

## **SPEECH**

### **Housing 2017: Julie Fadden – Thursday June 29**

Good afternoon everyone and I hope you've enjoyed this year's conference.

I am delighted to be here at my second annual conference as CIH president.

It means I am in the unusual and, I believe, very fortunate position to be able to reflect back on my presidential year.

And what a year it has been for the sector.

It has been my privilege and honour to serve as the president of an organisation which plays such a key role in driving the housing profession forward.

After what has been a very difficult couple of weeks I want to start by paying tribute to the many people affected by the awful fire at Grenfell Tower.

This is a terrible tragedy which has stunned us all.

At times like this it is more important than ever to work together and to exert our collective influence to make sure this never happens again.

And that is exactly what we need to do. We are all responsible, and we have to make sure that we equip ourselves with the skills, knowledge and advice to make sure we all play our part.

Our role at the Chartered Institute of Housing is to educate, train, empower and lobby for change. All of these things will be crucial as we get to grips with this terrible event.

Inside Housing's new campaign, which we have wholeheartedly endorsed, sums it up perfectly in just two words.

Never again.

When I stood here in 2016 I promised to do three things.

- First of all I wanted to raise money to help Crisis end homelessness for good.  
I am delighted to have raised £50,000 for this fantastic organisation with three months of fundraising still to go.

- I also set my own personal weight loss challenge as part of that fundraising effort and I'm pleased to have lost three stone so far.
- And finally I promised to see as much of the amazing work that housing professionals do as I possibly could and to play a leading role in sharing and profiling that work.

During my presidential year I've been privileged to be able to visit organisations and professionals in every English region and every nation in the UK.

I've also visited other parts of the world in which the CIH's community of housing professionals continues to grow - Canada, the United States and our wonderful Asian Pacific Region in Hong Kong and China – which celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016 and now has 3,000 members.

It has been an honour to see so many passionate people do such important and inspiring work – responding to the unique challenges they face wherever they are in the world.

From frontline housing officers in the UK to the team running the Shanghai tower – wherever I have

encountered CIH professionals they have had the same passion ... the same desire to make a difference.

The theme for my presidential year was Changing Lives and I cannot think of a better way to sum up the work that I have seen over the last year.

I was privileged to have been president for the CIH's centenary and to have seen so many people come together to celebrate 100 years of professional housing.

It was a timely reminder, as if we needed it, of the value of housing to society. An opportunity to think back to the millions of people our profession has helped to have a better future.

One of the best things about our profession is our ability to adapt, and despite the many changes and challenges of the last year we have continued to thrive.

We've continued to build homes for the people that need them most.

We've continued to provide vital support that no one else can.

And we've continued to create communities that last.

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Most importantly of all, we've continued to change lives.

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And we must not forget that ... we must never forget the huge contribution we have made and that we continue to make. That's why we are here, that's why we work in housing – because we want to make a difference and leave our world better than when we found it.

If there's one thing I've learned about the CIH in my time as president it is the extent to which the organisation is absolutely committed to driving our profession forward to make sure we can continue to make that crucial difference.

That is what this conference is all about – coming together so that we can explore the challenges we face together, inspire one another, learn from each other and debate and challenge each other.

It's that sense of community which drives the CIH's work and we're proud to continue to be a powerful voice for the housing sector and to support housing professionals to be the very best they can be.

In the next 12 months we will bring together thousands of housing providers at our events across the UK - hosting conferences on everything from homelessness and home ownership to repairs and maintenance.

Our regional boards continue to do fantastic work to address local issues and help professionals to address the housing challenges which are unique to their area.

And our presence in each of the devolved nations allows us to exert our influence and support housing professionals in every corner of the UK.

Despite the many pressures in the sector, it is very clear that housing organisations are committed to investing in their people.

Thousands of housing staff started a CIH qualification in the last year through our Housing Academy.

We've also continued to build on our training offer and launched new tools to give housing

professionals the practical advice they need to be the best they can be.

And we're committed to improving our offer to members.

This year we launched a new Mission Membership project to drive the growth of our community of housing professionals and offer a series of new and exciting benefits.

Despite all of the challenges we face how we prepare ourselves for the future is in our hands.

The changes to apprenticeships in the UK represent a huge opportunity for the housing world to bring through the talent we need to make ourselves fit for the future.

The CIH was a major player in the development of the new apprenticeships and is committed to working with housing organisations to help them make the most of this opportunity to bring through new talent.

Bringing out the best in every person through their professional development is just as important as the

policy landscape. That is the bit which we can control, and which we must get right.

I said before that recent events have been a reminder to us all that we have to make sure we are equipped to deal with the challenges that lie ahead.

Bringing through new talent into our sector is work that we should all be doing if we're going to prepare ourselves, our organisations and our industry for the future.

The CIH is absolutely committed to helping you do exactly this.

I'd like to take a moment to talk about the organisation I chose as my presidential charity last year – Crisis.

I have been delighted to support this brilliant organisation as it celebrated a very special landmark – its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. I have been absolutely inspired by the work of Jon Sparkes and his team.

The Homeless Reduction Act, as it will soon be, represents huge progress in our efforts to tackle homelessness and Crisis has been instrumental in

driving this legislation forward. And the CIH has been proud to support their work.

I am extremely proud to have been given the chance to help raise awareness during this crucial time for the organisation.

I chose Crisis as my presidential charity precisely because I wanted to make a difference to help solve our homelessness problem.

Shortly after I became president I was invited to volunteer and distribute food and clothing to people living on the street in my home city of Liverpool – this experience changed my life.

The first man I spoke to was Stephen – whose story I want to tell you.

Until shortly before I met him, Stephen had a flat, a partner and a baby - life was not perfect, they didn't have much, but they had each other.

One night their baby tragically died in a cot death, and within days Stephen's partner committed suicide as she could not bear life without her child.

From there life spiraled out of control for Stephen - grief and hopelessness led to drink, drugs and being thrown out of his flat with nothing.

Unfortunately cases like this are all too common.

I decided right then and there that I would help him, and the next morning we picked up Stephen and rehoused him the same day in a furnished flat, complete with new clothes and food, to begin his new life, supported in his new tenancy by my wonderful staff.

A year later we have done the same with 20 people.

I would like to say that this was hard, but it wasn't - it was easy.

Stephen's story is just one example of the hugely important work that housing organisations do to change lives.

He is still with us and is thriving – he has a brighter future.

And the real value of our conference and the work that housing professionals do every day is right there.

Working together

Challenging each other

Speaking out together ...

all of that gives us the opportunity to be part of something bigger:

A community working every day to change lives.

It means we can do work every day which helps people just like Stephen.

When I reflect on my presidency, being able to help people like him is the thing I am most proud of.

When I move on in September I will be leaving you in the very capable hands of the current vice president Alison Inman.

Congratulations to Alison on recently being awarded an OBE for her services to housing and I know that she will do a fantastic job.

And a date that all CIH members should mark in their diary is July 3 – which is when the voting for the next vice president opens.

We will be revealing the excellent candidates we have to replace Alison and become CIH's president in 2018 and I would urge every member to cast their vote for their President – you have a say, please make it count.

I have discovered more than ever as president just how privileged our role as housing professionals is.

We've been given the opportunity to make a genuine difference to people's lives

The CIH is here to help you do the fantastic work you do.

We're here to help you continue to push the boundaries of what you do to create great places to live.

We're here to help you build great homes and communities,

To support people to thrive.

And above all ... to change lives.

So I hope that this year's conference has inspired you, challenged you and given you very practical lessons to take back to your organisation so that together we can continue to make a crucial difference.

Let's get on with it.

Thank you for listening.