# ITOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

#### Features this month

Bathroom Refurbishment
Fire & Smoke Protection
Floors & Flooring
Heating & Renewable Energy
Water & Air Quality

#### **Show preview**

Homes 2016

#### News

Four in 10 homes below standard Ministers target rogue landlords HA reclassification latest Latest news, events and products

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## Contents

#### **Features**

33 Bathroom Refurbishments

#### Towards an accessible and inclusive future

Adapting bathrooms to the needs of an ageing population should become top priority, explains James Dadd.

37 Fire & Smoke Protection

#### Don't wait 'til the heat is on

Landlords shouldn't firefight unforeseen problems but eye long-term solutions instead, according to Steve Martin of the Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA).

 $41 \hspace{0.1cm} \textbf{Floors \& Flooring}$ 

#### Getting your property covered

Floors in social and privated rented homes must meet a wide range of needs. Peter Kelsey of Designer Contracts advises.

45 Heating & Renewable Energy

#### Green from the ground up

Simon Lomax of Kensa Heating explains how to reduce tenant's utility bills by adopting sustainable heating solutions.

 $\mathbf{54}_{\text{Water \& Air Quality}}$ 

#### Clearing the air

Andy Makin of EnviroVent explains how ventilation issues in the home could aggravate respiratory conditions.

**56** Water & Air Quality

#### A way through the Legionella minefield

Water hygiene is a headache for landlords but it's crucial they get it right says James Homard of Compliance for Landlords.

#### In this issue...

Industry News	4 - 27
Case Study	25 - 27
Product Focus	51
Homes Show Preview	28 - 29
Directory	59



#### **Products**

Appointments & News22
Bathroom Refurbishment32 - 35
Building Products & Services32 - 36
Coatings, Sealants & Paints36
Doors, Windows & Glazing36
Fire & Smoke Protection36 - 39
Floors & Flooring40 - 42
Heating & Renewable
Energy42 - 49
Homes Show Preview26 - 32
Insulation50
Lighting50
Rainwater & Greywater Products52
Safety & Security58
Timber Products58
Water & Air Quality53 - 58



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#### Editor's comment

#### Spotlight shines on landlords

Housing has been in the media spotlight recently with horror stories about the plight of people unable to get a secure and decent home in which to raise their families. Many commentators and TV presenters have drawn links to the 50th anniversary of the airing of 'Cathy Come Home' which changed the country's attitude and approach to tackling terrible conditions in the private rented sector and a rising tide of homelessness.



Patrick Mooney. News Editor

Not surprisingly the question often asked is "How far have we really come since then?" Homelessness has been increasing for quite some time and the numbers being housed in unsuitable temporary accommodation is at record highs.

Shelter has just launched a new Living Home Standard to measure the acceptability of housing across all tenures, just days before the Government issued a new bedroom size standard for adults living in the private rented sector and an extension of licensing to cover thousands more rented properties.

A crackdown on rogue landlords is developing at the same time as figures emerge showing that the rental market is booming at the expense of the sales market.

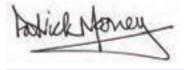
#### Fraud

It is clear there are bad individuals on both sides of the landlord and tenant relationship and good honest people need protecting from them. Latest figures show an increasing number of people are being scammed by fraudsters taking advantage of a highly competitive rental market. Reports of rental fraud in the UK jumped by around a third in 2015 compared with the previous year, with 2,940 incidents, according to Action Fraud – the national fraud and internet crime reporting centre. In the first nine months of this year 1,891 people reported they had been a victim of rental fraud. These are worrying figures.

Building significantly more homes for rent would reduce the opportunities for fraud, abuse and criminal activity. Evidence suggests we need almost two million more homes for rent and a think tank has demonstrated the Government could save billions by investing in 100,000 new social homes a year, making the contra argument which focuses on housing for sale looking increasingly flawed. The trend for mergers in the housing association world is about to take a significant step forward with several huge deals edging toward completion. The primary driver for these appears to be increasing their building capacity, so they can deliver lots of new homes.

#### **Fitness**

But social landlords also need to ensure they focus on building sustainable homes – with sufficient room for 21st century households – and that they also look to improve their existing housing stock. Billions of pounds were invested in bringing social homes up to the Decent Homes Standard, but that investment needs to be protected and built upon by continuing to spend money on replacing out-dated components and improving the energy efficiency of our homes. The new Living Home Standard will not deliver itself, and the regulator is clearly worried that repairs and maintenance budgets are going to be squeezed by the centrally imposed annual rent cuts. The chancellor's Autumn Statement is eagerly awaited to see what help and encouragement he has for landlords hopefully he sees them as part of the solution, rather than an expensive problem.



Patrick Mooney



#### On the cover...

The cover of this issue of HMM features The Joinery, London © Family Mosaic

The Joinery is a development in Islington by housing association Family Mosaic which is providing 52 flats in a converted Victorian warehouse plus four new blocks constructed along a newly created street. The development is offering affordable rent in a particularly expensive area of London and also represents a sustainability achievement being BREEAM 'Excellent'. See the case study on this project on page 25 of this issue.

## Charity says more than four in 10 homes fall below new standard

ore than four in 10 homes in Britain do not reach acceptable standards across a range of measures according to a report by Shelter.

The national housing charity along with Ipsos MORI has developed a Living Home Standard to assess housing according to its affordability, Decent Home conditions, stability, space and neighbourhood. This is a wider set of measures than the decent homes standard.

Shelter said affordability was the biggest problem and people should "live and thrive" in homes, not just "get by". Overall, 43 per cent of homes in Britain did not meet at least part of its standard.

Chief executive of the charity Campbell Robb, said: "When Shelter was founded, it was with the hope that one day everyone in the country would have access to a place they can truly call home.

"But the sad truth is that far too many people in Britain right now are living in homes that just aren't up to scratch – from the thousands of families forced to cope with poor conditions, to a generation of renters forking out most of their income on housing each month and unable to save for the future."

#### **Failures**

After establishing the standard, a survey of almost 2,000 people found that 43 per cent of people lived in homes that failed part of the requirements.

Over a quarter failed on affordability, while almost a fifth failed the standard because of poor conditions, with problems including persistent pests, damp and safety hazards. One in 10 failed because of insecurity about the period of occupancy.

The highest number of homes failing the standard was in London (73 per cent), followed by Wales and the East Midlands, where the figure was 49 per cent. The smallest percentage of failures was recorded in Yorkshire and the Humber at 27 per cent.

Shelter found residents were most concerned about the rising cost of their homes, or they were unable to meet their rent or mortgage without regularly cutting back on essentials, or they felt they did not have enough control over how long they could live in their home.

Each of the five elements in the standard is measured according to certain criteria – for example, the essentials of "space" include having sufficient bedrooms for the household and space for the whole household to spend time together in the same room.

Other aspects included having outdoor space, and enough space for children to study and adults to work.

#### Five factors

The range of measures developed to make the new Living Home Standard are:

- Affordability: Factors included how much was left for essentials, savings and social activities after paying for rent or mortgage.
- Decent conditions: Words like "safe", "warm" and "secure" were among the words used by the public to describe what makes a home meet this criterion.
- Space: Adequate space was considered crucial for wellbeing, especially mental and social wellbeing.
- Stability: this was often described as the extent to which people felt they could make the property they lived in a "home";
- Neighbourhood: Living in an area where people felt safe and secure was considered particularly important. People also wanted to be close enough to work, family and friends and the services they need.

Of the five criteria, affordability was consistently rated as the most important aspect of an acceptable home and 27 per cent of homes failed at least one of the affordability specifications.

Shelter said 24 per cent of people were not able to save anything for unexpected costs after meeting their rent or mortgage, and 23 per cent worried that their rent or mortgage

charges might become difficult to pay if they increased.

#### Cut backs

A further 18 per cent of people could not meet their housing costs without regularly cutting back on essentials like food or heating, and 20 per cent could not do this without missing out on social activities, commented the charity.

Nearly one in five, or 18 per cent of homes failed the criteria for decent conditions, with renters twice as likely as homeowners to live in places that failed on this element of the standard.

More than one in 10 people lived in homes failing the criteria for space. Tenants in social housing fared particularly badly on space, with one in five living in homes with inadequate space.

On stability, one in four private renters felt they did not have enough control over how long they could stay in their home. Shelter has called for stable rental contracts that last for five years and protect tenants against unaffordable rent increases.

Mr Robb called on the Government, businesses and other charities to work with the organisation to increase the number of homes that meet the Living Home Standard.

(See also story on page 6)



#### **NLA** demands changes to new buy to let tax

More than four hundred-thousand landlords (22 per cent) who pay the basic rate of tax will be forced into a higher tax bracket from April next year as planned changes to landlord taxation come in to force.

The changes, due to be fully phased in by 2021, mean landlords will no longer be able to deduct mortgage interest payments or any other finance-related costs from their turnover before declaring their taxable income.

Currently, mortgage interest payments can be deducted as a business cost, including insurance premiums, letting agent fees and maintenance and property repair costs.

"When the Government announced these changes, it claimed they would only hit a small proportion of higher-rate tax payers. We now know that is complete tosh"

Richard Lambert, CEO at NLA

While 440,000 basic-rate tax payers will be forced into a higher bracket, all landlords could be at risk of seeing their tax liability increase regardless of their existing rate of tax, with landlords in Central London (31 per cent), the East of England (30 per cent), and the West Midlands (28 per cent) particularly hit.

The amount by which landlords will be affected depends on their personal circumstances, including whether or not they generate income from any other sources.

Landlords' tax liability will increase depending on their existing annual mortgage interest payments, which are broken down by portfolio size below.

The sums vary from £3,600 on a single property, £18,200 on five-10 properties and £38,000 for 20 or more properties.

Richard Lambert, chief executive officer at the National Landlords Association (NLA), said: "When the Government announced these changes last year, it claimed they would only hit a small proportion of higherrate tax payers. We now know that is complete tosh."

He warned that unless changes were made landlords faced an impossible decision on whether to increase rents or to sell-up, forcing their tenants to find a new home.

#### **Trade bodies react to Shelter report**

Shelter's Living Home Standard report was a study of public perceptions and did not provide "hard evidence" into the housing stock, representatives of the National Housing Federation (NHF) and the National Landlords Association (NLA) have insisted.

The charity's report, which polled 1,961 people across Britain, found that 66 per cent of housing association, 68 per cent of local authority, and 69 per cent of private rented homes were not up to scratch.

HMM can reveal the survey examined 152 LA-rented homes (104 failed, 48 passed), 127 HA-rented homes (84 failed, 43 passed) and 427 PRS homes (293 failed, 134 passed).

In August the NHF claimed HAs provided "some of the best homes" based on its own report which looked into factors such as energy efficiency, tenant satisfaction and neighbourhood.

Henry Gregg, assistant director of communications and campaigns at the NHF, said: "These findings give an interesting insight into what the nation considers to be an acceptable home, but ultimately the results are attitudinal and based on the perceptions of respondents.

"Our research shows that housing

association homes are better quality and more energy efficient than those in the private rented sector. They are also more affordable and provide tenancies which are more secure.

"Indeed, across all tenures housing association repair costs are the lowest, with costs in the private rented sector almost

Richard Lambert, CEO at the NLA, said: "Shelter's Living Homes Standard defines what people aspire to in a home, rather than a practical housing standard based on hard evidence. In reality, many people are living happily in homes which do not meet their criteria."

"Standards are continuing to improve in the PRS. According to the most recent English Housing Survey, the proportion of 'nondecent' properties in the private sector is actually declining, and fell by 18 per cent between 2006 and 2014.

"Nevertheless, more can be done to improve private renting in the UK, but the best way to do this is through incentivising the good work of landlords, rather than applying yet more regulations and discouraging investment in buy-to-let."

#### Private landlords lose legal challenge over tax changes

rivate landlords have warned rents will rise after they failed in their bid to force a judicial review of the Government's controversial decision to change how mortgage interest payments are accounted for.

Buy to let investors and landlords will be particularly affected by the changes which stop mortgage interest being a claimable business expense. It means landlords with mortgages will pay tax on their turnover rather than their profit.

Steve Bolton and Chris Cooper went to the High Court demanding a judicial review but the judge refused them leave to proceed and the co-claimants have confirmed they are not going to appeal.

In a joint statement after the hearing, Bolton and Cooper said they were "outraged" by the decision, adding: "It has completely missed the opportunity to protect tenants, landlords and the housing market from the disastrous consequences of Section 24 of the

"Sadly it will be tenants who are hit the hardest; they are set to see unprecedented rent increases over the coming months and years, which will be a very clear and direct consequence of this ludicrous legislation. For many, it will also mean the loss of their homes because vast numbers of landlords will be forced to exit the market.

#### Unfair

"Hard-working, responsible landlords will have their pension plans in ruins, but the large corporations and the wealthiest in society, who can buy property without the need for mortgage finance, are systematically excluded from this unfair tax policy."

A survey of landlords by the Residential Landlords Association revealed the changes would lead to higher rents for tenants, repair and maintenance standards slipping and the supply of private rented housing would stagnate.

David Smith, policy director for the Residential Landlords Association (RLA) said: "Having provided support for this case, the RLA is disappointed it will not progress to a full judicial review. The campaign to seek changes must now focus on a political path."

'The Autumn Statement provides an important opportunity for the Government to make changes that will support the development of the new homes to rent the country desperately needs," he added.

He said: "Whilst it is now being judged as a legal tax that doesn't make it a just or fair tax and the Government still doesn't seem to fully understand the impact it will have on housing supply and economic activity. The real losers with be the tenants as living costs continue to increase."

## Clampdown on rogue landlords includes new minimum bedroom size

new minimum bedroom size and extending licensing to thousands more properties both form part of a clampdown on landlords who cram tenants into overcrowded homes.

The measures are contained in a new Government consultation to tackle the problem of landlords who squeeze tenants into "rabbit-hutch" properties.

The proposals will introducte a new minimum bedroom size of  $6.52~\text{m}^2$  (70 ft²) in shared houses classed as homes in multiple occupation (HMO). The size would be applied for each bedroom in the property.

The Housing Act 1985 specifies minimum space standards but a tribunal case in April 2015 caused confusion when it ruled that standards could only be guidance.

#### **Exploiting**

The Government wants to make the standard mandatory as part of a package of measures it said would help councils to bring an end to bad practices by ruthless landlords, who exploit tenants and charge them extortionate rents to live in poor conditions.

Other proposals in the consultation paper include extending mandatory licensing rules to flats above shops and other business premises; requiring landlords to provide decent storage and disposal of rubbish; and tightening up the

"fit and proper person" test for landlords ensuring that criminal record checks are carried out to weed out roques.

Where a landlord fails to obtain a licence they will be liable to pay a potentially unlimited fine. The rules only apply to HMOs requiring licences, which are shared homes with five or more people from two or more households. The changes would bring about 174,000 more properties into licensing, on top of the existing 60,000.

The Government is also seeking views on whether the licensing arrangements for purpose-built student accommodation are appropriate.

#### **Protection**

The Housing and Planning Minister Gavin Barwell said: "In order to build a country that truly works for everyone we must ensure that everyone has somewhere safe and secure to live.

"These measures will give councils the powers they need to tackle poor-quality rental homes in their area. By driving out rogue landlords that flout the rules of business, we are raising standards and giving tenants the protection they need."

Commenting on the proposals David Smith, policy director at the Residential Landlords Association, said: "We agree that tackling

#### "About 174,000 more properties will have to be licensed"

criminal landlords must be a priority. We wait to see the full details, but powers are already available to tackle overcrowding which is about the number of people crammed into a room, not the size of a room. What is needed is proper enforcement of existing powers."

Powers in the Housing and Planning Act, which are also being introduced, will further crackdown on poor quality homes by introducing a database of rogue landlords and property agents, banning orders for the most prolific and serious offenders, penalties of up to £30,000 and extended rent repayment orders.

The new measures are intended to complement other Government efforts. More than £5 million of targeted funding for 48 councils has brought a big increase in the number of homes checked over recent months.

In early 2016, more than 33,000 homes were inspected and nearly 2,800 rogue landlords are now facing prosecution for providing substandard homes.

Since 2011 the Government has provided £12m so local authorities can carry out more raids, issue more statutory notices and demolish 'beds in sheds' and other prohibited buildings.

#### Governments pledge to reverse ONS reclassification

Governments across Britain have pledged to legislate in an attempt to reverse the Office for National Statistics decision to classify housing associations (HAs) as part of the public sector.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has announced that HAs in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are to be treated as public sector bodies, meaning their private loans will be added to the Government's balance sheet.

This follows a similar decision made last year to re-classify English housing associations as public sector bodies.

Westminster has already included measures in the Housing and Planning Act 2016, to

address the same issue in England. If the ONS decision stands despite the legislation, it could lead to the Treasury placing limits on associations' borrowing.

Nicola Sturgeon, the Scottish First Minister, has promised a new law to reduce the control over associations' activities and management, including the need for the regulator's consent to dispose of assets or to merge with another landlord.

Representatives of the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Executive also vowed to pass similar deregulatory measures to reverse the reclassification.

#### Deregulation

The ONS has now decided that housing associations in all four parts of Britain should be classed as "public non-financial corporations" for the purpose of national accounts.

Derek Bird, head of public sector at the ONS, said: "The ONS has reclassified housing associations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to the public sector purely for the purpose of economic statistics.

"This has no direct impact on the ownership, management structures or borrowing constraints of the organisations concerned. It is for the devolved governments, rather than ONS, to consider the impact this classification decision may have on budgeting and fiscal management."

"HAs in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be treated as public sector bodies adding their private loans to the Government's balance sheet."



#### **Scottish housing** bill promised

Legislation which will help support the delivery of 50,000 new affordable homes is to be introduced by the Scottish Government.

By ensuring housing associations (HAs) can be classified as private bodies, the bill will ensure that HAs can borrow money privately in addition to the Scottish Government's committed investment of £3bn in affordable housing.

The announcement follows the decision by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to classify HAs as public bodies in the national accounts. The ONS came to this decision in light of a number of powers that the Scottish Housing Regulator can exercise over HAs. The ONS came to the same decision in regard to England's HAs last year and similar legislation was introduced at Westminster.

"By ensuring housing associations can be classified as private bodies, the Bill will ensure that HAs can borrow money privately in addition to the Scottish Government's committed investment"

Commenting on this decision, Housing Minister Kevin Stewart said: "The First Minister made clear in the Programme for Government that we are committed to HAs remaining classified as private bodies in the national accounts. In light of the announcement by the ONS, the Government will bring forward a Bill to adjust the powers of the Scottish Housing Regulator. This will allow the ONS to reclassify HAs to the private sector.

#### Reclassification

"Reclassifying HAs to the private sector is important as it will ensure their borrowing continues to be treated as private borrowing, which can be used to augment the £3bn of public investment that the Government is providing to support the delivery of 50,000 new affordable homes in the next five years.

"I am pleased that the Scottish Government has reached an agreement with the HM Treasury that will allow progress in delivering this programme to continue whilst the position on classification is being resolved."

The Scottish Government has discussed its plans to legislate with the Regulator, and bodies representing HAs, their tenants and lenders, and confirmed that it would continue discussions with them during the development of the new law.



#### **UK** faces critical shortage of homes to rent, says RICS

he UK is facing a "critical rental shortage" which requires a building programme to focus on providing nearly two million new homes for tenants.

This stark warning has come from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), a body not normally associated with making exaggerated claims. But the surveyors have claimed the Government's current housebuilding targets are insufficient.

Instead they claim at least 1.8 million more households will be looking to rent rather than buy a home by 2025. Among their solutions to the current housing crisis, RICS have called on the Government to offer tax breaks to encourage building and greater investment in the construction sector.

Although the Conservative Party appears to be softening its exclusive focus on home ownership and building new homes for sale, the surveyors say that specific measures need to be taken to encourage social and private landlords to build more homes for rent.

#### Stamp duty

The private rented housing sector has grown significantly since the year 2000 and numbers of privately rented homes have risen to over 5.5 million homes, overtaking the number of properties owned and let by councils and housing associations.

The previous Chancellor of the Exchequer raised stamp duty on buy-to-let purchases earlier this year in a direct move to discourage private landlords from competing with first time buyers. Tax changes to reduce what landlords can claim in operating costs are due to be implemented next year.

A survey of landlords by RICS found that 86 per cent had no plans to add to their property portfolios this year.

RICS recommend reversing the stamp duty increase and have also called for a number of measures to boost investment. These include:

Private house builders encouraged to build

- specifically for the rental sector;
- Pension funds given tax breaks to fund large scale rental properties;
- Councils encouraged to release brownfield sites for building new homes for renting to tenants.

#### Construction

Speaking at the Conservative Party conference Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said the Government would take "unprecedented steps" to encourage construction of homes for people to buy. He told delegates tackling the housing shortage would be his "number one priority".

He said: "Far too many young people cannot get a foot on the housing ladder. Many are being forced to live back with mum and dad as rents soar faster than wages."

The Chancellor Philip Hammond and Communities Secretary Sajid Javid, have announced new measures to build more houses, including the launch of a £3bn Home Building Fund.

This will provide £1bn of short term loan funding - to be used by small and medium builders, custom builders, and innovators, delivering 25,000 homes in the short term; and £2bn of long term funding for infrastructure to be used to unlock a pipeline of up to 200,000 homes over the longer term.

Jeremy Blackburn, RICS head of policy said: "The private rented sector became a scapegoat under the previous Prime Minister, and because of that it suffered. Yet with increasingly unaffordable house prices, the majority of British households will be relying on the rental sector in the future.

"We must ensure that it is fit for purpose, and the Government must put in place the measures that will allow the rental sector to thrive. Any restrictions on supply will push up rents, marginalising those members of society who are already struggling."



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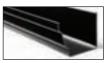
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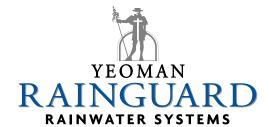
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#### LGA chief attacks housing duty proposal

The influential chair of the Local Government Association has urged the Government to drop proposals for a new duty on councils to provide supported housing.

Ministers are understood to be considering imposing new duties on councils to provide "certain types of housing", to ensure supported housing continues to be provided at affordable rent levels.

Speaking at the Conservative Party conference in Birmingham Lord Gary Porter said: "If anybody is talking about giving us new duties, they need to go away and they need to go away very quickly.

"You cannot solve problems by making councils have duties to do things. You have to give us the means to will the outcome. You can't just tell us to do something. So if the Treasury come back at that position, that's where we will be with it."

The Government plans to cap housing benefit for supported housing tenants in line with local housing allowance (LHA) rates from 2019/20, with many existing providers warning this could make supported housing schemes too costly to run.

#### Uncertainty

Chartered Institute of Housing chief executive Terrie Alafat has already attacked the Government's decision that the LHA cap will apply to all tenants in supported housing, not only those with new tenancies from April 2017.

"It will have huge implications for existing and new supported housing schemes. For that reason, CIH is calling on government to reconsider this retrospective application, and bring it into line with the application to new tenants in the wider social sector.

Ms Alafat also raised concerns over increased levels of uncertainty affecting existing schemes. "The system of top up funding through a local pot means that providers are already considering whether they will develop new schemes; this measure will increase the risks to the viability of some existing schemes and in the long term, potentially reduce the overall provision of supported housing. That will mean vulnerable people will struggle to get the homes and help they need," she added.

#### Regulator warns sector over stock sales

Housing associations have been warned they risk damaging the reputation of the social housing sector if they sell housing stock occupied by tenants.

As part of a de-regulation drive, the Government has dropped the need for associations to obtain permission from the Homes & Communities Agency before they dispose of social assets, although they still have to notify the regulator of sales that have taken place.

The red tape was cut as part of a package of measures to get borrowing and spending by social landlords off the public expenditure books. This followed their reclassification by the Office of National Statistics.

However, Fiona MacGregor, executive director of regulation at the HCA, has warned HAs the agency will be keeping a particularly keen eye on social landlords disposing of tenanted stock because of a potential backlash from the public.

Ms MacGregor said: "We'll want to know about disposals of tenanted property out of the sector. We think that's one of the areas that could bring the greatest reputational risk to the organisations and the sector.

"Our interest in this is that you make sure you comply with the consumer standards, being open and transparent with tenants so they know what the implications of being outside the regulated sector will mean for them and their tenancies."

Ms MacGregor insisted the regulator's priority was in preventing problems arising but she warned that the agency was prepared to step in and use its powers where necessary.

#### **CIH** wants more new housing of all tenures built

Housing's professional body has welcomed the Government's package of investment to build new houses, but stressed that making sure homes of all types are built will be crucial to meet demand.

Following the announcement of a new £3bn fund, Gavin Smart, deputy chief executive of the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), said: "We need more homes for rent and sale that people of all incomes can afford and it is crucial the Government ensures that this extra investment, and the new momentum created by it, achieves this."

The CIH wants to see the new money invested in building new homes for all tenures – for renting, for shared ownership and for outright sale. This is similar to the message from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, who highlighted the need for 1.8 million new homes for rent in their response to the Government's funding announcement.

#### **Encouraging**

Mr Smart added: "It is encouraging to see both the Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government recognise that we need to build far more homes to meet housing need.

"The key now will be in the detail and the biggest challenge will be making sure that the investment supports new, affordable homes of all types.

"Though boosting home ownership is something we support, many people are unable to get onto the property market and are left with no option but to rent in the private sector."

#### **Upward trend in homelessness** "deeply worrying," Alafat says

The latest figures on homelessness highlight a worrying upward trend, CIH chief executive Terrie Alafat has commented.

Alafat said: "The Government's latest homelessness figures highlight the continuation of a deeply worrying trend." She was responding to figures that showed:

- Local authorities accepted 15,170 households as being statutorily homeless between 1 April and 30 June 2016, up 3 per cent on the previous quarter and 10 per cent on the same quarter of last year.
- The total number of households in temporary accommodation on 30 June 2016 was 73,120, up 9 per cent on a year earlier, and up 52 per cent on the low of 48,010 on 31 December 2010.

Ms Alafat added: "It is particularly concerning that those living in bed and breakfast accommodation for longer than the legal limit of six weeks went up 18 per cent in the last quarter alone. These are trends we cannot ignore."

In praising local authorities for their work on support and prevention, Ms Alafat said the increased numbers of people presenting as homeless showed that more resources were needed, in particular for new affordable housing.

"While the Homelessness Reduction Bill could be a crucial piece of legislation in our efforts to tackle homelessness, what these figures clearly demonstrate is that imposing a

"Over 8,000 people were seen sleeping rough in London in 2015/16"



"What we desperately need is a long-term strategy which includes a commitment to give local authorities the support they need and recognises building more homes people can afford will be absolutely central to making sure homeless people get the help they need."

#### Temporary accommodation

Meanwhile research by trade magazine Inside Housing has found a Government fund targeted at tackling the number of families in temporary accommodation has failed to halt

Some 25 councils were given access to a £5m fund late last year, but 19 of them reported a jump in the number of households placed in temporary housing between June 2015 and June 2016.

In Birmingham, the number of households living in temporary accommodation at the end of June had shot up by more than 50 per cent

Analysis of homelessness statistics published by the Department for Communities and Local Government revealed the total number of households living in temporary accommodation across the 25 local authorities rose by 6 per cent to 51,552 between June 2015 and June 2016.

#### Capital response

London mayor Sadiq Khan has responded by establishing a new taskforce aimed at tackling the rise in rough sleeping on the streets of the capital.

Mr Khan has announced the new 'No Nights Sleeping Rough' taskforce, which will be headed up by deputy mayor for housing James Murray. The taskforce brings together officials from central and local government, as well as homelessness charities. Its main focus will be on prevention.

The new group will work with the Metropolitan Police, NHS bodies and Transport for London to identify new interventions, as well as lobbying the Government for support. It replaces previous mayor Boris Johnson's Rough Sleeping Group. A City Hall source said the new taskforce, which will hold its

A total of 8,096 people were seen sleeping rough in London in 2015/16, according to research commissioned by the Greater London Authority - a 7 per cent increase on the 6,508 reported in 2014/15 and a 20 per cent increase on the 6,437 rough sleepers in 2012/13.

Mr Khan said: "The number of people sleeping rough is clearly unacceptable. I won't allow this problem to be ignored. I want my new taskforce to make a real impact by ensuring government, the voluntary sector, boroughs, and others are working together effectively to help people off the streets."





#### **MERGER WATCH** 'Sector changing' deals move forward

ergers to create three giant-sized social landlords with massive development ambitions have moved closer to completion, with the potential for shaping the housing sector for many years to come.

Spurred on by opportunities to make huge cost savings and the capacity to invest this in delivering tens of thousands of new homes for rent and sale, the new landlords will join the ranks of the very biggest associations with huge budgets. They could even compete with volume builders.

The Government is hoping their financial muscle will be converted into house building programmes the like of which we have not seen in a generation. The most notable deals are:

- · Affinity Sutton and Circle joining forces to produce a new association, Clarion with 128,000 homes:
- East Thames will join L&Q to form a 85,000 home landlord; and
- Sovereign and Spectrum are merging to

become a giant HA in the South West with 55,000 properties.

Meanwhile Housing & Care 21, whose proposed merger with Sanctuary collapsed earlier in the year, reacted to tough operating conditions by putting their care home business up for sale.

#### New homes

Affinity Sutton and Circle are the most advanced following conditional approval from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) for their 'megamerger'. The new organisation will be called the Clarion Group. Subject to obtaining approval from their lenders, completion of the merger is expected in November.

The new group will consist of a housing association, Latimer (a commercial development company), and a charitable foundation. Latimer is expected to build 50,000 new homes of various tenures over 10 years from 2019. The new charitable foundation will carry out community investment work.

In London, East Thames is expected to merge with L&Q in December with full amalgamation by March 2019. Initially East Thames will stay as a subsidiary of L&Q, managing all of the group's homes in its East region as well as its care and support operations.

The new association will own 85,000 homes and retain the L&Q branding. It hopes to generate efficiency savings of £40m in the next two years and build 100,000 homes over 10 years, across the whole of the South East and London.

Yvonne Arrowsmith, chief executive of East Thames, said: "East Thames was formed through a merger 30 years ago, so we see it as something which is part of the organisation. We could remain independent, but if we did we wouldn't be able to build as many homes as are definitely needed in the East region - which is what the organisation was set up to do."

#### Surpluses

Down in the South West, Sovereign posted a £45m surplus ahead of its merger with Spectrum with a planned completion before the end of the year. The new organisation plans to build 6,000 new homes over the next five years.

Their combined size of 55,000 homes will make them the largest association in the region. Ann Santry, Sanctuary's chief executive, will remain in her role after the merger.

John Simpson, chair of Sovereign, said: "I believe strongly that more consolidation within the sector is needed and while merger can mean making difficult decisions, it is up to boards to take the lead."

Housing & Care 21 has decided to dispose of its home care service and is in the process of seeking a new provider to take it over. It said it was taking the decision because of squeezed council budgets and the difficulty in recruiting good quality care workers.

Its home care business had a turnover of £29.2m in 2015/16 and 90 per cent of this was made through local authority contracts.

A spokesperson for Housing & Care 21 said: "Our staff have worked extremely hard over recent months to achieve the high-quality standards we set for this area of our operations in what are challenging circumstances for all providers. The board has taken the view that it would now be better to pass our operation on as a going concern to a new provider."

#### Tougher penalties for landlords renting to illegal immigrants

Prison sentences await landlords who knowingly let their homes to illegal immigrants, the Home Secretary has warned.

Amber Rudd MP has announced landlords will face harsher penalties for renting out to migrants staying in the UK illegally.

While the 'Right to Rent' checks, introduced earlier this year, were treated as civil offences with a maximum fine of £3,000, a series of postreferendum policy announcements are revealing a tougher stance being taken by Ministers.

Ms Rudd told the Conservative Party

conference: "I am announcing that from December landlords who knowingly rent out property to people who have no right to be here will be committing a criminal offence. They could go to prison."

The regulations apply to all landlords, in both the private and social housing sectors but housing associations are not liable to prosecution if they rent a house to an illegal immigrant who has been nominated to them by a local authority from the council's waiting list.

There are fears the new penalties could make

it even more difficult for foreign nationals to rent homes, with some landlords reluctant to rent their properties to anyone who is not British.

"From December landlords who knowingly rent out property to people who have no right to be here will be committing a criminal offence"



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#### East London council has 50-year waiting list for houses

The far-reaching extent of the housing crisis was laid bare in a BBC documentary in October in which a Barking and Dagenham councillor told local people they would have to wait 50 years for a council home.

Maureen Worby, the councillor in charge of social care at Barking and Dagenham, told a meeting of local people they would have to wait a decade for a council home, but then added: "Do you know what - it's not a 10-year wait, it's a 50-year wait."

The BBC documentary also included footage of the council's leader Darren Rodwell saying he is unable to afford a house in a borough where the average property now costs £270,000.

Tenants have bought almost 20,000 homes from the east London council since they were given the Right to Buy under the Housing Act 1980. This has halved the council's housing stock.

#### "The perfect storm"

In 'No Place to Call Home' a BBC film crew followed housing officials and the people they are trying to help in the Borough. Among those featured are a teacher forced to sleep in her car after losing her job, a family with a young son who have spent three years sleeping on friends' sofas and a young woman who does not qualify for help despite having tried to kill herself.

Barking and Dagenham is one of the 10 most-deprived boroughs in England, but at the same time local property prices have risen by almost 40 per cent since 2008 and the council has 50 times more people on its housing waiting list than properties available.

John East, the council's director of housing, said: "In terms of trying to find suitable accommodation for homelessness, we have the perfect storm." The borough's homeless population has grown 350 per cent in four years with almost half of them in work, up from 10

per cent.

The documentary showed the impact these changes have both on those without housing and on council staff, who are having to tell more people that the council cannot help them.

"We're a housing options service, without any options," said one frontline member of staff featured in the film. "It's a bit like the Grand National," she said. "If you fall at one of the hurdles, you're not going to finish the race."

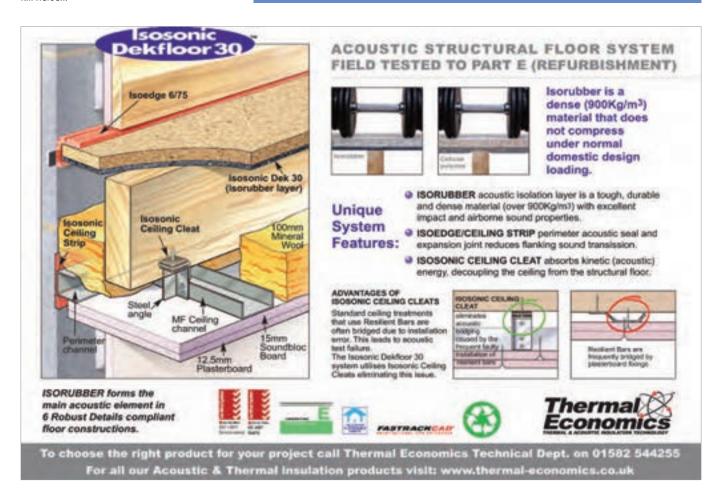
#### Mixed picture on private sector rent rises

Private sector rents rose 2.3 per cent on average last year, but a mixed picture emerged across the country with inflation-busting increases in some locations and no growth in others.

Figures released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that rents rose by:

- 2.4 per cent in England
- 0.1 per cent in Wales
- Remained unchanged in Scotland

In England rents rose fastest in the South East (up 3.4 per cent) and the East of England (up 3.3 per cent) while the lowest annual increases were recorded in the North East (up 0.9 per cent) and the North West (up 1.1 per cent). The overall growth of 2.3 per cent easily outstripped inflation but would have been higher except for a cooling off in the London market. The ONS concluded that inflation in the rental market is "likely to have been caused by demand in the market outpacing supply".



#### Up to £300bn savings if more homes are built

The Government could save billions of pounds and achieve better value for taxpayers' money if it built 100,000 new social rented homes a year new research has concluded.

The report by think tank Capital Economics, was commissioned by the National Federation for Arm's-Length Management Organisations, the Association for Retained Council Housing, the Local Government Association and campaign group 'Social Housing Under Threat' looked at four post-Brexit scenarios for social housing, including weak and strong economic outlooks.

It found the Government could generate savings of between £102bn and £319bn over a 50-year period if it invested in building 100,000 new social rented homes a year. This is because the housing benefit bill would fall as a result of more people living in the social rented sector rather than the more expensive private rented sector.

Even in a weak economic scenario where growth is weak and borrowing costs are high – the Government would still make savings compared with current housing policy, the authors concluded. This was based on a comparison of only 9,100 new social rented homes being built each year from 2018/19 onwards rather than 100,000 a vear.

#### New homes

The think tank assumed just 9,100 new social homes a year because the current HCA investment programme for 2016/21 does not include any funding for social rented housing. It calculates all new social rented homes will be funded either by Section 106 planning payments or from landlords own resources.

Funding the development of 100,000 homes a year would add more than four million homes to the UK's housing stock over 50 years. They point out that providing new homes for low-income families has "knock-on" benefits, such as savings in health, education and productivity.

The authors say that unlike other types of infrastructure investment, social housing begins to pay for itself once it is built through rent payments.

Hugh Broadbent, chair of the NFA, said: "To complete a 100,000 new homes a year housebuilding programme would only cost £7billion – the equivalent of two weeks' worth of spending in the NHS. But in the long-run, the return on this borrowing would deliver greater savings to the taxpayer and the economy. Critically the investment needed would be paid for through rental income and not from general taxation."

#### Big rise in sales of social homes, but overall HA stock at record high



Housing associations reported a 48 per cent increase in sales of social rented homes as they seek greater financial returns and value for money from their assets.

This was the stand-out figure in a set of recently published statistics that also revealed the number of homes owned by associations rose to 2.8 million homes at 31 March 2016, a two per cent increase on the figure from the year before. This is the largest growth in HA stock numbers since 2012.

The Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA) statistical data return, showed English associations disposed of 4,406 homes in 2015/16, up from 2,982 in 2014/15. The HCA defines these disposals as the sale of social rented homes for 'non-social housing use'.

When all disposals (such as demolitions and Right to Buy sales) are included, the total number of properties leaving the sector increased 16.6 per cent to 18,419 homes in the year - up from 14,803 in 2013.

The figures pre-date the enforced one per cent annual rent cut in April, which could force more landlords to sell properties to plug income shortfalls. Other sales could happen where properties are deemed too costly to maintain because of their location or condition, or they are subject to low demand.

Associations increased their rents by an average of two per cent in 2015/16, the last year before the first annual rent cut imposed by the Government. The rent rise was in line with the 2.2 per cent increase in target rents.

#### Disposals

The HCA said the increase in disposals "is likely to be a combination of increased asset management activity by some providers, focusing on achieving value for money from

existing stock and securing resource for development programmes through the sale of existing assets".

The data release follows a warning from Fiona MacGregor, executive director of regulation at the HCA, that associations risk damaging the sector's reputation if they sell housing inhabited by tenants.

A spokesman for the National Housing Federation, said: "Housing associations regularly review their stock. In some instances, maximising the value and efficiency of stock will lead to disposals. This generates profits for them to reinvest in building new homes for rent as well as continuing to improve the already high quality of their existing stock."

#### "Affordable rent stock numbers rose by 31 per cent between March 2015 and 2016"

General needs stock increased by 36,982 homes, some 70 per cent of the total increase in stock, while the number of non-social rented homes owned by HAs increased 7.5 per cent to 53,981. The HCA said this was "likely due to increases in market rental and student accommodation developments by a minority of providers".

Affordable rent stock numbers rose by 31 per cent between March 2015 and 2016 to 161,193. This was expected, as this was the main tenure funded through the 2015/16 and 2015/18 Affordable Homes Programmes.

The statistical release was based on responses from 95 per cent of English HAs, with 100 per cent of associations owning 1,000 homes or more responding.

#### **HA suspends CEO** over board failures

A Norfolk housing association breached regulatory standards by failing to appoint board members properly and failing to notify the regulator.

The social housing regulator, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) has criticised Saffron Housing Trust for keeping quiet about the failings between 2011 and earlier this year.

It downgraded the association's rating to a non-compliant G3, reflecting "the scale, impact and duration of Saffron's historic failures". A HCA spokesman said Saffron's "failure to work openly with the regulator" represented a "fundamental breakdown in trust".

Following its downgrading, the 5,000 home landlord suspended its chief executive and appointed an interim. Adam Ronaldson has been placed on paid leave while an internal investigation takes place, with John Whitelock, director of new business, taking over.

The HCA judgement said Saffron had informed the regulator that problems in the governance process and failures to comply with its rules meant some board members had not been appointed properly. This continued over a period of years.

"Significant decisions were made during this period involving third parties and funders and there was uncertainty about the validity of all the decisions that had been made at those meetings given some board meetings had been inquorate," the regulator added.

Saffron's board is now properly constituted and has ratified all of the decisions made previously by the illegitimate board.

A Saffron spokesperson said: "As an organisation, we are determined to ensure that the historic failings that have come to light are not repeated and that we have correct and robust governance to ensure a stable, compliant and successful future."



#### HCA to ensure repair responsibilities delivered

he Homes and Communities Agency will examine housing association budgets and business plans to ensure property maintenance is not being put at risk by cuts in repairs spending.

Faced with four years of one per cent annual rent cuts and the need to make savings many social landlords are actively looking at ways to deliver 'more for less' while at the same time generating efficiencies to invest in building more new homes.

In its Sector Risk Profile document, the HCA will examine the cost efficiencies landlords are planning to cope with the cuts. The average major repairs cost per unit in the sector is forecast to fall by 10 per cent from £1,032 in 2016 to £928 by 2020.

"We will seek to understand the assumptions within business plans where there are significant reductions in maintenance and repair expenditure, to gain assurance that this is not a sign of a registered provider failing to maintain its stock or a simple balancing figure in which significant capital investment programmes are being pushed to future years."

The HCA said associations relying on ambitious cost savings need to have clear plans in place and mitigations if they cannot be delivered. However, where repair costs appear to be unusually high it will also challenge association boards.

"HCA's document outlines key risks including the Universal Credit, Brexit and deregulation measures"

The Sector Risk Profile document outlines key risks to the sector. These include Universal Credit, Brexit and deregulation measures in the Housing and Planning Act as risks that providers need to be aware of.

The HCA warned associations they particularly needed to manage sales risk, which has increased due to the development of more homes for sale, including shared ownership and outright sales. It said board members' skills and governance structures need to match the increasing complexity of providers' businesses brought about by diversification.

#### Good news for contractors as lucrative deals inked

Multi-million pounds worth of new business have been announced by major contractors working in the social housing sector.

Wates Living Space Maintenance has been awarded a £24m repairs contract by Network Homes, to deliver a repairs service to the association's 13,900 properties across London and the south east.

Wates will also repair and maintain Network's empty properties under the contract, which runs for five years with an optional five-year extension.

Meanwhile Kier Group have reported

increased profits of £125m (up 45 per cent) on a higher turnover, up 26 per cent to £4.2bn, despite the social housing rent cut resulting in a reduced level of contracts won by its housing maintenance business.

The company is delivering higher volumes of mixed tenure joint venture schemes. It also sees growing opportunities for new business arising from the trend for mergers among social landlords. A spokesman said: "With the anticipated merger of registered providers and the increasing need for social housing, we are starting to see new opportunities for

the provision of end-to-end services which our residential and services divisions can provide with a combined new build and maintenance offering."



#### **Ombudsman urges councils** to be more flexible

Councils should be flexible in their housing policies when dealing with people with complex needs the ombudsman has said.

The Local Government Ombudsman has said that councils should deviate from their policies when awarding housing priority in special cases where a family's circumstances are difficult.

This followed an investigation into how Kent-based Thanet District Council dealt with a family of six living in a small, privately rented home. One child had sleep problems and another had mobility difficulties, with the parents acting as full-time carers.

The ombudsman ordered the council to apologise to the family after they spent nearly three years too long in "unsuitable cramped accommodation".

The council was asked to apologise to the family and pay them £8,400 due to the impact of living for so long in unsuitable accommodation. They were also told to pay a further £250 to acknowledge the "stress and confusion" caused to the family.

#### Overcrowding

The ombudsman said the council based the family's application on overcrowding criteria instead of their needs. The ombudsman also found the council contravened its own lettings plan by wrongly prioritising other families over them. This meant they could not bid for homes that met their needs.

"The council was asked to apologise to the family and pay them £8,400 due to the impact of living for so long in unsuitable accommodation"

The council incorrectly told the family it could only take into account one of the childrens' needs. The council should have recognised the complexity of the case as needing cross-agency referral, and officers should have visited to check the size of the bedrooms, the Ombudsman said.

Jane Martin, Local Government Ombudsman, added: "While it is important for councils to operate consistent housing policies, they also need to ensure they spot the complex cases, such as this family, that may require special consideration.

"To properly meet people's needs, local authorities should allow themselves the flexibility to exercise discretion when exceptional combinations of circumstances mean their allocation policies cannot accurately meet those needs."

Rob Kenyon, director of community services at Thanet District Council, said: "We have reviewed our procedures to ensure that we learn from the findings of the report to prevent similar issues from arising in the future." He also apologised to the family.





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#### Big tenure changes north of the border

he Scottish private rented sector has nearly tripled in size as a proportion of the country's housing stock since the turn of the century, the latest household survey has revealed.

The annual survey covers many aspects of life in Scotland and highlights some fascinating details and trends, with changes in the profile of housing tenure being among the most significant.

Over the past 16 years, the total number of households has increased by 11 per cent from 2.19 million households in 1999 to 2.43m households in 2015.

The biggest single change shows the private rented sector grew from 5 per cent in 1999 to 14 per cent in 2015, an estimated 192 per cent increase. This equates to 350,000 households in the private rented sector, 91,000 of which

Moving in the opposite direction, the percentage of households in the social rented sector fell from 32 per cent in 1999 to 23 per cent in 2007, (a 22 per cent drop) and has remained at 23 per cent of all households

The number of households in owner occupation grew from 61 per cent in 1999 to 66 per cent in 2005, but then fell back between 2009 and 2014 to 60 per cent, and in 2015 was around the same level at 61 per cent.

#### **Trends**

Looking back over a longer period to the 1960s, the long-term trend has been even more marked with the proportion of owneroccupation, increasing from just 30 per cent in 1969 to 66 per cent in 2005, before dropping back to 61 per cent now.

The long-term increase in ownership has been mirrored over the same time period by a sharp decline in the social rented sector, which in 1969 accounted for around 50 per cent of all households compared to 23 per cent in 2015. The proportion of households in the private rented sector also decreased from around 20 per cent in 1969 to 5 per cent in 1999, before increasing to 14 per cent in 2015.

While 39 per cent of tenants living in social rented properties said they would like to be homeowners, the majority - 51 per cent - said they preferred living in the social rented sector.

Tenants in the social rented sector had lived in their properties longer than those in the private rented sector. In the private rented sector, 43 per cent of tenants had lived in their property for less than a year, whereas social rented sector tenants tended to have lived in their homes between five and 10 years.

More than four in 10 of local authority social rented properties and more than half of housing association properties were in the 20 per cent most deprived areas of Scotland. Only 39 per cent of tenants in the social rented sector rated their area as a very good place to live, a lower percentage than in other tenures. However, almost three-quarters do not expect to move from their property in the future.

One positive piece of news was that despite an increase in the number of households in total, there was a maked decrease in the number of local authority waiting lists, down from 160,000 to 130,000 households.



#### Regulatory judgements

Breaches of fire safety procedures saw St Vincent's Housing Association and Tower Hamlets Community Housing being issued with regulatory notices by the Homes & Communities Agency.

Spokesmen for both landlords said carrying

out corrective works was a top priority, with recovery plans an urgent matter.

Colne Housing Society was downgraded to a compliant G2 after failing to submit accurate financial information to its board and the regulator. A spokesperson said an

improvement plan was in place to address the HCA's findings.

Aldwyck Housing Group was reissued with a compliant G2 and V2 governance and viability grading following an in-depth assessment with the regulator.



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#### A third of tenants sublet without permission

third of tenants are subletting without their landlord's consent and four out of 10 tenants admit they plan to sublet in the near future without telling their landlord.

The study by PropertyLetByUs.com, a leading online letting agent, shows that the majority of tenants (96 per cent) are subletting the property for a short time to help a family member or friend out and 82 per cent claim they are subletting to help pay the rent.

Over half of tenants (52 per cent) say they planning to sublet their property in the near future, with the landlord's consent. A further 78 per cent of tenants think they should be able to sublet the property without the landlord's approval.

Subletting is becoming one of the main grounds for a tenant to be evicted, partly because of the increasing popularity of shortterm lets and websites offering these services.

#### Regular checks

In response, Jane Morris, managing director of PropertyLetByUs.com has urged landlords to make regular checks on their property to check for additional occupants.

"Many tenants will try to hide the fact they are subletting, so the warning signs can be excessive rubbish and accelerated wear and tear. There can be increased mould and condensation with more occupants. Landlords can also face

expensive repairs for damage and redecoration costs, to bring the property up to the standard it was at check-in.

"Illegal subletting falls under tenant fraud and renting a property makes landlords vulnerable to fraud. It is vital that landlords and agents carry out thorough pre-letting checks. The purpose of referencing a tenant is threefold - to check the person is who they say they are; that they can afford the rent and that they have honoured past commitments.

"Last year, the Government said it planned to make it easier for tenants to sublet a room by legislating against the use of clauses in private fixed-term tenancy agreements, that expressly rule out subletting, or otherwise sharing space on a short-term basis. However, it has not yet set a date for a consultation on the plans."

PropertyLetByUs.com has put together some tips on what evidence to look for if you are suspicious that a tenant is subletting:

- · It pays to make regular checks on the property - every 3-6 months is advisable;
- The tenants will be hiding evidence of extra tenants, so look out for additional clothing and shoes; excessive rubbish for the number

"Subletting is becoming one of the main grounds for a tenant to be evicted"

of registered tenants; additional bedding like sleeping bags and pillows; suitcases and rucksacks; and extra toothbrushes; and

Before taking on a new tenant, make sure you carry out a thorough reference to ensure you know who your tenant is.

#### **Broken rules**

Research carried out by Direct Line Landlord Insurance has revealed that one in seven renters have broken one or more conditions in their tenancy agreement.

The research found that although most tenants (65 per cent) have stuck to the rules, 15 per cent say they have broken the terms and conditions of their tenancy. A further 9 per cent said they did not have a contract. More than one in ten renters (11 per cent) claimed they were unsure whether they had actually broken any rules.

The rules which tenants say they bend the most range from:

- · failing to pay the rent on time or at all (25 per cent);
- failing to regularly check the smoke or carbon monoxide alarm (10 per cent);
- smoking indoors (21 per cent);
- · keeping a pet (18 per cent); and
- damaging or making alterations to the property (17 per cent).

The penalties for breaking the rules are said to include losing some or all of the deposit, paying for any damage caused and in some extreme cases being evicted. More than one in five tenants say that their landlord never found out about the misdemeanours.

#### Private rents set to rise further following tax increases

Two thirds of private landlords plan to raise rents to cope with recent tax increases according to a major new survey.

A survey of almost 3,000 landlords by the Residential Landlords Association also found the same proportion do not plan on purchasing any additional properties to add to their portfolio.

Recent tax changes have included restricting

#### "Nearly a third of landlords are considering leaving the market altogether"

the payment of mortgage interest relief to the basic rate of income tax, raising stamp duty by an extra three per cent on the purchase of homes to rent and taxing landlords' income and not their profit.

Nearly a third of landlords are considering leaving the market altogether despite predictions one million more new homes to rent are needed by 2021 and evidence that institutional investors in the rental market are not delivering the homes needed.

#### **Increases**

A total of 56 per cent are planning to increase rents in the next 12 months to offset the impact of changes to mortgage interest relief. This will most negatively impact families, with 63 per cent of landlords reporting letting to tenants with at least one child. In other survey findings:

- a majority of landlords (54 per cent) do not have confidence in the future of the sector;
- 58 per cent say the tax changes will hit plans for investment in their properties;
- 70 per cent anticipate further government policies aimed at landlords in the near future;
- 86 per cent of landlords report they have a good relationship with their tenant;
- 82 per cent said their tenants pay their rent on

The current average tenancy period is three years suggesting the majority of tenants are happy and secure in their current home.

Nearly three quarters of landlords (73 per cent) have not attempted to remove tenants from their property in the last 12 months and of those who have 70 per cent said that this was due to rent arrears or abuse of the tenancy. Three per cent were related to rent increases.



#### The high cost of evictions revealed

Private landlords claim that local authorities are costing them thousands of pounds by wrongly advising tenants to ignore eviction notices.

After surveying their members, the National Landlords Association has estimated the average cost to a landlord of their tenant being advised to ignore an eviction notice stands at nearly £7,000. The NLA provided the figure when submitting evidence to the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Select Committee on the Homelessness Reduction Bill.

The Homelessness Reduction Bill has been introduced by Conservative MP Bob Blackman, as an amendment to the Housing Act 1996. It seeks to expand councils' duties to prevent homelessness but it is being fiercely opposed by the Local Government Association who fear its impact on councils.

The NLA has complained that private tenants are often advised by local councils and advice agencies to ignore eviction notices served by their landlords - and to wait until they are evicted by bailiffs - in order to qualify as homeless and being eligible for rehousing.

#### Damaging advice

Richard Lambert, Chief Executive Officer at the NLA, said: "We have consistently campaigned on this issue, but despite many warnings to councils and agencies, this damaging advice is still being given out to tenants.

"Possession cases can take a very long time to resolve, and aside from putting an unnecessary strain on everyone involved, not to mention the courts, these findings demonstrate just how costly the advice can be."

The National Landlords Association revealed that the mean total cost of a tenant being advised to remain in a property is £6,763. In addition, half (47 per cent) of tenants who have been served a section 21 eviction notice by their landlord say they have been told to ignore it by their local council or an advice agency such as Shelter or the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB).

Mr Lambert continued: "Bad, or incorrect, advice hinders rather than helps landlords and tenants who are often already in a desperate situation.

It will inevitably damage landlords' confidence in the local authority and tenants may be put at much greater risk of having nowhere to live.

"We hope that this Bill will achieve its aims of reducing homelessness by giving tenants the support they need while incentivising the good work that landlords already do in communities across the country."

#### Rentals forecast to overtake sales next year as housing crisis continues

The rental market is booming and lettings could overtake sales next year as home buyers face an on-going struggle to find properties they can afford.

The sales market has cooled since the Brexit vote and a shortage of properties being offered for sale has combined with rising prices to see more new lets than purchases, according to Countrywide, the UK's largest estate agency.

Johnny Morris, research director at Countrywide, said "As some would-be buyers and sellers sit on their hands, September saw record activity, with increasing numbers of lets agreed and tenants choosing to renew their contracts. On current trends 2017 could be the first time since the 1930s that more homes are let than sold."

Buying a new home is becoming increasingly difficult for would-be purchasers, with asking prices rising since the summer and borrowers having to find bigger deposits than in 2015.

This has seen homeownership levels fall to their lowest level in 30 years and although recent figures from mortgage lenders have shown a pick-up in loans being taken out, the actual number of homes for sale remains at near record lows which is forcing prices up.

#### Changing patterns

In 2015 some 1.2 million properties costing more than £40,000 have changed hands. Morris said that analysis of the number of homes advertised for sale and for rent online showed that over the past five years rental activity in the mainstream was catching up.

"The shift between the number of properties being offered for rent and sale has been a longterm trend, boosted a bit by stamp duty and a bit by the Brexit vote," he added. Morris said that when informally advertised lets were taken into account, the rental market may have already outgrown the sales market.

Further evidence on the changing dynamics in the housing market has come from Rightmove, who said that across six regions of the north of England and the Midlands, the number of homes for sale had fallen by 11 per cent since 2015, giving buyers less room to negotiate on price.

In contrast, in the south of England available stock increased by 16 per cent year-on-year, while sales were down by 10 per cent. Activity in Greater London is likely to have been stifled by affordability problems, with asking prices averaging £645,833 in October, compared with £630,974 in September and a similar figure a year ago.



#### Insourcing of repairs service completed

major social housing landlord has extended its in-house repairs service to all its customers in a move to save money and improve performance.

Sovereign manages nearly 40,000 homes in the south and south west. Their properties in Hampshire have been repaired in recent years by Mitie, but when that contract ended they handed the work to Sovereign Response, who will now carry out repairs to all of the homes.

In doing so Sovereign have joined a growing number of landlords to have brought their repairs service back in-house in the past year, as social housing providers seek greater control over the service which has the biggest

impact on customer satisfaction and usually accounts for most expenditure.

Colin Gallaugher, head of operations at Sovereign, said: "Given the success of Sovereign Response across the majority of our region, as well as pressure on budgets, we felt it was time to review our existing contracts.

"This was an opportunity to not just save money, we also wanted to take control and improve the services our residents receive, getting the job done and to a high quality.

"In particular I've been excited about building the new team, giving around 35 local skilled tradespeople the chance to make our newest Sovereign Response team a success."



## Peabody to build over 1,500 homes in south east London

eabody has been granted permission to build more than 1,500 new homes in South Thamesmead in London.

The project will mark the first substantial development in Thamesmead since Peabody acquired land there in 2014 and is one of the largest residential schemes approved in the capital this year.

The development will be built in four phases, with the first due to start in 2017, and the final phase anticipated to be complete in 2024.

The housing association will first create Southmere Village, which will deliver 525 new homes - around 230 of which will be affordable - a new library and nearly 40,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of commercial space offering cafes, retail and local enterprise spaces. The development will be centred around a new public square on the banks of Southmere Lake and will act as a vibrant new space for a range of outdoor activities.

Future phases for Binsey Walk, Coralline Walk and Sedgemere Road will deliver around 1,000 new homes and substantial public realm improvements. These spaces will be linked by a new pedestrian and cycling route between Abbey Wood train station and Southmere

The neighbourhood will be connected to central London from the Abbey Wood station via Crossrail, now known as the Elizabeth line, which will open in December 2018.

#### 'Huge Milestone'

Peabody's executive director for Thamesmead, John Lewis, commented: "This is a huge milestone in the regeneration of Thamesmead. As well as creating much needed, quality new homes, the development will create thousands of new jobs and will attract new businesses too. This is just the start of our commitment to Thamesmead and its residents at what is a really exciting time, with the Elizabeth line opening at Abbey Wood station in December 2018 and the DLR extending to Thamesmead in the next 10 years.

"Thamesmead will be better connected, opening up new opportunities to residents and to businesses looking to invest. We hope this will be the catalyst for Thamesmead fulfilling its promise as London's new town."

Cllr Teresa O'Neill OBE, Leader of the London Borough of Bexley said: "After many years of joint working, I am delighted that Thamesmead has reached such an important milestone in its history. We know that London faces significant housing pressures and are committed to being part of a future that makes quality places where people choose to live and work."

#### Southmere Village

- 525 new homes
- New public lakeside square
- New neighbourhood square with play facilities for the community
- Library, cafes, convenience store, community facilities
- Hard and soft landscapes, outdoor activity spaces

#### Coralline Walk

- Soft and hard landscaping
- A thriving new pedestrian and cycling route linking Abbey Wood station and Southmere Lake
- · Cafes, community uses and flexible workspace to cater for a range of users

#### Sedgemere Road

- A welcoming new gateway to and from Abbey Wood station centred around a new arrival square
- More than 200 new homes
- offices
- Retail
- Cafés
- Job opportunities

"Future phases for Binsey Walk, Coralline Walk and Sedgemere Road will deliver around 1,000 new homes and substantial public realm improvements. These spaces will be linked by a new pedestrian and cycling route between Abbey Wood train station and Southmere Lake"

## Eviction worries over impact of new benefit cap

Over 100,000 of the poorest households in Britain are at risk of being evicted from their homes after the latest benefit cap came into effect.

From 7 November total household benefits were limited to £23,000 (£442 a week) in London and £20,000 (£385 a week) in the rest of the country. The cut from the present level of £26,000 is being rolled out, but is expected to be fully implemented by the end of January 2017.

Research undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Housing has revealed some families will lose up to £115 a week, pushing them ever deeper into poverty. The CIH analysis shows the new lower benefit cap is likely to impact 116,000 households with between one and four children.

However, the Department for Work and Pensions has argued that the benefit cap acts as an incentive to get people into work because moving on to working tax credits gains an exemption from the cap.

#### Homelessness

Terrie Alafat, chief executive of the CIH, said: "We are seriously concerned that this could have a severe impact on these families, make housing in large sections of the country unaffordable, and risk worsening what is already a growing homelessness problem."

The benefit cap was originally introduced in 2013 and mainly affected families in high-rent areas such as London. But the extended cap is expected to impact on families in all areas of the country.

The cap will see "average" sized families affected in even those parts of the country with the cheapest housing, such as Wales and northeast England.

According to the CIH, a couple with three

children outside London will have £50.80 a week left for housing costs after out-of-work benefits are taken into account. In Leeds, where a three-bedroom property at local allowance rates costs £151.50, this would leave them with a shortfall of £100.70. In Northampton a similar family would face a shortfall of £89.04 a week, and £75.78 in Leicester.

A couple outside London with two children would have £117.92 a week for housing costs. In Reading, however, a two-bedroom property would cost £188.33 per week. leaving a shortfall of £70.41. The same family would face a shortfall of £38.46 in Southampton and £33.58 in both Bristol and Milton Keynes.

#### Unaffordable

Alafat said the new cap could put many families at serious risk of losing their homes and would make housing in significant parts of the country unaffordable for those affected.

"The results of our research are extremely worrying," she said. "It shows that the reduction in total benefits is going to hit some of the most vulnerable families of all sizes across England, Scotland and Wales.

"In many cases these families will straight away face a substantial gap between their rent and the help they receive to pay for their housing. Worryingly, our analysis shows many families could be one redundancy or a period of ill health away from being in this situation.

"We are seriously concerned that this could have a severe impact on these families, make housing in large sections of the country unaffordable and risk worsening what is already a growing homelessness problem. We suggest that the Government looks at this policy again urgently."

## Student housing costs have risen by a quarter in past seven years

The cost of student housing has increased by almost a quarter in the past seven years, raising the prospect of a wave of rent strikes at British universities and colleges.

The average weekly rent for purpose-built student accommodation rose 23 per cent from £120 to £147 between 2009-2010 and 2015-2016, according to a survey undertaken by the National Union of Students.

Shelly Asquith, vice president of welfare at the National Union of Students (NUS), said the rising cost of accommodation was now the biggest worry for students. "The main concern is that their income, their loans and grants, hasn't been rising at anywhere near the same rate," she said.

"We're now in the situation where the average rent for students is the equivalent of 85 per cent

of their maximum loan and grant if you're coming from the poorest background, which doesn't leave you much money for other bills, food, social life or anything else."

According to the NUS, the quality of accommodation does not always improve in line with cost increases. "Not only are they charging ridiculously high rents but the service is poor in lots of situations," said Asquith.

Some students are now taking action. The Cut the Rent campaign at the University of Sussex has gathered more than 1,000 signatures in protest at the conditions at the university's halls. This follows similar protests last year at the University of London over poor conditions in halls of residence, which saw compensation paid to tenants.

## Tenants complaints on the increase

The number of complaints made by tenants to social landlords has risen steadily over the past three years.

Analysis carried out by Housemark, shows the average social landlord received 33 complaints per 1,000 homes managed in 2015/16. This figure was up from 31 complaints per 1,000 homes in 2014/15 and from 27.6 in 2013/14.

The results are at odds with data published earlier in the year by the Ombudsman and the Homes & Communities Agency which showed that complaints from tenants to these two organisations were actually falling.

Many social landlords are also expecting the number of complaints to increase in coming years. The main reasons cited for this are an increase in customer expectations, combined with many housing providers having to strip back services to make up for expected reductions in funding, most notably the annual rent cuts affecting English landlords until 2020.

The Housemark data shows complaints about property services – including repairs and maintenance – made up more than half of the complaints last year. Housing management was the next area to receive most complaints, mostly about rent arrears and collection.

"The results are at odds with data published by the Ombudsman and the Homes and Communities Agency"

#### Compensation

The average time taken to respond to a complaint was 10 days. Seventy per cent of participants in the exercise had at least one complaint where compensation was awarded. The average compensation payment was £145.48. Several participants said they were actively working to reduce payments going forward.

The average satisfaction rate for how their complaint was handled fell over the three years from 66.75 to 58 per cent, while tenants' satisfaction with the outcome of the complaint actually rose from 51.5 to 54.45 per cent.

The main driver for satisfaction is responding to a complaint within the landlord's stated target time, although upholding the complaint and paying compensation also have a smaller impact.

Over 80 social landlords took part in the exercise and they came from all parts of the UK. The majority were housing associations, but councils and ALMOs also participated.

#### Sleaford floorer takes UKWOTY crown

This year's UK Worker of the Year has been chosen.

Sleaford based flooring specialist, Kevin Skeith, took the title at the Awards dinner at the Mercure Brands Hatch hotel, in front of his six fellow finalists, family and sponsors, Dickies, Honda



and ASDA and of the fabulous prizes on offer, chose the Honda Crosstourer 1200cc motorbike, to go with a year's free shopping at ASDA.

Kevin commented: " I feel incredibly proud of this achievement and honoured to have won."

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#### RIBA gives seal of approval for Kingspan

Kingspan Insulation are thrilled to announce the launch of their latest RIBA-certified Continuing Professional Development (CPD), Facades and Fire Safety: Routes to Compliance, on the regulatory requirements for rainscreen clad buildings; in particular, those with habitable storeys over 18m. The new



CPD discusses rainscreen and masonry facades in habitable high rise buildings of 18m or above, and how to comply with the fire safety requirements of the Building Regulations and Standards. By the end of the CPD, it should be clear what is deemed acceptable by Fire Safety Engineers, BCBs, as well as Warranty and Insurance providers.

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#### **HA** computer fraudster jailed for five years

A computer analyst has been jailed for five years after trying to steal almost £430,000 from a London housing association

Adeshola Dada, 51, of Watts Crescent Purfleet, Thurrock, stole more than £138,000 from Genesis HA with the help of three associates. He also hijacked the identities of colleagues at Genesis to make a series of illegal transfers to his fellow fraudsters.

The money was meant to be paid to the association's in-house contractor, Pathmeads Property Services for maintenance work. The first fraudulent payment was discovered by the association's internal auditors during checks they made. Then staff at Barclays Bank managed to stop a further £290,090 being stolen from Genesis by Dada.

#### Investigation

The judge, Recorder Cheryl Jones sentencing Dada at Southwark Crown Court said: "Placing your own employees under suspicion is a very uncomfortable position for an employer to find themselves in." Dada was found guilty of two counts of

Ansar Ali, 43, of Limehouse Causeway, Tower Hamlets, Danielle Brown, 24, of Benworth Street, Tower Hamlets, and James McMasters, 24, of The Heights, Northolt, Middlesex, received suspended sentences for helping Dada hide the cash. Brown and McMasters were found guilty of acquiring criminal property while Ali pleaded guilty to the same offence.

An internal investigation found that details of a former senior surveyor were used to gain access to computer based payment systems. The surveyor had left the 34,000 home landlord in June 2011 and was not involved in the scam in any way.





#### Homelessness bill passes crucial second reading

raft legislation which can reform England's homelessness laws passed its second reading in Parliament on Friday 28 October.

The Homelessness Reduction Bill saw unanimous support in the Commons and will now go forward for detailed examination, but some MPs warned councils would have to receive additional funding for their new duties.

The legislation, tabled by Conservative MP Bob Blackman, will alter the Housing Act 1996 and require councils to support people at risk of becoming homeless within 56 days to find accommodation.

It will extend the current period of 28 days to allow people more time to seek help from the local authority.

#### 'National disgrace'

During his speech in the Commons, Bob Blackman MP criticised the way homelessness is currently being handled by the authorities.

He said: "The non-priority homeless are told to go out and sleep on the streets, on a park bench, or in a doorway, and then they may - may - be picked up by a charity under the No Second Night Out programme.

"That is an absolute national disgrace. When employment is at the highest level ever and we have a relatively low level of unemployment, having one single person sleeping rough on our streets is a national disgrace that we must combat."

#### Funding

Despite backing the Bill without a single vote against, some MPs warned that councils' new duties would have to be adequately funded.

Shadow housing secretary John Healey commented: "If the Government are serious about this Bill, and if Ministers mean what they say about homelessness, they must do two things: fund the cost of the extra duties in the Bill in full, and tackle the causes of the growing homelessness crisis in this country. Those are the two tests with which we Opposition Members will hold the Government to account, hard."

"The legislation, tabled by Conservative MP Bob Blackman, will alter the Housing Act 1996 and require councils to support people at risk of becoming homeless within 56 days to find accommodation"

Former Housing Minister Mike Prisk also called for additional funding, while Labour Co-operative MP for Ilford South, Mike Gapes, attacked the legislation as "wishful thinking" and suggested that it would not result in the additional homes needed.

Mr Gapes commented: "This Bill, unfortunately, is a classic piece of wishful thinking. It is gesture politics of the worst kind in that it wills the ends but does not provide the means. It is about feeling good about voting for something that sounds good, having been pressed to do so by pressure groups and campaigns."

### Living in the city, affordably

As steep prices drive households out of inner London, one housing association has been thinking outside the box to deliver affordable homes in one of the capital's priciest areas. HMM reports on a new affordable and sustainable scheme in Islington.



t the Conservative Party conference in October Prime Minister
Theresa May admitted what she called an "honest truth" – that the
UK simply needed to build more homes if it was to really tackle
the deepening housing crisis.

However despite the PM's admission, the lack of affordable properties for rental has been no secret for many years now. While the private rental sector has benefitted from an increased number of renters who are unable to gain access to the housing ladder, the lack of affordable social homes remains a massive issue.

Even the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has recently weighed in to the debate, identifying an overall shortage of 1.8 million homes for rent across the UK. With property prices being the highest in London, living affordably in the city currently constitutes a pipe dream for many households.

Family Mosaic, one of London's largest housing associations with over

"The housing association wanted to ensure the scheme was 'an exemplar of low energy' and embedded a strong commitment to delivering a variety of sustainable solutions to help residents benefit from low utility bills" 25,000 homes for rent serving over 45,000 people, is however making a concerted effort to buck the trend. The organisation has found one possible solution on a site in Islington in the form of The Joinery.

The scheme comprises a redevelopment of a former Victorian warehouse on Courtauld Road opposite Elthorne Park, (The Joinery which gives the project its name), renamed Hardy Court and providing 15 flats. In addition four new blocks have been constructed along a new route developed for the scheme, Charles Street, providing a total of 52 homes across the whole Joinery project.

It was conceived after the housing association, working with Islington Council, identified a need for larger family homes in the area. With the

#### Phase One

#### **Fairbridge Road**

80 properties: 51 social rented homes and 29 shared ownership, plus two ground floor shops

#### Phase Two

#### The Joinery (pictured, top)

52 new-build flats inc converted warehouse, 20 affordable rent and 10 shared ownership



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- 7 Terrie Alafat CBE, Chief executive, CIH
- 8 Trudi Elliot, Chief executive, RTPI
- 9 Jamie Ratcliff, Assistant director, policy, programmes and services, GLA

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neighbourhood's proximity to central London, the project presented the clear challenge as well as opportunity of delivering affordable homes for rent in what would normally be an unaffordable area.

"Islington is a very sought-after location in the city, and The Joinery is an ideal destination for people seeking to get on the housing ladder in a desirable part of London. It is close to The City and also has excellent transport links," said Dick Mortimer, director of development and sales for Family Mosaic for the scheme's developer United Living. "The Joinery offers people on local housing waiting lists an opportunity to live in an expensive area, affordably."

The locality has a range of Ofsted 'Good' and 'Outstanding' rated schools and access to tube and overground stations including Archway and Holloway Road, making it a highly desirable place to live for a wide range

While delivering family homes was a key objective, the project also provided smaller flats suited for couples and single people as well as accessible homes for residents with disabilities on the ground floor.

Family Mosaic also wanted to ensure the scheme was "an exemplar of low energy" and embedded a strong commitment to delivering a variety of sustainable solutions in the project which would also help residents benefit from low utility bills.

#### Joining the phases

The background to redeveloping the Joinery itself was a first phase which saw the housing association initially purchasing a site on nearby Fairbridge Road, just off its junction with the major route of Hornsey Road. Their contractor Willmott Dixon constructed two new blocks of 80 homes - 51 of which are social homes - to high sustainability requirements.

Family Mosaic then hatched the plan to develop a new north-south connecting street (Charles Street) to the former entrance of the Joinery, which "unlocked" the potential to develop it, said United Living's Dick Mortimer: "That phase allowed Phase 2 (The Joinery) to be developed." The Fairbridge Road development is now successfully integrated with the five blocks of the Joinery section of the scheme.

#### Meeting sustainability objectives

While transforming a derelict industrial building into homes was a challenge in itself, Family Mosaic's plan to deliver a highly sustainable project – achieving a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating – added further pressures. BREEAM is also claimed to be able to provide benefits however by acting as a useful sustainability score card and means of focus on achieving the goals for design teams. BRE says it was developed to "help investors, developers, design and construction teams and occupiers to use natural resources more efficiently."

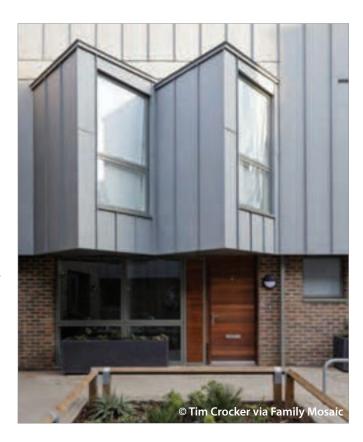
The association worked with sustainability consultants EcoFirst to ensure various aspects of the scheme – from the combined heat and power system serving all homes to the green and photovoltaic (PV) roofs, efficient water fixtures and insulation – would serve residents for years to come.

The Joinery's careful layout and high performing thermal envelope meant the project achieved the highest possible credits within BREEAM Domestic Refurbishment. The scheme also claimed BREEAM's residential award earlier this year. In addition, The Joinery achieved a Secured by Design certification and met the Lifetime Homes Standard requirements.

#### Tenure mix

The Joinery's 52 warehouse inspired and new-build flats consisted of 20 homes for affordable rent, 10 for shared ownership and 22 for private sale.

The scheme, backed by funding from the Greater London Authority, was also cross-subsidised from revenue by sales and shared ownership. Together with the 80 Fairbridge Road apartments, there are 132 homes in total across the development.



"Family Mosaic, which is one of London's largest housing associations with over 25,000 homes for rent, is making a concerted effort to buck the trend"

The housing association provided three four-bed three-storey townhouses, three three-bed flats and four two-bed flats, while also adding five two-bed wheelchair-friendly units at the ground floor. All homes also have private garden or a terrace/balcony.

Family Mosaic hopes the mix of tenures would promote a sense of belonging to a shared community, while uniting residents from a range of backgrounds would promote diversity and nurture inclusivity.

#### Conclusion

Communities secretary Sajid Javid commented at the Conservative conference, "Tackling housing shortfall isn't about political expediency. It's a moral duty."

Since then, the Government has vowed to make changes to the planning rules so that housing developments are prioritised on brownfield land, representing a key part of the newly-announced £3bn Home Building Fund.

While there are a raft of fine words on the potential, Family Mosaic's The Joinery, as well as its wider development on Fairbridge Road, provides a practical example of how a sensitive approach to land and the reuse of existing buildings can create a characterful, sustainable scheme that strengthens the neighbourhood's heritage and sits comfortably within the wider community.

Furthermore, the scheme demonstrates that with sensitive design and placemaking, different tenures can coexist in the same community without friction if a balance between privacy and community is achieved.

#### No place like **Homes** 2016



The annual trade event focused on housing maintenance and development returns to London Olympia on 16 and 17 November

he Government signalled its intentions to solve the UK's widespread housing crisis through extra funding and the ambitious task of building a million homes by 2020, but it's up to the nation's housing providers to help deliver on that promise.

At Homes 2016, professionals from housing associations, local authorities, ALMOs, as well as registered social and private landlords can show just how this can be achieved.

Organisers are expecting around 3,000 attendees to set foot at Olympia during the two-day conference, with 100 speakers from leading trade bodies and government agencies and 180 exhibitors taking centre stage.

A new one-day PRS and home ownership conference will be launched on Wednesday 16 November to focus on the booming sector, attracting up to 300 delegates from housing associations, councils and construction firms.

With welfare reforms and budget cuts continuing to put pressure on social housing providers, the inaugural Green Housing Forum will give insights and advice into sustainable housing and tackling fuel poverty, carbon emissions and government energy efficiency targets.

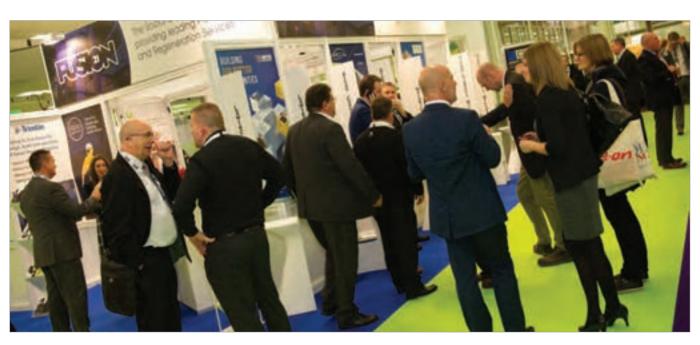
Further advice will be given on improving procurement processes and strategic asset management, while tips on taking advantage of new forms of capital funding as well as completing regenerations and affordable housebuilding will also be provided over the two days.

#### Tenants views at Homes

Sarah Payling, event director, said: "Homes 2016 is bigger and better than ever. We have more housing provider attendees, we have more expert seminars, we have the Green Housing Forum with Daikin UK and we have

#### **Homes 2016 Key Facts**

- 100 speakers, including Terrie Alafat CBE, chief executive, Chartered Institute of Housing; Paul Homes and Communities Agency
- associations attended Homes 2015
- Networking drinks event for 400 attendees on
- Follow @Homes2016 and use #Homes2016



the PRS and homeownership conference.

"Homes is the event where you will meet the senior procurement teams and decision makers for development, products and services in social and affordable housing."

She added: The message from our audience of housing associations, local authorities and suppliers is clear. Their businesses are evolving and they look to us to provide the information, the people and the networking to help them stay ahead of the game.

"Housing development is a core activity for our attendees. This has traditionally focused on social and affordable housing, as well as shared ownership. However, in recent years, housing providers have become more creative and broadened their output into private rent and market sale too

"They see this as an important contribution to helping meet housing need and cross-subsidising the provision of affordable homes. Homes 2016 will be bringing together more housing providers and housebuilders than ever before to share ideas about

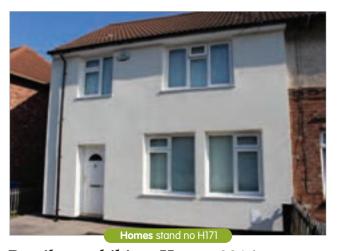
#### **Key themes include:**

NEW: PRS and home ownership

maximising development."

Housing Management & Maintenance's news editor Patrick Mooney will ask "Do tenants' views matter?" on Thursday 17 November. He will discuss how the constant changes in the social housing sector are affecting tenants and delve into government policies like Right to Buy and Pay to Stay, the ending of lifetime tenancies and the increased focus on affordable housing delivery. Mergers and rent cuts forcing changes to budgets will also be among the main topics explored at the session.





#### Bostik to exhibit at Homes 2016

**Bostik** will be exhibiting its high performance external wall insulation (EWI) system, Climatherm, on stand H171 at this year's Homes event. Available locally via a national network of approved distributors, the Climatherm system can be tailored to individual property requirements and comprises insulation, reinforced mesh, a base coat and a render finish. Insulation is supplied in a choice of materials, while a range of render options help to ensure existing building finishes can be matched or a fresh new appearance achieved. Specification of the Climatherm system ensures conformance with several recognised refurbishment funding schemes, such as ECO, thanks to its British Board of Agrément (BBA) certification. Experts from Bostik will be on hand throughout the show to discuss how, by working with funding partners, the company can provide ECO funding for large and small EWI projects. For further information, please visit stand H171 at Homes 2016.

01785 272727 www.bostik-climatherm.co.uk



#### Flowcrete UK launches Comfort range

Flowcrete UK has launched a new comfort flooring range to provide the developers and designers of commercial and public facilities with finishes that will deliver the necessary practical, aesthetic and budgetary criteria. The Comfort Resins collection includes the systems Peran Comfort and Peran CHD as well as Flowshield Comfort and Flowshield CHD. These self-smoothing and flexible polyurethane coatings are all able to create a durable, seamless and easy to clean surface that will withstand intensive foot traffic, rigorous cleaning as well as the scuffs, stains and scratches that the floor will face on a daily basis. The Peran systems consist of an aliphatic main layer with a clear aliphatic topcoat. This formulation increases the UV stability, meaning that it won't lose its colour or vibrancy after prolonged exposure to direct sunlight. Created using an aromatic main body with a coloured aliphatic topcoat, Flowshield Comfort and Flowshield CHD, available in a variety of colours, the Comfort Resins range is ideal for creating a minimalist, warm and modern aesthetic.

01270 753 000 www.flowcrete.co.uk

## Intergas Remote management

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#### Aico data extraction technologies

Following on from its success at both CIH Housing 2016 and FIREX exhibitions this year, Aico will be exhibiting at Homes 2016, Stand H141. There visitors can see Aico's market leading smoke and Carbon Monoxide (CO) alarms, along with working demonstrations of their latest data



extraction technologies. Aico specialise in smoke and CO alarms that are built under exceptionally stringent quality controls, for maximum reliability and safety. Aico is also an innovator in the field, having launched a number of unique new technologies of benefit to housing providers. Alarms on display will include the Multi-Sensor Fire Alarm.

#### Decorating made easier with Rotarad

Reaching that awkward space behind the radiator to decorate has long been a time consuming issue for professional trades people looking to do a perfect job. However, now there's a solution. The Rotarad radiator valve kit enables easy access to the space behind the radiator, for decorating and for cleaning



with no need to turn off the water or get the plumber in to remove the radiator. The kit is an easy retrofit for existing radiators and an obvious benefit when having new radiators installed. It enables the radiator to be lowered away from the wall to a 45° or 90° angle for easy and safe access with no need to disconnect the radiator from the central heating system.

01782 385152 www.rotarad.com

#### Accessible guidance

With the growing need to make homes adaptable so occupiers can remain independent, and in their own homes, new guidance is aiming to help get it right. Design Guidance & Considerations for a Domestic Accessible Toilet/Wetroom has been produced and published by Clos-o-Mat. The white paper gives



advice to ensure that all aspects affecting the functionality and practicality of a bathroom, wetroom and toilet, as occupier needs change, are considered. The paper is the latest in a series of guidance documents produced by Clos-o-Mat designed to ensure good specification of accessible toilet provision in domestic and public/commercial environments.

0161 969 1199 www.clos-o-mat.com

#### A mighty defence against skin damage

Dry skin and cracked, painful hands are a common ailment among the trade, but Big Wipes has come to the rescue with the launch of its new, specially formulated Hand Cream. Big Wipes Hand Cream is a high performance treatment cream that rapidly relieves dry and rough skin, helps strengthen



the skin's barrier function and improves its ability to absorb and hold moisture. It is non-greasy and alcohol and fragrance free and is recommended by dermatologists to increase moisture concentration and improve skin texture, appearance and function. Used regularly, Big Wipes Hand Cream helps restore the skin's smoothness, softness and flexibility.

webenquiry@bigwipes.com





#### Winter wall adhesives from Mapei

Mapei's high performance, fast setting cementious adhesive Adesilex P9 has an extended pot life which makes the product an excellent winter wall and floor adhesive. The cement based, flexible adhesive can be used for interior and exterior application when installing porcelain, ceramic or non-moisture sensitive natural stone materials to floors and walls; it is also suitable for the bonding of insulating materials like foamed polystyrene and sound absorbing panels. Adesilex P9 Express is a grey powder adhesive, consisting of cement, appropriately selected aggregates, synthetic resins and special additives developed by R&D Laboratories of MAPEI. When mixed with water Adsilex P9 express is characterized by easy processing and excellent adhesion to background materials. Highly thixotropic, Adesilex P9 Express can be applied on a vertical surface without sagging or slipping even when heavy tiles are used, and can be used under full loads from three days. Contact Mapei for more information on Mapei Ceramics products and how they can be used in your project.

0121 508 6970 www.mapei.co.uk



## Towards an accessible and inclusive future

Adapting bathrooms to the needs of an ageing population should be seen as a top priority, explains James Dadd of AKW.

here are four compelling reasons why it's impossible for social housing managers to ignore the needs of the elderly and disabled. Firstly, there is a concentration of people with disabilities in social housing – and landlords are being encouraged to work more closely with health services to help accelerate hospital discharges.

Secondly, as tenants age they continue to live in housing that lacks the special adaptations necessary to ensure the occupants' safety.

Thirdly, dementia is becoming increasingly widespread – and extra safety requirements are needed to protect these particularly vulnerable tenants.

Finally, an additional 215,000 residents with mobility and/or serious memory problems are predicted to be living in housing association properties by 2034 according to the English Housing Survey 2011-12 produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

These critical factors place enormous pressure on housing associations,

"Nearly 24,000 people remain in urgent need of wheelchair accessible social or affordable housing in England" local authorities, managing agencies and residential landlords to cater for those with special needs. However, the situation is not static – the burden is increasing as more people live longer and require additional support.

As well as housing the elderly, landlords face increasing demand to accommodate disabled people of any age. According to the English Housing Survey, people from this social group are twice as likely to be social housing tenants than those without disabilities.

Moreover, a recent survey of local authority waiting lists revealed 23,886 people remain in urgent need of wheelchair accessible social or affordable housing in England (source: Aspire report entitled *Wheelchair Accessible Housing*).

#### Balancing the costs of adapted living

Value for money is key for social and residential landlords looking to provide support for vulnerable tenants. One way to balance cost and effectiveness is to future-proof rooms to meet the changing needs of tenants.

Bathrooms in particular have to be carefully planned and appropriately designed to address any dangers that could arise in the future.



That's why it's a good idea to install level access showers or wetrooms. These solutions are growing in popularity in the private as well as public sector, with tenants recognising the benefits of these products regardless of their housing needs. In a recent survey of 2,000 homeowners by Anglian Home Improvements, 43 per cent of respondents said they felt that adding a wetroom would increase the value of their homes.

Adapted living solutions providers offer innovative, flexible bathroom designs that can future-proof housing stock at little or no extra cost and increase accessibility in the bathroom. For example AKW offers two "Bathroom-for-Life" design concepts to meet the diverse needs of social housing tenants.

The first is a system featuring a built-in former and adapter to make it fast and simple for a bathroom with a bath to be converted to a wetroom. These durable, high load-bearing devices also maximise flexibility as the leading formers have offset waste positions and are strong enough to fit straight onto joists.

With this design the bath becomes, in essence, a piece of furniture that can be kept or removed and put back again according to tenant preference.

#### **Smart showers**

Another vital element in the bathroom is the shower unit and the technology in this area has also been developing rapidly to meet the needs of the ageing population. Most recently, for example, Bluetoothenabled smart electric showers have become available.

Models such as iCare can be controlled either with a push button interface on the front of the device or via a wireless remote control or smartphone app to provide additional flexibility and assistance to carers without interfering with the users' privacy.

To address the growing cases of dementia specifically, dementia-friendly bathroom designs should be considered to introduce greater safety. AKW conducted extensive research to discover the best practice approach and identified a series of design changes beneficial to tenants as they eliminate dangers, including trip points, slippery floors and hot water hazards.

#### Critical issues

Adopting a 'person-centric' design approach does not cost more than a standard adaptation; it simply requires an understanding of the key safety issues.

Although safety and design – particularly in relation to accessibility – are critical issues for the elderly and disabled, there is another equally pressing concern - the need for refurbishment. Although there is a large amount of sheltered housing around the UK, most was built 30-40 years ago and urgently needs upgrading.

Indeed, a warning that the adult social care sector is in crisis came in a recent report 'The State of the Nation's Housing' from the International Longevity Centre. It reveals that the retirement housing sector is not yet building enough homes for a swelling older population and says that ensuring effective home adaptations in the short-term is critical for those with activities of daily living (ADL) restrictions. ADLs range from bathing to using the toilet, walking, eating, dressing and getting into and out of bed.

The report states: "Currently around 54 per cent of people who have ADL limitations live in homes without any health-related adaptations despite the fact that, for a great number of those with limitations, adaptations would make a real difference...Facilitating a greater number of adaptations must be an important immediate policy objective."

So, by working with an experienced adapted living solutions partner, social landlords and housing associations can ensure their properties feature cost-effective, built-in flexibility that will free their housing stock to change with the times.

James Dadd is marketing director at AKW

#### Vulnerability by numbers

- The current 11.4 million people of retirement age nationwide is set to triple by 2050 to 34.2 million
- 70 per cent of the total health and social care spend in England is spent on long-term age-related health conditions
- Older people occupy almost a third of all UK homes and 76 per cent of older households are owner-occupied
- The number of households headed by a person aged 65 and over is predicted to rise to more than seven million by 2021
- By 2019 the wetroom market is forecast to have increased by 34 per cent compared with 2014
- Almost 45 per cent of social tenants in England are over the age of 55
- Around half a million people aged under 65 are receiving Disability Living Allowance as a result of a musculoskeletal problem as many are left unable to work because of severe pain and restricted mobility
- Just 4 per cent of people with mobility impairments looking for accessible homes said they were easy to find, according to disability charity The Papworth Trust
- One in 10 people are expected to develop arthritis in the near future
- A fifth of the UK population (12.9 million people) reported a disability in 2014/15, a million more than a year earlier

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#### Fight back against vandalism with ASBO

Vandalism and graffiti is a growing concern within the UK, costing over £1 billion a year to remove. To combat the trend, Everbuild - A Sika Company have launched a new ASBO range, providing both the prevention and cure to the problem. Within the range is ASBO Anti-Graffiti Coating, a semi-gloss, clear coating designed to protect against costly damage caused by spray paints, marker pens and fly posting. Once applied, the coating prevents paint from bonding, causing it to crack allowing for easy removal using just water and detergent, eliminating the need for any harsh chemicals, whilst posters will fall off on their own after a few days. The coating can be brush or roller applied to concrete, brick, render, masonry and previously painted surfaces. ASBO Anti-Climb Paint is a non-drying, solvent free paint which remains slippery and greasy making climbing virtually impossible. The thick black paint also marks anyone who touches the surface making the intruder easily identifiable. ASBO Graffiti remover is a powerful, non-drip aerosol formula, which penetrates deep into the graffiti allowing easy removal of paint, felt tip and biro marks left by vandals. It can be used on all surfaces including brick, stone metals and concrete.

0113 240 2424 www.everbuild.co.uk



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info@snickersworkwear.co.uk

#### Helping to tackle 'Condensation Season'

Mould is often an issue faced in the social housing sector. Poor heating or air movement can allow mould to develop, particularly in void properties over winter. If a client reports problems with mould in their property, Crown Paints Specification Services can offer a solution to help manage the issue,



with the application of Crown Trade Steracryl Mould Inhibiting Paint. Available in Matt and Eggshell finishes, this durable product contains an effective fungicide, specially developed to maintain decorated surfaces by inhibiting the development of mould growth on the paint film. Crown Trade's range of Steracryl coatings include an anti-bacterial product.

0330 0240310 www.crownpaintspec.co.uk

#### Yale launches Partnership Pledge Plus

Yale has launched a new audited scheme, offering a 15-year warranty. As part of Yale's commitment to its partners, the Partnership Pledge Plus offers an audited warranty scheme to housing providers who specify Yale's hardware, including the austenitic stainless steel range. It has been



designed to help ensure that the hardware specified, is that which is supplied and fitted. Under the scheme, Yale will monitor individual contracts to ensure that the right components have been used and correctly installed. Additionally, site visits by the specification team will help to confirm that the most suitable ironmongery products are being used.

info@yaledws.co.uk

#### Aico 160e: next step in alarm evolution

Aico, a UK market leader in domestic mains powered Fire and Carbon Monoxide (CO) detection, unveils the latest in Smoke and Heat Alarm technology with its new 160e Series. the new 160e Series builds on this high quality, reliable and proven technology to produce a cleaner, modern designed



alarm containing a whole raft of enhancements to increase protection and performance. The new 160e design is up to 18 per cent slimmer when compared to the previous 160RC Series alarms allowing them to be less obtrusive in the room, whilst maintaining the same easi-fit footprint making it simple to upgrade from previous Aico alarms.

01691 664100 www.aico.co.uk



Landlords shouldn't firefight unforeseen problems when it comes to fire risk prevention but instead keep the focus on long-term solutions, according to Steve Martin of the Electrical Contractors' Association.

he effects of a fire on the residents of any large scale building are serious and far reaching. Loss of life, injury and psychological trauma are the three most commonly associated, but other consequences include damage to property, homelessness and a feeling of uncertainty and disorientation while alternative accommodation is arranged.

For landlords, the consequences of a fire breaking out and spreading can range from liability for civil or criminal prosecution to reputational damage – particularly if steps could and should have been taken to prevent fires happening or limit the damage done by them.

In some cases, this might be easier said than done. After all, very few fires are started deliberately, and in many cases it's hard to ascertain what caused one to start in the first place. The latest statistics from the London Fire Brigade show that there may be common causes of accidental fires in dwellings – with the most common being smokers' material and cooking appliances – but the very nature of accidental fires means there's very little that can be done to prevent them starting.

#### Adequate fire systems

Steps can be taken to limit the damage caused by them and to minimise the risk of them spreading, and the first of these is to ensure the building in question is equipped with properly commissioned, installed and maintained fire systems that detect the early warning of fire and alert the building's occupiers when one starts. This point is even more important when the building houses vulnerable people, who may need the additional time for evacuation that these systems can allow.

#### Know your responsibility

This sounds like a simple statement, but it's one that doesn't always move from an aspiration to a reality. Limited finances, coupled with a lack of knowledge among building managers and specifiers of their legal obligations, can sometimes lead to installers being asked to carry out work

outside their area of expertise.

This in turn can result in the wrong systems being commissioned and installed – a scenario which may have serious consequences for a building's occupants and owners if a fire breaks out, and may panic and irritate residents if a malfunctioning fire system leads to an unnecessary evacuation, particularly if it occurs at night.

It might surprise you to learn that the responsibility for having the right systems commissioned and installed lies firmly with the building's owner, as they would be classed as the Responsible Person under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. In addition, the latest version of the Construction Design and Management (CDM) 2015 Regulations, which came into force in April, made it a legal requirement for the clients in construction projects - by which I mean the organisation who commissions the project, which includes maintenance of systems – to ensure the contractors working on it have the relevant 'skills, knowledge and experience' within their discipline to carry out the work and ensure the systems installed perform their required function.

#### Use accredited contractors

Evidence of this can be obtained in a variety of ways, but probably the most effective method is to specify contractors who have relevant third party accreditation – formal recognition from an independent third party of their ability to perform specific tasks. This process provides a way of confirming the contractor meets certain requirements in order to reduce everyone's risk.

This is something the HSE recommends as part of the CDM Regulations – particularly if clients are looking to either discharge their duties or appoint a principal contractor to oversee their project team. It also allows clients to discharge and fulfil their obligations as the Duty Holder under the Electricity at Work Regulations, which require them or their designated Duty Holder to ensure that all risks are effectively managed. Failure to do so can be punished by unlimited fines, criminal prosecution (as can breaches of the

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#### "The responsibility for having the right fire systems lies firmly with the building's owner"

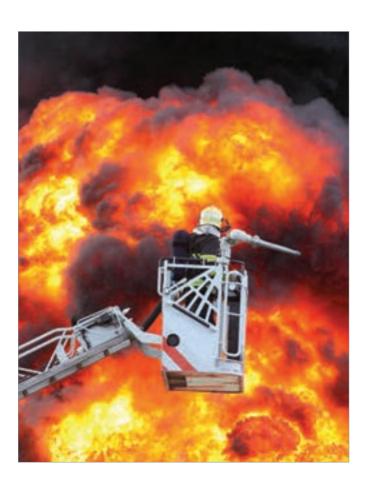
RRO), and – if prosecuted – a requirement to publicly inform customers that they have breached the Regulations.

Third party accreditation can take a number of forms – either specialised accreditation following an assessment by a recognised organisation (in the case of fire systems the two preferred options are BAFE SP203-1 and LPS 1014) or through membership of a relevant trade association, which in addition to demonstrating the contractor's commitment to adhering to the industry standards also provides a guarantee they will abide by the association's Codes of Conduct and Guarantee of Work. In our case, ECA members who carry out work on fire and security systems form part of the Fire and Security Association (FSA), our specialist association for fire and security contractors, which means all members have third party accreditation that is relevant to their specialist discipline.

Ensuring your contractors have this independent accreditation is a worthwhile investment. The legal, financial and reputational consequences of fire damage are grave. They can be reduced by having properly installed fire systems and by ensuring contractors have the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to commission, install and maintain these systems.

By taking these precautions, it's easy to mitigate the risks of fires occurring and affecting you, your buildings and their occupiers.

Steve Martin is head of specialist groups at the Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA)



#### Smoke ventilation maintenance – the hot issue for HAs and LAs

By Simon North - Service and Maintenance Division Manager with SE Controls

ngoing budgetary pressures and a lack of familiarity by local authorities and housing associations about the strict regulations that govern the maintenance of smoke ventilation systems, has given rise to a worrying trend that will leave them exposed to prosecution for non-compliance unless it is addressed.

In an effort to integrate fire systems maintenance and save money in the process, many HAs and LAs are 'bundling' smoke ventilation maintenance into a multi-disciplined 'fire service' contract, where the contractor is responsible for all fire and smoke system maintenance, often across several locations and building types.

However, under the scope of various British Standards, including BS9991, BS9999 and BS7346 Part 8, together with Building Regulations ADB; the European EN12101 standard and best practice guidance documents from the Smoke Control Association, there are specific maintenance requirements and procedures that must be followed.

The real 'teeth' behind this complex and vital legislative framework is the Regulatory Reform



Order (RRO). This gives fire service officers an extensive range of enforcement powers in situations where smoke control systems have been inadequately maintained under the demands of the various pieces of legislation.

The penalties for non-compliance can be significant, including the prosecution of companies, building owners, landlords and individuals responsible for building maintenance, resulting in punitive fines as well as custodial sentences.

At SE Controls, we have already been directly involved in a significant number of projects to correct problems caused where general fire contractors have found themselves out of their depth and unable to maintain the smoke control



system within the demands of the regulations.

In one instance the maintenance company had failed to notice a smoke vent that had been 'nailed shut' rendering it in operable and dangerous, while another recent case or poor maintenance from an inexperienced contractor resulted in an automatic smoke vent falling out of the building. A major internal review followed, together with the involvement of the  $\ensuremath{\mathsf{HSE}}$ and prosecutions are now being considered.

On a number of other remedial projects, fire officers or building control have already imposed close notices on the buildings, resulting in disruption, the removal of tenants and large unbudgeted costs for the housing association. Clearly, these could have been avoided if the specialised smoke ventilation maintenance contract was kept separate and handled by a specialist company with the necessary skills, experience and expertise.

01543 44 30 60 www.secontrols.com

















Floors in social and privated rented homes must meet a wide range of needs. Peter Kelsey of Designer Contracts advises on specifying safe and durable floor coverings.

B efore purchasing a floor covering for a rented property, specifiers should first consider the type of property, and look into the specific needs of the occupants. In short, it is important to establish who the user is, as opposed to simply knowing what the product is used for.

Supplying floor coverings that are technically appropriate and within budget is key in ensuring a safe and inclusive environment within any property, be it in social or private rented home. It goes without saying that choosing a reliable contractor is vital to the success of an installation.

So, in selecting a contractor, opt for a company able to offer a wide selection of affordable – yet durable – floor coverings to suit the nature of the building. There are a number of specialist manufacturers of flooring solutions on the market which will stand the test of time.

#### Making the right choice

Careful planning and consideration should be taken before any flooring selection is made, particularly where it needs to adhere to strict requirements. Ideally, the chosen flooring has to be hardwearing, hygienic and stain-resistant.

Flooring that can be easily cleaned is essential for a busy care home for example. Practical options and slip-resistant vinyls should be considered for any wet areas. Where appropriate, the product should be suitable for occupants with bare feet and in cases where social care workers are involved, as they are likely to wear shoes when assisting occupants in and around wet areas.

Carpet still remains a staple flooring option, with beige once being the

## "It is important to establish who the user is as opposed to simply knowing what the product is used for"

colour of choice, now greys are the most popular selection for new build rented properties, where it sits comfortably with modern interiors.

The advanced manufacturing techniques used for vinyl tiles and laminates make it difficult to tell the difference between these and the real thing, yet they're much easier to maintain. Many ranges also meet health and safety guidelines for installations that require additional criteria to be met.

In high traffic areas, such as hallways and kitchens, luxury vinyl tiles and fashionable laminates continue to grow in popularity as a practical alternative to real wood, stone or ceramic tiles. Their hardwearing nature also makes them a popular choice for the rental market catering for families with young children and pets.

#### Challenges and regulations

Individual rooms and apartments should be approached in a completely different way. Noise disturbance in some properties can be a real problem if the room above hasn't had suitable flooring fitted. Softer flooring and underlay options should be considered, able to save a great deal of hassle in the long run. High traffic entrance areas will require a thicker wear layer and surface protection to increase the longevity of the product.



There are regulations and requirements that should be considered when selecting flooring products. R10 is the German DIN Standard slip resistant test (ramp test), which is the accepted test method for Europe, however in the UK HSE guidelines prefer the Pendulum Test, providing a classification of 36+ when dry, wet and contaminated. So if a floor is going to be prone to product spillage – shampoo, shower gel or general bathroom related products – it will need a low potential for slip (>36) with a surface roughness of >20 microns as outlined in BS7976-2.

Ease of installation is incredibly important. Time is money, so contractors should be able to replace and install flooring to tight deadlines. As well as



new properties, some older care homes and rental properties have to be upgraded to comply with modern needs and changes in regulations.

Having access to the most up to date products and being aware of new and innovative products, often in advance of them being introduced to the industry, is important for any contractor working with those managing or maintaining social and rented properties.

It's also important to build a trusted relationship with any property owner, so picking up the keys and completing the work as soon as possible mean a swift and efficient turnaround with fewer disturbances for residents.

#### Less remedial work and faster fittings

Gerflor has developed sustainable flooring solutions that dramatically reduce remedial work, fast-track installation and drive down 'on-floor' costs, even contributing to longer product life cycle times and lower replacement budgets. For example, loose-lay Gerflor Fibre Technology (GFT) residential



≥36/R10 slip resistant vinyl floorings with a unique stabilising, waterproof interlayer, reduce many refurbishment and new build installation problems that housing professionals face and allow contractors to lay up to twice as much m2 per day. Tolerating damp better than glued products they are less likely to trap moisture between the flooring and the subfloor.

01926 622600 www.gerflor.co.uk

#### **Introducing the Purevision classic range**

Following the successful launch of the Purevision™ multi-fuel stove range in 2014 Charlton & Jenrick is very pleased to announce the launch of their new Classic range of stoves. The Classic Purevision™ Multi-fuel stoves have all the features of the current range making them ultra-efficient and designed to



easily pass the strict Eco Design 2022 regulations that will ensure all stoves sold are clean, efficient and environmentally friendly. The Classic version offers a more traditional look to the current modern looking Purevision™. Classic models also all feature the Purevision™ high-quality ceramic firebox liners that are self-cleaning, hardwearing and very attractive.

sales@charltonandjenrick.co.uk

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finishes, the Polyx Oil range offers the highest coverage of any oil on the market – a 2.5 litre can cover approximately 30m<sup>2</sup> with two coats. Polyx Oil is also extremely easy to apply. Simply brush on to the wood surface to achieve deep, long-lasting penetration. Another key benefit of this wax-oil is that Polyx Oil has a reduced solvent content.

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2016 is the groundbreaking TF1 Omega Filter, which offers significant benefits to the installer and the homeowner. Precision-engineered, this brass filter is a small, smart and simple investment for landlords who want to find a cost effective way of protecting boilers for the long term and ensuring an energy efficient central heating system.

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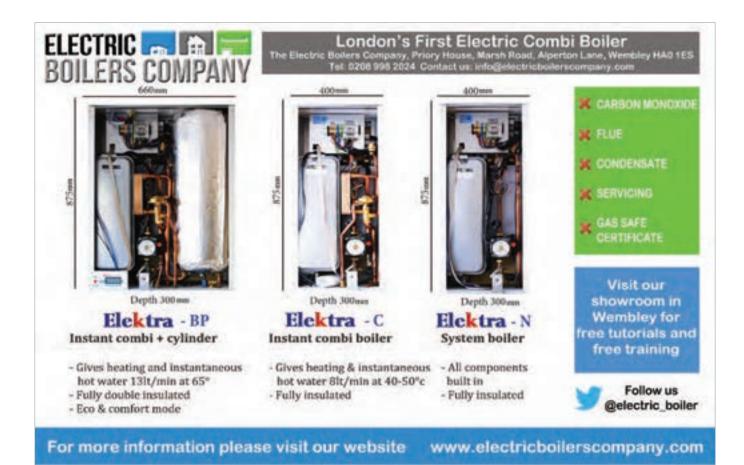
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## Green from the ground up

Households have seen their bills slashed as a result of adopting sustainable heating solutions. Simon Lomax of Kensa Heating explains how the firm helped to harness funding schemes to deliver a big change at several housing associations.

eating issues are a significant cause for concern at this time of year, with landlords and maintenance teams often looking to deliver a quick fix before winter sets in.

However, in an attempt to satisfy green regulations, as well as cut tenant utility bills, social housing providers are increasingly turning to long-term solutions which can reliably heat their properties for many years to come.

Such were the aspirations behind a partnership between energy provider EDF Energy and Kensa Heat Pumps, which delivered energy saving measures to 345 households across six different housing associations.

The project consisted of changes to the heating networks through the installations of ground source heat pumps, resulting in £136,000 worth of savings in tenants' bills. Moreover, carbon emissions were cut by over 35,000 tonnes. To put the numbers in perspective, the installation cut up to 50 per cent of tenant's bills as well as 65 per cent of carbon emissions.

#### Funding aid

The partnership helped social landlords Westward Housing, North Devon Homes, Coastline Housing, Trent & Dove Housing, Bromford Housing Group and Flagship Housing to access ECO (Energy Company Obligation) funding to offset the installation costs of replacing inefficient electric heating and oil-fired systems with sustainable and reliable ground source heat pumps. The associations also secured a 20-year budget through the Non Domestic Renewable Heating Incentive (RHI). In total the partnership has enabled £5,661,494 of ECO and RHI payments.

Kensa's micro ground source heat network system architecture, featuring an individual ground source heat pump in each property linked to a shared ground array, satisfies the ECO and RHI district heating definition, enabling unique access to the funding streams. This in turn allows social landlords to recover their installation costs and potentially fund other property improvement measures. This method also removes problematic issues around communal plantrooms and shared bills.

"From the outset, EDF Energy had the foresight to realise the potential for 'micro' heat networks to deliver ground source heat pump installations at volume, and have worked alongside Kensa to ensure that Government and Ofgem recognised that the design is eligible for ECO funding alongside the Non Domestic RHI," explains Simon Lomax.

Kensa and EDF Energy jointly pioneered the use of Carbon Saving Communities Obligation (CSCO) and Carbon Emissions Reduction Obligation (CERO) funding for micro ground source heat networks as an eligible ECO measure under ECO2. This ensured the application for ECO funding met with all prevailing Ofgem requirements. The system architecture was recognised for the significant potential for carbon savings where the most inefficient



fuels – notably electric or oil – are displaced by ground source heat pumps.

Matt Smith, contracts manager at housing provider Flagship Group, added:

"We knew we needed to innovate to solve the problem of fuel poverty.

Flagship is taking steps wherever possible to reduce our reliance on oil in favour of sustainable alternatives. After the initial consultation meeting with Kensa, the tenants all voted in favour of the renewable ground source heat pump option."

#### "The installation cut up to 50 per cent of tenant's bills as well as 65 per cent of carbon emissions"

Steve Grocock, director of property services at Trent & Dove Housing commented: "Until now, many housing providers have struggled to finance the upfront capital costs associated with ground source heat pumps, even though the maintenance costs and tenants' energy bills are significantly reduced. However, Kensa was able to unlock a combination of funding from the RHI and ECO that made the financial case for the project stack up.

Grocock explained Trent & Dove, as a result of the installation, achieved an outcome "many housing associations dream of" – the association halved its tenant's energy bills and carbon emissions and added £2.3m of income through the RHI funding to offset the £1.8m investment. "And all of this in just three months," he concluded.

#### Adding comfort

Apart from accessing funding, for North Devon Homes the project offered a chance to improve tenant's living conditions.

"It supported us in our aims to improve our customers' homes and make them more affordable and comfortable to live in," explains Ben Ashfold, general practice surveyor at North Devon Homes. "The new heating systems are providing a sustainable source of heating that will benefit our customers for years to come. The innovative borehole array has helped access funding and ultimately made this project a possibility."

#### The bigger picture

Kensa and the Ground Source Heat Pump Association (GSHPA) have backed plans within the ECO consultation proposing that ground source heat pump installations satisfy the district heating definition, and will continue to be



Trent & Dove housing resident Mrs Carter

eligible for support via the CERO strand.

"The appeal of the CERO strand would be enhanced if the proposed re-introduction of deemed scores (to establish the carbon savings) could also be used for this simple form of district heating," says Lomax. "This refinement would allow the level of ECO grant funding to be established immediately upon receipt of a property list (rather than after the production of a SAP report) so Kensa and its trade association the Ground Source Heat Pump Association, have requested this change.

Lomax adds: "There is also a need to find ways to support ground source heat pump installations under the "Affordable Warmth" [Northern Ireland only] strand, given the consultation's proposal to focus most of

the future ECO obligations towards those who are most in need of

But, Lomax says, the AW strand hides some caveats as it supports only the least energy-efficient social housing properties, i.e. those rated EPC E, F or G. This, he claims, could prevent landlords from upgrading such dwellings altogether.

#### **Caveats**

According to Lomax, landlords are commonly facing complaints from tenants living in properties heated with night storage heaters. The issue with such carbon-intensive electric systems is that while they may not provide adequate warmth, the property may be still be classed as efficient because of SAP improvements such as insulation. This in turn would leave the dwellings above the lowest bands eligible for AW finance.

"The costs are high and comfort levels can be compromised if the system is only switched on during the low tariff periods," says Lomax. "That said, many of these properties are somehow categorised as EPC Band D, possibly because of a generous treatment within SAP. As a consequence, there is a worry that these properties cannot be supported."

He adds: "This outcome would be particularly disappointing especially if there was a mix of Band D or E properties within an estate. In this instance, it is possible that the ground array infrastructure will run past the front door of a Band D property but there will be no opportunity to make a connection. Again, the GSHPA has sought a refinement to the proposals so all social properties which are electrically-heated can qualify for support under the AW strand."

Simon Lomax is managing director of Kensa Heat Pumps

#### 30 second system dosing? Yes we can

Dosing heating systems with Sentinel's award-winning and boiler manufacturer endorsed water treatment chemicals just got even easier and faster thanks to the company's new Rapid-Dose™ aerosol. Already being hailed as the most innovative aerosol product to enter the market, the new, smaller



Rapid-Dose features a unique pre-assembled adapter and 'twist and dose' mechanism that allows easy hands-free dosing of a system in just 30 seconds. The new, no fuss, mess-free Rapid-Dose cans are available with Sentinel X100 Inhibitor, Sentinel X400 High Performance Cleaner and Sentinel Leak Sealer chemicals, and can be tried out on a no-risk basis.

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#### New standards in electric fires

The two new Infinity electric fires are based on Charlton & Jenrick's bestselling gas fires, and are available to fit frameless in the wall or into a fireplace suite. There are Infinite possibilities of how you can present these fires. The fires feature the new 3D Ecoflame™ technology from Charlton & Jenrick,



which offer a very exciting realistic flame effect with four mood settings. The fires come complete with a loose realistic log fuel bed and fire bed media kit, to be arranged as desired, although a suggested layout is provided. Ultra-low running costs for the LED flame effect means it can run for six hours or more using one penny of electricity.

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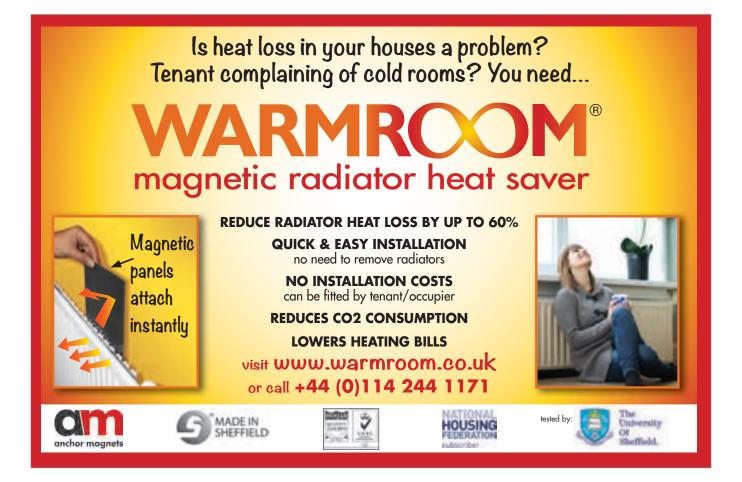
An increasing number of customers that have had problems with their existing storage system are fitting the E3 Mole. The E3 gives the opportunity to increase storage volumes and improve the utility of a pellet store.



Web: www.pelletmole.co.uk Email: nick@pelletmole.co.uk

Phone: 01691655328 07940570302





#### ESi releases new controls brochure

Heating controls manufacturer and distributor ESi has released its brand new heating controls range brochure. ESi Controls is one of the fastest growing designers and manufacturers of heating controls in the UK having developed a range of energy saving, innovative controls for residential and



light commercial use. In the brochure you will find information on the ESi channel programmer range, its wireless programmable room thermostats, its electronic and electro-mechanical room thermostats and motorised zone valves, its cylinder thermostats, a range of accessories and its kits and packs.

01280 816868 www.esicontrols.com.uk

#### Johnson & Starley shines in report

The October 2016 Which? Report into the 'Best & Worst Boiler Brands' made for good reading for Johnson & Starley, with the well-established company achieving fourth place amongst tough competition! This was the first year that Johnson & Starley have been included in the Which? Survey, with the



organisation saying they had made "an impressive survey debut" With a history of innovation spanning almost 100 years, Johnson & Starley developed the QuanTec range of High Efficiency condensing boilers using the latest state of the art boiler technology. Designed with reliability, performance, outstanding efficiency and long term value for money.

01604 762881 www.johnsonandstarley.co.uk

#### **Energy saving small circulators**

Small circulating pumps are a key component of all wet heating systems in the UK. They perform as standalone pumps or as integrated pumps in combi and system boilers and they keep the water circulating in underfloor heating systems and air conditioning units too. They are responsible for a much higher



percentage of overall household electricity usage than many realise which is why old uncontrolled pumps were targeted by European legislation as a key way of reducing residential energy usage. **Wilo's** series of glandless pumps – Wilo-Yonos PICO, Wilo-Stratos PICO and Wilo-Stratos – are seeing increasing popularity across the board.

01283 523000 www.wilo.co.uk

#### Kitchen and bathroom radiator selection

The range of decorative and designer radiators on offer from **Stelrad** for the bathroom and the kitchen have grown exponentially with the launch of the Stelrad Aqua range.



There's now a radiator for every possible opportunity where a statement radiator

is needed to brighten up one of the key rooms in the home, with stunning tubular towel rails like the Caliente and the Concord, and designer stunners like the Optia, the Excel and the wave and Arc which are finding their way into kitchens across the UK. Take a closer look on the Stelrad website.

01709 578950 www.stelrad.com

#### Discover E-fficiency: to control heating

Rointe, the low consumption heating brand, is introducing for the new 2016/2017 heating season E-fficiency, an update for the Rointe Connect app which lets consumers know at first-hand how efficiently they are using their heating system from their mobile phone, tablet or PC. This new update



included in the Rointe Connect app allows the end user to know in real time how much they are spending on their heating on a daily, monthly or annual basis. This new update includes a "performance indicator" related to the system energy efficiency that works as a traffic-light: red for unbalanced, yellow for revision and green for efficient.

rointe@rointe.co.uk

#### Cost effective renewable heating

The residents of 200 dwellings under the ownership of a Basingstoke Housing Association have been given a welcome boost to both their energy bills and their temperatures with the installation of Mitsubishi Electric Ecodan air source heat pumps. Ecodan air source heat pumps are proven to reduce both run-



ning costs and emissions over traditional carbon-intensive heating and are particularly suited to off-gas areas which are heavily reliant on oil. The fact that they also qualify for the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) provides additional financial benefits to the system owner. The installations also include Mitsubishi Electric's Metering and Monitoring Service Package.

air. conditioning @mitsubishielectric. co.uk

#### Flexible billing for residents

The Ladbroke Grove development from Taylor Wimpey Central London, is part of the regeneration of Grand Union Centre, and includes both luxury apartments and homes for first-time buyers, close to Kensington and Chelsea. This mixed use scheme combines living and working, with office accommodation and retail units set around a private courtyard. Evinox Energy are delighted to be working with P R Morson on this outstanding development, supplying heat interface units and metering & billing services. Evinox ModuSat HIU's are supplied pre-payment or credit account ready, meaning there is no requirement for additional controls, sensors or hardware providing flexible metering options. With most modern housing schemes being mixed use, the ability to operate a part credit billing and part pre-payment system on the same scheme is extremely desirable, and providing a future proof solution is a key advantage of the Evinox system, as it can be adapted to different tenant occupations. The ability to make changes remotely provides the ultimate in simplicity.

01372 722277 www.evinoxenergy.co.uk

## Icynene provide a solution for hard-to-treat flats

cynene insulations contractor Kishorn Specialist Contractors have insulated twelve flats for an Aberdeen based Housing Association. The flats were part of a church conversion with stone external walls and internal liner walls, posing a real challenge to insulate with the minimum of disruption.

Using a mixture of the Icynene's LDC-50 spray foam and a pourable version the air space behind the liner wall was insulated. A series of 10mm holes was drilled in the wall and then the foam was injected. The pour foam rises and sets in about 30 seconds and excerpts very little force on the walls as it fills the void.

One of the primary concerns was that the structure would be allowed to "breathe" as it had done for decades since it's construction. Because Icynene's foam is open cell it is vapour open, more vapour open than the lime mortar used in the walls. There was no compromise in the natural moisture migration through the wall. But the passage of convection currents behind the liner walls were eliminated, resulting in a reduction in heat loss through the structure.

Carried out over the last five years, Icynene are involved in continuing trials with Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen. During these trials the moisture migration through historic building elements has been monitored with very successful results. The moisture passage through walls insulated with Icynene foam has not been affected, but the thermal comfort of the properties has been greatly increased. Wimpey No Fines



properties have also been insulated in the same manner with the similar results.

Icynene specialise in finding solutions for hard-to-treat properties and are in discussion with various Housing Associations about treating system built housing stock.

01229716039 www.uksprayfoam.co.uk

#### Waterfront student accommodation

Kingspan Insulation's Kooltherm K15 Rainscreen Board has been specified as part of a new £42 million purpose built student accommodation project in Portsmouth, due to its outstanding thermal performance and ability to meet the stringent fire performance requirements for the project. Once



completed, the building will provide high quality and safe accommodation for 836 students. Cooley Architects' design uses coloured Alpolic ACM cladding to form an eye-catching cube at the top of the 240 ft building. Kingspan Kooltherm K15 Rainscreen Board was installed as part of the rainscreen facade system.

01544 387 384 www.kingspaninsulation.co.uk

#### Simply saving energy with DANLERS

DANLERS has launched a new range of High Bay PIR occupancy switches. The range is ideal for energy saving lighting control in areas such as entrance halls and storage areas. The products sense a person moving within the detection area and control the lights accordingly. Each product includes an adjustable



time lag function plus and adjustable photocell. There are versions for simply switching the lighting load on/off, as well as products for DALI, DSI or 1-10VDC ballasts, which automatically dim or brighten the lights in response to changes in the ambient light level. The products either come with manual adjustment or as versions which are programmable.

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**Poujoulat** www.poujoulat.co.uk

Poujoulat UK's Therminox TI and ZI chimney system is "the only HETAS listed metal twin wall chimney that is soot fire tested using a solid fire stop in the room of the appliance in domestic houses" which, the company says, makes it an "ideal internal metal chimney solution for houses built post 2008 (Airtight)". During testing, the soot fire test took the cooling air for the enclosure shaft down from the roof space and avoided taking air flow from the living room and this was sufficient to achieve a distance to combustible materials of 50mm. For further information on Poujoulat's complete range visit the website.



#### **TME**

#### www.tmethermometers.com

Streamline water checks with TC Wall Ports from TME, specialists in temperature test equipment. Spot checks on boxed in pipes or high level tanks are faster and more practical with remote thermocouple monitoring points located up to 20m away. Each port houses a thermocouple connection, linked to the water outlet by a fine wire sensor. Simply plug in a thermometer for an accurate, instant result every time. Now available in Red and Blue for hot and cold water points - ideal for hot and cold feeds into tmvs. Apply a barcode to achieve paperless temperature recording using TME's MM7000 barcode scanning thermometer.

#### **Micronics**

#### www.micronicsflowmeters.com

Micronics Ltd the Clamp-on ultrasonic flowmeter specialist are delighted to announce that they have reached an agreement with Engelmann Sensor GmbH, to market their range of In-line Heat meter products within the UK. The Introduction of this range of products now enables Micronics to compete within the energy metering and billing market for new build, full refurbishment and retrofit projects offering the customers a choice of meter types and solutions to suit their individual needs and preferences. Micronics will first introduce the UF50 Ultrasonic heatmeter range for 15mm, 22mm and 25mm pipes.





#### Pellet Mole

#### www.pelletmole.co.uk

Pellet Mole can now offer a simple but sophisticated way to monitor the level of pellets left in your store; Sonavis. The basic unit can be read on-site and has a low-level warning output. The pro version enables remote configuration and monitoring. An increasing number of customers that have had problems with their existing storage system are fitting the E3 Mole. The E3 gives the opportunity to increase storage volumes and improve the utility of a pellet store.

#### Consort Claudgen

#### www.consortepl.com

Consort Claudgen's new CRX1 wireless controller features a large easy-to-read backlit LCD display and offers up to six temperature settings a day, seven days a week. It has four different operating modes and features a 15-minutes Boost with temperature control to provide the maximum comfort quickly. The CRX1 works with all Consort RX heaters and can operate different products at the same time allowing total heating systems to be effectively controlled. This modern design controller is supplied with a security wall bracket and table top stand.



## Millbrook Tower stands tall following replacement of rainwater drainage stacks



ne of the tallest buildings in Southampton has had a complete drainage solution designed and installed without the temporary re-homing of any residents.

Formerly the tallest building in Southampton, the Millbrook Tower stands at 240 feet. Built over 50 years ago, the building had a cast iron drainage system installed that had started to rust and fail, causing excessive leaking in the 144 flats in the development.

Southampton City Council (SCC) who wanted a complete holistic approach to the design, manufacture and installation of the replacement drainage system, approached Polypipe. In January 2016, eight members of the Direct





Labour Organisation (DLO) department of SCC came to Polypipe Terrain's Centre of Excellence in Aylesford for training to gain a better understanding of the specification, assembly and installation of plastic fabricated drainage stacks.

Working with SCC, as experts in providing intelligently engineered solutions for the movement of water and air around tall buildings, Polypipe Terrain assessed the failing drainage stacks in Millbrook Tower, and designed a new high-density polyethylene system. Terrain FUZE HDPE was installed due to a number of its key benefits over other more traditional materials.

Lighter in weight than cast iron, Terrain FUZE HDPE can feature longer pipe runs, so less jointing is required. As the system is jointed using electrofusion welding, where the weld area is as strong as the host material, the system integrity is increased and consequently the risk of leaks in the development is dramatically reduced.

Due to the inherent material characteristics, Terrain FUZE HDPE lends itself to fabrication. Utilising Polypipe's unique Terrain Fabrication Service, the system was fabricated to exact specification and delivered to the site, where Southampton's DLO were able to complete the installation work across the 144 properties 40 per cent faster than the average for such works. This meant that the residents of Millbrook Tower were able to remain in their properties, a key consideration when designing the drainage stacks of the building.



Jim Simpkins, Housing Refurbishment Project Manager for Southampton City Council, said: "Millbrook Tower has been standing for 50 years and so naturally the drainage systems in place were not functioning as well as required. Polypipe Terrain provided a single source for all our drainage requirements, helping in the specification, design, manufacture and installation of replacement drainage stacks, ensuring we had expert advice from start to finish. As with all refurbishment work in our residential properties, it is always our intention to do so with as little intrusion as possible. Working with Polypipe Terrain, we were able to deliver live stack replacements across 144 individual properties with minimum disruption to residents."

Ed Swift, Business Development Manager at Polypipe Terrain, added: "We have worked closely with numerous councils on the replacement of live stacks within tall buildings so understand the issues surrounding this. Training SCC's DLO on the specification and installation of drainage stacks means they are able to use this method, and our fabrication service in future projects. By utilising our service from the design stage of the project, we provided a bespoke design and manufacture service, adding real value to the Southampton City Council project."

01622 795200 www.polypipe.com

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## Clearing the air

The NHS is spending £900m a year on asthma care as poor air quality mars millions of lives. Andy Makin of EnviroVent explains how ventilation issues in the home could be a root cause.



ne of the major issues facing landlords and social housing providers, especially during the colder months, is poor indoor air quality in residents' homes.

In a recent survey, 58 per cent of householders said they experienced condensation at home, with over a fifth saying their property had a problem with mould. The issue is worse in the winter months when windows and doors are kept closed because the relative humidity inside the home is higher. Vulnerable people, such as the young, the elderly and those with illnesses, are most at risk.

Without a continuous flow of fresh air into and out of a dwelling, the internal atmosphere may reach a high relative humidity of around 70-80 per cent, which then leads to condensation. The water droplets that form on colder surfaces can stimulate mould growth and, in some cases, result in damage to the building fabric itself.

#### Too airtight

After World War II, there was a dedicated focus on the rebuilding and redevelopment of properties and, over the past 40 years, homes have been improved with energy-efficient upgrades, including double glazing, new external doors, plus cavity wall and loft insulation.

This has effectively made homes sealed boxes, trapping moisture inside and resulting in condensation. If you factor an average four-person family into that sealed home, with each person emitting around 16 pints of moisture per day, the result will be a high level of humidity. Added to this are the numerous litres of water that are emitted into the atmosphere from drying clothes indoors during the colder months.

The result is most commonly recognised as 'damp', of which the most visible manifestation is condensation and mould growth. The worst affected properties are new builds and properties that have been built in the past 20 years since Building Regulations were introduced. This is due to the energy-efficient measures that have been introduced without fitting adequate ventilation.

#### 'Toxic' homes

The outcome of this failure to ventilate properly is more condensation and a growth in mould spores. This creates ideal conditions for dust mites to thrive. The airborne detritus from dust mites has been shown to exacerbate the symptoms of asthma and other breathing related conditions. This makes for a lethal cocktail, leading to poor indoor air quality or 'toxic home syndrome', where the inside atmosphere is almost twice as polluted as that outside.

Other pollutants that can cause problems inside the home without adequate ventilation include volatile organic compounds, which are commonly found in furniture, fabrics and chemicals. There may also be tobacco smoke and, in some regions of the country, there is a problem with Radon gas that is harmful to long-term health and can add to the problem of poor indoor air quality.

Retrofit solutions such as Positive Input Ventilation (PIV) can help to



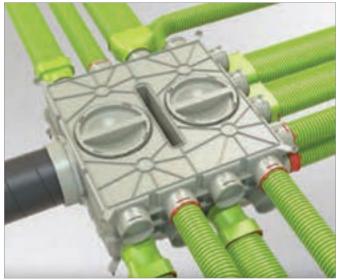
"Landlords address damp and mould growth by upgrading insulation or adding new heating systems, but do not tackle the cause of the problem – a serious lack of ventilation"

#### Health costs

The cost of poor indoor air quality is being widely recognised, and with local authorities now in control of their own health budget, many are beginning to see that improving air quality in the home can help them make significant savings. For instance, currently in the UK, there are 5.2 million people receiving treatment for asthma (Source: Asthma UK). Asthma care and services cost the NHS around £900m per year. There are also 12.7 million lost working days per year due to asthma-related conditions. In addition, there are 11,500 deaths and 74,000 emergency hospital admissions, showing the scale of the problem.

The BRE has recently released its report The Full Cost of Poor Housing, commissioned by the Government. The definition of 'poor housing' in the report is that which fails to meet the current minimum standard for





Left: loft-mounted Positive Input Ventilation (PIV) unit; Right: semi-rigid ducting offers rapid, air tight ventilation installations

housing in England and has one or more of the Category 1 Health Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards. This category includes damp and mould growth because of its direct correlation to aggravating respiratory and dermatological conditions.

The report found that Category 1 hazards were responsible for 70 per cent of the NHS costs associated with poor housing. It also revealed 3.4 million (15 per cent) of England's 22 million homes have HHSRS Category 1 hazards

The study suggests the NHS could potentially save £600m a year if all the Category 1 repairs were carried out in housing. However, if vulnerable people continue to live in the poorest 15 per cent of England's housing, this will cost the NHS around £1.4bn a year in first year treatment costs.

#### **Eyesore**

The high visibility of damp and mould growth and the distress this can cause means it is one of the main causes of complaints for housing maintenance teams during the colder months. Relative humidity inside the home is higher, and windows tend to be kept closed trapping moisture-laden air inside.

Social housing providers and private landlords often address the problem of damp and mould growth by upgrading insulation, adding new heating systems, followed by re-plastering and re-decoration. All of these actions can help, but do not tackle the cause of the problem a serious lack of ventilation.

It is a common misconception that turning up the heating will prevent condensation. It doesn't - the only solution is adequate ventilation.

#### Whole house approach

In the past, the best way to tackle condensation and mould growth in one particular room was to fit extract fans in the bathroom or kitchen. This can certainly help, but many housing management companies and local authorities are increasingly taking a 'whole house' approach to improve ventilation throughout the property.

Weary of mould treatments that don't work, they are looking for longer term, effective solutions. Retrofit solutions like Positive Input Ventilation (PIV) are helping to improve indoor air quality for residents across the country while mould risk and damage to the fabric of a building.

PIV systems work by drawing in fresh, filtered, clean air from outside and gently ventilating the home from a central position - this is usually in the loft, above a landing if installed in a house, or in a central hallway in a flat or bungalow.

They dilute moisture-laden air, displacing it and replacing it to control humidity levels between 45 and 60 per cent.

#### Permanent solutions

Research such as the BRE study is helping increase public awareness of the impact of damp and mould on health into focus, and highlight the need for permanent solutions.

In the past, ventilation has been given a lower priority than heating and insulation when it comes to upgrades. Now, with indoor air quality becoming a more widely recognised issue, whole-house ventilation is being seen as a way to improve the nation's health and in turn reduce the burden on the NHS.

Andy Makin is managing director of EnviroVent

#### "It is a common misconception that turning up the heating will prevent condensation"



## A way through the Legionella minefield

Water hygiene compliance is a headache for landlords, with many having only limited experience, but it's crucial to get it right. James Homard provides a guide to the pitfalls and how to avoid them.

ith around five million private rental properties in the UK, owned by approximately two million landlords, it's fair to say that the buy-to-let boom of recent years has had a dramatic effect on the housing market. It has also meant that a sector which was previously dominated by 'professional' landlords is now largely made up of property owners with no previous experience of letting. This brings with it several challenges for both the authorities and for landlords.

From a legislative perspective it's important that rental housing meets safety standards so, with this in mind, in November 2013 the Health & Safety Executive issued a revised version of its Approved Code of Practice on the control of Legionella bacteria in water systems (L8), extending it to include all landlords and letting agents. In our experience however, a large proportion of private landlords have little or no understanding of their responsibilities when it comes to Legionella control.

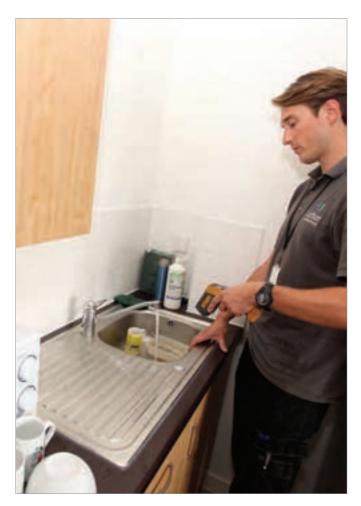
#### Lack of information

There is something of an information vacuum when it comes to Legionella control but sadly ignorance of the law is no defence. All landlords should visit the Health & Safety Executive's website (www.hse.gov.uk) and download a free copy of the L8 Approved Code of Practice. The Legionella Control Association or LCA (www.legionellacontrol.org.uk) has also published several guides and is an excellent source of information. Lastly, there are a number of industry blogs (including our own at www.complianceforlandlords.com/advice) where you can find useful guidance and tips.

"The older the building or the more complicated the plumbing system, the higher the risk of Legionella"

#### **Competency training**

The law states that your Legionella risk assessment must be carried out by a 'competent person'. This could be you, your letting agent or a water



hygiene professional, but whoever it is needs to understand how the water system in the property works and what the risk factors are for Legionella. Lack of proper training is so often cited in court cases where a safety breach has occurred but it's an easy problem to fix.

Every landlord should take a Legionella awareness course even if they are employing a third party to handle their risk assessments as, ultimately, the health and safety buck stops with them. If you are working with a letting agent, plumber or other trade professional, make sure you ask to see their qualifications.

#### Poor system design

As a general rule, the older the building or the more complicated the plumbing system, the higher the risk of Legionella. Where a house has been converted into flats or a property has been extended, often the plumbing system ends up as a bit of a patchwork of piping. Tanks may be tucked away in hard-to-reach places or there might be several dead legs or blind ends where pipes are redundant or water flow is irregular.

These are exactly the places where Legionella bacteria likes to lurk, in stagnant water or feeding on rust. To minimise the risk, inspect your pipework thoroughly, cap off or remove unused parts of the plumbing and make sure that your tank is in good condition with a tightly-fitting lid.

#### Inadequate record-keeping

Your Legionella risk assessment needs to be properly documented to prove its efficacy. All too often the paperwork is patchy, gets lost, or is just filed away in a drawer and forgotten about. Ideally you should repeat your risk assessment every two years, or whenever there are any changes to the plumbing system. Your report should include details of any necessary remedial work and a record of it being carried out, as well as a detailed

schematic drawing of the plumbing system. It's a good idea to take photographs as evidence too.

One of the simplest ways to ensure that your records are in good order is to use a digital compliance tool such as an app or virtual logbook. We use CAT-SI (www.cat-si.com), a new water hygiene compliance app for creating, storing, updating and managing risk assessments from your smartphone or tablet, and it's proving to be a real asset in Legionella control.

#### Tenant trouble

The relationship you have with your tenants and the type of tenant in your property can have a significant impact on managing the risk of Legionella. Firstly, some tenants are at higher risk of contracting Legionnaires' disease than others, so when doing your risk assessment make sure you take this into account. For instance, over 45s, smokers, heavy drinkers, people with underlying health conditions (such as asthma, heart disease or diabetes) or anyone with an impaired immune system can be more susceptible.

Secondly, it's important to educate your tenants about Legionnaires' disease and make them aware of the control measures you have in place. This could include asking them to descale taps and showerheads regularly, reporting any plumbing problems promptly (e.g. inconsistent water temperatures, leaks or reduced water flow) as well as not interfering with any thermostats or water temperature settings. We always recommend giving tenants a simple handout on the risk of Legionella as part of the tenancy pack.

#### Managing void periods

Most rental properties lie vacant from time to time and if you rent your place out to students or run a holiday let, void periods will be inevitable.



When a property lies empty it gives the water in the system a chance to stagnate, allowing any bacteria to flourish undisturbed. The best way to avoid this happening is to ensure that showers and taps are run at least once a week, for a minimum of two minutes. It's also a good idea to flush all the toilets.

Whether you decide to manage Legionella control yourself or bring in the professionals, with these simple precautions you'll see that compliance needn't be complicated.

James Homard is co-founder and technical director of specialist consultant Compliance for Landlords



#### **Premium protection from Remmers**

The Scandinavian log cabins and lodges at the picturesque Felmoor Park in Northumberland have been given a striking new finish thanks to Remmers wood coatings. Remmers HK Stain was selected to provide not only effective weather protection but protection against blue stain, rot and insects. HK



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ASSA, part of ASSA ABLOY Security Solutions, has worked with Warrior Doors to secure bin stores for Solihull Community Housing (SCH). SCH is an ALMO set up to run the housing service on behalf of Solihull Council. SCH is undergoing a regeneration programme to upgrade the interiors, exteriors and



surroundings for 35 high rise Social Housing council properties. A total of 37 sets of dilapidated doors to the bin stores, which were prone to vandalism and arson were replaced with Warrior Doors' high quality brushed stainless steel doors. The doors contained ASSA's 2788 deadlocks, which offer a robust design ideal for high usage areas.

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#### **UK Plumbing Supplies**

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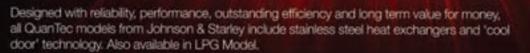
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