



Communities Together:
Community Investment Report
2022-23

Foreword

We recognise that the cost-of-living increases have made this a challenging year for many of our customers.

This year we have seen an increase in funding and participation across all our community and support services.

Our colleagues, partners and customers have really come together to improve customers' homes and the communities we work in.

The fantastic achievements highlighted in this report reflect the hard work and dedication of our staff and partners.

Dawn Wightman

Director of Homes and Communities
A2Dominion



Introduction

Welcome to Communities Together, A2Dominion's Community Investment Report 2022-23, showcasing the breadth of services A2Dominion and partners are providing to support our customers.

We're a housing association, and for over 70 years we've been building and maintaining quality homes and investing in communities across London and Southern England. We have over 39,000 homes and we put 100% of our profits into delivering on our social purpose. The last two years have been challenging for people and communities across the UK. As a housing association we are seeing the acute impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the customers we provide homes to and the communities in which we operate.

As energy bills continue to rise and the essentials of everyday life become increasingly unaffordable, more customers than ever before are needing support.

In addition, we know that providing a good quality, affordable home has never been more important. For that reason, we have introduced new ways of working to respond to housing regulation and improve customer satisfaction in repairs, neighbourhood management and customer voice.

A year in numbers – key achievements 2022/23

Headlines	Cost of Living and Financial Capability	Health and Wellbeing	Strengthening Communities
<p>Social value achieved*</p> <p>£11.2m</p> <p>INCREASE OF 12%</p>	<p>£7m</p> <p>grants, benefits and funding accessed by Tenancy Sustainment Team to support customers with cost of living</p>	<p>247</p> <p>customers benefitted from Health Entrepreneur Programme</p>	<p>£460,000</p> <p>given in grants to support customers, homes and neighbourhood improvements. 28 community organisations received grant funding</p>
<p>External funding secured through partnerships and fundraising</p> <p>£524,000</p> <p>INCREASE OF 4.85%</p>	<p>2,265</p> <p>customers received support through Tenancy Sustainment Team</p> <p>896</p> <p>customers received advice and support on cost of living and wellbeing</p>	<p>280</p> <p>referrals to our Emotional Wellbeing Service</p> <p>200</p> <p>Ealing residents and customers supported through social prescribing</p>	<p>2,668</p> <p>customers participating in community initiatives</p>
<p>£1.3m</p> <p>spend on community investment activities to support customers and communities</p>	<p>109</p> <p>customers supported with employment and training advice</p> <p>58</p> <p>customers into employment</p>	<p>300+</p> <p>customers benefitted from A2Dominion’s Winter Wellness Campaign</p>	
<p>Total Number of customers</p> <p>5,800</p> <p>INCREASE OF 4.5%</p>	<p>50</p> <p>customers completed training to set up their own business</p> <p>40</p> <p>young people received bursaries to support them with their career pathways</p>	<p>£100,000</p> <p>funding secured to support health and wellbeing</p>	

*Social value is a way to measure the impact of our projects and ensure that we deliver effective services. The social value calculator - used across the housing sector - enables us to quantify things that are not inherently quantifiable (such as wellbeing and mental health) and measure the unseen financial value to the people and communities who have used our services.

Delivering our corporate objectives and social purpose

Underpinning our work are our new corporate objectives which shape the Community Investment offer to customers and our three main aims.

1. Cost of Living and Financial Capability
2. Health and Wellbeing
3. Strengthening Communities

Corporate Objectives	Community Investment Impact Statement
Customer care: respond and resolve with respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ We're supporting households facing cost-of-living challenges
A strong, sustainable, and effective organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ We're working with partners and through partnerships to secure funding to support our customers with cost of living and health and wellbeing ■ We're putting customers at the heart of what we do through opportunities to shape our priorities and make a difference in the communities they live
Homes that are safe, high quality and sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ We're community based, delivering long-term regeneration alongside support and advice and activities to improve our customers' homes and communities



Increasing financial capability Tenancy sustainment

Why this matters

Social housing tenants are some of the hardest hit by the cost-of-living crisis, with 4.4 million households – one in six – now estimated to be in “serious financial difficulties”.¹

The most recent Office of National Statistics (ONS) report highlights key social groups most affected by the cost of living. Renters had a higher likelihood of experiencing some form of financial vulnerability (4.4 more likely), compared with those who own their home outright; more than half (55%) of renters reported being unable to afford an unexpected, but necessary, expense of £850, compared with 12% of outright homeowners.²

Adults aged 25 to 34 years had the highest odds of experiencing some form of financial vulnerability, alongside parents living with dependent children aged 0 to 4 years and those earning between £10,000 to £15,000 per annum.

Our Tenancy Sustainment Team offers vital support to A2Dominion customers in managing their bills and rent payments.

What we did

We held two webinars, attended by over 100 customers, the first providing awareness of support available from A2Dominion and partners with cost of living, and the second, information on rent and service charge increases.

Our first ever Winter Wellness Campaign brought customers together with partners and staff to help with bills, budgeting, advice and other support through a series of events. We launched the new Springboard grant fund, to help customers aged 16 and over with education pathways, and we are helping more customers with requests to set up businesses from their homes and in the community.

Key achievements

This year this year our Tenancy Sustainment team has:

- Provided advice and support to more than 2,265 people who were experiencing financial difficulties
- Helped customers to access £7m in grants and funding
- Increased the numbers of grant applications to the Tenancy Sustainment Fund, providing a vital lifeline for our customers
- 85 customers received funds totalling £30,000 helping them to manage their household budgets
- Provided emergency food/fuel vouchers to over 280 customers in crisis during the winter months
- Delivered Under 30s support in Spelthorne.



¹ Financial Fairness Trust (Chartered Institute of Housing Cost of Living Crisis – Briefing 2 – July 2022)

² Impact of Increase cost of living. September 2022-January 2023 (ONS)

Business skills and jobs

Why this matters

To meet the demands of the current crisis we reviewed and adapted our business skills and jobs programme, reflecting on the progress made so far and refocusing on the changing needs of our customers.

The updated programme ensures that customers looking to set up their own business from home or in the community have access to flexible support through a range business and skills online classes for beginners, intermediate and advanced.

With relatively low unemployment across London and the south east, but record high inflation affecting household budgets, our focus has been on providing education and training grants, wellbeing support and one-to-one employment advice to upskill our customers so that they can access better paid and more sustainable jobs.

Achievements

- Over 50 customers completed our Business Skills programme
- 9 customers received help to set up a business from home
- A further 7 received a share of £15,000 from the last of our annual Enterprise programmes
- 100 customers received one-to-one employment advice and guidance and 60% of those have secured jobs

A2Dominion customer, **Helene Griffin**, (centre) received £2,760 through our Enterprise programme to support her business, 'Cocoon Kids', a community based therapeutic service which provides creative counselling and play therapy for children and young people aged 4-16 years, and was nominated for New Start Up of the Year and Best Business in Staines-upon-Thames and Laleham at Spelthorne Business Awards 2022.



Events and campaigns

A2Dominion winter wellness programme

Why this matters

To make sure that the customers that needed it most were supported through the cost-of-living crisis we needed to raise awareness of the help available to them.

What we did

In winter 2022 we launched a Winter Wellness programme offering a range of support to customers including a cost-of-living advice booklet, winter wellness packages with items to help keep warm, phone calls, doorstep chats and community events. We supported more than 2,000 customers who were identified in one of the following priority groups:

- Over 75s living alone
- One parent one child families
- Under 25s

Our partners, Pyramid Plus, BP, Fortus Recruitment, Huws Gray and Surplus to Supper, helped us to put together winter wellness packages, which were well received.

Achievements

- We delivered over 2,000 letters and booklets
- We gave out more than 150 winter wellness packages
- We called 100 customers to offer support
- We held community events in Ealing, Stanwell and Sunbury, with 151 customers attending and getting one-to-one support, including money saving and repairs advice
- We made 39 referrals to internal support services, including Money Matters, Digital, Employment and Emotional Wellbeing Support.



Swanfield Park, Chichester, cost-of-living event

We held an advice and support event at our Swanfield Park Community Centre in Chichester. Our Tenancy Sustainment and Employment Support teams were on hand to advise local residents, and over 15 external organisations attended the event, including: Southern Water and Portsmouth Water, Chichester District Council Wellbeing Team, and Arun & Chichester Food Partnership.

Achievements

- Over 75 customers attended the event
- 15 external organisations supported the event
- 48 people attended the new food pantry
- Ladies' Weekly Boxifit Sessions continue
- Weekly Walking Group at Swanfield has expanded
- Weekly Coffee Club has started.



Customer testimony

"A2Dominion held a brilliant, useful event for the whole community, offering lots of advice, support and information. Everyone was so polite and helpful. They made me feel very at ease and welcoming. Thank you for all your help!"

A2Dominion Resident



A2Dominion warm hubs

Why this matters

We know that many people struggle to keep their homes at a healthy temperature over the winter, particularly those people at home all day, older people and people in vulnerable situations. Warm Hubs delivered at our Community Centres in Chichester, Ealing and Westminster offered our customers and communities a safe, accessible and warm environment during the day to help those worried about their bills and wanting to connect with others.

Swanfield Park Community Centre Warm Hub

Since January this year, the Hub at Swanfield has been providing members of the community a place to go to have a hot drink or soup, to keep warm and have a chat, do crafts, listen to the radio and engage in planning things for the community. The local food bank has supported the project by donating supplies of tea, coffee, biscuits and soup.



Swanfield Warm Hub

Wednesdays from 11am - 1pm
Swanfield Community Centre, Swanfield Dr, Chichester PO19 6SH

Keep warm this winter in the small meeting room at the community centre. Come along for a cup of tea or coffee and a chat.

To find out more, contact Jan Reed on 01797 560096 or email janet.reed@a2dominion.co.uk

@A2DCommunities
A2Dominion Communities



Beethoven Warm Hub

At the Beethoven Centre in Queen's Park we established a weekly Warm Hub in early 2023. Volunteers from a local church group have provided a hearty soup and roll to around 50 visitors each month, introducing many to the Centre and its services whilst providing a friendly and sociable place to go.

Achievements

- **Swanfield:** We have now engaged with over 25 residents, with an additional 5 people attending as a result of the Advice and Support event on 13 March.
- **Beethoven:** 50 visitors per month attend the hub and access support services.
- **The Lido Centre** received £2,500 to deliver warm hubs in West Ealing throughout the winter months.

Supporting younger tenants – under 30s project, Spelthorne

Why this matters

Under 30s in the UK are bearing the brunt of the financial crisis, with lower wages, a lack of financial knowledge and higher expenses to contend with. Young people are among those groups disproportionately affected by the cost-of-living crisis; in addition, they have fewer opportunities to gain access to well-paying jobs. (ONS data *Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain: September 2022 to January 2023*).

Independent research commissioned by A2Dominion has shown consistently that our under 30s customers, particularly young parents are struggling to make ends meet. This trajectory has continued with the cost-of-living crisis, and our under 30s and first-time tenants are the highest group on our arrears list.

What we did

To get our under 30s tenants the specific help they need, we launched Project Breakthrough in April 2022. Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, the service offers a bespoke package of support to both A2Dominion customers and the wider community, aged 18-30, who reside within the Spelthorne Borough Council area.

The project receives self-referrals and referrals from partner organisations and A2Dominion's Tenancy Sustainment team. Following a short needs assessment, the specialist Under 30s Tenancy Sustainment Officer works with the customer to produce a person-centred support plan which addresses rent arrears and debt, managing household budgets, employment and training needs and personal wellbeing. This year each beneficiary has received up to four one-to-one sessions facilitated by the Under 30s Officer, who has achieved the following outcomes for the project:

- 157 reduced debt
- 8 reduce homelessness
- 7 pathways into work
- 3 supported from affordable housing
- 95 supported social rent
- 3 living in supported housing
- 8 living in temporary accommodation

Achievements

- Supported 130 customers (above our target of 76)

Such has been the demand over the last 12 months, the Under 30s project has supported 71% more customers than initially planned. 90% A2Dominion customers and 10% non-A2Dominion customers.



Health and wellbeing

Our Emotional Wellbeing team, Tenant Welfare service and partnership with Mind are helping more A2Dominion customers and communities to live well and live better. Customers are training as Health Entrepreneurs and volunteering their time to set up and run local health and community projects. We deliver a Social Prescribing Service for communities in Ealing in partnership with Ealing Primary Care Network and Mind.

Why this matters

Mental health in the UK has been dramatically affected by the cost-of-living crisis and the long-lasting impact of the pandemic.

Dealing with life events, environmental factors like noise and anti-social behaviour on top of money worries over a prolonged period of time can cause stress and have an impact on the wellbeing of the customers we work with.

Emotional Wellbeing Service

To address this we have set up an Emotional Wellbeing service that has been available to customers since November 2020. The Emotional Wellbeing team give one-to-one support to customers and can refer them to services that they may find helpful.



Some of the ways we support customers include:

- Mind My Home: Mind’s solution-based therapy
- Mind Safe Spaces: an out of hours drop-in service for people nearing crisis
- Tenant and Wellbeing Support service
- Befriending services
- Terrace Talks: men’s wellbeing walks with Brentford Football Club
- Connecting People service
- Gamblers Anonymous

We are always continuing to grow our offer so that we can support more customers with a wide range of emotional wellbeing needs.

Achievements

- 280 referrals to date
- 100 customers supported
- Launch of Tenant Wellbeing Support service
- External funding for Mind partnership in Hounslow, Ealing and Mind
- External funding for men’s befriending service Spelthorne
- External funding for Terrace Talks project

Testimonies

“With my support the customer said she has got more confident and feels happier in her accommodation and can sleep better at night as she is addressing her rent arrears.”

“Everyone should have EWB in their lives.”

SE, A2Dominion customer

A2Dominion staff member

Health entrepreneurs

We support anyone aged 18 and over who wants to make a difference in the community with a health-related business. The personal online support programme offers support from business experts, grants of up to £2,000 to get the business started, support with funding applications and industry-related requirements to establish future growth.

Achievements

The first cohort of Health Entrepreneurs have successfully reported their outcomes from the last twelve months. Miindfulness, Mindful Ninja, Pop Up Pilates and Stanwell Surplus have achieved the following outcomes:

- Support for children’s mental health and wellbeing in Ealing
- Support for young people, focusing on anxiety and ADHD, in Spelthorne
- Support for families struggling financially in Stanwell, through a community café and cooking classes
- Mother and baby wellbeing - Pilates and postnatal support sessions in Oxford
- Total number of customers benefiting from their services: 247
- Miindfulness secured £33,000 in external funding (Clarion, National and Postcode Lottery)



Case Study

Lauren took part in our Health Entrepreneur Programme and was awarded £1,800 to develop her business, Pop-up Pilates.

Lauren is a physiotherapist in the NHS and she delivers Pilates classes in Oxford. Pop-up Pilates was born out of Lauren’s desire to help people avoid health problems and tackle them early on by developing an understanding of the human body and exercising appropriately. She wanted to bring her skills, knowledge, and support right into the heart of the community. Pop-up Pilates aims to empower individuals and improve their wellbeing.

The Health Entrepreneur Programme has enabled Lauren to grow her business and deliver more accessible classes.

“The course has given me the confidence to take my business to the next level and my business has flourished. The grant has helped me develop my links with the local community and create classes that interlink care with public health services. We now offer postnatal support at our classes.”

With increasing NHS pressures and a focus on shared responsibility for health, there is a greater need than ever for individuals to understand and manage their own health needs. Lauren’s exercise classes have incorporated education and a mindfulness focus that has provided a positive impact on her clients and improved their health and wellbeing.

Customer feedback

“I would like to say how wonderful Lauren is and how grateful I am for the support in getting back into some form of shape. I’m always so impressed by how inclusive and flexible you are. Thank you so much, you’re providing such a fantastic service in the community.”

Achievements

- Support for mother and baby wellbeing- Pilates and postnatal support sessions in Oxford.
- Lauren has expanded her classes and is now delivering sessions in Cowley, Oxford.
- Lauren has created free coffee mornings that offer free signposting to other health organisations and an opportunity to meet new people.
- Over 50 customers supported.

Delivering a community-based social prescribing service

Social prescribing is a way of addressing people's needs in a holistic way that also aims to support individuals to take greater control of their own health and wellbeing.

Community Link Workers connect people with local community activities and services that can help tackle the issues that may be contributing to their stress or anxiety. Funded by Ealing Clinical Commissioning Group, our two social prescribers have supported over 200 customers from Ealing this year.

Achievements

- Supporting over 200 clients locally with their health and wellbeing
- Establishing a network of 20 local community and volunteer partners to provide support for our customers
- Set up a weekly warm hub advice session at the Lido Centre, West Ealing
- Helped secure £10,000 to recruit two part-time community connectors to support isolated black, minority ethnic and Irish over 65s who live in Ealing. This is through our partnership with Age UK.



Partnership and fundraising

Why this matters

More funding than ever before is being invested to meet our housing regulation requirements; particularly, keeping our customers’ homes safe and secure. In addition the challenging financial climate has meant that there is less government, local authority and charitable sector funding.

To ensure some of the incredible community projects highlighted throughout this report are affordable and crucially sustainable, it is more important than ever that we collaborate and work in partnership with other organisations and external funders.

Identifying resident groups, community and voluntary organisations, NHS providers, local authorities, charities and sports organisations working in the same communities as A2Dominion and supporting our customers is key. Not only do they bring skills and knowledge, but they are often funded to deliver similar objectives to ours.

Where there are gaps in services for customers or in a particular community, the Partnership and Fundraising team bid to funders to secure grants and contracts to deliver specific activities. Helping local charities, resident groups and community organisations who do amazing work to support our customers and the communities we serve, is how we aim to sustain projects, strengthen and build community resilience and leave a lasting legacy as part of a2Dominion’s social purpose.

Achievements

- This year, our Partnership and Fundraising team secured £524,000, an 4.85% increase on last year
- Secured funding to expand our partnership with Mind to cover Spelthorne Borough Council
- Secured funding to increase our Social Prescribing offer in Ealing, in partnership with Mind
- Supported the G15 Community Investment strategic working group
- Grown the Black History Month 365 funding network to include seven housing associations.

We would like to thank all our funders, volunteers and partners who have supported us over the last 18 months.

Our key partnerships include:	Key funders
▪ G15 Housing Associations	▪ National Lottery Community Fund
▪ Clarion Futures	▪ Postcode Lottery
▪ Brentford Football Club Community Sports Trust	▪ National Health Service
▪ Ealing Local Strategic Partnership	▪ Clarion Futures
▪ Spelthorne Borough Council Economic Development Team	▪ Spelthorne Borough Council
▪ Mind Hammersmith and Fulham, Ealing, Hounslow and Spelthorne	▪ Surrey County Council
▪ Ealing Primary Care Network	▪ MOPAC (Mayor’s Office for Police and Crime) London
▪ HACT (Housing Association Charitable Trust)	
▪ GGT Solutions	

Next steps

Our focus for 2023-24 includes the following:

1. Work in new multi-disciplinary teams in priority areas to improve homes and communities, and lead on the development of local plans to increase support to customers
2. Deliver on cost-of-living programme
3. Grow social value commitments from contractors

For more information please see our **A2Dominion Community Investment Three-Year Plan**.

For more information contact **Dele Ryder**
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