

What you need to know

Scottish Churches Housing Action is a small charity owned by the churches with representation from the 13 main Christian bodies. We believe Scotland can be free of homelessness.

There are many surplus church properties: buildings that are underused, empty, not fit for purpose or in need of major and expensive repairs or land that is lying idle. There is a great need for more affordable housing: for people who are homeless or are living in unfit or unaffordable accommodation. Many people, including churches, work to help homeless people and many people work to provide and manage affordable housing.

Ours is a unique role: through the **Churches Property & Housing Programme** we work with the churches helping find a solution to the problems of surplus church property and, at the same time, helping to provide more affordable homes.

We have provided information, advice and varying levels of support to people in almost 60 churches. We have met with many church people of all denominations across the country, sitting down with them to discuss whether the programme could offer them a solution. The needs of the church may vary but the issues are often the same.

Many churches have already successfully used this approach and we are helping more consider it, actively developing solutions that can include a new church centre. This consideration may include some complex issues such as:

- ❖ Assessing options - might developing affordable housing be the right approach?
- ❖ Testing the water - is there need and opportunity?
- ❖ Testing feasibility - can it work?
- ❖ Testing viability - will it work?
- ❖ Identifying who to speak to about your proposal
- ❖ Establishing if there is a need for affordable housing
- ❖ Deciding to sell church property - how it will be valued
- ❖ Understanding the requirement to meet trustee responsibilities
- ❖ Dealing with sensitivities in congregations
- ❖ Managing aspirations.

We have prepared a guide to help people consider these issues more fully: *Make it happen* - affordable homes from surplus church property. If you would like a copy of the guide, which costs £10 plus p&p, contact us at: information@churches-housing.org or on 0131 477 4500.

The section **How we can help you** provides more detail on the advice, information and support we can provide.