



Message from the Chief Executive

Responding to the challenges of 2015

Whether it's the fall-out of the huge migration across Europe, the various Summer Budget announcements impacting on the sector or, most recently, the challenges and opportunities arising from the Comprehensive Spending Review earlier this month, few of us can remember a year as challenging to the sector as 2015. HDN has held a consistent line in its response to most of these challenges and, as we reach the end of the calendar year, I think it is worth now re-stating some of our key messages in relation to some of these challenges.

Reviewing the approach to staff and board member support investment

We clearly understand the implications of the financial pressures the sector faces. Most of our Board at HDN work within the sector and a number sit on housing association boards. I have been a housing association board member since 2008 and so we do understand the political and financial pressures faced by the sector.

What we do also understand though is that whilst some organisations feel that they have little option other than to disinvest in both their provision for staff and board member training and support as a way of achieving cost reductions, other organisations are taking a different approach. This alternative approach seems clearly based around their view that, in order to maximise their chances of not just *surviving* but *thriving* in the face of all the challenges, they will look at working with us and other stakeholders to see how they can make their current investment in staff, board, customers and wider communities be even more effective and provide greater value for money. Naturally, HDN and other stakeholders welcome this alternative approach!



To quote David Orr in his response to the CSR:

"Housing associations are innovative, passionate and resilient and they will find new ways to build the homes our communities need... We'll take up this challenge and we will succeed."

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In our view, without the necessary investment in staff, customers and board members, achieving the level of innovation, resilience, flexibility and forward-thinking needed by organisations to *thrive* and not just survive in the years to come will be that much harder. As we look towards our 2016 staff and board mentoring programmes we very much hope to pick up on these themes with both current and potential member organisations in the New Year.

“Shameful response undermines respect for the rule of law”

Not our words but the words of our colleagues at the long-established and hugely respected body of lawyers at the Discrimination Law Association (DLA) in their analysis of how the UK government has responded to the migration across Europe that massively escalated during 2015. DLA argue powerfully (and we completely endorse their analysis) that the refusal of our government to respond adequately to people fleeing persecution and seeking asylum shakes to the foundation our pride in the rule of law and respect for human rights which underpins the long-established moral and legal traditions we have had in the UK.

We believe with the DLA that these rights should be at the core of our government’s response to those seeking refuge from conflict in countries such as Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan or from repressive regimes in other countries such as Eritrea and Sudan. Our government’s approach to its clear legal obligations (clearly being shaped by the opinion polls, the media and the rise of UKIP) has been to develop a “deserving/undeserving” judgemental approach – offering to help those it perceives as in “genuine need” leaving the remainder (the vast majority) to rely on the humanity and increasingly overstretched generosity of other European states many of whom recognise their international legal duties.

We have now established a dialogue with the Women and Equalities Select Committee and this will be one of a number of issues we will hope to discuss with them at events we hope they will attend and give their input during 2016.

Final Board Mentoring Classes

Huge thanks to Yorkshire Housing and Your Housing Group for hosting the final classes in December. As always the highlight of the final classes is when we hear from the Board Member mentees the impact the programme has had in terms of their confidence, knowledge and effectiveness as board members. We also had fantastic contributions from our guest speakers – Jenny Osbourne, Chief Executive of TPAS, Eamon McGoldrick, Managing Director of the National Federation of ALMOs and Rob Warm from the NHF – all of whom brilliantly described the “perfect storm of challenges faced by the sector” and who reinforced the point made earlier in this briefing that investment in staff and boards in the face of this “perfect storm” will become critical to the success of the business over the next couple of years. For further information on the 2016 programme please contact us at boardmentoring@housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk





EHRC Strategic Plan Consultation

The deadline for the Equality and Human Rights Commission consultation on their Strategic Plan is Friday 18th December so hurry if you want to give your views: [2016 - 2019 Strategic Plan Consultation](#)

Safeguarding Workshop

Our colleagues at enact solutions would like to invite you to their 'free of charge' taster 'safeguarding' workshop. This bite size workshop will demonstrate examples of experiential exercises designed to explore safeguarding best practice in a safe and supportive environment.

It's on **Monday 25th January**, 10.00am – 12.00pm in Birmingham. To book your place or find out more about this event [click here](#).

Excellence in Diversity Awards

Nominations are open for Excellence in Diversity Awards 2016 – an awards ceremony that honours the remarkable work of Inclusive Housing Employers and Diversity Champions.

These awards usually have a good showing of housing organisations and individuals in them. In 2016 The Diverse Company Award and Diversity Champion Award are split into 5 categories: Housing, Education, Public, Private, and Charity.

Nominations are open until **February 19th**. To nominate, please visit: www.excellenceindiversity.co.uk/nominate

HDN Chief Executive Recruitment

As I mentioned in the previous e-briefing, I will be retiring from HDN in April 2016. The recruitment is underway for my successor and details of the role can be found [here](#).

2016 HDN Diversity Calendar

The HDN 2016 Diversity Calendar is now available. We know this is popular with members and you can access it from the link [here](#).

AND FINALLY...on behalf of Board and Staff colleagues at HDN can I wish you all a restful Christmas, as well as thanking you for your support during 2015 which I hope will continue through 2016 and beyond!

Best wishes

Clifton Robinson
Chief Executive
Housing Diversity Network



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Equality & Diversity News

Please note, to access articles from **Inside Housing** you will need a valid subscription.

[A government bill forcing social landlords to cut their rents by 1% over four years has passed its latest hurdle in parliament](#)

28th October 2015, Inside Housing

The Welfare Reform and Work Bill passed its third reading in the House of Commons yesterday, with 317 MPs voting in favour and 285 voting against. The legislation will force social landlords to reduce their rents by 1% over four years, tearing up a previous agreement allowing landlords to increase rents by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1% for 10 years.

The proposed legislation also reduces the benefit cap from £26,000 to £23,000 in London and £20,000 outside the capital.

[Government plans to scrap lifetime tenancies](#)

29th October 2015, Inside Housing

Under new government plans, social landlords will no longer be able to automatically issue tenancies on a lifetime basis and would instead be forced to offer fixed-term lets for prospective tenants. Since 2012, councils and housing associations have been able to offer five-year fixed-term tenancies to new tenants.

However, according to official figures, just 13% of new general needs social housing lets were made on a fixed-term basis in 2014/15, compared with 9% in 2013/14. Michael Gelling, chair of the Tenants and Residents Organisations of England (TAROE), said the prospect was “alarming”, and that long-term tenancies gave tenants and communities stability.



[“Inquiry launched into low-cost housing”](#)

3rd November 2015, Inside Housing

A Westminster inquiry has been launched into the effectiveness of government policies aimed at delivering low cost housing. The House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee has appealed for written evidence, including personal testimony, on measures to tackle the shortage of affordable homes to buy and rent. Committee chairman Lord Hollick said: “Across the country, young people in particular are struggling with the cost of housing, whether they are looking to buy or rent. There is an affordability crisis in housing.

[Social rent cut 'will not help tenants](#)

5th November 2015, Inside Housing

The social rent cut will be “of little or no benefit” to the majority of social tenants, while quarter of a million will see rents hiked to market rates, according to the Institute of Fiscal Studies. The IFS analysis of government changes to social rents, found that the four-year cut in rents of 1% would not help tenants, as most are on low incomes and receive at least some housing benefit to pay rent. The independent think tank described the policy as a “transfer from social landlords to the exchequer” and said it will automatically trigger a 1.7bn decrease in housing benefit. Around 250,000 tenants will be affected by this change, the IFS said, representing around 7% of social housing tenants.

[Home decency codes could be scrapped](#)

6th November 2015, Inside Housing

Government efforts to deregulate housing associations could include scrapping home decency codes, sector experts have suggested. Regulatory experts, who preferred not to be

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Damning report exposes Europe's escalating housing crisis

Call to exempt benefit claimants from Pay to Stay

named, said the government could go further and remove consumer standards relating to tenants. These include the Home Standard, which requires that properties are maintained at Decent Homes levels, and the HCA's tenant Involvement Standard, which gives tenants a role in their landlords' decision-making.

[More than 23,000 households' benefit capped](#)

9th November 2015, Inside Housing

The number of households subject to the benefit cap has increased to more than 23,000 for the first time since February, the latest government statistics reveal.

In August, 23,397 households were capped, up from 22,866 in July and the highest figure since January, statistics published on Saturday showed. Over the summer, the government announced the benefit cap will be reduced to £23,000 in Greater London, and £20,000 elsewhere in the country. Critics of the policy have warned it could push low-income families out of the capital.

[Committee inquiry on the gender pay gap and EDF response](#)

9th November 2015, Equality and Diversity Forum

On 4 November 2015, the inquiry to inform Government strategy on reducing the gender pay gap, focusing on women aged over 40 was announced on 4 November by the Women and Equalities Committee.

Currently the gap between all male and female employees stands at 19.1% (2014), measured by median gross hourly pay. For all full time employees the gender pay gap is 9.4%, but there are wide variations by age and sector. The Government will be announcing its proposals to tackle the gender pay gap in early 2016.

[Majority of British Muslims have witnessed Islamophobia](#)

11th November, the Guardian

The majority of British Muslims say they have witnessed discrimination against followers of the Islamic faith and that a climate of hate is being driven by politicians and media, a study has found. Six out of 10 Muslims in Britain surveyed by the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) said they had seen Islamophobia directed at someone else, up from four in 10 when the survey was first conducted in 2010. Then, half of Muslims said they had not witnessed Islamophobia – a figure that has now crashed to 18%.

[UC cuts would stop tenants looking for work](#)

12th November 2015, Inside Housing

Universal Credit cuts could remove work incentives – social landlords have warned. Unconfirmed reports suggest that George Osborne is considering making savings by changing the taper rate in Universal Credit (UC), so that claimants lose more benefit for every £1 they earn. Currently, Universal Credit claimants lose 65p in benefit for every £1 they earn over a threshold. However the chancellor would allegedly raise this to 75p in the 25 November Spending Review, in order to pay for measures to soften controversial tax credit cuts. Sam Lister, policy and practice officer at the Chartered Institute of Housing, said the government's claims that Universal Credit makes people better off in work would "evaporate" if the taper was increased to 75p.

[Workplace racism is on the rise](#)

10th November, the Guardian

A survey of over 24,000 people has found that racial bullying is on the rise. Of employees in the UK who have witnessed or experienced racial harassment in the workplace first hand, 30% say they experienced it in the last year alone.

[The young will lose out, again, in George Osborne's spending review](#)

17th November, the Guardian

The Resolution Foundation think tank has observed how combined spending on older people and on the health service, which the elderly use most, looks set to rise from 34% of the total in 1997 to 43% by 2020. The obverse is a dwindling slice of the shrinking overall pie for two key areas of spending: education and broader “economic” expenditure on the future. This heading includes housing, something that’s in acute short supply for the young, as well as regeneration which support the next generation of jobs. The overall pattern will therefore almost certainly skew departmental spending towards older cohorts at the expense of the young, compounding the established and increasing inter-generational imbalance in social security.

[Women will get equal pay ... in 118 years](#)

18th November 2015, the Guardian

Progress to close the gender pay gap around the world has all but stopped since the 2008 economic crash and it will be more than 100 years before women can expect equal pay with men, according to the latest global figures. Women’s pay still lags nearly a decade behind, according to the World Economic Forum, meaning that what they are paid now on average is the equivalent of what men were paid in 2006. And the outlook is gloomy: at current rates of change, the World Economic Forum (WEF) estimates it will be 118 years before women around the world can expect equal pay.

[CIH: Pay to Stay will hit benefit claimants](#)

19th November 2015, Inside Housing

The proposed ‘Pay to Stay’ threshold is too low and will hit some households claiming benefit, the Chartered institute of Housing has warned. The government is proposing that social tenants with household incomes of £30,000 (£40,000 in London) pay up to market rent. It has suggested the policy could include a ‘taper’ – meaning rents gradually increase as household income increases further above the cap.

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), claims that the policy as currently outlined will lead to a number of “perverse outcomes which run counter to government’s wider ambitions to deregulate housing associations, incentivise people into work and reduce the welfare bill”. The CIH believes the policy could reduce work incentives and push some people at the margins into benefit dependency.

[Damning report exposes Europe's escalating housing crisis](#)

19th November, the Guardian

Europe is experiencing a “silent emergency” for housing, with the number of young adults living with their parents now at an all-time high, according to a study. Research conducted by Habitat for Humanity, a non-profit NGO dedicated to promoting affordable housing around the world, found that the 2008 housing crisis triggered by the global financial crash is by no means over in Europe. Experts warn that continuing problems, such as exploding costs and the numbers of young adults forced to live at home, are likely to have a major economic and social impact across the region.

[Call to exempt benefit claimants from Pay to Stay](#)

23rd November 2015, Inside Housing

The National Housing Federation has called for benefit claimants to be exempt from Pay to Stay amid widespread concern in the sector about the impact of the policy on low-income households. The National Housing Federation (NHF) said: “It is possible for a household with an income in excess of the current thresholds to be entitled to housing benefit.” The government is proposing that social tenants with household incomes of £30,000 or more (£40,000 in London) pay up to market rent. The NHF said the policy as it stands would push up the housing benefit bill. It said: “A household entitled to income-related benefits should, by definition, not be regarded as high-income.” The NHF also wants an exemption for residents in extra care schemes, supported housing and significantly adapted policies.

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Government pledge to reduce discrimination through 'name blind' recruitment

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Equality and Human Rights Commission – Is Britain Fairer?

Publications



[Women on boards: 5 year summary, Davies review](#)

9th November 2015, Equality & Diversity Forum

This publication gives a summary of the voluntary, business led, approach to increase representation of women on FTSE 100 boards to at least 25% by 2015. The report also sets out Lord Davies's next step recommendations for further work in this area.

[Government announcement of new measures to eradicate gender pay inequality](#)

9th November 2015, Equality & Diversity Forum

The Prime Minister has announced measures to remove barriers facing gender equality in the workplace including: requiring large employers to publish information about their bonuses for men and women, extending the plan for gender pay gap reporting to the public sector, and working with business to eliminate all-male boards in the FTSE 350. The announcement is part of a wider plan to help women and black and ethnic minority groups as part of the Government's determination to extend opportunity to all.

[Government pledge to reduce discrimination through 'name blind' recruitment](#)

9th November 2015, Equality & Diversity Forum

On 27 October 2015 the Government announced a pledge to recruit on a 'name blind' basis to address discrimination. Under new agreement, names will not be visible on graduate recruitment applications, reducing potential discrimination. Leading graduate employers from across the public and private sector will commit to the new

scheme, which will include applicants to the Civil Service, Teach First, HSBC, Deloitte, Virgin Money, KPMG, BBC, NHS, learn direct and local government.

[Research on 'Disabled people's experiences of social care](#)

22nd November 2015, Equality & Diversity Forum

The report was published by Scope and paints a detailed picture of disabled people's recent experiences with the social care system, how far services support disabled people to live, work and participate in their communities, and how services can become better at supporting disabled people to live independently in their communities in the future.

[Equality and Human Rights Commission – Is Britain Fairer?](#)

23rd November 2015, Equality & Diversity Forum

The review reveals that while for many life has become fairer over the past five years, for others progress has stalled and for some— in particular young people and poor White boys – life on many fronts has got worse. Is Britain Fairer? draws on a wide range of major datasets and the Commission's own analysis to reveal how, as the country becomes more ethnically and religiously diverse than at any point in its history, new complexities mean many existing assumptions about which of us encounter greater challenges may no longer hold to be true.



HDN Website - Careers Page

Check out our website for the latest jobs with Orbit Housing Group, London & Quadrant Housing Trust, Colchester Borough 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. 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 **21st January 2016**, Liverpool Mutual Homes.

Yorkshire and East Midlands Diversity Discussion Forum

The next Forum meeting is still to be confirmed.

North East Equality & Diversity Network for Housing Practitioners

The next meeting will be held on the **17th March 2016**. venue to be confirmed.

South & South West Equality & Diversity Forum

The next Forum meeting will be held on the **25th February 2016**, NHF, Bristol

Midlands Equalities Forum

The next Forum meeting is still to be confirmed.

London Diversity Group

The next Forum meeting will be held on the **9th February 2016**, Amicus Horizon, Surrey

Upcoming Events

- [Safeguarding Workshop](#) - 25th January 2016, Birmingham
- [NHF Board Members' Conference](#) - 5th - 6th February 2016, London

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