

HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

11.17



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conference
pledges

Funding
row over
sprinklers



Universal
credit
controversy

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Publisher:
Lesley Mayo

News Editor:
Patrick Mooney
patrick@netmagmedia.eu

Assistant Editor:
Sebastian Reed

Editorial Assistant:
Jack Wooler

Studio Manager
Mikey Pooley

Production Assistants:
Shelley Collyer
Carmen Simpson

Senior Sales Executive:
Nathan Hunt

Sales Executives:
Suzanne Easter
Kim Friend

Circulation:
Jane Spice

Managing Director:
Simon Reed

Cointronic House,
Station Road,
Heathfield,
East Sussex TN21 8DF

Advertising &
administration
Tel: 01435 863500
info@netmagmedia.eu
www.housingmmonline.co.uk

Editorial features
Tel: 01435 863500
teo@netmagmedia.eu

Press Releases
editorial@netmagmedia.eu

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Editor's comment

In the headlines for the wrong reasons



Patrick Mooney,
News Editor

Housing has rarely been out of the headlines since the terrible tragedy of the Grenfell Tower fire back in June. And yet here we are some five months later with little progress made in several hugely important linked issues.

Firstly the judge-led inquiry has not got off to the best of starts, with the victims, their families and others badly affected by the fire feeling left out of the process and powerless to influence its direction and purpose. Judge Moore-Bick opened the inquiry in opulent surroundings in central London and then promptly adjourned it before any appeals could be made directly to him.

Most of the people who survived the fire have yet to receive an acceptable offer of re-housing from Kensington & Chelsea Council despite all of the promises made to them in the days and weeks that followed. Some of them are actually in the official figures for homelessness, which are showing record numbers of children staying in B&B hotels and temporary accommodation.

SUSPICIONS

Thousands of tenants in high-rise tower blocks across the country have been left worried about their safety as tests were carried out on the flammability of the cladding around their homes. Panels that were meant to improve the insulation and fuel efficiency of their flats, are now being eyed suspiciously as a potential risk to their very lives.

The social housing sector has been shaken to its core with many openly questioning how such a terrible event could happen and thanking providence that it didn't happen to them. They have also said that the Grenfell tragedy must never happen again.

Social landlords have talked to their tenants and got the message back loud and clear that the dangerous cladding needs to be replaced and sprinkler systems installed, or retrofitted as the experts describe the works.

SPRINKLERS AND UC

Unbelievably the Ministers who were urging landlords to make tower blocks safe, are now saying that the fitting of sprinklers is not essential work and it's at their discretion - therefore the landlord is deemed responsible for these works, rather than the Government. This is a particularly crass decision when seen alongside plans to include sprinklers within the multi-million pound refurbishment of the Palace of Westminster.

For insensitivity it sits alongside the decision of work & pensions secretary David Gauke to refuse requests for a brief pause in the planned rollout of Universal Credit, so that the many reported problems and complaints can be properly investigated. Burying your head in the sand is rarely a good ploy, especially when faced with a barrage of well-evidenced requests, unless your objective is to imitate a pantomime villain, like Scrooge.

Ignoring pleas from her backbenchers, Theresa May has decided to retain the six-week delay before payments are made. The official view is the availability of advance payments makes any changes unnecessary, even though only half of claimants appear to know of them and the money is still paid as a loan that has to be repaid. Sadly it could be a bleak Christmas for many this year.

Patrick Mooney



On the cover...

The November issue of Housing Management & Maintenance features energiesprong demonstrator apartments in Groningen © Rogier Bos

The apartments, refurbished by Dura Vermeer, exemplify a new housing refurbishment approach implemented in Nottingham and managed by Nottingham City Homes (NCH) and the Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO)

Government refuses to pay for post Grenfell fire safety work

English councils are accusing Government Ministers of breaking their promise to ensure money would be found for fire safety works to high-rise blocks of flats after the Grenfell Tower fire.

In the immediate aftermath of the tragedy in June, Ministers repeatedly stated that the priority was making tower blocks safe places to live and that landlords should proceed with essential works. This was taken to mean that financial help would be available to pay for a variety of safety works, chosen in conjunction with residents' wishes.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has urged the Chancellor to allocate £1billion in the budget to pay for retrofitting sprinklers in all council high-rise blocks. His intervention has been supported by Simon Rooks, council member of the British Automatic Fire Sprinkler Association, who said insufficient action has been taken so far.

"What we urgently need are special measures to retrofit sprinklers into existing properties. The government can help by offering clearer guidance and financial support to local councils and building owners. Retrofitting sprinklers is cost effective and practical – building managers need to find the right supplier now and take action today," urged Mr Rooks.

A similar message was given by Alan Brinson, executive director of campaign group the European Fire Sprinkler Network, who said that sprinklers could significantly reduce fire deaths. "Nothing compares to them in saving lives," he said. A recent study of 677 fires where sprinklers were activated found they controlled or extinguished the fire in 99 per cent of cases.

SPRINKLERS

The installation of fire sprinkler systems and the replacement of external cladding have emerged as the favoured responses of social landlords and tenants, but council leaders are complaining that Ministers are "washing their hands" of their responsibilities, leaving them with multi-million pound bills that will drain their budgets and leave little money for other essential and planned works to their housing stock.

Over 30 local authorities are understood to have formally written asking for financial assistance but the new Housing Minister, Alok Sharma, has already refused requests from a number of councils. In total the bill for replacing flammable cladding and retrofitting sprinklers is likely to run into many hundreds of millions of pounds.

Among those councils seeking help Nottingham wants to install sprinklers inside flats and communal areas in 13 towers at a cost of



£6.2m, Croydon has started work on retrofitting sprinklers to 26 tower blocks costing £10m, while Wandsworth plans to spend up to £30m on sprinklers in 100 tower blocks. All the councils say they have been advised to carry out the works by their local fire brigades.

In Salford, the city council has borrowed £25m to fund works to remove potentially flammable cladding from nine tower blocks and councillors have accused the Government of "failing to live up to its responsibility".

Southwark has estimated their bill for installing sprinklers in its tower blocks could be as high as £100m, but that figure would be dwarfed by the bill for works at Birmingham City Council, the country's largest council landlord with up to 213 tower blocks.

Southwark council leader, Peter John, said: "Fire safety is a national issue and the financial burden for these works must not fall on already stretched councils." Southwark in south London is the location of Lakanal House, where six people died from a fire in a council owned tower block in July 2009.

HEFTY BILLS

Sharma reportedly told Croydon Council that the works they outlined are the council's responsibility as a landlord, while telling Wandsworth that any support given will not include general improvement and enhancements to buildings.

This is believed to be a reference to sprinklers.

The Government appears determined not to fund or allow additional borrowing for any improvements that go beyond essential safety works. The crunch appears to be over what is considered essential, with sprinklers proving to be a key issue. The Department for Communities and Local Government argues that an appropriate level of fire safety can be achieved without the need to retrofit sprinklers and fitting them is a matter for landlords to consider for themselves.

However, housing bosses have pointed to the words of Dany Cotton, the commissioner of the London Fire Brigade, who said retrofitting sprinklers in tower blocks "can't be optional, it can't be a nice-to-have, this is something that must happen".

Ms Cotton has called for all high-rise flats to be fitted with sprinklers. "I think Grenfell should be a turning point. I support retrofitting - for me where you can save one life then it's worth doing. If retrofitting isn't one of the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower inquiry then I will be so very disappointed."

In 2007, sprinklers were made compulsory in all new-build high rises over 30 metres in height but this requirement was not applied retroactively so did not apply to Grenfell Tower, which was built in 1974 and then subject to a major refurbishment which completed two years ago.

Chancellor is urged to scrap benefit cap as one million face homelessness

Leading housing charity Shelter has called on the Chancellor of the Exchequer to use this month's budget to scrap the cap on housing benefit and ease the upward pressures on homelessness.

Local government leaders have joined the charity in lobbying Philip Hammond for more assistance while at the same time criticising the Government's plans to fix the broken housing market as inadequate.

The Prime Minister promised to address the shortage of housing by spending an additional £2bn to pay for an extra 25,000 homes for social rent by 2021, although this promise has since been partially qualified by DCLG officials who say the money could also pay for newly built affordable rent and shared ownership homes.

Shelter said the extra money was welcome, but it was a tiny proportion of what was required and would not help one million private renters in immediate danger of homelessness as a result of the benefit cap. Communities Secretary Sajid Javid raised the possibility of £50bn being borrowed for new housing, but the Chancellor has publicly rejected this idea.

CRISIS

Polly Neate, Shelter's chief executive, said "The money put forward is only a fraction of what is needed. Building new homes takes time, and time is not on the side of the million private renters at risk of being tipped into homelessness by the freeze on housing benefit.

"Whether a struggling family or a young person in low-paid work, the freeze is stripping away the help people desperately need to pay their rent. Given the tide of despair faced by hard-up renters, we urge the Government to abandon the freeze on housing benefit or risk making more people homeless."

A survey by Shelter of 3,978 tenants found 79 per cent of those in work while also claiming housing benefit are struggling with their rent payments. More than half of these "working renters" on housing benefit are worried about losing their homes, while 71 per cent said it was harder to find a decent affordable home now than five years ago.

Shelter also pointed to the growing numbers of people in temporary accommodation because there is insufficient rental housing available and the growth in reports of landlords being unwilling to let to tenants on benefits, as further evidence of the problem.

The Local Government Association is concerned that rising rents have left many people on benefits with large shortfalls in their income, a view supported by a research from the Institute of Fiscal Studies. The LGA has called for the cap on housing benefit to be scrapped before 2020.

Corbyn pledges Labour to 'radical action' on social housing policy



Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has pledged to review social housing policy, promising a 'radical programme of action' to bring to next year's party conference with a guarantee to ensure every home is fit for human habitation if his party forms the next Government.

Corbyn told the Labour conference of plans for the reintroduction of rent controls as the current generation of tenants was now paying three times more than its grandparents. Other pledges included:

- A "use it or lose it" tax on undeveloped land held by developers; and
- Strengthened compulsory purchase powers.

"A decent home is a right for everyone – houses should be homes for the many, not speculative investments for the few," Corbyn said.

He praised the efforts of Karen Buck MP, whose private member's bill – the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Bill has passed its first reading and seeks to place greater responsibilities on landlords to provide accommodation that is both safe and comfortable to live in, while giving tenants greater rights of redress.

REVIEW

There was support for the Labour leader from David Orr, Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation, who said: "We welcome the announcement of a comprehensive review into

social housing policy and share the ambition to ensure everyone has a great quality home that they can afford.

"It is important that politicians from across the spectrum are committed to reconnecting with the purpose of social housing and with those who need genuinely affordable housing. Tenants are at the heart of social housing and the communities that housing associations invest in. It is absolutely right that their voices are heard.

"But while work on this review is underway, there are things we can and must do right now – like reallocating the unspent £1.1bn of Starter Homes investment in a new generation of high quality homes for social rent."

However, the Residential Landlords Association was critical of Corbyn's speech, with policy director David Smith describing the rent control proposals as an "attack" on private landlords, which would exacerbate current problems by reducing the supply and quality of homes as landlords are forced out of the market.

"Instead of attacking landlords who are helping to provide homes, it would be better to treat them as part of the solution and to supplement their efforts with a sustained and well thought out building programme overseen by government" he added. The RLA has been lobbying both Conservative and Labour to reverse recent budget tax changes on landlords and to encourage their growth as a means of tackling the country's housing shortage.

Councils fear surge in evictions as UC rollout accelerates

Council and housing association chiefs are expecting a big increase in evictions as the introduction of Universal Credit accelerates across the country over coming months.

Social landlords have warned they are under increasing pressure to start eviction proceedings against tenants amid a large rise in rent arrears attributed to the new benefit payment system. The initial six-week delay before payments are made to new claimants is cited as a particular problem.

The National Housing Federation and Chartered Institute of Housing have said UC presents a significant challenge to landlords as they try to prevent tenants from becoming homeless, while their debts and rent arrears grow at a fast pace. Increasing numbers of private landlords are reportedly refusing to accept tenants who rely on benefits to pay their rent.

Political arguments over the benefit system are attracting national headlines with Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn angrily clashing on the topic at Prime Ministers Questions. Conservative backbench MPs have urged the Cabinet to delay the roll-out of UC, while a review is undertaken into problems such as payment delays, financial penalties and administrative difficulties.

The architect of the new benefit system Iain Duncan-Smith has added to the Government's difficulties by saying that changes to UC were forced on him by the Treasury under George Osborne and these created many of the current processing and payment difficulties.

But Work and Pensions Secretary David Gauke has repeatedly rejected pleas for change saying that emergency loans are already helping half of all new claimants. Campaigners point out that these loans have to be quickly repaid and are themselves a source of problems. However, he accepted calls to change a paid-for telephone advice service into a free one. Critics say this does not go far enough and insist the initial waiting period is reduced.

FEARS

Universal Credit combines six different working age benefits into a single payment. This simplification is widely supported, but opponents complain the six-week delay before a payment is made combined with IT difficulties and how it is being administered have undone all its positive aspects. The system is due to be rolled out to 50 Job Centres a month from now on and critics fear that thousands of tenants could lose their homes as a result, as well as making vulnerable people reliant on food banks and loan sharks.

There are increasing reports that growing numbers of private landlords are refusing to accept tenants who are reliant on UC, even though many are in paid work, because of problems in getting

rent paid on time. This is putting further pressure on councils and housing associations.

The Resolution Foundation thinktank has warned that about 2.5 million low-income working households will be more than £1,000 a year worse off when they move on to Universal Credit.

Croydon Council in south London, which piloted Universal Credit's introduction, led calls for a pause in the rollout. It said it is spending £3m this year helping thousands of tenants in arrears to avoid eviction, and said the 50 per cent increase in support costs was unsustainable.

"The Government needs to slow down this full rollout process and consider lessons from pilot areas like ours or face a bad situation becoming much worse," said Alison Butler, the Council's deputy leader and cabinet member for homes, regeneration and planning.

In the first quarter of this year Croydon issued 959 special housing payments to help households maintain their tenancies, compared with 529 in the same period last year. Without this support, hundreds of tenants would have become homeless, it said.

EVICTIIONS

A leading opponent of the current system is Frank Field, the chair of the Commons work and pensions committee. He said: "If claimants fall foul of just one of the many confusing rules, punishing pay schedules or unreliable computer systems dotted around this assault course, we know the outcome in all too many cases is either grinding poverty or destitution." He has also linked UC to the growing use of food banks.

His committee called for evidence from landlords in areas where UC is already being delivered and Mr Field cited figures from Halton Housing Trust, a fifth of whose tenants are now on the full digital UC service. The Trust has reported a 100 per cent increase over the past year in the number of tenants it has started eviction proceedings against. Seven tenants owed at least £2,000 more in rent arrears than they had before going on to UC.

The work and pensions secretary David Gauke, has rejected calls to pause the rollout while design flaws are fixed. In his party conference speech he described universal credit as a step towards a Tory vision of the modern welfare state that was "compassionate, practical and aspirational". This has failed to stem the calls for change to the system and it has become one of the hot political topics of the year.

Social landlords say increases in the number of tenants going into arrears as universal credit is rolled out is financially unsustainable and

The National Housing Federation has said UC presents a significant challenge to landlords as they try to prevent tenants from becoming homeless, while their debts and rent arrears grow at a fast pace

affecting their ability to build new homes as operating surpluses diminish. Many landlords have increased the cash set aside to cover bad debts related to arrears. They say this highlights how different policies in the welfare and housing sectors are not being properly linked up and are actually working against each other.

CHALLENGES

Melanie Rees, head of policy at the Chartered Institute of Housing, has called for the Government to better align its welfare and housing policies. While welcoming the decision to unfreeze the Local Housing Allowance, she said Ministers should also reverse the benefit cap reduction and make changes to how universal credit is paid.

Sue Ramsden, head of policy at the National Housing Federation, said housing associations were working hard with tenants to sustain tenancies and minimise arrears. "Despite some assurances from the Department for Work and Pensions that the process to assess claims has improved, we still have real concerns around the impact of the long wait for families on very low incomes to receive the benefit," she said.

The Scottish government has used its devolved powers to introduce flexibilities to the way the new benefit is administered in an attempt to prevent rent arrears and make it easier for tenants to cope with the financial shock of the switch.

In future Scottish tenants moving onto UC will be able to choose to be paid fortnightly and request that the housing benefit element is paid directly to their landlord. Many tenants used to weekly or fortnightly income, have struggled to budget using a system that pays people on a monthly basis.

£2 billion boost for affordable housing & 5 year deal for social rents

The Government has set out plans for increased investment in new council and housing association homes, while also confirming inflation busting rent increases for the sector.

With much focus given to housing during the party conference season, the Government sought to take the initiative with several high profile announcements, including:

- Funding for affordable homes being increased by a further £2 billion to more than £9 billion;
- Increases to social housing rents at upto one per cent above the Consumer Price Index (CPI) will be allowed from 2020; and
- A Green Paper to focus on the future purpose and use of social housing will be launched.

Although the additional funding was welcomed across the sector, it soon became clear that social landlords will have to bid for the funding and as Ministers look to maximise output, the money will probably be used for all types of new housing – shared ownership, affordable rent and social rent.

There was however criticism that the Government failed to make an announcement on Right to Buy for HA tenants or the enforced sale of high value council homes. Similarly it was unwilling to pause the planned roll-out of Universal Credit, which even its own backbenchers appear critical of.

SOCIAL HOMES

The numbers of new homes delivered will be determined on the type and location of housing. With a typical £80,000 subsidy, a DCLG press release stated the £2bn investment could supply around 25,000 more homes at rents affordable for local people.

Under the new rents proposal set out, increases to social housing rents will be limited to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus one per cent for five years from 2020. Ministers said this will give social tenants, councils and housing associations the security and certainty they need, while also hoping it will encourage more housebuilding.

When the former chancellor, George Osborne, introduced the rent cutting policy up to 2020 it



resulted in development programmes being slashed, with plans for tens of thousands of new homes scrapped, in a short-term measure to reduce the housing benefit bill. Ironically the savings have been dwarfed by increases in private sector rents and the sums being paid to rogue landlords.

The Government's affordable housing policy has until now primarily supported 'affordable rent' – rents of up to 80 per cent of local market level – and low-cost home ownership. This announcement now extends support for 'social rent' – which are lower rents, set according to national guidelines.

The announcement on rent policy beyond 2020 will be reflected in a direction to the Social Housing Regulator, which the Government will consult on next year.

FURTHER WORK

Chartered Institute of Housing chief executive Terrie Alafat CBE welcomed the announcements on extra money and rents. "As we have been saying for some time, social rents, which are significantly cheaper than market rents, are the

only truly affordable option for many people on lower incomes, so the recognition that we need more of these homes is a vital step forward.

"It's also encouraging to hear that Theresa May agrees councils have a central role to play in building the homes we need at prices people can afford. The details of exactly how these new homes will be funded and just how many will be for the lowest social rents will be crucial."

Ms Alafat pointed out there was a lot of room to be made up. "The number of homes for social rent funded by the government collapsed from 36,000 to just over 1,000 between 2010/11 and 2016/17. Reversing this trend will be a significant task – how much of this new funding will be dedicated to building these kinds of homes?"

Her head of policy at the CIH, Melanie Rees remained cautious, highlighting the disparity between support for private market housing and the social rented sector. "Though £2bn is a good amount of money, our recent analysis showed that there was £40bn earmarked for housing until 2021 and of that just 21 per cent was directed towards affordable housing. It's clear straight away then that £2bn will not exactly even that balance."

Renters pay £54bn to private landlords in buy-to-let boom

Rent paid to private landlords is more than double the amount of mortgage interest paid to banks by homeowners, as the number of people living in the rental sector continues to grow.

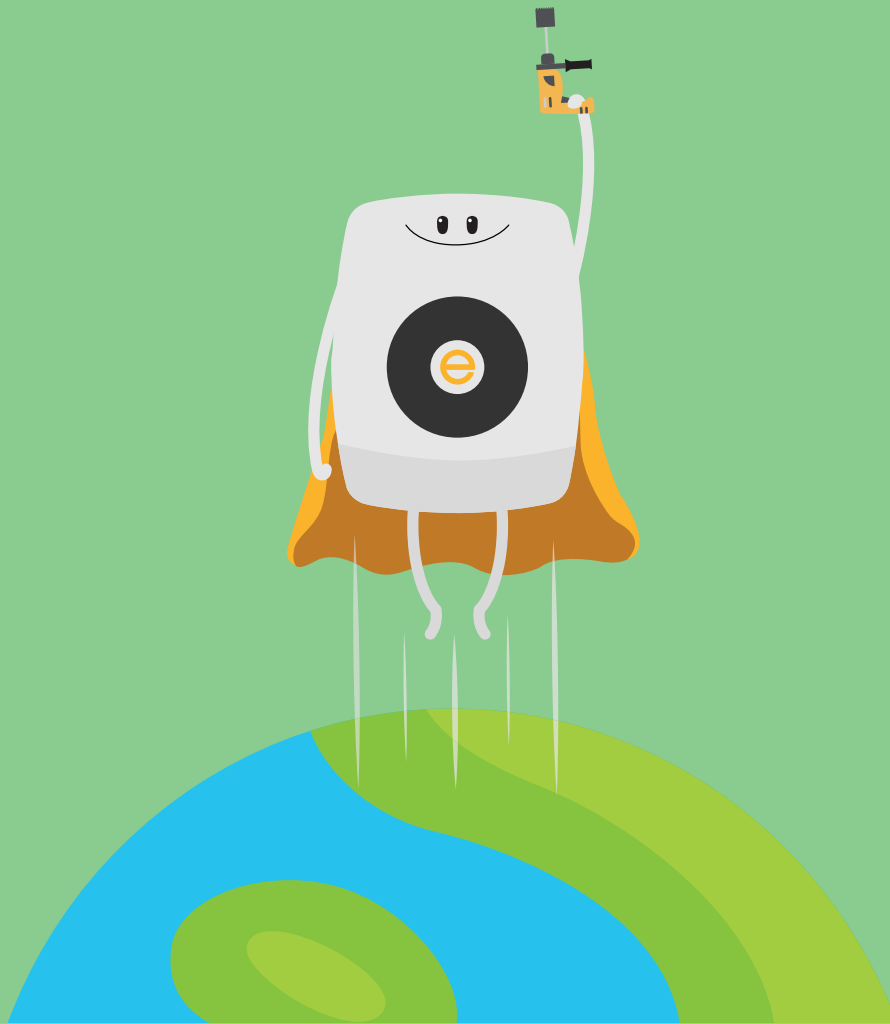
Private tenants paid about £54 billion in rent to their landlords in the 12 months to June, according to figures published by the estate agency group Savills. Younger people contributed around

£24bn of the total.

Mortgage rates have stood at historically low levels since the banking crash of 2008/09, with the amount of interest paid by home owners to banks and other lenders falling to £26.5bn in the same period. Home ownership has fallen to its lowest level for a generation, while sizeable deposits are difficult for first time buyers to raise.

Lucian Cook, head of residential research at Savills, said that despite low interest rates, it has become increasingly difficult for people to save for a deposit due to slow wage growth and rising house prices. "Fewer people have been able to benefit from the low mortgage rates and we know that people are renting longer into later stages of life," said Mr Cook

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Universal Credit benefits system is 'failing' people

The roll out of Universal Credit should be put on hold as the benefit payment system is "failing" people, the charity Citizens Advice has claimed. A pause will allow the system's current problems with processing and payment delays to be addressed before hundreds of thousands of new claimants are enrolled.

Universal Credit represents the biggest change to the welfare system since its inception according to the CAB. By 2022, over 7 million families will be in receipt of this benefit - nearly 3 in 10 (28 per cent) of all working-age households. Over half the households are expected to include children.

The charity says it supports the aims of UC to simplify the benefits system, to make transitions into work easier and make every hour of work pay. However, it claims that some aspects of UC risk causing or exacerbating personal debt problems. With UC roll-out due to accelerate significantly from this Autumn, it fears that the current problems will become more widespread leading to higher levels of personal debt, a growth in homelessness and an increase in mental health issues.

Evidence collected by the CAB shows that UC clients are more likely to have debt problems than those on legacy benefits.

- A quarter (26 per cent) of the people helped with UC by the CAB also needed help with

debt, compared to 19 per cent for legacy benefits;

- They are also struggling to pay off their debts. More than 2 in 5 (41 per cent) of debt clients on UC have no spare income to pay creditors, compared to a third (33 per cent) on legacy benefits;
- 57 per cent of claimants are having to borrow money while waiting for their first UC payment, while 39 per cent are waiting on the first payment for longer than the six weeks target.

STRUGGLES

Claimants are struggling with the applications process, the charity said, with 30 per cent of respondents having to call the Universal Credit helpline more than 10 times and some waiting more than 30 minutes to get through.

"Universal Credit is already failing too many people, pushing them into debt and leaving them without the means to make ends meet," said Gillian Guy, chief executive of Citizens Advice. "The Government needs to pause plans to accelerate the roll-out of full-service Universal Credit this autumn and devote the time and resource needed to tackle the key problems which mean the system is not working."

The charity says measures such as removing the seven-day waiting period at the start of a claim,

introducing an online system for booking appointments and making the helpline free of charge should be introduced before the large scale roll-out to existing benefit claimants.

ARREARS

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) responded by saying the study did not reflect the experiences of the 500,000 people already claiming UC, as it only was based on a survey of 792 Citizens Advice clients.

"The vast majority of claimants have told us they are satisfied with Universal Credit. We are rolling out Universal Credit in a gradual, safe and secure way, and in the rare cases where issues arise, we work closely with local authorities and landlords to support people when they need it," a spokesperson for the DWP said.

"Universal Credit is designed to mirror the way many people in work are paid, and we have budgeting advice and benefit advances available for anyone who needs extra help."

But social landlords have been reporting that increasing numbers of tenants in receipt of Universal Credit have fallen into rent arrears and the new system is putting "vulnerable residents at risk of destitution and homelessness". MPs from all parties are joining the voices calling for a pause and a re-think.

Councils warn that nation faces an older persons' homelessness 'time bomb'

The nation is facing a "ticking time bomb" in the number of homeless older people after official figures showed an alarming rise of 130 per cent since its lowest point eight years ago, councils have warned.

The Local Government Association says that homelessness among older people is a growing hidden phenomenon that needs greater understanding. Figures show that between April and June this year, councils accepted 620 people aged over 60 as homeless - at a rate of nearly 10 a day. This is up from the 270 accepted between October and December 2009, which was the lowest number since records began in 2005.

The LGA, which represents more than 370 councils in England and Wales, is warning that based on existing trends, this is set to double by 2025.

Older homeless people are presenting to councils with a range of complex health conditions. Physical and mental health problems, alcohol abuse and gambling problems are contributory factors in later life homelessness, along with the death of a close relative, relationship breakdown, accommodation being

sold or needing repair and rent arrears.

Councils often cite rapidly increasing rents and stagnating household incomes as key factors driving the increase. Older people who experience homelessness are also more likely to suffer from mental illness or depression, adding to pressures on health and care services.

UNDERSTANDING

The LGA's new report *The impact of homelessness on health*, launched at its National Children and Adult Services Conference, says the rising number of older homeless will create significant extra pressures for councils, such as in providing housing and social care.

While there is an understanding of the link between homelessness and health for young people, the report says little is known about those experiencing homelessness later in life. It contains information and ideas for local authorities to improve health and wellbeing in their local populations.

The LGA is calling for Government to address the undersupply in specialist housing for older people, and changes in the implementation of

welfare reforms to reduce the risk of homelessness. Councils are being given additional responsibilities next year to support those at risk of becoming homeless, but the LGA says councils need to be able to borrow to invest in new housing to increase supply, boost home ownership and reduce homelessness.

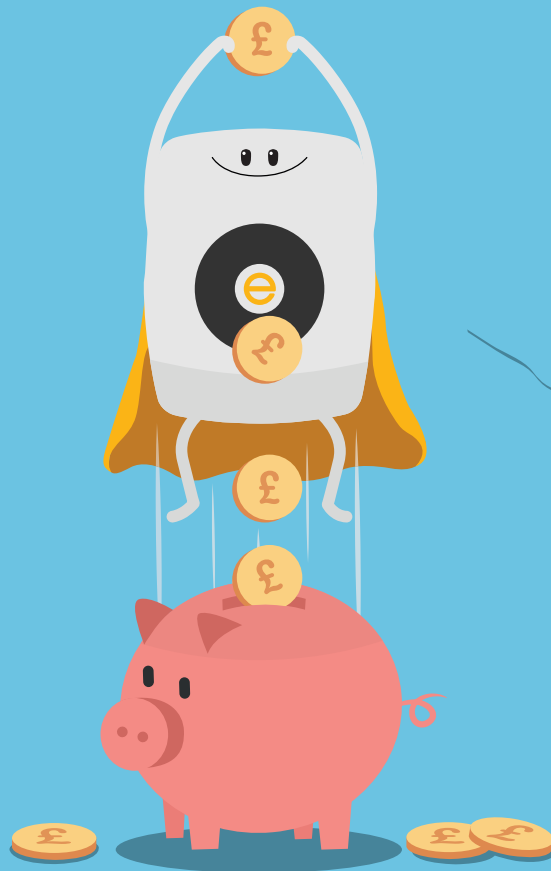
Clr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said:

"Traditionally homelessness is associated with young people and it is a tragic fact that a person suffering homelessness lives to an average age of only 47. But we are facing a ticking time bomb in older homelessness, with an alarming rise in the number of older people becoming homeless.

"While the actual numbers are relatively low, at the current rate, this will spiral in just a few years. Homelessness is not just a housing issue. Homelessness and ill-health are intrinsically linked, and this is especially evident in elderly people. For example, older people experiencing homelessness are more likely to suffer from depression or dementia, which has wider implications for social care and health services.

"Councils want to end homelessness by preventing it happening in the first place, we need government to allow councils to build affordable homes and to adapt welfare reforms to ensure housing remains affordable for low-income families."

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Government offers 'greater protection' for private tenants

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has revealed plans to give private sector tenants a range of new rights and protections – including tenancies of at least 12 months duration.

The measures would force all landlords to join an ombudsman redress scheme, as well as giving tenants more power to challenge rip-off fees and poor treatment.

The Government also wants to bring in new laws requiring all letting agents to be registered, ending the current rules that allow people to operate in the role without any qualifications or professional oversight.

The new rights could be protected by a newly established housing court, as the Communities Secretary, indicated he plans to work with the judiciary to establish a specialist housing court, partly based on suggestions from the Residential Landlords Association.

RLA policy director, David Smith, said: "We called for housing courts to speed up and improve access to justice for good tenants and landlords. This is a welcome sign the Government is ready to listen to practical proposals to improve the working of the sector."

INCENTIVES

Tax incentives are expected to be included in the Budget to ensure landlords offer tenancies of at least 12 months, providing greater security for tenants. This comes after Jeremy Corbyn used his conference speech at Brighton in October to promise a future Labour government would bring about a renting revolution, including the use of rent controls.

Javid told delegates at the Tory Conference: "For too long, tenants have felt unable to resolve the issues they've faced, be it insecure tenure, unfair letting agents' fees or poor treatment by their landlord with little to no means of redress. We're going to change that.

"We will insist that all landlords are part of a redress scheme and we will regulate letting agents

who want to operate. Everyone has a right to feel safe and secure in their own homes and we will make sure they do."

He also said that 'Tory failures' over housing were putting Labour within reach of Number 10. He criticised his party's previous housebuilding record, which he said was a "national outrage" for young people, and declared war on "Nimbys" who, he said, "will never accept development".

Javid told the conference that, for his generation: "Home ownership was something that, if you worked hard enough, you could afford. Now, in every high street, you see young people with their faces pressed against an estate agent's window, trying, and failing, to find a home they can afford. The opportunity my generation took for granted now seems lost to many. This is a national outrage.

PLANNING REFORM

"For decades, our planning system has failed to plan for the number of homes we need. There has been too much control given to those who will never accept development," he added. However, before the last general election he made similar promises about tackling volume builders and forcing them to speed up construction of new houses or to hand sites over to smaller builders.

The House Builders Association (HBA), the house building division of the National Federation of Builders (NFB), doubts that the additional funds will have a significant impact in solving the housing crisis.

Rico Wojtulewicz, policy advisor for the HBA, said: "More money for new council homes is good, but the Government is only scratching the surface of the problem. Removing the borrowing cap on local authorities would certainly enable them to invest more in their local communities, but only radical planning reform will allow us to tackle the current housing crisis.

"The current planning process remains a considerable barrier to many house builders and developers and we can only assume councils will



"For decades, our planning system has failed to plan for the number of homes we need. There has been too much control given to those who will never accept development,"

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid

fall foul of the same barriers. Overhauling the planning system is vital to building more homes and ultimately solving the housing crisis."

Right to Buy sales in decline

Sales of council homes have fallen in recent months to their lowest level for four years, the latest Government figures reveal. In the same period starts on new houses rose above last year's figure but they still lag behind sales.

There were 2,601 homes sold between April and June this year, a 23 per cent drop from the 3,382

sold in the same three months in 2016. However, a number of councils with large numbers of homes did not report their sales figures. The Department for Communities and Local Government estimated these councils had around 350 sales between them taking the total sold to 2,951 – a 13 per cent drop on last year.

Councils have now sold a total of 57,521 homes since the maximum discounts available to tenants was increased to £100,000 by David Cameron in 2012. Annual sales were 5,944 in 2012/13, but had risen to 13,164 in 2016/17 before the recent fall.

In the same quarter, councils started building 903 replacement homes, a 27 per cent increase on the 714 homes started in the same three months last year, but a decrease on the last three quarters. Annual starts were just 581 in 2012/13 but had reached 4,624 last year.

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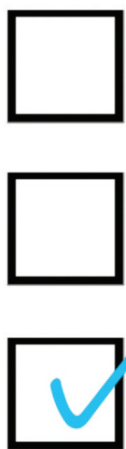
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Sector scorecard pilot reveals size is not important



Links between housing association size and their efficiency do not exist according to results from the new sector scorecard, which has completed a pilot exercise using a new set of metrics.

More than 300 landlords took part in the pilot exercise, which is being eagerly followed by politicians and officials at the Homes & Communities Agency and the Department for Communities and Local Government. If they were hoping to see strong links between efficiency and anything else, then they are likely to have been disappointed.

The participants manage around 2.4 million homes, accounting for more than 80 per cent of the HA sector. They also included organisations of all shapes and sizes, from the very small to the largest. But the pilot found no strong correlation between landlord size and their efficiency, perhaps supporting the case for continuing diversity across the sector.

The scorecard exercise uses 15 metrics including such factors as occupancy rates, operating margins and the number of homes developed. These were agreed before the Grenfell Tower fire which has caused a rethink about the purpose and direction of social housing, so it is possible the metrics will be refined to include more community based and social value measures.

At the same time, the HCA has launched a consultation exercise on changes to how it expects value for money to be measured, used and reported on from April 2018. The deadline for responding to the consultation is 20 December and it will be interesting to see how the vfm debate is influenced by the mixed results from the scorecard pilot and questions

over future direction. The HCA was clearly expecting all social landlords to use the 15 common metrics, plus their own in on-going monitoring work, but the results from the pilot may require a further rethink.

VARIETY

Mark Henderson, chief executive of Home Group, who has led on the development of the sector scorecard, said the first tranche of results from the pilot had provided “mixed results”.

“Nobody performs above average on all indicators and nobody is below average on all indicators, and nobody is bang on in all indicators. That kind of spread reflects the nature of the activities of our organisations because we are different. It certainly hasn’t shown that it’s skewed between any particular type or size of organisation.”

He added: “What it does show is that nobody’s perfect and that we always have room for improvement. As we move the bar up we must push harder in our own organisations.”

Generally there was a high satisfaction rate among tenants, with more than eight out of 10 pleased with the service their landlord provides. Occupancy rates for homes were very high at 99.5 per cent, while spending on routine repairs was less than planned works and HAs of all sizes are building homes.

Mr Henderson said: “Both big and small associations are developing new homes at ever-increasing rates and are pushing the boundaries in terms of their ability to build out.”

Benefit cuts leave the poor vulnerable to rent rises

Households on low incomes are being left particularly exposed to rent increases as housing costs eat up a growing proportion of their money, a thinktank has said.

Analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) found that “substantial” cuts to housing benefit which now total £3bn a year has led to rental payments using up an average of 28 per cent of the non-housing benefit income of low-income private renters – up from 21 per cent in the mid-1990s.

The IFS said that across Britain the proportion of people living in private rented accommodation had more than doubled in recent decades, from eight per cent in the mid-1990s to 19 per cent in the mid-2010s, while among 25- to 34-year-olds the proportion had trebled from 12 to 37 per cent. The benefit cuts allied with rent increases have hit tenants in London the hardest.

It said that over the same period, average private rents had risen by 33 per cent in real terms. The research, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, found that tenants on lower incomes tend to spend greater fractions of their income on rent, even after accounting for the support they received through housing benefit. Their report called ‘The cost of housing for low-income renters’ is available on the IFS website.

Agnes Norris Keiller, a Research Economist at IFS and an author of the report, said: “Wider problems in the housing market are pushing up housing costs and increasing the size of the rented sector. The current approach effectively places most of the risk of further rises in costs onto low-income tenants, and little on the housing benefit bill. While containing the cost to taxpayers, it leaves housing benefit vulnerable to becoming increasingly irrelevant with respect to its purpose – maintaining the affordability of adequate housing for those on low incomes.”

The lowest-income fifth spend an average of 35 per cent of their non-housing benefit income to pay for the part of rent not covered by housing benefit, compared with 19 per cent for the highest-income fifth.

The IFS said about 1.9 million privately renting households containing 4.8 million people were entitled to less housing benefit – an average of £24 per household a week – than they would have been without cuts introduced since 2011.

It said changes had also cut the entitlements of 600,000 social-renting households containing 1.3 million people by an average of £19 per household per week. Housing benefit entitlements were forecast to fall further behind rents in the coming years, the IFS said.

These cuts are estimated to impact on another 400,000 people, split evenly across the private and social rented sectors. While the main focus is on the impact on families, the report highlights that working age households without children are also paying very large parts of their income in rent.

Midlands association evicted tenants illegally

Tenants of a large West Midlands housing association may have been forced to sleep rough after they were evicted with very little notice, the Homes and Communities Agency has disclosed.

WM Housing may have caused “serious detriment” by evicting tenants either with no notice or only a week’s notice, the regulator concluded. The HCA said WM Housing breached the tenancy standard by not giving licensees in one of its temporary housing schemes the legally required 28 days’ notice before an eviction. This meant a small number could have been forced to sleep rough.

WM provides over 30,000 homes across Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Birmingham, Coventry and the wider West Midlands area. It has grown incrementally through a series of mergers and acquisitions over the last six years. It comprises a mix of traditional and stock transfer organisations.

During the course of an in-depth assessment visit WM Housing reported to the regulator that for up to two years a “large number” of tenants in a supported housing scheme in Coventry were not given 28 days’ notice before their eviction. In some cases tenants had been given no notice at all, others received only seven days notice meaning they had no time to find alternative accommodation. The issue was identified after a change in management at the temporary housing scheme.

The regulator concluded the landlord needed to improve aspects of its governance arrangements. It said: “Improvements are required to WM’s control framework to ensure that key controls relating to higher risk activities are operating as intended, in line with established policies and procedures, and with appropriate leadership oversight.” The regulator’s assessment of WM’s financial viability was unchanged at the top rating of V1.

Kevin Rodgers, group chief executive said: “We are very sorry that this error was not identified before the notices were issued at the Gateway. While in every case the individual residents had broken the terms of their licence we fully recognise we failed to give people the required notice. We take our responsibilities seriously and we will be working with those who were affected to put things right. I also want to reassure our residents that this was an isolated incident in one particular scheme.”

Consultation on smoke and fire alarms launched

The Scottish Government has launched a consultation on standards for smoke and fire alarms, with an aim to introduce consistently tough standards across the sector regardless of tenure or housing type.

The Scottish Government have said that they consider standards to be at their highest in the Private Rented Sector (PRS). Therefore, they would like to use current regulations for smoke and fire alarms within the PRS as a basis to bring standards across other types of housing up to that level.

The consultation has been brought forward, due to the higher priority being given to fire safety across the UK since the Grenfell tragedy in June, and much of the focus of the consultation is around the use of smoke and fire alarms in flats and high rise buildings. The closing date for responses is 1 December 2017.

The Common Housing Quality Standard Forum,

established in 2015, noted that the scope of the existing standards for social and private rented housing are linked to specific types of tenancy and therefore it is possible that some housing falls between the gaps and is not covered by either standard.

To extend standards, the following options are given in the consultation document:

- Applying a new standard to social rented housing;
- Applying a standard to flats, irrespective of tenure;
- Applying a standard to flats in high-rise buildings, irrespective of tenure; and
- Applying a standard to all housing, irrespective of tenure.

The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) could also be amended to include a more demanding standard for fire and smoke alarms in place of the existing element 44, which says there must be at least one smoke detector present in the property.

The Scottish Government recognises that changes made to the standard for social housing could have a much bigger impact on some landlords than others, depending on previous property improvements.

A year on lower benefit cap is pushing thousands into poverty says CIH

A year since its introduction the cap on welfare benefits is pushing thousands of people into poverty and putting them at risk of homelessness, according to the Chartered Institute of Housing.

Figures released earlier this month show that at August 2017 more than 68,000 families were being affected by the lower benefit cap. Nearly a third of these families are losing between £50 and £100 a week as a result. The lower cap came into effect on 7 November 2016.

In a series of interviews which the CIH conducted with households affected by the cap, half said they had gone without food, fuel or were otherwise in debt as a result and a third said they had been forced to use food banks.

The cap reduced the total amount any family can receive in benefits from £26,000 to £23,000 in London and £20,000 outside of the capital, leaving families with significant shortfalls between the benefits they get and the cost of their housing. Since the initial benefit cap was introduced in 2013, an estimated 160,000 families have had their benefits capped.

Last year CIH warned the cap would hit families across the social rented and private rented sectors with hundreds of thousands of children affected, now it is calling on the Government to use the budget to scrap the lower cap.

STRUGGLES

CIH chief executive, Terrie Alafat CBE, said: “One year after the introduction of the lower benefit cap

its worrying effects are very much apparent. As a result thousands of families face a daily struggle to live – in some cases being forced to go without food or heating so that they can pay for their housing, in many others being forced into arrears and put at risk of homelessness.

“The government says the aim of the cap is to get people into work, but many of the families who have been capped receive benefits which recognise they are not able to work and the concern is that many more families could be a redundancy or period of ill health away from being in this situation.

“The government has made a number of commitments in recent weeks to build new homes and take other crucial steps to solve our housing crisis, but this is an example of a welfare policy which seriously undermines that commitment because it makes housing virtually unaffordable to a significant number of people. The government should use the budget to scrap the lower benefit cap.”

CIH conducted 18 interviews with households affected by the benefit cap. Half of those households revealed they have gone without food, fuel or were otherwise in serious debt as a result of the cap.

The Government’s figures show that of the 68,000 households capped 71 per cent are single parents, 77 per cent of those households have a child under five and 35 per cent have a child under two. Half of the families affected are on income support and 15 per cent are on Employment and Support Allowance.

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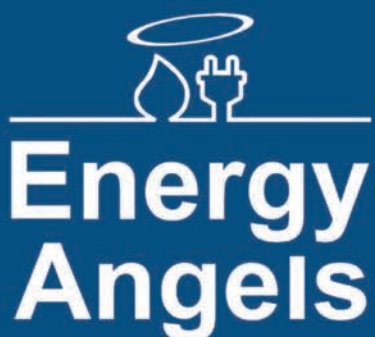
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Statistical return masks a year of challenges for housing associations

A year of momentous challenges for social housing landlords is barely reflected in the annual statistical returns made to their regulator, which looks more like a modest and unexciting school report.

The Homes & Communities Agency has published a composite report based on the data returns from all private registered providers of social housing in England.

This shows only slight changes in total stock numbers, despite the pressures on associations to deliver the annual rent cut while supporting their tenants coping with welfare benefit reductions and the roll-out of Universal Credit. However, an increasing proportion of the sector's housing is now owned by a small group of large landlords.

The highest numbers of housing association homes are to be found in the north west of England (514,044 homes) and London (453,472 homes), which combined represents just over 36 per cent of the national HA stock.

KEY POINTS

Private registered providers of social housing (PRPs) owned 2,781,305 homes / bedspaces at 31 March 2017, an increase of 0.7 per cent on the total for 2016 and the smallest rise in stock numbers since 2014.

The slow rate of growth is partly explained by the absence of any transfer activity - this being the first year since 2014 without a new stock transfer from local authorities taking place.

Large PRPs built 36,438 new homes in 2016/17. This included 23,907 social rental properties, down 14.2 per cent from 27,855 in 2015/16, but the figures do not include any non-social housing properties (such as outright sales) built by unregistered entities within HA groups.

The percentage of vacant homes is falling with the largest associations reporting that 1.1 per cent of their homes were vacant as of 31 March 2017, down from 1.2 per cent in 2016 and 1.4 per cent in 2015. Meanwhile, the proportion of homes vacant and available for letting dropped from 0.8 per cent in 2015 to 0.6 per cent in 2016/17.

The average rent for general needs housing owned by PRPs with more than 1,000 homes / bedspaces was £96.61 per week, representing a decrease of 1.3 per cent since 2016, reflecting policy changes introduced by the Welfare Reform and Work Act (2016).

The number of PRPs completing the Statistical Data Return dropped slightly from 1,490 providers in 2016 to 1,432 providers in 2017, mostly as a result of deregistrations and mergers.

Five providers owned more than 50,000 properties each in 2017. Combined, these five providers alone account for over 10 per cent of all social housing stock within the sector (owning 288,048 units between them).

The number of for-profit providers increased during the year from 26 to 31, and they now own 873 homes. While this is a 56 per cent increase on

the homes owned the previous year, it remains a very small fraction of the 2.8 million homes owned by providers overall.

RISK BASED

The regulator collects data on stock type, size, rent and location of social housing stock at 31 March each year, and data on sales and acquisitions made between 1 April and 31 March. The information is used to inform its risk-based and proportionate approach to regulation and to help a range of stakeholders better understand the housing association market. The combined statistical data return report is available to view and download from the Gov.uk website.

Fiona MacGregor, Executive Director of Regulation at the HCA, said: "The publication of the data return shows that the housing association sector has continued to increase the number of homes that it owns and manages for the benefit of social housing tenants throughout England, at the same time as implementing the requirements of the Welfare Reform and Work Act."

The figures reported in the 2017 Return show that, across the sector, rents have fallen in line with the terms of the Act. If statistical data raises concerns that individual providers may not be setting rents in line with the relevant standards and legislation, the HCA will seek assurance from the landlords concerned and if necessary will reflect this in published governance judgements.

CityWest Homes appoints new maintenance contractors

CityWest Homes have appointed four new organisations to provide repairs and maintenance services to their 21,000 properties in Westminster for the next 10 years.

The five new long-term contracts have a total value of £219 million and they replace the previous 11 repair contracts which expired over

the course of the summer. Residents are being offered a quicker and more efficient service through improved communications about repairs by text alerts and more specific appointment slots.

Morgan Sindall Property Services have taken over the management of the general repairs and voids contract, as well as responsibility for

domestic heating. Oakray will deal with electrical services, Precision Lifts have the lifts contract and GEM will be responsible for mechanical services.

Jim Paterson Property Services Director at CityWest Homes said: "Each of the new contractors were selected because they provided impressive proposals and in some cases not only met but exceeded the criteria set out in the tender. We are enjoying working with our new partners and are looking forward to developing long term relationships with them in order to offer an improved service for our residents."

Lincs council approves HA merger plan

North East Lincolnshire Council has given the go-ahead for a merger between two housing associations to create a 12,700-home landlord. The merger of Shoreline Housing Partnership and Boston Mayflower could complete by the end of

the year.

Shoreline took on the council's housing stock in 2005, and currently owns and manages almost 8,000 such homes across north-east Lincolnshire. Boston Mayflower, was formed in

1999 and owns almost 5,000 homes in the south of the county.

Papers for the council's cabinet showed just 2.2 per cent of tenants responded to a consultation exercise on the merger plans. This resulted in a miserly 1.4 per cent of tenants in favour of the merger, with 0.5 per cent against and 0.2 per cent neutral.

Gentoo chief executive resigns

The chief executive of Sunderland based Gentoo, John Craggs, left the 29,000 home association just before the Homes and Communities Agency downgraded it to a non-compliant rating for governance failings.

Sunderland's largest housing association was judged non-compliant due to a failure "at the most basic level" relating to a number of payoffs to outgoing senior executives.

The HCA said that Gentoo "exercised weak governance and internal control when agreeing executive contracts and severance payments to outgoing executives. In doing so, the board has failed to safeguard its reputation, and that of the sector," the regulator said.

In issuing a strong rebuke to the landlord, the HCA said: "The board failed to ensure adequate control and scrutiny in discharging its responsibilities. It lacked effective oversight and an appreciation of risk in discharging its responsibilities in line with its own governing documents and scheme of delegation. It failed to ensure that governance arrangements were operating at the most basic level."

The HCA said Gentoo's board and remuneration committee "lacked clarity and transparency" with regard to executive pay and severance arrangements and proposals "were not diligently scrutinised and challenged" as a result.

The association's new chairman Keith Loraine said the Gentoo board had self reported the issue to the regulator and was bitterly disappointed by the downgrade. "We are now seeking further legal advice about the possibility of obtaining redress or recovery. Such payments are not in keeping with the group's ethics as a responsible business, and it will not happen again."

The regulator said the organisation "has so far responded positively and is working with the regulator to agree a plan to resolve the issues". It warned that an increased reliance on sales in its business plan may affect its future financial viability, adding that "forecast margins appear optimistic in the light of recent performance". It said the discovery of a "substantial number of properties" which are not compliant with the Decent Homes Standard would add costs to the organisation's costs making it more vulnerable to risks.



Luminus selects merger partner

Huntingdon-based housing association Luminus is to merge with Places for People in a move it hopes will bring an end to a turbulent year which saw it downgraded by the regulator and its long standing chief executive leave abruptly.

The association was downgraded for failings in its governance by the HCA after it was revealed more than 1,000 homes had not had a valid gas safety certificate for up to two years. It then lost its chief executive Chan Abraham who left the association on the same day he resigned.

The 7,300-home association was downgraded to a non-compliant G3 for governance for placing its

tenants at risk of "serious detriment". It was found to have breached the Home standard.

The board failed to notify the HCA of the gas servicing issue despite this being a well-publicised area of concern for the regulator. When downgrading the association, the HCA was critical of the board saying it "did not seek to understand the root causes of the failure."

A recently published value for money statement revealed an audit of health and safety by consultancy Altair showed "non-compliance with numerous elements of cyclical servicing in relation to health and safety". These are believed to have included electrical safety failings.

Fire safety breaches included in rogue landlord database

Breaches of fire safety by private landlords will be included in the Mayor of London's new database of rogue landlords. Entries will be based on legal cases brought against landlords by either the London Fire Brigade or a local authority.

Caroline Pidgeon, a Liberal Democrat member of the London Assembly, said: "I welcome

the creation of a London Rogue Landlords database to help private tenants. It is long overdue that tenants and prospective tenants can find out about landlords. Such information will be vital to allow people to find a safe and secure home and avoid the exploitation from rogue landlords.

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Views sought on crackdown of unfair managing agents

The Government has launched a consultation on proposals to bring in regulation of property managers and letting agents affecting millions of leaseholders, private sector tenants and their landlords.

With over 4.2 million leasehold homes in the country and service charges of between £2.5bn and £3.5bn a year, the Communities Secretary Sajid Javid says the Government wants to fix problems in the property management industry, drive down costs and protect consumers from the small minority of rogue agents who rip them off and provide a shoddy service.

As part of this call for evidence, the Government is seeking views on:

- whether regulatory overhaul of the sector is needed;
- measures to protect consumers from unfair costs and overpriced service charges; and
- ways to place more power in the hands of consumers by giving leaseholders more say over their agent.

It wants to know if a new independent regulatory body is needed, if separate bodies should be established for leasehold and private rented management, and letting agents and whether they must be qualified and regulated in order to operate.

The sector is already partly self regulated - through professional bodies such as the Association of Residential Managing Agents (ARMA), ARLA PropertyMark and the National Approved Letting Scheme (NALS), who all have a code of conduct - while other property agents operate outside of any system. For instance ARLA have demanded that estate agents should be included in any new system.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said: "This is supposed to be the age of the empowered consumer - yet in property management, we're still living in the past. We are showing our determination to give power back to consumers so they have the service they expect and deserve, as part of my drive to deliver transparency and fairness for the growing number of renters and leaseholders.

"Our proposed changes to regulate the industry will give landlords, renters and leaseholders the confidence they need to know that their agents must comply with the rules," he added.

For Labour John Healey said the measures did not go nearly far enough. "In the face of the country's housing crisis, this is a truly feeble announcement," he said. "It isn't even a commitment to act, it's a commitment to ask some questions."

Guidance on homelessness prevention finally issued

The long overdue guidance to councils on how they should implement the Homelessness Reduction Act has finally been published by the Government, along with news of some extra grants for homelessness prevention.

The guidance is subject to an eight-week consultation period, with councils encouraged to suggest improvements where they can. The act is due to come into force in April 2018. It requires councils to provide services to anyone at risk of becoming homeless.

The Government has also announced some additional funding - £11.7m is added to the amount available for local authorities facing new burdens, bringing the total up to £72.7m over two years, while £3m will help councils to upgrade their data systems to take into account the new requirements.

Homeless cases have increased sharply in recent years with the Chartered Institute of Housing branding the figures a "national disgrace". Some 14,400 households were accepted as homeless between April and June, a slight decrease since last year but a 53 per cent rise since 2009.

There were 78,180 households living in temporary accommodation, a seven per cent increase on last year. This included 335 households who were victims of the Grenfell Tower fire and had to move into hotel rooms. Of the households in temporary accommodation, 78 per cent included children and/or a pregnant woman.

COMPLEX

Sir Steve Bullock, executive member for housing at London Councils and mayor of Lewisham, wrote to the Government back in September saying councils were still waiting on "much delayed information".

The guidance includes advice to councils on how to form a new homelessness strategy as required under the act. It advises local authorities to collaborate across boundaries and produce sub-regional homelessness strategies, where appropriate. It also covers issues relating to homeless survivors of domestic abuse, how to determine which homeless people are in 'priority need' and how to deal with people leaving care facilities.

Marcus Jones, the minister with responsibility for homelessness, said: "Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping is a complex issue with no single solution, but this government is determined to help the most vulnerable in society.

"Local authorities play a vital role in implementing the act. Therefore the guidance and government funding will support them in making sure people will get the help they need earlier to prevent them becoming homeless in the first place."

New tenancy agreements for Scotland

A new tenancy agreement for the Private Rented Sector comes in to force in Scotland from the beginning of December. Changes have been made to make tenancy agreements more flexible, easier to understand for landlords and their tenants, as well as increased clarity and security for both sides.

The changes to the private sector tenancy will apply to all new tenancies beginning on or after 1 December 2017. The new tenancy rules coming in to force include:

- Tight restrictions for landlords on ending a lease - they will no longer be permitted to serve notice on a tenant without a specific cause;

- Rent increases only permitted a maximum of once a year;
- A ban on setting a duration for the lease or an end date;
- A set of mandatory and optional clauses;
- Changes to pre-tenancy information and documentation which landlords must provide to tenants; and
- New appeal and arbitration procedures.

The Scottish Association of Landlords has been working with the Holyrood government to organise various events to publicise the changes, to ensure a smooth transition to the new tenancy agreements.

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Winter mould problems and how to prevent them

Mould in rental properties is an expensive and time consuming problem faced by local authorities and private landlords

As the winter period arrives, tenants close windows and doors and turn up the heating, this prevents airflow in your properties and their homes. This is similar to wrapping the property in a plastic bag. When there is no ventilation and plenty of moisture, which is created through ordinary activities such as showering, drying clothes, cooking and even breathing, mould spores will multiply and then colonise areas giving a fungal attack in the property. It is interesting to note that typical moisture emission rates in a four person household can be between 5 and 10 litres of water in a 24 hour period. This level can increase by 10 to 20 litres if washing and drying laundry takes place.

Most fungi grow at moderate temperatures in the range of 10-40 oC. These mould, blackspot and fungal spores will feed off surfaces in dwellings where nutrients can be found, such as paper, paste, paint, bath or shower areas (silicon sealers, etc) and general surface contaminants which are present in even the cleanest of dwellings.

MOULD PREVENTION

Apart from the general appearance of mould which can cause physiological problems other health risks exist. Rhinitis, asthma, alveolitis and other bacterial infections may be aggravated or instigated by the presence of mould.

Mould and blackspot are now becoming a real health and safety issue for local authorities and increase dramatically during the winter period.

Installing ventilation systems in order to reduce the amount of moisture in a property can assist in reducing these growths but may not completely eradicate the problem.

Ideal air change rates (ACH) should be maintained at around at least 4 per hour, but should increase considerably in areas of high damp and humidity i.e. laundry areas and bathrooms. In these areas of high moisture output, washing and drying rooms, a mechanical extraction ventilation system should be employed.

Modern dwellings with cavities are less prone to mould growth due to increased insulation. Thermal insulation should be considered on older, single skin, properties to reduce the effects of condensation.

Where a dwelling is suffering from water penetration or rising damp, these must be rectified at source, as must any general leaks.

Established mould growth can also be killed by fungicidal treatment, but this will be short lived unless precautions, such as those listed above are taken.

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Fighting fuel poverty from the ground-up

Sébastien Reed investigates the options available when replacing inefficient and ineffective heating systems in an age of rising energy costs

With British Gas' announcement of a 12.5 per cent increase in their electricity prices due to affect more than 3 million customers, and some sources estimating an overall nationwide energy price hike of £1.2 billion impacting on 12 million users (according to an Ofgem standard variable tariff comparison), the cost of energy in the UK will be looming large in the minds of numerous tenants this winter.

With this considered, alongside expected fluctuations in rental costs and planned reductions in benefits, it comes as no surprise that housing providers are facing ever-increasing pressure from tenants to provide properties with more timely and efficient utility solutions. Beyond encouraging tenants to switch energy providers, there are numerous more practical, long-term, and scalable actions that can be taken as a way of lowering the energy consumption of your housing stock.

NOTTINGHAM'S REVOLUTIONARY APPROACH

Ten homes in Nottingham have been selected as part of a UK pilot aiming to radically improve older houses to save and generate energy, making the residents of these homes ultra-low energy consumers.

Nottingham City Homes (NCH), the Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) who manage and maintain the city council's housing stock, has become the first landlord in the UK to adopt an approach to retrofitting housing solutions, known as Energiesprong (meaning "Energy Leap") as part of the next phase in the city's Greener HousiNG programme.

Energiesprong involves wrapping an existing property with pre-fabricated wall and roof panels. The comprehensive retrofit delivers a super insulated, low maintenance and affordable near net zero-energy home with a 30-year life and assured energy performance warranty.

The process, which can be completed in a matter of days, includes the installation of a thermally insulated roof cassette (an all-in-one panelised roof system) with solar PV built into it; a thermally-efficient wall envelope insulation panel system; low-maintenance glass panelled wall kitchen and bathroom; air or ground source heat pump and heating system; removal of gas to create an electricity only property; and low energy cooker and shower.

Originating in the Netherlands, Energiesprong brings today's houses up to 2050 standards of energy efficiency, and the new funding approach ensures the works are affordable. Following Energiesprong's success in the Netherlands, where a thousand homes a year are now receiving this high-tech makeover, the concept has been exported to France, Germany, Luxembourg, the USA, and now the UK.

Nottingham City Homes' chief executive, Nick Murphy, says: "While we're delighted to be part of a UK-first pilot programme, it's more important to us that we're creating warmer, more energy efficient homes, which are cheaper to run for residents.

"The Greener HousiNG programme is dedicated to finding the most efficient and reliable solutions, to help us future proof our housing stock and tackle issues such as fuel poverty. Plus, the improvements will greatly improve the look and feel of the area."

Councillor Jane Urquhart, the council's portfolio holder for planning, housing & heritage, says: "We're very excited that Nottingham is at the forefront of this approach. Many of our residents live in fuel poverty, so



creating more energy efficient homes to reduce people's energy bills is a high priority for us. Our Greener HousiNG programme has seen over 6,000 hard to heat homes in both social and private sectors receive energy efficiency measures."

GROUND SOURCE GALORE

Just over 100 miles south west of Nottingham, Burton Gardens is a short walk from the centre of the picturesque rural village of Weobley, Herefordshire, part of the famous 'Black and White Village Trail'. The Burton Gardens ground source heat pump retrofit scheme is being piloted by social housing provider Stonewater, with the aim of providing residents with a warmer and cheaper home heating system that will save them hundreds of pounds on their energy bills every year.

Stonewater is working with British-manufacturer Kensa Heat Pumps on the pilot retrofit scheme which is due for completion in December this year. Ground source heat pumps will replace the residents' expensive electric night storage heaters and immersion hot water heating systems.

Nick Harris, Stonewater's chief executive says: "With rising energy costs forcing more vulnerable people into fuel poverty, there is a real need for social landlords and housing providers to help tackle the problem which affects thousands of people across the UK.

"Effective measures such as replacing night storage heaters with more efficient, affordable and carbon-friendly home-heating technologies can make a big difference to people's lives, particularly their health and wellbeing. An average two-bedroom bungalow typically costs £800 a year to heat with night

storage heaters, compared with £390 from a ground source heat pump – less than half the cost.”

The scheme’s communal ‘micro district’ design – in which a Kensa Shoebox heat pump installed inside each bungalow is connected to one of 25 communal boreholes – ensures eligibility for Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding provided by Kensa’s partnership with EDF Energy, plus twenty years of income through the Non Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI).

This design also avoids the need for a plant room, and provides complete heating independence to the tenants who are free to switch energy providers as and when they please. Each resident will also receive a new hot water cylinder and radiators in place of the dated night storage units.

A WIN-WIN SITUATION

What makes these two schemes even more attractive is their long-term financial viability. In fact, part of the innovation behind Energiesprong itself originates from the funding process. The household pays an ‘Energy plan’.

Energiesprong maximises energy and maintenance savings as well as other incomes from renewables and energy services. These incomes are guaranteed over a longer term by the solution provider, creating an investment envelope typically between £40-50,000 for a 3 bedroom home. The occupant also receives a guaranteed energy service plan, akin to a mobile phone bundle, with hot water provision for a family, a kWh allowance and the ability to heat their home to 18-21°C all year round. The landlord (NHC) receives an on-going income to fund similar works to more homes.

“Feedback has been really positive” says Jon Warren, market maker at Energiesprong UK, “there’s no need to decant and tenants get a warm and desirable home within a fortnight.” Energiesprong is kick-starting the UK market with additional EU funding to cover the initial setup and higher costs associated with pilot volumes. Warren adds: “We are aiming to follow the



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Dutch example and make an ‘energy-leap’ to a volume deal, where they have delivered over 2,000 and are now upgrading 1,000 a year to 2050 standards, without subsidy.”

In a similar vein, the Burton Gardens retrofit is costing Stonewater £700,000 to install. The scheme is benefiting from subsidies by an upfront ECO grant of £95,000, which has an expected payback of 16 years with Stonewater receiving an additional £800,000 income over 20 years from the Government’s non-domestic RHI scheme.

“This is a win-win situation,” comments Leon Storer, Stonewater assistant director of assets (West) “where not only are we installing a sustainable, efficient heating solution that pays for itself and gives Stonewater a return over 20 years of RHI grant, the main factor for us all is that it reduces our residents heating bills and enables them to live in a warmer, healthier environment.”

Council takes over unsafe private tower block

Slough Council has taken over a privately owned block of flats in the town after it failed fire safety tests carried out in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower blaze.

Nova House in Slough has aluminium cladding

that has failed all Government tests commissioned by the DCLG. The six-storey block is home to around 200 people and because of safety concerns, the council has paid for a fire engine to be stationed outside the building 24 hours a day since late September.

This goes further than Government advice but it mirrors action taken by several councils in London and other cities to reassure their own tenants that any fires will be quickly spotted and extinguished. Other social landlords have placed fire marshalls in tower blocks as part of an early warning system.

Sohail Munawar, leader of the council, said: “We have been concerned about the fire safety at Nova House since the terrible tragedy at Grenfell Tower and have been closely monitoring the situation. Unfortunately, it has now got to the stage where we feel, to protect the safety of the residents we have to intervene directly and take over responsibility for Nova House.”

Slough Council itself owns four high-rise blocks, two of them are currently empty awaiting demolition, while the other two are subject to a round the clock safety watch because of their cladding.

Charging the wrong rent results in downgrade

Devon based Teign Housing has had its governance downgraded from G1 to G2 after the

3,600-home landlord was found to have been overcharging its tenants for a number of years.

Errors were made in rent-setting, resulting in a “significant number” of tenants being overcharged. The regulator said Teign’s response was “swift and decisive” with plans in place to reimburse tenants and the local council.

Teign has commissioned a review into its control systems and has been “open and

transparent” with the regulator.

Jo Reece, chief executive of Teign Housing, said: “The governance downgrade is due to a failure in one key, isolated, area which we have moved ‘swiftly and decisively’ to address. While we are clearly disappointed to have our governance downgraded, our executive and board’s focus is on restoring our G1 status as quickly as possible.”

Regulator reports rise in complaint referrals

The social housing regulator has received a 15 per cent increase in reported breaches of

consumer standards by housing associations in the last year.

Consumer standard referrals can only be made to the Homes & Communities Agency by official bodies or individuals such as an MP, a councillor, the Housing Ombudsman or the Health and Safety Executive.

In a review of its consumer standards regulation, the HCA said it received 532 referrals

in 2016/17, a 15 per cent increase on the previous year. Of these, 105 were investigated and seven led to the regulator ruling there had been a breach – three more than in the previous year.

The HCA said where providers breach a consumer standard their systems are often “poorly designed, poorly implemented, or both”. The breaches were mostly due to problems with fire or gas safety works.

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Marking the difference

Conformité Européene, more commonly known as the CE mark, is a legal certification for all manufacturers, whether they are making bathroom products within the EU, or exporting products into the EU.

The certification mark is an indication of health, safety and environmental protection standards for products sold within the European Economic Area, and has existed in its present form since 1985.

When thinking about the CE, most people picture toys, or perhaps electrical appliances. It is often overlooked that bathroom accessories, including baths, toilets, basins, shower trays, shower screens and more all fall under the category of Construction Materials, and so must comply.

WHY IS CE MARKING IMPORTANT?

CE marking ensures consumers and landlords know they are buying products with a consistent level of health and safety protection, making sure they are not being exploited by manufacturers who are buying cheap illegal products and then selling them at an inflated price.

Sometimes, your installer may recommend cheaper products to save you money, as Damian Walters, of the British Institute of Installation for kitchen and bathroom products explained: “Unfortunately, the UK market is flooded with products that simply don’t meet the stringent safety and quality

requirements of those with a CE mark.

“While quality is important, safety is paramount when it comes to bathroom products, especially when you consider the potentially lethal mix of water and electricity.

“With an ever price-aware consumer prevalent, buyers are often attracted to installers who offer a ‘cheap’ service proposition – these tradesmen are often able to reduce costs by compromising on product – product that doesn’t meet the CE mark of assurance.”

WHAT ARE THE REPERCUSSIONS?

Consumers are not breaking the law by buying non CE marked products, it is the manufacturer placing the illegal products onto the market that is liable. However, if you, knowingly or otherwise, install illegal products into a bathroom, you are breaking the law. If you buy illegal products and you ask someone else to install them, the installer is breaking the law.

Since 2013, it has been against the law for a manufacturer to not correctly CE mark a product, to falsely CE mark a product, and to fail to CE mark a product for which it is required.

Penalties for manufacturers often include a £5,000 fine and a maximum of three months in jail for the director of the offending company. Reputable manufacturers will do their best to test their own products before they go on sale, so it is vital that specifiers choose CE marked products. Make sure you look for the CE mark when considering bathroom products, and if there isn’t one clearly visible, ask why not. If you can’t ask why not, don’t buy it.

Besides the legal repercussions, improperly tested products can cause serious injuries, especially in the bathroom. In January this year, the national press covered the story of a one year old who was being bathed by her mum, when their glass shower screen exploded. It showered the toddler with shards of glass, inflicting multiple cuts to her head and body. In another incident at an international airport, a man sustained serious cuts when the toilet he was on tipped over and smashed.

Any reputable manufacturer will have their CE mark “declaration of performance” displayed on their website. If you install a non-CE marked product, and someone suffers as a result, you will have no fallback.

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One woman's mission to revolutionise block management



Kate Boyes, founder of evolutionary property-tech company Resident, has today launched SELF, her latest Software as a Service (SaaS) brand. SELF, a cloud based block management tool, has been designed specifically for those who self-manage residential blocks.

Kate has been letting and managing property for 15 years and has had the opportunity to meet many savvy property owners and talk about their wish list for making block management more accessible. An online dashboard, easy enough to use from day one and crucially, affordable for those that self-manage, was the answer. SELF is service charge accounting made simple. It generates service charge demands, creates year end reports and records supplier invoices and leaseholder service charge receipts. Because Kate is a chartered surveyor and regulated by the RICS and ARLA, SELF is designed to help directors of Resident Management Companies comply with relevant landlord and tenant legislation.

Commenting on the launch Kate said "Through my work I recognised a need for a cost-effective solution that modernises block management and

makes it more user friendly and transparent.

Being able to combine technology with a passion for property to create genuinely useful tools for the residential property market is very exciting".

A serial entrepreneur, Kate's career was launched 15 years ago when she won a Property Week essay competition about what would have the greatest impact on real estate over the next decade. Before the term 'prop-tech' was coined, Kate predicted ways in which technology would enable and support the development of smart buildings.

Since then, Kate has set up an award winning letting and block management agency and founded Resident Block Management Software. For more information about SELF contact Kate Boyes at kate@selfblockmanagement.com



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Cool down

Dean Ronnie of Cool You UK advises on achieving cool and clean air quality in conservation and new build properties under stringent regulations

Installing conventional integrated air conditioning into a building bound by restrictions can be an unachievable objective. Whether you wish to air condition a listed building, a property in a London conservation area or an apartment in a newly built development, you will find yourself coming up against the dilemma of installing conventional integrated systems.

THE RESTRICTIONS OFTEN FACED

Often the biggest issue in installing conventional integrated air conditioning into conservation properties comes down to planning permission. To install a conventional integrated air conditioning system, which always requires an outside condenser, you will need to endure the lengthy process and cost of applying for planning permission. And with planning permission, there is never any guarantee that it will be accepted. Unfortunately, when it comes to fitting air conditioning to a listed building, more often than not, this is rejected.

In some cases, such as those concerning apartments in newer developments, planning permission isn't the issue. The issue instead lies with the regulations imposed on the exterior walls of the building.

Ultimately though, the common factor in all cases where conventional integrated air conditioning cannot be installed is the fact that an outside condenser unit cannot be attached to the property. This is the source of the headache for many, as without an outside condenser unit this type of air conditioning cannot be installed. Whether you cannot drill holes into the exterior walls of your property, there is insufficient space, or you are not permitted to tamper with the exterior walls, you will find that air conditioning your property will present a problem.

LOOKING AT THE OPTIONS AVAILABLE

Perhaps the most obvious solution to the air conditioning quandary for such buildings is simply opening the window? This may be a solution for some, but if you live in a built-up area this will be a no go. Firstly because of the noise from the streets outside, and secondly for the pollution you will be letting into your home from the outside air. A recent report produced for the Department of Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs found, alarmingly, that 7.9 million Londoners live in areas exceeding World Health Organisation limits for a damaging type of air particle known as PM2.5, capable of causing a host of health issues. This is not something you want freely circulating around your home.

The other option is a portable air conditioning system. While portable air conditioning units are becoming more sophisticated and can be moved from room to room, they are not a practical air conditioning solution for large rented and social housing stock. An integrated system provides more effective cooling and air quality control.

Often the biggest issue in installing conventional integrated air conditioning into conservation properties comes down to planning permission





THE REMEDY FOR THE HEADACHE

Whether you are looking to air condition an apartment in a modern development like the Strata SE1 building or an apartment in a Grade II listed building such as Cumberland Terrace (both of which have previously faced

this air conditioning headache), the remedy for your integrated air conditioning headache comes in the form of internal water cooled condenser air conditioning.

Ensuring you do not have to install a condenser to the exterior of your property, internal water cooled condenser air conditioning provides the same quality of air conditioning without needing an outside condenser unit. This means there is no need for anything to be installed to the exterior walls of your property, no need for holes to be made in the walls of your property and no need for planning permission to be sought.

Internal water cooled condenser air conditioning is the ideal solution for apartments, listed buildings and properties located within conservation areas. As everything is contained internally within the property, this type of air conditioning is also ideal for properties lacking in external space.

HOW INTERNAL WATER COOLED CONDENSER AIR CONDITIONING WORKS

Using A** rated energy efficient DC inverter water cooled internal condenser units, internal water cooled condenser air conditioning works by being plumbed into the property's mains water supply, much the same as a washing machine or a dishwasher.

Using the property's mains water in a controlled manner, refrigerant pipework is used between the internal condenser unit and the units in the rooms to be air conditioned. The exiting water from the system can then be treated and used in a number of ways.

The internal condenser unit utilised is easily concealed by being able to be located in a number of different locations around the home, including airing cupboards, utility rooms or fitted within a bespoke room unit.

Dean Ronnie is the content marketing manager at Cool You UK

Bushboard to exhibit Nuance at SLEEP 2017

Bushboard will be at this years hotel design event SLEEP on stand DG6 to showcase its outstanding Nuance bathroom wall panelling. Bushboard, now part of the Wilsonart Group, and the UK's leading producer of laminate worksurfaces is exhibiting at the London Design Centre at SLEEP. Jo Gilhooly, marketing director for Bushboard explained "SLEEP has gathered pace over the last few years and is now the must-go-to-show for specification and inspiration in hotels and the hospitality sector. It's the ideal platform for us to showcase NUANCE a compelling range of bathroom panelling products. Our aim is to change attitudes to what is an unquestionable alternative to tiling with a product that offers stunning design advantages and real savings on installation time, money, and ongoing maintenance." Nuance panels are manufactured using a patented core that is 100 percent impervious to water so there is never any danger of warping, peeling or leaking. The panels can be used for walls, around the bath or basin, inside a shower enclosure or to create a true wet room. Because there is no need for trims or extrusions, Nuance panels present a sleek, seam free look. The panelling is easy to clean too – no grout lines to attract grime, limescale and mould. All that is needed is a wipe down with a damp cloth and mild detergent. The Nuance range is supported by a full-colour brochure that shows the range of patterns and finishes available and has detailed plans on how to create different looks.

www.bushboard.co.uk



Solution to condensation control

Vent-Axia has launched the PoziDry Pro™ Positive Input Ventilation unit. Designed to improve indoor air quality in social housing properties the PoziDry Pro™ provides a highly effective solution to help landlords control mould and condensation, as well as offering high levels of air filtration. Boasting quick and simple installation for contractors the PoziDry Pro™ is a highly energy efficient ventilation unit that is unobtrusive, near silent and helps provide a healthy environment for residents. The PoziDry Pro™ offers the perfect solution for hard to cure mould and condensation properties by improving IAQ and preventing moisture build-up within the home.



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Helifix launches new enhanced website

Masonry repair specialist, Helifix, has launched its new website, offering enhanced navigation, functionality and content. The site contains over 100 Repair Details that cover most common masonry faults, such as crack stitching, reconnecting separated walls and creating load bearing masonry beams. In addition, there are an ever-growing number of case studies on all types of structures including listed buildings, converted properties and bridges. The redesigned site provides optimised viewing on any device, whether you are in the office on a desktop, at home on a tablet or on site on your smartphone. It provides 24/7 access to installation videos and blogs.



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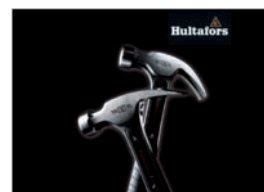
EnviroVent, has reached a milestone by selling 1,300 ventilation units to Tees Valley-based Thirteen in just 13 months! This latest milestone coincides with Thirteen confirming that EnviroVent has successfully secured a five year agreement to provide both Positive Input Ventilation (PIV) systems and its Filterless Infinity Fans for its homes. Thirteen carried out an in-depth ventilation review where it tested out a number of different ventilation systems and EnviroVent's products were found to be the most effective. The landlord and developer also recognised that contracting with EnviroVent meant longer warranties, technical support and surveys all as part of the package.



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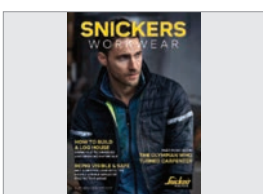
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Waterproofing, damp proofing and ground gas solutions in housing management

Delta Membrane Systems' technical director, David J Symes, explores the challenges experienced by housing providers in today's ever evolving market

The availability of affordable housing is key to accommodating the United Kingdom's ever increasing population, not only in building newer homes, but in ensuring the restoration and maintenance of existing buildings.

Social housing provides accommodation for around 4 million tenants in the United Kingdom, and the upkeep of these homes is essential.

The Government pledged in April 2017 to unlock brownfield land to accommodate our housing shortage. 73 Local authorities across the United Kingdom will pilot, under new legislation, registers of brownfield sites available for housing locally. These new registers will help housebuilders identify suitable brownfield sites instantly, therefore unlocking land for thousands of new homes.

BUILDING ON BROWNFIELD LAND

The government has pledged 1 million more homes and to get planning permission in place on 90 per cent of suitable brownfield sites for housing.

Brownfield land is a term specifically used to describe land which has previously been used for commercial or industrial purposes with suspected or known contamination (such as pollution or soil contamination) or land which has been in close proximity to pollution, hazardous waste or soil contamination. There are over 66,000 hectares of brownfield sites in England, one third of these are in the high-growth areas of greater London, the South East and East.

To safely build on brownfield land, considerations need to be given to how the land was previously used. All brownfield sites prior to developing will need to be assessed by an experienced environmental consultant before they can be redeveloped. This involves an analysis of the soil, groundwater and surface water through testing for hazardous compounds, and will ensure that appropriate measures are taken to reduce identified risks and liabilities.

With the continued challenges to build on brownfield land, technology has advanced accordingly, with the introduction of gas proof membranes. Gas proof membranes protect buildings and structures by offering a barrier to dangerous chemicals and ground gases.

Legislations such as building standards BS8485:2015, BRE 211.2015, CIRIA 665, CIRIA 735, CIRIA 748 and NHBC standards have all taken into consideration what protection will be essential for building on brownfield land. Gas proof membranes can cater for the harshest of brownfield conditions, protecting against the ingress of hydrocarbon vapours, radon, methane, carbon dioxide, ground gas and volatile organic compounds (VOC).

MAINTAINING THE COUNTRY'S HOUSING STOCK

The preservation of older properties has taken on greater significance in recent years. Concrete structures over time deteriorate. Properties which have experienced long term exposure to snow, frost, ice and rain will require repair and maintenance. Concrete repair solutions can repair and protect a



The demand for maintaining the country's ever growing housing stock is continual

structure, while managing and controlling corrosion, strengthening the structures, and offering a cost effective solution.

Multi-tenanted structures will have additional features to consider - besides the frontage, maintenance of balconies, terraces and walkways are vital. With a wide array of application techniques and detailed knowledge of the causes of deterioration to concrete, a waterproofing design specialist should be consulted to advise cost effective solutions available.

DAMP

Damp can damage much more than a building's appearance, creating unhealthy conditions for occupants. Over time, damp will lead to the deterioration of plaster and masonry, while promoting timber decay. Inappropriate treatments for damp will cause further harm to older structures.

Damp proof barriers, such as damp proof membranes, satisfy most site conditions while offering a sympathetic approach. Incorporating a damp proof membrane to a structure suffering with damp issues minimises recurrence or structural damage.

Additional attention may need administering during the design stage to maintain the aesthetic and structural integrity of the structure/building. The waterproofing design should offer sympathetic application.

Damp proof membranes offer a further compromise for when lime renders are inadequate in given situations. For example, on below ground structures, on structures that have heavy salt contamination and on structures that cannot be effectively repaired and waterproofed sympathetically and adequately from the outside (eg. where there are architectural features that cannot be waterproofed). Damp proof membranes may be used in conjunction with a chemical damp proof course, or as is often the case, in listed buildings used as the sole means of providing an effective barrier which complies with BS 6576:2005.

Understanding the basic construction of older buildings differs from that of new ones, and this knowledge will assist in avoiding misguided remedies.

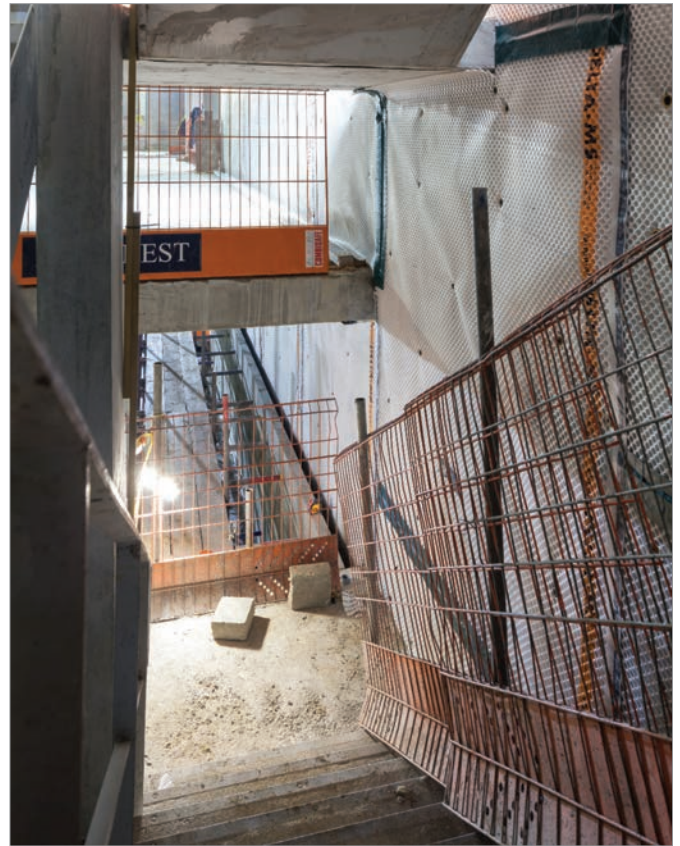
THE ROLE OF A WATERPROOFING DESIGN SPECIALIST

A waterproofing design specialist provides expertise in structural waterproofing. Waterproofing design is a complex task; every construction project is different and will require diversities.

There are number of key signs to look out for when selecting a qualified waterproofing design specialist. A waterproofing design specialist should attend the site, undertake investigations, produce reports and manage documentation in relation to the design, ensuring at all stages that sufficient protection is designed into the project. Getting the design correct prior to construction can save significant long-term costs.

A waterproofing design specialist should have CSSW as a minimum standard of qualification, be able to offer knowledge on ground gases, structures, risk assessment, water sources, and other domains. A qualified specialist should, in addition, be able to produce a design report, method statement, and waterproofing design drawings.

David J Symes is the technical director at Delta Membrane Systems



Advantages of Osmo UV-Protection-Oil

Osmo UK, the eco-friendly wood and finishes specialist, has developed a quality finish to protect, maintain and restore exterior wood. Osmo UV-Protection-Oil has been specially designed to preserve the natural colour of the wood, leaving it looking in top condition. Protection of exterior wood is of the upmost importance as the colour can fade after harmful UV rays damage the lignin within the wood. Osmo UV-Protection-Oil is a clear, satin finish for exterior application onto vertical wooden structures only such as doors, cladding, fencing etc. Based on natural oil, it does not crack, flake, peel or blister. The UV-Protection-Oil 410 consists of natural ingredients.



www.osmouk.com

The customer always comes first

Designer Contracts has launched a Customer Service Charter, believed to be a first within the industry. Since the launch of the Home Builders Federation (HBF) annual customer satisfaction survey, carried out by the HBF and the National Housebuilding Council each year, significant progress has been made by the industry to deliver exemplary levels of customer service, with Designer Contracts generally considered a leading example. The new Customer Service Charter sets out its mission, commitment and processes to give guidance on how to deal with issues quickly and effectively. The detailed flow charts ensure that every consequence is covered.



01246 854577 www.designercontracts.com

Practicality meets comfort at tudor lodge

Tudor Lodge, a development of 30, one and two bedroom, purpose-built retirement apartments based in Solihull, in the West Midlands, has upgraded the carpet in its communal areas with Total Care, from Heckmondwike. After the period of consultation with residents had concluded, Tudor Lodge's management team opted to upgrade all the carpet in communal areas and chose Heckmondwike Total Care in 'Spice' for the corridors and Total Care in 'Cajun' for the lounge. Total Care and Pure Care are ideally suited to healthcare environments or sheltered housing, whether in communal areas, corridors or bedrooms and in entrance areas.



01924 413637 www.heckmondwike-fb.co.uk

Polyflor helps create modern apartments

Luxury vinyl sheet flooring and Polysafe safety flooring from Polyflor, was recently installed throughout apartments on the Belle View social housing development, Stow Park Avenue, Newport. Approximately 1400m² of Designatex PUR sheet vinyl flooring, Polysafe Wood fx PUR and Polysafe Arena PUR safety flooring was installed during the interior fit out phase by Evabuild Interiors Ltd, under main contractor Willis Construction. The Platinum Oak grey wood effect design from Polyflor's Designatex collection of luxury vinyl sheet flooring for residential interiors was used throughout bedroom, living room and kitchen areas in each apartment.



0161 767 1111 www.polyflor.com

From the floor up...

Richard Sutton of Horbury Property Services considers the options available when refurbishing floors in housing

Choosing flooring for an apartment block or housing project is a decision that should not be taken lightly. If the properties and performance of the floor covering do not match the requirements of the building and its occupants, it could prove to be more expensive in the long run. That is why it is worth considering the lifetime cost of the flooring choice, rather than the initial cost of purchase.

DURABILITY

For many housing projects, durability of the material is the biggest factor in a floor covering - those materials with a longer lifespan usually offer better value for money. Although the initial outlay may be more, this can pay back many times over the lifespan of the building. Flooring therefore needs the durability to withstand the volume of traffic using it each day, otherwise it will start to lose its aesthetics and its lifespan will be greatly restricted.

Higher traffic areas, such as lobbies and hallways, require greater durability in a floor covering than an individual living space. Flooring should always be selected that has robust certification and has undergone rigorous testing procedures to withstand the rigours of that environment.

SLIPS AND TRIPS

In a worst-case scenario, wrongly specified flooring can cause severe injury by introducing slip and trip hazards into high footfall areas.

Floors that do become worn inevitably pose more of a health and safety risk. Slips, trips and falls are often caused by moisture and dirt being brought into buildings on footwear. Entrance matting is one of the best ways to prevent this and many entrance matting products these days have the ability to remove water and grit from shoes, and therefore prevent slip hazards.

As inferior floor coverings age and start to deteriorate, they are more likely to cause slips, trips and falls, especially if entrance matting is not cleaned and maintained properly. There are a number of excellent choices for entrance matting, which should be selected according to the design and use of the building.

The traction of a flooring material is especially important in high traffic areas. It is advisable that floor coverings are tested to offer anti-slip properties, as part of reducing health and safety risks.

REFURBISHMENT & REPLACEMENT

Another factor to take into account when it comes to selecting a flooring material is that certain types of flooring are easier to repair than others. Carpet and vinyl tiles can be replaced individually, and solid hardwood flooring can be sanded down if damaged.

The cost of works associated with removing a certain type of floor covering should also be taken into account when specifying. The durability of a material has to be balanced against how easy it is to remove and replace. Carpet, for example, wears out faster in high traffic applications, yet it is relatively inexpensive to replace. It is worth considering at the outset how often you would be prepared to replace the floor covering and how much cost would be involved if you decided to completely change the material specified.

Some companies may provide a flooring refurbishment and maintenance service, or even advise on floor suitability and longevity, as part of its overall project management service.



Wrongly specified flooring can cause severe injury

INSTALLATION

And, while specification of a floor covering that is fit for purpose should be a priority, installation is equally important. A poorly fitted floor covering can be a major source of issues.

It is important to select a flooring installation or refurbishment partner that has experience working with the type of material specified. Ask for references from other customers to demonstrate that they are skilled in delivering flooring projects of that type to a high standard. The installer should also be able to advise on the suitability of the flooring substrate, as it may be the case that the current substrate is not suitable for the specified flooring, or could shorten its lifespan. This could also be checked with the floor covering manufacturer, if in any doubt, to ensure you receive the performance you expect. The preparation of the substrate is therefore really important as its condition needs to be pre-determined. The reason is that remedial work may need to be carried out before a new floor covering is put in place.

An incorrectly prepared substrate can affect long term performance, which is difficult to spot following installation, so the skill and experience of the installer needs to be evaluated beforehand. Again, working with a flooring installation company with a wide experience of different materials is preferable. Failing to install flooring to manufacturers' guidelines runs the risk of shortening the lifespan of the flooring and almost certainly invalidates any manufacturer's guarantee.

Issues that can occur with incorrect installation include, for example, underlay being wrongly specified, as it can create unsightly humps across certain areas of the carpet. This, again, can be a trip hazard and usually only



complete replacement of the underlay and re-laying of the flooring can provide an answer.

MAINTENANCE

Maintenance costs can rise substantially when incorrectly specified flooring is installed. Damage can be incurred more easily, leading to a rise in airtenance visits.

Ongoing maintenance is essential to prolong a floor covering's lifespan, but it is important to take into account the views of the cleaning/maintenance team when it comes to making a final decision. In some cases, a floor covering may be specified for its aesthetics but the cleaning regime may far exceed the capabilities or time allowances of the maintenance team. If this is the case and the regime cannot be maintained, it could mean that the initial investment in the floor covering was not worthwhile.

ALLERGENS

An unseen and often ignored factor at selection stage, but one which is extremely important, is to choose floor coverings which do not cause or exacerbate allergic reactions. For example, older flooring can retain more allergens and particulates, and can harbour living organisms such as dust mites if they are not properly and regularly cleaned. This can result in increased cases of allergies for residents – particularly vulnerable are older people and young children. Correct specification of floor coverings with a low allergy risk is advisable for housing.

AESTHETICS

Aesthetics are always going to be an important factor in the decision making process. Floor coverings are usually required that can deliver the right look, but that are also comfortable underfoot. Improving the aesthetics of the interior is the number one reason why floor coverings are upgraded.

Once you have determined the most important characteristics needed for

the flooring in that particular environment, then it makes sense to show these to the maintenance staff in order to determine which will be most suitable for the space. It may also be the case that residents of the building are consulted too, if it is a refurbishment, for example on their preferred colour choice. Many carpet and vinyl manufacturers provide samples which a registered landlord or housing association can use to consult with tenants.

SO WHEN IS A GOOD TIME TO REPLACE A FLOOR COVERING?

There are a number of factors that suggest when a floor covering needs to be refurbished or replaced. The obvious ones are rips and tears and patches that appear thinner than they should be. Some inferior types of vinyl flooring, for example, can break apart at weld seams. Discolouration can also occur when flooring becomes contaminated with microorganisms and bacteria.

If a low maintenance flooring solution is being sought, then it is recommend, as with all projects, to arrange a site survey and discuss the options with an experienced project manager. They can then advise on a suitable product to fit the budget and the environment.

Once the correct product is selected, it should last for its specified lifetime. However, this can be drastically reduced if it has not been installed correctly or the fitters haven't used approved installation products, such as specified underlay and adhesives. On average, floor coverings are replaced every 10 years, however it can be done much more frequently due to change of building usage, planned refurbishment works and poor installation.

Working with a flooring refurbishment partner can help ensure that the floor covering you receive is well specified and installed. This reduces the risk of wrongly specifying a flooring material, which can be an expensive mistake. Durability and performance are the hallmarks of a well chosen carpet and careful consideration at the start can reap rewards over the long term."

Richard Sutton is the general manager of Horbury Property Services

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Gerflor's new look for housing

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01926 622 600 www.gerflor.co.uk

BoilerMag introduces 10 year warranty

Heating system filter specialist Eclipse Magnetics has increased the warranty on its BoilerMag commercial and industrial boiler filters to 10 years. As a result of BoilerMag's confidence in the high quality full stainless steel construction and outstanding performance of its products, the new warranty provides installers with high levels of product guarantee. The BoilerMag XL is designed for use in medium sized commercial, retail, or large residential properties, while the BoilerMag XT is perfect for industrial heating systems. Both products effectively prevent the build-up of contamination in central heating systems, reducing energy bills and increasing boiler life.



0114 225 0600 www.eclipsemagnetics.com

Mapei launches Keraquick Ultrafast S1

Mapei are delighted to launch Keraquick Ultrafast S1 adhesive. The cement-based ultra-rapid setting adhesive is ideal for fast track repairs as Keraquick Ultrafast S1 sets to foot traffic in 60 minutes and is ready for grouting in 90 minutes. Suitable for interior and exterior use installing porcelain and ceramic tiles and mosaics the fast track product can be used for both renovation and new build installation projects in bathrooms, kitchens, terraces and balconies as well as areas subject to pedestrian traffic. Available in grey, fast setting Keraquick Ultrafast S1 is a very low VOC adhesive. Suitable for installation over wet and electrical underfloor heating systems.



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Fix it with Norbord's CaberFix Range

With the CaberFix floor fixing range, Norbord promises exceptional value and easy application for a simple and safe on-site experience. Offering six different products, the CaberFix range provides a variety of choice. Each floor fixing product is fully BBA-approved, guaranteeing 42 days of exposure to weather and on-site construction when used with CaberDek. Having undergone comprehensive independent tests, the CaberFix range has been specifically developed for use with Norbord's flooring products. Products in this range include CaberFix D3 T&G, CaberFix Joint&Joist and CaberFix tape.



www.norbord.co.uk

LSZH self-regulating heating cable

Pentair leads on innovation with its new Raychem Low-Smoke Zero Halogen (LSZH) self-regulating heating cable range, the first of its kind. Thanks to its unique combination of self-regulating and LSZH properties, the range provides safe, simple and efficient pipe-freeze protection. This offers users superior performance and durability as well as improved energy efficiency. Developed specifically for use within commercial and residential buildings, the range offers unparalleled building safety, thanks to a new LSZH jacket material. XL-Trace features cross-linked materials to improve product performance, resulting in a superior life expectancy.



www.pentairthermal.com

Polysafe offers Sustainable slip resistance

Polyflor was chosen to help create a safe yet homely interior design scheme for Somerset Care's latest care home, Stockmoor Lodge in Bridgwater. Three safety flooring collections featuring sustainable wet slip resistance were used throughout communal areas and bathrooms within the care home – Polysafe Wood fx PUR wood effect flooring (Sun Bleached Oak, Rustic Oak, Tropical Pine wood effect designs), Polysafe Hydro Evolve flooring for continually wet areas (hard wearing sheet vinyl flooring which) and Expona Control PUR luxury vinyl tiles (cross-linked and UV cured polyurethane reinforcement to achieve superior cleaning benefits).



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TME
TECHNOLOGY IN TEMPERATURE

Turning around system efficiency

Francine Wickham of Fernox explores how to improve central heating system longevity and efficiency through the use of chemical cleaners, inhibitors and filter technology

The Cold Homes Crisis and the rise of fuel poverty within the UK is a widespread and ongoing issue currently estimated by National Energy Action (NEA) to affect more than four million households. Consequently impacting on the National Health Service (NHS), the effects of cold homes are approximated by Public Health England to cost £1.36 billion, not including associated social care costs.

Reducing this risk is therefore of significant importance for housing associations. However, the UK's housing stock consists of relatively inefficient properties built across various decades to evolving planning regulations. This is often the case with older housing association properties and therefore significant energy efficiency improvements can be both expensive and disruptive.

Consequently, one of the simplest and most cost-effective ways for social housing providers to reduce the risk of cold homes is to improve the efficiency of the installed central heating system.

When left untreated, central heating systems are susceptible to internal corrosion and the formation of sludge and scale. These contaminants can then accumulate and circulate within the system, leading to blocked radiators and pipes, causing the boiler to work harder and consume unnecessary energy to reach the desired temperature. This overworking can significantly reduce the boiler lifespan while increasing day-to-day running costs for tenants.

In addition, faulty boilers are the number one tenant complaint according to Property Let By Us, and are often the result of a dirty central heating system. It is therefore advisable to ensure the heating system and boiler are thoroughly protected; reducing visits to site due to complaints and increasing the system's overall efficiency.

Before dosing a heating system with chemical treatments, any existing contaminants should be removed. For many properties, the best course of action would be to powerflush the system. However, the UK's housing stock includes some of the oldest homes within the EU and the systems within these properties can suffer from poor system design and low flow rates, which can prevent a successful powerflush.

The effects of cold homes are estimated to cost the NHS £1.36 billion per year

To provide a belt and braces approach in all scenarios and for properties where thorough cleaning by powerflushing may not be achievable, technological innovation has resulted in high performance system filters, capable of capturing and containing circulating debris, to improve system efficiency.

To ensure the correct course of action is taken in these scenarios, a 360 degree approach to cleaning and protecting social housing heating systems is strongly recommended.





The first step of this process is to check the quality of the system water. If the test results suggest so, then a reliable cleaner should be added to the

system. Once the dosing is complete, the products should be left to circulate within the system, before the system is drained, flushed clear and refilled with clean mains water.

Industry best practice then advises that a high performing system filter is fitted. Capable of removing both magnetic and non-magnetic material, filter technology aids in the safe capture, containment and removal of any circulating debris. A rapidly evolving technology, comprehensive ranges of filters are available.

For properties in hard water areas, either an electrolytic or magnetic scale reducer should also be fitted to reduce the risk of future scale buildup.

A chemical inhibitor should then also be added to the system to work with the filter technology to protect the system against corrosion and scale formation, along with an active dispersant. Formulated to continuously detect, lift and deliver system sludge and debris to an inline filter, the active dispersant ensures ongoing delivery of debris, significantly enhancing the performance of the filter.

Furthermore, as the solution is left within the system, the chemical inhibitor aids in reducing system down time and postpones the need for the system to be drained and cleaned. For those within social housing properties, particularly the elderly, this can be vital to keep a system running during the cold winter months.

To conclude the 360 degrees process, the system water should be rechecked to assure the cleanliness of the system.

As fuel poverty and the impact of cold homes continue to increase, improving the efficiency of installed central heating systems is of paramount importance. By incorporating innovative filter technology and proven chemical water treatments, system debris can be consistently captured, contained and removed, preventing the build-up of sludge and scale, resulting in a trouble-free and effective energy efficient heating system.

Francine Wickham is the global marketing director at Fernox

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Stokvis reliability wins repeat work

A developer specialising in the conversion of existing commercial properties into apartment buildings for social housing providers is placing repeat orders with **Stokvis Energy Systems** for a range of heating and hot water solutions having been impressed by the company's quality, reliability and service. The Stokvis Econoplate plate heat exchangers offer an ideal means of reducing boiler cycling and isolate the units from any potential problems of being linked up to old pipework within refurbished or converted buildings. They are widely specified for hotels, leisure centres and other high demand situations as well as shared heat networks, such as the one within the Luton apartment block.



info@stokvisboilers.com

Evinox ModuSat® XR takes HIU efficiency to another level

Evinox has extended its best-selling range of ModuSat® Heat Interface Units with the introduction of the new ModuSat® XR and ModuSat® XR- ECO Twin Plate models. Providing both indirect space heating and domestic hot water, ModuSat® XR units are ideal for use in modern, efficient district and communal heat networks. All units deliver fast, dynamic domestic hot water response, and the ModuSat® XR-ECO models also provide ultra-low DHW return temperatures to the primary heat network.

With extensive experience in the design and application of HIU's across thousands of UK-wide installations, Evinox has made significant advances in the performance of its latest range, aiming to help improve the overall efficiency of heat networks, whilst retaining high levels of user satisfaction and comfort levels.

EVEN FASTER, MORE EFFICIENT DOMESTIC HOT WATER PERFORMANCE

An overriding requirement for many consulting engineers involved in the design and specification of heat networks, is to ensure abundant and responsive supply of domestic hot water. This goes hand-in-hand with residents expecting consistent and safe hot water at the tap. ModuSat® XR HIU's deliver fast hot water without reducing the efficiency of the heat network.

EVINOX MODUSAT® XR-ECO; HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

It's clear that lowering system temperatures is a critical factor in the efficient operation of UK heat networks. Reducing the network primary flow & return temperatures enables heat generation plant to operate more efficiently; lower grade, low carbon heat sources to play a more predominant role in the energy mix; and network heat losses to be dramatically reduced.

ModuSat® XR-ECO units have been designed precisely with this in mind, incorporating ultra-high efficiency domestic hot water plate heat exchangers with improved volumetrics that encourage turbulent flow and optimal heat transfer.

These latest improvements mean designers are given the opportunity to focus on the energy efficiency performance of HIU's and the wider heat network, with the confidence that units will continue to deliver impressive full load hot water capacity and flow rates.

A NEW TEST STANDARD FOR HEAT INTERFACE UNITS FROM BESA

The ModuSat® XR has been tested under a new UK test standard, intended to help heat network designers to evaluate individual HIU performance on their network under typical UK conditions. The new scheme, operated by the Building



Engineering Services Association (BESA), will provide HIU benchmarking, similar in many ways to the SEDBUK scheme for domestic boilers.

01372 722277
www.evinoxenergy.co.uk

Encasement helps HAs save time and money boxing in boiler pipework

As housing association heating system refurbishment and upgrade programmes aim to reduce emissions and energy consumption while improving efficiency, it is also important that the updated systems look good and are cost effective.

To help achieve this, Encasement's pre-formed boiler pipe casings are manufactured to the required boiler dimensions and pre-finished with durable melamine or laminate, so there is no need for on-site fabrication or painting, allowing them to be fitted in less than half the time of site made alternatives, which saves time and money.

By using Encasement pre-formed boiler casing, which are supplied to the correct dimensions, the freestanding casing just slides into place underneath the boiler, which can be done by the heating engineer at the time of the boiler installation.

Also, as each casing is manufactured to the same high quality, using only FSC® 'Chain of custody' certified and sustainably sourced timber; they provide a consistent finish, as well as being compliant with housing association sustainable procurement policies.

Every boiler pipe casing order is accompanied with a copy of Encasement's FSC® certification, which takes care of compliance and traceability.



Also, as the company supplies so much FSC® boxing, it can purchase cost effectively, so there's no price premium for using FSC® compliant products.

Routine maintenance and boiler servicing is simplified too. With site made boiler casings they're usually damaged or destroyed during removal, which requires their replacement or re-manufacture, as well as re-fitting, all of which adds labour and materials costs. As Encasement's



pre-formed boiler casings are self-supporting, they can be easily removed and replaced in seconds, dramatically reducing the time maintenance engineers need to be on site along with the associated cost.

01733 266 889
www.encasement.co.uk



Small changes, massive savings: heating secrets explained by Sentinel

Social housing organisations that join Sentinel's CPD learning seminar at the Homes Show, Olympia will be in for a revelation about the significant potential savings they could be achieving with regard to heating provisions. The boiler manufacturer endorsed water treatment specialist will explain how a few small changes to heating system care can save registered landlords hundreds of thousands of pounds for every 1,000 boilers – and improve tenant satisfaction to boot.

Sentinel's mission has been the same for 30 years: to protect boiler and heating system components from the damaging effects of corrosion, which is the inevitable consequence of poor water quality. Corrosion can lead to a multitude of devastating problems within heating systems including complete boiler failure, breakdowns, premature repairs and parts replacements, cold spots in radiators (or radiators that fail to provide almost any warmth at all), higher heating bills, and lower energy efficiency.

The prevalence of the problem has been highlighted by research and testing conducted by major boiler manufacturers: 87 per cent of call outs are to systems without correct water treatment. This means registered landlords are

currently missing an opportunity to maximise boiler longevity in their housing stock. Feedback from providers and contractors suggests that a significant percentage of boilers last around 10 years, not reaching their projected lifespan. Since heating provision cannot cease, the cost of getting these systems back on their feet simply has to be absorbed.

Carefully administered water treatment can protect heating systems from the effects of corrosion for life for a surprisingly low cost. This true Value for Money solution benefits both registered landlords and tenants by extending system longevity, preventing premature repairs and breakdowns, lowering heating costs, optimising heat transfer and energy efficiency, and ensuring that homes are warmer.

Sentinel's unmissable session, titled 'Delivering Value for Money in heating provision: how small changes can deliver large savings', will be presented by the company's UK Sales Director, Craig Mitchell, on Wednesday 22nd November at 11.45am. At the show, Sentinel will also be discussing their revolutionary upcoming innovation on stand H143.

01928 704330
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Development offers excellent performance

A new development in Orpington, Kent, by award-winning developer London Square, has been fitted with Kingspan Kooltherm K106 Cavity Board, helping to achieve external wall U-values of 0.16 W/m²K with a slim construction. The product is part of Kingspan's new K100 range of premium performance insulation boards which boast a thermal conductivity of just 0.18 W/m.K across all available board thicknesses. In addition to its inherently outstanding thermal performance, Kingspan Kooltherm K106 Cavity Board also features a water-tight, vapour-open polypropylene fleece outer facing which protects against moisture penetration.

01544 387 384 www.kingspaninsulation.co.uk



Security Switches just got better!

DANLERS Outdoor Security Switch range are neat and compact and now benefit from an IP66 rated polycarbonate enclosure and therefore can be installed across a greater range of challenging environments. The product range includes: IP66 Compact Person Detector with both improved time lag options and upgraded photocell range of 10-1000 lux together with a photocell inactive feature, IP66 Twilight Switch turns lights ON from Dusk to Dawn, new IP66 Twilight Switch featuring DANLERS 'Intelligent' Photocell which reduces risk of hunting and over illumination, IP66 Dusk Switch with new 'Intelligent photocell' and LED feedback.

01249 443377 www.danlers.co.uk



Homes 2017: dedicated to housing



In partnership with the National Housing and National Leasehold Group, Homes 2017 is the only housing event in the UK dedicated to residential development, strategic asset management and procurement solutions.



Key speakers include...

- Sir Edward Lister, chairman, Homes and Communities Agency
- Jayne Dunn (labour), cabinet member for neighbourhoods and community safety, Sheffield City Council
- Professor Paul Cheshire, department for geography and environment, London School of Economics
- Ann Santry CBE, chief executive, Sovereign
- Claire Kober (labour), leader, Haringey Council
- Trudi Elliott CBE, chief executive, Royal Town Planning Institute

Attended by over 3000 housing sector professionals from housing associations, local authorities and the commercial sector, Homes is an opportunity to explore the latest thinking on housing supply, discover the latest housing innovations, speak to leading housing suppliers and be inspired by expert minds from across the housing industry.

LEARNING

Homes boasts the housing sector's largest free (fee applies to commercial organisations) learning programme, offering talks, seminars and panel debates.

Five theatres will cover topics ranging from strategic asset management, residential development, efficiency, fire safety, home ownership, planning, regeneration, technology, people, finance and Build to Rent.

Senior representatives from the Government, local authorities, housing associations and the commercial sector ensure that every base is covered in addressing the sector's key challenges at the event.

STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT

The strategic asset management stream of seminar sessions will explore the latest thinking and best practice around repairs and maintenance, strategic asset management, partnership models and innovations in energy management. Set in an environment for informed debate and discussion,

attendees will leave with a 'tool kit' of take-home solutions which can be implemented straight away.

BUILD TO RENT

Build to Rent is now seen as a realistic solution to the housing crisis. The increase in these developments recently is a visible sign of this, especially in the capital, where large scale sites are providing quality and affordable homes. Homes 2017 features a stream of sessions dedicated to this tenure type.

FINANCE, EFFICIENCY & TECHNOLOGY

Since the introduction of yearly 1 per cent rent reductions in 2016 there has been an increasing onus on the sector to provide value for money and to deliver cost savings. This stream of sessions will showcase how organisations are realising savings and efficiencies through innovative financial management, underpinned by current and emerging technologies.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Residential development of new homes, across all tenures, is at the forefront of the sector's mind. Across the two there will be leading content to help attendees get to grips with the latest innovations and thinking, which can help companies meet the housing supply challenge.

HOMES 2017 takes place at Olympia, London 22-23 November 2017. Secure your free (Fee applies to commercial organisations) ticket today at homesevent.co.uk/visit

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Product Focus



EnviroVent

www.thefanhero.com

As part of its commitment to social housing providers, EnviroVent, has launched a Condensation and Mould Awareness workshop to help housing associations and local authorities to be better equipped to deal with these issues. Through the free workshops, EnviroVent aims to help social housing providers to reduce the burden on their maintenance teams during the colder months when problems with condensation and mould are more likely to occur. The company has launched a dedicated website, where social housing providers can find out more about the workshops and easily book their free place.

Consort Claudgen

www.consortepl.com

Consort has introduced new low surface temperature heaters with a digital heating control which offers a seven-day programme with three heating periods per day. The LSTE and PLSTiE models have concealed digital control located on the side of the heater which includes an easy-to-read display, four large control buttons with audible and tactile feedback and an electronic lock to prevent tampering with the controls. These heaters have a maximum surface temperature of 43°C making them perfect for environments with vulnerable people such as children and elderly residents. For more details, visit the website.



Kiwa

www.kiwa.co.uk

Kiwa Watertec has launched its own certification scheme for thermostatic mixing valves and tempering valves. This new scheme is robust and offers manufacturers an alternative approach to gaining approval for thermostatic mixing valves (TMV2 and TMV3) and tempering valves. The scheme includes initial product testing, manufacturing process checking, as well as an ongoing testing program over the lifetime of the product. TMVs control water temperature for showering, bathing and handwashing and prevent scalding by blending hot water with cold water to ensure constant, safe outlet temperatures.

TME

www.tmethermometers.com

TME's new KM08 Shower Probe has an inbuilt collection 'cup' which collects water samples whilst simultaneously recording temperature. This halves the amount of time taken for such tests, which currently involve a time consuming two-stage process of collection and testing. MD, Tom Sensier: "The KM08 Shower Probe is faster, more practical and more accurate, eliminating any time delay between collecting and testing shower water." Multiple water tests are undertaken every year in UK hospitals to prevent the spread of legionella in hot water and heating systems. Shower heads are a particular focus as Legionnaires' disease is contracted by inhalation of legionella.



Strongdor Limited

www.strongdor.com

Strongdor Limited manufacture and stock a comprehensive range of steel security doors. What sets Strongdor apart from the industry is the high level of customer service and outstanding quality of their custom-made steel doors. Steel door experts, Strongdor offer glass profile as well as solid double and single fire exits and personnel doors which can be configured with louvre and vision panels. The doors can also be specified with a combination of fire, acoustic, security, ballistic and blast ratings. Powder coated, including C5I marine options, to give a high standard finish, the doors come with a choice of quality hardware.

Vectaire

www.vectaire.co.uk

Vectaire's new catalogue details its ranges of high performance, low energy, economical, residential ventilation units with EC motors. It describes Whole House Heat Recovery Units which control condensation and pollution by providing low level, continuous ventilation in up to seven rooms with up to 93 per cent heat exchange efficiency. Also shown is the WHHR Mini DC (for small dwellings, student accommodation etc), and the slimline Microbox DC, particularly suited for apartment installation. Finally, the Elegance and Elix are dMEVs available for installation into toilets, bathrooms, utility rooms and kitchens.



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Lessons for landlords: Fire and carbon monoxide safety

James King of FireAngel shares his top tips with private and social housing landlords on installing the most appropriate levels of fire and carbon monoxide (CO) protection throughout rental properties.

Recent National Housing Federation research has shown that housing associations throughout Britain currently provide more than 2.5 million homes for over five million tenants. Back in 2014, more than two million private landlords also let over five million properties, a figure that will have undoubtedly have increased over the last three years.

These statistics evidence that an increasing proportion of the UK's population are living in either private or socially rented accommodation. However, did you know that these individuals are seven times more likely to have a fire than those who own their home? For landlords, ensuring the safety of their tenants, specifically with regards to fire and CO safety, is more paramount than ever. According to a recent report compiled by Property Wire, over half of UK private landlords have conducted fire safety checks throughout their property portfolio in response to the Grenfell Tower disasters.

The correct fire and CO protection required for each rental property can initially appear a confusing and complicated process. However, by following these simple steps, landlords can not only follow best practice, but also provide tenants with the most appropriate levels of protection.

TIP ONE: UNDERSTAND YOUR LEGISLATION

In order to achieve compliance with relevant legislations, landlords must first understand the specific regulations that apply to themselves and their properties. UK fire safety regulations are predominantly dependant on two factors. Firstly, the type of property being rented, and secondly, its location. With regards to legislation in England specifically, it is recommended that all private landlords should refer to the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015, as fire safety legislation is enacted differently under the three jurisdictions of England & Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The Housing Act 2004 applies to all residential properties including Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO). A HMO is a property that is shared by three or more tenants who are not members of the same family. The act is enforced by the Local Housing Authority, which in most cases will be the Local Council Housing Department. However other pieces of fire safety legislation can be applied to HMO's.

Fire safety in the common areas of HMO's, blocks of flats or maisonettes are controlled by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, and this order lays down the legal requirements. Landlords of HMO's must consult the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in addition to the Housing Act 2004 for further guidance.

UK Fire Building Regulations are based on a range of different documents and outline varying levels of protection. BS 5839-6 is a useful resource for understanding the recommended fire detection in domestic premises as it summarises the code of practice for the design, installation, commission and maintenance of fire detection and alarm systems. Landlords must research these regulations carefully to ensure they install the appropriate types of protection required.



TIP TWO: CONDUCT FIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS

All landlords, whether private or social, should have an in-depth understanding of the Fire Safety Order (FSO). The legislation states that there must be a listed 'responsible person' who not only complies with all relevant legislations, but also conducts fire risk assessments. If there is no employer, the responsible person is the individual who has control of the premises, which is often the landlord with regards to rental accommodation.

When conducting fire risk assessments, it is recommended that landlords follow the fire risk assessment template provided by Gov.uk. However, they should also be aware of their duties in relation to local housing authorities under the Housing Act 2004, while also being compliant with the property's local fire and rescue service, as per the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. It is also recommended that individuals refer to LACORS as an essential resource for landlords to refer to when making this decision.

TIP THREE: INSTALLING APPROPRIATE FIRE SAFETY SYSTEMS

Understanding what types of alarms are required and where they should be installed may initially appear confusing. Current Building Regulations in England and Wales (Approved Document B) stipulate a Category LD3 detection system with alarms only in circulation spaces that form part of the escape route.

However, minimum standards in properties constructed in Scotland and Northern Ireland must meet Category LD2, requiring additional protection in rooms that present a high fire risk to occupants, such as the kitchen and living room. It is best practice for landlords to abide to Category LD2, regardless of where their rental property is located throughout the UK, as this offers tenants a greater level of protection.

Private landlords in England must abide by the 2015 (England) fire safety legislation, which requires a Category LD3 protection.

This requires at least one smoke detector on every storey of a rental property and a carbon monoxide alarm in any room that contains a solid fuel burning appliance (for instance, a coal fire or wood burning stove). Failure to comply with these regulations not only puts tenants at risk, but is also prosecutable of up to a £5,000 fine.

With regards to private rental properties in Scotland, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 requires private landlords to install a higher level of protection throughout the property, ensuring Category LD2 requirements are met. This requires additional protection in rooms that present a high fire risk to occupants such as the kitchen and living room.

For private landlords in Northern Ireland, there are no specific fire safety legislations regarding private rental properties. However, under the Private Tenancies (NI) Order 2006, landlords must ensure their properties are "Safe and would not cause injury or death to occupants." Landlords must also be able to prove "due diligence" in court, should a fire occur.

Fundamentally, fire safety in rented accommodation should be equivalent to that of a new build. It is therefore best practice to follow fire safety specified in the building regulations which is category LD2.

To provide overarching protection and prevention, anti-fire products suitable for both the accommodation and the tenant should also be installed. These include fire doors, fire blankets and extinguishers.

TIP FOUR: PUTTING ALARMS TO THE TEST

Once the appropriate alarm has been installed in the property, landlords are then under a legal responsibility to ensure the alarms comply with British Standards and are checked at the beginning of each tenancy to make sure they are working correctly. They should also make tenants aware of their own responsibility to check the alarm at least once a week, while also cleaning

them every three months.

TIP FIVE: GOOD COMMUNICATION WITH TENANTS

Although not a legal requirement, landlords should proactively communicate with their tenants, effectively sharing information that ensures their continued safety while living in their property. This includes educating them on what to do in the event of a fire, e.g. outlining all exit routes and assembly points, while also identifying the potential fire hazards present within the property.

Over half of accidental domestic fires are caused due to cooking, while 36 per cent are caused due to the misuse of electrical items. Landlords should install signs and instructions throughout the property in a range of languages that outlines all of this information.

Landlords should also consider implementing a smoking policy to reduce the potential risk of smoking related fires. Tenants should be made aware of the potential fire dangers smoking presents and could additionally install smoking points with safe cigarette disposal outside of the property.

In light of recent events, ensuring the safety of tenants has never been more paramount. In order to successfully achieve this, landlords must take a proactive approach to the fire safety of their property by following best practice to provide tenants with the highest level of protection available. In England, the 2015 fire safety (England) legislation falls short of the protective levels recommended in the BS 5839-6 guidance, which is designed to help private landlords meet and go beyond legislative requirements. Fundamentally, it provides a level of fire safety that is recommended as best practice, and it is highly advised to follow guidance to provide tenants with the highest level of protection available.

James King is the sales director for FireAngel

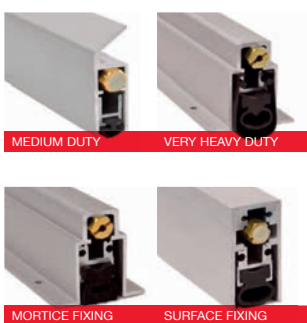
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Mustang® Aluminium Guttering chosen for new housing development

Shingler Homes are an independent housing developer, who are keen to provide individual, attractive homes that are sympathetic to their surroundings. Their most recent development – Perry View, Baschurch only 10 miles from Shrewsbury is such a development. Direct Roofing Services, who are a long-standing customer of ARP, approached Shingler Homes to quote them for the Mustang® Seamless Aluminium Guttering System as it is a high-quality, cost effective gutter system, that is quick, easy and safe to install, and requires no maintenance. The Mustang® Seamless Aluminium guttering was the obvious choice, as it is produced on site from coated aluminium coil, roll formed in continuous lengths of up to 30 metres. Brackets stop ends and outlets are installed at ground level before the finished section is raised to roof line level for the final fixing. As the gutter lengths are cut to size on site, there is no waste and the aluminium coil is made from recycled aluminium, which once it reaches to the end of its useful life, can be further recycled. Mustang® Seamless Aluminium Gutter system is the ideal solution for housing developments as it is a strong, sustainable, leak-free, no maintenance option, which has a life expectancy in excess of 30 years.

0116 289 4400 www.arp-ltd.com

Residents at The Landmark apartments in Dudley stay safe with SE Controls

An iconic and popular residential development in the West Midlands, The Landmark at Brierley Hill, is using smoke control systems from SE Controls to ensure escape routes are kept free of smoke in the event of a fire, allowing residents to exit the building safely.

Located at the Waterfront complex adjacent to the Merry Hill retail centre in Dudley, The Landmark was formerly the HQ for a financial services company before being acquired by investment property developer, Seven Capital, who converted it into 181 apartments with Colmore Tang Construction, all of which were sold off-plan within five months.

As the travel distance from some of the apartments to the building's five existing escape stairs was more than the maximum 7.5 metres allowable for code compliant naturally ventilated smoke control system within Building Regulations Approved Document B, SE Controls designed and installed four individual smoke ventilation solutions. Each of these was based on the specific requirements of each floor within the building

and combines both mechanical fan and natural smoke extraction.

The ground and first two levels have the largest floor areas and highest density of apartments, so an SE Controls SHEVTEC Extended Travel Distance mechanical fan system was installed to protect the corridors and three of the stairwells where apartments are located more than 7.5 metres from the escape stairs.

On the second, third and fourth floors, supplementary automatic opening vents (AOV) are provided to ensure additional stairwells and corridors are kept free of smoke to aid escape from apartments located within 7.5 metres of the stairs.

A further naturally ventilated system is used on floors five and six. Although these have the smallest floor area, a further dedicated escape staircase is protected by AOV louvres at the head of stairs. The main escape route in the seven-storey section of the building is also protected by a naturally ventilated smoke system, which covers all the floors.

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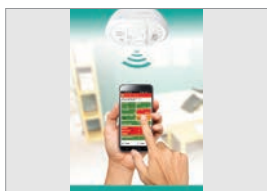
Following the launch of Aico's Mobile Training & Demonstration Units earlier this year, the visit to Scotland has proven highly successful with one of the Mobile Units spending a day at Port of Leith Housing Association and a day at electrical wholesaler Scott Coppola in Edinburgh. Aico's Mobile Training & Demonstration Units enable the company to deliver detailed Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm product and technology information, plus its CPD accredited Expert Installer training, right to customers' doors. Information boards on all Aico technologies and alarm ranges are installed within the units along with a virtual video tour of the company's manufacturing process.



enquiries@aico.co.uk

Aico AudioLINK seals the deal

Calico Homes in Lancashire has changed its Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarm specification to Aico Ei208 Lithium battery powered CO Alarms with AudioLINK data extraction technology. Calico has been fitting Aico Smoke Alarms into its properties for some years but only made the decision to fit Aico CO Alarms across its 4,600 homes in September 2016. The Ei208 is a quality, cost-effective CO alarm which uses sealed in 10 year life Lithium batteries, a highly sophisticated electrochemical CO sensor and Aico's multiple award winning AudioLINK technology. AudioLINK allows real time data to be extracted to a smart phone or tablet using the free AudioLINK App.



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The monthly Housing Management & Maintenance email newsletter is designed to provide you with the latest products and services, direct to your inbox. You can quickly gather a snapshot of information from up to 12 carefully selected companies and easily follow links through to further information on the website or go directly to the company's website. Go to the Housing Management & Maintenance website to subscribe.

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- Lightweight - 45kgs per m²
- High load bearing and impact resistance
- Timber, stone & cementitious effects
- Completely non porous
- Ideal for balconies, roof terraces and piazzas, for both commercial and residential use
- Frost proof
- Height adjustable/slope correcting support system ranging from 9mm up to 550mm

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t: 0118 391 4120 e: info@thedecktileco.co.uk