

Working Collaboratively to Support the Growth of Community-Led Housing

Towards an Operational Plan

Participants in the event **'Working Collaboratively to Support the Growth of Community-led Housing'** (23-24 February 2016) discussed a proposal by BSHF and identified a **set of follow-up actions** which could help to shape a more coherent support mechanism for community-led housing. **The objective is to support growth in community-led housing, in all forms.**

Where we've got to 	What we think might work 	Can we make this work? 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If we increase awareness/understanding/demand for community-led housing • Lots of support and expertise on offer but <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – No clear point of reference for new enquiries – No simple pathway to find the right support at the right time – Support/funding can be tied to specific 'models' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single point of reference • Generic front line support/triage service • Phone/advice line – human contact! • Signposting • Evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who provides the triage/generic support? • What would they need? • What would this cost to set up? • Does something exist that we could use? • Do people have capacity to help with this? • Could we build up a 'menu' of support? • What sort of commitment can we get? • How will we evaluate this? • Leadership

End Game: *What are we doing all of this for?*

- We are working together to see if we can improve the process of delivering community-led housing
- We want to demonstrate both demand and a coherent response to that demand in order to make the case with funders to invest in increasing capacity
- In the longer term we will be aiming to make the model financially sustainable
- Increasing demand for and delivery of community-led housing will create political leverage and influence policy
- ***We want community-led housing to be accessible, intelligible and visible to all as part of the mainstream.***

Summary of discussions

Design: We talked about providing a clear starting point for new customers to offer a clearer path to the support they need

- Phone line: Light touch, neutral, shared hosting to build trust
- Website/Online resource, possibly hosted initially by an existing organisation

What BSHF will do next:

- Identify options for hosting phone line – offers/opportunities from existing organisations; costs/software etc.
- Identify options for online presence – offers/opportunities from existing organisations; costs/software etc.

Function: We talked about what something like this should do

- Help customers to figure out what they want to do – for example tackle empty property locally; build suitable housing for the community; set up a Tenant Management Organisation; recruit members to a Housing Cooperative (etc.)
- Signpost to expertise (local/regional/national as available/appropriate) and other resources
- Enable customer interaction (e.g. through network meetings?)
- Provide for the 'quiet enquiry' – reflect a diversity of ways to access the services on offer

Process: We talked about *how this could work*

What BSHF will do next: We will design an initial process and ask for specific input, considering (but not limited to):

- What already exists? How can it be built on?
- How can we ensure common ownership and enable advice by existing bodies in a virtual space?
- Can we set something up within an existing organisation or not?
- How do we keep this as simple and light as possible?
- How do we ensure a common approach to diagnostic support and referrals to specialist support?
- How do we ensure a positive customer experience across the board?
- How do we identify and address gaps in skills and knowledge? Is recruitment/training required?
- How do we ensure the process is flexible and able to respond to evolving customer needs?
- How do we enable those supporting community-led housing to support each other?

Human Resource: We talked about *who will help us to do this?*

What BSHF will do next: We need a clearer understanding of the spectrum of skills and capacity available to support community-led housing. If you provide any form of support for community-led housing please tell us about what you do by responding to a **skills and capacity survey [to follow]**.

Funding & Finance: *How can we pay for this?*

- We need to set up a working pilot which will help lever in funding
- BSHF may be able to provide a small amount of support funding through the project initially
- Several funders have expressed an interest in this process – follow up conversations will be arranged when the process design is further along
- We need to know from existing organisations whether there is the scope to combine existing funding and/or resources to support this initiative

What we are asking you to do: Tell us honestly what your capacity is over the next 15 months (to end May 2017); whether and to what extent you will be able to get involved in developing and staffing a new pilot system of support for community-led housing.

Evaluation & Adjustment: *How will we know if this is making any difference?*

This is a pilot – it might not work! The design must be open to adjustment & continuous review. Evaluation and monitoring needs setting up, to cover:

- Quality control
- Consistency of approach & message
- Are customers getting the right help?
- Are support providers receiving the right types of referrals?
- Is the signposting provided appropriate?
- How useful are regional/local networks as a resource where they exist – what do people get out of them?

What BSHF will do next: There is a small project budget to set up evaluation & monitoring. The process design needs to consider what evidence needs to be generated at all stages and how this should work. We will include questions about evaluation & monitoring when we ask you for input on process.

Collaborative Action: *Working on working together*

What everyone can start doing NOW

- ***The door is open for input, contributions and ideas about anything, from everyone. This is the project mantra. Stay engaged!***
- Talk about merging existing funding pots where sensible/possible to help reduce grant chasing behaviour
 - E.g. Scoping days via NCLTN could join with Locality funding
 - Explore options to collaborate using UKCN Lottery funding
- Encourage **all new enquirers** where appropriate to register their interest with the local authority (on the LA self-build register) to demonstrate demand
- Direct enquirers and local authorities where appropriate to the Ecomotive self-build register (<http://localselfbuildregister.co.uk/>) /other resources (please share) which enable customers to express demand, and to find & interact with each other
- Try to work together by default on new initiatives e.g. funding applications
- Think about how working with others could help you and actively explore partnerships
- Keep sharing information about new and existing resources/networks & what can be offered to customers
- Link up with Wales & Scotland: Learn from what works in each country and bring activities together across the border where possible
- Avoid replication re: written guidance/online resources by helping to improve existing resources together.
 - E.g. NaCSBA Toolkit for Local Authorities – supporting self & custom build