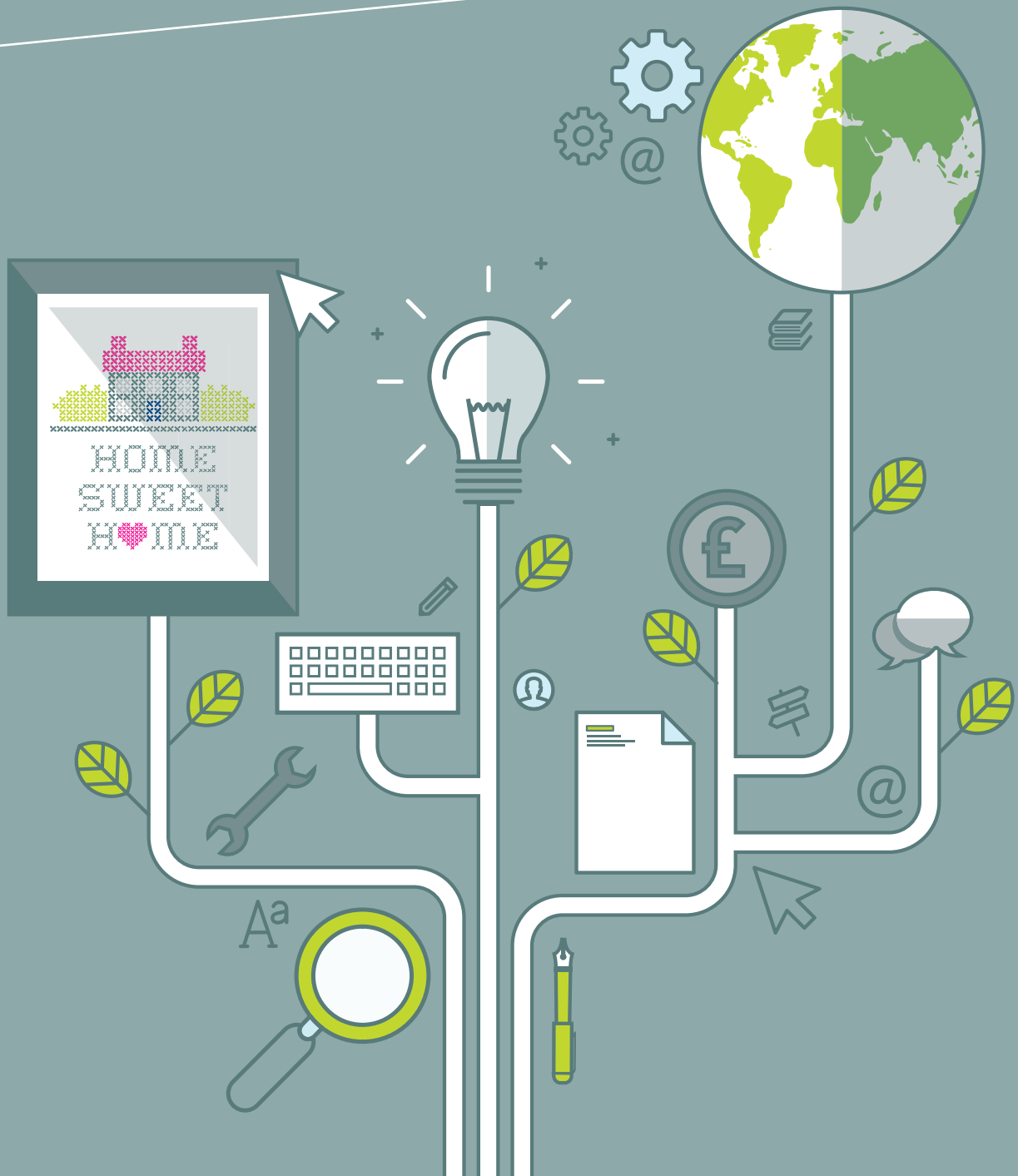


A Home, a Job,

a Future



Introduction

In a difficult economic environment and with recent changes to welfare, housing associations across the country have been stepping up and helping their tenants gain the experience and skills they need to get back into work. However, they could do so much more to help Government achieve its ambitions around skills and employment.

This report is for policy makers, politicians and local and national decision makers with an interest in housing and employment. It aims to build an understanding of what housing associations are already doing, and outlines how much more they could do with the right environment and policies in place.



39%

of housing associations currently offer employment and skills support with a further 28% planning to do so in the future.

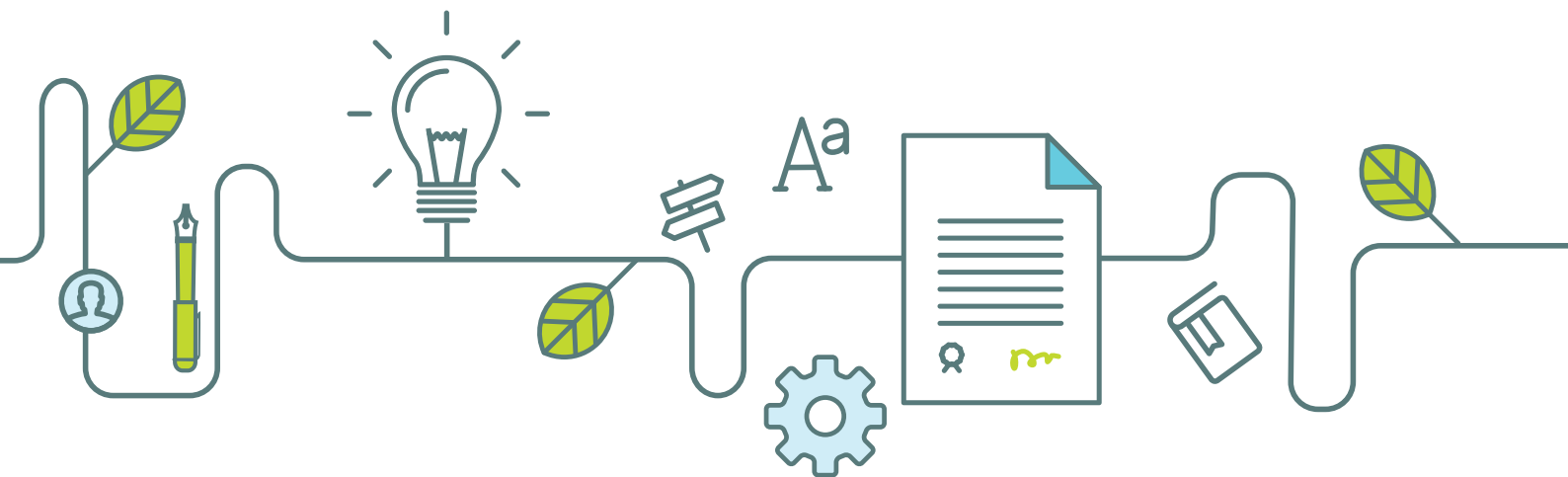


Housing associations are playing a crucial role in the Welfare to Work agenda. 'A Home, a Job, a Future' highlights the ways in which they are successfully supporting their residents and communities into employment, education and training. It also demonstrates the significant contribution of housing associations across England in reducing benefit dependency through their activities around employment. But there is an ambition to do more and the report concludes with recommendations for Government and its agencies, as well as national and local funding bodies, which can help unlock unexploited potential within the housing association sector.

Over a third (39%) of housing associations currently offer employment and skills support with a further 28% planning to do so in the future¹.

Housing associations provide two and a half million homes for more than five million people in England. They invest in helping to create strong, vibrant communities and support the health and wellbeing of their residents. Housing associations are in a strong position to contribute to the Welfare to Work agenda because they:

- have a unique relationship with their residents
- operate in some of our most deprived areas
- take a long-term approach to working with their residents and the communities in which their homes are based
- are major employers in their own right, with established supply chains which can provide further employment opportunities



¹ Ipsos MORI, National Housing Federation commissioned research, October 2014

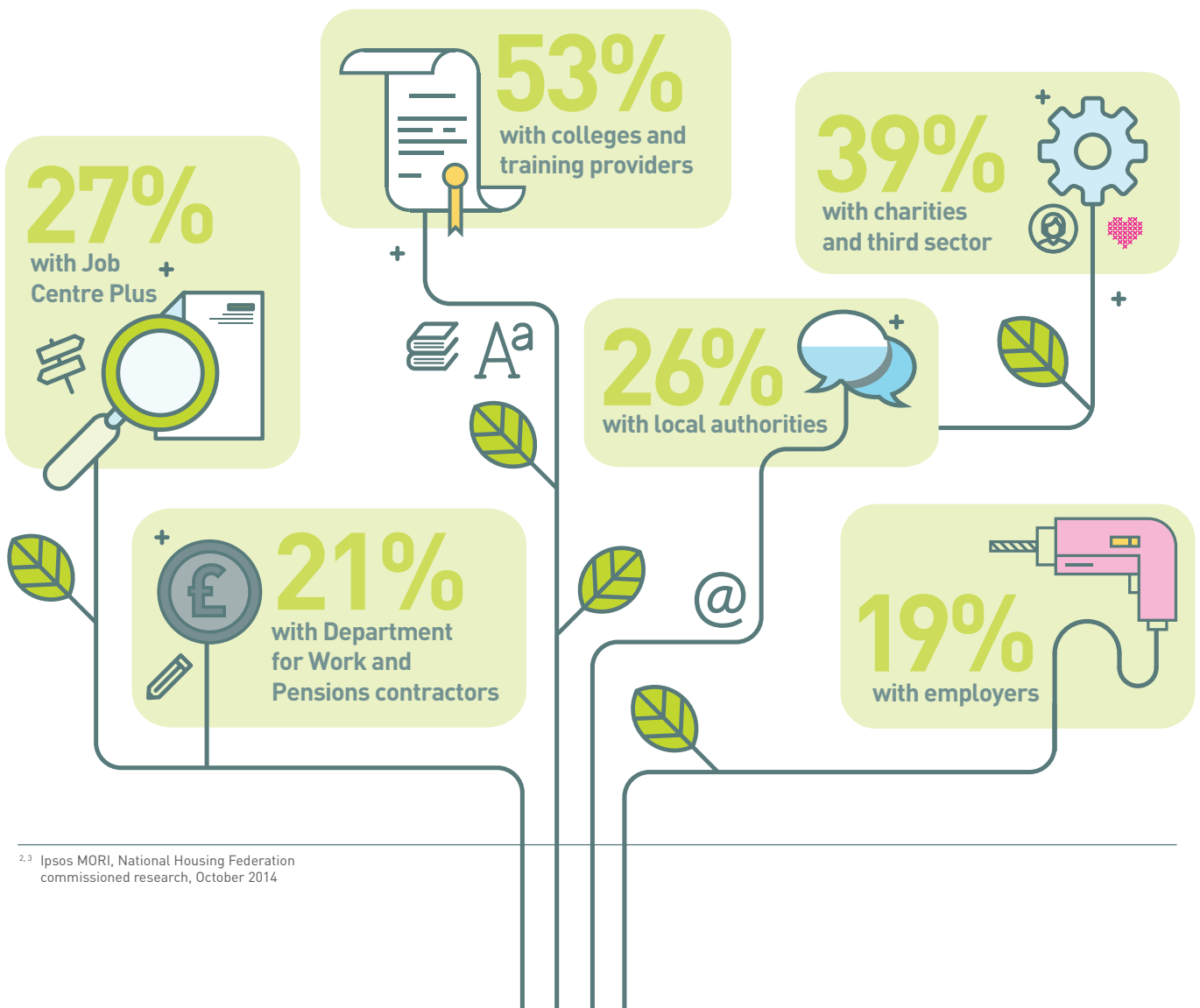
32%

of housing associations see supporting their residents, and the wider community, into employment, education or training as a top priority.

- have an investment in the success of their employment, training and skills programmes
- have a good understanding of the local employment market and strong relationships with other organisations across both the public and private sector
- use their own resources as well as attracting investment from partners.

In a recent National Housing Federation survey, carried out by Ipsos MORI, about a third (32%) of housing associations saw supporting their residents, and the wider community, into employment, education or training as a top priority for their organisation².

In delivering their employment and skills activities housing associations work with a range of partners³:



^{2,3} Ipsos MORI, National Housing Federation commissioned research, October 2014

Working in areas of greatest need

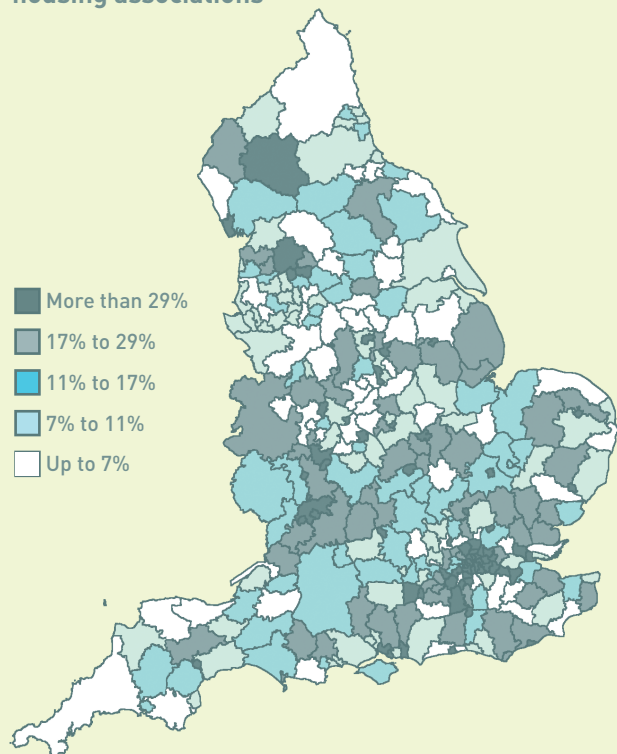
Housing associations work in some of the most deprived areas of the country, where employment opportunities are limited, health inequality is high, and levels of educational attainment are low.

For people living in social rented homes the unemployment rate is over 10%, much higher than for those in the private rented sector (6%) or among those who own their own homes (1%)⁴. While many social housing tenants are actively seeking work, they may face multiple barriers to employment, such as being a single parent, having other caring responsibilities, illness or disability, and low levels of skills and educational attainment. In some areas the severe lack of local job opportunities and the proliferation of seasonal, temporary and part-time work, including zero hours contracts, can be significant market led barriers. Quarterly data produced by the Work Foundation highlights the continued high level of underemployment across the economy, characterised by individuals wanting more hours than employers are willing to provide⁵. Just under a quarter of social housing residents are in full time work, with one in eight employed part time⁶.

As demand for housing association homes dramatically outstrips supply, the complexity of how to allocate such a scarce and sought after resource has become a major challenge for politicians, policy makers and housing professionals.

Applying certain conditions to encourage positive behaviours is one approach currently being explored, as well as shifting the balance towards local connection and promoting employment; moving away from the traditional prioritisation solely on the basis of housing need.

Proportion of homes owned by housing associations



⁴ Office for National Statistics (ONS), Census 2011

⁵ Work Foundation, Bell & Blanchflower Underemployment Index, 2014

⁶ Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) -English Housing Survey, July 2014 (latest figures for 2012-2013)

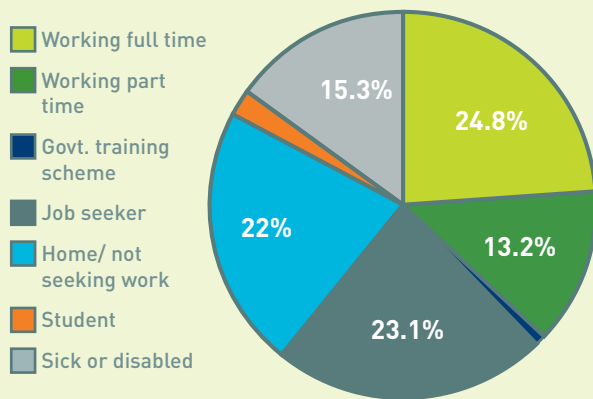
2.3 jobs

are supported in the UK economy for every affordable home built.

The latest figures show that, of working age households currently entering general needs housing association homes:

- over a third were employed (either part time or full time)
- over a third were either not seeking work or were sick or disabled
- just under a quarter were unemployed

Economic status of household reference person (working age and not retired) entering general needs social rented housing⁷



There are 3.6 million children living in poverty in England. Of these, 1.3 million are living in social rented housing⁸. There is increasing concern about long-term and inter-generational unemployment. Worklessness, low paid employment and inadequate benefits continue to be the three main causes of poverty in the UK⁹. Where social renters are in employment, they tend to have lower incomes than those in other tenures. Around a third had a household income of under £200 per week and over half (55%) had an income of less than £300 per week, compared with 15% of home owners and 28% of private renters who earned below this level¹⁰.

Recently, there has been a steep increase in the number of people living in social housing who are in receipt of housing benefit, from 245,000 to 411,000 in just three years, with around two thirds of all social renters getting support with their rent. Around a third of working households in social rented homes receive housing benefit, due to low or part time wages not covering housing costs¹¹.

With employment being seen as one of the primary routes out of poverty, housing associations are uniquely placed to provide support services to some of the hardest to reach households, to increase their ability to engage with skills development, training and employment.

⁷ CORE, general needs housing association lettings data, April 2013 to December 2013
⁸ Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Households Below Average Income (after housing costs), 2014

⁹ Child Poverty Action Group, 2010-2014

^{10,11} DCLG, English Housing Survey, July 2014 (latest figures for 2012-2013)

Providing solutions

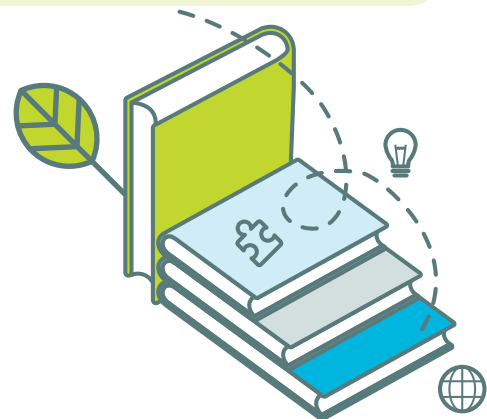
Housing associations are at the heart of thriving, resilient communities. They empower their residents and promote health and wellbeing, particularly in terms of financial inclusion and employment. Not only does this help tenants by enabling them to keep up with their bills and rent, but it also secures long-term rental income for the housing association. In our recent survey 61% of housing associations expected their employment and skills support to increase in direct response to the introduction of Universal Credit¹².

Housing associations have developed a range of approaches to help their residents become 'work ready', to support them in accessing existing employment and training opportunities, and bring new training and employment opportunities to the communities where they operate. Housing associations are major employers in their own right, have extensive supply chains, and often have significant build programmes, all of which support job creation. For example, investing in the building of one affordable home supports 2.3 jobs in the UK economy.¹³

Through having a good understanding of the needs and circumstances of the individuals and families living in their properties, and of the local employment market and partner agencies operating in their communities, housing associations are able to offer bespoke employment, education and training services.

61%

of housing associations expected their employment and skills support to increase in direct response to the introduction of Universal Credit.



¹² Ipsos MORI, National Housing Federation commissioned research, October 2014

¹³ Centre for Economic and Business Research (CEBR), analysis for National Housing Federation, 2014

Case Study 1

Affinity Sutton active in Bromley

Bromley is one of the most prosperous boroughs in London but there is a high level of inequality with pockets of concentrated deprivation. Almost 20,000 Bromley households live in a home owned and managed by a housing association.¹⁴

The overall unemployment rate among the working age population in Bromley (5.2%) is lower than for England (7.3%), and the Job Seekers Allowance and Employment Support Allowance claimant rates are also lower at 2.1% and 3.5%¹⁵.

But house prices and private rent levels are high, averaging £353,596 or £1,094 per month, pricing many individuals and families out of the market¹⁶. Currently almost 13,000 households, or nearly two thirds, of households living in housing association properties, are claiming housing benefit to help cover the cost of their home¹⁷.

With over 57,000 homes and a 100-year history, Affinity Sutton is one of the largest providers of affordable housing in England. As a business with a social purpose, it is committed to 'helping people put down roots' and improving life chances for residents. Affinity Sutton is the main provider of social housing in Bromley.

Ready2Work is their national employment service and helps residents throughout their journey back into work. It has been developed as part of their wider community investment programme, funded through Affinity Sutton's Community Foundation.

In 2013/2014 the Ready2Work team helped 881 people into work, placed 85 new apprentices, created 200 work placements, and had fantastic success with 3,400 training outcomes. A quarter of all residents supported by Ready2Work last year lived in the London Borough of Bromley, where Affinity Sutton has the largest concentration of housing (15,300 homes).

Ready2Work is designed to give a seamless service focusing on:

- Routes into work – Training programmes designed around the needs of the labour market and employers, with a strong focus on long term sustained employment.
- Apprenticeships – An internal programme that encourages Affinity Sutton managers to take on apprentices. The external programme is run in partnership with employers across major sectors.
- E-Learning – Online courses are free and open to all residents across the UK.
- In work support – All residents are offered in work support and free post-employment training to upskill them in the workplace.

¹⁴ Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), Statistical Data return, 2013

¹⁵ DWP, Statistical Tabulation Tool, February 2014

¹⁶ Land Registry, Sales Data 2013; Valuation Office Agency, Private Rental Market Statistics

¹⁷ DWP, Stat-Xplore, May 2014



For employers, Ready2Work provides account management and recruitment services that are free of charge. Major employers that work with Affinity Sutton include:

- British Gas
- Osborne
- Web Help UK
- Total Security Services

Ready2Work is complemented and supported by Affinity Sutton's digital and financial inclusion programmes, Get Connected and Money Matters, which help residents get online and manage their money.

“ Ready2Work has changed my life. Today I don't have a stress in the world, I am relaxed, chilled and life is going in the right direction. If job club didn't exist and if the staff weren't so supportive, this wouldn't have happened. I have the perfect job, perfect hours and life is good. ”

881

people were helped into work.

200

work placements were created.

3,400

successful training outcomes.



Case Study 2

Aspire Group active in Newcastle- under-Lyme

The borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme is a market town adjoining the city of Stoke-on-Trent. The decline of traditional coal mining and heavy manufacturing industries has left a very weak economic base.

Average weekly earnings are significantly lower than the national average, and whilst the unemployment rate is also lower (4.2% compared to 7.3%) the proportion of people claiming Employment and Support Allowance is higher (5.5% compared to 5.3%)¹⁸. Health in Newcastle-Under-Lyme is quite poor overall, in common with the rest of North Staffordshire. Skills and qualifications levels among the working age population in the district tend to be below national averages, with a higher proportion of people with no qualifications, and 4% of the wards in Newcastle-under-Lyme falling into the 10% most deprived in the country¹⁹.

Staffordshire-based Aspire Group owns and manages almost 10,000 homes and delivers a range of training and employment services to its own residents, and to the wider community.

Aspire recognised the lack of jobs in the area following the decline of traditional industry; that skill levels were low, and that there were pockets of significant deprivation. Therefore they took a

broader focus than just housing, aiming to tackle some of the underlying issues that were holding back the aspirations of their tenants.

In 2008, the group acquired PM Training, a leading independent training provider which has training centres in Stoke-on-Trent, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stafford and Leek. Aspire converted the training company from a private business to a social enterprise and it has more than doubled in size, becoming the largest provider of apprenticeships in Staffordshire. The company holds contracts with both the Education and Skills Funding agencies.

Overall, 80% of learners who completed a pre-apprenticeship study programme have gone on to jobs or apprenticeships through PM Training.

Around 10% of Aspire's employees are young apprentices. The company also works with over 900 local employers to provide work experience and apprenticeship opportunities which, through its supply chain alone, has created around 800 apprenticeship placements.

Aspire works with around 400 unemployed adult residents a year, offering help and advice through job clubs, support and one-to-one coaching, with 80% of those receiving support making positive progress.

¹⁸ DWP, Statistical Tabulation Tool, February 2014

¹⁹ DCLG, Indices of Multiple Deprivation, March 2011



Finally through Aspire's regeneration charity, 'The Realise Foundation', Aspire supports around 300 individuals a year, helping to break down barriers to employment. It provides apprenticeship grants, funding for specific training or qualifications (including driving lessons, where needed for employment), and helps pay for work clothes and equipment.

“ I thought about what I wanted to do and what I was good at. I am dyslexic and I used to have help at school, but I like being outside and getting my hands dirty, so I thought construction was the right thing for me. I have an image in front of me of what I want to reach, one day I'd like to be in charge of my own site, learning as much as I can from the job and always with a smile on my face. ”

400

unemployed adult residents a year get help from Aspire.

80%

of those receiving support make positive progress.

Case Study 3

Calico Enterprise active in Burnley

One third (33%) of the wards in the borough of Burnley in Lancashire fall into the top 10% most deprived areas of the country²⁰.

With an economy based on a declining manufacturing sector, the area suffers from high unemployment, low wages, out-migration and a struggling housing market. The overall unemployment rate among the working age population in Burnley (16%) is significantly higher than for England (7.3%). The Job Seekers Allowance claimant rate is higher than the national figure at 3.8%, while the Employment Support Allowance claimant rate is extremely high at 8.9%²¹. Significantly more than half of working age Burnley residents who are living in social housing are economically inactive or unemployed²².

Calico Enterprise, a wholly owned subsidiary within the Calico Group, created Constructing the Future (CtF) in 2010. This was one of the first shared apprenticeship initiatives run in partnership with the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) which aims to pool local procurement and set up appropriate training to create construction apprenticeships.

CtF operates across the North West, with all of the major housing associations, 12 local authorities and the majority of further education colleges working in partnership. It has created over 120 apprenticeships since its launch, with over 70% of the apprentices moving into permanent employment afterwards.

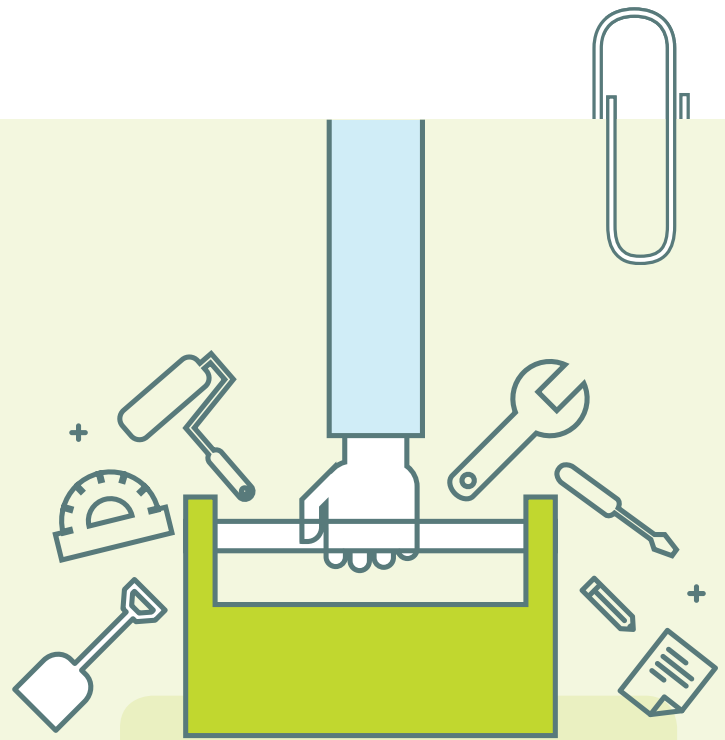
CtF has developed a flexible and cost effective approach which allows new contractors to host an apprentice with all of the recruitment, selection and management remaining the responsibility of CtF. They have also introduced the option for contractors to employ the apprentice at any stage of their placement, and they can still draw down the balance of CITB grant. Recent analysis shows this is becoming increasingly popular with contractors and is boosting the number of apprentice opportunities.

CtF has a client base of over 70 contractors, ranging from large multi-nationals including Balfour Beatty, Eric Wrights and Morgan Sindall, through to small-medium sized enterprises (SME's). CtF's apprentices have been placed on a variety of projects from small private developments and housing association refurbishment programmes, to major developments such as Building Schools for the Future and the development of Preston City Centre Retail Centre.

²⁰ DCLG, Indices of Multiple Deprivation, March 2011

²¹ DWP, Statistical Tabulation Tool, February 2014

²² ONS, Census 2011



Calico Enterprise's approach meets the principals and objectives within the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 and the shared apprenticeship model was identified as unique in the recent Richards Review on apprenticeships.

“ The last three years have been fantastic and I've been fortunate to have had the support of Calico, Burnley College and CITB. There are a lot more opportunities in construction than I realised. I want to pursue a professional career and train to be an architect. ”

120

apprenticeships have been created since Constructing the Future's launch.

70%

of the apprentices moved into permanent employment afterwards.

Case Study 4

Coast & Country active in Redcar and Cleveland

In the North East of England, Redcar and Cleveland is the largest borough in the Tees Valley. The economy has historically been dependent on the vast industrial complexes of the steel industry, chemicals and heavy engineering. But in recent years the area has become increasingly characterised by industrial decline, urban deprivation and out-migration of the working age population.

The unemployment rate in Redcar and Cleveland has reached 10%, with the number of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance almost double the national average (5.2% compared to 2.9%)²³. Almost a quarter of the wards in Redcar and Cleveland are in the top 10% most deprived wards in the country²⁴. Of the people living in social rented housing; just over 40% are employed; 20.5% are economically inactive due to sickness or disability, and 16.7% are unemployed²⁵. Over 12,000 households in the area are living in a housing association home²⁶.

As a well-known and trusted landlord, Coast & Country is ideally placed to provide information, advice and guidance services to those hardest to reach and furthest from the labour market.

Coast & Country's Journey into Work programme is directly linked to the National Careers Service and provides volunteering opportunities and paid work experience placements, offering something for everyone, whatever their circumstances.

The latest initiative is the innovative Pop-Up Work Hubs, designed to reach parts of the community most in need, where people face multiple barriers to finding employment.

Pop-Up Work Hubs are run at local community venues, offering information and advice in familiar surroundings. Participants get a tailored action plan, showing them the steps they need to take to move closer to the job market.

The Pop-Up Work Hubs have been strongly promoted through referrals via rent officers, money advice teams and partner agencies. Websites, social media, events and presentations to other professionals working with the target customer group have also been key to raising their profile.

Half day sessions are run at three different venues. Individuals get practical support with online job searching, CV writing and interview practice and preparation. The sessions also provide motivational support, as well as advice on where to find additional training and other help.

²³ DWP, Statistical Tabulation Tool, February 2014

²⁴ DCLG, Indices of Multiple Deprivation, March 2011

²⁵ ONS, Census, 2011

²⁶ HCA, Statistical Data Return, 2013



Since March 2014, 160 people from priority groups have attended the Pop-Up Work Hubs and, with the support of the whole range of Journey into Work services, there is a 60% success rate. Coast & Country define success as a participant accessing work, volunteering, work placements or further/higher education, or setting themselves up as self-employed. Coast & Country are, therefore, on track to achieve their target of 250 people accessing the service and 40% of those securing volunteering opportunities, accredited training or employment by the end of 2014.

160

people from priority groups have attended the Pop-Up Work Hubs.

60%

success rate with the support of the whole range of Journey into Work services.

“ Since participating in Journey into Work, my confidence has grown massively. I started my journey with some good skills, but without the confidence to apply them. Now I feel as though I can take on anything. It’s made a massive difference to me. ”



Case Study 5

Family Mosaic active in Hackney

Hackney is an inner London borough which is home to over a quarter of a million residents. Around 20% of Hackney residents live in a home owned and managed by a housing association.²⁷

Hackney has significant levels of deprivation with nearly half of the borough's wards being among the top 10% most deprived areas in England²⁸. The overall unemployment rate amongst the working age population in Hackney (11.1%) is significantly higher than for England (7.3%), and the Job Seekers Allowance and Employment Support Allowance claimant rates are also high at 4.4% and 6.1%²⁹.

House prices and private rent levels are high, in keeping with the overheating London property market, averaging £432,075 or £1,490 per month³⁰. With average wages only reaching £30,035 a year, many individuals and families are priced out of the market³¹. Currently almost 42,000 households in the borough are claiming housing benefit to cover the cost of their home. Of these, around 16,000 are living in a housing association home³².

Family Mosaic provides around 23,000 homes for rent in London and the South East, of which more than 4,000 are in the London Borough of Hackney.

One third of their residents are out of work and in April 2012 they made a commitment to support 1,000 people from across their whole area of operation into sustainable, secure employment within three years. As of June 2014 they have helped 850 people into employment and are on track to exceed their initial expectations.

The Employment Boot Camp (EBC) is an intensive pre-employment course designed to support their harder to engage customers on this journey. Delivered over six weeks, EBC offers a personal approach that supports individual development, whilst challenging the attitudes and behaviours that often form barriers to gaining employment.

Participants work through five modules, in both individual coaching and group sessions, covering:

- Interview and interpersonal skills
- Self confidence
- Fitness, health and vitality
- Nutrition and wellbeing
- Money management

²⁷ Hackney Borough Council, Hackney Facts and Figures Leaflet, July 2014 update
²⁸ DCLG, Indices of Multiple Deprivation, March 2011
²⁹ DWP Statistical Tabulation Tool, February 2014

³⁰ Land Registry Sales Data 2013; Valuation Office Agency, Private Rental Market Statistics
³¹ ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2013
³² DWP, Stat-Xplore, May 2014



“ I was unemployed for years and no one was able to help me. I’d given up on myself and then boot camp saved me. I’m working again, can pay my way and can hold my head up high. ”

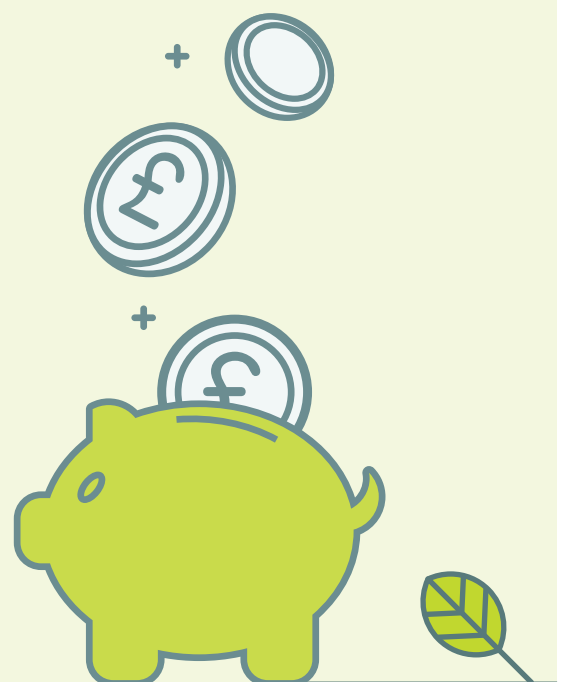
Overall, 87% of participants remain engaged in a positive activity such as education or training after the course finishes, with 45% of all delegates gaining employment within six months. Of the 23 residents from the borough of Hackney who completed the course, 21% have secured sustained employment.

Family Mosaic estimates their EBC costs £1,000 per person for the whole course or £83 per person per day. It is just one part of Family Mosaic’s wider employment service. Overall, Family Mosaic estimates it spends £1,907 per job outcome, which they consider to be an individual being in work for longer than three months³³.

Family Mosaic have started working in partnership with Network Housing to deliver EBC, which has lowered the cost per head significantly. As the positive impact of the scheme has been clearly demonstrated, there is now potential for Family Mosaic to partner up with other London housing associations to deliver this programme to as many people as possible.

87%

of participants remain engaged in a positive activity such as education or training after the course finishes.



³³ Family Mosaic, Reasons to be Cheerful, Job outcomes 2012-2013, 2014

Case Study 6

Yarlington Housing Group active in South Somerset

South Somerset is the largest district in England. Sparsely populated, it has wide rural areas and a network of market towns. Property is at a premium, with house prices over nine times local salaries³⁴.

The unemployment rate is much lower than the national average, at just 2.9% compared to England's 7.3%³⁵. However, this masks some significant pockets of deprivation, with over 10,000 householders needing to claim Housing Benefit to cover the cost of renting their home³⁶. As in many rural areas; a lack of access to affordable housing, minimal transport infrastructure, low and seasonal wages and a shortage of employment opportunities can all be barriers to local people finding secure jobs.

Yarlington Housing Group owns and manages almost 10,000 homes across Somerset, Devon and Dorset. In 2013 they developed and piloted an approach for helping new residents identify and achieve their goals, by agreeing a Household Ambition Plan as a condition of their tenancy.

This was designed to encourage residents to think through what their ambitions are for the future and identify the support they would need to achieve their goals, and to explicitly link this to the provision of social rented housing.

The majority of ambitions were focussed on employment and training and also featured improved health and wellbeing.

In addition to its own in-house employment support, Yarlington works with partner agencies to provide a range of services from job clubs and mentoring, to mental health peer support and financial support. This has led to the creation of Yarlington Employment Services (Y.E.S.), a partnership with Inspired to Achieve (I2A), who specialise in supporting people into employment, training and education. Yarlington has announced recently that it is bringing I2A into its group structure.

Yarlington is one of a number housing associations currently exploring introducing an element of conditionality into the provision of social housing. This conditionality means a tenancy will only be offered to those prepared to make commitments over and above the traditional tenancy agreement clauses. Another example is Bromford Group's 'The Bromford Deal', which focuses on what customers can do rather than on what they can't; inspiring them to improve their own lives and become fully participating members of society.

³⁴ Land Registry Sales Data, 2013; ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2013

³⁵ NOMIS, Annual Population Survey, 2013/14

³⁶ DWP, Stat-Xplore, May 2014



The Bromford Deal is designed to enable customers to use their tenancy as a springboard, to take personal responsibility, build their own local networks and, with support, take steps towards working, training or volunteering. If either or both parties find that the Deal isn't working, they discuss whether being a Bromford customer is right for that tenant.

The Yarlington pilot recently concluded that making the Household Ambition Plan a mandatory condition of tenancy was not necessary as the majority of households were keen to get involved with the range of support services Yarlington provides.

“ Through the Household Ambition Plan I was introduced to Inspired to Achieve and the Y.E.S. Project, who helped me look for work and apply for jobs. The service was really helpful and honest and everyone went out of their way to get me where I wanted to be. ”

Residents are being encouraged to engage with employment and skills support as a condition of their tenancy.

Working together

The Give Us A Chance Consortium

The Give Us A Chance Consortium (GUAC) aims to be the leading employment and skills consortium in the social housing sector.

It is a national group of 27 housing associations and one other social landlord, who focus on getting unemployed residents into work.

From its launch in 2011, members of the consortium have been working in partnership with Work Programme prime contractors to develop innovative employment solutions for residents and the wider communities in which its members are based.

The consortium developed 'Proving Talent' which helps young unemployed residents onto the first rung of the employment ladder. The Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (CESI) has independently reviewed five of the Proving Talent pilots in:

- Birmingham – Castle Vale Community Housing Association working with EOS
- Southampton/Eastleigh – Radian Group working with Action for Employment (A4e)
- Newcastle and Manchester – Guinness Housing Partnership working with Avanta
- South West London – Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP) working with Careers Development Group
- London and the South East – Amicus Horizon working with G4S

CESI recommended that Proving Talent is continued and expanded as part of housing providers' wider worklessness and access to work strategies. As one of the housing associations states "We have always invested in developing the skills of young people. We recognise that lots of young people in our communities are seriously disadvantaged and that they need opportunities. We see our business as providing a platform for some of those opportunities."

GUAC is now developing further models to widen employment opportunities for residents, including whole community solutions to tackle worklessness, and targeted help to enable long-term unemployed people to become self-employed.

“ We know this approach is one of the best ways of lifting people out of poverty, and have, through new partnerships and schemes, achieved real results on the ground. There is a wealth of collective knowledge in the Consortium, and we have all experienced the satisfaction of creating great employment opportunities for our residents. ”
Kate Shone, Chair of GUAC



Conclusion



The case studies in this report demonstrate that housing associations' training and employment programmes are making a huge difference; lifting people out of poverty and supporting them in their journey from welfare into work. Their performance on employment and skills is already matching that of other providers, but they have the vision and ambition to achieve even more.

Housing associations have a unique relationship with their residents and can use their local knowledge of the communities where they operate to develop individual solutions in the context of the local labour market. As yet, they are a largely unrecognised resource that could be linked into wider employment and skills initiatives far more effectively, supporting government objectives to reduce unemployment and economic inactivity, particularly amongst those who face multiple barriers to entering the workforce.

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) argues that the current Work Programme is 'underperforming' because it is not delivering for those who are furthest from the workforce. They also state that local labour market conditions are critical to success or failure, and that the Work Programme does not coordinate and sequence with local delivery of other public services³⁷.

The issue of scale and risk has largely prevented housing associations from becoming prime contractors for the Work Programme, and the experiences of those who have been sub-contractors for it have been mixed.

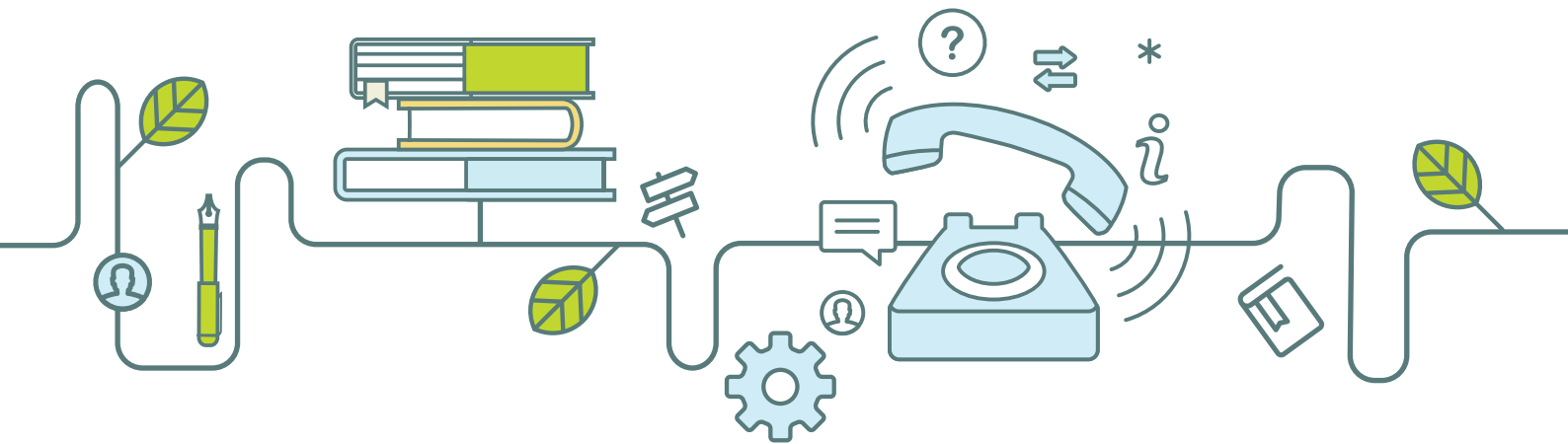
Some have reported that it is not viable under the payment by results system, because this exclusive focus on employment outcomes means there's not enough funding for helping more vulnerable people, who are further from the workplace, in taking smaller steps on their way towards employment³⁸.

In this report we have demonstrated that, as the Government considers the design of future mainstream and specialist outsourced Welfare to Work provision, there is a clear role for housing associations; in terms of both needs-led and demand-side interventions. With the right conditions the sector has the capacity and the appetite to do more.

Housing associations are already delivering a range of employment and skills services and are drawing on their own resources to do so. They have developed good working relationships with their Local Enterprise Partnerships on the Growth Deals and the EU Structural Investment Funds Growth Programme. With better integration across the employment and skills agendas at Government level, as well as improved targeting of funding and closer links between Work Programme prime contractors, training providers, local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships, housing associations can bring some of the hardest to reach unemployed and economically inactive households closer to the workplace.

³⁷ Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), *Alright for Some? Fixing the Work Programme Locally*, June 2014

³⁸ The Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (CESI), *Press Release*, 19 August 2014



What do we need for the future?

Housing associations must be considered as crucial partners for consultation in the future design and commissioning of employment programmes if we are to achieve the best possible results for housing association residents and the wider communities they serve.

National and local funding agencies need to be aware of the significant investment and expertise that housing associations currently put into employment and skills programmes. We need to see greater support for co-investment models and collaborative contracting, as well as improved partnership with business, if we are to achieve these results on a greater scale.

Housing associations, as major employers, have a successful track record in providing apprenticeships and in offering employment opportunities through their supply chains. As policy in this area moves through apprenticeship reform, and towards Employer Ownership of Skills, their potential contribution needs to be considered.

Department for Work and Pensions funding needs to be better targeted in order to support longer term unemployed people and those furthest from the workplace. Should funding for this client group be devolved to local level then housing associations are uniquely placed to provide services for this group.

Housing associations already have established partnerships with local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships. In the current environment Local Enterprise Partnerships should back local investment strategies that place housing associations at the centre of employment and skills programmes for local people.

Housing associations welcome the opportunity to further demonstrate the value of the contribution they make on this agenda. They have the commitment and ambition to significantly extend their employment and skills offer where conditions allow.

The National Housing Federation is the voice of affordable housing in England. We believe that everyone should have the home they need at a price they can afford.

That's why we represent the work of housing associations and campaign for better housing. Our members provide two and a half million homes for more than five million people. And each year they invest in a diverse range of neighbourhood projects that help create strong, vibrant communities.

#AHomeAJobAFuture

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