

g320 Representing smaller Housing Associations working in London

Impact Report 2015–16



g320

LONDON'S SMALL HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

Who are the g320

Our aim is to promote and share good practice amongst those “smaller but beautiful” associations providing a range of housing and care services in the capital and indeed across the country.

As g320 has developed it has become an important source of information and support for all smaller London social landlords. We seek to bring value to members by sharing expertise and knowledge and encouraging collaboration.

g320 represents smaller housing associations in London. Of the 320 smaller members of the National Housing Federation London with fewer than 1,000 homes, there is a diverse and successful mix of housing associations, many locally focused, many delivering specialist services.

These include housing associations which focus on black and minority ethnic communities, people with support needs, key workers, students or older people and which come in many shapes, including housing co-ops, almshouses and trusts. We play a strong part in developing housing solutions for our capital.

The g320 operates as a forum to promote good practice and to enable discussion and information sharing. g320 has regular meetings where smaller housing associations have the chance to get together to explore issues of common concern. Speakers also attend these meetings, providing information or training on current issues. Outside of the meetings, we actively collaborate with each other by sharing services, recommending suppliers, learning from each other's best practice and through benchmarking costs and performance. We provide training for Boards and senior teams focusing specifically on the needs of smaller associations.

The g320 also gives smaller associations the opportunity to network with each other and a number of local partnerships have developed in order to achieve efficiencies through joint commissioning and sharing services – examples include the joint procurement of a stock condition survey, training courses shared between five local associations, and tenant satisfaction surveys carried out by peer associations rather than consultants.

Members of g320 are fit to face the many challenges facing housing associations today. Our ability to work well in partnership with each other and with key enablers such as local authorities gives us a head start in meeting many of these challenges. Our diversity, professionalism, community impact, and focus on our customers are our core strengths.



“It’s great to have a voice for small organisations in London.”

What is our impact?

We have featured the stories of a number of members for this Impact Report over pages 5-10 to show our diversity and achievements.

Many of us are working towards developing more homes for the communities we serve, acutely aware that there is significant demand in London and the South East for the housing we provide.

We have also compared the views of our tenants on our services through benchmarking satisfaction rates and costs on page 4, and can see that our focus on quality and meeting the needs of our communities is highly valued by tenants.

We surveyed 31 of our 61 members in 2016, and uncovered significant diversity:

400    

homes managed on average by each member, but there was a huge variation between housing providers

12,500            

homes managed by members

1,700       

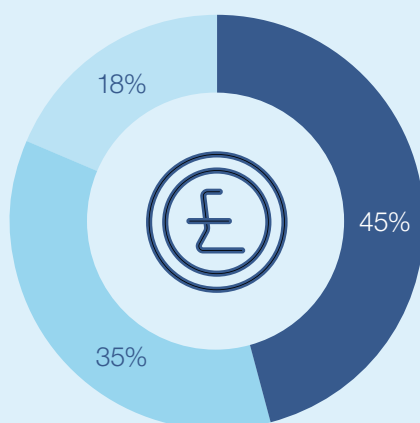
staff employed by these members across the group

This ranged from

2 to 550  

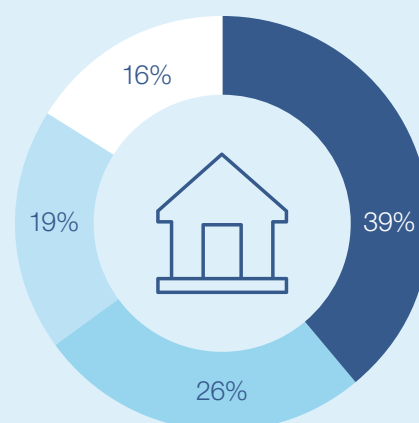
staff employed per member

Members turnover



- Over £3 million
- £1 to 3 million
- Under £1 million

Member's housing offer



- General needs
- Older people
- Special needs
- Other (BME, single, vulnerable, faith and co-ops)

How we compare

Members of the g320 benchmark their services using Housemark and Acuity services (both provide benchmarking for housing associations). Some take part in a bespoke benchmarking club, bm320, which is for g320 members only.

The table below demonstrates how members of g320 provide high quality services for tenants which consistently out-perform against the national comparator, Housemark medians. 31 members of g320 took part in this comparator exercise and they are listed on page 11.

Indicator		g320 median 2015/16	g320 median 2014/15	Housemark median
Satisfaction – overall services – GN	●	85	87	76
Satisfaction – quality of home - GN	●	85	86	76
Satisfaction – neighbourhood – GN	●	85	86	82
Satisfaction – VfM rent – GN	●	80	83	77
Satisfaction – overall services – OP	●	92	92	88
Satisfaction – quality of home – OP	●	94	93	91
Satisfaction – neighbourhood – OP	●	94	94	90
Satisfaction – VfM rent – OP	●	90	88	85
Satisfaction – overall services – SH	●	90	91	89
Satisfaction – quality of home – SH	●	89	91	92
Satisfaction – neighbourhood – SH	●	86	81	87
Satisfaction – VfM rent – SH	●	77	72	84
Weekly operating cost per unit		99.49	94.78	
Cost per property of housing management		448.5		278
Cost per property of responsive repair and void works		785.65		715
Cost per property – major and cyclical works		1247		1487
Overhead costs as a % of turnover		20.4		11

The traffic light in column 2 represents the relative performance of the g320 median 2015/16 compared to Housemark median.

The Housemark median is mainly a London comparator, but for Supported Housing, this is a national comparator.

g320 is encouraging members to measure their Value for Money indicators against which to benchmark in the coming years:

- Cost per property of housing management
- Cost per property of responsive repairs and void works
- Cost per property of major and cyclical works
- Overhead costs as a % of turnover

Our members' stories

General needs:

Bexley Community Housing Association



Bexley Community Housing Association (BECHA) was formed in 1965 and owns 137 properties in Bexley while managing an additional 66 properties in Gravesend on behalf of another organisation. As a small housing association, it prides itself in getting to know its residents well and can often pick up problems because staff notice small, but significant changes in the behaviour of tenants.

One of its tenants had some historic arrears, which she was paying off through a voluntary agreement. She was punctilious about making these payments on time, but our income officer suddenly became aware that she had missed a couple of payments, and so she made a phone call. The discussion she had with the tenant alerted her to the fact that something was badly wrong, so she subsequently popped round. She discovered that the tenant's benefits had stopped because her partner had taken a job – but they didn't have enough money to bridge the gap between the benefits stopping and his first wage packet. The tenant was living on toast and jam, in order to make sure her children ate properly. Neither the job centre nor her health visitor had picked this up and she was too proud to say anything. Our member of staff immediately identified the local food bank, called them, and the food bank agreed to issue an emergency food parcel that afternoon.

Now BECHA is a registered food bank distributor, and so far, has referred two other tenants who have experienced a sudden crisis to the food bank. BECHA is closely in touch with its tenants and is more easily able to pick up gaps where other agencies such as the job centres and health visitors are unaware.

So that this family could get back on their feet, the housing association 'froze' their arrears payments and just accepted payment of the current rent for six months. This breathing space has helped them to get back on track, and payment of the arrears has now resumed.

 www.becha.org.uk

“The g320 does an excellent job in promoting the work of the small Registered Providers.”

Penge Churches Housing Association



Penge Churches (PCHA) is based in Penge, Anerley and Beckenham in the London Borough of Bromley. It was established in 1969 and currently has 264 units in management.

PCHA prides itself on being a truly community based association, which means that its well-qualified and experienced team is able to offer an individual and personalised service to its tenants. This has been put to the test and proved to be valuable recently; its staff have stepped in and provided extra support to a number of tenants with learning disabilities who previously received a support service which was withdrawn in April 2015. A few hours support each week on a range of tenancy related matters such as budgeting and benefits, paying rent and bills, arranging repairs and dealing with any neighbour disputes was stopped due to funding changes.

PCHA's staff have taken on the role of providing support to these tenants to ensure that they remain safe and well, receive the housing-related benefits they are entitled to and comply with their tenancy agreement. This is sometimes challenging as one tenant in particular phones the office numerous times a day, whilst others are hard to communicate with and staff need to proactively check that all is well. One tenant who also has some physical disabilities will soon be moving to a more suitable ground floor flat on PCHA's estate in Beckenham.

The positive impact of PCHA's input is that all the tenants have continued to live independently in their homes, and the PCHA team is saving other publicly funded services from having to be provided. Other community partners providing voluntary services such as local churches also help to support these tenants; Penge Churches is a key part of a local network and safety net looking out for vulnerable people in the community.

 www.pengechurchesha.org.uk

Sutton Housing Society



Formed in 1964 and operating only in Sutton, Sutton HS provides 450 homes at social rents, mainly for older people but also for families and single people. It has focussed on investing to improve the quality of its existing homes and is now developing new homes wherever it can. Sutton HS currently have 23 new homes in development and a substantial refurbishment project involving a further 12.

Kent Court is a new scheme completed this year. This development of 12 flats for older people in Hackbridge was funded entirely from Sutton HS's reserves. The organisation took on a challenge and bought a derelict factory on a difficult site. The result is badly needed housing managed locally, let at social rents and providing a significant improvement to the local environment. Every flat has been built with sustainability in mind. All flats have level access showers and access to Wi-Fi.

'We wanted to move down from Manchester to the Sutton area of London to be near to our daughter and granddaughter. We joined the Council's Waiting List and were very happy to receive a call from the housing team saying that we had been shortlisted for a new development called Kent Court in Hackbridge. We have now lived here for 4 months and it is the best move we could have made. The size and layout of our flat is perfect for the two of us and the location, with nearby shops, bus routes and train station, makes it easy for us to get around. We are so pleased that we made that first step and applied to go onto Sutton's Waiting List and grateful to Sutton Housing Society for offering us this lovely property.'

Quote from tenants at Kent Court

Innisfree Housing Association



Innisfree was set up over 30 years ago to meet the housing needs of the Irish community in London. Innisfree now houses over 550 households in Brent, Haringey and Camden. Back in 2013 they were offered a disused allotment site by Brent Council so it could be cultivated and offered as a space to their tenants.

During 2014 the site was cultivated and divided into 12 raised bed plots with the help of a group of dedicated volunteers. Scaffold boards were donated to construct the raised beds and a tree surgeon provided wood chippings to create walkways. Innisfree purchased a shed, tools and a small rotavator to work the soil.

Older Irish tenants of Innisfree now spend their spare time working with others growing fruit and vegetables. The project has benefited an often isolated client group who may not traditionally get involved. It has the added value of providing a healthy eating dimension for their tenants as well as the more obvious benefits of reducing isolation and loneliness and in improving physical health. This story shows that from a small idea, greater things can grow from the seed, sometimes in the most unexpected ways.

This project has worked to bring together people from different communities and generations, enhanced interfaith understanding and improved the well-being and sense of fulfillment for the allotment volunteers.

Supported housing:

Peter Bedford Housing Association



Peter Bedford (PBHA) is based in North East London (Hackney, Islington, Camden and Tower Hamlets). It was set up along Quaker principles in 1968 by a probation officer who wanted to offer people leaving prison and institutions the chance to build skills, gain paid work and become independent.

Now PBHA provides 276 homes to people with learning disabilities, mental health needs, substance misuse and ex-offenders. PBHA provides a range of employment and training services across London to help people gain the skills they need to work. They also run a number of successful social enterprises where people gain this experience – a creative industries studio which produces goods to sell at Outpost, PBHA's contemporary homewares store in Holloway; and the Kingsland Hub in Haggerston, where spaces to rent for training and a coffee shop are open to the public.

PBHA has been bringing its enterprises and services for tenants up to date, and were proud to open two new community hubs last year. The largest of these was in Sept 2015, when they moved from Highbury into the Kingsland Hub, consolidating the offices, digital learning spaces and community hubs into one modern multipurpose building. Earlier in the year, in April 2015, they also opened The Workshop, a new social enterprise joinery and art studio in Hoxton. PBHA has invested in and restructured its Adult Learning and Enterprises attracting in fundraising adding value for PBHA's tenants and the local community.

Overall in 2015/16 PBHA supported 475 people with either housing or learning support, with the majority based in Hackney and Islington. 89% of service users progressed onto training, volunteering or community activity, an increase of 35% on the previous year. It also noted that the tenant intake is getting younger – 51% of supported tenants joining in 2015/16 were between the ages of 21 to 30. As the supported accommodation is short term,



PBHA also focuses on assisting tenants to move on to private tenancies or other forms of longer term supported accommodation such as sheltered housing. The long term goal is to increase housing stock so that affordable mid-range move on accommodation can be provided for more tenants who struggle to afford private rents on low incomes.

The efficiencies required by the 1% rent reduction and a significant drop in funding for the Supported Housing service, has led to PBHA restructuring and needing to secure alternative funding this year. It constantly looks for efficiencies so the service it provides can be protected to ensure that people are able to sustain their tenancies, and to that end, collaboration with other small housing associations through the g320 on repairs, asset management or fundraising has brought savings which has either reduced charges for tenants or improved services.

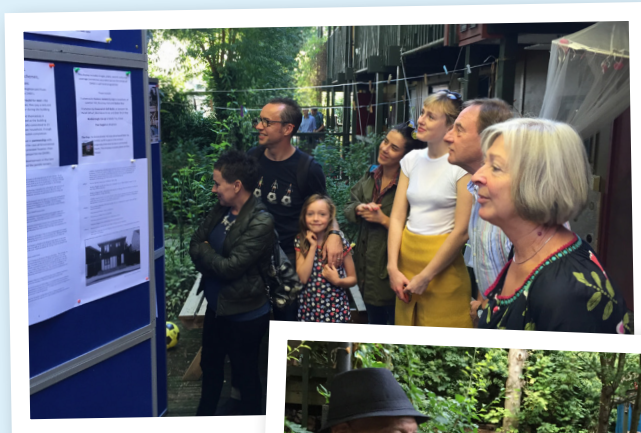
PBHA has recently been recognised for the quality of its Information, Advice and Guidance service by receiving the Matrix Standard. They have also been recognised as a Pioneer of Social Enterprise in Hackney by Hackney Cooperative Developments, sponsored by UBS.

 www.peterbedford.org.uk

“It’s really valuable to share learning and experiences.”

Co-operative and Self Build Housing:

CHISEL Ltd



Established in 1986, CHISEL houses people across South East London, Brighton and Essex in 225 homes.

In Autumn 2015, CHISEL contributed to broadening public awareness of the ability of small associations to innovate and provide alternative housing solutions. This public awareness project was self-funded by CHISEL, with resources from Open House.

CHISEL opened one of their self-build homes and the surrounding garden to the public as part of the London Open House weekend in September 2015. This was part of a wider celebration of the work of the pioneering self-build architect, Walter Segal, on the 30th anniversary of his death. CHISEL had created 10 self-build schemes in the 1990s.

The event was on Telegraph Hill, in the London Borough of Lewisham. There was strong interest; 300 visitors took tours of the house and the shared communal garden, guided by the self-builder residents. CHISEL staff provided a display of archive materials and a rolling programme of talks through the day, with participation from the architect of the scheme.

The event was well-timed, as a new self-build scheme in Lewisham was then in the recruiting phase – the new scheme is led by a Community Land Trust called The Russ.

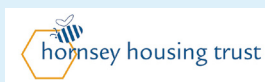
Many of the visitors were younger people exploring alternative and social housing options, as potential residents, architects or housing activists. They were fascinated to see the self-built houses, and to understand something of the experience of living in a self-build community, 20 years on from the building phase.

Although hard to measure, the impact of the project has promoted an expanded view of social housing possibilities among a wider public, rather than a defined set of beneficiaries. CHISEL signposted enquirers to The Russ as the relevant local initiative during the event, and also a number of people who enquired after the event was over.

 www.chisel.org.uk

“The support between member organisations is excellent.”

Focus on Dementia: Hornsey Housing Trust



The Hornsey Housing Trust (HHT) has operated in Haringey since 1933. It houses 385 elderly and vulnerable people in a mix of street properties and sheltered housing schemes.

In 2014 HHT invited the Alzheimer's Society to host a weekly Dementia Café in one of the Trust's Sheltered Housing schemes. The café hosts weekly events such as talks on local history, fitness sessions, 'Singing for the Brain', memory boxes and even Brazilian dancing.

HHT also contracts the Alzheimer's Society to provide two support workers to give those living with dementia, and their families and carers, the necessary information and support to enable them to continue to live fulfilling lives. The Dementia Café is important in tackling the problem of loneliness for those living with dementia. HHT regularly promotes the café to its tenants and their families both inhouse and through the local press.

HHT estimates that 127 people have used the service at least once, and there is now a regular group using the café plus others who come on an occasional basis. It has provided HHT with a springboard to encourage other organisations to run similar services, and specifically in 2015 HHT, working with the Alzheimer's Society, established a Dementia Action Alliance in Haringey. This now has around fifteen members including the local Picturehouse cinema, which is running dementia-friendly screenings, and which showcased such a screening at the Dementia café.

The Alliance meets regularly at HHT, and is expanding at a good pace. The initiative of one community based housing association has been amplified and made into a larger movement for change, benefitting everyone in the local area.

Waltham Forest HA



Waltham Forest Housing Association (WFHA) is a small, locally based organisation providing predominantly sheltered housing in Waltham Forest.

They were set up in 1963 and now house 325 tenants. 14% of their tenants (including 20% of their sheltered tenants) are living with dementia. WFHA work in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society and Leyton Orient Football Club to raise dementia awareness.

WFHA's achievements promoting better care and services for people with dementia are:

- Appointing Dementia Champions who lead the integration of dementia into everyday work rather than treat it as a separate topic.
- Auditing their properties as part of their estate inspections and support planning from which they developed an Internal Action Plan that is reviewed and updated regularly.
- Setting up and chairing the Waltham Forest Dementia Action Alliance.
- Training all staff, board and main contractors as Dementia Friends
- Establishing the Sunshine Club to raise dementia awareness with tenants whilst having fun. They meet once a month celebrating themes such as pamper sessions, arts and crafts, fitness and black history.
- Developing a Dementia Friendly specification for void works
- Incorporating Dementia Design into cyclical and planned maintenance programmes.

Merger:

Crown Simmons Housing



Crown Simmons was established in 2014 by the merger of the Rosemary Simmons Memorial Housing Association (RMSHA) and Crown Housing Association. The combined organisation – Crown Simmons Housing – now houses 800 households across London and the South East.

Crown was established in 1973 by a civil service charity to provide housing for civil service workers, while RSMHA was established by the Simmons family in 1959 to provide housing for older people who could not access housing through other means.

Following a strategic options review, Crown's Board made the decision in 2013 to seek a merger with a similar small registered provider. Crown had made the decision to sell homes owned in Scotland and, with a long term management contract with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) due to end in 2015, the Board felt that there would be a stronger future with another small local registered provider. RSMHA were coming to the end of a period of growth but loan covenants were likely to restrict future development aspirations.

Following the selection of RSMHA as the preferred partner in May 2013, both Boards established a joint working party to consider the business case for merger, due diligence was carried out and professional advice sought on treasury, pensions and other matters.

The HCA approved the business case in June 2014 and Crown Simmons Housing was officially launched in August 2014.

Since merger there has been a necessary period of integration and the Board has had to carefully consider the impact of rent reduction and the ending of the MOPAC Contract. A revised business plan was approved this summer which, with additional borrowing, has plans for up to 150 new units to be delivered over the next 5 years.



Other highlights since merger include:

- Improved STAR customer satisfaction ratings in 2015
- Establishment of an innovative repairs partnering contract with a local SME contractor
- 2 schemes currently in planning that will see 39 new homes built in the next 2 years
- Stock rationalisation with the aim to invest in new housing (one disposal and one acquisition currently in progress)
- Completion of integration which has led to a new streamlined staff structure with savings of 20%
- On target to achieve business case savings within 5 years (accelerated by rent reduction)

Crown Simmons achievements have been acknowledged with the following awards:

2016	Top 20 placing in Inside Housing Innovation Index
2016	Runner Up, Best Small Client, NHMF Awards
2016	Shortlisted, RICS South East Awards (for Castlemaine Court)
2015	Winner, Best Designed Scheme Inside Housing Top 60 Developments (Castlemaine Court)
2015	Top 40 placing in Inside Housing Innovation Index
2015	Inside Housing Top 50 Developments (for Imber Cross)



Our g320 members

Members of g320 (October 2016) – those marked with an asterisk have taken part in the data analysis on page 4

Apna Ghar HA*	Kurdish HA
Bahay Kubo HA	Lambeth & Southwark HA*
Barnsbury HA*	Lambeth Self Help
Bexley Community Housing Association*	London Housing Trust
Brockley Tenants Co-op	Mission HA (Previously Affordable Christian)
Cedarmore HA	Mount Green HA*
C&C	North Camden Housing Co-op
Cherry Tree HA	Pathways HA*
Chisel*	Penge Churches HA*
CDS Co-operatives*	Peter Bedford HA*
Co-op Homes*	Providence Row HA*
Crown Simmons Housing*	Quo Vadis Trust*
Ekarro Housing Co-op*	Radcliffe HS*
Ekaya HA*	Sapphire Independent Housing
Eldon HA	Seymour Housing Co-op
Evolve Housing [South London YMCA]	Simba (Greenwich) HA Ltd
Glebe HA*	Soho HA
Greenwich HS	St Christophers Fellowship
Haig Homes	St Martin of Tours HA
Harrow Churches HA	Stoll HA*
Hill Homes HA*	Sutton HS*
Home from Home HA	Tamil HA*
Hornsey Housing Trust*	Teachers HA*
Housing for Women*	Tooting Bec Housing Co-op
Hyelm Group*	Twenty Fifth Avenue HA
Innisfree HA*	United St Saviour's Charity
Inquilab HA	Waltham Forest HA*
Jewish Community HA*	West London YMCA
Karin Housing Association	Women's Pioneer HA
Keniston HA*	Yarrow Housing
Kingston Churches HA*	Zebra HA

How to join g320

Eligibility requirements are that you are a London member of the National Housing Federation, a registered housing provider (Housing Association or Co-operative) with 1,000 or fewer homes in management and ownership.

If you are eligible to join us, please see the website for details of how to apply
www.g320.org/our-members

Annual fees are due in April each year, and are tiered based on the number of units in each association:

Under 50 units



Under 250 units



Under 1,000 units



Acknowledgements

Thank you to:

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Executive Committee of g320

John Delahunty (outgoing Chair), Innisfree Housing Association;
Clare Norton (incoming Chair), Peter Bedford Housing Association;
Linda Wallace, CDS Co-operatives;
John Castleberg, Kingston Churches Housing Association;
Sue Daniels, Bexley Community Housing Association

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 Clare Norton is our Chair and can be contacted on **clare.norton@peterbedford.org.uk**



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