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## Message from the Chief Executive

### Board Mentoring Update

Following the successful Board mentoring pilot that finished in January, HDN's plans to roll out further regional programmes have taken a great step forward this month by holding launch events in Yorkshire/ Humber and in the North West.

New HDN Member South Yorkshire Housing Association hosted our first Regional (Yorkshire/Humber) Launch Event early this month in Sheffield which was attended by 18 colleagues from 10 housing organisations interested in finding out more about the programme. There was a mix of CEOs, Board Chairs, Board members and housing association staff.

Two Board Member Mentors from the pilot programme travelled hundreds of miles to attend and to share their experience of the pilot. The feedback was very positive and there was strong support for taking the programme forward in Yorkshire.



One week later, another HDN Member Regenda hosted the North West Launch Event which was attended by 32 colleagues from 14 organisations in the North West. As was the case in Yorkshire, there was a similar level of support for the programme from Board members and executive officers alike. It was also again really helpful for delegates to have independent endorsement this time in the form of the youngest Board Member Mentee from the pilot programme.

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Both of these events were timely given the recent launch of the consultation on the revised regulatory framework giving even greater focus on governance and risk with particular emphasis on ensuring Boards have the right skills, and the need to plug any identified skill gaps through Mentoring Programmes such as ours.

Not surprisingly given who we are and what we do, increasing the overall diversity of boards plays a huge part in this agenda for HDN. A recent survey of housing boards across the UK by colleagues from the Board Development Agency which we supported was reported in Inside Housing last month (23 May) and confirmed the lack of diversity on boards across the UK. The final part of this important survey will be looking to establish if there is any link between board diversity and organisational performance.

We want as many organisations to take part in this final piece of research regardless of whether or not you were involved in the first part of the research project. To take part you just need to complete a short survey which can be found by visiting [www.surveymonkey.com/s/BDAAEqualityDiversitySurvey](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BDAAEqualityDiversitySurvey)

We are confident of holding a London and Home Counties Board Mentoring Event probably in London in September but will of course confirm this as soon as we are able to. We then hope to have similar launch events in other regions depending on the level of interest.

In the meantime, we are meeting with a number of potential sponsor organisations especially as we hope now to have the programme running in the North West and Yorkshire/Humber during this financial year.

Hope this update is of interest. If you would like to find out more, register an interest in providing or becoming mentors, mentees, joining a regional steering group or sponsoring please email us at [boardmentoring@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk](mailto:boardmentoring@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk)

## **Diversity Network Accreditation (DNA) Awards for Coast & Country Housing and Pendleton Together**

We were delighted to present our Diversity Network Accreditation (DNA) Award to both Coast & Country Housing and Pendleton Together (part of Together Housing Group) recently. DNA goes beyond assessing how organisations deal with equality and diversity and drills into whether organisations have effective leadership and processes in place to achieve positive outcomes for colleagues, partners and customers. It is a comprehensive and robust assessment and to receive the Award is a real achievement for an organisation.



Pendleton Together is a consortium delivering a regeneration project that includes social landlord Together Housing Group and Keepmoat. They are working in partnership with Salford City Council. Training provided by members of the Disability Focus Group, who look closely at how Pendleton Together works with residents who have disabilities, has meant that Pendleton Together received a distinction for good practice.

Steve Close, the Chief Executive of Together Housing Group, said: "Equality and diversity is integral to the work we do, people are valued and treat each other with respect."

Clifton Robinson, Chief Executive of the Housing Diversity Network, presenting the DNA to Pendleton Together customers Neil Blackley, and James Gillard, and Pendleton Together Contract Manager Chris Brown.

Iain Sim Coast & Country Chief Executive, said: “It is an honour to receive such a prestigious national accreditation. The Housing Diversity Network is a fantastic organisation with wonderful ideals that we look to portray daily here at Coast & Country.

“We work hard to promote equality and diversity and we believe it is very important for the success of a business. The Diversity Network Accreditation is a reflection of the hard work and dedication to achieving positive outcomes for everybody.”



HDN Board Member, Arshia Bhatti presents the DNA award to Coast & Country Housing

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)

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# Equality & Diversity News

**The bedroom tax is failing to make a significant impact on under-occupancy a year after its introduction, a new report has claimed.**

*Inside Housing, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2014*

**Advice service funds slashed by 11.7%**

*Inside Housing, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2014*

Ministers have slashed funding for a 'vital' charity-run national homelessness advice scheme for the third consecutive year. Last week the Communities and Local Government department released the bidding prospectus for the National Homelessness Advice Service, offering £3 million for 2015/16. This equates to a more than 3 per cent cut to the 2014/15 funding, and nearly a 12 per cent cut over the three years since funding was announced.

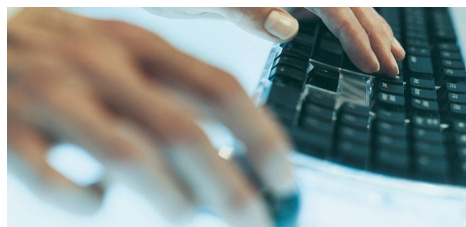
<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/finance/advice-service-funding-slashed-by-117/7003833.article>

**Council brings bidless housing services in-house**

*Inside Housing, 2<sup>3rd</sup> May 2014*

A council has brought housing services for vulnerable people back in-house after providers concluded the financial terms of the contract were too risky. Bradford Council put the housing services contract out to tender in 2012 at an estimated value of £6.6 million over five years, with a start date of February 2014 - but received no bids. The tender included additional financial responsibility for 50 per cent of the cost of the authority's bed and breakfast accommodation, which totalled £500,000 in 2012/13. The services, including homelessness prevention and housing options, were run previously by 22,000-home housing association Incommunities from 2003 to February 2014.

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/tenancies/council-brings-bidless-housing-services-in-house/7003834.article>



**IDS continues to block universal credit report**

*Inside Housing, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014*

Iain Duncan Smith is continuing to block the publication of reports believed to reveal the failure of the universal credit scheme. The Department for Work and Pensions appealed to the upper information tribunal to prevent the publication of documents under the Freedom of Information Act yesterday. Politics.co.uk reported that the DWP was continuing to block publication of key documents. Transparency campaigners want to see documents thought to reveal the scale and nature of issues surrounding the planned introduction of Universal Credit. A first tier information tribunal upheld their request earlier this year, finding there was a 'strong public interest' in publication. <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/legal/ids-continues-to-block-universal-credit-report/7003827.article>

**Bedroom tax fails to address under-occupancy, landlords warn**

*Inside Housing, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2014*

The bedroom tax is failing to make a significant impact on under-occupancy a year after its introduction, a new report has claimed. A report by six housing associations, said tenants have struggled to find smaller properties and social landlords have found it difficult to let large homes. The research found just 150 of more than 1,000 tenants affected had moved to a smaller home. Around 80 had stopped claiming housing benefit, potentially by securing work or better paid work. More than 700 continued to have their housing benefit docked. The landlords, which jointly manage 31,500 homes in and around Bedfordshire, also found 286 tenants became affected by the policy during the year, usually as a result of a household member leaving. Among the affected tenants, 42.5 per cent were in arrears. Four of the six landlords experienced increased levels of arrears overall by the end of the financial year.



<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/tenancies/bedroom-tax-fails-to-address-under-occupancy-landlords-warn/7003817.article>

### **1600 crisis fund claims by disabled people rejected**

*Inside Housing, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2014*

Councils rejected more than 1,600 applications for help from disabled people hit by the bedroom tax last year, potentially undermining claims that the policy is not discriminatory. Lawyers acting for disabled tenants challenging the reform are considering using the findings - from Inside Housing research - if they are given permission to take their case to the UK's highest court. Freedom of information requests, showed at least 1,637 applications for discretionary housing payments made by disabled people impacted by the bedroom tax were rejected by just 49 councils last year. The overall figure is likely to be much higher, as 154 other councils responding to requests did not record the data. In February, Court of Appeal judges ruled that the availability of DHP to people with disabilities meant the bedroom tax did not unlawfully discriminate against them.

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/care/1600-crisis-fund-claims-by-disabled-people-rejected/7003749.article>

### **Inquiry into rented homes for under-35s launched**

*Inside Housing, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2014*

An all parliamentary group has launched an inquiry into access to private rented housing for under-35s. The private rented sector group will consider the pressures faced by young people seeking rented accommodation and what can be done to support them. Organisations are invited to submit evidence for a report which will make recommendations to ministers. As well as written submissions, members will take oral evidence from experts on the 17 June and 8 July. Oliver Colvile, MP for Plymouth Sutton and Davenport and chair of the group, said: 'With over half of tenants under the age of 35 the issues of the supply and cost of private rented housing are increasingly important to young people.'

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/regulation/inquiry-into-rented-homes-for-under-35s-launches/7003739.article>

### **1.66m housing benefit claimants live in private sector**

*Inside Housing, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2014*

A third of all housing benefit claimants live in the private rented sector, the latest government figures show. The figures showed housing benefit was paid to 3.34 million tenants of social landlords and 1.66 million private tenants in February. The data also showed 3.7 million, or three quarters, of the 5 million claimants were aged under 65. There were 3.92 million single housing benefit claimants, 1.21 million of them with at least one child. Figures also showed that around 500,000 tenants were affected by the bedroom tax. Of these, 397,000 had one spare bedroom and 78,000 had two. Information was unavailable for the remaining 1,600.

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/tenancies/166m-housing-benefit-claimants-live-in-private-sector/7003724.article>

### **Bedroom tax challenge today for children with care needs**

*Inside Housing, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2014*

A judicial review in the High Court will argue that the bedroom tax unfairly discriminates against children with overnight care needs. Child Poverty Action is representing Susan and Paul Rutherford in their challenge against the bedroom tax. The couple, from Pembrokeshire, care for their 13-year-old grandson, Warren, who suffers from rare genetic disorder Potocki-Shaffer syndrome. Their three-bedroom bungalow is specially adapted including a room for overnight carers to stay in. His grandparents both suffer from disabilities themselves and struggle to look after him alone. They need the help of two paid carers who can stay overnight at least twice a week. At present there is an exemption to the bedroom tax where a disabled adult needs an overnight carer, but disabled children are not exempt.

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/legal/bedroom-tax-challenge-today-for-children-with-care-needs/7003717.article>

## **Councils reject 70,000 crisis fund requests**

*Inside Housing, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2014*

Research reveals north-south divide between DHP allocations and demand for help. English councils turned down more than 70,000 applications for emergency housing assistance last year, despite £9 million of funding being handed back to government. Research by Inside Housing has revealed that while 153 councils underspent their discretionary housing payment allocations in 2013/14, others turned away thousands of applicants and still spent well over their allocated amount. Liverpool Council had a DHP pot of £2.06 million and received 14,355 requests for help, effectively giving it £143 per applicant. Overall, 19 councils received less than £200 per applicant - all of them in the north or the midlands. However, Westminster Council received £4.82 million of DHP funding but only 2,089 applications, equating to £2,038 per applicant. A total of 17 councils received more than £700 per applicant, all of them in London and the south east. <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/home/news/councils-reject-70000-crisis-fund-requests/7003640.article>

## **Proposed 'age discrimination' removed from Scottish Housing Bill**

*Inside Housing, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2014*

The Scottish Government has dropped a section of the Housing (Scotland) Bill that would have allowed social landlords to discriminate between tenants on the basis of age. Housing minister Margaret Burgess revealed her decision in a response to the stage one report from the infrastructure and capital investment committee. The proposed measure, which would have lifted a bar on considering the age of an applicant when allocating social housing, had become the source of a row between Shelter Scotland and the Chartered Institute of Housing. Graeme Brown, director of Shelter Scotland, had said lifting the prohibition would unfairly penalise 'vulnerable groups and young people in particular'. CIH Scotland, and other organisations including the Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers, had argued there was no evidence for this claim

and said the measure would only be used in 'very specific situations'.

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/home/proposed-age-discrimination-removed-from-scottish-housing-bill/7003592.article>



## **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"*

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

The deadline for all applications is

**Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014**

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

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[How pensions can meet consumer needs under the new social care regime](#)

[28 Days Later: the experiences of new refugees in the UK](#)

## Publications

**More than 215,000 households in England are at risk of eviction or repossession**  
*Shelter, May 2014*

### Rainbow Rising

*Human City Institute, May 2014*

Social landlords need to up their support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender tenants as austerity measures have affected LGBT community services, a think tank report said. The Human City Institute's report

*Rainbow rising*, about the housing needs of LGBT communities, brings together a range of research from Stonewall and others with new research by HCI and Trident Social

Investment Group. The report highlights that public service cuts have disproportionately affected LGBT communities, especially in the areas of advice, support, health and well-being services. It found the housing problems specific to the social rented sector 'centered on the response of a landlord to harassment or the threat of homelessness'. It added:

'Some LGBT people feel that service providers do not understand or take on board their specific problems and needs and that they feel alienated by policies and practices upheld in the social rented sector which leads to feelings of victimisation.' The report highlights some pioneering work from social landlords but the think tank points out that there is much more to do across social housing to tackle the housing problems of LGBT people.

<http://www.humancity.org.uk/reports/publications/RAINBOW%20RISING%20WITH%20COVERS%20-%20may%202014.pdf>

### Housing Association Boards and Diversity

*Board Development Agency and Raglan Housing Association*

Most UK housing associations are chaired by white British men aged between 50 and 59, new research has found. Men chaired almost two thirds (64 per cent) of the 80 boards surveyed in early 2014 by the Board

Development Agency and Raglan Housing Association. Of these, 35 per cent were aged between 50 and 59. Just 10.1 per cent of chairs were from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, despite this group making up 20.9 per cent of the UK population and 15.2 per cent of residents of the organisations which participated. Disabled board members made up 11 per cent of the chairs, compared with 24.3 per cent of residents and 17.9 per cent of the general population. More than half - 52 per cent - of the boards surveyed had no disabled member. In addition the report found that male housing association board members are more likely than their female counterparts to bring previous governance experience to the organisation. <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/care/report-reveals-lack-of-diversity-on-boards/7003837.article>

### Great Workplaces

*Great Place to Work, May 2014*

A social landlord in Merseyside is the best medium-sized workplace in the country, according to a new report. One Vision Housing tops employers with between 50 and 499 staff members in a list of the UK's 100 best workplaces compiled by Great Place to Work, a research, consulting and training firm. The rankings are based on the results of employee surveys and audits of participating organisations' people practices. Great Place to Work also recognised the 11,000-home social landlord, which has 255 members of staff, as delivering excellence in well-being and 'employee voice'.

<http://www.greatplacetowork.co.uk/storage/Publications/greatworkplacesukspecialreport2014.pdf>

### Almost four million families could be just one paycheque away from losing their home

*Shelter, May 2014*

More than 215,000 households in England are at risk of eviction or repossession – the equivalent of 4,140 homes every week – according to new research released today. Shelter based the research on Ministry of Justice data from April 2013 to March 2014 showing how many homeowners and private

or social tenants received a possession notice. The research showed 215,305 possession orders were issued in the period. Shelter is concerned this number could rise with growing interest rates. The housing charity's research shows that London boroughs dominate the list of councils issuing possession notices with the top 14 areas in London. Nottingham is the top hotspot outside the capital with one in every 54 homes at risk, followed by Peterborough, one in 60 homes, and Salford, one in 60.

[http://england.shelter.org.uk/news/april\\_2014/almost\\_four\\_million\\_families\\_could\\_be\\_just\\_on\\_e\\_paycheque\\_away\\_from\\_losing\\_their\\_home](http://england.shelter.org.uk/news/april_2014/almost_four_million_families_could_be_just_on_e_paycheque_away_from_losing_their_home)

### **Life on a low income**

*Age Cymru, May 2014*

Around 50,000 older people in Wales live in severe poverty on £183.50 or less a week, a report by a charity has found. The life on a low income by Age Cymru, based on research through the charity's income maximisation and information and advice services, also found 84,000 older people in Wales were living in poverty. In total, 200,000 older people in the country reported cutting back on food, heating and social activities for financial reasons. An example given was of a 91-year-old woman who was re-using toilet paper and eating just two boiled potatoes a day. She wasn't claiming her full pension entitlement and one of the report's recommendations is for the Welsh Government to use its tackling poverty action plan to ensure vital help in claiming their full entitlement of benefits is available to all older people across Wales. The report estimates that £168 million is unclaimed by older people entitled to pension credit alone. The charity also found 42,000 older people have got themselves into debt recently.

<http://www.ageuk.org.uk/PageFiles/41168/Life%20on%20a%20low%20income%20-%20FINAL%20-%20E.pdf?dtrk=true>

### **How pensions can meet consumer needs under the new social care regime**

*Institute and Faculty of Actuaries, May 2014*

Pensioners hoping for help to pay for care since a government cap on costs are 'in for a shock', a report has warned. The limit of £72,000 will benefit just 8 per cent of men and

15 per cent of women, a report by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries has warned. The cap, announced last year to help people deal with spiralling care costs, could still mean £140,000 is spent before any help is given as it covers direct care costs only. The establishment of a cap was a bid to tackle the high costs of care, which routinely saw people forced to sell their own homes to meet the fees. Before its introduction, anyone with assets of more than £23,250 would be expected to fund all of their care, whether in their own house or at a residential home. <http://www.actuaries.org.uk/research-and-resources/documents/how-pensions-can-meet-consumer-needs-under-new-social-care-regime-f>

### **28 Days Later: the experiences of new refugees in the UK**

*Refugee Council, May 2014*

Refugees are being made homeless and destitute due to administrative errors and delays in the asylum system, according to research. A report by the Refugee Council found examples of refugees who were forced to sleep rough and beg for money while waiting for documents to arrive. The charity, which works with refugees and people seeking asylum in the UK, is calling on the government to urgently review its system and to eliminate delays in issuing documentation. The report, *28 Days Later: the experiences of new refugees in the UK*, examines the short period between the granting of refugee status and when asylum support ends. It was compiled using information from the 469 advice sessions Refugee Council held in 2013 for individuals it worked with. Under current rules, asylum seekers lose accommodation and cash support 28 days after they are granted refugee status. Of the eight in-depth case studies in the report, four individuals stayed with a friend after the 28-day period ended, two slept rough, one stayed in a hostel and one was placed in bed and breakfast accommodation by a council. In some instances, refugees were waiting for months to be issued the correct documentation to enable them to claim mainstream benefits, find employment and support themselves. [http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/1769/28\\_days\\_later.pdf](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/1769/28_days_later.pdf)





## HDN Website - Jobs Page

Check out our website for the latest jobs with L&Q Housing Trust, Horton Housing Association, Orbit Housing Group, Curo, Eastlands Homes 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 is still to be confirmed.

### Yorkshire and East Midlands Diversity Discussion Forum

The next meeting will be held on the **9th July 2014**, at Action Housing & Support, Rotherham

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

The next meeting will be held on the **24th September 2014**, at East Durham Homes, Peterlee

### South & South West Equality & Diversity Forum

The next Forum meeting will be held on the **17th September 2014** at Aster Communities, Hampshire.

### Midlands Equalities Forum

The next meeting will be held on the **21st July 2014**, at Severnside Housing, Shrewsbury.

## Upcoming Events

- **HDN Annual Mentoring Conference 2014**  
2nd July 2014, Birmingham
- [Care and Support Conference and Exhibition 2014 - National Housing Federation](#)  
3rd July 2014, Renaissance Hotel, Manchester

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 [MatthewJackson@cles.org.uk](mailto:MatthewJackson@cles.org.uk)