

FUSION²¹

Foundation Impact Report

2022-2023



Proud Providers of Procurement with Purpose

Welcome

from our Chair and Chief Executive

It is our privilege to introduce the latest trustee report and to celebrate the achievements of our organisation over the past year.

2022-2023 saw the organisation celebrate its 20th anniversary, and it was fitting that we also surpassed 1,000 members this year. We continue to welcome new members from social housing, as well as members from education, health and other areas of the public sector.

The Foundation continued to go from strength to strength, with over £400,000 committed to supporting innovation and transformative thinking in communities. We are enormously proud of the depth and breadth of impact created by working in collaboration with key partners and members, a hallmark of the Foundation's approach.

Our social enterprise, Fusion21 Ltd, continued to support our members with procurement and social value services. We were particularly delighted to partner with the Social Investment Business (SIB) to support the delivery of the Youth Investment Fund (YIF) to maximise social value and benefits through a government funding scheme to create, expand and improve youth facilities across the country.

We are excited to be celebrating 21 years of Fusion21 next year. This anniversary celebration will be an opportunity to recognise the achievements of Fusion21 over the past 21 years with our members, contractors and supply chain partners and our people.



Chris Murray,
Group Chair



Dave Neilson,
Group Chief Executive

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Fusion21

Foundation

in review

1.**Achievements and performance: grant funding**

This year, the Foundation went from strength to strength, increasing its grant investments and pipeline for future years. We continued to raise the profile of the Fusion21 Foundation by developing the website content to make our work more visible and to showcase the great feedback we've had from our grantees and strategic partners. In addition, we took an active role in webinars and conferences to showcase our impact as a funder and shape thinking in our funding priority areas.

We spent **£415,464** in grant funding to support projects across the country...

- Employment and skills
- Health and wellbeing
- Financial inclusion and resilience

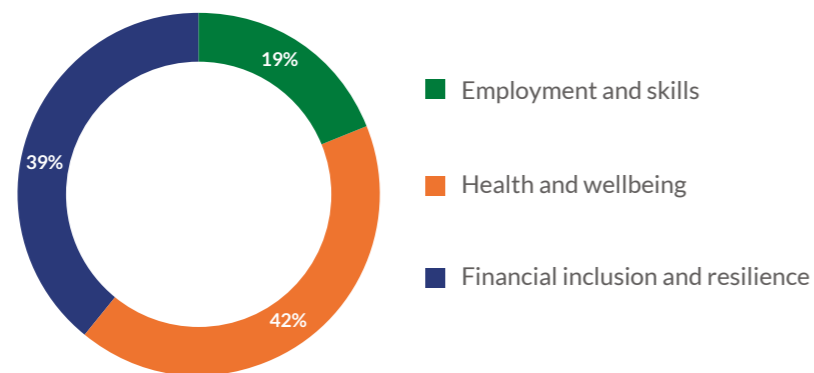
Our grantees were particularly focussed on responding to the growing challenges around the cost of living and its impact on communities and their health



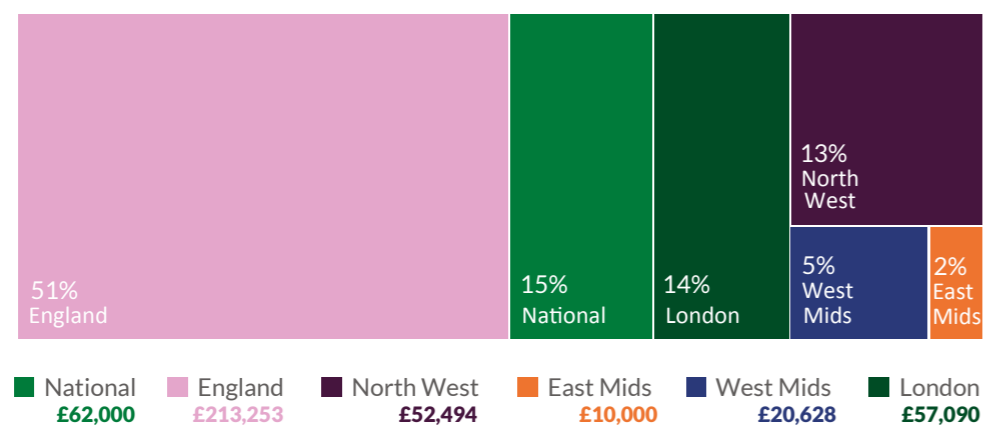
41% of spend was attributed to projects that were commissioned this year.

The total value of the (multi-year) projects that were newly commissioned this year is **£585,766**.

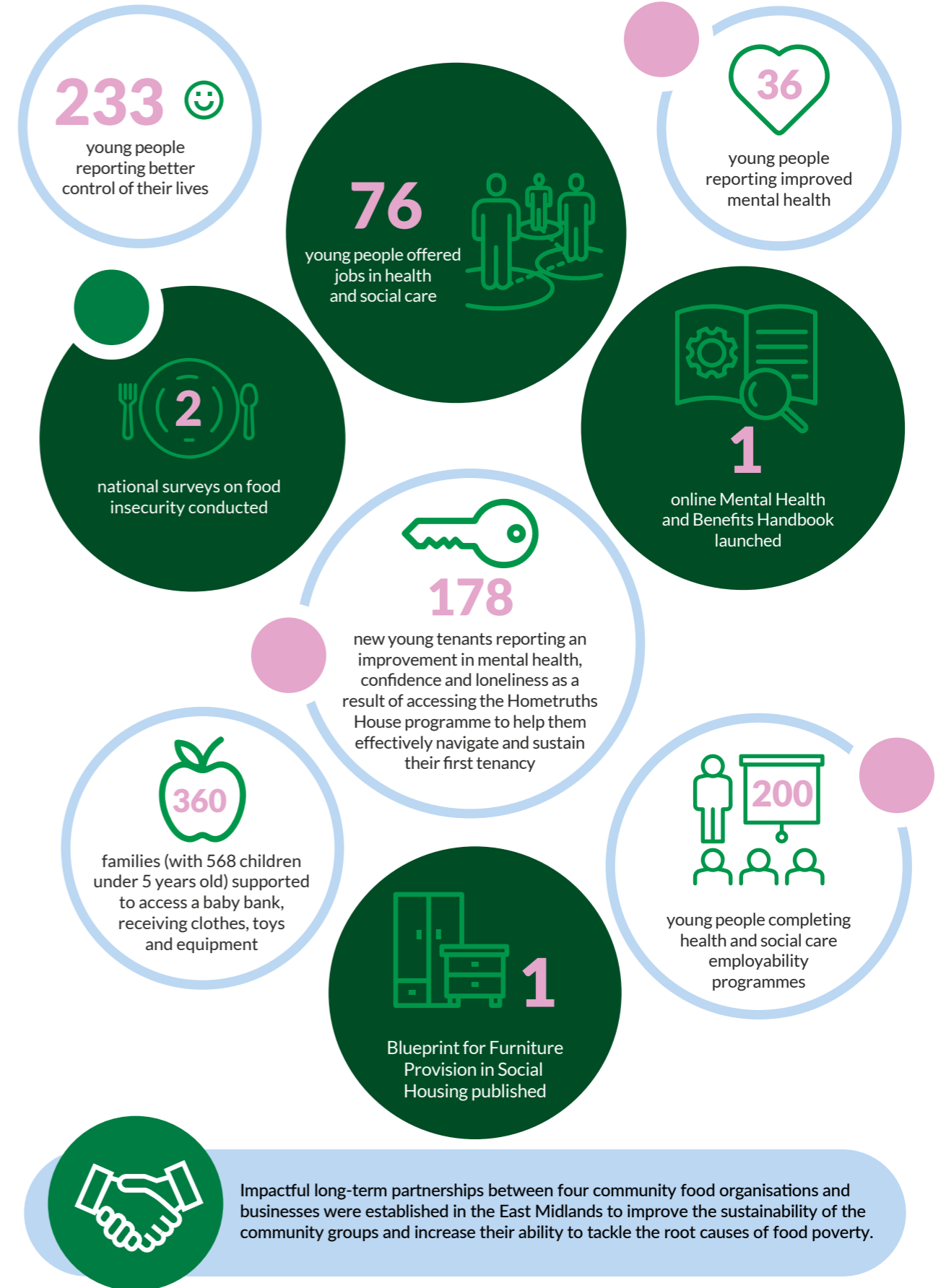
SPEND BY PRIORITY THEME



SPEND BY REGION



Our funding generated a range of outcomes across the priority themes including:



2. Health and wellbeing

The long-standing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the economic climate continued to impact mental health and wellbeing across the country.

Young people

We made over £145,000 available to New Horizon Youth Centre (NHYC) to help fund a new £1 million project aimed at giving 16–24 year olds across London access to a wide range of mental health support over the next three years.

NHYC have been working with young homeless people across London for over 50 years. Through their day centre, outreach, and remote services they support young people to overcome the barriers life has put in their way and solve their homelessness for good. Their wider service offer includes expert help in safety, youth work and, housing.

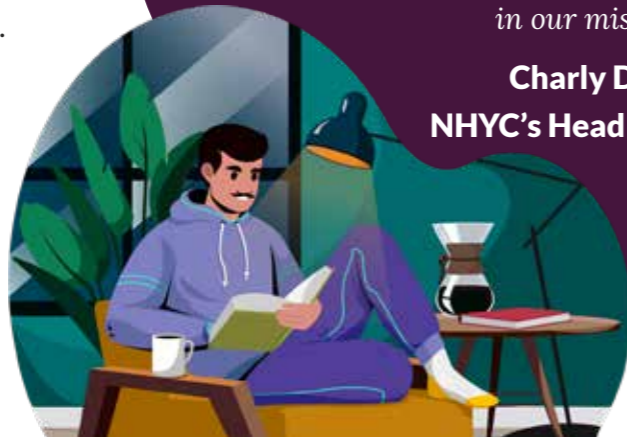
Starting in October 2022, NHYC’s Wellbeing Project was launched in response to data that found 39 percent of people who came to the charity needed support with their mental health, many having experienced trauma in their lives.

The Wellbeing Project, based in NHYC’s day centre in King’s Cross as well as remotely, offers everything from counselling and psychotherapy to support with health provider registration. It also includes specialist provision for young people with speech, language, and communication needs.

Led by a Head of Health and assisted by Clinical Practitioners, a Nurse and Occupational Health and Communications workers, the Wellbeing Project ensures a trauma-informed approach is implemented across all New Horizon services. This means they are designed to understand and address the psychological and emotional needs of young people experiencing homelessness. Many have suffered trauma and additional challenges from exposure to the criminal justice system, serious youth violence or going through the care system.

“We’re incredibly thankful for the unwavering support and generous funding from Fusion21. Their contribution has enabled us to launch a holistic well-being initiative that will revolutionise our trauma responsive healthcare. With these newfound resources, we can now reach young people who have been let down by other services and provide them with the support they desperately need and deserve. Thank you, Fusion21, for giving us this opportunity to make a tangible impact and for your ongoing support in our mission.”

Charly Dale,
NHYC’s Head of Health



Older people

We have funded a partnership with HACT, the National Lottery Community Fund, Clarion Futures and South Yorkshire Housing to build an ‘Age Friendly’ Social Housing Programme, aiming to improve outcomes for older people in communities, including social isolation and loneliness. Since its inception, a number of other social landlords have joined the partnership, bringing the combined partnership to 23.

The project launched in August 2022 and will run for two years to build local partnerships in three areas across the UK (with aspirations to deliver in an additional three areas in the second year of the programme), connecting social housing to local networks, partners and communities who are committed to building better places and services for our ageing populations.

The programme is facilitated by ‘on-the-ground’ project coordinators in each place who are working closely with, and between, housing associations and partners in the following three areas to support them to understand and embed the principles of Age Friendly Communities in their work and places, and to support local people to access, and potentially deliver, a wide range of services for over 55s:

- London Borough of Southwark
- Bradford City Region
- Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

HACT hopes this approach to joined-up working between housing associations will become a blueprint for collaborative community investment, demonstrating the incredible impact social landlords can have as local investors in people and places when they pool energies and resources.

“We believe that this programme will lead to significant changes in the way that social housing providers develop and support Age Friendly communities across the UK. With 44 percent of social housing residents over the age of 55, there is the opportunity to improve the lives of thousands of older people through this pilot and as a result of the learning and recommendations that will be shared across the sector, through HACT’s Centre for Excellence in Community Investment Age Friendly Network.”

HACT Head of Communities,
Dr. Robert Sugden



3.

Financial inclusion and resilience

Our biggest area of focus this year has been mitigating the huge impact of the cost-of-living crisis.



“People struggling with their mental health need to know they can at least cover their bills but the benefits system can be opaque and overwhelming. Without the right support, vulnerable people can fall through the cracks. Our guide offers expert back-up for those who are supporting someone so that they can access the money they are entitled to and live with dignity.”

Alison Garnham,
Chief Executive at CPAG



Welfare rights

Following the commission of a [report](#) with Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) last year, which highlighted the issues people with mental health problems face when interacting with the universal credit system, we co-funded a free online resource with The Riverside Group and the Northwick Trust.

CPAG collaborated with mental health charity Mind to produce the [Mental Health and Benefits Handbook](#) which provides practical advice and guidance for the different stages of benefit claims and health assessments and the problems that might be encountered during the process.

The comprehensive guide is informed by the lived experience of people with mental health needs and the social security system. The book is aimed at benefits advisers and is also helpful for other professionals such as social workers and housing officers, or carers and families. Over 2000 users accessed the guide in the first month alone.

“Each year there are hundreds of thousands of claims for disability benefits like personal independence payment, with mental health being the single most common reason for claiming. Those benefits mean that people who are unwell can get the security they need to focus on moving forward with their lives, to build connections with other people and to live more independently. Mind is proud to have worked with CPAG in the development of this essential resource, and hope that it can play a part in helping those of us with mental health problems get support and respect from the benefits system.”

Stephen Buckley,
Head of Information at Mind

BBC NEWS
Home UK World Business Politics Tech

Cost of living: Rise in Britons saying they skip meals or go hungry

By Beth Timmins
Business reporter, BBC News
9 May 2022

More people in the UK are struggling to afford to eat every day as food prices rise, according to research by charity the Food Foundation.

The Guardian
News website of the year

News Opinion Sport Culture Lifestyle

Food poverty: More than 2m adults in UK cannot afford to eat every day, survey finds

One in seven adults estimated to be food-insecure, up 57% from January, owing to rising cost of living

Patrick Butler Social policy editor

Sun 8 May 2022 19.01 EDT

Food

insecurity

The Food Foundation conducted another two food insecurity surveys this year, thanks to our support. The survey published in May received over 400 pieces of press coverage within the first 24 hours across the UK and abroad.

Our funding with Business in the Community (BITC) concluded this year. We funded BITC to support five community organisations in the East Midlands through the Tackling Food Poverty project, to develop activity around food pantries, community cafes and community growing. The project focussed on two counties; Nottingham and Northamptonshire. These were chosen because of the unemployment rates in these areas and the number of children in poverty. One in four children under 16 are living in poverty in the East Midlands. The project aimed to tackle food insecurity in the region by partnering businesses with charitable organisations to share their specialist skills to support the sustainability of local community food organisations, including help with marketing and business planning.



Business support included:

- For Hope Nottingham: Nottinghamshire Surveyors providing free drone footage of an outer building as part of a building survey and Nottingham Trent University students devised improved food bank recipe cards.
- For Himmah: A donation of laptops from the RSPB and a masterclass from law firm Shoosmiths whose HR training focused on wellbeing, communication, and resilience.
- For Northamptonshire Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE): A productive and continuing partnership with Pfizer, who assisted in developing leadership, sustainability, marketing, and business planning strategies aimed at bolstering the Northamptonshire Sustainable Food Network.
- For Northampton Hope Centre: Mechanical, electrical and telecom engineering experts VVB gave a masterclass on performance management and advice around measuring social impact. Nottingham University business students also shared marketing and fundraising strategies and volunteers from digital services and printing solutions company Ricoh UK cooked lunch for 150 homeless people on the third Tuesday of each month.



As part of the project BITC developed a [report](#) to highlight good practice examples of the different ways community groups and other organisations are tackling food insecurity and supporting people to be less reliant on food banks. We have shared this report widely with our colleagues in the housing and VCSE sectors.



Furniture poverty

Furniture Poverty is an ongoing issue across communities – including those living in social housing, where around 50% of tenants are already living in poverty and unable to afford basic furniture or white goods. This year, we collaborated with End Furniture Poverty, funding them to produce their latest research [report ‘A Blueprint for Furniture Provision in Social Housing’](#) which was launched via a webinar in November.

End Furniture Poverty also wrote a series of blogs to support the publication of the report, for [Inside Housing](#), [Homes for Cathy](#), and [CIH](#).

The report provides a template business case for furnished tenancies and guidance for social landlords. It also outlines the benefits if more were to be done to increase the number of furnished rented properties available.

Claire Donovan, Head of Policy, Research and Campaigns for End Furniture Poverty:

“We have been supporting social landlords who are interested in furnished tenancies for several years, helping them to prepare business cases and also raising awareness of the huge benefits furnished tenancies can offer both tenants and landlords.”

“Thanks to funding from the Fusion21 Foundation, we have been able to take this to a new level by compiling this detailed guide, speaking to dozens of social landlords and putting together a compelling case for every social landlord to provide essential furniture to their tenants.”

End Furniture Poverty continue to meet regularly with social landlords across the UK who are recognising that an increasing number of tenants need support with furniture and the Blueprint has always been their first port of call, helping them to hit the ground running.

Following the launch of the report, we were approached by our Fusion21 member, Curo, to match fund a furnished tenancy pilot, targeting single people and care leavers moving from temporary accommodation or homelessness into general needs. The project aims to deliver furnished tenancies to around 20-25 customers over 12 months in Bath and North East Somerset. We look forward to reporting the impact this has had on individual tenants in our next annual report.



Fuel poverty

Clarion has launched a responsive retrofit pilot project in a co-ordinated response to the challenges their residents are facing with fuel poverty. They stress that to have meaningful impact on fuel poverty, the underlying issues causing this must be addressed: stock condition, poverty, and behaviour.

The pilot project will enable Clarion to systematically address energy behaviours and poverty alongside improving the efficiency of the property and ensuring any repairs that may impact on efficiency are completed. Working under the fuel poverty and sustainability agendas, it brings together the Asset Management, Repairs and Money Guidance teams who will work together to maximise the savings that can be made on household bills. The project will provide interim solutions to household efficiency, minimising fuel bills for those who need it most, until large scale, planned retrofit happens.

Fusion21 Foundation has funded National Energy Action (NEA) to independently evaluate the project in order to influence the long-term implementation of Clarion's Fuel Poverty Strategy. Once complete, the final report will summarise key impacts of the programme, including recommendations for improvement (should investment be secured to extend the programme) identify trends and outcomes for residents on their energy consumption and home comfort, including considering impact on health and wellbeing.

The evaluation will be used as a model of good practice throughout the wider Housing Associations network. NEA will share the findings with over 400 members and wider campaigning activities as a model that can be applied to influence government for real change when tackling fuel poverty throughout housing stock.



Children and families

We were delighted to be approached by a Fusion21 member, The Guinness Partnership, to fund a partnership between them, Sal's Shoes, Boiler House and Little Village to open a new family centre in Hackney, East London.

About 48 percent of children in Hackney live in poverty according to figures compiled by Trust for London, way above the London average. It also has one of the highest rates of households in temporary accommodation, with 28 households per 1,000.

Provided by The Guinness Partnership, the formerly unused building off Harrington Hill in Lower Clapton, was refurbished to become a welcoming and vibrant family centre, providing baby bank services to help local families with young children.

The baby bank operates like a food bank but supplies children's equipment and provides essentials for babies and young children, including; clothes, shoes, cots, nappies, toiletries, buggies, and toys to families needing extra support. It helps local families with children aged up to five. Parents who visit are also able to find details of where to find further support.

Since its opening, the centre has supported 360 families, including 568 children under five.

The centre is run by three local charities: Little Village which runs a network of baby banks across London; Boiler House Spaces which manages community spaces in Hackney; and

Sal's Shoes, which provides good quality second-hand shoes and other essentials to those who need them.

Alistair Smyth, The Guinness Partnership's Director of External Affairs and Social Investment:

"This much-needed family centre will help more and more families who are struggling financially right now. They're faced with really difficult choices about what to spend and how, or if, they can make money go further. And we're talking about essentials here; housing, food, energy, clothes, the basics all families need. The cost of living crisis means the Baby Bank, Sal's Shoes and all other services provided at The Boiler House are likely to be needed more than ever, and by even more families over coming weeks and months."

Anna Iskander-Reynolds, CEO of Boiler House:

"The pandemic highlighted existing poverty, and now as the cost of living increases, we're seeing greater support needs. It's hard enough being a parent or carer without the financial burdens and impossible choices you have to make in order to survive the week. We want to support families through such times and ease their burden. The Family Centre will not only provide access to a wide range of essential childcare items, it will also offer a nurturing space for families to gain further support, build relationships, and feel more able to move through current challenges."





Evidencing impact

We are acutely aware that the current cost of living crisis may continue for several years.

With this in mind we have made an investment to support the Association of Charitable Organisations (ACO) in its work to demonstrate the impact of individual hardship funds. The ACO is the united voice of the benevolence sector, they champion the contribution of charities that provide financial and wellbeing support to individuals.

The benevolent charity sector provides crucial services for the housing sector and wider communities to refer into, particularly during the cost-of-living crisis. This research will provide a more robust approach to measuring and articulating the sector's impact, enabling better quality conversations with regulators, potential funders, and other bodies. The report is due to be published in June 2023.



4.

Employment and skills

The second year of our three year partnership with The Prince's Trust continued to enable them to provide life changing support to young people to kickstart their careers in the Health and Social Care Sector.



Thanks to the £50,000 annual donation from Fusion21 Foundation, The Prince's Trust has been able to unlock a further £150,000 of public sector match funding each year to support even more young people. Through this overall donation, The Trust can support an average of 200 young people each year to engage in the Health and Social Care programme.

In years one and two of the programme The Prince's Trust supported 400 young people to engage with the scheme, enabling young people to develop the practical skills, confidence and experience needed to move into sustainable and worthwhile careers. In addition to empowering young people, the partnership is focussed on securing a more diverse workforce for the NHS and Health and Social Care sector, with a focus on engaging and reaching young people from different backgrounds, demographics and communities.

5. More than just a funder...

Housing, Learning and Work Conference

In February, we teamed up with our colleagues in the social value team and sponsored the Learning and Work Institute's joint annual conference with Communities that Work to discuss this year's theme of 'securing prosperous futures for all'.



The conference brought joined-up thinking to the social housing, employment and skills sectors. It explored how economic growth and prosperity can be shared, the opportunities that devolution of power bring, and how green jobs can help to achieve sustainable growth across more communities. The conference married the political dimension with practical considerations to understand how we can best come together to drive new and better chances for all.



Cost of living webinars

This year, in response to the ongoing economic challenges, HACT developed a fortnightly cost of living event series from the Centre For Excellence in Community Investment. These informative webinars connected networks of community investment colleagues with expert speakers in the areas of energy, food, income maximisation, hardship funds, mental health, and a range of other issues related to supporting residents through the cost-of-living crisis.

We were delighted to be asked to chair one of the webinars which explored how The Hyde Foundation's Cost of Living and Universal Credit tools can benefit residents in housing associations across the country.

Transition to 'Green'

Our continued commitment to the green agenda was demonstrated through our sponsorship of HACT's White Paper: [A Just Green Transition](#), which examined how the housing sector can deliver sustainable communities alongside sustainable homes. To deliver this, HACT have identified six principles housing associations should incorporate into their sustainability strategy, so that the investment made into making homes sustainable results in sustainable communities.



Homes UK 2022

The Foundation hosted a panel at Homes UK 2022 to discuss 'Addressing the cost-of-living challenge through innovation and collaboration'. We were delighted to be joined on stage by our partners from National Energy Action (NEA), Sovereign Housing Association, The Guinness Partnership, and the Food Foundation.

6. Social investment

Our funding investment with Social Investment Business' (SIB) Recovery Loan Fund has gone from strength to strength this year, with 23 organisations now receiving loans from the fund.

The fund is reaching a diverse range of organisations working with beneficiaries including people who are homeless, in poverty or are financially excluded, those experiencing long term unemployment, have learning disabilities, mental health needs, vulnerable young people and children as well as older vulnerable people and ex-offenders. Many of these beneficiary groups have been the hardest hit in society by the pandemic and cost of living crisis.

Case study

Change Please Coffee, which was launched in 2015, has been dedicated to improving the lives of the local homeless community. Beginning with a single coffee cart in Covent Garden, the initiative has since grown to eleven locations across London with all profits being reinvested into initiatives aimed at alleviating homelessness.

[Change Please](#) provides individuals experiencing homelessness with a job, a living wage, access to housing and comprehensive training. Through their training program, over 79% of trainees who have completed the training have secured ongoing employment, and 286 trainees have become trained baristas in the last two years, thanks to the Change Please training program.

Change Please has utilised the Recovery Loan Fund (RLF) to secure new locations for their cafes, to help move forward with their mission to make a positive social impact.

With the RLF, Change Please has expanded their capacity, increased their visibility, and multiplied their social impact one cup of coffee at a time.



7. Ambitions for the future

Our partnership approach has helped us shape our response to some of the biggest challenges faced in a lifetime; the pandemic, the economic crisis, and a crisis in mental health. It is through our partnerships that we can effectively target and magnify our resources and funding to best effect.

We will continue our collaborative approach, strengthening existing relationships and developing new ones, as we navigate the considerable cost of living challenges that will undoubtedly continue in 2023-2024.

Supporting growth and opportunities in the employment and skills sector is still a priority and is the ultimate way of empowering people out of poverty. We hope to develop more investment opportunities with our partners in this area next year.

Alongside the continuation of our grants programme, we will also seek further opportunities to create new social investments, through the learning we have gained from our work with Social Investment Business (SIB).

Listening to our members and understanding their priorities remains at the heart of our strategy and we will use this to shape our investments to meet the needs of communities across the country. We will share the learning from our projects and work together to drive innovation and learning across the public and community sectors.

Our ambition in 2023-2024 is to broaden our reach to more members, particularly those in local government, to understand how we can collaborate and support VCSE sector organisations - the lifeblood of communities - in their local areas.



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