



PlaceShapers

Together we help communities thrive



Realising the Potential of Housing Associations in Places and Communities

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Executive summary

This report synthesises evidence on the contribution of housing associations to improving outcomes for places and communities, and in turn the role of place-based approaches to housing in delivering national priorities. It draws on evidence sources and case studies to examine how the work of housing associations supports outcomes across regeneration, health, economic development, and homelessness prevention and how housing investment can contribute to wider national priorities when shaped around local context and delivery systems.

It identifies structural enablers and constraints that influence what is feasible at a local level and presents evidence-informed recommendations for national and local policymakers.

The findings are published at a time of renewed national focus on devolution, integration, and cross-sector collaboration. Policy commitments- including in the Devolution White Paper- aim to strengthen the role of local leaders and decision makers in shaping public investment and service delivery. The evidence reviewed suggests that place-based housing approaches can support this direction of travel and help housing associations achieve better outcomes for communities. But their impact depends on how powers, funding, and responsibilities are structured. In particular, the report highlights the importance of flexibility, long-term investment, and clearly defined roles for housing associations and other partners in local governance and delivery frameworks.

Overview of findings

The review identified six areas in which housing association investment has delivered wider benefits for places, communities and national priorities:

- 1. Regeneration:** Housing-led regeneration schemes demonstrated social return on investment (SROI) ratios ranging from £2.50 to £4.00 per £1 invested, with reported improvements in health, neighbourhood safety, and employability. Case studies highlight the role of housing associations in long-term neighbourhood renewal and co-designed interventions.
- 2. Affordable housing delivery:** Housing associations support delivery in both high-demand and low-value areas, often through community-led design and mixed-tenure models. Modelling suggests that delivering 90,000 new social homes annually could generate £86.5 billion in social and economic value.
- 3. Employment and skills:** Programmes targeting residents facing multiple barriers to work—particularly those that integrated housing and employment support—achieved employment rates of up to 76% and SROI of £2.62–£4.12 per £1 invested. The JobsPlus pilot is demonstrating the feasibility of hyper-local, housing-led employment support.

- 4. Economic and environmental delivery:** Retrofit programmes delivered by housing associations have supported local job creation, improved health outcomes, and reduced carbon emissions. Evaluations of Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) demonstrator projects reported carbon savings of up to 60% and the creation of around 1,200 low-carbon jobs.
- 5. Health:** Integrated housing and health interventions are associated with reduced hospital use, improved wellbeing, and cost savings. One housing–health partnership reported £1.5 million in NHS savings over two years. A randomised controlled trial found annual per-person NHS savings of £935 linked to housing-led health support.
- 6. Homelessness:** Housing associations play a role in early intervention, tenancy sustainment and Housing First delivery. Evidence indicated cost savings of £15,000+ per person per year and tenancy sustainment rates above 90% in some Housing First programmes.

The evidence indicates that housing investment outcomes depend not only on scale and funding, but also on how delivery is structured. Place-based approaches—defined here as those that align housing with local geography, population needs, infrastructure, and systems—can enable housing associations to contribute more effectively to outcomes for places and communities.

Housing association investment delivers wide-ranging benefits across regeneration, health, employment, climate, and homelessness, with strong social returns when aligned to local needs through place-based approaches.

Enabling and constraining factors

The effectiveness of the potential contribution of housing associations to improved outcomes for places and communities depends on a combination of structural, financial, and institutional factors and how responsive they are to the unique challenges of a place.

Key enablers include:

- Stable, multi-year funding with flexibility to align investment with local priorities.
- Rent policy that supports financial planning.
- Locally rooted delivery with trusted relationships and community knowledge.
- Strong cross-sector partnerships, including integration with health, climate, and employment systems.
- Opportunities for community participation in planning and delivery.
- Tailoring design and delivery to local infrastructure, housing conditions, needs and service environments.

Key constraints include:

- Fragmented, ring-fenced, or short-term funding streams that limit coordination and responsiveness to the unique challenges of a place.
- Limited capacity, among local authorities, housing associations and delivery partners in some rural, coastal, and post-industrial areas, affecting local leadership and the ability to deliver place-based approaches.
- Exclusion of housing from strategic governance structures, e.g., Integrated Care Systems (ICSs), devolved boards.

- Misalignment between national programmes and local delivery systems.
- Limited use of shared data and consistent impact measurement tools.

Recommendations

The report sets out recommendations, directed at national and local policymakers that will help to strengthen the contribution of housing associations to improving the outcomes for places and communities:

- 1. Integrate housing into local strategies and governance:** Embed housing in health, regeneration, employment, and ICS frameworks to support cross-sector alignment.
- 2. Align and integrate funding:** Develop funding models that support the integration of housing with other sectors, allow investment to be directed towards local priorities, and consolidate funding streams for new homes to ensure more effective use of resources.
- 3. Invest in delivery capacity:** Target support to rural, coastal, and post-industrial areas where institutional infrastructure is limited and support housing associations with capacity challenges, including through the reintroduction of rent convergence.
- 4. Improve impact measurement:** Strengthen the use of shared metrics and ensure funding programmes support evaluation of housing-led outcomes across health, economic, and social value.

While the recommendations focus on policy and system enablers, stakeholder reflections also pointed to the importance of effective sector practice—particularly around community engagement and the use of data to shape delivery.

Introduction and scope

Introduction and scope

This report presents findings from a review of evidence - supplemented by interviews with 15 stakeholders - examining the role of housing associations in shaping outcomes for places and communities and exploring both the opportunities and challenges of adopting a more place-based approach to housing policy and delivery (Box 1). It explores how housing interventions that respond to local needs and contexts can contribute to wider outcomes across health, regeneration, economic development, climate action,

and homelessness. The aim is to provide a consolidated view of the available evidence and the conditions that can maximise the contribution of housing associations to places and communities- supporting policymakers, local leaders, and housing sector stakeholders.

The report includes a selection of independently evaluated case studies involving housing associations that highlight work that is locally focused and embedded in specific communities.

Box 1

Defining place-based approaches

There is no single definition of what it means to work in a place-based way. For many organisations, the term reflects a set of values as much as a specific delivery model- including local responsiveness, trust, relationships, and a commitment to working with communities rather than doing things to them.

“Place means different things to different people - for some it’s public safety, for others it’s green spaces or support for young people. The point is, it has to be shaped by the people who live there.”

- Housing association representative

“The definition [of place-shaping] is more about the values that have led to that definition feeling appropriate... rather than there being this cohesive look and feel about how each place-based way of working should appear.”

- Policy and advocacy representative

For the purposes of this report, place-based approaches are defined as seeking to:

“Improve outcomes by aligning housing, health, infrastructure and economic support around the specific needs, assets and priorities of local communities. They depend on local insight, joined-up systems, and the flexibility to design solutions that reflect the diversity of places and the people who live in them.”

While the report focuses on the role of housing associations in delivering outcomes for places and communities, **it does not assess the overall performance of individual organisations or speak on behalf of tenants.** Issues such as tenant satisfaction, service quality, and accountability are critically

important, but they fall outside of scope. Instead, the report is designed to highlight where housing-led approaches- particularly those with strong local roots- contribute to wider policy outcomes, and what conditions are needed for place-based approaches to deliver more effectively.

Delivering national priorities through housing associations

The policy environment is shifting toward more devolved and integrated models of delivery. Initiatives such as the Devolution White Paper, Warm Homes Plan, and ongoing reforms to the NHS and homelessness systems offer opportunities to embed housing more fully in local planning and investment frameworks. Working with their local partners, housing associations who prioritise their place-shaping role are well placed to contribute to the delivery of government priorities. Key areas of policy alignment include:

- Devolution and local leadership:** The Devolution White Paper commits to more locally driven planning, funding, and service integration across housing, health, and employment systems- alongside greater community participation, accountability, and transparency. Place-based housing approaches are already supporting delivery of these aims through neighbourhood-level regeneration, partnership working, and resident engagement.
- Affordable homes and planning reform:** The Government's pledge to deliver 1.5 million homes recognises housing as critical infrastructure. This is closely linked to reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which aim to strengthen local plans, unlock land, and support mixed-tenure delivery. Housing associations contribute to both new development and regeneration, often aligning housing with community infrastructure, affordability goals, and long-term stewardship of place.
- Preventing and reducing homelessness:** The cross-departmental Homelessness Strategy emphasises early intervention, tenancy sustainment, and housing-led models of support. Alongside providing social housing, housing associations provide a range of services, including Housing First, supported housing, and floating support- often in collaboration with local authorities, health services, and voluntary sector partners.
- Community-led housing models:** Including Community Land Trusts (CLTs), can enhance local delivery where embedded in local plans and supported by enabling policy. They complement housing associations by strengthening local accountability, stewardship, and community participation in housing provision.
- Inclusive economic growth and skills:** The Make Work Pay agenda and the forthcoming Industrial Strategy aim to support fairer economic growth and access to quality employment. Housing associations play a role in supporting these goals through employment-linked housing schemes, training programmes, and retrofit-related workforce development- particularly in areas with lower economic resilience.
- Environment and climate change:** The 2025 Spending Review confirmed a £13.2 billion Warm Homes Plan for 2025–26 to 2029–30, prioritising decarbonisation, particularly through retrofit and improved energy efficiency in low-income households. Place-based housing associations support delivery by targeting investment in areas with high fuel poverty, tailoring retrofit to local housing and geography, and aligning environmental action with tenant wellbeing. Their long-term local presence also enables them to support green jobs, nature-based projects, public realm improvements, and neighbourhood-wide climate action.
- Health, wellbeing and care integration:** The NHS 10-Year Plan and related reforms emphasise prevention, early intervention, and more integrated community-based care. Housing associations contribute to these aims through tenancy sustainment, and some go further by providing neighbourhood health initiatives, and working with partners (e.g., with ICSs) to improve health outcomes and reduce pressure on acute services.



Overview of evidence approach

Overview of evidence approach

- **Targeted evidence review:** Key policy areas were identified at the outset, and a robust and pragmatic approach was taken to sourcing material- including peer-reviewed academic studies, grey literature (such as think tank and consultancy reports), programme evaluations, and practice-based evidence from the housing sector. The review incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data, such as case studies, cost-benefit assessments, and SROI analyses. In total, **101 evidence sources and 87 case studies** were reviewed, of which **23 included some form of outcome or impact evaluation**. While not a systematic review, this approach combined targeted searches with documents shared by stakeholders to provide a broad, practice-informed perspective.
- **Interviews with sector stakeholders:** The research included **15 semi-structured interviews** with stakeholders from housing associations, local authorities, policy and advocacy experts, grassroots and community-based organisations and individuals, covering a wide range of geographies and thematic areas- including **health, regeneration, decarbonisation, economic development, and homelessness**. These interviews were used to test findings from the literature and explore current delivery challenges and opportunities.
- The work was guided by a **Critical Friends Group**, comprising **senior representatives from housing associations** of different sizes and regional contexts, alongside stakeholders from the **Royal Town Planning Institute**. The group provided feedback on framing and emerging findings and helped shape the final recommendations.

Each of the core evidence sources were assessed by both authors using a structured framework that considered robustness, transparency, and methodological approach (through a 'traffic light' rating approach- more detail in Appendix 1). While the evidence varied in design and rigour, many sources- regardless of method- pointed to consistent themes (for example, the value of community involvement in regeneration). These shared insights have been used to identify patterns across diverse practice contexts. For this report, where there is clear alignment across multiple sources, individual references are not provided. However, where specific data or claims are made, these are supported by direct citations. A full list of sources reviewed for this report is provided in Appendix 3 (a selection of case studies is presented in Appendix 2).

This report is grounded in a broad, practice-informed evidence review and stakeholder interviews, drawing on over 100 sources and 87 case studies to highlight consistent themes across housing, health and regeneration.



Insights from the evidence review

Insights from the evidence review

This section provides an overview of findings across all evidence sources. The following chapter explores six specific themes in greater depth.

Despite the aforementioned gaps, the evidence base reviewed points to the value of place-based delivery- where local priorities and circumstances shape housing

strategy, investment, and service delivery. Across themes such as regeneration, health, employment and homelessness, several initiatives have demonstrated **measurable returns on investment** - for example, SROI ratios ranging from £2.50 to £9.00 per £1 invested, and public savings (Box 2).

Box 2

Measuring Social and Economic Value in Place-Based Housing Initiatives

Social housing providers are increasingly seeking to evidence their wider contribution to local outcomes through structured, place-based approaches- using recognised methodologies such as **SROI** and the **National TOMs (Themes, Outcomes and Measures)** framework. These tools are used to estimate both economic and social returns on housing-led interventions, capturing outcomes that extend beyond traditional service delivery.

- **Orbit Group** reported delivering **£61.5 million in social value** in 2022/23, including £24.2 million from community investment activities, £11.4 million linked to employment and skills support, and £12 million in environmental impact, calculated using the National TOMs model.¹
- **Greatwell Homes** reported a range of outcomes from its place-shaping activity, including reductions in antisocial behaviour, increased youth engagement, and targeted tenant support. SROI analysis applied to a focused subset of these activities estimated **£300,000 in social value** over a 12 month period.²
- **Cunninghame Housing Association**, working with North Ayrshire Council (Scotland), applied SROI to the **Vineburgh regeneration programme**, a £33.3 million initiative that reported a **£4.63 return for every £1 invested**, alongside improvements in health, safety, and local employability.³

Understanding local conditions for place-based delivery

The review consistently highlighted that **housing systems operate differently in different places**- shaped by geography, local governance, population needs, economic conditions, infrastructure, and institutional capacity.

While national policy frameworks provide direction and funding, their effectiveness often depends on how well they align with **local delivery conditions**.

Areas with strong local leadership, integrated systems, and delivery partnerships are typically better placed to coordinate interventions, maximise investment, and respond to need.

Certain local features- such as deprivation, rurality, market volatility, or lack of devolved powers- influence what is possible, which in turn determines how effectively housing associations can contribute to improving outcomes for places and communities.

Even within broad categories (such as urban or rural), there is significant variation between places. In rural, coastal, and post-industrial areas, these challenges are often compounded by long-standing structural factors. These include historic underinvestment in infrastructure and planning functions, loss of industry or economic base, and fragmented institutional support. Local government restructuring and austerity-driven reductions in planning and housing teams have further reduced capacity in many of these areas, making it harder to access specialist skills, develop robust investment plans, or coordinate across sectors. In smaller or lower-demand markets, housing associations may also face difficulties sustaining delivery partnerships, securing funding, or attracting the workforce needed to scale regeneration or retrofit activity.

Housing systems vary across places, and local capacity, governance, and context shape how effectively housing associations can support outcomes, particularly in rural, coastal and post-industrial areas facing structural challenges.

¹ <https://learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Fit-for-the-future-Reshaping-Orbits-employment-service.pdf>

² Social Impact: A HACT assessment of Greatwell Homes' Placemaking activities, 2024.

³ <https://socialvalueuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Vineburgh%20SROI%20Report%20Final%20Assured.pdf>

The table below summarises common contextual factors that influence housing-related delivery, and the ways in which place-shaping housing associations respond to these conditions across different themes.

These factors do not operate in isolation- most places experience **overlapping characteristics** - which further reinforces the value of flexible, place-based approaches to housing policy and investment.

Table 1: contextual factors and implications for housing led place-based delivery

Contextual factor	Implications for housing associations and delivery
Urban areas	Typically face higher housing demand, overcrowding, and acute health and homelessness inequalities. Can operate at scale but must navigate complex institutional environments and multiple actors.
Rural areas	Tend to have limited housing supply, infrastructure and service gaps, and fewer support services. Act as vital infrastructure and may use dispersed delivery and partnership models – can be more resource intensive.
Coastal and peripheral areas	Often marked by housing market volatility, seasonal pressures, underinvestment and structural disadvantage. Face particular challenges in maintaining supply and joined-up service delivery.
Deprived communities	High need and lower resilience, but also high potential for impact, and community services that help reduce inequality.
Post-industrial towns	Often affected by economic decline and housing disrepair; key actors in area renewal, delivering both affordable homes and social support through regeneration.
Refugee and asylum dispersal areas	Experience increased pressure on housing, support needs, and integration. Contribute by providing culturally appropriate housing and wraparound support for transition.
Established combined authorities	Typically have more developed governance, funding arrangements, and partnership models. Often integrated into strategic plans for housing, health, and regeneration.
Emerging combined authorities	May have less established structures or capacity can fill gaps and act as convenors, but formal roles and collaboration mechanisms may still be developing.
Non-combined authority areas	Without devolved powers or pooled budgets, local coordination is more fragmented, often lead or broker partnerships with overstretched local services.

Conditions that shape housing associations potential to improve outcomes for places and communities

Evidence from across the policy themes explored in this report highlights a set of common enablers and constraints that influence how housing associations can contribute to improving local outcomes and national priorities. While delivery models vary, factors such as funding stability, governance structures, local capacity, and data infrastructure often determine what can be delivered and the extent to which local approaches can be sustained and scaled. The following sets out the key enabling conditions and constraints identified through the literature and stakeholder engagement.

Enabling factors:

Structural enablers: funding and investment models

Making effective use of housing investment to improve local outcomes depends not just on how much funding is available, but how it is structured. Housing-led interventions are most impactful when supported by **stable, multi-year funding that enables continuity, workforce retention, and forward planning**- as well as the flexibility to design responses around local priorities.

While peer-reviewed evidence on funding reform in place-based housing is limited, programme evaluations and grey literature highlight examples where removing ring-fencing and aligning funding streams has supported more effective local delivery.

In Glasgow’s Thriving Places, housing associations acted as anchor organisations in regeneration initiatives funded through partners’ mainstream budgets rather than new ring-fenced grants- enabling coordinated, locally tailored services. In England, the **Big Local** programme allocated non-ring-fenced funding to 150 communities, allowing investment to reflect local priorities across housing, employment, and wellbeing. In both cases, flexible funding enabled integrated approaches that would have been difficult to deliver through fragmented budgets.⁴

A policy shift to remove fragmentation and support more integrated place-based delivery is reflected in recent devolution single-pot settlement deals for combined authorities such as the West Midlands.⁵

Stakeholders also identified rent policy as a critical enabler- particularly in shaping the financial stability needed for local investment and delivery. The box below summarises how long-term rent settlements and convergence mechanisms can support the delivery of outcomes for places and communities.

“Funding needs to fit the local problem - not the other way around.”

- Policy and advocacy representative

“The funding is very transactional and very short-term. You just can’t deliver sustained impact or engagement with that kind of approach.”

- Community engagement representative

⁴ <https://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/evaluability-assessment-of-thriving-places-a-report-for-glasgow-community-planning-partnership/>, <https://localtrust.org.uk/insights/our-bigger-story>
⁵ https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/0wkntfwp/devolution-deal-summary-final-ea0963523623144ae8a9afd0534d462df94d61b24202832dde2f6e1b77abd8c3.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Box 3

The role of rent policy in supporting place-based housing delivery

While this report does not explore the broader question of what rent should be used to fund, stakeholder interviews consistently identified rent policy as a system-level factor shaping providers’ ability to plan, invest, and deliver on local priorities. Financial constraints- including stalled development and estate renewal- were often linked to uncertainty around rent settlement and the absence of a convergence mechanism.

“If we had a ten-year rent settlement - CPI plus 1% - that would give us the confidence to plan and build. Rent convergence matters too, especially for smaller associations like ours. Without it, you can’t invest locally in the way that’s needed.”

- Housing association representative

The government’s recent commitment on future rent policy reflects growing recognition of these issues. Sector evidence highlights two core enablers: **long-term rent settlements** and **rent convergence**.

Long-term rent settlements, such as CPI+1%, support forward planning and investment in housing, retrofit, and neighbourhood services.

Rent convergence aligns rents with national formulas, addressing historical disparities between providers. Its removal in 2015 led to income shortfalls, particularly for associations with below-formula legacy homes, limiting their ability to invest. Modelling shows that reintroducing a modest £3/week convergence mechanism alongside CPI+1% increases could generate £3.28 billion in additional income by 2035–36 and support up to 80,000 new homes.

National bodies including CIH, NHF, PlaceShapers and London Councils have called for convergence to be reinstated, citing its role in promoting financial equity, consistency for tenants, and investment in areas where below-formula rents currently restrict delivery- all of which will help housing associations contribute to improving outcomes for places and communities.

Local delivery conditions

Tailoring to local contexts

The success of housing policy and programmes, and their contribution to local outcomes, is strongly influenced by local conditions. Rural, coastal, urban, and post-industrial areas all face different opportunities and constraints. A place-based approach allows for flexibility and responsiveness to these variations (as considered above):

“The great problem of Whitehall setting the housing agenda is that the housing needs in Liverpool are fundamentally different to the housing needs in London and the southeast - and that doesn’t get recognised by what is funded or the grant rates.”

- Community engagement representative

Locally rooted delivery

Organisations with deep local knowledge, long-standing relationships, and community trust are often best placed to engage residents, tailor support, and respond to complex or overlapping needs- particularly in areas of disadvantage.

“Locally based partners with the right capacity will know their area best... and be able to deliver the right type of housing.”

- Policy and advocacy representative

“We’re hyper-local. I can tell you the ten properties in our homes with the worst damp and mould - and who’s complained most about repairs. That kind of insight is what gets lost when local providers are excluded from strategic planning. It’s not just about scale - it’s about knowing your community.”

- Housing association representative

Supporting smaller-scale and flexible delivery models

Many (though not all) innovative place-based work happens at smaller scales- such as rural schemes, pilot projects, or partnerships with CLTs. While these may not always be robustly evaluated as individual initiatives, they offer important

insights into how housing can respond flexibly to local needs, particularly where larger-scale delivery is less viable. Evidence highlights that community-led housing can represent value for money, and can complement traditional providers, especially in rural or underserved urban areas.⁶

“Sometimes I think in civil society space we need smaller organisations that have a depth and equality to them to help show what’s possible... Without the more bespoke approach happening, sometimes the bigger organisations won’t shift.”

- Housing and advocacy representative

Strategic partnerships and joined up systems

Outcomes improve when housing activity is integrated with health, employment, decarbonisation and care systems- often through formal partnerships, shared strategies, or co-located services. Addressing housing challenges in isolation- for example, delivering temporary accommodation without considering affordability, or retrofitting homes without tackling fuel poverty- can limit the overall impact of public investment. Many housing associations combine core housing functions with wraparound services such as tenancy sustainment, welfare advice, or mental health support- allowing them to contribute to more preventative, person-centred local delivery.

Stakeholders noted that regional housing partnerships can provide a shared voice for housing associations, particularly local housing associations, and act as a point of coordination with local and combined authorities. In some areas, these partnerships are also helping to share practice across regions, including between Yorkshire and Greater Manchester.

“The partnership is the power... it involves not only the housing associations but also the local authorities... they got together, agreed some shared priorities... and are looking at your [mayoral] priorities and saying, ‘How can we help you deliver?’”

- Housing and advocacy representative

⁶ <https://eprints.icstudies.org.uk/id/eprint/209/1/TPR-2020-09-Housing%20by%20the%20community%20for%20the%20community.pdf>

Resident and community involvement

Engagement, participatory and partnership models help build trust and ensure that services reflect local needs and priorities. While formal measurement of this impact is limited, stakeholder feedback and qualitative evidence highlight the value of early and meaningful engagement.

“You’ve got a better chance of placemaking if people feel like they’re contributing - not just finding out from a planning notice on a lamppost.”

- Local authority representative

“It’s placemaking and place-shaping where it’s building those relationships and enabling people to do the work when they don’t have the perceived ability to or they don’t hold the power that a lot of housing associations do.”

- Community engagement representative

Place-sensitive design and flexibility

Delivery must be tailored to geography, infrastructure, existing local housing, and population needs. What works in urban areas may require adaptation for rural or coastal settings.

“You’ve got to tailor to local needs - it’s not just about numbers. Cities need new social housing more than rural areas, but the geography of building is broken.”

- Planning representative

“We just couldn’t deliver new council homes in [...] at the cost we needed. But housing associations might be able to - they can draw on different funding and sometimes move quicker. The key is working together to get the right outcomes locally.”

- Local authority representative

Constraining factors:

A more place-based approach to housing can enhance the role of housing associations in improving local outcomes, although structural and systemic barriers often constrain their ability to do so. These constraints span different geographies and policy areas, limiting effective planning, integration, and delivery at the local level.

Uneven and fragmented funding structures

Short-term, ring-fenced funding limits housing associations’ ability to respond to housing and wider local challenges and makes it difficult to coordinate efforts across housing, health, and other local systems. These constraints are particularly acute in areas outside combined authorities, in places with limited planning or commissioning capacity, or in those that have experienced long-term underinvestment. Such areas often face barriers to accessing national funding streams (e.g. the Affordable Homes Programme) or participating fully in devolved investment strategies. Without more flexible and inclusive funding models- and targeted support where capacity is weakest- current structures risk reinforcing geographic inequalities in housing outcomes and system integration.

“Well-intentioned regeneration gets derailed by delivery deadlines or risk of losing funding.”

- Policy and advocacy representative

“We asked for more capacity to bring housing and health together as part of our spending review submission. There’s interest -but at the moment, we just don’t have the resource to do the scale of work we’d like.”

- Combined authority representative

Misalignment between national structures and local delivery systems

Centralised policies, targets, and regulatory frameworks often fail to reflect local conditions- particularly in areas outside combined authorities or with limited capacity. This misalignment can undermine place-based delivery and reduce the effectiveness of national investment. Despite the role local housing providers can play in prevention, regeneration, and frontline service delivery- they are not consistently included in local governance or system leadership- such as ICSs, combined authority strategies, or strategic housing boards- limiting their ability to shape and align with wider priorities.

“Housing often gets dropped to the bottom - the focus has been on employment, transport, and early years. But if we’re serious about prevention, housing has to be part of the conversation. It needs to be recognised as a system player, particularly in work around health and homelessness.”

- Combined authority representative

Sustaining capacity in smaller local organisations

Smaller local housing organisations can deliver a wide range of outcomes in the areas they serve. However many face capacity and financial pressures- particularly when adapting to external shocks or meeting new regulatory and investment requirements. Stakeholders noted that these organisations may have less flexibility to reallocate resources or absorb cost increases, which can affect their ability to sustain neighbourhood services or invest in local priorities.

Some stakeholders reflected on the potential consequences of large-scale consolidation in the sector. Others highlighted the importance of recognising that efficiency and impact are not solely determined by scale. For example,

analysis of Regulator of Social Housing (RSH⁷) data shows no clear link between organisational size and operating margin, suggesting that different models can be effective depending on context.

Partnerships can help address these challenges, but there is also a need to ensure that potential solutions - such as shared services or regional collaborations - do not dilute the local relationships, trust, and responsiveness that underpin the contribution of housing associations to local outcomes.

“That’s the really interesting challenge for the sector... okay, there probably is going to be more consolidation. But how do you do that in a way that means that the place-shaping - what needs to happen at a local level - doesn’t get lost?”

- Housing association representative

Variable local capacity and infrastructure

Rural, coastal and post-industrial areas may lack planning, commissioning or delivery capacity- limiting their ability to secure funding or participate in strategic programmes.

“Our rural [housing association] specialists [are concerned] about being a bit forgotten [that] they’ll be on the periphery of strategic authorities. So there’s definitely concern [...] even if technically their geography is part of a devolved area.”

- Policy and advocacy representative

Limited use of shared data and outcome measurement

The absence of standardised tools and shared metrics across housing, health, employment, and climate sectors makes it difficult to track long-term outcomes, assess impact, or compare interventions. This limits the ability of local areas and housing providers to demonstrate value, build robust business cases, or inform investment and policy decisions.

⁷ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5bce436340f0b644210d72eb/VfM_metrics_Summary_report_-_Sept_2018.pdf



The role of housing associations in shaping outcomes for places and communities

The role of housing associations in shaping outcomes for places and communities

The following six subsections explore the role of housing and housing associations- in advancing key national policy goals, including regeneration, affordable housing delivery, economic inclusion, decarbonisation, health, and homelessness prevention. Each represents an area where housing investment and leadership interact with other local systems to shape outcomes for people and places.

While each policy domain presents distinct delivery challenges, the evidence consistently shows that place-based approaches- characterised by local knowledge, integration, and flexibility- can lead to more effective and sustainable results. These include improvements in health and wellbeing, employment and skills, neighbourhood quality, and local economic resilience.

1. Improving places through housing-led regeneration

Overview

Regeneration is often a priority for housing associations who want to improve the outcomes for a place and its communities. When aligned with wider goals around economic development, health improvement, and climate action, it can strengthen community resilience and reduce long-term demand on public services. Housing-led regeneration can catalyse broader social and economic benefits, including job creation, improved public spaces, enhanced local amenities, improved energy efficiency and improved physical and mental health.⁸

Regeneration outcomes can be hindered by resource constraints, underinvestment, and competing priorities within local systems.⁹ In addition to broader systemic pressures, there are challenges specific to regeneration, including the need to adapt to different local contexts (e.g. rural versus urban), stronger alignment between housing, planning, and climate policy, and the risk of displacement where affordability safeguards or meaningful community engagement are lacking. These factors highlight the need for regeneration to be embedded within wider place-based strategies that reflect local priorities, delivery capacity, and long-term social value.

⁸ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/650073c21886eb001397721b/Measuring_place_making_impacts_of_housing_led_regeneration.pdf, <https://www.shu.ac.uk/centre-regional-economic-social-research/publications/a-return-to-neighbourhood-regeneration>, <https://www.smf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Strong-foundations-August-2023.pdf>, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0033350617301051>

⁹ <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10190393/1/Zhou%20et%20al.%20-%202024%20-%20Sustaining%20Attention%20to%20Sustainability%2C%20Health.pdf>

Box 4

Stakeholder insights

Stakeholders shared examples of the role housing associations play in regeneration- not only through development, but as long-term partners in neighbourhood renewal. However, it was noted that not all providers are positioned to take on this wider role, with financial pressures and local context shaping what is feasible.

There was broad agreement that regeneration is most effective when it involves **multi-agency collaboration and active community engagement**. It should reflect the needs and priorities of local people, rather than focus solely on physical upgrades. Concerns were raised about “retrofit regeneration,” where improvements to buildings proceed without wider involvement or coordination.

Regeneration needs vary by geography. In parts of the North, stakeholders noted that investment in existing housing is often needed before new development can proceed. In rural or ‘left behind’ areas, housing associations may act as intermediaries, working with organisations such as CLTs to support local ownership and responsive delivery.

In some places, housing associations were described as among the few remaining civic institutions- providing continuity, relationships, and local insight that can help sustain regeneration over the long term.

“We need to stop treating regeneration as short bursts of funding. It’s long-term; people need certainty to plan and deliver.”
- Policy and advocacy representative

Summary of key evidence

The evidence base for this theme includes **17 sources**, with approximately **47% assessed as using robust or independently reviewed methods** (rated as Dark or Light Green) and a further **35% rated as moderate**. While some sources noted gaps around measuring social and environmental impacts¹⁰ or capturing longer-term outcomes¹¹ findings were consistent around the importance of **long-term investment, community involvement, and cross-sector coordination**. Housing-led regeneration is associated with significant benefits across health, employment, neighbourhood quality, and public service savings:

- **Health and wellbeing:** Improvements to insulation, ventilation, and housing quality are linked to

reduced cold-related illness and fewer respiratory conditions. Interventions to eliminate Category 1 hazards- with an average cost of £3,780 per home - have been shown to offset NHS costs within 7–8 years. Refurbished homes are associated with improved health and reductions in fuel poverty.¹²

- **Community participation and public health:** Regeneration schemes that embed community involvement- including co-design, tenant leadership, and neighbourhood-led planning, have been associated with improved mental wellbeing, reduced loneliness, and stronger social connections. Evidence suggests that participatory approaches can enhance residents’ sense of belonging and resilience, supporting wider health and social outcomes in areas undergoing change.¹³

¹⁰ Assessing Sustainability in Housing LED Urban Regeneration: Insights from a Housing Association in Northern England. Architecture
¹¹ *see 1 and <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/22/9903>
¹² https://files.bregroup.com/research/BRE_Report_the_cost_of_poor_housing_2021.pdf, https://assets.ctfassets.net/6sqqr111sfj/393AXA3mEM62PjAVKVUwNd/e16b2434d6f8d5b1c1c4aa69d1e7ed37/Shelter_Scotland_Literature_Review_13th_January_2022_FINAL.pdf, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34751014/>; <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10070510/>
¹³ <https://www.youngfoundation.org/institute-for-community-studies/repository/community-led-housing-and-health-a-comprehensive-literature-review/>; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-led-housing-and-loneliness>

- **Social return on investment:** Several regeneration schemes demonstrate strong SROI, with reported returns of £2.50–£4.00 for every £1 invested. In some high-rise refurbishment projects, total social value generated exceeded £21 million.¹⁴
 - **Neighbourhood outcomes:** Regeneration linked to improved public space, building safety, and co-designed environments has been associated with improved perceptions of safety, reduced antisocial behaviour, and increased community satisfaction (though also to note risks around displacement and gentrification persist).¹⁵
 - **Employment and economic resilience:** Programmes that integrate housing regeneration with employment and training opportunities show positive outcomes. For example, one scheme reported 100% improvement in participant employability and confidence. Area-based initiatives have
- been linked to reduced crime, stronger skills pipelines, and improved access to work.¹⁶
- **Economic and fiscal impacts:** Modelling shows that integrated regeneration programmes can reduce demand on public services and support household income growth when combined with transport, jobs and skills investment. One local scheme was estimated to deliver between £4 and £9 in public value per £1 invested.¹⁷
 - Case studies show that housing associations **delivering regeneration in partnership with local communities** - including through co-design, tenant leadership, and neighbourhood forums- have achieved reported positive outcomes in resident satisfaction, trust, and sustainability. These approaches are particularly valued where regeneration affects long-standing communities or takes place in areas with histories of disinvestment.¹⁸

Box 5

Vineburgh– Integrating Housing and Community Renewal¹⁹

Housing-led regeneration, when supported by strong local partnerships and community engagement, can deliver measurable social and economic benefits. The Vineburgh Regeneration Initiative in Irvine, North Ayrshire (Scotland), was a £33.3 million, five-year programme led by Cunninghame Housing Association (CHA) in partnership with North Ayrshire Council. It involved the redevelopment of 306 dilapidated homes, the construction of 287 new properties, and the rehousing of 105 returning tenants. Tenant engagement was built into the process through consultation events and steering groups.

A SROI evaluation estimated that the initiative generated £4.63 in social value for every £1 invested. Refurbished homes were associated with improved health in 67 reported cases,

valued at over £1,000 each, and 76% of tenants who previously experienced health issues reported significant improvements. Utility bill reductions were noted in 128 cases, with an average saving of £130 per household.

Improvements to neighbourhood design contributed to increased confidence, reduced stress, and enhanced perceptions of safety- with 77% of tenants feeling safer as a result.

The regeneration also included employment and training opportunities, with apprentices and trainees reporting increased confidence and improved employability. Additional housing capacity created through the scheme contributed to reported reduced use of temporary accommodation for people at risk of homelessness.

¹⁴ <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10070510/1/amps20190002.pdf>
¹⁵ <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/22/9903>, A HACT assessment of Greatwell Homes’ Placemaking activities, 2024
¹⁶ <https://www.thinkhouse.org.uk/site/assets/files/2215/cache0920c.pdf>
¹⁷ <https://socialvalueuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Vineburgh%20SROI%20Report%20Final%20Assured.pdf>
¹⁸ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/650073c21886eb001397721b/Measuring_place_making_impacts_of_housing_led_regeneration.pdf
¹⁹ <https://socialvalueuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Vineburgh%20SROI%20Report%20Final%20Assured.pdf>

2. Planning and delivering affordable housing

Theme overview

Expanding access to genuinely affordable housing is fundamental to strategies that aim to improve health, reduce inequality, and support inclusive economic growth at a local level. Local housing systems differ widely in terms of supply, cost pressures, land availability, and planning capacity- making flexibility and alignment with local context essential when considering investment in affordable housing. Housing associations are well positioned to build new homes that help address the unique housing challenges in a place- delivering new and regenerated affordable homes in both under-served and high-cost areas. Their development activity is often closely linked to community infrastructure, social value, and long-term stewardship of place.

Many of the conditions that enable housing investment to be spent in a way that contributes to the broader outcomes in a place mirror the cross-cutting enablers set out elsewhere- including long-term funding certainty, strategic local partnerships, and integration with health, transport, and employment systems. However, several challenges are particularly acute in this domain. These include the need for stronger alignment with local planning authorities, better coordination with transport and economic strategies, and the impact of planning delays and local capacity gaps on timely delivery. Land access and valuation constraints, alongside the continued under-recognition of affordable housing as critical infrastructure within spatial strategies, further highlight the case for policy reform to support more joined-up, place-sensitive housing delivery. Historically planning regulations- such as NPPF- tends to be ‘place neutral’ and does not take into account local nuances of local and regional land markets.²⁰

Box 6

Stakeholder insights

Stakeholders emphasised that planning policy and rent-setting mechanisms (see Box 3) have a direct impact on housing associations’ ability to deliver affordable homes and contribute to wider place-making goals. While reforms to the planning system aim to increase supply and strengthen community engagement, concerns were raised that a narrow focus on speed and headline targets- such as the ambition to deliver 1.5 million homes- may come at the expense of quality and local responsiveness. Land value capture alone was seen as insufficient to meet affordable housing needs. Stakeholders called for a stronger public sector role in land and housing delivery, particularly given the uncertainty surrounding long-term rent settlements, which can limit providers’ ability to plan and invest at scale.

“About half of affordable housing is now

delivered through section 106... That means you get most affordable housing as a function of private house building rates - and it doesn’t happen where you’re not building houses.”
- Planning representative

The role of **local housing associations** was highlighted as especially important in rural areas and for smaller or less commercially viable sites. Local partnerships- including those involving CLTs - were cited as effective in bringing forward schemes that larger developers may overlook. However, stakeholders noted that realising this potential depends on **policy alignment across land, funding, and quality standards**, and on the ability to **invest in existing housing** as part of a broader place strategy.

Summary of key evidence

The wider benefits of affordable housing delivery - including economic growth, health improvement and regeneration- are explored across other sections of this report. This section focuses on the distinctive contribution of housing associations to planning, land use, and delivery models that support the 1.5 million homes target:

- **Localised, needs-led delivery:** Housing associations contribute to supply through new development, regeneration, and adaptive re-use of buildings- often working in areas where private delivery is less viable. Housing associations who prioritise their place-shaping role often focus on delivering homes that aligns with local needs and affordability.
- **Community-led design:** Several case studies illustrate how housing associations use community consultation and co-design to deliver sustainable, mixed-tenure schemes tailored to local context.
- **Strategic enabling role:** Housing associations often unlock complex or stalled sites, broker land assembly, and deliver community infrastructure- including public space, active travel routes and local employment facilities.
- **Return on investment:** Modelling shows that meeting the estimated need for 90,000 new social homes annually could generate £86.5 billion in economic and social value- including £4.5 billion in homelessness-related savings and £5.2 billion in reduced NHS demand.²¹



²⁰ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0269094218772974>

²¹ <https://www.housing.org.uk/globalassets/files/cebr-report-final.pdf>

3. Driving economic growth through housing-led skills and employment

Theme overview

Social housing residents are nearly twice as likely to be out of work as those in other tenures, and significantly more likely to be disabled, lone parents, or have no qualifications. Over four in five who are out of work are not actively seeking employment, with limited access to support. Among those in work, residents are twice as likely to be in lower-skilled jobs and earn around a third less on average.²² Housing associations, particularly those who work closely with their communities, are well placed to support groups who are further from the labour market- including people who are economically inactive, disabled, or digitally excluded- offering tailored and sensitive employment support.²³

Housing investment plays a significant role in supporting local employment, skills development, and inclusive economic growth. Housing associations contribute not only through construction and retrofit programmes, but also by supporting tenants into work – partnering with local employers, aligning with wider economic strategies, and delivering personalised employment support.

Decarbonisation efforts by housing associations have also driven local economic opportunities, particularly in green skills and employment.²⁴ By aligning retrofit activity with neighbourhood-level delivery, housing associations have supported green skills development, strengthened local supply chains, and created employment opportunities – particularly in areas with limited economic resilience. Their established presence in communities can mean that investment is more likely to be retained locally, supporting inclusive growth alongside carbon reduction.

These approaches are often most effective when integrated with tenancy management, enabling targeted help for unemployed and economically inactive residents, particularly those facing multiple barriers.²⁵ A place-based approach strengthens this further by aligning housing activity with local labour market needs, skills pipelines, and inclusive growth ambitions – particularly in areas facing high levels of deprivation, unemployment, or low pay.²⁶

Many of the conditions that enable housing associations to address employment and skills challenges effectively mirror broader enablers discussed earlier – including long-term funding, tenant engagement, and strategic local partnerships. However, employment initiatives led by housing associations also involve distinct delivery challenges. These include the need for collaboration with employment-specific partners (e.g. Jobcentre Plus, further education providers, local employers), integration of tenancy and employment support, and targeted delivery in areas with weak economic infrastructure. Additional barriers include securing employer engagement in low-wage or low-growth areas and a lack of longitudinal tracking, which limits visibility of long-term outcomes and public value.

Effective partnerships between social landlords, local authorities, and other agencies- supported by devolved, place-based funding – will help ensure interventions respond to local labour market needs and can be sustained over time.²⁷

Box 7

Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholders noted that housing associations, as long-standing local institutions, are well placed to support **inclusive economic growth**. Their role extends beyond housing provision to include **skills development and employment initiatives**, many of which are open to residents across different tenures and designed to benefit whole communities.

Housing associations, particularly those who prioritise their place-shaping role- were also described as providing platforms for **social enterprise** and delivering **community-led projects** that build local resilience. In

several areas, stakeholders highlighted how associations are integrating **green skills training into** retrofit and regeneration programmes - helping align housing activity with climate objectives and local economic priorities.

“The only way you can make neighbourhoods thrive is if there’s something happening in those neighbourhoods... It’s job creation, getting people into work... That is what placemaking is about.”

- Housing association representative

The **JobsPlus pilot** was cited as an example of how housing associations can deliver **hyper-local employment support** (see below).

Summary of key evidence

The evidence base includes both formal evaluations and more exploratory case studies, with 50% assessed as robust, **40% exploratory**, and **10% moderate**. Methodologies ranged from structured programme assessments and SROI models to internal reporting on employment and training outcomes. Notably, the evidence points to clear benefits around **confidence, job-readiness, and economic resilience**. However, significant gaps remain in **tracking longer-term employment outcomes, understanding scalability, and evaluating cost-effectiveness**.

The evidence shows that housing-led programmes can improve employability, increase economic participation, and reduce structural inequalities:

- **Employment, skills and local economic benefits:** Housing association-led programmes have supported positive transitions into work, volunteering, and training – with Transform and Achieve reporting 76% of participants entering employment (51%), volunteering (10%), or training (15%). Retrofit and regeneration have

also supported local economic growth, creating green jobs, apprenticeships, and supply chain opportunities.²⁸ An independent evaluation of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Demonstrator estimated around 1,200 jobs were created, mainly in low-carbon construction. Housing associations contributed through procurement and skills initiatives focused on low-growth areas, and by introducing tenant liaison roles to minimise disruption – for example, Clarion’s programme combined job creation with tenant-focused delivery.²⁹

- **Targeted support for disadvantaged groups:** Social housing tenants are more likely to be out of work, lone parents, or living with a disability- all of which contribute to structural disadvantage. Tailored, place-based support models can address these barriers through sustained and locally relevant delivery.³⁰
- **Anchor institution role:** Housing associations are often trusted local institutions able to convene stakeholders across employment, education and housing. International models such as *Jobs-Plus* (and UK adaptations) have shown the value of housing-led delivery in driving local employment ecosystems.³¹

²² <https://learningandwork.org.uk/resources/research-and-reports/building-opportunity-how-social-housing-can-support-skills-talent-and-workforce-development/>

²³ <https://www.communitiesthatwork.co.uk/images/pdf/CSJ6364-Social-Housing-and-Employment-Report-180706-WEB.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.housing.org.uk/globalassets/files/climate-and-sustainability--energy-crisis/07085855-9cf8-456c-8099-9506a6839b5d.pdf>

²⁵ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344265816_Transform_and_Achieve_Programme_Evaluation_Report

²⁶ https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/housing-and-inclusive-growth_6ef36f4b-en.html

²⁷ https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/Report_Improving-Opportunities_APPG.pdf

²⁸ <https://repository.uel.ac.uk/download/Of5ffbd45abaec08f04cb4ce24bf1520552f132310f7f166f21dbf90ee30c42/4121708/MTVH%20Evaluation%20Report%20v5.pdf>
<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2022-06/a-scoping-review-of-place-based-approaches-community-engagement-and-support.pdf>

²⁹ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6490d552b32b9e0012a96aad/shdf-d-whr-process-evaluation-report.pdf#:~:text=Clackmannanshire%20Alva%20Community%20Regeneration%20through,Decarbonisation%20project%20had>

³⁰ <https://learningandwork.org.uk/resources/research-and-reports/building-opportunity-how-social-housing-can-support-skills-talent-and-workforce-development/>, <https://hact.org.uk/publications/strategic-approches-to-employment-responding-to-change-in-the-sector/>

³¹ <https://learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Developing-a-Jobs-Plus-Model-for-the-UK.pdf>

- **High resident satisfaction:** Evaluations show that tenants value the role of housing associations in delivering employment support. In one study, 92% of learners rated the support as ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’, underlining the importance of trust and accessibility.³²
- **Wellbeing and social value:** Employment-linked regeneration programmes report improvements in confidence, independence, and mental health. In one regeneration scheme, residents and apprentices reported significant improvements in employability and self-esteem.³³
- **Return on investment:** Some programmes have demonstrated strong SROI, especially where employment pathways are integrated into broader regeneration or retrofit initiatives. In one case, a £1 investment in employment support generated between £3 and £4 in public value.
- **A collaboration of nine London-based housing associations supported over 22,000 individuals in areas of high unemployment.** Around 31% moved into work, with 77% sustaining employment for at least 13 weeks and 62% for 26 weeks. Holistic support included CV workshops, training, and financial guidance. The programme delivered £2.62 in social value for every £1 invested. Individual housing associations reported additional value: Orbit reported £1.44 per £1 invested and Octavia’s pilot achieved £4.12 per £1. Tenants who gained employment saw an average income increase of nearly £8,000 per year, and a reduction in rent arrears of £75.50 after 26 weeks.³⁴

Box 8

JobsPlus: A housing-led approach to employment support

JobsPlus³⁵ is a housing-led, neighbourhood-based employment support programme currently being piloted in England. Funded by HM Treasury and delivered through the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), it aims to support working-age adults- including those who are economically inactive, on benefits, or seeking a career change - as they transition into employment. Adapted from a model developed in the United States, JobsPlus operates at the level of local neighbourhoods (typically 500–1,000 households) and is open to all residents, regardless of tenure or benefit status. Unlike many traditional employment schemes, it is delivered through local housing services rather than national providers or health-led

channels- reflecting the trusted role that housing associations can play in community-based support. The programme promotes voluntary participation and a ‘no risk’ environment, allowing individuals to engage without fear of benefit sanctions. Early implementation highlights the importance of local partnerships, particularly with housing associations, to build credibility, reach under-served groups, and integrate employment support into everyday community infrastructure. *“JobsPlus is hyper-local, housing-led, intergenerational employment support... working through neighbourhoods using community champions.”* - Policy and advocacy representative

³² <https://repository.uel.ac.uk/download/Of5ffbd45abaec08f04cb4ce24bf1520552f132310f7f166f21dbf90ee30c42/4121708/MTVH%20Evaluation%20Report%20v5.pdf>
³³ <https://socialvalueuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Vineburgh%20SROI%20Report%20Final%20Assured.pdf>
³⁴ https://learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Fit-for-the-future-Reshaping-Orbits-employment-service.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com
³⁵ <https://learningandwork.org.uk/resources/research-and-reports/jobsplus/>

4. Supporting health in communities

Theme overview

Housing conditions (e.g., building quality, energy efficiency, thermal comfort) are negatively linked to health outcomes and corresponding rising demand on public services. Housing quality, stability, affordability and location, and the built environment- including neighbourhood design and access to green space – also shape health outcomes. For example, poor housing costs the NHS £2.5bn in treating illness linked to cold, damp, and dangerous homes. Concerns about damp and mould in social housing have gained renewed national attention, highlighting the need for coordinated responses across sectors.³⁶ Evidence shows that place-based partnerships within ICSs can improve health outcomes by addressing broader determinants of health. Improving housing quality and availability is consistently identified as central to reducing health inequalities.³⁷

Housing associations are increasingly involved in these partnerships, contributing to neighbourhood-based, preventative health strategies that span tenancy sustainment, mental health, and coordination with social care- particularly in areas affected by deprivation, fuel poverty, or underinvestment. The housing–health interface brings distinct delivery dynamics. Housing associations can act as early identifiers of health risk, using frontline housing management and wraparound support to prevent escalation into acute care. Many deliver place-based models of preventative care, such as integrated housing and health hubs and partnerships with ICSs. However, housing is not consistently included in health strategies or ICS governance structures. Fragmented funding across housing, public health, and care continues to limit joint commissioning, while data-sharing barriers and limited capacity- particularly among smaller providers- constrain the delivery of integrated, preventative models focused on health equity and local need.

Box 9

Stakeholder insights

Stakeholders acknowledged the strong links between housing, health, and inequality, but noted that many health interventions still focus on crisis response, such as food or fuel vouchers, rather than addressing root causes. *“We could save the NHS millions and millions... We could stop people blocking beds. If they saw the connection between health, housing, and education... having a warm substantial roof over your head does lead to better health and greater educational attainment.”* - Housing association representative Housing associations, particularly those who prioritise their place-shaping role, were seen as well placed to support early identification of health and wellbeing needs, particularly where ongoing relationships with residents enable preventative engagement, with an assessed appetite to bring health and housing together.

“We commissioned HACT to bring health and housing together - we ran roundtables on damp and mould, supported housing, homelessness, trips and falls. There was real appetite. At the housing and health summit the Mayor opened, we had to turn people away.” - Combined Authority representative Some associations have brought maintenance services in-house, allowing staff to identify issues during home visits. When working in partnership with community organisations, housing associations were viewed as valuable contributors to public health and social cohesion. *“We deal with people affected by mental health, criminal justice issues, or NHS pressures every day - and we often have the tools to resolve those issues. But because we’re not a statutory service, we’re not seen as equal partners. Despite our insight and impact, we don’t always get into the room.”* - Housing association representative

³⁶ <https://hact.org.uk/publications/adam-report/>
³⁷ <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/reports/place-based-partnerships-integrated-care-systems>

Summary of key evidence

This theme is supported by a strong body of evidence, **with 69% rated as robust and 31% as moderate**. Sources include systematic reviews, peer-reviewed studies, and well-documented programme evaluations that combine qualitative and quantitative data- including tenant health outcomes, NHS cost savings, and wellbeing metrics. However, evidence gaps remain. These include limited understanding of the mechanisms driving impact, insufficient long-term tracking, and a lack of integrated housing data within health systems. There is also limited evidence on how housing can be systematically embedded within ICS governance and funding structures, particularly in relation to addressing health inequalities.

The evidence indicates that improving housing conditions and integrating housing with health systems can deliver significant health and service outcomes:

- **Physical housing improvements:** Investments in insulation, ventilation, and hazard removal are linked to reduced cold-related and respiratory illness, improved mental wellbeing, and lower stress. Removing Category 1 hazards at a cost of £3,780 per home has been shown to repay NHS costs within 7–8 years.³⁸
- **Cost savings to the NHS:** BRE modelling estimates that poor housing costs the NHS £1.4 billion annually, with wider societal costs exceeding £18 billion. Integrated housing-health models can reduce demand for acute care: one Housing and Health Hub saved the NHS £1.5 million over two years.³⁹

- **Integrated tenancy support:** Housing associations embed health-focused services in housing delivery, including support for addiction, mental health, social prescribing, and welfare advice. These services have been linked to reduced emergency NHS use, improved health engagement, and fewer delayed hospital discharges.
- **Positive resident outcomes:** In one project hospital readmissions were eliminated, and per-person savings of £25,000 were reported.⁴⁰
- **Personalised, housing-based health interventions can improve outcomes and reduce NHS use** - particularly for vulnerable tenants with long-term conditions. A rare example of a randomised controlled trial (RCT) in the housing sector comes from the Health Begins at Home project, delivered by Family Mosaic (now Peabody). This large-scale RCT involved over 430 older social tenants and found that **regular housing-led health support reduced planned hospital appointments by 22%**, inpatient nights by 0.87 per person, and NHS costs by £935 per person annually.⁴¹
- **Retrofitting measures** such as insulation, ventilation and low-carbon heating are linked to improved thermal comfort, reduced respiratory illness, and better mental health. For example, Vineburgh residents reported improved self-reported health following refurbishment, and over £1,000 per household in social value was estimated (see case study Box 5).

Box 10

Wakefield housing and health support

The Wakefield Housing Support Evaluation project was a partnership between Wakefield District Housing Association (WDH) and local NHS providers to improve hospital discharge for patients with housing-related needs. The model placed housing support within NHS discharge processes, helping people return to safe and stable accommodation and reducing avoidable delays and system pressure. WDH’s role in delivering the service meant patients could be connected to wider housing support - including tenancy sustainment, debt advice, and other internal services- alongside NHS care. Clinicians valued the service for reducing the time they spent

managing housing issues, while patients reported discharge was quicker, safer and less stressful. The mixed-methods evaluation (University of Sheffield, 2022) estimated £1.5 million in NHS cost savings over two years, linked to reductions in readmissions, GP visits, and ambulance callouts. Qualitative evidence also suggested improved continuity of care and fewer delays linked to unsafe housing situations. The findings suggest that closer working between housing associations and health partners can support discharge planning, reduce system pressure, and improve outcomes for people whose health and housing needs overlap.



³⁸ https://files.bregroup.com/research/BRE_Report_the_cost_of_poor_housing_2021.pdf

³⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁰ <https://www.hantsiow.icb.nhs.uk/about-us/case-studies/case-study-keep-well-collaborative>

⁴¹ <https://www.peabodygroup.org.uk/media/ueonlsm/family-mosaic-health-begins-at-home-report.pdf#:~:text=planned%20hospital%20appointments,004%29%20in>

5. Preventing and tackling homelessness

Theme overview

Homelessness places pressure on housing, health, social care and criminal justice services, with English council’s spending £2.9 billion on providing temporary accommodation for homeless households between April 2023 and March 2024.⁴² Effective prevention requires alignment across affordable housing supply, allocations, early support, tenancy sustainment, and long-term recovery. Housing associations can play a key role in preventing and tackling homelessness as providers of affordable homes, landlords, partners in local prevention frameworks, and deliverers of housing-led models such as Housing First (see Box 12). Their long-term presence in communities and links with local health and care systems position them to support more coordinated and sustainable responses – with evidence highlighting positive outcomes for individuals affected by homelessness, including greater housing stability, improved health and wellbeing, and better opportunities for long-term recovery and community integration.

While the broader delivery environment- including funding stability and cross-sector partnerships - shapes the effectiveness of local homelessness strategies, several conditions are particularly critical. These include the access to supported housing, the availability of genuinely affordable housing to support both prevention and recovery; the need for integrated responses across housing, health, care and justice; and the role of housing associations in delivering tenancy sustainment, floating support and early intervention services.

System-level constraints include housing supply shortages, especially in high-cost or low-turnover areas; fragmented commissioning that limits collaboration across sectors; and gaps in infrastructure and service coverage- particularly in rural, coastal or non-devolved areas. A lack of shared data systems and the inconsistent inclusion of housing associations in formal homelessness strategies further limit the potential contribution of housing associations.

Box 11

Stakeholder insights

Stakeholders highlighted the scale of homelessness and the rising use of temporary accommodation as a significant concern. Examples such as Greater Manchester were cited to illustrate how devolved powers can support more coordinated, multi-agency responses, with housing associations acting as core delivery partners. Housing associations were viewed as well positioned to support homelessness prevention, drawing on local knowledge, sustained community engagement, and early identification of risk. Tenancy sustainment was described as key, with stakeholders

emphasising the importance of trusted relationships and the effective use of data to intervene early - particularly in preventing youth homelessness.

“Homelessness here is very high - we know it’s part of a national shortage. That’s why we’re thinking about bringing in housing associations or private developers who might be better placed than the council to deliver quickly, access funding, or support people into homes and training.”
- Local authority representative

Summary of key evidence

The evidence in this theme includes a mix of robust and moderate sources, using case studies, programme evaluations, and cross-sector reviews. Around 57% were assessed as robust and 43% as moderate. Many studies evaluated tenancy sustainment schemes or Housing First models, often incorporating SROI or public cost savings analyses. However, gaps remain in terms of long-term tracking, comparative evaluations, and understanding how support models perform across different geographies or populations.

Housing associations play a key role across both prevention and recovery, contributing to reduced service pressure and improved resident outcomes.

Individual outcomes⁴³

- **Rapidly rehousing people who are homeless**, providing safe and stable accommodation as a foundation for recovery. Models such as Housing First have demonstrated high tenancy sustainment rates and improved engagement with health and support services among people with complex needs (see Box 12).
- **Tenancy sustainment and early intervention:** housing associations-led programmes offering financial advice, floating support, crisis prevention and partnership working (with health, care, justice services) have been shown to coordinate holistic support for people experiencing homelessness.
- **Support for priority groups:** Housing associations provide supported housing and transition services for refugees, young people, survivors of domestic abuse, and others at heightened risk- including in areas with limited statutory provision.

Sector level outcomes

- **Cost-effectiveness:** Research shows that preventing homelessness is more cost-effective than reactive provision- with a Crisis led report finding that public spending would fall by £370 million if 40,000 people were prevented from experiencing one year of homelessness.⁴⁴ Housing First programmes have demonstrated public savings of £15,000+ per person per year (Box 13).
- **Cross-sector outcomes:** Partnerships between housing associations and NHS providers have reduced hospital admissions and emergency health use. Wakefield’s NHS-linked scheme saved £1.5 million in two years, a cross-sector initiative bringing together housing associations, local councils, the NHS and voluntary sector partners to reduce health inequalities generated savings of up to £25,000 per patient by facilitating timely discharge and preventing readmission.⁴⁵
- **Neighbourhood and tenancy outcomes:** Orbit Group’s supported housing service helped 99% of customers who engaged to successfully maintain their tenancies. The programme reported a social return of £9.73 for every £1 invested.⁴⁶

⁴² https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/homelessness_bill_doubles_in_five_years_to_2_3bn#:~:text=The%20data%20is%20available%20here,%C2%A3161%20million%20across%20England.

⁴³ <https://homesforcahy.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Compendium-of-Homelessness-Prevention.pdf>; <https://www.housing.org.uk/resources/what-are-housing-associations-doing-to-tackle-homelessness/#:~:text=Housing%20associations%20are%20committed%20to,12%25%20of%20respondents%20in%202018>
⁴⁴ https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/20680/crisis_better_than_cure_2016.pdf
⁴⁵ https://www.hantsiow.icb.nhs.uk/about-us/case-studies/case-study-keep-well-collaborative?utm_source=chatgpt.com
⁴⁶ https://orbitgroup.org.uk/media/bpxbp0nv/vfm-standalone-report-2024.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Box 12

Place-based support models: lessons from Housing First

While many Housing First evaluations are small in scale, the evidence base overall indicates consistently high tenancy sustainment rates and positive outcomes across multiple settings. A 2021 international systematic review of 26 studies found that, compared with treatment-as-usual approaches, Housing First were associated with an **88% reduction in homelessness** and a **41% improvement in housing stability**.⁴⁷

A recent England example is Oxfordshire Homeless Movement's Housing First project for 25 people with no recourse to public funds, 15 of whom were housed in housing association tenancies. An evaluation reported that 88% sustained their tenancy for at least 12 months- a strong outcome given the complexity of need. The project also evidenced improvements in mental health and employment engagement.

Between 2018 and 2023, three large-scale Housing First pilots ran in Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, and the West Midlands, funded through devolved powers and independently evaluated by ICF for MHCLG. The pilots supported 1,061 people facing long-term or repeat homelessness and multiple complex needs.

Many tenancies across the pilots were in social housing, with housing associations playing a key role in delivery. In several areas, they worked closely with local partners to provide homes and adapt lettings and tenancy support for people with complex needs- particularly in Birmingham, where registered providers were a major source of accommodation.

The pilots achieved **92% housing retention at 12 months**, rising from just 14% at baseline. After three years, **84% of tenancies were sustained**. Engagement with primary care rose significantly, with **GP registration increasing from around 60% to 92%**, and access to addiction support improving. The evaluation estimated **cost savings of £15,880 per person annually** and a **benefit- to-cost ratio of 2.1**.

Success was underpinned by strong collaboration between housing, health, and support services- although access to suitable housing remained a key delivery challenge.⁴⁸



Devolution, housing and place-based approaches

⁴⁷ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8513528/>

⁴⁸ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/671a70221898d9be93f75db4/Housing_First_Final_Synthesis_Report.pdf

Devolution, housing and place-based approaches

The evidence reviewed suggests that further devolution of powers and funding over housing, regeneration, retrofit and net zero, health, and employment presents both significant opportunities and important risks for the role of housing associations in shaping positive outcomes for places and communities.

When well-designed, devolution can help address many of the structural barriers identified in this report - enabling the alignment of investment, planning, and service delivery around the needs of specific places and communities. It can also support integration across housing, health, economic development, and climate priorities, and empower housing associations and other local partners to take on a more strategic role.

Evidence from both academic sources and stakeholder interviews highlights a recurring concern: the ‘catch-22’ of devolution, where local institutions are expected to demonstrate capacity to secure powers and funding, but cannot build that capacity without meaningful autonomy and investment.^{49 50} Contextual factors such

as housing market conditions, governance maturity, economic resilience, and demographic need significantly shape what is possible under devolved systems. To succeed, housing devolution must be underpinned by:

- Flexibility to design local strategies tailored to diverse conditions.
- Investment in capacity-building for under-served areas.
- Clear mechanisms to embed housing associations and other local partners in governance and planning structures.

Devolution offers an opportunity to strengthen the contribution of housing associations to place- but only if national frameworks support variation, invest in local capability, and promote cross-sector integration. The recommendations that follow aim to support this by removing structural barriers, embedding housing more fully in devolved strategies, and ensuring that place-based approaches are both equitable and effective.



⁴⁹ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21582041.2023.2203122#abstract>
⁵⁰ <https://neweconomics.org/2024/04/reclaiming-our-regions>



Realising the potential of housing associations in places and communities: recommendations

Realising the potential of housing associations in places and communities: recommendations

While housing associations can make a significant contribution to improving the outcomes for places and communities beyond building new homes, several persistent barriers continue to limit what they can do - including fragmented funding, uneven local capacity, disconnection between national and local systems, and the under-recognition of housing associations as strategic partners. Yet the evidence reviewed shows that, when well designed and adequately supported, investing funding through housing associations can deliver measurable benefits across health, economic development, decarbonisation, regeneration, and homelessness. Current reforms to service delivery, climate policy, planning, and devolved funding offer a timely opportunity to embed housing more centrally in cross-sector strategies and better align local delivery with national priorities.

Realising the full potential of housing associations in places will require policy frameworks that support long-term planning, local flexibility, and greater integration across housing, health, and economic systems. This also means tailoring delivery models and investment to the specific challenges faced by under-resourced or high-need areas -including post-industrial towns, rural and coastal communities, where housing associations can be among the few long-standing local institutions.

Although this report focuses on national and local policy levers, several stakeholders noted that some aspects of effective delivery depend on practice within the sector. Community engagement, in particular, was seen as central to building trust and avoiding conflict – especially in regeneration and planning.

The following recommendations are intended to help national and local policymakers create the conditions for sustaining and scaling place-based housing strategies. They are grounded in the evidence reviewed and informed by insights from stakeholder interviews.

Reflections on sector practice

While this report focuses on policy and system-level enablers, several stakeholders reflected on aspects of practice that sit within the housing association sector itself. These included the importance of early and meaningful community engagement, thoughtful partnership working, and making use of existing data and insight to shape local delivery. In discussions about regeneration and service change, engagement and trust were seen as particularly vital – not as a policy requirement, but as integral to the ethos of place-based working.

To realise the full potential of housing associations in improving local outcomes, policy must support long-term planning, local flexibility and integration, particularly in under-resourced areas where housing associations are key local anchors.

1. Integrate housing into wider strategies and partnerships

Local leaders, decision makers and commissioners need the motivation, powers, tools and partnerships to align housing with wider local priorities.

What the research suggests:

- Housing stability and quality directly influences health, education, and employment outcomes - but housing providers can be excluded from strategic discussions about how to improve outcomes for places and communities.
- Integrated governance enhances return on investment and strengthens long-term impact.
- Integrated approaches that include housing at a place-based level can help address challenges such as ageing housing, health inequity, fuel poverty and workforce needs. Housing associations can contribute more effectively when they are included in formal governance structures and actively involved in the design of local interventions and partnerships- including networks such as ICBs, local homelessness prevention forums, and place-based planning groups.

- There is variation in local capacity and infrastructure- particularly between combined authority areas and places without devolved powers- which may affect how effectively housing associations can contribute at a place-based level.

Implications for policy and delivery:

- Ensure strategic discussions at a place-based level - including future devolution arrangements - are developed collaboratively with local partners, including housing associations, and that housing is embedded in the design and delivery of key strategies such as Local Homelessness Strategies, Integrated Care Systems, Health and Wellbeing Boards, and employment frameworks (industrial strategies).
- Include explicit provisions within devolution and funding frameworks to support delivery in under-resourced or disadvantaged areas- such as those with limited capacity, fragmented governance, or a history of low investment- to promote more equitable outcomes across all communities.



2. Align and integrate funding to support joined-up delivery targeted at local priorities and need

Fragmented and ring-fenced funding limits the ability of local areas to design tailored and integrated responses to housing, health, climate and employment challenges that are unique to a place. Addressing this requires greater flexibility in national programmes and stronger integration of related funding streams to enable more coherent, outcome-focused investment at place level.

What the research suggests:

- Siloed and short-term funding prevents coordination across priorities such as regeneration and retrofit, and health and employment.
- Ring-fenced funding aimed at improving the supply of new homes limits the ability of providers to leverage this funding in the most effective way.
- Housing associations delivering multi-outcome interventions often face barriers aligning funding rules across programmes.
- Integrated and flexible funding would support more efficient, person-centred delivery- especially when it can be aligned with local priorities and conditions.

Implications for policy and delivery:

- Build flexibility into existing housing funding programmes to support the delivery of local priorities, particularly in areas with high deprivation, low institutional capacity or that require housing-led regeneration.
- Promote integration of relevant funding streams within central agencies- for example, aligning local authority and Homes England programmes aimed at supporting the delivery of new homes, such as the Affordable Homes Programme and the Brownfield Infrastructure Fund, into a single, place-based investment offer.
- Explore opportunities to link national and local funding streams- including those administered by local authorities, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, public health grants, adult skills and Further Education capital funding, and climate-related investments (e.g., Local Net Zero Accelerator or Active Travel Fund) - through shared outcome frameworks and place-level governance structures.

This approach aligns with Homes England’s strategic plan, which emphasises a more integrated and flexible funding model to support the needs of places, partners, and their projects.

Fragmented and ring-fenced funding limits locally tailored responses. More flexible and integrated funding is needed to support joined-up, place-based delivery across housing, health, climate and employment.

3. Build delivery capacity across all geographies and types of housing association

Unlocking the potential of housing associations to contribute to positive outcomes for places and communities requires targeted investment in the delivery capacity of local leadership and decision making. This is particularly so in rural, coastal, and non-combined authority areas where infrastructure and institutional support are often limited.

It is also important to recognise that some housing associations which prioritise their place-shaping role, particularly those rooted in communities, face capacity constraints and financial pressures that may affect their ability to contribute to outcomes for places and communities in the future. While the ten-year rent settlement announced at the June Spending Review will help many housing associations plan with greater certainty, others will require additional support.

What the research suggests:

- Without additional capacity, some areas will struggle to leverage the full potential of housing associations.
- Rural, coastal, and post-industrial areas often lack the planning expertise, workforce, or infrastructure to deliver regeneration, retrofit, or supported housing at scale.
- Housing associations in these places are key delivery agents but frequently operate without strategic support or access to national funding on equal terms.
- Some housing associations, including smaller locally based providers, face capacity challenges that may lead to consolidation in the sector.
- A return to rent convergence will bring capacity back into the housing association sector that will help some providers build more new homes and others to continue to invest in broader outcomes for places and communities.

Implications for policy and delivery:

- Ensure that national programmes, including Homes England’s Affordable Homes Programme, reflect the diversity of delivery models across the sector. Funding criteria should enable access for smaller, community-based housing associations.
- Invest in delivery infrastructure in under-served areas- including retrofit capacity, planning functions, and partnership coordination.
- Fund targeted capacity-building programmes for housing associations and local authorities in rural, coastal, post-industrial and other left-behind areas.
- Provide technical assistance, shared learning platforms, and planning support to strengthen local delivery of complex, cross-sector programmes.
- Ensure the planned reintroduction of rent convergence, as announced at the June Spending Review, is confirmed and implemented as soon as possible.

Unlocking the potential of housing associations in under-served areas requires targeted investment in local leadership, delivery capacity and access to funding that reflects the diversity of providers.

4. Support improved impact measurement

Across the themes explored in this report, a consistent gap is the lack of shared metrics and robust outcome measurement to capture the full impact of housing-led, place-based interventions. While this is not unique to housing associations, it affects their ability to demonstrate value, build the case for integrated funding, and align with broader system goals. Strengthening the evidence base – particularly around long-term and cross-sector outcomes – would support more effective planning, accountability, and value for money, especially for smaller housing associations and providers working in lower-capacity areas.

What the research suggests:

- Impact measurement approaches – including outcome tracking, cost–benefit analysis, and social value frameworks – are underused, limiting opportunities for learning, accountability, and cross-sector planning.
- Outcomes related to housing and tenancy sustainment are more likely to be tracked, while longer-term impacts on health, employment, or community resilience are often overlooked.
- A lack of shared metrics across housing, health, climate and skills systems makes it harder to assess impact, inform investment, or scale what works.

Implications for policy and delivery:

- National bodies – including Homes England, ONS and relevant departmental leads – should signal the importance of consistent and proportionate evaluation across funding streams, enabling clearer expectations and more comparable outcome data.
- Public investment programmes should make space for evaluation within funding design – allowing providers, particularly smaller and community-based housing associations, to assess and demonstrate outcomes using proportionate and practical methods.
- Support could include shared metrics, optional templates, and access to existing tools (e.g. SROI models, wellbeing valuation frameworks) to help local partners evidence the full value of place-based work.



Conclusion and Acknowledgements

Conclusion

This report brings together evidence from across housing, health, economic development, and climate policy to explore the contribution of housing associations to **improving outcomes at a local level**, beyond their role in building new homes. The findings suggest that tailoring housing interventions to local needs – supported by integrated systems and flexible funding – **can maximise their contribution across a range of policy priorities**.

Across different geographies and policy areas, the research highlights that effective place-based approaches are often built on a foundation of long-term **partnerships**, trusted delivery relationships, and locally responsive governance. These conditions enable housing policy and investment to connect with wider systems – from health and skills to transport and energy – and support more preventative, coordinated, and resilient delivery.

Within these systems, housing associations – particularly those that prioritise their place-shaping role – emerge as key local partners. Their long-standing community presence, delivery capacity,

and involvement in cross-sector collaboration position them to **contribute meaningfully to local outcomes**. However, realising this potential consistently will require supportive policy conditions – including greater stability, integration, recognition, and capacity at the local level.

As national policy continues to evolve – through devolution, public service reform, and investment in affordable housing and net zero – there is a clear opportunity to strengthen the enabling conditions for housing associations. Doing so will help ensure that housing policy contributes fully to national priorities, and that local areas are equipped to deliver solutions that **respond to their own contexts and communities**.

Finally, while this report focuses on system and policy enablers, stakeholder reflections also pointed to aspects of effective practice within the sector itself – particularly around community engagement, use of data, and trusted partnerships.

Housing associations are key partners in delivering wider local outcomes. Their impact is maximised through tailored, place-based approaches, integrated funding, and strong local partnerships supported by stable and joined-up policy.

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Appendix 1, 2 and 3

Appendix 1 Evidence and method design

Desk Review and Document Analysis

We conducted a review of literature and policy materials, including:

- National policy documents (e.g. the English Devolution White Paper, Labour policy statements, National Planning Policy Framework updates).
- Peer-reviewed studies and sector-led evaluations across housing-led regeneration, affordable housing, employment, decarbonisation, health and care.
- Evaluations of place-based delivery models and governance, including analysis of Combined Authorities, Integrated Care Systems, and community-led initiatives.

To support analysis of the evidence base, each source was assessed using a **‘traffic light’ system to indicate the range and rigour of methodologies used.**

This framework categorises sources as Dark Green (very high), Light Green (high), Amber (moderate), and Red (lower). Higher ratings reflect more structured methodologies, greater transparency, and independent validation (e.g., systematic reviews or well-documented mixed-methods studies). Amber-rated sources typically use sound methods but may be smaller in scale or more exploratory in nature. Red-rated evidence generally consisted of smaller-scale, locally focused or qualitative studies- with many offering valuable insights into lived experience, place-specific challenges, or developing practice.

In this analysis, the largest proportion of sources (47%) were rated as Amber, indicating a strong presence of methodologically sound but less formal evidence. Around 22% of sources were assessed as Light Green, and a smaller proportion (7%) as Dark Green, reflecting more rigorous or peer-reviewed approaches. Red-rated evidence accounted for approximately 24% of sources.

Stakeholder Interviews

17 semi-structured interviews were carried out with PlaceShapers members and wider stakeholders across housing, local government, health, and regeneration. These interviews provided real-time insights into the delivery environment, including:

- Opportunities and constraints facing housing associations within local systems.
- Perspectives on funding, partnership working, and governance structures.
- Reflections on what enables or inhibits integrated, place-based delivery.

Interviewees represented a range of organisational types and geographies (urban, rural, coastal, and non-devolved areas). Insights from these conversations were analysed thematically and used to supplement and validate findings from the desk review and survey.

Critical friends group

The work was guided by a Critical Friends Group, comprising nine senior representatives from housing associations of different sizes and regional contexts, alongside stakeholders from the Royal Town Planning Institute and Homes England. The group provided feedback on framing and emerging findings and helped shape the final recommendations.

Limitations in the evidence base

- **Current evaluation methods often focus on outputs** (e.g., units built or people trained), which may underrepresent longer-term value such as improved wellbeing, resilience, or reduced demand on public services.
- Many place-based interventions involve **complex, multi-sector systems** where outcomes emerge gradually and are shaped by overlapping factors. This makes both attribution and short-term measurement difficult- particularly for benefits like community resilience, wellbeing, or reduced service demand.⁵¹
- **Attribution challenges:** The integrated nature of place-based working makes it difficult to isolate the specific impact of housing association-led interventions from other contributory factors.
- **Underrepresentation of certain groups and geographies:** Some community types- including rural areas, smaller-scale initiatives, and specific demographic groups- are underrepresented in the current evidence base, making it harder to assess variation in delivery and outcomes.
- There is limited systematic evidence on **how resident voice influences housing outcomes in place-based delivery**- particularly in regeneration or planning processes. Where engagement is strong, impacts are often described qualitatively rather than formally tracked.
- **Underuse of economic valuation tools:** SROI and cost-benefit approaches are not consistently applied across interventions, limiting the ability to make robust economic cases.
- **Data coverage and standardisation:** Outcome data is often collected in inconsistent ways, particularly across housing, health, climate and employment interventions- reducing comparability and national benchmarking.
- **Cross-sector data sharing constraints:** Fragmented data systems between housing, health, justice, and care restrict the ability to track long-term outcomes or shared system impact.

While not all evidence meets formal academic thresholds, the consistency of findings, combined with emerging good practice in integrated delivery and evaluation, suggests a strong foundation on which to build. This report therefore supports both the case for action and the case for continued investment in strengthening the evidence base - particularly in under-represented geographies and for smaller-scale, locally led initiatives.

Evidence tends to focus on short-term outputs and struggles to capture long-term benefits due to data gaps, attribution challenges, and underrepresented groups, highlighting the need for improved evaluation and investment.

⁵¹ <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Evaluating-place-based-approaches.pdf>

Appendix 2 Selection of case studies reviewed

Health and Housing Integration

Case Study	Location / Provider	Summary	Evidence Type
Keep Well Collaborative – Step Out Pathway	Hampshire and Isle of Wight ICB, Abri HA	Partnership accelerated hospital discharge for mental health patients, saving £25k per person with 0% readmission.	Quantitative + qualitative feedback
Sussex Mental Health and Housing Strategy	Sussex Partnership NHS FT, HACT	Integrated housing into mental health care via cross-agency strategy. Supported community-based care pathways.	Strategic partnership – qualitative evidence
Croydon Place-based Partnership	Croydon Health Services NHS Trust	Streamlined discharge and improved community support through local housing collaboration. Improved satisfaction and service efficiency.	Local reporting – limited published evaluation
Bolton Integrated Care Partnership	Bolton NHS Trust and housing partners	Place-based model reduced discharge delays and enabled tailored housing solutions.	Local practice – no formal evaluation
Black Country Health and Housing Programme	NHS Black Country ICB and whg	Integrated health and housing to reduce inequalities. Includes asthma-friendly homes and NHS workforce recruitment from tenants.	Qualitative and early programme monitoring
Wakefield District Housing – Health Partnership	Wakefield CCG and WDH	Improved housing conditions linked to NHS savings of up to £1.5m annually via reduced hospital demand.	Joint internal reporting
Southside Housing Holiday Hunger	Southside Housing Association	Food and activities programme for low-income children, generating £158,627 in estimated social value.	Internal SROI estimate
Bield Housing Volunteering Projects	Bield Housing Association	Volunteer-led schemes reduced isolation and improved wellbeing in older people.	Qualitative – resident feedback

Appendix 2 Selection of case studies reviewed

Employment and Skills

Case Study	Location / Provider	Summary	Evidence Type
New Directions Programme	Beyond Housing / Actes Trust (Tees Valley)	Supported 1,138 NEETs; 666 progressed into work/education. High impact in deprived areas with over 60% success rate.	Quantitative tracking + case studies.
New Start Programme	Karbon Homes	Paid placements for over-25s. 73 participants in 2022, with 31 securing employment. Expansion planned with 80+ placements.	Internal monitoring data
Clarion Futures – Employment Support	Clarion Housing Group (National)	Supported 1,724 into work and over 5,000 into training in 2023–24. Lead partner on ‘Love London Working’.	Internal evaluation + national award recognition
Magenta Living – Inspiring Dreams	Magenta Living (Wirral)	Group-based confidence building and employment support for people facing barriers to work.	Local programme with internal feedback
Aspire Housing – Achieve Training	Aspire Housing (Staffordshire)	Delivered apprenticeships and vocational support. Closed in 2022 after 40 years due to funding changes and COVID impacts.	Quantitative outcomes and closure report
North Star – Employment and Skills Model	North Star Housing Group	On-site employer liaison and inclusive job support. Tailored programmes for disabled people and young tenants.	Programme details – limited outcome data
Clarion Futures – Mentoring Programme	Clarion Housing Group	Mentoring for care-experienced young people and apprentices to support transition to work and independent living.	Internal programme data
Cross-sector Employment Partnerships	Efficiency North, Love London Working	Collaborations between HAs, councils, and job services to link support with local labour markets.	Case study snapshots

Appendix 2 Selection of case studies reviewed

Community-led Housing and Regeneration

Case Study	Location / Provider	Summary	Evidence Type
York Hill Estate Regeneration	Spennymoor, County Durham Livin Housing	£5.4m investment replaced 64 flats with 32 houses, improved energy efficiency (SAP 56→71), cut ASB to near zero. Delivered £188k HACT social value and long-term community improvements.	HACT social value, housing data, community impact assessment
Back on the Map	Sunderland	Refurbished poor-quality PRS for affordable rent with support from Virgin Money Foundation and council loan.	Qualitative outcomes – housing conditions, community empowerment
Glendale Gateway Trust	Northumberland CLT w/ Karbon Homes	Delivered 9 affordable homes and wider regeneration in a rural area. Community-led model supported by housing association.	Community-led, no formal evaluation
Amble Development Trust	Northumberland w/ Karbon Homes	Secured housing through S106 with priority to local workers. Reduced housing costs and supported community ties.	Qualitative – local criteria, tenant feedback
Phoenix Community Housing – Community Gateway	South London	Resident-led governance model. C1 regulatory rating and improved resident trust, engagement and service co-design.	Regulatory rating + internal feedback
Southside Housing Association	Scotland	Tenant-led evaluation and social value projects. Reduced isolation and improved neighbourhood cohesion.	Qualitative – community feedback
Big Local Programme	National – Local Trust	£1m per area for community-led change. HAs supported residents managing micro-grants and local regeneration.	Evaluation reports – community empowerment
Karbon Homes – Community Investment	North East England	£286k invested in 61 projects to tackle food insecurity and financial exclusion.	Quantitative project data + feedback
North Star – Social Capital Investment	North East England	£60k into community-led activities incl. youth and language classes. Improved inclusion and local ties.	Participation data + community feedback

Appendix 2 Selection of case studies reviewed

Decarbonisation, Retrofit and Environments

Case Study	Location / Provider	Summary	Evidence Type
Coventry Retrofit Partnership	Coventry City Council with Citizen Housing	SHDF-funded retrofits improved 2,000 homes and reduced fuel poverty. Aligned with One Coventry Plan.	Wave 1 and 2 reporting + stakeholder testimonials
Crawley Borough Council Retrofit	Crawley Borough Council	Retrofitted timber-framed properties using 'quick build' methods. Lessons transferable to housing associations.	Local innovation – technical insight only
whg – Asthma Friendly Homes	whg and NHS Black Country	Clinical referrals led to home surveys and repairs to reduce asthma triggers. Linked to fewer hospital admissions.	Local pilot – early impact data
Halsnead Garden Village	Liverpool City Region CA	Garden Village delivering 1,600 homes with integrated transport and employment land.	Planning stage – early impact projection
LLDC Masterplan	London Legacy Development Corporation	Regeneration of Olympic Park with 13,000 homes and East Bank hub. 34% affordable housing.	Planning and delivery reports
OPDC – Old Oak & Park Royalz	Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation	HS2-linked regeneration plan for 6,000+ homes. Delivered heat network and energy innovation.	Strategic delivery reporting

Appendix 2 Selection of case studies reviewed

Homelessness and Housing-led Support

Case Study	Location / Provider	Summary	Evidence Type
Housing First Pilots	GMCA, LCR, WMCA	Pilots supported 1,000+ with complex needs. 84% tenancy sustainment rate and estimated £15,880 p/person savings.	Robust national evaluation
Rock Trust	Scotland	Supported housing for young people with wraparound support. Improved housing and health outcomes.	Internal monitoring and lived experience feedback
Liverpool Homelessness Reduction Project	LCR Housing Associations & Council	Allocated all social lettings to homeless households during pandemic. 94% tenancy sustainment, £8.95m costs avoided.	Impact report – tenancy, finance and wellbeing outcomes
Orbit – Tenancy Sustainment Programme	Orbit Group	Integrated welfare, employment and debt advice. Supported 338 customers and reduced evictions to zero in key area.	Internal data and external audit summary
Clyde Valley Housing – Rapid Rehousing	Clyde Valley Housing Association	Transitioned people from TA to permanent homes via financial advice. Reduced costs and improved wellbeing.	Scottish Government RRTP reporting
The Keep Well Col-laborative – Step Out Pathway	Abri Housing, NHS Hants & IoW	Accelerated mental health discharges. 3 months saved per patient, £25k p/person savings, zero readmissions.	ICB case study + internal data
Nottingham Multi-agency Disadvantage Model	Nottingham ICS, housing associations	Created integrated care pathway for people with severe disadvantage. Improved engagement and efficiency.	Narrative summary – no formal evaluation

Appendix 2 Selection of case studies reviewed

Governance, Participation and Inclusion

Case Study	Location / Provider	Summary	Evidence Type
Phoenix Community Housing – Community Gateway Model	South London	Resident-led governance, regulatory C1 rating, community training via Phoenix Academy.	Regulator and internal resident reporting
whg – Community Champions	Midlands	Trained residents to act as advocates, improving trust, local input and cohesion.	Local programme – internal monitoring
Public Realm Inclusivity Panel – Earls Court	Earls Court Development Company	Established diverse panel to shape masterplan after controversial displacement fears.	Planning and consultation documents
Lankelly Chase – Tenant Empowerment Models	UK-wide (various housing associations)	HAs enabled tenants to lead small-grant initiatives. Built local leadership and reduced isolation.	Evaluation of funded programme (place-based projects)
Big Local – Tenant and Community Leadership	National (Local Trust)	£1m per area for community-led initiatives. Tenants involved in design and delivery.	External evaluations and local project reporting

Appendix 2 Selection of case studies reviewed

Devolution and Strategic Place-making

Case Study	Location / Provider	Summary	Evidence Type
Liverpool City Region CA – Housing and MDCs	Liverpool City Region Combined Authority	Used Mayoral Development Corporations and brownfield registers to deliver high-density and affordable housing.	Strategic planning documents + internal CA evaluations
Greater Manchester CA – Housing Strategy	Greater Manchester Combined Authority	£300m revolving loan fund helped build 5,150 homes. Supported with GMHP and unified NHS/housing approach.	Programme delivery + housing provider partnership reporting
Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation	GMCA / Stockport Council	Transformed town centre with 1,200+ homes, a new park, and £600m private investment.	Site delivery tracking and investment impact
Sheffield City Region – Housing Fund	South Yorkshire Mayoral CA	£7.5m in grants unlocked 524 stalled homes. Integrated planning and energy strategy.	Regional development reporting
West Midlands CA – Affordable Housing Accelerator	WMCA	Proposed funding scheme to triple affordable housing supply over a decade.	Strategic business case
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough SIF	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CA	Investment fund enabled tenure-diverse housing, incl. CLTs and forward sale models.	Investment pipeline data
West of England Joint Assets Board	West of England CA	Coordinated public land for housing. Delivered pipeline for regional planning.	Spatial strategy documents
Tees Valley – South Tees Development Corp	Tees Valley Combined Authority	Land remediation and regeneration created 20,000 jobs and major housing investment.	Regeneration project reporting
Greater Manchester Health and Housing Integration	GMCA / GMHP / NHS	Unified NHS, council, and housing governance supported integrated care and tenancy sustainment.	Policy documentation and CA briefings

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