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Message from the Chief Executive

Thanks and farewell!

Here's my final e-briefing CEO Message following my first message back in January 2010...and the really good news is that I'll try to make this the shortest!!



So much has happened since 2010...so many colleagues have left the sector and with them so much experience in many areas including of course equality, diversity and inclusion. On the plus side, lots of new faces have joined the sector bringing different skills and fresh energy. Whether new to the sector or someone who has been in it for years, one thing is painfully clear for all of us who are passionate about this agenda...the battle to prove that E&D matters more than ever when times are challenging will be relentless over the next few years. In this context, it's refreshing to hear from Matt Cooney, Chief Executive of Midlands based asra Housing, explain why he has decided that asra should become members of HDN for the very first time!

Breaking News...EHRC Inquiry into housing!

Back in February when the Equality and Human Rights Commission spoke at our South West E&D Forum event at the NHF Regional Office in Bristol, they gave a strong hint that there would be an inquiry into particular areas of housing.

We received directly from the Commission their 2016/17 Business Plan at the start of this month and within it were the following significant statements:

"We will launch a new inquiry examining housing options for disabled people, including

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those with learning disabilities. Our inquiry will gather evidence and assess the provision and choice of housing for disabled people and its impact on independent living, and seek to identify innovative approaches to providing a choice of housing to enable independent living.”

“The Commission is planning a separate intervention into the ruling by the Supreme Court into the spare room subsidy.”

In terms of the first statement, I have already put the Commission’s Inquiry Head in touch with the chief executives of the CIH, NHF, the National Federation of ALMOs, Community Housing Cymru (the Welsh NHF), TPAS and, of course my successors at HDN, Sallie Bridgen and Alison Burns. We have also discussed with the Commission the possibility of HDN being directly involved in evidence gathering from practitioners which will be key to the inquiry – in much the same way that HDN supported the Commission’s Statutory Inquiry into Disability Related Harassment back in 2011/12.

In terms of the “separate intervention” into the bedroom tax, I think this is also potentially very significant. It does indicate that the Commission have finally responded to the pleas of many organisations and individuals to be far more strident and interventionist when considering the impact of government policies that appear to negatively impact on the most disadvantaged in society. I know that HDN will continue its close working relationship with the Commission and give it every support regarding these two elements of its inquiry.

UKHA Awards and TPAS Annual Awards

I’m signing off my final week before retiring by attending the CIH UKHA Awards event in London on 26 April and in Manchester on 29 April where I’ll be attending the TPAS Annual Awards (Northern Region). It’s been a fabulous experience and a real privilege being a judge on both these awards and seeing close-up the fantastic work in a range of areas (not just E&D!) that the sector does. If you see me at either event do please come and say hello...and goodbye!!

“Why asra Housing Group is joining HDN” – Matt Cooney CEO

As the difficult financial regime of welfare reform and the disappearance of grant subsidy in all its forms progressively disappears, it is tempting for housing associations to pull up the draw bridges and concentrate on essential compliance and follow a strict commercial agenda. I am sure that most social housing organisations are having an on-going dialogue about priorities with the recurring argument that “if it aint contributing to the bottom line, then it’s a distraction and we should stop doing it”.



The current difficult times have prompted us here at asra to consider how our values can help us through and to remind ourselves of why we were created in the first place. asra’s origins lie in the Black and Minority Ethnic housing movement and our original purpose was to help Asian elders with their housing

needs and provide culturally sensitive housing services. As time has moved on we have become a mainstream housing association but we retain a passionate commitment to equality and diversity in housing. HDN is a community of like minded organisations. By joining HDN we can share our experiences and learn from other housing providers about best practice. We will also benefit from the peer mentoring and the wealth of other services that HDN provides.

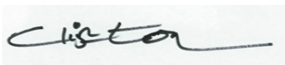
Mentoring 2016/17 and EDI Resources

The resources that we have mentioned previously will be available soon on our website, we will notify members when they are available. Applications for this year's mentoring programme are now open, there is more information on our website [here](#).

More new Members!

Finally, we're delighted to welcome not only asra as new members to HDN this month but also Barnet Homes and Lewisham Homes. Existing members will have received their renewal notices recently and we're really pleased that so many of you are retaining your membership of HDN. We know that is it challenging for many organisations currently and we're pleased to see that so many value the services we provide and look forward to working with you over the coming year and beyond.

Best wishes



Clifton Robinson
Chief Executive

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More African Londoners living in overcrowded accommodation

Why the UK housing market is brutal if you're young, LGBT and homeless

New minister faces calls to rethink 'LHA cap'

Pop up village in south east London to house homeless families

Budget 2016: £115 million to tackle homelessness

Disability campaigners gather at the Supreme Court for bedroom tax cases

Applicants barred by local connection rules

Equality & Diversity News

[More African Londoners living in overcrowded accommodation](#)

29th March, *The Voice*

A new report from race equality think tank Runnymede has unveiled the level of inequalities facing Africans in the capital. The report on London's inequalities has found that African communities in London are facing some of the most unequal challenges, especially on poor living conditions. Whilst it was found that all ethnic groups in London were more likely to **live** in overcrowded housing than the white population. Black Africans were the worst affected, with 40 per cent in overcrowded accommodation. Bangladeshi's were the second worst affected group, with 36 per cent suffering housing inequality. On average, black African people were also three times more likely to experience overcrowding compared to white British people. Runnymede is now calling on the next Mayor of London to work with local boroughs and communities to tackle this issue.

[Why the UK housing market is brutal if you're young, LGBT and homeless](#)

22nd March, *The Guardian*

Research from the Albert Kennedy Trust has found that young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people have long been over-represented among the homeless, with LGBT young people comprising up to 24% of the homeless population. The Trust also highlight how recent government changes to housing benefit policy are further exacerbating homelessness and housing problems among this group. This article discusses the impact of local public sector spending cuts and legislation such as the Localism Act, and concludes that recent policy changes are likely to force more LGBT young people to risk their safety and identity in order to gain accommodation.



[New minister faces calls to rethink 'LHA cap'](#)

21st March, *Inside Housing*

New work and pensions secretary Stephen Crabb is facing immediate calls to re-examine plans to apply a new housing benefit cap to supported housing. Rachael Byrne, director of care and support at Home Group, wrote to Mr Crabb to warn "if we get this [the 'LHA cap'] wrong... we will not have a functioning market for the provision of care and support". In the letter Ms Byrne criticised plans for using Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) to mitigate against the impact of capping housing benefit at private sector rates. However the letter stopped short of calling for an exemption from the LHA cap for supported housing.

From April 2018, social housing tenancies that began in April 2016 will be subject to LHA rates – which are used to calculate benefit for private renters. Following a torrent of lobbying from the housing sector, the government last month exempted supported housing tenancies from the cap if they began before April 2017.

[Pop up village in south east London to house homeless families](#)

18th March, *The Guardian*

A council in south-east London has created what it describes as "the UK's first pop-up village" to house families who are forced to live in B&Bs in other parts of the capital. Rapidly rising property prices and rents, combined with the loss of social housing through right to buy, have put councils under growing pressure to find new ways to help people off their housing lists. In Lewisham one solution is a £4.3m scheme to provide 24 homes and 880 sqm of business space that can be picked up and moved at a later date, allowing the council to make use of vacant brownfield land while longer-term projects are finalised. The two-bedroom flats on Lewisham high street will provide temporary accommodation for families who are living in B&Bs.

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Homelessness law change examined

Social housing benefit cap deferred for a year

Government allocates funding after five month delay

Benefit claimants exempt from Pay to Stay

High London rents pricing out young teachers

[Budget 2016: £115 million to tackle homelessness](#)

13th March, *The Charity Times*

The Government has named the first charities to benefit from the so-called 'Tampon Tax' in the recent Budget, and included social investment among over £115m in support to combat homelessness. On homelessness, Budget documents confirmed funding for the Rough Sleeping Social Impact Bond would be doubled to £10m to drive innovation in tackling entrenched rough sleeping. The Government has committed to invest the £10m over two years in initiatives to support and scale-up innovative ways to prevent and reduce rough sleeping, particularly in London. This plan builds on the No Second Night Out initiative which has seen London boroughs, government departments, the voluntary sector, and others work together to tackle rough sleeping in the capital. Low-cost second stage accommodation will also see investment of £100m.

[Disability campaigners gather at the Supreme Court for bedroom tax cases](#)

29th February, *The Guardian*

Disability rights campaigners and women's groups have protested outside the Supreme Court, where judges will consider appeals that claim the government's bedroom tax is discriminatory to vulnerable people. The outcome of the case could have implications for disabled children, hundreds of victims of domestic violence and thousands of disabled adults. The DWP has argued that the regulations are not discriminatory for disabled people due to the provision of discriminatory housing payments. However a survey of local authorities in England, carried out by the Child Poverty Action Group, backing the case, showed that 41% of councils have policies that only provide discretionary housing payments (DHP) for a short-term period, while 28% have policies where DHP can only be granted for a specified finite period, for instance three, six or 12 months.

[Applicants barred by local connection rules](#)

11th March, *Inside Housing*

An exclusive Inside Housing survey has revealed that 159 English councils have struck 237,793 people off their waiting lists and barred a further 42,994 new applicants since the Localism Act came into effect in June 2012. Ninety councils, or 57% of respondents, have introduced a requirement that applicants have a connection to the local area.

In response to these findings Melanie Rees, head of policy at the Chartered Institute of Housing, has said the requirements "generally aren't good practice" as they can be "discriminatory depending on how long they're applied". Twenty-six councils require a person to have lived in the area for three years or more. The research also suggests a surge in the number of people removed or barred from waiting lists. In a similar survey of 126 councils two years ago, 113,000 people had been removed or barred. A spokesperson for the Local Government Association said the Housing and Planning Bill will cut investment in council housing and pressure local authorities to "further reconsider" their policies.

[Homelessness law change examined](#)

11th March, *Inside Housing*

The government has announced that it is looking at how it could impose new rules on councils to help prevent people becoming homeless. Ministers previously said they would look at the proposals of an independent panel recommending that housing legislation is amended in England. The panel, organised by Crisis and including the National Housing Federation, proposed the imposition of a new 'duty to prevent' homelessness on councils. According to Inside Housing the duty suggested by the panel would require councils to prevent everyone, not just those in priority need, from becoming homeless. This could lead to councils mediating with landlords or helping prospective tenants pay a deposit.

[Social housing benefit cap deferred for a year](#)

1st March, *The Guardian*

The government has backed down over plans to cap housing benefit payments on social rented properties, a move that campaigners had warned would make thousands of vulnerable tenants homeless. The 11th-hour change of heart was announced in a ministerial statement just a month before the changes, originally unveiled by the chancellor George Osborne in the autumn statement in November, were due to come in to effect. The government said it was delaying the implementation of the policy for a year while it carried out a full review of the impact of the cap on tenants in supported housing.

The National Housing Federation, which represents English housing associations, welcomed the deferral but warned that the sector still faced “substantial uncertainty” because of the threat of the cap being introduced at a later stage.

[Government allocates funding after five month delay](#)

10th March, *Inside Housing*

After a 5 month delay allocations for the Homes and Communities Agency’s (HCA) £120m portion of the £155m Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund phase 2 have been announced, with £84m of the fund allocated to developing specialist supported housing outside London. A total of 79 schemes will receive around £84.2m to build up to 2,000 affordable homes. The homes will be for older people and adults with disabilities or mental health needs.

The £155m programme is funded by the Department of Health. The HCA is responsible for managing £120m outside London and the Greater London Authority (GLA) manages the £35m for the capital.

[Benefit claimants exempt from Pay to Stay](#)

9th March, *Inside Housing*

Social tenants in receipt of housing benefit will be exempt from the Pay to Stay policy, the government has announced. A government response to a consultation on the scheme has been published, which states that households claiming housing benefit will escape the new rules, contained in the Housing and Planning Bill.

Under Pay to Stay, social tenants earning £30,000 (£40,000 in London) will be forced to pay up to market rents. The Chartered Institute of Housing have previously raised concerns and said that this threshold is too low and would hit benefit claimants.

[High London rents pricing out young teachers](#)

7th March, *BBC*

The success of London schools is at risk as high rents are increasingly pricing young teachers out of London, according to the National Union of Teachers. Teacher recruitment expert Prof John Howson confirmed the rate of teacher vacancies advertised in London was higher than anywhere else in England. A survey of 1,200 NUT members in London aged under 35 found 60% were planning to leave the city within five years, and almost two-thirds of these said housing costs were the main reason. The union has urged candidates in May's mayoral elections to adopt policies to boost affordable housing in London.

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Statutory homeless figures show 6% rise

Making a house a home: local authorities and disabled adaptations

Growing older together: an overview of collaborative forms of housing for older people

Stop the scandal: an investigation into mental health and rough sleeping

Older people, housing, health and care: infographic

Publications



[Statutory homeless figures show 6% rise](#)

[Statutory Homelessness](#)

23rd March, DCLG homelessness statistical release

The number of people accepted by councils as homeless rose by 6% last year, government figures published today reveal. Statistics released by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have shown that 14,470 households were accepted between 1 October and 31 December 2015, 6% more than the same quarter of 2014. The number of households in temporary accommodation has also increased substantially. At the end of December, there were 69,140 households in temporary accommodation, 12% higher than at the same date in 2014. The most common cause of homelessness was found to be the ending of a shorthold tenancy, which accounted for 31% of all the cases. The figures come after the government confirmed that it is considering placing a duty to prevent homelessness on councils. In the recent budget Chancellor George Osborne announced £115m of funding to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping as ministers come under increasing pressure to tackle the problem.

[Making a house a home: local authorities and disabled adaptations](#)

March 2016, Local government ombudsman

This Local Government Ombudsman report reveals that people with disabilities are being left for too long in unsuitable homes because of problems with councils' Disabled Facilities Grants processes. It also highlights some of the complaints it receives when the grants process goes

wrong, and the significant impact this can have on people's daily lives.

[Growing older together: an overview of collaborative forms of housing for older people](#)

7th March, Housing LIN

This Housing LIN Case Study Report shows how collaborative models of service delivery for older people are now being widely adopted in the health and care sectors, and suggests that housing could do more to embrace this. The Report also emphasises the need to build community resilience through co-producing and co-creating locally driven solutions for older people.

Drawing on a selection of case examples and the lessons learnt, the report goes on to emphasise that collaborative housing schemes can be produced in a variety of ways from self-development and self-build through co-production to market options.

[Stop the scandal: an investigation into mental health and rough sleeping](#)

28th February, St Mungo's

The report explores the complex issues relating to mental health and rough sleeping in order to gain a deeper understanding of the problems and develop effective solutions. The research is based on an analysis of data on people sleeping rough, a national street outreach survey and interviews with homelessness and mental health professionals.

[Older people, housing, health and care: infographic](#)

March 2016, Care and Repair England

This infographic provides a number of key statistics relating to the housing challenges faced by older residents.



HDN Website - Careers Page

Check out our website for the latest jobs with Leeds Federated Housing Association, Bernicia Group, 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 **20th July 2016**, venue to be confirmed.

Yorkshire and East Midlands Diversity Discussion Forum

The next Forum meeting will be held on the **24th May 2016**, Incommunities, Shipley.

North East Equality & Diversity Network for Housing Practitioners

The next meeting will be held on the **22nd June 2016**, venue to be confirmed.

South & South West Equality & Diversity Forum

The next Forum meeting will be held on the **1st June 2016**, South West Council.

Midlands Equalities Forum

The next Forum meeting will be held on the **28th April 2016**, Fortis Living, Worcester.

London Diversity Group

The next Forum meeting will be held on **10th May 2016**. Peabody, London.

Upcoming Events

- [Unconscious Bias & Inclusive Management](#) - 5th May 2016, Holmfirth, West Yorkshire

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