

The Chartered Institute Of Housing



From Octavia Hill to Octavia House

The history of housing management, and the Chartered Institute of Housing, was sparked by the work of pioneers of social reform opposed to appalling housing conditions in the second half of the 19th century.

In 1884-1885 the Royal Commission on the Housing of Working Classes published a report that detailed with shocking clarity the poor conditions in which many people were living. At the same time, forward-thinking social reformers like Victorian socialist, philanthropist and educationalist Octavia Hill, recognised the need for improved housing for the poor and the reform of housing in England began.

Octavia Hill (1838-1912) initiated the profession of housing management, first managing two small groups of dilapidated houses in Marylebone, London in 1865 and 1866. She rented her properties on weekly or short-term tenancies, employing trained female housing managers, who were equipped to deal with repairs, welfare issues and rent accounting, to collect rents in person.

She continued this pioneering work throughout her life and in 1916 women who had trained under her founded the Association of Women Housing Workers. The Association grew and changed its name to the Society of Housing Managers in 1948.

In 1931, a group of local government officers from housing departments in the West Midlands established the Institute of Housing. The roots of CIH were in the Institute of Housing, which held the first Housing conference in 1931, developed its own qualifying examination and published the first issue of Housing magazine in 1938.

The Institute worked alongside the Society of Housing Managers until finally the two groups merged on 24th February 1965, forming the Institute of Housing Managers. This marked the start of the modern era for CIH.

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