

# HOUSEPROUD PLEDGE



## PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL

August 2022

### INTRODUCTION

This partnership proposal sets out the intent to find a suitable partner to take forward and develop the operation of the HouseProud Pledge scheme, with HouseProud and resident groups, as a member of the proposed HouseProud Pledge Advisory & Oversight Board.

For the avoidance of doubt, there are no fees associated with commissioning this partnership proposal. The Pledge scheme will continue to be called the 'HouseProud Pledge'.

### OVERVIEW

#### 1. History of the HouseProud Pledge Scheme

HouseProud was set up in 2014 as the nationwide network for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT+) people working in social housing. Its key aims are to be a forum for sharing information and promoting best practice, to raise awareness of LGBT+ issues across the sector, to be a network and safe space for LGBT+ social housing colleagues and to improve service delivery for all our customers. HouseProud is a voluntary membership organisation of LGBT+ people working in social housing. It has an elected management committee, with terms of reference, but it has no legal constitution or funding.

In 2017, HouseProud commissioned the University of Surrey (Professor Andrew King, Frances Sanders, and Dr Paul Stoneman) to undertake research on the experiences of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer (LGBTQ+) social housing residents and published the report '[No Place Like Home](#)' in February 2018. The study found:

- *A third of survey respondents felt their neighbourhood was not a safe place to live as an LGBTQ+ person.*
- *A fifth of gay men reported that they regularly modify their home if their landlord or a repairs person visits to make their sexuality less visible. Whilst many lesbian women routinely assess people at the door*
- *A third of survey respondents felt that their housing provider was not able to deal effectively with issues like harassment.*
- *Only a half of survey respondents felt a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, whilst a quarter reported feeling lonely.*

The HouseProud Pledge Scheme was developed by the University of Surrey and HouseProud in response to that report, and launched in May 2019 with endorsement by the Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development, London.

A knowledge exchange project, 'Housing with Pride', (with funding from CaCHE<sup>1</sup>) has tracked the progress and learning of the first Pledge Scheme signatories through workshops with staff. This led to development of a promotional animation video to raise awareness about the need for housing providers to be supportive and inclusive of LGBTQ+ residents' lives. The [Housing with Pride report](#) gives the key learning points that emerged from the project. The current 'Housing with Pride' project (due to complete in December 2022) represents a collaboration<sup>2</sup> involving several partners and has LGBTQ+ social housing residents on its Advisory Board. The project seeks to make a national impact in the way that housing providers listen to and engage with their LGBTQ+ residents. The project also responds to the government's Social Housing White Paper (2020) - A Charter for Social Housing Residents.

*HouseProud North-West is an independent local group setup to support LGBT+ staff working in social housing organisations in that region. Representatives from HouseProud North-West attend the House Proud steering group meetings to share information between the parties. HouseProud North-West has established an umbrella LGBT+ resident network called Rainbow Roofs which aims to provide residents with a voice on housing related matters.*

## 2. Overview of the Pledge scheme, and anticipated costs

### Overview

The Pledge Scheme is an equality framework that any social housing provider can sign up to. It was designed to work flexibly for all social housing providers, regardless of size and geographical location. The scheme provides a framework for landlords to work with residents to take action and demonstrate their commitment to LGBTQ+ equality and support.

The scheme has been designed to enhance existing resident involvement activity and to ensure that residents can input directly into landlord policy and practice. The scheme is based on two levels of accreditation:

- **Pledge Pioneer:** *all housing providers have a year to deliver three core commitments, including making sure that involved LGBTQ+ residents can input at a strategic level. These are designed to help providers get the basics right before working with involved residents to explore other commitments.*
- **Pledge Plus:** *following the delivery of the above commitments, landlords can choose to commit to additional pledges. These see them work with involved residents to set achievable and time-bound goals on an ongoing basis.*

Each organisation needs to demonstrate evidence of how they meet Pioneer status one year after signing-up to the scheme, after which they can sign-up to Pledge Plus. Accreditation is currently assessed and agreed by HouseProud's Management Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence

<sup>2</sup> Between HouseProud, University of Surrey, Stonewall Housing, Tonic Housing, Opening Door (London) and other social housing providers

Whilst the Pledge Scheme complements other equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives undertaken by housing providers, the collaborative partnership with residents is a key cornerstone and provision that distinguishes it from the existing, EDI schemes on the market. This inclusive approach means there is greater cultural sensitivity and flexibility, and the scheme will be more fitting for the specific demographics of different organisations. In signing up to the Pledge scheme, housing providers will gain accreditation for work that currently may go unrecognised.

By the end of 2020, sixteen organisations had signed up to the Pledge Scheme; seven of these had achieved Pioneer status and two had attained Pledge Plus. The scheme brochure, sign-up information and the 2020-21 Pledge Project Report are all available via the HouseProud website: <https://www.houseproud-lgbt.com/pledge>

Since the Pledge scheme was set up over 50 social housing providers have reached out about the scheme and over 30 have now gone on to sign up.

### Costs

The Pledge Scheme is currently free for housing providers to sign-up to. The administration, evaluation and accreditation process has been undertaken by HouseProud Management Committee members.

The costs of setting up and reviewing the Pledge scheme have been covered by funding from the Economic and Social Research Council via the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE) and subsequently the University of Surrey Impact Acceleration Account and in-kind contributions from housing providers. ESRC funding is expected to cease with the conclusion of the Housing with Pride project in Dec 2022.

We have outlined the potential costs of operating the Pledge scheme below, which are based on work to-date. The Pledge Scheme has benefitted from the goodwill of a range of stakeholders: residents; staff members and support from housing providers, which is difficult to quantify. The no-cost approach of the Pledge Scheme also makes it difficult to incorporate reliable costings or projections and any future financial model will be developed with potential partners.

- The Pledge Scheme is currently administered by members of the HouseProud Management Committee, and we estimate that to maintain the Scheme would require approximately 7 hours a week. This includes the time required to monitor the Scheme, communicate with stakeholders, and provide assistance to members.
- Information about the Pledge Scheme is currently hosted on the HouseProud website. We estimate that to maintain the current level of web content would require approximately 5 hours a month, in addition to any costs related to web hosting.
- Attending networking events and conferences helps us to promote the Pledge Scheme. We estimate that this is the equivalent of approximately 4 hours a month.

The above reflects our estimates to maintain the Pledge Scheme as it currently stands, but any development work would be additional to this. Charging for accreditation, or for consultancy, would also likely require additional resources, including regular catch-ups with housing provider contacts and attendance at staff meetings, etc.

### 3. Rationale for partnership

An organisational review of the Pledge Scheme in 2021 and feedback from HouseProud members raised concerns in relation to its long-term stewardship and sustainability; specifically, with respect to the appropriateness of a staff network managing the scheme but also having the resources to do so. Whilst committed to the Pledge Scheme, HouseProud recognised that the voluntary and un-constituted nature of their network means it has insufficient capacity to oversee and implement the Pledge Scheme as it continues to develop and expand. Hence, to ensure its continued growth and success, the HouseProud Steering Committee are seeking to find a partner organisation able to support the Pledge Scheme, i.e., one able to raise and hold funds, including the potential to apply for funding.

### 4. Opportunity

The Pledge Scheme offers a unique and highly workable approach to LGBTQ+ resident inclusivity for a range of organisations and for residents in the housing sector. It is expected that a partnership arrangement will provide an equitable solution for the continuation and further the potential of the Pledge Scheme: for example, possible scenarios for the future management of the Pledge Scheme may include a tiered approach (i.e., hybrid model with non-paid and paid tiers and/or flexible pricing model, dependent on organisation size) an outsourced model (i.e., involving a separate, paid for, evaluation and accreditation body) or combined approach (i.e., combines elements of the different approaches). It is hoped that the partner will fully support the efforts of the current 'Housing with Pride' project team by fulfilling their ambition to help develop the first National LGBTQ+ Residents Forum, a ground-breaking milestone in the social housing sector in the UK and a significant development in terms of the Government's new housing charter. In addition, it is envisaged that the Pledge Scheme may be extended with potential in the longer-term to develop independent charitable or foundation status.

### 5. Partner requirements

The partner organisation must:

- Be committed to LGBTQ+ equality and inclusion and to championing the rights of LGBTQ+ social housing residents.
- Exist independently from any social housing organisation, unless both partners can form an agreement to ensure an appropriate level of independence (financial and ideological) is maintained.
- Be willing to partner with HouseProud and work inclusively with resident groups and as a member of the Pledge Advisory & Oversight Board (see point 6) to develop the best working model for the Pledge Scheme to ensure short-to-medium term sustainability of the scheme. For example, this may include creation of a communication strategy and online presence, as well as further development of the governance and evaluation processes.
- Have the resources to dedicate appropriate support to the day-to-day administration of the Pledge Scheme and be able to seek funding to cover these costs (e.g., through the Scheme itself and/or grants, etc.).
- Maintain the legacy of the Pledge Scheme and acknowledge contributors/contributions accordingly.

The partnership must include the following:

- *The setting up of an Independent Pledge Scheme Advisory Board which has a proportional representation of HouseProud members, partner organisation members, LGBTQ+ residents and the University of Surrey.*
- *The commitment to the inclusion of resident representative(s) in the assessment/auditing process of the Pledge Scheme.*
- *The commitment for the Pledge Scheme to be independently evaluated every three years.*

## **6. Role of Pledge Advisory and Oversight Board**

The purpose of the Board will be twofold:

- To provide oversight of the Pledge Scheme and through which the partnership will be governed, and
- to provide the mechanism by which LGBTQ+ residents are represented and have a voice in the governance.

HouseProud representation on the board will be taken from the HouseProud Management Committee. It is envisaged that the Pledge Scheme partnership will be advised by the Board with respect to any decisions concerning the future direction and sustainability of the scheme. The 'Housing with Pride' project is working on a set of recommendations which, it is envisaged, will provide the partnership with a basis for the Board's Terms of Reference.

## **7. Implementation Plan**

HouseProud will work with the partner organisation (and Board when established) to plan and document the transition process to the new partnership, including the development of a fast-track plan to ensure continuity for existing signatories and organisations in the sign-up process.

Current signees to the Pledge scheme have been advised of a review period postponing further accreditations being made. This includes a survey requesting their feedback, to inform the review.

### **High-Level Timeline/Schedule**

August to October 2022:

- Survey of Pledge scheme participants
- Advertising of partnership opportunity via social media etc
- Identification of partner
- Partnership agreement and development of transition plan
- Establishment of Pledge Advisory and Oversight Board
- Notification of partnership to existing signatories and across housing sector

November to December 2022:

- Development of Board materials, including the terms of reference, etc.
- Review branding of the Pledge Scheme (to include HouseProud and 'Housing with Pride')
- Outline how to work with residents as ambassadors, etc.
- Research and review how a tiered pledge scheme could operate.
- Research and review a) options of charitable status and b) outsourcing the accreditation and evaluation.

January 2023:

- Re-launch the Pledge Scheme using social media approved for use by both partners, in conjunction with the Pledge Scheme Advisory and Oversight Board, and be appropriately resourced to deal with enquiries/calls for support.

## **8. Expressions of Interest**

Expressions of interest are invited from organisations that meet the Partner requirements set out in section 5. The expression of interest should set out how your organisation meets the Partner requirements, how you plan to approach this opportunity and what experience you bring. Please clearly state the name of the organisation and the lead contact person's details.

Assessment of the expressions of interest will be made using the scoring matrix, attached as Annex A.

Enquiries and/or expressions of interest should be registered by the 30th Sept 2022 via Email:  
**HouseProud\_LGBT@outlook.com**

All expressions of interest should be signed by an appropriate person stating the authority given to make the submission.

# HouseProud Pledge partnership proposal

## EOI Assessment: (date here)

Requirements (the below will be assessed against the scale on the right)	Organisation 1 (Name here)	Organisation 2 (Name here)
Meets the Partner requirements		
Understanding of the brief		
Suitable capacity and expertise to deliver the requirements, including being able to raise and hold funds, and apply for funding.		
Approach to developing the Pledge scheme and finding a successful and sustainable operational model		
Reputation and demonstrable track record of relevant experience		
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

### COMPLETE SCORES 0-4 IN YELLOW BOXES

Assessment	Detail	Score
Excellent	Demonstrates clearly and convincingly how all of the requirements will be delivered in an excellent way	4
Good	Demonstrates how nearly all of the requirements will be delivered to a good standard	3
Fair	Demonstrates how some of the requirements will be delivered to a fair standard	2
Poor	Provides only limited information on how the requirements will be delivered resulting in a poor standard	1
Very poor	Either no answer provided or the answer fails to demonstrate how the requirements will be delivered in accordance with the specification	0