



Social Value in Social Housing 2025

An annual review of trends,
measurement and impact across the
social housing sector — from the team
behind the UK Social Value Bank

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With thanks to:

Our partners

SIMETRICA | **Jacobs**

Contribution from

th trowers & hamlins

From the Chief Executive



Andrew van Doorn OBE, Chief Executive

Social housing organisations have long delivered value beyond bricks and mortar - supporting residents' wellbeing, strengthening communities and contributing to local economies.

However, consistently measuring and articulating that impact has historically been a challenge for the sector.

Over the past decade, expectations have shifted. Housing providers are increasingly required to demonstrate not just what they do, but the difference they make - to residents, to places and to wider public services.

Social value in social housing is evolving rapidly. As expectations increase, so too does the need for clarity, consistency and confidence in how impact is measured and communicated.

This report reflects what we are seeing through our work but more importantly, it highlights the opportunity for housing providers to move beyond measurement as reporting and towards using it as a tool for better decision-making and greater impact.

01 The year in numbers

£1,191,587,922

Total social value reported by housing associations using Social Value Insight



"The opportunity is to move beyond measurement as reporting and towards using it as a tool for better decision-making and greater impact."

Andrew van Doorn OBE,
Chief Executive, HACT



£825.4m

UK Social Value Bank (UKSVB)

£366.2m

UK Built Environment Bank (UKBEB)

179,284

Individual beneficiaries

Most valued outcomes (£)

01	Feel belonging to neighbourhood	£65,648,640
02	Financial comfort	£59,096,133
03	Relief from depression / anxiety	£58,614,997
04	High confidence (adult)	£46,007,342
05	Relief from heavy debt burden	£41,151,954

Most used values (by number of people)

01	Member of a social group	18,108
02	Able to obtain advice locally	15,318
03	Feel belonging to neighbourhood	8,947
04	Job-related training not provided by employer	8359
05	Satisfaction with landlord repairs & maintenance	8040

02 What's your impact?



Dr Frances Harkin, Head of Delivery, HACT

A common criticism of the housing association sector is that it fails to tell its story. What positive difference does it make for its residents, for local places, for society in general? How can we shout about this with confidence?

This need to talk about impact was our starting point for social value. In 2012, a group of housing associations asked us to work with them to help them measure the impact they made in local communities. Through insight, collaboration and real-world experiences, we developed the first version of the UK Social Value Bank with Simetrica-Jacobs. This first version consisted of 53 values, all based on a common wellbeing methodology that was, at the time, groundbreaking.

Since its initial development, the UK Social Value Bank has evolved significantly in response to changes in the social housing sector, policy landscape and the needs of housing providers. Early iterations focused on establishing a robust set of wellbeing values that organisations could use consistently. Over time, this has expanded to reflect the realities of housing delivery, incorporating areas such as homelessness, the quality and condition of homes, and the wider environmental and community context.

More recent developments have strengthened the methodology itself, including the introduction of Exchequer values, clearer assumptions around additionality, and regular updating to ensure values reflect current economic conditions.

This evolution reflects both increasing expectations around the credibility of social value measurement and the growing range of outcomes housing providers want to understand and evidence.

Fast-forward to 2026, where we have now launched version 7 of the UK Social Value Bank, consisting of 92 value outcomes. Alongside the UK Built Environment Bank and the UK Mental Wellbeing Bank, we have now co-created values that the social housing sector can use to measure the full breadth of its activities - from tenancy sustainment and rectification of damp and mould to retrofitting existing homes and building homes for shared ownership and social and affordable rent.



As a result, housing associations are now able to report on their impact with confidence. The £1.2 billion of social value reported through Social Value Insight in 2025 only tells part of the story.

Sector wide reporting (2025)

£500m

Places for People
24 - 25

£128m

Clarion Housing
24 - 25

£100m

Orbit Group
24 - 25

£155m+

Liverpool City
Region (Network)

Current focus for HAs



Impact reporting

Across the sector, we're seeing more annual impact reports being issued by housing associations – and by networks of housing associations – which helps them quantify their impact to their residents, to local stakeholders, regional and city mayors, to the regulator and financial institutions. L&Q, Peabody, Orbit and SNG have all benefited from having social value metrics linked to reductions in interest rates on sustainability-linked loans.



Verification

Consequently, more Boards are stepping up and taking notice often asking, “how do we know that these figures are real?”. This coincides with a trend we've noticed over the last twelve months has been the rise in numbers of housing associations seeking verification or assurance over the social value metrics they are reporting.



Professionalism of roles

At the same time, we're also seeing more dedicated social value roles within housing associations, as well as more networks through which colleagues can share ideas, insights and, at times, frustrations. At a recent session of a social value network we host, colleagues were sharing email addresses, suggesting ways of engaging with internal colleagues around social value and sharing tips for embedding social value in their organisation.



Accountability to stakeholders

Being able to tell the story of your impact to internal and external audiences is not the only value of measurement. Using this information to understand whether services are actually working, alongside other forms of feedback, can help housing associations to re-design and redefine them, for the ultimate benefit of their residents. After all, at the heart of this are the benefits and the impact you make for people - surely, the most critical thing to be shouting about.



5 tips for making the internal case for social value

01

Embed into governance

Build reporting into governance structures for example, customer committees, resident scrutiny and Board reporting.

02

Win senior buy-in

Senior buy-in makes a massive difference — especially from finance or treasury colleagues. Get them on side.

03

Link with existing priorities

Look at what's high profile (e.g. sustainability strategy) and build in a social value metric with wider teams.

04

Be tenacious

Keep drip feeding the message. Culture change takes time — consistent advocacy is key.

05

Recognise colleagues

Help colleagues understand that they are already generating social value. Recognise when they achieve and make it as visible as possible.

03 Confidence is critical. Trust is earned.



Matthew Grenier, Business Development Director, HACT

“How do we know that these figures are real? What are they based on?”

Chair of a leading housing association

As social value becomes more widely used across the sector, this question is becoming increasingly important. Measurement is no longer just a communications tool. It is being used in governance, strategy, funding discussions and, in some cases, assurance processes. As a result, the credibility of the underlying methodology matters more than ever.

HACT's UK Social Value Bank was the first that used a methodology based on wellbeing. Others are now following suit. At its core, this approach focuses on understanding how changes in people's lives - such as improved health, stronger social connections or greater financial security - affect their overall life satisfaction. Our partners, Simetrica-Jacobs, draw on large-scale datasets, like Understanding Society and the English Housing Survey, to identify the changes in life satisfaction that people say they feel as a result of changes in their lives.

Being based on large scale longitudinal surveys, these changes are “revealed”, rather than “stated” – they are based on what is happening in the real world.

For housing providers, this is particularly relevant. Many of the activities they deliver - whether tenancy sustainment, community investment or improvements to homes - are intended to improve people's quality of life. A wellbeing-based approach provides a way of quantifying these changes, helping organisations move beyond just counting the numbers towards a clearer and comparable understanding of outcomes.

Since 2022, we've also calculated the Exchequer benefits of each value outcome. As someone moves from unemployment into employment, for example, there are clear benefits to the Exchequer from increased tax revenue and reduced Universal Credit payments. For the talking to my neighbour regularly value outcome, these Exchequer benefits are far smaller.





How wellbeing methodology works

Take loneliness as an example. It's a growing issue, not just among older people, but increasingly among younger people as well. Loneliness is linked to poor mental health, as well as increased risks of dementia, stroke, cardiovascular disease and obesity.

Housing associations often respond through simple, community-based interventions, such as gardening clubs or local drop-in sessions. These create opportunities for residents to connect, helping them build relationships with neighbours and feel less isolated.

To measure the impact of this, we draw on the UK Social Value Bank, using value outcomes like "talking to neighbours regularly." Using data from Understanding Society - an annual survey of over 30,000 people - we can identify the average improvement in life satisfaction associated with talking to your neighbours regularly.

This gives us a measure of direct wellbeing. Simetrica-Jacobs then identify any indirect wellbeing effects, usually related to health. Combined, these are translated into a consistent monetary value using the Government's standard value for the measurement of wellbeing, the WELLBY, in line with HM Treasury's Green Book.

Over time, it's critical to keep these values up to date. For example, version 7 of the UK Social Value Bank has updated both the wellbeing as well as the Exchequer valuation so that they are in line with 2025 base rates. This means organisations can be confident that they are measuring the impact they are making today with the most up-to-date valuation.

Some organisations – and some other social value tools – are still using values from version 4 of the UK Social Value Bank. These include value outcomes based on calculations we made over ten years ago. They are out of date, not credible and do not reflect the value of the impact organisations are making today. They will not include any Exchequer values. If organisations are using these outdated values, they will be undervaluing the impact of their activities.

We are committed to keeping the UK Social Value Bank robust and relevant. Every update we make is not only underpinned by academic rigour, sector insight and investment, it is also only made possible through the organisations that choose to licence, pay for and use the tool properly.

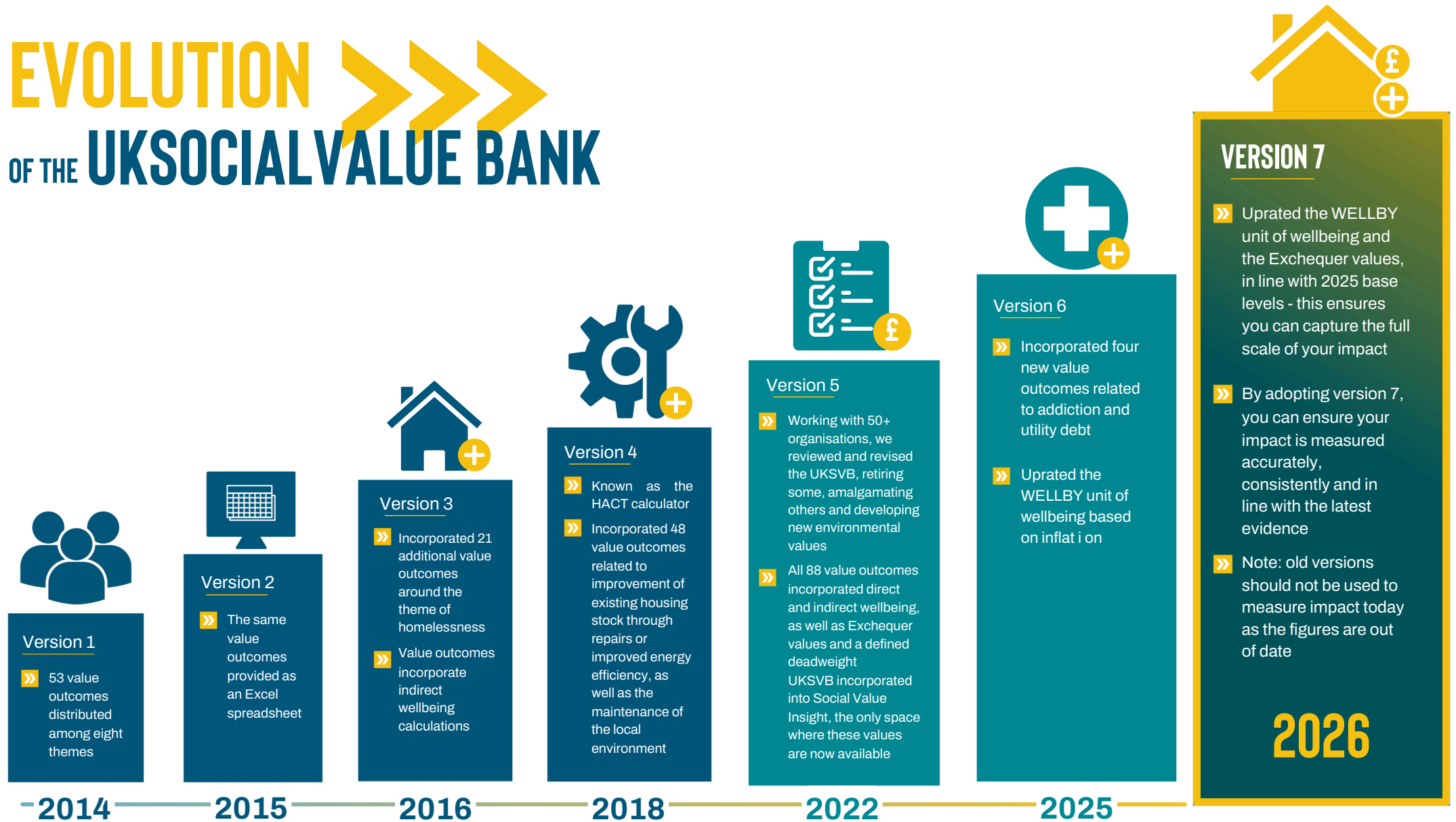
HACT continues to set the benchmark for evidenced, transparent and responsible social value practice. And why we were able to answer the question posed to us by that Board member – and by other critical stakeholders since then – with confidence and trust.

Ultimately, confidence in social value reporting is not just about the numbers themselves, but about the clarity and credibility of the methodology behind them. If organisations are using outdated, unverified or skimmed values, they will be undervaluing the impact of their activities.

Matthew Grenier, Business Development Director, HACT

EVOLUTION

OF THE UKSOCIALVALUE BANK



04 An inconvenient truth: Who pays for social value?



Andrew van Doorn OBE
Chief Executive,
HACT



Dr Rebecca Rees
Partner and Head of
Public Procurement,
Trowers & Hamlin

It would be a brave soul indeed who argued against public sector buyers seeking to achieve social value impact through their spending decisions.

Social value (not defined in the procurement sense but a term that refers to benefits created through public-sector contracts that extend beyond the core deliverables of that contract such as training and skills, local jobs, environmental improvements, community investment, or supporting SMEs) is very much the current "poster girl" of the procurement world. It highlights how public procurement can be used to secure additional value for the public sector purse.

Over recent years, we have seen social value become both a creative and impactful space for public procurement. Public sector organisations and housing associations have been asking for and securing, ever more expansive programmes of social value, involving complex multi-year delivery and deep engagement with communities. In many ways, social value has become the differentiator that demonstrates the contractor's commitment to driving economic, social and environmental outcomes.

Conversations, however, get interesting when you ask buyers and bidders who pays for the social value outcomes. With the increasing scale and complexity of social value programmes being put on the table, and the growing workforce of social value managers, co-ordinators and specialists now evident across the contractor landscape, this question becomes even more important. And it is this disconnect between what the key players of a public procurement process think about this that we need to explore.

Who pays?

Many public sector buyers strenuously insist that they do not pay for social value, that it is delivered "for free" (out of a bidder's profit margin?) and is a cost to the bidder that it must swallow to win the contract. Another way of putting it is, "public sector buyer sets the price of entry; the bidder pays it and the community (and/or the wider society) benefits". Too often concepts of additionality get confused or conflated when the question of resourcing is raised. The costs of delivering social value are certainly not additional to either the bidder, nor the buyer.

Bidders can often be coy about who bears the cost, arguably gaslighted into this position by politicians and practitioners who insist social value is delivered for free. Nevertheless, research has shown that the costs of social value are built into bids through a combination of pricing methods, commercial strategy, and risk appetite. In terms of pricing methods, these include:



Indirect

through the central office overhead or margin priced on every bid by the bidder regardless of the social value ask of the project (this overhead cost will also include their CSR budget).



Direct

as a specific project cost, often spread across the different line items requested rather than separated out on its own.

In terms of commercial strategy, bidders will decide on which of the two pricing methods they will adopt and what to recharge the buyer. It may be that they seek to minimise additional cost for a bid by either leveraging what they are doing elsewhere for other buyers or by working with charities and intermediaries to share the cost of initiatives.

Turning to risk appetite, it may be that bidders do not price social value outcomes into a bid directly and accept the risk that it may have to absorb the cost of the social value delivery. This absorption will rarely hit their profit margin though and is not wholly altruistic. Instead, it will usually be assuming that the buyer will not demand delivery of the social value promises, either through the lack of (1) contract management, or (2) service delivery visibility of the offer made at bid stage.

Whichever way the cost is absorbed, there is still a cost and it is foolish to believe that price isn't affected by both the social value ask and how it is delivered.

Is it the fault of the procurement process?

It is often the design of the competition documents that maintains the fiction. Social value offers are usually evaluated only on a benefit basis: e.g. what is going to be delivered and what is the attributed value to that social value offer. Most competitions avoid acknowledging a separate head of cost for the social value requirements, requiring instead that the bidders disguise associated costs within the rates requested.

Given this, UK bidding practices, encouraged by PPN 002 and the central government Social Value Model, focus on social value commitments, method statements and delivery models and KPIs for measurement. Cost remains invisible.

Does it matter?

We would argue that it matters enormously. The public sector's persistent reluctance to acknowledge that social value has a real cost to the buyer, rather than being absorbed by the bidder, leads to the wrong conversations taking place at the wrong levels. From the outset, this approach embeds a series of risks and poor practices that too often go unexamined and unmanaged.

Ambitious social value requirements are frequently specified without sufficient regard to affordability. Buyers rarely test whether their social value "ask" is realistic, whether programmes have been properly scoped, or whether costs have been credibly modelled to deliver the outcomes being promised. This creates an inherent fragility in delivery that only becomes apparent once contracts are underway.

The current approach also distorts competition. Larger and more sophisticated bidders are routinely advantaged over smaller organisations and new entrants, not because they are better at delivering the core purpose of the contract, but because they are better able to absorb, spread, or strategically price social value costs across wider portfolios. In effect, social value becomes a proxy for balance sheet strength rather than a genuine measure of added public benefit.



Over time, these costs are normalised into the market, subtly but materially shifting perceptions of what "value for money" means. While the Procurement Act 2023, like its predecessors, recognises that the Most Advantageous Tender is not necessarily the cheapest, there is still limited willingness to confront the reality that social value requirements can and do increase prices across the public sector. This tension remains largely unspoken.

Perhaps most concerning, the current environment discourages meaningful debate about whether procurement is always the right mechanism for delivering social value at all. There is a long and well-established history behind the Social Value Act 2012, but that should not exempt its practical application from scrutiny.

Some of the questions we need to be asking:

- Are bidders genuinely best placed, in terms of expertise and efficiency, to deliver complex social programmes, or might buyers themselves, or specialist partners, be better equipped to do so?
- Is it sensible to layer additional transaction costs onto spending that could otherwise be directed more efficiently towards impact?
- And is it really an optimal use of private sector time, resource, and expertise to require contractors, whether they are builders, architects, lawyers or cleaners, to divert attention from their core work in order to build social value delivery teams, facilities and overheads to meet procurement demands?

There is also a broader strategic question about whether social value through procurement is beginning to displace more deliberate and effective approaches to social regeneration.

We risk sidelining place-based, long-term programmes of social capital development, grounded in decades of research and evaluation, in favour of fragmented, contract-led interventions that are easier to specify but harder to sustain.

Ultimately, we must be clear about what we are trying to achieve. Is social value intended as a means of justifying public expenditure with the private sector? Is outsourcing more palatable if private companies accept lower margins and redirect the foregone profit into social value activity? If so, we should be explicit about that choice, rather than allowing it to sit implicitly within procurement processes.

Please do not misunderstand us. We are, and always have been, strong advocates of social value. We firmly believe that public expenditure should be used to improve social, economic and environmental outcomes. Our concern is simpler, but more fundamental: without a clear and honest conversation about cost, we undermine our ability to make informed choices about how public money is spent and, ultimately, how the best outcomes are delivered.

What next?

Lord Agnew has previously suggested that “a pound of public sector money spent through procurement without achieving social value is a pound wasted” (paraphrased). If that is the prevailing political lens through which social value is viewed, then we must also be willing to engage with the consequences of that position. Acknowledging that social value is not cost-neutral, and that it is not, in reality, “paid for by the bidder” but by the public sector, inevitably complicates the conversation. That complication should not be avoided.

If public bodies and housing associations are paying contractors to deliver social value, we should ask whether procurement is always the best approach, or whether some outcomes may be delivered more effectively, efficiently, or strategically through direct delivery or specialist partners. We should also be more honest about how much we are willing to pay to outsource social value activity and whether we are genuinely achieving value for money from those arrangements once overheads, transaction costs and delivery risk are taken into account.

At a more practical level, there needs to be greater discipline and transparency about proportionality. What constitutes a reasonable and appropriate social value requirement for a particular contract, sector or market? How do we ensure that social value expectations are clearly costed, affordable, and aligned with delivery capability, rather than aspirational additions that create hidden pressure in price, risk and performance?

Answering these questions will require a more mature conversation about who pays for social value, how much it costs, and what trade-offs are being made. That conversation may be uncomfortable, but without it we risk undermining the very outcomes social value policy is intended to achieve. Greater honesty and transparency are not a threat to social value; they are a prerequisite for doing it well.

05 The importance of place-based impact



Rebecca Rieley, Head of Communities and Projects, HACT

Housing associations have always played a critical role in delivering place-based impact, whether directly or indirectly. Our approach to valuing this impact originates from this work – from the core and critical work that community investment colleagues deliver for residents and local communities.

Demonstrating your impact in place is more important than ever. The Neighbourhood and Community Standard, which was published April 2024, sets out four required outcomes from registered providers. All four require housing associations to work collaboratively with local partners around the safety of shared spaces, promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing, deterring and reducing anti-social behaviour (ASB) and tackling domestic abuse.

As more social housing organisations in England are inspected by the Regulator for Social Housing, so we're seeing an emerging trend around those who use impact measurement and those who don't. A majority of those housing associations with C1 regulatory judgments are also Social Value Insight subscribers.

By contrast, none of the 48 housing associations or local authorities who were graded as C4 or C3 were subscribers. We are now seeing growing interest in wellbeing methodology from lower-performing organisations, as they look to refocus and improve their approach and reporting.

As well as being able to tell a coherent story about your place-based impact, the other significant opportunity relates to procurement. As a first step, housing associations should ensure they align their procurement requirements for social value with the needs of local communities, working with their community investment colleagues to understand these needs and then monitor delivery of commitments.

There is a huge opportunity for landlords to collaborate in this space. Within a local area, there are usually numerous different housing associations, each of which asking for different social value contributions through their individual procurement processes. If there was a coordinated approach in this area, the impact on local people and communities could be significantly increased. Without this co-ordination, the true benefits of social value generated through procurement will never be realised.

Regional networks of housing associations could greatly benefit from collaboration around procurement. In 2026, we'll encourage these networks to work more closely together - helping them show communities and the Regulator for Social Housing that they are meeting consumer standards.

The Neighbourhood and Community Standard - Demonstrating your impact

01 Safety of shared space

Applying the value outcome called “not worried about crime” helps demonstrate how you have improved the safety of local, shared spaces.

02 Communicating to tenants

There are a wide range of value outcomes that can be used to demonstrate the impact of the services housing associations provide in this area and in promoting social, environmental and economic wellbeing

03 Deterring and reducing ASB

A useful value outcome called “no problem with anti-social behaviour” applies widely to this topic

04 Tackling domestic abuse

As well as the value outcome “not being worried about crime”, there are also a range of services related to the support provided to women and children at risk of homelessness

06 Looking forward: Emerging trends for 2026



An honest discussion about procurement

As the article in this report notes, we need to face up to the realities of procurement and social value. The social housing sector's refusal to acknowledge that social value costs the buyer rather than the bidder results in the wrong conversations at the wrong levels at the wrong time. We need to have an honest conversation about where we go with procurement and social value, both to ensure that social value commitments are meaningful and appropriate, but also so that they deliver actual impact.



Audit and Assurance

In 2024 we released a white paper with Mazars about audit and assurance, with the vision that “social value – alongside other non-financial reporting – is part of a verified and recognised assurance process by 2028”. Judging from our experience of the increasing focus on verification, the growth in sustainability linked loans and need for validation of social value metrics from banks and other lenders, our vision is still on track. This will become even more certain as the Big Four become more interested in this space.



Mental wellbeing

One in three social housing residents experience mental health issues, far more than those living in private-rented accommodation or owning their home. We already have a UK Mental Wellbeing Bank to calculate the social value generated through improvements in wellbeing. There are now more recognised therapeutic approaches for measuring improvements to mental wellbeing that we will be looking to incorporate into the UKMWB.



Young people

The application of wellbeing methodologies for young people has been focused on those of secondary school age. This is primarily because of the challenges in understanding and attributing wellbeing changes in younger children with confidence. Research from LSE and the development of the C-WELLBY has changed this – we will be releasing a new sport and youth engagement bank in 2026 which will support confident measurement for the sector in this area.



Environmental social value

We already have a range of social value outcomes related to environmental measures – from improving the energy efficiency of a home to individuals buying recycled products and recycling waste. Over this year, we anticipate further developments in this space, particularly around the social value of reducing carbon usage in non-residential buildings. It's an area we are constantly investigating because we know how important the journey to net zero is for housing associations.



Social value in social housing

In 2025, we published research on the social value of social homes in Scotland. Over the next year, we'll publish similar research in England, working with Shelter England and more than 30 housing associations to track how moving into a new home affects people over time. Later this year, our partners Simerica-Jacobs will also complete research with two government departments on affordable housing. Together, this will build stronger evidence of the social value of social housing.



Let's create transformational social impact.

Get in touch with our team to learn more about how we can support.



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