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## Message from the Chief Executive

### Leading Diversity by 2020

The Presidential Commission on Diversity in Housing released its report in June at the CIH Conference in Manchester. The report, along with the 10 challenges it has set the sector can be found [here](#).

Following publication I wrote in Inside Housing that I welcomed the attention that the Commission and report had brought compared to the last few years when equality and diversity for many organisations was not high on the corporate priority list. I also noted that the commission's report could be timely because just weeks after May's general election, the government decided to form a new and (potentially) hugely influential select committee - the committee for women and equalities. The Challenges set in the report and the work of the Committee have some real parallels.

Despite what has become an even more challenging environment for housing providers, I believe Steve Stride, outgoing president of the Chartered Institute of Housing, and his colleagues on the presidential commission, deserve huge credit for drawing up a final report that gives the sector a golden opportunity to respond strongly, engage with the new select committee, and if not necessarily able to win over a sceptical government at least make real progress on diversity in the sector. In these challenging times it is even more important we harness all of the talents and abilities in the sector to their full potential to support the communities we work with.

### The Budget and equality implications!

Whilst the post-Budget focus has been largely around the rent reduction implications and the new Right to Buy, organisations will need to start urgently reflecting on the social inequality implications...particularly in terms of the impact it will have on both current and future customers. Within days of the Budget, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) having analysed the numbers, calculated that 3 million households would be £1,000 worse off as a result of the cuts to tax credits, with low- income workers (many of course living in our sector) hardest hit. Even before the Budget, there was clear evidence (and huge concern!) around the widening social inequality gap in the UK.

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Post- Budget things can hardly be said to have improved on that score! What's to be done? With Labour in turmoil over its response to the Budget we cannot realistically rely on Opposition politicians to redress the impact of the proposed cuts...indeed, the Government can actually point to the fact that it made no secret during the General Election campaign that it would be making cuts and that its election victory was, in part, due to these "popular" cuts!

A few years ago when I was part of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), a Section 31 Assessment of HM Treasury was undertaken. This utilised unique powers of the Commission to assess the extent to which HM Treasury met its legal obligations to consider the impact of the Government's 2010 Spending Review on people with different protected characteristics. As a result, the then Government was forced to go back and introduce some changes.

We are now re-engaging with the EHRC (see below) and I will be contacting their current Chief Executive (Mark Hammond) to enquire whether this will be an approach that the Commission will consider.

### **Is Britain Fairer 2015? Major EHRC Research Report**

Every 5 years the EHRC is legally required to produce a report that examines in detail the state of equalities across Britain. According to the Commission's CEO, Mark Hammond, this year's report, "Is Britain Fairer 2015?" will be by far the most comprehensive research ever undertaken by the EHRC. As a result of HDN's previous work with the EHRC (including work with the Commission's inquiry 3 years ago around disability related harassment) I was invited to attend the final of three stakeholder consultation events held in London on 15 July to discuss Is Britain Fairer 2015? Well over 100 delegates were invited to attend the London event and, looking through the delegate list, it seems I was the only one there from the housing sector which, given the range and eventual impact of the report was a little surprising.

All of the delegates were however required to individually undertake as a condition of accepting the invitation to attend the conference that they would not release information about the findings of Is Britain Fairer 2015? ahead of the publication of the final report expected to be in October 2015. I will therefore be able to say much more about some of the individual findings later in the year but by way of a taster of some of the many areas of interest to housing I can flag up a few areas without hopefully breaching my confidentiality undertakings...

Is Britain Fairer 2015? will report in some detail on the impact of welfare reform on different groups in society. There will be findings around the pay gap, representation on boards and senior management, hate crime, mental health, homelessness domestic violence and discrimination in employment. In fact, it will be difficult to work out which of the hundreds of areas it will report on will NOT in some way impact on the work of housing organisations! The acid test of course will be how the Government will respond to Is Britain Fairer 2015? Time will tell but it's definitely one for the sector to keep an eye on!

### **HDN/CIH E&D Conference 2015**

I am delighted to confirm that we now have a date (8th October) and a venue (CIH London office in Gray's Inn Road) for the E&D Conference we have been running jointly with the CIH for the last 5 years. We will be looking to pick up on the Challenges set in the Presidential Commission on Diversity report and provide a range of speakers and workshops that will help organisations meet these challenges. Do keep an eye on the CIH website for further information but in addition to having a senior director from the EHRC to tell us more about Is Britain Fairer 2015? we also will have Terrie Alafat, CEO of the CIH as another keynote speaker and a speaker from the Confederation of British Industry to give us a perspective from outside of the sector.

## “Wake Up to Values” - The Values Journey Continues!

Last December, participants in a housing sector pilot, supported by HDN, identified 5 shared individual/ organisation/ sector values, and then worked over a 3 month period to demonstrate behaviours and actions which would make them ‘live’. Last week they met again to review the impact of what had happened since the end of the pilot, to share practical examples of Values in Practice individually and in their organisations and plan next steps.

A strength of the project is the strong ownership by participants. Lisette Nicholson and Claire Kinsley from Gentoo and Mary Ormston from Cestria hosted the Wake up to Values national team, and other pilot participants from Curo, Circle and Welwyn and Hatfield Community Trust (all HDN members) for a Values road trip, showing how values have been embedded in their culture and communities, including environmentally ‘passive houses’, and a community care scheme.

Discussions focused on the additional values challenges faced by the sector including how to empower people to enact change as individuals and organisations against what is ‘imposed’ by government and the regulator, and how the sector can use our values to address these challenges. Participants discussed the need to ensure different generations and diversity of need are reflected in services and defining what is important, engaging customers in terms of what their values are, what’s important to them and empowering them to get involved. In these tough times, they also identified the need to have values about ‘efficiency, accountability and doing things the right way’, alongside their chosen values of ‘Contribution to Society’, ‘Community Involvement,’ ‘making a difference’, ‘trust’ and ‘empowerment’

The group is also addressing how to get others in the sector involved in the national project which aims to raise awareness and understanding of values and their immense impact on individuals, organisations and society. The sector is uniquely placed to do this. If any HDN members of Housing Associations would like to discuss how to get involved, or have ideas about how to involve others, please contact Juliet Hancock or Andrew Petrie.

The pilot group will meet again in Bath in November to complete its initial review into its values journey. A video will be produced to share the experience.

## Liverpool Mutual Homes - Focus Awards 2015

Sue Waterall was privileged to attend the LMH awards ceremony on behalf of HDN on 19th June, held at the fabulous Camp and Furnace venue in Liverpool.

The hospitality was second to none from the roving waiters serving canapés in the bar area, through to the lovely 3-course meal with complimentary wine and table magician, and a fantastic band to dance the night away.

Sue was a guest on table 9 with members of the LMH Tenant Scrutiny Panel who were over the moon to receive their award for Tenant Group of the Year. The award recognised their contribution as “outstanding tenants who go above and beyond, with their hard work and dedication”. Other awards included Volunteer, Neighbour and Team Leader of the Year.



The host for the evening was Ray Stubbs, presenter of Premier League Football and former Tranmere Rovers player, who kept the audience superbly entertained and informed.

## Board Mentoring Update

Since last month we have had the opportunity to present workshops on Governance and Equality at last week's National Federation of ALMOs Annual Conference in Manchester as well as holding events in the Midlands and in North Wales. It's been an invaluable two way process involving governance officers, corporate directors, CEOs, board members and board chairs and a huge thanks to everyone in helping us decide both how and where to shape future programmes!



## Staff Mentoring Programme – We Need your Help

Due to an unprecedented demand this year HDN have received 250 mentee applications compared to 180 last year. This is a fantastic response and great show of confidence in the programme from organisations. As a consequence we are now in need of more mentors.

We know that our mentors get a huge amount out of it. Many come back year after year and in a survey of mentors last year, 100% of those that responded said they would recommend it to a colleague. What we look for from mentors is:

- \* Developing others and/or management experience is desirable
- \* Commitment to Equality & Diversity
- \* Commitment to the personal development of assigned mentee for the duration of the programme (5 meetings and an initial Briefing session over a 10 month period is the minimum time commitment required)
- \* Mentoring or coaching experience would also be desirable but not essential, as briefings and continued support are available

HDN has processes in place to ensure the suitability of mentors for the programme and their matched mentee. If you are interested or know someone that would make a good mentor then please find further information, including application forms, on our website [here](#).

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clifton Robinson', on a light-colored background.

**Clifton Robinson, Chief Executive HDN**

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

## Quick Links

### E & D NEWS

[A London council's attempt to bar homeless people from bidding for housing for a year has been thwarted in the High Court](#)

[Soaring numbers of families housed illegally in B&Bs](#)

[Homelessness charity eyes move into house building](#)

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[Charities warn UK faces 'homelessness crisis' as number of people in temporary housing soars](#)

# Equality & Diversity News

[A London council's attempt to bar homeless people from bidding for housing for a year has been thwarted in the High Court](#)

*Inside Housing, 22nd June*

The High Court ruled that Westminster City Council's policy of suspending homeless people from bidding for social houses for an entire year was unlawful. When Mrs A was made homeless from her private rented accommodation in Westminster due to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) cap, it was argued that the policy breached the 1996 Housing Act, which requires councils to give 'reasonable preference' to homeless people. Although she was offered temporary accommodation in July 2014, Westminster Council informed her she was unable to bid for social housing.

[Soaring numbers of families housed illegally in B&Bs](#)

*Inside Housing, 24th June*

The government limit of housing families in B&B's for a maximum of six weeks is increasingly being surpassed with figures of families residing in B&B's illegally more than doubling in one year. In total, 2,570 families with children were in B&Bs at the end of March, an increase of more than a third, from 1,900 a year earlier. Campbell Robb, chief executive of Shelter, said families had been 'left to linger in cramped and unfit B&B rooms, as overburdened councils struggle to find them anywhere that's stable and affordable to live.'

[Homelessness charity eyes move into house building](#)

*Inside Housing, 25th June*

Crisis, a homeless charity for single people, has identified the biggest barrier for their



organisation is to find affordable housing at a reasonable distance to where jobs are located. It is for this reason they are 'doing some modelling work' in order to identify what it would mean to start building in areas that they deem practical. They recognise they are not a social housing company but feel obliged to act due to the lack of affordable and practical social housing alternatives available.

[BME Landlords: The Future](#)

*Inside Housing, 23rd June*

Umbrella organisation, BME National, set out on a journey 18 months ago to plan the future of the BME role in housing. The collective mission to expand by 40,000 homes – a 66% increase – is accompanied by increasing the unity and collaboration of the BME network. Mushtaq Khan, director of 800-home BME landlord Aksa Homes, identifies that this aim is born from the current housing crisis and the disproportionate housing need in BME communities. Furthermore, BME landlords are keen to uphold the social responsibilities that accompany housing; this includes community cohesion, tackling extremism, promoting integration and actively changing measures to accommodate new migrants.

[Homeless protesters face eviction from Manchester city centre](#)

*The Guardian, 29th June*

Homeless individuals have been camping for months in Manchester city centre in protest at the city's growing rough-sleeping problem, yet they could be evicted if the council wins an injunction against them. The 10-weeks of apparent disruption was masterminded by protestors, who have adopted the name *Homeless Rights of Justice*, they describe themselves on their Facebook page as a "collective of activists and homeless people



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[Worst deal in Europe: UK rents double the continental average](#)

['No children, no dogs, no DSS': The demonisation of benefit claimants is helping fuel homelessness, and it's about to get even worse](#)

working together to change the way Manchester deals with the homeless". They have received criticisms for causing violence in the city centre, ignoring court-ordered restrictions and several for rejecting council places in hostels to participate in the strike.

[Charities warn UK faces 'homelessness crisis' as number of people in temporary housing soars](#)

*The Independent, 24th June*

Official figures have revealed that thousands of homeless families are now being housed in 'bedsits', mobile homes and annexes. With those in temporary accommodation reaching almost 65,000 - the highest since 2008 - leading charities are claiming that the UK is "sleepwalking into a homelessness crisis." Shelter compared the single rooms to "bedsits or prefabs", saying they are usually small units of a low standard, often with very limited facilities such as a gas stove or single hob. Campaigners said high private-sector rents and cuts to housing benefits were largely to blame, highlighting that in 29% of cases the issue was the loss of an assured short-hold tenancy with a private landlord.

[Worst deal in Europe: UK rents double the continental average](#)

*National Housing Federation, 24th June*

The research highlights that rents in the UK have are the highest in Europe; furthermore, they take up the biggest chunk of people's salaries and are among the least secure. UK rents average €902 (£750) per month in comparison to the European average of €481 (£400). In countries with similar wage levels such as Germany and Holland, private rents are still around 50% cheaper than in the UK (€600 and €625 respectively). By European standards, UK has persistently underinvested in housing. Between 1996 and 2011 in the UK, just 3%

of national GDP was invested in housing, compared to 6% in Germany and 5% in France.

['No children, no dogs, no DSS': The demonisation of benefit claimants is helping fuel homelessness, and it's about to get even worse](#)

*Independent Voices, 26th June*

The main cause of homelessness has been pinpointed as evictions from a private rented home. The current economic situation for those on low incomes is about to deteriorate and with the state under financial pressures they are unable to offer support, guidance or money. Landlords are also becoming increasingly intolerant, with many displaying 'No DSS' (Department for Social Security) signs along with everyday signs of 'no children and no dogs'. The intolerance for those on security benefits has been extended with rents regularly exceeding the average monthly wage in parts of London.

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[Report values landlords' health outcomes for tenants](#)

[Policy briefing note: The Affordable Homes Programme 2015 – 2020](#)

[Working Together – Thinking Alike: What Do Councils And Local Enterprise Partnerships Expect From Housing Associations?](#)

[The Impact of Welfare Reform on Social Landlords and Tenants](#)

## Publications

[Report values landlords' health outcomes for tenants](#)

*HACT, 10th June*

An innovative project coordinated by HACT aims to put monetary values on the health benefits to tenants of housing association work has released its first findings. While health has always been on the agenda of housing providers in traditional areas such as compliance with health and safety requirements, managing fire risk and providing warm, safe homes, this does not improve health per se. This report has revealed areas of investment not typically associated with tenant health also have an impact on health; presenting an opportunity to capitalise on an additional health element. A health programme could potentially include a focus on employment or volunteering type outcomes to help tackle health problems or inequalities. Naturally, this would require robust evaluation to ensure that the benefits are accrued as expected but the evidence from the current study suggests the potential benefits.

[Policy briefing note: The Affordable Homes Programme 2015 – 2020](#)

*Shelter, June*

The report highlights the fact that the amount the government invests in new affordable homes has declined in recent years as part of a longer term transformation in spending. The Coalition government committed to continue current levels of capital investment in affordable housing through the 'Affordable Homes Programme' over the period 2015 – 2020. This promise was reflected in the Conservatives' manifesto, with a commitment to build 275,000 additional affordable homes. The report summarises that investment is still needed in order to build additional homes as low-income



working families are at a massive disadvantage and future cuts will only succeed in increasing the number of working families in poverty.

[Working Together – Thinking Alike: What Do Councils And Local Enterprise Partnerships Expect From Housing Associations?](#)

*Smith Institute, June*

The report studies the changing relationships between local authorities, housing associations and local enterprise partnerships (LEPs). The report finds that housing associations are displaying a 'greater reluctance' to house poor and vulnerable people, often choosing which local council authorities to work with and avoid dependant on prior experience and reputation. More elective procedures are also carried out in terms of a greater reluctance to accept nominations from vulnerable households or those with a record of antisocial behaviour or rent arrears.

[The Impact of Welfare Reform on Social Landlords and Tenants](#)

*Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 23rd June*

The harsh consequence for vulnerable people of the current welfare reforms affects all social landlords and all disadvantaged communities in ways that were not foreseen by the government. This report details the experiences of both social landlords and tenants as these reforms are implemented. As welfare reform takes effect, low-income tenants and social landlords are two of the groups more directly affected. The pace of reform and its wide ranging impacts have weakened the safety net for a large percentage of tenants and cuts may have a detrimental effect to both poverty rates and the long-term dependency rates of low income households on government welfare.



## HDN Website - Careers Page

Check out our website for the latest jobs with Orbit Housing Group, Merlin Housing Society, London & Quadrant Housing Trust, Arches Housing 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 six email groups.

Dates for the next meetings are:

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

The next Forum meeting will be held on the **16<sup>th</sup> September 2015**, venue to be confirmed.

### Yorkshire and East Midlands Diversity Discussion Forum

The next Forum meeting will be held on the **18<sup>th</sup> August 2015**, venue to be confirmed.

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

The next meeting will be held on the **23<sup>rd</sup> September 2015**, venue to be confirmed.

### South & South West Equality & Diversity Forum

The next meeting will be held on the **16<sup>th</sup> September 2015**, venue to be confirmed.

### Midlands Equalities Forum

The next Forum meeting will be held on the **10<sup>th</sup> September 2015**, venue to be confirmed.

### London Diversity Group

The next Forum meeting will be held on the **28th September 2015**, Metropolitan, London

## Upcoming Events

- **Unconscious Bias** - 29<sup>th</sup> September 2015, Birmingham
- **Equality Monitoring - Asking Sensitive Questions** - 7<sup>th</sup> October 2015, North West
- **Inclusive Leadership** - 26<sup>th</sup> November 2015, London
- [Young Leaders Conference 2015](#) - 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2015, ICC, Birmingham

For further information on the above events please visit the HDN website or 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 (CLÉS). For further information on CLÉS 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)