

## Self-help housing is a win-win activity...

## Examples of existing projects

- **A source of housing:** Self-help housing is a source of economical and affordable housing for people who have difficulty in finding somewhere to live.
- **Use of wasted buildings:** Self-help housing makes use of empty or redundant buildings that the owners are willing to make available for a limited period on licence or lease at minimal cost.
- **Improving neighbourhoods:** Self-help housing contributes to raising the overall quality of a neighbourhood by reducing the number of empty and void buildings.
- **Learning new skills:** Self-help housing can provide people with an opportunity to learn practical “on the job” building skills and also how to run an organisation.
- **Supporting the community:** Self-help projects can generate cheap work space for start-up businesses and social enterprises and also provide community facilities.
- **Finally:** It's legal!

**Latch & Canopy, Leeds** – Latch was established in 1989 and Canopy followed in 1998. Both work with volunteers and homeless people, renovating disused and derelict properties in inner city Leeds. Between them, they now manage and own around 80 properties, many of which are leased from Leeds city council. Both provide hands-on training in building skills to their service users and are committed to helping to regenerate their local communities. [www.latch.org.uk](http://www.latch.org.uk)  
[www.canopyhousingproject.org](http://www.canopyhousingproject.org)

**Phoenix Housing Co-op, London** – Phoenix Housing Co-op was founded in 1980 by a group of single people and students. It now provides a local volunteer-led solution for single homeless people in east London. Initially Phoenix borrowed all its properties on licence from local authorities and housing associations, but over the years it has managed to acquire 60 permanent units of accommodation, while still managing a further 120 short-life units. [www.phoenixcoop.org](http://www.phoenixcoop.org)

**Giroscope, Hull** – **Giroscope** was formed in 1985 by a group of young students who decided to do something positive about homelessness. To date it has renovated 23 houses, seven flats, three offices, a shop and 3,000 square feet of workshop space, which is let out to a variety of local organisations. It has succeeded in providing affordable homes for hundreds of people and helped to set up a variety of small businesses. [www.giroscope.co.uk](http://www.giroscope.co.uk)

**Self-Help-Housing.Org**  
promoting community driven housing initiatives



**Self-Help-Housing.Org** has been set up to support people wanting to make use of empty properties as a way of securing accommodation. This leaflet outlines how this can be done and provides details of where to go for more information and help.

[www.self-help-housing.org](http://www.self-help-housing.org)

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# What is self-help housing?

**Self-help housing** involves people making use of empty properties that are in limbo, usually because decisions are awaited about their future use or their redevelopment.

There are lots of examples of owners being persuaded to lend their empty properties to locally based organisations, in exchange for them taking on responsibility for their management.

**Negotiations** are most likely to succeed if you can approach the owner via some sort of community based organisation. If none exists, then you might consider setting one up: for instance, a housing co-op.

**Properties** are usually 'borrowed' on the basis of a licence or a lease for a specified period of time – ideally in exchange for a small weekly rent.

Any **repairs** can often be funded out of income charged to tenants, but it may be possible to get grants of one kind or another.

**Owners** could be or public bodies (eg the local authority) or private landlords.

**Everything you need to know can be found on our website [www.self-help-housing.org](http://www.self-help-housing.org)**

# What exactly does Self-Help-Housing.Org do?

Self-Help-Housing.Org is an organisation which has been set up with funding from Tudor Trust to help more people make use of empty properties.

The website – [www.self-help-housing.org](http://www.self-help-housing.org) – provides an A-Z of how to go about getting hold of and bringing empty properties back into use.

- How to identify properties and their owners
- How to set up a simple organisation to negotiate for the properties
- How to negotiate with owners
- How to finance any necessary repairs
- What sort of tenancy agreements to use

Plus:

- Details of other existing projects around the country &
- A document bank containing all the key documents you might need.
- Links to many other useful sites



**There are over 900,000 empty properties in England and Wales.** Many of these are in limbo and will remain empty for a number of years while the schemes and redevelopment projects, of which they are a part, await approval and/or funding. Meantime they could be providing people with housing!

Visit: [www.self-help-housing.org](http://www.self-help-housing.org) to find out how to get started.

**“This is something to which Shelter would want to support however we can.” – Adam Sampson, Director Shelter**

**“Allowing people to resolve their own housing needs is one of the best things you can do to build communities... we fully support it.” – David Ireland, CEO Empty Homes Agency**