



Glasgow and West of Scotland
Forum of Housing Associations



**Tenancy
Sustainment
and Intensive
Housing Support
for Vulnerable
Households:
A Perspective
from Community
Based Housing
Associations in
Glasgow**

March 2023

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1 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Tenancy sustainment pressures on housing associations are increasing, and have been exacerbated by the pandemic and then the cost of living crisis
- Whether provided as part of the mainstream housing management service, or as a separately staffed service, tenancy sustainment support is seen as critical to preventing homelessness among existing tenants
- Mental health issues feature prominently among those most in need of support: some are already 'in the system' but others are not and their only support is from the housing association
- Where HA staff have a single, named contact within the HSCP, relationships are good, and the chances of engaging with the right services are enhanced
- Recent, new services such as the Complex Needs Service in Glasgow are very welcome and could make a real difference (they were at a relatively early implementation stage at the time of the survey and interviews), but referral processes can be problematic and there are concerns over the threshold for receiving support
- Access to other critical services is also limited, with GPs being almost impossible to access in some locations, and long waiting times for residential rehabilitation services
- The increasing pressures are having a profound impact on frontline staff, whose inability to access external support is leaving them vulnerable as they move far beyond the traditional model of tenancy sustainment activities
- There is a growing risk of burnout among staff as they seek less stressful roles in or outwith housing. This has a particularly marked impact on smaller associations who may only have two housing officers
- The increasing prominence of homeless prevention, as the 2023 Housing Bill approaches, means that the need for a central funding source – akin to the former Supporting People fund – is self-evident. It should be made available directly to housing associations and others providing the support and not routed through local authorities (to avoid falling foul of local government's dislike of ring fenced funding)
- GWSF has a good relationship with the HSCP in Glasgow and will continue exploring how HAs can better access critical support for their tenants, recognising the many competing demands on resources

2 - BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 2.1 As we tentatively emerged from the pandemic in late 2021, many GWSF member associations in Glasgow advised us of the ever-increasing involvement of housing staff in providing additional support for vulnerable tenants, alongside escalating efforts to engage the statutory support services in individual cases. Forum members felt that these new pressures, and the increased level of activity, far exceeded the usual parameters of their tenancy sustainment work.
- 2.2 In response, we embarked upon a research project with Glasgow associations to explore their concerns in more depth. In doing so we hoped to obtain a clearer and more comprehensive picture of tenancy sustainment and intensive housing support in Glasgow.
- 2.3 The research project comprised a survey responded to by 50% of our Glasgow members in the second half of 2022, a small number of follow-up/in-depth interviews, and gathering in short case study examples.
- 2.4 The research will help us assess whether the provision of tenancy support has increased in recent years and/or become more intensive in nature, and what factors have influenced any such increase (including, for example, any link to the proportion of homeless households being housed).
- 2.5 We have aimed to capture the implications for staff roles and overall landlord services, how successful or otherwise the attempts to engage statutory/commissioned services are, and how housing staff can better access those services when needed.

What is 'tenancy sustainment'?

Outcome 11 of the Scottish Social Housing Charter sets out what social landlords must do in relation to tenancy sustainment. It states –

Social landlords ensure that: tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home; and ensure suitable support is available including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations.

The three definitions of tenancy sustainment below are taken from three of our members' Tenancy Sustainment Strategies.

"Tenancy Sustainment is a generic term for the prevention of tenancy breakdown or a 'failed tenancy'. Failed tenancies are a waste of resources because each additional property becoming empty incurs significant costs. It can also be disastrous for the tenant who may end up homeless, and find it difficult to secure another tenancy."

"Tenancy sustainment means providing housing related support to enable tenants to have the best opportunity to sustain their tenancies by improving their quality of life and ensuring they have access to the right support services at the right time."

"Tenancy sustainment is important to us because providing secure homes for people is what we do it's our core business. We strive to provide 'excellent housing in vibrant communities' which are exemplified by settled tenancies. There is a cost associated with failed tenancies, a financial cost to the association and a personal cost to individuals and families who lose their home."

3 - HOW OUR MEMBERS DELIVER THEIR TENANCY SUSTAINMENT SERVICES IN GLASGOW

- 3.1 Eleven associations indicated that their tenancy sustainment activities are delivered as an integral component of their mainstream housing management services.
- 3.2 Six associations reported that they have a separately structured/staffed tenancy sustainment service, with funding coming from a mixture of sources, including Scottish Government grants, social work, and service charge/rents.
- 3.3 Three associations described themselves as having a hybrid model of tenancy support services.
- 3.4 For each of the hybrid models, most tenants receive tenancy support via the association's mainstream housing management service. In addition, these three associations also provide more specialized and targeted support to specific groups of tenants.

3.5 These activities include:

- a project targeted at individuals who have experienced homelessness
- ESOL classes and other support for members of BAME communities
- commissioned services targeted at people who have been assessed by social work as having mental health issues
- young people with a background of homelessness or care
- floating support service that supports older people to maintain their independence.

3.6 However, it should be noted that all respondents, regardless of how they deliver their TS services, indicated that their associations provide a wide range of TS supports. Furthermore, we know that this is true for all our members, both within and outwith Glasgow.

4 - WHAT TYPES OF TENANCY SUSTAINMENT SUPPORT DO OUR MEMBERS PROVIDE?

“We have a very low-level eviction and even court action rate, which I do feel demonstrates our staff hard work & commitment to doing everything possible & within our power to keep people in their tenancies.”

4.1 New tenants –

- We fund starter packs (£50 each)
- We provide decoration vouchers (when décor is disrupted or of poor quality)
- We refer to the local community church for help with furnishings and we also donate items back from property left in voids including white goods.
- We offer welfare rights and energy advice
- Access to the local pantry - £2.50 voucher for first weekly shop offered.
- Provide flooring and blinds packages to new tenants
- Furniture packages for in-work poor to new tenants
- Working with statutory and other agencies to support new tenants via Section 5 referrals

4.2 Existing Tenants –

- We have funded one off clean ups or item uplift (property condition where appropriate) however we don't have a budget for this therefore only in extreme circumstances
- We offer décor vouchers as incentive (at housing officer discretion)
- FHOSS referral through casework team (homeless prevention)
- Can make appointment for welfare rights advice and energy advice in house.
- We do make referrals through the AP1 online facility
- We previously had access to the community links workers via GP service (although since reopening post Covid they are recruiting and we haven't had a named contact)
- We have a separate domestic violence policy.
- Referrals to No.1 Befriending Agency
- Community food hub and community gardens that up skill people in how to cook and grow vegetables. Also provide a soup kitchen on a Saturday afternoon
- Fuel Advisor
- Financial Inclusion Officer
- Partnership with Working Rite to provide work placements for 16-25 year olds
- Partnership working with Aberlour to provide services for young people
- Craft café
- Provide tablets and digital training to tenants
- Elderly helpline service to assist with tasks around the home
- Working in partnership to recycle white goods and up skill tenants in repairing white goods
- Partnership working with Community Links and other agencies
- In-house sustainability budget to support individuals to sustain their tenancy, for example, house cleaning
- Income Maximisation
- Budgeting
- Shopping
- Managing their household
- Life skills
- Stress or physical/mental health related issues
- Accessing healthcare and other services
- Dealing with addictions; alcohol, drugs etc.
- Reporting repairs/applying for medical adaptations
- Arranging doctors' appointments, ordering prescriptions etc.
- Tenancy sustainment budget £20k
- Recycled household items
- Food parcels
- Breakfast Packs
- Hot Meals (Still delivering to 70 tenants Tuesday and Thursdays)
- Vouchers (Aldi, Co-op, Superasia)
- Fuel Top ups
- G-heat Referrals/Fuelbank referrals
- Foodbank Referrals
- Digital Inclusion Programme
- Cash for Kids/STV Childrens Appeal
- At Home in the Gorbals
- Tenancy Sustainment Officer who can work with tenants to identify support needs and put appropriate support in place
- Assistance with form filling or making phone calls
- Referrals and signposting to partner services and support agencies

5 - INCREASING PRESSURES ON TENANCY SUSTAINMENT

“Without a doubt, there seems to be a definite increase in tenants with additional needs – including addiction, mental ill health, physical ill health. And this often affects how they cope with day-to-day living, caring responsibilities etc.”

The impact of the pandemic

- 5.1 Whilst all of the respondents acknowledged that there have always been pressures on tenancy sustainment, most also highlighted the role of the pandemic in exacerbating these.
- 5.2 The majority reported that since the start of the pandemic the support they provide to tenants has greatly intensified, in that it is much more frequent, whilst also being more complex in nature.
- 5.3 However it is worth emphasizing that several other members advised us that they were not necessarily providing more intensive support, or dealing with more complex cases, but mainly seeing increasing numbers of tenants who need ‘lower-level’ support. Nonetheless, this increased demand still results in pressure on TS services.

Complex needs

- 5.4 Associations drew attention to several, often inter-related issues in relation to tenants with complex needs, with many of these connected to tenants' mental health struggles. These included:
- general neglect of tenancies
 - hoarding
 - disengagement from other services
 - repeated calls and/or visits to the association (where often the responsibility falls on one member of staff); anti-social behaviour
 - support with medical and other appointments.
- 5.5 Disturbingly, at the more extreme end of the spectrum, some tenants presented with alcohol and drug abuse issues, severe anxiety and suicidal thoughts. Members indicated that it is often very difficult to access mental health support services for these tenants, and therefore struggle to know how these behaviours can be managed, as the root of the tenants' problems are not being addressed.
- 5.6 Respondents were keen to point out that they were well aware of the increased pressures on statutory services too. One association shared recent information from its Tenancy Sustainment Officer highlighting the situation. This revealed that the current waiting time for residential rehabilitation services is approximately 5-6 months, with access to GPs almost 'non-existent'.
- 5.7 As well as tenants with complex needs, who are known to social services, associations are also seeing significant numbers of people with complex needs who are not. One member described this cohort as 'flying below the radar', and explained that very often the only support they receive is from the housing association.

Increased poverty

- 5.8 All respondents commented on increased poverty amongst their tenants, and in their wider communities, and on the subsequent increased demand for and pressure on their TS services.
- 5.9 Specific TS services referred to by members included supports such as starter packs to new tenants, or similar packs to existing vulnerable tenants where demand had continued to increase. Members' Welfare Rights and Money Advice services have also seen a substantial increase in demand.
- 5.10 Most associations have also become more involved with mitigating the impacts of rising costs and higher energy bills for their tenants too, with the provision of food and fuel vouchers, and other schemes.
- 5.11 In spite of this, the consensus amongst members was that things will only become more pressured as the Cost of Living crisis and rising fuel costs continue to bite.

6 - INVOLVEMENT IN ACTIVITIES THAT LIE OUTWITH HOUSING STAFF'S 'USUAL' ROLE/AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

"It's about more than an added layer of responsibility, we're really talking about dangerous role-creep. Dangerous, because we're dealing with serious issues here, with serious consequences for people if you don't get it right."

Traditional tenancy sustainment role

- 6.1 Several respondents emphasized that housing associations obviously have a key role to play in supporting their tenants and indeed have a responsibility to do so, and that this has always been the case.
- 6.2 They also suggested that, in their experience, housing staff have accepted this responsibility, and, in fact, have often gone the extra mile, to achieve good outcomes for tenants.
- 6.3 Furthermore, housing staff recognize that 'things don't always fit neatly into a box' in relation to tenancy sustainment and realize that individuals often have ongoing issues that require long-standing support mechanisms.
- 6.4 Nonetheless, housing staff are not equipped to deal with complex cases which are underpinned by mental health and/or addiction issues. In the current climate, however, housing staff regularly feel that they have no recourse to statutory services to seek specialist support for tenants, and are just left 'to get on with it.' This inevitably leads to housing staff moving far beyond their usual tenancy sustainment activities.

Going beyond that role

- 6.5 Members believed that housing staff were now moving into territory that has traditionally been the responsibility of social work services (either directly or through contracted support providers). Examples provided included:-
- Liaising with GP services;
 - Accompanying tenants to medical and other appointments;
 - Helping with shopping;
 - Helping tenants who hoard to clear their properties;
 - Arranging property deep cleans and clearances where living conditions have badly deteriorated;
- 6.6 Respondents reflected that it can be very difficult for staff to manage these situations without the required support from other agencies. Additionally, they were not optimistic about seeing any improvement in the situation; rather that things would get worse as pressures on statutory services continue to grow.
- Being a main point of contact/ support for people experiencing a mental health crisis, including suicidal thoughts/intentions (this could involve taking multiple telephone calls a day);
 - Visiting tenants at home – acting as a befriending service

7 - IMPACTS ON STAFF AND ON ASSOCIATIONS

“At present we are basically just dealing with what is coming through the door, on the telephone on a daily basis, and generally just fire-fighting.”

Impacts on staff

- 7.1 Although participants were keen to highlight that they recognized that there were increased pressures on staff in all sectors, the majority of respondents conveyed that the increased pressures on TS services, and the often complex and difficult nature of individual cases, was having a profound impact on front-line housing staff.
- 7.2 Several members commented that far more time was now being spent by housing management staff on performing duties more akin to those of a social worker (see Section 6). Additionally, they pointed out that housing staff are not specialised in this area and that many of these activities go far beyond what we would traditionally expect from housing officers.
- 7.3 Furthermore, as well as not possessing the specialist knowledge and skills required to deal with these difficult issues, housing staff are then presented with complicated systems that they need to navigate to access support for an individual.
- 7.4 One association commented that whilst their staff are trained to recognise the signs of various mental health conditions, they are not trained to provide either short term, or ongoing, mental health support. However, they now find themselves having to carry out this role to the best of their abilities as they are unable to get appropriate support in place from statutory services.
- 7.5 Undoubtedly, the biggest concern here is the personal impacts on housing staff and their health and well-being, and members described a number of these, including:
- Poor staff morale due to feeling that there is no progress or positive change to a tenants’ circumstances and their ability to maintain/sustain their tenancy;
 - Personal stress and anxiety around making unqualified decisions and potentially getting these wrong for the tenant;
 - Increased workload due to the time that it takes to provide intensive support and the knock-on effect on a staff member’s ability to carry out other core elements/responsibilities of their role;
 - Instances where vicarious trauma has affected staff members’ own wellbeing and mental health;
 - Staff burnout leading to sick leave and/or decision to leave.

Impacts on associations

- 7.6 Fundamentally, associations indicated that increased pressures on TS services are having real implications on their organizations: in relation to both TS and other services, and therefore on overall resources. This was especially problematic for smaller associations. One commented – ‘we only have two housing officers, so the impact has been enormous.’
- 7.7 Two associations reported seeing an increase in staff turnover and were finding it increasingly difficult to recruit staff.
- 7.8 Most respondents told us that their other day-to-day services are being heavily impacted. For instance, their estate management duties are suffering, due to the time staff are spending with individual tenants with a variety of complex needs, and the resources that then go into chasing up support services.
- 7.9 Several members also pointed out that, in many cases involving mental health and criminality, community-based associations are often the main responder (without having the specialist knowledge required to deal with the issues), and are subsequently left to deal with ongoing situations, as it is they that are in situ in the local community.

8 - ENGAGING STATUTORY SUPPORT SERVICES

“We actually have great relationships with local managers in the HSCP and the single point of contact works well. But beyond that individual referral processes are poor.”

In this section we quote statements directly from member associations.

What currently works well?

- Relationships with managers in the service are positive, but individual referral processes are poor.
- The community links practitioners in GP office/Community Connectors are by far the best and most useful services and the experience with them have been overwhelmingly positive.
- We have a single point of contact at HSCP who checks Care-first for care managers. Once we have this information we then can engage with the right services.

What are the key challenges?

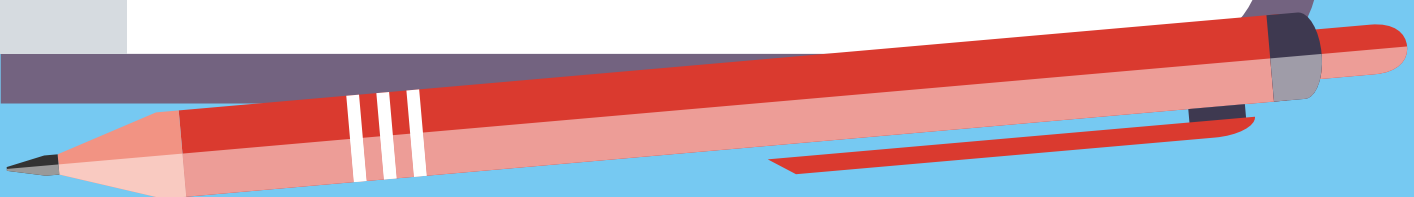
- Individuals not meeting SW criteria/not classed as ‘vulnerable’.
- We have reported items to social work which get routinely ignored, and services do not seem to interconnect.
- We complete Adult Protection Referrals (AP1s) where we recognise that a tenant needs support or a mental health intervention, however some tenants do not meet the “three-point test” and therefore do not receive any assistance.
- Sometimes a situation needs to reach crisis point before any support will be provided. It is also difficult to get information about what has happened following a referral.
- Where the decision has been made not to provide any intervention, it is often difficult to find out why or to have the opportunity to challenge the decision.
- There is a lack of “low level” support available to prevent people from reaching a crisis point.
- We recognise that people with complex needs are often afraid to engage with statutory services so do not respond or engage readily, but cases are often closed down and we are still left with the problem to deal with.
- I’m aware of the staffing constraints they have but I have found HSCP responsive and supportive under the circumstances. Identifying the correct person to speak to can sometimes be frustrating.
- The high turnover of staff at HSCP means contact information changes constantly.

NEW _____
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 Queens
Cross
Housing
Association

Case studies



Case study 1 - Successful outcomes through preventative work and wider partnership working.

New Gorbals HA – ‘At Home in the Gorbals’ project

In October 2021 the Association was part of a group facilitated by Homeless Network Scotland. The group included local support agencies that were all based in the Gorbals and Pollok areas. Homeless Network Scotland, had secured £100k from the National Lottery and were looking to fund agencies who had new ideas to tackle homelessness and assist with tenancy sustainment. New Gorbals pitched its idea and was successful in obtaining £40k of funding for the ‘At Home in the Gorbals’ project.

The primary focus for our idea was to target new tenants coming from a homeless background. It is often the case, that one of the biggest barriers encountered in sustaining a tenancy comes in the initial stages. Usually, because of a lack of essential items and utilities, that we all require in setting up and maintaining a comfortable home.

From the outset, the project focused on supporting and assisting new tenants coming from this background, who often face multiple vulnerabilities. The project sought to give them a head-start, not only to maintain their tenancy and avoid falling into homelessness, but to thrive within their new home and within the wider community.

In offering essential items such as seating, beds, bedding, microwaves and kitchen items, as well as support with initial gas and electricity payments, the project helped tenants who have experienced homelessness, even before their tenancy formally began.

The 40k funding was broken up into 3 parts:

- 25k essential household items
- 10k Gheat vouchers/Support
- 5k Aldi vouchers

Every new case who fits the criteria was supported with heating (gas or electric) and food vouchers for the first month of their tenancy. Break down below:

Aldi vouchers:

- £80.00 for a single adult
- £120.00 for a couple or single person with 1 child
- £160.00 for families of 3-4 people
- £200.00 for families of 5+ people

Gheat fuel support:

- £40 on gas and £40 electricity to cover the month. Total £80.00.

Starter Packs Scotland:

- £60.00 – package as normal

This initiative helps remove much of the financial strain of setting up a home.

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In addition, the project allows individuals and families coming from a homeless background to focus, with the support of NGHHA staff and our partner agencies, on maximising their income on a monthly basis in a sustainable manner.

Once their tenancy begins, the provision of household essentials and initial utility payments help to ensure the tenant feels safe, secure and comfortable within their home, increasing their wellbeing and drastically reducing the number of risk factors which can lead to homelessness and/or the likelihood of relying on insecure accommodation elsewhere.

As a result, those accessing the project during the initial days and weeks of their tenancy, which are often the most crucial in sustaining it long term, have the opportunity to establish a close, trusting and supportive relationship with the Association, our partners and the area as a whole.

Since the AHITG project began in October 2021 we have helped 47 tenants who have come to us via the homelessness route. 39 single people, 7 single parents, and 1 large family. During this time, we have only had one default tenant who abandoned their home.

Based on our statistics prior to introducing the AHITG project, we housed 138 homeless applicants over the preceding few years and, over time, received 33 terminations from these rehoused homeless applicants. The breakdown of reasons for these tenants moving out show abandonment, financial reasons and moving out with the area as they have not settled being the main termination reasons.

We are now significantly improving these stats and believe that assisting our most vulnerable at the early stages does have a major impact on tenancy sustainment. We have helped residents in the past with flooring and basic essential items and can see the positive impact that it makes, and we would like to continue to enhance this approach.

“We have made a commitment that every homeless applicant re-housed will be eligible for At Home in the Gorbals support.”

“We fill in the gaps that the Social Welfare Fund can’t plug, or provide for.”

Case study 2 - A complex case where the HA provided ongoing and intensive support yet felt 'abandoned' by other services.

Glen Oaks HA – goConnect tenancy sustainment service

Y has been a tenant for several years, and was referred to our goConnect project by a Housing Officer, who raised concerns for their mental wellbeing and personal safety. Y's children had been taken into the care of a relative, leading Y to have a serious mental health crisis.

Y had been engaging with a Children and Families social worker, however once the children were removed, communication with social work dwindled. Police and other residents began to raise concerns about Y's behaviour, as their mental health crisis had led to Y partaking in risky behaviours, including recreational drug use, and presenting as volatile and threatening towards other residents. Police informed the Housing Officer that they had been called to Y's home on a few occasions and on one of these occasions had taken Y to a psychiatric facility for assessment due to their behaviour, however Y had been discharged on the same day, as the referral was deemed "inappropriate". Y was also referred to the Mental Health Crisis Team at this time, however this was also closed off, as deemed "inappropriate". It was at this time that the HA's tenancy sustainment project became involved.

As Y's behaviour began to escalate, the Sustainability Officer (SO) submitted an AP1 to Social Care Direct. SCD processed the AP1 and felt it best to place Y with the Addictions Team. The

Addictions Team took the referral on, however, the Addictions team soon advised the SO that the referral would be closed, as they team deemed Y as presenting with mental health problems as opposed to addiction problems, and advised that a referral would be made for the CMHT. The CMHT received the referral, however deemed that Y should be engaging with Addictions rather than Mental Health. This began a cycle of referrals being passed between the Addictions Team and the CMHT, without either department being able to take the referrals forward.

Y became increasingly agitated during this time, and this led to their severe mental health problems spiralling further, as they believed no one was interested in listening, and no one wanted to help. Y disclosed to numerous agencies that they wanted to commit suicide. Y was also banned from contacting their GP practice due to abusive language they used over the phone. Police began to attend Y's property more often for well-being checks, and Y was taken by the police a further 4 times to psychiatric facilities for evaluation. On all of these

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occasions, Y was discharged hours later, and was not deemed an immediate risk to themselves or others. Y was also being harassed by ex-partners through social media and by phone, and was becoming increasingly paranoid and volatile. Y contacted the psychiatric facility asking for a bed for a few nights to help them calm down and evaluate their situation, however this request was denied. Y presented at A&E on two occasions & after assessments was released next day. Y began calling different departments within the Housing Association in order to talk to anyone who was willing to listen. On one occasion, Y contacted the SO and advised they were going to do serious harm to themselves and to others. The SO stayed on the phone to Y for three hours, while the Housing Officer called 999 to request the police be called out. Y said that they would be willing to go to jail, because at least then they would get the support they needed.

The SO stayed on the phone while waiting for the police. Y was increasingly agitated and began breaking furniture and damaging fixtures in their home. The SO tried to keep Y calm, as damage to their property would result in rechargeable repairs, which Y could not afford. Y requested that the SO stayed on the line while the police were in attendance. The police spoke to Y for over an hour, but eventually left as Y refused to go to for an evaluation: Y felt that this was futile, as they were

repeatedly discharged every time they presented at the facility. The SO phoned NHS Mental Health Crisis team, who called Y and tried to calm them down.

Staff at the Housing Association were extremely concerned about Y's wellbeing. At this stage, Y was phoning the Housing Association at least once a day, sometimes up to 4 times daily. The phone calls were distressing to staff. The Community Initiatives Manager decided to become Y's 'Contact Person' and advised that she would phone Y daily, listen to them and offer support until services were put in place. She arranged for a weekly befriender to phone Y and provided several support lines who could offer support. During their conversations, Y revealed that they had significant historical Adverse Childhood Experiences. The goConnect team tried to get Y counselling, however, as Y had a Community Psychiatric Nurse, several services could not take on referrals for Y. During this time the CIM continued with daily phone calls to check on Y's wellbeing and sent texts to Y over the weekend since Y's mood was so low and they regularly spoke about suicide.

The T team encouraged Y to participate in online courses, for example: Raising Your Self Esteem; Eating Well for Less and Health and Wellbeing. The CIM also encouraged Y to listen to podcasts, start daily meditations and compose and recite daily affirmations.

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Y was linked in with one of the TS team's local telephone befrienders, whom they engaged with regularly, and Y also attended the community walking group. The TS team also organised the loan of a tablet device for Y and free internet access, to partake in Zoom classes and engage with wellbeing and self-help sites. Y also engaged with some support networks, who could take on referrals while being registered with a CPN.

This is a complex case, and Y will need a lot of support going forward. Despite some positive improvements initially, Y requires intensive support from social services. There is only so much that the goConnect team and the Housing Association can do to support Y without intensive input from other services, and unfortunately, Y's behaviour continued to be volatile and escalated to the

point that Y has been charged with criminal offences. Due to her attitude and behaviour, she has been banned from clubs and classes, as she was intimidating other participants who were scared of her, so is now isolated.

Her tenancy is now at risk, due to serious anti-social behaviour, and many of her neighbours issued a petition to the HA demanding she is evicted for the ongoing fear and trauma she is causing them and feel that the HA are not doing enough, unaware of legal restrictions of evictions. Her behaviour is still erratic and it is likely she will be evicted in due course, due to the ongoing criminal offences and will probably end up in the Homelessness system.

The Community Initiatives Manager highlighted their frustrations and concerns, commenting:

"In 2021 following a particularly stressful episode where the tenant had called out police all weekend before threatening to commit suicide and subsequently threatened to stab a young boy who was in her garden. We sent in a third AP1 highlighting our concerns. We were advised by Social Care Direct that this was not a social work issue, but a police matter. When I highlighted her mental health, I was advised that there were a lot more urgent cases and they couldn't take Y on at this time."

Next day, the client phoned again saying she was going to commit suicide over the weekend. In desperation I sent a copy of the case study to Head of Mental Health in Glasgow, not knowing where else to turn to and concerned that Y couldn't contact me over the weekend. Someone then phoned me from the Addictions Team advising he was responding to the email I had sent. He advised that our tenant was under Addictions Services and that their Addictions Worker was off today, but would contact them on Monday on her return! I advised that I doubted she would still be alive on Monday and asked if there was anyone who could help her now, today. He advised that she could present at A&E."

Key Issues

- Mental health crisis
- Social Isolation
- Volatile behaviour
- Lack of appropriate services
- Lack of support
- Childhood Trauma
- Adverse Childhood Experiences Indicators

- Liaised with Addictions team and CMHT
- Signposted client to crisis support services
- Contacted MH Crisis team
- Booked client on to wellbeing classes
- Made referrals to support services
- Organised loan of tablet device
- Arranged in-house Befriender

What We Did

- Made 2 x AP1 referrals to Social Care Direct
- Ongoing phone calls to client for support
- Made numerous police call out requests

Outcomes for the tenant

- Engaged with telephone befriender
- Attended online wellbeing classes
- Engaged in goConnect projects and activities
- Engaged with support networks
- Gained trust in goConnect team

Case study 3 - A successful partnership approach to dealing with a hoarding crisis

Queens Cross HA – A holistic tenancy sustainment approach

Background

Mr B previously resided in the Westercommon area and was supported by our Wellbeing for Good Mental Health Service. He then moved to xxxxxx Street in 2012 and his support continued until 2017 when he opted to leave the service.

Mr B's gas meter was capped in 2018 and access to the property has proven difficult since the support ended in 2018. In April 2022, the Housing Officer (HO) began receiving complaints from residents in relation to an overpowering and pungent smell from the ground floor within the common close and

suspected it may be coming from Mr B's flat.

The HO began contacting Mr B to request access to inspect the property but he would cancel on each occasion. In May 2022, the HO was advised to initiate the take access process as it came to light that the gas meter had not been checked since it was capped in 2018. While undertaking this process HO continued to pursue access and the tenant continued to refuse or cancel. Eventually, the take access visit was confirmed and booked for 13th June 2022.

Initial visit and follow-up support

On 13th June 2022 Mr B emailed the HO to advise that his property was in an unsatisfactory condition, and it was for this reason that he had been cancelling appointments. An urgent AP1 was submitted, and Social Work Services (SWS) agreed to attend the property on 13th June 2022 along with the HO.

The HO confirmed that no room was accessible due to high piles of debris, litter and personal belongings. It was noted, that these piles were approx. 4ft high in each room including the bathroom. It was suspected that Mr

B had been urinating and defecating amongst the debris/litter as the bathroom was inaccessible and there was an extremely overpowering and foul smell throughout the property. Mr B admitted to defecating and urinating in plastic bags. He also confirmed that the current living conditions had become too much for him and that he felt very overwhelmed. He advised that he was not able to undertake clearing out and cleaning the property on his own and would require support and assistance to do so.



Queens Cross Housing Association

The HO and SWS made the decision that the property was not fit for habitation and attempts were made to try and secure temporary homeless accommodation, for Mr B as he had nowhere else to go. He was placed in hotel accommodation on 13.06.22 and the North West Community Homeless Team advised he could make a homeless application but would be placed in hostel accommodation. SWS advised that this would be detrimental to SB's mental health and supported accommodation was recommended.

The HO then sought authorisation from QCHA management to place Mr B into furnished decant accommodation provided by QCHA and Mr B was

Ongoing support

QCHA submitted an AP1 and a Support Needs Assessment was undertaken by SWS and referral made to Mental Health Team. Mr B also agreed to sign up to QCHA Wellbeing for Mental Health service to receive daily support and assistance to sustain his tenancy.

He also agreed to meet with his GP and discuss concerns around his mental and physical health. Mr B continues to engage with, and be supported by, SWS and Mental Health teams and with the HA.

decanted on 14.06.22 with SWS agreeing to pay rent for this property.

SWS subsequently applied to the Scottish Welfare Fund to pay for the clear out and an environmental clean of property. Cordia undertook the clean of the property and for a number of reasons the work took until early December 2022 to complete. Following the clean of the property work began to undertake any necessary repairs to the property and this was completed by mid-January 2023. Meanwhile Mr B remained in the decant property from June 2022 to January 2023 with SWS paying the rental income on the decant property.

Following the completion of clear out and repairs Mr B agreed to QCHA arranging a furniture package for the property to supply and fit carpeting, blinds and new furniture items. This was completed and he returned to his tenancy on 20.01.23, however, there was no heating as the meter had been capped due to a large debt. QCHA provided assistance to manage this debt and arranged for the gas supply to have funds in the meter. Mr B is now re-settled into his home and continues to engage with all support services.

9 - WHAT WOULD MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE MOVING FORWARD?

Funding

“Additional funding to increase our capacity to respond to and resolve complex cases would make a huge and significant difference.”

- 9.1 Not unsurprisingly perhaps, the majority of respondents indicated that funding for tenancy sustainment services would make the biggest difference moving forward. We can break this suggestion down further, as follows.
- 9.2 Several members who fund their TS services through rent highlighted that this limits what they are able to offer, and who they can offer it to. Therefore, external funding would be extremely welcome, particularly when associations are faced with increasing pressure to keep rent increases as low as possible while dealing with spiralling costs. In addition, these members anticipated that the Cost of Living crisis would further increase the needs and demands on their TS services.
- 9.3 Other members who receive funding for specific elements or bespoke projects related to their TS approach (such as welfare and money advice services, supporting younger BAME tenants), expressed disappointment that this is often provided on a short-term basis. They indicated that the impact of this on employees is job insecurity which often results in experienced and knowledgeable staff moving on to other more secure jobs. Subsequently, associations then lose a valuable resource and, unfortunately, tenants lose out. The solution here would be longer-term, secure funding.
- 9.4 Respondents asserted that longer term funding for the types of specific services referred to above would allow them to support more individuals to sustain their tenancies, remain independent, and to avoid slipping into crisis. Ultimately, this would result in fewer demands being made of statutory services.
- 9.5 Overall, respondents made a good case for external funding for TS services, reasoning that very often community-based associations are best placed to provide services and support when required, since they have the reach into, and relationships with, their tenants. The case studies provided by members reinforce this argument. However, members generally believed there were very few potential sources of external funding, although a small number indicated that the Scottish Government currently funded their projects.

Communication

“Better communication with and better access to GHSCP services would make the biggest difference. We require the support and expertise of specialist services in order to get tenants the interventions that they need.”

- 9.6 As we described (in the first half of Section 8), the majority of members told us that they had extremely positive and effective relationships with both managers and HSCP staff members that they worked with regularly.
- 9.7 Nonetheless, despite these positive individual relationships, members went on to say (in the second half of Section 8) that they felt there were many challenges when it came to communicating with GHSCP.
- 9.8 Alongside external funding, members felt that improved communication with the HSCP was the thing that would make the biggest difference moving forward.
- 9.9 One member commented that better communication and a more joined up approach to assessment of need in partnership with GHSCP, would result in increased capacity for associations, the HSCP, and third sector organizations.
- 9.10 However, members acknowledged that it wasn't easy to get to the stage where there would be fewer challenges around communication, especially in the current climate with increased demands on everyone.
- 9.11 Although we know that there are already joint meetings and other opportunities for members to connect with some HSCP colleagues on key TS issues (such as regular local homelessness/lettings meetings in each locality) none of the survey respondents mentioned these, perhaps because they are specific to the homelessness referral/lettings process.
- 9.12 Several members did suggest that having a point of contact or designated liaison between housing associations and statutory services would be helpful, as it would aid communication and help guide/advise housing staff to the correct services. This is something that the Forum has already been exploring, over the last few months, with HSCP/GCC colleagues.

Partnership working

“It’s hardly a ground-breaking suggestion, but great partnership working is the key. When it works it allows for real collaboration and achieves real results when it comes to supporting tenants.”

- 9.13 Most associations were keen to point out that they had experienced really positive examples of partnership working with the HSCP and with other agencies. Furthermore, there was a real appetite amongst members for continuing to explore better ways of working together in partnership.
- 9.14 However, there was also a consensus that more effective partnership working, particularly with the HSCP, was crucial for tenancy sustainment services overall in the city.
- 9.15 Some members believed that they tended to be left out of decision-making processes, particularly following case conferences etc., and were eager to see this improve.
- 9.16 A small number of members (who were doing so already) also suggested that CBHAs in the city should look at partnering with other associations in the same area. This would then allow them to jointly commission a service or employ staff to provide tenancy sustainment tailored to meet their local needs.

A focus on prevention

“A focus on, and access to, preventative services will be critical if we are to prevent homelessness going forward.”

- 9.17 The majority of respondents highlighted the crucial role of preventative services. They spoke about this in relation to the wider third sector, and housing specifically. One member neatly summed it up by saying ‘the HSCP needs to realise that tenancy sustainment is prevention!’
- 9.18 This sentiment was echoed by other members who commented that access to many services is restricted to people who have been assessed as having high or critical needs. The consensus was that there needed to be a greater recognition of, and more funding for, preventative work, along with a lowering of the ‘bar’ or threshold for receiving HSCP support.
- 9.19 This was reinforced by a comment from one member who stated, that particularly in relation to homelessness cases:
- “It would be good if applicants to our properties who already have issues continue to receive ongoing support for at least 6 months (to a year) after their tenancy starts instead of the current situation where it seems like getting a tenancy is the end of any support in place.”*

10 - MEASURING THE IMPACT OF TENANCY SUSTAINMENT SERVICES

- 10.1 Most members indicated that they currently try to capture the impact of their tenancy sustainment work, and that they did so in a number of different ways.
- 10.2 These included case studies, quantitative and qualitative data, Charter data and levels of abandonment.
- 10.3 Two members shared that they have started looking at using the SFHA Social Value toolkit to try and capture the impacts of their TS work.
- 10.4 Three members reported that whilst they do not have a specific tenancy sustainment evaluation tool, they use Advice Pro to capture financial outcomes, and keep detailed notes on each case, which can then be written-up as case studies.
- 10.5 One member commented 'Advice Pro has the ability to record strategies, referrals, financial outcomes, social issues, and non-financial outcomes i.e. homelessness prevented/court action avoided, adaptations obtained, and we have a customised version, so we can add to the list whatever we want to record.'
- 10.6 Several respondents who currently don't use any bespoke system indicated that they would be interested in finding out more about them, and what other associations are doing. This is definitely something tangible that we can take forward on behalf of members.
- 10.7 A key point made by many members was the way this data could then be used to highlight the crucial preventative nature of the work. There was also a recognition that the sector overall needs to 'get better' at doing so.
- 10.8 At the same time, however, respondents reasoned that it would be both encouraging and beneficial to associations to receive acknowledgment from the HSCP, NHS and other agencies about the importance of their preventative work, and what a difference it makes. In particular, how tenancy sustainment services ensure that many vulnerable tenants avoided reaching crisis point or becoming emergency cases due to the support provided by the housing sector.
- 10.9 Based on members' feedback in the above bullet point we will explore the potential for bringing members together with GHSCP/GCC colleagues to share and build upon this type of information.

11 – KEY FINDINGS FROM FOLLOW UP INTERVIEWS WITH MEMBERS

- 11.1 We were keen to explore some of the key issues which emerged via the survey data further; and to do so we carried out a combination of group and one-to-one interviews with members.
- 11.2 We interviewed 10 members in total, half were Directors/CEOs, or held other senior positions, and half were front-line staff directly involved in tenancy sustainment provision.
- 11.3 The key themes which emerged in the course of the interviews unsurprisingly reflected those which members had highlighted via their survey returns, as we have documented in the previous sections.
- 11.4 In addition, the interviewees also brought up additional concerns, and potential solutions, which they considered crucial in relation to increased pressures on tenancy sustainment. We will now explore these in more depth.

Increased homelessness referrals

“The higher proportion of tenants that we are housing via our homelessness duties is definitely a fundamental factor.”

- 11.5 The statutory requirements in relation to associations housing more tenants via the homelessness route was another factor highlighted by two senior staff members. They argued that many tenants who came through the Section 5 process often had more support needs in general, and often these were complex in nature.
- 11.6 Subsequently, this resulted in more strain being put on tenancy sustainment services and was a critical driver of increased pressures overall.
- 11.7 These members reasoned that since CBHAs are such integral actors in helping to deliver the Scottish Government’s homelessness policies then their tenancy sustainment activities should be funded to allow them to support tenants effectively.
- 11.8 However, several other interviewees reported that increased Section 5 referrals did not result in their associations having to provide more support for these tenants. Largely because they usually had wrap-around support services in place, at least at the beginning of their tenancies.
- 11.9 Nonetheless, these members did highlight the perennial issue of associations being left trying to meet individuals’ support needs when other services had withdrawn.

Navigating the HSCP map

11.10 Several interviewees referred to recent HSCP services and approaches that associations could access in order to get support for tenants. These included: the Complex Needs Service; Social Care Direct; Glasgow Helps and the Strategic Hoarding Group. All of these were welcomed by members.

11.11 Nevertheless, participants did comment on the complex array of HSCP services, and the difficulty they often had in trying to 'navigate this map.' This means that, in reality, housing staff genuinely don't know about services that are potentially available. One senior member of staff suggested a potential solution to this problem:

"I don't know how difficult it would be to have a 'Housing Liaison Officer' – that type of post based in the HSCP. Basically, one point of contact, acting as a bridge between the HSCP and housing sector. Someone who can give us advice on what services are available to refer a tenant to, that stays on the journey with us, and has an overview of the case. That way if a person doesn't fit the criteria for one service, we have someone to go back to and ask where else can we try/what other options do we have?"

11.12 The feelings of frustration and helplessness felt by front-line staff who try to refer a tenant to a service with no success, and who then have to repeat the process with other services was palpable during the interviews, as evidenced in the comment below:

"So, if a tenant doesn't meet the criteria for the mental health team and then is referred to addictions, and it's the same answer there, where can we go to get help for that person? Are there other services that we can refer onto? At the moment, it's us left to deal with things as best we can. Not any resolution for the person, or neighbours or the wider community and the impacts this can have."

11.13 Inevitably then interviewees echoed similar concerns as our survey respondents, around both the impacts on frontline staff and the impacts on CBHAs' resources, as a result of dealing with these situations on behalf of tenants.

Beyond role-creep?

11.14 As we have already highlighted, the issue of role-creep was also addressed in the interviews, with the majority of participants expressing their concerns about the increased layers of responsibility front-line staff were having to assume.

11.15 These concerns were particularly focused on the fact that most of this increased responsibility involved supporting tenants with mental health and/or addiction issues. Especially when staff often felt that they did not possess the specialist knowledge or experience required to deal with these matters. A situation often exacerbated by there being no recourse to HSCP services, and therefore no assistance for the tenant. One front-line staff member's comments emphasized their concerns:

"I feel like a social worker most days. And an unqualified one at that. We are lucky because we do have a dedicated tenancy sustainment service, and that's what we're here for...to help/support tenants. But we can only do so much. If they (social work) tell us someone doesn't fit their 3-point criteria, then where does that leave us to go? We have a duty of care to our tenant but ultimately these types of problems are beyond us being able to solve."

11.16 The impacts of this role-creep on associations themselves were also highlighted, in terms of both resources and perceptions of the role of CBHAs.

11.17 One senior staff member felt that CBHAs were now regarded as 'quasi social services' and that the sector's long history of supporting tenants and communities had led to the assumption that it would and could 'just do more and more, to 'pick up the slack' in service provision' where the Council and HSCP had retreated. The fact that CBHAs are visible, located in communities, and well known to residents also means that they are often the first place people turn to when they need help. His remarks capture the pros and cons of this situation:

"Our (CBHAs) USP has always been that we're local, and right in the heart of our communities. And that's always been a good thing, closer to what's happening on the ground, closer relationships, better knowledge etc. and we're not going to change that and nor do we want to. But I do think that there are now increased expectations from tenants about what we can do, and a lot of that happened as a result of Covid and the lockdowns, when people couldn't get any support from other services. And those increased expectations are also coming from statutory services. We know how stretched they are too, but there has got to be a discussion about all of this. The role-creep is not just about issues like the environmental stuff anymore, and that's bad too...but about vulnerable people, and how we can get them the support they need."

11.17 Another member was keen to stress the level of resources involved for associations in providing TS services:

“The amount of cross-subsidy we actually put in as an organization – not just in terms of what we provide, but the resource involved in working with partners, our tenants, the wider community...never mind chasing funding...to provide the tablets, the vouchers, the community groups and spaces, and run the projects.”

11.18 As part of the role-creep discussion, one interviewee reflected that perhaps the sector itself should be having discussions around the role of housing officers in associations that don't have bespoke TS services. She remarked:

“What should the role of a housing officer be now? Should we be reconsidering this as a sector? Is there an opportunity to create a new type of role for specialist Housing Officers who are trained in mental health and other key issues?”

Working better together

11.19 As we indicated in point 11.8, several members were aware of more recent service options, and indeed welcomed these. As one participant pointed out:

“We can see that they [HSCP] are trying to introduce new things, and to do things differently, and that's always welcome. We're always open to new ways of working, and if it means that there are other referral routes for tenants...new approaches, then that's good.”

11.20 It is worth noting though, that the same respondent also cautioned:

“We need to be aware of these though, and also involved and treated like an equal partner, and sometimes I think that housing is still not seen as being that. Certainly, we are still often left out of the loop when it comes to the sharing of information. For instance, if we have referred someone to a particular service and then their case is shut down then we aren't even told about it.”

11.21 The issues of the preventative work that members do via their TS services and the means to carry this out effectively were closely linked. With the plea that this should not only be recognised by the HSCP, but also perhaps funded by them, highlighted by comments like:

“The housing sector needs to be seen as part of the wider solution. Funding, for all CBHAs to embed preventative tenancy sustainment services should be seen as crucial. Since if individuals don't get the support they need, then they are the people who end up in homelessness, in the criminal justice system, or as crisis cases in the NHS.”

“We know that statutory services are stretched, perhaps more than they have ever been. So CBHAs should be seen (and funded) as a crucial partner, and that our preventative tenancy sustainment work takes massive pressure off other services.”

12 – RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 Our research with members on tenancy sustainment in Glasgow has provided us with valuable feedback, which in turn, has allowed us to develop a number of key recommendations.

12.2 We have separated these into three categories:

- firstly, ideas that GWSF can take forward to provide members with more information about tenancy sustainment;

- secondly, our key proposals to Glasgow’s HSCP as a foundation for discussion on tenancy sustainment;

- thirdly, our ‘asks and offers’ to the Scottish Government in relation to CBHAs’ tenancy sustainment role into the future.

GWSF’s ongoing role

12.3 The critical bridging role that GWSF plays at a strategic level between the HSCP and CBHAs was recognized by members. However, in terms of what services are available to associations, and to help them navigate this complex map, we will look at how we might build upon and extend this role.

12.4 It is important that we acknowledge that some of the more recently introduced HSCP services, like the Complex Needs Service, were still in their infancy when the research was carried out, and therefore might not yet be on the day-to-day ‘radar’ of housing staff.

12.5 We will consider how we can both raise the profile of HSCP services, and use the Forum’s existing network groups for members and connect these to staff in key HSCP services.

12.6 One issue which came through very clearly in the research was the

crucial, preventative value of tenancy sustainment services. Allied to this was the need for the CBHA sector to be able to tell this story, and to be able to evidence it.

12.7 At the moment, there is a piecemeal approach to how CBHAs evaluate their tenancy sustainment services. However, most participants indicated that they were interested in learning more about potential methods of capturing this data.

12.8 Therefore, the Forum will arrange some sessions for members to explore this area further.

12.9 Crucially, in our lobbying and representative role we will take forward discussions with both the Glasgow HSCP and the Scottish Government, around the key issues included in the following two sections.

Key recommendations – for discussion with Glasgow HSCP

- 12.10 Although CBHAs often have strong relationships with HSCP staff on the ground, this is regularly complicated by tenants not meeting specific criteria for a service. The subsequent chasing around for a suitable service is labour and resource intensive and is routinely unsuccessful. Therefore, we would like to explore with the HSCP the creation of a Housing Liaison role within the HSCP where someone with an overview of services would act – in liaison with housing association staff - as a conduit for the onward referral of tenants to appropriate services.
- 12.11 A discussion around the role of the Forum as one of the conduits for getting information out to our members on a regular basis, as well as a wider strategic discussion about how HSCP services and CBHAs can work together more effectively moving forward.

Our asks of and offers to the Scottish Government

- 12.13 In their dual roles as Registered Social Landlords and Community Anchor Organizations, CBHAs have a highly regarded record of supporting their tenants and communities, which spans decades. Most recently our members response to the Covid crisis demonstrated this beyond a doubt.
- 12.14 As we have outlined in Section 4, CBHAs' tenancy sustainment activities are myriad and help to support both existing and new tenants. At a certain level, these activities have always been integral to our members' work. Forthcoming legislative duties on housing associations around homelessness prevention will throw this work into even sharper focus.
- 12.15 However, it is evident from our findings that TS services are under increasing pressure and facing more strain than ever before. As well as the negative impacts on associations and their staff, the ultimate losers in this situation are tenants. At the moment, CBHAs are doing all that they can to continue to support their tenants, and to maintain their services. But the current pressures are unsustainable in the medium and longer term.
- 12.16 CBHAs' tenancy sustainment work helps the Scottish Government meet key objectives across a range of policy areas. Those include: place-making; homelessness; health and well-being; digital inclusion; reducing isolation; food and fuel support; money and benefits advice; and social connectedness.
- 12.17 Taking all of this into consideration, we believe that all housing associations should be funded directly by the Scottish Government to enable them to carry out their tenancy sustainment functions. This would not be channelled through local authorities and so would not breach the existing understanding around minimising the amount of ring-fenced funding going from central to local government.
- 12.18 GWSF is keen to have initial discussions with the Scottish Government to consider what this might look like moving forward.

We would like to thank our Glasgow members for contributing to the research.



Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations

GWSF is the leading membership and campaigning body for local community-based housing associations and co-operatives (CCHAs) in the west of Scotland. The Forum represents 63 members who together own almost 88,000 homes. Along with providing this decent, affordable housing CBHAs also deliver factoring services to around 33,000 owners, mostly in mixed tenure housing blocks. For over 40 years CBHAs have been at the vanguard of strategies which have helped improve the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of their communities.

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