

# **THE BEST THING**

## **An Overview of Research on Impact of Empty Homes Community Grants Programme**

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**Empty Homes  
Partnership  
Project**

**Returning empty homes  
to use.**

[www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/emptyhomes](http://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/emptyhomes) Tel. 01287 612455

# The Best Thing.....

- *'The best thing is seeing when the house is finished. You know, seeing when it's all finished and somebody moves into that property and you know that all the volunteers have done a bit to help.....'*

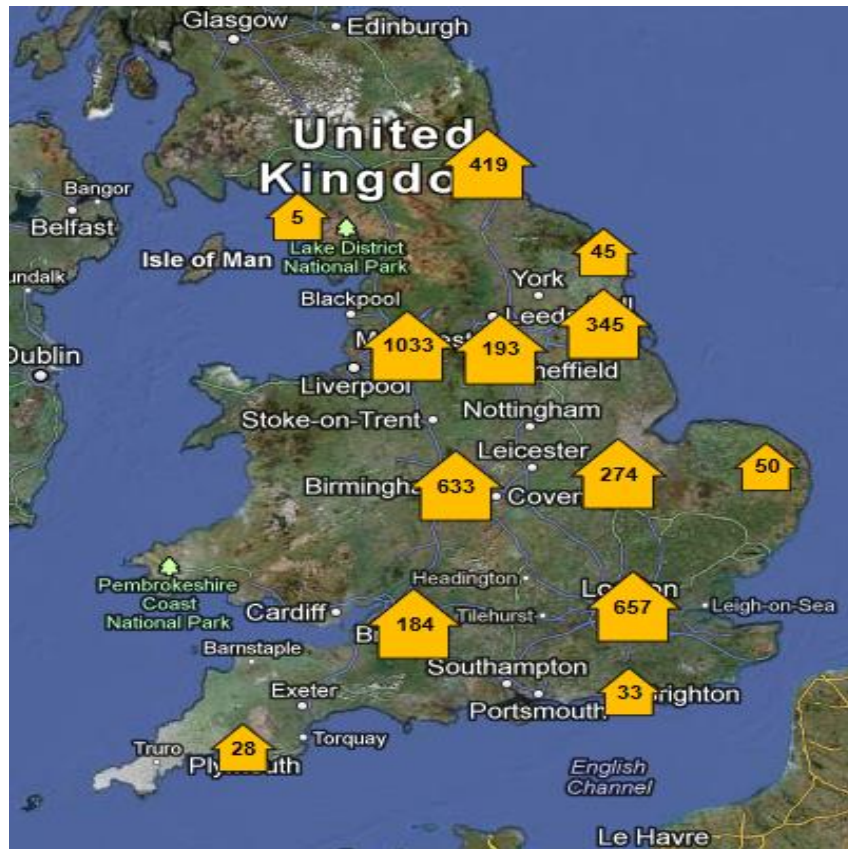
Volunteer, Canopy, Leeds



Redcar and Cleveland MIND  
– Kitchen at Lazenby, Cleveland

# Empty Homes Community Grants Programme (EHCGP)

‘a bold departure from large scale procurement of affordable housing...worthy of detailed evaluation’



## 2011-15 Funding Programme

- £50 million capital funding
- Non-registered providers (i.e. Community-led)
- 110 successful projects – lease or buy and improve
- Over half groups not involved before the programme
- Filled in gaps in the map
- Peer support network through Self-help housing.org.

EHCGP LEGACY?

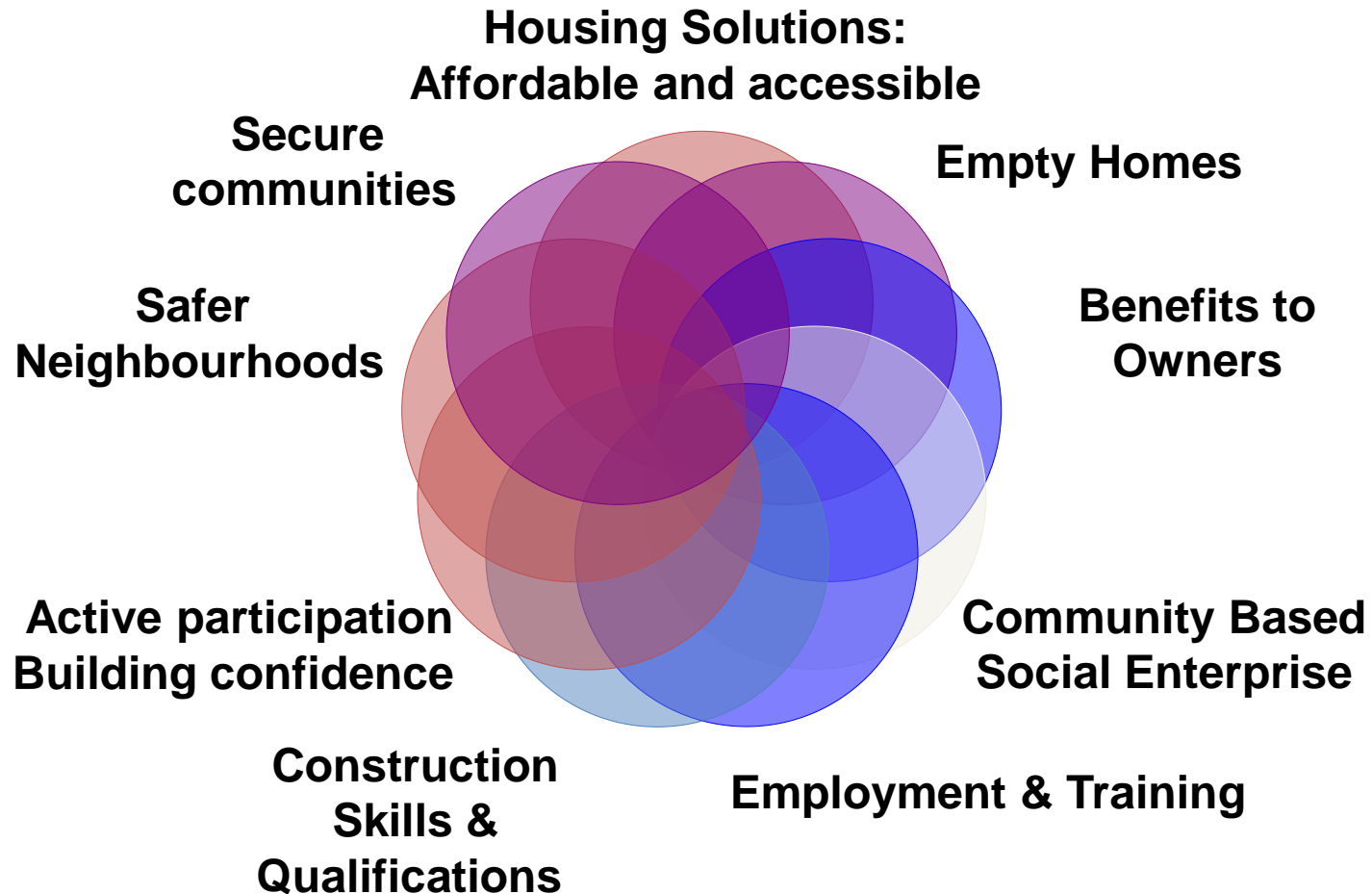
– Outputs or Outcomes?

# EHCGP OUTPUTS BY REGION

Region	Grant (Rounds 1&2)	Underspend Re-allocated into region	Bedrooms	Properties
London	£10.1 million		603	246
Midlands	£5.9 million	£600k	684	289
North West	£6.1 million	£550k	796	454
South East/East	£3.7 million	£350k	556	124
South West	£3.8 million	£220k	401	165
North East/Yorkshire & Humberside	£19.5 million	£3.1 million	1084	481
TOTALS	49.1 million	£4.8 million	4124	1759

Provisional outputs pending Tribal Final Monitoring 2015

# Self-help housing: Multiple Outcomes





Reflecting Changing Times and Policy Agendas – LATCH  
What is Government & Society looking for today?

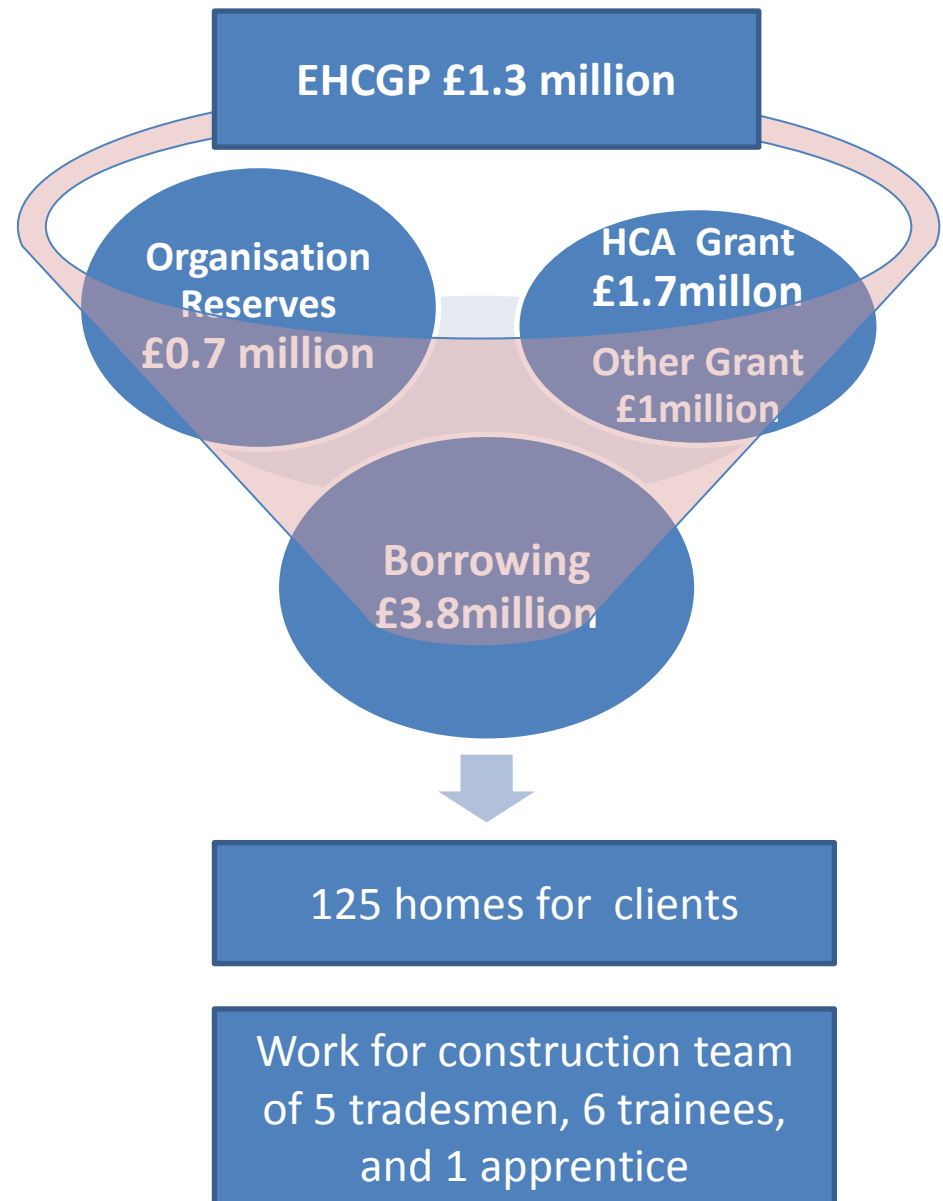
# What is Government and Society Looking for Today?

- 
1. **Value for Money**
    - ✓ Making the Grant go a long way
  2. **Localism**
    - ✓ Doing things differently by being local
  3. **Tackling skills gap and youth unemployment**
    - ✓ Genuine pathways into work
    - ✓ Mature construction workforce
  4. **Real volunteering**
    - ✓ Volunteering impacts
    - ✓ Taking responsibility
  5. **Solutions to wicked problems**
    - ✓ Housing for clients
    - ✓ Offender resettlement
    - ✓ Live/work off benefits
  6. **Building Strong and Independent Organisations and a vibrant community-led sector**
    - ✓ Assets, balance sheet and cashflow
    - ✓ Partners and Influence
    - ✓ Going viral
    - ✓ Regional networking
    - ✓ Local Authority partners

# 1. Making the Grant Go a Long Way

**2.5 properties will be delivered for every one funded from EHCGP and total funding secured for empty homes work is equivalent to 4.5 times the original EHCGP grant.**

Changing Lives,  
Gateshead



## 2. Doing Things Differently by Being Local



### THE BENEFITS OF BEING LOCAL

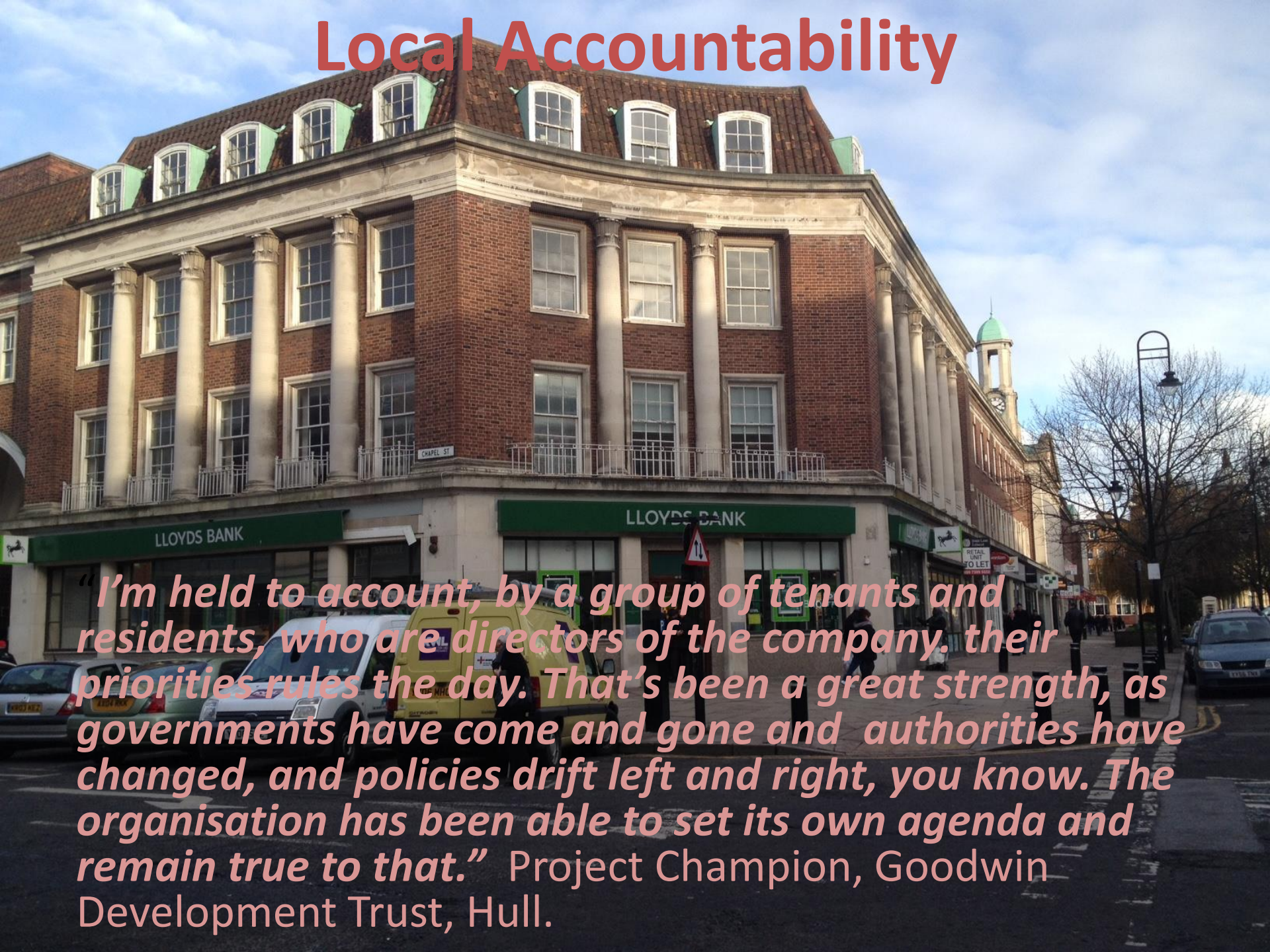
Fresh Horizons has a strong local community focus leading to local regeneration impact, local jobs, local economic impact and a **unique advantage in negotiating with local property owners**

25 properties in Sheepridge  
Village Centre refurbished  
under EHCGP .



Local jobs, apprenticeships and  
training for construction team of 18  
and 3 local SME partners.

# Local Accountability



*"I'm held to account, by a group of tenants and residents, who are directors of the company. their priorities rules the day. That's been a great strength, as governments have come and gone and authorities have changed, and policies drift left and right, you know. The organisation has been able to set its own agenda and remain true to that."* Project Champion, Goodwin Development Trust, Hull.

### 3. Making a Difference .....Genuine pathways into work and workforce development

***‘the approach makes a major difference to these kids’ lives...they have a sense of self-worth and feel they have achieved something. Spending the grants and hitting the targets are less important than the guys on the sites’.***



After 8 years working at Mears and 3 at Places for People the Construction Manager at TCUK was initially sceptical of including trainees and apprentices within his team, but after three years at TCUK he is now convinced of the difference this makes !!

# Pathways into Work

## From Training Hub to Mature Workforce

**2010** Future Jobs Fund. 10 trainees for 6 months, one construction manager.

**2015** EHCGP. 3 levels of staff, 5 apprenticeships with college day release, 10 trainees beyond NVQ2 several skilled tradesmen and two site supervisors and construction manager.

***“I started on a trainee course for the government. Now I’m doing an apprenticeship. .. I’m doing a plastering course which I’d never done before ....Its brought me from the streets into work which I like’.***

Apprentice Fresh Horizons (in workforce 18 months and previously a volunteer, always lived in Deighton)

TRANSFORMATION in FRESH HORIZONS BETWEEN 2010 AND 2015  
DUE TO EHCGP WORKFLOW

## 4. Real Volunteering

***“everyone works together, we have a laugh and it’s a good vibe. It’s a good vibe between us all...”*** Volunteer, Canopy

***“A lot of us did it ....we did it for the provisional (driving licence). I did the presbytery garden.. that was all right that was an experience as well.”*** Former Volunteer, Fresh Horizons.



Volunteer painters, Canopy, Leeds

## 5. Real Solutions to ‘wicked problems’



Refurbishment in Progress, Redcar

***“none of the landlords would give me a chance being from prison...then these guys said we’ve got somewhere but it’s not ideal. But I said look anywhere is good for me, just let me have my own space. I’ve never been happier”***

Ex-offender and former volunteer now living and working for Redcar and Cleveland Mind

***“we were getting more and more people through the door who were in poor private rented ...people with a mental health difficulty are less likely to be able to maintain a tenancy. ”***

Project Champion, Redcar and Cleveland Mind

# Live and Work Scheme for Young People

- Live-work option for 27 young people in Sandwell
- Empty Health Trust properties
- EHCGP funds refurbishment
- Health Trust provides apprenticeships
- Rent deducted from wage – no benefit required
- St Basils provides support and manages homes



*“This 'Live and Work' scheme really help(s) young people find their independence ..to take up an apprenticeship and live in safe, affordable accommodation without recourse to benefits.”*

St Basils CEO – 24dash.com Nov 24 2014

A photograph of a two-story red brick house. The house features a large bay window on the ground floor with a dark blue frame and white panes. Above the bay window is a smaller, square window. To the left of the bay window is a small arched entrance with a white frame. To the right is a blue door with a white frame. The house is surrounded by trees and foliage, with shadows cast across the brickwork.

Project Champion – Start Again, Birmingham

**“The great thing about Empty Homes...it was not only refurbishing properties and putting them back into use but also meeting other agendas of the Council such as youth homelessness which is huge and rising, and also creating a stronger and better community. So all in all it was a bit of a win-win situation.”**

## 6. Building Strong and Independent Organisations

***Canopy's had a good year – a good two years really, largely thanks to the Empty Homes Community Grant programme.***

***.....the staff team has doubled as a result of the increased activity and income, so we've doubled from eight staff up to 16 staff currently. [Yeah]***

***We've been able to buy 13 properties. That's massively improved our balance sheet, giving us much better assets and more sustainability going forward.***



Project Champion Canopy, Leeds



Project Champion,  
Redcar and Cleveland Mind

*“the empty homes programme has put us in a different position...put us out there on the local radar ..and we weren't there before. It's created relationships that we never had. It's given us ways into other networks and that's been important for us. I can just pick up the phone now and things get sorted”*

# Gaining Confidence and a Sense of Purpose: Middlesbrough CLT

“

*“EHCGP has contributed to the confidence and sense of purpose of a fledgling organisation. The funding has been just the right amount of ‘push’ to support this organisation.”*

David Webb, Newcastle University

# Building a vibrant community-led sector

- Strong organisations have actively fostered wider sector, Leeds and Tees Valley: **‘we’ve worked with these organisations to help build the infrastructure and look at things like bidding for grants and meeting each other and going to visit schemes; good old-fashioned community building’** Community Campus Project Champion
- Local authorities a key partner – Hull, Birmingham, Leeds - LATCH 25 years celebration speech **“like a love letter to the council”**.
- Some positive links with housing associations – e.g. Coast and Country trustees at Redcar MIND **‘really important to success, because they’ve had a lot more knowledge and experience’**.
- In Midlands EHCGP brought many new groups into housing - only one self-help housing group in 2009 now **19 funded groups**.



**EHCGP contributed to making spaces in which a vibrant community-led sector can flourish**

# After EHCGP?

*“For Self-help housing to grow and develop there needs to be further community grants funding to bring empty private properties into use.”*

2011-15 **grant** programme was **ring fenced** to non-registered providers and led to **wider social value** and community impact.

Looking to the future:

- **Why is public funding needed?**
- **Why did ring fencing work?**
- **How can wider community impacts be encouraged?**
- **What is the appetite for more?**

## Other opportunities

- Meanwhile Use – Development pipeline
- Managing Hard to let social housing
- Asset transfers

*“The potential for additional activities to manage hard to let properties for registered providers, development pipeline properties and asset transfers should also be explored.”*

# Why Public Funding has to be part of the mix

- Continuing to attract **smaller locally focused groups**
- Without it **other funding** not attracted or **doesn't stack up**
- **Mix** of grant, soft loans and interest bearing loans **makes things** happen
- Without the Grant the sector was clustered in certain places with fewer than 50 active organisations – now well over 100 and active in **every region**



# Why ring-fencing to non registered housing providers worked

- Without ring fencing grant unlikely to reach **street level**
- Mainstream providers not interested in **street properties**
- Barriers to **new entrants** to sector substantial
- Some have built up **track record & registered with HCA**
- Most would not meet new **stringent financial viability** and governance standards



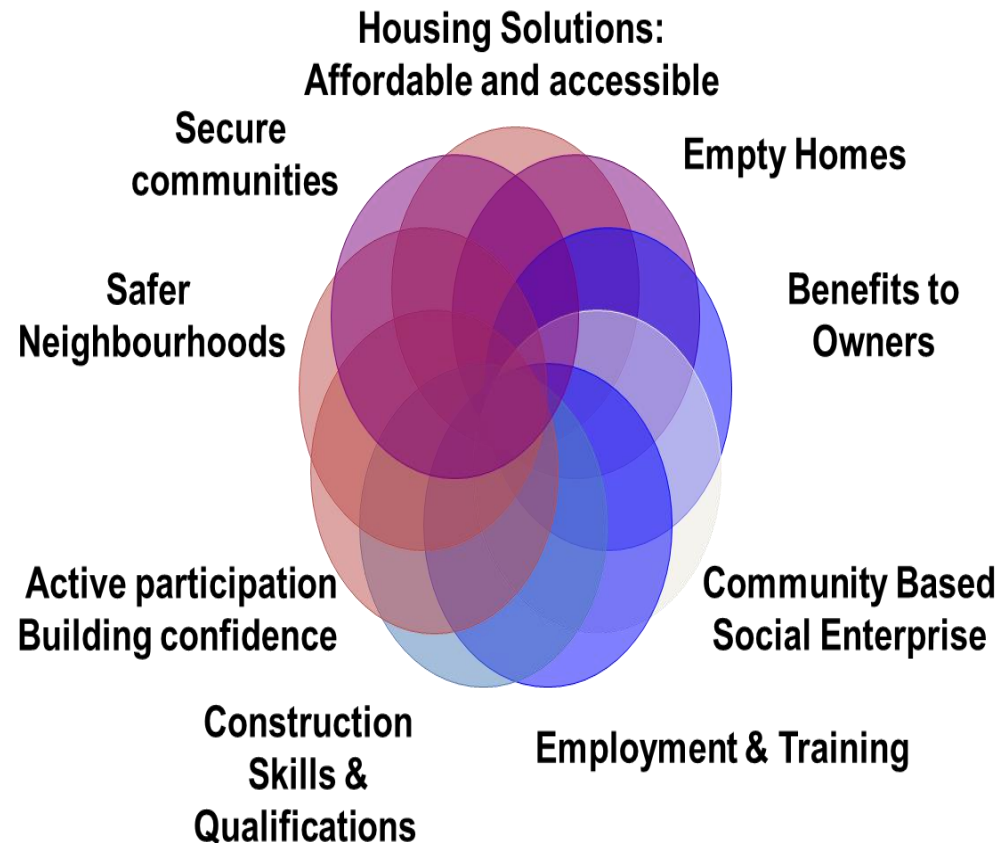
# How can wider social and community impacts be encouraged?

***‘everybody likes collaborative working but nobody wants to accept responsibility.....’***

***‘When you say, ‘Oh, it’s going to take a bit longer,’ they’ll go, ‘Oh, is it worth it?.....’***

***‘The impact for apprentices and clients is massive, but sometimes that gets lost in the ether’.***

Project Champion, Community Campus



# An Appetite for More

2014 Self-Help-Housing & Hact survey indicated an appetite for further growth:

- **£52m grant** required over the next three years
- Confirmed benefits of a small scale locally focused approach
- And potential for leverage
- Scope for viral expansion!

***‘The success of our project has inspired us to want to do more. We would seek a mix of property types and community areas’***

(Goodwin Development Trust, Hull)

