



Delivering on our promises

**Community Strategy 2021 – 2025**

## 1. BUSINESS PLAN 2025

ccha provide good quality homes and are dedicated to providing a high quality of service to our residents. We have been rooted in the local community since we were founded in 1967. The focus of our 1,528 property portfolio of affordable homes we own and manage, are in Croydon, Sutton, and Bromley. We are proud to create sustainable communities by forging strong local partnerships, local initiatives like the Legacy Youth Zone in Central Croydon and working closely with residents. We are committed to developing more homes to meet the increasing demand in our community.

2020/21 was the first year of our ccha2025 business plan which, following significant resident, staff, and Board consultation, identified five strategic priorities key to the future success of our Group:

- Resident Standards
- Staff and Partner Engagement
- Safety and security undertaking
- More affordable homes pledge
- Value for Money offer

**Our vision** is “Delivering on our promises.”

**Our mission** is “We enable staff and partners to deliver excellent services for our residents and provide more quality homes for our community”.

**Our values are:**

- **Care** - We care about our customers, staff, and our wider environment
- **Adapt** - We adapt and embrace change to achieve our goals
- **Resilient** - We are resilient and effective in challenging times
- **Everyone** - Our strength is in our unity with everyone playing their part



## 2. AIM

The aim of this strategy is to develop our partnership working to deliver community projects to support homelessness, worklessness and youth initiatives and to ensure our own community spaces are invested in.

This will enhance the lives of our residents and people living within our community by giving them access to housing and personal development opportunities that they may not otherwise have. It will give them access to training and job opportunities as well as activities and support for young people. It will help our residents sustain their longer-term housing needs by linking up with specialist support services to give advice and guidance on homeless prevention and improve the environments within which our residents live.

## 3. BACKGROUND

ccha's previous Community Investment Strategy (2016 – 2020) had 5 key objectives which were:

➤ **We will develop and maintain good relationships with our key local partners**

Our focus for this objective was around working with other local housing providers, local authorities, the Police, and other agencies to support the young people in our communities. Holding large scale events around gun and knife crime in the area but also celebrating the successes of young people and giving them access to opportunities to better their lives in the future.

In June 2019, we signed up as a Founder Patron for Croydon's Legacy Youth Zone which is a purpose-built facility supporting thousands of young people across the borough aged 8 – 19, and up to 25 for those with additional support needs. We committed to providing funding of £25,000 each year for the first three years.

We have around 280 households with young people in the 8-19 mainstream target age range. Prior to the pandemic, we were able to offer free annual memberships and holiday club places and were working with them on their employment programme to explore common ground and opportunities.

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, Legacy had to completely adapt their services to ensure they could continue to support the young people of Croydon and the wider community. This meant that, whilst the numbers of young people they were able to support face-to-face decreased, they were able to support considerably more digitally, as well as offer other services.

➤ **We will provide access and support for residents to help them engage digitally**

Our STAR survey results from 2015 identified that a low number of residents have access to the internet with only 57% having access. With the introduction of the Welfare Reform and Universal Credit, ccha needed to ensure we provided support to residents to assist them getting online. We created a separate Digital Inclusion Strategy and created our 'Go Digital' campaign to promote the benefits of using online services.

➤ **We will develop specific pathways into employment for our residents**

Over a number of years, we worked to support residents by offering programmes such as support on CV writing, interview preparation, accessing the job market, work experience, apprenticeships, and internal vacancy opportunities. Most of this work was in conjunction with our main repairs' contractors. Unfortunately, due to the stability of this contract over the last few years and the Covid 19 pandemic, success has been limited. However, we have recently been able to advertise vacancies to our residents from several of our contractors.

Our focus over the last couple of years has been to engage with residents actively looking for work and employment skills via a jobs bulletin to those that have requested to receive it as well as advertising on social media and our website.

➤ **We will measure and evaluate the 'social value' of our community services to clearly demonstrate the benefits and outcomes of our wider role**

The initial intention was to record all forms of social value through the HACT model; however, this did not suit the projects and initiatives we were running and therefore could not be used to its full potential. ccha therefore created its own internal Social Value Framework that records the activities and success of our social value projects.

➤ **We will ensure that our income is maximised**

We have also had an important role to play in tackling financial exclusion and alleviating residents from becoming vulnerable to financial distress, debt, and hardship. Continuing to provide our welfare and debt advice service has been paramount in this, along with providing information and support at the point of sign up.

#### 4. THEMES

Under the strategic objective of our ccha2025 business plan: Staff and partner engagement – We will be an employer and partner of choice; we have committed to the following strategic aims:

**Worklessness** – To develop our relationships with our contractor partners to deliver our worklessness objective

**Youth engagement** – To build on the relationship with the Croydon Youth Zone to get more young residents involved

**Homelessness and prevention** – To work with partners such as Emmaus and Crisis UK to support homelessness initiatives in the borough

In addition to this, the Social Housing White Paper: “The Charter for Social Housing Residents” (November 2020) sets out what every social housing resident should expect in seven themes. Theme Six is: ‘**To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in**’.

Whilst much of this is aimed towards new development, ensuring the build is well designed and that homes are kept to a decent standard, it is expected that landlords do their bit to help keep neighbourhoods safe and clean. Feedback from the government consultation noted that people talked about having pride in their community, but how sometimes this was let down by poor neighbourhood management, upkeep of buildings and the quality of shared spaces. Some residents also struggled to find green spaces to exercise, and others experienced isolation, loneliness, and the challenge of dealing with anti-social behaviour.

To this end, we feel it is important to continue to invest in our communal spaces to make them positive spaces for our residents and local communities and have also committed to the following:

**Community Improvements** – To work with residents to improve our estates and communal spaces through additional funding for small community and environmental based projects

#### 5. OBJECTIVES

In line with the overall aim of this strategy, to develop our partnership working to deliver community projects to support homelessness, worklessness and youth initiatives and to ensure our own community spaces are invested in, we have developed 4 new objectives.

## **Worklessness**

Supporting residents back into work or to work for the first time remains a key priority for ccha. People who are out of work often experience multiple disadvantages, over and above not having a job. These may include challenging personal circumstances such as higher risk of health problems, substance and alcohol abuse, being homeless or under threat of homelessness and being in debt. 'Workless' also has a knock-on effect to family generations who potentially continue in this cycle of a non-working life and the detrimental effects it brings.

At ccha we can help with the stages of seeking employment including training and apprenticeships through partnership working with third parties and in particular through our main partnering contractors.

At the end of 2019 we procured a new contract with Chequers for estate services and in 2020, a new contract with Axis for repairs and maintenance. Both included an offer to help support residents into work and provide employment and apprenticeship opportunities.

### **Objective 1: Expose residents to training and employment opportunities to assist them in improving their employability and financial position**

To achieve this, we will:

- Ensure our key partnering contractors continue to include employment and training opportunities which are required to be delivered as part of their contracts
- Send out our Jobs and Training Bulletin a minimum of once per month to those residents registered to receive it and promote on our website and social media
- Advertise to residents all ccha vacancies and all local vacancies that arise at Axis and Chequers
- Offer and signpost residents to training and development opportunities to ensure they are equipped with the skills they need to apply for the jobs they are interested in, including each year:
  - 1 apprenticeship opportunity from Axis and Chequers
  - 2 work experience opportunities and 1 pre-apprenticeship opportunity at Axis
  - 1 unpaid work placement opportunity at Chequers with evaluation and feedback
  - 2 trade training sessions for up to 10 residents to be delivered by Axis

- Create a campaign to increase sign up to our Jobs and Training Bulletin at least annually
- Consider our Wi-Fi accessibility in our homes and buildings to assist with applications, training and work opportunities so residents are not restricted because they cannot afford to install Wi-Fi including:
  - Considering our Wi-Fi offer in our new developments
  - Rolling out Wi-Fi to communal areas at our older persons schemes (over 55s)

## **Youth Engagement**

Our partnership with Legacy Youth Zone remains, with one more year of committed funding to fulfil as part of the original agreement. As one of many founder members we are united by a determination to give young people in Croydon somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to, which can transform the lives of 1,000s of young people in the borough of Croydon and the wider area.

Offering young people, a safe environment for them to go and be part of something like this is an amazing opportunity for them and ccha. Legacy offers something like no other, all under one roof. The young people benefit from youth sessions suitable for their ages. Activities include cooking and nutrition sessions in a training kitchen, fun and games in the Rec area, outdoor and indoor sports in addition to boxing and fitness gym sessions and an amazing music room, art room, dance studio and film and media suite where the young members can really tap into their creative talents, using state of the art equipment under the guidance of their youth workers.

As well as this, they offer several additional initiatives such as the Empowered programme that is designed to help people aged 16-24 who are not in education, employment, or training to prepare for finding a job or career. They support members who would like further support with training, work placements, or want to find out about volunteering opportunities and apprenticeships. They also have an active Young Leaders and Enterprise group.

This service not only offers all the above, it also helps tackle anti-social behaviour in the area and enables parents to remain in or seek employment through the school holidays and, unlike other holiday clubs, it's affordable. This opens up opportunities to families who would otherwise not be able to afford to send their children to somewhere like this. And without these opportunities, and support from organisations like ours, more deprived children in our community would have even fewer life chances.

With trained staff on site at every session, young people can also utilise their 'Stop and Breathe' counselling service which safeguards our young people in a safe environment.

## **Objective 2: Provide young people with a safe environment and opportunities to enhance their life chances through our partnership with Legacy Youth Zone**

To achieve this, we will continue to work with Legacy Youth Zone to:

- Provide at least 7 holiday club places, reserved for ccha residents, for all school holidays
- Offer a minimum of 15 free annual memberships to the young people living within a ccha property
- Support and promote the full benefits and opportunities Legacy can offer young people in Croydon with articles in our newsletter twice a year and by social media campaigns a further two times per year
- Support and promote employment, training and personal development opportunities available at Legacy to all ccha residents and young people through our monthly Jobs and Training Bulletin
- Introduce Legacy to relevant new partners and sponsors to enhance and support the opportunities they provide

### **Homelessness and prevention**

ccha have offered a welfare and debt advice service for many years and brought in a dedicated post in 2017. Since then, we have directly assisted hundreds of residents to claim benefits, challenge decisions and help access other support and services to improve their income and wellbeing. This has recouped hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of income for residents and ccha, provided much needed mental health and wellbeing support through activities such as talking therapy and counselling and prevented many, often vulnerable residents, from losing their home.

In addition to this, we have partnered with a number of homeless charities to support the work that they do:

### **Partnership with The Nehemiah Project**

The Nehemiah Project is an established registered Christian-based charity working primarily with male prisoners or ex-offenders who are recovering from drug and alcohol addictions. To enable them to support more people and prevent further homelessness, we have leased Nehemiah two of our buildings on five-year repairing leases in 2019 and 2020. This has also benefited us by providing an income on properties we intend to redevelop in the future which were incurring significant void rental losses under their previous provision of supported housing. This income helps us to invest in more homes.

## **Partnership with Emmaus**

In 2019, following an options appraisal, we were able to sell one of our homes to homeless charity, Emmaus, following the withdrawal of funding by the local authority for one of our supported schemes. This meant we were able to continue to support the local homeless community whilst investing back into more homes for the area. In 2020/21, we were also able to work collaboratively with Emmaus to open up a winter shelter by giving them access to an empty building following a change in provision for the building. This meant a number of single homeless people had somewhere safe and warm to stay during the colder months of the pandemic and could also receive additional support. We have also worked with Emmaus to help some of their clients move onto longer term homes by giving them access to our harder to let studios in our older persons accommodation.

## **Objective 3: Work with local charities to support homelessness initiatives in the borough**

To achieve this, we will:

- Continue to work closely with our existing homelessness partners to look at other opportunities to support homelessness initiatives
- Seek out and develop new relationships to support this aim including exploring opportunities with Crisis UK's Croydon branch
- Complete at least one new homelessness initiative each year with one of our new or existing partners
- Continue to provide welfare and debt advice to at least 100 households each year and link up with other support services and charities to prevent homelessness amongst our own residents

## **Community Improvements**

Making improvements to our estates and their communal areas has been a commitment for ccha for many years and remains our focus. Each year, we have funded projects which have included improvements to security to help reduce anti-social behaviour, improving parking security to stop non-residents using/accessing the car parks and completed landscaping and garden improvements. We have also purchased equipment for communal areas and gardens and funded events for older people to help bring residents together and encourage social inclusion.

We have an annual fund of £65,000 (The Presidents Fund). Its purpose is to make a positive difference to residents and our estates with residents and staff working in partnership to make applications. A proportion of the fund will continue to be used to support our community improvement projects.

In addition to our own community initiatives, we also have commitment from our contractors to deliver added social value which range from volunteering days and community projects to ensuring that a percentage of their contract is delivered using local supply chains.

**Objective 4: Work with residents to invest in their communal spaces to enhance their feeling of safety, wellbeing, and pride in their local community**

To achieve this, we will:

- Approve and spend a minimum budget of £25k per year to support initiatives through the Presidents Fund
- Promote the Presidents Fund to our residents using newsletter and social media campaigns at least twice a year to encourage applications for positive improvements to their community spaces
- Showcase past improvement projects in our newsletters twice a year to give residents ideas on what they can apply for
- Encourage staff through internal campaigns to work with residents to identify and deliver improvement projects, carrying out appropriate consultation where appropriate
- Utilise our partnering contractors' commitments to deliver at least 4 social value projects each year including volunteering days and gardening projects

## **6. SOCIAL VALUE FRAMEWORK & BENEFITS ACHIEVED**

To document our achievements and to help measure success, our Social Value Framework records all ccha's community and social value activity.

The framework records the following:

- Category (as well as the HACT category to try and link as much as we can)
- The activity and the outcome
- Budget costs and income raised for ccha or charity
- How many residents have benefitted and at what schemes

**Appendix 1** documents the anticipated benefits and beneficiaries which we expect to achieve as a result of the delivery of this strategy and the detailed objectives and resulting activities.

## **7. RISK**

There are a number of risks associated with the successful delivery of this strategy. These include:

- Lack of take up from residents wishing to receive information about work opportunities and applying to vacancies advertised by ccha and/or our contractors
- Lack of success in recruiting residents to vacant roles
- Lack of take up from residents to pursue training and/or support advice to ensure they have the right skills to apply for vacancies and fulfil the roles criteria to be a successful candidate
- Lack of funding to support the Youth Zone and/or Presidents Fund
- Failure of contractors to deliver on their commitments
- Future Covid 19 restrictions preventing activities in all the above

We will work hard to try to mitigate these risks as we work through the delivery of this strategy.

## **8. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

As part of this strategy, we will ensure everyone is treated fairly and without discrimination, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and age. We will promote inclusion, challenge discrimination, and seek to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that everyone can access our services and that no one is excluded inappropriately from any services or activities provided by us.

In addition to this, as part of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, we will be revisiting the information we hold about our residents. Through further fact finding and the collection of specific data, we will seek to improve our promotion of the different initiatives to take a more targeted approach. This should enable us to achieve greater success by helping to attract those who will benefit most from the various activities and objectives.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and has indicated that this strategy would not discriminate against any specific groups.

## **9. DATA PROTECTION**

Under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Human Rights Act 1998, all personal and sensitive organisational information, however received, is treated as confidential. We are required to collect and hold certain types of data on residents in order to carry out our business requirements and fulfil our service obligations.

For the purposes of this strategy and how we manage the information that we hold on individuals as part of its delivery, ccha will comply with its obligations under GDPR including ensuring that the appropriate data sharing agreements are in place with all of the partnering organisations we look to work with. A Data

Protection Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of the development of this strategy.