

# Community Investment Strategy

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## 1. Summary

Peabody has 160 years of history, experience, and expertise. Our communities are at the heart of our purpose: helping people flourish. As set out in our inaugural business plan a key component to achieving our purpose is by making a positive difference to the communities we serve. We have made a commitment to elevate our focus on wellbeing and to provide better quality services and improved customer experience. This strategy seeks to help us achieve our purpose with a vision to help build communities which are healthier, wealthier, and happier.

Our community investment work is needed now more than ever. The pandemic put a huge strain on people's lives, with constraints on people's ability to work, seek support from loved ones, and engage in their communities. Our customers and communities are undoubtedly still facing many challenges with many in a difficult financial position not only as a result of the pandemic, but as they are also now facing rising fuel bills and the cost-of-living crisis. Our community investment strategy applies to all our customers and recognises the increasing needs amongst customers of all tenures.

To ensure that our community investment resource delivers the greatest possible value for our communities, we have developed this new strategy, structured around four priorities that have been informed by our customers and communities.

### 1. Tackling inequality and poverty

A culture of collaboration across the organisation and partnering with external organisations will maximise the value we bring to our communities. We will deliver support to those who need it by making our offer more accessible and using data to understand the needs of our communities and customers. We can then use this data to co-create and promote targeted support based on need.

### 2. Embedding wellbeing

Our commitment to the wellbeing of our customers will be elevated with all business areas taking a hand in addressing it. We will take a holistic approach to bring sustainable change, bringing people together and equipping them with new skills.

### 3. Customer co-creation and sharing power

We will position our assets and expertise to facilitate community mobilisation, which is driven by our customers' strengths and passions. We will be effective and adept at delivering co-production.

### 4. Community activities and programmes

With our increased size and influence we will develop national and pan regional partnerships aligned to our objectives to bring skills and funding to local areas. Our local approach will be supported by our presence, connections, and knowledge, maximising the impact of our local plans.

## 2. Context

Peabody's community investment work has sought to improve the communities and lives of the individuals who call them home. This takes on different forms from helping people improve their

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financial situation, improve their wellbeing, or to mobilise groups to undertake initiatives and create positive change.

Following the merger of Catalyst and Peabody we are now working together to provide services to over 104,000 homes and 220,000 customers across London and the Home Counties. Our new organisation reflects the values and history of Peabody and Catalyst, and by joining together, we will go further and faster with our plans to improve our services and invest in our homes and communities. Our new community investment capacity consists of 150 colleagues and almost 100 community centres.

The pandemic has exacerbated many challenges already faced by our customers. Our teams worked harder than ever throughout the Covid-19 crisis, adapting and mobilising our efforts so we were able to support our communities. Our research into the experience of social housing customers in London has shown that despite signs of recovery in the economy post pandemic, barriers persist for many of our customers around skills and caring responsibilities, making it hard for many to find suitable jobs that pay a decent wage. Our analyses on disparities experienced between ethnic groups through the pandemic have shown consistent and statistically significant differences between customers on key measures. We have found that ethnic minority customers have been worse in terms of employment stability, financial situation, and food bank use through the pandemic.

The rising cost of fuel is a source of great difficulty for many. Even after the Government's decision in September 2022 to freeze the energy price cap so that a typical household will pay £2,500 per year for the next two years, it is anticipated that the number of UK households in fuel poverty will double by the end of the year. Our fuel poverty research has highlighted some worrying numbers, with the majority of our customers restricting the amount of heat they are using, and significant numbers spending less on food as a result of high energy bills.

The UK has consistently failed to fulfil the full potential of childcare, performing poorly on both quality and accessibility of provision. The UK's nurseries are among the most expensive in the world, while childcare professionals are some of the lowest paid workers in society. Flexible and affordable childcare enables parents, especially mothers, to make choices about how to balance their caring and employment opportunities. The Peabody Index published in March 2020 (undertaken prior to the Covid-19 pandemic) found that 1 in 10 of Peabody's social housing customers are parents of young children aged 0-5 years, and two-thirds of them have found it difficult or impossible to find affordable childcare.

Alongside the financial difficulties the pandemic caused, the isolation and stress led to worsening mental health for many and this impact continues to be felt. The World Health Organisation has found a 25% increase in anxiety and depression worldwide caused by the pandemic and the social isolation and constraints on people's ability to work, seek support from loved ones, and engage in their communities. The number of people aged 70+ with depression in the UK doubled. Sadly, those on lower incomes are already twice as likely to experience anxiety and depression. A key component of the strain on mental health is social isolation which is associated with poor life satisfaction, work related stress, and higher levels of substance use. While the impact of this was magnified during the pandemic, social isolation continues to be an issue across many of our communities. The tragic case of Sheila Seleoane also highlighted how isolated some people not deemed as vulnerable can be. Our work must seek to reduce isolation and promote mental health by fostering a holistic approach to improving wellbeing.

Our customers have made it clear that they want to influence more of our community investment work and ultimately drive more activity themselves. Feelings of empowerment are strongly associated with wellbeing. Going forward we want to maximise these opportunities by removing barriers and providing the necessary support to enable customers to be the driving force behind more community work. We want to build strong communities where people have many ways to have their say about where they live and the services they receive. We also want to build, grow, and support communities that are resilient. With our help and resources and their skills and

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confidence, our communities should be able to cope with problems, adapt to, and recover from adversity.

### 3. Strategic approach and outcomes

At Peabody, our purpose is helping people flourish. As set out in our inaugural business plan, a key component to achieving our purpose is making a positive difference to the communities we serve. We have made a commitment to elevate our focus on wellbeing, and to provide better quality services and improve our customers' experience. We will enhance our community investment approach across our localities, prioritising our investment through data, co-producing services, and taking opportunities to transfer power and control to customers and community groups. We will have greater impact and increase our capacity and expertise through our partnerships.

This strategy seeks to help us achieve our purpose with a vision to help build communities which are healthier, wealthier, and happier.

- **Healthier** – helping people with their physical and mental wellbeing
- **Wealthier** – supporting people to boost their incomes through high quality advice and support services, as well employment, enterprise, and educational opportunities including apprenticeships
- **Happier** – helping people make the most out of their lives through active citizenship, volunteering, and community involvement

We are focusing our work around four key priorities: (1) tackling inequality and poverty, (2) embedding wellbeing, (3) customer co-creation and sharing power and (4) community activities and programmes.

#### Priority 1: Tackling Inequality and Poverty

Objectives:

- **We will maximise the value our resources deliver through partnerships and supporting customers to access what is available in their area.** We will partner with Local Authorities and the voluntary sector to bring more services to our neighbourhoods. We will ensure we are identifying customers in need and directing them to these services.
- **More of our customers will be aware of how our services can help them and how to access them.** We will make better use of data to develop tailored marketing campaigns for specific services, again using data to inform our approach and understand which channels and messaging work best. We will ensure that we promote our work and success stories in the localities as part of the broader localities communications and marketing plans.
- **Customers will feel less hesitation about engaging with our advice services.** We will acknowledge the stigma attached to some of our services and will reduce this by working with customers to understand the barriers and identify the best methods of engagement that will build trust.
- **A culture and practice of collaboration across the business will enable us to identify the needs of more of our customers and allow us to support them.** We will ensure we are embedded in the localities we work in so that colleagues and contractors interacting with customers will understand the Communities offer. This will enable them to actively identify need and refer customers where they feel support is needed. We will bolster our approach to ensuring we deliver social value through our supply chains.

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- **We will know where and who to deliver support to.** Delivering economic and financial support will be supported by robust data and information both at the local community level and the needs of individual customers. We will ensure our services are accessible and support people who are marginalised by additional prejudices and bias because of their identity and protected characteristics.
- **We will support the provision of affordable childcare.** We will expand our mobile crèche provision, apprenticeships, and childminder training programme and explore innovative models of childcare provision. Internal business functions will co-ordinate effectively to maximise the provision of affordable and sustainable childcare.

### Outcomes:

- Increased awareness of our advice services
- Increased number of people assisted
- Increased skills and qualifications
- Increased income
- Reduced inequality
- Increased provision of affordable childcare

## Priority 2: Embedding Wellbeing

### Objectives:

- **All business areas will have a hand in promoting wellbeing.** Colleagues across the organisation will consider wellbeing implications of the way they deliver their services and the changes we make to our delivery models.
- **We will harness our colleagues' desire to deliver our social purpose.** We will build a culture of delivering social value across the organisation, encouraging and giving colleagues more opportunities to contribute through volunteering and fundraising initiatives.
- **We will bring people together in a way they enjoy.** To foster relationships between community members we will utilise the benefits of less formal and more enjoyable activities such as events, parties, and physical activities. When delivering social activities for older customers we will be less paternalistic and let pursuing their interests and pastimes inform opportunities to spend time together.
- **We will take a holistic approach to individuals' wellbeing.** When supporting customers, we will work hard to understand the individual's whole situation so that we can provide support that brings sustainable change.
- **Accessing our services and receiving support will be straightforward and seamless.** Customers will know how we can help them and who to speak to, encouraging early and preventative support. Our offer of support will avoid a convoluted customer journey and centre around a consistent and reliable point of contact, giving great customer experience.
- **We will work to equip people with new skills and qualifications.** We will allow people's skills and passions to drive their projects and provide support to ensure they are developing both soft and hard skills which lead to future opportunities.

### Outcomes:

- Increased wellbeing
- Reduced isolation
- Increased connections and mutual support
- Increased physical activities
- Increased skills and qualifications

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- Increased colleague volunteering and fundraising

### Priority 3: Customer Co-Creation and Sharing Power

#### Objectives:

- **We will be effective and adept at delivering co-production.** Communities colleagues will be knowledgeable on its use and know when and how to apply it. Customers' expectations and trust will be managed through clear communication on the extent to which they will influence each initiative. We will be realistic about the resource genuine co-production requires for some projects and adequately plan for this.
- **Our grants will be more accessible and will deliver more value for recipients and the community.** We will clearly publicise our grants offer widely and simplify the application process, shifting more trust to our customers. Once grants have been awarded, we will provide ample support to ensure initiatives achieve their potential and recipients progress to further opportunities more frequently.
- **Our communities will be built on their own skills and passions.** We will focus on community assets and strengths rather than problems and needs. Our role will be to provide our assets and expertise to facilitate community mobilisation.
- **We will provide the infrastructure required to deliver community activities and give customers greater ownership.** We will be creative in the ways we allow the community to use our facilities. Necessities such as Wi-Fi and property management issues will be delivered, allowing community members to efficiently deliver initiatives.

#### Outcomes:

- Increased co-produced services and projects
- Increased customer trust
- Increased percentage of grants leading to further opportunities
- Increased engagement in communication around services and success stories
- Customers have the infrastructure to support initiatives

### Priority 4: Community Activities and Programmes

#### Objectives:

- **We will be a facilitator of local activities and programmes.** We will distribute our limited resources wider and more fairly by using our in-house expertise, partners, and access to funding to empower customers and grassroots organisations to deliver based on their first-hand knowledge of local need.
- **We will be ambitious with our partnerships.** With our increased size and influence we will develop national and pan regional partnerships aligned to our objectives to bring skills and funding to local areas. Communities' colleagues will understand the principles of productive partnerships and develop strong relationships to deliver value together.
- **We will have a local presence and knowledge.** We will co-ordinate better knowledge of and more supportive relationships with the extensive community volunteering sector. Our local staffing decisions will take into consideration the impact on maintaining local connections and knowledge and supporting the local community.
- **Customers and colleagues will understand and value our local approach.** Our approach will be communicated in a straightforward and consistent way to all audiences. We will celebrate and share success with impact through methods and such as stories and awards events.

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- **We will maximise the impact of Local Area Plans.** We will have a thorough understanding of the specific needs and current services available in areas to ensure our resource is delivering the greatest impact. Our work will focus on the whole community and not solely our customers.

Outcomes:

- Increased colleague local knowledge
- Increased partnerships
- More productive partnerships
- Whole community impact
- More productive grassroots organisations and customer initiatives

### 4. Environmental, Social and Governance

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) detailed in the '2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' and adopted by all United Nation Member States in 2015, is one of the most widely used and comprehensive frameworks to describe social value. The goals aim to create a better, fairer world by 2030 – ending poverty and inequality and urgently addressing climate change. The goals provide a robust framework for best practice.

Our four new strategic priorities for community investment activity: Tackling Inequality and Poverty, Embedding Wellbeing, Customer Co-creation and Sharing Power, and Community Activities Programmes - directly link to the following SDGs:

- Goal 1: No Poverty
- Goal 2: Zero Hunger
- Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing
- Goal 4: Quality Education
- Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Goal 10: Reduced Inequality
- Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
- Goal 17: Partnerships to Achieve Goal

Peabody and Catalyst are both early pioneers of the Social Housing ESG Framework, and our communities work is pivotal to our social performance.

Together the SDGs and ESG focus on long-term solutions and provide us with a roadmap for a sustainable future. They can be used as the lens to understand our organisational impact delivered through our activities and supply chain within a wider context and sustainability agenda.

### 5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Our current community investment work delivers positive impact for our communities particularly on younger and older groups. Our work also has a positive benefit on those of low socioeconomic status, low-income households, and those with lower levels of education or literacy. However, we recognise the negative impact that racism, ableism, classism, homophobia, and transphobia have on individuals and communities, often compounding existing pressures on physical, mental, and financial wellbeing. Our aim is to do more to target our work to our customers and communities with protected characteristics and to help dismantle structures that uphold discrimination and prejudice. We will collect and monitor data on the characteristics of people accessing our services to ensure they are accessible to all.

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In keeping with Peabody's value, 'We celebrate diversity', we will look to support and partner with organisations that are led by and serve a diverse range of people. Wherever possible we will look to uplift social action work that empowers marginalised communities, including, but not limited to:

- Black communities and wider communities of colour
- Disabled communities
- LGBTQ+ communities
- Working class communities
- Homeless communities
- Care experienced communities

### 6. Value for money

In order to achieve our priorities as an organisation, we need to ensure that we make the best possible use of the resources which are available to us. Our community investment work and the delivery of this strategy will deliver value for money in the following ways:

- **Economy:** We will maximise our co-investment in projects and services with partners, local authorities, funders, and in-kind support. Our work will have a focus on key activities which are essential for local community development and creating social fabric. We will maximise the social value delivered through our contracts by testing and implementing new approaches.
- **Efficiency:** We will simplify and delegate choices around the use of community buildings. Making use of digital methods will allow us to increase our reach and efficiency in delivering certain services.
- **Equity:** Our community investment will not solely focus on our customers but seek to have a whole community impact. Through data we will understand our communities and customers allowing targeted support to be delivered to those who need it most, promoting greater equity in our communities and society.
- **Effectiveness:** We will deliver more co-production and position ourselves as a facilitator of local activities and programme empowering customers and grassroots organisations to deliver based on their first-hand knowledge of local need. We will focus on the wellbeing of our customers and communities, acknowledging the long-term cost of not doing this.

### 7. Business Plan and Other Peabody Strategies

The Community Investment Strategy supports our overall social purpose and our organisational purpose of helping people flourish. The strategy is also linked to the following strategies:

**People Strategy** – In the development of this strategy our colleagues consistently told us that our work in communities, was one of the things that attracted them to come work for Peabody and it continues to help them to stay engaged with our social purpose. Many colleagues are keen to give back. The Community Investment Strategy will play a prominent part in our People Strategy with consistent touch points throughout our colleague experience, including recruitment, induction, development, colleague volunteering, fundraising and much more.

**Communications and Brand** – Our work in communities already helps us to demonstrate our social purpose to our customers, communities, colleagues, and stakeholders. However, in developing this strategy some of our customers and colleagues told us that they still do not know enough about Peabody's Community Investment work. Communities will be embedded in

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the communications and marketing strategy as a core strand of the narrative both at a group and locality level. We will also be using our data to take a much more targeted marketing approach to promoting our services to customers, as well as our external stakeholders and partners.

**Human Experience and Customer Engagement** – Our Community Investment work will both help inform and demonstrate the commitments of our Human Experience Strategy. The Community Investment Strategy and the projects and services that flow out of this will also be opportunities to engage with customers not only on issues related to their communities, but also Peabody services.

**Locality Model** – The Community Investment Strategy will support our new Locality Model and its aim of being local and connected to our customers and communities. Each of the Localities will have a specific plan that has been developed by local teams in partnership with one another and our customers with the resources and autonomy to deliver the priorities of the strategy in a way that are relevant to each Locality.

### 8. Next Steps

1. Integration of Catalyst and Peabody Community Investment teams and programmes.
2. Further develop the outcomes framework for all Community Investment activity that reaffirms the organisation's definition and approach.
3. Develop and implement a clear approach to co-production based from learning from across the organisation and external best practice. This will allow more customers to be involved in decision making as equal partners and to be equipped with the resources and skills to mobilise and engage in local action.
4. Build and embed wellbeing into our services and work with specialist partners to make that happen.
5. Address poverty and inequality through partnerships, bringing investment and services into our communities that encourage economic activity.
6. Provide advice services that tackle poverty and improve wellbeing and continue to deliver projects and services in communities.
7. Keep community centres running and safe to allow activities to take place which enable community spirit to flourish.
8. Develop a high-level delivery plan in line with the resources allocated to the strategy.

### Approval

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<b>Strategy owner</b>	Sahil Khan (Director Community Strategy, Partnerships & Funding)