HACT Community Centres Network – 2024 Activity Round Up

1. Background and details:

The Community Centres Network is run by the Centre for Excellence in Community Investment. Members of the community centres network mostly come from housing associations, but some network members are from independent community centres or charity sector partners. This network is for sharing practice, collaborating and connecting across the community investment in social housing sector.

The Network is Co-Chaired by Michelle Parry (Clarion Futures) and Rebecca Fenner (Peabody). By working in collaboration with other Housing Associations that have community facilities both Rebecca and Michelle feel we can learn from each other on the most effective and successful way to utilise our community assets.

2. Meetings & Training

No. of meetings	No. of attendees	No. of Organisations	No. of speakers
5	88	53	8

- **January 2024 – Network Meeting**

  A Community Centres Network meeting focusing on providing housing and community spaces for older people with Bournemouth University and United St. Saviours Charity.

- **April 2024 – Network Meeting**

  A Community Centres Network meeting focusing on revitalising a derelict community space into a thriving multi-purpose holistic community hub with The Sutton Centre and VCS Alliance.

- **July 2024 – Network Meeting**

  A Community Centres Network meeting focusing on sharing a case study on Peabody's approach to managing community properties and buildings – and their management committee model. Also, an update on HACT's Community Spaces research from Frances Harkin.

- **September 2024 – Community Investment Conference 2024**

  A conference breakout session focusing on the value of community spaces – understanding and unlocking it featuring the Network Co-Chairs. This session shared and discussed the learning from developing a social value framework for community spaces owned by housing associations.

- **October 2024 – Network Meeting**
  A Community Centres Network meeting focusing on Community Centre bookings platforms and approaches with SpacetoCo. Also a case study from Bourneville Village Trust and their community spaces followed by South Yorkshire Housing Association and Good Practice Mentors.

- **December 2024 – New Local Focus Group**
  A specially arranged focus group for Community Centres Network members to feed into a research report by New Local in partnership with the Rayne Trust on the future of community spaces to be published in 2025.

3. Community Spaces Research

HACT conducted new research that came about from conversations in this network. The report tackles the challenge in articulating and demonstrating the impact and value of community spaces, to effectively illustrate the importance of community spaces for healthy, happy local communities.

It focuses on understanding what makes community spaces so valuable to communities and creating a social value framework to set out how organisations can assess the impact and social return on investment these spaces create. HACT will look to build on this framework and understanding in 2025.

Read more about this research.

4. Plans for 2025:

During 2025 we hope to continue to build on our activity and research in this last year and build connections between the housing sector and key organisations and the role of community centres and spaces in community investment and generating social value.

2025 meeting dates:

- Wednesday 5th March 2025 – 2pm – 3:30pm
- Wednesday 18th June 10:30am – 12:30pm
- Tuesday 9th October 2025 – 10am – 11:30am
- Thursday 9th December 2025 – 10am – 11:30am

For more information about the Network or future meetings and events please get in touch with Rebecca Rieley - Rebecca.Rieley@hact.org.uk.