



Chartered
Institute of
Housing



Good Practice Compendium

Sharing the lessons learnt from the
Northern Awards 2021

Headline sponsor:



Welcome

Welcome to the Chartered Institute of Housing's 2021 Northern Housing Awards Good Practice Compendium. We produced this compendium to make sure the fantastic innovation and good practice demonstrated in the wide range of nominated projects and partnerships were captured and disseminated to the housing world across the North and beyond. Every project, every organisation, every housing professional mentioned in this publication is a great example of how we can change lives and how housing professionals are striving to deliver better for the communities we all serve. Celebrating this is a vital part of what CIH is about.

This compendium is a 'shout out' to every single one of you, who have worked tirelessly through what have been extremely difficult days. But it's more than just a celebration of dedication and commitment. CIH exists for our members; supporting them with an excellent service, useful and up-to-date information and the knowledge and skills they need to create a future in which everyone has a place to call home. Housing everywhere is facing unprecedented challenges: uncertainty in government funding; new regulations; the pressing need for many more homes; the equally pressing need to maintain and improve the homes

we have; and the expectations of those that live in the homes we manage for a better and more modern service. So, it has never been more important for us all to find new and innovative ways of delivering.

This compendium contains a wide range of fantastic examples from which we can all learn. The standard of entries was as usual exceptionally high and demonstrated the resourcefulness and creativity of our sector. The judging panel had some outstanding submissions to consider and choosing the finalists was an incredibly difficult task. I would like to thank all the judges for giving their time and making some very tough decisions in deciding the shortlists and overall winners.

I hope you feel inspired by the examples included in this publication and that it serves as a useful tool for learning and sharing positive practice in workplaces across the breadth of the sector. I would like to thank the awards headline sponsor, Aico- and category sponsors Bernicia- young achiever in housing, NFS- working in partnership and Magenta Living- health and wellbeing. Without their support we wouldn't have been able to share this great content with you.



Gavin Smart CIHCM
Chief executive

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In order to keep the authenticity of these projects, and to convey the passion felt by those involved, we have not altered any of the text submitted to us as part of these entries.

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BEST HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Sponsored by:

savills

This award recognises developments that provide desirable and sustainable places to live, improving the lives of people within the community.

Artifex

Salix Homes



Statement of support

Artifex is the flagship affordable housing development from Salford housing association Salix Homes.

Salford is experiencing a boom in housing developments - fuelled by the rise of MediaCityUK and its close proximity to Manchester. Between 2019-24, almost 16,000 new homes will be completed across the city.

However, the majority of those homes are geared towards the higher-end of the market - luxury apartment blocks which are grossly unaffordable. Meanwhile, the need for genuine, affordable housing grows ever more desperate with over 6,000 people on the housing-register.

Located a stone's throw from Manchester city centre, Artifex is surrounded by a plethora of luxury apartments targeted towards buy-to-let investors or high-income professionals, pricing out many local people in an area where the average household income is £21,128pa.

Salix Homes is committed to delivering more affordable housing and Artifex is the first such scheme in the area for decades.

The 11-storey building, built by construction specialists Willmott Dixon, was completed in May 2021 and comprises 108-apartments available under the Rent-to-Buy Scheme.

It has 90 two-beds and 18 one-beds and is geared towards young professionals to help plug this major gap in provision within the housing market - for whom home-ownership is out of reach.

Rent-to-Buy is a government scheme designed to ease the transition from renting to buying by providing a subsidised rent at 20% below market-rate. People can rent for five-years at the reduced rate, leaving room to save towards a deposit and then have the option to buy after the five-year period.

Rent for a two-bedroom apartment at Artifex is £800, whereas the average rent in the area for a similar property is £1,000.

Artifex is located within the grounds of Canon Green Campus - a social-housing development owned by Salix Homes made up of two further blocks - Canon Green Court and Westminster House.

These 1960s blocks comprise 113-social-rent apartments that required significant investment and refurbishment.

Artifex was the key to making that refurbishment programme financially viable, so not only has it delivered 108 new, affordable homes, it's also ensured the continued provision of this much-needed social housing.

The entire development, including the refurbishment of the existing buildings, cost £22.5million. Of that, £15million was spent on Artifex, which included £3.8m Homes England funding.

It's a steel-frame structure with 10-floors of residential accommodation and the ground floor containing community meeting rooms, commercial space, car-

parking and cycle storage for 128 bikes to encourage the use of bikes in this city-centre location.

The communal grounds have also been landscaped for the use of everyone within the multi-tenure complex - promoting community cohesion.

In keeping with the sustainable, eco-building style, we also opted for an all-electric approach, supported with PV arrays for water heating.

It was important the design complemented the wider regeneration in the area and also encapsulated the site's rich history.

Artifex is named in tribute to the late Canon Peter Green - a local rector, published writer and pacifist whose fight against social injustice mirrors Salix

Homes' own values and ethos to deliver high-quality, affordable housing for everyone.

During the First World War and until the 1950s, he wrote a weekly column in The Manchester Guardian - which was later to become The Guardian - under the pen name 'Artifex'.

His legacy has been immortalised at Artifex with an extract from a pertinent column he wrote in 1947 now showcased in the lobby, which reads: "When the time comes for action, let stately civic centres and the repair of cathedrals and churches, and large hotels, and super cinemas, and everything else, give place in the competition for money, man-power and materials, to homes for the people."

Outcomes and achievements

The vision with Artifex was to provide much-needed homes for a young working population who cannot afford the high city rents and yet aspire to the city centre lifestyle.

The first people to move in were restaurant manager Mike Nyoni and support worker Megan. They'd previously been in private-rented accommodation, but had to move when the landlord decided to sell-up.

For them, it's been life-changing. Mike said: "We just feel so lucky to have found Artifex - it's in a brilliant location, it's so convenient and it's absolutely beautiful.

"The Rent-to-Buy scheme is perfect for people like us. We've been renting for years, but you feel like you're paying for someone else's house, now we're working towards buying the place we are living in.

"We never thought we'd be able to buy a property because it's so difficult to get a mortgage these days, but now we're looking forward to becoming homeowners - we feel like we've won the lottery."

Mike's words perfectly encapsulate what we set out to achieve at Artifex and we're incredibly proud to bring our vision to deliver more high-quality, affordable housing to life.

Bentinck Terrace

Changing Lives



Statement of support

Last year Changing Lives began an ambitious redevelopment project to transform its longest-standing supported housing accommodation for people experiencing homelessness in Newcastle.

Changing Lives recognised that shared hostel accommodation was not best serving the people it supported and embarked on a transformation of Bentinck Terrace and its services in Newcastle.

With funding from Home England's Move On grant fund and the support of Newcastle City Council, Changing Lives began the £3.2m transformation of the Grade II listed buildings from a 52-bed hostel crisis accommodation into 36 self-contained apartments with specialist onsite support.

Changing Lives has 50 years experience of in delivering frontline homelessness services. We have seen the pitfalls and challenges of traditional hostels, which provide no more than a sticking plaster approach and do not tackle the root causes of why people become homeless.

In Newcastle, we have witnessed a core of individuals who circulate around the system, stuck in an endless cycle of rough sleeping and in and out of hostels.

Bentinck Terrace had been a challenge to manage. It served as our 52-bed shared crisis accommodation, but, like many shared hostels, its chaotic nature meant it was not the best environment to help people make positive changes.

So, we talked to residents who said things such as "I'd like to be able to use the kitchen in the middle of the

night", "I don't like being disrupted by other peoples comings and goings", and "I'd like a space that I can make my own".

That prompted us to develop our initiative Changing Lives: Leading From The Front Door.

We believe that everyone should have their own safe space to call home in order to be given a better chance to move forward in life.

We have focused on quality, not quantity and have created an environment that can make a lasting impact on residents' lives rather than simply providing a bed for the night.

Each resident is provided with their own fully equipped and furnished apartment as well as shared communal spaces, including a community hub, classroom and gardens. They are also supported by an onsite team to help build on their personal strengths and overcome any barriers which would prevent their transition into independent living. The support is 1:1, and residents can also undertake qualifications onsite such as level 1 warehousing and health and beauty.

Giving homeless people their own front door is not new but applying the principle to hostel accommodation is.

The redevelopment of Bentinck Terrace found an innovative way to make the most of the space, creating modern practical living spaces while keeping the heritage and period features of the grade II listed building, such as protecting its ornate high ceilings and exterior walls.

The design has also been psychologically informed. Creating a bright, positive and spacious environment is important in influencing someone's mood, motivation and potential for positive change. The building has made the most of large open spaces with plenty of natural light.

We have also adopted a trauma-informed approach when it comes to supporting residents. For instance, in most housing projects a resident would be ejected if they kicked off and caused serious damage. However, that does nothing to address the root cause of their distress. At Bentinck Terrace we let things calm down, and trained staff take the time to talk to the resident to try and understand the trauma that triggers their behaviour and provide them with coping mechanisms.

Our other approach is a strength-based one which nurtures and assists an individual's strengths and talents rather than focusing on their problems or what they are lacking.

Outcomes and achievements

Changing Lives has taken on a complex redevelopment project, challenging existing models and re-engineered our service delivery to ensure that it serves our residents in the best possible way.

Bentinck Terrace has provided a much-needed bridge between crisis emergency homelessness services and good quality move-on accommodation.

Take Beth, for example, a resident of Bentinck Terrace who has been in and out of shared hostel accommodation and had spells of rough sleeping. She said: "I've got my own space and independence here, but I know I've also got the support I need. It's a lovely safe space, and when my door closes I can be in my own little world to do my painting and chill out, something I felt I could never do when I was living in shared hostels. It gives you the time and privacy to just be you and work on yourself."

The development has also received some great feedback from stakeholders. Newcastle City Council said: "Bentinck Terrace shows Changing Lives' and the city's ambition to change all our residents lives for the better... Bentinck Terrace isn't just an investment in a building, it's an investment in a community and in people."

Homes England would also like to use the redevelopment as a case study and example of best practice.

The results are stunning, both in terms of the beauty of the buildings with their preserved ornate ceilings, and in results - the journey times through our homelessness services have reduced by 70%, from 327 nights in 2018-19 to 133 nights now.

Affordable Homes in Rural Communities - Huby

Lead organisation: Broadacres

Partner organisations: Esh Construction



Statement of support

Huby is a village in North Yorkshire, situated between the historic city of York and the market town of Easingwold.

It's proximity to these centres make it a prime commuter location and this is reflected by the fact properties in the village have an average house price of £426,075. The cost of renting privately is also high.

As part of its strategy to make rural communities affordable for future generations, in the summer of 2021, Broadacres completed work on a 12-home scheme in the centre of the village, providing two and

three-bedroom properties for affordable rent and shared ownership solely to people with a connection to Huby or the surrounding areas.

This £1.8 million development was built on farmland behind the local school by Broadacres' developing partner Esh Construction.

Built during the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of difficulties had to be overcome to ensure the scheme was delivered on time, including sourcing materials such as bricks and roof tiles. Given the location in the heart of Huby, the homes had to be in keeping with the appearance of the village streetscape and landscape so much attention was paid in the initial design process. This involved the detailed brickwork with dental course and brick coins which has really elevated the project.

Broadacres and Esh were also sympathetic to existing homes close to the site, providing new fencing and a parking area for residents in these homes.

As part of its affordable warmth and sustainability strategy, all the homes had renewable air source heat pumps installed, which are not only better for the environment but will save residents' money on their energy bills too.

Outcomes and achievements

All the homes have been allocated to local people. They include Chris Brain and his partner Sarah Collinson who moved into their two-bedroom rented home with their nine-month-old daughter Isabella.

Chris, a truck driver, was brought up three miles from Huby in Stillington, and still has family in the village.

He said: "The house we were living in was privately rented but it was small, had single glazed windows and damp and was miles away from any local amenities.

"Now, we have a shop in the village where we can get milk for Isabella, as well as other day-to-day essentials, and a doctors' surgery close, so the location is perfect

"More importantly, aside from the quality of the house and it being much more suitable for our needs, we are paying less than when we rented privately, so means we are able to save money and buy more things for Isabella."

Local MP Kevin Hollinrake said: "Sustainability has been a key priority for Broadacres and given the mix of rental and shared ownership options, there are houses to suit a variety of needs and financial situations. I hope to see more schemes such as this in the constituency and will be championing this in Parliament at every opportunity."

Travellers Green

Living Housing



Statement of support

Living is a registered provider based in County Durham, The development at

Clarence Green involved the design and construction of 47 new homes available or affordable rent with a mixture of 18 two-bedroomed bungalows for over 55's and/or disabled people and 29 two, three and four-bedroomed homes.

The aims and objectives were to provide:

- Affordable new homes, including bungalows and family houses to extend local housing choice, helping to meet the need for new affordable rented homes which are in high demand in Newton Aycliffe (average of 100 bids received for accommodation in this area). All new homes meet the Nationally described Space Standards.
- Variety of character areas with dwellings positioned in a traditional village green manner; and a small inverted crescent set-piece as place-making

Total Scheme Cost £7.2m

Homes England Grant Funding £1.8m

Cohesion with the surrounding area

- The new homes replace post-WW2 bungalows owned by Living that had reached the end of their serviceable life, offering significant improvements in thermal efficiency and spaciousness.
- The layout is carefully planned to be inserted into the existing highway and landscape infrastructure, retaining trees and hedging, where possible, to preserve the mature, verdant landscape character.
- Safe pedestrian routes welcome users within a barrier-free, inclusive strategy, linking the new homes with existing open spaces and the nature park trail immediately to the south. Encouraging healthy communities by providing residents a pleasant and peaceful walking/ cycle route on their doorstep.
- A variety of character areas, dwelling facing materials and roofscapes in keeping with the neighbourhood creates locally inspired, well-

understood and well-defined streets and spaces blended within the existing natural woodland.

- The site is surrounded by well-established trees and benefits from views overlooking areas of open green space.
- The discovery of Great Crested Newts in the nature park resulted in various off-site works to enhance the habitat, including the creation of an additional pond in the nature reserve.

Innovation in design and construction

- Clarence Green aims to be an exemplary modern neighbourhood offering a range of bright, cheerful affordable homes and a garden-themed quality of life.
 - The site layout provides a variety of landscape-themed character areas as place-making: Dwellings front Travellers Green in a traditional village green manner, while home-zone arrangements abut Clarence Green maximising the number of dwellings with visual connection to the greenspace.
 - An inverted crescent is provided off the Clarence Green as a set-piece.
 - Bungalows are generally grouped to encourage forming self-supporting communities.
- Additional open green space was created within the site for the use of new and existing residents. A piece of public art is also due to be installed commemorating the first social home ever built within the town on this location.
- The scheme has been designed to be meet Nationally described Space Standards and are accessible to those who may develop mobility issues. All bungalows have level access front and rear doors, and benefit internally from level access showers.
- A site-wide, fabric-first approach exceeding Building Regulations requirements targeting limiting heat gains and losses and efficient building services will maintain low running costs for residents.
- Two dwellings have been built to the emerging Future Homes Standards utilising low carbon heating in the form of air source heat pumps, heat recovery ventilation and utilising solar photovoltaic cells.
- A 4 bedroom adapted house has been designed and built for a family, who were in urgent need of a property with level access, through floor lift and level access bathing facilities.

Once customers have settled into their new homes, Living undertake customer satisfaction surveys, any comments received are reviewed and fed into the design brief to enhance future developments.

Outcomes and achievements

Clarence Green supports strong, vibrant, healthy communities, providing the right type of homes required to meet the needs of present and future generations; creating a high-quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being.

Demand was exceedingly high, over 100 bids were received for each property. Built to exceptionally high standards, the development demonstrates the ability to deliver outstanding affordable housing in a residential location providing a high environmental value.

Livin wanted to create a sustainable development that would be affordable for all customers, rents are set at 80% of the market rent and range from £96.92 to £120.00 per week.

- Benefits include:
- Help to fulfil the demand for much needed homes for families and the elderly.
- Redevelopment of a brownfield site
- Improvements to the local streetscape by constructing aesthetically pleasing buildings
- Improved security for neighbouring properties through passive and active surveillance.
- Enhanced biodiversity within the existing nature park
- Contractor prioritises employment of locally based sub-contractors, Kickstart funding was provided which resulted in the employment of a Livin resident as a site operative.

This project has been a great success for Livin and its partner contractor Tolent Living.

EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

In a rapidly changing environment, the need to deliver excellent service is more important than ever. This award recognises housing teams who go above and beyond to deliver truly outstanding customer service.

Support Services and Allocations Team

Progress Housing Group



Statement of support

In April 2021, Progress Housing Group launched its Customer First project and the Group's Administration and Allocations Team took on a greater support role for vulnerable customers in our communities, being renamed Support Services and Allocations.

They recruited two dedicated Community Support Officers whose sole purpose is to provide support to customers and tenants who need it most.

This change will further enhance a service that has been a lifeline for many customers over the last 12 months.

The Support Services and Allocations Team has continued to provide essential support to domestic abuse victims throughout the pandemic, and specialist officers have worked tirelessly to ensure that those needing help have received it.

Progress has several customers who have been identified as under-occupying their current home and wanting to move, often due to financial pressures. The team recognised that this customer group needed specific support to enable them to find a home they

can be happy in and has been on hand to support these customers throughout the pandemic.

Over the last 12 months, the team continued to provide interim accommodation to homeless persons who required short-term housing until a more permanent residence was found for them. Progress has 35 properties used specifically for this purpose.

As a direct response to the pandemic, Progress set up a 'Here to Help' service to support vulnerable customers. So far, the project has helped ensure that tenants have access to vital services, access to food and medicines, and that they are managing childcare arrangements. Colleagues working on Here to Help also made more than 100,000 welfare calls, signposting customers to the help they needed, either internally or via external organisations.

Progress Housing Group's Customer First journey aims to further our commitment to putting customers at the heart of everything we do.

As part of this, the Support Services and Allocations Team will:

- Take on overall responsibility for safeguarding within the Group
- Continue to lead on Domestic Abuse cases
- Provide invaluable support in communities, especially for the most vulnerable customers with complex needs, via Community Support Officers
- Take on responsibility for the management of Aids and Adaptations, with newly-created area teams having greater visibility within communities and improving customers' ease of access to services.

Progress can't wait to help more people like Mr M, who had the following to say about the support and service he received from the Support Services and

Allocations Team, when he really needed help: "I feel like a different person now, and I can't thank Progress enough."

To ensure that we keep the momentum going, a Continuous Improvement Team has also been

created. This team leads on service improvements, with customer insight, regular staff training, and good practice being central to this.

Outcomes and achievements

At a time when vulnerable customers and tenants are more at risk than ever before, Progress Housing Group is stepping up to the mark. Here are some of the Support Services and Allocations Team's achievements from the last 12 months:

- A father and son moved in together to support each other during the pandemic – the son was homeless, and the father recently lost his partner. The move didn't go as planned as the son was spending household income on narcotics. The father, confined to his bedroom, became very depressed and lonely. The father reached out for help, and Progress were able to rehouse him on his own. He is extremely happy now.
- A single male lived in a two-bed flat that he had originally occupied with his brother, who had left the premises. The tenant had physical injuries and mental health issues that were affecting him financially and limiting his mobility. Progress worked tirelessly with the tenant to get him rehoused and even acted as a point of contact with his new landlord when COVID restrictions caused a breakdown in communication.
- A single mother of four was a victim of domestic abuse at the hands of the father of her youngest child. She was living in a three-bedroom property with rent arrears and anti-social behaviour proceedings against her. Her children were no longer living with her. Progress worked with her to establish coping techniques for dealing with conflict and found her a new home. She is rebuilding her life now and is able to see all her children again.

Supporting Customers and Developing Improved Services Through Covid in 2021

Stockport Homes Group



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Outcomes and achievements

Prior to Covid, reception received approximately 600 customers per week. On re-opening in March 2021 we welcomed 100 visitors per week and by September we are up to 400 customers per week visiting. We undertake monthly surveys of 60 people coming into reception to ask them about the service they have received, prior to Covid this ran at about 95% satisfaction. Since re-opening reception the service has achieved 98% satisfaction.

The telephone team has continued to meet its three core targets of answering 95% of telephone calls, emails within 2 days and webchat within 30 minutes

throughout despite the increased activity generated by Covid. Over the first three months of running the automated telephone satisfaction surveys we have had feedback from over 600 customers. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive with customers expressing satisfaction with the politeness of staff (92%), staff's knowledge (93%) and the overall service (88%). The analysis of this data, the staff training and the feedback from the Customer Scrutiny Panel will enable SHG to develop these services further as we support customers through the remainder of Covid and beyond.

HOUSING TEAM OF THE YEAR

This award is for a team who have delivered an outstanding contribution to their organisation and for the housing sector.

Manningham Housing Association Community Investment and Partnerships Team

Manningham Housing Association



Statement of support

The team was brought together to deliver Manningham Housing Association's three-year Community Investment Strategy. This included a pioneering new venture, Building Bridges Bradford, devised by the team and funded by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The project sought to bolster community resilience, enhance societal awareness across diverse cultural/faith/ethnic communities and challenge racism, prejudices and community division through a range of social action activities.

It also supported those affected by COVID-19 including people experiencing mental health challenges, loss of income and isolation due to lockdown. The approach focused on placing people in the lead - local people, taking local action with local lived experience at the forefront.

The project was delivered across Bradford, but specifically targeted at 32-wards ranked in the top 3% most deprived in the country. Bradford is 8/317 in the

most deprived local authorities in England with 34% of Bradford's 310 neighbourhoods within the 10% most deprived nationally.

Around 59% of the local BAME population (36.5% of 192,240 residents) suffers from long-term ill health such as diabetes, cancer, dementia, respiratory issues, obesity and general poor wellbeing. There were other communities/groups left behind such as non-BAME, Gypsy/Roma/Traveller and LGBT which required support.

Building Bridges Bradford had three strands (community conversation, connecting communities and good neighbours days/events) coupled with online (outdoor) physical/light exercise sessions such as yoga/bangra-cise, shadow boxing and coffee mornings.

When designing the project, the team envisaged a range of co-designed sessions would directly and indirectly support individuals/families and communities suffering from physical/social/economic challenges.

Following consultations and planning, staff realised that having a talking society would develop better understanding but, without social movement towards cultural experiences within a social setting, cross-community relationships/links would not be established. Having conversations, socialising, building common understanding and creating friendships was progressive, but without 'social action' - community development initiatives led by service users - an opportunity would be lost.

The rationale for the dual level of online activities (physical/non-physical) was deemed most viable for increasing community cohesion, improving personal wellbeing and building healthier relationships.

Overall progress has been immense with many users now seeking additional or continued support. Manningham HA will be offering employment support, digital engagement, and mental health through user-led groups, facilitated by community volunteer champions.

The BAME LGBT service will be further developed to act as an independent project in supporting people from these minority communities.

The team has received lots of positive feedback from users.

Naheeda on confidence building training: "The sessions were very positive and encouraging for me. I felt guilty to leave my mother to do things for myself. I now understand that it's important for me to look after myself so that I can continue to look after them, otherwise I was at the brink of burn out."

Resident on seated exercise for BAME women 50+: "I have not exercised in so long and I look forward to these sessions every week. I feel young again! This makes me happy."

Resident on budget planning and saving. "The sessions helped me recognise that the way I was managing money was an unhealthy coping technique response to my mental ill health. The course helped me to face my financial worries, budget and look at ways that I could save better for the long-term future of my family and me."

Resident on mental health awareness: "Sharing my phobia with others and understanding that some of us have similar phobias has made me feel at ease. I am more aware about the different types of mental health issues we face in our daily life. This course has impacted me to make positive changes to my life."

Outcomes and achievements

- Engagement with 2240 beneficiaries.
- 1258 had direct support through attending more than one activity/session on mental health and wellbeing with over 65% reporting personal improvement to mental health.
- 25 new (bottom-up) community initiatives were developed and launched.
- 40 service users were supported on the employment project with 7 service users moving into full-time employment and 14 becoming volunteers.
- 39 black and South Asian women benefited from online business coaching of which 6 women are now setting up small business).
- 412 beneficiaries reported improved physical mobility and reduced obesity through online and outdoor sporting sessions. 292 were young people (8-24-year-olds) and a further 120 (female-adults (24 year +) reported improved physical health.
- 275 service users including those from marginalised groups (LGBTQ, refugee, and disabilities) benefited from community conversations and good neighbours day sessions of which over 56% report improved community relations, better understanding of hate/race crime and healthy cultural friendships with fellow participants.
- 98 service users (including 9 young children) reported improved healthy eating through participating and attending healthy cooking sessions on low budgets.
- Manningham HA developed good working relationships with 25 small groups for continued collaboration and partnership working.
- e-Community Partnership network strengthened to include 80 local groups.

Greater Manchester Housing First

Greater Manchester Housing First



Statement of support

The war on homelessness and entrenched rough sleeping in Greater Manchester is one that GM Housing First is helping to win.

Homelessness in all forms has increased in Greater Manchester since 2010. In 2009-10, 1,857 applications were accepted by local authorities as a 'main duty' of re-housing being owed under provisions of the Housing Acts. This increased by 85% to a peak of 3,428 in the 2017-18 financial year.

GM Housing First began in 2019 following the Government's decision to commission three regional pilots testing the Housing First model at scale as a solution to help entrenched rough sleepers and those experiencing homelessness.

The pilot is aiming to support at least 330 people into safe and secure accommodation during the lifetime of the pilot that ends on March 31, 2022. At the time of submission, we have rehoused 282 people.

To do this, the pilot and its team of 72 people, made up of people from a wide range of organisations with many different skills, provides support services across Greater Manchester to the most vulnerable people in the 10 boroughs - people who had been failed repeatedly by traditional support services and in most cases have multiple traumas - and bring about systemic change to allow people access to housing and support.

As well as Housing First delivery, the team also has Dual Diagnosis Practitioners who help tackle homelessness and health issues for people on the programme as well as helping the team to deliver systemic change.

We also have a dedicated Quality Assurance Manager and other central functions to help ensure the highest quality and consistent practice is delivered across all areas and operate as one team regardless of which organisation is delivering support.

The task is challenging in a "normal" social environment would be challenging enough, but continuing to not only support the people on the programme but help new people into homes of their own was tougher still.

We had to reimagine the way we delivered our service practically overnight and as some services were postponed or scaled back, the GMHF pilot continued to grow, helping to engage with those with multiple and complex needs as they weren't able to address the challenges they face.

We utilised virtual contacts and socially-distanced visits to ensure we could support service users during the numerous lockdowns.

We ended Year 1 with 103 people in their own homes, a fantastic result given the infrastructure of the pilot had to be implemented.

We ended Year 2 with 224 people successfully supported into their own homes. And all amid the global pandemic. We consider this to be an outstanding performance by an outstanding team.

And not only are we helping to get people into homes of their own, but our tenancy sustainment rate is 87 per cent (a 2015 study from Homeless Link found that tenancy sustainment rates were between 70 and 90 per cent) with zero evictions.

The work being done by the pilot is transformational, not just for the people using the service, but it is changing the face of the homeless strategy in Greater Manchester.

We have been very active through our communications and our fantastic co-production panel have taken part in a number of studies including the Housing First England, Centre for Social Justice, All-Party Parliament Group on Ending Homelessness and Crisis reports of how effective the model can be at scale as we look to make the pilots permanent.

To create such a strong team to help those who have been failed by traditional support models is an outstanding effort, especially during a global pandemic and the resulting lockdowns.

Outcomes and achievements

The Greater Manchester pilot, launched in 2019, has taken a unique approach, creating a partnership of 12 organisations and a network of services to ensure the people on the pilot get all the support they need while remaining in charge of their recovery journey.

Co-production, people with lived experience, and innovation are at the centre of the pilot as we strive to provide a significant body of evidence that the pilot should be made permanent.

In June, the pilot supported the 250th person into their own home with a tenancy sustainment rate of 87 per cent – at the very top end of the expected rate.

Behind the stats are people and lives that have been changed, and in some cases saved, because of the

unique way the pilot has operated and helped people who had been repeatedly failed by services in the past to rebuild their lives.

Our latest statistical data is:

People rehoused – 282

People on the programme – 348

People housed for more than 6 months – 154

Graduations (people who no longer need the service) – 3

Tenancy sustainment rate – 87%

Evictions – 0.

Gentoo Group's Affordable Development Team

Gentoo Group



Statement of support

Gentoo's vision is to 'build great homes, strong communities and inspire people'.

The housing association has endured a turbulent few years following a regulatory downgrade to a non-compliant G3. The downgrade led to the Group's development programme being halted and Sunderland's main provider of affordable housing was not able to deliver affordable housing for the city's residents.

Fast forward to 2021, and, Gentoo has some major catching up to do, with its new Affordable Development Team at the heart of this.

Gentoo launched an ambitious £165m, 1200-unit Affordable Homes Programme to deliver by 2026. In the space of one year, the Group has recruited some of the best talent in the industry, from across the UK, to create a team of eleven colleagues, from eight different organisations, with an average age of 35.

The team is led by Joanne Gordon, Joanne's team is split into 'development' and 'delivery', with the addition of Shared Ownership Sales and Marketing Manager – a role that ensures Gentoo is supporting

the Government's home ownership agenda, by delivering up to 100 shared ownership units as part of its programme.

Joanne has recruited the team based on skills, knowledge, passion for affordable housing, and most importantly, alignment to Gentoo's vision and values. The Group's ambition to deliver a significant programme over a short period of time and its track record of developing its people, were both crucial factors in the successful recruitment of the team.

Gentoo's commitment to equality and diversity is reflected in the colleagues it has been able to attract to the team. It is proud to have appointed several female colleagues into roles that are traditionally held by men, with more than 90% of the team being women. This sends a strong message to the sector about our commitment to giving women in construction the opportunity to thrive, and to aspiring female construction professionals thinking about a career in the industry.

Blending a whole new team together of this size has not been easy, especially with the challenges of a global pandemic. The team has embraced the new way of working and quickly adapted to the challenges posed by COVID-19 to ensure its development programme has remained fully on track.

Perhaps the most impressive achievement the team has made in its short existence, is the sheer scale of activity it has been able to deliver at such a phenomenal pace over a short period of time. In the 18 months since it was fully formed, the team has performed extremely well and achieved some ambitious objectives:

- It has secured 100% of its forward pipeline
- Designed fourteen new house types in line with the National Design Guide
- Has 270 new homes under construction

- Taken 324 homes through a public consultation process in the middle of a global pandemic
- With a further 240 homes at pre-planning stage.

This activity equates to more than one new home being built every day for the past year.

The team has also quickly created not only its own identity, but a new identity for affordable housing in Sunderland.

The new house types were designed with the modern living in mind, and all meet national space standards

and have a focus on volume and light. To help address the climate crisis, the new homes are 70% carbon neutral and feature a range of energy efficient measures, including, air source heat pumps, solar PV panels, battery storage, triple glazing, and electric car charging points.

And all of this was achieved without the team ever being able to meet in person one single time. This team really have gone from zero to heroes.

Outcomes and achievements

This past year Gentoo has put homebuilding and placemaking back at the heart of its organisation. This marks a new era of housebuilding in the City of Sunderland and the groups new Affordable Development Team has been key to such significant progress over such a short space of time.

For three years, the Group halted its affordable housing provision off the back of a Regulatory downgrade to a non-compliant G3 governance rating.

Fast forward to 2021 and it has seriously made up for lost time.

Gentoo created a new Affordable Development Team from scratch, recruited some of the best talent from

across the UK, and developed a new range of house types that meet the national design guide, focusing on volume, natural light, and sustainable living.

The team has achieved some ambitious targets to ensure it's on track to deliver its £165m, 1200-unit affordable homes programme on Wearside by 2026.

It has secured 100% of its forward pipeline, has 270 new homes under construction across the city, and is set to launch a new Shared Ownership brand to support affordable home ownership on Wearside.

Overall, it has been a fantastic 18 months for the team.

YHN income, advice and collection team

Your Homes Newcastle



Statement of support

On a basic level, YHN's Income, Advice and Collection team is there to ensure the organisation's income through the simple act of collecting rent, but there is a great deal of support built into this, as well as a court team element for when the last resort is needed.

Despite a strong track record in sustaining tenancies, including for a high number of vulnerable and complex households, and two recent award wins for homeless prevention work, arrears had continued to rise.

Like other housing organisations across the country, the outbreak of COVID 19 and the subsequent lockdown created many new challenges for the team.

YHN's Income, Advice and Collection team were faced with two seemingly opposing priorities in the early stages of the pandemic - the rent must be collected to meet the city council's target (98.6%) and protect the organisation's income for the benefit of the wider tenant base, and all customers must be supported to remain in their homes with usual enforcement action ruled out due to the Government's temporary ban on evictions.

All of this against a backdrop of an increase in referrals for customers with no experience of claiming benefits, as well as a large number of self-employed customers and people who'd been furloughed or made redundant. With a seismic shift in working practices, it was clear that the same old practices would no longer be enough.

We quickly changed our approach to focus much more on the information sharing and supportive side of our roles. A move from enforcement to support - and from collection to connection.

Rather than consider ways to keep things ticking over until court action would once again help to protect

income, the team was determined that as many people as possible would be in a more positive position once court restrictions were lifted. A cultural shift relating to performance management supported this; judged on what the officers do with a case, as opposed to the outcome.

Using bespoke texts, letters and phone calls (and, latterly PPE home visits) aimed at seeking an understanding of the customer's individual set of circumstances, rather than specifically rent, the team has guided many through new applications for Universal Credit, Discretionary Housing Payments and food parcels as well as support with gas and electric top ups when required.

They have run through household budgets and identified priority bills with customers, establishing affordable payment arrangements and having realistic discussions with customers about the rent they could afford.

In some cases, a holiday from paying back any arrears was permitted and for those customers successfully applying for Universal Credit, they maximised the number of applications to have the rent paid directly

to YHN - helping to reassure the customer their tenancy was safe and maximising the income to the landlord.

With the effective closure of the courts for possession actions for rent arrears, our legal officers were redeployed into our contact centre to give more specialist income advice and assistance both to our customers and staff.

They liaised closely with county court staff, including district judges, and were actively involved in a court user group to help clarify how the proposed new hearing process would work.

They were concerned that an initial telephone hearing could disadvantage our customers, so continued to pro-actively make contact with those due to go to court to seek agreements and advise them on the help available, including duty solicitor service.

When the courts reopened, only four out of the original 67 cases due to be reactivated went to the second substantive (in person) hearing, avoiding unnecessary stress for our customers and saving the court's time.

Outcomes and achievements

In terms of rent collection, we achieved 100.23% for 20/21 compared to 98.82% in 19/20; an improvement of £1,364,864.

When additional support needs were identified, first contact was made with customers within 1 day of referral and an appointment to discuss their circumstances made within 2.3 days.

For households where the threat of homelessness was particularly severe, additional contact was undertaken, with around 75% of our critical case customers now having embedded a satisfactory payment pattern.

For customers who completed any programme of support, they were able to achieve a £2.24million

income generation, and customers made claims for unclaimed benefits totalling £2,240,000

Customer testimonial: "Jess helped me get on the Housing Register which required sending in documents by email, something I didn't know how to do before I spoke to her. She also helped with my application and bidding and even my income and outgoings, like my bills and council tax payments. I couldn't have done it on my own.

"Jess helped me find and bid for a smaller flat that I could manage better by myself. She even helped after I was successful by sorting out a reference for my new landlord so I could get moved in quickly."

Housing development team

Sunderland City Council



Statement of support

In the 12 months, during the most challenging of circumstances since the onset of the pandemic, this newly-formed team has come together, driven by skill and commitment, to realise the ambitions of the local authority, which will see it deliver hundreds of new homes for rent by 2025.

Sunderland City Council stopped renting homes 20 years ago, and it is 40 years since the council constructed council houses, so the team were starting from ground zero. From this standing start the team has established new processes, systems, governance, partnerships and financial systems so that the new investment programme can be delivered. The progress and achievements made through the year are simply amazing.

The Council is proud that the team is made up entirely of women bucking the trend in the construction sector and hope it will inspire other women into the industry.

From a standing start, the team have ensured 101 homes are either acquired, built or under construction, and already secured 32 empty properties, which will be brought back into use as affordable rental homes for residents across the city.

Already, more than half the bungalows the council aimed to deliver have either been secured, built or are under construction. And 27 supported accommodation properties have been secured, against a target of 95.

In spite of challenges associated with the pandemic, with team working arrangements and associated professional and technical support being unavailable through lockdown, the team has built positive programme momentum, with exceptional first year outputs.

The team has established new financial viability processes and systems ensuring value for money and effective investment decision making, procured

a Professional Services Framework and required contractors for all new construction sites. They have worked with Homes England securing over £2m of grant funding in the last 12 months, achieved by demonstrating and proving delivery of project outputs within budget.

The team seeks to maximise the social value it delivers by working with local providers, supply chain, businesses and colleges to create local opportunities through training, employment, subcontractors and supply opportunities. More than 50 local businesses have been involved in the construction of new council homes, a framework of North East based suppliers has been appointed for professional services and local artists have been commissioned to create stunning public art. This social value activity also embraces local community engagement and environmental considerations.

The team's proudest achievement is the feedback from residents. "I was speechless when I came and saw this place. It's absolutely perfect." Resident, Elmwood Avenue

With a key focus being on building new bungalows to support more vulnerable residents, the team has ensured that the properties drive up standards and support people to enjoy a good quality of life in excellent accommodation.

Some of the team's achievements include:

- a new technology approach developed with social care partners to support independent living
- 5G connectivity for future service provision and to complement the Council's Smart City status
- bungalows have been designed to Category 2 and 3 standards so needs of older people and those with mobility problems can be fully catered for and strategic housing needs are met
- National Described Space Standards (NDSS) delivered
- Secure by Design (SBD) standards and principles adopted
- Sustainability and fuel poverty applications have been applied on all homes to support green living and minimise carbon footprint
- Development of high quality specification for fixtures and fittings

Throughout the delivery programme the team has pushed boundaries in terms of quality, construction methods and sustainability.

Outcomes and achievements

In 2019, Sunderland City Council committed to become a registered provider. The council set out to appoint a talented team to drive this important programme, which would be required to meet stretching targets from a standing start.

A newly appointed team - entirely made up of women - was appointed and, in less than a year and despite joining the organisation and working remotely during the pandemic, has already made significant progress against ambitious aims set out in the £59m Housing Delivery and Investment Plan.

The team is headed up by Amanda Gallagher, an experienced housing development professional and project manager, with a track record of delivering

successful affordable housing schemes and major housing-led regeneration projects throughout the region. She is joined by architecturally qualified Samantha Lowrie, the team's Technical Coordinator, and two Development Officers; experienced property professional Tracey Dobson, and Yasmin Ellis who joined the council having worked for a Charitable Registered Provider.

Together, the team is bringing more than 360 empty properties back into use as family homes over the next five years; as well as the delivery of 117 new build bungalows; and through construction, conversion and refurbishment, 95 new homes will be created to offer supported accommodation.

Suicide Prevention and Safeguarding Leads

believe housing



Statement of support

Unlike many landlords, believe housing offers lots more than just a home. The range of support it provides its customers is extensive. From the moment a potential new customer comes into contact with believe housing, they are provided with expert advice on budgeting and welfare benefits that are available, alongside other support on making their new home a success.

Support does not end at a transactional level though, believe housing has a team of fully trained volunteers able to provide support for customers in the darkest times of times.

The Suicide Prevention and Safeguarding Leads at believe housing have come together to tackle some of the most difficult problems that affordable housing customers face. They all volunteer to be a part of the group alongside their day jobs with believe housing. Although they volunteer to offer support to vulnerable customers in their time of need, the quality of service they provide is second-to-none.

The team is drawn from all parts of the housing association and was set up to help customers through times of crisis particularly people who were experiencing suicidal thoughts. It was created just

before the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

A GP, who had been contacted by one of the leads to offer additional support to a tenant, voiced his amazement at the quality of service offered by the team; praising the processes in place and the training undertaken. They said: "believe housing ask all the right questions and have a great process in place."

Rosie is a Lettings Assistant at believe housing and regularly signposts to the support offered by the suicide and safeguarding leads. She said: "They are very helpful and are always available to give advice and guidance, not only to our customers but also to me when I've been unsure on how to support customers in need. The leads are great to go to when you need some reassurance. I have referred vulnerable customers to leads and find comfort in knowing they are receiving amazing support."

The team has seen huge growth during the last 18-months, not only in the number of issues it has dealt with, but also in the number of staff volunteering to take part in the team.

In the first year the team was in place, it handled 43 suicide concerns and 33 broader safeguarding concerns. In the second year, 2020/2021, those figures had risen to 112 suicide concerns and 61 safeguarding. Figures for the first quarter of the 2021/22 year show that the trend appears to be continuing; with 26 suicide concerns and 36 safeguarding concerns in just a three-month period.

From just a handful of people with a passion for protecting vulnerable customers, the team has grown to more than 20 strong. The growth has ensured that there is always someone on hand if a concern is raised.

All concerns that are received are dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible by a member of the team. Customer contacts are passed directly to members of the team wherever a concern is raised for welfare. The team are trained to help move customers out

of immediate danger, but they are also experts in signposting to longer-term advice. The team are trained to spot the most appropriate referrals in each instance, whether that be to social care, GP, mental health services or other advice and guidance services.

A key figure in the initiative was left stunned after receiving an MBE in the Queen's birthday honours. Jayne Adamson was awarded the prestigious accolade for 'services to housing and suicide prevention' after leading the team from inception.

Outcomes and achievements

The most important outcome is that potentially life-saving interventions have been delivered on more than 180 occasions. Breaking that down to individual cases proves this achievement is about more than numbers.

One potential customer disclosed they were suicidal during the process of applying for a home with believe housing; and that they had access to a lot of medication. A welfare call was quickly made by the suicide prevention team, but no contact could be made. This was escalated to police so face-to-face checks could take place.

The police commended believe housing for making a 'good call' for spotting concerns and reacting quickly

to ensure that the welfare check was carried out and the tenant was able to receive the support she needed. The skills and tenacity of the team saved their life, before they even became a customer.

It isn't always an immediate threat to life. A welfare check after an electrical test revealed hoarding issues, that lead to a safeguarding referral due to concerns for the welfare of a child. Working with the family and allocated social worker, the safeguarding lead secured support to turn things around. Home conditions improved, the family continue to access support and remain tenants.

Income Management Team

Lancaster City Council



Statement of support

The Council's Income Management Team, in response to the upheaval of Welfare Reform (2016-onwards) and latterly the Covid-19 pandemic, have delivered on new vision for the team based on support; smart, well directed, pro-active work; and a commitment to the avoidance of legal action wherever possible.

From a singular focus on rent arrears management the team have realigned towards the promotion of tenancy sustainment; preventing and reducing rent arrears, reducing legal action and associated costs (to tenant and organization); and delivering end to end targeted support, from pre-tenancy onwards.

The success of this approach would be measured in:

- Decreased rent arrears
- Income maximization for tenants, and...
- Achieving this with the absolute minimum use of legal action

This would be achieved in the context of business planning forecasts of significant rent arrears increases (as at 2017, forecasts of £500,000 current tenant arrears were assumed) and the multiple negative outcomes associated with this.

Positive outcomes would include reduced void levels (and associated costs), the promotion of stable, settled communities in which residents can take pride and thrive; and maintenance of a strong, predictable income stream upon which ambitious business planning can be developed.

What made the difference?

1) Working closely with partners:

More joined up working within the Housing Service, and an alignment of objectives, allowed the financial circumstances of tenants to be recognised and addressed in a more rounded way.

For example:

- Issues of tenancy sustainability in general, and specific financial issues, were picked up at the earliest opportunity, pre tenancy.
- Training and upskilling of the Income Management Team enabled them to provide high quality, individual advice to tenants around benefits, credit, debit and other financial advice.
- Financial and affordability assessments and benefit checks (designed to maximise income), allow the whole Housing team to direct their efforts and resources where they are most needed.

- Strong relationships with the DWP, Housing Benefit, CAB, local food banks, and other partners, are also crucial in this respect: rent arrears are treated as one aspect of the financial situation of a tenant rather than the sole focus.

By helping tenants to address their whole financial situation, a reduction in rent arrears can be sustainably achieved.

2) Time intensive, high quality interaction with tenants, and relationship building:

This switch of emphasis is the key: away from a systematic, one size fits all, to a focus on individuals and households and a willingness to commit time and energy to deliver a positive outcome for individuals and families.

Genuine engagement with tenants is what works. Officers have moved away from standard letters and reminders of legal action in favour of solutions, sound advice, and support. Working with tenants, building trusting relationships.

3) Avoidance of legal action:

All of which means that legal action is significantly reduced, because alternative routes to success are

found. The figures highlight this. Court applications (and the associated court costs passed on to tenants) have significantly reduced year on year during this period.

To be able to prevent and reduce rent arrears without recourse to legal action is the ultimate vindication of the team's methods of work.

Happy customers:

"I got so depressed about all this and just buried my head. I'm so relieved. I feel like I can talk to you now if I have any more problems and I'm really glad about that. Thank you!"

Mr F - tenant, after working with his Income Management Officer on a plan to clear his arrears, Jan 2021.

"I never want to go through this again. Happy days...I was feeling down 'till I heard from you. Thank you so much for your patience with me, you've been fabulous."

Mrs L - tenant, after successful resolution of an arrears issue, March 2021.

Outcomes and achievements

- 80% reduction in rent arrears: from high of £566,000 in 2017/18, to historic low of £113,000 in 2020/21.
- Reduction in legal action against tenants: 176 cases in 2017/18, 108 in 2018/19, 58 in 2019/20, down to 1 in 2020/21.
- Financial gains for tenants: income maximisation work, benefit entitlement support work, and work with partner agencies realised gains of £362,000 for Council tenants during 2020/21.

The outcomes delivered by the team are clear. This has been possible because of a complete change of approach from data led and process driven, to tenant focussed and support based. It has also succeeded to

a large degree because of inspirational and tireless management of the team, and unfailing commitment from team members.

In buying into the approach, and the huge amount of hard work involved, the team are now able to see the fruits of their labour and derive huge satisfaction from their achievement. In maximising income in this way they have become a crucial, high-performing area of the Housing Service, and one which allows for ambitious long term planning in the knowledge that predictable income is being maximised.

Future goals around tenancy sustainment are the next target for the team; ensuring greater tenancy success by supporting tenants to make positive decisions for themselves and their household.

Petrus Community Team

Petrus Community



Statement of support

Underpinning the work at Petrus is their vision, 'Together we will end homelessness and create safe places where all people can flourish'. This with their co-produced values and attributes of kindness, accountability, co-production, empowering, inspiring hope and being needs led stood the team in great stead when the pandemic hit the world. The team is driven to achieve the best for people through our unique service offer utilising many years experience providing asset based, bespoke support to vulnerable people with complex needs, they know that a one size fits all approach doesn't work. Because of this, the approaches to support are innovative, creative and asset based. Petrus offers supported housing and critical day support across Rochdale and the local area.

As the pandemic hit, Petrus teams responded with dedication to continue all services, having to adapt at short notice and be creative in their approaches, working as an organisational team to provide critical services to rough sleepers and vulnerable adults in crisis, service users within supported housing and members of the local community who became at risk of losing their tenancies. Service offer was adapted to suit needs and inclusive access. Staff worked together, from Petrus Hub centre, over the telephone and safely face to face taking necessary precautions to deliver access to housing advice, primary health care, and a range of wellbeing and resilience support.

Achievements during this unprecedented time and while teams had their personal worries and concerns, included, identifying unused rooms meaning they were able to offer a much needed place of safety

to more people, being involved in the boroughs coordinated response to the 'everyone in' campaign, ensuring that everybody in supported housing services had daily access to fresh, nutritious hot meals, providing wellbeing telephone calls to 100 people per day and distributing well being packs. Petrus also moved to a digital platform to empower the voice of our service users in campaigning with community groups across Greater Manchester for better mental health services and safe, accessible transport links, this resulted in an online meeting with Andy Burnham to discuss their personal experiences and offer solutions to improvement.

Testimonial evidence of this dedicated response;

"I like living here and I am comfortable. I was sleeping rough for months and when COVID-19 hit, I was worried because you can't really self-isolate on the streets. I had lived for many years without a diagnosis even though I knew something was wrong with me. Staff at Petrus supported me to receive the correct support I needed for my mental health. I have since received a formal diagnosis of Paranoid Schizophrenia and I am managing well with the correct medication I am on. I wouldn't have known this without moving in here and getting the support that I needed."

"After fleeing an abusive relationship, I ended up sleeping rough in Rochdale Town Centre. As a woman it was hard for me to live on the streets. I was always so worried about my safety and to mask that I used alcohol a lot. Since moving into Petrus accommodation, I have cut down on my alcohol use. The staff and I have been working with Turning Point to reduce harm from alcohol misuse. I am now looking forward to the future where I can hopefully have my own home."

"Moving here was what I needed - it was a real life saver. It feels safer to have staff at hand, like a security thing, it's nice to be checked on and asked how I am and to know I have someone to talk to after the loneliness of being on the streets."

Outcomes and achievements

During the height of the pandemic, between the end March – end December Petrus Team achieved outcomes for their local community of continuing a robust Covid safe delivery model resulting in;

- seven unused spaces being identified and refurbished to make an additional accommodation offer to those at risk,
- Operating 4 Covid safe face to face support desks
- 6,913 individual support visits to local tenancies
- 4,454 breakfasts distributed in the community
- 1,528 food bank vouchers distributed
- Engaging 217 entrenched homeless service users with positive outcomes
- Vaccination roll out to 200 service users in partnership with HART

- Pulled out all the stops to 'normalise' Christmas in partnership with local partners and donors to provide 230 Christmas dinners accompanied with wrapped presents.
- Within supported housing services 9,457 breakfasts were distributed with the same number of hot evening meals
- 29,400 welfare checks were made.
- 90 free mobile phones were distributed to mitigate risk posed by the digital divide

During this time, Petrus was also awarded a Gold Investors In People Award, who highlighted during the assessment that Petrus have navigated the COVID-19 pandemic "Extremely well, going the extra mile to support our team to ensure their health, wellbeing and resilience."

Southway Customer Involvement and Community Investment Team

Southway Housing Trust



Statement of support

Southway Housing Trust's vision is of thriving communities; a place where people choose to live because they have a sense of pride and belonging. The Customer Involvement and Community Investment team play a pivotal role in achieving this vision. They work in Southway's neighbourhoods, connecting people with each other and the services they need, supporting local groups and ensuring that the voices of tenants and local residents are at the heart of service planning and delivery.

When the pandemic hit, the team responded quickly and re-focused their work to meet the immediate needs of their communities. Supporting the five 'Quids In' food clubs set up by Southway across south Manchester became the priority as members pleaded for the clubs to stay open and the need for food support increased whilst many of the clubs' volunteers had to stop working to shield or care for family members.

The 'Quids In' food clubs work with Fareshare to offer good quality food that supermarkets would otherwise throw away to members at a low cost. Each club is run as a drop-in from a community building and led by volunteers but when the first lockdown was announced the team switched to delivering pre-packed bags of food to peoples' homes.

The team's role changed overnight to sourcing food supplies, receiving and organising van-loads of food, packing up food parcels and delivering them to local residents. They secured funding to meet extra demand and ensure that the food given out each week was nutritious and met dietary requirements and recruited new volunteer drivers to help manage the flow of food.

"Fabulous service and excellent staff, a real godsend in these difficult times. I can always make meals with the products provided"

"I'm really proud to be a Muslim and proud too to have a food club that thinks about us as a small minority."

Deliveries also kept the team in touch with residents who they linked to other essential support including benefits and employment advice, digital support and online activities and social groups. WhatsApp groups were set up for each club so that 'Quids In' members could keep in touch and the team organised socially-distanced summer events in 2020 to encourage people to meet up again.

The team worked with local organisations to distribute children's activity packs and seasonal gifts to families and donated some of their budget over the festive period to local groups. They also supported the community response to the pandemic by administering Beautiful South Fund grants awarded to

local groups including a collective making scrubs and masks for NHS workers and a local library who created an outdoor seating area for groups to meet safely.

Tenants' and residents' voices have continued to be central to the work of the team. Tenant groups have met online and consultation with 'Quids In' members led to the clubs re-opening in August 2020 with timed collection slots to pick up food and social distancing measures in place.

The team also led an organisation-wide 'Inspired by our Communities' consultation in summer 2021 which will shape Southway's service delivery over the coming year.

Appreciation for the team's work is clear from tenants' comments:

"The staff are always friendly and helpful, really appreciate all their hard work and safety measures they have in, they are always happy to see everyone and chat makes you feel good at these times"

"The club is a lifeline for my family ... the staff and members are wonderful and I don't know what I would do without [it] ... I'm looking forward when we can all meet up again"

Outcomes and achievements

The Customer Involvement and Community Investment team have delivered the five 'Quids In' food clubs every week throughout the pandemic. Changes to the food clubs' operation were made within days so that members didn't miss out on any of the food they rely on.

During the first lockdown, demand for the 'Quids In' food clubs increased by 50%. The team worked hard to expand the capacity from supporting 189 households each week before the pandemic to 285 households each week in April-May 2020. The five 'Quids In' clubs currently support over 230 households, benefiting over 900 people.

Between April 2020 and March 2021, the team distributed 11,723 food parcels and saved over 111,250 kilogrammes of food from going to waste.

By working with other local organisations and groups the team have helped to distribute over:

- 200 hygiene packs, containing household and personal cleaning products
- 250 packs of nappies and baby wipes to local families
- 500 activity packs to local children
- 100 seasonal gifts to local families

Two consultations with 'Quids In' members about changes to club procedures generated 100 responses each. The 'Inspired by our Communities' with all Southway tenants received over 800 responses.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Sponsored by:

NFS

This award commends collaboration between organisations or groups that achieves the best possible outcomes.

Karbon Solutions

Lead organisation: Karbon Homes

Partner organisation: Castles & Coasts Housing Association



Statement of support

Karbon Solutions is a 'cost sharing company' (also known as cost sharing vehicle) which allows any tax-exempt organisations, like housing associations, to provide services with a reduced level of VAT charged to its members. This model enables Karbon Solutions to deliver high-quality services at a competitive cost.

Karbon Solutions and Castles & Coasts Housing Association (CCHA) have worked in partnership since 2015. Initially, Karbon Solutions delivered heating servicing and repairs to 3,500 CCHA homes, across the North East and North West, however since April the partnership has grown. Karbon Solutions has expanded its heating repairs and servicing to an additional 3,000 CCHA homes in the North West, taking the total to 6,500, and has taken on the delivery of both grounds maintenance and responsive repair works to CCHA's homes.

Karbon Solutions first partnered with CCHA in replacement of a previous provider, where there were concerns about performance and low levels of

customer satisfaction. Since, both have significantly increased, also resulting in an improvement in customer safety and a significant reduction in the number of customer issues and complaints being reported.

A key element of the partnership's success is the focus on excellent customer service. Colleagues are given the time they need to get the job done right first time and as a result less repeat visits are undertaken and residents receive an enhanced, more efficient, service. With extra time in properties, colleagues also have time to engage more with customers, some who may require additional support.

As both partners report to the same governing body, there's a strong, mutual understanding of the challenges faced, both from a customer and a regulatory perspective. This cultural alignment means there's a mutual focus on high performance, customer safety and value for money.

The partnership also operates using a real-time, shared IT platform, allowing the safe and seamless storage of data. Data between the partners is shared and updated within 15 minutes of an activity being undertaken.

CCHA owns/manages homes across a diverse geographical area and Karbon Solutions' experience of working within similar geographies has been invaluable. The understanding of operating within rural communities in particular, and of the time and resources required to effectively service properties in these areas, has helped CCHA provide an efficient, safety-first focused service, across its operating areas.

To further support this, Karbon Solutions invested in 10 additional full-time trades colleagues, six of which were recruited within the past 12 months. All are based in the North West and work solely in CCHA homes. Their knowledge of the local geography and

the communities they serve, helps ensure the service is both effective and efficient, and provides CCHA with an increased level of security and assurance that residents are receiving the best possible experience. It also signals to customers and stakeholders the commitment to this partnership, with hiring from the local talent pool bringing benefit to the communities and local economy.

During the pandemic, the two organisations openly shared information regarding their operations, updating one another on successes, challenges and learnings. The partners launched an expanded service

in the North-West, eight days after the UK went into lockdown in March 2020. Despite the challenges and restrictions, through excellent collaboration and support six colleagues were inducted into the business. This enabled CCHA to continue to deliver critical services to residents, whilst ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of both their residents and colleagues.

This open and collaborative approach has helped the partnership work effectively during difficult times and has ensured that services, which have customer safety at their core, have been delivered with minimal delays.

Outcomes and achievements

Within the first six months of the partnership expansion, with Karbon Solutions delivering increased gas servicing, as well as grounds maintenance and responsive repairs, customer satisfaction, on time appointments, and fix first time rates have all improved.

August 2021 results show 85% of customers were satisfied with the overall experience and 89% were satisfied with the service they received in their home.

Customers stating they were 'very dissatisfied' with the service has dropped by 12% since Karbon Solutions took over.

Compliments received from customers include

"Karbon provided a great service to a very high standard. Can't thank them enough"

"this is the second time this gentleman has carried out a repair in our home and I cannot commend him or his work highly enough"

CCHA has also caught up on incomplete gas servicing that occurred as a result of lockdown. This was achieved within budget due to strong financial control and excellent performance and flexibility from colleagues.

These improvements have made the partnership with Karbon Solutions better value for money for CCHA. The cost of services provided remains competitive to other market solutions alongside the significant drop in hidden costs, attached to various elements including complaint and conflict resolution.

EDI- Change starts at the top

North Star Housing



Statement of support

A partnership comprising , The Housing Diversity Network, Beyond, Gentoo, North Star and Thirteen Group has launched a two-year programme to develop the Board members of the future. The programme, the first to be delivered in the North East, has focused on increasing diversity at Board level. Applications were encouraged from people whose ethnicity is under-represented, people who

are LGBTQ+, people with a disability, women, and young people. All continue to be significantly under-represented at Board level, locally, nationally, and internationally. During the two-year programme, the apprentices will receive comprehensive training, shadow local Boards, and be supported by a mentor. The skills individuals gain on the programme will help to prepare them to become the Board Members of the future.

Diversity and inclusion are essential in business today. A healthy variety of people from different backgrounds and cultures provide organisations with the balance of voices and diversity of thought that is needed. Across the decades, many reports and reviews have attempted to tackle the lack of diversity at a Board level. They have all made valid recommendations and, some progress has been made. However, this local partnership felt that more was required. The partners strongly believe that real change only happens when you are able to influence leadership - and hold organisations to account.

The partnership was created to deliver real change, and to ensure that Boards are even more dynamic,

energetic and understanding of the needs of people and communities. This will lead to stronger and more visionary organisations in every way

One of the major benefits for the apprentices is the lived experience of observing Boards and Committees, enabling them to see how things happen and come to fruition. It will develop their confidence and they will build networks, whilst enabling North Star, Beyond, Gentoo and Thirteen to gain diversity of thought and experience on their Boards.

Manisha Sharma, a newly appointed apprentice said; "I am honoured to be part of this wonderful opportunity. It is vital that a range of diverse voices are heard in the Boardroom. This is why I applied. I applaud all the partners for leading the way on EDI at a strategic level. This has been missing for too long "

Yvonne Davies, Consultant for The Housing Diversity Network said: "I look forward to introducing the trainees to the world of housing, governance and regulation over the next 2 years. They will, develop their skills, knowledge, constructive challenge and diverse thinking, adding value in the years to come, to the boards who have supported them. This is a great programme to promote diversity on boards."

The process to recruit was specifically tailored to reach under represented groups. All partners used their local networks. The process included an open event which enabled interested people to meet the organisations and ask any questions. Over 50 people took part

The intention is to track progress.

- Regular check ins with HDN, (The training provider)
- Regular check ins with the relevant HA's
- End of programme evaluation, probably conducted by a University
- Exit interviews with all participants

We will be looking to gather from participants

- What's helped / What's hindered
- Level of skill development - A trainee self assessment at start and at the end
- Levels of confidence - As above
- What do they need more of / less of

The intention is for us to flex and learn to make the programme even more relevant.

Outcomes and achievements

The partnership has recruited twelve people. All from under represented groups.

This includes the following

Young People

Women

People with ethnic diversity

Thirteen recruited two women and one male. This includes two young people and one person from an ethnic minority community

Gentoo recruited two people. This included a young person and a person from the ethnic minority community

Beyond - Recruited three people from local communities Young People, and someone from the LGBTQ+ community

North Star - Recruited four women, one young person and three people from the ethnic minority communities

Enabling Horton Housing customers to access Wi-Fi for free

Lead organisation: Central Networks & Technologies

Partner organisation: Horton Housing



Statement of support

Central Networks & Technologies (Central) supplies specialist, bespoke IT solutions to social landlords across the North and is marking 30 years in business this year.

Rochdale based Central has a strong presence in the social housing sector, partnering with over 50 housing providers to support their IT needs and digital transformation strategies, with more than 70% of clients being non-profit organisations.

The impact of COVID-19 has further cemented Central's drive to support and use its expertise to give something back to its Northern partners. This includes working collaboratively with Horton Housing to deliver free Wi-Fi access across its sites, providing tenants with online connectivity and enabling them to have a vital support line during one of the most difficult periods in living memory.

The Government continues to move towards a digital-first approach and as a result of this online shift - and to support its customers during these challenging times - Central developed its existing partnership with Horton Housing, trialling a pilot to provide free Wi-Fi access for its 550 homes which are located across 30 sites in North and West Yorkshire.

Horton Housing provides specialist housing, training and support services for customers at risk of homelessness, people with mental health, drug and alcohol issues and ex-offenders.

Central's ambition was to support Horton Housing's 6,000 customers who access its supported housing services per year, across often rural areas of Yorkshire, as well as Horton Housing's 320 colleagues to work remotely from their homes.

Central's first successful pilot project was completed at Horton Housing's homes in Skipton in September 2020, with a view to rolling out free Wi-Fi across all of Horton Housing's 30 sites across West and North Yorkshire throughout the course of 2021.

Central has donated the Wi-Fi hardware required for the implementation and carried out the installation free of charge for the first pilot site, as well as volunteering ongoing support and maintenance of the access points.

Paul Gartland, CEO of Horton Housing, said:

"Central do things over and above, way beyond what we pay for. Gaining access to WiFi has been massive for us; Central haven't left us out there in the cold to get on with things during the pandemic. They've been really helpful and flexible, taking more of a partnership approach, which we're building on to our mutual benefit.

"The Central team has really assisted our IT department in terms of infrastructure and also bringing in additional support and troubleshooting to make sure everything is enabled for our diverse customer base."

Steve Godson, Infrastructure Manager - Horton Housing, added: "The wellbeing of our tenants is of great importance to us and in 2021 an internet connection is a basic requirement for being able to access the help they need.

"Teaming up with Central was the right choice; Central delivers above and beyond. The technical side of their offering is fantastic; a quick call and they're on to it, either remotely or at the site. They are a fantastic company to work with and do anything they can to help."

John Blackburn, Operations Director - Central Networks, added:

"Over this most challenging of years, Central has shown our commitment to the social housing sector; we are proud of our teams drive to go that extra mile to support our housing customers.

"As an IT business, we feel we have a corporate social responsibility to ensure that everyone, regardless of where they are in life, has an internet connection to access crucial online services. We are pleased that our partnership with Horton Housing has enabled internet access for its tenants when they needed it the most."

Outcomes and achievements

Following the completion of Central's first successful pilot project at Horton Housing's homes in Skipton in September 2020, Central has now completed the full roll out of free Wi-Fi for all 30 of Horton Housing's sites across West and North Yorkshire, supporting Horton Housing's 6,000 customers and 320 colleagues to continue to work remotely from their homes.

With Central's support, Horton Housing's customers can now digitally access welfare services, job applications, healthcare, finances and further housing support services.

Central takes care of the glue that holds organisations together - their IT infrastructure. The Central team has

gone more than the extra mile during the last year, implementing and maintaining crucial IT solutions. The team has taken this in its stride, with client feedback always being stellar, keeping vital services running during a period of national crisis.

The focus on remote working and one-stop shop IT solutions during lockdown has contributed to Central's revenues increasing by more than 30% since March 2020. Central is driven by corporate social responsibility, helping to create seamless IT experiences for digital workers in order to future-proof IT infrastructure, offering unbiased expert advice working with market-leading technology partners, based on the most appropriate solutions for clients.

Cordage View

Lead organisation: North East Lincolnshire Council

Partner organisations: JCP Ltd, NEL CCG, Occupational Therapy, Golden Lanes Housing, Living Ambitions



Statement of support

North East Lincolnshire Council's (NELC) first residential new build project, Cordage View: fifteen one bedroomed apartment building designed to meet the needs of North East Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group (NELCCG) Adult Service users who have learning and physical disabilities. The multi-agency partnership was comprised of local developer JCP Ltd (employing local labour/apprentices), NELC, NELCCG, Occupational Therapy service, Social Workers, registered provider Golden Lane Housing, care provider Living Ambitions, and also valuable input from service users themselves: with development support commissioned from ENGIE.

£1.5,000,000 investment by the Council, supported by a £650,000 Department of Health grant, delivered a bespoke development on an unviable, prominent brownfield site in an area of deprivation, mitigating for an underground petrol tank and flood risk, deep piling etc.

As NELC is a non-stock holding authority, this was an ambitious project with no template to follow. The

Council pulled together a diverse new partnership from the North East Lincolnshire Council/NEL Clinical Commissioning Group Union, the private sector, NHS, and charitable organisations: developing a coordinated approach to working together effectively to meet very specific targets. Creating a building and/or scheme from scratch was a first-time experience for some partners and few had experience of creating both, and the partnership faced significant challenges with the design, viability and build of the scheme.

The Council and CCG Union identified a need for accommodation to enable independent living with support and investigated the measures which were needed to fully meet those needs. A specialist team was formed to feed into the design and build of the scheme: to ensure that all aspects of the build, technology and future proofing met the physical and emotional needs of the residents.

The site itself presented many challenges as it is a small, prominent, brownfield site in central Grimsby, on the edge of an area of deprivation and in need of renovation, this site was an eyesore in the local neighbourhood and development needed to be enabled. The poor quality of the site needing deep piling, flood risk mitigation and the added challenge of a submerged petrol tank from a garage on the site many years previously, made the site unviable for development without financial intervention.

The scheme provides onsite support supplemented by technology which can be tailored to an individual's needs to enable independent living for those who would otherwise be in residential care. The building has been 'future proofed' to enable easy installation of further adaptations in the future without carrying out major works, therefore reducing the impact on the DFG budget, e.g. hoist rails hidden in the pelmets in most apartments, electric spurs at the side of the toilets to install Closimat automatic toilets if needed in the future.

With the aim of encouraging a sense of community within the scheme, enabling the development of friendships and mutual support the scheme has a communal room equipped for social events such as film nights, parties and enjoying hobbies and crafts, and an area for a garden has been provided for the tenants to develop as they wish: as a sensory garden

or to supply their own fruit and veg. Residents have are proud to invite visitors to look at what they have done with their new homes, one has started a resident's newsletter and friendships are forming. The staff also report that they are equally happy working in the scheme.

Outcomes and achievements

Also there have been benefits to the wider community through local employment and training opportunities. The developer, J C Pomfret Construction Ltd (JCP) is a local company employing a local workforce, using local suppliers and specialist services wherever possible. Construction opportunities for work experience placements were provided as part of a Traineeship, 6 Apprenticeships through various trades and pathways and also full employment for

apprentices who had recently qualified. John Pomfret also achieved CIOB and is close to gaining RICS chartership qualifications through the development of Cordage View by using the scheme as his university practical coursework, and will continue to train and work in collaboration with Orchard Training & Education. It was undoubtedly the value of the partnership that makes this scheme wholly achievable and truly impressive.

Ready for Tenancy Officer

Lead organisation: WDH

Partner organisation: Wakefield Council



Statement of support

In January 2020, WDH and Wakefield Council's Adult and Community Education Service, informally agreed a pilot project to co-locate a Wakefield Council employee at WDH within the Tenancy Ready Team (TRT). The officer's role is to support Homesearch applicants and WDH tenants by delivering a qualification in the customers' home. Homesearch is the lettings service provided by WDH. The TRT are a small team of dedicated officers who work with vulnerable applicants and tenants to help them accessing and successfully maintaining a tenancy. This includes applicants and tenants in financial hardship and those with unmet or unresolved

support needs. The qualification created is called 'Ready for Tenancy' qualification as it helps new or prospective tenants learn how to sustain a tenancy. The qualification is designed to upskill and increase our tenants' social mobility, in addition to providing them with a qualification, which enables them to access further education and qualifications through Wakefield Council's Adult and Community Education Service. The qualification supports WDH's Tenancy Sustainability Plan and the WDH vision of creating confident communities.

Modules within the qualification have included:

Making a claim for Universal Credit.

How to make a Council Tax Support Allowance claim.

How to apply for a grant to assist furnishing my home.

Maximising my income.

Understanding my WDH Tenancy Agreement.

How to report a repair to WDH.

This is not an exhaustive list.

In July 2021, following the pilot being deemed successful, Wakefield Council agreed to make the role of Ready for Tenancy officer permanent. The role will continue to be located in the TRT and will build on the essential work already being carried out with customers.

Outcomes and achievements

The Ready for Tenancy officer has completed the qualification with 77 customers. The officer is accepting approximately five new customers each week, who are all enrolling onto the course and learning essential life skills to help them successfully maintain a tenancy.

The officer has unlocked over £50,000 of additional income for customers to give them more disposable income to enable them to pay their rent on time and ensure they can decorate and furnish their new homes.

14 of these customers have gone on to enrol for other adult learning to further increase their skills. Course

subjects include employability, foundation English and mathematics.

The TRT are also currently undertaking an exercise to monitor tenancy sustainment at various stages within the first 12 months of a new tenancy. Whilst this review is still being undertaken, it is currently indicating that at day 90 of a new tenancy, customers supported by the TRT are on average £89 less in arrears than those who are not supported. This further shows the impact that the Ready for Tenancy officer role has played in improving service delivery and improving the wellbeing of customers and communities and supports our corporate vision of creating confident communities.

Progress Lifeline Emergency Home Response - working with the North West Ambulance Service

Lead organisation: Progress Lifeline (Progress Housing Group)

Partner organisation: North West Ambulance Service



Statement of support

Progress Lifeline is the telecare arm of Progress Housing Group, based in Leyland, Lancashire.

Progress Lifeline, along with North West Ambulance Service, the Health and Social Care Commissioners of Lancashire County Council and the NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups, are working collaboratively to create an improved service for patients who fall but are uninjured.

This new way of working together is a 'first of its kind partnership', in which callers to the 999 service who have fallen at home, and are unable to get back up but are triaged as uninjured, are transferred directly to Progress Lifeline. Their Emergency Home Responders will then attend with specialist lifting equipment, eradicating the need for an ambulance. Progress Lifeline responders are able to attend in an average time of just 26 minutes, dramatically decreasing the pressure on ambulance services.

Progress Lifeline manage this partnership as a form of good practice community collaboration across multiple organisations to support people in the most efficient way, speeding up response times and reducing the burden on the NHS. Progress Lifeline also receive referrals from health and social care teams.

Since the start of this innovative, joint way of working, Progress Lifeline has taken 1,465 referrals from the North West Ambulance Service and has successfully lifted 1,055 patients.

Progress Lifeline has 29 responders across Lancashire who are on call 24/7, 365 days a year. The responders are trained to use specialist equipment, trained in infection control and provided with full PPE. They are also audited regularly and customers are asked to provide satisfaction surveys following a visit, to continually enhance the quality and delivery of the service.

This partnership has also decreased patient hospital admissions following a fall. The wait for an ambulance can mean that, although initially uninjured, a hospital admission is then required due to the 'long lie', which has caused a need for further treatment.

The intervention of Progress Lifeline responders can also result in a better outcome for the ambulance service, and patient wellbeing, long-term. Following a visit, the responders can make referrals to local falls prevention services across Lancashire, reducing the likelihood of future falls.

The Emergency Home Response service continually relieves demand on the North West Ambulance Service which has, undoubtedly, had one of its most difficult years yet, and is set for another difficult winter. Between April 2020 and March 2021, Progress Lifeline responders attended 767 falls referred to them from the North West Ambulance Service.

Due to the success of this pilot, the falls lifting service has been extended and Progress Lifeline are also supporting Yorkshire Ambulance Service, covering Calderdale in Yorkshire.

Joanne Bushell, Head of Progress Lifeline said, "We are proud to be working with the local authority, NWAS and NHS partners as part of this exciting service. We have an ageing population and there is an increasing demand for help with uninjured falls. It is clinically recognised the importance of lifting people up off the floor as quickly as possible, and that this does not always have to be an ambulance with a

paramedic crew. We have a highly trained team who specialise in responding to people who have fallen at home. It makes sense to let us do this and leave the ambulances and paramedics to focus on emergency call-outs."

"The responder arrived so quickly! My husband has fallen before and we have waited hours for an ambulance to come. The service and lifting chair are marvelous, so much better than people having to lift him up." Barbara White - North West Ambulance referral.

Outcomes and achievements

The Progress Lifeline Emergency Home Response service has been live since October 2019 and has:

- Taken 14,060 falls related calls and carried out 10,608 lifts. 1,465 of these calls and 1,055 lifts came from NWAS referrals.
- 29 responders covering Lancashire 24/7, 365 a year. Responders receive specialist training and are audited for best practice.
- Relieved pressure on the North West Ambulance service and decreased the amount hospital admissions following a fall.
- Saved the NHS ambulance call-out costs for the referred uninjured falls, as well as further savings in non-conveyance to A&E and ongoing treatment or hospital stays.

- Made 3,539 referrals to local falls prevention services following a responder visit, reducing falls and subsequent 999 calls in the future.
- Attended call-outs with an average response time of just 26 minutes.
- Three referral pathways directly into the 24/7 alarm response centre; Progress Lifeline monitoring services, electronically from 999 triage calls and via a direct line used by Care and Residential homes.
- Extended the service geographically and are now supporting Yorkshire Ambulance Service in Calderdale.

Progress Lifeline hope to expand this successful service to support more ambulance and falls prevention services across England.

Loftus Community Woodland

Lead organisation: Beyond Housing

Partner organisations: Groundwork NE & cumrbia, Redcar and Cleveland Council, Loftus Town Council, Loftus ACCORD walking group



Statement of support

The ambitious Loftus woodland project is a collaboration between Beyond Housing, Groundwork NE & Cumbria, Redcar and Cleveland Council, Loftus Town Council and Esh Construction.

Other partners on the scheme have included Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, Loftus Accord Walking Group and the Middlesbrough Football Club Foundation.

The purpose of the project is to create new woodland and habitat from an unmanaged area, to aid the creation of new pollination corridors and managed wetlands, to address climate change through flood risk and to tackle invasive species.

It also aims to open the woodland to the community by providing wider paths throughout to allow all ages and abilities to connect with nature, while providing a new green space for the wider public.

Loftus is an isolated, rural coastal town, with high unemployment, deprivation, poor transport networks and low aspirations. Beyond Housing is working with its partners to bring change to the area and wants to ensure that the need to support communities sits in parallel with the need to support nature.

This project has created an accessible community woodland and wetland, providing direct training and employment opportunities for 12 young people and

secured two further jobs. It will increase access to nature for over 3000 people, improving the health and wellbeing of our community, tackling both obesity and social isolation.

It has been part-funded by a grant of £124,100 from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' Green Recovery Challenge Fund, with the woodland project being one of just 68 schemes in the UK to be chosen as a beneficiary. Further match-funding investments of £20,000, £30,000 and £50,000 have also been pledged by Beyond Housing, Esh Construction and Groundwork NE & Cumbria, respectively.

Beyond Housing is the main social housing provider within Loftus and is building a new development of 128 homes, which includes 43 extra care units, to ensure that residents and the wider community have access to nature, to improve their wellbeing and access to green open space, and its latest new builds will be on the doorstep of the woodland once completed.

The Loftus woodland project is a collaboration between the following partners:

- Beyond Housing - providing land 1700 sq., managing/leading on the woodland project, funding some community engagement events. The development team has pledged £20,000 towards the project and £4500 from the tenants' panel fund for events.
- Redcar and Cleveland Council - providing land 3620 sq., guidance and support when needed.

- Loftus Town Council - providing majority of the land 14470sq. responsible for maintaining the woodland once completed. No financial commitment at point of funding application but can provide funding for other things outside of this project.
- Esh Construction- providing in-kind or cash contribution of £35,000 through social value contract.
- Groundwork NE & Cumbria - environmental partner, commitment of £54,000 through the Kickstart fund which will pay for trainees and supervisor onsite.

Beyond Housing has long-standing partnerships in place that will extend well past March 2022 and will work to empower local community groups through regular volunteering, training and support to work toward a community-led management model.

Simon Clarke, the MP for Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland, visited the ambitious £210,000 community woodland project and said: "This area's really been transformed over the last six months and there's more still to come.

"It's uplifting to see the results of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund in action partnered with fantastic local companies like Beyond Housing who have done such a great job of co-funding the work that's been going on here.

"It's something that, if we can replicate it both locally and nationally, we'll be doing really well."

Outcomes and achievements

The project has achieved a great deal already and is on track to have further successes in its second phase, set to deliver in 2022.

As part of the project, Beyond Housing and its partners have cleared 1600sqm of thick bramble and created 1000m of new accessible pathway. This has led to increased use of the woodland, particularly by those with mobility scooters.

There is increased habitat space and new plants, with space from the brambles for the foliage to breathe, as well as evidence of wildlife included deer, rabbits and toads.

The team has opened up historical piped spring water to create wetlands and ponds area.

The project has created two government 'Kickstart' placements, and the recipients have completed the full course in preparation for future employment. There have also been fortnightly volunteer sessions and qualified training for some volunteers.

In the future, there will be a further increase in habitat from the creation of wildflower meadows, increased species of trees through planting, the creation of wetland area and introduction of new wetland habitat and a focus on local heritage for artwork.

Beyond Housing and partners will also be focusing on wellbeing activities and education within the Loftus woodland.

Core 364

Lead organisation: Gentoo Group

Partner organisation: Equans



Statement of support

Core 364 is a collaborative, pioneering retrofit scheme and the biggest housing decarbonisation project in the UK. It brings together multiple benefits of energy efficiency to impact on the lives of tenants, improve thermal comfort, reduce fuel poverty, tackle climate change and improve building safety.

Gentoo identified the requirement to renew the heating and hot water supply to 364 flats within their environmental agenda and worked with ENGIE in partnership to create a scheme that saw removal of gas from the towers and installation of Ground Source Heat Pump and thermal battery technology to provide both renewable heat and hot water.

This project is leading the way as a blueprint for large scale climate change retrofit and building safety improvement schemes in the housing sector, which will provide key learnings to the sector as it drives forward to help the UK meet net zero carbon targets. Gentoo and ENGIE worked in partnership to design a scheme that addressed the aged heating systems, to bring together multiple benefits of renewable energy efficiency that has had a significant impact on people, property and the decarbonisation agenda.

The strong partnership approach to this scheme continued by bringing additional, specialist, supply chain partners into the project to enhance the delivery, overall project and tenant experience. Gentoo and ENGIE worked with Kensa, Sunamp, Switchee, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service, National Energy Action and Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group. All parties worked together to bring added value to

the project, from the introduction of new technologies, to give both client and end user a great customer experience, to measuring the impact of the scheme on the health and wellbeing of the tenants.

Gentoo and ENGIE have a strong existing partnership and history of working on a number of large projects together and Gentoo and Engie discussed the priorities over a number of years, one of which was the desire to take gas out, de-risking their tower blocks whilst decarbonising the heat source. ENGIE engaged with Kensa, Sunamp and Switchee to produce a full turnkey proposal which was

presented to Gentoo. Kensa are both manufacturer and installer of the ground source heat pumps. Early engagement between ENGIE, Kensa and Gentoo enabled full control of all aspects of the project and enabled a holistic approach to delivery - allowing works to be delivered on time, within budget and to a high quality whilst ensuring residents were informed and satisfied with the project. Once the project was agreed the collaborative approach continued by working closely with the two low carbon technology providers, Switchee and Sunamp to incorporate their innovative products in-to the design. This additional partnership with Switchee brought Eco-funding to the scheme giving a cost saving to Gentoo of £85,000.

The early integration between Gentoo, ENGIE and their partners ensured the project was approached in a truly collaborative form; providing a quality scheme that could be delivered in a live environment and give residents the best possible experience.

ENGIE have significant strength and depth of resources with directly-employed, local staff and local partnering arrangements with 200+ approved sub-contractors and suppliers. All Supply Chain Partners are selected on criteria such as Health & Safety, Environmental Performance, Quality, Ability to deliver, Commercial viability and People & Relationships. This robust supply chain enables certainty of cost, materials, resources, quality and service as well as value for money. Procedures are followed through the Pre-Construction and Construction phase with a Supply Chain Management Plan followed, focusing on overall project time, key milestones, project costs and tenant requirements. Weekly progress meetings between all parties throughout the supply chain were held to monitor progress.

Outcomes and achievements

Climate change is the challenge of our generation. Gentoo and ENGIE are committed to supporting both Sunderland and the UK in reaching net zero carbon targets.

Core 364 is a major contribution to this, and maximised building decarbonisation by installing LED lighting across all blocks, the scheme will generate a significant carbon saving of 8,322 tCO₂ over the next 20 years.

Prior to Grenfell, these blocks were fitted with small amounts of ACM cladding, which was removed as soon this was understood. Building safety has been a top priority for all RP's in the UK and one of the unique

aspects of Core 364, is that it has combined energy efficiency retrofit with significant building safety improvements.

National Energy Action have been jointly commissioned by Gentoo and ENGIE to complete an energy, health and wellbeing evaluation supported by data provided by Sunderland CCG. The output of this research will benefit the improvement of future projects of a similar nature. Using the Switchee technology Gentoo have been able to track how comfortable residents are with new technology and are able to offer support and education where indicators show any potential issue.

Homeless Prevention Programme

Lead organisation: Gateshead Council - New Tenancy Team

Partner organisation: 2 Way Tenancy Solutions CIC



Statement of support

2 Way Tenancy Solutions CIC and Gateshead Council's New Tenancy Team have been working in partnership over the last year to support some of the most vulnerable tenants in our communities with multiple and complex needs. The partnership has worked well to support tenants at risk of losing their tenancy to maintain and sustain their tenancies. In the past year the Pandemic has presented challenging circumstances in supporting clients as the Council closed the Civic Centre and it meant support needed to be provided remotely.

2 Way Tenancy Solutions, who work with disengaged people in the community, were able to adjust their ways of working to accommodate this difficult client group. We found that the clients lacked life and digital skills and were not able to communicate or interact over the telephone due to challenging matters such as poor mental health, substance misuse and learning difficulties.

The partnership worked to ensure no one was left behind and that new tenants setting up their new home for the first time were supported to maintain

and sustain their tenancies. This was achieved by identifying those who had multiple and complex needs to get the right support from when they signed up for the new home. Referrals were made to 2 Way Tenancy Solutions by the New Tenancy Team to help with setting up the new home.

Additional office space was acquired, and support provided face to face in line with Government Guidance on social distancing. Risk assessments were put in place and sanitization stations to keep the staff and clients safe. The support included, setting up utilities, applying for benefits (council tax support, housing benefits and universal credit), as well as access to income maximization support to improve living conditions such as charitable grants or to alleviate furniture poverty.

Working together the partnership was able to support over 100 new tenants and supporting them to access at least £1 000 000 in charitable grants, benefits uptake and income maximization through money saving tips. Working in partnership the tenants were supported to develop their financial capability skills and electronic payments. The pandemic meant that paying rent at the Civic Centre was no longer an option and electronic means of payments had to be used. This included utilizing alternative payment arrangements, direct debits, standing orders and telephone payments. Tenants were given training on financial capability skills and online payments and how to keep safe online. Identifying those at risk of not paying their rent, the service provided to the tenants is not only practical, it's emotional as well, as most struggle with poor mental health. Emotional support was provided by the weekly sessions where the client could express their deepest fears and be honest with how they were feeling at that moment and not feel judged. Leaving them feeling less alone.

The feedback that we received:

"It's 2 different organisations but it feels like 1"

"The support that we received was very quick and efficient. I signed up in the morning and in the evening, I had been contacted and had an appointment arranged for the next day"

"You took all my worries away, I was not sure how was I going to manage and just speaking to someone

face to face, is what I needed as I don't do well on the phones.

"I just did not know the support and organization like yours existed, if it was not for the council mentioning you, I don't know what I would have done"

Outcomes and achievements

In the past year both teams have achieved financial outcomes of over £1 000 000 for the clients and prevented the homelessness of over 100 individuals.

An example of our support and outcomes: Mike was referred to 2 Way due to non-engagement with the New Tenancy Team, his rent arrears were going up as he had not applied for any benefits. Mike had multiple and complex needs, he struggled with addiction to drugs and alcohol and had both physical and mental health needs. He also thought everyone was against him as he had to be rehoused as a priority due to being homeless. He was not happy with the area that he had been moved to and therefore, stopped engaging with any of the statutory services. A home visit was carried out and following a risk and needs assessment, a benefits check was carried out and he was found not to be receiving all his benefits and was subject to the bedroom tax. He was supported

to apply for his Severe Disability Premiums, housing benefits and council tax support. Client did not have a bank account to pay for his rent and was using a pay point card, this was causing difficulties as he would sometimes forget to pay his rent. Third party deductions were requested, and a discretionary housing application was applied for, all support outcomes saw his income maximized annually by over £25 000.

In all this time, he was being supported by both teams and he realized that Gateshead Council's New Tenancy Team was not the enemy but were trying to support him maintain and sustain his tenancy.

When asked if he felt supported, he confirmed,

"I am sorry for all the trouble I caused; I appreciate all the support that I have received from both of you. I love my flat now and like where I live, I want to make it my permanent home".

Grange Park Regeneration

Lead organisation: Blackpool Coastal Housing

Partner organisations: Groundwork / Public Health Blackpool / Blackpool Council Strategic Housing



Statement of support

During the covid pandemic partnership working has accelerated on Blackpool's Grange Park estate. At the outset Blackpool Coastal Housing and Groundwork Cumbria, Lancashire and Merseyside volunteered to run the coronakindness food delivery on the estate in partnership. Both organisations identified staff who gave up their own time to deliver food parcels around the estate. BCH contacted all potentially vulnerable tenants to see what kind of support they needed

during the pandemic, including welfare calls to reduce social isolation.

As Blackpool Council phased out the food parcel delivery BCH and Groundwork joined forces to introduce a low cost hot meal delivery service for residents on the estate. This was to address both the lack of nutritional food options on the estate, and to reflect the fact that many tenants had valued the social contact during the pandemic and it was helpful to maintain that.

Groundwork had moved into the former City Learning Centre on the estate some time ago, and were providing a range of services from the building rebadged as '@ The Grange' working with Public Health. The excellent working relationships fostered during the pandemic led naturally to BCH negotiating co-location when other tenants gave notice. Residents of the estate now have access to a genuine multi-agency interface including the Council, Blackpool Coastal Housing, the third sector particularly Groundwork and the police who also have a base in the building.

BCH were able to close our existing estate office on Grange Park on moving in with Groundwork and the police. A bonus of this is that the area next to the estate office was cleared for the building of new

homes, and foregoing the building will enable several extra homes to be included in that development.

In terms of the new Grange Park development BCH have worked with Blackpool Council to start a two phase scheme of 136 properties. This will refresh the feel of the estate whilst using materials that complement the existing fabric and colour palette of existing properties. It builds on lessons learned from a small project elsewhere on the estate creating a new street of homes for people with learning disabilities replacing a closed residential care facility.

As part of this regeneration project the Council were successful in obtaining ERDF funding for a range of initiatives on the estate. These include the use of ground source heat pumps in the new builds, and the recruitment of eco coaches to advise residents on how to make best of sustainable technologies and also reduce instances of fuel poverty. There are also workstreams to increase tree planting on the estate, with BCH identifying pockets of land suitable for this purpose. Blackpool Coastal Housing have worked in

partnership with other Lancashire housing providers to secure additional European funding for More Positive Together, which works to reduce barriers to employment and training for residents of the Grange Park estate and other deprived areas of the town.

As the Grange Park estate is a large one Blackpool Coastal Housing recognises that not everyone is willing to travel across the estate to use facilities. This is often most pronounced with youth nuisance stemming from a lack of diversionary activities in immediate vicinity of where young people live, especially when cost of transport is a significant factor. BCH have given use of an underused community centre to the Boathouse Youth charity, who have transformed it into a popular and successful youth facility complementing @ The Grange on the northern and eastern estate.

In summary BCH has worked tirelessly with a range of partners, but particularly Groundwork, to transform the lives of Grange Park residents.

Outcomes and achievements

The community on the Grange Park received an exemplar support service during the pandemic. This has been reflected in both Groundwork and Blackpool Coastal Housing receiving awards for their efforts, in BCH's case being highly commended at the Northern Housing Awards. This reflected a willingness to collaborate and staff who went above and beyond including at weekends, public holidays and even providing a Christmas Lunch.

Creative thinking has ensured the best use of assets on the estate to offer services and support. Partnership working has been widened and deepened. The results of this are being seen in reduced youth and other offending. By all key ASB

measures Grange Park is not one of the hotspots for ASB in the town.

Some new housing has been built on the estate offering high quality accommodation to people with learning disabilities. The groundwork has been done to develop two areas of new housing at the heart of the estate giving over 100 new homes as well as local employment opportunities.

More Positive Together has significantly exceeded the targets set for it, and received additional tranches of funding. BCH have partnered with Blackpool College to deliver free literacy and numeracy training on the estate.

Play Streets

Lead organisation: ForHousing

Partner organisations: 46 organisations



Statement of support

Introduction

ForHousing is a progressive landlord managing 24,000 homes across the North-West.

An innovative organisation, ForHousing makes more things possible for more people, providing the building blocks to live a better life.

ForHousing oversees a partnership with 46 organisations to deliver Play Streets, a programme launched five years ago. It is designed to address inequalities by supporting families and children in poverty during the school holidays. The project provides a range of free activities and free meals in Salford, Knowsley and Oldham for 45 hours a week to help hundreds of children gain new skills and confidence.

The landlord partnered with charities including Onwards and Upwards (Salford), Safari Kids (Stockbridge Village) and Community Interest Companies including REEL, (Oldham) and Freestyle Urban Soccer (Stockbridge Village), as well as tenants and local volunteers. It also works closely with the local authority in each area.

Improving service delivery and quality as a result of partnership working

When the pandemic hit in 2020, ForHousing and partners saw an opportunity to improve service delivery. Firstly, as a team, they identified those in need of support, including families in rent arrears or children with parents having to shield.

By working together they were able to reach families by taking the Play Streets programme into the virtual world.

This came at an incredibly difficult time and helped improve the wellbeing of children and their parents.

Following parent feedback and the Marcus Rashford campaign, the project now also offers free packed lunches for children, helping address holiday hunger.

The footballer supported the project by retweeting a Twitter post.

Evidence of new and innovative ways of working

ForHousing knew that it needed to find innovative ways of working with partners to continue to deliver vital services during the pandemic.

This included Play Streets which aimed to support the wellbeing of vulnerable children during the school holidays at a time when many families were struggling financially.

Traditionally a face-to-face service, the initiative was quickly and successfully moved online for 2020.

As part of its transition to digital, ForHousing created a Facebook group attracting 500 followers and play packs and free meals were delivered by volunteers to children's homes during every school holiday.

Each pack linked to a specially designed Facebook page full of videos including science experiments, virtual theatre shows, arts and crafts, singing Bingo, cook-a-long sessions and much more.

Continuing to deliver Play Streets would not be possible without successful partnership working and community feedback has been excellent.

Jenny, a childminder in Oldham said:

"Virtual Play Streets took the focus off Covid and allowed us to enjoy something normal."

Demonstrated best practice and improving the wellbeing of communities through working together

The pandemic has pushed organisations to work together to share best practice and ultimately improve the well-being of communities and places.

ForHousing and its partners exemplify this through the Play Streets project.

The Department for Education recognised ForHousing's efforts, contributing over £30,000 funding towards Play Streets for 2021. This summer the project has delivered activities to almost double the number of children it did last year. These include: circus skills, gardening, mental health sessions and offering young people the chance to improve an unloved part of their estate.

Partnership working has addressed inequalities, met the needs of local people and helped others in the community learn new skills. The sharing of resources and community insight has enhanced the programme.

Pam from Safari Kids said:

"We have worked in partnership with ForHousing on many occasions. We can reach goals as a bigger team working together. Play Streets has benefited the Stockbridge community and has helped the wellbeing of families."

Outcomes and achievements

Play Streets has helped improve the wellbeing of hundreds of children and families since it began.

Impact in numbers:

2020:

- 46 partners
- 312 children received activity packs
- 252 families received food support
- 20 families received IT devices to ensure participation
- 56 sessions delivered through Facebook
- 56 hours of delivery

2021:

- 27 partners involved
- 506 children participated
- 506 children received food packages

- 86 activity sessions delivered
- 179 hours of delivery

Social media:

A tweet from a partner on the project mentioning ForHousing was retweeted by Marcus Rashford and received 32 retweets and 403 likes.

Testimonials:

Jo, a parent from Oldham said: "Play Streets is really good for children and adults; I'm amazed at what I've seen. I've volunteered every session and seen the community come together. It's something different and parents and children are really enjoying the sessions."

Chloe from Salford Community Leisure:

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much. A huge thank you for letting Salford Community Leisure be part of this partnership. All the staff have really enjoyed Play Streets and seeing the positive effects it has had on young people and parents."

The Homelessness Reduction Project

Lead organisation: Liverpool City Council

Partner organisations: 20 organisations: Crisis Merseyside, Cobalt Housing, Furniture Resource Centre, Fusion 21, IDVA, Liverpool City Council, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Liverpool YMCA, Pine Court Housing Association, Plus Dane Housing, One Vision Housing, Onward Homes, Prima, The Regenda Group, Riverside, Sanctuary Housing, South Liverpool Homes, Torus, The Whitechapel Centre, Your Housing



Statement of support

When lockdown began in March 2020, Liverpool's rough sleepers were first offered accommodation in hotels.

With the letting of housing association homes also at a standstill, the city's social landlords joined together to prioritise vacant properties - a way of working together unlike anything they had done before. A radical approach was adopted whereby homeless

households, including entrenched rough sleepers, were given the opportunity to have a permanent home rather than moving them on to alternative temporary accommodation. There was also a need to be vigilant to a potential increase in domestic abuse cases, plus a commitment to house young people leaving the care system.

Emergency provisions in the council's housing allocations scheme were invoked, and choice-based lettings temporarily suspended. A multi-agency panel was established to oversee the matching of properties to applicants and to ensure adequate support. People were given choice about their new homes to ensure their needs were met and in the right location. They could turn down unsuitable properties without affecting their chances of being offered another. This approach aimed for high rates of tenancy sustainment - remarkably 97% of the properties allocated are still tenanted.

and the turnaround was quick, with many applicants being provided with new homes, and even moving in, just weeks after being considered by the panel.

More than 860 households have moved into a new home, and 106 more have been matched to a property and are waiting to move in. There are currently 238 people still in temporary accommodation waiting to move on.

Contributions from government, housing associations, the city council and a public appeal raised £679,476 for furniture packs to help people with the essentials. This helped to furnish more than 396 of the homes,

in addition to 318 furnished through the Liverpool Citizens Support Scheme.

Support organisations and homeless charities work with tenants with multiple and complex needs to help them with everything from substance abuse, avoiding social isolation, managing their bills, and registering with GPs.

The project could not have happened without the will to do this together. This partnership working is like nothing the city has seen before and is testament to the hard work and quick thinking of a wide range of specialist teams coming together to make a difference. In many cases people worked on the project in addition to their full time roles - no extra staff were employed.

Liverpool's homelessness reduction project has embraced the principles of Housing First and taken them to a new level.

The current arrangement will be in place until the end of September, aiming to move as many people

as possible out of temporary accommodation. The partnership is determined to build on the best practice established through this programme and incorporate them into normal working practices as we emerge from the Covid crisis, and to improve the experience of vulnerable people facing homelessness.

Testimonials:

"At one point I was so close to giving up. Thanks to them I have a future with my child." - Kerry

Dave Carter, Whitechapel: "It wasn't weeks of discussions, it was 'no, we have to do it now, and we've got to get it right'."

Lauren Parker, Plus Dane Housing: "It's so positive and the change to people's lives is just unbelievable."

Fiona Smith, Crisis: "The reason it works is because services are working together. The response was so rapid that we were housing people within weeks of them entering a B&B, which is really groundbreaking and something that we weren't doing previously."

Outcomes and achievements

In the middle of the Covid-19 crisis, Liverpool saw an opportunity - a chance to do things differently and find a way to end the blight of homelessness and rough sleeping in the city once and for all.

The result was the Homelessness Reduction Project - a major partnership between Liverpool City Council, housing associations and support charities across the city to create a radical new way of offering permanent homes to those in need.

So far, more than 1400 people have been or are in the process of being helped by the project, and more than 800 are now in their own homes and being supported whatever their needs - including the

provision of furniture packs and assistance setting up home.

The partnership working behind it is like nothing the city has seen before and is testament to the hard work and quick thinking of a wide range of specialist teams, with one focus, coming together to make a difference.

The partnership is determined to build on the best practice established through this programme and incorporate them into normal working practices as we emerge from the Covid crisis, and to improve the experience of vulnerable people facing homelessness for good.

Leading from the front door

Lead organisation: Changing Lives

Partner organisation: Newcastle City Council



Statement of support

Changing Lives and Newcastle City Council have embarked on a new way of delivering homelessness services for people in the city – with successful results.

Last year, with support and funding from the council and Homes England, Changing Lives undertook a huge renovation project to transform a 52-bed hostel at Bentinck Terrace in Newcastle into 36 self-contained high-quality apartments.

Changing Lives has 50 years' experience of delivering frontline homelessness services and has seen the pitfalls and challenges of traditional hostels, which do not tackle the root causes of why people become homeless.

In Newcastle we have witnessed a core of individuals who circulate around the system, stuck in a cycle of rough sleeping and in and out of hostels. Bentinck Terrace had exactly this issue with a chaotic environment that was a challenge to manage, never mind help residents move forward.

For years we have worked alongside Newcastle City Council to try and produce a solution to this issue.

So, we facilitated a consultation exercise with staff, residents and commissioners to understand the issues, identify our assets, and plan for change.

Residents told us: "I'd like to be able to use the kitchen in the middle of the night", "I don't like being disrupted by other peoples comings and goings" and "I'd like a space that I can make my own".

As a charity, we believe that everyone should have their own safe space to call home to have a better chance to move forward in life, and in the past few

years who have increased our provision of dispersed housing – accommodation for people in our homeless service who are given their own front door key while still receiving arms-length support from our staff.

But the initiative Changing Lives: Leading from the Front Door had not been tried in a hostel environment before.

Working with the council, we focused on quality not quantity and created an environment that can make a lasting impact on residents' lives rather than simply providing a bed for the night.

We had to move our crisis response service from Bentinck Terrace to one of our smaller existing supported accommodation projects, which is designed around therapeutic communities and provides a much better experience for those in crisis.

Amanda Senior, Head of Newcastle City Council's Fairer Housing Unit, said:

"Changing Lives have shown a real commitment to redeveloping their housing services to improve the overall accommodation pathway across the city, to provide sustainable and good quality housing options for those experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.

"Our collaborative work has recognised the housing system's challenges in Newcastle, and the innovative redevelopment of Bentinck Terrace towards self-contained accommodation is fully aligned to the Councils ten-year strategy to end homelessness.

"This approach fully supports our commitment to reduce reliance on hostel bedspaces; provide a different self-contained offer for those with lower needs and develop smaller-scale specialist units where therapeutic interventions can succeed for those with multiple needs. Changing Lives is the first provider to introduce this radical change to the way its services are delivered, and we hope it will serve as an example of best practice to others."

Neil Munslow, the council's Active Inclusion Service Manager, said: "Bentinck Terrace shows our joint ambition to change all our residents lives for the better by creating the hope that comes with a home, and by providing the support that residents need to build on that hope to overcome the challenges that led to homelessness. Bentinck Terrace isn't just an investment in a building, it's an investment in a community and in people."

Outcomes and achievements

Changing Lives undertook a review of their homeless services in Newcastle since 2018-19 and looked at the outcomes for those who had been given access to a home they could call own and compared them to people who only had access to hostel or shared accommodation.

Two figures stood out:

Of the people who had never been given their own front door key, only 9% had successfully moved on to independent living - compared to 28% of those who had experienced a safe place to call home.

Of those successful move-ons, the ones from hostel/ shared accommodation spent an average of 327 nights in our service - compared to only 133 nights for those who had had their own front door.

Bentinck Terrace is the first large hostel to be transformed into self-contained flats, providing a much-needed bridge between emergency homelessness services and good quality move-on accommodation.

It has been open just over three months but already three residents have successfully moved on, one has gained a place at Newcastle College's energy academy, and more than a dozen people are taking in-house courses.

And neighbouring householders have been consulted and invited in - and are delighted with the changes.

NEW IDEAS, APPROACHES AND INNOVATION

This award recognises the housing associations, local authorities, and other housing providers, that are pushing the envelope in terms of developing new ways to deliver housing services, or projects and initiatives that can demonstrate innovative uses of technology, or have increased the adoption of technology, reducing digital inequality or exclusion.

Shaping Karbon's strategic approach to fire safety

Karbon Homes



Statement of support

As a result of the Grenfell Tower disaster, an independent review of fire safety is being carried out in the UK which is leading to significant changes in fire safety legislation, most of which focuses initially on buildings over 18 metres high.

In response to the new regulations, Karbon Homes decided to go above and beyond legislative requirements and took the opportunity to reassess the 637 blocks (11 of which are over 18m high) it owns and manages, and heavily invest in extensive fire safety work to make them as safe as possible for the customers who live there.

This fits with one of Karbon's strategic aims, to 'deliver excellent service to our customers' and ensure customers feel safe and secure in their homes. Therefore, it's important to the organisation to go above and beyond the call of duty when it comes to fire safety building compliance.

However, determining the overall risk of each of its multiple occupancy buildings was subjective, which made it difficult to accurately and consistently inform strategic investment decisions. The team needed a

solution which would capture precise data on each of the blocks and paint a clear picture of risk.

With full backing from Karbon's Executive team and Board, the fire safety matrix project was developed.

The fire safety matrix is a digital programme which provides Karbon with a holistic approach to the fire risk management of our buildings. Each building is scored based on 28 weighted factors that contribute towards risk, such as consequences of a fire and safety of customers.

From the score, each building is given an overall risk rating which helps inform the level of investment required. This overall rating, and the ability to delve deeper and extract data on any one of the 28 risk factors, provides the team with a complete picture of each building, an understanding of the surrounding factors linked to it, and a clear recommendation for investment needed to reduce the residual risk of that building.

The matrix has been developed from scratch, as we were unable to find an off-the-shelf programme suitable to achieve what was needed. Similar matrices for general repairs and stock maintenance have been used by other housing associations but nothing unique to fire safety and that's as highly developed as the matrix Karbon has created.

Developing from scratch means the matrix has been built for the unique challenges of Karbon's stock and customer groups. This ensures it meets the organisation's requirements and can easily be modified and expanded to keep in step with the business as it develops in the future.

Customers sit at the heart of every action Karbon takes and this project was no different. In April 2020, we carried out a customer survey to help the project group to understand customers' concerns about

fire safety in Karbon's varying multiple occupancy buildings.

As well as questions around personal demographics and their understanding of the current fire safety measures in place where they live, customers were also asked how safe they felt in their homes and what measures they thought Karbon could take to help make them feel safer. The survey also captured

customers' understanding of what they should do in the event of a fire in their building and whether Karbon provided enough information about this.

The survey results helped inform the development of the matrix. It has ensured the final product is focused on the needs and wants of customers and the recommendations it produces all benefit them.

Outcomes and achievements

Since its launch in 2020, the matrix has played a key role in shaping Karbon's strategic investment decisions on fire safety, providing clear recommendations that teams across the organisation are now beginning to deliver.

Through taking this approach, Karbon's plans for both immediate and ongoing investment in fire safety are more informed and based on in-depth data and customer needs, rather than solely on assumptions linked to the specifications of the buildings.

The informed insights it provides, focussing expenditure based on risk, helps Karbon make investment decisions which offer good value for money and will inform future investment programmes with certainty, where teams will be able to ensure good-value procurement.

Thanks to strong, cross-team collaboration during its development, the matrix not only guides Karbon on what's needed for each building from a compliance perspective, but recommends additional investment that is needed.

For example, by using the risk rating system, the housing teams can clearly identify specific buildings where there are high levels of vulnerability among residents and ensure additional information and support is offered regarding fire safety procedures. Feedback from customers affected tells us they feel more informed and have better peace of mind as a result of this work.

Reducing carbon emissions and achieving affordable warmth

Lead organisation: South Lakes Housing

Partner organisation: Elliott Associates



Statement of support

South Lakes Housing (SLH) have redeveloped an unattractive former garage site in Kendal into highly efficient affordable homes utilising innovative fabric first and renewable technologies. The transformation of Parkside Road, Kendal has created five much needed new homes, three for affordable rent and two for shared ownership funded through SLH and Homes England Shared Ownership Affordable Homes Programme.

This innovative project which was completed in March 2021 breathes new life into a piece of land in central Kendal that now showcases five beautifully built homes. The impressive outcome demonstrates SLH's commitment to positively investing in communities, alleviating the acute housing need issues that are faced locally and reducing SLH's environmental impact in line with their greening objectives and supporting affordable warmth.

The houses have been constructed with energy efficiency enhancements that have provided them with an EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) score of 100 (Band A) and a 95% improvement in carbon emissions over and above the Part L 2013 Building Regulations target emission level. This means that resident's fuel bills will reduce by over £400 per year and that carbon emissions from homes have been reduced by 6.0 tonnes per year (an almost 100% improvement over Part L 2013 Building Regulations). To achieve the rating of A, the following building elements were changed:

1. The thermal performance of the ground floor construction was enhanced using insulated beams and block floors.

2. The thermal performance of the roof was enhanced by adding additional mineral wool insulation.
3. The thermal performance of the external walls was enhanced by introducing insulated plasterboard and high performing cavity insulation.
4. The thermal performance of windows and external doors was enhanced by reducing the U-Value (thermally efficiency of windows) and increasing the G-Value (solar efficiency of Photovoltaic panels).
5. Air leakage was reduced by 60%.
6. The ventilation system was enhanced by omitting isolated ventilation and replacing these with a whole house ventilation method.
7. A high efficiency gas boiler was installed.
8. 3.15kw of Photovoltaic panels were installed.

In addition to the above smart batteries were also installed. Smart batteries are connected to Photovoltaic panels when electricity produced by the sun is not being used by the resident, the home automatically charges up the smart battery to allow the electricity to be stored for when the resident needs it.

Technical assumptions are that the Photovoltaic panels charge 75% of the battery each day, reducing the resident's electric bill by circa £185 per year.

The additional build cost associated with the enhanced energy criteria including the smart battery is £10,200 per home with a payback period of circa 17 years. Over a period of 60 years, the new homes will reduce carbon emissions by over 1,800 tonnes when compared with standard Part L 2013 Building Regulations homes.

During construction, SLH worked with Employers Agent (Elliott Associates), Contractor (R P Tyson), Architect (ID Partnership) and Sustainable Consultant and EPC Assessor (Dew Point) to maximise the enhanced energy performance criteria.

After reviewing the positive impact of these energy efficiency enhancements, SLH will apply the same principles to all future developments.

Lisa, an SLH resident at Parkside Road said "Moving into a new home has been wonderful for me and my family, it has been life changing and we are like different people who are so much happier. As my new home has lots of energy efficient features, I have been able to reduce my household bills and heat my home without it costing a fortune."

Outcomes and achievements

1. Delivered a successful and innovate fabric first and renewable technology development in line with SLH's greening objectives.
2. Five new affordable homes for both shared ownership and affordable rent which help to tackle the acute local housing need issues faced locally in South Lakeland.
3. Reduced fuel bills for residents by over £400 per year and enhancing comfort and the internal environment by making hot water and heating better value helping to promote affordable warmth.
4. Reduced carbon emissions by circa 6.0 tonnes per year per home (circa 1,800 tonnes of carbon over a 60-year design life for the project) which helps to reduce the carbon footprint of SLH and their residents.
5. Reviewed the energy efficiency enhancements and applied the same principles to upcoming future developments.
6. Using knowledge gained through this process to educate staff and residents to become carbon literate and make informed decisions on energy use.
7. Applying knowledge from new build developments to existing homes to ensure that carbon emissions are reduced and affordable warmth can be achieved for SLH's residents.

Middlesbrough Council and Voicescape: Transforming council tax collections

Lead organisation: Middlesbrough Council

Partner organisations: Voicescape



Statement of support

In 2020, Middlesbrough Council (MC) was faced with a mounting challenge of council tax arrears, exacerbated by Covid-19, forcing the temporary closure of the court system and subsequent negative impact on its debt recovery process. As the pandemic's economic impact escalated, numbers of residents falling further into arrears rocketed. Even when courts reopened virtually, MC could only achieve 3,000 liability orders – a 79% decrease from 2019.

The council knew it needed to find a new solution to tackle the challenge and build better engagement with residents to pay or arrange a payment plan, while enabling the conversation to educate residents on how to avoid costly enforcement action. Previous methods of manual, outbound calls proved time and resource-intensive, and ineffective at income recovery.

In May 2020, Thirteen Housing Group introduced MC to Voicescape. Voicescape uses software to facilitate meaningful engagement between social housing providers, local authorities and individual residents to build more sustainable tenancies. Its Collections service, typically used for rental collections, helps maximise efficiency for teams by changing costly, ineffective outbound calling activity into productive inbound calls, allowing more time to be spent on higher-quality engagement with residents, driving positive outcomes.

MC embarked on a 6-month pilot of the Voicescape Collections solution between November 2020 – April 2021 to prove the viability of the technology when applied to collecting council tax arrears. The outcomes

of the pilot have been transformational and will form a major part of MC's future recovery process.

During the pilot of 2,029 charge payers, MC collected a total of 1,081 payments as a result of a Voicescape call, recovering a total income of £146,054.91.

Of the 2,029 residents, engagement rates increased to almost 60% and 1,209 proactive conversations were conducted by operators to support residents with making payment arrangements and other welfare needs.

Consequently, MC has signed a 3-year partnership to roll out Voicescape's technology across its 64,801 charge payers. It plans to implement the technology at the start of the council tax payment process to shift the approach from consequence to opportunity. This early intervention will create multiple prompts for residents to proactively engage to discuss their needs before they fall into arrears. It will also free up staff resources to be reallocated to services where human intervention adds most value to further improve the organisation's overall performance and effectiveness.

MC is currently combining its debt management into one service to utilise Voicescape Collections council wide. This will create the potential to work more closely with its biggest social landlord, Thirteen Group, which also uses Voicescape's Collections service to engage the same customers to improve rent arrears and council tax collection, simultaneously.

Through the data collected, MC and Voicescape are also developing opportunities to apply data science and behavioural insights to tailor messages for individual residents to build more effective long-term engagement.

Council tax customer: "Thanks for contacting me this way, I really appreciate it as I always forget to pay my Council Tax and don't want to set up a Direct Debit or Standing Order. Please can you contact me this way every month as a reminder for me to pay."

Lewis Scott, team leader, Middlesbrough Council: "Before Voicescape, you'd find us going through our records manually calling one by one, maybe speaking to 5 people a day, if that. It's a lot better than the previous method, we know we've targeted a certain customer at a specific time in their recovery procedure, so we know what the outcome of the call needs to be, and we know we can steer the conversation in a positive direction to reach the right outcome."

Outcomes and achievements

Increasing income: The pilot produced a total income of £146,054.91 from 1,209 residents during the 3-month period the service was active, increasing its collection rate by 0.2%. This sample of 1,209 accounts for 1.9% of Middlesbrough's council tax residents and equates to an average of £121 per customer. If extrapolated across the 64,801 charge payers, this could generate a total incremental revenue of £7,840,921 demonstrating its effectiveness for increasing income.

Increasing efficiency: By using Voicescape's technology, MC has created efficiencies by eliminating time spent on costly, ineffective outbound calling activity and converting it into productive inbound calls, resulting in income collection. In the same 3-month period, one revenue operator would have

spent approximately 433 hours attempting to contact residents using manual outbound calling, with limited success. This efficiency allows more time to be spent engaging with residents in direct, quality conversations to secure a sustainable resolution and identify support needs, whilst creating resource capacity to support other demand-driven services within the authority.

Improving wellbeing: Reorienting-the-nature-of-the engagement to drive positive inbound calls with residents choosing to engage with the collections-team-and-look-for a resolution before escalation has improved both staff and resident wellbeing and satisfaction by significantly altered the nature of individual interactions.

Core 364

Gentoo Group



Statement of support

Core 364 is a pioneering retrofit scheme and the biggest housing decarbonisation project in the UK. The project is leading the way as a blueprint for large scale climate change retrofit and building safety improvement schemes in the housing sector, which will provide key learnings to other housing associations as the sector bids to help the UK meet net zero carbon targets. It brings together multiple benefits of energy efficiency to impact on the lives of tenants, improve thermal comfort, reduce fuel poverty, tackle climate change and improve building safety.

The £9m scheme is central to Gentoo and Engie's net zero carbon journey and combines the commitment of both organisations to tackle climate change and fuel poverty, with the provision of safe and affordable housing. The project is a demonstrator and forms a key part of Sunderland City Council's Low Carbon Framework and its target for the city to become carbon neutral by 2040.

The ground-breaking project involved replacing gas boilers in 364 properties across seven high-rise tower blocks, with an open loop ground source heat pump system, which takes renewable heat from the earth's core to uniquely generate both heat and hot water.

The scheme not only addressed the ageing heating systems in the blocks, but brought together multiple benefits of energy efficiency, to have a significant impact on people, property and the planet. This included:

- Engaging tenants from the outset and improving their lives through the provision of more efficient renewable heat and hot water
- Helping to improve thermal comfort, reduce fuel poverty by reducing the cost of resident's energy bills
- Tackling climate change and minimising the buildings' impact of the building on the planet through a significant carbon reduction of 8,322 tCO₂ over the next 20 years.
- Improving the safety of the tower blocks by removing the gas supply to the buildings and installing various fire safety measures, including life-saving sprinkler systems to every property and ground floor communal area
- Installing smart home technology as part of the heating controls in every property
- Measuring the impact of the scheme on the health and wellbeing of the residents, in partnership with National Energy Action and Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- Funding the scheme by bringing together existing asset investment from Gentoo, with external funding from the Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (NDRHI) and the ECO Innovation Fund

- Developing a strong partnership between Gentoo (client), Engie Regeneration (contractor), Kensa, Sunamp and Switchee (low carbon technology suppliers) and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

Core 364 is a visionary scheme that will leave a legacy on the properties, the people and the planet. Whether it's building safety, tenant engagement, building safety or the carbon reduction benefits, this scheme has been pioneering in many aspects.

The technical element of the project involved the removal of the gas supply from the seven tower blocks and all gas boilers and gas powered appliances from 364 properties. This supply has been replaced with a renewable heat and hot water system powered by

open loop ground source heat pumps. The gas boilers and thermostats have been replaced with shoebox heat pumps, thermal batteries, access to SMET22 meters and smart heating controls. The scheme has also involved:

- The upgrading of the electrical infrastructure in the buildings
- Installation of low energy, LED lighting in all communal areas across the seven blocks
- Installation life-saving sprinkler systems
- Assessing and upgrading fire stopping
- Installation of fibre broadband infrastructure
- Replacement of soil and vent stacks

Outcomes and achievements

Climate change is the challenge of our generation. Gentoo and ENGIE are committed to supporting both Sunderland and the UK in reaching net zero carbon targets. Core 364 is a major contribution to this, and maximised building decarbonisation by installing LED lighting across all blocks, the scheme will generate a significant carbon saving of 8,322 tCO₂ over the next 20 years.

As a housing association, Gentoo has a deep underlying social purpose and alleviating fuel poverty across its housing stock is a priority. One of the key

drivers behind Core 364 was the opportunity to reduce tenants' energy bills by £150 a year, through the removal of the standing daily charge from their gas meter. The long-term financial savings will be monitored as part of an Energy and Wellbeing evaluation, which is being carried out as part of wider health and wellbeing study by National Energy Action (NEA) and Sunderland CCG. Having previously delivered the nationally renowned 'Boilers on Prescription' scheme, Gentoo is hoping to provide valuable evidence to support the link between retrofit and health and wellbeing of occupants.

Care and Leaving Care Support

Lead organisation: Blackpool Coastal Housing

Partner organisations: Blackpool Council (and other agencies for More Positive Together)



Statement of support

Care leavers taking new tenancies face many challenges. Blackpool Coastal Housing wanted to help Blackpool Council turn round the failure rate in social housing tenancies for the cohort. We have innovated in many ways to do this.

We developed our Positive Transitions programme to support Care Leavers to maintain tenancies. They have access to intensive support to ensure they are

not alone and better able to cope with the transition to independent living. The staff working with the young people are committed to their progress and form the sort of relationships that would normally be enjoyed with a parent or guardian. The good outcomes from this project led to the Council asking us to enter a new semi-independent market.

We were asked to support the Council in provision of a facility that for young care leavers. A property was available on lease from another housing provider with six rooms plus sleep-in supervision and we began operating this facility a couple of years ago. This has proved a great success.

We identified another property that had been relinquished by another housing provider, William Lyons House. During the particular challenges of the first lockdown we refurbished it and got it ready for occupation for under 24s who were homeless. It was always intended that the long term use of this building was to provide long term support for 18-24 year olds who were either homeless or care leavers as part of our Positive Transitions comprehensive pathway to provide tailored and at times intensive support for young people to make their start in life as adults as successful as possible by offering not only support, but also inspiring ambition so the young people can

be successful adults in the long term. The service has transitioned gradually to its intended person.

Not resting on our laurels we are now preparing a former children's home in the north of Blackpool transform it into a semi-independent service for looked after children aged 16-18. It is anticipated that this work will be completed by the end of September. Staff are in the process of being recruited into the service, although some established staff from Clare Street will move over to this building to ensure a consistent service delivery, with some new staff going into Clare Street.

We anticipate that the new service will be up and running by early November.

Alongside these direct interventions to create better futures for care leavers in the town we have introduced a number of other relevant initiatives. In a cross Lancashire initiative we have obtained ESF funding as part of the 'More Positive Together' programme. This provides direct support to people

who would otherwise find the barriers to education or employment insurmountable, so that they are able to increase their confidence and improve their life chances. This project, and the BCH element of it in particular, have been so successful that there have been three additional tranches of funding allocated to it.

Blackpool has one of the highest levels of looked after children in the country.

As can be seen from the underlying narrative above, despite this provision was being reduced by many mainstream providers. This often led to placements outside Blackpool which were setting up young people to fail. We have worked creatively to develop solutions that stack up in terms of what they offer young people whilst being financially viable. As an ALMO it is in our DNA to do what we can to support the Council, but by adopting a 'housing plus' ethos we have been more effective in this and now make a far greater impact.

Outcomes and achievements

Positive Transitions worked with 89 clients during 2020-21. Using HACT methodology over £600k of social value was generated. Case studies are the best testimony. Jemma was accepted for a permanent position with the DWP. Codie secured employment with the Co-op. Nikkita secured a role in care, worked to obtain her NVQ and was promoted to team leader.

During 2020-21 William Lyons House accommodated 39 young people. Four young people were helped to gain permanent employment, with fourteen moving into training, employment or volunteering opportunities. £200k was generated in social value. As stated in the main part of the submission this was done at the height of the pandemic.

Clare Street housed seventeen young people during 2020-21. Five moved onto the Positive Transitions pathway with their own flat and support to maintain the tenancy. More than £200k was generated in social value using the HCAT methodology. Three residents were asked to use their lived experience to inform options in the Council's Supported Housing Review.

To date the More Positive Together Programme has succeeded in getting 245 people into employment, and a further 189 customers into education and training. Social value generated by the programme to date is in excess of £4m.

HOUSING HERO

This award celebrates outstanding individuals who have used new approaches to help solve housing problems they see around them.

Eleanor Edgar

Stockport Homes Group



Statement of support

Over the last four years, Eleanor has become an indispensable talent within the Temporary Accommodation Team. Starting her career with Stockport Homes Group as a Charity Engagement Assistant delivering diversionary activities to customers experiencing homelessness, she progressed initially to a Homelessness Support Officer, then quickly developed her skills and ambitions to secure a manager role within the Temporary Accommodation Team. In the two years since her appointment to this position, Eleanor has gone from strength to strength and has truly encapsulated Stockport Homes Group's mission of Transforming Lives, both of our customers and her team members alike. Eleanor lives and breathes Temporary Accommodation and exudes passion, care and commitment in all she does. Without hesitation she goes above and beyond on a daily basis. No more so has this been evident than over the last 12 months when the unique circumstances of the pandemic presented many new challenges for the service. Normally accommodating between 450-480 households a year, the last year has seen a growing need for the service to support in the

fight against the pandemic, accommodating those rough sleeping across the wider Greater Manchester authorities, and supporting the discharge of medically optimised patients from local hospitals to assist in the challenges faced by the NHS. Eleanor has led on a jointly commissioned project with Public Health to set up a housing scheme to accommodate customers experiencing complex health and support needs where access to accommodation has been a barrier to hospital discharge. She has been involved in all aspects of this project, down to giving up her weekends to personally decorate and furnish properties. This innovative new project has been vital in tackling bed management and Delayed Transfer of Care (DToc) for medically optimised patients experiencing housing related issues across the borough.

Eleanor is always looking to improve the service, from the physical environments we provide to the innovative methods of engagement she explores, including the recent creation of a Sanctuary Area at the accommodation scheme. This area is designed to support the service in meeting our aims to always work in a psychologically informed way and work with customers to support them both holistically and individually. One of the services Eleanor has sourced to operate from this new environment is a dedicated counselling service for Young Persons aged 11years+.

Eleanor has an effortless way of building trust and understanding with people, treating everyone as individuals, supporting them to achieve their aspirations in life and make positive changes in order to fulfil their potential; this extends to customers who she's supported to gain employment and qualifications, to colleagues who she has supported to complete apprenticeships and access development pathways to progress to new roles within and outside of the company.

Outcomes and achievements

Stockport Homes Group and SMBC (Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council) have co-produced their fourth Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2021-2024) this year, and with the legacy of the pandemic likely to be felt for many years, we anticipate an ever-increasing need for high quality temporary accommodation that provides excellent support for customers. Eleanor will be pivotal in delivering our key objectives around providing personalised, holistic and strength-based support to all customers and will lead teams in focusing upon expanding our offer around improving the health of people who are homeless, addressing multiple and complex needs, and tackling rough sleeping. Within this, Eleanor will lead on sourcing further accommodation and championing customer voices in shaping our service. Eleanor has a great understanding of the issues that can impact upon people experiencing homelessness and the

entrenched health issues that are often intrinsically linked to homelessness. She has a key role in building relationships with health partners to deliver key health initiatives to our customers including vaccination roll-out; immunisations; Hepatitis C screening and treatment; self-harm and suicide prevention; smoking cessation; and accessing substance and mental health services.

Eleanor demonstrates all the attributes and passion key to enhancing her personal development and the development of the service. She not only has a keen awareness to encourage the development and growth of customer's and team member's talents, but she consistently demonstrates self-awareness of her own learning needs, and will be completing a Management Progression Pathway through SHG's Learning and Organisational Development Team, including a recognised managerial qualification, over the next 12 months.

David Bradley-Bowles

Pure Haus



Statement of support

David as the project director of the scheme has managed and coordinated the project successfully from start to finish. Despite facing adversity such as lenders pulling out due to covid, managing the limited supply chain and dealing with contractors. Keeping laser focused to deliver the Pure Meadows development which is the first of its kind in the Yorkshire region. Using german principles, Scandinavian design and a British workforce to build environmentally kind innovative homes. Pure Haus believe in a beautiful clean world where mankind and nature can co exist. Pure Haus aims to build homes which offset the carbon footprint relating to building and living in a home. Our homes are focused around health, well-being & the environment, while also being sustainable and commercially viable for other developers. As developers, we are becoming leaders in building homes which are focused on health, well-being, and the environment. In the process, we are

showcasing to other developers that it is possible to make a difference when building homes. First and foremost, our mission is to build homes which have a reduced energy demand. In turn, this will allow us to provide homes which rely on the consumption of energy through locally generated renewable sources. Our ultimate aim is to create a truly carbon zero home, one which creates more energy than it consumes during its entire life cycle. This includes the manufacturing of materials, demolition, and the recycling of its components at the end of the home's life. Working with great architects who believe that good design, selection and detailing of materials is fundamental to each project. Combined with efficiency of the space, the ease of construction and the finer touches of elegance which allows us to achieve a remarkable benchmark for new homes. The Pure Meadows development and landscaping have been designed with the intention of preserving the existing landscape, views and co exist with nature. The homes have an air filtering system, removing pollutants from the outside world. Rainwater harvesting system, purifying the water which is collected on the roof of the house and delivering it freshly to your glass for you to enjoy. The scheme has been designed sensitively to fit in with nature and is not overbearing in terms of the scale of the development. The selected high quality palette of contextual materials are intended to enhance the immediate site setting whilst also being sensitive to the wider surroundings. Timber has been chosen as the primary external wall material, the surrounding mature trees ensure that the timber cladding is sensitive to its surroundings. Timber has been sustainably sourced and treated. The glazing is high performance, slim-framed aluminium system

frame which is robust and has a lower u value which contributes to the air tight design. The glazing will benefit from slim framing and will be undemanding in appearance. The contemporary design will provide a clean and elegant canvas for the more traditional and contextual approach. This has been achieved through designing to Passive House principles. The building is wrapped in an airtight structure preventing the uncontrolled movement of air and heat. A super-insulated layer wraps the building, walls, floors and roofs keeping the heat inside. The building has an efficient ventilation system with heat and/or humidity

recovery, removing stale air and bringing in clean fresh air. Heat likes to escape through thermal bridges that are often overlooked; windows, doors, intersections of floors, walls, ceilings and balconies, these thermal bridges are carefully designed. Capturing and using the sun's heat to warm the property minimises the need for artificial heating and is kind to the environment. Retaining the heat in the fabric of the building helps to regulate consistent temperatures all year around.

Outcomes and achievements

Dave has used his innovative approach and creative mindset to establish something truly unique. Combining all the unique features previously highlighted with the smart adaptable wall technology; allowing these 5 bed homes to be 2, 3 or even 4 bed by easily removing the adaptable walls without any plumbing or wiring. Along with the ability to put a stair lift within the stairwell for the changing needs

of a family these are homes for life. Finally the cradle to grave calculation exceeds the 2030 RIBA standard making these homes of the future built today by a company who are looking to stretch the boundaries. This desire to stretch boundaries has been led by Dave who proactively went to Germany to study Passivehaus of his own desire. We need to see more

YOUNG ACHIEVER IN HOUSING

Sponsored by: **BERNICA**

This award aims to recognise individuals who can demonstrate that they have shown passion, commitment, and flair in putting the human aspects of tenant or client services first.

Jai Kay

Incommunities



Statement of support

I have known Jai since he was appointed the charge hand position on my team and have since then worked closely with him. After completing his level 3 NVQ he worked for our day to day repairs team and due to his performance and reputation he became a mentor to new apprentices. Jai applied to undertake the CIH level 4 in housing and successfully qualified earlier this year with his tutors and colleagues tipping him to have a bright future in the sector due to his leadership skills and high level of emotional intelligence.

During the course he was set many challenges such as public speaking at an event held by the wheatley group in Glasgow and won the challenge (with his team) for their speeches on 'place shaping' our communities. I have never heard anyone have a negative opinion on Jai or his performance at work and when he became my charge-hand in late 2020 I could see why. His new job was now a leadership related position and I was amazed at how quickly he settled into the role, especially with him being only 25 years old and managing a very experienced team that he had never met before and with a range of

roles from property inspectors, joiners, bricklayers, plumbers, plasterers and drainage - none of which he has had any involvement with before but his technical knowledge on these trades and regulations is incredible.

Jai has a very good work ethic and always works in a very professional manner and has shown nothing but dedication and commitment. I personally have had the opportunity to shadow him on several occasions with customer complaints and he has dealt with them very professionally and come to an outcome which suits both the customer and organisation. He is an inspiration to his colleagues as he is always wanting to learn and explore new ideas but making sure the customers come first. Even though he works in the Building Service Department he is aware of his role and the impact it has on the rest of the organisation and how his team collaborate well with the Income Team.

I have witnessed Jai carry out his role and through his professional manner continues to empower his colleagues on a daily basis. Jai is very good at leading by example and being hands on in his approach to carrying out his role which sets a good president for the rest of his team.

Jai has helped me personally with applying for my ILM level 3 and also helped me greatly when I had to appeal the decision. He helped me to prepare for my appeal using previous knowledge he had gained from his own experiences. He continues to support me where required with my assignments and functional skills I need to undertake.

Jai also has the opportunity to cover a field manager role, this is something I myself is wishing to progress into and Jai has been very good in guiding me through the process of what is required to carry out

this role and showing me the different IT systems required. He has also showed me different reflective practice methods to assist me with my own personal and professional development which I have found empowering. Jai's style of leadership is to give his

team the tools required to improve their own roles, wellbeing and future. For someone who is only 25 gains the respect of his peers through his leadership style.

Outcomes and achievements

Jai has successfully managed 5 different teams at different times (equating to around 6 months full time as a manager) and he has always received positive feedback from the permanent manager in the area as well as customers, senior management and even our newly appointed Director who congratulated him on his performance since he has joined the company.

He is a fully qualified electrician at an NVQ level 3.

He has successfully mentored 3 electricians who are now qualified.

He has successfully raised money for charity by doing a charity boat race every year at coniston hall.

He has completed the GEM programme and gained a level 4 qualification from the CIH.

He is now undertaking an apprenticeship to get an ILM level 5 in management.

Eleanor Edgar

Stockport Homes Group



Statement of support

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OUTSTANDING APPROACH TO COMMUNICATIONS

This award recognises landlords whose communication with their tenants and residents has been outstanding over the past year, keeping them fully informed and supported or helping them to stay in touch with their friends and family during the pandemic through initiatives such as digital inclusion.

Manningham Housing Association

Manningham Housing Association



Statement of support

Keeping tenants properly informed has always been a priority for Manningham Housing Association (MHA), but never more so than during the pandemic. As soon as the first Government COVID restrictions were introduced, MHA staff contacted every tenant to ensure that they were safe and receiving any additional support required whilst self-isolating. Some tenants had been furloughed and MHA's Welfare Benefits Officer was on hand to offer help. The association's Community Investment Team provided online courses including confidence building and assertiveness. MHA ran hundreds of online events for tenants and the wider community, ranging from yoga sessions to CV writing. Tenants without access to a laptop were given or loaned machines.

Alongside MHA's inhouse magazine, which is delivered to the doorsteps of all tenants, weekly newsletters have been sent out by email with updates on the association's activities that tenants can get involved in, together with the latest national COVID updates. These have been supplemented with regular updates on MHA's website and through social media channels.

MHA has also sent out frequent SMS updates to tenants, not only in relation to COVID but also with details of local job vacancies and upcoming events.

Being a community-based BAME housing association means that MHA's services are tailored to ensure that the needs of diverse and vibrant communities are met. The association has always had its tenants at the heart of what it does and sees communication with them as a two-way activity. MHA has a strong Customer Panel which has been instrumental in helping shape the services it provides. The panel scrutinises MHA services and all operational policies are reviewed by them prior to being approved. To ensure that the tenant voice is heard in the Boardroom, MHA has a policy of having at least one tenant on the Board. The current Chair of the Customer Panel is also Board member.

Keeping in contact with friends and family has been every bit as important as hearing from MHA staff. These efforts were greatly helped by the launch of MHA's Building Bridges Bradford project which had three strands - community conversation, connecting communities and good neighbours events - coupled with online and outdoor exercise sessions such as yoga and shadow boxing as well as coffee mornings.

As well as keeping in close contact with tenants, MHA has made a concerted effort to spread the positive news about its initiatives to partners, the housing sector and the wider public through the media.

Guided by a bespoke External Communications Strategy approved by the Board, over the past 12 months MHA has disseminated stories in a wide range of subjects including an £50.5 million funding deal for more affordable homes, the launch of a programme of projects to tackle discrimination and guide the local community through lockdown, a VIP visit of the West Yorkshire Metro Mayor and the association's support

for National Inclusion Week. MHA's Chair and Chief Executive have also had opinion pieces published on several issues including on the inequalities highlighted by the pandemic, anti-racism, Universal Credit and the need for housing associations to prioritise the health and wellbeing of all tenants. Several senior MHA representatives have been interviewed by local, regional and national broadcast media. All stories and interviews have been geared towards spreading

MHA's key messages as laid out in its External Communications Strategy.

Also this year, MHA's Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive were invited by to deliver a joint presentation on "Achieving Outstanding Levels of Customer Service Excellence Through A Commitment To Inclusion and Diversity" to the Institute of Government & Public Policy's event "Building A Better Social Housing Future 2021."

Outcomes and achievements

Over the past year, MHA's Facebook channel grew almost five times from 46 followers to 217. Its Twitter followers jumped from 120 to 305. YouTube videos and profiles had nearly 600 visits and its LinkedIn page followers almost doubled from 340 followers to 635 in total. In one month, 10,000 people viewed MHA's profile on Google.

MHA tenant H. Khan commented: "I have nothing but compliments and praise for

MHA, for all the support they have provided for my family during the lockdown. They have been very helpful, and patient, and just simply very understanding. My parents really appreciate all the

help Zahid has given to them, he literally has gone out of his way to help my parents, for this I can't thank him enough, MHA thank you for everything you do."

Media outlets featuring good news stories about MHA included Inside Housing, Housing Executive, Housing Digital, Social Housing, HQN, Northern Housing, Keep the Faith, Bradford Telegraph & Argus, Keighley News, Yorkshire Post, The Voice, Bradford Zone, Business Mondays, Business Up North, Business Mondays, Yorkshire Business daily, Bdaily, Public Sector Executive, Public Sector Building, Construction UK, TheBusinessDesk.com, ITV (national and Yorkshire), BBC Radio Leeds and Bradford Community Broadcasting.

EXCELLENCE IN CULTURAL CHANGE AND TRANSITIONING

This award is open to organisations that have achieved a transformation or turnaround in their culture and can demonstrate excellent results.

Transforming LYHA - pressing the reset button

Leeds & Yorkshire Housing Association



Statement of support

Leeds & Yorkshire Housing Association (LYHA) is an ambitious community-based housing association with 1,600 homes and 43 staff.

Over the last three years LYHA has undergone a total transformation, improving its performance across the board and is still "undergoing a significant culture change to one that is now customer-centric, where striving for excellence and doing the right thing are firmly embedded throughout the organisation" (Mike Gaskell - Board Chair).

In 2018, LYHA was in a poor position.

There were compliance issues, which were self-referred to the regulator, leading to a governance downgrade in July 2018. Customer satisfaction and engagement were low, and complaints were high, especially regarding the poor repairs service and one particular estate, The Elmetes, which received significant negative media coverage.

Internally, staff turnover was high (54% in 2017/18) and a recent IIP assessment had flagged employee dissatisfaction and significant cultural issues.

This all resulted in the board being forced to consider merger opportunities as one option to help navigate through the difficult challenges the organisation faced.

However, rather than accept this as a *fait accompli*, LYHA, led by a restructured senior management team and new Chief Executive, pulled together as 'one team' to transform business operations and place customers firmly at the heart of decision making.

With the board's support, LYHA took a 'back to basics' approach, focused on core business operations and prioritising what matters most to customers. They developed a detailed recovery action plan, reviewed capacity and brought in external support where required.

Colleagues were supported in their roles, receiving training to address skills gaps and consulted throughout the transition journey to ensure everyone was united behind shared goals: delivering the highest levels of customer service and turning around what was a failing organisation. This was very successful: staff welcomed the new ethos of openness, positivity and transparency. Effective communication was vital and regular full team meetings were held to share progress and celebrate colleagues' achievements.

Health and safety processes and reporting were overhauled to achieve 100% compliance in all areas; whilst complaints policies were reviewed to ensure customers received faster and more effective resolution of issues.

Meanwhile a £1.5 million improvement programme got underway at the Elmetes estate, with a residents' steering group playing a key role in decision making.

Customer engagement was significantly improved to ensure LYHA was genuinely listening and acting on customers' feedback:

- 'Customer Experience Committee was formed (comprising customers and board members) to hold LYHA to account and ensure the 'customer voice' was heard at board level.
- A scrutiny panel of engaged customers worked with LYHA to co-create improvements in areas where customers felt they were most needed, including telephone answering, repairs and garden maintenance.
- More regular customer satisfaction surveys and drop-in events were introduced to improve customer insight and track the effectiveness of improvements.

This spirit of transformation included not only

colleagues and customers but also the board. Tighter governance procedures were adopted, a Board Charter was developed committing to inclusive, accountable, ethical and respectful working practices, and new members were recruited to broaden the 'diversity of thought' and skills on the board.

The transformation of LYHA's organisational culture has been formalised in a new corporate plan 'Together 2023'. This sets out LYHA's new mission, vision, values and strategic objectives, all of which were subject to meaningful consultation with customers and colleagues. Cultural change is not a finite process; there is lots still to be done. The plan ensures that the positive transition of the last three years is firmly embedded, and that customers and communities will continue to see improved levels of service in the future.

Outcomes and achievements

In just three years the organisational culture has been completely transformed. The IIP assessor awarding LYHA 'Silver' in November 2020 described the cultural shift since 2018 as 'phenomenal'.

- Strengthened governance resulted in LYHA regaining the highest G1V1 rating in September 2019, which was maintained in September 2020 following an in-depth assessment by the Regulator of Social Housing.
- LYHA is a much happier and more positive place to work. Staff turnover has reduced significantly. In 2020/21 it was just 2.5% (compared to 54% in 2017/18).
- Colleague engagement is now 87%.
- Customer satisfaction has increased by 7% since 2018 and 89% of customers are now happy with

the repairs service received (which was previously the biggest area of dissatisfaction)

- Customers feel more engaged and 'listened to'. 69% now believe 'LYHA provides ample opportunities to make your views known' up from 54% in 2018 and 100% of complaints were resolved at stage one this year.

Culture and people make an organisation and LYHA has evolved into a modern, trusted and customer-centric business.

"There has been incredible progress in transforming everything that LYHA does. I have felt genuinely inspired by the dedication and commitment of all involved." (Mike Gaskell - Chair

GREATER Together

Great Places Housing Group



Statement of support

Our new business

On 1 April 2020, Great Places and Equity Housing Groups merged to become a bigger, stronger

business. While the two organisations had many similarities in terms of geography, ethos and offer, there were fundamental differences in size and approach because Great Places employed around 700 people, while Equity was much smaller, with 130.

The challenges

Although the cultures of the two organisations were similar, there were many small differences, which quickly became a big problem when trying to create a 'one business' feel. Covid-19 exacerbated complexities as we plunged into lockdown a fortnight before merger. New teams and colleagues couldn't meet face to face, and the planned office-based celebrations and welcome conference were cancelled.

Morale and confidence dropped and we saw nervousness and anxiety, particularly from Equity colleagues, many of whom were uncertain about the merger notwithstanding the Covid context.

Engagement scores in that part of the business hit a low of 39% at the point of merger, reinforcing the need to prioritise cultural transformation in our Integration Programme.

Our response

We quickly adapted merger celebrations, with planned in-person events becoming virtual. Our CEO shared his welcome via vlog, and partnership packs were posted to homes.

As we reacted to an evolving Covid crisis, we were determined not to derail strategic plans to create an inspirational and inclusive new culture. Months before the merger was finalised, we'd organised joint leadership away days and established a guiding coalition from across both legacy organisations to drive the success of integration from a people perspective.

The coalition was committed to creating a culture that combined the best of both organisations to deliver greater things for colleagues, customers and communities. Involvement for everyone was a key principle because we recognised that if we wanted real cultural change, collaboration was critical.

Inclusion and engagement

A cultural audit, facilitated by external consultants, was sent to all colleagues. Responses were used to map existing cultures, highlighting similarities/differences and strengths/weaknesses. The audit was supplemented by workshops with colleagues at all levels, from Board/Executive Directors to frontline workers.

Consultation on culture also took place via colleague forums and virtual conferences. Everyone had the opportunity to contribute and we launched our Space To Talk listening programme in May 2020, discussing

culture and key issues and providing a platform for colleagues to suggest improvements.

Customer insight

Our culture of inclusion encompasses both customers and colleagues, and Equity customers were overwhelmingly supportive of the new partnership from the outset (just 6% of those consulted with pre-merger were against it). Careful consideration went into plans to ensure continuity of service delivery, with enhanced services a driver for our business transformation.

Impactful outcomes

Through a truly collaborative process we created our GREATER Together culture, encompassing seven pillars of Growing, Respectful, Empowering, Achieving, Trusted, Excelling and Reputable.

It's about opportunity, inclusion and growth, and is already helping us deliver excellent services.

By living our culture, we ensure our people have a meaningful voice and are empowered to work collaboratively to achieve ambitions. It allows us to be innovative in delivering excellence for customers and partners, ensuring we promote fairness and respect.

Being GREATER Together is embedded in everything we do. It's a key part of our Customer Experience Strategy and Service Delivery Frameworks and is integral in the upcoming launch of Aareon, our new housing management system. This will enhance our digital offer and improve services through improved communication, accessibility and functionality.

It's been quite a journey but we're proud we've come back from highly challenging beginnings to get where we are today; in a position where we clearly are GREATER Together.

Outcomes and achievements

Following the launch of our new culture, engagement scores among former Equity colleagues rose from 39% last April to 86% this May, with 96% of all colleagues believing in the vision and work of our merged business; 89% are 'Satisfied with Great Places as an employer' (UK average 65%); and 85% 'Feel fully motivated to do a great job every day'.

We've held 37 Space To Talk listening sessions on topics including culture and wellbeing, with 450 colleague attendances.

We've consulted with customers on topics including our Customer Voice strategy, the corporate plan, compliance and facilities management.

The culture is fundamental in our new hybrid

working approach. 98% of former Equity colleagues feel 'Empowered to work in a way that benefits my customers, colleagues and personal life' (89% business-wide).

Colleague stories bring culture to life as part of our Employee Value Proposition, while being GREATER Together drives the Powering Our People campaign to improve mental health. 84% of colleagues agree that 'Great Places promotes an inclusive environment where I feel able to be my true self at work'.

Our corporate narrative has launched to articulate our culture, history and vision, helping colleagues understand how we really are GREATER Together.

- Stats from May 2021 all-colleague survey.

EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP

This award is for an individual, and its purpose is to recognise excellent leadership in the sector. It aims to demonstrate the quality of leaders that we have in housing, and to show the rest of the world how brilliant housing people are.

Fiona Astor

Magenta Living



Statement of support

As an experienced leader and natural problem solver, Fiona has been instrumental in leading our strategic transformation programme “The Magenta Way,” since joining Magenta Living in February 2020. She has made a real and tangible impact on Magenta Living in her first senior role, her leadership being instrumental in driving behavioural change across the organisation.

Fiona’s approach to organisational development is research-led, measured and methodical, and collaborative. Fiona goes out of her way to ensure that the views of colleagues across the organisation are heard, understood, and considered. A highly motivated, dynamic, enthusiastic, and adaptable leader, we are delighted to have Fiona in the Magenta team.

Fiona says: “The Magenta Way’s vision is to do the right thing, at the right time, working together. I get involved in everything, supporting colleagues to work in The Magenta Way. I am passionate about our vision and the future of our organisation. I love the energy we have created at Magenta Living and it is a joy talking to my colleagues, leading by example, and encourage others to do it too.

“People are central to everything we do, and I understand how important it is to live our vision and provide others with a platform to share their amazing ideas.

Fiona led on a project that gave colleagues a clear voice in the organisation. This was a collaboration that involved gathering volunteers from across the organisation to identify customer frustrations and turn these into ideas for improvement. The sessions created a list of manageable projects that those involved were empowered to deliver. This has built up a belief in the organisation that anyone can influence change. Fiona has created a way of thinking that empowers all colleagues to turn their frustrations into new ways of working, ultimately benefiting our customers.

Fiona has found that a high level of self-awareness has been key in making such an impact in a short time. She says: “We learn all the time by making mistakes or being brave enough to try something new. If it doesn’t work, we admit it and move on, but we never give up! Sharing the successes alongside the failures and being very self-aware of how others learn from us as leaders, means we can influence culture and clearly demonstrate The Magenta Way in action. I am never afraid to admit that I don’t have all the answers.”

Fiona used her forward thinking, innovative approach to quickly tackle key issues during the Covid-19 pandemic by introducing virtual whiteboard technology and teaching teams how to collaborate in a virtual world. By starting with the problem and clearly stating why we need change before trying to work out what we need to do and how to do it, Fiona keeps the end customer in mind, delivering change that is lasting and meaningful.

As with every transformation programme, there are things that just don’t work out. Fiona has worked hard to change mindsets from seeing failures as a problem, to embracing them as a learning opportunity. In a controlled and safe environment, colleagues are free to try new things and encouraged to report back on the successes and failures. This no-blame culture enables colleagues to be innovative and this has been critical to our success.

She says: “Every time we get something wrong, we don’t beat ourselves up over it. As long as we started with the right intentions and stopped once we realised it wasn’t quite right, that is fine.

“We take this approach with customer complaints – they are a gift and an opportunity to listen and evolve, always remains reactive to our customer’s needs.”

Outcomes and achievements

Fiona is the focus of innovation at Magenta Living. Most of the innovation involves getting back to basics and talking to customers and colleagues to really understand their needs and wants. Fiona was able to solve long standing problems using innovative approaches to problem solving. The first of these workshops resulted in a significant reduction in complaint resolution timings from an average of 39 days to an average of 2.6 days, something the organisation had been trying to achieve for a long time.

Fiona was instrumental in introducing Magenta’s Rising Stars leadership development programme, which has been a smashing success. The innovative approach to leadership development includes

access to internal mentors, external coaching, online management training, job shadowing and opportunities to lead on projects. This has improved confidence and helped the Rising Stars be the best versions of themselves and rounded, competent leaders.

They are encouraged to suggest key deliverable changes identifying one thing they would change and under Fiona’s leadership these ideas were costed, planned, and presented to leadership teams. Some of the ideas were simple but made a huge difference to the way we work. The Rising Stars have taken this learned experience and replicated in their service areas, meaning we are getting to a culture of continuous improvement.

EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

This award is for organisations who have revitalised the community or neighbourhood they serve. It also recognises that physical improvements go hand-in-hand with social and economic developments to make a real difference to people's lives.

The Depot - homes for every stage of life

Rowlinson



Statement of support

The Depot in Manchester is a brand new intergenerational development catering for all stages of life, with affordability, adaptability and a strong sense of design at its heart. The change from the site's former use as a bus depot is transformational, bringing a range of much-needed new, quality housing to the community.

Context

After working in the Moss Side/Whalley Range area for many years, Rowlinson knew that there was an opportunity to do something different on the 5 acre site which sits on a main arterial route into the city. The need for quality, new-build affordable accommodation continues to outstrip demand within the context of a population that is both growing and ageing. Existing housing stock in the area is predominantly Victorian back-to-back terraces with layouts that don't always cater well for larger families and older people.

Regeneration

Regeneration activity, with an associated wider masterplan, has been ongoing in the area since the 1990s with a drive to produce homes with lower running costs, high specifications and diverse tenures promoting the area as a neighbourhood of choice. The plan for The Depot was entirely consistent with the local authority's core strategy, involving the creation of new, high-quality diverse housing on previously developed land, addressing demographic needs and supporting economic growth.

Homes for all

The Depot is a development for all, where generations can mix freely and people can upsize, downsize or adapt their existing space to meet their changing needs whilst remaining within their community. In all, over 300 new build homes form part of the development with a range of rented apartments, 3 and 4-bedroom family homes and later living options encompassing extra care housing and over 55s apartments developed in line with HAPPI principles.

A modern quality development

The new properties have been informed by the character of the surrounding area, respecting the style and quality of Victorian homes, whilst providing modern open-plan interiors suitable for today's living requirements.

Green space was highlighted as an important feature for local residents. In response, both private and communal gardens feature within the development along with tree lined paths, all forming part of a comprehensive landscape strategy. The extra care apartments focus on a communal garden which can also serve as a central community hub.

The Depot is pedestrian friendly with inbuilt measure to keep car speeds low and therefore safer for all. Cycle stores are available, encouraging active travel where possible.

Sustainability was key both during the construction and in terms of the houses. After the land had been remediated, every effort was made to reuse and recycle materials.

Working together

A major key to the successful delivery of the development is partnering with other organisations bringing their expertise to the scheme - Rise Homes for the private rented sector apartments and housing provider, Mosscafe St Vincent's (MSV), for the affordable and later living solutions.

David Chilton, Managing Director of Rowlinson, said: "The Depot is all about quality, design and choice set within the existing community. Together with Rise and

MSV, we have worked hard to create a really cohesive development. It's rewarding to know that we're making a significant contribution to the development of what is such a vibrant area."

Key facts

- Value: over £40 million
- Four low-rise PRS apartment blocks with 92nr 1 and 2-bedroom apartments
- Elmswood Park extra care offering 72nr affordable rent apartments with associated canteen, communal indoor and outdoor space and additional support as needed
- 54nr family homes, 30 of which are shared ownership, 24 private sale homes
- 40 apartments for over 55s, designed with HAPPI principles in place (ongoing)
- 45 PRS apartments (ongoing)

Outcomes and achievements

"Moving here has been the best thing that could've happened to me... It's given me a new lease of life." Mary, Elmswood Park resident.

The Depot is already becoming an established part of the local community landscape and has brought a former neglected brownfield site back into full use. Sustainability now features widely across the development with energy efficient measures to reduce the carbon footprint and keep bills lower.

Giving back

Together with Manchester City Council, the team has worked to deliver employment and training opportunities throughout the construction period. Local labour has been prioritised and apprentices have worked throughout the scheme.

Wider community support has been provided throughout the build including activity for the local allotments, assistance for the community's alleyway cleaning and greening activity, donations to food bank collections and support for neighbourhood gatherings.

The range of homes on offer has been well received with excellent take-up across all housing types and tenures, despite the impact of Covid-19 in terms of viewings.

The past 18 months has come with challenges that no-one could have predicted. The scheme partners stayed focussed and are genuinely thrilled that The Depot is already home to so many.

HOUSING ORGANISATION OF THE YEAR

This award will recognise organisations who are leading the way in driving professionalism, learning and development and inclusion while delivery a great service for tenants. We want to hear from organisations who are fantastic to work for and drive good outcomes for their staff on promoting equality and diversity as part of the day job.

Building Safety and Customer Voice

Salix Homes



Statement of support

The Grenfell Tower tragedy was a wake-up call for the housing sector - exposing a major building safety crisis and highlighting the urgent need for cultural change and for tenants to be listened to and treated with respect.

Since that fateful night, Salix Homes has been leading the way on building safety and customer voice, championing the calls for change on a national level, influencing an emerging statutory regime and successfully positioning itself as an ambassador for the cause.

These are two of the most pressing issues facing the housing sector, and Salix Homes' actions are driving up standards for not only its own residents in Salford, but people across the country.

Building Safety

Salix Homes has become synonymous with the drive for building safety, campaigning for a seismic shift within the industry to ensure there can never be another Grenfell: from advising government bodies on future recommendations to piloting and implementing

the reforms in the pending Building Safety Bill.

The landlord owns 8,000 homes in Salford, Greater Manchester, including eight high-rise buildings which had failed cladding systems. Once this was brought to light following Grenfell, Salix Homes moved quickly to implement changes to ensure the safety of its residents and has been championing building safety ever since.

Salix is part of the Government's Early Adopters initiative, playing a key role in advising and trialling the recommendations of Dame Judith Hackitt's Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety. It has also been instrumental in the development of the National Building Safety Charter - Building a Safer Future, and the Building Safety Bill, which will bring about the biggest improvements to building safety in 40-years.

This year, Salix completed its cladding remediation and safety enhancement programme, which has followed the principles of the reforms in the Bill, representing a microcosm of what the future of building safety will look like.

Salix has successfully developed, piloted and implemented many of the new measures in the Bill, as an example for others, including:

- Establishing annual building safety inspections to high-rise buildings
- Introducing a Mandatory Occurrence Reporting system, allowing residents, contractors or colleagues to report building safety issues directly to their landlord
- Establishing a dedicated Building Safety Directorate, including an 'Accountable Person'

Salix is also one of the first social landlords to embark on the journey to becoming a Charter Champion

- a robust benchmarking and verification process launched by the Building a Safer Future (BSF) Charter to help organisations drive the systemic culture change required to put building safety first.

Customer Voice

Not only did Grenfell shine a spotlight on building safety, it also accentuated the importance of listening to, and crucially acting upon, tenants' views - an issue that has also been brought to the fore in the Social Housing White Paper and another area where Salix is leading the way.

The landlord is trailblazing a new and modern approach to customer engagement, which aims to give tenants a stronger voice.

Last year, it launched its new Customer Committee - made up of a diverse group of 12 tenants in a paid-for role on a par with the organisation's Board members and responsible for ensuring Salix is delivering on the consumer standards, achieving value for money, and holding the landlord to account.

It isn't a talking-shop or box-ticking exercise. It's about meaningful, strategic customer engagement where tenants can genuinely make a difference and help shape services.

It's a bold and new approach, inspired by the Social Housing White Paper and the recommendation for landlords to 'continually improve the way they engage with social housing tenants' and is setting the blueprint for others to follow.

Outcomes and achievements

Building safety and customer voice are inextricably linked, and Salix is recognised for its innovative approach to both, with trade awards and multiple appearances at conferences to share its experiences.

Dame Judith Hackitt has commended Salix for its commitment to building safety, saying: "We were impressed to learn how Salix has applied building safety initiatives to all buildings, embedding culture change. This all contributes to bringing about a behavioural shift throughout the company, by building ownership and responsibility for building safety. Salix Homes should be commended for your approach."

The cultural and organisational change brought

about by Salix's approach to building safety and customer voice has also presented new learning and development opportunities for its workforce, with the organisation launching a new Business Safety Directorate, a Customer Engagement Team, and a programme to create a culture where both these areas form the foundations of its business.

Salix Homes' actions to drive fundamental reforms in both the built environment and customer engagement, will help ensure people are safe and have a strong voice to speak out, impacting not only its own tenants, but all social housing tenants and that's what makes it a strong contender for Housing Organisation of the Year.

Housing Organisation of the Year

Stockport Homes Group



Statement of support

Stockport Homes Group (SHG) is an umbrella for four companies, including Stockport Homes, Three Sixty, Viaduct Housing Partnership and Foundations Stockport.

As a landlord, Stockport Homes is an Arm's Length Management Company managing 11,500 homes on behalf of Stockport Council and 800 in their own right.

With 700 staff, over 30,000 customers, and a turnover of £50m.

SHG is a unique landlord where entrepreneurship and commercialisation go hand in hand with social impact. The group has created an innovative approach to sustaining essential employment, finance and food provision services in a world of increasing demand but reducing resource.

No matter where a colleague works within the group, it is clear they are contributing to this social impact goal. Whether they work in the commercial construction arm, Three Sixty, or the charitable arm, Foundations, the work they do is focussed on doing more for customers and the communities they live in.

SHG couldn't do this without a highly engaged and high performing workforce. With a recognisable mission of 'One team, transforming lives', engagement is central to this mission and their commitment is recognised through Investors in People Platinum, IIP Health & Wellbeing and Best Companies accreditations, retained for 12 consecutive years. In 2021 the group achieved three Star 'Extraordinary'

Best Companies status, placing them at number one in list of Best Housing Company to work for!

At SHG there is a working environment where team members feel they truly belong to the SHG family and are encouraged and supported to 'be the best they can be'. Although the group have achieved a lot, the engagement journey continues, focusing on feedback, having great conversations and working collaboratively to provide extraordinary services for customers and communities.

In the summer of 2019, SHG developed BE YOU - a vision for an inclusive workplace. BE YOU sums up their belief that everyone has the right to be who they are, and to be that person at work. BE YOU has continued to be intrinsic to SHG's diversity activity through 2020/21 and has led to the creation of different staff groups including those for: LGBT, BAME and people who have a disability - this gives colleagues a space to vocalise positive changes they want to see.

A diverse workplace has continued to be fostered throughout the past year through effective management training, supportive policies, staff groups and events (e.g. sponsoring Stockport Pride) - these are some examples of activities that are in place to help provide this environment.

SHG believes it is vital to deliver development sessions to help staff grow and throughout the past year, the team has adapted these sessions to run

virtually. Particularly, facilitating a series of 'Directorate Management Seminars' has been a success and has allowed managers to obtain new skills that help them to offer support, knowledge sharing and development opportunities to their own teams. In 2021, SHG launched a policy called 'Maximise Our Potential' which enables all staff that can to work flexibly - allowing them to have time needed for development and personal activities.

Other initiatives SHG have been involved in over the past year and continue to be involved in include being lead partner in the unique, collaborative project 'Let Us'. This aims to increase access to quality affordable homes in the private rented sector across the region. So far, this project has secured approx. £15-20M of investment from social impact company Resonance.

A bespoke service for landlords and developers, 'Three Sixty Living' - has been critical during the pandemic. From individual properties to extensive portfolios, the team remained entirely focused on every aspect of tenancy and facilities management including rent collection and repairs. So, despite the pandemic, all this has improved the level of quality demanded of others across the Greater Manchester housing sector.

During the Pandemic SHG have also launched 'Home' - a unique in-house socially focussed marketing agency which has generated almost £100k over a five-month period to deliver surplus' to reinvest into SHG's social value provision.

Outcomes and achievements

SHG have always lived by the mantra of being part of a place, committing to communities not just customers. This last year has really driven home how important this is, and emphasised that the best staff deliver the best support for customers. During unprecedented times SHG colleagues kept a positive attitude and worked in an agile way to ensure that customers were not isolated or unsupported. Committed colleagues continue to be the biggest asset.

Some highlights of achievements;

100% Gas safety compliance

98.70% customer satisfaction with the outcome of repairs

99.62% customer satisfaction with the outcome of their ASB case

Maximised digital technology to continue to deliver essential services

Improvements in technology meant that when Covid-19 hit SHG were able to;

Quickly make over 11,000 welfare calls

Support over 2000 customers receiving Universal Credit

Deliver winter welfare visits to over 500 older and more vulnerable residents

Deliver over 4500 essential food packages in the first three months of lockdown through 'Your Local Pantry'.

SHG value learning opportunities, looking back with pride, but more importantly look forward with the determination to do even better.

believe housing

believe housing



Statement of support

The coronavirus pandemic created difficulties for all organisations. But believe housing hasn't just been getting through the problems, it has thrived on the challenges, and delivered a string of positive results during the very height of Covid-19 issues.

During the same period, customer satisfaction increased to almost 9 out of 10 placing it in the top ten housing associations surveyed. In-depth research into culture, found that believe housing scored 86 out of 100, among the highest not-for-profit organisations in the country by the internationally recognised Barrett Formula.

County Durham has had a consistently low economic base for decades. Some of the communities served by believe housing have seen no significant employers based there for 100 years or more. Many families find themselves relying on low-wage or zero-hour contract jobs.

Against that backdrop, the coronavirus pandemic created huge challenges for many believe housing customers. Calls to the organisation about Universal Credit increased by 40% with more than 560 new claims just a few weeks.

Experts in Universal Credit and welfare benefits at believe housing responded immediately. Although face-to-face meetings were impossible, telephone and video call appointments replaced them. Hundreds of thousands of pounds were secured in unclaimed benefits for believe housing customers, some of the individual examples are even more striking. One customer was more than £35,000 better off after it was discovered that they were entitled to a severe disability premium but had not made a claim.

believe housing's established community funding

programme was repurposed within weeks to direct grants to groups that could help neighbourhoods most during the pandemic.

The extra financial hardships customers faced, combined with the impact of lockdowns, created a significant strain on the mental health of many. A17-strong team of believe housing employees volunteered to offer support to people struggling with mental health concerns during the pandemic, alongside their day job.

The team, drawn from all parts of the business, was set up to help customers through times of crisis; particularly people who were experiencing suicidal thoughts. During the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic they saw an increase of 50% in the number of people they were supporting.

A key figure in the initiative, Tenancy Sustainment Manager Jayne Adamson, received an MBE for services to housing and suicide prevention.

believe housing took a very proactive stance on customer welfare. More than 10,000 outgoing calls were made to customers to check on their welfare. Many of these calls were handled by staff unable to carry out their usual work due to pandemic restrictions. Resources were regularly redirected and believe housing did not use the furlough system at all.

As part of our efforts to reduce the need for believe housing repairs staff to go into homes during the pandemic, a series of more than 30 self-help videos were produced. They cover simple repairs like bleeding radiators, unblocking a sink or lubricating a door lock, which can be carried out by customers with a minimum of tools.

Securing a £250m new financing deal during all the uncertainty of a global pandemic was a major milestone in the journey of believe housing. The funding allows believe housing's award-winning new-build programme to be expanded to 1,250 homes. The organisation is determined not to lose its community focus. Extra money will also be pumped into believe housing's successful community investment programme, which provided more than £150,000 to charities and community groups during the last year.

believe housing also became the first housing association ever to achieve the Carbon Neutral International Standard and United Nations Climate Neutral Now initiative participation. It has also officially reached carbon neutrality for business activities.

Outcomes and achievements

believe housing hasn't just been getting through the coronavirus pandemic, it has thrived on the challenges and delivered a string of results during the very height of Covid-19 issues.

This year, believe housing has completed a ground-breaking refinancing deal that places environmental measures at the heart of business performance, a raft of innovative measures to ensure that believe housing customers could access help and advice when physical visits were impossible, and funding increased to support some of the most vulnerable people and communities through Covid-19.

Customer satisfaction increased to almost 9 out of 10, placing it in the top ten housing associations surveyed through a range of measures to ensure that tenants were placed at the heart of believe housing's coronavirus response.

Key award wins included the top honour for covid resilience in the housing sector, plus a coveted 'two stars' in the Best Companies survey the first time believe housing has taken part. And in-depth research into culture found that believe housing scored 86 out of 100, among the highest not-for-profit organisations in the country, by the internationally recognised Barrett Formula.

EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH AND WELLBEING

This award is for organisations who have demonstrated excellence in their approach to the health and wellbeing of staff and volunteers in the last 12 months. We are looking to hear about new projects or initiatives which have improved health and wellbeing outcomes for the people connected to your organisation.

Health & Wellbeing

Stockport Homes Group



Statement of support

At the start of the Pandemic and upon entering a national lockdown Stockport Homes Group (SHG) were faced with the challenge of continuing to deliver services to some of the most vulnerable within Stockport whilst safeguarding team members safety and wellbeing. Half of team members had to work from home, some for the first time, balancing work and home schooling or caring responsibilities, whilst the other half who are key workers, continued to work on the front line.

SHG's collaborative and inclusive approach enabled us to embrace the challenges of the Pandemic. Our Senior Management Team, alongside key managers and partners worked in collaboration to create a plan of action which subsequently developed into our 'Transformation and Recovery' Plan. This approach enabled us to continue to operate whilst developing and utilising skills of our workforce, which enabled them to be motivated and supported their wellbeing.

It was important to gather team member feedback as they were faced with working in extremely challenging circumstances. This was facilitated through two

engagement surveys at three and six months into the Pandemic. The feedback was used to shape SHG's engagement plan which included activities such as; targeted Resilience sessions, Team Connectivity sessions, introducing a dedicated Teams channel for those home schooling or caring. Through SHG's Active Listeners we undertook over 400 welfare calls to team members which included follow up calls and signposting to professional services.

We utilised communication channels to keep team members up to date, sending out daily Insight newsletters and tracking access. Headed up by a member of our wider leadership team they included written and filmed updates, so they remained visible and contactable. We made sure we the content reflected wellbeing, engagement and development support based on team member feedback. We ran several competitions including; workplace selfies and share your story to keep colleagues connected. SHG also felt it was important to continue to deliver development sessions, adapting them to run virtually. Facilitating our Directorate Management Seminars with managers has been key to supporting them to continue to support their teams' wellbeing and engagement through clear communications and knowledge sharing.

SHG also delivered innovative activities to keep people connected through a virtual Colleague Festival and Festive Ball. SHG's CEO and Senior Leadership Team put their full support behind continuing to facilitate these events albeit in a very different style. SHG were the first in the Housing Sector to facilitate a hybrid Colleague Festival where nearly all 655 team members were able to access the 'live streamed' event, with a link forwarded to those who couldn't attend due to delivering emergency services or self-isolating. The event included; an update from the CEO, who provided reassurances

and offered her personal thanks to all colleagues, a live 'question and answer' session with Directors who generated excitement for the future of SHG and a special 'SHG Hero's' recognition award ceremony.

SHG's first ever virtual ASPIRE Festive Ball recognised team member commitment and dedication across the year. All team members received a celebration pack, delivered personally by their manager to their homes which included prosecco, snacks and party paraphernalia. Colleagues enjoyed awards presentations, bingo and a bespoke Christmas film which ended with a live sing-along led by one of our Directors.

We have also advanced our approach to flexible working to support team member wellbeing through our 'Maximising our Potential' approach. This

enabled us to maintain high levels of customer satisfaction, enhance 100% attendance and increase our headcount by continuing to recruit throughout this period. We maintained 'world class' levels of engagement across our 655 team members who adapted to take on board new ways of working whilst balancing the challenges of homelife and caring responsibilities.

SHG believe that through this approach, ASPIRE values and the commitment of team members we have improved colleague mental wellbeing and enhanced an already high performing working environment which has proven to be adaptable and forward thinking to support us on the next steps of our journey.

Outcomes and achievements

SHG has led its operations through a pandemic which has resulted in top performance, reduced sickness, and maintained the highest levels of engagement.

Thanks to SHG's unwavering commitment to supporting colleagues, we have maintained a high level of performance across the organisation - reflected in the retention of 3 Stars 'World Class' levels of engagement, in our Best Companies' survey. SHG's approach is also reflected in our 'Platinum' Investors in People Accreditation - including special recognition for our standards in health and wellbeing. This feedback came from colleague surveys and SHG recognise how important this approach is to get an accurate reflection of colleagues' needs.

The following benefits have been achieved or maintained due to our collaborative and inclusive approach:

- an average staff retention rate of 89%
- a rise in employee headcount to 655
- 98% satisfaction with Stockport Homes as a landlord
- 71% individuals achieved 100 percent attendance in 2020 compared to 58% individuals during 2019 and 45% in 2018