Choosing a Career in Housing - Graduates

By now you will have probably read the other CIH Careers Series sheet: Starting your Career in Housing – an introduction to the housing sector and housing work. This information sheet is specifically aimed at graduates who are considering a career in housing.

After graduation most graduates are in a position where they now need to look for employment. This can be quite a daunting time. Many graduates who have pursued a degree course know what career path they wish to pursue, but many are not sure and there are also a high number who change their mind at least once either during their course or at the end of their course. There are estimated to be over 150,000 people working in housing throughout the UK. These people work for a range of housing organisations including housing associations, local authorities, charities and public and private sector organisations. Housing employers account for a high percentage of the UK workforce, in fact, within many cities large housing employers are major employers in the local area. Those employed within the housing sector consist of both people who have followed a housing route as well as others who have followed a non housing route. Housing organisations also need the skills and experience of people within a wide range of disciplines from housing through to surveying, through to HR, Finance, IT and Marketing to mention a few. This means that there are a wide range of opportunities for graduates from a range of disciplines within the housing sector.

What does working in the social/affordable housing sector mean?
Providing affordable housing is a real priority for the government. With an increasing waiting lists for homes, the increasing number of people who cannot afford to buy because of the cost of properties and the growing number of people deemed as homeless, or at potential risk of being made homeless improving existing homes and building new homes is becoming increasingly important. This requires the talents, skills and experience of a wide range of people. If you’re looking for work in the housing sector you will have the satisfaction or knowing that your work is transforming people’s lives and that you have chosen to work for an employer with a socially ethical origin. And there aren’t many careers where you could say that and choosing a career in housing really is a decision that will help you to change lives.

What types of roles are available in the sector
As indicated earlier housing involves a huge range of jobs, many of them specialist functions. Almost all require a lot of contact between different departments in an organisation, and often other organisations and there is a great need for teamwork and responsiveness, both to residents, clients and internal customers.

The ‘Why Housing’ booklet provides extensive information about the range of jobs available and the skills and attributes for working in the sector. Job titles vary between organisations, but here is some general information about some standard departments and job roles.

- Housing Management
- Maintenance
- Development
- Finance
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- Tenant Involvement and Participation
- Supported Housing
- Corporate Services – such as HR, IT, Finance and Marketing and Communications
- Policy and Research
- Social Enterprise and Business Development

Routes into Housing for Graduates

Graduates who are considering a career in housing have a number of options to commence their housing career.

Direct Entry into a housing organisation – Trainee Schemes – Many housing organisations offer routes into their organisation through trainee schemes, many specifically aimed at graduates. Many of these schemes can offer the opportunity to gain experience in a range of departments and in some instances providing an opportunity to gain a qualification. Some organisations also offer Internships for graduates to work on specific projects, these also give graduates the opportunity to work on cross organisational projects and bring their experience and creativity to the organisation. For those interested in a traineeship or any opportunities for Internships it is suggested that you contact the housing organisations in your region to establish what schemes they offer, as the nature of the schemes will vary from organisation to organisation.

Applying for jobs – There are many places where jobs in housing are advertised, this can range from local press through to national newspapers and website, as well as recruitment agencies, many who specialise specifically in housing related positions. Refer to the “Starting your career in housing” information sheet and the “Why Housing” Booklet for more information about where to look.

Qualifications – If you are a graduate with a non-housing degree, and work in housing you could do the Level 4 certificate for the Housing Profession. This qualification can be used as a graduate conversion course. It is a platform for people with non-cognate degrees to enable them to become familiar with housing and for those who are experienced in housing but not in learning. Students may wish to progress onto the postgraduate diploma/MSc in Housing. Courses are available through CIH accredited centres and the CIH Distance Learning Centre.