

Best practice guide

Social value: long-term benefits of ALMOs work

With their position firmly at the heart of their communities, arm's-length management organisations have a huge opportunity to make a positive difference to residents' lives above and beyond the decent homes they provide. Their improvement and maintenance work, their procurement programmes, their links with contractors, businesses, schools and colleges, their knowledge of their local economy and of course their relationship with their residents all allow them to make a real contribution to improving life prospects.

Given the tough economic times, and the likely impact of welfare reform, this work is set to be more vital than ever in the months and years to come. Yet, with the constraints on funding, there is also an increasing pressure on housing providers not only to expand their support for communities – but to demonstrate the value of the work they do.

In this latest best practice update, we look at how ALMOs are showing how the money spent in their communities pays off. In the second part, we highlight some of the latest innovations by ALMOs in supporting their residents into employment and training.

Demonstrating social value

Social value is a hot topic in the social housing sector. Housing associations, local authorities and ALMOs are starting to think about how they might best capture the value of the work they do. In some cases, this might mean looking at the 'payback' that investment in individual projects can bring. In others, it might mean analysing the wider benefits to residents, communities and the taxpayer of providing decent homes or other services. Measuring social value can help both in convincing decision-makers that investment can bring wider social benefits and in helping providers themselves make the right investment choices in these challenging economic times.

Work undertaken at two ALMOs gives a good insight into measuring social value. Nottingham City Homes embarked on a major project with Nottingham Business School and Nottingham Trent University as part of the Knowledge Transfer Partnerships programme to look at the impact of its decent homes programme. Its study, published last year, found that the **improvements to homes led to improved outcomes for residents' health and security**. There were also wider benefits for the community in employment, reduced carbon and better neighbourhoods. The analysis of social value showed every £1 spent on the decent homes programme generated £1.36 spending in Nottingham and £1.46 across the wider county. **Training programmes, including the apprenticeship programme, are estimated to have created at least £13m in social value** through increased earning potential for those involved. Other findings included a reduction to burglary of 42 per cent after the fitting on new secured by design windows compared to a 21 per cent fall across the city as a whole and a decrease in NHS treatment for respiratory illness, accidents and falls, saving an estimated £700,000 for the cases analysed in the report.

The full report and summary can be found via the following link:

http://www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk/improving_your_home/impact_study/default.aspx

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More recently, Nottingham City Homes has analysed the impact of using a local social enterprise to deliver improvement works. The research estimates that Broxtowe Education Skills and Training (BEST) generates £2.01 within the city for every £1 spent. BEST is a small construction work contractor set up to improve employment prospects on the Broxtowe estate which has successfully bid for work from the ALMO. Because the majority of people employed by BEST are local, much of the money spent with them stays in the local economy.

You can read the full report from the research here:

http://www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk/documents/modern_warm_secure/BEST_report_081012.pdf

Stockport Homes is another ALMO whose positive contribution to the wider local economy has been under the spotlight. The organisation was one of those involved in a study by the Northern Housing Consortium and Sheffield Hallam University on the economic impact of social housing providers in the north of England. The analysis of Stockport Homes' work found that £30m it spent had a £45m impact on the local economy. So how are these benefits seen? Among the pay-offs of the ALMO's work are:

- Hundreds of jobs supported indirectly through the supply chain on top of some 450 people directly employed
- Benefits and money advice, which last year helped to achieve £4.3m in extra benefits or reduced debts
- Mortgage repossession advice, which prevented 51 people from being made homeless last year and resulted in an estimated saving to the government of £800,000
- Twenty-four people helped into education and training and 19 into work through the employment service
- Funding advice for community groups which brought in £350,000 of grant funding and attracted a further £750,000 of match funding.

The full report *The Economic Impact of Housing Organisations on the North* and individual reports on case studies from Stockport Homes, Durham City Homes, Helena Partnerships, Liverpool Housing Trust, Leeds Federated, St Leger Homes of Doncaster and Wakefield and District Housing can be found on Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University, website:

<http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/reports>

HACT has also recently produced a report *The social impact of housing providers* setting out methodologies and metrics for measuring the social value and the social impact of housing providers – <http://www.hact.org.uk/social-impact-housing-providers-report>

Social value in action

While a detailed analysis of social value is a relatively new phenomenon, ALMOs have long recognised the importance of working in their communities to promote the local economy and **skills and employment opportunities**. Here are some of the most recent success stories.

Local spend

The money ALMOs spend has a direct impact on their communities and maximising this spend locally is important. Berneslai Homes, for example, purchases some 41% of its goods and services from local suppliers and subcontractors, so promoting growth and sustainable employment in its area. It is committed to offering work experience placements and apprenticeships across the organisation, giving opportunities to a wide range of local people. Its repairs and maintenance partnership with Barnsley Council and Kier – Barnsley Property Repairs and Improvement Partnership (PRIP) –

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employs one trainee or apprentice for every £1m in turnover and will take on 21 employees over the course of the contract. PRIP has agreed contracts with a local supplier for PVCU windows and doors. The supplier, Moorlands Plastics, provides training, skills and support to local young people, with employment opportunities for disabled people.

For more information contact: Stephen Davis, Director of Assets, Regeneration and Construction, on 01226 772732 or stephendavis@berneslaihomes.co.uk

Link to Berneslai Homes' Apprenticeship Scheme page: <http://www.berneslaihomes.co.uk/about-us/apprenticeship-scheme/>

Poole Housing Partnership is another example of how investment directly benefits the local economy. Its programme to install photo-voltaic systems to homes in its patch meant the creation of a distribution hub in Poole employing 10 people at the height of the programme with four still in full-time employment for maintenance and further installations. Jobs were advertised in the local "Echo" and the local Jobcentre Plus, which are the mainstream methods for ALMO's residents to find jobs.

For more information about the project contact:

Mike Harrison, Director of Technical Services, on 01202 264454 or M.Harrison@poole.gov.uk

Matt Wilkin, Communications Officer, on 01202 264436 or matt.wilkin@poole.gov.uk

Apprenticeship schemes

A number of ALMOs are running successful apprenticeships schemes, offering residents the opportunity to gain valuable skills.

- East North East Homes Leeds has 33 apprentices working across the organisation, from customer services to maintenance. Some 21 of the apprentices have been recruited from the ALMO's own patch. Each apprentice receives mentoring, which continues when they go into their permanent job. The scheme has already won accolades: ENEHL was voted Leeds' apprentice employer of the year in 2011.

For more information contact: Nick Lawrence, Marketing and Communications Manager, on 07891273468 or Nicholas.lawrence@abcl.org.uk

- South Tyneside Homes now has a total of 28 apprentices across the organisation – four on the office side and 24 in trades. Apprentices attend college or undertake work-based assessment to gain NVQ levels 2 and 3. The scheme has already won recognition, including an award from the TUC and apprentices have gained full-time roles with the ALMO, including two of the first business administration apprentices.

For more information contact: Gary Kirsop, Head of Property Services, on gary.kirsop@southtynesidehomes.org.uk

- Barnet Homes currently has 11 residents on its apprenticeship scheme. Four of its first crop of apprentices in 2011/12 managed to land permanent jobs at the organisation.
- Around one in three of Dale & Valley Homes' workforce came through its apprenticeship scheme. The ALMO currently has three office-based apprentices and is planning to take on another. The organisation has also worked with its contractor Gentoo to take on three more apprentices – two in decorating and another in general repairs – to work on bringing empty homes up to standard. The apprentices are trained at Bishop Auckland College (<http://www.bacoll.ac.uk/adults-a-part-time/apprenticeship-information.html>).

For more information contact: Dave Sanders, Director of Resources, on 01388 770915 or d.sanders@daleandvalleyhomes.co.uk

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Annual **National Apprenticeship Week** will take place from **11-15 March** this year. The week is designed to celebrate apprenticeships and the positive impact they have on individuals, businesses and the economy. For more information about the week visit the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) website <http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/Awards/Apprenticeship-Week-2013.aspx>.

Employment support

ALMOs are working with their residents in a range of ways to boost their confidence and support them into work. Job fairs are one key way of opening up opportunities for residents with both Welwyn Hatfield Community Housing Trust and Barnet Homes, for example, running recent successful events. Some of the other initiatives include:

- Homes for Haringey is running an ambitious programme called *Project 2020* (www.homesforharingey.org/project2020) to help young people get into work or training. The project, which involves a number of partner organisations, offers mentoring, one-to-one assessment, skills training and work experience. In January this year, the building which will serve as the 'hub' for the project, and which includes an IT suite, music studio and community room, was officially opened. Already 40 young people are registered on the programme and 32 Homes for Haringey staff have completed training to become mentors.

For more information contact: Chinyere Ugwu, Project Director, on 020 8489 5092 or chinyere.ugwu@homesforharingey.org

- Arts and fashion have a particular appeal for many young people. A partnership in Leeds has been harnessing the power of the arts to offer new opportunities for people in their area. The *Passion4Fashion* project, which has involved ALMOs Aire Valley Homes Leeds, West North West Homes Leeds and East North East Homes Leeds as well as housing associations and contractors, has staged a series of events including catwalk shows and fashion workshops. On the fashion side, budding designers have learned how to design and make their own clothes and a pop-up shop, and a social enterprise bringing together independent retailers have provided opportunities to sell their clothes. The initiative has also meant wider opportunities in the arts for young people: participants in a *Passion4Fashion* training project learned film-making, photography and social media skills as they documented the fashion events. The initial project has led to a partnership with Future Arts to provide multi-media apprenticeships.

For more information contact: Nick Lawrence, Marketing and Communications Manager, on 07891273468 or Nicholas.lawrence@abcl.org.uk

- Wolverhampton Homes' LEAP (learning, employment and achievement programme) offers support with pre-employment skills such as CV writing, interview skills, literacy and numeracy as well as an eight-week unpaid work experience scheme and its apprenticeship scheme (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggCKoU4O_9s). The ALMO has an innovative partnership with the Timken Vocational Training Centre, which works with disadvantaged and disabled people. As part of the partnership, Timken has been manufacturing fencing panels for Wolverhampton council homes. The scheme has provided work experience for some 33 residents with various special needs including 12 Primary Care Trust clients with a range of mental health issues.

For more information contact:

LEAP project (<http://www.wolverhamptonhomes.org.uk/aboutus/working-for-us/learning-employment-achievement-programme>) – Dawn Aston Adams, Project Manager, on 01902 550144 or Dawn.Aston-Adams@WolverhamptonHomes.org.uk

Timken project – Wilson Severn, Decen Homes Contract Manager, on 01902 552382 or Wilson.Severn@wolverhamptonhomes.org.uk

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- West North West Homes in Leeds has launched an employment outreach service offering dedicated support and guidance for residents. The service aims to help tenants, many of whom were disillusioned with the lack of support they had received from previous employment schemes, to get practical support as well as valuable work experience in areas such as customer service, housing management, caretaking and administration. Since the service was launched in July last year, it has placed 11 tenants and secured permanent jobs for three of them. A second wave of recruitment is due to begin in March.

For more information contact:

Junior Warden project – Glyn Beynon and the Community Engagement & Inclusion Team on 0113 2477204 or glyn.beynon@wnwhl.org.uk

West North West Works – Phil Rees, Project Manager, on 0113 247 7063 or phil.rees@wnwhl.org.uk

- Barnet Homes has set up dedicated work clubs – including one in the area with the highest unemployment in its patch. The three work clubs are part of a wider campaign run by the ALMO with a range of partners, which also includes a coaching programme designed to boost residents' confidence and an online learning facility. This year Barnet Homes is also launching a new training programme for all tenants and leaseholders offering a range of free courses including basic English, maths and IT and teaching assistant and housing qualifications. The programme is being run in partnership with local colleges and Jobcentre Plus.

For more information contact: Tim Blanc, New Support and Customer Services Manager, on 020 8359 4821 or tim.blanc@barnethomes.org

- Poole Housing Partnership is working with a number of partners to open a 'jobs hub' this spring in a local library, offering help for job-seeking residents. Volunteers will give residents advice about applying for jobs and improving their computer skills and they will also point people in the right direction for help with benefits, debt or housing issues.

For more information contact: Sylvia Webster, Neighbourhood Manager, on 01202 264421 or s.webster@poole.gov.uk

- East North East Homes Leeds offers a job-seeking skills programme, which aims to boost tenants' confidence by offering them work placements. The four-week placements are designed to improve participants' interview, CV writing and computer skills as well as offering them time in a workplace environment. Participants also have the opportunity to gain a BTEC level one qualification. To date, seven of the trainees have gained apprenticeships with the ALMO and three are in full-time employment. A further six have landed a full-time job in the private sector. The ALMO has also run taster programmes, giving tenants the chance to learn DIY skills including decorating, plumbing and bricklaying.

For more information contact: Nick Lawrence, Marketing and Communications Manager, on 07891273468 or Nicholas.lawrence@abcl.org.uk

- East Durham Homes has teamed up with East Durham Partnership and Durham County Credit Union to offer participants on a two-week employment skills course the opportunity to access a £500 low-cost loan from the credit union and a £200 voucher for furniture or white goods from the partnership. The ALMO says the first person to complete the course was not only able to get a range of furniture and white goods for their home, but to land temporary work after four years of unemployment.

For more information contact: Jayne Adamson, Senior Employment and Support Officer, on 0191 5185425 or jayne.adamson@eastdurhamhomes.co.uk

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- Homes in Sedgmoor is working with students at a local college to help them get ready for work. The partnership with Bridgwater College Academy will teach students how to put together a good CV, apply for a job and prepare for interviews. Students will be invited to an interview, with the winner landing a four-week placement at the ALMO.

For more information contact: Clive Sullivan, Communications and Engagement Officer, on 01278 435702 or clive.sullivan@homesinsedgemoor.org

- Newark and Sherwood Homes is working with community interest company GOALS UK to offer training and support for residents. The idea is that GOALS UK will build capacity within the ALMO so that staff can then offer support to residents with everything from confidence and self-esteem to job-seeking, skills and maintaining their tenancies. The ALMO already offers training opportunities for local people, particularly under its programme to build 52 new energy-efficient council homes.

For more information contact:

GOALS UK project – Julie Davidson, Tenancy and Estates Manager, on 01636 655542 or julie.davidson@nshomes.co.uk

Training opportunities – Peter Harley on 01636 655001 or peter.harley@nshomes.co.uk

- *Tenants into Work* is a joint initiative between Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing (KNH) and Jobcentre Plus aimed at helping customers find jobs. A team of outreach workers provide advice and support to unemployed KNH tenants across Kirklees. They visit customers in their own homes to complete an action plan and discuss barriers to gaining employment. To date, the team has helped dozens of tenants find work or access training.

For more information contact: Angela Holland, Team Manager, on 01484 223261 or angela.holland@knh.org.uk

For further information regarding NFA best practice guide or ALMO contact details, please contact Maya Rehill, NFA Office Manager, on 0845 4747008 or email maya.rehill@hqnetwork.co.uk