

Cobalt Housing
Community Impact Report
2023-2024



Contents

- 03 Introduction**
- 04 Community Hub**
- 05 Timetable of activities**
- 06 The Good Help Hub - a legacy**
- 07 Tenancy Wellbeing**
- 08 Tenancy Wellbeing Case Studies**
 - Customer A
 - Customer B
- 10 Community Fund**
- 11 Food and Fuel Support**
 - Winter Warmer Packs
 - Enhancing Local Food Pantries
 - Welfare Benefit Advice Support
- 12 School Projects**
 - Positive Footprints
 - It's Your Child's Life
 - C.E.L.L.S Project
 - Alchemist Mindset Project
 - Forest Schools
- 13 Case Studies from Projects**
- 14 Feedback from Projects**
- 15 Community-led Projects**
 - Youth Consortiums
 - Skills and Training
 - Employment and Training Fund
 - Dream High
 - Contractors Social Value



Introduction

Our Community Partnership and Neighbourhood Teams provide a range of support services, reaching our most vulnerable customers including those:

- **with mental and physical health needs**
- **experiencing financial hardship or living in poverty**
- **working in low-paid, insecure roles.**

We work with local organisations to improve the lives of our residents, contributing to our corporate objective of supporting thriving and resilient communities in Croxteth, Norris Green and Fazakerley and Sparrow Hall.

We do this by:

- **Investing in community-led programmes, projects and facilities that support the aspirations of our customers.**
- **Developing our communities to deliver and manage community-led projects.**
- **Building strong partnerships**
Our Partnership Stakeholder Group includes Merseyside Police, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, Early Years Practitioners and social prescribers, alongside other key stakeholders. The group meets monthly to co-ordinate neighbourhood activities and provide new opportunities for local communities.
- **Linking contractor social value commitments back to community groups.**
In 2023/24, we partnered with Lovell, Brabners and Ecogee to provide work experience opportunities and funding to support local community initiatives.



This impact report was produced with assistance from the MKTP Partnership with Liverpool John Moore's University, and provides a summary of our key areas of work over the last 12 months, detailing the diverse range of community projects that Cobalt has supported.

In November 2023, we invested in the Housing Association Charitable Trust (HACT) social value tool to capture the outcomes and impact of our community regeneration work. A HACT assessment of our projects is provided on pages 17 to 19.

Community Hub

Liverpool City Council secured funding from Partnerships for People and Place to establish a pilot scheme in Croxteth, and chose Cobalt Housing to be its lead partner.

The Good Help Hub was set up in 2023, and aimed to bridge the gap between existing services and the local community.

During the 12-week pilot period, 430 local residents visited our hub, with the community accessing housing advice, support for mental health and employment and training opportunities. Regular activities aimed to tackle social isolation.



Timetable of activivites

Using the space currently available, the Community Hub has a regular timetable of activities for customers and the local community to attend.

Table 1:
Current Community Hub timetable:

Group / Organisation	Day	Time
Liverpool In Work	Monday	10am - 3pm
Energy Project Plus	Tuesday (Every 2nd)	9.30am - 12.30pm
Youth Forum	Tuesday	5pm - 6pm
Communities Together Choir	Tuesday	5.15pm - 6.45pm
Norris Green Debt Advice	Tuesday	10am - 2pm
Stakeholder Meetings (monthly)	Wednesday	1pm - 3pm
Connect for... Community Drop in group	Thursday	10am - 11am
Partners Credit Union	Thursday	10am - 3pm
Queen of Green's Bus	Thursday	11am - 12pm
Brekkie & Brew Friday	Friday	10am - 11.30am
Community Drama Group	Friday	11.30am - 1pm



The Good Help Hub - a legacy

Following the success of the Good Help Hub, we are planning to bring a permanent community hub to our Lower House Lane Office. The design of the hub has been considered by our customers and forms part of Cobalt's office investment project.



"I'm the most recent person to become a member of this great community choir. Vicky, Liam and all the members are lovely and made me feel very welcome from day one. Singing has always been a passion of mine, so it's amazing coming together with others who feel the same. I first joined a choir age 9... I'm soon to be 69 and so happy I joined."

Stakeholder involvement is vital for the success of the hub, and we are consulting with customers, community members, local organisations and relevant authorities in the planning process.

The design of the hub will integrate equality, diversity and inclusion, aligning with our EDI Strategy through programmes and activities including language classes, cultural exchange events and support groups.

We are working with the newly appointed Neighbourhood Managers from Liverpool City Council and other partners to explore the option of having a dedicated Community Interest Company to deliver our community regeneration activity. The group will consist of individuals with expertise in grant writing, financial management and project planning, and will identify and secure funding from a mix of funding streams to help enhance financial stability and deliver diverse creative activities.



Tenancy Wellbeing

Cobalt has two tenancy wellbeing officers, who support the wellbeing and tenancy sustainability of some of our most vulnerable customers.

They use a trauma informed approach and listen without judgment to assess needs and explore support options.

The team works on a referral basis, with most referrals coming from our Neighbourhood Housing Officers. These commonly include financial hardship, poor mental health, substance misuse, domestic violence, social isolation and hoarding.

The Tenancy Wellbeing Officers support with crisis intervention by connecting customers with the appropriate partners to address their needs. Valuable links have been made with local stakeholders who can offer face to face support, as well as national services such as the Multi-Disciplinary Team at the NHS.

The service has also supported our Asset and Compliance Team, where obtaining access into homes has been challenging due to vulnerability issues.



“Thank you so much, I can’t wait to have the heating on for a little bit. I am so grateful that you’ve helped me, I am finding it hard at the moment, being a single mum, sorting money for food and gas, paying my rent and bills and looking after my son who has ADHD. It’s hard, so thanks for your help.”

Young single mum who was referred in by a surveyor after concerns regarding food and fuel poverty.

Since Cobalt introduced this service in 2022, the Tenancy Wellbeing Team has worked intensively with around 130 customers, providing vital support including:

- Social worker intervention
- Accessing health services, such as GP appointments, vaccinations and general health checks
- Complex hoarding cases, including clearance and health and safety of property
- Complex family needs, including early help interventions with social services
- Severe mental health and accessing services
- Tackling isolation and accessing local community groups.



“The Tenancy Wellbeing Team came in with compassion straight away. It’s the first time in a long time that my dad has felt comfortable letting Cobalt in on the first visit.”

From the son of a tenant with very poor health and extremely poor property condition who is now actively engaging with tenancy wellbeing and health professionals.



Tenancy Wellbeing Team: Case study

Customer A

Customer A was referred into the team due to severe hoarding and a historic failure to engage with Cobalt. They lived with mental health issues and were not engaging with health services. They would not let anyone into their home to carry out compliance or welfare checks.

Our Tenancy Wellbeing Team called Customer A and arranged a home visit, which took place on Customer A's doorstep. It took several visits like this before we were let into the property.

The team worked with Customer A to address hoarding concerns and agreed short term goals, including carrying out gas and electrical checks and a fire risk assessment. The team took a trauma informed approach in helping Customer A to understand why they hoard and to identify the triggers. Our customer agreed to let us move some items from the home and, following this, began to engage with the health and fire services and social care.

Customer A has made significant progress to sustain their tenancy; the home is now safe, clean and clear. They are connected with health and social care and are receiving help to sustain this progress.



“This week was the first night I have slept in a bed for over five years.”

Customer A



Tenancy Wellbeing Team: Case study

Customer B

A referral was made for Customer B due to poor health and home conditions. Due to the work needed to make the property safe, a temporary move was necessary. Customer B did not want to move and was concerned that they would be moved to a care home and not allowed to return.

Our Tenancy Wellbeing Team discovered that Customer B had not left the home for a number of years. They were living in fuel poverty and were not receiving the benefits they were eligible for. They had also stopped engaging with health professionals.

We arranged short term support, including fuel vouchers and heated blankets and supported in the application for benefits. Customer B allowed us to reconnect them with the local health team and medicine management has been put in place to help with understanding and receiving multiple prescriptions.

An Occupational Therapist has made a referral for a personal alarm, which does not require a landline or broadband service.

Tenancy Wellbeing arranged for minor adaptations to be carried out, including grab rails.

Customer B has agreed to temporarily move out while we carry out significant works to the property.



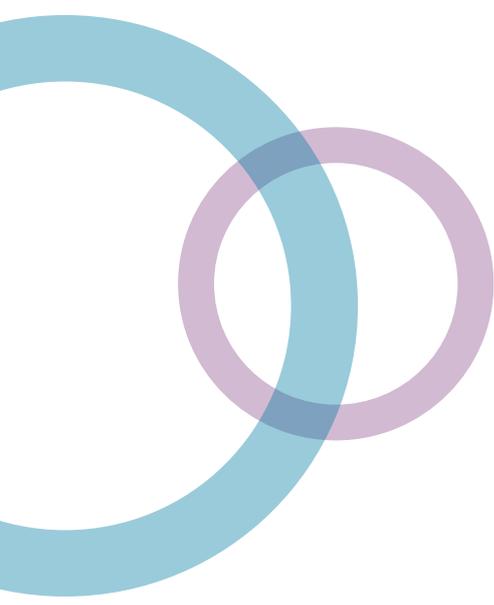
"I didn't think they would be a time in my life that I would need the help like you have given me, and I really appreciate it, thank you"

Customer B



"I know I will get there".

Customer B



Community Fund

The Cobalt Community Fund supports local groups and organisations to deliver a project or event that will benefit residents living in our neighbourhoods.

Applications can be submitted for up to £3,000 and must meet one or more of the following six objectives:

- Healthy, happy and fair societies
- Educated and skilled to succeed
- Safe and thriving neighbourhoods
- Low carbon and accessible
- Strong and inclusive
- Exciting and inclusive city

In 2023-24, £32,606 was distributed to 17 projects and 11 community groups and organisations.

Funded projects include training courses, physical activity sessions and mental health support groups.



Food and Fuel Support



140

Winter Warmer Packs
to vulnerable
customers

Winter Warmer Packs

Between October 2023 and January 2024, we delivered 140 Winter Warmer Packs to vulnerable customers.



£18,350

Contributed towards
food pantries

Enhancing Local Food Pantries

Cobalt supports several local food pantries to enhance the provision already provided and to assist customers in crisis. In 2023/24, Cobalt contributed £18,350 towards food pantries within our neighbourhoods.



£14,164

In 2023/24, the team supported 198 customers with food and fuel vouchers and essential household appliances, totalling £14,164.

Welfare Benefit Advice Line Support

Cobalt's team of Benefit Advisors offer a triage phonenumber service to support customers in need of financial support, before completing full in-depth benefit checks.



School Projects



Positive Footprints

We funded the delivery of Positive Footprints award-winning Raising Aspirations Programme in five primary schools in our communities, reaching 521 children and young people. Schools held events to open up the world of work, meeting business volunteers from a variety of sectors, such as housing and construction, law, filmmaking, graphic design, renewable energy and the fire service.

In June 2023, pupils from Monksdown Primary School attended the Chartered Institute of Housing Conference, sharing their story with executives from housing associations across the country.



It's Your Child's Life

Cobalt provided £12,500 to It's Your Child's Life to run a parental engagement programme in five local primary schools. It covers topics including communication and language, personal, social, emotional and physical development, maths and literacy skills. To date, the project has supported 75 families and 122 children.



Alchemist Mindset Project

Cobalt provided £1,200 funding to The Alchemist Mindset Project, a wellbeing course delivered by A.Ur.Tistic, who are a small local business. The course was delivered in St John Bosco School targeting year 10 pupils identified by the school as having behavioural issues or a mental health condition and who would benefit from improvements in mental health. The project has had significant benefits to those who completed the course, including an increase in general mood, mindset and self-confidence and a better understanding of mental health.



C.E.L.L.S Project

Cobalt provided funding of £9,600 to The C.E.L.L.S Project, to run an early intervention project in 10 local primary schools between December 2023 and April 2024. The project uses the experience of rehabilitated ex-offenders to educate children and young people of the consequences of anti-social behaviour and criminal activity and offers onward training and progression into employment.



Forest Schools

Cobalt commissioned Beautiful New Beginnings CIC to deliver weekly Forest Schools in Norris Green Park and Karonga Gardens. Cobalt contributed £3,900 and Brabners Law Firm contributed £2,200 as part of their social value activity. Forest Schools promote community cohesion by connecting local parents/carers and their pre-school aged children to green space on their doorstep, improving mental health and wellbeing and children's gross and fine motor skills development. It builds strong relationships and the project leaders provide signposting advice to families for additional support needs.

Case Studies from projects

1. It's Your Child's Life

The B family moved to the Norris Green area two years ago. They had no family members living close by and the parents were not in employment. Integration hadn't been easy, and isolation had become part of their daily life. This had affected the family's mental health and emotional wellbeing. School was aware of how isolated the family members were, and the school family worker encouraged the parents to come along to 'It's Your Child's Life', a parental engagement programme running in school. Both parents attended, providing an opportunity to connect with other families. They discovered that many other adults in the room faced similar challenges. At the heart of the programme is the sharing of practical tools and activities to help parents with their own learning and that of their children.

The programme boosted the confidence, mental health and wellbeing of family B. Working together with other families in a fun and relaxed environment meant bonds developed and parents from different families became good friends. As a result, their children became friends, meaning the whole family felt like an integral part of a community where they had once felt lonely and isolated.



"The 'It's Your Child's life' parental engagement programme was the lifeline we needed, and we can't thank you enough for giving us the opportunity be a part of it"

Mum of C and D.

2. Christ Church Food Pantry

Paula is a young single parent with a severely autistic child. English is not her first language. When she first started coming to pantry she would wait outside until it was her turn due to her anxiety.

Over the weeks she started to come in and sit down, have a drink and wait her turn. After chatting to one of our volunteers, she explained how hard things are at home. Through these conversations, Paula has been signposted to Liverpool City Council Community Connectors for additional support. It's great to see how see how her confidence has improved.

3. Norris Green Youth Grant, Autism in Motion

Dan is one of our 16-25 group. He is very quiet and struggles to engage with the others in the group, although will speak when spoken to. At the 2023 Christmas fayre, Dan looked after the tombola stall along with one of our volunteers. All of the visitors commented on Dan's enthusiasm, eye contact and helpfulness. Dan enjoyed it so much, that he has asked to do it again next year – a massive achievement for him.

Feedback from Projects



"My son and I absolutely love the forest school sessions! The women who run it are fabulous, and it gives families in the community a chance to get together outdoors to not only socialise, but to give their children endless opportunities to learn and develop"

Parent attending Forest Schools



"Being able to attend a forest school session with my 2-year-old daughter is invaluable. Child-led learning and seeing her grow in confidence in herself and with other children in a social setting is heartwarming as I know it will put her in good stead for the future. The range of activities is well suited for the age group, and it is good to be able to speak to other likeminded adults"

Parent attending Forest Schools



"It was a great experience and I learnt a lot", "Great and fun experience that will benefit lots of young people" and "good because I learnt about the consequences of crime"

Multiple pupils who participated in the C.E.L.L.S Project.



Community-led projects

In 2023/24, we provided over £7,000 to local community groups to support with club fees, ensuring that vital activities can continue to run in our neighbourhoods.



Community organisations supported by Cobalt via affiliation fee funding:

Community Group/Organisation	Contribution
Just Average Men (JAM) Men's Group (supporting men who are isolated)	£2,028
Fazakerley Morris Dancers (running club events across the city)	£1,500
River of Life Community Choir (weekly rehearsals and rehearsal space)	£1,358
Norris Green Junior Park Run Pilot (providing health and fitness opportunity for 4 to 14 year olds)	£2,400

Youth Consortiums

In 2023/24, we provided £38,000 to support Norris Green, Fazakerley and Croxteth Youth Consortiums. This funding has been used to enhance youth and play provision, supporting additional services. To date, 3,282 young people have attended sessions across our neighbourhoods.

Skills and Training

Employment and Training Fund

Cobalt's Employment and Training Fund supports customers aged 16 and over who are currently unemployed, into work and training. From April to June 2023, three customers were awarded £500 each towards funding for first aid training and CPR equipment and beautician training.



Dream High

Dream High is a non-profit community-based organisation that provides free support to entrepreneurs and established businesses to develop business ideas. Over the past year, they have supported six Cobalt residents.

Social Value

We work with our contractors to deliver a wide range of community investment projects linked to contractor social value commitments. This includes:

- Support towards a new Food Pantry at Ellergreen Community Centre.
- Five apprenticeships created for local people.
- Contribution towards the delivery of a Forest School in Norris Green Park.
- Work experience opportunities for young people.

Priorities for 2024/2025

Community investment, social value and supporting our communities to thrive remains a key priority within our Corporate Plan. Social value is how we improve opportunities for all: for our customers, employees and communities, while considering the wider economic, social and environmental impact of our actions. Our key priorities for 2024/25 are:

- Continue to develop our community hub, providing a central space for the community to access health, wellbeing, training and employment services.
- Support the development of local CIC's aligned to our community investment work and corporate priorities.
- Develop a Social Value Strategy to refine and align our activities and impact.
- Expand the use of the HACT social value tool to identify our social return on investment and assist with targeted community investment activity.
- Deliver £92,500 funding from UK Shared Prosperity Fund, providing volunteering opportunities and improving green spaces across our neighbourhoods.
- Further integrate our Tenancy Wellbeing service as part of our wider neighbourhood management offer, including more targeted approaches and support.
- Ensure we continue to integrate the customer voice into all our work.
- Support a targeted programme for schools within our communities, raising aspirations and supporting families with children at risk from exclusion.
- Support a programme of youth and play activities and projects across our neighbourhoods that raise awareness of the consequences of crime.
- Work with our community partners to deliver a range of projects that assist with the impact of the cost of living, including projects around food and fuel, alongside projects that reduce the impact of social isolation.



£39.33

We generated £39.33 in social value for every £1 spent

In 2023, we subscribed to the HACT Social Value Insight Tool to measure the social impact of the work we do and the projects we fund. The tool allows us to measure the impact of funded activities, which is used to inform our decision making.

The Housing Associations Charitable Trust (HACT) allows social housing providers to measure the social value of commissioned projects.

It provides Cobalt with a standardised framework to show the effectiveness of projects we fund, enhancing our decision making and helping us to deliver the services that make an impact on our communities.

The following tables outline our activities and social value output.

Partnerships Team

Project Name	Activity Generating Social Value	Number of Beneficiaries	Budget	Social Value Generated
Partnerships Team				
Positive Footprints	- Improved youth confidence - Job related training	521	£10,000	£901,643
It's Your Child's Life	Member of a social group	75	£12,500	£128,750
C.E.L.L.S Project	- Improved youth confidence	136	£10,000	£796,916
Alchemist Mindset Project	Improved mental health	10	£1,200	£96,390
Norris Green and Karonga Garden's Forest School	Improved mental and physical health through access to and improvement of green spaces and buildings	35	£4,600	£739,783
Fazakerley Federation Crisis Support	Tackling fuel poverty and supporting households in winter	20	£1,150	£122,382
Youth Consortiums (Combined)	Community youth and play provision, providing safe places for children and young adults	3282	£38,000	£2,079,475
Fazakerley Morris Dancer's Club Fees	- Improved confidence (youth) - Frequent moderate exercise - Regular volunteering	61	£1,500	£353,501
Tenancy Wellbeing	Multiple outcomes across all categories	130	£78,520	£659,398

Community Hub

Project Name	Activity Generating the Social Value	Number of Beneficiaries	Budget	Social Value Generated
Community Hub				
ESOL (ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES) Assessment	Vocational training	6	£125	£21,231
Partners Credit Union	Ability to save money	38	£2000	£213,151
Communities Together Choir	Member of a social group	20	£4,019	£34,333
Brew and Brekkie Friday	- Member of a social group - Regular volunteers	24	£5,220	£48,681



Community Fund

Our current assessment for 2023/24 shows that we have generated over **£7,030,457** of social value, which provides a **£39.33** return on every **£1** spent.

Project Name	Activity Generating the Social Value	Number of Beneficiaries	Budget	Social Value Generated
Community Fund				
Rooting For You - Mental Health First Aid	Vocational training	10	£1000	£35,386
Croxteth Tigers - Football Coaching Course	Vocational training	3	£480	£10,618
Dementia Action Liverpool - North Liverpool Meeting Centre	Member of a social group	20	£1650	£34,333
Rooting For You - Boiling Point Cooking Course	- Member of a social group - Improved confidence - Regular volunteers - Youth clubs	12 12 3 3 2	£800	£152,728
MJ Productions - Summer Camp	- Youth clubs - Improved youth confidence	20 20	£1000	£21,204
Triple C - Community Café	Member of a social group	50	£1350	£85,833
Apex Health and Wellbeing - Mindfulness	- Member of a social group - Regular volunteers - Frequent mild exercise - Improved confidence in adults	20 2 20 20	£2500	£463,514
Rooting For You - After School Group Pilot Project	- Regular volunteers - Go to youth clubs - Improved youth confidence	5 13 10	£1200	£31,207

