



Community Impact 2016/17

Because good homes
make everything possible



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This publication highlights what we do beyond bricks and mortar to improve the lives of our residents and make a positive impact in the neighbourhoods where we work.



We believe good homes make everything possible.

► About us

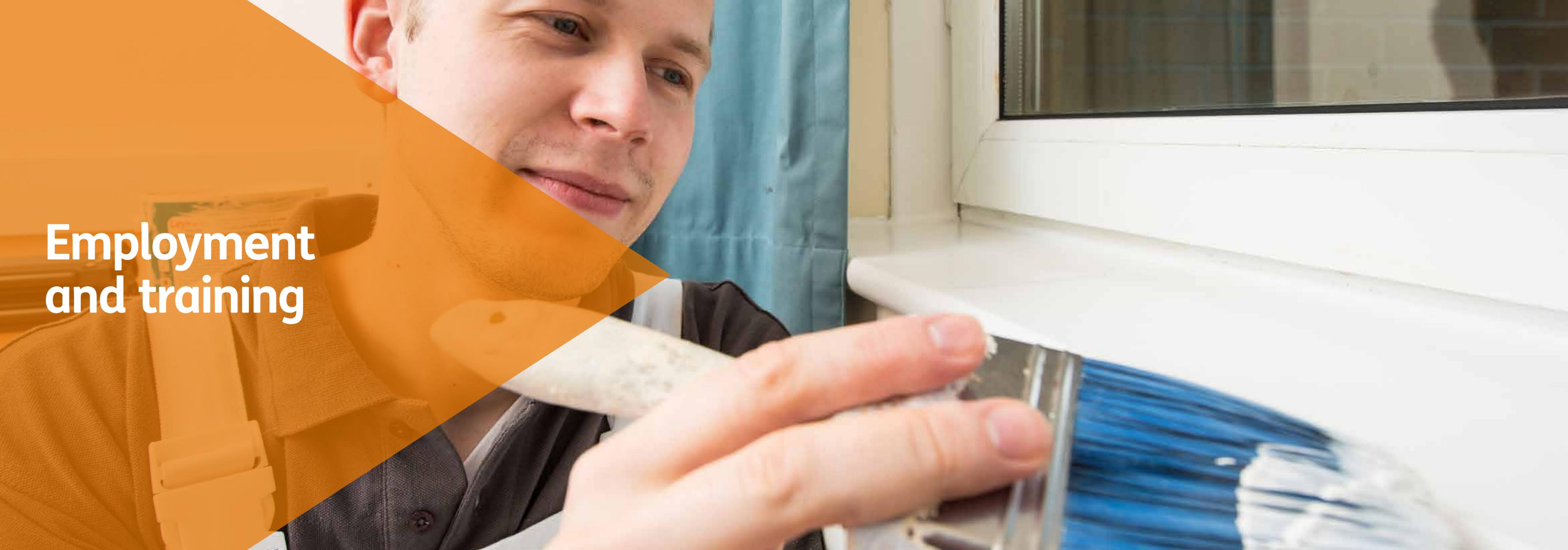
Network Homes is an award-winning housing association with over 40 years' experience of providing affordable homes. We own and manage 20,000 properties across London and the South East and aim to develop 1,000 new homes a year.

Building and managing homes is what we do and we take pride in doing it well. But that's not the whole story. At Network Homes, we believe in giving back. We do this by investing in our communities, by contributing to sustainable initiatives, and by adding community value to everything we do.

Our mission is to open up possibilities for as many people as we can by continuing to grow a forward-thinking, service-driven and financially strong organisation that builds, sells, rents and manages good homes in thriving communities.



Our social purpose underpins everything we do, so all our profits are re-invested back into building high quality homes and providing first class services to our residents.



Employment and training

► Employment and training

At Network Homes we view employment and training as key to developing the communities we work in. We provide our residents with a variety of opportunities through our Worksmart programme which supports them to achieve their goals. This could be looking for a job, thinking of a career change or exploring training opportunities.

Worksmart provides:

- free one-to-one advice and guidance
- employment and training advice
- training to improve skills
- information on job opportunities
- one-to-one support to create a tailored CV and covering letter
- assistance with interview preparation and techniques.

We also provide year round support to residents by holding regular employment and training advice sessions as well as access to a free online recruitment tool, MyWorkSearch. This brings together thousands of jobs from major jobsites and can be used with the Job Centre's Universal Job Match tool to tailor job searches to individual needs.

► Key achievements in 2016/17:





“Thanks to the support from the Worksmart programme, I hope this is the first step to one day running my own nursery or day care centre.”

Joyce Nantumbwe, Resident

▶ Meet Joyce

Joyce Nantumbwe has been a Network Homes resident in Hertford since 2012. Worksmart gave her the confidence to return to work after having children and set up her own business.

Joyce had a session with Worksmart advisor Sarah and was sent on a CV writing workshop. She realised she had the experience and qualifications she needed to run her own child-minding service. Sarah and her colleagues supported Joyce in her new venture, giving her the tools she needed to promote her services and sourcing a grant for a triple buggy to take the children to the park – one of the features Joyce is particularly proud of.

Joyce said:

“I knew I wanted to be a child-minder and I did all the necessary training a year ago, but I needed to get my CV up to date. After speaking with Sarah I realised I wanted to be my own boss, but I was lacking in confidence. They helped me to design a parents’ brochure and organised some printing to save me money.

“Sarah has been amazing; she has boosted my confidence and helped me to apply for a grant towards the cost of setting up my business. Thanks to the support from the Worksmart programme, I hope this is the first step to one day running my own nursery or day care centre.”

Financial inclusion



► Financial inclusion

Many of our residents are on a low and restricted income and struggle to make ends meet. Whether they are parents working in low paid jobs, young people struggling to find work or elderly residents dependent on their pension, our Welfare Advice Team is there to help. The team has been in place since 2012, supporting residents to maximise their income by offering income advice, support and access to benefits.

Welfare advice

This year we introduced new tools and processes to help residents sustain their tenancies. This included EntitledTo, an affordability calculator, which enables staff to work with residents to ensure they can pay rent, save money on bills and claim any benefits they are entitled to. We also made sure that all residents affected by the revised Benefit Cap were contacted and offered advice and assistance.

► Key achievements in 2016/17:





► Money management

Managing money wisely is important to us all but when your income is limited it's vital. Not everyone has the skills to budget so we piloted an initiative in one area to offer money management training for our residents.

The course, run by Brent Community Law Centre, aimed to help people manage their money better and develop their budgeting skills. It was a great success. Based on feedback from participants we are now looking to extend the initiative to other areas in London and Hertfordshire, offering courses in local hubs and providing incentives for residents to attend.

► Bedroom tax

In November 2016 we launched a campaign to encourage under-occupiers to move to smaller properties. The aim is to save our residents money – they no longer pay the bedroom tax - and provide homes for larger families. We call it the Peachy Deal and provide incentives to make it more attractive – we cover the cost of moving and any decorating costs in the new home.

So far 11 residents have moved to smaller properties and 11 larger families have gained the space they need. Building on the success of this initiative we are looking at ways of adopting a similar approach for residents seeking mutual exchanges.

“Supporting our residents on a daily basis in ways that really matter to them is something we are really proud of. We know there are increasing financial pressures for everyone and it's tough to make sense of the jargon. Our job is to support our residents to maximise their income, especially those who are vulnerable.”

Dianne Challis, Welfare Advice Team Leader

A photograph of a modern, multi-story residential building with a light-colored brick facade and dark window frames. The building features balconies with black metal railings and decorative perforated brickwork. In the foreground, there is a well-maintained courtyard with a green lawn, several raised garden beds containing various plants, and a paved walkway. The sky is blue with some light clouds. On the left side of the image, there is a large, semi-transparent orange graphic element that tapers to a point on the right, containing the text "Development and estate improvement".

Development and estate improvement

► Development and estate improvement

Whether it's new homes for first time buyers looking to get on the housing ladder, places for people unable to rent on the open market, or somewhere safe for older and vulnerable people to live, we operate across the whole housing spectrum, providing homes for people from all walks of life.

We are one of the country's leading housing association developers, building a range of homes in a variety of locations - from high-rise city developments to low-rise homes in rural communities. We are currently building over 1,200 new homes and have 2,800 in the development pipeline for completion by 2021.

Major regeneration projects

Much of our work involves the regeneration of run-down estates and we are currently leading on three major projects: The Ridgeway in Hertford; Stockwell Park in Lambeth; and Rectory Park in Ealing. Together with our recently completed project at South Kilburn in Brent, these will provide over 2,000 new and refurbished homes.

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We also have a new scheme that we're working on at Merrick Road, Southall. In 2016 we purchased 0.66 hectares of land in the heart of the Southall Housing Zone and close to the new Crossrail station that will provide around 500 homes.

Innovation

We think carefully about what we do when we take on a regeneration project. We don't just knock down the existing homes; we look at what can be saved or improved. The refurbishment of Tyler House in Stockwell Park is a prime example. Due to start in early 2018, we are not only refurbishing the existing three storey block, but adding a new floor with 13 shared ownership properties. The money we receive from the sale of these properties will be used to fund the refurbishment of the existing homes.

This is an innovative and exciting initiative which will enable us to make the most of our existing assets and reduce pressure on the land. We aim to become a leader in this field and will be seeking similar opportunities elsewhere.

Consultation

We consult with local people from start to finish to ensure our plans deliver what they need. For example, for residents in Rectory Park, keeping the community centre was really important. It was always at the heart of the community but the old one was in need of major work. So we're currently building a new centre which includes dedicated space for a nursery to cater for the growing number of young families in the area and bring in extra income for the estate.

Award-winning

Our Stockwell Park regeneration project in South London has already won awards not only for the buildings themselves but also for our approach to regeneration. Alongside the 473 new build homes, we've improved play areas and signage, streetways and gardens; we've refurbished the community centre and substantially improved 457 existing properties.



With the help and support of local residents we've transformed a run-down estate with serious anti-social behaviour problems, into a place where people want to live.



► Creating communities

Our work isn't simply about building and selling or renting homes: our aim is to create sustainable communities and to continue to invest in them after the developers have left. That means having a local presence, so we have 12 Resident Liaison Officers on hand to work with residents and build relationships with the local community while the work is happening, plus a resident engagement team at our head office who continue to invest in those relationships once the builders have left.

Having fun in the community

One of the main events in the community and engagement calendar is the Fun Days. Despite the name, this isn't just about having fun - it's about building relationships and binding the community.

Fun Days provide us with an opportunity to connect with the community, update residents on progress with their development and help them make connections with local services and the wider neighbourhood.



Resident engagement and community development



▸ Resident engagement and community development

Involving residents in what we do and consulting them on how we do it is a key feature of the way we work. We listen to our residents, we want them to have a say in the services they receive and we support them to make their communities as good as they can be.

Residents' Panels

Residents' Panels provide a vital link between us and our residents. They help ensure residents' views are heard locally and enable them to influence our organisation at the highest level. We have three Local Panels, each with up to 12 members: Hertfordshire and Outer London; London (North and West); and SW9. Together they make decisions on local issues, set local priorities, monitor service delivery and hold service providers to account.

Representatives from each Local Panel sit on a broader Network Homes Residents' Panel, which meets regularly with Network Homes Board members and executive directors. Its eight members monitor our performance against our customer standards and oversee delivery of service improvement plans.

Boosting resident engagement

In 2016/17 we invested significantly in our resident involvement activity. We commissioned our first scrutiny project to review our complaints service, we held a series of winter activities for residents, and we held our first Residents Day.

The Big Conversation

In March 2017 we launched our Big Conversation - the next stage in the development of our resident involvement strategy. Following the success of the Residents Day we issued an online survey to find out more about how our residents wanted to be involved in the future. The results of the survey will form the basis of a new menu of involvement activities that we will be launching for residents in 2017/18.

Talking to young residents

In February and March 2017 we worked with Participation People to roll out a youth engagement project across areas of our operation in Brent and Stockwell Park in London, and Hertford. We invited young residents to tell us what was important to them about where they live.

Some of the young people from Hertford presented their ideas to decision-makers from Network Homes and SW9 Community Housing. We're looking at the best ways to deal with the issues raised and will be feeding back on our actions in the coming year. This will also inform our Young Persons Offer which is due to be launched in 2017/18.

▸ Residents Day 2016

On Saturday 24 September 2016 we held our first ever Residents Day and over 530 residents joined us at Brent Civic Centre. This was an opportunity for us to meet our customers face to face, hear about the issues that are important to them, and tell them about what we're doing to improve our services.

Over 70 people from Network Homes were on hand to meet and greet, provide information and answer questions. We had stalls with information on Right to Buy, welfare benefits and how to get involved. Plus workshops about welfare reform, repairs and our new customer service strategy.

We also had some important messages to get across and used the afternoon for a more formal conference session with speeches from our new Chair, Bernadette Conroy, and our Involved Resident of the Year, Dianne Larrington, plus a lively Q&A session.

The feedback from residents at the end of the day was overwhelmingly positive with calls for the event to be an annual occasion. Plans are already in place for the next one.



“A great idea as it gives residents time to talk about their needs.”

“Thank you for a lovely day at Brent Civic Centre yesterday. Everyone was so helpful and friendly. I hope to be at the next one!”



▶ Investing in our communities

We are passionate about the neighbourhoods we work in and invest over £1million a year in community development. This covers a wide range of initiatives, from building playgrounds and gardens for everyone to enjoy, to tackling homelessness and supporting older people.

Tackling homelessness

Providing people with good quality homes at affordable prices is the core of what we do. So, helping homeless people find a safe and secure place to live fits perfectly with our values. Over the past few years we have established a number of initiatives to support homeless people and Network Homes is one of only five housing associations in London providing temporary accommodation.

We currently:

- ▶ provide temporary accommodation for over 1,000 homeless families across 12 London boroughs
- ▶ work in partnership with New Horizon Youth Centre to provide homes for young homeless people and help them become self-sufficient
- ▶ provide rooms for Mace Housing Cooperative which houses single homeless people
- ▶ work with St Albans District Council and the Refugee Council to house five Syrian refugee families
- ▶ encourage private landlords to work with us to provide temporary accommodation and help to keep families out of bed and breakfasts.

Helping homeless people find a safe and secure place to live fits perfectly with our values.

► Project Vista

One of the projects we're particularly proud of is the work we're doing to support homeless young people. In 2016 we launched Project Vista – an exciting initiative to provide safe, stable and affordable accommodation for young people who are on very low wages or seeking employment, and who are in urgent housing need.

Working in partnership with New Horizon Youth Centre (NHYC), we provide homes for 16-21 year olds who have been made homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless. They might be sleeping on the streets, living in the family home but experiencing conflict or abuse, or just sleeping where they can – from friends' sofas, to cars and even strangers' beds.

Currently we have 20 young people living in four flats in Islington and Hackney. Each flat has a minimum of four bedrooms with en-suite facilities and a communal living area. They are equipped with all the basic essentials including bedding and crockery.

The flats are provided by Network Homes at a discounted rate to NHYC who manage them and provide specialist ongoing support. This includes career development, training, and emotional support and advice – something that many young homeless people miss out on. The aim is to empower them to improve their situation, live independently, and save for a deposit before they move on after a year, or earlier if they're ready.

Project Vista is making a real difference to the young people involved. Most had jobs or apprenticeships but their wages were too low or unpredictable to enable them to rent on the private market and too high to get into specialist hostels. They were stuck and at risk of losing their jobs. Now, with access to a stable home, they can stay in work and improve their lives. Many have secured promotion at work, moved onto a permanent contract, and increased their wages.

Expansion plans

We are delighted with the success of Project Vista and will significantly increase our commitment in 2017/18 by providing more accommodation and enabling NHYC to house at least another 20 homeless young people. Some of the current tenants will move into Network Homes private rented accommodation.

Award winning

The value of this unique project has now been recognised externally. In October 2017 Project Vista won first prize in the London Homelessness Awards in recognition of its innovative approach. The judges were impressed by the collaborative approach between the two organisations and the way young people are placed at its heart. The £30,000 prize money will go direct to NHYC and will be used to extend frontline services.

► Key achievements through Project Vista:



▶ Youssef, aged 21, tells his story:

“I was referred to New Horizon Youth Centre by my council. I was homeless, sofa-surfing and staying with friends – but I wasn’t in priority need and I didn’t have any savings. I met with a worker who assessed me and told me about Project Vista. It was so much cheaper than a hostel and thankfully I didn’t have to provide a deposit.”

“As soon as I moved into the flat I felt more settled and able to focus on my work. With the support of my worker from New Horizon Youth Centre, I learnt how to cook for myself, budget for rent and bills and save towards a deposit.”

“Over that year my situation at work improved. I was promoted to supervisor and my wages went up. I got a bike and cycled to work every day and felt healthier and happier. I was able to save a deposit and explore the move-on options available. I found a private rented room on an AST in North London and have just moved in to my new place.”



“Project Vista gave me the skills and support I needed to learn how to live independently and understand more about my rights and responsibilities as a tenant. It was the step I needed to become fully independent.”

▶ Supporting older people

The profile of the UK population is changing: people are living longer and the number of older people is growing. By 2027 one in five people in the UK will be aged 65 or over. What impact will this have on their housing needs and what does this mean for housing providers like Network Homes? These are just some of the questions we are looking at as we develop our Older Persons Strategy.

We provide specialist housing for older people, with 984 homes in total and over half of those in Hertfordshire. We also have many residents in general needs accommodation who are over retirement age including nearly 600 households where the main tenant is 70 or over. This year we launched a major piece of research amongst our older residents to find out what’s important to them and what services they would like to receive from us. We’ll be using the feedback to shape our services over the coming year.

▶ Providing free legal advice

Living in a Network Homes property gives our residents access to a variety of free services including legal advice. At the beginning of 2017 we piloted free legal advice clinics for non-housing related problems.

Legal advice clinics can make a real difference. Even if the legal issue is not solved at the clinic, residents feel some relief from talking to a professional. LawWorks found that 81% of people attending legal clinics felt less stressed afterwards.

As a result of the pilot, we helped six residents get representation from a solicitor, and another 13 were either referred to solicitors or to other organisations offering legal advice. We are now planning to build on this initiative with other partners in the housing sector and in partnership with HACT.



► Focus on East Herts

In June 2015 Network Homes partnered with the Community Voluntary Service (CVS) of Broxbourne and East Herts to create a new post - Community Engagement Officer. The post, funded by Network Homes and employed by CVS, enables us to work together to deliver community projects.

The initiative has already been a great success, providing a model for joint working in other areas. Activities and achievements in 2016/17 include:

- working with Network Homes Neighbourhood Officers to establish two new Residents Associations: Tower Road Residents Association in the Ware Trinity ward – one of three most deprived wards in East Herts; and Tewin – a small village in the west of the district with a new housing development

- securing £30,000 of external funding, including £10,000 from Network Homes, towards the refurbishment of the village playground in Hertford Heath which is now used as a community hub
- developing a Neighbourhood Action Plan for Pinehurst, in consultation with the community and organising a community Tidy Up Day as a result
- responding to concerns about anti-social behaviour by supporting the establishment of a weekly youth club in Pinehurst to provide activities for young people
- helping secure £18,000 of external funding, including £10,000 from Network Homes, for a village playground in Wareside that was installed in summer 2017
- working in partnership with Hertford Town Council and others to deliver the refurbishment of the All Saints subway in Hertford
- rolling out Meet and Eat sessions in assisted living accommodation – a weekly opportunity for residents to come together to cook and eat a meal under the guidance of a trained nutritionist.

Green Team Employability Initiative

Eight of Hertfordshire's young people teamed up to create better places for locals while improving their own employment prospects. The volunteers enrolled on the Green Team, a project run by community charity Groundwork Hertfordshire and funded by Network Homes.

Over the course of 14 weeks they worked together to transform a communal garden in Hertford for the benefit of local residents. They built a shed, created a paved seating area, and planted a wildlife area to attract pollinating insects. Not only did they gain significant practical experience and learn a range of new skills, they also gained qualifications to boost their job prospects.

Promoting furniture recycling

We have been proud to support a local Furniture Re-use scheme in Ware which was set up in partnership with Broxbourne & East Herts Community Voluntary Service in 2012. Nearly 2,000 residents have benefitted from the project and over 1,000 deliveries of re-usable furniture have been made. The scheme ended in 2016 but we continue to support the underlying concept by recycling good quality furniture ourselves.



▸ Giving something back

Network Homes believes in giving something back to the communities we work in. Everyone who works here gets two volunteering days a year to spend helping support social or charitable causes. To encourage our people to make the most of it, we launched a three month 'Giving Something Back' campaign.

Groups of staff got together to help a variety of causes which included helping out at foodbanks, donating business clothes to those unable to afford them for job interviews, teaching older people digital skills, skydiving to raise money and local gardening activities.



In September 2017, a team of 20 Network Homes cyclists raised over £66,000 for our chosen charity St Mungo's, covering over 300 miles in four days on the London to Paris charity bike ride. They not only smashed their initial fundraising target of £30,000, but also set a new record for challenge donations to St Mungo's.



Energy and environment

► Energy and environment

Building to high environmental standards is part and parcel of what we do. Every new Network Homes property is built to be warm, energy efficient and economical to run. Increasing numbers of our properties are served by Combined Heat and Power (CHP) systems, making use of energy that would otherwise be wasted, and we have installed solar panels on many of our sites. We provide free electricity to all communal areas, install thermal insulation to cut down heating bills and fit smart meters as standard.

Using innovative construction methods

Printworks Apartments in Neasden is a good example of the work we are doing to explore new and innovative methods of construction, reduce running costs for residents and reduce our impact on the environment. Built off-site using cross-laminated timber (CLT) construction – a sustainable product with a low carbon footprint – this former print works meets the highest of environmental standards and is the first Network Homes property to be constructed in this way.

Key features include:

- ▶ solar panels on roofs to reduce energy costs and usage
- ▶ green/brown living roofs to help insulate the building
- ▶ electric charging points in the car park for up to 24% of spaces
- ▶ car club space to encourage shared usage
- ▶ substantial bike storage to encourage car-free mobility.

Improving energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty

While building to high environmental standards in new properties is important, there's also work to be done to improve existing homes. Not only does this benefit the environment, but it also saves money on heating bills.

In 2016/17 we worked in partnership with Sustain, to install loft and cavity insulation to more than 1,400 homes. The results were impressive:

- ▶ 1,367 homes received loft insulation, saving residents an average of £117 per year on fuel bills
- ▶ 66 homes received cavity wall insulation, saving an average of £102 per year
- ▶ residents saved a total of £166,000 a year on their fuel bills.



The Sustain partnership project has also saved 12,882 tonnes of CO2 across 66 homes to date.

► Calculating social value

Network Homes owns and manages 20,000 homes across London, Hertfordshire and the South East. We aim to deliver around 1,000 new homes a year - one of the largest development programmes relative to size of any housing association in England. We also invest around £1 million a year in economic development, social and environmental projects in the communities where we work.

Applying the HACT Social Value Calculator shows that in 2016/17:

- ▶ our Older Persons team delivered £146,453 of social value through a range of social activities
- ▶ the Herts and Outer London region delivered £559,696 of social value through a range of activities including social events, a youth club and a street dance workshop
- ▶ the London Region's Local Panel delivered £51,219 in social value by enabling residents to be active in a tenants group. Several members of the Panel have successfully completed TPAS training courses, providing them with additional skills and personal development opportunities
- ▶ our 360 project delivered £282,672 in social value in 2015/16 (results were received in 2016/17), with a ratio of £3.57 social value for £1 spent.



Over 100 members of staff volunteered to take calls for Comic Relief.



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