



Community Investment Strategy

2023-2027

1. Strategy Background

The Southway Futures Strategy 2023-2026 has the long-term vision to create **“Thriving Communities”**.

A key objective is for us to **“use our skills and resources to address inequality, reduce poverty and improve lives in our diverse communities. We support, advise, and enable people to achieve their potential and live well”**.

We know from feedback and information that our customers have provided to us that people are struggling financially and with their general health and wellbeing:

- Only 42% of tenants feel financially secure.
- Only 64% find their rent and service charges affordable.
- 25% of people feel lonely or isolated and that this is more common in people under the age of 35 and over the age of 84.

We also know that:

- Good neighbours and a strong community are important.
- Some tenants want us to provide more facilities and events within the community.
- Help with finding a job/better work is important.
- The cost of food is prohibitive with some neighbourhoods having limited food options.

Accessibility to our community investment services is essential and ensuring our policies and services are inclusive will help to address these difficulties and to ensure that every tenant has equality of opportunity to engage.

44.7% of children in Manchester are considered to be living in poverty. This compares with 31.4% of children in Greater Manchester and 30.8% of children in England. The wards that Southway operates in are generally quite affluent which masks the significant issues that people living in our homes and communities are experiencing.

The percentage of under 16s living in relative low-income households in Southway's core areas is shown below:¹

- Burnage 37.6%
- Old Moat 30.1%
- Chorlton Park 26.1%
- Withington 24.6%
- Chorlton 10.1%
- East Didsbury 9.9%
- West Didsbury 5.1%

2. Our Strategy Aims:

To provide an effective social and community investment offer.

To work with local people and partners to enhance the good work that is carried out and strengthen what is good in our communities and neighbourhoods.

To reduce the impact of poverty for people living in our communities.

To poverty proof all of Southway's services - no activity or service should exclude or treat differently anyone impacted by poverty.

3. Strategy Approach:

We will treat people fairly and with dignity, showing respect and care.

Our inclusion of the socio-economic duty alongside other protected characteristics and intersectionality within our Equality Scheme will underpin our approach.

We will collect and analyse data about the people living in our communities to target our work at the right things at the right time.

¹ Relative Poverty measures individuals who have income below 60% of median incomes. The dataset looks at families who are in low income before housing costs (BHC). To be included in this data a family must have claimed Child Support and at least one other household benefit. The HBAI takes into account household incomes, whereas this data set covers family incomes, as multiple families may live in the same household.

Our priority when delivering services in our communities will be our tenants and their households though we recognise the importance to also support the wider community.

We will use a strengths-based approach and work in co-production with local people, voluntary, community or social enterprise organisation, (VCSE's) and the community, recognising that people living in our homes and working in our communities have a wealth of skills, knowledge, and experience.

Where Southway is best placed to deliver work in the community we will, however, where others are better placed then we will support them to carry out their work. As examples, Southway will lead on providing benefits, debt management and advocacy work whilst pre-employment skills training may be delivered by our community or statutory partners.

Our work will be underpinned by a commitment to working with Manchester City Council and other partners in co-production² and innovation and we will actively seek new and better ways of working.

4. Strategy Themes

There are five themes that underpin our strategy aims:

Theme 1 - Poverty Proofing our Services

We will avoid delivering or developing services in a way that could exclude people in poverty or push tenants and/or their households into poverty or debt.

We will ensure strong links exist between all aspects of community investment work to ensure wrap around support is provided where needed.

² The term Co-production refers to a way of working where service providers and users work together to reach a collective outcome. The approach is value-driven and built on the principle that those who are affected by a service are best placed to help design it." From the MIND website

Theme 2 - Financial Health, Inclusion, and Well Being

We will deliver financial inclusion, debt and other advice through a holistic service that helps to move people to being debt free and more financially secure.

We will work with partners to support the provision of materials that will benefit those on a low income, such as hygiene packs, wellbeing packs and school uniform.

Theme 3 - Food, Fuel, and Furniture Poverty:

We will work with community partners to reduce hunger, aiming to provide a universal offer to our tenants.

Support and signposting will be provided to source low-cost furniture, flooring and soft furnishings and save money on day-to-day energy costs.

Theme 4 – Employment, Training and Volunteering:

We will provide opportunities for our tenants to develop skills and confidence and move into sustainable employment, and support those who are furthest away from the employment market.

Theme 5 - Community Partnerships and Place

Southway works with Community Partners to deliver services to its communities and tenants. We want our communities to be strong and resilient. We will encourage and support opportunities for people to volunteer and for groups and individuals to connect and support each other.

5. Delivery Plan

We will develop an Action Plan to support the delivery of this Strategy. The actions we will take will be reviewed annually to make sure we are having the greatest impact that we can, as we listen, learn, and find other ways to achieve our objectives.

The main commitments and activities that we have already identified, and that will be the focus in the first year of the strategy are:

Theme 1 - Poverty Proofing our Services

This is a new Strategy aim and theme and work will be carried out in year 1 to identify service areas that could impact on tenants financially. We intend to undertake poverty impact assessments across all services to ensure that what we do and how we do it to ensure there are no barriers to accessing our services because of a household being impacted by poverty.

Theme 2 - Financial Health, Inclusion, and Well Being

Our offer will include:

- A robust communications plan to promote all our services with tenants
- Providing tenants access to good-quality, financial inclusion, and advice.
- Helping people to maximise their household incomes including through benefits checks and employment, training, and volunteering advice.
- Providing budgeting, money, and debt management support
- Providing affordable borrowing solutions through our partner South Manchester Credit Union.
- Providing digital access support to tenants including low-cost computers, laptop loans, broadband and social tariffs.
- Delivery of the Living Well Fund (year 1 of the strategy)
- Working with partners to support provision of hygiene packs, wellbeing packs and school uniform provision.

Theme 3 - Food, Fuel, and Furniture Support

Our offer will include:

Our relationship with community partners that deliver food support and local food banks.

We will work with our community partners to tackle holiday hunger.

Explore alternative models of delivering food support. The Quids In clubs were set up between 2015 and 2017 to address food waste more broadly and food poverty directly in our communities, and since then they have supported up to 250 households a week. However, we recognise that the needs of our communities and scale of food poverty have increased significantly so we aim to adopt a new food support offer that will reach more people.

Working with partners to access furniture, floor coverings and soft furnishings to help tenants have warm and comfortable homes. This will include ongoing provision of the furniture loan product that we support South Manchester Credit Union to deliver for our tenants.

Providing a cosy space over the winter months and continue distribution of winter warmth packs.

Refer tenants for energy advice and one to one support from Energy Works and/or the Citizens Advice Bureau and access any voucher schemes available for our tenants too.

Theme 4 - Employment and Skills and Volunteering

Our offer will include:

- Providing people with work and skills training
- Supporting people into sustainable work
- Develop and invest in accredited training for job searchers and volunteers
- Developing networks with local businesses to directly match local people to career opportunities.
- Promoting our own apprenticeship and work experience placements to Southway tenants and their families
- Maximising employment and training opportunities through our procurements and our supply chain
- Continue to

Theme 5 - Community Partnerships and Place

Our community partnerships and commitment to place are things we are very proud of. As a Trust:

- We support community partners Barlow Moor Community Association (BMCA), Burnage Library and Westcroft Community Centre by providing buildings, project funding and in the case of Westcroft, staff resources.
- We provide community spaces at Merseybank Shopping Parade to deliver a café, Quids In, Perry's Pantry and a charity shop
- We provide subsidy to café providers at our cafes within With Care schemes – Gorton Mill and Dahlia House to provide activities as well as an affordable and healthy food offer.
- We provide funding of at least £25k each year to support activities and events that promote neighbourliness through our Beautiful South Fund
- We provide support and training to our volunteers to make our communities stronger and more resilient.
- We provide support and guidance to help partners access funding to increase the offer of services/activities available across our communities.
- We actively work with local community led Cost of Living Groups to maximise benefits of a shared and joined up approach
- Work with our community partners to deliver place-based community investment.
- Developing our neighbourhood-based work with MCC, Health, the Police, and other strategic partners through Teams around the Neighbourhoods and Bringing Services Together, using these as a platform to develop joint services and to improve outcomes for people living in our homes.

6. Measuring Our Success

To ensure our resources and projects are focussed on the right things each year we measure our success in the following ways.

An annual report to our People and Places Committee and to our tenants to confirm what we have achieved through:

- Work experience

- Apprenticeships
- Getting people into work
- Welfare Rights and Benefit Checks and the financial gains achieved.
- Food support
- Volunteering and working in our communities
- Case Studies to show the qualitative impact of our work

We will also provide an annual statement of what is being spent across the different areas of community investment, what this is as a percentage of the overall budget and how we measure the success of our financial investment. Expenditure in 2023/24 is shown in the table below:

	Cost 23/24	Percentage of total budget	Strategic Theme	Measurement Tool All areas will be subject to case studies
Living Well Fund	£200k	21%	2	£ and number of awards made/ referrals for other services/support
Welfare Rights	£156k	17%	2	£ Financial gains
Employment and Training	£141k	15%	4 and 5	Number of people (split by internal team and Learning Hubs: Into work (and types) Work and skills training (all types). Volunteering numbers
Financial Inclusion	£69k	7%	2 and 3	Number of bank accounts/ budgeting advice/ hygiene packs/ energy advice/ food banks
Community Buildings & Development Work	£86k	9%	5	Partner case studies and annual reports
Westcroft Community centre	£66k	7%	5	Centre users/ case studies
Volunteering	£55k	6%	4 and 5	No. of volunteers x hours x living wage/ Case studies
Funding	£57k	6%	5	£ of funding received and number and £ of Beautiful South Awards made
Debt Advice	£47k	5%	2	Rent account monitoring/ average £ debt being presented
Food, Fuel and Furniture Support	£36k	4%	3	Reduction of food waste/ number of visits to QI/ £ and number of energy vouchers/
Digital Inclusion	£36k	4%	2	Number of digital champions
Community Cafes – Gorton Mill and Dahlia House				
Total	£928km			

7. Related Documents and Strategies

- Manchester City Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy 2023/2028
- Southway Futures Strategy 2020 to 2025
- Inspired by our Communities Customer Voice Strategy
- Age Friendly Strategy
- Digital Access Strategy

- Single Equality Scheme
- Value for Money Strategy
- Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards
- Business plans for Westcroft Community Centre, Barlow Moor
- Community Association and Burnage Library