

LSE Housing and Communities

Housing Plus Think Tank 2: Welfare Reform and Poverty – the next big challenge for social landlords

Tuesday 4th June 2013

with an informal supper and debate from 7pm on Monday 3rd June
Trafford Hall, National Communities Resource Centre, Wimbolds Trafford, Chester CH2 4JP

Summary

This event *Welfare Reform and Poverty* follows LSE Housing and Communities' first Think Tank – *Tackling an Uncertain Future* – which was held at Trafford Hall in February 2013. This second Think Tank will focus on how social landlords are tackling welfare reforms and poverty alleviation in an increasingly unequal society. What wider role can they play beyond just providing homes? The Housing Plus project brings together practitioners and policy makers working in social housing to share their knowledge and experience on the complex challenges facing the housing world today. The aim is to develop radical thinking about housing as a foundation stone of family life, community, social capital and self-help.

Housing associations are hit by many resource problems – loss of grants, loss of direct rent payments for those on the lowest incomes, cuts in Council Tax benefit, change in Income Support for lone parents, changes to the “Supporting People” and “Disability Allowance” systems, changes to housing benefit itself, and much more besides. Yet compared with other parts of the welfare system, housing associations enjoy some strong pluses:

- a property base worth millions (billions for the bigger associations);
- a regular revenue stream in the form of rent income;
- specialist skills in housing management;
- property repair and upgrading;
- a powerful social function in housing the elderly and people with special needs;
- providing vital ancillary community services;
- a track record in investing in the rented stock through a combination of private finance and government backing;
- a crucial role in poor communities.

Housing associations can help shape our housing and community futures, because:

- they work in some of the most disadvantaged areas;
- they own more homes than Councils now;
- they face some of the toughest challenges in our poorer communities – youth unemployment, debt and arrears, family breakdown, elderly isolation, skills gaps, simple poverty.

All these pressures undermine the financial viability of social landlords, and yet tackling them is their *raison d'être*.

This important Think Tank will bring together leading voices in the housing association world, to forge new ways of thinking about these problems. The first Housing Plus Think Tank was extremely popular and raised some crucial themes and ideas which we are taking forward into an Agenda for Housing Plus due out in 2014.



#LSEHousingPlus

Outline Programme

Monday 3rd June

6.30pm Drinks in the bar
7pm Hot buffet supper
8-9pm **Informal debate**

Tuesday 4th June

9.00 – 9.15 Registration and refreshments

9.15 – 10.45 Session 1: Welfare reform and poverty – a challenge to housing associations

- How big is the challenge? How serious are the pressures?
- Are social landlords up for the challenge?
- Thinking about the unresolved issues

10.45 – 11.15 Break and refreshments

11.15 – 12.30 Session 2: Housing the seriously excluded

- Housing people on the lowest incomes
- Helping communities under pressure
- Providing special support and care
- Making rented housing work for vulnerable groups
- Does philanthropy work?

12.30 – 1.30 Lunch and tour of Trafford Hall

1.30 – 2.45 Session 3: Anti-poverty action can help

- Why low income areas are being hit on all sides
- Worked examples of anti-poverty action
- Preparing front-line staff for the challenge

2.45 – 3.00 Break and refreshments

3.00 – 4.15 Session 4: Social enterprise and other action to combat poverty

- Developing skills
- Developing local enterprise
- Helping to overcome barriers to work
- Building on the co-operative tradition

4.15 – 4.30 Round-up

4.30 End and depart