



## The Urban CLT Project Evaluation

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## Executive Summary

Community land trusts (CLTs) are growing in number in England and Wales. There are now over 300 CLTs in rural and urban areas, tackling a range of housing issues including problems of affordability, supply, dereliction, and regeneration. Formed and governed by local residents, CLTs offer an alternative solution to the housing challenges of local communities.

In 2014, the National CLT Network launched the Urban CLT Project, aimed at supporting the expansion of CLTs in urban areas. The Project provided 19 participating CLTs with grants of £10,000, giving them the flexibility to determine how best to spend it in accordance with local priorities. The Project also included a package of peer networking support services, and aimed to provide CLTs with a resource that could help accelerate their housing plans and delivery. Based on a survey of Urban CLT Project CLTs, five in-depth case studies, and expert interviews, this research finds that:

- Urban CLT Project funding was a key source of support for groups. It supported CLTs with revenue costs, which were used for employing staff, securing technical support and advice, and advancing projects more quickly. This helped to relieve pressure on volunteers and build organisational capacity.
- The light-touch monitoring and lack of prescription as to how the grant could be spent was highly valued by participants, who could respond flexibly to emerging costs and needs. This suggests similar processes could be adopted for future small grant funding programmes.
- There has been a significant revenue funding leverage effect of the Urban CLT Project. For every £1 awarded by the project, a further £17 was generated - with over 90% of this coming from either charitable foundations or Central Government. CLTs are highly reliant on forms of community finance and social investment for capital expenditure.
- Urban CLTs are deeply embedded in their local communities, engaging a minimum of 307 volunteers in various roles within CLTs and over 5,000 members.
- Access to land remains a crucial barrier for scheme development. Many groups are reliant on asset transfer from public bodies, but this is contingent on there being suitable assets to transfer and on local authority support. This study reveals that public sentiment towards CLTs is strengthening but remains variegated.
- Urban CLT Project participants are beginning to transition into roles within emerging Community-Led Housing Hubs. This is one of the significant legacies of the Urban CLT Project, as these CLTs attributed the Urban CLT Project grant

as a key factor in raising the finance and building the organizational capacity to pursue these opportunities.

## Introduction

Community land trusts (CLTs) have emerged as a significant response to housing problems in England and Wales. Based on principles of community participation and democracy, CLTs tackle a range of housing issues in urban and rural communities, including affordability problems, dereliction of empty properties, and wider neighbourhood regeneration.

CLTs have grown in number in recent years, with over 300 CLTs now functioning to meet a range of housing needs. CLTs are increasingly emerging in urban areas. A range of endemic, pressing housing problems, are affecting our cities. House prices in many cities are beyond the reach of local incomes, exposing neighbourhoods to gentrification and local residents to displacement. Elsewhere, Urban CLTs are emerging in disinvested neighbourhoods affected by failed or unpopular regeneration schemes. In addition to tackling problems of housing supply, affordability and dereliction, CLTs structure themselves around principles of local leadership and accountability, responsiveness to local needs, and democratic governance, engaging a broad range of local people in the planning and management of housing.

Supported by funding through the Government's Community Housing Fund, which amounts to £223m funding until 2020, and funding from Power to Change, the CLT sector is set for further expansion. Parallel to these funding programmes, the National CLT Network launched the Urban CLT Project in 2014, to support potential or existing Urban CLTs with their growth and development. Funded by the Oak Foundation, grants of up to £10,000 were provided to CLTs in urban areas to address costs such as legal fees, community engagement, business planning, technical support, network building and staffing. Drawing on survey data collected from participating CLTs and in-depth case studies of five projects, this report provides evidence and learning from the experiences of the Urban CLT Project and provides recommendations for the future support and expansion of the Urban CLT sector.

## The Urban CLT Project

Urban CLTs can arise in a range of contexts, including in areas subject to large-scale urban renewal, where they act as vehicles for community-led regeneration and asset stewardship, and locations affected by worsening housing affordability and gentrification (Moore, 2014; Archer, 2016). In addition to a focus on housing, CLTs can also take ownership of other community assets, and draw on varied objectives, aspirations, and networks to form and develop projects (CFS, 2008; Thompson, 2015).

While communities organise their own housing solutions through CLTs, there are a range of challenges that confront new and emerging projects, including land acquisition, funding constraints, and access to the knowledge, skills and networks needed to progress (Smith Institute, 2016). As such, the pace of growth for Urban CLTs has been slower in cities compared to CLTs in rural locations. However, the context for CLTs is beginning to change through a range of funding interventions. The Government's Community Housing Fund and Power to Change have injected significant resources into the sector's growth and development, while in many locations local government is actively supporting and enabling CLT development. CLTs also continue to be eligible for funding through various Government-backed Affordable Homes Programmes that are open to social housing providers.

An additional development is the emergence of Community-Led Housing Hubs, representing the evolution of 'umbrellas' that have been associated with CLT support services and advisors, often operating at regional levels. This reflects a synergy with other forms of community-led housing similar to, but sometimes distinguished from, CLTs, such as co-housing, co-operatives, and community self-build. Funding from Power to Change has been used to set up new hubs in locations such as Bristol and Leeds, while active enabling work continues in more longstanding CLT support services in places like Cornwall, Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Wessex, and London.

It is in this context that the number of Urban CLTs has grown. This has also been aided by the Urban CLT Project. 19 Urban CLTs were awarded grants of up to £10,000, with the flexibility to use the funds to fund activities or address costs that could further the development of their projects. The Urban CLT Project represented a significant opportunity for participating CLTs. While there have previously been support and demonstration projects aimed at facilitating Urban CLT growth (CFS, 2008), the Urban CLT Project was unique in providing groups with funds to use with significant local discretion, in addition to a programme of peer networking opportunities and the provision of support and advice from the National CLT Network.

The 19 CLTs that received grants were geographically dispersed around the country, located in areas with different housing market characteristics related to affordability, supply and demand. They were also varied in their stages of progress, ranging from visioning and planning to development and delivery of housing, while some were engaged in the provision of additional or supplementary community assets in addition to housing. The location of the 19 participants is mapped in Table 1 and they are listed in Appendix A.



Case study research has highlighted diversity in the motivations and objectives of CLTs, capturing the differences between those focused on new housing provision, refurbishment of existing properties, and those with potentially more or less community leadership, and more or less focus on broader neighbourhood-based issues (Moore, 2014; Thompson, 2015). The influence of local policy environments (Bunce, 2015; Thompson, 2015) and partnerships (Moore, 2018) also appears to be a key factor, with varied reliance on the state and partners for land and funding opportunities influencing the different ways in which the sector may 'scale up' through the growth of existing CLTs, or 'scale out' through the proliferation of a greater number of organisations (Moore and Mullins, 2013).

With the emergence of both Urban CLTs and new funding programmes and infrastructure to support their growth, this research evaluates the experiences of the CLTs that participated in the Urban CLT Project, offering understanding both of the prospect for future development of CLTs and the way in which this may be supported.

## Research Methods

This research was conducted between September 2017 and March 2018, four years after the first cohort of Urban CLT Project participants were awarded grants in 2014, and two years after the second cohort in 2015. There were two overarching themes that structured the research:

- What have been the impacts and activities of Urban CLT Project participants, including homes planned and developed, funding leverage, and community engagement activities?
- How has the Urban CLT Project supported CLTs with their growth and development?

In addition, the research sought to understand factors that may enable or constrain the work of CLTs, including land acquisition, financial barriers, and relationships with partners and stakeholders. From this, we sought to identify lessons that can be learnt from the Urban CLT Project for the future support and development of community-led housing.

A survey of all Urban CLT Project participants was conducted, which was completed by 16 of the 19 grant recipients (a response rate of 84%). Surveys were completed by CLT representatives fulfilling a range of positions, including Director, Community Organiser, Board or Committee Member, Secretary, or Treasurer. The survey aimed to capture a range of information relating to the housing planned or provided by the CLTs, their management, funding sources, and impact of participating in the Urban CLT Project.

This was supplemented by five in-depth case studies of CLTs operating in different locations, in order to capture diversity and variance in experiences, land and finance opportunities, housing market characteristics, and different stages of progression. The case studies are detailed in the table below, with a brief description of their progression to date.

CLT	CLT Developments
Homebaked CLT (established 2012)	Saved a local bakery from demolition and provided the premises for a new community cooperative bakery, which the CLT leases to the cooperative. Refurbished flats above the bakery. Also involved in rescuing a local public green space and currently hoping to refurbish or rebuild (if demolished) terraced housing adjoining the community bakery.
London CLT (established 2007)	Currently has 11 homes in a pre-development phase, 10 with planning permission/in development, and a further

	23 occupied at the St Clement's Hospital site in Mile End. Developing other sites around London, such as in Lewisham.
Heart of Hastings CLT (established 2016)	63 homes in a pre-development phase on a site held on license from Hastings Borough Council. Also negotiating further asset transfers from their local County Council.
Oxfordshire CLT (established 2006)	Currently has 28 homes in a pre-development phase, with 6 in planning permission/development phase. Also involved in creating the Oxon Community Housing Hub across the county.
Somerset Co-Operative CLT (established 2009)	Renovated an empty property to provide work space for community enterprise services on one level and four flats above, targeted at local people on low incomes or at risk of homelessness.

Interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders in each case study area, including CLT representatives, funding partners, local authority contacts, CLT enablers, and local Councillors. In total, 22 interviews were held across the five case studies. These were supplemented by 10 interviews with what could broadly be termed 'national stakeholders', including representatives of national funders, the Ministry of Communities, Housing & Local Government, representatives from the community-led housing sector, the Local Government Association, and the Greater London Authority. These stakeholders were selected according to their relevance to, and involvement in, community-led housing and discussed the effectiveness of lobbying, partnerships, and advocacy amongst CLTs.

The following section presents the research findings, drawing on material from the survey, case study interviews, and individual interviews to reflect on the impact and activities of Urban CLT Project grant recipients, the support offered, and the implications of this funding programme for future support and expansion of the CLT sector.





## Research Findings

This section presents research findings structured around the impact and activities of Urban CLT Project grant recipients; the impact of the Urban CLT Project on the growth and development of Urban CLTs; and in the final section aims to draw out lessons and implications for the future support and funding of community land trusts.

## The impact and activities of Urban CLTs

### Affordable homes for local needs

Many of the Urban CLTs in this research had been formally established in the past decade, with 8 of the 16 survey respondents in existence since 2012, with two only forming in 2016. As a result, the number of new homes planned and built by Urban CLTs is variable between different CLTs and different regions. At least 8 of the 16 projects had completed a total of at least 72 homes, 51 of which were already occupied at the time of this research. The first four completed schemes were at Bristol CLT, London CLT, Granby Four Streets in Liverpool, and West Rhyl in Wales, highlighting variation in the geography of CLTs and their roles in different types of housing market.

CLTs were also asked about their development pipeline, which indicated that planning permission had been secured for a further 50 homes from 9 projects, and planning permission had been applied for a further 26 homes from 7 projects, indicating strong potential for further growth of CLT stock. A larger number of homes were in a pre-development phase and awaiting planning permission. While CLTs reported a total of



461 homes at a pre-development stage, there is uncertainty around funding and land acquisition, which may affect completions. Nevertheless, the total number of completions and homes at varied stages of planning indicate that the impact of the Urban CLT Project CLTs will be significant, given that the current total existing CLT stock nationally is estimated to number around 840 homes. So far, Urban CLT Project participants have contributed around 10% of that figure, with a substantial number of homes awaiting or granted planning permission.

The homes planned or delivered by Urban CLT Project participants are largely focused on rental housing, though there is a substantial minority that provide varied forms of home ownership products, usually involving some form of resale restrictions to ensure lasting affordability. The CLTs also impose household income restrictions to meet housing need. While survey responses did not provide significant detail on this, it was clear that income restrictions are applied in different ways, ranging from absolute limits, to median local incomes, and structures based on average local incomes. Significantly, Urban CLTs were all considering applying local connection restrictions to their properties in order to meet designated local needs, with local connection often defined in relation to residency, employment, or 'community contribution' to recognise local community engagement and voluntary activity. Local connections were usually defined by areas smaller than a local authority level, such as single towns, neighbourhood wards, neighbourhood plan areas, or postcodes.

In addition to local connection requirements, it was clear that there is a diverse range of beneficiaries from CLT homes. For instance, the CLT in Somerset provides four rental apartments available to people who have recently been homeless, or are at risk of homelessness, while Homebaked CLT in Liverpool has developed a four-person shared housing flat that will be rented out to local young people. CLTs are therefore meeting a range of housing needs according to local circumstance and need, which may include those seeking affordable home ownership products, but also extends beyond this to meet a diverse set of needs. The provision of affordable housing within CLT ownership was thought to provide broader benefits to households by enabling people to remain resident in their communities. This was particularly the case in inflated housing markets such as in London, where the affordability of housing can restrict choice and push people into unsuitable accommodation, as described by a London CLT representative regarding their housing on the St Clement's Hospital site:

The most important impact [of the CLT] is that 23 families so far at St Clement's have been able to stay in London, where their livelihoods and networks are, where they would otherwise have been forced to choose between living in poor, insecure and overcrowded accommodation, or leaving the neighbourhood they call home.

London CLT (Survey Response)

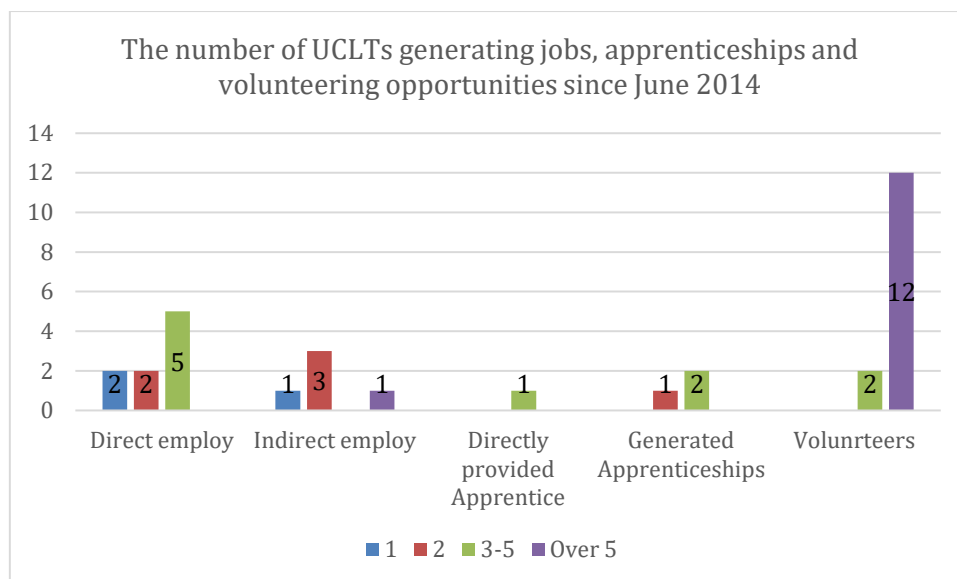
## Community Benefits

While CLTs are commonly associated with the provision of affordable housing, survey and case study work with the Urban CLT Project participants showed that their work has broader community impacts, including ownership or management of non-housing community assets. These included community shops, green spaces and neighbourhood facilities, demonstrating the ability of community-led projects to respond to an array of local community needs and priorities. This included hosting community street markets (Granby Four Streets), management of a community bakery (Homebaked), and working towards shared community green space, facilities, and workspaces (such as the CLTs in Hastings and London). A good example of this came with the Homebaked CLT in Anfield in Liverpool, where there is a provision of different community amenities and partnerships with other organisations to build shared community spaces. Homebaked is now involved in a ‘family’ of community-oriented amenities, including HomeSquare (a revitalised public space for local cultural activities) and ‘HomeFarm’ (an urban food growing project), in addition to its CLT housing group and leasing of a Bakery. Homebaked are now aiming to renovate the terraced row of property adjoining the bakery and apartment above, providing a mixed-used development of affordable housing on top and commercial space for other community businesses below, acting as an incubator as well as a landlord. A survey response from Homebaked painted the vision for the local community, which the CLT is at the heart of:

[Our vision is] A thriving independent high street with a mix of shops and services for local residents, as well as trading for matchdays [Homebaked is located near a football stadium] and tourists. Good quality housing that remains affordable in perpetuity. Public open green spaces that are welcoming, cared for, and well-used. Well-paid jobs. Good quality training opportunities. Social interaction and inclusion. Growth in the local economy.

Homebaked CLT (Survey Response)

The mention of training opportunities highlights another community-based impact of Urban CLTs. Homebaked have already secured grants from organisations such as Power to Change to offer construction apprenticeships to local young people. CLTs have had a significant impact on volunteering, engaging a minimum of 307 volunteers in various roles within the CLTs, including management, governance and broader community engagement exercises. There has also been a more modest, but important, impact on employment, training and apprenticeships, with a total of 25 paid staff employed directly by CLTs, a further 19 further local jobs generated through CLT activity, and a combined total of 10 construction trainees and apprenticeships. This is summarized in the graph below, showing the numbers of CLTs and the number of employment posts, apprenticeships, and volunteers (banded 1, 2, 3-5, and over 5).



While some of these figures may seem low when taken on face value, it still represents the significant potential of CLTs to provide a range of broader community benefits beyond the beneficiaries of their housing provision. Furthermore, given many of the CLTs are in the early stages of housing planning and delivery, it seems reasonable to anticipate that there may be further growth in the provision of direct employment and training opportunities in the future, as CLTs and their activities progress and expand.

In addition, CLTs were frequently described as having a qualitative benefit for communities, perceived as building community understanding of housing issues and providing a platform for local people to input into the planning and development of their neighbourhoods. There were various examples of CLTs offering hope for local people, such as the resistance to unwanted demolitions of social housing through the West Ken Gibbs Green CLT or the response to failed state interventions in Liverpool. Survey evidence suggests clear evidence of increased community capacity among urban CLTs, including their campaigning capabilities and broad community support. The levels of civil society participation in their membership and governance sets most urban CLTs apart from other types of housing bodies. The 15 responding CLTs in our survey have recruited a total of 5,295 ordinary members from the local community. While around half of these are accounted for by London CLT, with its connections to Citizens UK, others including Naked House, West Ken Gibbs Green Community Homes, Bristol CLT, and Leeds Community Homes reported membership totals ranging from 275 to 800. Members usually paid a nominal fee of £1 or £5.

Alongside the broad community membership, urban CLTs boards are usually led by residents of the wider local community, with the Chairs particularly likely to be local residents. This seems important for the local accountability and legitimacy of CLTs, setting them apart from most social and commercial housing providers and, complementing the broad-based community membership, this suggests that one benefit of urban CLTs is their deep-reaching democratic base within the communities they serve.

## Funding Leverage

One of the ways in which the impact of the Urban CLT Project may be measured is by the amount of funding leveraged by the participating organisations. While the money received by Urban CLTs was relatively small in the context of what is required to plan and develop housing, the £10,000 grants can be observed to have had a ‘pump priming’ effect. This has worked in tandem with other funding sources and activities undertaken by the participating CLTs, including grants and support from partners. Nevertheless, by providing grants which could be used to meet revenue funding needs – such as legal fees, community engagement exercises, business planning, and staff costs – the Urban CLT Project has helped CLTs position themselves to access additional funding streams.

Survey responses from 12 of the 19 participating CLTs indicated that in excess of £2.1m grant funding was secured, in addition to the £120,000 received in total by those projects. This suggests that the Urban CLT Project, in tandem with other sources, has led to a revenue funding leverage ratio of 17:1. Over 90% of revenue grant funding has come from either charitable foundations or Central Government; 66% of which came from charitable organisations such as Power to Change, the Nationwide Foundation, and Big Local. The survey also asked participating CLTs to confirm levels of capital funding, which was described as ‘loan or borrowed (repayable) funding for capital expenditure’. Only 11 of the CLTs responded to this question, with only 6 reporting any capital expenditure to date. While this reflects the early stage of development of many of the Urban CLTs that took part, the data suggests that at least £2.4m of capital funding has been raised by participating CLTs to date, with 69% of this raised through either social investors or through community share issues and crowd-funding mechanisms. This shows a much greater use of community finance and social investment than would be found by mainstream housing providers, reflecting the capacity and capability of community-based projects with social goals to attract this type of funder.

In interviews and survey responses, the Urban CLT Project grant was acknowledged to have had a significant impact in giving CLTs a funding base to help leverage further funding. 80% of survey respondents said that participation in the Urban CLT Project had had a significant leverage effect, while Leeds Community Homes reported that their Community Share issue had been one of the most important impacts of the Project to date:

The success of the Community Share offer offered a different vision of how we can create the homes we need in Leeds, through the creation of what we called People Powered Homes. It would have been difficult to prepare, launch and run a successful Community Share offer [without the Urban CLT Project grant].

Leeds Community Homes (Survey Response)

In this instance, the Urban CLT Project funding had been used to contribute to the costs of producing a share offer document and business plan, legal costs, and costs associated with the launch, promotion and administration of the offer. An interview with London CLT also illustrated the way in which the Urban CLT Project monies had laid the groundwork for further development and funding leverage, as described in relation to the proposed development in Lewisham:

The London CLT Urban Fund money was put towards initial pieces of work; a feasibility study was drawn up, but also other initial work: a land agreement, some initial community engagement workshops. We had a picnic up on the site over the summer after the money came through and gave everyone on the Estate the chance to pick the architect.

London CLT Representative

These exercises funded by the Urban CLT Project were critically important, both in terms of supporting and fulfilling the CLT's commitment to community engagement and its ability to develop further funding streams off the back of initial feasibility studies. London CLT subsequently helped set up a Community Share offer, which raised £488,000 towards the development of CLT homes in Lewisham.

The success of Community Share offers highlights how CLTs and other community-based projects can diversify their funding sources compared to mainstream housing providers, tapping into sources of finance that may only be available due to their unique social goals and commitment to community ownership. However, it may also reflect the difficulty in securing finance from commercial lenders at pre-development or early stages, at a stage when CLTs may not have any income streams nor any assets to leverage. Furthermore, some CLTs such as Somerset explained that the Urban CLT Project grant played a critical role in providing revenue funding, meaning they didn't have to ask their members or existing Community Shareholders for further financial support, which may have increased the financial exposure of the organisation. In some cases, therefore, it will be important for issues of financial risk to avoid reliance on sources of community-based finance.

An additional issue with leveraging finance related to the fragmentation of grant funding within the sector, including variation in funding criteria, duplication of effort in submitting multiple funding applications for relatively small amounts, and difficulty in obtaining pre-development finance prior to obtaining planning permission, when a lack of income streams and asset base make it difficult to access funding. CLT representatives spoke both of the paucity of pre-development funding and of the 'patchwork' of funding that was available, with it sometimes being necessary to go through lengthy funding applications for relatively small amounts of money:

We've had about £200,000 of money so far, so it's a lot of money but we've had it in a small amounts and that's fine. It's not the small amounts that I mind, it's the fact that each of those small amounts comes from a different

organisation with a different set of rules, timetables, and monitoring approaches. It's that that's the problem.

Heart of Hastings CLT Representative

This suggests a need for the various parties involved in funding community-led housing to consider how funding opportunities may be co-ordinated and streamlined to best support funding recipients. In addition, one CLT sector stakeholder felt that some funders place a significant emphasis on 'community control', which while ensuring community leadership may also undermine the potential to leverage in external expertise and skills:

Making community control the holy grail for community-led housing from the very outset can easily lead to less well-resourced and deprived communities missing out, since either there's no-one to start up a project or they can't demonstrate enough community control. But the level of community benefit could easily compensate for this and in any case, it may be possible to move towards more community control over time. So, there is a Catch-22: you can't have the money if you don't have the skills, but you don't qualify as community-controlled if you bring in the skills from outside the area of benefit.

CLT Sector Stakeholder

## **The Urban CLT Project: Supporting the Growth and Development of CLTs in Cities**

While the previous section looked at the impact of the Urban CLT Project, this section aims to unpick how and why the Urban CLT Project supported CLTs with their growth and development, tracing what CLTs used the grant for and how participation in the Urban CLT Project contributed to their progress.

### **Using the grant to build capacity and expertise**

The stated aim of the Urban CLT Project was to "help with such costs as legal fees, community engagement, business planning, support with negotiating with local authorities, and finding a development partner". Survey evidence shows that the funding was used for at least 39 purposes, with the most common expenditures including meetings, consultation and engagement, publicity and recruitment, legal expenses, and operational costs. These costs often related to specific activities and priorities of the CLTs, such as the organisation, promotion and administration of the Community Share scheme ran by Leeds Community Homes. In addition, other specific uses of the grant included to pay for staff costs or to buy in technical support and expertise.

All the case study CLTs reported that the funding through the Urban CLT Project had made a difference to their plans, helping them to progress quicker. One aspect of this was the flexibility and lack of prescription as to how the grant would be spent. It is common that funding applications are accompanied by a detailed breakdown of expected costs with accompanying reporting criteria. However, the Urban CLT Project monies came with flexibility of how it could be spent, allowing CLTs to respond both to organisational needs and bespoke requirements. This was cited as particularly important by London CLT:

There's the flexibility of the Fund and the fact it was designed specifically to get CLT homes off the ground, which meant that it was all quite light touch and we were able to do it at a time that was really helpful, whereas some other grants, it takes a long time for the process to be gone through. You have to explain what CLTs are again and again and again for people who don't get them, and so it was useful not having to do all that.

London CLT Representative

Some CLTs also used the grant to employ staff or buy in technical expertise. This helped to build capacity in the organisation and reduce the workload on volunteers, the effect of which was to accelerate plans and activities. Oxfordshire CLT provided a particularly compelling example of this, having been in existence since 2006 but encountered numerous difficulties related to land acquisition and local strategic relationships, while being led by volunteers. Using the Urban CLT Project money for a staff member to have a core focus on progressing CLT work helped them get in a position to start work on a housing site (though this was subsequently delayed due to financial issues):

We got the money in 2014 and it was instrumental in helping us get to the point where we were ready to start work on Dean Court. Charlie [employed to work on the CLT] did all the work in the run-up to the start on site. He managed all the contractors, he managed the budget, he did all of those things. I just don't know how we would have done it if we didn't have him, and so we learnt a lot from that.

Oxfordshire CLT Representative

A legacy of this has been the development of human capital within the CLT sector; the person employed for a short period of time has stayed involved with Oxfordshire CLT as a volunteer and trained as a national CLT accredited advisor.

For other CLTs, the grant provided a resource to sustain existing work, while formulating or awaiting decisions on other funding bids. This was seen as particularly important as a broader concern identified by other stakeholders in the sector related to whether community-led housing organisations have the ability to respond quickly to emerging funding or land opportunities. Having a pool of money to use for emerging costs, or to fund staff resources to progress key activities and respond to



opportunities, was cited as one of the most valuable aspects of the Urban CLT Project. As London CLT described, the grant “allowed us not to put everything on hold while we waited for our Community Share offer to take place.” Those we interviewed acknowledged that it helped speed up the progress of their planned scheme and maintain a reputation for efficacy and trust with key partners and gatekeepers, including local authorities. Another important use of the Fund was reported to be through buying in legal and financial expertise. For instance, Homebaked used part of the £10,000 grant to procure expert financial advice for costing their planned new-build redevelopment of the terrace row adjoining the Bakery. The financial projections revealed that the multi-million-pound scheme would prove unviable under the rents that the CLT had proposed to set and the loan facilities available on the market. This evidence then helped make the case to the local authority to retain and renovate the housing, rather than demolishing and rebuilding.

The use of the grant to buy-in technical support or fund staff costs is crucial in the context of challenges faced by some of the other participating CLTs, where there is reliance on a very small number of individuals to push forward the scheme. For instance, one case study CLT encountered significant difficulties with tenant management, placing a heavy burden on the capacity of the CLT.

While it is not possible to say that progress on the CLT schemes cited here would not have happened without the Urban CLT Project grant, we can surmise that progress may have been slower without receipt of the grant, particularly given that it was one of the few sources of revenue funding available at the time of the Project’s inception and launch in 2014.

### Peer Networking Support

In addition to grant funding, the Urban CLT Project had an objective of increasing support and awareness of urban CLTs. One aspect of this included peer networking opportunities, including regular meetings between participating CLTs. Peer networking offered the opportunity to meet up with CLTs in similar circumstances and to realise the commonalities of some of the problems they face locally. Skills training and information provided through these meetings was highly valued, as was the residential nature of meetings, allowing CLTs to forge stronger links and encourage more informal networking opportunities. Sharing commonality of experience, challenges, and potential solutions was highlighted by some CLTs as a distinctive and valuable element of the Urban CLT Project. For other CLTs, peer networking was seen as less valuable, perhaps reflecting their preoccupation with navigating significant local and contest-specific obstacles to their plans, or the diversity of ‘urban’ experiences within the programme, ranging from inner-city neighbourhoods, to high demand housing markets in the South East, and smaller urban locations in the South West.

Interestingly, peer networking was seen not only in a transactional manner, where CLTs may learn skills and absorb knowledge from other people to tackle local issues,

but as a reflective exercise that allows CLTs to share their problems in a sympathetic environment:

It's just not just learning from other people, it's being able to think through your own project and describe your own project to other people in a similar but different context, and that helps you work out what you're wanting to do, just by talking about your projects. It's not like you're just constantly listening to other people and absorbing their ideas or pushing your ideas onto them, it's that you get a chance to reflect on your own development and opportunities and challenges in a sympathetic context. So that's an opportunity to really further your own development which I think gets missed a lot of the time. We talk about peer learning as if it's just like a swap but actually a really important part of it is the opportunity to reflect on your own development.

Heart of Hastings CLT Representative

This quote from a CLT representative in Hastings captures a previously unseen value of peer networking: the opportunity for CLTs to reflect on their own activities and refine their aims, objectives, and activities accordingly. This might provoke reflection and thinking about, for instance, different methods of community engagement, different housing options and provision, and relationships with other actors. The same representative highlighted the 'mutual learning potential' that emerges from peer networking and stated that the National CLT Network's arrangement of this "gives us a solidarity network and a way of spreading innovation."

When asked about improvements to the Urban CLT Project, one CLT commented that greater opportunities for peer learning would be valuable. For instance, more frequent group meetings, a 'buddying' system where CLTs are paired by according to similar locations and economic situations (e.g. where land prices are an issue, or where CLTs are active in post-industrial towns), or the opportunity for paid time to shadow or work with people that actively work with CLTs in order to support quicker adoption of core skills and understanding of routes and barriers to CLT progress. In interviews with other CLT stakeholders beyond the case study areas, there were contrasting views on peer networking. All agreed that it was useful, but some questioned the practicalities of a national scheme based on prohibitive issues of distance, time, location and expense. Some suggested that networking happens more informally at a local level. Other CLT stakeholders supported the concept but questioned the usefulness of a rural and urban split, on the basis that: "there's a lot of mutual learning and actually a lot of issues that people face are quite similar."



### The importance and Emergence of Community-Led Housing Hubs

Previous studies have acknowledged the role of community-led housing hubs (sometimes referred to as umbrellas or intermediaries) in supporting the growth and development of CLTs (Moore and Mullins, 2013). Not all of the Urban CLT Project participants were based in areas where existing CLT support bodies or hubs operate. Where they were, some had received valuable support and guidance, even if only on an informal basis, such as in Somerset, who also had links with a local organisation called Somerset Cooperative Services.

In response to this, some of the CLTs involved in the Urban CLT Project have begun to develop community-led housing hubs or secondary support services of their own. London CLT, emerging from the Citizens UK community organizing body, saw their future role as similar to the secondary co-operatives of the 1970s and 1980s, performing an overarching enabling role. This is in part due to their commitment to the philosophy and principles of CLTs – community leadership, local democracy, and utilising land and housing for community benefit – as well as their ability to mobilise lessons learnt from earlier projects to support further development of CLT homes around London:

One of the things that we've been looking at is to identify either the parts of the process, or the process itself, that can be repeatable, that we can say to other people "this is how we did this". So, making it replicable by other groups, I think that's probably quite a useful and importance outcome.

London CLT Representative

Oxfordshire CLT highlighted the community organising approach as inspiration for the development of their own hub, where building connectivity and relationships with other parts of the community runs in parallel to site identification. In short, the CLT organises around the concept and principles of the CLT idea, rather than solely the individual site, helping to build broad-based coalitions of support. The development of a hub in Oxfordshire responds to the availability of Community Housing Fund money made available by Central Government, as well as the identification of synergies with other organisations with different areas of local expertise, including in finance, community development, and neighbourhood planning:

The hub idea is being mainly led by Community First Oxford because they have paid people working for them, who can do some of this work, whereas Oxfordshire CLT is still managed by volunteers. The reality of it is that it's absolutely brilliant that Community First Oxfordshire is working with the Oxford Community Foundation and us.

Oxfordshire CLT Representative

The coalition of these three organisations, and their development of a community-led housing hub, can be considered a legacy of the Urban CLT Project. The grant received by Oxfordshire CLT enabled them to fund staff costs and invest in an individual who had the time and vision to build relationships and networks across the city and county with organisations that share similar and overlapping principles and objectives. While these organisations may not necessarily be housing-focused, coalitions such as this can prove useful in building local awareness of the CLT model amongst the strong memberships of the different partnerships, and more generally in embedding principles of community leadership and local democracy into local planning processes. A similar legacy of the Urban CLT Project can be seen in Leeds, where the grant funding supported Leeds Community Homes to realise major investment in the form of Community Shares and a hub to support proliferation of community-led housing is emerging.

The growth of urban CLTs is likely to be encouraged by the formation of these hubs, as well as by the expansion of support services in areas such as the East Midlands (also covering south of the Humber) and Wessex (covering Somerset, Dorset and Devon). This expansion is in part a response to the Community Housing Fund, which in its first year was distributed across local authority areas. CLT practitioners identified limits to the geographical expansion of hubs. There are practical limitations, in that they are often reliant on small numbers of staff that would find it practically difficult to support communities across disparate geographical areas. In addition, further growth may ultimately end up becoming too distant from the communities they support. Hubs identified that an understanding of, and relationship with, communities and their local context was important to the success and effectiveness of their support.

In some circumstances, housing associations have proven to be crucial partners for CLTs, providing support with development. However, in a small number of cases case study CLTs were critical of housing associations on the basis of their perceived 'top-

down' approach and a perception that they inadequately met housing needs of the poor and low-middle income groups in their communities. This highlights that while housing associations are important partners and often adopt pro-social attitudes to supporting CLT development (as in Wessex; see Moore, 2015), in other cases community-led housing hubs will be key partners and conduits for supporting CLTs.

Interviews with case study CLTs and sector stakeholders explored the role of the National CLT Network. This was viewed in a positive light. Several interviewees observed that the Network plays a key role in strategically lobbying Government to create the environment for local CLTs to thrive. Some interviewees observed this as a shift from providing detailed technical support to groups, with a focus on lobbying at a high, national level. This was a shift very much reflected by the majority of interviewees, with high-level stakeholders in organisations representing local and national government supportive of the Network's role in translating and reflecting local experiences at national level. Although some urban CLTs did not engage regularly with the Network, this was usually due to a concentration on local politics and issues, or not requiring specific advice or guidance on issues relevant to the Network. Participating CLTs also commented on the value of the light-touch funding process overseen by the National CLT Network, which provided the £10,000 grants to CLTs with little prescription over how it should be spent and, compared to other funders, less stringent monitoring and reporting obligations.

Some interviewees commented that it was positive to see different parts of the community-led housing/development sector working more closely than in previous years, rather than operating in individual silos related to their specific product. Another view was that the role of a nationally based membership organisation should be to visit specific groups and offer advice and solutions, potentially building closer relationships with its membership. However, there are practical and resource constraints to this, and it is possible that the further growth and development of community-led housing hubs could fulfill this role.

Finally, some interviewees – including one from completely outside the CLT sector (a former housing association employee) - felt that the sector as a whole could do more to strategically engage with different housing campaigns and different types of housing needs, finding new ways to reach a range of housing groups (e.g. housing for the elderly, 'Generation Rent', engagement through cultural/philosophical messages). This, of course, may be difficult to arrange at a national level, as one of the unique aspects of CLTs is its emphasis on local leadership and solutions to locally-defined housing needs, which are likely to differ within and between different parts of the country.

## The Support of City Leaders and Politicians

Another objective of the urban CLT project was to raise awareness of the potential of urban CLTs, as well as to identify potential barriers to their development.

Most external stakeholders tended to be unaware of the Urban CLT Project per se, which is unsurprising given the activities and grant funding laid on through the Project was directed at the participating CLTs themselves. However, there was a view amongst stakeholders that public understanding awareness of CLTs had grown in recent years:

Four years ago it was something that people were occasionally aware of and sometimes had interest in, but certainly over the last three years in particular the awareness of the sector and the CLT Network and its work in particular has increased significantly.

Central Government Official

The case studies provided examples of CLTs successfully navigating local politics to build support for their plans. The most obvious examples seem to have occurred where CLTs have successfully connected with prominent and visible local concerns, such as the housing affordability crisis in London and – in its inception – the debate around the Olympic legacy, to which London CLT promoted community land trusts as a solution. Another example, with more ambiguous results, can be found in Anfield, where Homebaked have campaigned around the consequence of failed urban renewal. While Homebaked have been successful in drawing support from politically powerful figures locally, including the Deputy Mayor of Liverpool City Council, they are still yet to obtain the freehold of the building that they currently manage or that which they hope to redevelop. Interviews with London CLT emphasised the importance of gaining the support from local political leaders and government at an early stage, particularly when seeking resources from local authorities:

[There] was a kind of explicit emphasis on the politics over everything else at the beginning... and very few people spend enough time thinking about what is the political strategy to ensure that it is in the interest of this particular local authority to hand over land. Often I think people prioritise technical expertise and things like that when actually there's probably quite a few technical experts you can get your hands on if you need to but the other thing is persuading a land owner to get you some land and the easiest way to get that done, unless you've got contacts with some very wealthy land owners, is through politics.

London CLT Representative

Coming at it from a different angle, this view was reiterated by local government representatives and politicians, who emphasised that CLTs – and community-led housing more broadly – need to make it clear how they can help local authorities meet their statutory objectives in order to gain support:

It is not about pursuing CLTs for CLT's sake. The local authority has to deliver these duties that are efficient to the place, and how can CLTs help deliver these would be the focus, rather than you have to have a CLT because they are great.

Local Government Representative

[Presenting CLTs] in terms of being a tool which might empower local government to do good stuff, rather than challenge the local government in terms of things it is not doing and kind of berating it, that would probably be the way to go.

Local Councillor, South East

A particularly important aspect of this is also ensuring that key partners such as local authorities see CLTs as credible. In London, the CLT cited the grant provided through the Urban CLT Project as important to this, as having a source of finance to help their progression whilst leveraging other finance helped strengthen their credibility:

We had this political opportunity in Lewisham– and it takes quite a long time to do a community share offer particularly on the scale that we were looking to do. And so we would have had to sit there for a few months had we not got the Urban CLT Fund which would have been significantly detrimental to our relationship with Lewisham [Council] because it would have been like “you work with a community housing organisation and everything takes ages, they don't have the resource to just get on and do it” – that's one potential thing that happens. Also it would have taken us longer.

London CLT Representative

This is particularly important given that local authorities are seen as a key source of resources, particularly regarding the asset transfer of land or buildings. 30% of survey respondents had received asset transfer to date, with 80% indicating that they expected asset transfers to take place in the future. Anticipated future transfers included land for development and property transfers, while 5 CLTs in the Urban CLT Project had already received transfers at zero or discounted value, including land in Bristol and Hastings, and property in Middlesbrough.

The transfer of assets at low values is important, for it can enhance and in some cases be a determining factor of the financial viability of proposed developments, especially in areas where land values are high. Yet, there remain challenges to this, meaning that access to asset transfers remain somewhat of a ‘postcode lottery’. Not all local authorities have suitable assets available to transfer, and where they do the issue of gaining ‘best value’ for land over and above consideration of the social returns and impacts can affect potential disposals at low or discounted rates.



Similarly, some local politicians highlighted that there is still misunderstanding and a lack of awareness as to the product that CLTs provide, which in turn affects a local authority's willingness to transfer land. One example was given in relation to CLTs in the South East, where it was felt that land in public ownership in some local authority areas may be prioritised for social rental housing over and above intermediate housing tenures due to a perception that CLTs do not meet the most extreme housing needs. While it is often the case that some CLTs focus on affordable intermediate home ownership opportunities, others – including ones in this study such as Somerset – provide to households at risk of homelessness and on low incomes, indicating that the CLT sector has a broad and diverse spectrum of beneficiaries.

Some stakeholders indicated that an upturn in local authority support for CLTs and community-led housing could be attributed to the availability of Community Housing Fund monies, rather than principled support for the concept. A consequence of this has been that many local authorities have obtained Community Housing Fund money, but have been unsure as to the best method of distributing and using it. This has opened up opportunities for some CLTs, such as in Oxfordshire where a strong case was made to use it for the development of the community-led housing hub, while in others, such as in Hastings, the grant money was used to pay a consultant to do an options appraisal on a site, even though the CLT were the only interested and realistic party. In other areas, where local authorities show little interest in community-led housing provision, support bodies may divert attention from that area and focus on areas where local political interest and opportunity is higher, which may help explain the variegated distribution of CLTs around the country.

Asset transfer is a key way in which CLTs can unlock land and property, and is especially important given that many CLTs lack capital (or assets to borrow against) – which can be used to purchase assets outright. Open competition for land and assets is problematic for small-scale, under-resourced organisations such as CLTs. Larger-scale affordable housing providers have greater financial capabilities and can outmuscle CLTs for sites of interest. One school of thought was that CLTs are best suited to smaller, marginal sites that don't interest these providers, but these can be rare, and schemes can be complicated. This would also inevitably restrict opportunities for CLTs and the growth of the sector, while there are also examples in this study of CLTs developing proposals for large-scale sites, such as in Hastings where they are planning homes for a 5.5-acre site.

While the Community Housing Fund offers a welcome and accessible pool of funding for CLTs, it was not felt that this automatically resolves the financial barriers mentioned above. Indeed, grant funders acknowledged that there may be a 'mismatch in timing' in that CLTs may need subsidy to secure a site, but conversely may also need a site to secure subsidy. One potential solution to this may be a revolving land purchase fund, similar to the facility operated by Cornwall Council to support CLTs in their county, where CLTs can access loan finance through the fund and replenish it when schemes are completed. The vast majority of interviewees also identified the difficulties of becoming a Registered Provider in order to access grant funding from Homes England, echoing previous research in which CLTs have argued

that this process represents a bureaucratic hurdle, with application procedures and reporting requirements perceived by CLTs to be disproportionate to the size and scale of their homes and to their organisational capacity (Moore, 2018).

## Concluding Remarks

This report has presented evidence from the Urban CLT Project funding programme, funded by the National CLT Network from 2014. The direct impact of the £10,000 grants given to groups is difficult to define, given that most groups pursue a cocktail of funding to progress their aims and objectives. Nevertheless, we can see that the Urban CLT project provided a key source of financial support to groups at times when it was particularly needed. It enabled CLTs to meet revenue costs, which were critical for employing staff, securing advice and technical support, and conducting community engagement and feasibility exercises that allowed projects to advance more quickly. A distinguishing feature of the Urban CLT Project was its light-touch monitoring and the limited conditions placed on the use of funds, allowing CLTs to respond to emerging costs. This suggests that similar processes could be adopted for future small grant programmes. Local nuance and specificity is a defining feature of community-led housing, and it is beneficial for groups if this is accommodated in the design of funding programmes as occurred through the Urban CLT Project.

This also relates to the co-ordination of financial support. Case studies revealed critical lessons about the need for CLT initiatives to be linked into a continuum of funding that parallels the lifecycles of projects, avoiding the potential for funding gaps to emerge at key stages of the journey, such as the pre-development phase. This is an especially important issue for community-led housing groups that often lack a capital or asset base to leverage. The diversity of state and third sector funders in the sector should consider how their programmes can be co-ordinated and complement each other to best support groups.

This study also reveals that access to land remains a key barrier to scheme development for CLTs. A number of groups are reliant on asset transfers from public bodies at nil or discounted values. While this provides useful access to resources, it is highly contingent on both there being suitable and desirable assets to transfers and on local authority support and willingness. There is the potential for more dedicated support with land acquisition and dedicated purchasing funds to enable more groups to purchase land and assets. Revolving loan funds that allow groups to draw down funds, as used successfully elsewhere in the community-led housing sector, may be one solution to this and may be an effective use of the new grant-funding coming into the sector.

Evidence gathered here reveals positive local and national government sentiments towards community-led housing, though there remains some misunderstanding and apprehension in some areas. Community Housing Fund monies could be used to encourage a change in local government processes and practices, including

encouraging learning from best practice in places where asset transfer has successfully occurred and where local government is actively supporting CLT development. This may include urban CLT Project examples such as Bristol and London, but also other good practice in places such as East Cambridgeshire.

One of the major impacts and legacies of the Urban CLT Project is the development of new community-led housing hubs around the country. Some Urban CLT Project grant recipients have begun to transition into roles where they aim to support the proliferation and replication of community-led housing, often making important synergies across community organisations to build support and capacity. This is crucial given that the most significant developments of CLTs have historically been where support services are available at a regional level, highlighting that there is significant potential for growth if new hubs are effectively supported. There will be key decisions to make for hubs as they progress, regarding the types of projects they decide to support in relation to the skills, knowledge, capacity and potential for groups to ultimately deliver homes. Diversity in long-term funding for hubs will make it easier for some to support groups that require more intense support than others, raising questions as to how these pioneer CLTs from the Urban CLT Project can be supported to expand and facilitate the development of other groups, particularly in lower-income areas. This highlights the need for local and national government to consider carefully how best Community Housing Fund money can be used to support community-led housing over the long-term, and the need for investment into the sector's infrastructure is important.

The Urban CLT Project has played an important role in facilitating the growth of CLTs in cities around the country. With the advent of Community Housing Fund money and the development of new community-led housing hubs, the evidence provided in this report offers valuable lessons as to how future funding and support programmes may be structured in ways that can best support CLTs to tackle a range of local housing issues.

## Appendix A: Urban CLT Project Participants

CLT	Town/City
Homebaked CLT	Liverpool
Granby Four Streets	Liverpool
London CLT	London
Heart of Hastings	Hastings
Ambition Lawrence Weston	Bristol
Brighton and Hove CLT	Brighton and Hove
Somerset Co-Operative CLT	Taunton
Leeds Community Homes	Leeds
Lincoln Birchwood	Lincoln
Oxfordshire CLT	Oxford and across the county
Thrift Soham	Soham
Truro CLT	Truro
West Rhyl	Rhyl
West Kensington Gibbs Green	London
Naked House CLT	London
Lewes CLT	Lewes
Brixton Green	London
Bristol CLT	Bristol
Middlesbrough CLT	Middlesbrough