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# **Community Investment Strategy Review November 2020**

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## Report Purpose

The Community Investment team requested feedback on their 3-year Strategy. Following the introduction of Southern 360, the team also asked for feedback on their new brochure which was formed to promote their service offers.

## Consultation Themes

The three themes within the strategy were **Tackling Poverty** and **Sustaining Tenancy, Health and Wellbeing** and **Neighbourliness and Community**. Within each of these themes there were a series of aims.

Residents were asked to rank the aims in order of importance, to put forward any additional aims and to provide feedback to the overall strategy.

## Consultation Methodology

This report sets out the findings of the consultation using **Quantitative** and **Qualitative** data analysis.

*In line with standard research practice, and due to the numbers of residents involved, the findings cannot be viewed as providing representative feedback on the views of all of the Group's residents. To achieve this we would need to combine this programme with a survey exercise that would deliver statistically reliable and significant data, however these results do provide an insight into the views and opinions of residents.*

The forms of engagement undertaken were:

- Online survey
- Word document template replicating survey
- Telephone call to informally obtain feedback

The forms of engagement undertaken were part of a contingency plan put together in response to Covid 19 preventing face-to-face consultation.

- Residents interested in 'service improvement' and/or 'strategy reviews' were invited to take part. We also reached out to residents who had recently engaged with the Community Investment team.
- Email: Residents with a known email address were sent a letter from Matt and John, a word document template, online survey link, copy of brochure and the offer to provide their feedback during a telephone call.
- Online survey: Residents were able to click a link to an overview and video clip introduction to Southern 360.
- Text: Residents with no email address, were sent a text with the option of a survey link - should they have access to the internet - or to contact myself to arrange a telephone call.
- Landline/Post: Residents were contacted by the telephone to initiate contact.

All calls were scheduled over a 10-day period – AM, PM or evening.

The project timescale was reduced from the contingency plan to enable the Community Investment team to ensure the wording of the 'aims' of the themes were self-explanatory to the reader. I provided advice from a resident involvement perspective.

Additionally, I was asked to create a staff questionnaire, to monitor responses and report back to the team.

## Respondent profile

For the purposes of this consultation, the Resident Involvement team were not required to request age or ethnicity from the residents participating in the review.

We agreed to gain details of location – Isle of Wight, North and South – to help assess themes across Southern Housing Groups regions. On the appendix to the consultation, we have provided a spreadsheet with a breakdown of towns and counties linked to the ‘themes’ and ‘aims.’

No respondents with a mobile number accessed the online survey by the link sent to them.

46 residents took part in this consultation.

The table below outlines the ways in which the residents took part and their tenure types:

Tenure types	Telephone call	Online	Word Document	Totals
Tenant	24	11	5	40
Shared Owner	2	3	0	5
Leaseholder	0	1	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	26	15	5	46

The table below outlines how many residents took part in the South, North and Isle of Wight regions and the ways in which they took part:

Tenure types	South	North	Isle of Wight	Totals
Calls	15	8	3	26
Word Document	2	3	0	5
Online	6	6	3	15
<b>Totals</b>	23	17	6	46

## Average participation time:

**11 minutes** to complete Online survey (3 Hours 40 minutes total)

**11 minutes** to complete Word document template replicating survey (55 minutes total)

**31 minutes** Telephone calls to informally obtain feedback (13 hours 25 minutes total)

Please note, the Word document template average participation time is based on the format of the Online survey completion.

## Consultation findings

Below, we have provided a quantitative data analysis based on the findings to the key questions received via the Online Survey and completed word document survey:

Chart 1:

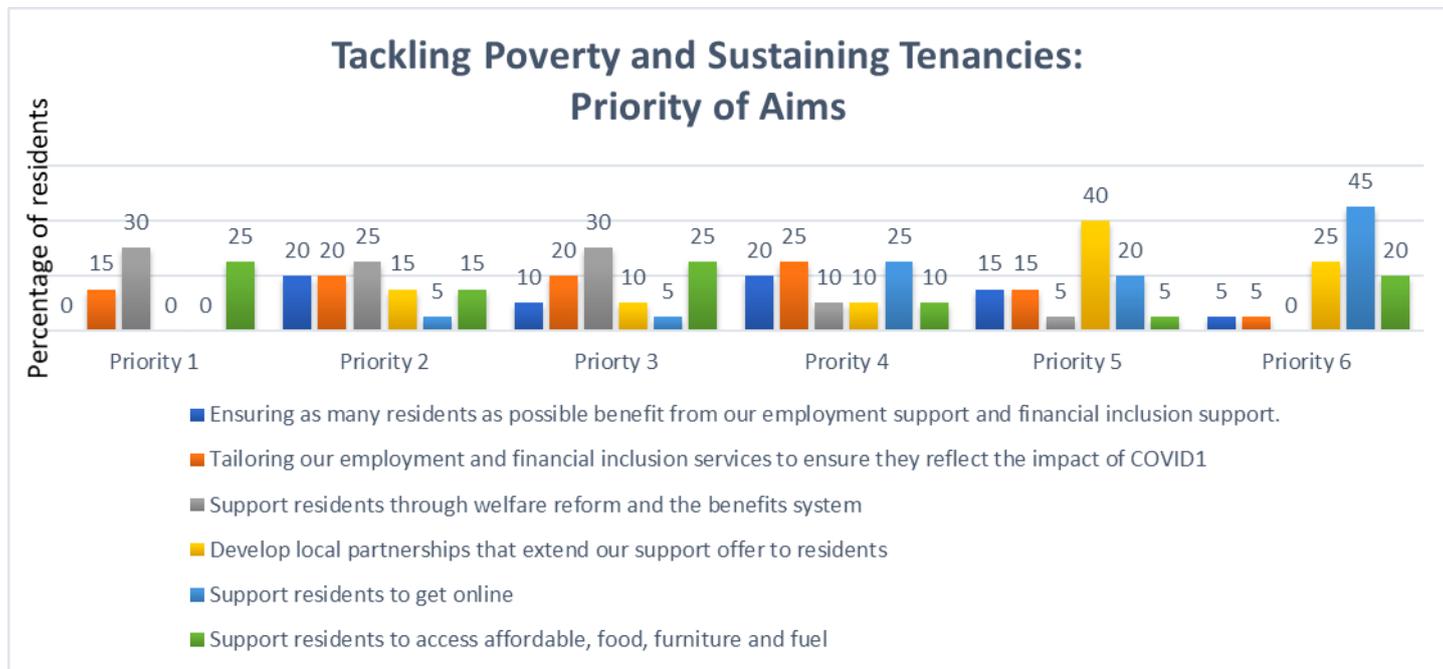


Chart 2:

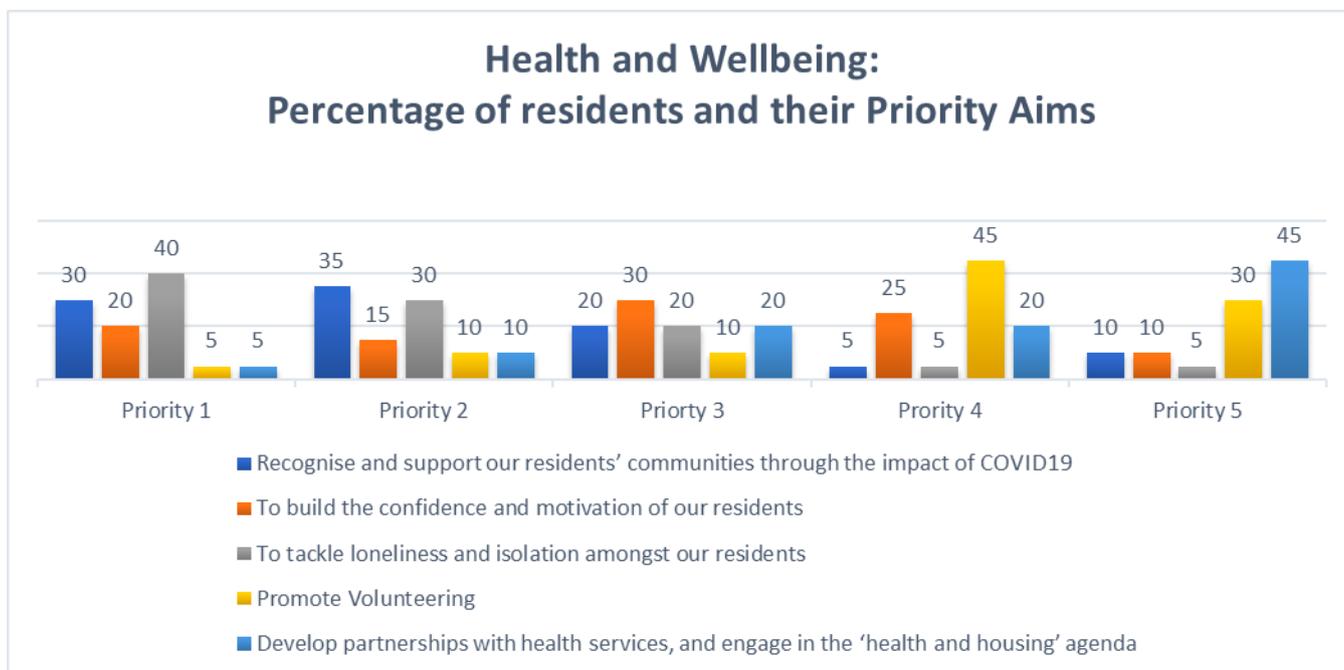


Chart 3:

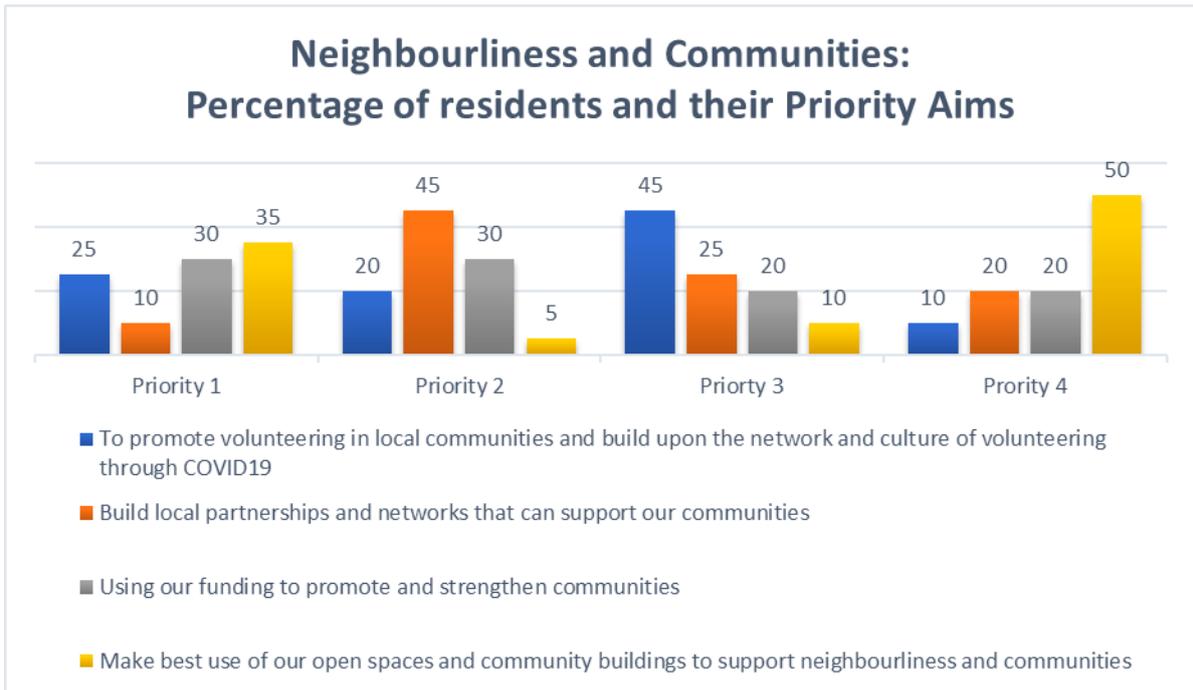
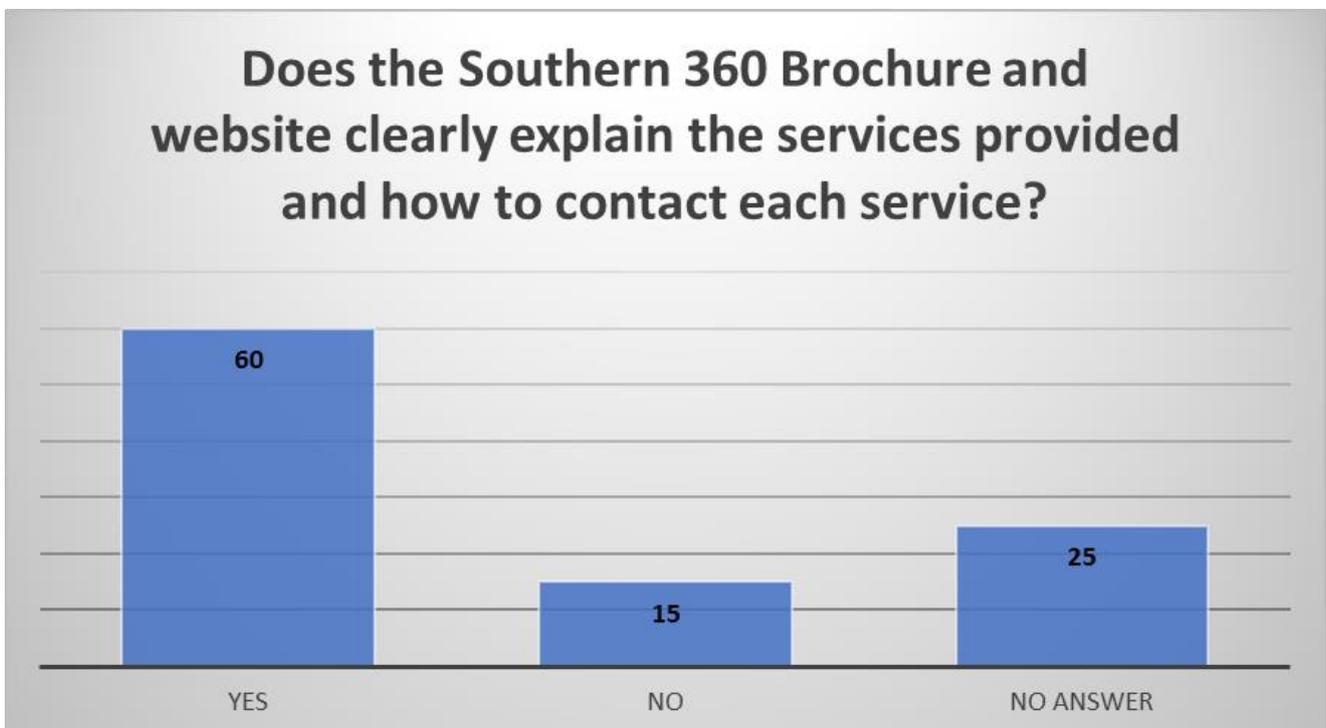


Chart 4:



## Summary of quantitative data:

Please refer to the charts above, indicating the top and bottom and the attached spreadsheet.

**Chart 1: Tackling Poverty and Sustaining Tenancies** ‘Support residents through welfare reform and the benefits system’ and ‘Ensuring as many residents as possible benefit from our employment support and financial inclusion support’, were chosen as the priority aims. Support to get online was the *least important* of the priorities.

**Chart 2: Health and Wellbeing** To tackle loneliness and isolation amongst our residents - 40% chose this option as their Priority aim and 30% chose ‘Recognise and support our residents’ communities through the impact of COVID19’

**Chart 3: Neighbourliness and Communities** ‘Make best use of our open spaces and community buildings to support neighbourliness and communities’, was the *top* priority but 50% listed this also as the *lowest* priority in a divided vote.

**Chart 4: Brochure and Southern 360 website customers** Residents said: ‘Yes I think it sets things out well’ and ‘Not Bad. Says it all there. Wants to be short and concise.’ but some did comment that all brochure services ‘provide the same phone number’ under each section and the website ‘It explains the services in mind but there is no links to how or who to contact.’

## Isle of Wight, North and South trends

We looked at any differentiating trends between these 3 areas:

### Tackling Poverty and Sustaining Tenancies

#### Isle of Wight:

With 3 people taking part in the quantitative data on the Isle of Wight, there was no clear top priority for residents with this Theme.

**Support residents to get online:** With 2 votes for Priority 6 and 1 vote for Priority 5 this was the *least important* aim.

#### North:

Positive:

‘Ensuring as many residents as possible benefit from our employment support and financial inclusion support’, ‘Support residents through welfare reform and the benefits system’ and ‘Support residents to access affordable, food, furniture and fuel,’ all scored well, mainly in priority 1 and 2 categories.

Negative:

‘Support residents to get online’ and ‘Develop local partnerships that extend our support offer to residents’ scored badly, mainly in priority 5 and 6 categories.

#### South:

Positive:

‘Support residents through welfare reform and the benefits system’ was the clear priority aim in the South – with all 6 residents choosing Priority 1 to 3, with 3 indicating priority 1.

Negative:

**‘Support residents to get online’** and **‘Develop local partnerships that extend our support offer to residents’** were the categories that scored worst.

## Health and Wellbeing

### Isle of Wight:

Positive:

The quantitative results for this Theme were not conclusive.

Negative:

**‘Volunteering’** and **‘Building Confidence and Motivation’** were the lowest priorities.

### North:

Positive:

**‘Recognise and support our residents’ communities through the impact of COVID19’** with 3 Priority 1 preferences and **‘To build the confidence and motivation of our residents’** with 2 Priority 1 preferences.

Negative:

**‘Volunteering’** and **‘Partnerships’** were the lowest priorities.

### South:

Positive:

**‘To tackle loneliness and isolation amongst our residents’** was the clear priority in the South for this Aim with 4 Priority 1 choices and all 6 responses being between Priority 1 and Priority 3 categories.

Negative:

**‘Volunteering’** and **‘Partnerships’** were the lowest priorities.

## Neighbourliness and Communities

### Isle of Wight:

Positive:

**‘Using our funding to promote and strengthen communities’** was the top priority within this Aim

Negative:

There was no clear indication for the least important priority.

### North:

The results were very mixed for this theme in the North with no clear favourite.

### South:

Positive:

The aim to **'Make best use of our open spaces and community buildings to support neighbourliness and communities'** scored 4 Priority 1 rankings out of 6 – with the other two respondents ranking this Aim the lowest.

## Summary of qualitative data analysis

Below, we have provided a qualitative data analysis based on the findings of our conversations with residents during a telephone call.

- 57% of the total respondents provided feedback to this consultation during a telephone conversation.
- Residents with SHG for over 20 years were not aware of the services provided by the Community Investment team prior to their engagement with the service or their involvement in this consultation.
- Each resident found it helpful to focus on their personal situation and/or their own community when considering the themes and aims.
- Residents said **'Support to get online'** was of value, but there was need for ongoing financial assistance and for recognition of band width and area capability (Isle of Wight) to be considered strongly.

Residents considered all aims to be important and of need. We have pinpointed aspects of additional feedback relatable to them.

### Isle of Wight:

- Grant funding required to help kick start employment for young people
- Grant funding required to help elder people access affordable day trips and replace the usual trips to 'free entry' locations.
- Support on-line at local hubs operated by town/parish councils – weighted against concern of bandwidth issues and poor mobile signals due to cliff's.

### North:

- **Neighbourliness and Communities** was the key theme in this area. **'Using our funding to promote and strengthen communities'** and **'Make best use of our open spaces and community buildings to support neighbourliness and communities'** are instrumental to

residents asking for help from Resident Involvement to consult and work with the community investment project, grant and volunteer teams to improve where they lived.

- Multi-tenure condensed areas were identified as factors prohibiting the community due to ASB, the look and feel of the internal of blocks, managing agents having knowledge of which blocks paid which charges and a lack of unity between the residents living in the different tenures.

### South:

- All three themes featured prominently
- **Tackling Poverty and Sustaining Tenancies** and **Health and Wellbeing** were identified by residents as key themes linked together. Early Intervention is required to help mental/emotional wellbeing and reach out prior to debts, for example, reaching a higher level.
- **Neighbourliness and Communities** Some residents volunteered in the community prior to Poverty and Wellbeing deteriorating and some wanted to volunteer and access grants to support their community once adversity had been overcome.

### FSO/ESO referrals: (inclusive of all areas)

Residents from FSO and ESO referrals also took part by completing the online survey or word document

- The majority of referrals were from ESO's and FSO's in the South. Unsurprisingly, the trends from these telephone conversations replicate the trends of South.
- All of the residents were 'Tenants' in general needs properties.
- Their engagement with Community Investment was by referral from an internal team, all bar one - an FSO undertaking an initial tenancy sign-up for Housing and handing over the keys to the tenant.
- The link between their **Health and Wellbeing** and support received to gain employment or gain access to benefits they qualified for, were heavily linked and reliable on the qualities of the all-round qualities of the team.
- Residents suggested adding comments to the Brochure to demonstrate the accessibility and staff members they would be working with.

Compliments gained during my communications with these residents have been added to the attached spreadsheet.

**Grants:**

- One resident thought his daughter could not access educational equipment through Course grants. Another resident said the FSO was enabling her son to get access to Course grants.
- Residents were unaware of the Grants or the range of Grants that could be accessed.

**Referrals:**

- **5 referrals have been made to Grants/Hannah so far. Other residents have been sent links to the grants section of the Southern 360 website.**
- **7 Resident Involvement forms have been sent to ESO/FSO referrals**

**Feedback:**

Compliments received from FSO/ESO referrals have been added to the attached spreadsheet. Below we have provided feedback from Involved residents:

'There's this (Community Investment) and I can be proud of that. I want to be proud of my landlord.'

'To me you seem to be heading in the right direction for all of us to be of help and service to others.'

'Great you are listening to your clients, their needs, whether financial, mental or into work or volunteering. Encourage those that don't need help to help their neighbours.'

**Other Suggestions:**

The team asked us to collate any other feedback or suggestions from respondents:

Trend:	Suggestion:
Training opportunities	<p>'Monthly newsletter on employment and training opportunities'</p> <p>'...people should be encouraged to understand the credit system and Universal Credit to their best advantage.... help of charities to help them access their needs.'</p>
Communication	<p>'Communicate with residents properly and involve them more'</p> <p>'A core contact person who is responsible for our patch'</p> <p>'Encourage communities to work together and support each other....make it easier to get in touch with management and an efficient response to whatever issue is important to them.'</p>
Community	<p>'Monthly community meeting/dialogue with residents very crucial and essential. We will have many helpful and useful ideas and suggestions that can improve the quality of the community service.'</p>

	<p>'Building partnerships will be an important issue going forward'</p> <p>'Once people feel confident and motivated they can go out into society to make a difference.'</p> <p>'Optimism is needed for health and wellbeing...confidence.. and motivation is first...applies to loneliness too. I believe people are healthier and happier if they are busy, have plans and a reason to socialise. Getting people out into the community by volunteering will open doors to friendships and a reason to go out and develop new skills amongst positive people.'</p>
Covid 19	<p>'...SHG should fund social groups for sport, music, education and other social activities to encourage young and older people out and about safely in their community. Socialising and communication is the best form of activity to keep people fit, well, motivated and fight loneliness... possibly to set up groups to volunteer to help neighbours, introductions to activities set up by local charities... to help friends and neighbours to feel valued. Open spaces and gardens are good for the mind and morale, and to hear nature and know there is life outside.'</p>

## Report summary

The key outcomes have been summarised and reflect majority opinion from the qualitative and quantitative data:

### Tackling Poverty and Sustaining Tenancies – Health and Wellbeing

Residents recently supported by FSO's and ESO's fed back the **importance of the emotional and mental wellbeing** being rebuilt prior to working on **Employment and Financial Skills**. **Early assistance** is key

### Barriers

**Language** barriers and bringing different **cultures** together, if residents would like to get together.

**Tenures**; different legal **agreements, standards** of properties provided (including communal) and **payments for upkeep**

**Age groups**; 'Over 55's' now include younger, **mixed** age-group of blocks, single, young, couples, elder. Different **needs**

### Grants and Community Centres/Hubs

Residents want to make greater use of existing **hubs** and **community centres** and were unaware of **grants** for **community activities**

### Aims – all important

Residents found it hard to prioritise the **aims** and mainly saw them **all as important**. It then came down to **area specifics** and **what is required**

### Grants

Residents unsure **who can access** them within the family to help with costs  
Residents **unaware** of the **range of grants** available  
**Support** required to **apply** and for initial **set-up** of projects

### Residents of SHG for 22 and 30 years were not aware of the services provided by Community Investment

Some residents needed to be sold what aspects of Southern 360 related to them before contributing by telephone

### Support to get Online

**Signal strength, cost** of broadband and **Data** Usage for Mobiles where **no WIFI** in homes were reasons for low scoring and support requirements

### Promote Volunteering to help isolation and employment

Residents see **isolation** as a **risk** and **volunteering** as a **wellbeing** and **employment benefit**

## Recommendations

The key recommendations have been summarised and reflect majority opinion from the qualitative and quantitative data:

### Tackling Poverty and Sustaining Tenancies

**Early intervention** - low level rent arrears. Call to residents with **offer of assistance** to **avoid escalation** of mental health and debt

**Moving In** – Basic **essentials**; cooker, fridge. **Support** to not feel alone

### Analysis of areas

Working in **partnership** with **Resident Involvement** where residents have identified needs, to **consult with residents** on what the Community Investment '**Offer**' is to the area and their **choices** within the offer.

### Promotion of Community Investment

Use **feedback from residents** using the service to **encourage** others

**Pinpoint** what aspects of **service** will assist different **communities** (including sheltered)

**Posters** in blocks to advertise service

**Pop-up events** – go local to promote

**Promote** services other team members undertake – Grants, Volunteering, Community Project Work, Community Centres, ESO/FSO, RI Involvement and Consultations

### Ongoing support

Residents highlighted the benefit of receiving details of further Community Investment Opportunities such as the following:

#### Links to courses

Information about **Grants** and support to **Apply** and **Action** for the **benefit** of the community.

Information about **Volunteering/community project consultations**

### Community Centres Projects

**Accessible** and **Affordable** to local residents.

**Investment** to enable all ages of communities to enjoy.

**Enable** best use of spaces available

### Covid 19

**Call** isolated residents - identify isolated versus independence

**Ensure** everyone is aware of assistance during Covid 19 – including non-digital customers  
**Enable** Charities/organisations to continue

## Feedback from Project Leads

### **Matt Smith (Head of Community Investment South) and John Gleeson (Head of Community Investment North)**

We have combined the strategy feedback together with the feedback on our new Southern 360 Community Investment Brochure and presented the recommendations to the SHG committee

Residents agreed with our key aims and didn't feel we had missed anything in terms of key areas

Residents felt our top priorities should be to:-

- Ensure as many residents as possible benefit from our employment support and financial inclusion support.
- Support residents through welfare reform and the benefits system
- Support residents to access affordable, food, furniture and fuel
- Recognise and support our residents' communities through the impact of COVID19
- Build the confidence and motivation of our residents
- Tackle loneliness and isolation amongst our residents
- Residents were concerned about the ongoing costs of data and Wi-Fi but highlighted that it was important to them to be able to access services online.
- Residents wanted more clarity over our grant funding in terms of what we can and can't fund. They felt early interventions were important and wanted us to offer support at the earliest opportunity.
- A number of residents were completely unaware of our team/services and were keen for us to further promote ourselves. Many residents said they would be happy to help us promote our services at a local level.

We also used the survey developed by Steven Martin to conduct an internal consultation with staff across the Group and gather their views on the Strategy. As a result, we were able to make some amendments to the draft Strategy, prior to it being reviewed by the Board on October 12<sup>th</sup> 2020.

We would like to thank everyone who took part. The following recommendations are being taken forward:

#### **Early Intervention:**

Working with Customer Accounts we have a number of processes in place to try and ensure we provide early intervention to prevent the build up of arrears:

Residents who are claiming Universal Credit (UC):

- Each resident is contacted by email (or phone if no email address) with the offer of support from Community Investment at the point of making their claim. They are also contacted again after 5 weeks, just prior to their first payment with the same offer of support.

- When someone falls behind with their rent by 2 weeks, the Customer Accounts Team call the resident to discuss their account and offer Community Investment Support.
- Every-time a letter and quarterly rent statement is sent to the resident, support is also offered and the Community Investment Hotline details are highlighted.

We have recently updated and branded our support message so that it stands out more and we hope that residents respond and get in touch when they need assistance.

### **Support with 'basic essentials' when moving in:**

Through our 'New Beginnings Programme' we work with Housing Management to assess all the needs of residents signing their tenancy agreement. This process involves identifying any areas of vulnerability or support needs.

Once identified, a referral is then made to the Community Investment Team where we contact the resident and have a more in-depth discussion about the support required. Action is then taken.

This includes the provision of essential items of furniture. Our aim is for everyone to move in with at least the essential items. For people who are already living in our properties, we have the Hardship Fund which can be used to help people who fall on financial hardship, purchase essential items and white goods.

### **Promoting Community Investment:**

We have recently issued some internal guidance to all resident-facing teams to highlight and clarify our Community Investment offer. As well as feedback from residents, we also had some feedback from staff saying that they were not completely clear about our offer.

To remedy this, we have circulated a clear offer outlining all the services and support that are directly available to residents. Along with this we have provided the relevant contact details and Community Investment Staff are attending team meetings across the business to ensure that our colleagues are fully aware of our services, so ensure they are promoted to residents.

We have also updated our web pages at [www.southern360.org.uk](http://www.southern360.org.uk) for those who wish to look online.

### **Working in partnership with Customer Involvement to support consultation where a need has been a need identified:**

We already work closely with our Customer Involvement colleagues and they provide support where appropriate with local projects. A common issue reported is the use of open/green spaces and we have worked/are working with the relevant Customer Involvement Officer to provide additional resources and expertise to support local communities in driving forward their own projects.

Where appropriate we will set up Community Connector schemes to provide additional support, structure and guidance.

### **Promoting links to courses, grants, volunteering opportunities and community projects:**

We have recently updated our webpages with appropriate links. We also directly text message residents in certain areas depending on the project we are supporting and the target audience. The most effective way for us to promote courses and projects is via digital methods although we do appreciate that not everyone has access to online services.

We will update our website as and when appropriate and continue to text message groups of residents when we have specific items we want to promote.

### **Promotion of Community Centres and their activities:**

Generally, Community Centres are mainly promoted via the website and posters at the centres themselves, but we can consider other means whenever Covid-19 restrictions begin to ease again.

Most recently, usage of our Community Centres has been severely impacted by Covid-19. However, in line with government guidance, some of our centres have remained open where they provide essential childcare or food distribution services.

In the last few months we have identified several of our community centres in which we will develop a series of food pantries, providing high quality food at a very low cost to local residents.

Our Community Centres are a valuable resource for local communities. They also enable us to lever in additional support services for local residents. We will review their usage on an ongoing basis, in line with government guidelines, and ensure we develop services that meet local resident need.

### **Identify people at risk from CV19 and ensure they have access to support:**

Since the end of March, we identified over 3000 residents that we thought maybe vulnerable and in need of support. This included all our residents over the age of 70 plus other people who front line staff knew to have a vulnerability.

Every person was contacted to see if they required help and assistance during the lockdown and subsequent months. We established a support service that provided help with shopping and essential items such as prescription pick ups and welfare calls.

We have been running that scheme for the last 7 months, ensuring residents get the support they need and are aware of any local services that may also be able to help them.

Sheltered Housing residents have also been written to throughout the pandemic reminding them about the support that is on offer and updating them on the rule changes and the impact on their schemes.

We will continue to assess the situation and keep in touch with residents where we think necessary.

**Each project will be reviewed, one year on, to see what impact this project has had following on from the outcomes.**