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- DEVELOPMENT COMMENT
- REGULATION INSIGHT
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- EVENTS MY
- CIH ACCOUNT



Jo Richardson is president of the CIH, and professor of housing and social inclusion at De Montfort University

Taking a homeful approach for the future

COMMENT 21.12.21 BY DR JO RICHARDSON

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Chartered Institute of Housing president *Jo Richardson* explains why she is focusing her 'Homeful' campaign on addressing homelessness



Picture: Getty

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 Chartered Institute of Housing president @Socialhousing explains why she is focusing her 'homeful' campaign on addressing homelessness #UKhousing

 “There are growing numbers of people, including young children, in temporary accommodation feeling uncertain and unsettled and a long way from ‘home;’” says @Socialhousing #UKhousing



has amplified social inequity. For so many who were barely holding on, lockdowns, restrictions and job losses meant the thin cord which was holding it all together was worn thinner still, and with the recent cut of the Universal Credit uplift, for many it has snapped altogether.

“There are growing numbers of people, including young children, in temporary accommodation feeling uncertain and unsettled and a long way from ‘home’”

Homelessness remains a scourge on a modern wealthy country like the UK. The most visible version is rough sleeping, but many more people are experiencing ‘hidden homelessness’ – living in unsafe, insecure, unaffordable or short-term accommodation.

As we head into Christmas, we know that families are living on the edge, making decisions between eating and heating, some feeling unsafe, unhealthy or insecure in their accommodation. We are seeing people returning to life on the streets and, indeed, there are growing numbers of people, including young children, in temporary accommodation feeling uncertain and unsettled and a long way from ‘home’.

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The year in review: homelessness and rough sleeping

However, during the time of challenge and uncertainty amid a pandemic, we learned a lot about ourselves as housing professionals. We very quickly went back to our values formed during the social housing movement that is such an important part of our history. We reflected the values that we see as integral in the newly launched CIH professional standards – integrity, inclusion, ethics, knowledge, skills, advocacy and leadership.

“The social housing sector already does much to provide homes and support for people. But we can and should continue to do more”

We have re-energised collaborative working – sharing ideas and resources and pulling together in similar ways, albeit in different political contexts across the countries of the UK. Of course, there are some things that we can do better, much better, in terms of not only listening to residents, but really hearing what they are saying and responding to that swiftly and



Everyone In and bringing people in safely from the streets.

As society unlocks and the success of the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out injects a bit more normality into our lives, it's vital that we don't lose the progress or lessons we have learnt as a society during the pandemic.



The social housing sector already does much to provide homes and support for people. But we can and should do more, to take both a housing-led response to resolve homelessness, and a support-led approach to prevent it. My CIH presidential campaign will build on the lessons learned in responding to the homelessness emergency we have seen on our streets, in temporary accommodation and hidden behind closed doors across the country. The campaign is called [Homeful](#) – a word I've made up as a combination of hopeful + home, and an antonym to “homeless”.

There are a number of ways in which everyone can get involved. At the beginning of 2022 there will be an online toolkit available which organisations can access to take part in a sector-led piece of action research to establish what can, does and will work to resolve and prevent homelessness. We will explore what worked during Everyone In; we will learn from different approaches across the UK; and we will examine



homelessness will be able to contribute to the project and learn together. For details, please take a look at www.cih.org/homeful or contact homeful@dmu.ac.uk.

Over the next year (up to December 2022), it's my goal to raise funds for [End Youth Homelessness](#), a group of charities across the UK. There will be lots of activities, including a 'big walk' I'll be undertaking along the South West Coast Path next May. The walk is part of '22 in 22', a [fundraising campaign](#) to encourage colleagues to get outside, connect with one another and support their mental and physical well-being by getting active. Individuals or organisations can join in – walk 22 km, cycle 22 miles, do 22 hula hoops – whatever you like!

The aim is for us to connect with one another and with the great outdoors, amplifying our own sense of well-being while raising funds for an incredible cause across the UK.

I have one heartfelt request: please think about what you can do to support the Homeful campaign over the next year, either by contributing ideas or examples of housing-led approaches to resolve and prevent homelessness, or by getting active and helping raise funds for End Youth Homelessness. Together we must continue what we started during the pandemic with our agile, customer-focused approaches and effective collaborative working.

Jo Richardson, president, CIH; and professor of housing and social inclusion, De Montfort

University



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