



## Message from the Chief Executive

### Motivating, Inspiring... MENTORING...

Housing Diversity Network Mentoring Programme 2014-15 commences in September 2014.

*“The course was very educational and inspired me to think more deeply about my long term aspirations in the housing sector. My Mentor was excellent”*

*“Probably one of the best experiences I have had in my career”*

The Mentoring Programme offers the rare opportunity for your staff to access an external Mentor for one-to-one professional development support and to attend Mentoring Workshops focused on a variety of career development topics.

As a HDN Member you are entitled to FREE Mentee and Mentor places on the HDN Mentoring Programme, giving your staff the chance to:

- Increase their confidence
- Manage change
- Overcoming barriers to progression and personal development
- Feel valued
- Share learning and network with other housing organisations



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### PRACTITIONER GROUPS

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

[North East Equality & Diversity Network](#)

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

[Midlands Equalities Forum](#)

For more information please see [leaflet](#) and visit our website on to see [testimonials](#) from past participants (both mentors and mentees) and organisational representatives.

Please download [application forms](#) for staff who are interested in participating in this years' Mentoring Programme.

**The deadline for all applications is Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014.**

If you would like to discuss the Programme or require further information before completing an application form, please contact HDN on 01484 652 606 or email [mentoring@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk](mailto:mentoring@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk)

We are happy to talk to any staff members, groups or teams to tell them more about the Mentoring Programme.

*“Another enjoyable year in which I've learned from and been inspired by my mentee”*

*“I continue to delight in the mentoring programme and never cease to learn new things as a Mentor. Every mentoring relationship brings a new set of ideas, challenges, options and advice and I have really enjoyed the programme this year. The journey might not always lead you where you expect but taking those steps together is hugely rewarding”*

### **Board Mentoring Regional Launch Events**

Please use the following link to view our first [Board Mentoring Newsletter](#) which will bring readers up to speed with what's been happening in recent months, as well as confirming details of three regional launch events. Our thanks to HDN member organisations - Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust, South Yorkshire Housing Association and Regenda Group for hosting these launch events. They are all free and I would strongly encourage as many organisations to attend as you will then have a great opportunity to help influence the content and roll out of a regional mentoring support programme for Board members and Chairs.

### **Top 50 Power Players**

We are hugely delighted to be working in various ways with different colleagues on Housing 24's Top 50 Power Players - whether through their participation as mentors, members or partners.

Best wishes



**Clifton Robinson, Chief Executive HDN**

For further information on any of the above, please email me at [Clifton@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk](mailto:Clifton@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk)

To follow the view of the HDN Chair, please visit the Chair's Blog on [www.housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk](http://www.housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk)

## Quick Links

### E & D NEWS

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## Equality & Diversity News

**The number of people approaching Citizens Advice centres for help with social housing rent arrears has risen by 10 per cent, it has emerged.**

*Inside Housing, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2014*

**Councils spend £3 million on tackling food poverty**

*Inside Housing, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2014*

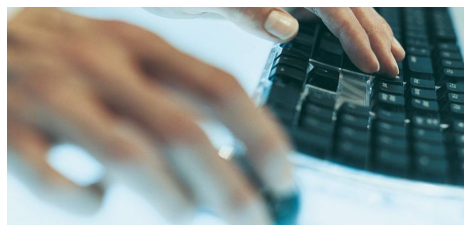
Councils have plunged nearly £3 million into tackling food poverty, an investigation has discovered. A third of all councils in England and Wales said they had subsidised food banks. Of the 323 councils that responded to a BBC Panorama survey, 140 said they were providing food bank funding – totalling almost £2.9 million over the past two years. The Trussell Trust, the largest network of food banks in the country, and Citizens Advice, both told the BBC the main causes of the rise in demand are problems with benefits, low income and debt. Councils refer residents to local food banks if they believe their needs are pressing enough. The Trussell Trust said it helped feed hundreds of thousands of people last year. It said the number of people asking for free food has tripled since 2012.

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/councils-spend-%C2%A33-million-on-tackling-food-poverty/7002390.article>

**'Bleak outlook' for 870,000 living in poverty in Scotland**

*Inside Housing, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2014*

More than 870,000 people in Scotland are living in poverty, a new coalition of charities has claimed. Scotland Outlook – a group of eight charities including Shelter Scotland and Child Poverty Action Group that has just launched – said there was a 'bleak outlook' for people living in deprivation in the country. The group said many children were



living below the breadline and that people were turning to food banks to feed themselves. The campaign aims to highlight the scale and impact of poverty in Scotland and to raise awareness of the problem throughout the country. <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/care/bleak-outlook-for-870000-living-in-poverty-in-scotland/7002403.article>

**12,000 homeless families housed outside their borough**

*Inside Housing, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014*

The number of homeless families in England that have been housed outside their borough has risen by nearly 20 per cent in a year. English councils have sent nearly 12,000 homeless families out of their home boroughs as they struggle to find accommodation for destitute households. Figures from the Communities and Local Government department show 11,860 homeless households were placed in temporary accommodation in another local authority district at the end of December 2013, compared with 9,670 in December 2012 – a rise of nearly 20 per cent. The number of households living in temporary accommodation rose by 7 per cent to 56,930 in December, compared with the year before. <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/12000-homeless-families-housed-outside-their-borough/7002457.article>

**Why homeless services are failing women**

*The Guardian, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2014*

Homeless services are developed by and for men, with little consideration for the problems experienced by women. Women make up 26% of people who accessed homelessness in 2013, which in real numbers is around 10,000 people. At the sharpest end of homelessness, 786 women were recorded sleeping rough in London last year. There are no figures on the number of women sleeping rough nationally but the overall number of people recorded sleeping rough has

[New CIH Scotland chair calls for better health and housing relationship](#)

[Food banks are filling gaps left by jobcentres and the DWP](#)

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risen by 37% since 2010. The true number is likely to be much higher. Women may be sleeping on a friend's sofa or, worse, trapped in abusive relationships because they have nowhere to go but do not want to become homeless. <http://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2014/mar/07/homeless-services-failing-women-st-mungos>

### **Payday lenders to face review over collection methods**

*Inside Housing, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2014*

Payday lenders, and other high cost, short-term lenders, will be subject to an inquiry into the way they collect debts and manage borrowers in arrears, the Financial Conduct Authority has said today. The FCA will take over regulating the consumer credit sector on 1 April and the review will be one of its first actions. On top of the new FCA rules for the sector which were confirmed in February, Martin Wheatley, chief executive of the FCA, said 'there will be no place in an FCA-regulated consumer credit market for payday lenders that only care about making a fast buck'. The review will include how lenders communicate with customers who are struggling to pay, how they propose to help people regain control of their debt, and how sympathetic they are to each borrower's individual situation.

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/payday-lenders-to-face-review-over-collection-methods/7002564.article>

### **How bedroom tax affects those on domestic violence protection scheme**

*The Guardian, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2014*

Almost one in 20 households using the sanctuary scheme which creates a safe room or "sanctuary" within a property to protect those at risk of domestic violence, have been affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy. Figures obtained by a freedom of information (FOI) request to 79 Local Authorities show that since last year, 281 households have been affected, with an average loss of £14 per week expected. The figures vary widely depending on the local authority. In North Tyneside, 25% of the 109

households using the sanctuary scheme have been affected by the bedroom tax. The sanctuary scheme aims to enable householders at risk of violence to remain safely in their own home by installing a 'sanctuary' within the home and providing support to the household.

[http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/mar/14/bedroom-tax-domestic-violence-protection-scheme?CMP=new\\_1194](http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/mar/14/bedroom-tax-domestic-violence-protection-scheme?CMP=new_1194)

### **IDS urged to punish firms for delays over disability benefit tests**

*Inside Housing, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014*

MPs have urged Iain Duncan Smith to punish the firms responsible for the 'unacceptable' delays to disabled people's benefit eligibility tests. The work and pensions select committee said the government should invoke penalty clauses in its contracts with Atos Healthcare and Capita Business Services after disabled people were found to be waiting more than six months to discover whether they were eligible for benefits. Last month the National Audit Office found 92,000 people had claims outstanding with assessment firms Atos and Capita in October 2013, nearly three times the number expected by the DWP. Dame Anne Begg, committee chair, said 'Government efforts to promote a positive image of disabled people will be undermined if the language used by DWP when communicating benefit statistics to the media feeds into negative perceptions and prejudices about benefit recipients, including disabled people.'

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/regulation/ids-urged-to-punish-firms-for-delays-over-disability-benefit-tests/7002653.article>

### **Charities merge to widen fight against homelessness**

*Inside Housing, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014*

A homelessness charity and the housing arm of a community charity are set to merge on 1 April. Aquila Way, a homelessness charity in the north east, and Oasis, the housing arm of a community charity which works in 36 UK communities, will become Gatehead-based

Oasis Aquila Housing. The move means Aquila Way will be able to expand its reach and Oasis will gain the expertise to help support the communities it works in. Nancy Doyle, chief executive of Aquila Way, said the two organisations have been sharing expertise and best practise for a number of years. 'As time went on, it became more and more apparent that we would be stronger together rather than as two separate organisations,' she said.

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/care/charities-merge-to-widen-fight-against-homelessness/7002661.article>

### **New CIH Scotland chair calls for better health and housing relationship**

*Inside Housing, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014*

Health bodies are unprepared to work with housing associations to keep vulnerable and older people out of hospital, the new chair of the Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland has said. Speaking after he replaced Elaine Gibson as chair, Keith Anderson said health bodies had not 'fully understood' the contribution housing associations could make to bring down the costs of keeping people in hospital wards. Mr Anderson, chief executive of 2,400-home Port of Leith housing association, said: 'I do believe that the opportunity for preventing spend [on healthcare] isn't fully understood within health circles. 'I think more needs to be done to have genuinely shared debates about what the housing contribution can and should be.'<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/new-cih-scotland-chair-calls-for-better-health-and-housing-relationship/7002654.article>

### **Food banks are filling gaps left by jobcentres and the DWP**

*The Guardian, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014*

While the government insists the voluntary sector forms no part of the welfare system, the chief executive of Trussell Trust argues food banks fill the gaps caused by welfare reforms. When the government says food banks are "absolutely not a part of the welfare system" many people today will say 'think again'. The Trussell Trust runs a

network of over 400 food banks and our daily experience tells us otherwise. Our food banks gave three days' emergency food to over 700,000 people in 2013. Half of them were in financial crisis primarily because of problems with welfare; whether that's changes to the support they receive through the welfare system or delays in receiving the support they are entitled to. [http://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2014/mar/18/dwp-jobcentres-food-banks-gaps?CMP=new\\_1194](http://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2014/mar/18/dwp-jobcentres-food-banks-gaps?CMP=new_1194)

### **Osborne sets out cap on welfare bill**

*Inside Housing, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2014*

George Osborne has announced a £119 billion cap on welfare spending. As he laid out his budget in parliament, the chancellor said the £119 billion cap for 2015/16 would rise in line with inflation to £127 billion in 2018/19. Only state pensions and cyclical unemployment benefits will be excluded from the cap. Under the plan, total welfare spending would be set by the chancellor at the beginning of each parliament, with MPs voting on it. Mr Osborne told MPs: 'In future, any government that wants to spend more on benefits will have to be honest with the public about the costs, need the approval of parliament, and will be held to account by this permanent cap on welfare.' Charities including Shelter and Crisis wrote to the government ahead of the budget, warning an overall cap on welfare spending would 'compound hardship for many individuals and families'.<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/osborne-sets-out-cap-on-welfare-bill/7002680.article>

### **10% rise in people seeking rent arrears advice**

*Inside Housing, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2014*

The number of people approaching Citizens Advice centres for help with social housing rent arrears has risen by 10 per cent, it has emerged. The advice charity said it had seen 87,000 cases in which people were in behind on their rent to social landlords in 2013, an increase of 10 per cent compared to 2012. It blamed below inflation wage increases, high

food costs and a lack of social housing for the rise in arrears problems. A total of 20 per cent of the charity's clients affected by the bedroom tax from October to December 2013 were in arrears, while the number of cases where people were at risk of having their home taken away from them rose by 26 per cent to 10,702.

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/care/10-rise-in-people-seeking-rent-arrears-advice/7002788.article>

### **Committee makes 40 recommendations for Housing Bill**

*Inside Housing, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2014*

A Welsh committee has agreed the general principles of the Housing (Wales) Bill and has made 40 recommendations to improve it. The bill will include a compulsory registration and licensing scheme for PRS landlords alongside wide reaching reforms of homelessness and provision for travelling communities. The Welsh communities, equality and local government committee recommendations will be debated in plenary on 1 April. The recommendations include implementing a phased approach for the introduction of the PRS registration and licensing but also list several extra responsibilities for landlords such as regular electrical safety checks and improved professional development.

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/regulation/committee-makes-40-recommendations-for-housing-bill/7002791.article>

### **Atos quits £500m disability tests contract early**

*Inside Housing, 27<sup>th</sup> March 2014*

The firm carrying out the government's disability assessments is quitting its contract early, it has been announced. Atos Healthcare, which came under fire for the quality of its tests to assess whether British people are fit to work, will not get 'a single penny of compensation,' disabilities minister Mike Penning said. The £500 million contract to deliver work capability assessments was due to last until August 2015, but Atos has reached an early exit settlement with the

Department for Work and Pensions. Mr Penning said in a written ministerial statement that Atos had made a 'substantial financial settlement' to the government. He said ministers would be seeking another provider, with a new contract being awarded later this year.

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/care/atos-quits-%C2%A3500m-disability-tests-contract-early/7002850.article>

### **Training plan for unemployed**

*Inside Housing, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2014*

The Welsh Government hopes to involve social landlords in a project to create 5,000 training and employment opportunities for long-term unemployed people. The Lift Programme will provide one-to-one help for hard-to-reach people who have not been able to take up training or find work. Two employment brokers will work in each of eight pilot areas - Communities First clusters covering the country's most disadvantaged areas - to find people who could benefit. The scheme, part of the Tackling Poverty Action Plan, will focus on people who face barriers to becoming employed and may have spent more than six months out of work or training, and support those who are at risk of becoming long-term unemployed.

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/regulation/training-plan-for-unemployed/7002892.article>

## Quick Links

### PUBLICATIONS

[Violence against women: an EU-wide survey](#)

[The UK Fuel Poverty Monitor](#)

[Real Life Reform – third report](#)

[Work and welfare reform—impacts in the south west](#)

[Can't complain: why poor conditions prevail in private rented homes](#)

[After The Council Tax: Impacts of property tax reform on people, places and house prices](#)

## Publications

**Social housing tenants in rural areas are being pushed into poverty by welfare reform, a study has found.**

*Housing Association Influence and Leadership Organisation, March 2014*

**Violence against women: an EU-wide survey**

*Fundamental Rights Agency, March 2014*

A report by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) presents results from the world's biggest-ever survey on violence against women, revealing the extent of abuse suffered by women at home, work, in public and online. As well as demonstrating the wide prevalence of violence against adult women, the report also details incidents of physical and sexual violence experienced by women in childhood. <http://fra.europa.eu/en/press-release/2014/violence-against-women-every-day-and-everywhere>

**The UK Fuel Poverty Monitor**

*National Energy Action and Energy Action Scotland, March 2014*

National targets to eradicate fuel poverty will be missed unless politicians take urgent action to tackle the 'cold homes crisis', a charity report has warned. The UK Fuel Poverty Monitor, published by National Energy Action and Energy Action Scotland, found current policies to tackle fuel poverty are inadequate to mitigate the effect of rising energy costs and the impact of the economic situation and welfare reform. It said the UK government and devolved administration need to take urgent coordinated action. The report, released to coincide with NEA's national fuel poverty awareness day, revealed that while you are more likely to be in fuel poverty if you live in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland, you are more likely to receive support for energy efficiency measures in those countries than in England.

[http://www.nea.org.uk/Resources/NEA/Publications/2012/Fuel%20Poverty%20Monitor%202013%20\(FINAL\).pdf](http://www.nea.org.uk/Resources/NEA/Publications/2012/Fuel%20Poverty%20Monitor%202013%20(FINAL).pdf)

**Real Life Reform – third report**

*Real Life Reform Steering Group, March 2014*

The average debt of the social housing tenants taking part in the Real Life reforms study is now £2,943 according to the third report. Of the 83 tenants from across the North of England, 77 per cent were in arrears and the average debt was up by 28 per cent since the last report. The study, which aims to investigate how changes to the benefits system are affecting tenants' health, housing, wellbeing, finances, education and employment prospects, also found that the average weekly debt repayment has increased by 58 per cent to £34.41. Andy Williams, director of neighbourhood services at Liverpool Housing Trust and chair of the Real Life Reform Steering Group, said it's likely that many of the tenants will never be able to pay off their debt.

[http://www.lyha.co.uk/documents/Real\\_Life\\_Report\\_No3\\_March2014.pdf](http://www.lyha.co.uk/documents/Real_Life_Report_No3_March2014.pdf)

**Work and welfare reform—impacts in the south west**

*Housing Association Influence and Leadership Organisation, March 2014*

Social housing tenants in rural areas are being pushed into poverty by welfare reform, a study has found. A report based on interviews with 200 tenants in the south west found they were cutting back on food and utilities, dipping into savings, selling their belongings and borrowing money to cope. The study, carried out by the London School of Economics on behalf of 11 housing associations, found 95 per cent were 'struggling or just managing' financially, with welfare reform causing a cut in income for almost half. Although most said they would like a job, 57 per cent had no one in work with disability, ill-health, and caring responsibilities are cited as the main barriers. The report also found incentives to work

were not always clear, due to the prevalence of low wage work and insecure contracts. Travel costs were also prohibitive in more remote areas.

<http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/cr/casereport81.pdf>

### **Can't complain: why poor conditions prevail in private rented homes**

*Shelter, March 2014*

More than 200,000 people have faced eviction in the last year because they asked their private landlord to fix a problem in their home, according to Shelter research. A YouGov poll of more than 4,500 private renters found that 2% – equivalent to over 213,000 people across England – said they had been evicted or served with an eviction notice in the last year because they complained to their landlord, letting agent or council about a problem that wasn't their responsibility. The study also suggested that many more renters are too scared of losing their home to complain at all. 1 in 12 renters (8%) say they have avoided asking their landlord to repair a problem or improve conditions in the last year because they were scared of eviction.

[http://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/763087/6430\\_04\\_9\\_Million\\_Renters\\_Policy\\_Report\\_Proof\\_6\\_opt.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/763087/6430_04_9_Million_Renters_Policy_Report_Proof_6_opt.pdf)

### **After The Council Tax: Impacts of property tax reform on people, places and house prices**

*Joseph Rowntree Foundation, March 2014*

This study examines two key questions: would taxing property values be fairer than the Council Tax, and could such a tax help to reduce house price volatility? Key points from the report:

A progressive property value tax would reduce the size of median gross bills by £279 a year compared to the Council Tax.

Gross bills would fall by more than 10 per cent for almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of

households. Fewer than one-quarter (22.3 per cent) would experience increases of more than 10 per cent.

A progressive property tax would reduce gross median bills for the poorest tenth of households by £202, and increase them for the top tenth by £184.

However, London is a special case because of its high property prices, and needs to be handled differently, with its own scheme.

A property tax could also have a supporting role in reducing house price volatility, along with other measures such as mortgage credit controls.

Any national property value tax would need to be phased in gradually.

A property tax should also take account of household income and a hybrid property and income tax should be investigated.

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/property-taxation-reform-full.pdf>





## HDN Website - Jobs Page

Check out our website for the latest jobs with Curo, L&Q Housing Trust, Orbit Housing Group, Horton Housing Association, Bernicia Group and many more <http://www.housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk/jobs/>

## Practitioner Group Updates

If you or any of your colleagues are interested in joining any of the groups, please contact [carla@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk](mailto: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 will be in June, date and venue to be confirmed.

### **Yorkshire and East Midlands Diversity Discussion Forum**

The next meeting will be held on the **9th April 2014**, at York Housing Association, York

### **North East Equality & Diversity Network for Housing Practitioners**

The next meeting will be in June, date and venue to be confirmed.

### **South & South West Equality & Diversity Forum**

The next Forum meeting will be held on the **3rd June 2014** at Orbit Group, Redhill.

### **Midlands Equalities Forum**

The next meeting will be in June, date and venue to be confirmed.

## Upcoming Events

- [HDN Board Mentoring Launch Event - Home Counties](#)  
29th April 2014, Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust, Aylesbury
- [HDN Board Mentoring Launch Event - Yorkshire and Humberside](#)  
5th June 2014, South Yorkshire Housing Association, Sheffield
- [HDN Board Mentoring Launch Event - North West](#)  
12th June 2014, Regenda Group, Liverpool

For further information on the above events please contact [carla@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk](mailto: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](http://www.cles.org.uk), contact Matthew Jackson on 0161 233 1928 or email