

# STONEMALL

— housing association limited —

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BACKGROUND PAPER

AUGUST '87

Stonewall Housing Association has been registered as a friendly society since October 1983. It is a member of the National Federation of Housing Associations, but is not registered with the Housing Corporation nor do it have plans to.

## Funding

The association first received its first funding from the GLC in '84, and this enabled it to employ, in February '85, 2 part-time development workers to 18 months to bring the first 2 hostels into management. Since the demise of the GLC, funding support has been sought successfully from the London Boroughs Grants Scheme who fund over 75% of excess management costs and the majority of our central overheads. The London Borough of Islington makes a contribution of approximately 20% of excess management costs. We also claim Hostel Deficit Grant on both properties, and receive charges from residents. We have also received charitable donations from the following organisations; Crisis at Christmas, the Thames Help Trust, Shelter and the Housing Association Charitable Trust.

## Structure

The association is managed by a Management Committee which usually numbers around 10 people. All the members have experience that is relevant to the running of the project, for example our present membership includes advice workers, hostel workers, a housing manager, a special projects officer, youth workers and those with financial skills. There is also a co-optee from Circle 33 Housing Trust who own both our existing properties. The Management Committee meets monthly and generally makes decisions about matters of policy. Workers present written reports to this meeting, and so keep the Committee aware of the activities and progress of the project. In addition to the monthly meetings, there are also sub-groups, namely a Finance Sub, an Employment and Recruitment Sub, a Black & Ethnic Minority Sub, a Design and Development Sub and a House Policy Sub. These are made up Management Committee members, workers and residents are also invited. These groups report to the monthly Management Committee meetings.

## Staffing

The project employ 3 full-time and 2 part-time hostel workers. Apart from hostel work, each worker has an area of work that they alone are responsible for. Hence we have: a Finance worker, a Administration and Resources worker, a Development and Rehousing worker, a Welfare Rights worker and a Maintenance worker. The workers are formed into a collective, and they have weekly staff meetings. Supervision is offered by individual Management Committee members during new workers probationary periods or as requested.

## The hostels

The first hostel came into management in July '86. It provides 8 bedspaces in 4 2person cluster flats. There is no office space at the hostel and workers visit at least weekly or as required. Residents in the house are expected to be able to live in a fairly independent way and to share successfully. Workers are available to the residents on a 24 hour basis, as they can be contacted at the other hostel. This house opened in March '87

and provides 9 bedspaces in a more conventional hostel set-up. Each resident has their own room and shares other facilities with other residents. This hostel provides office space, a worker is usually on duty every day and evening. Night cover is provided either by workers sleeping over or by the use of a bleeper call-out arrangement. This hostel aims at taking those who may have some limited needs over and above sheer housing need. The workers are not trained counsellors, they do not see themselves and providing such a function, they are hostel managers and are there primarily to deal with practical matters, but if a resident has areas of concern that cannot be dealt with by the staff they will ensure that the resident gets appropriate advice or assistance from another agency.

#### Management arrangements

As has been explained, both our existing properties are owned by Circle 33 Housing Trust with whom we have a management agreement. Very generally this gives the responsibility for the day to day management of the hostels to Stonewall Housing Association, whilst the maintenance responsibility lies with Circle 33 Housing Trust. They also undertake to do any legal action arising from the eviction of any resident, and as a result are kept informed of any action the project takes which may culminate in legal proceedings. They also receive copies of minutes of all Management Committee meetings and some sub group minutes, and a co-optee attends management committee meetings.

#### Future developments

Since our hostels came into management we have received a very positive response. For the few vacancies that arise we receive around 7-8 suitable referrals, and we get inquiries about accommodation daily. We are the only organisation dealing with housing needs of young lesbians and gay men, and we are very keen to develop more properties in partnership with other housing associations. The housing problems of our clients vary and so we should like to be able to offer a range of short-stay accommodation. We have noted a demand for, and are committed to having a house for women only (both our houses are mixed at present). Neither of the hostels is accessible for residents in wheelchairs, and we would like to see the project developing more accessible property. Something our management experience has told us; that the most successful and desirable communal living takes place in smaller rather than larger groups, and we are particularly interested in property that will allow residents to live together in groups of not more than 3. We are also concerned with reasonable transport, and local access to shops, etc. Whilst we would prefer to be able to claim Hostel Deficit Grant on all our schemes, we would not rule out developing smaller schemes which were self-financing. But this would have to be examined on an individual basis.

We do have 2 new schemes in progress, both at acquisition stage. These to provide more cluster flat units, one being with New Islington & Hackney Housing Association, the other Circle 33 Housing Trust.