



Student Co-op Homes

Strategy summary, 2022 – 2025

Aim This document will set out our mission, goals and how we have measured if we have achieved.

Our Mission To build a thriving and large scale student housing co-operative movement.

1. Our Story

Student Co-operative Homes (SCH) is a member-led co-operative, founded in March 2018. We are the national body designed to grow the student housing co-operative sector across the UK, and offer an alternative solution to expensive, poor quality, and profit-driven housing. SCH aims to support the growth of a student-led network of co-operators and empower student-led democratic control.

By using a lease model and through issuing further share capital and making use of mortgage finance, we aim to expand our property portfolio over time. SCH will own some of the properties, and lease others from third parties/partners, investing any surplus back into the properties. Surplus will also be used for further acquisitions and to fund staffing costs. The role of SCH is to acquire properties and lease them to local student housing co-operatives, who will have responsibility for the day-to-day management of the buildings. We will also work with new and existing student housing co-operatives to help them grow and thrive. SCH aims to be the federal organisation that unites student housing co-operatives throughout the UK - sharing skills, best practice, and service provision (either in-house or from third parties).

In 2020, we ran a successful community share offer, and through the support of our funders and investor members, we raised over £300,000.

2. Our Vision

"Our vision is to create a thriving student housing co-operative movement in the UK, enabling properties to be taken out of the private market, and support a strong co-operative economy."

3. Our Core Values

SCH aims to support the growth of an active student housing co-operative movement in the UK by empowering student-led democratic control and mutual aid between student housing co-operatives. As a member led organisation, our core values reflect our commitment to housing justice, equity and fairness. We work to represent our core values, to improve housing conditions for students most in need.



4. Our Accomplishments to Date

The start-up and incubation of Student Co-op Homes has been generously supported by Co-operatives UK, The Mid-counties Co-operative, East of England Co-operative, The Reach Fund and Students for Co-operation.

- Student Co-op Homes is now supported by over 170 investor supporter members who generously invested in our share offer.
- Current active user members are: Sheffield, Birmingham, Edinburgh, SEASALT (Brighton) and Glasgow.
- Media coverage:
 - [Novara Media](#)
 - [BBC Reporting Scotland](#)
 - [Scottish Housing News](#)
 - [Co-op News](#)
 - [Financial Times](#)
- Fostered partnerships to help us grow and succeed– Co-operatives UK, Phone Co-op Foundation for Co-operative Innovation and East Midlands Community Led Housing Hub.

Since 2019, we have:

- ✓ Secured over £300,000 in share capital
- ✓ Received over £75,000 in funding and donations
- ✓ Signed up 170 investor supporter members
- ✓ Bought our first property outright, in Nottingham
- ✓ Events- hosted an Annual General Meeting (AGM), a General Meeting (GM) and one member forum.
- ✓ Gathered interest from prospective partners to set up a student housing co-op in new locations
- ✓ Approached by one of the largest housing associations in the UK to redevelop an empty property into a student co-op
- ✓ Set up various sub-committees to help SCH to develop policy and strategy (member services, property, recruitment and finance)



- ✓ Recruited a part-time freelance contractor, Lisa Hartley, as our Operations Manager.
- ✓ Secured a transatlantic solidarity agreement with NASCO, as our sister organisation.
- ✓ Attended NASCO Institute 2019
- ✓ Engaged with co-operative federations and organisations: Confederation of Co-operative Housing (CCH), Co-ops UK, Co-operative Housing International (CHI) and Studentendorf.
- ✓ Started to engage with Students' Unions; educating them on student housing co-operatives and helping them to explore options locally.
- ✓ Co-opted three new directors to the Board.

5. Our Experience

We have also learnt a lot in the last year, particularly in response to the pandemic.

- Students want an alternative to the current student accommodation on offer which is dominated by clinical, characterless and expensive properties with short term tenancies, where students have limited autonomy.
- Around half of young people, aged 17 - 30 go onto Further Education ([Higher Education Initial Participation Rate \(HEIPR\) 51.9%, 2018/19](#))
- However, student housing that meets diverse needs is currently not met by the private student housing market, which primarily caters to a high cost, homogenised standard. This is especially evident for accessibility needs.
- For international and home students, year groups and disciplines are segregated in student housing. Whereas student housing co-ops aim to create a more inclusive environment where these groups can mix.
- The pandemic has increased the demand amongst students for an alternative housing model, whilst exposing the vulnerabilities of the current system, and the need for safe, secure and affordable housing. This growing discontent from the student population has been a catalyst for new student co-operatives to set up across the country.
- The main obstacles for SCH trying to compete in the current inflated market for property are the high prices, student turnover and getting



finance in place sufficiently quickly to compete with mainstream developers.

- Internally, SCH has adapted to the pandemic by operating online, which has enabled SCH to increase the frequency of its meetings.
- There are many SCH investors who are interested in investing in affordable, good quality student-led housing co-operatives.
- Enthusiasm for an alternative housing model from organisations across the UK is increasing, as they explore the potential of student led co-operatives to meet student housing need.

6. Our Priorities 2022-2025

1. Expand our property portfolio through direct ownership and leases

2. Grow our network of student housing co-operatives (SHC's)

3. Ensure SCH continues to be financially sustainable

4. Review and evaluate our current Board and staff performance

5. Implement a membership programme

6. Work with housing associations, community-led housing organisations, councils, regional consumer co-operatives, students' unions, Universities and other partners to highlight the availability of SHC's as a recognised housing solution

7. Our wider ambitions

- Work with campaigning groups like Generation Rent, Cut the Rent, Living Rent, and Acorn to empower students to create their own housing solutions.

- Retrofit our properties to minimise their impact on the environment. Make cold, damp, and mouldy student accommodation a thing of the past.

- To support good relationships in the neighbourhood between the local community and new student housing co-operatives.

- We build our projects and students are involved in their design.

- By 2030 – operating in the four nations across the UK