Community Investment Strategy
2023-2026

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Contents

Introducing our Strategy 3
Making a real difference to people's lives

About Apex 4
Scope and size of the organisation

Working beyond our core activities 5

Our investment achievements 6
How we did during 2020-2023

Strategic themes and objectives 7
and community investment programmes

Strategic theme 1:
Enable people to fulfil their aspirations 7

Strategic theme 2:
Enable successful communities..... 8

Strategic theme 3:
Promote positive partnerships within communities 9

Delivering the Strategy..... 10
Monitoring and review

1

2

3

Introducing our Strategy - making a real difference to people's lives

RIGHT: The neighbourhood allotments at Ballymagowan Urban Park in Derry~Londonderry enable over 100 users to grow their own food; with any surplus produced going to local charities.

This strategy has been developed with the aim of supporting our communities beyond our core landlord purpose.

It provides a focus to ensure we are working towards our common goals which have been shaped by feedback from stakeholders including tenants, community groups and employees.

They target the following five pillars of activity:

- *Community empowerment and engagement*
- *Health and wellbeing*
- *Financial wellbeing*
- *Work and learning*
- *Volunteering*

We will continue to use our influence and knowledge, work in partnership and source additional funding to deliver a range of collaborative services. These services will aim to instigate positive change and make a fundamental difference to people's lives; also contributing to wider community benefits.

About Apex

We provide and maintain almost 7,000 high quality homes and provide support to more than 16,000 tenants and residents across Northern Ireland.

As a not-for-profit housing association, we work to social enterprise principles and employ almost 650 staff. Over the next three years, the number of Apex homes is expected to grow to around 8,000.

We provide:

- *General needs housing for families and single people*
- *Purpose-built accommodation for older people and families with complex needs*
- *Supported housing for people with mental ill health, learning disabilities, or alcohol/drug addictions; young people in need of support; and older people*
- *Housing support for vulnerable groups under the Supporting People programme*
- *Support services for tenants and the wider community through our community investment programme*
- *Community buildings managed by local community groups*

We work with others

Apex works with Newington Housing Association, using our joint resources for mutual benefit. We provide services on behalf of Apex Housing Association (Ireland).

High quality homes

almost **7,000**
high quality homes provided and maintained by Apex

Tenants and residents

more than **16,000**
tenants and residents live in Apex accommodation

Apex Staff

almost **650**
staff are employed by Apex

Working beyond our core activities

In the period 2020-2023 two of our community investment initiatives were recognised at All-Ireland level.

Apex works across a range of vibrant and diverse communities throughout Northern Ireland and increasingly sees the need to target this work beyond our core business activities.

This is necessitated by the considerable pressures that society in general continues to face, in a challenging economic climate. As a social landlord, we see every day the impact of a range of factors on our communities.

Apex therefore seeks to deliver a range of programmes and services that instigate positive change and make a fundamental difference to people's lives, thereby making our communities better places to live.

Through investing in people, property and the environment, we aim to make a positive difference. To help achieve our aim, we work with a number of community partners to enable tenants and residents to access a range of initiatives including self-development programmes, advice on health and well-being, budgeting and employment opportunities.

By enhancing our engagement in community investment activities, we have established Apex as one of the leading socially responsible organisations in Northern Ireland. We continue to receive external recognition for this invaluable work.

In 2020, Apex won the CIH 'Working in Partnership' award in recognition of Apex's efforts to help those experiencing financial difficulties. And, in 2022, Apex won the CIH 'More than Bricks and Mortar' award for the very successful community allotments project.

We want to further this important work to ensure that we continue to build thriving communities where people want to live and work.

Our community investment achievements during 2020-2023

Tenant Feedback

more than **100**
allotment users supported by an on-site horticulturalist at Ballymagowan Urban Park

Meals for older people

more than **70**
meals per week provided for older people through Abbey House Luncheon Club

Financial wellbeing

more than **1,200**
tenants helped through Apex's Welfare Advice Service

Emergency food

almost **65,000 kg**
of food delivered to local communities

Shared neighbourhoods

more than **200**
events delivered for 'Housing for All' communities

Additional benefits

more than **£850,000**
of additional benefits accessed for tenants through Apex's Welfare Advice Service

Wraparound support

almost **200**
households supported through Apex Community Supermarket

Charity fundraising

more than **£60,000**
raised for Children in Crossfire to support projects in Tanzania

Strategic theme 1:
Enable people to fulfil their aspirations

Our objectives are to:

1.1 Support people to make informed decisions about their lives and increase their independence.

1.2 Support people to recognise their potential by increasing their motivation, confidence, skills and knowledge.

Community Investment programmes

Welfare Advice & Financial Inclusion

Our Welfare Advice Officers support tenants by providing advice on benefits and budgeting and support them to access external assistance.

Apex Community Supermarket

In addition to emergency food, the Community Supermarket at Apex Living Centre enables struggling households to access a range of support initiatives.

Tenancy Support

Our tenancy support service provides tenants in the greater Derry~Londonderry area with practical support, advice and assistance in the home.

Training & Employment

Our community hubs facilitate training in areas like good relations, first aid and essential business skills; and are supported by volunteering opportunities.

Strategic theme 2:
Enable successful communities

Our objectives are to:

2.1 Provide opportunities for people to participate in making decisions about their communities.

2.2 Support people to fulfil their vision and aspirations for their community and between communities.

2.3 Promote and encourage diversity and good relations in all housing developments and particularly within areas where there is 'shared housing'.

2.4 Develop bio-diversity and sustainability initiatives within our communities.

Community Investment programmes

Promoting Diverse Communities

Apex's Good Relations Team (funded by the DfC Shared Housing Programme) works to promote good relations and diversity within our shared housing areas.

Luncheon Club Home delivery

Addressing social isolation amongst older people, Apex provides nutritious 3-course meals 5 days a week from Abbey House in Derry~Londonderry.

Food sustainability initiatives

Apex's allotments have been awarded NIFHA* Green champion status; for their role in building food sustainability in the community.

Advisory groups

These groups, made up of representatives from local community and statutory agencies, work together to develop good relations plans for local shared communities.

** Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations*

Strategic theme 3:
Promote positive partnerships within communities

Our objectives are to:

3.1 Support charities, social enterprises and SMEs within our communities.

3.2 Support the development of economic activity within the areas that we work.

3.3 Maximise the social value impact for our communities within Apex development contracts.

Community Investment programmes

Empowering local charities

Through the provision of community hubs, Apex is empowering local charities like GSAP* to help build better communities.

Apex with Foyle Foodbank

Foyle Foodbank based at Apex Living Centre, provides emergency food to those facing food poverty in the Foyle region.

Apex with Children in Crossfire

We partner with Children in Crossfire to provide pre-primary school education in the Mwanza region of Misungwi in Tanzania.

Work experience

Apex and our partners facilitate apprenticeships, work placements and volunteering to help upskill people in local communities.

** Greater Shantallow Area Partnership*

Delivering the Strategy

Monitoring and review

We will continuously monitor and periodically evaluate the success of this strategy. We will do this through:

Quarterly Progress Report
Progress on delivering the Community Investment Strategy is reported quarterly to the Housing Management Committee which is attended by senior managers, board members and connected tenants. Progress is also reported annually through the Apex Annual Report.

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