



ALL IN(NOVATION):

A Social Return on Investment (SROI) Analysis of Eastlight Community Homes' All In Incubator



SUMMARY

This is a Social Return on Investment (SROI) report which sets out the social impact of Eastlight Community Homes' All In Incubator. The report ultimately demonstrates that Eastlight's All In team have created a truly innovative programme of work which has put the power into the hands of the community. The teams of Community Entrepreneurs supported by Eastlight have created genuinely impactful solutions to solve the problems important to them.

The report shows that in the first year alone, for every £1 invested in the All In Incubator, there is a social return of £6.26.

This conservative figure only takes into account the impact of the programme during the year it was active. It does not include its longer-term impact on the participants, communities or of the solutions they created. This means that for every future year the social impact of the programme is likely to increase considerably.



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HEADLINE STATISTICS FROM ALL IN

100% of the community teams created credible ideas which have gone on to become new organisations	67% of Community Entrepreneurs secured employment based on their experiences on the programme
2,530 people engaged in face-to-face conversations	3,186 people engaged with the incubator project through surveys, social media and mailing lists
60% average increase in networks for participants as a result of the programme	100% retention of participants on the programme

In the first year alone, the All In Incubator generated a social value of £7.5 million for an investment of £1.2 million. This equates to a social return on investment of £6.26 for every £1 invested.



THE ALL IN INCUBATOR

“I want there to be a moment where we just prove to the community, to Eastlight, to local people, local partners, everybody, that ordinary people in our communities can do the most extraordinary things”

James Green, Eastlight Community Homes

These members of the community became Community Entrepreneurs who were paid a salary of £26,000 for one year. Eastlight's All In team created a design thinking process and supported them through it by providing training, mentoring and coaching.



“The purpose of All In is to give local communities hope. Hope that things that are affecting them negatively can be tackled and changed, maybe not overnight but that communities can find, in themselves, with some help and some investment, ways to tackle these things”

**David Solomons,
Eastlight Community Home**

“So often recruitment can feel like you're having to jump through hoops, or is slightly antagonistic, you know doesn't feel like an adult to adult relationship from the off, and that was the absolute opposite of what we wanted to bring in”

**Georgia Butler,
Eastlight Community Homes**

At its core, All In is rooted in the idea that **the people experiencing issues in communities are the best people to create the solutions**. In its first year the All In Incubator brought together 20 community members to tackle issues their communities were facing. Working in teams of around five people, they created community-led social ventures designed to tackle problems including the cost of living crisis, social isolation, issues faced by young people and mental health. These teams were based across North Essex in Colchester City, as well as in the towns of Witham, Halstead and Braintree respectively.

The community members went through a recruitment process **without ever being asked for a CV**. Rather, the recruitment process placed emphasis on the importance of character traits, such as having tenacity, enthusiasm, and a passion for tackling social issues. The process looked for people based on their experience of the issues, as well as people in the community that were **community oriented** and possessed a **learning mindset**. Each one of the 185 applicants to the programme was spoken to by a member of Eastlight's All In team at least once.

Each team had a seconded member of Eastlight staff with the view that they would embed the ethos of All In and take their learnings back into Eastlight itself.

As part of the design thinking process, the teams had a rigorous process of research and listening within the communities to identify what ideas would be successful. This was followed by a process of experimenting with different ideas and running a pilot to ensure the viability of the idea.

Location	No. in Team	Local Issue	Social Venture	People Involved in Pilot
Braintree	5	Mental Health	Kinder Minds	42
Colchester	5	Cost of Living	Trusted	10
Halstead	4	Young People	Grow with the Flow	6
Witham	6	Social Isolation	Popcorn	5

Over the course of the year, these teams engaged over 2,500 people in person across the community. Through this process the project teams also engaged with 46 community-based organisations, 76% of which had not engaged with Eastlight before.

On the 22nd of April 2023, the Community Entrepreneurs made their pitch to the public at the **All In Ideas Festival** at Firstsite in Colchester. All four teams were also required to submit detailed funding proposals to Eastlight to unlock grant funding to turn their ideas into new organisations

that could go onto have impact once the programme had come to an end. After the Festival, **all four ideas were credible enough to secure funding.** These proposals were rigorously assessed by an expert panel comprised of an Executive Director, Board member, a resident Board and Committee member and an experienced local social entrepreneur. All four were awarded £25,000 funding on the basis of completing key governance milestones and a further £25,000 on the basis of demonstrating their ability to raise match funding.

“The people experiencing social issues are the best people to solve them, yet too often it has been organisations leading the way. That’s why we wanted to give local people a real sense of ownership of and responsibility for the work they do. After all they are the community - they understand these issues best and have that passion and entrepreneurial spirit needed to invent the right solutions. For me, that is what being a Community Entrepreneur is all about”

James Green, Eastlight Community Homes

“Being the voice, for these people, I feel really proud. I feel that it gives me a meaning, that this is not just a job, but that I’m actually doing something that hopefully will be recognised, down the line, once we’re done with our project. That, when we’ve put out there what we’ve came up, it will be recognised and they’ll say, I remember that five people from All In did this, this is brilliant, this is working really well. So, I’d say we are the voice and that, now, we’re slowly becoming the action”

A Community Entrepreneur describing their **Sense of Purpose**

“I feel like our voice is always heard... pretty much all my jobs, in the past, I always had a senior, like a boss, and in this case I don’t feel that. So I feel like we’re running our project, that that’s who we are, the project is who we are, but that we have our mentors, who are like the seniors, who aren’t telling us, this is what you have to do... that they’re guiding us. And that’s quite beautiful, that’s really nice, because that gives us that freedom, that we all put our hearts in it and really love turning up to work”

A Community Entrepreneur describing how All In made them **Feel Valued**



Trusted Colchester

The cost of living has put people in the community in a difficult financial position. Trusted aims to build a money confident community: it is rooted in the insight that those who have the least money are often the best budgeters - because they have to be. Trusted runs a 6-week money confidence programme which brings together people with lived experiences of tight budgets and those that want to make savings in their everyday expenses, helping them with their confidence in budgeting techniques and money management skills. The programme also invites guest organisations to speak to the community.

Pilot outcome: £43,876 collective saving in just six weeks



GROW with the FLOW

Nurturing your period power.

Halstead

85% of girls have tried to hide the fact that they are on their period. Grow with the Flow creates Flow Sisters: empowered young women who can educate their peers

about their bodies and menstrual cycle through a weekly series of mentoring sessions. Findings from the team's research showed a reluctance by schools to discuss periods in a way that meets the needs of young girls, which created feelings of shame and unpreparedness that went undetected by educators and policy makers. This led the team to ask: "Where are our girls? They slip under the radar" and subsequently created Grow with the Flow.

Pilot outcome: 100% increase in confidence around periods

Kinder Minds Braintree

Time and again, Braintree residents told the team that they would only receive appropriate mental health support when they reached a point of crisis. Research found that long waiting lists for support and treatment can influence a range of social issues such as financial difficulty, unemployment, and family breakdown, with gaps in prevention leading to an escalation of problems that often result in reliance upon emergency services. Kinder Minds is a wellbeing community hub in the centre of Braintree which provides a space for residents to come together and enjoy mindful community activities with the aim of improving their mental health.

Pilot outcome: 73% reported a mood improvement after just one session

popcorn Witham

Tasked with tackling social isolation, the team's research discovered those most at risk were young people who were struggling to reconnect after spending their formative years stuck at home during the pandemic. 40% of 16 to 24-year-olds reported feelings of loneliness and 11% chronic loneliness. Popcorn helps young people to build confidence in themselves through a 10-week programme of weekly sessions, where Popcorners get to know one another in a safe and trusted environment. The team spoke to 40 service providers, hosted two events that attracted more than 200 attendees, engaged with 65 students from the local sixth form college, and considered the life-stories of friends and families.

Pilot outcome: Increase in confidence from 46% to 90%



WHAT MAKES ALL IN UNIQUE

Like its ethos, All In is innovative and ambitious for two key reasons: Firstly, **no housing association in the UK has offered a programme in quite the same capacity** in terms of scale, funding and commitment to community. Housing associations rarely offer opportunities outside their resident base, whether that be training, funding or employment opportunities within the housing association. By giving those in the community who have direct experience of the problem a blank sheet of paper to form an idea to solve that problem, the All In Incubator has been able to unlock different ways of developing community. It gave people the knowledge, skills, support and confidence to help communities identify, test and solve problems important to them.



Secondly, the All In Incubator is unique as an incubator programme: Incubator programmes are almost never accompanied by pay, and never accompanied by a full-time salary. By providing a salary, Eastlight has given community work a clear financial and professional value. This is also important because **Eastlight have greatly increased the accessibility of the programme:** a number of Community Entrepreneurs had come from low-paid work, unpaid work, unemployment or had full-time care responsibilities. Coupled to this, it is often these individuals that have the experience of, and therefore the solutions to, those issues Eastlight's All In Incubator was trying to address. The above living wage salary enabled those people, who would not have had the financial capacity to take time out to contribute to designing the solutions.

Alongside All In's unique approach to recruitment, the Community Incubator was able to bring people in that are not typically engaged in this type of work. It enabled All In to have **people involved in the process of solving problems that had direct lived experience** of those problems.

"The goal of the All In Incubator is to help people recognise the power they have to tackle the problems they care about, that no-one else is going to come along and solve for them [...] and All In is a facilitator of that, to help people realise their potential to do that"
Matt Black, Eastlight Community Homes

"Eastlight has committed and said, we're not going to half do this, if we're going to do it we're going to invest in people, pay them properly, and get some good talent in, which I think is really impressive"
Dave Smith, Eastlight Community Homes

"I think communities are more eager to get involved when they know you're local people, that you're starting this idea. I think that's what gets them behind it more, that feeling of community... developing an idea needs to be in a small area, specific, to get everybody onboard and talking to you, giving up their precious time and going above and beyond for you. It just makes it more personal"

A Community Entrepreneur describing their increased sense of **Neighbourhood**

"We've got to know each other very fast, very deeply, on a really profound level, much more than you normally do, with work colleagues. And I'm not sure if that's to do with the programme or to do with the people that have been recruited, you know maybe that's to do with the kinds of people that want to do this work, who are automatically those kinds of people"

A Community Entrepreneur describing their newfound sense of **Team Working**

ALL IN SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Why Social Return on Investment?

A Social Return on Investment measures social value: social value is concerned with people's **experience of change in their lives as an outcome of a particular project or initiative**. If the experience of change is positive then social value is created in society, if it is negative then social value is reduced.

Sometimes changes in people's lives can be easy to quantify in financial terms; being paid a higher wage than before, having more qualifications, access to transport and so on. However, sometimes these changes are difficult to quantify; confidence, good overall health, feeling a part of a community. Whilst these may not appear to have financial values, they do have clear financial effects: for example, if someone is in good overall health, they create a value made up of a number of different, easily valued factors such as; reduced burden on the NHS and local medical services, reduced time off work, ability to contribute to the community and so on.

We can then compare this to the costs of things people have inputted and calculate a "Social Return on Investment". The SROI provides an account of cost effectiveness by showing how much is invested and the value that is generated for stakeholders (directly and indirectly). This leads to the production of a ratio of total benefits to total investments. However, it is still important to remember that this is not an objective process: there are many elements that can be rigorous, but there is always subjectivity in the valuation decisions made. It is therefore important not to see things in plainly financial terms too closely: **the broader lived experience and impact on people's lives should be considered**.



Whose Change are we Measuring?

Over 75 hours of 1:1 interviews recorded	59 1:1 Interviews conducted
8 Focus Groups conducted	55 Surveys conducted
2,034 perspectives included	100 Hours observed

The All In journey started in June 2022 and involved a number of individuals, groups, communities and professionals. As with all Social Return on Investment evaluations, it is not possible to encompass all impacts for all stakeholders. Priority has been given to those with a direct involvement in All In, including the Community Entrepreneurs themselves and the staff involved in administering All In.

Stakeholders – Included in Analysis	No.	Involvement	How are they included?
All In Partner - Koreo	3	1:1 Interviews	Input
All In Partner – Shift	2	1:1 Interviews	Input
Eastlight Staff - All In Management (inc. Mentors)	9	1:1 Interviews, Staff Workshop	Input and outcome
Eastlight Staff - Community Entrepreneurs	16	1:1 Interviews, Surveys, Focus Groups	Input and outcome
Eastlight Staff - Community Entrepreneurs (Eastlight Secondees)	4	1:1 Interviews, Surveys, Focus Groups	Input and outcome
Engaged community	2530	Community entrepreneurs engagement	Input and outcome

There were a number of stakeholders not included in this analysis, but could be included in the future in longitudinal data research



Outcomes

Through our in-depth research and engagement with the All In Incubator we identified a number of outcomes that could be evidenced as key impacts of the programme and translated into social value for the first year of the project. This change has been created collaboratively through Eastlight working with the community, engaging with several stakeholders and having a positive impact. All In has created change in people's lives in several ways:

Who?	How many people in group?	Outcomes	Final Impact Calculation (each figure is based on HACT financial proxies)
Community Entrepreneurs	20	Sense of purpose\ sense of doing something meaningful	£36,005.02
		Enhanced employability	£92,493.54
		Feeling valued at work	£211,814.35
		Increased sense of belonging to a neighbourhood	£109,958.15
		Increased confidence	£138,705.62
		Reduced social isolation, building a team	£17,141.76
		Full-time employment	£6,969.60
Eastlight All In Staff	8	Sense of purpose/ sense of doing something meaningful/ rewarding work	£16,002.23
		Skills development	£6,035.40
		Increased sense of belonging to a neighbourhood	£48,870.29
		Feeling valued at work	£94,139.71
		Increased confidence	£48,161.68
Community Members	2500	Increased sense of belonging to neighbourhood (to avoid over-claiming the impact on the community members, the calculation assumes only 1000 people had increased 30% sense of belonging to a neighbourhood)	£6,033,368.80
Community members directly involved in teams pilot programmes	63		£668,468.53
		Total	£7,552,932.53

This table does not include all of the stakeholders featured as part of the social return on investment calculations, rather, it opts to show only the stakeholders with the most social impact generated.



Key Findings

This Social Return on Investment focuses on the first year running the programme from June 2022-May 2023 to understand the impact that the programme has had in the first year. In keeping with SROI good practice, calculations have been made with conservative figures in order to avoid overstating the impact of the Incubator. In its different forms **the programme is having a significant impact, changing peoples' lives by increasing social interaction, building confidence, developing skills and community ties.**

Through the SROI framework we have explored these social changes and identified that for every pound invested in the All In Incubator £6.26 worth of Social Value was returned.

This highlighted the cost-effective nature of the project through its innovative approach. This number gives a sense of the social value of the work undertaken. **This figure illustrates the depth and breadth of the impact All In has had on the lives of individuals and people in those communities and presents a high social value in comparison to similar projects.**

This is through several social outcomes, including engaging 2,500 community members in face-to-face conversations, which increases a sense of belonging to neighbourhood for many of those people.

It is important to note that this return on investment figure only takes into account the impact of the programme during the year it was active. It does not take into account the longer term impact of the Incubator on the participants and communities, or the potential impact of each of the community teams' solutions. This means that **for every year the social impact of the programme is likely to increase considerably.** Only with longitudinal research can this value be calculated, but given that the programme has already improved the outcomes of its participants, it is likely to continue to have an impact into the future.

The proxies overlap – for example, financial discomfort often goes hand-in-hand with lower levels of mental health challenge and confidence, and therefore an increase in one can often have a positive impact for other proxies, but for ease of understanding they are separated in the value map. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the breadth of the social issues being addressed by the All In Incubator, as this adds weight to the overall power and impact of the initiative.

Conclusions

The All In Incubator represents a genuinely innovative approach to community empowerment. Through this programme of work, **All In has equipped members of the community with a bespoke, transformative education.** Those Community Entrepreneurs had the unique opportunity to dedicate time to listen to the wider community and engage with local, real life issues. This has fundamentally shifted their understanding of these problems and the ideas that are created to tackle them.

By giving the Community Entrepreneurs a blank sheet of paper to decide everything from the start of the project and giving them innovative design thinking, **the programme has made social innovation accessible.** Applying the incubator model to community development has brought huge social outcomes for the community that have been outlined in this report. The Social Value created by the programme alone speaks volumes about the impact of the programme on its stakeholders: everyone involved has experienced some degree of personal empowerment, which carries the potential to have a wide and far reaching impact on society.

But it is the principles behind All In which should be taken as transformational trends for the future of housing associations and community development: recruiting Community Entrepreneurs in an open and inclusive way and paying them a respectable above living wage salary, the programme has reached individuals that had not typically engaged in community work. It has shown that **Eastlight are committed to the future of the communities it is involved in. This created genuine trust and engagement and fostered community in multiple directions and at multiple levels.**

This impact should not be understated, and there are important connections to current policy agendas. **This model has redefined the role of a housing association, and by extension other community anchor institutions, and shown how they can become important institutions of place and foster a sense of community, local pride and belonging.** Such models can be targeted to create value in specific areas and locales which need committed approaches to community issues.



From the Community Entrepreneurs

Over the course of evaluating All In's social return on investment, we found strong measurable evidence of improved outcomes. Here is a selection of those outcomes from the Community Entrepreneurs.

<p>"That's another reason why I applied, I thought it would be a really nice way to meet everyone from the community... It's been really nice, actually, having an excuse to be here, be out in the community and meet loads of people, so getting to know everybody and getting to know Halstead as well. Yeah it's been great. I've met so many people"</p> <p>A Community Entrepreneur describing their reduction in Social Isolation</p>	<p>"Before All In, I'd say I was really pondering along, day-to-day life, doing what I need to do, making sure my kids were fed and watered, everything. And now that we're at the end, of All In, I think All In has given me the confidence to move forward and to then begin a career, where I never thought I'd have that"</p> <p>A Community Entrepreneur describing their Employability</p>
<p>"I've found, with this project, I'm a lot more energetic outside of work, because I've got so much more energy"</p> <p>A Community Entrepreneur describing improvements to their Mental Health & Wellbeing</p> <p>"I've absolutely loved this opportunity. I'd say it's been one of my most favourite working years, that I've really enjoyed it"</p> <p>A Community Entrepreneur describing improvements to their Mental Health & Wellbeing</p>	<p>"But the training from Eastlight I suppose has increased confidence, you know we have a set plan, when we're going into these things, and the training has definitely helped with that"</p> <p>A Community Entrepreneur describing improvements in their Confidence</p> <p>"It's made me confident, in who I am"</p> <p>A Community Entrepreneur describing improvements in their Confidence</p>
<p>"I feel like I've learnt so much, and it's nice because you do so many different things, so there's the creative side, the IT side, the research"</p> <p>A Community Entrepreneur describing their newly acquired Skills</p>	<p>"So we are making our presence known, very much known, and we are getting the feedback we want, from the community"</p> <p>A Community Entrepreneur describing their sense of Community</p>



The All In Ideas Festival