

# Celebrating 40 years of Birmingham Co-operative Housing Services



15 July, 2019

A day of celebrations was held to mark 40 years of Birmingham Co-operative Housing Services (bchs) in the West Midlands.

bchs, now part of Accord Housing Association, was launched in the late 1970s, with the aim of developing and delivering a unique housing management service, which to date, has supported more than 50 housing co-operatives and community-controlled housing projects.

To mark this milestone, bchs Accord staff held a garden party during Co-op Fortnight for its Co-operative Members. The event was an opportunity to celebrate what can be achieved when organisations and communities co-operate.

Jacqui Rooker, Co-operative Manager at bchs Accord said: "Accord continues to actively support and promote co-operative principles and is proud to be a leader in the housing sector on this type of tenure.

"We believe this unique approach to housing builds stronger societies, in which people take control of their own communities. We are very proud to celebrate 40 years of bchs and are looking forward to the next 40."

Housing co-ops offer tenants affordability and safety. Helima Zindani lives in one of the bchs Accord's managed co-ops properties. She explained how this approach to housing has provided her with work and housing management training, as well as a home.

Helima said: "Living in a coop has not just provided me with a home, it has provided me with work opportunities, that I never would have been able to achieve if I wasn't given that training from living in 20/20, my housing co-op in Balsall Heath, Birmingham.

Co-op living is about sustainable communities and inclusion for all, and it is full of autonomous individuals who are passionate about self-organisation within the community.

A co-operative is a membership organisation, where each tenant pays a one-off fee of £1 to become a member of the co-op. Each member then has an equal say and vote and is active in the management of their homes making all the decisions about how their homes are run.

Housing co-ops are lived in by an association of members, where they pay a below-market rent, which goes towards the buildings maintenance and are managed by its members. For example, if a boiler needs to be serviced the members will arrange everything, and pay for it out of a communal repair fund.

A management service is then provided by an external body, like bchs Accord who provides housing management services to 10 co-operatives, consisting of over 600 properties, in Birmingham, the Black Country and Coventry, supporting each of these co-operatives to achieve their specific aims and objectives.

Each co-operative has a management agreement which details the services provided by bchs Accord. This includes providing services such as repairs and housing management, including income collection and tenancy issues.

To find out more about bchs Accord and some of the co-operatives it supports, visit <https://accordgroup.org.uk/bchs>.

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