

West Midlands

NATIONAL
HOUSING
FEDERATION



Join us for

Shared Ownership Week

18 – 24 March 2013

Housing associations working together to raise the profile of shared ownership, and its role in helping people onto the housing ladder and boosting local economies and communities

Foreword

Shared Ownership Week begins on Monday 18 March 2013 and runs until Sunday 24 March 2013. Whether it succeeds depends on what happens in between – and that's up to all of us!

The need for shared ownership in our housing offer has arguably never been greater. The last 10 years have seen house prices rise three times faster than real incomes. The last five years have seen mortgage availability for first-time buyers almost dry up. Yet the aspiration to own a home remains strong.

We also know that housing is now at the forefront of political debate. It drives growth with a speed and effectiveness few industries can match. It has a crucial role to play in the country's economic recovery. The statistics speak for themselves. Every £1 spent on affordable housebuilding is worth £2.41 in the wider economy. And because every new affordable home built creates 2.3 jobs, it also gets people back into work.

Shared Ownership Week is the ideal chance to build on this momentum. We hope you will join us in planning a week of activity and engagement aimed at highlighting the importance of affordable home ownership, in particular shared ownership options across the region.

It is an opportunity for us all to show MPs, councillors and decision-makers the value of shared ownership. It is a chance to emphasise how affordable and flexible shared ownership is in helping meeting people's home ownership dreams – and how they needn't be out of reach. We can show how it can help people live in areas and take up work that they wouldn't otherwise be able to. It can also be used to demonstrate the security and stability it offers compared with a poor private rented offer.

This resource pack has been developed by the Federation to help you make the most of this collaborative initiative. It includes a number of resources which can help you get the most out of the week, engage with local MPs and show-off your schemes.

The Federation will provide coordination and support during the week, and will also be issuing press releases and articles in the run up to the campaign and during the week itself. You may wish to adapt these to include details about your own services and offer.

All the best.

Stuart Ropke

Assistant Director, Research and Futures
National Housing Federation

So what is Shared Ownership Week?

Shared Ownership Week aims to demonstrate the important, and growing, role shared ownership can play in today's housing market.

By raising the profile and awareness of shared ownership with decision-makers at a national and regional level, we can promote the work you do in helping people own their home in a way which is affordable and sustainable in the long-term. It will also be an opportunity to highlight how this can benefit local communities and increase overall housing supply.

The week will offer housing associations the chance to improve understanding of shared ownership with local stakeholders and promote the need for it in the areas they work. It may allow you to dispel some of the myths and misconceptions which surround shared ownership – whether these are believed by your board, local media or customers. It will also be a time to showcase your work and highlight the positive outcomes shared ownership can deliver for customers.

When is it?

Shared Ownership Week will take place between Monday 18 March and Sunday 24 March 2013. There will be a single week across the country, which should help you coordinate your work in multiple regions, with regionally focused engagement, events and media.

What's happening?

To support your work, the Federation has put together a short publication on shared ownership. This contains key information about the product, what it is and isn't, and the benefits it offers customers and communities. This will combine introductory text on shared ownership, along with key data nationally on demand, sales, prices, incomes and mortgage availability.

We will also issue national and regional press releases to give a broad perspective on shared ownership's role in our housing market, as well as the key messages we are looking to promote. Beyond this, it is largely over to you.

The most important part of the week is for you to get local politicians and other key decision-makers involved. Housing associations need to organise their own events to showcase their work and schemes. You should aim to invite MPs, councillors, local authorities, business leaders and other key stakeholders to attend. Other partners with an interest in housing and shared ownership should also be engaged.

The key idea is to raise awareness and understanding of the value of shared ownership and how it can help first-time buyers realise their home ownership dream.

Who's it for and who is running the show?

We encourage all housing associations providing homes for shared ownership to get involved – either individually or in partnership with others.

The Federation will help coordinate Shared Ownership Week through our national and regional offices, but housing associations will be in the driving seat in terms of what happens. We will issue national and regional press releases with key information about shared ownership, highlighting good news stories and the positive outcomes it delivers for families. We will also be keeping a calendar of events to track activity in the region, so please let us know about your events so we can add them and post them online.

How do we get involved?

First let us know that you want to get involved in the week. We are keen to know your plans for events, engagement and media to mark Shared Ownership Week. This will help us help you promote and publicise them alongside wider campaign activities.

Some of the things you may wish to consider through the course of the week include:

- **inviting your local MPs and councillors to visit a scheme with shared ownership homes**
- **arranging visits and briefings for councillors and local authority officers to enlist their support for ongoing shared ownership delivery**
- **hosting a roundtable event with councillors, local authority officers, mortgage lenders and other interested stakeholders to discuss key issues relating to shared ownership delivery**
- **attracting local media and press coverage highlighting shared ownership schemes and good news stories.**

How will we know if it's been a success?

The Federation uses a media monitoring service to track media coverage. Housing associations may also want to keep an eye on their own local press and media, and where possible send published articles to us. Similarly, please also keep details of the events you have organised and any contact with local MPs, councillors and other key people you have made. All of this will be invaluable in helping us assess the week's success.

So what next?

The Federation will distribute hard copies of the national publication to interested housing associations. It would be helpful if you could indicate how many copies you may need.

We will stay in touch and offer support at a regional and national level where possible. We would suggest that you have discussions internally with colleagues across your organisation, especially any communications and press staff. This will enable you to identify your approach, your events, how you will promote them and the press to target.

As soon as you have something organised, you can start sending out invitations. If you can get key regional stakeholders interested in what you are doing, then media interest should follow relatively easily. Good luck.

Key messaging

- Shared ownership is an antidote to the affordability challenges facing first-time buyers and the insecurity private renters face.
- It can help boost local communities and economies by encouraging aspiration, offering stability and allowing people to take up employment opportunities.
- Shared ownership offers excellent value for money to both the Government and customers. Government investment is recycled into future affordable housing supply. Shared owners need to raise far lower deposits than your average first-time buyer and ongoing housing costs are lower.
- It continues to experience high levels of demand, as more and more people are priced out of traditional home ownership. Increasing numbers of first-time buyers now see shared ownership as the way to help them onto the housing ladder, in an area they want to live.
- Mortgages remain available for shared ownership, with growing lender confidence in the product.



Key facts

- The average house price in the West Midlands is £171,707 – to afford an 80% mortgage on this people would need an income of £39,247.
- An average first-time buyer deposit in the West Midlands is £25,295.
- An average first-time buyer pays £652 per month in mortgage payments.
- In the West Midlands the cost of renting privately is £546 per month.
- The average price of a shared ownership home bought in the West Midlands is £132,777.
- Shared owners typically buy a 46% share in their home up front – so, the deposit needed is on average £12,215.
- The average combined monthly mortgage and rent costs for shared ownership in the West Midlands is £533.
- Shared ownership buyers in the West Midlands have an average income of £22,000.



Key asks

- Continued government investment in shared ownership post-2015.
- Commitment from lenders and regulators to maintain and increase mortgage supply for shared ownership.
- Greater recognition of shared ownership's role in helping people take up employment and boosting economic prosperity.
- Local authority support for shared ownership as a way of meeting the need for affordable housing, alongside social and affordable rent, and ensuring planning conditions do not deter mortgage lenders.
- Public support for more homes is vital – people want more homes and their voices need to be heard. Visit www.yestohomes.co.uk to join the campaign.



Top tips for engaging with politicians and councillors

Politicians' postbags will be full of letters from local people concerned about getting on the housing ladder. Housing associations have a story to tell here and Shared Ownership Week offers an invaluable opportunity to communicate the great work you are doing for their constituents.

By inviting your local MP to support your work and visit a shared ownership scheme, you will not only build an important relationship with a key local decision maker. You will also help to transform perceptions of housing associations and the work that they do. Here are our five top tips for engaging with MPs and councillors.

1. Be clear about your top three messages:

Decide on the top three messages you want to get across during the meeting. The MP or councillor may have a lot of questions about a range of issues, so it is important that you ensure the interaction or meeting covers the areas you want to discuss.

2. Tailor your message to them:

How you talk about an issue is often as important as what you say. Do your research. Find out about their interests and whether they've spoken about home ownership or shared ownership in the past. Their political party will also provide important clues to their position.

MPs and councillors expect to be lobbied and expect to be asked to do something, whether it's making a speech, cutting a ribbon or simply expressing support for the work you're doing. Most will be happy to provide a supportive quote to the local press, for example, or to write to another agency on your behalf.

3. It's all about the constituents:

MPs and councillors care more about the views of their constituents than anyone else. They should be at the forefront of your mind during any conversation about shared ownership. It is vital that the politician sees you as on their constituents' side, aware of their needs and supporting them onto the housing ladder.

4. Make the most of your local credibility:

MPs get lobbied by a wide range of organisations on a daily basis. However, these approaches will mostly come from charities and pressure groups who work nationally on policy issues. You, on the other hand, work on the front line directly with their constituents. Nothing is more powerful than that for both MPs and councillors.

5. Cultivate their staff:

MPs' staff are very influential and if you are on friendly terms they can be very helpful. They tend to work in small close-knit teams, and if they think something will be of interest and relevance, they are likely to bring it to the MPs' attention. Local authority staff are also important contacts.

Template letter for MPs and councillors

This template is an outline letter you can use to invite MPs or councillors to support your work and/or attend an event you are organising during Shared Ownership Week. The more specific you can be, the more likely they are to engage or accept. Keep details clear and brief and stress the importance and value to local people (ie voters).

The template below is simply that – you may wish to add to it with regionally specific facts and key messages.

For details about MPs in your area (searchable by postcode) see: <http://findyourmp.parliament.uk>

Dear [MP / councillor / stakeholder name]

Invitation to Shared Ownership Week

To highlight the importance of shared ownership in the [insert region], housing associations are teaming up with the National Housing Federation for Shared Ownership Week from 18 to 24 March 2013.

Shared Ownership Week aims to highlight the need for shared ownership (part buy, part rent) within today's housing market. At a time where more and more would-be first-time buyers are frustrated by high house prices and deposit requirements, it is an ideal solution. Shared ownership offers the most affordable route into home ownership, meeting families' aspirations and allowing them to live and work in areas they wouldn't otherwise be able to afford. This week will show the positive effects shared ownership can have on local economies and communities.

[Insert some of the key messaging and regionally-specific facts]

I am writing to invite you to take part in Shared Ownership Week by supporting our work / visiting [housing scheme] / joining us at [event] to [speak / greet / cut ribbon / etc].

Time: [Date and time of event]

Place: [Venue]

This event... [Put in some details about your event here: What is the aim? Who will be there? Do you want the invitee to do anything in particular there?]

I would be grateful if you could let us know if you are able to attend this event by contacting: [contact details]

For more information about Shared Ownership Week, visit www.housing.org.uk/sharedownershipweek or contact Adam Morton at the National Housing Federation on 020 7067 1077 or at adam.morton@housing.org.uk.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

[Name]

Chief Executive

[Housing association]

Press release tips

During Shared Ownership Week, we hope you will be able to send out press releases to local media. Here are a few simple tips to ensure your release is most effective, has an impact and gets noticed by journalists.

- 01** Use a simple email to send the press release to journalist(s). Use a catchy/enticing headline in the email subject box. Put the text in the body of the email, rather than as an attachment.
- 02** Decide who you'll send it to. More than one person/paper is fine (as long as it isn't an exclusive) and make sure you're targeting the right people/paper.
- 03** Send well in advance – ideally a week before any event.
- 04** Give eye-catching and topical quotes, and provide case studies and scenarios people can relate to.
- 05** Attaching a good colour photo will always help your chances of getting coverage. Make sure you have the permission of the people in the photo (and avoid children unless you have their parents' permission). Including a brief caption will also help.
- 06** Always add 'For more information, please contact XXX' (stating their position, direct number and email) and make sure the named contact responds promptly to all queries.

Case study checklist

What makes a good case study?

There is a range of options when writing case studies - there is no right or wrong way. It could be about any of your shared ownership developments or about any of the people you have helped to own their own home. It may highlight a particularly innovative or high demand scheme, alternatively it may focus on a particular family housed. It may be drawn from your existing marketing material.

What information is needed?

- What makes this shared ownership offer different or special from the open market?

- Why is this story relevant for an area?

- What was demand like for the scheme and how have you responded?

- How have people and the area benefitted from this shared ownership scheme?

- Are there any key stats that can help illuminate your message?

- How does this story highlight the week's key messages?

- Have you photos of the scheme and people in their new home (preferably high resolution)?

- Who are the best contacts (name, number and email) for interviews and other enquiries?

If the case study includes a shared owner, you will also need:

- Their name, age and area of where they live.

- Confirmation of whether they are happy for their story and photo to be published by the press and be interviewed.

What do I need to do with my case studies?

You should look for opportunities to use your case studies to support any local media stories you run. They can also be used to add a tangible message in conversations and correspondence with local leaders and stakeholders.

The Federation needs case studies to inform our own media work, so if you are happy to share one, please send it to adam.morton@housing.org.uk with as many of the above details as possible, so we can use it effectively. We will consider any case studies received for use in national press releases, as well as regional press work, magazine features and other relevant media and publications.

Enquiries for press releases and features issued by the Federation will be handled by your regional communications officer in the first instance. Where an individual housing association is named in a release or article, it is possible you will be approached by the media directly. In this case, we will aim to let you know as the press release is issued.



Key contacts

For further information or to get involved, please contact:

Elizabeth Humphreys, Lead Manager

Tel: 07919 110536 or email: elizabeth.humphreys@housing.org.uk

Amy Beddis, Policy Officer

Tel: 0117 9529918 or email: amy.beddis@housing.org.uk

Peter Jones, Communications Officer

Tel: 0117 952 9913 or email: peter.jones@housing.org.uk

Adam Morton, Investment Policy Officer

Tel: 020 7067 1077 or email: adam.morton@housing.org.uk



The National Housing Federation is the voice of affordable housing in England. We believe that everyone should have the home they need at a price they can afford. That's why we represent the work of housing associations and campaign for better housing.

Our members provide two and a half million homes for more than five million people. And each year they invest in a diverse range of neighbourhood projects that help create strong, vibrant communities.

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