

**Co-Ownership launches Steps to
Buy NI to help aspiring
homeowners**



Pictured at the launch of Steps to Buy NI are Brónach Graham, Consumer Council; Kirsty Finney, NAEA and Mark Graham, Chief Executive at Co-Ownership.

Co-Ownership has launched a new campaign to educate aspiring homeowners across Northern Ireland about the process of purchasing a house.

[Steps to Buy NI](#) was launched last week to an audience of housing and property professionals at PLACE NI in Belfast city centre.

Owned and managed by Co-Ownership, Northern Ireland's main provider of shared ownership, Steps to Buy NI has been launched to address a knowledge gap among first-time buyers and other prospective homeowners about the process of buying a house.

The campaign's main resource, a free-to-use [website](#), covers a broad range of topics, including a step-by-step guide about [deciding your move](#), options for [financing your move](#), [making your move](#), detailing the ins and outs of the home buying process, and [life after buying](#) a house with information about budgeting, managing finances and more.

“It’s a one-stop shop to help prospective homeowners understand the process,” explained Mark Graham, Chief Executive at Co-Ownership.

“Research shows there is much about the process prospective homeowners, particularly first-time buyers, don’t understand. In our 40 years we have supported over 27,000 people into homeownership. Throughout this time there has been an evident knowledge deficit among home buyers with a clear pattern of recurring queries; ‘what does this mean?’, ‘who does what?’ and ‘what comes next?’

“At Co-Ownership we work to help people into affordable home ownership. To understand affordability a homeowner first needs to make sense of the processes involved in purchasing a property as well as understanding their financial capability to maintain mortgage repayments on a property. Steps to Buy NI works to outline this in clear and concise terms.

“We also recognise that every person’s circumstances are

different and that other housing options may be more suitable, which is why, alongside shared ownership, the website provides guidance on the private rented sector, social housing and alternative routes to home ownership.”

As well as a step-by-step guide through the home buying process, the website includes a handy [glossary](#) if home buyers encounter unfamiliar terminology. It also outlines the [different people involved in the process and their roles](#).

“There are a lot of moving parts in buying a house,” Mark commented. “Mortgage advisors and providers, estate agents, conveyancing solicitors, surveyors, vendors and more. Each person has their own unique role to play. Many of these people work on your behalf, often behind the scenes, so it’s important to be clear where they all fit in the process and to understand how they work for you during a purchase.”

It is hoped the website provides a definitive solution for home buyers wanting to understand the process and addresses a fragmented approach to property and home ownership education in the industry.

Mark continued: “Support guidance does exist, but this is one of the first instances where it has been collated into one single resource to help bring reassurance and understanding to home buyers during what can only be described as a complex and far-reaching decision.”

Susan Mason, Acting Director, RICS in Northern Ireland, said: “It is extremely important that home buyers understand what they are getting into and are able to make informed decisions. Whether it’s getting the right survey, having awareness of the mortgage options available, or understanding the ongoing costs of home ownership, it can be a steep learning curve for those buying their first home. That’s why we think this initiative has the potential to play an important role for many people.”

Echoing these thoughts, Kirsty Finney, Regional Executive in Northern Ireland for the National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA), said: “Home ownership is a significant life milestone and one that a home buyer should take time to consider carefully to make an informed decision about, bearing in mind the implications and responsibilities that come attached to the title of ‘homeowner’. Steps to Buy

NI is a valued resource that will enable prospective homeowners across Northern Ireland to educate themselves about the process, research their options and understand associated costs and affordability before beginning the process of buying a house.

“Many estate and lettings agents are now Propertymark Protected to demonstrate transparency and a customer-centric approach to the buying process. This initiative is yet another step in the right direction to maximise the support on offer.”

John French, Chief Executive of The Consumer Council, said: “Owning your first home is an exciting time, and we welcome the Steps to Buy NI campaign to help more consumers become homeowners. However, there are many other associated costs with owning a home, including home energy, utility bills and food and groceries. The Consumer Council will be working with Steps to Buy NI to share our resources to help new homeowners set budgets, manage their spending and compare the cost of energy suppliers.”

For more information, visit stepstobuyeni.co.uk.