

T R I B A L

**The Department for Communities
and Local Government
Empty Homes Community Grants
Programme**

30th June 2015

End of Programme Assessment Report

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Executive Summary

Purpose of the report

To provide the Department's Programme Manager with an evaluation report that includes the following:

- Funding spent
- Funding clawed back
- The number of empty homes that have been brought back into use
- Whether the grants allocated represents value for money
- Case studies showing innovation and good practice.
- Making use of technology
- Lessons learnt

The objective of the programme

The Department for Communities and Local Government launched the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme in January 2012. The programme was one of several initiatives borne out of the "Laying the Foundations a Housing Strategy" published in 2011. £100m capital funding was set aside within the Affordable Homes programme, by the Department specifically to tackle long term empty properties which would not come back into use without additional financial intervention. The target set by the Department was for the programme to deliver 3,300 affordable homes by March 2015.

By March 2015 the government had invested £235m in bringing back up to 12,000 homes into use. Local authorities and registered providers from across the country have played a key part in this development. The Empty Homes Community Grants programme specifically targeted not for profit organisations and registered providers within the voluntary and community sector, with the vision, passion, skills and expertise, that wanted to contribute to the wider programme of creating affordable homes.

The Department looked to the sector to deliver a range of projects, which could demonstrate innovation and creativity, whilst meeting the diverse needs identified within local communities, resulting in effective and sustainable change for individuals, organisations, and local areas.

In April 2012 £30m, over three financial years, was set aside for the Empty Homes Community Grants programme. Over the course of the programme a total of £52m was allocated to the programme.

This report will summarise the key activities and findings of the programme, budgetary action, and the lessons learnt, and provide recommendations for future delivery.

Methodology

The content of the report is developed from the qualitative information contained within the quarterly monitoring reports compiled and submitted by grant holders, case studies produced in collaboration with grant holders via telephone interviews, the findings recorded by members of the Grants Administration Team following on-site monitoring visits, action research as recorded by Self Help Housing during regional events, and from the responses to an online questionnaire.

1. The programme 2012-2015

The Empty Homes Community Grants Programme (EHCGP) was launched in January 2012, and is part of the Affordable Homes Programme which supports registered providers and community groups to bring 7,000 homes back into use as affordable housing by 2015.

1.1. Programme requirements

The programme was launched on 24th January 2012, at GLA City Hall offices. The Empty Homes Community Grants Programme provided funding to bring 3,300 empty properties, including commercial properties, back into use as affordable homes. All applicants and subsequent grant holders had to have the written endorsement and support of the local authority for each geographical area properties were refurbished. This was a mandatory requirement.

Organisations were permitted to lease or purchase properties from local authorities, unregistered landlords, private individuals and companies and public bodies. The minimum lease length had to be five years.

In order to benefit from funding each property had to be empty for a minimum of six months, with an expectation that they would remain empty without funding from the programme.

The Department was keen for properties in areas of decline to benefit from the funding, particularly if it helped to sustain local communities.

Another mandatory requirement was for properties to be brought back into use at an affordable rent, which the Department stipulated to be at least 80% of local market rate.

Applicants were required to submit an allocations policy for allocating refurbished homes. The Department was keen to ensure that allocations would be made in a fair and transparent way irrespective of gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, disability or ethnic origin.

Although grant holders were permitted to bring homes back into use as part of a homesteading or shared ownership scheme, none of them

did. Grant holders were also permitted to use funding as a contribution to a revolving fund for the reinvestment of funding in delivering further properties as loans are repaid.

This was a capital programme, with very little revenue expenditure permitted.

Properties that were leased for more than 15 years or purchased were required to meet the Home and Community Agency's Design and Quality standards 2007 for rehabilitation. Leased properties were required to be refurbished to the Decent Homes standard as a minimum, but grant holders were encouraged to exceed this standard wherever possible.

Above everything else, project delivery had to represent good value for money to the Department. Projects that were not deemed to represent good value for money at the point of application and beyond were not supported financially.

Prior to the start of the programme the Department assumed that project delivery would be based on properties leased for between five and twenty years. Over the course of the programme, the lease and repair delivery model proved to be the least popular method of delivery, for reasons that are detailed in section 3 of this report.

1.2. Application and assessment process

The application pack was designed and produced by Tribal in consultation with a Department representative. Particular care was taken to produce an application form that would yield the most pertinent and required information without it being too onerous for applicants to complete.

The application pack included an application form, application form guidance, programme guidance and a frequently asked questions sheet, which was updated on a weekly basis.

All of the application documents were uploaded onto the Tribal grants admin website for easy access by potential applicants.

The assessment criteria, assessment scoring matrix and assessment report templates were also designed and produced by Tribal. A small pool of experienced assessors were recruited and trained prior to the closing date for applications. Mock assessments were undertaken and moderated in order to set and agree a standard to work to. On average each application took two hours to be assessed.

The design of the application and assessment process reflected the Department's focus at the start of the programme on outputs and its definition of value for money, and not on programme outcomes.

Tribal worked with Locality to review the pros and cons of using the Department's solely monetary based method of calculating value for money.

Locality produced a paper entitled "Empty Homes Community Grants programme: assessing Value for Money" which was submitted to the Department for consideration. See Annex 1. The Department's value for money calculation remained unchanged throughout the lifetime of the programme.

Applications were rated in terms of score and the highest 25% of applications were recommended for grant award. An assessment report was produced for each application. The assessment reports were compiled into a panel report and formed the basis upon which decisions were made, and a shortlist of grant awards produced. Where it was deemed prudent and/or necessary, the decision panel assigned additional conditions of grant. The decision panel also allocated a baseline risk status for each project based on the assessment report and personal observations and/or knowledge.

1.3. Due diligence and grant award process

Four additional temporary workers were recruited to the Grants Admin Team in order to undertake the due diligence checks on those organisations that were shortlisted to receive a grant award.

A due diligence checklist report was produced for each shortlisted organisation and signed off by the Project Manager. Those organisations that passed the due diligence checks were recommended to the Department to receive a grant award.

If requested, unsuccessful applicants were provided with detailed written feedback within 10 working days of the request being received.

The panel's decision was final. There was no appeals procedure. Unusually, but rewardingly, no complaints were submitted.

Table 1: Grants awarded by round

ROUND	Number of projects shortlisted	Number of grant awards	Total value of initial grant awards
1	96	95	£29,706,101.66
2	78	45	£19,787,134.63
3	45	23	£4,655,651.00
TOTALS	211	175	£54,148,887.29

Round 1 and Round 2 were open application rounds, with many of the successful Round 1 applicants submitting Round 2 applications, to deliver additional projects. Round 3 was a closed application round. Some grant awards were revised during the lifetime of the programme

Some Round 2 applicants had to wait over 12 months for the Department to reach a decision, and were asked to submit updated proposals. This resulted in many organisations having less time in which to deliver a project, and for the majority of project proposals having to be scaled back.

Over the course of the programme, a total of 32 projects were withdrawn. See Annex 2. By the close of the programme in March 2015, there were 124 projects in grant.

Table 2: Grants awarded by region at 31.03.15

Region	Number of projects delivered	Final Grant awards
East Midlands	13	£3,496,065.00
East	6	£1,501,946.00
London	19	£5,483,315.85
South East	11	£2,371,877.94
South West	9	£2,808,369.00
West Midlands	15	£3,991,303.00
North West	35	£6,728,076.00
Yorkshire & Humber	26	£13,675,796.63
North East	23	£11,392,141.00
Totals	157	£51,448,890.42

NB. Some grant awards were scaled back or increased during the programme cycle

1.4. Project monitoring

For the first year of operation organisations were required to report either on a monthly or quarterly basis, depending upon the baseline risk status allocated by the decision panel. Organisations with high risk status projects were required to report on a monthly basis. All organisations were required to submit a claim form – Annex 1, a narrative report – Annex 3, and a financial report Annex 2.

For the second and third operational years, organisations were required to report on a quarterly basis.

In addition, those organisations which received a grant of £20,000 or more in the previous financial year were required to submit a statement of grant usage Annex D and an accountant's report each year.

Due to the diverse range of skills and experience of the main contacts, the monitoring requirements were designed to be relatively easy to complete. With daily support from members of the grants

admin team the main contacts benefited from extended advice, guidance and support.

Each year, ten percent of projects received an onsite monitoring or verification visit. Visits were made to projects that were allocated a high risk baseline status, but not exclusively so. Visits were made to other projects based on the quality and timing of projects and because of third party intelligence received. Examples of these visits are Live Wise Housing, Dorcas Housing Association, Middlesbrough CLT and Fresh Horizons. Onsite monitoring visit reports were produced to record the findings of each visit.

Overall, irrespective of the amount of funding received the standard of refurbishment seen during visits ranged from satisfactory to excellent. All of the tenants present during visits stated that they were happy with their accommodation and often expressed their gratitude for being offered the accommodation. The objectives of each organisation largely determined the target group of tenants that have been housed. The tenants seen came from a diverse range of backgrounds including ex-offenders, women escaping domestic violence, people with mental health issues, people with special needs, and the young homeless.

Table 3: Monitoring visits undertaken 2012-2015

URN	Organisation	Date of visit
EHCGP0011	Giroscope	14.03.13
EHCGP0038	Somerset Care and Repair	18.03.13
EHCGP0134	Access to Training and Employment	01.07.13
EHCGP0073	Live Wise Housing	16.07.13
EHCGP0013	Methodist Action North West	24.07.13
EHCGP0062	Habitat for Humanity	25.01.13
EHCGP0116	The Springfield Project	26.07.13
EHCGP0135	Birmingham YMCA	06.08.13
EHCGP0130	Sikh Community & Youth Service UK	13.08.13
EHCGP0004	Windrush Alliance UK	23.08.13
EHCGP0036	ADCRIS CIC	29.08.13

EHCGP0079	Threshold	12.09.13
EHCGP0023	Craghead Development Trust	19.09.13
EHCGP0138	Middlesbrough CLT	20.09.13
EHCGP0095	Groundwork Lincolnshire	24.09.13
EHCGP0121	Waterloo Community Development Group	25.09.13
EHCGP0060	Causeway Irish Housing Cooperative	26.09.13
EHCGP0067	Broadway Homelessness and Support	02.10.13
EPCGP0050	Start Again Project	19.05.14
EHCGP0108	Fresh Horizons Ltd	22.05.14
EPCGP0054	Phases Social Enterprise	29.05.14
EHCGP0015	Mace Housing Cooperative	30.05.14
EPCGP0022	Druglink	04.06.14
EHCGP0032	The Moat House Trust	11.06.14
EHCGP0113	Holme Christian Care	30.07.14
EHCGP0116	New Servol	26.07.14
EHCGP0053	Youth Enquiry Service Brixham	18.07.14
EHCGP0047	Action Homeless Leicester	21.01.15
EHCGP0125	Nishkam Civic Association	04.02.15
EHCGP0118	Dorcas Housing Association	05.02.15
EPCGP0062	Derbyshire YMCA	11.02.15
EPCGP0019	Probe (Hull) Ltd	25.02.15
EHCGP0051	Emmaus	04.03.15
EHCGP0118	Dorcas Housing Association	26.03.15
EHCGP0050	GIPSIL	19.03.15
EPCGP0016	YMCA Fairthorne Group	24.03.15
EHCGP0118	Dorcas Housing Association	08.04.15
EHCGP0130	Sikh Community & Youth Service UK	12.05.15

A drawback for the grants admin team was not having the experience of being trained in assessing properties against HCA standards. Team members used general judgement to determine whether refurbished properties were fit to live in.

1.5. The Budget

- 1.5.1. **Drawdown** – Funds were requested using the Department's claim form on a quarterly basis and as and when funds were needed. A designated bank account was set up specifically to receive flow through funds for grant payments.

The amount of funding drawn down was less than the amount awarded in grants. This was due to project withdrawals and returned under spend.

- 1.5.2. **Payments** – Were made to organisations subject to the receipt of satisfactory monitoring documents. A payment account was set up for each organisation by the Tribal finance department, following the submission of original bank statements or letters from banks which were checked as part of the due diligence process prior to grants being awarded.

- 1.5.3. **Payments clawed back** – If an organisation withdrew from the programme, or if funds were used for ineligible expenditure, a request was made for the under spend to be returned to the Tribal Empty Homes bank account within 30 days. See Annex 3.

All reported under spend was successfully clawed back with the exception of £16,624 from Shekinah Mission Plymouth, and £3,204.74 from Middlesbrough CLT. The total amount of under spend reported by Shekinah Mission Plymouth was £33,248. Due to the complexities of a partnership arrangement, it has proven difficult for this organisation to access the residual amount of £16,624. Further action by the Department is recommended in order for the residual amount to be returned directly to the Department.

Under spend was not clawed back from organisations with under spend at the end of project delivery, which had delivered a project to target which represented good value for money.

Returned under spend was used to make profiled payments and reduced the amount claimed from the Department each quarter.

- 1.5.4. **Bank account reconciliations** – Were undertaken prior to a request for funds being sent to the Department. A final reconciliation was undertaken at the end of the programme. The residual bank balance to be returned to the Department is £514,536.14. See Table 4 below.

Table 4: The budget by financial year

FINANCIAL YEAR	Description	CR	DR
2012/13	Opening balance	£3,500,000	
	Grant payments		£7,075,872
	Bank charges		£20
	Returns	£8,100	
	Grants received	£5,139,916	
	Carried forward	£1,572,124	
2013/14	Opening balance	£1,572,124	
	Grant payments		£14,825,381
	Bank charges		£58
	Returns	£337,862	
	Grants received	£16,471,913	
	Carried forward	£3,556,460	
2014/15	Opening balance	£3,556,460	
	Grant payments		£21,242,749
	Bank charges		£85
	Returns	£1,714,572	
	Grants received	£18,732,026	
	Carried forward	£2,760,224	
2015/16	Opening balance	£2,760,224	
	Grant payments		£2,304,648
	Bank charges		£13
	Bank charges refunded	£176	
	Returns	£58,797	
	Grants received	£0	
	Returned to DCLG	£514,536	

Source: Tribal Ltd Finance Department June 2015

1.4.5. Cost of withdrawn projects

A total of 35 projects withdrew from the programme. The amount of funding paid to these organisations was £1,749,660.71. These projects reported a total of 32 affordable homes. Projects were either delivered using a lease and repair or purchase and repair model and the refurbishment undertaken contributed to the programmes final output. Irrespective of the model used, these projects, because they did not reach project targets, failed to deliver value for money in line with the Departments framework. All of them however did contribute to the local economy by employing local trades. See Annex 2.

1.6. Making Use of Technology

The Empty Homes Community Grants programme had a fairly low tech approach to its administration.

Dedicated pages on the grants admin website were used to promote the programme, give easy access to application documents and grant award results. More could have been done to share good practice or to provide examples of completed refurbishments, using the grants admin website. This has been recorded as a lesson learnt.

The submission of monitoring documents via email was encouraged. Most organisations used this option, but some organisations, particularly those based in rural areas, where the availability of broadband is limited, used a combination of email and post to submit documents. The submission of the claim form (Annex 1/R) was submitted in signed and scanned format to reduce the potential of fraudulent activity.

Most communication was done primarily via email and secondly by telephone. Two dedicated email accounts were set up by Tribal for the programme i.e. EHCGP@tribalgroup.com and EPCGP@tribalgroup.com.

In order to save money, for convenience and where appropriate teleconferences were arranged with the main contacts of grant holder organisations to discuss in detail proposed changes to project delivery, and to provide additional support with the completion of monitoring returns.

2. Overall programme assessment and methodology

The performance of the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme was assessed via a range of qualitative and quantitative tools.

2.1. Quarterly monitoring documents

The narrative reports submitted as part of the monitoring requirements have formed the foundation of the programme assessment.

Submitted either on a monthly or a quarterly basis, these reports provide information on local issues, project delivery outputs and outcomes, successful approaches and challenges to project delivery.

Quantitative data includes the number of properties and the number of bedrooms completely refurbished, against the project target as well a breakdown of eligible project expenditure.

Qualitative data includes anecdotes related to the people housed within completed properties, the trainees and apprentices working on the project, the role of the local authority and the detail of challenges and successful partnerships and delivery.

The narrative reports were reviewed by a member of the grants admin team, and clarifications and amendments were sought from organisations. The pertinent data was recorded on a programme tracker and used to supply management information to the Department on a quarterly basis.

In terms of the detail provided, the amount and quality of content ranged from scant to very comprehensive. Nevertheless it was possible throughout the duration of the programme to see the emergence of trends and commonalities. For example, organisations in the north of the country, particularly in the North East and Yorkshire & Humber regions, experienced significant delays in getting electric and gas supplies and meters installed and/or changed within properties.

2.2. Telephone interviews

Representatives of fourteen organisations took part in a telephone interview. Invitations to participate were sent to organisation representatives in advance, and a date and time agreed for the interview to take place.

The questions answered related to specific areas of project delivery and formed the basis of the case studies included within this report, namely:

- Involving volunteers
- Improving the sustainability of the sector
- Cross sector partnership working in action
- Improving communities
- Accredited training
- Effective management
- Impact of property price rises
- Improving lives
- Decent, modern, affordable homes
- Good value for money
- Perseverance, determination and results
- Small but effective
- Clear policies and procedures

Each interview lasted between forty minutes and one hour and forty five minutes.

The telephone interviews provided representatives of grant holder organisations with the opportunity to bring to life the detail contained within the reports submitted during the life time of the programme and to relay information not requested within the narrative reports, but of relevance or significance to their organisation and personal experience of delivering a project.

Two organisations, rather than participate in a telephone interview opted to complete and submit set questions in writing.

2.3. Case studies

Sixteen case studies have been produced and included within this report. The case studies have been designed to highlight aspects of programme delivery reported within narrative reports. They have not been included within this report as examples of best practice, but to

provide examples of the different types of successful projects delivered by a diverse range of organisations which participated in the programme. The case studies were produced post the completion of the programme in April and May 2015.

2.4. Onsite monitoring visits

A total of 38 organisations received a monitoring/verification visit were during the life time of the programme. Visits were made to those projects with a high risk status which was either assigned when a grant was awarded or following the receipt of monitoring or third party information, as well as to organisations selected on a random basis. The monitoring visits undertaken have provided a first- hand assessment of all aspects of project delivery.

Typically a visit involved visiting properties reported as completely refurbished, verifying reported expenditure within a financial year and general discussions relating to project delivery.

2.5. Online questionnaire

A set of 27 questions were approved by a Department representative and an online survey created. The survey was launched 13th February 2015 and closed on 6th March 2015. An invitation to complete the survey was sent to all organisations that were awarded a grant between 2012 and 2014 - 113 organisations in total. Those organisations that delivered two projects were sent two invitations.

Reminder emails were sent on a weekly basis, up to and including the week the survey closed.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to capture information relating to the delivery of the programme, which was not specifically requested, or included within monitoring reports.

- 57 responses were received
- 1 organisation chose not to respond

2.6. Reference materials

The list below details available resource documents and websites that have been reviewed as part of the programme assessment:

- Bringing Empty Homes Back Into Use – *DCLG 2012*
- Affordable Housing Supply in England – 2010-2011 – *DCLG 2011*
- Affordable Housing Supply in England – 2013-2014 – *DCLG 2014*
- 2011 Census: Homeownership down and renting up for first time in a century – *Office of National Statistics*

3. Key findings

The key findings of the programme have been sourced from the quarterly monitoring reports submitted, and the completion of an online questionnaire by grant holders.

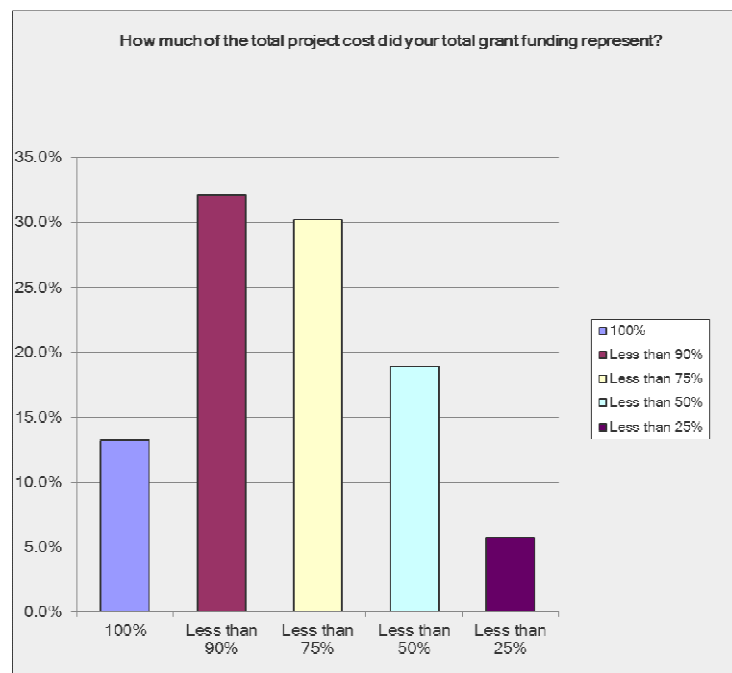
3.1. The objective of the programme

To refurbish long term empty properties, that would remain empty without financial intervention, and bring them back into use as affordable housing over three financial years.

For the majority of respondents, the funding received from the Department represented the largest share of the overall project funding required. Only 5.66% of respondents said that the grant funding represented less than 25% of total project costs.

Identifying and securing enough funding was crucial to project viability. When additional funding was needed organisations mainly looked to using organisation reserves, loans from local authorities, low cost loans, and in-kind funding.

Table 5 – Project cost and grant funding



3.2 Organisations in grant

Most of the organisations in receipt of a grant delivered one project, but 38 organisations delivered two or three projects. Over the course of the three years Empty Homes Community Grants Programme, a total of 112 organisations received funding from the Department to deliver 157 projects.

There was a diverse range of voluntary and community sector organisations participating on the programme. No one type delivered significantly better than another. The types of legal entities were:

- Community Interest Company
- Registered Charity
- Not for Profit
- Social Enterprise
- Limited Company
- Community Association
- Company Limited by Guarantee
- Industrial and Provident Society
- Registered Social Landlord

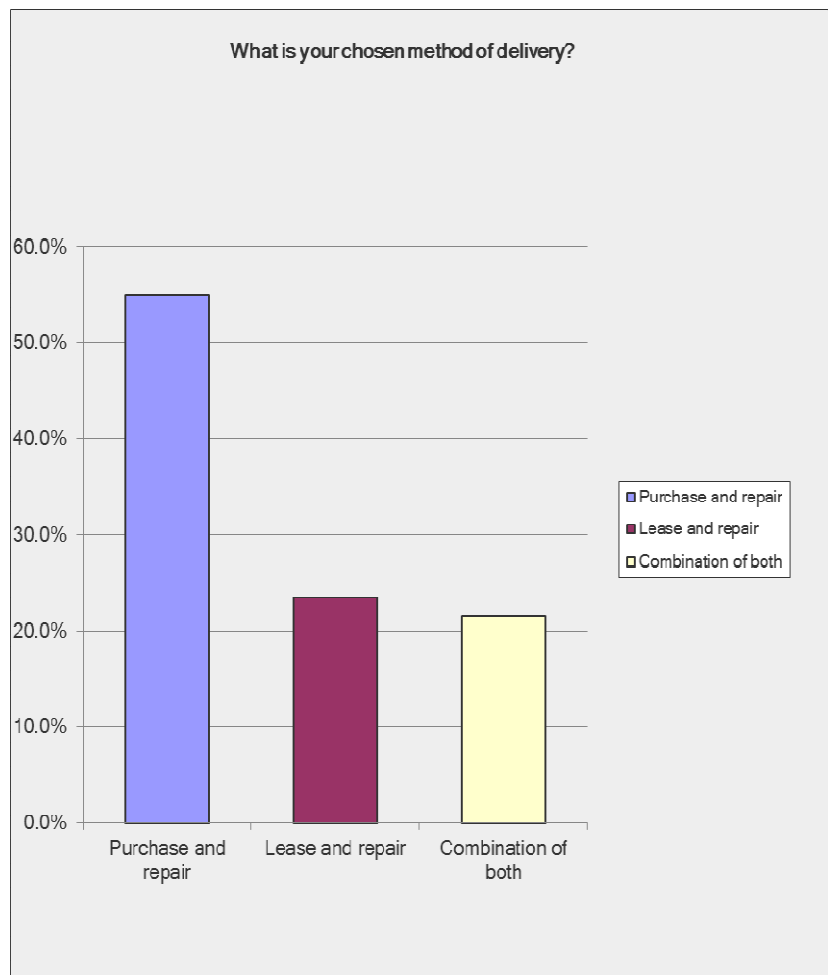
Three of the 147 Round 1 applicant organisations were created just a few months before the submission of an application for funding. In this instance, the question that must be asked is whether interest in the programme was generated by a pre-existing wish or ethos to create affordable housing, or by a wish to increase the asset base of a company, or by a need to find a contribution to the core running costs of an organisation, or by all of the above. Of these three organisations only one completed a successful project and achieved the project target of completely refurbished affordable homes.

In many parts of the country there was a significant rise in property prices during the lifetime of the programme. This had a negative impact on project delivery. It became difficult to engage property owners in lease and repair projects, because bringing affordable homes back into use for a minimum of five years, was not considered as financially beneficial as the financial benefit gained by selling a property. Identifying property owners, even with the support of local authorities was difficult and time consuming. 45.10% of respondents

said that letting refurbished properties at 80% of market rate was not well received by landlords.

The rise in property prices made it increasingly difficult to deliver lease and repair projects. The lease and repair model offered less value for money than the purchase and repair model. In year two there was a noticeable shift in project delivery, with many organisations moving from a lease and repair approach to a purchase and repair model.

Table 6:– Chosen method of delivery



3.3 Statistical evidence of price increases

- UK house prices increased by 7.2% in the year to February 2015, down from 8.4% in the year to January 2015.
- House price annual inflation was 7.4% in England, 1.1% in Wales, 6.4% in Scotland and 14.2% in Northern Ireland.
- Annual house price growth is showing signs of slowing across the majority of the UK.
- Annual house price increases in England were driven by an annual increase in the East of 10.7% and in London of 9.4%.
- Excluding London and the South East, UK house prices increased by 5.9% in the 12 months to February 2015.
- On a seasonally adjusted basis, average house prices increased by 0.6% between January and February 2015.
- In February 2015, prices paid by first-time buyers were 7.4% higher on average than in February 2014. For owner-occupiers (existing owners), prices increased by 7.2% for the same period.

Source: House Price Index February 2015, Office for National Statistics – February 2015

Table 7 - Mix adjusted average house price by Government Office region (DCLG A21) by thousand pound

Month	NE	NW	Y&H	EM	WM	E	L	SE	SW
Apr 12	145	157	160	164	176	245	388	288	221
Apr 13	144	159	164	171	181	250	414	296	227
Apr 14	152	168	172	181	194	269	485	320	238
Feb 15	153	175	177	187	196	288	490	333	248
Total increase	£8K	£18K	£17K	£23K	£20K	£43K	£102K	£45K	£27K

The knock on effect of property price increases was an increase in the number of people, particularly young people, choosing to rent property rather than purchase property.

“The decade 2001 to 2011 saw substantial changes in longstanding trends in home ownership and renting. In 2011, more than half (64%, 15.0 million) of the 23.4 million households in England and Wales were owner occupied, however this was a decline from 69% in 2001, which was the first fall in a century. As a consequence, there has been an increase in the proportion of

rented households (31% to 36%), particularly within the private sector; private rentals rose from 12% to 18% of the housing market, whilst social rented households remained stable, falling slightly from 19% to 18%.”

These statistics underpin the need for affordable rental accommodation and the need for policy which supports initiatives such as the Empty Homes Community Grants programme.

3.4 Direct benefits of project delivery

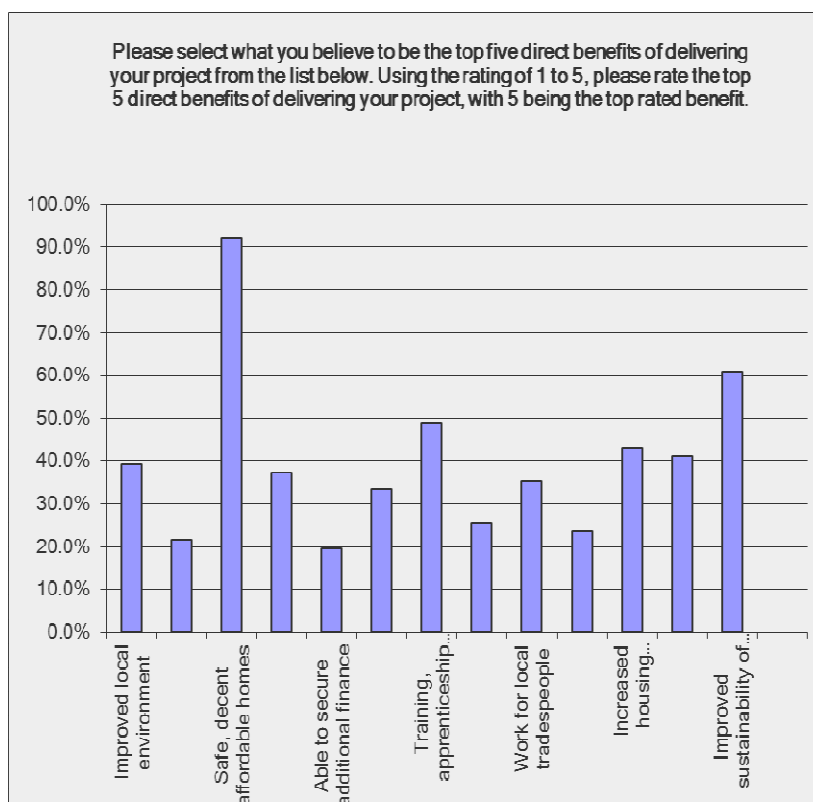
The most apparent benefit of successful project delivery is the availability of decent affordable housing. Organisations have however reported other benefits to project delivery, including the provision of training and apprenticeships, an increased asset base, safer neighbourhoods and raised organisation profile.

It can be argued that value for money should not just be measured in terms of pounds and pence, but that the added value delivered by projects should also be a factor in grant assessment.

The provision of decent affordable housing can be life changing for example for individuals who are escaping domestic violence, ex-offenders who want to learn a skill and gain employment, or the young homeless moving on from supported housing to independent living.

Respondents to the online questionnaire indicated that there were multiple benefits to delivering projects, and this is illustrated in the table below.

Table 8: – Top five direct benefits of delivering projects



58.82% of respondents indicated that their project had a specific target group for tenants.

Unsurprisingly 92.16% of respondents selected *safe, decent, affordable homes* as a direct benefit, followed by *improved sustainability of organisation* (60.78%) and *Training, apprenticeship or volunteering opportunities for local people* (49.02%). The programme has brought significant financial security for grant holder organisations.

3.5 Achievement of targets

The programme's target of refurbishment was steadily reduced during the course of the programme, due largely to project withdrawals, change to benefits, and the change in house prices. By the end of the programme in March 2015, the programme target was 1,325 affordable homes with 3,134 bedrooms. The programme achieved

1,297 affordable homes with 3,035 bedrooms. The programme output is illustrated within the table below.

Table 9: – Programme targets and achievements by region at 31.03.15

Region	Target Homes	Target bedrooms	% Homes achieved	% Bedrooms achieved
East Midlands	121	316	101.65%	100%
East	17	84	105.88%	102.38%
London	115	230	68.69%	69.13%
South East	17	76	94.11%	85.52%
South West	60	139	98.33%	104.31%
West Midlands	126	295	101.58%	103.05%
North West	253	616	101.18%	96.91%
Yorkshire & Humber	388	880	101.28%	100.56%
North East	228	498	99.56%	98.19%
Totals	1,325	3,134		

Organisations were asked to secure all properties for refurbishment by 31st October 2014, to complete major refurbishment by 31st March 2015, and to sign off all snagging by 15th May 2015. Not all projects were completed by the end of the programme. Some of the reasons reported for this were a delay in receiving a decision regarding Round 2 funding application, a delay in the transfer of property by a local authority, withdrawal of property for sale and delays in conveyancing.

3.6 Lessons learnt for the Department as reported by respondents

Section 23 of the online questionnaire, provided respondents with an opportunity to share lessons learnt and key messages with the Department. Some of which are listed below, but all of which can be find in the questionnaire summary attached to this report.

Table 10: – Lessons to be shared with the Department**Sample responses taken from online questionnaire**

Purchase and repair is the preferred model to take forward as it involves fewer and shorter negotiations in order to acquire properties and a longer term sustainability opportunity.

Not for profit social enterprises can deliver social housing provision and in some ways can be better placed than big housing associations who might feel that a project is not worth their while or there may be other restraints which prevent action to address the urgent need for social housing.

The timescales have been very tight and it has been difficult to manage the project within the restriction. It took a long time to gain momentum and that momentum needs to be continued and additional funding needs to be made available.

The ability for cost to rise both of purchasing of properties and refurbishment at the slightest glimpse of an upturn in the housing market. This was particularly prevalent in empty properties as private investors started to feel they could make money again from refurbishing homes.

For future such projects we would ensure that a workable protocol for the provision of Council Tax information required is put in place at the onset of the programme to allow for a smoother delivery.

The empty homes community grants programme is a great concept, however in future such a programme must include revenue funding to enable small community organisations to deliver to their full potential. Funding should not be linked under the same funding criteria as that of local authorities and Registered Providers because it automatically places community groups at a disadvantaged. Funding for purchase and repair methodology must take into consideration regional housing market prices.

We think local authorities should be given tougher and quick-to-enforce powers when dealing with the owners of long-term empty residential properties - particularly in a city such as Norwich where development land is very limited and the use of existing stock must be maximised.

Having funding in advance was essential for us to take the projects forward.

Premium rate council tax gets applied to a long term empty, only gets taken off when the property is tenanted. DCLG should campaign to get this altered.

A balance of lease and purchase is necessary. Lease and repair carries an inherent time lag and a substantial time cost.

Central coordination of common issues e.g. energy/utility company re-connections; liaison with first charge-holders, would add real value.

A retention scheme is understandable but may leave deliverers short.

This was a difficult project to deliver in London because of the surge in house prices, particularly in the borough we chose to work in (chosen because it was affordable when we applied but became unaffordable by the time we'd started). As a result we were unable to deliver our full allocation. There were also problems working with the local authority as we were competing with their own scheme and they were unwilling to release information on empty homes due to data protection.

3.7 Impact of project delivery on local communities

The impact of the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme has reportedly been wider than the availability of more decent affordable housing for those in need.

The added value that the programme has brought to organisations and communities has been diverse. The impact on some individuals has literally been life changing. For example, women fleeing domestic violence, and previously young homeless people now living independently and in secure employment. The reported impact of the programme includes the following:

- Improved working relationships between community groups and organisations

- Improved understanding and working partnerships between private, public and voluntary organisations
- Visually improved neighbourhoods
- Reduction of anti-social behaviour and crime associated with long term empty properties such as arson
- Job creation and apprenticeships for local unemployed
- Increased business opportunities for local tradespeople
- Acquisition of new skills, knowledge and accreditation by local unemployed
- Increased sense of security
- Introduction of sustainable revenue generated activity for grant holder organisations
- Successful project delivery has provided a foundation on which to secure more financial support from other sources
- Acquisition of new skills and hands on experience for those involved in project delivery
- Improved mental health and general well-being of tenants
- Improved opportunities for socially excluded groups
- Improved environment, for example a reduction in fly tipping
- Increased independence for previously homeless young people moving from supported housing to independent living
- Neighbours of refurbished properties have an increased sense of pride in their neighbourhood
- A shared work experience has increased community cohesion
- A reduction in ex-offenders re-offending
- Reduction in the cost of public services associated with supporting women fleeing domestic violence
- Raised the profile of grant holder organisations attracting; positive media coverage
- Increased asset base of grant holder organisations

4. Project delivery discussions

4.1 Background to project delivery

The programme was created in response to the Laying the Foundations a Housing Strategy for England published in 2011. The aim was to bring long term empty properties back into use as affordable homes.

The Empty Homes Community Grants programme was one element of the wider strategic Affordable Homes Programme which specifically targeted voluntary and community sector organisations and small registered housing providers.

Grant holder organisations were diverse in terms of size, legal status, experience, knowledge and resources. This diversity was indicative of the types of projects delivered on the programme. The programme guidance encouraged innovation and added value, yet did not recognise this as part of the assessment criteria, nor specifically seek to capture this as part of the programme monitoring.

All completely refurbished properties had to be brought back into use as affordable homes i.e. the rent charged being less than 80% of market rate. The programme was open to properties being brought back into use as shared ownership and supported homesteading schemes. A homesteading project allowed residents or future residents an opportunity to contribute to the refurbishment of a property in exchange for a reduced rent, or a share of the ownership of the property. Although there were some projects that provided accommodation to trainees, apprentices and labourers, none reported the offer of shared ownership. The project delivered by the Empty Homes Agency Ltd was the only project that set out to provide homesteading with the offer of shared property ownership. This project received the largest share of available funding however failed to reach its target and had to be significantly scaled back.

A total of 57,950 gross additional affordable homes were supplied in England in 2011-12. This is a decrease of 4% on the 60,430 (revised) affordable homes supplied in 2010-11.

A total of 42,710 affordable homes were provided in England in 2013 to 2014, slightly lower than the 42,920 (revised) affordable homes supplied in 2012 to 2013.

Although the statistics indicate that the number of available affordable homes is decreasing, the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme has made a small contribution, by bringing 1,297 affordable homes back into use.

4.2 Changes to programme focus

Part way through the first year of the programme, when applications were invited for Round 2 funding, the focus of the programme changed from homes to properties. During the third year of the programme it became apparent that there was confusion amongst grant holder organisations as to whether monitoring reports should record the number of 'buildings/properties' or the number of affordable homes. In September 2014 a reconciliation exercise was undertaken to achieve consistency in reporting across the programme. This approach helped in terms of making targets more achievable.

4.3 Ever decreasing targets

The Round 1 applications had what in time proved to be ambitious targets. It became apparent that the increase in property prices, the firstly locating the owners of empty properties and then secondly getting them to engage with the programme, meant that for more than 50% of grant holders, a reduction in targets was necessary; as well as for some a change to project delivery models. For these reasons and the withdrawal of projects resulted in a continual decrease in the programme target.

4.4 Barriers to delivery

Project delivery for grant holder organisations has been both challenging and rewarding. In hindsight the question is could or perhaps should anything have been done at the onset of the programme to address all or some of the following reported barriers?

- Rise in house prices
- High council tax bills on empty properties to be paid by grant holders whilst properties are being refurbished
- Locating owners of empty properties
- Getting property owners to sign a minimum 5 year lease
- Significant delays in obtaining gas and electric supplies
- Delays in transferring properties from a local authority
- Lack of programme revenue funding

- Significant delay in making Round 2 grant awards

The answer is probably not. Most of the common barriers listed above could not have been predicted, or were subject to wider government policy that would require lengthy consultation and negotiations to effect change.

4.5 Project delivery in London

Project delivery in the London region proved for the majority of grant holders to be impossible. Of the thirteen projects awarded a Round 1 grant, only three were successfully delivered to target, with a total of 75 properties refurbished. The other ten projects were withdrawn.

4.6 The cost of withdrawals to the Department

A total of 32 projects were withdrawn from the programme due to various reasons, but fundamentally because it proved too difficult to identify and secure properties and deliver a project that would represent good value for money to the Department. A total of £1,749,660.71 was paid to these organisations. This investment generated an output of 32 affordable homes, as well as multiple positive outcomes.

There is currently nothing in place to monitor the programme requirement that all refurbished affordable property should be let at an affordable rent for a minimum of five years.

4.7 Purchase and repair versus lease and repair

At the start of the programme the majority of projects worked to a lease and repair model. In time, a purchase and repair model became preferable. All grant awards without exception were made based primarily on whether or not the overall project was considered to represent good value for money. A ceiling of £1,100 per refurbished bedroom, per lease year, was set.

The calculation used for assessing value for money for a lease and repair model was as follows:

Total grant award ÷ number of refurbished bedrooms ÷ average number of lease years

The calculation used for assessing value for money for a purchase and repair model was as follows:

Total grant award ÷ number of refurbished rooms ÷ 30 lease years

The calculations were derived from the Department's theoretical modelling undertaken to support the business case for the programme. It assumed that most properties would be leased for between 5 and 20 years rather than acquired outright. The modelling assumed that for a 5 year lease, grant rates per property would range from £6,000 in the North to £13,000 in London. It assumed that grant rates for a 10 year lease would range from £9,000 to £22,000. This did not prove to be the case. The cost of refurbishment per property on average was higher.

4.8 The Green Deal

The refurbishment of empty properties afforded an ideal opportunity for grant holder organisations to make energy efficient installations to property. The installation of double glazed windows and energy efficient boilers was commonly reported, but the installation of better roof insulation, sound insulation, solar panels, ground sourced heating etc. were rarely reported.

Energy efficient installations save money long term, but require a large financial investment upfront. Although encouraged within the application guidance, generally, the level of grant funding awarded was too low to support this positive and progressive approach.

4.9 Regional networking

Self Help Housing and HACT organised regional networking events for grant holder organisations. These events were well attended and well received. They provided an opportunity for organisations to illustrate their project delivery models and to share their project progress. It was also an opportunity for social investors to promote their services, and for Department representatives to relay key

messages relating to the programme policy and expectations. There was little representation from local authorities.

£40K of the Tribal management budget was given to Self Help Housing and HACT. The sum was a contribution to the cost of providing capacity building, support, advice and guidance to grant holders. This was particularly beneficial when project delivery was difficult and an alternative approach needed to be found.

4.10 Impact of the project on local communities

The focus of the programme was on the number of empty properties brought back into use as affordable homes. Although quantitative data was not collected, project reports provide extensive detail of the impact of the programme at local level. Project delivery across the country has helped to visually improve the look of neighbourhoods, bring individuals together and engender a sense of community. The programme has created jobs, provided training opportunities, improved partnership working, supported local businesses, reduced criminal activity and provided safe, decent and warm accommodation for vulnerable people.

4.11 Capital funding

The Empty Homes Community Grants Programme provided mainly capital funding. Unless organisations had healthy unrestricted reserves or were able to secure a loan or other match funding, covering the revenue costs inevitably associated with project delivery, was difficult.

In hindsight there was not enough detail within the programme guidance to fully illustrate the potential impact on project delivery to potential applicants.

For example, a key element of all project delivery was the identification of empty properties. This incurred costs relating to staff time, travel and parking, and marketing, which were ineligible costs.

4.12 Registered provider status

Although the programme was open to applications from small registered providers with less than 150 housing stock, as well as other

types of voluntary and community organisations; it did not particularly target this type of organisation.

At the end of the programme, despite the potential to secure further funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Affordable Housing programme 2015-2018, the exit strategy of most grant holder organisations did not include the pursuit of registered provider status and funding via the HCA programme.

As previously mentioned the type of grant holder organisations is diverse both in terms of aims and size. There are organisations that would like to extend their project delivery, but which do not want to pursue what they consider would be demanding requirements, and are disappointed that the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme will not continue.

5. Good project delivery case Studies

No project delivered as part of the programme has been replicated exactly elsewhere. This section is entitled “Good project delivery case studies” as opposed to ‘Best practice case studies’ or ‘Good operating practice’, because none of the projects were measured against a set of agreed standards, or were necessarily part a strategic plan of operation. Instead the following case studies provide what is considered to be examples of projects that highlight specific good outcomes of project delivery.

Sixteen organisations contributed to the compilation of case studies for this report:

Centrepoint	
Rosa Bridge Housing Cooperative	
Changing Lives	
Progressive Lifestyle Solutions	
Access to Training and Employment	
Youth Enquiry Service Brixham	

St Basils	
ADCRIS CIC	
Fresh Horizons	
Oasis Aquila Housing	
Probe (Hull) Ltd	
Windrush Alliance UK CIC	
Birmingham YMCA	
Somerset Care and Repair	
Phases Social Enterprise Ltd	 People Housing and Social Enterprise Scheme

Newark and
Sherwood
Homes



1. Involving volunteers

Oasis Aquila Housing

Established: 1984, changed name in 2014 from Aquila Way

Objectives or ethos: Work with homeless people anywhere on the spectrum from crisis where they are rough sleeping, through to people who just need support for housing. Seek to support them until they can support themselves.

Project delivery model: purchase and repair

Location of refurbishment: Gateshead and Newcastle

Project description: To purchase properties which have been empty for about 6 months to 2 years in nice residential areas. To help meet the housing need of the local area.

Total grant award: £534,767.00

Refurbishment target: 10 affordable homes with 21 bedrooms

Achievement: 10 affordable homes with 21 bedrooms

Oasis Aquila Housing delivered three projects. Three volunteers worked on the project. Service users were recruited using standard recruitment procedures, as volunteers to help them get back into employment. A role description was created and service users were asked to submit a written application which included a statement of support by support workers. DBS checks were undertaken and all volunteers were taken through an induction process. Oasis Aquila Housing provided volunteers with training opportunities. The use of volunteers was limited but effective.

In order to incentivise and retain volunteers, as well as providing training, the organisation paid for travel expenses and created employment opportunities.

Exit interviews were held with each volunteer at the end of the volunteering period. The exercise often helps volunteers to explore working in a different field. Working in housing or in support services for homeless people is demanding and takes a particular skill. Volunteers have the opportunity to try out a new field of work without having to commit to anything expensive or time consuming. They can contribute to their own community and feel like they're giving back.

Having undertaken a training course makes volunteers more attractive to employers.

Only a small number of volunteers were used mainly because of safety problems. The properties that were refurbished were large in size. Volunteers required some experience in order to work in those kinds of environments. The skills set required also were a barrier. The volunteers were service users who we started working with Oasis Aquila Housing whilst they were in prison. They came to the project with a bit of experience and a mentor was employed to work with them on-site, which helped to maximise the benefits of the training.

Receiving the grant awards from the Department has made an enormous difference to the organisation. Historically most of the funding received was for revenue costs, which ran out after a few years.

The capital funding from the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme allowed the organisation to build its asset base. The balance sheet is healthier than before, and the assets will contribute towards making the organisation more financially resilient.

The organisation bought four flats within one building that has been sat empty for two years. As well as being a long term empty it had a missing freeholder. All the flats were repossessed by different banks. The building had dry rot and the work already had to be undone to fix the structure of the building.

When asked what lessons had been learnt, Nancy Doyle, Chief Executive Officer, said "It's taught us that when you're new at something it's probably best not to go for the most complicated properties. We paid for it both financially and with time. If there is a property that has lots of legal issues, it's probably best to wait until that's over and resolved before going for them.

We've also learnt that having a good set of professionals that know the outcomes and goals that we're working to is best. We've gotten to

a point where we have surveyors that we trust, a legal team that we trust and even estate agents that know the kinds of properties we're looking for and let us know if anything comes up. I would recommend getting a base like this together as soon as possible."

2. Improving the sustainability of the sector

Windrush Alliance UK

Established: 1998

Objectives or ethos: Promoting equality and particularly among young people and among the community. Provide education and training. The objectives have changed over the last 3 or 4 years into providing accommodation and affordable housing provision.

Project delivery model: A combination of lease and repair and purchase and repair, but mainly lease and repair.

Location of refurbishment: Nottingham, East Midlands

Project description: This organisation worked in partnership with the local authority and community to identify empty properties and bring them back into use as affordable social housing. Two projects were delivered. Tenants were referred via the city council housing process and as well as the organisation's own allocations process. A lot of houses were sourced from the local authority, particularly those that were derelict properties, being used by squatters with a history of anti-social behaviour. The local authority facilitated contact with landlords/property owners.

The projects engaged with ex-offenders to work on both projects, as well as providing an opportunity for them to get involved in project delivery, the organisation also helped them with their housing needs. They worked alongside the builders, electricians, etc. and received training which enabled them to develop practical skills. Windrush also worked with smaller local companies who undertook the plumbing work within the properties.

Total grant award: £416,500

Refurbishment target: Project 1 – 33 affordable homes with 66 bedrooms.

Project 2 – 3 affordable homes with 11 bedrooms

Achievement:

Project 1 – 33 affordable homes with 64 bedrooms

Project 2 – 3 affordable homes with 11 bedrooms

When asked, Trevor Fothergill, Chief Executive Officer said, “It has been a very learning experience for us. Our background is in employment training and education. We are now a small housing provider. It has given us housing provision with a tenant group of 80 tenants. We now need to provide back end support such as repair support and working with tenants to sustain their tenancy. We’ve been able to sustain a good funding and working model. The project has allowed a lot of ex-offenders, alcoholics, to get involved in low level maintenance and gardening, etc.”

Windrush Alliance has developed three housing initiatives. It has established “Housing Plus” which is affordable housing and tenancy support. It helps the tenants to support their tenancy, pay rent, help with repairs, etc. “Housing Home plus” is geared towards young people that need support. “Home care” works with local contractors, builders, plumbers, etc. to maintain properties. If any member of the public needs a repair they can utilise the organisation’s repair service. The organisation puts people in contact with charities that provide second hand furniture, white goods and food parcels. It also provides tenants with a starter pack when they move in. Delivering the Empty Homes projects has helped to underpin core services and enabled the organisation to take on three apprentices in business administration.

The organisation used its reserves as match funding to help cover the cost of project delivery. It received some help from landlords who contributed in kind to the work, which helped manage project overspend. For example, once a property had been refurbished there would be one month rent free period, which helped with cash flow.

The grant awards have placed the organisation in a position to be able to secure more funding in the future. There are plans to identify funding for apprenticeships and training, and the organisation is also considering applying to the Big Lottery Fund.

Those involved in the project have learnt a few lessons. Securing the right property is important. In the beginning the organisation overspent on project delivery, because of the type of properties secured. They also worked with a local contractor that delivered poor work. In future more consideration will be given to the selection of tradespeople and contractors. The projects were supported by the local authority, but the refurbished properties led to maintenance and

tenancy issues. By obtaining a good understanding of the legalities behind these issues, created a learning curve for staff.

In hindsight it is felt that working in partnership with a local housing association would have helped the delivery model. Self Help Housing and HACT provided great workshops but it was felt that if there had been a link to a mentoring organisation, it could have helped staff learn how to manage tenants.

Overall project delivery was successful, but the project delivery was challenging at times. Two of the biggest challenges were void management and council tax.

Tenants were not always referred as soon as a property had been completely refurbished. Landlords gave up to four months free rent. At the end of this period Windrush had to start paying rent, and at times lost money because of this. The challenge was to get the timing right, and getting the tenants lined up beforehand, to avoid having to pay rent even if the property is void of tenants.

Having to pay council tax on empty properties was a financial challenge, but staff learnt that as a charity it is possible to obtain an exemption from paying council tax if the property is empty.

3. Cross sector partnership working in action

Probe Hull Ltd

Project title: Cornmill

Organisation: Probe Hull Ltd

Established: 1997

Objectives or ethos: Social enterprise providing measures of regeneration within the local community

Project delivery model: Purchase and repair

Location of refurbishment: Hull

Project description: Refurbished 4 buildings and turned into 18 apartments and 5 houses

Total grant award: £1,700,000

Refurbishment target: 4 properties, 42 bedrooms

Achievement: 4 properties, 42 bedrooms

The project delivered by Probe Hull Ltd involved three sectors. This organisation worked with Hull City Council and Hull College and with 3 main Contractors in the private sector: Soper Group Limited, PJPS Limited, and Westland's Limited.

The organisation has a small management team and bought in architect expertise from another organisation. Invitations to tender for the contractual work were issued, to ensure that the project delivered good value for money. When contracts were awarded, regular formal monthly meetings with surveyors, architects and the contractors were held. However, in between meetings there was open communication with all parties which was particularly helpful in keeping track of project delivery.

This cross sector approach to project delivery proved to be very beneficial. Each party understood what the other parties needed which gave Probe Hull Ltd assurance that the project would be delivered to time and to budget. The cross sector partnership approach worked so well, that the organisation is now seeking

additional funding in partnership with Hull City Council from the Homes and Communities Agency.

By delivering the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme project, staff learnt that there were aspects of project delivery that they were good at, and others that required a skill set that the organisation did not have, such as architecture. The project provided a steep learning curve, but the experience has resulted in staff being more confident and capable of delivering projects successfully in the future. Each sector brought different skills, knowledge and mutual respect to the project and it proved to be a very effective way of working, learning and sharing knowledge.

The cross partnership approach served to dispel preconceived ideas staff had about other sectors. Staff had not previously worked closely with private sector organisations, and were wary of property developers in particular; but they provided a great deal of support over and beyond what was required.

The organisation was particularly effective in allocating resources, especially staff, across all areas of project delivery. Apprentices and students were placed with contractors to gain more experience than they would have gained from Probe Hull Ltd alone.

Project delivery involved the refurbishment of several large commercial properties. The lessons learnt from one property were carried over to subsequent properties, to improve efficiency and quality. When asked what she had learnt, Jayne Brindley said, "To be very organised. Time can go so quickly and you need to keep on top of the contracts. "

4. Cross sector partnership working in action

Fresh Horizons Ltd

Established: 2002

Objectives or ethos: To create sustainable employment in areas or deprivation.

Project delivery model: One project was lease and repair. The second project was purchase and repair.

Location of refurbishment: Kirklees and Calderdale in West Yorkshire.

Project description: To create an investment model, capable of being replicated in other areas, to bring back into use empty private sector housing for affordable rent and where the sale of refurbished houses at five to eight years allows the initial investment to be repaid and the surplus recycled into further refurbishment and letting.

Total grant award: £860,103.63 for two projects

Refurbishment target: 61 affordable homes with 133 bedrooms

Achievement: 61 affordable homes with 149 bedrooms

Fresh Horizons Ltd worked with several partner organisations:

- Two local authorities – Kirklees and Calderdale.
- Voluntary sector organisation, SmartMove Calderdale that supports people in housing crisis.
- Harambee Association, a voluntary organisation which provided empty properties with a focus on supporting young BME people with housing support

- Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing (KNH), an ALMO organisation
- Connect Housing – A Registered Provider
- Deighton & Brackenhall Initiative Limited (DBI Ltd), the local regeneration partnership
- Kirklees College and Leeds College of building that provided accredited training for trainees and apprentices
- Construction Industry Training Board
- Fusion Housing part of partnership trying to meet the outcomes of a programme called Fair Chance Fund (support for NEETs in danger of becoming homeless)
- Private individuals who owned properties
- Small building firms which undertook the refurbishment of properties

Staff at Fresh Horizons held frequent meetings with the local authorities who provided interest free loans. The terms conditions of those loans committed the organisation to providing properties for nomination and to hold regular reporting meetings to allow the local authorities to oversee progress. At those meetings the local authorities helped the organisation to progress by identifying target properties or target areas and acting as an intermediary by referring owners with problem properties.

Day to day Housing Solutions (Kirklees Private housing section) part of Kirklees Council inspected the properties. By working to different standards, they carried out additional checks to the Decent Homes standard.

Housing Solutions in Kirklees and Smartmove in Calderdale sourced tenants in housing need. Latterly Fusion Housing Fair Chance project sourced NEETS at risk of becoming homeless. Tenants were sourced from local networks in the area.

Monthly meetings were held with DBI to gauge how the work was fitting in with the broader regeneration of the area.

Connect Housing and Kirklees Neighbourhood assisted in drawing up policies, providing advice about housing management, allowed Fresh Horizons staff to shadow their staff and also gave advice on relevant training for our housing staff. Other ad hoc meetings with other partners were held as and when required.

DBI provided interest free loans and two properties which were transferred to Fresh Horizons.

The local authorities tied the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme projects to their wider housing and regeneration priorities. They assisted in sourcing tenants and provided an element of support for nominated tenants.

KNH and Connect Housing drew on their expertise in housing management to support project delivery.

The College's structured training programme offered the learners accredited courses to trainees and apprentices to maximise the benefit to them whilst working on the properties.

Fusion housing offered additional support to our NEET tenants so that theoretically the tenancies should be more easily sustained.

The delivery model used by Fresh Horizons is built on recycling the grant funding element of the funds we raised to bring back further long term empty properties. As the owner of the property commits to repay the total cost of the works, through the rent collected, the grant element which, unlike the loans doesn't need to be paid back, allows the organisation to refurbish more houses even though grant has ended.

When asked what he had learnt about his organisation and partner organisations as a result of the collaboration, Mike McCusker, Chief Executive said, "The need for Local Authorities to follow correct processes and procedures is inevitable given their duty to be accountable. We completely understand that is how they have to work, but at the same time this can cause frustrations when, as a small social enterprise we are able to move far more quickly to circumstances. Inevitably as a consequence of having to reduce staffing levels in Councils to meet their budget reductions, we often found that Local Authorities, however willing to assist and move the project on, were often hampered by lack of resource to get decisions through the correct process at a speed we would have wanted. However, through all our dealings with officers and elected representatives, we felt that they were constantly going the extra mile to try and make things happen for us."

The cross partnership approach has been very effective. It has added value to people and local areas. Concentrating work in a smaller area has maximised the benefit. Linking to wider Council strategies and regeneration activities has had a multiplier effect that the project on its own would not have been able to create.

Fresh Horizons, despite successful project delivery, will not be pursuing Registered Provider status.

Fresh Horizons has had a long term and positive relationship with Kirklees Council. The Empty Homes Community Grants Programme enabled this organisation to work with the Private Sector Housing and Housing Solutions for the first time. Staff found this to be both a positive and productive relationship. Calderdale Council was helpful and supportive.

Fresh Horizons Ltd secured interest free patient loans from the Local Authorities. The Empty Homes Community Grants projects helped the local authorities to address their housing priorities. This is seen by the organisation as good practice that should be widely shared. The local authorities benefitted from employment and training opportunities for local people, tackling issues of anti-social behaviour and residents' complaints associated with long term empty properties and helped to sustain social enterprises. As well as support an increase in ethically managed affordable accommodation at refurbished to a good standard. Fresh Horizons Ltd believe that the benefits to local authorities that invest in programmes such as the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme by pump priming, far outweigh the risks and create a sustaining self-funding programme for future refurbishments.

When asked, what lessons had been learnt Mike McCusker said "Everything takes longer than you think! For example, securing finance, the legal processes, sourcing and completing properties. It was significantly more difficult than anticipated to gather together the range of funds and loans and get the investment at the right time. Even with the flexibility of the release of grant we experienced cash flow issues in getting other funds, although agreed in principle at the start, released at the point they had been programmed.

We have found that our success has been in large part through creating flexible 'deals' for the owners that the EHCGP grant element allowed us to create, has a significantly higher success rate than a one-size-fits-all offer did. We should have taken more time in the build up to the start of the programme to create greater clarity

between each of the parties on their roles and responsibilities and time scales to take action. We found that even slight variations in expectations can have a big impact.”

5. Improving communities

Somerset Care and Repair Ltd

Established: 1999

Objectives or ethos: To help vulnerable people stay in their own homes. To adapt properties for the benefit of disabled people. To provide a handy person's service for older people.

Project delivery model: A combination of purchase and repair and lease and repair.

Location of refurbishment: In the Mendip and South Somerset.

Project description: Taking on empty properties and refurbishing them to a good living standard. Two projects were delivered.

Total grant award: £979,900

Refurbishment target: Project 1 – 28 affordable homes with 56 bedrooms

Project 2 – 15 affordable homes with 29 bedrooms

Achievement: Project 1 – 28 affordable homes with 67 bedrooms

Project 2 - 9 affordable homes with 22 bedrooms

The projects delivered under the Empty Homes Community Grants programme has considerably helped to improve local communities, particularly in terms of anti-social behaviour. Some of the properties were well known for squatters, drug dealing, etc. Empty, boarded up properties are blights on any road and lower property prices. Somerset Care and Repair has taken over local empty properties and improved them.

Local residents have responded to the projects very positively. The response has been great. The project used trainees from the local community, most of who were long term unemployed, and gave them valuable work experience. The trainees worked with and were trained by local contractors. The police are pleased that anti-social behaviour has been lowered in some areas.

Delivering two projects has helped this organisation to acquire properties which has increased its asset base. By managing the tenancies after the properties have been refurbished helps the organisation generate an income so that it is less reliant upon the local authority for funding.

By delivering two successful projects, the profile of the organisation has been raised. It has generated interest locally and now local companies are providing money to help with project delivery. Other local authorities have expressed an interest, and the organisation will now be able to expand services by providing a county- wide empty homes service in the future.

When asked what lessons have been learnt from delivering the project, Chief Officer, Kevin Lake said "Never take on listed buildings. Conservation officers have a different ethos to everyone else. Planning issues have been a problem. It takes a long time, having to go to planning committees and meeting. Whereas it would normally take about 8 weeks it has taken us up to 16 weeks in some cases."

6. Accredited training

Access to training and employment

Established: February 2012

Objectives or ethos: The directors of this company have excellent experience of working in the areas of training, employment and property renovation. The company is managed by three Directors each director brings a variety of skills to the organisation including experience of managing funding, delivering successful training and employment projects and experience of working in a social care setting.

The organisation is currently delivering a successful training and employment skills contract in partnership with the local Job Centre Plus and VOLA learning consortia. The scheme aims to work with young people not in employment education or training (NEET) and provide them with the basic skills required to prepare them for the world of work. As part of this work the young people have been involved in the renovation and improvement of a commercial property which is used as a training facility for the organisation.

Project delivery model: Combination of lease and repair and purchase and repair

Location of refurbishment: Wirral

Project description: The project worked in partnership with the local community to renovate and refurbish a range of empty properties to be used as residential dwellings. The project was delivered in tandem with the training and employment contract already being delivered by the organisation in partnership with Job Centre Plus and VOLA. The properties were used as training venues to teach skills on basic construction, plastering, and plumbing. The project provided the ideal environment for young people to gain skills in a work based environment.

Young people were offered incentives to be involved in the project by awarding credits to the young people that demonstrated commitment. Those with the most credits at were offered an opportunity to become tenants of the properties and awarded appliances to furnish their properties. Many of the young people involved in the project had no qualifications or experience of

working. The project built basic skills and developed their confidence and self-esteem by being able to play an active role in the project and see the final product.

The directors of the organisation have experience of managing commercial property portfolios but the organisation does not have the status of an accredited landlord. Wirral Council has offered to provide training and support to enable the organisation to become an accredited landlord, advice and training was provided to potential tenants to ensure that they have the skills to manage their own sustainable tenancy. As an interim measure to ensure the properties were made available for lettings as soon as they were ready, the properties were managed by an accredited letting agent.

The first six properties were leased from the owners on a 10 year lease. The organisation had a relationship with this landlord prior to the start of the programme through an earlier lease arrangement.

The seventh property which formed the second phase of this project was purchased using a loan secured from The Social Enterprise Loan Fund. Purchasing the property enabled the organisation to generate surplus which can be recycled either through increased employment for local people or to expand the portfolio of affordable properties from the Phase 1 work.

Total grant award: £321,117.00 for two projects

Refurbishment target: 9 affordable homes with 35 bedrooms

Achievement: 9 affordable homes with 35 bedrooms

The first group of trainees were recruited through connections, the careers service, young offender referrals and through informal referrals. Also because the project is based on a main High Street when passers-by see lots of young people in high vis jackets on site it drew attention and people/students would enquire out of curiosity.

The trainees were 16-18 but now school kids who do not want to be in school or have been excluded from school are included so there is a young cohort of trainees.

A full induction was provided. As a training provider the organisation has to meet the criteria of colleges and provides a structured course recognised City & Guilds. There is a full BSKB induction, followed by City & Guilds Level 1 and Level 2 in Construction.

As an incentive, trainees receive a government bursary, free lunch and travel and all the equipment they need for free.

The organisation was able to retain trainees because they were/are doing live work they enjoyed working on an actual site so could see the end product. Also when they came in they knew they were getting something to eat and were training 16hrs plus a week. The organisation has the right staff to work with young people and have been successful in recruiting and engaging a challenging cohort.

In addition to the City & Guilds in Construction the organisation provided accredited functional skills in English and Maths.

Access to Training and Employment worked with two colleges: Mid Cheshire College and Warrington Collegiate. The colleges held the main contract and subcontracted the training provision to Access to Training and Employment as a registered provider.

The projects achieved a 78% retention rate of students with certification and also built a cafe where the hospitality and catering students could cater for the construction students working on a live site.

The trainees moved onto apprenticeships with local housing associations, paid employment with construction firms and building merchants, FE education and accredited jobs.

Consideration is currently being given to obtaining registered provider housing status.

Without the funding this organisation would not have been able to deliver both projects and would not have been able to become a registered training provider. By delivering these projects the organisation has developed closer ties with Cheshire Council and is continuing to lease and purchase properties.

When asked what lessons had been learnt, Gary Williams, said "One of the hardest things we have found is the difficulty in this climate to refinance with banks and raise capital. We had to take the buildings to a higher lease and pay 5% of property the balance sheet shows as equity. As an organisation, despite a healthy balance sheet and huge success we could be closed down overnight because of cash flow."

This organisation believes in investing in youth and in providing young people with an opportunity to get into work and participate in training without feeling under-valued. By delivering the projects staff found a lot of the students want to work. Staff know that the geographical area they work in has drug issues. They ensure that trainees do not take drugs on site and guard against dealers trying to infiltrate students.

It was a challenging cohort but staff were aware of the difficult background some of these young people came from (mental health, addiction, parents with addictions, being carers for family members etc.) Staff took a supportive, but no nonsense approach to managing the trainees. They believe that when working with young people, it is important to look beyond face value and first impressions.

7. Effective management

Changing Lives

Established: 1970

Objectives or ethos: Providing homes for 'Changing Lives' client group. To regenerate dilapidated housing stock. To provide training and employment opportunities for the client group through the refurbishment of the properties.

Project delivery model: Combination of purchase and repair, and lease and repair.

Location of refurbishment: In Northumberland, Newcastle, Gateshead, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Sunderland and Durham.

Project description: To tackle long term empty properties and bring them back to use. Help to extend the work we do by enabling to offer permanent homes to some of our clients

Total grant award: £1,475,000 for two projects

Refurbishment target: 55 affordable homes with 128 bedrooms.

Achievement: 55 affordable homes with 127 bedrooms.

The project benefited from professional project management. Changing Lives brought in project expertise from a project management consultancy in the form of Chris Hughes. It was project managed using the following stages.

- Property selection and viewing
- Financing
- 'Offer' assessment
- Making 'offer'

- Compliance
- Refurbishment
- Handover

The organisation achieved the targets by the target date. The project was originally managed by a volunteer but it was realised that the targets would not be met, project expertise was sourced from ARTIS Consulting, which introduced new processes and principles to help meet the project's targets.

Change within the project was monitored by the project manager and the corporate services director within Changing Lives. Any new opportunity was assessed to ensure it was financially viable before the change to the delivery project was implemented. In relation to change during the refurbishment works any change was implemented via a variation request which was provided by the contractor and approved by the project manager.

The organisation made sure the purchase price of the houses represented value for money by checking comparison websites, employing an independent surveyor and building good relationships with local estate agents. Employing an in-house construction company to do the refurbishments but also regularly checking that these were value for money too by market testing.

Changing Lives had two teams working on the Homelife project. Two members were responsible for purchase and refurbishment and two members for tenancy management who looked after the tenancies. The tenancy team consisted of a tenancy manager and a tenancy co-ordinator. Inspections were arranged with tenants every three months to assist with the management of the tenancies and to ensure that the properties were being maintained. Homelife also agreed a service level agreement with the Cyrenians UK Property Services which outlined response timescales for various maintenance requests.

When asked what, if anything, you would do differently, if you were to deliver the project again, Chis Hughes said "Have a bigger team. At the start of the project we should have been more ambitious and tackled bigger properties and projects. Throughout this project we reviewed our processes every 6 months but in future we will still aim to continually improve and look to further streamline our processes."

8. Effective Management

Phases Social Enterprise Ltd

Established: 2001

Objectives or ethos: Originally in 2001 the organisation was set up to provide advice and guidance to homeless people. In 2006, this changed to renovating empty buildings and training the homeless in construction skills.

Project delivery model: A combination of both purchase and repair and lease and repair. This organisation was awarded three grants to deliver three projects.

Location of refurbishment: In the London boroughs of Southwark and Lewisham, achieved Southwark, Lewisham and Newham; and in Worthing and Arun local authority areas.

Project description: Bringing empty homes into use and letting them out as social housing when completed and running a construction training project. Although the numbers of the houses renovated were scaled back from the original plan, the training went ahead as defined at the outset.

Total grant award: £898,000 for three projects

Refurbishment target: 15 affordable homes with 37 bedrooms

Achievement: 15 affordable homes with 37 bedrooms

The project was managed by one person, Glenn Heaton and the training was dealt with separately by a training coordinator. Both reported on a quarterly basis to the board of trustees.

As the project Manager, Glenn used his previous experience to gain a good overview of all three projects.

This organisation did not use formal procedures to make changes to project delivery. It was difficult to source properties for the second project in preferred areas. The search had to be widened to include other London boroughs.

A concerted effort was made to fulfil the original targets that were set. When it became evident that those targets would not be met Glenn negotiated revised targets with the Tribal grants administration team, in order to deliver a realistic project that would remain good value for money.

Phases Social Enterprise managed the tenancies, including sourcing tenants, through the local authorities. This included the preparation of tenancy agreements and subsequent management. Property maintenance is either carried out by the builders on a sub-contractual basis or contract or may be dealt with by former trainees if they have the relevant skills. Most of the plumbing and heating engineering maintenance is dealt with by a former trainee who is now fully qualified.

When asked what if anything he would do differently if he had to deliver the project again, Glenn said "Not a lot. We purchased properties for the first time through this Programme so we had a fairly steep learning curve into the world of finance. If we have the opportunity to purchase further properties under future programmes we will be much better placed to do our homework in advance on this. For example, by speaking to lenders in advance, we will be able to establish the likely limits of future borrowing."

9. Impact of property price increases

ADCRIS Ltd

Established: November 2009

Objectives or ethos: To provide social housing for the most disadvantaged and homeless, bring empty properties back into use, and to provide employment and training opportunities for young people.

Project delivery model: Combination of purchase and repair and lease and repair

Location of refurbishment: The borough of Lewisham in South East London

Project description: Our proposal is to bring 18 eligible properties across five local authorities in London, back into use over the lifetime of the contract.

Total grant award: £759,999.85 for two projects

Target: Two projects – 12 affordable homes with 32 bedrooms

Achievement: Two projects – 4 affordable homes with 10 bedrooms

The purchase and repair delivery model was recognised as offering the best value for money, in terms of grant funding. The increase in property prices however made it impossible for this organisation to continue this delivery model.

In order to address the problem, consideration was given to purchasing properties in other areas of London, where property prices were lower; purchasing leasehold properties rather than freehold; and purchasing property directly from the owner to remove the cost of

agency fees. More funding was sought from Social Enterprise lenders and banks, but without success.

Despite the current set back this organisation is planning to undertake more property refurbishment in the future, subject to more funds being secured.

Delivering two projects on the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme has made a huge difference to this organisation. It has increased the number of houses within a portfolio, provided permanent employment for a young person, an asset base, financial security, and the ability to continue to provide long term social housing.

10. Improving lives

St Basils

Established: October 1972

Objectives or ethos: St Basils works with young people aged 16-25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, helping over 4000 young people per year across the West Midlands region with specific services in Birmingham, Sandwell, Solihull, Worcestershire, the Wyre Forest and Coventry. It offers a range of prevention, accommodation and support services to help young people regain the stability they need to rebuild their lives, gain skills, training and employment and move on. The aim is to help them successfully break the cycle of homelessness, as our shared hope is that the next generation will be free from this blight on young lives and instead will go on to develop and thrive and experience a bright, purposeful, fulfilling future.

Project delivery model: lease and repair

Location of refurbishment: West Bromwich, West Midlands

Project description: Many of the young people we work with have complex needs and some struggle to cope in shared insecure accommodation. During their time at St Basils, they are able to address underlying issues and develop skills and confidence to move on, with transitional support during their resettlement period.

The project proposal was to bring back into use 25 flats in a range of neighbourhoods across Birmingham. These flats will provide affordable Starter Homes for young people in diverse communities. The intention was to minimise revenue costs by commissioning the majority social landlord in the area to refurbish and manage the tenancies on behalf of St Basils. In this way, the young people would experience an independent relationship with the Landlord and would receive transitional support from St Basils or other support providers. This supports their transition to full independence. The intention was to negotiate lease agreements of a minimum of 5 years. The intention was to let the homes at affordable rent levels and to place an amount of £10 per week in a savings fund for young people for each week that they pay their rent through earned income. If they are in receipt of housing benefit, we would reduce the savings contribution

proportionately. This enables the young person to experience the benefits of work and savings. In 2006, St Basils received Innovation and Good Practice Grant from the Housing Corporation to develop this scheme of Starter Homes for young people and have successfully trialled it in a partnership with Family Housing Association. The scheme has a high success rate, encouraging young people to work and save and providing a 'move on' fund for their next stage accommodation. Five years is seen as an optimum period initially, generating investment funding for a legacy scheme.

Support from the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme has enabled St Basils to use this learning and scale up the provision whilst bringing empty homes back into use in local neighbourhoods and minimising revenue costs by using existing 'best placed' housing management.

Total grant award: £258,000.00

Refurbishment target: 9 properties with 32 bedrooms

Achievement: 9 properties with 32 bedrooms

It is still early days but the project has been transformative for 32 homeless people who will be able to live in the scheme and have apprenticeships with Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust. The rent is set at a level which will allow them to be benefit free and live off their apprenticeship wage.

St Basils has a lease agreement with NHS for 10 years but manage the tenancies and maintain the properties directly through the in-house team.

Young people are allocated to properties that are already in short term accommodation with St Basils, are referred through Sandwell council and are homeless or care leavers. They are assessed as ready to engage in employment.

Fully furnished properties are let at £41.84 per week inclusive.

The tenants are just moving into the refurbished properties because they are tied in with the apprenticeships. However in terms of having somewhere safe, decent and affordable linked to employment opportunities it is having a tremendous impact. In the case of one young woman despite her best efforts she got into serious difficulties, was not able to pay her bills and was evicted. Being a part of this programme has allowed her to keep her apprenticeship and provide acquire new accommodation.

The length of each tenancy will be dependent on the length of the apprenticeships. Most of them will be 12 months but some medical engineering apprenticeships go up to 4 years.

There are 32 bed spaces which over 10 years should benefit between 250-300 young people.

The properties were not inspected by a representative Homes and Communities and Agency.

The Empty Homes Community Grants Programme has enabled St Basils to deliver a ground breaking project. This organisation had previously tried to engage homeless young people and provide employment. Someone who is homeless cannot sustain an apprenticeship because of rent levels. This programme has allowed the organisation to deflate the rent to an affordable level. This was a real living example of a whole community approach to making something work. There were a number of different organisations who got involved and partnered with us to make the programme a success. The model that has been developed has been so successful the intention is to expand it nationally. The rent charged could have been doubled and still meet affordable rent level but it was deliberately deflated so young people could be benefit free and live on their apprenticeship wage.

When asked, what lessons had been learnt, Richard Lethbridge said, "From the outset we learnt quickly the difficulties in finding accommodation. Engaging the interest of private sector landlords was challenging as initially they would not consider the approach. Despite having no capital outlay they would prefer to see the property empty than see it go to the young people we supported. We found private landlords were unrealistic with their expectations and didn't understand that the aim of the programme was to bring empty neglected homes back into use at affordable rent. During negotiations they would move the goalposts thinking they could get more money out of the project. There was an element of greed in some instances

and this would be frustrating as we would already have invested significant time, effort and cost. We also used local authorities to identify empty properties. Eventually we made contact with universities and the NHS and that's where our current programme model started. They wanted to look at a scheme to engage apprenticeships. Although there are still challenges with the public sector they are in the whole more principled and are looking at the wider benefit to the young people. These partnerships really showed that it takes 'a village to raise a child'.

The programme would have benefited if the initial remit of bringing empty homes from the private sector into use to provide affordable rent for those in need use was extended to include other organisations with strains on their budgets and properties lying dormant. “

A number of organisations contributed to the success of the project:

- NHS Trust leased the buildings
- Health Education West Midlands 'Pre Apprenticeship Training Programmes' were delivered by University Hospital Birmingham. They also paid for a number of 'super nummery' apprenticeships so they were not being taken from other apprenticeship cohorts and are paying for the University of Birmingham to evaluate the schemes impact.
- KeepMoat delivered all the work at cost and their supply chain delivered all the materials at discounted rates. They also received an award based on the work they had done on the programme.
- A number of charitable trusts, including the hospitals own charity, have provided hardship funds and other support to the young people
- Talent Match putting in mentoring resources to support young people
- Birmingham Council is allowing the organisation to deploy some contractual support across boundary in Sandwell
- The NHS Trust and the Working Skills works team provide funding for travel and clothes for the young people. They also provide confidence building for living and working in the scheme before they start.

11. Improving lives

Progressive Lifestyles Ltd

Established: 28th July 2010

Objectives or ethos: Progressive Lifestyle Solutions is a Community Interest Company which provides affordable housing options to single males in Liverpool. The organisation's ultimate objective is to support the progression of service users into sustainable independent living via the provision of structured life skills and employment-related development opportunities. In its endeavours to achieve this objective, Progressive Lifestyle Solutions provides safe, secure accommodation to service users on an affordable rent basis across 11 properties. This provision is coupled with professional and experienced support via a team of key workers who impart information, advice and guidance (IAG) and effective signposting with a view to realising sustainable outcomes with service users, for service users.

Progressive Lifestyle Solutions has achieved great success to-date in Liverpool in relation to education, health and fitness, and effective customer transition into independent sustainable living.

Project delivery model: purchase and repair

Location of refurbishment: Liverpool

Project description: Progressive Lifestyle Solutions (PLS) for funding support for the acquisition of 8 properties in the Liverpool area. The properties will be used primarily for the purpose of housing adults aged 25 years plus, who have additional support needs in terms of education, employment, health and wellbeing. The organisation will provide a holistic service which promotes service users' development and transition to further independence. The project represents a new dimension to our core business which complements our historical operational delivery. The projects will provide service users the opportunity to live independently via a 'move-on' service, as opposed to living semi-independently in shared accommodation.

The successful acquisition of property is crucial to the ongoing development of the organisation as the provision of affordable rent options to vulnerable customers is the core activity. In securing additional property, Progressive Lifestyle Solutions will be able to provide much needed support to adults at risk of homelessness due to offending history and/or substance misuse issues. This will be achieved via a structured 'move-on' service. All customers are assessed to ascertain need and risk in a transparent manner in order to gauge housing priority, irrespective of race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, marital status or ethnic origin.

Progressive Lifestyle Solutions encouraged the involvement of volunteers in the renovation of the properties. This was supervised by time-served tradesmen at all times. In order to maximise outcomes for service users, PLS works in partnership with a number of agencies, in accordance with an Information Sharing Protocol (agreed with the individual at the induction stage). Professional agencies engaged to provide specialist advice and interventions in areas such as substance misuse, anger management, offending behaviour, domestic violence and other crimes.

Progressive Lifestyle Solutions sought to purchase identified properties in order to make available long-term homes for service users to further support their long term development. All properties were refurbished and maintained in accordance with HCA Design & Quality Standards 2007.

Total grant award: £751,315.00 for two projects

Refurbishment target: 18 properties / 42 bedrooms

Achievement: 18 properties / 44 bedrooms

A number of the service users came from a homeless situation. The difference the projects have made to their lives is immense. Provision from other organisations has been limited to a supported accommodation environment. PLS provide a full service allowing tenants to transition from supported living in a shared home to full independence. At the outset of the project all the accommodation provided by PLS was property rented from private landlords which

provided shared accommodation for the tenants. With the funding PLS has been able to offer people property at a low rent allowing individuals to live affordably and independently.

The properties are managed by PLS. Staff has the skills base to cover most of the maintenance e.g. an electrician, joiner etc. However larger jobs such as boiler inspections are outsourced. This organisation also has a scheme whereby if the services users volunteer to help with the refurbishment the time they spend working on the property will result in a reduction of their rent once they are re-housed. Effectively the actual time spent repairing/decorating properties would be deducted in kind from the rent.

Service users need to be unemployed to access the organisation's supported housing service, so if they find work they are in effect making themselves homeless. This means there is no incentive to get a job because they would have to leave their accommodation. With the project funding PLS is able to provide furnished accommodation without a need for a deposit. The grant has allowed us to support people out of the benefit trap and encourage them to find work.

All tenants are drawn from the current supported services users who come from a varied background including being homeless.

Typically in Anfield private rent is £525pcm. The PLS rent on average is £320pcm with the most expensive being £360 and the least expensive £300 about 70% of market value.

The Empty Homes Community Grants projects have helped to improve the quality of life of tenants. People now have hope in finding a job. Lots of people have no incentive to work. After a long period of inactivity they sometimes fail to realise that their initial salary is usually low. Monthly rental obligations would take up most of that salary so many chose not to be proactive about finding work. Being able to provide furnished accommodation with no deposit makes a huge difference to tenants who now have hope for the future. The social value is immeasurable. Also volunteers have been given work experience, learn new skills and working as part of a team has built their morale. The transition from homeless, to shared housing and then moving into independent living has a huge impact on their lives.

The average length of a tenancy lease is 12months. This particular type of accommodation is a stepping stones to a new life. The average price of a property is about £40-£50k so the homes are not

mansions. Yet they allow people an element of social mobility where they can plan for the future and think about expanding families and developing relationships.

PLS has housed about 28-30 individuals but it goes beyond getting people into properties. Tenants have been able to reengage with families now they have a roof over their heads. Local communities are being rebuilt as derelict, empty and vandalised properties are being brought back into use so the ripple effect has been maybe more than 100 people.

PLS is not a Registered Provider and therefore the refurbished properties were not inspected by a Homes and Communities Agency representative, but the standards were met. Selective licensing is a permit in Liverpool that all landlords will eventually have to sign up to. Landlords will have to meet basic requirements and the aim of the licensing will be to weed out slum landlords. Landlords will have to pay for it and any persistently reckless landlords will be prosecuted or sanctioned.

Securing funding from the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme has been extremely beneficial to this organisation. In 2012 this organisation was 'ticking over' and servicing a group, taking them just so far but not able to facilitate independent living. The funding has provided assets which can be used to grow the business.

The Council was impressed with the work and offered empty properties. The projects were visited by the Mayor of Liverpool, Joe Anderson, who wanted to offer further support in order for the organisation to grow. Following his visit PLS was offered properties at a nominal fee of £1 and on the proviso that the properties are kept as affordable homes of five years.

Previously we used grants to pay overheads such as wages so were only able to offer temporary employment contracts. Now we have permanent contracts so there is job security for staff. We have taken on two new members of staff since the project started 2 ½ years ago and that is likely to increase with the additional council properties. The project has been a springboard to sustainability and further growth.

PLS is considering other forms of finance for example 'patient capital' where you get the funding but don't pay it back for 2-3 years. It will allow the organisation to fund refurbishment which will also be

supported by rent revenue. The Empty Homes Community Grants Programme has provided more than an asset base; it has given the organisation options.

When asked what lessons if any had been learnt, Paul Martin, said “As a company we have learnt that the benefits system doesn’t help genuine job seekers. We have learnt the benefits of wider social outputs not just for service users but the wider community e.g. increased property values in areas when houses are not vandalised. Learnt how to be sustainable as a company and making income work, whilst improving the procedures of our company we have become a company of accountants! Previously when we received a grant it had to be spent on particular outcomes then we would report on it but with the rental it’s ours to spend as we see fit.

The project has also been a soft entry into procurement. Completing the paperwork has made us more confident in reporting to government organisations. We would do exactly the same but more. We picked up 18 houses through the project and are in talks with the council to supply more. If we had more time and funding we could have tripled what we achieved.”

12. Decent, modern, affordable homes

Birmingham Y.M.C.A.

Established: In 1849. Birmingham YMCA is a Christian charity working with people, especially the young, regardless of faith, race, ability or gender.

Objectives or ethos: The charity provides supported accommodation to people who have been homeless, helping them to live independently. As well as affordable childcare, out of school clubs and holiday play schemes, community facilities for hire and training packages.

Project delivery model: Lease and repair

Location of refurbishment: Birmingham

Project description: To identify empty properties for refurbishment into affordable homes for young people, as move on accommodation from supported housing.

Total grant award: £890,480

Refurbishment target: 59 affordable homes with 70 bedrooms

Achievement: 36 affordable homes with 70 bedrooms

The charity employed someone at Kartar to make links with landlords and to undertake searches for buildings that had been identified. The council sent a notification to property owners on behalf of YMCA. The charity also placed an advert in the Sutton Observer and appointed a project manager to oversee the project.

The charity was fortunate enough not to have to seek match funding for the project.

The project completed refurbishments in three different areas of Birmingham. The charity issued approximately ten invitations to potential contractors to tender for the Harry Watton House refurbishment. A local contractor was appointed.

The refurbishment of 24 self-contained flats in Henrietta Street had been started prior to the charity becoming involved. The owner did not have enough funds to complete the project and the contractor had not been paid, so the charity took over the refurbishment and the work continued. This arrangement was beneficial to the owner, the contractor and the charity.

The contractors, selected via an invitation to tender process were selected primarily based on the best price. This was because most of the quotes received were very high. In addition, it was felt that the selected contractors could also deliver good quality that would represent good value for money. One of the contractors was a new company looking to secure work that would help to establish the business in the city, raise its profile and help them market services in the future. The appointed project manager was very good at finding ways in which to save costs as well.

All of the appointed contractors were local to the Birmingham area.

The charity placed a lot of emphasis on the need to create refurbished affordable accommodation of a high standard. Knowing that completed refurbishment had to meet or exceed HCA Design Standards, staff felt that it was very important when charging rent. It was a conscious decision to exceed the standards. The charity works to move on residents from supported housing from troubled or difficult backgrounds. Providing good quality accommodation is an important part of that process. The finishes of the Henrietta Street and Harry Watton House properties, in particular, have been refurbished to a very high standard.

All of the properties that were refurbished benefited from decent bathrooms, kitchens and living spaces. Harry Watton House, previously used as a mental health facility and a care home, went from over 71 treatment rooms into 33 self-contained flats.

Where necessary, properties were given energy efficient boilers and double glazing.

Birmingham YMCA would recommend the following good practices:

- Select the contractors well.
- Make sure that the agreement with the contractor is clear from the start.
- The contractor agreement should include a clause which makes them responsible for twelve months post completion of any issues that arise from the work.
- Use a good experienced solicitor to ensure that the legal agreement is water tight.
- Employ an experienced project manager to oversee project delivery.
- Make sure that you have a schedule of work for each property.
- Plan for a quality finish at the start of the project.
- Be clear on tenancy management requirements.
- Ensure that internal policies are up to date e.g. rent arrears, dealing with anti-social behaviour and maintenance
- Include a break clause within the property lease agreement.
- Draw up and agree a service level agreement with the owner to cover call out issues and related costs.

Birmingham YMCA acquired registered provider status during the second year of the programme. This has helped the charity raise additional funds to acquire more supported housing units, a multi-purpose centre, plus a training kitchen; all of which should be completed by December 2015.

The Charity will continue to identify empty properties for refurbishment in the future.

Participating in the Empty Homes Community Grants programme has helped the Birmingham YMCA to provide much needed rooms for their residents; it has generated income; improved standards; improved working relationships with other registered and private landlords; and created employment for a housing officer and a project manager.

When asked what lessons had been learnt, Hyacinth Blackburn, Housing Service Director, said:

- “Having a good understanding of building regulations

- Be open to learning from the experience of a good project manager
- Understanding the process of obtaining planning permission; and knowing who to contact locally to help support your planning application
- Having good negotiation skills greatly helps when liaising with landlords and getting them on board with the project
- There is a need for very good legal support, to make sure everything is covered and water tight
- It is beneficial to know as much as possible about health and safety requirements on building sites.”

13. Good value for money

Newark and Sherwood Homes

Established: November 2004

Vision: “To deliver excellent housing services”. These objectives outline the stages to be achieved in delivering Newark and Sherwood Homes’ Vision.

- To deliver high and improving performance in customer satisfaction and all areas of service provision.
- To provide efficient and effective investment and service solutions targeted to meet local need and deliver sustainable Homes and Communities in the future.
- To maintain and manage a sustainable and viable financial business plan.
- To productively deliver growth to meet the Company’s and Council’s objectives.

Core values:

The Core Values set out the type of organisation that Newark and Sherwood Homes is, and the way in which it will reach its Objectives and deliver its Vision.

- Customer First
- Valuing Everyone
- Delivering Excellence
- Continuous Improvement and Value for Money
- Sharing Information

Project delivery model: purchase and repair

Location of refurbishment: All within Newark and Sherwood district: 2 in Balderton, 1 in Newark and 1 in Rainworth.

Project description: To maximise the use of properties standing empty across the district to provide additional accommodation and at the same time reduce the negative impact that empty homes can have on our communities.

Total grant award: £50,000

Refurbishment target: 4 affordable homes with 9 bedrooms

Achievement: 4 affordable homes with 9 bedrooms

The cost to the Department per lease year was £185; which represents excellent value for money. The size of the grant award was small in comparison to the majority of projects on the programme, but it was manageable.

The fact that the Empty Homes Community Grants programme was a capital programme did not create a barrier to delivery, despite the relatively small grant award. Remarkably match funding was not required.

The four properties were purchased on a freehold basis and let on assured tenancies.

The properties benefited from the following repairs:

- Electrical rewires
- Air Source Heat Pump
- Full new central heating, including new boiler and gas fire
- Replacement radiators
- Replacement gas piping
- Installation of studied wall
- Installation of new kitchens and bathrooms
- Tiling
- Localised pointing on eaves/roof
- New doors and associated furnishings
- Low energy light bulbs and light hoods
- Painting internals and deep cleans.

The project generated numerous benefits, namely:

- Increased available affordable housing offering houses and bungalows to accommodate community mix for local people in need, including homeless families.

- Reduce homelessness, therefore minimising the use of temporary accommodation.
- Making better use of current housing stock.
- Acts as a measure to reduce Anti-social Behaviour, crime and disorder and to allay the fear of crime in local neighbourhoods.
- Improvement to owners of neighbouring properties. Empty homes devalue areas, reducing sustainability which creates negative impact on communities.
- Assisted the local authority in meeting their strategic priorities with regard to the provision of Affordable housing.
- Supported local labour and employment.
- Community pride and sustainability: A positive impact of regenerating areas.

Following the refurbishment, for properties were let as affordable homes, housing seventeen people, with weekly rents ranging from £93.89 to £112.00 in the 2014/15 financial year.

The participation in the programme has provided additional and much needed affordable decent housing for local people.

By delivering the project, staff at Newark and Sherwood Homes have learnt the process of property purchase, how to improve and repair neglected property turning them into something decent, warm, energy-efficient and affordable for people in most need.

14. Perseverance, determination and results

Youth Enquiry Service Brixham

Established: 1996

Objectives or ethos: To give advice, guidance and support to young people under 25 and their families and encourage community activities in a purposeful way. The organisation has adopted a solutions focused approach. The organisation has 'visitors' not 'beneficiaries and volunteers'. There is no hierarchy. The organisation tries to make people independent and has been refining this philosophy since it started working with NESTAR/ABCD to pilot asset based ways of working and to share this approach with other organisations. This organisation is involved in the setting up the Torbay Community Development Trust, which is an infrastructure organisation set up to represent and promote the voluntary and community sector.

Project delivery model: Purchase and repair

Location of refurbishment: Brixham, Devon.

Project description: The buildings were completely derelict. There is very little of the original structures remaining. After the demolition phase there was hardly anything left of the old buildings. The inside of the properties have very modern, sound and heat insulation. Energy efficient affordable homes have been brought back into use. As a community charity with an environmental ethos, YES Brixham wanted to make the homes cheap to run and environmentally friendly. The project used local architects and local builders and local suppliers and local tradesmen to deliver the project. Everyone involved was committed to the idea of doing something positive for the town. A derelict property was specifically sought, because the charity wanted to achieve the maximum impact on the town. The two buildings were eyesores and were detracting from the tourist town. The charity thought it was important to not only stick to their objectives of not only providing affordable housing, but to make a difference in the community.

Refurbishment target: 6 affordable homes with 11 bedrooms

Achievement: The charity refurbished two buildings, and created eleven self-contained affordable homes. The rent will be set at £465 per calendar month. The buildings have been assessed by a local housing association, Westwood Housing, which has confirmed that this is 80% of market rate. A lot of people retire to the town of Brixham and purchase properties as cash buyers, which pushes up house prices. The town is somewhat cut off which keeps the cost of living high. Until the local link road is completed, Torbay will be the largest community in Britain without a dual carriageway.

Total grant award: £414,000

One of the properties refurbished was owned by a local charity and one is located across the road from the charity's office. The owners were contacted. In the case of the second property this was difficult because the owner had moved away. Local knowledge was used to track him down.

At the beginning local authority representatives showed an interest in the proposed project. Torbay is a unitary authority. The Empty Homes Officer, worked with them. It was not entirely satisfactory. Progress was very slow. The charity was unsure as to what support could be given by the local authority. The Empty Homes Officer offered to find empty buildings by reviewing the council tax list.

The trustees have a wide range of skills and knowledge and the project also used a pool of local volunteers. The charity called on people in the local community when in need of specific advice or information. For example when a valuation of the refurbished properties was required, a local estate agent was contacted, and he provided a written appraisal for free.

The initial project delivery plan set the completion of this project by March 2013. There was a significant delay in project delivery. The problem was not exactly a lack of experience, but perhaps a misunderstanding. Following the award of the grant, staff thought that following talks with local housing associations they would become engaged with the project in terms of time and finance, by becoming a delivery partner, and that delivery would begin. This did not happen. Intermittent communication and a lack of honesty resulted in over a year of delivery being lost.

In addition, the charity set other goals above and beyond the objectives of the programme, for example, it chose buildings that were derelict. Problems with the property title and in contacting the owner and obtaining local searches ensued. One of the buildings was owned by another local charity, Stapleton House Trust. A local old lady died and the trust was set up in her name, to provide for the older people of Brixham. Stapleton House Trust ran a lunch club once a week. The number of people going dwindled. The club closed and the Trust dwindled to two trustees. The charity decided that if the building was purchased the building, the Trust could use the sale proceeds, £150K, to benefit the older people of Brixham.

It proved almost impossible to get regular contact with one of the trustees who was frequently away on board a cruise ship; and contact could only make contact when he docked. It took 18 months to get things in order. The trustees of Stapleton House Trust had to prove to the Charity Commission that they were trustees and they had to prove that they could sell the building. YES Brixham is a very small charity, with two and half staff. A lack of experience, a degree of fear and caution, at the start of the project, led to lengthy hesitations.

Naively the charity thought that with just less than half of the funds required to deliver the project, that arranging finance would be a simple case of going to the bank and asking for £150K to refurbish the properties. The bank said no, because the charity had no income, despite the fact that the charity would have an income was the buildings were refurbished and the flats were let. It took time to approach other banks. In the end, staff met with a BIG Issue Invest representative, with who, over time, developed a close flexible and light touch working relationship. A total of £320K was secured. The representative was very helpful and helped the charity to go through the process of updating the charity's memorandum and articles of association with the Charity Commission. After a significant delay of two financial years, the project was finally completed in 2015.

If the charity had to run the project again, it would certainly aim to get the project started more quickly. Also it would select less difficult buildings to refurbish; ones that need less refurbishment.

Generally the days of charities receiving funds to cover core costs have gone. There is very little core funding available. The completion of the project means that the charity can use the surplus rents from the flats to fund the core work of the charity which is very important.

The charity is delivering another project, which will result in the installation of a biomass boiler, for which the charity will receive a subsidy of £10K per year. This will further help to sustain the core work of the charity, by enabling it to undertake commissioned work in the future. The organisation is now more sustainable. The charity believes in asset based development solutions focused work; which means looking at the glass as half full rather than half empty. It looks at tapping into the skills of individuals. By delivering the project, YES Brixham has shown what a small charity can do with determination, perseverance, and by using the in house skills assets. This charity is not afraid of trying new things and sees itself as a pathfinder organisation.

Now that the project has been delivered successfully, staff feel confident enough to deliver a similar project in the future. They have made contacts and now have a network of support. Delivering the project was “a real strain”, at times, but staff would happily do it again.

Local people who have walked past the refurbished properties have commented on how positive it is see the previous eyesores removed and to smarten up the town. The charity has received a lot of positive feedback. Locals now think that they are the ‘go to’ organisation for refurbishment.

Since the completion, and as a direct result of the refurbished properties, the local authority, as part of the community asset transfer scheme, has given the charity an opportunity to purchase a local asset before it is placed on the market.

In terms of lessons to be shared Andrew Wade of YES Brixham said: “Be brave. Don’t think that you can’t do it. Don’t wait for other people to do things for you. Make use of personal contacts. Tell your story so that people know what you are doing and why you are doing it, because you will get a lot of support if you do.”

15. Small but effective

Rosa Bridge Housing Cooperative

Established: November 2011

Objectives or ethos: To provide low cost housing in the centre of Brighton.

Project delivery model: purchase and repair

Location of refurbishment: Brighton

Project description: This project is initially working towards housing five people (five units) in shared accommodation in the form of a Housing Co-operative. When the organisation is financially able to do so, it will lease or purchase further properties and increase the number of its members.

The housing co-operative will contribute an alternative to private ownership which is unattainable for many and will create affordable housing for people in housing need and who want the opportunity to gain a wide range of skills and to be more directly involved in the control and management of their housing. This will provide tenants with greater security in relation to their homes which is beneficial both to the individual and to the larger community. By setting up a new co-op it will not only create more cooperative housing but also free up accommodation within an existing, successful housing co-op in Brighton.

The aim of the project was to carry out an acquisition and repair project to firstly provide value for money over a longer period in the sense that once mortgage payments are paid off, the co-op will be able to invest in further co-operative housing. Secondly, this will ensure that the house continues to be sustainable, affordable housing which is increasingly both needed and rare in Brighton and Hove, particularly in the city centre where residents are increasingly being forced to the geographical margins of the city because they are unable to pay the higher rents of the city centre.

The aim was to bring the property up to the Homes and Communities Agency Design and Quality Standards 2007 for Rehabilitation if not exceed it. The aim was also to make the property as energy efficient as possible.

Total grant award: £103,378.81

Refurbishment target: 1 property with 5 bedrooms (HMO)

Achievement: 1 affordable home with 5 bedrooms

Without the grant the project would not have been delivered, because property prices in Brighton are high. Other organisations try to buy outside the city centre as prices are lower, but the point of the project was to provide affordable housing within the city.

Sourcing the property was the most difficult aspect of the project. A variety of things were tried, including working with other coops, visiting estate agents and regular meetings with the council. The council were not allowed, for data protection reasons, to provide lists of empty homes which were vacant for long periods of times so staff walked the streets of Brighton for hours each week trying to find properties that looked rundown or empty then send the address to the council to see if they were suitable. Eventually a property was found through an estate agent by looking at properties which had been on their lists for some time. The whole process was very time consuming considering for a small organisation of three people providing time voluntary.

The local authority provided some basic guidance/support but on occasions such as helping identify properties they were unable to provide support as 'their hands were tied'. Staff felt that even though we were able to engage with the council whenever there were obstacles they weren't in a position to support us.

It was known at the start of the project that the project would have to be refinanced at a later date and private funding in the form of a £260,000 mortgage and £40,000 private loan was secured. More finance will be needed in ten to twenty years. The main cost did not come from the property being run down (it had been empty for a year) but from the large amount of work involved changing the residence into a multi-occupancy property. If the property had been empty

longer and was in a state of greater disrepair it would have been difficult to meet the standard.

Tenants were selected based on the cooperative's allocations policy which requires there to be a housing need and barriers to accessing property. Staff looked for people who could be a part of running the property as it's a housing coop and that is a requirement. So although tenants didn't need experience they did need to be interested in being part of the cooperative and providing the required support.

The cooperative would support another cooperative which wanted to do the same thing and has plans to reinvest in future cooperatives once the current financing has been paid off. The cooperative is involved in the debate for affordable housing in the local area and will continue to increase its level of involvement in that area.

In the beginning the project was idealistic and not realistic about the practical level and work required bringing long term properties back into use. Because of the rights of landlords (properties on a compulsory purchase list must be sold at the market rate) it was nearly impossible to meet the aims of the project. Advice from an eco-architect suggested that it would be difficult to balance books as there is a tipping point where value and cost don't meet. The focus of the project had to be altered. Initially the cooperative wanted to bring back into use a property which had been vacant for a long period of time, but ended up with a property that had been empty for a year.

When asked what lessons had been learnt, Helen Bartlett said, "We also learnt how to carry out a big renovation project doing extensive internal and external renovations, changing a property from a single dwelling into a 5 person modern HMO. Through all the process Tribal representatives have been fantastic and supportive."

16. Clear policies and procedures

Centrepont Soho

Established: 1969

Objectives or ethos: Centrepont provides a safe place to live for more than 2,900 young people, aged 16-25, every year in London and the north east of England. Centrepont is more than a room. It gives young homeless people a future. It provides young people with a job, a home, skills and resources to go onto live independent lives.

Project delivery model: This organisation delivered two projects. One worked to a purchase and repair model and the other worked to a lease and repair model to bring empty properties back into use as affordable homes.

Location of refurbishment: Sunderland, Gateshead, Darlington, Sheffield and Northumberland.

Project description: Centrepont's original bid was to deliver one lease and repair project and one purchase and repair project, but found the lease and repair approach very difficult and consequently adapted the delivery model, so that one project was a combination of lease and repair and purchase repair and the second project was solely purchase and repair. The organisation originally bid to deliver one lease and repair and one purchase and repair project, but found the lease and repair model very difficult to deliver. Across the projects the works were more than the original bid anticipated. Getting owners to get on board in an affordable way was difficult. The project delivery plans were changed to deliver one combined lease and repair and purchase and repair project and one purchase and repair only project. This proved to be much more workable and it was more beneficial to Centrepont, because in the future, the organisation will be able to support young people with permanent accommodation.

The Darlington, Gateshead and Sunderland local authorities were particularly helpful in identifying properties and fully engaged with the project. Properties were partly sourced via local authorities and privately on the open market.

The aim was to provide affordable move on accommodation for young people leaving Centrepont but in need of support. The organisation

delivered the intended projects. A lot of bed spaces were lost in Sunderland. The mandatory minimum 5 year leases created a lot of administration. Permanent bed spaces were created elsewhere. In other areas the projects met or exceeded bed targets. The make-up was different. Instead of one bedroom properties, two bedroom properties were refurbished. The change to the delivery plan led to an extra 14 bed spaces being refurbished for one of the projects.

Tenants receive tenancy support as and when needed. All refurbished properties are on schedule to be let by June 2015.

Total grant award: £1,401,425.00

Refurbishment target: 35 affordable homes with 48 bedrooms

Achievement: 36 affordable homes with 62 bed spaces

Centrepoint identified that a big need for their client group is an affordable place for them to move onto once they leave supported accommodation which can be really difficult for young people if they become homeless at an early age. For example if they are in a hostel, particularly if they do not have a network of support.

Centrepoint staff travelled regularly between each office, held regular telephone meetings; used an online tracker system (the identification of properties, and the purchase and refurbishment stage). A good contract administrator EC Harris, (surveyor managed the contract with the contractor) was used. Communication with the contract administrator was very good. There was a good understanding between both parties in terms of targets and budgets. Centrepoint was very proactive in terms of chasing the activities in line with the target completion dates and deadlines.

All financial activities had to be approved, and all changes to project delivery had to be approved by Tribal and the Department, as well as internally. Procurement policies were agreed with contractors; a formal tendering process was used; standards were identified. Staff checked with the maintenance team to ensure that adequate health and safety processes were in place. The project Manager reported on a regular basis to the Head of property and development. The

organisation also created a specific working group which created a specific allocations policy for tenants.

The projects have made a huge difference to the organisation. It has created a new type of accommodation, the need for which was identified by residents. It has enabled the organisation to work in four new geographical areas, and to expand the support to young people, aged 18 to 25, that have just become homeless.

Financially the projects were challenging because the properties needed more work than actually anticipated. This was because the properties that had been empty for more than two years needed a lot of refurbishment. Centrepont matched the funding awarded by the Department. A consideration for the future will be how Centrepont can ensure that the properties remain affordable for young people.

Staff discovered that it becomes problematic if two people are sharing a property and both apply for 25% single person's council tax discount. Centrepont is trying to find a solution that will help to reduce costs. Paying the council tax negates the rent yield. A discussion with individual local authorities is required. For Centrepont as a registered provider with a duty of care for young people, it can become quite expensive to provide affordable housing for single people. Financing two bed shared accommodation is an ongoing dilemma.

When asked, what in hindsight would you do differently, Claire English, Project Manager, said "I Would reassess the cost of refurbishing projects, apply a larger contingency to deal with unforeseen issues, get a damp proof contractor on board to get them to survey properties as soon as contracts are exchanged, because it can take up to 12 months to dry out. I would also build in more contingency of time."

Centrepont is a small registered provider. There is a possibility that this organisation will apply for funding from the Homes and Communities Agency in the future to deliver a similar project. Centrepont has developed a very positive relationship with Sunderland City Council's Empty Homes Team and is the lead organisation on the Sunderland City Council's Young Person's Pathway.

The lessons learnt from delivering the projects are:

- Getting damp proof surveys back in at the beginning

- To be realistic in terms of time and money
- Have a tighter contract with the contractor
- Start the process of obtaining energy supplies at the beginning of the project.

The project benefited from a retired conveyancing solicitor that volunteered one day per week, which helped enormously with the legal process of purchasing property.

Centrepont delivered training opportunities in the classroom with partner training provider Springboard, and onsite as part of the project delivery plan. The plan was to introduce a lot of learning, but due to the amount of resource needed to manage the project, there was less onsite than planned. Nevertheless seven young people benefited from this opportunity, and of these seven, three young people were given the opportunity to move on into the properties they had helped to refurbish.

6. Lessons learnt

“Ultimately there is no such thing as failure. There are lessons learnt in different ways.” Twyla Tharp

Late Decisions

Do not announce a funding round, if it is known that there is a possibility that decisions will not be made within a reasonable time frame. The round 2 application process was an example of poor practice that should be avoided in the future. It took over a year for applications to be processed. For most applicants it meant a resubmission of information, lost opportunities for applicants, and less time for project delivery.

Remarkably no formal complaints were submitted to the grants admin team. There were however several calls and emails from applicants periodically requesting an update on the Department's decision and/or a timeline of when decisions were going to be made.

Requesting proof of secured properties in the second year of operation

By asking organisations in grant to provide written confirmation from a solicitor of a completion date for a property purchase or requesting a copy of a fully signed lease are measures taken in the second year of the programme to reduce the risk of fraudulent activity, and to lessen the likelihood of clawing back funds paid, when property negotiations fail. Although there is no evidence to suggest that properties have been acquired fraudulently, this approach should have been introduced at the start of the programme.

Notified and unannounced onsite visits

Onsite monitoring visits to projects were regularly made over the life time of the project. Whenever possible, organisations were given two weeks' notice, in order to prepare for the verification of reported expenditure. Two unannounced visits were made to two organisations, where monitoring documents were overdue and the main contact was not responding to emails or telephone messages. Due to the constraints of the management budget, the number of visits undertaken was restricted to ten percent of all projects being delivered. The unannounced visits yielded important information about the organisation structure and governance and project delivery, not captured by the quarterly monitoring documents, and it is something that should be better resourced in future programmes

7. Recommendations

A list of recommendations has been created following a review of programme delivery, associated lessons log and management information reports.

7.1. Change of delivery area

Build in a check on letter of support for each LA when proof of secured properties is provided, as part of the payment process. Check the address of the property including post code against each letter of support on file. It is recommended that a section is added to claim form to record these checks.

7.2. Monitoring affordable tenancies

Local Authorities to monitor and ensure that refurbished properties are let at an affordable rent for a minimum of five years. To ensure that properties are not sold beforehand for organisational profit. The grant offer letter/contract should include a clause to illustrate this.

7.3. Check reported refurbishment

All properties reported as completely refurbished should be visited and the decent homes standards checked, by for example, a local authority Empty Homes Officer, before final retention payment is processed.

7.4. Sharing intelligence with stakeholders

Regular notification sent to Local Authorities of properties that have been reported by grant holder organisations as completely refurbished. Grant holders should be made aware of this practice. Sharing intelligence in this way would further reduce the temptation for organisations to submit fraudulent claims, and encourage a greater buy-in to the programme by local authorities. The cost of this additional resource will need to be considered, and so too will the objectives of each individual local authority or HCA regional team.

7.5. Increased the number of onsite visits

Onsite monitoring/verification visits were undertaken to high risk status projects as well as randomly selected projects. Ten percent of all projects were visited each financial year. In hindsight more

financial resource should be given to the managing agent to undertake a higher percentage of visits each year. The recommendation is that fifteen to twenty percent of all projects are visited each financial year. Monitoring visits provide an opportunity to double check outputs, verify expenditure and to discuss project delivery in detail with the main contacts, and can support early interventions that shore up project delivery and conversely stop delivery and safeguard grant funding.

7.6. More focus on the programme outcomes throughout the life cycle of the programme.

The focus for the Department at the point of inception was on the number of properties to be refurbished in terms of its definition of good value for money. The assessment process did not reward project proposals that sought to deliver added value and to create positive outcomes. Reported project delivery has shown a diverse range of outcomes worthy of recognition. A future programme should factor project delivery outcomes into the application, assessment, and monitoring processes.

7.7. More resource within the management budget to service and update the grants admin website

There was insufficient financial resource to support and maintain active use of the grants admin website to for example, post case studies of project delivery, provide a portal of networking for grant holder organisations, to post programme related publications.

It is recommended that the provision of this type technological facility is factored into the selection of future managing agents.

7.8. DCLG Theoretical modelling

The Department's theoretical modelling carried out for the business case for this programme assumed that most properties would be leased for between five and twenty years rather than acquired outright. The modelling assumed that for a five year lease, grant rates would range from £9,000 to £22,000. In practice, this did prove to be the case.

Due to the sharp change in the economic climate, many organisations altered project delivery, and moved to a purchase and repair model or a combined lease and repair and purchase and repair model, in order

to stand a fighting chance of reaching targets and in order for scaled back delivery fitting within the Department's value for money ceiling.

Some of the properties identified independently by grant holder organisations and local authorities had been empty for significantly longer than two years and therefore were in need of significant refurbishment in order to make them decent affordable homes. It is recommended that the theoretical modelling used to support the programme's business case is re-visited, and using updated external factors such as the change in government housing policy, the rise in property prices, and the other initiatives being delivered by other key stakeholders working within the field of empty properties to arrive at a more realistic calculation. Consideration should also be given to different methods of measuring social value for money, as recommended by HACT and other leading housing providers e.g. the Wellbeing Valuation Approach.

The level of funding awarded to some organisations in 2012, was simply inadequate by the start of the third financial year in 2014, and proved to be a major barrier to delivery. Over 60% of projects either withdrew from the programme altogether or had no choice but to scale back delivery.

7.9. Post programme monitoring and handover

There is a risk that properties have been falsely reported as completed or nearly completed, subject to the sign off of snagging. It is recommended that a small amount of work is undertaken to brief local authorities on individual project delivery, and to carry out checks on properties reported as completed, with and without snagging to be signed off.

7.10 Hands on demonstration of completion of monitoring documents/importance of reporting/ consequences of non-compliance etc. at regional events

Although there were no formal indications that organisations found the quarterly reporting requirements difficult, it was apparent that some individuals within a small amount of organisations did struggle to complete the required documentation. Despite in some cases, receiving an excessive amount of support and guidance, the requirements did continuously prove difficult for some. It is

recommended that time is allocated at regional events for face to face instructions to be given to those that would find it beneficial. Time during regional events could also be given to reiterating the importance of contract compliance, and reporting and verifying eligible expenditure.

7.11 Provision of revenue funding

It is recommended that future programmes have an element of revenue funding. It has been strongly demonstrated that project delivery is very difficult to achieve without a source of revenue funding. The Department should consider including a list of eligible expenditure within the application guidance pack, and to funding no more than 75% of each project budget specifically for capital expenditure, thereby ensuring that the applicant considers the amount of revenue required and seeks to source this prior to the submission of an application.

8. Conclusion

The Empty Homes Community Grants Programme objective to bring empty properties back into use as affordable homes has been achieved. The programme was successful. A total of 1,303 affordable homes were brought back into use. The programme target of refurbishment was continuously reduced during the duration of the programme. This was due to the difficulty organisations faced in securing leases and property purchases and the withdrawal of projects from the programme.

The overall achievement across all nine English regions is 97%. The least successful region is London, with an achievement rate of 67%.

The programme generated a lot of added value, such as employment, training, apprenticeships, improved neighbourhoods and improved sustainability of voluntary and community sector organisations. As a capital programme, there was, particularly at the start, little focus on programme outcomes. This can be evidenced by the design of the application form and the low score attributed to project benefits by the assessment process. Nevertheless successful project delivery did generate a positive effect on neighbourhoods as well as individuals, but this was not proactively captured, quantified or measured.

Having a managing agent with the right degree of professionalism, knowledge, experience and technical support is a key component of any grants administration programme. The Tribal Grants Administration team provided a comprehensive and personal service to grant holder organisations. By tailoring the type and degree of support to the needs of individuals, and by working closely with a Department representative to find solutions to problems, was an effective tool used to find solutions. Fifty percent of online questionnaire respondents stated that the support provided by the grants admin team was excellent. Team members have received numerous written expressions of gratitude from those representing grant holder organisations, for the support advice and guidance provided over the course of the programme. Future programmes may benefit from the use of an online portal to facilitate the upload of monitoring documents and scanned documents.

Organisations benefited from additional support, advice and guidance provided by HACT and Self Help Housing, which was very well received and often referenced within quarterly monitoring reports and verbal communications. These organisations facilitated regional events which

provided opportunities for grant holder organisations to share and receive information about project delivery and additional sources of project finance.

There are some organisations that for the first time have a sustainable future due to the fact that they were able to secure assets, that in the future will generate revenue that can be used to finance core activities. For some organisations, this has built the capacity of staff and led to a significant step change in operations.

One of the main components of this programme's success was the mandatory engagement of local authorities. Historically public sector grants programmes advocate cross sector partnership working, but few apply mandatory conditions. Although the degree of involvement by local authorities in actual project delivery varied considerably, the mandatory endorsement of each project, ensured an awareness of the programme's objectives, and created opportunities to share intelligence and to link project activity to strategic plans. The successful completion of some projects was due to good cross sector working partnerships. For example, a lead voluntary sector organisation working with the local authority, local Further Education college and a private contractor. Those involved shared knowledge, skills and experiences and have collectively learnt lessons that can be applied to future projects and programmes.

The Yorkshire and Humber region was the only region to have no project withdrawals and where every project was successfully delivered. The Yorkshire and Humber region received the largest investment of grant funding and had the highest refurbishment target, which was slightly exceeded. The Yorkshire and Humber region was the only region that Projects in the East of England region reported the greatest over achievement against target, at 105%. The least successful region was London, which achieved 68% of its target refurbishment. Of the nineteen London based projects which received a grant award, only five were successfully completed to target; three will be completed post June 2015; and eleven withdrew from the programme. The Greater London Authority has indicated a commitment to addressing the issue of empty property in the capital, and has described empty homes as a valuable but neglected resource. The Mayor is committing £60m to bring empty homes back into use.

“It is an absurdity that so many properties are empty in London when families are languishing on council housing waiting lists desperately waiting for a home.” Boris Johnson

The response to question 3 of the online questionnaire, suggests that very few organisations received support from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) – 82% of respondents stated that they did not receive any support. Whilst this is not surprising, it does illustrate an area of weakness. Greater synergy between projects and either regional HCA teams and/or local authorities could have resulted in the regular sharing of accurate intelligence, outputs and outcomes between key stakeholder organisations.

The shortage of new housing across the country is commonly cited as approximately 240,000 each year. Affordable housing within the private and social sector will always be needed. The progression routes for organisations which have participated in this programme are not clear cut. For some, the next step will be to attain registered provider status via the Homes and Communities Agency and continue to identify and refurbish empty properties. There will however be those organisations that although do not wish to become a registered provider, will want to continue the refurbishment of empty properties at local level. For the latter, a future programme that is similar to the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme would be ideal.

The overall measurement of the programme's success is probably not best solely measured by the number of empty properties refurbished and brought back into use as affordable decent homes against the programme target, but also by the testimonials of tenants, for some of whom, the Empty Homes Community Grants programme has been life changing.

Annex 1

Assessing value for money

Empty Homes Community Grants programme: assessing Value for Money

What is Value for Money?

Value for Money (VFM) is one of the most ubiquitous phrases in British politics, and is also one of the least understood. The phrase originated in the commercial marketplace, where discriminating buyers could confidently judge the attractiveness of various goods and services relative to their price. However, today the expression VFM is increasingly used with reference to public goods and services where the meanings of both value and money are obscure, and where comparison is complicated because those who pay are different from those who benefit.

VFM is not about achieving the lowest price. Synonymous with business effectiveness, 'new' VFM is about **doing the right things** and **doing things right**. It means focusing resources on the activities that will meet desired business objectives, being economical with expenditure and investment, and carrying out business activities in the most efficient and effective way possible. Drawing on guidance from the Audit Commission, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has a useful definition of this 'new' VFM: "Value for money is a term used to assess whether or not an organisation has obtained the maximum benefit from the goods and services it both acquires and provides, within the resources available to it. Some elements may be subjective, difficult to measure, intangible and misunderstood. Judgement is therefore required when considering whether VFM has been satisfactorily achieved or not. It not only measures the cost of goods and services, but also takes account of the mix of quality, cost, resource use, fitness for purpose, timeliness, and convenience to judge whether or not, together, they constitute good value."

Empty Homes Community Grants programme: VFM considerations

Put simply, VFM is about obtaining the maximum benefit with the resources available - achieving the right local balance between economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Audit Commission's website defines these as:

- **Economy:** what goes into providing a product or service - the cost of resources used
- **Efficiency:** a measure of productivity, how much you get out in relation to what is put in. Often this is the focus of VFM conversations, with the drive for efficiency outweighing the more holistic assessment of VFM. However, increasingly issues of equity and sustainability are important considerations under the assessment of 'effectiveness', and the need to

target resources and interventions to ‘hotspot’ areas of greatest need or impact.

- **Effectiveness:** a measure of the *impact* or *outcome* that has been achieved, which can be either quantitative or qualitative.

VFM is considered to be high when there is an optimum balance between all three elements. In this instance, VFM is therefore not only about the costs of bringing empty homes back into use but also about the mix of cost with quality, resource use, deliverability, fitness for purpose and timeliness to judge whether or not, together, they constitute good value. This relationship is often referred to as the ‘Value Chain’ and can be represented graphically as follows:

Being able to assess and evidence VFM is a challenge for the EHCG programme. VFM is about spending public money wisely to get the optimum balance between cost, performance and the impact on customers and citizens. It is not just about ‘number crunching’ figures from the budgets supplied. Some elements, such as project design, quality and deliverability, are subjective and therefore difficult to measure. It is also specific to different contexts. What is VFM for one organisation, or locality, may not be the same for another. What is VFM at one point in time may not be a year later. A strong element of good, informed, judgement on behalf of the assessors is therefore required when considering whether VFM has been satisfactorily achieved or not, and how it might be improved.

Achieving VFM

In 2007, the Audit Commission published *Seeing the Light: Innovation in Local Public Services Value for Money in Partnerships*. It noted that, to achieve VFM, a Partnership [read Project in this context] needs to have a good understanding of the outcomes it is seeking to achieve, why these are important and how they may change over time; how it is going to achieve these outcomes, over what period and the key products or outputs it will deliver through its programme of work; and the resources being used to deliver these outputs and the cost of these resources.

Extrapolating from that paper, the following questions cover the fundamental elements of VFM as they relate to project delivery under the EHCG programme:

- Has the project identified the key outcomes it wishes to achieve?
- Is it clear why these outcomes are important?
- Have clear objectives been set and prioritised relating to achievement of the outcomes?
- Has the project agreed clear measures of success and set challenging yet realistic targets?
- Is the project clear about the progress it is likely to make, and how this will be achieved?
- Does the project have a good understanding of the required quality of service provision?
- Does the project have a clear programme of work to deliver its objectives, with key milestones, timescales and agreed responsibilities?

- Is the project clear about key actions being taken, and how these relate to delivery of objectives/outcomes?
- Is it clear how the project is being resourced?
- If the project is a partnership initiative, is it clear what resources each member of the partnership is contributing in terms of people, premises, knowledge?
- Is there evidence of the project leveraging additional resources?
- Has the project identified the financial costs of its proposals and/or the activities of individual partners (if appropriate)?

VFM: our current approach

Government guidance provides some help in assessing VFM, although it tends to do so in terms of choosing between options for a project rather than in choosing between different projects. It states that having identified all items of cost and benefit, the next steps should be **where possible** to quantify them and again **where possible** to place a monetary value on them. Having done this, weighting and scoring techniques can be used to choose between options. An appraisal of risks and uncertainties can also be factored into the decision, to help determine how likely it is that the benefits will be secured for the proposed cost.

The EHCG assessment process, in line with government guidance, seeks broadly to take account of whether a project offers sufficient VFM, looking at the prospective benefits in relation to the overall size of grant requested. More specifically, assessors have been asked to take account of the guidance provided to applicants relating to:

- The funding requested, number of properties to be delivered and estimated size (no. of people housed) of properties (to allow both funding per home brought into use and funding per person to be considered)
- The amount of funding requested and whether properties will be purchased and brought into permanent use or leased, and the proposed lease length
- The rent to be charged to tenants
- The length of time that properties have been empty prior to being brought back into use

However, the nature of this programme poses particular issues which create real problems in assessing VFM. As indicated above, this is because the case for funding often involves a significant proportion of “intangible benefits” (even compared with ‘mainstream’ Registered Provider bids). This means that it is not cost effective or even possible to value all the benefits in money terms. We have therefore not attempted to be particularly scientific in our approach because it has simply not been feasible given the complexities involved, and the relatively low level of real competition for the funding.

Put simply, VFM is a judgement on “the prospective size of costs and of benefits” offered by a project. Assessing value for money entails making a judgement on the prospective outcomes, which can be defined as “the eventual benefits to society that the proposals are aiming to achieve”. In deciding whether these are a priority for EHCG funding, we must ask whether the outcomes will lead to the achievement of our strategic aims. Individual assessors can take a view on the VFM offered by the project they are

assessing and we could also look again at the use of weighting and scoring to help in appraisal. But ultimately we have to recognise that it is a matter of judgement and of using our expertise and experience rather than applying a mechanistic process. The Panel will look to assessors to provide an accurate analysis of the risks and benefits of the projects in front of them. But it is for the Panel, whose job it is to choose, to decide, after receiving recommendations from assessors, which projects they believe will generate the greatest value or return on our investment. This judgement will also need to include a consideration of what is likely to happen if funding is not offered. Would a particular project still be likely to go ahead, and the benefits still be delivered - at least in part, if not in full (the “do nothing” case i.e. “deadweight” in government parlance) – by what is effectively a new and inexperienced delivery sector.

Annex 2

List of withdrawn projects

URN	Organisation	Amount of funding received	Number of affordable homes brought back into use	Date of withdrawal
EHCGP0017	Brighton & Woodwych 2011 Housing	0	0	Sep-14
EHCGP0023	Craghead Development Trust	£31,271.72	2	Aug-14
EHCGP0024	St Martin's Housing Trust	£71,391.59	3	Mar-14
EHCGP0027	Thames Reach	£33,750.00	0	Oct-14
EHCGP0031	Justlife CIC	0	0	Aug-13
EHCGP0032	Moat House Housing Trust	£24,542.00	1	Oct-14
EHCGP0056	Shropshire Housing Alliance	0	0	Jan-14
EHCGP0060	Causeway Irish Housing	£369,700.00	3	Jun-14
EHCGP0066	Impact Initiatives	£343.25	0	Nov-13
EHCGP0073	Live Wise Housing	£95,000.00	3	Nov-13
EHCGP0080	St Mark's Housing Cooperative	0	0	Apr-14
EHCGP0081	Stop Gap Supported Housing	£2,650.00	0	Apr-14
EHCGP0083	Westminster Housing Cooperative	£1,800.00	0	May-14
EHCGP0086	Hornsey (North London) YMCA	£51,901.96	1	Jun-14

EHCGP0106	Blue Pits Housing Action	0	0	Apr-13
EHCGP0120	Our Croydon Ltd	£208,976.08	8	Feb-14
EHCGP0123	Lairdside Communities Together	0	0	May-13
EHCGP0128	St Peter's Community Partnerships	0	0	Jan-13
EPCGP0002	City of Liverpool YMCA	0	0	Apr-14
EPCGP0008	Shropshire Housing Alliance	0	0	Apr-14
EPCGP0057	Live Wise Housing	0	0	Nov-13
EPCGP0072	Phoenix Community Housing	0	0	Aug-14
EPCGP0075	All People All Places	0	0	Nov-13
EHCGP0071	Shekinah Mission	£45,276.00	0	Nov-14
EPCGP0048	Birmingham YMCA	£27,000.00	0	Nov-14
EPCGP0059	Meanwhile Space	0	0	Nov-14
EHCGP0036	ADCRIS CIC	£256,764.88	3	Jan-15
EHCGP0064	Heles Angels	0	0	Jan-15
EPCGP0074	ADCRIS CIC	£343,696.75	0	Jan-15
EHCGP0102	Ashley Community & Housing Ltd	£19,721.48	0	Feb-15
EPCGP0022	Druglink	£16,750.00	0	Feb-15
EHCGP0118	Dorcas Housing Association	£149,125.00	8	Mar-15
TOTALS		£1,749,660.71	32	

Source: Awards and withdrawals 2012-2015

Annex 3

Returned under spend

URN	Organisation	Amount	Amount Returned
EHCGP0003	Whitehaven Foyer	£27,000.00	£27,000.00
EHCGP0013	Methodist Action North West	£14,904.80	£14,904.80
EHCGP0017	Brighton Woodwych 2011 Housing	£5,760.00	£5,760.00
EHCGP0024	St Martin's Housing Trust	£59,177.12	£59,177.12
EHCGP0033	PANDA*	£87,760.56	£0.00
EHCGP0036	ADCRIS CIC	£22,353.92	£22,353.92
EHCGP0039	Meanwhile Space	£63,000.00	£63,000.00
EHCGP0047	Action Homeless (Leicester) Ltd	£56,371.42	£56,371.42
EHCGP0048	Developing Health and Independence	£3,559.53	£3,559.53
EHCGP0056	Shropshire Housing Alliance	£35,000.00	£35,000.00
EHCGP0061	Centrepont Soho	£32,601.87	£32,601.87
EHCGP0065	Berneslai Homes	£28,512.20	£28,512.20
EHCGP0066	Impact Initiatives	£5,962.57	£5,962.57
EHCGP0067	St Mungo's Broadway	£28,187.68	£28,187.68
EHCGP0071	Shekinah Mission Plymouth	£33,248.00	£16,624.00
EHCGP0079	Threshold	£93,911.38	£93,911.38
EHCGP0081	Stop Gap Supported Housing	£1,424.00	£1,424.00
EHCGP0083	Westminster Housing Cooperative	£44,000.00	£44,000.00
EHCGP0085	Empty Homes Agency	£722,910.00	£722,910.00
EHCGP0086	Hornsey (North London) YMCA	£51,179.04	£51,179.04
EHCGP0102	Ashley Community & Housing Ltd	£31,492.22	£31,492.22
EHCGP0107	Fylde Coast YMCA	£72,581.20	£72,581.20

EHCGP0116	New Servol	£28,392.00	£28,392.00
EHCGP0118	Dorcas Housing Association	£11,067.34	£11,067.34
EHCGP0119	Start Again Project	£1,061.08	£693.46
EHCGP0120	Our Croydon Ltd	£61,815.52	£61,815.52
EHCGP0121	Waterloo Community Development Group*	£21,571.53	£0.00
EHCGP0126	St Basils	£116,300.00	£116,300.00
EHCGP0130	Sikh Community & Youth Service UK**	£22,579.23	£0.00
EHCGP0133	Grimbsy & Cleethorpes Area Doorstep	£23,378.73	£23,378.73
EHCGP0135	Birmingham YMCA**	£58,348.00	£0.00
EHCGP0138	Middlesbrough CLT	£3,204.74	£0.00
EPCGP0008	Shropshire Housing Alliance	£18,000.00	£18,000.00
EPCGP0016	YMCA Fairthorne Group**	£16,875.00	£0.00
EPCGP022	Druglink	£43,554.00	£43,554.00
EPCGP0032	Community Campus 87	£173.99	£173.99
EPCGP0047	Middlesbrough CLT	£127.91	£127.91
EPCGP0060	Homebaked CLT	£47,730.00	£47,730.00
EPCGP0062	YMCA Derbyshire	£7,800.00	£7,800.00
EPCGP0067	Carlton Education & Enterprise**	£11,000	£0.00
EPCGP0074	ADCRIS CIC	£11,903.25	£11,903.25
EHCGP0031	Justlife CIC	£64,800.00	£64,800.00
EHCGP0027	Thames Reach	£33,134.50	£33,134.40
EPCGP0074	ADCRIS CIC	£3,857.39	£3,857.39
Totals		£2,050,323.72	£1,845,240.94

* Received permission from the Department to retain under-spend in order to complete refurbishment post programme end.

** Under spend not requested due to the fact that project was delivered under budget and reported completed refurbishment represents good value for money under the guidance set by the Department.

Note: EPCGP0047 Middlesbrough CLT did not submit a final expenditure report. The under spend shown may have been spent between January and March 2015.

Annex 4

Handover report for local authorities. Details include those organisations that did or did not complete their project by the end of the programme, had snagging issues to be signed off by 15th May 2015, will not complete refurbishment until after June 2015, did not submit all monitoring documents, did not return reported under spend, or have delivered projects that have raised serious concerns by region.

East Midlands

URN/Organisation	2012-2015 Target met	Properties with snagging	Refurbishment to be completed post June 2015	Outstanding 2013/14 statement of grant usage/accountant's report	Reported under spend not returned to Tribal	General concerns
EPCGP0025 Action Homeless Leicester	✓	x	x	✓	x	x
EPCGP0062 YMCA Derbyshire	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
EPCGP0063 City College Nottingham	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EPCGP0057 Live Wise Housing	x	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP004 Windrush Alliance CIC	✓	x	x	✓	x	x
EHCGP004 Windrush Alliance CIC	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0020 Carlton Education & Enterprise Ltd	x	x	x	x	x	✓
EHCGP0026 Newark & Sherwood Homes Ltd	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0047 Action Homeless (Leicester) Ltd	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0073 Live Wise Housing Ltd	x	x	x	x	x	x

EHCGP0095		✓		x	x	x	x
Groundwork Lincolnshire							
EHCGP0098	✓	✓		x	x	x	x
Groundwork Cresswell, Ashfield & Mansfield							
EHCGP0132	✓		x	x	x	x	x
YMCA Derbyshire							

East of England

URN/Organisation	2012-2015 Target met	Properties with snagging	Refurbishment to be completed post June 2015	Outstanding 2013/14 statement of grant usage/accountant's report	Reported under spend not returned to Tribal	General concerns
EHCGP0022 Hope Into Action	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0022 Hope Into Action	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0024 St Martins Housing Trust	x	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0051 Emmaus UK	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0069 Homeless Action Resource Project	✓	x	x	x	x	x

London

URN/Organisation	2012-2015 Target met	Properties with snagging	Refurbishment to be completed post June 2015	Outstanding 2013/14 statement of grant usage/accountant's report	Reported under spend not returned to Tribal	General concerns
EPCGP0070	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
Phases Social Enterprise						
EPCGP0071	x	x	x	x	x	x
Meanwhile Space						
EPCGP0072	x	x	x	x	x	x
Phoenix Community Housing Cooperative						
EPCGP0074	x	x	x	✓	x	x
ADCRIS Ltd						
EPCGP0075	x	x	x	x	x	x
All People All Places						
EPCGP0076	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Saint John of God Hospitaller						
EHCGP0015	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
Mace Housing Cooperative						
EHCGP0027	x	x	x	x	x	x
Thames Reach						
EHCGP0029	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
Phases Social Enterprise						
EHCGP0036	x	x	x	✓	x	x
ADCRIS CIC Ltd						
EHCGP0039	x	✓	✓	x	x	x
Meanwhile Space						
EHCGP0060	x	x	x	x	x	x
Causeway Irish Housing Association						
EHCGP0062	x	x	✓	✓	x	✓
Habitat for Humanity						
EHCGP0067	✓	x	x	x	x	x
St Mungo's Broadway						
EHCGP0080	x	x	x	x	x	x
St Mark's Housing Cooperative						

EHCGP0083 Westminster Housing Cooperative	x	x	x	X	x	x
EHCGP0086 Hornsey (North London) YMCA	x	x	x	✓	x	x
EHCGP0120 Our Croydon Ltd	x	x	x	✓	x	✓
EHCGP0121 Waterloo Development Community Group	x	x	x	✓	x	✓

South East

URN/Organisation	2012-2015 Target met	Properties with snagging	Refurbishment to be completed post June 2015	Outstanding 2013/14 statement of grant usage/accountant's report	Reported under spend not returned to Tribal	General concerns
EHCGP0005 Hornbeam Housing Cooperative	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0017 Brighton Woodwych Housing Ltd	x	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0054 Rosa Bridge Housing Cooperative Ltd	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0066 Impact Initiatives	x	x	x	x	x	x
EPCGP0016 YMCA Fairthorne Group	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
EPCGP0022 Druglink Ltd	x	x	x	x	x	x
EPCGP0023 YMCA Fairthorne Group	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
EPCGP0024 Southend YMCA	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EPCGP0034 Phases Social Enterprise	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EPCGP0079 YMCA Fairthorne Group	✓	✓	x	x	x	x

South West

URN/Organisation	2012-2015 Target met	Properties with snagging	Refurbishment to be completed post June 2015	Outstanding 2013/14 statement of grant usage/accountant's report	Reported under spend not returned to Tribal	General concerns
EPCGP001 The Restore Trust	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	x
EPCGP018 Somerset Care and Repair	x	✓	✓	x	x	✓
EPCGP021 Developing Health and Independence	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
EHCGP038 Somerset Care and Repair	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x
EHCGP048 Developing Health and Independence	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
EHCGP053 Youth Enquiry Service Brixham	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
EHCGP064 Heles Angels	x	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0071 Shekinah Mission Plymouth Ltd	x	x	x	✓	✓	x
EHCGP0102 Ashley Community & Housing Ltd	x	x	x	x	x	x

West Midlands

URN/Organisation	2012-2015 Target met	Properties with snagging	Refurbishment to be completed post June 2015	Outstanding 2013/14 statement of grant usage/accountant's report	Reported under spend not returned to Tribal	General concerns
EHCGRP0032 Moat House	x	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGRP0034 YMCA Black Country Group	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGRP0056 Shropshire Housing Alliance	x	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGRP0116 New Servol	x	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGRP0117 The Springfield Project	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGRP0118 Dorcas Housing Group	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓
EHCGRP0119 Start Again Project CIC	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
EHCGRP0125 Nishkam Civic Association	✓	✓	x	✓	x	x
EHCGRP0126 St Basils	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGRP0130 Sikh Youth & Community	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGRP0135 Birmingham YMCA	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EPCGP0008 Shropshire Housing Alliance	x	x	x	x	x	x
EPCGP0038 The Springfield Project	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EPCGP0048 Birmingham YMCA	x	x	x	x	x	x
EPCGP0050 Start Again Project	✓	x	x	x	x	x

North West

URN/Organisation	2012-2015 Target met	Properties with snagging	Refurbishment to be completed post June 2015	Outstanding 2013/14 statement of grant usage/accountant's report	Reported under spend not returned to Tribal	General concerns
EHCGP0002 North Huyton Community Future Ltd	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0003 Whithaven Foyer	x	x	✓	x	x	x
EHCGP0009 Manchester Settlement	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0010 Ashton, Wigan & District YMCA	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0013 Methodist Action North West	✓	x	x	✓	x	x
EHCGP0016 Skelwith & Langley Community Land Trust	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0030 City of Liverpool YMCA	✓	✓	x	✓	x	x
EHCGP0031 Justlife CIC	x	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0045 Rochdale Housing Initiative	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0063 Groundwork Oldham & Rochdale	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0068 The Ashley Foundation	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x
EHCGP0079 Threshold	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0103 Proffitts – Investing in Communities	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0103 Proffitts – Investing in Communities	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0106 Blue Pits Housing Action	x	x	x	x	x	x

EHCGP0107	x	✓	x	x	x	x
Fylde Coast YMCA						
EHCGP0109	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Elixir CIC						
EHCGP0114	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Progressive Lifestyles Solutions CIC						
EHCGP0123	x	x	x	x	x	x
Lairdside Communities Together						
EHCGP0124	✓✓	x	x	x	x	x
Seedley & Langley Trust						
EHCGP0128	x	x	x	x	x	x
St Peter's Community Partnership						
EHCGP0129	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Wirral Churches Ark Project						
EHCGP0134	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Access to Training and Employment						
EPCGP0002	x	x	x	x	x	x
City of Liverpool YMCA						
EPCGP0003	✓	x	x	x	x	x
North Huyton Community Future Ltd						
EPCGP0004	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Progressive Lifestyles Solutions Ltd						
EPCGP0005	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Ashton, Wigan & District YMCA						
EPCGP0007	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Groundwork Oldham & Rochdale						
EPCGP0010	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓
Methodist Action North West						
EPCGP0042	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Emmaus UK						
EPCGP0049	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓
Ambition						
EPCGP0052	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Access to Training and Employment						
EPCGP0055	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Proffitts Investing in Communities						
EPCGP0060	x	x	x	x	✓	x
Homebaked CLT						

EPCGP0067	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Carlton Education & Enterprise Ltd						

Yorkshire & Humber

URN/Organisation	2012-2015 Target met	Properties with snagging	Refurbishment to be completed post June 2015	Outstanding 2013/14 statement of grant usage/accountant's report	Reported under spend not returned to Tribal	General concerns
EPCGP0006	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Giroscope						
EPCGP0012	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
GIPSIL						
EPCGP0014	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Winner the Preston Road Women's Centre						
EPCGP0019	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
Probe (Hull) Ltd						
EPCGP0033	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
East Hull Transforms Ltd						
EPCGP0039	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
Fresh Horizons						
EPCGP0040	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
DISC						
EPCGP0046	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Canopy Housing						
EPCGP0051	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
Keyhouse						
EPCGP00054	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Goodwin Development Trust						
EPCGP0058	✓	x	x	✓	x	x
LATCH						
EPCGP0065	✓	x	x	✓	x	x
Holme Christian Care Centre						
EHCGP0001	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Barnsley Community Build						
EHCGP0006	✓	✓	x	✓	x	x
Hill Holt Wood						

EHCGP0011	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Giroscope						
EHCGP0033	x	x	✓	x	x	x
PANDA						
EHCGP0041	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
Probe (Hull) Ltd						
EHCGP0046	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Keyhouse						
EHCGP0050	✓	x	x	x	x	x
GIPSIL						
EHCGP0052	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Canopy Housing						
EHCGP0055	✓	x	x	x	x	x
LATCH						
EHCGP0058	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Winner the Preston Road Women's Centre						
EHCGP0065	x	x	x	x	x	x
Berneslai Homes						
EHCGP0108	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Fresh Horizons						
EHCGP0113	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Holme Care Christian Centre						
EHCGP0133	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Grimsby & Cleethorpes Area Doorstep						

North East

URN/Organisation	2012-2015 Target met	Properties with snagging	Refurbishment to be completed post June 2015	Outstanding 2013/14 statement of grant usage/accountant's report	Reported under spend not returned to Tribal	General concerns
EHCGP0008 DASH	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0012 East Cleveland Youth Housing Trust	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0019 Coatham House	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0023 Craghead Development Trust	x	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0057 Changing Lives	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0061 Centrepoint	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0077 Aquila Way	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0077 Oasis Aquila Way	✓	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0081 Stop Gap Supported Housing	x	x	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0085 Empty Homes Agency	x	x	✓	x	x	x
EHCGP0096 Five Lamps	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0097 Community Campus 87	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
EHCGP0110 DISC	✓	x	x	✓	x	x
EHCGP0138 Middlesbrough Community Land Trust	✓	x	x	✓	x	x

EPCGP0013	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
Ashington Community Development Trust						
EPCGP0026	x	✓	✓	x	x	✓
Hartlepool Revival Ltd						
EPCGP0032	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
Community Campus 87						
EPCGP0035	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Changing Lives						
EPCGP0036	x	x	✓	x	x	x
ECoRegener8 CIC						
EPCGP0043	✓	x	x	✓	x	x
Centrepont						
EPCGP0044	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Redcar & Cleveland MIND						
EPCGP0047	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
Middlesbrough Community Land Trust						
EPCGP0053	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Aquila Way						

KEY to shading

Withdrawn	
Withdrawn with unresolved issue(s)	
Completed	
Not completed by the end of the programme	
Non starter	
Merged project	

General Concerns:**London**

EPCGP0071 Meanwhile Space CIC – the retention payment has been withheld because the target was not reached during the lifetime of the programme. The refurbishment is estimated to be completed in December 2015.

South West

EPCGP0018 – Somerset Care and Repair – Eight affordable homes refurbished. Six more with ongoing refurbishment to be completed post June 2015. The target for this project is 15 properties with 29 bedrooms. This target will not be achieved. It will achieve 14 affordable homes with 34 bedrooms.

EHCGP0071 Shekinah Mission Plymouth Ltd - £16,624 has not been returned. This organisation is waiting for partner organisation to release the amount of £16,624, so that this amount can be returned to Tribal/the Department. If the total amount is returned, this will negate the need for this organisation to submit a statement of grant usage and an accountant's report for the 2013/14 financial year, which are currently outstanding.

West Midlands

EHCGP0130 – Sikh Community & Youth Service UK, – Flats reported as completely refurbished at 75 Holyhead Road, Birmingham are not visible from street level. This organisation is based at this address. It is suggested that a local authority representative visit the property to ascertain if the reported refurbishment has actually taken place. Reportedly there are nine tenants living there.

North West

EPCGP0049 Ambition – Reported expenditure includes a lot of revenue costs which across the financial year exceeds the 10% guideline.

EPCGP0010 – Methodist Action North West – DCLG received tripartite letters, but the fully signed tripartite letter has not been received by either Methodist Action North West or the accountant.

EPCGP0060 – Homebaked CLT – Under spend of £47,730 to be returned by 12th June 2015.

EHCGP0003 - Whitehaven Foyer – Unforeseen structural issues which require planning sign off. The refurbishment is expected to be completed in November 2015. The retention payment of £3,000 has been withheld.

EHCGP0068 – The Ashley Foundation – This project will be completed post June 2015.

North East

EPCGP0026 Hartlepool NDC Trust – there was a significant delay in the local authority handing over the property to the Trust. Consequently, the refurbishment of 16 self-contained units was not completed by the end of the programme. The 2014/15 retention payment has been withheld due to the target not being met by the end of the programme. The retention payment is critical to the completion of the project. Under the circumstances, the Department has given special dispensation, to authorise the release of the payment. The project will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the local authority post June 2015.

EPCGP0047 – Middlesbrough CLT – A financial report for quarter 4 (Jan-Mar 2015) has not been submitted.