

Accent

**Community
Development &
Inclusion Strategy**

2024 • 2027

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Background

At Accent, multiple teams provide community development and inclusion initiatives in their day-to-day work in the communities we serve.

With a focussed strategy, we have an opportunity to develop a consistent approach to maximise our impact on our customers. We will improve how we make best use of our resources, the impact we have for our customers and our ability to evidence the outcomes of our activities.

The Community Development and Inclusion team was introduced in 2023 and we are now in the process of defining their role within the organisation. The team will be supporting the delivery of community development and engagement activities and offer their expertise and ensure that all our activity is being recorded and evidenced.

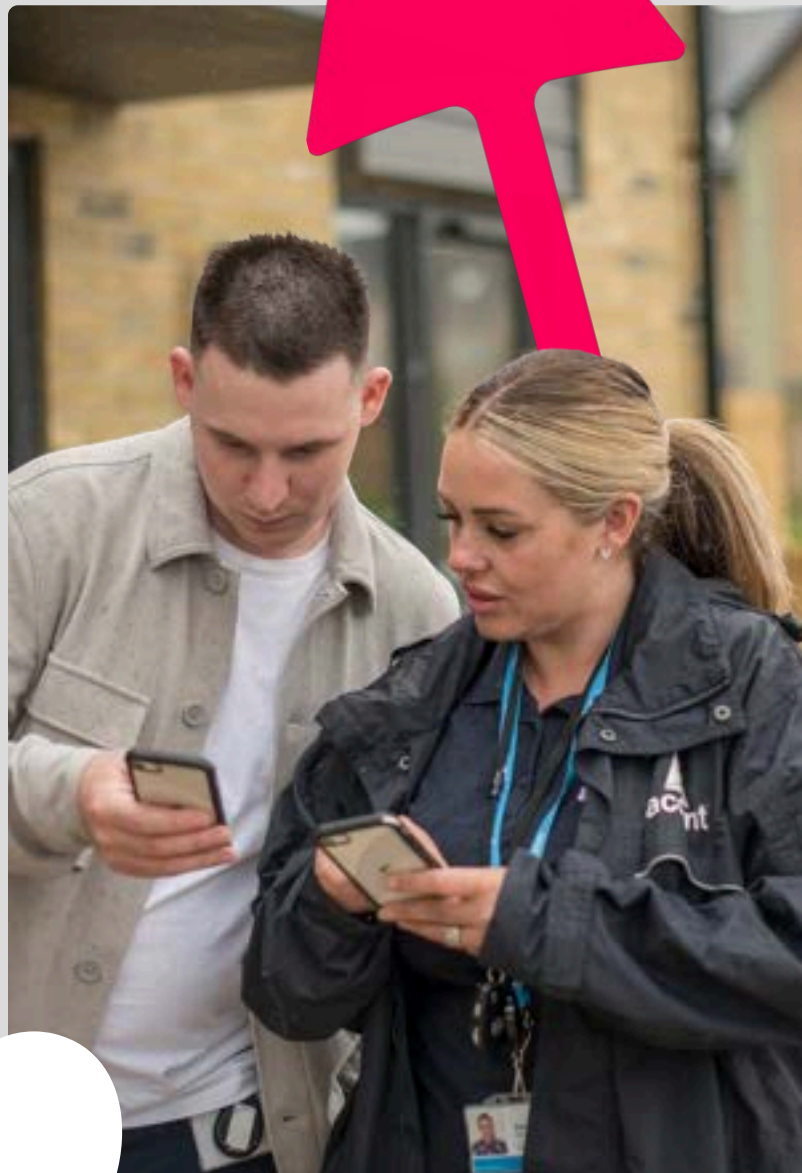
This strategy provides a focus in our approach to Community Development and Inclusion and ensures that our activities have a direct, positive impact for our customers and their communities.



Purpose of our Community Development & Engagement Strategy

The Community Development and Inclusion Strategy will help us to deliver our new corporate mission statement:

We believe that helping to solve the housing crisis will provide people with stability, a foundation for better living and contribute to the nation's wider objectives for local and national growth.



The Strategy is broken down into three key areas:



Community Development:

improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of the communities we operate in.



Inclusion:

creating an environment where all our customers feel valued, included, financially supported and have opportunities to succeed.



Social Value:

our approach to impact measures and wellbeing measures and a social value procurement framework.

The Community Development & Inclusion Strategy supports practices for compliance with:

- ▶ The Consumer Standards
 - Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
 - Treating our customers with fairness and respect
 - Meeting our customers diverse needs
 - Engagement with tenants
 - Neighbourhood and Community Standard
 - Local cooperation
 - Tenancy Standard
 - Tenancy sustainment and evictions
- ▶ Our Environmental, Social and Governance Objectives
- ▶ Legislative requirements for Social Value considerations during procurement.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the Community Development and Inclusion strategy is to improve stability in our local communities by bringing together the multiple strands of work we do that have a direct impact.

By unifying our approach, we can increase the outcomes for our customers, reduce our operational costs, increase funding for our community work and demonstrate our effectiveness through measurable activity.



Definitions

Some of the terms we use in our strategy are explained below:

Community Development

A process where community members work together to take collective action and create solutions to common problems.

Inclusion

Removing barriers which limit people from being part of society and enjoying their human rights.

Placemaking

The design and delivery of new developments, and how they impact on the surrounding community.

Placeshaping

The ways in which local communities and agencies collectively use their influence and resources to create attractive, prosperous and safe places.

Social Value

This can have a number of definitions, but for our strategy, it is about the 'Social Value' part of procurement, whereby contractors are obliged to work with customers and communities to 'give something back.'

Impact Measurement

The recording and demonstrating of outputs and outcomes from a project or initiative, sometimes referred to as Social Value.

Wellbeing Valuation

A system where the increases in someone's wellbeing is given a pound value for measuring and analysing.

Financial Proxy

A financial figure given to represent an outcome, such as an increase in wellbeing.

Exchequer Value

The savings to the government, local authority and other public sector bodies as a result of an intervention.

Outcome

The change that happened as a result of a project or activity.

Output

The raw figures that are derived as a result of a project.

Intervention

A project that is intended to create a positive change within the community or for an individual.



Community *Development*

Our aim is to promote stability within our communities, and act on information and insight to get the right outcomes that benefit those communities. We will develop a consistent way of understanding barriers and evidencing need by:

Engaging with our customers

We will engage with our customers at a local level and understand what is happening in their communities. This will be linked to our customer engagement strategy.

Big Data

By using publicly available information, which can be accessed through HACT (Housing Associations' Charitable Trust), we can analyse large amounts of information about our communities.

This information gives us an indication of the major challenges in our communities, such as crime or unemployment.

Internal Information

Reviewing our own internal information allows us to identify certain barriers and issues, and focus our activity in the right area. For example, if there is a significant increase in vandalism in an area, then we can investigate the root cause and start to develop solutions. The list below illustrates the kind of data and information we will use:

- Customer Satisfaction Levels
- Average Tenancy Length
- Tenancy Turnover
- Customer Engagement Activity
- Customer Protected Characteristics
- Anti-Social Behaviour Cases
- Number and categories of complaints
- Number of repairs relating to vandalism, graffiti and fly-tipping

Local Knowledge

It is important that this information is used with the local knowledge we gain from our customers. We will also use knowledge from colleagues and the wider community. This will ensure that one aspect of information is not relied on in isolation.

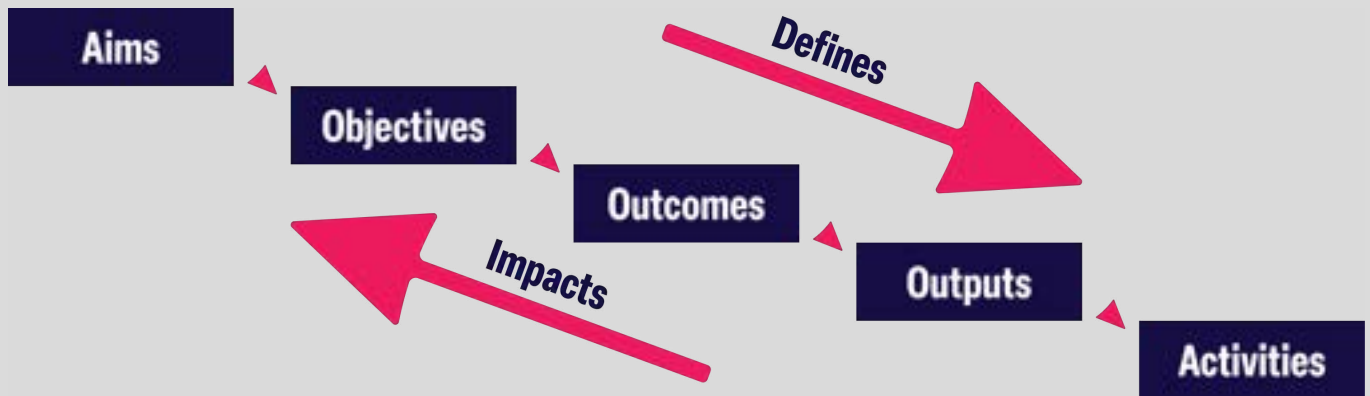


Achieving Outcomes

When we have identified areas that need our intervention, we will develop and deliver projects to improve stability within our communities.

We will develop an aims-led approach, which is detailed on the diagram on the right.

We will prioritise our resources based on this approach; our Community Development Partners will directly deliver a number of projects, as well as facilitating others. They will also train and upskill the Housing Services team to deliver projects in order to achieve greater outcomes in the communities where we operate.



Community Action Plans

We have developed annual Community Action Plans, which have a direct link to Community Development. These plans will become the focus for our activity.

These plans will create opportunities to identify areas that need intervention, and they will help to prioritise and provide accountability for delivering outcomes in our communities.

When we develop our Community Action Plans, we will work with local stakeholders and agencies to influence and achieve outcomes for the wider community (known as place shaping).

Placemaking

When we develop new homes, we will ensure that any design considers the impact of the community and new customers who will move into the new homes.



Inclusion

Our Inclusion offer will have a direct link to barriers that we identify in the community and will provide a more individual approach for our customers.



We will support customers with inclusion activity and intervene when individuals are experiencing crisis.

We will prioritise our resources, and our Inclusion Partners will take referrals for customers who are faced with complex situations that require more specialist knowledge. This will enable them to address their difficulties, such as maximising their income or to support them to become digitally or socially included.

The Inclusion Partner will train and upskill the Housing Services team to enable them to support customers who are facing any type of inclusion challenge.

The Housing Services team will work alongside new and existing customers to prevent missed payments and support those in financial hardship.

We will promote and encourage our customers to engage with us at the earliest opportunity to discuss any problems they are experiencing that could impact their ability to pay. We will provide budgeting information and support; welfare benefit support and ensure that the relevant support is in place to enable our customers to maintain the agreement they have with us.

Our Inclusion Partners will work with our Housing Services team to develop partnerships with external partners to enhance our signposting offer, which will include saving and borrowing advice, including the use of Credit Unions.

We are committed to making reasonable adjustments to support customers based on their individual need.

Every customer who is at risk of eviction will be offered the opportunity to be referred to an Inclusion Partner, who will support our customers to sustain their tenancy or agreement they have with us. Each Inclusion Partner will have a maximum caseload of 35 cases and will provide short-term support.

We will routinely and proactively promote the support we can provide customers to enable them to maintain their tenancies or agreements they have with us and prevent exclusion.

Social Value

- We will record all our social value activity through HACT. This will ensure we are recording our impact to evidence our intended outcomes and meet our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- Each project will have multiple outcomes on multiple dependencies, and we will classify dependencies into three distinct groups:
- Individuals – the participants or beneficiaries of a particular project.
- Society – external organisations such as the NHS, Police, Local Authority (sometimes referred to as the Exchequer Organisations).
- Accent – different internal teams that benefit from certain activities.
- The diagram on the right shows how each dependency will interlink.



Most of our projects will have an impact in all three areas and we will need to decide which measures are essential, which are desirable, and which are irrelevant for each project.

Our projects will have a set of very specific objectives and outcomes that we seek to achieve. How we measure success can be defined in a basic way.

We will ask the following three questions:

- Who is affected?
- How are they affected?
- How can we quantify it?

As an example, if we were to look at an Income Maximisation project in an area of need, (e.g. where there are high levels of arrears and/or tenancy failure), we will record the impacts through all three stakeholder groups.

Individuals

- Increase in Income (£s).
- Measure the reduction in debt (£s).
- Measure the increase in wellbeing (£s).

Society

- Reduction in costs of people being made homeless (£s).

Organisations

- Reducing the costs of evictions.
- Reducing rent arrears.

An example

Debt Advice Project Peterborough



Individuals

10 Participants saw a total of £4850 per year increase in income

10 Participants saw a total reduction in debt of £3400

3 Participants saw an increase in wellbeing valued at £15,786



Society:

2 customers at risk of eviction were moved away from crisis saving the local authority £100,000



Organisation

2 customers at risk of eviction were moved away from crisis saving the Organisation £20,000

10 Participants saw a total reduction in arrears of £2500

Most of the above information can be collated internally, or at the point of the project being delivered. (For example, by keeping a record of increased income or increased wellbeing).

The increases in wellbeing can be collected at source using a method called the 'Wellbeing Valuation' and the Social Value Calculator tool that is accessed through HACT. This tool was developed for the housing sector, so it largely focusses on impacts that we would be interested in achieving with our customers.

The tool itself requires the delivery partner of a project to either record a someone's participation, or to ask them a question before and after a project or intervention and recording the change.

This then generates a monetary value associated with that change.

This tool will also provide information about the value to wider society (known as the Exchequer Value).

The benefits to Accent will need to be defined internally, which will be focussed on during year



Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Our goal is to provide stability for customers, we could surmise that any work that has an impact as:

Creating a positive and sustainable change in someone's life.

Any measure of success must not only account for levels of engagement, but also that there has been a positive change, and then for that change to be sustained over time. As a result, we may have short-medium- and long-term KPIs.

For example, an employment initiative may engage with several individuals, but there is only a positive change if someone gets into work as a result.

Further to this, that work must be sustained for a period to have any lasting change.

Getting someone into a contract will be a positive change, but if they are out of work three months later, than the project hasn't had the impact that it should have.

A three step KPI model will be used as stated below:

Engagement



Change



Sustainment

These three KPIs will take place over different time periods and will provide us with more information about the effectiveness of projects that we have delivered. Looking at two examples of an employment programme:

Our KPIs will take into account:

1. The number of people we expect to engage through an intervention.
2. Indicators of change that we expect to see because of the intervention, (e.g. increase in income, reduction in debt etc).
3. Indicators of sustainability over time, (e.g. the number of people still in employment, a sustained reduction in arrears and sustained reduction in ASB etc).

This would give us a measurable series of figures to record and demonstrate stability.



Social Value – Applying Social Value in Procurement

We will use our KPIs to ensure the Social Value element of any supplier bid is relevant to the needs of the community. There are three main points we can consider regarding our Social Value strategy.

- 1 ▶** That the work is aligned with our existing work in our corporate strategy.
- 2 ▶** That the framework provides a strong enough incentive for the supply chain to provide an appropriate and meaningful offer.
- 3 ▶** That the offer is managed as part of the contract, and not seen as a dispensable add-on that can be side-lined after a successful bid.



Social Value – Applying Social Value in Procurement

There are potentially two ways in which an organisation can support our social aims and contribute to our KPIs.

1. Working directly with our customers and communities in partnership or independently but demonstrating impact.
2. Demonstrating that the operations of the organisation have inherent, built-in social value deliverables within the area.

Some routes may or may not generate a social impact within our geography, and this should be accounted for.

For example, much of the focus of social value conversations is around working with Small or Medium Enterprises (SME).

A SME, as defined by the EU is:

A business with fewer than 250 employees, a turnover of less than €50 million, or a balance sheet total of less than €43 million.

Based on this definition, it is arguable that using an SME doesn't necessarily bring any social benefit to our areas. The workforce may not necessarily be from the area, the organisation is not necessarily creating opportunities for marginalised groups, or the organisation doesn't have any ethical procurement practices.

It may be that a larger organisation that commits to recruiting locally, will offer work experience or apprenticeships, and is dedicated to using an ethical supply chain, could have a much bigger impact on our customers, than an SME.

With these in mind, we will use a framework to assess this portion of a bid.

Document Scoring

See appendix 1 of our Social Value Procurement, which provides a scoring matrix for this element.

To provide a scoring matrix for this element of procurement, we need to factor in several criteria.

A supplier may make an offer that carries a significant element of social impact, but that impact may not be aligned with our objectives.

Additionally, the Social Value offer may seem to be a good fit, but when viewed in more detail, it would provide very little input into the overall KPIs or success measures that are in place.





Internal and External Stakeholders

There are many teams within Accent that have a significant impact on providing stability for our customers, but we have an inconsistent way of recording Social Value.

This strategy aims to pull all these disparate strands together to ensure that we are maximising the impact we have and that we are recording and reporting it thoroughly.

Internal

Different teams within the organisation are having a direct impact on our customers, and the wider community, affecting both their wellbeing and their financial stability.

- Housing Services
- Home Ownership Team
- Property Services
- Development Team
- Procurement Team

By applying an aims-led approach we will have a consistent approach to identifying need and putting solutions in place to address them.

This will be an important step in assessing our overall effectiveness.

External

As part of our procurement strategy, we should consider whether the offer from suppliers is either directly supportive of this work, or demonstrably aligned with this work and scored accordingly.

If the offer isn't aligned with this, then we can assume it isn't meeting a need that has been highlighted through our community development and inclusion work.

To combat this and lower the risk, we will provide clear guidance to potential suppliers ensuring that they understand the need of our communities.

This strategy aims to combat these risks by giving very clear guidance to potential suppliers and ensuring that the understanding of community need is consistent cross our procurement processes.

Implementation Plan

Year 1: 2024-2025 – Implementation, Research and KPIs

In year 1, the Community Development Partners and Inclusion Partners will start to use the HACT dashboard.

This will help them to target work more strategically and develop frameworks so we can plan activities and collate the evidence required to report on and record the impact that they have.

The framework and reporting requirements will be trained out to other teams so that we can develop a consistent approach and ensure that our strategy is being embedded and delivered.

The Community Development Partners and Inclusion Partners will carry out research to understand how barriers and instability can have a negative impact on our customers and our business.

In year 1, we will implement the KPIs on the right and develop our wider KPIs for year 2.

Years 2: 2025-26 – Delivery and Evidence Gathering

In year 2, we will deliver the KPIs and have a full year of data to understand the impact of our actions. This information will be produced and will support our reporting to demonstrate compliance with the Consumer Standards and the Economic, Social and Environmental reporting requirements.

Years 3: 2026-27 – Review

At the end of year 3, we will be able to review the impact of our activity and identify our return on investment of social activity.

Community Development Partners



Wellbeing

To create a **£500,000** uplift in wellbeing as a result of direct and partner projects.



Partnerships

To leverage **£10,000** worth of in-kind or actual funding from external partners.

Inclusion Partners



Wellbeing

To create a **£100,000** uplift in wellbeing as a result of Inclusion Support.



Income

To increase income, or reduce debt/arrears by a total of **£15,000**.

Appendix 1

Social Value Procurement Document

Criteria	Assessment	Score
Does the Social Value offer demonstrably align with Accent's Outcomes? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing Income • Reducing Debt • Improving Health • Increasing Wellbeing 	The offer aligns perfectly with Accent Outcomes.	10
	The offer aligns somewhat with Accent Outcomes.	5
	The offer does not align with Accent Outcomes.	0
Does the offer directly benefit customers in the community where the contract/service will be delivered?	The offer directly benefits the customers in the community where the contract/service will be delivered.	10
	The offer indirectly benefits the customers in the community where the contract/service will be delivered.	5
	The offer does not benefit the customers in the community where the contract/service will be delivered.	0
Does the offer directly benefit a wider group of Accent customers?	The offer directly benefits a wider group of Accent customers.	10
	The offer indirectly benefits a wider group of Accent customers.	5
	The offer does not benefit a wider group of Accent customers.	0
How has the supplier priced their Social Value offer?	The offer is included with no additional costs associated with the contract	10
	The offer has been added into the price of the contract	0

Appendix 1

Social Value Procurement Document

Criteria	Assessment	Score
Does the offer support or align with the work of Accent's frontline teams or partners?	The offer involves working directly with or supporting existing projects of the frontline teams or partners	10
	The offer involves working on projects that align with the work of frontline teams and partners, but not directly with them.	5
	The offer does not support or align with the work of Accent's frontline teams or partners	0
How will the impact of the offer be measured and evaluated?	The offer will directly contribute to Accent's Social Impact KPIs	10
	The offer will be robustly measured, but will not contribute to Accent's Social Impact KPIs	5
	The offer will not be measured	0
The supplier uses local labour/SMEs/Social Enterprises	The supplier will deliver a significant portion of the contract through local labour/SMEs/Social Enterprises	10
	The supplier will deliver a portion of the contract through local labour/SMEs/Social Enterprises	5
	The supplier will not deliver any portion of the contract through local labour/SMEs/Social Enterprises	0
The supplier has a commitment to Sustainability/Environment goals	The supplier has a demonstrable, robust, published commitment to Sustainability/Environment and this will be evident throughout the contract	10
	The supplier demonstrates some practices and policies around Sustainability/Environment and this may or may not be relevant to the contract	5
	The supplier does not demonstrate any practices or policies around Sustainability/Environment.	0



0345 678 0555



customerservices@accentgroup.org