



*We exist to provide, support and promote co-op and community-led housing solutions.*

*We want to improve representation at a senior level in CDS. Applications from BAME candidates are actively encouraged.*

**Finance Director, CDS Co-operatives**  
**Candidate Information Pack**  
**April 2025**

## Finance Director Application

Thank you for your interest in this position. Attached, you will find the information you will need to assist you in applying to become our new Finance Director. To apply, please submit the following:

- A current CV which shows your relevant career history. Please keep it to a maximum of three pages;
- Complete the application (online) explaining why you are interested in the role, outlining what makes you the right candidate for the position and how you meet the requirements of the role profile;
- Indicate if you cannot attend any of the interview dates.

Only complete applications submitted before the deadline will be considered.

In addition to a rewarding and challenging role as part of the Senior Management Team of a values-driven organisation, we offer the successful candidate the opportunity to work from home, if desired, and to work four or five day per week (28 or 35 hours).

We are actively working toward becoming an anti-racist and inclusive organisation, open to challenge and learning in all our work. We are committed to looking for all kinds of talent to build a diverse workforce that represent the people we serve and we encourage our staff to bring their whole, authentic selves to work.

We encourage people from all backgrounds to apply.

For an informal chat about the role, please contact our Chief Executive: [Tom.Bremner@cds.coop](mailto:Tom.Bremner@cds.coop).

Sincerely



Christina Friedenthal  
Corporate Services Director

### KEY DATES:

Closing date for applications	Monday, 28 <sup>th</sup> April 2025 at 9:00am
Specialist testing	Shortlisted candidates will be asked to complete an online psychometric test to explore reasoning and leadership style. This test is used only to help guide questions at interview and is not used to select or reject any applicant.
First interview	Wednesday, 7 <sup>th</sup> May 2025 (in person at our offices in Central London)  As part of the interview, you will have a chance to meet our finance team. In addition, you will be asked to complete a writing exercise on the day. No specific preparation is required.
Second interview	Thursday, 15 <sup>th</sup> May 2025 (in person at our offices in Central London)

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## Welcome to CDS

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### Letter from our Chief Executive, Tom Bremner



Thank you for showing an interest in being our next Finance Director.

CDS is a unique organisation with an unusual mission – to provide, support and promote community led housing and co-operation – so that more people can shape the things that most matter to them.

CDS formed from another organisation in 1975 with a purpose to establish housing co-operatives, working with local authorities and communities to get new homes built and empowering residents to take control of the future. Through those early grant programmes, we helped to build hundreds of homes in London and the South East, which are now owned and managed by resident co-ops – most of them, full and independent registered providers of social housing.

Over time, our role has evolved – becoming a social landlord to more than 820 rented and shared ownership homes – as well as continuing to be the largest service provider for over 30 housing co-ops in our region, offering a menu of landlord and business services so that they can thrive and remain independent.

In 2016, we updated our mission to become more active in promoting growth in the community led housing sector – devoting some of our surplus each year into supporting great ideas and initiatives that can realistically lead to mainstream “scaling up”. Through that work, we have been delighted to partner with the GLA in forming and hosting the London Community Led Housing Hub, which has administered more than £4m of revenue grants for a diverse and exciting range of groups and new housing projects in the capital.

In 2019, we also became a charity and widened our objects again to include work to promote co-operation as an effective business model, one that can help to alleviate poverty and exclusion. This was important to us and embedded our long-standing commitment to co-operation and to the co-op movement as a whole.

In 2025, we are well advanced on developing our new 5-year Corporate Plan (see later in the pack for more on this) and, in the year of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the housing sector is once again looking to deliver a more resident centred and community led approach to how we provide and manage homes. This new focus is rooted in building true co-operation and collaboration with those who live in the homes that we provide, and this will be a perfect time for CDS to use our experience and expertise to push ahead with our mission. However, like most registered providers, we face a number of challenges.

There is a widening gap between income and costs with the pressure of higher building safety, decent homes and environmental standards added to the general economic forecast for high inflation and market volatility. Whilst we have a strong track record for good governance, management and financial control, as a small and specialist organisation, these pressures will inevitably lead to difficult choices in the years ahead.

Our new Finance Director will bring fresh eyes to these challenges, holding fast to our mission and our ambition for community led housing whilst being realistic and determined in how we apply our resources to the task. We

cannot deliver our goals at the expense of service or affordability for our existing residents – so leaning into mission in ever more creative ways will be key. Our successful candidate will be enthusiastic and visible in promoting our work and our strategies, giving confidence to our stakeholders and partners about the future and inspiring the Board and our team deliver on our promise.

If our mission and this challenge makes your heart beat a little faster, we look forward to hearing from you! If you want to chat about this role, please do email me: [tom.bremner@cds.coop](mailto:tom.bremner@cds.coop).

I look forward to your application and again thank you for showing an interest.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Tom Bremner'.

Tom Bremner  
Chief Executive

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## About us

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CDS was founded on co-operation 50 years ago, which we champion as an effective business model that can help people improve their opportunities and choices. We are passionate about helping people make the most of their individual and collective opportunities and expect to show this as an employer, agent and landlord. We will try always to work in ways that promote trust, optimism and kindness as a springboard for releasing potential and creativity.

Although we are not a co-operative ourselves, we are a charitable community benefit society (CBS). We work primarily in the southeast of England and we are registered with the FCA and with the Regulator of Social Housing. We're a creative organisation with three distinct and complementary areas of work.

As a **provider**, we own around 830 general-needs, social- rented and shared-ownership leasehold in London, Kent and the Home Counties. Much of this housing was built in the 1980s and the majority of our rented homes are for families.

As a **supporter**, we provide managing agent services to over 30 housing co-ops, providing them with a range of landlord, business and governance services to help them thrive as independent organisations. These services include accountancy and invoice payments. We currently support around 1,800 homes in this way.

As a **promoter**, we reinvest some of our surplus to promote mainstream growth in co-op and community-led housing. This work is collaborative and responsive to opportunities in the emerging market, where targeted support and investment can sustain and speed the delivery of more homes, and capture learning to repeat successful models.

### Our mission

Our *Purpose* is to provide, support and promote co-op and community-led housing solutions and our *Vision* is to grow co-op and community-led housing to see more people living and working in co-operative ways.

Our Corporate Plan (2024-29) sets the direction of CDS for the next five years and beyond.

The theme for 2025-26 is to Strengthen and Implement our Ambition. Our two priorities for this are to strengthen our performance and how we work and to implement our ambition to advance community led housing and co-operation.

### What is co-op housing ?

Housing co-ops own or manage homes under a mutual and democratic structure, controlled by the members. Members are often residents, although others may also be allowed to hold shares. There are different types of co-ops, but the most common are par value co-ops, where each member holds one share and has one vote.

### What is community-led housing?

The term 'community-led housing' (CLH) describes a range of housing where people or communities play a leading role in addressing their own housing needs. Communities are often geographic but can also be based on a community of interest or experience (eg. older women or LGBTQ).



*Three Principles:*

- ⇒ **Principle 1: Committed to all three business streams: landlord services; management services; growth & development.**
- ⇒ **Principle 2: Each business stream is financially viable.**
- ⇒ **Principle 3: Continue to be an independent, small (under 1000) housing association.**

Under-pinned by *Three Pillars:*

- ⇒ **Pillar 1: Financially sustainable**
- ⇒ **Pillar 2: Legally and regulatory compliant**
- ⇒ **Pillar 3: Customer and community focussed**

**Our values**

We believe that how we work is as important as what we do, and as a member of the Senior Management Team, you would be expected to behave in a way that honours these values.

<b>Unity</b>	We act as one team with one reputation
<b>Trust</b>	We strive to be reliable, fair and to act with integrity
<b>Intention</b>	We know why we do things, we plan, we monitor
<b>Impact</b>	We care about the effect we have on people
<b>Collaboration</b>	We can achieve more by working with others
<b>Communication</b>	We seek understanding as a basis for win/win solutions
<b>Kindness</b>	We value kindness, which is brave and honest, facing difficult issues with empathy

**Our business**

We employ about 45 staff and have a modern shared workspace in central London (SE1). We are passionate about employing a team of talented people who share our values. In 2020, we scaled back our office accommodation, reinvesting the savings in our services. Our team now work largely remotely but we maintain office space and expect teams to meet face-to-face at least twice per month.

Our team includes Community Led Housing London, a project which had been funded by the Greater London Authority as a resource and advice service for new community-led housing projects. CLH London has allocated early-stage funding over the past 5 years supporting the delivery of around 30 projects. and is now transitioning toward more self-sustainable funding and innovating new products that will enable widespread growth in the sector.

About 75% of our income comes from social rents and service charges (£4.6m) with a further 25% (£1.4m) coming from client fees. The surplus we make on our landlord business supports our promoter workstream and funds the long-term needs of the business.

## Our Board

We are governed by an elected board of management comprised of 11 members. The board has ultimate responsibility for the governance of CDS and leads on strategy, direction, policy and performance alongside the Chief Executive.

Our current board members come from a variety of backgrounds and includes a resident member and a member of a client co-operative. Skills within the board include finance, architecture, local authority project management, social housing, education, customer service, management consultancy, finance, communications and media as well as a significant amount of lived and professional knowledge of housing and co-operation. The board is a collaborative group, working together to support and challenge the senior management team and to drive strong governance and performance in line with our values. Members work in an inclusive and co-operative way, encouraging contributions, sharing ideas and learning together so that it can really hold the organisation accountable in a way that encourages openness, improvement and growth.

Additional information about our governance structure is available on our website [here](#).

## Recruiting a Finance Director

Our current Finance Director is moving on and we have brought in an interim Finance Director to bridge the gap. As we work on our 5-year corporate plan and look to celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, we are now seeking a committed and motivated individual to help steer CDS through a time of exciting opportunity and change.

During the next few years, we intend to truly embody our identity, playing a pivotal role in enabling communities to lead in decision-making and the management of their homes. This will be a significant change for us in how we manage the housing we own, but we believe our commitment to growing community led housing must start with us.

We want our new Finance Director to be someone who feels highly motivated by the central value of our work – excited by empowering and enabling people to have greater control, greater sense of belonging and encouraged to make the most of their opportunities. You will need to be ready to show personal leadership and to be an advocate for the business and for our mission. The right Finance Director for CDS will be one who sees themselves and their department as an integral part of the whole business and knows that we succeed or fail together. We are seeking a Finance Director who works to find ways to help the business achieve our goals whilst ensuring we stay financially safe.

Candidates must have experience in social housing, excellent communication skills, be a committed team player, have a proven track record of effectively managing teams, share our organisational values and have relevant qualifications.

We are committed to diversity, equality and inclusivity. We value and respect all the differences that make us who we are, including: age, cultural background, ethnicity and race, disability and mental health, neurodiversity, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, social background and lived experience. People who bring diversity and lived experience are particularly encouraged to apply.



## The Senior Management Team

The Finance Director forms part of our Senior Management Team, which provides overall and strategic leadership to the organisation and reports to the board. The other members of the Senior Management Team include:

### Tom Bremner, Chief Executive



Tom has worked in housing, local government and regeneration for over 25 years. He has chaired a housing association board and had a number of director and senior management positions in councils, ALMOs and housing associations. Before joining CDS he worked independently, helping organisations improve services and build new homes.

### Christina Friedenthal, Corporate Services Director



Christina joined CDS as Operations Director in June 2017 and took over as Corporate Services Director in January 2022. She has experience in social housing both in the US and England. As our Corporate Services Director, Christina is responsible for ensuring we have a strong governance environment, statutory and regulatory compliance, and an empowering 'back office' service – covering our people strategy, HR, IT and Offices – and also making sure that we have effective performance data and reporting.

### Kristell Marcantoni, Operations Director



Kristell joined CDS as Project Manager in February 2017 helping with improving services. She has over 15 years' experience in social housing and started her career at Notting Hill Housing Trust working in multiple roles over her years there. Kristell is passionate about customer service, building strong communities and Health and Safety compliance.

### Levent Kerimol, Community Led Housing Director



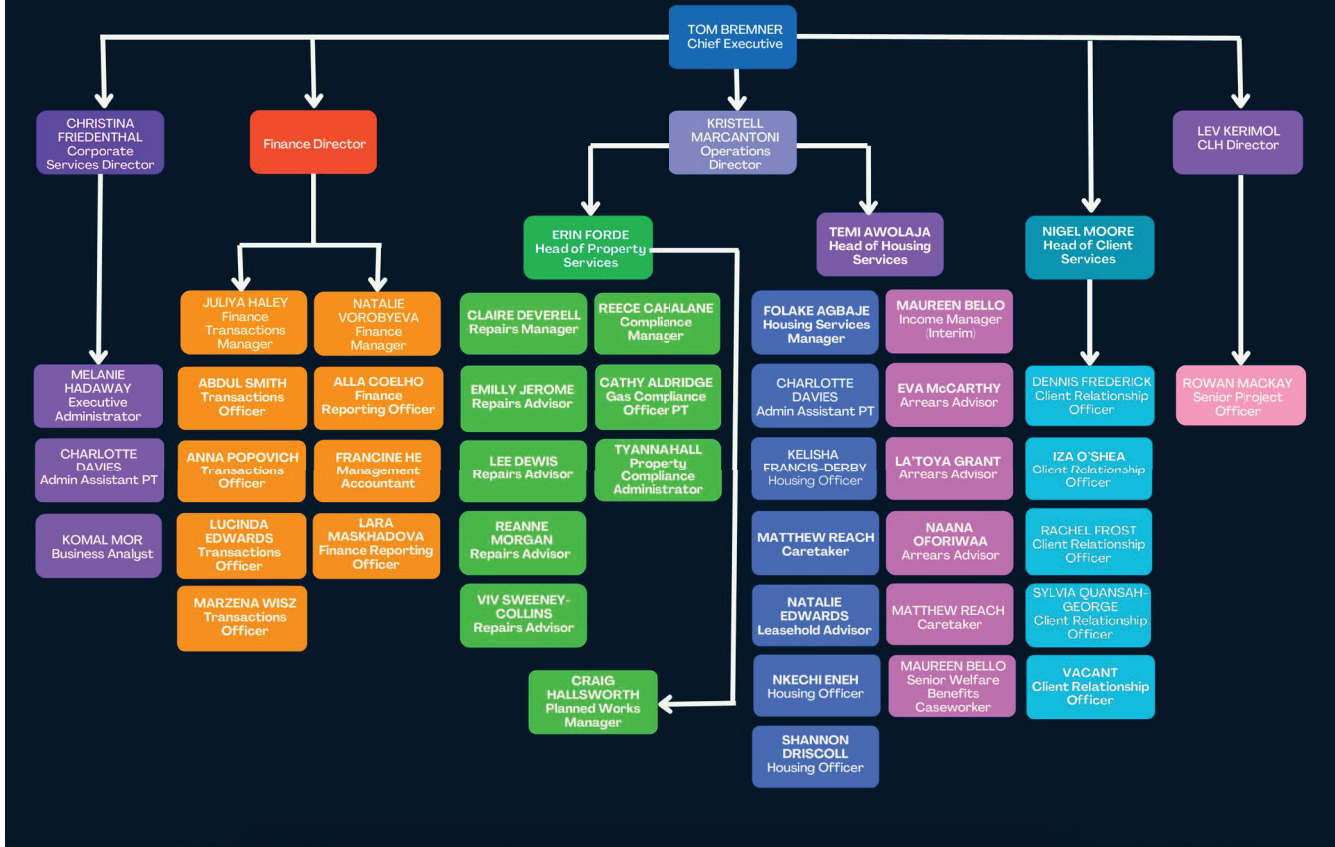
Lev is responsible for Community Led Housing London and our work in enabling growth in the sector. He was previously at the GLA establishing the Small Sites x Small Builders programme, contributing to the London Plan, and managing social and economic regeneration projects. He also worked with LB Lewisham on the early stages of the RUSS project. Lev has studied Architecture at Cambridge and Real Estate at Reading and taught Design & Planning at London Metropolitan University.

## **Nigel Moore, Head of Client Services**



Nigel has over 30 years' experience of managing housing in Local Authorities and Housing Associations, with 15 years at senior management level. In 1997 Nigel set up and led a successful Tenant Management Organisation, taking control of housing services from the Local Authority and handing it to local residents. He is a passionate advocate of co-operative housing and is committed to our mission of helping residents shape what matters to them.

## CDS CO-OPERATIVES ORGANOGRAM - MARCH 2025



## Role Profile

### Finance Director

#### What will you do at CDS?

You will be responsible for ensuring we have a clear financial strategy that delivers effective financial services, controls and reporting for CDS and for clients, maximising our capacity to deliver our vision and building our reputation for reliability, fairness and acting with integrity.

#### What difference will you make for us?

- Our financial strategy will help us achieve our vision
- We will have clear and accurate financial plans and reports
- We will understand financial risk and manage it well
- We will have appropriate and effective financial systems and controls
- Your team will be known for being reliable and easy to do business with
- Our clients will be confident that they understand their financial position and choices
- Everyone at CDS will understand our key numbers and why they matter
- We will always be compliant with the law, regulation and accounting standards
- We will understand how our financial results compare to others and why

#### We will look to you to ...

- Support the Chief Executive to deliver the business vision
- Build, develop and retain a capable and high performing finance team
- Drive effective financial planning, analysis and risk management
- Provide regular, clear, timely and accurate reports
- Develop and implement a financial strategy that supports delivery of our vision
- Ensure we have the funding available to implement our plans
- Be constantly aware of our financial position and act to prevent problems
- Provide the Chief Executive and the board with excellent financial advice
- Service and support the Finance & Audit Committee of our board of management
- Ensure we meet our financial and related statutory/regulatory obligations
- Build positive relationships with colleagues, key stakeholders, partners and funders
- Drive awareness, understanding and delivery of value for money in our work

#### You will definitely bring ...

- Financial qualification ACA, ACCA or equivalent and at least 5 years' post qualification experience
- Experience working in finance in a social housing setting
- Several years' experience of leading and developing a successful finance team
- Strong understanding of financial governance, management, systems and compliance
- Excellent verbal communication skills – not just about finance
- A passion for using commercial skills to drive social value
- A personal commitment to deliver on our purpose, vision and values
- Experience of working with board members
- Ability to effectively communicate in writing, fitting your style and message to your audience, from concise, polished board reports to simple, clear emails

You will be a star performer in this role if you ...

- Care passionately about accuracy, efficiency, timeliness and reliability
- Are great at communicating financial information in an engaging way
- Positively want to be responsible with the whole team for the whole business
- Have high personal and professional standards that align with our values
- Are committed to a collaborative approach – seeking out win/win solutions
- Have a big strategy brain and also delight in making small steps and improvements
- Enjoy making things simpler and are not daunted by unpicking confusion
- Are open to exploring and developing solutions with others

This isn't your dream job if you ...

- Like things to be orderly from day 1
- Prefer to work on your own
- Hate the details
- Prefer a 'hands off' approach and don't really enjoy mucking in
- Don't enjoy managing people and leading teams
- Are put off by the challenge of fixing lots of small problems
- Don't like systems and processes

Your team will include...

Finance Manager (Reporting)  
 Finance Manager (Transactions)  
 Finance Reporting Officers / Management Accountants (3)  
 Finance Transactions Officers (3)  
 Rents Officer

You will get support from:

Chief Executive

What we offer:

Salary: £106,781 p.a.  
 for full time equivalent

The possibility to work  
 full-time (35 hours) or  
 part-time (28 hours)

Other benefits:

- Contributory pension scheme (Social Housing Pension Scheme up to 10% of salary matched)
- 28 days annual leave prorata (3 fixed & statutory bank holidays)
- Health cash plan (non-contributory)
- Employee perks system (Perkbox)
- Eligibility for an annual performance bonus
- Ability to primarily work remotely (in office 2-4 days/month) or opt for a desk space in our Central London office

## Key terms & conditions

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### Job title

Finance Director

### Work location

The successful candidate can choose to work primarily from home (required to come to the office usually 2-3 times per month) or can have a desk at our office based in Central London.

Office address: Unit A, Arc House, 82 Tanner Street, London SE1 3GN

### Work hours

The work has successfully been done as a full-time role (35 hours/week) and as part-time (28 hours/week).

In order to attract the broadest and most diverse candidate pool, we are happy to consider a flexible schedule, including working part-time. We will discuss this in more detail at the interview stage.

### Salary

The salary for the full-time role (35 hours/week) is circa £106,000, pro-rata if part-time.

### Pension

Up to 10% of salary, matched

### Annual leave

25 days plus bank holidays. After five years, this increases by one day a year up to 30 days. Holiday entitlements are pro-rata for part-time workers.

In addition, staff get a paid holiday on their birthday when that day falls on a normal working day.

There are also three discretionary, fixed days of paid leave between Christmas and New Year's Day.

### Sickness entitlement

- Year 1: 2 weeks' full pay, 2 weeks half-
- Years 2-3: 2 months' full pay, 2 months' half-
- Years 4-5: 3 months' full pay, 3 months' half-
- After 5 years: 4 months' full pay, 4 months' half-
- After 10 years: 6 months' full pay, 6 months' half-

### Car allowance

Mileage rate of 60p per mile up to 10,000 miles and 25p after that. Car ownership is not essential for this role.

### Probation

6 months

### Notice period

3 months