

Board Member Biographies

Brian Aird (Chair)



Brian spent well over 40 years working with the public and not for profit sectors before joining the Westward Board in 2016. Following a long career in health service management that included several chief executive roles, he briefly worked for KPMG and subsequently became a trustee of United Response, a large charity supporting people with learning disabilities and mental health needs. He was their honorary treasurer for 3 years and is their vice chair (and chair of subsidiary Robert Owen Communities). He has also been a non-executive director/vice chair of the Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust for 6 years and was a non-executive director of Trent Strategic Health Authority for 4 years.

As well as his charity work, Brian leads a small community interest company that runs a cafe in Exminster, is a director of Work-Life Properties Ltd, a family business and runs his own coaching and strategy consultancy.

Brian brings to Westward a wealth of leadership and governance experience at a senior level, as well as a sound understanding of working with multiple partners to improve community infrastructure, health and wellbeing.

He is a Fellow and former president of the Institute of Health Care Management and a Fellow of the RSA. Brian is married with two children and two step children.

Alan Brunt



Alan is our Senior Independent Director. Alan has been the CEO of Bron Afon Housing Association since 2017. Previously he was a freelance management consultant working in the housing and voluntary sectors. He has led three separate housing associations in the south west, either as chief executive or managing director. In ten years he had spells as chief executive of Tamar Housing Society in Plymouth, managing director of Flourish Homes (part of Aster Group) and interim chief executive of West Devon Homes.

Before these positions he worked for the Housing Corporation (now HCA) as a regulation manager and held finance and corporate strategy roles in Devon and Cornwall Housing Association. Alan qualified as an accountant in 1986 and worked for KPMG in Bristol.

George Dexter



George is a retired finance director, working for 12 years in further and higher education. In addition to finance he was also responsible for construction projects and property maintenance. Before this he worked in various finance roles in the NHS, Milk Marketing Board and the Rank Organisation.

He serves on the Audit and Assurance Committee and is also currently the chair of Horizon Homes.

George is a non-executive director of AgeUK MidDevon. He was a non executive director in Devon Primary Care Trust between 2006-2011 and before that in Mid Devon Primary Care Trust. George was treasurer and trustee of ADEPTA, a charity that supported people with autism and mental health issues.

George Dexter has lived in Devon since 1997.

Anne Hayward



Anne is a solicitor, now retired from practice. She is delighted to bring some 40 years knowledge and experience as a lawyer together with her particular expertise of the social housing sector gained over her career.

In particular over the last six years with national law firm, Clarke Willmott, Anne led the social housing sector team working with lawyers across all disciplines acting for RPs, local authorities, ALMOs and charities in the housing field across England and Wales. Her background is as a commercial property lawyer having worked on housing development, regeneration and finance schemes both in the private, social housing and public sectors. She has a strong interest in business development and strategic growth of business.

Anne is a member of the Chartered Institute of Housing and has held previous board appointments with a charity involved in recycling of furniture and training. Anne chairs our Audit and Assurance Committee.

Steve Lyons



A degree qualified Chartered Surveyor, Steve has over 25 years of commercial and management experience working at senior and board level within a number of key sectors. Having worked with several organisations of varying sizes this has given an insight to the challenges faced by the private and public sectors.

Steve has over five years' experience working within the Social Housing Sector for Mi-space (UK) Ltd and has also spent 5 years providing services to the public sector within Environmental and Highways. The last 3 years has been spent in the South West delivering a fusion of contracting, housing and mixed-use regeneration schemes. This has included partnerships works in collaborative long-term arrangements with registered providers, local authorities and other stakeholders to build high quality housing and sustainable communities.

Steve understands the challenges in the current political and economic climate and demonstrates working in partnership with public sector organisation through vehicles such as joint ventures.

Steve initially joined the Board of Horizon Homes and has offered a positive contribution during that time. He joined the main Board in 2016 and has thoroughly enjoyed the challenges of the sector and assisting the Executive Team in delivering the organisation's objectives. Steve's key focus in any organisation relates to governance, effectiveness and efficiency, achievement of set goals and delivery of the bottom line.

Will Patterson



Will has 30 years of experience working in the corporate finance sector and is currently Head of Risk and Compliance for a social impact fund manager and consultancy which has a particular focus upon creating material, scalable and sustainable solutions which address the challenge of homelessness. Will believes that social housing has a key role to play in ensuring that the local property market provides accessible homes for as many people as possible.

In his spare time, Will is a volunteer watchkeeper with Teignmouth National Coastwatch Institute, keen gardener, walker and wildlife enthusiast.

Frances West



Frances West brings a varied career experience to her board role with Westward. She started her civilian working life in 2008 after over 20 years in the Army where she was a lieutenant colonel in the Royal Military Police. She moved into local government with Purbeck District Council initially as the head of legal and democratic services and then went on to run their public health and housing department.

More recently Frances has worked in the charity sector with roles as the national head of welfare with Help for Heroes; and as the chief executive with Age UK Plymouth and deputy chief executive with EDP Drug and Alcohol Services.

Frances is delighted to have settled in the South West; is passionate about housing and the contribution it makes to communities; and as a committed Exeter Chiefs fan, is a regular attendee at matches.

Sue Coulson BA



As with many people in the sector, Sue 'fell' into social housing, courtesy of a 6-week temporary appointment in housing benefits, and has now been working in the sector for over 30 years!

Passionate about working with people and communities, making a difference and delivering excellent customer service, she has held a number of executive director roles including group corporate services director at Orbit Group, managing director at OGL Housing and Three Valleys Housing, and latterly DCH's group housing & communities director. An instrumental member of the team transferring Coventry City Council's housing stock to the newly created Whitefriars Housing Group, she went on to work with the HCA to establish the

mortgage rescue syndication scheme, leading business and cultural change in successive organisations, developing new business opportunities and implementing initiatives to improve customer service experiences.

As director of partnerships at Rentplus, Sue led their local authority and housing association engagement strategy and delivery, parliamentary lobbying, PR and communications, and management of the Rentplus portfolio. Sue is now an independent management consultant with a particular focus on customer service excellence and business transformation.

In the past, Sue has been a member of the NHF East of England Regional Committee, the HQN Advisory Group, and was the secretary of NHF South Housing Directors Group. Her non-executive director experience includes Aster Group and Coastline Housing. Moving from Coventry to Devon five years ago has meant Sue can make the most of her love of the sea, watersports, walking and the countryside.

Barbara Shaw, Chief Executive



Barbara has worked in housing for more than 15 years and at Westward she manages all business affairs relating to 7,000 properties and related services including development, support and asset management, across the south west.

Prior to this Barbara was managing director of Guinness Hermitage. She brings experience from support and communication skills from roles at Sovereign Housing, the commercial, public and charitable sectors. Barbara is passionate about delivering great services to customers and making housing associations highly efficient and professional; while still focusing on people and their neighbourhoods. She is a CIH SW regional board member, a National Housing Federation SW regional committee member, has an MA in business management and has participated in the NHF's leadership programme.

Paul Bryan, Deputy Chief Executive



Paul has worked as an executive director for 15 years for both large and medium sized housing associations. He was the managing director for the award winning property maintenance company Spectrum Property Care from 2007-2017 which he grew from £15m to £40m turnover, whilst driving a ten-fold increase in the bottom-line. SPC established a great brand by delivering excellence for in-house services and winning work in the open market. Paul's background is in finance where he has held a number of financial director roles. Paul has led on the creation of commercial subsidiaries, the arrangement of loan facilities and the implementation of new systems.

He has been with Westward since July 2017 and in that time he has refinanced the Group and become our deputy chief executive in April 2018 through taking on wider responsibilities which include property services, safety and procurement. Paul is also proud to be a qualified coach and tries not to miss his mid-week guitar nights.

Audit Committee members:

David Lausen



David was educated in Dorset before moving to London in the early 1970s to pursue a career in strategic planning. From 1988-98 David was Corporate Planning Manager at BTR plc, a major engineering multinational, and then a management consultant. In 2001, David returned to the Westcountry and from 2007-2015 he was a district councillor at Torridge District Council representing Winkleigh ward. At Torridge, David was Lead Member for Housing (2010-2015) and Chair of Audit and Governance (2012-2015). David is married and has two daughters, and his passions are books, gardening, visual arts and watching cricket.

Andy Power



Andy served for 16 years as an Army officer in the Parachute Regiment and then the Army Air Corps. After working in military procurement he left to work in various charities including a role as managing director, before taking up a role managing performance data at Westward. He currently runs his own seasonal sheep shearing business, home educates his eldest son, has a smallholding and makes things out of wood. Andy is keen that social housing's vital role is maintained and strengthened so that good housing and good communities are supported and accessible.