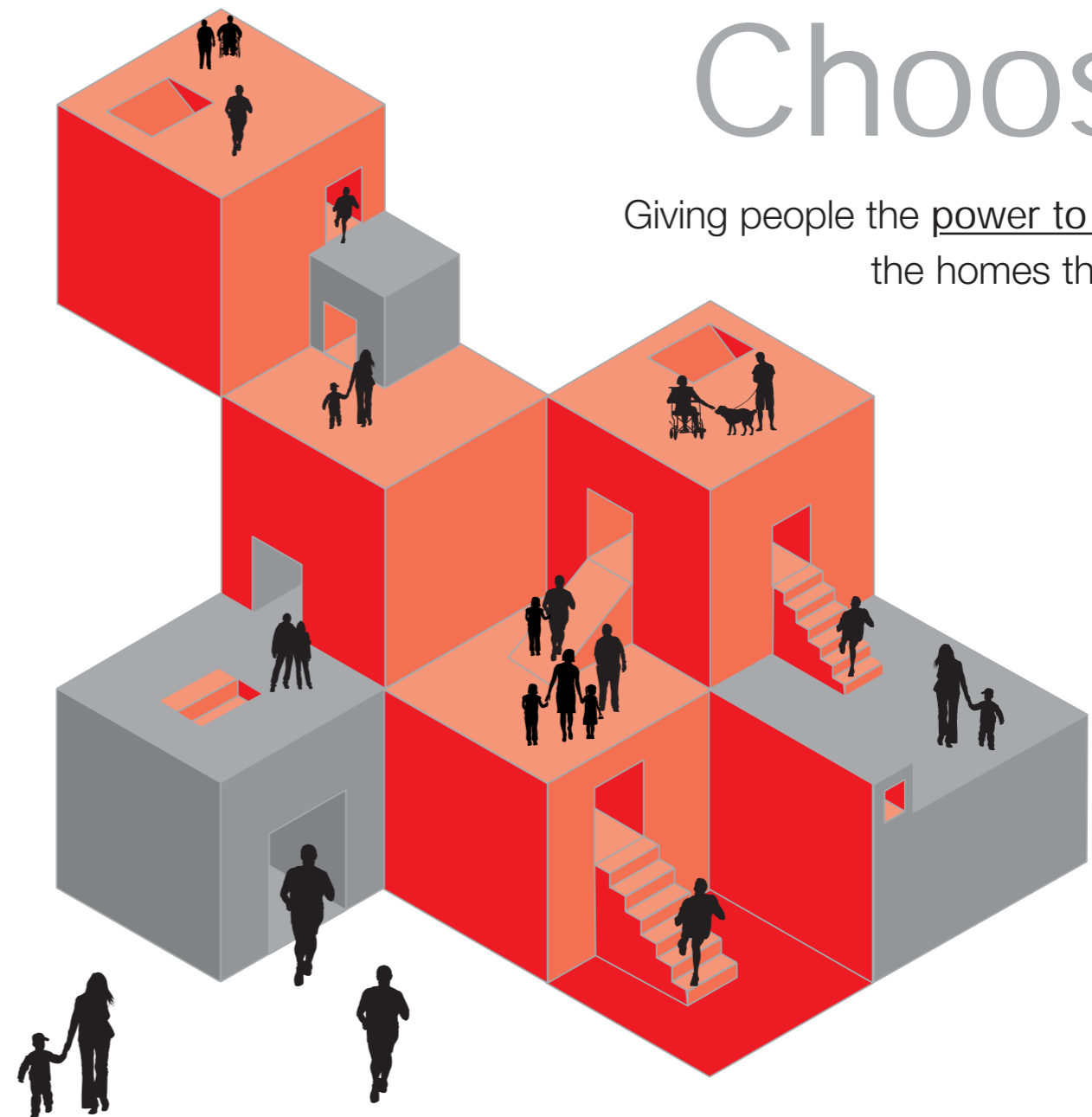


Power to Choose

Giving people the power to choose
the homes they want



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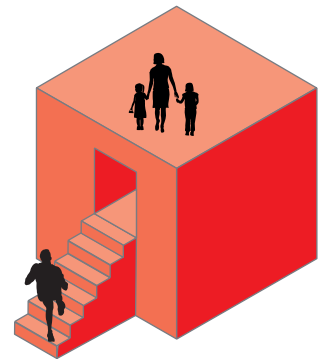


Designed by Homer Creative

Matrix
housing partnership

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Matrix Housing Partnership is a Midlands based development and regeneration partnership which aims to achieve efficiencies in procurement, management and service delivery. Our partners in Matrix are:



Matrix Partnership



Why it Came About

The Matrix Housing Partnership works across the Midlands and beyond. All partners have significant experience in supporting and empowering residents. We give people the power to choose the homes they want, the services they need and also provide opportunities for them to shape communities.

Matrix is constantly exploring different ways of working and is at the forefront of new approaches to community ownership and management of housing.

Our vision of choice is delivered by:

- 01/Listening to residents
- 02/Reaching out to all
- 03/Enabling people to get involved
- 04/Giving residents control
- 05/Building sustainable communities
- 06/Giving people tools for life
- 07/Transforming resident empowerment

Matrix has developed new ways of delivering excellence and innovation in development and regeneration and has a joint approach to resident engagement crossing organisational and geographical boundaries. The Matrix partners are Accord, Ashram, Caldmore, Rooftop and Trident Housing Associations, and our associate partners include Redditch Co-operative Homes, bchs, WATMOS Community Homes and Fry Housing Trust.



Making a point at a Matrix
Resident Engagement Day

01/Listening

By listening we can provide homes and services to help shape neighbourhoods.
Our goal is to give people real choice and outstanding customer care.



Communication is about people. There is no substitute for personal contact and we continue to use traditional 'over the counter' methods as well as telephone calls and letters. However, Matrix is constantly exploring new ways of communicating such as email, SMS and web-based services.

Our aim is to communicate in a clear, straightforward and jargon-free way. We offer different languages as well as braille, large print, audio and DVD formats. In our supported housing schemes we also use pictorial documents. Residents influence the content of our written communication to ensure they are understandable and appropriate.

Communication and Translation Services (CaTS)

CaTS is a social enterprise supported by Walsall Housing and Regeneration Agency (WHRA), and is a joint venture involving Accord and Caldmore. CaTS offers interpreting support for over 30 languages and written translation and sign language services.

Surveys help us to listen to our customers and the Matrix partners recently undertook a comprehensive tenants' survey which is leading to new collaborative work.

The Status Survey

Across Matrix 2,000 tenants were interviewed. Of this sample, 81% think we keep them well-informed and 71% are happy that we enable their participation in management and decision-making.

We are combining the survey with demographic data and other information to create a powerful engagement tool.

This joint work enables us to benchmark comparable data within the partnership and learn from each other and our residents.

We also focus on our future residents and Matrix is involved in a range of initiatives with schools in local communities:

- > In Walsall, Accord Directors participate in a Gifted and Talented Mentoring programme with Year 11 pupils. This provides support and guidance on the “world of work” and also raises the profile of housing as a career option.
- > Trident’s Care and Support team works with young people and the business community in centres of excellence to develop a possible future workforce and resident base.

We constantly explore new ways to tailor our services to people’s needs and offer additional benefits. Accord’s incentive scheme HomeClub and Caldmore’s alternative GIFT are examples of excellent services capable of extension across Matrix.

HomeClub

This Accord and Ashram scheme offers rewards, benefits and discounts simply by being a resident. Our awarding-winning At Home magazine provides information, advice and entertainment in a glossy high-quality publication that is very different from traditional tenant newsletters. 97% of our members wouldn’t change a thing about it.

HomeClub Plus

The optional HomeClub Plus scheme offers extra benefits to those who keep to their tenancy agreement and show us loyalty. Similar to schemes offered by High Street retailers, HomeClub Plus helps us to show customers our appreciation. Benefits include a Chief Executive hot-line, an enhanced repairs and maintenance service, discount cards and vouchers and PlusPoints which can be redeemed for prizes and member-only competitions.



Meeting Matrix residents
in their homes

02/Reaching out

In order to build and maintain communities we embrace and promote the richness of diversity that exists in our local areas. Traditional 'numerical' measures of engagement do not always capture this and Matrix offers many varied options for engagement at all levels within our organisations.



Although we continue to use conventional methods such as public meetings and surveys, the partnership also uses a range of innovative ways to reach people previously excluded as well as those who may not want to attend meetings or fill in forms.

Staff are encouraged to be “professional volunteers” - regularly working with community groups and organisations as part of their role. This puts us at the heart of communities, helping us to understand neighbourhood issues and build relationships of trust.

We also reach out by linking communication with social events and activities:

Ashram's Big Do

Ashram's 'Big Do' brings together residents and staff in an informal, fun setting. Residents are updated on Ashram's activities, get to give their views on performance, and influence Service Improvement Plans and policies. This forum has also determined the content of Ashram's website via an interactive display and helped recruit Board and Tenant Service Panel members. More than 25% of tenants and their families regularly attend the Big Do.

Trident Residents' Carnival

Trident celebrated its relationship with its residents who jointly organised the event, seeking involvement through an interactive day of fun, food and feedback. Residents were invited to consider how governance structures might change to make the decision-making process more accessible to a wider audience.

Caldmore's Carnival

This hugely colourful and popular annual event is jointly organised by Caldmore and the community. Prior to the Carnival, resident and stakeholder workshops are held to jointly develop new services and explore local issues. The Carnival itself helps to build community bridges and engender a sense of “belonging”.

Rooftop's Community Voice

Rooftop's 'Community Voice' scheme encourages residents to act as local champions. Housing officers regularly consult with designated 'Voices' to discuss key issues and service improvements. This enables Rooftop to respond directly to problems and opportunities, and to support community and resident-led initiatives. Rooftop also holds one-stop advice meetings where, in a relaxed environment, older people can get support and guidance from a variety of agencies.

Celebrating Chinese Culture

Trident works closely with the Chinese community in Birmingham on housing and related projects. Cherish House - located in the Chinese Quarter - caters for Chinese elders, providing culturally-appropriate housing and furnishings. Language support helps to celebrate and preserve Chinese traditions, customs and heritage. Trident also offers English and computer courses for residents.

Trident also encourages and sponsors community events where traditional Chinese skills can be explored by new generations who can learn to appreciate and preserve cultural heritage.

Supported Housing

Matrix specialises in involving diverse communities. At all supported-housing schemes service-user involvement shapes both individual-specific service provision as well as the overall day-to-day running of schemes.

In Accord's Older Adults Team, a Dementia Care Manager and Lifestyle Co-ordinator help individuals live life to the full. This ranges from "around the world" tasting events for residents to experience new menus, to inter-generational activities with local groups to maintain and strengthen community links.

At Rooftop, resident "Ambassadors" fly the flag, introducing and welcoming all new tenants and acting as a sounding-board for service delivery. Residents, regardless of their age or needs, are encouraged to set themselves real "wish list" challenges, such as taking hot air balloon flights or driving a tank, many of which are realised.

In Caldmore's supported housing schemes residents participate in annual appraisal events linked to Service Improvement Plans. This ensures that services are continually developed and enhanced.

Young people

Matrix is committed to young people. Ashram's partnership with Bordesley Green Girls' School offers work experience, placements and industry days for pupils and teachers. The project promotes housing as a career and offers pupils chances to get involved in managing neighbourhoods and developing future housing solutions. Ashram's conference for 13-19 year olds resulted in the creation of a youth panel which influences issues important to them.

Caldmore runs activity programmes for primary schools on homelessness, teenage pregnancy and domestic violence. This has been adopted by Walsall Domestic Violence Forum as a key prevention tool. Caldmore also provides a fully-equipped classroom in their foyer for secondary school teachers to work with excluded pupils.



Youngsters enjoy the Caldmore Carnival

03/Enabling involvement

For people who want more than just information



Those who want to play an active role and make a difference find Matrix's ground-breaking work is for them. We start by working with residents to identify issues and then involve them in devising solutions that work best for them and their neighbourhood.

'Speed Dating' - Accord-style

Accord's "speed dating" forum engaged residents' views on services. Individuals met with Accord representatives to challenge, question and shape how things are done. This alternative format generated an excellent debate and positive feedback.

Residents from across Matrix also have opportunities to join working groups, management committees and boards. At bchs resident members are in the majority, and on Accord's Housing Services Committee residents make up 50% of the members.

The Rewards Exchange

Trident's Care and Support team has developed a governance system where people can choose how and when they wish to get involved. A database tracks how often people are engaged and links to a system of rewards which can be "cashed in" for physical property improvements or exchanged for training and skills development.

Residents themselves are also at the forefront of celebrating their significant involvement by producing their own PowerPoint presentation which has been widely screened.

Rooftop's Main Customer Panel

The panel meets at least four times a year to review policies and monitor performance. A wide and representative membership has been achieved through the creation of sub-groups involving younger people and those with disabilities.

The panel produces annual action plans and scrutinises key performance indicators. Members are involved in inspecting void properties, attending meetings with contractors, and making improvements to working practices.

Panel members have visited Beacon Authorities to gain insights into excellence and good practice and some have been recruited as Rooftop Board members.

Offserve

Offserve is Caldmore's 'customer watchdog' - empowering tenants and ensuring they have a strong and effective voice. It negotiates its own budget and has a fully equipped office. Members have direct access to staff and have shared facilities at the Caldmore Green office.

WELCOME TO JERVIS COURT FOYER



Caldmore staff get ready to listen

04/Empowering residents

Giving residents and communities opportunities to directly control housing and services is a key strand of the Government's agenda.



Within Matrix are a number of organisations that lead the way on community-controlled housing.

bchs, an agency that promotes co-operative housing and community-led regeneration, joined Accord in 1992. Since then bchs and Accord have supported many innovative projects.

Paddock Co-op

Paddock Co-op in Walsall was formed with help from bchs more than 20 years ago to provide re-housing for families from tower blocks. In 1988 the first families moved into new homes they had designed and developed themselves. Paddock now runs four small schemes, all within walking distance of each other, creating a close-knit 'village in the town'. Accord is Paddock's development agent.

Burrowes Street TMC and WATMOS Community Homes

Burrowes Street TMC in Walsall is recognised nationally as an outstanding example of tenant management. bchs has worked with tenants since the 1990's to help establish the co-op which took on, from Walsall MBC, the management of six blocks of flats and a scheme for older people. It now works with both Caldmore and Accord, managing two additional projects. No other TMC has taken on three separate management agreements.

In 2000 Burrowes Street TMC joined with seven other tenant management organisations to form WATMOS Community Homes (WCH). This was the first tenant-led stock transfer organisation. WCH has now joined Matrix and is undertaking a new housing development in Walsall to be managed by Burrowes Street TMC.

Redditch Co-operative Homes (RCH)

The most comprehensive project sponsored by Accord/bchs is Redditch Co-operative Homes (RCH), a partnership between Redditch Borough Council, Accord and local communities. RCH has developed 200 homes on behalf of five neighbourhood co-ops, each of which participated directly in the design, management and planning of their homes, creating a series of dynamic communities that have a real impact on the life choices of residents. RCH recently attracted national attention with its innovative low carbon timber-framed housing. Co-op members designed the scheme and supervised the manufacturing of their new homes.

New Bushbury Triangle TMO

In Bushbury Triangle, Wolverhampton, Accord and bchs have been working with residents for many years, helping them to establish a Community Resource Centre and other initiatives. Accord has also now built a significant number of new rented and shared ownership homes as part of the area-wide regeneration. In April 2007 Accord entered into a management agreement with New Bushbury Triangle TMO to enable it to manage these properties.



Local schoolchildren on a site visit to a Rooftop development

05/Building communities

Living in a safe and friendly community is a high priority, according to research.



Matrix's vision is one of communities where everyone has a decent home, a decent neighbour and a decent environment.

Matrix partners champion 'In Business for Neighbourhoods' and believe we have a duty to help regenerate areas and build and maintain communities.

Caldmore in the Community

Caldmore is a community-based association established in 1972 and formed via a local residents' action group. Caldmore deliberately limits its operations to within five miles of its office so that it can maintain and develop community links. The association helps to build capacity with residents and others through its involvement in local groups, activities and its vibrant volunteer programme. Through its work tenants can influence services and gain new skills and confidence to help them participate fully in the community and improve employment prospects.

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour and Building Respect

Matrix partners have been working to develop a joint anti-social behaviour policy that meets the needs of communities and of the Respect Agenda. The Community Impact model has helped organisations to address residents' concerns and to help create safe and friendly places to live and work. Following a Community Impact day hosted by Accord and Ashram, residents were involved in drafting an Anti-Social Behaviour Service Standard.

Trident's Community Impact programme

Trident developed "Community Impact" to help residents explore issues around anti-social behaviour and neighbour nuisance. The project uses drama to deliver powerful messages that motivate, challenge and provide a basis for looking at local strategies and interventions to reduce crime, increase feelings of safety and build community confidence. Community Impact connects directly with residents and brings to life the Government's Respect Agenda.

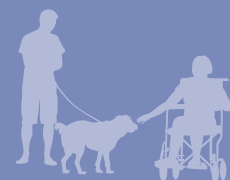
Since the inception of Community Impact, the model has developed and now works more closely with other key agencies. Much of Community Impact's recent work has been with schools. This work has involved linking the model into the school's Citizenship program, the purpose of which is to engage with children, raising their awareness and understanding of anti-social behaviour and the impact that this has on their lives.



Parents and children at Rooftop's Resident Involvement Day

06/Tools for life

Access to information and training is often needed to enable people to utilise skills and experiences and to fully engage with, and play an active role in, neighbourhoods.



Training is an important strand of our programme and Matrix has a number of resources and services available.

Accredited Training for Residents

Accredited training gives people the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to enhance their life chances. bchs is an Open College Network provider with a wide range of courses on offer. Accredited training has had a significant impact on residents and has helped many to gain employment, move into further education or become Board and Committee members.

Midlands Warden and Neighbourhood Resource Centre

Launched in 2005, the centre provides training for wardens, neighbourhood management and resident empowerment across the West and the East Midlands. Communication is key to resident empowerment and wardens are uniquely placed to understand local issues and deal with them. The Resource Centre disseminates good practice and helps wardens and others learn from areas where communities have become stronger.

Caldmore's Volunteering Scheme

Funded initially via Single Regeneration Budget money, Caldmore's Volunteer Support Scheme has helped more than 500 people in the last eight years and currently has 70 active volunteers.

The scheme supports and encourages residents into training and employment and many volunteers have successfully achieved full-time work.

Building on this success, Caldmore helped to establish a charity shop and a drop in centre and coffee-shop, developed and managed by residents. These two facilities provide an invaluable informal network with residents and have helped Caldmore to further develop services for the community, such as an outreach and support service to women escaping violence.



Young people at Ashram's 'Big Do'

07/Transforming lives

Resident and community empowerment is at the core of all of our work and we are looking to extend and develop our work across the partnership in a range of ways.



Resident Networking

Resident networking workshops have enabled people to discuss how Matrix should work for, and with, residents. Work-groups have provided the opportunity to share experiences and compare different methods of engagement. Residents have decided to set up a joint residents' forum to explore opportunities for sharing information, including a discussion board, an email network, a Community Chest and an accredited training programme.

Community Design

Involving residents and users in the design and development of their homes and communities is crucial to us. More than 30 tenants attended an Accord seminar to give their opinions on the design of new housing and discuss what they liked and disliked about their homes. Workshops focussed on sustainability, eco homes, and meeting diverse needs. A resident explained how, working with RCH and Accord, they had helped to design every aspect of their new homes. As a result, 12 tenants now sit on Accord's Design Panel. This acts as a forum for shared learning across Matrix. Panel members look at effectively involving users in design and undertake study visits including attendance at a CABE Summer School.

Ashram has set up a series of community design workshops in partnership with the Birmingham Institute of Art Design specifically targeted at South Asian Women. Ashram has also launched a centre for Community Design in Partnership with Birmingham City University.

Matrix Resident Inspectors

Residents are best placed to assess their landlord's services and the Matrix partners are committed to genuinely involving them in evaluation and inspection processes. In addition to Accord, Ashram, Rooftop and Trident already using mystery shoppers, the Matrix landlords have now developed and jointly trained a small team of resident inspectors who are able to 'reality check' front line services and facilities on a regular basis both within their own organisation, but also across the partnership. This allows residents to benchmark the services of all of the partners and ensure that good practice is disseminated and standards, products and services are continuously improved.

