



What is a housing co-op?

A housing co-op is a voluntary organisation of ordinary people managing the housing they live in, based on principles of self-organisation and mutual support. Legally, Deptford is a co-operative society (registered with the Financial Conduct Authority under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014) and a registered provider of social housing (registered with the Regulator of Social Housing). Technically, this separate legal entity called Deptford Housing Co-op owns the homes we live in and provides the structure by which we act collectively as our own landlord. Each of us owns a nominal £1 share in the Co-op, and we each have an equal opportunity to take part in the running of the place we live.

About Deptford Housing Co-op

Deptford Housing Co-op was opened in 1977 with the aim of creating community housing where all residents share the responsibility of its management and organisation. Its street address, Rochdale Way, commemorates the Rochdale Pioneers, a group of ordinary people who founded the world's first co-operative in the North of England in the 19th century.

All tenants are members and are encouraged to get involved in a range of ways in order to help create a better environment for themselves and others. Through self-management the Co-op is able to provide affordable housing with a contractual tenancy.

Currently we have eight shared houses, each with ten single-person bedrooms. It is essential that you understand that it is a single unfurnished room in one of these houses that you are applying for, and that you must be the sole (only) occupant.

Every new member starts in one of these properties with the opportunity to progress after 2 years to a self-contained studio flat when one becomes available. However, turnover in self-contained accommodation is very slow and progression is dependent on how active you are in helping run the Co-op.

We also have a community centre which we use for meetings and our grounds are fully enclosed with a large communal garden.

How Deptford Housing Co-op works

The co-op is run on democratic lines. Certain major decisions are decided by general meeting where all members can vote, but the general running of the Co-op is overseen by a management committee (MC) drawn from the Co-op's membership who are voted for at an Annual General Meeting. The MC delegates responsibility for certain areas of Co-op activity to a number of subcommittees, who report back to the MC.

The MC and most sub-committees meet once a month and all members can attend.

Currently we employ Co-op Homes as a managing agent who take care of the day to day administration of our finance, collecting rent, paying all bills, dealing with court actions for eviction, and providing a maintenance service. The following committees work in liaison with Co-op Homes.

Management Committee

Responsible for overseeing the overall organisation of the Co-op and supervising the work of the various sub-committees.

Sub-committees

Membership & Education

The membership and education sub-committee publicises the Co-op to potential members, processes applications and interviews and selects applicants. It moves people internally within the Co-op and moves them out when they leave. It also educates prospective and existing members about co-operative living and aims to provide training sessions and literature like this to help members take a full part in helping run the Co-op.

Grievance

The grievance sub-committee deals with disputes and mediates between two or more members who have a disagreement with each other.

Maintenance

The maintenance sub-committee liaises with Co-op Homes regarding responsive repairs and maintenance. It has responsibility for planning and scheduling long-term cyclical maintenance of the properties.

Grounds

The grounds sub-committee manages the grounds and garden areas of the Co-op, organises grounds clear-ups and holds meetings to discuss the management of the grounds. It also supervises our paid Grounds Worker.

Finance

The finance sub-committee liaises with Co-op Homes regarding the budgets and financial controls which regulate our spending and financial planning.

IT Group

Monitors the communal wi-fi network and advises on IT related matters.

The accommodation and the local area

You will be living in a single occupancy room in a shared house with nine other house-mates, with a diverse range of backgrounds, cultures, ages and gender. Your room will measure about 4m x 5m and is unfurnished, but includes a vanity unit, laminate flooring and double glazed windows.

As the rooms are small, if your belongings will not fit in your room, you will need to make your own arrangements as storage space is limited and communal areas **cannot be used for permanent storage**.

Each house has three floors with a shower and toilet on each, except the first floor which has a bath. The shared kitchen has two cookers, two sinks, two fridge freezers and cupboards for storage.

Each house also has a communal lounge area. The furniture in these varies. Some houses have microwaves and all have washing machines. All the houses back onto a large enclosed communal garden.

Deptford is a culturally diverse place which has experienced significant redevelopment and regeneration over recent years. The area is well connected for transport with rail stations in Deptford and nearby New Cross, overground services from New Cross and DLR from Deptford Bridge. The high street has an excellent market and there are supermarkets within easy reach.

Goldsmiths' College and Greenwich University are nearby and there are libraries, gyms, dentists, doctors' surgery and an NHS walk-in centre within walking distance.

Although Deptford is a down-to-earth working class neighbourhood it has an active arts and culture scene with the Albany Theatre and galleries and artists' studios nearby. There are many pubs and bars locally, several of which feature entertainment, so there's always something going on. Greenwich is a twenty minute walk away, with its park, shops and bars.

What will be expected of you?

You will be expected to play an active part in the running of the Co-op. Although the Co-op currently employs Co-op Homes as its managing agent, the survival and success of the Co-op has always relied on the collective efforts of its members. That means you! Your involvement could include working on one of the different committees, being a house rep, helping with grounds clear-ups, interviewing prospective members, or helping with IT or our website. There's always work that needs doing.

As a minimum you will, of course, be expected to comply fully with the terms of your tenancy agreement. You must pay your rent in advance, and must occupy your room as your only home. Although you may have visitors while you are present, they can't stay while you're not on the premises, and there are strict limits on how often they can stay.

If you allow your room to become overcrowded by having other people living with you, or if you sublet your room, the Co-op will take legal action to evict you. We will also take action to evict you if you engage in anti-social behaviour or allow your guests to do so.

Living with 9 strangers requires a mature attitude to dealing with differences and consideration from everybody. Noise, cleaning, control of heating, and use of communal areas can all be sources of friction. Although the Co-op does have a Grievance Sub-committee, we will expect you to take sensible steps to resolve in-house problems informally by discussion and compromise. Your house rep may be able to help, and house meetings can sort some issues.

The application process

To apply to live at Deptford Housing Co-op you must complete an application form:

<https://www.coophomes.coop/client-co-ops/deptford-housing-co-op/apply-for-housing-at-deptford-hc/>

After you have returned the form, in due course you will be invited to an interview. The interview will be held at the Co-op and you will be interviewed by members of the Co-op to assess your suitability for membership. We will expect you to have taken the time to read the information in this pack. You can expect your interview to take approximately 15 minutes. It is important that you arrive for your interview on time. If you are unable to make the interview time or date please contact our office at the earliest opportunity.

You will normally be informed of the outcome of your application within 7 days of your interview. Please note, rooms are unlikely to be available immediately but successful applicants will be placed on our waiting list and allocated rooms as and when they become available. It's not possible to anticipate how often rooms will become available.

FAQs

Q. If my application is successful, how soon can I move in?

A. We can't predict this. It depends on when existing members move out. We try to keep the waiting list small to avoid long delays.

Q. Am I allowed to decorate my room?

A. Yes.

Q. Who do I speak to if I have a problem?

A. Depending on the problem you may want to speak to your house rep. We will expect you to try to resolve problems yourself where possible.

Q. Can I move my boyfriend/girlfriend/cat in with me?

A. No. The room is strictly for one person occupation and no pets are allowed. Overcrowding, subletting etc will result in eviction, as will you or your guests causing repeated nuisance to other members.

Q. Is furniture provided?

A. No, sorry.

Q. Do I have to clean up after myself?

A. Definitely. A cleaner does come once a week to tidy communal areas, but all tenants are responsible for leaving all common areas clean, tidy and uncluttered with personal belongings.

Q. Is there internet access in the houses?

A. Yes, we have wi-fi supported by our iT sub-committee

Housing help:

If you've contacted us, you're obviously looking for housing. But you should note that we don't provide emergency accommodation and can't predict how long you'll have to wait to be housed if your application to join us is successful.

And we may not be the right place for you. A housing co-op requires more from you than private rented accommodation as we rely on members helping to run things. The accommodation is for **single** people in a shared house with nine others, so if you're thinking of bringing a partner or children to live with you in your room, it is essential you look elsewhere as we would evict you for any such breach of tenancy.

These resources may help with your housing situation

Housing charity Shelter has a host of useful information for people looking for housing www.england.shelter.org.uk. In an emergency, ie you are faced with homelessness, you have somewhere to sleep, but nowhere to call home, you are/could be at risk of harm or you feel very overwhelmed about your housing situation please call their emergency helpline 0808 1644 660. When it's not urgent or for general housing options advice call 0808 800 4444.

SHP's website at www.shp.org.uk may be of interest, particularly if you have additional support needs.

If you need emergency accommodation see www.homelesslondon.org.

If you are facing illegal eviction, see www.adviceguide.org.uk or <http://englandshelter.org.uk/> for information on your rights. The tenancy relations team at your local council may help.

If you're struggling to raise a deposit for private accommodation, you can find out about deposit guarantee schemes which may help at www.crisis.org.uk/find-pr-scheme.php. If you can't afford a deposit because your previous landlord has wrongly retained it, see www.adviceguide.org.uk, or contact Shelter for advice. Shelter's website has template letters you can use to resolve a dispute over a withheld deposit.

If you want to move because of disrepair, both Adviceguide and the Shelter website have useful information on solving the problem.

If you need to move because of domestic violence you can call the National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247 for advice 24 hours a day.

If you are only looking for temporary accommodation you might consider becoming a property guardian. www.dotdotdotproperty.com is geared particularly to people doing community or voluntary work.