A TOOLKIT FOR SOCIAL LANDLORDS

Building opportunities for business and social landlords to work together

Business Action on Economic Renewal

A toolkit for Social Landlords

Business in the Community mobilises business for good. Our members commit to take action on the key issues of today, be that people or planet, and create a unique platform for collaborative action.

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We want to ensure tenants get good homes, with effective services from their landlord. We also know the importance to tenants of living in successful communities. That’s why this toolkit matters. It supports social landlords and businesses in creating greater employment opportunities for tenants.

Many social landlords already commit significant resources to enrich their communities through improvements to the physical and environmental surroundings. Many have begun to invest in their communities through programmes that help tenants into training, education and employment.

This toolkit offers valuable insights to how social landlords can effectively use that investment, support tenants into work and thereby strengthen their communities.

Phil Morgan, Executive Director Tenant Services, Tenant Services Authority

Wates is committed to supporting communities and pursuing business in a socially responsible way. Therefore we are delighted to be involved in this Toolkit for Social Landlords, a vital tool for building more and stronger relationships between social landlords and multi-sector businesses.

Through collaboration, communities and businesses alike can realise benefits. Businesses can foster communities’ untapped talent and skills for future generations, supporting the development of future employees and consumers. Partnerships build and strengthen local networks, opening communication between business and community, broadening recruitment channels, developing employees’ skills and widening people’s horizons.

I am confident that this valuable resource will support social landlords to build innovative partnerships and make a difference to individual communities.

Steve Trusler, Strategy Director, Wates Living Space

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INTRODUCTION

Social landlords are increasingly harnessing the power of local employers within their employability programmes. There is a growing recognition that working collaboratively can bring greater benefits to all involved - social landlords, businesses, and most importantly the residents themselves.

This toolkit is based on findings from a Pilot run in two cities, with Midland Heart in Birmingham and Places for People in Bristol. The Pilot, supported by the Tenant Services Authority and Wates, explored how social landlords, working with a number of local employers, increased the effectiveness of their employability offer to residents.

This resource highlights the most important lessons learned and how these can be adapted to support other social landlords.

“Residents who take part in an employability programme that has input from employers are more likely to develop the skills and competencies that employers value. In this way, residents can move closer to the job market.”

Gill King, Community Development Manager Midlands, Morrison

WHY WORK WITH BUSINESS?

In addition, the business case for partnerships between social landlords and businesses is outlined, highlighting the type of collaboration that can be created.

DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESS

This toolkit details three determinants of success which act as the basis for case studies and key findings from the Pilot. These are:

EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS
SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS BROKERAGE
DEDICATED RESOURCE

The toolkit concludes with some tips on how social landlords can get started.

ACCESSING ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Working with businesses allows social landlords to tap into existing community investment programmes. Businesses offer skills and resources that can be harnessed to ensure that employability opportunities for residents reflect jobs available locally. Collaboration increases social landlord capacity and understanding of business; skills that can be used in other regeneration activities.

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO RESIDENTS

Business input strengthens the employability offer and creates more choice for residents. By involving multi-sector businesses, a landlord can offer a wider range of opportunities to residents, break down barriers, change perceptions and bring people closer to the job market. Residents benefit from the experience of different workplaces, locations and sectors.

INCREASE COMMUNITY COHESION

Working together, social landlords and businesses can improve communities through the social capital they create. Greater access to social networks can help raise aspiration and confidence and increase opportunities. In turn this can help skills development and access to work. When employees volunteer to support a local employability programme, they increasingly recognise local residents as individuals rather than a disassociated group, which in turn can help open up recruitment policies.

ACHIEVING LOCAL REGENERATION

Social landlords who offer ‘real’ work experiences are more able to move residents from benefit-dependency into employment and sustainable tenancies. This helps to increase the social mix, provides working role models to younger people and increases money in circulation in the area. In turn this should relieve pressure on public sector services and support local regeneration objectives.

£650 million of financial and in-kind support was invested in the community in one year by Business in the Community’s 30 achievers of the CommunityMark.

1 The CommunityMark is the national standard recognising community investment excellence.
EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Effective partnerships can develop through a lucky combination of the right people at the right time. However identifying partners can be a difficult business that needs careful handling.

PICK PARTNERS WITH
- A similar passion and commitment to addressing worklessness.
- A willingness to collaborate and agree objectives.
- The ability to offer a range of opportunities to local residents which reflect the partners’ expertise.
- Capacity to deliver throughout the life of the partnership.

GETTING BUY-IN
- Partners must be realistic and specific about activities they can offer. Not all partners need to offer the same level of commitment.
- Roles and responsibilities must be agreed. The social landlord typically engages residents, while a broker engages business.

“The Steering Group meant that we had a shared sense of progress and ownership of the Pilot at all times. It really helped us report back internally on progress.”

Gaynor Bradshaw, Head of HR Strategy, Signet

Business brokers should help identify the most effective involvement.

Set up a steering group with key partners to guide programme direction, potentially complemented by an operations group to monitor performance.

CREATING ADDED VALUE FOR ALL PARTNERS
- Connect to relevant local strategies to maximise public sector input.
- Utilise business networks.
- Integrate existing employability initiatives to avoid duplication.
- Improve understanding of the roles of different sectors, how each operates and build capacity.

556 work placements
In 2009, 97 companies provided 556 work placements to unemployed people who faced various barriers to work.

Business in the Community, 2009
EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS CASE STUDY: COMPANIES WORKING TOGETHER TO DELIVER VALUE

Social housing residents come from many backgrounds. However, a disproportionate percentage, 78%, are not in full-time employment and may need intensive support to become job-ready.

CREATING SYNERGY
In Birmingham, three companies, Badenoch & Clark, Morrison and Signet Jewelers Limited, worked closely together to create a complementary set of activities for local residents aimed at helping them access the job market.

Morrison and Signet hosted one-day CV and interview skills workshops, introducing residents to effective CV writing. These sessions also focused on soft skill development and practical support with interview-style questions.

Badenoch & Clark, recruitment consultants, followed up these sessions with one-to-one coaching.

Through this support, residents gained experience of interviews and received tips on job search techniques. As recruitment consultants, Badenoch & Clark gave residents a better understanding of how employment agencies work.

BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES
The combined input of three companies enabled each to play to their respective strengths and increased the amount of time available to local residents to improve confidence.

KEY FINDINGS

- Social landlords can achieve more effective employability outcomes that reflect the local economy by leveraging the input of businesses in their programmes.

- Businesses working together can make a greater impact on residents’ skill development than when they work alone.

- Key partners can form project management groups to identify gaps in employability provision and decide on ways to collaborate in order to fill these gaps.

- A broker is helpful in co-ordinating the sequence of events to maximise impact on residents.

SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS BROKERAGE

Successful partnerships depend on quality brokerage - matching partners and opportunities to deliver benefit. Ideally everybody gains from the relationship: residents from employability opportunities; landlords by residents in work; and businesses through positive public profile and employee skills development.

Brokers can sit within organisations (such as social landlords) or can be independent organisations with skills in bringing partners together (such as Business in the Community).

Brokers play several roles:

IGNITING INTEREST AMONG PARTNERS
- Broker must identify a business case for involvement and use this to engage partners.
- Requests to all parties should be specific and relevant to reflect capacity.

IDENTIFYING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
- Brokers ensure agreement on roles and responsibilities and can help resolve disputes.

MATCHING SUPPLY AND DEMAND
- They can help shape employability opportunities.
- The broker should create targets for activities.
- The broker should ensure a match between residents’ demand for particular opportunities and employers’ ability to deliver.
- Employers are best placed to identify and tackle barriers within recruitment processes.

SHARING SUCCESS
- Feedback should be shared and lessons integrated into planning.
- Successful activities and success stories can be publicised.

“The role of Business in the Community as the broker was key to the variety of employability opportunities we could offer residents. The range of business and sectors attracted residents to the programme because they could see direct links to employment in an area that interested them.”

Sarah Jones, Regeneration Manager (South West), Places for People
An effective broker brings businesses together to create dynamic and exciting experiences for participants. One of these – Behind the Scenes – takes participants into a workplace, such as an office, manufacturing plant or shopping centre, to demonstrate to participants the different jobs in the industry, the skills and experience required, training and development provided and the recruitment process.

Behind the Scenes visits help to raise aspirations, inform career choices, increase motivation and give people confidence when interacting with business people.

In Bristol, seven Behind the Scenes visits were held, involving the aerospace, hospitality, retail, food manufacturing, professional, housing and public sectors. Residents gained insight to a wide variety of job opportunities.

**IGNITING INTEREST AMONG BUSINESS AND SOCIAL LANDLORDS**
- The broker created the structure for a standardised industry day that included a visit, question and answer session and presentations from key team members.
- The structure was then presented to targeted businesses, adapting the content to suit different workplaces.

**IDENTIFYING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**
- The broker briefed the companies and business volunteers prior to the visit, and agreed an agenda to ensure learning objectives were achieved.
- Places for People identified and secured attendance of residents.

**MATCHING SUPPLY AND DEMAND**
- A number of opportunities were provided to reflect the variety of residents' interests.
- To create extra value, the broker secured additional capacity from Bristol City Council which meant that all visits were complemented by additional training.

**FOLLOW UP**
- Behind the Scenes visits are fully evaluated with feedback from residents and business volunteers.

**KEY FINDINGS**
- A broker understands the local business and community landscape and taps into existing networks and provision.
- Effective brokerage depends on the ability to sustain interest and engagement among residents and businesses for an extended period of time.
- Different businesses will offer different levels of resource – the broker needs to respond to this.
- Successful brokerage co-ordinates complementary partner activity to maximise business impact.
DEDICATED RESOURCE

Sufficient resource is essential to success.

Some partnerships are funded by the public sector; others by business contributions; while others rely on the staff time of organisations such as social landlords. There is no single or ideal model. However, partnerships will flounder without an honest assessment of costs and clarity about partners’ contributions.

Partners should expect ancillary expenses, such as room hire, crèche provision, staff and resident travel and refreshments.

COSTS TO SOCIAL LANDLORD
- The major cost to social landlords is likely to be staff time in advertising, outreach and resident recruitment.

COSTS TO BUSINESS
- In addition to employee time, businesses will need to allocate resource for volunteer co-ordination.
- Larger businesses may draw resource from ‘community investment’ budgets. Others may cover costs from elsewhere e.g. learning and development budgets.

BROKERAGE COSTS
- Independent brokerage costs must be considered e.g. developing and nurturing business relationships.
- Some areas have not-for-profit brokerages whose services may be free or subsidised. However, most brokers charge for services.

Evaluation of brokerage shows that where a broker is in place there is a tripling in business involvement, a quadrupling of community benefit and clear evidence of value for money3.

DEDICATED RESOURCE CASE STUDY:
PLACES FOR PEOPLE’S COMMITMENT TO RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

In Bristol, Places for People allocated resource for a Community Engagement Officer, to recruit and match residents to suitable opportunities. This individual built relationships and referral channels with housing providers and community-based support agencies.

Places for People used internal resources to identify unemployed residents among their tenants and created distinctive marketing to reach and engage them, including through local community radio advertisements.

DEDICATED, COMMITTED RESOURCE
Having a full-time Community Engagement Officer to recruit and support residents meant that relationships with local grassroots organisations were established and nurtured to create a pipeline of resident referrals. It also meant that each resident’s needs were assessed and a set of employability opportunities were tailored to each individual.

INVESTMENT
Places for People worked closely with Business in the Community to develop individually tailored programmes of employability support for residents, including Behind the Scenes industry visits to companies from seven different sectors. In addition, Places for People linked with Wates’ ‘Building Futures’ programme to offer residents valuable experience of the construction industry.

SUSTAINABILITY
Over the past year Places for People has established good working relationships with both public and voluntary sector agencies in Bristol who are interested in sustaining activities. These relationships will help it to achieve its mission to create new communities and transform existing neighbourhoods into vibrant places for people to live and prosper.

In addition, Places for People’s housing officers are now more aware of the opportunities businesses offer and have the opportunity to refer residents onto ongoing programmes, such as ‘Building Futures’ and ‘Ready for Work’.

KEY FINDINGS
- Social landlords need to commit resource to recruit residents to employability activities.
- Success is contingent on a clear assessment and allocation of costs at the outset - failure to do so can damage partnerships.
- Time and resource is necessary to build internal buy-in and should not be taken for granted.

A Business in the Community programme of employability training, placements and post-placement support.
HOW TO DO IT

GETTING STARTED

• Link with local strategies and existing employability programmes to complement provision and avoid duplication.
• Consider any existing relationships with local businesses - look to contractors and supply chain.
• Business partnerships need to be nurtured, consider what resource you have to develop relationships.
• Be realistic about what you can offer and what you want to achieve - potential partners need to understand your goals to make this align with their priorities.
• Think about how to engage different team members - from CEO to housing officers.

PARTNER PERFECT

• Identify businesses operating in your community and communicate your vision. These are your future partners.
• Find out about the community priorities of local companies and use these to shape your communication.
• Identify areas of your programme where business support would bring benefit - the ask needs to be clear.
• Agree on project management roles and responsibilities; don’t assume that one party will take responsibility for actions unless explicitly agreed.

PUBLICISE SUCCESS

• Promote your work internally and externally, communicate it through newsletters and websites – use success to strengthen your brand.
• Talk about experiences to peers in other organisations and encourage them to collaborate with you or replicate your efforts.
• Celebrate - recognise residents’ achievements and those of volunteers.
• Publicise success – encourage residents to refer friends or relatives through word of mouth.

GO FROM GOOD TO GREAT!

• Secure and maintain support from the top of your organisation and from your partners – create opportunities for them to celebrate progress.
• Ensure that businesses’ contribution to your employability programmes becomes embedded; make it a natural step when deciding on partners for collaboration. Talk about sustainability from the outset.

“Through partnerships like this, we can have a much greater impact than if we were to act alone. Linking up with Midland Heart, Business in the Community and the other companies has given us a much deeper reach into North Lozells.”

Nicola Linkleter, Executive Director, Badenoch & Clark
FURTHER INFORMATION

In addition to the Pilot report that accompanies this toolkit, the following sources of information may be useful:

British Chambers of Commerce
www.chamberonline.co.uk

Business in the Community
www.bitc.org.uk

Chartered Institute of Housing
www.cih.org

Federation of Small Businesses
www.fsb.co.uk

Homes and Communities Agency
www.homesandcommunities.co.uk

IN business for neighbourhoods
www.inbiz.org

National Housing Federation
www.housing.org.uk

Tenant Services Authority
www.tenantservicesauthority.org

The Housing Forum
www.housingforum.org.uk

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Building Opportunities: Businesses and social landlords working together (Business in the Community, 2008)

A Toolkit for Businesses: Building opportunities for businesses and social landlords to work together (Business in the Community, 2008)

Tackling Worklessness: A toolkit (Chartered Institute of Housing, Helen Cope, 2008)

Acknowledgments

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Thanks to the companies, voluntary sector organisations and statutory sector organisations who helped to assure the Pilot’s success, by providing input through Steering Group membership, offering residents opportunities, hosting employability events and sharing their skills and experience. This commitment created learning upon which the toolkit was based.

Finally, most sincere thanks to the residents in Birmingham and Bristol who took part in the employability opportunities the Pilot delivered.

The results of the Pilot are summarised in the ‘Building Opportunities’ report, which accompanies this toolkit.

Business in the Community – Community Impact

The Community Impact team supports Business in the Community members to address key social issues in communities of greatest need. We offer strategic leadership and programmes that enable businesses to share time, skills and resources that make a positive impact on the bottom line as well as society.

We campaign with our members to collaboratively address key social issues:

= EDUCATION - building effective and sustainable partnerships between schools and businesses to ensure all young people leave education with the knowledge and aspirations that will equip them to enter the world of work

= EMPLOYABILITY - removing barriers to work for socially excluded groups, including people who are homeless and ex-offenders, to ensure they seek opportunities to gain and sustain employment

= ECONOMIC RENEWAL - maximising the value of investment, enterprise and employment opportunities in our most deprived communities to increase social equity and cohesion
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