

## Social Value in Greater Manchester Case study



### New Charter Homes

New Charter Homes is part of the New Charter Group. The Group has a variety of operations, the primary of which is New Charter Homes; the biggest social landlord in Ashton-under-Lyne, owning over 16,000 homes. Gedling Homes provides homes for customers who live in North and East Nottinghamshire. The New Charter Building Company is the Group's property repair, maintenance, and improvement service that works with a variety of contractors and sub-contractors. New Charter Group is also proud sponsor of the Great Academies Education Trust (GAET); an academy chain of four schools in the Greater Manchester City region.

#### 1.1 Social Value

The Group's website gives an image of an organisation that has a strong commitment to creating a positive social impact and increasing social value. It is evident that the Group's ethos stretches beyond a simply commercial aspect in respect to their housing stock and tenants, to a concern for the wellbeing of the wider community in which it operates.

#### 1.2 Understanding the concept of social value

There is a very clear over-arching definition of the term that is adopted throughout the Group which requires two sub-definitions. Social impact is "*the amount of difference we produce*", and social value is, "*the benefits and/or value in that change*". Within this framework, any indicators can be adopted allowing the definition to be adaptable enough to mould to a variety of different contexts. These indicators are taken in four different categories: social; emotional; financial; and economic.

In governance terms, the Group takes the approach that social value should not be 'added value' – but instead embedded in the corporate DNA. Social value is woven into all policy and decisions that the group makes.

This is due to the moral commitment that social value entails. The Group believes it has a moral responsibility to the community in which it is based and this is manifested through ensuring its operations consider social value.

#### 1.3 Disseminating the concept of social value

The term social value and its attendant commitments and responsibilities are well communicated and understood throughout the organisation at all levels. From Ian Munro, the CEO, stating that New Charter should take a prime role in improving the local community, down to frontline staff who actively give their time within the voluntary sector in the area on the belief that it is the right thing to do. Creating a positive social impact is important for all members of staff.

This stretches beyond the internal confines of the Group to its contractors and sub-contractors. The New Charter Building Company ensures that its procurement does as much as it can to stay local. While there are certain legislative constraints on the

tendering process within housing associations, there is a continuously active desire to keep investment and employment in the local area as much as possible. This is reached through New Charter communicating these commitments to its contactors and sub-contractors. This has manifested itself in 50% of materials sourced, and 54% of sub-contractors being based within a 10 mile radius of its headquarters.

In general, away from the specific area of the building company, the Group has a procurement framework in place where creating a positive social impact is a necessary part of the tendering process. Any potential bids must therefore meet these criteria to be successful. The approach these potential bidders may take is entirely contingent upon their own processes, but it is clearly communicated in the procurement process that any successful tenders must also be beneficial to the economic, social, and environmental realms of the local community.

In a wider scope, staff members are encouraged to network with other organisations within the local area to see if symbiotic relationships can be established to increase social value within the Greater Manchester area. This relies on accurately communicating New Charter's commitment to creating a positive social impact to other agents within the community. For example, a networking event in 2015 led to joint enterprise with the University of Manchester's School of Nursing to help those most at risk of falls. Clinical expertise was combined with New Charter's knowledge of place and community to develop interventions to directly help those most at risk of falls. This had knock-on effects for the social well-being of the community and reducing demand on healthcare services.

#### **1.4 Establishing desirable social outcomes and the roles of other organisations**

New Charter collaborates as much as possible within the wider community to direct its policies and actions into areas that will produce the greatest social value. In this sense, the theory underpinning the term can only come to life by communicating with other organisations to understand the issues the community face. New Charter holds regular meetings with stakeholders in all sectors of all sizes, including: emergency services; education services; the local council; large, medium, and small businesses; social enterprises; the voluntary sector; religious groups; and, individuals.

An illustration of this commitment to collaboration came in New Charter's Healthy Living project. This was work carried out with, and funded by, Tameside's and Glossop's Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). The project was aimed at working with those in the over-75 demographic, as they are the most at risk group in terms of health care provision. The CCG's opinion is that social and clinical interventions have equal weight in healthcare. This marries up with New Charter's commitment to wider social well-being in its community as improved health-care positively impacts on a wide variety of markers that are used in social value, for example, social isolation. The project identified over 300 individuals described as 'invisible' - those that have major health issues but only interact with the health services when situations become critical. By working together, New Charter and the CCGs provided help to these individuals that not only directly improved their quality of life and reduced demand on critical health care services, but also had a positive, indirect impact on a host of social markers.

#### **1.5 Measuring social value**

New Charter uses a variety of measurements to track its social impact, both quantitative and qualitative because, *"the story means nothing without data, and the data means nothing without the story"*. In practice this means a mix of social return

on investment, cost benefit analysis, LM3, outcome star and questionnaire/surveys are used to document social impact and establish its benefit and value.

This is applied to: ensure that any measurement approach is adaptable to the project or policy it is evaluating; that the shortfalls of each approach are mitigated by working with other approaches; and, that communication is aided by being able to illustrate opaque measurements and jargons with relevant examples and stories – "*humanising the data*".

In particular, LM3 is used when looking at the 'money trail' of contractors and sub-contractors, so that a concrete evidence base can be presented when evaluating investment. This is the preferred measurement when considering the New Charter Building Company.

In evaluating the Healthy Living project, a mix of cost benefit analysis and outcome star through direct interviews with tenants was used to keep track of the social, emotional, financial, and environmental markers.

## **1.6 Using measurements of social value**

This wide variety of data on the social impacts of New Charter's actions is collected primarily to evolve its social value policy. The Group began to adopt a social value strategy in 2013 but the commitment was strongly focused around crime/ anti-social behaviour and unemployment. Through measuring these impacts it was shown that to help these markers, but also to benefit the community in general, wider considerations would have to be taken. Hence, the approach now gives significant weight to health, emotional well-being and the environment as well. The measurements are used to actively direct and evolve social value policy.

This evolution is also important in ensuring the Group does not suffer from, "*social value fatigue*", – the process of social value losing its impact and simply becoming a box-ticking exercise in the procurement framework. Through constant measuring and adaptation of approach, it is hoped that internally and externally (especially in relation to commissioners) that the term is kept fresh and relevant to current context.