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Message from the Chief Executive

HDN/CIH E&D 2014 Conference

Whatever the reason – be it a General Election a few months away, be it a vague feeling that we may have finally got over the worse impact of the recession, or maybe the initiative from the current CIH President regarding his Commission on Leadership and Diversity - there does seem to be an emerging feeling that E&D is at last getting back onto the agenda!

As possible evidence of this, on 14 October we held our 4th joint annual E&D Conference with the CIH in London. It sold out completely and CIH colleagues reported that they had not seen such numbers or such vibrancy at a conference they had hosted at Gray's Inn Road for many years! Keynote speakers included Grainia Long making her last conference appearance before leaving the CIH and sharing her ambitions for the work of not just the Diversity Commission but also around how housing can more powerfully relate to poverty, inequality and human rights. She also reminded us of the 31 October deadline to submit responses to the Diversity Commission.



James Caspell from Tower Hamlet Homes shared a number of innovative ways that award winning Tower Hamlet Homes had delivered E&D and we were delighted that he felt able to generously showcase the way his organisation had used both HDN's Staff Mentoring Programme and a specific tailor-made E&D training programme for their staff as key parts of their overall approach to E&D. Paul Fiddaman, Chief Executive of Cestria Housing spoke powerfully about how embedding E&D across their organisation has been a fundamental part of helping to transform their organisation and ensuring they achieve excellence for staff and customers.

With the General Election just a few months away, we needed to include a political

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dimension to the conference and we had speakers from both Stonewall and Scope to share the issues on which their organisations were actively lobbying the main political parties for change. We also had an exceptionally powerful presentation from an academic, Wendy Bradley from Sheffield University, giving a feminist perspective on the impact of various budgets since 2010 had had on women in particular and lessons that the next Government should learn from past mistakes. Wendy's knowledge around the *inner workings of HM Treasury, judicial reviews and Regulatory Impact Assessments* will make her someone that we are keen to establish close links to for the benefit of our member organisations and of course the wider sector.



In the run-up to the General Election it really is starting to feel that E&D is muscling its way back on to various agendas and rightly so!

“HouseProud”

Earlier this month “HouseProud” was formed with the aim of bringing together housing associations across London and the South East to share best practice for supporting LGBT residents and staff. HouseProud is particularly interesting in the way it unites the existing LGBT works of nine large housing associations and the way it is supported by Stonewall. I am meeting with Stonewall Housing’s Chief Executive along with one of the founding members of HouseProud later this month to explore the potential of linking up with our various networks so watch this space.

Diversity Network Accreditation (DNA)

We are delighted with the impact that our accreditation framework has had in the short time it has been on the market and we are always looking to improve it. Building on the learning from the last few years we are currently reviewing the framework with a view to ensuring it remains up to date and relevant. If you’d like to find out more about DNA do get in touch with us.

Safeguarding & Hoarding – New training expertise from HDN

We’re aware through discussions with members and practitioner groups that safeguarding is a key area of concern for organisations. To ensure we can respond to the needs of members we now have an Associate that is a specialist trainer in both safeguarding and hoarding. A typical training course on safeguarding that we can now offer would include being aware of key legislation, recognising forms of abuse and neglect, understanding the need to report concerns of abuse, discussing and identifying internal policies and procedures for reporting abuse and neglect and signposting to sources of good practice/excellence.

We would love to support organisations in this new area of work given the expertise that we have now acquired and to find out more, please contact my colleague Andrew Petrie at Andrew@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk or telephone him on 01484 652606.

Sunday Times Best Companies To Work For 2015

Encouraged by the fact that so many organisations appearing in last year’s Top 100 list were linked to HDN either as direct members or as practitioner group members I made contact and had meetings with the Chief Executive of Best Companies Ltd, Jonathan Austin. We feel we can help support organisations going through the process and if this is an area you want to discuss further with us do please email me at Clifton@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk

Board Mentoring Latest Update – Get Your Applications In!

We launched our Board Mentoring Programme at the NHF national conference in Birmingham last month with a lot of interest being expressed in the programme. Building on this we have e-mailed or written to your organisation with more details about the scheme and how to apply to be a mentor or mentee. We have also held the first of our Regional Steering Group meetings to enable organisations to actively participate in the development of the programme. Thanks for your input to this.

If you are intending to apply to be Mentors or Mentees, the closing date is 17th November 2014 but if you can apply before then that we would be even better.

Anyone needing more information about the scheme should contact our Project Officer, Geoffrey Sproson on 01484 652606 or e-mail boardmentoring@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk.

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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Equality & Diversity News

Homeless families in temporary accommodation at five-year high

Inside Housing, 25th September 2014

Figures from the Department for Communities and Local Government have revealed that the number of households accepted as homeless by English councils dropped by 2% this year to a total of 13,140. However the number of households living in temporary accommodation stood at 59,710 at the end of June, 6% higher than at the same date in 2013. It is the highest level recorded for five years. Jacqui McCluskey, director of policy and communications for Homeless Link, said: 'The fact that so many people are being placed in temporary accommodation should send another clear signal that there is a desperate shortage of homes that are genuinely affordable to those in greatest need. The alternative of housing people in accommodation like B&Bs is not only unsafe, but is also expensive to taxpayers.'

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/home/news/homeless-families-in-temporary-accommodation-at-five-year-high/7005927.article>

Unions urge Labour to set out fuel poverty strategy

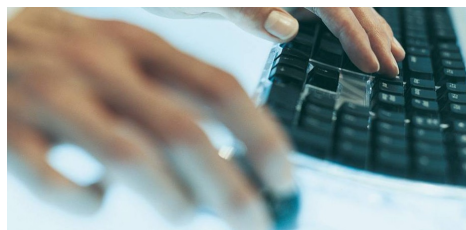
Inside Housing, 5th September 2014

Eight of the UK's largest unions have called on the Labour Party to set out a plan for a fuel poverty strategy in an open letter to Ed Milliband. The policy outlined in the letter is based on Unison's Warm Homes report published earlier this year. The report suggests a strategy to bring all UK homes up to energy performance certificate B and C, zero interest loans for energy efficiency measures, a council-led street by street delivery programme and grants for energy efficiency measures. The report estimates this would bring all six million low incomes homes to Band C by 2025, and at least two million homes to Band C by 2020. <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/eco/unions-urge-labour-to-set-out-fuel-poverty-strategy/7005540.article>

Britons think social tenancy a 'lifestyle choice'

Inside Housing, 29th September 2014

An online poll of 2,052 adults by ComRes on behalf of Circle Housing showed that 45%



believed that social tenants adopt a benefits 'culture'. This view is predominantly held by people working in the private sector (52%), those aged 65 and over (50%) and the upper middle classes, typically including doctors, managers and other white collar professionals (51%). Circle Housing says it wants the sector to challenge these stereotypes and establish public perception based on 'facts not myths'. Separate research by thinktank Social Market Foundation showed the number of social rented households with someone in work has increased by 168,000 since 1996. Nigel Keohane, research director of the Social Market Foundation, said: 'Our research shows that over half a million social-rented households are in poverty despite having someone in work. The full report will be published later in the autumn.'

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/tenancies/britons-think-social-tenancy-a-lifestyle-choice/7005972.article>

Social housing for older people at eight-year low

Inside Housing, 11th September 2014

The Homes and Communities Agency's statistical data return shows landlords own 299,876 homes for older people, as of 31 March this year - a reduction of more than 5,000 units (1.7%) from the same point in 2013. The HCA suggests that the decrease 'may be linked to policy changes that have increased pressure on Supporting People funding'. However, the HCA also observes that the figures for housing for older people stock are volatile, and have recorded three year-on-year decreases since 2007.

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/tenancies/social-housing-for-older-people-at-eight-year-low/7005616.article>

Tories would freeze benefits for two years

Inside Housing, 29th September 2014

Chancellor George Osborne announced if elected his party would freeze working age benefits, including housing benefit and Universal credit, from April 2016. Under Mr. Osborne's plans, disability and pensioner benefits would be excluded from the freeze, as well as other payments like statutory maternity pay. Speaking at the Conservative Party conference Mr. Osborne said: 'This is the choice Britain needs to take to protect our economic stability and to secure a better future. 'The fairest way to

reduce welfare bills is to make sure that benefits are not rising faster than the wages of the taxpayers who are paying for them. For we will provide a welfare system that is fair to those who need it, and fair to those who pay for it too.' Grainia Long, chief executive of the Chartered Institute of Housing, said the proposal 'fails to reflect the reality of the housing crisis'. 'We are not building enough homes, which means the cost of housing and therefore the housing benefit bill is going up. Millions of people have no choice but to rely on housing benefit to secure a roof over their head.'

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/tenancies/tories-would-freeze-benefits-for-two-years/7005983.article>

Greater priority plans for tenants relocating for work

Inside Housing, 10th September 2014

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) wants social tenants relocating for work to have priority under its Right to Move scheme through powers given to councils in the 2011 Localism Act. This will be done through creating a new 'reasonable preference' category - used by councils to prioritise people for social housing - or through strengthened statutory guidance to ensure local authorities apply the existing 'hardship' reasonable preference category to include people moving for work or training.

Communities secretary Eric Pickles announced a consultation on the potential new rules. Mr Pickles said: 'In the past tenants may have felt trapped in their existing accommodation when they needed to move to take up a job.'

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/tenancies/greater-priority-plans-for-tenants-relocating-for-work/7005635.article>

Landlord plans own universal credit pilot

Inside Housing, 23rd September 2014

Four thousand-home south west association Coastline Housing is to test universal credit under more realistic conditions than the official pilot schemes run by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), in order to model the true cost of direct payment. Officially 10 pilot schemes are already up and running, in Ashton-under-Lyne, Oldham, Warrington, Wigan, Hammersmith, Rugby, Inverness, Harrogate, Bath and Shotton. The government also ran six demonstration projects with social landlords, and found 95% of rent was collected from 4,719 tenants. However Coastline is working with the DWP to test universal credit on around 200 tenants who will be selected to reflect the

proportion of working age benefit claimants in the Cornwall-based landlord's stock. It will go to its board to seek final approval in January, with the aim of beginning the test run in April 2015.

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/regulation/universal-credit/landlord-plans-own-universal-credit-pilot/7005825.article>

Wales housing bill becomes law

18th September 2014

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 became law yesterday. It is the first major piece of housing legislation for Wales created through devolved powers. The act emphasises tackling inequality and poverty, and promoting social justice are at the heart of the act. It will introduce significant improvements across the housing sector to ensure people have access to a decent, affordable home and better housing-related services - particularly for those who are vulnerable or homeless.' The legislation will give Wales powers to implement mandatory licensing for the private rented sector, create a strategy for homelessness and allow councils to charge twice the rate of council tax on long-term empty homes. The act will not come into force immediately and new powers will be brought in at a later date through a series of commencement orders.

<http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/regulation/wales-housing-bill-becomes-law/7005769.article>

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[Prescription for Success - a guide to the health economy](#)

[Silent majority: how the public will support a new wave of social housing](#)

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Publications

Ticking the box for a welfare system that works

Chartered Institute for Housing, 16th September 2014

This CIH briefing outlines that spending on personal housing costs support in the form of housing benefit (HB) has grown extensively over the past two decades, both in absolute and real terms. The causes for increased spending are reported to be long-term tenure restructuring to more expensive forms of housing and decline in home ownership; rental growth; and labour market trends including less secure employment for lower earners. This report sets out a series of recommendations for government to address the causes of this growth. These include a substantial increase in the supply of social rented homes, but also wider economic reforms, such as a rebalancing of the labour market to reverse welfare dependency.

<http://www.cih.org/resources/PDF/Policy%20free%20download%20pdfs/Ticking%20the%20box%20for%20a%20welfare%20system%20that%20works%20Sep%2014.pdf>

Prescription for Success - a guide to the health economy

National Housing Federation, 10th September 2014

This new guide from the NHF aims to transform housing associations' offer to health, enabling them to build a robust business case to commissioners and become a crucial part of the future of the NHS. It argues that housing has a vital role to play in reducing the demand on acute health services and tackling health inequalities by offering community-based services. The guide was created in partnership with London School of Economics (LSE). It explains how the health economy works, and what commissioners are looking for, including the kind of evidence they expect to see from prospective providers. The guide includes case studies from housing associations.

<http://www.housing.org.uk/publications/browse/prescription-for-success-a-guide-to-the-health-economy/>

Silent majority: how the public will support a new wave of social housing

Fabian Society, September 2014

Consecutive governments have failed to build enough social housing, and the explanation often cited is a lack of widespread public support. The research outlined in this report argues that the majority of the general public are in fact in support of building more social housing. This research confirms that there is still considerable stigma attached to this type of tenure, but this itself does not equate with opposition to building more social housing. The report also demonstrates that the public are aware of the deep-seated problems with the housing market, although there is confusion over what the precise problems are. http://www.fabians.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/SilentMajority_web1.pdf

Landlords' strategies to address poverty and disadvantage

Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 17th September 2014

Low-rent housing has played a significant role in reducing poverty, but now welfare reform, the rising cost of living and changes to the way housing is funded are presenting major challenges for landlords. This study looks at how 15 local authorities are responding. It examines landlords' written strategies, business plans and other policies. Almost all housing associations said they were building new homes at Affordable Rents (which are usually higher than social rents). However, the actual levels of these rents varied, given that most local authorities had policies to restrict rents charged and the circumstances in which social housing could be converted to Affordable Rent. Developing housing associations were increasingly focusing on building housing for market sale or rent, either as a commercial activity to generate cross-subsidy for social homes. In terms of social housing allocations, some housing associations were moving away from focusing primarily on those in most severe need, in favour of a wider range of people, including those on middle incomes.

http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/Landlord_Strategies_Poverty_Summary.pdf

Prisoners 'need family home' to stop re-offending

Inside Housing, 18th September 2014

A joint study by HM Inspectorate of Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Probation and Ofsted has found that prisons need to recognise the importance of resettling prisoners back into suitable family homes to prevent homelessness or reoffending. The study explains that private rented or social housing sectors were often not an option for the offenders because it was hard to arrange from prison. The report says that prisoners also have difficulty securing private rented sector homes because of a lack of money to pay deposits and rents in advance. It also claimed that prisons did not take into account whether initial arrangements for living with a family on release were sustainable and what support might be needed. Some form of supported accommodation was necessary for those who might struggle to live independently because of lack of maturity or older offenders who had become institutionalised by long sentences. Chief Inspector of Prisons Nick Hardwick said: 'Overwhelmingly, this inspection confirmed our view that an offender's family are the most effective resettlement agency.'

<http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/cji/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/09/Resettlement-thematic-for-print-Sept-2014.pdf>

Gaps in the housing safety net

Shelter and University of St Andrews, September 2014

Low pay, high house prices and a small rental sector mean that the housing market in the UK has many inherent risks. Household savings are typically not enough to cover housing costs for more than a month. Successive governments have made changes so that provision for those who cannot pay their rent provides less support to fewer people. The research commissioned by Shelter and conducted by the University of St Andrews estimates the number of households falling through the net or at risk of falling through, the characteristics of those at risk and the main risk factors leading people to fall through the net.

http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/960315/Final_report.pdf



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National Housing Diversity Network Accreditation (DNA)

We all want to improve our customers lives, through genuine partnerships, by delivering excellence. HDN have developed a forward thinking and outcome based accreditation model, preparing you for significant change and future success.

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01484 652 606

info@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk



HDN Website - Careers Page

Check out our website for the latest jobs with Horton Housing Association, Curo, Orbit Group, London & Quadrant Housing Trust, Wythenshawe Community Housing 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. 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 held on the **2nd December 2014**, Southway Housing Trust, Manchester.

Yorkshire and East Midlands Diversity Discussion Forum

The next meeting will be held on the 28th **October 2014**, at Sheffield City Council, Sheffield.

North East Equality & Diversity Network for Housing Practitioners

The next meeting will be held on the **10th December 2014**, at Isos Housing, Newcastle upon Tyne.

South & South West Equality & Diversity Forum

The next Forum meeting will be held on the **2nd December 2014**, at Sovereign Housing, Basingstoke.

Midlands Equalities Forum

The next meeting will be held on the **4th December 2014**, Midland Heart, Birmingham.

Upcoming Events

- [Unconscious Bias Training Session](#)
5th November 2014, Leeds

For further information on the above events please visit the HDN website or contact carla@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk.



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