

HOUSING OURSELVES GRANTS - GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

1. About the CLH Programme

The Community-Led Housing (CLH) Programme in Brighton & Hove aims to build the capacity of local people to find their own housing solutions.

We aim to do this through awareness raising, engaging with diverse communities, helping groups access suitable land and properties, and providing grants to community-led housing groups. The money for the grants comes from the Department for Communities and Local Government via the Community Housing Fund and Brighton & Hove City Council.

The grants element of the CLH programme is called *Housing Ourselves*. The fund stands at a total of £253,000 for group support. All funds are to be disbursed over the programme period (January - October 2018).

2. What can the grants be used for?

Housing Ourselves grants aim to help groups of local people to develop their own community-led housing solutions and provide support to them in overcoming any obstacles they currently face in making progress.

The fund is **targeted at pre-construction stages**. We aim to help groups to, for example, develop their group, their business case, or their financial plan, or to find suitable land or property, and position them to secure commercially available mortgages to fund the construction phase of their project. We are unable to fund the purchase or construction phases with this round of money.

Based on national evidence, we know that many groups go through typical stages in the development of their CLH projects and our application process reflects this (see Diagram 1 below). Our enablers work with each CLH group to establish what level of grant they need, depending on the stage they are at, and how much they have achieved already. Some groups need smaller amounts because they are at the beginning of the journey and some groups need larger amounts because they are closer to needing to engage contractors and specialists. We recognise that all groups have differences and will achieve success in different ways.

The *Housing Ourselves* grants programme can also offer support in kind, not just money to be spent directly by a group. For example, if a group needs some financial planning advice, the Programme is organising action learning sessions for groups, with national and local

experts facilitating the sessions, to help groups to learn to produce their own plans. For more complex, larger projects, we can provide someone with the expertise to tackle more complex situations. We can also help to match groups and available land / property through our land and property enabler (Nicola Thomas). If a group needs advice on how to develop their project outline into a full business case, then a number of CLH Enablers are able to help at this early stage.

The key goal of the Programme is to help CLH groups to reach the point of having deliverable housing projects ready to go (see Diagram 1 below).

3. Who can apply?

The *Housing Ourselves* grants are open to local groups that require support to progress a community-led housing solution.

To be considered, a group should meet all of the following eligibility criteria:

1. Demonstrate a strong connection to Brighton & Hove
2. Be exploring or developing community-led housing options such as CLT, co-operative, cohousing communities, community self-build...
3. Prioritising permanently affordable housing
4. Willing to work in partnership with BHCLT and other local CLH organisations to share information, take part in shared learning events and contribute to the community-led housing movement.

The fund is *not* available for:

- Groups / projects where most of the members or participants live outside of Brighton & Hove
- Registered Providers, Private Companies, Local Authorities
- Paying debts or fines already incurred
- Expenses already paid / to cover retrospective costs.

A group that meets the above criteria is eligible for Pre-application Support: A member of the CLH team will meet the group to hear about and discuss their plans; further explain the grants programme; and help the group to develop their plans and to prepare and submit a grant application if appropriate.

Following the Pre-application stage, we offer three tiers of grant support, each with additional criteria (see below for Tiers of support).

4. How to Apply

To apply for *Housing Ourselves* support, a group must:

1. Express interest by emailing admin@bhclt.org.uk or telephoning the Operations Manager on 07526 688926. They will be assigned an enabler from the Programme, who will contact them.

2. Meet with the CLH enabler for a pre-application support conversation. The CLH enabler will help the group to work out if they are eligible and ready for a grant. If the group are not ready, the enabler can work with the group to get the support they need to be ready.
3. Prepare their documents describing their project, with advice and guidance from the enabler.
4. Submit their documents, along with an application cover sheet, to admin@bhclt.org.uk

Groups need to go through the pre-application engagement process with a CLH Enabler.

This will ensure that groups are supported to make their best case for their project and do not waste their time when they are not yet likely to succeed.

Applications should be received by the 10th of each month, in order to be considered at the assessment panel meeting at the end of the month. Applications received after the 10th will be held over to the following month.

5. How are applications assessed?

The CLH Assessment Panel considers each application at a monthly meeting. The Panel is made up of individuals who combine experience, expertise in CLH, property development, grant-giving, governance and scrutiny and includes a representative from Brighton & Hove City Council. The Panel's four criteria for assessing applications are:

- Community-led (see eligibility criteria 1. And 2. above)
- The extent to which the project will prioritise permanently affordable housing
- Viability of the project/ chances of the project succeeding (strength of the group, project outline or business case, sound and detailed costings or financial plan, the likelihood of the group securing the properties or land)
- Social and environmental value.

6. Receiving a grant

The Assessment Panel's decision will be communicated by email to the group, as soon as possible after the meeting.

If a group is successful, a Grant Agreement Form will be attached to the email for the group to sign and return.

The Programme aims to release the grant two weeks after the meeting.

Diagram 1: Stages of a Community-Led Housing project

Brighton and Hove Community-led Housing Support Hub project development

The CLH support hub will stimulate and support groups as necessary through the process, drawing on consultancy and existing expertise. Projects may arise from groups forming around general housing need, or community interest around specific sites.

