

Housing Plus Academy Roundtable

New challenges for social landlords

Monday 9th November 2015, Trafford Hall

On 9th November the **Housing Plus Academy** was launched, in a new partnership between Trafford Hall, LSE Housing and Communities, the Chartered Institute of Housing, the National Housing Federation, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and 14 leading housing associations. The launch was attended by 56 representatives from housing associations and local authorities from across the country.

The Academy has developed to promote **knowledge exchange and participative learning** among staff and tenants of social landlords, looking specifically into the impact of current government austerity programmes on social housing.

There are **major challenges and opportunities** facing social landlords in the coming months and years:

- The policy changes affecting the social housing sector undermine the business viability of social landlords, their social role and the stability of the communities where they operate.
- The uncertainties surrounding rents, ownership, benefits, and incentives, make it far more difficult for social landlords to contribute as significantly to the building programme.
- The devolution agenda will open the door to new opportunities for social landlords to innovate and collaborate more closely with local government.

The following **main findings** emerged from the roundtable discussion:

1. **Housing associations greatly value their independence** and want to preserve it. Housing providers are long term businesses, and as such they need optimistic leaders capable of strategic thinking and long term planning.
2. **Social landlords play a major role in low income areas beyond basic housing provision.** Frontline staff are a vital resource to both landlords and tenants. They need more training and recognition. Investing in people leads to good housing management, good tenant relations and sustainable tenancies.
3. **Most social landlords invest in creating economic opportunities for their tenants.** We need to collect clear evidence of the value of this investment both to social landlords and to tenants. We must show how Housing Plus activities offer a great value for money, and lead to greater efficiency in delivering services.
4. **Smaller, community-based and BME housing associations** play an important role in promoting integration and tolerance within the communities they serve.

5. Many social landlords are **achieving visible impact through their Housing Plus activities**. We need urgently to **pool this experience** and promote it through the Housing Plus Academy and learn from it in Think Tanks.

Participants' feedback:

I thought the whole day raised some interesting and thought provoking questions and ideas in my mind. It certainly sounded like the rest of the attendees had similar feelings. Absolutely Arawak Walton would want to be counted as a supporter of the Academy, Cym D'Souza, Arawak Walton

It was a really interesting day, thank you for organising it all, Phil Miles, Affinity Sutton

Great to take part in the launch, Hugh Owen, Riverside

I really enjoyed the Housing Plus Academy launch, because attendance was so diverse I got a strong sense of what was happening across the country, not just London, Matthew Corbett, L&Q

There is huge social value in what we do. Please continue to champion the cause while remaining open and reflecting on what you're trying to achieve Jamie Martin, Magenta Living

I do believe we should be trying to convert Housing Plus into Housing Core as I not only believe it is key to a good quality of life for tenants but also moves away from the idea that it is an expensive extra, ripe for chopping in the current round of austerity Paul Doe, Shepherds Bush Housing Group

Support from the National Housing Federation and the Chartered Institute of Housing:

It will initiatives like the Housing Plus Academy that will help the sector to rise to those challenges and prosper in the future helping all of us to do more and better, and often with fewer resources, David Orr, National Housing Federation

In a tough environment, the Housing Plus Academy can help housing professionals and organisations maintain their support for residents and communities, Terrie Alafat, Chartered Institute of Housing