

DorsetCAN Case Study 8: Fair Housing for Frome

Frome is not in Dorset but shares the same housing issues – shortage of affordable homes and increasing risk of homelessness that face many Dorset towns. Fair Housing for Frome (FHfF) is a grass-roots organisation that began in 2015 when a group of local people met to discuss the housing crisis in the town. They work to prevent homelessness, to encourage the better use of existing housing, and to enable the creation of new homes to meet local needs. They've been persistent and imaginative with their initiatives over the past 6 years.



Homelessness

Homelessness affects not only those people sleeping rough in tents or shop doorways, but also young people sofa surfing, families in temporary accommodation, and anyone who's living at risk of violence or abuse in the home. FHfF has published an information leaflet; set up and run Zero Nights, a winter shelter for homeless people; and reached out to homeless families around the town using the Big Red Housing Bus.

Use of existing housing

FHfF has tackled issues with the use of existing housing through its focus on renters, landlords & lodgers. They published a series of local information leaflets for tenants, lodgers, and landlords; set up the Frome Landlords Association, which provides monthly events to help landlords offer a better service to their tenants; and early in 2021 launched a Homeshare scheme to support older people to find a suitable and safe lodger.

New homes to meet local needs

Exploring a community-led approach, FHfF have

- carried out the [Frome Housing Survey](#)
- kept housing issues in the public eye through a newsletter and social media
- set up the [Frome Area Community Land Trust](#) (FACLT) – to create affordable homes owned in perpetuity by the local community.

- investigated setting up a 'tiny homes' community and established a 'tiny homes action group'
- connected with their town council and others to engage local people/advocate for meeting local needs at an early stage in any new development.



How do they function?

FHfF was registered as a community interest company in May 2018 and employs one part-time development worker. It has been supported by three funders – Frome Town Council, The Tudor Trust and The TDS Foundation – by partners like The Big Red Bus Co. and Wesley Church, and by benefactors and volunteers in the town. Activities are led by volunteer steering groups in partnership with local organisations such as Fair Frome; Elim Connect; Mendip YMCA; Bridge Café; and Wessex CLT. FHfF has a strong presence in the local press and on social media and runs a monthly, half-hour radio show – 'Housing Hub' – on Frome FM.



More information

The group is an example of how local volunteer-led activism can create a can-do attitude and help a rural town maintain a diverse and vibrant community despite local and national socio-economic pressures. Their website (www.fairhousingforfrome.org.uk), and that of FACLT (www.fromeareact.org), explain the issues and initiatives more fully and provide contact details