Working Together to deliver Stronger Neighbourhoods

An innovative project where 12 social housing providers are working with CIH to develop and pilot a new generation of Neighbourhood Sustainability Plans

Pooling all the group resources of CIH, led by CIH Consultancy and in partnership with specialists Involve 360, CIH is leading a group of other ‘like-minded’ housing providers in this exciting pilot project. The aim is to work together, to innovate and to ‘think out of the box’ so that, collectively, the next ‘best practice’ can be produced in developing and sustaining stronger communities for neighbourhoods across the UK.

The impetus for change

We are witnessing a huge transformation in our operating environment, a time of uncertainty and of considerable challenge for housing providers.

Regulation is less prescriptive with organisations more reliant on co regulatory inspired self scrutiny tied to all too frequently nondescript local offers – yet this is at a time when government is demanding greater customer focus and responsiveness.

Alongside cuts in public services there have also been significant reductions in the Local authority regenerative infrastructure. This has impacted directly on the ability of local agencies to address neighbourhood sustainability at a time of economic decline and increasing social disadvantage.

Housing, health and welfare reforms are placing additional pressure on Social housing tenants and social landlord income streams both of which will require much more intensive and targeted management interventions.
What does this mean for social housing providers? It means that:

- Local offers need to be made more relevant, specific and customer focused
- Local offers need to say what will be done in a neighbourhood to improve services, quality of life and life chances
- Landlords need to translate local offers into tangible, locally determined, actions
- More than ever, different local service providers need to work together in a joined up way to address neighbourhood sustainability making the most of reduced budgets. Housing providers need to reach out, be in the lead and make this happen as their tenants and communities have the most to lose if they do not. They also need to find a suitable vehicle to enable them to do this
- Landlords need to develop a flexible approach to existing neighbourhood service delivery that enables them to add new initiatives, campaigns, and provision to the existing mix

So, housing providers need a way of focusing their own services and the services of others on the key neighbourhood issues and the additional demands created by emergent government policy.

...... step forward the new generation of Neighbourhood Sustainability Plans.

What does the project involve?

For 12 months from September 2012, the pilot project is taking participating organisations through an interactive, shared process of developing a fresh approach to creating and building stronger neighbourhoods through targeted action and intervention.

The key project elements and timeframe are:

- Setting up a development framework and steering group: September 2012
- Identifying pilot neighbourhoods within landlord stock: October & November 2012
- Developing sustainability ratings for neighbourhoods: December 2012 & January 2013
- Conducting pilot neighbourhood audits: January to March 2013
- Identifying internal and external interventions and aligning with internal and external service offers January to April 2013
- Drafting and producing pilot Neighbourhood Sustainability Plans: April to July 2013
- Post plan implementation timetable and targets: June to August 2013

Throughout the project, there are a series of joint working sessions with other landlords giving opportunities for sharing and developing learning, backed up by individual consultancy support and detailed written material. Taken together, this provides a supportive framework for landlords to develop their own, tailored approach, but benefitting from CIH support and from the shared experiences and collective learning.

Sustainability is about services, quality of life, opportunities and support

What’s the aim of the project?

The Neighbourhood Sustainability Plans developed by the pilots will provide a vital tool for overcoming the challenges of the new operating environment, helping maximise the impact and relevance of local offers. They will maximise internal and external resource pooling to provide a more coherent, focussed neighbourhood delivery model that can adapt quickly to changing policy initiatives. CIH wants to help and facilitate organisations develop
and adopt this approach as a model that can be seen and promoted as the new best practice across the sector. CIH and the pilot organisations want to lead the way in developing and implementing new, innovative neighbourhood approaches through the collective learning and development model.

**What will the outcomes for the pilot organisations and the wider housing sector?**

The final outcomes of the pilot project will be the product of the joint working facilitated by CIH, with the aim being for them to include:

- New ways to identify where social housing providers need to focus resources and effort through an ‘at a glance’ sustainability mapping tool
- An audit tool that identifies the key problems that need to be addressed in individual neighbourhoods, informed by the needs and demands of the tenants and communities served
- Tailored solutions for tackling key neighbourhood problems based on local offer categories
- New approaches for developing effective internal and external multi-disciplinary action planning
- Informed approaches to delivering a consensus with partners on what needs to be done to improve individual neighbourhoods
- Lessons and learning for how best to lever in external resources into a neighbourhood and develop effective signposting to non-housing services for individual customers
- A checklist of suggested ways to develop effective neighbourhood level customer input and scrutiny
- A vehicle to focus resources and capability where they are needed and change services to meet the new operating challenges and requirements

**The Pilot Organisations**

The 12 pilot organisations working with CIH on the project include six housing associations, four local authorities and two Arms Length Management Organisations from across England.

![Logos of the 12 pilot organisations](image)

**Want to know more?**

If you would like more information about the pilot project or about how CIH could work with your organisation please contact Richard Medley, Director, CIH consultancy on 07799 115571 or by email at richard.medley@cih.org.