



Empowering our communities

Community Resilience Strategy 2022-2027



Introduction

Our customers and communities constantly inspire us. Demonstrating great strength and resilience, supporting each other, being resourceful and displaying true community spirit.

Especially throughout the pandemic, communities have led the way and showed us that with a bit of help, together, we can achieve great things.

As a housing association, we exist to provide housing and support services. We're also here to help communities across the North East, Yorkshire and Humber to develop and thrive.

Strategy to empower our communities

This strategy aims to build on the community spirit shown in the pandemic, galvanising and enhancing communities to help them be successful today, while preparing for tomorrow.

Thirteen's community resilience strategy is our five-year commitment to demonstrate how we engage, support and collaborate with others. The strategy sets out a path to help us create quality places and sustainable communities where our customers are proud to live.

In other words, it's a strategy to help us build resilience in our communities, empowering them to help themselves.


The strategy has been developed to help us deliver Thirteen's three strategic priorities:

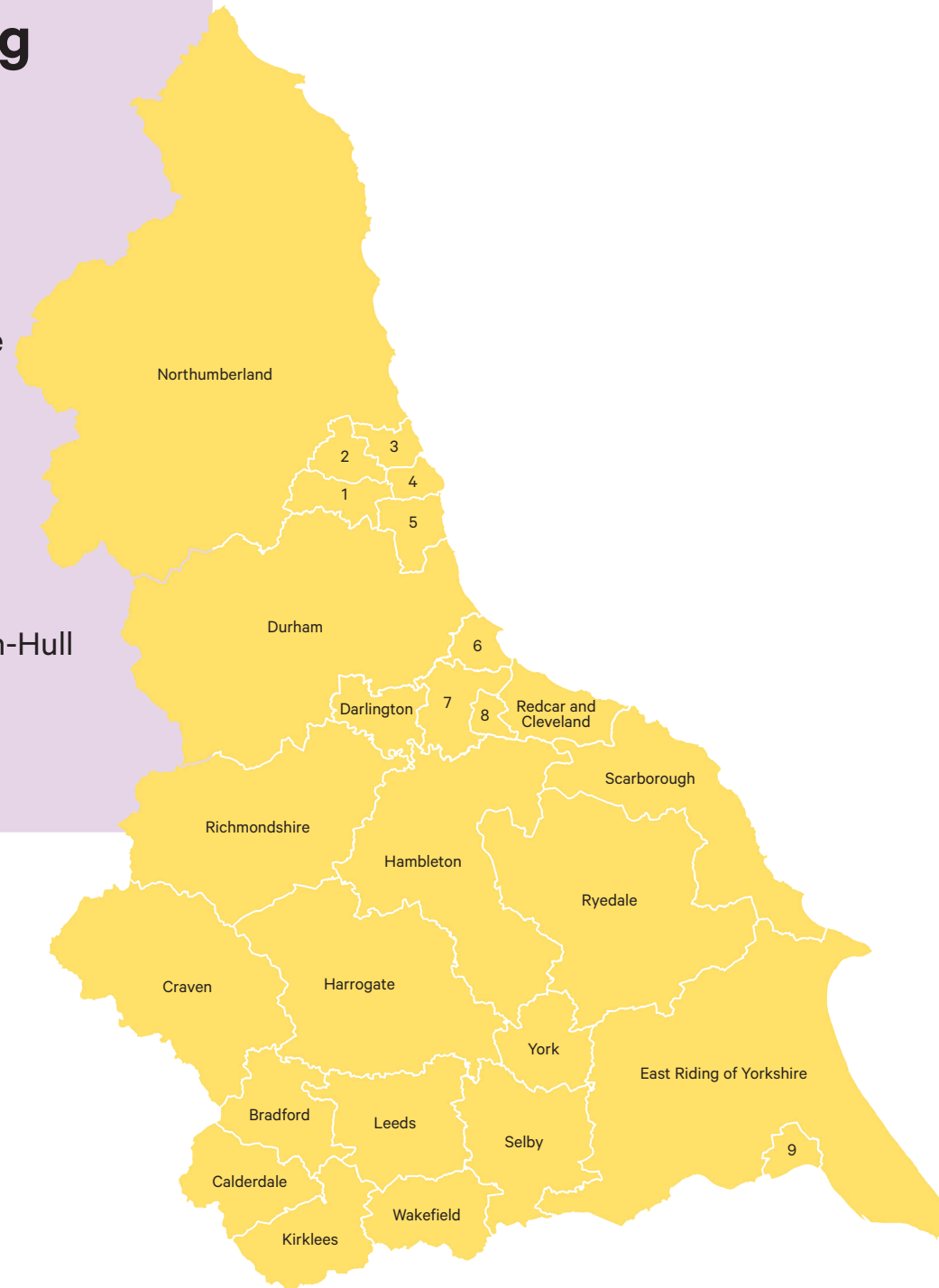
- Great customer experience
- Quality places to live and improving neighbourhoods
- Being Team Thirteen.

Our operating area

Key

1. Gateshead
2. Newcastle-upon-Tyne
3. North Tyneside
4. South Tyneside
5. Sunderland
6. Hartlepool
7. Stockton-on-Tees
8. Middlesbrough
9. City of Kingston-upon-Hull

 Thirteen operational area



The challenges ahead

The pandemic has taught us that the future can be uncertain and challenges often lie ahead. So our strategy must look to the future and demonstrate how we can support people and organisations to tackle the challenges they may face.

To help this strategy succeed, we need to put our customers and communities at the heart of our decisions, so we'll promote a culture of **working with** and not **doing to** our communities.

We aim to grow community confidence and build great relationships with the people who live, work and care about our communities.

As an anchor institution, Thirteen has an important presence in our communities. We aim to make the most of our presence by making the best use of our internal resources and targeting those who need us the most. More importantly, we'll give our customers the opportunities to help themselves through training, skills and employment.

Locality plans

Locality planning is Thirteen's new approach to regeneration and will be vital to deliver resilience in our communities.

Alongside investment in our homes and estates, we need to help grow the social infrastructure to create healthy and resilient communities. Working with others to develop new, community hubs in the heart of our neighbourhoods, as well as promoting existing community resources, will be critical to us achieving our goals.

Case study: eco-shop

The Active Tees Valley eco-shop in Pallister Park is one community venture that Thirteen has supported to become a great local resource.

Run by members of the community, the shop supplies food that might otherwise have been thrown away by shops and supermarkets. People buy items for a nominal charge to help them eat better at a lower cost and reduce food waste at the same time.



Thirteen provided support for a range of work on the eco-shop and other on-site facilities. The shop is a great example of Thirteen's support for a community enterprise working for the good of residents at the heart of one of our neighbourhoods.

Tackling local needs

This community resilience strategy will work to tackle local needs at a grass roots level. We'll speak to our customers and the wider community to understand the issues that are important to them and identify how we can work with them to make things better and the community stronger.

As a landlord, we know we aren't always the experts. So we'll seek help when we need to, using our network of contacts and partners to bridge any gaps. We'll identify, support and collaborate with local services, groups and people who are best-equipped to provide the support that our communities need.

Working alongside our communities and partners, we can:

- address inequalities and deprivation
- increase access to employment and skills
- reduce crime and anti-social behaviour
- tackle social deprivation
- increase opportunities to thrive.

We know that this will help improve customer satisfaction along the way, reducing debt, tenancy turnover, the number of empty homes and the costs they bring.

In summary, this strategy focusses on what makes communities strong. We'll be led by our communities to identify opportunities, and using the assets already in place, building on communities' existing strengths to create long-term resilience.

Our approach

Our aims:

With communities at our heart, we'll create engaged, thriving and empowered places where people want to live. Communities will:

- Be better connected to facilities and use local resources when in need
- Work together to address local issues
- Be better prepared and respond more easily to adverse situations
- Know how to get involved in or be aware of:
 - Thirteen's Customer Involvement Framework
 - Local resident meetings
 - Climate change action and environmental projects
 - Employment, skills and training opportunities
 - Financial and digital inclusion information and support
 - Health and wellbeing activities
 - Community safety projects and interventions.



Key principles

To achieve our ambitions, the strategy will be underpinned by these key principles:

1. Our work will be targeted and evidence-based
2. Interventions will be sustainable and community-led
3. We'll work in partnership to address community needs
4. We'll address inequalities through our projects
5. Interventions will help people to live and age well
6. We'll embrace our role as an anchor institution.

Strategic objectives

1. We will build evidence and understanding of community needs, the strengths, opportunities and priorities
2. We'll work to develop a tailored approach to specific areas, developing locality plans for areas of low resilience to test and learn when piloting new interventions
3. Our customers will be supported to help themselves
4. We'll reduce unnecessary demand by connecting our communities to support and services around them
5. We'll work with partners to reduce the impact of external pressure which affect our customers and Thirteen
6. We'll increase access to employment, skills and social enterprise
7. We'll raise awareness of climate change, improving the environment and reducing negative impacts, making communities greener and cleaner
8. We'll attract community investment and help build capacity within the voluntary, community and charitable sector
9. The social value and impact from our investments will be maximised for the benefit of our communities, particularly around local employment and skills
10. We'll review how our assets can be better used for the benefit of the community.

Why are we doing this?

The community resilience strategy will help Thirteen, respond to national agendas, to meet legislative requirements, and develop a community-led approach

Giving more power to communities and elevating the customer voice has never been more important.

The government has committed to levelling up across the UK to ensure that no community is left behind. They're changing the way they support local economic growth to: regenerate town centres and high streets; support people into employment; improve local transport; invest in local culture; give communities a stronger voice to take over local assets that might otherwise be lost. To show their commitment, the government has launched three new investment programmes

- Levelling Up Fund
- Community Investment Fund
- Community Renewal Fund.

Focus on left-behind communities

The Create Streets Foundation's *No Place Left Behind* report focusses on levelling up left-behind communities and the importance of *place*. Some of the recommendations include: policies to put customers and communities in the driving seat; building facilities for communities; and simplifying the transfer of community assets.

For us, this means we must develop our approach to communities to prepare for future opportunities, policy changes or funding streams to level up.

Following the Grenfell tragedy and the launch of the social housing white paper, our priority is to meet legislative requirements and deliver on the new charter for social housing residents. This strategy will ensure that customers continue to have a strong a voice to help us achieve this.



Understanding communities

We know our communities are diverse and their needs vary depending on populations, social, economic and environmental factors. To empower and support our communities, we need to better understand the differences, strengths and priorities of our communities at a strategic and grass roots level. So we must develop tools and evidence backed-up by community consultation.

This will be especially important as we continue to work in new operational areas such as Hull and Kirklees. Understanding the specific needs of communities will help us to respond and work with them to provide the services they need.

Active and meaningful customer engagement requires time and resources, but can deliver significant benefits in customer satisfaction, improved services, efficiencies and savings. We have a robust customer involvement framework which meets our governance and compliance requirements and puts customer insight at the heart of our decision-making.

This strategy will build on our involvement framework through the work of the community resilience team. The role of the team is to **communicate, connect, create** and **co-ordinate** community development activities. They will engage with local businesses, stakeholders and customers directly to understand local needs, and free-up time for housing services teams to focus on service delivery.

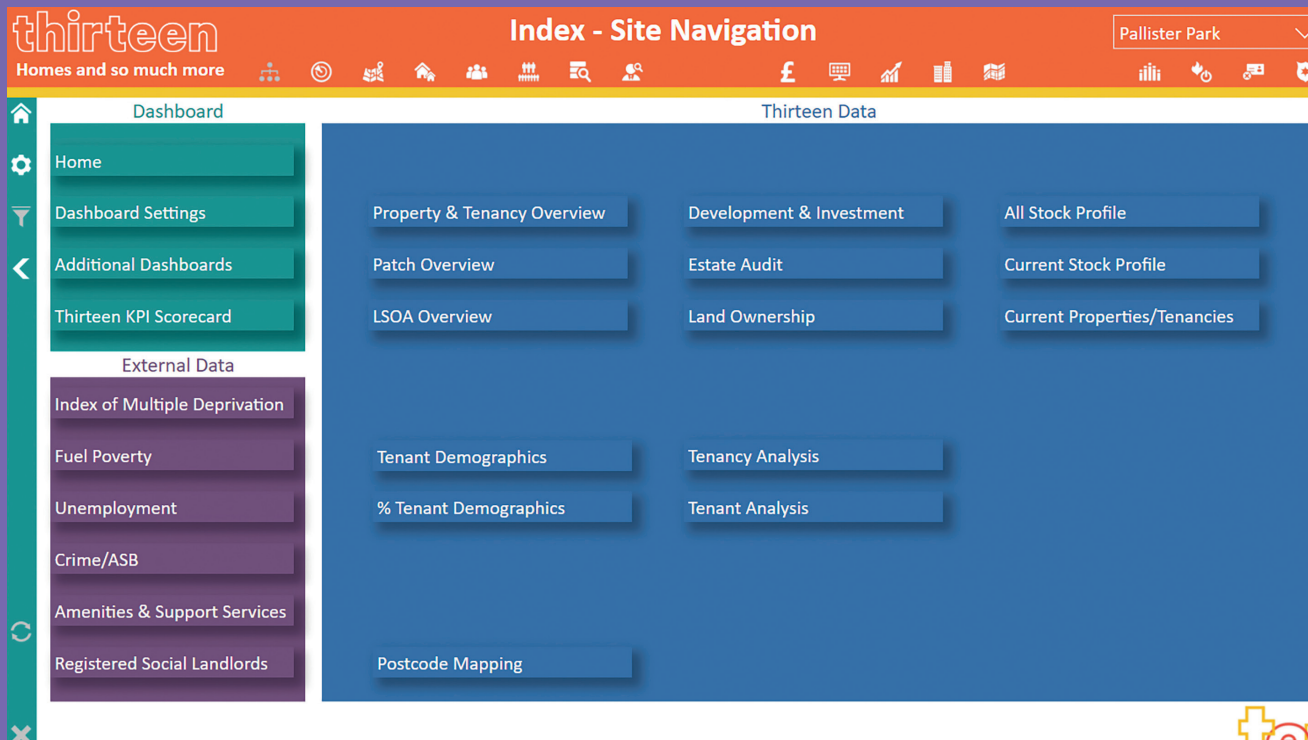
Why are we doing this?

We want to understand the difference we make in communities and provide an evidence-based approach to where we work and what we do.

As demands on Thirteen increase, we must make the best use of our resources by using evidence to understand where we work and what we do.

Understanding what makes a difference is critical to prioritising and maximising benefits for customers, communities and Thirteen. This strategy will provide the evidence base to keep us focussed.

Case study: Power BI dashboard



The community resilience team was one of the first to combine data from Thirteen's Power BI system with GIS mapping information to help better understand how communities can affect – or be affected by – a range of external factors.

The estate ranking and resilience map has supported the community resilience team to identify areas that need extra support. This has helped to pinpoint the main communities that the team will be focusing its efforts on over the next few years.

This strategy will help develop tools, data and evidence to define:

- Locality planning areas: priority areas for physical and social regeneration
- Low resilience zones: priority areas that require support to develop social facilities or support with issues such as anti-social behaviour or unemployment
- Where interventions should target particular customer groups or applied universally.

Why are we doing this?

To mitigate the impact of external pressures for customers and Thirteen, we want to review the effectiveness of current interventions, understand what works and try new approaches.

The effects of climate change and the actions to mitigate them are impacting on our customers and communities. We're already seeing uncertainty over rising fuel prices and increases in everyday costs for transport and food.

This, coupled with welfare reforms, lack of secure jobs and inflation will put further financial pressures on our customers, making it more difficult for them to pay their rent and sustain their tenancies.

We need to help people live more independently and do more for themselves. We need to raise awareness about climate change and the interventions available to reduce the impact on customers and Thirteen.

To mitigate the impact of these pressures, we have a range of additional support over and above our core services, for example our hardship or community funds. This strategy seeks to understand:

1. Clear line of sight of Thirteen's budgets and resources which contribute to community resilience
2. Which budgets and resources are flexible and could be refocussed or used in a different way.

Helping people help themselves

The pandemic has placed increased pressures on frontline services through more referrals for financial advice and support, anti-social behaviour complaints and safeguarding concerns.

As a priority of the strategy is to support customers to do more for themselves, we'll work to enable more people to get online by increasing skills and accessibility to the internet.

We know some customers found it difficult to access digital services during the pandemic, so this strategy aims to tackle digital exclusion and provide customers with alternative ways to use our services.

Case study: Tackling digital exclusion

Helping more people to get online will enable Thirteen to realise the benefits of online services.

We've been working with a group of organisations across Middlesbrough to develop a long-term sustainable solution to digital inclusivity for all. This project has seen people being able to access IT equipment, digital training and connectivity to help them overcome challenges they face to get online.

Thirteen awarded funding to the Hope Foundation to help develop an online system to enable organisations to donate and recycle IT devices to people who need the equipment.



Why are we doing this?

We want to avoid duplication of services in our communities, be clear about our role and the role of others, and maximise uptake of services.

Thirteen can't do everything. We need to connect with other sectors and organisations who can help our residents.

Thirteen has strong strategic links with local councils, other social landlords, anchor institutions - such as Teesside University - and a range of other partners. This strategy seeks to strengthen those relationships for the good of our communities and help us identify opportunities and bridge gaps. We'll be clear on our role as a landlord and ensure that partners are accountable.

As an example, Thirteen's Memorandum of Understanding with Teesside University means we'll work together to share learning, knowledge and expertise and ultimately raise aspirations and enrich the lives of people in the Tees Valley. The memorandum builds on our existing relationship and further focusses on collaborative projects related to education, training and employability opportunities.

In some areas, demand on our frontline teams is greater than others which can sometimes be attributed to areas of higher deprivation. Requests for financial support during the pandemic told us that some customers didn't know where to go for help, often relying on us to signpost them to services such as foodbanks, grants and money advice. This strategy will help connect communities to the support around them to reduce unnecessary demand.

Working with existing services

We know that in Teesside there is a strong voluntary, community and charitable sector. These grassroots organisations work in the heart of our neighbourhoods side-by-side with our customers and communities. They are best placed to understand local issues and needs and are instrumental in making a difference to people's lives.

We need to better connect to the community sector outside the Tees Valley, so the strategy aims to understand and map provision across all our neighbourhoods regardless of geographical location, helping us to build strong relationships and connections with other organisations and maximise the benefits for our customers.



Why are we doing this?

We want to understand Thirteen's full impact on providing jobs, training and skills in our communities



As a large employer, we support the local economy through the services we offer and the jobs we create. We increase opportunities for jobs, skills and training in many ways:

- We employ 1,500 people
- We've employed 57 apprentices over the last five years
- We have a commitment to build 6,100 homes by 2028
- We have a five-year investment programme to improve our homes
- We're decarbonising our homes
- We're working to address skills gaps through our employability team, helping people into jobs and training



- We deliver large, contracted employment services
- We work in schools to promote the housing sector
- We mentor young people
- Our community fund helps projects to build skills in communities.

This strategy will bring together all our employability and skills workstreams into one forum to understand gaps and opportunities, attract additional income, and celebrate the contribution we make to employment and skills in our communities.

Why are we doing this?

Land and assets

The needs of communities must be considered when reviewing land use and how we dispose of properties. By connecting local organisations we can generate opportunities for our buildings that will address local needs.

We want to refresh our approach to how we regenerate communities and maximise the impact for Thirteen and our customers. Using robust evidence, we can target where we work and be clear on the difference we want to make. Aligning internal budgets, investment plans and resources while working in partnership will ensure we gain a greater return on investment.

This strategy will also ensure that physical regeneration is complemented with social regeneration, which is vital to create sustainable and resilient communities.

We want to strengthen our role as an anchor institution and build community wealth through our land, assets and investments

We're investing £1bn in new and existing homes and have committed to developing 6,100 homes by 2028. Through our procurement processes, we must maximise social value and outcomes to help build community resilience, increasing access to jobs and skills and increasing customer wealth by reducing energy bills.

Case study: Working with communities in North Ormesby

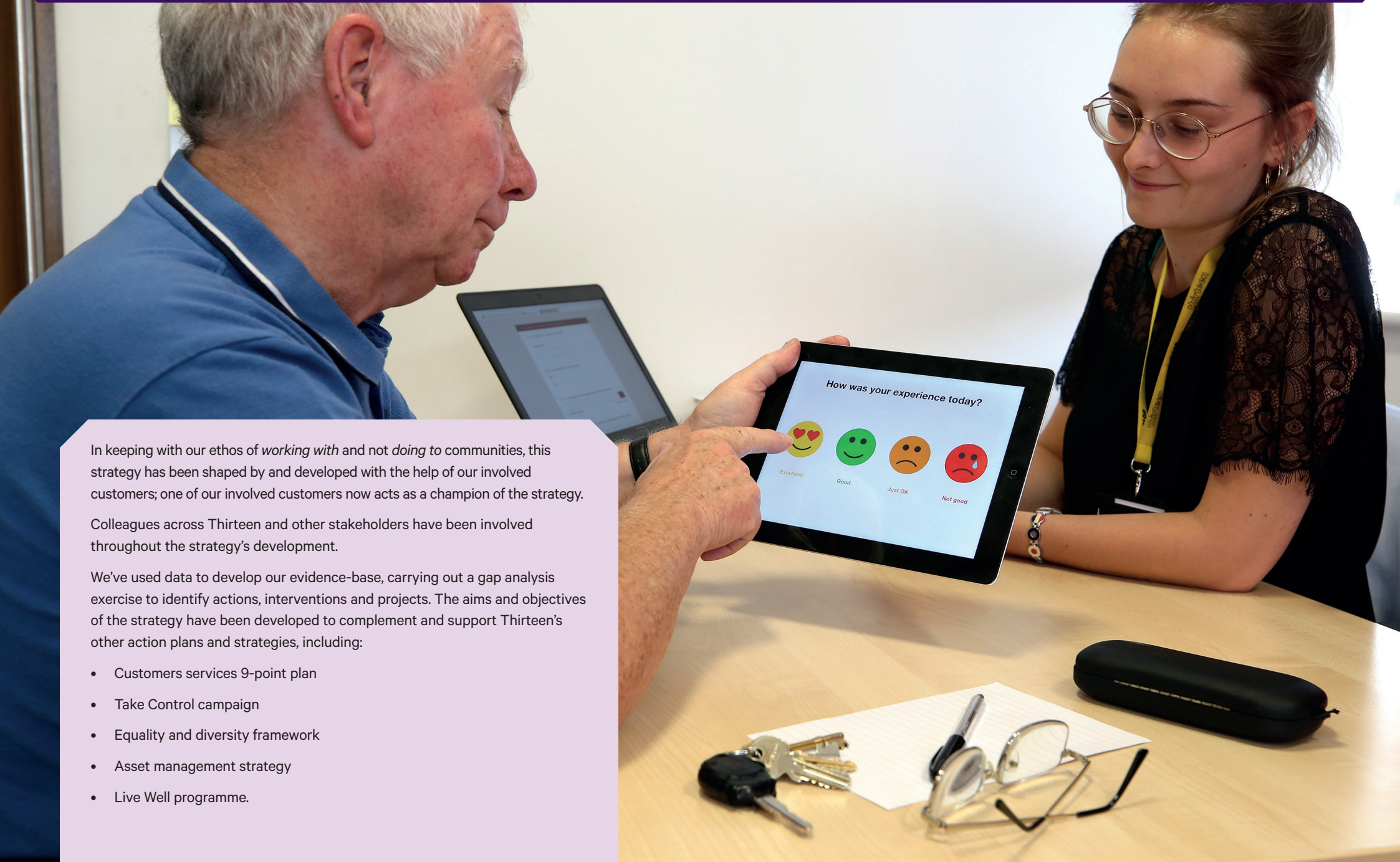
Thirteen has been working with Middlesbrough Council, North Ormesby Neighbourhood Development Trust, Big Local and people from the community to tackle social and physical issues in North Ormesby.

Together, we have spent more than £1.6m to buy and refurbish empty homes in North Ormesby while training 40 people in construction.

Thirteen helped to fund the Citizens Advice Bureau at the North Ormesby Hub and Thirteen's employability service worked at the hub to support people with jobs and training. We also helped people to volunteer their time in the local community.



Developing the strategy



In keeping with our ethos of *working with* and not *doing to* communities, this strategy has been shaped by and developed with the help of our involved customers; one of our involved customers now acts as a champion of the strategy.

Colleagues across Thirteen and other stakeholders have been involved throughout the strategy's development.

We've used data to develop our evidence-base, carrying out a gap analysis exercise to identify actions, interventions and projects. The aims and objectives of the strategy have been developed to complement and support Thirteen's other action plans and strategies, including:

- Customers services 9-point plan
- Take Control campaign
- Equality and diversity framework
- Asset management strategy
- Live Well programme.

The difference we'll make



Measuring success

1. We'll have an action plan to keep us focussed
2. We'll develop a community resilience steering group to oversee action plans and budgets
3. Each locality planning area will have individual measures, targets and specific KPIs
4. We'll record outcomes and outputs and measure the impact on our strategic KPIs
5. We'll develop a community intervention tracker which will help us understand the difference we're making in our locality planning areas and enable the roll-out of interventions in other locations
6. We'll monitor and report the impact of the strategy and actions by:
 - o a quarterly update to our quality homes place group
 - o an annual review and report will be shared with:
 - o Thirteen Board
 - o Thirteen's customers
 - o partners and local councils.

This strategy will help us make a difference for:

Customers

- ✓ Customers will feel listened to and more engaged
- ✓ Customers will know how and where to access support services
- ✓ Customers will be more informed about what climate change means for them, why it's important and what they can do to make a difference in their homes and communities
- ✓ More customers will move into employment and training.

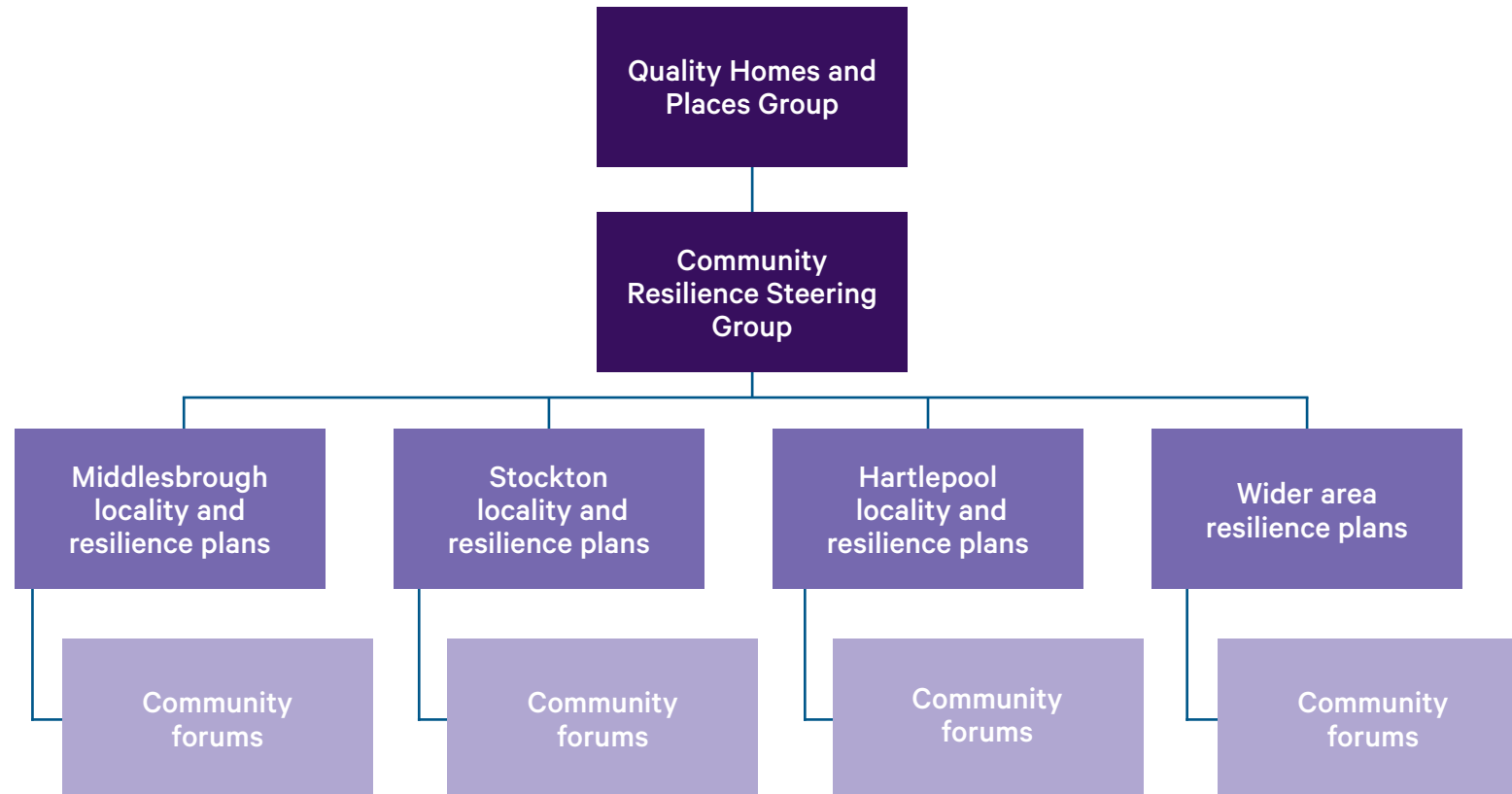
Stakeholders

- ✓ We'll build capacity in the voluntary and community sector by supporting groups to access funding and investment opportunities.

Thirteen

- ✓ We'll have a co-ordinated approach to building resilience
- ✓ We'll reduce unnecessary demand on frontline services
- ✓ We'll understand the interventions that work, and see a greater return on investment
- ✓ We'll attract investment to our communities and Thirteen
- ✓ Our assets, buildings and facilities will benefit our communities
- ✓ We'll better understand and celebrate our impact on employment and skills
- ✓ We'll maximise social value from our investments for the benefit of local communities
- ✓ By addressing customer needs, we'll aim to improve our performance and strategic key performance indicators of:
 - o reducing arrears
 - o reducing turnover
 - o reducing voids.

Governance



Reporting to the Quality Homes and Places group, the Community Resilience Steering Group will:

1. Focus support and interventions where they're most needed
2. Align priorities, interventions and resources across the organisation
3. Ensure interventions deliver value for money and generate a return on investment
4. Develop an agreed approach to understand which interventions are more effective in improving our performance and strategic KPIs
5. Support and empower communities to identify their own solutions and support them to identify and apply for funding to deliver.