



Message from the Chief Executive

Mentoring Conference 2014 - Sponsorship opportunities

Following on from the success of our Mentoring Conference last July which attracted 140 delegates - including Mentees and Mentors from the programme, their HR/L&D colleagues, chief executives and senior management attending to give their support and with a keynote speech by David Orr from the NHF - we are keen



to explore the possibility of attracting sponsors for our 2014 conference. There are a range of promotional opportunities for sponsoring organisations and if this is something that you would like to discuss further, please ring me on 07985 486633 for an initial conversation or email me at Clifton@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk

Membership Structure and Services Review

Since last Autumn we have been working with the HDN Board reviewing both our membership structure and the services we provide. Further details will be provided when we send out renewal information to our members in March but, amongst other changes, we will be sending out to each member organisation an individualised Statement of Services Used – this will mean that members will be able to see at a glance which HDN services their organisation has accessed. We hope that this will help all members get the most from their HDN membership and raise awareness of some of the new services we have introduced over the last few years. We hope you find this useful and will ensure that your membership is even better value. We are always keen to receive feedback on the work we do so if you have any views on our services please do get in touch.

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[Yorkshire and East Midlands Diversity Discussion Forum](#)

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[South & South West Equality & Diversity Forum](#)

[Midlands Equalities Forum](#)

Diversity Network Accreditation (DNA) - Latest winners!



Congratulations to Broadacres Housing Association and Wythenshawe Community Housing Group on recent DNA Award success. We are also working with Coast & Country Housing who are currently going through the DNA Moderation Process and are very close to successfully completing the award.

We are gathering a lot of good practice data from those organisations who have successfully completed DNA and we will be showcasing this in two regional DNA Events. Details of these events will be sent out presently.

Board Members Mentoring...where next?

Seldom in recent years has the issue of governance within the housing sector been under such scrutiny or presented such challenges and opportunities for Boards. My article in Inside Housing last month (please see link below), drew attention to some of the pressures that Board members and Board Chairs are under and highlighted the importance of our pilot Board Members Mentoring Programme-funded jointly by Thrive Homes and Vale of Aylesbury Housing.

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/home/blogs/get-on-board/7001356.article>

We were delighted that David Orr, Chief Executive of the NHF, was able to speak and present certificates at the final Board workshop hosted by Thrive Homes on 10th January. Clearly David was impressed by what he saw and heard from the mentors and mentees (please email us at info@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk for the official press release). We are working closely with David and his colleagues at the NHF to take all the learning from this pilot and extend it so that we can develop and roll out a programme that is not just suited to support current Board Members but will also reach out and help attract



potential board members to the sector. Such a programme will also sit well with HDN's vision and values which of course are based around celebrating and increasing the diversity within the housing and associated sectors- which also would embrace increasing the level of diversity amongst board members. Interestingly, as well as the business drivers for diversity, our pilot programme covered a range of other topics of critical importance to board members including the role of risk management in governance, understanding the challenges of finance and VFM and values based leadership in a changing sector.

How can you help?

Our aim will be to work closely with the NHF and others in shaping and developing a mentoring programme for board members which we would roll out to different regions. However as with the pilot programme, we will need to work with sponsoring organisations who would help us with the costs of developing the programme and play a critical role in shaping its contents by being part of a Regional Steering Committee. If this is something you are interested in talking to us about, please email me or phone for an initial chat (see above for my contact details). We are also happy to talk to organisations who may be interested in taking this forward in their own regions.

Find out more

HDN and participants from the pilot programme will be at the NHF Board members conference in London on 7th/8th February, where we will also be running a workshop with Thrive Homes on the pilot on Saturday 8th Feb.

Stonewall Workplace Equality Index

Congratulations to all those housing organisations that appeared in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index for 2014. There was a very strong showing from the housing sector with the number one place going to Gentoo, the first time a housing organisation has got the top spot. It was great to see HDN Members Gentoo, Tower Hamlets Homes and Genesis doing so well in the rankings and well done also to Metropolitan, Your Homes Newcastle, Riverside, South Tyneside Homes, Nottingham City Homes and Plus Dane Group for getting in the top 100.

The Business Case for Diversity in Governance

HDN, in partnership with Aksa Homes, are holding an event from 10.00 to 13.00 on 4th March in Manchester exploring the business case for a diverse Board. The event will share the learning and experience from Aksa and draw on research from outside of the sector. Topics to be covered include:



- What can go wrong?
- Key messages from recent research
- Approaches to increasing diversity on Boards
- Examples of Board Mentoring and Board Champion Project

Places are only £20+VAT each for HDN members but are limited to two per organisation and on a first come first served basis. Places for non-members are £60+VAT each.

Best wishes

Clifton Robinson, Chief Executive HDN

For further information on any of the above, please email me at Clifton@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk

To follow the view of the HDN Chair, please visit the Chair's Blog on www.housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk

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E&D NEWS

[More than 4,500 empty stockings hung outside Scottish parliament](#)

[Bedroom tax could be a 'perverse disincentive to work,' MPs warned](#)

[London homeless households soar by 13%](#)

[Scottish households in fuel poverty drop by 74,000](#)

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Equality & Diversity News.

The government's controversial bedroom tax could discourage people from working, a group of MPs were warned.
The Guardian, 4th December 2013

More than 4,500 empty stockings hung outside Scottish parliament

Inside Housing, 2nd December 2013

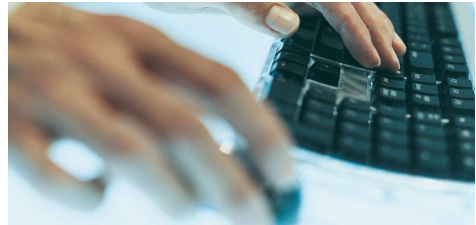
A homelessness charity hung 4,574 empty Christmas stockings outside the Scottish Parliament at the beginning of December. Shelter Scotland said the stockings symbolise the lost Christmas for homeless children in the country over the festive period. Graeme Brown, director of Shelter Scotland, says: 'One child homeless at Christmas is one too many, so 4,574 spending this Christmas living in temporary accommodation, some in hostels, is a scandal.' The charity is calling on the Scottish Government to adopt guidelines on minimum standards of temporary accommodation and give families the legal right to challenge the appalling conditions that can be forced upon them.

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/regulation/more-than-4500-empty-sockings-hung-outside-scottish-parliament/6529764.article>

Bedroom tax could be a 'perverse disincentive to work,' MPs warned

The Guardian, 4th December 2013

The government's controversial bedroom tax could discourage people from working, a group of MPs were warned. Speaking to a select committee of MPs, a housing association chief executive warned that people in part-time work are punished disproportionately by the policy and many could be better off unemployed. Under the policy, people considered to be underoccupying social homes face reductions to their benefits of up to 25% of their total rent. The chief executive of Riverside housing



association also revealed the reduction of income caused by welfare reforms will mean 500 new homes will now no longer be built by her organisation.

<http://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2013/dec/04/bedroom-tax-perverse-disincentive-work-mps-unemployed-homelessness>

London homeless households soar by 13%

Inside Housing, 5th December 2013

The number of households in London accepted as being homeless and in urgent need has increased by 13 per cent from last year, according to government figures. The statistical release from the Communities and Local Government department calculated the number of homeless households in the capital between July and September was 4,410. The same quarter last year had 3,900 households. There was a 49 per cent increase of households in London who had suffered from the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy - 1,440 compared to 960. These households made up 33 per cent of the London total. [http://](http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/care/london-homeless-households-soar-by-13/6529839.article)

www.insidehousing.co.uk/care/london-homeless-households-soar-by-13/6529839.article

Scottish households in fuel poverty drop by 74,000

Inside Housing, 5th December 2013

Improved energy efficiency of Scottish homes has contributed to a fall in fuel poverty, official statistics reveal. Figures published in early December show that between 2011 and 2012, the proportion of homes rated 'good' in terms of energy efficiency on the national energy scale increased from 65 to 69 per cent. Meanwhile, the number of households estimated to be in fuel poverty fell by 74,000 to 647,000, 27.1 per cent of all households, between 2011 and 2012. The survey said increased energy efficiency in the housing stock was responsible for two-thirds of the reduction in fuel poverty between October 2011 and 2012, while rises in household income contributed to a third. The fuel price drop by 2

per cent had little impact on the fuel poverty rate, however.

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/eco/scottish-households-in-fuel-poverty-drop-by-74000/6529893.article>

New outreach service for rough sleepers

Inside Housing, 5th December 2013

A new outreach service for rough sleepers has been announced by Sussex Homeless Outreach Reconnection and Engagement. SHORE, a partnership of local authorities in Sussex, is offering £217,000 worth of grants for projects to help prevent rough sleeping and improve services for single homeless people. Part of this fund will be used to provide an outreach service, which will be run by Broadway Homelessness and Support. John Routledge, SHORE project co-ordinator at the council, said: 'This commissioned grant will enable Sussex councils to quickly identify people living on the street and help them access the support they need. <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/care/new-outreach-service-for-rough-sleepers/7001339.article>

Draft legislation on modern slavery

Equality and Diversity Forum, 18th December 2013

On 16 December 2013, the Government announced a flagship Bill to tackle modern slavery. The draft legislation forms part of a government White Paper setting out action needed to eradicate slavery from the UK. It will be subject to pre-legislative scrutiny with the aim of publishing a Bill in the spring that could be passed and on the statute books by the end of the parliament. Among other aims, the draft Bill sets out provisions to consolidate and simplify existing slavery and trafficking offences to provide clarity and focus when investigating and prosecuting traffickers. <http://www.edf.org.uk/blog/?p=30993>

Welsh Government initiative on rights for older people

Equality and Diversity Forum, 18th December 2013

On Human Rights Day 2013, The Welsh Government announced its plans for a public consultation on proposals for a Declaration of

the Rights of Older People. The Declaration of the Rights of Older People, a first for Wales if adopted, will clearly highlight and articulate the rights of older people in Wales, as underpinned by existing legislation. <http://www.edf.org.uk/blog/?p=30954>

Delays to Lord Freud's pledge

Inside Housing, 20th December 2013

Civil servants are encountering serious complications fulfilling Lord David Freud's pledge to protect vulnerable and disabled people from the 'unintended consequences' of welfare reform. Some residents living in supported accommodation are exempt from benefit changes, including the bedroom tax and the benefit cap. But this doesn't apply to accommodation where the landlord is not the provider of care or when a landlord is a local authority. The welfare reform minister reassured housing bodies that he would protect these non-exempt tenants and landlords from 'unintended consequences' of the benefit changes but sources said that at a meeting between sector representatives and civil servants, it was confirmed that progress has been much 'slower than expected'. <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/care/delays-to-lord-freud%E2%80%99s-pledge/7001374.article>

Rising damp

Inside Housing, 20th December 2013

Landlords have warned of a sharp rise in the number of squeezed social housing tenants reporting mould and damp problems because they cannot afford to heat their homes. Rising energy bills and increasing fuel poverty are being blamed for a surge in the number of calls to landlords across the UK to deal with mould, damp and condensation compared with previous winters. Aragon Housing Association, a subsidiary of 10,000-home Grand Union Housing Group, received 76 requests from tenants for mould and damp inspections last month, a 300 per cent increase on the 19 received in November last year. <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/repairs/rising-damp/7001375.article?PageNo=2&SortOrder=dateadded&PageSize=10>

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PUBLICATIONS

[Manifesto for Change: Progress Report 2013](#)

[Rent arrears; the fasting growing UK debt problem](#)

[What price independent lives?](#)

[Real Life Reform – December report](#)

[Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2013](#)

[Vulnerable cut off from bedroom tax relief as demand for emergency help triples](#)

[Rent arrears and threat of homelessness on the rise](#)

[The Real Cost of Christmas](#)

Publications

More than half of households being tracked in a six-part welfare study were left without any money after paying their weekly bills.

December 2013, Real Life Reform

Manifesto for Change: Progress Report 2013

December 2013, Equality and Human Rights Commission

A report published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) in December 2013 reveals that some public bodies have made progress in tackling disability-related harassment but overall, more needs to be done. The Commission is pleased to see progress towards implementing the recommendations in relation to leadership and governance. Respondents contributed many positive examples of involving disabled people in performance scrutiny. The report found that strong leadership in authorities builds the confidence of staff to respond appropriately to disability-related harassment. http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/publications/manifesto_for_change_progress_report_2013_final.pdf

Rent arrears; the fasting growing UK debt problem

December 2013, the Money Advice Trust
UK renters are facing a 'rent debt crisis,' charity the Money Advice Trust has warned. Rent arrears are the fastest growing debt problem in the country, according to figures released by the charity. During 2013 alone, the charity received almost 20,000 calls from people behind with rent payments. This represents a material increase in the number of calls over the last two years; the figure has risen by 37 per cent since 2011. Joanna Elson, chief executive of the MAT, said: 'The long-term trend for rising rent prices is clear and its impact on the debt landscape is significant. Rent arrears are now the fastest

growing debt problem we help people with at National Debtline and we are in danger of falling into a rent debt crisis.

<http://www.moneyadvicetrust.org/media/news/Pages/Rent-arrears-the-fastest-growing-UK-debt-problem.aspx>

What price independent lives?

December 2013, Habinteg Housing Association

Disabled people are being hit hardest by the coalition government's welfare reforms, a report by a housing association has found. Habinteg Housing Association's *What price independent lives?* report looks at the impact of benefit changes, including the bedroom tax. It found that two-thirds of Habinteg's tenants affected by the bedroom tax are disabled – which is in line with the picture nationally according to the Department for Work and Pensions. It said of these, only a third have been exempted from paying by local authorities. Habinteg is calling on the government to repeal the bedroom tax, review its stance on universal credit, which will not cover service charging on disability-related adaptations, and revise their plans to cut benefit payments under the transfer to Personal Independence Payments. <http://www.habinteg.org.uk/documentHandler.cfm?dId=826&pflag=docm93jijm4n826>.

Real Life Reform – December report

December 2013, Real Life Reform

More than half of households being tracked in a six-part welfare study were left without any money after paying their weekly bills. The study by Real Life Reform, which looks at the impact of the government's welfare reforms in the North of England, found that 51 per cent of people have no money left after paying their bills for the week. This figure has risen by more than 10 per cent since July, from 39 per cent, demonstrating the increasing financial struggle faced by many families. These figures are in spite of the fact the households are cutting back on basic weekly spending. It also found that one in three households are spending less than £20 a week on food. <http://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/assets/Policy%20Documents/RLR%20Second%20Report.pdf>

Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2013

December 2013, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and New Policy Institute

This annual report by the New Policy Institute gives a comprehensive picture of poverty in the UK, featuring analysis of low income, unemployment, low pay, homelessness and ill health. A focus on the geographical distribution of disadvantage reveals that national averages mask huge variations between areas in unemployment, educational achievement, and life expectancy. The research shows that: more than half of the 13 million people living in poverty in the UK in 2011/12 were in a working family; while the labour market has shown signs of revival in the last year, the number of people in low-paid jobs has risen and average incomes have fallen – around five million people are paid below the living wage; and there is substantial movement in and out of work – 4.8 million different people have claimed Jobseeker's Allowance in the last two years.

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/MPSE2013.pdf>

Vulnerable cut off from bedroom tax relief as demand for emergency help triples

December 2013, National Housing Federation

Nearly a third of disabled people hit by the bedroom tax have been refused discretionary housing payments. The research, based on freedom of information requests sent to every council from the National Housing Federation, showed demand for DHP has nearly tripled this year, people in some areas are very unlikely to receive help. Approximately 420,000 people affected by bedroom tax, according to Government estimates, are disabled. That makes two thirds of the total number of people affected, yet 29 per cent of disabled people who applied for DHP were turned down. In parts of Kent, just one in ten disabled people successfully secured DHP and less than three in ten successful in North East Derbyshire, Basildon, Rotherham and parts of Lancashire.

<http://www.housing.org.uk/media/press-releases/vulnerable-cut-off-from-bedroom-tax-relief-as-demand-for-emergency-help-tri>

Rent arrears and threat of homelessness on the rise

December 2013, Citizens Advice

Social housing rent arrears cases reported to the charity Citizens Advice have risen 13 per cent in a year. In further evidence that social tenants are finding it harder to pay their rent, the charity has reported a sharp increase in enquiries about rent arrears. Citizens Advice said it gave advice on 22,412 cases about social housing rent arrears in the period from July to September, an increase of 13 per cent compared with the same period in 2013. Gillian Guy, chief executive of Citizens Advice, said: 'Prices which far outstrip incomes and the damaging impact of high food and energy bills make paying rent simply impossible for many people.'

http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/pressoffice/press_index/press_20131220.htm

The Real Cost of Christmas

December 2013, Circle Housing

Two-and-a-half million Brits will borrow money to heat their homes over Christmas, a survey has found. The survey by Comres, commissioned by Circle Housing, found that around 7 million people would take out a loan over Christmas, and 35 per cent of these would use the loan only to pay their energy bills. One in 20 of the borrowers said they would go to a payday loan company, while around 150,000 adults will go to an unofficial lender or loan shark. One in six people surveyed, or 18 per cent, said they associate Christmas with 'dread' and 'worry'.

<http://www.circle.org.uk/~media/61F6933FC49A4243A51F619F5EDAD26B.pdf>



2014 Diversity Calendar

Download the latest [HDN 2014 Diversity Calendar](#), produced in partnership with Places for People.

Practitioner Group Updates

If you or any of your colleagues are interested in joining any of the groups, please contact carla@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk. As a practitioner you are welcome to attend any of the meetings and be added to all 5 email groups.

Dates for the next meetings are:

North West Equality & Diversity Network for Housing Practitioners

The next meeting is still to be confirmed.

Yorkshire and East Midlands Diversity Discussion Forum

The next meeting will be held on the **23rd January 2014** at Incommunities, Shipley.

North East Equality & Diversity Network for Housing Practitioners

The next meeting is still to be confirmed.

South & South West Equality & Diversity Forum

The next Forum meeting will be held on the **5th March 2014**, venue to be confirmed.

Midlands Equalities Forum

The next meeting will be held on the **18th March 2014** at Waterloo Housing Group, Solihull

Upcoming Events

- [HDN Workshop with Aksa Homes - The Business Case for Diversity: Good Governance](#)
4th March 2014, Manchester

For further information on the above events please contact carla@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk .



The Housing Diversity Network's Equality & Diversity Briefings are produced in association with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES). For further information on CLES please visit their website at www.cles.org.uk, contact Matthew Jackson on 0161 233 1928 or email Matthewjackson@cles.org.uk