

Good Homes

in good places



A strategic vision
for Salford
communities, by
the community

Introduction

A good home is essential for leading a happy and healthy life. A home is the soil on which a person and family can grow and care for each other. And just like good soil, it must be nurtured with key ingredients to keep it fertile - so that it can contribute to creating and sustaining life.

Salford's housing strategy, *Our Home, Our City 2020 to 2025*, recognises that more and more people are unable to access housing. Costs are "becoming less affordable, [and] the demand for social housing continues to increase, whilst at the same time supply is falling". An increasing number of people are experiencing vulnerable and precarious housing situations - on waiting lists, in temporary accommodation, and engaging with an increasingly hostile system as it operates in consistent crisis. Their soil is under stress and isn't getting the nutrients it needs.

This report explores what this means for real lives in Salford through stories and insights created by a diverse group of young adults who have experienced care, homelessness, and engaging with housing services. It also draws on insights from 'within' the formal system, and illustrates the human reality of working in a system under huge strain.

However, we recognise that good homes require more than bricks and mortar. As one of the young adults said, "A home is about the people in it. It's about love". So what are the key ingredients for nurturing the soil people and families need to grow their lives on, in the way they choose? Ultimately, the silver bullet isn't building new houses. Despite this being part of the solution, we need a fundamental shift to a system that prevents people reaching crisis and grows spaces, places and relationships of support in the community. It's about compassionate conversations, dignity, respect and trust.

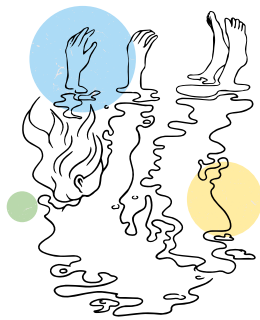
We've surfaced what our key ingredients are for a good home, and what it would take from the system to bring them to life. Stepping out of the current narrow focus on housing and expanding our purpose to creating and sustaining good homes, we can begin to see a way forward. Our vision sets out an alternative approach that enriches the soil for people in Salford to establish a home in which they are happy and well.

Insights

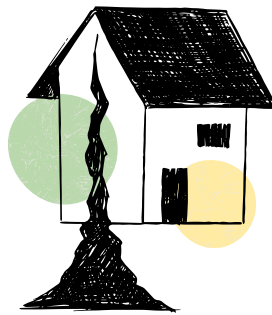
A diverse group of young adults from Salford have met twice a month since December 2021, researching, creating, and sharing stories together to understand what we mean by a good home.

Our research surfaced some key insights about the impact our home can have on our health and wellbeing, and our ability to fully participate in society.

We found that:



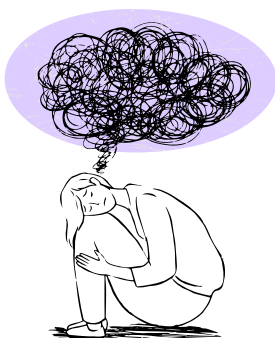
Everyday challenges escalate easily



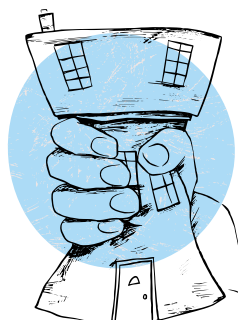
Services work on individual 'issues', when they present



Transitioning to independence is a critical moment that lacks support



Stigma, fear and mistrust are omnipresent



Public services are the focus, despite huge pressure



Unstable homes are vulnerable to hard & acute life events, like family loss

Trying to find my feet: *Sasha*

Sasha transitioned to independent living in 2021.

Her teenage years had been characterised by serious mental ill health, family loss, and estrangement from close caregivers. She found herself in temporary accommodation provided by Salford Council.

Despite finding some community there, when Sasha got pregnant the accommodation became an inappropriate and dangerous place. The other room mates were smoking, drinking and partying whilst she was pregnant and she was worried about the health of her unborn child. She registered herself on the housing list.

Sasha applied all the time. The interviews were often and asked personal questions from her, without giving her much information back about the housing association or how it would work.



Sasha was never told the amount of time she had between agreeing a home and signing the contract and felt that she was misinformed and rushed. She didn't have time to inspect the house or report the problems back. The temporary accommodation staff were meant to come and help with signing processes, but she didn't get that support so was left on her own to figure it out.

"They dismiss my complaints and it stresses me out everyday. I know what they think - young mum and stuff - but they're the only people I can call"



Losing mum: *Toby*

Toby's home life has been turbulent, worsened by his mum's death.

He adored his mum. Toby has learning difficulties and she spoke up for him when he couldn't. He lived with his mum and dad in a big home in Salford, with games and books. He still slept in his mum's bed because he was scared of the dark (he still is).



Toby's mum died when he was in Year 7. Toby attended a SEND school, which he hated because he didn't need high levels of support like many of the other kids. He played up in class and said he became a 'chameleon' to have friends - even becoming a bully if necessary and he isn't proud of it.

At 14, he moved onto his Nana's sofa because he couldn't cope with his Dad anymore, who was using drugs and alcohol. Toby would block out all the noise of his Dad by playing really loud clubland music. He has permanent ear damage now.

His Grandad held the family together. When he died, the house fell apart. Toby got kicked out over a row with his Dad, and ended up on Danielle's - his biological mum's - sofa.

In terms of work, Toby did lots of training and courses and small jobs. At one job, he met a man called Pete and then they worked together moving as chefs to different places. Pete moved on but Toby has stayed at the last place they worked together. He calls it his 'stomping ground'. Toby is on benefits that do not allow him to work and he has not taken paid work upon the advice of his dad.

Toby said his new flat is 'alright' with a big smile. It's challenging on his own and he has still not finished decorating. He has been scared to because he has had so much change in his life that he was worried it wouldn't be worth it, and assumes at some point that he would have to move again. He is settling a bit now.

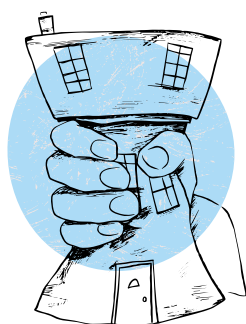
Looking into the system: further insight



Services work on **individual 'issues'**, when they present

Often, services working with individuals or families work on the issues as they present and within their service's duty of care. This means people experience the system in a fragmented and complex way, repeating their story to new faces each time. This way of working means multiple professionals enter someone's home, affecting their feelings of security, ownership and dignity.

Despite targeted support to individuals' needs, the home is often overlooked as a potential cause *and* solution to the distress or challenge.



Public services are the focus, despite **huge pressure**

Public services are facing compounding, complex challenges: frontline teams are exhausted, operating in siloes; national KPIs influence local delivery, superseding local needs and aspirations; and limited resource is channeled into acute services to tackle crisis. Despite this, collaboration, innovation, and community-led solutions remain at the margins of support delivery.

Many of the young adults involved in this process were surprised to hear about the choice of VCFSE offers in Salford, revealing the disconnection between available local expertise and skills, and formal pathways of support.

Guilt and frustration: *ex-Housing Officer, interview*

Dani is an ex-housing officer and shares the same frustration as local residents.

As a housing officer, what were the challenges facing the people you supported?

The majority of the time, people have been on the register for some time. But because of the year long waiting lists, we can only house those with the highest levels of needs or risks. Young people tend to present when there has been family exclusion or a family break down. They usually have been living in their 'family home' but it has become too volatile there for them to stay.



What kind of support is available to them?

Housing officers in associations only go as far as managing the tenancy - they often don't have local knowledge to connect people to support. I wasn't supposed to help people write their housing applications or sort their bills, but this leaves lots of people struggling in their homes and can be prevented from spiralling into a crisis situation.

And this is when they ask for help! Often they're too reluctant or worried to in fear they'll lose their property. I get this. Engaging with the system is not a pleasant experience. Teams are in crisis and the whole sector is stretched. We get reported as blunt, passive or aggressive, and this is because we have to be. There's no support beyond your personal housing plan (a rarely-looked at document). And people are shocked to hear that.

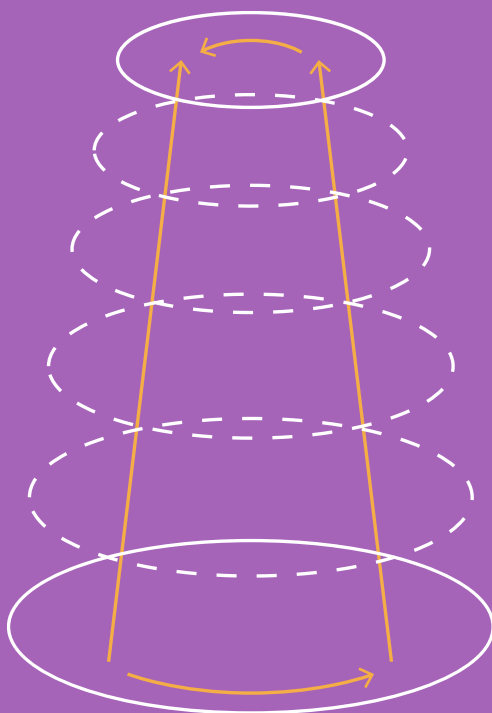
What is it like to work as a housing officer?

Our hands are really tied. The high staff turnover, extremely high workloads, and the whole process feeling unrewarding for both you and them is not a sustainable way to work. Even when people are in desperate need you can't guarantee them support. And you know this issue will develop into mental ill health - homes are a major reason mental health services are inundated.

You feel like you can't help.



System analysis



Individuals feeling powerless, confused, and avoidant

Suspicious and punitive culture and exhausted frontline teams

High thresholds, resource scarcity, complex referral pathways, waiting lists

Demand and risk management for sector under tighter budget

Political tensions, harmful narratives on poverty, compounding crises

Our vision

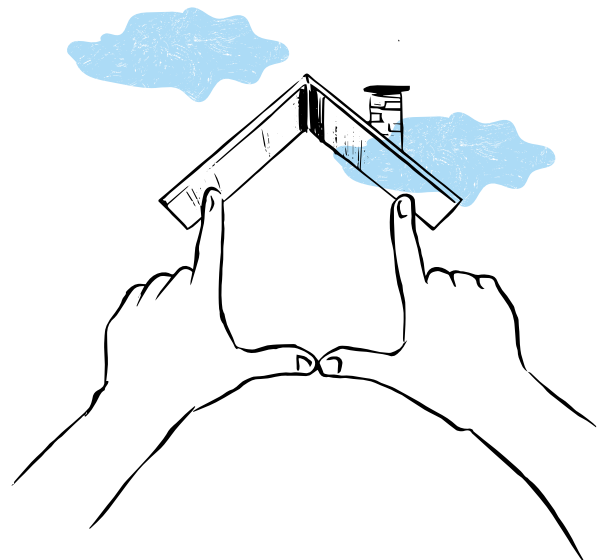
Good homes are essential for our health and wellbeing, and for thriving societies.

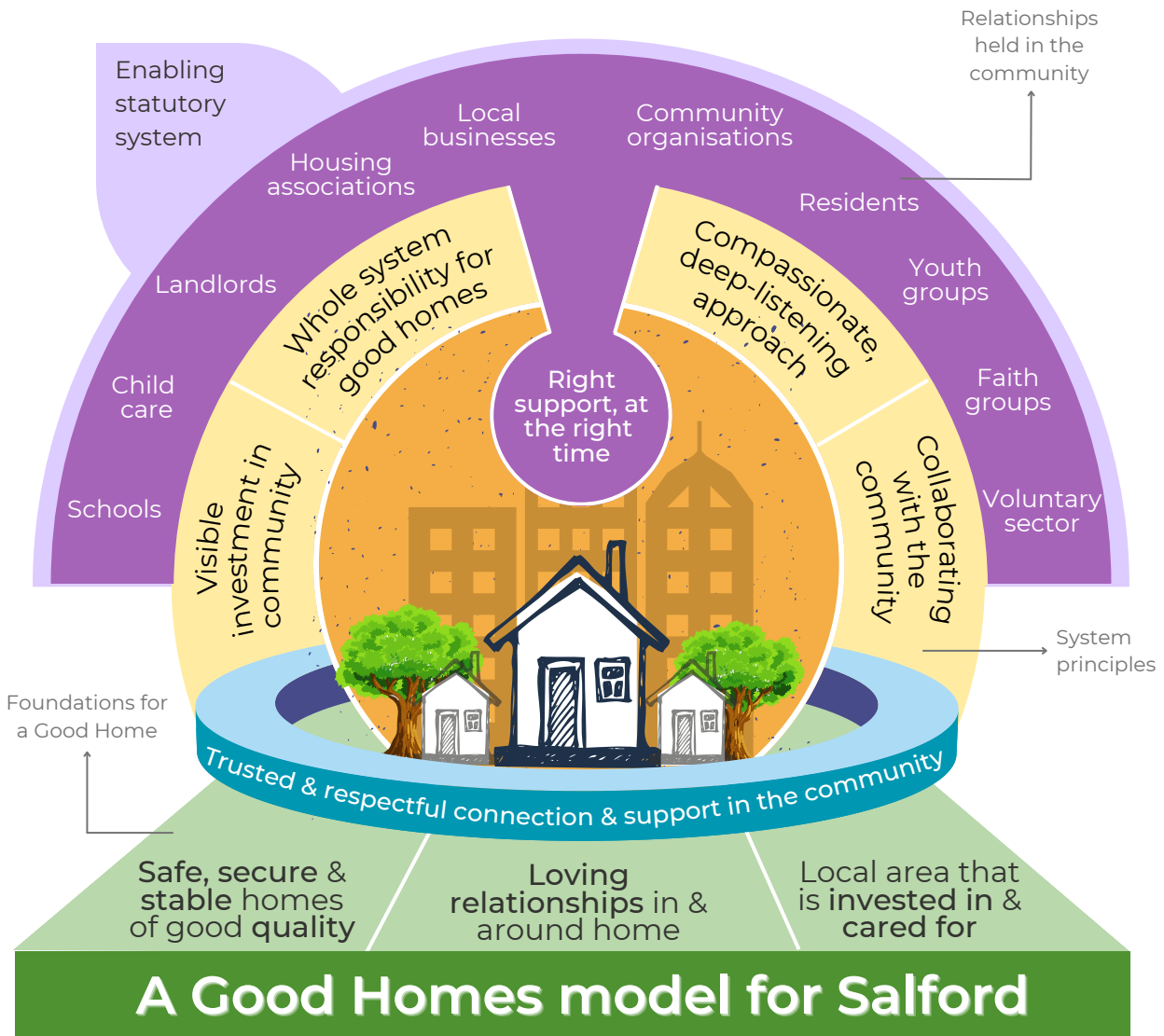
The Salford Good Homes model has been developed collaboratively with residents and professionals working in the local system. Its origins are in their collectively identified strategic vision: to shift from housing provision shaped by risk and demand management, to creating and sustaining healthy, happy homes as a foundation for a good life.

Because homes are essential for a decent life, we want to make it easier for residents to get the right support at the right time, from people they trust, in ways that are respectful, empowering and life-affirming. We know that this requires a system that focuses on recovery and prevention: at one end, working with individuals and families to make their own choices about their support and their home, and at the other, investing in community networks and assets to foster resilience and self-support.

We want the system to work in a way that breaks cycles of stigma spun by harmful stereotypes. We value homes as a 'clean slate' and want professionals working with residents (and/or their home) to be compassionate in their approach so we feel safe to ask for what we need. Rather than gates, thresholds, and loops to navigate, we imagine a system that instead of saying "no, we can't help you", instead listens deeply and responds with "yes, let me connect you to the right person for help".

The Good Homes model describes a whole system approach that puts residents' voice at its heart and acknowledges the wider determinants of creating and sustaining good homes. It sets out the possibility for alternative, preventative and adaptive futures beyond crisis.





Roots

The foundations of a good home are what make it a good place to live - beyond basic necessities for survival. Each is important on its own, but together they create an environment conducive to greater health, happiness, and resilience. We have envisioned each one through a series of statements.

Safe, secure & stable homes of good quality

- My home is in a safe area and I do not worry about mine or my loved ones safety
- My home is mine and I can stay here for as long as I want or need
- I don't worry about it being taken it from me, even when I ask for something
- My home is my safe space and others respect it as my home
- I have control over what happens in my home and feel well resourced and supported to address problems as they arise
- My home reflects my personality and I am proud to have people over

Loving relationships in and around the home

- I am happy and loved in my home
- I am happy and loved in my community, and participate in it
- I feel I can access support when I need it, and I know where it is
- I have a network of loved ones I can call on during happy and hard times

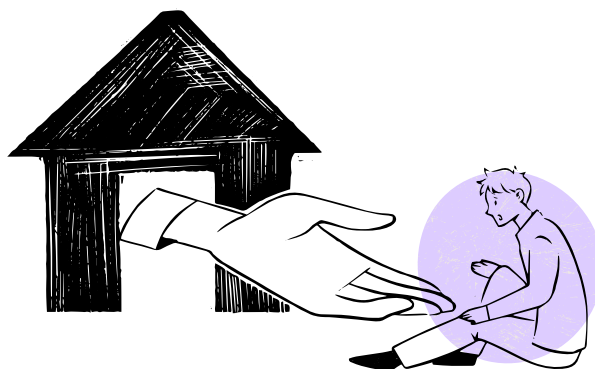
Local area that is invested in and cared for

- I can see investment in my local area to make it a better place for the existing residents
- I get to have a say in what happens in my local area and feel I can make a difference
- The places I care about in my community are protected and cared for
- I have access to nice, green space that the community can use

Relationships held in the community

Connections are important for finding support, opportunities, and friendship in our communities. Individual and local networks are vital for increasing connections across a community; to people, places and organisations that can provide the right support at the right time.

The specificity of who these might be is deliberate in this model so that resources and energy are shifted towards people and places that are important to our everyday lives. Greater connectivity between these groups will mean that those who hold a direct relationship with a household can connect them with the support or opportunity they need; creating an ecosystem of support that is timely, accessible and local.



System principles

Collaborating with the community

Health and wellbeing are improved when we have a sense of agency and control over what happens in our homes and neighbourhoods. Our services and communities are stronger and more resilient when we embed the voice of residents in the decision-making, design, and delivery of places and support.

In a system that often 'does to' people, particularly when accessing housing, a shift towards collaboration and participation is essential and timely. A system-wide commitment to empower communities to influence and own local solutions will improve outcomes by better channelling resources to things that work, and changing things that don't. Importantly, this way of working will begin the longer journey of rebuilding trust between residents and professional services led by the council.

Compassionate, deep-listening approach

Many people accessing housing and related services are in search of the support to help them get back on track, or overcome an obstacle. When these situations arise, a compassionate conversation where we feel we are listened to, understood and not judged is essential for establishing trusting and healthy relationships.

Experiences of instability, insecurity, and shame or guilt can have long-term implications for our health and wellbeing. It's vital that people who engage with the system experience respect and kindness so that they feel safe to ask for and engage with support. This means seeing the whole person first and not their 'presenting issues' and trying to 'fix them'.

Whole system responsibility for good homes

By acknowledging that a good home is created and sustained by a broad range of determinants - security of tenure, child care support, access to knowledge and resources to maintain a home, outdoor space, rich community, and so on - we can begin to consider our own sector's role in bringing this to life.

Whole system responsibility for good homes requires a shift from thinking about housing, to homes in their entirety. It calls upon the system to see beyond a statutory obligation to provide shelter, to an understanding of good homes as a prevention strategy for each service in Salford. This requires us to expand our duty of care across the system to support households to create and sustain a good home, either directly, via knowledge, resources or advice, or indirectly, by connecting people to the right support and growing community capability.

Visible investment in the community

Pride, wonder and creativity are all positive experiences of a place that provides places and spaces for community to come together. Living in a good place contributes to our experience of our home - how we value our neighbourhood, our community, and ourselves. Visible investment in our area demonstrates to us that we are valued citizens of Salford.

We imagine a system where resource and energy are given to initiatives (arts, sports, green spaces) and services (refuse collection, park rangers) in a place to increase local residents' ability to enjoy and participate in their area. Increased feelings of pride, confidence, and self esteem are essential for growing our lives positively - so that we can contribute to thriving societies.

This report was put together by Emma Price, Innovation Unit.

