

RCCE's Community-Led Housing Advisor for Essex within

New Eastern Community Homes Hub

Eastern Community Homes is an independent not-for-profit hub for the East of England, which provides essential support to community groups who wish to pursue successful community-led housing (CLH) projects. The hub looks to empower local communities and encourage them to shape their place together. All six counties within the hub (Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire) now have a Community Led Housing Advisor in their region, who has undergone specific training which is accredited by both Community Led Homes and the Chartered Institute of Housing.

What is the definition of community-led housing?

- The community is integrally involved throughout the process in key decisions like what is provided, where and for who
- The community benefits. The benefits of the scheme to the local area and/or specified community group are clearly defined and protected in perpetuity
- The community has a long-term role in the ownership, stewardship, or management of the homes
- Community-led housing is different from the rural housing enabler programme which will continue but builds on this experience and puts communities in the driving seat of any initiatives. There are hundreds of examples of community-led housing in urban as well as rural settings across the country and a Hub will support the growth of projects in the towns and cities across the region



The Community Led Housing Advisor for Essex, Laura Atkinson (RCCE's Rural Housing Enabler) will work with budding and more established community groups, housing providers, Local Authorities and other partners to develop new community led housing solutions, such as CLTs, co-housing, cooperatives and self-build schemes. She will work with groups (urban or rural) from inception to completion to ensure the expertise and experience in the region and nationally can support communities to overcome challenges and help them achieve their ambitions. This work will include running workshops, advising on funding and finance, undertaking housing needs surveys, working with neighbourhood plan groups and enabling access to a wide range of technical support.

There are various models associated with community-led housing which can offer a flexible and blended approach;

Models of community-led housing

- Self-build and custom-build housing
- Co-operatives, 'mutual' and tenant management bodies
- Community land trusts and development trusts
- Self-help housing and empty dwellings
- Co-housing neighbourhoods
- Eco-housing, 'low-impact' settlements and ecovillages
- Almshouses and charities



The diversity of these models presents a real opportunity for ordinary local people to come together, identify their own need and deliver homes and other assets which benefit their particular community. There are many reasons why groups are set up; for example a lack of suitable affordable homes in the area or bringing empty buildings back into use. They can also be referenced as an aspiration in a neighbourhood plan to allow local people to take control of how housing is delivered.

For further information, case studies and guidance with regards to community-led housing or other types of affordable housing in Essex, please contact Laura Atkinson, Rural Housing Enabler, Rural Community Council of Essex, on laura.atkinson@essexrcc.org.uk or 01376 574330.