

vincenthousingassociation
limited



a review of the years

2016/17

Vincent Housing Association (VHA)

Vincent House was built in the late 1930s by Vincent House Limited (VHL). Vincent Housing Association Limited (VHA) was formed in 1964 for the purpose of a friendly takeover of VHL, which was completed in 1965. Originally registered under the Industrial & Provident Societies Acts, it is now known as a Registered Society and is regulated by the FCA (Financial Conduct Authority) following the Co-operatives and Community Benefit Societies Act passed in 2014.

VHA's activities are the responsibility of its Committee of Management comprising: Rory Silkin (Chairman), Jenny Rugman (Treasurer), Sara Ives (Secretary), Julia Bindman, Penny Boreham Saban, Mike Farrar, Fi McLachlan, Jane Rae, Ashley Roughton, Mary Shaw.

VHA aims to be financially, socially and environmentally responsible and any surplus is reinvested in its activities or to use to help others working with homelessness. VHA:

- provides good value residential accommodation at Vincent House, Notting Hill, London;
- employs & trains the staff of Vincent House, many of whom live in;
- owns two further properties which we lease on benevolent terms to charities providing accommodation & services to vulnerable and homeless individuals;
- helps facilitate other charitable/social organisations working with homelessness.

For further information: www.vincenthouse.london

Vincent House is VHA's primary activity and is an established and popular residence in Notting Hill offering good value accommodation (mostly single bedrooms with private bathrooms) with breakfast and evening meal. In its early decades most of the House's residents were military personnel or civil servants. Now it accommodates a wide range of people of different ages and from a variety of countries who are in London to study or work, including many professionals and academics who like its quiet, comfortable and friendly ambience.

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VHA's Annual General Meeting March 2017

The AGM was attended by the Committee of Management, the Vincent House management team and several Members of the Association. VHA's Chairman, Rory Silkin was joined by Richard Tomkins (General Manager, Vincent House) in reporting on several key points including occupancy changes, management additions and how the House is 'going forwards'.

The guests at the event included representatives from two of our partners: Langley House Trust and The Art House Sheffield. (Read more on pages 8-11).



▲ Rory Silkin (left) with Richard Tomkins at the AGM

Going Forwards:

2016-17 has been a time of consolidation for VHA following our investment in a major improvement programme for Vincent House in 2014/15 when we installed new double-glazed windows, renewed the roof, made some significant exterior repairs and upgraded a number of rooms to superior status.

After many years of steady occupancy, the pattern has recently become less predictable. The impact of this combined with the investment costs, which included borrowing £1.5million from Charity Bank (www.charitybank.org), has been reflected in our financial results; however, we remain financially strong with satisfactory reserves.

Our occupancy rates have, we believe, been partly affected by external factors such as terror attacks and economic challenges, but the general trends in the 21st Century to greater mobility and so called 'short-termism' or 'instant gratification' have also been key influences.

Going Forwards (continued)

As longer term residents move on they are often replaced by individuals staying for shorter periods of a few weeks or months. This quicker turnover requires additional resources and operational changes. We are challenging ourselves with a review of all departments and have highlighted the need for greater flexibility and agility in the way we operate.

We have also been promoting Vincent House more widely, something we rarely needed to do in the past when 'word of mouth' recommendations were the main source of new arrivals. As a result of 'getting our name out there' and testing different markets we have shown many new contacts around the House and feedback has been positive. We have also introduced new 'pre-pay discounts' for stays of 6, 9 or 12 months to encourage longer term bookings and these are already showing signs of being popular.

Occupancy in 2017 has notably improved and we have welcomed many new residents and visitors to the House; and, pleasingly, nearly all of them give it very high ratings and seem to particularly like its hospitable atmosphere and friendly staff.

Looking ahead, there are still uncertainties and we continue to look at how Vincent House might adapt itself for the future; however, although we are adjusting our business model to reflect the changing world, it is essential that we balance that with the House's ethos and values and maintain our mission.

Our Key People:

To help meet the challenges we decided to strengthen Vincent House's small management team led by Richard Tomkins (General Manager). In January 2017 Mariya Tseluyko joined us as Deputy General Manager and in August 2017 we added Executive Housekeeper Agnieszka Kedracka.

It has been a year of change as in late Autumn 2017 we said farewell to Debra Loynton who left Vincent House after eight years as Administration Manager. Carla Soares Hester, our Front of House Manager for the last ten years, has taken over as Administration Manager and, as a result, we are restructuring our Front of House team.

Caroline Whitney (Head Chef) who joined us in 2015 has transformed our catering in the past two years and is responsible for our delicious breakfasts and dinners which get many favourable comments from residents and guests!

Christmas Party December 2017:

Following a break in 2016, our traditional Christmas party for residents returned with lots of sparkle, glitter and baubles on 13th December 2017. The evening started with aperitifs followed by a delicious dinner with a tasty selection of typical Christmas fare prepared by Caroline, our chef, and her team. A 'magic mirror photo booth' added to the fun and there was also late night dancing to live singing by Laura Soul Valore. The party was greatly enjoyed by the many residents, members of the Committee and guests who attended.



▲ Agnieszka Kedracka and Mariya Tseluyko



▲ Christmas table decoration



▲ Lawrence Bourke, one of our maintenance team serving drinks at the party



▲ Debra Loynton enjoys a slice of chocolate cake made especially for her farewell by Vincent House chef Caroline Whitney



▲ Rosemary Summers receiving a gift from her brother Geoffrey Roughton (VHA Chairman at the time) when she stepped down as a Committee Member in 2007

Rosemary Summers:

We were saddened to hear of the death of Rosemary Summers in early 2017. A long serving member of the Committee before her retirement in 2007, she was the last person who had served on both the Committee of Management of Vincent Housing Association and as a director of its predecessor, Vincent House Limited. Current Chairman Rory Silkin spoke about her at the AGM in March 2017 saying:

I remember her as always being a kind and humorous voice on the Committee, as well as having a penetrating mind when it came to knotty problems. We shall all miss her.

Our Partners:

As well as Vincent House, VHA aims to facilitate and support social/charitable organisations working with homelessness. Whilst the continued success and sustainability of Vincent House is our primary objective, VHA remains committed to its social mission.

We own two other properties: Carlisle House in Hayes, Middlesex acquired in 1998 and Hope House in South Croydon acquired in 2001. These are leased to Trinity Homeless Projects and Langley House Trust respectively on favourable terms which allow them to provide accommodation and services to vulnerable and homeless individuals.

Since the mid 1990s VHA has also provided financial support to several charitable/social organisations; most recently a loan to the charity behind the development of The Art House, a centre which opened in Sheffield in 2015 (see pages 9-11).



www.wearetrinity.org.uk

Trinity operates a scheme at Carlisle House comprising a store selling recycled furniture and three flats which accommodate seven people. Carlisle House is a pivotal part of Trinity's overall activities and continues to make not only a significant contribution to the rest of Trinity's activities but also a significant difference to the lives of the many people it accommodates, trains & employs.

LANGLEY
HOUSE TRUST
HELPING PEOPLE TO
LIVE CRIME-FREE LIVES

www.langleyhoustrust.org

Langley is an innovative charity providing offender rehabilitation services across England, including pioneering new initiatives to help more of their residents to move on to independent living by having an income either from employment or self-employment. Langley offers resettlement accommodation at Hope House, our property in South Croydon. The project there is doing well and achieving positive outcomes despite many challenges - they are having success with move-ons and have developed associations with Network Rail, Pret A Manger and Crisis Skylight amongst others.



www.arthousesheffield.co.uk

Graham Duncan, with whom we worked to develop the project at Carlisle House (see page 8) and who now works at St Mary's Centre in Sheffield, approached us a few years ago with the vision of a new centre based alongside another church in Sheffield, St Matthews. VHA helped facilitate the development through a loan arrangement which, together with a primary loan from Charity Bank plus fund-raising and grant monies, resulted in the £1.5million development of The Art House. It opened in Sheffield's city centre in August 2015 and comprises pottery & art studios, exhibition room and café. It provides high quality courses for both the public and those living with disadvantage, so each group is engaged in common endeavour in the same space reflecting a key aspect of the Art House's philosophy.

A special in-depth feature about The Art House follows on; and if you want to find out more about this exciting and dynamic project you can follow them on Facebook or visit their website.



The Art House, Sheffield:

Graham Duncan attended our AGM in March 2017 and spoke about The Art House. He brought a small selection of beautiful and individual pots (right, below) created by one of its users and explained how:

"the opportunity to express himself through the pottery classes is helping to transform his life for the better."

"Since opening in August 2015 we have worked with people with mental health difficulties, homeless people, and others with disadvantages such as Aspergers, early onset dementia and young people excluded from education. They come for the opportunity to do worthwhile work, develop skills and form social networks in a positive environment shared by the public. Our unique approach locates recovery from mental illness where it belongs: in the heart of the community and aligned with the interests, motivations and lives of the general public. Mental health issues are dealt with in a positive, non-stigmatising way that works with people's strengths and assets and helps them to discover their talents and abilities, to volunteer and become connected to the broader community.

"Income from commercial courses provides a vital revenue stream and many café customers participate in our 'pending' scheme by paying for an extra beverage or meal to be claimed by a homeless person. This makes the café accessible to homeless people who value the fact that it is a 'normal' space where people behave respectfully. Through natural conversations many are encouraged to join art and pottery classes.



"People living with these disadvantages have told us the unique benefits of the Art House are:

- The ability to form social networks not based on deficit. They value the fact that mental illness is rarely, if ever, discussed. Instead they are encouraged to focus outwards on learning the skills of making good art.
- They learn skills which other people value. It is difficult for many of our users to find paid work, but at the Art House they can create things valued by others which can be affirmed through exhibitions and sales.
- Progression routes. Some people have progressed into commercial classes where they learn alongside the public. We want to provide the support to make this route possible for many more people.
- Opportunities to volunteer for practical tasks in the pottery & art studios and assist in commercial classes.
- The building is shared with the public and so they are not coming to a facility defined by social deficit."

You can read an inspirational case study of one of The Art House's recent users by visiting our blog post: www.vincenthouselondon.com/the-art-house/ and clicking on the link at the bottom of the post: The Art House Case Study.

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