

Investing in our communities impact report 2021-2022

Key achievements 2021-2022



A housing association with a social purpose

Overview

We are a housing provider with a social purpose. Our vision is to improve people's lives through quality home and services.

And while we take a commercial approach to housebuilding, we reinvest all our profits into building more new homes and supporting the communities where we work.

Every year, we invest £1.7m into our community investment programme, and last year we secured £540,000 of external funding to expand our offer.

We support local communities with a wide range of innovative projects, including financial support, wellbeing support and digital inclusion. We also help to get people into work, employment and training.

We also invest £570,000 each year into our tenancy sustainment service, supporting residents who are experiencing financial difficulties.

In this report, you can find out about our key achievements from the last year and the difference that we have made to thousands of people.

Our priorities

Our work in community investment focuses on three key areas:

- Strengthening communities
- Improving financial capability
- Reducing health inequalities

These support A2Dominion's key business objectives to:

- Deliver customer-led services for residents and communities
- protect and grow the business
- provide new high-quality homes and places
- effectively manage our existing homes and places.

"This work underpins our commitment to profit for social purpose. It enables our customers to sustain their tenancies and supports those who are at risk. This creates strong communities that are easier to manage. It also improves people's life chances."

Dawn Wightman, Director of Housing.

Why do we invest in supporting communities and individuals?

The work we do has never been more important. Continued local authority budget cuts have led to increasing living costs and limited access to external support services.

Our community insight data shows those living in social housing and on low incomes are more likely to face the impact of the growing social inequalities.

- As a housing provider rooted in the principles of fair-rent, non-profit, social purpose and delivering good quality homes, our work ensures customers not only sustain their tenancies but are supported to fulfil their potential.
- Our community investment offer supports the aims of the Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper for residents to have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in. Our work in communities and with individuals supports tackling the stigma associated with living in social housing.
- Our work supports A2Dominion's development pipeline and bidding process, and we sustain key relationships in local authorities where we have strategic management and development interest.

What is social value?

***Social value** is a way to measure the impact of our projects and ensure that we deliver effective services.

The *social value calculator* - used across the housing sector - enables us to quantify things that are not inherently quantifiable (such as wellbeing and mental health) and measure the unseen financial value to the people and communities who have used our services.





we raised £45,573 funding via Westminster City Council's Open Spaces Greener Places fund. We also secured £42,133 funding from the HS2 Community Environment Fund.

At Selby Square, the aim was to:

- provide a safe place for the community to meet
- deter anti-social behaviour
- make it look more attractive and useable.

Work to turn the space into a community orchard is underway. The community orchard will improve individuals' quality of life by offering:

- Opportunities to grow and eat fresh produce, impacting, in a small way, on rising cost of food
- Creating access to free opportunities to exercise on the open air
- A safe place to relax and connect with nature in a densely populated neighbourhood.



Concept design for Selby Square development

Holiday and food programme

School summer holidays can be a particularly difficult time for families. Many children in our communities receive free school lunch during term time and are safe in school while parents' work.

Each summer our housing team receives increased reports of anti-social behaviour, particularly relating to children playing and noise.

Our summer camp, launched last year, supported children to be more active over the holidays, eat more healthily and learn more about health and nutrition. Funded by the government's Holiday Activities and Food Programmes, the camp was attended by 38 children.

- **60% of attendees reported an improvement in physical fitness**
- **60% of attendees reported improvement in confidence levels. This level was maintained six months after the programme ended.**



Some of our Havelock Summer Camp attendees



Football at Havelock Summer Camp

Strengthening communities

We tackle inequality and create opportunities for customers to improve their life chances. We work collaboratively with colleagues across operations, local authorities, and partner organisations.

People living in areas impacted by social deprivation are more likely to be on low income and have increased risk of health issues. Customers living in social housing are more likely to be impacted by inequality and stigma.

Our work focuses on:

- community resilience
- enhancing community spaces
- reducing health inequalities, loneliness and reducing anti-social behaviour.



Case study: Selby Square, Queen's Park

Queen's Park, in Westminster, is in the top 20% of socially deprived neighbourhoods in the UK:

- 20% of households defined as overcrowded
- one third of children eligible for free school meals
- 40% of children in the Queen's Park Ward living in poverty

*figures from the Office of National Statistics.

It is also an area that has only 4.4% of shared public space compared with Westminster's average of 22%.

This year, we worked with the local community to improve Selby Square, a disused public space.

Following consultation with the local community,

Those born in more deprived areas

are likely to live 10 years less than those in more affluent ones

Community spaces

A key focus of our community work is enhancing community spaces.



Increasing financial capabili-

Many of our residents are facing greater financial difficulties, due to cost of living rises coupled with a lack of accessible external support services.

Our employment, tenancy sustainment and health teams provide vital support for residents, increasing chances of sustaining tenancies, finding suitable employment and reducing the risks associated with financial difficulties.

34% of people struggling with housing payments are experiencing mental health problems

Money and Mental Health Policy Institute

Employment

Last year we:

- provided employment advice to 327 individuals
- supported 108 people to secure full time employment
- supported 79 individuals via our bursary programme, which is open to customers aged 14-24, supporting them with the costs of training, education and employment.

Many of our customers are accessing more than one service due to our robust internal referral pathway.

Enterprise Programme

We continue to provide business support to our customers. We awarded five of our customers a combined £15,000 in last year's Enterprise Programme.

Case study

Cherelle received £3,500 towards Chae's Bakes, her business. She makes bespoke cakes and baked goods for all dietary requirements including gluten-free, vegan and lactose intolerance.

Cherelle said: "I'm so happy because my dream is to scale-up my business beyond London. The money will help fund transport costs, social media marketing and kitchen hire."



Cherelle Fergus with her cheque for £3,500

Our Tenancy Sustainment team helped

2,314 customers

claim over

£6.3m

in financial support

Tennency Sustainment Support

We provided advice and support to more than 2,300 people who were experiencing financial difficulties. We helped residents to access £6.3m in grants and funding.

Our Tenancy Sustainment Fund provides a vital lifeline for our customers. Last year 100 residents received funds totalling £31,000. The funding supported them to stay in their homes. Under 30s made up 35% of customers receiving funds.

Case study

Alice Hunter, 19, moved into her first rented home last year, having been a resident at a young people's supported housing scheme since the age of 16.

Alice was able to buy a basic furniture package using funding from A2Dominion. The package from charity Scratch included a bed, mattress, sofa, table and chairs. She is now settled into her new home.

Business in a Box

We launched our Business in a Box programme offering free online workshops. The programme helps residents turn their business ideas into reality. In its first year 40 people took part.

Case study

A2Dominion resident Viv Bennet had a clear idea of what she wanted to do. Her Tenancy Sustainment Officer referred Viv to take part in the Business in a Box Programme to help her develop the skills she needed start her business.

After completing the programme Viv went on to receive funding from the Love London Working project. This funding helped her with equipment for her new business, Red Fox Kitchen.

Viv said: "I am greatly appreciative of the self-employment support I have received from A2Dominion and the Love London Working programme.

"My business is now branching out into exciting new areas like online cooking lessons, and I couldn't be more hopeful and excited about the future."



Viv Bennett, Owner Red Fox Kitchen

Digital Inclusion

Our digital inclusion service provides free training to customers to get online confidently and safely, and in the last year, we supported 146 residents.

20% of the population are lacking basic digital skills

Consumer Digital Index, 2019



Health Entrepreneurs

Our Health Entrepreneur programme enables individuals to start projects which benefit residents and communities.

Emma Bayou was awarded £2,000 to set up her business, Mindfulness, which provides advice for parents, carers and educational settings, and support for children experiencing poor mental health.

Having experienced anxiety in her childhood, watching her daughter with the same challenges and supporting students with mental health interventions, Emma realised more support was needed to help children manage their emotions.

She said: "The Health Entrepreneur programme came along at the perfect time; I would not have had the confidence to set up my business without it. The support has been fantastic, and it has allowed me to overcome any hurdles."



Emma Bayou started up her business, Mindfulness, with our support.

Lunch. The lunch provides an opportunity for residents and the local community to get together, meet new people and reduce social isolation. As word spreads and people's confidence grows, the number attending also steadily grows. Our last lunch was attended by 43 people.

Hazel, who attended, said: "It was amazing. The whole event was lovely, I can't praise the staff and food enough, it was like going to a first-class restaurant. I was in awe of Leah's (Leah Campbell, Health and Wellbeing Project Coordinator) warmth and kindness. She made the effort to introduce people to each other and start up conversations. I can't wait for the next one."



A resident at one of our coffee mornings



Residents at our community lunches

Reducing health inequalities

We recognise the impact that poor mental health and poor general health has on an individual's ability to work, pay their rent and contribute positively to society.

Our model focuses on investing in early intervention, which can prevent evictions, costing £10,000 on average per home.

Emotional Wellbeing

Our Care and Support team provides an Emotional Wellbeing programme. Last year, 137 customers were referred to the service, with 88 customers receiving support and 30 customers reporting an improvement in wellbeing.

One customer that benefited from the service told us: "I feel in control of my life, I'm sleeping better and managing my finances. I have money to buy food shopping for the first time in years. Asking for help and telling the truth was the best thing I've ever done; it opened the door to a better way of living."

£4m in social value

by supporting 650 customers with health and wellbeing

1 in 6 adults have had a common mental health condition

Public Health England 2018

Loneliness has the same impact on mortality as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, making it even more dangerous than obesity.

Douglas Nemecek,

Partnerships and fundraising

Despite the economic challenges presented by the pandemic, we secured more than £540,000 of external funding to develop targeted services for customers.

A key part of our approach is building relationships with communities, local partners, and strategic organisations. This helps us to deliver better outcomes for our residents in a cost-effective way.

Spelthorne Community Support

Developing local strategic partnerships which enable us to expand our services in priority areas is a key principle of our community investment. Our Spelthorne Community Support Project, funded by Spelthorne Council offers support to residents with their finances, housing, employment, and emotional and mental wellbeing.

A total of 400 clients were referred to the project Community Support service, 60% of clients referred to the over 50s project required benefits and financial management, 50% of under 30s referrals received support from multiple services and 80% received tenancy support.

As a result of a successful evaluation, we have been able to demonstrate the impact of the service and have received £150,000 in funding over three years from the National Lottery to deliver the under 30s provision.

Spelthorne Youth Hub

Our new Spelthorne Youth Hub provides support for young people aged 16 to 24 to help them into education and employment. It has been delivered by our Partnership & Fundraising team, working collaboratively with our Care & Support team and our local authority partners.

The hub offers advice, training and mentoring for young people not in education, employment, or training, and those with special needs and disabilities, as well as young parents and carers.



In It Together Reducing Stigma Project

In response to the social housing white paper, we've run a pilot project to gain greater insight into our customers' experience of stigma.

Working with the National Development Team for Inclusion to facilitate the one-year research pilot, more than 100 residents across West London participated in the project and the development of a new outcomes framework.

As a result of the pilot, we will be working with customers and staff to design new training to improve satisfaction in specific neighbourhoods.

A2Dominion Grant Giving

This year, we distributed £330,496 in grant funding to improve the lives of customers and the communities we operate in. 2,846 customers and local people benefited from funding through our various grants programmes including the Enterprise Programme, Tenancy Sustainability Fund and Neighbourhood Improvement Fund.



Our priorities for 2022-23

- Generate a social return of investment of £9 million
- Deliver more projects to tackle fuel and food poverty
- Secure £500,000 of external funding to develop our services

