



Wythenshawe
Community Housing Group

Scrutiny Group review findings - Living Well Fund

Feb 2024

Summary

During January our tenant-led Scrutiny Group conducted a review WCHG's Living Well fund . This report details how the review was conducted, its findings and its recommendations.

In summary, Scrutiny Group found that both aspects of fund – direct provision and support for community groups are well-run and demonstrate value for money.

The WCHG had a good support offer when compared to other RP's in GM.

That the fund should be more prominent on WCHG website

While Scrutiny Group found service offered VFM, they felt that more could be done, especially around furniture and curtains, through working in partnership with other agencies.

The Review

The review of the Living Well:

- **Interview with Stephen Jackson, Head of Income** – this was to review direct provision to tenants for goods and services
- **Site Visits to Groups supported by WCHG** – members of the scrutiny group conducted three site visits: Know Africa, Blossom and Fare Shop
- **Desktop review** – identified that the LW fund was not well publicised on WCHG website and SC panel members had to use Google search to find it

Members sought to answer the following questions, which they set in consultation with the Chair of CXC:

- Is it delivering Value for Money?
- Has the fund achieved its purpose?
- Is it person centred and responsive to tenant need?
- How does it compare to other landlords? (benchmarking)
- A large proportion of the fund goes to charities based in the Wythenshawe area, however this money was set up to help local tenants / area. Are there checks to make sure the charities are only serving the people of Wythenshawe?

The Findings

Blossom:

- Group was formed following Covid.
- Provide Food and Fuel Advice – help families to see benefit of health home cooked food and saving money on fuel costs at the same time.
- The Scrutiny Panel noted the following:
 - Provided 6 week courses that went at participants own pace.
 - Supported 6 people into employment.
 - Looking for further funding to take on an apprentice
 - Identified link between healthy eating and helping with wider health issues

Fareshop:

- Pantry Model
- Helping people move away from reliance on food bank.
- Contribution of £6/£8 meant could get £30/£40 of food:
- Half of funding went to get extra fresh food – provide recipes to help.
- Linking with other groups through community connector.
- ‘Simple but effective’

Know Africa:

- 2 aspects to work – school uniform scheme and foodbank
- Established in 2018 to help community.
- Used funding to do promotion and outreach – some concerns that funding was not focused enough on Wythenshawe/WCHG tenants.
- Group were also struggling as limited funding and lack of community spaces to deliver
- Scrutiny Panel wanted feedback from tenants who had used Know Africa
- Further info was sought from ‘Know Africa’ regarding who had accessed the funding via WCHG but this was not available as part of the feedback process.
- Noted that panel felt that WCHG should be trying to bring more external funding in to help community Groups

Publicity:

- Identified that fund is not easily found on website
- Content will be reviewed and updated to raise awareness
- Content will need to be clear that tenants will need to engage with FI/Living Well team to demonstrate that they have a need and not all applications are accepted
- Fund is limited and so we need to target resources to those most in need

Is it delivering Value for Money?

Findings:

Members agreed that the LWF is Value for Money, most items are purchased on AO for a full service.

There are issues with providing carpets due to the cost of fitters, though this has not been ruled out.

Recommendations:

Members suggested that more partnerships could be made and that engagement with suppliers for free or cheaper products / services could help.

Has the fund achieved its purpose?

Findings:

Members agreed that the LWF has achieved its purpose so far. Members noted that it is still early days and WCHG will learn along the way. It is too early to recommend improvements.

Recommendations:

To ensure monitoring is strengthened and reporting mechanisms are in place

Is it person centred and responsive to tenant need?

Findings:

Members agreed that the direct provision is person-centred and responsive to tenant needs as it looks at each individuals' circumstances.

SJ stated that (according to applications) 20,000 people have benefitted from the LWF through community groups.

Recommendations:

No improvements identified

How does it compare to other landlords? (benchmarking)

Findings:

In relation to benchmarking, not all landlords are providing such a fund, it is not compulsory. First Choice Homes Oldham do not have a Living Well Fund at all.

WCHG: £250,000

One Manchester: £400,000

Southway: £140,000

MSV / Great Places: £500,000

Northwood: £200,00

Recommendations:

No recommendations, considering the number of properties, WCHG is broadly in line with others.

A large proportion of the fund goes to charities based in the Wythenshawe area, however this money was set up to help local tenants / area. Are there checks to make sure the charities are only serving the people of Wythenshawe?

Findings:

It is confirmed that at year end a financial assessment form is issued and a number of checks are carried out and case studies requested to report on the number of people in Wythenshawe that have benefitted from the service.

Areas of Improvement:

Reporting mechanisms to include data from Wythenshawe residents that have received support through community groups

It was suggested that colleagues relevant to the LWF could go to the Community Connectors to hear the experiences of the groups.

Recommendations

Scrutiny Group recommendations

5 main recommendations were identified by the group

1. More rigorous checks on Community Groups that they were helping WCHG tenants and provided with a feedback mechanism to show this.
2. WCHG should try to bring in more external funding for community groups than provide all itself.
3. Work with local suppliers as well as national ones for direct provision.
4. Where possible identify suppliers that have unsold/surplus stock that could be bought at cost and delivered to tenants – e.g. curtains/flooring.
5. That the Living Well fund be more prominent on the WCHG website to help tenants who need help.



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