



JOIN OUR BOARD

Help Shape the Future



Welcome

Thank you for your interest in becoming a board member at Railway Housing Association.

We're proud of our heritage dating back to 1919, and today we remain committed to providing safe, affordable homes and excellent services across the communities we serve.

As we deliver our 'On the Right Track' plan and look to the next phase of our corporate strategy, this is an exciting time to get involved.

Our board plays a vital role in setting strategy, ensuring strong governance and championing the resident experience. We're looking for new members who share our values and want to help us make a positive impact.

We're particularly looking for candidates, one of whom will be the Senior Independent Director (SID), with knowledge, skills and experience in either:

- **Governance:** experience of working within the social housing sector at an executive level with oversight of governance, regulatory and assurance functions. Strong experience of the NHF Code of Governance and application around key governance activities including individual and collective appraisals, skills matrices, succession planning, board training and development. Strong understanding of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) standards and inspection framework. This role is likely to be appointed to the post of SID.
- **Asset management:** experience of working within the social housing sector or as a supplier to the social housing sector at an executive or senior level with a strong understanding of strategic asset management, active asset appraisal, landlord health and safety, contractor management, procurement and capital and retrofit investment.
- **Data, digital, AI and cyber security:** experience of working at an executive or senior level within a customer focussed industry and able to demonstrate an understanding of managing strategic IT change programmes, implementation and oversight of data strategies, understanding and mitigating the specific threats posed by cyber security and recognising the potential of AI and new technologies for improving customer experience.

Our board composition statement has a clear commitment to diversity and a board that reflects the communities we serve in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion and so we welcome applications from BAME, disabled and people aged under 30.

Time commitment: Around one and a half days per month, including six board and four committee meetings a year. Board meetings are held in person, mostly in Darlington, and committee meetings are held online, with one in-person committee meeting each year, plus occasional strategy days, training, events, appraisals and updates.

Support: Full induction and ongoing training, with access to resources and support from our executive team.

Reward:

Board member: £2,600 per year (including expenses)

SID: £3,300 per year (including expenses)

Impact: A real opportunity to shape services, influence strategy and improve the resident experience.

We hope this pack gives you a clear picture of what the role involves and the difference you can make. We'd love to hear from you.

Warmest wishes,



Yvonne Castle
Chair of the Board

About Railway Housing Association

Picture the scene. It's 1919. The First World War has ended, and railway workers are coming home needing somewhere to live.

That's when the North Eastern Railway Cottage Homes and Benefit Fund was created. It started with a donation of £10,000 and contributions from 7,000 railway workers.

By 1921, the first homes for railway families in the north were built.

Fast forward to today and Railway Housing Association now owns and manages 1,634 homes across 20 areas, from Northumberland and County Durham to York, Yorkshire and Hereford.

Our heritage is still at the heart of everything we do, as we continue providing good quality, affordable homes and services across the historic routes of the North Eastern Railway.

We are currently working hard to deliver our 'On the Right Track' plan, with clear actions around our four foundation themes:



Our resident experience

To provide an outstanding resident experience, reflecting our residents' needs and aspirations.



Our homes

To provide safe, affordable and energy efficient properties that residents are proud to call home.



Our organisation

To be a well governed, financially strong and digitally enabled organisation.



Our people

To create a high performing, resident focused culture that attracts and retains talented colleagues.

You can read On the Right Track here:

Our Mission

To be the country's best small housing provider

Our Values

**Caring
Fair
Efficient
Open
Trustworthy**

Our Behaviours

We will listen, be courteous, respectful, friendly, helpful, honest, patient, positive, and do what we say we will do to the best of our ability.

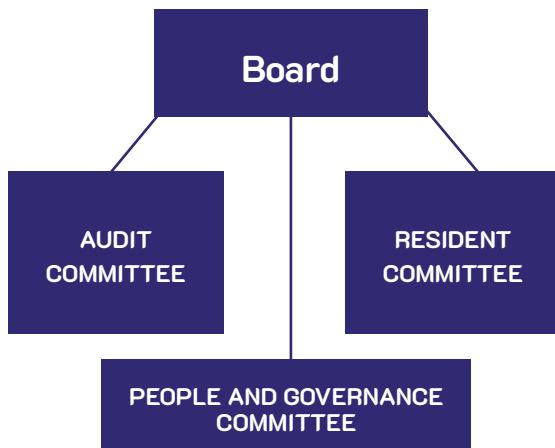
We're reviewing our values and behaviours as part of our On the Right Track plan.

Our Board and Executive Team

Railway currently has a board of ten board members, with a wide range of skills, knowledge and experience to ensure the business is overseen effectively.

The board is supported by three existing committees within the governance structure:

- Audit Committee
- People and Governance Committee
- Resident Committee



Matt Sugden
Chief Executive

Matt joined us in April 2023 from Accent Housing, where he worked in a national role as executive director of governance and strategy, holding responsibility for a range of services including strategy, governance, organisational culture, communications, customer insight and legal services.

Matt has held several executive and non-executive roles within the social housing sector and is passionate about improving our services, a key commitment of our On the Right Track delivery plan. Matt has overall responsibility for ensuring Railway Housing Association is legal, safe and compliant.



Joanne Watson
Chief Finance Officer

Jo has responsibility for our financial operations and strategic planning, as well as overseeing services including ICT, risk management, value for money and procurement.

Jo joined the team in February 2009 from Teesdale District Council, where she was Chief Finance Officer and had also worked in a range of finance and accountancy roles there for 20 years. Jo is committed to ensuring we operate successfully by making the best use of our resources to improve performance and provide excellent services for residents.



Chris Marshall
Chief Operating Officer

Chris joined us in February 2024 from Thirteen Housing Group and now leads the Railway Housing Association team managing our customer, housing management, repairs and maintenance and planned maintenance services, as well as our asset portfolio.

Chris has held several positions in housing associations across the North East, starting 22 years ago as a resident involvement apprentice. He has a particular passion around diversity and inclusion and ensuring residents' voices are heard across the organisation. Chris has overall responsibility for ensuring we comply with the consumer standards.



The Role

We would welcome people with previous board experience, however, it's not a necessity provided you have commitment, curiosity and a collaborative approach.

We aim to have a balanced board which reflects a wide range of skills, knowledge, competency and experience to ensure appropriate oversight of the business.

The role includes:

- Establishing positive working relationships with other board members and the executive team.
- Contributing to the development and achievement of our strategic plans and the decisions of the Board.
- Upholding high standards of integrity and probity, demonstrating our values.
- Acting with personal integrity and respect.
- Using experience, specialist knowledge and skills to provide impartial, intelligent enquiry to drive performance.
- Seeking assurances that appropriate controls are in place to protect the organisation, our colleagues and our customers.
- Being aware of external and internal risk factors that impact Railway and ensure strategies are in place to manage those risks.
- Providing visible leadership, investing time in visiting/understanding operational areas and engaging with colleagues, residents and other stakeholders.
- Actively participating in the annual appraisals process and support the development of the Board/Committee as a whole.
- Taking personal responsibility for keeping up to date with relevant issues which may affect Railway.



What We Expect From You

- To uphold the values and objectives of Railway Housing Association.
- To uphold the association's core policies including those for equality and diversity.
- To prepare for and attend meetings as set out in the requirements of each role.
- To participate in meetings, contributing expertise where applicable.
- To contribute and share responsibility for the board's decisions.
- To prepare for and attend training sessions or other events.
- To attend and prepare for reviews linked to individual performance and that of the board and its committees.
- To represent Railway Housing Association as appropriate.
- To ask for training where it is needed.
- To declare any relevant interest.
- To respect confidentiality of information
- To uphold the Code of Governance and Code of Conduct.

What You Can Expect From Us

- Induction and other specialist training, as appropriate, to enhance the skills of all members.
- Support of the directors and executive team.
- Remuneration as set out in this document.
- Access to the directors' portal 'OnBoard' which contains the key documents of our business.
- Planned notification of the annual meeting schedule.
- Agendas and meeting papers circulated in advance of meetings.
- Access to publications and literature relating to the social housing sector and board membership.
- Access to board member forums through the National Housing Federation, Northern Housing Consortium and Placeshapers.

Time Commitment and Reward

Around 1.5 days per month, including:

- Six board meetings a year (in person, mostly in Darlington)
- Four committee meetings (online, with one meeting each year in person)
- Two strategy days
- Occasional events, training, working groups, appraisals and updates

We also ask all our board members to spend time keeping up to date with what is going on within Railway and the wider housing sector and we give you access to information to help.

Remuneration:

Board member: £2,600 per year (including expenses)

SID: £3,300 per year (including expenses)

You'll be asked to sign an Agreement for Services.



Board Meeting Schedule	
29th January 2026	Board meeting
19th March 2026	Board meeting
21st May 2026	Board meeting
23rd July 2026	Board meeting
18th September (Friday)	Board meeting
19th November 2026	Board meeting
28th January 2027	Board meeting
18th March 2027	Board meeting
Wednesday 13th May 2026	Strategy launch day
Thursday 17th September 2026	Strategy day and dinner



Starting in the Role

We'll fully support you through our induction process which takes place during the first six months of appointment. This will be tailored around you and will involve visits to Railway Housing Association schemes, engaging with residents and colleagues.

How long it's for

All appointments have a term of office in line with the National Housing Federation Code of Governance, 2020.

This is subject to satisfactory performance, evaluated through an annual non-executive appraisal.

Insurance

Director and officer insurance cover is in place.

Eligibility

We are unable to accept applications from candidates who are ineligible to serve as a director. This includes individuals who:

- Are disqualified from acting as a director under Sec 72 of the Charities Act 1993, by virtue of:
 - Having been convicted at any time of any offence involving deception or dishonesty (unless the conviction is legally regarded as spent)
 - Being an un-discharged bankrupt
 - Having made composition with creditors and not been discharged.
 - Being at any time removed by the Commissioners or the court from being a trustee because of misconduct
 - Being disqualified from being a company director
 - Being subject to an order under S429 (2)(b) of the Insolvency Act 1986.
- Are unable to comply with our Code of Conduct and/or have made a declaration of any actual or potential conflict of interest affecting them, members of their family and businesses or other companies with which they are associated or closely connected. This includes any matters that could be perceived as a conflict of interest.



How to Apply

To apply you should submit:

- An up-to-date CV
- A statement that explains why you are interested in the role, details how you are a good candidate and how you fulfil the skills requirement. We recommend your statement is no longer than two pages. Please indicate on your supporting statement if you cannot attend the interview dates.
- A fully completed [declarations and fit and proper person's form](#) – please complete every page.

We'd also be grateful if you would complete an [equalities monitoring form](#), which is not mandatory but helps monitor our commitment to equality and diversity.

Application documents should be emailed to recruitment@railwayha.co.uk by no later than 9am on Monday 26th January 2026. Your application will be acknowledged within 48 hours of receipt. Please contact Karen West at kwest@railwayha.co.uk if you have not heard from us within that time.

What happens next?

Your application will be assessed against the requirements of the role profile to help us create a shortlist.

Successful shortlisted candidates will be notified by 5pm on Tuesday 10th February and will be invited to attend an interview in Darlington on either 24th or 25th February 2026.

You will be asked to undertake a short verbal presentation on a topic you will be given in advance, before taking part in a formal interview with Yvonne Castle, Chair of the board, as well as board members Matt Lewer and Faye Gordon.

Matt Sugden, Chief Executive, will attend as an observer.

You will also have a structured discussion session with a small panel of Railway residents and Railway colleagues.

Informal discussion

There is an opportunity for interested candidates to chat with the chair or chief executive in advance of applying.

Please email Karen West, our Corporate Support Manager, to arrange a suitable time for a call at kwest@railwayha.co.uk or call 01325 373035 or 07860 504085.

You can also contact them directly as below.

Yvonne Castle, Chair of the Board
Tel: 07974 218726
Email: ycastle@railwayha.co.uk

Matt Sugden, Chief Executive
Tel: 07530 880723
Email: msugden@railwayha.co.uk

Board Terms of Reference

Purpose

- To play an active leadership and governance role within the association, setting the strategic direction of the business to support the overall association mission.
- To make best use of the association's resources to provide good quality, desirable and affordable homes for residents in need of housing.
- Doing so in a way which is consistent with the association's values, ensuring that risk is managed and obligations to residents, regulators and stakeholders are understood and met.

Scope

The board will be the governing board for the association.



Board Terms of Reference

Main Duties

- Lead the association in pursuit of its social mission, setting, reviewing and reaffirming the association's mission and values.
- Ensure that the needs and safety of the organisation's current and future residents are placed at the heart of the board's decision-making.
- Demonstrate a clear and active commitment to achieve equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in all of the association's activities, as well as in its own composition.
- Regularly review and reaffirm the culture and behaviours of the association that will best enable the association to deliver its mission and values.
- Ensure the association's statutory and regulatory obligations are being fulfilled.
- Ensure that the association operates within its constitution and objectives.
- Safeguard the association's long-term financial viability and going concern status.
- Set the strategic plans and ambitions for the association and monitor performance against them.
- Approve the association's Financial Statements and Annual Report.
- Approve benefit structures and colleague terms and conditions.
- Set the association's risk appetite levels.
- Ensure external and internal risk factors that impact the association are identified and ensure strategies are in place to manage those risks.
- Ensure that appropriate controls are in place to protect the organisation, colleagues and customers.
- Ensure that there are effective accountability and delegation structures in place.
- Ensure that any conflicts of interest are appropriately managed as set out in the Standing Orders.
- Promote the highest standards of governance for the association, including compliance with the NHF Code of Governance where applicable.
- Receive information on and monitor health and safety performance.
- Receive information and act upon resident insight, scrutiny and feedback.
- Ensure there are performance monitoring structures in place;
- Appoint and remove the chief executive.
- Create task and finish groups to look at specialist areas.
- Appoint Internal and external auditors.
- Appoint specialist advisors when required.

Board Terms of Reference

Composition

The board will have a membership of between 5 and 12 which reflects a range of skills, expertise and diversity. Board members will be remunerated and will sign a contract for services. The board will co-opt members as necessary to fill any gaps of skill or expertise.

Office Holders

The board will appoint a chair and a SID and other officers.

Conflicts of Interest

Board members must not put themselves in a position where their duties as a board member conflict with personal interests they may have.

All board members are expected to comply with the conflicts of interest protocols outlined in the Standing Orders.

Quorum

The quorum for the board will be not be less than four board members or half of the total number of board members, whichever is lower. In the absence of the chair, the vice chair or another board member will chair the meeting.

Frequency of Meetings

The board will meet formally at least four times a year or more often if required, as well as meeting for discussion and away days as required.

Administration

The agenda for meetings together with written reports will be distributed 7 days before the meeting.

All papers, minutes and decisions will make clear if any conflicts of interest are relevant or evident.

Meetings of the board can be held digitally. Minutes of the meeting shall be presented to the next board.

Review

The board is responsible for improvements and amendments to its terms of reference and for reviewing its effectiveness/performance every year. There will be a formal review every two years.

Need more Information?



Visit us online at www.railwayha.co.uk

Facebook: [/railwayhousingassociation](https://www.facebook.com/railwayhousingassociation)

LinkedIn: [/railway-housing-association](https://www.linkedin.com/company/railway-housing-association)

Call us on freephone 0800 028 7428

Email us at info@railwayha.co.uk