

6 Co-operative tenants have rights

Although co-operative tenancies are usually of a different type to those offered by housing associations and councils, members are protected by law from eviction provided they pay their rent regularly, look after their home and do not cause a nuisance to other residents.

However, co-operative members do not have the right to buy their home and in some areas, there are restrictions on the right to carry out a mutual exchange.

7 Co-operatives need the support and active involvement of their members

In order to function effectively, co-operatives rely on their members playing an active part in running the organisation.

Members are not paid for any work they put into the running of the co-operative. However, the more efficiently the co-operative is run, the more money can be made available to keep rents low or used to improve members' homes and provide better quality services.

8 Housing co-operatives are democratic

Housing co-operatives are different from other landlords in that they are democratic organisations – every member has a vote and an equal say in matters affecting the management of their home, such as the co-operative's policies and service standards.

9 Co-operative democracy in action

Major decisions are made at general meetings, which take place at least twice a year. Every member is expected to attend these meetings; voice their opinions and cast their vote.

Day to day decisions are taken by an Executive Committee made up of ordinary members of the co-operative, elected to the committee at an annual general meeting, usually for a term of one year.

Co-operatives may also delegate some decisions to sub-committees which will concentrate on a particular aspect of the service, such as finance or repairs.

10 CDS Co-operatives provides support and guidance

CDS Co-operatives was established in 1975 to provide assistance, advice and support to independent housing co-operatives. CDS Co-operatives is run by a Board of Management, some of whom live in a housing co-operative themselves.

We also provide a management and administration service for housing co-operatives – collecting rents; organising repairs and keeping financial records on the co-operative's behalf.

11 Everyone can play their part

You don't need to know anything about running a co-operative to join one or to get involved. CDS Co-operatives offers a full training programme for new members and refresher courses for everyone. Learn new skills such as setting budgets, bookkeeping, administration and maintenance.

Training sessions usually take place at a local venue. Childcare will be arranged or the costs of a babysitter met by the co-operative.

12 How can I find out more?

You can contact CDS Co-operatives to find out which co-ops are in your area and how to apply; The Lettings Officer, CDS Co-operatives, The Co-operative Development Society Ltd, 3 Marshalsea Road, London SE1 1EP.



Telephone: 03333 21 30 30
 Fax: 020 7407 4697
 Email: helpdesk@cds.coop
 Website: www.cds.coop



Housing Co-operatives
Where the tenants' are in control



Can I join a housing co-operative?

1 Housing co-operatives offer rented homes to families, couples and single people in housing need

Housing co-operatives offer homes to people in housing need at affordable rents. Anyone can apply to a co-operative for a home, regardless of ethnic origin, race, disability or sexual orientation. Everyone who accepts a tenancy of a co-operative property must also become a member of the co-operative.



2 Some co-operatives have open waiting lists; most take nominations from the local council

If you would like to find out more about co-operatives with properties in your local area and how to apply, you can obtain advice from your council's housing department or contact CDS Co-operatives for further information. Our telephone number, address and email can be found at the back of this leaflet.

3 Housing Co-operatives are controlled by their members

Most co-operatives own or manage homes on small estates, while others have their properties in a number of different streets – although usually in the same area. All co-operatives require that their tenants become members by purchasing a £1 share. Membership of a housing co-operative entitles you to a say in how the co-op is run and to vote for the members of the Executive Committee.

4 Members can make decisions affecting the co-operative's affairs such as:

- How the repairs service operates
- How to organise estate services such as cleaning, gardening and security
- How to ensure that the co-operative's homes are let fairly
- How the co-operative should manage its funds
- How to deal with tenants in arrears with their rent
- What action to take when members are responsible for antisocial behaviour or other breaches of tenancy.

5 Rents are similar to housing association rents

Co-operatives set their rents at a level which are both affordable and provide sufficient income to maintain and manage their properties; to make improvements and to provide the services their members want.

Typically, rents are very similar to housing association rents in the same area, but will often vary depending on the location of the property and age of the co-operative. Rents for larger properties are usually higher than for smaller ones. Rent levels are regulated by the government and with most types of tenancy are reviewed each year. Co-operative tenants can apply for Housing Benefit to help pay their rent just the same as council or housing association tenants.

