

Future directions

A review of Irish housing needs in Innisfree Housing Association's key areas of operation

Geoffrey Randall and Susan Brown

September 2005

Stanley House, 48 Castle Street, Eye, Suffolk, IP23 7AW
Telephone & Fax: 01379 870376

Partners: Geoffrey Randall & Susan Brown
E-mail: geoffrey.randall@britishlibrary.net OR susan.brown@britishlibrary.net

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Foreword	3
Summary	4
1 Introduction	6
2 London wide findings	9
3 Borough reports and strategies	13
4 Possible future developments	20
Appendix: local authority documents searched	23
References	26

Acknowledgments

Much of the material in this report was made available to us by the GLA and we would particularly like to thank Chris Jarvis of the GLA and Mark Aldridge of Fordham Research Ltd for making data available from the *Housing requirements study* and for producing additional analyses for us and Eileen Howes and Gareth Piggot from GLA and for producing additional analyses for us from the 2001 Census. We could also like to thank Sister Aileen Kennedy of Acton Homeless Concern, Atara Fidler of Brent Homeless Users Group and Michelle Morgan of Cara Irish Housing Association for organising the service users focus groups for us and all those who took part in the groups. We are also grateful to officers from the London boroughs covered in the study for their help with providing additional material.

Foreword by the Chair of Innisfree, Maurice Wren

This timely piece of work confirms much of what we at Innisfree have believed for some time. It highlights the growing unmet needs of sections of the Irish community in London. The report was commissioned specifically to direct our future strategy and, in that respect, it entirely fulfils our objective. Disappointingly, it also demonstrates – with some notable exceptions – how little notice is taken of the Irish community and their needs by key London Boroughs.

The author refers to the findings of the 2001 Census, which recorded that three per cent of Londoners identified themselves as White Irish. A recent GLA survey found much larger numbers of households from families originally from Ireland. As many as 11 per cent of Londoners have Irish parents and 19 per cent Irish grandparents. This disparity demonstrates the importance of research and survey work at a more local level.

For our part, we will be reviewing our corporate strategy over the coming months and hope to work in partnership with other housing associations to develop the provision which best meets the needs of our community. We hope that our local authority partners will take the opportunity to delve more deeply into the needs of the Irish people living in their areas.

We are grateful for the support we have received for this project and would especially like to thank CARA Irish Housing Association for organising and funding one of the focus groups and Genesis Housing Group for their kind donation of £500.

Maurice Wren
Chair
September 2005

Summary

This report brings together information from London wide and borough data to identify the housing and support needs of Irish people in the boroughs in North and West London where Innisfree might plan new developments.

London wide and borough data indicate that the Irish population has a high proportion of:

- ❑ one person households;
- ❑ pensioner single households and retired people;
- ❑ tenants of social housing and a low proportion of home owners;
- ❑ households with people with special needs;
- ❑ people who are permanently sick or disabled;
- ❑ people sleeping rough, especially older rough sleepers;
- ❑ older hostel residents;
- ❑ hostel residents with alcohol problems;
- ❑ long term hostel residents;
- ❑ resettled homeless people with alcohol and mental health problems;
- ❑ users of day centres for homeless people, including those who have been rehoused but who continue to use the centres.

The Irish have relatively low proportions of families with dependent children.

Higher levels of housing and support needs are concentrated among middle aged and older Irish people in London from an earlier generation of migrants.

Four years ago research by Innisfree found that in many areas there was very limited information on the specific housing needs of Irish people and few or no plans to meet them (Cope, 2001). This research found that in many areas little had changed. However, Census returns and the additional borough information indicate that the profile of needs in particular boroughs matches the London wide picture. As a result some boroughs are already making plans for possible provision for older Irish people.

The findings suggest a number of possible future developments of culturally specific services for Irish people by Innisfree:

1. Sheltered housing.
2. Specialist provision for older people with alcohol problems, including accommodation which allows continuing drinking.
3. The provision of residential homes for frail elderly people, including some currently housed in sheltered housing.
4. Schemes to rehouse long term residents of hostels.
5. Consideration of providing low to medium support housing for middle aged and older people, perhaps with some facilities for social activities.
6. Schemes to help both younger and older Irish people access better condition private rented accommodation. This might include rent deposit schemes and lodgings schemes.

7. The provision of specialist tenancy support, including for people in the private rented sector. This might also include befriending schemes drawing on Irish volunteers.
8. Schemes to help older people who want to return to live in Ireland after many years in Britain.

1 Introduction

Background

Innisfree Housing Association was formed in 1985 primarily to meet the needs of homeless and badly housed Irish people in London. It has grown steadily in the last few years and now has over 400 properties in ownership and a development pipeline of 150 in the North and West sub regions of London. The majority of the staff team and board members are also Irish. Accepted by the Housing Corporation as BME (Black and minority ethnic) providers in 1996, they work closely with colleagues in the BME sector and with mainstream development partners. A recent stakeholder survey indicates that Innisfree is well regarded by partners.

Innisfree expects that the changing demographic profile of Irish people in London will have a significant impact on the shape of any future development and service provision. They expect that their focus will alter substantially from family housing to more specialised provision. However, they need more detailed information on the housing needs of Irish people in order to plan future developments.

Innisfree commissioned this study from Research and Information Services in order to:

- gain better information on specific needs of the Irish community in selected areas;
- enable them to direct future services and development proposals to meet the needs identified.

The research focused on those boroughs in the North and West sub regions of London where Innisfree is currently active or might become so. They are:

North

Barnet
Camden
Haringey
Islington

West

Brent
Ealing
Hammersmith & Fulham
Kensington & Chelsea

Research methods

London wide data

The major sources of data on the housing needs of Irish people in London were the *2001 Census profiles: the Irish in London* (Howes, 2004) with additional analyses provided by the GLA and the *Housing requirements study* (GLA (2005) which was

made available by the GLA prior to publication. It is an immensely valuable study because it collates data from twenty seven of the thirty three London boroughs with data imputed for the remaining boroughs, based on Census and HIP returns. This gives data on 40,127 households, including 1339 White Irish households. The sample size means far more detailed data are available than from individual borough studies in the past.

Data on homeless people without children from different ethnic groups were available from *Single homeless people in London*, (Crane and Warnes, 2001)

The research examined data on general housing needs among these groups. There are some special groups where there is very little or no London wide or borough data, for example Irish Travellers and ex-offenders. Further research on these would be useful.

Analysing local strategies and research

A range of strategies were examined from the local authorities in the North and West sub-regions of London. The strategies included:

- ❑ Housing Strategies and Investment Programmes
- ❑ Homelessness Strategies
- ❑ Supporting People Strategies
- ❑ Equality and Diversity Strategies
- ❑ Community Strategies
- ❑ Local Strategic Partnerships
- ❑ Community Care Plans
- ❑ Anti-poverty Strategies
- ❑ The London Housing Strategy
- ❑ North and West sub-regional strategies

All reports were examined to identify:

- ❑ the housing needs of Irish people in these areas;
- ❑ related support needs;
- ❑ current provision;
- ❑ gaps in provision;
- ❑ plans to fill these gaps;
- ❑ the additional contribution Innisfree might make to provision.

Focus groups

Two focus groups were held with Irish people in London who were or had experienced homelessness and other housing difficulties, to discuss the particular housing needs of Irish people and preferred types of accommodation and support services.

Chapter 2 contains an outline of key findings from the London wide data sources on the housing needs of Irish people.

Chapter 3 contains a summary of the limited materials available from the boroughs' plans, strategies and other reports.

Chapter 4 provides an outline of possible ideas for future developments.

2 London wide findings

The 2001 Census included Irish as a pre-defined category for the first time. Three per cent of Londoners identified themselves as White Irish, a total of 220,488 people, one of the largest ethnic groups. However, a recent GLA survey found much larger numbers from families originally from Ireland. As many as 11 per cent of Londoners have Irish parents and 19 per cent Irish grandparents (Howes, 2004).

In London the Irish population has a high proportion of:

- ❑ one person households;
- ❑ pensioner single households and retired people;
- ❑ tenants of social housing and a low proportion of home owners;
- ❑ households with people with special needs;
- ❑ people who are permanently sick or disabled;
- ❑ people sleeping rough, especially older rough sleepers;
- ❑ older hostel residents;
- ❑ hostel residents with alcohol problems;
- ❑ long term hostel residents;
- ❑ resettled homeless people with alcohol and mental health problems;
- ❑ users of day centres for homeless people, including those who have been rehoused but who continue to use the centres.

The Irish have relatively low proportions of families with dependent children.

This Chapter examines the data on these groups.

One person households

The Census found that the Irish in London have the highest proportion of one person households of any ethnic group: 41 per cent compared to 35 per cent of all households.¹ They also have a high proportion of pensioner households at 22 per cent compared to 18 per cent of all households.

Conversely, they have a low proportion of families with dependent children: 20 per cent compared to 29 per cent of all Londoners. The Census recorded fewer than 5000 Irish children under five in London.

Tenure

A low proportion of Irish households own their own homes: 52 per cent compared to 62 per cent of white British and 57 per cent of all households. Conversely 33 per cent of Irish households live in social rented housing compared to 26 per cent of all households.

¹ *Note:* Most percentages have been rounded in this report.

Health

Irish people in London have high rates of ill health: 23 per cent had a limiting long term illness compared to 15 per cent of all Londoners. This is related to age. Up to the age of 34 the rates of long term illness are similar for Irish and White British people. After this age, and particularly after the age of 50, Irish people become significantly more likely to have a long term limiting illness than their White British counterparts, indicating the concentration of health needs among older Irish people. They are also the ethnic group with the highest proportion of people aged 25 to 74 who are unemployed because of permanent sickness at nine per cent, compared to five per cent of all Londoners in this age group.

Table 1 Comparison of White Irish in London and all Londoners

	<i>White Irish %</i>	<i>All Londoners %</i>
One person household	41	35
Pensioner	22	18
Family with children	20	29
Home owner	52	57
Social rented tenant	33	26
Limiting long term illness	23	15
Special needs	18	13

Note: Rows 1-5 and 7 = % of households, Row 6 = % of individuals
Sources: Rows 1-6: 2001 Census, Row 7: GLA (2005)

A more detailed analysis of the GLA data found that fewer than half (49 per cent) of Irish people aged 40-59 were working and 23 per cent were unemployed because of long term sickness, compared to only 3 per cent of Irish people aged 16-39.

Special needs

The GLA housing needs survey asked whether anyone in the household had special needs, defined as: the frail elderly, physical disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health problems, severe sensory disabilities and other needs. Irish households have the highest proportion of people with special needs, at 18 per cent, compared to 13 per cent of all households. Although in some cases the sample sizes are small, the proportions were higher than average on every one of these categories of special need.

Qualifications

Census data show a similar distinction between different age groups in levels of qualifications. Up to the age of 34, Irish people in London are more likely to have qualifications than White British people, after that the position reverses, especially after the age of 50.

Homeless single people and rough sleepers

A survey of homeless single people and rough sleepers in London found that older Irish people were over represented in these groups (Crane and Warnes, 2001).

Eleven per cent of people sleeping rough in 1999/2000 were Irish, rising to 16 per cent of those aged 50-59 and 21 per cent of those aged 60+.

Thirteen per cent of hostel residents were Irish. Of these, 55 per cent were aged 50 or more and 27 per cent were aged 60 or more, far higher than any other ethnic group. Fifty per cent of Irish residents of hostels had alcohol problems, twice as high as any other ethnic group, although they had lower proportions of drug and mental health problems than other White groups.

They had an average stay in their hostel of 1078 days, nearly twice as long as any other group and they formed 58 per cent of those who had been in the hostel for more than five years.

Irish people who had been resettled continued to have high support needs, with 39 per cent having alcohol problems (the highest of any ethnic group) and 28 per cent having mental health problems (the second highest group after White British at 33 per cent).

A high proportion (19 per cent) of users of day centres for homeless people were also Irish. Once again there were wide variations by age, with only two per cent of users aged under 20 being Irish, but 27 per cent of users aged 50-59 and 29 per cent of those aged 60+. It was also significant that 28 per cent of day centre users who had their own accommodation were Irish, suggesting the need for suitable community facilities for formerly homeless Irish people after they have been housed.

Returning home

One survey found that around a quarter of elderly Irish people might want to return to live in Ireland (Task Force on policy regarding emigrants, 2002). The GLA survey recorded 13 per cent of Irish people in London as planning that their next home would be abroad. However, these were concentrated among the younger age groups with 25 per cent of the 16-39 age group planning to move abroad, but none of the over 60s.

Changing patterns of need

The Census and survey evidence strongly supports the anecdotal evidence from Irish agencies that there has been a fundamental change in the nature of emigration to London from Ireland and in the profile of new migrants. Earlier generations who came to London in the 1950s to 1970s mainly left Ireland because of the lack of job opportunities. Many were manual workers from rural areas. The men often worked in the construction industry and the women in domestic or personal services. This generation are now middle aged or elderly and have high levels of housing and support needs (Randall and Brown, 1997). Anti-Irish discrimination was common and was still prevalent in the late 1990s (Hickman and Walter, 1997).

By contrast, in recent years there has been a net migration of Irish people out of Britain, reflecting the strength of the Irish economy. It seems likely that most new migrants are very different in skills and income to those from earlier generations. Many are highly qualified and they may not differ significantly from skilled young migrants from other EU countries.

The evidence from the Census and London wide surveys suggest that higher levels of housing and support needs are concentrated among middle aged and older Irish people in London from an earlier generation of migrants. The next chapter examines the evidence from the individual boroughs.

3 Borough reports and strategies

All reports and strategies on housing needs available on the websites of the target boroughs were examined. A full list can be found in the *Appendix*. In addition the boroughs were asked for any other information they had on the needs of Irish people in their areas. Very few documents made any specific references to the needs of Irish people, even within reports about the needs of minority ethnic communities. Four years ago research by Innisfree found that in many areas there was very limited information on the specific housing needs of Irish people and few or no plans to meet them (Cope, 2001). Little progress in identifying the specific needs of Irish people seems to have been made since that report.

This chapter summarises the findings and policy statements.

Barnet

The Census gives Barnet's Irish population as 3.4 per cent of the total.

The differences between Irish residents and the total population are less marked in Barnet than in most of the other boroughs, possibly because more affluent households would have moved there. Nevertheless, there are significantly fewer families with children and more social rented tenants and people with limiting long term illnesses.

Table 2 Barnet: comparison of White Irish and all residents

	White Irish %	All residents %
One person household	34	31
Pensioner	15	14
Family with children	23	31
Home owner	65	67
Social rented tenant	20	15
Limiting long term illness	19	15

Note: Rows 1-5 = % of households, Row 6 = % of individuals

Source: 2001 Census

There are references to the Irish community in Barnet's *Draft Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy 2004*. Irish people are 20 per cent of those with limiting long term illness. The highest proportion of older age groups (except 75 and over) are White Irish.

Barnet's policies are planned to include:

- support for new developments by BME housing associations and transfer of stock to them;
- support for specialist schemes;

- ❑ establishing the needs and wishes of older Irish people in relation to existing sheltered housing and the need for extra care, working with existing specialist providers of housing for older people.

Brent

Brent's Irish population is seven per cent of the total.

Irish people in Brent have higher proportions of one person households, pensioners and people with long term illnesses.

Table 3 Brent: comparison of White Irish and all residents

	White Irish %	All residents %
One person household	36	29
Pensioner	15	11
Family with children	21	33
Home owner	57	56
Social rented tenant	27	24
Limiting long term illness	22	16

Note: Rows 1-5 = % of households, Row 6 = % of individuals

Source: 2001 Census

There are details of the housing and support needs of the Irish community in Brent's *Supporting People Strategy* and the *Older Person's Housing Strategy*.

Key points from these strategies are:

- ❑ There are particular needs among isolated older Irish people.
- ❑ There is a need for specialist sheltered accommodation for older Irish people with alcohol problems.
- ❑ There is a need for more low level support for older people living in private rented and owner occupied housing.
- ❑ Services for frail elderly people and older people with support needs are top priorities for action including: considering the needs of BME communities; support for older people in the private rented and owner occupied sectors; reviewing the balance between generic and specialist sheltered accommodation for specific ethnic minority groups, including remodelling some of the non-specialist sheltered housing and considering the need for additional BME specialist accommodation; the need for specialist floating support for older people from BME groups.
- ❑ Research suggests that eight per cent of older people in Brent need social sheltered housing, a requirement for 2878 sheltered and extra care housing units compared to the 1059 currently provided.
- ❑ The council has tended to use its sheltered housing for anyone over 60 (and sometimes over 50) who was living in unsuitable housing. In practice, many

tenants of sheltered housing are single Irish men and some may have to be assessed for residential care.

- ❑ Older people with mental health problems are a top priority.
- ❑ Services for people with alcohol problems are also a priority for action, including commissioning a floating support service for 20 older people with alcohol problems in 2005.
- ❑ There are large numbers of older Irish people in South Kilburn, many of whom want to stay in the area.

Camden

The Irish population of Camden is 4.6 per cent of the total.

Camden, where many of the older Irish people live who came to London in the 1950s to 1970s, shows an even sharper contrast between them and all residents of the borough, with very high proportions of one person households, pensioners and people with long term illnesses.

Table 4 Camden: comparison of White Irish and all residents

	White Irish %	All residents %
One person household	56	46
Pensioner	18	12
Family with children	15	22
Home owner	24	35
Social rented tenant	57	37
Limiting long term illness	31	16

Note: Rows 1-5 = % of households, Row 6 = % of individuals

Source: 2001 Census

The only significant references to Irish people in Camden documents are in the *Shadow Supporting People Strategy*. The evidence on needs is all drawn from an Innisfree report (Cope, 2001). It also states that Irish people are over-represented in mental health and alcohol services and that there is a need to review services for the ageing BME population. A joint report with Islington identifies a high proportion of Irish people among street drinkers and people begging.

Ealing

The position in Ealing is closest to that in Barnet, where there are important differences between the Irish and total populations, but not as great as in some other boroughs.

Table 5 Ealing: comparison of White Irish and all residents

	White Irish %	All residents %
One person household	36	31
Pensioner	14	12
Family with children	20	31
Home owner	64	63
Social rented tenant	22	19
Limiting long term illness	19	15

Note: Rows 1-5 = % of households, Row 6 = % of individuals

Source: 2001 Census

The only references in Ealing documents to Irish people are the Census data on ethnicity, which show that 4.7 per cent of the population are Irish.

Hammersmith and Fulham

Irish people are the second largest ethnic group in the borough, at 4.8 per cent.

Hammersmith, like Camden, is one of the traditional areas for the settlement of older Irish migrants and shows a similarly large differences between them and the total population, with 50 per cent more pensioners and twice as many people with long term illnesses..

Table 6 Hammersmith and Fulham: comparison of White Irish and all residents

	White Irish %	All residents %
One person household	51	40
Pensioner	22	13
Family with children	14	22
Home owner	33	44
Social rented tenant	50	33
Limiting long term illness	30	15

Note: Rows 1-5 = % of households, Row 6 = % of individuals

Source: 2001 Census

At the time of the research a number of initiatives were in hand to assess and meet the housing needs of Irish people.

Hammersmith and Fulham have produced a briefing on the Irish population in the borough drawing on the Census, a *Briefing on Irish housing needs*, a *Draft BME Housing Strategy* and an *Older People's Strategy*, both of which refer to Irish people.

The older Irish population is growing, with 23 per cent aged between 50 and retirement age and a further 30 per cent over retirement age, a total of approximately 2000 people. Only 13.6 per cent of households contain dependent children compared to 21.6 per cent in the borough as a whole and 39.5 per cent among Black groups.

Local records indicate that Irish people are over-represented among:

- ❑ adults with long term illnesses and physical disabilities: 52 per cent of Irish elders over 65 report they have a limiting long term illness;
- ❑ people in poor health: of the main working age groups, the Irish population has the highest incidence of poor health at 13.9 per cent, almost twice the rate of the White British population;
- ❑ people aged 18-64 with a registered mental health problem;
- ❑ substance misusers among older people;
- ❑ older people with support needs;
- ❑ long term residents of nursing and care homes: they form 4.8 per cent of the population, but 22 per cent of those in nursing homes and 30 per cent of long term residents of hospitals.

Irish people are also over-represented among children placed on the child protection register, those looked after and referrals to children's services. However, the numbers are small, so caution is needed interpreting the data in relation to children.

Hammersmith and Fulham have been developing a *BME Housing Strategy* and an *Older People's Housing Strategy*. In both they have begun to examine the needs of the Irish community living in the borough. They plan to explore the need and demand for tailored housing services for older and vulnerable Irish households. Of the 145 Irish households entering supported housing last year, 53 per cent went into sheltered accommodation. The borough are intending, as part of the implementation of the older people's housing strategy, to gauge the need and demand for a sheltered scheme managed by an Irish BME RSL, similar to the scheme that Innisfree manage in Brent. It is noted that CARA and Innisfree are two of the six BME RSLs and therefore have the potential to own and manage 20 per cent of new affordable stock.

The borough have also identified possible access problems to some housing services, in particular private sector services and are implementing a marketing strategy that will more effectively target services to some ethnic minorities, including the Irish.

Through the Equality Impact Assessment process they expect to identify other issues of access for ethnic groups that may mean that they will need to target and tailor services. Their Housing Benefit Take Up Strategy has identified the need to target more effectively benefit advice services to older and younger people living in the borough.

There are a number of services in the borough that provide advice or support to Irish households.

One of their RSL Joint Commissioning Partners is an Irish RSL (Innisfree) and is a regular attendee and active participant in the Boroughs BME RSL Forum.

Haringey

Irish people are 4.3 per cent the population. As with the other boroughs, Haringey has significantly higher proportions of Irish people in one person households, pensioners and people with long term illnesses.

Table 7 Haringey: comparison of White Irish and all residents

	White Irish %	All residents %
One person household	42	36
Pensioner	13	10
Family with children	19	29
Home owner	47	46
Social rented tenant	34	30
Limiting long term illness	22	16

Note: Rows 1-5 = % of households, Row 6 = % of individuals

Source: 2001 Census

The only mentions of Irish people identified in Haringey documents are in the Homelessness Review which includes some tables with ethnic breakdown, but there is no discussion of specific Irish needs or services.

Islington

Irish people are 5.7 per cent of the population. As in the other boroughs, there are high proportions of pensioners and people with long term illnesses.

Table 8 Islington: comparison of White Irish and all residents

	White Irish %	All residents %
One person household	53	44
Pensioner	17	12
Family with children	16	24
Home owner	26	32
Social rented tenant	62	49
Limiting long term illness	32	18

Note: Rows 1-5 = % of households, Row 6 = % of individuals

Source: 2001 Census

The only references to the needs of Irish people in the Islington documents are to census data in the *Islington Housing Services BME Strategy*.

Kensington and Chelsea

Irish people are 3.3 per cent of the population.

There are high proportions of pensioners and nearly twice as many social rented tenants and people with long term illnesses as in the general population.

Table 9 Kensington and Chelsea: comparison of White Irish and all residents

	White Irish %	All residents %
One person household	58	49
Pensioner	25	15
Family with children	13	19
Home owner	29	44
Social rented tenant	48	26
Limiting long term illness	27	14

Note: Rows 1-5 = % of households, Row 6 = % of individuals

Source: 2001 Census

There are no significant references to the needs of Irish people in the Kensington and Chelsea documents.

Conclusion

Although the data is limited in many areas, borough Census returns and the additional local information indicate that the profile of needs in particular boroughs matches the London wide picture. As a result some boroughs are already making plans for possible provision for older Irish people.

4 Possible future developments

The research had found that London wide and in the individual boroughs the Irish population has a high proportion of:

- ❑ one person households;
- ❑ pensioner single households and retired people;
- ❑ tenants of social housing and a low proportion of home owners;
- ❑ households with people with special needs;
- ❑ people who are permanently sick or disabled;
- ❑ people sleeping rough, especially older rough sleepers;
- ❑ older hostel residents;
- ❑ hostel residents with alcohol problems;
- ❑ long term hostel residents;
- ❑ resettled homeless people with alcohol and mental health problems;
- ❑ users of day centres for homeless people, including those who have been rehoused but who continue to use the centres.

The findings from the London wide and borough reports were discussed with Innisfree and with two focus groups of Irish people who had experienced housing problems in London.

There were seven people in each focus group with ages ranging from the 30s to the 70s. There were users of the day centre services operated by Acton Homeless Concern and the Brent Homeless Users Group based at Cricklewood Homeless Concern. Several had slept rough, been in hostels sometimes for several years, or both. Some had experience of poor conditions in the private rented sector. Their views are reflected in the recommendations below.

A satisfaction survey of Innisfree tenants (NHF, 2003) found that it is a high performing landlord. The level of tenant satisfaction provides a solid base for future developments.

Provision for elderly Irish people

The high proportion of older people with growing support needs among the Irish in London suggests that this group could be a major focus for future accommodation and service development by Innisfree.

There is recognition in some boroughs of the need for sheltered housing specifically for Irish people. As the older Irish population becomes increasingly frail there is likely also to be a need for provision of residential and nursing homes, including for some people currently in sheltered housing.

Research into the housing needs of Irish people in London has consistently identified the need for culturally sensitive sheltered housing and possibly residential care for elderly Irish people (Randall and Brown, 1997), (Tilki, 1998), (Cope, 2001), (Gaffney, 2001).

Brent and Hammersmith and Fulham have specifically identified this need and some other boroughs have identified the need to review services for the ageing BME population, of which the Irish are one of the largest groups.

Where social facilities have been provided along with accommodation (for example, in Innisfree's sheltered housing at Clochar Court) they have proved very popular with residents and have also been available in some instances to other local Irish people. A review of culturally sensitive care for older Irish people found that Clochar Court:

“differed not only in terms of the cultural support it offered, but also in terms of the level of advice, advocacy and social support offered to clients by the warden. In all these respects the scheme was meeting the specific needs of clients to a higher degree than seen anywhere else, it is popular with older Irish clients, it has a waiting list and it might be regarded as a model of good practice.” (Gaffney, 2001).

An Irish government task force recognised the need for sheltered housing for Irish people in Britain with attached community facilities and recommended that consideration should be given to funding such facilities where statutory funding was not available (Task Force on policy regarding emigrants, 2002).

Specialist provision for people with alcohol problems

There is also a need for specialist provision for those with alcohol problems, including the elderly, some of which should allow continuing drinking. This was a gap identified also by several of the participants in the focus groups.

Accommodation and support for older hostel residents

A high proportion of older formerly homeless people who have become institutionalised in hostels are of Irish origin. There is a need for schemes to rehouse these long term residents of hostels, many of whom are likely to need continuing support. It would be necessary to ascertain their housing preferences, as some may initially feel they would prefer to stay in their hostels.

A range of supported housing for middle aged and older single people

Consideration could be given to providing low to medium support housing for middle aged and older single people, a significant proportion of whom may have limiting long term illnesses and who are likely to have growing support needs as they age. Facilities for social activities are likely to be popular. More detail will be needed in each borough on the specific types of illnesses and support needs of this group.

Improving access to private rented housing

Innisfree could consider schemes to help both younger and older Irish people access better condition private rented accommodation. This might include rent deposit schemes and lodgings schemes. The focus group discussions suggested these might be popular with people currently living in poor condition private rented accommodation. Some older single men would like serviced accommodation which covered household bills and perhaps provided meals.

Floating tenancy support

A number of those in the focus groups gave examples of people they knew who had lost tenancies. The high incidence of support needs suggests there is a role for the provision of specialist tenancy support, including for people in the private rented sector. This might also include befriending schemes drawing on Irish volunteers.

Low cost home ownership

The higher qualifications of younger Irish people in London suggests that they are likely to have higher incomes and there may therefore be some demand for schemes which help them to access home ownership, although no hard data was identified on this subject. It could perhaps be covered in Innisfree's next tenants' survey.

Help to return to Ireland

There is some demand, although the scale is unclear, for schemes to help older people who want to return to live in Ireland after many years in Britain.

Priorities

It is for the Board of Innisfree to decide on priorities. However, the clearest evidence does point to developments for older Irish people and it also appears that this is the area of greatest interest to the boroughs.

Conclusion

The broad conclusion from this review of current evidence on the housing needs of Irish people in London is that while lower income Irish people of all ages are likely to encounter housing problems, in common with other low income Londoners, the special needs of Irish people are increasingly likely to be concentrated among middle aged and older Irish people who have lived and worked in London for many years. Many would prefer and would benefit from schemes which provided culturally sensitive support.

Appendix

Local authority documents searched

Barnet

Race Equality Scheme (revised September 2003)
Draft BME Housing Strategy 2004

No references to Irish in:

Housing Strategy 2003 – 10
Homelessness Strategy 2003 – 5
The Future of Barnet Homes
North London Housing Strategy 2003
Community Care Plan for Barnet
Community Care Service, Minority and Ethnic Communities
Race Equality Action Plan May 2003 – 6
Race Equality Scheme Action Plan
Equalities Standard April 2000

Brent

Confronting Inequality: Annual Report on Equality and Diversity in Service Delivery
2003-4
Supporting People Strategy 2005-10
Older Person's Housing Strategy 2003-8
Housing Strategy 2002-7
Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008
Housing Diversity Strategy 2003-2004

No references to Irish in:

Housing Strategy – Equality Impact Assessment July 2004
Community Plan 2003-8

Camden

Supporting People Strategy 2003-4
Race Equality Scheme
Time for a Change Survey: a study of drinking and begging in Camden and Islington

No references to Irish in:

Housing Strategy 2005-10
Homelessness Strategy 2003-8
Serving Older People Strategy
Community Strategy
Camden & Islington Street Population Strategy 2000-2
Street Population Strategy Action Plan

Ealing

Census data for Ealing

No references to Irish in:

Community Strategy

Housing Strategy

Homelessness Review

Homelessness Strategy

Draft Housing and BME Strategy

Supporting People Delivery Plan 2003-8

Hammersmith & Fulham

Race Equality Scheme May 2002

Housing Strategy

5 Year Supporting People Strategy

White Irish population in Hammersmith and Fulham

Irish households housing briefing

Draft BME Housing strategy

Draft Older People's Strategy

No references to Irish in:

Supporting People in West London March 2005

Housing Department Best Value Performance Plan 2004-5

Haringey

Haringey Homelessness Review 2003

Race Equality Scheme 2002-5

No references to Irish in:

Community Strategy 2003-7

Housing Strategy Statement 2002-6

Homelessness Strategy 2003-8

Best Value Performance Plan 2004-5

Supporting People 5 year Strategy 2005

Islington

Housing Strategy 2004-7

Housing Services BME Strategy

Supporting People Shadow Strategy 2003-4 (Appendix)

No references to Irish in:

Homes for Islington Service Delivery Plan 2004-5

Housing Needs Survey – Executive Summary 2003

Prevention of Homelessness Strategy
Street Population Strategy 2003 – 5
Race Equality Scheme
Equality Action Plan

Kensington & Chelsea

Homelessness Strategy
West London Cross Authority Strategy Statement

No references to Irish in:

Housing Strategy
Guide to managing and developing social housing – housing performance data 2002-3
Draft Equality Scheme 2005-8
Race Equality Scheme

Cross borough reports

Building communities: a housing strategy for West London (2003)
The framework North London Housing Strategy (2003)

References

- Cope, H. (2001) *Still beyond the pale? Innisfree*
- Crane, M. and Warnes, A. (2001) *Single homeless people in London*, University of Sheffield, Sheffield
- Gaffney, M. (2001) *Culturally sensitive care for older Irish people*, Unpublished
- GLA (2005) *Housing requirements study*
- Hickman, M. and Walter, B. (1997) *Discrimination and the Irish community in Britain*. CRE
- Howes, E. (2004) 2001 *Census profiles: the Irish in London*, GLA
- NHF, *Innisfree Housing Association survey report*, NHF, 2003
- Randall, G. and Brown, S. (1997) *Meeting the need: Irish housing associations in action*, Innisfree
- Task force on policy regarding emigrants, (2002) *Ireland and the Irish abroad*
- Tilki, M. (1998), *Elderly Irish people in Britain*, Federation of Irish Societies