

In conversation with our borrower CEOs

We spoke to two 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.

Handcrafted Projects is a charity set up in 2011 to help individuals across the Northeast who need to rebuild their lives. Its holistic “hub and housing” model for high-needs individuals combines safe accommodation with therapy workshops and vocational skills training. This helps residents move towards independence and improved well-being.

Dan Northover has been at the helm as founder, managing director and now CEO for 14 years. Handcrafted’s first SASH loan in 2023 enabled him to move from part-time to full-time in his role.

Dan says the SASH loan was “transformational for the organisation”. As well as funding the purchase of 24 properties, the process of taking on the SASH loan also helped the organisation professionalise its operations, strengthen its governance and achieve Ofsted registration. This in turn has opened the way to new contracts and expanded services. Handcrafted now also works with people who have complex needs, including those experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges, or leaving care or prison.

SASH’s loan also funded an internal property resource. This has helped Handcrafted develop the skills needed to purchase properties that fit its longer term financial plans.

When Handcrafted took on its SASH loan, it was the smallest organisation (by turnover) to have borrowed from SASH. Dan estimates that Handcrafted is now four times larger than it was before the SASH loan based on turnover, staffing number and number of bedspaces available. Being able to purchase properties makes it possible for Handcrafted to plan ten years forward because

Our SASH loan was transformational for the organisation.



it knows it will retain control of these properties. Being the owner also gives Handcrafted an incentive to optimise the quality of the properties. And resources can be directed into services rather than spent on rent.

Dan believes owning rather than renting properties gives Handcrafted more control. This applies both to choosing the location at the point of purchase, and to subsequent repairs and maintenance.

When it comes to bidding for contracts, Handcrafted believes commissioners have recognised it can provide better quality services as a result of owning the SASH properties. Owning rather than renting properties has also opened up new opportunities to work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people leaving care. To do this, Handcrafted had to register with Ofsted. Being more financially sustainable allowed Handcrafted to develop the quality of their housing and support provision to meet the requirements; Dan feels owning some of its properties helped Handcrafted in this respect.

An important factor for Dan is the impact property ownership has had on the vulnerable people Handcrafted works with. Being able to match the right home to the right individual has enhanced

Handcrafted’s person-centred approach. Being able to control the quality of the property, and give tenants some autonomy, ultimately leads to better outcomes and tangible improvements in the lives of vulnerable people.

Overall Dan feels that growing its asset base has made Handcrafted more resilient; and the structure of the SASH loan and its risk profile have made it feel like a genuine partnership.

In March 2026 SASC agreed a second loan to Handcrafted from its SASH II fund to provide a further 32 bedspaces. Dan views this as a step-change in Handcrafted’s growth, allowing it to replicate its model in new geographies but in a way that is rooted in each local community. He continues to be excited by the chance to show how an alternative way to finance property ownership can enhance support for the most vulnerable in society.

SASC is delighted to be able to play a part in Handcrafted’s success and we wish Dan and his team all the very best going forward.

Dan Northover
Founder, Handcrafted Projects



WHAG provides affordable supported accommodation to homeless women aged 16-65 across Rochdale, Bury, Cheshire West and Chester. It also delivers outreach and floating support services. WHAG's origins as Rochdale Women's Housing Aid Group date back to 1981. In 2022 it used a loan from SASH to buy some of the accommodation it uses to support women fleeing domestic abuse before they move on to independent living.

Kirsty Rhodes, WHAG's CEO, has led the organisation for over 30 years. She oversaw the due diligence process that led up to the SASH loan, followed by the use of the loan for the purchase of 17 one-, two- and three-bed properties for women and their children.

Before borrowing from SASH, WHAG used to rent all the properties it used from either registered providers or private landlords. Kirsty believes owning at least some of its properties delivers clear benefits to WHAG.

Most tangibly, this involves service quality. WHAG's experience is that the landlords of properties it rents are not always prompt in responding to the need for repairs or refurbishment. As an owner with direct control over maintenance, WHAG can make sure that quality remains high.

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Owning has allowed WHAG more choice in the property types it offers. Kirsty believes that being able to offer single accommodation properties allows clients to demonstrate they are able to manage their own properties. This has increased positive outcomes to the women and children they support in stabilising their lives

Owning properties helps WHAG bid for contracts by allowing it to guarantee some property availability.



through improved confidence, social and life skills.

Continuity is another area where ownership helps. Renting exposes WHAG to the risk of landlords deciding either to take properties back or to put them up for sale. In this way ownership brings improved visibility over the medium term.

Kirsty believes owning properties has brought strategic benefits by making WHAG more credible when bidding for contracts. WHAG attributes a recent tender win in part to being able to demonstrate forward thinking through the property portfolio it bought with the SASH loan. Owning properties also helps when WHAG bids for contracts by allowing it to guarantee some property availability. However, WHAG's wide geographic range means this also involves a trade-off in terms of locations.

WHAG recently used its own reserves to buy three properties. The trustees made this decision after seeing the benefits that WHAG received from owning the properties it bought using the SASH loan. They chose to purchase properties outright rather than via mortgages so that all rent received for these properties can be re-invested into upkeep of properties or expanding services.

Looking back, Kirsty believes SASH helped make it possible for WHAG to move into owning some of its properties for the first time. Trustees took comfort from the low-risk nature of a SASH loan and from the close relationship built up in the process of agreeing and then deploying the loan. The SASH loan also funded an external

property consultant, local to WHAG, who has helped the organisation develop its skills in purchasing, and key things to look out for. WHAG still rents 40-50 properties from social landlords and in the private rental sector (PRS) and have found working with a consultant has given them more knowledge of 'good' properties when searching for rental ones as well.

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Kirsty feels the SASH loan gave WHAG a low risk way to purchase its own properties. The fact the loan also provided funds towards refurbishment and that the void risk is shared with SASH, gave Kirsty confidence that this was a safer option than borrowing from a bank.

Borrowing from SASH to buy some of its properties has had a big impact on WHAG's plans and strategy: for example, the decisions to use its reserves to buy, and expanding into new geographies.

SASC looks forward to working further with WHAG to enhance and strengthen its financial resilience.

**Kirsty Rhodes
CEO, WHAG**

