

VIVID Community Investment Strategy 2020-2025



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1. Introduction

Community investment is defined as the work that housing providers undertake with communities which is in addition to their responsibilities for providing housing. Community investment is designed to help create, support and/or develop more self-reliant communities which have a positive and equal relationship with local service providers and have a measure of control over their own neighbourhoods.

At VIVID our vision is **more homes, bright futures** and our community investment strategy explains how we intend to provide **bright futures** for all our customers.

We aspire to be more than just a provider of housing and to make investing in communities a key business priority. We want to create and support long term sustainable communities by providing **more homes** people want to live in and by improving the prospects and opportunities of residents living in those communities, **bright futures**. We want to support residents when they need it and provide a springboard to fulfil their potential through helping them to sustain their tenancies, providing money advice and benefits advice, skills and assistance to get jobs, health and wellbeing activity. We also want to work in partnership with local statutory and voluntary organisations to create thriving communities where residents feel proud to live.

2. Our Priorities

We want to work with as many customers as possible who need some support towards a **bright future** by empowering and developing them to be independent, able to sustain their tenancy, maximise their income, give and build on the skills and experience they already have. We will also be working in our communities with key partners to place shape and build capacity, with the aim of building individual and community resilience by reducing isolation, working with our customers of the future.

There are many ways we could help to improve the prospects and opportunities for individuals, and to help create communities people want to live in.

In order to focus our investment and direct our resources to where they are most needed, we have identified 2 priority areas for funding:

- Tenancy sustainment- supporting residents when they first move into our property and whenever they face a challenge be it financial, health, or the actions of others that may affect their tenancy. Building on our strong in-house provision we will continue to provide and look to expand our;
 - Money and benefits advice service - last year we collectively brought in extra income for our residents of £5.9m of which 3.65m was achieved by this team which deals with the more complex benefit cases and higher debts. With a long-term increase in benefit claims and debt likely from an economic downturn an increase in resource will be required to meet the increase demand for this service;
 - Employment, education, skills and training- with a current increase in unemployment which is likely to be long term given economic predictions, it will be important to give our residents the best chance of obtaining employment and thus pay their rent. The in-house team has been very successful in getting our residents into work particularly helping those furthest from the jobs market, but partnership working will be explored where appropriate;

- Digital inclusion - a successful partnership has been running for some time with volunteers and Hampshire library to help our residents learn digital skills. Our recent offer of 400 laptops to help school children of our residents, those socially isolating and new UC cases during the Covid 19 crisis, which were snapped up in a matter of weeks, has highlighted a previously unknown demand for this type of assistance for our residents ;
 - Tenancy support- our Homeless Prevention team deal with low level money advice and benefit cases and contributed over £1.5m to the overall figure of £5.9m of additional income to our residents. In addition, they provided tenancy support to over 500 residents without a financial outcome. Again, demand for this service is likely to increase in a long term economic downturn;
 - Support for our elderly customers- our older persons team contributed just under £750,000 to our overall total of £5.9m additional income, as well as over 250 non-financial outcomes to sustain customers tenancies. They play an important part in supporting our residents in extra care and sheltered schemes who will continue to need support and reassurance as Covid 19 is unlikely to be a short-term disease and they are the most vulnerable;
 - Wellbeing - our wellbeing service has been running successfully for just under 18 months providing mental health support and access to mental health services. Demand for the service has grown and the aftermath of covid 19 and an economic downturn will lead to even more calls on this service which needs to expand to meet that demand;
 - Welfare Fund- continue to provide financial support to our residents when they first move into our properties at points of crisis when they are unable to feed or heat their properties
- Place shaping- to mould and re-mould the places we operate in and develop, and to shape them so as to improve our residents perceptions of the communities they live in for the better in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies in the area. This will be a mixture of direct support for community groups and influencing the local agenda of our partners to improve the health, well-being and physical environment of our residents. Details of the type of things that could be included in this type of work are included in the Bright Futures- Place Shaping appendix.

3. Informing our Investment/Where we are now

VIVID has a strong base in Hampshire, being the biggest social landlord and with an ambitious house building programme to make that position stronger. We therefore have a unique opportunity to help shape the communities in Hampshire in conjunction with our current and future customers, statutory agencies and voluntary organisations.

As this strategy is being written we are in the middle of a coronavirus pandemic which has had an unprecedented impact on the UK economy already, but its full extent will not be known for some time. However, we have already seen our residents facing greater hardship with increases in unemployment, benefit claims and referrals to food banks and other community support. With Brexit widely expected to also have a detrimental effect on the UK economy, we can expect times to be difficult for our more vulnerable customers for the duration of this strategy.

The pandemic has also seen a rise in community activity as people pull together to help those most in need during difficult times. VIVID has helped stimulate that activity with generations donations to local foodbanks, community support grants and provision of IT devices. This has been extremely well received and provides an excellent opportunity to build upon.

VIVID has a strong in-house tenancy statement service providing wraparound support to help residents sustain their tenancy including money advice and benefits, employment and training, digital inclusion, a welfare fund and wellbeing services, as well as the more traditional tenancy support. Community development has tended to concentrate on section 106 requirements as part of our development programme. We have strong partnership links and play an active part in social inclusion partnerships and other such initiatives. Our response in the community as a result of the coronavirus has demonstrated the potential for us to have a much stronger influence on the wider communities in which we operate.

4. Our Approach

- We will work with new and existing communities - to prevent issues arising and challenge longstanding inequalities
- We will proactively deliver the community aspects of s.106 planning requirements and work with a wide range of local agencies to support community cohesion of and in new and existing communities.
- We recognise one size does not fit all – our approach will vary depending on the impacts and outcomes VIVID, our partners and the community wishes to achieve.
- We use wide range of internal and external evidence to identify communities needs and target resources where we can add value, deliver impact and outcomes
- We target and prioritise resources to where they are needed the most which may be defined by deprivation, impact upon communities of anti-social behaviour, difference in life chances and life outcomes etc.
- We take an asset-based approach to community investment to reduce duplication, use and build upon local resources
- We work with a wide range of partners including – police, health, community safety, local authorities, the voluntary and community sectors, to address the issues that matter to local communities and neighbourhoods
- We recognise that our role is flexible – we may lead, influence or fund depending on the assets available.
- We will have clear exit strategies at the start of each project or initiative – as our aim is to make our projects impactful and self-sustaining
- We provide support to build the skills and confidence of community members – building investment activities from grass roots up; to promote co-organisation, co design, co ownership and self-sustainment in the longer term
- We will be accessible and inclusive ensuring diversity and representativeness of customer, neighbourhoods and communities and we will work to ensure we reflect local character

5. Working In Partnership

Mention charitable trust/ building on in house provision

Partnership working is crucial, we can't change communities on our own. Depending on the community's needs, challenges and outcomes that they and partners wish to achieve, the agencies involved and our role within the partnership may vary.

We will work with in partnership with national, regional and local agencies, colleagues, communities and customers to deliver investment which results in meaningful impact and outcomes.

We work with a wide range of partners including – police, health, community safety, local authorities, the voluntary and community sectors, to address the issues that matter to local communities. Partners objectives may inform our activity.

We aim to do this by developing partnerships which are based upon:

- Mutual trust and confidence, shared community vision, goals and outcomes
- Recognition of the wide range of assets within communities and the need to involve, engage and include partners in the early stages
- Securing the skills, knowledge, expertise of partners such as local authorities, police, health, fire, education, skills, training etc to work together to invest in our customers and our communities
- Co-organisation, co-design and co-owned investment activities with customers and communities to promote self-sustainment

6. Our Key Outcomes

- Ensuring customers feel safe and secure in their neighbourhoods; VIVID customers will be no more likely to be a victim of crime than anyone else in the local authority area
- Customers will live in healthy environments and have access to initiatives which will work to reduce health inequalities including food and fuel poverty. Life expectancy and chance of poor health is the same as the best of the population in the local authority area
- A VIVID home and neighbourhood will be a matter of pride not of social stigma; our communities will be great places to live, our customers are proud to call their house a home
- Encouraging social enterprise: facilitating opportunities for communities to grow, learn and earn
- Enabling customers to organise and take action together to address the things that matter to them in their households, homes, communities and neighbourhoods.
- Preventing customers being excluded from digital technologies and the opportunities these bring
- Customers will be able to have their say, get involved to codesign and hold VIVID to account
- Ensuring our community centres are modern, vibrant community hubs fit for a wide range of community activity and local delivery: our community centres are high quality, safe, value for money venues for hire.

7. Reporting our Impact

We will seek to use a range of methods which demonstrate outcomes, outputs, impact and show social return on investment.

Our community investment activity will be outcome based.

Depending on the specified outcome, we will measure, record and report our outputs and impacts, through all or any of the following ways:

- Using social return on investment tools and calculations
- Impact on local indicators including indices of multiple deprivation, fear of crime, health inequalities
- Investment attracted from alternative sources including gift in kind, national funding
- Customer satisfaction levels within local neighbourhoods
- Partner feedback
- Customer case studies
- Sustainability beyond our involvement

Outcome, output and impact measures will be specified at the start of any activity, monitored throughout and reported on a regular basis and no less than once a year.