HACT

Community benefits

A framework to capture the impact of community spaces

Contents

Community benefits: a framework to
capture the impact of community spaces
Published November 2024

© HACT 2024

978-1-911056-37-9
www.hact.org.uk
@HACThousing
info@hact.org.uk

HACT, Canopi, 82 Tanner Street, London, SE1 3GN
HACT is registered as the Housing Associations' Charitable Trust, charity number 1096829, company number 04560091

Our thanks to the following housing associations for sponsoring the research and production of this framework:

1. Introduction

Creating thriving communities is at the heart of the social housing sector's core purpose. It therefore makes sense that community spaces are often a first point of contact between housing associations and communities where housing associations, alongside other partners, can provide support and services that enable residents and communities to thrive.

There has been a notable shift over the past few years to ensure community spaces owned and funded by housing associations are demonstrating value for money to both residents and the wider organisation. As a result of this, housing associations recognise there is a real need to demonstrate the impact that community spaces have to ensure their use is maximised for the benefit of communities as well as be able to make the case for investment to build, develop and maintain these community spaces.

This report presents the findings from a collaborative research project with seven housing associations that set out to understand what community spaces owned and/or managed by housing associations look like in practice and develop an impact measurement framework that enables housing associations to articulate the key benefits of community spaces, take a shared approach to measuring their impact and be able to make well-informed business cases for investment.

Using a combination of research methods, including a quantitative sector survey with 37 organisations in the UK social housing sector, and qualitative engagement with partners through 1-1 interviews and focus groups, HACT has focused on:

- Undertaking a discovery exercise to understand and share what the broad portfolios of community spaces look like in the sector, including volume, type, usage, and management approach.
- Developing a set of impact measures for community spaces, including outcome measures from HACT's Social Value Banks.
- Providing recommendations for how organisations can take research findings and the impact framework forward to start measuring and understanding the impact created through community spaces.

> "If there's nowhere for the community to meet, then there is no community."
>
> Quote from interviewee, How to Build a Community, a film co-produced with residents of Parkway Towers, Leeds.

2. Understanding community spaces

The infrastructure underpinning communities plays an essential role in supporting the wellbeing of community members and addressing their needs. Community infrastructure includes physical spaces, the services that are delivered or accessed via these spaces and the skills, knowledge and networks that connects spaces to their communities.

2.1 Context

A growing body of research and thinking, goes further to assert the deep links between community infrastructure, like the above, with enabling communities to thrive, calling this social infrastructure. Local Trust is one of these organisations and they say:

> ***Social infrastructure refers to the framework of institutions and physical spaces that support shared civic life. Places like community centres, pubs and parks provide space for people to meet, engage, and build relationships and trust that underpin any successful community.***[1]

Community spaces are often woven into our physical environments and local lives. However, drawing out their core impacts and demonstrating the value of these spaces is widely acknowledged to be complex and, at times, challenging. These spaces can look very different in different locations; offer a wide varieties of activities and services; and be managed in a wide variety of ways. In a social housing context, these spaces are often located in areas where people are living on lower incomes and have been disproportionately impacted by the deepening cost of living crisis.

As such, these spaces are likely to be trying to respond to a wide spectrum of needs from crisis response services such as food banks and debt advice as well as provide spaces for social connection and fun. All of these factors contribute to this complexity of being able to home in on the key impacts and demonstrate value concisely and consistently.

A range of terms are used to describe community spaces, including community assets, community centres, community hubs, community places, community halls, community buildings, community living rooms, wellbeing hubs and resource centres. For example, over 60% of respondents to the research survey indicated that their organisation uses *community centres* as a catch-all term for community spaces even when the space is not a typical community centre building.

In addition to traditional spaces, such as community centres and hubs, research participants also noted that community spaces also include church halls, converted residential properties, sports buildings, annexed parts of school academies and green spaces.

Additionally, *community assets* is a term that is widely used following the introduction of the Localism Act and the What Works Centre for Wellbeing described community assets as being:

> ***Community buildings, spaces or facilities like community centres, village halls, parks, or community owned businesses, like shops or pubs. These places and spaces can provide valuable opportunities for communities to run events and activities or locate essential services in trusted and accessible venues. However, when projects do not consider the***

1 Local Trust, https://localtrust.org.uk/policy/what-is-social-infrastructure/

2. Understanding community spaces **continued**

needs of the whole community, some people may feel excluded.[2]

Research participants highlighted the commercial connotations of using the *community assets* terminology, often causing confusion between the value offered to the organisation by community and commercial assets and the implications this has for how community spaces are perceived by colleagues and organisations that are not working directly in communities.

Following discussions with research partners, HACT has chosen to use the term *community spaces* as it can be inclusive of a range of types of spaces, places, and venues, including more traditional places such as community centres and halls, as well as less conventional spaces such as converted flats, multi-use games areas and shared use garages. This terms also includes more transient spaces that are not fixed or permanent.

2.2. Community spaces in the social housing sector

The What Works Centre for Wellbeing highlights the role that community spaces play a range of different roles in communities, including:[3]

- Encouraging physical activity and other healthy behaviours.
- Building the sense of belonging and social cohesion, particularly when bringing people from different ages and social backgrounds.
- Enabling social relationships and connections.
- Developing a shared sense of identity, thus helping people feel closer to their neighbours and to the place they live.

This highlights the valuable role that community spaces can play for housing associations to operate as community anchors, supporting communities to thrive and enable them to have a physical presence in local places. This also aligns well with the growing movement towards place-based working within the social housing sector, with a specific focus on addressing health and wellbeing inequalities.

Housing associations work in, and with, community spaces in a number of different ways. Some housing associations own and directly manage their community buildings, whereas others have transferred management responsibilities to other organisations via a community-asset transfer approach or Service Level Agreements.[4] Many housing associations do not directly own or manage community spaces and collaborate with Local Authorities and other partners to use their physical spaces to deliver services to local residents and communities.

The research survey is not intended to provide a representative sample of the social housing sector in the UK. However, it does provide an insight into the differences across the sector in terms of volume and types of community spaces, types of activities

2 Funding-Officer-Briefing-assets.pdf (whatworkswellbeing.org)
3 ibid
4 https://ceci.org.uk/community-asset-transfer-a-toolkit-for-housing-providers/

2. Understanding community spaces **continued**

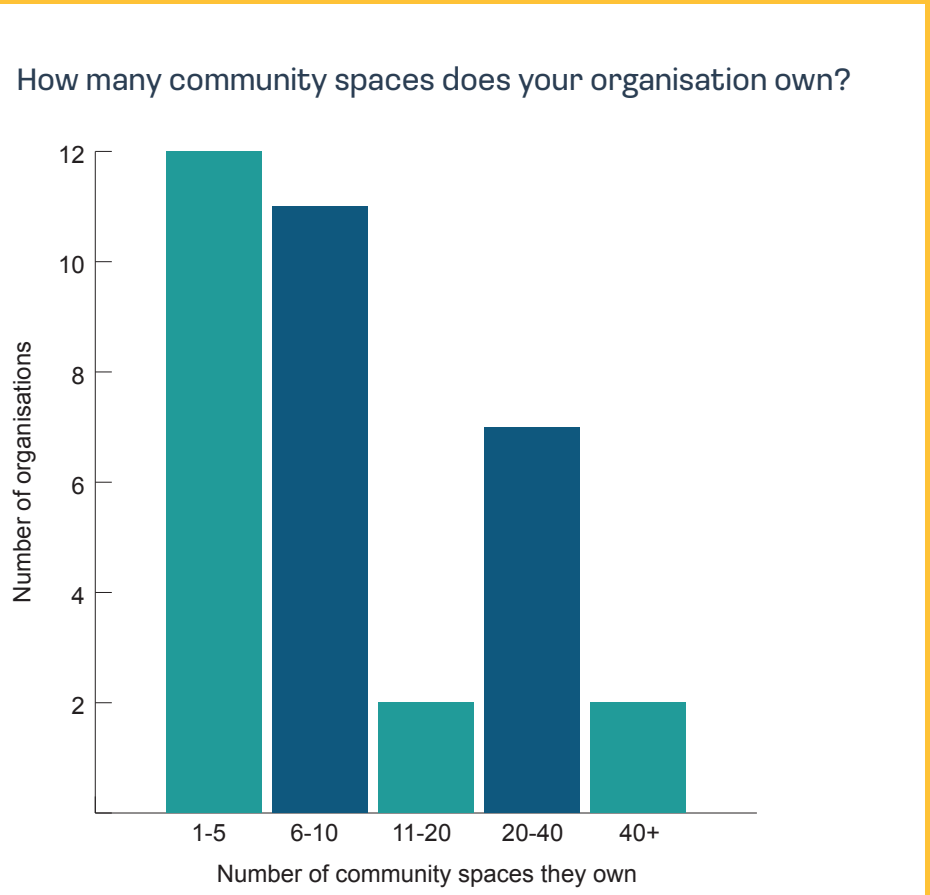
delivered in these spaces and how they are managed. Here is what we learnt.

2.2.1. Number of community spaces

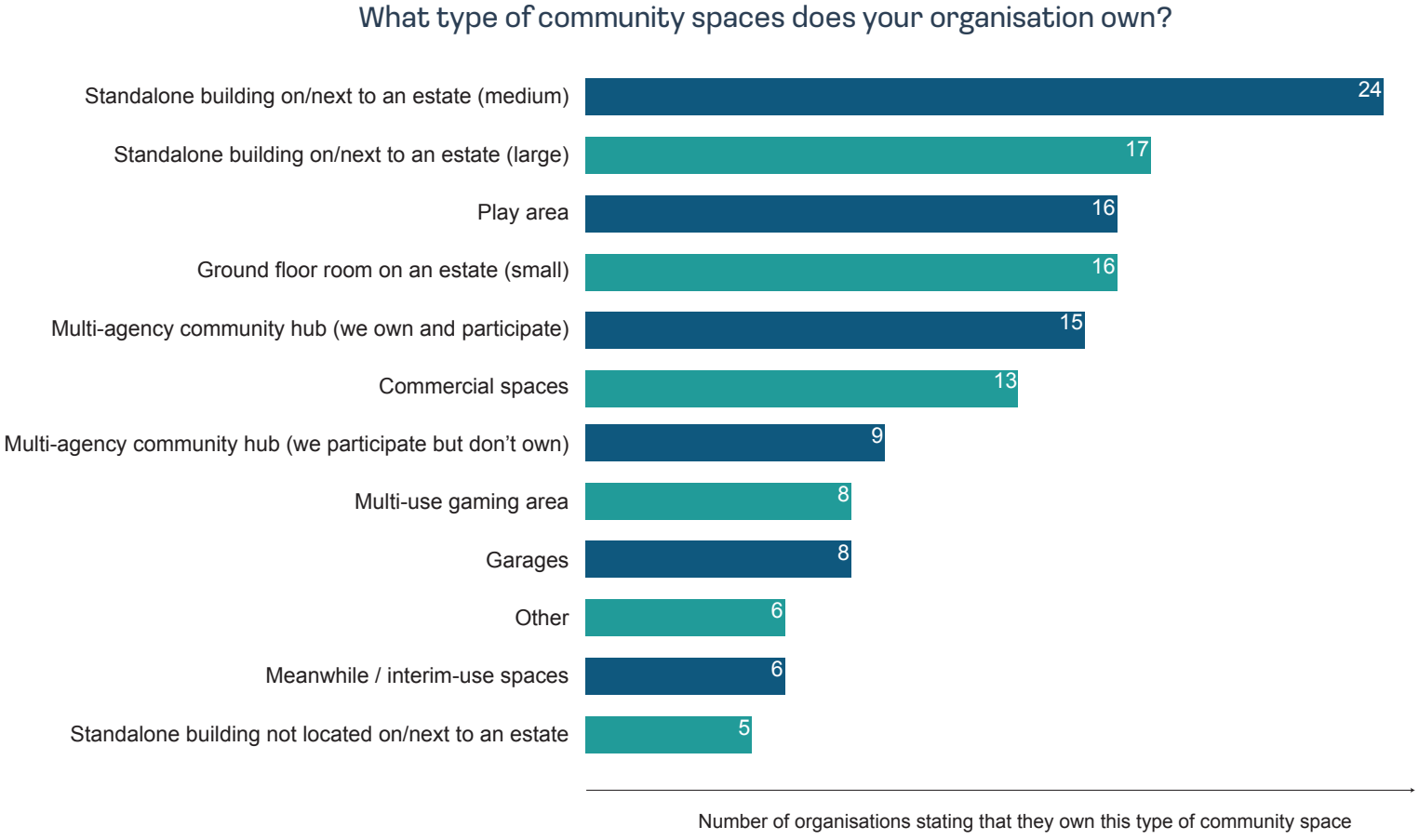
Over two thirds of survey respondents indicated that their organisation owns between 1-10 community spaces, with just under a fifth owning between 20-40 community spaces (see diagram right). This highlights the variability in the volume of community spaces within an organisation's community space portfolio.

2.2.1 Type of community spaces

The most common types of community space owned, managed or used by housing associations are large- or medium-sized standalone buildings on or next to an estate, followed by a large standalone building, play areas, single room on an estate and multi-agency hub (see diagram on page 7). Partners highlighted that many of these spaces are legacy spaces that are older buildings specifically built as part of estate development or converted from housing accommodation.



2. Understanding community spaces **continued**



2. Understanding community spaces **continued**

2.2.3. Managing community spaces

The most prominent management approach amongst the research survey sample is owning and directly manging community spaces (44%), with a further quarter (26%) of respondents using different approaches for different spaces.

Most of the research partners use a mix of models, with the management responsibilities between the housing association and community partners varying:

- 54% of survey respondents indicated that they have a different mix of responsibilities with partners, depending on the community space and type of partner.
- 30% of survey respondents indicated that when a partner leases a community space, they take responsibility for activities and staffing whilst the housing association takes responsibility for repairs, utility bills, and governance associated with the freehold (e.g. health and safety, insurance).

2. Understanding community spaces **continued**

- 15% of survey respondents indicated that when a partner leases a community space, they take full responsibility for repairs, utility bills, and governance associated with the freehold (e.g. health and safety, insurance).

Throughout the research, participants shared further detail about how housing associations engage residents and community partners in the management of community spaces:

Internally managed assets (either owned or leased): communities are engaged in early / pre-opening consultations. Teams run a public consultation with the community 3-6 weeks prior to opening. They knock on doors and organise open days. This has been beneficial to build trust and develop links in communities and is felt to contribute to cultivating long term-commitment to communities.

Teams develop partnership-led work to deepen relationships with the local community and this can include quarterly steering groups for each community hub or centre (depending on the size). Organisations are mindful not to rush in and override existing knowledge, activity, and connections already in place in local communities. Small community grants are often available to enable communities run activities themselves.

Handed over/leased asset management (including transferred community assets): spaces are handed over to partners to directly manage. It is important to ensure that community groups/community boards that manage community spaces have the skills to do so and are representative of their community. It is important to be mindful that it takes a lot of time for partners to be embedded in the community. Even more so, it is crucial to have the right partners that understand community needs.

Partners highlighted the need to enable local communities to inform who manages the asset. For example, one housing association collected Expressions of Interest from interested partners and enabled the local community to lead on the assessment of potential partners. Community members created the process themselves, did consultations and reviewed the process.

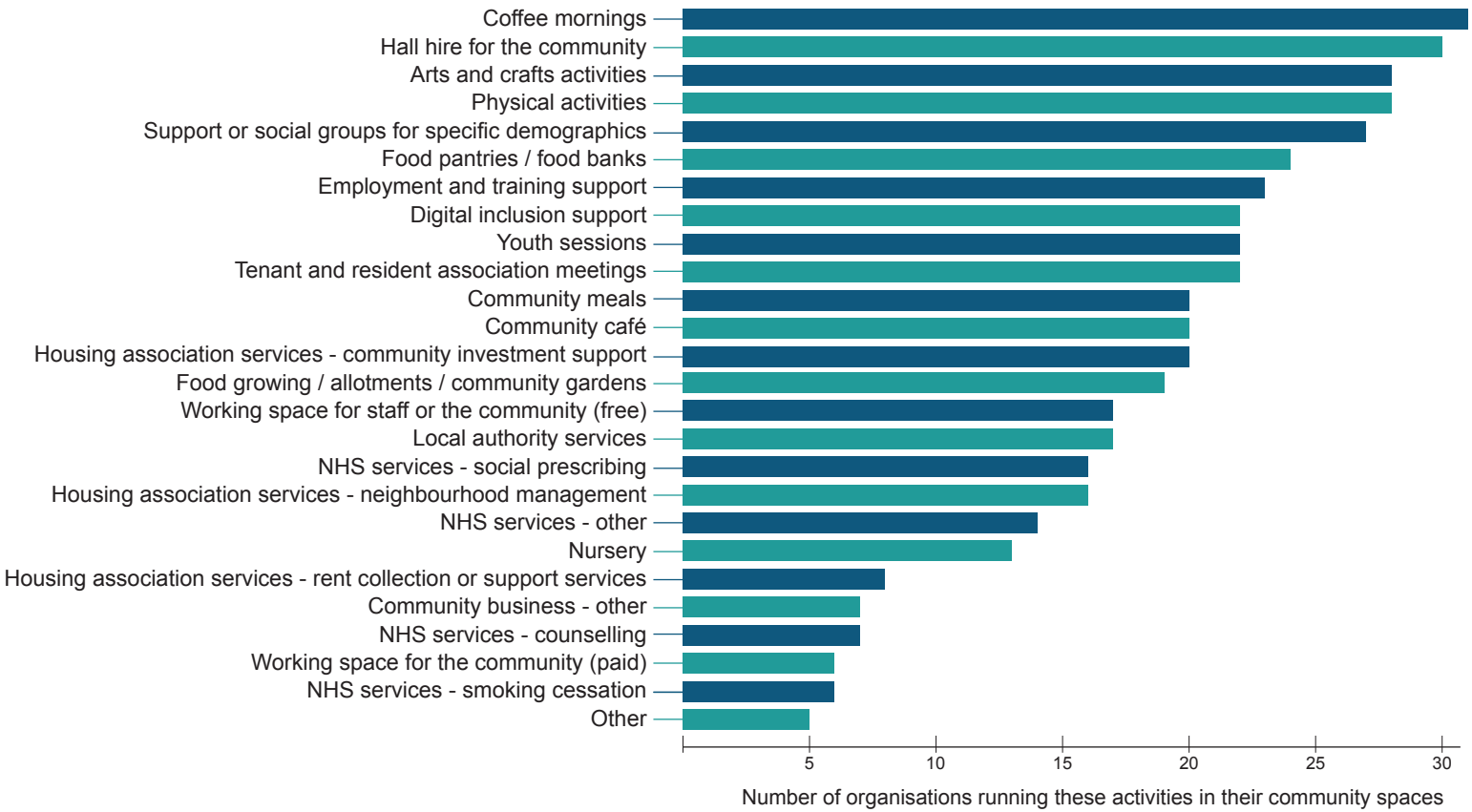
Research participants also highlighted the importance of having good governance structures in place when handing community spaces over to community partners, to ensure it does not fall on one person to manage the space.

2.2.4 Using community spaces

A wide range of services and interventions are delivered in community spaces owned and/or used by housing associations, either directly by housing associations or through partner organisations.

The graph on page 10 provides a detailed breakdown of the types of services and activities that are delivered through these community spaces, including services delivered directly or in partnership with the Local Authority or NHS.

2. Understanding community spaces **continued**



2. Understanding community spaces **continued**

In addition to these types of services, research participants also highlighted activities that engage the local police service to enhance community safety, surgeries with local Councillors, faith group meetings and educational activities, such as language skills.

These spaces often serve as hosts for statutory services (e.g. Job Centre, mental health services), Local Authority outreach teams, as well as social prescribing and vaccination services. Some community spaces even accommodate GP meetings and surgeries in the same building. The collaboration between NHS, Local authorities, and housing associations has led to innovative and interesting ways of utilising community spaces, highlighting the potential benefits of such partnerships.

Examples of how community spaces owned and/or managed by housing associations are used in practice are described in the boxes on the next three pages.

Research participants highlighted that when a housing association owns and manages a community space, activities are more likely to be tailored to the needs of communities following consultation with communities. This enables housing associations to consider how activities align with strategic priorities, however, several research participants highlighted that there is a lack of strategic thinking about aligning community spaces with broader strategic priorities and objectives.

Where housing associations are not managing community spaces, research participants also highlighted that this means they have less input or direction into what happens and the extent to which activities are tailored to community need. Another common reflection was that it was not always clear how frequently some services were provided, nor was it straightforward to find information on accessing or referring into these services.

There was a general consensus amongst research participants that community spaces are well-used. However, engagement with these spaces has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with rates of usage by partners and local residents still recovering

Places for People community space

Places for People manage a traditional community centre type of space in Edinburgh to provide a range of activities.

These activitis are delivered by a number of partners, incuding:

- Action for Children;
- Capability Scotland;
- Edinburgh Vaccination Team;
- Family Nurse Partnership,
- Scottish Autism

These services rent or lease space to deliver their services to local residents and contribute to four key themes within Places for People's strategic impact work:

- financial and digital inclusion;
- health and wellbeing;
- education, employment, and training;
- sustainable and resilience communities.

2. Understanding community spaces **continued**

from closures during COVID lockdowns. In addition to engagement rates, participants also highlighted a number of challenges with owning and managing a portfolio of community spaces:

Maintaining the quality of community spaces and the cost implications as well as the impact that the quality of the activities has on usage. For example, anecdotal feedback from partners included the statement that:

"Decent quality spaces attract partners and service users, while rundown buildings can attract ASB and deter people from using the space."

Lack of awareness both within the organisation and in the community about the presence of community spaces and the activities and services available to residents. There was a common reflection that colleagues are not always aware that their organisation owns and/or manages a community space in a specific area and what is available to residents and the wider communities and how to refer or signpost to these activities. In addition to this, many community spaces and the services available are often not well advertised to local communities, with traditional advertising methods such as leaflets and posters not reaching people.

Accessibility and inclusivity of spaces or the lack thereof, means spaces can often be inaccessible to people with disabilities or unwelcoming or unsafe to people from different demographics, such as younger people, older people, and people from ethnic minority groups who may not feel represented in the space. This may be worsened by legacy issues surrounding community spaces or pre-existing associations.
For example:

"Older buildings may be associated with activities for old people or children's play activities meaning it can be hard to engage young adults."

Orbit's Better Days Hubs

Orbit's Better Days Hubs are a key part of helping the housing association to support the development of inclusive, healthy, and sustainable communities where people are proud to live.

These hubs include a standalone one room 'hut' building with a large, attached garden space as well as a tenancy flat that has been converted into a community space, illustrating the different types of venues that can be used to provide community spaces. Hubs are mainly used to deliver services facilitated by Orbit and are used to engage with customers, external support agencies to deliver services and resident associations to hold community events and meetings. Orbit are in the process of finalising their 2030 strategy and it is expected that community hubs will feature heavily in this as part of a commitment to bringing services closer to the customer.

2. Understanding community spaces **continued**

There was a general consensus that how community spaces are viewed has an impact on usage, and often it is often working aged people between the ages of 18 years and 65+ years that are less likely to use a community space.

Lack of flexibility in terms of types of services and activities that are available. For example, community spaces that have responded to the changing needs of the community in light of the COVID pandemic and cost of living crisis have been more successful at engaging residents and partners. Owning and directly managing these spaces presents greater ability and flexibility to control how they are used to the best effect for the benefit of communities.

2.2.5. Profile of, and value given to, community spaces with organisations

Most research participants indicated that their organisations have small teams or a single job role to manage their organisation's community spaces. Responsibility typically sits within the community investment team, housing team and or customer experience teams, and they will often collaborate with other teams such as estates, tenancy sustainment and property management teams.

Feedback from partners indicated that it is not unusual for finance teams to make decisions on retaining or discharging these spaces based only on profitability. This feedback suggests a risk of disconnection between those directly managing the community space portfolio and the wider business about the value of and organisation's objective for community spaces. Community assets are "the most customer-facing part of the business, [yet] they are not seen as the priority."

It is clear that there is more work to take place in the sector to highlight and highlight the value of community spaces and the extent to which they can underpin housing association's work as anchor institutions.

- 45% of survey respondents feel that their organisation understands how important

Bourneville Village Trust's partnership

The partnership between Bourneville Village Trust, local NHS Trust, and the University of Birmingham is one notable example of collaborative services delivered via community spaces that provide a clear and direct benefit to the community. This collaboration has provided employment and training services that offer access to guaranteed interviews and coaching and pathways to employment at the University of Birmingham.

Bury Council's one-stop shop

Bury Council Housing Services use community spaces as a one-stop shop for a range of health-linked services, in collaboration with GMP, GMFRS, and social prescribing services. This includes linked-up support from drug and alcohol teams, a joined-up approach to tackling crime, ASB, cost-of-living and anti-poverty measures, and other health initiatives (e.g., smoking and vaccines).

2. Understanding community spaces **continued**

community spaces are to residents, communities, and the business.

- 24% of survey respondents feel that their organisation views community spaces as key tools of engagement with residents, rather than directly contributing to outcomes for residents.
- 21% of survey respondents feel that their organisation views community spaces as for resident use only or something outsourced and, therefore, not having a significant connection with the business.
- 9% of survey respondents mentioned difficulties attracting internal or external funding.

There was a general consensus amongst research partners that there is both strategic buy-in at senior level and a lot of enthusiasm amongst community-facing staff to invest in community spaces, however, this is not aways reflected in operational planning or priorities for local teams.

Partners provided examples of the poor state of the buildings and lack of essential services, such as WIFI, in community spaces, illustrating the lack of resourcing for these spaces. While staff might see community assets becoming a priority at the strategic and board level, this is not always enabled by the resources that can unlock these goals and therefore, the goals struggle to be embedded and translated into practice effectively in local teams.

2.2.6. Community spaces strategies and plans

During the research, we observed how community spaces are often part of local neighbourhood plans, paired with messages about how community spaces have a role in attaining good outcomes for residents and maintaining local networks. Whilst many of the partners involved in this research were able to articulate how their community spaces connected to, and provide a vehicle to deliver, key community investment or resident community strategies, it became clear that the rationale for developing these community spaces and ongoing ambitions for success have not always been worked through or documented.

Additionally, most partners indicated that they are unlikely to have clear plans for each individual community space that are regularly reviewed or connected to a more strategic objective or plan. This is echoed in the survey, where just over half of survey respondents indicated that they have a clear plan for managing their community spaces portfolio effectively.

It is clear from discussions with partners that there is a real appetite to ensure that the sector connects community spaces to wider community investment and social impact planning, with a shared view amongst research participants that:

> ***"These spaces play a key role in supporting efforts to nurture thriving communities and the best outcomes for residents."***

Where services are joined up with a wider organisation goal or strategy, staff reflect that "there is a holistic approach, otherwise it wouldn't work", for instance, they work with property management team to ensure monthly health and safety visits to the buildings. There is a recognition that existing social infrastructures and networks can be further maintained and developed through community spaces.

2. Understanding community spaces **continued**

Organisational attention to community spaces is typically fragmented and piecemeal, leaving them under-resourced and red-taped. The view that services and activities taking place in community spaces are not part of the core business is still prevalent. This highlights the need to make a stronger business case for community spaces within our sector and internally within housing associations, showing their value and impact in both monetary and non-monetary terms.

2.2.7. Funding

The research survey responses highlight a variety of funding models:

- Most organisations partially fund community spaces through core funds.
- Over half of respondents indicated that their organisation uses a mix of funding sources to cover running and staffing costs.
- 26% of respondents indicated that their community spaces are fully funded through core funding and grants.
- 26% of respondents indicated that community spaces are partially through room hire to local community organisations.
- 14% of respondents indicated that community spaces are funded through core funding alone.
- 14% of respondents indicated that communities who lease or manage community spaces are responsible for financing the centre and usually do so through grants and charges for activities.
- 14% of respondents stated that third party organisations or Tenant & Resident Associations (TRAs) who manage the building are financially responsible for the running of the building, while the housing association is responsible for compliance.
- 9% of respondents indicated that community spaces are partially funded by social value commitments from their contractors to subsidise the cost of fitting out new community spaces or upkeeping existing ones.

This emphasises that there is no one size fits all approach to funding and manging community spaces, with decisions about how spaces are funded dependent on various factors such as legacy funding arrangements, limitations on core funding and organisational strategic priorities.

2.2.8. Impact measurement

The purpose of this research is to create a framework that housing associations and partners can use to measure and articulate the impact created through community spaces.

> ***"We know it is important, but we don't know how."***

Research participants highlighted the need to make the impact community spaces create tangible. Survey respondents and research partners shared key areas in which they currently measure the success of community spaces, with the majority of organisations focusing on footfall, income generation, financial sustainability, volunteering, and activity-specific outcomes. However, there are also some clear current challenges and limitations with data collection.

2. Understanding community spaces **continued**

Only a small number of the research partners use surveys to monitor well-being and impact. When they do so, they mainly use retrospective questions rather than before/after types of questions. There is a shared view that before/after questions may not work for everyone using these spaces, particularly when community members may be going in and out of the space and participating in short and transactional visits with services/activities in the space. While the existing measures often contribute to monthly and quarterly monitoring reports, it is worth noting that this practice has been sparsely adopted by most organisations. This low adoption rate highlights a potential area for improvement in wellbeing monitoring practices.

Research partners have also highlighted the need to take into account:

- Differences between community spaces, in terms of location, geography, local area need, partners and services.
- Not all partners have the resources, technology, and skills to measure impact.
- Measuring one-off and repeat engagement with service users is complicated.
- A need for consistent impact measurement across community space portfolio, which may contain different types of spaces / partners.
- Given already under-resourced teams, measurement should not overburden community-facing staff.

This means that there is unlikely to be a one sized fits all approach to impact measurement for community spaces owned and/or managed by housing associations. However, there is a real opportunity to provide foundations upon which tailored approaches can be built and implemented.

2.2.9. Opportunities to enhance community space portfolios

Discussions with research partners have also identified opportunities to enhance community spaces portfolios, including:

- Empowering local teams to make budgetary decisions and collect data.
- Implementing formal processes requiring Development teams to consult community-facing teams as well as residents themselves in the early stages of development to understand community need and space requirements. Organisations may benefit from developing guidance for Development teams that set out community investment ambitions and priorities and the ways in which new developments and spaces can contribute towards achieving this.
- Formalising maintenance procedures for community spaces so these spaces are treated differently from general housing stock by estates and repairs teams and asset management teams. Organisations would benefit from having separate maintenance budgets for community spaces.
- Championing the role of community spaces both internally and externally and raising awareness and visibility of their existence and the services available through these spaces for residents and wider communities. Ideas shared throughout the research, included:

2. Understanding community spaces **continued**

  - Internal marketing to colleagues about hubs, including more storytelling.
  - Developing relationships and changing the business's culture, leading to a more proactive rather than reactive relationship with residents.
  - Members of staff to champion these hubs internally and externally.
  - Ownership and management of community assets
- Implement a more comprehensive approach to developing and managing community spaces, engaging development and estates / facilities / repairs teams and developing a stakeholder map for each space developed in collaboration with housing teams.
- Develop an overarching community spaces strategy that clearly articulates the purpose for each community space, detailed strategies for redeveloping underused and old community spaces before prematurely discharging/closing up.
- Support third party organisations leasing and/ or using community spaces with governance, support, training. This can include linking them with supply chain partners, providing fundraising support, networking, etc.
- Community spaces should stay reactive and flexible, responding to the changing needs of communities (and enabling local partners to be flexible and agile).

Recommendations to improve and enhance impact measurement of community spaces include:

- Using consistent impact measures across the portfolio of community spaces. This can be done by requiring an impact report as part of the lease/ partnership agreement if the assets are not under direct management.
- Connecting impact measures to strategies and business plans.
- Empower local teams to have input into how the impact of community spaces is measured, the type of data that is collected and how.
- Share measures with external partners to ensure information sharing and early involvement

3. Impact framework

Through understanding the current profile of community spaces, we have identified a range of outcomes and relevant measures that can be used to identify and understand the impact and value they can bring to individuals, communities, and organisations themselves. These have been collated into an impact framework, which has been designed to enable organisations to start measuring, or develop their approach to measuring, the impact of community spaces.

The Community Spaces Impact Framework:

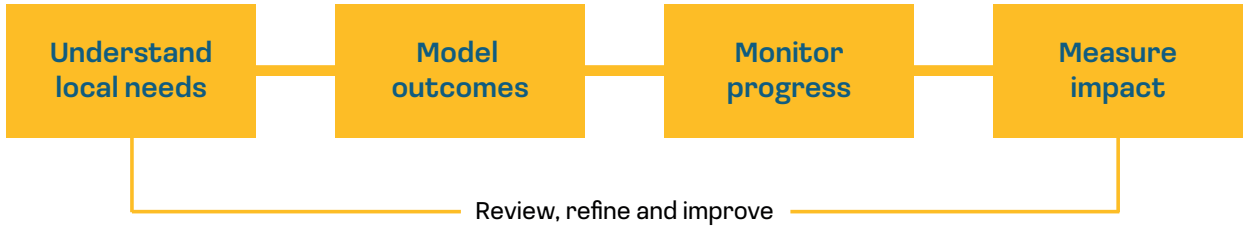
- Focuses on a broad cross section of outputs and outcomes that many housing associations and partners will be able to evidence through existing organisational record keeping and data capture. Other measures will require new evidence trails.
- Provides a practical model for recording the value that community spaces create and producing good quality data and insight for reporting.
- Provides a reference point for staff and partners who wish to see how their role connects to, and enhances, the impact created by community spaces.
- Will be a 'living' document that organisations can fine-tune. It is likely to evolve over time based on feedback and learning from its use, with organisations adding new measures that reflect positive outcomes for new activities or removing outcomes that prove to be less relevant.

Research partners highlighted the need for an impact framework to focus on the *so what* – what outcomes happen as a result of being able to access community spaces, and what does this actually means in terms of impact for residents and communities?

The framework has been designed to reflect key areas of activity of community spaces and also outline the evidence trail to support it. It is based around three pillars: Impact for individuals; Impact for communities; and Impact for the business.

To find out more about the framework, please contact info@hact.org.uk

This is the golden thread for impact, which sets out the process for delivering meaningful and transformation change in communities.



4. Implementing the framework

By implementing this framework, organisations will be able to have a clearer understanding of the broader value that community spaces provide within local communities.

4.1. Develop a community space strategy

This will provide a format against which progress can be assessed as this will be critical to ensuring social value is embedded across the organisation effectively.

There are a number of key considerations to take into account:

- Define what success for the community spaces portfolio looks like - this will vary across different organisations and will be informed by local contexts, organisational priorities, and strategic contexts.
- Set ambitions for the impact you want community spaces to enable.
- Set key priorities key objectives and measures of success. It is for each organisation to determine what success looks like for their community spaces and use the relevant outcome measures and proposed data points.
- Set targets as part of developing community spaces and leasing arrangements with partners and ensure these align with partner priorities and reflect how community spaces are being used and the needs of the communities they serve.
- Consider what resource and infrastructure is in place to support impact measurement.

Identify key internal colleagues to lead as 'community space impact champions' within the business. This may involve formalising key colleagues engaged in this work in a community space impact steering group to ensure impact is considered strategically, as well as key individuals to oversee data collection and monitoring as outlined in the framework.

4.2. Embed impact measurement across the community spaces portfolio

This will require raising awareness of the purpose of measuring impact amongst colleagues and partners and building skills to collect and analyse data. Include community partners who lease or help deliver services in your community spaces too.

Why measure the impact of your community spaces - Consider why you want to measure the impact of a community space or portfolio of community spaces – what will this insight enable you to do? You may want to this information to build a business case for accessing resource and investment, inform decision making about where to prioritise resources, or to demonstrate the impact as part of wider monitoring and evaluation activity.

How will you select outcome measures - Consider what services and activities are being delivered through the community spaces and what their aims and objectives are so you can identify the ways in which the community spaces drive and/or facilitate impact and identify the relevant outcome measures.

The framework is intended to be a starting point for organisations and some of the outcome measures identified will be more relevant to some organisations that others. Relevant outcome measures may vary across different community spaces and with different

4. Implementing the framework **continued**

partners. HACT recommends that organisations document the rationale for selecting outcomes and data points and how this connects to strategic and local priorities and plans.

Where HACT has proposed outcome measures from the HACT Social Value Banks, these can be used to calculate a social value figure. In addition to this, where budget and/or cost information is available, the HACT Social Value Bank outcome measures can also be used to run a Social Return on Investment calculation. Please see appendices for more details about HACT's social value banks.

What is feasible in terms of data collection - Consider how feasible data collection is for the relevant outcome measures from the impact framework. This needs to take into account both the capability and capacity of staff or partners to collect and record data, and the responsiveness of partners and people using the community spaces to provide data. Some of the proposed outcome measure require a pre and post survey to determine change.

HACT recommends reviewing existing data collection processes to identify opportunities to use existing data as well as introduce new data collection processes. Also consider roles and responsibilities for data collection, monitoring, and reporting.

The majority of outcome measures proposed in the framework require two forms of data – records of attendance/observational data, or pre- and post-survey data. HACT recommends collecting data at the start and end of intervention where the service or activity is expected to run for a set period of time. For services or activities that are ongoing or available longer term, HACT recommends periodically capturing data from service users using the survey questions to track changes over time.

For outcome measures requiring pre and post survey questions it is acceptable to ask both the pre and post surveys together asking people to reflect back and provide an answer at the end of the intervention/ activity. However, HACT recommends including caveats in reporting to highlight this deviation from best practice.

It is important to note that outcome measures from the HACT Social Value Banks can only be counted against an individual once per year, regardless of how many services they may have engaged with. Where individuals have used more than one service, organisations will need to consider how they report on their outcomes and may wish to consider this cohort of individuals differently from people who have only used one service within a year period. There may be challenges with tracking individuals so organisations will need to consider how it will deal with challenges. Also note that some value outcomes cannot be used in conjunction with other value outcomes for the same

4. Implementing the framework **continued**

individual: for example, *Able to save regularly* and *Financial comfort*. Further information about which values are incompatible with others can be provided by HACT.

How will you report on the impact - Consider the audiences to share your impact assessment with as well as the level of detail they will require. Audiences may include Boards, Teams, residents and the community, partners, and funders.

HACT recommends also considering how this insight will be presented and what has been included in impact reporting. For example, delivery partners may already be providing performance data that includes some of the impact outcome measures proposed above. There is a need to ensure that impact is not being double counted.

The way in which the HACT social value banks have been developed means that there is not a sliding scale of social value and to be able to claim the value, movement between pre and post surveys as described above is required. HACT recognises that this means positive changes will not aways be recorded through the UK Social Value Bank values.

We recommend that organisations document other benefits and impacts from the services provided at community spaces through customer feedback and case studies. You may also wish to undertake more detailed analysis to understand whether people from different backgrounds or of different demographics experience different levels of impact and include this segmented level of analysis in reporting.

We recommend reviewing your approaches to impact collection and analysis on a regular basis.

Appendix 1: HACT and social value

Why is it important to measure social value?
By measuring the social value created, organisations can evidence the impact they have on individuals and communities. It will also help to drive informed decision making about how and where to improve services, with increased positive results.

In an increasingly socially responsible world, organisations are seeking to understand the impact of their work on society. Social value is a measurement of the benefits of the work you do, the services you provide and the programmes you deliver for people and communities. It is essentially the quantification of the relative importance that people place on the changes they experience in their lives through changes in wellbeing and this value is captured and presented in different ways, including market value. It is important to recognise that social value places focus on understanding need and change from a person-centred perspective, specifically those affected by an organisations' work and services.

At its most basic level, social value is about understanding, planning, delivering, and evaluating your services and impacts to learn and provide more effective social outcomes.

It should be remembered almost everything you do has a social value, and by understanding the impact of our work, we can get even better outcomes.

Social value provides a way to evaluate services, address inequalities, improve wellbeing outcomes and understand what works well to achieve outcomes of interest and enact change. It allows you to:

- Evaluate social and environmental impact of your work.
- Inform decision making to create a more impactful and sustainable organisation.
- Make the best resource and person-centred decisions possible.
- Influence policy makers and stakeholders.
- Be consistent with your social purpose.
- Demonstrate value for money.

Social value needs to be located in the real experiences of people and communities. When thinking about social value, we can visualise the golden thread from the change people and communities need and want to see for themselves; through what organisations can do about it (how it fits their mission, purpose, and ambition), what change or impact is made and, finally, what value does this drive.

HACT's social value banks
HACT has a suite of social value banks that can be used to measure the social value of a range of activities.

UK Social Value Bank (UKSVB)
Launched in 2014, the UKSVB is a HACT resource that offers organisations and businesses a way to understand the social impact of their investment in communities. HACT developed the UKSVB using the wellbeing valuation approach, and it features as part of HM Treasury Green Book guidance that sits at the heart of policy evaluation approaches within UK government. Therefore, the values have been calculated using UK Treasury Green Book compliant methods. All values found in the UKSVB are quality assured and co-created by SImetrica-Jacobs, who are members of the UK Government's Social Impact Taskforce.

The UKSVB is based on person-centred principles, using data from national data sets relating to self-reported wellbeing and life circumstances and income levels. It provides a suite of 88 outcomes and measures that have been monetised using wellbeing valuation and calculation of net exchequer value.

Appendix 1
continued

The UKSVB offers a proportionate way to measure social impact and generate insights around cost: benefits, value for money, investment decisions, service improvements and reporting to stakeholders. It has become the standard method used by the social housing sector to measure social impact, with more than 400 organisations attending training and using the model in their business decisions.

The UKSVB is a living bank and is continuously expanding to include new values. It was last updated in 2022 with funding and support from a range of investors and supporters via HACT's Social Value Roadmap project.

The UKSVB includes four key elements:

- Wellbeing value – this is the direct impact to an individual in terms of wellbeing and has been adjusted for deadweight. Wellbeing values are from UK Social Value Bank.
- Exchequer value – this is the indirect impact on the public purse from an exchequer point of view. Wellbeing and Exchequer values are from UK Social Value Bank.
- Deadweight – this is the probability that this outcome would have happened anyway and is applied to social value calculations.
- Total social value – this is Wellbeing Value plus Exchequer value (and includes the deadweight that has been applied to the wellbeing value).

The total social value is then multiplied against the number of individuals who have achieved the relevant project outcome to calculate the social impact for a project or programme.

Wellbeing values

To estimate the monetary equivalent of the impacts of the outcomes on individuals, we use the wellbeing valuation method. This approach relies on a comparison between the change in wellbeing from the outcome to be valued with the change in wellbeing from income.

The Wellbeing Valuation method estimates value by inferring the impact of social outcomes associated with specific projects or interventions on the subjective wellbeing (life satisfaction) of individuals who experience these outcomes. To calculate the outcomes, large national datasets have been analysed to show how people's self-reported wellbeing changes due to different life circumstances.

Analysis reveals the impact of these various outcomes on life satisfaction and calculates the amount of money that produces the equivalent impact on life satisfaction. Impact is then converted into a monetary amount by estimating the sum of money which would have an equivalent impact on subjective wellbeing. Wellbeing valuations in the UK Social Value Bank provide a £ proxy equivalent uplift in wellbeing the same amount as the outcome. Wellbeing valuation is therefore a financial measure of how effective a social intervention is, by the positive impact it has on an individual's wellbeing. More technical detail about the wellbeing valuation approach can be found in the wellbeing values methodology guidance notes.

Exchequer values

A secondary complementary approach found in the UK Social Value Bank 2022 is the valuation of outcomes via exchequer values, the indirect, secondary impacts of an outcome in net fiscal terms to the government.

The UKSVB includes exchequer values, which are the indirect, secondary impact of an outcome in net fiscal terms to the government in the form of tax receipts consistent with the UK average income, saving to the Government in Universal Credit savings, decrease in cost of crime motivated by economic gain associated

Appendix 1
continued

with transition from unemployment to employment, savings to Government from benefit to the NHS. Cost-savings are referred to as secondary values because they do not capture the benefits directly to the individual (in terms of their wellbeing) but to society more widely, in the form of 'secondary benefits.'

Using the latest available Government data and respected reports, HACT and SImetrica-Jacobs have calculated the net exchequer values. For example, these could include reports on graffiti removal costs, reduction in costs associated with crime, reduction in GP visits, reduction in unemployment benefits or less frequent use of health services associated with being in a secure job as opposed to being unemployed. Please note, for some outcomes such as 'Apprenticeship,' there is a negative impact shown in total social value figure for the exchequer value, as this is something that is primarily government funded. More technical detail about the exchequer valuation approach can be found in the exchequer values methodology guidance notes.

Effective practical use of measures and metrics from the UK Social Value Bank requires selecting the most appropriate outcomes, avoiding double counting, and applying "deadweight." Deadweight, or "what would have happened anyway" without an intervention, is an important part of social impact analysis. To give a correct picture of social impact, we have applied a percentage reduction in the HACT wellbeing valuation model, reflecting that a proportion of outcomes would have happened anyway. More technical detail about deadweight can be found in the deadweight methodology notes.

UK Built Environment Bank

The UK Built Environment Bank (UKBEB) is the next expansion of HACT's social value measurement. Launched in 2024, the UKBEB enables organisations to model, monitor and measure the impact of their construction, development, and supply chain activities. This is a gamechanger for housing associations, developers, contractors, and construction firms in measuring their transformational impact in local communities.

The UKBEB uses the wellbeing measurement which is endorsed by the Government through the HM Treasury Green Book. For the first time in compliant methodology, the suite of values will speak to three valuation strands:

- Individual wellbeing
- Benefits to business
- Exchequer savings or benefits

UK Mental Wellbeing Bank

Launched in 2018, the UK Mental Wellbeing Bank enables housing associations, charities, councils and contractors to measure their impact on improving their client's mental wellbeing.

The UK Mental Wellbeing Bank is based on the Warwick Edinburgh Mental-Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) and wellbeing valuation. Developed in collaboration with housing associations, contractors and charities, the bank helps organisations to understand how to improve the positive impact they can have on people's mental wellbeing.

Appendix 1 **continued**

The UK Mental Wellbeing Bank should not be used with values from the UK Social Value Bank to avoid double counting.

This is because values in the UK Social Value Bank already incorporate the impact on mental wellbeing: for instance, when someone gets a job, they are likely to have lower anxiety.

Organisations should either use the UK Mental Wellbeing Bank to measure their impact on mental wellbeing or relevant values from the UK Social Value Bank.

Social Value Insight

All three social value banks are only available through Social value Insight.

Launched in 2022, Social Value Insight is an online subscription tool that enables you to model, monitor and measure the social value you create in one place. With one subscription you can have multiple users, create multiple projects and run the social value elements of your procurement tenders – without any additional cost.

Additional services

HACT also offers a range of invaluable services to support you on your social value journey, including:

- Understanding local needs: so you can base your services on the needs of local people
- Modelling outcomes: so you can maximise your potential investment
- Creating frameworks: so you can report on the social value that you uniquely create
- Providing training: so you can embed social value across your organisation
- Auditing your results so you can report against your social value with confidence

Contact information

If you would like to discuss how the framework can be used to capture the impact of your community space, please contact:

Frances Harkin, Head of Services, HACT
Email: frances.harkin@hact.org.uk

WWW.HACT.ORG.UK