

Housing@21

Candidate brief for the position of Chair



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Welcome letter from our Interim Chair

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for considering applying for the Chair's role at Housing 21. Housing 21 is a high performing organisation, rich in history, which places the older person at the centre of decisions. We are impatient to continuously improve, expand our services and deliver even more care, support and homes to older people of modest means. Our recent acquisitions evidence this clearly, with new residents telling us the difference we have made to how they live their lives.



We are acutely aware of the changing needs, health and expectations of our current residents. Planning for these changes coupled with thinking about the needs of future generations of older people is central to our evolving strategy. We know there is strong demand for our Retirement Living and Extra Care products but also know they will evolve continuously. Evolution not revolution is our chosen path.

Affordability continues to be a challenge as we aim to provide the highest quality service whilst still making it accessible. The ongoing economic headwinds that have impacted all our residents has meant a continuing focus on value for money in everything we do. This has resulted in us undertaking a fresh look at our support services and the tools we provide to our resident-facing colleagues to do their jobs. Through our Transform 21 strategy our technology will be modern and intuitive.

Our people are committed to our mission. We are an Investors in People (IIP) Platinum accredited organisation. Our people are the beating heart of Housing 21. The homes we provide are high-quality, safe and warm, but it is our teams that make us the organisation we are. People are our business.

It continues to be an exciting time for Housing 21 and the new Chair will help shape the next six years of our journey. For the successful candidate it is not about them leaving a legacy, but about our residents and delivering the service they deserve, building on solid foundations to do more. It is a demanding role which takes time and commitment, but the right person will make a huge difference to our residents' lives.

Yours faithfully,

Michael McDonagh
Interim Chair

About Housing 21

At Housing 21, our vision is to ensure that older people who most need it can access high-quality housing with support or care, whilst being involved and empowered to ensure the services provided meet their individual needs and preferences now and in the future.

Everyone has the right to live in high-quality housing and we passionately believe in the Retirement Living and Extra Care services we provide. From enabling residents to regain independence, to allowing couples to stay together despite differing care needs, we see the value of our services demonstrated time and time again.

We're an organisation with people at the heart and constantly strive to be better and listen to our residents and employees. We want to make sure we continue to be a great place to live and work and are proud of our achievements, including being named Best Older People's Landlord at the 2022 Inside Housing UK Housing Awards for the second time, and joining the two percent of organisations accredited by Investors in People to attain the highest 'Platinum' rating in 2020.

Housing 21 has a great story to tell; our roots lie with the Royal British Legion (RBL) and 2024 sees us turn 60 years old. We'll be taking this opportunity to shine a light on our services through the decades, the difference they've made to the lives of thousands of older people, as well as the employees and partners who have helped us achieve this along the way.

Our guiding principles

We launched our [Strategic Commitments](#) in April 2022 to provide a 'golden thread', connecting the roles and activities we undertake back to our vision. Central to these commitments are our three guiding principles: 21, Better and Experience. We seek to apply these to all that we do.

21: We're committed to providing a modern, forward-thinking 21st century service which includes updating and modernising our existing housing, as well as [developing new and innovative property designs](#). We think differently, embracing the disruptive potential of new technologies and the challenges and opportunities of social change.

Better: Despite our achievements and [awards](#), we know there's always room for improvement. We're never complacent and constantly challenge ourselves to do better and achieve better performance, quality and value for money to provide excellent services that we are proud of and our residents deserve.

Experience: Understanding the experience of residents and their satisfaction with our properties and services is crucial for our success. We aim to provide a consistently excellent service and a great experience for all the people we serve. We engage and empower residents to make choices and exercise control over the services they receive, and devolve decision making to local managers whenever possible. We're committed to acting ethically and openly in all that we do, being ready to acknowledge and learn from mistakes.

What we do: Housing with Support and/ or Care

There are many different approaches to the provision of housing, support and care. Services which have the same name or label may vary across providers, as can the terminology used to describe them. We describe our core services as Retirement Living and Extra Care.

Retirement Living

The vision for Retirement Living is to make it an exceptional place to live where we listen to residents, invest in their homes, and provide consistently high standards of service to create a strong sense of safety and community, whilst still treating everyone as an individual. Retirement Living offers residents the opportunity to live independently within their own properties with their own front door and their own private space. We offer an on-site Local Housing Manager service and opportunities to be part of a wider community. This is a unique housing service with residents' wellbeing at its heart. As well as providing high-quality, comfortable and safe housing, residents are afforded the peace of mind that comes from a personal service relationship that offers support as and when needed. We are proud of our Local Housing Manager service and see this as the essence of our Retirement Living offer.



Extra Care

The vision for Extra Care is for older people to aspire to live in one of our properties and where residents can expect to receive a high-quality housing and care service and feel valued and listened to. At the same time, we want to ensure employees feel appreciated and inspired and are seen as sector leaders in the housing and care market for older people. Extra Care seeks to provide an alternative to residential care that enables residents to maintain their independence and autonomy, but still have access to high-quality care, meals and social interaction on their own terms. We engage with each resident as an individual, respect their opinions and preferences and ensure they are listened to and able to have a say regarding the way services are delivered and developed. Extra Care is a place where older people can live independently in their own apartment within a welcoming community setting with the added peace of mind that comes from knowing there is a professional care service on site and available 24/7 to meet any planned or emergency care and support needs.



Our Finances

We achieved a turnover of £252 million in 2023 (an increase from £224 million in 2022) and an operating surplus of £26.4 million. Our loan book and financing arrangements are relatively simple, meaning we are not subject to onerous financing terms. Our gearing as at March 2023 was 40.7 percent.

In August this year, S&P reaffirmed our long-term issuer rating as A- with a stable outlook. They commented that Housing 21 will continue to see strong and increasing demand for its services in Retirement Living and Extra Care, which will drive stable and predictable rental revenue and support financial performance.

Our Developments

We continue to have one of the largest development programmes for older people's housing in England with a development pipeline to deliver up to 400 affordable properties per annum, with 75 percent for affordable rent and 25 percent shared ownership, with at least 20 percent for Retirement Living. We are proud of our social housing roots and do not develop commercially to cross-subsidise social housing developments. We do not bank land and instead work closely with stakeholders to identify and provide for the needs of an older population.

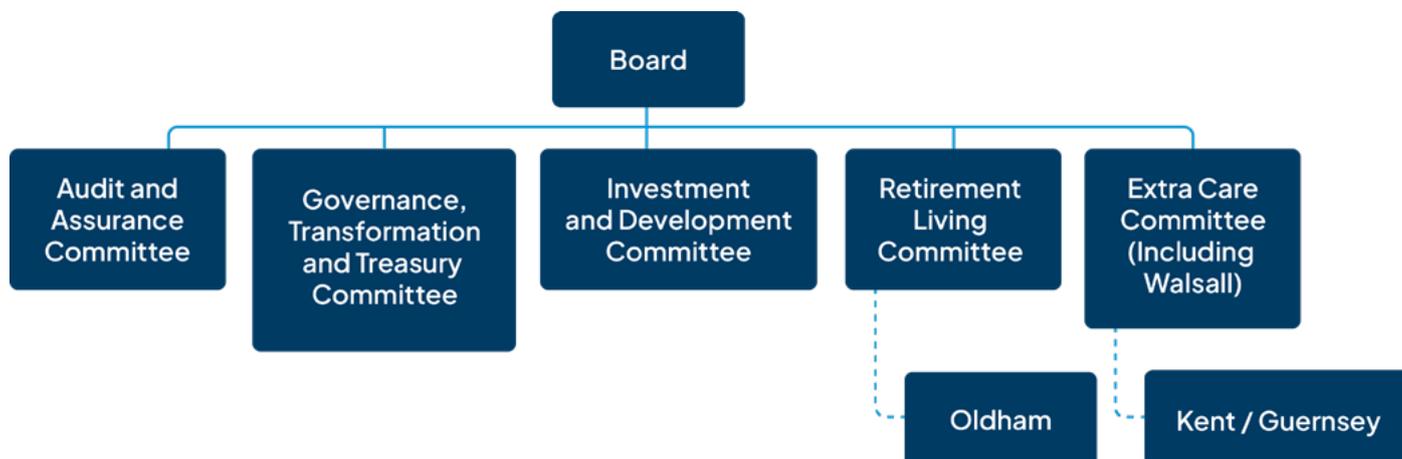
We have recently acquired properties from Clarion and Notting Hill Genesis, the latter being 427 Extra Care properties (seven schemes) in London, strengthening our presence there.

This deal marked the largest transfer of Extra Care in the sector in recent years, with further acquisition forming a key part of our growth and commitment to providing high-quality housing with support or care for older people of modest means in the coming years.



Board and Committee Structure

The Board operates the following structure:



2024 Board Dates (to be confirmed)

The Board meets four times a year, usually from 3pm Thursday to 3pm Friday at Tricorn House, Birmingham which includes dinner and an overnight stay:

- Thursday 7 March to Friday 8 March
- Tuesday 4 June to Wednesday 5 June
- Thursday 19 September to Friday 20 September
- Thursday 5 December to Friday 6 December

Housing 21 has five committees which meet every other month either on Teams or in person. At the time of writing these dates are being finalised and can be shared in due course:

- Governance, Transformation and Treasury Committee
- Audit and Assurance Committee
- Investment and Development Committee
- Extra Care Committee
- Retirement Living Committee



Key Responsibilities

- Ensure the leadership, and efficient conduct, of the Board's business.
- Promote openness and debate and ensures that all Board Members are given the opportunity to express their views, and that appropriate standards of behaviour are maintained in accordance with a code of conduct approved by the Board.
- Establish a constructive working relationship with, and provide support for, the Chief Executive, and ensure that the Board as a whole acts in partnership with executive employees.
- Ensure that the Respect and Inclusion agenda is integrated and considered throughout the business of the Board.
- Ensure that our residents remain at the heart of our decision making and that their voice/representation is heard at board level.
- Ensure that the Board delegates sufficient authority to its committees, the Chair, the Chief Executive and others to enable the business of the organisation to be carried on effectively between meetings of the Board; and also to ensure that the Board monitors the use of these delegated powers.
- Ensure that the Board receives professional advice when it is needed, either from its senior employees or from external sources.
- Ensure that the organisation provides appropriate role profiles and competency frameworks for all Board Members.
- Represent the organisation as appropriate.
- Working in consultation with other Board Members, ensure that:
 - All new members receive induction training and that effective arrangements are made to enhance the skills, experience and knowledge of all its members with regular training and development activity on an ongoing basis.
 - The Board makes proper arrangements to appraise the performance of the Chief Executive. When necessary, the Chief Executive is replaced in a timely and orderly fashion.
 - The Board makes proper and appropriate arrangements for its own appraisal and that of Board Members, including the Chair's own appraisal, and for implementing a succession plan for Board membership.
 - The level of any agreed Board Member remuneration results from an approved process that minimises the potential for conflicts of interest.
- The Chair (usually in conjunction with other designated Board Members) may also have responsibility for a number of specific functions including:
 - Chairing of the selection panel for the appointment of the Chief Executive.
 - Chairing the panel to appraise the Chief Executive's performance.
 - Conducting appeals against a disciplinary decision against senior employees.
 - Being an authorised signatory for contracts, cheques and other documents.
 - Being part of the emergency response arrangements in relation to such events as fraud, major failure of services, etc.

Qualities and attributes

- **Vision and a commitment to the provision of quality social housing and care for older people of modest means.** It is essential that the Chair has a strong sense of connection with the social purpose and values of Housing 21, especially the focus on helping those of modest means and setting high-quality standards, even if this isn't the most profitable option. A key challenge is to balance the cost of delivering effective services whilst maintaining affordability.
- **An inclusive and enabling approach.** Aiming for consensus whilst simultaneously seeking to achieve quality governance from a vibrant and challenging Board with diverse perspectives. The role requires a high degree of emotional intelligence and confidence from the Chair. This is not about the ego or expertise of the Chair but about creating a culture of openness, willingness to listen and acceptance that other members of the Board may have greater insight or expertise. The role of the Chair is to lead and get the best from the Board but this does not mean they need to necessarily dominate the Board's thinking.
- **Ambition and drive for Housing 21 to be the best, to innovate, to lead and succeed.** The Chair should be committed to maintain the drive for growth and setting of sector leading standards. The Chair must have the ability to recognise and ensure risks are effectively managed and controlled, whilst still being willing to embrace change and new opportunities. Understanding that steady and cautious is not necessarily always safe or sensible in an era where aspirations, technology and attitudes are undergoing rapid change. The Chair should share Housing 21's ambition to be exceptional and outstanding and not merely acceptable or just above average.
- **An ambassador and advocate, able to represent and promote Housing 21 to a range of stakeholders.** The Chair should be able to make connections and build relationships with stakeholders in government, local authorities, health, business partners, regulators and funders as well as maintaining links with employees and residents through various engagement mechanisms and events.
- **Experience and ability to establish an effective robust but supportive relationship with the Chief Executive.** The dynamics of the relationship between Chair and Chief Executive is particularly important. The Chair should be in a position to mentor, manage and monitor the Chief Executive. But the Chair should not try to be the Chief Executive and be willing to listen to and respect the judgement and expertise of the Chief Executive to enable them to operate and perform to their full potential.



- Commercially astute, with the ability to leverage growth (organic/inorganic) and champion modernisation and innovation. Specific sector experience or skills are less important than a general awareness and ability to prioritise and balance multiple positions, perspectives and external and internal pressures and priorities. The essence of being an effective Chair depends upon an ability to listen and lead, bringing lessons learned and a forward-looking mentality.

Skills and experience

- An experienced non-executive with credentials in the leadership and growth of organisations of scale and complexity in a regulated sector, with an unerring focus on driving positive outcomes for customers. It can be a first Chair appointment.
- A strong communicator with the ability to engage with residents, regulators and broader stakeholders.
- The ability to work collaboratively with our high performing Chief Executive and other senior colleagues, holding them to account and ensuring the business delivers on its strategy and objectives, galvanising colleagues in a boardroom environment.
- The experience to lead the Board in a collaborative, open and collegiate way, with excellent listening skills and the ability to bring structure and consensus.
- Possess a demonstrable track record of leading high performing teams and delivering excellent, sustainable customer-focused outcomes.
- Experience of working in a regulated industry would be beneficial, as would experience of business growth through acquisition and development.
- The ability to operate strategically in leading the organisational refresh of the three to five year strategy.
- Good commercial judgement, balanced with empathy, understanding and compassion towards our residents' needs.
- The ability to be an ambassador for Housing 21 and engage with the association's range of stakeholders.
- Possess a curious mindset, focused on improving outcomes.
- An understanding of good governance and strong personal and professional values.

Terms:

- Remunerated at £24,000 per annum (under review).
- Time commitment is c. three to five days per month.
- Initial term of three years, renewable to a maximum of six.

How to Apply

Key dates

The closing date for applications is Thursday 30 November at midday. Further information relating to the timing of the process will follow. The final interview process with Housing 21 will take place in late January/ early February 2024.

In order to apply, please submit a comprehensive CV along with a covering letter which sets out your interest in the role and encapsulates the aspects of your experience relevant to the qualities and attributes and skills and experience information on pages nine and 10. Please include the names and contact details of two referees. Referees will not be approached until the final stages and not without prior permission from candidates.

The preferred method of application is online at: <http://www.odgers.com/90088>

All applications will receive an automated response. All candidates are also requested to complete an online Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form which will be found at the end of the application process. This will assist Housing 21 in monitoring selection decisions to assess whether equality of opportunity is being achieved. Any information collated from the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Forms will not be used as part of the selection process and will be treated as strictly confidential.

Personal data

In line with GDPR, we ask that you do not send us any information that can identify children or any of your sensitive personal data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, data concerning health or sex life and sexual orientation, genetic and / or biometric data) in your CV and application documentation. Following this notice, any inclusion of your sensitive personal data in your CV/ application documentation will be understood by us as your express consent to process this information going forward. Please also remember to not mention anyone's information or details (e.g. referees) who have not previously agreed to their inclusion.

Contact details

For a conversation in confidence, please contact:

Becky Royle: rebecca.royle@odgersberndtson.com

Angela Dunbar: angela.dunbar@odgersberndtson.com

We are committed to ensuring everyone can access our website and application processes. This includes people with sight loss, hearing, mobility and cognitive impairments. Should you require access to these documents in alternative formats, please contact:

anne.neill@odgersberndtson.com

Also, if you have any comments and/or suggestions about improving access to our application processes please don't hesitate to contact us at:

response.manager@odgersberndtson.com



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