



PlaceShapers

Together we help communities thrive

Annual Review 22 - 23

We are PlaceShapers

The national network of place-based housing organisations. We are a collective of collaborators, change-makers and policy-shapers. We are a voice for our members and a voice for our communities because many voices can make a bigger difference than one. Together, we go beyond housing.



A Word from the Chair

“Life has been difficult for social housing customers over the last year, primarily as a result of the cost-of-living crisis. For PlaceShapers members working to support those same customers, that position has been compounded by the challenges across our wider operating environment and the need to tackle important issues like damp and mould and ensure we are delivering the quality homes our customers have the right to expect. As the Chief Executive of a housing association, I don’t think I’ve had a more challenging year at any point in my career.”

Matthew Walker
Chair



Matthew (on the right) pictured with residents Clare, Jane, Vicky and Michael.

It's against that backdrop that PlaceShapers has sought to be a help, contributing to the areas that members have said are their priorities. Staff and Board members have worked with enthusiasm and a passion for what the sector stands for. Our aim has been to put placemaking at the heart of decision-making, and influence others to do the same. Thank you to all members who have engaged with PlaceShapers over the last year doing just that – it really does make a difference.

Sometimes that has meant supporting national campaigns like the Keep the Lifeline campaign, by providing stories from PlaceShapers members which led to Universal Credit benefits and the total benefit cap being uprated in October.

Throughout the year we have put on events at short notice to provide opportunities for members to share their response to the issues of the moment. These have proved particularly popular, for example, the events we ran on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, the response to mould and damp and the response to the rent consultation.

We have continued to meet and work with Homes England and are proud that members' examples of regeneration and our Stay Local - Go Far report have continued to play a part in helping shape Homes England's thinking for additional funding and for an emphasis on funding regeneration.

At the heart of it all are the customers our members serve, and our thanks go to those customers who attended the events with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) giving feedback on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

Communication has been another key part of our work this year, whether it's writing thought pieces for Inside Housing or using social media to spread the message of what we've been up to. Our communications network have done a great job of keeping our voice heard.

This year we have sadly said goodbye to our Chief Executive Rachael Orr who helped lead exceptionally well over her 4 years with us. Our new Chief Executive, Catherine Ryder, has now joined us and is chomping at the bit to build on the progress achieved by Rachael. There is still a lot to do.

Finally, as I reflect on the year gone by, I am reminded of the PlaceShapers fringe event at the National Housing Federation (NHF) Summit last year, where four PlaceShapers members' customers told their stories about the impact social housing had on their lives. As they each set out the profound impact getting their new home had on them and their families, I was inspired again and energised by the impact it had. So thank you, Vicky, Jane, Michael and Clare – it's for people like you that I work in this sector, and you are the reason PlaceShapers exists.



Matthew Walker
Chair, PlaceShapers

Resident Voices

Part of our role is to amplify your impact. Your stories help us do this. Politicians and policymakers value real-life experiences and hearing directly from residents. Over the year we have increased the focus on resident voice in all our campaigning, lobbying and best practice work.

Political landscape

Resident voice shaped our response to the Social Housing Bill from the green paper stage. We opened our national conference with Origin resident, Jane, quizzing the Regulator on the standards.

Political campaigning

You told us the number one issue affecting you and your communities was the cost-of-living crisis and asked us to feed stories into national campaigning. This included resident voices in a 400,000 signature cross-sector petition urging the Chancellor to raise benefits in line with inflation. Raven Housing Trust Resident Sophie was among those at Downing Street. We are pleased the Government saw sense and made this commitment.

Best practice

We work with residents on subjects where you want to share and learn from best practice. We expanded our work with tpas on Residents' Voices in the Net Zero Journey to create a sector-wide communications campaign, in partnership with the Northern Housing Consortium. We recently held our first resident workshop ahead of an early summer launch of a new toolkit, which will be a culmination of effective partnership working.

Championing the value

When we were asked by the National Housing Federation to speak at their Summit on the power of involved residents, we handed the microphone to residents from Origin, Coastline, Karbon and whg. That's our approach whenever we are asked to speak – if it's more effective coming direct from a resident, then we will make it happen.

"I was delighted to have been asked to work with PlaceShapers, speaking at the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) conference in Brighton about consumer regulation. Not only was it great to be involved and have an opportunity to give the residents' perspectives, but it opened avenues for further discussions. Thanks to PlaceShapers, my interest in housing matters has increased no end."

**Steve, Chair of Resident Panel,
Worthing Homes**



Worthing Homes Resident Steve (right) pictured with the Housing Ombudsman Richard Blakeway

Public Affairs

Politics kept PlaceShapers on our toes this year, but thanks to our agile and responsive team we have managed to continue amplifying our voice within policy debates.

Working with our key partners is a core function of the network, so we were pleased to continue partnering with the RSH to deliver resident workshops on consumer regulations. Members hosted Kate Dodsworth in Bristol, Warrington, and West Yorkshire. We continue to provide valued feedback and scrutiny as the RSH bring in the long-awaited reforms.

The Development Forum has gone from strength-to-strength meeting quarterly with Homes England. Members are given a direct line to Homes England's strategy team, providing key feedback on planning, funding and market conditions. This has been influential in the development of Affordable Housing Programme changes and their new strategic plan. We know our support for regeneration funding has not gone unheard!

We have also been busy making sure your views are heard on the biggest issues in and out of the sector. We have responded to the consultations on the Dormant Assets Fund and Rents. PlaceShapers were proud to play our part in a sector-wide effort to work with DLUHC on a rent settlement that worked for residents and providers. We have produced a toolkit to help members communicate with residents and stakeholders about these changes.

We responded to needs identified by members, hosting a series of events to help them learn and share, amplifying their stories in national campaigning and policy work including a masterclass on working with local MPs.

As we look ahead to a general election in 2024, attention turns to policy development and our relationships with politicians of all stripes. Our work with Rose Grayston and Toby Lloyd (consultants from On Place) in developing a PlaceShapers influencing strategy will be put into full effect over the next year. A growing relationship with Labour has presented several opportunities for members to have an audience with key decision-makers and we will be ramping up this work throughout the year.

*Raven Housing
Trust Resident
Sophie at
Downing Street*



In numbers

In 22 – 23 PlaceShapers have:

Sign Up



Received over
800 registrations to
15 member events.



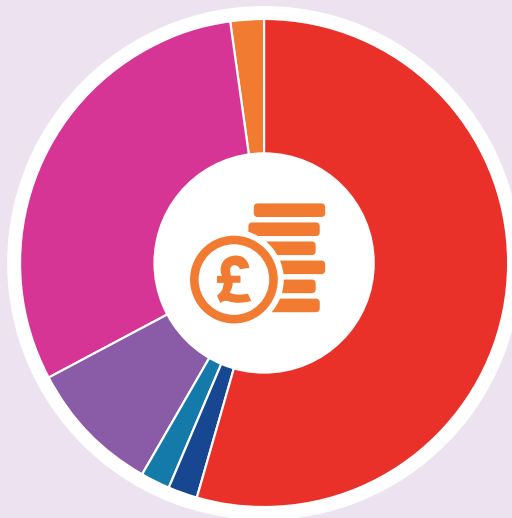
Hosted the
Annual Conference
featuring **32** speakers
in **10** sessions over
two days attracting
300 registrations.



Hosted **five**
sub-networks
for members:
Communications,
Chairs, Development,
EDI and Sustainability.

How we spent your subs:

- Staffing
- Infrastructure
- Events
- Website
- Campaigns
- Other



Looking Forward

As we look forward to the year ahead we are quite simply going to continue to ‘do what we’re doing.’ By that we mean that we will not be losing sight of the overarching goals identified in our corporate strategy. However, we of course acknowledge the continuous challenge faced by us all in the form of the ever-changing political picture and the somewhat volatile external environment.

We pledge to continue to be agile and responsive to these factors whilst addressing the core areas we, as PlaceShapers, have identified will make the most impact for our members and their residents.

Place – we will continue to proactively position ourselves as natural partners for the implementation of ‘Levelling Up’ activity.

Residents – will remain at the heart of everything we do. We will seek to engage and involve them in all our activities, particularly our net zero work and delivery of the communications toolkit.

Members – listening and responding to what members are telling us will drive all we do. Their feedback will inform and shape our work and events programme going forward.

We will also continue to respond to the issues which became a priority in the sector in the last year including:

Damp and mould – doing everything we can to prevent our properties from becoming damp and mouldy, bringing together our members to share their approaches and practical tools to help keep our residents safe in their homes.

Cost of living crisis – We will continue to campaign on behalf of those who need it most. Sharing best practice on support, amplifying resident voices and influencing policy where we can make a difference will remain our priority for as long as its needed.

Better Social Housing Review – We will work with members on the role we play in the action plan being developed by the CIH and NHF and the part this plays in our sector response to damp and mould.

Our new Chief Executive **Catherine Ryder** has now joined us from the National Housing Federation where she was Director of Policy and Research. Catherine will be hosting a series of member roundtables towards the end of April both to introduce herself and to gain a deeper understanding of member needs which will influence our work throughout the coming months.

As always, we will keep you updated via regular email bulletins. We’ve got a lot to be getting on with and we are looking forward to, with the support of our board and our members, working together to continue to help communities thrive.

Find out more more about your network and how you can get involved at www.placeshapers.org

**Catherine, Charlotte, James and Joanna
PlaceShapers Core Team**



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www.placeshapers.org

April 2023