Now that the days are getting longer make good use of them by planning your board away days, staff conferences and training. Obviously, the content must be right on the button. But they don’t need to be dull. Here are some ideas for you to think about. If you have a better idea for a session, we’ll go for that. Each session will be tailored to you.

Alistair McIntosh
Chief Executive
HQN

If you are interested in finding out more about any of our away days please contact Anna Pattison on 01904 557197 or email anna.pattison@hqnetwork.co.uk.
Policy updates, horizon scanning, futurology – towards a fit-for-purpose strategy after the Green Paper and Brexit

What happens next? What do we do about it? These are the questions your top teams will be asking. We can help you to think it through.

Alistair McIntosh will lead these sessions. He writes for the housing press and is a popular speaker. Alistair is flexible, so he can do speeches or workshops. Getting him in is a sure way to freshen up and test the rigour of your thinking. When the Regulator wanted advice on the future direction of housing Alistair wrote the top bid. That was a while ago. But Alistair doesn’t stop moving on.

HQN is ahead of the curve. We don’t just tell you what you already know. The Green Paper will set a new relationship with tenants. And Brexit is changing how we fit with the rest of the world. It’s the right time to press the re-start button on your strategy. Book now so you can get on top of the Green Paper.
Leadership in a crisis – what to do when the plan doesn’t work

It’s harrowing, but you can learn a lot from the Grenfell evidence as it comes through. By the standards we apply to housing the firefighters were superbly well trained. As they say, procedures were ‘drummed’ into them. Some of them had even put out two fires in other towers shortly before. Yet they were not at all prepared for the sudden changes that night. So how do you deal with a big challenge that you haven’t seen before? Of course, there is no pat answer here. This is why we have teamed up with the Leadership Trust.

The Leadership Trust delivers high impact experiential leadership development, which changes behaviour and transforms individuals, teams and organisations for clients across the globe. With foundations in the Special Forces, the Trust’s approach has been honed over four decades with expert input from behavioural psychologists and specialists in leadership development. Why not spend a day in their company? The sessions are interactive and safe. This is the best way to get ready for tough times of all sorts. They’ll show you how to think clearly under pressure. Your top team will come out of the session a lot stronger.
Iron Grip 2019

Over 70 housing providers have already been put through their paces with an Iron Grip board session.

It’s the ideal way to get your board ready to meet the requirement to stress-test set out in the RSH Regulatory Code:

• We use your size and scale of operation
• We base it on your business plan.

You pick the stresses including: the benefit cap, low CPI-based rents, Right to Buy, third party failure, cuts to Supporting People, spiralling maintenance costs, development problems, house price crashes, escalating costs of finance and reputational risk.

You decide on the mitigations including: selling land, lean working, channel shift, closing operations, new types of funding, re-profiling planned maintenance, the implications of Brexit, diversification and merger.
Bouncebackability – stress testing and mitigations (newly released sequel to Iron Grip)

Our stress testing simulation Iron Grip was used by 70 boards and even as far away as Australia. It was a hit. But we don’t rest on our laurels. The RSH is saying that stress testing is by and large OK. The problem is that mitigations are not thought through. That’s true. It doesn’t look like you can rely on the levers to pull in a crisis. So, we have built another simulation. Yes, it sets stress tests. But it makes the board really think about how they will get out of a hole. What will you actually do and when? Can you turn off development? What sorts of diversification really work? How do you fix safety? What stance should you take with funders and regulators? How do you keep the tenants on side?

This is a truly life-like simulation. Alistair McIntosh sets scenarios that are directly relevant to you. And finance expert Ian Parker builds a model that is a simulation of your business plan, so you can see the impact of your actions in real time. This session will help you to spot the risks that can take you out and devise ways of handling these. Every board member gets to select and use the levers to steer you away from the rocks.
Your safety responsibilities for board members and councillors

“Complying with health and safety obligations remains the most fundamental responsibility of governing bodies of registered providers (boards and councillors).” Regulator of Social Housing

This is total turnaround by the RSH. It was set up to be an economic regulator pure and simple. The biggest part of that job was to get costs down. So that was what it wanted from the sector. At long last safety is being taken seriously. Yes, the RSH is taking a tougher line here. What do boards and councillors need to do? Our session can cover:

• Learning the lessons from Lakanal and Grenfell on fire safety
• Implications of the Hackitt Report for boards and councillors – what safety systems must you put in place and who is the named duty holder responsible for safety? Hackitt says there will be no more tick boxes and easy-to-follow rules – safety is not that simple
• The rights and responsibilities of tenants and leaseholders on safety
• Analysis of evidence from the Grenfell Inquiry – what lessons can you apply immediately?
• Analysis of reasons for the RSH safety downgrades – how do you avoid making the same mistakes?
• Essential safety pointers on gas, asbestos, Legionella and lifts – are you managing the right risks for your organisation?

These sessions are run by Vicki Cutler – she is a Chartered Fellow of the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health as well as a Member of the Institute of Fire Safety Managers and holds a NEBOSH Fire Safety and Risk Management Certificate.

Vicki leads SAFETYnet, HQN’s specialist health and safety network, and she has assisted landlords facing RSH action.
Is merger right for you? Specialist advice for boards of smaller landlords so you can own your future

You know that the industry giants are looking at mergers and acquisitions pretty much all the time. And if they’re not, they should be. It’s their job to grow in the right way. That why they have research departments that would be the envy of many FTSE 250 companies. How should smaller landlords respond to this? Can you take control of your destiny? When is it right to stay on your own? But if you don’t want to go on as you are how can you pick the right partner? HQN wrote Form Follows Function, a guide to the pros and cons of mergers for Placeshapers. And we can run a session for you based on this looking at:

- Your financial capacity to deliver your mission on a stand-alone basis – eg, how many houses can you build?
- What more could you do with another association – depending on their financial capacity and how it meshes with yours based on our modelling?
- What you would look for in a merger partner if you are being proactive and actively want to find one
- How you should respond to merger offers from others – what factors do you weigh up?
- How to manage a merger successfully – some deals don’t get done and mergers can hit regulatory problems very quickly: what are the organisational options for mergers?
- How to stay on your own and maximise your impact, where that is your choice.

Who will run these sessions?

Ian Parker built the financial model based on the Form Follows Function approach and Clare Powell led on a series of mergers for Sovereign – you will get a clear insight into the finances and motivations for merger and whether or not it can help to deliver your mission in a fact-based unbiased way.

Please note we will not bid to run a merger for you. This is a briefing session not a sales pitch.
Getting to and staying at G1

This will be tailored to your board’s requirements, but we can cover:

- The requirements of the RSH standards
- Our analysis of why downgrades happen
- Lessons from associations that have regained G1
- Which approaches to risk management work
- Common problems on stress testing and mitigating risk – and how to avoid these
- Managing your engagement with the regulator – IDAs, financial returns and notifying them of health and safety issues
- What boards should be looking for from internal auditors, external auditors and other experts
- Regulation after the Green Paper – forging relationships with tenants and mainstreaming complaints
- How boards gain assurance from performance reporting and internal controls
- How to maintain board effectiveness.

These sessions will be run by:

Colin Ward – a long established governance and risk expert who has assisted on many of our IDA support projects. At Torus he managed the post-merge IDA and led on business assurance, performance and risk.

Peter Walters – former chief executive – established the VIVID merger and sits on the board of an ALMO and author of HQN’s Governance toolkit.
Digital and transformation strategy

In an increasingly digital world, technology is central to how organisations operate and interact with their customers. It is no longer just a back office function: it’s pivotal to your business.

As a board member you have the responsibility for developing and setting your organisation’s appetite and strategy for digital transformation, digital security and digital governance. This half-day workshop is designed to give you the high level strategic technology insight and knowledge you need to effectively undertake your role.

Objectives

This course will increase your:

• Confidence to lead, support and effectively challenge your organisation’s digital strategy
• Appreciation of the opportunities and limitations of your organisation’s technology
• Awareness of governance issues relating to technology
• Understanding of some of the jargon!

Who is it for?

Board members and executive teams who want to better understand technology principles and strategies.

These sessions will be run by:

Sam Young – HQN’s lead Business Transformation Associate. She has a wealth of technology experience gained in private, public and not-for-profit sectors as well as a track record of successfully leading large teams and large-scale changes. Sam has a MSc in Technology and Management and is an accredited coach and SFIA (Skills for the Information Age) consultant. She is passionate about developing talent, transforming teams and harnessing technology to deliver successful business outcomes.
Fast, practical guidance on everything to do with housing.

HQN provides high-quality advice, tailored support and training to housing associations, councils, ALMOs and other housing providers.

Find out more about HQN and our network membership by visiting www.hqnetwork.co.uk or call us on 01904 557150.