

STEPS – More than Homes



Briefing Note

There is a real need in Exeter for good quality houses for local people. At this moment there are approximately 1 in 8 of the Exeter population in need of housing. With the credit crunch this figure is getting worse. If we do not start tackling this problem head on, our children will find it impossible to find affordable accommodation where they grew up and more and more will find themselves homeless.

Three dedicated charities in Exeter, with support from Exeter City Council have responded to this situation with a new housing project. Exeter Community Initiatives (ECI), Exeter Shilhay Community (ESC) and Christian Alliance Housing (CAH) have created *STEPS*. This partnership is a major strength of the project. It is able to combine strengths and experience in delivering other projects and services to the homeless in Exeter and beyond.

STEPS is a unique housing project that provides the answer for local people of Exeter to contribute to solving homelessness for themselves. *STEPS* is about much more than bricks and mortar, it is about the reconnection of communities and providing extra 'steps' in the process of becoming independent. Through *STEPS* local people will be able to donate funds & property so local people in need can be housed in a safe and secure accommodation to help them to grow and develop.

STEPS aims to reduce homelessness and repeat homelessness in Exeter and the surrounding areas by increasing the housing stock available to house vulnerable people. By focussing on those that need long term support we aim to bring them out of the current system, reduce the pressure on the professional floating support services, stop clients languishing in the system and becoming institutionalised, or worse being moved on to unsuitable accommodation. *STEPS* will provide them with opportunities to make new strides to become independent.

STEPS will buy, renovate and build houses and provide support and guidance to tenants to help them access the right services, at the right time and with the right motivation. *STEPS* housing will meet all environmental standards and push to make the houses as 'green' as possible. This will not just contribute to preventing carbon emissions, but a better standard of life for the tenants.

We will achieve our aims through three elements.

1. Providing safe & secure homes. *STEPS* needs supportive landlords that are able to give tenants control over their home and only use eviction as a last resort.
2. Giving support. Volunteer mentors will create a relationship that lasts as long as the tenant requires and works towards goals and aspirations.
3. Skills & opportunities. Working across the city, *STEPS* will encourage tenants to engage in further training, pushing themselves into new experiences and making use of new opportunities.

ECI is leading on the fundraising and project management, whilst CAH & ESC are going to manage and own the houses on behalf of *STEPS*. Our aim is to now bring the residents of Exeter into the partnership.

STEPS is about providing local people an opportunity to become part of the solution through donations and giving time. For *STEPS* to work, it needs people to support it through giving donations in order that new homes can be bought. It needs people to give their time to mentor or practically help out the tenants. It also needs people to recognise the good work in wills and leave a legacy for the future residents of Exeter.