



creating homes
changing lives

Building

Futures

Together

Annual Report 2024



Building futures together

Together, we build futures by giving people in urgent housing need a home and support to make a new start in life. We transform empty and derelict houses in some of the most deprived areas of Leeds into quality homes. We give people a secure foundation from where they can focus on rebuilding their lives.

It's a shocking reality that over 3,000 properties lie cold and empty in Leeds, some for decades, despite there being more than 27,000 people waiting for a home. Over 5,000 people are in the highest priority band A*.

Many are women fleeing domestic violence with their children or are the 'hidden homeless', missing from statistics as they move from sofa to sofa.

We've built strong foundations ourselves too. Although we wish our work wasn't needed, we're proud to be celebrating 35 years of changing lives. Just like our tenants, we are all individuals with unique skills and experiences. We work together to focus on one thing – making a difference.

We've transformed 110 properties since we launched in 1989 but we go far beyond just providing a home. Every person we work with receives a bespoke package of training, support, counselling and coaching that is unique to them. We're here for as long as they need us as they move towards a positive new future.

Our legacy extends to helping others benefit from our skills and experience in renovating homes. Our traineeships offer local unemployed people the opportunity to work alongside our staff on construction projects. We aspire to them leaving us with the skills, qualifications and work experience that will help them secure future employment.

Times are challenging for both the people we help and for Latch as an organisation. But we are resilient. When things get tough, we dig deeper and work together to find solutions. This report focuses on some of the many people who make us who we are, the smiling faces of Latch who are committed to keeping us moving forward.

We hope you're inspired by this snapshot of the past year and meeting some of our people. We'd love you to support us so we can build more futures together.

2

Unique support

The safe, comfortable homes we provide are stepping stones towards future independent living. To help our tenants get back on their feet, we provide them with a personalised package of support. It could include joining courses on how to manage on a low income, skills training to help get back into work or education or trauma counselling and support with addiction. We also help Afghan and Syrian refugees to settle in the local community.

We're proud that 47 tenants and their 26 children moved on from Latch to new futures during the last 12 months. The bonds we form with our tenants are very strong and we wish everyone every happiness in the future. We hope they will keep in touch.



“

We put people first in everything we do. From the moment someone reaches out to us, we're dedicated to providing support every step of the way, making sure they feel welcomed, valued, and empowered. Through our housing, support and training programmes, we help them build the skills and confidence they need to move on to independent living with pride when the time is right for them.”

**James Hartley,
Latch CEO.**

Homes to feel proud of

High quality homes that people can truly make their own is right at the heart of our work. Many of the people we help are the 'hidden homeless', forced to live in cars or move from sofa to sofa. Others have been living in cramped accommodation far too small to meet the needs of families or is poor quality and even dangerous to their health.

We strive to be a good landlord. Our skilled team are dedicated to ensuring that repairs and maintenance are undertaken promptly and to schedule compliance works to make sure our properties remain safe. It's a workload that is constantly growing because providing more houses means we need to keep on top of a greater number of checks and maintenance.

We had 110 properties available in 2024 and 34 of these were prepared for let to new tenants. We're thrilled with the unanimous 'very good' rating from new tenants when asked to give their initial impressions. 86% of tenants who had been with us for over 6 months 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they were impressed.

The wonderful comments from our latest tenant survey speak volumes:



“

Latch were so amazing when I applied. I was made to feel looked after and very welcome during my assessment and when I was waiting to hear back.

I was kept up to date with everything that was going on. ”

“

Grateful to have a place to stay and have the best support around me. I couldn't wish for anything better. I feel safe and I'm grateful I found a safe place to sleep at night.

Thank you. ”

Moving on and moving in

We'd like to say a huge thank you to former Chair Stephen Boyle, who said goodbye after spending over a decade supporting Latch. Looking back on his time with us, he says:



"It's been the most fulfilling and rewarding experience seeing Latch grow from strength to strength. I was bowled over from the start by the brilliant work delivered by the team and Latch is a perfect example of what 'joined up working' really means.

The vision and ambition is remarkable. The courage to achieve two successful share issues and secure nearly a million pounds from ethical investors will always impress me. Latch has more than doubled the number of homes it provides over the past decade.

I've seen first-hand the impact a Latch home and support has on tenants, lifting people out of crisis and desperation and guiding them towards independent living. It has been a truly humbling experience.

What makes Latch so special? For me it's a wonderful combination of dedicated commitment to Latch's mission to make better lives for people in need; and a real sense of enjoyment and satisfaction in working together to achieve truly incredible things.

I've had many memorable moments - experiencing the work of our brilliant construction team with my hard hat, attending the opening of new Latch homes and seeing the joy on the faces of rookie tenants.

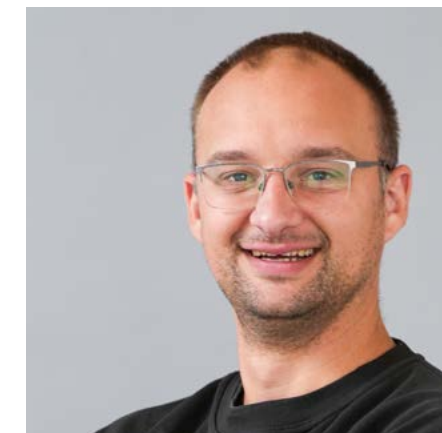
Latch is unique but I feel very strongly that its model could be applied nationally to turn empty properties into homes for those in need. What a truly remarkable enterprise."

Welcoming new faces

We welcomed 6 new temporary and permanent staff this year. Their backgrounds include working in social housing, as a tree surgeon and for a national waterways charity.

We're proud to have a really diverse staff team. Our different experiences and skills come together as one team to provide unique support for our tenants and also each other. Some days can be challenging but we always find a way through.

We all share a passion for making a difference and are looking forward to having a positive impact in the months and years ahead.





“

The team is full of people who genuinely care about our tenants and the outcome of our work. I see someone going the extra mile every day. ”

Emma

Allocations & Assessments Coordinator



“

Everyone gets treated equally and there is mutual respect despite a different skill set or background. ”

Anais

Property Services Worker



“

**I love to be practical
and make a difference
to people's lives. ”**

Roy**Property Services Worker**

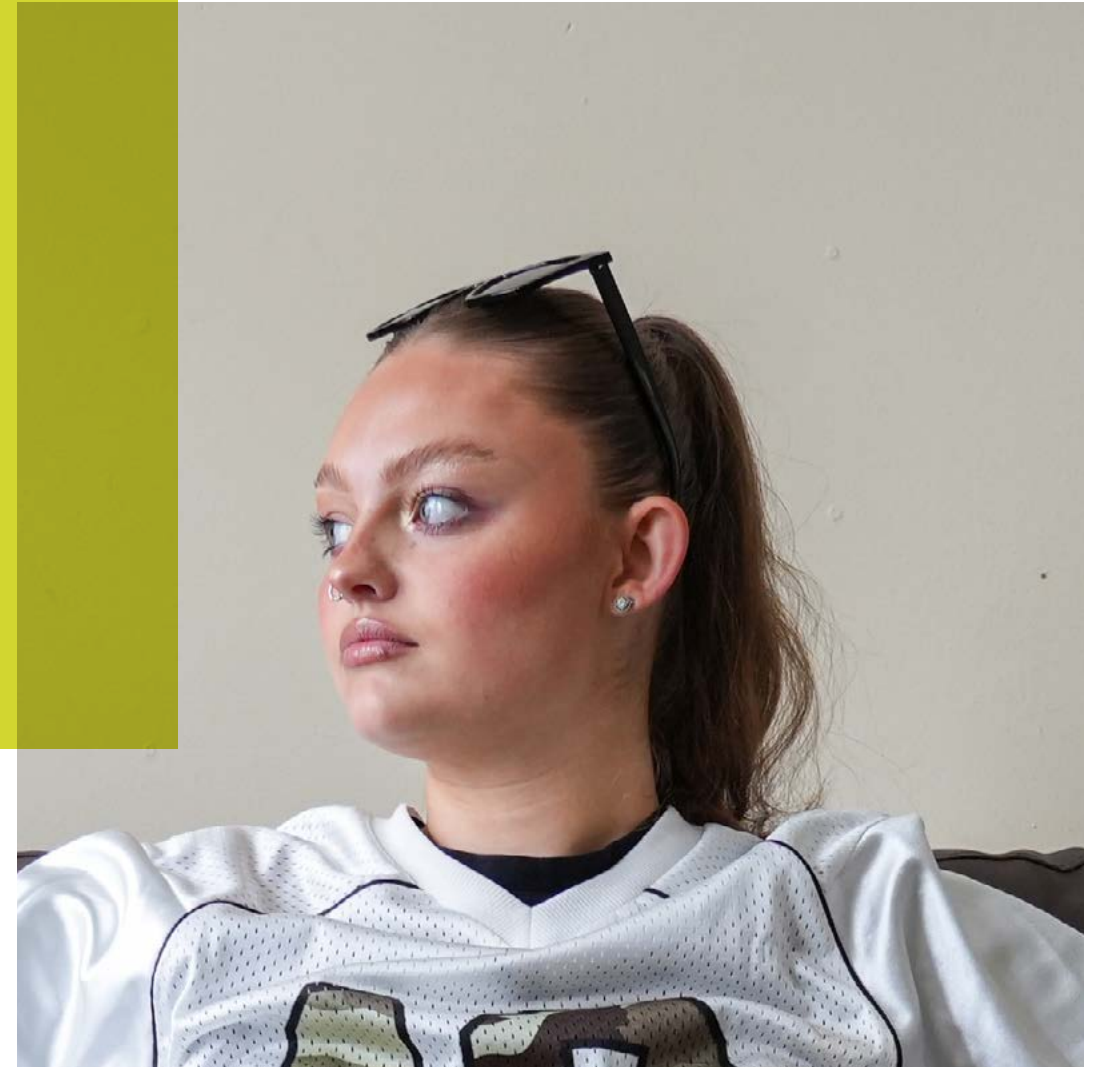
“

**After a challenging day,
we get support from
fellow colleagues.
The Latch team
are very caring. ”**

Nrgus**Support Worker**

Tenants stories

All our tenants have a different story to tell about their past, how they found Latch and their aspirations for the future.



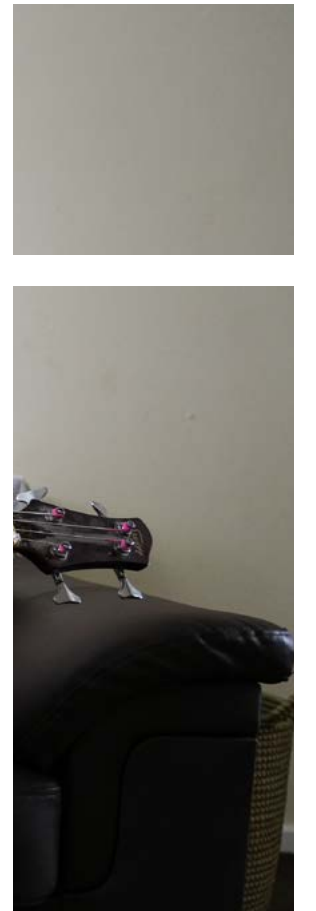
Holly's story

Holly found a home with Latch in January 2024. She's a young person who had been struggling living at home due to her complex mental health needs. She was aware that her behaviour, including drinking, was negatively impacting on her family and younger siblings.

She had reached out to other agencies but hadn't found the right help. Since being referred to Latch, Holly has started to transform her life, learning to live independently and to build her confidence. She has grasped every opportunity including the gym and volunteering on house renovations. She's even learnt to plaster, to tile and fit a bathroom and kitchen. She says:

"Thanks to Latch my life has completely changed and I am a totally different person. I'd never stayed at home overnight alone before and that was a really big step to overcome but Latch has really helped boost my confidence and overcome my anxiety. Volunteering keeps me busy. I really enjoy being able to help others and I love being able to go to the gym."

It's early days for Holly thinking about the future but she is really keen to encourage others in a similar situation to reach out for help.



“

Latch is one of the biggest reasons why my life has continued. I was in a really bad situation and seeking help isn't that scary. Latch have made the journey really easy for me and I can't thank them enough. I wish Latch had the resources to run a huge awareness campaign about their work because so many young people I know that need help aren't aware of how to reach out.

”

Nathaniel's story

Nathaniel found a home with Latch in February 2023. He'd been sofa surfing for a long time before turning to substance use to cope with the stress when he then became homeless.

Nathaniel's life has been transformed since he started engaging with Latch. He has restructured his life and filled his time with productive activities. He has volunteered with decorating and painting and has worked with his support worker to attend psychotherapy and join Latch activities and away days.

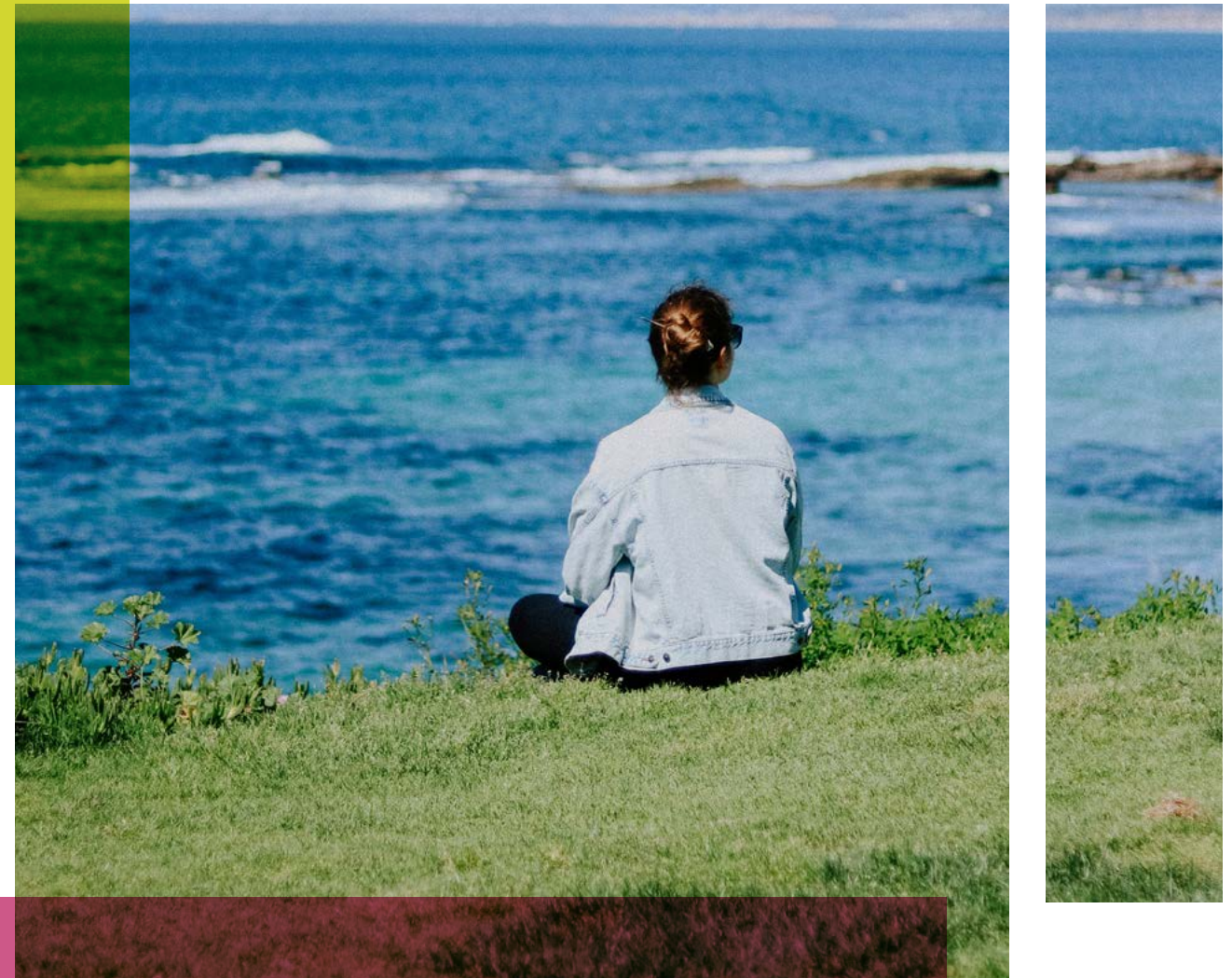
“

Latch turned me into a lover and not a fighter. I appreciate having a roof over my head with all the support that I'm receiving. I would definitely recommend Latch to anyone who needs help and support. I know people are hesitant to ask for help because of the stigma around it but Latch turned my life around and I am grateful for it.

”

Rachel's story

Rachel secured a home with Latch in June 2024. She was previously homeless due to having been sectioned following a psychotic episode and problems with drinking and drugs. Her young son ended up in care whilst she was poorly.



“ Latch has given me a place I can call home and where I can have my son on a regular basis. Without Latch I would not have been able to get some custody of my son and I am now looking at getting full time custody.

My support worker, Nrgus, has helped set up my bills and supports me weekly by checking in on me. She also supports me mentally, guiding me step by step and making it easy to understand.

My life is so much better than before. I don't have episodes anymore and I have a better bond with my son. I am so thankful for Latch. ”

Growing more homes

Our mission is to bring abandoned, empty, derelict and frequently old and draughty properties back into use as cosy energy efficient homes. With more homes, we can help even more people.

This year we embarked on our most challenging transformation to date, No.42. The property was in a shocking state, neglected for over 20 years and infested with vermin. It was a blight to both its immediate neighbours and the whole community. Although purchased for only £30,000, the transformation will cost around £120,000 and involves replacing almost everything plus some rebuilding due to subsidence. The house will receive a new roof, doors, windows and electrics, replastering throughout and a new kitchen and bathroom.

The work will take us until early 2025 but what a wonderful two bedroom family home it will be - one that a new tenant and neighbouring community can take pride in.

This epic project has been undertaken alongside the purchase and refurbishment of 5 other properties, meaning we can rent out an additional:

- 3 x one bedroom flats
- 2 x two bedroom houses

We're so pleased that our tenants feel proud to call them home.

“

It's an amazing house and I'm so grateful.”

Latch tenant



“

Please can you thank all those at Latch for giving me this beautiful new home just as I was about to give up. I love it!

Tyler
Latch tenant

”

Opening doors to employment

Our refurbishment projects provide stepping stones into employment for local unemployed people. They work alongside our skilled staff as trainees to gain construction work skills to help them into long term employment.

Ten unemployed people joined us as trainees during 2024. They've worked with us on a diverse range of projects and properties including painting, installing kitchens and replacing bathrooms. Two trainees from 2023 also continued to work with us and we're thrilled that Tyrese Rose gained his CSCS certificate.



Andrew's story

Andrew has just turned 50 and had previously worked at quite a senior level in Chemical Engineering. He had struggled with his mental health, financial issues and trying to secure employment.

He came to Latch with some fantastic DIY skills gained from working on his own house and was a massive help to us, working on two refurbishment projects. Whilst with us, we supported him to write job applications and with references and we are delighted that he has now secured work.



“

I've learnt new skills whilst being at Latch, got myself back into a work routine, and contributed to a good cause – all win, win. ”

Andrew

Latch Volunteer

Ellie's story

Ellie is in her mid 30s and a single mum with two young children. The relationship with her former partner broke down and the family returned from abroad to live with her mum.

She was struggling with the cost of attending building college with two children and a lack of apprenticeship opportunities. She really wanted to find a meaningful long-term trade that she could fit around child care, rather than feeling forced to take just any job. Ellie has been an exceptional trainee who really quickly learnt all the skills we showed her. She was always very positive and was a huge help washing down the fire damaged walls at one of our properties.

“ I volunteered at Latch to gain the confidence to start a new career and feel equal in a male dominated industry. ”

**Ellie
Latch Volunteer**



Haseeb's story

Haseeb is in his 20s and completely deaf. He has been at building college since he left school and gained qualifications in plastering, bricklaying and plumbing but has struggled to secure an apprenticeship.

Deaf Start helped us with his interview and health and safety and power tool inductions. He pays attention incredibly well and we have found a way to communicate effectively through combining his lip reading with giving him written instructions. He's really talented and applies the knowledge he learns at college very well on site. He's also eager to learn about things he has never tried, such as fitting a kitchen and has even turned up for extra days over his summer holidays. He plans to stay on at college now until he's 25.



Nurturing wellbeing

Year on year, the Coach House continues to expand its services and grow its profile within the Leeds community. We're proud to have attracted new funding and to have been recognised by partners and training bodies for our progressive and forward-thinking approach to support and wellbeing.

We believe in a multi-faceted approach that sees psychotherapy and talking therapies running alongside other beneficial therapies and activities. Everything we do reflects our values of compassion, creativity, collaboration, integrity and quality whilst being informed by proven treatment strategies.

Our services are available for both tenants and the local community and new initiatives include a bereavement support group and workshop focused on anxiety and stress management techniques. A men's health group is also launching soon. This sits alongside our established groups – psychotherapy, Bike Fix Sunday, freedom4girls, yoga, meditation and breathwork.

Here are just a few of the many things we have funded for our tenants: career development, gym sessions, driving theory sessions, psychotherapy, guitar lessons, college courses, breathwork, yoga, meditation and cultural exchanges.



We've also supported tenants back into employment, to access gardening projects and even to record their own music! Many of our tenants also volunteer with us to gain skills, experience and confidence.

Claire delivers yoga, meditation and stress and anxiety management techniques at the Coach House. She says:

“ My time with Latch tenants is so rewarding. Watching people’s confidence grow and see supportive friendships form with their peers is really rewarding. Latch has provided a safe and nurturing environment which enables people to access sessions that become an essential part of their support system. ”



“ When I started attending the psychotherapy sessions my mental and emotional health were extremely volatile. I had previously paid for therapy sessions but would attend inconsistently due to my lack of funds. The opportunity to receive free sessions felt like such a privilege. I now have much more resilience and self-awareness. Knowing I can speak to a trusted professional about what I’m experiencing and receive rational feedback gives me the confidence to make healthier decisions without second guessing myself. The sessions offered by Latch truly set them apart from other housing associations. I’m incredibly grateful. ”

Alena

Coach House attendee for psychotherapy, meditation, anxiety management



Partners in business

Our work relies on the huge generosity of corporate donors, grant funders and individuals. All donations, large or small, help fund what our tenants need most.

Leeds Building Society: The Hope & Home Project This fabulous initiative has funded 25 women and their children who are ready to move on from Latch and into their own independent accommodation. The funding covers essential items that they need on move in day – white goods, furniture and even carpet and flooring, which is not included as standard in council housing.

Optima Legal continue to support our Latch Education Fund, which provides vouchers to help tenants purchase school uniforms and educational equipment. They have also donated furniture, explored ways of sharing apprenticeship levy payments, provided free legal work and are helping us network with the wider Leeds CSR community.

Hearthstone Investments helped raise funds for a kitchen at property No.42. They have worked hard to encourage their connections to help us, with many of their suppliers donating items and funds.

Dowsing & Reynolds generously donated door handles, taps and lamps to furnish homes.

Lightwater Valley donated ice creams for our annual summer day trip.

The Junction named us as their charity partner for 2024. Their generosity funded a trip to the Christmas Panto 'Snow White' for the children of our tenants.

Solidartech donated laptops and tablets for refugees living with Latch

Drighlington Brass Band provided a wonderful free performance at a popular concert fundraiser for Latch.

Leeds Office Angels donated chocolate for children of our tenants at Christmas and Easter.

Taylor Wimpey Donated £500.

Knight Frank raised £1,300 from their sponsored walk.

Grants help us grow

Leeds Community Foundation – Coach House Expansion

Vital services at the Coach House have been greatly enhanced thanks to a generous £15,000 donation. We've increased the frequency and duration of meditation, breathwork and yoga sessions and also paid facilitators to deliver group sessions. We've bought additional seating and other practical things to help make the Coach House space function better and deliver a better experience for participants.

Land Aid Charitable Trust

Volunteers at the Land Aid Charitable Trust continue to support us with their incredible fundraising feats. One involved 100 people spending the night on top of a multi storey car park on a very chilly February night! We're immensely grateful for all their valiant efforts which have raised £54,000 towards two property refurbishments. A further £27,000 donation helped refurbish a third property which is now a home and they've helped us obtain pro bono support from property service professionals.

Leeds City Council

Leeds City Council very generously awarded Latch £865,000 in grant funding which really helps us by providing financial stability over a longer timeframe. This funding means we can purchase 12 additional properties over 3 years. We've already purchased and started refurbishing the first 5.



Foodbank builds resilience

The cost of living crisis continues to bite hard and many people in our local community face a stark choice between food and heating. This is incredibly stressful and can have detrimental impacts on both physical and emotional health.

Our foodbank remains vital and in 2024 we've distributed 359 food packs and helped 209 individuals – an average of 21 people each month. We've recently added frozen foods to our packs, which has enhanced their variety and nutritional value and received really positive feedback. Our friendly team engage with foodbank visitors, asking for their suggestions to ensure we deliver what's most needed.

One new foodbank user is a tenant - a 24 year old single mother in receipt of benefits who has struggled to cover rising utility and childcare costs on her limited income. Sudden unexpected costs like car repairs can rapidly make difficult financial situations become critical, threatening her ability to provide good quality nutritious food for her two children. Although, like many others, she was initially hesitant to visit the foodbank, she sought help after a particularly tough week and a recommendation from another Latch tenant.



Her first experience was positive and she received a warm welcome, along with a variety of nutritious food. We also took the time to talk to her about other support services that could help, including financial counselling and childcare resources. Together we ensured that her children ate healthy meals and she could use her limited funds to cover the other critical expenses. Through helping to build resilience in challenging times, we also play a role in promoting stronger mental health, being there as a support network and helping to alleviate a very stressful situation.

“

The foodbank has been a massive help. Not having enough money for food really impacts on my anxiety. The foodbank has meant I haven't had to worry so much. ”

Tony B

“

It's been a lifesaver. Really impressed with the stock. The end of the month can be a real struggle and the foodbank helps me get through it. ”

Chris R



Volunteering opportunities at the foodbank are also helping to boost wellbeing. Esma has been a Latch tenant for many years but is neuro divergent and has a very traumatic history, meaning she has struggled to engage with our support services. A conversation with our personal coach, Mark, during a visit to the foodbank led to her deciding to volunteer.

She's been a foodbank volunteer twice a week for two months now and hasn't missed a shift. The positive impact on her confidence is fantastic to see and she's even generated new ideas for the service. Volunteering has also encouraged her to engage with us around her mental health and support for some debt issues. We've been able to reconnect with Esma, building trust and finding her some really meaningful activity.

“

I think I'm really good at this and I have good ideas. I like doing it. ”

Esma
Food Bank Volunteer

Investment impact

Ethical investments made through our two Community Share Issues have enabled us to invest in changing more lives. Your investments will help us to provide an incredible final total of 12 new homes. We've completed the six funded by the first 2021 share issue and nine people have already made them their homes.

We're also making fantastic progress on the six homes funded through your 2023 investments. We've purchased five homes so far and we are looking forward to purchasing the sixth in the coming months. Three have already been refurbished and are now home to four people and we are busy working on the other two, ready for let in January 2025.

Nine trainees have worked alongside us to help complete the renovations, gaining vital skills and experience. Read more about them in the 'Opening Doors to Employment' section.



13

Outcomes

Our headlines for 2024

- 261 adults and children housed
- 55 adults and their children newly housed
- 2 x two bedroom homes created plus 3 x one bedroom flats
- 47 tenants successfully moved on to independent living
- 9 trainees gained construction skills to help them into work
- 25 tenants engaged with the Latch Coach and Coach House services
- 70% of our tenants were female
- 55% were from minority ethnic backgrounds
- 23% were aged under 25



Thanks to you

A big thank you to everyone for your support this year and always. This includes all our hardworking staff, volunteers and trainees, individual donors, contractors, suppliers, funders, partners and investors. Together, we build futures.

People and Partners

Adam Brannen - Leeds City Council

Audrey and Babs - Women's Group

Bike Fix Sunday volunteers - Robin Lovelace and his team

Cedric Bucher and Andrew Tarbit - Hearthstone

Christine Mclean - CMC Consulting

Clifton Trade Bathrooms

Co-operative & Community Finance

Co-operatives UK

Danny Key - Support Solutions

Dave Boyle - The Community Shares Company

David Nugent - Canopy

Diane Bubb - Engage

Dowsing Reynolds

Dzmitry Karpuk: Systemic & Family Psychotherapist

Ellis Taylor - SSTL

Emma Farley - Freelance marketing and PR

Ethex Investment Partners

Freedom4girls

Geraldine Conner Foundation

HATCH

Jill Burns - Housing Adviser, Temp Accommodation Team, LCC

Johnathan Kendall - Vitamin K Design

Jonathan Gould

Jonathan Lloyd - The Junction, Leeds

Karen Neal - Leeds Building Society

Katherine - Unity Housing

Katherine Proctor - Unity Housing

Land Aid Charitable Trust

Leeds City Council

Leeds Community Foundation

Leeds Interpreting Service - Interpreters

Local Care Direct

Lucia Morales and Richard Fyfe - Optima Legal

Mandy Bassi - Offender Manager, WY Probation

Manku Bros Ltd

Mark Ireland - Leeds City Council

Martyn Broadest - Connect Housing

Matthew Nice - St George's Crypt

Natalie Moran - Simon on the Streets

Oakwood kitchens

Olivia Normah - Touchstone

Over 2 Hills

Paula Gardner - Barca

Saiqa Ashraf - Gravity Insurance Brokers Ltd

Sarah Parry - Leeds City Council

Sophie Jenkins - Connect Housing

St Giles Food Bank

Steve Dawes

Steve Hoey - Turning Lives Around

Sue Sheard - HR Success

Surplus to Purpose

Board members

David Campbell

David Clarke

Dennis Bernard

Kat Donegan

Keith Gibson

Maggie Gjessing

Mags Shevlin

Manjeet Gahir

Nic Crocker

Samia Hussain

Stephen Boyle



creating homes
changing lives

Leeds Action to Create Homes

176 Chapeltown Rd

Leeds LS7 4HP

Email: info@latch.org.uk

Visit: www.latch.org.uk

Facebook: [LatchLeeds](https://www.facebook.com/LatchLeeds)

Twitter: [@LatchLeeds](https://twitter.com/LatchLeeds)

Community Benefit Society No. 27643R