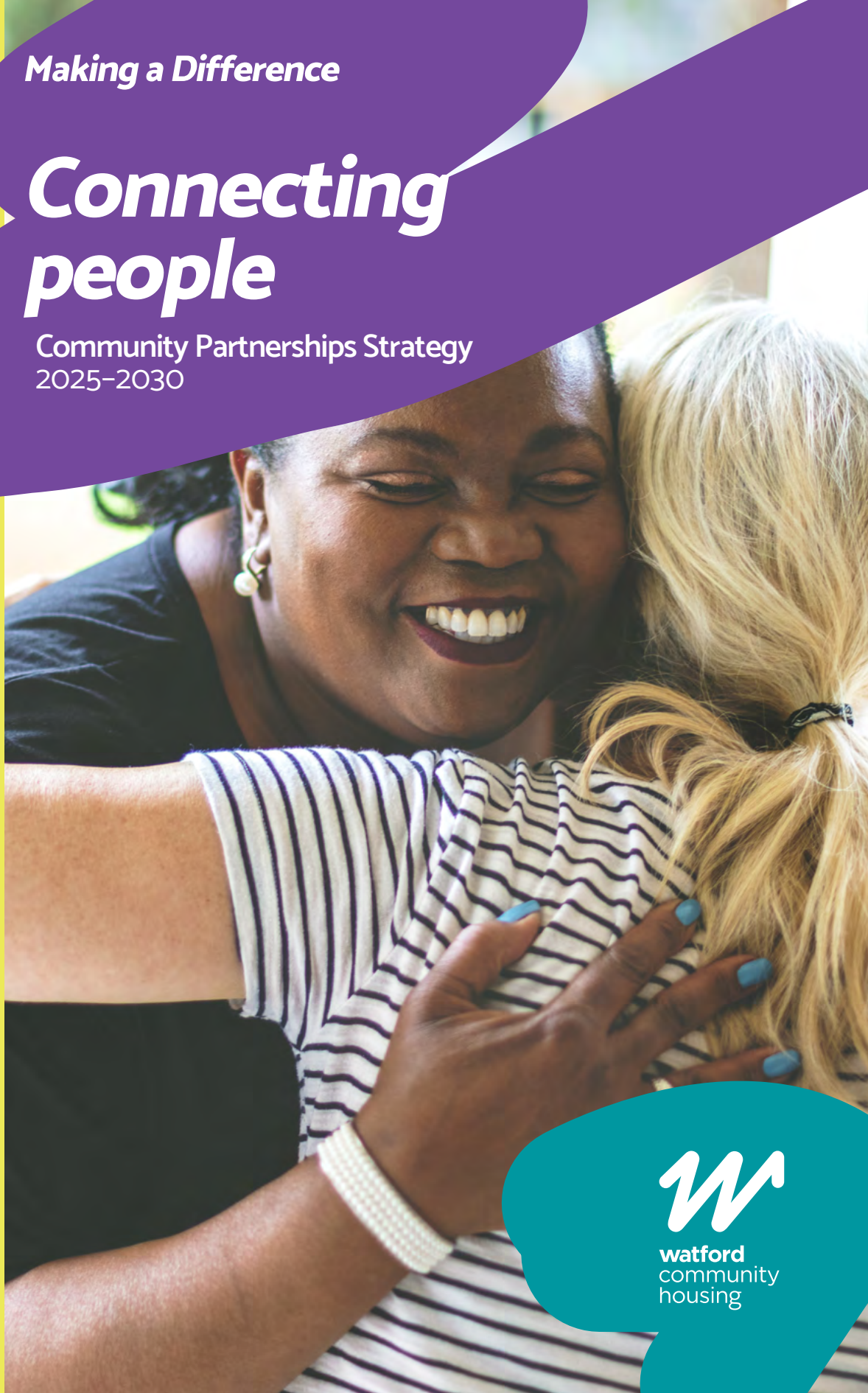


Making a Difference

Connecting people

Community Partnerships Strategy
2025-2030



watford
community
housing



Investing £250,000 per year in our communities

Between 2025 and 2030, we will invest **£1.25m** through our Community Partnerships Fund into initiatives that make a difference in our communities.

Communities should be places where people feel **connected**. Through strong relationships with residents and local partners, we can help to foster strong, supportive and inclusive communities where people can live happily.

As a Community Gateway housing association, we want to make a difference in all the areas we serve, helping them to become friendlier and more prosperous through excellent partnership working – and our most important partnership is with our residents.

Our Community Partnerships Strategy sets out how we will bring people together by investing in our communities and empowering our residents to influence the work we do, making positive change a reality.



Guided by our residents

We are proud to be pioneers when it comes to empowering residents – but we always want to do more.

As one of the few Community Gateway housing associations, we have always put our customers' voices at the heart of our work.

Now, we want to build on this and get more people involved in shaping the future of our organisation and our communities, by strengthening our Gateway Membership Team, improving our offer to members, and ensuring that customers are represented on our Group Board.





A strong and independent Gateway Membership Team

Our Gateway Membership Team is made up of residents who work with us to improve our services, scrutinise our performance and steer our decision-making. By giving our customers a voice, they influence our work for the better.

When it comes to resident engagement, we aspire to be a model organisation within the housing sector, so we will continue to develop the Gateway Membership Team, ensuring that they have the skills to challenge us and help us to do even more. We will work to attract strong candidates of all ages and backgrounds, with the ability to bring a range of experiences and speak for their communities.

‘By giving our customers a voice, they influence our work for the better. When it comes to resident engagement, we aspire to be a model organisation within the housing sector.’

An engaged membership

Being a Community Gateway organisation gives the people in our communities a real voice. Every tenant, leaseholder and shared owner has the option to become a member and have their say over the work we do in their area, and associate membership is available to people in our communities who are not Watford Community Housing customers.

We will enhance our offer to members, attracting more people to take an active interest in the benefits of membership and giving them more power to influence what we do. We will take a fresh approach to engagement, making membership more relevant to our customers' lives.

As well as giving members the chance to help shape and influence the strategic direction of our business, we will make sure that they have a clear say over the things that matter most to them – such as the services we provide and what we do in their communities.

We understand that time is precious, so we will offer quick and easy ways for members to share their views. With more ways to get involved, people will be empowered to suggest improvements and share their views on proposed projects in their neighbourhoods.



Find out more about what it means to be a Community Gateway housing association at **wcht.org.uk/gateway**



Representation on our Group Board

We want residents to be represented at the highest level of our business, because we know that their direct experience gives them an unmatched level of insight into how it feels to be a Watford Community Housing customer.

We'll continue to identify candidates who have the right skills to serve as members of our Group Board. By doing this, we believe our customers can have confidence that residents' views genuinely matter to us.

'We believe our customers can have confidence that residents' views genuinely matter to us.'

Investing in the future

When we invest money in our communities, we see it as an investment in people's lives and futures.

Between 2025 and 2030, we will spend £1.25 million to support residents in our communities and projects led by local people.



Funding for good ideas

Money talks. To help our communities prosper, we will invest £250,000 per year into a range of projects and initiatives that enhance residents' lives and bring people together.

Through our **Community Partnerships Fund** we'll provide direct investment in initiatives that benefit people in our communities. These will be targeted to help tackle known local issues – such as social isolation, poverty and youth crime – and to promote feelings of pride and aspiration through activities such as sport.

We'll also continue to support ideas that will deliver for residents through our **Community Chest**, which provides seed funding for smaller one-off projects, whether that's through events, equipment or something else.

To maximise spending in our communities, we will work hand in hand with our commercial partners and contractors to secure match-funding for the grants we award, and to ensure that our communities benefit from their Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives and funding streams.

We will also work to attract additional grants for local projects from outside sources, including non-profit organisations and funding programmes such as the National Lottery Community Fund.



To help our communities prosper, we will invest £250,000 per year into a range of projects and initiatives that enhance residents' lives and bring people together.



Tenancy sustainment

To support people when they need it most, we'll invest in tenancy sustainment initiatives that can ease financial pressures for residents and help them to avoid going into rent arrears.

We will continue to provide excellent one-to-one support and advice, so that our customers have the help they need to stay on track with their rent. We'll be proactive, offering assistance to people who are at risk of arrears, helping our customers to maximise their income, manage their money and make their tenancy a success.

Some of our funding will go to partners who can offer specialist support to people in our communities, such as Citizens Advice, who provide independent financial advice to residents.

We will also consider providing support to help people with costs such as urgent welfare or living expenses, essential items and unforeseen events. We'll ensure that this goes to people who are most in need, including those on lower incomes who are not eligible for benefit payments and new customers who need a little help to get set up at the start of their tenancy.

A perfect partner

Communities grow strong when people work together.

Our close relationships with other local organisations, stakeholders and residents enable us to do more in our neighbourhoods to support people.

As a valued local partner, we will help to build cohesive communities with bright futures.

Working with local stakeholders

As part of our drive to become an even more visible, active and positive presence in our communities, we'll continue to strengthen our relationships with the main stakeholders in our local areas.

We work alongside a range of partner organisations who can support residents with a wide variety of day-to-day challenges and help us to make sure neighbourhoods remain friendly and safe. This will include taking a multi-agency

approach to community safety, working hand in hand with police, fire services and local authorities to tackle crime and more serious anti-social behaviour.

We will maintain these vital relationships in each of our communities, forging new partnerships in areas where we are less well-established, or where the needs of our communities are evolving as local demographics change. This will ensure that we have the connections to direct residents to the best source of support if they need it.



Our partners

We are proud to work closely with local partners, including **local authorities, police, fire and rescue services, and schools, colleges and universities.**

We also work alongside **local organisations and charities** who specialise in areas including:

- Disability
- Special educational needs
- Mental health
- Addiction to drugs, alcohol or gambling
- Money worries
- Family support and counselling
- Coaching and mentoring
- Training, education and employment



Cohesive communities

For neighbourhoods to prosper, community cohesion is crucial. Our aim is to maintain communities where everyone feels safe and proud of where they live, by nurturing a sense of belonging and togetherness.

We will always treat all residents equally, regardless of who they are and whether they are a Watford Community Housing customer. We want to create communities where people from different backgrounds can live and work together in an atmosphere of mutual understanding.

We believe that everyone deserves to receive a good service and to be treated with respect. To help address the stigma that still exists around social housing, we will challenge unfounded assumptions about the circumstances, behaviour and background of people who live in our homes.

We will also actively share success stories that demonstrate the value of the homes and services we provide, and the strength of our communities.



'We want to create communities where people from different backgrounds can live and work together in an atmosphere of mutual understanding.'

Making every penny count

Investment into our communities is a priority. For maximum impact, we will consider social value when we are planning projects and appointing contractors. By involving local residents in our decision-making, we will ensure that we work with partners who will respect the people in our neighbourhoods and communities.

So that we can do more, we will work in partnership to secure grants to deliver projects and services in our communities, tackling deprivation and targeting areas where support is most needed. We will work with partners to jointly fund roles such as family intervention workers, where we are trying to reach the same groups of people and identify a need for additional resources.



Everyone together

We will continue to nurture our neighbourhoods through community hubs that bring people together and support for residents' groups.

By listening to residents and acting on their feedback, we'll help people to feel part of a strong and proud community.



The heart of our communities

Through both our buildings and our people, we will continue to be a visible force for good in our local community areas. Our community hubs provide a focal point within our neighbourhoods, bringing people together for an array of activities from fitness classes and group meetings to parties and childcare.

Our hubs will continue to be affordable for our customers, making it easier for local people to make use of these spaces and run initiatives such as community and support groups that help residents in their day-to-day lives.

We are committed to being there for our customers whenever they need us – and we know that people appreciate being able to talk to us face-to-face. We will make sure that our hubs are welcoming spaces, and we'll use them to hold regular surgeries with housing officers and other customer events, so that residents feel they have a place to go and someone they can talk to in person.

To maintain a proactive local presence at the heart of our communities, we'll ensure that our teams have the resources to spend time in our neighbourhoods, providing support and reassurance. We will be recognisable, approachable and on hand to help.





‘We will always consult residents and listen carefully to their feedback, to develop plans for our local community areas that are based on people’s unique knowledge and experience of their neighbourhood.’

Empowering people

By continuing to work closely with people in all our local neighbourhoods, we will foster a sense of community spirit and togetherness. In particular, we’ll make sure we help healthy communities to grow in areas where we’ve built or acquired new homes.

We will always consult residents and listen carefully to their feedback, to develop plans for our local community areas that are based on people’s unique knowledge and experience of their neighbourhood.

Our support for community groups will also continue, from formal residents’ associations to friends and neighbours who are looking to arrange one-off events or projects in their area. We are on the side of anyone who wants to help make our communities better, and we’ll continue to assist groups with grant funding.

Making a Difference

Community Partnerships Strategy
2025-2030



watford
community
housing