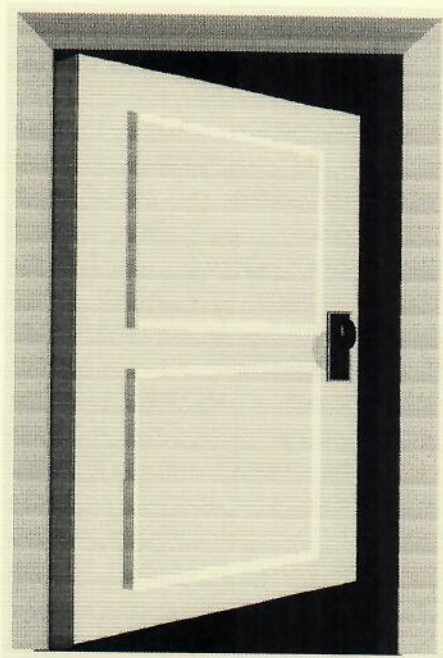


ACCOMMODATION CONCERN

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ANNUAL REPORT 1999/2000

**ACCOMMODATION CONCERN IS SUPPORTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF
THE ENVIRONMENT TRANSPORT & THE REGIONS, KETTERING BOROUGH
COUNCIL, NORTHANTS PROBATION SERVICE, LLOYDS/TSB FOUNDATION.**

Registered Charity No. 1014179

**ACCOMMODATION CONCERN
ANNUAL REPORT
1999/2000**

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**ACCOMMODATION CONCERN
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS
1999/2000**

Officers & Trustees

Chair: Cllr. Ian Watts

Vice Chair: Mike Fraser

Treasurer: Cllr. Carolyn Maxted

Secretary: Joyce Pedersen

Chris Fraser Neville Braybrook

Organisational Representatives

David Coren ~ Kettering Borough Council

Pam Hughes ~ Kettering Borough Council

Observers/Honorary Members

James Wright ~ Wilson Browne solicitors

Pat Mattock ~ Northants Probation Service

STAFF

Carole Pegley ~ Project Co-Ordinator

Sue Nott ~ Young Persons Worker

Rachel Laing ~ Advice & Resettlement Worker

Project Co-ordinators' Report

In the last annual report I mentioned that the general running and financing of Accommodation Concern was compounded by major changes in staffing.... never for a moment thinking that I would be writing very nearly the same thing again in the next report! However, the changes in staffing, and the shortage of funds both culminated favourably, and the "onwards and upwards" proclamation at the end of my last report proved to be the case.

The funding application submitted to the National Lotteries Charities Board was accepted, and this enabled us to appoint Sue Nott as a Young Persons Worker in January 2000. Sue has become a dedicated member of the team, and is doing much to develop our seminars in schools so that this provision of service may be extended to other schools within the Borough of Kettering. Sue has also worked closely with Social Care & Health in relation to the successful resettlement of young people. Our profile has also been raised through the talks Sue has given to local churches and community groups.

At the latter part of the year, we unexpectedly said goodbye to James Hodson, our Advice & Resettlement worker, who worked hard during his time with us and did a great deal to support landlords and negotiate on behalf of a diverse range of client needs. James has gone on to other things, and is wished all the best in that regard. In order that the recognised need for an increase in service provision could be met, Rachel Laing was appointed to replace James. Rachel joined us in December 1999, and she is also an asset to the organisation, working devotedly to advise and support clients, providing outreach care where appropriate. Rachel has continued in the quality of service provided to landlords, advising on health & safety, rights and obligations, mediating between both landlords and tenant should the need arise.

I am therefore very pleased to report that the addition of both Sue and Rachel has done much to strengthen the organisation, and we now have a committed and dedicated team striving to meet the identified needs of the client group. This has enabled me, as Co-ordinator, to also actively work to raise the profile of the organisation and develop the service provision in conjunction with both voluntary and statutory agencies within the Borough of Kettering.

I am currently working to produce a Rough Sleepers Strategy, as the number of clients sleeping rough has been consistent over the last two years. The strategy involves relevant agencies from both statutory and voluntary sectors and aims to take a co-ordinated approach in providing an accessible and efficient level of service for people sleeping rough. We have been fortunate to have invaluable contributions of

money and food from local schools and churches, enabling us to provide help and food for homeless people, which does a great deal to promote health and well-being and raises the self-esteem of those experiencing difficult times.

Accommodation Concern took part in an audit of need and service provision for young people in the Kettering Borough, orchestrated by Kettering Borough Council on behalf of the Young Single Persons Housing Group. Anita Ervelius-Althorpe interviewed a number of clients about their experiences of homelessness, and included this in her dissertation, also allowing the information to be used as part of the survey. Anita also provided staffing cover, and we thank her for her help and contribution. The audit was a worthwhile exercise, which shed a lot of light on the numbers and needs of young single homeless people, and the findings signified that Accommodation Concern is the main contact point for those people.

The majority of our clients [52.95%] continue to be under 25 years of age, and the number of client contacts continues to rise, with 1999/2000 being our busiest year so far. The last quarter of the last fiscal year (January – March 2000) saw a massive 535 client contacts – with both Sue and Rachel just having joined us! We also saw our largest ever number of families in this period, but out of the 28 families presenting for help, 20 were single parents. Also during this year, we saw a marked increase in particularly young mothers and teenage pregnancies, some as young as 15 years of age.

The overall rise in the numbers of people presenting for help has thankfully happened when we have had the staffing resources in place to cope with it. Nevertheless, the staff are continually busy in facing new challenges, working hard to meet identified client needs. In order to continue the justified and vital work of Accommodation Concern, my main task is that of raising funds - not only to enable continuity, but also to develop the core service with the aim of providing access to those people living in the outlying areas of the Borough. I also hope to work with other agencies to provide an evening drop-in facility to provide advice and support, promote life-skills and sustainment of tenancies, and increase the provision of our preventative work to schools and local community groups.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of Accommodation Concern for their dedication and hard work, and the Management Committee for their commitment and support, working actively to ensure the continuation of the work of Accommodation Concern in both challenging and rewarding times.

Carole Pegley

Young Persons Worker Report

Since my appointment to Accommodation Concern, I have found my work both rewarding and challenging. Apart from providing advice and support during surgery times, my role also consists of providing seminars and attending assemblies to schools in Kettering. I also represent the organisation by presenting talks to local groups and churches.

I have provided four seminars to the Henry Gotch school, providing advice and discussion on housing issues affecting young people and homelessness, as part of a preventative programme to tackle the growing incidence of youth homelessness. I have attended five assemblies at both primary and comprehensive schools in Kettering, to briefly mention the work that we do and impart on young children where they should go and what they can do should they find themselves in need of help. As a result of my contact with schools, teachers are now contacting us for advice and support when they become aware that maybe one of their pupils is experiencing difficulties at home and wanting to leave. In addition, this contact with schools has provided us with 257 tins for food parcels (from St. Andrews school), and a cheque for £50, (from St. Thomas More school), for which we are very grateful.

Through my contacts with local churches, we have raised awareness of the service we provide as many homeless people often go to churches for help. Following talks to the Methodist church in Rothwell we received a generous donation of £75, and very kindly received a £50 donation following a talk to the Christian Centre in Kettering. We have also appealed for donations of food, toiletries, towels and blankets, and so far we have had a good response.

I have also successfully resettled a 17 year old male who was evicted from his accommodation because of a drink problem. Together with social services, we were able to help him under the protocol and place him in temporary accommodation until finally settling him in a successful foyer project where he has abstained from alcohol and undertaken a training course.

I hope to continue to build on the resettlement aspect of my work, offering to young people in particular, support and advice to empower them to lead well-informed and independent lives. I also aim to develop the seminars to schools programme in order to provide this service to a wider area within the Borough of Kettering, and will continue to assist in raising the profile of Accommodation Concern within the community.

Sue Nott

Advice & Resettlement Workers' Report

I joined Accommodation Concern in December 1999, and my role consists of working with both clients and landlords, which inevitably means that my working day is very busy!

Since January 2000, I have worked hard to expand our landlord register, and currently we have some 63 landlords operating in and around the Borough of Kettering. At any one time we have approximately 15 landlords offering available accommodation mainly consisting of rooms in shared houses. That said, only two of these landlords will accept tenants claiming housing benefit. In order to address this issue, we have advised both clients and landlords of their respective responsibilities in relation to the Benefit Verification Framework.

Over the past few months, we have had 292 contacts with landlords, of which 77 were telephone requests for assistance. A total of 17 landlords visited the office, and we in turn made 11 visits to landlords in order to ensure that our minimum standards policy was being adhered to. To support our landlords further, I have produced a "landlord pack" which provides information to landlords about their statutory duties and rights. I also attend the Landlords' Forum, which is well attended by our landlords, and is an ideal opportunity to meet other landlords not yet known to us.

I see clients who visit the offices of Accommodation Concern, and as part of this work I have helped to resettle a number of clients. In addition to the surgery work, I provide regular outreach visits to two families, and two single people, all of whom live in private rented accommodation within the Borough. I have also made contact with people who appear to be street homeless in Kettering town centre, making them fully aware of our service. Together with my colleague Sue Nott I have attended local schools to deliver seminars as part of our preventative work. This has proved to be successful in that schools have referred pupils to us when they have encountered difficulties at home.

I have attended training housing advice and housing benefit courses with Shelter, and also have received training with regard to rough sleeping. As a result of all the training received, I feel better equipped to tackle the challenges that my job presents. I look forward to continuing my work with Accommodation Concern, and contributing positively to the valuable service we provide to the community.

Rachel Laing
Advice & Resettlement worker

Treasurers' Report

It is a strange feeling saying a sort of halfway goodbye to Accommodation Concern, an organisation I have been Treasurer of for some 7 years. Partially, there is a mixture of relief in that I feel I can offload some of the particular responsibilities of the Treasurers' role, but also sadness because I have shared in so much of the history of the organisation.

There have been times when I have been a prophet of doom, forecasting the imminent demise of accommodation Concern, unless more funding was attracted instantly. Miraculously, it seemed, the funds did materialise in time, and we were able to carry on doing what we know is a vital job in the community.

On the other hand, there have been occasions – far fewer of course, when we have seemed to be really well off! Managing this roller coaster, and endeavouring, with only limited success it must be confessed, to keep most of the money worries off the shoulders of the staff has been quite an exciting if occasionally nerve-wracking experience. There have been times when I wished I were back teaching – but not many!

This report is a “halfway” farewell, inasmuch that we are planning on leaving the area to be nearer to our children and grandchildren. In these circumstances, it seems fairer now to elect a new Treasurer at this time rather than further on into the financial year. That said, I am standing for re-election to that of Vice Chair of the management committee, in the hope that I can still contribute to an organisation that has been an important part of my life since I retired.

An important aspect of changes within the organisation in the last couple of years is that of a restructuring of staff, with Carole appointed as Project Co-ordinator. It seems that this move has been highly successful, and I would like to pay particular tribute to Carole, and her colleagues, who have done so much to establish Accommodation Concern as such an effective and respected organisation in the community. Fortunately, I am able to report that our end of year balances are healthy and the forecast for 2000-2001 looks relatively encouraging, providing that the prudence exercised last year by the staff is sustained. I should point out that this year there has been considerable expenditure on training, in order to induct Rachel and Sue fully into the intricacies of housing law and regulations. The expectation is that the expenditure on training for 2000-2001 will be much less, with training needs met through occasional courses.

ACCOMMODATION CONCERN
Client Statistical Information
1999/2000

Clients & Contacts

Total clients	New clients	Male	Female	Contacts
576	469	359	217	1448 Personal 909 Telephone 539

Ethnic Origin

White	Afro-Caribbean	Asian	Other
557	7	9	3

Age Groups

U-16	16	17-18	19-24	25-30	31-59	60+
3	22	116	164	92	168	11

Sources of referrals

Word Of Mouth	Kettering Borough Council	Citizens Advice Kettering	Welfare Rights Kettering	Social Care & Health Kettering	Northants Probation Service	Land-lords	Previous Clients Returning	Other
178	85	22	44	17	28	5	139	ECHG 9 KYI 4 Job centre 5 School 4 Other 36 Total 58

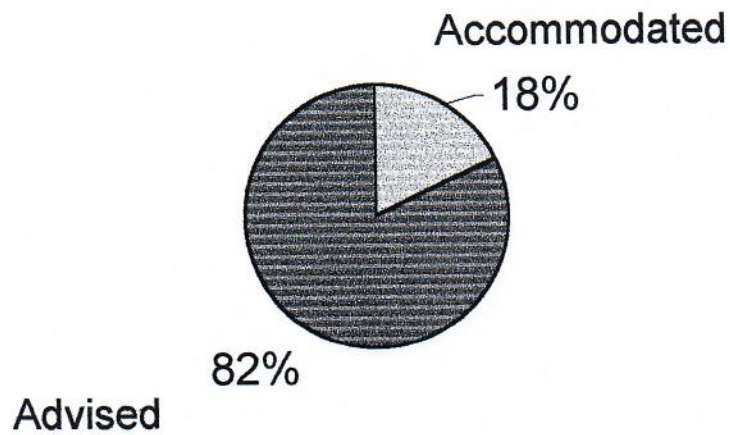
Contacts – Action taken

Advised	Sent to meet Landlord	Accommodated	Referred on
1163	196	106	39

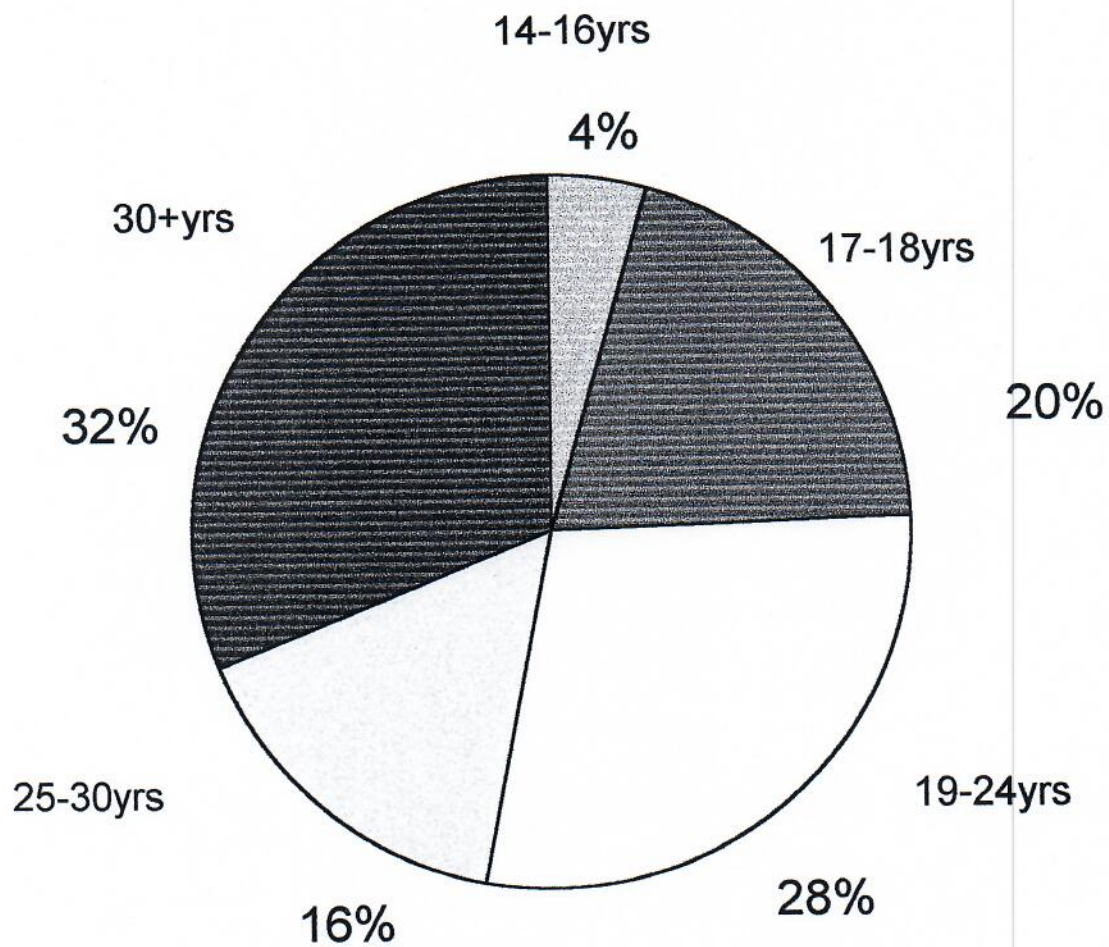
Clients presenting as Rough Sleepers	Rough Sleepers accommodated
11	2

Families seen	Of these families, those who are single parents
76	46

Clients Advised & Accommodated 1999/2000



Client Age Group Quotas 1999/2000



Quarterly Client Contacts **April 1997 - March 2000**

