

Community Investment Strategy



2019

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Introduction

Leeds and Yorkshire Housing Association (LYHA) is a social purpose business, with a rich heritage of providing decent, secure and affordable housing for the benefit of the community. But in the future, we want to do more than this. Our vision “to provide excellent quality homes and services that make a positive impact on people and communities” and strategic aim to “make a positive impact locally” define our purpose as a social landlord and informs our new Community Investment Strategy.



This strategy will be at the heart of everything we do, will help us to demonstrate our commitment to delivering social value, the development of local offers and ensure that our approach is fully integrated throughout the organisation. LYHA is committed to being sector leaders whereby we commit time and money to community investment activity and we truly embed this activity throughout the organisation and its culture.

Context

We are experiencing some of the biggest changes and challenges in the sector's history.

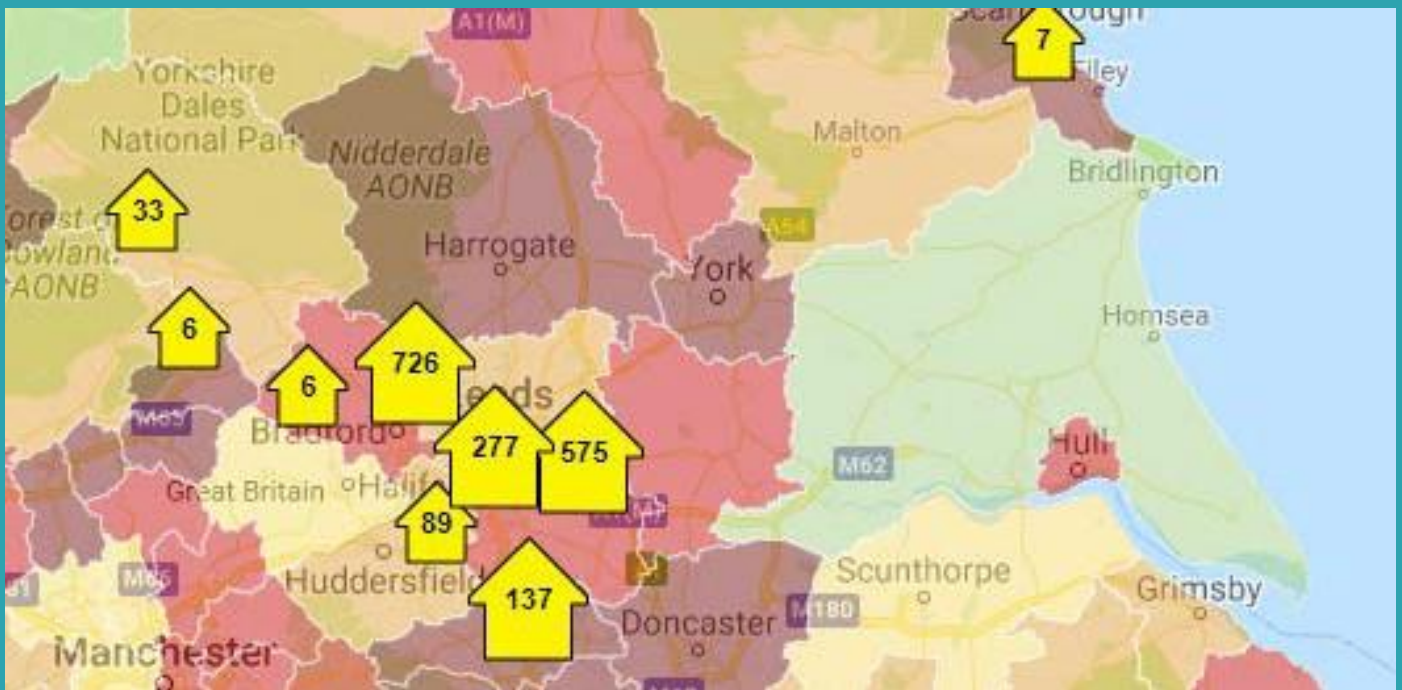
Alongside the substantial impacts of the financial and economic crisis, we are responding to the most radical changes to our operating environment for decades. Many of our tenants face continual financial stress as the result of labour market pressures and ongoing welfare reforms.

Community cohesion is being tested by Brexit and the polarisation of views.

Housing associations have always had a social purpose, above and beyond their role as landlords. SHOUT, the campaign which makes the case for social housing, states that every affordable home built generates an additional £108,000 in the economy and creates 2.3 jobs. Also, that housing associations invest £750 million annually in community initiatives, helping over eight million people. In short, community investment makes social, economic and business sense.

We recognise that social value is not limited to the community activities or 'added value' work in which we engage.

However, carefully targeted, well-managed community investment can produce a powerful multiplier effect that levers in other resources and makes every pound go further. Success for LYHA is about harnessing all available resources to maximise the production of social value.



Our Approach

In order to achieve our strategic objectives, we have adopted four principles that will guide how we develop priorities and deploy our resources:

A whole organisation approach

The development of this strategy involved consultation with a new steering group made up of customers and colleagues from across the organisation. This approach is at the heart of our corporate commitment to community investment. All colleagues have been involved in HACT workshops in the development of this strategy and will have opportunities to be involved in the design and delivery of community activities. Colleagues will also benefit from appropriate training opportunities, including the roll out of a project management model and guidance in order to ensure we design community investment activities that have clearly defined outcomes and delivery plans.

Building effective relationships

At LYHA we believe that by working together and drawing on the skills and expertise of people locally, we can develop effective interventions across our geography and sustain neighbourhoods where people want to live and work. Also, that by engaging with, involving and encouraging the influence of customers, this provides transparency and accountability. Wherever we work we will aim to maintain an environment that fosters respect, participation, innovation and the highest standards of professionalism.

Developing strategic partnerships

Our community investment offer is open to all our customers, but we will have a greater opportunity to invest strategically in neighbourhoods where we have a more concentrated presence. Where LYHA does not have the skills or resources, we will seek to work with partner organisations who will add value and work with us and communities to deliver results, attract resources and generate social value.

Intelligence based activity

We will aim to ensure our community investment priorities are strategic in their design. In order to do this, we will consider a range of indicators ensuring that we continue to focus in the right areas and resources are targeted where they will have the greatest impact. We will consider geographical context, local dynamics, demographics and diversity, including the needs of hard to reach groups. We are also prepared to be opportunist where appropriate and develop priorities utilising an understanding and appreciation of community assets, skills and strengths and how LYHA might support the growth of local initiatives.



LYHA's priorities will be driven by local circumstances but we will support initiatives that benefit communities in a range of ways, such as:

- Helping tenants to sustain their tenancies, particularly those impacted by UC
- Improved neighbourhood appearance
- Increased community safety
- Helping people to stay connected digitally and locally

LYHA is committed to investing in communities and has established an annual budget for community investment. This is used to fund projects and initiatives in the communities where we operate. Within this budget we provide funding opportunities for individuals, groups and organisations, via LYHA's Community Fund, a grant available to all LYHA customers to support them to establish a community project.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Effective measurement of the impact and return on investment is critical to assessing the extent to which need is being met and ensuring value for money. Most importantly, it provides the basis from which LYHA, as a values driven, social purpose business seeking both to provide homes and deliver positive social impact, can assess the extent to which we are succeeding in meeting our objectives.

LYHA will develop outcome targets, dependent on the projects that are initiated, as well as an annual target for social value generated by community investment activity (£s). This will require utilisation of the HACT Wellbeing Valuation approach, which enables us to access HACT's Social Value Bank, measure project success by the increases in customer's wellbeing and to produce impact valuation statements. LYHA will also have access to HACT's Value Insight tool that can be used to augment our own data and further enhance our understanding of our communities.




Review

Our intention is that this strategy will remain flexible and capable of adapting according to changing circumstances. Further work will be done to refine and develop our objectives and the theory of change required to achieve these.


Our Community Investment Steering Group, made up of customers and colleagues from across the business, will take a lead role in implementing this strategy, with a Community Investment Plan produced on an annual basis, championed by the Director of Customer Services and monitored by the Customer Experience Committee. This strategy will be reviewed after three years.



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