



Chartered
Institute of
Housing
Scotland



Good Practice Compendium

Sharing the lessons learnt from Scotland's
Housing Awards 2021

Headline sponsor:



Welcome

It is good to be back. After 18 months of Teams, Zoom, emails and phone calls, it is great to again be with the sector in Scotland, in person, to celebrate the work you all do day in, day out.

Our profession hasn't just survived the pandemic, we have thrived. We have developed new ways of working that were previously unimaginable - all to the benefit of our tenants and communities.

This year's awards and accompanying Good Practice Compendium recognises the incredible effort of housing professionals, teams, and organisations over the last 18 months. We will celebrate organisations that are developing new affordable housing, teams delivering excellence in customer services, individuals offering housing leadership and, this year in particular, those who have made an outstanding contribution to the sector throughout their career, with an award named in honour of our former director Alan Ferguson.

The Good Practice Compendium has become the must have record of the sector's innovation, developments and achievement in Scotland. It is at its core a learning document, but it acts as an inspiration to us all to be the best we can be and deliver on our shared vision of providing a sustainable and affordable housing option for everyone across the country. I hope you find it useful and it gives you a better insight into the fantastic work of your fellow professionals working across Scotland.



Callum Chomczuk

National director,
CIH Scotland

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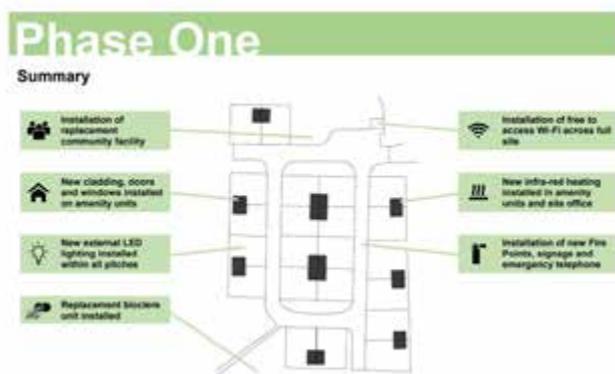
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EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

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.

Working with our Gypsy/Traveller Community

South Lanarkshire Council



Statement of support

South Lanarkshire Council currently operates two Gypsy/Traveller sites, providing accommodation for over 100 residents within Shawlands Crescent in Larkhall and Springbank Park at East Kilbride. For a prolonged period, the council has ensured the highest levels of customer service were offered to site residents, with dedicated officers available to provide services and support, alongside regular visits from a range of other health and education services. This was reflected in continually high results from annual resident satisfaction surveys conducted.

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, the longstanding face-to-face services provided to residents was immediately impacted due to restrictions imposed. Despite the challenges presented to the council, officers within Housing Services recognised the additional issues the pandemic may be causing to those within the Gypsy/Traveller community and therefore quickly progressed a range of actions to offer additional support to site residents. This included:

- Issuing site specific newsletters to residents, detailing the arrangements which had been put in place to ensure service continuity and reassuring them that their occupancy was not at risk as a result of any financial issues they may face due to the pandemic.
- Arranging for daily welfare telephone calls to be made to each household by the site officer
- Offering dedicated virtual money and benefit advice surgeries for residents as well as signposting to other advice and peer support groups available.
- Issuing free power cards to households to ensure they had access to electricity 24 hours a day.

As the initial restrictions began to ease, Housing Services saw an opportunity to transform and continually improve services in conjunction with residents. This included establishing and encourage participation in a virtual resident's meetings at Shawlands Crescent, with the aim of building on the momentum and engagement in place prior to the pandemic starting. These meetings have been extremely successful with strong attendance from residents, providing them with the opportunity to get to know the range of officers involved in delivering the services and projects on the sites.

The meetings have allowed a range of site improvement projects and plans to move forward with residents being fully involved in the decision making process. This led to the joint development of a Shawlands Crescent Masterplan, which highlights all improvement projects planned for the site including those suggested by residents and what the council are required to do to maintain and improve site standards.

Over the past 12 months, Housing Services worked with residents to progress the following projects:

- The installation of new innovative decarbonised heating systems within the amenity units, funded jointly by the council and Scottish Government
- The installation of free to access Wi-Fi for residents of both sites, funded jointly by the council and Scottish Procurement Alliance to tackle digital exclusion and social isolation.
- Expansion of the pitches at both sites to provide residents with more space and help achieve relevant fire safety guidance requirements.
- Progressing the plans for the new community facility at Shawlands Crescent, funded jointly by the council and Scottish Government. This includes giving residents the opportunity to pick their preferred interior designs and equipment that will be installed.

These projects have led to real improvements felt by residents with positive feedback received from them to date.

In addition, through this enhanced engagement, residents have also had the opportunity to work with officers to resolve long term issues on the sites, such as the re-instatement of doorstep deliveries from the Royal Mail.

Outcomes and achievements

Despite the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, the council has been able to improve its levels of engagement with residents of the Gypsy/ Traveller sites and deliver on many of the proposed projects that were planned.

The circumstances of the pandemic has required more innovative solutions to be found to how officers engage with residents and these have ultimately led to close relationships being forged, allowing open and clear communication between everybody involved.

This has led to officers understanding more about what residents would like to see on the sites, further enhancing the improvement plans in place. The

pandemic has also changed the preferences of residents, with an increased focus on improving the space available on the sites, leading to plans for new play facilities, extended amenity units and increased parking for residents and visitors.

South Lanarkshire Council remains committed to improving the lives of Gypsy/Travellers and will continue to build on the strong relationships forged between residents and officers before and during the pandemic to ensure it provides safe, attractive places for residents of the Gypsy/Traveller community to live that meets their ongoing needs.

Prospect's Welfare Rights Service

Prospect Community Housing



Statement of support

Prospect Community Housing - Welfare Rights Service

At the start of the pandemic, when all office staff were working from home, Prospect's welfare rights service was faced with a significant challenge. At a time when our tenants needed our help the most, we were unable to meet them face to face and this presented us with challenges in obtaining signatures and processing documents. Our Welfare Rights Officer, Fiona McLuckie, recognised the flexibility offered by using technology and by offering a variety of communication methods she was quickly able to adapt the service provided.

Fiona realised WhatsApp and text messaging were useful tools for obtaining documents as tenants could photograph the documents and send this information from their phones. Tenants have also used this method to send screenshots of their Universal Credit journal messages. Some tenants have found it easier to communicate this way, especially where poor mental health makes leaving the home or attending a face-to-face appointment difficult. The exchange of information through this method is also much quicker.

The main method of communication with tenants who don't have access to any digital platforms has been through telephone calls. This has been helpful for some of our more anxious or disabled tenants as they don't need to leave their homes. Fiona has discovered some appointments which would normally have been face to face can be conducted more efficiently by telephone.

A particular challenge during the pandemic has been the completion of disability forms. Fiona adopted a different approach where she would be seen cycling around Wester Hailes every couple of weeks to collect pre-signed forms from tenants in a socially distanced exchange. Fiona would then complete the form over the phone, scan, and email copies to tenants for approval before posting. This method was adopted very early in the pandemic when many other organisations were struggling to find a way of completing these forms remotely and obtaining the required 'wet signatures. Many tenants were pleased to see Fiona's friendly face as she conducted a socially distanced exchange from her bicycle.

Throughout the pandemic Fiona has explored different methods of communication and engagement with tenants to ensure the Welfare Rights service has been accessed by as many as possible. The experience has allowed us to enhance the service we provide and many of these new ways of working will remain an integral part of how we engage with our tenants even once restrictions have lifted.

In addition, Prospect's Welfare Rights service recognised the demand for additional support required by Prospect tenants and established two new projects over the last year. Firstly, Prospect worked with other members of the Edinburgh Independent Housing Association group, ARCHIE to establish an independent debt advice service, with local advice expert CHAI providing the advice. Fiona had recognised that specialised debt advice was needed by many and the requirement for this was only increasing as the impact of the pandemic worsened. This project developed by 4 organisations across Edinburgh and delivered remotely is working well to ensure that tenants are getting debt advice specific to their circumstances.

Secondly, Prospect's Welfare Rights service joined the HACT project to offer fuel vouchers to Prospect tenants, again responding to demand.

Over the year, Prospect's Welfare Rights service has responded to customers needs and preferences to continue to deliver and expand this much valued and needed service.

Outcomes and achievements

During 2020-21 Prospect's Welfare Rights project generated £1m in financial gains for 516 tenants.

Whilst out on her bike, Fiona generated £500k in disability benefits as part of this total. The remaining gains include additional benefits, charitable grants, and fuel vouchers.

The Debt Project has high engagement rates of 83% for the Prospect tenants referred. Those tenants referred with rent arrears, have had a 27% reduction in arrears balances, helped by the budgeting techniques offered as part of the support.

270 Prospect tenants received fuel support of £34k in help towards paying fuel bills. 300 tenants received an energy pack of goodies funded by the Scottish Government Community Recovery Fund.

Prospect tenants commented:

'I'd be starving and doing god knows for money right now if I didn't get help from that fund'

'Thank you for all your help and support Fiona. It is very much appreciated.'

'Thanks again for what you have done. Everyone needs a Fiona'

'OMG I almost got a heart attack [on hearing about a grant award]. Thank you so much!'

'The bill has been paid and I am so relieved and full of appreciation to you for your kind support. Thank you and god bless you'

Customer Contact Calls

Riverside Scotland



Statement of support

Following the announcement of the first Covid pandemic lockdown, members of the Riverside Scotland Housing Management team met to discuss how they could best support customers during this difficult time, particularly those with vulnerabilities and complex needs. The team were adamant that they should contact every single customer to discuss how they were feeling, check on their health and well-being, and address any tenancy related concerns they may have. The Housing team proceeded to implement a programme of telephone calls to all our 1280 customers over an 8 week period. These calls were made by team members in addition to their routine daily remits and tasks, and were often carried out in the officer's own time.

The discussions that took place with customers covered a wide array of issues, with the key aim being to ensure the customer understood that the Association was there for them, continuing to deliver services, able to facilitate access to local community support and health services, provide crisis support and food provisions, or even just as a listening ear at the

other end of the phone. Team members could often spend up to an hour with one customer, providing reassurance, companionship and support. The team recognised at the outset how the social isolation caused by the lockdown would detrimentally affect our customers, and the telephone chats that they carried out significantly helped to reduce feelings of loneliness during the darkest days of the pandemic for many of our tenants.

It became evident as the initiative progressed, that so many of our customers just wanted to talk to us about their family, friends, what they were watching on TV, their fears about the pandemic, their pets, what they were having for dinner, and that they were really interested in hearing about how the staff themselves were coping. At the initial call staff offered to call the customer back again the following week, and on a weekly basis thereafter to maintain the contact if this was something they would like. Approximately 20% of our customers agreed to this and were contacted proactively every week until the end of lockdown and beyond.

The lockdown was a very challenging time for all staff, given the impact on their own lives and personal circumstances. The Housing Team successfully placed the needs of their customers above their own anxieties and concerns, and were committed to providing a service above and beyond their routine housing management roles. This customer contact established the Association as 'more than a landlord', and significantly contributed to a demonstrable increase in overall customer satisfaction levels. Prior to the implementation of the contact programme, overall satisfaction was 72% prior to lockdown, this increased to 85% by November 2020.

The customer call project is a clear example of true person centred customer care. The compassion, empathy, and understanding displayed by every member of the team whilst implementing this programme, in addition to the delivery of our core services, has now 'raised the bar' in terms of the quality and level of customer care provided to our customers, and has essentially enhanced our core values. Following the success of this initiative, the Association has now introduced proactive 6 monthly

customer welfare checks, where a member of the team will call or visit the customer every 6 months to discuss how they are getting on, identify any tenancy issues or concerns, and address these issues before they become a service demand or require a crisis response. This is a real step change towards developing a more preventative and proactive service which supports our customers, not just to maintain a tenancy, but to thrive within our neighbourhoods and communities.

Outcomes and achievements

In the months and weeks following the implementation of our Customer Contact Project feedback the Association's overall customer satisfaction levels increased by approximately 13%. Positive feedback from our customers has told us how our telephone chats really helped them cope during the pandemic. Through the telephone calls we identified that one of our customers, Robert, was self isolating and therefore was unable to buy any food, he also had no family support to assist him. The Housing Officer arranged a food delivery for Robert which the

Association funded through our Customer Call Project fund. A photo of Robert receiving his delivery is included with this submission. Another customer who really benefited from the Customer Call Project, Mr Rennie, advised that 'The way Riverside Scotland has handled the pandemic has been outstanding, regular check in calls, helping with food provisions etc, if it were not for the daily call I would have been in a much darker place'.

EatWell: feeding customers in their time of need

Wheatley Group



Statement of support

At Wheatley Group 'Making Homes and Lives Better' is more than just a mission statement - it embodies everything it stands for.

In 2020/21, the EatWell service from Scotland's leading housing, care and property-management group stepped up to change lives like never before.

As the full impact of the pandemic struck communities across the country, the EatWell service became, quite literally, a lifesaver for thousands of Wheatley tenants.

As the economy ground to a halt, thousands of jobs were lost. Putting food on the table became the greatest worry for families, single people, the old and the young.

The pandemic left many Wheatley customers facing severe financial hardship - and EatWell was at the forefront of its customer support package.

Pre-pandemic, Wheatley delivered 120 food packs each week to mainly Glasgow tenants. Each day of the pandemic, more and more customers got in touch to say they were struggling to buy food.

In March/April 2020, the Group began to expand EatWell to meet the huge need. It mobilised speedily to extend food parcel deliveries across all Group geographies, from Glasgow to West Lothian and Dumfries & Galloway.

Wheatley increased operations to seven days a week, providing emergency weekend cover. Additional staff stepped forward from voids, handyman, environmental and repairs teams, temporarily increasing the food delivery team from five to 53 staff; and using 23 vehicles, including two existing EatWell vans.

Demand increased to an average of 1900 customers supported weekly. At the height of the emergency, over 2600 deliveries were made in a single week.

With staff, partner and funding support, Wheatley supported individuals and families who would simply have gone hungry without this service.

Across the year the pandemic continued to impact hugely on financially vulnerable customers - many were furloughed, had reduced incomes or became unemployed - often for the first time - and then had to navigate the Universal Credit process.

To speed up access and reach even more people, EatWell began offering £30 supermarket vouchers in July 2020 via text/email. This innovation worked

well for dispersed Edinburgh, Dumfries & Galloway and West Lothian households. Staff also reported that while physical food deliveries were hugely welcome, vouchers offered customer choice and discretion:

- "Vouchers allow people to get what they need, with dignity".
- "Customers could buy what they needed at the supermarket"

In the West, 2000 children were supported, and most customers were unemployed, receiving benefits, State Pension or were registered disabled. 19% were self-isolating, and most lived in the bottom 20% Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation areas, with 43% living in the bottom 5%.

Customers were delighted that Wheatley provided this support so quickly; particularly those experiencing sudden job loss or furlough.

Many stories across the Group highlighted how the service acted as a lifeline. For example, in one household with four children, a self-employed

customer lost all work almost overnight, and their partner was furloughed. They really struggled while awaiting benefit support. Wheatley provided food for three weeks, along with money and fuel advice. The tenant was delighted - providing food along with practical advice meant they had cash for bills, easing so much stress.

While the crisis has eased, Wheatley Foundation, the Group's charitable subsidiary, continued the EatWell service. It has been transformed from a physical service delivering packs to customers' homes, with food contents reliant on supermarket surplus availability, to providing fast, convenient, direct access to vouchers from three leading supermarkets.

EatWell now supports hundreds of families with choice and independence in emergency food support, alongside longer-term wraparound services to help people through a crisis and make a real difference to their lives.

Outcomes and achievements

33,000 food parcels or vouchers were delivered to 11,325 households experiencing significant hardship in 2020/21.

Wheatley supplied essential food parcels to vulnerable households, reducing hunger, worry and easing budgets.

Frontline staff responded quickly, with practical help and links into additional services.

Customers felt truly supported during an unprecedented crisis:

- "EatWell made a significant difference and made me proud to be able to offer support"
- "Fantastic service, never judging, always happy to help"
- "Stepped up when needed by our tenants".

Customers shared their own experiences:

- "We were down to no food at all, an inch of milk. I felt very much supported, my housing officer was brilliant. You are wee angels." (GHA family)
- "Milk, butter and cheese were very handy, really good. I'm 90 and my family try to help, but it is a hard time. My housing officer called me every week to check I was okay" (Dunedin Canmore lone household)
- "The supermarket voucher was fantastic; I got it at the weekend when I see my kids, it helped me get things for them. It is unbelievable what you are doing, all of you should be very proud for the help you are giving people". (WLHP younger male).

Kingdom CARES: Delivering Customer Service Excellence

Kingdom Housing Association



Statement of support

Since 2017 Kingdom has been progressing a culture change programme that has seen our core CARES values (Customer, Accountable, Respect, Efficient, Support) embedded within everything that we do. In late 2020 we ran a series of online customer service development workshops for over 100 colleagues ahead of the launch of our Kingdom CARES customer service commitment. Building on customer feedback and internal feedback Kingdom CARES embeds our core values within an approach to deliver customer service excellence.

Throughout the pandemic our aim has been to not just maintain services, but to proactively enhance services, adapting to the new operating environment and providing a responsive service to support our customers. This has been reflected in two key areas:

Digital Customer Services

Our long term plans to deliver digital customer service options have been accelerated in response to the pandemic and following on from work that we had already been doing exploring customers' service access preferences. We have driven development and promotion of a range of digital service options to meet varying customer needs. Over 80% of our customers now have an on-line 'My Kingdom' account. And during the past 12 months we have launched a successful Live Chat service as well as our automated Web chat service 'Kingston' who is providing self-service access through our website on a range of frequently asked questions about our services. Customer demand for expanded digital services is driving our development of services towards a goal to deliver full self-service for customers who wish to access services in that way.

Embracing video conferencing has helped us to deliver "face to face" service and along with the introduction of new technology for collecting customer feedback this has supported delivery of a range of services, not least our customer engagement programme. Indeed, during the pandemic we have seen an increasing number of customers engaging with the organisation on a wide range of projects. For example; to feed directly into development of our new Domestic Abuse Policy, over 300 tenants contributed to the development of our new Tenant & Customer Participation Strategy; over 20% of customers engaged in a study on rent affordability and value for money as part of our rent review

Customer Service Support

During the period we have also focussed on enhancing our customer service experience, with a particular focus on Inclusion and wellbeing.

We successfully accessed support through the Connecting Scotland project to provide support for over 250 vulnerable customers to get on-line to access our new digital services and wider community networks and services. And our full Housing team received training to provide support to our wider customer base in accessing digital services

In addition to promoting digital inclusion, we have delivered a range of initiatives, including our "Virtual Roadshows" that have seen us proactively engage with customers to deliver a variety of support that they may well not otherwise have been accessed including; money advice, energy advice, repairs and support grants. We received highly positive feedback from customers about the work delivered through these projects. and our energy advice and tenant participation staff have received individual recognition externally for their work

We have augmented our own services through accessing external support grants totalling over £260,000 that have been used to provide direct and indirect financial support to our customers. In addition we set up internal support funds to support customers in short term financial distress due to the pandemic. And to enhance customer experience at ground level we have run a series of small projects to deliver small gifts and complete tasks such as assistance with shopping for vulnerable customers.

Outcomes and achievements

Kingdom CARES customer service development workshops delivered (virtually) for over 100 staff

Development of My Kingdom has seen over 80% of all customers sign up to a digital account

Live Chat and automated chat services launched with positive uptake

Digital customer service channels now account for around 25% of inbound service access

Over 250 vulnerable customers supported to get online through Connecting Scotland Project

Staff training to support digital inclusion

Over 20% of customers have engaged in at least one consultation exercise this year directly influencing service development

Recognition for staff members through external awards

Positive feedback from customers - over 200% increase in compliments received.

Specific feedback on Connecting Scotland project:

"My wife had a stroke and we have both been housebound during covid. With the Connecting Scotland device, I will be able to do our shopping online ... We are going to be able to speak to family and friends, which is so important for my wife and I. Thank you so much."

."The connecting Scotland Device has made such a difference for me. My health has not been good over lock down and now I can attend virtual meetings of my support group again...It really is amazing."

Committed to Customer Service (Customer Response Unit)

Grampian Housing Association



Statement of support

The Customer Response Unit (CRU) is a self-organising team, affording the Customer Service Advisers autonomy to take into account the needs of individual customers and enabling them to make decisions where they can go the extra mile to improve the customer experience. A recent example was when the CRU arranged a refit of blinds for an elderly tenant following installation of new windows.

As essential workers during lockdown, the CRU had to work in the office and implement a makeshift phone system whilst being agile to adapting and embracing the challenges and changes faced. The CRU also provided on-going support to remote working staff across the organisation. The CRU has maintained its professionalism to provide excellent customer service by giving wide ranging advice to customers. Following delays due to Covid-19 for training and implementation of a new telephony system, this is now imminent and is being embraced with the usual enthusiasm by the CRU.

The CRU created and maintain a suite of guides for each task/process undertaken which covers all aspects of the Association's business. This not only enhances the high standard of advice provided to tenants, but also the accuracy and calibre of Key Performance Indicator data for both the Annual Report on the Charter and Housemark. The CRU is of strategic importance to our frontline service delivery given the comprehensive, across the board knowledge, they are expected to learn and retain. The Guides are also utilised as a training tool for new staff joining the CRU with individuals being mentored by other team members as they develop into a role where there is much to learn.

Grampian introduced "These Homes", a new Digital Lettings Service in March 2021 with the CRU handling first point of contact queries from housing applicants. The CRU continues to operate with a can-do attitude, with courtesy calls being the norm whilst a resolution is being sought, including checking on the wellbeing of self- isolating tenants and contacting tenants to provide guidance during two gas outages during lockdown.

Grampian also introduced-CX Feedback for transactional repairs surveys. The system is monitored by the CRU in respect of repairs to ensure dissatisfied responses are followed up efficiently with customers to improve the overall quality of our repairs service.

A number of compliments were received during lockdown from both customers and staff on the excellent customer service the CRU provides. Another example of going above and beyond with service delivery was when a staff member offered to collect

keys at the end of a tenancy to save the tenant travelling to the office. When the staff member visited the property to take final meter readings she patched holes in the walls to avoid a recharge to the tenant.

The CRU welcomes customer complaints and understand that this improves service delivery from the learning outcomes gleaned. Indeed, a compliment was received on an Adviser's helpfulness in taking their complaint and explaining the complaints process.

Customer service training delivered in April 2021 encompassed real time call handling, focussing on improving efficiency in dealing with calls and managing difficult customers. This training has further equipped the team to deal with challenging situations.

The team are exemplars in how an integrated team functions well and how this in turn benefits our customers as we continue developing a customer centric approach.

Outcomes and achievements

As part of Grampian's programme to digitalise more services, email and mobile phone contact details are refreshed during every customer's call to the Association. This has seen an increase to 73% of primary tenant data held as at July 2021, wholly down to the endeavours of the CRU.

Following rent arrears and Universal Credit training, the CRU is supporting Grampian's "Rent First" initiative by alerting tenants to arrears on their account whilst call handling. During lockdown over £67,000 in arrears payments were secured by the CRU contributing to its total of £387,645 since 2017.

Continuous Professional Development is undertaken regularly to improve knowledge in, for example,

handling repair calls. Training sessions on domestic abuse, modern slavery, suicide prevention, tackling poverty, mental health & wellbeing and equalities all enrich the support the Advisers are able to provide to vulnerable tenants at first point of contact.

50% of the CRU has achieved the CIH Level 2 qualification with new members undertaking the qualification within the next 18 months.

86% of tenants who responded to Grampian's latest satisfaction survey said they found contact staff helpful while 75% of respondents felt their most recent enquiry was answered within an acceptable time frame (15% had no opinion).

Scottish Empty Homes Advice Service

Shelter Scotland



Statement of support

The Scottish Empty Homes Partnership (SEHP) is funded by Scottish Government and hosted by Shelter Scotland, our key aim is to encourage Scotland's approximately 47,000 private sector long term empty homes (LTE) back into use. We launched our own brand in late 2019 as we recognised that our message and voice needed its own profile, separate from Shelter Scotland.

The Scottish Empty Homes Advice Service sits within the SEHP. It is there to provide advice and assistance to anyone who wants to call/email or report an empty home. Looking at case logs, we identified that queries relating to empty homes come in from 4 main groups. Owners of empty properties, neighbours living next door to an empty, an investor wanting to purchase

an empty home and finally practitioners that work in empty homes services.

We used the Service Design process to improve the experience of contacts to the Advice Service and we had 3 key objectives:

- To identify where there are opportunities for the service to have maximum impact
- Understand what motivates contact and whether the service meets the users' expectations.
- to identify themes and trends that may influence longer term policy asks

We started our research with ideation sessions which very quickly highlighted that to have maximum impact we should try to engage more with owners of empty properties. Following on from this, we sent out 118 surveys to empty home owners that had contacted us in the last 12 months. We got a response rate of 25% and 2 clear themes emerged; owners are unclear what to expect when they contact us and if they did find our webpages, the information is limited. However, feedback was not all negative, because once through to our advisers, we asked the question "Is there anything we could have done better?" and 75% responded there was nothing the service could have done better.

Armed with this research, we used techniques to understand the problem we are trying to solve and then carried out user journeys to identify pain points when contacting the service. We created two personas of owners that contact the service and did some interviews with Shelter Scotland volunteers asking them to role play the owner in the scenarios presented. This provided us with a great starting point and we then progressed to the next stage in the design process. We set up a co design session which consisted of stakeholders including an empty home owner, government civil servant, local authority empty homes officers and representatives from our digital and communications team. The aim of the session was to

- Identify what search terms are likely to be used by owners of empty homes to optimise our search engine
- Draft a new form of words for our SEHP landing page

- Consider what FAQs we could add to help owners be clearer on what to expect

This process has given us a true insight in what we can do to improve our service. The next planned steps are:

- Have a plan in place with content management team for changes to landing page and owner page
- Pull together the research from vox pops and co design session to identify form of words
- Create a draft FAQ section to be added to our webpage
- Initial engagement with professional stakeholders based on feedback
- Engage with other owners on a 121 basis to give an opportunity to feed in

This is likely to be completed by the end of September.

Outcomes and achievements

Outcomes to date:

Clearer expectations for users who contact the Advice Service

Empty homes calculator developed allowing owners to input details that will show the cost of keeping their home empty

Increased contact from Owners of empty properties due to changed messaging - 15% of all contacts in July

Greater motivation for advisers working on the service

More empty homes supported back into use

Case Study

Adviser has been working with an Aberdeen owner since August 2020. The property is a 5 bedroom HMO. At the start of the pandemic there was little demand from students in the PRS as most were learning remotely and the owner wanted to explore options of bringing the property back into use. They relied on the rental income to pay their own mortgage and if the property remained empty they would be in financial difficulty. The adviser had a frank conversation with the owner about the realities of their situation, the uncertainties surrounding the rental market in the pandemic and low demand for that size of property. The owner reduced her rental price and advice was given on realistic sale of the property. The owner has students lined up to take the property in September.

EXCELLENCE IN HOUSING INNOVATION

This award is aimed at programmes or projects that can clearly demonstrate how they have developed an innovative approach which has made a real difference to the lives of tenants or customers. This could be any new product, service, or technology – being able to demonstrate innovation is the key.

PRS Empty Homes Project

Lead organisation: Homes for Good

Partner organisation: Shelter Scotland



Statement of support

Homes for Good (HFG) was created in 2013 as is Scotland's first social enterprise letting agency operating in the private rented sector. We currently manage over 525 homes – half of which we own. With offices in Dennistoun and Bridgeton, we work with 165 landlords and 800 tenants in and around Glasgow and the West of Scotland. We work across the whole private rental market, with specialist expertise in supporting people on lower incomes.

Since 2014, we have raised £16m from a variety of social investors and developed over 260 homes. The homes we own are let to tenants in need (including those on benefits or low incomes) with rent set around the local housing allowance level.

As well as managing properties, we provide full and tailored tenancy support through our relationship-based person-centred approach. Our team's expertise spans mental health, employment and training advice, support with welfare support, financial health, energy efficiency advice, interior design and community-based support. All of this helps to keep our tenants

safe, happy and content in their homes and make us entirely unique in the PRS.

The Scottish Empty Homes Partnership (SEHP) is funded by Scottish government and hosted by Shelter Scotland. It's key aim is to encourage Scotland's private rented sector long term empty homes back into use.

According to Scottish Government figures (Dec 2020) 47,333 properties in Scotland had been empty for 6 months or more – an increase of 16% on the preceding year.

With numbers rising, HFG have undertaken this innovative project to have a positive impact on the market and bring these homes back to life.

SEHP has provided financial support to HFG to enable us to recruit a dedicated Empty Homes Manager. This is the first time an Empty Homes role has been created for an organisation that is not linked to a local authority – a first in the private rented sector!

The project will see HFG bring 30 privately owned empty properties back in to use over the next two years through one of three routes:

1. HFG Renovations Programme – HFG will purchase a property, refurbish, furnish and design it – then let it out to tenants accessing welfare or on low incomes;
2. Refurb to Rent – landlords will be given the option for us to get their property ready to let, manage the tenancy & then deduct the cost of works from rent received through a pilot loan scheme;
3. HFG Development Programme – HFG will purchase and bring the property back to life – to be sold on the open market. Profits will be re-invested in to purchasing homes for tenants accessing welfare or on low incomes.

Susan Aktemel, executive director for Homes for Good, said: "Empty properties are a desperately needed and much wasted resource in Scotland's towns and cities. There is nothing more rewarding than working with an owner to overcome the challenges of an empty property, bringing that property back to life and into brilliant condition, as a home for someone who needs it.

"To date, HFG has created over 100 homes in this way, and I am absolutely thrilled that we have developed this unique partnership with Shelter, who have supported our work in the private rented sector since we started in 2013. Everyone at Homes for Good is raring to go and I am committed to raising more investment to turn these unloved properties into homes that people love."

Outcomes and achievements

With tens of thousands of people on waiting lists for social housing across Scotland, the empty homes project is a much needed solution to the social housing shortage. By bringing these properties back into use, it solves not only a need for social housing but helps towards regeneration of areas and environmental sustainability.

This innovative project will bring 30 properties back to life and increase the supply of good quality homes for tenants on low incomes or accessing welfare benefits.

This project is the first of its kind and will provide practical evidence of new solutions to bring long term & much needed properties back in to use.

Craigdale Lens Programme

Craigdale Housing Association



Statement of support

Craigdale Housing Association worked with The Lens on an innovative Intrapreneurship Programmes where their tenants work with staff to develop an idea and pitch for investment. The Lens (<https://www.lensperspectives.org.uk/about-us/why-intrapreneurship/>) is a social enterprise that works with charities and not-for-profit organisations to help them to make ideas a reality.

The idea for this new innovative approach focusses on intrapreneurship - the idea that it is possible to act like an entrepreneur from inside an organisation, whether that's as a frontline team member or a tenant.

It runs a six-week virtual programme - with sessions including business storytelling, developing a value proposition and prototype, as well pitching for investment - for the team members who work most closely with customers, and therefore have the best understanding of the problems they face. This helps organisations' leaders to make decisions about funding these ideas and getting them off the ground.

The ideas that came out of the programme include a camera club to encourage residents experiencing poor mental health to get out of their homes and see

things from a fresh perspective, and a community garden for residents who live in flats and don't have access to their own outside space. Both of which aim to improve the mental health of people in the community.

Two of Craigdale's tenants John Masson and Pat Main were awarded £2,500 each for their ideas, partly funded through Craigdale and from a Scottish Government Addressing Future Need grant.

John said "To have the backing of the Craigdale Board and staff is amazing. I feel ecstatic and I am over the moon, about the funding award. Photography saved my life and I hope that this award will help to address other people's mental health issues in our area"

Pat said "My idea was about helping people who don't have a garden. I am lucky that I have a garden but know that's not the case for everyone. The thought of the workshops was frightening at first, but I really enjoyed the meetings. The staff helped me throughout, and I never thought I could do this."

They had previously pitched their ideas to Craigdale's Board and were helped to do so by the Craigdale staff team. They were, in turn, supported by The Lens Developer, who took Craigdale staff through a series of workshops that built their facilitation skills, knowledge of business development tools and their confidence.

David Mackenzie, Craigdale Chief Executive Officer said "The staff really put in a huge amount of effort to engage with and support our tenants through The Lens programme and their approach has been inspirational. They gained confidence and unique skills from the programme, and I am certain that this innovative approach could be replicated elsewhere."

Steve McCreddie, CEO at The Lens said "The Craigdale team worked closely with The Lens to develop tenants and their ideas. Backed by the Board, this brought

investment of time and resource to shape and implement tenants' ideas to improve lives. Crucially, it developed the confidence and competence of staff and tenants, reshaping the relationship between tenants and organisation. In The Lens we have a strong track record in delivering our programmes directly to staff. This was the first time we trained staff to run their

own version of our programmes. We learned a huge amount in doing so, successfully trialling new ways to deliver even greater impact and reach. This is informing the creation of a new digital platform that shares our expertise and knowledge, equipping many others to develop skills in running their own innovation programmes'.

Outcomes and achievements

The programme engaged tenants and provided staff with a transformative development opportunity. The Board were delighted and proud that Craigdale had offered a unique and innovative programme to their tenants. The Craigdale team are now planning their next programme and will use Pat and John's stories to engage and inspire more tenants. The important thing is these ideas come directly from tenants. They reflect their priorities, and they continue to be owned by them. The Lens' programme of structured and facilitated sessions has also boosted staff morale and helped team members to feel closer to customers.

There's also the wider subject of entrepreneurship to consider - how it is possible to be entrepreneurial within a job, and why proactively nailing down

innovative ideas and bringing them to life makes a huge difference to organisations' internal cultures, staff retention and motivation, and ultimately benefits customers and service users.

97% of tenants did not feel that Craigdale could have done more to help tenants through the period of the pandemic. This demonstrates the strong bond that exists between Craigdale and their tenants. This legacy is that this brave and innovative approach could be taken within any Housing Association, potentially transforming people's lives.

The Wheatley "You Choose Challenge"

Wheatley Group



Statement of support

Wheatley Group's 2021-26 strategy - Your Home, Your Community, Your Future - sets a clear ambition that "customers will have increased control over their services and their communities". As one of the methods to meet this ambition, we developed the "You Choose Challenge".

A pilot project was carried out in the West Lothian community of Whitburn to test this innovative method, before rolling it out in communities across Wheatley Group.

The project involved 100 customers in Whitburn. 80% of these customers had moved to a new-build development during the pandemic, meaning they had little opportunity to build up a sense of community.

Wheatley used this project to help them come together as a neighbourhood. The project offered the opportunity to work together as a community to decide how best to spend a small amount of money to improve their area.

Wheatley developed a crowdsourcing approach to generate ideas using social media, emails and phone calls. Anyone not digitally connected received letters and telephone calls so they didn't miss out.

Customers and non-customers got involved to generate potential options. A small group came together to create a shortlist of three options:

- activities to support responsible dog ownership;
- develop a community garden in two sites;
- and support classes to build digital skills.

The options were put to a vote - and the most popular was to create community gardens, reflecting a desire to strengthen the sense of neighbourhood following the pandemic. The gardens have proved popular and customers are now involved in creating and tending to them.

Wheatley wanted customers taking part in the You Choose Challenge to see quick results and not have to wait weeks or months between stages so the timeline and speed of the project was important. Using online communication helped streamline the project to meet the challenging timescales, while enabling customers to shape the process. Thirty ideas were submitted by 22 people and a shortlist of three were then voted on. Of the 101 customers, 57 voted (56%) with 49% voting for the winning project.

The project started on 14 January, with the winner announced on 17 February. Work on the gardens was completed by 5 May.

As a pilot project, feedback from customers was very important. Some had assumed that they did not have worthwhile ideas or feedback, but once they engaged in the You Choose Challenge they discovered they had much to contribute. They'd enjoyed the short-listing session while getting to know the Housing Team and spoke positively of their first experience of using Zoom.

In addition to a new method of engagement and of submitting ideas a new method of online voting was adopted. Customers managed to submit votes on their own, and support was provided to customers who were not as confident through the process.

To end the project, a newsletter was sent to customers, highlighting other suggestions made in the project and how some were already part of local services or groups. Some customers had moved from Glasgow so were new to West Lothian, not just the development, and this helped these customers get involved and feel a sense of community.

Community gardens have been externally recognised by Keep Scotland Beautiful as helping with community participation. The two developed as part of this project have provided a focal point for people to spend time tending the garden or mixing with others (when restrictions allowed).

This project was just the start of a much larger You Choose challenge approach across Wheatley and will be used to help strengthen and develop the process going forward.

Outcomes and achievements

Due to the pandemic, the project couldn't run with traditional face-to-face engagement, instead new forms of communication were tested with customers, tailoring the approach to their needs. Where customers didn't have internet, they were contacted by phone.

The following digital interactions were recorded:

- four Facebook posts reached 200 people;
- average reach on regular page posts: 25;
- average reach on these posts: 38 - a 52% increase;
- the You Choose Challenge page was the third most visited on the website during the project with 311 hits;
- and 60% of those surveyed completed the online survey (the target was 50%).

The project also helped nurture the customer base, encouraging them to share knowledge with new neighbours by highlighting local services and groups available.

Customers said:

- they were delighted with the raised beds and benches;
- it was easy to take part in the project;
- their opinions and input felt valued;
- and gardening packs provided to them were useful.

The pilot was a successful example of harnessing desire, knowledge, digital engagement and opinion to empower customers to improve their communities.

Working out of Homelessness - Naumann Phase 2

Kingdom Housing Association



Statement of support

We believe the Naumann Initiative is unique, innovative and is improving the lives of people in the communities where we operate.

The initiative simultaneously gives a homeless person a job, a tenancy, support with any complex needs/ barriers to sustaining their tenancy and training to help them perform in their new job. As a landlord, a developing RSL, an employer and an in house employability project, we had all the components to achieve that so the initiative brought all those together in an impactful way.

The concept of the Naumann Initiative is basically providing a homeless person with a home, a job and the necessary training and support, delivered through collaborating with partners

In the year April 2020 to March 2021 there were 33,792 homeless applications and 27,571 households assessed as homeless in Scotland. This equates to a household losing their home every 19 minutes. Researchers have estimated unemployment rates among people experiencing homelessness is approximately 75%.

Within the first phase of the Naumann Initiative Kingdom appointed two homeless people with a home and a job, however as an organisation we were limited by how many roles we could fill through the initiative and in January 2021, we commenced phase two of the initiative - Working Out of Homelessness. We provide the tenancy and employability support to homeless people but the employment aspect is with other "Naumann Accredited" employers.

The project enables an effective programme of practical work experience supported by training, resulting in improved employability opportunities.

Phase 2 of the initiative involves the following;

Establishing an Accredited Employers Register, based on employers committing to employing a homeless person, and identifying job opportunities,

Identifying potential homeless people on the Fife Housing Register,

'Matching' the homeless persons to the jobs available and a programme of capacity building, training and skills development,

Additional support is provided to the homeless participants to undertake the core induction training required for the employer organisation.

Homeless eligible participants are provided with a tenancy through Kingdom HA, or one of the other Fife Housing Register Partners.

New tenants are offered support and assistance through our tenancy sustainment services.

In addition to the above, we:-

Support those unsuccessful in their application for any position we advertise through the Naumann Initiative with direct support from a dedicated Employability Officer

Provide enhanced support for those previously homeless individuals who have a new tenancy with KHA with employability services (Kingdom provided 148 tenancies last year to those registered statutory homeless by the local authority)

Provide a wider employability service to those who are unemployed and registered homeless.

We anticipate in 2021 this project will support 100 homeless individuals, providing them with increased employability skills, and support 40 into sustainable employment. Not only does this initiative transform the lives of the individuals who gain employment and a home, it also helps remove some of the stigma of homelessness within our community and local people are more informed about the challenges faced by homeless people.

In the summer of 2020, Leicester based PA Housing adopted the Kingdom model and became the first employer outside of Scotland to implement the initiative through a recruitment campaign for two full time roles. Much like Kingdom, PA Housing found the recruitment process so successful they went on to recruit four people, all of whom continue to enjoy success at the organisation.

The initiative is named after Laurie Naumann, a founding member of Kingdom Housing Association, a current board member of the Association, a lifelong advocate of support to homeless people and, in 1998, was a recipient of an OBE for services to homeless people.

Outcomes and achievements

Phase two has significantly increased the number of homeless people we are able to provide a home to, whilst supporting a much higher number into employment.

Since January 2021, 66 homeless individuals have been supported through the initiative, 36 of those have undertaken accredited training and 28 of them have been supported into employment. 12 external organisations have created vacancies through this initiative and have been awarded "Naumann Accredited" employer status.

In 2019/2020 we housed 120 homeless households, this increased to 148 the following year (2020/2021)

and we are aiming that this will increase to over 160 in the current financial year.

Our dedicated Employability Officer said 'People find themselves homeless for a whole host of reasons, often through no fault of their own. Homelessness and unemployment often go hand in hand and being able to work with partner employers to tackle both is incredible'

We believe the Naumann Initiative has also reduced the stigma and prejudice that people who have experienced homelessness often experience especially when trying to secure employment.

Old Sawmill development, Rothiemurchus

Lead organisation: Communities Housing Trust

Partner organisation: Rothiemurchus & Old Sawmill Cooperative



Statement of support

Communities Housing Trust (CHT) is a registered charity working with communities to provide affordable housing and amenities in remote and rural places throughout central and northern Scotland.

We take a collaborative, partnership approach clearly demonstrated in the Old Sawmill project at Rothiemurchus near Aviemore. It's an excellent example of a win-win collaboration on estate land to secure affordable housing using self-build, within the Cairngorms National Park.

With an innovative and replicable cross-subsidy model, we facilitated a total of six self-build homes on Rothiemurchus land: four affordable plots for the local community that required no public subsidy, and two market plots. The final plot was purchased in 2020. The development also achieves the objectives of the Local Authority and Scottish Government.

Aviemore is a highly desirable area, constrained by land availability and planning, with limited housing stock, and even less affordable housing. This leaves an urgent need for new and fair middle-market

opportunities and solutions. Several local families formed a cooperative and approached Johnnie Grant of Rothiemurchus to tackle the issue, and CHT brokered the unique cross-subsidy model with the Cairngorms National Park Authority.

Hence:

- 67% of homes on the development are affordable
- No public grants were provided to enable the affordable plots
- The discount on the affordable homes is protected in perpetuity by the Rural Housing Burden
- Rothiemurchus gained financially by selling two open market plots and benefitted by selling land to a registered charity (CHT)
- Local families, active in the community, can remain in the area, in lifetime homes

This development could be replicated in other areas where there are few affordable properties to rent or buy.

Another aspect of the development is how the homes are sensitively designed within the landscape, making the most of the special location with large windows overlooking rear private gardens and the mixed Scots pine and birch woodland and heath. The front of the homes are open, providing a communal aspect important to the cooperative.

The four homes were individual self-build projects and hence differ slightly. One is a panel kit-home, with high wall insulation; some are timber frame, as fuel- and energy-efficient as possible, with triple glazing and air-source heat pumps. One has solar photo-voltaics, with more to follow suit, and EPCs on the homes range from B+ to A. All aimed to go above and beyond current building regulations.

The main challenges revolved around planning, as a sensitive brownfield site and redundant former sawmill within the Cairngorms National Park. This meant the

project timeline was extended to overcome planning concerns. The formal planning process began in 2012 and was awarded consent with rigorous conditions in 2016. The specific skillsets of the future residents ensured that the conditions could be met. There is also a 12-year tree-planting plan on the site.

Johnnie Grant of Rothiemurchus, said: "It took nearly ten years of investment and the determination of the members of the Old Sawmill co-operative and the Communities Housing Trust to make this happen - thank you to them. I have always wanted people to

have a fair opportunity to bring up their families in the place they call home."

Lesley McKenna, co-operative member and Old Sawmill resident, said: "We're really aware how difficult it is as a local person working in this area to find a house and especially to build your own house, but we know it's possible now. It wasn't easy and it took a while! But it has worked, and it's our wish that going through this unwieldy planning process can, and should, make it easier for local residents undertaking such ventures in the future."

Outcomes and achievements

The main outcomes and achievements of the development so far:

- We have provided homes in a challenging area where need is high and planning is extremely stringent, through partnership working, retaining local families who may otherwise have had to leave.
- The homes supported local and Highlands companies in their design and construction, especially valuable for rural trades during lockdown, and use local and Scottish materials where possible including the larch cladding which is vertical to follow the Rothiemurchus vernacular.
- The homes are highly energy-efficient and air-tight, with air-source heat pumps, for both environmental reasons and to reduce running costs, another crucial aspect of affordable homes.
- The affordable homes all have the Rural Housing Burden attached, a legal title condition which protects the property's affordability in perpetuity and prioritises the local community in future sales.
- The project demonstrates that affordable homes can be provided using mechanisms such as the Rural Housing Burden, and achieve the aims and objectives of the Local Authority and the Scottish Government.
- We have provided this community and hopefully others with the confidence and support that alternatives such as this project are a genuine solution. This to us is the most important point.

WRAP

Lead organisation: Renfrewshire Council Housing Support Services

Partner organisation: Blue Triangle Housing Association



**Renfrewshire
Council**

Statement of support

Renfrewshire has a relatively high proportion of individuals experiencing repeat homelessness, and/or not sustaining settled tenancies. Many of these individuals didn't engage with traditional support services.

Recognising this, we developed an innovative new approach to make change happen.

Established in December 2019 in partnership with Blue Triangle Housing Association (BTHA), WRAP is a bespoke, short-term, flexible, needs led and person-centred wraparound housing support service for people who are homeless and in housing need. It supports them to resettle into the community, sustain their tenancy, and achieve their desired outcomes.

WRAP stands for Working to and Achieve Potential - the name being suggested by one of the first individuals being supported by the new service.

The criteria for referral covers those:

- falling into crisis or needing additional support,
- who are homeless, with complex needs and history of un-sustained tenancies,
- resettling from existing supported accommodation projects to their own tenancy.

WRAP provides support along the lines of a Housing First approach, via a small team employed by BTHA.

The team adopt a therapeutic and trauma informed approach providing daily contact with supported individuals establishing positive relationships and building trust. There is a focus on educating, and empowering individuals to discover, and develop the appropriate knowledge, experience and skills essential for sustainable independent living.

The WRAP approach, including providing immediate wraparound and front-loaded support, has allowed the team to quickly develop positive relationships with individuals and provide a constant, consistent level of support, particularly to those who are leading relatively challenging and chaotic lifestyles at the point of referral.

De-coding non-engagement has been at the core of the new WRAP service.

A total of 58 referrals were made to the service in the first year, and 35 individuals are supported via WRAP at any time.

Due to the 'stickability' nature of the support, staff have been available to help service users immediately, often avoiding a crisis-situation occurring or escalating. This avoids prolonged assessment periods typical of many Housing First services, and enables the individual to deal with situations more effectively. This enhances their confidence, and their ability/personal resilience to deal with similar situations should they arise in the future.

Case-Study

M has been homeless twice since 2016 and has a history of repeat hospitalisations for suicide attempts and suicidal ideation.

M was living in temporary homeless accommodation when referred to WRAP for support and linking him in with mental health services.

Since engaging with WRAP, M has resettled in a tenancy suitable for his long-term needs. The team had daily contact with him to reduce the stress and anxieties he had when previous attempts to resettle had been unsuccessful. He was supported to apply for grants to furnish his tenancy, and develop the skills required for independent living.

M continues to attend mental health appointments and is stable on medication. WRAP continue to support M, and for the first time in his adult life he is happily settled in his own home:

"My life before WRAP service wasn't a life, I didn't want to be alive. WRAP has been a life saver and I'm very thankful. I've been with WRAP for over a year when helps been needed. I've had help with going shopping, attending doctors, psychiatrists and making me feel wanted. If I didn't have help from WRAP I think I may be dead. I've got some confidence now and go to college and do online courses. My life now is getting much better and I now get other help from the Community Psychiatric Nurses and Charleston Centre (Mental Health Support Unit). I have loved the help so thank you very much 10/10"

Outcomes and achievements

Outcomes include:

- significant improvement in uptake of assistance from wider services
- reduction in re-offending / offending behaviour
- enhanced understanding of personal money matters/ budgeting
- positive impact on tenancy sustainment

A sample of 24 individuals being supported highlighted that within 12 weeks

- 50% reduction in individuals whos' needs in relation to self-esteem were at crisis support level
- those recorded at crisis point for security/ suitability of accommodation at referral, reduced by 73%.
- the number of individuals at crisis for mental health reduced from 14 to 6.

From the sample, 23 individuals moved into settled accommodation. Over 80% of these 23 clients had at least one previous homeless application.

WRAP delivers an innovative approach to providing wraparound support for individuals who are in, or near, crisis point.

It adapted to the needs of individuals during the COVID19 response; staff continued to provide support remotely, as well as face-face contact. WRAP provided mobile phones during the COVID19 restrictions to ensure clients kept in regular contact with support throughout.

Because of WRAP, 36 individuals are now living in their own settled accommodation for the first time, after many periods of homelessness.

The project fits within Scottish Government homelessness policy on rapid rehousing and early intervention.

Delivering the SHORE Standards

Lead organisation: South Lanarkshire Council

Partner organisations: Scottish Prison Service



Statement of support

South Lanarkshire Council - Delivering the SHORE Standards

Since the publication of the Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone (SHORE) standards in 2017, South Lanarkshire Council's (SLC) Housing Services have been at the forefront of joint work with the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) and a range of partners with the aim of providing safe and sustainable housing for all prisoners upon their release from custody. This work supports prisoners leaving custody to resettle back into the community with the aim of stopping reoffending and the cycle of imprisonment and homelessness.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure a consistent approach to the SHORE standards, funding was secured through the council's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, to recruit a dedicated SHORE Officer. This post became effective in July 2020 with the primary objective of ensuring that the housing needs of people in prison are recognised at an early stage, that Housing Plans are in place upon release and that the potential cycle of repeat homelessness is prevented.

To facilitate discussion on housing options advice with prisoners and allow a planned approach to be taken, the SHORE Officer has developed excellent working relationships with the SPS, Community Justice Throughcare Team and other partners. This has facilitated the development and agreement of innovative service arrangements and standards, including an information-sharing protocol between Housing Services and the SPS allowing a weekly exchange of information on prisoners entering custody, as well as those nearing the end of their sentences or who may be due for early release.

The SHORE Officer has continued to work with the SPS and Community Justice Throughcare Team to provide in person, one-to-one service to prisoners through scheduled weekly visits to HMP Addiewell and HMP Barlinnie, which combined, accommodate most prisoners from within South Lanarkshire. During lockdown, this service to prisoners continued through a telephone/virtual appointment system. The service is provided both to prisoners entering custody (to secure any existing tenancy) and to support those nearing the point of liberation to secure suitable/sustainable housing options upon release. The service has also extended to other prison establishments where support needs have been identified.

Housing Services has been a key partner in the implementation of the national Early Prisoner Release Scheme, aimed at reducing the prison population in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Prisoners identified for early release were supported to have a Housing Plan developed and put in place prior to liberation. All were accommodated upon release into suitable accommodation, including permanent housing, close to their support networks, with a Housing Support Officer allocated to support tenancy sustainment.

Housing Services continue to track these prisoners to ensure that they remain supported and are signposted to services including addiction and mental health, to help them to remain in the community.

This targeted approach has placed Housing Services in a better position to prepare and respond to the housing needs of people in the prison system, by proactively preventing homelessness.

Taking a partnership approach, the SHORE Officer continues to explore all viable housing options for people approaching liberation from prison. Recent initiatives have included -

- Working with Blue Triangle Housing Association to identify a suitable property for people who have been granted bail conditions while awaiting trial or sentencing.
- Stronger links forged with the Private Sector Access and Sustainment Service to support individuals looking to secure accommodation in the private rented sector. The use of rent deposit funding is a core element of this.

This highly effective approach is founded upon supporting prisoners' rights from an equality and human rights perspective.

Outcomes and achievements

Housing Services' contribution to the implementation of the SHORE standards has supported the delivery of high-level positive outcomes. The provision of suitable and sustainable housing to prisoners upon release is a key factor in preventing re-offending and breaking the cycle of imprisonment and homelessness, with the wider impact on the criminal justice system which is widely reported to be over capacity.

During 2020/21, the SHORE Housing Officer provided housing advice to a total of 103 prisoners. Of these, 41 were liberated with a Housing Plan in place, 32 of which were settled in permanent housing. This included 5 who were offered and accepted an SLC tenancy.

The approach taken has been to prevent homelessness and identify secure accommodation upon release, with release into homelessness and temporary accommodation viewed as a last resort.

Sharon Egan, Area Housing Manager commented "The housing options service has continued to develop during the pandemic, with the role of the SHORE Officer to prevent homelessness and provide support to all prisoners due to be liberated, even during lockdown periods. The SHORE Officer has provided positive outcomes for short term prisoners and continued to build on a multi-agency approach".

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

This award celebrates partnership and collaboration across the housing spectrum.

Community Safety Partnership HUB

Lead organisation: South Lanarkshire Council

Partner organisations: Police Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service



Statement of support

South Lanarkshire Council has successfully established a strategic problem-solving approach to tackle antisocial behaviour across local communities, in collaboration with our Community Safety partners. Antisocial behaviour is a complex multi-faceted issue and requires a strong partnership approach to response and prevention.

This approach is co-ordinated by the Joint Problem-Solving Unit (JPSU) which encompasses:

- a specialist investigation team to progress the most serious, persistent, and complex cases of antisocial behaviour,
- an accredited mediation service that resolves lower-level neighbour disputes,
- a community warden service that carries out investigation support, community engagement, education and enforcement actions and operate vehicular CCTV in hotspot areas,
- a dedicated Police Scotland resource for operational support, information sharing and partnership co-ordination.

To support the work of the unit, twice weekly geographic Community Safety Partnership Hubs were established to facilitate enhanced information sharing and tactical assessment of antisocial behaviour and criminality. Partners from the JPSU, Housing, Police Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service meet to review incidents and to share information on potential areas of concern. When required, invites are extended to wider partners to support individual concerns. The Hubs cover all main population areas and local officers attend to ensure meaningful input and decision making capability. Weekly Hub discussion documents are produced outlining current incidents, collate actions allocated, and compile partner updates from tasking for the following week.

This model is pivotal to ensure continuing momentum and robust action plans tackle emerging issues. In 2020 partners discussed 3,283 incidents, each tasked to one of the partners to lead, with other partners providing secondary support to maximise prospects for a successful resolution.

Prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic the Hub was transitioning to a remote access model, but the concept transformed rapidly to a fully virtual format adapting to the restrictions that were introduced, ensuring the Hubs continued effectively. This was crucial due to the rise in incidents and the operational restrictions on core partners, ensuring resources came together to avoid duplication and communities were reassured of robust responses and actions in relation to current issues and emerging trends.

Operational Hubs link with quarterly locality Strategic Problem-Solving Groups attended by the Council's Housing Services, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service alongside a range of partners including Environmental Services, Education, Social Work Services, Community Links, voluntary sector and local youth groups.

These Groups identify priority issues for their local areas based upon a strategic assessment, analysing

wide-ranging data and intelligence, tailored to specific locality issues and supplemented by community feedback. The wider-ranging partnerships ensure that enforcement action is also complemented by enhanced engagement and education and early intervention work and allows partners to target resources where they will have greatest impact, ensuring best value.

The Community Safety Hubs and the joint problem-solving approach, has helped address anti-social behaviour creatively through targeted initiatives as well as innovative practices, for example, funding quad bikes to address an emerging trend in rural anti-social behaviour; deploying police horses to access wooded areas and nature trails, purchasing

and installing additional fixed CCTV in hotspot areas to tackle environmentally related anti-social behaviour such as fly-tipping, and developing joint educational programmes to tackle youth related fire setting. Partners also funded a drama company to produce and deliver an educational play in every high school within South Lanarkshire to emphasise agreed community safety messages identified through the work of the hubs and Problem-Solving Groups; but in a fun, engaging and innovative manner.

Continued creative and innovative partnership working ensures that residents enjoy communities which are safe, sustainable places, offering opportunities for all and a good quality of life.

Outcomes and achievements

During 2020, Covid restrictions and closures resulted in a rise in noise, youth disorder and fire raising complaints. Resulting action plans were devised for 3,283 incidents including:

- 534 JPSU Investigations
- 736 Housing Investigations
- 42 Mediation Referrals
- 1,971 Partnership Investigations

Using statistical analysis gathered through hubs, JPSU and partners delivered an additional twelve week intervention over peak times targeting persistent antisocial behaviour offenders and hotspot locations.

- 1,508 visits carried out
- 469 warnings issued.
- 256 ongoing incidents disrupted including:
 - 31 street disorders
 - assaults
 - vandalism

- Breaches of ASBO's
- Breaches of Covid Regulations
- Uncovered 15 abandoned properties
- Dispersed 12 groups of youths, seizing alcohol
- Serious potential criminality averted by recovery of weapons, seizure of controlled drugs and recovery of cash

Crucially, officers also carried out reassurance visits to vulnerable residents to offer support and Community Warden CCTV vehicles ensured a high visibility presence offering public reassurance. The collaborative approach achieved marked success with re-occurrences dropping by 63.86% due to effective partnership working.

Police Scotland Assistant Local Authority Liaison Officer said "The hubs provide an invaluable platform for sharing information and for considering all combined resources to effectively tackle and reduce incidents of antisocial behaviour, and have a proven record of achieving positive outcomes".

Dundee City Council's Housing Domestic Abuse Policy

Lead organisation: Dundee City Council

Partner organisation: Dundee Violence Against Women Partnership



Statement of support

Dundee City Council's Housing Service is nominated for the development, implementation and delivery of its Housing Domestic Abuse Policy. This builds on previous work to tackle domestic abuse and addresses the rise in cases during the pandemic. In 19/20 there were 2480 incidents of domestic abuse reported to Police Scotland, this is a rate of incident = 166 per 10,000 population. This puts Dundee with the highest rate in Scotland. Domestic abuse has remained the most common concern for registration on the child protection register with 55% children registered under this heading during the last year. During Covid-19 an increase in refuge requests of 71% has been reported in comparison to 2019.

The policy was developed and implemented in partnership with Dundee Violence Against Women Partnership and key partners including those with lived experience. It's underpinned by the fundamental principle that victims have the right to choose. And, whatever that choice may be - whether to remain in the home or move out - their wishes will remain at the centre of the Council's support.

Housing brought together a Working Group with knowledge and expertise to develop a draft policy, including:

- Dundee Violence Against Women Partnership
- Adult/Child Protection Services
- Women's Aid
- Other Council services

The next stage was a consultation strategy to share the draft and welcome comments / suggestions. Those consulted included:

- Lived experience groups
- Senior Management and Elected Members
- Dundee Federation of Tenants' Associations
- Registered Social Landlords
- Staff within Housing, Community Safety and Health & Social Care

Extensive consultation was undertaken, despite lockdown, using virtual platforms to deliver briefings and collate responses. Most importantly, a focus group of those with Lived Experience were able to meet to discuss the policy and provide invaluable feedback.

The Policy was approved in November 2020 and preparations for the launch in Spring 2021 included:

- Development of an e-learning training resource, rolled out to Housing, Customer Services, Anti-Social Behaviour, Rent Recovery, Scottish Welfare Fund, Construction and Elected Members.
- Intensive training delivered virtually to staff who support victims, whether in Council Housing or presenting to our Housing Options Service.
- A toolbox talk to frontline Construction Trades staff, focusing on an "Eyes and Ears" approach.
- Establishment of Domestic Abuse Champions across the Council.
- Commitment to enforcing action against Domestic Abuse by adding a clause in Tenancy Agreements from April 2021.
- Communications of the changes issued to tenants along with updating the Tenants Handbook
- Development of a Housing Team Practitioners Guide

The partnership approach taken has meant that Dundee City Council has been able to effectively develop and implement an essential policy to supporting victims of Domestic Abuse regardless of the impacts of Covid-19.

Outcomes and achievements

Through effective partnership working, Dundee City Council has developed and implemented a vital new policy to support victims of Domestic Abuse.

This builds on the Council sign up in 2019 to the Chartered Institute of Housing's 'Make a Stand Pledge', developed with Women's Aid and the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance, which encouraged social landlords to put in place a policy to support those affected by domestic abuse.

The development of this policy has been hugely welcomed by Dundee Violence Against Women Partnership. They say that the genuine desire to

improve services for victims and their children has been demonstrated in the time and care taken to ensure every necessary step has been considered to create a robust and meaningful policy and also culture change across the housing service. The involvement of people with lived experience and expert partners is testimony to this, as is the passion and commitment shown by leaders in the development of the policy and training roll out which has been undertaken. Dundee VAWP have used the learning from this and applied it in other areas of work (trauma informed practice) as they feel this is a gold standard example of culture change and service development.

The Triple Whammy ARCHIE Project

Lead organisation: Prospect Community Housing

Partner organisations: West Granton Housing Co-op, Lister Housing Co-op, Manor Estates HA, Viewpoint HA



Statement of support

After the initial shock of the pandemic passed, three issues faced tenants. Firstly, the necessity of digital inclusion. Secondly, with finances further stretched and more time spent at home, fuel poverty was a concern. Finally, as job insecurity continued, household debts were increasing.

ARCHIE is an alliance of independent Edinburgh registered co-operatives and housing associations providing affordable homes to over 20,000 people. Five members collaborated on this project: Prospect Community Housing, West Granton Housing Co-operative, Lister Housing Co-operative, Manor Estates Housing Association and Viewpoint Housing Association. Beginning with a pilot debt advice project, by utilising this experience, partners aimed to also tackle digital exclusion and fuel poverty.

The strands of the project were:

1. Debt Advice

A shared service between partners who can refer tenants directly for specialised debt advice and support.

2. Digital Inclusion

Due to the partnership bid, funding was granted to buy Chromebooks, chosen due for their quality, flexibility, and ease of use. These were supplied with data packages in recognition that identified tenants in need of support do not currently have online access. Eligibility criteria was flexible to support individual circumstances.

3. Energy Savings Packs

Partners developed an energy savings pack for vulnerable tenants that included radiator panels, energy savings plugs and light bulbs and draught excluders.

New ways of working?

- Lockdown forced partners to be more creative. The partnership couldn't offer energy advice in homes, so developed an energy saving pack with explanatory leaflet for the tenant. Debt advice couldn't be offered in person so it was offered remotely via phone.
- Whilst the partners had experience of working with statutory and voluntary agencies, this was the first time ARCHIE members had worked on a project to deliver services to tenants across Edinburgh.
- The project shared expertise and staff resource. Prospect acted as lead partner in recognition that as a community anchor organisation they had capacity to manage a joint project through their community projects officer. This resulted in a successful joint bid to the Scottish Government Community Recovery Fund.
- Each partner set their own priorities and was responsible for project delivery with their own tenants.
- A joint Steering Group was set up to monitor progress.

Service delivery and quality was improved by collaboration in the following ways:

- A larger number of tenants benefited.
- The project was shaped by experience and input from a wider range of professionals.
- Different organisations could benefit from the expertise of Prospect's community projects officer work.
- Flexibility was achieved recognising different organisations had differing needs and priorities. For example, one partner included a Polish translation of instructions in the energy pack.
- The debt project is delivered remotely via phone, email, and text. This meant that the service isn't tied to one location. Also, the wider range of communication approaches benefits the needs of tenants.

- No one partner had sufficient referrals to justify a worker's time but by collaborating were able to purchase 2 days per week from CHAI. They are accredited advice providers and have a strong track record in the provision of money and debt advice. They link clients in to other support services where appropriate and offer budgeting advice. Thus, tenants receive a better service.
- The partnership approach resulted in a successful funding bid. This meant bulk purchases and cost savings for the digital and energy project strands. Items were shared between partners depending on need and focus. This enabled the project to have a greater positive impact than if partners had acted separately.

The success of the projects confirmed to partners of the value of this partnership and a follow up fuel poverty project is underway.

Outcomes and achievements

Achieving best practice and improving the well-being of communities:

1) Debt advice project

Higher quality advice provision was secured by the partnership, resulting in 80%+ engagement rate of the 42 referrals in the first six months. One partner experienced a 27% reduction in the rent arrears of the project participants, linked to the budgeting advice and support offered. Thus, the project has a positive impact on financial and mental well-being.

2) Digital inclusion

As well as receiving Chromebooks, there is optional digital support from association frontline staff or through referral routes with third sector partners. There is now a group of tenants meeting regularly to learn with their Chromebooks,

supported by a digital support worker, thus increasing their digital skills, and reducing isolation.

3) Energy Saving Packs

Over 900 energy packs were distributed with the following benefits:

- (a) energy saving impacts - reducing draughts, saving electricity, increased heat etc.
- (b) the benefits of feeling part of the community and being helped.
- (c) the mental health benefits of the inter-action with the Housing Association staff
- (d) a good number of people said: "Ooh, pleasantly surprised that we have been offered this as normally we don't get anything".

Eildon and Cruden Homes East Development and Construction Partnership

Lead organisation: Eildon Housing Association

Partner organisation: Cruden Homes East



Statement of support

Eildon recently undertook a significant increase in our development programme aiming to deliver 750 new homes across the Scottish Borders. We identified the need for smarter working in procurement and planning to help overcome the myriad of challenges in delivering a £130m housing programme

Critical to successful delivery was the development of a procurement strategy reflecting the rural aspects and low level of suppliers across the region. Eildon worked with one of our long-standing development partners Hart Builders East, now known as Cruden Builders East (CBE) to agree a Development and Construction Partnership to deliver circa 400-homes, across nine sites, by March 2021, embracing six main objectives:

To Ensure Partnership: To work in trust, fairness, dedication to common goals and an understanding of each other's expectations and values. To foster a successful working partnership at every level. Adopt an open book accounting during negotiations and set out in the construction contract.

To be Innovative: Develop and/or consider service improvement and for greater cost-effectiveness in the delivery of the services on a whole life cycle costs basis, improved efficiency, cost-effectiveness, lean production, and reduction or elimination of waste.

To be Proactive: Anticipate and consider proposals for any change in the service that may be required, e.g., change in law or policy, or any change in economic or social circumstances or expectations

To deliver Community Benefits: Commitment to people including staff and users of the projects and delivery of community benefits and legacy

To deliver new affordable homes: The completion of the projects to the agreed time, price and quality

To Resolve Differences: Seek the rapid and fair resolution of any differences between the parties to the contract. Commitment to discuss problems as soon as they arise and to work together in a no blame culture.

As a partnership we also approached the local planning department to agree and develop a new more collaborative approach to secure statutory consent. We held a series of successful programme workshops, including, SW and SEPA, Planning control, Eildon and CBE delivery staff. The workshops were supplemented by scheme design meetings with the planners where the strength of this new collaborative approach has been displayed in the open and frank discussion around every proposal.

This approach has paid dividends. Each project has been reviewed in detail several times by all parties. By doing this pre-application, we have been able to discuss and design out specific issues with the planners playing a key role in co-ordinating the responses from transportation, refuse, environmental health, SEPA etc. Through this approach, we have been able to ensure that we submit planning applications which meet all the requirements of the various statutory consultees and are accompanied by all necessary surveys to allow the planning department to process applications efficiently and issue consents with very few conditions which need purified before a site start. Not only does it simplify the process and improve programme timescales, it unifies the stakeholders at a much earlier stage and allows contributions to be made and considered when the design can easily be adapted to incorporate specific requirements without lengthy delays, considerable redesign and protracted and often difficult discussion. It is a very inclusive and pro-active way to work, which all stakeholders are benefitting hugely from which is allowing us to collectively produce better homes and communities as a result.

The partnership approach has allowed place-making and sustainability agendas to be central to the design process and is creating a smoother, more collaborative approach to delivering our programme.

Outcomes and achievements

As with the rest of the construction industry Covid-19 has had a negative impact on the delivery of the programme. Nevertheless, by the end of Quarter Two 2021/22 the partnership has achieved the following:

136 houses, providing affordable homes for over 600 people have been completed and fully let.

143 homes under construction to be delivered between January to August 2022

A further 86 homes with planning permission progressing to site commencement in early 2022.

There has been no contract disputes or claims made by either party and all homes have been completed to the full satisfaction of Eildon.

By early 2023 the Eildon and CBE partnership will have delivered 365 new affordable homes, providing homes for up to 1,462 people, with an inward investment in the Scottish Borders of over £63m including a grant of £32m. Within this programme is the delivery of our first Extra-Care Elderly project, 39 homes at Wilkie Gardens in Galashiels that will be opened in January 2022.

Eildon and CBE are looking to evolve the partnership in a tripartite Charter formally embracing Scottish Borders Council as a third partner to secure construct and deliver further new affordable housing projects across the Scottish Borders.

goConnect

Lead organisation: Glen Oaks Housing Association

Partner organisation: Working Rite; Aberlour; Win Project; Glasgow City Council Community Planning Partnership; Church of Scotland; Jimmy Dunnachie Family Centre; St Vincent's Primary; Ashpark Primary, Police Scotland; Glasgow Life; Giffnock Soccer Club, Arden Community Hall, HSCP, G53 Together and Urban Roots.



Statement of support

The goConnect Project is a sustainability project of 4 staff within Glen Oaks Housing Association. Based in Glasgow's South Side, we have properties in Arden, Darnley and Pollok and some of our stock is in the bottom 2.5% of deprived areas according to SIMD statistics.

goConnect was developed when we identified that tenants needed intensive support highlighted by the requirements of Welfare Reform. We realised that many tenants had mental health issues - anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and isolation. We recognised a need to work with tenants to offer opportunities, encourage participation to improve their self-confidence and social skills.

The goConnect Partnership Group was established in 2018 as we felt it was important to work in partnership with all our local groups & organisations to identify

local needs and priorities. We all worked together to develop a Strategic Plan to decide what was needed to do to improve the lives of local residents. We wanted to avoid duplication of services and combine resources to deliver better services and create community capacity. We formed a Partnership with numerous local services including: Working Rite; Aberlour; Early Years Scotland; Win Project; Glasgow City Council Community Planning Partnership; Church of Scotland; Jimmy Dunnachie Family Centre; St Vincent's Primary; Police Scotland; Glasgow Life; Rainbow Friendship Club; Arden Community Hall. We have bi-monthly meetings and our local councillor Baillie Josephine Docherty chairs our meetings.

Our Project consists of only 4 staff members so it is important for us to know what our limitations are and by working with partners we can share resources, get insight and ideas from brain storming sessions, and get better value for money to run our activities - we are currently running 10 classes, before lockdown it was 13 classes, and we rely on our partners such as Glasgow Life, Glasgow Sport, Clyde College, Lifelink and Village Storytelling to run these classes free for us and our tenants. Our staff also help our partners by doing presentations or stalls to local schools & nurseries and volunteering events.

This year goConnect formed Active Arden with Glasgow Life Community Hubs, to encourage more physical activity in our area to improve health and Wellbeing. We work closely with Lifelink, Giffnock Soccer Club and SAMH to deliver wellbeing courses.

We are also developing a Community Garden for low level fitness and working with Urban Roots, Jimmy Dunnachie's, Aberlour and Greater Pollok Services. We are using our partners expertise to ensure that our sub projects have a better chance of being successful.

In April we also set up Arden Mens Mental Health Action Group in response to a number of suicides in our community. Again we invited our partners to form

another partnership to get expert resources including Police (Suicide Prevention), HSCP, NHS, Carnwadric Church, GCC's Community Planning, Community Safety Glasgow, Aberlour, Glasgow Sport and Councillor Docherty. We are all working together to develop a Suicide Safer Community Status as well as organising clubs and activities for men to attend. We are again working with partners sharing resources and ideas to reduce the stigma of mental health.

In addition to above 3 Partnerships that we formed, we participate in the following partnership forums including:

SALP (South Adult Learning Partnership)

G53 Together Forum including the sub groups of Poverty and Mental Health

Community Development in Housing Forum

South Locality Network (HSCP)

Voluntary Sector Voice

Quotes from the goConnect Partnership:

"The Partnership adds value to the community, through shared learning and resources."

"I have made good links with organisations I wouldn't have had access to, or been aware of before."

"Our school feels much more included in the community thanks to goConnect."

Outcomes and achievements

The goConnect Partnership has proved to be an extremely beneficial asset to the communities we serve, particularly during the pandemic. We quickly identified our most vulnerable tenants (697 elderly or vulnerable tenants, 245 Very Vulnerable 41 Extremely Vulnerable). We were also fortunate that we could call on our partners to help us deliver support (236 referrals for food, prescriptions and other urgent services).

During the lockdown, goConnect organised a meals programme with Urban Roots, Aberlour, Nobel Arts and Greater Pollok Services to help deliver weekly cooked dinners to 171 vulnerable tenants.

We also:

worked with the Partnership to improve community facilities in Arden, including replacing broken

floodlighting for Arden's football pitch and providing outdoor classes.

Hired 3 telephone befrienders - 2 male (one Polish) and 1 female to support tenants with mental health (currently 280).

Provided Benefit & Debt Advice, food & energy vouchers to 400 tenants

Secured funding for 100 digital devices for tenants. Our Digital Assistant preloaded useful apps on devices, wrote basic users guides for apps including zoom and gave tuition to tenants

Arranged 10 weekly classes for our tenants to prevent isolation - zoom chat, photography, digital support, mindfulness, Gardening, SAMH, tai chi, chair aerobics, walking and jogging.

Halcrow and Raydale Community Partnership/ Gretna FC 2008 Project

Lead organisation: Cunninghame Housing Association

Partner organisation: Raydale Community Partnership



Statement of support

Cunninghame Housing Association's (CHA) Halcrow and Raydale Community Partnership (RCP) project

combines the development of significant new social housing with an important new community asset within the town of Gretna between May 18 and August 21.

In partnership with Dumfries and Galloway Council (D&GC) CHA redeveloped a former greyhound track to create 90 new social housing units for rent consisting of 72 family houses, 14 amenity bungalows, 2 large four bedroom properties and 2 specific wheelchair friendly houses. Prior to this no new social housing had been built in Gretna since the 1980's. Creating sustainable communities, however, requires CHA to deliver on their Mission to be "More than just a Landlord". 300 metres from Halcrow is Raydale Park, taken into community ownership by Raydale Community Partnership 10 years ago, and home of Gretna FC. In 2017 an extensive consultation by Gretna Community Councils highlighted lack of sport and recreation facilities as an overwhelming priority. In response RCP, Gretna FC and CHA worked in

partnership to develop the Raydale Community Sports Hub consisting of a new 3g pitch, completed in August 2021, and community gym and fitness room due for completion in December 21.

Gretna was developed during WW1 to house workers from HM Factory Gretna, the largest munitions factory in the world. Planned by Sir Raymond Unwin, famed Architect of the Garden City movement, with low scale red brick houses, broad streets, grass verges, and generous gardens, these principles informed the design of Halcrow - with low rise, shallow plan houses with long frontages in terraces, open space and formal landscaped areas creating a feeling of open-ness.

Gretna has been restricted to small scale, incremental housing development due to historic infrastructure problems with water supply. A key aim of CHA's partnership with D&G Council was to secure commitment from the Scottish Government and Scottish Water to upgrade infrastructure in the area, providing a catalyst to develop this site and other areas within Gretna. Cost parameters were strict, with substantial costs for ground remediation and third party drainage systems from the A75 Euro Route. Despite this the development was delivered to a very high standard.

RCP is a community anchor organisation established in 2008 to buy back Raydale Park following the liquidation of the former Gretna Football Club. Working with Gretna FC 2008, the new community

owned football club, and RCP, CHA provided business planning, funding, market research and legal support to develop the Raydale Community Sports Hub. 400 local people endorsed proposals which would enable increased participation in sports and widespread community usage all year round and reduce "leakage" of local residents out of Gretna to surrounding towns.

£420k was assembled from 9 funders to install a new 3g astroturf with a further £104k secured from 7 funders to create a community gym, fitness room and new changing facilities - with CHA relocating former educational portacabins from a site in Lockerbie to Gretna for them to be repurposed.

Cameron Watt, the Scottish Football Association's Football Facilities Manager welcomed CHA's role in the project.

"Thanks a million for all your support offered to Gretna. I did have my doubts about this one ever happening for a variety of reasons. However, all of the hurdles placed in front of you and the wider project team have been overcomeThe somewhat unique situation of having a housing association being willing to drive forward a project that on the face of it wasn't your 'bread and butter' was, for me, refreshingly pragmatic - and one that I wish could be repeated elsewhere across the country".

Outcomes and achievements

Prior to our development there were only 240 units of social rented housing in Gretna, a community of c5000. The Halcrow development increased provision by 38% but even after completion, 190 applicants remained on the register. CHA will now develop a further 80 homes commencing next year. The benefits of Halcrow also lie in a longer term legacy as the concerted effort to encourage Scottish Water to take responsibility for the drainage solution has unlocked the development of other Gretna sites within the Local Development plan.

The Raydale Community Sports Hub levered in over £500k investment to create a new 3g pitch and a 3250sqft gym/fitness facility. The project will

increase participation in sports and leisure across all age groups, meaning fewer Gretna residents with sedentary, inactive lifestyles and more young people engaged in positive sporting activity. 3 new jobs and numerous volunteering opportunities for local residents will be created.

CHA's contribution to the project has been recognised by Craig Peacock, Chair of RCP "Without CHA's support our vision of a recreational hub for the community wouldn't be possible. We've benefitted from significant support with a business plan and bids to major capital funders for the pitch and community gym".

Changing lives at the Bellgrove Hotel

Lead organisation: Wheatley Group

Partner organisation: Glasgow City Council



Statement of support

The opportunity to purchase the Bellgrove Hotel, a private hostel in Glasgow's east end, provided a remarkable opportunity for Wheatley Group to help the 57 men who lived there to create better lives and homes for their future. The arrangement was developed in partnership with Glasgow City Council.

The building was in extremely bad condition and all the men were effectively homeless. They had often transitioned through many homeless services and generally had many other vulnerabilities. Without this partnership, the men would have remained on the margins of society without a safe place to live.

In just under four months, the Wheatley team ensured all 57 were able to move to a new home of their choice, including 37 who moved straight to their own tenancy, despite complex needs. Most of these men have not had a home to call their own for years, and in some cases, decades. This was achieved through extensive teamwork both internally in Wheatley and externally. All this was achieved despite requiring to maintain social distancing and Covid-safe work practices.

Our care team led the work in the Bellgrove, using an informal approach to build trusting relationships and ensure our customers could be in control of their futures. They were supported by City Building (Glasgow) and Wheatley's Neighbourhood Environmental Teams, who provided much-needed repairs, deep cleaning and removal of fire hazards. This work ensured the building was as comfortable as

possible for residents for the few weeks they remained there.

Partnership working was also key to managing the successful and seamless move-on for our customers. Wheatley's care team worked very closely with the Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership on the various care services required, as well as with housing officers from Wheatley and other social landlords in Glasgow. Wheatley's Housing First team provided an important role in pulling together everything that was required for each individual, particularly where they were moving into their own tenancy. This included liaison with our City Building partners who ensured that properties were not just ready for occupation, but also delivered additional requirements for our customers.

Using existing Wheatley wraparound support services and Wheatley Foundation resources, the team ensured that each customer entered the tenancy with all the basics they required to start life in a new home, including furniture and household goods. Many were also provided with support to ensure they would have sufficient food and heat to get them started. Wheatley's fire safety team visited tenants to help ensure they were safe in their home and provide a range of fire safety products.

A fundamental element of the success of the project was ensuring customers had the right level of support to help them maintain a tenancy. Some customers had moved to accommodation that provided support on site. For those in a mainstream tenancy, many have been provided with support through Housing First. All the customers who did not receive Housing First support have been provided with tenancy support through Wheatley's own service. This support will be in place for at least 12 weeks, with a check-in service continuing for at least 12 months. Due to their wide-ranging needs, many customers also required other specialist services including addictions, mental health, adult community care and older people's services.

Wheatley provided additional training for key staff, including housing officers, in order to help with the process. This included trauma-informed practices and adverse childhood experiences. This training is now being used to inform a wider roll out to frontline staff across Wheatley.

Outcomes and achievements

- 57 vulnerable men provided with a sustainable home of their choice within four months - and two weeks ahead of schedule;
- 37 obtained their own tenancy despite the high level of vulnerability and complex needs;
- a longstanding negative impact on the local community was ended;
- the Wheatley 'Outcome Star' approach shows the progress made. From 90% of customers reporting being "stuck" in all aspects of life and making no progress, now around 50% have moved on to some level of improvement in outcomes by August. The outcomes include areas such as life skills, motivation, managing money, drug and alcohol use, as well as mental and emotional health.

We're Safe and Well

Lead organisation: Renfrewshire Council Housing Support Services

Partner organisations: H-Arts, Made In Paisley, Connecting Scotland, Paisley FM radio station



Statement of support

Throughout the COVID19 pandemic, Renfrewshire Council's sheltered housing service and our partners supported the 310 tenants at our 10 complexes to clearly express to everyone that 'We're Safe and Well !'

Our staff ensure all tenants enjoy the benefits of independent living, and during the unprecedented challenges throughout 2020/21, the team developed a broad range of innovative art, poetry, music, video and digital projects to support these older tenants, many of whom were particularly vulnerable, using their own words, thoughts and choices to reach out to family, friends and the community.

From putting pen to paper, using new technology for the first time, seeing their art-work exhibited across their local community and beyond, our sheltered housing service supported tenants to get the message across to all that 'We're Safe & Well' in a wide range of lockdown-friendly health and wellbeing projects. This also allowed us to develop new ways of tackling the threats of loneliness, isolation and loss of skills.

Everyone was supported in a way they wanted in order to make sure their voice was heard.

They experienced a renewed sense of purpose and pride throughout a time of uncertainty and apprehension.

This initiative has strong partnership working at its core between the sheltered housing team and new partners such as community arts projects and local radio stations.

Successful applications for funding from bodies including Creative Scotland and Connecting Scotland, enabled us to find new ways to:

- support those tenants who needed it most,
- ensuring everyone remained safe at home during 'lockdowns',

- help tenants keep in touch with their families,
- reassure relatives that 'We're Safe and Well!'.

Examples of initiatives and innovative projects which formed part of the over-arching 'We're Safe and Well!' approach adopted by our sheltered housing service throughout 2020/21 include:

- The first ever Arts Project in Renfrewshire solely for sheltered housing tenants, which had the theme of "Reminiscence" Working in partnership with local Community Arts Group, 'Made in Paisley', the winner's work will be displayed in their housing complex and local art gallery now COVID19 restrictions are lifted.
- A 'sharing our world to remind you we're still in yours' initiative used funded from Creative Scotland for a community arts venture aimed at enabling those shielding in Renfrewshire to reach out to the wider community through creative writing. Tenants produced pictures, poems and stories which told the wider community of their experience of lockdown. The touching words and personal memories provided an outlet for feelings of fear, grief, hope, humour and support for one another. The work was displayed on billboards and advertisements across Renfrewshire's main towns.
- Workshops and performance projects using video technology, phone-calls and activity packs including creative writing sessions, poetry reading and group project meetings. The non-traditional means of engagement, meant they could still benefit from 1-2-1 engagement with project leads and support while taking part remotely to keep them safe.
- Online video sessions, were supported by our Digital Participation Officer, who ensured that everyone could access the sessions with weekly Zoom and online quizzes proving particularly popular, as well as on-going support to keep in touch with family and friends.
- Local radio station Paisley FM worked with 'We're Safe & Well!' to broadcast a weekly "Community Request Show". Tenants sent in requests for songs and 'shout outs' for birthdays and anniversaries for family and friends. Staff posted the link to our tenant email and Facebook groups, so the show could also be heard on catch up. We even purchased small digital radios for those who did not have one to ensure every tenant would be able to enjoy their weekly music tribute.

Outcomes and achievements

The tenants poems and short stories were displayed across ten locations in Renfrewshire for six weeks. It was then developed into a printed book which was distributed across all of our sheltered housing complexes, our Facebook page, even attracting national coverage in a Sunday newspaper.

One of the main benefits of the project for tenants has been learning to use digital messaging and video call technology, and they are now regularly using these skills to keep in touch with their families.

Our radio show has had a growing number of tenants and their families listening in and sending in requests

every week. The tenants have said they now look forward to sitting down on a Sunday afternoon and listening out for not only their own request but their neighbours and friends.

This has given tenants a sense of togetherness after being physically apart for so long.

We spoke to two of our tenants who benefitted from the "We're Safe & Well" project. Angie who wrote poetry and took part in live showcases said: "I can't believe the things I've been able to do". Anne added: "I can't believe something I've written is on a billboard on the High Street!"



EXCELLENCE IN DEVELOPMENT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Despite the disruption caused by COVID-19, Scotland's housing sector has continued working hard to deliver much needed affordable housing. This award is aimed at developers who have built new residential developments in any recognised affordable tenure.

Regenerating, creating a community and designing for Dementia

West dunbartonshire council



Statement of support

Regenerating, Creating a new Community and Designing for Dementia

Completed in January 2021, Creveul Court is located in the heart of Alexandria. The amenity development consists of sixteen flats, with full lift access, and five terraced bungalows (one fully wheelchair adapted) dwelling all for social rent.

Developed on a site where previously an obsolete 1960s block of flats stood, this new development, created in partnership with CCG has delivered the community aspired pre-war urban landscape of red sandstone with the additionality of a magical community garden, which sits central to the sense of community within the development.

The Council worked closely with a number of community organisations in developing the Creveul Court vision, collectively clear that this was not merely a new housing development this was to serve to meet the wider need of the older Alexandria population, providing the highest quality housing in an attractive location which supported social benefits to improve the health and wellbeing of some of our

more marginalised citizens affording them a sense of community and belonging.

It was the intention through the design process to knit together the existing housing with the new development through a series of landscaped zones. The existing and new bungalows have been connected by a landscape of fruit trees and occasional seating contributing to the biodiversity.

The Council as an early adopter of the CIH Housing and Dementia Framework is committed to improving health outcomes for its older population. The proximity to the town centre and health services meant the development is an ideal location to provide homes for older citizens who would benefit from the dementia friendly design elements.

Dementia friendly design was incorporated within the common close and individual dwellings.

For example, doors and close tiles on each floor are colour coded to assist with orientation and reduce confusion.

Interior dementia design includes

- Glass fronted cabinets
- Taps with clear colour coding
- Colour contrasting between floor and wall finishes
- Additional task lighting
- Full height glazing
- Private outdoor seating at each terraced bungalow to encourage outdoor living and community.

"We feel our whole life and health have benefitted since moving into our new home at Creveul Court. We are more active, we are breathing and sleeping better. We are already feeling a sense of community and we look forward to helping establish the community garden in the summer."

Quote from Mr and Mrs McH Creveul Court
Community Garden

The homes are designed within a secured courtyard with a communal orchard residing at its centre, allowing tenants to relax, socialise and keep active with a sense of ownership and integration.

Using Community Benefit funding, West Dunbartonshire Council partnered a local community gardening group to develop a program that has promoted meaningful interaction and exposure to nature in a community setting.

Energy Efficiency

Designed to sustainability level "Silver Active" and incorporating renewable energy sources in the form of a solar PV system it is anticipated the development will deliver a mean £314 (B) annualised energy cost.

In addition the wheelchair adapted property has an electric vehicle charging point.

With an enhanced building fabric specification residents can expect an improvement in heat loss and energy demand resulting in significant savings and avoiding fuel poverty.

Conclusion

Creveul Court is a success story we are proud of, the approach and commitment to excellence has led to 100% tenant satisfaction.

The golden thread of positive early community engagement, a strong collaborative focus, ground breaking design incorporating the dementia framework and a vision to deliver for and to meet the needs of the community is fully evident and is now being replicated in all our future developments.

Outcomes and achievements

Achievements to Date

The total budget for this project was £3,771,342, which equates to an average price per unit of £171,424 and was delivered on budget.

Our letting plan which we developed for this project helped West Dunbartonshire Council to reach our target demographic and many of the new tenants were able to transfer from large family homes which were difficult to access due to external stairs, thus freeing up the stock for young families in housing need.

We have carried out a tenant satisfaction survey where 100% of tenants expressed satisfaction with their new home and 95% of tenants stated that they have

experienced improved health benefits since moving to their new home.

"Moving to Creveul Court has been better than any medication a doctor could prescribe" Mrs A, new tenant at Creveul court

Our tenants have also advised us of affordable energy costs, with an average utility bill of £46 per month for gas and electricity which meets our objective of creating energy efficiency housing.

Our approach to caring for our new tenants through engagement with the Development Officers has enhanced that sense of community and belonging.

The success of the elements of Creveul Court are now replicated in our new developments

Inverclyde

Lead organisation: Sanctuary Scotland

Partner organisation: Cruden Building Ltd



Statement of support

Sanctuary Scotland's (part of Sanctuary) £14.7 million suburban development of 96 new homes across the Inverclyde area of west Scotland has brought not only quality, brand new and much-needed affordable housing to the area, but also created a positive boost to the local community through Sanctuary's continued dedication to place shaping.

Completed in June 2021, the properties themselves comprise of 24 terraced houses, 4 cottage flats and 68 standard flats with a range of 1, 2 and 3-bedroom properties available to suit the needs of individuals, couples and growing families alike. All 96 affordable homes were available for social rent and allocated quickly, improving the lives of almost 100 local families. The development spans across the towns of Port Glasgow (Lilybank, Dubbs Road and Broadstone Avenue areas), as well as Mount Pleasant Street in Greenock and was part funded by a Scottish Government grant.

With solar panels (PV modules) added to all buildings, the development has been built with a modern approach to sustainability and renewable energy in mind. A selection of the properties at Dubbs Road were also specifically made accessible (known as amenity flats or cottage flats), providing homes exclusively for the over 55s or those with accessibility needs.

Excellent design features were also included within the construction process of the Inverclyde properties, enhancing the benefits of living in a new Sanctuary Scotland property here for the residents. For example, features include metal panelling, cladding and roofing, box window features providing shelter over front

door areas, an enclosed hard and soft communal landscaping area (Dubbs Road), Juliet balconies for optimised views and attractive featured brick patterns.

The project saw the creation of 19 new jobs, 6 of which were apprenticeships, 9 work placements and 20% local labour was utilised by Cruden Building Ltd; the build partner and contractor for Sanctuary Scotland's Inverclyde development.

During the development process, Sanctuary Scotland and Cruden worked together to fund a new educational play area for local nursery children on the doorstep of the Dubbs Road part of the development. Funding for the play area transformation was made available by Sanctuary's MORE! initiative, through which Cruden provided their skills and time.

Sanctuary's MORE! programme sees development partners work closely together to add value to areas where homes are being constructed by donating skills, resources and equipment to help support important local community projects.

The outdoor learning area at St Francis Primary and Nursery School in Port Glasgow has been brought to life by building timber bench seating, planters and troughs, a water activity wall, work benches and a new mud kitchen, with astro-grass, woodchips and mulch surrounding the area.

Additional projects benefiting the local community included the resurfacing of a local bowling club car park, kindly loaned to Cruden for a temporary site office location towards the end of the Lilybank phase of the project. Over £4,000 worth of tools were then donated to local charity Inverclyde Shed, which also benefited from a fully refurbished community garden for members to enjoy. The charity aims to bring people together to utilise their handy skills in fixing things, whilst combatting mental health issues such as loneliness, keeping people talking to one another and making new friends.

The Inverclyde development showcases the very core Sanctuary mission in practice; building affordable homes and sustainable communities where people choose to live. Inverclyde has positively benefited in more ways than one from the project which has not only created much-needed new homes but also an improved sense of community, many new jobs and facilities for local children to thrive in their educational settings.

Outcomes and achievements

Sanctuary Scotland is one of the country's leading housing associations with more than 8,000 homes. A registered Scottish charity, Sanctuary Scotland was established in 1996 and is a part of Sanctuary, one of the UK's leading providers of housing, care and commercial services. By working with others, the organisation has created thousands of communities where people are proud to live.

Our mission statement is to build affordable homes and sustainable communities where people choose to live. Utilising our wealth of experience in building affordable homes, at Inverclyde we did just that,

contributing towards improving the lives of many local people.

The £14.7m development of 96 new affordable flats and houses for social rent across the Port Glasgow and Greenock areas of Inverclyde have breathed new life into the community, whilst also adding some attractive new architecture to the local streetscape. Offering fresh opportunities in the form of jobs, homes and community projects, Sanctuary Scotland and build partner Cruden Building Ltd have worked to positively transform the local area.

Transforming Sanquhar

Dumfries and Galloway Housing Partnership



Statement of support

In March 2021 Dumfries and Galloway Housing Partnership, part of Wheatley Group, completed 12 homes at Old School, Sanquhar. This provided single storey one and two-bedroom homes for affordable rent.

The site, home of the former primary school, had been unused and derelict since the 1980s, and had the remains of a derelict B-listed building insitu. Its prominent location, adjacent to a local village square, focused attention on the site and highlighted the need for it to be redeveloped. The Local Authority was keen to see this happen and supported the project through the Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Supply Programme. DGHP was able to bring improvement to this part of the village, bringing the site back in to the community. The scheme name reflects its history.

Despite national lockdowns, the project completed within the revised contract period of 52 weeks and within budget.

The site is within a conservation area. Careful design was needed to meet requirements and to fit in with the surrounding area. The single storey design is in keeping with the majority of the neighbouring properties and ensures the new houses fit well.

To remain in keeping with local and surrounding properties, the majority of which are traditional

cottages, chimneys were included in our designs along with energy-efficient double-glazed windows which replicate the old sash style windows common locally.

Designs were also tailored to raise the height of the window ledges and to include higher roof ridges and steeper pitches to complement the more traditional styling around the site.

Part of the stonework from the former school building was retained and installed as a feature in the communal lawn, retaining some site history.

The development is formed in a courtyard formation with all parking to the front. It creates a safe and secure environment and replicates the village square layout which it adjoins, creating a welcoming addition to the village.

All properties have level access ensuring flexibility of use and long-term suitability to meet changing needs of those who have made them their home. Two wheelchair-adapted properties were included in the design at the outset. The properties have met a range of needs from those of young families, those needing level access accommodation and those needing wheelchair-adapted properties.

DGHP's designs and design team were flexible and were able to respond to emerging needs throughout the course of the contract. As such, DGHP was able to adapt properties to include level access showers rather than baths, thus ensuring the properties met the needs of those who were to stay in them.

At the time of property allocation, the demand for single storey properties was 63% greater than the level of existing stock and there had only been one re-let over the preceding 12-month period - highlighting the need for modern, level access living accommodation in the village.

The level access design allowed people to move to a more manageable property size thus freeing-up family accommodation which is also popular in the village. A lot of DGHP's existing single storey stock in the area is older and due to size, location and existence

of external steps were no longer suitable for their ageing occupants and nor could be adapted. The new properties allowed people the single storey, modern accommodation they needed while being able to remain part of their community.

The properties were designed to meet Silver Active Building Standards. They included solar pv panels and water butts. The combi gas heating system included a heat recovery element. The heating system is zoned to allow greater control of different areas thus making the system more economical.

Outcomes and achievements

Sanquhar is a close community where people tend to live their whole lives and those who move away often come back in later years. Eleven of the 12 occupants at Old School were from the local area, with the last having a local connection. Through this development we were able to help people remain in their communities.

The properties sit well in their context, matching local styles and features, thus helping to integrate the properties into the community.

Overall, 70% of customers completing a recent satisfaction survey were very satisfied with their new homes. They were happy with the layout and that they fit in well with the local area.

Other comments DGHP received were:

- location is ideal for buses, shops, health centre etc;
- keeps the heat well. Very warm, comfortable;
- there's nothing I do not like;
- very happy with everything;
- and could not praise enough as the houses are great.

The new development has seen the redevelopment of a derelict site which posed an eye sore and potential hazard within the village.

The new houses have a positive impact on the local views and amenity as well as providing much-needed modern accommodation in the village.

Affordable modular homes - Isle of Mull

Lead organisation: The Wee House Company

Partner organisation: Mull and Iona Community Trust



Statement of support

The Ulva Ferry Housing Project, delivering 4 high quality modular homes for long-term affordable rent on the Isle of Mull, is a truly community-led project with wide reaching benefits to ensure the future sustainability of a fragile community.

The project was delivered by Mull and Iona Community Trust (MICT), working with Ulva School Community Association (USCA) in response to long-term population decline due to a lack of suitable homes in the area. Ulva Ferry is a beautiful but isolated community, where 30% of total housing stock is second and holiday homes and the few long-term rental properties available are locally unaffordable. As

a result, the primary school roll declined to the point the school was threatened with closure in 2010.

Feasibility work confirmed the housing issues, along with the difficulties of local small businesses and organisations in recruiting and retaining staff and volunteers. As a designated National Scenic Area land prices are disproportionately high and the few land options available for building have significant challenges including planning restrictions and access to services.

MICT worked closely with USCA and the wider community on all aspects of the project, holding extensive community consultation meetings, fundraising events and workshops with the school. Community members were actively involved throughout, from initial land options and outline house designs, to agreeing an allocation policy with which to choose tenants. The names of the houses were chosen by school pupils, who also planted trees and buried a time capsule on a corner of the housing site, ensuring an ongoing connection with the land, which was purchased via a grant from the Scottish Land Fund.

The Wee House Company were appointed following an open tender, responding positively to the community's requirement for energy efficient housing to address the fuel poverty issues prevalent on the island, housing that fitted the local vernacular, solutions to the difficult site conditions, and homes that offered flexibility and exceeded minimum space requirements, recognising that in very rural areas,

people spend more time working and socialising in their own homes. The homes achieved EPC B rating, using a combination of high-quality insulation, increased air tightness and the use of solar PV panels.

Thanks to the innovative modular design, construction on site by The Wee House Company took just 7 months and was completed on budget, despite taking place during the Covid-19 pandemic and a very cold winter. Each house was made of between 4 and 6 modules, and 90% of construction was completed under factory conditions in the company's Ayrshire facility, meaning site preparations could be completed in tandem. Module dimensions were designed with meticulous accuracy to ensure safe passage on the ferry and along single track roads, with local residents enjoying the spectacle of the modules being craned into position.

From delivery of the modules to residents moving in took a matter of weeks and the houses were complete in May 2021. 31 applications were received, with four tenants chosen using the community-agreed,

points-based allocation policy. The new tenants have the comfort of secure tenancies, affordable rents, and high quality, energy efficient homes. All four new tenants had experienced significant housing need and were thrilled to move into their new homes. As one commented, 'The positive impact MICT have had on us and other families can genuinely not be underestimated, and securing our home is truly life changing.'

While MICT is a registered private landlord, it works closely with West Highland Housing Association, which offers assistance with allocations, management support, setting rent levels, and advice to tenants. The project has been funded by the Scottish Government's Rural & Islands Housing Fund, Argyll & Bute Council's Strategic Housing Fund, Ecology Building Society, and local donations and fundraising.

Outcomes and achievements

Four houses may seem a small achievement, however in a fragile community of 110 residents, the impact is significant:

- The project has addressed an identified housing need, providing homes for 16 people;
- The school roll has increased by 50%: enabling the school to employ a second teacher;
- The future of the school has been cemented: in a community with no village hall, shop or pub, all social activities centre around the school building;
- The number of working age residents has increased by 10%: boosting the local economy with increased local spending, potential for job retention and creation, and opportunities for new business creation;
- Community members have a greater sense of cohesion and achievement: by being actively engaged with the project from conception to delivery;
- The project has showcased innovative modular construction methods: delivering affordable housing that is high quality energy efficient, cost effective and quick to complete;
- The project has gained significant interest throughout rural Scotland: MICT has been able to share its experiences with other community groups and private landowners seeking to deliver their own affordable housing aspirations;
- The project contributed to the Scottish Government's (then) target to deliver 50,000 affordable homes by 2021.

Countesswells Phase 2

Lead organisation: Hillcrest Homes

Partner organisation: Stewart Milne Homes



Statement of support

165 homes recently completed in the spacious, airy, rural surroundings of Countesswells represents an exciting mixture of homes specially developed for a wide range of tenants and families, set within a tranquil tenure-blind community. These aren't just homes delivered to offer an affordable housing solution, scattered amongst premium open-market homes, these are properties that tenants can take pride in.

Countesswells isn't just a development, it's a community specially designed to allow tenants to thrive. Nestled in countryside five minutes from Aberdeen, Countesswells offers shops, amenities, and landscaped community spaces all on residents' doorsteps.

Inclusivity has been at the forefront from design stage to completion. Included within the wide mixture of housing are a number of properties specially developed for wheelchair users and those with mobility issues. These homes include level entrances and flooring, accessible cupboards and storage and customised bathroom facilities. Accessibility has been a key consideration in Countesswells' hard landscaping, with level path networks and a large number of dropped kerbs.

Developing a vibrant and positive community was a key consideration at Countesswells. Working with Stewart Milne Homes and the local community, focus has continued on this following completion. Uniquely, covering Countesswells as a whole, a community liaison role was appointed to provide a point of call for residents with queries or suggestions, and to lead on community events and initiatives. A range of regular events are planned to bring people together, such as Countesswells' Christmas light switch-on with

entertainment and gifts for children. Events with local schools are also organised such as on-site picnics featuring a free ice-cream stall, along with fundraising events and more. The community liaison is also working to create a community council which will hold monthly meetings and encourage community-wide participation.

Another Countesswells innovation is its community orchard, featuring apple, pear and plum trees and a herb garden for residents to look after and use.

Community was also a key consideration in appointing the local convenience store, with Sainsbury's selected due to their impressive focus on the area and their pledge use as many Countesswells residents as staff as possible.

Trades operatives were sourced locally where possible. Two apprentices were shortlisted as finalists for the Trades Awards Apprentice of the Year, while two bricklayers were shortlisted for Tradesperson of the Year. A graduate Construction Manager from Robert Gordon University was given the opportunity to carry out his industrial work placement at Countesswells - the second graduate to be given this opportunity. In addition, materials were sourced locally wherever possible to contribute to the local economy.

The homes have been designed with a rustic rural feel to complement the countryside setting. The homes feature a mixture of red brickwork reminiscent of country cottages and weatherboard cladding to enhance this rural feel and offer additional protection from the elements.

A timber kit construction method has been used throughout to hugely limit construction waste. Timber also enjoys a significantly higher Building Energy Rating compared to steel frame or masonry built projects.

Specially designed soft and hard landscaping has been incorporated throughout the development to enhance the rural feel with plenty of trees, shrubs and meadows all with a subtle contemporary edge to the aesthetic.

All of the affordable homes have been designed and constructed to high standards of energy efficiency, featuring gas central heating with gas savers on boilers, smart meters and state of the art cladding and insulation that exceeds the government standard. These measures have been installed to help tenants keep bills as low as possible and reduce instances of fuel poverty.

Outcomes and achievements

The development of Countesswells has created a new community within a tranquil rural setting, within easy access of Aberdeen. The development doesn't just offer homes, but retail space, community premises and spaces and amenities too.

- 165 homes delivered.
- High quality, energy-efficient housing in a rural setting.
- Tenure blind - social rent is mixed in with private sale properties.
- A wide mixture of housing types are represented, including apartments, cottage flats, and semi-detached, terraced and detached homes, meaning there are homes for a wide variety of tenant requirements or family sizes.
- Countesswells' mix of housing types and styles is also a specially designed nod to the traditional assortment of buildings found in Scottish villages.
- Unique and in-depth community focus, including events and a specially appointed community liaison. There are also a number of community features such as the orchard and civic spaces.
- Creation of a more engaged and harmonious community and increased opportunities for them from employment to easily having their voices heard.

EXCELLENCE IN TENANT SCRUTINY

Sponsored by:



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

This award is aimed at landlords and their tenants who can show excellence in working collaboratively to carry out a piece of scrutiny work, or to embed scrutiny within the culture of the organisation in ways which have led to positive change, improved service outcomes for tenants and/or enhanced the lives of tenants and communities in some way.

Budget Scrutiny Group - engaging tenants in ongoing scrutiny of the HRA and budgetary process

South Lanarkshire Council



Statement of support

Budget Scrutiny Group (BSG) - engaging tenants in ongoing scrutiny of the HRA and budgetary process

South Lanarkshire Council's BSG established in 2008 has a proven track record of influencing the housing budget and rent setting.

The BSG has a clear remit to continuously monitor the housing budgets and coordinate engagement on annual budgetary process. The work of the group ensures engagement in relation to budgets and financial performance is undertaken on a continuous basis and not merely specific to the annual process for rent setting.

The group supported by South Lanarkshire Tenant Development Support Project is very much tenant led and meets throughout the year.

The group made up of 8 tenant representatives considers a range of budgetary information and works in partnership with the council through their agreed agenda and workplan. As their skills have developed,

the group have significantly developed their role in considering/challenging financial and performance information and identifying housing budget areas they wish to focus on.

The group has embedded a culture of enhanced involvement and effective tenant scrutiny in the housing service with relevant input from senior management to frontline staff. The importance and value ensures greater ownership and empowerment of tenants in scrutinising housing services. Tenants with experience of scrutiny support other tenants, enabling them to challenge and hold the housing service to account.

Continuous monitoring of financial information

A continuing focus for the group has been ensuring tenants have the right information to help them scrutinise financial performance. Financial reporting has developed and improved over time to ensure the right information is available, in accessible formats at the right time to support their work. Financial reporting includes trend data and comparison of key financial areas including investment, rent arrears and repairs. Tenants scrutinise this data and seek supplementary information if required.

The financial performance of the housing service is transparent with tenants involved having a greater understanding about expenditure, why decisions are made and the pressures/challenges faced by the housing service. Tenants involved understand the financial issues considered in setting rents.

Annual rent setting consultation - designed/delivered by tenants The group has a proven track record of influencing the council's budget and rent setting discussions, integral to the continuous improvement and development of the housing service.

They co-ordinate/deliver the consultation for setting the rents annually which has evolved over the years. They also engage wider customer groups including gypsy/travellers and homelessness customers.

Last year despite Covid-19 restrictions, a significant programme of engagement through virtual platforms was undertaken to seek the views of tenants on proposed rent levels for 2021/22.

Working to design the consultation the group considered the impact of Covid-19 and the restrictions. In previous years there were a range of engagement opportunities for tenants to provide views. Last year, the key focus was an online survey agreed with the group. The survey sought tenant opinion on the rent increase, the priorities that influence the housing budget and the considerations for investment.

Through excellent partnership working the response from the survey was the best the council had ever had - 1385 responses compared to 800 the previous year.

The work of the group is embedded into the council's business/service planning for housing services. The influence and impact of the group has led to fundamental changes. A key example being a 3 year rent strategy following the 2018/19 rent setting consultation. Feedback from tenants indicated support of a move away from setting rents annually and proposed rent increases be set over a longer period allowing greater clarity in the planning/managing of household bills, as well as the financial planning of the HRA.

Outcomes and achievements

- Tenants design/deliver rent setting consultation - embedded in culture of council.
- BSG continue to adapt approach to the level of challenge.
- Increased transparency/openness.
- Greater ownership/empowerment of tenants in scrutinising the housing budget.
- Tenants pro-actively working with the council.
- Able to demonstrate tenant influence/impact:-
- Successful conclusion of rent harmonisation
- Agreement of multi-year rent strategy
- Move from multi-year rent strategy and reduction of rent increase for 2021/22 due to financial impact of Covid-19
- Rents reflective of tenants' views
- Factored into business/service planning.
- Tenants' skills developed to challenge/influence.
- Evaluation continually positive

Successful consultation last year despite restrictions:

- 1,385 surveys.
- 48% supported 2.2% rent increase.
- 74% felt rent represented good/very good value for money.
- 90% strongly agreed/agreed with the investment priorities.

Tenants' views

"For years now the council has embedded scrutiny in their approach. Through this have learnt about the financial issues and challenges for the housing service."

"Having relevant information allows me to give views on the rent levels and the investment priorities."

"The excellent work of the BSG allows tenants views to be at the heart of scrutiny."

Annette Finnan, Head of Housing Services - "We've worked very hard to build a robust approach with the BSG at the centre."

Independent scrutiny, massive impact!

Link Tenant Scrutiny Panel



Statement of support

Link Tenant Scrutiny Panel was established in 2013.

The original members of the Panel completed the Scottish Government funded "Stepping up to Scrutiny" training and worked in partnership with Link to develop 'terms of reference' outlining the role and remit of the Panel.

The Panel independently monitors Link's performance against Charter outcomes and standards. It formally assesses performance, service delivery and decision-making, improving outcomes and value for money for tenants. The Panel attend LHA Board, with a standing agenda item ensuring they have a voice and can share progress and raise concerns directly.

Performance is reported to the Panel in the following ways:

- A meeting prior to submission of the Annual Return of the Charter (ARC)
- Presentation of the tenant satisfaction survey findings
- Scottish Housing Network benchmarking performance analysis
- During annual joint meeting with Board members to validate evidence gathered for the Annual Assurance Statement
- During the Covid-19 pandemic the Panel received monthly written updates of all key Link Housing activities and met regularly with the Director of Housing

Each year, the Panel selects Charter indicators to scrutinise the evidence submitted to the Regulator in the annual return on the Charter. The Panel provides the narrative of Link's RSL performance for the annual Charter report card, along with a foreword from the Chair, summarising the Panel's other activities. This 'tenants talking to tenants' approach helps make the report card more accessible.

The Panel actively gathers its own evidence when carrying out scrutiny inspections. From July 2018 to January 2019, they scrutinised estate management, specifically close cleaning, and landscaping. Their methodology included.

- Site inspections
- Tenant surveys
- Staff and contractor interviews
- Meetings with other landlords
- Desktop assessment of policy and procedures

This was their most ambitious and challenging scrutiny inspection to date. Even with meticulous planning, the inspection took longer to complete than previous ones. The extensive nature of the inspection ultimately led to it being split into two separate inspections, each resulting in detailed reports with areas for improvement.

In the report and recommendations, the Panel highlighted that Link would benefit from better procurement and monitoring of contractors. Link provided a management response to the Panel's report and worked closely with the Panel to implement viable recommendations.

After this ambitious and challenging scrutiny, to support a positive relationship with senior management and the Panel, an external consultant facilitated a two-day session. Day-one focussed on team building, working as an effective team in a constructive and productive way. Day-two provided a refresh on the scrutiny role to turbo charge the group to carry out shorter, sharper scrutiny reviews. The Panel was also supported to develop a 3-year action plan to provide focus for itself and Link.

Link's Chief Executive also arranged for the Panel to receive training from Link's internal auditor. This emphasised the role of validating findings with senior managers during scrutiny inspections, to aid the Panel's understanding of complex issues.

In August 2021, the Panel met with Link Housing and Link Group Board members to develop a more cohesive way of working on areas of shared interests. This confidential meeting is now programmed twice a year, helping the Panel to understand what is critical to the Board. The Panel can then consider this when assessing what to scrutinise.

The Panel will meet with the consultant in October to develop a mechanism that will allow them to grade value for money of services being inspected. This is the final step in supporting the Panel to produce sharp, focused scrutiny reports.

Outcomes and achievements

New close cleaning specifications were developed by Link and approved by the Panel.

Link undertook a major retender of the close cleaning, moving away from individually procured area services to a contract led service. This will provide a more consistent service.

A formal quarterly review of contractor services was included in the tender to ensure high services are consistently maintained.

Link has introduced agile working of housing officers equipped with iPads, enabling inspections of close cleaning and any resulting complaints to be recorded directly on housing management software.

The chairperson of the tenant scrutiny panel took part in tender interviews for the landscaping contractor in the east of the country in early 2019.

A new supervisor post has been introduced for the asset planning team. This will improve use of front-line resolution and the management of contracts.

A tenant satisfaction survey in May 2020 demonstrates the impact of the scrutiny. Satisfaction with window cleaning increased from 82% in 2017 to 91% in 2020 and landscaping satisfaction has increased from 83% to 85%. Whilst satisfaction with close cleaning has remained static at 85%, this can be explained by the new cleaning contractor being procured in spring 2021.

Cunninghame Scrutiny Group

Cunninghame Housing Association Ltd



Statement of support

Cunninghame Housing Association is very proud of the scrutiny work they are developing in partnership with tenants and service users. Tenant scrutiny is very much at the heart of how the Association monitors and improves its housing services.

Partnership in practice

Cunninghame Housing Association were keen to work more closely with their tenants and service users to receive independent reviews and scrutiny of their housing services to support further service improvements and growth. To achieve this, they supported the launch of the Cunninghame Scrutiny Group (CSG) made up of local tenants and service users.

Key lesson - It was realised very early on, that a key aspect in the success of the scrutiny process was removing the 'fear' factor which tenant scrutiny members, front line staff, senior staff and Board members all had in various degrees. This was achieved by jointly agreeing a scrutiny framework which outlines the remit, role and reporting arrangements everyone has in the process.

By working together tenants have an opportunity to set their agenda and work in partnership with Cunninghame to make improvements.

'Our role as a scrutiny group is to ensure we bring a customer perspective to independently review and scrutinise the performance of Cunninghame's housing services. We set the agenda of the items we choose to scrutinise. Cunninghame staff have been very supportive of our work. To date, the Board have agreed most of our recommendations and we work well as a team to continue to drive services forward'. Willie Clarke, Chair of CSG.

Scrutiny at the heart of delivering services

'The CSG has carried out a range of excellent scrutiny projects that have been well received by the Board and staff team. We ensure that tenant scrutiny is fully embedded into Cunninghame's performance monitoring and reporting arrangements. We respect the commitment of our volunteers and the essential work they do. It is an excellent example of partnership working to ensure continuous improvement'. Frank Sweeney, CEO, Cunninghame.

The CSG carry out detailed research to decide on each scrutiny task it undertakes and produce an action plan for each exercise. The CSG have used a range of scrutiny methods including desk top reviews; staff interviews; benchmarking; job shadowing; tenant led inspections; mystery shopping and surveys.

Recent scrutiny activities carried out by the CSG, include:

- Review of customer service standards - Recommendations were all taken into account in the design of the Association's new office reception. Staff have been trained on the new standards.

- Review of gas safety procedures and practice - Cunninghame wanted to record more information

on no access/forced entries/capping and to raise the need to record and benchmark this information with the Scottish Housing Regulator.

During the last 18 months CSG showed incredible determination to continue their valued work completing the following scrutiny activities through the severe restrictions imposed by Covid 19:

Review of Anti-Social Behaviour Policy (ASB) - Cunninghame realised their policy needed updated to reflect recent changes in legislation and to ensure it embraced diversity, equal opportunities and eliminate unlawful discrimination.

Drafted an ASB information leaflet for tenants - CSG drafted and made design recommendations for the new leaflet to reflect the revised policy and make it more user friendly for tenants.

Review of the customer 2021 satisfaction -. The CSG worked with the research team to review the format and content of the satisfaction survey. This was vital to ensure the survey was suited to telephone interviews rather face to face. The group's recommendations were adopted into the 2021 survey ensuring a high response rate during the Covid restrictions.

'CSG have recently presented their recommendations on updating our ASB policy and a new tenant advice leaflet. These have already been implemented. ASB is a very important issue and we value the work of the scrutiny group to ensure we get things right at Cunninghame'.

Janet Strang, Chair, Cunninghame Housing Association

Keeping everyone informed

Cunninghame has developed an excellent working partnership with tenants and service users to work together to discuss issues and joint solutions to these. Cunninghame and CSG have regular meetings and updates on progress with previous scrutiny activities. The Association also has seven tenants and resident's groups who are updated at their monthly meetings on the progress and outcomes of the scrutiny work.

Cunninghame ensures that staff are kept up-to-date about scrutiny activity at team briefings and via the staff intranet. Scrutiny is a standing agenda item at Senior Management Meetings. Tenants are kept updated on scrutiny activity through; Cunninghame newsletters; Annual tenant performance report and at the Annual Conferences, which is normally attended by over 120 delegates each year.

Making a Difference

Tenant scrutiny has seen significant improvements in how housing services are delivered. There is a more open environment for CSG and Cunninghame to work together to ensure value for money for rents and service charges. Cunninghame continually review savings that are being made following the implementation of scrutiny recommendations and review if there is more tenant satisfaction after these changes are made. Scrutiny is supporting the Association to ensure services reflect tenant's needs and priorities.

'Our scrutiny approach helps us to have a better understanding of the needs of tenants and service users. Dialogue between the Association and CSG has been really productive. We are working together to drive our services forward at rents people can afford.'
Steven Good, Director Housing & Property Services, Cunninghame.

Outcomes and achievements

The outcomes and achievements following scrutiny projects can be summarised as follows:

CSG has a full complement of 12 trained members who have grown in confidence, knowledge, skills and experience.

TIS support CSG and Cunninghame to ensure an independent and innovative approach.

Scrutiny is now fully embedded into the culture of Cunninghame at all levels.

CSG are significantly influencing continuing improvements in housing services.

Satisfaction surveys highlight that Tenant Satisfaction levels are increasing.

Review of Anti-Social Behaviour Policy/New ASB Tenant Information leaflet

The CSG's latest exercise was both challenging and unique not being able to meet face to face. Group members were determined to continue improving tenant housing services virtually. They reviewed CHA's ASB policy and drafted and designed an accompanying advice leaflet for tenants. Staff, tenant groups and individual tenants were all given the opportunity to comment on the leaflets first draft. These views were incorporated into the final leaflet and design. Tenants commented on the new leaflet being easier to understand, quicker to find contact numbers and support. The CSG recognised this was important as tenants who need information are often already under great stress.

CHA now offers greater support for tenants who report cases of ASB.

Staff have been given additional training on the reviewed policy, complaint handling/resolution and support.

Action tenants and tenant groups have endorsed the newly drafted advice leaflet

2021 Tenants Satisfaction Survey - Action Plan

The Cunninghame Scrutiny Group was involved in the independent design of the 2021 Cunninghame Tenant Satisfaction Survey. The 2021 survey was much more challenging than the 2018 survey, but the response rate from tenants was still very high. It returned high levels of satisfaction across all areas of interest to tenants despite a reduction in resources and service imposed by Covid 19. These included:

Keeping you informed

Taking part in decision making

Complaint resolution

Repairs services

This clearly shows the positive impact of the CSG's last action plan and the exercise on Customer Service. Their recommendations which were fully implemented and supported by Cunninghame. The 2021 action plan has now been completed and will also be presented to the Board.

A second Financial Inclusion Officer was recruited. This has already improved the financial circumstances to a wider range of hard to reach tenants.

Additional staff training is in place which has reduced the variability in services across all Cunninghame's towns of operation, improving satisfaction levels.

A dedicated social media and marketing officer role has been created to improve Cunninghame's digital offering.

West Dunbartonshire Scrutiny Panel

West Dunbartonshire Council



Statement of support

The introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter heralded a review of how tenants could be involved in performance monitoring. It was identified that while there were many traditional ways for tenants to be involved, many local tenant groups wanted to focus on local issues and so having a Scrutiny Panel would provide a new opportunity to consider performance issues across all areas and be ideal for individual tenants. An advert to be involved in performance scrutiny was publicised through the Council's Housing News (tenant newsletter) and website to look for potential members.

The initial members involved identified that other service users as well as tenants should be involved, including those on the waiting list for WDC housing, homeless applicants, gypsy travellers and owners and other occupiers who receive factoring services from the Council. From this an additional 2 factored owner members joined. The Scottish Government's "Stepping up to Scrutiny" training programme gave staff and members a structure and focus to their scrutiny activities. Alongside the training, members felt that having a formal Terms of Reference (setting out aims, objectives and the role of the panel) with Committee approval was an important step to ensure that they would be heard. This was approved by Committee in November 2013 and provided a basis to ensure that recommendations were taken seriously by senior management and implemented promptly and meaningfully. The Terms of Reference along with a Code of Conduct gave the Scrutiny Panel a legitimate and effective role within the council's performance management processes.

The Panel looks at various sources for information when deciding what to consider in more depth, including satisfaction surveys, Annual Return on the Charter and Complaints information. WDC's Charter Improvement Plan also allows the Panel to see what the Council had already committed itself to with regard to improving standards. This also allows the Panel, during their scrutiny exercise to check what had already been said would be done, has been done.

The Panel meet with senior staff from services involved, conduct surveys to provide a snapshot of

customer experiences as well as review benchmarking information. The information the Panel collect from this, along with analysing and interpreting performance information allows for recommendations and observations to be created. Tenants are supported by staff and their training to make sure that they can be meaningfully involved in analysing and interpreting the performance information that they need.

Charter performance information is also shared with all tenants through Housing News, the quarterly newsletter so that all tenants can build up an understanding of performance and hold the Council as their landlord to account.

Initially establishing the Scrutiny Panel's role at Council committee level has helped embed their role into performance management and organisational culture. The quality of the Panel's reports and their presentations to subsequent Housing Improvement Boards (HIB) has continued to show they are a valuable inclusion to performance improvement. Their focus on performance from a tenants point of view for example, has helped identify where communication can be improved (medical adaptation report) more staff priority needed (complaint handling report).

Scrutiny Panel Reports go directly to the Housing Improvement Board (HIB). To date all recommendations have been accepted and unless there is an unreasonable expense, the commitment from the HIB is to implement the Panel's recommendation in recognition of their insight and as a recognised part of performance improvement. Key actions from Panel recommendations are also a regular item on the Housing Improvement Board agenda and actions are only updated as completed with the Panel's approval. This ensures that the Panel stay in control of their recommendations and can ensure that they are implemented as they intended.

Membership of the Scrutiny Panel can be more intensive than other forms of participation. For many members this also leads to greater satisfaction but it also means that attracting and retaining new members can be more difficult. Recruitment is ongoing and a focus is put on advertising the work of the Scrutiny Panel and the benefits of their recommendations for all tenants and service users. Panel members have volunteered for 'On the spot with ...' a regular feature in the Housing News to help promote the benefits and satisfaction of being involved in the Scrutiny Panel. Training and support from TP staff as well as other panel members has also helped nurture and encourage new members to stay involved.

When the pandemic hit, the Panel initially took a break for a couple of months but were then keen to carry on their work and virtual meetings on zoom took place. Only 2 members were not keen on zoom and opted to take a longer break but have kept in touch with the group's progress and are still keen to re-join when face to face meetings can recommence.

Outcomes and achievements

Tenants need to play a central role in improving services and our Scrutiny Panel dedicate their time to ensuring that this can be done for areas they think are of most concern to tenants or where performance is poor. The improvements generated from their recommendations are for all to benefit from. They also help emphasise to tenants that they have a voice and have a role to play in holding their landlord to

account. For the landlord, the partnership with the scrutiny panel helps keep focus on tenants as well as the bigger picture and meeting targets. It is an invaluable partnership for tenants and landlords and when done effectively can be so beneficial to both - WD Scrutiny Panel is a great example of that.

Kingdom Tenant Scrutiny

Kingdom Housing Association



Statement of support

Since the establishment of our Scrutiny Panel in 2016, tenant scrutiny has become embedded within organisational practice. The Panel works collaboratively with our Senior Management Team to conduct a review of annual performance supported by an independent bench-marking organisation. This allows the Panel to scrutinise our performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter and identify service areas for further investigation. The Panel additionally plays an important role in the development and review of our Customer Satisfaction Surveys, which also informs other scrutiny activities.

The importance of tenant-led scrutiny is highlighted in our new Tenant and Customer Participation Strategy as an important way to empower tenants to influence. Over the last year we have worked with tenants to build their confidence to participate in scrutiny at different levels. Tenants were supported to attend online events like TPAS' tenant information sharing sessions and training workshops, the SFHA's Virtual Engagement Conference and webinars hosted by TIS.

Our Scrutiny Panel has a close working relationship with our Board of Management, which was formalised this year when they worked together to develop an official reporting process. This has strengthened the trust that exists between Panel and Board members, which was publicly recognised by a member of the Panel at our Tenant Gathering, who thanked the Board for consistently acting upon the feedback received through scrutiny activities.

Although the pandemic brought challenges, staff and tenants have worked collectively to revise scrutiny processes to ensure they could continue. We provided Panel members with electronic devices and technical support. They responded with willingness and commitment to adapt. Consequently, as far as we are aware, the Panel was able to complete one of the first tenant-led scrutiny investigations in Scotland which was undertaken entirely online. This focused on our planned maintenance service. The Panel also reviewed our participatory budgeting scheme procedures.

This new approach to scrutiny has helped us to increase the size and diversity of our Panel; something that had previously presented a key challenge. This is why we are now moving towards a blended approach to scrutiny that will provide opportunities to get involved in-person and online. For example, while Panel meetings are still held via Zoom, members recently took part in an estate walkabout to monitor the outcomes of our participatory budgeting scheme, CHOICES. The scheme has delivered a range of community development projects directly benefiting tenants, including landscaping enhancements and recycling projects.

It is always a challenge to increase the number of young residents involved in scrutiny. We have addressed this through consultation and incentivisation. This has led to us working with over 40 young people to shape opportunities to take part in scrutiny at a level they feel comfortable with. This has given them a platform to influence service provision. These opportunities have also been tailored towards a young person's own aspirations, allowing them to gain new skills and experience to help them achieve their educational or employment goals.

In 2021 we launched our new Tenant and Customer Participation Strategy, which was developed during lock-down in consultation with TIS and with input from over 300 tenants. This emphasises the importance of adopting an organisational approach to scrutiny, with staff from all departments outwith Housing having already met with our Tenant Participation Officer to discuss opportunities to integrate this within their own roles. And in recognition of the approach that the organisation has taken, Kingdoms Tenant Scrutiny Panel said: "throughout the last year Kingdom

expanded the methods of engaging with tenants and demonstrated a real commitment to consultation, participation and scrutiny, which empowers customers. As a Panel we feel confident that Kingdom listens to us."

Outcomes and achievements

45% increase in tenant satisfaction with opportunities to participate in decision making;

The Panel's Planned Maintenance inquiry provided reassurance of the handling of the service throughout Covid-19. Recommendations made by the Panel are already improving our processes;

Following Panel recommendations we have improved our digital consultation methods. We introduced an interactive digital newsletter which allows us to quickly gather feedback. We also introduced a digital survey platform which has doubled our response rates.

Our participatory budgeting scheme CHOICES, developed from a Scrutiny Panel recommendation has delivered 10 community enhancement projects during the past 18 months

The size of our Scrutiny Panel has doubled over Lock-down, making it more representative;

A young resident, previously involved in scrutiny through being co-opted into the Panel, helped us to review our online tenant events. This was part of a wider university placement, allowing him to achieve an "A" in one of his courses;

Increased tenant involvement in procurement and recruitment;

In November 2020, we were awarded the Danny Mullen Scrutiny Excellence Award by the Tenant Information Service. This recognised our exceptional standard of tenant-led scrutiny activities that have made a real difference to the lives of tenants.

EXCELLENCE IN ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

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

Digital Cloud Services

Kingdom Housing Association



Statement of support

Technology is at the forefront of what we do and requires good knowledge from all staff to ensure its effectiveness. Kingdom continues to introduce new ways of working to help staff support our customers. Staff now have access to quicker systems with improved collaboration. Kingdom's digital infrastructure has changed significantly to ensure we have great foundations to continue to increase our services. Some of our successful digital projects implemented include:

Chrome devices - all staff access systems using a Chromebox or Chromebook device. This provides a browser first approach and login to devices in under 10 seconds.

Kingdom was the first Scottish business to implement Awingu, a secure remote access application to allow access to any legacy system using a browser excluding the need for outdated VPN technology.

Implementation of public cloud using Google Cloud Platform (GCP) hosts all of Kingdom's virtual servers ensuring best performance at all times. The introduction of SaaS solutions and improved

performance in GCP has resulted in a 66% decrease in servers, from 66 to 22.

The migration from Microsoft Office to Google Workspace for improved collaboration, access, system uptime and performance, also reducing costs significantly.

Implementation of BOX, a world-leading secure content and collaboration system. In addition to secure file sharing internally and with external organisations this system is used to share new property information with customers and hosts tenancy agreements digitally.

Happeo social intranet, a User first system for effective communications to improve staff awareness of activities across the organisation.

A key objective was to ensure great security to protect customer data, this was achieved by:

Implementing Chrome devices, unlike Windows, Chrome is fully protected from malware and auto-updates take seconds.

Palo Alto security was implemented and all servers are 100% compliant with international computing standards.

Email phishing testing has increased staff's security knowledge and improved Kingdom's security posture.

Two-factor authentication to further improve Kingdom's security.

The introduction of security has increased staff's awareness and responsibilities to ensure customer data is protected.

Our customer focused digital services provide:

MyKingdom online services 24/7 from any device.

The ability to ask a question and receive an accurate response using our 24/7 artificial intelligence ChatBot.

The Customer Contact Team can deal with customer interactions quicker due to high-performance systems.

Access to new property information using secure file access from BOX.

Self-service repair appointments.

Over 250 customers who have been part of the Connecting Scotland programme can access these services. The successful implementation of our strategy will continue to have a positive impact on our customers.

Change is constant and particularly during lockdown staff have had to work differently. A key challenge when implementing new systems is staff confidence. We understood the importance of this and employ a full-time Digital Trainer to provide scheduled and on-tap sessions. This ensures staff are comfortable and make the best use of systems.

When we started the GCP project we still used outdated systems for access. We took our time to assess the market and select products to meet our needs. The move to GCP was challenging as consultants and suppliers did not meet our expectations. We decided to empower staff and progress the implementation internally.

Moving to Google Workspace was challenging because Microsoft dominated the Office software business market for so long and this was embedded in Kingdom. Through meetings, and training sessions with staff we have addressed the challenges and feedback has been positive.

Overall, the transformation has been phenomenal leading to greatly improved systems. Staff feel empowered, engaged and are encouraged to think of new ways of working that will progress our organisation and customer journey.

ls, food banks and anti-poverty initiatives.

Outcomes and achievements

Housing Associations are increasingly reliant on technology to stay connected to customers. Prior to the pandemic, we had good online digital services and customer engagement. With a drive to advance digital services we substantially increased engagement enabling over 4,500 active customers to access our MyKingdom portal. The introduction of our Fuzzlab AI web bot and the rollout of over 250 Connecting Scotland devices by Housing has further enhanced our digital services. A dynamic digital cloud-only strategy has progressed Kingdom's use of technology, with pioneering browser only technology, a full move to public cloud computing and implementation of multiple Software as a

Service (SaaS) products. SaaS implementations have included the transition to Google Workspace, BOX and other products including project management, risk management, staff engagement, procurement and unified communications. The transformation has been fundamental; systems are quicker, more secure and focused on staff and customers. A blank canvas approach has allowed us to re-think how we use technology to improve the customer journey and ensure staff are engaged in our success journey. We have also taken into account one of our biggest challenges in cybercrime. Kingdom has introduced hardware, software and training to mitigate the risk and protect customer data.

Changing lives in a pandemic

Wheatley Group



Statement of support

In 2020, when the first lockdown hit, the priority for Wheatley Group was to keep our staff safe and well while still delivering an excellent service to our customers.

Scotland's leading housing, care and property-management group went almost overnight from working in busy offices to working at home. Only staff delivering essential repairs, environmental and care services continued to work on site and in our communities.

Our customer service centre transformed from a traditional office-based service into a home-based service in time for lockdown. They were still able to carry out all the tasks they had previously done in the office.

The Group provided staff with additional digital technology to ensure they could work entirely at home. Staff used this to increase customer contact beyond previous levels and include proactive contact in recognition of the challenges they faced. An adaptable approach was used to suit customer preferences, including texting, telephone calls, email and video calling.

This ensured Wheatley quickly identified and helped those in crisis. It created the basis for the Group to deliver a range of additional support, including essential white goods, food, digital devices and "boredom buster" packs to help with mental health.

The support provided to customers meant the number in debt and the overall level of arrears reduced despite the challenges of the pandemic and the

economic situation. Although the Group is now back to working in communities, these digital approaches will continue to be used where they suit the customer.

Wheatley's welfare and fuel advisors also switched immediately to a digital approach. They were able to facilitate tribunals and appeals over the telephone. Many customers who had never claimed benefits before were assisted to maximise their income through three-way conference calls with DWP, Pensions Service etc. Fuel advisors used video calls to help understand and support customers with various heating systems. They also moved to an over-the-phone service to provide advice. They offered digital top-up vouchers from Wheatley's Emergency Response Fund for those who needed them and funding to alleviate fuel poverty which the Group successfully bid for from other agencies. They continued to advocate for Wheatley customers with utility companies, assisting them to reduce repayments or have debts written off.

Across Wheatley's allocations services the Group introduced virtual viewing. This included support to vulnerable customers (for example those in hospital) via real-time viewing conducted by the housing officer. Once house moves were allowed under Government restrictions, a new Covid safe sign-up procedure was put into place.

All other staff, including those from Wheatley Solutions, which supplies support services to the Group's subsidiaries were moved to a home-based environment. IT services were able to deliver rapid support to ensure that everybody could connect from home - not only to core work systems, but also to video calling. Wheatley HR made sure that staff were adequately supported with social opportunities to get together, fitness related challenges, cooking classes and other items to help staff wellbeing. Staff all used video calling to ensure team meetings continued virtually almost as before and also to connect in for general support and updates.

Wheatley's Group Protection Team developed an online multi-agency meeting approach overnight to support and safeguard high-risk victims of domestic abuse, child protection, adult support and protection and suicide prevention. This ensured there was no gap in service for high-risk victims of abuse or vulnerable customers. Meeting frequency was increased to accommodate the increased challenges faced by these vulnerable customers at this time.

Outcomes and achievements

- more than 11,000 households supported with over 33,000 food packs or vouchers;
- rent arrears reduced by 0.12% compared to national benchmark increase of 0.5%;
- reduced the number of our customers in debt by more than 2%;
- supported tenants to get £9m of additional income through our expanded welfare and fuel advice services and proactive conversations;
- supported more than 600 vulnerable customers through multi-agency conferences and attended many more;
- provided more than 50,000 wraparound services to customers including welfare advice, fuel advice, tenancy support and furniture;
- 30% increase in the number of homeless households housed;
- fuel advisors working with local authority, lettings teams and utility companies to enable rapid resetting of meters so that house moves for homeless customers requiring temporary accommodation could be completed quickly;
- obtained £9million in additional benefit income for our tenants;
- and over 700 customers supported by the Group Protection Team at multi-agency meetings.

EXCELLENCE IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

Sponsored by:



SAL
SCOTTISH
ASSOCIATION
OF LANDLORDS

This award is open to all organisations operating in the private rented sector in Scotland. It is aimed at letting agents or landlords who strive to excel in the areas of customer service and innovation.

Going the extra mile for mid-market tenants

Lowther



Statement of support

Lowther, part of Wheatley Group, is a landlord and letting agent, with 2167 full and mid-market rent homes of its own, and a further 299 mid-market rent homes which are managed under contract to City of Edinburgh Council for its growing Edinburgh Living portfolio.

The last year has been extraordinary and challenging for everyone, but particularly for Lowther's mid-market rent tenants. Three-quarters of Lowther's homes are let at affordable rents for households earning up to £40,000. Many tenants have been severely impacted by pandemic restrictions, losing jobs or some or all of their income as they were self-employed or put on furlough. However, few moved onto Universal Credit, and accessing the new government support packages was not always easy.

Wheatley Group responded quickly to the crisis expanding its food project - EatWell - to offer

emergency food parcels to any customers that needed it, including Lowther's. It was a vital lifeline for tenants who were isolating or suddenly found themselves with no income. An Emergency Response Fund was also created by the Group to help tenants struggling during lockdowns, for example, providing tablets to stay connected or homeschool, and garden equipment to support mental health.

Lowther offered, and funded, a free money and fuel advice service to tenants. If Lowther tenants were struggling, worried about money or looking for advice on how to access the different support packages that were put in place, letting agents were able to get them the help and support they needed.

Lowther let customers know about these new services through text messages, emails and regular newsletters. Letting agents were trained on Universal Credit and the new Government support packages so they could help and advise tenants.

As well as money worries Lowther's Letting Agents knew that many tenants were living on their own and were isolating or feeling isolated from friends and family. They identified customers that might need additional support and kept in touch, checking in on them regularly with a call and a chat.

Despite restrictions on letting, the team was keen to help people in housing need. Working with colleagues in Wheatley, Lowther offered void properties to Local Authorities to support their efforts to provide accommodation to homeless households. The Lowther team also developed a virtual letting model designed to keep customers and staff as safe as possible, in line with Scottish Association of Landlord and

Scottish Government joint guidance, while meeting the demand for its homes. On one memorable Zoom call, the team developed and problem-solved how this would work. Using their existing iPads and mobile phones they developed:

- protocols for virtual check-outs using WhatsApp calls with outgoing customers to virtually walk around homes so they could log repairs and ensure deposits could be returned quickly to customers who had to move out;
- virtual viewings where customers could book a Zoom or WhatsApp appointment with a letting agent who would virtually walk them round a property and answer any questions, even looking inside cupboards for them;

- new Virtual Property Tours were added to adverts so customers could get lots of information about the property before they noted interest;
- and virtual sign-up appointments again by Zoom or WhatsApp, with digital welcome packs, so new tenants would get all the information they needed about their new home in advance.

The team's Think Yes approach was key to Lowther's ability to respond to the crisis, going above and beyond to offer support to tenants when they needed it, and to continue to let homes safely so that high-quality affordable homes were available to meet housing need.

Outcomes and achievements

Over the last year Lowther:

- helped 80 tenants in crisis by delivering over 270 emergency food parcels and shopping vouchers;
- helped 25 tenants through the isolation of lockdowns with an Emergency Response Fund that provided tablets to support home schooling, garden equipment and children's books and activity packs;
- helped 120 tenants struggling with reduced incomes with free fuel, budgeting, benefits and money advice to they could manage and reduce their rent arrears and sustain their tenancies;
- helped 45 tenants access the Scottish Government's Tenant Hardship Grant loans to reduce their rent arrears;
- let five homes to South Lanarkshire Council to help them house homeless families through the crisis;
- let over 700 homes using the new virtual letting model, including 286 new mid-market rent homes handed over by Wheatley's development team and City of Edinburgh Council for let;
- and trained eight letting agents in Universal Credit, other Government Support packages, and how to create virtual property tours.

ECO3 Grants

Gilson Gray



Statement of support

With our clients at heart of what we do, our lettings team across Edinburgh, Dundee and Scotland's Central Belt work tirelessly to provide both landlords and tenants, with a customer centric level of service.

We're working in conjunction with partner firms to identify properties and tenants that are eligible for ECO3 grants, allowing the installation of energy efficient measures, including loft insulation, installation

of gas central heating systems and internal wall insulation. These measures improve the standard of living in rented properties, increase the capital value and contribute in meeting minimum requirement of EPC.

Much of the criteria for the grants and installations require tenants to be on various forms of benefits and supportive income, thereby delivering improved living conditions and reduced energy costs to lower income households.

Our task as a letting agent is to make sure that our landlords are aware of such schemes available to them. So far, we're delighted to share that we have successfully helped to upgrade and insulate nine properties.

Here's some feedback from our recent clients that have received this funding.

"It has definitely improved the property. The heating and GCH has been really good and has significantly reduced previous damp and condensation issues."
Tenant Andrea, Tarvit Street

"Gilson Gray have been fantastic and proactive in investigating ECO3 upgrades within our portfolio and the subsequent referral to partner firms leading to upgrades within 8 of our properties. The upgrades add great value to both the properties and the tenants." Landlord, Pauline Gillies

Our property renovation services is a new innovation and addition to our lettings service offering. With our rental market knowledge, experience, highly skilled and credible staff, and our network of some of the best contacts in the business, we ensure that we're offering a service that is both cost effective for our clients, significantly improves standards of rental accommodation with the private rental sector and gives other organisations within the sector a higher standard to aspire to.

The benefits have been amazing, significantly increasing the EPC ratings for the properties creating a "future proof" rental property which will yield long terms benefits both for the clients and the industry as a whole. It also benefits the tenants, who are amazed at the standard and we hope that over the years to come this will allow us to sustain long term tenancies with all our tenants.

Here's some of the feedback from recent client that have used our property renovation service.

"Our rental property needed to be completely renovated and we live too far away to take on the project ourselves. A friend recommended Gilson Gray and we never looked back. Every conceivable aspect was addressed and dealt with effectively, efficiently and stress free for us. The turnaround period was kept to an absolute minimum and quality tenants have since moved in. Gilson Gray has restored our faith in Letting Agents and has kept us informed the whole way. Their knowledge and sensitivity to the project has been exceptional." Mr & Mrs Dewar

We take pride in mentoring, nurturing, looking after and investing in our staff. Our lettings team is no exception to this. We have an extensive team of 10 employees across Edinburgh and Dundee that all are certified or working towards their ARLA Level 6 accreditation of Certificate in House, CIH, Level 3 qualifications. We also encourage and promote courses to strengthen and expand personal development and most recently have placed an emphasis on staff wellbeing and introduced lunch time online meditation and yoga classes.

We believe that if not for our strong aspirations to be the change in the industry we wouldn't be where we are today. Our lettings team work continuously day in and day out to make sure that our landlords are compliant with current legislation and that our tenants have a pool of properties to choose from at affordable and competitive prices.

Outcomes and achievements

Our busy lettings team over the past year has worked not only on day to day services but also on such important projects as ECO3 grants that allow free upgrades in properties that are needing to be improved to meet the minimum rating of EPC which is currently band D. Our task in this project was to communicate the message to eligible landlords and make them aware of such grants available. The application process is extensive and can seem difficult, hence, our knowledge and assistance with application submission has been greatly recognised and appreciated by our landlords as well as tenants who get to enjoy to live in upgraded properties. Over the last twelve months, we have upgraded and insulated nine properties.

Our other massively important project over the last year was property renovation services. This service was created to help landlords raise the standard of the rental property market, improve energy efficiency and environmental impact, help find quality tenants and maximise the return on their rental income. So far we have helped five landlords to refurbish their properties one of which has a portfolio of properties. We feel that this service offering has come at the right time as the expectation of quality rental properties is only increasing and with the amount of enquiries we receive, we understand that it is well needed and well recognised amongst landlords, buy to let investors and tenants who expect value for the money.

EXCELLENCE IN REGENERATION

This award acknowledges the critical importance of a range of bodies, organisations and local groups in revitalising communities and neighbourhoods. It also recognises that physical improvements go hand-in-hand with social and economic developments to make a real difference to people's lives.

Engine Yard

Places for People Scotland



Statement of support

Establishing the Engine Yard as a new place for Edinburgh

The Engine Yard on Leith Walk is Edinburgh's most exciting new place to live.

Rich in industrial architecture, it has been transformed by Places for People whose sympathetic conversion has seen original structures transformed, while also creating seven new apartment buildings.

The result is a brilliantly designed, well-connected new neighbourhood in the heart of Edinburgh, one rich in green space - both public and exclusively for residents - as well as secure cycle storage and walking routes into the city centre - each planned to make this neighbourhood accessible.

Creating homes for all

Among the many appealing features of The Engine Yard is the attainability of the 385 homes; all mixed-tenure one- and two-bedroom apartments and duplexes, and two- and three-bedroom penthouses are available for sale or rent, with affordable options too.

The homes maximise space and light, with dual aspect windows, terraced roof decks, gardens or balconies from which residents can take in Edinburgh's world-famous cityscape and the distant countryside. There is also onsite parking.

Strong eco-credentials come from a central energy centre which uses natural gas to generate heating and hot water in each home. The energy is distributed via easy-to-use metering and controls, generating less carbon emissions and using less energy than traditional, individual boilers.

Add that to an onsite Places Gym and the neighbourhood's design which prioritises walking, and cycling - and it's clear to see why this is an exemplary new community in which green living is promoted for all.

Collaborative working

Places for People is a business committed to partnerships, with proven track records of successful private and public sector collaborations.

The success of The Engine Yard is strengthened by such partnerships, firstly from within the Places for People Group, with the development created by development and construction teams in partnership with Residential Management Group (RMG), property management specialists Touchstone, Places Leisure - operating the gym - and Places for People Scotland which is providing 25 units for older people.

And, to enable the affordable elements of the development, Places for People Scotland, formerly Castle Rock Edinvar, has collaborated with City of Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) with whom 93 of the homes have been purchased for the provision of mid-market rent (MMR) under SFT's National Housing Trust (NHT) initiative.

The Engine Yard is the only site of its type in Scotland where NHT funding is being used as part of a large-scale city centre development - something instrumental in moving a scheme of this size forward. The mixed tenure options available (20% affordable, 24% MMR, 56% Residential Sale) will allow everyone to become part of a vibrant new city centre community.

Places for People Scotland also collaborated with local provider, Port of Leigh Housing Association, to create 51 much needed social rent homes in this city centre location.

A city-wide impact

The Engine Yard has made a significant impact on

Edinburgh, breathing new life into a rundown, disused area of the city - giving it purpose for the first time in almost 100 years.

Its prominence can't be ignored, with the development situated in a prime location less than 15 minutes' walk from the centre of the city next to New Town - a UNESCO World Heritage site rich in neo-classical and Georgian architecture.

Conclusion

Thanks to investment from Places for People, this area of Edinburgh is now one of the city's most exciting places to live. We believe the Group's efforts in transforming the area are award worthy.

Outcomes and achievements

Until 1923, The Engine Yard was a thriving hub for Edinburgh; sadly, throughout the 20th Century it fell into disrepair, and in 2011 was added to Historic Environment Scotland's Buildings at Risk Register as a forgotten part of the city's transport history.

In 2016 though, Places for People - a leading UK affordable homes led placemaker which believes that places work when they work for everyone - took on the challenge of regenerating The Engine Yard with a sensitive, considered masterplan.

The Group's designs celebrate the rich heritage of the site, preserving much of the original structure, while also introducing new architecture which marries

the redbrick style of the original buildings with the surrounding streetscape. Traditional Edinburgh sandstone cladding with a predominance of Rothesay Blend brick and stone, modern zinc cladding and natural slate roofs all feature, and create a sense of quality that gives this exciting new neighbourhood a sense of identity.

The result is 385 homes of varying size - and of mixed tenure - of which 90 outright sale, 93 Mid-market rent and 76 for social rent have been completed. The homes are perfectly designed into a new neighbourhood filled with public, semi-public and private amenity spaces and gardens paved throughout.

Lockerbie Academy and Old School Regeneration Project

Lead organisation: Cunninghame Housing Association

Partner organisation: Lockerbie Old School SCIO



Statement of support

In September 21, Cunninghame Housing Association (CHA) completed 45 new homes on the former Lockerbie Academy site including 3 wheelchair adapted properties and 9 amenity flats. The project meets clear local need for affordable, quality housing. The design and layout address the gaps in

the previously fragmented urban edge of Glasgow Road, forming a new sweeping crescent to create a shared surface street within the heart of the site and completing Dryfe Road up to the new Lockerbie Academy/Primary School campus via new semi-detached blocks which respond to the character of surrounding properties.

CHA engaged with the local community to form a new streetscape with a strong sense of character. The housing mix creates a sense of community, combining two storey housing and a series of amenity ground floor cottage flats, suited to elderly residents, in end terrace locations allowing for dual aspect corner living spaces. Site design affords residents the opportunity to participate in the activity of the street whether inside or out. Project design emphasises simple, recognisable, features that improve domestic life - covered entrance porches, bay windows, well-proportioned spaces, and generous external spaces. The buildings complement the existing local context using a material palette of stone and slate with a single, red, facing brick selected to closely reflect Lochaberbriggs sandstone, creating architecture with a sense of weight and permanence,

evoking the qualities of high quality public housing built in Scotland in the early 20th Century.

Reinforcing this sense of place CHA and main contractor Ashleigh Construction undertook community benefit activity with Lockerbie Primary Parent and Carers Council - raising over £53k to create an outdoor classroom and inclusive play park for local children and those with complex disabilities. Their Chairperson, Caroline Spencer, said "We are thrilled with CHA's support. Our school is a Public Private Partnership. Getting anything built within the school grounds is fiendishly complex and expensive so this was a challenge. With CHA's help we raised all the funds needed and negotiated the best possible terms for installation and ongoing maintenance of the project with the local authority and Amey, who own the school."

Adjacent to the site lies the Victorian, former Dryfesdale Old School building. Lockerbie Old School SCIO (LOS) took ownership of this via a community asset transfer from Dumfries and Galloway Council in 2020. As part of CHA's commitment to being "More Than Just A Landlord", they are working in partnership with LOS to transform the site into a £4.5m Well Being Centre and 8 flats for assisted living.

Public consultations on the social and economic issues facing Lockerbie and the changes local people, groups and businesses want to see in their town prioritised providing new learning, personal and cultural development opportunities, supporting existing and new community organisations and businesses to develop and bringing key services to the town.

The Centre will act as a catalyst and focal point for the social, economic and physical regeneration of Lockerbie Town Centre - providing 1006m² of new spaces including a Learning zone, conference and meeting space, business space and a Makerspace. CHA are assisting LOS with business planning, Design Team management, construction procurement, governance and financial management services. The capital funding package currently being assembled has a proposed start date of September 2022.

Gillian Moffat, Secretary of LOS outlined the impact of the partnership "CHA has transformed a previously derelict housing site into a stylish, modern housing development warmly welcomed by the community. The Lockerbie Old School Committee are excited to be partnering with CHA on our project. Their expertise, community focus and dedication to create positive change are second to none".

Outcomes and achievements

No new social housing or housing for varying needs has been built in Lockerbie since the 1980's. Prior to CHA's Lockerbie Academy development there were 489 units for social rent in the town. The additional 45 units CHA provided significantly address housing need when there are 400 applicants for accommodation within Lockerbie and only 37 other social rented units available in Kintail Park - the letting area for CHA's new stock, with a waiting list in excess of 200 and only 2 vacancies in the previous year.

The redevelopment of the Lockerbie Old School will improve community well-being by providing

over 1000 sqm of new space for people to meet, learn, contribute and connect enabling increased participation and contribution to community activities. Over a 3 year period around 450 young people will engage in learning and development to improve their skills and life chances whilst around 400 older people and vulnerable groups will be able to participate, volunteer and contribute to social, cultural, learning and community programmes. The space will enable 30 community organisations, social enterprises and local businesses to access support and quality business and meeting space to deliver new services and create local jobs.

Kippen Gate/Buckley Street

Loretto Housing Association



Statement of support

The historic B-listed, former Greenview School in Buckley Street, Parkhouse, in Glasgow, has been converted into 28 flats for social rent, saving a historic building for the community. The school was designed by James Austen Laird, assistant to Sir JJ Burnet, one of Glasgow's most distinguished architects.

The project cost £4.1m, supported with a grant of £2.5m from Glasgow City Council, and the contractor was McTaggart Construction. The homes are a mix of one and two-bedroom flats, with great light and many with high roof levels. Despite the fact it was a historic building, Loretto was also able to incorporate one wheelchair flat.

Parkhouse is a historic area of Glasgow. It was one of the first districts to be developed for municipal housing after the passing of the landmark 1924 Housing Act led by Glasgow Labour MP, John Wheatley. The cottage style homes, based on the garden suburb concept, was a stark contrast to the traditional tenement dwellings.

Continuing the garden suburb theme, a new community garden was created for the development. This has been enthusiastically adopted by the residents. It is an important aspect of developing a sense of community and wellbeing for tenants who moved in only months before the first lockdown.

This has been so positively received by residents that Loretto is now installing a greenhouse to support their vegetable growing.

The regeneration has received positive acclaim from tenants and community representatives:

"The north of Glasgow lost much of its historic built environment though poor planning decisions in previous decades, so it is encouraging that there is a renewed focus on creating new housing to repopulate the area, while protecting what is left of our heritage in this part of the city. This new investment to protect its heritage by Wheatley Group and Loretto HA lives up to those founding principles of good quality social housing championed by John Wheatley." - Paul Sweeney, former MP for Glasgow North East and Chair of the Glasgow Building Preservation Trust.

"I love it - the wee front door suits my needs. The design inside is great. Pleasure to live here and I won't be going to live anywhere else." New tenant.

"Everyone is so nice. We get on so well and people have really helped each other which is so unexpected and makes such a difference. Brilliant community spirit." New tenant.

"It's brilliant. It couldn't be better. I like my home. The house is amazing, everyone is nice and they all help each other. Every day there is someone to talk to in the street." New tenant.

Outcomes and achievements

- maintained a landmark building within the community;
- provision of 28 new social rented homes;
- shared community garden for residents;
- one wheelchair flat;
- and resolved a derelict eyesore in the middle of a housing area and eliminated issues of anti-social behaviour.

Fraser Avenue Regeneration

Kingdom Housing Association



Statement of support

Built in 1956 the Fraser Avenue estate comprised 236 common access flats and was ranked in the top 15% of the most deprived areas of Scotland. The unpopular flats were in poor condition with little daylight resulting in severe condensation issues and high fuel bills for tenants. The lack of defined public space facilitated anti-social behaviour and a feeling of insecurity. A stigma took hold against the estate resulting in a distinct lack of civic pride and sense of place.

Designated an 'Estate Action Area' in 2004, Fife Council took the decision to demolish their existing flats and transfer the land to Kingdom who was selected as the developing partner to build, own and manage the new housing.

A cross-organisational team approach was adopted to deliver the project objectives and overseen by the Project Implementation Board (PIB) which includes representatives of Kingdom, Fife Council and Local Elected Members.

The project will provide c.189 new energy efficient affordable homes on a phased basis. This submission relates to Ph1 and Ph2 comprising 53 and 61 social rented homes respectively. Ph1 completed in March 2019 and Ph2 is currently on site with phased completions programmed to start October 2021. In addition to the new homes 3 shops were built to replace shops which were demolished.

Extensive community engagement took place from the outset through a series of workshops and consultation events to establish key design principles to help create a new sense of place and ownership; these included a pedestrian and cycling focused public realm and a

people focused street design in contrast to the old 'canyon' like street, often described as a wind tunnel and race track, which isolated Fraser Avenue from the surrounding areas.

The Housing 2040 stakeholder engagement session confirmed the revitalised Fraser Avenue scored highly on aspects of the Place Standard demonstrating that the finalised design created a safe and enjoyable place to live.

Driven by the housing needs of tenants wishing to remain in the estate and the wider community, the mix comprises general and particular needs (amenity and wheelchair) homes ranging in size from 2-6 bedrooms. Tenants were involved in the design and given the opportunity to choose their ground floor layout along with internal/external fixtures; to-date 83% of the completed homes have been allocated to returning tenants.

The completed homes comply with Housing for Varying Needs, Secured by Design Gold, Building Regulations Silver Sustainability Standards and include renewables and a breathing wall system to improve indoor air quality and reduce fuel bills. Tenant "When I got my keys I was like a girl who had been given the world. Since moving my son hasn't had a single illness, my daughter doesn't need any inhalers".

With increasing air-tightness levels, the links between poor ventilation and ill-health are being increasingly acknowledged. Kingdom commissioned Glasgow School of Art to complete a building performance evaluation on the Ph1 homes to establish the as-built performance against design predictions. Results of the study will inform future design and promote shared learning.

Designed in collaboration with the local school, a pocket park has been provided to give a more intimate space to play beyond the Ph2 'village green'. Inverkeithing Primary "We're delighted to be working with Kingdom, this is not only a great learning opportunity for our children as they discover about construction but our partnership helps our community spirit grow allowing our children to take pride in their community".

The project has transformed a once stigmatised area into a vibrant community with a strong sense of place providing a platform for future growth and enhanced sustainability.

Outcomes and achievements

Community direction/engagement from the outset.

Dedicated webpage/social media platforms.

Tenant choice.

Improved digital connectivity.

100% resident satisfaction. Tenant "We catch the sun as we're south facing. The hall in our old flat had no windows so when you came in the front door it was dark unless you had the light on. Our new house has a roof light which I love".

Community-led street renaming.

School initiative including site visits, logo competition and play equipment selection.

Relocation/provision of shops into a prominent area within the wider community.

Building Performance Study underway.

Range of community benefits delivered including

construction academies to enhance employability opportunities and promote life chances; 14 placements; 16 new jobs and 17 apprenticeships. Construction candidate "The academy was a great opportunity to move into construction, I loved being part of the team building my new home."

Architecture & Design Scotland case study to share lessons learned.

Housing to 2040 stakeholder engagement session held to discuss the new housing and its impact on the lives of individuals/community.

Community memory book published and held in the Local Library.

Tenancy sustainment projects to offer financial advice and support.

Improved reputation helping people feel proud of where they live.

Achtercairn development, Gairloch

Communities Housing Trust



Statement of support

Communities Housing Trust (CHT) is a registered charity working with communities to provide affordable housing and amenities in remote and rural places throughout central and northern Scotland.

We take a collaborative, partnership approach as demonstrated in Gairloch, in the north west Highlands. The Achtercairn regeneration project grew into a community-led development tailored to local and long-term need which addressed the social and economic inequality of this rural and remote area, as well as the climate crisis.

Together with the local community, CHT formed a steering group and developed a detailed Local Place Plan for a derelict brownfield site in the centre of the village.

We facilitated a detailed consultation and feedback process with:

- Air Training Corps
- Albyn Housing Association
- All interested local groups
- Big Lottery Fund
- Gairloch and Loch Ewe Action forum (GALE)
- Highland Council
- Highlands & Islands Enterprise
- Landowners
- Local museum
- Private businesses
- Scottish Government
- University of Highlands and Islands
- Visit Scotland

The resulting development combines affordable homes with a mix of tenancies, with social, commercial, education and training facilities, reflecting the complexities of local needs.

It included:

- 19 affordable homes to rent, with 3 providers: CHT, Albyn Housing Association and Highland Council
- 6 Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) homes
- Gairloch Farm Shop
- A vet surgery

- GALE Centre Tourist Information Hub, run by Gairloch and Loch Ewe Action forum (GALE), a social enterprise, which includes:
 - o University of Highlands and Islands classroom and learning hub
 - o Community shop
 - o Community café
 - o Growing space for veg, fruit & herbs, to supply the cafe
- Air Training Corps facility
- Access to two further development sites

Properties have been built with sustainable materials and are economic to run, with air source heat pumps. All homes were allocated to people who had a connection and need to live in the area.

The LCHO homes also have a Rural Housing Burden title condition attached. This innovation was developed by CHT and ensures discounted property prices, for local communities, in perpetuity.

The development has created a geographic, thriving centre for the village, which was previously lacking.

Janet Miles (MD of GALE): "...the idea was to create a social, economic and environmental space within the community where we could create employment, social opportunities and improve our environmental

impact as well, so the [GALE] building's a Passivhaus. It was the first public building in Scotland to achieve Passivhaus status. The building has allowed us to expand our operations... we employ 20 staff all-year round, and the building has very much enabled us to do that. We also sell products from 40 different people in the community.

"Tidying up this brownfield site has really improved the look of the village, created more of a heart to the community."

Nicki Ellakirk: "I run the local Air Cadet Squadron... the new building is bright, airy, environmentally friendly and it's made a huge difference to the morale of the cadets.

"The whole area has completely rejuvenated the centre of Gairloch and it's wonderful to see investment in a remote rural community."

Wendy Watson (owner of Farm & Garden Store): "When the first phase of housing went in along with our shop and the GALE centre, the nicest thing was that all of it went to local people. Another lovely part of that is the school roll is now a bit higher, we have more people in our local school. The numbers were declining.

"Having this little area that's now been developed, it stops people going straight out the village... ultimately the housing and everything else that's here, I would say the difference is phenomenal to our village."

Outcomes and achievements

The development's main outcomes and achievements so far:

- Developing one of the first Local Place Plans in Scotland, together with the steering group
- The GALE Centre is Scotland's first public building to be awarded Passivhaus status, and attracts over 40,000 visitors a year. The building has also enabled GALE to increase their staff, but equally importantly, employ them year-round, creating a more settled, stable community
- Air Training Corps facility gives young people the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills
- University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) learning hub, enabling people of all ages to access learning materials locally rather than having to make long, arduous and environmentally harmful journeys to central learning facilities

- Shop, store and café sell locally made or grown products from at least 40 people living nearby, further supporting the circular economy of the wider area
- Confidence for local groups to undertake further projects, such as Gairloch Heritage Museum relocating and regenerating their facilities. (They won Art Fund Museum of the Year 2020, the world's largest museum prize)
- Exemplar development for what's possible in other remote and rural places across Scotland.

Together, these impacts contribute towards reducing the social and economic inequalities frequently experienced by rural communities.

HOUSING PROVIDER OF THE YEAR

This award recognises organisations who are leading the way in driving professionalism, learning and development and inclusion while delivering a great service for tenants.

Delivering More than a Home

Kingdom Housing Association



Statement of support

The last 12 months have been exceptionally challenging, however Kingdom HA has continued to deliver successful outcomes across all areas of work, demonstrating significant contributions to all their strategic objectives.

Kingdom has supported staff to pursue learning and development, provided initiatives to address challenges associated with health, well being and inclusion and encouraged staff to demonstrate the highest standards of professionalism.

Kingdom is passionate about its CARES values - Customer, Accountable, Respect, Efficient and Supportive, and ensures those values inform every decision made and every action taken. These values provide the main focus for Kingdom's Culture Programme which continued to deliver improvements over the last year. This has allowed Kingdom's staff to adapt to the changing environment and to pursue their own personal and professional development.

All line managers at Kingdom have completed Level 3 management and performance management training and other professional qualifications, so they could

better support and develop their teams and drive performance in line with our Values. The management team have been participating in a 12 month leadership training course with the aim of further developing leadership qualities to deliver improved outcomes for customers and employees

Kingdom delivers community benefits through working with partners, stakeholders and the wider community, enhancing employability opportunities, supporting community projects and promoting life chances in local areas.

The pandemic has significantly impacted on tenants and Kingdom has expanded services to customers covering areas related to;

- * Tenancy Sustainment
- * Homelessness
- * Welfare and Money Advice
- * Energy Advice and Energy Cost Assistance

Through collaboration with local employers, Kingdom has launched phase 2 of the Naumann Initiative, providing both a home and a job to homeless people.

Focusing on developing tenant engagement Kingdom has continued to operate tenant focused participation groups and has hosted a series of tenant roadshows and virtual tenant gatherings, most recently in August 2021

Kingdom's Tenant Scrutiny Panel recognise the benefits of Kingdom's approach to customer involvement and said: "throughout the last year Kingdom expanded the methods of engaging with tenants and demonstrated a real commitment to consultation, participation and scrutiny, which empowers customers. As a Panel we feel confident that Kingdom listens to us."

Kingdom has a successful track record of collaborative working with many public, private and 3 sectors organisations, including; other RSLs, Local Authorities, CIH, SFHA, SHN, Scottish Government, Universities and Developer and Consultant partners. This has provided mutual benefits and is the main factor that contributes to Kingdom's success.

The above collaborative arrangements have allowed Kingdom to achieve high performance outputs, share good practice and develop innovation through learning from others.

Kingdom participated in the Brilliant Scotland Programme, this involved an assessment by the Dolphin Index and Mark Brown, CEO of Innovation Centre Europe and the Dolphin Index Organisation provided the following testimonial on Kingdom; "Their overall 'Dolphin Index' profile shows a culture where people are 'on fire', appreciated, creativity and smart

risk-taking is encouraged, colleagues have a shared passion for creating a great future. Most importantly, colleagues feel everyone deeply cares about the customer and score very close to the best ever score we have seen for any other organisation in Europe, across sectors. Wow! We all have much to learn from this top 'Dolphin'."

Kingdom has been proactive in its approach to learning and development and introduced innovative approaches that have delivered great outcomes for the organisation, staff and most importantly tenants.

Kingdom's mission of providing 'More Than A Home' is at the heart of everything they do and the achievements are testament to the hard work and professionalism of everyone involved and why Kingdom should be considered for the Housing Provider of the Year award.

Outcomes and achievements

Below summarises some key project outcomes and achievements over the last year;

Support to Customers;

- * £100,000 Covid Financial Assistance Fund created
- * Secured over £260,000 of external grants to deliver additional support projects.
- * Facilitated over £150,000 of direct grant payments to assist customers financially impacted by the pandemic.
- * Provided over 200 digital devices to get vulnerable customers on-line.
- * 148 Homes provided to Homeless households.
- * 2,122 welfare calls to support tenants.
- * 5,302 money and or energy advice appointments.
- * Launched phase 2 of 'the Naumann Initiative'
- * 4,500+ Registered users of 'My Kingdom' (tenant portal)

New Homes Programme;

- * £55m new homes investment during the year
- * 484 new home starts
- * 341 new home completions
- * 904 new affordable homes under construction as at end of March 2021

Communities Benefits;

- * 14 community projects supported
- * Kingdom Works outcomes;
- * 673 people supported with Employability Services
- * 386 people undertook accredited training courses
- * 278 people moved into employment
- * Small Repairs completed 363 jobs
- * Care & Repair completed 159 cases
- * Tree planting to offset Kingdoms carbon footprint

Satisfaction Levels;

- * 94% satisfied with new home
- * Kingdom Works Service
- * 98% Client satisfaction
- * 99% Partner satisfaction
- * 94% Care and Repair
- * 94% Allocations Service
- * 92% Repairs Service
- * 89.4% Staff satisfaction

Changing lives during a pandemic

Wheatley Group



Statement of support

When the pandemic struck, Wheatley Group stepped up as never before to help communities in their time of greatest need.

Services were transformed overnight as Wheatley put customers first and, at the same time, supported staff to keep safe and provide these lifeline services.

Even with many staff working from home, close connection to customers remained as Wheatley embraced new technology to reach people of all ages like never before - all while maintaining safe-distancing practices.

Staff were focused on delivering more for tenants - looking out for signs that all was not well and using the Group's "Think Yes" approach to resolve the issues whether they were housing-related or not.

During the pandemic Wheatley has provided new or expanded specialist services to customers to meet immediate needs including:

- provided food packages and set up local food distribution centres, this was expanding this to include supermarket vouchers;
- created the "Talk to Us" campaign to help customers deal with financial issues and other difficulties they faced, helping customers to stay out of, or minimise, debt and resolve other acute issues;
- helped customers gain £9m of additional income through proactive contact and appropriate welfare and fuel advice;
- moved suicide awareness and Group protection services online with essential visits in line with current guidance to ensure the most vulnerable customers continued to receive the support they needed;
- developed enhanced training so frontline staff were trained in trauma and in domestic abuse issues;
- tripled the level of wraparound service provision, including upcycled second-hand furniture to help tenants furnish their home and starter packs to help new tenants settle into their first home;

- enhanced the concierge role helping ensure multi-storey flats remained safe and customers were not isolated;
- and expanded learning and development online so virtually all training and staff development could continue (including bespoke Covid and home working training);
- and provided a range of services to support homeless households, including increasing the number of households given permanent homes by 30%, providing more temporary accommodation and "flipping" temporary tenancies to permanent where that suited the household.

Wheatley also continued to enhance services through a range of developments, including:

- a new Group strategy which puts customer control and digital development at the heart of services;
- a strategic homeless policy for the next five years which aims to prevent and resolve homelessness rapidly, including a greater provision of homes for homeless households;
- an Anti-Social Behaviour Framework which puts customers at the heart of our service, tackling underlying causes and vulnerabilities as well as protecting communities;
- delivering sustainable homes for all the men who previously lived in the Bellgrove Hotel for the homeless;
- and introducing a new deployment approach to tackling anti-social behaviour in priority areas.

Wheatley also created a highly-successful virtual and digital approach across almost all of its services including:

- welfare advice via telephone and online, including tribunal appeals;
- moved the 24/7 call centre to an entirely home-based model;
- created a digital approach for anti-social behaviour;
- attended multi-agency meetings digitally;
- put in place virtual viewings;
- used visual analytics to help housing officers target conversations to those who needed help the most, supported by new video training;
- and launched call secure digital plus as an additional easy digital payment option for customers.

Wheatley also:

- provided the Wheatley Wellbeing hub staff intranet with activities and discussions to help and promote wellbeing among colleagues;

- delivered a unique graduate training programme twice during the pandemic - with recruitment, support and training largely online;
- and provided bursaries for staff and customers to ensure they can get training and skills throughout the pandemic.

Outcomes and achievements

- more than 11,000 households supported with over 33,000 food packs or vouchers;
- rent arrears reduced by 0.12% compared to national benchmark increase of 0.5%;
- reduced the number of our customers in debt by more than 2%;
- supported tenants to get £9m of additional income through an expanded welfare and fuel advice services and proactive conversations;
- supported more than 700 vulnerable customers through multi-agency conferences and attended many more;
- provided more than 50,000 wraparound services to customers, including welfare advice, fuel advice, tenancy support and furniture;
- a 30% increase in the number of homeless households housed;
- and over 25,000 customers provided with welfare and fuel advice.

Excellent Tenancy Toolkit

Link Group Ltd



Statement of support

In what has been a challenging 12 months, the Link Housing team has worked tirelessly to deliver services to tenants, supported by a newly developed toolkit aiming to equip our colleagues with the skills and knowledge to deliver great outcomes for tenants.

The pandemic highlighted a need to strengthen our focus on tenancy sustainment ensuring our tenants receive the best possible support with challenging situations. The Excellent Tenancy Toolkit (ETT) learning program was designed to provide the learning and skills which reflect this increased awareness on tenancy sustainment, and how to help our tenants with different needs to sustain their tenancies and live well in them.

Sponsored by senior managers, the Toolkit invited colleagues to learn about topics including Tenancy Sustainment, Dementia, Hoarding, Trauma Informed Practice, and Mental Health.

The program encourages peer learning, support and sharing through a regular schedule of "Lunch and Learns", a place for questions, innovation, reviewing success and feedback. Attendees suggested areas of

learning, with a timetable of 15 topics being agreed and prioritised until June 2022. These include areas such as fuel poverty, digital skills and continuous improvement based on lessons learned. The next phase of the ETT is already planned to cover topics including neurodiversity and domestic violence.

Link Housing and our RSL partners within Link Group, have established a collaborative project with cross group representation, to implement the CIH Professional Standards across our housing service. An exercise mapping these standards alongside Link's vision and values has been completed ensuring alignment to our strategic objectives.

Work is underway on the next stage, with working groups to identify what the professional standards look like in Link and provide tangible examples and case studies of what good, mediocre, and poor practice looks like.

Our strategic goal of "Working Together" involves supporting our people to fulfil their potential. To enable this, we have a focus on our people's wellbeing, creating a culture where this is embedded in our daily working lives. Our Wellbeing Group have highlighted a series of subjects, including Mental Health and Stress Awareness. A "Wellbeing Challenge" was designed with topics such as Finance, Fitness and Mental Wellbeing, with a forum set up for colleagues to take part.

Continued promotion of our Employee Assistance Program emphasizes the resources and help available. It is also highlighted for all new joiners on our digital Employee Induction Hub.

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group are refocusing what inclusion and belonging means for Link, bringing this conversation to the forefront in collaboration with partners such as the National Centre for Diversity and Stonewall. Pride Month

was celebrated across Link in June 2021, with communications and training to raise awareness, including use of pronouns.

Our teams have also demonstrated a commitment to delivering great outcomes for tenants through excellent collaboration. Our Older Persons Service (OPS) provided an enhanced contact service to support sheltered and retirement plus tenants during the pandemic including assisting tenants experiencing financial difficulties, accessing food and medicines, reporting emergency repairs and referrals to other agencies.

On numerous occasions, our Advice Service and Debt teams have gone above and beyond for tenants, helping challenge denied claims, supporting appeals, and securing benefit awards for tenants.

Link was the first Scottish Housing Association to invest in the HACT social value roadmap and provided support with fuel vouchers for tenants at risk of self-disconnection via their pre-payment meters.

With a focus on digital inclusion, the Connecting Scotland scheme, helped secure funding for 577 devices to get individuals online. Approximately 199 devices of these went to Link Housing tenants, based on recommendations from our "Digital Champion" front-line teams.

Outcomes and achievements

The Excellent Tenancy Toolkit has delivered 908 hours of formal learning with 179 attendees across different subjects. Our voluntary lunch sessions have been attended by 35% of housing staff. Feedback tells us 72% of attendees have found learning sessions "very useful" and 23% "somewhat useful", with 70% saying they can use this learning in their day-to-day role.

CIH working group outputs will be used alongside the Self-Assessment tool. Individuals and teams will complete this and a development plan will be designed, focused on the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to role-model the professional standards.

Usage of our Employee Assistance Programme has increased by 56% in the last 12 months and

engagement with the online wellbeing resources show over 3,100 visits in 6 months.

Our advice teams helped secure £2,756,379 in unclaimed benefits for tenants in the last 12 months.

Through the different energy schemes, 582 tenants were issued fuel vouchers to a value of £53,216, including £40,000 being issued in just 6 days, benefiting 400 people.

The devices from Connecting Scotland, has generated approximately £480,000 in social value for our tenants.

From the 01/09/20 until 02/07/21, our OPS completed 64,423 calls to and on behalf of tenants during the pandemic.

EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH AND WELLBEING

This award celebrates organisations which have made commitments to improve the health and wellbeing of the communities they serve.

HOMESTART

South Lanarkshire Council



Statement of support

It is widely recognised that health and wellbeing are shaped by factors beyond access to health care services. The factors that influence health and wellbeing, which include housing, are connected inherently to the other determinants such as employment, education and income. Access to a decent home is therefore inextricably linked to the highest attainable standard of health and wellbeing.

To ensure a sense of wellbeing, belonging to a community and promoting connectivity and inclusion, South Lanarkshire Council has introduced a service which is aimed at providing sustainable housing solutions and conditions for all new tenants and enhancing tenancy sustainment. The service focuses upon supporting security and preventing tenancies coming to a premature. This is achieved through the provision of information, advice and housing support for tenants to settle and feel at home.

HOMESTART was established as a test of change in July 2019 in one of the four locality areas in South Lanarkshire and its rapid success led to an expansion across the local authority area in September 2019.

While the service is available to anyone accepting the offer of a new council tenancy in South Lanarkshire there is a particular focus on cases where there has been a history of homelessness, previous debt issues and support needs. This approach is person-centred and aims to break the cycle of homelessness by undertaking a support needs assessment which forms the basis of a HOMESTART plan. This plan covers the range of assistance and support which will be provided including money advice, setting up bank accounts, signposting to employability and training schemes, fuel and energy advice, furniture assistance, help to apply to the Scottish Welfare Fund, linking in with charities and providing community link information on access to GP's, banks and schools.

The council recognises the increasing prevalence of furniture poverty which is the inability to afford or access the basic essential items that provide a household with a decent quality of life and the ability to participate in the norms of society. The Council recognises that people should not be moved into empty boxes, they need more than just a roof over their heads if the tenancy is going to last. HOMESTART ensures a support needs assessment is carried out for each new tenant which includes identifying the household items each tenant needs to improve their sense of well-being and the feeling of homeliness that is often missing when a tenancy comes to an abrupt end.

In order to encourage tenancy sustainment the Council understands that certain conditions are required. HOMESTART is not means tested and is not limited to homeless households. It is recognised however, that many service users may have experienced homelessness or have never had the responsibility of managing their own home before. In these cases, the HOMESTART officer will refer to Housing Support Officers or other specialist external

agencies to help in the early stages of their tenancy to ensure they feel supported and want to stay in their home. This partnership approach is key to preventing loneliness, social anxiety issues and makes a new stage in someone's life less frightening. This ultimately improves feelings of belonging and wellbeing.

Poor housing conditions are recognised as one of the mechanisms through which social and environmental inequality translates into health inequality.

Outcomes and achievements

Since full roll out in September 2019, 464 furniture starter packs have been provided to new tenants to help with sustainment and prevent repeat homelessness. In 2020/21 836 new tenants has their needs assessed with 11% receiving a furniture starter pack.

Pathways have been established to assist with maximising income. HOMESTART Officers have assisted with all aspects of moving into a tenancy, providing information and advice on a range of services, their continued support is inextricably linked to improved tenancy sustainment as there has been a 15% reduction in tenancies ending within the first year in 2020/21 and 91% of tenants sustaining their tenancy for more than 12 months.

HOMESTART is dedicated to ensuring access not only to an adequate standard of housing but to the contents and systems required for making it a home and achieving the highest attainable standard of well-being for all new tenants.

This innovative initiative has had noticeable success. One lone parent with three children was assisted with furniture provision and stated that she was "Happy with the service provided. I found it difficult moving in lockdown but I felt this service and assistance was a good help during a difficult time".

Support should be a springboard, not a safety net and HOMESTART is providing a route to improved self-esteem and self-confidence by ensuring a strong foundation from which to progress to living a satisfactory and healthier life.

Springfield Terrace, St Boswells

Eildon Housing Association



Statement of support

The Springwell Terrace development comprises three family homes built to Passivhaus Certification. The project successfully transformed a longstanding eyesore in the Conservation Area of St Boswells providing modern, high quality affordable housing, positively contributing to the local conservation area with a design that considers the local context complimenting the historic villagescape.

Originally a former garage site standing empty for several years deteriorating over time to create a visual blight and magnet for anti-social behaviour. Due to the very sensitive nature of the site, it was vital that

any development would not just address fuel poverty through innovative design but also add to the high-quality village vernacular and historical architecture

Working with market leaders in energy efficient design, John Gilbert Architects, Eildon opted to provide Passivhaus Standard homes which aims to eliminate fuel poverty due to resultant low space heating costs of the home: compared to standard houses these homes should require 90% less energy for space and water heating and subsequently have very low running costs.

To secure Passivhaus certification each home is constructed to an extremely high standard, including:

- Excellent insulation (400mm) and eliminating thermal bridging
- Outstanding airtightness: recorded value of 0.3ach, minimising heat loss and improving comfort.
- A small double-A rated Vaillant boiler, for hot water and top-up space heating via radiators.
- Triple glazed windows throughout.
- Mechanical Ventilation with up to 90% Heat Recovery (MVHR), providing a constant, healthy indoor environment.

The high level of energy efficiency and sustainability principles integral to the Passivhaus standard making space and water heating more efficient, limiting carbon emissions and reducing tenant's energy bills. The project provides high quality, sustainable affordable homes, the calculated SAP is 86 and the Environmental Impact (CO2) Rating is 90.

The homes were immediately let on completion in April 2020, embracing Scottish Borders Council PPG on Place Making and Design whilst enhancing the character and nature of its sensitive setting, meeting:

- Housing for Varying Needs
- Greener Homes Standard (Silver Aspects 1&2)
- Passivhaus certified
- Secured by Design Gold
- Silver Active Standard

The project forms the first element of Eildon's green pilot looking at innovative building technologies across 45 homes over four further projects. The Pilot is an investment in our future homes and in new technologies and methods of construction which can provide efficient, sustainable and comfortable homes for our tenants. By evaluating building performance and value for money for homes completed under the

Green Pilot banner and a post occupancy evaluation of the new homes, we can determine which new build technologies and building methods work best for Eildon and our tenants. This will allow us to develop our road map to build future homes that will overcome issues around fuel poverty and adapting to climate change. The pilot includes a further Passivhaus certified project, one built with the Energiesprong System and another using off-site volumetric construction system

Eildon are working with both Construction Scotland Innovation Centre (CS-IC) and Glasgow School of Art to undertake an academic study and report on the economic viability of different construction types and the reduction in carbon and fuel poverty. Once complete the study will give both Eildon and the wider housing sector an insight into constructions costs, air quality, fuel poverty, construction times and whole life cycle costs.

The Springfield Terrace project, is Eildon's first small but vital step in providing homes that promote the health and well-being of the occupants, creating an excellent living environment maximising natural light and air quality whilst reducing fuel poverty and environmental impact. Through the Green Pilot Eildon, working with CS-IC and GSA, will maximise the learning and sharing with the wider housing sector.

Outcomes and achievements

Quotes from Eildon's Tenants in an August 2021 survey:

"We think the new house is fantastic; we love it. ... It is now quiet with triple glazing, and we have a safe enclosed back garden for the boys to play in. ... We now have a family kitchen with a shower room downstairs as well as a bathroom upstairs. The MVHR heating system is easy to run and is proving very economical. In fact, we have not needed the heating on since February and we reckon it costs about £52 a month to run. When my mum comes to stay with

us she notices a marked difference in the air quality, as she suffers from COPD but finds she can breathe much more easily here. Actually, all the family have kept in good health since we moved here - even with the children still attending school and nursery - it appears it is a much healthier environment too."

A second tenant estimates running costs at £75pcm and notes her asthma is much improved, quoting: "Moving to this Passivhaus has been an amazing transformation for me and my family. It has been brilliant, and I feel that this is my forever home."

Wheatley Group - More than a landlord

Wheatley Group



Statement of support

As Wheatley Group met the challenges of the pandemic, it became clear many tenants were isolated, faced the fear of getting into or increasing debt, losing their jobs or being furloughed, and many had other issues related to poverty and health.

A key priority for the Group is, and remains, to provide support wherever possible while keeping staff safe and well. Wheatley's great relationships with customers meant frontline staff were often the first port of call for people experiencing hardship.

Through the variety of wraparound support services available, Wheatley provided a range of assistance to improve customers' living conditions, reduce household costs and improve their overall situation at a particularly difficult time.

Welfare benefits and fuel advisors provide essential expert advice and support to the most vulnerable customers across Group. They facilitated initial conversations with customers and conducted tribunals and appeals over the telephone.

Many customers who had never claimed benefits before were assisted to maximise their income through three-way conference calls with the Department of Work and Pensions, and Pensions service - resulting in more than £9million of financial gain for customers.

Wheatley carried out campaigns to support customers with meeting their household costs. The 'Talk To Us' campaign helped reach customers, build on great relationships and highlight the range of support on offer, when many felt incredibly vulnerable and had nowhere else to turn. For many, having this support really helped with their mental health too.

The Group's Emergency Response Fund, developed in response to the challenges of the pandemic, ensured Wheatley could quickly help those in crisis. It allowed staff to deliver a range of additional support, including essential white goods, digital devices to reduce social isolation and the strains of home-schooling without adequate devices or wifi, and 'boredom buster' packs to help with mental health.

Through the Group's Eatwell emergency food service, over 11,000 households experiencing food poverty were supported, providing them with more than 33,000 food parcels and supermarket vouchers.

Fuel advisors used video and phone calls to support customers with heating systems and to provide advice. They offered digital top-up vouchers from the Emergency Response Fund and distributed funding to alleviate fuel poverty, which Wheatley successfully bid for from other agencies.

They continued to advocate for customers with utility companies, assisting them to reduce repayments or have debts written off. This led to financial gains of £400,000, with a further £400,000 of external funding distributed via fuel top-up vouchers for customers in immediate need.

In the last year, Wheatley supported almost 1200 customers in new tenancies to settle into and connect with their communities via its My Great Start service. This service helps customers to settle into their new homes, maximise their income, develop and improve their budgeting skills, and highlights local services and amenities to ensure a successful start to their tenancy.

Furloughed customers were offered support with employability and benefits advice and others were helped to apply for Pension Credit as part of a targeted benefit uptake campaign to promote financial inclusion for older customers.

Wheatley developed short videos on the wraparound services, sharing them on social media platforms to highlight how staff could help to improve customers' financial situation and associated living costs.

The Group encouraged customers to apply for the new Scottish Child Payment to maximise the income of young families living in its homes. In the run up to Christmas, Wheatley provided 16,000 supermarket vouchers to 8300 families with children, helping ensure they had a happy festive period with food on the table and a present for each child.

Outcomes and achievements

- 7000 customers received essential items through Wheatley's Emergency Response Fund;
- more than 11,000 households supported with over 33,000 food packs or vouchers;
- 25,000 additional contacts made by welfare benefit and fuel advisors, generating more than £9m in income for customers;
- helped 1400 customers out of debt;
- provided 16,000 supermarket vouchers to 8300 families over Christmas;
- and supported customers with fuel bills to the value of £800,000.

Customer feedback:

"I don't think I would still be alive if not for her. I couldn't afford to pay for my bills or manage without food banks. This lady helped me to get my PIP (Personal Independence Payment) which is more than double what I was trying to live on. I was paying Council Tax and I should not have been. She has changed my life and I THANK HER SO MUCH FOR ALL THAT SHE HAS DONE FOR ME."

"Despite the situation being really complicated, Lily would not give up and kept going until we had a resolution from Universal Credit. Her actions led to my son being rebated a large sum of money which helped him pay his electricity bill and replace his cooker. We call her our Guardian Angel".

Financial Inclusion

Berwickshire Housing Association



Statement of support

During the Covid-19 pandemic Berwickshire Housing Association (BHA), working in partnership with other organisations, made it a priority to improve the health and wellbeing of the local community.

BHA's Financial Inclusion Team have also been working with Eyemouth Community Council to get help for struggling families during the pandemic. The Community Council was successful with an application to the Radio Borders Cash for Kids 'Warm and Well' funding scheme and they approached BHA for help in identifying families on Universal Credit or with children receiving free school meals who would qualify to receive £100 per child.

The Financial Inclusion Team had the difficult task of identifying families who would qualify for the funding. The application was for 29 children from 17 households and this was successful with payments of £100 cash per child. By giving cash it had an immediate impact for the better on the child's daily life.

As there were many of our tenants who we were unable to contact due to the time constraints, a further

application to Radio Borders Cash for Kids 'Warm and Well' funding scheme was made in partnership with Eyemouth Community Council. This was also a great success with 103 children from 43 households being supported through the funding initiative.

A total of £9900 was distributed across the Borders of which 76% were BHA tenants. Of these 85% were self-employed or working single parents who struggled as a direct consequence of lockdown and 15% were families who struggled to get benefits who were unemployed. More tenants were offered extra help and directed to our other projects supporting communities for example Eyemouth Community Fridge and Reston and Auchencrow Community Larder.

Through the One Parent Families Scotland, Emergency Energy Fund, where third sector and statutory organisations could sponsor single parents to apply for £50 for help with their energy costs, BHA were able to identify and make applications for 21 one parent families during the period the grant was open.

Working with Link of Eyemouth, Splash and the Eyemouth Rotary Club a total of 22 Christmas hampers were delivered to some of our BHA's vulnerable tenants and BHA Financial Inclusion Advisers also oversaw the delivery of Christmas toys from Mission Christmas for 10 families with 14 children.

All in all these are great examples of BHA working in partnership with other organisations during the Covid-19 pandemic.

What our customers say about us:

The service is an amazing resource for BHA tenants and I have recommended it to others. It has been invaluable to me, thank you so much.

I'd just like to say if it wasn't for Jennifer, I would be in an even bigger financial mess. She has made countless

calls on my behalf, sorting out rent payments and an affordable repayment plan. Also she has arranged to get me a loan of a tablet so I can go online and check job vacancy sites. It has enabled me to keep my home and claim benefits I was entitled to. It has also relieved the financial pressure I was under when I became too ill to work.

Marion - she is quite simply an incredible, kind, caring, considerate lady who was an immense help to my wife and me. Since August 2020 has been quite awesome for want of a better word - when my wife passed away, her compassion, understanding and counsel has quite honestly been life saving. I will always be grateful to her (and others in BHA I should add)

Outcomes and achievements

In 2020/21 BHA's Financial Inclusion team received a total of 435 referrals and as a result of the team's intervention annual benefit gains amounting to £1,004,805.39 were achieved from 272 separate benefit claims.

There were: 21 benefit mandatory reconsiderations

of which 17 were successful; 4 benefit appeals, 2 of which were successfully challenged; 197 food parcel referrals made; 34 applications for Community Care Grants, mostly for new tenants; 45 customers helped with fuel poverty and 42 customers helped with budgeting advice.

Tenancy Sustainment Services Supporting Tenants

Grampian Housing Association



Statement of support

At Grampian Housing Association we recognise the importance of supporting tenants to make houses their homes. Grampian's tenancy sustainment projects are customer centric and provide tenants with free, confidential and impartial advice tailored to their individual needs. SMART (money advice), ASSIST (housing support) and Energy Advice have been embedded in the services offered to tenants and tenants of participating social landlords for over ten years.

Tenants' wellbeing and dignity is a priority and in order to support and empower them in sustaining their tenancies, these services offer extra assistance at any stage of their tenancy. This is all underpinned by Grampian's commitment to equalities and human rights.

The teams work with tenants on a one to one basis, gaining insight into their particular situation and

finding solutions which work best for their personal circumstances. Options are discussed to allow tenants to make an informed decision on the outcome they want to achieve to enable them to take responsibility and control of their own lives.

2020/21 was a year like no other for everyone across the UK and globally with Covid-19 impacting on everyone's lives. However, Grampian rallied in response, rediscovering its community spirit to help those most in need. Quickly the teams and clients adjusted to the new way of working and living showing their resilience so that advice continued through the challenging times.

For SMART, advice initially related to welfare benefits with tenants furloughed losing their jobs. This led onto debt advice. ASSIST saw an increase in checking-in calls with 74% of its service users requiring mental health and social isolation support while 58% were supported to manage their tenancy. Energy Advice had calls from tenants with higher heating costs and fuel debt as being at home all day was impacting on their energy consumption. Emergency energy top-ups were offered to keep tenants on supply.

All of our tenancy sustainment projects had a rise in complex cases due to the uncertainty of the pandemic impacting on tenants with some requiring more intensive support to find sustainable solutions.

With reduced face to face contact, engagement was challenging but the teams worked tirelessly to support tenants through lockdown. In a recent survey 93% of those using tenancy sustainment services said they would recommend these to others.

New initiatives were introduced based on findings of a Covid-19 Impact Survey in 2020 through CX-Feedback in which 50% of Grampian's tenants said they had been badly affected both financially and health wise.

- Energy Crisis Fund - implemented in May 2020 with funding from the William Grant Foundation Fuel Poverty Challenge Fund, it supports tenants with emergency top ups and payments towards fuel debt. To date over 131 energy top-ups have been made to tenants totalling over £7,000.
- Well-being calls from October 2020 to March 2021 SMART called 287 vulnerable tenants. 563 emails were sent to tenants with rent arrears over £800 or potentially financially vulnerable due to Covid-19. Funded by The Scottish Government Debt Levy Fund to raise awareness and offer benefit/debt advice, tenants appreciated the calls with some receiving help to apply for relevant benefits/grants.

- Benefit awareness campaign in December 2020 tenants with children aged under 6 were contacted about the new Scottish Child Payment benefit opening for applications from February 2021.
- Tenant Fund in January 2021, an internal budget was identified with grants of £40 available to tenants experiencing financial hardship. E-vouchers were issued for Tesco or Asda while gift cards were issued for Co-op. The vouchers can be used on essentials including food, household items, clothing, toiletries etc to help at a time of crisis. To date 116 tenants have benefitted from this fund.

Outcomes and achievements

While the statistics demonstrate the success of the projects, it is the human factor which is most important to Grampian.

An ASSIST service user recently said: "Over the years I don't know what I'd have done, or who I could have turned to if I didn't have the help of ASSIST, each of the employees have been amazing. If not for my support worker's practical help as well as mental help, I know I wouldn't be here with a roof over my head, I'd have given up and left myself homeless or seriously this is hard to admit but it's absolutely true I'd have ended my life before now. I didn't used to think I was

lucky being a Grampian Housing tenant but now I 100% realise how things are and I'm eternally grateful to GHA and all their staff for all the help and guidance I've received over the years."

The wellbeing of tenants continues to be Grampian's priority and it has launched a new Tackling Poverty Strategy "Resilient People, Resilient Places". It outlines EVERYONE's role within Grampian to work with tenants, putting them at the centre of what the Association does to ensure it is a responsible and listening landlord doing the right thing for tenants.

EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNICATIONS

Sponsored by: *We are*
resource

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.

Communicating In Unprecedented Times

Kingdom Housing Association



Statement of support

Effective. Efficient. Excellent. Kingdom Housing Association recognises great communication is crucial to the development and provision of services.

Being there for its community during the pandemic was exceptionally important to Kingdom. So too was the realisation that Kingdom's community isn't just its tenants and customers, but its own people as well. Being there to support and encourage them was equally important and made an equal priority within the communication strategy.

Isolation is the enemy of community. Coronavirus restrictions kept people apart so taking a deliberate two-pronged approach to internal and external communications was vital.

External communication focussed on providing information, signposting support and alleviating feelings of isolation. During the pandemic a series of weekly virtual 'roadshows' for tenants were held. Kingdom's twice yearly tenant participation events, known as 'The Gathering', were also taken online. As well as providing tenants the opportunity to offer invaluable feedback on services, the events had a

strong social element and provided free workshops on mindfulness, gardening, art and music.

The work of Kingdom's Scrutiny Panel was conducted online. Communicating the option to participate online resulted in greater attendance which in turn has offered Kingdom's management and Board fresh perspectives and helped inform their strategic decisions.

Kingdom's website, social channels and tenant portal 'My Kingdom' were also used to keep tenants informed of the service impacts of lockdown and of the support that Kingdom could offer. Kingdom's Tenancy Support campaign resulted in over £50,000 worth of direct financial support being delivered.

Recognising digital exclusion could compound feelings of isolation during periods of lockdown, Kingdom's campaign for Connecting Scotland was delivered in printed newsletters and actively promoted by front line staff.

A successful digital, print and face-to-face campaign was delivered for the proposed Transfer of Engagements from Fairfield HA to Kingdom which resulted in 98.99% awareness of the project from Fairfield tenants and 89.66% saying they had read the materials provided to them.

Kingdom's staff community also benefited from a highly focussed internal communications approach during the last year designed around breaking down departmental silos, increasing transparency across the organisation and preventing feelings of isolation from those working from home.

Kingdom launched its first social intranet which proved to be an enormous success. Combining the information and resource sharing of traditional intranets with the social interaction and engagement familiar to users of social media platforms, Kingdom's

staff intranet has proved to be a useful business tool as well as an important morale booster. The platform has seen 80,487 page views and 35,241 channel views in the last year generated by just 301 users!

Staff benefited from monthly coronavirus updates delivered by the Chief Executive, in addition to his regular monthly CEO updates. A series of virtual 'Ask the Senior Management' sessions proved extremely popular with staff. The sessions not only increased visibility of senior staff, but also allowed them to share important service updates and information as well as field live questions.

Recognising the mental wellbeing impact of working from home, virtual daily coffee mornings were provided and staff encouraged to take time out of their day to have informal catch-ups with colleagues and friends within the organisation. A virtual Staff Conference was also held which gave staff the opportunity to hear about Kingdom's future plans and to take part in open discussion.

Kingdom launched its digital LGBT+ network to staff which has been extremely well received. The network is open and inclusive for members of the LGBT+ community as well as Allies and is a safe place to contribute, discuss, share and learn.

Outcomes and achievements

- * Kingdom's Tenancy Sustainment Team delivered over £50,000 worth of direct financial support to households with fuel debts.
- * Promotion of Kingdom's online portal My Kingdom has resulted in 4,500 tenants signing up for the service. 85% of tenants are registered to the platform that empowers tenants to manage their own account from the comfort of their own home.
- * The Connecting Scotland project enables low income households to get online. Kingdom is one of the leading participating housing associations in Scotland with 231 referrals.
- * 60 press releases were published promoting Kingdom's work and successes.
- * Kingdom's Facebook audience increased 13% in the last year and Instagram followers increased 83%.
- * Effective communication of the proposed Transfer of Engagements from Fairfield to Kingdom resulted in 98.99% tenant awareness of the transfer with 89.66% saying they had read all the materials provided to them.
- * Staggering success of internal communications with Kingdom's first intranet. Launched in September 2020, to date the platform has seen a 195% increase in channel views, a 306% increase in page views, an increase of 248% in content published and an increase of 544% in comments received on posts.

Digitally empowered housing customers

Lead organisation: South Lanarkshire Council

Partner organisation: South Lanarkshire Tenant Development Support Project



Statement of support

Since the onset of the pandemic, South Lanarkshire Council Housing Services recognised a greater need than ever for people to be digitally connected and has worked to effectively communicate and engage with customers across the wide range of housing/homelessness services it provides.

To achieve this and support service continuity an early decision was made to transition many traditional face-to-face services and communication methods to virtual or telephone delivery models.

Throughout the year, the council worked with customer representatives to develop and deliver a range of communications keeping customers up-to-date on key service changes and support available, including regularly updating the councils' website and social media.

Customer groups, including those in sheltered housing, multi-storey flats and the Gypsy/Traveller sites received service specific newsletters and other communication.

Our approach to customer approval of publications was revised to ensure customer representatives continued to input to key communications.

To meet challenges services also worked innovatively to help key customer groups stay connected by accessing digital equipment and support to get online.

Working in partnership with South Lanarkshire Tenant Development Support Project (SLTDSP), delivered by the Tenants Information Service, the council successfully secured funding through the Scottish Government's Connecting Scotland Initiative resulting in devices and Wi-Fi being provided to 8 Tenant Participation Co-ordination Group members, the main vehicle for central tenant engagement, 40 sheltered housing tenants, 16 'Housing First' customers and 4 Tenants and Residents Association members.

Funding was also successfully secured from the Lintel Trust, providing 55 laptops and mobile SIMS for homeless households through the 'Bringing IT Home' project.

SLTDSP has helped customers by providing training on how to use the devices and support to build knowledge and confidence.

During the last year, the service has moved a full programme of customer engagement meetings online allowing customer representatives to continue their vital work supporting the council to deliver high quality services.

Some areas progressed virtually include:

- approval of revised service arrangements;
- review of the Customer Involvement Strategy 2018-22;
- development/implementation of the 2021/22 rent setting programme;
- review of 2020/21 Scottish Social Housing Charter performance.

Ensuring tenants views were effectively incorporated into the annual process for setting the housing budget is one of the most significant features of the council's customer engagement/scrutiny activity. Establishing an effective basis to work with customer representatives digitally early allowed this to take place within the usual timeframe. This process was coordinated by the tenant-led Budget Scrutiny Group (BSG) and involved:

- virtual Budget Scrutiny Panel allowing panel members to question senior officers on budget proposals;
- virtual conversation café with interactive workshops ensuring all participants could have their say and be involved; and
- online customer survey.

Tackling digital/social inclusion has been a key priority.

For sheltered housing tenants, digital devices enabled them to stay in touch with family/friends, crucially tackling isolation, and helping them do things like online shopping.

'Housing First' customers have been enabled to keep in touch with family/friends and helped them to access vital support services and assisted them to apply for/ manage benefits and employment.

Despite challenges the council has improved levels of engagement the Gypsy/Traveller sites residents. Virtual residents' meetings and regular newsletters meaning closer relationships forged, allowing open and clear communication. Through funding from the Lintel Trust, free Wi-Fi is being installed providing enhanced connectivity for residents.

The approach by the council, its customers and SLTDSP has allowed versatility to be instilled in all customer engagement activities across the range of housing/homelessness services. As restrictions change and challenges continue the flexible and innovative approaches adopted allows the council to adapt and continue effectively engagement with customers.

Outcomes and achievements

South Lanarkshire Council has successfully communicated and engaged with its housing customers during the last year, while improving digital inclusion and tackling social isolation. Some key achievements /tangible results include:-

- TPCG representatives fully engaged using virtual platforms enabling online meetings and the continuation of the vital partnership working.
- Regular online meetings between Gypsy/ Traveller residents and council officers, with strong attendance.
- 'Housing First' customers empowered to access important services.
- Bespoke training for customers on how to use the devices and support to build knowledge/ confidence.

- BSG leading a significant programme of engagement in 2021/22 rent setting process through virtual platforms and an online survey, with around 1400 surveys completed and virtual tenant-led Conversation Café event offering opportunity to interact and engage through focused digital workshops

'Housing First' customer said

"It's brilliant having a device. I was able to view a property and access the services I needed. All in all I feel more positive now."

Project Officer Stephen Conner also said:

"Working in partnership with the council we have been able to break down digital exclusion barriers through digitally empowering customers, enabling them to stay connected with their friends, family and wider communities."

Better Comms Team

Berwickshire Housing Association



Statement of support

Since the onset of the pandemic, South Lanarkshire The communications strategy would be heavily reliant on our digital platforms, in particular our social media - allowing us to get important information out to our communities in a way that ensured our digital offer still felt personal.

Facebook page quickly became a community anchor, allowing our customers, the local community and stakeholders to access and communicate not only BHA updates but also available services and support in our local communities - this also reflected BHA's role as the lead organisation across our Community Resilience and Assistance Hubs.

- Owing to the challenging operating environment we found ourselves in, we needed to be creative, informative, and engaging with our key messages. We took the opportunity to present communications in different ways with eye catching artwork and short video clips.

- Available services and support were changing daily and our communications team played an important role in making sure the most up to date information was communicated via social media to our customers.
- Our communications team established daily links with BHA staff and external organisations. We made our online profile and reach a collaborative space to ensure optimal impact, help and support were reaching those who needed it most across our communities.
- It was also crucially important to connect and communicate with those who do not have the use of digital technology. The staff embarked on 'Tenancy Wellbeing Calls', starting with those aged 70 and over and then progressed to others, identified through partnership working, who we knew could be vulnerable or isolated. We contacted as many of our other customers as possible. From 19th March 2020 until 1st April 2021 we made 11,867 wellbeing and support calls to our customers (with a customer base of 1887 households).
- We identified many people who required advice, support or who were very lonely. We were able to work with various community organisations.
- We had previously already joined the SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations) Digital Champion programme and during the pandemic we secured funding through the Supporting Communities Fund and set up a Digital Lending Library for not only our own tenants to take advantage of but also anyone living in the Berwickshire area.

- Purchasing 50 devices with unlimited data sims and pre-loaded applications the devices were distributed with ongoing support from our digital champions.
- BHA partnered with organisations within the area including, BAVS (Berwickshire Association of Voluntary Service), Chirnside Community Centre, SBC (Scottish Borders Council), Border Care Voice, Splash, local Jobcentre Plus and Outside the Box. With their help and connections, we were able to offer the devices to a large part of the community under the banner of 'Let's Get Digital Berwickshire' helping many people to get online and grow their digital confidence.
- The devices have helped people with job searches, applying for benefits on-line, connecting with family and friends through messaging and video calling, keeping in touch with their regular groups and start new hobbies. The feedback has been incredible and has really made a difference.
- Communications has become a more integral part of the organisation working to ensure we communicate key messages to our customers and the broader communities. We feel closer to our communities and the people within them and continue to feel encouraged with everyone's engagement.

Our communications activity has grown to working in partnership with the other housing associations in the Scottish Borders under the banner of Borders Housing Network with a key successful campaign around County Lines and Cuckooing along with Police Scotland by producing an awareness video to all of the region. This group is key in delivering regional wide communications on topics affecting our communities.

Outcomes and achievements

In April 2020, our Facebook reach was 60,000 with engagement levels of over 6,000 people.

Our engagement figures for Facebook during April, May & June 2021 were 44,662 people. In the same period the previous year it was just 3,769. To put this into context, Berwickshire has an overall population of 22,000 people, over 4,000 of whom are BHA customers.

We have also increased the number of people engaging and following us by 40% from 1,225 to 2,003.

Some feedback on the Digital lending library :

"During this pandemic it is great to be able to join our family via a video link. My wife has a hearing difficulty and is thrilled to be able to read the news at leisure. Not least among the many benefits of being able to use a tablet is that it has enabled us to surmount a technological barrier and debunk some of the mystique! To those who turned this visionary idea into a generous reality we say a very hearty THANK YOU."

We have built a solid platform for communications which is now supported with our newly appointed Customer and Community Engagement Officer to support our Scrutiny Panel, Customer Forums, Community Engagement Panel and TPAS Healthy Engagement accreditation.

Communicating in a pandemic

Wheatley Group



Statement of support

The Coronavirus pandemic presented exceptional challenges for Wheatley Group's 210,000 customers.

Communicating was key, particularly over the past year to support the business, tenants and factored homeowners to adjust from another period of disruption to a new 'normal'.

The communications team had two key roles:

- ensuring staff were kept up-to-date with coronavirus and service changes and did not feel isolated or detached;
- supporting the business and helping customers get the support they needed as COVID-19 affected communities, in particular vulnerable tenants who were struggling financially and emotionally.

A two-pronged strategy was implemented to ensure support at every step.

Staff:

The staff intranet 'W.E. Connect' kept staff members updated and safe.

The 'Family Hub' section, launched early in the pandemic, provided a range of support, including mindfulness, cooking and activity challenges to help adjust to working from home.

Staff went the extra mile to support customers – posts and inspirational stories were shared to encourage others.

Features called '15 minutes with...' and 'A day in the life of...' showcased leaders and staff who were doing outstanding work, encouraging others to do the same.

Customers:

The communications team used the recognised public relations industry Paid, Earned, Shared and Owned (PESO) model to maximise reach.

Central to customer communications were the key messages 'Talk to us' and 'We're here to help'.

Wheatley recognised many tenants were isolated, feared getting into debt and were often coping with poverty, health issues and isolation.

The Group's websites and 15 social media channels were the key channels used to provide updates. Based across 19 local authority areas – with different Coronavirus levels – it was important tenants were kept informed of changes to services in their area.

With Government advice and levels changing rapidly, traditional magazines meant information would be out-of-date before reaching customers. Instead, the communications team produced two-sided newsletters which could be quickly and easily printed and distributed within days rather than weeks. They were important as they allowed the Group to reach older customers who traditionally were not online.

The communication team's objectives:

- promote the support and benefits of the wraparound support services offered by the Group;
- use real-life stories to show how tenants have benefited from support services to encourage others to do so;
- give customers up-to-date information on the pandemic and any impact on services;
- encourage those hard to reach customers to come forward and speak to Wheatley staff with a clear message, 'We're here to help'.

Frontline staff were telling the Group that people were losing their jobs and young people had no opportunities to gain training or employment.

As a result, the communications team was tasked with launching and encouraging people to sign up for two new recruitment campaigns: Modern Apprenticeships and the Ignite graduate scheme.

Using the PESO model, the earned content focused on a media campaign, generating, and placing stories about the support provided to customers, local authorities and to the Scottish Government.

Messages were shared on 15 Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and new Instagram pages, generating 'likes' and positive comments, attracting thousands of new followers and offering another way for customers to request support.

Owned content was:

- Coronavirus sections on the Group's websites with links to Scottish Government and NHS;
- website content updated with the latest service information;
- service updates on digital screens in the Group's multi-storey blocks; and
- organic social media posts, including bespoke graphics and videos, across 15 channels.

Paid content saw:

- a specially produced magazine for tenants staying in Wheatley's Livingwell complexes – for people aged 55 and over – sharing useful information, updates and stories of activities across the areas

Outcomes and achievements

The targeted multi-media communications strategy delivered outstanding results.

Positive stories secured more than 400 positive mentions in the press - in print and on websites.

Wheatley has almost 45,000 followers across its channels - allowing it to reach around 320,000 people on social channels and 115,000 on websites.

Hundreds of customers who saw information on Wheatley's channels reached out for help. For example, coverage in local press on Modern Apprenticeships helped generate 17,345 page views on Wheatley's website and reach more than 309,624 people on social media - leading to 699 applications, a four-fold increase from 2020.

A total of 164 people applied for the Ignite graduate training scheme and 112 applied for the bursary programme.

The communications team supported and promoted wraparound services to customers.

This led to 33,000 emergency food parcels and 11,325 supermarket vouchers being delivered to vulnerable households. 7000 households also received help through the Emergency Response Fund.

The difference it makes to customers can be summed up by one customer who said:

"The bursary has been an absolute godsend. It's made a big difference to us as a family and took away some of the stress and worry about our finances while I was studying."

APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by:



This award recognises the contribution of apprentices across the length and breadth of the housing sector in different areas and specialisms. The winner of this award will have demonstrated their commitment to personal development with achievement and attainment in learning.

Carla Hutchinson

Places for People Scotland



Statement of support

Carla Hutchinson (28) has been with the Places Management team at Places for People Scotland since 2018. She had graduated from Napier University in Edinburgh with a degree in film studies and was working in a call centre when she decided to apply to the Places for People Scotland apprenticeship programme. She will complete her electrician's apprenticeship in 2022.

Carla has demonstrated adaptability and rigour throughout her time as an apprentice, using her communication skills to build good relationships with customers and colleagues, tackling problems calmly and intelligently and becoming a valued member of the trades team, which in turn has positively benefitted from being more diverse. It was an unusual move for creative industries graduate to take up an engineering apprenticeship, and Carla brought a new dimension to the team, fusing her creative approach with problem solving, as she took to her new life on the tools.

During her apprenticeship she has excelled at college, meeting and exceeding all her coursework and practical assessments. She won Student of the

Year 2020, Building Services, The Built Environment & Science at Edinburgh College. At the same awards, she also scooped gold for the Academic Excellence Award, Electrical Installation.

As an organisation, we work with external partners such as thermal storage technology company ,Sunamp, and heat pump manufacturers. We install Sunamp heat batteries to cut fuel costs and carbon emissions in our customer's homes. Carla does not shy away from new technology and is a key member of the team during our installations process. The electrical install team also play a key role in the future development of these technologies by giving constructive feedback to manufacturers and suppliers about their technology, and Carla's contributions are always valued.

With all new technologies it is vital that we not only minimise disruption during installation, but that we clearly explain the benefits and how to use systems to our customers. Carla is an excellent communicator and explains instructions to our customers clearly and simply. Some customers really struggle with modern technology, and she always goes above and beyond to ensure they fully understand everything.

How the individual has shown dedication and drive to enable them to make an impact within the organisation

When the pandemic struck, the home repairs team were unable to enter customers' homes unless it was to handle an emergency. Instead, Carla volunteered put her communication skills to good use and the Financial Inclusion Team in making welfare calls to Places for People Scotland customers, receiving unprompted praise from her colleagues:

"I have noticed the number of referrals that we have received from you and the impression I have is that you are really taking the time to listen to tenants and

understand the kind of help they are looking for, which is brilliant.

"I bet you are keen to get back to your day job but just wanted to let you know that the Financial Inclusion team appreciate your involvement for now.

Thanks again."

Suzanne

Suzanne Wight

Financial Inclusion Team Leader

A statement of how this apprentice has demonstrated a positive and willing outlook to their role and supported by evidence of how they have been creative and innovative in their day-to-day work.

Throughout her time so far, Carla has received excellent reviews from her college tutors and tradesmen. She is very adaptable and versatile and does everything with a smile on her face. She undertakes basic electrical tasks and has been very proactive in becoming involved in our CCTV installs, PAT Testing and LD2 upgrades in addition to the usual minor repair to a socket or light switch.

Outcomes and achievements

Carla has had to face the challenges of COVID-19 whilst still learning her trade, keeping herself, her colleagues and most importantly our customers safe. Her colleagues in the electrical team all admire and respect Carla for what she has achieved so far. Being an adult apprentice and female in a male dominated environment is not always easy. She has earned the trust and respect of her team.

Carla is always seeking a solution to every problem. Often this means thinking outside of the box. She played a key role when tracing a fault in a communal

stair lighting circuit. While the Approved Electrician was testing the fittings for faults and not finding any issues, Carla was tracing cables in trunking under stairs and in attics. Perseverance paid off and the fault was found in a trunking under the stairs. Carla opted to renew the cable with Fire-Proof cable and to re-route the cable out of reach of passers-by, minimising risk. Tracing faults can be very time consuming, sometimes it just needs a different approach to find the issue and resolve the problem. Carla is always challenging her mentors which is a breath of fresh air and welcomed by the team

Abbey Kivlin

Prospect Community Housing



Statement of support

Through a Modern apprenticeship training programme we recruited Abbey Kelvin in March 2020. As well as workplace activities Abbey was also to undertake a SVQ Level 3 in Business Administration. Abbey joined us from school and had neither worked in an office environment nor within the housing sector, before joining Prospect.

The training received by Abbey before being the first lockdown was minimal, however, as an organisation Prospect were extremely well placed to ensure all staff were able to work from home within a week, including Abbey. Her initial training only covered our phone system, which proved invaluable to the service

we provided to our tenants in that initial period of lockdown. Despite the option of being furloughed Abbey was extremely enthusiastic to work throughout this period and to complete the modules and coursework for her SVQ.

Once she received the equipment to enable her to work remotely Abbey was the Prospect's primary contact for Property Services queries. Manning and answer calls from tenants and contractors while working from her bedroom and luckily enough not having a day off sick in the period. Although new and extremely challenging this initial period allowed Abbey to get to know our tenants, contractors and allowed her to build up and develop relationships that is key to the post. She also began to work with our Housing Management system. At times Abbey had to deal with difficult phone calls and requests without the immediate support of colleagues. She undertook this with a positive can-do attitude that has been recognized by her colleagues, tenants and stakeholders.

She was able to have dedicated time to work on her assignments for her qualification and, through Teams, have remote meetings with her tutor. She embraced the situation and completed her qualification within her first year rather than taking the 2 years that was originally planned.

Remote training with her line manager was also undertaken and although it has obviously taken longer than originally planned, she has been able to initiate the required training and develop her skills. Since being back in the office she has now completed her training and is competent to now deal with all the work that is undertaken within the department. From dealing and managing reactive repairs calls, our gas servicing requirements and general queries and complaints she is also confidently working with our tenants and visitors that are now able to come through the door.

Abbey has participated in all the training we have undertaken including a 2 day introduction with to housing that included meeting remotely a variety of different people from around the UK that were quite new to the housing sector. This allowed Abbey to understand that she wasn't the only one new to the

sector as well as providing a good foundation to the work undertaken by us and other similar organisations.

Abbey volunteered to be part of our communications group which has allowed her to work on our existing housing management communications and the system itself. Part of this role includes working and developing our social media outlets including Facebook and Twitter and providing live interaction with our tenants. She will also become one of our Microsoft Teams in house experts and help deliver training and be the department expert to assist others not so confident or proficient in its use.

Abbey has been a fantastic addition to our organisation and department. Her enthusiasm and willingness to take on new tasks has been a cornerstone of how we have managed continuing to provide a first class service to our tenants in, what has been, extremely challenging times.

Outcomes and achievements

As part of Abbey's training programme she undertook and completed her SVQ Level 3 in Business Administration. Although planned to take 2 years she completed this in just over 12 months and has now received her certificate.

Abbey has also completed her internal training programme at Prospect and is now a fully trained member of our Admin team. Working on a daily basis with our Civica CX housing management system she is able to work on all aspects of our business from dealing with our reactive repairs service, contractors invoices, our gas servicing requirements, raising complaints, recording compliments and dealing

with our planned maintenance programmes Abbey has become an integral part of the team. Abbey has developed great working relationships with her colleagues, our tenants and contractors and is reliable and dependable and possesses a can-do attitude that has led to Prospect offering her a full time contract as an Admin Officer once her training ends in March 2022.

She has willingly taken on additional duties and roles and is keen to develop our Social Media visibility as well as agreeing to become our Microsoft Teams champion for the department. Before we know it, it will be Abbey delivering training to others.

Jamie-Lee Davidson

East Ayrshire Council

Statement of support



Jamie-Lee began her housing journey as a Modern Apprentice with East Ayrshire Council's Housing Options Service in January 2020. It was clear that she was keen to learn and develop from the outset and successfully completed her SVQ Level 2 in Business and Administration which complemented her work within Housing Options.

Not only was she keen to enhance her own learning and development, she wanted to make a difference to future Modern Apprentices and embraced the opportunity to be a member of the Council's Apprenticeship Forum. Commencing in the near future, the Forum is seeking to review the Council's Modern Apprenticeship programme, from defining the range of apprenticeships on offer to looking at innovative ways to link apprenticeships to our current workforce for career change opportunities. The Forum also aims to ensure that young people often furthest from employment are supported to find work through work experience, foundation apprenticeships or other initiatives such as the Young Persons Guarantee. Jamie-Lee will not only play a vital role in the development in apprenticeships in the Housing Service, but across East Ayrshire Council as a whole.

Never one to shy away from an opportunity to enhance her personal development, Jamie-Lee put herself forward to attend the Young Scotland Programme and was fully supported by her Housing colleagues to participate. This unique and inspiring

course aims to enhance communication skills, broaden intellectual horizons and inspire confidence by utilising a combination of debate, group discussion and thought-provoking speakers. Recognising the benefits of this programme, Jamie-Lee knew it would help her to gain further knowledge, grow in confidence and be able to participate in group tasks and feedback her experience to the Housing Options Team.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of Jamie-Lee's training had to be undertaken remotely. Despite this challenge, she adapted well embracing alternative means of training and demonstrated her strength of

character by learning under her own initiative and asking for assistance from colleagues when required.

Jamie-Lee successfully completed her Modern Apprenticeship and thereafter gained a full-time, permanent post as a Clerical Assistant within the Housing Options service. She is the first point of contact for people experiencing homelessness and who are often the most vulnerable in society and at the point of crisis. She has a kind and caring manner when assisting those who require support from the service and always maintains a level of professionalism when conducting her duties.

Outcomes and achievements

Keen to enhance her skills in her current post, Jamie-Lee is currently working towards further administration qualifications as well as a SQA Level 6 course run by Shelter on Housing Law Advice which will broaden her knowledge of wider housing issues (including tenure types, anti-social behaviour and finance) as well as homelessness.

She is a great asset to the team, with a flexible attitude and a good working relationship with her peers, colleagues and other Council services. With a positive mental attitude in everything she does, she goes above and beyond to provide assistance to anyone who needs support. It is clear that Jamie-

Lee demonstrates the values of East Ayrshire Council in her work, with a strong work ethic and a clear commitment to the service.

Jamie-Lee has shown a clear drive to succeed during challenging times as well as ambition to progress within the Housing Options service. Based on her commitment and successes to date, as well as her willingness to improve her personal development, it is clear that she has a promising future in housing. She is a dedicated asset to the team with people at the heart of everything she does, strives to make a difference to people's lives.

Adam King

Wheatley Group



Statement of support

Adam, a GHA customer, joined Wheatley through the Group's two-year Modern Apprentice programme and secured a permanent position as an Environmental Operative in August 2021.

Since joining Wheatley in 2019, Adam has consistently gone above and beyond, providing exemplary support to colleagues and outstanding customer service to residents living in GHA's communities. He has proven himself to be equally dedicated to learning by completing an SVQ in Facilities Management and also achieving a CIH Certificate in Neighbourhood Maintenance.

As the Covid pandemic hit, Adam volunteered to work different shift patterns and changed shifts including dayshift, nightshift, weekends at very short notice. He has worked across a number of roles from his initial role in the business maintaining neighbourhoods through stair-cleaning and grass cutting to providing a 24-hour service within Wheatley's multi-storey flat sites across Glasgow. During this time, he gained a wealth of experience and displayed a high level of maturity in every role he undertook.

He has excelled at working within MSF sites, with his friendly, approachable nature instantly establishing rapport with customers wherever he works, including his current location at Cranhill multi-storeys. At his previous location in Sandyhills MSF Site he assisted customers by:

- going for prescriptions for those shielding or otherwise unable to go out;
- delivering newspapers each day;
- going to shops;
- and buzzing up to customers who were on their own to check how they were.

Tenants at Sandyhills continue to tell the team leader how much they miss him and ask how he is getting on.

Customers have expressed their opinion of Adam's work and support:

Adam helped tenant Lena to move furniture to aid her mobility in getting around the house, went shopping for her when she was self-isolating and took her bins out for her daily. Lena said he was "so polite and helpful" and didn't know what she would have done without him.

Adam arranged to meet Doreen when she came back from the supermarket and carry her messages up to the flat for her. Doreen said it was great just to have the help and have someone to chat to when she was not meeting many people.

Adam went for Peter's newspaper and other items from the shop during the pandemic. Peter said "Adam was just so helpful, accommodating and great company. A real credit to GHA".

Outcomes and achievements

Adam's first role was to carry out stair cleaning, grass cutting and general environmental tasks, allowing us to create 5-star neighbourhoods for our customers.

Adam excelled in this role and was able to put into practice the training he received. He showed a high level of expertise to use tools as well as carrying out work to an extremely high standard and was recognised by Team Leaders for his eye for detail and consistent standard of work. Adam played a key role in his area receiving a 5-Star award from Keep Scotland Beautiful for the maintenance of the area Adam was based in.

As he moved to his new role, he was able to adapt his skillset as this was different from his previous role. He has shown good communication, customer service skills, ability to signpost customers to key services and to identify vulnerable customers requiring support or access to Wheatley's wraparound services. Through these discussions with customers he was able to offer food packages and furniture for customers who required those support packages.

Adam has gained academic and practical skills through the Apprentice programme and is now putting this into practice in his new permanent post.

ALAN FERGUSON - OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO HOUSING

The award is for an individual who has consistently gone the extra mile during their career in housing. They will have shown passion and commitment to driving positive change in the sector. They will be a real ambassador for housing in Scotland.

Dr. Susan Aktemel

Homes for Good (Scotland)



Statement of support

A social entrepreneur is someone who is both able and motivated to create and run a business in the private sector but who chooses to use those skills for social benefit.

A housing professional is someone who not only recognises the positive impact good homes and environments can have on families' and communities' health and wellbeing but also commits effectively to doing something about it.

Dr. Susan Aktemel is an exemplar of a passionate and committed individual who has successfully combined both of those sets of attributes to deliver real improvements in the housing, social support and community regeneration sectors for three decades.

In 1994 she set up the social enterprise Impact Arts, 'using the arts to change lives'.

It created work for community-based artists, attracting financial support from private funders and interest from registered social landlords (RSLs), mainly in Glasgow but also further across the Central Belt.

Projects established by Impact Arts included Fab Pad, Creative Pathways, Eco-Chic Boutique, The Young Gallery and Craft Café, a range of community businesses providing hope, self-esteem and opportunities for young people and older people alike.

The cafes and shops were a physical and visible manifestation of their place in the community and their contribution to local regeneration.

RSLs with which Impact Arts engaged included Queen's Cross HA, Cassiltoun HA (where they established a local base) and, in Edinburgh, Link HA (where invaluable advice and support was given by Fab Pad to 16-25 year olds to enable them to 'take ownership' of their tenancies by helping with decoration, making soft furnishings and renovating furniture).

In 2011, Susan turned her attention to the Private Rented Sector (PRS).

The PRS was increasingly seen by national and local governments as a potential solution to the growing housing crises but it was not in sufficient condition structurally, culturally and operationally to make enough of a difference or impact. It was fragmented, unregulated and competitive, having a reputation for poor management and maintenance services and an absence of support for vulnerable tenants. Landlords were experiencing difficulties with letting agents. With putative welfare reforms looming, rents were beyond the reach of the majority of those needing access to PRS properties.

The climate and time was right for her intervention!

So, Susan gave up her post as Impact Arts CEO and - using her own personal assets and savings - set up Homes for Good (Scotland) CIC (HfG) with the

strapline 'Scotland's first social enterprise letting agency'.

She quickly attracted 'start up' funding circa. £30000 to establish a management and portfolio.

More importantly, perhaps, was her success in securing longer-term grants for a housing support and part-furnishings service to meet the needs of vulnerable tenants.

This offering of support, in turn, not only attracted more landlords to engage with Homes for Good but also secured unprecedented support from private lending institutions.

In 2014 Homes for Good Investments Ltd was set up as part of the HfG group to buy and develop dilapidated

properties and turn them into quality homes for people on low incomes. Tenants are often involved in designing their own homes through HfG's Love Home programme.

Big Issue Invest, Charity Bank and Shelter Scotland are now significant partners.

Big Lottery Invest is supporting Susan to assimilate experience across the UK and she is engaging in skills exchange programmes with other partners in Austria, Spain and Finland.

Her commitment, dedication, passion (and calculated risk-taking) in the interests of tenants and their communities for so long merits nomination for this award.

Outcomes and achievements

Achievements and outcomes.

Impact Arts

From a 'zero start', within 18 years its turnover has become £2m., it works in 12 local authority areas, it employs 42 staff and works with about 3000 people (including 40 freelance artists) annually.

Homes for Good.

Homes for Good Investments Ltd is part of the HfG group. Since 2014 it has raised over £17m to buy and refurbish over 200 dilapidated properties in Glasgow and the West of Scotland.

90% of these properties are now let to people on low incomes or who have been homeless for a variety of

reasons. Most tenants get ongoing support to sustain their tenancy, and usually have little assistance from other agencies.

During 2020, HfG brought in Big Issue Invest as a shareholder, linking HfG's agenda of providing genuinely affordable homes for people who need them with a national homelessness partner. Funding from the Big Issue and Charity Bank has totalled £4.35m.

During 2020, development and acquisition work was curtailed by COVID. Nevertheless, HfG is on track to be offering 1000 quality homes in the PRS by 2025, 500 of which will be owned by HfG itself and the remainder by private landlords.

John Ferguson



Statement of support

I would like to nominate Mr. John Ferguson, MBE, JP (retired) for the inaugural Alan Ferguson Award.

John is exactly what Alan thought a community activist should be. Based in the community, committed to the community, always putting the needs and interests of their community first, not being afraid to challenge the status quo, using any and all means to make the Authorities sit up and listen, maximize community involvement in the decision-making process. It is

ethos that has guided John Ferguson for nearly 65 years as a community activist in the East End of Glasgow and in particular the place he has called home all his life, Parkhead.

John is well known for his work in social Housing although by no means is this his sole community activity. John is committed to tenant control of local community based RSLs these prime community assets. John was the first Chair of Parkhead Housing Association, is its number two shareholder and has served on its management Committee and Board for 44 years. He is still as keen as a first year Board member to see his association, his community adapt to the challenges and to thrive. PHA started with no homes, it now has 1800. John saw the need, saw the potential for significant change and started to campaign, to organize within his community, to agitate to demand more, to lead and the outcome is a first-class community-based award-winning organisation ready to face the future with confidence. Had John sat back and did nothing, then PHA would not exist. It's as simple as that. John Ferguson is a living example of the type of community activism that Alan Ferguson

taught, lectured on and sought to introduce to all communities he came in contact with.

John knowing the power and influence community-based activity could have at a collective level, was a leading campaigner to establish the SFHA, and served with distinction on its Governing Board for nearly 20 years, bringing his brand of determination from the East End of Glasgow to the wider sector. John is a tenant member of the Chartered Institute of housing, and was a leading proponent of the establishment of what is now called Employers In Voluntary housing (EVH). Indeed, John still serves on its Executive committee and chairs its union negotiating committee.

John Ferguson was awarded an MBE for services to his community a much deserved and a very popular award.

Housing is but one strand of his community activity. John knew that housing can't resolve all the issues in his community. He's currently Chair of the Parkhead Community Council and has for many years been

heavily involved in the local health groups and in particular the decision to build the new Parkhead Hub on the site of the Old Parkhead hospital. His contribution to this debate has been enormous and he can take credit for ensuring the voices of his community were heard during the planning stages.

John did his national service, he married had a family and drove trucks and buses for a living. He was the senior Shop Steward at Parkhead Bus Garage and fought for and defended the union rights of countless workers over the years. All of his experience, all of his commitment all of who John Ferguson is sums up the need for community activists to be supported, guided and trained. Exactly what Alan stood for.

John Ferguson is in his 85th year and is still fighting the good fight. He is known locally as Mr. Parkhead or simply Big Fergie. There is no finer example of community activist than John.

Outcomes and achievements

Outcomes and Achievements to date. In no particular order these include:

- 1 the creation and development of Parkhead Housing Association
- 2 assisting other local RSIs to improve their governance standards
- 3 resurrecting, and maintaining the Parkhead Community Council
- 4 Representing the Parkhead area on numerous Local authority bodies.
- 5 Heavily involved in Community Health partnerships and local health initiatives.
- 6 Serving on the Board of the SFHA for over 20 years
- 7 Instrumental in establishing EVH
- 8 Playing a leading role in EVH

- 9 Member of chartered Institute of housing.
- 10 Being made the Hon President of Parkhead Housing association
- 11 Having the PHA office named after him
- 12 Being awarded an MBE
- 13 Serving for many years on the bench as a local Justice of the Peace.

What's not easily quantifiable is the impact his activity has had on the lives people of his community. A good measure is how people view John within his community. When you walk along the road with him everyone, young and old knows him, respects him, trusts him. Bus Drivers stop their buses to say hello, shop keepers come out of their shops to thank him for doing something for them. I have often thought that if Big Fergie ever stood for election, they wouldn't count his votes they'd weight them!

Lesley Baird

TPAS Scotland



Statement of support

For over 40 years Lesley Baird has championed tenant participation in Scotland, dedicating her entire career to promoting the rights of social housing tenants, ensuring their voices are at the heart of decisions that impact the standards and services they receive from their landlord.

She is committed to ensuring tenants receive high quality services that are continually improving, efficient and responsive to their needs. Her focus throughout has been to provide tenants with the skills and knowledge needed to promote and influence change and improve service standards as well as supporting landlords to have effective engagement structures in place putting tenants and other stakeholders at the heart of decision making.

Lesley's tireless work has created effective partnerships and robust mechanisms, ensuring tenants are integral to policy making and service delivery. Her belief is that every tenant should have opportunities to influence decisions from the remotest spot in Shetland to the Borders and everywhere in between.

Leading the Tenant Participation Advisory Service in Scotland for years she has developed strong personal relations with individuals and tenant groups, gaining their trust, respect, and confidence by demonstrating an understanding of their concerns and aspirations. She is highly respected by tenants and landlords alike working closely with landlords, the Scottish Government, the Scottish Housing Regulator, and key agencies to help improve and develop meaningful tenant engagement across Scotland.

Her contributions in development of TPAS England, Cymru and Supporting Communities Northern Ireland, the International Union of Tenants, ensures Scotland has a significant profile within the international housing community.

Throughout her career Lesley has been at the forefront of developing and implementing legislation and guidance giving enhanced tenant rights, higher standards, and continuous improvement in social housing. She uses her expertise to develop a culture where tenants and landlords communicate, share priorities in a trusting environment that enables informed decisions by tenants whilst understanding their landlords' priorities.

She has been instrumental in raising awareness of legislative and policy changes for example, the Right to Buy, the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, legal rights for Tenants to Participate in the delivery of services provided by landlords, advice and support in reviewing Tenant Participation Strategies and most recently the extensive and inclusive review of the Scottish Social Housing Charter, the production of a Tenant Scrutiny Guide, the Next Steps Scrutiny Programme and Training Toolkit.

Lesley has a leading role in supporting tenants through the Stock Transfer process which can be a very worrying time for tenants. She has an excellent reputation for explaining complex issues in a clear and understanding manner which helps tenants negotiate and influence their future.

Testimonials

Hugh McClung MBE - Lesley is truly one of our greatest assets in promoting tenants' rights. Her commitment to tenant voices as an equal partner in policy and service provision would not be as it is today without her determination to influence change.

Anne Cook OBE (Scottish Government) - Lesley's contribution to tenant participation in Scotland is unsurpassed - providing landlords and tenants alike with the leadership, drive and skills to work collaboratively together to embed effective and robust participation structures in all that they do and by supporting staff and tenants to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of national housing policy, performance monitoring and implementation.

Ian McLean (CEO, Bridgewater HA) - Lesley has enabled tenant participation to become mainstream with a significant and lasting effect on housing associations across the country. Her ability to adapt and her unwavering support for tenants in Scotland and further afield has helped tenants be heard and improved social housing delivery, creating improvement mechanisms that will be effective for years to come.

Outcomes and achievements

Throughout her career, Lesley has championed the rights of tenants. At Kyle and Carrick District Council she helped create one of the earliest tenant participation strategies.

Since joining TPAS Scotland she has helped guide Scotland's drive to keep tenants and communities at the heart of social housing. Whether in a hall on Shetland, a Board room in Dundee or door knocking in Glasgow, Lesley has made a difference. Whether a housing trainee or an experienced professional, an association chair or an individual tenant, Lesley has helped others achieve their aims.

With TPAS Scotland the first organisation of its kind, Lesley has supported the development of similar

organisations across the UK, her commitment and drive for innovation and good practice ensuring Tenant Participation Advisory Services became pivotal tenant organisations, recognised across the British Isles.

Speaking at countless international, UK and community events with invites from across Europe and most recently Australia, Lesley is recognised as a world leader in encouraging a more diverse and inclusive approach to how tenants can engage and influence.

Most importantly her dedication to giving voice to many, helping to improve the living standards of 597,000 social housing tenants, 4,000 gypsy travellers and 35,000 potentially homeless.

Fanchea Kelly

Blackwood



Statement of support

Fanchea has been at the centre of Scottish Housing for over 30 years at North Ayrshire Council, Edinburgh Council, Wheatley Group, Scottish Housing Regulator and since 2013 Blackwood. In each of these jobs Fanchea has made a significant difference to the lives of tenants, staff teams and other partners. People "touched" by Fanchea recognise her drive and ambition to make things better and she is unafraid of tackling laziness or careless thinking.

At her time in Blackwood she has positioned the organisation as an innovative hub in Scotland from "clever clogs" keeping people independent to the Blackwood House to the Blackwood lab to the new project are all quality delivery examples of her 8 year tenure at Blackwood.

The importance of housing has been central to Fanchea but her time at Blackwood has allowed her to develop an innovative care strand that will have a positive impact for peoples lives in the future - not just in Blackwood. Blackwood led by Fanchea has provided learning for Housing and Care throughout Scotland and in turn this has provided better lives for people.

Outside her paid work she is a respected leader and has served most recently on Thistle Board helping the organisational turnaround which finally saw them transfer to Sanctuary Scotland. Much of her work is done quietly with great humility and humanity not seeking recognition but her enthusiasm and love of the sector is well known and respected.

Outcomes and achievements

Clever clogs used by Blackwood was a fore runner of many online services. It provided access to many of Blackwoods online services not just housing, but GP's, Care and Family and Friends.

The Blackwood house is the physical part where it provides a generous open space around a core of kitchen and bathroom for all mobility levels. The automation links to "clever clogs".

Both these are part of the Blackwood lab approach which researches and develops products and services

to help people live more independently across Scotland.

The most recent project launched recently in 2021 is the Blackwood Neighbourhoods for Independent Living. This is a £12.5m neighbourhood investment programme to help people live healthier for longer. The project is concentrated on 3 areas Charleston in Dundee, Cardonald in Glasgow and Buckie in Moray.

These suite of projects represent real delivery of change in both housing and care across Scotland

Robina Qureshi

Positive Action



Statement of support

Robina Qureshi does not just work as a campaigner to counter racism and discrimination in housing; it's the way she lives her life. She is an outstanding example of someone adapting herself and her organisation to achieve change for disadvantaged communities and individuals in Scotland.

She is the original and current chief officer of Positive Action in Housing (PAIH) which began as "the Scottish Ethnic Minorities Housing Agency". Its mission was "to work with communities and housing providers to enable everyone to have an equal chance to live in good quality, affordable and safe housing, free from discrimination and the fear of racial harassment and violence".

Robina led pressure on the government's housing agency to research, recognise and react to ineffective representation by Scottish Housing Associations of all members of their local communities. It resulted in a national strategy and funding to ensure implementation of the law and good practice.

PAIH became the major trainer, influencer and conscience of the social housing sector in Scotland, with Robina herself fearlessly publicising the experiences of the people she helped. While also working in partnership with housing providers she has no compunction in highlighting poor practice. She rapidly achieved positive change in practice and attitudes in the Scottish housing sector. She built alliances with like minds, including Alan Ferguson, to challenge complacency.

PAIH has constantly developed under Robina's influence, first to include the housing needs of refugees. It grew further to provide support to asylum

seekers. PAIH pioneered the establishment of "Room for Refugees" in the UK, a community hosting network offering safe temporary homes and pastoral care for refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable groups who have no recourse to public funds.

Then, PAIH rebranded as "Positive Action - Working Together to Rebuild Lives", reflecting its role as a leading homelessness, housing and anti-poverty group. Robina's passion and fearless criticism shows in leading demonstrations, challenging politicians in person and drawing media attention to the heartbreaking results of the "hostile environment" UK government policy on immigration. Her hands-on and out-of-hours activity drew national attention to the treatment of homeless and badly-housed vulnerable newcomers to Scotland, and its results. Over 25 years, under Robina's leadership, Positive Action has grown and adapted, resulting in change to the treatment and experiences of people from ethnic minority communities in Scottish Housing.

Outside her paid work, she has served on the Lawrence Steering Group and led campaigns to stop extreme far right groups organising in Scotland. She was at the forefront of challenging "dawn raids" against asylum seekers. Malcolm Chisholm MSP, Minister for Communities at the time, joined her in criticising the "heavy-handed" immigration policies and described her as "a very formidable campaigner and completely dedicated to the rights of minorities."

She took her approach beyond Scotland with the case of a 13-year-old Kurdish girl who began self-harming when detained at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre pending deportation. Enlisting the support of Sir Al Aynsley the Children's Commissioner, and journalists at The Independent newspaper, Robina ran a campaign across the UK and Europe to secure the girl's and her mother's release.

Robina has also appeared in several films and television dramas which have highlighted human rights and housing issues, including *Buried*, *The Key*, and *Gas Attack* for which she won a best actress award at the 2001 Cherbourg-Octeville Festival of British & Irish Film. She has expressed her passion for decent, safe, affordable housing in welcoming communities in these many different ways. As a result she has achieved many individual and cumulative positive effects on the whole of the housing sector in Scotland and beyond.

Outcomes and achievements

In year 1, 1995/96 Robina had already changed government policy - a U-turn in the Race Equality Strategy, £10m in funding for unmet housing needs and the setup of PATH for housing trainees. The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations passed a resolution supporting the empowerment of the people PAIH represents. PAIH had 85 members and dealt with 468 enquiries for housing problems.

In its 25th year, during a worldwide pandemic - it had 169 members, its Money Skills Project helped 472 families, its New Migrants Action Project worked with 395 families from 27 European nations, there were 5,185 direct beneficiaries from its Advice, Information

and Humanitarian Support, 221 destitute or homeless people received 43,529 nights of accommodation in its Rooms for Refugees Programme and 1,137 people shared £59,405 from its Emergency Relief Fund. It provided equality and diversity training to 68 social landlords and voluntary organisations. Its Housing and Homelessness Service helped 402 households in the public sector and 58 in the private rented sector including newly approved refugees moving from asylum accommodation into social housing.

Imagine what that adds up to when adding the other 23 years in between and with Robina's dedication in other aspects of her life.

Maureen Morris

Wellhouse Housing Association



Statement of support

I have known Maureen for five and half years in her capacity as the chairperson of Wellhouse Housing Association - a community-controlled housing association in the east end of Glasgow. I am the chief officer of the association.

Maureen has been active in the housing association from its inception to its creation and ongoing growth, eventually becoming the chair for the last five year, taking it to its 25th anniversary which we celebrated in 2019. During that time, she was also part of supporting and developing a local charitable development trust, which has made significant positive impacts on the wellbeing of local residents. In addition, she supported a range of other domestic abuse, single mothers and mental health charities whilst bringing up her own family in one of the country's most deprived neighbourhoods.

Wellhouse Housing Association began essentially as an active resident's association who developed into a cooperative and then into a registered social landlord, taking community control of all housing in the community including running a successful ballot for a large percentage of the residents voting favorably to transfer their homes into the association. Wellhouse had been characterized up till then as a very run-down local authority peripheral estate. However,

though transformation work, vision, inspiration and sheer determination the community created a new organisation and radically changed the physical environment and commitment to community control.

After a period of 20 years, the organization experienced serious difficulties in its governance and financial controls. Maureen, who had left its governing body by then, was invited back to help rescue the organization. She agreed to this without hesitation, showing a selfless commitment to put things right. She was unanimously elected chair in recognition of her tenacity, honesty, determination and genuine unwavering commitment to her community. These 5 years were tumultuous, but Maureen remained at the helm and delivered a rescue package, a renewed governance framework, a staffing restructure with a new director (myself) and a financial realignment. During this time, she remained fully supportive of the staff team and committed to excellent customer service. The association is now widely recognized as an exemplar of good governance and of honesty, transparency, integrity, excellent, accountability, sustainability and trustworthiness. To have achieved this in a short period of five year is nothing short of titanic.

Maureen has remained an active member of Easterhouse Housing & Regeneration Alliance throughout the period, acting in a strong and effective ambassadorial role not only for her own organization but also for the people of greater Easterhouse as well as for social housing and community's experience multiple issues of deprivation. She has used these skills to campaign, influence and advise local and national politicians and staff, going the extra mile to give up significant amounts of her personal time including evenings and weekends.

Maureen is well recognized and respected across the housing association movement and beyond.

On a personal note, I can testify to her outstanding hard work, creativity and intelligence which is always delivered with humanity, passion and genuine desire to make her community the Place to Be.

I would be delighted to offer further insight as required and would highly recommend Maureen for this honour in recognition of 45 years of selfless commitment to one of the UK's poorest neighbourhoods.

Outcomes and achievements

In 1989, a tenants steering group was set up to seek the transfer of 335 homes from Glasgow City Council to community ownership - Maureen Morris was one of the leading tenants. The success led to the creation of Wellhouse Housing Co-Operative, registered as a social landlord in 1994 and becoming Wellhouse Housing Association thereafter. A second successful stock transfer from Glasgow Housing Association in 2010 resulted in all the social rented homes in Wellhouse being owned by the Housing Association. Maureen has sought to achieve the highest level of performance and secure some significant achievements, for example:-

- raised and invested over £40 million in refurbishing our properties and building new homes.

- set up Wellhouse Community Trust, which in time transformed into Connect Community Trust, a fully independent social enterprise which offers a wide range of employment, training and community services.
- built a large community facility, The Hub, to bring together housing, childcare, employment and training services all under one roof. The building also contains a community café, an IT learning centre and community space. The facilities are well used by the community and local organisations.
- We have been a pioneer in promoting an asset-based community regeneration approach.

Alex Adrain

Wheatley Group



Statement of support

Alex Adrain spent his 33-year career, up to his retirement in June this year, making lives better for customers and tenants.

Alex started off working in North Ayrshire Council in 1988 before moving to work with Wheatley Group in 2015.

In 2018 Alex created and led the 'Wheatley 360' service, bringing together vital services that make communities better places to live while, at the same time, also enabling Wheatley tenants to have better lives.

Alex's mission was to "change customers lives from every angle". To do this he created a team which would deliver seamless, personalised packages across a comprehensive range of 'wraparound' support

services which provided a lifeline by improving the safety, wellbeing and resilience of individual customers and communities.

W360 brought together housing, environmental and support staff from Wheatley with police and fire officers to tackle everything from anti-social behaviour, home safety and fire safety to fly-tipping, graffiti and food and fuel poverty.

The services provided include additional support in child protection, domestic abuse, suicide awareness and homelessness.

Alex led on the development of major innovations for the benefit of customers in his role, including:

- key work with Wheatley's highly-regarded Neighbourhood Environmental Teams (NETs). The NETs have a unique customer focus and help improve areas within Wheatley's communities. The work Alex led on included reshaping the service during the pandemic to maximise customer safety, delivering food and essentials to those in need and keeping in contact with vulnerable customers;
- providing work and training opportunities to hundreds of tenants and customers through Wheatley's Changing Lives programme. The programme consists of a 12-month paid work placement within Wheatley's Environmental Teams for customers with little/no previous work history, many of them going on to secure permanent

employment with Wheatley. Trainees described very significant, transformational changes in their lives from being on the programme;

- created a partnership and new Environmental Excellence Scheme with Keep Scotland Beautiful. All Wheatley communities are independently assessed against the Keep Scotland Beautiful National Award for Environmental Excellence as well as street and open space assessments;
- expanded Wheatley's Home Comforts service which takes donated pieces of unwanted furniture which may otherwise have been dumped and upcycle them to be passed to tenants. It benefits the environment and provides a lifeline service to tenants who struggle to furnish their home and could fall into debt buying white goods, electricals, bed or sofas. Since 2018 over 236 tonnes of furniture have been saved from being dumped or going to landfill;
- developing a Group Protection approach entirely focused on supporting Wheatley's customers including award-winning bespoke training for staff on domestic abuse, which is considered sector-leading and has played a significant role in safeguarding customers across Wheatley Group;
- the creation of a Wheatley's New Scots Action Plan in response to the Scottish Government Refugee Integration Strategy, to ensure Wheatley's services and products were fit for purpose to meet the needs of refugee customers and fully supported Wheatley's mission of 'Making homes and lives better' for all customers within its communities;
- establishing a specialised Fire Safety Team in 2017 to deliver home safety visits for vulnerable tenants and carry out risk assessments in key buildings;
- leading Wheatley's strategic approach to homelessness, including delivering approximately half of all new Housing First tenancies in Scotland;
- and Wheatley's strategic approach to anti-social behaviour, developing and expanding Wheatley's Community Improvement Partnership (CIP) which brought police, fire and housing services together for the benefit of our communities. The CIP was a unique development when it was first created and was so successful that it has now been expanded Group-wide.

Outcomes and achievements

Through the work that Alex led on, Wheatley has achieved remarkable outcomes and achievements.

These include:

- a 32% reduction in house fires in the last three years, as a result of the work of the fire safety team;
- 10,500 homeless families provided with a home in the last six years, with more than 2400 homeless families housed in 2020/21 alone – an increase of 30%;
- a total of 70% of households now living in neighbourhoods that have been categorised as peaceful. Wheatley has developed a categorisation of neighbourhoods in relation to levels of crime, anti-social behaviour and deprivation with peaceful the best ranking;
- last year, Home Comforts helped 442 households – with 1626 items passed to tenants in need;
- more than 11,000 households supported with over 33,000 food packs or vouchers in 2020/21;
- 10 GHA areas awarded a five-star rating with Keep Scotland Beautiful while 41 multi-storey sites also have a five-star rating;
- Dunedin Canmore and West Lothian Housing Partnership maintaining their five-star rating for a second year;
- Wheatley Group's Transforming our frontline response to domestic abuse project – CIH award-winning in Excellence in Learning & Development 2019;
- and Wheatley Group's Environmental Team – CIH award-winning in Excellence in Customer Service 2020.

Alan Russell

Hillcrest Homes



Statement of support

Alan's 40 years' contribution to housing has encompassed all areas of housing management from homelessness to development. It began in 1982 when he joined Kirkcaldy District Council as a trainee Housing Manager. Shortly after, he enrolled in a post-graduate diploma in Housing, and became a member of the Institute of Housing. By 1983 he'd been promoted to Area Housing Officer, responsible for a patch of 2,000 homes.

In 1985, Alan completed his diploma and was promoted to Senior Housing Officer at Dundee District Council, where he created a unique housing solution for young people. In 1987, he was promoted to run the Homeless Persons Unit. Under Alan's auspices, a new approach to supporting the homeless was developed across the wider city. He also pushed to further understand homelessness and how best to support those affected through research with Heriot Watt University.

Through the 90's, as Group Manager at North East Fife District Council, Alan sought to address fuel poverty, securing special funding for innovative energy-efficiency measures through a successful bid to the Scottish Office. This pioneering project supported the most vulnerable in the community, with analysis undertaken by the British Research Establishment endorsing his approach. In 1994, Alan promoted the National Home Energy Rating system to fairly allocate resources and prioritise energy-efficiency work. He also set up the first "Heat Lease" scheme in Scotland - an innovative initiative where modern heating systems were installed under a lease agreement, freeing up capital for other housing investment. As Chair of Hillcrest, he actively supported Hillcrest's energy advice team, which secured special funding

for emergency top-ups for vulnerable people at risk of falling off-supply. This significant project was recognised by a CIH Excellence in Innovation award in 2018.

Alan wrote the first Quality Manual (BS5750) for social housing management, leading to the formation of a working group focusing on staff training to deliver efficiency and smarter working. Throughout his career, Alan has championed organisational quality and efficiency, and this later saw him spearhead Hillcrest's business transformation project to futureproof and deliver a more streamlined service, including specialist personal development training for all line managers.

Creating harmonious communities was also a key ambition for Alan, who was appointed Chair of the multi-agency Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Task Group at Fife Council. He led on introducing a more effective response for those affected including the Night Time Noise Team, community mediation, family intervention services and more. Alan then integrated the group's ASB activities into a wider community approach after being appointed as Chair of Fife's Safer Neighbourhoods Task Group, working closely with Fife Constabulary to develop an analytical approach to ASB, and helping established the Safer Neighbourhoods Centre to bring together all agencies and teams in one place.

He also worked closely with tenants throughout his career to ensure their views were considered, and devised innovative ways of engagement such as the "Can We Fix It?" repairs consultation roadshow.

In 2012, he set up Fife Council's ambitious new-build housing programme and successfully delivered 2,700 new homes by 2017.

As Hillcrest Chair, Alan presided over securing a substantial increase in development funding resulting in Hillcrest's biggest ever house-building programme, which saw the organisation ranked 3rd in the UK for new affordable homes delivered. This programme included Hillcrest extending its area of operation into the Grampian region.

Many firsts for Hillcrest have happened under Alan's leadership. Hillcrest's first ever permanent charity shop was opened in Dundee with funds from sales going towards Hillcrest Futures support services. Hillcrest's first digital app and newsletters followed closely behind. Hillcrest's first super-low carbon housing development is also currently underway.

Outcomes and achievements

- Initiated use of scatter flats (in place of hostels) as temporary homeless accommodation (1987).
- Organised a multi-agency conference to mark the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (1987).
- Appointed homelessness adviser to Dundee YMCA (1993).
- Elected Fellow of the CloH 1993.
- Appointed Chair of the Gypsy Traveller Working Group in Fife (1998). Spearheaded a move to include Travellers' representatives on the group and coordinated with Save the Children to ensure Travellers' children had full access to support, education and health.
- Played a leading role nationally promoting carbon monoxide poisoning safety measures (1999-2000).
- Appointed to the Fife Drugs Forum in 1999, becoming vice-chair in 2008.
- Appointed as Hillcrest board member (1999).
- Initiated and developed Fife's private landlord licensing scheme following the introduction of new legislation.
- Set up Fife's award-winning Empty Homes Team.
- Set up Better Homes Exhibition in 2011 in Glenrothes (still operating to this day). Shows tenants what improvements are planned for their homes, such as new boilers, windows etc.
- As chair of FIRST Ltd, promoted the use of residential rehabilitation (2016)
- Listed as one of only three Scottish entries in the 2017 "Who's Who in Local Authority Housing Development".
- Elected Chairperson of Hillcrest (2017).

EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP

Sponsored by:

ALACHO

ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHIEF HOUSING OFFICERS

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.

Matthew Busher

Kingdom Housing Association



Statement of support

This statement was written by staff managed directly by Matthew Busher, Director of Housing, as testament to the caring and innovative way that he leads housing services. Matthew is approachable, reasonable and willing to accept suggestions from staff and tenants alike. He leads from the front, regularly attending organisational events to interact directly with customers and staff. In particular, many tenants have commented on how they feel listened to and respected by him due to the way he takes a genuine interest in their opinions.

Matthew joined Kingdom HA as the Head of Housing in 2016 and became Director of Housing in 2021. Over the last 18 months his passion for putting customers at the centre has been influential in taking the lead on a series of very successful service and organisational changes. Matthew improved communication channels between different departments and led on the creation of new teams to provide additional services such as tenancy support, energy advice and housing advocacy. Under his leadership, housing services have taken great leaps forward, developing award-winning tenant participation and customer service initiatives.

As well as driving forward change to housing services, Matthew champions learning and development opportunities to help people to reach their potential. Within the last 18 months, out of a team of 55 staff, 16 staff in housing have completed or are currently on a CIH accredited course. Matthew also developed collaborative partnerships with University of Stirling, CIH and Scotland's Housing Network to secure direct work placements as part of Kingdoms Graduate Trainee programme. This initiative has had direct tangible benefits for Kingdom tenants, including an enhanced digital support programme to empower tenants to get involved in scrutiny activities.

Another example in which Matthew's leadership excelled was the development of the Fife Voices Housing Advocacy Project, that provides additional support to vulnerable tenants, promotes tenancy sustainment and prevents homelessness within Fife. The project has been largely funded through a £167,000 grant from the Scottish Government Homelessness Prevention Fund and is being delivered by the Fife Housing Association Alliance, a partnership between Kingdom, Fife, Ore Valley and Glen housing associations. Two new full time Housing Advocacy Worker posts have been created through the project. These posts were filled through Kingdom's Naumann Initiative; another project that Matthew has led on. This ring-fences recruitment to those registered as homeless on the local housing lists.

In testament to the summary provided above, Bill Banks, Group Chief Executive with Kingdom said: "As Chief Executive I need to rely on the support of my leadership team to deliver on our objectives and gain buy-in from our colleagues across the organisation. Matthew is an excellent example of how this should be done. He has embraced our culture change programme and engaged with his teams and other management colleagues to increase engagement

and ownership, which has been a major contributory success factor. He has implemented innovative processes and systems to deliver efficiencies and improve services to customers. He has a clear vision of where we want to be and displays our values everyday through his approach to his work. He is aware and takes full responsibility for his actions and delivers to a consistent high quality through the leadership style he

applies. We can't however achieve everything on our own and Matthew has demonstrated a real aptitude for both internal and external collaborative working, which brings mutual benefits to everyone involved. I feel he is a true leader, he is well respected and a role model and I would fully endorse all the statements provided by his teams and colleagues."

Outcomes and achievements

- Enhanced tenancy support services, representing £292,161.67 in financial gains for our customers (Apr-Aug 2021)
- 565 people accessed over £50,000 of financial support through the Energy Redress Scheme.
- 829 households given financial assistance worth £90,000 through Connecting Scotland (estimated £187,329 in social value).
- 6 homeless people recruited and housed through the Naumann Initiative and additional homes available to 12 external employers taking part in the Naumann Initiative.
- Inter-departmental promotion of CIH housing qualifications for staff.
- Development of partnerships with CIH, University of Stirling and Scotland's Housing Network to deliver work placements for our Graduate Trainee Programme.
- Improved digital approaches to tenant participation contributing to record levels of customer engagement (e.g. 24% response to recent survey).
- Satisfaction levels rose by 5% to 89% and satisfaction with opportunities to influence also increased from 55.6% to 81% over the same period.
- This year we have accessed external funding at an unprecedented level, securing over £260,000 in grants. This helps us provide a comprehensive range of support to tenants and enhances our reputation with funders..
- We delivered workshops to 117 staff, focussed on improving service standards and helping us achieve and sustain Customer Service Excellence.

Ann Leslie

Lar Housing Trust



Statement of support

BY PHILIP RODNEY, LAR CHAIR:

Ann Leslie changes lives. That wasn't her overriding aim as she started her legal career, but it's now her main strategic and operational goal.

She's successfully driving Lar to help people put down roots and build communities. As one tenant confirmed: "My future was uncertain, but then Lar stepped in and I couldn't be luckier or happier." (SM Aberdeen).

Ann was part of the Scottish Futures Trust team that developed the concept of Lar's innovative financial model of loan, not grant, funding - a hugely positive outcome for the public purse. This model has supported on average 153 jobs per annum since launch.

She's steered Lar to its current status as an organisation with over 40 sites developed, under construction or in planning across Scotland, which will provide over 1,000 MMR homes.

Under Ann's inspirational leadership Lar's grown, thrived and now has a staff team of 15, two wholly owned subsidiary companies, an outstanding financial track record of year-on-year growth and has worked with most of Scotland's major construction companies and local authorities. Lar Group owns commercial properties and provides factoring services to private residential and commercial sectors

This has happened from a standing start. Armed with a £55 million Scottish Government loan, Ann had a blank canvas to develop a housing charity from scratch to meet the demands of a rapidly growing demographic, who could neither afford private rents nor qualify for social housing.

As Lar grew, she did everything from hoovering and making beds at show homes to negotiating a private finance deal for £65 million. She has a modesty about her abilities and achievements, but she is a powerhouse. She sees the big picture, is imaginative and creative. She doesn't start with a spreadsheet, but rather gets the vision right first.

She's never fazed by the number of zeros and she makes big decisions quickly taking full responsibility for them. She's not a pastiche leader, but a one-off. Ann never seeks the limelight, but has rather worked to nurture others and has built a strong team around her.

Her colleague, Mikko Ramstedt, said: "Ann's determination, passion and ability motivates and empowers. She's created an organisation with people at its heart that's not shy to punch above its weight, with a construction programme that rivals many of its larger peers. Thanks to Ann's vision, Lar's undoubtedly changed the face of the affordable sector in Scotland."

Ann takes on difficult projects that others won't touch, such as a derelict former boatyard in Cockenzie, a burnt-out property in Glasgow and an abandoned church in Edinburgh, as well as turnkey projects.

But at its core Lar is an organisation about people: "Moving here has genuinely changed my life." (ST Macmerry); "Moving into a brand-new flat's made a huge difference to our lives." (JM Falkirk). As a regular visitor to sites, Ann's a visible, known and approachable presence to tenants.

She's immensely proud of her staff with the three original members still in place and in promoted posts. Developing her team has included paying for college and CIH Letwell courses, financing an MBA, helping one finish a law degree and taking on a modern apprentice.

Lar's reputation is key for Ann and the organisation is a living wage employer and was the first Scottish business to gain a prestigious sustainability kitemark. She also led a rebranding, working to professionalise Lar as it moves from start-up to scale-up.

In Covid times she ensured older, vulnerable tenants were contacted regularly and she relaxed some policies to reflect difficult times. Staff were given mental health training, health checks and were surveyed to check their wellbeing.

Outcomes and achievements

It is rare for someone to have the ability to steer an organisation from concept through to launch and then on to successful delivery, but Ann Leslie has done just that.

Her undoubted leadership abilities and vision have taken the organisation from start-up to scale-up. Initially she helped develop the idea of Lar's innovative loan funded model and has since, post launch, driven the organisation to a position of considerable financial strength recording year on year growth. She has also set up two wholly owned subsidiary companies, expanding into different residential and commercial markets.

To supplement the initial Scottish Government loan she negotiated a private finance deal for £65

million and this has allowed her to develop strong relationships with all Scotland's major construction companies and several local authorities. Lar now has over 40 sites completed, under construction or in planning and is making a significant difference to people's lives.

She has developed a strong and loyal staff team, some of whom have been with her from launch and are now in promoted posts and Lar is also the first Scottish business to gain the prestigious ESG sustainability kitemark.

She has met and exceeded every development and financial target set.

John Mills

Fife Council



Statement of support

John Mills has been described by those that know him as a man who lives and breathes housing, who's passion and enthusiasm for the subject are obvious every time he speaks.

John started work as a Housing Assistant with Kirkcaldy District Council on 4 January 1984. He developed his skills and knowledge in a variety of posts through the 1980s and 1990s and was appointed Head of Housing with Fife Council on 24 March 2015. An active member of the Chartered Institute of Housing through out his career John has taken a particular interest in training and development including establishing the Fife Council's Training Academy enshrining succession planning within the organisation. His other major focus has been on strengthening tenant participation and supporting local tenant's organisations.

John was elected as ALACHO vice-chair in 2015 and as Co-chair in 2017. He has been a key part of ALACHO's leadership team for six years.

Whilst there is no doubt about his commitment and effort to drive improvements in housing services in Fife, this nomination from his peers in ALACHO is in recognition of the outstanding leadership he has shown at a national level through the Housing and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) and in particular in leading the work on developing Rapid Rehousing Action Plans.

HARSAG was established by the Scottish Government in October 2017 in the face of an increasingly visible crisis of rough sleeping on the streets of Scotland's

town and cities and continuing challenges in meeting the needs of homeless people in both our urban and rural communities. John brought a wealth of practical experience in delivering statutory homelessness services to the work of the group and played a key role in engaging the wider local authority sector in HARSAG's work.

HARSAG worked quickly, it produced its first recommendations for winter action on rough sleeping by November 2017 and followed this with a comprehensive set of recommendations for action the following year that became the framework for the "Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan" agreed between COSLA and the Scottish Government in November 2018.

As the work moved from planning to implementation John's role changed from participating as a member of HARSAG to representing ALACHO on the Homeless Prevention Strategy Group and leading the Rapid Rehousing Transition Planning sub-group. This group has been the key national forum for discussion, updating and agreement around policy and practice in relation to all aspects of Rapid Rehousing.

The Subgroup is the only forum that brings together Scottish Government, local authorities represented by the five Housing Options Hubs and COSLA, housing associations represented by SFHA, the third sector, health and social care and finance representatives. As well as keeping all stakeholders up to speed with developments in the field, the Subgroup has had significant discussions around funding, the engagement of health and social care professionals in Rapid Rehousing and the annual monitoring of progress by individual local authorities and at the level of the five individual Hubs.

John has led this group since its inception three years ago and has overseen the group throughout the short history to date of Rapid Rehousing. John's leadership, in his clear, methodical, gentle and personable, style has underpinned the groups effectiveness.

In the context of the pandemic over the past 18 months this has been all the more impressive.

Outcomes and achievements

John's inspirational leadership has contributed to rapid rehousing being embedded in the homelessness responses of every Scottish local authority. He has been central to the process of engagement across the sector. He has continued to offer this leadership nationally through out the pandemic.

His achievements are as much about promoting a positive culture as they are about more traditionally measurable metrics.

This well-developed focus on a positive organisational culture is also reflected in his work for Fife Council where he has:

- o led the development of Fife's Training Academy to promote and continuing professional development of Fife Council staff as well as staff from partner organisations;
- o lectured at Fife College as well as supporting SVQ students each year;

- o mentored colleagues to develop their work both for the council and with the CIH;
- o been the driving force behind Fife's Modern Apprentice and Graduate Trainee programme;
- o Influenced and shaped the Councils Affordable Housing supply programme;
- o made a clear commitment to tenant engagement, secured additional investment in Fife's Tenant Engagement Team; and
- o supported the transfer of genuine power to Fife's Tenant Forum and Scrutiny Panel.

John's achievements as a leader are a reflection of his long-term commitment to learning, improvement and delivering for tenants and those facing homelessness, in our view he is credit to Fife Council, to ALACHO, to the CIH and the housing profession and one worthy of recognition through this award.

BEST FRONTLINE HOUSING STORY

This award celebrates success stories in our sector over the past year.

Tenant Participation Team

North Lanarkshire Council



Statement of support

Due to the Pandemic tenant participation services could not be delivered as before, therefore the Tenant Participation (TP) team, comprising of 4 officers, volunteered to support the council's 'Community Assistance Helpline', set up in response to Covid-19.

The TP Team were core members of the helpline, which operated at the height of the pandemic, and first in place to accept calls. The team took many distressing calls from vulnerable individuals experiencing extreme isolation and often suicidal thoughts. In the early days many individuals were unable to access their usual supports therefore the team would support these callers as much as possible making referrals to other services as required. If there was a direct threat to anyone's safety, they would arrange for the Police to visit the property, while staying on the phone listening to their concerns until the Police arrived and assessed the situation. Weekly welfare calls were provided, building personal rapport and providing some social interaction through a very isolating and distressing period.

After shielding ended, the TP team were still unable to resume normal TP activities, therefore the team

offered their help to other housing areas. In August 2020 the team took on another very challenging and demanding role to support those experiencing or threatened with homelessness. With additional support from experienced housing advisors and the appropriate training, the team were able to take responsibility for the homeless helpline, giving advice and assistance to homeless households and liaising with our area teams to ensure people received further assistance when required.

More recently as restrictions have eased the team have been exploring other ways to assist our communities. Since the pandemic, individuals have been more eager to engage with the team, therefore they took this opportunity to explore options.

The team identified there was a particular gap in how people in harder to reach groups engage and this was compounded by digital exclusion. In partnership with North Lanarkshire Federation of Tenants and Residents the team applied successfully for grant funding to establish a digital learning library of IT equipment. With this funding the team were able to purchase iPads loaded with internet data which could be given to service users who otherwise would be digitally excluded.

This has revolutionised the way these service users engage and has dramatically decreased their feelings of isolation. Face-to-face events were previously carried out on a weekly basis through various workshops and meetings; however we are now able to hold these events digitally and continue to engage with our service users on topics meaningful to them.

This project then led the TP Team to engage with the council's Digital Inclusion Team, to become 'Digital Champions' for a project currently supporting residents in our older person housing to get online. After completing relevant training, members of the team can now carry out this role, which includes:

- setting up devices
- downloading apps
- setting up an email address
- showing how to use video calling
- showing how to shop online

For some tenants they may require use of a data loaded device, for others they may require home aids

which enable them to monitor their CO2 and moisture levels through a wifi enabled device, to maximise their energy usage, or the use of devices enabling them to communicate with their families ensuring their safety and wellbeing. Small monitors can be installed at their home e.g. on kettles, bedroom/bathroom doors or TV's to show a pattern of movement. This can be linked to their carers smart phone who can rest assured their loved one is going about their daily routine without intrusive checks.

Outcomes and achievements

Since March 2020 the TP team have gone above their normal remit, demonstrating versatility, compassion, commitment and dedication to help support vulnerable individuals within our local communities. They volunteered to accept new challenges and take on new roles, undertaking training and learning new skills to overcome the obstacles of their inexperience dealing with homelessness and support services. Whilst sacrificing their own personal circumstances they provided much needed support throughout the pandemic.

Many vulnerable individuals were supported by the TP team and some have contacted to thank them for their support through the most isolated period in their lives.

The helpline operated 7 days a week, 8 am to 8 pm and the TP Team willingly worked out with

their normal work patterns including evenings and weekends to meet the demands of the service, whilst also providing daily support to other volunteers. Their personal dedication made an enormous difference to vulnerable residents in North Lanarkshire.

The following outcomes have been achieved:

- 12,393 welfare check calls were made to people on the Shielding List
- 5,842 food parcels were delivered
- 985 pharmacy and prescription collections were made
- Over 500 referrals were made to other services
- Over 6000 calls taken (and still rising)

Moira Nisbet

Caledonia Housing Association



Statement of support

During the Covid 19 pandemic I felt it was either a chance to shy away or to embrace the opportunities I had in front of me. I choose to embrace it and make the most of what seemed to be like a bad situation. Tenants were worried, scared, angry and disappointed and I seemed to be in the firing line. Just before March 2020 I had decanted over 30 households into temp decants to allow the regeneration to commence. This

was coming to a standstill now and the relationships I had were about to break down. One evening days into lockdown I decided to make a facebook group to engage with the residents. I didn't expect the group to be overly successful, but I was short on ideas. The group took off! I could not believe it, within days I had 198 residents engaging with including tenants I had yet to meet. In the group I did weekly games and even managed to organise some fun activity packs within the local areas, I made "brainy bugs" which I tied to local lampposts for the kids which had kind words wrote on the back of them or a math question. I even managed to co-ordinate a handful of residents to come together holding individual words to read a thank you message to my colleagues. I was so proud of the work I got it made into a banner and hung it from the Bellsmyre office window! With the easing of lockdown, I still post daily on the group as thought it might have been a thing of the past, 2021 and it is still as active as ever with more and more residents engaging and throughout the year, I have managed to runner bigger competitions including Halloween colouring window displays and now mist designing a Bellsmyre tea towel with the residents' input.

I have rehoused a further 30 plus since we have been able to resume the removal service. To the point where I am often masked up and getting my hands dirty helping tenants getting packed up and moved into the new homes. I have helped break ups, growing families, domestic violence cases and always aim to be on the front line as much as I can. The tenants know they can call on me and often get updates on whats app on how they are settling into the new homes.

It is more than building new communities, it is being a part of their housing journey from start to finish. Visiting tenants' weeks on after they have moved in to

see how they are, popping in at Christmas time with selection boxes for the kids.

I have engaged with tenants who are needing extra support and applied for funding to get WIFI and iPads for residents to keep them engaged with friends and family. I have also focused on mental health, often in my facebook group I post about mental health and how I am also an ear to listen out with regeneration.

I am working closely with our contractor on a community benefits programme helping residents get work, it is more than just houses, it is opportunities within the regeneration.

Outcomes and achievements

I love what I do, I am extremely passionate about housing. I love meetings the tenants, finding out about their journey and building relationships. I am due to move in 66 households in the coming months into

their homes, these tenants I have decanted previously and delighted to be finally handing over keys to their lovely new homes.

Darran Kennedy

Wheatley Group



Statement of support

Darran Kennedy took up his post with Wheatley Group in July 2020, in the middle of the pandemic.

Despite the challenges of learning a new role and building working relationships in this environment, he has taken the Housing First programme to new levels, supporting customers when they needed it most.

Housing First provides permanent homes to the most vulnerable people and includes ongoing support to help them keep their tenancy. One example of this was Darran arranging a Housing First tenancy for a customer to move into direct from his release from prison - the first time we have achieved this within Housing First and achieved within Darran's first month in post.

This was a complex case where Darran had to work extensively with housing officers, repairs staff and partner agencies to make sure the customer's home was ready for him. This included arranging for furniture to be installed ready for the customer to move in to make sure he had a home, not just a house.

This was made even more challenging as the release date and time wasn't confirmed until the day the prisoner was going to be released. Darran's efforts meant the customer was able to leave prison and make a fresh start in a new home.

Darran's achievements and experience in Glasgow have gained recognition in other areas. He supported the launch of Housing First in Dumfries and Galloway, delivering training and on-the-job support to ensure it too will be a success for customers. Darran has also provided "bitesize" training to share learning across Wheatley Group.

Over and above his work on Housing First, Darran became involved in Wheatley's unique project to purchase and decommission the Bellgrove Hotel in the East End of Glasgow which housed 57 homeless men with a variety of vulnerabilities.

Darran led on the housing plans for those who were being rehoused within Wheatley properties. These properties were identified and made ready in less than four months at times to suit our new customers. Darran assessed the properties and worked with repairs teams, environmental teams and support officers to ensure customers had everything they needed to move into their property. Darran's tireless efforts and many long nights, while navigating Covid-19 restrictions, allowed us to successfully house 24 customers.

In addition to his work on the new tenancies, Darran volunteered to set up and run the detailed monitoring system that was required to ensure everything was on track for the customers to transition from the hotel into their new permanent homes. This monitoring meant Darran was able to identify suitable properties at a glance, having a detailed knowledge of customers'

needs and support requirements. The monitoring continues to ensure all tenancies are successfully sustained through regular check ins.

Without Darran's work it is likely that well over 100 vulnerable people would still be staying in hotels,

Outcomes and achievements

Darran has delivered 132 Housing First Tenancies since coming to post. He has also co-ordinated the moves for 24 Bellgrove residents moving into Wheatley tenancies.

Darran has achieved recognition throughout the sector. The Housing First Lead at the Health and Social Care Partnership Glasgow commented:

"Darran has shown outstanding flexibility in his approach. He has quickly established strong working relationships, understanding of processes and a rapid approach to housing our most vulnerable in Glasgow - going beyond our expectations of him.

Darran has been integral to the ongoing development of Housing First, especially the matching process.

temporary accommodation or worse - on the street. All of this at a time when homeless individuals are at particularly high risk from the Covid pandemic.

Recently he has joined HSCP staff going through Vanguard Process and has been key to the future changes recommended.

Most recently he has been key to the multi-disciplinary approach in moving on the men identified through the Bellgrove closure, being pivotal in his approach, identifying positive destinations for them, demonstrating flexibility to all partners, overcoming some of the obstacles faced, producing great results for those vulnerable men, allowing them to still feel a sense of connection with the East End.

On a personal note, working with him most days since early last year I have relied on the camaraderie and support."

Housing Support and Homeless Services

Renfrewshire Council

Statement of support



Our 'Move-On' initiative established a whole new approach to safely moving homeless applicants into settled tenancies during the COVID crisis.

New tenants, and particularly those who have been previously homeless and / or with housing support needs, can often find it challenging to deal with and co-ordinate all the 'to-do's involved in moving house.

The 'lockdown' restrictions during 2020/21 made this significantly worse!

The aim of 'Move-On' was to assemble a small task force of officers with the skills, determination, and energy to do whatever was needed to assist homeless applicants to safely move out of temporary accommodation and into their new settled tenancies, while always ensuring adherence to government

guidelines/ restrictions.

The 'Move On' approach took a team of dedicated officers from across our Homeless and Housing Support teams and empowering them to go above and beyond their usual roles, to test new ways of working, and offer a bespoke service to over 300 homeless households to move into their new homes.

All households continued to be involved in this new approach throughout, however our 'Move-On' team were there to take the strain !

A key initial step was to delegate responsibility for matching homeless applicants to void properties to this small team, which meant that once the property which had been 'matched' to a homeless applicant, the 'Move-On' officers would collect keys from the repairs contractor, establish early contact with the prospective tenant, set up 'viewing' appointments - including the pioneering use of 'virtual video viewings', and liaise with the various partners / teams who are involved in a successful move, such as Housing Benefit team, utility companies and removal companies.

This innovative approach helped ensure:

- the Council would continue to have temporary accommodation vacated for further use,
- reduce the use of B&B as a form of temporary accommodation
- ensure new tenancies were properly set up
- reduction in any unnecessary contact with services, and footfall to homes.

- helping to significantly improve the chances of tenancies being sustained

The commitment of staff to our new approach meant new tenants could move into their new home with as little stress as possible during lockdown.

Case Study

E presented as homeless, was alcohol dependent and suffering from depression. She wanted to live in Renfrewshire to be near family. Sadly, her sister passed away at the beginning of lockdown and she no longer had family support. Staff spoke to E about the services available in the area and when she was "matched" to a property were able to talk through any anxiety she had about moving during lockdown, whilst having attended her sister's funeral.

The dedicated 'Move On' support staff organised her 'virtual viewing', helped her deal with benefit applications, arranged the delivery of furniture, carpets

and white goods, liaised with energy companies and worked in partnership with repairs contractors to connect her cooker and gas appliances.

E said it took a lot of the stress and worry of moving away from her when she was already facing significant personal issues.

She is still in her new tenancy, is abstinent from alcohol, tells us her mood is improving and she feels settled and happy for the first time in years. She has been linked in with CMHT and is building her confidence.

E was provided with emergency food parcels at the beginning of lockdown due to her anxiety going out and was later provided with a Tablet through connecting Scotland and is now shopping online. E also benefited from a £100 ASDA gift voucher from the 'Staying In' fund, has successfully reviewed her PIP application online and is gaining confidence online.

Outcomes and achievements

Since May 2020, 'Move-On' staff have co-ordinated over 300 moves for homeless applicants into settled tenancies in both Council and Housing Association properties.

Recorded:

- reductions in the number of abandonments within 12 months of tenancies allocated to homeless applicants - reducing from 32 in 2019/20, to 11 in 2020/21
- significant reduction in the number of homeless individuals staying in B&B accommodation- from 234 individuals at the peak of the first lockdown between May- August 2020 to zero by December 2020.

- clear improvements on tenancy sustainment- from 151 individuals who benefitted from the Move On process and have now passed one year since their tenancy began, 93% have sustained their tenancy.

"'Move On' has been a vital support during the pandemic. People were moving into tenancies without white goods or a sofa, waiting days before these were delivered. How horrible must that have felt?

The hard work and dedication of the staff with 'Move On' means people have been able to move into their new home with everything in place. It has been seamless, helping to alleviate a lot of anxiety that people can feel when moving into a tenancy.

It really has made a difference to so many people"

ServiceCo-ordinator- TurningPointScotland

HOUSING TEAM OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by:



The title of housing team of the year is awarded to a team who have delivered an outstanding contribution to their organisation and for the housing sector. The award is designed to recognise achievement of something special, as part of developing new services, dealing with difficult situations or delivering the best services.

Housing Options Scotland staff and volunteer team

Housing Options Scotland



Statement of support

Housing Options Scotland (HOS) are Scotland's cross-tenure housing information and advice service for disabled people, older adults and members of the Armed Forces community. They offer a bespoke and person-centred, 1-1 casework service. Despite the pandemic, it has been a record breaking year at HOS as the team have supported more clients than ever before and launched several new projects, each strengthening and diversifying the support offered to people experiencing housing difficulty across Scotland.

In the past year, the service supported a record 716 new clients, representing a 47.9% increase on the year previous. The HOS team have launched new projects to improve outcomes for this growing number of clients:

Making Moves

Recognising the unique circumstances that younger disabled people face when planning to live independently for the first time, HOS have developed a new service, Making Moves. The service comprises specialised resources and different ways of working to ensure that all stakeholders are represented in the casework - most importantly, the young person themselves. Making Moves has supported over 20 clients this past year.

"The HOS team explained what we were trying to achieve together and what steps we'd need to take to achieve it. [A] was very much the centre of the conversation and involved in everything. Now [A] is moved, the improvement in his mental health has been brilliant" - Making Moves client

Homeless Housing Options

The Homeless Housing Options (HHO) service has been designed to better allow the team to respond to crisis situations for those who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness. HOS now respond to all homelessness queries within 48 hours. The project is also working to change the perception of homelessness by highlighting the issues homeless people face, especially amongst the "hidden" homeless population - often older adults or disabled people. Since launching, the project has supported over 50 clients.

"Before I thought: 'I'm not homeless. I've got a bed'. Then I realised I had no opportunities and couldn't do anything. Although I wasn't living on the street, I never had that feeling of 'going home'. Whenever I spoke

to the staff they listened to me and told me 'You don't need to worry, you just need to look after yourself.' I felt like I could contact them at any point." - HHO client

HOS Helps

HOS Helps was launched as a new tenancy support service, working with landlords to help tenants on a range of tenancy sustainment issues. From offering occupational therapy support, to helping with money advice and sourcing furniture, the service is a one-stop-shop for residents who need additional support in their home. The service has helped over 100 tenants already and applies the person-centred, pragmatic and solution-focused approach of HOS to new settings.

"I can't speak highly enough about HOS Helps - you've made a real difference to our tenants' lives [...] not just in what you have been asked to do, but in the way that you have done it - valuing and treating people with respect. The service is a great example of a 3rd sector organisation utilising its unique abilities to deliver the best outcomes and interventions for tenants." -

Housing Association

HOS has expanded its offering this past year to further meet the needs of clients and make interventions in other parts of the housing landscape. The team has grown by 50% and - despite the huge increase in casework and challenging circumstances of the pandemic - team members have demonstrated themselves to be creative-minded and solution-focused, flexible in their approach to empowering clients and finding innovative ways to support individuals to find the Right Home in the Right Place.

Outcomes and achievements

This year, the HOS team has:

- Supported 716 new clients (+47.9% on the year previous), from 31/32 local authorities across Scotland
 - Recruited 6 additional staff members, growing the team by 50%
 - Attended a large number of training events and accredited courses to upskill staff and volunteers
 - Recruited 10 additional volunteers who have helped over 60 clients this past year offering emotional and practical support to them, from filling out and sending housing application forms to delivering shopping to clients through lockdown. HOS volunteers have also written 10
- "Your Area" guides for clients which detail services within a local authority to support clients when settling into their new home.
- Received 95% client satisfaction rate from feedback survey, and many positive comments: "The person I've worked with has been a fundamental help in helping me to overhaul certain aspects of my life. I would really have been lost without her extra support, very thankful."; "I now have a little more hope so thank you so much"; "They were so friendly and helpful, I would not change a thing."
 - HOS Helps has supported 115 clients and received a 100% satisfaction rate from tenants via a text feedback survey

Brenda Whitelaw, Erin Williams, Audrey Dorward

Glen Oaks Housing Association



Statement of support

The goConnect Project is a sustainability project within Glen Oaks Housing Association. Based in Glasgow's South Side, we have properties in Arden, Darnley and Pollok and some of our stock is in the bottom 2.5% of deprived areas according to SIMD statistics.

goConnect was established when we identified that tenants needed intensive support. We realised that many tenants had mental health issues - anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and isolation. We recognised we needed to offer support to improve tenants' self-confidence, social skills and happiness, and build community capacity.

We support Glen Oaks' most vulnerable tenants: making referrals to relevant support agencies, providing social contact, and facilitating activities to promote better mental health and wellbeing. Prior to the pandemic, we were facilitating 13 classes per week, including one of the busiest community ESOL classes in Glasgow. We currently offer tenants a mix of outdoor and Zoom activities, and have been working with Clyde College, Glasgow Life and SAMH.

We joined forces with Glasgow Life (Community Sports Hubs) to form Active Arden, to encourage the community to participate in sport activities. We are currently providing 3 free outdoor classes per week, which is helping improve physical and mental health in the area. We are setting up a committee who will be able to apply for funding in their own right. We also recently secured funding with our local partners for floodlights for the Astro turf pitch.

During the pandemic, we began developing a community garden through Active Arden. Residents are involved in the planning of this garden, and are looking forward to having somewhere to meet and socialise: most live in tenement flats and have no access to gardens.

Our Digital Assistant also helps tenants with CVs and job applications, and refers to People Plus for additional employability support. We also have a digital device lending library to help residents with job searching and accessing Zoom classes. We also have free mi-fi devices for tenants.

We also sought funding for 3 telephone befrienders to support our tenants, including a Polish speaking befriender: 18% of our tenants are Polish, and our Polish speaking befriender is currently contacting every Polish tenant to offer this service, and can advise tenants of local services and support.

The project has proved to be invaluable to Glen Oaks' residents, particularly since the pandemic took hold. Furthermore, we facilitate a community partnership forum, combining resources to work together in the delivery of local services and to address the ambitions and issues of the communities we serve.

Quotes:

M aged 80 "I can't thank you enough. I've had so much help from goConnect, and I feel very supported. I tell my family about the help you've given me: where they live there's no project that does what goConnect do, and they're amazed. I really appreciate what you have done for me."

K aged 65 "Last week after the Tai chi class I slept from 1am - 7am - I was so relaxed, I never sleep longer than 3 hours so I'll definitely be coming back to this class again."

J aged 48 "I enjoy the befriender phoning. It's good to know someone takes an interest in my life. It's good for my mental health"

Jim McDaid NHSGGC Health Improvement Team

"The goConnect Project are doing a fantastic job in keeping tenants from becoming crisis cases for services which are already at full capacity. For such a small team, I am so impressed with how forward thinking, dedicated and committed they are to helping their tenants. I nominated them for the Evening Times 'Streets Ahead' Award this year."

Outcomes and achievements

- Identified & supported 697 elderly or vulnerable tenants (245 Very Vulnerable 41 Extremely Vulnerable) & provided emergency telephone contacts
- Completed 236 tenant referrals requests to support agencies - Mental health services, social care direct, family support, Employability, Digital Support and food services etc.
- Provided weekly Meals to 171 tenants
- Hired 3 telephone befrienders – 2 male (one Polish) and 1 female to support tenants with mental health (currently 280).
- Provided Benefit & Debt Advice, food & energy vouchers to 400 tenants
- Secured funding for 100 digital devices for tenants. Our Digital Assistant preloaded useful apps on devices, wrote a basic users guide for apps including zoom & gave tuition to tenants.
- Developed Active Arden with Glasgow Sports Hubs for new classes (walking, tai chi & jogging), & funding.
- Started a Community Garden.
- Developed Arden Mens Mental Health Action Group in response to local suicides, with partners & local groups (Police, HSCP etc), to develop a Suicide Prevention strategy. G53 Groups are now following our example and taking a lead in what we started.
- Arranged 10 weekly classes for our tenants to prevent isolation – zoom chat, photography, digital support, mindfulness, Gardening, SAMH, tai chi, chair aerobics, walking and jogging.

Central Rents Team

North Lanarkshire Council



Statement of support

As a result of the pandemic, and like most other public and private sector teams, North Lanarkshire Council's Central Rents Team was under immense pressure to ensure they continued to provide a front line service during a significantly difficult and unprecedented time.

With a pause on formal arrears recovery, the team's primary focus was to ensure that tenants facing any hardship or difficulty could be supported to maintain their tenancy and keep a roof over their head.

The team embraced this challenge and through their hard work, dedication and professionalism they made a case for change and began to deliver a new message to their tenants: the new message was one of **ENGAGEMENT, NOT ENFORCEMENT**.

To act and deliver on this, it was important that the team continued to be front facing to provide a point of contact for their tenants throughout the pandemic. This approach has helped to maintain crucial engagement with tenants which has helped generate positive results and outcomes, giving tenants a much

better chance of not accruing as much debt and any associated stresses that would come with this.

Central to this was the completion of a financial assessments for every tenant to identify if there was any scope to maximise benefit entitlement or to establish if they would qualify for any Council funding such as our Universal Credit Assistance Fund and Rent Relief Funds, or wider government funding, such as the Scottish Child Payment. Some tenants were wary or even reluctant that the team were contacting them to determine what assistance could be offered instead of enforcing rent arrears procedures but gradually through persistence and hard work, engagement levels increased, and the team managed to break down age old barriers about the service(s) available and our new ethos.

To date, this hard work has meant that £2,624,852 has been paid into tenant's rent accounts (with an affordable arrangement in place to pay back), which has given these tenants some financial breathing space for the first time in over a year. This methodology has increased engagement levels at a time when the team were anticipating a significant increase in rent arrears levels due to concerns of low engagement with tenants and increased hardship across the country.

The team continued to meet with colleagues from locality housing teams to ensure that appropriate help and support was delivered to their tenants. This involved case review meetings with locality teams so that, where there was a risk to the tenancy, preventative work was put in place allowing full discussion and agreed actions to help sustain the tenancy. Information on financial support available as a result of the pandemic was shared with the locality teams so that the new message continued to be

delivered across a wider area. The Central Rents team took referrals from locality teams to carry out financial assessments and worked tirelessly to engage with tenants by phone, email and visits, (which continued to be safely carried out during lockdown), to ensure that income maximisation was made available to as many tenants as possible.

This clearly shows that the team aspires to do so much more than simply provide housing. The team strived to connect and engage with tenants which demonstrates

that they listen, learn and share good practice to maximise results for all tenants despite the added pressure of the pandemic. Income maximisation has a positive impact on tenants lives whilst supporting local communities. It is testament to the hard work and dedication of the team that providing this valuable service has continued throughout the pandemic, helping tenants sustain their tenancies and improve their wellbeing.

Outcomes and achievements

Collectively, the Central Rents team has played a key role in generating over £12.9m income for the communities of North Lanarkshire over 2020/21. This has been achieved through engaging with tenants and, where potential eligible benefits were identified, ensuring tenants receive the correct advice and assistance to apply for additional benefits.

The team's determination and success are mirrored in their performance with the overall level of current house arrears being reduced by over £370k at the end of Q1 2021 compared to the same period in 2020.

The percentage of Universal Credit cases in arrears saw a reduction of 12%; from 69% (end Q1 2020) - 57% (end Q1 2021) despite the number of Universal Credit cases having increased by over 1,400 over the same 12 month period.

The value of Universal Credit arrears also reduced by £500k at the end of Q1 2021 compared to the end Q1 2020.

Riverside Scotland Lettings Team

Riverside Scotland



Statement of support

Throughout the entire Covid pandemic the Riverside Scotland Lettings Teams continued to allocate available properties to homeless households and those most in housing need. The service provided by the teams did not stop at any point as a result of restrictions or lockdowns. The Association has always been a committed and key partner within the Common Housing Registers across our areas of operation in North Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway, and we recognised at the outset of the pandemic that we had a responsibility to ensure we continued to accommodate households who were in temporary accommodation, or who really needed to move due to their current circumstances.

The Lettings Team continued to liaise with our Local Authority partners throughout the pandemic to identify households who were in urgent need of housing. The allocations process was streamlined as far as possible so that all tenancy advice and information was provided in advance over the phone or online, and keys were exchanged with customers and between contractors in accordance with health and safety guidelines. To maintain the service, staff still had to visit properties to inspect and progress void works, hand over keys, and provide tenancy documentation.

During this time many other Housing Associations stopped allocating their properties completely. Riverside Scotland has always been committed to preventing and alleviating homelessness, and recognises the important role we play in supporting our Local Authority partners to provide secure and permanent accommodation to those most in need. This required members of the Lettings Team to place the needs of our customers above their personal concerns regarding the pandemic, and to go above and beyond to support vulnerable households. The Association's core values are 'We Trust, We Care, We are Courageous'. By continuing to let our properties during the Covid crisis, the Lettings Team has clearly demonstrated these values, and above all has placed the needs of customers before themselves. At every point throughout the allocations process the team showed compassion, commitment, resilience, and bravery.

Riverside Scotland is extremely proud of the support we provided to our Local Authority Homelessness services during this time. We rehoused 11 households throughout periods of lockdown, the majority of whom were residing in temporary accommodation. The Homelessness Manager from North Ayrshire described Riverside Scotland as 'Providing a lifeline to many people during this extremely difficult time, who feared that they would have to remain in temporary accommodation for extended periods as a result of the pandemic. We are extremely grateful to Riverside Scotland for continuing to allocate their properties and providing much needed support to the Council's Homelessness service'.

In addition to the allocation of properties, the Lettings Team also enhanced our letting standard during this period to ensure that all properties we allocated included all floor coverings, blinds, and full decoration.

These aspects were in addition to our routine 'Safe, Clean and Clear' void standard, and were provided to prevent vulnerable households from having to try and purchase these items when materials and contractors were in short supply, many customers were losing their employment, or were already reliant on benefits and facing hardship. The Lettings Team also purchased and delivered furniture items and essential groceries for these households during the lockdown, to help them settle into their new home and manage the transition into their tenancy as smoothly as possible.

As Head of Service for Riverside Scotland I am extremely proud of the passion, dedication, commitment, and sense of social purpose shown by our Lettings Team during such a challenging time for the Association, our partners, and customers.

Outcomes and achievements

In total Riverside Scotland accommodated 11 households in need during the most challenging periods of the pandemic. The majority of these households were living in temporary accommodation or facing imminent homelessness. Since 2018 the Association has provided properties to North Ayrshire Women's Aid (NAWA) which they use as interim supported housing for women fleeing Domestic Abuse. Unfortunately the lockdowns during the pandemic resulted in a significant rise in incidences of Domestic Abuse. In response to this Riverside Scotland agreed to provide Women's Aid with additional properties and tenancy support to help them meet this increased demand. Mary Beglan, Manager of NAWA, said that the Association 'really stepped up to provide NAWA with much needed

accommodation and support for our service users during the pandemic crisis, helping them to avoid homelessness and remain safe and secure'.

We have also received extremely positive feedback from the households we accommodated during the pandemic: "I had been in living in temporary accommodation during the pandemic and I was worried that I could be here for ages because of the lockdown. I was delighted when I received the phone call to say I was being offered my own secure accommodation'.

'I was absolutely over the moon when I was offered my house. The Association have been marvellous to me during the lockdown with all the help and items they provided me with for moving into my home'

Staff team

Ruchazie Housing Association



Statement of support

I would like to support the application for the staff team at RHA who over the last 3 years have overcome a really challenging time. From notification of intervention to eventually coming through that positively to manage even more challenge throughout the last 18 months.

A small staff team of 5 are no longer in statutory intervention. RHA now have a strong community based governing body with magnificent support from other committee members who bring required skills.

In the last 12 months the staff team have secured over £120000 to support the opening of the Ruchazie Pantry. Distributed over £75000 of funding to all our tenants to support food provision, fuel costs, provided iPads to local schools and provided activity packs for children. As well as all of this activity carried out mostly from home 40 of our elderly tenants received afternoon teas delivered to their homes.

As one of the smallest (of not the smallest) community based housing associations in Glasgow this is quite an achievement. We do not have a support team behind

us and carry out all of our wider role activities as well as our housing management functions with a strong small staff team

of 5. This includes all governance, finance, tenant participation, housing management, repairs and the list goes on. We obtain external specialist support when required.

We could easily have folded and been swallowed up, forced into a partnership or lost due to the challenges we faced however with a determined governing body and a committed staff team all

Of our challenges were overcome and we are now have a strong governing body and a happy staff team.

Some comments made - 'no one gave you a chance at the beginning- you were written off'(GWSF)

'Well done for getting through this' (EHRA chairperson)

'if it wasn't for our housing association I'd have no help at all. Your help has went a long way for us' (tenant)

'we are amazed the generous donations you guys have been able to provide to us throughout the pandemic' (tenant)

Being based in our community allows our staff to provide instant support when needed. This has been invaluable and our tenants really supported us with their patience and their commitment to rent payments. Staff have been able to support tenants through benefit changes -signposting to our partners ensuring they received their entitlements. All of this gives our tenants the confidence to approach us when things aren't going so well for them so we can help.

Outcomes and achievements

Our small staff team have distributed over £100,000 this year to our tenants and partners. The community. This equates to approx £400 per household in The year 2020/21.

Never in a million years could we have imagined being able to do this. But with the support of our

partners at GWSF, GCC, SFHA who all provide support to us, we see this as a great achievement. We have financially helped 225 families in a very challenging period as well as being continually present throughout the pandemic.

The Housing Property Repairs and Maintenance Team

North Lanarkshire Council



Statement of support

North Lanarkshire Council is the fourth largest local authority in Scotland with stock of more than 36,000 properties and a population of more than 341,000. The COVID-19 pandemic brought many challenges to the housing service, especially for the teams responsible for emergency and non-emergency repairs, servicing and legislative works. It was recognised at the beginning of the pandemic that communication would be key in supporting tenants and residents through this challenging period whilst continuing to deliver vital services such as gas servicing and emergency repairs.

In line with Scottish Government guidance, North Lanarkshire moved into Tier 4 restrictions from 26th December 2020 with the service still operating emergency repairs alongside external routine works, void works and legislative compliance works. This meant approximately 800 outstanding/live routine repairs were cancelled with around an additional 1000 jobs which had not been planned yet.

Using the experience of the first lockdown, the planning team contacted all tenants with repairs booked approximately 6 weeks in advance on certain trades. They were advised by telephone, text or message service via their mobile that the date was suspended due to lockdown and they would be

contacted to re-arrange. The repairs team processed an enormous number of calls and escalations and often worked additional hours to deal with the large influx in duties required. The team worked together by creating a plan and communicating in real time via live chat to react to an ever-changing situation. The Service Delivery Manager in the Repairs Planning Team said, "I am proud of the planning team and their ability to work together, reacting to issues as they arise and working beyond their duties to maintain daily workload."

The gas servicing team maintained outstanding performance throughout the pandemic, carrying out 32,283 annual gas safety inspections as of July 2021 with all services completed within the due date. This achievement can be attributed to the effective planning, safety measures and communication implemented by the team. The team had increased one-to-one communication with tenants via telephone calls and were at hand to provide full reassurance of the safety measures in place which included full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and finding alternative routes to access the boiler, for example, if a boiler was positioned within a kitchen, the engineer would use the back door to limit unnecessary contact with both the tenant and their home.

Similarly, Housing Repairs and Maintenance Team continued to provide our core repairs service to tenants 24/7 during lockdown and recovery- carrying out 23,206 emergency repairs from January 2021 to August 2021. The average timescale to complete an emergency repair is currently just over 3 hours which is an improvement in performance compared with 2019/20 figures pre-covid.

With the ease of restrictions and the reintroduction of internal routine repairs the Housing Property Repairs and Maintenance Team have managed to complete a staggering 32,787 repairs from April to August 2021, the current YTD timescale is just over 5 days which again is an improvement in performance compared with 2019/20 figures pre-covid.

Outcomes and achievements

The Housing Property Repairs and Maintenance Team have faced enormous challenges since the onset of the pandemic and 18 months later, remain responsive to ongoing changes relating to material availability and isolation requirements. Despite the difficulties, the team have improved performance on both emergency and non-emergency repair timescales compared with 2019/20 pre-pandemic figures. This is a significant achievement for an organisation with a housing stock of more than 36,000 properties. The team worked tirelessly and showed sincere dedication to limit the unavoidable consequences of the pandemic on its repairs service and this is evident in the sheer volume

of repairs (32,787) carried out within a five month period across North Lanarkshire.

Feedback from tenants has been positive, Mrs Ferguson of Airdrie said "I got a phone call to let me know my appointment to have my heating replaced was cancelled due to the lockdown but that they would contact me to re-arrange as soon as the restrictions were lifted. The same man called me back to re-arrange and he was very helpful and told me how they would progress the works and all the assistance they would give me to prepare. The communication was fantastic and staff were very helpful"

Wheatley's Lettings and Homelessness Team

Wheatley Group



Statement of support

Wheatley Group's Lettings and Homelessness Team delivered remarkable results for customers throughout the pandemic.

They redesigned the entire allocations process so that it could be delivered almost entirely virtually. This included providing virtual viewings and a distanced sign-up process. This approach allowed Wheatley to allocate as many homes in 2020/21 as it did in previous years, despite an almost complete cessation of letting for the first lockdown. It also ensured that some exceptionally vulnerable people could be housed even at the height of restrictions using video calling and virtual viewing.

Despite the pressures of the pandemic, the team has continued to develop services to customers. The MyHousing website letting system has been enhanced to include an integrated benefits calculator to help customers ensure they are receiving all the income they are entitled too. In Glasgow, the team has also participated in the vanguard review of homelessness processes in order to improve systems further.

Recognising the importance of housing homeless households at this time, the team quickly worked to identify additional properties which could be used by local authority partners as temporary accommodation to alleviate the urgent demand. The team also worked to ensure that as many tenants in temporary accommodation as possible can have their tenancy "flipped" to a permanent tenancy. This has reduced disruption and trauma to a large number of homeless households.

In addition to temporary accommodation, the team enabled Wheatley to house its largest proportion of homeless households ever - almost 20% higher than in the previous year, despite the challenges. The team worked closely with housing officers, tenancy support and our wraparound services to ensure households are supported to maintain their tenancy. They have also created a rapid matching service to help households move quickly from temporary accommodation to a suitable home in an area of their choice.

The team led Wheatley's sector-leading implementation of Housing First enabling the provision of almost half of all Housing First tenancies in the country. This included ensuring customers have all they need to successfully start and maintain their tenancy including furniture, key household items and ongoing support.

The Housing Options for Older People Team had one of its busiest years despite four months where there were no lettings. They worked with a range of providers to ensure rapid housing of customers with acute needs and also prevent further decline in mental or physical health.

Outcomes and achievements

The outcomes from the team throughout 20/21 and beyond have been quite incredible:

- almost 2500 homes let to homeless households - up almost 50% from 2019/20;
- over 200 customers in extreme housing need moved rapidly into suitable homes despite the pandemic;
- 500 additional homes provided to local authorities for use as temporary accommodation, including some from Lowther, Wheatley's mid-market rent provider;
- 116 Housing First tenancies created in the year, including one for a customer coming directly from prison;
- flipped approximately 150 temporary tenancies to permanent homes for households where they were suitable;
- tenancy sustainment rates maintained at over 90%;
- and 160 older customers helped to find suitable accommodation.

Tenancy Support Team

Homes for Good



Statement of support

Homes for Good (HFG) was created in 2013 as is Scotland's first social enterprise letting agency operating in the private rented sector. We currently manage over 525 homes - half of which we own. With offices in Dennistoun and Bridgeton, we work with 165 landlords and 800 tenants in and around Glasgow and the West of Scotland. We work across the whole private rental market, with specialist expertise in supporting people on lower incomes.

We believe that home is the foundation for all of our lives. We all have the right to live in a secure home that we love and where we feel safe.

HFG is now recognised as a leading social enterprise and was awarded £2.4m from the National Lottery Community Fund to test our model and with partners to replicate what we do across the UK.

Since 2014, we have raised £16m from a variety of social investors and developed over 260 homes. The homes we own are let to tenants in need (including those on benefits or low incomes) with rent set around the local housing allowance level.

As well as managing properties, we provide full and tailored tenancy support through our relationship-based person-centred approach. We also lease properties to a number of partner organisations which support people with more complex needs.

Our dedicated Tenancy Support team, whose expertise spans mental health, employment and training advice, support with welfare support, financial health, energy efficiency advice, interior design and community-based support. All of this helps to keep our tenants safe, happy and content in their homes and make us entirely unique in the PRS.

Over the course of the pandemic we have put in place measures to make sure our tenants' needs are met. We have made regular, sometimes daily, contact with tenants to ensure their needs are met and wellbeing maintained. This has been particularly important for our more vulnerable tenants who are living alone and have no family support.

We promoted digital inclusion, providing tablets and training on how to use them to 40 of our tenants who previously had no internet access. We also provided regular shopping deliveries to a number of our tenants who were in vulnerable groups and our energy advisor was able to secure many of them utility top-ups.

Working alongside The Basket Brigade, over 100 Christmas hampers were delivered by our team to our tenants, making sure that nobody woke up without a present at Christmas.

Our engagement activities were moved online at the start of the pandemic and we have continued to successfully continue our programme of events online. Our Facebook Tenant Community Group has over 100 active members and we have run several events over the last year. Workshops have covered children's art; upcycling; craft; and interior design. We have run online afternoon tea online meet-ups twice weekly and have also run established a film group. More recently we have organised socially distanced walks with some of our tenants who have faced challenges to their wellbeing that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. We are really proud of the level of interaction and support we have been able to maintain with our tenants, even when we have not been able to see them in their homes.

Our LoveHome project has been busy over the last year. We have worked with tenants that have faced a mental health crisis to help them de-clutter and empower them to improve their own living conditions. This project has also worked with tenants who want to put their own personal touch on their homes, offering one-to-one meetings with our interior designer who will help them design their space and facilitate making it a reality.

Outcomes and achievements

We have maintained regular online interaction with over 100 of our more vulnerable or socially isolated tenants through online platforms on both a one-to-one and group basis. Delivering over £6,000 of food, along with 40 tablets & more than 100 Christmas hampers our team have worked hard to make sure all our tenants' needs are met.

Reaching out to over 200 organisations & individuals to discuss the HFG approach helps us to achieve our aim of leading by example. Our innovative new Empty Homes Project is the first of its kind we are confident we will deliver on our mission to bring 30 properties back in to use.

Some feedback from our tenants...

"Wow, what a lovely surprise [delivery of children's art pack] on a miserable day! I can't thank you all enough at Homes for Good Community Group you truly are the best"

"I do thank all of you for the amazing things you do for your tenants, it's nice to know there are people out there that do care. Once again thank you"

BOB ALLAN - YOUNG ACHIEVER IN HOUSING

Sponsored by: **GHA**

The award celebrates individuals who can demonstrate that they have shown passion, commitment, and flair in delivering services for tenants and residents.

Abby Turnbull

Dunedin Canmore Housing Association



Statement of support

Abby joined Wheatley Group in November 2020 through Wheatley's Ignite Graduate Programme. She was given a placement with Dunedin Canmore Housing Association, part of the Group, where she would learn the skills and job behaviours needed to become a Housing Officer.

The 2020 Graduate intake was like no other, as all onboarding was done virtually due to the ongoing pandemic. Traditional methods of getting to know her new team and customers were not available, however Abby rose to that challenge as if she had been doing it her whole life.

From the outset, Abby contributed to creative solutions in terms of how teams could collaborate in a digital environment. She recognised that her new peers shared her desire to remain connected while home working and introduced the idea to work in 'pods' via Microsoft Teams. This created a digital version of 'working across the desk' with colleagues. It also helped to alleviate some of the isolation staff

had been experiencing and provided a solution to the wider team.

Abby's passion and determination for providing excellent services to our customers was evident from the moment she joined the Dunedin Canmore team.

Her first task was to contact Dunedin Canmore customers with children in the household, engaging with these customers and arrange delivery of Christmas vouchers. With each interaction, Abby took the time to gain an insight to each customer's circumstances.

She enhanced the Christmas voucher offering by identifying benefit entitlement for some customers, while enlisting our Welfare Benefits Advisors to help when required.

Customers praised Abby's approach and comments included: "I can't thank you enough, I have really struggled this year and this will mean so much to my children."

Another customer got in touch to say she had been self-isolating as was diagnosed with COVID-19 and really struggled to get prepared for Christmas. This

customer really opened up to Abby and told her "My son has just had a growth spurt and is now 6-foot, now I can buy him some trousers that fit." Abby then directed this customer to other support services to help with money and budgeting advice.

After only two months in the organisation, Abby had demonstrated she was more than capable of managing her own patch of customers. An unexpected period of sickness of another officer meant that Abby had the opportunity to showcase her ability as a patch Housing Officer, much earlier than planned.

Abby's ability has gone from strength to strength, demonstrating continuous improvement of delivery of services. The patch Abby is now responsible for also requires collaboration with Social Work and various care organisations.

An example of her determination and capability is where she became involved with a customer who has high level support needs. The customer had to be decanted while work was carried out in their home due to bed bugs. Abby immediately took the lead in

coordinating support agencies, social work colleagues and contractors to remedy the customer's situation.

Her caring approach towards the customer and tenacity to ensure the customer experienced as little disruption as possible has been admirable. Abby also identified areas of unmet need during this period of engagement as Abby put her 'Social Care' hat on.

Outcomes and achievements

- created the digital pods working arrangement at Dunedin Canmore to enable support and overcome isolation;
- successfully delivered Christmas vouchers across Dunedin Canmore customers;
- and used the Christmas voucher discussions to add value with customers, linking them to benefits advice and other support.

Abby's mentor, the People Services Lead in Employee Relations testifies:

"The fact that Abby has been nominated for this award comes as no surprise to me. Her 'can do' attitude and determination to do the best for her customers is an inspiration to us all. She regularly seeks out opportunities to expand her knowledge and skill base. She is resourceful and never afraid to use her own initiative. In the six months I have known Abby I have seen her grow and develop into a knowledgeable and extremely competent housing professional. She is a credit to the Wheatley Group graduate programme".

Alastair Burke

Ferguslie Park Housing Association



Statement of support

Alastair joined the FPHA in April 2019 during a time of rejuvenation following the end of statutory intervention with the Scottish Housing Regulator and since joining has proven to become an invaluable member of our Housing Service Team. He brought with him, his positive 'can do attitude' which helped to embed a new culture in the organisation moving forward.

Alastair carries out the role of Housing Services Assistant and is always one of the first to look for solutions to problems. He was instrumental in developing a system that allows for the calculation of arrears for any tenant in receipt of UC and works out if UC payments in arrears will clear balance or if the tenant has to make further payments. This

piece of work has helped to assist our Housing Services Officers in identifying rent arrears at an early stage which in turn has supported tenants to get the assistance they need before things become unmanageable. During the pandemic as expected there was an increase in early Welfare Rights referrals as a result of this system and although the association saw an increase in rent arrears, the support provided to tenants has enabled overall rent arrears to level off at 2018 levels.

More recently Alastair has worked extremely hard during the implementation of our new tenant web portal called 'My Home' which gives tenants immediate access to their rent accounts and allows them to report arrears online amongst other things. He was tasked with the job of ensuring tenants' details were complete and the system was ready for tenants to view the information contained on it. Alastair was diligent in checking any areas of concern and also supporting other departments in helping them be ready to go live also. The 'My Home' tenants portal is a big step forward for the association in becoming digitally connected to its tenants and Alastair's contribution to the project has enabled it to come to fruition.

Throughout the course of the pandemic Alastair has shown himself to be one of the most reliable, dependable and helpful members of staff and any request for assistance was received with the words 'no problem'. His role like many others changed quickly however Alastair used this to his advantage to gain more experience across the whole association and

was able to make a real difference to the community in Ferguslie Park. He initially supported the whole staff team by attending the office on an almost daily basis to scan mail to relevant staff and print and post out letters to tenants, this enable most services to tenants to continue. He provided much needed support to our Welfare Rights Team to free them up to assist more tenants and also picked up knowledge along the way. Alastair also assisted tenants by signposting and/or referring them to our Covid Response Worker and where appropriate referred them to the Association's Covid Essentials Fund and Energy Fund.

The Ferguslie Group was fortunate to be awarded Supporting Communities Funding from the Scottish Government enabling our community café to

provide meals to those in need. Alastair was one of the Ferguslie Group's stars who helped to deliver over eighteen thousand meals and whilst doing so provided some much, welcomed contact with the outside world to many who were self-isolating. For this he was nominated by the community for a "Thank you from Ferguslie" Award.

We are delighted to have Alastair as a part of our organisation and extremely proud that even whilst doing all he has this past year he has also been able to complete his CIH Level 4 Certificate in Housing Practise.

Outcomes and achievements

Alastair's own personal achievement include the completion of Level 4 Certificate in Housing Practise and being nominated and awarded a community thank you award for his effort in delivering meals to those in need during the pandemic.

Alastair has also been a key player in the delivery of a new 'My Home' portal for tenants to become digitally

connected to the association and also in providing systems to help detect early arrears cases when dealing with tenants in receipt of Universal Credit.

Alastair's kind, calm manner and support to tenants I am sure has helped towards improving tenants trust in FPFA which has risen from 91% to 95% in our recent Tenant Satisfaction Survey.

Katie Stewart

Clyde Valley Group



Statement of support

From Temp to Senior - A Success Story'

Katie Stewart started her housing career as temporary Factoring Assistant in 2013 with Southside Housing Association with no previous experience of working in the housing sector. Katie successfully managed to turn an initial 2 week temporary contract into 6 months with the Factoring Team and then a full-time permanent position with Southside Housing Association within their Maintenance Team. During her time at Southside Housing, Katie tried to learn as much as possible between her experience in her job roles and through completing any further training that was available. Katie completed her CIH Level 4 Diploma in Housing Practice at City of Glasgow College which gave Katie the knowledge and understanding of housing that

cemented her decision to work towards a successful housing career.

After nearly 3 years with Southside Housing Association, Katie was offered the role of Factoring Assistant with Govanhill Housing Association. This role allowed Katie to significantly build on the 6 months of factoring experience that she had gained in her first role at Southside Housing and also allowed her to complete her Associate and Affiliate level qualifications with IRPM (The Institute of Residential Property Management) in 2017. Katie was heavily involved in the South West Govanhill Project that led to the acquisition of 49 newly factored closes in one year within the area and is very proud of her work with the team at Govanhill and her contribution to the improvements that have been made for the local residents.

In January 2018, Katie joined Clyde Valley Group as a Repairs Assistant. Within one year, Katie had progressed to the role of Repairs Coordinator. During these roles, Katie was involved in all aspects of Clyde Valley's repairs service and also dealt with aspects of asset management and new build defects. Katie completed two qualifications during this time - HNC Construction Management and City & Guilds Understanding Buildings and Managing Repairs. Katie always used her knowledge from her previous two roles to suggest improvements to processes which were always appreciated by her line manager and resulted in positive changes within the team.

In March 2020, Katie was promoted to Senior Factoring Officer at Clyde Valley Group. As her first role managing a team, this was a great achievement for Katie and an opportunity that she had been working towards throughout her entire housing career. Katie has implemented several significant changes to the factoring service that have improved the customer experience and made the processes within the team more efficient. Katie is very proud of her work within this role so far and has a lot of exciting plans for the future of the factoring service at Clyde Valley with the goal of providing an exceptional customer experience. Katie has a passion for making positive changes to communities and ensuring that customers have the best experience possible and she shows this through her work as Senior Factoring Officer.

In September 2021, Katie joined University of Glasgow as a Housing Studies student. Katie is grateful for the opportunity to expand her knowledge of housing and show her enthusiasm for the subject through her writing.

Katie is an excellent example of how the housing sector will welcome those with no previous knowledge of the subject and encourage them to fulfil their full potential. Starting off as temporary factoring assistant and working up to managing a factoring team is a great achievement and one that Katie is proud of. Katie has dedicated herself for nearly 9 years to becoming the best housing professional that she can be and is looking forward to seeing what else she can achieve during her housing career.

Outcomes and achievements

At Southside Housing, Katie maintained a 100% record for ensuring annual gas services were completed on time, whilst dealing with all other aspects of the Association's repairs service in her first permanent housing role.

At Govanhill Housing, Katie's work with her team led to the acquisition of 49 new factored closes in Govanhill, resulting in those properties being brought up to an acceptable standard for the residents. Katie also worked alongside Glasgow City Council to obtain grant funding for property owners to assist with the costs of large scale common repairs.

At Clyde Valley in the Repairs team, Katie successfully coordinated the LD2 upgrades for the Association's tenanted stock whilst juggling several other responsibilities relating to new build defects and reactive maintenance.

In her current role as Senior Factoring Officer, Katie has implemented all the changes on an improvement plan which involved making processes more efficient for the team and services better for the customer. During the second quarter that Katie was managing the team, they achieved the largest reduction in factoring arrears that Clyde Valley had seen for several years. Katie's success within this role has been recognised by her superiors.

Soni Pius

Falkirk Council



Statement of support

With the current housing demands that the Falkirk Council meets, it is only an added advantage to understand as frontline workers what we could do differently. The Demand Analysis project across the Corporate Housing services offers an opportunity to understand if the Council is meeting the demands of the tenants and assess the delegation of the various enquiries. Soni worked on this project as a graduate where she listened in on calls that came in through the Housing Services phone line to determine the percentage of enquiries handled over the phone and the percentage passed onto the relevant departments. As a graduate, she managed to identify key themes and trends that were later presented to the management for review and further research. Soni also mentioned a key point that enhanced our diversity practices, by highlighting how individuals with certain accents particularly (Indian, Pakistani, and Chinese) found it harder to communicate their issues over the phone. As an Indian herself, Soni was able to identify the issues that were communicated and took it upon herself to channel the needs of this margin of the community. Soni also highlighted another key issue with regards to Mental Health, having observed several calls that were made by tenants looking to have a chat. With Covid-19 and self-isolation being the norm, it is imperative to strengthen our Mental Health resources through sign posting to gently discern the tenant's requests.

The Embedding Excellence project is another key initiative taken by the Falkirk Council to improve user experience of the Housing Services. Soni was the graduate picked from the housing team as part of this project. Soni proved instrumental in identifying core themes within the feedback comments given by tenants for the 2020 Annual Tenant Survey. This allowed the team to form a framework for the focus groups with questions formulated around the core themes identified. The project is ongoing and Soni continues to be a key part of this throughout.

The Corporate Housing services are implementing a new software to replace Capita which is the current software, and this was done in stages through a series of workshop testing days. Soni is one among members of the staff who were part of this workshop and represents her team of housing officers for the Central hub at Falkirk. Soni will be termed as a superuser upon participation wherein she can provide feedback during the testing phase and additionally help her team members once the software is ready for implementation.

Soni's line manager, Lorraine Pate states that for a graduate who joined the Council during lockdown, Soni has come a long way in her journey as a Housing Operations graduate. Lorraine also stated that as a housing officer one has to be out and about which proves particularly challenging during Covid and still Soni has managed to not only learn and grow as a graduate but also progress into a full time Housing Officer; managing her patch and participating in additional projects, all while working towards her CIH qualifications. Soni's colleague, Sharon Kennedy who closely worked with her also states that Soni has brought her experiences from India and really implemented it here within the Council; she chooses to imbibe from every opportunity that presents itself. With a diverse background and experience in construction and fund raising; Soni shows us that it is never too late to make a career change if it is something you truly desire. Soni has conquered barriers and proved herself truly capable and she only hopes to continue this journey and inspire minority ethnic young people waiting to have their stories told.

Outcomes and achievements

The Demand Analysis project was successful in identifying key issues in terms of meeting the tenant's needs. These were compiled into a report and a presentation for the management to review and highlight for further research. The report and presentation were also shared with the entire team of housing assistants who handle the calls and delegate enquiries to the respective departments. The Embedding Excellence research is still ongoing, however the findings obtained through Soni's research will be used to create a framework for the tenant focus groups which will be conducted in October this year. It is anticipated that these focus

groups would be conducted either in person or online depending on the restrictions at the time. The data from the focus groups will allow us to outline plans for improvement within the Corporate Housing Services at the Council. The new North Gate software has completed its testing workshop phase and is looking to review the feedback obtained from the selected 'superusers' to tweak the software. A friendlier user interface is anticipated, and the software is expected to be rolled out in 2022, with another series of workshops to be conducted enlisting the help of the 'superusers' at the time.

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