



**Working to help more people shape the things that matter  
through co-operation and community led housing**

**Board Member, CDS Cooperatives  
Candidate Information Pack  
September 2022**



Thank you for showing an interest in being a Board Member at CDS.

CDS is a unique organisation with an unusual mission – to provide, support and promote community led housing and co-operation – so that more people can shape the things that most matter to them.

CDS formed from another organisation in 1975 with a purpose to establish housing co-operatives, working with local authorities and communities to get new homes built and empowering residents to take control of the future. Through those early grant programmes, we helped to build hundreds of homes in London and the South East, which are now owned and managed by resident co-ops – most of them, full and independent registered providers of social housing.

Over time, our role has evolved – becoming a social landlord to more than 820 rented and shared ownership homes – as well as continuing to be the largest service provider for housing co-ops in our region, offering a menu of landlord and business services so that they can thrive and remain independent.

In 2016, we updated our mission to become be more active in promoting growth in the community led housing sector – devoting some of our surplus each year into supporting great ideas and initiatives that can realistically lead to mainstream “scaling up”. Through that work, we have been delighted to partner with the GLA in forming and hosting the London Community Led Housing Hub, which has administered more than £4m of revenue grants for a diverse and exciting range of groups and new housing projects in the capital.

In 2019, we also became a charity and widened our objects again to include work to promote co-operation as an effective business model, one that can help to alleviate poverty and exclusion. This was important to us and embedded our long-standing commitment to co-operation and to the co-op movement as a whole.

As we head toward 2025 and our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the housing sector is once again looking to deliver a more resident-centred and community led approach to how we provide and manage homes. This new focus on ‘resident voice’ is rooted in building true co-operation and collaboration with those who live in the homes we provide, and this will be a perfect time for CDS to use our experience and expertise to push ahead with our mission. However, like most registered providers, we face a number of serious challenges.

There is a widening gap between income and costs with the pressure of higher building safety, decent homes and environmental standards added to the general economic forecast for high inflation and market volatility. Whilst we have a strong track record for good governance, management and financial control, as a small and specialist organisation, these pressures will inevitably lead to difficult choices in the years ahead.

As a Board member, you will help to bring fresh eyes to these challenges, holding fast to our mission and our ambition for community led housing whilst being realistic and determined in how we apply our resources to the task. We cannot deliver our goals at the expense of service or affordability for our existing residents – so leaning into mission in ever more creative ways will be key. Our successful candidates will be enthusiastic and visible in promoting our work and our strategies and using personal skills to support our success.

If our mission and this challenge makes your heart beat a little faster, we look forward to hearing from you!

## About us

CDS was founded on co-operation, which we champion as an effective business model that can help people improve their opportunities and choices. We are passionate about helping people to make the most of their individual and collective opportunities and expect to show this as an employer, agent and landlord. We will try always to work in ways that promote trust, optimism and kindness as a springboard for releasing potential and creativity – and this applies to how we operate as a Board.

We are a charitable community benefit society (CBS) working primarily in the south-east of England and we are registered with the FCA and with the Regulator of Social Housing. We're a creative organisation, with three distinct and complementary areas of work.

As a **provider**, we own around 830 general-needs, social- rented and shared-ownership leasehold in London, Kent and the Home Counties. Much of this housing was built in the 1980s and the majority of our rented homes are for families.

As a **supporter**, we provide managing agent services to around 35 housing co-ops, providing them with a range of landlord, business, and governance services to help them thrive as independent organisations. We currently support around 1,800 homes in this way.

As a **promoter**, we reinvest some of our surplus to promote mainstream growth in co-op and community-led housing. This work is collaborative and responsive to opportunities in the emerging market, where targeted support and investment can sustain and speed the delivery of more homes, and capture learning to repeat successful models.

### What is Co-op Housing?

Housing co-ops own or manage homes under a mutual and democratic structure, controlled by the members. Members are often residents although others may also be allowed to hold shares. There are different types of co-op but the most common are par value co-ops where each member holds one share and has one vote.

### What is Community-Led Housing?

The term 'community-led housing' (CLH) describes a range of housing where people or communities play a leading role in addressing their own housing needs. Communities are often geographic but can also be based on a community of interest or experience (e.g. older women, LGBTQ communities).

Helping people  
**shape what matters to them**  
and creating a sense of belonging  
through  
community led housing

## Our strategic goals

Last year we revisited our corporate plan and are working toward four main goals

- Radically improving service experience for our customers
- Promoting a culture of collaboration, ownership & belonging
- Strengthening our financial and operational resilience
- Remaining well managed and well governed with a strong performance focus

## Our 'U-Tick' Values

We believe that how we work is as important as what we do, and as our Chair, you would be expected to behave in a way that honours these values.

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Unity</b>         | We act as one team with one reputation   |
| <b>Trust</b>         | We strive to be reliable, fair and to act with integrity                           |
| <b>Intention</b>     | We know why we do things, we plan, we monitor                                      |
| <b>Impact</b>        | We care about the effect we have on people   |
| <b>Collaboration</b> | We can achieve more by working with others   |
| <b>Communication</b> | We seek understanding as a basis for win/win solutions                             |
| <b>Kindness</b>      | We value kindness, which is brave and honest, facing difficult issues with empathy |

## Our business

We employ 45 staff and have a modern shared workspace in central London (SE1). We are passionate about employing a team of talented people who share our values and additional information about people can be found on our website [here](#). In 2020, we scaled back our office accommodation, reinvesting the savings in our services. Our team now work largely remotely and we are developing a hybrid work pattern for the future.

Our team includes the London Community-Led Housing Hub, a project funded by the London Mayor as a resource and advice service for new community-led housing projects. The Hub has responsibility for allocating nearly £3m in early-stage funding over the life of its life and supporting the delivery of 400+ homes.

About 75% of our income comes from social rents and service charges (£4.6m) with a further 25% (£1.4m) coming from client fees. The surplus we make on our landlord business supports our promoter workstream and funds the long-term needs of the business.

## Our Board

We are governed by an elected Board of Management comprising of 12 Members. The Board has ultimate responsibility for the governance of CDS and leads on strategy, direction, policy and performance alongside the Chief Executive.

Our current board members come from a variety of backgrounds and includes a resident member and members of client co-operatives. Skills within the Board include finance, architecture, local authority project management, education, customer service, management consultancy, design, communications, media and research as well as a significant amount of lived and professional knowledge of housing and co-operation. The Board is a collaborative group, working together to support and challenge the senior management team and to drive strong governance and performance in line with our values. Members work in an inclusive and co-operative way, encouraging contributions, sharing ideas and learning together so that it can really hold the organisation accountable in a way that encourages openness, improvement and growth.

Additional information about our governance structure is available on our website [here](#).

## Recruiting new Board Members

We have a number of vacancies due to the required retirement of existing members. We are now looking for committed and motivated people to help steer CDS through a time of exciting opportunity, challenge and development through 2022 and beyond.

During the next few years we intend to 'lean into mission' as we seek solutions to the economic and practical challenges that lie ahead. Improving our offer for customers and for employees whilst improving our bottom line will not be easy – but we are absolutely committed to driving this through the creative application of our core purpose.

Our board particularly seeks skills and experience in:

- Senior level experience in a housing association or deep understanding of sector and regulatory issues
- Business/strategic financial management skills
- Health & safety knowledge, experience or keen interest and understanding in this field

We want new members to be motivated by our mission and excited by empowering and enabling people to have more control, a greater sense of belonging and encouraged to make the most of their opportunities. You will need to be ready to show personal leadership and to be an advocate for the business and for our mission.

Candidates must have excellent interpersonal skills, be willing to be an ambassador for CDS, be interested in developing opportunities for the organisation and have a real empathy and passion for the work we do.

We value diversity, equality and inclusivity. We value and respect all the differences that make us who we are, including age, cultural background, ethnicity and race, disability and mental health, neurodiversity, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, social background and lived experience. People who bring diversity and lived experience are particularly encouraged to apply.

## **Application process**

To apply for this role, please send the following documents to Christina Friedenthal, Company Secretary, by email at [christina.friedenthal@cds.coop](mailto:christina.friedenthal@cds.coop):

- An up-to-date CV
- A covering letter (maximum two pages) that outlines your interest in CDS Co-operatives and the Board member role and what skills and experience you would bring to the role.

Please submit your application by Friday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

Interviews for the role will take place in October.

If you would like to know more about the role, please contact Christina Friedenthal, as above.

## Board Member

### What will you do at CDS?

You will ensure that CDS is a well governed organisation, championing our vision and embodying our values. You will ensure that the work we do as a landlord and as a co-op service provider lives up to our values and achieves our strategic goal of offering services that are reliable, affordable and of good quality compared to our peers. You will shape our strategy, scrutinise our delivery and provide ‘critical friend’ challenge to support improvement and efficiency. In your personal contribution you will add value by putting your skills and experience to work in pursuit of our goals and embodying our values.

### What difference will you make for us?

- We will be clear and consistent about our purpose and direction
- We will have ambitious goals and sensible measures of progress and success
- We will be safe and compliant as a landlord, employer and business
- We will operate safely and mindful of our duty to customer, clients, employees and others
- We will be agile as a business, able to respond to opportunities and change
- We will have a keen awareness of risk and simple, effective risk management
- We will use our resources to best effect in pursuit of our goals
- We will learn from setbacks and failures quickly and effectively
- We will be connected to the wider world, particularly to wider housing and co-operative issues
- We will have a highly motivated workforce who feel the support of the Board

### We will look to you to ...

- Be a champion for CDS and the work of growing a successful and mainstream co-op and community led housing sector
- Shape and monitor policy and strategy, helping the Executive Team to deliver plans and outcomes that are true to CDS’ values and objects
- Offer challenge in the interests of improvement and effectiveness, always in line with CDS values
- Review and approve each year’s budget and final annual financial accounts for presentation to the auditors prior to publication
- Monitor our performance
- Appoint and monitor the performance of the Chief Executive
- Ensure through both service and conduct that CDS is a well-managed and well governed organisation, complying with our adopted Code of Governance and with the general principles of charitable and ethical good governance
- Ensure that our affairs are conducted lawfully and in accordance with generally accepted standards of performance and propriety
- Establish and oversee a framework of delegation and systems of control
- Be diligent in learning about the strategies, plans and goals and in preparing for meetings and discussions fully so that you can make a meaningful contribution
- Act impartially and objectively and not to act as a “delegate” or “representative” of any particular interest or group, including client or tenant groups
- Comply with the requirements of the Board Member contract of employment and the code of conduct and to do nothing that will bring CDS, the social housing movement or the co-op and community led housing movement into disrepute

- Serve on one or more committees and to your personal talents and knowledge to support CDS's success
- Participate in appropriate training and in Board Member workshops and conferences
- Declare any conflict of interest or personal interests in a timely and open manner and to withdraw from any influence or decision making where these arise

You will definitely bring...

- Enthusiasm and energy
- Excitement about our vision and direction
- Curiosity and a willingness to ask questions for clarity/understanding
- A preference for working collaboratively and supportively
- An interest in housing and/or co-operation
- The ability to read/digest reports and data
- A willingness to share knowledge information and thoughts
- Optimism
- Commitment to learning about our business and sector
- A commitment to our values

You will be a star performer in this role if you ....

- Like working as part of a team
- Enjoy thinking about how things can be done
- Have high personal standards and integrity
- Can explore failure as a route to learning/improvement and without blame
- Are interested in housing and the power of community action
- Understand and enjoy the links between the big picture and small actions
- Like measuring things!
- Enjoy speaking in public

This isn't your dream job if you...

- Like to be told what to do
- Dislike big picture planning
- Find it hard to pay attention to written information/reports
- Prefer to be in charge
- Don't enjoy working within a framework of rules/obligations
- Have little interest in housing
- Find monitoring boring
- Dislike asking questions
- Are uncomfortable with open enquiry and straight talking
- Want a lot of personal 'applause'

Your team will include.....

No staff report to this role

You will get support from:

The Chief Executive  
Other Directors and Managers

What we offer:

Board Member Pay:  
£ 2062 per annum to be increased in October 2022

Other Benefits:

Training  
Development Opportunities