

RP3

**HOUSING NEEDS OF  
ETHNIC MINORITIES IN  
GOVANHILL:  
*A Community Perspective***

**MIKE DALTON  
KAY HAMPTON**

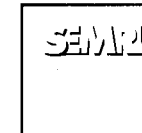
**Scottish Ethnic Minorities Research  
Unit Research Paper: Number 3  
Series 2  
ISSN 0957 9028  
January 1996**

GLASGOW



CALEDONIAN  
UNIVERSITY

SCOTTISH



ETHNIC  
MINORITIES  
RESEARCH UNIT

## Acknowledgements

The authors gratefully acknowledge the advice and assistance of Govanhill Housing Association, Strathclyde Social Work Department, Crossroads Youth Centre, and Strathclyde Community Relations Council. We would also like to express our appreciation to Rena Kaifi and Jackie Bain who assisted with the project. Finally we would like to thank all those who kindly agreed to participate in our group discussions and interviews.

## CONTENTS

	Page No:
Housing Context	3-4
Methodology	4-5
The Govanhill Ethnic Community in 1991	5-14
Housing Needs and Experiences <i>Community Voices</i>	15-30
Housing Needs and Experiences <i>The Voices of Community Workers</i>	31-36
Conclusion	37
Bibliography	38-40
<b><u>Appendices:</u></b>	
1. Profile of Participants <i>Focus Group</i>	41-42
2. Profile of Participants <i>Community Workers Focus Group</i>	43-44
3. Profile of Participants <i>Individual Interviews</i>	45-46

## Housing Context

The role of housing associations in meeting the housing needs of black and minority ethnic communities has been documented since the early 80's. Publicly funded and often locally administered, housing association policies and practices have far greater importance for minority households than a first glance would suggest (CRE 1993, Dalton, Hampton 1994). Given their geographical location, often in areas of minority ethnic concentration, many housing associations have been presented with significant opportunities to target minority ethnic households. Yet access and allocative mechanisms, accompanied by stereotyping and institutionalised racism, often indirect in form and context, continue to deter minority ethnic households from this form of tenure. During the 1980's work in England (see for example CRE 1983 Niner, 1985) and Scotland (Dalton, Daghlian 1989) exposed indirect discrimination in both policy and practice which worked against minority ethnic applicants and tenants. These included allocation criteria such as connection points, waiting times, and waiting list practices involving closed lists. Such policies and practices were found to compound within minority ethnic communities a lack of awareness of available housing opportunities often occasioned by, in many cases, the inappropriate publicity methods adopted by social housing providers.

When the focus of research effort was redirected towards the housing needs and preferences of Scotland's culturally diverse minority ethnic communities, the evidence, whilst highlighting the needs for larger housing units (Bowes et al 1990), began to reveal issues associated with elderly isolation and the needs of an ageing population (McFarland et al 1987); strained and violent relationships within the family (Harvie 1990); and disability (Brailey 1991); each requiring responses from housing providers in terms of facilities and support (Age Concern 1991, Bowes et al 1991). As a recent report has indicated:

Families with members needing special housing support are faced with a double disadvantage; first of racial discrimination and then the experience is compounded by the additional problems faced by anyone with special housing need, whether it be in sheltered housing for the elderly or supported accommodation for other client groups (MacEwan et al 1994 p18).

Faced with such situations community based housing associations have the potential to offer accommodation to minority ethnic families, but this potential has yet to be realised since minority ethnic households remain under represented in the social sector of housing.

This paper explores the linked themes of housing needs and in particular special needs, together with housing experiences and expectations. It has as its principle evidence the housing experiences of minority ethnic households living in Govanhill on the south side of the city. This evidence is further enriched by the workday experiences of professionals working for community based agencies who are able to give additional insight into the housing experience of the local ethnic communities.

### **Methodology**

In recent years many housing researchers have recognised the value of using qualitative research techniques in minority group studies. Such research by probing the housing experiences of individual households is able to provide illustrative cases of housing circumstances and need (Mooney, 1994; Forrest and Murie, 1991). Life history material can give additional insight into the operation of wider structures and also make a considerable contribution towards understanding housing strategy.

The strength of this approach is that the researcher can examine problems and processes whilst allowing for the complexities that occur in real life (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Rather than being representative they illustrate real circumstances and processes. Qualitative research methods are concerned with exploring and understanding the nature of respondents' perspectives and the meaning that they attach to their social world. (Rai, 1994), Thus, even a small number of interviews can reflect where needs, experiences and processes differ or are essentially similar.

The task of this methodology is to establish a framework which enables households to describe housing situations, needs and experiences in their own words. This was done by the interviewer using a semi-structured schedule and where possible the interview was tape recorded and, if necessary, transcribed. In addition **focus groups**, involving up to 8 people, were identified. These groups had the merit of creating an environment in which individuals, after

filling in a short questionnaire to establish the profile of group members, were encouraged to discuss freely housing concerns, needs and experiences shaped around a topic guide held by group convenors.

The fieldwork, amongst the ethnic population of Govanhill, resulted in 20 households being interviewed in depth on their needs and experiences of housing. In addition 4 focus group interviews were conducted involving 23 participants including one group of community care workers from local organisations. In all approximately 6% of all ethnic households living in Govanhill were interviewed.

But first an analysis of the 1991 census was undertaken to provide a statistical template by assessing small area statistics for the Govanhill area. These are the initial building blocks of the census and each area covers, for example, demographic characteristics, housing data, household composition, employment, long term illness and ethnicity. In addition matching data for Glasgow were analysed to provide some useful comparisons.

## The Govanhill Ethnic Community in 1991

This inner city area, still dominated by tenements built towards the end of the last century, has seen both substantial renovation as well as clearance. The 1991 census provides us with a snapshot of Govanhill's minority ethnic communities. It offers a detailed picture of its demographic structures, housing tenure, household structure and economic position. Moreover it allows for important contrasts to be drawn with the white majority community living in the locality. In all 501 minority ethnic households live in the area as against 6, 655 white households.

### Population

In Govanhill approximately 1 in 7 (2,040) of the population of 15, 046 belong to minority ethnic communities. The community constitutes 13. 6% whilst the white majority totals 86. 4% of the local population (Table 1). By comparison, the ethnic population for Glasgow city as a whole is 1 in 30 (21,517), totalling only 3.2% of Glasgow's total population (662, 853).

**Table 1: Resident Ethnic And White Populations**

Ethnic Group	GOVANHILL		GLASGOW	
	No.	%	No.	%
Black	85	4.1	1435	6.6
Indian	187	9.2	3,374	15.6
Pakistani	1,522	74.6	10,945	50.8
Bangladeshi	2	0.1	191	0.8
Chinese	97	4.8	2,780	12.9
Other ethnic	147	7.2	2,792	12.9
Total Ethnic	2,040	13.5	21,517	3.2
White	13,006	86.4	641,336	96.8
<b>Total Persons</b>	<b>15,046</b>		<b>662,853</b>	

The minority ethnic population in Govanhill is dominated by the Pakistani community (74.6%) who form almost three quarters of the total ethnic community. The Indian and Chinese communities are smaller at 9.2% and 4.8% respectively (Table 1). The proportionate distribution of ethnic minorities by origin is slightly different for the city as a whole in that whilst the Pakistani group still dominate, they only form just over half (50.8%) of the ethnic population in Glasgow.

Furthermore, the proportion of people of Indian and Chinese descent in Glasgow city are significantly more than those in Govanhill (15.6% and 12.9% respectively). Those of African Caribbean origin (referred to as Black) comprise small numbers both in Govanhill as well as the city. Indeed the growing 'Britishness' and more pointedly the Scottishness of the minority ethnic community is shown by the fact that approximately half of all members of the various ethnic communities living in Govanhill and Glasgow City were born in the United Kingdom, 54% and 49% respectively, (Table 2).

**Table 2: Ethnic Minority Residents Born in the UK**

Ethnic Groups	GOVANHILL			GLASGOW		
	No.	No. Born UK	%	No.	No. Born UK	%
Black Groups	85	51	60	1,388	677	49
I/P/B*	1,696	950	56	14,458	7,785	54
Chinese/Other	249	101	41	5,475	1,931	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,030</b>	<b>1,102</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>21,321</b>	<b>10,393</b>	<b>49</b>

\* I/P/B: Indian / Pakistani/ Bangladeshi

Further the residential stability of the dominant Pakistani population is revealed when considering the change of address. The Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi communities are less mobile in terms of changing homes than the white community with fewer than 1 in 9 recorded as having lived at a different address a year ago compared to 1 in 7 of white households A reversal of the trend for the city as a whole (Table 3).

**Table 3: Migration and Ethnic Group**

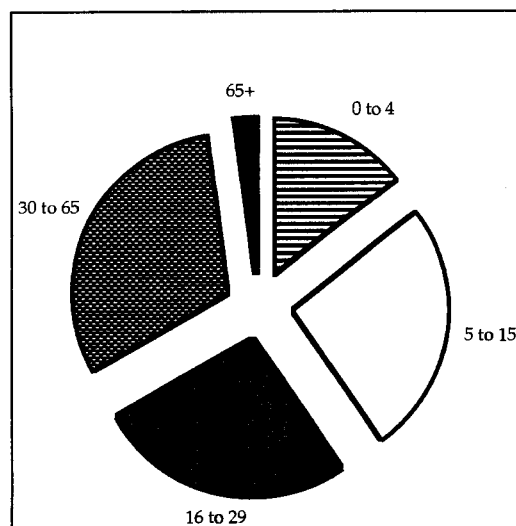
Ethnic Groups	GOVANHILL			GLASGOW		
	Different Address One Year Before		Total Persons	Different Address One Year Before		Total Persons
	No	%		No	%	
Black Groups	16	19.2	83	369	26.2	1404
I/P/B	161	9.8	1,646	1,801	12.7	14,181
Chinese/Other	56	23.7	236	1,664	30.6	5,434
All Ethnic Groups	233	11.9	1,965	3,841	18.2	21,019
White	1,816	14.1	12,843	68,800	10.8	633,144
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,049</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>14,808</b>	<b>72,641</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>654,163</b>

## Age and Gender

The pattern of age and gender distribution in both Govanhill and Glasgow City is very similar. In Govanhill, the age profile is skewed to the younger age cohorts with over 40% being 15 years or younger and 57% ranging from 16 to 65 years. Only 2.4% of the ethnic community are over 65 years of age. (Fig. 1)

This provides an interesting contrast with the white population where the age profile is skewed more towards the elderly population with 21% being aged over 65 years and only 15% being 15 years or younger. Such trends are representative of Scotland as a whole.

Fig. 1: Age of Ethnic Minorities in Govanhill



Gender is fairly evenly distributed between the minority ethnic communities though significant differences may appear if the male/female data is analysed by age cohorts, especially in relation to the Pakistani community where the number of females is slightly higher than that of males (Table 4).

Table 4: Gender and Ethnic Communities

Ethnic Groups	GOVANHILL				GLASGOW			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Black	52	4.9	33	3.4	819	7.2	616	6.0
Indian	99	9.3	88	9	1,779	15.7	1,595	15.6
Pakistani	780	73.3	742	75.9	5,568	49.3	5,377	52.6
Bangladeshi	1	0.1	1	0.1	102	0.9	89	0.9
Chinese	50	4.7	47	4.8	1,522	13.5	1,258	12.3
Other Ethnic	81	7.6	66	6.8	1,511	13.4	1,281	12.5
Total Ethnic	1,063	14.9	977	12.3	11,301	3.6	10,216	2.9
White	6,050	85.1	6,956	87.7	298,577	96.4	342,759	97.2
<b>Total Persons</b>	<b>7,113</b>		<b>7,933</b>		<b>309,878</b>		<b>352,470</b>	

## Housing

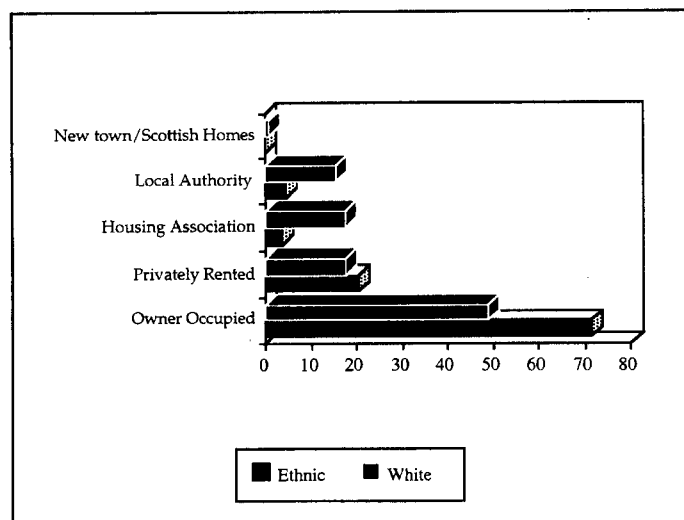
Just over 71% of the minority ethnic households are owner occupiers compared to less than 49% for the white majority (Table 5). Whilst the former figure may seem high it should not be equated with either quality of housing nor an over-whelming preference for owner occupation. Rather it reflects their position in a housing market which has erected significant barriers to access. The latter figure for white households owning their homes is broadly comparable to the overall figure for the city.

Table 5: Housing Tenure in Govanhill

TENURE	HOUSEHOLDS			All Ethnic %	White %
	Black %	I/P * %	Chinese/Other%		
Owner Occupied	77.3	75	49.3	71.1	48.9
Privately Rented	18.2	17	37.3	20.4	17.6
Housing Association	0	3.8	5.3	3.8	17.4
Local Authority	4.5	4	8	4.6	15.5
Scottish Homes	0	0	0	0	0.6

One in five (20.4%) households out of a total of 501 minority ethnic households rent their property from private landlords. This is not significantly different from that of the white majority (17.6%). In the social sector of housing 5% rent from Glasgow District Council and 4% rent from housing associations. In contrast 1:3 white households rent in the social sector. Thus a far greater number of the white population resides in either housing association or local authority property. New town/Scottish Homes figures are insignificant for both the white and minority ethnic communities. (Fig. 2)

Fig. 2: Tenure: Govanhill



### Household Structures

In Govanhill the average size of an minority ethnic household is 4 persons. For the Pakistani community this figure rises to 4.3 persons but for the Chinese community it falls to 2.8. White households have the smallest average household, falling below 2 persons (1.9). Indeed some 71% of all white households are single persons and this in part is a reflection of the age structure of the local community. The Bangladeshi/Pakistani/Indian groups have the greater number of households (402) though the Pakistani community is by far the largest (Table 6). Again, these trends apply to the city as a whole with the average minority ethnic household being 3.5 persons, rising to 4.4

persons for the Pakistani community and falling to 3.2 for the Chinese. The figure for the white majority is slightly higher than that of Govanhill at 2.2 persons (Table 6).

Table 6: Average household size of Ethnic Households

Ethnic Group	GOVANHILL		GLASGOW	
	No of h/holds	Av. h/hold size	No of h/holds	Av. h/hold size
Black Groups	21	4	483	2.9
I/P/B	402	4.3	3,263	4.4
Chinese/Other	78	2.8	1,700	3.2
Total Ethnic	501	4	5,446	3.5
White	6,655	1.9	284,409	2.2
All Households	7,156	2.1	289,855	2.3

Using an overcrowding indicator of one or more persons per room, some 114 minority ethnic households (22.7%) are overcrowded which is significantly higher than the average for Glasgow's minority ethnic community (18.2%) as a whole (Table 7). Indeed if a more stringent indicator is utilised of more than 1.5 persons per room, relatively few households are removed (17 households) and still 1 in 5 households (19.4%) remain living in overcrowded conditions. This data linked to tables 6 and 9 on family size and family composition allows a more generalised picture to be drawn of a significant number of large, mainly Pakistani, families, many with small children living in overcrowded circumstances. Of all the data revealed in this analysis of local census information this is a cause for concern. It highlights housing need and is of significance to the future housing plans for the Govanhill area.

Table 7: Overcrowding: Households with more than one person/room

Ethnic Group	GOVANHILL		GLASGOW	
	No	%	No	%
Black Groups	5	4.3	42	4.2
I/P/B	98	86	754	76
Chinese/ Other	11	9.6	197	19.8
Total Ethnic	114	22.7	993	18.2
White	306	4.6	12,999	4.5

In terms of household amenities - central heating - there are minimal differences between the communities in Govanhill. For example Table 8 shows that two out of three households in Govanhill lack this form of heating. Indeed, the number in Govanhill with no central heating is



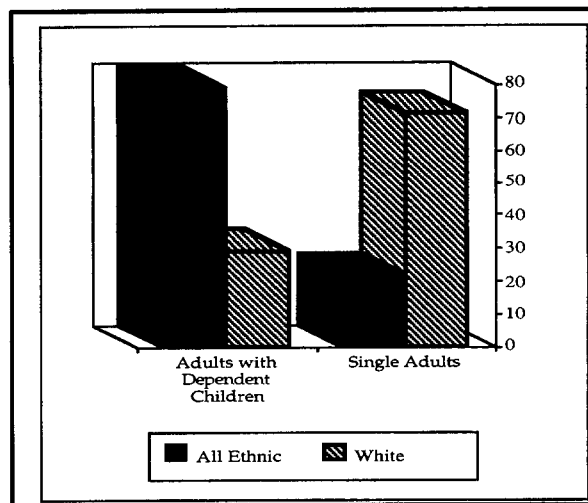
significantly higher than that of Glasgow for both minority ethnic communities and the white majority. In the case of the ethnic community, whilst a little more than a third of the Glasgow population (37.1%) have no central heating this figure rises to more than two thirds (67.1%) in Govanhill. A reflection perhaps of the economic status of that community.

**Table 8: Households with no central heating**

Households	GOVANHILL		GLASGOW	
	No	%	No	%
White	4,468	67.1	105,794	37.1
Ethnic	343	68.5	2,129	39

Finally a comparison of household composition of the minority ethnic and white communities in Govanhill and Glasgow, reveals significant differences. For example only 1 in 5 households in the ethnic community are single person households (21.6%) compared to 7 out of 10 white households. The reverse situation holds for households of adults with dependent children with over 78% of all minority ethnic households in this category compared to over 29% for white majority households. ( Fig. 3) and in turn is significantly different from the overall Glasgow data ( Table 9).

**Fig. 3: Household Composition in Govanhill**



Within the Govanhill ethnic community itself the Chinese community stands apart in the number of single person households when compared to the south Asian households. In Glasgow Black

groups constitute the dominant ethnic group with single person households (Table 9).

**Table 9: Households composition of Ethnic Minorities**

Household Composition	GOVANHILL		GLASGOW	
	Adults with Dependent Children %	Single Adults %	Adults with Dependent Children %	Single Adults %
Black	68.8	31.2	56.7	43.3
I/P/B	82.8	17.2	87.8	12.2
Chinese/Other	57.1	42.9	66.8	33.2
All Ethnic	78.4	21.6	79.2	20.8
White	29.1	70.9	41.7	58.3

### Employment

In April 1991 in Govanhill both male and female members of the minority ethnic communities, show higher rates of unemployment. Male economic activity data is broadly comparable between the communities but differences emerge in the context of female data. White females are more economically active (45.5%) compared to 20% of all ethnic groups. There appear to be no major differences in the unemployment figures, but a significantly higher percentage of ethnic women (73.2%) are economically inactive compared to 49.2% of white women. This figure may be affected by internal factors (eg, culture, gender roles) or external factors such as definition of and wider problems with female unemployment statistics. (Table 10)

**Table 10: Economic Activity of All Residents in Govanhill**

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY	ALL ETHNIC				WHITE			
	Male No.	%	Female No.	%	Male No.	%	Female No.	%
Eco. Active	468	60.6	121	20	3582	61.6	2883	45.5
Unemployed	135	17.5	41	68	704	12.1	337	5.3
Eco. Inactive	169	21.9	442	73.2	1528	26.3	3122	49.2
Total	772	100	604	100	5814	100	6342	100

Within the ethnic communities men tend to be more economically active particularly within the Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladeshi subset. Ethnic women (except black), compared to men have a much higher number who are economically inactive. A gap which is much wider

than in the white community (Table 11).

**Table 11: Economic Activity of Ethnic Groups in Govanhill**

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY	BLACK				I/P/B				CHINESE/OTHER			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Eco. Active	17	60.7	9	42.8	390	61.1	92	18.1	61	57.4	20	27
Unemployed	2	7.1	3	14.3	116	18.2	30	5.9	17	16	8	11
Eco. Inactive	9	32.1	9	42.8	132	20.7	387	76	28	26.4	46	62
Total	28	99.9	21	99.9	638	100	509	100	106	99.8	74	100

Thus Govanhill houses an minority ethnic community which has a profile somewhat at odds with the majority population. Indeed the ethnic community itself is far from homogeneous differentiated not only on ethnic lines but also on each communities varying position within the housing and employment markets. The census aids the identification of such patterns of housing tenure, housing structures and housing circumstances but cannot offer direct comment on the processes involved. For this, questions of housing experience and housing careers of minority ethnic households have to be explored.

### Housing Needs Experiences and Expectations: *Community Voices*

To explore the housing needs and experiences of minority ethnic families living in the local community in depth 'interviews' were held in which the participants were encouraged to discuss their housing needs, experiences and expectations.

In terms of tenure and in contrast to the overall pattern of tenure within Govanhill a majority of those who took part in the study rented their accommodation from various providers including the local housing association. Most households interviewed lived in tenement property and had accommodation on the first floor or above.

#### House Size and Structure

Participants were encouraged first to describe the type of housing they were presently living in and to tell us what they liked or disliked most about their accommodation. It became clear that a number of recurring themes troubled households. One group of concerns that families were anxious to discuss correlated with data from the census; issues of overcrowding in homes that were too small for their current needs, a lack of privacy; and conversely the need for larger homes, all featured in their conversation. A key area under discussion therefore was the mismatch between size of accommodation and size of family:

Some particular comments included:

*"I'd like to move but can't afford it"*  
*"Would like own privacy. Don't like being dependent on others"*  
*"To move to bigger house"*  
*"Need house for family-imposing on son's life. His own family is growing"*  
*"Want house and space for ourselves. All life lived in overcrowded situation"*  
*"Like the area and house but being harassed by neighbour"*  
*"Trying desperately for several years to get bigger house which is more appropriate for son with infirmity"*  
*"Need to feel a sense of settling down"*

Many of the participants felt that their current accommodation was too small and that they initially took it because they had little choice in the matter. For some, despite very difficult living conditions, attempts to

change their accommodation have so far met with little success. Two case studies illustrate these concerns:

#### Case Study A

One person went to great lengths to describe her problems. She was being racially abused in her previous home, she wanted to move and the authorities would not move her. She had to declare herself homeless as this was the only way she would be relocated. Unfortunately she had had only one offer from the Glasgow District Council and although she was not entirely satisfied with the offer felt obliged to accept. The flat she was offered was outside a pub and she was afraid to let her children out to play as it could be rowdy at times. In addition she indicated that her house was damp, her furniture was mouldy, there were no carpets and the house was very cold. She wanted to be rehoused but believed that she had no chance whatsoever. The only plus factor in her view was that she had three bedrooms. However she argued that she would prefer to have a smaller, but warm and damp free house, to the one she had presently.

#### Case Study B

One participant felt that her house was too small; not only were the rooms small but she needed an extra room because she was currently sleeping in the living room. Her husband was very ill and as such he needed the bedroom to himself. She wanted to be rehoused, but had no idea how to go this task. She was unaware of the transfer and exchange options. She was reluctant to approach the Housing Association again because according to their system she had adequate accommodation for her family size.

Issues of size and accommodation inadequacies were commonplace in our discussions. Overcrowding reflected in part extended families living within the same accommodation. One family who was interviewed had 10 people occupying a flat and represented an extreme case of overcrowding; indeed this particular case was highlighted further by the fact that the largest flat in the survey was 4 apartments all of which featured as bedrooms as well as for other purposes. This double purpose use of accommodation was a common experience for many households.

Examples of structural and housing fabric concerns were scattered throughout the discussions and included:

*"burst pipes and window needing to be fixed"*  
*"door security buzzer does not always work,"*  
*"need better heating, hot water and kitchen improvements"*  
*"outside railing and stairway in poor condition"*  
*"flooring needs improvement"*  
*"dampness of flat"*

Given that a significant proportion of these households lived in rented accommodation it is clear that landlords were at best slow to respond.

Even new build schemes seemed to generate mixed reaction in that certain cultural imperatives of the ethnic community were being challenged. Some participants were familiar with a new build social housing scheme in Govanhill and although they felt that it was very attractive, they also thought that the housing units were too small. Yet they knew of families living in such flats who were happy partly because they had small families which *"... is fine if you are just starting off"*. Negative comments relating to the new build scheme include; *"... the rooms are too small"* and *"... dislike open-plan"*. This latter observation was particularly significant as participants stressed the importance of having a separate kitchen explaining that this was the *"private space"* used by the women for their socialising, whilst the men socialised in the living room. Some even expressed concern that if they accepted the type of accommodation offered in the new build scheme then their chances of being re-allocated to larger housing later, as their family grew up, would be slim.

Indeed there was a perception on the part of a number of households

that housing structures and size were based on the needs of the majority population, especially in Govanhill where most of the white families were older and smaller. The Asian families tend to be larger, and as such their requirements as far as housing structure was concerned were slightly different.

People felt that they did not have exceptional needs and that their needs were very much the same as the whites. They all felt that it was reasonable to expect a house that was damp free, warm and reasonably decorated. Most Asian families preferred to furnish the flats themselves and not to rent furnished flats. They expected to have ample storage space, to have a place for their children to play in safety, to be located on the first or ground floor particularly if a member of the family suffered from long term illness. It was argued that on application forms people often indicated their reasons for choices but this appeared to be ignored.

They briefly explained that their lifestyle included entertaining overnight, so one needed space just in case people stay over. They also needed space to entertain during functions; in these situations a large living room. The kitchen should be separate at all times, with lots of storage space, as it served as the women's private working area. Significantly, they prefer separate toilet and bathing facilities. Above all many participants complained of a lack of privacy and the need for a separate place for ladies to socialise (the kitchen), because the living room was taken over by men socialising; *"... if men are present then you have to stay in the bedroom"*.

Finally, some participants felt that many families were frustrated with their accommodation to the extent that some family members became depressed. This coupled with the stress of not being able to get appropriate accommodation was held to be directly responsible for family breakdowns which were more common today than previously. The fact that providers were often ignorant of lifestyles and that they were influenced strongly by stereotypes was also a bone of contention. They felt that each person was an individual and that although there may be overriding common needs the facility to cater for individual needs was important and considering that the Asian community was relatively small this should not be difficult. One person argued that their requests were not for great big mansions but merely for a comfortable home which suited the family, located within a community that they prefer and to ensure that the house suits the family. They stated quite pointedly that even in ethnic families some prefer sharing with in-laws and that others don't, likewise some

require larger housing whilst others don't for their needs and expectations were as varied as those of the white community.. People were keen not to be treated as aliens but as a group of people with certain specific needs, expectations and cultural pre-requisites. This gulf of two cultures was best expressed when a group of householders were discussing size and layout of houses. One respondent mentioned that she had been offered a house by Govanhill Housing Association in the new build and she had turned it down. They could not understand why. She explained that it was too small, it was open plan and that she could not furnish the house properly because of the room sizes. Most women agreed that these houses were unsuitable and that they would not like to live in them. They indicated that it was *"... OK for the local Scottish people because their lifestyle was different"*.

Family circumstances were different from many white neighbours. They pointed out that because the Asian population was relatively youthful and increasing in family size that this should be considered. Much of the overcrowding was due to this stage in the family life cycle. They were anxious to know whether or not this situation was monitored and many were of the view that it was not. Many participants indicated that they preferred to rent and that it was a myth to believe that all Asians liked to own property. They argued that people bought properties only because it was so difficult to get accommodation from housing providers in areas that they like and of the right type.

#### **Special Needs Relating To Disabilities or Infirmities**

When our discussions turned to issues that occur within households that might require more specialist forms of accommodation, a plethora of concerns, conditions and disabilities emerged. Many are possibly the specific concerns of specialised agencies but nevertheless interweave with respondents housing experiences and perceived needs. Despite the small size and random nature of the sample, there appeared to be a significant number of people within the sampled households suffering from various forms of disability or infirmity. Overall, three quarters of those interviewed indicated that there was someone within their household who had some form of disability or infirmity that made living conditions difficult. In addition, approximately a third of the respondents pointed out that there was more than one infirm or disabled person within their household. The types of infirmities or disabilities as described by the respondents revolved essentially around the following three areas of ailments:

Individual members of households (21 recorded cases) were suffering

from a wide range of medical problems. An identification of the medical difficulties and infirmities which households were dealing with included heart trouble, high blood pressure, TB, asthma, diabetes and blood disorders. Four cases of physically disabled people were recorded. These were specified as paralysis, spina bifida, blindness and being deaf and dumb.

Turning to mental problems ten cases were recorded within the sample. These included people suffering from stress, depression, tension, nerves and epilepsy. Symptoms of depression appeared to occur more frequently and these ranged from perpetual sadness to suicidal tendencies. The incidence of high levels of stress and anxiety within the sampled households was supported further by the interviewer who indicated that she had often found it difficult to complete the interview with certain respondents who were "...too distressed to continue" and was consequently forced to conclude the interview with another member of the household.

The observations of our interviewer lend support to the difficult circumstances some households find themselves in:

*"...the son is epileptic"  
"...would like a home help or a home to feel safe in"  
"...the subject has severe walking disability'  
"... they don't know what is available for people with back problems"  
"...a son has spina-bifida, subject has asthma. Seven children in the house so more space is required."  
"... a son is mentally ill, deaf and dumb. Live with extended family and children of other family are scared of him.  
"...the subject is also elderly and quite ill".*

A small number of respondents indicated that they were receiving some form of assistance or support from outside organisations, to help them cope with the disabilities or infirmities within their households.

*"...mother looks after son..."  
"...daughter comes to help..."  
"...waiting for letter of support from GP..."  
"...CPN used to give injections..."  
"...only received walking aid..."*

However, more than a third pointed out that they were unaware of the nature of services that were available to assist them with their particular health problems. Moreover they were unsure of whom to approach to obtain these services. They pointed out that they depended mainly on their families or General Practitioners for any assistance or support with regard to their health problems:

#### **Awareness of Different types of Special Housing**

Remarkably, despite the significant and wide ranging physical and mental disabilities experienced by some participants, relatively few suggested a need for specific types of accommodation that might improve their current living conditions. This disparity should not be viewed as participants having limited need for certain types of specialist accommodation, but instead must be considered within the context of the respondent's knowledge and awareness of different types of special housing.

Thus, although more than half of the households indicated that they would prefer some form of special housing, none specified the actual type that was required. In addition, at least a quarter of all households confirmed that, given their circumstances, they were unsure of what their actual needs or requirements were concerning special housing. Typical responses about the type of accommodation and help required included:

*"...home help because I am very ill..."  
"...to suit son who is epileptic..."  
"... for son who is mentally disabled, deaf and dumb... I am part of an extended family and my son scares other children in the house....need a house close to extended family so that they can still support me..."  
"...need special flat for son on the first floor because he has spina bifida..."  
"... son has severe walking disability needs suitable house..."*

When specifically asked about different types of specialised accommodation, it was apparent that most participant's had very low levels of awareness. For example, none of the households in the sample knew of specially adapted housing for either the physically disabled or the elderly. Similarly, all the respondents indicated that

they were unaware of sheltered housing or any form of specialised accommodation for women. Nonetheless, about a quarter of the respondents were familiar with homes for old people and some knew of housing for single and mentally disabled people. It was noted however, that many of those who had indicated awareness of special housing, had either very little or no knowledge of how to go about accessing this type of housing.

#### Case Study C

A participant appeared greatly concerned about his present unsatisfactory living conditions. He indicated that he was living in overcrowded conditions, was part of an extended family, and that his flat was cold and damp. He had a son who was physically disabled and was aware that they could qualify for specially adapted housing to accommodate his son more comfortably. However he felt that "...they should sort our overcrowded situation first, give us a bigger house...so that we can all be comfortable. At the moment, we need a bigger house more urgently than a specially adapted house".

In conclusion therefore the limited attention paid by some participants, to special housing issues could in part be attributed, to their lack of knowledge of such accommodation. Yet for others their over-riding concerns were focused on general living conditions that appeared to supersede their need for specialist housing; as illustrated in Case Study C.

#### Needs relating to Homelessness

In response to questions relating to homelessness, a number of respondents stated that they had been homeless at some point during their stay in Scotland. They were asked to describe their experiences and to illustrate how they had coped with the situation at the time. The following comments were made:

*"...had to live with friends..."*

*"...lived with my son and his family..."*

*"...lived in a bed and breakfast place and then with family because that did not suit my lifestyle..."*

*"...lived in a hotel and then was moved by District Council to a house with no heating or electricity..."*

*"...in a situation like that we usually turn to friends and family*

*because we do not like the alternatives provided by the District Council..."*

When asked whether they knew of any support services available to assist homeless people, none of the households indicated awareness of such services.

It is evident that there is a degree of confusion regarding the official definition of homelessness and how it is generally perceived by the ethnic community. Indeed some respondents felt that although they would currently consider themselves to be homeless, the authorities on the other hand viewed their situation differently. Many respondents pointed out that it is common practice to take in a friend or relative who has no place to stay, on a temporary basis. Some indicated that they themselves were presently sharing accommodation with other relatives because of a lack of alternative accommodation. Ideally they would prefer to have their own accommodation.

The homeless or potentially homeless persons is defined by the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (part 11) as follows:

"A person is homeless if he has no accommodation which he can reasonably occupy." or "Households which are separated for no other reason than that they have no accommodation in which to live are also regarded as homeless"

In addition, the act defines someone as "potentially homeless" if he/she is likely to become homeless within 28 days. This definition would appear to exclude those who are in reality homeless, but are being accommodated by relatives or friends on a temporary basis. In this regard, the actual extent of homelessness would therefore appear to be somewhat understated.

#### Housing Experiences

The next strand of the research was to gather together information on ethnic household attitudes and their perceptions of housing providers in the locality. This was seen as an important aspect of the housing process because an understanding of and attitudes towards the local housing services can be shaped both by direct contact with the providers and local information networks who pass on information. Such channels and experiences colour the view from the community.

#### Advice Information and Assistance

This provoked a good deal of discussion and individual household

circumstances varied widely from lack of knowledge and information to first hand contact with housing providers. Again we let summaries of the taped conversations establish both the context and overall content of the commentary.

We begin with the role of advocacy that many community workers were undertaking on behalf of ethnic minority households. Some participants pointed out that if they needed to know more about housing related issues, mainly how to get accommodation, then they went either to the local Social Work Department or to Crossroads. There the community workers were able to listen, understand and help them because they were from the same ethnic background. They were not embarrassed to talk to such workers and at Crossroads there was always an interpreter available. It was then left in the hands of such workers to take the matter further on their behalf. Some of the participants had not felt brave enough to approach the housing providers alone, although they admitted that they were often dissatisfied with the response they got.

Indeed others took a more radical view and felt that there was little point in going to either the District Council or local housing association as there was no one there to whom they could talk or explain their problems and requests. They indicated that such organisations should have trained staff, preferably with ethnic backgrounds to deal with their problems. In particular they felt that a white person would never be able to understand their problems and would not have the same degree of commitment and sympathy. A number of participants indicated that they had at some point confronted these organisations with requests and problems and were not fully satisfied with the response. Indeed an area of complaint by a number of householders concerned staff attitudes. Phrases like 'rude', 'disinterested', 'insensitive', 'sarcastic' were used by interviewees. Some felt that they were not trusted and that Asian people were often treated with mistrust and suspicion " ... as if we are all here illegally".

One participant added that even if they knew about the availability of information it would be useless to them because they would not be able to understand what it meant. They needed someone to explain issues to them. They emphasised that their limited education and understanding of English made it very difficult to be kept informed about what is available.

It also became apparent that the informal network was very important to the Asian community and that they depended on this network for information. They appeared to trust these sources more than the

official ones. They indicated that a great deal gets around by word of mouth and if it was not for people informing one another, the community would be far more isolated.

Many agreed that whilst not all ethnic people were aware of the various facilities available to them, those who were aware often found it difficult to access these facilities. They argued that translating information was not enough nor was it sufficient to state that the facilities are there for everyone. It was stressed that housing providers must be prepared to understand people's lifestyle and modify the existing system to make it more accessible to all.

#### Case Study D

One participant said that for years she did not know who to go to. She then heard that there were leaflets at the library, so she went regularly to the library to collect them, but the leaflets did not answer her queries. She also went to councillors' surgeries and finally to the housing department but was not successful, '... they were not even prepared to talk to me when they discovered that there were only two in our family and that I wanted a bigger flat' They informed her that she lacked points and that she should see them again when her circumstances changed. She was currently living in a flat that has one bedroom and a kitchen which she rents from a private landlord. She has been living in Govanhill for the past 8 years. Although she suffers from high blood pressure and diabetes she lives 3 floors up and has to climb the stairs 4 or 5 times a day, she has little option but to remain. She indicated that her flat was too small, she was divorced and on income support and sick benefit. She has a 17 year old son (a college student) living with her. She said that he needed a separate room to study so she was forced to sleep in the kitchen. About 4 years ago a friend told her about Crossroads and she had been going ever since for advice and information. She had still not been considered, and in fact was not even on the waiting list, but felt that even though Crossroads could not give her a house they at least listened to her and gave her hope that one day perhaps she would qualify. She was told by the District Council not to even bother to apply. She concluded that the housing department was most unhelpful and that most of her information and explanation was through Crossroads and that she would have given up her search a long time ago but Crossroads were helpful and filled in and explaining why it was necessary to fill in the form. " When you had a reply, even if it was bad, it was nice to have someone on hand to explain why you did not qualify". She had approached Govanhill Housing Association also, but had spoken to no

one and was given a form to fill in. She was informed via Crossroads that she did not have enough points to qualify to be put on the waiting list. She had resigned herself to keep on trying.

For some respondents the housing market is perceived through a jaundiced lens reflecting bitter experience. Others appeared not to fully understand the procedures involved in obtaining accommodation and failed to appreciate the processes involved in getting a house. All the participants felt that getting a house was much more difficult if one was of ethnic origin. Two further case studies illustrate the sensitivities associated with lifestyle, culture and a perceived gulf between client and provider.

#### Case Study E

One participant explained how she was Scottish born (aged 50 years) of mixed parentage and that her problems started after she married her husband from Pakistan. She argued that her husband, who does not understand English, and was expected to apply for housing from '... people who scare him, intimidate him and who are unable to understand him'. She felt ill at ease with the person she was talking to at the Housing Association because she did not make herself understood. Her husband suffered from depression, has had a stroke and was still expected to do all the running around because she felt they would not deal with her.

#### Case Study F

He claimed that the Asian population was in general timid, unable to fight for what they want and are easily intimidated. He therefore felt that they are taken advantage of, "... the authorities play on our ignorance and lack of understanding. All attempts to get them to advertise appropriately to our community has failed. We depend fully on word of mouth for information and often we get carried away by rumour. We do not fully understand our rights and who to go to. Its like chasing rainbows. The translated pamphlets are useless. We all realise that there are various types of housing but how do we enjoy the benefits that the whites enjoy? It is easier to get accommodation if you are disabled because you get special treatment, but what about the poor single mother with no male to support her, she cannot speak English or understand what she must do or who she can talk to; besides we feel

bad to talk about our private circumstances to a white person. They should cater for the ordinary man in the street ..."

#### Accessibility

Clearly an important question beginning to emerge is: how are housing providers 'viewed' by the ethnic community? There was a preponderance of somewhat negative views on the accessibility of organisations, their perceived unapproachability and the reluctance of many potential clients to go to these organisations. From the comments that were made earlier many do not see the District Council or housing associations as the place to make direct contact themselves, often preferring to move through intermediaries.

When this issue was taken further it became clear that at the point of contact the lack of empathy between staff and client was a major stumbling block for many in the ethnic community. The issues crystallised in discussion around lack of language skills and an understanding of life styles, and that whilst facilities such as the provision of interpreters was useful in the short term this was generally felt to be insufficient. Instead there was a need to have skilled and trained staff within the organisation with whom people could consult and discuss matters. This is highlighted by a common feeling amongst those who had first hand experience that the system, for example the practice of handing applicants a form to fill in without any meaningful consultation to identify its need, is highly bureaucratic and cold. They suggested that housing providers should have a trained person who would be able to evaluate their needs, and advise and assist them accordingly. This role they felt was currently being carried out by workers within other organisations such as Crossroads and the Community Relations Council. The importance of this suggestion was supported by other participants who expressed their reluctance to share personal problems, anxieties or needs with persons who are perceived as being not fully trained to understand and appreciate their problems.

#### Case Study G

A participant, aged 38 years said she had been living in Govanhill for 22 years. She shared her home with her in-laws and had 6 children. She was living in a three bedroom dwelling which was shared by all ten members. She was quite desperate. All her children (one male and five female) slept in one bedroom. She was offered a house once



but it was too small and in an area that she did not like, so she turned it down. She was offered another since. She had approached Govanhill Housing Association, as well, and was told that given her family size, she required a 5 bedroom house. She argued that they had available 4 bedroom ones but would not give her one on a technicality. She felt that the four bedroom would have been better than her present one. So she still remains on the waiting list of both the Glasgow District Council and Govanhill Housing Association as neither appear to have a house big enough for her family. She claimed to have had her house inspected on numerous occasions and felt that the association was "checking her story" and had not believed her circumstances. She felt hurt about this.

A similar case of confusion, distress and perhaps misunderstanding is reflected in the case study outlined below of a divorcee's experience of finding alternate accommodation.

#### Case Study H

This participant appeared extremely shy and afraid but was encouraged to talk about her experience by others in the group. She had apparently been told by her landlord that he no longer wished to rent his flat and that she had to find alternate accommodation. She had approached both Govanhill Housing Association and Glasgow District Council but both organisations informed her that she did not qualify to be put on the waiting list. When she tried to pursue the matter with the District Council they were apparently, rude and unhelpful. After intervention from a worker from Crossroads, the 'official' agreed to talk to her in private. His attitude, nonetheless remained rude and unfriendly. He believed that he had 'sorted' her situation by asking her to appear at the office with her bags to prove that she really was homeless. He informed her that he would be prepared to find her a place to live, only if she did this. Again there were feelings of mistrust and the feeling that the situation was not taken seriously. She added that on another occasion she was asked 'why don't you buy your own house if you want a bigger one?'. She had three children and was involved with part-time work, rented from a private landlord and had been living in Govanhill for the past 6 years, since her divorce.

#### Housing Experiences

Finally to summarise minority ethnic households experiences set within the earlier commentary and to reflect on how the processes beyond the information and advice stage is viewed by the community. The following four strands have been identified by participants as significant:

- Most felt that the process involved in obtaining accommodation was highly complex and complicated, and that they did not fully understand how or where to start. For many, the process of obtaining accommodation often involved running around in circles achieving little success and a great deal of frustration.
- Participants felt also that the procedures (steps) involved in obtaining suitable accommodation were unclear and most agreed that the procedures should be simplified and outlined more concisely.
- Many participants claimed to have a limited understanding of the points system of allocation. They argued that in principle it was unacceptable for people who had little or no understanding of an applicant's social circumstances to decide whether or not they qualified for accommodation. Additionally, many felt that the points system was an arbitrary one and which failed to consider specific personal, social and psychological circumstances of applicants.
- They emphasised that the housing circumstances of ethnic minorities were fundamentally different from that of the majority white population and that despite this evident distinction, the process of housing allocation appeared to be based essentially, on the circumstances of the majority population.

This suggests that from the perspective of the ethnic community the process, procedures and allocations are still little understood by the community. However they are more clear when it comes to describing their experiences. Whether imagined or real is not an issue, for the people concerned these issues matter and colour their perceptions of organisations who respond to need.

Some people were disillusioned with the point system as they felt that it was based on a western concept and that it did not take into account

the social circumstances of minority ethnic families. Others described how embarrassing it was to continue to go to housing providers to plead their case. They had seriously ill and depressed people in the family and the medical evidence to support that, but housing authorities were still not convinced. Others described how discouraging officials could be in that they had received comments like "... you are wasting your time", "... you will never qualify", "... why don't you buy your own if you are so fussy".

From the ethnic community perspective, and despite the obvious presence of a significant population in terms of number within the Govanhill area, it would seem that the efforts of social housing providers over the past few years have failed to breakdown the perception that the service currently provided is primarily a white service.

### **Housing needs and Experiences: *The voices of Community Workers***

Given the middle agency status acquired by a number of community based agencies in recent years and acknowledging that they have different professional remits, it was felt that this group could add valuable insights into the housing needs of the ethnic communities. There was general consensus amongst the professionals that much of their work with ethnic communities in such areas as Govanhill is often linked with concerns about housing and related issues.

### **The Multiple Roles of Workers in the Community : Housing and Other Areas of Community Work**

Community workers acknowledged that they were familiar with each others organisations and indicated that staff within their respective organisations consulted with each other as part of their work. The workers agreed that it was often necessary to work together as problems facing the majority of ethnic people were usually complex and required the skill and expertise of more than one organisation at any given time. In this regard they perceived the combined skills, expertise and knowledge available within various organisation as being essential for efficient and effective problem solving in the community.

The workers indicated that most of the cases they had dealt with were referred to them by other organisations or ex-clients. They concurred that as many as half of all cases attended to, were referred to them by people from the community (by word of mouth). Moreover, they felt that their work load was frequently increased as they often felt obliged to offer assistance in areas that were not directly related to their work, for example, housing.

A link-worker indicated that although her job is related to mental health, a large proportion of her work was nevertheless dedicated to housing. At least half of her clients, she claimed, had housing problems (for example poor housing conditions or seeking alternative housing). This was an issue that caused, in part, mental stress and depression. She pointed out that a great deal of her time was taken up with providing support to those who were anxious about their housing situation, providing advocacy, assisting clients to apply for

housing (help them to fill in forms), accompanying clients to visit housing officers and providing bilingual staff to help sort out housing difficulties. She concluded that mental health problems were definitely, very closely co-related to housing.

The community workers agreed that dissatisfaction with housing conditions was an underlying cause of many problems confronting the majority of their ethnic minority clients in Govanhill. One worker added that her area of work covered health and disabilities and as such she too was of the same opinion and that various disabilities were aggravated by inappropriate housing. Both speakers concluded that they had dealt with a significant numbers of clients from the Govanhill area who had housing problems. As a result of the multiple role that the workers play, they often needed to contact local housing providers in an attempt to assist their clients.

#### **Issues and Concerns**

Language difficulties and the inability to understand 'glossy translated documents was discussed at length. It was emphasised that many ethnic people neither knew nor understood what their basic rights were, what was available to them and how to access services. This was seen as a the single, most significant and widely accepted barrier to accessing services, especially housing. It was generally agreed that organisations often publish, advertise and market their services in ways that were inappropriate to large sections of the ethnic community and that the lay person often finds it difficult to understand technical jargon.

Information was passed on to people on an inter-agency basis (referral) and by informal networking within the community. The workers felt that this situation was not entirely acceptable as they felt that it was the responsibility of housing providers to convey information in a manner that was appropriate to and understood by all in the community. It was established that there were certain issues that required clarification and simplification. These relate to:

**Finance, ie: mortgages, rents and debt related issues.  
Procedures to follow if one needed to obtain housing, relocation or transfer.  
Initial contact person/agency to discuss requirements of applicants with regard to documents and related information.**

Many felt that there was a need for social/personal support and that

people should be available within organisations to explain procedures and their implications to ethnic applicants. The workers believed that printed material alone, appeared not to work too well with the ethnic communities and that there was need for more individual (face to face) contact and support. Presently, they perceived a gap between housing providers and the ethnic community in Govanhill. It was agreed that local housing staff were distanced from the people that they were meant to serve and the gap needed to be bridged.

Workers felt that a major problem confronting the ethnic community in Govanhill was overcrowding. The majority of Asian families that they assisted were seriously overcrowded and were unaware of what they could do to change their situation. It was emphasised that overcrowding often resulted in a great deal of family stress and tension, family breakdown and other related social problems.

Some workers believed that there was a problem of 'hidden homelessness' among the Asian community. It was agreed that Asian families would usually take in friends and relatives if they knew that they had nowhere else to live. Although there appeared to be relatively few homeless Asian families, this was in reality not necessarily a true reflection of the situation.

A worker pointed out that ethnic people were often in vulnerable positions and felt a great deal of embarrassment about their problems and therefore they needed sympathetic, understanding and caring staff to deal with their usually complex problems.

#### **Role of Housing Associations**

Workers agreed that the physical area covered by housing associations was relatively small compared to that of the District Council and as such housing associations could be more flexible in their approach. In this regard it was mentioned that there were some associations in the surrounding area that followed good practice and who really tried to make themselves more accessible to the ethnic community.

There was discussion that people from ethnic communities felt that they were at times, unfairly treated and that certain housing associations were seen to be racist (indirect racism) since despite their knowledge of the critical circumstances in which some ethnic people found themselves, nothing was done about it. Families were often expected to provide unreasonable and unattainable proof of their circumstances to an association so that they may be considered for allocation or even short listing .

It was felt that housing associations should regularly monitor and evaluate housing stock and make available more readily, housing that is suited to the ethnic community. A definite need for larger accommodation was identified, as most Asian families in Govanhill had a tendency to be relatively large. The average size of ethnic households in Govanhill meant an increased demand for three and four bedroom accommodation.

There was a suggestion that housing associations should develop a special policy regarding allocations and ethnic minorities, to guide good practice. The policy should cover issues relating to life styles of and the specific circumstances surrounding ethnic communities. This should be developed along lines similar to those policies that are presently guiding disability and racial harassment. The need for such formal guidelines as the basis on which associations can make fair judgements as to who gets priority allocation, who is put on the waiting list and the criteria for allocation, was perceived as being essential for efficiency and effectiveness. It was suggested also that staff should be appropriately trained, have a positive attitude and an in depth understanding of ethnic life styles. It was agreed that staff within most agencies and associations tend to be distant and that the ethnic community was intimidated by this attitude. Workers affirmed that they had personally experienced rudeness and poor attitude from housing providers even though they were visiting on a professional basis. They felt that ethnic people were more inclined to turn to organisations like themselves for the help and support which essentially should be given by the housing providers.

Although workers admitted that as mediators they were often successful, they did point out that it encroached on their other work. They maintained that they were doing the out-reach work that should essentially be done by housing staff. A suggestion was made that to make themselves more accessible to the public the social housing providers needed to become more involved with the ethnic community and in turn, should encourage the ethnic community to become involved with it's work. The workers pointed out that they had managed to build trusting relationships with their clients and felt that the social housing providers should try to do the same. In order to achieve this, staff needed to be more flexible and if necessary be willing to visit people in their homes. Presently, applicants were merely given a form to fill in with little or no explanation provided. It was acknowledged that although most organisations had limited staff and related resources, some nonetheless manage to liaise successfully with

ethnic people. They felt that significant lessons could be drawn from other local practitioners, and suggested for example, that frequent and regular discussions with the ethnic community on their changing needs should become a regular feature. Finally, it was agreed that points systems were failing to allocate housing to ethnic minorities, appropriately. The systems were perceived as being limited, unfair and biased.

When asked to offer advice to the social housing providers on what additional elements were needed to serve the ethnic minority community in Govanhill, the following list was drawn up:

- **staff training and recruitment of bilingual staff.**
- **review the point system and develop an appropriate allocation policy for ethnic minorities.**
- **regular evaluation of housing stock.**
- **reducing the responsibility of applicants to provide 'unreasonable proof'.**
- **address the problem of long waiting periods (some people are on the waiting list for at least 5 years).**
- **increased ethnic minority representation on management committees; this should not be a token gesture, instead ethnic minorities should be actively encouraged to join.**

An example of good practice would incorporate the following elements of staffing and training:

- **bilingual staff available to listen, advise and deal with those who experience language and related problems and attempt to match ethnic applicants to appropriate housing.**
- **staff who are sympathetic, supportive and approachable.**
- **do not require unreasonable proof of applicants circumstances; tend to be more trusting.**
- **concern themselves with aftercare and monitoring.**

Finally it was suggested that an interesting and fruitful idea would be for the social housing providers to consult formally, at least twice a year, with community workers who operate in the area to share and discuss experiences, knowledge and problems. The community workers felt that since they were in frequent contact with ethnic people

at grassroots level, they had 'on the ground' experience which they were willing to share with housing providers.

## Conclusions

This study, although specific to Govanhill, mirrors the overall needs of the minority ethnic communities. Indeed, some participants were reluctant to share their views on certain housing issues indicating that despite numerous fact finding exercises in the past, agencies have failed to take effective action to change their circumstances. As a result, the housing expectations of many participants were fairly low. In this regard, housing providers by their own acknowledgement, have in the past achieved limited success in addressing the needs of these communities.

Despite the fact that this research did not uncover any novel evidence, it does stress the extent of unmet needs within this community. The housing experiences and aspirations which emerge adds to the more general understanding of housing experience. Some of the expressed needs of the ethnic communities in Govanhill associated with household structure, living arrangements, overcrowding, poor housing conditions and slow response to requests for rehousing are issues to be considered when planning for future provision. Lack of larger houses in the housing stock for example poses real problems and it would be appropriate for the providers to respond more positively in addressing these issues. Raising the sensitivity and cultural understanding of housing professionals remains a significant issue still to be resolved.

As documented in the Dalton & Daghlian study, ethnic minority families continue to exhibit a strong attachment both to their own communities and to the facilities that have been built to serve their needs. This desire to remain in the 'comfortable and established' area of Govanhill as well as their reluctance to move to peripheral schemes into housing offered by the district council, places a great deal of responsibility on local housing associations in terms of provision. Based on the findings of this survey and given that the ethnic community in Govanhill is stable, growing and fairly consistent as regards its housing needs, the housing providers should be able to plan and respond more sensitively their future housing provision and allocation.

## REFERENCES

- Age Concern, 1991 *Housing and Support Needs of Elderly People within Ethnic Minorities*. Unpublished paper for Greater Glasgow Joint Planning Forum March 1991.
- Bowes A, McCluskey J, Sim D, 1990 *Ethnic Minorities in Council Housing in Glasgow* New Community 16(4) pp 523-532.
- Bowes A, Sim D, 1991 *Demands and Constraints: Ethnic Minorities and Social Services in Scotland* S C V O Edinburgh
- Brailey M, 1991 *Ethnic Minorities and Special Needs Housing Provision*, in A Bowes, D Sim, *Demand and Constraints: Ethnic Minorities and Social Services in Scotland* S C V O Edinburgh
- C R E, 1983 *Collingwood Housing Assn. Ltd. Report of a Formal Investigation*. Commission for Racial Equality London.
- CRE, 1993 *Ethnic minority population in Scotland*. Unpublished Commission for Racial Equality Edinburgh.
- Dalton M & Daghljan S, 1989 *Race and Housing in Glasgow: the Role of Housing Associations*. Commission for Racial Equality London.
- Dalton M, Hampton K, 1994 *Scotland's Ethnic Minority Community 1991*. S E M R U Factsheet 1 Glasgow
- Forrest R & Murie A, 1987 *The Affluent Home Owner: Labour Position and the Shaping of Housing Histories*, Sociological Review 35 (2) 370-403.
- L Harvie, 1990 *Fighting the whole World? Action Research on Sexual Violence against Asian women in Glasgow*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis University of Stirling
- Marshall C, Rossman G B, 1995 *Designing Qualitative Research (2nd Ed)* Sage Publications, London.
- McEwan M, Dalton M, Murie A, 1994 *Race and Housing in Scotland. A literature review and bibliography*. SEMRU Research Paper No.58, Edinburgh.
- McFarland E, Dalton M, Walsh D, 1989 *Personal Welfare Services and Ethnic Minorities. A study of East Pollokshields* S E M R U Research Paper 4 Glasgow.
- Mooney E A, 1994 *Residential Relocation Experience in Rural Scotland: Towards Understanding the Context of Rural Housing problems*. Paper presented to Edinburgh School of Planning and Housing.
- Niner P, 1985 *Housing Association allocations: Achieving Racial Equality*. Runnymede Trust, London.

*In the Margins: Current Practices in Qualitative Social Research with Asian Communities*, Social Research paper No.2 School of Policy Studies, University of Humberside.

### Appendix 1: Profile of participants : Focus Groups

Number of participants:	14
Number of males:	2
Number of females:	12

The number of people participating in the discussions would have been slightly larger, however some who had initially agreed to participate, subsequently refused, indicating that since it was the month of Ramadan it was no longer convenient to participate. In addition, two more refused to participate after they had arrived at the sessions. One male refused to join the discussion once he realised that he was going to be the only male in a female dominated group. He subsequently agreed to share his views on an individual basis. Similarly, another participant who discovered that she was going to be the only Chinese person in a group of Pakistani and Indian people also left when she realised that she was going to be the only person in the group of Chinese origin.

Various reasons were offered for the relatively smaller number of male participants. Amongst them the more significant included the following:

- The men were at work and were unable to attend
- The men were not interested in participating in any more research projects
- The men appeared more reluctant to talk about their personal problems and felt that it was easier for the women to represent the family.
- Some men were physically or mentally unable to participate due to illness.
- Others experienced language difficulties and felt that their wives would cope better with the discussion.

- A number of the female participants were Scottish born, their husbands were born in Pakistan so they felt that it was more appropriate for them to express the views of the family.

**Ethnic origin:** the overwhelming majority of interviewees (13) were of Pakistani origin and only one was Indian. However this was not unexpected, since the majority of ethnic people in Govanhill are of Pakistani origin. A fair number of Chinese people were contacted but were reluctant to participate and indicated that since they preferred not to rent they saw no reason to participate.

<b>Age Distribution:</b>	Under 30 years	1
	30 to 39 years	5
	40 to 49 years	6
	50 + years	2
	TOTAL	14

Both the male participants fell in the age group 30 to 39 years

**Marital Status:** The majority were married (10), three were widowed and one divorced.

**Economic Status:** The majority indicated that they were housewives (9), one was employed on a part-time basis and one, self employed. Three were unemployed. Nine families indicated that they obtained some form of social benefit ie: income support, unemployment or ill-health.

**Relationship to head of household:** Five participants mentioned that they were heads of households and nine were wives of heads of households.

**Tenure:** Most participants indicated that they were renting (10), two households were sharing accommodation and only 2 owned their property. Of those who were renting, 4 mentioned that they were renting from private landlords, two from the District Council, three from Govanhill Housing Association and one did not specify. The two households who had indicated that they were sharing accommodation were in fact part of an extended families. They stressed that they wished to have their own accommodation and that they were actively seeking to do so.

## Appendix 2: Profile of Participants: *Community Workers Focus Group*

### The Participants

There were 9 participants in this group, excluding the researchers. The organisations that they worked for were as follows:

Strathclyde Community Relations Council  
Glasgow Association For Mental Health  
Crossroads  
Strathclyde Social Work Department

All participants were known to work extensively in the Govanhill area, some exclusively with ethnic minority communities. Each participant explained their role within their respective organisations, a summary of which is given below:

- **Strathclyde Community Relations Council**  
The workers from the CRC explained that they were community relations officers ( Housing and complaints officer) and that their work was concerned mainly with racist abuse and relocation. They indicated that they worked very closely with the ethnic minority community in Govanhill assisting for example in the relocation of families.
- **Glasgow Association For Mental Health**  
The link and social workers from the Association operated mainly in the South West sector and as such each had counselled and are still counselling a significant number of clients from the Govanhill Area. They had decided to join the group discussions because most of their work was linked to housing related issues and they felt that their experiences might be of use to the project.
- **Crossroads (community based organisation in Govanhill)**  
The housing information officer and a community worker from Crossroads were present. Both explained that most of their work with the ethnic minorities community in Govanhill involved the provision of assistance, advice and information with regards to housing related matters.



- **Strathclyde Social Work Department**

The social /community worker present had assisted many ethnic clients. She felt that her ethnic background and professional expertise offered insights into housing issues faced by the ethnic community in Govanhill.

### Appendix 3: Profile of participants: *Individual Interviews*

Number of participants: 20

Number of males: 6

Number of females: 14

In depth structured interviews were completed with 20 ethnic households in Govanhill. Several participants felt that external factors such as financial problems and poor health had affected their housing experiences, in that they could not afford to buy property and had to rely on housing associations and other similar agencies for rented accommodation. Although most interviewees were recorded as female, a number of interviews were conducted jointly with married couples. The women generally responded to questions as the men felt that their wives were better placed to discuss housing issues.

**Ethnic Origin:** again most (18) participants were of Pakistani origin; the dominant ethnic group in Govanhill, one was Sikh and one Scottish born Chinese

Age Distribution:	Male	Female
6 to 45 years	2	2
46 to 55 years	2	4
56 Under 25 years	0	2
26 to 35 years	0	3
3+ years	2	3
TOTAL	6	14

**Marital Status:** The majority were married (13), two were widowed, and five either divorced or separated.

**Household size and structure:** Only one participant lived alone. Five households had between 2 and 3 members, seven between 4 and 5, three between 6 and 7 and four had more than 7 people living in their dwelling.

**Economic Status:** The majority indicated that they were housewives (12). One participant was employed on a full-time basis and two worked part-time. Five indicated that they were unemployed. Two participants received social benefits, ie: sickness benefit.

**Relationship to head:** Twelve participants stated that they were the head of household, seven of whom were female. Four participants were wives of heads.

**Tenure:** Nineteen participants indicated that they lived in flats. Five were in ground floor flats whilst eight had first floor flats and six lived on the second floor or above. One participant lived in a rented house. Four owned their property, three had bought outright and one was still paying a mortgage. Eleven interviewees indicated that they were renting their property and three that they lived with family. ( extended family) Of those who were renting, the majority (7) were renting from the Housing Association, two mentioned they were renting from a local authority, and three from a private landlord.