

HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES



“I had no idea what a co-op was when I was 16 but my whole life revolves around co-ops now. The future of social housing is co-ops.” Paula Farrow – Minster Housing Co-op, Isle of Sheppey, Kent



“I wouldn’t want to live in any other type of housing other than a co-op. I’ve lived here for 20 years and have found it an empowering environment in which to spend my life. I can’t think of a better environment to bring up my child.” Samantha Dyer - Argyle Street Housing Co-op, Cambridge



“I was born in the co-op. I’ve lived here all my life. People are friendly and it’s a community. Everyone looks out for each other. And it’s good to know that my opinion means something. Why would I want to live anywhere else?” Carl Matharu – 20/20 Housing Co-op, Birmingham

“The co-op is a base within the community. Our members don’t feel excluded because we are part of the community. They often don’t realise how much knowledge they have about how systems work. This has come about because of their involvement with the co-op.” Shantilal Makwana – Belgrave Neighbourhood Housing Co-op, Leicester



“In the co-op, I’ve got good friends. You look out for your neighbour, knowing that your neighbour will look out for you. And the children all know they can knock on any door and people will look after each other’s kids as if they were their own.” Margaret Cope - Paddock Housing Co-op, Walsall

“Co-operative living is better for the soul.”
Helen Russell – Two Piers Housing Co-op, Brighton

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Housing Co-operatives are housing organisations owned and managed by their tenants and members.

They are the country’s best kept secret, small community organisations quietly sustaining strong community businesses, often owning significant community assets.

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Housing co-ops are democratically controlled by their members and tenants. People set up or become members of housing co-ops for a number of reasons:

- having a nice place to live
- living in a supportive and vibrant community environment
- good housing services and affordable rent
- having control over their homes and neighbourhood
- a commitment to the co-operative values and principles

All of these are good reasons to be involved with housing co-ops. Whatever the reason, the co-operative model is a good way of providing housing, at the same time as empowering communities.

The model uniquely builds the self-reliance of homeownership within a community safety net, and there are countless examples of housing co-op members who have personal journeys, like getting into employment, from their involvement in housing co-ops.

All the research carried out into housing co-ops shows that tenants are as good as if not better at running their housing than other landlords. It is not uncommon that tenant satisfaction ratings in housing co-ops are significantly higher than in other landlords.

Strong housing co-op movements exist all over the world – Canada and Norway being particular examples. The UK currently has a small housing co-operative sector, numbering about 600 housing co-ops in England, Scotland and Wales. Most housing co-ops are small community organisations owning about 50 homes, but some are larger. The sector generally has a good record of success, spanning 25 years.

Confederation of Co-operative Housing

The CCH was set up in 1994 and is recognised as the representative body for co-operative housing by Government and by the co-operative movement. We are a voluntary organisation, built from the membership of housing co-ops and other tenant controlled organisations. We provide opportunities for our co-operative housing members to network with each other, whilst at the same time, promoting housing co-operatives and other tenant controlled housing organisations to Government, the media and elsewhere.

Our programme in 2008/2009 includes:

- offering practical advice, support and information to housing co-ops on issues such as business planning, governance issues, reviewing policies and best practice guidance
- working with other national and regional tenant organisations and Government to develop a National Tenant Voice
- seeking to influence the Government's Housing & Regeneration Bill
- generally promoting the values and successes of the housing co-op movement

The Commission on Mutual and Co-operative Housing

In 2008, the CCH, working with Co-operatives UK, CDS Co-operatives, social housing providers Accord, Hanover and Trident, the National Housing Federation and the Chartered Institute of Housing, set in motion the Commission on Mutual and Co-operative Housing.

The Commission is independent. It will explore the historic role of housing co-ops and chart potential futures for our diverse sector. It has commissioned the University of Birmingham's Centre for Urban and Regional Studies to carry out independent research for the Commission.

Commission Chair Adrian Coles, Director General of the Building Societies Association, outlined the approach:

“The UK has a small but flourishing co-operative housing sector. The Commission's aim is to move housing co-ops closer to the centre of national policy debates by gathering evidence to see how best to expand their future role. The Commission is impartial and will receive evidence across the political spectrum. We aim to develop a long-term strategic framework for growth and management.”