

Frequently asked questions

Why are you recruiting?

Housing 21 has always been committed to ensuring the interests and needs of our residents are at the heart of everything we do. The recruitment of Board and Committee members is just part of a number of initiatives aimed at ensuring that the residents' voice is heard at all levels. We have, since our formation way back in 1964, always benefitted from resident representation at Board level but the Committee roles are new.

What does a Board do?

The Board directs the activity of Housing 21 and ensures it is well managed and focussed on delivering its charitable purposes. It is expected to take a strategic view, safeguard the association's assets and work as a team to ensure Housing 21 is well managed. It achieves this by meeting about ten times a year and listening to proposals and reports then collectively analysing and challenging those proposals to ensure the business achieves its strategic objectives.

What about the Committees?

The Retirement Living and Extra Care Committees meet four times a year to support, scrutinise, monitor and review the strategic and operational performance and potential of Housing 21's two areas of focus. As a resident representative you will help ensure that residents are, and remain, at the heart of both services and that your views and experiences shape the decisions and judgements being made.

Does that mean I have to be able to understand accounts and other technical matters?

A good Board operates as a team with each member bringing their own particular set of skills and experiences. We already have Board members who are trained accountants or understand the complexities of care provision or how our decisions impact the environment. You will receive training and support to enable you to understand these issues but you are not expected to become an expert. Instead, we are seeking someone who will bring a fresh perspective and look at proposals through the eyes of someone most affected by the decisions the Board is asked to make, which of course are our residents. If you are ever presented with a proposal written in language you simply don't understand, you will be encouraged to help the person who prepared the paper to ensure future reports are more accessible.

What will my time commitment be?

Whilst there is a minimum suggested time commitment for each role calculated to allow attendance at meetings with some training and preparation (25 days for Board members, 10 for Committee roles) you will be encouraged and supported to become as involved as you would like in the running of Housing 21. Whether through attendance at other Committees or meeting people at other schemes there are many ways you will be able to develop your understanding and ensure you best represent the interests of your fellow residents.

What are the benefits of being a Board member?

You will be trained and supported to enable you to apply the skills you have and to learn new ones. You will be part of an enthusiastic team, passionate about what Housing 21 are working to achieve, and will quite rightly feel pride and satisfaction from helping provide quality homes to people who need them.

Do I need previous experience?

Certainly not as a Board or Committee member. Your experience as a resident is what we are looking for. All we hope for is a passion for what we are trying to achieve, a willingness to learn and confidence to contribute. You will receive a full induction and ongoing training which will equip you to better ensure your skills and experiences help shape decisions.

Will I receive training and support?

We are recruiting two new Board members and two Committee members with the intention that you will collectively support each other. Each person will be assigned an existing, experienced Board member to act as their mentor/buddy – they will ensure you are properly prepared, give personal insight into the role and always be there to answer any questions you have. You will have plenty of opportunity to meet with Housing 21 employees and residents who will give you all the time you need to better understand the role.

Do I need to travel to meetings?

Before the Covid pandemic, all Board meetings were in person, usually in Birmingham at our head office. For the last couple of years, the majority of meetings were held online, using Microsoft Teams. Now, as restrictions have relaxed, an increasing number of meetings are being held in person and not always in Birmingham, so some travel and the occasional overnight stay will inevitably be required if you are going to fully contribute to all meetings. Having said that we are committed to ensuring that nobody is denied access to these roles for any reason and if you think travel may be an issue, please make that clear within your application and we will work to find a way to accommodate your requirements. We will meet all necessary expenses associated with the role and will book hotels and train tickets for you so there is no need to pay then reclaim the cost.

Online meetings – does that mean I need a good computer?

It would certainly help, with frequent communication by email and Board papers accessible online (although paper copies can be made available). Don't worry though – we will ensure you are properly equipped and trained. If you need a laptop and printer it will be provided and someone from our IT team will make sure you know how to use it. We don't want technology to be a barrier, if you have any concerns at all, let's talk!

These are paid positions – will that affect my benefits?

Your entitlement may be affected if the benefits you claim are means tested (based on the amount of money you receive) we would advise you to contact your Court Manager and ask them to refer you to our Tenancy Guru service who will be able to offer some advice.

Are you only looking for tenants or can a shared ownership or leasehold owner apply?

The only requirement is that you are a current resident of Housing 21. We are recruiting two Board members, one living within an Extra Care scheme, the other from Retirement Living. Similarly, we hope to appoint two Committee members, one from an Extra Care scheme and one from Retirement Living. The basis of your occupancy is irrelevant.

I have a disability that makes it difficult to use computers – will this get in the way?

No! There are loads of changes that can be made to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to a disability. These are called 'reasonable adjustments' and can range from providing large print documents or coloured gels to assist with reading, right through to special voice-to-text software or audio files and everything in between. In fact, your perspective would be really helpful in making us a more inclusive organisation.

Will I fit in?

We would really love to hear from people that don't have the same experiences, characteristics or perspectives as our current Board and Committee members! Really strong Boards and Committees bring together a range of people of different backgrounds so that they can challenge biases or 'groupthink' and can ensure that nobody is disadvantaged as a result of any decision making. We would particularly like to hear from people with disabilities, people of Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic backgrounds and LGBTQ+ candidates.

How do I apply?

Key dates

Closing date: 22 April 2022

Interviews: Week commencing 23 May 2022. These will be held in person at our Head Office in Birmingham (address below) and we will reimburse any reasonable travelling expenses

Application process

To express an interest please send a covering letter, no more than two sides of A4, to Paul Hutton, Housing 21's Company Secretary. Ideally this will be sent by email to Paul.Hutton@housing21.org.uk but if you have any issues with using electronic communication we will do what we can to find another way of enabling you to make an application (e.g. recorded audio, voice to text software). If you would like to send something by post, Paul's contact details are:

Paul Hutton, Company Secretary

Housing 21

Tricorn House

Hagley Road,

Birmingham B16 8TP

Paul.Hutton@housing21.org.uk

The National Careers Service gives some advice on writing a covering letter:

nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/covering-letter

Within your letter you should:

- Introduce yourself
- Tell us:
 - Why you are interested in helping direct the vision of Housing 21?
 - What you think the position involves?
 - What do you think you would bring to the role?
 - Why you think it is important to have resident representation at Housing 21 and how would you ensure that you speak for other residents?
- Let us know how best to contact you

If you have any questions about the process or need support, please speak with your Scheme Manager.

We know how important diversity is to making a successful organisation tick and this is especially important for its Board and we are proud of the work we are doing to improve representation at all levels. We value equality and inclusivity and respect all the differences that make us who we are, including age, cultural background, ethnicity and race, disability and mental health, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, social background and lived experience. People who bring diversity and lived experience are particularly encouraged to apply.

Data Protection

The personal information that you provide will be used to process your application. Personal information about unsuccessful candidates will be held securely for six months after the recruitment exercise has been completed, it will then be destroyed or deleted. If your application is successful and you take up an appointment, the information will be used in the administration of your appointment with us. It will be kept secure and will only be used for purposes directly relevant to your appointment.