



In conversation

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and

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Simon Community Scotland (SCS) provides hope and homes for people experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness. SCS works in partnership with local authorities, other agencies and other funders. We provide a whole range of different accommodation services from emergency immediate crisis intervention accommodation through to long term and now, with SASC support, permanent homes.

We were introduced to SASC by Homes for Good Glasgow who are part of our extended network and explained what social investment does. The loan has already had a huge impact on us because as a provider of social care homelessness services, we now know we also can also facilitate people directly into permanent homes. So that means that we have a real end to end offer.

It has been remarkable in our interaction with our clients. We have sometimes worked with people for many years. They have been in and out of the system and our care. To finally have the opportunity to offer them a safe, secure home with a landlord that really understands them is wonderful. It can take people four or five years to access even basic accommodation in Edinburgh with hundreds of applications for every social tenancy. So, to be able to help long-standing clients is so important for us. And in return, our new tenants have been incredulous about the quality of the housing we are able to offer them because we are in control of the properties and their maintenance.

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Owning our own properties has also given SCS the ability to talk to other housing providers on an equal basis. The SASC-sponsored growth has been hugely welcomed by the local

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authority because anything that increases the options for housing in the city is appreciated. Especially anything that helps people to move on from long-term support and care accommodation which is very expensive.

Working with SASC gave us the confidence to trust ourselves and our ability to manage the housing. It was a very, very steep learning

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And, of course, the learning has continued as the pressure remains high on the housing market in Edinburgh. But the loan pays for someone to purchase the housing and that has been critical as they can respond really quickly and we've managed to buy houses despite the competition.

What we weren't expecting but what is going well already is how quickly our tenants have settled into their new homes, despite their many challenges and their chronic experiences of homelessness. It can't be overstated just how much impact this has had. Even on just one life. It is giving people a sense of hope and aspiration and offering them something they have never had.

Being in control of the purchasing means we can buy in areas where people want to live. Near their families or a location that will work best for them. It means we can give them the best possibility of service.

We'd love to do more social investment and be able to offer more people a different type of accommodation. SCS does not have an ambition to be a large landlord, we want to make things happen, create capacity, and allow people to move forward. With the social investment, we are the first to establish a model that shows that was possible. We want to continue to build the evidence so we can encourage local authorities and other agencies and housing providers to come alongside us and be part of that ambition.

Lorraine McGrath, CEO
Simon Community Scotland



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