



# Leading Diversity by 2020



**Presidential Commission on  
Diversity in Housing**

**June 2015**

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**[www.cih.org/leadingdiversityby2020](http://www.cih.org/leadingdiversityby2020)**

***Diversity is everyone's business - that includes you.  
Will you rise to the leadership challenge?  
Sign up to "Leading Diversity by 2020" and take the lead to  
create a truly equal and diverse UK housing sector.***

***We cannot do this without you.  
Rise to our challenge.***

### ***Introduction***

At our first meeting in September 2014, one thing became very clear; we didn't want to produce just another report making the business case for diversity. There is a wealth of evidence, from multiple industries, making the business case for a diverse workforce and leadership.

***The business case is clear, diversity in leadership:***

- > ***Improves governance and risk management.***
- > ***Improves decision making and problem solving.***
- > ***Drives forward organisational performance.***
- > ***Supports staff retention and recruitment.***

We know there is an appetite for change and we know we must work together to make this happen.

We have focussed on uniting and challenging the housing sector, and our partners and regulators, to build on and improve the current levels of diversity in leadership positions across our sector. If we do not improve our levels of diversity then professional talent will not choose our sector or our organisations. We want people to choose housing as their career.

### ***Our challenge to the sector***

Everyone should take diversity seriously. This Commission has set stretching challenges for three key areas that can have a direct impact on supporting and promoting diversity among leaders in housing:

- 1. Housing providers across the UK.***
- 2. Recruitment agencies and contractor partners working with our sector.***
- 3. Regulatory bodies .***

### ***Challenges for housing providers***

Our research showed that our current housing leadership does not properly reflect the diversity of our general workforce and our service users. Organisations without a diverse leadership are in danger of incubating risk and failing to take advantage of the economic, business and performance benefits that diversity provides.

We also found that some housing professionals report that they are still experiencing direct and indirect discrimination and perceive unconscious bias within promotion and recruitment practices. For organisations to effectively serve their customers and neighbourhoods, and to recruit and retain the best professionals for their organisation, it is important the leadership and governance structures represent the communities they are working for.

We need to create opportunities for under-represented groups in our organisations to become part of the structures that lead our sector.

***CHALLENGES***

***HOUSING  
PROVIDERS***

The commission has set the following 10 challenges for the sector:

- 1** Know the make up of your communities and annually consider how you can improve the diversity of your board, leadership and staff teams.
- 2** Compile diversity-related data on the composition of your (1) board (2) executive team and (3) total workforce and publish it in an accessible format in your annual report.
- 3** Challenge all staff (and external agencies) responsible for recruitment to ensure that all shortlists include appropriate candidates from under-represented groups.
- 4** Ensure staff members involved in recruitment have completed mandatory training to ensure fair recruitment processes.
- 5** Set an aspirational target for board/committee recruitment from under-represented groups to ensure that your governance structure is representative of the wider communities you work in.

**10  
by 20**



- 6** Have in place succession and talent management strategies which reflect the principles of inclusion and diversity, so that all staff can succeed and progress, if they have the right skills and values.
- 7** Identify and provide appropriate mentoring and coaching opportunities for staff and Board members – within your own organisation and/or with external agencies.
- 8** Make diversity training mandatory for all staff, and use your corporate communications and culture strategies to ensure diversity is embedded within the organisational values.
- 9** Champion the business case for a diverse workforce and leadership – encourage your colleagues, peers and partners to sign up to the challenges.
- 10** Sign up and work towards the CIH Charter for Equality and Diversity.

**These challenges will drive our sector to improve, but we can't do it without you. Sign up now to create a truly diverse workforce and leadership by 2020.**

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**Our challenge to recruitment agencies and contractor partners working with our sector.**

Through our roundtable consultation, we found that senior professionals in housing recruitment agencies are willing and focused to address the diversity balance in the housing sector.

The economic value of the housing industry is substantial and contributes up to 14% of GDP in the UK. Housing provides tens of thousands of jobs and training opportunities annually, across a wide variety of specialisms, nations and regions.

**We challenge recruitment agencies and contractors to broaden talent pools to ensure all shortlists meet the requirements of their clients and include talent from under-represented groups.**



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by 20



**Our challenge to regulatory bodies.**

Housing organisations are already subject to legal and regulatory requirements relating to equality and diversity. We know that failing to operate as a diverse business increases the likelihood of incubating risk and poor performance. Regulatory bodies across the UK have a clear role in upholding standards and must hold the housing sector to account. Regulators must actively assess the level of governance and leadership diversity when addressing and assessing organisational risk and performance

**We challenge regulators to actively assess the level of governance and leadership diversity when addressing and assessing organisational risk and performance.**

## Why the need for action ?

Over the last six months we have listened to the views and ideas of more than 150 people from across the housing sector. We have heard about great initiatives that mean people can be both brilliant and themselves in the workplace, but we've also heard about significant barriers which can prevent some housing professionals from progressing their careers and moving into leadership positions. The vast majority of people we talked to say more action is required to push the diversity agenda forward, specifically;



- > **Increasing governance diversity should be a priority. Board membership can act as a development 'break' for up and coming leaders who are 'chomping at the bit' for opportunity.**
- > **Create a management culture that includes developing everyone in your organisation. Invest in understanding your workforce; if certain groups are not applying for certain jobs then work out what the barriers are and begin to address them.**
- > **If we want to recruit the best talent then we must attract young people to pick housing as a positive, intended vocation; a diverse, inclusive workforce and leadership will support career choices into our industry.**
- > **There is plenty of good practice out there, both within and outside of housing but there must be both resources and permissions for change to happen in a meaningful and sustainable way.**

During our evidence gathering we heard some great stories of the positive work happening across the sector, but there are still too many barriers and examples of people having negative experiences. Here's a snap shot of what you told us....

**Q** We asked what diversity in leadership meant to you.

**A** "A diverse leadership should reflect the full spectrum of communities and customers we work with - offering a mixed representation of skills, backgrounds, opinions, culture, experiences, goals, perspectives, life experiences, ages, styles, enthusiasms, education, ethnicities, gender, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities."

**Q** We asked about your own experiences of diversity in housing.

**A** "I have also experienced and witnessed misogynistic bullying and worked with leaders who were unable to even see that their way of viewing the world and of being was only one way. Other perspectives were not valued at all, enthusiasms, education, ethnicities, gender, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities."

**A** "Overwhelmingly positive. It has been a safe space to pursue a personally satisfying and rewarding career."

**A** "I have been fortunate that I have been able to reach director level, but as a woman you seem to have to work harder to get there and be stronger to get noticed."

**A** "Sometimes rapport is built over drinks on a Friday nights at the local pub/ social event/Christmas party. However, being a Muslim I cannot attend these type of events, which possibly influences the opportunity to network. I believe the culture of the organisation needs to change to be more inclusive."

**A** "My organisation has an excellent record in diversity and I can honestly say they are welcoming to all, however they don't often recruit externally for leadership roles closing themselves off to a talent pool of future leaders."

**EVIDENCE**

**Q & A**

**FEEDBACK**

**Q** We asked about your own experiences of diversity in housing.

**A** “Diversity and promotion of equality is one of the key reasons I entered the housing sector. I wanted to work for an organisation where equality is demonstrated in practice on a day to day basis and where all people are treated with respect and valued. However, my experience is that it seems more of a PR exercise than a true culture – what is said in policies or value statements is not always captured in relation to back office chat or daily practice.”



**A** “I think the housing sector in general has adopted a strong approach to diversity largely due to the nature of the work we carry out, but also due to the emphasis placed on diversity through the old inspection regime. I am concerned that the lighter regulatory approach could result in some of these significant gains being lost as priorities shift and financial pressures grow.”

**A** “I feel we are becoming more diverse. There seems to be a new wave of people coming through to senior posts with a people and business focus. This is refreshing. However, there are still far too few women in senior roles compared to the number in lower or middle management. Networks are not open – you have to fit a certain profile, have the right connections or behave a certain way to fit in. It is very easy to feel like an outsider (even more if you come from certain backgrounds) and as a result you may be less likely to engage with opportunities.”

**Q** We asked about your perception of the barriers to career development.

**A**

CONFIDENCE ISSUES  
REGIONAL BIAS  
UNEQUAL PAY  
UNCONSCIOUS BIAS  
TOO YOUNG/OLD  
MATERNITY LEAVE  
BULLYING  
ISOLATION  
TERMS & CONDITIONS  
BARRIERS  
STEREOTYPING  
INFLXIBLE WORKING  
CHILD CARE

**Q** What's working?

**A**

CONFIDENCE BUILDING  
FAST TRACK MANAGEMENT SCHEMES  
ROLE-MODELLING  
POSITIVE ACTION INITIATIVES  
INTERNAL PROMOTION  
SUPPORT  
AGILE WORKING  
MENTORING  
COACHING  
JOB SHADOWING OPPORTUNITIES  
MUTUAL SUPPORT NETWORKS  
YOUTH BOARDS  
VOLUNTEERING  
CONFIDENCE BUILDING  
ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES  
FLEXIBLE WORKING  
SOCIAL NETWORKING GROUPS  
VISIBLE ROLE MODELS  
TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

## CIH's promise to the sector

CIH is proud to be the home of professional standards for the housing sector. We strongly believe that diversity in leadership improves governance and risk management, drives forward organisational performance and increases staff retention and recruitment.

Our role in championing diversity is clear - we will use our status as the professional body to promote good practice; champion transparency on governance and employee diversity; provide guidance, advice and support.

CIH will support you to deliver against the challenges by:

- > **Providing a framework for excellence through our equality and diversity charter.**
- > **Highlighting what works and why.**
- > **Creating a bespoke online platform containing a range of advice, information and case studies.**
- > **Providing mentoring support to all student members who are working towards chartered membership.**
- > **Ensuring that content for CIH qualifications and our learning and development resources actively promote diversity and its benefits.**
- > **Sharing relevant good practice at member events and national and regional conferences.**

In addition, we will facilitate and present an annual survey which will track our sector's progress against the 10 challenges for housing providers.



Leading Diversity by 2020

SUPPORT

WHO ?



**Steve Stride**  
CIH President 14/15 & CEO  
Poplar HARCA

The commission was chaired by 2014/15 CIH President Steve Stride, and the members of the commission were:



**Dr Jennifer Donald**  
Deputy Chief Executive  
NIFHA



**Jon Prashar**  
Head of Diversity Marketing at  
Places for People and Chair,  
Housing Diversity Network



**Farooq Mohammed**  
Leader of professional services  
consultancy 4housing.org



**Debra Constance**  
Chair of Women in Social  
Housing



**Cym D'Souza**  
CEO Arawak Walton Housing  
Association



**Kate Dodsworth**  
Executive Director of People  
and Strategy at Amicus Horizon



**James Caspell**  
Business Innovation Manager  
at Tower Hamlets Homes and  
CIH/Inside Housing Rising Star  
2014



**Ashwin Kumar**  
National Housing Federation  
board member



**Michelle Reid**  
CEO Cynon Taf Community  
Housing Group

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**LEADERSHIP**

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**CHALLENGE**

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