
Innisfree Housing Association

STAKEHOLDER SURVEY REPORT

July 2008

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A SUMMARY

1. This report sets out the results of a new survey of external stakeholders, to establish the views of key partners about Innisfree, its operations and performance. 29 representatives of key partner organisations participated by taking part in telephone interviews conducted by the consultant and Innisfree Board members during the period May to June 2008. The survey follows up a very similar and earlier exercise conducted in 2003.¹
2. The principal finding is that, as in the earlier survey, Innisfree is viewed extremely positively by the people and organisations with which it does business. Across several key areas it was rated either 'Good' or 'Excellent' by 100% of respondents which is remarkable for any size of association, and especially so for a smaller one operating in what is now a much tougher and more competitive environment than five years ago.
3. The Association is especially well regarded in the following areas:
 - a. Managing its relationship with key partner and stakeholder organisations;
 - b. Its professionalism and performance of its staff;
 - c. Its contribution to community cohesion
 - d. Communicating its mission of assisting the Irish community, and knowledge of that community;
 - e. Partnership working where its key local authority and housing association partners rate highly its role in being proactive, sharing of responsibility and as a BME partner;
 - f. Its organised and co-ordinated approach to delivery of its business where it is overwhelming viewed as being planned, responsive, quietly confident and speedy to respond.
4. Performance is seen as generally good in the following areas:
 - a. Innovation;
 - b. Financial relationship management;
 - c. Tenant and resident involvement;²
 - d. Housing management;
 - e. Dealing with lettings;
 - f. Handling queries and complaints.
5. Areas where the ratings given are less good – but still satisfactory – are as follows.
 - a. Communication and information about its performance and governance;
 - b. Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB);
 - c. As a Supporting People (SP) provider.

¹ Innisfree Stakeholder Survey Report September 2003 by Greg Campbell

² This and the remaining questions on housing management, lettings and complaints were answered only by LA respondents.

6. The Association's main strengths are viewed as:
 - a. Having a strong focus on the Irish community, serving its needs well and with cultural sensitivity, and championing its corner;
 - b. Being extremely well led with a knowledgeable, experienced, committed, stable and friendly staff team;
 - c. Strongly committed to partnership working, willing to engage in policy and strategy discussions, and to put time and effort into delivering partnership objectives;
 - d. Well organised, professional and very clear about its aims and objectives.

7. In terms of what Innisfree might achieve in the future the following are the main points mentioned:
 - a. Continue to grow maintaining the quality of its services and its role as a successful community based association;
 - b. Survive and retain its independence, acting as a model and champion for other small associations;
 - c. Innovate and diversify its business, providing a wider range of services to its existing and new client groups.

8. Potential future priorities for the Association are:
 - a. Continuing to deliver high quality services to its tenants and clients;
 - b. Keeping close to its LA partners helping to deliver on their key objectives, eg worklessness;
 - c. Continue to develop and grow in a planned way and to diversify its business;
 - d. Remaining financially viable and retaining its independence, acting as a model for BME and small associations.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In order to inform its continuous review of services and its corporate strategy, Innisfree Housing Association commissioned a new survey of external stakeholders, to establish the views of key partners about the standing of the organisation, its operations and performance. This report sets out the results and gives an assessment, comparing where relevant the findings with those from the 2003 survey. It then puts forward some recommendations for the Association to consider.
- 1.2 The exercise was undertaken between May and June 2008. It comprised:
- Revisions to the 2003 questionnaire to reflect changes in the external environment, eg advent of Supporting People commissioning;
 - Review and compilation of a new list of external stakeholders, drawn from local authority partners, housing association partners and peers (referred to as RSLs in the appendices), business partners, lenders and other organisations;
 - Contact with selected participants to secure their agreement to take part and preference for responding to the questionnaire;
 - Telephone interviews undertaken by the consultant and a team of four members of Innisfree's Board. In a handful of cases participants elected to complete and return the questionnaires direct to the consultant;
 - Analysing the responses;
 - Preparing this report.
- 1.3 The list of stakeholders comprised 33 people. Three of those contacted declined to take part which included the London Field Director of the Housing Corporation on the basis that it is no longer Corporation policy to participate in such reviews. Of the other two the reasons were linked to change in position and circumstance. A total of 29 rather than 30 questionnaires were completed as it proved impractical to complete one of the scheduled interviews.
- 1.4 Attached at Appendix 1 is the list of those who took part. At Appendix 2 is the questionnaire used. Appendix 3 sets out the detailed results of the survey.
- 1.5 The exercise has been undertaken by Nigel Phethean Independent Consultant with the following Board members helping out on telephone interviews: Mildred Levison, Terry Jones, Liz Fenton and Geraldine Gordon.
- 1.6 We would especially like to thank the people who agreed to be interviewed, all of whom participated helpfully and positively and to acknowledge the earlier survey conducted by Greg Campbell which provided a useful benchmark for this study.

2. SUMMARY AND ASSESSMENT OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 This section summarises the results of the survey against each of the questions, comparing where relevant with the 2003 findings, and draws out issues of significance highlighted by participants as well as offering a general interpretation and/or assessment of the findings. It should be noted that as not all participants felt able to answer all of the questions, whether due to a limited or only recent knowledge

of the organisation and its operations, the percentages are calculated on a count of responses received.

2.2 From your experience how would you rate Innisfree in the following areas?

2.2.1 Managing its relationship with your organisation

This was answered by all 29 respondents who all rated Innisfree as 'Good' or 'Excellent'. 45% (13 surveyed) gave an 'Excellent' rating which is a considerable improvement on last time (32% in 2003) and is a remarkable achievement for any organisation – large or small.

2.2.2 Partnership working (with you and/or others)

All but 2 participants responded to this question and all but one rated Innisfree as 'Good' or 'Excellent' (96%). This represents an improvement on last time where 3 (11% of respondents) gave an 'Average' rating. The result reflects the commitment and effort which the organisation and its staff have put into partnership working in particular with its key local authorities. Indeed, several LA respondents commented very positively about its contribution to their liaison groups.

2.2.3 Communication & information about its performance and governance

The response to this question was disappointing compared to last time with 5 participants unable to express a view. Of those doing so 71% (17 out of 24) rated Innisfree as 'Good' or 'Excellent' which compares poorly with the 96% in 2003. While there is no reason for alarm – the result is still good for a small organisation – it does suggest that more might need to be done to ensure key stakeholders are well informed about performance. And, in the context of the recent Governance Review, to explore whether there is an appetite for greater disclosure of corporate governance information.

2.2.4 Professionalism

This was another area where the scores were outstanding. 100% of all participants rated Innisfree as 'Good' or 'Excellent', exceeding the results last time (96%). As stated in the 2003 report for a small organisation to achieve such a result is remarkable; that it has been sustained is a testament to the commitment of all those who work and serve the association.

2.2.5 Staff Performance

While a greater number felt unable to provide a response– 5 as opposed to 2 in 2003 – the result is remarkable with 100% (22 respondents) rating Innisfree as 'Good' or 'Excellent'. Comments given – both in response to this and other questions – suggest that while Clare is still regarded as the outstanding ambassador for Innisfree, there is a clear recognition that the staff team has greater visibility and standing with stakeholders now than in 2003.

2.2.6 Innovation

Of those responding (22 out of 29), 77% rated Innisfree as 'Good' or 'Excellent'. This represents a small improvement on 2003 (65%) and is based on a better level of response – only 7 as opposed to 11 felt unable to express a view.

2.2.7 Organisation and co-ordination

Another strong area based on the scores given. 92% (23 out of 25) rated Innisfree as 'Good' or 'Excellent'. This is a small improvement on last time when a larger number of participants felt unable to respond (9 as compared to 4). When viewed alongside the result above on 'Professionalism' and 'Staffing' the conclusion has to be of an exceptionally well managed, organised and led organisation.

2.2.8 Contributing to Community Cohesion

This was a new area of questioning to reflect recent policy changes and emphasis. Of those responding (20 out of 29), all rated Innisfree as 'Good' or 'Excellent'.

2.2.9 Communicating its mission of assisting the Irish community

Again this was an area of particular strength. 96% (23 out of 24) rated Innisfree as 'Good' or 'Excellent'. This matched the 2003 result exactly.

2.2.10 The next set of questions were directed at LA participants only (10 in total) which makes analysis limited and more so given that, disappointingly, response levels on several questions were poor. Nevertheless, the results – as summarised below – do give a useful insight into the views of its LA partners:

Tenant/Resident involvement: All 6 respondents rated Innisfree as 'Good'.

Housing Management: of the 5 respondents all but one rated Innisfree as 'Good'.

Dealing with ASB: only 4 respondents of which 3 rated Innisfree as 'Average'. As one put it: *Being small Innisfree does not have the resources to do more than the basics which it does.*

As a SP provider: applied to only 3 respondents, 2 of whom rated Innisfree as 'Average'. However there were several positive comments from SP teams suggesting that Innisfree has made improvements in its management of support services.

Dealing with lettings: of the 7 respondents, 5 rated Innisfree as 'Good' or 'Excellent'.

Handling queries & complaints: only one non-respondent with 7 rating Innisfree as 'Good' or 'Excellent'.

2.3 **Have Innisfree's operations and performance improved, stayed the same, or got worse over the past three years?**

2.3.1 Half of respondents (11 out of 22) felt that Innisfree had improved over the past three years with the other half saying it had stayed the same. Whilst this represents a small decline on the figures last time (61% improved and 39% stayed the same) many of those giving the latter rating said that the organisation remained a top performer. As one remarked: *It is at the top of its game and has stayed there – so not stood still.*

2.4 Which of the following attributes best describe Innisfree's business style?

2.4.1 More than four fifths of those responding to this question described Innisfree's business style as quietly confident, speedy to respond and planned and 93% (26 out of 28) defined it as responsive. These are significantly better ratings than in 2003 which were around two thirds for these same attributes.

2.4.2 Comments made by respondents underlined an appreciation of the attentiveness and responsiveness of staff.

2.5 How does Innisfree manage its financial relationship with you?

2.5.1 The number responding to this question was greater this time (18 out of 29). Of those 83% (15) described the organisation as efficient (71% in 2003) and 28% (5) as firm but fair.

2.6 How would you rate Innisfree in business?

2.6.1 Proactive

A very positive rating was recorded in this area. 95% of respondents (21 out of 22) giving an assessment of 'Good' or 'Excellent'.

2.6.2 Sharing of responsibility

Again a very high rating with 18 out of 20 rating Innisfree as 'Good' or 'Excellent' in this area. This was a big increase on last time where the figure was only two thirds. This probably links with results on partnership working which showed an improvement and is reflected in many of the positive comments made, especially by LA respondents.

2.6.3 Sharing of risk

A low level of response here – only 13 out of 29 which was mirrored in the 2003 survey which is explained no doubt by the fact that this is a question which is seen as essentially one for the association's development partners. Of those responding 62% (8) rated Innisfree as 'Good' or 'Excellent' which is an improvement on 2003 when only a half gave a good rating and none a rating of excellent. Comments indicate some willingness for Innisfree to be more proactive in this area.

2.6.4 As a BME partner

90% of those responding (17 out of 19) rated Innisfree as 'Good' or 'Excellent' on this score. This is slightly down on the 2003 figure of 95% and is based on a lower level of response – 10 as opposed to 7 non respondents. The change may be explained by the changing and harsher environment for the BME sector.

2.7 What do you see as Innisfree's main strengths as an organisation?

2.7.1 A range of different points were raised. Those mentioned the most frequently were:

- Strong focus on the Irish community, serving its needs well and with cultural sensitivity, and championing its corner (9 mentions);

- Extremely well led with a knowledgeable, experienced, committed, stable and friendly staff team (9 mentions);
- Strongly committed to partnership working, willing to engage in policy and strategy discussions, and to put time and effort into delivering partnership objectives (6 mentions);
- Well organised, professional and very clear about its aims and objectives (6 mentions);
- Places emphasis on quality of service, providing a professional yet informal approach to its customers, and is responsive to service problems (4 mentions);
- Small RSL with clear and well defined areas of operation providing a locally based service to its tenants (4 mentions);
- Straightforward organisation which knows its market, takes and acts on advice and is good to do business with (4 mentions);
- Strong advocate and champion for small and B&ME organisations, supportive to peers and to RSL sector generally (3 mentions);

2.7.2 These match quite well with the findings from the 2003 survey with the last two aspects mentioned being new dimensions.

2.8 **What do you see as Innisfree's biggest achievements over, say, the last three years?**

2.8.1 Again a range of issues was raised. Those cited most frequently were as follows:

- Managing to grow and develop new housing (7 mentions);
- Remaining independent and continuing to serve the needs of the Irish community (5 mentions);
- Positive and committed partner, enhancing its standing and profile with local Boroughs (4 mentions);
- Acting as a beacon for small and BME organisations and championing and lobbying on issues of concern (4 mentions);
- Improving service quality on Supporting People contracts (2 mentions);
- Retaining its reputation as a leader and as an organisation people want to work (2 mentions);

2.8.2 Again these match well with the results from last time but with more of an emphasis on its retained independence and role as a champion/ model for others in what are now much harsher times.

2.9 What do you think Innisfree could do better?

2.9.1 An even wider range of issues was raised under this heading. None were raised significantly more than others. Those cited most frequently were:

- Expand and develop its partnership working in the area of support services (3 mentions);
- Improve its maintenance and asset management and keep striving for excellence in its housing management (3 mentions);
- Take on bit more risk, become a bit more innovative in developing and diversifying its business (2 mentions);
- Adapt and respond to the changing environment for BME RSLs (2 mentions);
- Use its expertise and strength to help community and BME groups to start up projects (2 mentions);
- Become a little sharper, improve its efficiency (2 mentions);

2.9.2 These differ quite substantially from last time and reflect the presence of a tougher operating environment and the need for Innisfree to think about re-positioning itself as it grows from its specialist base. One respondent stated: *Could be more innovative in its approach by extending its range of services* and another: *Could use their cultural sensitivity to work with other providers in different (and new to them) service areas, eg substance misuse.*

2.10 What would you like to see Innisfree achieve over the next three years?

2.10.1 While, as last time, the main issues highlighted concerned the organisation's continued growth, this is seen now as more than just bricks and mortar, ie more homes, but also about developing its services including support to other providers and community organisations. Those mentioned most frequently were:

- Continue to grow maintaining the quality of its services and its role as a successful community based associations (10 mentions);
- Survive and retain its independence, acting as a model and champion for other small associations (5 mentions);
- Innovate and diversify its business, providing wider range of services to its existing and new client groups (5 mentions);
- Use its expertise and success in partnership working to help other community and BME organisations (3 mentions);
- Providing services and lettings for new client groups, eg gypsies and travellers and Polish community (3 mentions);

2.11 What do you think should be Innisfree's priorities in the future?

2.11.1 Responses in this area again focused on growth in the overall business and in its role as a champion and role model for others. The highest rated priorities mentioned most frequently were:

- Continuing to deliver high quality services to its tenants and clients (8 mentions);
- Keep close to its LA partners helping to deliver on their key objectives, eg worklessness (6 mentions);
- Continue to develop and grow in a planned way and to diversify its business (4 mentions);
- Remain financially viable and retain its independence, acting as a model for BME and small associations (4 mentions);
- Work with its communities to develop and sustain community cohesion (4 mentions);
- Maintain its relationship with its development partners and encourage/assist others in partnership working (3 mentions);
- Act as a resource for the Irish community (3 mentions);

2.12 Do you anticipate opportunities for your organisation to work with Innisfree over the next two to three years?

2.12.1 Most respondents replied in the affirmative albeit some, in particular LA respondents, qualified their response given changing political and funding frameworks. A wide variety of possible roles were mentioned which are listed at Section 11 Appendix 3.

2.13 Other general comments

2.13.1 A large number of general comments were made, broadly relating to or following on from the above reported matters. These are set out in Section 12 Appendix 3. Noteworthy, is the number of times that people mention the pleasure of working with the association and the helpfulness of its staff.

2.13.2 One comment of a LA respondent is worth mentioning as it sums up a lot of what others have said here and elsewhere in the survey:

Innisfree stands out as a small RSL and is showing the way for many larger operators

3. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The survey confirms and reinforces the very positive messages arising out of the earlier exercise in 2003. Innisfree continues to be viewed very positively by the people and organisations with which it does business. The 100% ratings of 'Good and Excellent' in key areas, and the evident warmth with which people speak about the organisation, its management, staff and Board, are outstanding. While size is clearly

not a measure of effectiveness or quality, it is remarkable that a small organisation can remain to be seen as so effective in so many areas of its business.

3.2 In the harsher and more testing environment in which small and BME associations now operate, these results provide vital encouragement to the Board and staff of Innisfree as it continues in its mission to serve the Irish community in north London. Helpfully, it also provides some useful observations about the way in which Innisfree might continue to grow and diversify its business, timely given the review of future strategy now being undertaken by the Board and senior management. The results also point to areas where there is scope to improve performance.

3.3 The following recommendations are made:

- i. The survey results are published following Board discussion.
- ii. Staff are thanked for their part in delivering a high quality service, which is valued and appreciated by key stakeholders of Innisfree.
- iii. In reviewing its future strategy, the Board and senior management give consideration to the suggestions and high priorities of those responding in particular to:
 - How it might develop and diversify the services it provides both to meet its existing client groups but also new groups;
 - How it might develop its role as a champion for small and community based organisations;
 - How it resources and manages the delivery of its essential housing management services to ensure quality is safeguarded.
- iv. Consideration is given to new and improved ways of communicating with key stakeholders to ensure they are well informed about Innisfree's performance and governance.
- v. The Housing Services Committee looks at the views of the association's local authority partners to consider what steps could be taken to improve on its housing and support services.

Appendix 1**SURVEY PARTICIPANTS**

The following people participated in the survey. The list was compiled to provide a representative sample of key external stakeholders. It includes three people who took part in the earlier survey in 2003. The perspective of respondents ranges from those having a wide knowledge and experience of the work of Innisfree to those with a more focused and, in some cases, limited knowledge related to a specific area of activity, for example its work on supported housing.

All interviews were conducted by telephone which was the unanimous preference of respondents. In a few cases, participants opted to complete the questionnaires themselves. Very few of those contacted and asked to take part in the survey refused to do so and where this was the case it was due to change in position or circumstance rather than an unwillingness to participate. Most of the interviews were carried out by the consultant but a team of four members of Innisfree's Board conducted around a third of the interviews. The Housing Corporation was approached to take part but declined on the basis that it is no longer the policy of the Corporation to participate in stakeholder surveys which nevertheless it regards as a useful tool for associations to employ.

Tenants were not included since they are surveyed separately. An independent survey of sheltered and supported housing tenants was carried out in May 2006 by Geoffrey Randall. The general needs tenants were surveyed in April 2007 using the NHF's *Feedback Service*.

Name	Title	Organisation	Organisation's relationship to Innisfree
Keith Moffitt	Leader of Council	LB Camden	LA partner
Julie Newsam	Lettings Manager	LB Camden	LA partner
Michael Cox	Senior Officer Housing	LB Camden	LA partner (incl SP commissioning)
Isidoros Diakides	Councillor	LB Haringey	LA partner
Phil Harris	Director of Housing	LB Haringey	LA partner
Maggie Rafalowicz	Assistant Director of Housing (Strategy & Regeneration)	LB Brent	LA partner
Lawrence Gilbert	Benefits Assessment Officer	LB Brent	LA partner
Zakia Durrani	Supporting People Team	LB Brent	LA SP commissioning
Ian Ruegg	Principal Enabling Officer	LB Hammersmith & Fulham	LA partner
Harry Pilla	Supporting People Team	LB Ealing	LA SP commissioning
Dave Woods	Director of Development	Octavia Housing & Care	RSL Partner
Gareth Jones	Development	Origin Housing	RSL Partner

	Director	Group	
Jo Murphy	Regional Director	Family Mosaic	RSL Partner
Judith Raymond	Project Manager	One Housing Group	RSL Partner
Nick Wood	Chief Executive	Stadium HA	RSL Partner
Colin Mitchell	Capital Accountant	Stadium HA	RSL Partner
Dee Rowley	Development Manager	MHT	RSL Partner
Declan Carroll	Chief Executive	CARA	RSL Peer
Gina Amoh	Chief Executive	Inquilab HA	RSL Peer and potential partner
Anil Vasudev	Chief Executive	Apna Ghar HA	RSL Peer
Linda Milton	Chief Executive	Waltham Forest HA	RSL Peer
Elizabeth Clarson	Chief Executive	Housing for Women	RSL Peer
Stewart Morris	Director	Creative Solutions Ltd IT consultants	Business partner
Sean Doherty	Director	S Doherty Ltd	Business partner
Rosemary Hart	Partner	Trowers & Hamlins Solicitors	Business partner
Neil Watson	Employment Advisor	Safestart Foundation	Non RSL partner
Heather Petch	Chief Executive	HACT	Non RSL partner
Nigel Perryman	Relationship Manager	THFC	Lender
Belinda Porich	Head of London Region	National Housing Federation	Trade body representative

Appendix 2

**INNISFREE HOUSING ASSOCIATION
STAKEHOLDER SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE 2008**

Interviewer Date.....

Interviewee..... Organisation.....

1. From your experience, how would you rate Innisfree in the following areas?

[Please tick one box on each line]

	<i>Excellent</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Managing its relationship with your organisation						
Partnership working (with you and/or others)						
Communication & Information about its performance and governance						
Professionalism						
Staff performance						
Innovation						
Organisation and co-ordination						

Contribution to Community Cohesion						
Communicating its mission of assisting the Irish community						
And, for local authorities ONLY	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Don't know	Comments
Tenant/Resident involvement						
Housing management						
Dealing with anti-social behaviour						
(Brent, Camden & Ealing only) As a Supporting People provider?						
Dealing with lettings						
Handling queries & complaints						

<p>2. Would you say that Innisfree's operations and performance have improved/ stayed the same/got worse over the past three years?</p> <p>In what ways?</p>	<p>Improved? Yes/No Stayed the same? Yes/No Got worse? Yes/No</p>	<p>Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•
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3. Which four of the following attributes best describe Innisfree’s business style?

[Please tick ONLY 4 boxes]

	Tick	Comments
Quietly confident		
Arrogant		
Speedy to respond		
Slow/Inefficient		
Bureaucratic		
Responsive		
Planned		
Disorganised		

4. How does Innisfree manage its financial relationship with you?

[Please tick any that apply]

	Tick	Comments
Efficient		
Inefficient		
Firm but fair		
Average		
Hard to deal with		

5. How would you rate Innisfree in business?

[Please tick one box on each line]

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Don't know	Comments
Proactive						
Sharing of responsibility						
Sharing of risk						

As a BME (development) partner						
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<p>6. What do you see as Innisfree’s main strengths as an organisation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
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<p>7. What do you see as Innisfree’s biggest achievements over, say, the last three years?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
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<p>8. What do you think Innisfree could do better?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
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<p>9. What would you like to see Innisfree achieve over the next three years?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
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10. What do you think should be Innisfree’s priorities in the future?

<i>Interviewee’s priorities</i>	<i>Very important</i>	<i>Fairly important</i>	<i>Valuable but of low priority</i>	<i>Comments</i>

<p>11. Do you anticipate opportunities for your organisation to work with Innisfree over the next two to three years? If so, what might these be?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
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<p>12. Do you have any other comments to add (generally)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
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<p>13. Do you agree to your name being published in the list of participants in the survey?</p>	<p>Yes/No</p>
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<p>14. We are intending to report the questionnaire responses statistically, respecting the confidentiality of what each interviewee has said. However, are there any matters – either positive or negative – that you would like us to pass on internally within Innisfree?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
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Thank you very much for your help.

For office use only:

Was this questionnaire completed (1) Face to face? (2) By telephone? (3) By the interviewee her/himself? PLEASE CIRCLE ONE

Appendix 3**SURVEY RESPONSES AND ANALYSIS**

Comments made by interviewees are given against the relevant questions where these help to clarify views and opinions. These have been selected to reflect the essence of what interviewees were saying generally, or because they are of particular note.

It should be noted that the interviews were recorded manually. Therefore, where comments are given, these record the sense of what was stated, but are not necessarily verbatim transcripts in all cases.

In addition, it should be noted that a commitment was made to interviewees that what they had to say would be treated in general confidentially (and especially so where confidentiality was explicitly requested). In certain cases, therefore, statements quoted have been edited to remove references to specific matters that could identify the interviewee.

As regards the percentages listed below, it should be noted that these have been rounded, so the figures listed may not always total 100%.

1. FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE HOW WOULD YOU RATE INNISFREE IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS?

1a Managing its relationship with your organisation

	No. of responses	%
Excellent	13	45
Good	16	55
Average	0	0
Poor	0	0
Total	29	

Comments

We know what they are doing. They keep us informed - LA partner

Active partner – responsive on allocation issues - LA partner

Always been aware that Innisfree does actively manage its relationships and does so well -non RSL partner

1b Partnership working (with you and/or others)

	No. of responses	%
Excellent	13	48
Good	13	48
Average	1	4
Poor	0	0
Total	27	

NB 2 respondents were unable to comment and have been excluded from this analysis

Comments

Active membership of Integrated Housing Board – an advocate for small RSLs - LA partner

Have professional approach - LA partner

Very impressed with their contribution to partnership working - LA partner

Has always battled above its weight in partnership working -non RSL partner

1c Communications & information about its performance & governance

	No. of responses	%
Excellent	5	21
Good	12	50
Average	7	29
Poor	0	0
Total	24	

NB 5 respondents were unable to comment and have been excluded from this analysis

Comments

Good in responding to information requests and in circulating annual and other reports -LA partner

Limited but sufficient - RSL peer

Information received is interesting, well presented and relevant - -non RSL partner

Receive occasional emails with 'round robins' from CE which is very useful - RSL partner

1d Professionalism

	No. of responses	%
Excellent	12	41
Good	17	59
Average	0	0
Poor	0	0
Total	29	

Comments

Innisfree senior team always represent the organisation effectively and enthusiastically - RSL partner

1e Staff Performance

	No. of responses	%
Excellent	5	21
Good	19	79
Average	0	0
Poor	0	0
Total	24	

NB 5 respondents were unable to comment and have been excluded from this analysis.

Comments

Most *don't know* respondents were unable to comment given their lack of exposure to Innisfree staff but nevertheless on the experience they did have (largely from contact with CE and senior team) were able to rate the organisation as *Good or Excellent* on Professionalism

Very positive member feedback on Innisfree's staff handling of member enquiries - LA partner

1f Innovation

	No. of responses	%
Excellent	3	13
Good	14	64
Average	5	23
Poor	0	0
Total	22	

NB 7 respondents were unable to comment and have been excluded from this analysis.

Comments

One average scoring respondent commented : *I am not sure we really need innovation in our relationship as opposed to responsiveness – RSL partner*

Very pro-active; mostly down to CE – LA partner

1g Organisation & co-ordination

	No. of responses	%
Excellent	3	12
Good	20	80
Average	2	8
Poor	0	0
Total	25	

NB 4 respondents were unable to comment and have been excluded from this analysis.

Comments

They are very professional – non RSL partner

No problems with things like rent increases - LA partner

1h Contribution to community cohesion

	No. of responses	%
Excellent	9	45
Good	11	55
Average	0	0
Poor	0	0
Total	20	

NB 9 respondents were unable to comment and have been excluded from this analysis.

Comments

Important role in local Irish community - LA partner

Pro-active; working with Polish community - LA partner

Willingness to get involved. Helping to overcome prejudices - LA Partner

1i Communicating its mission of assisting the Irish community

	No. of responses	%
Excellent	17	71
Good	6	25
Average	1	4
Poor	0	0
Total	24	

NB 5 respondents were unable to comment and have been excluded from this analysis.

Comments

Excellent support for clients – non RSL partner

QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY LA RESPONDENTS ONLY

Note : number of respondents (10) and their responses are low so not much weight can be placed on the individual results, nevertheless they provide an insight into LA views.

1j Tenant/resident involvement

	No. of responses	%
Excellent		
Good	6	100
Average		
Poor		
Total	6	

NB 4 respondents were unable to comment and have been excluded from this analysis.

1k Housing management

	No. of responses	%
Excellent		
Good	4	80
Average	1	20
Poor		
Total	5	

NB 5 respondents were unable to comment and have been excluded from this analysis.

1l Dealing with anti-social behaviour

	No. of responses	%
Excellent		
Good	1	25
Average	3	75
Poor		
Total	4	

NB 6 respondents were unable to comment and have been excluded from this analysis.

Comments

Being small Innisfree does not have the resources to do more than the basics which it does

1m As a supporting people provider (LBs Brent, Camden, & Ealing only)

	No. of responses	%
Excellent		
Good	1	33
Average	2	66
Poor		
Total	3	

1n Dealing with lettings

	No. of responses	%
Excellent	3	42
Good	2	29
Average	2	29
Poor		
Total	7	

NB 3 respondents were unable to comment and have been excluded from this analysis.

1p Handling queries & complaints

	No. of responses	%
Excellent	2	21
Good	5	56
Average	2	21
Poor		
Total	9	

NB 1 respondent was unable to comment and has been excluded from this analysis.

2. HAVE INNISFREE'S OPERATIONS IMPROVED OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS?

	Count of responses	%
Improved	11	50
Stayed the same	11	50
Got worse	0	0
Total	22	

NB 7 respondents were unable to comment and have been excluded from this analysis.

Comments from those who rated Innisfree as 'improved'

Co-ordination and communications better – business partner

Profile and performance indicators have improved. Now working with a number of large RSLs which speaks volumes – non RSL partner

Has a good development programme and benchmarks well against other RSLs – RSL peer

Have taken on points on service improvement and staff are very committed. They prepare well when they are performance managed. Need to improve on move-on – LA Supporting People team

Worked very hard at improving the quality of their services – now on borderline for A ratings in some areas of the SP assessment framework - LA Supporting People team

Staff more focussed on what they are doing – business partner

Profile with both RSLs and LAs has improved – RSL partner

Remarkably consistent in maintaining high standards over time. While operationally performance has remained generally at same level, they have done much visible work on their mission and objectives and strategic priorities – RSL partner

Improvement in the way we get information – not so many claims received where we are not informed about evictions etc – LA partner

Relationship has improved from a good base – they know who to link in with – LA partner

Good awareness of changing times for BME organisations and of the needs of new migrant groups. Showing willingness to move and adapt with the times – non RSL partner

Comments from those who rated Innisfree as ‘stayed the same’

Operations have stayed the same on housing management, complaints and nominations – LA partner

Have always provided an excellent service – RSL partner

It is at the top of its game and has stayed there – so not stood still – business partner

Reliable and co-operative partner which can be depended upon to carry out their part in any joint projects – RSL partner

High performing RSL whose performance has certainly not declined in last 3 years – LA partner

Always been a good small RSL to deal with – RSL partner

Remained at a consistently high standard over the years – business partner

3. WHICH FOUR OF THE FOLLOWING ATTRIBUTES BEST DESCRIBE INNISFREE'S BUSINESS STYLE?

	Count of responses	% of those responding choosing this attribute
Quietly confident	23	82
Arrogant		
Speedy to respond	24	83
Slow/inefficient		
Bureaucratic	1	3
Responsive	26	93
Planned	23	82
Disorganised		
Total		28

NB 1 respondent was unable to comment and has been excluded from this analysis. Not all of those answering selected four attributes

Comments

Always focussed – RSL peer

Strong presence on Borough liaison group where contributions are well made – LA partner

Very confident and responsive – non RSL partner

Clare is always very quick in responding to requests etc – RSL peer

*Very organised – gives good notice of when the firm's services are required and prepares well.
An exemplar for other RSLs – business partner*

Bureaucratic at times only – business partner

Always get a response in reasonable time – non RSL partner

4. HOW DOES INNISFREE MANAGE ITS FINANCIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU?

	Count of responses	% of those answering choosing this attribute
Efficient	15	83
Inefficient		
Firm but fair	5	28
Average		
Hard to deal with		
Total		18

NB 11 respondents were unable to comment and have been excluded from this analysis. High number is due to absence of a financial relationship with Innisfree

Comments

Never had problems in getting invoices paid – business partner

5. HOW WOULD YOU RATE INNISFREE IN BUSINESS?

	5a Proactive	%	5b Sharing of responsibility	%	5c Sharing of risk	%	5d As a BME partner	%
Excellent	4	18	6	30	2	16	7	37
Good	17	77	12	60	6	46	10	53
Average	1	5	2	10	5	38	2	10
Poor								
Don't know/ no rating/ not applicable	7		9		16		10	
Total no. giving a score	22		20		13		19	

NB % is of those giving a score

Comments on sharing of responsibility

Active local partner – very co-operative on allocations – LA partner

Comments on sharing of risk

Innisfree is not running anything in Borough which exposes them to risk – LA partner

Sometimes takes too much responsibility and maybe could let others take on more – RSL partner

Average score as not surprising that Innisfree wants its larger development partners to take much of the risk – RSL partner

Comments as a BME development partner

Well rooted in Irish community – LA partner

6. WHAT DO YOU SEE AS INNISFREE'S MAIN STRENGTHS AS AN ORGANISATION?

Strength	Number of mentions
Strong focus on the Irish community, serving its needs well and with cultural sensitivity, and championing its corner	9
Extremely well led with a knowledgeable, experienced, committed, stable and friendly staff team	9
Strongly committed to partnership working, willing to engage in policy and strategy discussions, and to put time and effort into delivering partnership objectives	6
Well organised, professional and very clear about its aims and objectives	6
Places emphasis on quality of service, providing a professional yet informal approach to its customers, and is responsive to service problems.	6
Small RSL with clear and well defined areas of operation providing a locally based service to its tenants	4
Straightforward organisation which knows its market, takes	4

and acts on advice and is good to do business with.	
Strong advocate and champion for small and BME organisations, supportive to peers and to RSL sector generally.	3

Comments

Specialist RSL well rooted in Irish Community – LA partner

Ability to provide to the Irish community a strong sense of identity– RSL peer

Cultural sensitivity to needs of Irish community- LA partner

Strong inspirational leadership. Committed & stable staff team – business partner

Calibre & quality of senior staff team – RSL peer

Very well lead RSL with good staff & excellent communication mechanisms for small organisation - LA partner

Willingness to invest time & effort into partnership working with LAs and RSLs - LA partner

Flexibility & commitment to partnership working. Prepared to work outside their own areas of specific responsibility to secure partnership goals - LA partner

Good attendee at local and borough forums. Genuinely committed to partnership working - LA Partner

Focussed vision. Clear about objectives. Controlled ambition. People can & want to do business with them – LA partner

Clear about its purpose. Prioritising quality over quantity. Working effectively as a BME partner. Providing a locally based service - RSL partner

Combines human style and informal approach with professionalism. Work in distinct areas – know where they are - LA partner

Very hands on – Housing Officers have good relationship with tenants- LA partner

Very efficient as a result of highly experienced and knowledgeable staff team – RSL partner

Focussed services to its customers in specific locations – good service provision to essential service standards – RSL partner

Straightforward organisation which listens to advice, acts on it and takes decisions in timely fashion – business partner

Business focus and hence excellent knowledge of its market – business partner

Preparedness to speak & lobby on issues. Commitment to sector & small RSLs– business partner

7. WHAT DO YOU SEE AS INNISFREE'S BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENTS OVER, SAY, THE LAST THREE YEARS?

Achievement	Number of mentions
Managing to grow and develop new housing	7
Remaining independent and continuing to serve the needs of the Irish community	5
Positive and committed partner, enhancing its standing and profile with local Boroughs	4
Acting as a beacon for small and BME organisations and championing and lobbying on issues of concern	4
Improving service quality on Supporting People contracts	2
Retaining its reputation as a leader and as an organisation people want to work	2
Engagement with new migrants	1
Improved communications on HB issues	1
No response	5

Comments

Maintaining its links with larger mainstream RSLs and ensuring a semblance of a development programme whilst retaining its independence and not being subsumed – LA partner

In difficult and changing times for small and BME RSLs, continuing to deliver and maintain a sound business and to serve the needs of the Irish community. – LA partner

Retaining its independence and niche role in serving the Irish community – RSL peer

Championing the role of small RSLs - RSL peer

Delivered a considerable development programme through successful working with partner organisations. Growth in units remarkable for small RSL – business partner

Improving service quality and involving more users – LA Supporting People team

Holding the standard as a well-run, viable and consistent BME organisation - RSL partner

Successfully managed to procure good schemes and have increased its stock working with their partners - RSL partner

Relationship and profile that it has with its development partners and stock it manages on behalf of other RSLs - RSL partner

8. WHAT DO YOU THINK INNISFREE COULD DO BETTER?

Activity	Number of mentions
Expand and develop its partnership working in the area of support services	3
Improve its maintenance and asset management and keep striving for excellence in its housing management	3
Take on bit more risk, become a bit more innovative in developing and diversifying its business	2
Adapt and respond to the changing environment for BME RSLs	2
Use its expertise and strength to help community and BME groups to start up projects	2
Become a little sharper, improve its efficiency	2
Selling itself a bit more, getting its story known by a wider audience	1
Greater strategic involvement with LAs on care & support	1
No responses	12

NB High number of no responses explained a) by respondents with only recent or limited knowledge of Innisfree and b) fact that for several respondents there was nothing that they could identify as needing improvement

Comments

More partnership working on services – support and care needs – RSL peer

Share its expertise in partnership working with mainstream RSLs with other BMEs – LA partner

Weaker area is around maintenance – could be more structured – RSL peer

Bit thin on development/client role and in asset management – could do with more resources albeit existing staff member is excellent – RSL partner

Selling itself a little better – good story to tell to a bigger LA audience - LA partner

Could reach out of its comfort zone a bit more – business partner

Could take on a bit more risk and with its considerable experience and strength help other small and B&ME organisations start up projects - RSL peer

Involvement at greater strategic level on care & support – LA Supporting People team

Could use their cultural sensitivity to work with other providers in different (and new to them) service areas, eg substance misuse – LA partner

Could be more innovative in its approach by extending its range of services– RSL partner

Maybe become a little sharper/crisper – business partner

9. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE INNISFREE ACHIEVE OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS?

Achievement	Number of mentions
Continue to grow maintaining the quality of its services and its role as a successful community based RSL	10
Survive and retain its independence, acting as a model and champion for other small RSLs	5
Innovate and diversify its business, providing wider range of services to its existing and new client groups.	5
Use its expertise and success in partnership working to help other community and BME organisations	3
Providing services and lettings for new client groups, eg gypsies and travellers and Polish community	3
No response	4

Comments

Modest expansion to strengthen its voice within the sector – LA partner

More pro-active BME supporting role – LA partner

Working with gypsies & travellers – LA partner

Survival as a small independent RSL to show it is possible to do so – model for others – LA partner

Continue as a good community based RSL. Avoid spreading themselves too thinly – RSL partner

Promote new services for Irish Community, eg support services for elders– LA partner

Remain a strong force and champion for small RSLs –RSL peer

Continue work started in using expertise to provide support to assist community groups – LA partner

Consistent, sustainable and organic growth– RSL partner

Branch out a little so it can make a bigger contribution to helping its client group - LA Supporting People team

Diversification into new and innovative service areas– RSL partner

Continue meeting B&ME needs and diversify lettings– LA partner

Look at needs of new migrants eg Polish – non RSL partner

10. WHAT DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE INNISFREE'S PRIORITIES IN THE FUTURE?

Highest Priority	Number of mentions
Continuing to deliver high quality services to its tenants and clients	8
Keep close to its LA partners helping to deliver on their key objectives, eg worklessness	6
Continue to develop and grow in a planned way and to diversify its business	4
Remain financially viable and retain its independence, acting as a model for BME and small RSLs	4
Work with its communities to develop and sustain community cohesion	4
Maintain its relationship with its development partners and	3

encourage/assist others in partnership working	
Act as a resource for the Irish community	3
Innovate and develop its services for its existing and new client groups	2
Maintain its stock and ensure it has a robust asset management strategy	1

Comments on Highest priorities

Working closely with LAs to support their objectives- LA partner

Managing its relationships with local communities- LA partner

Acting as a resource for Irish community. Using knowledge to help other groups– RSL peer

Continue delivering a top quality service to its tenants – business partner

Contribute to LA agendas eg reducing worklessness- LA partner

More collaborative working to maximise its contribution to meeting needs of Iris community- - LA Supporting People team

Maintaining profile of BME and non preferred partners with LAs – RSL partner

Maintain strong relationships with development partners– RSL partner

Diversify into new areas especially support services for elders. Become a more generous provider of BME services– RSL partner

Manageable growth & diversification to safeguard quality– RSL partner

Continue working on community cohesion – non RSL partner

Other Priorities mentioned

Recording its community commitments

Maintaining its political connections

Improving its services

Working with new immigrant communities

Growth at manageable rate

Maintain its connection with Irish community

Assisting LA with its needs analysis

Look at getting into floating support
Continue development in balanced way
Keep pushing needs of Irish
Look at other tenure options, eg shared ownership

11. DO YOU ANTICIPATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR ORGANISATION TO WORK WITH INNISFREE OVER THE NEXT TWO TO THREE YEARS? IF SO, WHAT MIGHT THESE BE?

Getting into new areas of business on a collaborative basis – RSL peer

Hope to continue working with Innisfree – one of the best RSLs to work with – business partner

As a specialist RSL in new local developments – LA partner

Dependent on sites coming available where Innisfree has strong management preference - LA partner

Hopefully and in particular on wheelchair support and design for new schemes – non RSL partner

Has a continuing part to play in Borough's diversity strategy - LA partner

Opportunities for continued partnership working around procurement – RSL partner

Possibly within Borough's estate regeneration programme - LA partner

On development opportunities within Innisfree's areas of operation – RSL partner

On peer reviews and as joint members of Solomon and Solfed – RSL peer

Hope to continue to provide services to Innisfree – business partner

Community work and possibly joint developments – RSL peer

Working in partnership to win tenders for supported housing -SP team

Innisfree key player in LA future strategy - LA partner

As BME partner on new housing developments – RSL partner

Moe limited opportunities in future given changes to funding framework –LA Supporting People

team

Continued provision of services – business partner

Stock transfers and partnership working – RSL partner

Continued partnering to produce good schemes – RSL partner

Possible involvement with gypsies and travellers - LA partner

Development opportunities and shared action on community development work – RSL partner

Subject to market conditions and products available – business partner

In promotion of RSLs and in adapting policies and practices to fit a changing world – non RSL partner

12. OTHER GENERAL COMMENTS

Innisfree has a very important role, it is well known and respected by stakeholders

Enjoyed working with Innisfree

Effective operator and committed partner in the Borough championing the role of small RSLs

Needs to do more in communicating with its development partners during construction period.

CE is a great advocate for small and BME sector

Innisfree has maintained Borough's faith in small RSLs to manage themselves

A pleasure working with the staff team

CE is a great asset to Innisfree -she builds relationships and inspires trust and confidence with stakeholders. Inspirational leader to the staff team

Good leadership – impressive organisation

A pleasure working with Innisfree

Strong identity – one of only a few BMEs working well

Our comments (SP team) relate to supported housing only. Innisfree is not a specialist RSL and sometimes it does show

Innisfree stands out as a small RSL and is showing the way for many larger operators

Good organisation which has worked hard to raise its game on SP front

A pleasure working with Innisfree

Only a limited view of Innisfree (Finance) but that is very positive

Always professional and friendly – never any problems (HB)

Always polite and helpful

Feels like a solid and trustworthy organisation. Does what it says on the tin – no misleading expectations