

50
HACT
1960-2010

PAST,
PRESENT &
FUTURE...

Mission statement

HACT is a national charity* that works to improve the wellbeing and living conditions of poor and marginalised people. Our projects deliver lasting change by harnessing the energy and enthusiasm of local people, housing providers and other organisations. We provide the expertise and the resources to make change a reality.

*HACT mainly operates in England. From time to time we also work in Wales and with our sister charities the Lintel Trust in Scotland and NIHACT in Northern Ireland.

www.hact.org.uk

Foreword

When HACT was founded 50 years ago by the National Federation of Housing Societies, under the chairmanship of Sir Parker Morris, it set out to match improvements in poorer people's physical living standards with improved opportunities to live fulfilling lives. As a society, we can take a measure of our collective health by looking at the way we treat some of the weakest amongst us: the homeless, the refugees and asylum seekers, the frail and aged and the mentally ill.

For the last 50 years HACT has worked successfully and consistently with the housing sector, with the support of the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), the National Housing Federation (NHF) and the National Federation of Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs), to help improve conditions and effect a lasting change for those living on the edge. This expertise in partnership building and community development has encouraged people to look for opportunities to transform the communities where they live.

Social housing providers and their customers (tenants, service users and a wider community) today are grappling with the effects of recession and subsequent funding cutbacks. Plugging the widening gaps in statutory and mainstream provision presents huge practical challenges. By creating opportunities for tenants and residents; building bridges between communities; and sharing resources between housing groups and resident-led or voluntary groups, HACT in this its jubilee year continues to make a real difference to people's lives.

+ Sentamu Ebor

**The Most Reverend and Right Honourable
Dr. John Sentamu, Archbishop of York and Patron
of HACT**





Congratulations

from leaders in the sector



“In 2010 the National Housing Federation celebrated 75 years as the voice of the voluntary housing movement. We have a great deal to be proud of during that period, including of course the establishment of HACT, which this year celebrates 50 years of working with our members to benefit the poor and marginalised in society.

Over the years HACT has grown from being the Federation’s charitable vehicle for distributing externally raised grants and donations to an independent charity in its own right, which not only supports those at the fringes of society but also benefits our members in a whole host of ways.

Whether helping to fund much needed projects, bringing people and organisations together or acting as the spark for new thinking and better ways of working, HACT has stayed true to the founding principles of the voluntary housing movement, making a difference to the lives of those who need us most. On behalf of our members I wish HACT every success for the future.”

David Orr

Chief Executive, National Housing Federation

“The Chartered Institute of Housing is very pleased to enjoy a close and productive relationship with HACT, an organisation that brings significant benefits to our members.

Over the years, as this report will no doubt show, HACT has been very much on top of the housing agenda, indeed sometimes ahead of it. HACT’s unique contribution is in exploring at grassroots level the issues affecting vulnerable and marginalised groups and enabling new ideas to be tested, evaluated and taken up more widely. Our President this year, Professor Paddy Gray, is particularly keen to support HACT’s work in building bridges across society and has chosen HACT as the beneficiary of his President’s Appeal for 2010-11.

On behalf of our members, I’d like to say ‘Happy birthday HACT and keep up the good work!’”

Sarah Webb CBE

Chief Executive, Chartered Institute of Housing

“The National Federation of ALMOs is a relative newcomer to the scene, having been established in 2003. However, our 69 members across England and Wales now provide services to a quarter of the nation’s social housing tenants.

Housing is all about people and HACT puts people, especially the poor and marginalised, at the heart of all it does. Many of our members have already established a positive working relationship with HACT and are tapping into the huge resource of expertise and experience it offers. We look forward to that relationship blossoming into the future as we strive to make a difference to the lives of our diverse communities.”

Alison Inman

Chair of the National Federation of ALMOs

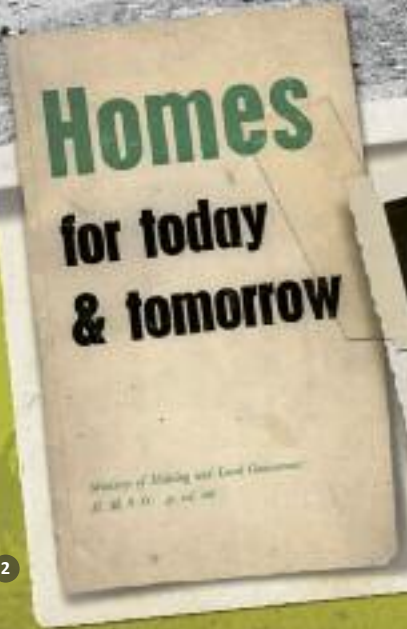
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Mary Evans Picture Library / Shirley Baker



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HACT archive



BBC

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1960s

Early Days

The Housing Associations' Charitable Trust (HACT) had its roots at the beginning of the 1960s when the postwar housing crisis and inner city poverty prompted a number of housing organisations to take action. HACT was founded by the National Federation of Housing Societies – now the National Housing Federation (NHF) – in 1960, with Sir Parker Morris as its first Chair. Sir Parker chaired the influential government inquiry 'Homes for Today and Tomorrow' that set modern day space standards for social housing.

The Trust's initial role was to distribute funding primarily from charities such as the Henry Smith Charity and the Unilever Charitable Appeals Committee, with an emphasis on ensuring appropriate support for older people and those with specific needs.

Raising and distributing funds

In 1966 public awareness and concern over the shortage of good quality, affordable housing

was heightened by the landmark TV drama-documentary 'Cathy Come Home' and a powerful fundraising campaign by the newly launched homelessness charity Shelter.

Shelter was created by a combination of Notting Hill Housing Trust, the British Churches Housing Trust, the Catholic Housing Aid Society and HACT. A joint committee of Shelter and HACT administered the funds until Shelter developed its own expertise.

Many of the housing sector's best known and respected names were nurtured and supported at this time including Circle 33 Housing Trust, New Islington & Hackney Housing Association (now part of Family Mosaic), Paddington Churches Housing Association (now part of Genesis), the Abbeyfield Society and Liverpool Housing Trust.

Funds for housing associations went into buying and refurbishing pre 1919 street properties in many of our major cities, making them fit for living and giving tenants security of tenure.

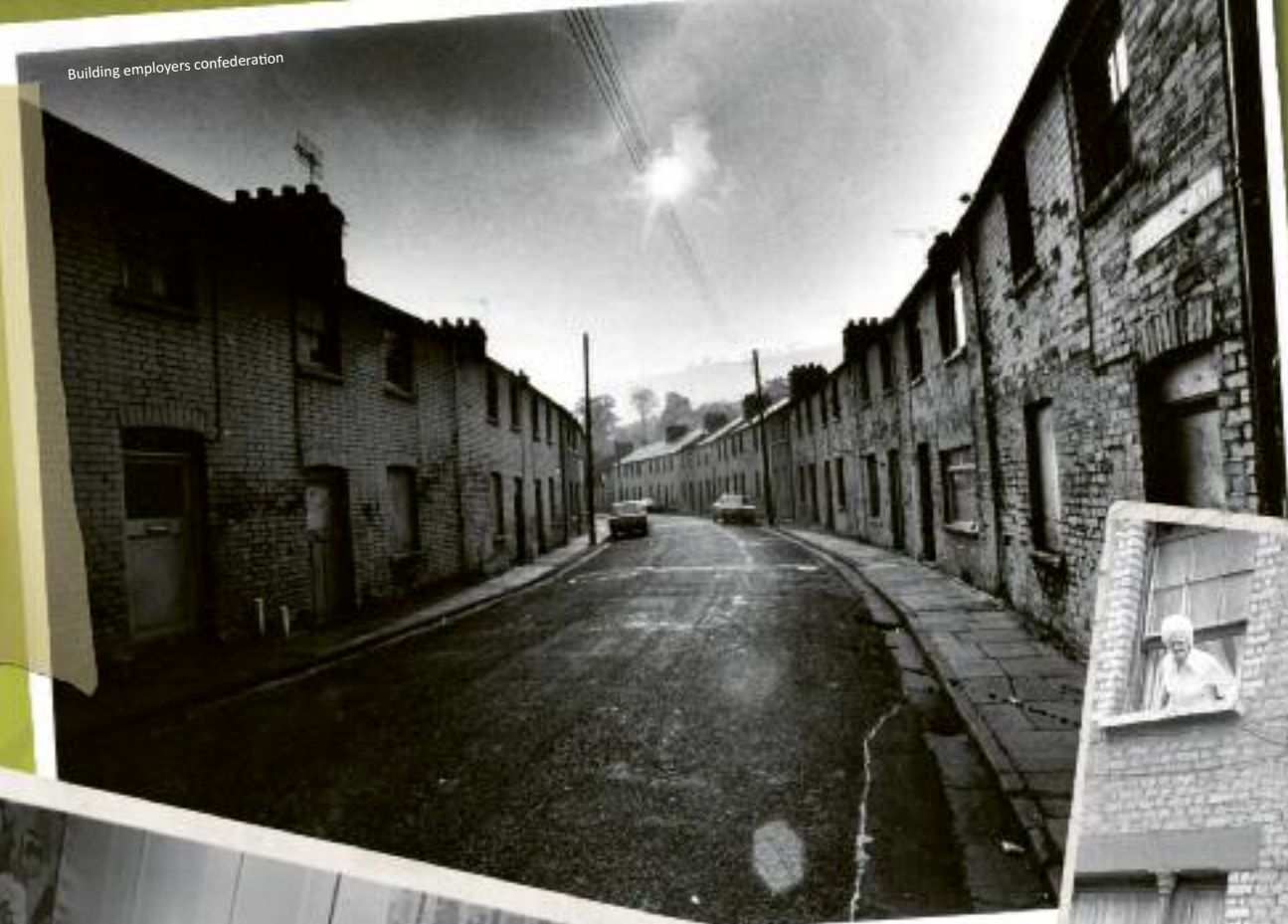
“As a member of the HACT-Shelter Grants Committee in the 1960s, I well remember the central role played by HACT in parcelling out Shelter grants to fledging housing associations. Today, HACT continues to reflect the underlying values of the housing sector and is not afraid to stand alongside the most disadvantaged in our society.”

Lord Best OBE, HACT Patron

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Building employers confederation



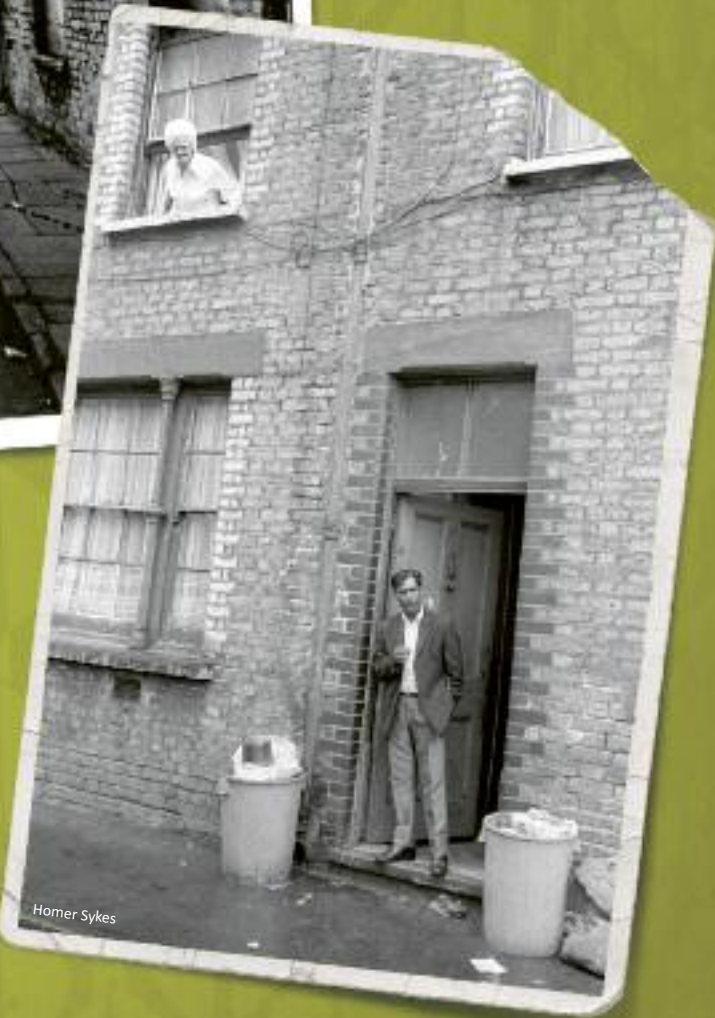
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Homer Sykes

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Homer Sykes



1970s

HACT continued to provide grants to individual associations and projects through the 1970s. Aldwyck, Bristol Churches (now part of Places for People Group), Ealing Family, Merseyside Improved Houses (now Riverside) and York HA were just some of the organisations whose work was supported in this way.

HACT was also one of the first organisations to make loans, paving the way for a capacity building approach that has been very much part of HACT's role.

Fuelled by its fundraising success, Shelter's grant giving capacity increased, enabling it to fund far more ambitious inner city housing renewal programmes. This created an opportunity for HACT to support smaller, more specialised community-based projects aimed at groups such as older people and homeless people.

“HACT continued to reach the more specialist, community based projects that are just as vital to society and which could easily have fallen between the cracks.”

Dave Bebb, Housing Director at Shelter from 1971 to 1973

Impact of the 1974 Housing Act

With the support of organisations such as Shelter, HACT and the National Federation of Housing Associations, housing associations

were demonstrating the considerable impact they could have in improving the appalling housing and living conditions in Britain's cities. A persuasive case was made to government for statutory funding to be made available and this subsequently came about through the 1974 Housing Act and the creation of the Housing Corporation.

This sea-change in housing policy gave housing associations a central role in improving and building homes as well as tackling inner city renewal in newly designated Housing Action Areas.

Extending HACT's mission in Scotland and Northern Ireland

In the 1970s, HACT helped to establish sister organisations in Northern Ireland and Scotland, namely NIHACT (Northern Ireland Housing Associations' Charitable Trust) and SHACT (Scotland HACT, which has since become the Lintel Trust). Both organisations continue with the same essential mission: to support new ways of improving the housing and wellbeing of vulnerable and excluded people by working with their own local networks of supporters and housing sector partners.

“NIHACT was founded in 1978 with the assistance of HACT and is delighted to celebrate the jubilee of its 'big sister'. We share HACT's aim of making a difference to poor and disadvantaged groups in the community.”

Christopher Williamson, Chief Executive of Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations, trustee of NIHACT

“For over 30 years the Lintel Trust has made a unique contribution to supporting housing and community related projects in Scotland and is extremely proud to be a sister organisation to HACT, an organisation we maintain close links with to this day.”

Robert McDowall, Convener of Lintel Trust and Director of DTZ

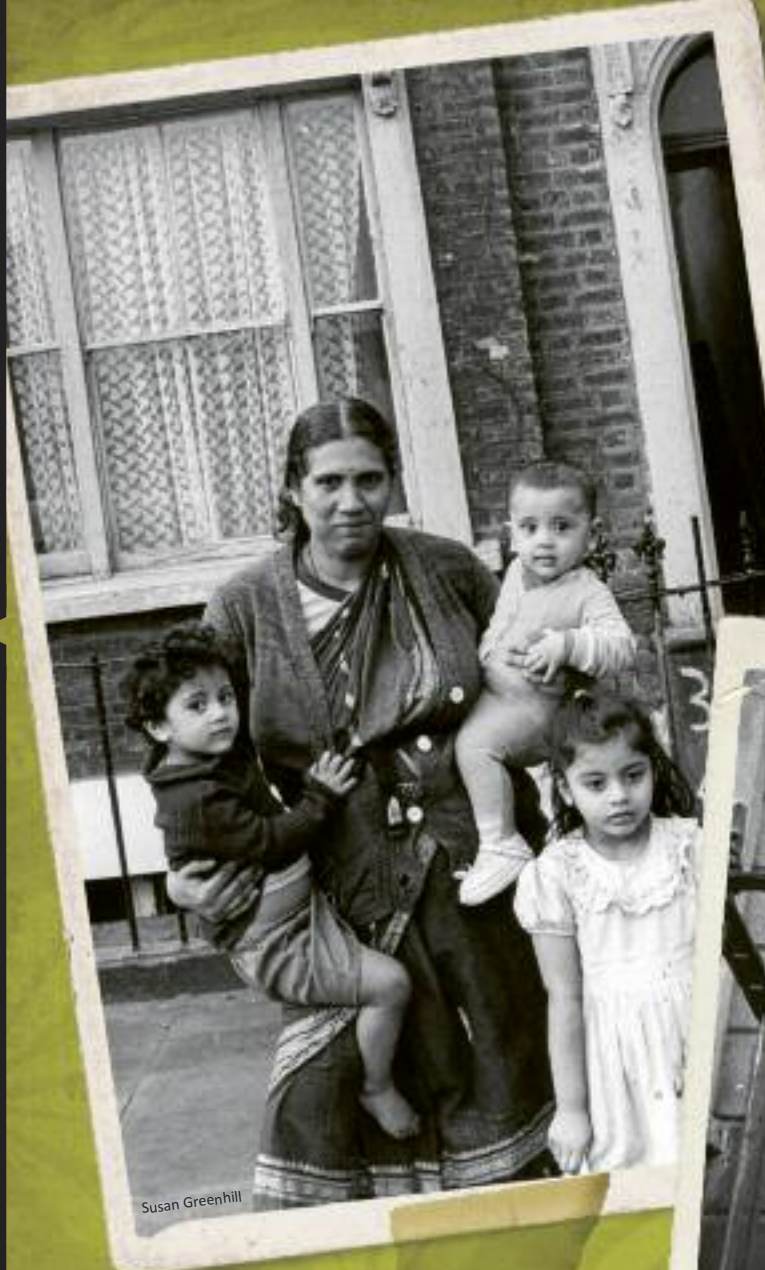
Further activity in the 1970s

In 1973 HACT worked with Age Concern to develop the first warden training for sheltered housing schemes, helping to set a national standard for this important supported housing role.

HACT also sponsored the Housing and Homelessness Award under the Community Enterprise Scheme, celebrating the most effective and imaginative community led projects meeting housing need.

Many black tenants in inner city areas in the 1970s continued to suffer direct discrimination or appalling housing conditions at the hands of private landlords, in spite of the passing of the Race Relations Act in 1976. Housing associations provided a much needed alternative housing option and HACT would later enhance this provision through its support for emerging Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)-led associations.

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Susan Greenhill

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Photographers Group

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HACT archive

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David Breatley

BY BRINGING
TOGETHER MONEY
AND ADVICE, HACT
HELPS PEOPLE
THE CREATI

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1980s

The 1980s brought many fresh housing challenges; thousands of public sector homes were lost through the Right to Buy. The 1988 Housing Act allowed the deregulation of rents, with housing benefit expected to 'take the strain'. Shortages of affordable housing and fundamental changes to the benefit system in 1988 led to an increase in street homelessness and as the '80s gave way to the '90s, thousands of homeowners faced a crisis of negative equity and repossession.

The decade began with an explosion of inner city unrest...

The outbreak of rioting in London, Birmingham, Liverpool and Bristol in 1981 caused shockwaves around the country. At the same time however it highlighted the anger and frustration felt by many young people, particularly from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds, about unemployment, discrimination and economic deprivation.

Much of HACT's work in the 1980s was aimed at tackling these problems and included:

- Funding and research that resulted in a groundbreaking report recommending housing provision for BME elders;
- Supporting initiatives aimed at creating job opportunities for BME people in housing, such as BICBUS in Birmingham and the Positive Action Training in Housing (PATH) scheme;

- Providing 'start up' grants to over 40 new black housing groups and enabling them to become registered for funding with the Housing Corporation;
- Providing funding for housing aimed at BME people including specialist schemes for BME elders, refugees and single mothers;
- Supporting projects such as Zenzele, a self build project in Bristol for young unemployed black people;
- Supporting the development of the Federation of Black Housing Organisations;
- Raising awareness and sharing knowledge of these and other initiatives by hosting conferences and producing videos and guides for the sector.

"I think the key contribution HACT made was to provide funding to like minded people from BME communities who wanted to show it was possible for their communities to help themselves and make a difference to their lives.

Arawak Walton is one of many BME led housing associations that has benefited at some stage from HACT's funding and support. Many such providers were actually helped into existence with start-up funding from HACT and all have benefited from the opportunities that HACT has helped create for BME associations to develop their skills and make their voices heard."

Cym D'Souza, Chief Executive, Arawak Walton Housing Association

Care and repair

"HACT provided the leadership and inspiration to turn the notion of mixing practical assistance with home repairs into the national Care and Repair movement that has brought so much support to many thousands of older and disabled people whose homes were in desperate need of repair and improvement. A great idea with delivery and impact at scale - HACT can be very proud!"

Richard McCarthy, Director General, Housing and Planning at Department for Communities and Local Government and first Chair of Care and Repair

Many older people, not surprisingly, have a strong desire to remain in their own home for as long as possible, even if the home itself is in a poor state of repair and is affecting their health and wellbeing.

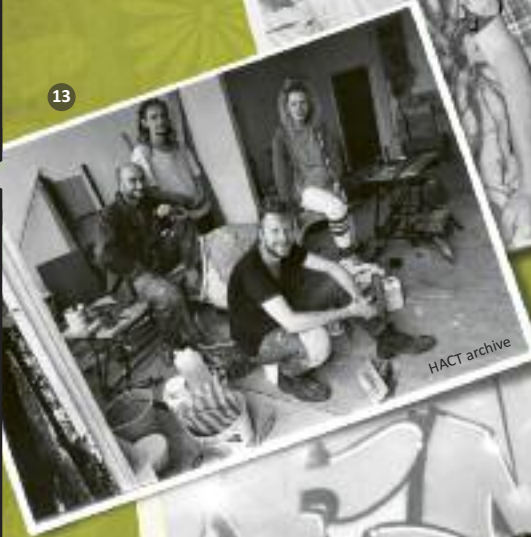
HACT's response to this began with the establishment of handyperson's schemes to carry out minor repairs in people's homes.

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1980s

Then in 1985, along with Shelter and with support from the Henry Smith Charity, we set up Care and Repair Ltd - a national organisation to support projects which helped elderly home owners remain comfortable and secure in their homes.

In the 1990s it was appointed by the government as the national organisation for home improvement agencies.

Now known as Care & Repair England, it helped establish over 200 Home Improvement Agencies and continues to work for greater choice and quality for older people in their housing options, particularly in the private sector.

HACT's commitment to helping older people remain safe and well in their homes continues to this day, the most recent example being the establishment of the *Fit for Living Network* (see page 23).

International Year of Shelter for the Homeless

The late 1980s saw a dramatic rise in the number of people, of all ages and backgrounds, sleeping rough on the streets. Homeless families were crammed into stressful and unsuitable bed and breakfast hotels whilst for others the only housing option available was overcrowded and poorly managed bedsit-style properties.

HACT's response to this housing crisis included:

- Leading the sector-wide appeal in 1987, which raised over £800,000 for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. The money raised benefited numerous organisations including London Connection and also established Homeless International;
- Providing funding for drop-in centres, night shelters, short life housing projects, housing advice and advocacy services, cafes and other initiatives for a variety of homeless groups from young people to BME elders and families;
- Funding advisory services to single homeless people through CHAR, the national campaign for single homeless people.

Transforming the landscape of care and support

During the 1980s HACT played a crucial role in developing 12 regional resource centres to provide training, information and advice to organisations involved in providing special needs housing. HACT also co-ordinated the development of National Vocational Qualification assessment centres for care and support staff across the country.

In 1989 we advised and helped many supported housing providers through a funding crisis

caused by changes in the benefit system and a complicated system of transitional payments.

Further upheaval quickly followed as the decade drew to a close, with Care in the Community legislation passing through Parliament. The resulting move to more home-based care brought sweeping changes to the way such services were commissioned and paid for.

In partnership with three major housing associations, HACT funded a two year programme with the National Federation of Housing Associations to help its members and their voluntary sector partners prepare for the changes. We negotiated with central and local government over funding and administrative arrangements and waged a vigorous campaign to increase funding for residential care.

We later helped support the development of 'floating support' services, demonstrating their potential as a person-centred, cost-effective option that enables vulnerable people to maintain their tenancies and live independently in the community.

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Tony Sleep



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HACT archive

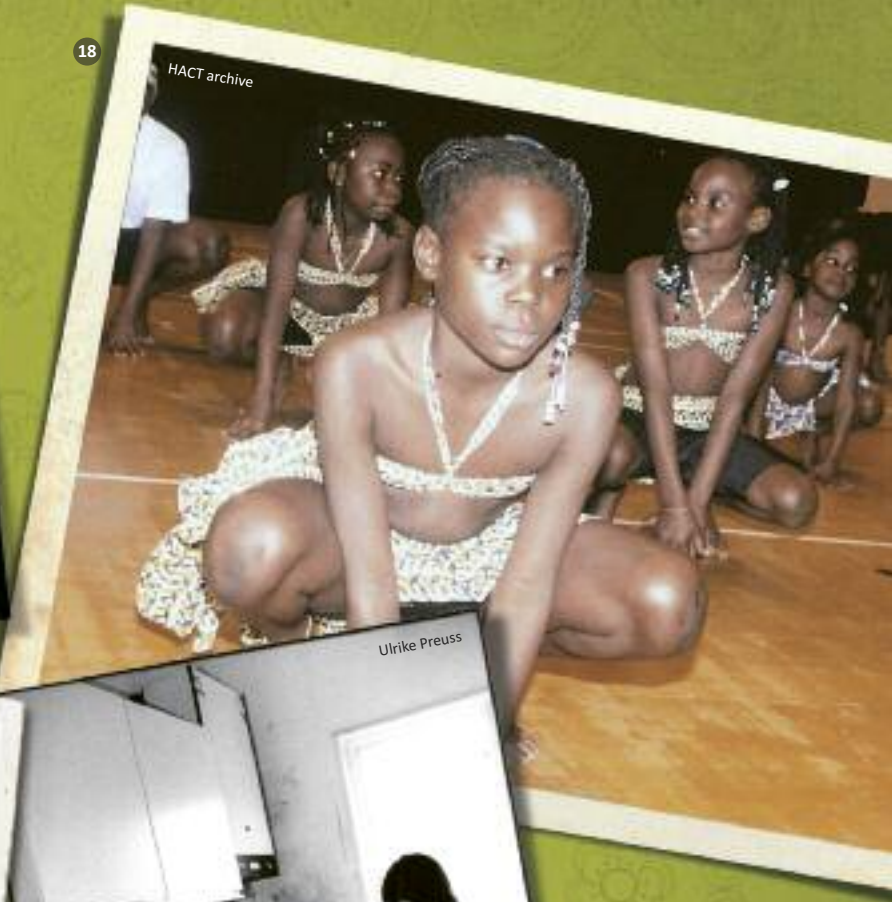
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HACT archive

18

HACT archive



Ulrike Preuss

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1990s

Tackling homelessness and discrimination

In the 1990s, with major backing from the Baring Foundation and support from Comic Relief we played a key role in tackling homelessness and discrimination in housing across the UK by funding:

- New BME housing associations, resourcing their capacity and development, which supported a significant number in registration with the Housing Corporation;
- Supported housing projects and those tackling homelessness including cross-community grassroots initiatives in Northern Ireland;
- Community groups and housing organisations supporting equality and access to appropriate housing for women, especially those fleeing domestic violence;
- Tenant and resident participation.

Fuelled by conflicts around the world, asylum applications more than quadrupled during the 1990s. For families in particular, the loss of housing entitlements in the 1993 Asylum and Immigration Act made an already difficult situation even harsher.

HACT responded by giving around £1 million in grants to refugee community groups. Evaluations of the grant-giving resulted in a parallel programme of capacity building through training and consultancy support.

Nearly 200 refugees benefited from HACT's Refugee Housing Training and Development project between 1998 to 2006.

“When I was at the Iranian Community Centre, as well as active member of the refugee sector, I knew well the invaluable impact of grants channelled through HACT to many refugee community organisations. These grants enabled refugee organisations to provide housing support and advice to many members of our communities with desperate housing needs, preventing painful experiences of homelessness and destitution.”

Elahe Panahi, Director of Royal Docks Learning Centre and Chair of Trust for London Grants Committee (Fleet), formerly Centre Co-ordinator for Iranian Community Centre 1992 - 1999

People for Action

The voluntary housing sector continued to grow in the 1980s and 1990s through both the Housing Corporation's approved development programme and local authority stock transfers. The number of homes owned by housing associations grew to over £1 million by 1997.

This growing sector was increasingly focusing on housing as a catalyst for improving lives and neighbourhoods, through initiatives such as People for Action. This was the result of a partnership between HACT and two inner city housing associations; SHAPE (based in Birmingham) and South London Family Housing Association.

People for Action was launched in 1990 with funding of £390,000 from the Wates Foundation, secured by HACT.

Its aim was to encourage and support local people to set up and run projects in their community that helped improve housing, employment, training, home security, the environment and economic growth.

With the support of the Department of Environment's Special Grant programme, People for Action went on to become a national network in 1994 and laid the foundations for a neighbourhood-wide approach to improving people's quality of life that went far beyond the traditional landlord role. Eventually the NHF (in 2003) launched iN business in neighbourhoods, which embedded this approach.

“The idea that housing associations could have a wider neighbourhood role, whether helping to train young people, create jobs, run credit unions or build community facilities, was a fairly radical one at the time. HACT was there to water the seeds so that People for Action could take root and grow. Twenty years later, HACT is still helping and encouraging housing providers to maintain that neighbourhood focus through its projects today.”

Chris Wadhams, former Director of SHAPE and co-founder of People for Action, and currently HACT associate

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Max Farrar

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HACT archive



HACT archive

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Advance Housing

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1990s

Empty homes and self-help housing

HACT was an early supporter of the Empty Homes Agency (now known as Empty Homes) and its work in bringing empty homes back into use. In the early 1990s HACT helped secure significant increases in funding to enable Empty Homes to expand and become a nationally influential organisation.

HACT has also been instrumental in supporting self-help housing, not only in providing funding for individual projects but recently by helping to establish the national online resource www.self-help-housing.org.

Self-help housing involves local people bringing empty properties back into use for themselves. It offers them a chance to learn new skills and find a solution to their housing problems. HACT has helped many such projects into existence.

“HACT has made a great contribution over the years to the self-help housing movement. With comparatively little funding but huge amounts of vision and determination, they have helped to empower local groups around the country by providing support and funding and by brokering housing partnerships that help turn their ‘pipe dreams’ into reality.”

Jon Fitzmaurice, Director, self-help-housing.org and Empty Homes Agency board member

Rural housing

HACT has long been aware of the unique

dynamics affecting the supply and quality of affordable housing in rural areas – and the crucial role it plays in creating communities that are economically and socially sustainable.

A major initiative around 1983 with 14 rural housing providers had already helped to stimulate new solutions to the shortage of low cost rented homes in rural areas.

This was followed by further projects in the 1990s with rural housing providers, the Countryside Agency and the Housing Corporation to increase the supply and quality of supported housing for people in rural areas.

Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of older people

In 1997 HACT, in association with Age Concern, published an influential report on homelessness in later life (‘Homeless Older People – A Forgotten Generation?’). This led to a three year programme in partnership with Help the Aged and Crisis to support around 20 projects that helped prevent or respond to homelessness amongst older people.

The same year, we funded a pilot dementia training programme for sheltered housing wardens and managers in partnership with Anchor Trust and the Housing Corporation.

In 1998, our publication on housing and support for people with dementia led to a good

practice guide produced in consultation with the Housing Corporation and the Dementia Services Development Centre at Stirling University, Scotland funded by Home Housing Association. This has influenced practice and policy in the field.

“What I think makes HACT special is the way it has stayed focused on the needs of groups such as older people on the margins but in a very innovative way. HACT had and still has the ability to address problems such as homelessness in later life with a level of insight that a homeless charity or an older people’s charity on their own might not have.”

Jane Minter, Head of Intelligence and External Affairs, Housing 21 and former long time staff member and Assistant Director at HACT who led HACT’s *Older People’s Programme* (1981-1999)

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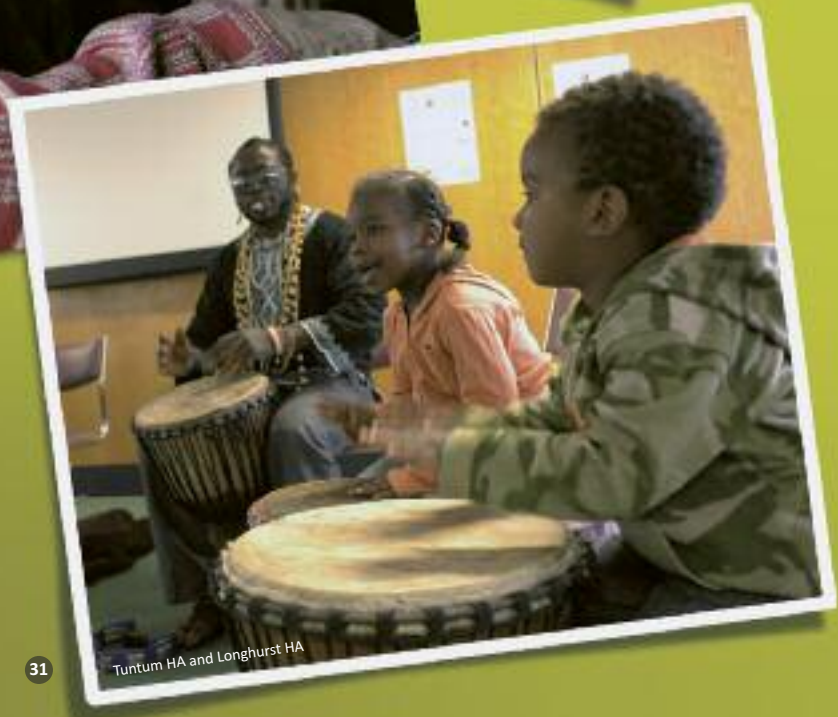


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Maja Kardum

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Supporting People

Between 2001 and 2005 HACT played a key role in helping housing and support providers to prepare for the introduction of Supporting People, the government's reform of the way supported housing was commissioned and funded.

Recognising HACT's track record for sharing knowledge and channelling support to specialist housing providers, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) provided funding of over £500,000 to our Supporting People programme. This enabled HACT to help smaller projects around the country of 50 units or less to prepare for this major change.

Projects received advice and grants of up to £5,000 to help fund temporary staff, training, consultation with service users and upgrading IT systems to enable them to help implement the changes. It also helped them gear up for reviews and quality assurance.

This work has continued through the decade with HACT's *Collaborate* project most recently highlighting the potential for joint tendering for Supporting People contracts and resource sharing amongst housing and support providers.

Older People's Programme 2002-2007

In 2002, we launched an *Older People's Programme* in partnership with NIHACT in Northern Ireland and the Lintel Trust in Scotland with £1 million of grant funding from the Henry Smith Charity.

It involved working with and supporting a range of voluntary and community groups to identify and evaluate practical solutions to needs that HACT had addressed in the past, but which remained significant gaps in provision. HACT supported 19 diverse and innovative projects, which:

- Helped isolated older people in rural areas;
- Offered hope to poor older homeowners unable to maintain their homes;
- Looked at inclusive approaches to the needs of BME and refugee elders;
- Addressed the needs of people with dementia and mental health problems through assistive technology and practical support.

The outcomes were captured in a five year evaluation funded by the Housing Corporation and were widely shared across the sector feeding into the government's strategy on ageing and housing 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods'.

No mention of HACT's work on behalf of older people would be complete without acknowledging the generous support of the Henry Smith Charity which, over the years, has channelled over £6 million into the development of solutions for older and other people in housing need, including home improvement agencies and rural supported housing initiatives.

“The Henry Smith Charity has worked in partnership with HACT over many years, and funded some excellent projects, particularly around older people's work. We are glad to be supporting the Golden Projects programme and hope this will help strengthen the role of housing providers in building community resilience.”

Richard Hoppgood, Director, the Henry Smith Charity

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Paula Solloway



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Age Concern Haringey



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Paula Solloway

36



Family Housing

37



HACT archive

2000s

Continuing to address refugee issues

“Since the mid 1990s, HACT has been responding innovatively to the increasingly restrictive legislation affecting refugee housing rights as well as the aspirations of refugee communities. Bringing together and resourcing refugee organisations, housing providers and other stakeholders became the main feature in HACT’s refugee work.”

Azim El-Hassan, former HACT Refugee Programme Manager and HACT associate

The impetus for HACT’s more recent ground-breaking refugee projects - such as *Accommodate*, *Communities R Us* and *Opening Doors* – was the Immigration and Asylum Act in 1999 which led to the over-hasty compulsory dispersal of asylum seekers across the UK.

Accommodate – the refugee housing integration project built on HACT’s understanding of the extreme levels of housing need amongst refugees and their tendency to seek advice and help from within their communities. Even the most robust refugee community organisations were not equipped to cope with the pressure and were often isolated from statutory bodies and housing providers. In new areas of settlement they were fledgling groups. HACT addressed this by bringing together housing providers and local authorities with the energy, commitment and ideas of refugee communities.

The results helped to influence the Housing Corporation’s BME Action Plan and the National Affordable Housing Programme as well as improving lives on the ground.

The practical experience of the three *Communities R Us* pilot projects demonstrated how grass-roots partnerships could help build bridges between long-term residents and new refugee groups, reducing tensions and contributing to healthier communities.

One of HACT’s recent success stories has been the resources developed jointly with the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) as part of the *Opening Doors* project. Drawing on the learning from HACT’s refugee work, the findings also embraced the needs of the fast growing European migrant population. CIH has now provided a long-term home for the website developed as part of *Opening Doors* which provides information on the housing rights of refugees and migrants, www.housing-rights.info.

Housing providers as neighbourhood investors

In 2006 we published our acclaimed *Opportunity Agenda* report ‘Housing associations as community anchors: an opportunity waiting to happen’. The following year, the Hills review - with its detailed analysis of the role of social housing - provided stark

evidence of the concentration of tenants living on low incomes, out of work and often with additional vulnerabilities. Housing providers were encouraged to promote greater opportunities for their residents by tackling worklessness and forging partnerships with other support agencies.

Our response in 2009 was the launch of our current *Housing Empowerment Network*, which supports housing providers to create and nurture partnerships with local people and grass roots voluntary and community organisations.

To test this in practice, we also recently set up our *Together for Communities* project which aims to demonstrate the positive impact that partnerships with social housing organisations can have on helping to build resilient and confident local communities.

“Working with grass roots community groups is essential if lasting change is to be achieved by housing providers. Tudor is pleased to have supported HACT for over 20 years – in its work in marginalised neighbourhoods and currently with their Golden Projects.”

Christopher Graves, Director of the Tudor Trust

HACT in a changing landscape

There have been significant changes in the housing landscape since HACT's inception 50 years ago when local authorities housed around a quarter of the UK population.

Today, in England, only 1 million units are left in direct local authority control, with 2 million units now owned and managed by independent providers and a further 1 million managed by Arms Length Management Organisations.

Despite all the apparent improvements over the last 50 years, the majority of social housing tenants live in poverty and many are not working. Around 40% of these are aged over 60 and many have support needs. In addition even more people on lower incomes are living in the private rented or owner occupied sectors (two thirds of older people on low incomes are now home owners). And 45 years after 'Cathy' there are still too many people with nowhere to call 'home'.

A new Government has proposed an agenda which heralds the end of the 'social housing' sector, along with widespread cuts to other services. HACT and others believe that the painful impact of these reforms will inevitably be felt hardest by the most vulnerable people and the poorest communities. We therefore pledge to continue to work vigorously on their behalf with housing providers and other partners who support our mission.

The project case studies that follow show just some of the ways HACT continues to remain relevant in the changing social and economic landscape. Projects such as *Reach In*, the *Fit for Living Network* and *Together for Communities* are all excellent examples of the three key areas HACT is focusing on as it refreshes its mission for the future.

Reach In

Nelma Karim moved to the UK from her home country of Mozambique with her husband and two children, but sadly difficult family circumstances led to the marriage breaking down. As a single mother, Nelma knew she would be persecuted if she returned to Mozambique, so she applied to stay in the UK long term, despite the difficulties that this presented for them.

"I had to fight for custody of my children to ensure they were safe but I had no job to enable me to support us" she says. "I wanted to work but there were so many barriers to overcome. Becoming a refugee was a last resort for me and life was really tough."

Nelma's lifeline came when she heard about the *Reach In* project at Norwich City Council, set up and funded by HACT. *Reach In* offers refugees a first step on the employment ladder by offering training, mentoring support and voluntary work placements with housing organisations.

As well as benefiting people like Nelma, it addresses the skills gap in housing and helps

employers to better understand the needs of refugees in their communities and build more cohesive communities.

"*Reach In* has been great because it gave me on the job training which enabled me to get a paid job" says Nelma, who now works as a Private Sector Leasing Assistant at Norwich City Council.

"I was always interested in working in housing and I had studied international law in Mozambique so I was keen to help others in a similar situation."

Nelma's hard work and dedication to learning English has paid off. "Not only have I got a full time job but I have been able to study too" she says. "I am very proud of what I have done, the friends that my children and I have made here in Norwich and so grateful to Norwich City Council and HACT for giving me this chance."





39

Fit for Living Network

Bryan and Sheila lived in a house that needed significant repairs to it. Like so many other older homeowners, they did not have the funds to carry out these works. Wanting to live in their own home and keeping their independence, they didn't know where to turn to. Luckily, they got transferred to the right people.

"One short call transformed the situation completely" says Bryan. "Bath & North East Somerset Council, Wessex Home Improvement Loans and Bath Care & Repair all helped tremendously. With a small grant and a low-cost loan for £18,000 we were able to have central heating installed and just as importantly had the essential structural repairs carried out, giving us a completely new shell to our home, with insulation also.

"This has really made a massive difference to our day-to-day lives. We have been so pleased with the help we received and the people concerned were really fantastic. The worries and concerns were taken completely out of our hands and everything was organised for us. An amazing service, we would say."

Not everyone is as lucky as Bryan and Sheila and that is why we have set-up the *Fit for Living Network*. We are exploring new, innovative financial models, policy frameworks and practice that are needed to prevent a further increase in the number of low-income older homeowners, living in sub-standard homes, just like Bryan and Sheila once did.



40

Together for Communities

In Bristol, the Upper Horfield Community Trust (UHCT) was formed by residents wanting a voice in the large scale redevelopment of their neighbourhood. Long time resident Maria Damsell was one of over 600 residents whose health and wellbeing had been affected by living in an area of poor housing for years.

The much needed redevelopment was widely welcomed but not without its challenges. Around 1,000 new homes were to be built, bringing a different social and ethnic mix into the area and effectively creating a new community.

Maria was involved in setting up and managing a community centre in one of the vacant properties on the estate. Now based in the grounds of the local church it provides a focus for a range of projects that help bring the diverse community together, organised by UHCT in close partnership with Bristol Community Housing Foundation (BCHF).

"BCHF was put into place to deal with the redevelopment, and UHCT was set up by us residents. From the beginning our two organisations worked closely together to co-ordinate the major changes within the community and to proactively support the needs of all residents" says Maria.

The impressive list of projects they have jointly delivered include a community play scheme, garden clubs, a Saturday club, youth activities, adult learning and social activities and the successful Eden Market and Community Café, which operates from the church building, selling produce grown on site.

HACT's *Together for Communities* project helps to support and strengthen partnerships such as this, developing the potential of local people to work together. It helps them to take action to deliver lasting change and create happier, healthier communities.

Current HACT projects

Over the years, HACT has been providing the spark for many of the once groundbreaking ideas that have gone on to become key strands of service delivery to poor and marginalised groups within the UK's increasingly diverse population.

Our future focus on vulnerable and marginalised individuals and communities continues through a range of innovative partnership projects, including:

Age2Age

Exploring the role of housing providers in bringing older and younger people together so as to promote closer-knit communities as well as reducing housing management costs.

Accommodate PRS

Developing and testing partnerships between local housing providers and refugee community organisations to improve the quality of, and access to, private rented sector (PRS) housing for refugees.

Fit for living Network

Bringing together experts and activists to seek solutions for older homeowners living in poor housing. The network aims to identify innovative ways of financing home improvements linked to integrated care and support packages.

Housing and Migration Network

Enabling practitioners and policy makers to explore solutions about housing issues affecting new migrants and sharing its learning with housing providers and Government.

Opportunity Agenda: Housing Empowerment Network

Engaging around 200 housing providers to share ideas and experiences so as to improve community empowerment approaches across the housing sector, and strengthen partnerships between housing and wider voluntary and community agencies.

Opportunity Agenda: Together for Communities

Funding and development of 17 partnerships between housing providers and community-led groups, to improve wellbeing in poorer neighbourhoods.

Opportunity Agenda: Worklessness

Exploring ways that housing and local community organisations can tackle worklessness in deprived communities with a focus on people with additional vulnerabilities.

Reach In

Facilitating volunteer placements in 20 housing organisations to increase employability of refugees, diversify the workforce of housing providers and improve their understanding of the needs and aspirations of refugees.

Up2Us

Responding to the personalisation agenda by working with six pilot projects. Supported by housing organisations, these pilots are exploring how people receive individual payments for their support and care, and how they can join together to purchase more effective services that increase their wellbeing.

Photo information

1960s

1. A young traveller girl stands amid the rubble and dirt of a cleared area of dilapidated terraced housing in Manchester. Traveller communities often made use of these areas of open city space which appeared as the result of re-development.

2. Although Sir Parker Morris' report, *Homes for Today & Tomorrow*, was published in 1961 it was only by the end of the decade that the impact of its generous space standards for housing were felt.

3. The BBC drama-documentary 'Cathy Come Home' helped raise the profile of the issue of homelessness.

4. Many people in the 1960s, like this mother and child, lived in damp, unfit homes without any modern amenities.

1970s

5. Deserted terraced housing epitomise both the waste and the opportunity of existing housing in the 1970s. This picture was taken in the village of Aberfan, South Wales, forever remembered for the disaster of 1966.

6. Older woman in her living room in a tenement building, Tower Hamlets, East London (1975).

7. An Asian man standing in his front door in Tower Hamlets, East London. The Race Relations Act of 1976 failed to end years of discrimination against BME communities in need of decent housing.

1980s

8. The Lime House project in Tower Hamlets extensively repaired Mrs Bibi's house; extending its use as short life housing and providing an alternative to expensive Bed & Breakfast accommodation.

9. Rehoused Bangladeshi children on the steps of their house in Commercial Road, Tower Hamlets (London). HACT continued to support PATH – Positive Action Training in Housing, which trained candidates from within the black community for senior posts in housing associations.

10. The final touches are made to Mrs Easton's home in Portsmouth. Care and Repair Portsmouth provided help to individual elderly people, as well as helping to repair and improve the housing stock.

11. In the 1990s HACT increased its support to BME groups by

funding 80 projects. Sir Hugh Cubitt, former Chair of the Housing Corporation and then HACT Chair (left), is sealing the partnership with Abdul Piracha from Ashiana (right).

12. The Girescope Workers Co-operative receiving their award from Lord Scarman, at the Community Enterprise Awards Scheme 1989/1990, recognising their imaginative community-led building project.

13. Members of Girescope Workers Co-operative got together in 1986 and since then have bought, renovated and converted derelict properties which they have let to homeless people, families and former psychiatric patients.

14. HACT continued to fund the support provided by London Connection (now the Connection at St-Martin-in-the-Fields) to young homeless people in central London. The project attracted national attention – including a visit from the Princess of Wales, with its unique combination of day centre, café, housing and benefits advice and opportunities to gain work experience.

15. After 30 years in residential care, Ray practices in the kitchen of the Wallbrook training flat before moving into independent housing. HACT advised and assisted this and similar initiatives.

16. Mrs Randon awaits repairs to her house in Coalville. Care and Repair schemes enable people to remain comfortable and secure in their own homes and prevented moves to more expensive provision.

1990s

17. Chris Wadhams (right), Director of SHAPE, hands over a tree from SHAPE's Sparkbrook garden centre to Steve Bendle, Director of South London Family Housing Association to launch People for Action. Also present were Jane Wates (left) and Ann Ritchie of the Wates Foundation and Donald Mc Ternan, Director of People for Action.

18. HACT's support enabled the Ugandan Community Relief Association in London to link up with mainstream housing providers, helping people in housing need to move into appropriate accommodation.

19. HACT funded SWALLOW, a unique project which addresses the housing and support needs of people with learning difficulties, fully involving members in all decisions affecting their lives.

20. HACT funded Newport MIND to develop culturally sensitive floating support services for Urdu and Punjabi speaking people with mental health problems.

21. Residents of Tamil Refugee Housing Association in London awaiting re-improvement or demolition of their short-life accommodation.

22. With HACT's help, Care and Repair Leeds enabled older, disabled and low income home owners to remain warm and secure in their own homes.

23. The focus on tackling the rise in homelessness during the 1980s and 1990s was on young people. It was only in the 1990s that studies began to focus on the lives and needs of homeless older people. HACT helped housing providers and agencies to rise to the challenge and respond to the needs of homeless older people.

24. Front cover of our 1995 annual report; the year HACT was celebrating its 35th anniversary and the last time HACT was selected as CIH Presidential charity of the year.

25. Support workers in rural areas help clients pursue hobbies and interests at an Advance Housing and Support project.

2000s

26. Cambridge Cyrenians help older people settle into sheltered accommodation and provide them with the support they need to stay there. HACT's grant helped the organisation to develop sheltered housing solutions for formerly homeless people with the City Council and housing associations.

27. This day centre in Nottingham provides a meeting point for homeless people as well as offering a free meal each day. HACT helped the centre prepare for the introduction of Supporting People.

28. Thanks to funding and support from HACT, the Wessex Reinvestment Trust developed a low-cost, trouble-free equity-based loan for older home-owners. As a result Mrs V now has hot water in her home for the first time.

29. HACT conducted independent research in Yorkshire and Humberside entitled 'Between NASS and a Hard Place', confirming that new refugee communities can be a force for renewal and regeneration but needed better support when their immigration status is confirmed.

30. HACT supported the LAWRS (Latin American Women's Rights Service) to increase access to social housing for older Latin American migrant women.

31. Refugee Week 2004 gets off to a musical start. Participants at the Tuntum HA and Longhurst Homes Opening Doors partnership 'Beyond Borders' event.

32. Canopy Care and Support Services, London. Lesley was moved to a shared house designed specifically for supported living for people with learning difficulties.

33. Gerald Ssali, a community researcher in Beeston, Leeds, where Canopy housing project was refurbishing empty properties to house refugees with the help of those refugees and other volunteers. Canopy led one of the HACT Accommodate partnership projects.

34. The handy man was considered a 'miracle worker' for many of the low-income older people he helped.

35. A Communities R Us football training session designed to bring different races and cultures together through a shared love of football. HACT supported the initiative organised by the New Bolton Somali Community Association (now Bolton Solidarity Community Association) that helped new refugee groups integrate successfully with long-term residents.

36. A lion dancer allows good spirits to come to the new homes of Chinese elders in Wales. HACT helped the successful development of this Family Housing (Wales) sheltered scheme.

37. Anthony, one of the residents at a Lister and Ullet hostel, which was funded and supported by HACT to help it adapt to the introduction of Supporting People.

Case studies

38. Nelma Karim in front of the Norwich City Council offices, where she is currently employed after her successful Reach In volunteer work placement.

39. Bryan and Sheila happy in front of their newly renovated home.

40. Colourful graffiti wall decorating the Upper Horfield Community area and celebrating the diversity of the community.

“The past 50 years of HACT’s work has been driven by passion and expertise. As you can see from this report, HACT has provided the spark for many of the once groundbreaking ideas that have gone on to become key strands of service delivery to poor and marginalised groups. As new Chair, I am proud to be taking on the stewardship of David Walker, the Bishop of Dudley, and in doing so I will ensure that HACT continues to be an innovator, responding to the changing needs of our society, both in housing and neighbourhoods. We want to enable those most excluded from society to continue to benefit from our work at a time when it is needed more than ever.”

Tom Murtha, Chief Executive of Midland Heart and HACT Chair

HACT’s future focus on vulnerable and marginalised individuals and communities centres on:

- 1 Identifying and responding to changing needs** in the population;
- 2 The experience of people in their homes** and the practical help they need to maintain their home and be happy;
- 3 The experience of people in neighbourhoods**, how they are supported and how we ensure that neighbourhoods work for everyone.

“This report describes some of the very significant achievements that HACT and its partners have made over the past 50 years to improve the lives and wellbeing of the poor and marginalised in society. None of this would have been possible without the continuous hard work and dedication of HACT's past and present Trustees, Chairs, staff, supporters and friends. On behalf of all the people that have benefited from this work, a big thank you to you all.

HACT's work is far from over though, and the report concludes with a sobering look into a future where our contribution will be ever more vital. HACT's mission is as relevant today as it was 50 years ago and we depend on your continuous support as we work to improve housing conditions and lives.”

Heather Petch OBE, HACT Director



HACT

The housing action charity

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