

COMMUNITY GATEWAY



“My greatest hope is that Gateway will help to bring a little more dignity back to the life of Preston’s impoverished neighbourhoods. If people feel pride in where they live, they will look after it.” Retired nurse Freda Olsson, aged 72 and one of the first Preston Community Gateway members



“Preston CGA is pioneering a tenant-led approach that has not been attempted on such a scale previously. Tenants, staff and board members should be rightly proud of their achievements.” Quote from Preston CGA’s first year Community Empowerment Strategy review report, written by BCHS, the agency who worked with tenants and officers in setting up Preston Community Gateway



“We chose Community Gateway because it was a tenant membership organisation which will allow us to democratically own our homes and work with our staff to make decisions about the future.” Chris Blackett, the tenant Chair of Watford’s Gateway Committee. In Watford, over 2,000 tenants have chosen to become members of their Gateway

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Community Gateway is a housing organisation owned by its tenants.

Developed by the Confederation of Co-operative Housing, Community Gateway is a large scale tenant membership housing organisation that builds opportunities for community empowerment into its rules and structure.



COMMUNITY GATEWAY



Community Gateway:

- places tenant empowerment at the heart of housing, using the housing asset as a catalyst for community
- generates community pride and vision through providing opportunities for local tenant and community involvement in decisions at a pace right for them and on issues that matter to them
- establishes a tenant democracy through tenant membership
- generates a cultural change to tackle the us and them mentality, where tenants lead the organisation and work with staff to deliver the quality homes and neighbourhoods they want
- builds all of this into the fabric, rules and structure of the organisation

Its components are:

- a tenant and leaseholder membership, giving a sense of ownership, identity and community guardianship of key values and directions
- a membership shaping strategies and policies
- tenant board members elected by the membership
- defined local community areas reflecting community perceptions
- a structured programme of Community Option Studies carried out in local community areas to define community vision and aspirations and to develop the ability of communities to achieve their vision
- a staircase of housing options available to local communities – from informal engagement to tenant management and community ownership
- all of this set out in a written Community Empowerment Strategy and built into the rules and structure of the organisation

Developed by the Co-operative movement, the Community Gateway Model was defined in the Empowering Communities report, published by the Confederation of Co-operative Housing, Co-operatives UK and the Chartered Institute of Housing.

Preston Community Gateway was the first Community Gateway set up. In Preston tenants and councillors - previously hostile to stock transfer - united to support their Gateway transfer. The Council's 6,500 homes were transferred in November 2005.

By 2008, over 2,100 residents have signed up as members of Preston Community Gateway. Tenants are involved in decision-making at all levels. The membership elected Gateway Tenant Committee sits at the heart of the organisation, working with the Board and staff to come up with ideas and to consider all areas of policy and strategy. Community Options Studies carried out in Preston's local neighbourhoods are generating community activity, where previously tenants saw little reason to get involved. All this is building a network of tenants and residents engaged at different levels, and hope for the future.

Hot on Preston's heels, tenants in Watford, Braintree and Lewisham have all voted to transfer their homes to Community Gateways. Their homes transferred to Watford Community Housing Trust, Greenfields Community Homes and Phoenix Community Housing in 2007. In Wales, tenants of Rhondda Cynon Taf and Torfaen voted to transfer their homes to Community Mutuals, the Welsh equivalent of Community Gateway, and their homes were transferred to RCT Homes and Bron Afon Community Housing.

Community Gateway is leading the way in developing community fabric, and encouraging a sense of community responsibility, ownership and identity. It is leading to a better quality of decision-making, and to increased pride, hope, sense of belonging and a better quality of life for some of the most vulnerable in our society. It is starting to build communities where people want to live, and it is showing that it is possible to develop vibrant tenant and community democracies where ordinary people make major decisions. Community Gateway challenges everyone who provides services to do so with people and communities at the heart of decision-making.