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**co-op**  
H O M E S

*part of RHP Group*

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Photos taken at Depford Housing Co-op residents' summer BBQ.  
Photographer: Gilbert Odeje

## ABOUT US

“Our aim for the business is to work with a co-operative ethos to help people and their communities flourish.”

### Who are we?

Co-op Homes (South) Ltd was set up in 1986 by a group of primary housing co-operatives to provide expert services to housing co-operatives and other small, resident-led housing organisations. We have in-depth knowledge of the needs and aspirations of housing co-ops and value the part we play in the community housing sector. Our aim is to help members retain their own independence and keep control of their co-ops.

We're an active member of the Confederation of Co-operative Housing (CCH), the London Federation of Housing Co-operatives (LFHC) and we work in partnership with Thamesbank Credit Union. We manage 300 of our own homes across London and the South East and provide management services to 27 housing co-ops.

We have our own Board of Management and operate as an independent organisation but we're also part of the larger RHP Group. This helps us achieve efficiencies and gives us access to in-house specialist support yet still retain our personal service and stay involved at a grass roots level.

We hold accreditation for quality and excellence in service provision from the CCH - the organisation set up to promote, represent and provide good practice guidance to co-operative and tenant-controlled housing.

### **We place customers at the core of our business**

We encourage all customers (individuals or corporate) to participate in the development and running of our business through a variety of routes including board membership and the customer focus and Co-op Homes user group. Our customer and employee satisfaction have increased to 88% and 100% respectively.

### **We're open and honest**

We're always looking to improve our services and welcome feedback from all our customers on how we're doing. We use this to improve and develop what we do.

### **We're a learning organisation**

We share our performance on a regular basis. This includes feeding back on the areas our customers tell us we do well in and where we need to improve.

### **We invest in our people**

Our employees are the key to our high-quality service. As part of RHP Group, we've achieved Investors in People (IIP) Platinum until 2020. Our team is experienced in working with housing co-ops and other community housing groups. We're privileged to have specialists in housing management, finance and asset management, surveying, governance and customer service working for us and our clients.

### **Our services are flexible, transparent and accountable**

We give our clients the freedom to choose how many or how few elements of our services they wish to subscribe to. Some clients have the full suite of services, others have just one or two (for example, just repairs, rents or admin etc). You choose! Our pricing structure is clear and aligned to the number and type of services our customers choose. If you ask us to carry out a piece of work outside your personalised management agreement, we'll let you know in advance if additional charges apply.

For one-off, additional ad-hoc projects outside the management agreement or interim long or short-term consultancy work, prices are agreed before a project is started and any amendments are agreed in advance.

So our clients and customers can interact with us 24 hours a day and from any device, we offer an online portal for residents as standard and can also offer a digital-only service to clients at a reduced rate.

References available on request.

For a snapshot of what we do for our clients continue reading. If there's an area you need help with that's not listed feel free to get in touch for an informal chat or reach out by email.

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# INTERACTIVITY

We're part of RHP Group – trailblazers within the housing sector in their approach to digital technology.

At Co-op Homes we're expanding the ways people can access our services digitally, like booking a repair by text or paying rent online. We believe this to be a good investment as research confirms that being agile in this area will pay dividends for us, our clients and our residents. It means that we can offer a fresh and flexible approach to service delivery and ensure that your members and our residents will benefit from a faster, more convenient and efficient service at a time that suits them - on any device.

Further digital transformation will contribute to a reduction in our cost base, call volumes and operating costs, all of which will help us maintain better value for money.

**We can offer you and your members a variety of ways to interact with us:**

## **Telephone:**

Calls answered by dedicated named employees (no call centres here).

## **Email:**

Direct contact to our Repairs, Finance, Customer Services and Governance teams.

## **Web:**

Secure home page [www.coophomes.coop](http://www.coophomes.coop) optimised for any device.

Dedicated co-op pages, with password protected members' and committee areas.

Webforms to report repairs, attach photos, log complaints and comment on services.

## **MyTenancy:**

A secure portal to check:

- › household details on tenancies
- › gas safety inspection dates
- › repair history
- › rent payment details
- › account statements
- › rent balance and pay rent online



**Text:**

A dedicated text number to contact us and beat the queue.  
Your members will be able to:

- › receive an immediate rent account balance
- › request a call back to discuss a rent account
- › request a new rent payment card
- › set up a Direct Debit
- › set up a Standing Order
- › report a repair
- › contact us about any query and request a call back to discuss
- › feedback on repair satisfaction

With our digital transformation programme, we're looking at further improving access and cost effectiveness for front and back office users whilst never forgetting that our customers retain the choice to interact with us in a way that suits them best.





## RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

We're committed to providing excellent customer service and believe this is best achieved by working with our clients on the issues that matter most to them. Customer involvement is at the heart of our business and by listening, we continually develop and improve our services for everyone's benefit.

### Improving our services

Our three-year Resident Engagement Plan represents our commitment and empowers our customers to influence the services we provide.

### Getting involved means working in partnership

We're always keen to get feedback or suggestions and work with our customers to make things better.

Our customers can get involved in the way that suits them best. This could include having a say on an issue, developing and monitoring new and existing services or helping us to develop and review policies and strategies.

We've made it as easy as possible for people to have their say. We recognise that not everyone has the time to commit in the same way, so we have a variety of routes for involvement including: Board of Management, Customer Focus Group and the Co-op Homes Users Group. Users can also help us shape services by feeding back on our customer newsletters and our interactive website.

### We can help you and your members improve services by:

Inviting your residents to join our Customer Focus Group which meets regularly to discuss:

- › our customer newsletter, Word on the Street
- › policies and procedures
- › contractor selection processes
- › our current performance and service improvements suggestions
- › revisions to booklets, leaflets and other communication
- › website content and functionality
- › contractor performance
- › complaints.

There's also an opportunity for our co-op committee representatives to join the Co-op Homes User Group (CHUG). This is an independent group chaired by an elected representative from our partner organisations. CHUG is hugely influential, reporting to the Co-op Homes' Board on key issues and concerns and providing invaluable insight on how we're doing from our clients' perspective.

### Helping you improve your organisation's resident engagement

We can help you develop your own resident engagement action plan to ensure your members become more involved in the development of your co-op.

We can help you produce:

- › annual reports
- › resident newsletters
- › leaflets and other literature
- › marketing material and posters
- › a client page on our website at [www.coophomes.coop](http://www.coophomes.coop)

We can create an annual publicity programme, respond to ad-hoc requests, develop content or editorials, help with design and print and co-ordinate mailouts. We'll make sure your publicity reaches the right audience in the most effective format. This will increase readership and feedback, improve services and help you understand the needs of your members.







# HOUSING MANAGEMENT

Co-op Homes' team of experienced housing advisors offers expert knowledge of resident-led housing management. Their expertise ranges from interviewing applicants, investigating and resolving members' enquiries and complaints through to tenancy and void management, rent arrears, attending court and implementing judgements.

## We'll be happy to:

- › welcome applicants to your waiting lists
- › collect nominations and housing applications for consideration to your allocation committees
- › carry out accompanied viewings
- › carry out new tenant sign-ups
- › assess aids & adaptation applications for funding/responsibility
- › manage the mutual exchange process
- › monitor tenancies and enforce action in line with your tenancy agreements
- › take appropriate action with low-level ASB cases
- › set up rent accounts and arrange regular payment methods
- › manage rent arrears in line with your policy including issuing Notices to Quit
- › report and feedback to your management committee on a regular basis on rent and arrears collections, tenancy issues and action points arising from your committee meetings.
- › represent the co-op at court
- › end tenancies
- › deal with former tenants' arrears
- › monitor any grounds and estates management services.



## REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE SERVICES

We know you need access to trusted contractors who can deliver a quality, affordable repairs and maintenance service. We also know that not having access to approved contractors can cause delays and frustration to your residents. We'll help you establish and maintain your own approved contractors list or give you access to ours and our other clients' approved contractors, all of whom can deliver excellent services and value for money.

We're proud of our performance on day-to-day repairs and are committed to fixing things fast to last for our customers.

We can offer you a range of repairs and maintenance services including:

- › responsive day-to-day repairs
- › out-of-hours emergency service
- › voids and re-let repairs
- › estates management

- › aids and adaptations
- › planned and cyclical maintenance
- › landlord gas servicing
- › stock condition surveys
- › large-scale contracts

As part of the service you'll also receive:

- › repairs ordering and monitoring
- › invoice processing
- › purchase ledger and payments
- › contractor and repairs performance monitoring
- › customer feedback collation and reporting
- › annual contract reviews
- › contract procurement
- › landlord gas safety record management and reporting
- › regular repairs performance reporting to your management committee

In line with your maintenance procedures, our experienced team will:

- › receive and diagnose repair requests received by telephone, text, web form and email
- › select appropriate contractors and issue repair orders to be completed within agreed time frames
- › provide an out-of-hours emergency service using an outside agency as appropriate
- › administer the progress of repairs and monitor contractors' performance
- › ensure customer satisfaction is received before authorising invoice for payment
- › work in adherence to your financial standing orders
- › monitor and report performance of the annual gas servicing contract
- › receive and store Landlords Gas Safety Records
- › arrange periodic audit of the work carried out by gas servicing contractors and resolve any quality issues.

# GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

We're proud of our qualified and knowledgeable team. Their experience includes advice on governance requirements, keeping our clients up-to-date on regulation and legislation and helping develop the skills and expertise of Management Committees.

We've developed excellent working relationships with our clients' Management Committees, Boards of Management and individual members. These relationships have enabled our clients to use Co-op Homes as a resource for all things governance.

## We can:

- › service your committee, special and annual general meetings
- › feed back on your meeting action points
- › document your policies
- › give you access to our good practice policy templates
- › document your membership records
- › file your Annual Returns to the FCA, HCA, Charity Commissioner etc
- › submit SDRs to the HCA

- › conduct complaint investigations
- › renew your data protection information annually to the Information Commissioner
- › assist and advise on good governance and practice
- › give guidance on the role and conduct of management committee members.

## We're also happy to:

- › advise on data protection issues, and in particular GDPR with its implications for co-ops and their management committees as data controllers
- › organise bespoke training and development opportunities using internal or external providers, designed to maintain high governance standards
- › help you carry out self-assessment against the Accreditation Framework which is based on the Regulatory Standards
- › share knowledge and good practice gleaned from our membership of the G320 - a group set up to promote and share good practice amongst small housing associations. The Group meets regularly with regulators to influence on legislative changes
- › help you draw up an action plan to address any areas where you may need to to improve your organisation's performance.



# HEALTH & SAFETY

Co-op Homes has access to an experienced health and safety team with expert knowledge and experience to help keep you and your members safe.

## We can assist with:

- › fire risk assessments (including regular inspections of internal and external communal areas)
- › landlord gas safety testing
- › Legionella assessments
- › lone worker assessments
- › asbestos risk assessment
- › contractor monitoring
- › safe systems of work
- › periodic electrical testing

All health and safety issues are reviewed regularly, both operationally and strategically for both Co-op Homes' own properties and those of our partner organisations.

Health and safety is also subject to a rigorous and independent audit and reviewed by our Group Risk Committee.



# FINANCIAL PLANNING, MANAGEMENT & ACCOUNTING

To help you develop robust medium and long-term financial plans, we can assess your current finances and evaluate future strength by examining:

- › management accounts
- › budgets
- › target rent details
- › grant and loans portfolios
- › leases (existing or proposed)
- › financial Standing Orders
- › treasury Management arrangements
- › list of properties unencumbered
- › insurance
- › future acquisitions
- › your Management Plan.



We also work with you to improve value for money by increasing income and helping make best use of your resources by:

- › making sure you're able to set your rent levels annually in line with the current rent regime
- › providing Treasury Management advice
- › improving rent collection and utilising efficient arrears management services
- › achieving economies of scale e.g. insurance and repairs contracting
- › achieving preferential banking and deposit interest rates.

Our experienced and highly-qualified team of finance professionals can also:

- › prepare your Annual Budget including income and expenditure and a cash flow forecast
- › prepare expenditure reports and budget comparisons
- › prepare Annual Accounts ready for audit
- › make sure mortgage payments are made on time and pay duly authorised and checked invoices and other payments on your behalf
- › instruct your bankers of changes in authorised signatories and prepare bank mandates for signature

- › make sure necessary insurances are arranged, including building, fidelity guarantee, and public liability insurances where appropriate.
- › apply promptly for any grant available at your request and report back
- › advise on applying for any tax or other reliefs and grants within current or future legislation
- › advise on any legislation that may affect your financial standing
- › take all reasonable steps to safeguard your financial interests and assets
- › make sure monies due to you are promptly recovered and banked and reconcile all your accounts
- › keep accurate, promptly updated and maintained records in accordance with good accounting practice and regulation
- › report on our performance a regular basis







# ASSET MANAGEMENT

Our experienced asset management team can help you develop a five-year planned maintenance programme as part of an asset management plan.

We believe that planned maintenance and asset management improves the quality of properties and helps give residents what they need - warm and dry homes. It also helps to increase the quality of customers' lives, while lowering energy bills and protecting the planet by reducing CO2 emissions.

We apply these values to all the work we carry out on behalf of our clients as well as helping define what the landlord's responsibilities are. These include the provision, state and proper working order of the exterior and structural elements of the property and its installations.

A planned maintenance programme can significantly increase the sustainability of your asset bases and overall operational efficiency. This results in real value for money for repairs and maintenance services, reducing the day-to-day repairs and maintenance costs.

To help you develop a robust asset management plan we will assess your:

- › current stock condition
- › maintenance activity since the last stock condition survey
- › historical data on the Decent Homes Standard
- › works to make sure they meet the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) standards
- › planning restrictions
- › leases (repairing obligations etc).

On request we can draw up an annual maintenance plan with our calculation of your maintenance needs. This will help you with budgeting and scheduling. We can include provision for routine and cyclical works, major repairs, common service and equipment replacements.

We're also highly experienced in providing specifications, invitations for tender and contract management for planned and cyclical maintenance, major repairs and development.

We'll prepare reports on the progress of substantial contracts, make regular inspections of works in progress and ensure payments are not made until the contract requirements have been satisfied. We'll enforce retentions if we or our client think it's necessary.

# PROCUREMENT

We can help you manage the complex and time-consuming process of acquiring products, works and services. We work in line with your Financial Standing Orders and the latest procurement regulations.

## We're happy to:

- › advise on providing in-house or procured services
- › advise on products to repair or replace
- › identify and deliver efficiencies
- › make sure all procurement decisions are transparent and evidenced
- › develop opportunities for you and your members to be part of the tendering process
- › assist you to identify potential procurement partners, procurement clubs and value for money services
- › make sure you meet UK and European procurement regulations as appropriate

## Our service will help you to:

- › deliver value for money
- › reduce administration time and costs
- › develop effective partnerships with contractors, suppliers and service providers

- › identify quality skilled labour using local contractors
- › improve project planning and risk management of large scale contracts and expenditure
- › access joint procurement initiatives to increase value for money
- › ensure fair employment terms in procured contracts
- › support diversity, environmental and ethical suppliers and supplies
- › comply with legislation and regulatory requirements
- › be transparent and accountable to residents and partners

## Operationally we can help you:

- › manage the tendering process
- › shortlist interested contractors
- › provide tender evaluation
- › complete an audit trail report detailing the whole process
- › contract manage works in progress
- › provide your management committee with regular updates
- › sign off works
- › review your processes



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