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Thursday 11th November 2021

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A HOMEFUL WORLD

Guest Blog from Jo Richardson, President of CIH talks about working together for a #homeful world. Read more...

Working together for a #homeful world

By Jo Richardson - Director of CIH

It was in my late teens, during a volunteering experience in New York, that I realised I wanted to pursue a career in social housing. As part of that experience, for a month in the spring of 1991, I joined New York City Relief, an organisation which provided food, clothing, first aid, employment and housing advice to people experiencing homelessness across the city.

Up until that point, I had always been able to take 'home' for granted – as a base that was always there, a place from which I could learn, travel, spread my wings. It wasn't until I talked with other young people in New York that I realised how important home is to our feeling of security, our sense of self. Many individuals just wanted to carry on with their education, start a career, or travel the world, but the insecurity of not having a place to call home meant they couldn't focus on their futures. People my age had their hopes on hold because of the lack of a home.

Exploring housing-led approaches to resolve and prevent homelessness

Fast-forward 30 years later, and following a career as a housing officer for a local authority and a housing association, a policy and practice role for my professional body and then an academic career – sadly, homelessness continues to be a crisis which a modern, wealthy country like the UK has not yet solved. The most visible pinnacle is rough sleeping – but there are many more people who are experiencing 'hidden homelessness', living in unsafe, insecure, unaffordable or short-term accommodation. 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.

This is the mission at the heart of Homeful (<https://www.cih.org/policy/homeful>) the campaign I'm running throughout my time as president of the CIH Institute of Housing and there are a number of ways in which you can get involved in two key strands:

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1. Action Research

By the end of this calendar year, there will be an online toolkit which organisations can access to take part in the largest, sector-led, data-collection on 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 the best methods for prevention. Housing providers, charities, public sector organisations and people with lived experience of homelessness will be able to contribute to the project and learn together. If you would like to talk about what your organisation is doing to resolve and prevent homelessness, please contact homeful@dmu.ac.uk (<mailto:homeful@dmu.ac.uk>)

2. Fundraising

Over the next year (up to December 2022), it’s my goal to raise funds for **End Youth Homelessness** (<https://www.eyh.org.uk/en/>), a group of youth homelessness charities across the UK. There will be lots of activity going on, including a ‘big walk’ I’ll be undertaking along the South West Coast Path next May. The walk I will be doing 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 wellbeing by getting active. You and your organisation can join in – maybe walk 22 km, cycle 22 miles, do 22 hula hoops – whatever you like! There is a button on **the JustGiving campaign page** (<http://www.justgiving.com/campaign/homeful>) where you can set up your own fundraiser – be daring, be imaginative and please join in to support this wonderful group of charities across the UK that do so much for young people experiencing homelessness.

I am passionate about equality and equity in our society, not only in relation to housing and homelessness research and practice, but also connected to equality for women. In my day job I am Associate Dean Research and Professor of Housing and Social Inclusion, but I am also co-chair of DMU Women (our university staff network) and I lead our series of menopause cafes and have recently developed menopause at work guidance. I know the power of women to make a positive change in society and I am thrilled to be a part of the WISH network with the opportunity to share my thoughts with you here.

Please help me to make #homeful a successful campaign.

Thank you.

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