



## Opening Doors

### **Guest Blog by Terrie Alafat CBE**

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This year's National Federation of ALMOs Annual Conference comes at a crucial time. Housing is firmly back on the agenda and there have been a number of very significant changes in the last year. We've had a new Housing Minister, a new Prime Minister, a new commitment from the Government to solve our housing crisis and of course, Brexit.

Through all of this the same challenges remain and the strapline for this year's event – 'Opening Doors', is a perfect summary of what the sector needs to do. First and foremost we must open doors for the millions of people struggling to gain access to a decent, genuinely affordable home.

Home ownership is at a 30-year low, private renting is at an all-time high and homelessness has been steadily rising since 2010 – the evidence that more and more people are struggling to afford a place to call home seems to grow by the day. For 25-30 per cent of people in the UK owning a home is simply not a realistic prospect. Too many people, particularly under 35s, are finding themselves priced out of buying a home and left with no alternative but to grapple with increasingly expensive private rents.

This all points to one thing - we have to build more homes. In fact we need 250,000 a year to meet demand.

The Government's White Paper represents a significant shift – but we have yet to see the concrete commitments to back up its very positive messages on affordability. It's no surprise there is a shortage of homes that people can afford when one looks at where the government is currently directing its housing investment. Our recent analysis showed that of the £51 billion invested in housing in the years up to 2020/21; only £8 billion will directly fund affordable homes.

It is very clear that we still need to do much more to support the people who need housing the most. We need more homes that people can afford and we need to give the organisations able to deliver those homes the funding, support and flexibility to do so. If we are going to do this, and meet the many other challenges facing our sector, we need all organisations, including ALMOs, to play a very significant part.

We must keep showcasing the valuable work that housing organisations do, keep lobbying the government to make sure the commitment to solve our housing crisis doesn't fall by the wayside as a result of Brexit and keep striving to make sure everyone has a place to call home.

The NFA continues to be a crucial lobbying organisation and representative body for the hundreds of ALMOs across the UK.

Coming together to explore the key challenges facing our sector is crucial, and I'm delighted to be at the conference this week. Here's to a great couple of days.

NFA Annual Conference 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> April 2017