈ ਹੋਰ (ਤਾਂ ਕਿਹੜੀ ਲਿਖੋ)

فروری 1998

ایسی عورتوں کیلئے دعوت نامہ

جنہیں گھریلو تشدد کی بنا پر دوسری جگہ رہائش فراہم کی گئی

اس خط میں آپ سے دریافت کیا گیا ہے کہ اگر آپ بتانا چاہیں کہ آپ نے اپنے نئے گھر کو کیسا پایا ہے یا آپ اپنے علاقے کے متعلق کیا خیال کرتی ہیں، بتا سکتی ہیں۔ میں دراصل اس پہلو کے متعلق ریسرچ کر رہی ہوں کہ جب عورتوں کو گھریلو تشدد کی بنا پر اپنے گھروں کو چھوڑنا پڑتا ہے تو ان کے ساتھ کیا کچھ پیش آتا ہے۔ زیادہ تر ایسی عورتوں کے ساتھ بات چیت کی جائیگی جنہیں ہاؤسنگ ایسوسی ایشنوں کی جانب سے رہائش فراہم کی گئی ہے۔

میں اپنے تعارف میں بتانا چاہتی ہوں کہ میں ایک سفید نام عورت ہوں اور لیڈز میں رہتی ہوں لیکن یارک یونیورسٹی میں کام کرتی ہوں۔ میں نے ہاؤسنگ کے شعبے میں 20 سال سے زیادہ عرصہ کام کیا ہے۔ مثلاً مشورے دینا، رہائشی انتظامات، ریسرچ، تحریکیں اور تحریریں لکھنا وغیرہ۔ میں نے ہاؤسنگ ایسوسی ایشنوں کے عملے کیلئے ایک رہنمائی تیار کی ہے جس میں بتایا گیا ہے کہ گھریلو تشدد، بے گھری، نسلی ہراس، ملازمت میں نسلی مساوات کی صورت میں کیا کرنا چاہئے۔ میں نے کیلڈر ڈیل کے علاقے میں رہائش پذیر سیاہ نام اور ایشیائی طبقوں سے تعلق رکھنے والے لوگوں کی رہائشی ضروریات کے متعلق بھی ریسرچ کی ہے۔

مختلف طبقوں سے تعلق رکھنے والی عورتوں کے ساتھ بات چیت کے بعد میں ایک رپورٹ تیار کرنا چاہتی ہوں جس میں واضح طور پر بتایا جائے گا کہ عورتیں ہاؤسنگ ایسوسی ایشنوں سے کیا چاہتی ہیں۔ میں اس ریسرچ میں مختلف ایشین، افریقن کریمیسن، افریقن اور سفید نسل عورتوں کو شامل کرنے کی توقع رکھتی ہوں۔

ہر بات چیت کو صیغہ راز میں رکھا جائے گا۔ یہ ریسرچ کا کام ریفیوج اور ہاؤسنگ ایسوسی ایشنوں سے علیحدہ آزادانہ طور پر کیا جا رہا ہے اگرچہ میری مدد کیلئے ان دونوں نے یہ تیار کردہ دعوت نامے بھیجنے پر اتفاق کیا ہے۔ میں یہ نہیں جانتی کہ آپ کون ہیں اور کہاں رہتی ہیں۔ اگر آپ مجھ سے بات کرنا چاہتی ہیں تو اس خط کے ساتھ بھیجے گئے فارم میں یہ تفصیلات شامل کرنا ہوں گی۔

لہذا، میں انتہائی طور پر امید رکھتی ہوں کہ آپ میرے ساتھ رابطہ قائم کریں گی۔ اگر انگلش آپ کی مادری زبان نہیں ہے تو میں مترجم کے ذریعے بات چیت کرنا بھی پسند کروں گی۔ مترجم عورت تجربہ کار ہوگی اور بات چیت کو صیغہ راز میں رکھے گی۔ میرا اندازہ ہے کہ ہمیں تقریباً ڈیڑھ گھنٹہ بات چیت کرنے کی ضرورت پیش آئے گی اگرچہ اس کا انحصار اس بات پر ہے کہ آپ کیا بتانا چاہتی ہیں۔

اگر آپ اس ریسرچ میں شامل ہونا چاہتی ہیں تو براہ مہربانی منسلک خط کو مکمل کر کے فراہم کردہ لفافے میں ہمیں واپس روانہ کریں اس پر آپ کو ٹکٹ لگانے کی ضرورت نہیں۔

مجھے پوری امید ہے کہ آپ مجھ سے بات چیت کرنا پسند کریں گی۔

Cathy Davis

سنٹر فار ہاؤسنگ پالیسی

توت نامہ
میں آپکی ریسرچ میں حصہ لینا پسند کروں گی۔

نام _____
اپنے (یا معرفت) : _____

ت چیت کیلئے وقت طے کرنے کیلئے بہترین طریقہ مندرجہ ذیل ہے (براہ مہربانی کسی ایک پر (✓) کا نشان لگائیں۔

ریچہ خط
ریچہ فون
میرا ٹیلی فون نمبر: _____

ہ سے ملاقات یا رابطہ قائم کرنے کے بہترین دن یہ ہیں (براہ مہربانی) کا نشان لگائیں

سوار منگل بدھ جمعرات جمعہ

سومنا بہترین وقت یہ ہے:

ج دوپہر کوئی بھی

پ میرے لئے مترجم کا بندوبست کریں (براہ مہربانی) کا نشان لگائیں

س مندرجہ ذیل زبانوں میں بات چیت کر سکتی ہوں (براہ مہربانی عام طور پر جس زبان میں آپ بات چیت کر سکتے ہیں اس پر (✓) کا نشان لگائیں۔

Urdu اردو Gujarati گجراتی Punjabi پنجابی
 Chinese چینی Vietnamese ویت نامی Hindi ہندی

یگر (براہ مہربانی بیان کریں) Other (Please say which)

DEFINITIONS

"Black and Asian"

Rather than simply use the term "black" to describe people of African-Caribbean and Asian heritages, it felt more appropriate to use two broad descriptors. In the areas in which this study took place, people described themselves in these ways. This was accepted and commonplace. In some situations, interviewees were more specific, referring to nationality (eg Pakistani) or island (eg Barbados or Monserrat) and the analysis required that this level of specificity was required.

"Domestic Violence"

This is a generic phrase including, in this study, physical, sexual and psychological violence and intimidation. Such violence is used by some men in their personal relationships with women (and children). Women may be partners or ex-partners, relatives, friends or acquaintances. Men use violence to maintain control, punish or get what they want.

In this study, the term was used interchangeably with other phrases such as 'women leaving violent men' depending on the context.

"Single Women"

Women who do not have any children or have no children living with them (or expected to live with them permanently) are considered to be single women in social housing allocation systems and under the homeless legislation. They may be unmarried, married, divorced or widowed by they live independently (or want to).

"Voids"

A term used by housing managers to describe properties which are currently empty and available for letting.

GLOSSARY

The following were the most frequently used abbreviations in the thesis:

ADC	Association of District Councils
AMA	Association of Metropolitan Authorities
CHAC	Central Housing Advisory Committee
CHAR	Campaign for the Homeless and Rootless (now the Campaign for the Single Homeless)
CORE	The Continuous Recording System of New Association Lettings
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions
DoE	Department of the Environment (now part of DETR)
DoH	Department of Health
DSS	Department of Social Security
HIP	Housing Investment Programme
HSAG	Housing Services Advisory Group
IoH	(Chartered) Institute of Housing (latterly CIoH)
LFHA	London Federation of Housing Associations (part of NHF)
NFHA	National Federation of Housing Associations
NHF	National Housing Federation (formerly NFHA)

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