OCTAVIA Abri



Community Investment Plan 2026-2027

Bridgwater

Building a healthier, safer and more connected neighbourhood together

Introduction

Bridgwater is one of our identified community investment zones within Somerset.

This plan sets out our long-term commitment to working alongside residents, partners and community organisations to support a healthier, safer and more connected neighbourhood.

We believe homes and communities are places to belong, grow and thrive. Through the Octavia Foundation, we are committed to a place-based approach to community investment that builds on the strengths, relationships and potential that already exist within local communities.

This plan has been shaped through a combination of local data, housing insight, community research and ongoing conversations with residents and partners. It reflects both the opportunities and challenges within Bridgwater, while recognising the important role residents play in shaping the future of their neighbourhood.

This is a living plan that will continue to evolve alongside residents as local priorities, feedback and opportunities develop over time.

Our aim is not simply to deliver projects, but to support long-term community resilience, stronger local connections and improved life chances for residents.

ABOUT BRIDGWATER

Bridgwater is a vibrant and welcoming town, best known as the home of the world-famous carnival and celebrated for its rich culture, diversity, and strong community spirit. Abri has around 500 homes located across the town occupied by a broad mix of residents, including a large number of working-age households and around 500 children and young people aged under 15.

The town has a strong history of pride and belonging, with many opportunities for people to get involved and play an active role in their communities. A range of valued local spaces and organisations, including places such as Mingle Café, provide welcoming environments where people can access support, take part in activities, and build connections with others.

The area benefits from strong community networks and a wealth of local activities that bring people together from all different backgrounds.

Despite these strengths, some residents continue to face challenges linked to income deprivation, barriers to education and skills development, and limited opportunities for young people. These issues affect financial stability, future employment prospects, and overall wellbeing. Targeted investment from Abri and local organisations can help address these challenges by increasing access to support, skills development, and opportunities for local people.

Our research also highlights wider socioeconomic challenges within the area, with the Sydenham ward ranking highly within the national Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Alongside this data, housing management insight, tenant satisfaction measures and community engagement activity have helped us build a fuller understanding of local priorities and experiences.

Importantly, this plan takes an asset-based approach. While we recognise the challenges facing the community, we also recognise the strengths already present within Bridgwater, including resident knowledge, community relationships, local organisations and shared spaces that can support positive long-term change.

WHAT YOU TOLD US

Listening to residents has been central to shaping this plan.

Through surveys, conversations, community events and regular engagement in Bridgwater, residents shared what matters most to them and where they would like to see investment and support focused over the coming years.

You told us that the biggest priorities for the area are:

- To work together to create safe, resilient and inclusive communities.
- Creating access to skills development, training and sustainable employment
- Strengthening financial resilience and supporting households to manage the cost of living
- More activities and support for children, young people and families.
- Empowering residents to influence decisions and shape their communities.
- Promoting health, wellbeing and social connection.



Our approach

Our approach to community investment at Bridgwater is long-term, place-based and community rooted.

This means:

- Working alongside residents to shape priorities and activity improving access to health and wellbeing support
- Building on existing strengths and community assets improving community safety
- Focusing on prevention and early support
- Developing strong local partnerships
- Creating opportunities for residents to lead and participate
- Investing in sustainable change rather than short-term interventions

We want to feel like a large organisation with a genuinely local presence — visible, accessible and connected to the communities we serve.

This plan will continue to evolve over time as local needs and priorities change. We are committed to ongoing engagement with residents to ensure our investment remains shaped by the people who live here.

OUR VISION FOR BRIDGWATER

Our vision is to create a safe and supportive community where residents are informed, supported to meet their needs, and empowered with opportunities to develop—nurturing a strong sense of belonging, identity, and pride in where they live.

Our priorities for Bridgwater

Priority 1.
Increased access to skills, training and employment

OUR SHARED AMBITION

Success would mean:

- More people accessing training and upskilling opportunities
- Stronger partnerships between employers, training providers and community organisations
- More young people in employment or accessing volunteering opportunities

WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON

Together, we will work to:

- Collaborate with partners to support and sustain existing projects that improve residents skills and future opportunities
- Create more opportunities for upskilling and career focused support and volunteering
- Improve awareness of local services and support

WHY THIS MATTERS

Deprivation data shows 89% of Abri properties in Bridgwater fall within the top 30% most deprived areas for education deprivation. We know youth unemployment is rising nationally, making it increasingly difficult for young people to secure meaningful employment. This is placing greater financial strain on individuals and families, while also having a significant impact on confidence, mental wellbeing, and future aspirations. Without access to the right support and opportunities, many young people risk becoming disconnected from education, training, and employment.

By providing opportunities to develop new skills, gain practical experience, and build confidence, we can improve employment prospects and help individuals overcome barriers to work. Investing in training and personal development not only increases access to sustainable, long-term careers but also strengthens the local workforce, supports economic growth, and enables young people to reach their full potential

Priority 2.
Creating more activities, opportunities and support for children, young people, and families.

OUR SHARED AMBITION

Success would mean:

- More young people participating in positive local activities to divert from anti-social behaviour activities
- Families feeling better connected to support and opportunities
- Improved relationships between young people and the wider community
- More young people feeling confident, included and listened to

WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON

Together, we will work to:

- Increase activities and opportunities for young people
- Support children and families to access local services
- Work in partnership with established young people focused organisations and community groups to build sustainability within their activities and support
- Involve young people in shaping local activities and projects

WHY THIS MATTERS

Over 50% of you told us in the consultations early in the year you would like more opportunities for children and young people within Bridgwater. This is a consistent message we are hearing within our communities and we know we have over 500 young people within our Bridgwater properties.

Alongside this, local insight shows concerns around youth-related antisocial behaviour and the impact this can have on feelings of safety and belonging within the neighbourhood.

Enhancing youth provision ensures young people have access to positive activities, support networks, and opportunities that help them develop skills, confidence, and a sense of belonging.



Priority 3.
Raise the resident voice and influence within their community

OUR SHARED AMBITION

Success would mean:

- More residents feeling happy where they live
- Improved relationships between Abri and our communities
- Stronger relationships between residents and local partners to increase engagement in community activities and support programmes
- Increased pride in the neighbourhood

WHY THIS MATTERS

70% of you told us that we have made positive progress over the past year in improving customer satisfaction. While this is encouraging, we recognise that there is still more work to do to ensure we consistently meet and exceed customer expectations. By strengthening these feedback channels and responding to what customers tell us, we can build on the progress already made and continue improving the overall customer experience.

WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON

Together, we will work to:

- Strengthen relationships between residents and Abri
- Support community activities that build trust and neighbourhood pride
- Improve customer and resident confidence in reporting and providing feedback to Abri, to help build a thriving community

Priority 4.
Supporting our customers and communities with the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

OUR SHARED AMBITION

Success would mean:

- More accessible support delivered across Bridgwater
- A stronger and more financially resilient community
- Local confidence in money management, budgeting and tenancy sustainment

WHY THIS MATTERS

Over a quarter of all our customers within Bridgwater have arrears on their rent account. Supporting our residents and communities through the cost-of-living crisis helps direct support to those who need it most, reducing financial pressures and improving overall wellbeing. In our 2026 survey, 67% of residents felt that we have made progress in providing this support. While this is encouraging, we recognise that there is still more to do to strengthen our response and ensure residents can access any financial support they may need.

WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON

Together, we will work to:

- Continue to fund and deliver projects aimed at helping reduce food insecurity
- Collaborate with local partners to provide a targeted approach led by customer voice
- Improve support for isolated residents and households
- Encourage volunteering and resident participation



Priority 5.
Helping people stay active, connected and improve their wellbeing.

OUR SHARED AMBITION

Success would mean:

- More residents actively involved in physical exercise
- Stronger resident support for those seeking support for mental health support through community engagement
- Improved wellbeing and reduced isolation
- Residents feeling more informed and connected to support available in the area

WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON

Together, we will work to:

- Bring more health and wellbeing support to the community
- Create more opportunities for affordable and accessible physical activities
- Improve awareness of local services and support
- Reduce isolation through community-based wellbeing activities

WHY THIS MATTERS

You told us there is a lack of, and need for more accessible health and wellbeing support. During our community consultation earlier this year, over 70% of respondents identified this as a priority, particularly support that helps reduce isolation and loneliness. These challenges can be especially significant in parts of Bridgwater where deprivation, rurality, and lower levels of investment can make it harder for people to access services and stay connected. Our aim is to work with local partners to develop sustainable, long-term solutions that improve physical and mental wellbeing, helping residents to feel healthier, more connected, and better supported within their community.

Priority 6.
Working together to create safer, stronger and more welcoming communities.

OUR SHARED AMBITION

Success would mean:

- More residents feeling safe where they live
- Improved confidence in reporting concerns
- Stronger relationships between residents and local partners
- More crime prevention and intervention initiatives across Bridgwater

WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON

Together, we will work to:

- Strengthen relationships between residents and community safety partners
- Improve communication around local safety issues
- Support community events that build trust and neighbourhood pride
- Encourage greater confidence in reporting concerns

WHY THIS MATTERS

Over 70% of you told us you would like to see more support and improvements with making the streets within Bridgwater safer and more accessible, without the fear of anti-social behaviour taking place within public spaces. Over the past 12 months over 450 reports of anti-social behaviour has been investigated by the police and this is a ongoing concern we're hearing. We want our customers and the wider community to feel safe where they live and have the confidence to report crime and antisocial behaviour. We know that this requires a joint approach with agencies including the police and other local organisations.

WORKING TOGETHER

This plan represents the beginning of a long-term commitment to Bridgwater and the people who live here.

We know that lasting change happens when residents, community organisations, public services and local partners work together around shared priorities and ambitions.

By continuing to listen, invest and build on the strengths already within the community, we believe Bridgwater can continue to grow as a healthier, safer and more connected place where people feel proud to live.

We will continue to review progress with residents and adapt our approach as local priorities and needs evolve over time.

HOW WE WILL STAY ACCOUNTABLE

We are committed to keeping residents updated on the progress of this plan and listening to feedback as the work develops. We will regularly review whether the actions in this plan are making a meaningful difference for the community and use resident feedback and local insight to shape future priorities and activity.

We will continue working with residents to shape how this plan develops and how progress is shared with the community over time.

A shorter resident-friendly summary version of this plan will also be developed alongside residents following the launch of the full Community Investment Plan.

If you would like to find out more, get involved in local activities or help shape future community investment at Bridgwater, please contact Ziana Azariah on ziana.azariah@abri.co.uk or 07443388162.

For regular updates on the progress of each priority in Bridgwater, check out our website.