



Diane French

Chief Executive Officer,
Reside Housing Association

Diane is an experienced board director with a strong track record in public sector management, particularly health and social care. She has worked in public health, NHS commissioning, mental health, substance misuse and learning disability service provision.

Specialist knowledge

- **Health and Social Care especially Mental Health and Learning Disabilities**
- **Strategic leadership and planning**
- **Governance and board leadership**
- **Change and transformation management**
- **Leading partnerships and multi-stakeholder teams**
- **Performance and quality management**
- **Leading growth**

Experience

Having started her career in homelessness and mental health as a project worker and referrals officer for supported housing, Diane worked in a variety of local policy and commissioning roles in public health.

Moving into national roles, she worked with the National Treatment Agency and Healthcare Commission leading a national programme to improve quality standards and inspection of drug treatment services.

Diane then joined the National Audit Office to head up an audit of performance frameworks underpinning key government targets. She also became further involved in the NHS through non-executive director roles with primary care and clinical commissioning groups.

She moved to a national mental health charity as Director of Performance and Quality in 2010, working in a number of roles before leaving five years later as Group Director of Operations. During this time, Diane helped bring in five merger partners, led a major management restructure and introduced a new approach to strategic business planning and KPI reporting.

Diane then became Director of Operations and Business Development at a national learning disability charity, where she managed the delivery of 25% growth in two years, restructured resources to improve performance and cost efficiency, and redesigned quality and operational systems.

In January 2018 Diane joined Reside Housing Association, which specialises in providing housing with support for people with disabilities. As Chief Executive Officer, she is currently leading a transformational programme to improve governance and deliver cultural change.

Getting to know Diane...

Who has inspired you the most?

My mother has always been my inspiration - sadly she is no longer with us, but I owe her a lot. She grew up in significant poverty because her father died when she was 3 in an era when not having a male bread winner consigned a family to real hardship and even bullying; the stories of which still have the ability to bring tears to my eyes. She lived through the 2nd world war, and was widowed in her 40s – when I was still at primary school. If I was ever feeling sorry for myself growing up, she always told me to look around - as I would always find someone worse off to focus my sorrow on. She taught me tenacity, diligence and a set of values which I still try hard to live by.

What's the funniest/strangest thing that ever happened to you?

I was once in unauthorised possession of the full set of keys to Wandsworth Prison for a full 5 minutes, when there was a mix up at the gate on my arrival to shadow a health care inspection with the prison inspectors team.

If you could go anywhere in the world and do anything, where would you go and what would you do?

I hope I have learned the secret of being content with my home, and I have no great wanderlust but wherever I go I try to seek out art; from local to famous. Next on my list is to see a Picasso in Nice. Art is a universal language and it makes me smile everyday.

Not many people know this but...

My ambition in life is to be called eccentric – but at the moment I am probably only succeeding at being quirky.

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