

**WORKING PAPER 3**

**BUILDING A LEGACY:  
THE IMPACT OF EMPTY HOMES COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMME IN THE  
NORTH EAST AND YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE**



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However, responsibility for the argument and analysis in this report is entirely ours.

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## Foreword

When endorsing the decision of the Coalition Government to fund the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme (EHCGP) in 2011, Liberal Democrat Housing Minister, Andrew Stunnell signed up to *'building a longer term legacy'* in which the number of community-led organisations increases and they have better access to funding and loans, better partnerships with LAs and housing providers, are better networked, more sustainable and have a better understood business model. (DCLG Press Release November 2011).

This research in the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside finds that EHCGP has indeed left a legacy in these regions of nearly 30 locally based organisations with a track record of bringing some 750 empty properties back into use for over 1,500 residents. These organisations now have the capacity and aspiration to bring many more back over future years with a wide range of social outcomes from community safety, accredited construction apprenticeships, and better homes accessible to those least able to access them in the market or through social housing.

Some have now succeeded in registration with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) thanks to the track record built under the EHCGP. Many more who do not wish to register as large scale housing providers have indicated that if funding similar to EHCGP were to become available in future years they would be keen to develop at a similar level of output. The purchase and repair option has enabled many of these organisations to acquire assets with benefits to their balance sheet, income streams and long term sustainability. Already some organisations have used this asset base to borrow to expand the scope of their activity and to leverage funds equivalent to over four times the value of the grant itself. The lease and repair option has also given organisations a longer term income stream. On some occasions property owners have paid back the repair costs over a period alongside management fees to enable the organisations to reinvest this income in longer term service development.

The programme has certainly contributed to the viability of construction teams through enhanced workflow. This has enabled richer and longer-term training experience to be offered to trainees and apprentices. In one case this had enabled the organisation to grow from 10 six month traineeships in 2010 to 18 staff and three levels of experience, with ten trainees beyond NVQ2, five apprenticeships, and 3 trade team leads reporting to the same construction manager five years later. The qualitative differences in the training experience offered were captured by an apprentice joiner excited by the challenge of installing a new staircase into a three storey townhouse.

EHCGP has delivered excellent value for money, making a small amount of grant go a long way, attracting further funding including grants, soft loans, social finance and conventional bank lending. Financial leverage has been estimated at between 50p to £1 for every £ of grant across the programme based on a survey with a 59% response. In one case leverage reached £4.5 of spend from all sources for every one pound of EHCGP grant, and 2.5 homes improved for every one funded under EHCGP. Benefits to tenants, volunteers, the wider community and third parties have been estimated in one case to deliver between £3.24 and £5 of social value for every £ invested depending on the assumptions. While the methods and assumptions used in such quantifications of benefit may be disputed there is no doubting the real benefits enjoyed by participants who converged on the view that EHCGP had been *'the best thing'*.

But EHCGP has not just been about value for money and bettering that offered by large scale procurement models. It has demonstrated the value of local knowledge in negotiating deals with owners of empty homes and local trust in securing programme participation from long term unemployed people. It has rewarded volunteering by providing routes into training, work and

housing for people initially joining in litter picks and garden clearances and intrinsic rewards of ***'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.....'***. It has provided solutions to *'wicked problems'* tackling property abandonment, blight and associated anti-social behaviour; offering housing options to those excluded from the mainstream including ex-offenders, people with mental health issues and for single people in work without homeless priority or resources to access decent private rentals.

Over and above these tangible benefits, the legacy being built by EHCGP is that of a grass roots housing sector, occupying the niches once served by fledgling housing associations, interested in individual properties and streetscapes, working with local people to craft tailored solutions to difficult and messy problems. A distinctive feature of this sector found in several parts of the region covered in this study, in Leeds, in the Tees Valley and in Hull, is the development of a collaborative culture of peer learning and mutual support in which new entrants are welcomed and enabled to grow as part of the sector. As one longer established organisation put it ***'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'***.

Reading this report it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that a legacy has indeed been built. Something important to but recently missing from the third sector housing scene in England is being recreated. A gap in the market is being filled and new opportunities fashioned for *'good old fashioned community building'* to take place. The magic of housing as both a physical asset and a source of rental income is being rediscovered as a basis for sustainable community-led action in a period in which organisations dependent on revenue support have found survival an increasing problem. Learning from this programme connects well with BSHF's wider work on Global Habitat and exemplifies *'can do'* approaches that are practical, sustainable and transferrable and that should contribute to a *'new social urbanism'*.



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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

This is the second regional study of the implementation and impact of the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme (EHCGP), programme introduced in 2011 to support non-registered community-led organisations to bring empty homes into use. The first based on the Midlands was published in 2014 and is now available as Working Paper 2 in this series.

The introduction of the EHCGP programme received high level backing from ministers of the 2010-15 Coalition Government, and eventually received nearly £50 million of public funding in a time of austerity. Ministers believed that self-help approaches combined with Government support would tackle *'years of inaction and inertia'*, *'provide valuable employment skills'* and *'create better places to live'*. This programme was expected to build a legacy of effective community-led action.

The programme was delivered through 110 locally based self-help housing organisations; *"procuring housing by means of bringing back into use empty properties to live in, organising whatever repairs are necessary to make them habitable"* <http://self-help-housing.org/>

### Objectives and Method

The overall aim of this research was to provide a rounded evaluation of the impact of the EHCGP and build on existing knowledge. Earlier work by the authors has outlined the history of self-help housing in England and identified five key success requirements (properties, funding, workforce, residents and partners) (Mullins 2010, Mullins et al 2011).

This second study focuses on the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside regions which together with the earlier Midlands study account for 40% of the entire programme. Around 750 properties in NE and Yorkshire and Humberside regions have been brought back into use to provide homes for over 1,500 people.

This report identifies the scale and nature of self-help housing projects in these two regions, explores the barriers and enablers to expansion of the sector, maps investment through the EHCGP programme, and uses 11 case studies to capture the experience of participation in the programme and the wider social and community benefits arising.

A database of organisations was developed and updated, regional meetings were observed, and 11 main case studies were undertaken, 5 in the North East region and 6 in Yorkshire and Humberside, each involving up to 5 semi-structured and qualitative interviews with key individuals including project champions, volunteers, residents and workforce and partners.

The 11 case studies selected reflect the broad array of community-led organisations taking part in EHCGP across the two regions including long-established groups and new entrants. Case studies were undertaken by a team of five researchers. Early findings were presented

at a series of consultative events in London, Hull and Birmingham and at academic conferences in Liverpool and Lisbon.

The six chapters of the report provide an introduction and background to the study (1), a desk based analysis of EHCGP in the two regions (2), profiles of the 11 case studies (3), a picture of the experiences of case study organisations in taking part in EHCGP (4), an assessment of the wider benefits of the programme (5) and some conclusions, future scenarios and recommendations (6).

## EHCGP Programme Analysis

Provisional programme data<sup>1</sup> indicates that self-help housing organisations in Yorkshire and Humberside were awarded the most grant of any region throughout the £50 million Programme (over £12 million in total). The North East followed closely behind London; with their total allocation standing at just over £9 million.

The two regions were also the largest beneficiaries of underspend re-allocated in 2014, accounting for around 70% of the recycled funding of £4.8 million. This is a good indication of delivery and performance in the two main rounds of the programme and the quality and value for money of further bids.

Maps of EHCGP allocations show a concentration in these two regions, partly reflecting the supply of empty properties and viability for EHCGP funding, and partly the level of activity of community-led organisations (with lively self-help clusters in Leeds, Hull and Tees Valley).

Most projects in the 2 regions operate very locally and bring community knowledge into EHCGP. Just 3 of the 16 Yorkshire and Humberside projects and 4 of the 14 North East projects were funded by EHCGP to work in more than one local authority area. This is a very different pattern to the wide geographical spread of HCA funding to housing associations and means that self-help can do things differently by being local.

Most participating organisations were charities and/or companies limited by guarantee. Only one was a registered housing provider (RP) at the outset, but some had applied or were thinking of applying for RP status.

Diverse types of organisations that have been attracted to EHCGP. The most common organisational purposes of participants were to provide supported housing/homelessness and education/training services. Community development and health were also quite common purposes.

Young people and NEETs were the most common target groups for participants in both regions, with single people and unemployed adults being well represented. Nearly half of the projects targeted specific geographical areas.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is based on a database compiled by SHHO and HACT incorporating provisional programme data provided by Tribal/DCLG in December 2014 Tribal and detailed organisation information compiled by SHHO. Outturn data from Tribal and DCLG is still awaited at the time of writing.

EHCGP is targeting the housing needs of groups least likely to qualify for social housing (young people, single people and ex-offenders) who would otherwise depend on expensive and often poor quality accommodation at the bottom end of the private rented sector.

### Case Study Profiles

Chapter 3 profiles the 11 case study organisations; 5 in the North East and 6 in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Each profile summarises aims and activities, the background to their EHCGP bid, their funding allocation and scope of project, refurbishment model, key partners, and a personal quote defining what the project means to each organisation's 'project champion'.

The 11 case study organisations were diverse in their legal status, primary purposes and previous experience of housing refurbishment work.

What united them was a commitment to use EHCGP to bring properties back into use, meet the housing needs of their clients, provide training and work experience for their workforce and benefit their local communities.

### Case Studies: Engaging with the Programme

While for some organisations renovating empty homes was a new departure, it was usually seen as closely linked to existing organisational aims.

Several projects were motivated by acquiring good quality homes for clients. Some also saw EHCGP as a route to viability. There was a fine balance between *'income stream and ethos'*.

EHCGP was valued for its flexibility. There was a preference for purchase and repair over lease and repair models particularly in round 2, except in higher price areas.

Other financial issues included lack of provision for and difficulty in predicting fees and on-costs and the need for long-term budgets for management and maintenance. Management fees covered some of these costs for lease and repair projects.

The bidding process for EHCGP was a significant challenge, especially where bids were submitted in advance of identifying properties and associated costs. Confidence of bidders increased in the second and underspend rounds when more was known about the process.

There was a range of enablers helping projects to overcome barriers with bidding and project management. Experienced internal (trustees) and external (friends and partners) advice was most valuable. SHHO played a key role in advice and support.

Local knowledge was a key advantage in sourcing suitable properties. Local authority empty property officers were helpful as was having local housing experts on your steering group.

Negotiation with property owners could become a 'tango' since despite clear benefits to owners, many played 'hard ball' over rents. This reinforced the preference for the purchase and repair model.

The cost parameters of EHCGP tended to concentrate activity in the lowest value locations. Judgement was needed to avoid concentrating clients in difficult areas – one formula was to purchase *'the worst properties in a good street'*.

Organisations learned from experience and improved project management over time (e.g. by outsourcing to experts). The need to account to Tribal for delivery was an important driver. One project built a track record for delivery enabling it to register with the HCA.

Of the seven possible refurbishment procurement models considered in our typology (Figure 4.1), the majority of projects had a hybrid model mixing trainees, volunteers and external contractors.

Scaling up, tight timescales and the need for specialists were tending to shift the balance to more external contractors, but many projects retained a self-help and training element.

External contractors were frequently locally based SMEs. Some contractors used the workflow from EHCGP to take on their own apprentices.

Scaling up of workflow and activity was also tending to increase hierarchy within the self-help projects themselves. Specialist construction managers and tiers of trainees and skilled staff were emerging within construction workforces to give a more rewarding experience.

Volunteer opportunities were also expanding with the programme. Projects were continuing to work with the most vulnerable people and increasing this work. Some projects continue to expect residents to volunteer before moving in to their homes.

There were flexible and varied approaches to tenant recruitment and selection, often in partnership with local authorities, social lettings agencies and supported housing providers.

Tenants generally felt more secure than with private landlords. Turnover is thought to be lower than in other private rented housing but higher than in social housing.

Case study organisations were embedded in networks of partnerships. Many partners were evident and performed a variety of functions. Partnerships were important in bidding, finding properties and tenants, workforce training and finance. Figure 4.2 summarises 7 partner roles identified in the case studies.

## **Programme Impacts**

A six-fold classification of benefits that was developed from the case studies and tested at two national workshops:

- 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**
- 4. Rewarding Volunteering**
- 5. Solutions to Wicked Problems**
- 6. Building Strong and Independent Organisations and a Vibrant Community-led Sector**

**EHCGP has achieved excellent for money** through leverage. A national survey<sup>2</sup> shows that £26 million of additional funding was attracted by 65 organisations on the back of EHCGP (a leverage ratio of between 0.5:1 and 1:1). This included £11.5million in loans, £7 million in surpluses and reserves, £6 million in grants and £2.3 million in fees from property owners.

Case studies demonstrated better value than this (leverage ratios of between 2.3:1 and 4:1) and provide evidence of an innovative cocktail of grants, soft loans and commercial loans. One case study was able to refurbish 2.5 properties for every one funded through EHCGP.

The social value delivered by self-help projects reflects a wide range of inputs and returns. The social purpose of these projects enabled them to access volunteer time, gifts and charitable contributions that would not have been available to more commercial providers.

Benefits to tenants, volunteers and the wider community have been estimated in one case to deliver £3.24 and £5 of social value for every £1 invested depending on the assumptions.

**Doing things differently by being local** gave a number of process and outcome advantages to self-help housing organisations compared to private landlords and to RPs who would typically be involved in large-scale procurement of housing.

Local knowledge and relationships helped to identify empty properties, track down and make contact with owners and develop attractive packages to bring their homes into use.

In this way one project brought 25 local properties into use in one village centre, creating local jobs, apprenticeships and training for construction team of 18 and 3 local SMEs.

The process of accountability to local residents delivered legitimacy and sustainability enabling another project to make a real impact on landmark buildings in a city centre.

Local community house bases provided another project with the means to connect residents, volunteers and staff and to scale up without weakening these vital links.

Another project champion argued that *“The process is as important as the end product. Involving the local people in a project, to manage it and work on it is the goal so the investment in people and in generating social capital is very important.”*

**Tackling the skills gap and youth unemployment** was the raison d’être of several projects. There was a qualitative difference to the tick box approach to training and development, testified by a construction manager with HA and private sector experience *“Spending the grants and hitting the targets are less important than the guys on the sites”*.

The workflow from EHCGP had enriched training experience and longer-term employment opportunities. Internally, the focus had shifted from short-term taster placements to workforce development and the role of Construction Managers had increased. Externally, Local SMEs were now also creating apprenticeships on the back of EHCGP workflow.

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<sup>2</sup> Self-Help Housing.Org/Hact May 2015

**Rewarding volunteering** is a key principle of many self-help housing projects. The ability to do this was enhanced by EHCGP. Volunteer opportunities increased in a number of projects. This improved self-esteem, social integration and pathways into employment.

There were tangible rewards for volunteers e.g. free driving lessons and chances to move on to trainee and apprenticeship positions. The focus on volunteers from disadvantaged backgrounds and links between volunteering and residents was retained in some projects.

Volunteers with professional skills were particularly attracted by 'can do' approach and clear social goals of self-help housing. There was more progression for volunteers into paid posts.

**Solutions to wicked problems** abounded including access to affordable accommodation and tackling blight and anti-social behaviour.

Projects met the needs of client groups not well-served by existing housing options, including people in work, people who have lived with insecurity and unstable housing for lengthy periods, clients of Social Lettings Agencies and local authority housing options and homeless prevention services.

EHCGP has also extended the scope to respond to the housing and support needs of excluded groups such as young people with support needs, ex-offenders, people with mental health problems and people recovering from alcohol and drug abuse. These cases showed the core value of a stable and secure base for people with chaotic lives from which to address other challenges.

One client recovering from alcohol addiction '*no longer felt lost*' for the first time in seven years. She felt at home and able to focus on her recovery.

600,000 empty homes<sup>3</sup> are not just a waste in a time of housing crisis and limited new supply, but can also create negative local impacts in the form of blight, act as hotspots for anti-social behaviour (such as vandalism, prostitution and drug dealing) and thereby heighten fear of crime and further neighbourhood decline.

Case studies projects addressed concentrations of empty and burned out homes and shops, overgrown gardens, crime and fear of crime. Success was evidenced by private owners gaining the confidence to invest again, protestors re-channelling their energies into proactive housing organisations and working strategically with local authorities.

**Building Strong and Independent Organisations and a vibrant community-led sector** is a demonstrable legacy of EHCGP in these two regions from which further achievement can be expected.

The three material ways in which EHCGP has strengthened organisations was through workflow, cashflow and asset base:

- Workflow has boosted jobs, training opportunities and local SME jobs.

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<sup>3</sup> There were 610,000 empties in England in 2015, 205,000 of which had been empty for over six months. Empty Homes (Autumn 2015) Empty Homes In England. Based on Council Tax base returns to central Government

- Gross cashflow from rents is estimated at £600,000 a month. In one case study net rental income was around £5,000 a month while in another it was £46,000 a month.
- Asset base was strengthened by purchase and repair and asset transfer, in one case study this was by around £8 million and in another just under £1million. This gave balance sheet strength, security for loans and unrestricted future rental income.

Stronger organisations have been able to focus more in their wider social goals.

EHCGP has also contributed to a diverse and vibrant sector which is evidenced at three levels:

- at project level by the wealth of collaborative partnerships and peer support e.g. of established organisations for new entrants
- at sector level by the role of SHHO in stimulating participation, assisting with practical issues and facilitating sharing through regional meetings
- At cross-sectoral level by increasing links with other community-led sectors to share ideas and promote common purpose.

## Conclusions

This report has captured the experience of longer established organisations and embedded networks in these two northern regions where there has been greater knowledge exchange and collaborative working than in our earlier Midlands regional report.

It has confirmed that community-led action provides opportunities for ‘can-do approaches’ - alternative routes to bring empty properties into use that can deliver much wider benefits that are practical, sustainable and transferrable.

EHCGP has been successful because it had a low entry bar in terms of registration and regulation, flexibility of funding and administration compared to other programmes and a purchase and repair option enabling organisations to build asset strength and sustainability.

The programme has left three important legacies that should be considered in any future policy development; public funding, ring fencing and wider social outcomes.

So how can this legacy be sustained? One very popular route with the sector would be to continue a programme of public funding for non-registered providers. There is a proven demand and capacity to deliver and the scourge of 600,000 empty homes may have reduced but have not gone away. The existing players could invest a further £52 million in the next 3 years.

There has been significant organisational learning on business models, managing the programme and the people. We know what worked in enabling small and non-specialist organisations to participate. There are excellent peer support arrangements to support a further phase of viral growth. There are successful models of local authority coordination where top down productively nurtures bottom-up.

Three scenarios are proposed to build on the legacy:

- **Scenario 1 - Continued Viral Expansion through Collaboration of Existing Groups with new Grass Roots Entrants.** A new cohort of entrants would be supported through public funding and form relationships with stronger and more established partners within the sector.
- **Scenario 2 – Exploiting Social Value to attract Wider Funding and Asset Transfers into the Sector.** The sector would become clearer about the wider social value it delivers and would form partnerships with charitable foundations and social investors who value these wider benefits. It would also seek asset transfers from local authorities and housing associations in recognition of social value. There would be active support for new entrants who demonstrate social value.
- **Scenario 3- Consolidation of Existing Sector around EHCGP Legacy and Social Enterprise Models.** In the absence of public funding stronger existing players would develop successful social enterprise models to build on their assets and to provide income generating services to landlords, local authorities and other purchasers.

### Recommendations

1. **Extract Key Learning From Case Studies:** Undertake research to inform sector legacy work by extracting key learning from these case studies and building on the scenarios above to support future sector sustainability.
2. **Maintain Regional Networks:** Continue to share learning within the sector through support for SHHO and regional networks such as Leeds, Hull and Tees Valley
3. **Introduce New Public Grants Programme:** Introduce a new public grants programme particularly targeted on smaller community based and new entrants and on achieving social value.
4. **Expand the role of Social Investors & Charitable Foundations:** Continue to expand contribution of social investors and charitable foundations to supplement grant and commercial loan income.
5. **Facilitate New Entrants Into Empty Homes Work:** Seek new entrants from local community anchor and other social enterprise type organisations able to contribute to and capable of benefiting from empty homes work.

## 1. Introduction and Background

*“the superb work that these housing schemes are already doing shows the scale of what can be achieved when community self-help is combined with cash incentives from the Government...more projects like these will get people into housing, provide valuable employment skills, create better places to live and at the same time give councils extra cash to tackle homelessness and spend on the local community”*  
(Grant Shapps, Housing Minister, February, 2011)

*“There is a desperate need in this country for affordable housing, and yet for every two families that need a home, there is one property standing empty. This is a national scandal, and after years of inaction and inertia, this Government is determined to get to grips with the problem. That’s why I am today announcing that community and voluntary organisations will now be able to apply for a slice of £100m to tackle empty homes. With the new homes bonus applying to empty homes as well as new ones, councils can also receive six years’ worth of funding for every home they bring back into use. And I will continue to explore all options so it is always in the interest of councils to tackle empty homes.”*  
(Announcement by Housing Minister, Andrew Stunell, November 11, 2011)

In announcing the programme the Minister, Andrew Stunell signed up to ‘*building a longer term legacy*’ in which the number of community-led organisations increases and they have better access to funding and loans, better partnerships with LAs and housing providers, are better networked, more sustainable and have a better understood business model. (DCLG Press Release November 2011).

Following the Ministerial announcement in November 2011, the Empty Homes Community Grant Project (EHCGP) was initiated in 2012. The first round provided capital investment of nearly £30 million to community-led groups to help them bring empty or derelict properties back into use. A second round of funding announced in 2013 brought total funding for the period 2012-15 to nearly £50million. With a further re-allocation of underspent funding in 2014 enabling over 110 non-registered or small registered housing providers to take up this innovative funding to undertake local empty homes projects.

Despite its origins as part of a larger Empty Homes Programme conceived primarily as a way of tackling empty property; EHCGP can now be regarded as one of several community-led funding programmes loosely associated with the Localism Act 2011 (including the community right to build and community-led housing programme). This is as a result of a successful response by Self-Help-Housing.org and its allies to the opportunity to make the case for a designated programme for non-registered providers to achieve a deeper local impact (Mullins 2013). The programme was expected to leave a legacy of effective community-led action.

However, it is important to recognise that self-help housing has a much longer history, connecting in part to co-operative and mutual housing traditions (Rowlands 2009, Bliss 2009, Handy and Gulliver 2010, Gulliver, Handy and Morris, 2013, Minora et al 2013, Lang 2015), to self-build by ex-servicemen that led to the foundation of BSHF (BSHF 2004), and

longer standing ideas of self-help (Smiles 1859) community self-help and mutual aid (Burns and Taylor 1998, Harris 1999, Home Office, 2009, Archer 2009, Vanderhoven and Archer 2010, Mullins 2010, Moore and McKee 2012).

Self-help housing is the term most commonly used to describe those community-led groups involved in bringing empty housing into use. Self-help housing uses empty buildings to provide homes and work opportunities for local people. According to the umbrella body, Self-Help-Housing.Org it **'involves local organisations procuring housing by means of bringing back into use empty properties to live in, organising whatever repairs are necessary to make them habitable'** <http://self-help-housing.org/>. These properties may be acquired on a short term lease basis, or may become part of the long term asset base of provider organisations. Self-help housing can provide a unique opportunity to unleash the wider community benefits e.g. individual and community empowerment, employment and training, community safety, tackling neighbourhood blight and providing attractive options for empty home owners (Mullins, 2010, Mullins, Jones and Teasdale 2011).

The Third Sector Research Centre (part supported by Cabinet Office and ESRC 2008-13) tracked the progress of self-help housing over several years, and produced a number of research based accounts of the sector and its potential, in collaboration with SHHO and including collaborations with BSHF and CRISIS.

<http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/Research/ServiceDeliverySD/SelfHelpHousing/tabid/615/Default.aspx>

This research together with a Policy Consultation and follow-up by Building and Social Housing Foundation (BSHF 2011 a and b) is recognised to have played a significant role in the establishment of an Empty Homes Community Grants (EHCG) Programme. Round 1 of this programme provided £30million direct funding to 110 community-led groups towards capital costs of bring empty properties into use.

<http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/Impact/Selfhelphousing/tabid/885/Default.aspx> A second round increased the overall funding total to £50 million and involved 110 groups in all.

A capacity building programme was undertaken by Self-Help-Housing.Org and HACT from September 2011 to March 2012, supported by Tudor Trust, to enable community-led organisations to bid to access EHCGP. This involved working with DCLG and Tribal to influence programme design, with network bodies such as Locality, Community Matters, Urban Forum & Housing Justice to promote the programme and with individual community-led groups to stimulate and support bids. Seven regional briefing events held in early 2012 were attended by 280 people. Twelve electronic briefings were mailed to a database of 190 organisations and individuals advising on completion of bids. To assist bidders a suite of customised documents was developed with help from an experienced development professional and on-line and one to one support was provided. Without this programme it is unlikely that as many as 147 community-led (nonregistered provider) bids would have been submitted to Tribal who were responsible for assessing the bids (Source: Unpublished Report Capacity Building Programme With Bidders Around The DCLG Community Grants Programme, Self-help-Housing.org, 2012).

The current project, undertaken by the Housing and Communities Research Group at the University of Birmingham and partly supported by Building and Social Housing Foundation

assesses the impact of the Empty Homes Community Grants (EHCG) Programme in the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside regions. This part of the country already had a rich heritage of self-help housing, with existing and new organisations ready and willing to take full advantage of EHCGP funding. Some 40% of the entire programme has been delivered in these two regions with 750 properties brought back into use to provide homes for over 1,500 people.

## 1.1 Project Objectives

The overall aim of this research is to provide a rounded evaluation of the impact of the EHCGP and build on existing knowledge about the self-help housing sector and its expansion and thereby to add to wider knowledge on community-led housing initiatives in the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside regions. To contribute to this aim, this study identifies the scale and nature of self-help housing projects in these two regions. It explores the barriers and enablers to expansion of the sector. It explores the wider community benefits, as well as the direct outputs of the programme in terms of empty homes brought into use. It assesses the impact of EHCGP on the national map of the sector and on the sustainability of individual projects.

## 1.2 Methodology

The methodology builds on earlier research on the self-help housing sector prior to EHCGP. A database of organisations was developed and updated, regional meetings were observed, and 11 main case studies were undertaken, 5 in the North East region and 6 in Yorkshire and Humberside, each involving up to 5 semi-structured and qualitative interviews with key individuals. A number of other organisations in the region were visited to inform the study but without applying the full case study methodology.

Desk research was undertaken building on earlier work undertaken at the Third Sector Research Centre in collaboration with SHHO on the history and evolution of the self-help housing sector (Mullins, 2010, Mullins Jones and Teasdale 2011).

A database was developed to map the growth of the sector and delivery of the programme in the North East and Yorkshire. Sources for database construction included the original EHCGP bid forms provided to HACT/TSRC by participating organisations, an expression of interest survey conducted by Self-HelpHousing.Org and analysed by TSRC, a database compiled by HACT staff, a survey completed by participating organisations and provided to HACT/TSRC, a database of the recipients of EHCGP funding from rounds one (2012) and two (2013) and two further surveys conducted by Self-HelpHousing.Org and HACT in 2014 and 2015 to establish interest in follow on funding opportunities.

This data was supplemented by discussions at regional meetings organised by SHHO and HACT and attended by TSRC (in the Midlands these were held in November 2012 and June 2013), two Self-HelpHousing.Org/HACT events in London and Hull in February 2015, a seminar at the University of Birmingham in March 2015, a conference presentation in

Liverpool in April 2015 and the Empty Homes Conference in May 2015 and by regular ongoing meetings with Jon Fitzmaurice, the co-ordinator of Self-help-Housing.org.

### Case Study research

As part of the national evaluation of the EHCGP, five case studies were undertaken in the Midlands in 2014 followed by five in the North East Region and five in Yorkshire and Humberside in 2015. This report reflects on the findings of the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside case studies.

Each of the case studies involved, where possible, up to 5 semi-structured and qualitative interviews with key individuals. A project champion was identified for each organisation for an in-depth interview, while specific aspects of the EHCGP project were explored through subsequent interviews with managers, contractors, residents, volunteers or apprentices.

Not all types of interviewees were viable for each of the case studies, for example depending on the stage of refurbishment at the time of the research interviews, many properties did not yet have residents moved, while other projects did not make use of apprentices or volunteers.

The sampling strategy for the case study research was to select a range of different types of organisations from different locations (urban and rural) across the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside regions, to capture a range of experiences of the EHCGP in action. We established good connections with ten organisations who were willing and excellent partners in the research reported here. Profiles of the 11 case studies can be found in Table 3.3 in Chapter 3.

The 11 case studies selected are representative of the broad array of community-led organisations that are successfully taking part in the EHCGP. The case study profiles show how these organisations differ in size from small, niche social enterprises to local branches of international charities. Table 3.3 outlines the background of each organisation, their EHCGP bid, the scope of their EHCGP projects, and the type of project according to its workforce. Organisations provide social housing, supported and semi-supported housing, homeless accommodation and many include a skills training or educational service. A number support young people in particular while others serve the needs of BME groups in their city or region.

In the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside, the case study interviews were conducted by five researchers using the same national set of topic guides for different types of interviewees, developed for this evaluation project. These interviews were usually an hour and a half in duration, and recorded for reference. The University's ethical review protocol was adopted including ethical approval for the project, and consent forms for all interviews. The interview topic guides were piloted in a case study of a self-help housing scheme in the East Midlands that was not funded under EHCGP.

The approach to the EHCGP evaluation has been on-going and participative. Several events were held to discuss early findings from the North East and Yorkshire case studies. These

included two Self-help-housing.org/HACT events in London and Hull in February 2015, a seminar at the University of Birmingham in March 2015, a conference presentation in Liverpool in April 2015 and the Empty Homes Conference in Birmingham in May 2015. Discussion and feedback from these events contributed to the discussion section of this report and to the refinement of themes presented throughout.

## 1.3 Structure of the Report

The remainder of this report is organised as follows.

**Chapter 2** provides an analysis of the EHCGP in the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside, showing the funding and its geographical distribution, the types of organisations involved, the partnerships they have engaged in their projects and the wider benefits of the programme.

**Chapter 3** introduces 11 case studies from across the two regions and draws on interviews and visits to track their baseline experience of EHCGP.

**Chapter 4** outlines the experience of bidding for EHCGP funding, followed by experience in accessing and managing works to empty properties. People aspects of the programme are then discussed including the role played by workforce, volunteers and residents. Finally, the key role played by partners in providing ‘help from without’ is discussed.

**Chapter 5** assesses the impacts of EHCGP using a new framework derived inductively from the 11 case studies here and the assessed in the earlier Midlands study (Mullins and Sacranie, 2014). First it looks at how the organisations identified their wider social impacts and community benefits of their work. Then it uses a six-fold framework to review the benefits delivered by self-help housing under EHCGP in the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside. It shows how organisations have made the grant go a long way, done things differently by being local, tackled skills gaps, rewarded volunteering, provided solutions to wicked problems and built a strong and vibrant sector.

**Chapter 6** provides conclusions reviews the main challenges perceived by the participants and the advice they would give to others embarking on a similar journey. It then considers the prospects for the future development of self-help and community-led housing after EHCGP. It reviews the legacy that EHCGP has left the sector with and the key measures that are now necessary to sustain the sector. Finally an agenda for further research is outlined and some recommendations are presented.

## 2. EHCGP Programme Analysis

### 2.1 Funding

Tables 2.1 and 2.2 below demonstrate the distribution of EHCG allocation by organisation in the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside respectively<sup>4</sup>. The tables also provide information on core outputs of the Programme – namely the number of bedrooms and properties brought back into use.

In the North East, 10 organisations successfully bid for the £30 million funding stream available in the first round of the Programme. A second round of the Programme in 2013 saw a further £20 million becoming available. In the North East, 6 existing EHCGP recipients bid successfully for round 2 along with 3 new organisations. 7 organisations in the region received underspend funding in the latter stages of the Programme. ECoRegener8 in Jarrow was one of two organisations (the other based in the North West) which received EHCGP funding for the first time through underspend allocations.

15 organisations in Yorkshire and Humberside received initial funding as part of the Programme. 8 of these also received round 2 allocations. Goodwin Development Trust secured its first EHCG as part of the second funding round. 7 organisations in Yorkshire and Humberside received further funding as part of the Programme underspend.

**Table 2.1 Grant allocation: North East<sup>5</sup>**

Org	Grant (Rounds 1&2)	Underspend allocation	Bedrooms	Properties
Ashington Community Development Trust	£215,000 (Round 2)	<b>£120,000</b>	14 + 4	6 +2
Centrepoint Soho	£1,401,425 (168,000+1,233,425)		40+34	20+34
Changing Lives	£1,325,000 (500,000+825,000)	<b>£150,000</b>	66+75 +11	25+30 +5
Coatham House	£189,000		6	2
Community	£1,124,040	<b>£97,500</b>	23+22 +5	6+5 +2

<sup>4</sup> This chapter is based on a database compiled by SHHO and HACT incorporating provisional programme data provided by Tribal/DCLG in December 2014 Tribal and detailed organisation information compiled by SHHO. Outturn data from Tribal and DCLG is still awaited at the time of writing.

<sup>5</sup> All data in these tables is provisional and based in provisional data provided by Tribal/DCLG in December 2014. Final outturn data will not be available from the Department of Communities and Local Government until later in 2015.

Campus 87	(698,240+425,800)			
Craghead Development Trust	£75,000 (Round 1)		36	13
Durham Action on Single Housing (DASH) Ltd.	£270,000 (Round 1)		24	
East Cleveland Youth Housing Trust	£119,160 (Round 1)	£60,000	6 +2	3 +1
ECoRegener8		£454,911	?	?
Five Lamps	£1,275,750 (Round 1)		176	75
Hartlepool NDC Trust	£351,012 (Round 2)		16	1
Middlesbrough CLT	£213,776 (96,000+117,776)		10+8	5+4
Oasis Aquila (formerly Aquila Way)	£254,767 (72,000+182,767)	£280,000	1+8 +9	4+4 +4
Redcar and Cleveland MMind	£183,850 (Round 2)	£130,000	7 +4	2 +2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£8,322,780</b>	<b>£1,292,411</b>	<b>572 (607)</b>	<b>240 (256)</b>

**Table 2.2 Grant allocation: Yorkshire and Humberside**

<b>Org</b>	<b>Grant (Rounds 1&amp;2)</b>	<b>Underspend allocation</b>	<b>Bedrooms</b>	<b>Properties</b>
Barnsley Community Build	£76,700 (Round 1)		8	1
Berneslai Homes	£270,000 (Round 1)		75	30
Canopy Housing	£696,000 (96,000+600,000)	£91,000	12+30+4	3+10 +1
Carlton Education and Enterprise	£375,025 (Round 1)		1	13
DISC	£485,000 (100,000+385,000)		20+53	10+36
Fresh Horizons	£860,103.63 (500,000+360,103.63)		151+12	63+4
Gipton Supported Independent Living Ltd. (GIPSIL)	£200,000 (Round 1)	£392,000	15 +?	10 +?
Giroscope	£704,857 (148,500+556,357)	£250,000	40+56 +11	18+24 +4
Goodwin	£2,395,000 (Round 2)	£360,000	100 +14	40 +5

Development Trust				
Grimsby and Cleethorpes Area Doorstep	£649,345 (Round 1)		22	10
Holme Christian Care Centre/Arise	£1,200,000 (600,000+600,000)	£225,000	69+17 +6	23+8 +3
Keyhouse	£377,532 (262,635+114,897)		45+19	25+10
Leeds Action to Create Homes (LATCH)	£849,059 (113,059+736,000)	£130,000	10+20 +4	4+10 +2
PANDA (Pickering and Newington Development Association Ltd.)	£500,000 (Round 1)		105	10
Probe Hull	£710,000 (360,000+350,000)	£400,000	78+30 +15	36+1 +5
Winner, the Preston Road Women's Centre	£600,000 (200,000+400,000)		42+44	20+22
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£10,948,622</b>	<b>£1,848,000</b>	<b>1084</b>	<b>441</b>

Table 2.3 offers a country-wide comparison. Yorkshire and Humberside were awarded the most grant of any region throughout the course of the £50 million Programme (over £12 million in total). The North East followed closely behind London; with their total allocation standing at just over £9 million.

Overall nearly 40% of the programme was delivered by organisations in the two regions included in this report. Moreover the two regions were by far the largest beneficiaries of underspend re-allocated in 2014, accounting for some 70% of the recycled funding. This is a good indication of delivery and performance in the two main rounds of the programme and the quality and value for money of further bids.

**Table 2.3 Grant allocation by region**

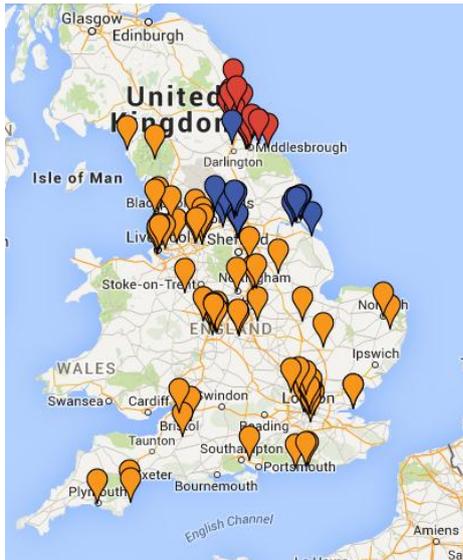
## EHCGP OUTPUTS BY REGION

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
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>49.1 million</b>	<b>£4.8 million</b>	<b>4124</b>	<b>1759</b>

Provisional outputs pending Tribal Final Monitoring 2015

## 2.2 Geographical Distribution

Figure 2.1 (below) shows the national distribution of EHCGP grant by organisation – organisations in the North East in red and those in Yorkshire and Humberside blue. Although recipients came from every region of England, the concentration in the North of the country is striking. This partly reflects the supply of empty properties and viability for funding within EHCGP, but also the level of activity of community-led organisations and the lively self-help housing sectors in these parts of the country.



**Figure 2.1**

Figure 2.2 shows grant distribution in the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside region.



**Figure 2.2**

Turning to local authority areas of operation in the North East (Table 2.4); most organisations operate in a single local authority area. 4 organisations in the North East work across more than two different local authority areas in their delivery of the Programme. Changing Lives HomeLife empty homes project is based at its largest hostel in Newcastle but operates in six local authority areas. However it aims to locate properties with an hours driving time of its central Newcastle project base. Centrepont covers five local authorities, four in the North East region and one in Yorkshire reflecting move-on demand from its young peoples supported housing projects. While Community Campus works in four local

authority areas, these are all proximate to Stockton and the Tees Valley areas where Community Campus has operated since the 1980s.

**Table 2.4 Local authority areas of operation: North East**

Organisation	LA area 1	LA area 2	LA area 3	LA area 4	LA area 5	LA area 6	LA area 7
Ashington Community Development Trust	Northumberland						
Centrepoint Soho	Sunderland	Gateshead	Northumberland	Sheffield	Darlington		
Changing Lives (formerly Cyrenians)	Newcastle	Sunderland	South Tyneside	North Tyneside	Gateshead	Durham	Northumb erland
Coatham House	Redcar and Cleveland						
Community Campus 87	Redcar & Cleveland	Stockton	Middlesbrough	Hartlepool			
Craghead Development Trust	Durham						
DASH	Durham						
East Cleveland Youth Housing Trust	Redcar & Cleveland						
ECoRengener8	South Tyneside						
Five Lamps	Darlington	Durham					
Hartlepool NDC Trust	Hartlepool						
Middlesbrough CLT	Middlesbrough						
Oasis Aquila (formerly Aquila Way)	Gateshead						
Redcar & Cleveland Mind	Redcar & Cleveland						

In Yorkshire and Humberside (Table 2.5) there is even more local working. With just three organisations operating in more than a single local authority area. DISC extends to three local authorities in different parts of the Region, while Key House based its initial project close to its housing advice centre in Dewsbury but applied for round 2 funding in Scarborough, where it also has an advice service. Fresh Horizons spread a little from its initial focus on the area of Huddersfield to operate across Kirklees through its partnership with the local authority Social Lettings Agency and in parts of the adjacent Calderdale authority through partnerships with two third sector advice agency projects. Hull in

particular emerged as a strong location of activity – with 6 of the 16 organisations in the region engaged in projects here. This reflects both the large numbers of empty properties in the city, the legacy of the abandoned Housing Market Renewal Area and the active co-ordination approach taken by Hull City Council in supporting community-led groups alongside the council’s own empty homes programme.

**Table 2.5 Local authority areas of operation: Yorkshire and Humberside**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>LA area 1</b>	<b>LA area 2</b>	<b>LA area 3</b>	<b>LA area 4</b>	<b>LA area 5</b>	<b>LA area 6</b>
Barnsley Community Build	Barnsley					
Berneslai Homes	Barnsley					
Canopy Housing	Leeds					
Carlton Education and Enterprise	North Lincolnshire					
DISC	Hull	Hartlepool	Durham			
Fresh Horizons	Calderdale	Kirklees				
GIPSIL	Leeds					
Giroscope	Hull					
Goodwin Development Trust	Hull					
Grimsby & Cleethorpes Area Doorstep	North East Lincolnshire					
Holme Christian Care/Arise	Bradford					
Keyhouse	Bradford	Scarborough				
LATCH	Leeds					
PANDA	Hull					
Probe Hull	Hull					
Winner, The Preston Road Women’s Centre	Hull					

From the two tables we can confirm that the vast majority of EHCGP projects operate at a very local level and can thereby bring local community knowledge into the programme and deliver benefits to local people. This is a very different pattern to the spread of housing association funding by the HCA.

The advantages of local working are highlighted by Fresh Horizons in Huddersfield. The photograph in Figure 2.3 shows the view from their Chestnut Centre in Sheepridge Village Centre; within which 25 empty properties have been brought into use including the fine terrace of townhouses being refurbished opposite. Local knowledge and persistence has enabled Fresh Horizons to succeed in negotiations with owners of empty properties where non-local developers would have failed. Most notably it took ten years to persuade the local Catholic diocese to sell their derelict presbytery in a key location in the village (see 5.2).



**Figure 2.3: Local Knowledge pays off in Sheepridge Village Centre, Huddersfield**

## 2.3 Legal Status

Table 2.6 shows that 11 of the 12 organisations taking part in the Programme In the North East are registered charities. 10 are companies limited by guarantee. Community Campus 87 is the sole community benefits society of the cohort and ECoRegener8 the only community interest company (CIC).

Meanwhile in Yorkshire and Humberside, Table 2.7 shows that 9 of the 16 organisations are registered charities and 13 companies limited by guarantee. 6 classify themselves as social enterprises in addition to one or both of these classifications. Berneslai Homes is the only arms-length management organisation (ALMO)– managing homes on behalf of Barnsley Council.

DISC is the only organisation in these two regions that embarked on the Programme as a registered provider (RP); although several other participants in the region have since applied, or are considering this (a survey undertaken by Self-Help Housing and HACT in October 2014 indicated that as many as 7 participants in the North East and 10 in Yorkshire and Humberside were considering applying to become an RP).

**Table 2.6 Legal Status: North East**

Organisation	Reg. Charity	Reg. Provider	Community Interest company (CIC)	Company Ltd. by guarantee	Community Benefits society	Co-op	ALMO	*Social Enterprise
Ashington Community Dev. Trust	X							
Centrepont Soho	X	X						
Changing Lives	X	✓		X				
Coatham House	X			X				
Community Campus 87					X			X
Craghead Dev. Trust	X			X				
DASH	X			X				
ECoRegener8			X	X				
ECYHT	X			X				
Five Lamps	X			X				X
Hartlepool NDC Trust	X							
Middlesbrough CLT				X				
Oasis Aquila	X			X				
R&C Mind	X			X				
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>

\*Note: These data were self-reported by organisations. Thus, whilst ‘legal status’ is used, the inclusion of ‘social enterprise’ is somewhat anomalous, with six organisations reporting this status in addition to classifying themselves as charitable and/or company limited by guarantee.

**Table 2.7 Legal Status: Yorkshire and Humberside**

Organisation	Reg. Charity	Reg. Provider	Community Interest Company (CIC)	Company Ltd by guarantee	Community Benefits Society	Co-op	ALMO	*Social Enterprise
Barnsley Community Build	X			X				X
Berneslai Homes				X			X	
Canopy Housing	X				X			
Carlton education & enterprise				X				X
DISC	X	X		X				
Fresh Horizons				X				X
GIPSIL					X			
Giroscope	X			X				
Goodwin Development Trust	X			X				X
Grimsby & Cleethorpes area Doorstep	X			X				
Holme Christian Care/Arise	X			X				
Keyhouse	X			X				
LATCH					X			
PANDA				X				X
Probe Hull				X				X
Winner, The Preston Rd Women's Centre	X			X				
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>

\*Note: These data were self-reported by organisations. Thus, whilst 'legal status' is used, the inclusion of 'social enterprise' is somewhat anomalous, with six organisations reporting this status in addition to classifying themselves as charitable and/or company limited by guarantee.

## 2.4 Organisational Purposes

The information in Tables 2.8 and 2.9 below is reflective of organisations' core activities prior to undertaking work as part of the EHCGP.

Table 2.8 shows that in the North East, 7 organisations provide supported accommodation and homelessness services. 7 offer some form of education and/or training. 2 organisations provide health-related services (specifically mental health in the case of Redcar and Cleveland Mind). 6 organisations have a community-based purpose and 4 are interested in the environment and sustainability. Oasis Aquila is the only organisation in the North East cohort with an explicitly faith-based focus.

**Table 2.8 Organisational Purposes: North East**

Organisation	Supported accommodation	Homelessness	Education & Training	Health	Community	Environment/ Sustainability	Faith-based
Ashington Community Development Trust			X		X		
Centrepont Soho	X	X	X				
Changing Lives	X	X	X	X	X		
Coatham House	X	X					
Community Campus 87	X	X	X			X	
Craghead Development Trust					X	X	
DASH	X	X					
ECoRegener8 Jarrow					X	X	
ECYHT	X	X	X				
Five Lamps			X				
Hartlepool NDC Trust					X		
Middlesbrough CLT					X	X	
Oasis Aquila	X	X	X				X
Redcar & Cleveland Mind		X		X			
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>

**Table 2.9 Organisational Purposes: Yorkshire and Humberside**

Table 2.9 shows that in Yorkshire and Humberside, 8 organisations provide supported accommodation – 6 of these specifically offering homelessness services. A great number – 13 – provide education and training. 4 organisations have a focus on health. 9 work on community development and 4 on the environment and sustainability. Holme Christian Care/Arise are the only organisations in the Yorkshire and Humberside cohort with an explicit faith-based focus.

Organisation	Supported accommodation	Homelessness	Education & Training	Health	Community	Environment/ Sustainability	Faith-based
Barnsley Community Build	X		X	X		X	
Berneslai Homes			X				
Canopy Housing	X	X	X		X	X	
Carlton education and enterprise			X				
DISC	X	X	X	X			
Fresh Horizons			X		X		
GIPSIL	X	X			X		
Giroscope			X		X		
Goodwin Development Trust			X	X	X	X	
Grimsby & Cleethorpes area Doorstep	X	X					
Holme Christian Care/Arise			X		X		X
Keyhouse	X	X	X				
LATCH	X	X	X		X		
PANDA					X		
Probe Hull			X		X	X	
Winner, the Preston Rd. Women's Centre	X		X	X			
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>

These tables show the diverse types of organisations that have been attracted in to local housing projects by the EHCGP. Some obvious strong connections exist for example with projects providing housing advice and homelessness support needing to access a supply of good quality housing for their clients and with employment and training projects seeking construction skills training for their participants. The emphasis placed on community also emerges as an important feature of participant organisations, particularly in Yorkshire.

## 2.5 Target Population

Tables 2.10 and 2.11 indicate the end beneficiaries of the EHCGP. In the North East (2.10), young people and those not in education or training (NEETs) were the most common target group, followed by single people in housing need and geographically specific areas. One organisation targeted unemployed adults; 1 people with mental health problems. Families in need were the target population for 2 organisations. 3 involved ex-offenders in projects.

In Yorkshire and Humberside (2.11), young people and NEETs were also the most popular target population – with 14 organisations involving these groups in projects. Unemployed adults also featured in the majority (10) of organisations in Yorkshire and Humberside. Single people in housing need were the target population in half (8) of the Yorkshire and Humberside projects; 5 of these also worked with families in need of homes. Ex-offenders were a target group for both Giroscope and GIPSIL. For 6 of the organisations, their geographic areas of operation were viewed as target beneficiaries.

**Table 2.10 Target Population: North East**

Organisation	Young people/ NEETs	Unemployed adults	Individuals experiencing mental ill health	Single people in housing need	Families in housing need	Ex-offenders	Geog. Specific areas
Ashington Community Development Trust							X
Centrepoint Soho	X					X	
Changing Lives	X			X	X	X	
Coatham House	X						
Community Campus 87	X			X		X	
Craghead Development Trust							X
DASH				X			
ECYHT	X			X			
Five Lamps	X	X					X
Hartlepool NDC Trust							X
Middlesbrough CLT							X
Oasis Aquila	X			X	X		
Redcar & Cleveland Mind			X	X		X	X
Regener8 Jarrow							X
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>

**Table 2.11 Target Population: Yorkshire and Humberside**

Organisation	Young people/NEETS	Unemployed adults	Individuals experiencing mental ill health	Single people in housing need	Families in housing need	Ex-offenders	Geog. Specific areas
Barnsley Community Build	X	X					X
Berneslai Homes	X	X					X
Canopy Housing	X	X		X	X		X
Carlton Education & Enterprise	X						
DISC		X		X	X		
Fresh Horizons	X	X					X
GIPSIL	X			X		X	
Giroscope	X	X		X	X	X	X
Goodwin Development Trust	X	X					X
Grimsby & Cleethorpes area Doorstep	X			X			
Holme Christian Care/Arise	X	X					
Keyhouse	X	X		X			
LATCH	X	X		X	X		
PANDA							X
Probe Hull	X						
Winner, the Preston Rd. Women's Centre	X			X	X		
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>

These tables highlight the role that EHCGP is playing in meeting housing needs of groups least likely to qualify for social housing (especially young and single people and ex-offenders) who would otherwise depend on expensive and often poor quality accommodation at the bottom end of the private rented sector. Although EHCGP is not a housing need based programme, it is clearly playing an important role in supplementing housing supply for these groups as was confirmed by tenant interviews in the case studies.

Having provided a broad picture of the EHCGP in the two regions and the organisations involved the next chapters dive deeper into the eleven case study organisations visited in the study. Chapter 3 provides profiles of these eleven organisations using a common format to enable similarities and differences to be drawn out. The following two chapters are thematically organised with Chapter 4 looking at how the organisations engaged with the programme in bidding to participate, their business and finance models, barriers and enablers they encountered, project management in relation to properties and people and how they worked with partners to achieve programme goals. Chapter 5 is concerned with the impacts of taking part in the programme both financial and social, highlighting six key benefits that the programme has delivered. Chapter 6 draws some conclusions, includes some future scenarios and makes some recommendations.

### 3. Case Study Profiles

The 11 case study organisations were diverse in their legal status, primary purposes and previous experience of housing refurbishment work. What united them was a commitment to use the opportunity provided by the EHCGP to bring properties back into use, to meet the housing needs of their members and clients and the wider community and to provide training and productive work experience for their workforces. Table 3.1 shows the different ways in which the legal status of these organisations can be presented, with the majority being either registered charities or companies limited by guarantee. While none were registered housing providers at the start of the programme a few had used the track record of EHCGP as part of the case to secure registered provider status, but most preferred to remain as broader community bodies outside of the regulated housing sector.

#### Case Studies – Legal Status

Organisation	REGION	Reg. Charity	Reg. Provider	Community Interest company (CIC)	Company Ltd. by Guarantee	Community Benefits society	Social Enterprise
Canopy	Y&H	X				X	
Changing Lives	NE	X	✓		X		
Community Campus	NE					X	X
Five Lamps	NE	X			X		X
Fresh Horizons	Y&H				X		X
Giroscope	Y&H	X			X		
Goodwin	Y&H	X					X
Keyhouse	Y&H	X			X		
LATCH	Y&H					X	
Middlesbrough CLT	NE				X		
R&C Mind	NE	X			X		

This chapter introduces our 11 case studies to provide an outline of the aims and activities of the participant organisations, their EHCGP bids, the scope and type of project funded by the programme.

### 3.1 Canopy

<p><b>1. Background: Aims and Main Activities</b></p>	<p>Canopy has a 25 year history of bringing empty homes into use in Leeds. It is well known within the sector and has had good long term relationships with Leeds City Council and Leeds ALMOs and more recently with Leeds Empties.</p> <p>Canopy is a charity providing volunteer training and support, it renovates and refurbishes empty properties to create new homes for homeless people, using mainly volunteers who come from diverse range of backgrounds, many of them disadvantaged. They gain new skills, social contacts and opportunities through their work with Canopy and some also go on to become tenants in the properties that they have refurbished.</p> <p>Canopy is strongly embedded in local communities in poorer parts of Leeds including Beeston and Hare Hills. In each community it bases operations at a community house. When expansion opportunities came it increased the number of such community bases rather than centralising the organisation.</p>
<p><b>2. EHCGP and Organisation's Bid</b></p>	<p>Canopy had been involved in empty homes work as its core activity for two decades but only made a small lease and repair bid in round 1 of EHCGP. This was partly motivated by the need to replace a major grant it had had from the Big Lottery which was still running at the time of Round 1 bids.</p> <p>However, the organisation took a fresh look at Round 2 and say this as an opportunity for strategic growth and development. It selected the purchase and repair option as a way to secure the future sustainability of the organisation.</p>
<p><b>3. Bid Allocation</b></p>	<p>£696,000 (96,000+600,000)</p>
<p><b>4. Scope of Project</b></p>	<p>13 properties</p>
<p><b>5. Refurbishment Model</b></p>	<p>Types 6 Hybrid – Mainly Volunteers and Apprentices historically apart from specialist works such as roofs and electrics, but with EHCGP growth subcontract works to and entire refurb to contractors.</p>
<p><b>6. Key Partners</b></p>	<p>Leeds City Council, Leeds College of Building, Keepmoat (Construction company) and contractors.</p> <p>Canopy's cost benefit analysis has demonstrated the benefits of the project to key partners including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits to volunteers (self-esteem, skills and motivation)</li> <li>• Benefits to tenants (home and friends)</li> <li>• Benefits to community (less derelict property)</li> <li>• Third party benefits (savings to public service)</li> </ul> <p>Canopy is a key player in wider Leeds alliances for community-led housing for example jointly commissioning a short film on community-led housing in Leeds.</p>
<p><b>7. What the project means to us:</b></p>	<p><i>"Canopy's had a good year – a good two years really, largely thanks to the Empty Homes Community Grant programme. In the last 18 months, 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. We've been able to buy 13 properties, giving us much better assets and more sustainability going forward. Apart from things like that, we have succeeded in bringing empty homes back into use and housing families and helping people get their qualifications and jobs. That's all been good too."</i></p>

### 3.2 Changing Lives

<p><b>1. Background: Aims and Main Activities</b></p>	<p>Changing Lives (CL) is a registered charity that started life 45 years ago as the Tyneside Cyrenians. Four volunteers who were concerned about rough sleeping in Newcastle and Gateshead came together to form the organisation and set up a soup run and night shelter. 14 months ago took over Platform 51's (previously YWCA) projects in the domestic violence field; at a stroke this changed the client base from 75% male to around 75% female. Today as a result of this merger, they employ over 300 people (56 in Head Office) and have a turnover of £15million and have expanded their remit from homelessness to social inclusion. They have a range of services including day centres, alcohol and drugs addiction services, direct access hostels in Durham, Newcastle and Gateshead. About a third of the workforce are former clients/ service workers. Now they plan to provide more long term accommodation and the empty homes project 'Home Life' subsidiary; which was set up before the merger with Platform 51 following a bid by the smaller Tyneside Cyrenians to EHCGP, TCUK Homes has recently become a registered housing provider with the Homes and Communities Agency.</p>
<p><b>2. EHCGP and Organisation's Bid</b></p>	<p>CL had been involved in homelessness and housing for over 40 years but it wasn't until the EHCGP that they secured direct capital funding for properties other than hostel accommodation. They had a portfolio of over 300 tenancies mainly in hostels and emergency accommodation. They also had access to move on accommodation, mainly leased flats with floating support. They had two large hostels, Elliot House and Virginia House The CEO had an aspiration for CL to buy properties, to find accommodation that people in work could afford and employing clients to help with that refurbishment. EHCGP afforded the chance to fulfil that ambition to provide long term affordable homes for its clients and expand its employment and training options for clients.</p>
<p><b>3. Bid Allocation</b></p>	<p>£1,325,000 (500,000+825,000)</p>
<p><b>4. Scope of Project</b></p>	<p>125 properties - (152 bedrooms) The acquisition of titles to 115 of the 125 properties refurbished has boosted the asset base of Changing Lives by around £8 million which is a significant cushion for an organisation with existing property assets (Hostels) and an annual turnover of around £15 million.</p>
<p><b>5. Refurbishment Model</b></p>	<p>Type 6 – Hybrid TCUK property services is a separate social enterprise subsidiary within Changing Lives. They have a manager with extensive private sector and housing association experience a core trades team which is directly employed full time, one apprentice who is attending a day release college course and five trainees at any one time working on 12 week training programmes.</p>
<p><b>6. Key Partners</b></p>	<p>Range of Funders and Grant Providers, local authorities, estate agents, SHHO. A Charitable Trust for furniture, Vicars Fund for small resident grants Small construction project management consultancy (Artis)</p>
<p><b>7. What the project means to us:</b></p>	<p><i>"You don't realise until you start talking to them what they've been through. Where they've been and how low they've been, and where they are now. It just reinforces it. It's good for me as well because I feel good about myself that.... They were going on about hitting targets for grants but I never think about that. I just think of the guys onsite and how it's affecting them."</i> Workforce / Head of Property Refurbishment</p>

### 3.3 Community Campus '87

<p><b>1. Background : Aims and Main Activities</b></p>	<p>Community Campus (CC) was set up in the 1980s in response to the lack of access to decent housing for young people in Teesside. Formally a voluntary housing organisation, a registered Industrial and Provident Society with tax exempt status and now applying to the HCA for Registered Provider Status. CC also has two wholly owned subsidiaries. One is a Construction Company. The other subsidiary (a CIC) is for lettings and housing management.</p> <p>CC houses and works with people from the ages of 16 to 25 years old, offering tenancies to people who do not have rent guarantors and have social problems. Working primarily in Stockton and Teesside, it provides supported accommodation for young people and has a team of support workers (mostly funded through Supporting People for 78 + clients living in 59 properties). CC provides an accredited pre tenancy course for tenants and provides other opportunities through its support workers to connect young people to education and work.</p> <p>CC has played a key role in supporting new organisations brought in to empty homes work under EHCGP including Middlesbrough CLT, Redcar and Cleveland MIND, Hartlepool NDC and East Cleveland Youth.</p>
<p><b>2. EHCGP and Bid Background</b></p>	<p>CC has always been interested in bringing empty properties back into use and has a track record for construction training. Getting involved in the Empty Homes Programme was a natural extension. Previously they have leased properties from housing associations. CC were also involved in a precursor to the Empty Homes Programme –with Coast and Country HA using Temporary Social Housing Grant. CC is committed to providing homes for vulnerable young people from fractured/chaotic backgrounds that need help to develop into adults with a better chance in life. The Empty Homes Programme gave CC the opportunity to buy and own outright properties that they could offer young people for short term and long term letting. This includes young people with debts, drug and substance misuse problems, rent arrears, troubled backgrounds and no guarantors.</p>
<p><b>3. EHCGP Bid Allocation</b></p>	<p>Round 1 £698,240, Round 2 £425,800, Underspend £97, 500</p>
<p><b>4. Scope of Project</b></p>	<p>22 properties in total. (60 beds paces) Mostly in Stockton and Middlesbrough. All properties were purchased by CC. By the end of the 2014/15 financial year Campus will have increased the number of properties it rents out to 107. It will also have increased its ownership of properties to 66 and increased the number of tenancies it provides for people in housing need to 107. It will also have doubled its asset value to £3.5 m (this includes the value of its offices if sold with vacant possession).</p>
<p><b>5. Refurbishment Model</b></p>	<p>Type 6 – Hybrid. The organisation involves people from its training and apprenticeship programme to do the work and some of these people are supported by CC in other ways. It also works with partners who engage volunteers to do their work with CC providing the skilled mentoring and supervision. CC uses volunteers but not on its Empty Homes Programme, and also sub contracts refurbishment works. Some of its subcontractors are enterprises run by former CC trainees and workforce. Some contractors in turn are creating apprenticeship opportunities through work generated by EHCGP. Thus there is a significant local employment impact.</p>
<p><b>6. Key Partners</b></p>	<p>CC is actively partnering with local authorities across Teesside including Hartlepool, Stockton, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland. On housing projects it is partnering with the Big Local Partnership in North Ormesby; Port Clarence Working party with Tristar Homes, Stockton Borough Council and Know How North East, Redcar and Cleveland Mind Empty Homes Project and a BME housing project with Cultures CIC. Key partners in CC's Empty Homes Programme are Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland's Empty Homes Officers.</p>
<p><b>7. What the project means to us:</b></p>	<p><i>"The project complemented what we do – it fits works with our values – we wouldn't do it otherwise. We want to support people and communities and we want to do that long term. We are not into short termism. We care about our properties and the people who live in them – we want to do the best for them."</i> (Project Champions).</p>

### 3.4 Five Lamps

<p><b>1. Background: Aims and Main Activities</b></p>	<p>Five lamps is a Community Finance (CDFI) and social enterprise working across the north east of England. It was established in 1985 to support people affected by deep structural unemployment caused by loss of traditional industries in Teesside. Its main aims are to tackle financial and social exclusion, enable people to overcome debt and help people achieve aspirations for a better life. Five Lamps has three main business service areas: youth services, financial and housing and, housing and economic development.</p> <p>Five lamps runs start up workshops and mentoring activities funded by NE Mentoring. It has a sub contract from the CDFA (umbrella organisation for CDFI's) to provide start up loans for businesses in the NE up to £10,000 loan per business. It provides safe personal unsecured loans mainstream lending funds. It also administers Helping Hand with the regional Private Housing Financial Assistance Fund of £9.2m. The fund is largely to provide loans for low income homeowners who need adaptations to their homes (mostly older people) and to bring homes to decent homes standards. In the last financial year Five Lamps made 12598 loans across all of its CDFI activities totalling over £8.1 million.</p>
<p><b>2. EHCGP and Organisation's Bid</b></p>	<p>The EHCGP came to the attention of Five Lamps in 2011 but prior to that CEO had long thought Five Lamps would be good at housing since the organisation already had an interest in regenerating local areas. He wanted to move the organisation from grants to contracts income and he wanted to strengthen the financial resilience of the organisation by diversifying their income streams, making the organisation into a strong social enterprise business. In 2003 Five Lamps responded to an opportunity to propose a strategy to the local authority to revitalise the Mandale estate in Thornaby. That proposal did not come off but the experience was useful. In 2011 Five Lamps bid for EHCGP with help from North Star HA whose bid had failed but whose groundwork was helpful e.g. assembling partners and identifying properties was really useful. The Five Lamps bid got support from Durham and Darlington Local Authorities as well.</p>
<p><b>3. Bid Allocation</b></p>	<p>Round 1 £1,275,750</p>
<p><b>4. Scope of Project</b></p>	<p>The intention was to deliver 75 properties/176 bed spaces before the programme ends in March 2015. This was scaled back to approx. 110 bed-spaces and to 49 properties after it became clear that either more would have to be spent per property or fewer properties could be refurbished within the money allocated. The project is on track to deliver the revised estimate. Properties are primarily in County Durham and in Darlington. They are a mixture of houses and flats.</p>
<p><b>5. Refurbishment Model</b></p>	<p>Type 7 – Professional Property Development – Buy in skills and labour.</p>
<p><b>6. Key Partners</b></p>	<p>External letting agent and Empty Homes Officers from Durham County Council and Darlington Council. Also several local contractors. Five Lamps also worked with North Star using the HA to carry out the refurbishment and carry out housing management tasks for tenants in the refurbished properties. A private lettings agent from a local estate agent for Five Lamps has managed the lettings process, rent collection and management of properties and tenant.</p>
<p><b>7. What the project means to us:</b></p>	<p><i>“The EHCGP has been highly significant to Five Lamps, expanding the scope and reach of our work, but most importantly creating nearly fifty new homes and contributing to local regeneration in a number of ways.”.</i></p>

### 3.5 Fresh Horizons

<p><b>1. Background: Aims and Main Activities</b></p>	<p>Fresh Horizons (FH) is a social enterprise providing a wide range of services to the community of Deighton and Brackenhall, a deprived community defined by two large former council estates and Sheepridge village centre with a mix of privately owned properties and shops many of which were empty. FH was set up in 2004 by Deighton and Brackenhall Initiative (DBI) a local regeneration partnership which had transformed the former council housing through demolitions, and construction of new private ownership and housing association homes. Fresh Horizons runs a purpose built local services the Chestnut Centre in Sheepridge village' where it runs the local library, day nursery and community cinema. 25 empty properties in the immediate vicinity of the Chestnut Centre in Shreepridge Village have now been brought into use under a number of programmes including EHCGP. FH also has contracts to manage community centres and even runs specialist music library for several Yorkshire local authorities. Its main focus is on employment and training opportunities for local people.</p>
<p><b>2. EHCGP and Organisation's Bid</b></p>	<p>FH bid for both rounds of EHCGP. It had been working with local property owners for some time to develop a programme to provide workflow for FH Construction team, to improve local neighbourhood and share benefits with property owners. The scheme enabled this existing work to be expanded and better meet FH core aims. The Construction and training initiatives were up and running before EHCGP but the programme provided the perfect vehicle to expand this activity to generate longer term benefits.</p>
<p><b>3. Bid Allocation</b></p>	<p>£860,103.63 (500,000+360,103.63)</p>
<p><b>4. Scope of Project</b></p>	<p>163 bedrooms in total EHCGP has been a significant new source of income, enabling 56 houses to be leased and refurbished and 6 to be purchased and refurbished. The empty homes work has a special focus on the Sheepridge village centre next to the Chestnut Centre where there were many empty and derelict properties. This area is being transformed by EHCGP backed investment in local properties</p>
<p><b>5. Refurbishment Model</b></p>	<p>Type 6 Hybrid – mix of apprentices, trainees, sub-contractors and volunteers</p>
<p><b>6. Key Partners</b></p>	<p>DBI is the key local partner who have supported the organisation since 2004 including providing material support for the empty homes project. Initially FH was grant funded from surpluses generated by the housing sales programme of DBI. Over time as FH became established the relationship matured to one of loans such as that provided to back the EHCGP programme. Support has included joint action to improve 'the village' through a concerted programme of works to shops and residential accommodation, provision of car parking etc. DBI provided an interest free loan.</p>
<p><b>7. What the EHCGP project means to us:</b></p>	<p><i>"The main thing for me would be it fits our principles both as Fresh Horizons and DBI and our values around the social benefits and returns. It's a good work stream for sustaining local employment. It has the wider environmental and social benefits."</i></p>

### 3.6 Giroscope

<p><b>1. Background: Aims and Main Activities</b></p>	<p>Giroscope is based in Hull and buy and renovate empty and derelict houses, bringing them back into use to provide affordable housing to people with housing needs. They house a range of people, and also train a wide range of volunteers including ex-offenders; people living in hostels; people that have been out of work for a long period of time, young people looking for experience; and people with mental health difficulties.</p> <p>Giroscope are focused on providing sustainable homes and sustainable communities through predominantly shorthold tenancies.</p>
<p><b>2. EHCGP and Organisation's Bid</b></p>	<p>The EHCGP tied into a lot of the work already done by Giroscope as they already had a track record of doing up empty houses and were working in an ex-Pathfinder area.</p>
<p><b>3. Bid Allocation</b></p>	<p>£704,857 (148,500+556,357)</p>
<p><b>4. Scope of Project</b></p>	<p>In total they acquired 48 properties which were all purchased rather than leased. (107 bedrooms)</p>
<p><b>5. Refurbishment Model</b></p>	<p>Type 6 – Hybrid</p> <p>There is a core group of internal staff on site as well as sub-contractors for specific jobs like plumbing or roofing. A number of onsite operatives are semi-skilled. They also make use of a network of sub-contractors who have connections with the area, and work with 2 local colleges where they send people for building skills.</p>
<p><b>6. Key Partners</b></p>	<p>Hull City Council have taken a proactive role in supporting the programme by bringing partners together through monthly/bi-monthly meetings to coordinate properties they would bid for.</p> <p>Tribal were helpful and managed the whole process with a light touch, while Self-Housing.Org give useful advice and shared information.</p>
<p><b>7. What the project means to us:</b></p>	<p><i>"I could not sing the praises more of the Community Grants Programme and what it's achieved in Hull. I really couldn't. It's been really, really successful and it has so many benefits that it just really should have another pot of money from Government, really." – Project Partner – Hull City Council</i></p> <p><i>"We really improved our volunteers. I think that has been a product of the programme. That we've been able to train a lot more people. We've become a lot better at doing that, because you're doing it a lot more regularly." – Project Champion</i></p>

### 3.7 Goodwin Development Trust

<p><b>1. Background: Aims and Main Activities</b></p>	<p>Goodwin Development Trust was set up by a group of tenants, residents and community activists on a public housing Thornton Estate of 5000 people in Hull. The tenants and residents got together originally to successfully resist a housing development on the estate and preserve green space. They set up the Goodwin Resource Centre Association, which eventually, became the Goodwin Development Trust.</p> <p>There are two wholly-owned subsidiaries: Goodwin Community Trading and more recently formed Goodwin Community House, which was a direct result of the Empty Homes Programme.</p> <p>Activities include about 30% of the city's children's centres under contract, three nurseries, pregnant mums support programme, a number of Public Health contracts such as the city's Smoking Cessation Programme, anti-obesity programmes, a number of psychological support services, programme for new migrant communities, a community college, a caring business a large food poverty programme, redistributing surplus food and feeding 5000 people a week in the city.</p>
<p><b>2. EHCGP and Organisation's Bid</b></p>	<p>Their long-term aspiration was to have asset-driven growth, and have control of physical assets in the community. The ability to be able to have a good quality housing offer for tenants and residents was central to this aspiration for a long time.</p> <p>The Empty Homes Programmes came at the right time, as Goodwin were starting to understand the housing market and building a profile locally for having that interest in housing. In round 1, coming out of recession, they made a decision not to apply because of confusion around business models and how much investment would be needed. After shared knowledge from Yorkshire partners, Goodwin applied for a large Round 2 grant to purchase properties to refurbish.</p> <p>A distinctive feature of their work has been the refurbishment of empty commercial buildings that proliferate in the centre of Hull, including vacant flats above the Lloyds Bank building in the city centre.</p>
<p><b>3. Bid Allocation</b></p>	<p>£2,395,000 (Round 2)</p>
<p><b>4. Scope of Project</b></p>	<p>Goodwin received the allocation £2.4m for 50 properties (101 bedrooms). They applied again for underspend and received funding for 4 properties which brought the total to £2.7m and 54 properties (114 bedrooms).</p>
<p><b>5. Project Type</b></p>	<p>Type 6 and 7: Goodwin had a core handyman service in-house and used local small builders for smaller properties. Large projects like Queen's House went out to competitive tender to a large Hull based contractor. So they used a complete range because of a short time frame to deliver such a large number of properties.</p> <p>Apprentices from a training college and volunteers were also involved.</p>
<p><b>6. Key Partners</b></p>	<p>City wide support was good through Hull city council, which created effective space to share experience and knowledge and not have different community organisations bidding for the same property.</p> <p>SHHO's role in the programme was described as superb, bringing people together in the region, keeping everyone informed and providing a link with the DCLG. Tribal were also described as being decisive, flexible and clear.</p>
<p><b>7. What the project means to us:</b></p>	<p><i>"I think if we can showcase that you can actually start changing the city centre of a big centre in the UK, a city that's had deprivation strewn through the city centre, empty shops, empty offices and actually start making the likes of Sainsburys move back into the city centre through one project you know for me said we've done something here."</i> Project Champion.</p>

### 3.8 Keyhouse

<p><b>1. Background: Aims and Main Activities</b></p>	<p>Keyhouse was established 25 years ago. Initially it focused on youth homelessness. The organisation came out of a partnership between local concerned individuals, the Church, the Probation service and a local housing association. It is a charity and a company limited by guarantee. Keyhouse created a subsidiary several years ago to provide an opportunity to grow. It has also applied to become a registered provider – giving it the opportunity to apply for social housing funds from the HCA if it wishes.</p> <p>Today there are four main work streams: supported housing, property management, legal advice and training.</p> <p>Property management services are part of the work done by the Keyhouse housing team and prior to the EHCGP included repairs and some refurbishment. The housing team’s work has developed and grown through arrangements with In Communities (the Bradford stock transfer landlord) and private landlords as well as managing hostels and supported housing.</p>
<p><b>2. EHCGP and Organisation’s Bid</b></p>	<p>Keyhouse had been interested for some time in finding good accommodation to let to vulnerable and homeless people who would not otherwise get access to suitable and affordable accommodation where they wanted/needed to live. They had (after losing the contract with In Communities) started to work with private landlords offering them a management service similar to the one they offered In Communities. Keyhouse offered to find tenants for their properties, support tenants for up to 2 years and influenced landlords to reduce the rents. They managed 50-75 properties. This helped establish a track record for Keyhouse and EHCGP was a natural development.</p>
<p><b>3. Bid Allocation</b></p>	<p>Type 4 – Keyhouse use a number of small builders and tradespeople whose track records are established and known to Keyhouse or, who are in the process of establishing a track record with them.</p>
<p><b>4. Scope of Project</b></p>	<p>Keyhouse is negotiating on a case by case basis with owners over the lease terms of properties. Out of five leases so far, two are for 10 years and three are for 5. One is on a 7 year lease. 5 years is the minimum. So far 5 properties have been acquired to lease and a further five are being sought this year. By 2015 the project will have acquired the eight properties required under the terms of the funding. Most properties are 2 to 3 bedroom.</p>
<p><b>5. Refurbishment Model</b></p>	<p>Type 4 – it uses a number of small builders and tradespeople whose track records are established and known to Keyhouse or, who are in the process of establishing a track record with them.</p>
<p><b>6. Key Partners</b></p>	<p>The Council were very important enablers in the early days and continued to be supportive. Empty Homes Officers work closely with Keyhouse, continuing to let potential owners and Keyhouse know about possible matches.</p> <p>When they were preparing the bid, a partnership with developers Taylor Wimpey may also have been advantageous.</p>
<p><b>7. What the project means to us:</b></p>	<p><i>“We talk about a different future now one that isn’t totally dependent on contracts.” – Project Champion/ CEO</i></p>

### 3.9 LATCH

<p><b>1. Background: Aims and Main Activities</b></p>	<p>Latch is based in the Chapeltown area of Leeds and was founded in 1989, with the direct purpose of bringing empty homes into use. Originally founded as a cooperative, Latch took empty properties – mostly gifted by Leeds City Council – and offered people in housing need the opportunity to refurbish the property themselves before moving in. After a period as a collective, Latch is now a Community Benefit Society. Over time Latch has evolved to offer housing only to those with additional support needs, it has moved to a ‘housing first’ model. This came about as they found that it was not realistic to expect people with complex needs to ‘self-help’ in this way.</p>
<p><b>2. EHCPG and Organisation’s Bid</b></p>	<p>As an organisation founded to bring empty homes back into use Latch has a great deal of bidding and management experience prior to the EHCPG bid. They have previously leased empty properties from private owners) but with limited success, largely due to owner’s expectation of higher returns that Latch could offer. They also bid for the first empty homes grant in the prior round of empty homes funding from the Homes and Communities Agency, allowing them to bring four homes back into use. Whilst successful, this bid was based on conservative financial assumptions, with a request for capital grant amounting to 35% of the cost of purchase and refurbishment. For the second round they bid with less conservative financial assumptions, applying for 65% of the capital cost of purchase and refurbishment, financing the rest through revenue. The bid was successful and Latch received funding for 12 properties, though the HCA requested an increase in the number of bedrooms</p>
<p><b>3. Bid Allocation</b></p>	<p>£849,059 (113,059+736,000)</p>
<p><b>4. Scope of Project</b></p>	<p>34 bedrooms LATCH are refurbishing 12 properties they were allocated funding for. All properties have been purchased outright.</p>
<p><b>5. Refurbishment Model</b></p>	<p>Type 6 – Hybrid The refurbishment is undertaken by two full-time builders who also supervise and train volunteers, who complete some of the work. Some specialist work (for example the replacement of a roof on one property) is contracted out.</p>
<p><b>6. Key Partners</b></p>	<p>LATCH works with a range of partners, with a number of referrals from support agencies, and with LATCH continuing the relationship with the support agency where appropriate; for example, when working with ex-offenders. The only formal partnership, however, is with Leeds City Council, who provided advice and back-office support for the bid.</p>
<p><b>7. What the project means to us:</b></p>	<p><i>“Well, I mean, it’s left us in a really good position, because we’ve basically increased our property assets substantially. The value of our assets is greater, so we can borrow more money. And, also, our rental income is higher, which makes us more financially sustainable. And the properties that we’ve refurbished, we’ve refurbished to a really good standard, so they’re not gonna need a huge amount – or they shouldn’t – need a huge amount of maintenance, over the next 10 to 15 years. So as an organisation, that’s put us in a better position than we were before.”</i> Project champion</p>

### 3.10 Middlesbrough Community Land Trust

<p><b>1. Background: Aims and Main Activities</b></p>	<p>Middlesbrough CLT is a new entrant to housing provision that started life as a group of residents campaigning against demolition in the Gresham area of the town. Over time, the residents decided that their energies would be better channelled into developing a pro-active housing organisation and began negotiating with Middlesbrough Council to acquire properties in the area surrounding the demolition area. The CLT secured full ownership of the first phase of these properties. They successfully negotiated the asset transfer of three empty homes from Middlesbrough Council for £1 each with an option to buy back at £1. They secured a five year lease on the second phase. Properties are let by Endeavour Housing Association which, together with Community Campus has provided arms-length support and assistance to the residents.</p>
<p><b>2. EHCGP and Organisation's Bid</b></p>	<p>Community Campus encouraged the CLT to enter the initial bid for funding. The detailed costings of labour and materials were worked up by the CLT's project manager based on local knowledge of the building industry and his own view of quality standards. These costings have turned out to be accurate, although unforeseen expenses have had to be met from the CLT's reserves.</p>
<p><b>3. Bid Allocation</b></p>	<p>£213,776 (96,000+117,776)</p>
<p><b>4. Scope of Project</b></p>	<p>18 bedrooms in total Round one involved asset transfer of three properties from the local authority for a nominal amount by the CLT and their subsequent renovation. Round 2 funding accounts for two further houses and two shops which had stood empty for over twenty years and required substantial structural work to convert to housing.</p>
<p><b>5. Refurbishment Model</b></p>	<p>Type 6: Hybrid and Type 7: Traditional Procurement The CLT went out to tender on required building work and prioritised local suppliers with a good record of honest and high quality work. Use of local apprentices was a condition of the contract with the CLT. Members of the CLT contributed around £15,000 of their own labour time into phase one at no cost to the project</p>
<p><b>6. Key Partners</b></p>	<p>Endeavour Housing Association who manage the lettings and Community Campus who provide advice and support. Middlesbrough Council who transferred three homes for £1 each to the CLT and provided wider support.</p>
<p><b>7. What the project means to us:</b></p>	<p><i>"EHCGP funding has contributed to the confidence and sense of purpose of a fledgling organisation...The funding has therefore been just the right amount of 'push' to support this organisation to develop. CLT members have developed their skills to such a degree that they are now taking steps to advise other projects and help others to learn from their experiences."</i></p>

### 3.11 Redcar and Cleveland Mind

<p><b>1. Background: Aims and Main Activities</b></p>	<p>Redcar and Cleveland Mind is a 24 year old locally based Mental Health Charity with a strong volunteer base, a small paid staff, and is very rooted in the communities it serves. After volunteer based origins in the late 1980s it affiliated to national Mind in 1991 but continued as a mainly volunteer project until larger grants and service contracts were secured, peaking at £350,000 from Redcar and Cleveland Council in 2010/11. A sudden reduction core funding to £135,000 in 2011/12 led to a major organisational restructure and a strong push to diversify revenue. While the organisation has always had a diverse range of charity and grant funding it is now seeking more commercial and social enterprise income, e.g. the establishment of a cafe and charity shop, locally branded as ‘Something in Mind’, and the Well4Work scheme which provides mental health training and workforce development to local employers. All the income generated is spent directly on community mental health services. Its main activities comprise one to one client recovery services, counselling, support and information, Something in Mind, Well4Work and projects which now include the empty homes housing project. The organisation caters for a range of people with mental health problems.</p>
<p><b>2. EHCGP and Organisation’s Bid</b></p>	<p>The Project Champion moved to the organisation as part of this rapid period of restructuring, initially as a Strategic Consultant and later as the new CEO, with a personal network including links to Community Campus the Local Authority. Two trustees of the organisation work for Coast and Country, the local stock transfer housing association. When the CEO heard about EHCGP these links proved very helpful in submitting a bid and in spending the resulting grant.</p> <p>The decision to bid was driven by the opportunity to diversify income and services in a way that would strengthen the organisation and increase housing options for its clients, who were mainly confined to the private rented sector.</p>
<p><b>3. Bid Allocation</b></p>	<p>£313,050 (Round 2)</p>
<p><b>4. Scope of Project</b></p>	<p>2 properties and further 2 properties in underspend allocation (11 bedrooms in total)</p> <p>Project 1: Lazenby, Project 2: Coatham Road, Project 3: Underspend properties secured from Redcar and Cleveland Council, Thomson St and South St.</p>
<p><b>5. Refurbishment Model</b></p>	<p>Type 4 and Type 7 – Hybrid and Traditional</p> <p>Community volunteers take part at certain stages of property clearance, wallpaper stripping and garden clearance and there are plans for residents to be involved in the final decorations to their new homes. However, the main works are contracted out; in the first, third and fourth properties to two small local building contractors and in the second property to Community Campus.</p>
<p><b>6. Key Partners</b></p>	<p>Locally based advice and support came from from Community Campus and Community Campus. The LA Empty Homes Officer was a valuable link. Tribal were helpful throughout the process. Excellent support was received from Self-Help Housing with regional workshops particularly helpful in embedding the organisation in the wider housing network.</p>
<p><b>7. What the project means to us:</b></p>	<p><i><b>It was bit of a no-brainer in terms of persuading people; I think people saw it as well this is exciting, this is an opportunity, a chance for us to do something different. I think the other thing that we thought, because people are very outcome-focused in terms of service users. We saw it as an opportunity to make a difference to people’s lives in a much broader way.”</b></i></p> <p><b>Project Champion</b></p>

## 4. Case Studies: Engaging with the Programme

This chapter draws on site visits and interviews undertaken with the 11 case study organisations participating in EHCGP across the North East, Yorkshire and Humberside regions. Section 4.1 explores why and how these organisations bid for funding under EHCGP, section 4.2 describes the financial strategies and business models adopted to undertake the programme, 4.3 reviews barriers and enablers to progress, 4.4 looks at property issues and 4.5 at people issues within the management and delivery of the projects, and finally 4.6 looks at the role of partnership working. Taken together this chapter therefore explores the five key elements of self-help housing: funding, properties, workforce, residents and partners seen as essential in earlier research on the topic (Mullins 2010, Mullins, Jones and Teasdale 2011).

### 4.1 Bidding for EHCGP: Why and How?

A variety of motivations were reported for taking part in EHCGP. These included the strategic vision of the organisation, finding accommodation for service users and building organisational sustainability. While for some organisations renovating empty homes was a new departure, it was usually seen as closely linked to existing organisational aims.

#### Strategic vision or fit

A recurring reason given for taking part in the EHCGP was that the programme was aligned to the strategic vision of the organisations or would help them fulfil their strategic objectives. These could include more accommodation for homeless people, more supported housing or new social housing provision for existing service users.

*“Now when I originally started working it was very clear that housing was, it felt to me, like the last piece of the jigsaw, it felt like that we offered a support service that allowed people access into different element of support but housing is that missing piece. And certainly from listening to the board and sitting in board meetings it was clear that it was bubbling there on the agenda, it was a key objective but... we*

*needed to wait for the right opportunity to come along, not just buy houses and develop houses for the sake of doing so. The empty homes programmes ....came at a perfect time” (Project Director, Goodwin)*

### Supported and Move-on Housing

Several projects were primarily motivated by the need to acquire good quality rented accommodation for clients who often have very limited choices in parts of the private rented sector that are within the Local Housing Allowance limits. The case study organisations who already provided supported housing faced the constant problem of where to move their service users on to, after their stay in supported accommodation.

For Changing Lives this was a primary motivation. Not just to enable people to move on from its supported housing hostels but also as part of a strategy to move from large hostels to community based living for clients receiving support services. Having available general needs, affordable rental ‘move-on’ housing was seen to be crucial to prevent service users falling back into a cycle of homelessness. The EHCGP therefore afforded these organisations the opportunity to develop their own portfolio of ‘move-on’ properties.

For Key House the need to source decent quality accommodation for housing advice clients was also an important driver. The desperate need for decent and affordable accommodation was shared by projects working with ex-offenders and people with mental health needs such as Redcar and Cleveland Mind:

*“I think the driver (to bid) was the fact that we had so many people in poor housing and we weren’t getting very far in terms of supporting them and they were getting lots of barriers around housing allocations and one of the real issues in Redcar, is a real lack of one bedroom properties. So it was very difficult to get people moved into something within the social housing provision that we had, which is why they ended up with private landlords.” Project Champion, Redcar and Cleveland Mind*

## Exploring New Opportunities for Financial Robustness Long-Term Sustainability

Interviewees described the need to explore new opportunities and be creative in finding funding to support their activities. Some expressed the ambition to diversify to create new income streams and be more in control of their own destinies.

For Fresh Horizons the EHCGP funding had a number of advantages in supporting its innovative new business strategy and constant need to find new income streams with a mix of costs, returns and loan repayment profiles to sustain the social enterprise.

The £860,000 EHCGP funding was the largest capital injection this £2million annual turnover organisation secured over three years. This partly substituted for the loss of funding and delays in transferring a key asset by the local authority. It also helped to replace employment training funding lost after the rechanneling of Government employment contracts prime contractors had crowded out small local providers such as Fresh Horizons. The ability to draw down EHGP in three tranches also helped with cash flow, balancing with interest bearing forms of investment, and asset acquisition. This income also helped Fresh Horizons to develop new activities in this period such as taking on the community cinema and Yorkshire music library contract.

Similar advantages were perceived by Redcar and Cleveland Mind, a small locally based charity, seeking to remain viable by diversifying funding in the face of declining core grant from the local authority:

*“They’d had a contract with the council for 20 years and I think always thought they would have a contract with the council. So I did some work with trustees around a diversification model really- We looked at contracts, grants, charitable giving and fundraising, business development and asset acquisition as the five strands, which again partly was one of the reasons why we stuck our toe in the water really with Empty Homes in order to look at assets. That wasn’t our kind of main driver; it was just kind of a bit of a by-product really, but it was a bit of a no-brainer.”*

Project Champion, Redcar and Cleveland

The balance of motives for taking part in EHCGP was well summarised by the Finance lead at Redcar and Cleveland Mind:

*'It isn't just about the income stream – we are also going to be housing people with mental health needs in Redcar and Cleveland and there's the whole ethos about making use of empty homes – these houses that have been left empty and that's a good thing for a start ...and then we're going to get a bit of income which is low cost income – affordable rents not scandalous prices'* (Finance Lead)

## 4.2 Financing and Business Models

### Flexibility of EHCGP

A key financial advantage of EHCGP funding was its flexibility. For Fresh Horizons EHCGP funding enabled more flexible packages with variable lengths of leases, rental return and refurbishment pay back periods to motivate property owners. This fitted the model Fresh Horizons had been pioneering to persuade property owners to share the responsibility and reward for bringing their properties back into use prior to the availability of EHCGP.

### Lease and Purchase Models

The two main business models adopted by the case study organisations were to lease or purchase with the latter being the preferred model for the NE and Yorkshire Empty Homes projects.

- **Lease and Repair** - using EHCGP for capital expenditure for use in refurbishment cost ; housing benefit and rent used to cover leasing costs
- **Purchase and Repair** - EHCGP funding to contribute towards the purchase cost of properties; additional private borrowing or reserves used to contribute towards both purchase and refurbishment costs

Many organisations described a change in strategy in Round 2 of the EHCGP compared to Round 1 and previous programmes. Purchasing has become a preferred option and the lease model proved to more difficult. LATCH felt that part of this was unrealistic rent expectations from property owners, but a significant factor was mortgage providers not allowing the lease-holder to lease to Latch.

Canopy echoed the preference to purchase properties and thereby acquire assets:

*“because we’ve got such a large element of grant into this programme; we got £600,000 in Round 2, so we were putting £60,000 per house into 10 houses, so we were able to purchase them outright with relatively little amount of borrowing. Those assets are now sat there on our balance sheet, so by the end of this year, we’ll have nearly £1 million worth of assets on the balance sheet. That’s offset slightly by some of the borrowing that we are going to have to do but that’s ten times better than our balance sheet looked 24 months ago.”*

Project Champion, Canopy

Conversely some projects like Five Lamps who had gone predominantly for lease and repair programmes subsequently reflected on the problems that purchase and repair would have avoided. This could have worked for them except in higher cost locations like Darlington where property prices would have made the model less feasible:

*There is no doubt, for me that if we could turn the clock back, we would look to probably do a 50/50 balance – maybe 60/40 in favour of purchase and repair. You take away so much of the kind of personal tango and you can resolve much more readily the issues with utilities, the energy companies and stuff like that.....Also things like, ‘You’ve got full title straight away’, so certainly from my point of view, there is no doubt that we would... The one property in our programme that we’ve bought; a property in Evenwood and we paid £20,000 for it. In Darlington, you won’t get much for probably below about £55,000, so you kind sort of see the difference.. I mean that’s an issue for us; we put in our bid and obviously, all of them would be lease [yeah] but that’s a tough gig. (Project Champion, Five Lamps).*

### **Professional Fees and On-Costs**

A difficulty reported by SHHO from regional meetings and other feedback was that EHCGP grants only really covered capital costs and that there was very little (up to c10% of costs) for revenue costs/expenditure for example to cover professional fees.

*“I’ve never really spoken to a project where this hasn’t been to a greater or lesser extent a problem.” (SHHO Coordinator).*

Some costs such as legal fees and VAT were difficult to predict and often hit projects after individual property works had started. This was difficult for new and smaller projects without the prior experience of these costs or the volume of schemes to smooth unexpected costs against the programme as a whole.

*“when we put the budget together there were lots of things that he hadn’t included; things like council tax liability and buildings insurance and things like that. So his kind of base line I think was 150 quid in legal fees per property and we soon realised that we had to pay an awful lot more for that. So in terms of budget there were quite a few errors that I think we probably made just because of lack of knowledge at the beginning.” (new entrant interview)*

### **Management and Maintenance Costs**

Revenue costs became significant for organisations such as Canopy scaling up their operations as a consequence of the grant funded capital works under EHCGP:

*“We’ve just spent about £15,000 on upgrading our IT systems, which we just needed to do to make it all work. Things like help with policies – so we’ve got an HR consultant working with us and we’re going to be spending some money with them, which we’ve never needed to do before because we’ve just kind of muddled along with ancient policies and had gaps and it hasn’t mattered but now, we really need to get sorted. There are costs that we hadn’t envisaged like paying architects to do drawings. Thankfully, I had enough contingency in the programme to absorb that but that’s the new costs that we’ve never had ....with 13 properties in a tight timescale, we needed help to do the design stuff and project manage contractors because we couldn’t do all of that ourselves. Contractor costs have gone through the roof as well, in a planned way but that is much higher than it used to be. We used to do a lot of the work ourselves, apart from gas and roofs and electrics, whereas now, we’re outsourcing entire refurb to contractors and that requires drawings and more*

*project management. We've upskilled internally and project management but we're also paying other people to do some of that for us."*

Project Champion, Canopy

Future maintenance costs of the refurbished properties were an important consideration:

*"The rents are formed at 80% of market rents. So that will be a challenge. It all depends on one, how well you build the properties and two, how well you manage them. If you don't manage them properly and they get kicked about you'll soon end up spending your rent on repairs. So it's that balance."* – Partner Community Campus about Redcar and Cleveland.

Lease and repair projects had developed a number of different ways to cover project costs. It was usual to charge owners a management fee for services provided in securing tenants, collecting the rents and keeping the properties well maintained. These fees were normally deducted from monthly lease payments to the owners. In some cases the initial refurbishment costs which represent a material benefit to property owners were recouped over the period of the lease by further deductions from lease payments or by one off or staged payments by the owners. This provided the self-help housing organisations with a further income stream that they could recycle to extend the programme in subsequent periods. The mutual benefit of such arrangements was clear from interviews conducted with property owners in some case studies:

*"we had a figure in mind based on the previous estate agents assessment and the monthly rent was almost exactly the same - £450 a month- we said fine- obviously there was the 20% management fee to come off and the schedule of works we agreed to – we're paying that at a monthly rate and it will take a couple of years. After five years we can re-assess do we want to sell or continue to rent it out.....we would have had to do the works anyway, although some estate agents may not have insisted on the works....but the council, did have excessive requirements for their referrals..so what we ended up with was not a council tenant but a private tenant through the self-help housing project. It had been empty for 14 months and now we*

*are getting a rent. For us it's a business transaction and a chance to put a roof over someone's head'* (Case Study Property Owner).

Further details of how projects attracted wider funding into their work to enhance EHCGP funding is reported in the next chapter (5.1 – Making the Grant go a long way). There is also discussion of asset transfers as a different way to secure properties and to enhance the viability of schemes with lower levels of grant or no grant in section 5.6.

### **4.3 Barriers and Enablers**

The project champions were the key individuals behind the decision to bid or support their organisation's involvement with the EHCGP. They were encouraged to bid for the funding by various people including board members of their organisation, local authorities, housing association partner or contacts. The interviews illuminated some barriers and enablers to bidding for EHCGP.

#### **Barriers**

Barriers included the tight timescale to complete bid documentation and uncertainties in the bidding process for example in relation to unidentified properties. Organisations were being asked to bid over a 3 year period, for properties they'd not yet identified and to specify how much it would cost to repair them and for how long they'd be available on lease. This would not have been possible without considerable peer support from SHHO, the more experienced self-help housing organisations and in some cases from local authorities. Advice on bidding was available from SHHO, who advised on completion of the relatively simple form, how to put the budget together etc., but not all bidders had used this. There was a feeling that the application process was very difficult for inexperienced organisations, especially in relation to bidding and pricing repairs for properties not yet identified,

Because of the tight budgets involved, some case study organisations managed the application 'in-house' putting pressure on existing limited staff resources. The short time frame most had to complete the application, was also cited a challenge. However, the case

studies revealed a learning process whereby organisations pooled knowledge or outsourced project management expertise to improve their bids and programme delivery.

Those organisations who applied for EHCGP Round 2 funding did feel that their experience was improved the second time around, but this may have also reflected their own growing familiarity and confidence in the process. There was a high level of interest in the third round opportunity of reallocation of underspend enabling a further £3.1 million to be attracted into the two regions.

### **Enablers**

A number of factors were identified as contributing to the successful bids of these case study organisations. These included:

- Encouragement and letters of support from Local Authorities.
- Good advice from SHHO, Board Members and steering groups, accountants, Housing Association staff, planners, environmental health officers and other housing professionals.
- Competitive Bids – Value for Money for EHCGP
- Strong Partnerships
- Guidance (reference was made to the extensive guidance provided by Self-help-housing.org- see section 1 above) advice and support ('buddying') from housing associations and more experienced self-help groups to smaller community projects, especially on financial matters.

SHHO played a key role in advice and support, encouraging participation and advising on bid and programme delivery (see 5.6). This role was widely acknowledged in case study interviews:

*“Jon liked the sound of Five Lamps [mmm] and then obviously, in all the preamble to the Empty Homes Community Grant programme and Jon lobbying, he kept us in the picture and we always saw that as an opportunity; we always recognised that there were potential synergies with some of our business (Project Champion, Five Lamps)*

*“whichever hat Jon was wearing, it was his organisation that facilitated those regional network meetings, which were great from our point of view, for us to be able to tap into experience and intelligence, you know.” (Project Champion, Goodwin).*

Advice from board members and partners was also very important, particularly at bidding stage. Redcar and Cleveland Mind’s decision to bid was influenced by a strong relationship with Community Campus who provided advice on the bid. Later Redcar and Cleveland Mind pulled in expertise through its housing steering group which included two senior staff from the local stock transfer organisation and one from the local authority environmental health and empty properties team.

*“So in terms of our trustee mix we’ve got two trustees for Coast and Country Housing one of them is an asset manager, the other one is the head of Independent Living Services. they’ve been trustees for about three years now, and have been a real source of support to me. We have one trustee who has a finance background who’s a senior auditor with Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council. We have one of the assistant deans from Teesside University who’s recently joined us as a trustee”.*

Project Champion, Redcar and Cleveland Mind

Goodwin’s decision making on round 2 bids was also informed by sector networking:

*“Round 2 came along, luckily we have friends, we have partners nationally but more locally, certainly Yorkshire, who were able to exchange their knowledge and understanding of how the project worked and they were keen to tell us it had worked and that round 2, what they’d be looking for in round 2. So we went high in the amount of grant but also around delivery, being a large organisation we knew we had the capacity, back room capacity in finance, legal, etc, etc. And so we went in high grant but high delivery, that (was) fit for us and yeah the fact that we got the allocation was great. (Project Manager, Goodwin Development Trust)*

Changing Lives was an example of organisational learning with a move from in-house to outsourced project management to manage the acquisition and refurbishment programme, latter they recognised the need for further resources on tenancy management.

*'we were a bit naïve to start with about delivery. We should have got staff in quicker than we did. The outsourced project manager has done wonders for the project, got it more streamlined and now we need to learn more about the tenancy management side'* (Finance Lead).

#### **4.4 Managing Projects: Properties**

##### Enablers to finding suitable empty properties

Local knowledge was an important advantage for community-led projects in securing suitable properties; enquiries through local contacts and word-of mouth were often crucial to finding the right properties. Local authorities were often helpful in locating empties, but there were often difficult negotiations with owners.

The importance of local knowledge is well evidenced by the Fresh Horizons case study (see 5.2) on how the project was able to track down and negotiate with owners of 25 properties and thereby transform Sheepridge village centre in Huddersfield.

Councils or local authorities proved to be very helpful in providing both lists of empty properties and also suggestions from Empty Property Officers on suitable properties for the case study organisations. The extent of knowledge and work involved in keeping this up to date is indicated by the following local authority interviewee:

*"I've done 1,989 visits for these programmes of which 429 resulted in a letter or a referral. Like if there was a for sale poster it's obvious what they want to do straight away so here's the one that's been empty two years, it's up for sale for £45,000 give them a ring and that's the way that's been done. Proven there was 429 it's worked*

*out with Five Lamps and we've got 94 back, we've actually got still two hopefully coming on board"* (Local Authority Empty Property Officer).

Apart from council help, local knowledge, enquiries through local contacts and word-of-mouth were also seen as crucial to finding the right properties. A few of the case study organisations also advertised locally for expressions of interest from private landlords and this was seen to have been a useful exercise in finding suitable properties.

Overall it appeared that local knowledge and intelligence are significant advantages of community-led projects in securing properties. This competitive advantage can be reinforced by maintaining good links with housing sector partners and local authority empty property officers.

*" I think one of the things that has made it work for us is particularly the relationship with S. as an asset manager from Coast and Country. She's just been brilliant in terms of lots of information, lots of practical advice, lots of you can do this, you can't do that. When we were first actually having a look at different properties that were coming up we had a very good relationship with the Empty Homes officer at the council,"* Project Champion, Redcar and Cleveland

#### Barriers to finding suitable empty properties:

As could be expected, interviewees had to view and sift through many unsuitable properties or 'no-hopers' before finding the right ones. The property search was described as both time consuming and disheartening. Lease costs and the capacity for negotiation with landlords was also an important factor in securing property.

In some cases negotiating with property owners proved to be a barrier and in a few instances terms couldn't be agreed for the properties concerned, and potentially suitable properties become unviable. Some projects found landlords difficult to negotiate with and in some cases seeking to use the scheme for properties that did not meet the criteria of having been empty for twelve months.

Describing the negotiation process with property owners as a 'tango' the Project Champion at Five Lamps captured some of the barriers in negotiating leases and his resulting preference for purchase and repair for the future :

*What's not to like about this? You've got a house that's in a shocking state, sign it over for ten years, we'll do the work, we'll recover our bit out of the rent, you get a bit of the rent and at the end of ten years, and you get a property. I think it's a brilliant deal'. [Yeah] I cannot believe how difficult it is..... Some people grasp it straight away [mmm], 'Where do I sign?' but it's difficult..... Some of the things people have told me that have been impediments have been things like not being clear on the title, having debts on the property that only emerge at the last moment [laughter], having disputed ownership.*

*There is no doubt, for me that if we could turn the clock back, we would look to probably do a 50/50 balance – maybe 60/40 in favour of purchase and repair. You take away so much of the kind of personal tango and you can resolve much more readily the issues with utilities, the energy companies and stuff like that.....Also things like, 'You've got full title straight away', so certainly from my point of view, there is no doubt that we would...(Project Champion, Five Lamps).*

Property owners stand to benefit in three ways from EHCGP. First, from investment in improvements to their empty properties which are often derelict or in a state of disrepair. Second, through securing a rental income and avoiding costs associated with preventing squatting and vandalism. Third, the opportunity to take part in a project with a positive social impact. However, problems with securing properties on lease from private owners were raised in several of the regional meetings organised by SHHO and HACT. The internal note of the first round of regional meetings after programme allocations noted that :

*'Most often because owners' demands regarding rents were too high, making it impossible to manage properties at an affordable rent once the renovation had been completed . Less often, because of competition from Registered Providers or local authorities trying to secure properties for other schemes (e.g. HCA programme or*

*temporary accommodation).*' (Unpublished note –Summary of Issues Arising from Regional Meetings – SHHO January 2013).

Another potential barrier is the unsuitability of certain locations for vulnerable clients. Home Life, the empty homes subsidiary of Changing Lives, were purchasing property in seven local authority areas, but in order to meet needs of clients and cost parameters of £70k per property for acquisition and works tended to focus on particular neighbourhoods (around £20k is generally used for refurbishment leaving £45-50k to purchase the property). 90% of the refurbishment work is done by Changing Lives construction subsidiary (TCUKPS) on an open book accounting system with all labour costs recharged at £15 an hour. Some specialist work is subcontracted to local SMEs.

In some streets and neighbourhoods Home Life now has several properties. This can have a local impact on house conditions and on related issues such as community safety and ASB, as was pointed out by a Ward Councillor for one such neighbourhood. A balance was struck between such benefits and avoiding exposing vulnerable tenants to the worst neighbourhoods. This was described by a team member as *'going for the worst properties in good streets'*. This strategy was seen as likely to be most effective for a relatively small landlord who will always be dominated by other owners and landlords in setting the tone of a neighbourhood.

Redcar and Cleveland Mind pinpointed the same issue in relation to their vulnerable client group.

*"we also made a very clear ethical decision that there were some areas of Redcar and Cleveland that we would not touch. They were the more affordable areas but we didn't feel that it was in any way, shape or form appropriate to put a vulnerable person in an area that we knew would be problematic. There's some areas of huge deprivation, of high levels of antisocial behaviour, where you or I would struggle to live there but certainly somebody with a mental health need would be extremely vulnerable."* (Project Champion, Redcar and Cleveland Mind)

## Progress and Monitoring

The progress of the Empty Homes projects was closely monitored by the project champion of each case study with the support of the management team and/or administrative staff. The case study organisations were required to produce regular updates on progress against targets for Tribal in order to ensure grant compliance and release of staged payments. Few problems were reported in complying with this requirement.

By outsourcing project management to a local project and cost management consultancy Changing Lives were able to rapidly build capacity and a reputation for delivery with Tribal that enabled them to secure underspend allocations and to support their application to become a registered provider with the Homes and Communities Agency. Changing Lives delivery of the Home life project was assisted by a project and cost management consultancy (Artis Consulting) enabled delivery of programme targets, building of reputation and rapid scaling up to achieve registered provider status and mainstream HCA allocations within 2 years.

*‘Through the work we had done on EHCGP, one of the officers came out from HCA and they saw that we were delivering for that pot so they approached us to say we’ve got an underspend in our 2012-15 programme, how many properties can you do? So we did 25 properties for them and on track so we put in another bid for the 15-18 programme, another 45 properties’.* Project Champion, Changing Lives

This outsourcing strategy had also been identified in our earlier research in the Midlands, and may be particularly useful for smaller organisations breaking in to the housing and property refurbishment field.

### 4.5 Managing Projects: People

This section covers the various aspects of managing people involved in EHCGP projects. Particular attention is paid to workforce management including managing contractor and refurbishment teams, management teams, apprentices and volunteers. The final section considers selection of tenants.

## Contractors / Refurbishment team

The case study profiles in Chapter 3 include a reference to a typology of refurbishment works models used for the empty properties. This includes the mix between works done by apprentices, volunteers, small local contractors, traditional procurement or a hybrid mix of workforce. The main possible ways of organising the project workforce are shown in Table 4.1 below. This reflects the various delivery approaches that organisations in receipt of EHCGP funding have used and are using to empower and strengthen communities. Some of these delivery methods will be explored further through the case studies.

Figure 4.1 Typology of Refurbishment Models

<b>Type 1</b>	Use of prospective residents to undertake the work, or some of it
<b>Type 2</b>	Use of trainees/apprentices to undertake the work – either in their own employ or from another organisation
<b>Type 3</b>	Use of volunteers
<b>Type 4</b>	Use of small local builders
<b>Type 5</b>	Use of a Housing association/social landlord to do the work
<b>Type 6</b>	Hybrid mix of several of the above
<b>Type 7</b>	None of the above – e.g. conventional procurement from general construction companies

A number of case study projects in the NE and Yorkshire brought in some independent contractors and these ranged from large building companies to local tradesman. However, there were varying mixes of internal trainee based and externally procured refurbishment models. The majority of case studies ended up being classified as hybrid as new methods of procurement were added to the core to manage the scaled up programme under EHCGP.

The pressure to complete projects within grant timetable and the need for specialist building skills did lead to case study organisations in the NE and Yorkshire employing professional builders, contractors to manage the refurbishment projects, and shift from their previous more volunteer focused approach.

For LATCH, The idea of 'self-help' evolved with a desire to be more efficient, to deliver the support more effectively and to use refurbishment resources more efficiently – and has therefore moved to the “housing first” model. They now offer fewer training places, with the aim of better quality training and a higher standard of work. Volunteers do not need to be housed by them and typically aren't. They started on a model of applicants working on their home as a condition of being housed, but found that this was unrealistic as the needs of homeless people were too complex to expect them to meet such a commitment. They now house first and work on the more holistic aspects later. This does not include an expectation that the tenant will be a building volunteer. Another key change has been from housing single people to housing families, often young families.

Canopy similarly expanded the scale of work by moving more activities on from its core volunteer and tenant work team model. However like LATCH they were strongly committed to preserving the focus of the project on volunteers and service users and retained the volunteer team model for certain parts of the works to each property, particularly the finishing touches before occupation in which tenants were always involved and the requirement for all tenants to do a certain number of hours of volunteer work.

*“For skilled stuff like the electrical work and the gas; stuff where you need qualified people. Also, if something has got to be done really quickly, if we've got a short time to get the property up, we get contractors to do the stuff.”* Operations Manager  
Canopy

*“So before, the volunteer teams, including the tenant, would be involved from start to finish on a refurb. Now, they're going in in the last couple of months to do the painting and decorating and the snagging and that kind of stuff. Having said that, there are teams still involved – you know, we've probably got contractors on five sites right now but that still leaves three or four sites where volunteer teams are going in and out doing demolishing or clearing out or doing all sorts of different jobs. There is still quite a variety of work for the volunteers to learn and do.”* Project  
Champion, Canopy

*“Well, we’ve done it differently for each of them, so Lazenby (R&C’s first property in a more distant part of Cleveland) we used private builders. We went through a process where we put out for quotes etcetera. Now, one of the issues for us is that we are not VAT registered, so actually doing Coatham Road (the second property in Redcar) is costing us an awful lot more because Community Campus are VAT registered, so we’re liable for that. It works out being about 17 grand’s worth of VAT; a hell of a lot of money. But the first one was below the VAT threshold so we actually got really good value for money on the first Lazenby one and we used private builders for that. Community Campus are managing the process at Coatham Road and using some of their staff, but we’ve also got a relationship with DISC who’ve got people on unemployment programmes so we’ve got volunteers through DISC who are on placement with them, who are part of the workforce too. Probation did a lot of the garden work at Lazenby too and put a team in for a couple of days. So again, really good partnership and for us it’s all around that added social value really, and opportunities for people. So we’ve had quite a mixed bag really. But we don’t employ any people who’ve worked on any of the properties ourselves. Project Champion, Redcar and Cleveland*

### **The Management Team**

Different approaches were adopted for managing the Empty Homes projects including recruiting specialist skills as well as projects managed in-house using existing staff resources or increasing employees such as in the case of Canopy.

*“The structure of the organisation has changed quite significantly. Before, probably in the first five or so years – five or eight years – Canopy was run by the staff team as a committee more or less a coop and there were different roles within that. It was a very flat structure and so with this growth, I’ve been able to bring in a bit more of a traditional hierarchical structure, so I was able to afford to employ an operations manager – a kind of deputy to myself and then she manages other managers, who then manage other staff. We’ve gone from a very flat structure with one manager which was me to having four or five managers now, all managing different areas, which is brilliant. It really does spread the responsibility around and the load in that respect. It frees me up to think much more strategically and to network and to invest*

*in the future of Canopy, in terms of important partnerships and funding possibilities, so that's been really good.” Project Champion, Canopy*

The role of construction team managers also changed dramatically as a result of the scaled up programme. In the case of Fresh Horizons the single construction manager's role changed from managing team of 10 six month trainees funded under the Future Jibs Fund in 2010 to a more diverse and experienced team gaining accredited construction skills training and experience in 2015 under EHCGP. to 18 staff and three levels of experience, with ten trainees beyond NVQ2, five apprenticeships, and 3 trade team leads reporting to the same construction manager five years later. The qualitative differences in the training experience offered were captured by an apprentice joiner excited by the challenge of installing a new staircase into a three storey townhouse. The expansion of the work flow under EHCGP provided real opportunities for progression within the organisation.

*“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'. Fresh Horizons Apprentice*

### **Apprentices and Volunteers**

Different approaches were adopted to the case studies that employed apprentices and volunteers to a different extent, from a core approach to the projects to an auxiliary contribution to the refurbishments. Apprentices on case study projects have been involved in a variety of refurbishment activities clearing out houses and gardens, stripping old walls, bathrooms and ceilings, and developing a range of constructions and decorating skills including plastering, carpentry and tiling.

Community Campus involved people already in their training and apprenticeship programme to do the Empty Homes work. They also work with partners who engage volunteers to do their work with CC providing the skilled mentoring and supervision.

*“We work with young people who are at most risk of failure and we help them if they make mistake and get it wrong. It’s not marginal for us – it’s what we do – it is our core business” (Project Champion, CC)*

Canopy Volunteers:

*“We’ve got another guy who gives us about one and a half days a week and he’s a Prince2 project manager and he’s a management accountant by background. He’s got another job that he does two days a week as an MD of a firm but he’s able to give us that time and that’s fantastic, so we get loads of pro bono help out of him. There’s our committee of course and some of them, from time to time, give us quite a bit of input and advice and support and help, including Stewart who’s on the board now. He’s a property lawyer, so he’s helped us and his colleagues have helped us with quite a number of different things over the last year or two.”*

One of the key added values of self-help housing is the potential it provides for participation on the construction process and the opportunity this in turn provides for learning construction skills.

*“We’ve started having a specific volunteer meeting about volunteers, so that would be the site workers and support workers getting together. If there are some issues with particular volunteers; discussing the best way to support them. We’d talk about new volunteers coming in and if there are any risks or any support needs and things like that.” Ops Manager, Canopy*

At one of CC properties being refurbished an interview with one of the former apprentices showed the value of skills training enable by Empty Homes programme. The young man completed his college end of his apprenticeship and could not have completed his apprenticeship without CC giving him the opportunity to complete the practical work. At the time of the interview he was learning how to lead a refurbishment team, lead people, how to organise materials and supervise the process. He intended to stay with CC to learn more then pass on his skills for at least the next few years.

Fresh Horizons workforce remains largely 'home-grown' and has a good ethnic mix, one female and four workers older than 30. In an interview the project champion described the new employee structure as having good retention and progression and becoming a more mature and stable workforce. This has enhanced skills development and transfer and is a massive benefit in terms of long term employability:

*"I've never done any work before this...but I feel confident doing it...I like doing it, that's the thing..as soon as I put a trowel in my hand I said yeah, this is me and I can do it now..I can put on a wall, can't say I can do everything but I can put on a wall....going to college is good..it teaches the right way...here you get a good experience off the qualified ones...and a lot of what I've learned is from them not from college, cos I've only just started there".* (Apprentice with Fresh Horizons Construction Team for 18 months).

At Fresh Horizons, trainees are paid a minimum wage which is recouped from Kirklees Jobs Fund. Apprentices have a day release at college and a lower salary in year 1, but subject to securing NVQs then move on to minimum wage in Year 2. There are further increments on securing higher qualifications and grant is drawn down from Construction Industry Training Board as eligible training is completed. Fresh Horizons is working towards Living Wage and in recent years pay has increased most for the lower staff grades. In addition to paid employment and training, trainees are given food allowance and clothing. Local SME partners involved in electrics and plumbing sub-contracts work alongside Fresh Horizon's trainees passing on skills. Both of these contractors have also taken on apprentices of their own on the back of EHCGP workflow.

Changing Lives has also provided employment training opportunities through 6 trainees on 12 week programmes at any one time, 1 apprenticeship and 5 tradesmen's' jobs in the social enterprise and small external sub-contractors also being encouraged to take apprentices.

Canopy has built on its ethos of using volunteers and apprentices on the Empty Homes projects.

*“You’re giving something back to the community and you’re doing something worthwhile.”*

Volunteer, Canopy

*“We work in partnership with Leeds College of Building and we encourage our staff and volunteers to look into training and try and get on courses. We’ve had one staff member go through a Diploma in Plastering, so he got NVQ Level 1, then Level 2, then a Diploma. Another member of staff has qualified as an electrical installer just recently, so that’s been great. She actually did that at Harrogate College and also with our tenants and volunteers, we’ve seen people qualify in NVQs in things like plumbing, tiling, bricklaying and plastering. Yeah, so we’ve had some successes getting people into training and then also apprenticeships. We had three volunteers get paid apprenticeships last year with Bramalls and one of those has gone on to get a full-time job with Keepmoat on the new PFI scheme that they’ve got in Leeds, which was facilitated by our staff; you know, they helped them go through the process and get to the interview and so on.”* Project Champion, Canopy

*“In the last three or four years, we’ve had roughly 70-80 volunteers each year and when we say ‘volunteers’, a more accurate term might be service users or trainees because the vast majority of them are unemployed; they have support needs of one sort or another. Some are very skilled, professional people who happen to be out of work; others are very unskilled and they all learn from each other and they get training from our staff on site as well; sometimes, supplemented by formal training at places like Leeds College of Building.”*

Project Champion, Canopy

Community Campus also has volunteers suitable for certain phases of the refurbishment process:

*“What we do is provide supervisors and volunteers come in and do most of the work. That's beneficial if they haven't got any skills. The second model's the best one. There volunteers work alongside our trades and apprentices - that's the easiest model. Somebody knocks the plaster off the wall and you do it like this and people get on with it. It's when you start putting the fabric of the building back together you have to slow the amount of volunteers to ratio of other trades. – Community Campus (partners) talking about working on Redcar and Cleveland Mind properties*

## **Tenant Selection**

A final key aspect of people management in EHCGP is the selection of tenants to live in the refurbished properties. EHCGP funding is not dependent on allocating the homes produced to those in greatest housing need as recognised by statutory guidelines. This flexibility and complementarity of self-help housing to social housing was noted in earlier reports to be an important advantage enabling a wider range of groups to benefit. The value of a complementary role of empty homes to mainstream social housing was recognised by both project and local authority interviewees.

For several schemes such as Key House, Changing Lives and Redcar and Cleveland Mind a key motivation for taking part was to provide move-on accommodation for existing supported housing service users. Other schemes such as Fresh Horizons found local authority housing registers and homeless nominations a good source of residents for the scheme. Fresh Horizons supplied properties and sourced tenants from the local authority Social Lettings Agency in Kirkless but worked mainly with two voluntary sector homelessness projects in Calderdale. In addition to this, tenants applied directly for properties advertised locally in newspapers or online, or just finding out about the Empty Homes vacancies through local knowledge or word-of mouth.

Some used a variety of referral sources to fit their own project objectives such as LATCH where selection for housing was usually started by referrals from other agencies but applicants could also self-refer. Applicants, who don't have to be statutorily homeless, will see a nomination officer who assesses both their needs and their commitment to the self-

help model. Agencies typically only send their 'best' candidates, who are likely to have already proven some commitment; for example, like having had to go through an addiction programme before referral. Tenants are given an Assured Shorthold Tenancy for six months on a rolling basis, with no expectation for them to leave unless they want to. Rent is then set at 80% of market rate but a discretionary fund is used to ensure that once tenants are in work no more than 25% of earned income is spent on rent.

For some of the projects, there was a preference for potential tenants to first volunteer on site:

*"We have a system where we're supposed to have 12 days minimum volunteering on each house. But I think when things are pressed it's not always their own house that they're volunteering on; they'll volunteer on somebody else's house if their house is ready or doesn't need much work doing. There's a requirement on engagement in the project prior to moving in."* Operations, Canopy

The overall message from the case studies was of the advantage of flexibility; working in collaboration with local authorities but seeking tenants who would best fit the ethos and wider objectives of the projects. Trying to match these opportunities too rigidly to housing need based allocations systems would lead to potential conflicts and misunderstandings.

Most of the completed properties were let at affordable sub-market rents on assured shorthold tenancies rather than at social housing rents on secure tenancies. Rent levels were almost everywhere set on the basis of Local Housing Allowances, since this is the rent that residents eligible for housing benefit were able to afford and which in most parts of the country fitted the '80% of market rents' default position of the National Affordable Housing Programme. In one case, Fresh Horizons, accommodation was sometimes provided to the Council's Social Lettings Agency (SLA). This meant that standards above the decent homes standard had to be met and there was close attention to security (such as window catches) and extra electrical sockets. In a few cases where landlords were not happy to pay for these higher standards this resulted in properties being let in the private market rather than to SLA referrals.

*'There was a stumbling block with council (SLA) because their requirements seemed to be excessive and even Fresh Horizons were surprised. they (the council) had wanted a rail in front of a fire escape access window. They were hoping to use...their requirements are more stringent than the neighbouring local authority. So what ended up with was not a council tenant but a private tenant, one of Fresh Horizons own tenants.'* (Landlord interview, Kirklees).

Thus the accommodation was generally pitched as an alternative to the private rental sector rather than to social housing. It was generally seen in this way by residents and valued as providing a real alternative, accessible in a way that other housing options were not. Often this provided new and better accommodation options for groups who despite their particular needs and vulnerability would generally have very little prospect of accessing social housing, as the following three individual examples illustrate.

One tenant who also volunteered and was then employed at Redcar and Cleveland Mind lived in a former empty property before works were being undertaken.

*"I've got no carpets, I've got no heating; it's absolutely terrible. But at the same time I've never been happier, even though I'm living in one room. I mean they did say to me before I moved in, 'This is what's going to happen down the line; you're going to have no electric and you're going to have no carpets; there's going to be work going on and dust everywhere.' I said, 'I'm not bothered; just let me have my own space.' And they did and it's been fantastic."* (Tenant/ ex-offender and volunteer Redcar and Cleveland Mind)

A tenant interviewed at Fresh Horizons had accessed housing because of the reputation of Fresh Horizons in the community.

*'A friend of mine...her niece works at Fresh Horizons..and I told her about my housing situation and need to move away from domestic violence. She advised me and I went to Fresh Horizons and met the housing manager and within one month I moved into this house. I had a housing support worker (previously) who was able to advise Fresh Horizons of the four years of misery and police reports. I also needed someone to act*

*as guarantor for my rent which for a three bedroom house would not be covered fully by local housing allowance. The guarantor works for the council’.*

There are also big variations on the length of time people stay in accommodation provided by self-help housing schemes. While it is usually let on an assured shorthold tenancy term, and sometimes linked to a fixed term provision of housing related support, in most cases it is possible for tenancies to be renewed and for tenants to feel a degree of security in their homes. Turnover is probably lower than in the private rented sector generally but higher than in social housing.

*“The average length of stay is about three years, but we did have a tenant who was with us for 15 years. Sometimes people’s circumstances change and leave, but we don’t put a limit on how long people stay.”*

*Whether we’re here to provide long term housing or whether we’re here to provide housing for people with housing needs until they’re ready to move on.*

Ops Manager, Canopy

New challenges were faced during the programme with changes in housing benefit for under 35s and prospective changes for under 25s. As a result several projects were looking for more flexible solutions including shared housing.

An EHCGP project in another region, St Basils in the Midlands has used EHCGP funding to develop an innovative Live-Work option for young people to secure apprenticeships to work in the NHS and to cover the costs of the rent for their EHCGP flats in refurbished accommodation on the hospital site. This holistic model combining employment experience with housing has the added advantage of protecting young people from future changes in housing benefits for under 25 year olds and deserves wider attention.

#### **4.6 Working with Partners**

Earlier research found that of the five key success factors required by self-help housing schemes, good partners were the most significant (Mullins 2010). More recent work by the

University of York (Gillett et al 2014) has explored the value of collaborative partnership working on empty homes in the North East through case study work with Community Campus 87, East Cleveland Youth, Coast and Country Housing, Redcar and Cleveland Council and the Homes and Communities Agency. This report highlighted the role of trust in fostering collaboration to deliver community benefits and the role of social enterprises as hybrid organisations.

Partners for EHCGP case studies were key in helping source properties, funds, people and skills. Several types of partners were important in these case studies.

This section investigates the evidence on partnership working from the case studies.

Partners were defined technically as organisations or individuals external to the case study organisation i.e. not part of the workforce directly involved in refurbishing the empty properties. Partners were classified by type of organisation and then partnerships discussed by functional roles.

Ten main types of partner organisations that emerged:

- Local Authorities/ Councils/ Empty Property Officers
- Council Voluntary Services
- Self-help-housing.org
- Funding bodies- Banks/Funders/Investors
- Contractors
- Property Owners
- Housing Associations
- Local Colleges and Training bodies
- Housing Professionals
- Local Voluntary and Third Sector organisations

In the NE and Yorkshire there was evidence that case study organisations were embedded in networks of partnerships and that a self-help housing sector was emerging thanks to intense networking and support by field leading organisations.

Community Campus provides a good example of this – they described themselves as part of a network of organisations that made things happen and which operated somewhere between traditional and statutory organisations across Teesside and the surrounding area. Partner organisations ranged from Middlesbrough Community Land Trust and East Cleveland Youth Housing Trust to the LEP European Structural Investment Fund Panel and the North East Procurement Community Investment Working Group. These organisations span the following fields: young people, tackling homelessness, people centred development, voluntary and community capacity building, employability, community-led solutions for housing and development (Community Land Trusts), employability, procurement, social business and community investment. Members of CC were also variously Trustees and members, Chairs and leaders of these different organisations, also regularly attending the Tees Empty Homes Programme meetings.

Community Campus also described SHHO as a key partner who made the bid possible, and help secure the EHCPG funding in the first place. *“Jon came to us and asked us what we needed. The answer was grant.”* SHHO facilitated and supported bids through its website, regional events, national advice and facilitating peer learning. Once it was known who had received allocations they made contact, sent regular briefings and ran regional meetings. This role was widely appreciated by the case studies.

When the decision was made to ring fence EHCPG to non-registered providers there was a need to identify a grant funder to take on this role. Following a procurement exercise by DCLG, Tribal Education was selected as the grant administrator for EHCPG. While the organisation did not have housing expertise it did have a track record of administering grants to the third sector. The research indicates that this role was conducted very effectively and comments from Goodwin Development Trust in Hull were typical in respecting the contribution made to programme success by Tribal Education.

*“I actually think it was very straightforward. It’s not often you get an opportunity to be complimentary about bureaucrats. I think the programme management by Tribal – irrespective of my views about the government outsourcing services to private sector organisations – our relationship has been excellent. Tribal have run an incredibly responsive, flexible, quick to decision, you know, service. I’ve found them to be a joy to work them. The process has been easy and transparent. Outcomes have been assured, you know. Timescales have been adhered to. So for us it’s been a really good programme, from that point of view, in terms of the programme management.”* CEO, Goodwin Development Trust

### **Phases of Partnership Support**

Partnerships were essential at each project phase from bidding, finding suitable properties, financing and acquiring the properties, refurbishing and finding suitable tenants. The following case study examples demonstrate the value of partners over these respective phases:

#### **Bidding**

Partnerships helped overcome barriers to bidding including the tight timescale, uncertainty and lack of knowledge and experience of this type of programme. Guidance and support was available from self-help-housing.org and peer support from more established projects. Most organisations were very positive about the support received from local councils in the form of notifying them about the EHCGP grant and providing letters of support for bids.

Hull City Council played a pivotal role for the two projects included in our case studies. Later research revealed the importance of the Council’s strategic approach to co-ordinating empty homes work across all programmes, with the six EHCGP bidders regarded as key partners in this strategy. Hull is working with 6 community organisations under the EHCG in Rounds 1 and 2. There were 5 organisations in Round 1 and one further in Round 2. Hull Council has been involved in supporting organisations in preparing their bids and support since its inception in 2012, but not a formal partner. EHCG takes up a portion of time.

Goodwin found that the City Council had created an effective space to share experience and knowledge and avoid competition in property purchase and leasing. Hull Council was also seen as “an honest broker” taking a proactive role in co-ordinating the programme in Hull, where monthly meetings were held to coordinate bids and transactions with property owners, as well as to provide letters of support for bids.

Giroscope also found the Council’s support invaluable. Taking part in Empty Homes Programme had raised Giroscope’s profile with local authority and has opened doors for the organisation to access resources it needs to do its work. Prior to the programme, Giroscope had limited dealings with Hull City Council at a strategic level. The award of the grant enabled it to expand. *Hull City Council did a good job and received a lot of praise for their support through the process. Right from the start they got everyone together. There were issues around the other local partners who submitted bids* (Giroscope, Director).

In summary our case study research found that:

- **Hull City Council have taken a proactive role in supporting the programme by bringing partners together through monthly/bi-monthly meetings to coordinate properties they would bid for**
- **Generating and sharing information about empty properties, landlords and which partners were bidding**
- **Using its statutory powers to persuade the most stubborn landlords/property owners to cooperate in bring empty properties into use. This meant the partners saved a lot of work dealing more engaged landlords/property owners**

Figure 4. Source: Case Study Interviews, Hull City Council’s strategic support for self-help housing

A number of other local authorities were also extremely supportive of EHCGP work. The key partner throughout Latch’s history has been Leeds County Council; the project champion described his 25th anniversary speech as being “like a love letter to the council”. They have supported Latch from the earliest days, by either gifting property or leasing it for peppercorn rent. Good relations were also identified in Redcar where Redcar and Cleveland Mind enjoyed support from council officers and from the local stock transfer association in building their expertise in housing and enabling things to happen.

## **Locating Empty Properties and Securing Agreement with Owners**

Local authorities were the most useful partners in locating suitable empty properties, through empty property officers and homelessness strategy officers. The level of involvement from local councils varied but across the NE and Yorkshire case study organisations were very positive about the support received from local councils in the form of notifying the groups about the grant, providing letters of support for bid applications and especially in helping to identify suitable empty properties, with the help of empty property officers and homelessness strategy officers at the councils.

Community Campus described actively partnering with local authorities across Teesside and the Tees Valley including Hartlepool, Stockton, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland. On housing projects it is partnering with the Big Local Partnership in North Ormesby; Stockton Borough Council and Know How North East, Redcar and Cleveland Mind Empty Homes Project and a BME housing project with Cultures CIC. Key partners in its Empty Homes Programme were Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland's respective Empty Homes Officers.

Partnerships with private property owners were more problematic. The apparent irrationality of landlords failing to secure any return on their assets but then expecting a rent at near market levels was problematic leading to problems in forming effective partnerships with them. SHHO identified a number of issues in securing leased properties based on discussion at regional meetings in 2013:

- a) Problems in getting owners to come forward (e.g. Canopy in Leeds reported that an approach, via the local authority, had been made to over 70 owners and that only 6 came back as interested, but none had signed up).
- b) Unrealistic demands regarding rents from owners, making it very difficult to then manage properties at an affordable rent. Competition in some cases from other Registered Providers and Local Authorities trying to get properties for other schemes (e.g. the HCA's Empty Homes Programme or temporary accommodation)."

(Source: Unpublished note –Summary of Issues Arising from Regional Meetings – SHHO January 2013).

There were however notable successes. Fresh Horizons used local knowledge to negotiate with over 15 owners in the area immediately adjacent to its premises. They were also assisted by Deighton and Brackenhall Initiative (DBI) a local regeneration partnership, who were instrumental in the formation of Fresh Horizons and who had experience in transforming former council housing and constructing new homes. As Fresh Horizon's key local partner, DBI provided the organisation with material support for their Empty Homes project with an interest free loan which was used to assist in purchase of properties where it had not proved possible to negotiate leases with owners.

Often it required considerable persistence to interest empty property owners in bringing them into use. Fresh Horizons had considerable success in engaging with 'hard to reach' owners including the owner of a deteriorating but potentially attractive Yorkshire stone townhouse terrace opposite the Chestnut Centre and through persistence and patience eventually acquired this property for works under EHCGP. In another case, a former Catholic presbytery, this process had taken ten years. The Diocese eventually agreed to sell to Fresh Horizons but not before the property had deteriorated considerably making the refurbishment works more expensive.

Hull City Council used its strategic role and Council Tax powers to increase tax on empty properties and also created a database of empty properties and landlords. Enforcement action was also used where necessary. Where a landlord was proving unreasonable on price they stepped in and suggested an alternative lease arrangement. A key problem identified was engaging with landlords who lived outside of the city and here too enforcement proved to be successful.

### **Financing Properties**

Additional capital funding for EHCGP projects was secured in a number of ways from commercial loans and soft loans, charitable fundraising and donations and grants and contracts for associated services such as employment training.

Often projects were financed through a mix of partners such as in the case of Fresh Horizons who secured a mix of interest free loans from their local authority, local regeneration trust and more commercial loans from social investors (see 5.1 below).

SHHO used its regional meetings to introduce EHCGP projects to social investors and banks who might be interested in co-funding projects. Productive partnerships were formed with social investors such as the Unity Bank, Triodos, Ecology, Charity Bank and Big Issue Invest as well as high street banks.

Projects varied on their experience of negotiating different forms of finance. While social investors were often more attuned to the aims of the projects than were commercial banks, the interest rates they were able to offer still reflected their perceptions of risk. For asset backed investment, commercial banks were sometimes able to offer more favourable rates without expensive arrangement fees:

*‘So in this instance we looked at Unity, we looked at Charity Bank, we looked at a couple of the kind of smaller ones but in the end we’ve gone with Lloyds and that’s who we bank with and who we’ve always banked with, and we got a better rate from them than we did from any of the social investment banks and without any arrangement fees’.* Project Champion Redcar and Cleveland.

Further details of how these various types of investment and other financial contributions to the projects made grant go along way is included in section 5.1 of this report on programme impacts.

## **Refurbishment**

Third sector partners often had the skills and local knowledge to source essential resources for example volunteers or technical know-how. Partnerships with local colleges and training bodies were an important way of ensuring long term benefits to the workforce from taking part in EHCGP. Many of the case study projects had well developed construction training pathways in partnership with colleges and training providers.

The lead on refurbishment at Community Campus headed a construction business and the Construction Builders Team Apprentice Programme, members of the North East Social Enterprise Partnership and Co-ops North East. He has a wide experience of working on different construction sites in the UK and elsewhere and in mentoring and training. His skills include costing refurbishments, assessing how much work needs to be done, working out schedules for work and bringing the necessary trades together.

Case study organisations sometimes bought in housing professional housing or construction services such as architects and surveyors.

*“So we work in partnership with Leeds College of Building and we encourage our staff and volunteers to look into training and try and get on courses...increasingly, we’ve got a good relationship with Keepmoat in particular and Bramalls is part of the same group as Keepmoat. We’ve built up relationships with project managers, site managers and then, more recently, national people at Keepmoat, in terms of sustainability and regional people. We’ve got better and better links with them. There is also a brokerage agency in Leeds called Construction Housing Yorkshire and we’ve got good links with them and they advertise apprenticeship and construction job vacancies in Leeds and they let us know about them before they go out to the public, so we get the nod on those.” Project Champion, Canopy*

*“We’re still doing training support, getting hold of empty homes, doing the building work, doing them up, involving the future tenants in that and then we’ve got the support of the tenants. We do all our own housing management, so maintenance work and rents and everything is done internally. We’ve got our own finance people here. We’ve started to outsource a little bit more as we’ve grown, like IT for example*

*and some HR advice and bits and bobs like that but the activities are very much the same.”*

Project Champion –Canopy

Table 4.2 below summarises the various roles played by partners in this research project. The roles range from partnerships with a high positive impact and critical to the success of the project to reluctant partners and unfulfilled partnerships. Of course for different case studies the same partner might have played a different role - for example a local authority may be a critical enabler for one case study organisation but an adviser for another.

Figure 4.2 : The Role of Partners in EHCGP schemes in NE and Yorkshire and Humberside

Partner Role	Description
<b>Critical Enabler</b>	An essential role- without this partnership, the case study organisation may not have bid for EHCGP funding. Key catalyst, particularly from strategic point of view. Having a primary role in decision making at the inception of the project and continuing to guide organisations as required throughout the process e.g. Leeds city council approaching organisations to take part in the programme, supporting bid process and Hull City Council an “Honest Broker”
<b>Adviser</b>	Agencies providing guidance, support and advice. These partners provide valuable help and guidance but don’t have as crucial a role as a critical enabler.
<b>Funder</b>	Financial support in the form of commercial and soft loans and match or other grant funding - for example in the form of a bank lending funds to acquire an empty property, or grant match funding from local council.
<b>Buddy</b>	These are larger organisations such as housing associations buddying with community-led organisations throughout the project to provide them financial and skill support.
<b>Network Partner/ Ally</b>	On the ground partnerships with other delivery agents such as other charities or social

	enterprises, sharing local knowledge for the mutual benefit of the organisations and their (sometimes common) service providers
<b>Reluctant partner</b>	Partners needing to be convinced or coerced. Not high level of goodwill or buy – in but partnering because of financial or local authority pressure e.g. private landlords with empty properties
<b>Expert Partner</b>	These are partners recruited for expertise and to provide a specific professional service such as a letting agency for 5 Lamps.



from social enterprises such as self-help housing organisations. Quite a range of benefits were identified from the very individual, participant and community and neighbourhood benefits to wider organisational benefits as the following quotations indicate:

*‘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).**

*“They treat me like family and always have. Since the first day I started here that’s the way they’ve treated me. Yeah, they’re not friends they’re family.”*

**(Tenant, Redcar and Cleveland Mind)**

*‘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 target are less important than the guys on the sites’.*

**(Construction Manager TCUK, Changing Lives)**

*“When we started only four properties (in the village) were occupied. When our properties are fully tenanted, 13 will be occupied and a local private landlord who owns two of the remaining properties is assessing the Durham County Council Cluster Scheme. This is a substantial neighbourhood impact.”*

**(Five Lamps Project Champion).**

*“the empty homes programme has put us in a different position..put us out there on the local radar..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”.*

**(Redcar and Cleveland Mind Project Champion).**

*“We have succeeded in bringing empty homes back into use and housing families and helping people get their qualifications and jobs. That’s all been good too.”*

**(Project Champion, Canopy).**

*The project complemented what we do – it fits works with our values – we wouldn’t do it otherwise. We want to support people and communities and we want to do that long term. We are not into short termism. We care about our properties and the people who live in them – we want to do the best for them.*

**(Community Campus, Project Champions).**

*“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 on Middlesbrough CLT).**

Figure 5.2 Source: Case Study Interviews

Reflecting on the very different types of impacts identified by the projects led us to a six-fold classification of benefits that was further tested in two national workshop presentations held in February 2015:

7. **Value for Money – Making the Grant go a long way**
8. **Localism- Doing Things Differently by being Local**
9. **Tackling Skills Gaps and Youth Unemployment**
10. **Rewarding Volunteering**
11. **Solutions to Wicked Problems**
12. **Building Strong and Independent Organisations and a Vibrant Community-led Sector**

The remainder of this chapter provides examples of each of these six key benefits which capture most of the key achievements of EHCGP .

## **5.1 Making Grant go a Long Way**

EHCGP grant funding was used by a number of the case studies to leverage further capital, to bid for more grants and take out bank loans to further the impact and outputs of their projects. Projects were also able to demonstrate good value for money through the range of outputs that their investment achieved.

A key aspect of the funding model for the NE and Yorks Empty Homes case studies was using the EH grant to leverage wider resource inputs including commercial loans and social investment to raise further working capital.

The shift from grants to a mixed grants and loans model was present even in the smallest and newest projects such as Redcar and Cleveland Mind:

*“And I think you’re starting to see it a lot more in the voluntary sector now around loans more than grants. I’ve got a good group of trustees who aren’t risk averse and at the moment although nothing is complete or tenanted, at the end of the day we will have ultimately seven tenancies. Our original allocation was £183,000 and 50 quid or something, we had another £130,000 in the underspend round as well as*

*borrowing £40,000 and a grant of £35,000 from Wolfson Foundation.” (Project Champion, Redcar and Cleveland)*

## Leverage

The extent of leverage across the programme was illustrated by a survey undertaken by SHHO and HACT in May 2015 to which 65 organisations responded (59% of the 110 who had secured EHCGP funding). This indicated that across the country over £26 million of additional funding was attracted by these 65 organisations on the back of the EHCGP grant funding. This total additional funding from just over half of the projects is equivalent to over half of the overall EHCGP funding received by all projects (see Figure 5.2). This indicates a leverage ratio<sup>6</sup> of between 0.5:1 and 1:1 (depending on how much leverage was achieved by the non-respondents). Several case studies provided the opportunity to collect more detailed information on leverage and the two detailed examples shown in this section indicate ratios of between 2.3:1 and 4:1.

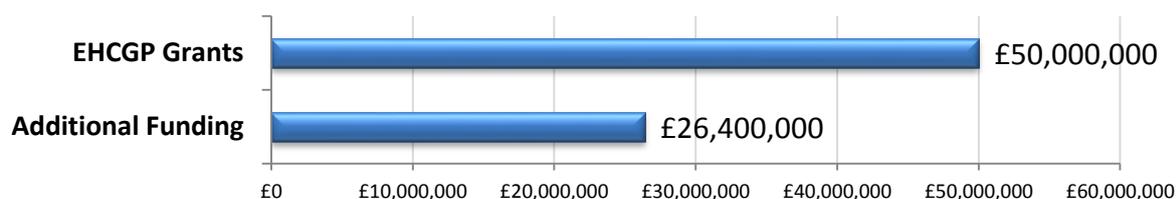


Figure 5.3 Leverage from EHCGP. Source Additional Funding Survey May 2015, SHHO and HACT

Several different types of additional funding were identified of which the largest comprised £11.5 million in loans from a variety of sources. Followed by nearly £7 million from organisation’s own surpluses and reserves, nearly £6million from further grants and 2.3million fees from property owners (see Figure 5.4).

<sup>6</sup> Leverage is defined here as the ratio of total financial inputs to empty homes activities to the total grant obtained under EHCGP.

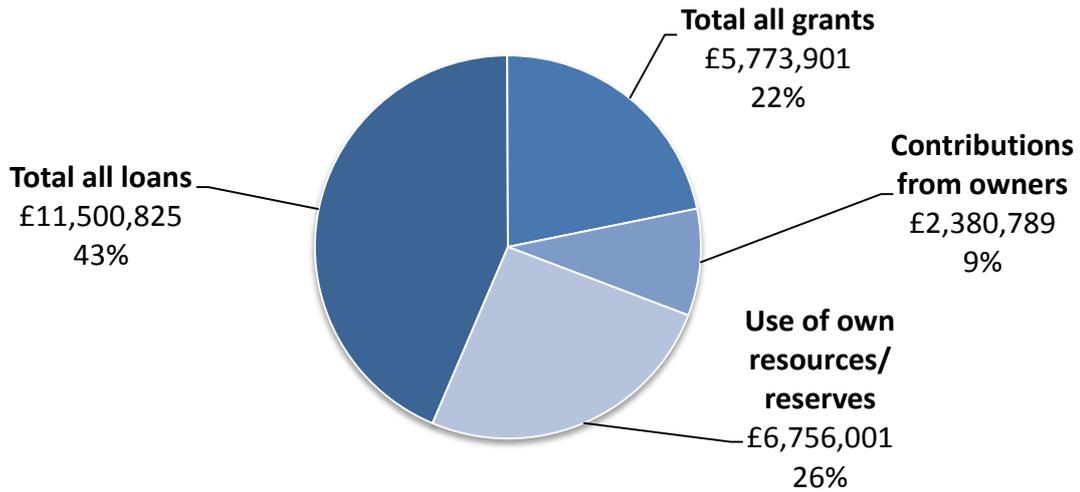


Figure 5.4 Source Additional Funding Survey May 2015, SHHO and HACT

As Figure 5.5 illustrates, 83% of loans came from banks and social investors (£9.5million), reflecting work by SHHO in introducing projects to social investors at regional events early in the programme (see 4.2 above). However, 13% (nearly £1.5million) came from local authority loans and a further £460,000 from other sources such as the DBI regeneration partnership shown in Fresh Horizons case study below. A further £5.7 million came in the form of grants from trusts and foundations (such as Nationwide), local authorities and others. Again the case studies below indicate the sheer range of sources of income these innovative projects have blended into their funding cocktail.

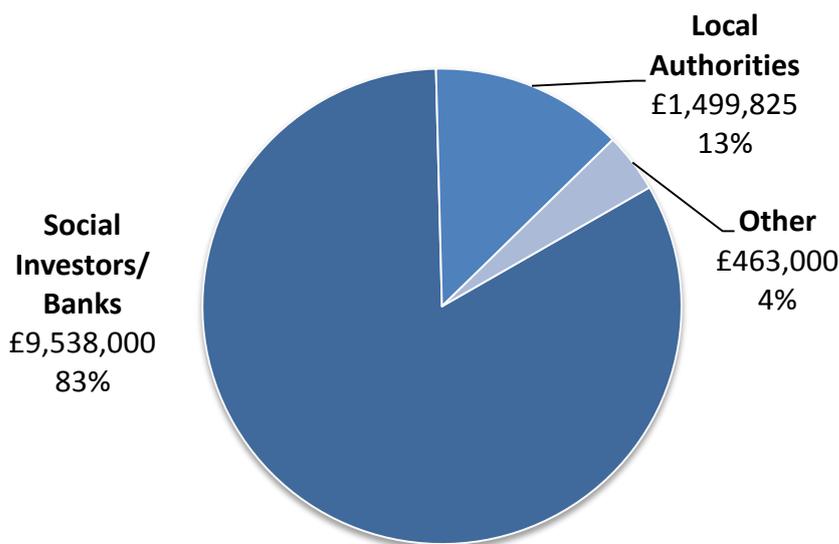


Figure 5.5 Loan Finance, Source Additional Funding Survey May 2015, SHHO and HACT

Two depth case studies of financial leverage confirm the survey results indicating that attracting loan finance is just one way in which these innovative projects have made the grant go a long way. Both cases indicate considerably greater leverage than was apparent in the wider survey with leverage ratios between 2.3:1 and 4:1.

Figure 5.6 shows the example of **Fresh Horizons** and their innovative cocktail of grants, soft loans and commercial loans that enabled £860,000 of housing grants to support nearly £2 million of spend (a leverage ratio of around 2.3:1). Fresh Horizons estimate that 44% of Empty Homes programme is covered by EHCGP grant income, with a further 33% covered by other grants and soft loans, leaving 23% covered by interest bearing loans.

<b>HOUSING GRANTS</b>	
• EHCGP 2 tranches	
o 1 lease and refurbish 56 properties	£500,000
o 2 purchase and refurbish 5 properties	£360,103
• TOTAL GRANT FUNDING	£860,000.
<b>OTHER GRANTS (and interest free loans)</b>	
• DBI (local regeneration partnership (interest free loan)	£100,000
• Association of West Yorkshire Authorities (interest free loan)	£300,000
• Kirklees Council (interest free loan)	£100,000
• Key Fund (Grant to offset first years' loan interest	£10,000
• Private Individuals	£30,000
• Employment Training Kirkless Jobs Fund	£47,000
• Employment Training- Construction Industry Training Board	£54,000
• Stronger Families (Kirklees)	£8,000
<b>TOTAL (NON-HOUSING) GRANT AND SOFT LOANS</b>	<b>£649,000</b>
<b>LOAN FINANCE</b>	
• ICOF Community and Cooperative Finance	£130,000
• Ecology Building Society	£130,000
• Key Fund	£200,000
<b>TOTAL INTEREST BEARING LOANS</b>	<b>£460,000</b>

Figure 5.6 Fresh Horizons Case Study

While the EHCGP funding enabled Fresh Horizons to successfully secure nearly half a million pounds in commercial loan finance, their project champion points out that in order to attract this funding it was necessary first to have the grant income and to show the interest of other grant funders and preferential lenders. Underpinning the entire cocktail of funding was a soft loan from their local partner and founder organisation, the DBI Regeneration partnership. DBI is an area base regeneration organisation that originally founded Fresh Horizons as a social enterprise to bring employment and services to a deprived area on the outskirts of Huddersfield. DBI was a natural supported (and funder) for Fresh Horizons' empty homes work.

*'It was about trying to put the right ingredients in place...the partnership is the key here...supporting Fresh Horizons . In the early days we gave them grant funding for projects as a way of creating local employment opportunities. Over the years that matured into loan investment for initiatives. For example we put seed fund loans into the empty homes initiative. This was a good example of being a strategic partner because we were the first ones to put some investment in that would then attract further resources. So we actually spent very little to attract in major additional funding. (Key Partner Interview -DBI Project Manager)*

Even greater leverage was demonstrated by **Changing Lives**, a larger organisation in the north east who became a registered provider after their first EHCGP funding and a major organisational merger (Figure 5.7). In this case the original EHCGP grant allocations of £1.3 million on 50 homes has led to a programme of 125 homes for which total housing grant of £3million and total resource input is around £8.6million. £1.7million of the housing grant came from the HCA after successful delivery on EHCGP helped support an application to become a registered provider and to receive underspend on the National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) 2011-15 and an allocation for the 2015-18 programme. Furthermore housing grant has been added to by almost £1million in other grants and fees directly resulting from the housing grant; by £725,000 from Changing Lives Reserves and by Bank loans of £3.8 million, £3.2 million of which have been arranged but not all of which is yet drawn down. Altogether these different sources of finance will enable a spend of £8.5 million by 2018; a leverage ratio of approximately 4.5:1 against the original EHCGP .

## 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

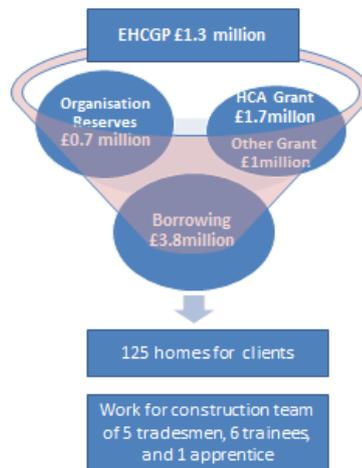


Figure 5.7 Source: Changing Lives Case Study

Furthermore 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 (see Figure 5.7).

## Costs and Benefits and Social Value

However, financial leverage is not the only way in which self-help housing organisations have demonstrated outstanding performance in making public grant go a long way. Figure 5.8 illustrates the wider range of inputs projects have harnessed and the wider outputs and outcomes they have achieved as a result. Together these inputs and outputs provide an indication of the wider social value delivered by self-help housing under EHCGP.

### Wide range of Inputs & Returns

INPUTS	Financial and social returns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Grant recycling (charge owners for works)</li> <li>✓ Management fees for leased properties</li> <li>✓ 'unrestricted' Rental income for purchased properties (LHA level)</li> <li>✓ Construction Training Board (for training completed)</li> <li>✓ Community Right To Build &amp; Locality (for feasibility and support)</li> <li>✓ Jobs Fund (for trainees)</li> <li>✓ Some Supporting People (for residents)</li> <li>✓ Charitable donations and volunteer time</li> <li>✓ Furnishing Grants</li> <li>✓ Soft loans and grants</li> <li>✓ Commercial Loans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Social Value: Canopy CBA calculation <b>£4.28 social value for each £ of external investment</b></li> <li>❖ Benefits to volunteers (self-esteem, skills and motivation)</li> <li>❖ Benefits to tenants (home and friends)</li> <li>❖ Benefits to community (less derelict property)</li> <li>❖ Third party benefits (savings to public services)</li> </ul> <p><b>Plus Impacts on organisational viability (assets, unrestricted income, cash flow &amp; influence)</b></p>

Figure 5.8 Source: University of Birmingham based on case study analysis and Canopy CBA and SROI study

Creative work was required by some projects (e.g. Fresh Horizons) to access **wider funding** sources such as the (former) Future Jobs Fund and training fees from the Construction Industry Training Board. It is also notable that some projects (again including Fresh Horizons) were more successful than others in securing contributions from property owners (towards works cost and management costs for leased properties).

It can also be seen from Figure 5.8 that the **inputs** secured are not only about direct financial inputs but also include less tangible contributions including volunteer time, charitable contributions and gifts such as furnishings to enable tenants to move in to the properties once they are refurbished. Many of these inputs are available to self-help projects only because of their local community, third sector, social enterprise or charitable identities and would simply be lost to a more conventional large scale procurement programme for housing.

A good example of volunteer inputs is provided by **Middlesbrough CLT** whose members contributed around £15,000 of their own labour time into phase one at no cost to the project. The CLT was successful in a bid for money to assist Community Right To Build projects and used this to draw up further designs for the area. None of these inputs would have been available to a larger more commercial provider. With these additional inputs Middlesbrough CLT was able to use EHCGP allocations in Round 1 ( £96k) and Round 2 (£117k) to make a substantial impact in Gresham, a neighbourhood that had experienced a long period of decline associated with discontinued Housing Market Renewal Area programmes. The Council helped the CLT to receive support from a local housing provider, Endeavour Housing, who remain really effective and valued in acting as a critical friend and partner without compromising any of the independence of the CLT and its members in securing its goals. A short video captures the importance of community drivers to the success of this project.

<http://mycommunity.org.uk/stories/middlesbrough-community-land-trust/>

However, Figure 5.8 is not only concerned with inputs but also with the outputs and outcomes achieved by self-help housing projects through their EHCGP activity. In a report

that attempted to estimate the costs and benefits of their work<sup>7</sup>, **Canopy Housing** in Leeds undertook some systematic collection of data on their impacts on several specific target groups (volunteers, tenants, the wider community and third parties such as public services).

In relation to volunteering the CBA report commissioned from Steve Bagley of Real-Improvement noted that Canopy *'uses a self-help model which differs from that of other providers; prospective tenants must do at least 12 days work on their future home to be eligible to move in'* (Bagley, 2014 p.3). In their CBA Real-Improvement attempted to put a value on benefits to volunteers for example greater self-esteem, support to find employment, better mental health, social interaction and motivation. Similar types of benefits were identified for tenants and for the wider community from Canopy's work in bringing empty properties into use. By using proxy measures for each of these benefits to volunteers (e.g. each person who found a job as a result of training with Canopy was shown as a benefit of £4,548 per year- the difference between minimum wage and jobseekers allowance for single person), it was estimated that the project's total income of £542,000 in 2012 (before the EHCGP) led to social value totalling over a million pounds. This gave a simple cost: benefit ratio of 1:1.93. But when the calculation was developed to consider just the external investment (grants, donations and other investments in Canopy (£298,100 in 2012); by excluding income from rents and housing benefit, this ratio increases to an impressive £4.28 of social value for every £1 invested.

Later Andy Bagley undertook a full SROI analysis of Canopy's 2014 inputs and outcomes for volunteers, tenants and other stakeholders concluding that £3.24 of social value was derived from every £1 of investment, and £5 for every £1 of external grant funding including EHCGP (Bagley, 2015). His report includes the following simple graphic representations of conclusions from a complex set of calculations.

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<sup>7</sup> Bagley, S. (2015) Canopy Housing CBA Final Report . Real-Improvement.

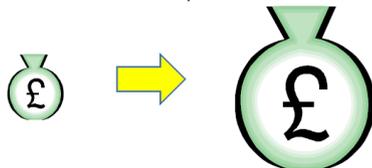
For Canopy's total investment:



Each **£1** invested generates around **£3.24** of social value

This ratio is calculated by dividing the total social value for all beneficiaries by Canopy's total income for the year (2014). The exact figure lies somewhere between £2.50 and £4.00 per £1.

For Canopy's external investment only:



Each **£1** invested generates just over **£5** of social value

This ratio is calculated by dividing the total social value for all beneficiaries by Canopy's grant income only for 2014. The exact figure lies somewhere between £4.25 and £5.75 per £1.

Source: Steve Bagley, *Real-Improvement 2015*. Reproduced with kind permission from Canopy and Real-Improvement

### How Canopy has an Impact

#### Volunteers



Many volunteers aim to re-enter permanent employment. Some achieve this, others make progress, with better prospects for the future. In a few cases (e.g. volunteers with learning disabilities), prospects of paid employment may be limited but Canopy still helps them maximise their independence and achieve a better quality of life.

#### Tenants & Families



Almost all tenants have previously been volunteers, and so gain those benefits as well. As tenants, they and their families have a secure and decent home of their own, which leads to improved health, better family relationships and new opportunities for the future – what many describe as “a new start in life”.

#### Local Businesses



Some specialist renovation work cannot be done by volunteers, so Canopy uses local contractors. This brings the benefits of increased business to these contractors.

#### Other Agencies



Canopy works with other local agencies including Women's Aid, Mind, Sign Health and Solace (for refugees). This collaboration supports these agencies' aims and can reduce the support they need to give to some individuals. This in turn enables these agencies to help more people. Leeds City Council also benefits when Canopy helps to house people who would otherwise be homeless.

#### Environment



Canopy is also has small but positive environmental impact; its well-insulated home help to lower heating costs and hence reduce carbon emissions.

This work using cost benefit analysis (CBA) and Social Return on Investment (SROI) could, subject to resources, data availability and agreement on definitions, be developed by other self-help organisations to give a wider picture of the social value of the sector. While the methods and assumptions used in such quantifications of benefit may be disputed there is no doubting the real benefits enjoyed by participants who converged on the view that EHCGP had been 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).*

This chapter continues by providing more grounded and qualitative evidence of these benefits using the other five elements of the benefits model developed in this study.

## **5.2 Doing Things Differently by Being Local- Investing in Communities and Improving Neighbourhoods**

One of the most distinctive features of EHCGP was the bold decision to move away from large scale procurement and to provide opportunities for locally based organisations to play a part in the regeneration of their neighbourhoods and thereby generate local economic and social impacts. This allowed things to be done differently with impressive process and outcome advantages as outlined in this section.

One of the clearest examples of process advantages came from the ability of self-help groups to apply their local knowledge to identify empty properties, track down and make contact with owners and develop packages that were attractive enough to owners to motivate them to take part in the programme. Fresh Horizons had been working on such an approach before the advent of EHCGP. It had developed a menu of options for property owners to share the benefits (and costs) of improvement work and developed a flexible approach that met the needs of individual owners and properties. EHCGP provided more resources to continue this approach without taking away the flexibility as some other public funding schemes for empty homes work Fresh Horizons had tried to engage with had done.

Indeed, the purchase option proved a valuable additional tool to Fresh Horizons leasing options and proved effective in persuading some of the harder to influence local owners to engage.

The success of this locally led approach is easily seen if we stand outside Fresh Horizon's Chestnut Centre in Sheepridge village centre where we can see a terrace of three attractive Yorkshire stone townhouses purchased and refurbished with EHCGP funding. Within a few minutes' walk we can see a further 22 properties refurbished mainly on a leasing basis by Fresh Horizons to bring new life back into the village centre while creating much valued employment and training opportunities for a construction team of 18 and 3 SME partners. Little of this successful local impact would have been possible without the strong local presence of Fresh Horizons, a local social enterprise, which runs the local library, Sure Start centre and even a community cinema from the Chestnut Centre base. Fresh Horizons has been tenacious in using its local knowledge to track down and make attractive deals with property owners to bring empties back into use.



Figure 5.9 Fresh Horizons- Doing Things Differently by Being Local

Another advantage of being local was evidenced by Goodwin Development Trust in Hull. This was the process of accountability to local residents enshrined in the governance of Goodwin. As the project champion put it:

*"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.*

Building in the strength of this local accountability, Goodwin has brought back into use some of the large empty commercial premises that still litter Hull City Centre such as the attractive flats above a bank premises shown in Figure 5.10. This activity is beginning to turn around the feel of the city centre as it prepares for its status a UK City of Culture in 2017.



Figure 5.10 – The Value of Local Accountability, Goodwin Development Trust, Hull

The value of local delivery is reflected in the organisational structure of Canopy, a long standing self-help organisation in Leeds. As Canopy has expanded into different neighbourhoods in the City, it has taken with it the model of the community house at the centre of the neighbourhoods in which its empty homes work takes place. These houses are not just office and stores bases at which the workforce of volunteers and paid staff meets as work proceeds, but also social spaces in which meals are cooked, conversation is enjoyed between residents, workers and volunteers and plans are made for outings and football matches that allow further bonds to be formed. Figure 5.11 shows one of the oldest neighbourhood houses in Beeston.



Figure 5.11: being different by being local: Canopy's Community Houses in Leeds

Like many of the NE and Yorkshire case studies, Community Campus were clear about their community vision - they wanted to stay close to the communities and the people they existed for and close to their values. However, they also recognised the potential they had to spread the experience they have gained in over 25 years working in this way and have been exemplifying the 'viral expansion' model discussed at Windsor in 2010 as a preferred way of scaling up the self-help housing sector without losing the value of being local.

*“Community Campus believes in getting extra value from the work it does. The process is as important as the end product. Involving the local people in a project, to manage it and work on it is the goal so the investment in people and in generating social capital is very important. Community Campus wants to spread this message, their model of working and has a way of working with people, organisations and communities to develop them and their skills – it’s a nurturing rather than a taking over approach. As a result in working with other organisations they pass on and share information, resources and know-how. This is the approach it is taking for ‘helping’ North Ormesby to develop a CLT. It is developing proposals with Hartlepool BC, Middlesbrough CLT, Coast and Country and Thirteen Group. It is why organisations like Redcar and Cleveland Mind and Middlesbrough CLT approach them in the first place.”*

Figure 5.12 Preserving Local Difference through viral expansion. Source: extract from Community Campus case study report, Moyra Riseborough

So how different are the outcomes and impacts achieved by this local way of working to large scale procurement? We have already seen the difference this can make in engaging with empty property owners (shown in section 4.3 as one of the biggest barriers to EHCGP). Another key outcome comes to the local economy through local jobs, training opportunities and contracts. Then there are impacts on neighbourhoods through turning round abandonment and decline and reducing anti-social behaviour around formerly empty properties, the kinds of *'street level regeneration'* talked about by a former Housing Minister as a key benefit of EHCGP.

Middlesbrough CLT prioritised having a local impact through benefiting local business, as they claim that 100% of their funding was spent in Middlesbrough, with less than £100 spent outside of the immediate local area. This has supported the chosen local contractor to expand their business and take on two full time employees and an additional two apprentices (use of local apprentices was a condition of the contract with the CLT).

At the other end of the spectrum, Changing Lives, which has worked on properties in 7 local authority areas across the North East, but generally within 30 minutes travel time of their main base. 90% of works are undertaken direct by Home Life but there are also some sub-contracts to local SMEs. This includes small local painting and electrical contractors who are now being encouraged to take on apprentices themselves linked to the incentives of further sub-contract work. A larger scheme involving five dwellings in a single building is currently being tendered for as the work is too large for TCUKPS. Local knowledge is being used to prime local businesses for this tendering opportunity.

The impacts on local neighbourhoods of this different way of working are well evidenced in an urban context by the uplift of Sheepridge village centre shown in Figure 5.8. Similar dramatic changes have been evidenced in remoter rural locations such as Chapel Street, Evenwood (Figure 5.13). These and other neighbourhood impacts are discussed in section 5.5 c) below.

### 5.3 Tackling Skills Gaps and Youth Unemployment: Genuine pathways into work

Sections 4.3 and 4.4 have already shown some of the ways in which the workforce for empty homes projects is recruited and some of the training and volunteering opportunities offered by the workflow achieved through EHCGP. Throughout the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside projects we visited, we were struck by the importance placed on using the programme to maximise social value in relation to training and employment goals. Indeed in some cases this was the primary motivation for becoming involved in the empty homes programme in the first place. Not surprisingly therefore the employment and training outcomes achieved in these regions are impressive and make a powerful case for future housing procurement to be more focused in these approaches to social value and local labour and economy impacts rather than the tick box approaches to these issues often found among larger national contractors.

A direct example of the difference in approach to training and employment outcomes within this programme is provided by an experienced construction manager who had previously worked for large housing associations and commercial construction firms before joining Changing Lives to head up TCUK, their property refurbishment arm. After 11 years working for a large housing association he was initially sceptical of the approach to including trainees and apprentices within the team, but after three years at TCUKPS he is now convinced that:

*“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”.* (Construction Manger TCUK)

The active participation of apprentices was seen as building confidence and giving the organisations and individuals a sense of achievement. Opportunities for long-term sustainable employment through construction skills training was also highlighted as a key benefit by several projects. For Community Campus, EHCGP was the latest workflow opportunity to deliver broader social outcomes in relation to employment and training. The organisation also described training young people in real skills with recognised qualifications, finding them jobs and investing in local communities as driving force behind

the programme. This reflected a longstanding emphasis by Community Campus on providing accredited construction training and work opportunities for local young people in Stockton and surrounding areas.

This aim is delivered through the employment of a specialist construction manager, G., who organises the construction and training side of the Empty Homes programme for Community Campus. He inspects all potential properties, assesses the degree of work required, works with the Empty Homes officers, costs the programme of work needed to get properties back to a decent standard, he organises materials and supplies, encourages safe work practices, encourages trainees and apprentices to be involved in the project and inspects all works to ensure compliance with building regulations and so on. G. also liaises with partners and is responsible for supporting his instructors and tradespeople to create a good learning environment for trainees, apprentices and volunteers.

In our interview, G. described working with young people who needed a lot of encouragement and support to behave well. He noted that some of them have had bad experiences at school or been excluded. He enjoys seeing them develop – he thinks it is helpful that he can draw on his own experience and thinks that some of the earlier apprentices have been very influential on the later ones. This is because they created a process of mentoring and wanting to mentor others. G. thinks this process is integral to Community Campus and an important part of how they do things.

The impact of EHCGP workflow was also apparent at Fresh Horizons which now has a more mature and experienced workforce better placed to compete for construction industry jobs than were the former Future Jobs Fund Trainees. This organisation had seen a massive transformation in five years. The key difference observed by the researcher compared to a previous visit to the organisation in 2010 was the impact of EHCGP on the workflow for Fresh Horizon's construction workforce and in turn on jobs for local people. In 2010 the structure of the construction team was based around its starter training aim to give local young people tasters in construction skills with employment training funding such as the Future Jobs Fund. 10 trainees employed for six months each worked with a single construction manager and gained a valuable taste of construction work and were then

helped with securing longer term jobs outside of the organisation. By 2015 the workforce had three levels of staff: five apprenticeships with college day release, ten trainees beyond NVQ2 and a more permanent team of skilled tradesmen and two site supervisors. Staff retention and progression has been good, with the result that longer standing trainees and apprentices can pass on 'on the job' experience to newer recruits, thereby reinforcing college based learning. The main emphasis is no longer on helping trainees to secure access to employment outside but on maintaining the skills needed within the team to deliver a demanding programme on time without substantial sub-contracting.

The steady stream of EHCGP for Fresh Horizons' workflow has also had a local economic impact through specialist sub-contracts for roofing, electrics and plumbing (in the case of electrics accounting for half of the subcontractor's own turnover). The local SME partners involved in this have in turn worked alongside Fresh Horizon's trainees passing on skills and both the electrics and plumbing contractors have also taken on apprentices of their own on the back of EHCGP workflow.

The impact of this more mature and stable workforce on skills development has been a massive benefit in terms of long term employability. Whereas 6 month trainees had a tough time competing for declining construction jobs and vanishing apprenticeships in 2010, experienced tradesmen with NVQs and up to 7 year in the job experience were much better placed in 2015 to move on if the end of EHCGP leads to a fall back in Fresh Horizon's programme. However, the organisation is continuing to chase new opportunities to maintain workflow, and already anticipates a further 7 properties can be worked on through recycled EHCGP as property owners pay back construction costs from rental income over the period of the leases.

Changing Lives also provided employment training opportunities through its TCUKPS subsidiary. 6 trainees on 12 week programmes at any one time, 1 apprenticeship and 5 tradesmen's' jobs in the social enterprise and small external sub-contractors also being encouraged to take apprentices. Several apprentices have gone on to work as tradesmen with TCUKPS and some have taken on more specific responsibilities, e.g. for finishing off and

presenting properties, while still trainees. One became a site supervisor within 18 months of joining as a volunteer.

At Changing Lives, trainees are paid a minimum wage fortnightly in arrears from day 1 and may receive increments related to performance. In addition to paid employment and training, trainees are given travel allowance, clothing and equipment (which may be used for private work) and a Christmas bonus (last year this was shared equally at £180 per worker in Marks and Spencer's vouchers). In addition to Changing Lives clients TCUKPS has provided training opportunities for a group of 5 ex-offenders from Aquila Way (another social enterprise in the North East who have received EHCGP funding).

Elsewhere in the region construction skills training was a major driver for Berneslai Homes, Barnsley Community Builders, and Oasis Aquila getting involved in EHCGP. Meanwhile other projects more focused on generating housing options for their clients such as Centrepoint, Key House, Five Lamps and DASH were more likely to outsource building works to SMEs thereby generating a different local employment impact.

#### **5.4 Rewarding Volunteering**

The practical benefits of the self-help housing model are apparent in the opportunities it has given people in the region to contribute directly to solving housing problems, to gain skills and confidence and to work in collaborative ways to achieve wider social benefits. Projects in these regions provide some of the best examples of rewarding volunteering, enabling local people to get involved for example in garden clearance in return for driving lessons and then if they wish to move on to trainee and apprentice roles to gain accredited construction skills.

The impacts of volunteering on self-esteem, social integration and securing pathways into employment have been evidenced in one Yorkshire project (Canopy) using a cost benefit analysis methodology estimating £4.28 of social value for every £1 invested. These projects have had significant local impacts on street level regeneration, tackling abandonment and anti-social behaviour by working closely with property owners to incentivise them to bring

empties into use. This in turn has led to practical benefits for third parties including property owners (in avoiding risks of vandalism and squatting and avoiding security costs), local authorities (in delivering their empty homes strategies and securing additional housing supply to meet local needs), and wider society.

Volunteers may be motivated by the chance to gain experience, earn CV points, prove their commitment to potential employers, and gain a good reference. Some are new to construction, others may have been more experienced but have been out of the labour market for a long time and appreciate volunteering as a crucial step back towards paid work. Then too there are volunteers with high levels of professional skills and experience, motivated by the desire to put something back into society. These volunteers are particularly attracted by 'can do' approach and clear social goals of self-help housing.

Through its involvement in EHCGP, Giroscope has been able to develop its volunteers and create employment opportunities and stability. They have been able to scale up the workforce to take on the acquisition and delivery of new homes under the programme. Giroscope give priority to developing and rewarding volunteers but this is not usually linked to housing provision and not only seen as a pathway into the labour market. Fixed periods of volunteering mean that both sides get to build a relationship and can decide whether they want to continue this after the period has ended. Many do move on to other roles within Giroscope and a lot of the current staff group were former volunteers.

The Programme Manager at Giroscope commented that

*“we’ve got a mixture of ex-offenders; people living in hostels; people that have been out of work for a long period of time; young people looking for experience; older people with slight mental health difficulties.... wanting to pass on their skills, and it’s about not being so isolated, whereas others are really trying to get back into work.”*

*“The most rewarding bit is seeing the transformation people make and how it makes their lives more stable. It has been intense couple of years and we have learned a lot. Some people have left and some have joined. It has been good seeing the organisation grow, dealing with a much bigger workload. It’s been good seeing the momentum EHCG has given us. (Programme Manager, Giroscope)*

The benefits of EHCGP in enabling volunteering to expand are explained by a former volunteer, himself an ex-offender and recovering from addictions, who now plays a wider role in supporting the expanding volunteer team at Giroscope:

*“ I came in April 2013, I came to Giroscope via Probation after leaving prison just to volunteer and get a 40 hour reference and have been here ever since ....Its expanded quite a lot as empty homes rolled out, we’ve now got a lot more volunteers and more supervisors and contractors helping us..it’s grown a lot. I volunteered for about 12 months and then a semi-skilled supervisor retired and I was offered his position because of the life skills I have after a long time in prison and as a recovering alcoholic ...to deal with a wide range of volunteers. I can relate to them and point them in the right direction and say it works for me”. (Volunteer Team Supervisor, Giroscope).*

Other approaches to rewarding volunteering were found across the case studies. For example in offering tangible rewards such as driving lessons in return for volunteer work, in enabling progression from volunteering and in recruitment for paid positions:

*“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, who then moved on to trainee and apprentice roles

*‘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)

The experience of these projects shows that it is possible to keep voluntarism as part of the mix while expanding and scaling up self-help housing. At Canopy tenants must still do at least 12 days work on their future home to be eligible to move in. The organisation also provides wider opportunities for volunteering and encourages social activity such as playing football together for residents and workforce volunteers. They have a very diverse volunteering group including people with mental health and learning difficulties , refugees and pupils from local schools. The following quote comes from a person with learning difficulties in an integrated workforce at Canopy.

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

LATCH, another Leeds based project, has evolved from ‘self-help’ organisation in which residents were directly involved in building work to a ‘housing first’ model in which they are supported and enabled to take control of their lives and finances and contribute to the organisation. The idea of ‘self-help’ has evolved with a desire to be more inclusive, to deliver the support more effectively and to use refurbishment resources more efficiently – and has therefore moved to the housing first model. They now offer fewer training places, with the aim of better quality training and a higher standard of work. LATCH’s current model incorporates:

- referrals from Leeds Addiction Unit, Leeds Women’s Aid, ex-offenders
- Intensive support from support worker in first year
- Then take active steps to move forward in life
  - Move to independent household finances and training/work
  - refurbishment is undertaken by two full-time builders who also supervise and train volunteers, who also complete some of the work.
- Latch is seeking to develop a more robust approach to measuring the impact it has on individuals, both its tenants and work volunteers.

LATCH gives people a stable and secure base to address challenges, to allow active participation and to live independently, EHCGP has underpinned this model.

Self-help projects also benefit from other forms of volunteering, with professionals contributing their skills and time to reflect the value they place on the aims and purposes of these projects. This proved extremely valuable for new entrant projects such as Middlesbrough CLT and Redcar and Cleveland Mind who were able to gain knowledge and skills from voluntary committee members and advisers with experience of key issues for their business. Not only did Redcar and Cleveland Mind have steering group members with housing expertise from the local stock transfer housing association and the Council but they were also advised by a long established self-help housing activist and even recruited a landscape gardener to advise on garden refurbishment at empty properties:

*“But that’s been a real kind of partnership that one, with...you’ll meet M. tonight, who’s again a sort of like landscape gardener and he tends to do big houses and stately homes and things. I’ve known him for ages and I said ‘Come on, M., come and have a look at this’. Now, he’s been brilliant and has donated a lot of time. So he’s been a really practical help as well.”* (Project Champion, Redcar and Cleveland Mind)

In summary and as the title ‘self-help’ suggests, volunteering has been intrinsic to the operation of the case studies reviewed here and has been rewarding to the individuals involved. However, the nature of volunteering has been diverse and changing:

*“In the last three or four years, we’ve had roughly 70-80 volunteers each year and when we say ‘volunteers’, a more accurate term might be service users or trainees because the vast majority of them are unemployed; they have support needs of one sort or another. Some are very skilled, professional people who happen to be out of work; others are very unskilled and they all learn from each other and they get training from our staff on site as well; sometimes, supplemented by formal training at places like Leeds College of Building.* (Project Champion, Canopy)

## 5.5 Providing Solutions to ‘wicked problems’

Under this category of benefits we consider some ways in which EHCGP has made a real difference to groups, communities and localities affected by some of the more intractable and ‘wicked’ social problems to which there are no easy solutions. The first important wicked problem is the apparently simple need for decent affordable rented housing for groups with limited means but who do not qualify for social housing . Then there is the need of most supported housing projects working with more vulnerable clients to secure decent move-on accommodation or to source decent rented accommodation while support is provided. Third is the contribution bringing empty homes into use can make to tackling blight and anti-social behaviour and thereby promoting community safety.

a) Access to decent affordable homes for excluded groups

The provision of additional affordable housing was widely regarded as a key benefit of these projects. Moving from the waste of empty homes to the material benefits of homes for those who need them proved to be a unifying and motivating goal for project champions, residents, partners and volunteers alike:

*“It’s a brilliant idea to restore houses, yeah. What gets me is why there are so many empty properties in Leeds. There are loads, and it’s a shame because everyone wants a roof over their head but there are just not enough properties to go around which is daft, I think.”* Volunteer, Canopy

The following examples show how this new housing supply has met the needs of a range of client groups who were previously not well-served by existing housing options, including people moving on from supported housing, people in work, people who have lived with insecurity and unstable housing for lengthy periods, clients of Social Lettings Agencies and local authority housing options and homeless prevention services.

Changing Lives were able to expand access to decent move-on housing for their clients and other providers of supported housing including Newcastle City Council, Salvation Army. 125 properties will have been provided to these groups by 2018.

*‘It was the Chief Exec’s desire that we should be buying properties, because of our employment programme. If we are employing clients or getting them jobs, supported accommodation is too expensive. So we were looking at different models to get clients accommodation that was affordable once they had a job. His dream was new build but then we looked at refurbishment. EHCGP came along and that was the chance to live the dream. That dream was to find accommodation that people in work could afford and employing clients to help with that refurb’. (Changing Lives Employment Team Lead)*

Tenants of Changing Lives’ Home Life service have experienced improvements in their wider well-being from moving into a Home Life property. One took up gardening and produced fruit and veg from the large back garden of her Home Life property. In another case the Home Life property was the first time for a family that the children had their own

bedrooms. In several cases having a secure and affordable home has proved invaluable in seeking and securing work.

For Community Campus a key advantage of EHCHP was that it allowed the organisation:

*“to house more people in housing need in properties we know are decent and let at reasonable rents.”* (Project Champion)

Other housing advice and supported housing projects such as Centrepoint, Key House and DASH saw EHCHP as an important way of improving housing options for their clients.

Key House got involved in EHCHP to extend its existing leasing operation (which had started with housing association stock, then moved on to private rented properties) to secure better and more secure accommodation for its housing advice clients in Keighley. The story of one of the tenants, S., confirms the real alternative Key House can offer to clients as a result of the conversion of empty homes.

S. works in a small office and has a reasonable income but hasn't been able to find anywhere she can afford that is a reasonable quality where she wants to be until now. She saw the Keyhouse leased property she is going to move into in the evening paper a month ago:

*“I lived in a big Victorian house with 10ft ceilings with my young daughter. Last winter was a nightmare it was very cold/very draughty and the rent was £480 a month. The heating bills were horrendous and I will be paying them off forever”....*  
*“The new house is a lot cheaper and it's in so much better condition. It's going to be £360 a month and I think it will be easier to heat and look after....I am very pleased. It is in the area I wanted – near my daughter's school, near my mum so it couldn't be better really. The lease is for five years. It's better than a 6 month contract and I can see my way to paying off huge gas bills”* (Tenant Key House)

Part of the Fresh Horizons empty homes programme delivered an alternative source of rentals for Calderdale Council's Social Lettings Agency (SLA) which sources decent, affordable homes in the private sector for the council's homeless prevention and housing options nominees. This contribution was valued by the Council's SLA:

*"We have started working with Fresh Horizons to bring empty properties into use and I find suitable tenants for them.....we try and work with partners like Fresh Horizons because we all do similar things and together we can achieve more....this helps with homelessness prevention.....I know how many need a two bed in Sheepridge (Fresh Horizons primary area of operation)....it's quite new but we have got 8 or 9 in Fresh Horizons property at the moment. It's part of a loan agreement with the Council. There is a certain number they have to put forward. They must meet the basic standards. We inspect them all, there were one or two teething problems...we deal with each property on its merits. I've known Fresh Horizons for years but only worked closely recently...they've done a brilliant job in this area, clearing shops and parking areas, providing opportunities for people for work. They are the only group who bring former empty homes to the SLA"* Council Private Tenancy Officer.

b) Offender resettlement and housing excluded groups

Beyond simply adding to the local housing supply for households needing medium term, decent and affordable rented accommodation, EHCGP has also extended the scope to respond to the housing and support needs of excluded groups such as young people with support needs, ex-offenders and people recovering from alcohol and drug abuse. It has enabled third sector organisations already providing support to these groups to add to their housing options to provide a secure platform for recovery and social integration.

Seven of the EHCGP funded projects in the North East and 14 in Yorkshire had a specific focus on young people. As well as contributing to employment and training programmes for this age group, EHCGP also provided some of these projects with the opportunity to buy and own outright or to secure medium term leases on properties that they could offer young

people for short term and long term letting. This included some of the young people working as volunteers and trainees with the self-help housing projects. These connections proved very positive:

“Some of the TCUK construction trainees have also become tenants of Home Life. This is seen to have increased self-worth and their value of their own home.”  
(Changing Lives, Construction Manager)

Similarly at Fresh Horizons, 3 current members of the construction workforce are also tenants. This is seen to have increased self-esteem and their sense of home.

There were also young people with support needs, sometimes with troubled backgrounds drug and substance misuse problems. Financially there were often histories of debt, rent arrears, and no guarantors leading to many young people being excluded from other housing options.

*“at least half of our tenants have support needs”* (Fresh Horizons, Housing Officer)

More than this there were real attempts to address the ‘wicked issues’ associated with chaotic life styles and the need for personal bits of support that can enable young people to cope better and sustain their tenancies.

The Latch case study identified a core value of the housing is that it gives people with chaotic lives a stable and secure base from which address other challenges they are facing. Key examples of agreed objectives would be promote independence in managing household finances, or moving into work or training.

Similarly, discussion with Community Campus teased out some of the differences that they can make. This is very different to the limited term support plans typically funded by Supporting People and recognises the entrenched and long-term nature of disadvantages and the value of personal relationships and trust in tackling these. Projects like Community Campus can have a deeper impact on damaged young people through personalised and long

term informal support, much of it unpaid, but which can work within their holistic and widely resourced community based model:

*“we knit together various packages to work with tenants and trainees, personal development and confidence building..it takes a long time...but you see the difference in people...they come back because they trust us ....some very damaged young people will always need an element of looking after to make sure that they are doing the normal things like paying the rent, not living in pig sties....C. was one of our first tenants ever but still at our recent Christmas party that we give a meal to the tenants. He’s in a Tristar property now (local housing association) ...but we go in and check that he’s paying his rent ..he still needs input to make him tidy up..keep him in a tenancy..he’s one of ours but we don’t get paid for this”. (Community Campus, Project Champions)*

Another group who frequently experience difficulties in securing decent and affordable housing are ex-offenders. Their experience is captured graphically by the story of R. a resident and volunteer at Redcar and Cleveland Mind. R. had left prison a year or so prior to the case study and had first made contact with the project as a day release prisoner as part of his community rehabilitation:

*“They used to send me here as part of my community rehabilitation..... this was an ideal place for me. I was getting a bit of counselling from Mind in prison, so this was a perfect way of giving something back.” (R. Tenant, Redcar and Cleveland Mind).*

From this early experience prior to his release R. developed a close relationship with the project, volunteering in the newly opened Something in Mind community café in Redcar town centre on his release days and going on to run the café as an employee after his full release date.

However, while R. received some housing advice in prison he became increasingly anxious with his release date approaching when he saw little prospect of anywhere to live and feared placement in a hostel:

*“On release from prison I was still looking for somewhere to live, I had absolutely nowhere....none of the landlords would give us a chance because of the risk (of housing an ex-prisoner).... these guys (Redcar and Cleveland Mind) said well we’ve got somewhere but it’s not ideal, not very habitable at the moment ...but I said look, just give me somewhere to live ..it was lovely (before the works started)’ (R. Tenant, Redcar and Cleveland Mind).*

R. has gone on to take the café to higher levels, living temporally in both of Redcar and Cleveland Mind’s first two properties while works progressed, eventually becoming a long term tenant of a one bedroom flat in the completed house conversion:

*“I’ve got security where I am and I know that they’re not going to kick me out.” (R. Tenant, Redcar and Cleveland Mind).*

The role that stable housing can play in recovery from addiction is also well known, yet often it can prove difficult to secure decent stable accommodation beyond the immediate treatment period. The experience of one of Changing Lives clients who is now happily a Home Life tenant confirms the paucity of available options and the gap that EHCGP funded accommodation is now filling in Newcastle.

For the first time in seven years J. ‘no longer felt lost’, she felt at home and able to focus on her recovery. J. had left hospital in January 2014, then been in PRS, then in a hostel and moved in to the three bedroom flat in October. Being settled has made a huge difference to J.

*“Before I met N, (CL support worker) I lived in a terrible house and had lots of problems and drank a lot. I was in hospital and they gave me number to help with the addiction and they put me in touch with N. and she’s just changed me life really. ....I was on a three month addiction recovery programme and living in private place, but I thought I’d better leave as was spending all me money on drink...then I moved to a hostel but I hated it.....then S. (Home Life Property Team Worker) said she had properties, I couldn’t believe it...its brilliant, not far from me daughters.....I loved it, it was immaculate new carpets, new everything....it’s an upstairs flat in terrace....its*

*different (to private renting) because S. says as long as I look after it she will renew the tenancy...the quality is a hundred times better than my last place (leaks in bathroom) and the neighbours are lovely. “ (Changing Lives, Resident Interview)*

The value of stable housing and support in addiction recovery is replicated in the following example of Latch’s supported self-help model in Leeds:

‘N’ is a young mother of two with an 8 year old daughter and new son. She was referred to Latch by the Leeds Addiction Unit and has been housed by Latch in a two bedroom house. She had been living in a high-rise council flat in a difficult estate, first with her partner and then just her daughter, who ‘N’ subsequently sent to live with her parents as a result of the impact that her depression was having on her daughter. She was given a conditional offer of support based on evidence of self-help in managing her addictions. This was successful and she is now happily housed with both her children. Latch set out milestones/goals in terms of independent living and visited once a week. Recent visits have become a bit of a formality in the sense that ‘N’ is doing very well. A striking feature of the interview was that this was self-help with strong support – a managed process of self-development, and ‘N’ was extremely positive about the experience of developing a personal relationship with her key support worker. (Interview note of N. Tenant Interview at Latch).

### **c) Tackling blight and anti-social behaviour**

600,000 empty homes (Empty Homes, Autumn 2015) are not just a waste in a time of housing crisis and limited new supply, but can also create negative local impacts in the form of blight, act as hotspots for anti-social behaviour (such as vandalism, prostitution and drug dealing) and thereby heighten fear of crime and further neighbourhood decline.

Several case studies referred to already experienced these symptoms and the benefits of EHCGP and local community action in turning them round (Sheepridge village centre in

Huddersfield, Chapel Street, Evenwood, Gresham in Middlesbrough and in parts of Hull City Centre).

Prior to Fresh Horizons' empty homes project there were visible symbols of long term decline in Sheepridge village centre (see Figure 5.8 above). Empty homes and shops, a burned out coop, overgrown gardens, crime and fear of crime. Tackling fear of crime was one of the main drivers for Fresh Horizon's wider programme of action in the village centre. This included the demolition of derelict shops to provide a safe parking area, target hardening work, building relationships with property owners to create a cluster scheme to bring properties into use on a leased basis sharing costs and benefits. All of this came before the EHCGP which provided the resource to accelerate the area improvement and introduced new opportunities for purchase and repair. The acquisition and refurbishment of the former Presbytery that the church had kept empty for over 10 years and of a terrace of three Yorkshire stone townhouses opposite the Chestnut Centre have been key to the transformation. Now the centre of Sheepridge is attractive, has new shops including a social enterprise café, and no longer has the feeling of being unsafe. Getting a deal with the owners of the terrace of three houses was a long process as recalled by the Project Champion:

*"we had a long term discussion with them, one was very local (who owned the burned out former coop premises, he kind of collected empty properties, would work on them for a bit and then board them up...so we talked to him. But these places needed a lot of work as well so the lease and refurbish model didn't work. The other guy had bought the property to get the pharmacy licence in the area, but he just left the house for seven years ...we managed to track him down because we started working with Calderdale and he was known to the local authority as a serial empty home owner ...but he failed to turn up to numerous appointments. For both of them offering to buy it was more attractive than a lease deal. The purchase and repair scheme enabled us to use the asset for a secured loan. But the negotiation on price was still tough as the owners were in no rush.*

*The other thing about the property..not just right at the heart of the area..but also its history ..it was built in the 1890s..a Society of Oddfellows meeting place and partly a*

*skills place for local crafts people..a Guild ...so the architect who drew up the plans for us converted what was a weird arrangement back to three townhouses on three floors. Carrying on the tradition..local people working to improve the areas and provide employment....*

*The other thing that's important is the broader impact..because we have been doing up anything we can that's empty (in the village centre), owners of other properties are now investing as well ...some are for buy to let investors. (Project Champion, Fresh Horizons)*

Areas like Sheepridge can be found in many parts of the region and at the very local scale programmes like EHCGP can have a major impact.

In Chapel Street, Evenwood (Figure 5.13) there was a similar effect to Sheepridge with private owners gaining the confidence to invest again in the street on the back of the improvement brought by Five Lamps' EHCGP funded refurbishment. Five Lamps (a CDFI) worked on seven properties out of 17 in the street, including one which was burned out and three which had been empty for over 5 years. The street had been beset by anti-social behaviour, and other private rented properties were empty. As the Project Champion at Five Lamps put it:

*“without EHCGP it is highly unlikely that this work would ever have taken place. The street would have continued to blight the community”.*

### **Tackling Abandonment, Blight and ASB**



Figure 5.13 Impacts on rural blight and abandonment, Chapel Street, Evenwood, County Durham

One issue faced by self-help projects in such contexts is the tension between their role in bringing empties into use and attempting to turn areas around and in providing safe and secure housing in which their tenants can rebuild their lives (see 5.5b). One constraining factor here is the small scale of the EHCGP programme and its focus more on individual properties than neighbourhood renewal, usually limiting the direct investment to less than 10 properties in a neighbourhood, and thereby limiting the capacity to turn around entrenched decline of neighbouring properties to the extent achieved in Sheepridge and Chapel Street .

In several of the case studies we were able to discuss how these tensions are managed in practice. There were recognised risks of *'dumping clients in benefits streets'* with little direct ability to affect the approach of neighbouring property owners or possible anti-social behaviour of tenants in neighbouring properties. One strategy favoured by Home Life's property purchase strategy to minimise risk of dumping its own residents into unsafe neighbourhoods was to target the *'worst houses in best streets'* (within its budget parameters -around 20k is generally used for refurbishment leaving £45-50k to purchase the property). This strategy is likely to be most effective for a relatively small landlord who will always be dominated by other owners and landlords in setting the tone of a neighbourhood. However, for self-help housing to take in a more regenerative role on neighbourhoods requires a more joined-up and partnership based approach, particularly with local authorities as the following examples illustrate.

Changing Lives itself had faced up to these issues in Newcastle and had attempted to forge relationships with local residents' associations and councillors. One local councillor in an area of operations (also a very long-term supported of the charity), spoke very positively about how residents' fears that self-help housing and its potentially transitory residents would accelerate decline were handled.

*"I met J. because in the area I represent as a councillor we have properties that have been derelict for many years..a real blot on the landscape and we need to bring them back into use....concerns were being raised by my constituents about empty*

*properties attracting anti-social behaviour and affecting character and appearance ..so I began to engage quite closely with Changing Lives and J. and to provide a link in to council empty property initiatives....to put pressure on owners who are neglecting their properties..I felt it was important to have a co-ordinated approach". (Ward Councillor, Newcastle).*

In Middlesbrough and Hull some EHCGP projects focused in areas blighted by the 2000s Housing Market Renewal Area Programme (HMRA) that had involved substantial demolition plans but was stalled when central government funding for the programme was pulled after the 2010 election.

Middlesbrough CLT started life as a group of residents campaigning against demolition under HMRA in the Gresham area of the town (Figure 5.14), but their activities had little impact on the local authority. Over time, the residents decided that their energies would be better channelled into developing a pro-active housing organisation and began negotiating with Middlesbrough Council to acquire properties in the area surrounding the demolition area. It secured three properties on an asset transfer basis for £1 each (see section 5.6 for further details). The CLT secured full ownership of the first phase of these properties and a five year lease on the second phase. the CLT are looking at the possibility of acquiring further terraced properties from the local authority and Thirteen Housing Association, which has eight surplus properties, four of which are empty. Researchers believe that EHCGP has acted as a mini-demonstration project providing Middlesbrough CLT with proof of concept showing that resident-led action can make a significant contribution to the improvement of the Gresham area and that there is significant potential for further development of this approach.



Figure 5.14 – Gaining Confidence in responding to dereliction in Middlesbrough

In Hull, also affected by HMRA, there is a strategic approach to providing joined up solutions to the wicked problems of blight and dereliction. This meshes local action by six self-help housing groups funded under EHCGP and a wider Local Authority strategy. This has enabled the bottom up 'can-do' action that is the strength of self-help housing with the top down co-ordination role of local government.

Hull's strategic partnership approach is set out in section 4.6 above. Here it is worth recapping the benefits of this approach to tackling the wicked issues of blight and neighbourhood decline. In particular the approach assisted self-help projects to coordinate their activities better, to avoid unproductive completion and to achieve a better mix between different types of occupiers in the neighbourhoods where refurbishment activity took place. It did this by generating and sharing information about empty properties, landlords and which partners were bidding and using its statutory powers to persuade the most stubborn property owners to cooperate in bring empty properties into use.

The Council managed the transition from HMRA for low value areas with accumulations of empties :

*“We developed area action plans for housing market renewal (i.e. Gateway Programme) and was part way into it when the programme ended suddenly which meant that a lot of homes which would have been demolished were left empty. A lot of these properties were in low value areas. (Partner Interview, Hull City Council)*

The Council saw EHCGP as an additional resource to be attracted into the city to complement the local authority programme:

*“It was really challenging but everyone has achieved. Three partners went back for permission to acquire more properties. The Council dealt with this issue by bringing the partners together to make sure organisations were not bidding for the same properties under EHCG. We got organisations to arrive at an agreement on who would bid for what in different areas and sharing information about who was bidding for what so that organisations could negotiate between themselves. There was a lot of compromise between partners; the council has backed off to let the partners deliver” (Partner Interview, Hull City Council)*

The Council paid particular attention to co-orientating the neighbourhood impacts of the programme and avoiding concentrations of vulnerable people in poor neighbourhoods:

*“There was a slight issue over one community partner's approach which would have resulted in significant numbers of vulnerable young people living in very close proximity to one another in a relatively unstable area to which, as a strategic housing authority, the Council expressed objections. This was addressed with the specific partner and it has not affected relations within the partnership.” (Partner Interview, Hull City Council)*

As evidenced in section 4.6 this approach was welcomed by the self-help organisations in Hull and enabled the delivery of EHCGP to be far more effective than it would otherwise have been in the city:

*“Hull City Council did a good job and received a lot of praise for their support through the process.” (Giroscope, Project Champion)*

## 5.6 Building Strong and Independent Organisations and a Vibrant Sector

The strategic growth and development of their organisation was one reason cited by the project champions for all 11 case studies when discussing the motivations behind their involvement with the EHCGP. There were a number of ways in which EHCGP impacted on strategic growth:

- by providing work flow for refurbishment teams,
- by increasing rental income cash flow,
- and in some cases by adding to the asset base of the organisation to enable further borrowing and growth and generating a long term revenue stream.

In all of these ways EHCGP can be seen as providing institutional support for the self-help housing sector and thereby contributing to their sustainability, and promoting the longevity of the sector.

### a) Workflow for refurbishment teams

The workflow stimulus of EHCGP was particularly important for all of those projects based around a construction team with employment and training objectives for volunteers and employees. This impact was exemplified in section 5.3 by examples such as Fresh Horizons, Changing Lives, Canopy and Community Campus who were not only able to employ and train more people as a result of their participation in EHCGP but were also able to create a more mature work environment with longer term planning horizons and to enrich the experience of their trainees and workforce.

In Canopy's case the workflow translated into increased staffing:

*“Well Canopy's had a good year – a good two years really, largely thanks to the Empty Homes Community Grant programme. Rounds 1 and 2 we got funding through both of those and in the last 18 months, 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. (Project Champion, Canopy).”*

This replicates the experience of Fresh Horizons, Community Campus and Giroscope, all long established organisations who experienced unprecedented staffing growth between 2012 and 2015. (reported in 5.3). Employment benefits were also felt by start up empty homes organisations like at Changing Lives and Key House who chose to deliver some or most of their programme through a directly employed workforce.

The benefits of longer term planning and enriched workforce and trainee experience were well evidenced at Fresh Horizons where the training and employment focus had shifted away from supporting trainees into external jobs. Now the focus was on internal staff development and more challenging tasks requiring new skills could be taken on by the workforce. The qualitative differences in the training experience offered were captured by an apprentice joiner excited by the challenge of installing a new staircase into a three storey townhouse in Sheepridge:

*I've been with the company for about seven years now.....only recently qualified...an apprenticeship through college training. With the empty homes scheme I seem to have got a lot more experience now, like I'm putting in staircases now which I had never done before...a lot more experience...more to do...kitchens you name it. I'm not on the best of wages by the way but I do love the experience I get here.I probably wouldn't get that anywhere else, so that's why I'm still here'. (Fresh Horizons, Construction Workforce member with 7 years' experience)*

b. rental cash flow

Rental income is one of main and most reliable income streams of self-help housing projects. Rents are usually linked to Local Housing Allowance rates and thereby affordable to tenants on housing benefit, but are sometimes topped up by residents from other income sources. Across the regions the most commonly cited rentals were between £350 and £450 a month depending on whether there were top ups to enable rents above Local Housing Allowance to be charged.

The estimated increase of 1500 in the number of leased and owned properties for rental by self-help sector in the North East and Yorkshire as a result of EHCGP will have an ongoing cash flow benefit to these organisations. Using the above figures this would suggest a gross rental income stream of around £600,000 a month going into sector cashflows across the two regions.

In the case of leased properties the bulk of rental income is likely to pass on to property owners, but with a proportion (say 20%) retained by the self-help provider for management services and in some cases a further contribution from owners to refurbishment costs.

In the case of purchased properties rental income is regarded by some projects as 'free cash flow', a highly valued income stream for charities without substantial housing activities since it is more flexible than many of their other income streams which are tied to specific purposes and activities. Of course from the rental income, provision needs to be made for housing management and maintenance services, interest payments on any loans and for longer term repair costs. But in the short term this 'free cash flow' stream can be an important boost to organisational sustainability.

Because no figures were provided by Tribal and CLG of the mix of approved schemes between purchase and repair and lease and repair options it is not possible to estimate the net rental income stream impact on overall revenue finances across the sector. However the following examples provide an indication of the impact on organisational sustainability in specific cases.

### Fresh Horizons

Participation in EHCGP brought four substantial streams of income for Fresh Horizons

- 'unrestricted' rental income on 7 properties (5 bought using EHCGP and 2 purchased by DBI and then transferred to FH) at an average of £400 a month (£2800 a month)
- Management fees of around £40 a month on 56 leased properties netted off from the rent paid to owners (£2240 a month)

- refurbishment income on 61 properties of around £10,000 per property with minimal VAT due to 90% of programme delivered in house. (£610,000)
- Recycled property owner contributions towards works on 56 properties usually offset against rental income over the period of the lease (£500,000)

This equates to a regular monthly income of just over £5000 from rents, net of payments to property owners for the leased stock, and a substantial boost to the construction team cash flow for refurbishment works of over £1million over the life of the lease, most of which was also added to monthly cashflow.

### Changing Lives

Using similar assumptions, but also taking into account the role that EHCGP played in enabling Changing Lives to register as a provider with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and receive additional grant to do up more empty homes, the following calculation shows a monthly gross rental income of £46,000, around ten times that of Fresh Horizons, enjoyed by Changing Lives from its empty homes activity, with further refurbishment income of £1.8million and a growth in their asset base of £8million.

EHCGP (and follow on empty homes funding from HCA) provided two substantial streams of income for Changing Lives

- 'unrestricted' rental income on 115 properties at an average gross rent of £400 a month (£46,000)
- A further management fee for 10 leased properties (20% of £4,000 rental) of around (£800 a month)
- refurbishment income of around £15,000 per property for TCUK with minimal VAT due to 90% of programme delivered in the group and profits gift aided to the Changing Lives Charity to support further training activities (£1.8 million)

c. acquiring assets

One of the biggest effects in the long term sustainability of the sector from EHCGP was the ability to acquire assets under the purchase and repair model. This has several positive effects for the organisations involved. It adds to balance sheet strength, provides security for loan finance, provides an unrestricted retained rental income (rather than simply a management fee) and makes for a more permanent organisation, less dependent on periodic review of leases.

*So, I think, with purchase and repair, it's almost simpler, because you know that you will have that asset. I think it's fair that you invest in it, because you're getting something that will generate rental income for the foreseeable future, and that you will have a building that you could potentially sell or borrow against. (Project Manager, Giroscope)*

For several case studies asset ownership was seen as one of the most significant lasting impacts for their organisation of taking part in EHCGP.

In the case of Changing Lives, the acquisition of titles to 115 of the 125 properties refurbished has boosted the organisation's asset base by around £8 million. This provides significant security and loan raising capacity for an organisation with existing property assets (mainly hostels) and an annual turnover of around £15 million. This growth was achieved using a mix of EHCGP and loan finance with the Home Life acquisition team using a formula based on around £45-50,000 for property purchase and £20,000 for works. This growth reflecting the price at which empty and derelict property could consistently be purchased in Newcastle during the course of the programme.

Canopy was able to grow in this way in Leeds at the same time through its round 2 EHCGP bid, with the Project Champion summing up the advantages to the sustainability of the project as follows:

*“Of course, that gives us more resilience in terms of future sustainability – having those assets there, we can borrow against them and it gives us longevity as well because rather than the leases, some of which were very long – 25 year leases – they would come to an end eventually and there are risks around break clause in there, so owning them outright just gives kind of permanence that it never had before. This programme has been absolutely fantastic for us.” (Project Champion, Canopy).*

Similar benefits were reported by Community Campus:

*“It has also increased our asset base and given us the potential to raise money to continue to do this.”*

#### Asset Transfers

The purchase of properties with a mix of EHCG grants and loans is one way in which assets have been acquired by self-help housing organisations. Another method with great potential for wider application is that of asset transfer by existing owners.

The most significant example of asset transfer in our case studies was found in Middlesbrough where in April 2012 the local authority agreed to transfer three properties to Middlesbrough CLT for £1 each. <http://self-help-housing.org/case-studies/middlesbrough-clt-asset-transfer/>.

The background to this asset transfer was that the Council owned 23 residential properties acquired in the former clearance area of Gresham. Many of the properties had been used for a Homeswap Scheme, but three properties remained empty and in need of refurbishment. These properties were valued in the region of £40,000 to £50,000, but the Council accepted that the proposal for £1 asset transfer would support their ongoing strategy for Gresham after the Housing Market Renewal programme had been terminated, and to establish a constructive partnership with the CLT.

The business case for the council was that asset transfer would attract additional resources into the area to bring these properties back into use at no cost to the council, although their value could not be used to reduce council borrowing costs to deliver other elements of its housing programme in the Gresham area. The council's interests were covered through a legal agreement with an option to buy them back (for £1), in the event that the CLT failed to improve and let the properties within a specified time scale. The Council also used a restriction on title requiring its consent for the CLT to raise a private mortgage on the properties.

For its part the CLT was able, with the council's consent, to raise loan finance on the properties once they were improved thereby increasing the asset strength and sustainability of the CLT. Works financed by EHCGP enabled these three properties to be brought back into use as affordable housing for local people. The experience gained by the CLT led to a further successful bid for Empty Homes funding and a further agreement with the Council to bring two burned out shops back into use through conversion into four flats, this time on a long lease basis.

### Achieving wider goals

Other aspects of organisational strength facilitated by EHCGP concern the assistance it has provided to achieve wider organisational goals and deliver the core mission of these organisations. A few examples illustrate this wider outcome of EHCGP:

Keyhouse described how EHCGP meant they have finally been able to do some of the things they wanted to. The organisation's primary aim has always been to assist people who are homeless achieve good secure housing. However, Keyhouse has owned very few assets and this made the organisation vulnerable. Now the organisation was building up its assets and a steady income stream, and as a result the organisation has a strategic plan and a long term vision.

For Middlesbrough CLT, EHCGP funding has contributed to the confidence and sense of purpose of a fledgling organisation. All indications are that the scale and timing of the

funding have been well aligned with the capacity of the CLT members to deliver their project. The funding has therefore been just the right amount of 'push' to support this organisation to develop. The funding has contributed to the stability of the CLT and, in turn, has assisted the development of mutual support. This has assisted members to take an active stance in championing council and police action to address local environmental and crime issues. CLT members have developed their skills to such a degree that they are now taking steps to advise other projects and help others to learn from their experiences.

It is also clear that EHCGP played an important role in getting new groups into housing . For Redcar and Cleveland Mind the logic was clear in the links between housing and core business in mental health:

*"It was something we hadn't really thought about before in terms of housing, but we were getting more and more people through the door who were in poor largely private rented accommodation, some of whom were having some quite significant issues in terms of discrimination, bullying, either by neighbours, sometimes by dodgy landlords... And we know that people with a mental health difficulty are less likely to be able to maintain a tenancy. I think the relationship with some of our key partners has been really important to the success of it, because they've had a lot more knowledge (and experience)." Project Champion, Redcar and Cleveland Mind*

The Middlesbrough CLT's properties show that resident-led action can make a contribution to the improvement of the Gresham area and that there is significant potential for further development of this 'grass roots' action approach. Completion of the properties has not been straight forward and the CLT's success therefore shows that residents of Gresham with little experience of regeneration have nonetheless been able to organise and deliver a significant project using labour drawn exclusively from the local area. This has also established the credibility of the CLT as a formal organisation and may improve residents' ability to influence the future approach to the regeneration of Gresham. During the course of undertaking the refurbishment work, members of Middlesbrough CLT have developed ideas and visions for how their approach to regeneration could be extended in the future. With additional, appropriate support the CLT could well become a pilot for a more 'localist'

approach to improving the quality and supply of housing and supporting vulnerable members of society more effectively.

### **A Strong and Vibrant Sector**

The final dimension to emerge from the case studies was the extent to which EHCGP has helped to build a vibrant sector rather than simply a set of strong organisations. Section 4.6 has already considered the vital importance of partnership working to the success of self-help housing and EHCGP. There we noted that case study organisations were embedded in networks of partnerships and that a self-help housing sector was emerging thanks to intense networking and support by field leading organisations. Section 4.6 went on to identify a number of functions of partnerships for individual organisations including the network/support role, considering mainly interaction with external partners. In this section we return to consider the network/support roles developed within the self-help sector itself to help build a vibrant sector.

Three levels are important in the sector-building work that has occurred since 2010. First, local project level collaboration, support and learning, particularly in locations such as Leeds, Hull and the Tees Valley. Second, sector level sharing and support at sector level, facilitated by SHHO. Third, cross-sector level engagement of the self-help housing sector with wider networks including community-led housing which has significantly increased its profile as a wider sector since 2010.

#### Project Level

*There are quite a few northern organisations that meet up every, sort of, six months: Canopy in Leeds; LATCH in Leeds; Fresh Horizons in Calderdale; Community Campus, who are further north, have been to the odd one [yeah]. Oh, another Leeds organisation, GIPSIL. (Project Manager , Giroscope)*

The practical value of this networking and peer support is highlighted by Key House, a long established housing advice and supported housing provider but new to this field:

*“When I was looking at the Bid and starting to put it together the TSRC site and the information in it was really helpful and the self-help housing organisation was useful too..... . I met a woman from Latch an organisation in Leeds and they do empty homes there. We talked about sharing information. Jeff and I went on a study visit shortly after that to Latch and we came back a lot wiser..... Since then other people in the regional meetings have been great – we have been able to share lots of information and talk about some of the practicalities as well. We have a really good network operating as a result”. (Key House, Project Champion)*

Redcar and Cleveland Mind was another new entrant and placed a high value on collaboration and support from existing sector projects and attributed the original decision to bid for EHCGP to these supportive relationships:

*“I think to be fair it kind of was born, I suppose, out of my link with Campus really. They said ‘Well, why don’t you lot apply for this?’ We hadn’t really thought about it before and it was quite scary for us because it was like ooh, blimey, can we do this? So I think the relationship with some of our key partners has been really important to the success of it, because they had a lot more knowledge” (Project Champion, Redcar and Cleveland Mind)*

This stimulus was not an accident, but fitted the collaborative, viral approach to sector expansion and leadership favoured by Community Campus (see also 6.2). Community Campus had active partnerships with a number of EHCGP projects in the region including Redcar and Cleveland Mind, East Cleveland Youth, Hartlepool NDC and Middlesbrough CLT:

*‘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*

Further evidence of effective collaboration networks in the Tees Valley were provided by Gillett et al (2014) who held a workshop with 6 local partners to explore the achievements of

empty homes partnerships. This highlighted *'the nature of relationship development and organisational bonding, both formal and informal, between the participant organisations'* (Gillett et al 2014, p.3). This in turn had led the local authority to perceive that *'collaboration achieved community benefits such as job creation whilst also solving problems associated with derelict properties'* (ibid p.4).

Similar evidence of local networking was found in Hull where six self-help projects worked collaboratively with Hull City Council (see 4.6) throughout EHCGP with significant mutual benefits and in Leeds where three self-help projects (Latch, Canopy and GIPSIL) worked with Leeds Empties and the City Council. Evidence of wider collaborative networking in Leeds is discussed below.

### Sector Level

Evidence of the key role played by SHHO in sector building and in the success of EHCGP abounds throughout the case studies. This was instrumental in persuading and encouraging organisations to engage with EHCGP in the first place and then to help with bidding and project management. Some of the tools used to achieve this included

- the SHHO website with practical advice in key issues faced by projects,
- regional meetings to share experience and introduce potential partners (e.g., social finance bodies) at key stages of the programme,
- negotiation on the rules and procedures for EHCGP with DCLG and Tribal Education,
- strategic surveys to demonstrate demand for funding,
- stimulating expressions of interest and bids
- but most of all a personal face well known to everyone in the sector and accessible for advice and discussion and ideas sharing.

These personal links were very important in encouraging groups to consider taking part in the EHCGP:

*I've known Jon for a good number of years.... in all the preamble to the Empty Homes Community Grant programme and Jon lobbying, he kept us in the picture and we*

*always saw that as an opportunity; we always recognised that there were potential synergies with some of our business. (Project Champion, Five Lamps)*

Practical help in drafting bids was also evident:

*Jon has been very helpful when we've drafted stuff, looking at it again when we approach Tribal again for additional money. Part way through Empty Homes 2, he, kind of, went through various drafts of emails. We'll talk to him about issues. (Project Manager , Giroscope)*

While the value of SHHO's regional networking was oft repeated:

*"we were able to understand what was happening because, through Jon Fitzmaurice, there was a very effective regional network setup, of people who'd bid into round one, that met on a regional basis, to exchange, you know, experiences and knowledge, and we sat in and listened." (Project Champion, Goodwin)*

### Cross-Sector Level

As noted in our introduction, EHCGP can now be regarded as one of several community-led funding programmes loosely associated with the Localism Act 2011 (including the community right to build and community-led housing programme). This reflects the successful response by Self-Help-Housing.org and its allies to the opportunity to make the case for a designated programme for non-registered providers to achieve a deeper local impact (Mullins 2013). It also reflects the extent of activity that has occurred in the related fields of Cooperative and Mutual Housing, Community Land Trusts, Cohousing and community self-build sectors over the same period (Lang 2015). SHHO has been an active player in the Mutual Housing Group and Strategic Alliance Community-Led Housing that have sought to promote community-led housing with Government, the public and potential partners over recent years (BSHF, 2014 a and b) . Key participants from self-help housing projects in the region such as Canopy and Giroscope have played an active role in national meetings of the strategic alliance and events such as HACT's House Party in June 2015. The House party which coincided with the massive CIH Housing Conference in Manchester included a two day workshop across community-led housing options curated by Steve Hoey from the Canopy self-help project.

The success of this wider sector building activity is reflected in the support provided by other community-led sectors for self-help housing, notably in the cases for £52 million further public funding for empty homes projects in the CLT Manifesto (National CLT Network 2014). It is also reflected at local level in the increasing cross sector working and multiple labelling of projects (e.g. Middlesbrough CLT is also an empty homes project and features on both the Self-Help-Housing.Org and communitylandtrusts.org.uk websites).

Cross-sector links were also apparent in different parts of the region.

*“It’s possible that we’ll look into doing a self-build project [right]. K., on our board, is very keen to try and do that, so that could be a project over the next three or four years. There are possible collaborations with others, like Latch and GIPSIL and Leeds Empties that may or may not come to fruition.”* (Project Champion, Canopy)

Leeds Community Housing is a good example of networking across the community-led sectors in the city. This includes projects such as Lilac, Leeds Empties and self-help housing projects in the city. In July 2015 it made a breakfast presentation to Leaders for Leeds a forum based at Leeds City Council; earlier a short animated video on self-help projects in Leeds. Similar cross-sector networking occurs in the North East region including through the Homes and Communities Agency’s Community-Led Housing Forum.

## **5.7 Case Studies Conclusion**

The 11 case studies, profiled in Chapter 3, have informed our analysis in chapters 4 and 5 of this report to provide ample evidence of the wider social value delivered by this little known sector of housing providers known as self-help housing organisations.

The six dimensions of added value covered in this chapter show how the allocation of £50million to 110 mainly small, community based organisations has impacted on the sector and on its outcomes for society. There is ample evidence here to support the case for a continuation of the procurement methods adopted for EHCGP to future public programmes.

However, the outcomes discussed here are of interest to a much wider audience than simply to housing funders. The next chapter takes the discussion on to the period after the end of EHCGP to identify what we have learned that can be applied to future public policies and to social investors and charitable foundations.

## Chapter 6 Conclusions, Programme Legacy and Future Prospects

### 6.0 Conclusions

This report has drawn on inspiring case studies from the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside where the EHCGP has been a particular success. It adds to earlier evidence from the Midlands where EHCGP greatly expanded the scale and scope of self-help housing activity. Together these three regions account for over half of the national activity within EHCGP and thereby proved a sound basis for informing future policy.

The particular value of this report has been in capturing the experience of longer established organisations and embedded networks in these two northern regions where there has been greater knowledge exchange and collaborative working than in the Midlands case studies. It has been a challenge to capture the sheer range of useful learning emerging from the 11 case studies featured here and the report is therefore more lengthy than originally envisaged. These case studies confirm that community-led action provides opportunities for ‘can-do approaches’ - alternative routes to bring empty properties into use that can deliver much wider benefits that are practical, sustainable and transferrable. Furthermore the last few years have seen self-help groups in the region expanding their activity and demonstrating these tangible benefits for society.

To conclude this study we look back at the achievements of EHCGP and consider the implications for future policy. At the time of writing EHCGP (2011-15) is complete with the final projects delivering their programme spend by the end of March 2015 and final accounts anticipated from Tribal Education and DCLG in Summer 2015. The General Election in May 2015 has resulted in a single party Conservative administration and the priority attached to empty homes and to community-led housing will be under review as part of a wider consideration of policy development for the next five years.

First (in 6.1) we draw some conclusions on EHCGP itself as a funding approach, leading to some thoughts about the legacy of EHCGP and future funding possibilities (6.2). Then we

turn to consider what has been learned from the case studies, including the key challenges (6.3) they have successfully faced and the advice they would give to other organisations (6.4). Finally to pull things together we consider the future prospects for the sector, building three scenarios (6.5) to make some recommendations (6.6).

## 6.1 Programme Conclusions

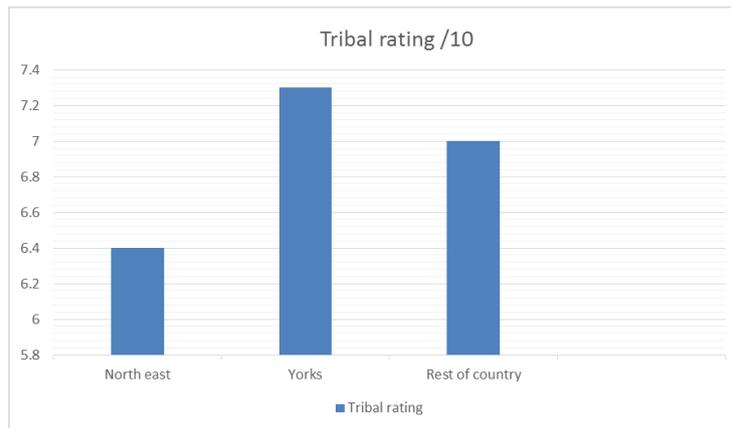
The case studies have demonstrated the key role played by EHCGP as a targeted funding programme in enabling a significant revival of self-help housing since 2010. While the programme had its limitations, and could not be accessed by all of the community based organisations who could potentially have become involved, it did have a number of clear advantages over other funding approaches.

1. **The first major advantage of EHCGP** was the absence of a high entry bar, registration with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and associated regulation, which would not have been a realistic prospect for most of the groups who have nevertheless performed well under EHCGP. Some organisations have since gone on to register with HCA and others are considering this, but without a continued low entry bar it will be impossible for future new entrants to follow their footsteps. Furthermore, new registration rules introduced by the HCA in April 2015 requiring new providers to comply with the regulator's financial viability and governance standards at the point they register would effectively have ruled out most of the 30 self-help housing organisations who secured EHCGP funding in these two regions. Commenting more widely on these registration changes in February 2015, Catherine Hand, partner at Trowers and Hamlins, said: *'Over the last two or three years a number of smaller organisations have registered and they would probably have found it difficult to meet the new requirement.'* (Inside Housing, Feb 5<sup>th</sup> 2015).
2. **A second advantage of EHCGP**, already discussed in 5.6 was the availability of a purchase and repair option enabling organisations to build asset based strength during the programme. This option proved particularly popular in the two regions

covered in this report reflecting the availability of empty properties within the price range that would enable purchase and repair costs to be met under the scheme.

- 3. The third advantage of EHCGP** was the flexibility of funding and administration compared to HCA programmes. With regard to flexibility, experienced projects such as Fresh Horizons found the EHCGP regime very useful in enabling and supporting their entrepreneurial approach to project funding; and in particular in matching the funding to manage wider cash flow. New entrants such as Redcar and Cleveland Mind were equally happy with the terms and administration of the grant and its availability at key stages of their refurbishment projects. The holding of two funding rounds and a further round to allocate underspend proved particularly advantageous to these regions who thereby gained market share compared to the rest of the country. For individual projects, there was a greater propensity to use the purchase and repair option in round 2 bids, reflecting learning within the sector following on from the rather speedy initial choices made in round 1 bids.

With regard to administration, the unlikely CLG decision to appoint Tribal Education, a non-housing specialist third sector funder, to administer the grant proved in practice to be one of the surprising success stories of the programme. A survey by SHHO and HACT in late 2014 asked all funded projects to rate the performance of Tribal Education in administering the scheme. The responses were generally very high, with an average 'Tribal rating' of 7 out of 10. This figure was slightly higher amongst Yorkshire and Humberside organisations (7.3) and slightly lower amongst organisations in the North East (6.4). Many organisations commented on Tribal's helpfulness throughout the project, their approachability and willingness to talk through individual issues. The main criticism was around some of the jargon and new terminology at the beginning of the project, the fact that they did not have prior experience in the housing sector and their limited attendance at regional information meetings convened by SHHO at key stages of the bidding process. Face to face contact at those meetings would have saved follow up time for projects and Tribal Education alike.



**Figure 6.1 Programme participants' rating of Tribal Education in administering the programme; Source SHHO, HACT survey, Autumn 2014**

The experience of the following project captures the reasons behind Tribal's high rating with project administrators:

*But in terms of our relationship with Tribal they've been really good. I mean, L. who was their grants officer sitting under J., he's just left, but to start with he must have thought I was so dim, because I'd phone him up and say 'I don't quite understand this' and he was really good. Very helpful. J's been very helpful and when we got to a bit of a stalemate with the council before Christmas she was like right, I'll ring them, shall I? You know? And she was more than happy to intervene. She said 'Right, will it help if I get a civil servant to ring them?' (Project Champion, Redcar and Cleveland Mind)*

## 6.2 Key Legacy Arguments and Future Funding

As the title of this report suggests the evidence from the North East and Yorkshire and Humberside regions indicates that EHCGP has gone a long way to building a legacy as envisaged by its early advocates and supporters in 2010-11.

Three key legacies of the EHCGP should be considered in any future policy development; public funding, ring fencing and wider social outcomes:

1. **The role played by EHCGP itself as a capital injection of approaching £50million of public funding into bringing empty homes into use:** Without this funding injection to pump prime activity and to enable works to be started it is unlikely that there would have been anything like the scale of expansion that has been achieved (with 1500 refurbished homes generated in these two regions alone). This public funding was particularly important in attracting smaller locally focused groups into the programme. For larger groups too, who have been very successful in developing a funding cocktail mixing grants, soft loans and interest bearing loans (see 5.1) the grant has still been important. Since without the grant it is much less likely that other funding would have been attracted or stacked up to support the level of activity that it has.
2. **The impact of the bold decision to ring-fence EHCGP to non-registered providers** This was particularly important in stimulating the growth of a grass roots community sector that has the capacity and motivation to take on more empty homes work into the future. Before the EHCGP grant the sector was clustered in certain places with fewer than 50 active organisations nationally. Now well over 100 groups who are active in every region with more waiting in the wings and aware of the potential of housing for their communities. Even in the North East and Yorkshire where there were previously important clusters of activity in Leeds, Hull and the Tees Valley, EHCGP has enabled activity to spread from these clusters into neighbouring and more remote areas such as East Cleveland, Grimsby, Hartlepool, Keighley, Scarborough and Hexham.

Without ring fencing of the grant it is much less likely that this funding would have reached 'street level', by which we mean scattered empty properties in residential streets and neighbourhoods. Mainstream registered providers, with their focus on large scale green field development, are not generally interested in street properties which are seen as messy and do not easily fit business models based on volume, efficiency and risk reduction. This is evidenced by the former 'Mini-Hag' (Transitional Social Housing Grant) funding regime for empty property work which had ceased to attract many housing association participants well before it was terminated. Furthermore as noted in 6.1 the barriers to new entrants to the RP sector are substantial. While some self-help

housing projects have used EHCGP to build up track record and register with HCA, most would not meet new stringent financial viability and governance registration standards.

3. **The wider social impacts of EHCGP and the mechanisms that will be required for these to be replicated in any future programmes.** It is the wider social impacts, such as employment, training, volunteering, 'wicked issues', anti-social behaviour and crime and building the capacity of a grass roots sector that have been a major focus of this report (particularly Chapter 5) and which underpin the case for procuring housing services from groups 'beyond the usual suspects'. However, there is a danger that these wider social impacts may simply be considered as a 'nice to have' extra to housing outcomes and will not be sufficiently valued to enable them to be built into future delivery mechanisms. This argument was particularly well articulated by the Community Campus project champions reflecting on their partnership with Redcar and Cleveland Mind and other local projects. Working for wider social outcomes with local partners requires a different way of doing things, it can be messy and may take longer. This message should not be 'lost in the ether' :

*"There's a whole timetable thing as well with Tribal that's interesting because if you look at what we've done here, it's not necessarily the quickest way of doing things because actually the quickest way would be to say to Tribal, 'Give us the money. I'm going to give it to a builder. The builder's going to finish it in five weeks.' But if you want the money, then you want input into the planning, the cycle of building regulations and engaging with potential clients to get involved it's messy and it takes longer.*

*Now that doesn't fit with Tribal at all because they're champing at the bit. They want it finished tomorrow. They like the anecdotes about all the social value, but actually when you say, 'Oh, it's going to take a bit longer,' they'll go, 'Oh, is it worth it?' And I think there's a whole issue there because everybody likes the collaborative working but nobody wants to accept responsibility that it takes slightly longer than a normal-type development. But the impact of collaborative working for the apprentices and for Mind*

*clients is massive. And sometimes that gets lost in the ether.”* (Community Campus, Project Champions).

So how can this legacy be sustained? One very popular route with the sector would be to continue a programme of public funding for non-registered providers to match with other funding sources and continue to leverage remarkable levels of housing and social outcomes from relatively small amounts of grant. A survey conducted by SHHO and HACT in late 2014 indicated a remarkable appetite for further funding. This was later endorsed by the Community Land Trust Network in their 2015 Housing Manifesto:

*“What are we calling for? Government to invest £52million in another Empty Homes Community Grants Programme...there is a cohort of community-led organisations geared up to deliver another 2000 homes over the next 3 years”.* (National CLT Network, 2014 p.3

### **Appetite for Future Funding**

#### **Survey responses**

In Autumn 2014, SHHO and HACT surveyed EHCGP participants on the subject of future funding and achieved an impressive response rate in the regions covered by this report. A total of 73 organisations across the country responded. In the North East, 12 of the 14 organisations who had received EHCGP responded (85.7%). All 16 organisations in the Yorkshire & Humberside regions who had received EHCGP funding completed the survey.

Organisations were asked whether – were a similar programme to run from April 2015 - they would bid again and if so, how much they anticipated spending. Figure 6.2 compares the response in these two regions with other regions nationally. It is apparent that the level of latent demand for such a programme is higher in Yorkshire and Humberside than anywhere else in the country, and that the North East is third only to London. It is also apparent that in this part of the country the predominant interest is in a future programme based on purchase rather than leasing.

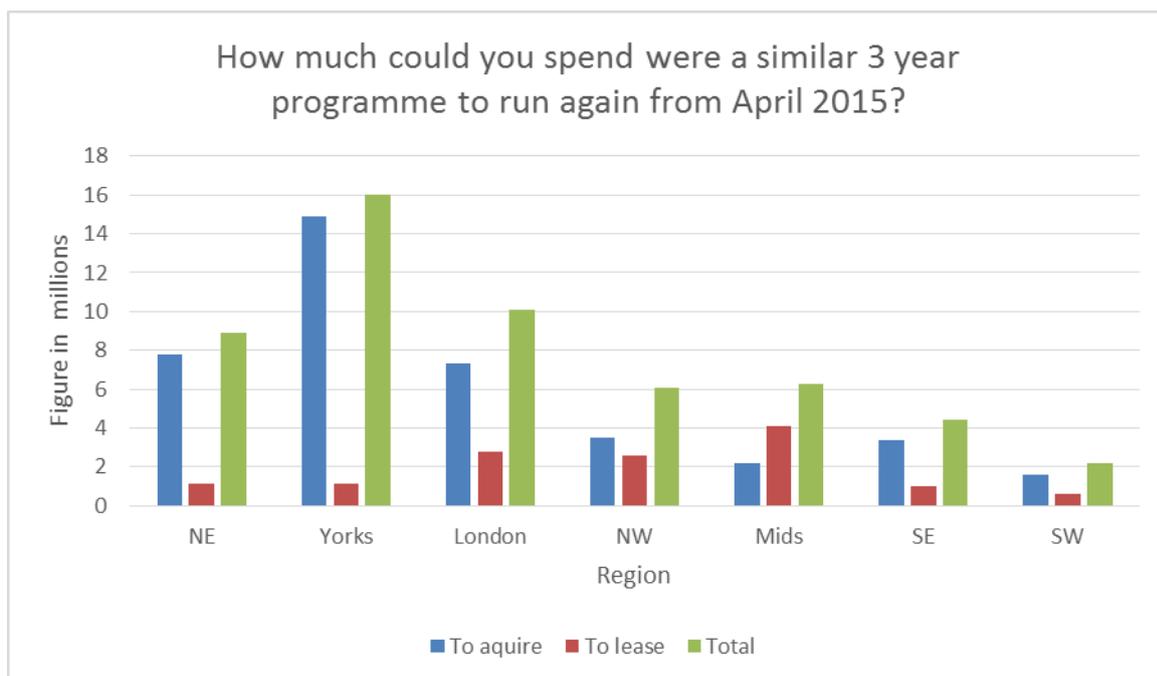


Figure 6.2 Self-help housing projects involved in EHCGP, Spending capacity over next three years; Source SHHO, HACT survey, Autumn 2014

On average, a greater proportion of organisations in the North East and Yorkshire & Humberside said that they would bid again – 100% and 93.8% respectively. This was compared with 90% across the rest of the country.

15 of the 16 organisations (93.8%) in Yorkshire & Humberside responded that they would bid again. The total investment respondents were looking to make was £15,982,221; £14,932,000 of this was to acquire properties and £1,050,221 to lease.

Of the 12 that responded in the North East, all (100%) answered that they would bid again. They estimated being able to spend £8,930,000 - £7,830,000 to acquire properties and £1,100,000 to lease.

Proportionally, organisations in Yorkshire and Humberside expected to bid for more than their counterparts in the North East (a mean figure of £1,065,481.40 compared with £744,166.66). On all counts, the proportion of organisations that said they would bid again was overwhelmingly high.

So there is a strong demand for further funding and to build on the success of the purchase model in these regions. As noted earlier, this preference for purchase relates partly to property prices and ability to deliver within programmes such as EHCGP, but the comparison with the North West and Midlands indicates that this is probably not the only explanation. There may also be greater familiarity with and confidence in a more commercial social enterprise model amongst the more experienced projects in Yorkshire and Humberside and the North East. This would be likely to lead in turn to further leverage through commercial loans and social investment, enhancing the long term sustainability of the sector in these

regions and providing good value for money from public funding. Indeed a supplementary question in the survey indicated a greater degree of willingness of projects in these two regions to supplement public funding with other sources compared to other regions.

Another question included in the survey suggests a potentially important difference for future development. This concerns the propensity to partner with housing associations (Figure 6.3)

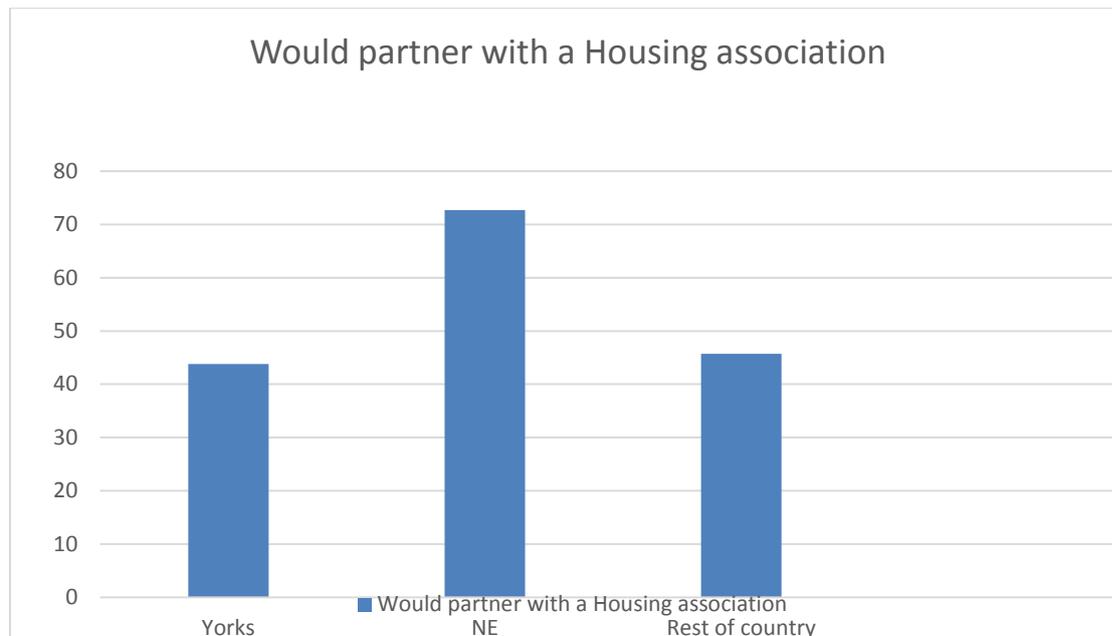


Figure 6.3 Self-help housing projects involved in EHCGP, Willingness to partner with housing associations; Source SHHO, HACT survey, Autumn 2014

8 of the 11 respondents in the North East region (72.7%) are currently or would consider working with a registered provider. This figure was considerably lower amongst organisations in Yorkshire and Humberside – at 43.8% (7/16 respondents) – and those in other regions (45.7% - 16/35 respondents). The reasons for not partnering were varied. Some organisations felt that working alone left them unencumbered and made their organisation more sustainable. It also depended on whether the housing association in turn were happy to work with smaller organisations. This could be significant in the event that EHCGP is not replaced since the only route to HCA funding is through registered providers. However, the evidence from the case studies suggests that this question may be a little hypothetical as there were very few examples of existing partnerships with housing associations, none of them involving use of such partnerships to access social housing grant.

## 6.3 Key Challenges

To help to draw practical conclusions from the research, we asked project champions about the challenges they had faced in managing their EHCGP funded project from grant application through to project completion. Three main issues emerged; business models and funding, managing the programme, staffing and partnerships.

### **Business Models, Rent Structures and Funding Gaps**

There were some particular financial challenges around the business model and the rent charged to the user. Participants had to balance the financial viability of their projects with the rent levels that intended beneficiaries were able to afford. ECHG funding allowed for rents up to 80% of the market, but resident ability to pay these was governed by their individual circumstances, age, employment status, eligibility for housing benefit. Local Housing Allowance limits effectively provided a cap to rents that could be paid without top ups by residents from other sources of income. Meanwhile property owners were often seeking rents from projects involved in leasing arrangements that were closer to market rents, leaving a potential funding gap, particularly for projects with higher management costs associated with the support needs of residents.

If there is no further public funding after 2015 such opportunities will need to come from other sources such as asset transfers, 'meanwhile use' of social housing properties in limbo awaiting regeneration or sale, and contracts to draw on local community strengths to manage hard to let properties for registered providers. Further research on the development of these alternative sources of supply of empty properties for the self-help sector is therefore urgently required.

For LATCH the programme has transformed the organisation, allowing it a far greater degree of stability and the ability to plan future expansions. Alongside other self-help housing organisations they are looking at "four to five" ways of expanding and innovating in the next few years: (1) strategic research (2) the potential for new-build projects rather than

refurbishments, with a £25k bid to HCA for a feasibility study about to be submitted. They will also bid to LCC for the use of Homes Bonus money that comes through the receipt of RTB sales; (3) to develop as a social enterprise, selling their expertise on green insulation; (4) to ask LCC to directly gift some properties (as they did in the past) and then to fund the refurbishment; (5) finally, to ask LCC to transfer ownership to Latch of some of the properties they lease for peppercorn rent (so that the asset is on the balance sheet).

A risk factor is that the support grant (20% of their income) will be reduced or not extended, but the EHCPG programme has allowed Latch to become self-supporting financially and they are confident they could survive this.

On the leasing model there was a danger that the programme had created an expectation amongst owners that they could enjoy a return near to market rents for properties that had been empty for at least six months.

### **Managing Refurbishment Programmes**

Other challenges related to managing complex works programmes, meeting targets on time with tight budgets and managing building schedules. Pressures on budgets included escalating costs and/or unexpected costs e.g. house clearance, landscaping. An underlying problem here was seen to be the lack of provision in the EHCPG scheme for revenue funding to cover management costs and external fees (beyond the 10% on cost allowance). There were also delays on conveyancing and paperwork that created additional pressure to tight refurbishment timetables:

*“But the really frustrating thing is that the council, from accepting our offer, have taken four months to get the papers to our solicitors. So our solicitors only received the papers on the 22nd December. So as yet we haven’t completed on those. We’re hoping to complete by the end of this month, and we need to get them done and tenanted by the end of March.”*

Project Champion, Redcar and Cleveland

## Staffing the Project and Partnerships

There were particular challenges for those projects to whom property refurbishment was a complicated new activity. This could put pressure on existing staff resources with outsourcing of project management, and the building of complementary partnerships.

There was also a challenge around housing management and becoming a landlord.

Community Campus partners about Redcar and Cleveland Mind:

*“We have a housing management function with a team of support workers. The challenge for Mind is obviously now they have tenants and they're going to have to devote some resources to managing those tenants out in need of support or you have the whole infrastructure support but the housing management turns out rental payments, housing benefits, tenancy agreements, policies, procedures. There's a whole raft of learning there.”* (Project Champion, Community Campus).

Using volunteers and apprentices, while a key value of strong bids, was nevertheless more time-consuming and resource intensive, and also put pressure on property turnaround timetables.

Community Campus partners of Redcar and Cleveland Mind on collaborative working and using local apprentices:

## 6.4 Advice to Other Organisations

A particularly useful part of the case study interviews was the opportunity to ask participants for the advice they would give to other organisations embarking on a similar journey to bring empty homes into use as a way to achieve some of the multiple benefits set out in chapter 5. Advice from new entrants like Redcar and Cleveland Mind is particularly valuable if future approaches are to continue to encourage viral spread to involve more grass roots organisations.

*“We had a lot of debate when we established our Empty Homes steering group around whether that was a good thing to be a landlord with enforcement rights and that sort of relationship as well as somebody who’s providing support services”*

Project Champion, Redcar and Cleveland Mind

*“I think we’ve learned a huge amount and that’s one of the things that I’ve said... In terms of the learning curve it’s been massive. So yes, although there’ve been a lot of benefits to us and will continue to be a lot of benefits to us and our service users long term, it’s been quite costly in terms of staff time, I think, because I’ve kind of been the sort of champion on it. Really, when you think that I’m being paid as a Chief Executive, for me to be trawling round Redcar and Cleveland looking at properties isn’t probably the best use of my time. Sitting here having a look on Right Move and things because nobody else will do it. But we have learned massively and it’s given us an appetite to do a lot more. And it’s also helped us forge different relationships and build contacts with other organisations.” - Redcar and Cleveland Mind.*

Case study organisations offered a range of advice to other organisations considering going down the self-help housing path. The scope to collaborate to do new things and develop free income streams and increase organisational assets was prominent, highlighting the scope that EHCGP has provided for innovation and creativity. Balancing this is the necessity for planning, research and caution and of course effort and hard work. These are all qualities that EHCGP has unleashed and which should continue to be harnessed after the programme ends.

It is interesting to consider why some local authorities have been so helpful and supportive of self-help groups while others less so. Hull City Council stands out as a key enabling authority and had well developed reasons for supporting self-help as it makes a difference for the council. It means that excluded groups such as ex-offenders gain new skills and opportunities to move into employment. It means people take pride in their properties. Volunteering is good for the city and move into economic activity. It prevents social isolation, improves public health, social care etc. Volunteers need the right support and

health & safety policies, and it is important that they are made to feel valued and not out of pocket, treated respectfully and not taken for granted. It is important both sides (volunteers and organisations) think about what they get out of it and how they benefit the work of the organisation. The advice Hull City Council offered to others typifies these beliefs and approach:

*“Engage with your council before you do anything. Make sure you have the right funding, resources and reasons for doing it and a commitment for working with private landlords. Link the work with other things going on in your locality and working with partners and your empty homes officer. I can’t praise the EHCG enough - what it has done for Hull.”*  
(Local Authority Partner Interview, Hull).

## 6.5 Future Prospects

The research has indicated the importance of EHCGP in kick starting new activity in a sector that had been locally active but not widespread and had shown no general increase in activity since the 1980s. This has left the sector in a qualitatively different position to 2010. Not only have we seen a build-up in output, assets and organisational capacity but there has been a growth in organisational learning and exchange between organisations that has left a legacy at sector level. Where do we expect things to go over the next few years and what should be done to consolidate the progress that has been made?

We have constructed three scenarios to map possible futures for the sector. These scenarios are not intended to be mutually exclusive but to indicate some broad direction of travel and the combinations of factors that might be associated with each direction. Because we are convinced of the power of the legacy that has been left by EHCGP none of these three scenarios is about decline, but rather about different models of expansion. Of course for individual organisations empty homes work may become less important than it has been over the last five years, particularly under scenarios 2 and 3 which exclude a replacement public funding programme for empty homes.

## **Scenario 1 - Continued Viral Expansion through Collaboration of Existing Groups with new Grass Roots Entrants.**

The case study research reported here has found that there is an opportunity for the further growth of the community-led housing sector through publicly funded programmes like EHCGP. Evidence from this project has shown how collaborative partnerships between community organisations and local councils can work well to maximise the benefits of such funding for neighbourhood, towns and cities. The guidance from knowledgeable advisors such as SHHO and more established self-help housing providers can empower smaller community based organisations to bid for and undertake grant funded projects they would not even have considered taking on alone.

So where will the new entrants come from? The experience of EHCGP has shown the particular scope for local charities and community based social enterprises involved in other fields to diversify into housing to fill the gap left by the housing association sector as it scaled up and focused increasingly on large scale house building rather than street level regeneration.

The 'start up' activity documented in this report has included entry into housing refurbishment and management by a small mental health charity, a Community Finance provider (CDFI), two supported housing projects who had not previously been involved in housing development a work, a protest group against housing demolition, a local employment and training social enterprise founded by a local regeneration partnership, and a local development trust.

The latter two examples (Goodwin and Fresh Horizons) highlight the potential of local community anchor organisations to spawn the next generation of grass roots housing organisations. The 150 Big Local Partnerships, a number of whom have already identified housing as a key community priority, might form a fertile ground from which new empty homes action projects could grow. Further potential lies in the increasing organisation of groups left out of the housing market and from social housing. Groups such as Priced Out and Generation Rent could provide a recruitment base for new self-help projects, following the transition made by groups such as Middlesbrough CLT from protest into self-help social

action. It is this 'can do' approach that could spark continued viral expansion of self-help housing given the right policy and funding environment. Local churches, mosques and gurudwaras might provide another potential launch point for existing social capital and values to be channelled into community-led empty homes projects.

**This scenario would be relevant to support a new cohort of entrants similar to Redcar and Cleveland Mind and Five Lamps through public funding. This works best by new entrants joining an expanding and vibrant sector; and is greatly enhanced by supportive relationships with stronger and more established partners within the sector.**

### **Scenario 2 – Exploiting Social Value to attract Wider Funding and Asset Transfers into the Sector**

A second scenario which gains some credence from this report is a further expansion of the sector based on the evidence of social value and wide community benefit in section 5. This scenario might also accommodate asset transfer in recognition of the social value provided and could enable continued new entrants. This could be assisted by the substitution of funding for social outcomes to replace the EHCGP public funding for housing outputs.

So where is the money? The evidence on leverage presented in section 5.1, including the SHHO/HACT survey indicated the success of the sector in topping up EHCGP with other sources of funding, very conservatively estimated to total of £26million. The interesting aspect of this data for this scenario is the breakdown of the £26 million between different funding sources. Grants and soft loans from charitable foundations have been an important underpinning of the recent growth of the sector with significant support for some organisations coming from the Nationwide Foundation, sector wide support for SHHO coming from the Tudor Trust.

More local social purpose funding has also been accessed by many projects, with for example Fresh Horizons' diversification into empty homes work supported by seed grants and loans from the local DBI regeneration initiative and from the local authority in Kirkless. Similarly Changing Lives has accessed charitable funding to furnish its completed properties to enable people with very limited savings to move in and live normally. This grant and soft

loan funding has been secured by many projects because they can demonstrate to these funders the added social value of their approach. By making these benefits more widely known to charitable foundations and social investors it is possible that some of the public housing funding lost if there is no new EHCGP could be substituted by other sources of social funding.

The cost benefit analysis undertaken for Canopy (Real\_Improvement 2014) indicates the potential to take the social value approach further. By quantifying a range of wider benefits to society of their work it can be seen that their value extends well beyond the housing field into mental health , and well-being, education, employment and criminal justice. While the Canopy analysis placed less emphasis on 'third party benefits' for example to statutory services such as Health and Education than on benefits to individual tenants, volunteers and employees, the logical extension of the analysis is that these benefits should not only be 'monetised' but also 'traded' so that savings to public services result in income to the projects. This may seem an unlikely scenario in the current austerity and cost cutting climate. However, where this has stimulated cross-cross cutting thinking such as community budgeting, there may could be potential for proven monetary benefits to be rewarded.

Community Campus provides an example of wider public benefits that their style of working delivers . The challenge is to package this social value to allow local authorities and other statutory agencies to buy into it and thereby potentially make net savings.

Local authorities may be in a weaker position to assist as a result of further austerity and funding cuts but they are tasked to recognise social value and still have property and land assets which could provide an important stimulus to the sector. The experience of asset transfer negotiated by Middlesbrough CLT with Middlesbrough Council (see 5.6) could provide a mechanism to continue the momentum for asset ownership expansion. This provided a major boost for the emergent CLT provides a good example of the role of asset transfer in this scenario. The assets transferred have provided for the first new additions to the housing supply in Gresham since the HMRA programme commenced.

Similarly many housing associations hold assets that do not fit their current business model and have been disposing of these through private sales to help finance new construction

activity. These disposals reflect their asset management strategies which compare the costs and value of continued use of these properties leading to disposal of properties whereas costs exceed value. While negligible to date, there is clear potential for some low value disposals from housing associations to self-help community groups. If a vehicle could be established to transfer these assets into the self-help housing sector this could provide a further boost to the sector. This would also recognise the social value that self-help can add through improving and managing these neglected assets in a more socially responsible way than private landlords currently purchasing housing association surplus stock. These landlords have a weaker management tradition and community approach than has been demonstrated by self-help housing organisations.

**This scenario is of particular relevance to projects like Canopy and Community Campus who are clear about the wider social value they deliver and would require sector and could also support asset transfers by local authorities and housing associations. It will be fostered through partnerships with charitable foundations and social investors who value these wider benefits. It could be further developed through asset transfers from local authorities and housing associations.**

### **Scenario 3- Consolidation of Existing Sector around EHCGP Legacy and Social Enterprise Models.**

The absence of any replacement for EHCGP funding would make continued viral expansion of the sector and growth through new entrants less likely. Instead the ability of more established groups already holding assets to leverage further funding would provide the main prospects of further expansion. The supportive networks and partnerships that have been evidenced in places like Leeds, Hull and the Tees Valley could become even more crucial for the sector moving forward and for these self-help projects to remain sustainable. This suggests that stronger individual organisations and strong regional clusters of mutually supporting organisations would be the most likely to prosper under this scenario.

The value of assets accumulated under EHCGP would provide the engine for consolidation around a social enterprise model. However, while these assets can provide a valuable long term free income stream for these organisations, the potential to borrow against their asset

value is a one off advantage that could quite rapidly be used up. External contract opportunities could continue to stimulate growth through social enterprise and trading models for established self-help projects to grow. Some projects such as Fresh Horizons have developed a range of packages to motivate owners of empty homes to share the costs and benefits of bringing properties into use, and it is possible that versions of these could work with little or no public subsidy, but this would require a change of mind-set on the part of many landlords. Links with local authority Social Lettings Agencies can provide a potential vehicle for such activity, with management fees and contribution to repair costs providing a cash flow for the providers.

**This scenario is best exemplified by Fresh Horizons, Key House, Latch and Giroscope who have developed successful social enterprise models to build on their assets and to provide services to landlords, local authorities and other purchasers. Collaborative partnerships in Leeds, Hull and Tees Valley could continue to support smaller partners in this scenario.**

## 6.5 Recommendations

Five main recommendations are supported by the evidence in this report. These are designed to promote the legacy of EHCGP and the future sustainability of the sector and will be the focus of further work by the Housing and Communities Research Group with SHHO.

1. **Extract Key Learning From Case Studies:** Undertake research to inform sector legacy work by extracting key learning from these case studies and building on the scenarios above to support future sector sustainability.
2. **Maintain Regional Networks:** Continue to share learning within the sector through support for SHHO and regional networks such as Leeds, Hull and Tees Valley
3. **Introduce New Public Grants Programme:** Introduce a new public grants programme particularly targeted on smaller community based and new entrants and on achieving social value.
4. **Expand the role of Social Investors & Charitable Foundations:** Continue to expand contribution of social investors and charitable foundations to supplement grant and commercial loan income.
5. **Facilitate New Entrants Into Empty Homes Work:** Seek new entrants from local community anchor and other social enterprise type organisations able to contribute to and capable of benefiting from empty homes work.

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