



## 1. Document Control Information

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## Introduction & Purpose

Mara's Housing Co-operative Ltd. is a fully mutual cooperative dedicated to positive social change through providing infrastructure to grassroots community groups in North East Scotland, particularly in Aberdeen City. We operate on a financial structure that can both provide affordable housing to its members while also providing space and equipment to community groups at low or no cost. All prospective co-operative members and community group affiliates must agree to our aims and values to join.

## Our aims

### Collective care

The purpose of Mara Co-op is to encourage a culture of radical care. Our capitalist system is draining and prioritises profit over people. Mara Co-op seeks to fight that imbalance by rejecting the rat race and insisting on time freely spent with each other. To us, care is not transactional, and it is dearly necessary for a healthy community. Radical care is collective care, and it includes any actions that improve our well-being collectively. With this in mind, the Co-op promotes and supports activities such as gardening, crafting, communal cooking and eating, artistic expression, learning and sharing knowledge, sharing resources, and any other connecting activities like film clubs, book clubs, jam sessions, and so on.

### A better model for housing

We seek to create a model for interdependent communal living in Aberdeen that can serve as an example for what is possible beyond landlordism and property ownership. Many people do not see a future where they can or want to own property, but the perceived only other option is a one-sided, exploitative relationship between renter and landlord. Affordable, quality housing is nearly impossible to achieve within the recognised frameworks of accessing shelter. We seek to show how access to a warm, safe, high-quality home does not have to be dependent on inheritance, income, or immigration status. We reject the extractive relationships of private landlordism especially, and we find that homes are best cared for by the people who live there. We will ensure that all members are able to live at Mara Co-op affordably by providing accommodation at the Local Housing Allowance rate.



## **Learning and DIY**

We think that learning together makes a strong and resilient community. Knowledge is liberating, and we believe the best way to learn is by doing. The co-op aims to facilitate workshops on self-sufficiency, sustainable living, practical skills, and ways we can better protect ourselves from exploitative systems of capitalism. We invite experts from the community to share their knowledge. We also aim to provide material for self-directed learning with resources such as a small library and a tool library, with space for people to learn how to use these tools and practice. We plan to host specific events to invite folks to repair workshops -- where people can bring items they'd like to repair and do so under our direction and supervision.

## **Community funding**

We will pay for all of our running costs through rental income alone. As we pay off our liabilities, we will turn over an ever-increasing surplus. We aim to reinvest that surplus into our co-operative and our local communities. We will do this by investing in assets, training, and resources that will support the grassroots within and outwith our spaces. We will ensure that our communities have genuinely impactful decision-making powers on how they'd most like to see that surplus spent. When we are in the position to do so, we will offer our surplus as financial contributions to grassroots organisations in order to support them in achieving their aims. We will not influence or sway the movement or decision-making of any organisation that we financially support - we believe that our communities work best when they are maximally free and completely independent.

## **Communal living**

In order for the co-op to function and thrive, we are committed to develop healthy systems for communal living. We encourage members to spend time together beyond the monthly general meetings. We operate the Mara Community Space project together, learn together, make mistakes together, and grow together. We have a sense of responsibility to each other. We seek to encourage rest before burnout, clarifying boundaries before they are crossed, and mediation before arbitration. We encourage a member culture of checking in with each other, and with ourselves.

## **Our values**

**Equality** – All people have equal value, and deserve to be treated with respect and dignity, regardless of who they are or where they're from. We actively work against inequality and discrimination, and we organise non-hierarchically. Though property-related decisions are made by co-operative members, we encourage all community members to participate in decision making of Mara Co-op by attending our open meetings.

**Diversity** – We celebrate the many ways of being human, and anyone can make a valuable contribution. We actively work to make our organisation, space, and events inclusive for all people who share our values, regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, nationality, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or beliefs.



**Sustainability & Degrowth** – We recognise that the way we extract, distribute and consume resources has caused profound harm to all life on the planet we share. We actively work for a more sustainable society, environmental justice, and fairer distribution of resources. We know that infinite economic growth on a finite planet is a fantasy, so we promote a lifestyle of waste reduction, circular economy, and degrowth.

**Anti-capitalism** -- We believe there shouldn't be a cost to participate in community. Food and leisure should be free, so we strive to provide a space that can offer communal use without the pressure for profit. As a fully mutual housing co-operative, we are a non-profit and no surplus will ever go into an individual's pocket. All money taken in by the co-op will go back directly to our community.

**Solidarity** – All progressive struggles are interconnected; none of us can stand alone. We actively support other progressive causes.

**Self and Community Empowerment** – We believe that all people should be able to play an active role in shaping our world, in ways that are meaningful to them. The co-op seeks to provide resources and structure that can encourage active participation. Anyone participating in the space has a responsibility to it and to each other. Action is empowering, and we support people to take initiative and act autonomously.

**Education** – We share our knowledge, learn from others, and take individual and collective action towards social change. We also believe that the best way to learn is by doing. We take a DIY approach to learning and acting, to promote a culture of self-sufficiency and a true sense of responsibility to the space we occupy.

**Animal Liberation** – We believe that rights of equality and dignity extend to non-humans. All living beings are oppressed under a capitalist system, though many do not have voices to speak for themselves. All communal meals and shared foods are vegan.

## **What we stand against**

Intolerance, exploitation, oppression, inequality, sexism, racism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism, xenophobia, bigotry, hunting and 'blood sports,' industrialised animal husbandry, fascism, borders, violence, war, militarism, imperialism, monarchy, and unjustified hierarchy.



## 9. History of Changes and Scheduled Reviews

Date	Version	Reason for Review	Changes Made

**END OF POLICY**