

Home Truths

Churches and homelessness in East London — Taking Action

CHURCHES RESPOND

— see page 2

FOUR OPTIONS

— see page 2

CASE STUDIES

— see page 4

Urgent alert goes out as homeless crisis grows

NEWHAM CHURCHES JOIN BATTLE ON HOMELESSNESS!

HOMELESSNESS is a major problem in Newham. The needs of the homeless people in Newham are so great and urgent that they must become a priority concern for all Christians and churches in the borough.

In April, 1989, Newham Community Renewal Programme (NCRP) convened a Working Party to look at the Churches' response to the homeless crisis in our borough. This publication is a summary of its report.

The Working Party defined its task as 'to enable Newham Churches to play a concerted role in the pastoral care of the homeless and to provide opportunities for action'.

In its 18 months existence the working party has:

- researched and educated itself about the causes and dimensions of homelessness in Newham
- discovered what the churches

EXCLUSIVE

and others are already doing to tackle the problem

- looked at several patterns of ministry among homeless people that have been established elsewhere
- made much of this information available to church leaders and

ordinary concerned Christians through reports and seminars

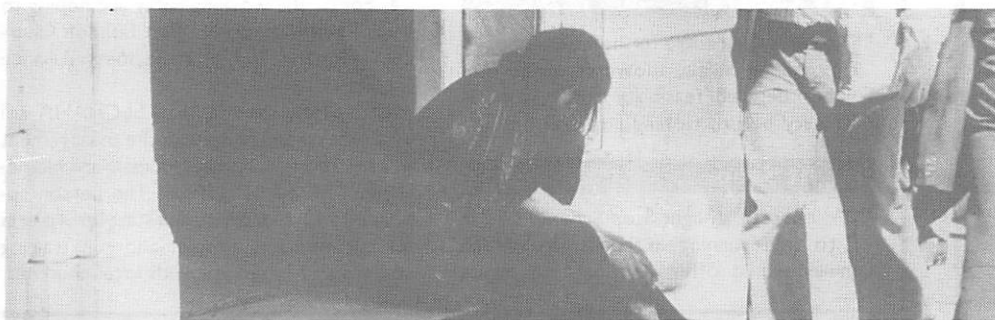
- fostered enough commitment among Christians and collaboration with the Council to launch the pilot stage of the Newham Nightstop scheme
- worked in tandem with Waltham Forest churches to make the launch

of a new body East London Churches Housing and Homelessness Alliance (ELCHAHA) employing a resource officer, a real possibility.

- proposed several further potential initiatives for the churches to consider

TAKING ACTION

— page 2



Who is homeless?

IN NEWHAM in 1989/90 there were 2,347 applications to the Council by households to be considered as homeless, a 7.5% increase over the previous year. Just over 1000 of these were accepted.

Meanwhile, almost 10,000 people are on the waiting list for council property.

Ten years ago there was hardly any need to accommodate homeless people in Bed and Breakfast hotels. Since 1988, the number of Newham house-

holds in such accommodation (within or outside the borough) has been around 500.

Regarding housing stock, Newham Council is building only one third of what it did ten years ago.

In the same decade from 1981-89, it has been forced to sell 5,800 properties under Right to Buy and has lost hundreds of others by evacuating unsafe tower blocks.

- Homelessness is growing — see p. 3

'More rented places needed'

THE MAIN cause of homelessness 'is a critical shortage of affordable rented accommodation'.

New building of local authority housing 'in the United Kingdom has been cut by 85 per cent from well over 100,000 houses per year in the 1970s to 15,000 at present'. New building by housing associations is also falling. Meanwhile, over 900,000 council houses have been sold under the Right to Buy Scheme.

On top of this, the people of London face astronomical rents and house prices. It is no surprise that for individuals and families low income and poverty are linked with homelessness.

MAURICE AMBLER

IF YOU WANT TO GET INVOLVED, CONTACT PAUL REGAN ON 081-472 2785

SOME FACTS

NATIONWIDE

- 126,240 households in England, were officially categorised as homeless in September 1989.
- This is 7 out of every 1000 households in the country.
- This adds up to over 300,000 individuals even without counting those who are sleeping rough. *The official figure has more than doubled since 1978.*
- 38,000 households in 1989 were in temporary or Bed and Breakfast accommodation at a cost of £143 million a year.
- Nationally there are 1.4 million people on Council waiting lists.

IN LONDON

- 74,000 people are in overcrowded accommodation;
- 11,000—12,000 in hostels.
- 10,000—12,000 in shortlife properties.
- More than 19,000 squatting.
- 4,000—5,000 in Bed and Breakfast.
- Up to 3,000 sleeping rough.
- Nearly 30,000 households a year were accepted as homeless by local authorities in London in 1988, equivalent to *one in every 100 households.*

A Prayer for the Homeless

*O God
Your son Jesus Christ said
He had nowhere to lay his head*

*We pray for those
who have no home of their own
who are rejected and looked
down on by others*

*Help us
to stand alongside homeless people
to work with them and others
to see justice prevail
to serve them and care for them*

*In the name of Christ
and for His sake. Amen*

Working Party hammers out 3 ways to

TAKING ACTION

ON the basis of the survey, and our wider investigation of homelessness, the working party believes there are three approaches by which Christians and churches can make an impact on the problems of homeless people. There is political action, the

provision of housing, and short term pastoral care of homeless people.

CAMPAIGNS

Our working party believes that only a major programme of investment in building *affordable rented homes* will go any way towards

Pastoral care options:

Vouchers

To collect funds to operate a pre-paid voucher system to local landlords and hotel operators for people on benefits. Church workers confronted by the immediate needs of a homeless person would then be able to make a practical response without the need to give cash.

Day Centre

To run a day centre for homeless people, providing meals, showers, advice etc. Further detailed feasibility study work is necessary before rushing into this option.

Night Stop

To operate a Night Stop Scheme similar to one running in Leeds. Volunteer families would offer one or two nights

emergency accommodation to young homeless people, thus giving a breathing space until longer term housing is found. A group has been set up to co-ordinate the scheme which is due to open on a pilot basis from October 1, 1990.

Education

Together with churches in Waltham Forest the working party are hoping to launch a new body, the East London Churches Housing and Homelessness Alliance (ELCHAHA).

One of the main tasks of ELCHAHA will be to set up and undertake the management of a new post, a churches Housing and Homelessness Resource Officer. The person appointed will co-ordinate and start-up projects serving homeless people, and run training courses and campaigns with local churches.

What are Newham's

THE WORKING party received questionnaires from 51 Newham Churches and found that most churches in Newham have been approached by homeless people, discussed the issue and prayed about it.

A dozen have practical action projects up and running, and another

seven have projects at the planning stage.

Three churches have been giving food and advice to homeless people (one with a soup run to the centre of London). Three others mentioned some church property used for housing association purposes.

attack homelessness

NG ON

solving the problem of homelessness in Newham and the surrounding area.

We believe Bed & Breakfast is an expensive and unsatisfactory way of housing homeless families and should be phased out as soon as possible.

We also believe that some of the regulations on housing and DSS benefits, especially for young and single people are unjust and cause unnecessary suffering.

We want Christians and other people to join us in campaigning on these issues.

HOUSING PROVISION

In Newham itself, several churches, church related agencies and Christian Housing Associations are already involved in providing accommodation. There is potential for new projects, and expertise on funding and building development is available through the Christian networks in Newham.

PASTORAL CARE

The working party has suggested four schemes which will help meet the immediate needs of homeless people. (They are set out to the left). Two of them are already well advanced.

THIS is the summary report of the Newham Community Renewal Programme's Working Party on the Pastoral Care of the Homeless in Newham. Further copies and the full report are available from NCRP, 170 Harold Road, London E13 0SE (081-472 2785).



● Home at last: *The Assan family (above) lived in a dingy, overcrowded Bed & Breakfast hotel, with their new-born baby Louisa. Now they have been moved into a privately-leased, newly-built house managed by a housing association. It's part of a deal with private developers, guaranteeing them rent and costing the council five times less than the cost of B&B. The Assans' new bathroom is almost as big as their old B&B hotel room.*

Homeless queues grow

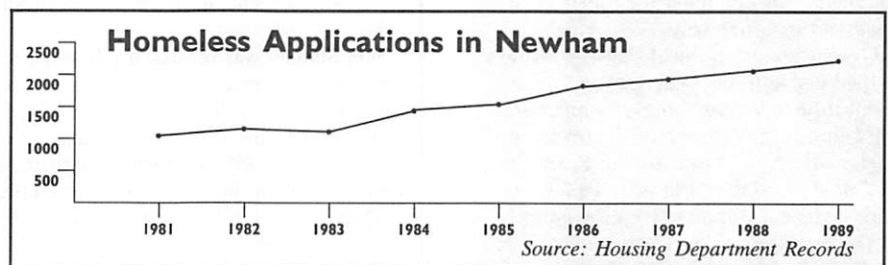
NEWHAM Council receives over 2,000 applications per year from homeless families. Assuming an average of 2 individuals per family or household that would mean 4,000 people living either with no permanent roof over their heads or in unsuitable or unbearable accommodation. Meanwhile, almost 10,000 people are on the waiting list for council property.

The borough continues to have some of the highest levels of unsatisfactory amenities and overcrowding of any area in the country.

There is a major crisis in housing in Newham and the prospects for homeless individuals and families are extremely bleak.

In 1989/90 there were 2,347 applications to the Council to be considered as homeless, a 7.5% increase over the previous year (see graph below). Just over 1000 of these were accepted.

Nearly 1000 non-priority applications were received. Undoubtedly there are hundreds more families and individuals who are homeless or on the margins of homelessness who are not included in these figures.



churches doing?

Five churches were involved at some level in hostel provision. One was meeting homeless people through a drop in care centre, and another was providing a base for the Care and Repair project.

Most church leaders felt they could do little to help except refer people on.

They saw the need for a better way to share information about homelessness and how to deal with it around the churches.

As a result we have prepared and distributed a leaflet on how to help homeless people who knock at the church or vicarage door.

Times don't change?

MORE than 2500 years ago, the prophet Isaiah told Israel what God wanted to see:

'THE kind of fasting I want is this, remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice and let the oppressed go free. Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor.'

(Isaiah 58: 6-7)

PHILIP WOLMOUTH

More than 98,000 young people run away every year

Who becomes homeless?

CHILDREN and young people are highly vulnerable—98,000 young people run away from home each year, often from intolerable family situations. They are very vulnerable to exploitation and the DSS benefit systems fail to meet their basic needs.

Most single homeless people are not covered by the 1985 Housing Act which gives councils a duty to rehouse homeless families. Many local authorities exclude those under a certain age from even registering on the waiting list.

Children leaving care, people coming out of

mental hospitals and prisons face particular difficulties. Women often face the choice between living with a violent partner or becoming homeless. If they leave, low income and lack of provision make it difficult for them to find even a hostel place.

Ethnic Minority Groups are heavily over-represented among the homeless families in London. Refugees and their families arriving from countries such as Sri Lanka and Uganda arrive in places like Newham to face major rehousing problems.

The stories on this page illustrate how homelessness impacts upon people. They are true stories of people who have contacted Newham Council — names are changed.

GRACE

GRACE arrived in London in the spring of 1989 as a refugee from an African country. She had seen her husband abducted and presumed murdered and had left behind her four children. She was five months pregnant at the time.

The Home Office granted her exceptional leave to remain status and through friends she was able to find a cold damp bedsit. Although the rent was high it was covered by Housing Benefit. However the landlord failed to pay the electricity bills and through the winter she and her new baby had long periods with no heating in the room. She and other tenants were also harassed in other ways.

Grace joined a local church which helped her in many practical ways. They spent time in supporting her applications for rehousing to Newham Council, and various Housing Associations. From time to time she and the child stayed a few days with different families from the church.

The Social Services Department eventually visited her and put pressure on the Housing Department because the bedsit was an unfit place in which to house a small child.

By the summer of 1990 Grace could stand the delays no longer. As a protest she dumped her baby in the local Housing Office and disappeared for a day. But for the intervention and support of her friends at church the child would have been taken into care.

The result of this protest was that the Housing Department have promised to offer her a place as soon as possible. This promise is still to be delivered. For the time being Grace and the baby are staying with friends from the church.



THE STANLEYS

MR & MRS Stanley have two children aged 12 and 7. Until 1985, the family lived in a small flat rented from a private landlord. It had no bathroom.

Mrs Stanley was offered a job as a doctor's caretaker/receptionist. The agreement was that they could live in the three-bedroom house next to the surgery, rent free.

In October, 1986, the doctor told them he wanted to sell the house and served a Notice to Quit, but did nothing further about this for over a year.

The house had always been cold and damp and in mid-1988 dry rot was discovered. The council's environmental health officer served a notice on the landlord requiring him to carry out extensive repairs.

The doctor terminated Mrs Stanley's employment in August, 1988, and asked her to leave the house.

On advice from the Council she stayed in the property until the landlord obtained a Court Order.

In May 1989, two-and-a-half years after the landlord originally asked them to leave, the court ordered them out. The Stanley's reported to Newham's homeless persons unit and were placed in temporary accommodation.



PETER

PETER Cogg comes from Suffolk. He has had a lot of contact with Social Services and was in care as a child. He is now 22. Suffolk Social Services describe him as 'emotionally vulnerable'. From October 1987 to June 1988 he was placed in B&B hotels in London by Newham Council.

From June 1988 to June 1989 he lived in a van in Suffolk with a male friend, aged 58. He was harassed because of his sexuality and was the object of unwelcome advances. He has a criminal record for theft and says he is in fear of violence in Suffolk because he informed to the police.

When Peter came back to London in June 1989 and was homeless, Newham Council again placed him in a hotel.

Those who have met him describe Peter as emotionally immature and open to sexual exploitation. He has little understanding of how tough life is in London. When he is short of money, which for all single people on social security is often, he turns to male prostitution for an income.

Newham Homeless Persons Unit have recently decided he is not 'vulnerable' within the meaning of the homeless legislation and that the borough should not offer him permanent accommodation. They have ended his B&B booking and when last heard of he was adrift in London.

AGENCIES

UNLEASH (United London Ecumenical Action on Single Homelessness), 131 Camberwell Road, London SE5 0HF (Pat Logan, 071-701 4319/3414). A network co-ordinating Christian work with homeless people in London.

Shelter, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9HU. (071-253 0202) Campaign against homelessness. Publishes journal *Roof*. A free publications list is available.

SHAC, 134-138 Romford Road, Stratford E15 (081-534 6025) offers advice to homeless people and training courses for professionals and volunteers working with them.

WORKING PARTY ON THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE HOMELESS IN NEWHAM

FINAL REPORT SEPTEMBER 1990

by Herbie Boudier, Greg Smith & Peter Williams

Available from

NCRP

170 Harold Road
London E13 0SE

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MEMBERS OF THE WORKING PARTY INCLUDED

Megan Wylie-Smith, Paul Regan, June Layton, Peter Williams, Greg Smith, Herbie Boudier, Henry Kontor, Jim Florance, Cathy Cooper, Martin O Kane, David Lapworth, Paul Charman, Simon Vincent

HOMELESSNESS AND THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE

PREFACE

Homelessness is a major problem in Newham. In April 1989 Newham Community Renewal Programme convened an advisory Council on the subject which was addressed by Pat Logan, Homelessness adviser for Southwark Diocese and author of "A Life to Be Lived; Homelessness & Pastoral Care" (published by Darton Longman and Todd). As a result, a working party was formed to look at the Churches' response to the homeless crisis in our borough. This is its report.

We were fortunate to have the services of Cathy Cooper and later Herbie Boudier to work part-time on the research. This was funded to the tune of £2,000 by Newham Council. Greg Smith's involvement in this group was partially supported by a \$1500 grant made to London ECUM by the Love in Action Committee of the Billy Graham Mission 89.

The Working Party drew its membership from members of local churches who have an interest in the housing position of the borough. To date it has met about 20 times and is now working on definite projects to alleviate the suffering of homeless people.

Newham already has several Church - based projects tackling homelessness but there is a great deal more to be done. That was our starting point.

Early on the Working Party defined its task as "to enable Newham Churches to play a concerted role in the pastoral care of the homeless and to provide opportunities for action".

The group's work has been based on a Christian understanding of God's special concern for the poor, on His commitment to social justice and Shalom, and on Christ's identification with the poor and homeless as one who himself had no place to lay his head. In face of the evident injustice and suffering caused by the housing situation in East London today, we believe all Christians must face up to the radical challenge of Isaiah 58; 6-7.

"The kind of fasting I want is this, remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice and let the oppressed go free. Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor."

As a result we believe Christians must work at two levels;

- a) in radical, costly Christian compassion to meet the needs of homeless people in a practical way.
- b) to challenge through, prayer, education and campaigning the structural evils of our society which make homelessness an ever increasing problem.

HOMELESSNESS IS A NATIONWIDE PROBLEM

"Homelessness in Britain is not a new phenomenon. There has always been a substantial minority of the population who, because of inadequate income, have been unable to compete in the housing market."

This statement from Greve and Currie is a good summary of the long struggle of a significant number of people to provide shelter for themselves. However, it fails to highlight the profound crisis and the phenomenal rise in the number of people who are currently homeless or living on the margin of homelessness in England.

According to the London Research Centre, some 126,240 households in England, (plus over 6,000 in Wales and 11,000 in Scotland) were officially categorised as homeless in September 1989. This is 7 out of every 1000 households in the country. The latest report of the National Audit Office (reported in the Guardian Aug 22nd 1990) confirms this figure and suggests that this adds up to over 300,000 individuals even without counting those who are sleeping rough. The official figure for households accepted as homeless has more than doubled from 53,000 in 1978.

The figure for households living in temporary accommodation in England increased from 5,000 in 1982 to 38,000 households in 1989. The overall bill for bed and breakfast accommodation has risen to £143 million a year. Nationally there are 1.4 million people on Council waiting lists. (Shelter).

The problem was also aired at the Tory Conference in October 1989, when Kevin Johnstone described the current homeless problem as "A National Disgrace." He stated that 400,000 individuals were classified as homeless and 33,000 persons were "living in abysmal Bed and Breakfast accommodation." He also said, that it was ironic "that in London 18,000 homeless families remain in temporary accommodation while 23,500 properties stand empty." (Evening Standard, 10.10.89).

IN LONDON

Nicholas Timmins (Guardian, September 1989) also reported that "Thousands of people have been left to the mercy of squats, hostels.....and on some estimates about 11,000 people are living on the streets of London."

In case you should be tempted to accuse Mr Timmins of exaggerating the

figures, we will include an estimate' for the number of single people on the margin of homelessness or potentially homeless in London, courtesy of the National Federation of Housing Associations (1989) reported that:-

- a) 74,000 people are in overcrowded accommodation;
- b) 11,000 - 12,000 in hostels.
- c) 10,000 - 12,000 in shortlife properties. (SHAC's estimate for this category is a staggering 30,000 which does not include short-life properties let to individuals or collectives by local authorities, under Part 3 of the 1985 Housing Act).
- d) More than 19,000 squatting.
- e) 4,000 - 5,000 in Bed and Breakfast.
- f) Up to 3,000 sleeping rough.

The above figures for homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless are alarming, shattering or depressing, depending on how one chooses to respond. However, there is no scope for complacency and we should not assume that the figures have reached their peak. In fact latest DOE figures for 1989 indicate a continued increase in the level of homelessness in London:

"Nearly 30,000 households a year were accepted as homeless by local authorities in London in 1988, equivalent to one in every 100 households. Figures for the first nine months in 1989 indicate an increase of 15% for the year." (Greve and Currie)

One should also remember that these calculations and percentage increases only reflect those applications which local authorities accept as homeless (within very narrow and increasingly strict criteria). Most single people are not included in officially compiled lists since the Councils have no legal duty to house them. In addition some homeless people do not even bother to apply.

Consequently, the true number of homeless people nationally or in London at any given time is higher than the figures compiled from research data of government agencies or voluntary organisations. These figures are not being used for scare mongering tactics. We are simply trying to paint the picture in the hope that churches, individuals and organisations will be moved to action on behalf of and alongside homeless people and to join the campaign for an effective response from Central Government and local Councils.

THE HOMELESSNESS CRISIS IN NEWHAM

Newham Council receives over 2,000 applications per year from homeless families. Assuming an average of 2 individuals per family or household that would mean 4,000 people living either with no permanent roof over their heads or in unsuitable or unbearable accommodation.

Meanwhile, almost 10,000 people are on the waiting list for council property; over 4,000 Council tenants have requested transfers to other Council accommodation and nearly 7000 Newham families are living in overcrowded accommodation.

Over 5,800 Council properties have been sold under the Right to Buy Scheme. Many other units have been lost because of the emptying of tower blocks on safety grounds. Furthermore our borough continues to have some of the highest levels of unsatisfactory amenities of any area in the country.

In short, we are also faced with a major crisis in housing in Newham and the prospects for homeless individuals and families are extremely bleak.

SOME FACTS

GRAPH 1; HOMELESSNESS APPLICATIONS IN NEWHAM 1981-89

In 1989/90 there were 2,347 applications to the Council to be considered as homeless, a 7.5% increase over the previous year. Just over 1000 of these were accepted.

In addition nearly 1000 non-priority applications were received. Undoubtedly there are many more families and individuals who are homeless or on the margins of homelessness who are not included in these figures.

GRAPH 2: NEWHAM HOUSEHOLDS IN
BED & BREAKFAST 1981-89

Ten years ago there was hardly any need to accommodate homeless people in B&B hotels. Since 1988 the number of Newham households in such accommodation (within or outside the borough) has been around 500. After the explosion in numbers between 1984 and 1988, Newham tried to reduce its dependence on B&B. For example over 650 dwellings are currently leased from private landlords. However, use of B&B is now increasing again due to the continued increase in applications.

GRAPH 3: NEW COUNCIL DWELLINGS
COMPLETED IN NEWHAM 1979-89

Newham Council believes the only real solution to the homeless crisis is building new homes for rent. It has made this a priority but because of shortage of funds is building only one third of what it was building 10 years ago.

In the same decade it has been forced to sell 5,800 properties under the Right to Buy.

CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

Market Pressures

The main cause of homelessness "is a critical shortage of affordable rented accommodation" (John Greve).

It is a significant feature of modern British society that the demand for housing has grown faster than the supply. Partly this is due to the trend towards smaller households. More people than ever before are choosing to live on their own as both young and old people seek independence, and more couples and families break up into separate households. And of course people are no longer willing to tolerate the overcrowded conditions that earlier generations were forced to endure.

The demand for housing has been greatest in London and the South East and has been reflected in astronomical rents and house prices. From 1985 to 1989 house prices have increased much faster than the general rate of inflation, and high mortgage interest rates have tightened the screw even further. The rise in rents is noticeable, in the private sector as a result of loosening of regulations on landlords, and in the public sector as a result of the end of subsidies on the housing revenue account which now has to pay its own way. As a result many households, even if eligible for housing benefit have little chance of paying the rents demanded by the market.

Since many landlords demand deposits and rent in advance, many homeless people, including those on DSS benefits who are paid in arrears and those on very low income lose out in the search for cheap accommodation. Put another way, low income and poverty are the main causes of homelessness for those who are unable to compete in the housing market. As in the 1970's when: "low wages were a key factor in homelessness... (today) the majority, averaging 75 to 80% of homeless heads of household are dependent on social security, housing benefits or state pensions." (John Greve)

Inadequate Building Programme

Nationally the crisis is related to the massive decrease in the public sector building programme. New building of local authority housing "in the United Kingdom has been cut by 85% from well over 100,000 houses per year in the 1970's to 15,000 at present."

The figure will be further reduced to 6,000 annually by 1991-92.

The building programmes for Housing Associations, like local authorities, have been reduced from 19,000 annually in 1981 to about 15,000 in 1988-89. The prospects for the 1990's are even

worse. Sheila Mckechnie of Shelter (quoted in the Guardian 22.8.90) talks of "the fact that not one new permanent home will be built by housing associations this year."

In contrast, in the private sector, where market forces are supposed to cater for the population's housing needs, the emphasis is on schemes for high income earners or special projects such as sheltered housing, with total disregard for people on low income. The developments in Docklands are a case in point. At least 85% of new homes built in the LDDC area by March 1989 have been for sale rather than rent and market prices have been as high as £200,000 for a two bedroomed flat. A Docklands Housing Needs Survey in 1987 suggested that only a quarter of Newham households had an income over £8415 p.a. To be able to take out a 100% mortgage on the cheapest dwellings being built, which were then being sold for the (artificial) "affordable" price of around £40,000, the household income needed to be at least £12,000.

The 1990 report from the Docklands Consultative Committee, "Providing Affordable Housing in East London" updates the story with some alarming statistics. In Newham the number of households on the waiting list rose from 7967 in April 87 to 9,511 in 1988. But by the end of 1988 average house prices in Newham had risen to £73,500 which would only be available on 100% mortgage basis to households with an income of over £23,000. Less than 1% of households on the Council waiting list could afford to buy even a 2 bedroom property.

Meanwhile across the country, over 900,000 council houses have been sold under the Right to Buy Scheme (Shelter) and at the same time, councils are barred by the Government from putting much of the income from sales into new building programmes.

While thousands of former council tenants now own their own homes, some owner occupiers have lost theirs and are now homeless because of arrears or the inability to meet soaring mortgage costs. Figures for repossessions for former council tenants are not available but a report from the Council of Mortgage Lenders, covered in the Guardian on 18th August 1990, showed that repossessions had doubled from 7390 in the second half of 1989 to 14,390 for the first six months of 1990. At any rate we are likely to experience larger numbers if people losing their homes in 1990 because of high mortgage rates.

WHO IS HOMELESS?

Homelessness does not hit people equally or affect all types of people in the same way. We will now try to indicate which groups are disproportionately represented in the statistical data. These groups of homeless people are also likely to experience long term problems with housing and accommodation needs.

Homeless Children and Young People

According to the Children's Society, about 98,000 children and young people run away from home each year. Many are escaping from unbearable family situations where verbal, physical and sexual abuse have been an everyday experience. Although many of them leave home for only short periods of time, many others "arrive on the streets penniless and homeless and turn to prostitution to support themselves... once involved in prostitution they often find it hard to give up. Some fall victim to pimps, others are preyed upon by men who hang around main line railway stations, waiting for runaways to arrive." (The Guardian, October 10th 1989)

Homeless young people are doubly vulnerable because as single persons the local authority has no legal duty to provide housing for them. Furthermore the benefits system is based on the assumption that young people are living in a family situation and it is therefore extremely difficult for them to successfully claim housing benefit and an adequate level of income support. In addition anyone trying to help under 16s by offering accommodation rather than reporting their presence to the police or their parents is technically breaking the law.

Women and Homelessness

Women in full time employment on average earn only two-thirds of what men earn and because of low incomes women are frequently denied access to credit facilities, eg. mortgages. On the other hand, "Private landlords prefer to take male tenants ... They often view single women seeking accommodation as 'on the game' and generally assume that all single women tenants will get pregnant."

Meanwhile, "most authorities won't accept single homeless women who have suffered violence as being in priority need." (See CHAR's report: Single Women and Homelessness)

Furthermore, women who are homeless are less likely than men to seek accommodation in hostels because they experience hostels as "intimidating, alienating and threatening." (John Greve)

SINGLE HOMELESS IN LONDON in fact reported in 1986 that there were "no hostel places for single women in outer London other than a few places for girls. There were only 2 hostels catering for Asian Women, one for Afro-Caribbean and one for Latin American Women."

Ethnic Minority Groups

"Minority Groups (including Irish people) are heavily over represented among the homeless families in London and the larger urban areas outside the capital." (John Greve)

The London Research Centre pointed out that although only 15% of London's population is black, some 40% of households accepted as homeless are black (including Asians in this category). One survey conducted by the Housing Aid Centre in Lambeth showed that 62% out of a total of 319 single people, registered as homeless over a four month period were black. Similarly 52% out of a total of 334 young people seen by the Threshold Housing advice Centre in Wandsworth over 6 months to March 1987 were black. One study in Hackney in 1989 showed that between 70 and 75% of all first time callers to the Housing Aid Centre were black and homeless.

Detailed up to date figures broken down by ethnic group are not available for Newham but according to the SHIL report 39% of households accepted by the council as homeless in 1985-86 were black (compared with 17% in the population as a whole) and 48% of referrals to a voluntary sector hostel in the borough were Afro-Caribbean and 8% Asian. (Over half were female). And one officer dealing with non-priority (i.e. young single) homeless people at a local Housing Office told us recently that well over 50% of his clients are black or Asian.

It is almost certainly the case that a large proportion of families in bed and breakfast in or from Newham are black or Asian. In addition our group has become increasingly aware of the housing needs and difficulties of refugees and their families who arrive in the borough from countries such as Sri Lanka, Kurdistan, Uganda and other African states.

Single People

"The majority of single homeless people are excluded from the statutory protection of Part III of the 1985 Housing Act. Many local authorities give low priority to the housing needs of single people and frequently exclude those under a certain age from even registering on the waiting list." (CHAR)

The Alone in London Service which operates an advice and counselling service for young homeless persons in Central London, saw 532 new clients over almost a year leading up to March 1988. Of the above total (532), 230 (43%) were women and 104 (19.5%) of the women were 16 or 17 years of age, compared to 118 (22%) men in the same age group. Those who were indigenous to London

comprised 236 (44%) of the total; 407 (76.5%) were unemployed; 12 (2%) were on Government sponsored schemes while 57 (11%) were either still at school or college.

Similarly, between February 1989 and September 1989 the Stonewall Housing Association which caters mostly for London gay and lesbian residents, found that 71% of 221 new applications were under 25 years of age.

The following figures from The Soho Project are pre 1988 but they are still useful in illustrating the long term vulnerability of young homeless persons. Soho Project operates in Central London and sees over 2,000 people in Central London annually. During the first 6 months of 1986, 87% of a total of 308 people seen were under 18 years. The Project has recorded increasing high percentages for the under 18's from 1983 onwards.

Undoubtedly there are many single homeless people in Newham although much of the problem remains hidden through short term arrangements such as staying with friends or relatives, or is exported into other boroughs where there is more extensive hostel provision. Certainly the few hostels catering for single homeless such as the HYPP, Durning Hall or the new Short Stop project have no difficulty in filling the beds available. There is also a significant contribution made by the Newham Housing Co-operatives, who house some hundreds of singles in short life properties leased from the Council. But these schemes are increasingly under pressure as there is the imminent possibility of many properties being withdrawn from the scheme, in order to provide temporary accommodation for homeless families who have greater priority than singles.

People Leaving Institutions

Many single people are threatened with homelessness on leaving institutions and entering life in a community where they have inadequate support systems. Young people leaving Social Services care, prisoners completing their sentence and patients discharged from mental hospitals under the care in the community policy face particular difficulties in finding secure permanent homes. These problems are often compounded by prejudices against them, and their own limited social skills.

CASE STUDIES

The following stories illustrate how homelessness impacts upon people. They are true stories of people who have contacted Newham Council. Only the names have been changed.

PETER:

Peter Cogg comes from Suffolk. He has had a lot of contact with

Social Services and was in care as a child. He is now 22. Suffolk Social Services describe him as "emotionally vulnerable".

From October 1987 to June 1988 he was placed in B&B hotels in London by Newham Council.

From June 1988 - June 1989 he lived in a van in Suffolk with a male friend aged 58. He was harassed because of his sexuality and was the object of unwelcome advances.

He has a criminal record for theft and says he is in fear of violence in Suffolk because he informed to the police.

When Peter came back to London in June 1989 and was homeless, Newham Council again placed him in a hotel.

Those who have met him describe Peter as emotionally immature and open to sexual exploitation. He has little understanding of how tough life is in London. When he is short of money, which like all single people on social security is often, he turns to male prostitution for an income.

Newham Homeless Persons Unit have recently decide he is not "vulnerable" within the meaning of the homeless legislation and that the borough should not offer him permanent accomodation.

They have ended his B&B booking and when last heard of he was adrift in London.

THE STANLEYS

Mr. & Mrs Stanley have two children aged 12 and 7. Until 1985 they lived in a small flat rented from a private landlord. It had no bathroom.

Mrs. Stanley was offered a job as a doctor's caretaker / receptionist. The agreement was that they could live in the three bedroom house next to the surgery rent free.

In October 1986 the doctor told them he wanted to sell the house and served a Notice to Quit, but did nothing further about this for over a year.

The house had always been cold and damp and in mid 1988 dry rot was discovered. The council's environmental health officer served a notice on the landlord requiring him to carry out extensive repairs.

The doctor terminated Mrs. Stanley's employment in August 1988 and asked her to leave the house. On advice from the Council she stayed in the property until the landlord obtained a Court Order.

In May 1989 two and a half years after the landlord originally asked them to leave the court ordered them out. The Stanley's

reported to Newham's homeless persons unit and were placed in temporary accomodation.

GRACE

Grace arrived in London in the spring of 1989 as a refugee from an African country. She had seen her husband abducted and presumed murdered and had left behind her four children. She was five months pregnant at the time.

The Home Office granted her exceptional leave to remain status and through friends she was able to find a cold damp bedsit. Although the rent was high it was covered by Housing Benefit. However the landlord failed to pay the electricity bills and through the winter she and her new baby had long periods with no heating in the room. She and other tenants were also harassed in other ways.

Grace joined a local church which helped her in many practical ways. They spent time in supporting her applications for rehousing to Newham Council, and various Housing Associations. From time to time she and the child stayed a few days with different families from the church. It became obvious that no-one would offer her a home of her own unless she was actually put out on the streets by her landlord.

The Social Services department eventually visited her and put pressure on the Housing Department because the bedsit was an unfit place in which to house a small child. By the summer of 1990 Grace could stand the delays no longer and as a protest dumped her baby in the local Housing Office and disappeared for a day. But for the intervention and support of her friends at church the child would have been taken into care.

The result of this protest was that the Housing Department have promised to offer her a place as soon as possible. This promise is still to be delivered. For the time being Grace and the baby are staying with friends from the church.

SURVEY OF THE CHURCHES' RESPONSE 1989

A major concern of the working party was to make sure that any new proposals were not duplicating existing services. The survey was conceived as a way of discovering what churches in Newham were already doing, and to test the level of awareness, perceptions and interest in homelessness to be found in the Christian communities of the borough. It was also hoped that the process itself would be a consciousness raising exercise among church leaders. The production of the survey report was tied in with a Homelessness Sunday on November 5th 1989 when special prayers in many churches focussed on homelessness. On the same day an awareness raising event was held at St. Barts East Ham. An

information pack was prepared for this event and is still available from NCRP.

The key results from this survey are presented as appendix III

Several summary conclusions can be drawn and are given below.

Most of the 51 church leaders who responded have at least a minimal level of awareness that there is a problem of homelessness in the borough and enough good will to want to do something about it.

While most responding churches have been approached by homeless people, discussed the issue and prayed about it, only a dozen have any practical action projects up and running, and only another seven have projects at the planning stage.

Many churches are aware of their very limited resources in terms of information, people power and finance in the face of a huge problem.

There were however plenty of ideas for action at many different levels. The eight listed below all represent possible responses which emerged from the survey and the working party's reflection on it. Some have already been acted upon. We feel the churches of Newham should carefully consider the rest.

1) The need for a better way to share information about homelessness and how to deal with it around the churches. As a result of this an information sheet with basic information about resources and contacts available for homeless people has been produced and distributed to church leaders through the NCRP monthly mailing. It is still available from NCRP.

2) Develop and recommend a consistent policy for church leaders on how to help homeless people calling at the church or vicarage. Perhaps back it up with voucher system for food (link with supermarkets?), boarding and lodging.

3) Investigate the possibility of emergency accommodation with Christian families. This has led us to the establishment of the Newham Night Stop project (see below).

4) Look at the possibility of further hostel or B&B type provision run by Christians on a non-profit basis with priority given to homeless families, single homeless, and people discharged from institutions.

5) Survey church premises in the borough to identify possible sites and schemes for development of long term housing provision, probably in partnership with Christian Housing Associations. Offer advice on sources of finance and consultancy expertise.

- 6) Provide popular presentation of information on homelessness for church congregations. Identify individuals with time and burden to get involved in new projects.
- 7) Look towards the training / appointment of a full time housing projects initiator / homelessness resource and campaign worker or team to be employed on an interchurch basis.
- 8) Investigate the possibility of increased day centre provision for homeless people.

RESPONSES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the survey and our wider investigation of homelessness the working party believes there are three approaches by which Christians and churches can make an impact on the problems of homeless people. There is political action, the provision of housing, and short term pastoral care of homeless people.

Political Action

Many who have campaigned for homeless people believe that the current housing crisis can only be rectified by a major redirection of public funds. The opposing view, promoted by the government of the day, is that the problem will be solved through individual initiative, charitable begging bowls, 'market forces' and private sector funding. However, it is now abundantly clear "that the government's reliance on market-orientated policies, including financial incentives to owner-occupiers and private landlords, has serious limitations when matched against the pattern of housing needs, general income levels and demographic factors..." (John Greve)

Our working party has come to the conclusion that only a major programme of investment in building affordable rented homes will go any way towards solving the problem of homelessness in Newham and the surrounding area. We are very disappointed that the massive house building programmes in Docklands seem to have made so little impact on the housing chances of poorer people. Too much of the redevelopment has been targetted at the affluent, and luxury end of the owner occupier market. If anything it has been detrimental as property prices have risen beyond the dreams of most potential first time buyers who live in the area.

We therefore support, and encourage Christians and others to join in appropriate campaigning for the greatly increased provision of affordable rented homes in our borough.

There is also a place for other campaigns which more immediately

affect the day to day life of homeless people. For example we believe Bed & Breakfast is an expensive and unsatisfactory way of housing homeless families and should be phased out as soon as possible. We also believe that some of the regulations on housing and DSS benefits, especially for young and single people are unjust and cause unnecessary suffering. This report is not the place to advocate detailed changes of policy. However, we would encourage Christians to become involved through political parties and campaigning groups such as Shelter, CHAR and the Young Homelessness group, and to make these concerns better known in the churches and in society at large.

HOUSING PROVISION

In Newham itself, several churches and church related agencies and Christian Housing Associations are already involved in providing accommodation for the elderly (eg. St Barts, East Ham; West Ham Central Mission); for single people (Bryant Street Church, Stratford) or Homeless Young Peoples Project (NCRP). Nonetheless there is need and room for more. An initial co-ordinated response might be a survey of potential sites and schemes.

If our planned responses as churches are to become effective projects for homeless people generally, or for any of the groups specified earlier in the report, considerable sums of money will be needed to acquire develop and manage suitable buildings. There will also be need to bring in professional expertise from fundraisers, architects, surveyors, and housing associations. One network which offers contacts in this field is the Urban Church Consultancy Project based at ECUM.

PASTORAL CARE OPTIONS

In order to respond more immediately to the needs of homeless people in Newham a number of short-term options were considered in some depth by the working party. In some cases visits to projects outside of London were undertaken. As a result the four options given below are now being proposed by the working party for serious consideration and urgent implementation by the Churches of Newham. None of these options are exclusive and plans for some of them are already well advanced.

OPTION 1 : Vouchers

To provide funds to operate a pre-paid voucher system to local landlords and hotel operators for people on benefits. One church

in our survey had already experimented with a small scale scheme on these lines. If a wider scheme could be established, church workers confronted by the immediate needs of a homeless person would be able to make a practical response without the need to give cash. This voucher scheme could secure a short term place for those waiting for DSS payments which are made in arrears. It might also be possible to arrange a parallel food voucher scheme with local shops or other food outlets.

Costing: The number of sponsored places is obviously dependent on the amount of funding raised.

Time and effort needed: One person to spend a considerable amount of time contacting churches, hotels, shops etc. and devising a workable system.

OPTION 2 : Day Centre

To develop a day centre for homeless people modelled on the Brighton Housing Trust project. This Housing Trust provides a wide range of specialised services for homeless people, including intervention in eviction cases, usually by way of making representation to Building Societies and Courts over outstanding payments; specialised hostels and the Day Centre. The Day Centre operates from a converted redundant church building in the centre of Brighton. No one is allowed to sleep in the hall at nights (though blankets are regularly provided for those sleeping rough on the beach or elsewhere) but users have access to a library, and art room, a limited games facility, cooked meals, advice and support, showers and a change of clean clothing from the 'clothes store'. Clothes are donated free of cost by supporters and churches connected with the project. Some of the users at the Brighton Housing Trust Day Centre frequently help by preparing meals and with redecorating the hall.

Any such day centre in Newham would need to work alongside and build on the experience of voluntary sector initiatives such as SHAC and the Open House project at Sebert Road. Further detailed feasibility study work is necessary before rushing in to this option. In particular the churches should consider whether further involvement in and development of the Open House project would be sufficient provision for the needs of all homeless people in the borough, or whether a new additional centre is necessary and viable.

Costing: (Assuming a new project). Capital funding to lease / purchase and equip a suitable Day Centre and revenue funding for at least three staff. This staffing level would provide cover for holidays and sickness but presumably the scheme might be viable with two staff backed up with regular and dependable

volunteers.

OPTION 3: Night Stop

To operate a Night Stop Scheme similar to the one in operation in Leeds. The project was inspired by the Leeds Churches Community Involvement Project, an Ecumenical group which was established in 1985 to examine the churches' response to the needs of the local community. The steering group met from September 1986 to July 1987. The project was submitted to an open forum in July 1987 and Nightstop was launched in October 1987. During the first year of operation there were 149 enquiries; accommodation was provided for 94 persons with a total of 163 bed nights.

"Nightstop has 29 hosts offering hospitality ... Hosts come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some are families with young children, others have grown up, and some are single men and women. They come from different Christian denominations throughout the city and a variety of social backgrounds."
(Annual Report 1987-88)

Leeds Nightstop employs 1 full time worker; operates on a rota system with volunteers who are on duty up to 10 pm at nights (the office closes at 5 pm); it works closely with Social Services and Probation Service and takes up two references on volunteers, which include the Police. It caters for the 16-25 age group, but excludes anyone on drugs or who is mentally disturbed. Nightstop is now an Associate Project of Barnardos.

Costing: The Leeds scheme operated on a budget of £1,127 during the first year mainly raised in gifts from Churches. Four pounds, as a matter of principle is paid to each host but most of them donate it back to the scheme. In theory Housing Benefit would cover the cost of lodgings, but it has been the experience of the Leeds scheme that since the DSS pays in arrears and the young people have to sign up the next day, normally with a great deal of hassle, "benefits" are not taken up. The full-time salary is funded separately. An office facility is provided by a local church.

In March 1990 a meeting was held in St. Barts East Ham in which two people from the Leeds Project shared their story with nearly 50 people drawn from various Newham Churches. As a result of this a decision was taken to establish a Newham Nightstop, some 20 people expressed an initial interest in being volunteer hosts and a steering group was set up. Following discussions with the Council and training sessions for volunteers in September, the Newham scheme is due to open on a pilot basis from October 1st 1990.

OPTION 4 : Educating and Enabling the Churches

Churches in the East London are becoming more aware of the issues of homelessness and many are seeking to respond in practical ways. The growing concern is further shown by the emergence of a Waltham Forest working group parallel to our own. It is associated with CREST and the Waltham Forest Council of Churches. They too have been researching the needs and opportunities for ministry among homeless people in their borough.

Churches in both boroughs are lacking in energy, expertise and specialist knowledge in the field of housing and homelessness. Employing a person with experience of work in the field homelessness and skills in community development and adult education, would be a major step towards expanding and enhancing the Christian response.

The two groups have now started to work together with a view to forming an new body the East London Churches Housing and Homelessness Alliance (ELCHAHA). One of the main tasks of ELCHAHA will be to set up and undertake the management of a new post, a churches Housing and Homelessness Resource Officer.

The officer, working with the local churches, would attempt to meet the needs of local people who are homeless, or in housing needs in the following ways:

Directly:

by enabling the further development of Newham Nightstop which will provide emergency short term accommodation for homeless young people.

by initiating new projects to meet the need of homeless people based on churches in Waltham Forest and Newham

Indirectly:

by providing advice, training and information resources to churches in East London

by raising the awareness among Christians of issues of homelessness and housing, and campaigning on their behalf.

Costing: A budget of £25,000 a year for three years is envisaged and an application is being prepared for the Church Urban Fund and other grant making bodies. It is also hoped that local churches joining the new alliance will make substantial donations to the work.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE WORKING PARTY

In its 18 months existence the working party has:

researched and educated itself about the causes and dimensions of homelessness in Newham

discovered what the churches and others are already doing to tackle the problem

looked at several patterns of ministry among homeless people that have been established elsewhere

made much of this information available to church leaders and ordinary concerned Christians through reports and seminars

fostered enough commitment among Christians and collaboration with the Council to launch the pilot stage of the Newham Nightstop scheme

worked in tandem with Waltham Forest churches to make the launch of a new body (ELCHAHA) employing a resource officer a real possibility

proposed several further potential initiatives for the churches to consider.

THE FUTURE

Much remains to be done. If ELCHAHA is established and funding for a worker is obtained, a new structure will be available to carry on the work of the working party. If ELCHAHA does not come to fruition some alternative way of continuing the tasks must be devised.

The needs of homeless people in Newham are so great and urgent that they must become a priority concern for all Christians and churches in the borough.

APPENDIX ONE

10 FACTS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS

- 1) Being homeless is not just about sleeping on the streets. There are many ways in which someone can be homeless. For example, sleeping on someone else's floor, living in a night shelter, temporary hostel or bed and breakfast hotel. Although these provide a roof, they do not provide the security, stability and privacy of a permanent home.
- 2) Each year, more and more people report to a local authority as being homeless; among these are many teenagers, young people and families with children.
- 3) In England in 1988, 105,000 households were found to be in priority need of housing. Over three quarters of these households included one or more dependant children or a pregnant woman.
- 4) The annual cost of providing bed and breakfast for homeless people is over \$100 million, and is double what it would cost to build homes for them.
- 5) The biggest reason people become homeless is that relatives or friends are no longer willing or able to accommodate them. Many young people are forced to leave their family home because they have been abused, harrassed or thrown out.
- 6) SHELTER, the national campaigning organisation for the homeless have estimated that around 150,000 16 - 19 year olds experience homelessness each year.
- 7) About 40% of all homeless young people have been in care, and consequently have no family at all to fall back on.
- 8) Cuts in social security benefits have left tens of thousands of young single people begging for survival. Most 16 and 17 year olds who are forced to live away from home are not entitled to claim Income Support at all and yet they may not be able to find a suitable job or YTS placement.
- 9) Financially, it is virtually impossible for a young person to set up their own home on YTS pay and Housing Benefit.
- 10) Some young people are being forced to turn to crime or prostitution in order to make enough money to live on.

APPENDIX II

REFERENCES, SOURCES AND CONTACT POINTS

Information in this report comes mainly from the following sources:

Newspapers (see text for references)

Various CHAR Reports: CHAR (Campaign for Single Homeless People)
5 Cromer Street, London WC1H 8BR. (tel. 071 833 2071).

Leeds Nightstop Annual Report: Leeds Nightstop can be contacted via "Faith in Leeds", c/o Burley Methodist Church, 53 Cardigan Lane, Leeds LS4 2LE (tel. 0532 74021)

"No Fixed Abode" and: "Single Homelessness among Black and Ethnic Minorities in London" from SHIL (Single Homelessness in London Joint Working Party, 5th Floor, Regal House, London Road, Twickenham TW1 3QB (tel 081 891 5021)

Docklands Consultative Committee report "Providing Affordable Housing in East London" from DCC, Unit 4, Stratford Office Village, 4 Romford Road, London E15 4EA (tel.081 519 5485)

Various SHELTER Reports; from Shelter, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9HU. (tel. 071 253 0202)

London Borough of Newham Housing Committee reports: available from the Town Hall, East Ham.

Report on Local Authority Housing Programmes from London Research Centre, Parliament House, 81 Black Prince Road London SE1 (tel.071 735 4250)

"Young Homelessness: A National Scandal" from Young Homelessness group, 5th floor, 140a Gloucester Mansions, Cambridge Circus, London WC2H 8HD (tel.071836 0494).

Newsletters and briefing papers from UNLEASH 131 Camberwell Road, London SE5 0HF (attn. Pat Logan tel. 071 701 4319/3414).

Currie & John Greve's book/report

***** Details?

BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING

Fearon M. "No Place like Home (1989) \$2.95 Triangle / SPCK

Suggests ways the church can and should be involved in housing issues and ministry to homeless people.

Logan P. (1989) "A Life to be Lived : Homelessness and Pastoral Care" Darton Longman and Todd \$4.95

Practical suggestions and masses of resource material for churches seeking to respond to the current housing crisis.

RESOURCE AGENCIES ON Housing and Homelessness

CHRISTIAN AGENCIES

UNLEASH (United London Ecumenical Action on Single Homelessness), 131 Camberwell Road, London SE5 0HF (attn. Pat Logan tel. 071 701 4319/3414). A network co-ordinating Christian work with homeless people in London

London Churches Resttlement Agency, 131 Camberwell Road, London SE5 0HF, offers advice to churches planning housing projects.

SPA Westminster RC Diocese Social & Pastoral Action, 73 St. Charles Square, London W10 6EJ (tel 071 969 9073)

Catholic Housing Aid Society 189a Old Brompton Road, London SW5 OAR (attn Robina Rafferty tel 071 373 4961)

The Children's Society, Edward Rudolf House, Margery Street, London WC1X OJL (tel.071 837 4299). Working mainly with Anglican churches to develop community projects for the welfare of children and young people.

Salvation Army HQ, 101 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4 4EP (tel 071 236 5222). Runs a number of centres and hostels across London.

London City Mission, 175 Tower Bridge Road, London SE1 2AH (tel 071 407 7585 Duncan Whyte). Evangelism and care of homeless people is included in LCMs work.

Church Army HQ Independents Road, Blackheath, London SE3 9LG (tel. 081 318 1226) Order of Anglican lay evangelists working in many projects among homeless people.

Praxis, Pott Street URC, Bethnal Green, London E2 (attn. Vaughan Jones) a group of radical Christian organisations including work on homelessness.

The URBAN CHURCHES CONSULTANCY PROJECT is based at ECUM at Lawrence Hall, 2/4 Cumberland Road London E13 8NH (tel. 071 476 3651) and can offer advice on setting up new projects.

SHAFTESBURY SOCIETY 2A Amity Grove, Raynes Park, London SW20 0LJ (Gordon Holloway tel. 081 946 6635, Fran Beckett tel. 071 582 9545) Social involvement and evangelism in many local centres. Also runs a major Housing Association.

OASIS TRUST, Haddon Hall Baptist Church, Tower Bridge Road, London SE1 4TR (tel. 071 231 4583) attn. Fi McClachlan. Runs a small hostel in Bermondsey and developing a major hostel project in Lambeth.

British Youth For Christ (London Region) attn. Denis Birch, 25 St. Mary's Road, Ealing London W5 5RE. (tel. 081 566 2801). Street work with homeless young people in central London, feeding them through into a medium stay centre in Islington and a longer term rural training and rehabilitation programme.

SECULAR AGENCIES

Shelter, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9HU. (tel. 071 253 0202) Campaign against homelessness. Publishes journal "Roof". A free publications list is available.

London Housing Unit 125-133 Camden High Street, London NW1 7JR produces a newsletter "London Housing News" and occasional reports.

CHAR (Campaign for Single Homeless People) 5 Cromer Street, London WC1H 8BR. (tel. 071 833 2071). Newham branch at 81 High St. Sth. E6 (tel. 081 472 6652). Publications and action groups on behalf of the single homeless.

National Federation of Housing Associations 175 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8UP (tel. 071 278 6571). Umbrella organisation for the voluntary housing sector. Its membership list includes many Christian Housing Associations.

SHAC, 134-138 Romford Road, Stratford E15 (tel. 081 534 6025) offers advice to homeless people and training courses for professionals and volunteers working with them.

APPENDIX III

SURVEY OF THE CHURCHES' RESPONSE 1989

The questionnaire was mailed to the leaders of some 130 known fellowships and Christian centres in the LBN in June. Eventually a total of 51 questionnaires were returned and processed. All the denominations were fairly well covered. If there is a bias in the replies received it is probably towards those churches which are already involved or interested in the issues of homelessness. The ones who were least interested, or had least involvement to report were probably the least likely to reply.

REPLIES TO OUR QUESTIONS

The following responses were given:

NB: "church" should be read as including Christian Centre or project.

Q.1) Is your church currently involved in a housing project or any other project specifically aimed at meeting the needs of homeless people?

12 churches (24% of those replying) claimed to be currently involved. Three mentioned giving food and advice to homeless people (one of these was a soup run to the centre of London). Three others mentioned some church property used for housing association purposes. Five churches were involved at some level in hostel provision. One was meeting homeless people through a drop in care centre, and another was providing a base for the Care and Repair project.

Q.2 Are there any plans to use/develop the premises of your church for work with homeless people or people with housing problems?

10 churches (20% of respondents) mentioned they had plans in mind. 3 of these were looking at building redevelopment possibilities. 3 were looking at emergency shelter provision. 2 were planning to run advice centres. One was about to start a day centre for people in Bed & Breakfast hotels. The final one simply reported they had people keen to get involved in the issue.

Q.3 Is the issue of homelessness ever addressed in the general programme of your church e.g in discussion groups, prayer, education)

35 Churches (70% of those replying) said yes.

22 respondents mentioned prayer.

7 had covered the subject in sermons or worship.
18 churches had discussed homelessness in church councils, home groups or Bible studies.
4 mentioned financial support of relevant charities.
5 respondents mentioned practical responses to meet the needs of homeless people
one church had written to their MP on the topic.

Q.4 Have homeless people or people with housing problems ever come to you / your church seeking help / advice / assistance?

37 respondents (73%) answered yes, although many qualified this by saying only occasionally. The ones that answered no tended to be those who had no obvious point of access for the casual door knocker, i.e. no obvious vicarage or church building. The most frequent type of cases mentioned were single people, both old and young followed by families with children, and people with mental or physical disability.

Clearly these findings reflect the fact that single people are the key group who have no statutory right to housing, and the high numbers of young homeless people in London. The high figure for disabled people probably reflects the so called "care in the community" policies of the Health Authority, whereby patients discharged from mental hospitals are thrust out to fend for themselves. The high number of families asking for help reflects the level of homeless families in the borough, the long Council waiting lists, and families in B&B.

It is necessary to point out that these figures must not be taken to represent the overall dimensions of homelessness in Newham. For example it is likely that there are many more homeless refugees and members of ethnic minorities than actually contact the churches represented in our respondents.

Q. 4b) How do you /your church usually respond?

19 churches mentioned advice or referring people on to the LBN, housing or social services, housing associations or to other voluntary agencies and hostels

11 mentioned immediate first aid help of food and in some cases money. But about half of these said it was their policy never to offer monetary help.

8 said that they would use informal contacts within the congregation and sometimes at least offer emergency shelter.

2 churches mentioned prayer or spiritual ministry.

one said that they vote left of centre!

Q.5 In your view in what ways could the churches in Newham respond to the problem of homelessness

12 respondents mentioned better sharing and gathering of information on the issue. e.g register of agencies for referral

11 suggested various forms of political lobbying on Council & Government

7 redeveloping premises (included two suggesting borough wide survey of church premises)

3 suggested emergency shelter in Christian homes

1 advocacy on behalf of individuals

1 setting up and training a team of specialists across the churches

3 befriending and listening to homeless people

4 hostel projects

3 Christian B&B provision (one of these meaning day centre)

3 Strengthening family life

2 Other spiritual solutions

About half a dozen people expressed their own powerlessness and inability to deal with the problem, or lack of time and resources to tackle it.

Q.6 Would you find it helpful to have a fact sheet / resource list outlining key phone nos. and information regarding homelessness in Newham.

42 respondents (82%) said YES

HOMELESSNESS IN NEWHAM



Afternoon of Prayer and Information

St. Bartholomew's Church and Centre
292b Barking Rd. East Ham, E6

Sunday Nov. 5th 1pm - 4pm

Newham Community Renewal Programme Ltd

170 Harold Road London E13 0SE

The Pastoral Care of the Homeless

This summer a working party drawn from various Newham Churches has conducted a survey of churches in the borough to discover how much involvement there already is in issues effecting homeless people.

The results are encouraging and a detailed report on the research will be published in the new year. The Council have given us a small research grant which has allowed us to employ Herby Boudier for a couple of days a week.

This pack is produced to coincide with a day of prayer for the homeless which is organised by UNLEASH - the ecumenical group working on a London wide basis.

We have taken some of their material and compared it with material we have gathered about Newham. You will see that we are faced with a crisis of startling proportions.

Our hope is that out of prayer and research, it will be possible to develop a co-ordinated strategy for the churches of Newham to make their contribution to solving an issue of major injustice. It is no longer possible to leave things to agencies like the Salvation Army or our own Homeless Young Peoples Project.

I hope you will be able to make good use of this material - in discussion and study groups or wherever you decide it appropriate.

Paul Regan

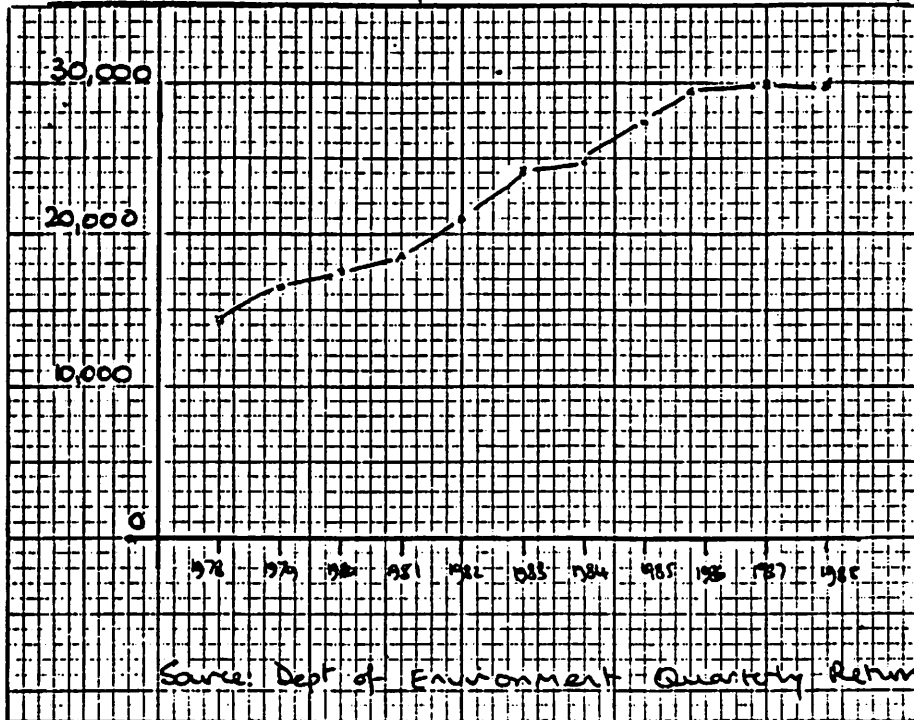
**For further information contact: The Renewal Programme
472-2785**

HOMELESSNESS IN LONDON

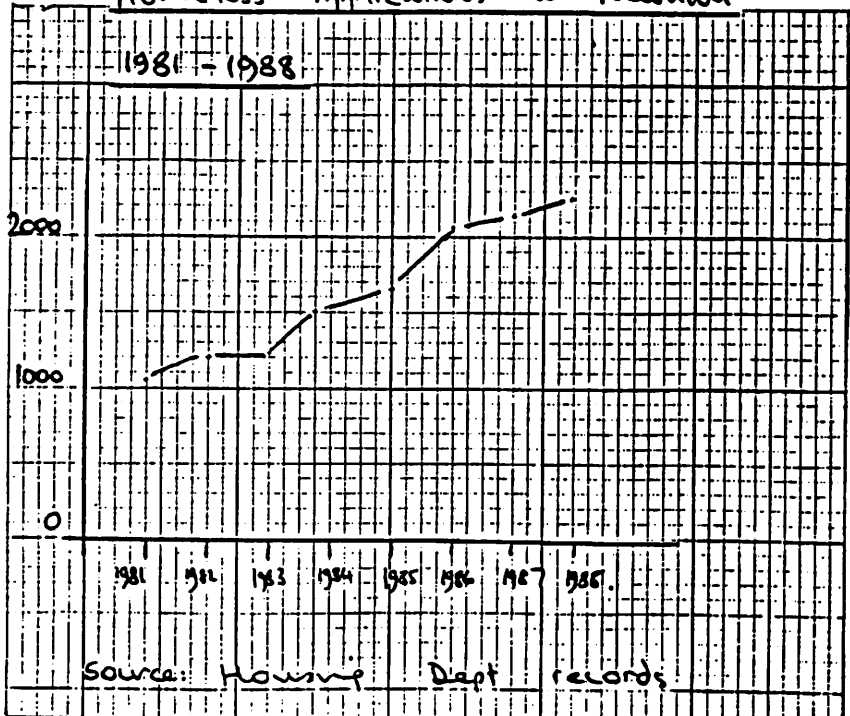
NEWHAM

Recent reliable estimates suggest that 150,000 people are homeless in London. The Borough of NEWHAM represents some 1,563 of this total (as at September 1989).

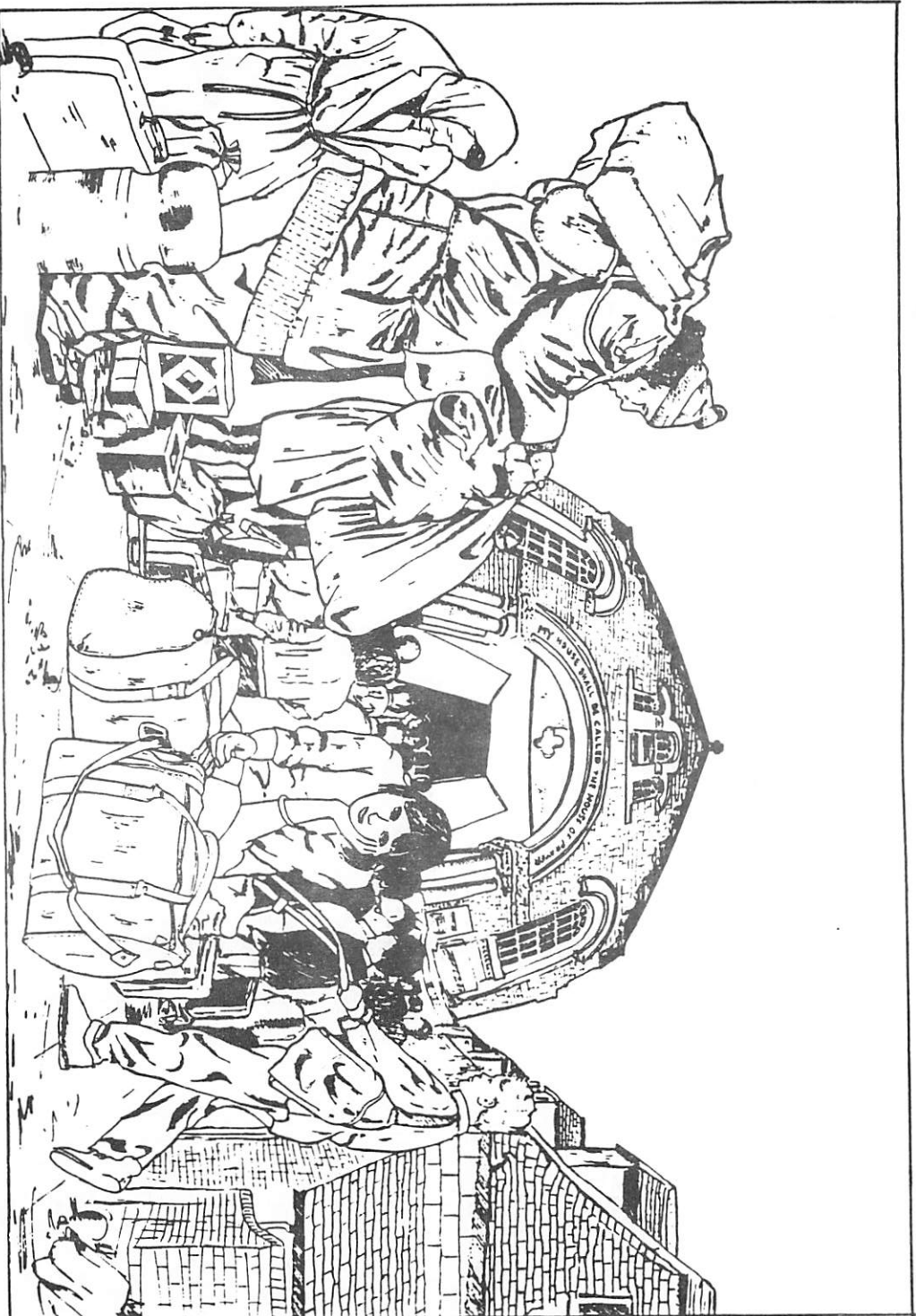
Homeless households in London accepted for rehousing by local authorities 1978-1988



Homeless Applications to Newham



The figure of 150,000 homeless persons can be broken down into two further categories:



Case Study 1

Peter Cogg (not real name) comes from Suffolk. He has had a lot of contact from Social Services and was in care as a child. He is now 21.

From October 1987 - June 1988 he was in B & B hotels in London placed by Newham Council. Suffolk Social Services describe him as "emotionally vulnerable".

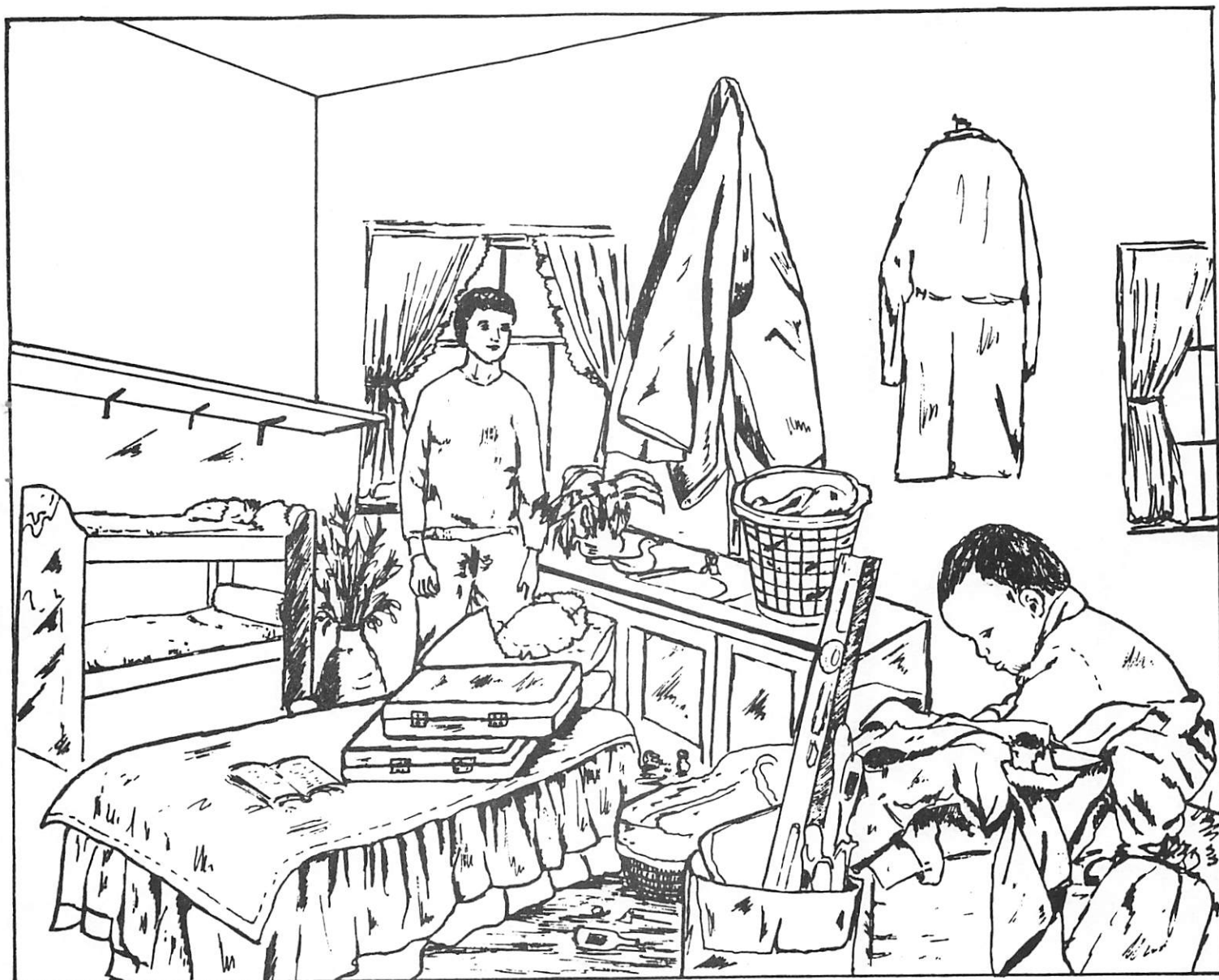
From June 1988 - June 1989 he lived in a van in Suffolk with a male friend aged 58. He was harassed because of his sexuality and was the object of unwelcome advances.

He has a criminal record for theft and says he is in fear of violence in Suffolk because he informed to the police.

Peter was again placed in a hotel in June 1989 by Newham Council. He had come back to London and was homeless. Those who meet him describe him as emotionally immature

and open to sexual exploitation. He has little understanding of how tough life is in London. When he is short of money, which like all single people on social security he often is, he turns to male prostitution.

Newham Homeless Persons Unit have recently decided he is not vulnerable within the meaning of the homeless legislation and Newham should not offer him permanent accommodation. They have ended his B & B booking and he is now adrift in London.



What does Hidden Homelessness mean?

Hidden homelessness means that "a very large number of people are simply unable to find a home of their own and wind up sharing accommodation with family, friends or other people. In some cases the arrangement meets everyone's needs very well; in other cases the situation is merely tolerable; and in other cases, where for example the property is in very poor condition or over crowded or simply not conducive to sharing, people are just trapped." *

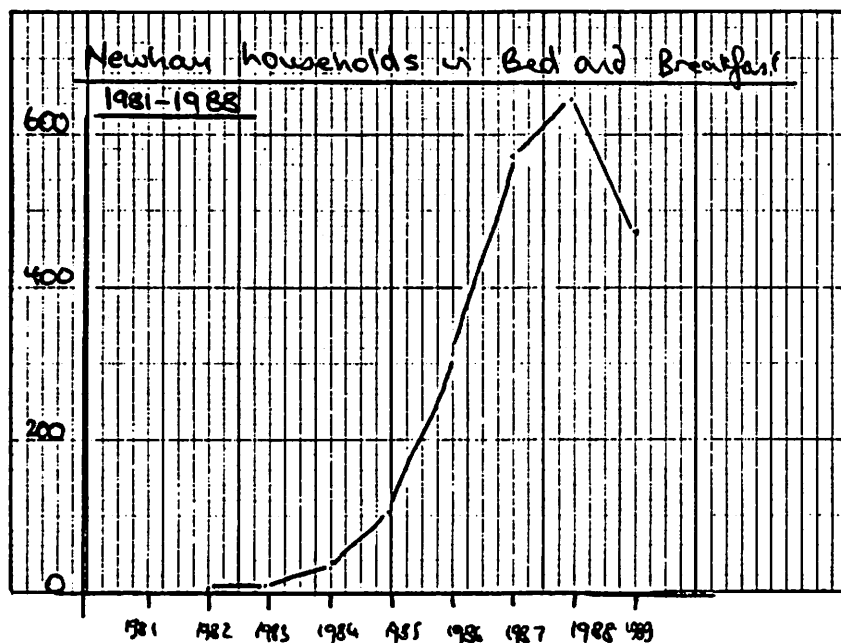
Who does the Council have responsibility for?

Only a minority of homeless people have a right in law to be provided with housing by local authorities. In London, the numbers of homeless households which have been accepted as having legal right to housing are as follows:

1978	.....	14,430	
1979	.....	16,600	
1980	.....	17,480	
1981	.....	18,470	
1982	.....	21,100	
1983	.....	24,050	
1984	.....	24,820	
1985	.....	27,390	
1986	.....	29,740	
1987	.....	30,000	
1988	.....	28,950	*

As you can see the numbers of people having a right to council housing have more than doubled in the last ten years.

However, "the vast majority are families with dependent children (61%); households with a member pregnant (19%)"* those vulnerable through old age, mental illness, physical disability and other special reasons totalling 19% - with 1% resulting from fire and flood. Since most local authorities are currently unable to build new flats or houses, one can only assume that individuals and families in the above categories will be placed more and more in Bed and Breakfast accommodation in the years ahead.



Source:
Housing Dept. records.

Why do people loose their accommodation?

Government "returns for the first quarter of 1989 suggest that 54% of the people become homeless because parents/friends are no longer willing or able to accommodate them; 9% occurred as a result of broken relationships with partners; 10% losing private

rented accommodation for reasons other than failure to pay rent; 3% through loss of service tenancy; 2% resulting from mortgage arrears and 1% each from rent arrears in the private and local authority sector." *

Case Study 2

Mr and Mrs Stanley and their two children aged 12 and 7. Until 1985 they lived in a small flat rented from a private landlord. It had no bathroom.

Mrs Stanley was offered a job as a doctor's caretaker/receptionist. The agreement was that they could live in the three bedroom house next to the surgery, rent free.

In October 1986 the doctor told them he wanted to sell the house and served a Notice to Quit, but did nothing further about this for over a year.

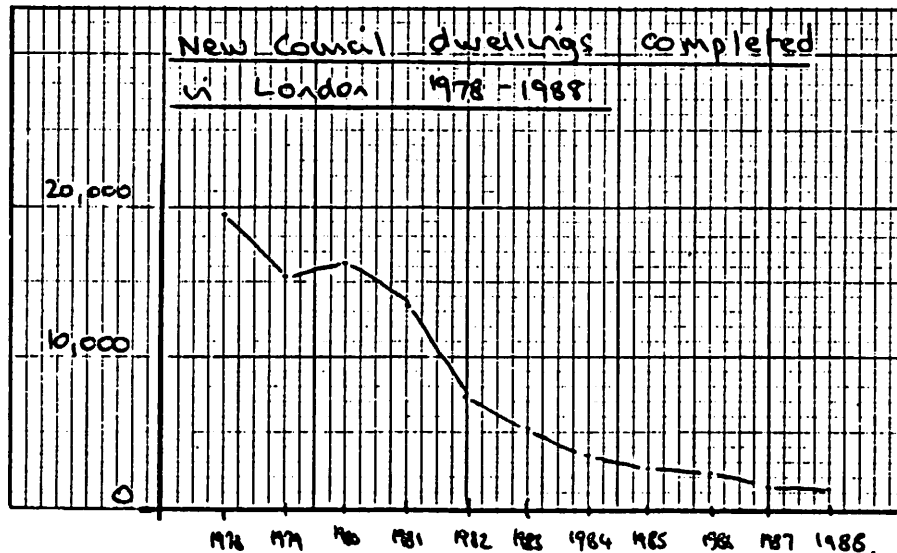
The house had always been cold and damp and in mid 1988 dry rot was discovered.

The Council's Environmental Health Service served a notice on the landlord re-quiring him to carry out extensive repairs.

The doctor terminated her employment in August and asked her to leave the house. On advice form the Council she stayed in the property until the landlord obtained a court order.

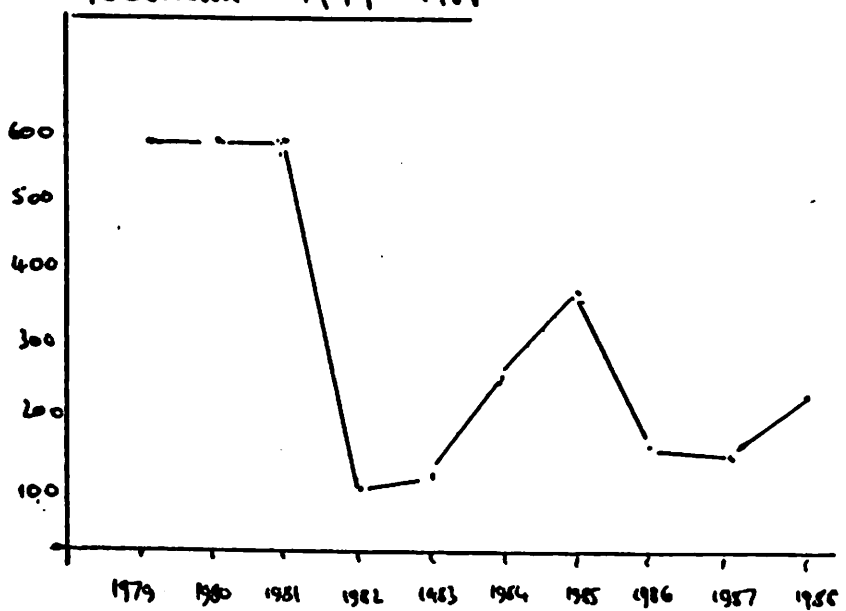
In May 1989, two and a half years after the landlord originally asked them to leave, the court ordered them out and the Stanleys reported to Newham's homeless unit and were placed in temporary accommodation.

Councils are tightening up on the number of homeless people they cater for because they are forced by Government legislation and 'scarse resources' to become less sympathetic to people who are not considered 'vulnerable' or meeting the 'priority needs' criteria. This kind of response is obviously inter-twined with Local Authorities' inability to finance new housing projects. See tables below for London/Newham building programmes over the past 10 and 11 years respectively.



Source: Dept. of Environment statistics.

New Council dwellings completed in
Newham 1979 - 1989



Source:
Newham HIP Statement
1990/91

In the light of the above, should legal steps be taken to reduce
Local Authority responsibility for the homeless?

"It is sometimes argued that because local authorities cannot even now respond adequately to the needs of those whom they have a duty to rehouse, steps should be taken to tighten up the grounds on which homeless people are accorded in law a right to housing. This is as silly as it is inhumane. Tightening the criteria may ease the pressure on local authorities but it will do nothing to reduce the problem of homelessness itself. Housing is a basic human right, according to the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, and the teaching of the churches. The review of legislation and Code of Guidance on homelessness which is currently being undertaken ought to provide an opportunity to ensure that the right to housing is extended not restricted. But the clear implication of this is that action needs to be taken to increase the supply of housing that will be within the means of the people who are most likely to become homeless." *

Local Church responses to homelessness.

According to the findings of a survey, carried out by the Renewal Programme Working Party on Homelessness in Newham between June and October 1989, some 12 local churches (from a sample of 51 returned questionnaires) indicate that they have been responding to the needs of 'homeless' people in the Borough by providing food, advice, a drop-in centre, a base for Care and Repair Project and properties for housing association purposes. When asked about future plans to use or develop church premises for work with homeless people or those with housing problems, a further 3 churches said they were considering redevelopment possibilities. Another 3 were looking at emergency shelter provision; 2 were planning to run advice centres and one was about to start a day centre for people in Bed and Breakfast hotels.

It is also worth bearing in mind that other churches are involved in operating hostels and/or supporting ones such as Renewal Programme's Homeless Young Peoples Project (HYPP). More indirectly others are providing permanent accommodation for the elderly.

Other Initiatives/Action by local churches ??

Engagement in prayer, worship and Bible study on homelessness ?

Launch or join in campaigning activities on an interchurch basis to persuade the Council and Government to redraft their housing and homelessness policy?

Investigate setting up emergency night shelter or short term hospitality schemes in church halls and local homes?

Identify church sites or other properties for the development of long term housing on denominational or interchurch basis or in partnership with housing associations or the local Council?

Look at the possibility of further hostel or B & B type provision with priority given to homeless families, single homeless and people discharged from institutions?

Could two or three people from your church attend the Renewal Programme's annual conference on housing, homelessness and the family on the 18th November 1989?

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The Pastoral Care on Homelessness Working Party (Renewal Programme) would welcome further comments and suggestions on how we might proceed to tackle the pressing problem of homelessness in our locality. We would like to incorporate your ideas in our feasibility study on homelessness for March 1990. Please send us your ideas by the end of November.

Acknowledgements:

LBN
* Pat Logan - UNLEASH
Pastoral Care for the Homeless Working
Party



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