

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio
Minister for Housing and Regeneration



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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To: Chairs of Housing Associations
Chief Executives

 December 13

Dear Colleague

I am sure that you share my view that good governance is of the utmost importance to the effectiveness and efficiency of individual Registered Social Landlords and to the sector overall. The role and composition of Boards is fundamental to this, hence this letter to you.

Boards need to be credible, challenge the information with which they are provided, make informed decisions and command the confidence of tenants, service users and other stakeholders. There is significant emerging evidence that Boards with diverse membership perform better than Boards with less diverse membership, making better decisions and contributing to the delivery of effective and efficient services.

As you know, in June this year I published a report on governance:

<http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/sector-study-governance-housing-associations-registered-wales/?lang=en>

My officials are working with the sector to implement its recommendations and to secure the improvement needed and an action plan will be discussed by the Regulatory Board for Wales at its next full meeting in January 2014. I welcome the report's suggestion of action to facilitate recruitment of Board members with a diverse range of skills and backgrounds and wish to highlight this issue with you in advance of the action plan being finalised.

You may be aware that the Welsh Government has been taking positive action to increase the number of women and other under-represented groups in public appointments. I am highly committed to this practical action and noted in my speech to the Community Housing Cymru conference in November 2013 that I would like to see greater diversity in relation to the membership of the Boards of Registered Social Landlords, for example, in relation to gender, age and professional experience. Therefore, as the Chair of your Board, I would like you to:

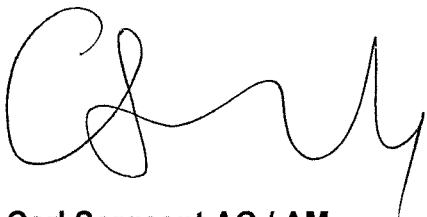
- (i) Consider how you can apply good practice to your Board in relation to diversity of membership. One of the issues you might want to consider in doing this is putting in place fixed terms for Board membership if your organisation does not already have such a policy

- (ii) Agree with your Board a programme of action to engage with women and other under-represented groups with the aim of achieving a more diverse Board
- (iii) Consider the use of mentoring and support programmes for women and other under-represented groups, and the possibility of encouraging people to observe your Board in action and discussing with them the relevance of their skills and experience
- (iv) Include action on diversity of Board membership as part of your continuous improvement action plan on governance

A range of material is available to assist you. This includes key findings from discussions with the Chairs of Boards of public bodies and from a meeting with under-represented groups. I also commend to you a case study of *Sport Wales*. The documents are available on the Welsh Government's website and for ease of reference, the links to the documents are provided in Appendix 1.

I have met Nick Bennett from Community Housing Cymru and Joy Kent from Chwarae Teg to explore ways in which the diversity of Boards can be improved. They are keen to help and are ready to provide Registered Social Landlords with practical assistance. I am copying them into this letter.

I have asked my officials to monitor progress as part of their regulatory role and look forward to hearing about what is being done to take this important matter forward. Thank you in advance for your attention and action.



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cc Nick Bennett. Community Housing Cymru
Joy Kent, Chwarae Teg

Increasing the number of women and other under-represented groups on Boards

Good practice and case study materials

Good practice:

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dsjlg/publications/equality/131118-good-practice-en.pdf>

Key findings from a meeting with under-represented groups

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dsjlg/publications/equality/131118-summary-key-findings-en.pdf>

***Sport Wales* case study – summary report**

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/caecd/publications/121219sportwalespublicappointmentscasestudysummary.pdf>

***Sport Wales* case study – full report**

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/caecd/publications/121219sportwalespublicappointmentscasestudyreport.pdf>