Metropolitan Community Regeneration Strategy 2012-2015
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This document outlines the strategy for delivering Metropolitan’s community regeneration services for the period 2012-2015. The primary objective for the strategy is to ensure we deliver on the following:

- Customer involvement
- Tackle disadvantage and social exclusion
- Building sustainable communities

This Community Regeneration Strategy forms part of Metropolitan’s Strategic Plan.

During 2011/12 Metropolitan:

- Developed a regional and national customer involvement framework to scrutinise our housing and care support services;
- consulted and worked with 2713 customers;
- secured employment for 79 of our local people;
- 76 people participated in volunteering or work placements;
- 107 Adults obtained training through Metropolitan projects;
- 1446 people benefited from sports related activities; and
- secured a total of £385,130 external funding to support community regeneration projects.

Building on the work that has been done to restructure and improve our housing services, the strategy takes on board the principle of one housing, one care and support business. In response to the wider economic challenges facing the UK, it outlines a generic model which is based on the principle of working in partnership with our customers to improve service delivery and prioritise those neighbourhoods most in need of community investment services.

In order to achieve our objectives we will deliver on the following themes:

1. Customer Involvement
2. Employment
3. Youth
4. Financial Inclusion

This strategy also responds to the outcome of our equalities impact assessment. More customers will be able to access our services through our community engagement activities with referrals being made to community projects by Neighbourhood Officers and Support Workers. We will make direct links to those individuals and families who are in need of support, taking on board those customers who are most at risk of social exclusion.

**Governance**

Metropolitan’s Operational Directors Group (ODG) and Housing Services Management Team (HSMT) will review and sign off the strategy, ensuring it is in line with the Metropolitan Strategic Plan and operational priorities. The Community Regeneration Strategy will also be approved by Customer First Committee based on the recommendations of the National Residents Group (NRG) which will review the strategy from a customer’s perspective. Performance against outcomes will be measured by the Community Regeneration Team and monitored by HMST. The NRG and local neighbourhood community panels will be updated on progress of the overall programme and the delivery of local themes.
Metropolitan provides services to over 38,000 households. We have an annual customer base of 90,000 people, providing a diverse range of services including care and support for a range of client groups including refugee and asylum seekers. We have helped 34,000 people on low to moderate incomes get onto the property ladder and support ca. 4,000 owners.

Our services go beyond the traditional landlord role of providing homes and housing services. Metropolitan works with local people and organisations to improve the wider social and economic conditions of the areas in which we deliver services. There is increasing awareness of the ways in which living in a deprived neighbourhood can contribute to social exclusion. Tackling problems such as high unemployment, social and financial exclusion and community unrest are key to us delivering our vision of Improving Life Together.

We acknowledge that communities have an integral role in identifying solutions which shapes the services that we provide. As a social landlord we want to make sure that we offer our customers the service that best suits them. We work with customers so that they can influence the services provided by Metropolitan, holding us to account for decisions we make. Effective engagement of local people is critical to the regeneration of our most disadvantaged communities. Listening to the experiences and ideas of people who live and work in these communities enables us to find solutions that will make a lasting difference.

With increasing levels of unemployment, particularly for the 16 - 24 year olds, and changes in housing benefit rules, early indications are that our customers will require support and interventions from a range of agencies, including Metropolitan. The work we will do over the coming years will be even more important in supporting those residents who will be adversely affected by the current financial climate.

We aim to improve the quality of life for the communities we serve by bringing long lasting benefits and choice to individuals and families. It is important to us that people living in our homes are given opportunities to develop the skills, confidence and resources to take advantage of opportunities open to them. We recognise improving the quality of life within communities is a collective responsibility that we share with our customers, and the voluntary, public and private sectors.

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Metropolitan will work to develop its understanding these new powers, and how they can be used, in partnership with our customers and other local stakeholders, for the benefit of the communities where we work.

The Localism Act also contains a wide range of new powers designed to devolve decision-making and accountability to a local level. These include the Right to Challenge, Right to Build, Neighbourhood Planning and new powers around community asset ownership. These powers will change the ways housing providers work at a local level, offering both challenges and opportunities.

In addition, a growing focus on ‘participatory democracy’ and co-production will increase expectations amongst tenants and communities that they will play a more active part in shaping and designing their own neighbourhoods and services. This is significantly different from historic approaches based around consultation, tenant participation and resident inspection.

The responsibility of ensuring adherence to the consumer standards will rest solely with the registered providers through their own governance arrangements. The act also introduces a ‘democratic filter’ or role for members of Parliament, Councillors and Tenant Panels in resolving tenants complaints about the services that they receive. Working alongside our customers, other registered social landlords and local authorities, Metropolitan’s customer involvement framework offers a platform from which to build involvement structures which meet the need to develop local offers, scrutinise service standards and involve tenants in resolving complaints.

The Localism Act also abolished the Tenants Services Authority in March 2012. A reduced regulatory function moved to the Homes and Community Agency from April 2012. Regulation will include:

- proactive regulation of registered providers’ economic matters, in particular value for money
- national standards for consumer issues in social housing but only intervening if an registered provider is identified of failing (or at risk of failing) to meet the standards
- freedoms for local authorities to manage their housing waiting lists, tenancy policy and allocation of social housing and the development of new housing their area
- launch of the national Home Swap Direct mutual exchange scheme

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Metropolitan’s Strategic Plan sets out the strategic objectives for the years 2012-2015 and explains how we will adapt and develop our organisation and the services we provide in order to achieve our core purpose. We want to be recognised as a leading social and community regeneration business. By delivering an integrated package of housing, care and support and community regeneration services we will enhance the quality of life and opportunities for everyone in the communities we serve.

The work which we undertake at a local level, both with communities and the individuals that live in them, is integral to Metropolitan’s unique offer. The Plan identifies the need to embrace the challenges of economic austerity, changes in the regulation of housing, and the opportunities of localism being integral to its success. The Plan also anticipates, when operational financial performance allows, a community dividend to increase the level of resources available for investment in local communities, in addition to funding that can be raised externally.

Welfare reform and the effect of increasing unemployment will have a serious impact on our customers ability to improve the quality of their lives. The complicated benefit and tax credit system (there are currently over 50 different benefits and tax credits) will be replaced by one ‘Universal Credit’ October 2013. This means families and individuals will receive one payment instead of several (or many) different benefits and credits. The impact that Metropolitan and our tenants will feel now revolves around changes to individual benefits. This will mean that many of our tenants will see a reduction in their household income. This together with increasing levels of unemployment particularly amongst young people will require a response from organisations to address the underlying causes of financial exclusion and the associated problems this presents.

Our community regeneration strategy will provide cost effective community interventions that offer value for money.
Our community regeneration services cover a number of priorities which targets specific groups and fall into the following categories:

**Priority 1. Customer Involvement**
- Enabling customers to shapes services and priorities
- Holding Metropolitan to account
- Meeting our regulatory requirements
- Improving satisfaction levels
- Developing local offers and service standards

**Priority 2. Tackling Disadvantage & Social Exclusion**
- Working with diverse groups
- Addressing community tension
- Improving the lives of young people
- Enabling service users and vulnerable residents to be independent
- Targeting resources at where they are most needed
- Working with migrant communities

**Priority 3. Building Sustainable Communities**
- Getting in people into employment
- Providing skills and training
- Providing advice and support
- Securing private and public sector funding
- Maximising use of Metropolitan’s supply chain and procurement process
- Delivering new business for physical regeneration schemes
- Promoting and supporting the development of social enterprises

**What Does This Mean?**

**Our Customers**
This strategy recognises the diverse needs of the people who live within our homes and communities. Our programmes will be inclusive addressing issues of social exclusion working with the most disadvantaged.

It will include customers across Metropolitan and will target the following groups:

- Tenants
- Leaseholders
- Unemployed people
- Young people
- Older people
- BME groups
- Lone parents
- Men
- Women
- People with disabilities and disadvantage
- Service users and vulnerable people
- Migrant communities
- Families

**What is Community Regeneration?**
Community regeneration is about improving the quality of life for communities we serve.

In order to achieve this it is important that we know our customers, understand their aspirations and work in partnership to develop and deliver services that address the social and economic needs of our neighbourhoods.

**Our vision is Improving Life Together:**
Metropolitan Community Regeneration Strategy will contribute to this vision by:

- **Ensuring our customers are involved in shaping the services we provide.**
  We will consult with our communities, understand their aspirations and work in partnership to improve quality of life. We will make sure the communities we serve are resilient and sustainable.

Over the next three years Metropolitan will:

1. Ensure a quality assured customer involvement and scrutiny framework is in place.
2. Ensure that people who live in our homes feel that they are in a community where they are safe, can live, work and learn.
3. Ensure Metropolitan’s customers have access to community programmes, employment and volunteering opportunities through the delivery of information advice & guidance services.
4. Reduce the level of debt and hardship experienced by our customers by enabling access to quality financial inclusion advice, support and community services.

**In order to achieve this our key priorities will be:**

- **Customer Involvement:**
  we will ensure that Metropolitan is accountable to customers by involving them in our governance and scrutiny arrangements, consulting with them on the issues that are important to them, encouraging and listening to their feedback, and providing them with clear information about our performance.

- **Tackling Disadvantage and Social Exclusion:**
  we will work in neighbourhoods with high levels of deprivation to deliver services for groups at risk of marginalisation. We will ensure individuals and families have access to information, advice, training, and support.

- **Build Sustainable Communities:**
  we will deliver services to build the capacity of our customers to improve the quality of life. We will work in partnership with the voluntary, public, and private sector.

**How We’ll Ensure Success**
We recognise services provided to communities will be affected by the significant reductions being made to central and local government funding. There will be a need to utilise the resources that are available more effectively. We will focus our resources on our core boroughs where we have high levels of deprivation, unemployment, debt and where neighbourhoods are experiencing high levels of ASB. We will use intelligence about local service performance as a trigger for further research to illuminate the challenges which particular neighbourhoods face.
Social Exclusion Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

Metropolitan works in some of the most deprived boroughs in England, including the core boroughs of Hackney, Haringey, Nottingham, Lambeth, and Brent. For example, 77% of neighbourhoods in Hackney are among the 10% most deprived in England, and in Brent, the figure is 30%. The IMD looks at a wide variety of factors, including income inequality, underemployment, health, educational attainment, and so on.

The economic profile of social housing tenants indicates that many of Metropolitan’s neighbourhoods experience high levels of deprivation. While there are areas of deprivation in all the areas where Metropolitan works, our stock profile indicates that the majority of these will be in London.

Metropolitan North Region

We will ensure success by:

- offering our customers a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing, including the ability to influence strategic priorities, the formulation of housing-related and care policies and the delivery of service;
- profiling our customers and neighbourhoods, and using the information to develop appropriate responses based on the needs and the funding available to support community activities;
- concentrating on areas and neighbourhoods where there are high levels of unemployment and multiple forms of deprivation.
- continuing to work collaboratively with a wide range of established delivery partners in our core areas (Hackney, Haringey, Nottingham, Lambeth, and Brent);
- targeting our efforts on securing funding for identified priorities, developing

relationships with ongoing sponsors and external funders, project and research partners;

- establishing partnerships with other registered social landlords, the public, voluntary and private sectors to address local priorities by pooling resources and skills;
- evaluating and seeking external validation of services, through effective quality assurance. Ensuring the lessons learnt are used to support continuous improvements of services;
- communicating, marketing and promoting services to our customers and stakeholders;
- taking a leadership role for the delivery of community regeneration programmes – our links to the G15 Social Capital Group enables us to share knowledge and best practice and maximise the potential for joint ventures;
- adding value to the physical regeneration schemes by offering an efficient and effective job brokerage and apprenticeship programme for Metropolitan’s customers;
- developing community hubs through maximising the benefits of our community centres, ensuring that our services are accessible; and
- building on the expertise of our care and support services to provide specialist support for service users.

We will focus our resources on our core boroughs

Metropolitan South Region

In addition, we have specifically focused on those priorities where we will have greatest impact and have developed more detailed plans supporting employment, training volunteering, youth and financial inclusion.
Community Regeneration Framework

Metropolitan's community regeneration services will bring together resident involvement, community investment and regeneration. The centralised management of services will provide the strategic direction with delivery taking place locally. Our communities are recognised as valued and equal partners and as such will be provided with opportunities to participate in the delivery of services. There will be meaningful community representation on decision making bodies.

We will ensure that members of the community receive the appropriate support and training to build their capacity to effectively engage with the consultation and decision making process of the organisation. We will build on the strengths of our communities by working with the local community and voluntary sector networks.

Metropolitan staff will be trained, supported and knowledgeable about the mechanisms and options in place to assist effective engagement. We will have a clear understanding of the role we play as facilitators and will actively work to demonstrate that the views and needs of our customers have been sought, taken into account and reflected in local neighbourhoods or estate level service plans.

Metropolitan will deliver community regeneration programmes by providing the following services to our customers:

- develop social enterprises
- offer grant support (migration foundation)

Our community regeneration services will be underpinned by our ability to identify the key priorities of our communities. Community interventions will be delivered through the use of Project Cycle Management. This approach will enable us to develop demand driven solutions based on a thorough analysis of local situations. A key principle will be to involve beneficiaries and other stakeholders in planning, decision making and design of programmes.

Our work with communities will include the following steps:

1. **Identification**
   Metropolitan will work in partnership with communities including customers and other key stakeholders to address key problems affecting neighbourhoods.

   A key part of this process will be to undertake a ‘needs assessment’ identifying the priorities and resources necessary to address local issues. We will utilise customer insight to target our services. A fundamental part of this process will be to understand the demographics, deprivation indices and wider social and economic issues affecting the borough in which our households are located.

   We will utilise our community engagement activities working alongside our Housing Services officers, local community groups, the voluntary, public and private sectors. The National Residents Group, Scrutiny Committees, Community Panels and Boards will play an integral part in identifying solutions to local problems.

2. **Design**
   Our approach will involve designing community programmes and services which meet the diverse needs of our customers. We will be clear about the assumptions that are being made, the associated risks and how we will measure the programme’s performance. This will involve working with our customers to develop an in depth understanding of the impact of problems experienced by the communities we serve.

   In terms of delivery we will assess if Metropolitan should provide direct delivery, commission services or enter into joint ventures or partnership arrangements and the extent to which this meets programme objectives and offers value for money.

3. **Implementation**
   During the implementation of programmes we will monitor and review their progress. Metropolitan will use the Hanlon Project (IRIS Database) system for monitoring community regeneration project activity. This corporate monitoring system will enable project performance data, outputs and finances, to be systematically collated across Metropolitan based on agreed core performance indicators and objectives. Deviation from forecast or approved figures will be intelligently monitored. Regular analysis will enable better understanding of the impact of projects.

4. **Evaluation**
   Evaluations will be carried out in order to assess long-term impact and sustainability. This approach will also enhance our ability to develop evidence-based community interventions and improve our chances of successfully securing external funding bids. Enhancing our capability in this area will be critical to securing and increasing the resources (both internal and external) for community investment activities.

   Metropolitan is working in partnership with HACT to develop an evaluation tool kit that is fit for purpose for the housing sector. We will continue to carry out case studies, benchmark and undertake a range of surveys (including STAR) which will enable us to track progress against a set of key performance indicators.

5. **Lesson Learning**
   Regular reviews will be repeated to ensure that any changes that might affect the programme’s success are accounted for. Findings will also be used for organisational learning and to improve other projects.
**Priority 1: Customer Involvement**

**Ensuring Metropolitan is Accountable to Our Customers**

We operate in amongst some of the most diverse communities in the UK.

Our customers reflect that diversity in both their needs and expectations. The challenge therefore is to provide a consistently high standard of service across the board, whilst at the same time tailoring those services around the diverse profile of our communities. We can only achieve this by working together with our customers. We know this because the best and most successful businesses shape their products and services to what they have learnt from consultation and customer feedback.

More than a third of Metropolitan’s customers are under 25 and 39% of our customers are disabled. A growing proportion of our customers come from black and minority ethnic communities (52%). Over 150 different languages are spoken and a significant number of customers prefer to receive information in languages other than English. Our customers include people receiving support to live independent lives, tenants, those on low to moderate incomes who have bought a share in their home, and affluent customers who have bought their properties on the open market and regard Metropolitan as they would any other business from which they buy services. We have committed to strengthen the role of customers in decision making to deliver change and improvements. We have therefore developed an approach to involvement that offers opportunities to suit all of our customers.

It covers five key areas:

- Engaging our customers
- Investing to build involvement
- Support and incentives for involvement
- Local Offers: Shaping our services around our customers
- Developing our staff

Metropolitan recognises and values the input of staff, customers and service users. The added value they bring is crucial to an organisation that strives to get things ‘right first time’. We will invest in and build the capacity of involved customers by offering training and support based on both the individual and collective needs of those involved. Information gathered from annual skill analysis will be used when reviewing our training programme.

We will consult with customers to identify how services can be improved. Housing Services staff will lead on consultation. Customers will be involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of the services provided by Metropolitan. We will work with customers at neighbourhood level to deliver services to the standard agreed. We will ensure that customers are kept up to date and receive feedback on service improvements.

We have committed to strengthen the role of customers in decision making to deliver change and improvements.

**Scrutinise Performance:**

Our regional scrutiny committees together with the National Residents Group will work with Metropolitan staff to ensure services offer value for money. In addition customers will have an active role in auditing services provided through our Mystery Shopping Programme.

**Provide Training & Support:**

We will ensure customers have access to information and the skills required to scrutinise the services provided.

**Develop Local Offers:**

Local Offers represent a new way of tailoring the services of social housing providers based on what residents want. All providers must consult with customers on the desirability and scope of local offers in relations to services to meet the following Homes and Community Agency standards:

- Tenant Empowerment and Involvement:
  - including customer service, choice and complaints and understanding and responding to diverse needs of tenants
- Home:
  - including repairs and maintenance and quality of accommodation
- Neighbourhood & Community:
  - including neighbourhood management, local area co-operation and anti-social behaviour

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We will report on the delivery of our local offers on a regular basis.
Metropolitan knows its customers and understands the importance of eliminating potential barriers to customer engagement. We are committed to ensuring that all customers are offered fair and equal access and that we are proactive in seeking the view and opinions of the hard to reach.

Our Consultation Framework sets out how customers will be consulted about the services provided. Our process will be flexible in order to work with residents and service users at a local level and respond to the diverse needs and profile of the many communities we work with.

The Star Survey undertaken by Metropolitan enabled us to understand the views of our customers on a number of key indicators that support community regeneration. Between July – Sept 2011 72% of our customers in general needs and sheltered and supported housing were satisfied with opportunities to make their view known. 63 % of tenants where satisfied that as a landlord we listen to customers views and then acted upon them.
Metropolitan will address social exclusion by adopting the following approach:

We will:
- recognise the gaps between poorest and most affluent communities
- target resources at the most deprived boroughs in which have homes
- develop Partnerships Working with the public private and voluntary sectors
- ensure that Customer Involvement is “Everyone’s Business”
- build on our track record of successfully delivering projects and securing external funding
- use Customer Insight and community engagement to target those individuals who would benefit from the services provided

Metropolitan will deliver a range of community based programmes designed to contribute to reducing the levels of Anti Social Behaviour, create a Sense of Community, promote supportive Social Networks and creating employment training opportunities.

Utilising our centres as “Community Hubs” we will deliver a range of projects. This will build on existing and new services and will include the following:
- Mayors Fund Sports Programme
- Youth Diversionary Projects
- ESOL Classes
- Numeracy and literacy Classes
- Volunteering opportunities
- Debt advice
- Employment information advice and guidance

In order to achieve this we will:
- Work with vulnerable customers and provide support to those groups who are at risk of being marginalised. Through our care and support services we will support service users and vulnerable residents to be independent. We will develop community programmes which build supportive social networks.
- Ensure the projects we deliver reflect the diversity of the area - enabling customers to access quality driven services. There will be an inclusive approach to age, gender, religion, disability, sexuality and ethnicity.
- Establish links with the Metropolitan Migration Foundation to encourage creative and constructive responses to migration to the UK. We will ensure migrants have an opportunity to play an effective part in civil society to find work, homes and to take an active role in improving conditions for themselves and the communities in which they live.
- Deliver debt and advice services to address issues of financial exclusion by helping customers to identify and prioritise their spending to prevent them getting into debt.

The term ‘social exclusion’ is now widely used to describe how some forms of disadvantage, including unemployment, poor skills levels and poverty, can combine to push people out of mainstream society.

Social exclusion is the effect that lack of income and lack of work, educational underachievement, and poor health, have on people’s ability to participate in society. The correlation between this and social housing is that our estates are likely to have higher levels of unemployment, Anti-Social Behaviour – (more visibly involving young people), poor access to mainstream and housing services for the disabled and vulnerable, lack of social and support networks for groups like lone parents, children the elderly, and poor integration of migrant groups.

The research identified a serious lack of support for children and families under stress; vulnerable families on the study estates were exposed to conditions in which even families with much better resources would find it difficult to thrive. In addition these circumstances are known to adversely affect people with disabilities who need extra support to participate in communities. 39% of our customers are disabled and will therefore require support to access appropriate services.

From an educational perspective, a recent review of educational achievements depicts a contrasting picture for Metropolitan. It showed that the North Region has a higher percentage of people with ‘No Qualifications’ compared to the South Region. For example, Brent has the lowest percentage of its residents with no qualifications (5.1%) whilst Hackney has the highest (14.9%). Whilst in the north, Rushcliffe has 5.5% compared to 19.5% for Derby.

Research involving socially excluded residents across the UK highlighted that the biggest single issue was antisocial behaviour of young people, including crime, vandalism and the use of drugs.

Through our care and support services we will support service users and vulnerable residents to be independent.

Priority 2: Tackling Disadvantage and Social Exclusion

Working with vulnerable people including service users, young people, older people, and migrant communities

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Priority 3: Building Sustainable Communities

Tackling worklessness through the provision of employment, volunteering and training opportunities

Worklessness is a term used to describe the situation of people who are out of work but would like a job. The Department of Work and Pensions defines worklessness as “people of working age who are not in formal employment but who are looking for work”.

The impact of worklessness and poverty on households and individual’s quality of life, can be far reaching and result in ill-health, crime, substance abuse, poor levels of attainment at school and family breakdowns. Workless households are highly concentrated in particular neighbourhoods including areas of social housing. This has wider implications for community regeneration, the economic vitality of neighbourhoods and local capacity. The ‘Hills Report’ highlighted that workless households tend to be concentrated in urban areas, with an over-representation from minority ethnic communities.

Research undertaken by Metropolitan shows the unemployment situation at the estate level, may be even more pronounced. For example, a skills audit on the Clapham Park estate in South London showed that 37% of survey respondents were not in employment for various reasons; 16.8% held no qualifications; with 30% indicating that they held qualifications gained overseas.

A study undertaken in 2008/9 by Metropolitan Support Trust entitled My Future Pilot aimed to measure the impact of employment support for service users and demonstrated the effectiveness of providing support to service users with a variety of disabilities including mental health problems, learning disabilities and vulnerable young people. It resulted in 61% increase in participation in employment activities including paid work, volunteering and training. A total of 96 service users participated in the study. Employment rose from 8% to 19% within the group and from 3% to 11% for volunteering.

In order to achieve our objective there is a need for measures which positively connect the unemployed and workless to job opportunities.

Metropolitan will build sustainable communities by delivering the following:

- Creating employment, training and volunteering opportunities
- Working with communities to develop social enterprises
- Maximising the social, economic and environmental benefits of Metropolitan’s procurement processes
- Building on the benefits of physical regeneration schemes to deliver social objectives
- Develop links with the Metropolitan Migration Foundation to address integration and access to services

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Helping more customers into employment when the economic situation is difficult for everyone will require a culture change within Metropolitan and also for some of our customers. In future we will need to be more innovative and resourceful. We must look at the raw materials we have as a business and utilise these to strengthen our employment and training programme and to offer early support to customers. This can be done through linking to front-line housing management and income services, and by Metropolitan recognising itself as an employer and a training resource.

New business opportunities for the partnership are an essential element to the strategy and will come from further exploring Department of Work & Pensions, Learning and Skills Council, now SFA, and European Social Fund programmes. These will need to be harnessed across Metropolitan, rather than the focus being primarily on London. The larger funded programmes may not always be suitable for providing services to the care and support clients, so a different strategy is needed here involving smaller more focussed funding streams.

Metropolitan will provide training, volunteering and create in-house work placements as a means of equipping individuals to find long-term employment. Our workforce will reflect the communities we serve enabling local people to take up employment opportunities within Metropolitan.

The strategy will deliver the following:

Place People Into Employment:
We will provide:
- Specialised programmes for young people
- Support for lone parents to enter employment or return to work
- Job brokerage services
- Help keep people in employment

Place people into training and volunteering
We will ensure that:
- Young people access specialised programmes such as NEETS and apprenticeship programmes
- Internal work placement scheme are made available
- Volunteering schemes are provided
- Training is provided through our contractors

Develop a referral network and in-house Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) service
We will:
- Ensure that a process is in place to register customers who are interested in finding employment
- Provide information, advice and guidance
- Support job search - through the provision of job clubs, CV writing and other training
Building aspirations, confidence, empowerment, improving mental and physical wellbeing, increasing engagement and strengthening community cohesion are key elements of developing young people. A fundamental part of this process will be for Metropolitan to work with families to support young people.

The aim will be to ensure that young people:
• feel part of their community
• be welcome in services and facilities
• have access to quality provisions relevant to their needs
• are actively and meaningfully involved in local decision-making

An integral part of this programme will be the effective use of our community facilities. We will provide reliable and consistent services maximising external funding opportunities and marketing to effectively promote services to target groups.

We will work with the following age groups:
• 8 to 12 years (initial engagement and retention-diversionary)
• 13 to 17 years (developing potential and maintain engagement-diversionary)
• 18 to 24 years (focus on employment and training for vulnerable groups)
In 2010/11 over 7000 social tenants were at risk of eviction due to rent arrears. For households that are financially excluded, one of the major issues that is hardest to overcome, can be finding ethical and affordable loans at times of particular financial stress. As a result, many financially excluded people turn to legally constituted ‘door-step’ lenders (such as Provident) and illegal money lenders (loan sharks); as well as money shops and pay-day loan companies. All of these institutions charge very high rates of interest, which have the effect of locking their customers into a vicious circle of financial decline.

During 2011, Metropolitan worked with other housing associations in the preparation of two reports, which evidenced the worth of effective money and debt advice resulting in reduction of rent arrears and evictions. It demonstrated that for every £100 invested in debt advice there was a 22% reduction in rent arrears.

Financial Inclusion

A recent government report highlighted the fact that 70% of the financially excluded live in social housing. Only 51% have access to a bank account, exacerbating the problems of rent arrears and potential evictions.

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In 2007 Metropolitan chose the following ‘shorthand’ definition of -

Financial inclusion is the ability to:
• Use money effectively and maximise available income sources
• Access and utilise mainstream financial services
• Deal effectively with financial distress

The Financial inclusion Strategy will be led by Metropolitan’s income services. This includes providing benefit advice and support. Community regeneration will contribute to the delivery of this plan by bidding externally for funds, establishing partnering arrangements and making best use of the services offered by external organisations where they add to the in-house knowledge and skills of our staff.

Debt – Awareness:
Prevention and Resolution: we will develop services aimed at addressing and preventing debt. This will involve working closely with external agencies such as the Money Advice Service, developing publicity campaigns and ensuring our front line staff have access to information and training.

 Debt – Awareness:
Prevention and Resolution:

Money Advice Packs will be issued to all new customers and others where appropriate. This is a self-help pack produced in partnership with three other housing associations, covering the following topics:-
• Debt - Where to start?
• Can you afford to pay your debts?
• Can you increase your income?
• What should you deal with first priority creditors

Wellbeing Activities:
Develop wellbeing initiatives in core boroughs through partners or external funding to complement the ‘Local Activity Programmes’ such a sessions in healthy living, staying safe, expanding aspirations and opportunities, and addressing relevant topics affected by some of the target group such as gang culture and knife crime.

Creating Employment and Training Opportunities:
Work with partners and delivery agents to ensure that there are employment, work placements, volunteering, accreditation training and apprenticeships. Steps will be taken to ensure that Metropolitan provides opportunities for young people.

Young Entrepreneurs:
Develop a ‘Young Entrepreneurs’ initiative by supporting and developing our young people/youth groups who wish to run community projects in their local areas.

Service Delivery:
Developing Young People

Metropolitan will provide programmes for developing young people within our core boroughs in the following areas.

1. Local Activity Programmes
Work with key partners and delivery agents to ensure that weekly and holiday activity programmes incorporating social inclusion activities (such as youth clubs), sports and wellbeing activities are being run within our core geographical areas, and specifically within the housing estates where there are large stock quantities. This will be delivered as part of the Mayors Fund Sports Programme.

2. Youth Forums
Develop and establish local youth forums supported by our delivery partners to steer the direction for locally run projects.

3. Parenting Programme
Develop and deliver a Positive Parenting Programme for our families with children or young people. This will be designed to strengthen and empower families and the communities they live in, and tackle many of the prominent issues and dynamics that these families are faced with in today’s society.

Young People Financial Inclusion

A recent government report highlighted the fact that 70% of the financially excluded live in social housing. Only 51% have access to a bank account, exacerbating the problems of rent arrears and potential evictions.
**Financial Inclusion**

- How to deal with non-priority debts
- How to start negotiating with creditors
- Financial statements
- Why is it important to take a long term approach to debts?

**Advice Agencies:** Metropolitan will work with outside agencies such as Citizen Advice to provide debt and money advice services to its customers. We maintain partnership arrangements with a number of highly professional debt advice and other agencies who provide services without cost.

These include:
- Christians Against Poverty
- Consumer Credit Counselling Service (CCCS)
- Debt Support Trust
- Money Advice Plus
- Money Advice Service
- Pay Plan

**Helping Customers improve their Budgeting Skills, Financial Capability and Capacity:**
Building on existing services provided by Metropolitan, customers will be provided with training and support in order to embed money management skills. These Money Skills sessions will incorporate guidance on making provision for the future, both short and longer term, including retirement planning. In order to support this initiative, we will draw even more strongly upon the services of the Money Advice Service, as well as the resources of the National Energy Action and other agencies. We will also develop a digital inclusion action plan to support better access to services for customers who are financially excluded.

**Fuel Poverty:**
This is a particularly relevant area of work in view of the fact that domestic fuel prices continue to rise out of all proportion to household incomes. (For instance, in August 2011, British Gas increased its gas and electricity prices by 18% and 16% respectively, just months after a previous 7% increase). This will be addressed as part of Metropolitan’s Fuel Poverty Action Plan.

**Facilitating Access to Affordable Credit:**
Tackling high-cost lending, whilst at the same time, providing affordable alternatives is a priority. Metropolitan will continue to deal with this issue by its partnering with:
- Credit Unions
- Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFIs)
- Government funded Illegal Money Lending Team

The stronger and more powerful credit unions are now providing fully fledged bank accounts and are able to offer similar basic facilities to banks and building societies. Metropolitan will introduce a programme of training to frontline staff, identifying sources of affordable lending and how referrals can be made.

Metropolitan will introduce a programme of training to frontline staff, identifying sources of affordable lending and how referrals can be made.

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**Outcomes**

Our overarching vision is to improve the quality of life for the communities we serve. In order to achieve this we will deliver on a number of interventions focusing on customer involvement, addressing social exclusion and building sustainable communities.

These interventions will include delivering community projects which support access to service, advice, employment, training and community activities. Key outcomes include:
- improve customer satisfaction with the services Metropolitan provides
- increase access to employment and volunteering opportunities
- strengthen communities and neighbourhoods
- reduced levels of debt and hardship within communities

**This will be measured in the following way:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
<th>Metropolitan Star Survey 2012</th>
<th>Target 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve customer satisfaction with the services Metropolitan provides</td>
<td>Views taken into account</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Given opportunities to make views known</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Access to employment opportunities and/or develop workplace skills</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen communities and neighbours</td>
<td>Reduction of ASB</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metropolitan supports you to become part of your community</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to a range of activities and facilities for young people in your area</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce levels of debt and hardship</td>
<td>Amount of investment in debt advice</td>
<td>£103k</td>
<td>£120k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No of people receiving debt advice</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address issues of social exclusion</td>
<td>Satisfaction levels for service users</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Communication Strategy

Ensuring people are kept well informed about Metropolitan's services helps us build trust and strengthen our reputation. We recognise that it also plays a key role in customer satisfaction and their views of Metropolitan's overall performance.

Metropolitan's Community Regeneration Strategy will be widely publicised to customers, staff and other stakeholders. Working with Metropolitan’s Communications Team we will contribute to delivering effectively targeted communications to the right people at the right time. Through our community engagement activities we will support two-way communications with our customers, ensuring that people are kept up to date on service delivery and improvements.

We will:
- Publish the strategy on www.metropolitan.org.uk and Intranet;
- utilise Staff Newsletters;
- develop E Module staff training programmes in partnership with Learning and Organisational Development;
- ensure Policies and Procedures are in place to support delivery of community regeneration;
- deliver specific Briefing Sessions;
- build on the work done on the Shared and Led Culture: deliver workshops to highlighting the links between the strategy and how we behave as an organisation;
- encourage staff to be volunteers as part of the Expert Volunteer Programme; and
- get feedback from staff on how to improve the service.

External Customers and Other Stakeholders
Customer Involvement is key to the aims and objectives of Metropolitan. In order for this to be achieved, effective two way communications are essential. We will utilise a number of tools to ensure effective communications with our customers and stakeholders.

This will include:
- Producing Metropolitan customer involvement newsletter;
- Local neighbourhood newsletters;
- Annual reports;
- Communications and other focus groups;
- Notice board;
- Metropolitan leaflets;
- Customer guide DVD’s;
- Conferences and other events;
- Events calendar: publicising neighbourhood panel meetings, focus groups, estate walkabout;
- Facebook groups; websites;
- Letters; and
- Customer services centre.

We recognise that our customers will comprise of hard to reach groups including people with disabilities, service users, and ethnic minority groups. Metropolitan will ensure that all groups’ needs are recognised and responded to and ensure that no audience is isolated.

We will work with:
- Translations Services - produce publications that provide details of how to request translations and information in a different format
- We will review the languages used in relation to our customer profile and assess demand for alternative formats
- Metropolitan will generate increased positive press for local and regional media, supplying a range of good news story supporting Metropolitan’s community programme.
- We will ensure that the Community Regeneration Strategy is communicated in the most effective way which leads to customers being able to access community services provided and improves the way our services are delivered.

Internal Communications
A key part of the delivery of the strategy will be to ensure that Metropolitan’s staff are fully engaged with the delivery of community programmes. We will maximise awareness, input and knowledge of staff across Metropolitan.

Ensuring people are kept well informed about Metropolitan’s service, contributes to building trust and a strong reputation
Community Regeneration Action Plan 2012 - 2015

Key Outcomes:
- Improve customer satisfaction with the services Metropolitan provides
- Increase access to employment and volunteering opportunities
- Strengthen communities and neighbourhoods
- Reduced levels of debt and hardship within communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Priorities – 2012/13</th>
<th>Lead Officer</th>
<th>Dependencies</th>
<th>Timescale/ completion date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Customer Involvement</td>
<td>Metropolitan’s Business Programme Office, Senior Responsible Officer &amp; Project Manager</td>
<td>Completion of housing staff restructure, Working across Housing Services and Shared Services</td>
<td>March 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Regional Community Engagement Manager</td>
<td>Links to be established with Metropolitan Learning and Organisational Development team</td>
<td>September 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Regional Community Engagement Manager</td>
<td>Completion of training needs analysis and appraisal process Learning and Organisational Development</td>
<td>October 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Regional Community Engagement Manager</td>
<td>Housing &amp; Repairs Services Managers and Development of patches and neighbourhood plans, Working with Performance and Research</td>
<td>September 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Regional Community Engagement Manager</td>
<td>Housing &amp; Repairs Services Managers and Performance and Research</td>
<td>December 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Priorities – 2012/13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead Officer</th>
<th>Dependencies</th>
<th>Timescale/ completion date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F Customer Involvement (continued)</td>
<td>Regional Community Engagement Manager</td>
<td>Review local neighbourhood involvement structures to ensure effectiveness, value for money and appropriate linkages to terms of reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Head of Community Regeneration</td>
<td>Undertake Review of Metropolitan’s community centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Head of Community Regeneration</td>
<td>Marketing and promoting customer involvement and development of the customer newsletters and updates for websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Evaluation</td>
<td>Regional Community Engagement Manager</td>
<td>Develop an effective framework for project development, implementation measurement of the cost and outcomes of community involvement and resident involvement across Metropolitan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Head of Community Regeneration</td>
<td>Deliver an annual impact customer assessment ensuring that the appropriate framework is in place to assess how customers are involved and what difference it makes to service improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K Financial Inclusion</td>
<td>Financial Inclusion Manager</td>
<td>Develop a framework for supporting and evaluating debt advice and support delivered to identified groups and individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L Employment</td>
<td>Regional Community Engagement Manager</td>
<td>Establish a centralised Metropolitan Employment and Volunteering Team. Review client management system for employment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Community Regeneration Action Plan 2012-2015

**Key Priorities – Lead Officer, Dependencies, Timescale/Completion Date**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Priorities – 2012/13</th>
<th>Lead Officer</th>
<th>Dependencies</th>
<th>Timescale/Completion Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>M Employment</strong></td>
<td>Review employment opportunities in North Region to support employment programmes</td>
<td>Regional Community Engagement Manager - Evaluation</td>
<td>Housing Services Managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>Deliver flexible fund employment programme, Timebank and other externally funded projects</td>
<td>Regional Community Engagement Manager</td>
<td>Central employment and youth team in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>O</strong></td>
<td>Commence delivery of Metropolitan Migration Foundation Programme funded projects (Small Grants &amp; Expert Volunteering Programme and Social Enterprise Programme)</td>
<td>Regional Community Engagement Manager</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P Youth Programme</strong></td>
<td>Develop youth diversionary programme – focusing on areas with high levels of anti-social behaviour</td>
<td>Regional Community Engagement Manager</td>
<td>Housing Services Managers, Review partnership links with local authorities, youth services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q</strong></td>
<td>Deliver Mayors Fund Sports Programme – two year programme</td>
<td>Regional Community Engagement Manager</td>
<td>Housing Services Managers ensuring the appropriate targeting of resources at most effective areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R</strong></td>
<td>Review customer involvement structures and extent to which it supports youth participation in consultation, decision and delivery of services</td>
<td>Regional Community Engagement Managers</td>
<td>Housing Services, ASB Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>S Regeneration Scheme</strong></td>
<td>Ashmole – Establish apprenticeship schemes for Ashmole in partnership with Rydon</td>
<td>Community Engagement Manager (Regen)</td>
<td>Housing Services Managers, and development of local plans to support regen scheme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Regeneration Scheme (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Priorities – 2012/13</th>
<th>Lead Officer</th>
<th>Dependencies</th>
<th>Timescale/Completion Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashmole - Review Terms of Reference and membership of Ashmole Board. Recruit additional members through marketing to ensure membership reflects resident profile</td>
<td>Community Engagement Manager (Regeneration)</td>
<td></td>
<td>March 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clapham Park Homes – Master plan review - ensure effective consultation and communications in place</td>
<td>Head of Community Regeneration</td>
<td>Working with Development, Communications, External partnership working with external stakeholders and agencies</td>
<td>June 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clapham Park Homes – Review the Block Champions Programme ensuring it is in place to support service improvements</td>
<td>Community Regeneration Manager</td>
<td>Housing Services Managers in development of delivering local plans to deliver the programme</td>
<td>July 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clapham Park Homes – Develop social enterprise supporting a charity shop</td>
<td>Community Regeneration Manager</td>
<td>Identifying appropriate budgets and premises and involvement of Development Services</td>
<td>March 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canalside - Deliver youth programme</td>
<td>Community Regeneration Manager</td>
<td>Working in partnership with One Housing. Ensure monitoring and evaluation framework in place</td>
<td>March 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review current arrangements for delivering community projects to older people</td>
<td>Community Regeneration Manager (Evaluation)</td>
<td>Work with care and support services in being able to establish a baseline</td>
<td>March 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This plan will be reviewed annually*
We want all of our customers to be able to understand the customer information we provide. If your household needs to receive this information in your own language or as an audio recording then please get in touch with us.