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Community-led housing and partnerships in practice

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Context

- Community-led housing groups regularly partner with housing associations
- Often in response to challenges related to perceived legitimacy/reliability of groups, gaps in willingness/appetite to assume responsibility and risk for development process, and acquiring funding.
- CLH groups often struggle (or do not wish) to obtain Registered Provider status, which is required to act as a landlord of Govt subsidy-funded rental homes.
- Partnerships cited as a potential delivery route in latest Community Housing Fund prospectus.



How do such partnerships (typically) work?

- The local community group/organisation owns, manages and stewards land, with Registered Provider owning freehold or leasehold of properties that stand upon it.
- Necessary for CLH groups that do not wish to become Registered Providers, due to the perceived bureaucracy of this: application procedures, reporting requirements, ongoing obligations perceived as disproportionate to organisational capacity and appetite for risk (Moore, 2018).
- Registered Provider (HA) would deal with grant application and often oversee development process, often assuming the risks related to this (Moore, 2015), while supporting CLH group with in-depth and meaningful community planning processes.



What are the advantages?

- Where successful, mutually supportive arrangements are devised that meet the interests of both partners
 - CLH group: low-cost homes planned and designed through meaningful community engagement, and allocated according to local needs, preferences and priorities.
 - Registered Provider: extension of existing community-based activity, strengthening community engagement & acceptance of development, and often accessing sites that may be otherwise unavailable due to development (tackling 'NIMBYism').



What are the challenges?

- ‘Postcode lottery’ of finding a partner – key to identify one whose values and working practices coalesce with those of CLH. Is the motivation to widen portfolios or to act on shared emphasis on community leadership?
- Potential to cede control and influence where one partner dominant.
- Community Housing Fund monies are available to RPs not necessarily working in partnership. While understandable – RPs often community-based and have strong parallels with CLH groups – how can CLH ensure it secures it’s ‘fair share’?



Lessons for Birmingham

- Partnerships are often facilitated by, and emerge from, the crucial support given by CLH hubs/enablers. Enablers often act as an important conduit and mediator of the relationship (Moore and Mullins, 2013).
- Partnerships are an effective way of scaling up and out CLH activity & of working to provide social good with actors that share similar values – potential unlocking resources and opportunities for both partners that would not otherwise be there.
- There is no ‘one size fits all’ model – of CLH or of partnerships. Transplanting learning from one community to another may not work; instead partnerships need be negotiated in relation to local circumstances, relationships, ambitions, needs and priorities.



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Thanks for listening

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References

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