



Homes and Communities Agency Set-up Team

What is the Homes and Communities Agency?





What is the Homes and Communities Agency?

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) will be the single, national housing and regeneration agency for England. With an investment budget of over £5 billion per year, its scale and resources mean it can bring about a step change in housing supply, and enhance people's quality of life by creating and regenerating thriving communities where people want, and can afford, to live.

The HCA will bring together English Partnerships, the Housing Corporation's investment arm and the Academy for Sustainable Communities. It will also take on some of the delivery functions of Communities and Local Government including Growth, Thames Gateway Delivery, Housing Market Renewal, Decent Homes and Mixed Communities and the Places for Change Programme.

Sir Bob Kerlake will become its first Chief Executive when the HCA begins operating in early December. He is working with a small Set-up Team to establish a responsive, adaptable agency that will help local authorities and their partners meet the ambitions they have for their areas. This will enable the HCA to achieve national targets for growth, renewal and affordable housing in a sustainable way that corresponds to the needs of local areas.

The appointment of a highly skilled and experienced team of senior staff with a sound knowledge of housing and regeneration puts the HCA in the best possible position to operate as a national organisation that delivers locally.

How will it work?

The HCA will work with a wide range of partners, especially housing associations, private sector builders and developers and the voluntary and community sectors. It will become the best delivery partner for local government.

The agency's regional teams will engage with local authorities in a **single conversation** about all housing and regeneration issues in a local area. The full range of HCA investment programmes and tools will be used to deliver tailored solutions to help local partners achieve shared ambitions, including:

Partnerships and collaboration

Using its strategic relationships across housing and regeneration to bring partners together, the agency will achieve economies of scale, encourage innovation and open up new sources of private sector funding.

Investment programmes

With an annual budget of over £5 billion, delivered in tandem with partners across the public, private and third sectors, the HCA will use its investments to bridge local ambitions and national targets.

Investment tools

To accelerate local delivery, the HCA will develop nationally tested tools such as joint ventures to access private finance, promote development, create new affordable housing, improve community facilities and forward fund infrastructure.

Unlocking land

By unlocking the supply of surplus public sector land and working in partnership with local planning authorities, the HCA will bring more land forward for development and help resolve complex planning issues.

Skills and expertise

With over 900 staff, the HCA will be an unrivalled source of expertise and specialist knowledge and its regional structure will ensure it supports local needs. The Academy for Sustainable Communities will also be retained as a team within the agency to drive forward the skills agenda.

Design and sustainability standards

The new agency will set and enforce rigorous sustainability and design standards to ensure the creation of high-quality homes in safe, attractive surroundings with appropriate infrastructure and amenities. It will particularly champion the issues of diversity, sustainability and good design.

Research and best practice

The agency will strive for innovation and new approaches to the delivery of housing and regeneration, and will work with the best in the field to test new ideas and disseminate knowledge.



What benefits will it bring?

The HCA will have an effective dialogue with its regional and local partners to achieve a **shared clarity of purpose**. Together, it will develop an understanding of local housing growth needs, how to improve areas through regeneration, and how HCA investment can be used to meet the ambitions of individual areas. This will be supported by the agency's adoption of a **flexible investment approach**, which can respond to the requirements of specific places, as well as its relationship with the Government Offices and Regional Development Agencies.

By building flexibility into its ways of working, the HCA will be able to adapt to changing economic circumstances. The priority is to achieve this in a way that continues to support Government housing targets, ensuring they are met in an **economically, socially and environmentally sustainable way**.

In developing a range of area-specific integrated housing and regeneration programmes aimed at providing physical improvements and better infrastructure, the HCA will **support economic development** and **connect homes to job opportunities**.

The agency will help partners to develop a strategy to tackle worklessness by encouraging them to take **access to jobs into consideration when making decisions about the location of new social housing**.

It will also provide support to local agencies to **put communities at the heart of the design and delivery of regeneration**.

The chief beneficiaries of the HCA's work across England will be **local people and places**.

What has been achieved so far?

Formal consultation on the new agency started in June 2007, with the launch of the Government's Green Paper, 'Homes for the Future', and the HCA Set-up Team has kept up the momentum. A comprehensive stakeholder engagement programme is helping to shape the new agency and its emerging policies through consultation with developers, RSLs, local authorities and other interested bodies about what they want from the HCA.

The London HCA Board was established in February 2008 to deliver the agency's housing and regeneration programme for the capital. This sub-committee of the HCA will be chaired by the Mayor and London Boroughs will be fully engaged and represented.

Sir Bob Kerlake was appointed Chief Executive Designate and took up his post in April 2008, leading the newly-formed Set-up Team. Robert Napier was named as Chairman Designate two months later and will continue in his current role as Chairman of English Partnerships until the HCA becomes operational.

In July 2008 the Housing and Regeneration Bill received Royal Assent to become an Act, paving the way for the creation of the HCA in early December. The Act will also establish a new watchdog for social tenants, the Tenants Services Authority (TSA). The TSA will regulate social housing landlords, setting high standards of management across housing associations, and at a later date, local authority social homes.

Also in July, a joint approach to identifying and delivering housing and regeneration objectives was agreed with the Local Government Association.

The HCA's most important asset will be the staff it inherits from English Partnerships, the investment arm of the Housing Corporation, the Academy for Sustainable Communities and Communities and Local Government. Those staff members transferring across have been closely involved in planning and preparing for the new agency to ensure it builds on the success of the contributing organisations.



An organisation ready for the future

By working in partnership, providing access to funding and expertise, supporting a good supply of affordable housing, ensuring that growth and renewal are joined-up processes and setting demanding standards, the HCA will have a central role in building communities that will stand the test of time.

There are a number of important steps to be taken this year and beyond to arrive at the formal establishment of the HCA. Key to demonstrating its approach will be the interim corporate plan to be published before Christmas. This plan will:

- Form the basis for a consultation with local and regional stakeholders for the production of a full corporate plan for publication in April 2009.
- Set out a business plan for delivery during 2008-11.
- Set out how the HCA will use its powers and funding to provide increased flexibility for more efficient delivery.
- Describe the HCA's integrated approach and the single conversation and invite stakeholders to engage in its further development.

From December 2008, the senior team will be in place to begin the single conversation with local areas and develop a joint approach towards delivering the HCA's programme.



Homes and Communities Agency Set-up Team

8th Floor/F15 Ashdown House 123 Victoria Street London SW1E 6DE

T 020 7944 0788