

WARM UP

1 Tick (✓) what you would expect to find in a cohousing community.

- 1 Big houses with lots of living space.
- 2 Shared recreational areas.
- 3 A committee to make all the decisions.
- 4 Quiet streets.
- 5 Friendly neighbours.
- 6 An unsafe environment for children.
- 7 Offices and other work places.

GLOSSARY

picking up: *migliorando*
in the pipeline: *di prossima realizzazione*
pantry: *dispensa*
messy room: *ripostiglio*
snooker table: *tavolo da biliardo*

A cohousing project in the UK

Cohousing in Britain has been slow to start, but now things seem to be picking up and there are fourteen new projects waiting in the pipeline. In Dorset, in south west England, there is a cohousing community of twenty-one families. It is set in beautiful grounds covering five acres and there are all kinds of animals from rabbits to hens and horses. The community started when a group of friends decided they wanted to live together in the same place with some communal areas but still maintaining a certain level of privacy. Their first problem was finding other people who were interested in joining the project as they needed a solid financial basis to work on. Next, they had to find the right location which was by no means easy. In the end they chose 'Laughton Lodge' a former hospital which they converted into seventeen housing units.



Financing the project was not simple either. Initial estimates for restructuring were double what they had expected and they had to make a lot of sacrifices and change some of their plans to reach the figure they were aiming for, but in the end they managed. The main building of the old hospital was transformed into the communal area and is enormous. It has a professional kitchen, a dining room, a well-stocked pantry, a children's games room, a room for shows, a messy room used as a workshop, and a room for teenagers with table tennis, snooker table and TV. There is also a recording studio and a gym. There are several spare rooms for guests who wish to sleep over, and some members of the community have their offices in this building which means they can work 'from home'. However, the most important activity for the harmony of the community is eating together. Some people with previous experience in other communities, find the Dorset community doesn't have the same warmth and sense of togetherness, probably because they only all eat together once a week on a Friday, which underlines the importance of consuming meals in the communal area if close relationships are to be maintained.

Adapted and translated from *Cohousing e condomini solidali* ed. by M. Liettaert

ACTIVITIES

READING COMPREHENSION

2 Read the text and answer the following questions.

- 1 How many families live in the community in Dorset?
- 2 What kind of animals can you find there?
- 3 Who created the community? Why?
- 4 What location did they choose?
- 5 How many rooms do they have in common?

SPEAKING

3 **PET** Talk to your partner about the advantages and disadvantages of living in a cohousing community like the one you have just read about in the article. Decide if you agree or not with this choice of living, then present your ideas to the rest of the class. Include the following points.

- Facilities
- Company
- Money saving aspects
- Lack of privacy
- Nosey neighbours