



WOMEN IN HOUSING AWARDS

The next section of *Inside Housing* is a celebration of all that is best about the affordable housing sector, as we introduce the winners of the Women in Housing Awards and Housing Heroes Awards 2023.

At a time when the system is under huge pressure, these are the people delivering change, innovating and going above and beyond to make a difference to communities across the UK.

In this special section, we'll be telling the stories of outstanding achievements from apprentices, tenants, individual teams and inspirational colleagues. There are tips for other organisations in important areas, such as career development and inclusion initiatives, as well as how different teams are driving positive change.

It's a great chance to say thank you to hard-working individuals and teams for a job well done.



HOUSING HEROES AWARDS

But the coverage serves another purpose, too. The individuals and teams here are the ones doing the most interesting work, challenging the status quo and working with communities to deliver change. In a difficult environment, it is so important to make sure that excellent performance travels and that others have the chance to pick up on that learning. These are stories we are sharing for a reason – there is learning here that could improve performance more widely.

Finally, a massive thank you to our judges, for so diligently scrutinising the entries and picking the winners, and our sponsors for helping support the work these individuals and teams are doing.

Martin Hilditch, editor, Inside Housing, and Gavin Smart, chief executive, Chartered Institute of Housing



Judges

Michelle Baker
Board member and committee chair,
Eastlight Community Homes

Daniel Bebbington
Debt and energy manager, Wrekin
Housing Group

Alan Boddy
Chief executive, Livin Housing

Leslie Channon
Public affairs and tenant
engagement consultant,
TAROE Trust

Simon Chisholm
Chief investment officer,
Resonance

Amanda Dubarry
Chief executive, Your Place

Anthony Duerden
Group chief executive,
The Calico Group

Andrea Finkel-Gates
Chief executive, Scotland's
Housing Network

Anneka Gill
Transformation director,
Morgan Sindall Property Services

Stephanie Goad
Chief executive, Golding Homes

Charlotte Goode
Divisional chair, Keepmoat Homes

Shaun Harley
Executive director of strategy,
culture and digital, Lincolnshire
Housing Partnership

Jaimee Hendry
Project manager, Oasis Community
Housing

Martin Hilditch
Editor, *Inside Housing*

Mark Johnson
Relief inclusion consultant, Mencap

Suresh Lal
Partner, head of social housing,
Odgers Interim

Becky Leonard-Dixon
Engagement advisor, Home Group

Melissa Madjitey
Director, Savills Affordable Housing
Consultancy

Jess McCabe
Deputy editor (features), *Inside
Housing*

Jenny Osbourne
Chief executive, Tpas

Ann Otesanya
Acting chief executive, Tower
Hamlets Homes

Lara Oyedele
President, Chartered Institute
of Housing

Moreen Pascal
Programmes manager,
Housing Diversity Network

Helen Phoenix
Head of customer collaboration
team, South Yorkshire Housing
Association

Annemarie Roberts
Executive director of operations,
Golding Homes

Christine Searle
Housing and regeneration
consultant

Doaa Shaye
Disability rights activist, resident
and youth panellist, Sovereign

Fayann Simpson
Group board member and senior
independent director, L&Q

Ishen Stewart-Dowding
Housing delivery project manager,
Haringey Council

Kirsty Wells
Director of consultancy and
partnerships, Housemark

Helen White
Chief executive, Taff Housing
Association

Sarah Williams
Head of customer experience and
digital, Westminster City Council

About

On 26 June, the Women in Housing Awards took place alongside the Housing Heroes Awards as the opening ceremony for Housing 2023.

We celebrated the leaders, innovators and changemakers across the sector, championing their successes and sharing learning from teams and individuals within the housing sector. Both awards recognised achievements at all levels, from apprentice, to tenant, to chief executive.

The aim of the event is to flag the teams and individuals by showcasing their work, ideas and contribution in communities across the UK at Housing 2023, Europe's largest housing festival.

After pulling together impressive shortlists for each category, a large panel of 32 expert judges, representing all parts of the sector, decided our winners. Read about the winners and find out why they were successful over the next 33 pages.



Best career development initiative

Pathways Academy



This initiative supports young disabled people into jobs in the inclusion sector

The academy has trained 40 people since launching in 2020, with a 98% positive feedback score

By the end of the training programme, more than two in three were working in inclusion

Pathways Academy supports young disabled people into a variety of inclusion and inclusion-related roles through a structured, three-year programme of training, mentoring and on-the-job support. It follows the social model of disability, which states that people are disabled by the barriers they face in society, not their impairment.

Since its launch in 2020, Pathways has trained and supported 40 young people. At the start of their time at Pathways, only 12% of trainees felt confident to apply for jobs, but by the end this had increased to 78%. One in five trainees were working in inclusion before

taking the course; by the end of training, this had risen to more than two-thirds.

Many trainees report that they had also gained skills, such as presentation and report writing, as well as increased confidence. Students have given the academy a 98% positive feedback score.

As one of them said: "I pushed myself and took a chance on applying and it's been the best decision of my life. Not only has Pathways Academy given me the confidence to pursue a new career, it's also introduced me to a group of like-minded peers."

This category was judged by:

Alan Boddy, chief executive, Livin Housing
Suresh Lal, partner and head of social housing, Odgers Interim
Christine Searle, housing and regeneration consultant

The judges said:

"This initiative demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of barriers facing those with disabilities and makes targeted efforts to remove them. It should be seen as a model for others"

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Board/committee member of the year

Shruti Bhargava



Shruti Bhargava is stepping down as chair of Unity Homes & Enterprise after eight years

She has demonstrated transformational leadership and a drive to challenge the status quo

She continues to be a champion for equality and the Black, Asian and minority ethnic housing sector

Shruti Bhargava has been chair of Unity Homes & Enterprise since 2015. She has provided transformational leadership, as well as being a tireless champion of the Black, Asian and minority ethnic housing sector.

Shruti has also served on the Better Social Housing Review's Trust and Quality Steering Group, as well as the connected Race Action Group, set up by the National Housing Federation and Chartered Institute of Housing to tackle social housing issues in England. As the only non-chief executive member of the steering group, Shruti played a critical role in ensuring the issues of

structural and systemic racism were kept at the forefront of discussions and that the focus remained on the most marginalised.

Charlotte Norman, the group's co-chair, said: "I have been collaborating with Shruti on the Better Social Housing Review for almost a year now. She has gone above and beyond... She is bold, brave and not afraid to challenge the status quo for the benefit of people and communities. The shape of the review and its recommendations have been richer with her contribution and I would like to commend her work and recommend her wholeheartedly for this award."

This category was judged by:

Charlotte Goode, divisional chair, Keepmoat Homes

Shaun Harley, executive director of strategy, culture and digital, Lincolnshire Housing Partnership

Fayann Simpson, group board member and senior independent director, L&Q

Highly commended

Catherine Turner, Eastlight Community Homes

The judges said:

"Shruti is very people-centric, with an incredible drive to help others and create more inclusive communities. She is a leader who challenges the status quo, while taking people with her"

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Inclusion champion

Lynne Nicholls



Lynne Nicholls is a long-standing champion for LGBT+ rights within the sector and beyond

She was instrumental in setting up HouseProud, the network for LGBT+ people in social housing

She is a passionate advocate for inclusive education and sits on the LGBT+ History Month committee

Lynne Nicholls is vice-chair of Watmos Community Homes and a champion for LGBT+, disabled people's, women's and Black, Asian and minority ethnic people's rights. She is passionate about the positive impact staff networks can have and set up her first one 20 years ago while working at Southwark Council.

Lynne ran the award-winning LGBT+ Network at Circle Housing, and has provided advice to other organisations on staff networks. She was instrumental in setting up HouseProud, the network for LGBT+ people working in social housing, which she has co-chaired for the past two years. She has organised more

than 50 events for HouseProud, the most recent of which brought together more than 100 residents and staff.

Lynn has run a housing sector International Women's Day event annually for the past decade and is currently volunteering as a strategic builder for First Brick Housing, which aims to build housing for and owned by the LGBT+ community.

She is also the chair of trustees for Schools Out, the LGBT+ education charity, sits on the committee for LGBT+ History Month, and speaks in schools for Diversity Role Models.

This category was judged by:

Becky Leonard-Dixon, engagement advisor, Home Group

Jess McCabe, deputy editor (features), *Inside Housing*

Lara Oyedele, president, Chartered Institute of Housing

Fayann Simpson, group board member and senior independent director, L&Q

Highly commended

Lade Hephzibah Olugbemi, Tower Hamlets Council

The judges said:

"A true champion for equality, who leads by example. Lynne has given so much to so many people. She lives the values of inclusivity and this can be seen through her work"

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Professional of the year – housing association/ registered provider

Katie Gilmartin



Katie Gilmartin has succeeded in driving forward MMC to deliver sustainable and affordable housing

Both local and central government officials now come to her for advice on MMC

Her passion and determination mean she is already a role model for many in the sector

Katie Gilmartin (pictured above, right) is taking on a tough mission – to convince not only the board at her employer, Platform Housing Group, but also the affordable housing sector, to accelerate their approach to modern methods of construction (MMC) and deliver sustainable homes for customers.

Despite a hectic 12 months, and in a climate of inflated costs, stretched supply chains and economic uncertainty, she is succeeding. Katie commissioned research into how larger-scale investment in MMC can benefit both the sector and the homes it builds for residents. She is influencing thinking around

MMC to such an extent that local authorities such as Lincolnshire County Council and even central government are now approaching her for advice.

Katie has made a big difference at Platform. She continues to push for new thinking and approaches in development. Huge, new, all-MMC sites are close to being finalised that will be the biggest in the group's history.

Many different people from across the sector and beyond all say the same thing – her passion and determination for collaboration drives and inspires them.

This category was judged by:

Charlotte Goode, divisional chair, Keepmoat Homes

Shaun Harley, executive director of strategy, culture and digital, Lincolnshire Housing Partnership

Doaa Shayea, disability rights activist, resident and youth panellist, Sovereign

Highly commended

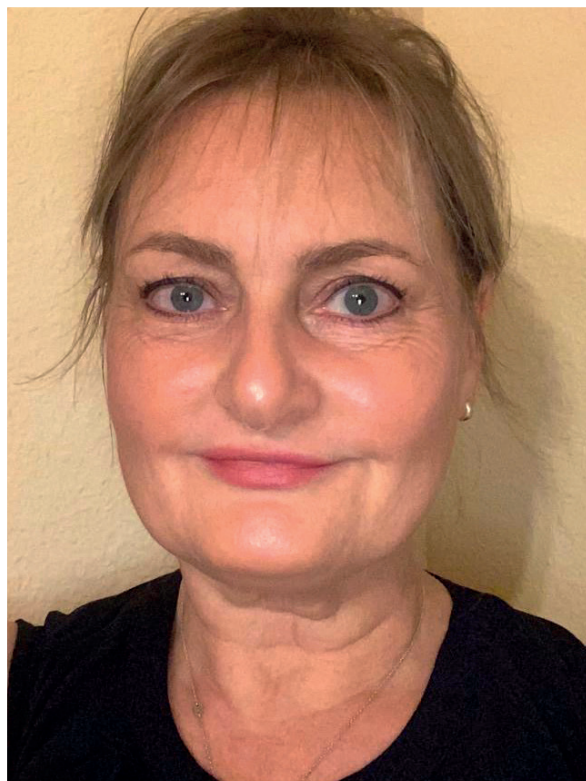
Jannette Cannon, Langley House Trust

The judges said:

“Katie is a hugely passionate individual, who continuously strives to raise the bar when it comes to delivering high-quality and sustainable affordable housing across the sector”

Professional of the year – council/ALMO

Wendy Johnstone



Wendy Johnstone set up East Ayrshire Council's resettlement team in 2015

Her team has helped hundreds of families fleeing war and violence in Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine

Her team's ongoing support for refugees has averted potential homelessness for many families

Wendy Johnstone is the resettlement service manager for East Ayrshire Council. In 2015, she set up the team, which, since then, has provided support to people fleeing war and violence in Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine.

To date, Wendy and her team have provided support to around 80 people from Syria and Afghanistan, and to a further 170 Ukrainians. Each family resettled in East Ayrshire is allocated a key worker and provided with bespoke support from resettlement officers, who ensure they can access a range of services such as healthcare, education and welfare benefits. A designated employability

worker works with the team, directly engaging with people to ensure the best employment opportunities are available to them.

Ukrainian families are placed with a host in East Ayrshire. Unfortunately, around half of these placements broke down within the first six months for a variety of reasons. Wendy and her team have been inspirational in finding solutions where this has occurred. As a result of their proactive, flexible and people-first approach, the team has successfully prevented around 12 families becoming homeless, along with the associated disruption and distress.

This category was judged by:

Charlotte Goode, divisional chair, Keepmoat Homes

Shaun Harley, executive director of strategy, culture and digital, Lincolnshire Housing Partnership

Doaa Shayea, disability rights activist, resident and youth panellist, Sovereign

The judges said:

“Wendy is helping people in crisis to overcome barriers and feel supported in their local community. She restores our faith in humanity through the work she is doing”

Professional of the year – independent

Sybil Bawuah-Quashie



Sybil Bawuah-Quashie established homelessness charity Housing Dilemmas in 2019

Since then it has accommodated more than 30 adults at risk of homelessness

Former residents continue to be supported, and are encouraged to stay in touch with the team

Sybil Bawuah-Quashie founded Housing Dilemmas in Chelmsford in 2019. There had been a period in Sybil's life when she was extremely close to losing her home. Fortunately, she managed to emerge from this situation, but she knew this was not the case for many, and wanted to support others at risk of becoming homeless.

Housing Dilemmas acquired its first property in 2020, which supported four former rough sleepers. Today, it has six properties, and has accommodated and supported more than 30 adults who were homeless or at risk of losing their homes.

The judges said:

“Sybil’s compassion for those experiencing rough sleeping and housing vulnerability shines through. Her organisation is already having a profound impact in the community”

Housing Dilemmas also equips residents with the life skills to help them keep a roof over their heads, and ensures that their mental health is stable. Support doesn't dry up once someone moves to living independently. Former residents are encouraged to call and engage with the Housing Dilemmas team, whether to have an informal conversation or speak about their housing issues or well-being.

Housing Dilemmas continues to impact the Chelmsford community positively and will soon extend its services to other cities and counties.

This category was judged by:

Amanda Dubarry, chief executive, Your Place Home Group

Melissa Madjitey, director, Savills Affordable Housing Consultancy

Woman of the future – housing association/local authority

Aimee Tomalin



Aimee Tomalin became Cartrefi Conwy's group company secretary at 29 years old

Her drive and compassion are informed by her own experience of growing up in social housing

She will always bring decisions back to what is right for tenants, to create communities to be proud of

Growing up in social housing and knowing the impact it can have, Aimee Tomalin joined Cartrefi Conwy in 2017 as a governance trainee. Through her persistence, innovative approach and personable manner, she has progressed to governance assistant and is now the company secretary, the governance lead for the Cartrefi Conwy Group and its numerous subsidiaries.

This is an outstanding achievement and a testament to Aimee's persistence and hard work. Despite being relatively young, Aimee immediately commanded the respect of the executive team and board with her

kind yet assertive approach. She is knowledgeable and always finds time to help others. With a strong social conscience, Aimee is never afraid to challenge decisions when she feels it is the right thing to do. She is very much part of the group's social compass and will always bring decisions and discussions back to what is right for tenants, to ensure the group is creating communities to be proud of.

Given the challenges facing this sector, Aimee is the type of organised and innovative personality that every organisation should have in a governance role.

This category was judged by:

Ann Otesanya, interim chief executive, Tower Hamlets Homes

Ishen Stewart-Dowding, housing delivery project manager, Haringey Council

Kirsty Wells, director of consultancy and partnerships, Housemark

The judges said:

"Aimee is clearly guided by her own experience of growing up in social housing and strives to ensure that the customer voice is at the heart of decision-making within the leadership team"

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Woman of the future – independent

Laura Barnett



Laura Barnett's work at Barratt focuses on promoting biodiversity and improving open spaces

She set up multidisciplinary estate management review meetings that emphasise the role of ecology

Laura is also committed to developing and supporting the careers of those around her

Laura Barnett is a commercial manager at house builder Barratt Southern Counties, where she is responsible for developing and implementing new processes to develop the division's open spaces, promote biodiversity and improve landscaping and planting.

Over the past year, she set up new multidisciplinary estate management review meetings to show how open spaces on each development will be delivered and make sure that staff members focus on the importance of ecology and arboriculture. She has worked with landscape designers and contractors to put together a more flexible seasonal

programme of planting, with computer-generated imagery to show residents how the landscaping will look as it matures.

Her work will not only benefit the business, but will increase biodiversity net gains to benefit the planet and the community for generations to come.

Laura manages and mentors a team of surveyors and administrative staff who value her leadership and expertise, as well as her commitment to developing their careers alongside her own. She is also a huge advocate for women in construction.

This category was judged by:

Anneka Gill, transformation director, Morgan Sindall Property Services
Stephanie Goad, chief executive, Golding Homes

Lara Oyedele, president, Chartered Institute of Housing

The judges said:

“Laura’s unwavering dedication to challenging the status quo stood out; a multifaceted approach and commitment to developing others, while addressing issues facing the industry”

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Woman of the year – social landlord/public body

Emily Cole



Emily Cole is the founder of and programme lead for Greater Manchester Housing First

This partnership has secured housing for 350 homeless people and helped 500 into recovery

She is bringing about systemic change to help eradicate entrenched rough sleeping

Emily Cole is the programme lead for Greater Manchester Housing First (GMHF), a partnership of 12 cross-sectoral organisations working together to get people off the streets and into long-term homes – and it is a partnership Emily built herself.

GMHF has supported more than 500 people into recovery pathways. Of that number, almost 350 have been supported into a safe and secure home, where frontline staff and third-party services can provide the wraparound support they need. Many in the programme have experienced years of rough sleeping and chronic ill health, and existing

services had been unable to provide the support they needed. Many would probably still be on the streets, or worse, had it not been for the project Emily has led.

This shows Emily's commitment to the most vulnerable people in Greater Manchester. She has played a huge part in bringing about systemic change that will help eradicate entrenched rough sleeping by proving there are real alternatives, helping to save lives and prevent families from breaking up. What Emily has achieved is ground-breaking and her influence is felt from the streets to the highest levels of government.

This category was judged by:

Moreen Pascal, programmes manager, Housing Diversity Network

Helen White, chief executive, Taff Housing Association

Sarah Williams, head of customer experience and digital, Westminster City Council

The judges said:

“Emily has led an incredible journey of partnership and co-production, and has made a huge impact on the lives of hundreds of people who have experienced homelessness”

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Woman of the year – independent

Victoria Grinnall



Victoria Grinnall joined Barratt Developments after a six-year career in the Royal Engineers

She uses her experience to tackle mental health issues among her colleagues in construction

She is passionate about helping those in an industry known for high rates of mental health problems

Following a six-year career in the army, 28-year-old Victoria Grinnall today uses her experience of a male-dominated workplace to help tackle mental health issues among her – often male – co-workers in construction, and plays a leading role among local charities.

Victoria's transferable skills made her an ideal candidate for Barratt's Armed Forces Transition Programme, which provides an intensive 12-month training course to ex-service people. Victoria has gone from strength to strength and was recently nominated as a Champion of Women in the Ex-Forces in Business Awards, the world's

largest celebration of former military personnel in their second careers.

The construction industry is known for high rates of mental health problems, specifically male suicide. Victoria is passionate about the development and well-being of others.

For International Women's Day 2023, Victoria launched a campaign alongside Barratt Homes to ensure she and everyone on site took the time to say hello to each other and ask if everyone was OK, with the aim of opening up channels of conversation for those in need of it.

This category was judged by:

Jaimee Hendry, project manager, Oasis Community Housing

Jenny Osbourne, chief executive, Tpas
Annemarie Roberts, executive director of operations, Golding Homes

The judges said:

“Victoria has the drive and ambition to change and modernise attitudes to mental health in the construction sector. She has achieved so much and we are confident there's more to come”

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Woman of the year – charity

Kayley Hyman



Kayley Hyman founded Holistic Hoarding in 2021 to support people who have hoarding disorder

She has developed training for trauma-informed approaches to hoarding

Kayley has also launched Thinking Space, Wales' first support group for this condition

In 2019, Kayley Hyman developed accredited training in trauma-informed approaches to hoarding. This training is still delivered to a host of organisations, including the NHS and the Chartered Institute of Housing. Kayley knew that spreading awareness was an important step in effecting change, but was determined to go further.

In April 2021, Caerphilly County Borough Council commissioned Kayley to provide her training, and Holistic Hoarding was born. She has made substantial and meaningful changes to people's lives by preventing

evictions and homelessness. She has supported people to understand the how and why of their hoarding journey, unpacking the trauma surrounding it, and helping them to make sustainable changes.

She has expanded Holistic Hoarding by earning a new contract with another local authority and she has also launched Thinking Space, Wales' first support group for people affected by hoarding disorder.

Kayley has changed many lives for the better because of her courage and kindness.

This category was judged by:

Michelle Baker, board member and committee chair, Eastlight Community Homes
Anneka Gill, transformation director, Morgan Sindall Property Services
Annemarie Roberts, executive director of operations, Golding Homes

The judges said:

“Kayley provides a holistic and innovative approach. Her work is scalable and has the ability to change how we all understand and support people with hoarding disorder”

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Best company health and well-being initiative

SKylight



SKylight, Stockport Homes Group's charitable arm, supports local people

It delivers physical and mental health-boosting services through local partnerships

SKylight also helps local groups with funding bids, securing more than 70 grants in the past year

SKylight, the charitable arm of Stockport Homes Group, provides holistic health and well-being support for residents in the borough from the age of 11 to the over 80s. With partners from across Stockport and Greater Manchester, it delivers a range of services that seek to improve people's physical and mental health.

SKylight's physical health offer includes food-based work to encourage healthy eating and cooking. Your Local Pantry – a low-cost, food membership scheme – saved its members £153,417. The team has also provided cooking lessons for vulnerable

groups, including young people leaving care and temporary accommodation residents.

Mental health is part of SKylight's offer. It has a dedicated mental health worker who, in 2021-22, supported over 100 customers in temporary accommodation who were unable to get the help they needed to live independently, manage their housing and live harmoniously in the community.

SKylight has also supported many local groups in their funding bids. More than 70 health-related grants worth a total of £158,302 were won over the past year.

This category was judged by:

Daniel Bebbington, debt and energy manager, Wrekin Housing Group
Leslie Channon, public affairs and tenant engagement consultant, TAROE Trust
Mark Johnson, relief inclusion consultant, Mencap

The judges said:

“We were impressed with SKylight's support for local groups in helping them secure funding. This initiative demonstrates what can be achieved when working in partnership”

Recruitment campaign of the year

Customer Experience Centre recruitment, Yorkshire Housing



Yorkshire Housing has reshaped the way it recruits people for its Customer Experience Centre

The new approach deployed more innovative and informal recruitment methods

It enabled Yorkshire Housing to recruit the best talent, while demonstrating what it could offer

A group of women from different teams across Yorkshire Housing came together to change the way the organisation recruited staff for its Customer Experience Centre. This was to give candidates a truer and more positive experience of the role, and to deploy more innovative and informal recruitment methods to give people the chance to shine by enabling candidates to be themselves, to be authentic and show what they had to offer.

It enabled Yorkshire Housing to recruit the best talent and to be open about what it could offer candidates, while demonstrating its values and culture. Even candidates who

weren't successful have given amazing feedback about how supportive and enjoyable the process was, and how much they had learned.

This project was not devised by leaders, but created by colleagues to transform the recruitment experience for candidates and, ultimately, Yorkshire Housing's customers. It also opened up the process to other colleagues, who are able to get involved and develop new skills and experience as recruiters. It has created a real buzz across the organisation and has been a learning experience for all involved.

This category was judged by:

Alan Boddy, chief executive, Livin Housing
Suresh Lal, partner and head of social housing, Odgers Interim
Christine Searle, housing and regeneration consultant

The judges said:

“This holistic view of recruitment utilised insight from a range of perspectives, supported colleagues to thrive from the outset and used the process as a learning opportunity”

Outstanding achievement by apprentices

Tasha Rhodes-Farley



Tasha Rhodes-Farley joined 54 North Homes as an apprentice at 17 and has made a big impact since

She has shared her personal experience of ADHD to raise awareness

She has gone above and beyond to raise awareness of neurodiversity in her workplace and beyond

Tasha Rhodes-Farley joined 54 North Homes in February 2022 aged just 17 on an 18-month apprenticeship. Since then, she has gone above and beyond her day-to-day role to raise awareness of neurodiversity within her workplace and elsewhere.

Tasha has spoken about having attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). She has written a very personal blog and taken part in a social housing webinar in which she eloquently presented her own experiences and the challenges she has faced to a broad sector audience.

The judges said:

“Tasha has shown incredible fortitude and spirit. This has enabled her to advocate and raise awareness of neurodiversity, not only in her workplace, but also on the national stage”

Tasha was praised for raising awareness of a subject that is not often discussed, but which affects many people. She has impressed her colleagues with her confidence, maturity and professionalism.

As Sally Hilton, 54 North's HR officer, puts it: “Tasha has helped raise the profile of neurodiversity in our workplace, by speaking about her experience of ADHD. Her openness has allowed others to learn from her experience and grow their own confidence around the condition, and [it has] helped us become a more neuro-inclusive organisation.”

This category was judged by:

Daniel Bebbington, debt and energy manager, Wrekin Housing Group
Leslie Channon, public affairs and tenant engagement consultant, TAROE Trust
Mark Johnson, relief inclusion consultant, Mencap

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Team of the year – less than 1,000 homes

Fairoak Housing Association



Fairoak is a small association that houses autistic people and people with learning difficulties

Team members support each other closely, and every member of staff has met every tenant

The team works hard to maximise tenants' independence

Fairoak Housing Association is based in Cumbria. All of its tenants are autistic and have learning difficulties. They live in either independent flats or supported housing. The team at Fairoak works incredibly hard to ensure that all of their tenants live as independently as possible and lead fulfilling and meaningful lives.

Although the team members have very different roles, they are close and support each other, both professionally and personally. This ethos carries over to how the team supports its tenants. Fairoak wants each person to feel welcome and supported,

The judges said:

“All Fairoak team members work tirelessly to build warm, supportive relationships with their tenants, which is crucial for this group of people”

so every visit, phone call and message is treated with the same urgency, care and respect.

In such a small team, roles often overlap, but it is clear that tenants are at the heart of everything this team does. As a small housing association, Fairoak's staff members are able to spend time with all of their tenants; in fact, every member of staff has met every tenant and has a personal relationship with them. This means that when the team is planning any work at tenants' homes, they know how they will react and what can be done to minimise the impact on their daily lives.

This category was judged by:

Andrea Finkel-Gates, chief executive, Scotland's Housing Network
Jaimee Hendry, project manager, Oasis Community Housing
Helen Phoenix, head of customer collaboration team, South Yorkshire Housing Association

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Team of the year – 1,001-15,000 homes

Mental Health Floating Support Service, BCHA



This team tackles homelessness in Bournemouth among local people suffering from poor mental health

It supports over 320 customers every year to move on from unsafe or unsuitable accommodation

They help customers navigate benefits and housing applications, and advocate on their behalf

Bournemouth Churches Housing Association's (BCHA) Mental Health Floating Support Service team has one main goal: to reduce and prevent homelessness among a section of the local community who are vulnerable, stigmatised and often isolated and misjudged. The team has been delivering support in Bournemouth for more than six years and supports more than 320 customers each year.

Customers often live in unsuitable or unsafe accommodation, or they may be at risk of losing their accommodation because of difficulties managing their mental health. The team strives to reduce its customers' feelings

of social isolation and to help them find their place in the community so that they can live safe, happy and healthy lives.

Advocacy is a key aspect of the team's work. They help customers to unpick and understand often highly complex benefits assessments, housing applications and tenancy agreements, and then advocate on their behalf at the agencies involved. The team is working towards greater financial freedom, stability and choice for their customers. In 2021, the team helped to claim back £300,000 for its customers, including a lump sum of £42,000 for one individual.

This category was judged by:

Ann Otesanya, interim chief executive, Tower Hamlets Homes

Ishen Stewart-Dowding, housing delivery project manager, Haringey Council

Kirsty Wells, director of consultancy and partnerships, Housemark

The judges said:

“We felt that this team will have a long-term impact in a very challenging area of work, thanks to the exceptional efforts of team members who are clearly dedicated to their customers”

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Team of the year – 15,000 homes + Treasury team, Stonewater



Stonewater's treasury team is key to the organisation's success

Over the past year, the team has been instrumental in restructuring the Stonewater Group

The team is committed to developing through internal recruitment and promotion

Stonewater describes its treasury team as fundamental to its success. The all-women team stands out thanks to each member's varied professional background and experience. Its work ensures the long-term financial stability, strength and resilience of Stonewater.

Over the past year, the team has been instrumental in restructuring the Stonewater Group, a huge project that has involved consolidating and renegotiating key financial covenants with banks, as well as collaborating with other Stonewater teams on changes to internal systems and processes.

Another project has been the incorporation of 550-home Greenoak Housing Association as a Stonewater subsidiary, a partnership that will help the group deliver a new national centre of excellence for zero-carbon development and retrofit.

What the team is most proud of, however, is the way it has developed through internal recruitment and promotion. The team demonstrates Stonewater's commitment to opening up opportunities and nurturing talent, and to removing potential barriers to progression, such as those faced by working mothers.

This category was judged by:

Moreen Pascal, programmes manager, Housing Diversity Network

Helen White, chief executive, Taff Housing Association

Sarah Williams, head of customer experience and digital, Westminster City Council

The judges said:

“This team has made a huge impact by enabling Stonewater to plan for significant additional financial investment in homes and services, amid a challenging external environment”

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Tenant of the year

Salma Akhtar



Salma Akhtar played a pivotal role in helping to deliver Manningham's £470,000 retrofit project

If this project is rolled out across West Yorkshire as planned, Salma can take a lot of the credit

Salma is also a community champion and is committed to improving the lives of others

Salma Akhtar is a remarkable person, popular with everyone she meets at Manningham Housing Association (MHA), including fellow tenants, staff, board members and partners.

Over the past year, she has made a significant contribution to the MHA community by playing a pivotal role in helping the organisation to deliver a £470,000 retrofit project. A key part of the scheme included liaising with local people to highlight job opportunities in areas such as installing green technology and saving energy in buildings. The project would not have been so successful without Salma's active and highly

visible involvement. It is hoped that the project will be rolled out across West Yorkshire in future – and if so, Salma can and should take a huge amount of personal credit.

In her own time, Salma does outreach work to get people to participate in MHA's planned projects and has organised numerous sessional activities. She is also a community champion who has managed to promote the association's digital inclusion training.

Salma is committed to improving the lives of others, particularly those living in areas of high deprivation.

This category was judged by:

Jess McCabe, deputy editor (features), *Inside Housing*

Jenny Osbourne, chief executive, Tpas
Doaa Shayea, disability rights activist, resident and youth panellist, Sovereign

The judges said:

“Salma has been instrumental in bringing a difficult retrofit project to life. Her efforts to have a positive impact on the well-being of others is priceless and should be commended”

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Lifetime achievement in housing

Emma Palmer



From an 18-year-old apprentice, Emma Palmer worked her way up to become a chief executive

She pulled off the merger of two housing associations to create Eastlight during the pandemic

She helped to develop a national degree-sponsored apprenticeship and champions accessibility

Over a career straddling four decades, Emma Palmer has developed a depth of knowledge to complement her commitment and ambition, as well as her contagious enthusiasm, which commands respect throughout the housing sector. She has worked at every level and managed every service area of housing, working her way up from an 18-year-old management apprentice to become chief executive of Essex-based Eastlight Community Homes.

Emma pulled off the merger of two housing associations to create Eastlight during the pandemic, something her advisors said would

be impossible. During her career, Emma has also helped to develop a national degree-sponsored apprenticeship with a leading university, and sat on the National Housing Federation and Chartered Institute of Housing-sponsored steering group for the Better Social Housing Review.

She has had a huge impact, both locally and nationally. She champions accessibility and diversity, has spearheaded far-sighted and innovative approaches to people management and customer empowerment and inclusion, and is a leading ambassador for the entire sector.

This category was judged by:

Simon Chisholm, chief investment officer, Resonance

Andrea Finkel-Gates, chief executive, Scotland's Housing Network

Helen Phoenix, head of customer collaboration team, South Yorkshire Housing Association

The judges said:

“Emma demonstrated a passion for housing throughout her career. Her commitment to developing others’ skills, and focus on frontline staff and tenant progression are outstanding”

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Employer of the year Gloucester City Homes



Gloucester City Homes is a small landlord that is exceeding all expectations

Last year, it beat stiff competition to win an award for best place to work in Gloucestershire

It has adopted a hybrid working model, giving staff the flexibility to maintain a strong work-life balance

Gloucester City Homes may be a small housing association – with 4,500 homes and 175 employees – but it punches well above its weight. It fought off much larger competition to win the prestigious SoGlos Gloucestershire Business Award for Best Place to Work 2022.

The key to its success is passionate and committed teams. It has a strong track record as an employer of choice, thanks to a positive and inclusive culture, commitment to colleagues' well-being, empowering and listening to the workforce and offering personal development opportunities.

The judges said:

“Gloucester City Homes is a landlord that has punched above its weight. They are showing real leadership; this organisation is an example to the sector”

It has helped staff cope with the cost of living crisis through financial well-being advice, a benefits package for accessing medical care and shopping discounts, and gifts of £250 of vouchers to all employees. It has also introduced a new staff benefits package, which includes 30 days of annual leave and two annual volunteering days.

Gloucester City has adopted a hybrid working model, closed its traditional office and invested in a new, flexible collaboration hub. It has introduced trust-based working, giving staff the flexibility to maintain a strong work-life balance.

This category was judged by:

Anthony Duerden, group chief executive, The Calico Group

Stephanie Goad, chief executive, Golding Homes

Martin Hilditch, editor, *Inside Housing*

Highly commended

Wolverhampton Homes

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Inspirational colleague of the year

Natalie James



Housing officer Natalie James always goes the extra mile for the customers on her patch

She is a committed volunteer who gives her time to a men's hostel and her local food bank

Natalie's commitment to the most vulnerable makes her a truly inspirational colleague

Natalie James (pictured above, centre) started at Stockport Homes as a neighbourhood housing officer in April 2014. She soon built a rapport and strong relationships with customers in the area.

She successfully completed her Chartered Institute of Housing qualification in 2019. During this course, her interest in homelessness was sparked.

She began volunteering at Buxton Road men's hostel as part of the A Bed Every Night scheme, cooking and engaging with the customers.

The judges said:

"Natalie is absolutely dedicated to helping others and she is doing this in many practical ways in her community. We love her firm but fair approach"

Natalie also volunteers at her local food pantry, and is always on hand to provide support and assistance to the holiday clubs that provide free meals and activities for local children during the school holidays.

Natalie works tirelessly to ensure that vulnerable customers are supported. She goes the extra mile to resolve situations and ensure the correct agencies are in place to support those in need. She has a tenacious approach, and persists with visits, phone calls and messages to maximise engagement with difficult-to-reach customers.

This category was judged by:

Amanda Dubarry, chief executive, Your Place
Becky Leonard-Dixon, engagement advisor, Home Group
Melissa Madjitey, director, Savills Affordable Housing Consultancy

Highly commended

Donna Davies, Tai Tarian

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Inspirational leader of the year

Louise Murphy



Colleagues describe Louise Murphy as the epitome of a modern day leader

She has led her social housing and regeneration team to new heights over the past three years

Louise is an inspirational mentor to junior staff, and devotes her time to helping them shine

Louise Murphy is the epitome of modern day leadership. A partner at MSB Solicitors and the firm's head of social housing and regeneration, Louise has led her team to new heights over the past three years, all while contending with a global pandemic.

Louise is a mother, the managing director of her family-run social club, chair of the board of governors at her children's school and sits on the Chartered Institute of Housing's regional North West board.

Louise inspires her team and those around her to know that having it all is an option,

not a myth. Through hard work and determination, she has pushed doors open for herself, and she supports others around her to also achieve this.

Louise is a mentor to junior staff, including trainee solicitors. She wants her entire team to shine, and devotes her time to making this happen. Her door, as well as her heart, is always open, which is something her team finds bolsters her leadership style.

Louise truly has the inspirational touch, as she demonstrates every day, both in business and in life.

This category was judged by:

Michelle Baker, board member and committee chair, Eastlight Community Homes
Anthony Duerden, group chief executive, The Calico Group
Martin Hilditch, editor, *Inside Housing*

The judges said:

“Louise is the exemplar of compassionate leadership. She shows a real understanding and awareness of the people she is leading and how to support them”