

Dispatches from our borrower CEOs

We asked a selection of CEOs from across the portfolio to describe how their loan from SASC is enabling them to scale responsibly and meet the needs of their communities.

CEOs

Keely Dalfen
CEO, The Brick

Gary Meek
CEO, Blue Triangle

Sarah Hill
CEO, IDAS

The Queens Hall Mission in Wigan has been established for over 100 years but began trading as **The Brick** in 2013. It is an anti-poverty charity offering services to people who are at risk of or transitioning through homelessness, financial hardship or crisis. At the heart of their recent growth is a partnership with SASC to purchase 40 bedrooms, taking the organisation's property ownership to the next level

Keely Dalfen, CEO of The Brick, leads a dynamic and mission-driven organisation supporting people in crisis across Wigan and Leigh, boroughs experiencing some of the highest levels of deprivation in England and big increases in homelessness presentations.

The original plan with SASC was to purchase a mix of HMOs and two-bed properties but an opportunity came along to buy 15 self-contained flats that the charity was leasing but at risk of losing because the landlord was looking to exit. Two of the flats have full disabled access, a rare facility that Keely was keen to hold on to. The flexibility in the SASC loan allowed The Brick to re-shape the property portfolio and secure the flats for their continued use.

Keely feels that owning properties has given The Brick greater control over housing quality enabling them to offer a better experience for their service users as relying on private landlords was becoming problematic. As mortgage rates increased, Keely was finding that landlords were keen to reduce costs cutting back on repairs and maintenance and reluctant to bring properties up to energy performance standards resulting in higher bills for tenants.

Whilst The Brick had some experience of mortgage funding and social investment they did not have the equity needed to scale their property ambitions. They chose SASC as their preferred partner as the offer did not require an up-front deposit and we were able to provide a substantial grant, sourced from Access under the Cost of Living programme. The grant reduced the overall cost of funding and allowed The Brick to keep rents lower for their tenants.

The partnership with SASC has given The Brick a renewed confidence and willingness to expand their services. 'If you own property, you have a story to tell stakeholders. You don't really have that if you are leasing'.

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Keely also describes how the due diligence undertaken by SASC, whilst rigorous, gave the leadership team and the trustees the confidence to be ambitious and through the process they felt able to double their original ask from 20 units to 40. Keely feels the dedicated due diligence undertaken by SASC on the management team and expert feedback on team development and capacity gaps was particularly valuable.

In terms of the ongoing relationship with SASC, Keely highlights its openness and feels the SASC team understands the day to day pressures of running a support charity. Finding the last few properties in the portfolio was a challenge but Keely found

two developers who were able to offer recently refurbished, large properties and the partnership they forged is being put to good use by The Brick in a new project to redevelop existing hostel provision in Wigan that is not fit for purpose.

Looking forward, Keely says that the partnership with SASC has given The Brick a renewed confidence and willingness to expand their services. They have won new commissioned contracts leveraging their new portfolio – as Keely put it 'If you own property, you have a story to tell stakeholders. You don't really have that if you are leasing'.

Finally, being able to offer more, good quality supported homes has significantly increased the profile of the charity. Keely now sits on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategic Partnership Board in Wigan and larger charities are approaching The Brick asking to work with them. SASC is delighted, in partnership with Access to be able to play a part in The Brick's success and we wish Keely and her team all the very best going forward.

Keely Dalfen
CEO, The Brick

THE BRICK
QUEENS HALL ACTION ON POVERTY



In May 2024, Scotland declared a national housing emergency, recognising the severe and widespread issues impacting the availability and affordability of housing. Gary Meek and **Blue Triangle** are working hard to address the challenge in the south of the country.

Blue Triangle was established in 1975 by the Young Women's Christian Association to manage their properties and 50 years later the charity supports 400 people every day at various points of the homelessness pathway across ten local authorities.

Blue Triangle already does a great job supporting those in their service, with two-thirds of them successfully moving on to independent tenancies each year. However, Scotland is facing significant increases in demand for affordable and supported housing with an unprecedented number of people currently stuck in temporary accommodation, which can be detrimental to personal progress and an unsustainable financial burden for councils.

So, Gary is driving an ambitious strategy to expand Blue Triangle's property portfolio to address this demand and the partnership with SASC is at the heart of this vision – to create a sustainable pipeline of housing, allowing people to progress from crisis accommodation into supported tenancies, and eventually into long-term affordable homes.

SASC agreed to fund the purchase of 61 self-contained, one-bed properties for single homeless service users but the plan changed during the purchasing phase to include family homes in response to evolving need from council partners. Gary is clear that SASC's flexibility has been critical. "The model allows us to respond to real-world needs – if we can maintain the agreed yield, the portfolio can flex," he said. The partnership has enabled Blue Triangle to move quickly where local authorities are eager to commission services, such as in East Ayrshire, where uptake far exceeded initial expectations.

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For Blue Triangle, owning properties is not just a strategic decision – it's a long-term commitment to their mission. As a registered social landlord, Gary wants to increase the volume of housing the charity controls so that vulnerable people can stay in homes longer, rather than cycling through temporary support services. Owning homes gives Blue Triangle autonomy over its services and assurance that the accommodation remains available for those who need it most.

While Blue Triangle considered more traditional financing routes, including bank loans, they chose to work with SASC because it offered more than just capital. Gary described the relationship as a real partnership and particularly valued the chance to connect with other SASC clients in Scotland to share learning. "We saw it as an opportunity to learn from a financial partner with experience in the sector, not just secure a transaction," he said. Also, the

questions asked by SASC during the due diligence phase of the project, particularly around development of the management team, supported Gary in driving his change agenda as the new CEO and gave the trustees confidence in the direction of travel.

Looking forward, Blue Triangle is exploring new development opportunities, including repurposing disused buildings like an empty office block in Argyll and Bute with the potential to become self-contained flats with on-site support. SASC is delighted to be working with Blue Triangle on its ambitious plans and we are all motivated by the vision to create a sustained pathway for service users throughout their journey to independent living.

Gary Meek
CEO, Blue Triangle



Sarah Hill, CEO of **IDAS (Independent Domestic Abuse Services)**, leads one of the UK's largest specialist domestic abuse charities. Working across Yorkshire, IDAS supports thousands of adults and children affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence every year.

IDAS has a clear vision – to increase the number of safe, stable places available to those fleeing abuse. Currently, the charity is forced to turn away 60% of people who contact them for emergency accommodation due to lack of capacity. At the same time, IDAS and other women's services charities are reliant on landlords who are increasingly redirecting properties towards more lucrative temporary accommodation.

This is why IDAS was determined to own its own properties and they approached SASC with a plan to purchase a first portfolio of 16 houses in Barnsley and Sheffield to cater for single women and families. SASC provided a loan of £1.7m plus a grant of £0.4m from Access' Cost of Living support programme and the project was off and running. During the ramp up phase, IDAS won a new contract in Doncaster and the plan was flexed to move some of the purchases to this new area.

This shift from leasing to owning was more than logistical – according to Sarah it was transformational. She explains how it is part of their medium-term strategy to become a registered social landlord and offers IDAS not only control over property standards but a greater ability to respond flexibly to unmet need.

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By building ownership experience, IDAS can now assert greater influence in commissioning discussions, demonstrating that they bring not only service delivery but housing assets to the table, ensuring they are indispensable partners in future tenders.

While IDAS explored various financing options, including traditional bank loans and leasing, the charity found SASC's shared-risk model and supportive relationship to be unique. Sarah valued the transparent, consultative nature of the process, which allowed open dialogue and mutual problem-solving. This gave IDAS the confidence to move forward with a bold new approach.

The due diligence process was described as challenging but empowering. It prompted useful internal reflection and helped the executive team and board evaluate their readiness for housing ownership. The fact that SASC was able to introduce IDAS to peer organisations who had already been on the journey was particularly helpful in giving the team and trustees confidence to move forward.

Once the project was underway, IDAS worked with property consultants to source homes. While the consultants were helpful in handling negotiations, Sarah highlighted the value of local knowledge, noting that IDAS teams often knew the nuance of local areas better than external partners. In future, she suggested a hybrid model where internal teams shortlist and consultants negotiate – an approach echoed by other SASC partners like The Brick and one we will look to incorporate in future projects.

Despite minor challenges in sourcing properties, Sarah says that SASC remained flexible – allowing geographic adjustments to the

portfolio and continuing to offer practical and responsive support. Sarah described the relationship as a true partnership, where SASC “wants you to succeed.”

Sarah says that the experience with SASC has been a launchpad for broader strategic ambitions. IDAS is preparing to present a five-year housing plan to its board, aiming to grow its property portfolio and recruit a dedicated Housing Development Lead. The ultimate goal: become a Registered Social Landlord and significantly expand housing provision across Yorkshire.

What once seemed out of reach is now central to IDAS' strategic direction. Sarah shared that the SASC partnership has “unlocked doors” internally and created a lasting shift in how the charity views its future.

We are proud to partner with Sarah and IDAS in their mission to offer safety, dignity and independence to those experiencing domestic abuse. Their bold vision for growth and housing ownership is exactly the kind of transformation we hope to support through our funding.

Sarah Hill
CEO, IDAS

