

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

