

The HouseProud Pledge scheme

Empowering social housing providers to
improve services for LGBTQ+ residents



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With thanks to:

- Anchor Hanover
- Clarion Housing Group
- Greater London Authority
- L&Q
- Notting Hill Genesis
- Riverside
- Stonewall Housing
- University of Surrey

Our call to action

About HouseProud

HouseProud was set up in 2015 as the nationwide network for LGBTQ+ people working in social housing. Membership of HouseProud now comprises of over 50 organisations, including housing associations, ALMOs, local authorities and care providers. Our key aims are to provide networking opportunities for LGBTQ+ staff members and to campaign on/for LGBTQ+ and housing related issues.

HouseProud commissioned the University of Surrey to undertake research on the experiences of LGBTQ+ social housing residents and published the report *No Place Like Home?* in February 2018. The pledge scheme has been developed in response to that report.

What is the HouseProud Pledge?

The HouseProud Pledge is a scheme that all social housing providers (housing associations, local

authorities and ALMOs) can sign up to, to demonstrate their commitment to LGBTQ+ resident equality and support. (We're using the term LGBTQ+ to refer to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer and all those people who identify as gender diverse or who consider they have a gender and/or sexual minority identity.)

The pledge has been developed by HouseProud and the University of Surrey in association with residents, staff members and sector leaders from across the country. It addresses the issues raised by the findings of *No Place Like Home?*, the largest study ever undertaken to understand LGBTQ+ experiences of social housing.

In particular, the pledge tackles the issue of resident trust – it provides a framework for landlords to work with involved residents to take action and demonstrate their commitment to LGBTQ+ equality and support.

Why sign up?

The home is of central importance to LGBTQ+ residents because it should be a place where people can freely express their sexual orientation and/or gender identity without fear of prejudice or reprisal.

Sadly, despite recent changes in equality laws, our research highlighted that LGBTQ+ social housing residents continue to experience prejudice in their everyday lives. It also revealed that a significant number do not believe they were being listened to by their landlord:

- A third of LGBTQ+ residents felt their neighbourhood was not a safe place to live as an LGBTQ+ person
- A third of survey respondents felt their landlord was not able to deal effectively with issues like harassment
- A fifth of gay men reported that they regularly modify their home if visited by their landlord or a repairs person to make their sexual orientation less visible (for example, moving pictures, books and DVDs).

With the recent launch of the Social Housing Green Paper, the Government has called on the sector to empower residents and strengthen accountability. The HouseProud Pledge has been designed to help housing providers work with involved LGBTQ+ residents to deliver this and has been cited in the government LGBTQ+ action plan.

Many housing providers already work with LGBTQ+ involved residents. In signing up to the HouseProud Pledge, landlords will gain accreditation for work that currently goes unrecognised.

What does it involve?

Residents told us that they want their landlord to move beyond token gestures – the HouseProud Pledge requires housing providers to work with involved LGBTQ+ residents to guarantee this.

The pledge is free to sign up to and offers an easy-to-adopt framework to encourage dialogue with involved LGBTQ+ residents. It has been designed to enhance existing resident involvement activity and ensure that residents can input directly into landlord policy and practice.

Housing providers will have a year to deliver three core commitments, including making sure that involved LGBTQ+ residents can input at a strategic level. Following the delivery of these commitments, landlords can choose to commit to additional pledges. These would see them work with involved residents to set achievable and time-bound goals on an ongoing basis.

What are the benefits of signing up?

Residents feel strongly that social housing providers should be more proactive on inclusion and work with LGBTQ+ residents to build trust.

Reflecting the principles of the Social Housing Green Paper and LGBT+ action plan. The HouseProud Pledge empowers landlords to be more responsive and accountable to their LGBTQ+ residents. It allows them to demonstrate their ongoing commitment to LGBTQ+ equality and support.

The pledge scheme complements other initiatives undertaken by housing providers. For example, it could be used as evidence as part of a submission to the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.



How the HouseProud Pledge works

This scheme has been designed to work flexibly for all social housing providers (housing associations, local authorities and ALMOs), regardless of size and geographical location.

The HouseProud Pledge scheme is based on two levels of accreditation:

- **Pledge Pioneer status** – we expect all landlords to make progress in achieving three core commitments within the first year of signing up. These are designed to help providers get the basics right before working with involved residents to explore other commitments. Delivery of these core commitments is necessary.
- **Pledge Plus status** – landlords can also choose to work with LGBTQ+ residents to formulate and deliver additional goals. Commitment to these goals is optional, but offers a higher level of accreditation.

Pledge Pioneer commitments

Once signed-up to the scheme, landlords are expected to deliver the three commitments outlined below. They should report back to HouseProud within a year to demonstrate that substantial progress has been made towards achieving these. Housing providers that sign up to the scheme will be offered Pledge Pioneer status and will be encouraged to use the Pledge Pioneer symbol on corporate materials.



HouseProud
Pledge Pioneer

Once a housing provider has achieved these core commitments, continued Pledge Pioneer accreditation over subsequent years will require an annual submission to HouseProud. This should be in the form of a short report, demonstrating that the core commitments are still being met (see the governance section below for more details).

1 Ensure that LGBTQ+ residents can have input at executive/strategic level

The No Place Like Home? research helped the sector to understand the experiences, concerns and preferences of LGBTQ+ social housing residents. We want to build on this to make sure that LGBTQ+ voices continue to be heard at the highest levels.

Our scheme hinges on landlords visibly acknowledging their LGBTQ+ residents and working with them to identify commitments and track progress.

We know that some housing providers already have formal consultation structures in place, including LGBTQ+ resident groups that meet regularly to ensure that services meet their needs. Other providers may have resident board members to help drive a focus on LGBTQ+ inclusion.

By the end of the first year, we will require landlords to have formal arrangements in place to consult with LGBTQ+ residents on an ongoing basis. We also expect landlords to demonstrate how LGBTQ+ residents can have input at a strategic/executive level.

2 Increase LGBTQ+ visibility through use of the Pledge Pioneer symbol

Some participants reported feeling that they were rendered invisible by their landlord, despite their housing provider making attempts to communicate with them. Residents felt that their landlord should visibly promote LGBTQ+ inclusivity to demonstrate their support, taking equality legislation to a higher level.

Landlords who sign up to the scheme will receive the Pledge Pioneer symbol, which we expect to see displayed in corporate and resident communications. This should be accompanied by an explanation on the provider's website about what the scheme means.

3 **Initiate a programme of staff training to improve understanding of LGBTQ+ lives**

The people who took part in the research did not agree that housing staff were always responsive to their concerns or sensitive to their needs. This made them feel less valued as residents.

Residents repeatedly offered examples of poor staff understanding of LGBTQ+ lives and, in some cases, outright discrimination. Some 21% of survey respondents reported that they were uncomfortable with repairs people entering their home, and 24% their landlord. They felt that all staff, including sub-contractors, should receive training on an ongoing basis.

Staff members we spoke to wanted to be more proactive in addressing the concerns of LGBTQ+ residents. In particular, they were keen to promote examples of existing good practice and improve outcomes for LGBTQ+ residents.

Within a year of signing up to the scheme, we expect providers to have started to roll out a programme of training, including a focus on LGBTQ+ lives. Landlords will need to demonstrate clearly how this training is being rolled out to frontline staff members, including repairs operatives and housing officers.

For more information about training packages and providers who deliver them please visit the Pledge Scheme section of the HouseProud website at www.houseproud-lgbt.com

These providers include Stonewall Housing, who were members of the steering group of the pledge scheme. Stonewall Housing offers tailored training packages that respond to the needs of different resident groups in a variety of organisational settings. It also offers an Inclusion Standard for organisations to audit their practices regarding LGBTQ+ residents.

Pledge Plus goals

In addition to the core commitments, landlords can also choose to commit to Pledge Plus goals. These will see them work with involved LGBTQ+ residents to set achievable and time-bound objectives.

The Pledge Plus goals follow the Pledge Pioneer commitments. Pledge Plus is a higher level of accreditation as it denotes providers going further in terms of LGBTQ+ equality.

Unlike the core commitments, Pledge Plus goals are not prescribed, but are co-created by staff members and involved LGBTQ+ residents. Goals can be created to address specific issues, or guided by the following menu of options, which were identified by residents as part of the research:

Be clear about asking for equality monitoring information

If a housing provider doesn't ask for information about residents' gender identity and sexual orientation for the purposes of equality monitoring, think about doing this. However, make sure it is done sensitively and that residents understand why the data is being collected, how it will be used, how it will be stored and who will have access to it.

Take complaints about harassment and abuse seriously and act promptly

Provide a clear explanation of how a particular complaint will be investigated and provide regular updates to the resident about progress.



Create opportunities for inter-community dialogue

Do not isolate LGBTQ+ residents as a 'special group', separate from others. Seek out opportunities to bring residents from all communities together, perhaps around group activities, e.g. gardening clubs and socials.

Hold an ongoing series of activities to demonstrate commitment to LGBTQ+ equality

Avoid taking a cursory approach to LGBTQ+ equality and diversity. Make the goals that are created really have a lasting impact on LGBTQ+ residents' lives – don't just do one-off events.

Have a permanent LGBTQ+ liaison team/contact

This is someone who residents know they can turn to if they have an issue. All residents should be made aware of this person/team and their role on a regular basis.

Provide spaces for LGBTQ+ residents to meet, socialise and engage with housing provider

Most housing providers will have some sort of meeting space they can use, such as community centres or even their offices.

Pledge Plus goals allow landlords to build their commitment over time. This higher level of accreditation requires housing providers to commit to delivering at least one goal each year. Larger organisations with more resources may be in a position to deliver two or more.

Goals must be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) and their delivery reported to HouseProud each year.



HouseProud
Pledge Plus



Governance and stability

The scheme is intended to be largely self-governing, with LGBTQ+ resident groups taking an active role in promoting and monitoring the scheme. Each year the housing provider resident group, or approved representative, will submit a short report to HouseProud. This should set out their progress with attaining or advancing towards Pledge Pioneer commitments and Pledge Plus goals.

Accreditation by HouseProud can be reviewed if these goals are not met in time. It can also be reviewed if providers fail to continue with the Pledge Pioneer commitments attained in the first year of accreditation.

The housing provider must ensure that residents are consulted with and updated on progress. It is up to the provider to decide how to do this in a meaningful way. Suggestions include regular presentations to the LGBTQ+ resident group or a section outlining progress in the organisation's annual report.

Although the process for consulting with LGBTQ+ residents will vary from provider to provider, we would expect to see the terms of reference which have been adopted. These will outline how the landlord engages with involved LGBTQ+ residents and will specify how residents are consulted with in order to develop goals and priorities.

A new sector-wide national LGBTQ+ resident group is due to launch later in 2019. It also offers an opportunity for resident groups to share experiences, swap best practice and help drive up performance in relation to the pledge.



How can I sign my organisation up to the scheme?

Signing up to the HouseProud Pledge is free of charge. If your organisation has not yet signed up, you can do so now. Simply email

HouseProud_LGBT@outlook.com

with 'HouseProud Pledge' in the title. We'll get back in touch to confirm some details, including that you have the backing of senior leaders in your organisation to implement the necessary changes.

Once you've signed up, you'll receive a copy of the LGBTQ+ Pledge scheme symbol and other resources to help you publicise your involvement.

You will also receive a copy of the certificates of commitment, a sample of which is shown on pages 19 and 20.

If you're unable to sign up, or need more time to make a decision, please let us know. We may be able to assist with more information to help you prepare for the commitment. The HouseProud website hosts a number of resources to help you learn more about the HouseProud Pledge, including the No Place Like Home? research report. We anticipate the number of resources to increase over time as examples of good practice and other evidence collected as part of the scheme is shared by housing providers.



Background to the scheme

Summary of No Place Like Home?

HouseProud commissioned the University of Surrey to conduct research, to understand the experiences, concerns and preferences of LGBTQ+ tenants living in social housing. Over 260 people took part, through a survey, focus groups and interviews.

The study was funded by six housing associations (Clarion, Hanover, L&Q, Notting Hill Genesis, Optivo and Riverside) and supported by a number of other organisations, including the Greater London Authority.

The study uncovered many examples of good practice, including active LGBTQ+ resident groups and involvement in Pride events. However, it found that residents can find it hard to trust their landlord or believe that they are being listened to. It also found that LGBTQ+ social housing residents can be hyper-vigilant around their neighbourhood and home.

Some of the findings were:

- A third of survey respondents felt their neighbourhood was not a safe place to live as an LGBTQ+ person – this was 60% amongst trans respondents.
- 36% reported that they were uncomfortable having neighbours in their home – a figure that rose to 91% for trans individuals. Some spoke about harassment and abuse from neighbours, yet felt housing providers were not able to deal with it effectively.
- Only a half of survey respondents felt a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, and a quarter reported feeling lonely.
- 21% of survey respondents said they were uncomfortable with repairs people entering their home and 24% their landlord. A fifth of gay men reported that they regularly modify their home if visited by their landlord or a repairs person to make their sexual orientation less visible (for example, by moving pictures, books and DVDs).
- A third of survey respondents felt that their landlord was not able to deal effectively with issues such as harassment.

Development of the pledge scheme

Work on the scheme was funded by the University of Surrey and four housing associations (Anchor Hanover, Clarion, Genesis, L&Q and Notting Hill). Other organisations, including Stonewall Housing, the Greater London Authority and Riverside, were represented on the steering group, along with members of LGBTQ+ resident groups.

The structure of the scheme has evolved through a series of workshops facilitated by the University of Surrey:

- The project began in July 2018 with a meeting of Chief Executive Officers and senior executives. They gave us their backing to develop the scheme, urged us to be ambitious and to address the issues highlighted by the research.
- Two workshops were held with LGBTQ+ residents to identify priorities. They told us that they wanted housing providers to move beyond ‘tokenism’, commit visibly to LGBTQ+ residents and act to resolve issues.
- Finally, a workshop was held with social housing staff members to review the feasibility of proposed options.



Next step

The University of Surrey has now received funding from the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE) to raise awareness of and help pilot the HouseProud Pledge scheme.

We are currently looking for housing providers to sign up to this pilot scheme. To sign up, please email

HouseProud_LGBT@outlook.com

with 'HouseProud Pledge' in the title and we'll get back in touch with details about next steps.

The funding received will allow it to:

- Create a short educational animation video to communicate the issues facing LGBTQ+ social housing residents and the purpose of the pledge scheme.
- Host face-to-face workshops and webinars to engage staff members in the pledge scheme, listen to their feedback and take ideas forward.
- Host face-to-face workshops with residents to promote the pledge scheme, encourage participation and identify barriers that still need to be overcome.
- Host a conference to discuss the impacts of the pledge scheme and discuss whether the model developed could be replicated by others to engage with diverse groups (e.g. specific BME groups, disabled residents or older people).



Summary of the scheme



Expressing interest in the scheme	Signing up to the scheme and levels of accreditation	Activity during the year	Annual reporting of HouseProud	Subsequent years
<p>Social housing providers (including housing associations, local authorities and ALMOs) can express interest in the scheme at any time and can contact HouseProud for more information.</p>	<p>On signing up to the scheme, the housing provider will be awarded Pledge Pioneer status and encouraged to use the Pledge Pioneer logo in corporate and resident communications.</p>	<p>The housing provider must commit to making significant progress in delivering the following core commitments within the first year of signing up to the scheme:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make sure that LGBTQ+ residents can have input at executive/strategic level. 2. Increase LGBTQ+ visibility through use of the Pledge Pioneer symbol. 3. Initiate a programme of staff training to improve understanding of LGBTQ+ lives. <p>The housing provider must make sure that residents are updated on progress. This could be via regular presentations to the LGBTQ+ resident group or a section outlining progress in the organisation's annual report.</p>	<p>The housing provider, resident group or approved representative must submit a report to HouseProud within a year of signing up. This should provide evidence that the core commitments have been met, or that substantial progress has been made in delivering them.</p> <p>Evidence required includes the terms of reference outlining how the landlord engages with involved LGBTQ+ residents.</p> <p>Accreditation by HouseProud can be reviewed if providers slip in continuing to deliver the core commitments.</p> <p>Once providers have delivered the core commitments, they may also choose to work with LGBTQ+ residents to deliver Pledge Plus goals.</p>	<p>Once the core commitments have been achieved, continued accreditation over subsequent years will require the annual submission to HouseProud of a short report, demonstrating their continued delivery.</p> <p>Accreditation by HouseProud can be reviewed if providers slip in continuing to deliver the core commitments.</p> <p>Once providers have delivered the core commitments, they may also choose to work with LGBTQ+ residents to deliver Pledge Plus goals.</p>
<p>1. Pledge Pioneer accreditation (necessary)</p>				

	<p>In addition to delivering the core commitments, landlords can also commit to Pledge Plus goals, which will see them work with involved residents to set achievable and time-bound objectives. This will enable housing providers to work towards Pledge Plus, the higher level of accreditation.</p> <p>On signing up to the scheme, some housing providers may already have the formal structures in place to consult with LGBT+ residents and agree with them to work towards Pledge Plus accreditation.</p> <p>For other providers, Pledge Plus accreditation is something to aim for once they have delivered the Pledge Pioneer commitments.</p> <p>Objectives should be co-created with involved LGBTQ+ residents to address specific issues.</p> <p>Pledge Plus accreditation can only be awarded if the housing provider continues to deliver the core commitments necessary for Pledge Pioneer accreditation.</p>	<p>Pledge Plus goals must be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound).</p> <p>Landlords must commit to delivering at least one goal each year, but larger providers with more resources may be in a position to deliver two or more.</p> <p>The housing provider must ensure that residents are updated on progress. This may be via regular presentations to the LGBTQ+ resident group or a section outlining progress in the organisation's annual report.</p>	<p>The housing provider, resident group or approved representative must submit a report to HouseProud within a year of agreeing the goals.</p> <p>Pledge Plus accreditation will be awarded on the basis that goals have been achieved or that substantial progress has been made in achieving them.</p> <p>Accreditation will not be awarded if the provider fails to provide evidence of delivering the goals or the involvement of LGBTQ+ residents in creating them.</p>	<p>Pledge Plus goals are designed to be incremental and allow housing providers to deliver other goals over subsequent years.</p> <p>Continued accreditation will require the annual submission to HouseProud of a short report, demonstrating the delivery of Pledge Plus goals.</p> <p>Examples of good practice can be shared with other providers on the HouseProud website.</p>
<h2>2. Pledge Plus accreditation (optional)</h2>				

Certificate of commitment to Pledge Pioneer status of the HouseProud Pledge scheme

Organisation name

Key contact

We commit to achieve Pledge Pioneer
status within a year of signing up

Signed by (Chief Executive)

Date



HouseProud
Pledge Pioneer

Certificate of commitment to Pledge Plus status of the HouseProud Pledge scheme

Organisation name

Key contact

In addition to committing to achieve Pledge Pioneer status within a year of signing up, we commit to achieving Pledge Plus status within years

Signed by (Chief Executive)

Date



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Pledge Plus



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The HouseProud Pledge scheme

Empowering social housing providers to improve services for
LGBTQ+ residents

This booklet sets out the HouseProud Pledge scheme for social housing providers to sign up to, to demonstrate their commitment to LGBTQ+ resident equality and support.

The pledge has been developed by HouseProud and the University of Surrey in association with residents, staff members and sector leaders from across the country. It addresses the issues raised by the findings of No Place Like Home?, the largest study ever undertaken to understand LGBTQ+ experiences of social housing.



HouseProud



We've made all reasonable efforts to ensure that the information in this publication was correct at the time of going to print in May 2019, but we can't accept any liability for any inaccuracies in the information published, and the information might change from time to time without notice. For the latest and most up-to-date information, please visit our website at www.houseproud-lgbt.com