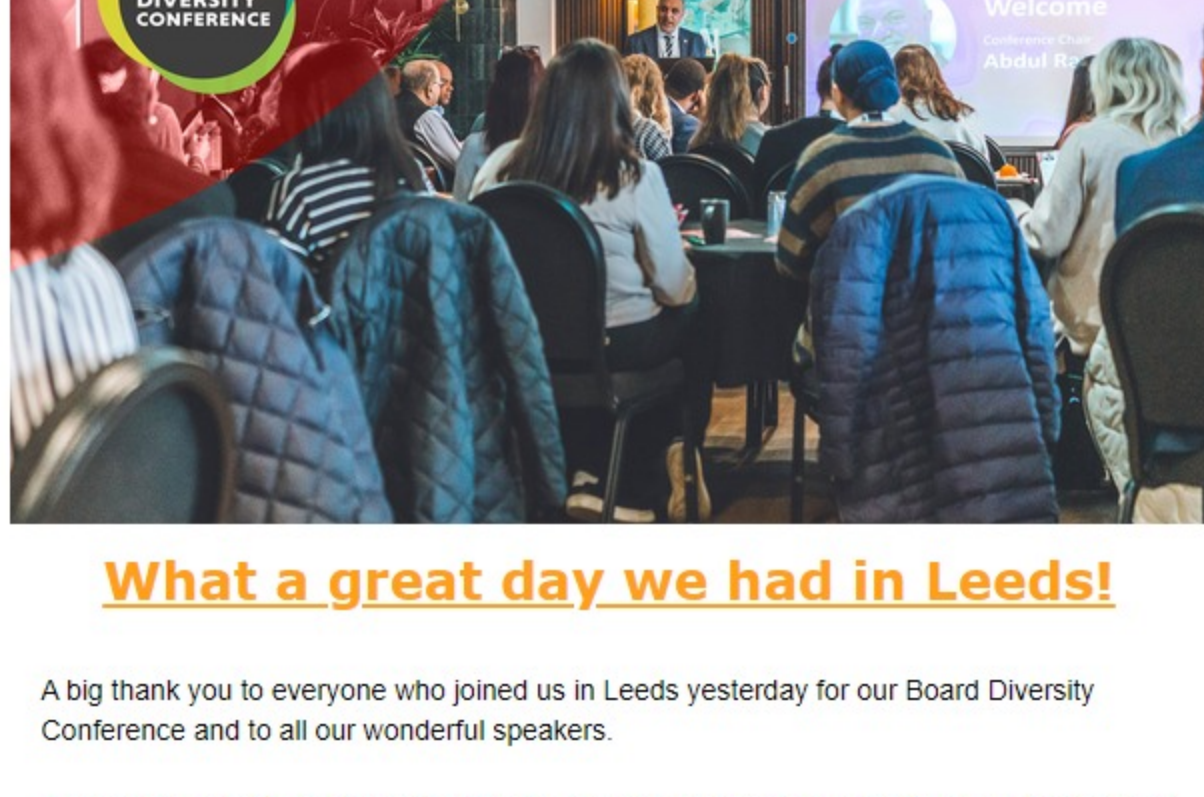


NEWSLETTER



What a great day we had in Leeds!

A big thank you to everyone who joined us in Leeds yesterday for our Board Diversity Conference and to all our wonderful speakers.

It was a fantastic day, with many attendees recognising how valuable they found taking time out from the boardroom or day job, giving themselves the space to think about the topics covered, and the opportunity to discuss their thoughts with others in the sector.

Particular thanks go to **Abdul A. Ravat** (Head of Development and Relationships, Abbeyfield) for kindly stepping in to chair the event with only a couple of days' notice after unforeseen circumstances meant Shazad Sawar was unfortunately unable to join us.

Amanda Kibarry (Chief Executive) and **Kevin Maxwell** (board member) from Your Place kicked off the day telling us about the organisation's journey to diversify their board and the impact it has had – making massive strides between 2018 and where they are now. Kevin spoke about his role in this journey as one of the Next Generation Trustees trained via HDN's [Board Trainee Programme](#) and about the vital importance of both sponsorship and allyship. As a small, specialist organisation working in a London borough with one of the worst rates of homelessness in the country (1 in 20 people in Newham experience homelessness), Amanda's advice to other organisations was to not 'duck the issue'. Small in size doesn't mean small in impact, and Amanda and Kevin offered the challenge that if Your Place can do it, so can you!

Next, we had a session on what makes a good board chaired by **Sharon Thandi** (Senior Associate, Devonshires), with panellists **Jesse Fajemisin** (Executive Director, Mount Green), **Lynne Nicholls** (Director, Leonis Solutions) and **Nicola Ebdon** (Assistant Director, Lincolnshire Housing Partnership). Jesse emphasised the importance of authenticity, honest conversations and creating spaces where it feels safe to bring challenge. Lynne spoke about the chronic underrepresentation of minoritised groups on boards, and how a good board strategically plans how it will get more diverse input – including from residents. A good board also understands that EDI is a component of all board decisions, not an add-on. Nicola shared how valuable it is to have diversity of views/thinking, and the importance of new board members not feeling that they must agree with or behave like existing ones. She also encouraged people not to wait for their first 'diverse' board member to come and change things – everyone can make a start.

Zara Mohammed (Secretary-General, Muslim Council of Britain) delivered an honest and impactful talk about the imperative for housing organisations to get to know their communities. When she started her role as Secretary-General, Zara visited over 300 Muslim organisations across the country to gain a deep understanding of what was happening in their communities. What she found was systemic bias and barriers to housing and services, community organisations struggling to fill the gaps in social service provision, and the weathering of needing to constantly challenge stereotypes and Islamophobia (40% of religious hate crimes are targeted at Muslims). Zara's challenge to attendees was "How robust are your systems and processes to deal with the most vulnerable people?" and emphasised that no one was asking for favours – just fairness, and an understanding of even the simplest issues that affect different communities.

Before lunch we heard from **Kanthi Ford** (Managing Director, KFV Consulting) and **Patrick Ricketts** (board member, Great Places Housing Group), about what we mean by equity, diversity and inclusion, and whether it truly improves business performance (research seems to go back and forth on the matter). Kanthi and Patrick carried out an activity about systemic privilege which got people thinking about 'what they have, but don't have to think about'.

After being foiled by train strikes last year, we were pleased to have **Alistair McIntosh** (Chief Executive, HQN) with us in person this year, delivering a talk on the current environment housing providers find themselves in. With costs per unit increasing, inflation is having a detrimental effect on the ability of both local authorities and housing associations to tackle the issues facing the sector. Alistair summarised the causes of the increased costs facing organisations and the risks presented by them, along with a call to action on taking both tenant and staff satisfaction seriously; "Frontline services are always more important than the boardroom."

Staying on the theme of challenges facing the housing sector, **Anne-Marie Bancroft** (Head of Consumer Regulation, Altair) delivered a breakout session focused on complaints and regulation. She gave an update on the relationship between the RSH and Housing Ombudsman, the new powers held by the latter, and reminded everyone to get their self-assessment submitted by the 30th of June! Anne-Marie also went into detail about the components that make up the 'right systems' for managing complaints, and those needed to provide adequate data and assurance on how they are dealt with and learned from. A key takeaway from the session was that Ombudsman outcomes are merely indicators relating to individual cases; it's up to the organisation to use them as prompts for strategic discussions and potential investigation into whether a wider, more systemic issue is at play.

Our second breakout session saw **Dave Richmond** (Chief Executive), **Dave Wilkinson** (Chair) and **Milcah Walusimbi** (tenant board member) from St Leger Homes of Doncaster share how they approached diversity and inclusion at the organisation – including HDN initiatives such as our accreditation process and Board Trainee Programme, and the use of mentoring. The two Daves posed the question of whether, as white, middle-aged men, they should be the ones talking about EDI and delivering improvements. Ultimately, with self-awareness and collaboration, the answer can be yes – it's everyone's responsibility to do this, especially if you have the power to make change happen. Reiterating what Kevin had said earlier in the day – allyship is vital, and it can be powerful for those with mainstream identities to do some of the heavy lifting rather than expect minoritised groups to fix things. Milcah shared her experience joining as a tenant board member – a welcoming induction process, plenty of training, mentorship, and regular social activities ensure that board members get to know each other well and function as a cohesive group. They also ensured that the Residents' Voice group has a direct link with and input to the board, with Milcah sitting on both.

Our third breakout session was run by **Camila Carvalho** (ED&I Consultant, The Adecco Group), looking at what can cause diversity initiatives to fail. Using case studies from the financial services, automotive, and recruitment sectors, Camila shared what doesn't work (lack of clear strategy and alignment with organisational purpose, superficial approaches focused on *seeming* rather than *being* inclusive, insufficient engagement and buy-in from leadership, with a lack of sponsorship and allyship, and underrepresentation of marginalised groups at senior levels. This continues when there are no programmes to meaningfully effect change, such as targeting training or accelerator initiatives. Camila shared Adecco's successes that they have had with two such programmes; Elevating Women in Leadership and Ethnic Representation in Management.

We finished the day with something slightly different.

Rohit Talwar (CEO, Fast Future) gave a fascinating talk on what the future may look like based on six key considerations:

- Values
- Geopolitical uncertainties and fault lines
- Economy, money, wealth and disparity
- Energy, environment and sustainability
- Wellbeing, health and life expectancy
- Technology and artificial intelligence

Rohit delivered his session virtually so couldn't see the faces of everyone in the room, but instinctively knew some reassurance was needed – that mixed thoughts and apprehensive feelings about the rapid pace of change are completely valid... but they don't necessarily change where the world is heading. So Rohit's advice is do not panic, breathe (but don't ignore it), be curious, experiment and most of all aim to embed learning as a daily practice. This way we can all hopefully remain assets rather than 'legacy liabilities'.

A final thank you again to our Headline Sponsor, Devonshires, and for support from Great Places Housing Group, Sovereign Network Group and 54 North.

Are you LGBTQ+ or an ally? Do you work or live in social housing?

HouseProud and Rainbow Roofs are amazing groups supporting LGBTQ+ colleagues and customers. We are looking to continue to make tangible change within the housing sector and encourage new members to join, and learn what we do!



HouseProud is a national group that supports colleagues in amplifying the voices of LGBTQ+ tenants and also gives LGBTQ+ colleagues a space to discuss areas for improvement internally as well. We look at supporting colleagues on an individual and organisational level. It can be isolating when the place you work doesn't recognise who you are, and we want to work to change that.

At the heart of all that HouseProud do is Rainbow Roofs – a group made up of customers from the North of England working to make changes of their own. Many have experienced antisocial behaviour due to being LGBTQ+, and they want people to recognise that as LGBTQ+ people their rights should be equal and fair.

So why should you attend HDN's LGBTQ+ Inclusion webinar?

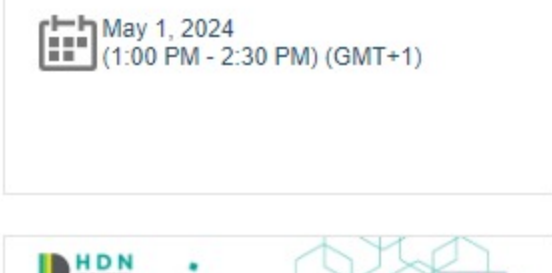
In our session, you'll learn about how your organisation, you as an individual, and your customers can all benefit by engaging with the work of HouseProud and Rainbow Roofs. LGBTQ+ issues within social housing aren't going away, and we need to work together to create positive change.

Come along and learn first-hand from customers and colleagues about how you can get involved.

Lili Vetter,
EDI Specialist at Wythenshawe Community Housing Group and co-chair of HouseProud NorthWest

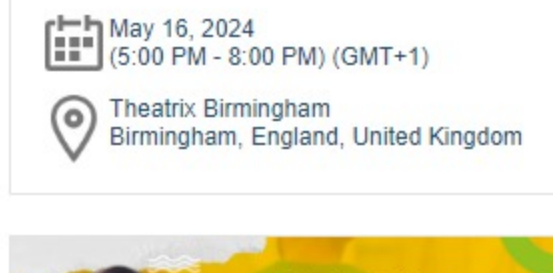
[Sign up here!](#)

EVENTS



Staff Mentoring Programme 24-25 - Inform...

May 1, 2024
(1:00 PM - 2:30 PM) (GMT+1)



HDN & WISH Networking Event Birmingham

May 16, 2024
(5:00 PM - 8:00 PM) (GMT+1)

Theatrix Birmingham, England, United Kingdom



Board Masterclass - Risk management and ...

May 20, 2024
(5:30 PM - 7:00 PM) (GMT+1)



HDN Online Workshop: Equity, Diversity a...

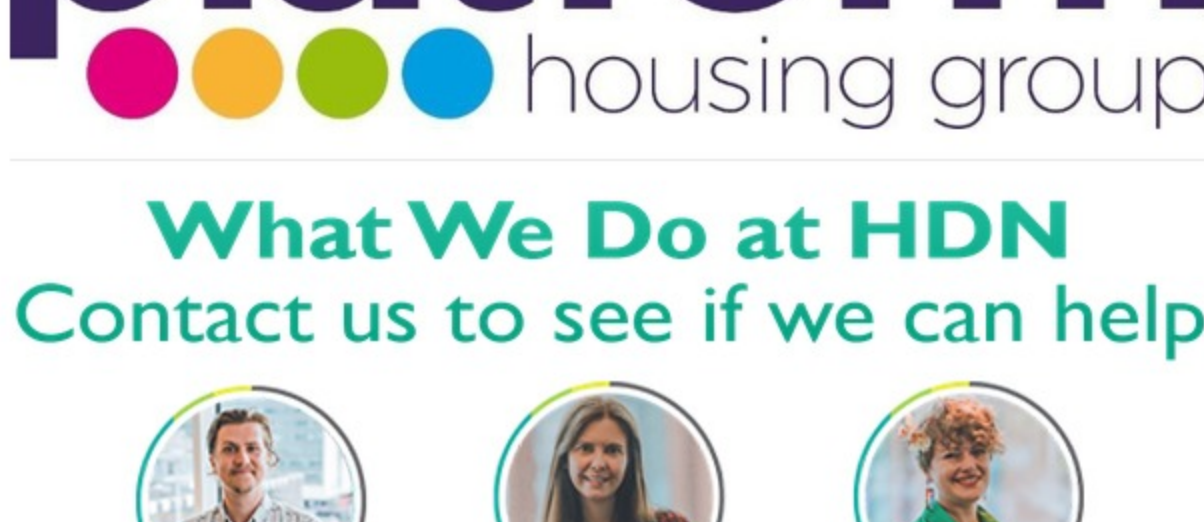
Jun 12, 2024
(1:00 PM - 4:00 PM) (GMT+1)

[For details of ALL our events CLICK HERE](#)

NEW MEMBERS



St Mungo's
Ending homelessness
Rebuilding lives



What We Do at HDN Contact us to see if we can help



We work with organisations on a range of equality, diversity and inclusion issues. These include management and leadership training, staff mentoring, board and executive team discussions and reviewing and helping on equality, diversity and inclusion action plans and strategies.

[Contact us](#) for further details