Working with Co-Ownership

A guide for developers

September 2026

Delivering new intermediate homes for sale under planning requirements.

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Executive's Housing Supply Strategy (2024) aims to deliver at least 100,000 homes over the next 15 years. Among its long-term policy commitments are to encourage mixed tenure and to ensure that the planning system including Local Development Plans, helps support the delivery of the appropriate supply of housing.

Under Local Development Plans and planning guidance, some developments may be required to include intermediate homes as part of their affordable housing contribution. This may be set out as a planning condition, or form part of a Section 76 agreement under the Planning Act (NI) 2011.

This document sets how how Co-Ownership can help you fulfil that requirement, and reflects our current understanding and approach.

Contents

About Co-Ownership

At Co-Ownership, we have been making home ownership more accessible in Northern Ireland since 1978. In that time, we have helped over 35,000 homeowners. We are a registered housing association, a charity, and an industrial and provident society with a clear mission: to bridge the gap between what buyers can afford and the cost of a home.

What is affordable housing?

The Department for Communities states “Affordable housing is:

- Social rented housing; or
- Intermediate housing for sale; or
- Intermediate housing for rent

that is provided outside of the general market, for those whose needs are not met by the market.

Affordable housing which is funded by Government must remain affordable or alternatively there must be provision for the public subsidy to be repaid or recycled in the provision of new affordable housing.”

Co-Ownership products are classed as intermediate housing for sale by the Department for Communities.

Co-Ownership - a straightforward solution

In Northern Ireland, Co-Ownership is currently the only government funded way to sell intermediate homes. If your site requires intermediate homes, making them available through Co-Ownership is a recognised and established way to meet these requirements.

By selling eligible homes in your development through Co-Ownership, each purchase by one of our customers can contribute toward fulfilling the intermediate housing element of your planning obligation. When a customer buys out our share in the home, the government funding is repaid or recycled to help deliver more affordable homes.

The exact terms will be set by you and your local council, but many developers find Co-Ownership is a practical, market-tested way to deliver intermediate housing, while helping more people into home ownership.

Co-Own

Co-Own is our shared ownership product. It's designed for people who want to buy a home but face challenges like affordability or high deposits.

Here's how it works:

- The buyer purchases a share of the home (between 50% and 90%) with a mortgage.
- Co-Ownership buys the remaining share.
- Over time, the buyer can increase their share all the way to full ownership, if they choose.

Co-Own for Over 55s

Co-Own for Over 55s is our shared ownership option for people later in life who want to move to a home that better suits their needs, whether that's being closer to family, downsizing or finding a property that's easier to manage and more energy efficient.

Here's how it works:

- Buyers use savings or equity from a previous home to buy a 50–90% share in a new or existing home.
- Co-Ownership buys the remaining share.
- Over time, the buyer can increase their share all the way to full ownership, if they choose.

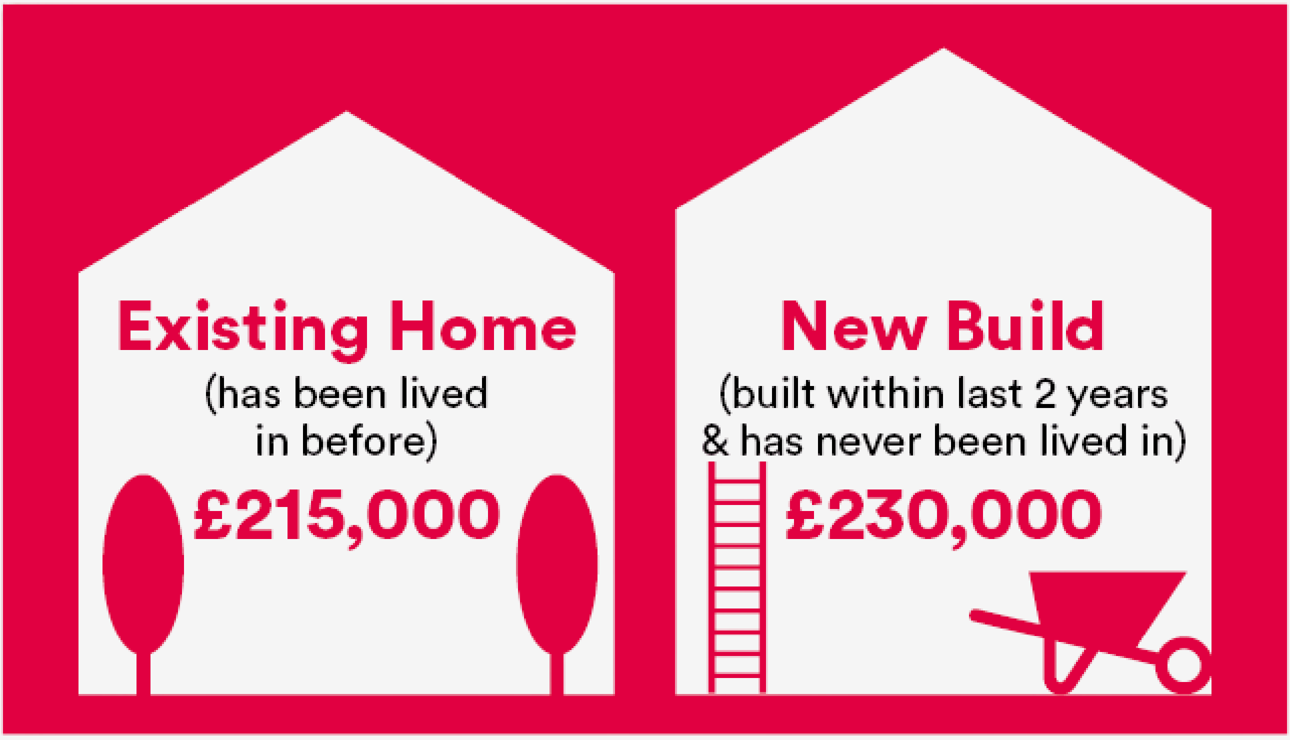
Further details on our products are available at co-ownership.org

Property Value Limit

We have been working with the Department for Communities (DFC) to review our Property Value Limit (PVL) to ensure we can continue to respond to changing market conditions. As a result of this, from 15 September 2026 we introduced separate Property Value Limits for

- New build properties (homes built within the last 2 years and never lived in)
- Existing properties (homes that have been lived in before)

The PVL for existing properties remains unchanged at £215,000 and a new PVL for new build properties was introduced at £230,000.



We recognize that new build homes in Northern Ireland are often more expensive than existing properties. The new build PVL will better reflect current market conditions and allow us to support more customers who wish to purchase a new build home through Co-Ownership. Our next review will be in 2028.

As with all purchases supported through Co-Ownership, properties are subject to an independent valuation.

Early engagement with Co-Ownership

To make the process as smooth as possible, it's best to involve Co-Ownership early, ideally during the design stage of your development and before a planning application is submitted.

Check the affordable housing requirements
If your planning application requires affordable housing, speak to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). They will confirm whether social housing or intermediate housing (or both) is needed in that area.

Involve us if Co-Ownership is part of the plan
If you're planning to offer intermediate homes for sale through Co-Ownership, get in touch with us. Please share any correspondence you've received from NIHE that outlines the requirement. We can provide you with evidence of your engagement with us.

Social housing is separate
Co-Ownership supports intermediate housing for sale. If social housing is required, you will need to contact a registered housing association which deals with social housing. A full list is available on the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations website (nifha.org).

Clarify ownership and sales roles
It's useful to confirm who owns the site, whose name the site will be in and who will sell the homes to Co-Ownership as soon as you can.

Making intermediate homes available through Co-Ownership

When Co-Ownership homes are included in a development, there are a few key things to think about to help make sure the homes will be suitable for Co-Ownership, and avoid issues later in the process.

If your planning agreement includes intermediate housing for sale, you may agree with the council that some homes will be offered through Co-Ownership for a set period. This is known as the marketing period.

The length and timing of the marketing period will be defined by the council, so it's important to check this with them in advance. You should also agree with the council what the next steps will be if you don't sell the homes.

As every development is different, it's important to confirm with your council that your proposed approach meets the intermediate housing requirements for your specific site.

Here's what you need to know:

- Homes sold through Co-Ownership must meet the same design, planning and building control standards as homes on the open market. They must also meet Co-Ownership's property criteria and be suitable for mortgage lending.

- The market value of the home must be within our relevant Property Value Limit. The limits are normally reviewed regularly, so please check our website for the latest information.

- We will carry out a pre-marketing valuation before the marketing period starts. To enable us to do this we will need the following:

  - A site layout plan showing details of the overall development
  - Details of the intermediate homes which will be marketed for sale at this stage, their proposed sale price, specification, floor plans, and dimensions of each home.
  - The UK Finance Disclosure of Incentives Form (not all incentives will be acceptable to us).

  Please note that the pre-marketing valuation will only last for six months from the date of valuation.

- Once a sale is agreed, each home will also be formally valued by a RICS registered valuer. This valuation sets the price Co-Ownership will pay for the home. We can only buy homes at the market value, and we are not able to pay more or less than what the property is worth.

- If a customer applies to buy a home, we will assess their application. If successful, we will issue a formal offer and instruct solicitors to progress the purchase. Once the sale completes, that home will count towards your planning obligation for intermediate housing.

- You may also have other homes in the development that meet our criteria and are priced within our Property Value Limit. If a Co-Ownership customer chooses one of these and completes a purchase, this may also count toward the planning requirement. This should be discussed and agreed with the council in advance.

Meeting our requirements

When a home is being sold through Co-Ownership, it must meet our requirements and appeal to buyers, just like any other new build home.

We have standard property criteria that homes must meet to be eligible for Co-Ownership. These may change from time to time, so please check with us.

You'll find full details of property criteria on our website, but in general:

- Homes must have been built within the last two years and have had no previous occupants to be considered new build.
- They must be ready to occupy now or within six months.
- Only turnkey properties are considered (see the section on specification).
- The purchase price must include all utility connection fees.
- Roads and sewers must be bonded or adopted. If this is not the case, please contact us as soon as possible so that we can check the arrangements. Private water treatment plants are not acceptable.
- Any service charges must be reasonable.
- A suitable 10-year structural warranty is required (we do not accept architect-certified properties). The warranty must be the same as a warranty for a home that is sold on the open market and must be for the full reinstatement value.
- The home must meet all the necessary consents and approvals (such as planning and building control approvals).
- If your development has any unusual or bespoke features, please get in touch so we can consider them.
- The UK Finance Disclosure of Incentives Form must be acceptable.
- The property must be mortgageable.

Some non-standard construction methods may not be accepted by mortgage lenders. If you are using alternative materials or approaches, please check with us in advance.

If the proposed heating system is other than gas or oil heating, please contact us. We will require all the standard documentation/certificates re the heating system. For instance in the case of gas heating/appliance(s) we will need a gas safety certificate and gas installation certificate.

- **Specification**

Customers expect a high-quality turnkey finish, similar to other new build homes in the development. We would usually expect that a turnkey finish would include, for example, floor coverings, painting of walls, and ceilings, tiling, white goods, and a boundary fence/wall. Fixtures and fittings should be in line with what is offered to private buyers. If a developer plans to include upgrades or extras, they should check with us first to confirm if they are acceptable.

- **Energy efficiency**

We welcome homes that are energy efficient and cost-effective to run. Solar panels and other renewable features, such as heat pumps, are generally acceptable if they will be owned outright by the customer. Leased systems are not suitable. If your development includes any renewable technologies or other non-standard features, please check with us so we can confirm they are suitable.

- **Site design**

The overall layout and design of the development can affect the suitability of homes for shared ownership. Consider:

- Where Co-Ownership homes will be located in the development.
- Whether the surrounding environment may affect desirability or access.
- How any non-residential elements (such as shops or offices) will interact with the homes.

Homes for Co-Ownership customers should look and feel like any other home in the development.

- **Common areas and service charges**

If the property is an apartment or if the development includes shared spaces like green areas, playparks or communal facilities, these must be managed appropriately. This could be done by you or a third-party management company. Appropriate documentation must be provided.

If a service charge will apply, it must be reasonable. Co-Ownership customers pay their service charge directly.

If the home is an apartment the ground rent must be reasonable and not increase over time.

- **Legal and title considerations**

Any property we buy must have a good and marketable title. If there are any title restrictions across the site, please get in touch. For example, resale restrictions or clauses that limit when or how a property can be sold may affect eligibility for Co-Ownership.

- **Mortgages**

Most Co-Ownership customers take out a mortgage to buy their share of the home. The property must therefore be suitable for mortgage lending and meet lender requirements.

All purchases are subject to a customer having been accepted for Co-Ownership and choosing to buy a home in your development and the valuation and title being acceptable to our solicitor and the customer's mortgage lender.

Sales and marketing of the development

If your development includes Co-Ownership homes, they may be marketed on your usual platforms. To ensure a smooth sales process, before marketing, contact us at businessdevelopment@co-ownership.org so we can obtain a pre-marketing valuation. The homes must only be marketed as only available through Co-Ownership if:

- The planning permission states that the homes have to be sold as an affordable home
- They have a satisfactory pre-marketing valuation and
- You are satisfied that there is nothing in the title to the home or otherwise that would prevent it from being acceptable to Co-Ownership or a mortgage lender.

It's important to keep a record of the marketing activity for homes 'only available through Co-Ownership'. This will help you to demonstrate to the council that you've made reasonable efforts during the marketing period.

We can guide you on how to market your homes through Co-Ownership. To help you get started, here are some key things to consider:

- Make sure the homes are clearly advertised as only available through Co-Ownership.
- Include Co-Ownership messaging in your own materials, signage and online listings.
- Highlight the eligibility criteria to attract suitable buyers.
- Co-Ownership will work with you and your agent on PR activities.

It is up to you, and your estate agent, how you agree the sale of homes to Co-Ownership customers. This must be done in a fair, open and transparent way, such as first come first served basis.

Customers should be free to choose where they get their financial advice, whether from a financial adviser or mortgage lender, and should also be free to choose which solicitor acts for both them and Co-Ownership in their purchase.

Marketing support from Co-Ownership

We have a dedicated team who will support the promotion of Co-Ownership within your development and help make sure buyers understand shared ownership. Our team has experience working across Northern Ireland on mixed tenure developments. We regularly collaborate with developers and estate agents to support Co-Ownership sales.

We can:

- Support you and your estate agents to help understand how Co-Ownership works, including specifically in mixed tenure developments.
- Attend your development launches, open days or show homes.
- Provide guidance and answer questions from potential buyers to help move applications forward.
- Supply bespoke resources such as brochure inserts, suggested website wording and 'only available through Co-Ownership' materials.
- Give you access to our brand assets, such as logos, and guidance on how to present Co-Ownership clearly and correctly.
- Provide Co-Ownership branded materials, such as brochures, for use in show homes and by estate agents.
- Share your development with our audience on social media if our team is attending an event or open day.

Please speak to us so we can discuss what's possible based on your plans.

Key contacts

Glynis Hobson, Director of Customer Service
ghobson@co-ownership.org

Niall McNulty, Business Development Manager
nmcnulty@co-ownership.org

Grant Mulholland, Business Development Officer
gmulholland@co-ownership.org

Marketing team
marketing@co-ownership.org

Co-Ownership customer journey

We offer a fully online application process that makes things easier for your buyers. Customers can apply directly through our website or with the help of a mortgage adviser. Here is the customer journey for people applying to these homes.

Developer markets the homes for sale (through estate agent)

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Applicant completes an expression of interest in the development

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Applicant applies to Co-Ownership and gets a Co-Ownership Approval

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Applicant gets a Decision in Principle from a mortgage lender

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Home is sale agreed to the applicant

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Applicant uploads details of the home and Co-Ownership does a property assessment

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Co-Ownership buys the home and creates the lease to the applicant

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Intermediate housing element is satisfied from a council perspective

Developer checklist

Working with Co-Ownership to deliver intermediate housing for sale

If your development includes intermediate housing as part of a planning agreement, Co-Ownership may be able to support the sale of those homes.

Getting in touch with us early can help avoid delays later. We'll work with you to make sure the homes meet our criteria, the marketing aligns with our requirements, and customers understand how to apply. Use this checklist to stay on track at every key stage.

Before you submit planning

When: At early concept or pre-application stage

- ☐ Confirm if intermediate housing is required (check planning conditions or Section 76 agreement)
- ☐ Speak to NIHE about local affordable housing need
- ☐ Identify site ownership and who will sell the homes
- ☐ Contact Co-Ownership to discuss how we can support

During planning and design

When: Once your planning obligations are confirmed and designs are in progress

- ☐ Make sure homes meet Co-Ownership property criteria (e.g. turnkey, new build, bonded roads and sewers)
- ☐ Check how many homes we can support in your development
- ☐ Design homes to appeal to Co-Ownership customers
- ☐ Consider any restrictions, non-residential elements, or service charges
- ☐ Ensure homes will be suitable for mortgage lending

Pre-sales and marketing

When: Before listings go live or sales begin

- ☐ Confirm the marketing period with the council
- ☐ Share development details and launch dates with our business development team
- ☐ Arrange for a Co-Ownership pre-marketing valuation to confirm the value we may pay
- ☐ Confirm that the homes meet our requirements (details in our developer's guide and/or on the Co-Ownership website)
- ☐ Clearly mark which homes are only available through Co-Ownership
- ☐ Include approved Co-Ownership messaging and marketing materials
- ☐ Make sure your estate agent understands how Co-Ownership works
- ☐ Request brochure inserts, web copy, or registration of interest templates

During the marketing period

When: Once the marketing period (set by councils) begins

- ☐ Keep in touch with us – our team may be able to attend show homes or events
- ☐ Highlight the Co-Ownership eligibility criteria and application process to buyers
- ☐ Ensure Co-Ownership buyers are directed to apply through our website or with a financial adviser
- ☐ Keep a record of all marketing activity during the marketing period in case it's required at a later date

During buyer applications and sales progression

When: When customers apply to purchase through Co-Ownership

- ☐ Keep in touch throughout the application process to stay updated
- ☐ Let us know about any updates, delays or changes

This guide is for information only. It does not form a contract between Co-Ownership and any other party.

Terms & conditions and criteria apply.

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