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Message from the Chief Executive

Board Mentoring – First Sessions!

Last week (23 and 24 April), we ran our first two National Board Mentoring Programme sessions which, judging by the feedback we've had, were really well received! Muir Group hosted the North West Regional Hub in Chester whilst Poplar HARCA hosted the London & Home Counties Hub. Leeds Federated HA will be hosting the Leeds/ Yorkshire Hub on 15 May. A huge thank you from us to all 3 organisations for hosting...we simply could not run these programmes without this level of support and commitment from organisations!



In terms of last week's first classes, well over 40 board member mentees and mentors attended both sessions – so much energy, so much wisdom and a real determination to use this energy and wisdom to support those board member mentees into becoming the most effective board members they can possibly be!

At both classes, we had the huge bonus of either the HCA's Deputy or Assistant Director of Regulation and Enforcement being part of the sessions around "What good governance should look like". Both received generous applause at the end of their sessions which I think reflected that the Regulator had delivered on their brief which was to be open to a conversation with colleagues who were keen to use this new National Programme as part of the drive by the sector "to shape our governance destiny."



One particular insight from me that I hope readers will find of interest... the HCA briefly shared some insights on the *new forensic assessments* that will kick in from July and I found it hard to believe that those organisations with board members participating in this National Board Mentoring Programme would not find themselves in a better place when responding to these new assessments. Not only would their board members have good access to explore the wider strategic governance considerations behind these new assessments with the Regulator but those same board members could also network with board members from other organisations creating either new alliances or reinforcing existing networks promoting good governance practice.

We will be shortly be starting to recruit for our 2016 National Board Mentoring Programme and if you would like to register an interest and receive more information about the Programme, whether as a mentee, mentor or possibly even becoming a Sponsor, please email us at boardmentoring@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk. Alternatively if you like an informal chat or to arrange a meeting please ring me on 07879 486633.



Staff Mentoring

How time flies! Unbelievably the 2014-15 programme is already nearing the end of another year! Final classes are being held in May and the fully booked National Celebration Conference is taking place in Birmingham on 3rd June – when mentees and mentors from across the country will no doubt inspire colleagues once again with their achievements. We are looking forward to the CIH's incoming CEO, Terrie Alafat, being our keynote speaker following her predecessor, Grainia Long, who was due to have been our keynote speaker at the Conference this year.

There have also been a number of *firsts* this year:

- Sue Waterall our newest Associate will soon be successfully completing her first year as North West Mentoring Coordinator
- A post evaluation survey has been conducted 8 months after last year's programme, to identify any further changes and continued development for previous mentees
- North East Steering Group has been established with lots of member commitment, enthusiasm and support
- An action learning set for mentors in SW proved useful and now both London & SE and North East are looking to provide similar support for mentors next year
- HDN will be recruiting a new Mentoring Associate for London & SE shortly

Once again the hard work and commitment of Mentoring Associates Gill Cook, Juliet Hancock and Sue Waterall is resulting in further expansion of the programme and continued membership in the regions they support so thank you to our colleagues and, of course, to Kam Urwin, Mentoring Manager.

Tenant Mentoring Pilot

Housing Diversity Network has been working with Liverpool Mutual Homes to pilot an exciting and innovative Tenant Mentoring Project. The programme matches tenant mentees with staff mentors. The aims of the project have been to support tenants in search for employment and career development and to complement existing employment support services. Over 30 tenants have been on the programme and, as the pilot is drawing to a close, early indications are it has been a success. Thanks to Yvonne Davies for delivering this for HDN and to Julie Fadden from South Liverpool Homes for coming to one of the sessions and giving the mentees some inspiring advice. I'm now looking forward to the celebratory event on 14th May and meeting the mentees and mentors on the programme.



Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink on a white background. The signature is written in a cursive style and appears to read 'Clifton'.

Clifton Robinson, Chief Executive HDN

To follow the view of the HDN Chair, please click [here](#) to visit the Chair's Blog.

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[Cold home deaths could be stopped by 'hidden army'](#)

[Homeownership levels collapsing among young](#)

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[Sanctions regime flawed, charity says](#)

[Court rules disability eviction cases could go to full trial](#)

Equality & Diversity News



[Housing affordability ranked as most urgent issue affecting councils](#)

The Guardian public leaders network, 4th March 2015

A survey of council chief executives has found that the cost of housing and its impact on local people is now their main concern, with 61% stating there needs to be improvements. Recent years have seen local authority waiting lists for social housing increase exponentially, as provision has collapsed. Welfare reforms which affect housing costs such as the bedroom tax and benefit caps have also impacted upon affordability. This bleak picture is backed up by statistics that show rates of home ownership dropped for an 11th consecutive year, and one in five renters rely on aid from housing benefit to meet monthly costs.

[Cold home deaths could be stopped by 'hidden army'](#)

Inside Housing, 5th March 2015

The National Institute for Health Care Excellence (NICE) recommends that housing providers should create a single point of contact to allow staff such as social carers to report cold homes. Gillian Leng from NICE stated that each year in England and Wales there are around 24,000 excess winter deaths, with 23% of social tenants having suffered ill health as a result of cold homes. There is opportunity to identify those vulnerable to the risk of cold housing and prevent thousands of deaths.

[Homeownership levels collapsing among young](#)

Inside Housing, 9th March 2015

A review of the housing market has revealed that levels of home ownership are collapsing amongst the young. It has found that just over a third (36%) of 25-34 year olds were homeowners in 2013/14, compared with two-thirds in 1991. Gavin Smart has called on all political parties to acknowledge the scale of the problem, and to take a more active role in boosting housing supply.

[Surge in debt among welfare reform hit tenants](#)

Inside Housing, 9th March 2015

Debt among a group of 70 northern households who have been affected by welfare reform has increased by 55% in the last 18 months. The problems are linked to low levels of employment, with just 24% of households having one or more people in work; of those in work, more than 80% were on part-time or zero hours contracts. The result has been an increase in household debt, with weekly debt repayments more than doubling to £34.56.

[The challenge of a generation](#)

Housing learning and improvement network, 10th March 2015

The UK population is getting older, and with a third of all housing association residents now over 65, it is time to recognise the strategic issues this creates. Firstly, associations are failing to review the fit between residents and their needs, resulting in unsuitable accommodation. Secondly, issues such as loneliness and fuel poverty must be addressed. Finally, there needs to be quality advice in terms of housing and financial and benefit options.

[Breaking the taboo: male victims of domestic abuse](#)

[Landlords threaten legal action over Right to Buy extension](#)

[Poverty Trap](#)

[Sanctions regime flawed, charity says](#)

Inside Housing, 10th March 2015

Benefits sanctions are enforced unevenly around the country, by a 'flawed' and 'punitive' government. The map shows that the greatest concentrations are North of England, with several smaller pockets in London, Norfolk and the South West. This is significant because the transition to Universal Credit means that housing benefit will now be affected when claimants are sanctioned; with the result being that social landlord rent arrears are likely to increase in future.

[Court rules disability eviction cases could go to full trial](#)

Inside Housing, 12th March 2015

The Supreme Court has ruled that landlords could be taken to full court hearings if tenants argue that they are being evicted as a result of issues related to their disability. This will have implications for other disabled tenants as they look to appeal against notices for possession. The court said that tenants looking to stop an eviction under the Equalities Act should not be dealt with in the same manner as those who used human rights grounds, which are often dealt with in a summary hearing.

[Breaking the taboo: male victims of domestic abuse](#)

Inside Housing, 18th March 2015

Service for male victims of domestic abuse are set to come under increasing pressure as council budget cuts continue. Already there are a lack of refuge facilities, and there is no network to allow the gaps in provision to be mapped. The Worcestershire based Rejuvenate programme is now council funded, and has seen 91 men access the service. However, the budget for domestic violence services is being halved in April, which leaves Rejuvenate in a vulnerable position.

[Landlords threaten legal action over Right to Buy extension](#)

Inside Housing, 25th March 2015

Housing association leaders would challenge any government attempt to extend the Right to Buy policy in court. It is feared that any extension of the controversial coalition policy would raise serious questions around the viability of housing associations in the long-term.

[Poverty Trap](#)

Inside Housing, 27th March 2015

Anti-migrant legislation is resulting in a human cost, with access to that most basic of needs, shelter, now increasingly restricted. There are issues associated with unregulated occupations and the low pay and vulnerability that come with it. This is twinned with the explosion in rental costs and fees in the private sector that further restrict the opportunities for migrants.

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Publications

[Support for single homeless people in England, annual review](#)

Homeless link, 6th March 2015

This report found that more than four in ten homelessness services have had their funding reduced in the last year; those that had experienced cuts, were on average 17% worse off. Despite this, around 80% of services reported that they were able to support the same number of people, however, bed spaces have fallen by 16% since 2010. 90% of accommodation service users had been affected by sanctions.

[A qualitative study of the impact of the UK 'bedroom tax'](#)

The Journal of Public Health, 15th March 2015

This study sets out the scale and the impact of the controversial spare room subsidy introduced by the coalition; this affects around 660,000 working age social housing tenants in the UK. The authors looked at the impact of a community in the North-East which has 68.5% of residents live in social housing. There were tangible results, such as a reduction in purchasing power for essential items such as food and utilities and negative impacts on mental health. This study concludes that bedroom tax has increased poverty and had broad-ranging adverse effects on health, wellbeing and social relationships within this community. It recommends abolishing this tax.

[Core Cities – home truths \(Let's end the housing crisis within a generation\)](#)

The National Housing Federation, 19th March 2015

This report highlights the spatial inequalities that exist between UK cities in terms of affordability and provision of housing. The core cities of England are failing to address their housing issues and are lagging behind growth areas such as London and Manchester. These problems are diverse, while cities like Bristol are stifled by unaffordability with house prices soaring almost nine times the average



pay check, others are in desperate need of regeneration with more than 3,500 homes lying empty in both Birmingham and Liverpool.

[Getting the house in order](#)

The children's society, 20th March 2015

The headline of this publication is that only one in five homeless teenagers who go to their local council for help get housed. In addition, although most young people are steered towards the option of going home, less than 5% are given help to rebuild relationships with parents or carers. Even more shockingly, despite a high court ruling to the contrary, many teenagers are still being dealt with by housing departments, instead of social services.

[The cost of poor housing to the NHS](#)

Building Research Establishment, 23rd March 2015

This report shows that the cost of poor housing to the NHS is at least £1.4 billion annually, more than double the estimate from a 2010 report. It is argued that there are gains to be made from focussing on the most cost effective improvements to the homes of the most vulnerable, this would include falling hazards and cold homes. This is based on the discovery that the impact on health of poor quality housing is similar to smoking.

[Excess winter deaths and illnesses associated with cold homes](#)

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 27th March 2015

This document is a guideline for Practitioners who deal with vulnerable people that may have health issues caused, or exacerbated by living in a cold home. The aims include reduce preventable winter deaths, improve health and wellbeing among vulnerable groups, reduce fuel poverty and the risk of disconnection of utilities, and improve the energy efficiency of homes. It identifies a list of people that should be considered as vulnerable and establishes that year-round action is needed to combat problems; these include prioritising which homes are improved first, influencing the decision making process on how homes are improved, and developing the research agenda.



HDN Website - Careers Page

Check out our website for the latest jobs with Housing Diversity Network, Orbit Housing Group, London & Quadrant Housing Trust, Thirteen Group, Bolton at Home, Colchester Borough Homes and many more.

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 **2nd June 2015**, venue to be confirmed

North East Equality & Diversity Network for Housing Practitioners

The next meeting will be held on the **10th June 2015**, venue to be confirmed.

South & South West Equality & Diversity Forum

The next Forum meeting will be held on the **3rd June 2015**, Merlin Housing Society, Bristol.

Midlands Equalities Forum

The next Forum meeting will be held on the **4th June 2015**, Nottingham City Homes, Nottingham.

London Diversity Group

The next Forum meeting will be held on the **20th May 2015**, Notting Hill Housing, London

Upcoming Events

- **Inclusive Leadership** - 24th June 2015, Liverpool
- **Unconscious Bias** - 14th July 2015, Bury St Edmunds
- **Equality Monitoring - Asking Sensitive Questions** 21st July 2015, Isos Housing, Newcastle upon Tyne

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 (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