Case Studies

1. North Ayrshire Fab Pad is a partnership project between Cunninghame Housing Association and Impact Arts to assist up to 30 excluded 16-35 year olds with no or failing natural support structures to sustain housing tenancies and secure training and job opportunities. Established in March 2004, over the past 4 years the project has offered young people the opportunity to work with an interior designer to get the ideas, and learn the skills necessary, to turn this new flat or house into a home. It has been shown that for every £1 that has been invested in the North Ayrshire Fab Pad project, a social return on investment of £8.38 has been realised.

2. Dalmuir Community Concierge Service – an initiative started by Link Group in partnership with Dalmuir Park and Trafalgar Housing Associations in 2004 to provide grounds maintenance, concierge services, minor repair and cleaning to their own tenants but has since grown to cover ten social landlords across Dunbartonshire, Renfrewshire, Paisley, Glasgow Ayrshire and Falkirk. This social enterprise aims to offer jobs and training to local young people while enhancing the quality of the local environment and now has become so successful that it has become fully independent of its parent Link Group, the owners of Link Housing Association.

3. New Horizons. As part of The Dunedin Canmore Group, New Horizons offer the security of a well-established business with extensive property management and factoring experience which has at its core the social aim of providing property management services to buildings of mixed tenure particularly in areas other factors don’t want to compete in. New Horizons are working in partnership with the Edinburgh Community Backgreens Initiative to provide a long-term maintenance solution for the upkeep of regenerated backgreens in the Gorgie and Dalry area into shared community greenspace with facilities that will benefit all residents.

About the SFHA

The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) is the membership body for over 200 different housing associations across Scotland. Our members house approximately 40% of Scotland’s social housing tenants and in some areas where Large Scale Voluntary Transfers of local authority stock have taken place our members are the sole providers of social housing. The SFHA is owned by its membership and exists to support the work of housing associations and co-operatives in Scotland by providing services, advice and good practice guidance.

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The original DTI definition of social enterprise was: “A social enterprise is a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners.”

Social Enterprise: A Strategy for Success, DTI 2002

Social enterprises are dynamic businesses that exist for a social purpose and to make a profit. They have clear social aims and reinvest their surpluses to meet them. The sector is diverse and includes cooperatives, credit unions, housing associations, community development trusts, social firms and community-owned businesses. Many operate in growing markets like recycling, renewable energy, leisure services and health and social care.

The social enterprise approach delivers many benefits to society. It can grow the economy, deliver high quality public services, transform communities and create jobs for people excluded from mainstream employment.

**Housing Associations in Scotland**

Housing Association (sometimes called Registered Social Landlords or RSL) are independent housing organisations registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. They provide high quality housing and work towards building sustainable communities.

Scotland’s housing associations deliver social goals through business means. They reinvest their surpluses in the services they provide and in the communities that they serve. They have a track record of delivering on the basic social goal of providing high-quality, affordable housing right across the country, but they also deliver a far wider range of services as well, such as:

- housing support and care services
- employment and training opportunities
- youth development opportunities
- financial inclusion services
- cultural regeneration

Scotland’s housing associations don’t just put a roof over peoples’ heads; they change the lives of the communities they serve for the better.

Playing a wider role in community regeneration is not a distraction from their ‘core’ business as social landlords; it can actually be part of delivering on ‘core’ objectives, so it is clear why housing associations are increasingly recognising themselves as social enterprises in their own right, and why there is a growing appetite to get even more involved in helping develop the social enterprise sector.

**What is a Social Enterprise?**

Social Enterprise: A Strategy for Success, DTI 2002

**Why should housing associations be interested in social enterprise?**

**Changing Political Context**

The Scottish Government has set out its strategy for wealth creation and economic growth, which emphasises the role of social enterprise in meeting these strategic priorities, and a sharpened focus on achieving higher levels of employability. The historic Concordat between the Scottish Government and local authorities signals a major shift in the relationship between the social enterprise sector and local government, which can be seen in the inclusion of a specific outcome to “increase the social economy turnover”. Housing associations can help meet these objectives.

**What housing associations can offer to the social enterprise sector**

There is innate strength and stability within the housing association sector which can be shared with other partners in the broader social economy. Housing associations have a wealth of experience, knowledge and business assets to offer partners in the social enterprise sector and there is a clear role for housing associations supporting both existing and emerging new social enterprises.

- taking on a community anchor role - strengthening the social enterprise sector via partnerships for Wider Role, incubating new social enterprises
- being creative contractors - increasing their contracting with social enterprises
- being trusted intermediaries, helping develop the sector by sharing their knowledge, experience and skills.

**Community Anchors**

Housing associations can play the role of being a “community anchor”, supporting other community organisations and social enterprises by

- providing premises, or practical advice and assistance
- helping to incubate social enterprises in their early stages.

**Creative Contractors**

Using their commissioning functions, housing associations can support social enterprises in their local areas. By becoming “creative contractors” they can:

- grant maintenance contracts to social enterprises employing vulnerable people
- directly offer job placements to local people in need of such opportunities
- create opportunities for local environmental improvements
- agree with banking partners that the latter will fund financial inclusion initiatives such as money advice projects.

**Trusted Intermediaries**

Given their unique status as trusted intermediaries with the communities and the tenants they serve, housing associations are ideally placed to help social enterprises reach potential service users, tenants and communities who would otherwise be unable to access services that can make a major difference to their lives; for example, housing officers can identify vulnerable young tenants struggling to maintain their tenancy and yet not in contact with support services, and act to link them to those services.

Here’s what some key housing association Chief Executives are saying about the benefits of developing social enterprise ventures:

"Entrepreneurial Housing Associations are increasingly recognising Wider Role as an opportunity to build community businesses. There are major benefits here for these social enterprises to help with the economic development of the communities we work in."

Ewan Fraser, Chief Executive, Dunedin Canmore Housing Association

"Social enterprise ventures present housing associations with potential avenues to boost their own long term sustainability - providing protection against change in political administration or political priorities. Social enterprise subsidiaries provide management capacity building. In fact I would argue that housing associations are themselves social enterprises, being businesses which re-invest their surpluses in the communities which they serve."

Craig Sanderson, Chief Executive, Link Group

"Social enterprise also clearly fits in with Corporate Social Responsibility and marketing objectives: improving the local environment therefore protects our asset value."

Frank Sweeney, Chief Executive, Cunninghame Housing Association