

HOUSING 2016: CIH President's closing remarks
Delivered 30 June 2016
CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Good afternoon everyone.

It's a real privilege to be here speaking to you today.

This is my first major event as CIH President and I'm delighted that it's taking place here in Manchester, in the middle of our centenary year, with the opportunity to speak to so many fellow housing professionals.

Being elected as your President is a real honour. It's also a great opportunity.

An opportunity to play my part in making the case for housing and the housing profession, an opportunity to promote the work of CIH and its members and an opportunity to make a personal contribution to a profession that I am proud to be a member of.

And it's also an opportunity to follow up on the fantastic work of previous Presidents and the great work they have done for our profession and in fund raising for their Presidential charities.

It was a privilege to serve as Vice President during Geraldine Howley's Presidential year, to see the fantastic contribution that she made and the record fund raising she led for her Presidential charity, the Princes Trust.

Geraldine is a hard act to follow, but I'm going to give it my very best shot!

[PAUSE]

In preparing for my Presidential year I thought long and hard about how I might choose a theme that reflects the great work of the housing profession.

After some reflection I settled on the theme of Changing Lives.

Changing Lives because that's what we do every day

And it's what housing professionals have done across the last century.

The work of housing organisations and individual housing professionals transform the lives of individuals, families and communities on a daily basis up and down the country. Housing is the glue that holds lives and communities together.

Housing makes places work.

Housing matters.

As we all know, the work we do is about far more than housing.

At its widest, our work covers a huge range of disciplines and areas.

From social work to debt advice and support,

from environmental health to youth work

and from law enforcement to careers advice, education and training.

A decent home provides a place to bring up a family, a place for children to study and thrive, and a place to live healthy fulfilling lives that enable people to contribute positively to their community.

Without a decent home the fabric of our society starts to unravel - and the cost of dealing with that is greater than the cost of providing a home in the first place.

And as public services show the strains of increasing demand at a time of reducing resources we increasingly step in to ensure the continuation of vital services that keep neighbourhoods thriving.

We really do change lives.

[PAUSE]

The theme of Changing Lives also runs through my choice of this year's Presidential charity. Like many of you I have been

very concerned to see the evidence of rising levels of homelessness across the country.

This is unacceptable.

[PAUSE]

No one should face the worry and uncertainty of being without a place to call home and the security and wellbeing that provides.

Nobody chooses to sleep on the streets in the rain - life happens to them and circumstances put them there, and once you are there it is difficult to escape.

What could more fundamentally change lives than helping people who have become homeless and preventing others from experiencing homelessness in the first place?

And how many lives could we change for the better if we ended homelessness for good?

For these reasons I have chosen Crisis as my Presidential charity.

Crisis are dedicated to ending homelessness by delivering life-changing services and campaigning for change. An ambition that I know all housing professionals would share and one that I am proud to support.

Crisis do amazing work, truly changing lives as you will see in this short film...

[PLAY FILM]

This film highlights just a couple of examples of the kind of work that Crisis do every day and the impact that their work has in changing lives for the better.

I know that with your help we will be able to raise funds to support them in continuing their work at a time when it is needed more than ever.

We have a stand in the exhibition that I urge you to visit as we are raising funds to help eliminate homelessness for good.

Please take this fundraising spirit back to your organisations and have fun doing it – it is great for morale and makes a massive difference.

I encourage you to help your own organisations remove the barriers in allocation policies and Choice Based Lettings that stand in the way of getting homeless people housed.

And please work with us as we influence government policy on homelessness, including making the case for a statutory prevention duty.

[PAUSE]

If, like Crisis, our role as housing professionals is to change peoples' lives then the role of CIH is to support you to do that.

Members are at the heart of who we are and what we do.

We are dedicated to ensuring that you have the tools and knowledge you need to do the job to the highest possible standards.

Sometimes our role is about giving you the information you need even if it helps you implement policy changes that you do not support.

This was true in the early period of welfare cuts and it is true now as we think about the implementation of some of the measures in the new Housing & Planning Act.

The Act contains a number of measures that CIH has questioned.

But now that these are law it is our role to make sure that you have the advice and guidance you need to implement these policies competently and professionally even while we make the case for policy changes.

Our offer of support extends beyond good practice advice. We want to support you and the wider housing profession across your careers and with your personal and professional development.

In the last couple of years we've listened to you and introduced a number of changes to enhance the value that you see from your membership, but we want to go further.

We are determined to ensure that our profession remains relevant to the changing environment that you work in by engaging with key players and employers across the industry.

We are consulting with organisations across the UK about how they are changing and the skills and competencies they need for the future.

You can find out how you can contribute to this discussion at the CIH stand.

We have worked hard to update our membership, training and education to respond to what employers have told us about what they need from a modern housing professional.

All of this work shows us the increasing importance of soft skills at a time when employers are as likely to recruit for attitudes and competencies as hard technical skills.

To ensure you have the opportunity to build and develop the right skills we are launching free training sessions for members across the UK.

We have worked with our national and regional boards to ensure that the topics covered are relevant to you and the environment you work in.

In the same spirit our new routes to chartered membership provide a greater range of choices more suited to the needs and working patterns of today's housing professionals.

But, and this is important, maintaining the same high standards that have always been the mark of a chartered housing professional.

The assessment may have changed, but our high standards have not.

[PAUSE]

And we have also brought back Fellowship to recognise our fellow housing professionals who have demonstrated an exceptional level of achievement.

Proof that we do listen!

We have listened, we have understood and we have changed!

[PAUSE]

This year sees the launch of the new trailblazer apprenticeships.

In this new approach housing organisations will be able to design a range of new job roles around new standards for housing.

Employers can set up regional training hubs to deliver the training, use existing providers, such as CIH's Housing Academy, or they can choose to develop their own programmes.

Whatever way forward you choose, CIH will be ready to support you in this work.

We are also looking at higher level apprenticeships which can provide a viable alternative to provide degree level qualifications for everyone who wants a career in housing.

Young people will be able to earn as they learn and not be saddled with a large debt.

That is great news for our sector.

CIH has been a major player in the development of this new approach to apprenticeships and we have ensured that employers are in the driving seat so that the apprenticeships work properly for employers and apprentices.

But it isn't only about new entrants to our profession. As your professional body we are committed to lifelong learning and personal development.

This year we will also be launching our online CPD tool providing courses of bite sized learning that you can undertake at your desk covering subjects such as professional skills, project management, wider business skills and professional resilience.

We will be launching the CPD tool this summer, so watch this space.

[PAUSE]

I also have some good news on the education front. Despite all the pressures there are some real positives for the sector.

A few years ago, we were all concerned about the drastic reduction in housing courses as universities reacted to funding changes. We were concerned about our ability to continue to attract new talent into the sector.

But things are changing.

More universities are recognising that housing is a vital component of social policy, social science, health, community development, community studies, urban management and regeneration.

There are currently 18 universities delivering courses, some more than one, which lead to chartered membership.

And there are many more courses under consideration.

This is a great opportunity to put housing as a career in front of a greater number of students than ever before.

And despite all the pressures, student numbers across all housing qualifications are holding up.

Many housing providers are investing in training and development to drive changes through their organisations and equip their staff to deal with new business streams, changing job functions and to build their professional resilience.

Over 1400 housing staff started a CIH qualification in the past 12 months.

In my organisation South Liverpool Homes, we have accessed a wide range of training through the CIH Academy, who provide bespoke training in the workplace to save staff travelling to courses – this ensures staff are equipped well for their work but eliminates the cost and time of travel.

[PAUSE]

I want to say something else about the future of our profession.

The CIH has focused particularly on new professionals in recent years and this is already paying dividends.

We are holding the Tree House fringe here at the conference for the second year running and the buzz and energy is amazing. Much of the programme has been organised by our younger participants.

All the CIH regional boards are attracting young talent keen to be part of the housing profession.

And look at this year's rising stars competition. The quality of entrants was so high that the judges had to go with four finalists.

This year we held the first ever new professionals' conference here in Manchester and it was an outstanding success. Two more events are planned for next year.

And we are working to ensure the future of our profession by attracting new entrants through the GEMS programme that we run in partnership with our colleagues at InCommunities.

[PAUSE}

My year as Vice President has given me a fantastic insight into the great work carried out by regional and national boards across the country.

Our ability to have an active, local presence is entirely dependent on the work of volunteers who freely contribute their time and effort to make that happen.

I want to take this opportunity to recognise your contribution and to thank you for it.

I know from personal experience that this is hard work but without you our members would lose out on essential professional development.

[PAUSE]

During my Presidential year I also want to play my part to support the connection between the CIH and its members and keep communication working.

We will actively engage with you to make sure that we understand the things that matter to you, the challenges you are dealing with and the support you need from us.

Please do engage with me and let me know what you think.

[PAUSE]

As I've travelled around the country in the last year I've been incredibly impressed by the work and commitment of housing professionals on the ground that I have seen.

And I hope to see a lot more during my Presidential year.

Everything I have already seen tells me that we are a dynamic, creative and committed profession driven by a strong sense of values and ethics and a belief in what we do.

We are working in a challenging, difficult and changing environment, but our determination and our ability to make a difference and to change lives endures.

I know that we will rise to meet the challenges we face today just as we have risen to the challenges of the last hundred years and will rise to meet the challenges of the next hundred.

By doing that we will carry on doing what we have always done, changing lives and showing why housing matters.

And for that reason alone I am honoured to be your President and looking forward to the next year as we work together to meet the challenges we will face.

I can't wait! I'm really looking forward to it. And I hope you are too.

Let's do this.