



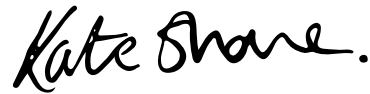
## Operating Context

The rapidly developing costs-of-living crisis has made our mission of growing stronger communities more critical than ever. We are still feeling the tremors of the global pandemic and a prevailing sense of insecurity has threatened to entrench long-term social issues across our heartlands.

In 2020/21, we worked hard to unlock funding and explore new models of business – enabling us to make the biggest impacts where they were needed most and adapting the way we support people.

This section of the Annual Review looks back at some of the services, projects and interventions we delivered, and provides insight into impacts achieved - both as a direct service deliverer and in partnership with like-minded organisations.

We would like to thank everyone on the team, our partners and communities for the inspirational way they have responded to difficult new realities over the last 12 months. I look forward to further evolving offer from Torus Foundation throughout 2022/23.



**Kate Shone**  
Managing Director,  
Torus Foundation



Our social and community responsibilities are always a key consideration at Torus. In 2021/22, the increased demand for funded and community-based support made us find ways to step up and increase delivery of social projects for communities facing the impacts of the pandemic and a looming recession.

The key to enabling this was the implementation a commissioned services model that saw our charitable arm, Torus Foundation, deliver services requested by our Landlord directorate.

The commissioned services model enabled targeted investment by allowing Torus' Landlord function to commission specific projects that dealt directly with pertinent issues impacting our residents during the latter stages of the pandemic. Four focus areas were identified: Health and Wellbeing, Employment, Digital and Financial Inclusion, and projects/services were put in place to deal with issues stemming from these themes – many started in 2020/21 and continued into 2021/22.



## Skills and Employability

A volatile job market has caused significant challenges for our tenants over the last two years. In many cases employment opportunities they were working towards disappeared, training courses were cancelled and support agencies stopped meeting. As a result, demand for our skills and employability support increased sharply. **In 2021/22, 1,848 individuals accessed employability support through Torus Foundation, with 1,004 gaining a job and 552 earning new qualifications. Furthermore, 87% of customers have reported an increase in skills or confidence due to engaging with this service.**

A large proportion of these outcomes are delivered through two projects which Torus Foundation lead, New Leaf and Springboard. A full overview and case studies from these projects is covered in section 2.8 of this report.



## Financial Inclusion

It is common knowledge that household income levels across our heartlands and the wider North West are disproportionately lower when compared with many geographies across the Midlands and South. The lasting impacts of the pandemic and rampant inflation has added to the financial pressure faced by many people in our communities and this has been evidenced by an increased demand for our services. Our Financial Inclusion Team provide free, confidential, high-quality advice and training regarding welfare benefits, debt, and financial capability issues. Torus Foundation also commission the RAISE Benefit Service to offer money and debt management facilities. **In 2021/22 £4.2m in grants and benefits was unlocked via these services.**

Furthermore, the cost-of-living crisis has caused many people to seek help dealing with rising energy costs. As a result, Torus Foundation ran two projects in 2021/22 specifically addressing this issue.

Supportive Energy is delivered in partnership with the Energy Saving Trust and provides in-depth advice on energy debt, bills, and tariffs to vulnerable people in St Helens, Warrington, and Liverpool. The project provides an advocacy service on behalf of vulnerable tenants to contact, negotiate with and challenge energy providers – this also includes claims to the energy ombudsman.

Torus Foundation also ran a winter energy fund programme with the Energy Saving Trust. The project distributed energy vouchers to customers with a pre-payment meter who are at risk of disconnection.

**In 2021/22 277 fuel vouchers were granted totalling a value of £15,148.12.**

*"I cannot thank you enough, you are an amazing person.*

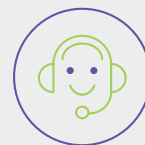
*You have helped me out in so many ways I cannot describe, and you have made me feel like life is worth living again."*

*Mr. B writing to his Torus Foundation advisor after receiving financial inclusion support*

In 2021/22 Supportive Energy produced the following outputs:



**752**  
people engaged with us



**2,066**  
telephone advice sessions



**276**  
home visits



**£39,634**  
estimated savings

## Digital Inclusion

Since the pandemic has encouraged a steady integration of online-only activities into everyday life, it has never been more important for people to have the skills and equipment to stay digitally connected. Our Digital Inclusion team work to increase the number of our tenants using digital services by providing training, support and in some cases equipment. The core offer from this team is the provision of Digital Hubs which Torus Foundation run and manage across our heartlands. These are established in various locations, such as sports and community centres, including FireFit Hub. These hubs offer one-to-one drop-in sessions where residents can get online, learn basic digital skills and deal with specific issues (such as submitting an online application for Universal Credit); 986 people utilised this service in 2021/22.

Furthermore, Torus Foundation also runs and manages Connecting Communities. This project aims to tackle isolation and digital exclusion in the vulnerable and elderly population, this is done by distributing tablets and educating people on how to use them for video calls and basic services.

**664 internet enabled devices were distributed through this project in 2021/22.**

Torus Foundation are also delivery partners in the Include IT Mersey project. This is a European Social Fund programme that provides targeted, personalised digital skills development and employment support to digitally excluded, unemployed people in St Helens and Liverpool. It focuses on developing basic IT skills, online navigation techniques and building confidence.

**In 2021/22, 1,898 individuals were supported by digital inclusion activities and 96% of this group reported an increase in digital confidence.**



## Health and Wellbeing

Torus Foundation's Health and Wellbeing Team offer activities aiming to improve physical and mental health for all age groups and abilities. Health and Wellbeing officers work across Torus neighbourhoods and sheltered and extra care schemes with the aim of engaging residents in physical activity, mental health coaching and healthy eating programmes. Activities typically included moving to music, holistic therapies and mindfulness training. The tail end of 2021/22 saw many of these activities recommence in face-to-face settings, vastly improving effectiveness and resident engagement. Reverting to face-to-face sessions also meant that Torus Foundation could introduce personal assessment tool (PAT) – this allows participants to assess their physical progress between two benchmark dates. 139 PATs have been completed with 80% of participants showing an increased score.

Additionally, Health Promotion Officers operated in each heartland to act as a conduit between the local community and the Foundation team. They worked to identify clear community needs and match them to the Foundation offer.

This activity was possible due to strategic partnerships with local bodies, including Clinical Commissioning Groups and various schools and Children's Centres.

**In 2021/22, 2,048 over 18s took part in Health and Wellbeing Activities.**

Moreover, 2021/22 saw Torus Foundation forge an initial partnership with the charity Making Space, which produced an 18-month commissioned service entitled 'Mindspace'. The service gives Torus customers access to Computerised Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (cCBT) to help improve their mental health. Modules include overcoming depression or low mood, building self-esteem, stress, problem solving, controlling anger, mindfulness, mood and anxiety, social anxiety and work stress. **At the end of 2021/22, 2,048 over 18s had used the service and 912 under 18s.**

Furthermore, hunger is a significant issue that faces communities across our heartlands and as a result our Health and Wellbeing team spend significant time and resource supporting local food banks and pantries.

**Last year, we supported five foodbanks with donations worth £32,000 and provided £40,000 to assist in the establishment of eight food pantries.**

Also under the Health and Wellbeing theme, Torus Foundation delivered 31 Impact Days in 2021/22. Impact Days allowed Torus Foundation to increase engagement and support in our neighbourhoods, whilst also delivering practical help to clean up an area. **Over 100 skips were filled with just under 1000 tonnes of rubbish during the Impact Days,** thanks to the support from HMS Green Space operatives - many of which were young people on the Government's Kickstart programme which gave people ages 16-24 a chance to earn while they learn.



As well as clearing away bulky household waste and fly-tipped items, Green Space Operatives worked to tidy hedges and lawns for residents who may have been struggling, improving communal outdoor areas and helping communities to safely remove garden waste.

The Environmental Impact Days were also a great opportunity for teams from Torus Landlord services, Torus Foundation employment, skills and wellbeing teams, and key partnering organisations, to speak to tenants and residents about the issues impacting them and provide support and signposting where possible.



## Community Investment Fund

Torus Foundation also manage and administer the Community Investment Fund (CIF), a key tool for direct community support. CIF is allocated to develop projects that will benefit Torus tenants and their surrounding neighbourhoods. Constituted community or resident groups are invited to apply, along with organisations that deliver services within a Torus neighbourhood.

**These projects collectively attracted £144,286.33 in match funding and £130,708.58 value in-kind.**

**As shown in these examples, the projects funded make a real difference to our partners and people.**

St Helens Shed is a community space for men to connect, converse and take part in crafts using reclaimed timber. It was set up to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents who may be battling isolation and mental health issues. The charity were struggling to supply a full range of utensils to attendees and were unable transport timber creations once complete. To remedy these issues, they put forward a successful application to CIF for £3,000 to procure tools, a trailer and expand the Group.

Tuebrook Hope Group are a community charity helping people throughout Tuebrook and adjoining communities improve their wellbeing. They wanted to make sure local people on low incomes were able to enjoy a traditional Christmas dinner with their family. As a result, they applied for £750 from CIF in order to procure 30 meat hampers which were distributed within the community.







## 1.8 Case Study: Torus Developments and Generating Social Value through Edge Lane

A landmark site for Torus, The Approach sits at the heart of the multi-million-pound Edge Lane regeneration area – the primary eastern gateway into Liverpool City Centre.

This once unloved, but strategic site on the city's edge has become a unique and vibrant place where young professionals want to live; 145 high-specification homes for Shared Ownership and Rent to Buy now occupy land on which a derelict Victorian terrace previously stood prior to demolition, managed by Liverpool City Council.

The Approach is a former Liverpool Strategic Housing Partnership scheme – a cross-sector initiative designed to unlock difficult sites and deliver quality homes and housing solutions. Crescent shaped and in need of remediation when Torus acquired the site, its location and size offered potential for transformative 'place-making'.

From the outset, Torus and the Project Team regarded the £20 million development as an opportunity not only to build aspirational homes, but also to unlock substantial social value. Torus Foundation worked closely with main contractor Vistry from the outset to connect the build site with the surrounding community.



### Key outcomes included

- **Engagement with over 280 people** wanting to work in the Construction Industry
- **Over 15 collaborative sessions** in local Kensington schools (4 health & Safety sessions, 3 Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and several career days
- **Taking an active role** to support **Women in Construction**, working with Blackburne House, a Liverpool-based charity that supports the development of local, often vulnerable women. As well as undertaking interview skills and mock interviews sessions, work placements were offered to Blackburne House and Torus tenants.
- **14 work experience candidates** spent a week each on site
- **Hosting apprentices** on site, including **17 apprentices** employed by subcontractors

The principle of local connections extended beyond the construction phase; The Approach was envisaged as an affordable location for people working at the neighbouring Royal Liverpool Hospital and Knowledge Quarter. According to surveys carried out by Torus with Rent to Buy and Shared Ownership residents after they had moved in:

- **The primary reasons** for choosing The Approach were the cost of housing in the area and close proximity to the city centre (58% response), followed by the size and type of homes (39%) and the quality of the build (32%)
- **29% of Rent to Buy** respondents come from the local community and **97% are employed**
- **4 out of the 23 Shared Ownership** respondents work in Healthcare/NHS; 21 are from Liverpool
- **Only 3 customers** were previously social tenants; 44% had been living with family and friends whilst 35% came from a private rental

The Approach shows well how cross-sector partnerships can turn difficult, neglected sites into thriving future-ready neighbourhoods – built on principles of affordability and community opportunity. Whilst the initial survey results present only a partial picture of social value outcomes, they suggest that the primary aim of the scheme – to provide quality affordable housing solutions, linked to Kensington and the Knowledge Quarter, has been realised.





## 1.9 Case Study: Delivering on Decarbonisation

Although 2021/22 saw the launch of Torus' first Environmental and Sustainability Strategy, we have been rolling retrofit to decarbonise of our assets for a number of years and this programme continues apace.

In 2021/22, Torus was awarded £2.6m from wave one the government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF). This will be supplemented with £9m of our own investment. Using this funding a total of 189 properties will receive a combination of efficiency improvement measures including: external wall and loft insulation, solar panels, replacement doors, windows and roofs along with space being left for future solar battery storage. Once completed, the properties will surpass an Energy Performance Certificate C.

Bid for via the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, which was awarded £11.1m from wave one of the SHDF to work with nine housing associations, Torus' was the single biggest grant in the region. We are now working with partners to prepare another funding bid for more projects in wave two.

Last year, Torus also tapped into the last round of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grant funding to decarbonise stock. The funding programme finished in March and £1.1m was used to retrofit 330 properties across five projects – one electric heating, one underfloor insulation and three fabric first. Whilst a fabric first approach has been the priority for Torus - 732 improved doors were fitted in 2021/22 and 4,679 dwellings now have external wall insulation – we are adopting new innovations and heating systems.



**European Union**  
European Regional  
Development Fund





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