Meeting the Needs of Black and Minority Ethnic Communities

by Joe Matthias

Photography Jon Walter
0208 985 7312

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Raising the Standard for Homes and Neighbourhoods

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SECTION 1

Meeting the needs of black and minority ethnic communities

INTRODUCTION

Under the bIGPicture title, the Housing Corporation is producing a series of papers to promote and disseminate the outputs of its Innovation and Good Practice (IGP) programme. The papers are intended to:

- inform housing associations and others about the range of issues covered by IGP-supported projects;
- encourage consideration of their findings and recommendations;
- stimulate debate on, and discussion of, the topics covered; and
- encourage the proposal of new and related projects.

Each paper will pull together the lessons learned from IGP projects covering a key policy area. Papers will therefore provide information and practical assistance for housing associations aiming to improve their performance in these areas.

There is an increasing body of evidence – such as reports published by the Policy Studies Institute (Modood and others, 1997; Beishon, Modood & Virdee, 1998) – that black and minority ethnic (BME) communities experience higher levels of disadvantage than the majority white community. BME communities tend to be concentrated in some of the most deprived inner-city areas and face severe housing deprivation, partly as a result of direct or indirect discrimination. The socio-economic position of many individuals in BME communities – which may derive from barriers both to job opportunities and health and educational services – has also limited their choices, increasing their disadvantage.

This paper reviews the actions and strategies of various social housing providers in meeting the housing needs of BME communities. It briefly summarises the main findings and recommendations of 20 IGP projects concerned with identifying and assessing their housing needs and options. The summaries provide a valuable insight into the diversity of needs among BME communities; they also give direction to housing associations and associated organisations on how to identify, understand, assess and meet these needs.

This first section of the paper is in three parts:

- an overview of the policy background, focusing primarily on the Corporation’s policy initiatives in tackling the housing needs of BME communities;
- a summary of the key messages and common themes from those IGP projects concerned with identifying, assessing and meeting those needs;
- a discussion of the lessons learned from several wholly or partly IGP-funded projects that have used innovative approaches to lessening the effects of social exclusion among BME communities.

Section 2 lists and provides details of the housing needs projects reviewed in section 1.

Section 3 summarises the projects concerned with promoting social inclusion.

Appendix 1 provides contact details for many of the reports reviewed for this paper and Appendix 2 gives details of other publications mentioned.
THE POLICY

Background

Between 1986 and 1991 the Housing Corporation’s strategy towards BME housing needs focused on promoting the creation of BME-led housing associations. From 1992 to 1996, our second five-year strategy shifted the emphasis from setting up BME-led associations to support and consolidation. Over the past four years the Corporation has focused on equalities issues and the role that mainstream housing providers can play in reducing inequalities and meeting the housing needs of BME communities. In 1997 a discussion paper, Promoting diversity, choice and involvement, by the National Federation of Housing (NHF) advocated a needs-based and consumer-orientated vision for meeting BME housing needs.

The Corporation’s current BME housing policy (1998) also focused on meeting consumers’ needs rather than providers’, and followed the Housing Act 1996.

Called Black and Minority Ethnic housing policy (1998), the policy acknowledges the diverse needs and aspirations of BME communities and recommends that housing associations adopt a consumer-led, needs-based approach to BME housing and support needs.

One of the policy’s key aims is to engender a cultural change in mainstream housing associations that will empower BME communities and integrate their needs and aspirations into everyday housing association activities.

The framework that informs this BME policy is:

- housing associations cannot resolve the problems of deprivation on their own, and should work in partnership with others to develop solutions and to ensure that their own policies and practices facilitate equality and empowered BME communities;
- BME communities should be involved in implementing the policy – and housing associations have to work with their tenants and residents, local authorities and each other to achieve this;
- housing associations have to ensure that race equality is an integral part of their organisational and operational policies and that Board and senior management members are representative of BME communities.

Our BME policy objectives are to:

- ensure that all housing associations deliver a high standard of service to people from BME communities, enabling their empowerment;
- ensure that investment in, and delivery and regulation of, services reflects local needs and adherence to equal opportunities;
- maintain a vibrant BME housing sector to ensure continuing diversity and choice;
- promote greater accountability of all housing associations and contribute to the objective of capacity building and community development;
- contribute to the development and success of wider social policies, such as the New Deal for Employment and social inclusion.

The Corporation has emphasised the role of mainstream housing associations in realising its BME policy objectives, and its expectations are summarised below:

- housing associations must work with local authorities in developing locally based housing strategies that meet BME housing needs;
- housing associations must consult, empower and promote the participation of BME communities if they are to deliver appropriate and effective housing services;
- housing associations’ bids for funding must show how their proposed services meet local needs;
- housing associations must act to prevent indirect discrimination against BME communities when designing and delivering services;
- housing associations must consider the significance for BME households of the size and type of properties planned, and ways of making services more culturally sensitive.

Other Corporation initiatives have also given impetus to debate in this area, resulting in BME housing needs moving up the housing agenda.

These include:

* Quality and choice: the way forward for housing and the Housing Bill 2001, which proposes to extend the statutory safety net to a wider group of vulnerable homeless people – including BME – and which advocates that choice should be at the heart of allocation policies.

* The Housing Corporation Performance Standards, which emphasise the need for effective equal opportunities policies, the importance of letting homes to people in greatest housing need, and the need to provide a responsive service to vulnerable individuals and communities. The Corporation is currently at the consultative stage before adopting a new Regulatory Code in the autumn of 2001.

* The Housing Corporation’s national investment strategy underlined its commitment to meeting the range and diversity of housing needs in BME communities in order to help create, revitalise and maintain sustainable housing and neighbourhoods.

* Cabinet Office – New commitment to neighbourhood renewal: national strategy action plan (2001) recommended that local authorities give ethnic minorities a choice of housing to prevent them becoming concentrated in the worst housing and also ensure their participation in drawing up strategies for tackling areas of unpopular housing. The promotion of choice in housing is also a key part of the DETR’s housing policy statement The way forward for housing quality and choice: a decent home for all (2000).

* Race Relations Act Amendments 2000, which extends the provisions on direct and indirect discrimination and victimisation to all functions of specified public authorities and also obliges a wider range of public authorities to promote race equality.

* ‘Best Value’ – the Corporation regards the quality and appropriateness of service delivery responses to ethnic and cultural diversity as essential to the development of Best Value.

* Macpherson Report (2000) stressed the need for all public organisations to constantly review internal policies and procedures to counteract institutional racism.

* The Housing Investment Programme (HIP) Guidance emphasised that local authorities should ensure that the needs and aspirations of BME people and communities form an integral part of the local housing strategy.

However, two recent evaluations of housing association performance in meeting BME housing needs have revealed serious deficiencies and inequalities in the way housing associations met the needs of BME tenants and staff. A question of diversity (2000) by Salford University provided evidence that many housing associations had a long way to go in addressing the inequalities faced by BME staff within their organisations. A Question of Delivery (2001) by De Montfort University indicated that many housing associations still lacked ‘depth and breadth’ in the implementation of race equality policies. It made the following key recommendations to all organisations in the sector:

- BME communities must be consulted directly about policies and practices;

- ethnic diversity in the workplace as well as in committee membership must be recognised and promoted in achieving organisational aims;

- a culture of openness about outcomes and practices in employment, housing investment, service delivery and procurement must be developed;

- race equality policies must be ‘mainstreamed’ throughout all areas of the organisation by adopting a timetabled and monitored action plan.

The Housing Corporation started to address some of the issues even while the evaluations were under way. We are considering the recommendations during our current review of regulatory approaches.
Empowerment and consultation

As the BME policy emphasises the role of consumers rather than providers, it follows that consultation with the community is essential in identifying and understanding their housing needs. The Corporation’s policy on tenant involvement, Communities in Control (2000), takes forward its BME policy commitments and advocates the need to engage and involve BME communities in the design, delivery and management of services. Many of the projects reviewed for this paper show the value of consulting and involving BME communities in identifying and assessing their diverse housing needs and in the design, location and development of housing services to meet them.

The diverse needs of BME communities

Several IGP projects reviewed in this paper have emphasised the wide diversity between and among BME communities, showing how their needs have changed over time. Diversity arises from differences in demographic factors such as age and household type, culture and religion, expectations and aspirations, the period a particular community has lived in this country, current housing situation and socio-economic position. Some studies have sought to differentiate between the groups that form a particular category, e.g. Asian. Thus they have identified and clarified important differences in individual communities’ housing needs, cultural values and housing aspirations; these all have a bearing on decisions about how best to meet housing needs.

Since the extent of this diversity varies from area to area, caution is needed when applying or transposing research findings from one area to another. Many of the IGP reports are area specific and focus on identifying and assessing local BME housing needs and local solutions; but common themes emerge that are relevant to social housing providers and could provide a useful starting point for devising strategies on meeting BME needs.

The various factors, processes and agencies involved in tackling BME needs include:
- identifying and understanding BME needs – and the demographic and cultural factors;
- cultural sensitivity in designing and undertaking surveys;
- identifying deficiencies in existing housing provision;
- obstacles to accessing social housing;
- assessment of BME housing needs, aspirations and future trends;
- strategic role of local authorities and the role of other organisations;
- housing association participation and involvement in locally based BME housing strategy development;
- collaborative relationships between local authorities, housing associations, and BME community organisations;
- consultation with and empowerment of BME communities;
- design, location and delivery of services for BME communities;
- appropriateness of housing provision in terms of cultural and religious requirements.

The listed items have policy implications for housing associations and other organisations involved in developing housing and services for BME communities. These may be summarised as:
- the importance of taking into account the differences between BME groups and understanding the diversity of needs;
- the need for more accurate assessments of levels and types of need;
- the need for greater consultation and involvement of BME communities in determining priorities, and in the planning and provision of services;
- the use of partnership arrangements with specialist BME providers so that the communities being catered for have a voice in the type, location and quality of housing being developed;
- the importance of designing and developing culturally appropriate service provision.
MEETING THE NEEDS OF BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

KEY MESSAGES FROM THE IGP PROJECTS
The relevant key messages of the IGP reports are listed below under common themes.

BME diversity and household characteristics
• Diversity of need within and between BME groups is complex: communities cannot be treated as homogeneous groups.
• BME households in general, but particularly those from the black African, Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities, experience greater levels of economic disadvantage and deprivation than the majority white population. They tend to be concentrated in rundown inner-city areas.
• Increasingly, smaller BME households are forming. This is due to complex social and cultural processes – including changing family patterns, labour-market effects and length of residence – which all point to the need for a wider range of housing provision.

Strategic planning in meeting BME housing needs
• Several social housing organisations have commissioned research in response to the recognised need for accurate information on the housing needs and aspirations of BME communities. The aim is to provide a firm basis for strategic planning and service development.
• In developing local housing strategies, it is essential to analyse BME differentiation in housing need, residential settlement, tenure preferences and perceptions of social housing agencies.
• A number of the IGP-funded projects reviewed for this report were housing needs surveys commissioned by black-led housing associations. They were seeking concrete evidence of BME housing needs to underpin their future development strategy and to secure funding.
• Local authorities which have clear policy commitments to tackling BME housing needs – and which have undertaken local BME housing needs assessments – have facilitated understanding between service providers and local communities.
• Surveys have provided a common focus for future partnerships and inter-agency co-operation between local authorities, housing associations, community-based organisations and BME communities.
• As part of their Housing Investment Programmes (HIP), local authorities should include strategies that identify, prioritise and target the housing needs of BME communities.

BME housing needs surveys
• BME communities have housing needs, problems and aspirations which differ from those of the majority population and which have not found their way onto the survey agenda. There will thus be a continuing need for specialist research in this area.
• The housing needs of some BME communities can be easily overlooked in conventional housing need surveys, where the numbers of people in that community are numerically small or dispersed.
• Needs assessments of older BME people will continue to be necessary, given that the first generation of Asian and African Caribbean immigrants is now reaching retirement age, and there is evidence of premature ageing among minority communities.
• Conventional survey design often lacks the cultural sensitivity required to ascertain BME housing needs; it must therefore become more sophisticated to ensure maximum participation by BME communities.
• Surveys must be designed to differentiate between and within BME communities with particular reference to the varying housing needs, resources and aspirations of people of different ages, gender and health.
• Consultative techniques such as focus group discussions with BME community representatives have often preceded the main surveys. This has usually helped to design and set the agenda for the larger household surveys.
• Several BME household surveys were conducted by fieldworkers from the communities involved, who were trained by the research teams.
Obstacles to meeting BME housing needs

- There is a widespread lack of awareness among some BME communities of the availability and range of social housing and other services.
- The dangers of perpetuating or inventing stereotypical assumptions about where BME groups want to live must be recognised. Differences in these preferences between households, irrespective of their ethnicity, must be considered.
- The failure to provide information in an easily accessible form may have influenced BME perceptions about social rented accommodation and determined or inhibited their choices of where they wish to live.
- Fears about racial harassment have significantly affected their areas of housing choice, limiting location to areas of BME concentration – despite the poor social environment in some of these areas or lack of job opportunities.

Cultural factors and BME housing need

- Developing BME housing provision involves a high level of specialist knowledge in identifying and understanding the specific cultural and other needs that are to be met.
- Some BME communities generally perceive BME-led housing associations as being better able to provide culturally sensitive housing, housing management and other services.
- BME-led housing associations generally provide a greater proportion of larger or culturally designed houses suitable for larger or extended families; though such provision may be phased out in future due to cost pressures.
- Recognising diversity among BME communities and enabling them to choose from a range of different housing options is fundamental to a consumer-centred approach to meeting their housing and support needs.

Location and design for BME communities

- Ethnic origin, religion, cultural factors, size of accommodation and location must be considered when designing and developing housing provision to meet BME community needs.
- The Corporation's previous definition of value for money in development was necessary but often harmed the provision of sensitively designed accommodation and services.
- In areas where BME communities experience severe levels of overcrowding, social housing providers should seek to develop large family homes where necessary and develop new initiatives to reduce overcrowding.
- Most BME households – and in particular older people and people who have mental ill health – want to live in areas where there are other members of their community, with cultural and religious facilities close at hand.

Consultation, communication and choice

- Improved publicity to BME groups is needed about the availability of home improvement and disabled facilities grants.
- Housing associations and local authority housing departments should raise their profile among BME communities by publicising their activities and providing information on allocations and transfer procedures as well as sheltered accommodation and other tenure options.
- If the cost makes outright home ownership impossible, consideration should be given to shared ownership initiatives that combine a preference for home ownership with renting. But the potential risks for residents must also be addressed.
- Shared ownership provides one route to ownership for tenants who aspire to it, and to existing owner occupiers who currently own a property that is too small or unsuitable for their family needs. However, it is generally accepted that staircasing down is not usually possible.
INFORMATION ON THE PROJECTS

Section 2 gives detailed summaries of each of the various IGP-funded reports concerned with identifying, assessing and meeting BME housing needs. In some instances, I have combined the findings of housing needs surveys into a single review because of their similarity of method, the BME communities being surveyed and the conclusions drawn. Contact details are given at the end of the report in Appendix 1.

Social inclusion of black and minority ethnic communities

BACKGROUND

Social inclusion may be described as overcoming the problems experienced by those individuals, groups and communities who are unfairly excluded from some of the opportunities enjoyed by the majority population.

In response to the social exclusion of BME communities, most public sector organisations, including housing associations, have developed policies and strategies to ensure fair access and equality of opportunity to services and employment. However, authoritative organisations such as the Commission for Racial Equality have said that BME communities continue to be excluded from participating fully in society or in receiving or accessing services that are theoretically available to all. There is mounting evidence of continued discrimination against BME communities in housing, education, health and employment.

Organisations that have adopted equal opportunities policies have found that the key to effective change was not just policy statements or good intentions but positive action to ensure that the policy or strategy was implemented throughout the organisation. In other words, ‘mainstreaming’ race equality so that it became an integral part of the internal culture of the organisation, not just a convenient or expedient concept. Policy statements alone achieved very little. One of the IGP projects reviewed here, A Question of Diversity, concluded that the internal cultures of many mainstream housing associations did not place a great value on diversity in the workforce and also worked against the employment or career development of BME staff. Like any other organisational policy, equal opportunity policies and the promotion of diversity clearly demand a strategic and purposeful programme of action to give effect to the policy intention.

The IGP projects reviewed here highlight the key factors that create or contribute to the multiple disadvantages of BME communities. They also make recommendations for creating the conditions that promote the social inclusion of BME communities, in terms of receiving or accessing appropriate services from mainstream providers. Many of the housing needs surveys pointed to factors that contribute to the continuing disadvantage and social exclusion of BME individuals and communities. These factors are summarised below:

• The myth that BME communities were ‘looking after their own’ had resulted in a shortfall of services or inappropriate service provision from mainstream providers.

• Lack of awareness about services provided by statutory and voluntary sector organisations, and lack of information in relevant community languages had resulted in poor take-up of services.

• The failure to involve BME communities in consultation from the outset, including identifying need and determining priorities, had resulted in inappropriate service provision.

• The failure to recruit widely among BME communities had resulted in under-representation of BME staff in most housing associations and associated organisations.

• The ‘colour-blind’ approach to service provision and assessment had resulted in a lack of confidence in the ability of mainstream providers to deliver culturally appropriate services.

• Lack of bilingual professionals in many areas – and absence of interpreting and translating services – had reduced the quality of services.

• Language barriers had reduced the ability of service users to access and receive appropriate services from providers.

• Lack of cultural and religious awareness among service providers had reduced the quality of services and therefore their take-up.
• Geographical isolation, difficulties in accessing public transport and lack of outreach work had contributed to social exclusion.

• Mainstream providers had failed to address the diverse needs of BME communities in their strategic plans, when developing services or when buying culturally appropriate provision.

• There was individual and institutional racism – overt and inadvertent.

• Financial hardship arose because of poverty and ignorance of benefit entitlement.

Moving from exclusion to inclusion

Some inner-city areas and housing estates with high concentrations of BME communities have become increasingly rundown, stigmatised and unpopular because of the multiple problems of poor housing, high unemployment, antisocial behaviour, drug dealing and misuse, vandalism, family dysfunction and poor health. The Government – through the Social Exclusion Unit – has recognised the barriers faced by these communities and their multiple deprivation. Its Policy Action Team (PAT) has made several recommendations on how to achieve social integration and create sustainable communities. A central tenet of the urban renewal strategy is the active involvement of local communities in developing their own solutions. Local authorities and housing associations have been given a prominent enabling and facilitating role.

KEY MESSAGES ON IGP PROJECTS

The findings of the IGP reports on possible solutions to the problems of social exclusion of BME communities are listed below under common themes:

Regeneration - building inclusive, sustainable communities

• To move from exclusion to inclusion, regeneration and urban renewal projects must focus on increasing the numbers of BME people employed in them and maximising their involvement in developing sustainable communities.

• Strategies for urban renewal and regeneration should be based on partnership with housing associations, local authorities, the private sector and the BME communities themselves.

• Housing development and area regeneration processes are perceived as providing opportunities for increasing the involvement of BME people, and ensuring a more integrated approach to the provision of services, advice and assistance.

• Consultation with the local community on regeneration issues should have tenant involvement as its major priority.

• The barriers that prevent BME people from participating fully in regeneration and other initiatives need to be identified; special effort is needed to ensure that BME tenants can participate fully.

• Some BME people do not participate fully in housing and regeneration issues because they lack ready access to information on the nature and extent of their rights and entitlements.

• There was a need for BME community capacity building in the context of regeneration.

• BME-led groups from the community should be involved in setting the agenda for regenerating their neighbourhoods in partnership with other organisations like housing associations and local authorities.

• ‘Joined-up’, carefully co-ordinated approaches to urban renewal and social inclusion were vital: uncoordinated social interventions in the past had aggravated and to some extent caused problems.

Service delivery

• The range of issues facing many local authorities and housing associations demands new approaches to service delivery that require active involvement from BME communities.

• Outreach and other ways of providing services should be explored.
• Translation and interpreting services need to be reviewed with a view to exploring and developing ways of improving services for tenants’ benefit.

• More partnerships with relevant BME service providers should be developed to facilitate the delivery of culturally sensitive services and a more seamless and customer-friendly service.

Employment

• Housing associations should play an important part in promoting equality and social inclusion through ensuring that their own workforces reflect the communities they serve and through their contracting powers.

• The majority of housing associations and associated organisations need to reassess the effectiveness of their equal opportunities policies and procedures and the under-representation of BME staff in their organisations.

• Housing associations should develop a set of equality performance indicators to inform their employment practices and to enable them to monitor improvement targets.

• Housing associations should have a workforce data report showing analysis of staffing profile by grade, ethnicity, gender, and disabilities.

• There is a need for growth in local labour initiatives for BME communities, especially those that prioritise rehabilitation, private investment, and ‘staying-put’ strategies.

• Production and targeted distribution of local BME business directories detailing the goods and services they sell could improve their business opportunities.

Community safety

• Racial abuse and harassment is a common feature of the lives of many BME people, often undermining their self-confidence and willingness to access services or become involved in community projects.

• The involvement of BME tenants is crucial to tackling racism and harassment effectively and also fundamental to a much wider range of current issues such as tackling social exclusion and promoting neighbourhood renewal.

• Housing associations and associated organisations should review the effectiveness of their current procedures for investigating racial harassment incidents and supporting victims.

• Housing associations and associated organisations should review training and information available to staff in relation to tackling racial discrimination and harassment and develop training programmes for relevant staff.

Communications and community involvement

• An organisation’s communication strategy must target the specialist BME media, community groups and forums, places of worship etc. to disseminate information about services, service development or employment opportunities.

• Organisations should explore the preferred means of communication in diverse communities and their communications strategies should be based on this assessment.

• The mechanisms for sharing best practice between organisations, on equalities in employment, service delivery and community participation need to be reviewed and improved.

Faith communities

• The Social Exclusion Unit’s Policy Action Team acknowledge the growing role of faith communities in regeneration projects and their potential for engaging and mobilising the support of adherents.

• Many places of worship from among the different faiths have provided the basis to support and regenerate communities.
Faith communities have developed partnerships with other organisations and mobilised their followers, making them active partners in regeneration programmes which in the past have often seemed remote.

Faith-based communities have been able to collate and provide information on disadvantaged followers often excluded from the mainstream service provision.

**Poverty**

- A significant number of BME households are unaware of their full entitlement to benefits and are sometimes unable to access advice because of language barriers.
- A significant number of BME households are excluded from financial services – no banking service, no savings and difficulty paying their various utility bills.

The various reports raise several issues and pose significant challenges for statutory and voluntary organisations concerned with sustainable regeneration and the social inclusion of BME communities. All point to the immediate need for equalities issues to become mainstreamed and central in every organisation’s policies and strategies. In the medium to long term there will be a continuing need to identify barriers to equality and further strategies and actions to overcome them. Currently several IGP-funded projects that promote the social inclusion of BME communities in an innovative way are currently being piloted. These include Mentoring for Diversity by Nazia Khanum, whose objective is to accelerate cultural change within housing associations by engaging BME staff as mentors to senior white officers.

**INFORMATION ON THE PROJECTS**

Section 3 reviews several wholly or partly IGP-funded projects that have taken innovative approaches to mitigating the effects of social exclusion among BME communities.
SECTION 2

Identifying and meeting housing needs

(i) IGP PROJECTS PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH ASSESSING NEED
7. The Housing Needs of Southampton’s BME Community (1999)
11. Equity and Difference - racial and ethnic inequalities in housing needs and housing investment in Leeds (1996)
15. Managing to Survive - Asylum seekers, refugees and access to social housing (1999)
17. The accommodation, support and care needs of individuals with mental health problems from the Asian community in Leicester (1998)
18. The accommodation, support and care needs of individuals with mental health problems from the African Caribbean community in Leicester (1998)
19. The Housing and Care Needs of Asian Elders in London
Assessing Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Needs
By J. Atkins, et al of the London Research Centre & E. Bowes of Lemos & Crane

Description:
This informative and comprehensive guide emphasises the need for cultural sensitivity when researching BME housing needs. For those social housing organisations which are intending to undertake research into BME housing needs, the guide provides details about essential data collecting techniques and the main sources of data. Among other useful information, the appendices provide examples of a housing needs questionnaire, a model research brief and website information on accessing software for analysing qualitative material.

Key points:
- The needs of minority groups can be overlooked in conventional housing surveys because the communities may be numerically small and scattered, or have problems or aspirations that differ from the majority population and therefore not considered at all.
- Some surveys into BME housing need may lack the cultural sensitivity required to ensure BME community participation.
- While conventional survey design must become more inclusive to assess the diverse needs of BME communities, there will also be a continuing need for specialist research into BME housing need.

Recommendations:
- Ensure adequate resources are allocated to carry out the housing needs survey.
- Involve other organisations on a steering group that has a good mix of knowledge of the housing system, awareness of BME housing issues, technical expertise, local knowledge and contacts.
- Combining research techniques such as using existing data, in-depth interviews or focus groups work well.
- Quantitative surveys are expensive and time consuming but may be the only way to obtain certain kinds of information.
- Consult extensively with voluntary and statutory sector agencies and community organisations on research design.
- Ethnic categories should be selected with care and should reflect local circumstances.
- Avoid combining ethnic groups on the basis of skin colour or area of origin as this can obscure important differences in people’s needs and circumstances such as religion.
- Research should be approached with an open mind and not designed to reinforce existing forms of housing provision.
- Potential sources of information are the Census, Survey of English Housing, English House Condition Survey, local authorities, advice agencies and the CORE monitoring system.
- Housing needs surveys usually involve face to face interviews while other options include postal surveys, surveys of housing applicants and organisations working with BME groups.
- Surveys should be carefully designed if they are to include an assessment of the needs of people in small or dispersed BME communities.
- Focus groups or in depth interviews may be useful in identifying issues of importance to particular BME groups before developing the questionnaire.
- Standard questions used in government surveys may be included in some parts of the questionnaire, but their applicability to particular BME groups needs to be assessed.
- Depending on the BME community being surveyed, it may be important to obtain the views of different generations or both sexes or to seek the views of ‘concealed’ households.
• It may be essential for interviewers to be fluent in the languages spoken locally, and advantageous to use gender specific interviewers from the same community.
• In selecting respondents the aim should be to reflect the range and diversity of views, rather than to be statistically representative.
• Summaries should be available in appropriate languages and consideration given to different ways of disseminating the findings.
Race Equality in Access to Housing Services – A good practice guide

By N. Bacon, J. Barelli & D Levison of the London Research Centre

Description:
This comprehensive guide on access to housing and associated services by BME communities incorporates earlier NHF guidance on equality issues and focuses on the elimination of discrimination in access to housing and services. Four main areas are considered: meeting BME housing needs, access to housing, managing tenancies and ethnic monitoring. Each area covers: review of the background, legislation and regulation, main issues, good practice guidance and action checklists. The guide contains several good practice examples and model policies for housing associations to adopt to enable them to provide housing services that promote racial equality and avoid discrimination.

Key Points:
• Housing associations must obtain reliable and comprehensive information about levels and types of housing need in their areas of operation.
• Housing associations and associated organisations need to build good relationships with local, representative BME community groups.
• Housing associations and associated organisations need to respect and take into account the differences between ethnic groups.
• The housing needs and their aspirations of BME communities are diverse and can easily be obscured by simple distinctions between ‘white’ and ‘black’.
• Housing associations must involve local communities in the planning and provision of housing services.
• The good practice examples in the publication demonstrate that many housing associations are skilled and experienced at providing sensitive solutions to BME housing needs and these can be replicated.
• The numbers of pensioners from minority groups will increase and BME elders may require more specialist provision.
• BME groups show very different patterns of housing tenure, often related to their patterns of migration and settlement in this country.
• Black Caribbean, Black African and Bangladeshi households are more likely to live in social housing.
• While Indians and Pakistanis are more likely to own their own homes, this does not necessarily indicate affluence because often these households bought cheap inner city properties in a poor condition.
• BME communities experience higher unemployment rates than the white population and the numbers of BME single homeless people are rising disproportionately.
• In many areas BME households are disproportionately represented among those accepted as homeless by local authorities and this is reflected in the higher numbers of housing association lettings.
• Generally Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and Black African households experience severe overcrowding.
• 20% of Pakistani and Bangladeshis households live in the worst housing compared to the national average of 10%.
• BME owner-occupiers are twice as likely as other owner-occupiers to own poorest condition housing.
Gathering Dust - The Black and Asian Housing Needs (Calderdale) Report - One Year On
By A. Jones, D. Mullins & C. Davis of CURS, University of Birmingham

Description:
‘Gathering Dust’ reviews the progress made by those organisations involved in addressing some of the original recommendations contained in the ‘Black and Asian Housing Needs - Calderdale’ report. When the original report was launched in 1996, it was intended to be a catalyst for action for the participating organisations to carry out the recommendations. However the review presents a very mixed picture of the progress made from the time of the report’s launch to the review 16 months later. It identifies the main reasons for lack of progress in many areas and makes a compelling case for continuing action from the participating organisations.

Main Findings:
• Rather than acting as a catalyst, the original report had been used in support of actions that were to be taken anyway.
• The absence of a strong resource commitment in terms of finance, time and staff had a major impact on the incomplete implementation of the original recommendations.
• Participating organisations had not given sufficient priority to the implementation of key recommendations.
• Participating organisations appeared to be unaware of which of the recommendations were relevant to their organisations and in many instances the person responsible for carrying out the action had not been shown the report or made aware of its recommendations.
• In some cases there were difficulties in identifying who exactly was responsible for taking the report forward.
• The few individuals who were well acquainted with the report tended to be representatives of organisations with a strong local connection and high profile.
• At the time, the limited amount of land available for development, and high development costs made it difficult to develop new stock to meet the needs of people within the area.
• The key housing issue in the original research i.e. Home Improvement Grants had been addressed in some depth.

Recommendations:
• Participating organisations had to review their response to the ‘Black and Asian Housing Needs’ report and ascertain how their particular organisation could better implement its recommendations.
• Organisations had to ensure that all relevant staff were aware of the report and clarify between themselves and internally who was responsible for implementing specific recommendations.
• The Report should be re-launched and those attending should be informed not only of its recommendations but their specific role in its implementation.
• There was a need for a specific structure such as a working party facilitated by the local authority to keep the issues the report raised alive, because one-off launch events were insufficient.
• Another option was to appoint a Development Worker to develop action plans in response to the initial reports’ recommendations.
• The Housing Corporation had to change their value for money criteria if larger houses were to be developed.
• Those mainstream housing associations with stock in the area should investigate the possibility of stock transfer/management agreements to/with local BME led housing associations as part of their strategy to meet the needs of BME communities.
Description:
This publication provides easily accessible information and guidance on the design features that are essential to meeting the specific housing needs of diverse BME communities. Its basic premise is that house design must start with those who will live in it and places a high value on the needs of the BME consumer. The guide indicates how relatively small and inexpensive changes in design can produce houses which are better not only for BME households, but for everybody. It provides a structured introduction to design features that have an impact on the home lives of BME people from various backgrounds and a checklist of possible design responses. This publication helps bridge the gap between identifying BME housing needs and the design and delivery of services.

Key points:
• Prevailing social housing designs have inadequately catered for the cultural and religious needs of many BME households.
• Social housing providers should avoid a prescriptive approach to designing for BME communities because of their great diversity and the fact that all BME communities are in a process of change.
• Design issues relating to the following minority ethnic groups are provided:
• African, Arab, Bangladeshi, Caribbean, Chinese, Filipino, Greek Cypriot, Indian, Jewish, Kurdish, Pakistani, Somali, Tamil, Turkish, Turkish-Cypriot, Vietnamese, West African.
• Not all minority ethnic groups present in Britain are included because there is little information available about their needs or their needs are no different from that of the mainstream population.
• Elements of design that provide for particular needs do not necessarily incur additional cost.
• Funding regimes sometimes favour building the largest number of units on a site rather than units for the largest number of people militating against the provision of large family houses.
• Use of contractor design procurement methods such as ‘off the peg’ and ‘design and build’ resulted in the loss of control over design and specification, unless there had been increased client involvement in defining the design brief.
• BME groups need to be involved at all levels in the design and production of houses to achieve their design requirements; housing providers need effective procedures for obtaining feedback from them.
• The right location in terms of proximity to appropriate facilities and community resources is essential to the successful development of housing for BME communities.
• An awareness of kinship networks and the support they provide should be considered when designing and locating new developments for BME communities.
• For some BME groups locating sheltered housing and family housing on the same site can help preserve and strengthen kinship networks.
• Distinguishing between ‘large’ households and extended families is important, as the former may need a single large house while other more flexible long term options exist for extended families such as re-housing younger families into smaller dwellings near each other and older relatives.
• Religious practices may require design considerations such as a place for the location of a shrine or provision for ritual washing, and therefore it is important to consult with the communities concerned about their specific needs.
• Designers must consider how the layout of a scheme can make a contribution to security as BME households continue to experience harassment and are statistically more likely to be the victims of crime.
• The development and design of housing has an important role to play in promoting the inclusion of BME people in society and in building and sustaining communities.
Improving Asian Access to Social Housing in Bradford

By Peter Radcliffe of the University of Warwick

Description:
This report due to be published in mid 2001 identifies the obstacles Asian households face when accessing social rented housing in Bradford and provides an action plan for the local authority and its housing associations partners for overcoming them. It follows a survey into the housing needs and aspirations of BME communities in Bradford, which revealed that while there was considerable housing need and demand for social housing within the Asian community, disproportionately few Asian households were offered social housing.

Main findings:
• While the extended/joint family structure remains an important feature of Bradford's Asian communities, this does not mean that they will continue to live in the same house.
• There is general expectation that the young Asians will move away from the family home, especially following marriage.
• Owner-occupation is the preferred choice of younger Asians, while those who will consider social housing do so because they cannot afford a mortgage.
• Levels of unemployment have historically been higher amongst the BME or Asian communities than among the white population.
• Asian communities experience considerable overcrowding mainly in the inner city areas.
• Few Asian households are currently in social housing and lettings from housing associations tend to be in areas of significant minority concentration.
• There is clear evidence of stereotyping among Asian respondents who viewed all estates as having a bad reputation, or being ‘rough’ and crime ridden, and also unacceptable in view of the likelihood of abuse and racial harassment.
• The lack of awareness among potential Asian tenants about housing associations provision acted as a barrier to access.
• Other obstacles to accessing housing association housing were: perception as whites only provision, expectations of poor service delivery, stigma attached to social renting, inappropriate stock in terms of size, design and location, cumbersome applications procedure, and concerns about cost.
• Many BME households have had negative perceptions and experiences of local authority and housing association housing provision in the past.

Recommendations:
Both housing association and local authority stock needs to be marketed more effectively to counteract the widespread view of housing associations as ‘White institutions’ and the council as distant and uncommunicative.
• Various BME media and organisations should be used to advertise housing association and local authority housing provision including community radio stations, community centres and places of worship.
• Selective stock transfer options from local authorities to housing associations should be considered.
• Schemes in the inner areas should be developed specifically targeted at South Asian households including extending land-banking and the exploitation of ‘brownfield’ sites.
• Marketing strategies need to be developed focusing on the specific needs of those most likely to consider social housing e.g. young Asian couples.
• The recruitment and training of front-line staff in the provision of culturally sensitive services.
• Application and lettings procedures should be reviewed and streamlined.
• Targeting housing stock in areas close to existing South Asian settlement for their cultural and religious needs.
• The consideration of group lettings on estates, to counteract fears of isolation and the threat of harassment and abuse.
• The provision and development of estate support mechanisms and capacity building e.g. Mutual Aid, and the involvement of key external agencies such as social services, police and emergency services.
The Lessons from Seven Local Housing Needs Surveys

Description:
Below is a summary of the main findings and recommendations from seven housing needs surveys commissioned to assess the housing needs and aspirations of BME communities in their areas. As the surveys focus on the housing needs of BME communities in specific localities, they differ in terms of their demographic findings and the specific or localised actions required in addressing those needs. However for the purpose of this report these are generalised because of the similarities in methodological approaches to obtaining information; the BME communities targeted for the research and in the conclusions drawn.

The following Housing Needs Surveys are reviewed:
1. Housing BME people in Sheffield
   G. Gidley, M. Harrison & D. Robinson (Leeds and Sheffield Hallam University)
2. The Housing Needs of Southampton’s BME community
   SAMEC Trust
3. A Study of BME housing and related needs in Kirklees
   A. Steele, Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit, University of Salford
4. Housing Needs Study of the Ethnic Minority community in Bolton
   David Couttie Associates
5. Danehouse and Stoneholme Housing Market Analysis
   Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit, University of Salford
6. Equity and difference – racial and ethnic inequalities in housing needs and housing investment in Leeds
   I. Law et al Race & Public Policy Research Unit, University of Leeds
7. Asian Housing Needs in Bristol
   C. Lambert & K Razzaque, University of the West of England, Bristol

Main Findings:

Methodological features
• Steering Groups comprising representatives from various statutory and voluntary organisations including Local Authorities, housing associations and BME community based organisations usually co-ordinated the surveys.
• Local BME led housing associations provided advice on the selection of the household sample, culturally sensitive questionnaire design and the recruitment and training of interviewers from the relevant communities.
• Individuals with specific language skills and representative of the BME communities being surveyed were trained and widely used as interviewers.
• Focus discussion groups with community representatives were held with the objective of collecting views on the nature and extent of the problems.
• BME households in those areas with high concentrations of BME communities were randomly selected and interviewed.
• Information from the census and from personal interviews with the heads of households from among the BME communities provided the bulk of the data for analysis.
• Some surveys interviewed young people from selected households in recognition that the future sustainability of the community would be influenced by future household formations.
Household characteristics

- The BME population in all areas was increasing and would result in the formation of significant number of new households over the next ten years.
- While the most common household type is a conventional nuclear family, joint and extended family forms are found particularly amongst the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities.
- Joint and extended families were often very large, and even where they occupied relatively large properties were subject to overcrowding.
- There was some evidence of a changing family structure with less concentration on extended families, suggesting that future development programmes should offer wider housing options.
- The extended family appears strongest in the Bangladeshi community, but weakening in the Pakistani, and particularly weak in the Indian communities.
- The numbers of BME pensioner households was increasing as were the number of lone parent families.
- A significant number of BME households had a member with a long-standing illness or infirmity or disability.

Housing needs

- A significant number of BME households continue to experience severe housing deprivation.
- High levels of overcrowding were experienced particularly by the Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indian and Chinese communities depending on the areas they were concentrated in.
- Young people were particularly affected by overcrowding and were most concerned about inadequate leisure facilities in their area.
- The majority of young people felt that in the future they would want to live independently in their own accommodation.
- A significant number of BME households lived in sub-standard owner occupied housing and were unable to afford remedial action to common problems such as damp, dry rot and leaking roofs.
- The weak socio-economic position of some BME owner-occupiers affected their ability to maintain, repair and upgrade their properties.
- Problems of disrepair may have compounded the problem of overcrowding by taking some rooms out of effective use.
- There was evidence to suggest that renting will become a more common tenure among Asian households.
- Financial constraints, combined with a lack of suitable accommodation are the main reasons why BME households do not expect to move home.

Residential distribution, choice of area and housing location

- Generalising about residential distribution of BME groups is problematic because of contradictory processes of suburban migration and inner city concentration, linked to widening social and economic inequalities within and between specific minority ethnic groups.
- Dislike for an area because of its deterioration, high crime levels, health problems and the need for larger accommodation were the main reasons for people wanting to leave.
- Locations close to their existing family and community were most important for those aspiring to move.
- Younger Asians breaking away from extended families were more likely to opt for rented social housing.
- There was a high degree of interest in shared ownership housing schemes amongst BME communities.
- A significant number of households would be prepared to move away from the traditional community areas, if a number of households were relocated at the same time.
Information and service delivery

- The lack of awareness about services and language barriers were obstacles to BME communities accessing housing and other services.
- The low take up of housing advice services by BME households raised questions about the quality and effectiveness of current provision.

Language barriers

- Chinese, Bangladeshi and Pakistani elders in particular had language difficulties.
- Information and advice on housing options and other services in relevant community languages were not readily available.

Equality of opportunity

- There was little evidence of equal opportunities policies being widely advertised or used by some social housing organisations.
- Waiting list data suggests that in some areas, racial inequality in terms of allocations had widened with Asian households under-represented on waiting lists and allocations in comparison with other groups.
- BME communities were under represented among the staff of many statutory and voluntary organisations including housing associations.
- Although most housing agencies had developed client-monitoring systems, few could readily provide monitoring information.

Racial harassment

- The full impact of racial harassment remains unknown as many victims had taken no action, and few had approached a formal agency for assistance.
- A significant number of BME households would like to move, but almost exclusively within the ethnic community area, partly because of concerns about racial harassment in other areas.
- Safety issues and proximity to shops and schools influenced young people’s choice of area.

Regeneration

- There is uncertainty about how far BME groups have benefited from recent initiatives to encourage the use of local labour related to housing and training.

Recommendations:

BME diversity and housing development

- The diversity of BME communities and the wide range of minority ethnic household formation must be taken into account in drawing up housing development programmes.
- Housing and other service provision should be targeted and sensitive to the needs of the different communities.
- New developments should be located within or near the existing community and sensitive to the cultural needs of the various BME communities who should be included in the design process.
- Investment should be spread more widely to provide a range of additional, affordable provision to meet general and emerging family needs as well as those of the extended family, the elderly and those with special needs.
- Future strategies must include mixed tenure developments that incorporated a wide range of property types and sizes for those individuals with limited finances who prefer owner occupation.
Advice and information

- Strategies must be developed on how best to disseminate information in the various BME community languages on the full range of statutory and voluntary housing options and other services.
- Written and verbal translation and interpreting services should be provided to make provision accessible and to minimise discrimination.
- Housing providers must ensure that housing advice and allocations do not steer BME households into inner city areas and increase concentrations in a discriminatory manner.
- BME households must be fully informed about options for housing in different areas.

Private sector housing

- As housing disrepair is a significant problem for those owner-occupiers who cannot afford the necessary repairs, additional resources in the form of grants and subsidies need to be found to tackle the problems of damp, dry rot, leaking roofs and inadequate amenities.
- Self-help should be encouraged through the development of a community maintenance approach.
- The DETR should review the indirectly discriminatory impact of HIP rules which both limit the scope for significant improvement of public and private sector housing.

Allocations

- Relevant authorities should review their allocation and transfer policies to ensure that sufficient weight is given to overcrowding, make their eligibility criteria clearer and ensure that data is monitored more effectively.
- Relevant authorities must address the persistently low access of BME households through Medical Priority and Elderly classifications and give urgent attention to the classification and re-housing of overcrowded cases.
- Relevant authorities should develop allocation systems that are sensitive to issues of concern to BME communities such as size and location, and monitor the numbers of households that are excluded from waiting lists due to the lack of suitable property in the right locations.
- Housing associations should improve their ethnic monitoring and targeting systems for housing applications and allocations.

Regeneration

- Area regeneration should be used to increase the involvement of BME communities, facilitate a more integrated approach to service delivery and the provision of advice and assistance.
- Local authorities and housing associations should encourage the rehousing of BME households into areas benefiting from major improvement programmes.
- ‘Housing plus’ activities and community capacity building should be initiated in the context of regeneration, mental health services, health/disability support, services for women, support for elders and responses to the needs of young people.
- Young people should be encouraged to remain in their area, by providing greater employment opportunities and improved housing in terms of quality and affordability.
- Local authorities and housing associations should develop strategies for making non-traditional housing areas more attractive to the BME communities.
- A multi-agency ‘best-practice’ approach should be adopted which would involve effective monitoring of performance and agreed equal opportunities strategies linked to appropriate targeting.
• Respondents felt that the replacement of derelict properties with new larger homes, cleaning up the area and the creation of employment opportunities would encourage them to remain in an area.

Community safety
• Current provision for those individuals experiencing racial harassment should be reassessed to determine how to make the service available, more accessible and responsive.
• Local authorities and housing associations must work closely with the police to find more effective ways of combating racism, including measures to encourage the reporting of racial harassment.
• The police presence in some areas should be increased and security cameras installed in strategic places to deter criminal activity.
The Invisible Minority - The Housing Needs of Chinese Older People in England
By Adrian Jones of CURS, University of Birmingham

Description:
This report makes the providers of housing and related services more aware of the needs of Chinese older people, and provides projections of future need. Invisibility and isolation are the underlying themes of this report, which demonstrates that Chinese older people form an invisible minority because of their dispersal and the fact that they tend to keep to themselves. As a consequence of this invisibility, mainstream providers have often ignored their housing and related needs. The study focused primarily on Hong Kong Chinese with small numbers of ethnic Chinese from Vietnam, Malaysia and mainland China being interviewed.

Main findings:
• The 1991 Census is considered to have underestimated the numbers of Chinese older people in England and accurate figures are therefore unavailable.
• The Chinese population is dispersed, but with concentrations in Greater London, West Midlands, North West, Yorkshire and Humberside.
• Chinese people disproportionately live in poorer quality, private rented, often tied-accommodation.
• There is a widespread lack of fluency in English among Chinese older people due to factors such as age, lack of contact with English speaking people, long working hours and lack of education in their country of origin.
• A comparatively large proportion of Chinese older people still live with their families, but this is changing.
• Take up rates of social housing, social services, and welfare benefits are low and are related to a lack of awareness, lack of fluency in English and reluctance to complain or ask for help.
• Luck/superstition are very important to Chinese older people and may impact on their usage of facilities such as emergency call systems.
• The problems of mobility faced by frail older people are compounded for the Chinese by language problems, which act to restrict their mobility further.

Recommendations:
• Service providers must address the unmet housing and other needs of Chinese older people who are numerically small in number.
• Housing providers should investigate the needs of Chinese older people in their areas by undertaking research surveys and consulting Chinese community groups.
• Chinese community groups can be a source of information particularly if they collate details of all housing related cases they have dealt with to provide evidence of the type and extent of need.
• Details of housing and related services currently available should be disseminated to the Chinese community in a variety of media formats including, videotapes and recorded cassettes in the languages by the Chinese themselves.
• The housing needs of Chinese older people should be addressed through specific provision or by improving access to existing provision with Chinese led housing associations playing a major role where relevant.
• More Chinese specific accommodation should be provided in areas where there is proven demand.
• Providers should consider setting aside clusters of flats or a particular floor so that Chinese older people could be housed in close proximity to each other.
• Accommodation should ideally be located close to Chinese areas of concentration, close to families of potential tenants, community facilities and shops and have good public transport links.
MEETING THE NEEDS OF BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

• Potential solutions to the housing needs of Chinese older people that should be considered include sheltered housing, staying put schemes, Mixed Category 1 and general needs developments and larger family homes.
• Design factors should be considered when developing schemes for Chinese older people.
• Staff with the necessary language skills and cultural understanding should be employed to meet the housing and support needs of Chinese older people.
Meeting the Need: Irish Housing Associations in Action

By G Randall & S Brown

Description:
This report examines the housing needs of Irish people in London and evaluates the housing management and support services provided by four Irish housing associations. A survey of staff in four Irish housing associations and associated agencies, as well as Irish people awaiting re-housing forms the basis of the report. In addition fifty tenants of Irish housing associations were interviewed to ascertain their perceptions of the housing and other services provided. The report also reflects the demand from Irish people for Irish led housing associations to provide a wide range of additional, culturally sensitive support services such as advice and counselling to migrants, support in cases of harassment, links with local Irish communities and organisations.

Main Findings:

• Irish people experience difficulties in gaining access to housing and the high prevalence of Irish people in insecure accommodation leads to higher risks of homelessness.

• Many housing providers appear to be unaware of the relative disadvantage of Irish people, in part because they do not keep monitoring records of the Irish as a separate group.

• There is a demand for shared housing for young migrants and for some middle aged people who prefer this type of accommodation as it offers companionship and mutual support.

• In addition to specialist supported housing schemes, the main need is for arranging access to ordinary self-contained accommodation.

• Irish led housing associations have been distinctive in the types of housing they have provided such as shared housing for single people and specialist sheltered provision, and they have added value by providing a culturally sensitive management style and additional services.

• Irish associations and agencies have been involved in developing employment and training schemes but these services need to be developed further.

Recommendations:

• There is a need for the development of more referral agencies to provide alternative routes to housing access for Irish people.

• Arrangements to ease access to the private rented sector and Foyer type schemes offering accommodation and training facilities should be developed.

• More sheltered and semi-supported housing schemes should be developed for older Irish single people.

• Housing associations should develop two-way referral links with Irish agencies and consider management contracts with Irish led housing associations for the management of sheltered and shared housing schemes as well as stock transfers of sheltered or shared housing.

• Housing associations should examine the work of the Irish Associations for lessons in providing a more responsive service and also consider ways in which they can work in partnership with them.

• Housing associations should keep records of Irish applicants and tenants and aim to employ some Irish staff in areas with a significant Irish population and train non-Irish staff in cultural sensitivity.

• Housing associations must recognise that people from other cultures may have difficulties in registering their needs and therefore take steps to ensure that Irish people are able to apply for housing.

• Housing associations should recognise the importance of enabling Irish people to be housed close to their existing communities if they wish.

• Housing associations should develop mechanisms for joint working with comparable agencies in Ireland to provide accommodation and support for people who may wish to return there.
Managing To Survive - Asylum Seekers, refugees and access to social housing
By R. Zetter & M. Pearl of Oxford Brookes University

Description:
This report assesses the impact of major government policy changes introduced between 1993 and 1996, on housing supply processes for refugees and/or asylum seekers. The quality of housing association service provision in London, Manchester and Birmingham, and the range of management practices and support, are assessed from the points of view of providers and the refugees/asylum seekers. Although there have been policy and procedural developments since 1997, the report remains relevant for the providers of services to refugees and asylum seekers. It details the needs of this group, documents good practice, and recommends ways in which this practice might be extended in partnership with the consumers of services.

Main Findings:
• Between 1996 and 1999 housing services to refugees and asylum seekers have been increasingly provided by the housing association/voluntary sectors as a result of statutory and policy changes.
• Some housing associations have provided services for asylum seekers and refugees in ways that have been sensitive to their needs and aspirations; they provide models for others to follow.
• Good practice is based on culturally sensitive service delivery. Aspects valued most are privacy, cultural and social activities, own language documents, and supportive staff.
• The failure to provide accommodation and services responsive to the diverse needs of refugees and asylum seekers has increased their sense of vulnerability, social exclusion and isolation.
• The skills and expertise of refugee community organisations (RCOs) are substantially under-utilised which means that consumers do not receive the best services.
• Many large housing associations that operate in areas where refugee and asylum seeker communities are concentrated have not made any provision, despite having the resources and capacity to do so.
• Wider structural and resource constraints, especially Government policy, are the fundamental barriers to strategic responses and the adoption of good practice in housing provision.
• Because refugees and asylum seekers have little political leverage, they are a low priority for resource allocation.

Recommendations:
• A coherent national policy framework for the reception and resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers is needed.
• A strategic approach to housing and other services is required with housing associations and RCOs as the primary providers of services.
• A range of housing and support services is required, recognising changing housing needs at different phases of the reception and resettlement process.
• Housing associations and the Housing Corporation need to develop greater awareness of the issues and diverse needs relating to refugees and asylum seekers.
• To avoid fragmentation of service delivery, there is a need for improved partnership between housing associations, RCOs, the voluntary sector and local authority social services departments.
• Housing associations and the Housing Corporation should explore the means to share and disseminate good practice in the area of meeting housing needs for this client group.
• Housing associations and RCOs should recognise and mobilise the range of personal resources, which are often present within refugee communities.
• Housing associations need to be aware of the current and future housing and support requirements of elderly refugees.

• Housing associations should give consideration to tailoring ‘Housing Plus’ projects to the specific needs of refugees and asylum seekers in order to develop and enhance their skills, self-sufficiency and aspirations.

• Housing associations should explore ways to engage with communities in neighbourhoods where they accommodate significant numbers of refugee and asylum seekers.

• RCOs need to be supported in accessing funds for the provision of housing and related services.
The accommodation, support and care needs of individuals with mental health problems from the African Caribbean community in the City and County Leicester

By de Montfort University and Mary Seacole Research Centre

Description:
This report focuses on the key issues affecting the accommodation, support and care needs of African Caribbean individuals with mental ill health in Leicester. The study comprised a series of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with potential service users and carers, while staff views were obtained by personal and telephone interviews. Research focused on the individual’s experience, perceptions of good practice, together with wants and perceived need.

Main Findings:
• The development of culturally specific accommodation, support and care has been accepted as a legitimate need.
• Choice of accommodation, appropriate support and care is considered to be very important by potential service users and had often been denied in the past.
• Limited financial resources had the effect of reducing accommodation options and is the main reason why there was a dependence on friends and family following discharge.
• There is a reluctance to access mental health services because of the stigma which surrounds them or the inappropriate nature of the services.
• The majority of those interviewed wanted a worker from a similar cultural background.
• Nursing and other professional staff considered that skills rather than ethnicity are the most important factor in determining positive care outcomes for BME service users.
• The voluntary sector was generally praised for its responsiveness on cultural issues and sensitive service provision because it recruited and retained staff from the BME community.
• Inappropriate referrals to hostels or residential homes were felt to be commonplace.
• African Caribbean people want an improved range of accommodation and supported living alternatives from which they could choose.
• African Caribbean people want to be involved in determining alternative provision, support and care.
• Most respondents considered being with familiar people and places as important and wished to be discharged into the areas from which they came.

Recommendations:
• Provision of a range of culturally specific short, medium and long term supported accommodation for African Caribbean people with mental ill health are necessary.
• A range of supported accommodation located within easy access to amenities, public transport and the community, and long term ordinary housing with flexible levels of support should be provided.
• Culturally sensitive service provision must include choice in areas such as accommodation type, locality, fellow residents and care workers, food, appropriate hair care etc.
• There should be greater collaboration between service providers to ensure a range of choice, and a full rehabilitation care package that included input from African Caribbean organisations.
• Statutory organisations needed to become more informed about community based African Caribbean agencies and how to access them.
• There was a need for health, housing and other professionals to receive training on race awareness and cultural issues such as foods, lifestyles, religion and celebrations.
• The housing and support needs of young African Caribbean people with mental ill health and those of the older first generation group should be considered separately.
• There was a need for respite accommodation for those with mental ill health and their carers with the opportunity to take the user and carer together or separately.
• There was a need for a centralised multi-agency facility that provided advice on welfare rights and where primary and mental health care could be accessed.
Lessons from two studies on mental ill health and housing needs within the Asian community

Description:

Below is a summary of the main findings and recommendations of two projects that investigated and assessed the housing needs of Asian people with mental ill health in Birmingham and Leicester. Although there are differences between the two reports, the main findings and recommendations are generalised because of the similarities in methodological approach, the community targeted and in the conclusions drawn.

Housing and Support Needs of Asian People with Mental Health Problems
By Ashram Housing Association
This study focused on the housing needs of Asian people under pensionable age with mental ill health in two Birmingham areas. On the strength of this report Ashram Housing Association was able to secure support and funding to implement some of the recommendations.

The accommodation, support and care needs of individuals with mental health problems from the Asian community in the city and county of Leicester
By De Montfort University & Mary Seacole Research Centre
The study highlights the barrier a different language presents to service providers and also shows how a lack of cultural awareness prevents them from providing a quality service. The report concludes that future service development for Asian individuals with mental ill health had to radically change in style, provision and content to adequately meet their diverse cultural needs.

Main Findings:
• Stereotyping of Asian families as ‘caring for their own’ had resulted in a short fall of service provision for individuals in need.
• As the traditional structure and role of Asian families changed, there will be a greater demand for care and support services from external sources.
• Mainstream provision had a shortage of skilled social workers, community psychiatric nurses and housing officials with bilingual communication skills.
• There was a shortage of interpreters who could interpret skillfully the various languages spoken within the Asian communities.
• Voluntary sector service provision usually included workers who could communicate in the main Asian languages.
• There was a steady demand from Asian people with mental ill health for services that were specifically targeted to meet their needs.
• The effects of racism on an individuals mental health should not be ignored.
• Current local initiatives and concerns were driving the debate for accommodation, support and care needs of Asian individuals with mental ill health.
• Asian people tended to be under-represented among tenants and referrals in non targeted schemes such as the dispersed housing scheme run by the local authority and supported housing schemes run by housing associations.
• Reasons for under-representation included: a lack of awareness of service provision, the perception that the organisation may not be providing culturally sensitive services, inappropriate accommodation offered, or not located in an area where Asian people wanted to live.
Recommendations:

- The diversity of the Asian community and the various languages spoken had to be taken into account when assessing housing and care needs, and when developing services to meet those needs.

- Recruitment of staff from a variety of Asian cultures who could communicate effectively in the main first languages should be incorporated in any service development.

- Mainstream staff needed awareness training in Asian cultures and more Asian counsellors were required to conduct the initial assessment of needs of the individual in their first language.

- Asian community organisations, service users and carers needed to be consulted and involved in decision making about the services needed and in the selection of staff.

- Provision of a range of housing including family homes, supported and emergency accommodation in familiar areas close to cultural amenities.

- Development of accommodation that provides opportunities for independent living, but with flexible support available to meet the specific needs of the service user.

- Support should be provided to individuals in their own homes rather than moving away from their current accommodation.

- Development of more respite care for Asian service users, with facilities for the individuals cultural and religious needs, and provision of more support to their carers.

- The local authority and housing associations should consider whether their allocation policies should give more weight to people with mental ill health.

- The local authority should review its criteria for awarding home improvement grants and give more weight to the needs of people with mental ill health.
This report provides a comprehensive review of the housing and care needs of Asian elders in London. The report examines London-wide data such as census, lettings figures and household projections and combines a survey of a random sample of Asian elders in 4 London boroughs to construct a statistical analysis of their housing and care needs. The survey was designed to highlight the specific needs of elders in these boroughs and to provide more detail on how important factors such as age, ethnicity, religion, tradition and culture impact on the provision of housing and care for Asian elders.

Main Findings:

• About 66% of Asian elders live as part of a larger family unit, while 10% live alone and 25% live with one other person.

• Census data (now dated) reveal that Pakistani and Indian elders are more likely to have a long term limiting illness than any other ethnic group of elders.

• Although there are certain elements of the Asian culture and ethos that are common to all, the Asian elder community is extremely diverse and this has to be recognised when planning services.

• Provision that fails to recognise diversity in relation to language, diet, religion, culture is less likely to be successful.

• For London as a whole there is an estimated need for over 1,700 sheltered units with alarm, warden support and communal facilities and a further 1,500 very sheltered housing units.

• In 1996 over 22,000 Asian elders were estimated to require aids and adaptations, while over 400 required residential or nursing home care.

• Between 1993 and 1997 the number of housing association lettings to Asian elders declined.

• As the Asian community undergoes social change, the traditional models of housing and care within the family might not be appropriate for a significant number of elders in the future.

Recommendations:

• Local authorities should undertake an assessment of needs relating to the Asian community in general and elders in particular.

• Housing departments should seek partnerships with specialist providers to meet the needs of Asian elders.

• Housing associations need to examine why lettings to Asian elders are decreasing when lettings generally are increasing.

• The Housing Corporation should prioritise funding innovative schemes for Asian elders where the emphasis is placed on keeping the family together while providing an appropriate level of care.

• Service providers should consult with the community to make sure the model of provision and issues relating to diet, religion and culture match the community’s needs.

• Local authorities must promote awareness within the communities of the range of housing options available to Asian elders.

• A range of options including aids and adaptations, staying put schemes, sheltered housing and care home provision are required to meet the housing needs of Asian elders.

• Family housing needs to be adapted to enable the extended family to remain together with the elder receiving the appropriate level of care. Other options include lower elevation extensions, loft conversions and combining two properties into one.
The Housing & Support Needs of Women especially those from Ethnic Minorities.

By A. Ahmed & D. Sodhi of the University of Salford

Description:
This report arose out of a concern from Rochdale Women's Housing Aid Group about the low numbers of BME and older women accessing their accommodation and other services, and the limited information available about their housing and support needs. It also aimed to identify ways to increase the involvement of BME women in voluntary sector work including volunteering and participation on management committees. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 representatives from a range of voluntary and statutory organisations, and 55 potential and former women clients.

Main Findings:
- Only a small proportion of Asian women were aware of Women's Housing Aid and supported housing provision generally, with levels of awareness being greater in the white sample.
- Lack of awareness, language difficulties and the inappropriateness or reputation of existing provision were identified as the main barriers to accessing supported housing provision.
- The majority of Asian women perceived that service providers were not culturally sensitive or responsive to their needs.
- Some women felt that supported housing schemes had a poor reputation and too many rules and regulations.
- Women generally preferred self contained units, while there was a preference amongst a small minority for more specialist provision, such as single sex schemes, Asian only or age specific.
- There were wide variations on locality preferences, but women generally wanted to be close to amenities while some Asian women wanted to be close to cultural facilities.
- Most women valued the security and safety provided by supported accommodation as well as the contact with staff.
- Very few Asian women indicated a preference for supported housing, but many identified a need for support.
- Asian women indicated that factors such as language difficulties, childcare responsibilities and community disapproval influenced their decision not to participate in voluntary sector activities.

Recommendations:
- Statutory and voluntary organisations needed to work collaboratively and communicate more effectively, while the development of forums for discussion and information sharing would help to raise awareness about services amongst service users and service providers.
- Service providers must improve communications with BME groups to get a better understanding of their diverse needs. They should employ more BME staff to provide culturally sensitive services.
- Information should be disseminated in community languages and a wide range of media used to publicise supported housing to raise levels of awareness among BME women.
- Service providers must develop a sense of trust and guarantee the safety and confidentiality of their women service users.
- Future developments must not only address any gaps in provision, but also consider the preference for more dispersed supported accommodation with flexible support arrangements.
- Future service provision needed to be located close to amenities and cultural facilities.
- BME women participation in voluntary work should be promoted by publicising opportunities within BME communities, providing training and gaining the support of community leaders.
- The image of supported housing needed to be improved with more consultation of residents and regular review of rules which would provide them with a sense of ownership and acceptance.
- Further research needed to be undertaken on the housing and support needs of African Caribbean women.
Our Future Homes - Attitudes to Shared Ownership among BME communities in Preston
By Aysha Desai of Ashiana Housing Association

Description:
This research has its origins in the report “Action Time - Survey of BME Housing Needs in Preston” published in 1996 which indicated that seventy five per cent of this sample were not aware of shared ownership. The study investigated the attitudes of Preston’s BME community towards shared ownership, and the potential demand for such schemes. Between February 1999 and January 2000 three trained interviewers, able to communicate in both Gujerati and Urdu or Punjabi interviewed 135 households.

The study sought to address the general lack of awareness of shared ownership by providing translations of information about shared ownership into Urdu and Gujerati, advertising in Asian Image, a free monthly Asian newspaper and ‘Asian Word’ a weekend radio programme.

The survey sample however was not representative of Black and Afro-Caribbean households, and while the report indicates how this was addressed, was unable to draw any conclusions about this group.

Main findings:
• There is a lack of awareness about shared ownership among the Asian community and this may have a bearing on the true extent of demand for this form of housing provision.
• As overcrowding continues to be prevalent among the Asian community in Preston, with over 30% of the households interviewed containing six or more occupants, there is a demand for larger 3, 4, and 5 bedroom shared ownership houses in specific areas.
• It is anticipated that the demand for shared ownership housing will be limited to low cost housing development, since 71% of the heads of households surveyed earned less than £10,400 a year.
• The study highlights how funding mechanisms for new build shared ownership and rehabilitation capital investment limits potential demand within the BME community.

Recommendations:
• A proportion of the Approved Development Programme should be targeted for affordable 3, 4, and 5-bedroom new build shared ownership houses in specific areas.
• The Housing Corporation should introduce a grant to promote and market shared ownership to the BME community.
• There needed to be increased grant support to allow low-income households to make a 25% equity purchase into shared ownership housing.
• Grant levels need to be increased to reflect the higher development costs of large 4 and 5 bedroom houses.
• New shared ownership schemes should be culturally sensitive to meet the needs of the Asian community.
• The local authority should consider, where appropriate, two into one conversions and the selective demolition of some houses for new development.
• Housing associations should promote voluntary sales to existing tenants, in particular 4 and 5 bedroom homes to Asian families.
• There needs to be greater promotion and marketing of information on new shared ownership schemes to all sections of the community by housing associations and the local authority.
Surma Housing Co-operative in Rochdale – Development Worker

Description:
Canalside Village in Rochdale includes 40 new high quality homes for local people in housing need on a former industrial site adjacent to the Rochdale Canal. A group of these houses (16 units) are managed by the Surma Housing Co-operative whose membership comprises of people of Bangladeshi origin who had previously lived under considerable housing stress in the inner areas of Rochdale.

A multi-agency approach, focusing on economic regeneration, housing, environmental renewal, training for life and work and building a safer community has made possible the development of the physical and social infrastructure of Canalside Village.

Main issue:
• The Bangladeshi community has lived mainly in the ward with the highest levels of deprivation, experience severe levels of overcrowding, occupy old traditional houses which are in a poor state of physical repair and suffer the highest levels of deprivation compared with other groups.

Main findings:
• Ashiana Housing Association working in close partnership the local authority, other housing associations and in particular the local community facilitated the development of Surma Housing Co-operative to address the problem.
• Surma Housing Co-operative was formed with voluntary membership from the local Bangladeshi community to address the issue of housing need and to meet the common economic, social and cultural needs of the community.
• Central to Ashiana’s approach was that the development had to be based on a sound knowledge of local housing needs and a sensitive response to the cultural needs of the local BME community.
• As a BME Housing Association, Ashiana felt that it was better able to engage people from the local communities, and facilitated their participation as Committee members and tenants.
• Surma Housing Co-operative’s underlying principles are predicated on self-help, self respect, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity.
• A voluntary unpaid Management Committee consisting of 14 elected members from the community is responsible for the management of the Co-operative.
• The development worker has been the link between Surma Housing Co-operative, the local authority and those housing associations involved in the development of two other schemes.
• There is a waiting list (reflecting increased demand) for the existing co-operative houses, but there has been no turnover since the first lettings.
• In addition to Housing Corporation funding for a development worker, SRB funding over three years has been secured for the employment of a Community Housing Co-ordinator.
• An information pack that explains underlying principles, objectives, responsibilities of members, membership details and management of the co-operative has been produced.

Future action:
• Ashiana Housing Association has focused on the development of those initiatives which offer added value to tenants, while Surma Housing Co-operative has committed to being involved in ‘Housing Plus’ initiatives e.g. employment and training.
• The development worker’s remit is to improve access to social housing for Bangladeshi and other households currently in housing need, to extend the geographical boundaries and to encourage and enable a wider choice of areas for people to live in.

• While some Management Committee members have professional skills in community development, opportunities exist for training and capacity building for new tenant members.

• A further 25 units of accommodation for between 5 and 10 person households is being developed for Surma Housing Co-operative.
SECTION 3

Innovative approaches to mitigating the effects of social exclusion experienced by BME communities

LIST OF PROJECTS

31. A New Spirit of Community - developing Mutual Aid at Byron Street, Bradford (1999)
32. Housing Plus Needs of the Young Muslims in Hackney (2001)
St Paul’s Assessment Phase 2 Report

By T. Trott (Housing Consultant) & J Frost (Social Housing Models Ltd) for Bristol City Council

Description:

St Paul’s is a mixed use inner city area of Bristol, consisting primarily of social housing, mostly Victorian terraced properties and purpose built council flats. The area experiences high turnover and void rates and suffers adversely from negative perceptions of high crime rates and drug related activities. This report investigates the social and economic issues affecting St Paul’s and makes recommendations for future investment and possible solutions to the problems of housing and social exclusion in the area.

Main Findings:

• The problems in St Paul’s have been aggravated by, and to some extent caused by uncoordinated social interventions over a long period.
• The majority of residents found St Paul’s attractive because of its lively atmosphere, community spirit, multi-cultural diversity and central location.
• Street safety was the dominant issue for the majority of respondents of whom 43% have been the victims of violent attacks, muggings and verbal harassment.
• Fear of violence and harassment is closely associated with drug trading, prostitution and street drug use in the area.
• Many local people perceived that St Paul’s was used as ‘dumping ground’ - a convenient place to manage social problems which would not be accepted in such concentrations or at all in other areas of Bristol.
• A majority of respondents perceived that St Paul’s received a lower quality environmental service than other areas with regard to the quality of street cleaning, the state of open spaces and general levels of dirt.
• Concerns about the high transient population of St Paul’s was closely related to concentrations of drug and alcohol mis-users accommodated in the area.
• St Paul’s external reputation had affected the services to residents, and had a wider impact on both the economy and social provision, in relation to employment, investment, trading, housing demand, education and population profile.

Key areas for a strategic response:

• The main social organisations involved in regeneration must agree a common objective through which each must ensure that their own plans are assessed not simply for their own benefit, but also for their impact on St Paul’s as a whole.
• Existing capital allocations must be spent in a co-ordinated and targeted way.
• A formal partnership between the various organisations, involving people at the most senior levels must provide the leadership, strategic direction and co-ordination for regeneration.
• Resident’s perceptions and those of small groups and organisations must be given a central role in defining the scope, standard and accountability of services.
• The fear of crime must be tackled by arresting drug dealers; deterring visitors who come to purchase drugs; and weakening the links between hostels and drug use.
• Active residents must be attracted by targeting social lettings on those committed to the area; promoting market lettings; and disposing of social housing only to committed owner-occupiers.
• Capital investment must be secured to deal with major repairs and improvements in social housing and tackling the abandoned sites and buildings.

• St Paul’s relatively cheap start up costs and excellent transport links must be promoted to businesses, and visitors must be made aware of its position as the multicultural heart of Bristol with diverse recreational and entertainment attractions.

• City-wide action must be undertaken to address racial discrimination in the workplace including targeted training for employment within St Paul’s.

• Education standards had to be raised so that in about five years, as safety issues were resolved and demand for housing increased, families with young children would be attracted back to the area.
Good Practice Guide – Alcohol, Housing Management and BME Tenants of housing associations
By Fahmeeda Gill

Description:
This guide provides examples of good practice in housing management and support for BME tenants with an alcohol misuse problem. The guide builds on earlier research into the extent of alcohol misuse amongst BME tenants and the housing and support options available to them. The research was based on information collected from a sample of 36 housing associations, 37 alcohol agencies and follow-up interviews with over 50% of respondents. The guide will be of use to those housing associations and local authorities who are developing models of floating support for individuals with alcohol misuse problems from BME communities.

Main Findings:
• Although the available data on the incidence and drinking patterns amongst BME communities are dated there is evidence that levels of dependency on alcohol is underestimated.
• BME individuals did not approach mainstream agencies for help because of institutionalised racism, lack of awareness of services, and a tendency to approach a GP or the family first.
• As BME communities are not homogeneous and have different experiences of alcohol misuse, there was a need for appropriate service responses to be developed.
• Many housing associations were ill-equipped to identify and respond to the needs of those tenants with alcohol problems and were unable to offer appropriate support services to BME tenants with an alcohol misuse problem.
• When receiving nominations from local authorities, housing associations were often not provided with sufficient information about tenant misuse of alcohol or their support needs. The floating support provision that existed for tenants with alcohol problems was patchy and there was a need to develop provision for tenants with complex needs.
• Many housing officers had low levels of awareness of alcohol misuse and lacked confidence in dealing with those tenants who were problem drinkers.

Recommendations:
• Alcohol agencies, housing associations and other statutory organisations needed to work together more systematically to provide a more effective service for BME tenants with alcohol problems.
• Housing associations and other providers should be aware of the impact of racism on BME communities if they are to develop culturally appropriate services.
• Mainstream agencies needed to improve access to their services by employing BME staff, undertaking outreach work and undergoing training in order to develop a greater awareness of the needs of BME communities.
• Specialist agencies should improve access to services for BME communities through the provision of culturally sensitive services that reflected the diverse needs of BME communities.
• Culturally sensitive services should address the issues of confidentiality, the need for outreach as well as locating services outside of a close-knit community and religious institutions.
• The concept of Izzat or ‘respect/honour’ and the effect this has on whether or not individuals were able to present themselves for help had to be considered.
• More counsellors of the same ethnicity/gender and able to speak several community languages should be employed by specialist agencies.
• Housing staff must be trained to enable them to respond appropriately to BME tenants with an alcohol misuse problem.
• Housing staff should be sensitive to the particular needs of BME tenants in relation to racism, language barriers, confidentiality and their need for specialist alcohol support services.

• Housing staff should act as brokers or advocates in accessing support services for those tenants with alcohol abuse problems.

• Housing associations should develop culturally sensitive floating support services in order to meet the needs of those BME tenants with alcohol misuse problems.
A Question of Diversity – Black and minority ethnic staff in the housing association sector

By P Somerville, D Sodhi & A Steele University of Salford

Description:
This report used career opportunities for ethnic minorities (COFEM) as a barometer of how well mainstream housing associations maximised the talent, skills and expertise of BME staff. A postal questionnaire completed by 75 mainstream housing associations and 31 BME led housing associations and in depth interviews with 52 staff working from 15 housing associations provided the information for analysis. The report concluded that the internal cultures of many mainstream housing associations did not place any value on diversity in the workforce and also worked against the employment or career development of BME staff. However the report also outlines a programme of action for housing associations to pursue in addressing the issue of under-representation of BME staff in their workforce at all levels.

Main Findings:
• BME groups continue to be under represented at all levels in the workforce of mainstream housing associations.
• In the majority of cases BME staff were equally if not better qualified than their white colleagues doing the same job.
• Even when mainstream housing associations operate in areas with high concentrations of BME communities, BME staff are virtually absent from senior management positions and generally located in the most junior levels of the organisation.
• BME staff were more likely to experience racism from colleagues than from tenants or members of the public.
• BME led housing associations tended to employ white staff at comparable senior levels to similarly qualified BME staff.
• Mainstream housing associations that used job samples, simulations and assessment centre techniques for recruitment purposes were more likely to employ BME staff.
• The majority of mainstream housing associations had no positive action practices on PATH, Mentoring or personal development.
• There were significant failures in human resource management in supporting and empowering BME staff.
• There was a strong business case for housing associations pursuing equal opportunities as there could be cost savings in recruitment and selection.

Recommendations:
• Strong leadership should be provided on promoting equal opportunities and positive images of BME staff.
• Racist attitudes of staff, tenants and contractors should be challenged and action taken accordingly.
• Regular training on the promotion of diversity in the workforce should be provided for Board members.
• The Best Value framework should be used to promote continuous improvement in services for BME staff, customers and clients.
• The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) code on conducting equality audits should be adopted.
• Secondment opportunities should be actively promoted and advertised internally and externally.
• Mentoring and coaching programmes should be introduced.
• Staff development and consultation with BME tenants, service users and the community should be improved.
• BME staff, tenants and contractors should be consulted on a regular basis.
• Local communities and BME media should be used to advertise widely for the recruitment of BME staff.
• Management development training for BME staff should be considered in partnership with other housing associations.
• The Housing Corporation should improve the accountability of mainstream housing associations and apply sanctions to poor performing housing associations or those without equality action plans.
Bristol area Black and Minority ethnic business survey and business directory

By the Centre for Employment and Enterprise Development

Description:
This project developed a business directory and produced a report about the needs and status of BME led businesses for use by housing associations and other groups. The report provides valuable insights into the Bristol BME business community, their training and advice needs and suggests ways in which housing associations can constructively assist the development of these businesses. A main tenet of the report is the facilitative and enabling role that housing associations can play in making the social housing sector an industry of opportunity and choice for people from diverse racial backgrounds.

Key Findings:
• At the time of the survey in February 2000, local housing associations had a low representation of BME suppliers within the sector.
• All respondents perceived housing associations as a white dominated environment where it was difficult for BME businesses to be accepted on equal terms.
• Housing associations had not been successful in developing awareness of the wide range of employment or contract opportunities amongst the BME communities.
• 80% of respondents mentioned ethnicity and race as barriers to obtaining contracts from mainstream companies, while 97% of the building and construction related businesses perceived that it would be difficult to secure contracts from housing associations because of their racial origins.
• 78% of the BME firms interviewed were not aware of the types of opportunities available within housing associations or how these opportunities could be accessed.
• Many BME businesses were concerned about insurmountable demands and red tape involved in the awarding of contracts.
• BME businesses were comparatively small, with few people employed, were most likely to be concentrated in restaurants and catering sectors and were likely to experience adverse trading conditions.
• BME businesses often found it difficult to access the capital required in the successful development of their businesses.
• Even though 59% of the respondents had been refused expansion loans by their banks, bank finance was the most important source of finance for business development and expansion.
• While 78% of BME businesses were located outside inner city postal districts, those businesses located within the inner city wards suffered most from adverse trading conditions.

Recommendations:
• An easily accessible outreach system should be developed to provide advice and information about the activities of housing associations to BME businesses.
• A working group should be set up to liaise with minority businesses and discuss issues of contracts, the tendering process, contract types and resource availability within the businesses.
• The image of housing associations had to be improved among BME businesses and the community by developing a common equal opportunities strategy on issues of contracting, tendering and other business activities.
• Publicity and promotional materials should be reviewed to ensure that items and articles was more representative of cultural diversity and there should be targeted distribution of such information.
• Marketing and promotional information should be systematically provided to BME businesses about business opportunities available within housing associations.
• Local housing associations should be aware of the limitations BME businesses face and therefore consider awarding smaller and manageable contracts.

• Local housing associations should enable BME businesses to build up track records with mainstream companies that could be used as leverage to access larger contracts and bank finance in the future.

• A ‘Mentoring Scheme’ should be developed whereby delegated housing association employees would provide on-site advice and counselling to BME businesses on various topics such as contracts, tendering, training schemes and positive action programmes.

• Information on Ethnic background should be routinely monitored and collated by housing associations on the award of contracts, list of approved contractors and composition of Management Committees.
Career Opportunities for Ethnic Minorities
By Peter Sommerville & Andy Steele University of Salford

Description:
This study identified examples of good practice among housing organisations in the North West with regard to career opportunities for BME people. A base line census of all housing organisations in the North West and in depth interviews with 42 black staff working at different levels in fifteen housing organisations provided the underlying information for the report.

Main Findings:
• Very few housing organisations in the North West employed more than five ethnic minority staff.
• Housing organisations rarely used the ethnic minority press for advertising job vacancies.
• More than half of the housing organisations always advertised job vacancies externally.
• More than 80% of the housing organisations did not have arrangements for consulting with BME communities.
• Under a third of the housing organisations relied on an assessment of future potential in their selection of staff.
• Organisations who had the Investors in People standard were more than twice as likely to have BME staff at above junior level than those without the standard.
• Half of the interviewees felt that BME people were under-represented in their organisation.
• Most interviewees expressed the view that their organisation’s recruitment and selection practices were fair in theory, but not in practice.
• Most organisations appeared to give little thought on how to attract more BME applicants despite substantial under-representation within their organisations.
• Fewer than 20% of the interviewees thought that their organisation planned the training and career development of staff.

Recommendations:
• Housing organisations should forge links with BME communities and consult with them on a regular basis to seek their views on recruitment and selection procedures.
• Vacancies within the organisation should be advertised widely, including the BME media so as to attract as many potential BME applicants as possible.
• Assessment methods should be reviewed and a wider and more innovative range of methods adopted to determine the candidates’ level of development.
• Careful thought should be given to the composition of interview panels and to the skills required by panel members to ensure fairness in selection procedures.
• Recruitment and selection processes should be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis, and at least once a year.
• Opportunities for all staff to progress by gaining experience of doing higher level jobs should be created and management skills should be developed.
• Opportunities for secondment or acting up should be advertised as they arise and applicants should then be assessed in open competition.
• Housing organisations need to reflect on the culture of their organisation and in particular the effects of attitudes and practices of senior managers.
• Housing organisations need to adopt a policy of valuing diversity within the workforce and ensure that the policy is actively promoted throughout the organisation.

• Wherever feasible housing organisations should explore the possibility of introducing their own positive action management development schemes.

• Training needs should be identified and met in a planned way on the basis of regular staff appraisal and career development plans.

• Effective staff appraisal systems should be implemented and used as the basis for a fair allocation of opportunities for secondment and acting up and career development generally.

• The formation and development of black support groups within the organisation should be encouraged.

• Housing organisations should examine the possibility of introducing mentoring systems within a framework of career development planning.
Contracts of Exclusion: A study of BME Outputs from housing association Contracting Power
By D. Sodhi and A. Steele Salford Housing and Urban Studies Unit

Description:
This report identifies the scale and type of barriers experienced by construction related BME led businesses in obtaining commissions primarily from housing associations and other organisations. It also highlights the role that housing associations can play in promoting equality and social inclusion through their contracting powers.

Main Findings:
• There are significant institutional barriers to BME led businesses getting fair access to commissioning opportunities with housing associations.
• The absence of a clear definition of what constituted a BME company hampered the ability of housing associations to monitor the outcome of equal opportunities in relation to the use of BME companies.
• Housing associations generally lacked appreciation of why the employment of BME businesses was important either from an equal opportunities or community sustainability perspective.
• Most housing associations invited consultants and contractors who were recommended or known to them, except for BME led housing associations which also advertised invitations for membership on their approved lists.
• Housing associations generally required the provision of the organisations equalities policy to ensure equality of opportunity in access to approved lists, while only 40% monitored applications and selection for membership.
• 40% of housing associations did not enforce standards on equal opportunities through contract compliance.
• Only 10% of housing associations encouraged large contracting firms with whom they worked to sub-contract or encouraged consortia schemes or joint ventures with BME consultants.
• The main barriers identified by BME companies working in the construction industry were their size and limited resources.
• Most BME companies felt that housing associations were discriminatory in their selection of contractors or consultants and this was attributed to organisational procedures and the actions of individuals within them.
• There was a general feeling that female companies and those employing disabled people experienced similar difficulties to BME companies working in the construction industry.

Recommendations:
• Housing associations must ensure that they operate policies that provide equality of opportunity in the employment of contractors/consultants in line with the Housing Corporations BME strategy.
• Housing associations should develop their equal opportunities policies in relation to the use of contractors/consultants and formulate agreed action plans that include targets for the use of BME businesses.
• Training and assistance to BME companies should be provided to enable them to compete successfully for contracts.
• Housing associations should encourage the use of BME companies as sub-contractors by larger companies until they acquire sufficient experience to tender on their own.
• The inclusion of BME companies in consortia schemes and partnering arrangements for large projects should be considered.
• Flexibility in the treatment of BME companies, contractors/consultants in terms of payment and continuity of work should be considered.
• Targets for the use of BME contractors/consultants should be introduced by number and value of contracts as a proportion of the total value of maintenance and development work.
• Internal monitoring systems should be developed for all stages of procurement, which include equal opportunity considerations.
• The Housing Corporation should consider enforcing and monitoring the application of the recommendations by housing associations as part of its BME strategy.
Managing Nuisance, Harassment and Anti-Social Behaviour – a framework for housing associations
By Elaine Ganderton Central Consultancy Services

Description:
This publication provides a framework for senior managers and board members to identify strategic approaches to tackle anti-social behaviour, nuisance and harassment. It identifies the organisational requirements that will contribute to effective solutions and advocates tenant involvement in seeking solutions. It highlights a range of organisational issues that need to be addressed to ensure that policies and procedures are implemented, monitored and continuously improved upon within a Best Value framework.

Main Findings:
• Best value surveys of residents indicate that they place significant importance on their landlord’s response to anti-social behaviour.
• Evidence suggests that anti-social behaviour is not uniform across the country, but is eight times more likely to be an issue in urban and inner city areas than elsewhere.
• Anti-social behaviour is very localised - it may be endemic on one estate or in one area but not affect other areas in the locality.
• Evidence suggests that housing associations do not have the organisational infrastructure in place to deal effectively with anti-social behaviour.
• Many housing association staff failed to take action on neighbourhood nuisance and anti-social behaviour complaints because of their uncertainty about their organisation's policy, the remedies available or the follow up action required.
• As the majority of housing associations do not keep and analyse data on incidents identifying the extent of anti-social behaviour is difficult.

Recommendations:
• A wide range of responses is required from housing associations, as anti social behaviour ranges from the mildly irritating to the life threatening
• Housing association staff dealing with anti social behaviour require a wide range of skills and knowledge to do their work effectively.
• The extent and nature of anti-social behaviour should be investigated in their areas of operation and housing associations should produce a strategic response.
• Housing associations must ensure that their strategy on anti-social behaviour is cross-departmental and take action to increase the awareness of the strategy amongst non-housing management staff.
• Anti-social behaviour issues should be integrated into all levels of management within the organisation through an integrated organisational development programme designed to achieve specific outcomes.
• Anti-social behaviour issues should be integrated into existing Corporate Plan processes and Best Value service reviews.
• Housing association tenants and staff should be involved in determining what constitutes reasonable and unreasonable behaviour.
• Organisational procedures should ensure that risks have been clearly identified and processes included for the elimination and reduction of risk to staff and tenants.
• A training strategy must be developed throughout the organisation to raise awareness and improve skills on dealing with anti-social behaviour.
• Residents and partner agencies should be consulted about the collection and analysis of data on important performance indicators such as categories of noise, response times etc.

• Occupancy agreements must have clear, unambiguous clauses on racial harassment and anti-social behaviour that are capable of enforcement.

• Housing associations must develop structures for working effectively with other organisations such as the police and local authorities that are all involved in developing and implementing crime prevention strategies.
RaceActionNet Lemos and Crane

Description:
RaceActionNet is a website that provides up-to-date practical on-line guidance on dealing with racial harassment and which also puts individuals in touch with each other to share experiences. Housing departments, police and other agencies have contributed to the research for the website which was jointly sponsored by the Housing Corporation, DETR, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Home Office.

Main Findings:
• RaceActionNet is an on-line National Directory, comprising a password protected database of details on housing organisations and their actions against racial harassment.
• Details of how to obtain a password to the site and demonstration pages can be viewed at www.raceaction-net.co.uk
• Users of the service can obtain information about the actions being taken to tackle racial harassment and support those experiencing it through the sites’ Action Search, or contact professionals dealing with racial harassment through Contact Search or originate or disseminate knowledge on Knowledge Search.
• RaceActionNet offers access to the most current best practice on dealing with harassment and also provides related services such as an electronic journal with case studies, case law, etc.
• RaceActionNet helps facilitate the sharing of contacts, ideas and information between organisations on combating racism.
• Organisations intending to take action against the perpetrators of harassment and violence are able to network and possibly identify actual perpetrators.
• Users of the service have access to search facilities on interviews with more than 250 organisations for examples of action taken on a local level and contact details of experienced practitioners.
• In addition to legal advice and current policy the site hosts a discussion forum to allow users to share experience and discuss emerging problems.
• RaceActionNet will be linked to the Home Office’s national on-line Crime Prevention toolkit which was launched in April 2001.
• The on-line service is currently available free to those organisations with a public responsibility for dealing with racist incidents.
• The website has a keyword search facility that enables users to more easily access information.
• The Housing Corporation and DETR have commissioned and produced a joint Code of Practice which will have regulatory force for housing associations.
A New Spirit of Community Developing Mutual Aid at Byron Street Bradford 3

By: G. Lemos & G. Goodby Lemos and Crane

Description:
This report describes a pilot scheme undertaken by Manningham Housing Association (MHA) in Bradford to facilitate the development of Mutual Aid in housing. The aim of the project was to rekindle a neighbourly spirit to rebuild and benefit the community as a whole. The report illustrates how housing processes such as allocations have been altered from the norm elsewhere in the sector to develop Mutual Aid and provides an overview of the procedures adopted in developing Mutual Aid in housing.

Main findings:
• The Maudesly Street community in which the Byron Street scheme was piloted contained 300 households of whom the majority was from the minority ethnic communities.
• The majority of properties were owner occupied, in a serious state of disrepair and with low market values.
• Most households had joint family or three generation living arrangements with high child densities and experienced severe overcrowding.
• People’s ability to move was constrained by unemployment, benefits dependency, low incomes and the limited supply of large homes available for social renting.
• Resident ties to their area had grown stronger, particularly amongst the ethnic minority communities with an increase in the number of extended families living close to each other.
• Over 75% of the households had exchanged various forms of mutual support including child care, socialising and celebrating cultural religious, shopping and cooking for each other etc.
• Respondents wanted to rent property on Byron Street because it offered the opportunity to live amongst a more caring community-minded group of people in larger better quality homes, and close to established social networks.

Key issues and processes in the development of Mutual Aid in housing:
• A fresh approach to allocations was adopted which took into account social as well as housing needs to minimise the disruption to existing social support networks.
• Lettings criteria for the homes in Byron Street were discussed in nine focus groups of applicants.
• Applicants for housing in Byron Street were prioritised according to MHA’s current allocations policy which awarded points for different factors affecting housing need.
• Additional factors such as existing social networks, or housing management considerations of minimising neighbour disputes or anti-social behaviour were also considered.
• Points were allocated to applicants who filled in a Mutual Aid questionnaire asking them about their social needs and their existing ties of Mutual Aid to the neighbourhood and its residents.
• Mutual Aid points were not allocated on the basis of kinship ties or length of stay in the neighbourhood.
• The Housing Corporation guidance stated that no more than 20% of the total points could be allocated for mutual aid to ensure that a housing needs threshold was met.
• The 22 successful households from the original shortlist of 60 were identified on the basis of the points scored in the Mutual Aid questionnaire as a result of either needing or offering support to others.
• Family structure and ethnicity were also considered to ensure that the final 22 households reflected a ‘balanced and sustainable’ community.
• Two neighbours and the existing landlord had to provide references for each household prior to mutual aid points being allocated and offers being made.
• The Mutual Aid Compact was introduced as a means of bringing new residents together in the common cause of creating a neighbourly environment and providing encouragement for undertaking obligations mutually and voluntarily.

• Focus group discussions by prospective tenants at Byron Street informed the content of the Mutual Aid Compact which defined what the communities expectations were in terms of providing and receiving support.
## APPENDIX 1

### CONTACT DETAILS OF IGP PROJECTS REVIEWED

   Contact: Policy Division, The Housing Corporation, 149 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 7BN  
   London Tel 0207 393 2000

   Prepared for the National Housing Federation by N Bacon, J Barelli & D Levison of the London Research Centre  
   Contact: National Housing Federation, 175 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8JP, Tel 0207 278 6571.
   Email: info@housing.org.uk

   Prepared for Calderdale Black and Asian Housing Needs Research Group by Adrian Jones David Mullins & Cathy Davis  
   Contact: Adrian Jones, Centre for Urban and Regional studies, University of Birmingham

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   Published by the National Housing Federation & Home Housing Trust  
   Contact: National Housing Federation, 175 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8JP, Tel 0207 278 6571.
   Email: info@housing.org.uk

   By Peter Radcliffe of University of Warwick  
   Contact: Imran Rathore, Housing Strategy Section, Central House, Forster Square, Bradford, BD1 1DJ  
   Tel 01274 754362. Email imran.rathore@bradford.gov.uk

   By Adrian Jones of the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham  
   Contact: School of Public Policy, University of Birmingham. Tel 0121 414 5019

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   By Geoffrey Randall & Susan Brown of Research and Information Services, Suffolk  
   Contact: Innisfree Housing Association, 190 Iverson Road, London NW6 2HL  
   Tel 0207 625 1818
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   By Roger Zetter & Martyn Pearl of the Housing Studies Unit, Oxford Brookes University. Contact: The Policy Press, University of Bristol 34 Tyndall’s Park Road, Bristol Bs8 1PY
   Tel 0117 954 6800. Email tpp@bristol.ac.uk

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   Prepared for Advance Housing & Support Ltd & Foundation Housing Association by De Montfort University Faculty of Health and Community studies and the Mary Seacole Research centre.
   Contact: Advance Housing and Support Ltd, 2 Witan Way, Witney, Oxon OX8 6FE
   Tel 0116 25559935

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    Contact: details as in 9 above

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    By Ashram Agency, Ashram Housing Association, Birmingham
    Contact: Jaz Bains, Ashram Group, 249 Ladypool Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, B12 8LF
    Tel 0121 624 4090

12. The Housing and Care Needs of Asian Elders in London
    Prepared for ASRA Greater London Housing Association, by PS Martin Hamblin
    Contact: Gera Patel, Policy Unit, ASRA, 239-241 Kennington Lane, London SE11 5QU
    Tel 0207 940 6616

    Prepared for Rochdale Women’s Housing Aid Group by Anya Ahmed and Dianne Sodhi of Salford University
    Contact: Women’s Housing Aid Group, Rose Court, 670 Manchester Road, Rochdale OL11 3AA.
    Tel 01706 354 046

    Developed by Ashiana Housing Association, Rochdale
    Contact: Mohammed Miah, Surma Housing Co-operative, 3-11 Drake Street, Rochdale, OL16 1RE
    Tel 01706 712252

    Prepared for Ashiana Housing Association, Preston Borough Council and North British Housing Association by Aysha Desai of Ashiana Housing Association
    Contact: Ashiana Housing Association, 3-11 Drake Street, Rochdale OL16 1RE
    Tel 01706 712252
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author/Institution</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Housing Black and Minority Ethnic people in Sheffield – a research report (1999)</td>
<td>G Gidley, M Harrison &amp; D Robinson of Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Leeds for South Yorkshire Housing Association.</td>
<td>Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Unit 10-Science park, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 2LX. Tel 0114 225 3073</td>
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<td>A Steele, Salford Housing &amp; Urban Studies Unit, University of Salford</td>
<td>Kirklees Housing Services, 4th Floor, Civic Centre, Huddersfield, HD1 2NF</td>
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<td>C Lambert &amp; K Razzaque, University of West of England, Bristol</td>
<td>Research office, University of West of England, Coldharbour Lane, Frenchay, Bristol BS16 1QY. Tel 0117 965 6261 Ext. 3102</td>
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<td>SAMEC Trust for Raglan Housing Association, Southampton City Council and Presentation Housing Association.</td>
<td>Raglan Housing Association Ltd, Wright House, 12-14 Castle Street, Poole, Dorset BH15 1BQ. Tel 01202 678731</td>
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<td>I Law, J Davies, D Phillips &amp; M Harrison of University of Leeds</td>
<td>Ian Law, Race and Public Policy Research Unit, University of Leeds, LS2 9JT Tel 0113 2334410 Email <a href="mailto:I.G.Law@leeds.ac.uk">I.G.Law@leeds.ac.uk</a></td>
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<td>St Paul's Assessment Phase 2 Report (2000)</td>
<td>T Trott &amp; J Frost of Social Housing Models Ltd for Bristol City Council</td>
<td>Tim Borthwick, Housing Services, Bristol City Council Tel 0117 9116 5138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
   By Fahmeeda Gill for EACH
   Contact: Sandra Machado, EACH, 4 Hanworth Road, Middlesex TW3 JUA
   Tel 0208 577 5059

   By P Somerville, D Sodhi & A Steele from the University of Salford
   Contact: Policy Division, The Housing Corporation, 149 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 0BN
   London Tel 0207 393 2000

   By Centre for Employment & Enterprise Development (CEED), 97-107 Wilder Street, Bristol BS2 8QU
   Contact: Alistair Allender - Elim Housing Association, 14 High St, Thornbury, South Gloucestershire
   BS 35 2AQ. Tel 01454 411172 Email info@elimhousing.co.uk

   By P Somerville & A Steele, University of Salford
   Contact: National Housing Federation (NW) Tel 0161 848 8132

   By D Sodhi & A Steele, University of Salford
   Contact: London Equal Opportunities Federation, Surrey Quays Road, London SE16 2YS.
   Tel 0207 237 7700

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   associations (2000)
   By E Ganderton of Central Consultancy Services
   Contact: Policy Division, The Housing Corporation, 149 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 0BN
   London Tel 0207 393 2000

   Contact: Lemos & Crane, 20 Pond Square, London N6 6BA
   Tel 0208 348 8263 Email admin@lemos.demon.co.uk

   By G. Lemos & G Goodby of Lemos & Crane for Manningham Housing Association.
   Contact: Manningham Housing Association, Bank House, 30 Manor Road, BD1 4QE
   Tel 01274 771144

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   By A M Al-Azami, Y Hafesji & J Ali for North London Muslim Housing Association
   Contact: Nurjhan Ali, NLMHA, 62 Cazenove Road, London N16 6BJ Tel 0208 806 9696
APPENDIX 2

OTHER REFERENCES

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by

Joe Matthias

www.housingcorp.gov.uk

Photography

Jon Walter
0208 985 7312

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