

The role of English housing associations

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Leading figures from the housing association sector in the West Midlands met at the University on 17 February with Dr Keith Magee, Director of the National Public Housing Museum, Chicago. The roundtable chaired by **Professor David Mullins** ([/staff/profiles/social-policy/mullins-david.aspx](#)) from the School of Social Policy discussed the role of English housing associations, their history and social missions, their potential to advance social justice, their status as non-public bodies and their housing and wider community roles. The purpose was to share information on Keith's plans for potential collaboration between the Public Housing Museum in Chicago with the housing sector in Birmingham and the West Midlands and to contribute to Keith's background research.



The roundtable was attended by five senior figures from housing associations in the West Midlands including three chief executives and five academics, four from the University of Birmingham and one from Coventry University. Some key themes emerging were the growth in economic insecurity and the roles that social housing can play as a buffer against insecurity, the rich and well-documented history of housing associations in the region, the potential for oral history contributions and concerns around policy directions and attitudes to social housing residents. These themes connected well with the aims of the Museum.

Summing up the Roundtable and Public Housing Museum

David Mullins, Professor of Housing Policy, Birmingham "It is clear that English housing associations have made important contributions to social justice by providing decent affordable homes and a wide range of community services, yet today they are challenged by funding opportunities that trade new homes for increased security and reduced affordability and by stigmatisation. The need for a clear social mission and communication of this to society has never been clearer."

Keith Magee, Director of National Public Housing Museum, Chicago "The Public Housing Museum chronicles the extraordinary experiences of everyday, ordinary men, women and children, who, during the nadir of world history sought affordable and safe housing communities to live, work and play. Chief among our broader goals is thoughtful investigation into the historical and contemporary issues relevant to the study of housing and society by highlighting: current issues facing social and affordable housing; public policies influencing community change; new visions for sustainable urban and rural neighbourhoods and consciousness surrounding social justice and human rights."