
**Unite Housing Workers' Branch Press Release Immediate release:
Monday 10th April 2017**

**Lousy Landlords and Bullying Bosses: Welcome To The
Alternative Housing Awards!**

Residents and staff of housing associations will be handing out several gongs of shame to Housing Association bosses as they gather for their annual Inside UK Housing Awards.

Hyde Housing Association leads the field in the Bad Landlord category, having received around 130 of the 300 and nominations. It is also neck and neck with the newly formed Clarion Housing Group in the Bad Employer category.

One resident claimed Hyde has shown:

"utter contempt for health and safety, good practice, their customers and the truth. They have been appalling at every level and in every situation. Our snagging issues are still issues 13 years on."

The association has also come in for criticism over its decision to close down community centres which residents believe represent a vital resource for building cohesion across their estates. Hyde staff were in sympathy with residents, with one saying Hyde was guilty of:

"stripping the community of much needed services by closing all of their community centres while managing to hold £42million of residents' money in their bank account and spending at least £2million of it on an ugly rebranding."

The disregard for tenants in the relentless drive toward commercialisation is a repeated criticism by residents and workers in almost every association listed, including Sanctuary and Clarion. The two housing groups are competing for second place with around 40 nominations each. Other nominees include Impact, Peabody Trust, Worthing Homes, Genesis, Metropolitan, One Housing Group, Family Mosaic, and Hexagon.

In the Bad Employer category, Hyde, Sanctuary and Clarion are currently out in front. Clarion was formed recently through a merger of Affinity Sutton and the beleaguered Circle Housing. It has recently hit the headlines for its decision first to derecognise Unite the Union and then to stop paying company sick pay for the first three days of sickness absence.

A campaign by Unite members subsequently led Clarion to reinstate sick pay, but the dispute has clearly left a bitter legacy amongst staff. One worker said that their bosses had introduced:

"divisive ways of working with staff ... Another set of restructures are proposed with less staffing, more work and less pay generally, yet with over £200m surplus last year!!!"

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Another said:

"All glitz and fancy stationery but no substance, presenting a well manipulated narrative on staff representation and trying to penalise staff through removal of sick pay"

The Alternative Housing Awards is a joint initiative of association residents and staff and the first action of the newly formed Housing Association Residents and Workers Network. The awards will be made as association executives arrive for the Inside Housing UK Housing Awards:

5.30pm
Wednesday 26th April
(Outside) The Lancaster Gate Hotel
66-71 Lancaster Gate
London W2 3NA

Suzanne Muna, one of the event organisers and Branch Secretary of the Unite Housing Workers Branch explained:

"Over the last year, too many housing association staff and residents have been squeezed to breaking point. Pay cuts, punitive 'performance management', service charge hikes, cut backs to repairs and maintenance, and this despite record surpluses of £3.4 billion and rocketing executive pay."

She added that association executives will be attending the UK Housing Awards at a minimum cost of £1,980 for a table with a drinks reception, three course dinner, and free wine for the lucky few. Or they might have paid £2,475 for a premium table with chilled champagne and chocolate. Meanwhile, across the road in Hyde Park are the highest number of rough sleepers of any London borough, with rates rising rapidly since 2008. The contrast between the two worlds could not be more stark.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

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