



Supporting Communities Strategy  
2018-2021

## 1. Introduction

In 2011, West of Scotland Housing Association (WSHA) developed a strategy to support Sustainable Communities and committed a level of resources to ensure successful delivery of this within the communities in which we operate.

During the period 2012-2017 WSHA's charitable subsidiary Willowacre Trust supported the delivery of services and projects which sought to improve the lives of WSHA tenants and communities. The original Sustainable Communities Strategy was scheduled for full review in 2017 and the new strategy outlines the updated priorities for WSHA and Willowacre Trust.

WSHA explicitly commits to taking action to develop a strong social and economic infrastructure within our communities. Our Community Objective is:

**“Be proactive in delivering services and projects which go beyond housing to impact on the lives of our tenants and sustain tenancies”**

## 2. What is the Supporting Communities Strategy?

The Purpose of this strategy for WSHA and Willowacre Trust is to set out the direction of travel to deliver the strategy successfully. The strategy is subject to review by 2021 and will be updated in line with the internal and external operating environment but its purpose will always be about achieving the priorities identified by our tenants.

## 3. Defining Our Communities

WSHA's Supporting Communities Strategy (2018) sets out the priorities for both WSHA and Willowacre Trust. The new strategy will assist WSHA and Willowacre Trust to build on the success of the previous sustainable communities' strategy. The Supporting Communities strategy will support community cohesion by creating an environment where our tenants feel a sense of belonging, where tenants from diverse backgrounds are welcomed and where opportunities are available to everyone.

The Strategy seeks to define what the organisation views as a cohesive and thriving community this definition is detailed below.

**A community to us is more than just building and managing affordable homes; it is about creating safe, socially inclusive, thriving, vibrant communities where tenants want to live. To us it is about ensuring that our tenants have access to training and employment opportunities, where tenants are supported to maximise their income, where they have improved health and wellbeing and feel good about their life.**

## 4. Business Case

RSL's are facing the most significant threat in a generation in terms of tenants being unable to sustain their tenancies due to the implications of welfare reform.

Housing policy has demonstrated that registered social landlords, by their very nature are designed to meet the housing needs of those members of society who are deemed most in need of housing. The organisation's core business has therefore focused on the provision of housing and estate management and property services functions striving to increase performance levels.

During the period from 2009 to date there has been a significant political change this has included multiple referendums and changes within UK, Scottish and local government levels. Each successive government continues to include manifesto promises to increase the future investment in social housing. However, Inside Housing confirms that in Scotland "The programme of government comes on the back of an existing commitment to build 50,000 new affordable homes by 2021, with 35,000 available for social rent" (Inside Housing, 2017).

As legislation has evolved over the last decade this has placed additional burdens on the association in terms ensuring that it meets the requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulator and the subsequent changing housing and social policy. The key challenges have included increasing performance levels to ensure a presence in the upper performance quartile, robust governance structures, increasing value for money, ensuring benchmarking within existing housing peer group, increasing customer satisfaction levels, lowering complaint levels, changing structures to address welfare reform and increasing the financial viability of the organisation. The continuation of public sector austerity measures also continues to place additional pressure on the frontline delivery of services.

In terms of WSHA moving forward there will be increased scrutiny on the activities of the organisation and there is a clear need to demonstrate the value of non-core additional support service in terms of any future investment. The moral dilemma in terms of supporting tenancy sustainment and going beyond housing supports the need for the organisation to diversify.

This is happening against a backdrop of increased local and national government austerity measures and in particular welfare reform. This includes the roll out of universal credit, welfare benefit caps, bedroom tax, local housing allowance caps and additional exclusions. This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of tenants who require support from both WSHA and Willowacre Trust to sustain their tenancy.

Tenant's needs are becoming increasingly complex and require multiple interventions and support. This is demonstrated by information collated from a community survey which indicates that "45% of our tenants think that their health is only fair or poor". (WSHA, 2017)

This includes emotional or mental health issues, drug or alcohol dependency, offending behaviour, poor educational attainment, worklessness and complex family issues. Supporting increased numbers of tenants with complex needs will continue to be a challenge for the organisation.

Oxfam’s Humankind index cites that one of the most important assets in people’s lives is “An affordable, decent and safe home as well as good physical and mental health” (Oxfam, 2013)

Therefore in order to address these complex issues and meet the needs of our tenants the organisation will need to ensure that it has a continued commitment non core community housing support.

## 5. Developing Our Strategy

The Supporting Communities Strategy follows on from our large scale research which provides the organisation with a tenant based demographic profile including household composition, health and wellbeing status, financial inclusion status, employment status, satisfaction with services, care and support needs, and community and estate management service needs.

Research was undertaken in 2017 to complete a comprehensive community and social need survey with 2,067 WSHA tenants. The research enabled WSHA and Willowacre Trust to understand tenant’s needs and aspirations and to place their needs at the heart of future service delivery.

From the results of this survey we have identified that we operate in 65 individual delivery areas, twenty two of these communities have less than 10 homes and the remaining 43 communities have between 10 and 461 homes.

In terms of areas of multiple deprivation 55% of West of Scotland Housing Association communities are represented in the bottom 15% most deprived areas within the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

The Table 1 below provides the household composition for those tenants who participated in the survey.

<b>Table 1: Household Composition:</b>		
<b>Base: All respondents, n=2067</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Single Person</b>	<b>724</b>	<b>35.0%</b>
<b>Single Older Person</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>21.6%</b>
<b>Multiple adults without children</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>19.3%</b>
<b>Lone Parents</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>14.0%</b>
<b>Multiple adults with children</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>5.7%</b>

The Table 2 below provides the geographical split by local authority for those tenants who participated in the survey.

<b>Table 2: Local Authority</b>		
<b>Base: All respondents, n=2067</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>East Ayrshire Council</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>2.7%</b>
<b>South Lanarkshire Council</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>24.3%</b>
<b>Glasgow City Council</b>	<b>965</b>	<b>46.7%</b>
<b>East Dunbartonshire Council</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0.1%</b>
<b>South Ayrshire Council</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>8.9%</b>
<b>North Ayrshire Council</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>2.0%</b>
<b>North Lanarkshire Council</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>15.3%</b>

Table 3 below provides snapshot examples of the type of social issues highlighted by tenants in our survey. This evidences the increased role for RSL's in terms of providing wider role support services.

<b>Table 3: What types of services or support do you think would assist you or your family or others within your community?</b>								
	<b>Ayr</b>	<b>Camlachie</b>	<b>Cumbernauld</b>	<b>Uddingston</b>	<b>Springburn</b>	<b>Broomhouse</b>	<b>Hamilton</b>	<b>Fernhill</b>
<b>Types of Service</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>85</b>
Family/parent support	6%	17%	14%	7%	3%	4%	3%	1%
Family Programmes	9%	23%	19%	12%	8%	9%	17%	2%
Support for older people	13%	22%	24%	12%	9%	11%	7%	2%
Employment support	10%	20%	18%	13%	6%	8%	7%	2%
Health & Wellbeing Support	9%	19%	18%	12%	4%	6%	3%	2%
Money or Energy Advice/Support	11%	22%	23%	13%	15%	8%	5%	2%
Welfare benefit Advice	15%	21%	23%	15%	19%	6%	5%	2%
Tenancy Support	14%	19%	21%	12%	10%	5%	8%	2%
Emotional or mental Health support	8%	19%	19%	14%	7%	5%	5%	2%

The overall strategy has been informed by the information generated from the survey in terms of meeting our tenant's needs.

### **Tenants Needs Summary**

The majority of tenants (98%) stated their first or preferred language was English. In terms of digital inclusion 7 in 10 tenants (66%) said they had internet access. However 30% of those indicating that they had access were related to mobile access only when credit was available.

1 in 5 tenants (20%) report that their home had aids or adaptations to help them or others in their household live independently. 60% of tenants indicated that they did not have home contents insurance.

Tenants indicated that the following services were supportive of them or their family Summer Programmes (17%), dedicated community spaces, hubs or community gardens (16%), Welfare Rights Advice (15%), support for older people (14%) Money or Energy advice (14%) and Handy Person Services (10%)

The proportion of respondents who felt their health was good or very good (55%) is significantly lower than the Scottish Average of 74%. Subsequently the proportion of tenants stating their health was poor or very poor (44%) is significantly higher than the Scottish Average (8%).

3 in 10 Tenants (27%) indicated that they had a mobility or physical disability, 13% had a mental health condition and 9% had some form of heart disease or condition

Analysis by age revealed that older respondents were more likely to be particularly worried about poor health (77%) and mobility (46%), whilst younger respondents (those aged 16-34) were more likely to be worried about money (41%) and supporting their family (33%).

Older respondents (those aged 65 and over) were more likely to state they were worried about loneliness (20%) and those aged 55-64 were the most likely to be worried about isolation (13%).

In terms of household composition single older people were more likely to worry about paying for their utilities (51%) than two parent families (32%); Single adults aged 16-64 were more likely to worry about relying on welfare benefits (45%) than single older people (13%); Single adults were more likely to worry about low income (43%) rather than single older people (27%).

Tenants with children are significantly more likely to worry about supporting their family with, 49% of lone parent families and 47% of two parent families than single adult households (4%). Tenants were then asked how much money they have left to live on once they have paid all of their bills. Half of respondents (50%) said they did not know whilst 3% refused to give a response. Just under half (48%) of those who answered said they had more than £80 a week to live on, however 45% of tenants said they only had between £0-£60 to .

## 6. Aims & Objectives 2018-2021



## 7. Community Engagement

It is important that WSHA and Willowacre Trust engages with and listens to the communities which we operate in. We currently work with and support tenant advisory groups, tenant members on our Board, use tenant surveys, community groups, community councils and individual feedback from tenants to inform our services. Our aim is to ensure full participation and engagement from our communities when implementing any services or projects resulting from the Supporting Communities Strategy.

## 8. Collaborative Working

There are a number of changes that WSHA and Willowacre Trust can achieve by acting as the conduit to develop initiatives that meet our tenant's needs. An integrated enabling approach to the development of our communities is vital. The delivery of this strategy will not be achieved without collaborative working both internally and externally. Stakeholder engagement is a key focus for everyone in the organisation to ensure effective and successful partnerships working.

### **Internal: To have successful internal collaborative working we need:**

Open and transparent communication networks within WSHA and Willowacre Trust. Respect for new ideas and a willingness to listen. Encourage staff where appropriate to research new ideas and present to SMT/CMT. Ensure open mindedness and do not dismiss ideas that may not have worked in the past. Encourage innovative ways of working.

### **External: To have successful external collaborative working we need:**

Our partnership working supports collaborative advantage in order to develop and implement innovative ideas and meet the aspirations of our tenants. We should work with public, private and third sector partners to bring "added value" to the work we do.

## 9. Priorities 2018-2021

The information from the survey has been utilised to identify service provision gaps, make improvements to existing services and highlight where additional support is required in relation to tenancy sustainment.

Over the next 3 years WSHA and Willowacre Trust will focus on supporting the delivery of the Supporting Communities Strategic Priorities. This includes but is not limited to the following priorities. **Priority Level 1 (High), Level 2 (Medium), Level 3 (Low)**

### **9a. Tackling Poverty**

Our survey results identified the following key issues in relation to the impact of poverty on our tenants.

37% of tenants had home contents insurance; however 60% of tenants indicated that they had no home contents insurance.

46% of tenants indicated that their sole source of household income is from welfare benefits. An additional 27% indicated that some of their household income is from welfare benefits.



The survey identified the range of welfare benefits for those living within the household this highlighted that:

- 65% of households received **Housing Benefit**;
- 58% received **Council Tax benefit**;
- 24% received the **State Pension**;
- 15% received **Child Tax Credit**;
- 15% received **Disability Living Allowance**

Tenants indicated how much they spent on their utilities, including gas and electricity per week with 1 in 5 stating they did not know. 54% indicated that they spent £20-£30 a week on their fuel bills, 19% stated that they spent £0-£20 and 20% stated that they spent £30-£40. 8% stated that they spent more than £40 a week on gas and electricity.

Tenants were asked to indicate what they struggled to pay for table 4 below provides a breakdown of the items indicated.

	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Bills - Gas/Elect	220	88.4%
Food	150	60.2%
Clothing - Me	104	41.8%
Bills - Council Tax	95	38.2%
Bills - TV Licence	86	34.5%
Bills - Rent	70	28.1%
Clothing - Children	61	24.5%
Debts - Non Priority	54	21.7%
Activities - Me	50	20.1%
Transport	46	18.5%
Insurance	43	17.3%
Activities – Children	29	11.6%

Townsend's (1979) definition of poverty highlights that poverty is about a lack of resources. Poor people lack capital (both income and wealth). But they can also be resource-poor in other ways: they may lack human capital (such as education or good health), or social capital (such as positive and trustful communities). Yet it is money that, to a large extent, determines whether people are able to compensate for other shortfalls in their lives. That is why a lack of adequate financial resources is the decisive characteristic of poverty.

Therefore individuals, families and groups within communities can be said to be in poverty when they lack resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong. The issue of poverty is now intrinsically linked with welfare reform and the changes impacting on our tenants

### Tackling Poverty Priorities

The table 5 below details the areas which we will focus on to tackle poverty for our tenants and communities.

<b>Table 5: Theme: (Tackling Poverty)</b>		
<b>Project Description</b>	<b>Priority Level</b>	<b>Implementation Date</b>
Support Thematic Tenancy Sustainment Initiatives	1	By 2019
Initiatives preventing or eradicating homelessness	1	By 2019
Provide additional support to address Fuel Poverty	2	By 2020
Create additional partnerships to address food poverty	2	By 2020
Support tenants experiencing in work poverty	3	By 2021
Create Digital Inclusion Support Project	1	By 2019

### 9b. Employment, Training and Education

3 in ten tenants stated they were in full or part time employment, 6% were unemployed, 20% were not working due to illness or disability, 4% were at home looking after the family or home and 32% were retired.

Fewer than 4 in 10 tenants (38%) stated that they or someone in their household is in paid employment. Whilst it would be expected that those aged 65 and over were not in paid employment, just over 4 in 10 of those aged 16-34 years were in workless households (44%). Tenants living alone were more likely to be workless households (64%) than households with multiple adults with children (26%).

The table 6 below provides a breakdown of the employment status for those tenants who participated in the survey.

<b>Table 6: Which of the following best describes your present employment position?</b>		
<b>Base: All who responded, n=2023</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Self-employed	29	1.4%
Full-time employed (30 hours per week or more)	428	21.2%
Part-time employed (between 16 and 29 hours per week)	171	8.5%
Part-time employed (up to 16 hours per week)	48	2.4%
In full-time education	21	1.0%
In training programme	6	0.3%
Unemployed and seeking work	125	6.2%
Retired	651	32.2%
Not working due to ill health	398	19.7%
Looking after family	84	4.2%
Full time carer	42	2.1%
Other not working and not seeking work	20	1.0%

Employability is about obtaining a job. Evidence suggests that education and training play a significant role in determining the extent of unemployment. There is strong evidence to suggest that low literacy and numeracy abilities are associated with long-term unemployment. Similarly, poor or low level academic qualifications are associated with an increased risk of long term unemployment.

The adverse impact of a lack of qualifications appears to be increasing and this is reflective of the number of unskilled jobs in the labour market. A further element of employability relates to acquiring those skills and attitudes that will assist people to find work. Education and training promote social mobility in its widest sense.

## Employment Training and Education Priorities

The table 7 below details the areas which we will focus on to address employment, education and training challenges for our tenants and communities.

Table 7: Theme: (Employment , Education and Training)		
Project Description	Priority Level	Implementation Date
Create Asset-Based Employability Training Project	1	By 2019
Create Digital Inclusion Support Project	1	By 2019
Partnership working with Employability Services	2	By 2020
Maximise Community benefit clauses for employment	1	By 2019
Support Community Jobs Initiatives	2	By 2020
Support School Placement Programme	2	By 2020

### 9c. Health and Wellbeing

55% of tenants indicated that their health was very good or good, compared to 21% who stated that their health was fair and 24% who said it was poor or very poor. This equates to 45% of tenants who view their health as not good.

The proportion of tenants who felt their health was good or very good is significantly lower than the Scottish Average of 74%, subsequently the proportion of tenants stating their health was poor or very poor is significantly higher than the Scottish Average (8%).

Analysis by age revealed that as age increases the likelihood of tenants stating their health was very good or good decreases, for example 83% of respondents aged 16-34 years compared to 35% of those aged 65 and over.

Understandably tenants with a long term illness or disability were less likely to state their health was very good or good, for example 91% of those with no disability compared to just 10% of those with 3 or more health problems.

Economically active (employed) tenants are significantly more likely to think of their health as very good or good (88%) than economically inactive tenants (38%).

In terms of life satisfaction, tenants who said they were satisfied with their life as a whole (rated 7 or above) were significantly more likely to state their health was very good or good (65%) than respondents who rated their overall life satisfaction between 0 and 3 (15%).

Those who were in contact with their relatives, friends or neighbours on most days were the most likely to be in very good or good health (58%). On the other hand tenants who said they never have contact with their relatives, friends or neighbours were the most likely to say their health was very poor or poor (46%).

Tenants were asked if they (or any member of their household) had a long term illness or disability which limits their daily activities. (53%) stated they had no health problems or disabilities. However 49% of tenants indicated that they or someone in the household did have a long terms illness. This included 3 in 10 tenants (27%) with mobility or physical disability, 13% with a mental health issues and 9% with heart disease or other condition.

Tenants were asked to rate on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is extremely dissatisfied and 10 is extremely satisfied, how satisfied they were with their life. Eight in ten tenants (80%) rated life satisfaction as a 7 or above, 18% gave this a rating of between 4 and 6 and 2% rated life satisfaction a rating of between 0 and 3.

Analysis by age revealed that those aged 55-64 years were more likely to worry about their health or wellbeing at least sometimes (52%) than tenants aged 16-34 (28%). Further analysis revealed that males aged 16-34 years were the least likely to worry about their health or wellbeing (23%); whilst female respondents aged 55-64 were the most likely (56%).

Tenants with a long term illness or disability were significantly more likely to worry about their health or wellbeing at least sometimes (69%) than tenants with no health problems (22%). Those tenants with multiple health issues were more likely to worry about their health or wellbeing at least sometimes (75%) than those coping with one condition (65%).

8 in 10 tenants stated that they require care and support with a long term health issue or disability (77%). Tenants with one health issue were more likely to require care and support (44%) than those with 3 or more health issues (15%). There are strong links between poverty, poor health and wellbeing. Progress has been made in the last 20 years however inequality means that tenants still face serious challenges in the future.

### Health and Wellbeing Priorities

The table 8 below details the areas which we will focus on to address Health and Wellbeing issues for our tenants and communities.

Table 8:Theme: (Health and Wellbeing)		
Project Description	Priority Level	Implementation Date
Develop Life Skills Toolkit for New & Existing Tenants	1	By 2019
Support Community Health Champions	2	By 2020
Create Cooking Skills & Healthy Eating Initiatives	2	By 2020
Support Older Tenants with Issues (Dementia)	1	By 2019
Work in partnership to offer health & wellbeing support for mental & Addiction issues	2	By 2020
Support Befriending Programmes	3	By 2021

## 9d. Community Support

Tenants were then asked if they were aware of or had used any community and support services provided by WSHA and Willowacre Trust. 1 in 4 tenants (25%) said they were unaware of any of the support services provided. Where tenants were aware, awareness was highest in terms of, money advice (58%), Welfare rights (54%), energy advice (40%), handy person services (30%) and Food Parcels (20%). Just over 3 in 10 respondents said they had used the services provided by the Association (31%). The services most used or attended were, Welfare rights (15%), money & Energy advice (15%) and handy person services (7%).

Community support strengthens society by prioritising the actions of communities, and their perspectives in the development of social, economic and environmental services. This approach supports the empowerment of local communities, including geographical communities, communities of interest and communities organised around specific themes. It strengthens the capacity of tenants as active citizens through their community groups, organisations and networks; it plays a crucial role in supporting active democratic life by promoting the voice of disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.

### Community Support Priorities

The table 9 below details the areas which we will focus on to address community support issues for our tenants and communities.

Table 9: Theme: (Community Support)		
Project Description	Priority Level	Implementation Date
Provide Family Support – childcare, school clubs	2	By 2020
Support Activities for young people – Skills development	2	By 2020
Support Activities for older people – Pen Pal scheme	1	By 2019
Support to Tenant and community groups	1	By 2019
Create ‘Fab Pad’ – upcycling of old furniture, decorating	2	By 2020
Link in with schools and colleges (Saltire Awards, Duke of Edinburgh) to help develop literacy, numeracy and Digital Inclusion.	3	By 2021

## 9e. Community Development/Assets

The community support tenants felt would be of greatest assistance were children and young people’s Summer Programmes (17%), dedicated community spaces, hubs or community gardens (16%), learning programmes (11.4%) and employment programmes (11.4%).

The social principles of community development cover human rights, social inclusion, equality and respect for diversity; and a specific skills and knowledge base.

Community development will support tenants to recognise and develop their ability and potential and organise themselves to respond to specific issues and needs which they identify. This can support strong communities to use community assets and encourage social justice which improves the quality of community life. Community capacity building (CCB) is one of the ‘twin pillars’ of community development. (SCDC, 2017)

The other pillar is community engagement. Most of the beneficial changes in communities come via community engagement, when communities can respond to opportunities, or deal with issues, by bringing them to the attention of organisations like WSHA and Willowacre Trust who have the ability to respond.

Community engagement cannot take place unless a community has the capacity and the recognition required to engage in discussions. The most vulnerable tenants and communities are often the ones with the least capacity to engage. Communities with capacity are confident, organised, cohesive and influential, and mean that community members are likely to enjoy a better quality of life.

### Community Development/Asset Priorities

The table 10 below details the areas which we will focus on to address community support issues for our tenants and communities.

<b>Table 10:Theme: (Community Development/ Assets)</b>		
<b>Project Description</b>	<b>Priority Level</b>	<b>Implementation Date</b>
Create local hubs in Local Libraries, Community Services, Partnerships with Local Groups,	1	By 2019
Community Janitor or Gardening Services	2	By 2020
Create Additional Community Centre	3	TBA
Create Social Enterprise for Upcycling/Reuse	3	TBA
Create small local community hubs	2	By 2020

## 10. Monitoring and Review

The progress of our strategy will be monitored on a regular basis by providing reports to WSHA and Willowacre Trust Boards and to our tenants. The key mechanisms for monitoring will include:

- Collation of service delivery data
- Feedback from tenants on service quality and delivery, implementing any changes on the basis of feedback
- Identifying any successes and additional areas of development
- Regular updates to TAG about progress on the annual action plan and any issues
- Monitoring of key performance indicators
- The Strategy will be reviewed and updated in line with emerging priorities in 2020

## 11. Summary and Conclusion

The review of the strategy comes at a good time for WSHA and Willowacre Trust with the disaggregation from Gentoo complete. In conclusion there is little doubt that there will be significant challenges and opportunities for the organisation in future in terms of the implementation of this strategy. The approach that the organisation takes in terms of the implementation is vital to delivering the strategic aims by 2020.

Therefore the approach endorsed by the organisation must take cognisance of the impact of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the role of social landlords in tackling poverty. This impact is set against a backdrop of a housing portfolio which encompasses a range of property types, including, traditional sandstone tenement flats, new and purpose built flats, four in a blocks, semi-detached and detached houses and cottages. Properties are dispersed across six local authority areas throughout Scotland (North, South and East Ayrshire, Glasgow City and North and South Lanarkshire).

There is a moral obligation placed on social housing organisations to provide support services to tenants which ultimately impacts on tenancy sustainment. A Joseph Rowntree report cites 'there is evidence of positive impacts from individual schemes, although the total impact is difficult' (Tunstall et al., 2013).

### Further information

For further information about the Supporting Communities Strategy:

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