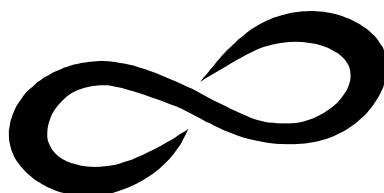


# Northamptonshire Community Housing Network



**Working with people with Learning Disabilities  
to find housing**

## **Our Vision and Approach**

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Programme Coordinator

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## **The Aims of the Community Housing Network**

The main aim of the Network will be to help people with a Learning Disability to help each other to explore their housing options and live happily as part of our communities in Northamptonshire.

## **Background to the Network**

The Network has been formed following the production of the Northamptonshire Learning Disability Housing Plan in January 2011. The Plan was commissioned by the Learning Disability Partnership Board and co-produced by the members of the 'Finding a Place to Live Group'.

One of the main issues identified in the Plan is that people with learning disabilities need consistent help to support them to explore their housing options, work out which is best for them and to settle in to their community once they move in. Whilst some organisations are helping with pieces of this 'housing journey' there are many parts where no formal help, guidance or accessible information is available.

We found that in many cases people felt let down by the statutory organisations, like Social Services and their Local District or Borough Council's. The support they provide was either not known about, difficult to access or just not available when and in the form that people needed.

Ultimately, despite the government's intention that people with a learning disability experience real housing choice, for most this is not happening nor do many people have any awareness that they even have a choice.

In developing a solution to help address these needs more effectively, the group also considered the increasing financial pressures on statutory services and the forthcoming reductions in public funding.

The Community Housing Network is born out of this work and its proposed structure is a creative response to both the present financial climate and also the desire of people to have greater control and choice in planning for and meeting our own housing needs.

## **How It Will Operate**

There are two main functions for the Network, to focus on helping people.

- ❖ through the housing journey, and
- ❖ receive support to connect and 'root' within our communities

## **Co-production**

It will be run using co-production principles, which emphasise the benefits of people and professionals working together equally to achieve their aims. Members will collectively share their skills and help to meet some of each other's needs using approaches such as Timebanking.

As well as helping each other, The Network also offers a means by which members can support other people in the broader community, providing an opportunity for all members to 'give' as well as receive.

## **Timebanking**

This is where people share time and skills to help each other. For every hour of help given a person receives 1 time credit. They can then use this time credit to 'pay for' any help they need from others.

In the Housing Network it is our intention to enable members to be rewarded for the skills they share. Thus offering a kind of 'employment' and an opportunity to learn new skills as well as enhance existing ones. This will help many people, previously reliant on benefits, begin to sustain themselves in new ways. Members will be rewarded using a mixture of 'timecredits' and money on a percentage basis, where funds permit.

Where people earn timecredits they will be able to 'spend' these on other services offered within the Timebank or in exchange for the housing training programmes and events on offer through the Network.

For example one member may help another on their housing journey and receive 5 time credits for 5 hours help. They could then chose to buy :-

- ❖ a 1 hour massage from member A
- ❖ 2 hours help in their garden from member E
- ❖ 1 hour to attend a exercise class run by member H
- ❖ 2 hour's help on their housing journey from member T.

For the Network to be sustainable the services available to people via the Timebank need to be useful and broad ranging. The more people who share both professional and personal skills the more useful the Timebank will be to the community it serves, and the more effective this form of exchange between people and organisations will become.

We also intend to encourage organisations, as members of the Network, to offer their skills & services using timebanking, to individuals, groups and the Network itself. This will make time credits more accepted as a form of exchange by not just people but also by businesses, voluntary groups and local Council's. At this time of financial pressure this could have a profoundly positive impact on our community.

### **Who Can Join The Network**

Network membership will be open to anyone in the local community including:-

- ❖ People with a Learning Disability or Difficulty
- ❖ Family members, supporters and other vulnerable people
- ❖ Community members,
- ❖ Local businesses or voluntary organisations
- ❖ Local advocate organisations
- ❖ Housing and support providers

### **Network Actions**

The Housing Network will help people to:-

- ❖ Broaden their awareness of ways of living and try out some of these
- ❖ Explore their housing desires and understand their housing needs
- ❖ Think about where they wish to live, work out the costs and help people find money to pay for them
- ❖ Work together with others to create their housing solutions
- ❖ Explore support / care options to sustain themselves
- ❖ Help people to move, settle in, make friends with neighbours and connect into their new community,
- ❖ Provide a route for people to offer support to other people
- ❖ Act as a link between people and organisations that help them

## **Creating Housing Solutions Together**

It is our intention to actively create a broader range of housing solutions for people with a learning disability. We envisage therefore, that as we begin to understand our housing desires we will be able to approach housing providers to create more housing solutions in partnership with others. So the Network will be able not only to support people to understand their housing needs but also to have greater control and input in meeting these needs.

## **The Objectives in 2011-2012**

We are looking to establish the Network as a self sustaining body by April 2012. This year provides us with an opportunity to test out our ideas and approaches. Our main objectives in this first year, therefore will be to:-

- (a) Set up the Community Housing Network
- (b) work with an agreed number of people and families to explore their housing options, needs and help them move if they wish
- (c) Produce housing guides and information which will help people expand their options
- (d) Establish a Housing 'try out' scheme where people can have a go at living in a variety of ways,
- (e) Start working with Local Housing Authorities to improve their methods of providing housing advice and helping people with Learning Disabilities to apply for Social Housing,
- (f) Make contact with local housing providers to begin the planning and creating required housing solutions
- (g) Work with People with learning disability to begin recording people's housing needs and desires and collating this data

## **The Hosting Body**

To help the Network get started we have selected a local organisation, based in Northamptonshire, to host us. This organisation is the Delos Community. The main duties of the host body are to:-

1. Begin carrying out some of the actions identified for the Network in the Learning Disability Housing Plan
2. Hold any funds, resources or 'staff' the Network begins to attract

3. Support colleagues and friends to begin setting up the Network, establishing appropriate business and operational systems
4. Provide mentoring and capacity building skills to members so they will be ready to take its reins and launch the Network as an independent enterprise by April 2012

### **The Core Values & Ethos of the Network**

The Network is built on a range of shared values, ethos and beliefs, these include the following:-

- **Sharing needs / gifts & skills** - we all have needs to meet and gifts / skills to share
- **Respect** - we respect and appreciate each other
- **Co-operation** – we can achieve so much more if we work together
- **Responsibility** – we can take responsibility to meet our own needs and jointly lead in creating our own solutions, in partnership
- **Inclusive** – we wish to encourage and support all community members to join in and be a part of our community
- **Valuing people & Appreciation** – we value and appreciate the skills, expertise & contributions of all
- We value money and time shared equally
- **Compassionate** – we wish to nurture an attitude of compassion and mutual support in our Communities

### **The Operating Details**

People will have the option to pay for services they access using a proportion of money and or time credits. This approach should enable the network to be much more sustainable making it much less vulnerable in the present climate. Where funds are required it will be a key aim of the Network to seek this finance from private rather than public sources. This finance could be acquired by

- ❖ charging fees and membership charges
- ❖ receiving investment from local businesses and
- ❖ applying for grants, fundraising and seeking contributions.

## **How it will Work – Accessing Our Programmes & Services**

The Network will use the shared skills of its members to run the services. There will be no separation of 'staff' & 'customers'. We intend to provide services to people in two forms,

- ❖ firstly by offering a range of 'training' programmes, and
- ❖ secondly by offering one to one services

## **Using Programmes**

By providing collective 'training' programmes to help people through their housing journey we hope to be able to both draw on the collective skills and experience of people and communities, and keep the costs of accessing this detailed support to a minimum.

The types of programmes we intend to offer include:-

1. A housing options awareness programme
2. A 'try out' programme
3. A programme to help people identify their housing needs, desires, exploring the costs, resources & help to make it happen
4. a Life skills programme

These programmes will be accessible to :-

- (a) People with a learning disability
- (b) Family members, carers and supporters
- (c) Community members and
- (d) Professional colleagues wanting to enhance their knowledge and their support skills in this area

## **Membership and Paying for Services**

There will be a charge for the services & programmes we offer. Our main aim is to make these charges as cost effective as possible for people, and to off set some of the costs using an annual subscription. Through these membership arrangements we will be able to make the programmes more accessible and foster a spirit of sharing and supporting each other.

More work is required to create this membership structure and agree charge levels.

## Setting Up the Network - Getting Started

I have been appointed as the Network a coordinator. I will lead in helping the Network achieve its planned aims for 2011-2012. The main actions over the next few months will be:-

NO	ACTION
1	Agree governance & management arrangements
2	Agree principles, ethos & aims of the Network
3	Create Network constitution (short term )
4	Set up a management group/ committee
5	Establish membership levels & method of operation
6	Set up the Training Programmes; the housing journey, life skills and staff training
7	Set up & Launch the Timebank
8	Create the tools for the Housing Programme(s)
9	Clarify the resources needed to operate the Network (a) People (b) Things
10	Promote the Network and recruit members to help run it
11	Identify the groups and people to do the work
12	Launch the Network and its programmes

## Come and Join Us

If you feel inspired by what you've heard please get in touch. You can do this by contacting Marion Turner on 01933 677889, by emailing [mturner@myhomemysay.co.uk](mailto:mturner@myhomemysay.co.uk). For more information about the Housing Plan or the Network please go to our website [www.myhomemysay.co.uk](http://www.myhomemysay.co.uk)

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