

Let's  
Go!

# Changing lives

Communities Strategy  
2020 – 2025



watford  
community  
housing



# Changing lives

Strong, cohesive and prosperous communities provide the foundations for people to live better lives.

By investing in local initiatives, we can help people to connect and form wider support networks. We can also give people access to services that can be vital to their wellbeing and help them make a success of their tenancy with us.

## **Investing £1 million**

We will invest £1 million into community projects between 2020 and 2025 – giving support to people through initiatives that change lives.

We want to create vibrant communities so that people love the area they live in, as well as their home. And following the coronavirus pandemic, we will play a central role in helping our communities to recover and supporting people impacted by the crisis through a dedicated Welfare Fund.

Our community work will reach every area where we provide homes and services, making a difference to everyone who lives in those areas – not just our customers.

To make sure our investment has a real impact, we will work closely with local people in our community areas and put them at the heart of our decision-making.







We love helping people in our communities to enjoy their lives and fulfil their potential. This starts with providing high-quality homes, where they can live comfortably and safely – but we can do lots more too.

# Live better

By offering support and opening up opportunities to connect with other local organisations, we can help to ensure the wellbeing of our customers. And by building friendly communities around them, we give people a better chance of making their tenancy with us a success.

## Vital support

Mental health is one of the biggest challenges facing individuals and communities across the country. People can encounter mental health problems at any time and for an extremely wide variety of reasons. Loneliness, relationship breakdowns and bereavement are just a few of these – and the coronavirus crisis is also likely to have an impact.

Working in partnership with specialists, we will deliver projects and initiatives that tackle the root causes of mental health problems, including social isolation, and help people to develop coping strategies, improving their life chances.

## Life-changing opportunities

The chance to work, be independent and pursue a rewarding career can be key to wellbeing. We will work with other organisations to help people in our communities gain the education, qualifications and experience they need to live independently and achieve their goals.



We believe in investing in people as well as buildings. Between 2020 and 2025, we will spend £1 million in our local communities to improve lives and create valuable opportunities. This will support a wide range of projects, both large and small.

# Our £1 million commitment

Every year, £35,000 will be dedicated to community-led initiatives overseen by our Gateway Membership Team. We will give people the chance to bid for money for small grassroots projects and a community panel will decide which bids to support.

## Community partners

To make sure that the money we invest goes further, we will deliver projects and initiatives in partnership with other organisations that can help us do more for our communities. To maximise the impact of our work, we will look to secure at least 15% match-funding from these partners, and we will measure the outcomes and the return on our investment to make sure that local people are benefiting.

## Diversity and inclusion

We are proud of the diversity in our communities. To ensure that our investment programme reaches as many people as possible, we will deliver a variety of projects for a wide range of people. We will also support events that bring together people from different backgrounds and faiths, such as Watford Celebration and Herts Pride.



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**Our valued partners**

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**Delivering more for our communities**





As a Community Gateway organisation, we are committed to putting customers at the heart of our work. We will continue to invest in resident engagement over the next five years to give people a real voice and a chance to influence what we do.

# Better together

To make it as easy as possible for residents to work with us, we'll review our engagement offer to make it as enticing as possible. We will work directly with customers to ensure that there are appealing and convenient options for everyone.

## Involvement options

We have a range of involvement options to make it easy for people to find a way to work with us that suits them. To help people make the most of their abilities, we will aim to carry out skills-mapping exercises with 500 customers between 2020 and 2025.

## Digital engagement

We recognise that customer involvement is rapidly changing. People have busy lives and can't always commit to attending meetings, so we will provide digital solutions that offer people different ways to engage with us and help scrutinise our services, in line with our Digital Transformation Strategy.





## A thriving membership

Because we are a Community Gateway organisation, our shareholders are customers who choose to take up membership, and other local residents who opt to become associate members.

As members have voting rights, they are empowered to influence our work and play a central role in our decision-making.

We will review our approach to membership, to include an enhanced benefits package – incentivising more people to engage with us and helping us to ensure that this group reflects the diversity in our communities.

## Strong representation

Our Gateway Membership Team represents our customers within the organisation. We will empower the team to scrutinise our services and hold us to account over our performance. Through our range of involvement options, we will identify and encourage new members to join the team so that it remains strong.

## Residents' associations

We currently work with eight active residents' associations. We will continue to give annual funding to help these groups to flourish, as well as championing new associations and community networks that support local people and projects.

## Supporting changing communities

As part of our Development Strategy, we plan to build 1,580 new homes over the next five years. Our Community Engagement team will work closely with local people in areas where we are delivering development and regeneration projects, to help them understand our vision and how their communities will benefit.





We believe we have a crucial role to play within our communities. We can help to bring good ideas to fruition and, through our community hubs, provide facilities that allow people to lead more fulfilling lives.

# Thriving communities

## Vibrant community spaces

**Our community hubs allow us to open up an array of opportunities for people. They offer a range of community spaces for everything from fitness classes to business meetings.**

We currently have six hubs and **we will open two more by 2025**. We also make the communal lounges at our independent living schemes available to the local community, for events that bring people together.

Over the next five years, we will develop a high-quality offer in an appealing environment, making our hubs attractive to our local communities. By providing a range of activities, we will meet the needs of a large number of people – especially those of our customers.

Through our hubs, we will partner with specialist organisations to tackle key challenges such as social isolation, food poverty and childhood obesity.

We will also make sure that we offer engaging activities for young people, investing in them as the next generation that will form our future communities.

To make sure we are getting it right, we will measure and monitor who uses the hubs and the impact of the activities that are on offer. This will help us to tailor our offering so that our hubs continue to meet customers' needs and remain financially viable in the long-term.

## Supporting social enterprise

We are keen to work with people who can create opportunities in the areas we serve. We will support social enterprise by working with entrepreneurs who can deliver services for our communities and create jobs. The projects we support will reflect our customers' priorities, as well as helping us to achieve our aims.





# Let's Go!

## Our key goals for 2020-2025

- Invest £1 million into community projects between 2020 and 2025.
- Build a strong membership and work closely with our customers to put them at the heart of our work.
- Help people in our communities to gain the education, qualifications and experiences they need to live independently and make their tenancy a success.
- Support people to combat social isolation and mental health challenges.
- Partner with local organisations and support residents' associations to deliver more and champion diversity.
- Enhance lives through our community hubs and by supporting social enterprise.





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