



COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER

A TOOLKIT FOR HOUSING PROVIDERS

**HELPING PEOPLE
PUT DOWN ROOTS**



**Mary-Kathryn Rallings Adams
and Frances Harkin, HACT**
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“Above and beyond transferring the Asset, we are committed to supporting community organisations to build their capacity”

FOREWORD



Harnessing the spirit of “localism”, Affinity Sutton has developed a Community Asset Transfer Programme which aims to move our extensive portfolio of community buildings (which we call Community Assets) into long-term local ownership. We are doing this through identifying the community organisation that is the best-fit for its local neighbourhood – we firmly believe that local people and partners best understand the needs of our communities and the role a Community Asset can play in delivering the right services. In some cases this will be by resident groups, but in other cases we are forming mutually beneficial relationships with new partners, such as emerging forms of social enterprise.

Affinity Sutton has transferred a significant proportion of its Community Assets portfolio to local organisations, and we are at the latter stages of agreements with many others. Above and beyond transferring the Asset, we are committed to supporting community organisations to build their capacity - in turn securing their long term viability and sustainability. Our sector-leading Hub Connect programme is currently providing guidance and expertise to our community organisations to help them sustain and grow. Now more than ever, strong business planning, enhanced fundraising skills and clear governance will be essential to survival in these times of financial pressures. Community Centres in our housing areas can sometimes be quite estate-focused, and in this way they can be great for providing

services for local neighbourhoods, but a crucial part of Hub Connect is about creating more chances for organisations to network with each other and beyond their estate. Through these connections organisations gain peer-support, fresh inspiration and opportunities to expand their resources. There’s a lot of shared experience and expertise in the room.

Comparatively little is currently known about the scale of Housing Provider-owned Community Assets or their approach to managing them. We have put together this toolkit and associated master classes to help disseminate the experience we’ve amassed so far. I hope other housing associations and partners will find it helpful and that this starts a valuable dialogue on the best way we can ensure these local facilities remain relevant, thriving and sustainable.

Keith Exford CBE

**Chief Executive
Affinity Sutton**



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I. INTRODUCTION



Housing Providers typically own a range of Community Assets including land and buildings – in this case “Community Asset” refers to community buildings such as Community Centres or meeting spaces.

The management of these Community Assets is a significant part of Housing Providers’ Community Investment activity, yet little is known about the strategic approach they take when managing a Community Asset portfolio, or the potential that Community Assets have in the sector.

Statutory organisations such as Local Authorities and Councils are increasingly developing proactive Community Asset Transfer initiatives. Community Asset Transfer (CAT) is widely used to refer to the process whereby the ownership and/or management of land, building or facilities is transferred from a statutory organisation to a Community Organisation.¹ It is a voluntary process and is intended to benefit the local community. As part of this process, an agreement is made regarding the management of the Asset, most commonly by way of a long lease. Alternative arrangements are also available, such as transfer (or sale) of freehold or a licence, which is particularly useful for newly formed Community Organisations.

Few resources exist for Housing Providers interested in developing a Community Asset Transfer approach to identify and share innovative practice. Those resources that do exist are primarily focused on Local

Authorities and rarely consider the experience of the Asset Transfer process from the perspective of the Community Organisations or Housing Providers.

Over the last five years Affinity Sutton has cultivated a Community Asset Transfer approach to maximise the potential of its Community Asset portfolio and support residents in line with Affinity Sutton’s social purpose to help people put down roots. Having undertaken a significant programme of Community Asset Transfer, Affinity Sutton has proven experience in Community Asset management. This toolkit is designed to disseminate this learning and good practice and encourage dialogue in the social housing sector.

Affinity Sutton asked HACT to conduct this research and produce this toolkit in conjunction with three Community Organisations that were pioneers of Affinity Sutton’s Community Asset Transfer approach. This toolkit is designed to explore the experience of the process from the perspective of Community Organisations and to enable Housing Providers to understand the operational realities and practical challenges of Community Asset Transfer.

¹.For more information about the process of Community Asset Transfer, particularly from the perspective of Community Organisations, see Locality’s guide to Community Asset Transfer at: http://mycommunity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/LOCALITY-ASSET-TRANSFER_UNDERSTANDING.pdf

II. AFFINITY SUTTON AND COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER



In 2009, the Community Investment team at Affinity Sutton inherited the portfolio of over 70 Community Assets – diverse in many ways, including location, usage, purpose and sustainability – from Community Centres and halls to individual rooms.

The Affinity Sutton approach sprung from the need to ensure these buildings were being clearly managed and consistently treated as assets, not liabilities. Affinity Sutton recognised the need to create a specialism within the organisation; this is reflected in the decision to name the portfolio of buildings and facilities “Community Assets”. This contributed towards a positive shift in how these community resources were viewed within the organisation.

In promoting these community buildings and facilities as Assets, Affinity Sutton recognise their potential to host vital services, bring people together, contribute towards a sense of community and help build social capital. This approach to Community Asset Management was informed by Affinity Sutton’s remit as a business with a social purpose.

Due to the size of the Community Asset portfolio and its diverse needs, Affinity Sutton recruited a Community Asset Manager in 2010 to ensure that there was a dedicated member of staff with responsibility for the portfolio, supported by a team and the wider Affinity Sutton staff body. Building upon this, a cross-departmental Community

Asset Working Group was set up in 2011, charged with developing the

2009			
2010	Affinity Sutton recruited a Community Assets Manager.	2009-2011 CAT occurring at Affinity Sutton on an ad hoc basis.	2010-2012 Affinity Sutton undertook a programme of mapping assets.
2011	Cross-departmental Community Assets Working Group was set up, charged with developing the policy for Community Assets and CAT process.		
2012	Affinity Sutton developed a formal Asset Transfer Policy.	Affinity Sutton commissioned an external review to explore the provision of support to Community Organisations.	
2017	Community Assets Policy aims to bring all the Community Assets managed by COs under management agreements by Lease or Licence.		

policy for Community Assets and for the process of Community Asset Transfer (CAT). (Between 2009 and 2011, CAT was occurring at Affinity Sutton, but was less formalised than it is currently.)

In the period between 2010 and 2012, Affinity Sutton undertook a programme of mapping assets, carrying out assessments of stock conditions, conducting health and safety checks, and meeting with users and community organisations.

In August 2012, a formal policy was developed, setting out a five year strategy for Community Asset Transfer at Affinity Sutton.

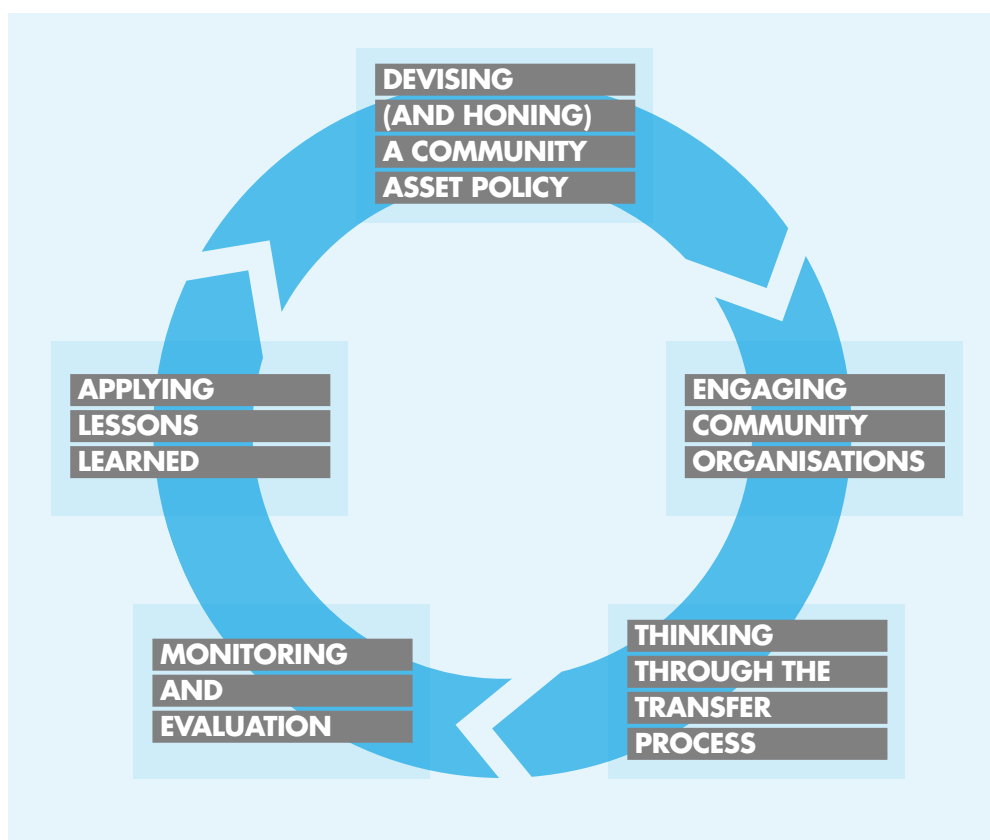
The Community Asset Policy aims to bring all the Community Assets managed by COs under management agreements by 2017, offering benefits to local residents. The policy hinges on directing investment to the right places, in the right way, to enable organisations to thrive and grow. The approach was fully endorsed

by the Affinity Sutton Homes Board and Group Executive Team. This was supported by a range of other documents formalising the processes around Asset Transfer with a number of template documents, covering applications for transfer, licensing, leasing, hirer's agreements, health and safety, etc.

* (See Appendix 1).

In autumn 2012, with a full portfolio of transfers underway, Affinity Sutton commissioned an external review to explore the provision of support to Community Organisations (CO) – users, management committees and delivery partners – around Asset Transfer. This review uncovered a number of areas in which COs communicated that they would welcome support around the fundamental aspects of running a Community Asset. As a result, Affinity Sutton issued a tender for the design and delivery of a Community Asset Training and Support Programme. Locality received the contract for this programme of training, which is now underway.

Affinity Sutton recognised the benefits of incorporating external expertise into their approach to Community Asset Transfer, particularly with regards to receiving independent and knowledgeable advice and ensuring that COs are able to access the relevant information and resources. This has contributed towards their decisions to commission the services of consultants and organisations such as Locality and Community Matters to deliver training and bespoke support across a broad range of themes such as governance, financial and operating procedures, employing staff, volunteer management, fundraising and business planning.



This toolkit draws upon the experiences of Affinity Sutton to discuss the various steps that form part of the CAT process:

- Section III (Devising a Community Asset Policy) outlines key factors that need to be considered from the outset of implementing the CAT process.
- Section IV (Engaging Community Organisations) turns the focus upon COs, considering the characteristics of a successful CO and three examples of the management of a Community Asset by successful COs, each of which have different histories and approaches.
- Drawing upon these three case studies, Section V (Thinking through the Transfer Process) highlights fundamental elements of the CAT process that need to be considered at the outset. These key areas are broken down into questions in order to help Housing Providers anticipate matters that can arise.
- Section VI (Monitoring and Evaluation) reflects upon the growing interest in measuring social value within the housing sector and provides retrospective projections of the case study COs.
- Drawing upon the experiences of Affinity Sutton and the three case studies, Section VII (Applying Lessons Learned) highlights the learning that Affinity Sutton has amassed in undertaking the CAT process, which can be utilised by other Housing Providers to inform their approach to CAT. Fundamentally, it is the learning from what works (and what does not work so well) that has helped Affinity Sutton develop (and redevelop) their own CAT process.

III. DEVISING A COMMUNITY ASSET POLICY



Affinity Sutton's Community Asset Policy was developed through the collaborative effort from staff across the organisation, as well as drawing on lessons learned through the ad hoc asset transfers that were already occurring.

The Policy sets out a five-year plan for Community Asset Transfer (CAT), considering the vision, mission, values, and strategic themes, as well as thinking through how the Community Assets Working Group will help with delivery of the strategy. Capacity building is also considered within the policy, outlining how Affinity Sutton provides support to Community Organisations (COs) and the broader network of support available. Affinity Sutton identified four key steps for Housing Providers to consider when devising their policy for Community Asset Transfer, outlined below.

STEP 1: DEVELOP CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUPS



Involving staff from different departments will ensure that everyone understands (and can contribute to) the CAT process operationally and strategically; this can help secure buy in across the organisation.

The policy can affect a number of departments including housing, legal, planned investment, maintenance and contract surveyors, health and safety compliance, regeneration and development, community investment and resident involvement.



STEP 2: MAP ASSETS



Understanding which Assets will fall within the scope of your CAT policy, how they are currently managed and identifying the key stakeholders is a vital step in informing your approach.

When looking at multiple Assets, phasing according to priority may be required, and may be informed by opportunities or risks. Housing Providers will need to consider the remit of their CAT policy. Affinity Sutton's CAT policy focuses on achieving Community Asset Transfer for existing and planned new builds.

Housing Providers will need to decide if speculative applications for CATs will be considered, and if they will also consider proposals for new buildings and conversions. Affinity Sutton considers speculative applications for conversions such as redundant offices or workshops by assessing the alternative uses of the buildings (with a priority for housing where viable) and the viability of the COs' proposals. It would require a CO willing to fundraise the significant costs towards building or conversion, but Affinity Sutton has been able to match-fund efforts for example at Bancroft Community Association in Tamworth.

STEP 3: DEVISE A COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER FRAMEWORK



It is important to establish a process for CAT including eligibility requirements and a decision-making process.

Housing Providers will need to establish whether existing organisations/groups using the Assets will be offered first priority to pursue a CAT, or whether it will be a competitive process. At Affinity Sutton, where an established resident group is the primary user of the Asset, it is offered first opportunity to meet the CAT requirements. If the local resident group is not interested or able, the opportunity to engage in the CAT process is then promoted to the voluntary and community sector as a competitive process.

Affinity Sutton holds open days for interested partners to explain the building and its users, and to outline the application; successful process. Departments from across the business are given a chance to provide feedback on the application, and successful COs meet with an interview panel to understand their intentions, and select the CO that is the best fit. The panel may choose to set conditions for the successful organisation, which must be met prior to entering the licence or lease – for example, to draft a missing policy, or to consult the local community to enable them to understand local needs and desires. An on-site handover is organised to coincide with the licence or lease completion after which the CO resumes management of the building.

STEP 4: PROVIDE A SUITABLE SUPPORT MECHANISM

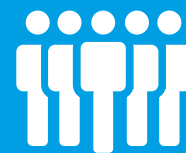


Considering the support that will be required from the outset will ensure that mechanisms are in place and that adequate support can be provided to Community Organisations.

The transfer of the building is the beginning of the next phase, and inevitably there will be a period of settling in during the management transfer. Housing Providers will need to identify lines of communication, and operational considerations (as outlined in section VI) but also support for Community Organisations to grow and thrive.

*** The Appendix for this toolkit includes various documents for the Community Asset Transfer process including a flowchart detailing the CAT process, a document outlining what is required of a Community Organisation during the CAT process, draft licence agreement, handover process, and welcome documents providing essential information for Community Organisations about the Community Asset.**

IV. ENGAGING COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS



WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY ORGANISATION?

There is a range of characteristics that are invaluable for Community Organisations (COs) to manage a thriving Community Asset

✳ (See Strategic document 2: CAT Requirements in Appendix 1).

Whilst the CAT requirements ensure a CO has the fundamentals in place, COs will grow significantly through the process of managing an Asset, allowing them to develop the strengths outlined here; this list is not necessarily intended to serve as criteria for evaluating COs at the start of the process.

There are a number of key characteristics successful COs will either already have, or should develop:

• Confident in facilities management

It is essential the CO develops clear operating procedures for using and hiring the facilities and to be in a position to respond to day-to-day matters such as access, repairs and enquiries. It is also important to make sure that COs are financially sound with clear financial procedures and access to a range of resources and support to diversify their income streams. Equipping relevant individuals with knowledge of legislation and procedures (for example, by providing templates) also provides additional support.

• Stable, well-run organisations

Creating a strong body of staff and volunteers who are able to cover the core roles in running the Asset, share the workload and cope with adversity (e.g. illness of a primary trustee) is of huge benefit to COs. Balancing skills and interests and identifying successors to bring in new ideas and energy, or replace those who no longer feel in a position to continue their role provides stability. Central to this is effective communication and decision making and ensuring that the committee is informed and in control.

• Well-connected

When managing a well-used and treasured Community Asset, COs need to engage with the local community to create trust and be inclusive to a range of users, thereby reflecting the local neighbourhood. COs will also work in partnership with the Housing Provider to overcome difficulties and maximise resources. This requires a joint commitment to problem solving and effective communication from all. Establishing networks with a range of partners provides support, resources and influence, as does reaching out to other COs and the sharing of best practice.

• Thriving and growing

Foreseeing and responding to emerging community needs is important for COs to remain relevant and vibrant and to grow. Adapting to changes and new technology (for example, developing an online and social media presence), reporting impact and monitoring help a CO cement its reputation and improve performance. COs can use the Asset to become more self-sufficient, further their goals and lever more resources.

Having identified the key qualities of a successful CO, three case study examples follow in order to demonstrate how these qualities can be applied in different contexts, for different organisations.



CASE STUDIES

ST. HUGH'S

As part of the exploration into the processes surrounding Community Asset Transfer at Affinity Sutton, HACT explored three case studies: St Hugh's Community Centre, Riverside Centre and Turpington Lane Community Centre. These Community Assets are all located in the Greater London area (St Hugh's and Turpington Lane in south east London; Riverside in south west London). Whilst they do not represent the geographically diverse areas in which Affinity Sutton operates across England, they were selected because they present different dynamics and challenges, and were some of the forerunners of the CAT process at Affinity Sutton.

HACT staff conducted a number of semi-structured interviews and phone calls with staff and volunteers working in and with the three Community Assets, collecting information about a range of topics, from the transfer process itself to activities run at the individual Centres, as well as general feedback and the number of service users.²

A community hall to benefit all

- **Managed by a Residents Association, Hilda Lane Community Association**
- **New build**
- **30 year lease, signed November 2012**
- **1 paid member of staff (part time)**
- **10 volunteers**
- **www.hlca.org.uk**

St Hugh's Community Centre is located in Anerley, south east London. The main areas which benefit from the Centre include Crystal Palace, Penge and Cator wards to the northwest of the Borough of Bromley. It can be accessed on foot, by car and by public transport, including by bus and train. The flagship Centre is purpose built and the development was part of a wider Affinity Sutton regeneration project in the local area. It was officially opened in April 2012 and is managed by the Hilda



²HACT is grateful to former Housing Intern Anna Carnegie for her early contributions to this project and to the fieldwork stages.

Lane Community Association (HLCA), which has a long term, thirty-year lease with Affinity Sutton, which was signed in November 2012.

HLCA was formed in the 1970s by tenants of the St Hugh's estate in Bromley in a bid to lobby London Borough of Bromley to provide community facilities for the estate's residents. As a result, a community hall was built in the 1980s managed



by the Residents' Association, which closed in February 2010. In an effort to secure financial support for the redevelopment of this community hall, the Residents' Association was advised by what was then Broomleigh Housing Association, now Affinity Sutton, to become an incorporated company and a registered charity.

The limited company and charity status provides HLCA financial benefits and legal protection. Since 2007, HLCA has been a charitable company limited by guarantee, with a board of trustees that oversees the management of the modern St Hugh's Community Centre. Initially there were four trustees on the board of HLCA, and as of 2015 there are seven. HLCA has a business plan in place that outlines their aspirations for the management of the Centre. HLCA has also developed a range of partnerships in the local area that they consider to be of benefit to the community and the management of the Centre, including with the police and local schools.

There is currently one paid member of staff who is employed on a part time basis. Members of HLCA and volunteers from the local community further support the running of the Centre. A large part of the income generated at the Centre comes from private hirers for regular classes and events as well as one-off hires. Other funding is provided by charitable organisations.

Facilities at the Centre include an office, IT suite, conference facilities, meeting room, hall, multi-use game area and a kitchen area. Specialist equipment and both indoor and outdoor space are available for a variety of classes, activities, sport and events. An Affinity Sutton grant and other funding bodies support the youth club. Costs for participating in activities at the Centre vary, with many being provided free of charge.

Services are offered by HLCA themselves alongside external providers. The community hall and meeting room at the Centre are available to hire for a fee, to members of HLCA, community groups and commercial users, to generate income.

St Hugh's Community Centre has an online presence with social media profiles as well as a website where timetables for activities and classes at the Centre are available and a newsletter can be accessed.

Monitoring data, such as contact details, is collected from classes organised internally, whilst more rigorous records are kept for classes organised by the Bromley Adult Education Centre. Data relating to classes and activities organised by external service providers that hire facilities at the Centre is not collected due to time constraints. Estimates regarding the composition of attendees at classes suggest that 30% of those attending classes offered by external service providers are Affinity Sutton tenants, and they attract people from a broader area, whilst classes offered by the Centre itself attract a larger majority of Affinity Sutton tenants.

RIVERSIDE

*Working for the
community, with
the community,
in the community*

- **Managed by a charity, Riverside Community Association**
- **New build**
- **30 year lease, signed May 2012**
- **16 paid members of staff**
- **8 volunteers**
- **www.riversidecentre.org**

The Riverside Centre is located in Carshalton, southwest London. The main areas that benefit from the Centre include the Wrythe Green ward and other neighbouring wards in the Borough of Sutton.

The Centre is purpose built; the development was part of a wider regeneration project in the local Durand Close Estate by what was then Broomleigh Housing



Association, now Affinity Sutton. The Centre is managed by the Riverside Community Association (RCA), which has a long-term 30 year lease with Affinity Sutton. RCA moved into the Centre in May 2012.

RCA was formed in 1997 in a bid to support and provide community activities, initially in the Durand Close Estate. Prior to the construction of the new Riverside Centre, RCA managed the old Community Centre also located on the Durand Close Estate. RCA has charitable status with a board of trustees that oversees the running of the modern Riverside Centre. It has also become a company limited by guarantee, as the RCA needed to incorporate to take on a lease in its name. The limited company and charity status provides financial benefits and legal protection. RCA also has a business plan in place that outlines their aspirations for the management of the Centre.

A number of paid staff, the majority of whom are part-time, as well as volunteers from the local community, contribute to and support the management of the Centre. The Centre also has a full-time Community Development Manager and participates in apprenticeship schemes that further supplement the staffing body. RCA provides training to both staff and volunteers with the intention to equip them with qualifications.

RCA has developed a number of partnerships with organisations, both statutory and voluntary, to work on joint projects. These partners currently include Sutton Life Centre,



Sutton Carers Centre, and Carers Support Merton, to name a few.

Facilities at the Centre include several meeting rooms, IT facilities, a sports hall and a community café. The community café is currently run internally by RCA on a social enterprise basis to promote the Centre as a community social space. The Centre generates income from hiring out facilities at the Centre, project funding from charitable bodies and other commissioned pieces of work, for which they levy a charge to cover overheads. RCA delivers a variety of activities at the Centre,

focusing primarily on families and children, sport, healthy living and older people. They also hire out the Centre to external providers. The cost of activities to users varies, depending upon the activity and the service provider - some activities are free.

A large proportion of those using the Riverside Centre come from the immediate local area, many of whom are able to access the Centre on foot. The Centre can also be accessed using public transport, including by bus and trains available locally.

The Riverside Centre has an online presence with social media profiles as well as a website where details about services and timetable for activities can be accessed.

RCA actively monitors the usage of the Centre, collecting data internally and from external service providers who hire facilities at the Centre. More specifically, they keep data on attendance at activities offered by both internal and external providers, through recording footfall in general, as well as registers of attendees at particular classes.

TURPINGTON LANE



*Family and
community hub*

- **Managed by Community Interest Company**
- **Took on an refurbished asset**
- **Licence to manage**
- **1 paid member of staff**
- **2 main volunteers**
- **Supported by local Resident's Association**
- **<http://www.playplace.org/inovwhereweare.html>**

The Turpington Lane Community Centre is located in the Borough of Bromley, south east London. It is situated in a refurbished building and is managed by Play Place Innov8, which has a licence with Affinity Sutton with a view to obtaining a lease.

As a Community Interest Company (CIC), Play Place Innov8 does not have charitable status but operates on a non-profit basis with community interest; any surpluses made are used to offer additional community projects. It is one of five companies which form the Play Place Group with the others including Play Place Childcare Services Ltd, Treasure Box Scrap Ltd, Cudham Open Space Ltd and PP Commercial. Formed in 2007, after Play Place Childcare Services Ltd, Play Place Innov8 is an independent company with a number of volunteer directors and 1,500 registered members. They provide community services across parts of South London



and Kent. Play Place Innov8 uses grants and commissioned funding to provide opportunities for children, young people and communities.

Play Place Innov8 responded to a call for Expressions of Interest from Affinity Sutton to manage Turpington Lane Community Centre and underwent a competitive process against other potential Community Organisations in a bid to manage the Centre.

Play Place Innov8 has a substantial body of staff and has been able to commit one member of staff to Turpington Lane, who is central to the management of the Centre. The Business Development Director and local Area Manager at Play Place Innov8 provide combined support for this staff member. The day-to-day running of the Centre is further supported by the local Residents' Association and other volunteers from the area.

The financial sustainability of Turpington Lane is made tenable by grants and the income from hiring out space at the Centre to external service providers. For instance, Play Place Innov8 secured My Community Rights Pre-feasibility funding from Locality that has been used to support



the running of the Centre. Various community groups are able to access the Centre at no cost including the Residents' Association and the drop-in youth service, whilst other service providers are charged an affordable fee. As at Riverside, the cost of activities to users varies depending upon activity and the service provider; some activities are free.

The availability of parking facilitates access from beyond the immediate local area, which means that users of the Centre are not all Affinity Sutton tenants. Affinity Sutton does not require users of their Community Assets to be tenants, as this would limit the range of services available for tenants.

Play Place Innov8 has an online presence with social media profiles and a website which provides users with a timetable detailing the various activities held at Turpington Lane. They also communicate via a newsletter that is distributed to local residents advising of events and activities.

Play Place Innov8 actively monitor the usage of the Centre. External providers provide statistical information regarding the attendance at activities and events, with differentiation on age groups and whether attendees are Affinity Sutton tenants or not. Data collection methods include online surveys that are employed by Play Place Innov8 to get a sense of what activities and services people want at the Centre.

V. THINKING THROUGH THE TRANSFER PROCESS



KEY AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION

Once Housing Providers are in a position to engage in the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) process, there are three important areas to consider:

1. Fundamentals of the transfer process

2. Relationship-building and communication

3. Operational considerations

This section breaks down each of these areas further into questions in order to ensure that the transfer process goes as smoothly as possible and that Community Organisations (COs) are supported through the process. Examples are drawn from the case studies to help Housing Providers anticipate challenges that may arise in a CAT process.



	Theme	Elements to consider
PART 1	Fundamentals of the transfer process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Are you considering a new build facility? 1.2 What is the level of local knowledge? What are the CO's intentions to engage the local community? 1.3 What is the legal status and governance arrangements of the CO?
PART 2	Relationship-building and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Is there a dedicated staff member at the Housing Provider available to liaise with COs? 2.2 What are the practical considerations of the Asset Transfer and how can the Housing Provider prepare and plan for these potential issues? 2.3 How can the Housing Provider ensure that the CO receives the support needed?
PART 3	Operational considerations for Community Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Does the CO have sufficient people-power to run the assets, and will the CO be run by paid staff, volunteers, or a mix of both? 3.2 Has the CO considered long-term sustainability (either in their business plan or otherwise) and how they will communicate services, classes and activities to the local community to galvanise support and maintain consistent use? 3.3 Has the CO considered how it will tailor services, classes and activities to local community need? Has the CO considered where the local environment or existing perceptions may impact on service provision? 3.4 Has the CO considered costing structures and whether users will be expected to pay for activities, services and classes delivered at the Centre, either by the CO or by external hirers? 3.5 Has the CO considered how it will monitor use, measure impact and report back to the Housing Provider?

PART 1: FUNDAMENTALS OF THE TRANSFER PROCESS

Despite their different backgrounds, there was a general consensus amongst the three organisations about what drew them to the Community Asset Transfer process: the desire to work with, and support services for, the local community. The needs of local residents and the wider community were at the forefront of their proposals for the Centres, and these were formalised in their applications and business plans, which formed part of the Community Asset Transfer process.

There are a number of key questions for Housing Providers to consider when looking to explore and/or improve Community Asset Transfer processes.

1.1

ARE YOU CONSIDERING A NEW BUILD FACILITY?

Both new build and existing Community Assets pose their own challenges and benefits. In order to tailor the transfer process accordingly, an understanding of what the asset encompasses in terms of its physical space will ensure that any issues that arise can be taken into account.

When Play Place Innov8 moved into Turpington Lane Community Centre, it was an older building that had recently undergone refurbishment as part of the Community Hubs programme, through which Affinity Sutton provided significant capital investment. Play Place Innov8 had seen the facilities available at an open day, and developed its plans to suit the facilities available.

This contrasts with the experiences of the two community associations who took over new buildings constructed as part of wider regeneration projects. This is obviously a much lengthier process.

A CO taking on a new build has the opportunity to have direct involvement in the design of the Centre. The former Chairperson of HLCA, Vicki, represented the community association in discussions with Affinity Sutton around the wider regeneration project and the Centre.

“Plan at the outset to ensure that the building is right.”

Vicki, HLCA

Vicki indicates that it is necessary “to plan at the outset to ensure that the building is right,” thinking through the types of activities that will take place within the Centre, and everything from storage to kitchen facilities, to ensure that it would meet their needs. RCA was also able to have an input into the design of the new Riverside Centre and Dave Lunn from RCA indicates that the wider regeneration project in the local area was “very much dependent upon resident involvement”. Involvement in the redevelopment of these Community Assets has generated a sense of ownership for both HLCA and RCA, as they were able to actively make decisions about the purpose, use and specifications for their Centre. For example, Riverside has a mix of flexible spaces designed for different activities – from smaller meeting and conference rooms to larger multi-purpose rooms and a café situated at the front of the Centre.

1.2

WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE? WHAT ARE THE COMMUNITY ORGANISATION'S INTENTIONS TO ENGAGE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY?

The level of knowledge about the local area as well as the relationship with the community, whether this is an existing or new relationship, is vital to success.

Both HLCA and RCA emerged from their respective local areas, initially as voluntary resident-led associations. They were responsible for the management of the Centres that existed in their local areas prior to the construction of the new Centres, thus providing a sense of continuity and familiarity. Trustees and members of the community associations have links with their local community and knowledge of the local area and stakeholders, including individuals who might engage or otherwise benefit the Centre.

Early in the process, HLCA and RCA actively sought out ideas and feedback from residents and the local community regarding their needs and the future of the Centres. Representatives of both associations emphasised the importance of this element of the transfer process in terms of ensuring local communities retain a sense of ownership and investment in their Centre. For example, Vicki Papworth from HLCA recommends that organisations need to "get out there, talk to the local community and get as many volunteers on board as possible". This enables the local community to have an input into the future of the Centre, which secures support and engagement at an early stage in the process.

"Get out there, talk to the local community and get as many volunteers on board as possible."

Vicki, HLCA

By comparison, prior to their application to the Community Asset Transfer scheme, Play Place Innov8 was not part of the local community at Turpington Lane. The staff were, however, familiar with Bromley and had an awareness of some of the service needs at Turpington Lane. Like the two resident-led organisations, Play Place Innov8 also recognised the importance of local knowledge for managing community services, highlighting the advantages of having a permanent member of Play Place Innov8 staff at Turpington Lane.

As the Asset at Turpington Lane was an established building, with some existing community use, Play Place Innov8 put a lot of effort into reassuring local residents about the process, as some people had assumed they would have to forfeit use of the Centre. They also worked closely with the local



Residents' Association, highlighting this relationship as integral to the successful running of the Centre. Chris Hennis from Play Place Innov8 explained: "we're working with them rather than against them". Whilst Play Place Innov8 and the two community associations approached the Community Asset Transfer scheme with different backgrounds, they collectively emphasise the importance of nurturing relationships within the community.

1.3

WHAT IS THE LEGAL STATUS AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS?

Considering a Community Organisations' (COs) legal and governance structure is important in considering the timeline for transfer to accommodate time for the CO to change their status where needed. Incorporated status provides legal protections and is therefore beneficial to individuals managing Community Assets. Charitable status offers the most financial benefits.

During the application process, Affinity Sutton is now guided by a set of criteria to evaluate the eligibility of Community Organisations

***** (See Strategic document 2: CAT requirements in Appendix 1).

The implementation of procedures, the preparation of a business plan and the establishment of governance structures impact the timeframe for the transfer process.

HLCA and RCA have become companies limited by guarantee with charitable status as a result of their involvement with the Community Asset Transfer process. This decision predated the introduction of the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), which many COs now choose as it only requires them to register with the Charity Commission (not Companies House).

"Things wouldn't happen at the pace people might expect them to happen."

Dave, RCA

Incorporation is a requirement for a CO to be able to take on a lease in their organisation's name (as opposed to as an individual or groups of individuals). Once they became a company limited by guarantee with charitable status, RCA was then required to transfer all of their assets into a new name, which meant opening a new bank account. According to Dave, who is now the Community Development Manager at Riverside, this was a protracted procedure for RCA as a small organisation as they encountered difficulties such as the bank only communicating with trustees. Dave emphasises the importance of governance questions and the need for organisations to be prepared for what this involves, noting, "things wouldn't happen at the pace people might expect them to happen". The need to implement additional structures and procedures should be taken into account early in the process.

As a Community Interest Company (CIC) with experience of managing other community facilities, Play Place Innov8 had existing governance and management policies in place, prior to their application. As Chris from Play Place Innov8 suggests, "one of our biggest selling points really [is that] we are about communities but we've also got our business hat on".

Housing Providers need to consider that some COs will not have access to legal advice or technical support to guide them on formulating policies and procedures such as incorporation. Much support is available by signposting to local CVS or National community sector partners who offer templates and guidance documentation. If the Housing Provider can identify resources, or the CO can fundraise, the process can be made faster if the CO can appoint a dedicated consultant to support them.



PART 2: RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING AND COMMUNICATION

The relationship between the Housing Provider and the Community Organisations is a key part of the Community Asset Transfer process.

2.1

IS THERE A DEDICATED STAFF MEMBER AT THE HOUSING PROVIDER AVAILABLE TO LIAISE WITH COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS?

Ensuring that there is a line of communication between the Housing Provider and the Community Organisations (COs) is vital to ensuring that pertinent information is shared.

As Dave from RCA suggests, everyone involved “needs to be really clear about what’s expected”. Both HLCA and Play Place Innov8 describe the level of support they have received from Affinity Sutton as being “brilliant”.

However, they also highlighted that communication was not always constant. Sally Smith from Play Place Innov8 indicates that they “can’t always get someone on the end of the phone. The main contact, when

she was there was brilliant, but she wasn’t always there”. Affinity Sutton had some changes in personnel at this time, introducing a job share, and a shared email inbox picked up by the three members of the team shortly after this.

Housing Providers should think through the communication channels for COs, and might want to put COs in direct contact with certain departments (for example COs report repairs directly to the repairs department). There needs to be a means for COs to contact the Housing Provider in the event of urgent matters or difficulties. Affinity Sutton is introducing a notification list to guide COs on who to contact in what circumstances, to ensure issues are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

***** (See Strategic document 5: CAT Handover of a Community Asset in Appendix 1).

2.2

WHAT ARE THE PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE ASSET TRANSFER AND HOW CAN THE HOUSING PROVIDER PREPARE AND PLAN FOR THESE POTENTIAL ISSUES?

It is important to consider, from the beginning, the practical issues involved with the CAT process, and how to ensure that these issues do not impact on nurturing and maintaining relationships between the Housing Provider and the CO.



Housing Providers can be complex organisations, with multiple departments liaising on one issue; this complexity can prove difficult to navigate for smaller organisations with less resource, particularly if these various departments are not always aware of the details of arrangements with the COs.

For example, Housing Providers must determine their policy on income generation and their own use of the Centre. Affinity Sutton originally told internal departments they would need to pay to hire the Assets, to encourage Community Organisations to become accustomed to hiring out the Community Asset at full rate to become more financially sustainable. However this affected other departments' delivery budgets.

Dave from RCA explains:

Some Affinity Sutton colleagues were saying 'hang on a minute, why are we having to pay for stuff that takes place in our building?' It's about saying 'you've got to hire it in the same way everyone else does because Assets are telling me I've got to be self-sustaining, but Community Investment want to deliver this great service. Actually you two [Affinity Sutton departments] might want to have a conversation about what one is asking.

-Dave Lunn, RCA

Affinity Sutton often subsidises running costs in the early stages of a CAT (depending on the CO's resources) and has arrived at the conclusion that it requires some usage in-kind to deliver services to residents. This usage is stipulated in the licence.

Empowering COs to make decisions about the Asset is an important part of the CAT process; however this may require a change in attitude on the part of users of the Asset. Sometimes difficult decisions will need to be made regarding other existing uses. In some cases, user groups were accustomed to using a Community Centre free of charge or below current rates, or their time of use might conflict with a CO's plans. There is potential for hostility when

a new CO enters and introduces changes. It is not possible to have a one-size-fits-all approach, and existing uses need to be balanced with the need for the CO to deliver its own activities and ensure operations at the Centre are viable. Existing users need to be informed early in the CAT. Users are made aware of the appeal for a new managing organisation when the opportunity is promoted - they can be invited to any open days, and are notified before the new organisation is introduced. The CO can be introduced to user groups at the handover to take forward these relationships.

"The hardest problem I had when I came in here was utilities. I had to get companies out to find out where it was coming from. I've got to tell you, we're this far down the line and we still don't know where the electric meter is."

**Sally Smith,
Play Place Innov8**

The Housing Provider may later need to investigate and reinforce the CO's entitlement to implement changes; common concerns relate to hire terms and conditions and storage.

Other issues that emerged during the process were the apparent lack of information regarding the physical logistics of the building and critical details about utilities.

Questions regarding responsibility for repairs and how and when they are addressed are also key practical considerations of the relationship between the Housing Provider and the CO. As Chris from Play Place Innov8 notes, they encountered issues around finding out who to go to, and "actually understanding whether we're responsible for it, or whether Affinity Sutton are responsible for it. Apart from emergencies, repairs at the Centres are not given priority over residents - "you will just be another number on a docket" according to Dave from RCA.

In most cases, Affinity Sutton retains the repairs service and provides repairs free of charge to the CO. This does have its limitations as repairs fall under the same contractual service standards as its homes. An issue that might be pressing for a CO operating a Community Centre would not necessarily be considered an urgent repair in a home as there are less users and the repair can be controlled. Affinity Sutton has introduced an acceleration process for necessary repairs where this might result in closure, loss of earnings or cannot be controlled safely.

As well as repairs, Housing Providers will want to think about transferring responsibility for paying utilities and services, and how compliance requirements will be organised (for example Gas Certificates, Fire Regulations etc). A Welcome Pack of documents is useful for the CO.

2.3

HOW CAN THE HOUSING PROVIDER ENSURE THAT THE COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS RECEIVES THE SUPPORT NEEDED?

It is essential to provide support to Community Organisations (COs) prior to the application as well as during the Community Asset Transfer process itself in terms of sharing information and advice to make the process more approachable and less daunting.

Community Organisations (COs) can receive support from a variety of sources. COs can draw on the experience of other voluntary and Community Organisations in the local area to form networks for peer support. Organisations like Locality also offer advice and training. Critically, Housing Providers also have a wealth of knowledge, resources and networks that COs can draw on – in this sense, Housing Providers can themselves function as capacity builders.

Play Place Innov8 had experience raising substantial funds and developing relationships with statutory and voluntary bodies – an advantageous skillset for running Community Assets. They were

confident in their ability to manage the Centre and suggested that if they were newer or more insecure about their capabilities, the process may have taken longer. In actuality, the application and licensing agreement were arranged fairly rapidly.

Chris from Play Place Innov8 suggests that the “pre-preparation process is really important” for COs in order to ensure that they meet the criteria for participating in the Community Asset Transfer process. He mentions the prospect of peer mentoring – connecting groups with the relevant experience and residents’ associations new to CAT, to guide them through the application process and increase their confidence and skills.

Affinity Sutton has recently launched the Hub Connect training programme (See Box 1.), which is offered to all groups that have completed or are undertaking CAT. It includes visits to other sites and encourages COs to connect in person and online.

“The bit you have to work out is where you stop being a competitor and become a support network.”

**Chris,
Play Place Innov8**



Box 1. Hub Connect

- **Networking the Community Organisations for peer support.**
- **An 18 month support programme commissioned by Affinity Sutton and awarded to Locality.**
- **A series of workshops, visits, e-learning, webinars, social media, resources and signposting.**
- **Support across a range of themes including fundraising, business planning, financial and operational procedures, health and safety, governance, hiring staff, volunteer management.**



Whilst Chris draws attention to potential difficulties which may arise due to competition as COs bid to deliver the same services in the same geographical area, he does suggest providing support to peers during the application process need not be a conflict of interest – “the bit you have to work out is where you stop being a competitor and become a support network”.

Affinity Sutton views their role in the CAT process as landlord, supporter and facilitator. They seek to provide COs with the necessary support even prior to the application process, commissioning the services of consultants and infrastructure organisations like local CVS, Locality, Community Matters to ensure that Community Organisations have access to the necessary information. Affinity Sutton also offers support to COs in terms of helping them to understand any requirements.

* (See Strategic documents 1: CAT Transfer Flowchart; 2: CAT Requirements and 5: Handover of a Community Asset in Appendix 1).

For example, HLCA enlisted an independent consultant on the advice of Affinity Sutton to deliver a business planning exercise that provided vital skills and helped facilitate the development of their proposals and vision.

This type of exercise can be enhanced by developing links with other COs engaging in the process and sharing practical experiences, which Vicki suggests would “help embed the planning skills” necessary for developing and updating key documents such as business plans.

Affinity Sutton’s Community Investment team also support COs to manage and grow their Assets, through frequent review meetings, signposting to opportunities and joint projects. It is important Housing Providers also prepare for the unexpected, as COs have their own organisational difficulties. For example, internal relationships with local community members may break down which can be difficult for COs to manage themselves but might create a conflict of interest

for the Housing Provider. Creating links between COs and specialist support or independent mediators can also prove useful once COs are managing an Asset, enabling them to handle any difficulties they encounter and continue their operations.



PART 3: OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

There is another suite of questions to consider in thinking through how Community Organisations (COs) will take over management of a Community Asset from an operational perspective (See Strategic document 2: CAT Requirements and 5: Handover of a Community Asset in Appendix 1). Affinity Sutton assesses these at the application and interview stage of the CAT process, and might set conditions to be met prior to entering a lease or licence.

3.1

DOES THE COMMUNITY ORGANISATION HAVE SUFFICIENT PEOPLE-POWER TO RUN THE ASSET, AND WILL THE COMMUNITY ORGANISATION BE RUN BY PAID STAFF, VOLUNTEERS, OR A MIX OF BOTH?

At some Community Assets, there is a mix of paid staff and volunteers, but frequently volunteers are a vital resource in the running of the centre. The Housing Provider needs to check there are enough people to cover the day-to-day responsibilities and governance, and COs must ensure staff and volunteers have the support they need.

The day-to-day running of St Hugh's has relied heavily upon the voluntary involvement of trustees, particularly in relation to making sure that the Centre was made available for those hiring facilities and using the Centre. A paid Centre manager now supports the Centre and as a result, the Centre is now able to advertise regular set opening hours, taking some of the burden off the trustees and other volunteers. RCA also

employs staff to deliver activities, which Dave suggests "makes us a little bit different from a traditional building for hire", differentiating them from organisations which might primarily see themselves as a key holder or caretaker.

Many of the staff at HCLA and Riverside have been recruited from the local area. This can offer important benefits in terms of the local connections and knowledge that these individuals may have. However, it is also important to holistically consider the role and who may be best suited for it. Whilst paid staff provide a sense of stability, the number of formal employees at each of the Assets vary and are dependent upon finances and the capacity of the organisation to take on the responsibilities of employing staff.

All three of the Community Assets have strong teams of volunteers in place who support the paid members of staff and are integral

to the management of the Centres, activities and events. For Play Place Innov8, the voluntary involvement of the local Resident's Association contributes towards the smooth running of the Centre and according to Sally from Play Place Innov8, this "made our job ten times easier".

They work with us to do things for the community. Everything we've done here is to promote the Centre, the residents' association has been involved because they want it to be a success as well.

-Sally Smith, Play Place Innov8

HLCA and RCA are heavily supported by their voluntary trustees. John, one of HLCA's trustees, highlights their integral role in managing a Community Asset, suggesting that their commitment and voluntary involvement is so vital, the Centres "wouldn't open otherwise". The decision to employ a part-time Centre coordinator has taken some of the pressure of trustees at HCLA which Vicki suggests that the decision to employ a part-time Centre coordinator "professionalises the face of the Centre, meaning individuals and groups can engage with the Centre, rather than trustees".

Many of the youth workers at Riverside started out as volunteers and were supported by RCA to receive the appropriate training. Dave notes, "if an opportunity comes up, we like to offer it to long-standing volunteers". This demonstrates the value that RCA place upon volunteers, working with the local community and incorporating them into Centre management.

3.2

HAS THE COMMUNITY ORGANISATION CONSIDERED LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY (EITHER IN THEIR BUSINESS PLAN OR OTHERWISE) AND HOW THEY WILL COMMUNICATE SERVICES, AND ACTIVITIES TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY TO GALVANISE SUPPORT AND MAINTAIN CONSISTENT USE?

Making a Community Asset more efficient contributes toward ensuring that it is sustainable. Community Organisations (COs) need to consider how they are ensuring sustainability both through income generated by hire of the Asset, fundraising and delivering services and activities.

"From a business perspective, you've got to make this work."

**Chris,
Play Place Innov8**

Affinity Sutton only conducts Community Asset Transfer with organisations that position the Community Asset as core to their remit. The hiring of facilities at all three case studies is actively promoted in order to maximise income and ensure that the Centres are sustainable. This enables them to deliver activities and services needed in the local community.

Play Place Innov8 emphasises the need to be cost aware, pointing to the example of discontinuing the use of a photocopier which had a monthly cost for maintenance, despite no-one using it in order to reduce costs. Chris argues, "from a business perspective, you've got to make this work". Various costs, including service charges, were also highlighted as important concerns to consider. Dave from RCA advises COs to "be aware that it doesn't matter whether you have one person or 100, a lot of costs will be the same. Be aware of the costs and that you have to cover the costs no matter what". These sentiments are shared by HLCA who suggest

that if the Asset is not organised to generate income, it could encounter problems. Therefore it is necessary to begin planning at the outset of the CAT process to ensure that the building is right for the organisation's objectives and goals and that the CO is capable of managing the Asset effectively. Affinity Sutton sometimes subsidises some running or start-up costs but this depends on the finances of the organisation in question. The aim is for COs to generate income to become more self-sustaining where they have this potential.

Projects organised at Riverside are encouraged to encompass an element of outreach to the local community, as opposed to being exclusively bound to the physical building in order to reach more people. This is a response to what Dave refers to as "building phobia", which prevents people from becoming involved; "even those projects which are working well, they are not used by everybody". Working with the community and raising awareness of the services that the Centres have to offer can help bridge the distance

between the Centres and those who feel they are not a place for them.

Organising open-days and seasonal fun-days are an effective means to generate awareness and promote interaction with local people, potential hirers and those using the Centres. As staff from Play Place Innov8 indicate, "that really, really helped us... so that everybody could see what we wanted to see and what the community wanted happening". All three organisations use a website, social media platforms and newsletters to promote the Community Centres and the services and activities they provide and reach out to the local community. The aspiration to establish their Centre as a place for all, where people can socialise and congregate informally outside of structured classes and activities is shared by all three of the organisations. Housing Providers will want to assess the intention of COs for engaging the community at the CAT application stage, think about how this fits with their own plans, and consider the potential for partnership working.



3.3

HAS THE COMMUNITY ORGANISATION CONSIDERED HOW IT WILL TAILOR SERVICES, CLASSES AND ACTIVITIES TO LOCAL COMMUNITY NEED? HAS THE CO CONSIDERED WHERE THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT OR EXISTING PERCEPTIONS MAY IMPACT ON SERVICE PROVISION?

It is important for Community Organisations (COs) to think how their services and activities meet local need, and whether these services complement, fill gaps, or duplicate existing service provision in the area. New and existing external hirers may also play a part in shaping service provision. By being aware of and responsive to local needs COs can ensure that appropriate partnerships are formed.



The division of service delivery by internal and external providers at St Hugh's Community Centre is approximately equal, with external services at the Centre encompassing classes delivered by the Bromley Adult Education Centre. RCA estimates that 60-70% of those using Riverside live in the immediate postcode, indicating that services need to be tailored to their needs in order to be successful. For example, there were local residents running Pilates classes elsewhere who wanted to deliver the same at Riverside. However, as Dave indicates, this venture was not successful, explaining, "actually it didn't work, because it's not what the community is looking for". In comparison, family orientated activities such as seasonal fun days at both Riverside and St Hugh's Community Centres have proved popular.

The process of developing links with external partners, and ensuring that they are happy with arrangements and facilities is time consuming. This is certainly an issue at RCA where more time is spent focusing on external service providers and their activities than internal activities.

We probably work harder at that in some respects. The [internal] projects take care of themselves; the people managing them can just get on.

-Dave Lunn, RCA

The projects and activities organised internally at Riverside tend to focus predominantly upon families, older people, sport and healthy living. There is also a café on the premises, a venture managed by RCA and promoted as central to the social life of the Centre. An external contractor previously managed the café. Bringing management of the café in-house contributes towards the CO having a sense of ownership of the Centre as a whole, how it is run, and the relationship between the Centre and the local community, ensuring that all services are integrated.

Common services offered at each of the three Centres include those centred on youth services and engagement. The youth project at Riverside is the longest running youth service in the three case studies, and has been operating in different incarnations and supported by various funding streams for approximately 15 years. There is also a long-standing youth club at the St Hugh's estate. However, HLCA have found it more difficult to assign a youth worker to the Centre, with the Centre not having sufficient funds to do so. Vicki suggests that employing someone is a big task for a small organisation in terms of the attendant costs and administration required. With the recent addition of a part-time Centre coordinator to the Centre, it is expected that the process of employing a youth worker will be easier as relevant systems are now in place. In addition to this, HLCA was unsure how to locate potential staff, with Vicki suggesting that "some advice and support around key roles

and how to locate and fill them” would be a useful exercise for COs.

Whilst youth services are deemed to be of value by each Centre, the viability and progression of such services has been hindered to some extent due to prevailing misconceptions about young people.

There are issues around trust in young people.

-Vicki Papworth, HLCA

People’s fear of crime is very high, despite the fact that this is the safest borough in London.

-Dave Lunn, RCA

There is an assumption that young people are bad – we hear this all the time from communities.

-Chris Hennis, Play Place Innov8

Distrust and ambivalence towards young people within the local community is a common theme across all three case studies and has influenced the services offered at the Centres and how they are introduced.

The emergence of youth activities at Turpington Lane generated a sense of unease amongst local residents, particularly amongst older residents who live opposite the Centre as the local area already experiences some anti-social behavioural issues. As Chris notes, “residents weren’t keen, they thought we’d be bringing more trouble in”. In order to counter this, Play Place Innov8 actively engage with local residents and other partners such as the police in order to understand the viewpoint and fears of the local community.



HLCA and RCA also face similar issues around their youth projects, despite being established for longer.

There are still misconceptions about young people - even with a project that’s been running for that length of time. In the London Borough of Sutton, there isn’t much statutory youth work going on anymore, so we do a lot of that.

-Dave Lunn, RCA

In an effort to counter this, both community associations have responded by reaching out to the local community. Dave from RCA argues, “It’s our job to break those barriers down, but it takes time”. By promoting regular interaction and communication between different elements of the community on an informal basis, HLCA are actively trying to address tensions and lessen the boundaries separating these groups.

They have also employed a Community Organiser at HLCA, whose responsibility is to work closely with the local community and develop ideas for running the Centre. Vicki indicates that this post has been essential, “enabling the Centre to respond to local residents’ needs and aims, rather than basing decisions on services and events on the small group of Trustees”. Enabling local residents to become involved with the management of the Community Asset generates a sense of empowerment and ownership amongst local residents, giving them a sense of control over what happens at the Centre.

3.4

HAS THE COMMUNITY ORGANISATION CONSIDERED COSTING STRUCTURES AND WHETHER USERS WILL BE EXPECTED TO PAY FOR ACTIVITIES, SERVICES AND CLASSES DELIVERED AT THE CENTRE, EITHER BY THE COMMUNITY ORGANISATION OR BY EXTERNAL HIRERS?

Whether a Community Organisation (CO) chooses to charge for some – or all – of the services, activities and classes offered at the Asset may depend on the local area, level of need, and existing service provision, whilst also considering the balance between cash flow and footfall in guaranteeing sustainability. Some COs obtain grants or fundraise in order to make activities affordable for end users.

There were some differences of opinion amongst the two community-led organisations as to whether charges should be applied to activities hosted by the Community Centres. Members of HLCA highlight the extent to which costs can act as a barrier to entry, particularly for their local residents. This assertion supports their decision to offer most of their activities free of charge. The feasibility of offering free activities on a long-term basis is something that needs careful consideration as it raises the issue of sustainability and the need to ensure that the Centre is self-supporting.

HLCA made a conscious decision to use the income generated from some activities that can bear a charge, to cross subsidise those that can't. Vicki emphasises the need for "clarity about service charges and other costs from the outset" so that groups can make these sorts of decisions and plan for the medium and longer term.

The issues surrounding costs are recognised at Riverside and as Dave notes, is "something that we're acutely aware of and something our hirers are very aware of. Charges are applied to some of the activities held at Riverside; however, RCA also recognise the need to take circumstances into account and will consider discounts and arrangements to support groups, if necessary. Dave indicates that charges at Riverside, even if just a nominal fee, are justified with the argument that it "shows people that there is actually a value for something". These sentiments are acknowledged at HLCA by Vicki, who suggests that there does need to be a general awareness that "just because it is free to users, that does not mean it is free to provide". There are also differences of opinion regarding charges amongst users of the Centres, with some local residents expecting free activities and others willing to pay for particular activities.

People will generally be willing to pay for social activities but not so much for classes.

-Vicki Papworth, Hilda Lane Community Association

If people want to participate in something, they will find a way.

-Dave Lunn, RCA

However, it is important to note that attracting people to the Centres is vital. As Dave notes, "you can't price yourself out of the market" which suggests pricing structures require a lot of thought and attention.

All COs are now required to develop a business plan for the CO to demonstrate it is thinking through how it intends to develop and sustain its activities. Affinity Sutton will sometimes agree to support COs to meet some of their running costs or with other resources in the start-up phase, and understands that becoming more sustainable takes time and there is different potential for each Asset. Income and expenditure for the Asset is discussed at review meetings with a view to reducing financial support on a phased basis as income is generated. The support programme, Hub Connect, provides advice on business planning and fundraising, and Affinity Sutton regularly alert COs to suitable funding opportunities.



3.5

HAS THE COMMUNITY ORGANISATION CONSIDERED HOW IT WILL MONITOR USE, MEASURE IMPACT, AND REPORT BACK TO THE HOUSING PROVIDER?

Agreeing reporting mechanisms and processes from the start will ensure that it is clear how data will be captured and reported, as well as the frequency of reporting and overall methods for measuring impact of activities and services. This monitoring enables the Community Organisation (CO) and the Housing Provider to judge the success of the transfer, and develop their services.

The extent to which the three organisations monitored the footfall at each Centre and measured the numbers of people participating in classes and activities offered at each site varied. Play Place Innov8 actively collate information about people using the Centre at Turpington Lane, with regular statistics being provided by their external hirers. Using online survey tools such as Survey Monkey, Play Place Innov8 has been able to communicate with local residents. According to Sally, this “gave us an idea of exactly what it is the community needed in the area, so that told us what to aim for”.

At Riverside, RCA retains records about activities organised internally and externally as this data can be used constructively to make decisions about the Centre. As Dave suggests, “collectively it makes us a lot stronger to share information. We can evidence all this stuff at a very local level”. Dave does recognise

“Collectively it makes us a lot stronger to share information. We can evidence all this stuff at a very local level.”

**Dave,
RCA**

the need to provide some training, particularly to those who are not familiar with data collection and adapt this process to their particular needs, indicating that “for some groups, we’ve had to sort of educate them and say ‘you need to keep a register’ and that’s not something some groups would traditionally have ever done. It’s an evolving process”. Providing training to people hiring out facilities and creating structures for collating information is part of the wider strategy being developed at Riverside to share information and improve services at the Centre.

In contrast to Riverside and Turpington Lane, the amount of information

gathered at St Hugh’s is somewhat limited, particularly with regards to activities organised by external service providers. Classes organised by Bromley Adult Education Centre do have strict reporting measures in place and contact details are kept for, classes hosted internally. However, as John, one of HLCA’s trustees, reveals, they “do not ask any of the private hirers to give us any information”. Time constraints and the logistics of recording data were identified as being the main factors inhibiting data collection at St Hugh’s.

Housing Providers should consider what reporting they require from COs. Affinity Sutton asks COs to stipulate what monitoring they are able to do in the CAT application. In this way it is possible to understand what the CO is willing and able to collect. The Housing Provider might also want to think about means of reporting or structure of review meetings so it can monitor use of the Asset, demonstrate outputs and promote good news resulting from the transfer. Monitoring the use of Community Assets can also be utilised to evidence its social impact. Considering the social impact of a Community Asset is an area of CAT that Affinity Sutton is venturing into as it aligns with the Housing Provider’s own approach to measuring social impact. This will also enable Affinity Sutton to assist CO’s to begin thinking about their social impact and become familiar with the tools that can be used to measure this (see Section VI).

VI. MONITORING AND EVALUATION



A key consideration in the process of Community Asset Transfer is considering how you, as a Housing Provider, will monitor and evaluate the activities and services provided by the Community Organisations (COs). One potential method for evaluation is to consider the social value generated – the ways in which the activities and services provided by COs improve the wellbeing of local residents and other service users.

As part of the development of this toolkit, Affinity Sutton has piloted this approach at two of the case study organisations to understand what the approach offers and to approximate the level of social value generated based on estimates.

SOCIAL VALUE AND THE SOCIAL HOUSING SECTOR

The social housing sector has been increasingly conscious of its **need to measure and demonstrate the social value it generates**.

Different Housing Providers have used a number of different systems but have typically reported existing approaches to be a poor fit, usually because they require excessive resource requirements and/or they lack the robustness for findings to reliably inform decisions.

As part of value for money regulations, the HCA now states that boards must maintain a robust assessment of social returns, and recently announced that it will spring surprise tests on Housing Providers to ensure they are delivering value for money. More fundamentally, Housing Providers are increasingly seeking to use data and evidence to inform all aspects of their decision-making, to ensure they are spending their money as effectively as possible. Without a robust method to measure social impact, they will not be able to assess whether efforts to maximise social value are effective.

HACT AND WELLBEING VALUATION

HACT has been undertaking a programme of work to equip the sector with the tools it needs to understand its social value, as well as working with individual Housing Providers to help them embed consideration of social value within their decision-making.

HACT has worked with Daniel Fujiwara, a leading econometrician, to develop the **Social Value Bank – the first set of methodologically consistent and robust social values derived using the Wellbeing Valuation approach**.³ Wellbeing Valuation is recognised in the HM Treasury Green Book as an approach to value goods not traded in the market. The Social Value Bank focuses on values associated with community investment and the method can likewise be applied by organisations working with Housing Providers, such as COs participating in Community Asset Transfer.

Wellbeing Valuation allows you to measure the success of a social intervention by how much it increases

people’s wellbeing. Rather than asking people about how much something has improved their life, which can introduce psychological complexities and extensive data collection. Wellbeing Valuation analyses existing datasets of national surveys that instead reveal effects on wellbeing in a robust way.

Analysis can isolate the impact of a specific aspect of life on wellbeing. We can then value this by determining the equivalent amount of money needed to increase someone’s wellbeing by the same amount. This is a value across a year and may be used in cost-benefit analysis as well as SROI calculations.

So, for example, as detailed below, you would need to give an individual £8,116 in order to affect the same uplift in wellbeing that they experience by being active in a tenants group.

³HACT was commissioned by Affinity Sutton and Catalyst to develop the Social Value Bank. For more information on the Social Value Bank and Wellbeing Valuation, please see: <http://www.hact.org.uk/publications-and-tools>

RETROSPECTIVE IMPACT PROJECTIONS

RIVERSIDE CENTRE

Associated outcome	Average person value	Number of participants	Impact (minus deadweight) ⁴
Go to youth clubs	£2,300	206	£383,764
Moderate exercise	£4,179	117	£396,021
Active in tenants group	£8,116	200	£1,314,838
OVERALL SOCIAL IMPACT			£2,094,623

TURPINGTON LANE

Associated outcome	Average person value	Number of participants	Impact (minus deadweight)
Mild exercise	£3,537	10	£28,651
Moderate exercise	£4,179	50	£169,240
Active in tenants group	£8,116	25	£164,355
Member of a social group	£1,850	98	£146,822
OVERALL SOCIAL IMPACT			£509,068



The retrospective impact projection here is an indicative measure of the impact achieved at two of the case study organisations, across several specific areas of activity. The COs were not aware when collecting this data that it would be used for an impact assessment, nor did HACT request records of attendance to confirm these figures. The figures were calculated according to average values (i.e. not differentiated by age or by region) and, since a given value can only be applied once to each individual, where there is a suspected duplication of attendees (in youth activities offered, for instance), these were subtracted from the total in order to provide as robust an estimate as possible.⁵ As this data was provided by the COs to indicate data collected over a particular period of time, the results also have not been verified in terms of the “regular participation” threshold for these activities.⁶

The Wellbeing Valuation approach can be used by COs to inform business decisions and can also play a role in improving business management, through improved record keeping. COs can use the values in the Social Value Bank to provide potential partners with evidence of the social impact that joined-up working could achieve, as well as using the values to demonstrate how they may meet funders’ outcome and reporting requirements.⁷

4. The question of cause and effect is an issue in any kind of impact appraisal. For example, we do not know who may have found a job even if they had not attended your job club. To tackle this, we apply a deadweight (‘what would have happened anyway’) adjustment to prevent over claiming. The Value Calculator gives the deadweight-adjusted values. For more information see Trotter, L., Vine, J., Leach, M. and Fujiwara, D. (2014) Measuring the Social Impact of Community Investment: A Guide to using the Wellbeing Valuation Approach. London: HACT.

5. For example, Riverside collected data on three youth projects, with 265 attending the Time Out Youth Project, 18 attending the SSPS project and 41 attending the Doorstep Sports Club. The number of participants was therefore calculated by subtracting the 18 and 41 attendees from the 265 (n=206) to recognise that there was likely some duplication in attendees between these activities and to prevent double counting.

6. The regulatory participation threshold for regular activities is regular attendance at least once a week for two months.

7. More information available from HACT. See Trotter, L., Vine, J., Leach, M. and Fujiwara, D. (2014) Measuring the Social Impact of Community Investment: A Guide to using the Wellbeing Valuation Approach. London: HACT.

VII. APPLYING LESSONS LEARNED



COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Recognise the importance of nurturing relationships within community

Enabling local residents to become involved with the management of the Community Asset generates a sense of empowerment and ownership amongst local residents, giving them a sense of control over what happens at the Centre. Incorporating local people and knowledge also contributes towards a sense of continuity and familiarity. Facilitating regular interaction between different elements of the local community promotes community cohesion by breaking down some of the boundaries separating different groups.

Communicating with Housing Provider

Maintaining contact with the Housing Provider will enable the CO to access support/advice when needed. Joint trouble-shooting and efforts to identify resources can improve results.

Begin planning at the outset

In order for some COs to meet the criteria for the CAT process, they must have a number of structures, particularly those relating to governance and finances, in place. The implementation of additional structures and procedures need to be taken into account early in the process.

Contributing towards the design of new buildings provides COs with a sense of ownership and enables them to ensure that it suits the organisation's objectives and goals.

Relationships and partnerships with other statutory and voluntary bodies

Developing links with other groups will enable COs to access useful information and advice, and increase their confidence with the application process.

Role of volunteers

Volunteers are an invaluable resource. It is important COs have sufficient people involved and support for staff and volunteers.

HOUSING PROVIDERS

Recognise the importance of nurturing relationships within community

It is important for Housing Providers to actively communicate with the local community during the CAT process, particularly during the initial planning stages to determine their needs and the future of Community Assets. Is there an existing organisation managing or using the Community Asset – do they want to continue, or are they looking to step back? If they want to step back but maintain an interest in the Centre they can play an important role. For example, having a resident to represent the group on the CAT interview panel.

Dedicated point of contact

Providing COs with a point of contact within the Housing Provider is an important part of keeping the line of communication open. Joint trouble-shooting and efforts to identify resources can reap results.

Begin planning at the outset

In order for COs to take on a CAT, they must have a suitable structure, and financial and governance arrangements in place. This demonstrates that the organisation is capable of managing the Asset effectively. Affinity Sutton generally offers a licence in the first instance, which allows both parties to test the relationship and to reach a point where the Asset is more self-sufficient and self-sustaining, and delivering significant social value. At this point Affinity Sutton would consider a lease. A lease is often required for COs to obtain capital grant funding.

Provide support for COs

Supporting COs with the application process in terms of facilitating peer-mentoring, networking or meetings with independent consultants will increase their confidence with the application process and encourage more COs to consider the CAT process.

Assessing capacity and providing support

Affinity Sutton will assess the capacity of COs at interview stage, and may set conditions to boost volunteers or trustees to ensure numbers are sufficient. Helping voluntary trustees to access support and training, from within Affinity Sutton or outside, can help COs understand their responsibilities, and enact their responsibilities, and to thrive.

Whilst the three organisations have been successful in managing their Community Asset, they have also encountered a number of challenges that relate to their background, model of management and local environment. There is no blueprint for Community Asset management; different approaches to community involvement, the history of a particular area, and the nature of the relationship between a Housing Provider and a Community Asset all affect the process.

Community Organisations (COs) and Housing Providers alike need to be aware of the difficulties associated with the CAT process and be able to respond appropriately. An exploration of the CAT process from the perspective of the CO highlights a number of clear lessons that can be applied by COs and Housing Providers.

The lessons emerging from the discussion around what worked well for the three organisations, what was learnt by trial and error and what could have been done differently can be used as a tool to inform the CAT process.

Identify who has responsibility for repairs and compliance

Determining who has responsibility for repairs and Health and Safety compliance checks (Gas Certificates, Water testing etc.) will make the CAT process and management of the Community Asset more straightforward.

Be aware of costs

Financial sustainability is a key issue for COs involved with managing a Community Asset, and requires accurate cost management, business planning and diverse income streams.

Services need to be tailored to the needs of local residents and people using the Asset

Ongoing consultation and engagement is essential. The CO also needs to think about barriers to engagement, such as the costs of activities and awareness. The profile of the local area and demographics of the local community may also influence what activities are offered and who decides to use the Asset.

Embed reporting processes

Ensuring that data collection procedures are in place to capture any monitoring information is vital. COs will need to consider data protection legislation and liaise with external hirers to determine how data will be shared.

Ensure pertinent information is shared

Sharing relevant information regarding the physical logistics of buildings and critical details about utilities, and determining who has responsibility for repairs and Health and Safety compliance checks will make the CAT process easier for all involved.

Ensure CO approaches CAT process from business perspective

Financial sustainability is a key issue for COs involved with managing a Community Asset. Housing Providers need to ensure that the CO is aware of this and is suitably prepared.

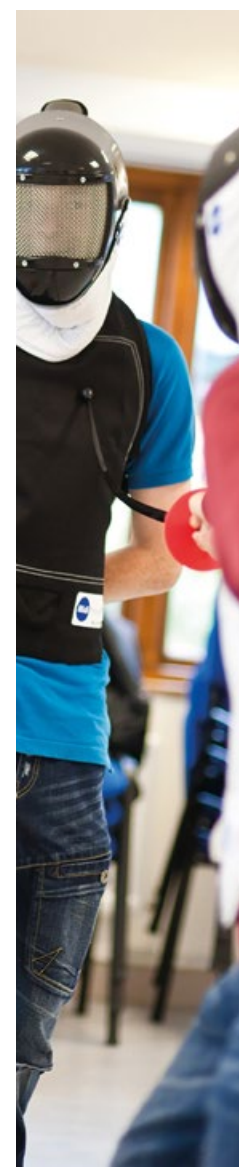
Data-driven service provision

Housing Providers may have access to external data or to area-based data from housing management systems. Where Housing Providers can share insights about the existing partners, existing service provision, or profile of an area, they can help COs target service provision more effectively.

Prior to the interview stage, Affinity Sutton provides COs with a report generated using the online Community Insight tool, which offers information about how the local area performs across a range of open data indicators.⁸

Support reporting processes

Where the Housing Provider requires monitoring and reporting, is it essential to ensure that COs are able to do this (they will need to cover themselves in terms of data protection) and to keep in mind that they may need support if specified reporting is required via a template or pro forma, a data schema, or a particular methodology.



8. More information about Community Insight can be found at: <https://www.communityinsight.org>

APPENDIX 1: STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS AND TEMPLATES

There are a number of important useful documents detailing different aspects of the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Process that Affinity Sutton has developed and that can be adapted for different organisations. The list below sets out this group of strategic documents; please see the relevant section in the online toolkit for copies of all documents.

For templates, please visit:

[www.hact.org.uk/
community-assets](http://www.hact.org.uk/community-assets)

1. CAT FLOWCHART

This document details the different actions that follow an initial expression of interest from a CO, from informal discussions through to formal application and, where suitable, transfer of the Asset.

2. CAT REQUIREMENTS

This document outlines the aspects a CO needs to ensure it has in place before entering a licence or lease. They are not necessarily required at the CAT application stage, and where they are absent they will form conditions to be met prior to completion of the transfer.

3. APPLICATION FORM

This form is designed to be used by the Housing Provider in inviting applications from COs interested in taking over management of the Asset.

4. LICENCE AGREEMENT

This document details the terms of the licence which allows the Community Organisation to manage the building, under shared occupation with Affinity Sutton. Typically a Community Organisation will be offered a licence in the first instance to allow both parties to test the venture and for Affinity Sutton to retain some use. When the Community Organisation achieves confidence and self-sufficiency a longer-term, exclusive lease can be negotiated.



5. CAT HANDOVER OF A COMMUNITY ASSET

Transferring a Community Asset to a CO or other organisation is a complex process involving a number of procedures. There are a number of items that need to be completed by the Housing Provider and CO during the handover process of the Community Asset. In order to make this more straightforward and efficient, a practical checklist detailing the various stages in the process and the items that need to be completed is an advantage. The Handover document is used by staff at the Handover meeting and sets out the different elements to consider in the transfer. The CO is also given a Welcome Pack containing useful information in relation to the building and AS procedures:

HANDOVER PACK

- Letter to Existing Hirers
- Inventory
- Actions and Miscellaneous Items
- Gifted Items

WELCOME PACK

- Repairs Procedure
- Utilities and Annual Checks/ Certificates
- Health and Safety
- No Smoking Policy
- Marketing and Media Protocol
- Notification procedure
- Hirers agreements (see 6)

6. HIRER AGREEMENTS – ONE-OFF BOOKINGS AND RECURRING BOOKINGS

The one-off hirers' agreement is used for a single block booking (e.g. a one-off session or a particular week); the recurring form is used for repeat bookings. The differences between the two agreements are the period of hire (at 1.1.2) and the Conditions set out on page 3. Likewise, there are differences in the deposit payable (a portion of the fee for recurring hires, or whole payment upfront for one-off bookings) and the potential to review the hiring rate.

Affinity Sutton may use these to hire the space to the CO to enable them to deliver some activities before entering a licence or lease. The CO can use these as a model for their own documents to enter their own hire arrangements.

7. SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT

This Social Value Report is designed for use by the CO taking over management of the Asset. It details the context of the Wellbeing Valuation methodology and contains a simple reporting structure, along with a certification statement. This document can be used by the CO in funding applications and in reporting to the Housing Provider.

Affinity Sutton Group Limited

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Registered Office:
Level 6, 6 More London Place
Tooley Street, London SE1 2DA

www.affinitysutton.com