

# **Our commitment to social value**

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## Our Commitment to Social value

Southern Housing Group is one of the largest housing associations in the South East. We put our customers at the heart of our business. When we procure new services, we expect the appointed contractors and suppliers to share our commitment to our customers.

The Group follows the terms of the Public Services and Social Value Acts (2012). We have a responsibility to ensure the services we procure have a direct benefit for customers and the local community. All contractors must agree to meet the minimum criteria and will be encouraged to commit additional resources to support the Group in improving our customers' lives and communities.

We will work with our contractors to develop innovative social value opportunities that help them meet their corporate social responsibilities, while improving quality of life for our customers.

### What is Social value?

“Social value is a way of thinking about how scarce resources are allocated and used. It involves looking beyond the price of each individual contract and looking at what the collective benefit to a community is when a public body chooses to award a contract” – Social Value Act 2012

Southern Housing Group achieves this through ensuring that social value is included in every new tender process. We expect all our departments to work to create opportunities that will deliver benefits to our customers under one or more of the following categories:

- Employment and training
- Financial resilience
- Community projects
- Digital inclusion
- Improving local environments

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## Types of opportunities for social value

This list gives examples of the different kinds of social value work we've done with suppliers and contractors. The list is not exhaustive and we're keen to explore innovative new ideas with our partners.

### Sponsorship/funding

We have created a Resident Support Fund which can only be used to support Southern Housing Group customers. The fund aims to allow customers to engage in a wide range of activities. Given previous demand we anticipate that most of the funding will be spent on:

- Training
- Employment
- Apprenticeships
- Financial resilience
- Environmental impact
- Health and wellbeing
- Community cohesion

The fund can also be used by staff to create specialist projects that will directly benefit our customers.

### Employment

Wherever possible we want our contractors to provide employment opportunities created with our customers in mind. All employment opportunities must be paid and at least 12 months in duration.

Previous examples of how contractors have supported our customers to access paid employment include:

- Robert Heath Heating agreed to employ several customers as tenant liaison officers.
- Durkan Limited appointed one of our customers as an office administrator and is keen to create further employment opportunities for other customers.
- Axis has appointed a customer as a Resident Liaison Officer. It is also providing the customer with training to progress in his career with Axis.

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## Apprenticeships & traineeships

Where possible we want our contractors to provide apprenticeship opportunities for our customers or provide funding for apprenticeships with other organisations. We are particularly interested to hear how contractors and suppliers can support customers with low skills and those further from the labour market access apprenticeships.

Previous examples of how contractors have supported our customers to access apprenticeships include:

- Durkan Limited agreed to provide at least two apprenticeships to our customers. Both apprentices are now close to completing their apprenticeships.
- Robert Heath Heating recruited a customer as an Apprentice Plumber. The customer has successfully completed the apprenticeship and is now training to become a Gas Engineer.
- Durkan has provided a traineeship for a customer who had a positive attitude but lacked the qualifications for direct entry to an apprenticeship. The traineeship will enable the customer to gain functional skills while also gaining invaluable experience on site. Once the trainee has the basic skills they will move on to a full two year apprenticeship.

## Work placements

We are interested in creating opportunities for customers to gain valuable work experience, which could help them to go on and secure employment. We are looking for meaningful development opportunities that can enhance customers' skills sets. We want as many residents as possible to benefit from work placements lasting between three and six months.

- Mountjoy has offered two customer work placements each lasting three months initially with the option to extend by three months. One was an office administration role; the second was an operative role. Both roles allowed the customers to gain new experience to add to their CVs as they had both been unemployed for some time.
- Landscape has offered one customer the opportunity to gain experience as a landscape gardener. It is a three month placement with option of a further three months.

## Supporting social enterprises and self-employed customers

Southern Housing Group would like all contractors to echo our commitment to support our customers who are either self-employed, or run a social enterprise, or those that would like to. We encourage our contractors, where possible, to consider using a social enterprise or self-employed customer as suppliers for their projects.

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## Coaching, mentoring or buddying

We are interested in speaking to contractors that have the capacity and flexibility for their staff to coach, mentor or become a buddy for our customers who require guidance and support.

## Offering customers specialist services for free

We encourage contractors to offer their services to our more vulnerable customers for free, depending on the relevance of the work. Providers could do this by setting up local surgeries, drop-in sessions or by working with our staff to arrange visits to our customers' homes.

## Work Shadowing

We are looking for contractor or suppliers to provide our customers with opportunities to shadow staff within a particular field to help the customer understand the role and whether it is something they are interested in pursuing as a career. Shadowing may be of particular interest to our younger customers who are not sure what they want to do or who would like to get a feel for a job before pursuing further training or education.

## Inspirational speaking

We are always looking for opportunities to find new ways to help our customers to feel empowered. We are seeking contractors or suppliers that can directly provide, or are willing to fund an event where customers could hear inspirational speakers in areas related to employment, health and wellbeing, financial resilience and confidence building.

## Participating in our events

We are always looking for opportunities to bring local businesses and communities closer together. Supporting and taking part in local community events is a great way to do that.

## Use of premises for events

We offer our customers training and other activities. Contractors and suppliers could let us use their premises for free so we can deliver social value at a reduced cost. It would also be a great opportunity for us to use premises in locations our customers may otherwise not have the opportunity to go to.

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## Enhancing green spaces

Promoting open green spaces is very important to the Group and we encourage our contractors to support us in developing and maintaining green spaces so our customers can directly benefit from them.

## Personal accreditation

We encourage contractors to provide our customers with accredited training which could lead to employment.

## Provision and maintenance of equipment

We welcome proposals from any contractors or suppliers who could provide us with equipment such as computers, stationery or DIY equipment that could benefit community groups, projects and individuals.

## Staff volunteering

We know that many organisations have a commitment to providing some form of corporate social responsibility but often struggle to find a charity or service the whole organisation could commit to. Southern Housing Group can provide organisations with opportunities to give their employees meaningful volunteering placements.

## Further information

For more information about social value and how to embed it in your tenders please contact:

Rajvinder Kaur Uppal

0207 017 8501

07824 451 473

[rajvinder.kaur@shgroup.org.uk](mailto:rajvinder.kaur@shgroup.org.uk)