

HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

OCT/NOV 2020



Building Safety
Bill published

Cladding
removal delays
criticised

Ombudsman
getting quicker
& tougher

Landlords lose
millions in
unpaid rent



Evictions ban
extended



Adapting to change

Though the construction industry is now back on site, Covid-19 has not left it unscarred. AO.com managing director Anthony Sant speaks to netMAGmedia's Jack Wooler on how the virus has brought supply to the fore, and what the company has learned during the pandemic.

See report on page 24

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Features

24 Ask The Manufacturer

Adapting to change

Though the construction industry is now back on site, Covid-19 has not left it unscarred. AO.com managing director Anthony Sant speaks to HMM's Jack Wooler on how the virus has brought supply to the fore, and what the company has learned during the pandemic

34 Professional Services: Finance, Warranties & Procurement

Presenting social value

Andrew Morrison of AM Bid explains how to present social value

37 Safety & Regulation

Legionella concerns post-lockdown

Legionnaires' disease could be on the rise in post-lockdown properties, according to a recent report by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH). HMM's Jack Wooler investigates why this is, and the actions required under law for landlords

41 Safety & Regulation: Accessibility

The 'new normal' in access control

Intratone takes a look at how the latest access control technology can ensure tenant security and safety as we emerge from lockdown

43 Safety & Regulation: Smoke & Fire Protection

A proactive approach to fire safety

Nick Rutter of FireAngel explores what connected and cost-effective fire safety solutions can do to help

47 Technology: IOT

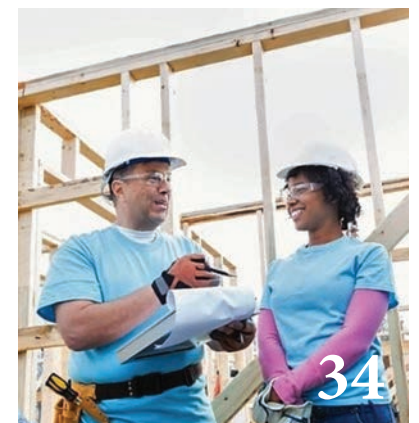
A property 'MOT'

Mark Lowe of Pinacel explores how conducting a property 'MOT' can provide an overall view of the health of a property portfolio

Oct/Nov 20 Contents

In this issue of **HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE**

Industry News.....	04
Directory.....	51



Products

Efficiency	
Heating & Renewable Energy	28
Maintenance & Refurbishment	
Bathroom Refurbishment	30
Cladding	30
Coatings, Sealants & Paints.....	32
Doors, Windows & Glazing.....	31
Flooring.....	29
Landscaping & External Finishes	32
Roofing.....	33
Professional Services	
Finance, Warranties & Procurement	34
Safety & Regulation	
Accessibility	40
Smoke & Fire Protection	43
Technology	
IOT.....	46

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Editor's comment

Responsibility has to mean something



Patrick Mooney,
News Editor

Welcome back to the first issue of the Housing Management & Maintenance magazine since our enforced period of inactivity caused by the Coronavirus pandemic. An awful lot has happened in the housing world in the interim, but the Grenfell Tower public inquiry rumbles on as indeed it will do for many, many more months, or even years, to come. It must be particularly difficult for the survivors of the fire and family members of the deceased to be barred from attending the inquiry in person. The reason given is due to safety concerns for all of those giving and hearing the evidence from the various designers and contractors involved in the refurbishment of the tower, and the need to honour safe distancing for all participants. Instead the Grenfell community has had to follow proceedings on a live feed on You Tube. They will have got little satisfaction from hearing designers and contractors continuing to avoid taking any direct responsibility for the events leading up to the fire. As understandable as the safe distancing procedures might be, it must be galling for the survivors and family members that similar safety concerns and considerations were not enjoyed by the residents of Grenfell Tower back in June 2017. During the refurbishment works which were completed shortly before the fire, many of the residents raised worries about the quality and standard of work in the high rise tower, but the residents also complained that at the time and subsequently no-one appeared to be interested in their views, or in doing anything about the issues they were raising.

WHY SO LONG?

More than three years after the fire, we have finally seen the draft Bill designed to improve the design and construction of residential buildings and the on-going day-to-day safety management of high-rise tower blocks. It is to be hoped that the Building Safety Bill is passed expeditiously and implemented a lot quicker than the programme of removing the dangerous, flammable ACM cladding panels from hundreds of tower blocks across the country. As deadlines for cladding removal works have continued to slip, the Government has set a revised deadline of late 2021 for all of the removal and replacement work to be finished. If this target is met, it will have taken a staggering four and a half years since the fire, for the same flammable panels as were on Grenfell Tower to be removed from several hundred high-rise residential blocks. For such dangerous materials to remain in place for this length of time is wholly unacceptable. Understandably this has appalled a great many people, including the powerful Public Accounts Committee. The Government has an incredibly busy agenda right now with the COVID pandemic and the Brexit process, but it cannot and must not let issues like residents' safety slide, or for safety to be compromised for want of adequate resources being made available. Surely the Grenfell Tower fire has taught us the need to provide proper budgets for essential works and that while cutting corners might save money in the short term, it can also have dire consequences. It's also clear the building regulations were not fit for purpose, despite repeated warnings in the shape of the Lakanal House fire and similar incidents at other high-rise buildings. Politicians could and should have taken responsibility; now they need to ensure that a much safer system and environment is put in place.

OFF THE STREETS

On a much more positive note, it was heartening to see the Homelessness Reduction Act has made a very encouraging start in preventing and alleviating the indignity of homelessness for about a quarter of a million people BUT it could achieve so much more if Council services were properly resourced and if there is a huge uptick in funding the building of thousands of new homes for social rent. Councils have been given the primary responsibility for preventing and alleviating homelessness, but they need ready access to a supply of new permanent homes, as well as decent temporary accommodation to deal quickly with emergencies. Action taken early in the pandemic to house many rough sleepers and homeless people in empty hotels is believed to have saved at least 250 lives. This type of response was highly creditable but something similar is going to be required this Winter if high numbers of deaths among those living and sleeping on the streets is to be avoided. Extending the evictions ban is a good start but this is only a temporary solution. We need to find a way for landlords to be recompensed for lost rent and for tenants 'at risk' to be given greater security of tenure. Hopefully our politicians will stand up and take responsibility for sorting this out.

Patrick Mooney



On the cover...

AO.com managing director Anthony Sant speaks to netMAGmedia's Jack Wooler on how the Covid-19 virus has brought supply to the fore, and what the company has learned during the pandemic

See page 24

Fears that social distancing rules could leave more homeless people on the streets

Places in homeless shelters and emergency overnight accommodation could drop by two-thirds because of social distancing rules to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving thousands of rough sleepers with nowhere to turn as winter approaches.

Charities and councils are assembling their plans to provide winter accommodation for growing numbers of homeless people. Meanwhile night shelters are still closed to prevent the spread of the virus and charities fear that if they reopen they will only be able to house a fraction of those they previously could.

Housing Justice, the national membership charity for night shelters, said social distancing meant if and when they reopened, winter shelter capacity would be reduced by around two-thirds, meaning less than 1,000 beds will be available through their network.

In previous years the organisation used dormitory-style shared rooms, but this year it is hoping to offer private rooms or self-contained pods within larger rooms. To stay COVID-safe, Housing Justice will need to rent more space and employ more staff, meaning the cost of running a single shelter will triple in most cases, from around £25,000 for three months to £65,000.

Kathy Mohan, the organisation's chief executive, said last winter they provided more than 2,600 beds and supported over 9,000 people. "It is certain that cold weather night shelter projects will offer significantly fewer beds this winter, in many cases where shelters can run they will look very different to what has gone before and in some cases projects cannot run at all."

She added it would "present huge challenges for local authorities and homelessness services as they seek to plug this gap in provision, at a time when homelessness presentations will inevitably increase."

Councils are also making plans amid uncertainty. Councillor Darren Rodwell, London Councils' executive member for housing and planning, said: "We're working flat out to arrange on-going homelessness support over winter ... We're doing everything we can to keep rough sleepers in accommodation – not only for their own safety but also to help minimise the spread of the virus."

"In London, we're spending an extra £97m on homelessness and rough sleeping this year



"It is certain that cold weather night shelter projects will offer significantly fewer beds this winter, in many cases where shelters can run they will look very different to what has gone before and in some cases projects cannot run at all."

Kathy Mohan, Housing Justice

because of COVID-19 and the funding we've received from the Government is nowhere near enough to meet these fast-rising costs."

At the height of the pandemic, rough sleepers were given shelter in hotels and other accommodation through the Government's 'Everyone In' scheme.

Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick, claimed the scheme had taken 90 per cent of homeless people off the streets. But figures collated by outreach workers in London showed numbers of rough sleepers were up by a third during lockdown compared to the previous year.

A quarter of private landlords have lost rent during the COVID crisis

Almost a quarter of private landlords in England have lost significant amounts of rental income as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, with overall losses estimated at hundreds of millions of pounds according to a major survey.

The research found that 19 per cent of landlords had lost up to half of their usual rental income as a result of the unprecedented health crisis, while another three per cent had lost more than half.

The on-line survey was conducted by pollsters YouGov for the National Residential Landlords Association. It found the average loss per landlord was between £751 and £1,000. If replicated across the sector as a whole, the total rent income lost by private landlords in England as a result of COVID is between £328m and £437m.

The same survey found nine per cent of landlords plan to leave the rental market altogether with another seven per cent saying they will sell some of their properties over the next 12 months.

Of those surveyed, 61 per cent let just one property and 34 per cent are retired, with rental income representing all or part of their pension. As a result the NRLA argues it is unsustainable to expect landlords and tenants to allow rent arrears to build up indefinitely.

RESCUE PACKAGE

The NRLA has been leading calls for an urgent financial package from the Westminster Government to pay off COVID related rent arrears and sustain tenancies, citing examples set in Wales and Scotland where interest free, Government backed hardship loans for tenants to cover rent arrears have been established.

Ben Beadle, Chief Executive of the NRLA, said: "Where COVID has caused difficulties for tenants, the vast majority of landlords have reached agreements with them to avoid problems. That said, most landlords are not property tycoons and cannot be expected to go indefinitely without any or only part of the rent they are owed."

"To date there has been no direct financial support for the rental market, with individual landlords unable to access small business grants or bounce back loans. The furlough scheme is ending, benefits do not cover average rents in any given area and the mortgage deferral scheme only builds up the amount landlords have to pay for the remainder of the term of their mortgage."

"The Government needs to step in and ensure tenants and landlords in England have the same level of support being provided in Scotland and Wales to pay off rent arrears and sustain tenancies."

Record number of 'serious detriment' cases among social landlords in 2019/20

England's social housing regulator has said it identified the potential for serious harm to tenants in a record number of 15 cases in 2019/20, up from six in the previous year.

In its latest annual consumer regulation review setting out themes and lessons from the cases, the regulator said this "significant" increase was driven by referrals relating to local authority landlords.

As well as being clear on health and safety requirements, it said social landlords should focus on treating tenants fairly and take into account their diverse needs, responding to complaints effectively including those from shared owners, and maintaining robust governance arrangements supported by good quality data.

Reports to the regulator of possible consumer standards breaches at councils were up more than three-quarters on the previous year and the regulator found there was a "serious detriment" in seven cases. In the previous four years between 2015/16 and 2018/19, only two councils breached the regulator's consumer standards and met the serious detriment test.

"We attribute this to an increased level of communication with the sector, particularly the level of engagement with local authorities about the importance of complying with the consumer standards," the report said.

"We consider this to be a material change in the way local authorities monitor and report their compliance to the regulator and is key in explaining the higher numbers of cases where we found a breach of the consumer standards and serious detriment this year."

The regulator received a total of 597 consumer regulation referrals in 2019/20, up 19 per cent from the previous year. Of these, 274 were within its remit. It investigated 143 of these for potential standards breaches, leading to the 15 "serious detriment" conclusions.

The proportion of self-referrals from social landlords rose from 31 to 38 per cent, while the proportion from tenants fell from 47 to 37 per cent. The report said several Home Standard breaches arose in 2019/20 in cases where HAS or councils "have failed to understand what is required of them to ensure tenants are safe in their homes".

It warned this is particularly a risk for landlords where housing management services are delivered by a third-party, such as with lease-based housing associations or councils using ALMOs.



Mayor wanted rents frozen to avert mass evictions in London

London mayor Sadiq Khan asked the Government for new powers allowing him to impose a two-year rents freeze in the capital and to stave off a huge rise in evictions.

The capital has 2.2 million renters and research from the Greater London Authority and YouGov estimated that a quarter of them had fallen behind on payments, or say they were likely to do so as a direct result of the pandemic.

Mayor Khan warned that half a million Londoners could face eviction because of arrears built up during the COVID-19 pandemic. The mayor's advisors cite a five-year rent freeze in Berlin, although that was part of a plan to slow down controversial gentrification of the German capital.

But representatives of private landlords attacked the power grab by the mayor saying such a move would be counter-productive and that instead, the mayor should focus his efforts on getting more affordable housing built.

Chris Norris, Policy Director for the National Residential Landlords Association, said: "Rent controls would be a disaster for anyone looking for somewhere to rent. As history and experience elsewhere tells us, all they would do is drive landlords out of the market exacerbating an already serious shortage of homes available.

"Rather than driving a wedge between landlords and tenants the Mayor should focus on using the powers he already has to boost the supply of available housing, including for private rent. Only then will he make any discernible impact on improving the affordability of housing across the capital."

The capital has 2.2 million renters and research from the Greater London Authority and YouGov estimated that a quarter of them had fallen behind on payments, or say they were likely to do so as a direct result of the pandemic.

Khan made his request just days before the courts restarted hearing eviction proceedings in late September, after they were put on hold during the lockdown. Tenants living in lockdown areas continue to be protected from eviction.

"Without an operational vaccine, the economic fallout of COVID-19 will continue for months into the future," said Khan. "A rent freeze is only one part of a package of measures renters urgently need from the Government to ensure no one is forced out onto the streets as a result of this pandemic."

Khan said: "At every stage of this pandemic, renters have been treated as an afterthought by the Government, with protection measures only ever rushed out at the last minute. This uncertainty is causing unnecessary anxiety and stress. If Berlin can freeze rents for five years, there's no reason why London shouldn't be able to freeze rents for two years in these extraordinary times."

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Government extends ban on most evictions until next Spring

A complex legal framework over security of tenure has emerged after the Government changed the law to increase notice periods to six months – effectively banning the vast majority of evictions over the autumn and winter period, but leaving question marks over the rights of both tenants and their landlords.

The change in the law means there should be no evictions carried out in the run up to and over Christmas. The only exceptions are meant to be the most serious breaches of tenancy conditions, where tenants have committed anti-social behaviour, domestic violence or fraud, and the landlord wants to re-let their property to another tenant.

The Housing Secretary also confirmed that with coronavirus still posing a risk, if an area is in a local lockdown evictions will not be enforced by bailiffs. Guidance is also being issued to bailiffs that they should not enforce any rent arrears related possession orders in the weeks around Christmas.

Robert Jenrick declared the Government has put in place an “unprecedented package of support” to help communities through the pandemic, including strengthening the welfare safety net with a nearly £9.3 billion boost to the welfare system. This includes an extra £1 billion to increase Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates so that they cover the lowest 30 per cent of market rents.

COURT CASES RESUME

For renters who require additional support, there is £180 million available for Discretionary Housing Payments, an increase of £40 million from last year and which is for councils to distribute to support renters with housing costs.

Since 21st September courts have started to hear possession hearings again, but they have been

subject to new court processes and procedures which the Judiciary developed, during the seven months since cases were suspended in March. About 200 judges were given training to deal with housing cases as they prepared to deal with the backlog. The changes include:

- The prioritisation of cases, such as those involving anti-social behaviour and other crimes, as well as extreme rent arrears where landlords would otherwise face unmanageable debts;
- No cases from before 3 August 2020 will immediately proceed to hearing, but will have to be ‘re-activated’ by the landlord and then subject to a new review hearing, at least four weeks before the substantive hearing; and
- Landlords need to provide the courts and judges with information on how tenants have been affected by the pandemic. Where this information is not provided, judges can adjourn proceedings until the information is provided.

However, as many as 55,000 private renters are thought to have been given an eviction notice between March and August this year. They are considered to be at a high risk of eviction. Meanwhile cash-strapped councils fear they will be left to pick up the bill from any increase in homelessness that emerges in the coming months.

FURTHER PROTECTIONS NEEDED

Polly Neate, the chief executive of Shelter, said: “More than 300,000 private renters have fallen behind on their rent since the pandemic hit. And while some of the short-term protections – like longer notice periods – are welcome, they don’t apply to everyone, nor do they stop people getting deeper into debt.

“If the Government is dead set on lifting the evictions ban, then the best shot it can give struggling renters to keep hold of their homes is with emergency funds to clear COVID arrears.”

David Renard, the Conservative leader of Swindon council and the housing spokesman for the Local Government Association, said: “Councils will continue to do everything they can to help tenants who are in financial difficulty and cope with the likely increase in those seeking housing support. However, they face significant homelessness pressures which have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

“The Government should bring forward its pledge to end ‘no-fault (Section 21) evictions’, as well as commit to maintaining local housing allowance rates at the lowest third of market rents beyond the period it has committed to.”

Where tenants do experience financial difficulties as a result of the pandemic, the Government expects landlords and tenants to work together and exhaust all possible options – such as flexible payment plans which take into account a tenant’s individual circumstances – to ensure cases only end up in court as an absolute last resort.

According to independent research, 87 per cent of tenants have continued to pay full rent since the start of the pandemic, with a further eight per cent agreeing reduced fees with their landlords.

The original halt on possession proceedings was introduced at the end of March. It was extended in June and again in late August bringing the suspension to a total of six months. Under the new rules, notice periods for the most serious circumstances have been shortened. Since late August, notice periods must be at least 4 weeks where over six months of rent is due (if less than 6 months is owed, then 6 months’ notice must be given).

Ben Beadle, Chief Executive of the National Residential Landlords Association said: “It is disappointing that the Government has so far failed to heed the warnings of the NRLA and others that a financial package is needed to pay-off rent arrears built up due to COVID. In the end this is the best way to sustain tenancies. We will continue to campaign hard for this important measure.”

Policy vacuum feared after homelessness adviser steps down

The Government’s top adviser on homelessness shocked the housing sector by unexpectedly stepping down and sparking fears of a policy vacuum at a crucial time, with tens of thousands of tenants threatened with eviction.

Dame Louise Casey told housing and campaign groups that she had stepped back from her role as she wanted to make her “contribution to public service” from the House of Lords.

The Government’s target is to end rough sleeping by 2024 and it remains unclear who will now lead that effort. As recently as February, Casey was appointed to review the Government’s rough sleeping strategy but her role quickly morphed into crisis management due to the Coronavirus

pandemic.

As well as helping arrange thousands of hotel and temporary accommodation spaces to get rough sleepers indoors, she was credited with securing an additional £105m for more permanent accommodation for those people to move into. Nearly 15,000 people were helped under the Government’s ‘Everyone In’ initiative.

Jon Sparkes, the chief executive of charity Crisis. “We urge ministers not to leave a leadership vacuum. With the economic impact of the pandemic pushing more people into homelessness, we must redouble our efforts, otherwise we risk rates of rough sleeping rising with all the human misery this entails.”

There are worrying signs that rough sleeping is increasing again, in a trend that is likely to be exacerbated by rising unemployment as the recession bites.






Figures from the homelessness charity Streetlink showed that alerts by members of the public about rough sleepers increased by 36 per cent year on year between April and June 2020, reaching 16,976. Notifications were also higher than the previous quarter.

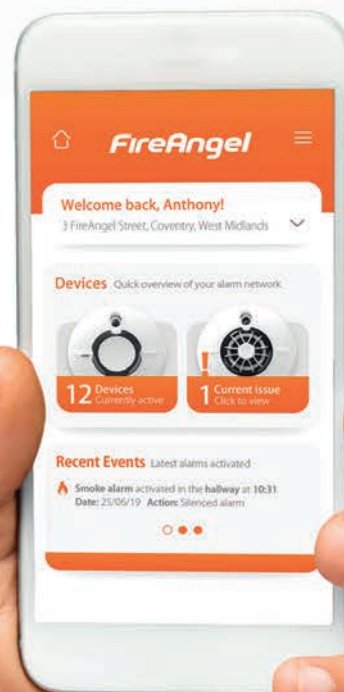
Official homelessness statistics showed there were nearly 5,000 tenants in England threatened with section 21 “no fault” evictions between January and the end of March before lockdown, a 25 per cent increase on the previous three-month period.

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Councils receive funding to provide housing and support for thousands of vulnerable people

A total of 274 local councils will share £91.5 million of Treasury funding to provide interim accommodation and support for vulnerable people, as part of the Government's long-term commitment to end rough sleeping.

The money can be used in a variety of ways, including by helping people into the private rented sector, secure interim accommodation such as supported housing, and assess the wider support these people need in order to rebuild their lives. An additional £13.5 million fund will be used to enable local authorities to tackle new or emerging challenges.

Applications are now being considered for a further £161 million fund intended to provide over 3,300 additional supported homes this year for those sleeping rough or currently housed in emergency accommodation. Details on successful bids will be announced in due course. This is part of a broader support package to provide 6,000 homes over four years.

Thousands of vulnerable people who were housed during the pandemic will be helped to stay in accommodation this year thanks to the allocations of funding announced. Of the £91.5m of allocations, £43.2m (47 per cent) will go to London boroughs, while £15m (16 per cent) will go to councils in the South East and £7.6m (8 per cent) to the North West, with the rest being split between other regions in England.

Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick said: "The incredible national effort to support rough sleepers during the pandemic has protected many lives and is widely regarded as one of the most successful programmes of its kind in the world. I'm hugely grateful to all those involved.

"This funding will ensure that vulnerable people and rough sleepers continue to have safe accommodation and the care and support they need, to ensure as few as possible return to the streets."

Chief Executive of St Mungo's Steve Douglas said: "We welcome the speed with which this funding has been allocated. It will be for both homes and support, and will build on the success of the 'Everyone In' initiative, which enabled us, and other homelessness charities and service providers, to help almost 15,000 people sleeping rough or at risk of homelessness to move into emergency accommodation during the pandemic, and to receive the support they needed. This undoubtedly saved lives."

Homelessness Reduction Act helps 243,680 people to keep their home or move into longer-term accommodation

A review of the Homelessness Reduction Act has found nearly a quarter of a million people who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless have been helped to keep their home or move into longer-term accommodation in the past two years.

The Act came into effect in April 2018 when it placed extra duties on councils to try to prevent homelessness, rather than just helping people to find accommodation after they had already become homeless. The new duties apply irrespective of whether a person has a 'priority need' or may be regarded as being 'intentionally homeless'.

It also placed a duty on public bodies to refer people at risk of homelessness, flagging those most vulnerable to homelessness and rough sleeping so they could receive support. In many respects it was the most ambitious reform of homelessness legislation in decades and it appears to be achieving many of its goals, although councils are spending many millions of pounds more on discharging their new duties, than they are receiving in additional grants.

Since the introduction of the Act, 365,000 single households (almost two thirds of the total number of households), including 28,000 people with a history of rough sleeping and over 15,000 people who were rough sleeping at the time of the assessment, have been assessed as owed help to prevent or relieve their homelessness.

Ministers say this means the Act is meeting its goal of helping people who previously would not have had access to support. The review of the Act has also provided feedback on where further work is needed, including on administration, data collection and joint working.

The Act has been backed by over half a billion pounds to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping over 2020 to 2021 – to break the cycle of homelessness and end rough sleeping for good.

ADDITIONAL HELP

Measures taken include the Next Steps Accommodation Programme, which funds local authorities and their partners to prevent people from returning to the streets, and the fast-

tracking of 6,000 additional homes for former rough sleepers across the country.

The Government has also put in place various support measures for renters, such as the eviction ban for six months and increasing notice periods to six months so most renters can stay in their homes over winter.

Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing Kelly Tolhurst said: "The Act is working well, with councils supporting the most vulnerable, meaning many more people who may not previously have been eligible for support now have the help they need.

"This Government is committed to ending rough sleeping for good by the end of this Parliament and we have backed this up with over half a billion pounds of funding in this year alone."

The Government is providing £4.8 billion councils to help councils to manage the impacts of COVID-19 which includes their work to support homeless people. This also includes £3.7 billion which is not ringfenced and over £1.1 billion specifically to support social care providers.

Responding to the review of the Homelessness Reduction Act, Councillor David Renard, the Local Government Association's housing spokesperson, said: "Since the Act was introduced, councils have continued to work hard to manage increased demand for support and find safe and secure housing for thousands of homeless people.

"The long-term impact of coronavirus on council homelessness services, which were already under significant pressures before the pandemic, is currently unclear. It is vital that the Spending Review shifts the Government's focus towards the key drivers of homelessness, including a lack of affordable housing, welfare-related poverty, and a lack of an integrated prevention approach.

"This means Government investment in homelessness prevention, giving councils the powers to build the desperately-needed new generation in social housing the country needs and ensuring that the role of the local safety net is adequately resourced."



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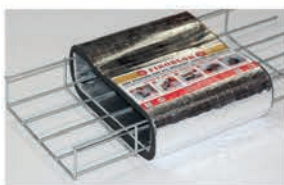
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AROUND PIPES



2 HR PROTECTION
VENTILATION
DUCTING



2 HR PROTECTION
ELECTRICAL
TRUNKING



2 HR PROTECTION
CABLE BASKETS
AND TRAYS



67 MINS PROTECTION
FLUE PIPE
PROTECTION



67 MINS PROTECTION
FIRE AND THERMAL
PROTECTION FOR PIPES

PRODUCT 13, 16 & 18 - COLLARS, SADDLES AND MULTI PURPOSE BOXES

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NHF claims the housing waiting list is 500,000 higher than official figures

The real social housing waiting list in England is 500,000 households bigger than official figures, according to data published by the National Housing Federation, which represents the majority of housing associations.

The findings are published in the Federation's annual 'People in Housing Need' report, a wide-ranging update on the state of the nation's housing crisis. The NHF claims it is the only research to analyse the true number of people in need of social housing in England.

It says the total number of people in need of a social home (provided by a HA or council) has reached 3.8m. This equates to 1.6m households – 500,000 more than the 1.16m households recorded on official waiting lists.

This bold assertion is followed up with another worrying statement, that due to the severe shortage of social homes, some of these people have been on their council waiting list for almost two decades and may never be housed.

The NHF goes on to warn that the number of people in need of social housing is set to rise rapidly as a result of the coronavirus pandemic - with low-income earners roughly twice as likely to lose their jobs. Worse still, those currently in need are likely to be forced further into poverty and debt when the eviction ban ends, and many more will become homeless.

The rent of social homes are typically set at 50 per cent of the market rent for privately rented homes in their locality. They are also the most affordable and secure homes for people on low incomes.

HUGE SUPPLY DECLINE

Last year only 6,338 new social rented homes were built, a fall of 84 per cent since 2010. New lettings from existing properties also fell by 17 per cent in the same time period and the most expensive areas of the country saw the smallest proportion of new lettings, despite having the highest number of people in need and on waiting lists.

In the last two years the number of people in need of social housing has increased by five per cent and 165,000 people, while the number of households has largely remained the same. This suggests that new and growing families are now suffering the worse effects of the housing crisis. The report shows that there are now 3.4m people living in overcrowded homes.

Now in its second year of publication, 'People in Housing Need' reveals the true number of people hit by housing problems, what issues they are facing; such as unaffordability, overcrowding or poor conditions, and what housing would be most appropriate to meet their needs, based on income and circumstances.

This bold assertion is followed up with another worrying statement, that due to the severe shortage of social homes, some of these people have been on their council waiting list for almost two decades and may never be housed.

Previously, council housing waiting lists were the only way of measuring how many people needed social housing. But these lists, which only record people who apply and meet strict criteria, are a way of prioritising the most vulnerable. They are not intended to be an accurate reflection of everyone in need of an affordable and secure home. The NHF claims their report gives a clearer and more accurate picture of housing need across the country.

The largest number of people on the real 'social housing waiting list' are in private rented homes (1.5m), with many having to choose between living in poverty and getting into debt in order to keep a roof over their heads. Others are living in overcrowded, poor quality or unsuitable homes, stuck with friends, family or ex partners because they cannot afford a home of their own, or are homeless.

BUILDING STIMULUS NEEDED

Official figures show the number of homeless children living in temporary accommodation has risen by 88 per cent since its low point in 2011 to 129,380.

A coalition of charities, businesses, banks, and think tanks has launched the Homes at the Heart campaign, calling on the Government to put building social homes at the heart of its plans for recovery from the coronavirus crisis.

A cross party committee of MPs recently completed an inquiry into building more social housing. It endorsed the NHF and Crisis' recommendation that the Government should invest £10bn a year in social housing. This would be enough to build 90,000 new social rented homes every year.

Kate Henderson, Chief Executive of the NHF, said: "Our report shows that the sharp end of the housing crisis is getting sharper, and at a rapid rate. Under-investment in social housing has left us with virtually no new affordable homes available for people on the lowest incomes.

"The real tragedy is that these are same people impacted the most by the coronavirus crisis, which had led to huge job losses for low income workers.

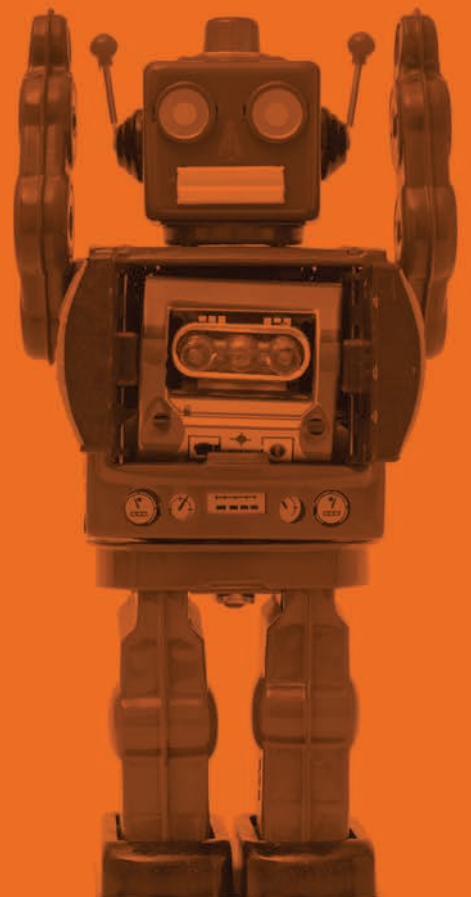
Everyone deserves a safe, secure and affordable home and social housing provides that vital safety net for low-income people. We are calling on the Government to commit to a once-in-a-generation investment in social housing and put homes at the heart of its plans for economic and social recovery."



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Building safety update for ACM clad high rises

For the first time since removal work of Aluminium Composite Material cladding panels first began, more high-rise buildings are now free of the dangerous covering systems than still have it on them.

The Government's latest progress report shows that 458 high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings were identified with ACM cladding systems and unlikely to meet Building Regulations. Remediation work (full cladding removal and replacement) has either completed, or has started on 341 high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings in England.

Of these, 231 buildings (50 per cent of all identified ACM clad buildings) have either fully completed the remediation process (167 buildings), or have had their ACM cladding systems removed (64 buildings) but not yet replaced.

There are 227 high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings still with ACM cladding systems in place and unlikely to meet Building Regulations in England. Of these, 110 buildings have started remediation work. A further 89 buildings have a remediation plan in place. There are five buildings, where it is still not clear what the remediation plan is, all of them are hotels.

The social housing sector has a better record for the completion of remediation work with 94 per cent either having completed or started remediation. 74 per cent of the 155 buildings have removed the ACM cladding, with 83 (54 per cent) having completed remediation. 58 per cent (121) of private sector buildings have either completed or started remediation. Of these, 56 have had their ACM cladding removed.

The total number of high-rise residential multi-occupied buildings of 18 metres or more in height, or more than six storeys (whichever is reached first) in England is estimated as of April 2020 to be 12,500.

Of these, 6,500 are private sector buildings (private residential buildings and student accommodation) and 6,000 are social sector buildings. Over 95 per cent of the buildings were identified as flat dwellings, with the remaining proportioned across Houses in Multiple Occupation, residential education and sheltered accommodation.

Grenfell Tower inquiry news – in brief

- Survivors and bereaved of the Grenfell Tower fire branded as “madness” rules **banning them from attending the public inquiry** in person. The inquiry restarted hearings in early September with builders of the refurbishment continuing to give evidence. But survivors and bereaved have had their participation in the inquiry restricted to watching a live YouTube broadcast of witnesses being cross-examined in front of the chairman, Sir Martin Moore-Bick, and his fellow panellist Thouria Istefhan. The inquiry said it is “planning for bereaved, survivor and resident attendance as soon as it is possible” and is considering a ballot system allowing in 10 members of the community at a time. The inquiry said it worked with the Government Property Agency (GPA) “to ensure our premises are as safe as they can be for those who need to attend. This includes taking account of the required physical attendance of individuals who are in more vulnerable groups.” The GPA approves the limit on the numbers of people allowed in each room in the venue, and these limits would not currently allow for extra attendees.

The restrictions are adding to tensions between the Grenfell community and the Government.

Members of Grenfell United have compared rules forbidding their attendance at the inquiry with rules (at the time) allowing the public to eat at a restaurant or drink in a pub.

- The Grenfell Tower inquiry must include a **separate investigation** into how “race and class” contributed to the tragedy, according to a group supporting more than a third of the deceased. The organisation, which represents 28 of the 72 individuals who died in the fire, submitted a statement to the inquiry chairman, Sir Martin Moore-Bick, requesting that an extra module be added to the eight modules which the inquiry is already looking at. This extra module would ask if the cost-cutting measures that helped spread the fire would have been sanctioned “if the tower block was in an affluent part of the city for an affluent white population”. The statement from the Grenfell Next of Kin group, accuses the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, of “contemptuous disregard” in the decision-making that led to the tragedy. “Systemic racism goes deep to the heart of the problem that caused the catastrophe. Questions around race and social

class is at the heart of this truth-seeking and we would be grateful if you can revisit it and add it as an extra module,” said the document. Of the residents who died in the fire, 85 per cent came from ethnic minorities. Official surveys have found that 40 per cent of high-rise residents in the social rented sector are from BAME communities, which makes up just 14 per cent of the country's population.

- Rydon, the lead contractor for the Grenfell Tower refurbishment project was tipped off that **the job was “ours to lose”** before the formal procurement process ended, following an “informal” chat at a CIH conference in Brighton in 2014, the inquiry heard. Rydon was duly appointed in spring 2014, after bidding against rival contractors Durkan and Mulalley for the contract. Stephen Blake, who was refurbishment director at Rydon for the duration of the project, was questioned about his longstanding relationship with the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO) and the procurement process which resulted in the firm winning the job. It emerged that Mr Blake had a “professional relationship” with Peter Maddison, director of assets and regeneration at KCTMO, dating back to the early 2000s when Mr Maddison worked at housing association Hyde. The inquiry heard that Mr Blake had forwarded an initial email from KCTMO's consultancy Artelia about the project to Jeff Henton, managing director at Rydon, describing it as “the Peter Maddison scheme which is right up our street”.
- The Celotex RS5000 insulation foam boards, widely blamed for spreading the fire, **were sold at a discount** of 47.5 per cent to Harley Facades, the cladding firm who worked on the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower as a sub-contractor for Rydon. The synthetic foam was not in the original architects' specification for the tower and Harley's project manager Ben Bailey admitted he did not check it complied with building regulations to prevent fires spreading through the external walls of tall buildings. The inquiry was told a salesman for Celotex pushed the idea of using Grenfell Tower as a case study for using the new polyisocyanurate foam insulation boards on tall buildings. The Celotex boards were fitted behind aluminium composite panels, also combustible, with a polyethelene core. Together with failures in the installation, the materials fuelled the deadliest fire in the UK since the second world war. It has since been withdrawn from sale.

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Tenants win big reduction in temporary accommodation rents

Hundreds of council tenants in temporary accommodation in east London have had their rents reduced by about 60 per cent following a four-year campaign against their landlord.

The tenants live in 250 properties at Custom House and Canning Town, in Newham, which were leased out by the council to the property management company Mears. The properties have now been transferred back into council management.

Tenants claimed their homes are unsafe and unhealthy, with issues such as crumbling asbestos floors, brown water running from taps, and leaky roofs. Those who had struggled to pay their rent, which they described as “sky high”, had fallen into arrears. Some of these issues were compounded during lockdown. Newham council says it will charge tenants a social rent and will respond to repair works needed in the homes, which have been used as temporary accommodation to house local homeless households. The exact rent reduction would depend on each property.

Rokhsana Fiaz, Newham's mayor, said: “This marks a real victory for the residents who have had historical issues with the management of the property by Mears, which I have been committed to address from the time I was a councillor in Custom House.

“Since becoming the mayor of Newham in May 2018, officers have worked tremendously hard with residents to address these issues, by challenging Mears to meet their responsibilities and now we've come up with an acceptable solution which causes minimum disruption for tenants.”

Mears said it had spent £400,000 annually on repairs to the properties, which were condemned for demolition by Newham council. The company said the rent levels in the blocks were set by the council.

The properties will be demolished and replaced as part of a regeneration scheme. The council announced plans that will allow current Mears tenants who have lived in the area for five years and were placed into their homes by the council to receive a secure social rent home.

Grenfell Tower inquiry news – in brief cont.

- Ministers have backed away from a Phase One Inquiry recommendation to make it a legal requirement to carry out **three-monthly checks of all fire doors** in blocks of flats. Instead the Government is proposing making three-monthly checks compulsory only for fire doors in communal areas of high rises, with six-monthly checks required for entrance doors to individual flats in high rises. These timeframes double for buildings between 11m and 18m tall, while the Government said it is also seeking views on whether prescribing a frequency of checks for shorter buildings is “reasonable and practicable”. A Home Office consultation paper also waters down a call by inquiry chair Sir Martin Moore-Bick for mandatory personal evacuation plans (PEEPS) for all high-rise residents who would struggle to leave their building in a fire. Instead, it is proposing that PEEPs will only be required in buildings with a waking watch in place, mainly those with unsafe cladding. For other high rises, responsible persons would be required to pass details of people who self-identify as needing evacuation assistance to the fire service and keep them in a premises information box on site.

A Government statement said “the lack of personnel available to assist during an evacuation; the complexity of any particular building and the roles of those responsible; high turnover of residents; and data protection concerns” present practical challenges to implementing this measure.”

Sir Martin's phase one report found that missing or broken self-closers on fire doors at Grenfell helped smoke and toxic gases to spread through the tower. While Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick previously promised to implement the inquiry's recommendations “in full”, there is growing evidence of the Government rowing back from that commitment. Experts have suggested this

could well be because of the growing costs associated with full implementation of the inquiry report's recommendations, particularly on the private sector and complex issues over responsibility for payment and delivery.

- Ben Bailey, the project manager on Grenfell Tower's refurbishment for cladding firm Harley Facades, told the inquiry he had received **no training or qualifications in fire safety** in construction of buildings, in building regulations or industry codes of practice for design and installation of cladding and windows. Bailey said the only assessment of the performance of the Celotex insulation boards that he saw was of its thermal insulation, not its fire performance. He claimed he was unaware of various documents showing Harley's contractual responsibilities for ensuring that cladding met official guidance on the fire performance of external walls, nor requirements for the firm to comply with all building regulations and a national standard for walls with vertical rainscreens. He was also unaware that product literature for RS 5000 stated that its classification for safe use on buildings over 18m only applied to the system as tested and detailed in the classification report, which did not test it with combustible, plastic-filled aluminium panels.
- Police helicopters circling Grenfell Tower **did not fan the flames or cost lives** by misleading trapped residents into thinking they would rescue them, an investigation managed by the national police watchdog has concluded. The surveillance helicopters were not close enough for their rotors to fuel the fire and residents who believed they were there to rescue them had not been misled by 999 call operators, according to a report by the Metropolitan Police's directorate of professional standards under the management of the Independent Office of Police Conduct. However, the report concluded that 999 operators taking calls from trapped residents asking about the possibility of helicopter rescues had on occasion been “unclear” and recommended all emergency services call handlers be trained to be explicit that national police air service helicopters do not have rescue capabilities. The findings came three years after an initial complaint by Nabil Choucair, who lost six members of his family in the fire in west London on 14 June 2017. He had said the six helicopters deployed to fly around the tower almost continuously from 1.44am to 4.05am had offered a “cruel and tortuous hope”. In fact, their job was to send live video footage to incident commanders.



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Publication of Social Housing White Paper expected before the year-end

Ministers have indicated that the long awaited Social Housing White Paper will be published later this year. It is expected to redress the balance of power in the all-important relationship between landlords and tenants.

The themes in the Social Housing Green Paper, published more than two years ago in August 2018, are understood to be the basis of the new piece of draft legislation.

One of the five principles set out in the green paper was 'improving and speeding up how complaints are resolved'. The Government has already given the revamped Housing Ombudsman Service strengthened powers and resources to speed up the resolution of complaints and investigate systemic issues. These are likely to feature more highly in the regulator's views on social landlords as well.

The Government is also looking to carry out a focused survey to better understand how residents currently experience the complaints process. This will be used to assess whether residents understand the whole system and find it easy to navigate. This may see stronger opportunities for residents to obtain redress when things go wrong.

The National Housing Federation acknowledges that there is more housing associations can do to ensure the voice and experience of residents is listened to and valued. It has recently published a Together with Tenants Charter, which has a strong focus on complaints and redress.

The charter states: "When things go wrong – tenants and residents will have simple and accessible routes for raising issues, making complaints and seeking redress. Tenants and residents will receive timely advice and support when things go wrong."

The NHF is now actively working on plans for a rollout of the charter later this year. This will include sharing its learning from the 130 early adopters who worked with their residents to test the plan.

Of course we have been in a similar place in the last three years but regular changes in personnel at Secretary of State and Housing Minister positions has disrupted the progress made. We can but hope that this time the draft legislation actually makes it to Parliament.

Landmark draft Building Safety Bill published, with aim of reforming the construction sector

The long awaited Building Safety Bill has been published by the Government, more than three years after the Grenfell Tower fire which killed 72 people and prompted demands for a fresh and more professional approach to building design, construction and maintenance.

The draft legislation is now being consulted on ahead of its introduction to Parliament. It is intended to solve the widespread and systemic issues that have blighted the country's construction sector in recent decades and ultimately led to the shoddy working practices on the botched refurbishment of Grenfell Tower in west London. Among its headline making changes are:

- the creation of a national Building Safety Regulator, led by a chief inspector of buildings;
- a requirement for building safety managers to make sure all high rise residential buildings are up to standard; and
- an overhaul of the building control process.

Tower block residents will have a "louder voice" under the new regime, the Government has claimed, with the power to challenge inaction on safety issues from building owners. This will address one of biggest complaints made by Grenfell residents, who were raising concerns about refurbishment work and safety standards with their landlord and the council.

Failure to comply with the new rules could lead to unlimited fines or prison sentences of up to two years. The Health & Safety Executive is leading the work on setting up the Building Safety Regulator (the BSR), for which it is receiving a budget of £16.4m this year.

At the launch of the draft Bill, Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick said: "This is a significant milestone on our journey to fundamentally improving building safety and delivering real changes that will keep people safer in their homes.

"I am calling on the industry to actively prepare for these changes now. It is vital that the sector moves in step with us, to provide confidence and reassurance to residents that their safety is firmly at the heart of everything we do."

Lord Greenhalgh, the building safety and fire minister, said: "These are the biggest changes to building safety legislation for nearly 40 years, and they will raise standards across the industry and ensure building owners have nowhere to hide if they break the rules."

Some of the early responses from property owners have highlighted several difficulties they envisage in complying with the draft legislation,



including its complexity, the absence of clarity, competing organisational priorities and the sheer volume of high-rise buildings some would need to submit to the new regulator.

The potential high cost of becoming compliant with the new safety regime is also featuring as a major issue with building owners and residents, particularly leaseholders who fear they will have to bear the cost of any works considered to be necessary.

The new regulatory body will oversee the new, more stringent building safety regime for higher-risk buildings, which prioritises blocks of flats more than 18m high or more than six storeys tall in England.

It will also have a broader oversight role in the safety and performance of buildings; and in promoting improvements in the competence and organisational capability of all those working in the built environment.


HSE Chief Executive Sarah Albon said: "HSE fully supports the measures set out in the draft bill to move forward and enhance building safety across England. We are working with other parts of Government, key regulators and industry to establish how the new legislation can be implemented in a practical way and create a new regime that improves building safety standards and competence across the industry."

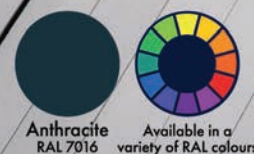
The HSE will also lead the Government's Joint Regulators Group (JRG), which will provide coordinated leadership to local authority and fire & rescue regulators during the transition to the new regulatory regime. It will support the development of close working arrangements between the BSR and local regulators, while continuing to work with early adopters to trial new safety approaches.

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Benefits claimants are still facing discrimination by landlords

Thousands of private landlords are trying to avoid letting their rental properties to benefit claimants, despite a Court ruling that imposing a blanket ban is discriminatory and unlawful.

An investigation by the BBC into 9,000 property listings on the OpenRent website found that about 75 per cent of listings said the landlords would not accept people on benefits. The term "No DSS" is often being used as shorthand for referring to people who are reliant on welfare benefit payments for some or all of their income.

The investigation followed the judge's ruling in July that "No DSS" rental bans were against equality laws. In the case a single mother-of-two had experienced indirect discrimination when a letting agent refused to rent to her. The mother had ended up homeless with her two children, when her case was taken on by housing charity Shelter and the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

District Judge Victoria Mark ruled at York County Court: "Rejecting tenancy applications because the applicant is in receipt of housing benefit was unlawfully discriminating on the grounds of sex and disability".

The ruling of indirect discrimination was due to the fact women and those with disabilities are disproportionately more likely to be in receipt of housing benefit, and therefore disproportionately affected by blanket "No DSS" bans. And this was, therefore, contrary to the Equality Act 2010, she said.

The case established "persuasive authority" in law rather than setting a legal precedent, so while it may help guide other courts in reaching future decisions, it is not binding on them.

Polly Neate, chief executive of housing charity

Shelter, said: "The court's ruling should be a wake-up call for landlords and letting agents to clean up their act and treat all renters equally. "We won't stop fighting DSS discrimination until it's banished for good. OpenRent should ban landlords from advertising their properties as 'DSS not accepted' - and remind them of their legal duty not to discriminate."

ELIMINATE BLANKET BANS

OpenRent said it advised landlords to assess tenants "on their own merits". Their listings include a "tenant preference" with the option for landlords to tick or cross the description "DSS income accepted". Some websites have removed "no DSS" from listings while others aim to advertise properties which do specifically accept people on benefits.

The company said it "fully supported Shelter's efforts to eliminate blanket bans" but its belief "based on speaking to our customers including surveying hundreds of benefit claimants directly, was that applicants should be made aware upfront of any conditions of renting a property". Some landlords had conditions in their mortgage agreements which prevented them from letting to benefit claimants, it said.

"We're committed to solving root causes like these, however in the meantime our customers are overwhelmingly telling us we should not be pretending the problem doesn't exist," founder Adam Hyslop said. "Hiding conditions of renting over which the landlord has no discretion only wastes time for all involved, and indeed makes the situation far worse for the very people Shelter is trying to help."

It said in the past year the website had let more than 25,000 properties to people on benefits and



"The court's ruling should be a wake-up call for landlords and letting agents to clean up their act and treat all renters equally. We won't stop fighting DSS discrimination until it's banished for good."

Polly Neate, chief executive of housing charity Shelter

when applying on OpenRent, tenants were always given the chance to explain their particular circumstances and suitability.

The National Residential Landlords Association's deputy director for policy and research, John Stewart, said it had "always advised landlords they should not blanket ban benefit claimants" but the "fundamental issue was the affordability of renting".

He said a variety of reasons could explain why rental listings said benefit claimants were not accepted, including: the timeliness and levels of benefit awards; a shortfall between housing benefit and private sector rents; banks and insurers seeing benefit claimants as higher risk; and landlords trying to avoid extra fees for tenants who would fail credit checks and references.

Growing evidence that private landlords are cutting rents

Private rents in parts of the capital have fallen by as much as 20 per cent as tenants leave London and other major cities, and the number of overseas students at British universities is drastically reduced.

Leading estate agents say average rents in London are down by at least seven per cent in "prime" areas,

but much bigger falls are reported in areas such as the Barbican estate. Data released by estate agent Hamptons showed that demand from people looking to rent in city locations across Britain is down 23 per cent.

Meanwhile the National Residential Landlords Association is reporting that 50.8 per cent of its member private landlords feel less confident about their prospects, with only 6.6 per cent feeling more confident.

This is partly reflected in the numbers of landlords who are buying and selling property, with 15 per cent selling some or all of their properties and 10 per cent buying. A stunning 72 per cent of landlords have frozen rents over the past year, with just 18 per cent imposing rent increases.

Aneisha Beveridge, head of research at estate

agent Hamptons International, said that with many people's priorities are changing, renters had joined homeowners in the "race to suburbia", in search of larger properties, with gardens and other facilities which they could not afford in city centre locations.

Other factors helping to push down rents are corporate relocations being put on hold in the wake of the pandemic and Airbnb investors, starved of tourists, deciding to put their flats on to the longer-term rental market.

The sharp decline in the number of overseas students is one of the main factors behind the current glut of rental properties in the capital and other major cities like Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle and Sheffield. The student market has become increasingly important to London-based and other metropolitan landlords.



Ombudsman hits target resolution timescale for the first time

Improved performance at the Housing Ombudsman has seen it meet its target for resolving customer complaints in an average timescale of under-six months for the first time in its history.

For 2019/20, the Ombudsman took an average of 5.8 months to conclude formal investigations into complaints, down from 6.7 months a year earlier. This is the first time the service has hit this key target. Further improvements are planned with a target timescale of resolving complaints within three months set for two years' time.

Repairs complaints continued to dominate its workload, representing 38 per cent of cases, while

complaints about health and safety-related issues soared from 4 per cent in 2018/19 to 12 per cent last year. However, no formal referrals were made to the Regulator of Social Housing regarding non-compliance with orders.

The Ombudsman received 14,903 enquiries and complaints in total last year, down from 16,294 in the previous year, and it closed 15,832 cases. It issued conclusions for 2,138 cases, down slightly from 2,214. Of these conclusions, it found maladministration or partial maladministration by a landlord in 834 cases (39 per cent), marginally up by two per cent from 2018/19.

For 2019/20, the Ombudsman took an average of 5.8 months to conclude formal investigations into complaints, down from 6.7 months a year earlier. This is the first time the service has hit this key target.

COMPENSATION PAYMENTS

In addition landlords were ordered to pay £412,214.54 in compensation to residents in 2019/20, with the Ombudsman issuing 1,618 orders and 999 recommendations.

Housing ombudsman Richard Blakeway claimed the service had achieved its "best performance against targets in recent times". He promised further improvements, saying: "Our service will be even more important as we move forward and we remain committed to delivering our plans to expand and change the service, ensuring the Ombudsman is integral to a healthier housing system."

From the start of 2020/21 the Ombudsman will share details of all severe maladministration findings with the regulator. It will also issue "complaint handling failure orders" and name landlords found to be at fault.

The Ombudsman and regulator have agreed to work closer together going forward with the former referring a wider range of cases to the regulator while a tougher set of powers for the redress scheme has also come into force.

The two organisations recently agreed a memorandum of understanding on their working relationship and greater sharing of information. This means that social landlords found repeatedly failing to handle complaints properly, or who the Ombudsman suspects of having systemic issues may find themselves being investigated by the regulator.

Ombudsman names and shames 12 social landlords

In a surprising move the Housing Ombudsman has named the social landlords most commonly found at fault in its investigations of complaints made by leaseholders.

After analysing almost 2,000 recent complaints from leaseholders and shared owners, the Ombudsman has warned the sector it is "consistently getting things wrong" on complaints handling.

The six housing associations and six councils with the highest number of maladministration findings against them following leaseholder or shared owner complaints, are: HAs - Clarion, A2Dominion, Notting Hill Genesis,

Peabody, L&Q and Orbit, while the councils are Southwark, Hammersmith and Fulham, Lambeth, Westminster, Haringey, and Camden (all in the capital).

The Ombudsman said the strong London focus among these landlords is "notable" and that councils in the capital "should consider what action they can take to improve their service in comparison to their counterparts".

The Ombudsman revealed that 72 per cent of cases relating to complaints handling resulted in a finding of full or partial maladministration against the landlord. This is double the average rate for investigations undertaken by the Ombudsman.

Difficulties getting through landlords' complaints procedures, delays and periods of inaction experienced by residents were to blame for the high overall figure of maladministration findings.

"This is a concern for the sector. Leaseholders and shared owners commit to a long-term relationship with their landlord. A poor experience of complaint-handling can damage this relationship and sour a resident's perception of their landlord." The Ombudsman further urged landlords to have clear lease arrangements in place "to avoid misunderstandings and dissatisfaction when issues arise".

Ministers have failed to deliver on cladding removal promises

A powerful cross-party committee of MPs has issued a damning criticism of the Government's efforts to deal with the removal of dangerous cladding from thousands of high-rise buildings across the country.

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) said it is 'unacceptable' that cladding remains on more than 2,000 residential buildings, trapping tens of thousands of residents in unsellable homes because the Government has failed to deliver on "pie-in-the-sky promises" to fix them.

Among its recommendations, the PAC wants the Government to begin vigorous enforcement action against any building owners whose remediation projects are not on track to complete by the end of 2021. It also wants to see greater transparency for residents throughout the removal and remediation process, with building owners required to meet higher standards of communication with residents.

It also said a further £1bn Government fund to fix other kinds of high-rise cladding was inadequate given the number of buildings affected, and that up to £3.5bn was likely to be needed. It wants Ministers to reveal their own impact assessment of this shortfall in terms of safety risks and financial impacts on private leaseholders and social landlords.

Lord Gary Porter, building safety spokesperson at the Local Government Association, endorsed the PAC's work and their findings. He said: "Leaseholders and residents have suffered enough. The Government has accepted that the building

safety system has failed for decades and it must now deal with the consequences, which includes funding remediation in full and pursuing those responsible through the courts."

More than three years after the Grenfell Tower fire killed 72 people, the MPs on PAC called on Ministers to "put a stop to arguing over who's responsible and put this right". It said the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had not done enough to address spiralling insurance costs and "nil" mortgage valuations, which have made thousands of homes unsellable.

RESIDENTS ARE TRAPPED

PAC said leaseholders are trapped in homes that are not being fixed because of disputes over responsibility with freeholders and developers, and residents have reported rising levels of mental health problems.

The Government estimates that more than 2,000 high-rise buildings need to be fixed because of dangerous cladding – at least 455 of them wrapped in combustible plastic-filled aluminium panels similar to those used on the Grenfell Tower.

Despite pledging £600m for works, the MHCLG has "missed its target badly" for Grenfell-style cladding to be removed from all high-rise blocks by June 2020, the PAC said. MHCLG has set a new target for works on the remaining high-rise blocks to be completed by the end of 2021.

The Government estimates that more than 2,000 high-rise buildings need to be fixed because of dangerous cladding – at least 455 of them wrapped in combustible plastic-filled aluminium panels similar to those used on the Grenfell Tower.

"Thousands of people have been condemned to lives of stress and fear in unsaleable homes with life-changing bills: for the works and for the fire-watch that is necessary to allow them to sleep at night until it is done," said Meg Hillier MP, the chair of the committee.

"The Government has repeatedly made what turn out to be pie-in-the-sky promises – and then failed to plan, resource, or deliver. The deadly legacy of a shoddy buildings regulation system has been devastating for the victims and survivors of Grenfell but is leaving a long tail of misery and uncertainty for those whose lives are in limbo."

The committee has also identified the danger to vulnerable care home residents of combustible cladding on their properties and is demanding an audit of which are at risk and stressed the particular danger to residents who might need significant assistance to evacuate.

By April 2020, cladding had been replaced on two-thirds of student accommodation blocks and nearly half of the social housing buildings, compared with only 13.5 per cent of private sector residential buildings.

Funding is the biggest barrier to green retrofit for most HAs

Almost three quarters of housing associations say a lack of funding is the biggest barrier to them rolling out an ambitious national retrofitting programme for social housing.

Research from the National Housing Federation has identified the major obstacles that more than 70 HAs say they face in their efforts to make their housing stock greener and more energy efficient.

Alongside funding challenges, over half of respondents (56 per cent) also reported a lack of clarity in Government policy was making it difficult to plan effectively or with confidence. The challenge of investing in energy efficiency improvements while also addressing other priorities like building safety remediation and Coronavirus support was raised as a barrier by 40 per cent of respondents.

HAs also reported concerns around capacity in supply chains (34 per cent) and about the lack of a

retrofit strategy or plan in the organisation (22 per cent).

Despite these barriers, many associations already have a strong track record on climate action, running warm homes programmes and building new homes that exceed current energy efficiency requirements. Social housing makes up 17 per cent of the UK's housing stock but produces only 10 per cent of the carbon emissions from housing.

The Homes at the Heart campaign is highlighting the role decarbonisation can play in tackling not just the climate crisis, but also the economic impact of Coronavirus. Retrofitting homes with measures like heat pumps and better insulation, as well as building new properties to high-energy efficiency standards, will create jobs and promote investment in infrastructure – as well as tackling the climate emergency.

Rob Wall, Head of Policy at the National Housing Federation, said: "Housing associations are eager to play their part in tackling the urgent threat of the climate crisis, but without further funding and policy clarity from Government these ambitions will be difficult to achieve.

"Greater certainty on funding and policy will allow associations to make long term plans for both decarbonising their existing stock and building new homes to higher energy efficiency standards.

"The NHF hopes to see the Government commit to a £3.8bn ten-year Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, as they committed to in their 2019 manifesto. This money, with a policy roadmap for standards, targets and requirements, will mean the Government and social housing providers can work together to reach the UK's target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050."

Green grants can pay for sorting out the insulation, but pay attention to the scheme's rules and your property's ventilation system

Property landlords and homeowners in England have been given the chance to make their homes more energy efficient, but they will have to act fast if they want to take advantage of the Chancellor's £2 billion 'green deal' boost.

Improvements which qualify for the grants of up to £5,000 per property include insulating your home to reduce its energy use or installing low-carbon heating to lower the amount of carbon dioxide your home produces. The grants can cover two-thirds of the cost of home improvements up to the maximum value.

However, speed is of the essence as you must redeem the voucher (which is obtained via a Government website) and ensure improvements are completed by 31 March 2021, using an approved tradesperson. The installer will request and receive payment from the Government for the costs covered by the voucher.

BIG SAVINGS

The Chancellor, Rishi Sunak estimates that 650,000 homes will benefit from the grants – to pay primarily for insulation to lofts, walls and floors. That figure might look and sound like a very big number, but it's actually only two and half per cent of the country's housing stock of 26 million properties, so there will be plenty of competition for the sought-after vouchers.

Low-income homeowners may qualify for a higher grant, of up to £10,000 but tenants do not qualify for the assistance and will need to persuade their landlords to apply for the grants, if they want any of the qualifying works to be done to their homes. Leaseholders and shared-owners do qualify for the scheme as they are property owners.

Why should people consider applying for the vouchers? Well the Treasury claims that utilising these vouchers could help families make an average annual saving of £200 to £300 on their energy bills. It also has the potential of supporting around 140,000 jobs and taking the equivalent of 270,000 cars off the road.

However, the grants will only pay for certain types of improvement works, which have been split into 'primary' and 'secondary' measures.

PRIMARY MEASURES

The voucher must be used to install at least one primary measure. This can be an insulation measure and/or a low carbon heating measure. The following insulation measures are covered by the voucher:

- solid wall;
- under floor;

- cavity wall;
- loft;
- flat roof;
- room in a roof; and
- insulating a park home.

The following low carbon heating measures are covered by the voucher:

- air or ground source heat pump;
- solar thermal (liquid filled flat plate or evacuated tube collectors); and
- biomass boilers.

If you install at least one of the above primary measures, then your voucher can also be used to help cover the cost of any of the following secondary measures:

- draught proofing;
- double/triple glazing (where replacing single glazed windows);
- secondary glazing (in addition to single glazing);
- external energy efficient doors (replacing single glazed or solid doors installed before 2002);
- heating controls; and
- hot water tank thermostats and insulation.

RESTRICTIONS

There are certain restrictions on using the vouchers. For instance the amount you get towards the cost of secondary measures cannot exceed the amount you get for primary measures.

In addition installing a new fossil fuel boiler, such as gas, oil or LPG boilers do not qualify for funding, as the Government is actively looking to phase out our use of carbon based heating systems.

Applicants also need to be aware that only local and approved TrustMark and Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) registered tradespeople can carry out the work.

In most instances, homeowners and landlords will have to pay at least one-third of the cost of home improvements. So if you want to have double-glazed windows installed for £2,500, then the Government would contribute £1,667 and the homeowner or landlord would pay the balance of £833.

Anyone considering applying for a voucher under the scheme should also consider a number of cautionary comments. Foremost among these is that some homeowners have already reported receiving scam calls, emails and texts telling them that they are eligible for the grants, while other scams claimed to offer specific energy-saving measures, such as insulation.

LIMITATIONS

While the vouchers can provide a much-needed boost for low-income households, the £5,000 cap – or £10,000 for the poorest homeowners – may not be enough for certain energy efficiency improvements to be made. For example, external wall insulation on a three-bedroom house is likely to cost in the region of £10,000. Vouchers up to the value of £5,000 will not cover two-thirds of the costs in this instance.

And finally, the findings from the latest English Housing Survey identified that over a quarter of households (27 per cent) reported they had an issue with condensation, damp, or mould in their home. These problems are sometimes the unintended consequence of improving the insulation of homes. Warmer houses and flats with weathertight windows and doors can result in homes with little or no movement of air, except when windows and doors are actually opened!

Unless some thought and effort is put into improving the ventilation of our homes at the same time as the insulation is upgraded, then we are in danger of creating a whole new problem.

IMPROVING PROPERTY STANDARDS

Given the strong links between tackling Covid-19 and establishing good ventilation indoors, an active exchange of air and ensuring air conditioning systems are operating efficiently; it would seem obvious that any system designed to improve insulation, should also incorporate measures to improve ventilation and prevent condensation and mould.

But someone who is no doubt about the merits of the scheme is Ben Beadle, chief executive of the National Residential Landlords Association. He is clear that private landlords should apply for the grants, saying: "Improving the energy efficiency of rental housing is good news for tenants, landlords and local economies.

"We encourage all landlords to make use of this as it will mean housing standards are improved, tenants will save money and it will reduce carbon emissions across the whole sector." This should not come as a surprise to anyone, as the NRLA has long campaigned for financial support for private landlords to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, while simultaneously increasing the value of their assets.

Written in partnership with Mitsubishi HUB





ASK THE MANUFACTURER

Adapting to change

Though the construction industry is now back on site, Covid-19 has not left it unscarred. AO.com managing director Anthony Sant speaks to HMM Features Editor Jack Wooler on how the virus has brought supply to the fore, and what the company has learned during the pandemic

As in all areas of life, the Coronavirus pandemic has introduced many challenges to the construction industry during recent months, and has highlighted both strengths and weaknesses across the board.

One of the most discussed has been supply chains, which have been highly disrupted for much of the sector, including landlords and housing associations.

"Let's make no bones about it, the Covid-19 situation has been an extraordinary challenge for the entire construction sector," begins Anthony Sant, managing director of AO Business UK - the B2B arm of online electricals retailer AO.com. "Suddenly, when lockdown was introduced, businesses were told they'd have to stop working; for some companies, it was not as easy as just picking back up where they left off."

AO.com however was in the very "fortunate position" of being deemed essential by the government - "you've got to have a fridge," notes the MD, "you

As in all areas of life, the Coronavirus pandemic has introduced many challenges to the construction industry during recent months, and has highlighted both strengths and weaknesses across the board

need to wash your clothes, you need to cook" - and as such has been open throughout the pandemic. It's this position that Anthony believes has provided the company with a "unique insight" into post-Covid supply.

Anthony says that “as Brits, we’re fairly cynical;” he’s always amazed how people are so surprised at the “simple fact” that they do what they say they will, and deliver when they say they say they’ll deliver

According to Anthony, the experience has highlighted weaknesses in supply right across the industry - and, as he found out from research with potential B2B clients, the ramifications of this on site can have major implications on entire projects. The pandemic has then worsened this greatly in his view, with many suppliers left unable to keep commitments or gain the moment necessary to get projects back on track - even outside of appliances, a chink in the chain at any point can hold up the entire show.

He tells me that working through such times has not been easy, but the lessons that this has taught him have been “invaluable,” and it is these lessons he hopes to share.

CHINKS IN THE CHAIN

Anthony first explains that after discussions with housebuilders, developers, housing professionals and landlords, the company truly began to unravel the extent to which projects rely on speedy supply (even pre-pandemic) - especially when it comes to the products he knows best.

“Appliances are probably the last thing to go in,” he explains. “While anything can happen during the period from start to completion - and anything will - the one thing that’s immovable is the completion date.” This rings true for landlords just as much as builders, he adds: “If there are tenants due to move in, it’s essential that the appliances promised are specified and delivered on time.”

A common issue here that was reported to AO was other suppliers’ inability to be in every postcode every day - it could be a week before the product they need arrives, which means a week’s delay on site.

“What you’ve got to remember is that a house unfinished - missing something as simple as a cooker hood - can hold up the completion of a project that’s worth many hundreds of thousands of pounds,” says Anthony. “And, if a landlord’s got a tenant with a broken appliance, how much rent is at risk while they wait for the appliance to turn up?”

Anthony says that “as Brits, we’re fairly cynical;” he’s always amazed how people are so surprised at the “simple fact” that they do what they say they will, and deliver when they say they say they’ll deliver. He suggests that this is something that may come from experience in other supply chains - noting that of course the pandemic has again introduced even greater problems here, with companies folding or suddenly being unable to keep commitments they’d made pre-lockdown.

One of the biggest challenges for businesses is when there are chinks in their supply chains, Anthony argues. He tells me that when Covid hit there were a huge number of companies who had made commitments they couldn’t make, or had inbound products that they simply couldn’t receive - especially b2b providers who’s customers were suddenly put on hold.

“If your world is just b2b supplying - housebuilders, landlords, whatever - and suddenly lockdown hits, you’re in a position where it’s hard to justify staying open,” laments the managing director. “Because of that, we have seen a number of distressed customers that have come to us out of the blue because they need supplies now, and their existing supplier isn’t back up and running yet.”

CHANGING THE FACE OF WHITE GOODS

Anthony went on to explain how the company came to be in this position, and the steps it took to offer such stability to both B2B and B2C customers: “20 years on, selling appliances on the internet isn’t such a big deal, but people forget that when John Roberts (CEO and Founder of AO.COM) first came up with the idea, Amazon was still only selling books on the internet through dial up connections.”

He continues: “Back in 2000, when John basically decided to go and change the face of the white goods industry, there’s no question about it - it was a hugely



bold statement.”

Anthony remembers how most people would go into an appliance store, make an order, and receive it at least 7 days later. “John’s attitude was different, however,” he says. “To give customers what they really wanted, we needed to do more.”

“He decided that for us to become a differentiator, and to give true customer service, the only way to do that was to own our own logistics business,” says the MD.

AO purchased Expert Logistics from Iceland which, according to Anthony was an “inspired” decision: “About three or four years ago I was at a round table discussion within the industry, and I was chatting to this person who said he sometimes wonders if John realised at the time how significant that was, or was he just lucky?”

“He knew,” says the MD. “Truly, he did.”

With “probably the best two man delivery fleet in the country” - so much so that other companies are now utilizing it - the retailer is able to cover all its own deliveries and be in “every postcode, everyday” as the customers were demanding. This means that buyers can get whatever they want from the company’s over-a-million-square foot of warehousing the very next day - from individuals, to landlords, to large scale developers.

This control over the chain is so important to AO’s ethos that the company even launched its own facility to collect and recycle old appliances - including the largest fridge recycling facility in the country, which covers more than just its own products.

“Why?” he asks, “because we wanted to make sure it was done properly.”

A JOURNEY

Taking things back to the present pandemic, Anthony tells me that this approach to bringing more and more of the supply chain under the same umbrella has been a “huge help” towards its stability during these uncertain



times. Of course, AO did not go wholly untouched during these troubles, but the MD believes it has actually strengthened the company's position in some respects.

"There have been a lot of changes, and it's been a really interesting journey - I've been blown away by how people have coped and what they've done," he says. "But, while it's been challenging and thought-provoking, it's really been one of those proud moments - just the fact that we've been open for customers has been really positive for us as a business."

He tells me how in three days the company immobilised all its offices to home working, including call centres aftercare, "everything," and introduced all the necessary social distancing measures in its warehouses - even opening new warehouse space in order to accommodate these rules. In doing so, he believes the company has provided an "essential lifeline" to the sector in such times of uncertainty.

Another strengthening the online retailer has found during the pandemic is the general move away from the storefront he has seen: "As John has said, there has been 5 years of market change in 5 weeks - this huge migration from the retail store to internet based solutions. I suspect that now people know how easy and trouble free it is, people will continue to buy on the internet."

He continues: "I can't predict the future, but it's hard to deny that people have changed their shopping habits. When was the last time you went anywhere except the local shop?"

"It takes 66 days to make a habit," Anthony adds, "and we're well past that now."

MESSAGE TO THE INDUSTRY

Bringing the conversation to a close, AO's managing director says that looking back he is "very proud" of the company's approach to these times, celebrating its "can do" attitude.

He explains how this attitude has helped define AO Business, and what it

AO's managing director says that looking back he is "very proud" of the company's approach to these times, celebrating its "can do" attitude.

offers over other routes: "Intrinsically, we are selling the same product, but a very different service - a washing machine is a washing machine - but in the business market, what people want to know is that you'll meet your promises and deliver when you say you will. And, in 20 years, we've met all our promises, and we always deliver when we say we will."

He provides me with a great example of this in action - another matter the company discussed with builders, where in order to meet social distancing measures and spread out their workforces, companies were changing a five day working week into a seven day working week. "What does that mean for AO?" says Anthony. "Well it's not a problem, because we deliver on Saturday and Sunday anyway; there are so many advantages in working in this retail-esque way of working."

"Saturdays and Sundays are some of our most popular days in the consumer market, so if a developer wants the same, it's not a problem."

The managing director concludes with a message to the industry that, while throughout the purchasing space there are "all sorts of issues like this" with supply currently, from where you can get hold of your brick to your cement, "you can spend your time worrying about that, but when it comes to the appliances you want delivered, there's no need to worry - we've been doing it for 20 years."

Encasement conceals 4.5km of fire sprinkler pipework in South Tyneside tower blocks

More than 4.5 kilometres of 'Versa' fire sprinkler boxing from Encasement is being used to conceal surface mounted fire sprinkler pipework, which has been retro-fitted at four South Tyneside Council tower blocks in Hebburn and Jarrow to help protect more than 280 residents.

Even though an independent fire inspection and level four fire risk assessment declared the high rise residential blocks to be safe, the council chose to continue with the £1.4 million automatic sprinkler installation programme as part of its commitment to tenant safety and fire protection.

The 18 storey Durham Court block in Hebburn is home to 127 residents and was the first to have sprinklers installed, which was carried out by Compco Fire Systems and South Tyneside Homes Property Services, followed by the 12 storey Ellen Court, Monastery Court and Wilkinson Court in Jarrow.

As sprinklers had been installed in every flat, it was important that the work was undertaken quickly and with the minimum disruption to tenants, so Encasement's Versa pipe boxing not only had to be quick and easy and to fit, to speed the installation process, but also provide an attractive finish.

Encasement's 5mm thick Versa 5 'L' shaped pre-formed plywood sprinkler boxing was used



to conceal the majority of the pipework in each tower block. Supplied in two different sizes and in 3 metre lengths for easy cutting to size on-site, the boxing's pre-finished white melamine surface and soft radius edge provided a consistent and 'wipe clean' finish in every flat.

In addition, Encasement manufactured

bespoke 8 mm thick 'L' shaped Versa 8 and 'U' shaped Versa 8D sprinkler boxing to meet the project's dimensions and specifications, which were supplied in 2.20 metre and 1.30 metre lengths.

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Fastflow Group makes Top Track 250

Fastflow Group has made it into the Sunday Times PwC Top Track 250 for the first time, ranked 177th. The Sunday Times PwC Top Track 250 league table ranks Britain's leading mid-market private companies with the biggest sales. Fastflow Group provides essential gas, water and multiutility infrastructure services to blue chip customers across the UK, as well as the development of new homes and planned and responsive property maintenance services for social housing and local authority clients. Neil Armstrong, CEO and Chairman at Fastflow and United Living Group, said: "I see this accolade as recognition of the strength of our business and our people."



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These programmers also feature a "Landlord" option to encourage social housing and private tenants to allow access for annual maintenance, often a real challenge for landlords. You can take a closer look at ESI's offering on their website.

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Nordic Copper Bristol Fashion

A major new residential building in Bristol is defined by its 170m long façade, clad in Nordic Brown Light pre-oxidised copper, complementing its modern, listed neighbour.

Designed by Ferguson Mann Architects, the new Copper Building replaces a factory, demolished in the 1990s, and provides 136 apartments for rent or for sale, including purchase through Shared Ownership.

FMA project architect Nick Brown explained: 'The form and language of the Copper Building were always intended as a reference to its Cor-ten

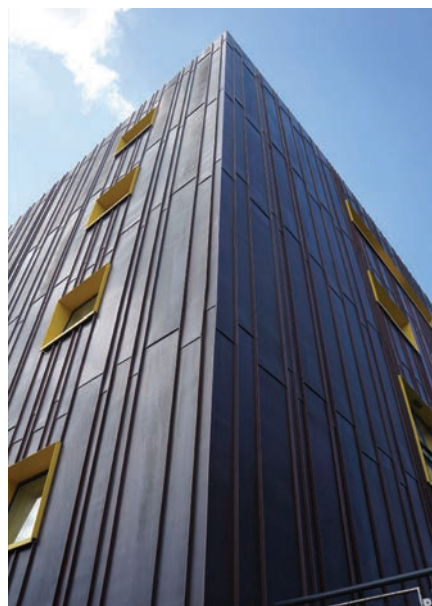
steel clad predecessor. We sought a more friendly and economic material to speak of the industrial heritage of the site, yet in a warmer and more refined way – a material with some life, that would patinate subtly over time. The warm colour of the Nordic Brown Light pre-oxidised copper, along with the longevity, sustainability and natural credentials of copper made it the perfect choice.'

Nordic Brown Light is part of an extensive portfolio of architectural copper surfaces and alloys from Aurubis, with an unrivalled lifespan, no maintenance and full recyclability. With an 'A1 (non-combustible material)' fire classification to EN 13501-1, copper is suitable for cladding tall buildings, using appropriate constructions.

The range includes Nordic Standard 'mill finish' and Nordic Brown pre-oxidised copper offering lighter or darker shades of brown determined by the thickness of the oxide layer. The extensive Nordic Blue, Nordic Green and Nordic Turquoise ranges have been developed with properties and colours based on the same brochantite mineralogy found in natural patinas all over the world. As well as the solid patina colours, 'Living' surfaces are available for each.

Copper alloys include Nordic Bronze and Nordic Brass, which can also be supplied pre-weathered. The innovative Nordic Royal is an alloy of copper with aluminium and zinc, retaining its golden colour.

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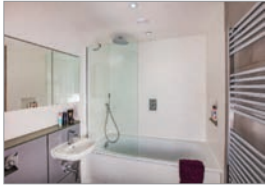
The vital role that fire doors play in protecting the occupants of a property has never been more compelling as it has been in the past few years. **Nationwide Windows & Doors** has devoted time, clever product design and testing at levels never previously seen to launch their next generation GRP fire door range. Nationwide's expertise in fire doors makes them the ideal partner of choice when it comes to large scale replacements or new installation programmes. With four door hinges, letterplate, spy hole, closers and specialist hardware, the Nationwide GRP fire door provides architects and specifiers a complete low-maintenance and thermally-efficient solution.



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New developments with Permeable Paving and SuDS

The trade association Interpave has published a new edition of 'Understanding Permeable Paving and SuDS', an essential introductory guide to all aspects of concrete block permeable paving for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) – and much more. This comprehensive guide explores the latest innovations for new and retrofit paving, and potential with wider benefits for the urban environment.

Concrete block permeable paving is uniquely placed as an essential, multifunctional SuDS technique, providing an inherent drainage system that requires no additional land take for water storage. It combines proven engineering design solutions with water management replicating nature near the surface. Permeable paving can be used for direct infiltration of attenuated, treated water to the ground or conveyance to other SuDS or sewers. It should also cost less than conventional paving and piped drainage to install and maintain, as the guide demonstrates. The new edition then explains how to use straightforward flow controls to maximise storage and other capabilities of permeable paving, offering further cost savings.

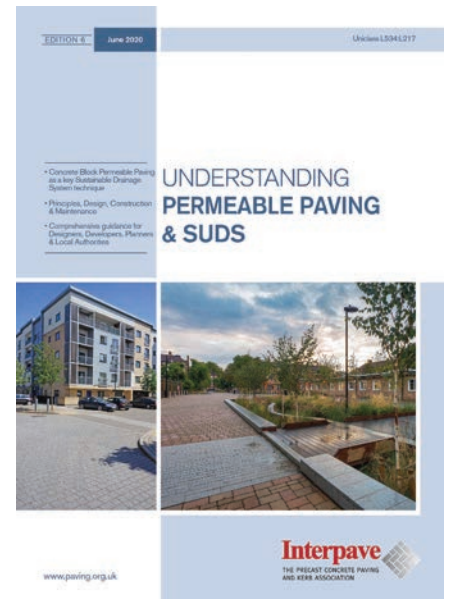
And permeable paving is also very effective at removing pollution from surface water runoff, notably vehicle pollutants, identified in recent

research as particularly harmful to our rivers. In fact, permeable paving provides a gradual supply of clean, treated water as an asset, supporting landscape (including trees), biodiversity, water harvesting and safe open SuDS features downstream. But the wider benefits of concrete block permeable paving are also discussed in the guide. It offers 'cool pavements' helping to reduce the urban heat island effect, making our cities more comfortable in summer, with evaporation of rainwater from the surface and within the paving. This enhances the already high albedo – or heat reflectance – offered by concrete block or flag paving generally.

One particular innovation covered in the latest edition of the guide is set to play a major role in the post-pandemic public realm. Retrofitting concrete block permeable paving as an overlay to existing streets offers a low-intervention technique to transform the public realm in response to the raft of recent active travel and open space initiatives.

To download edition 6 of Understanding Permeable Paving and SuDS, please visit www.paving.org.uk/home/permeable-paving

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RAISING THE STANDARDS IN LIGHTWEIGHT ROOFING

Presenting social value

Andrew Morrison of AM Bid explains how to present social value within your bids



Social value is the benefit of a contract on the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the local community. Buyers want to see legacy from the contract – not the circus coming to town, entertaining, then leaving.

If you are bidding for public contracts, then social value will form part of the evaluation. Buyers are legally bound by the (Public Services) Social Value Act 2012 (in England and Wales) and the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 to assess bidders' social value (termed 'community benefits' in Scotland) proposals. This can form upwards of 10 per cent of the overall marks – making it a critical area to get right. In fact, there are new measures coming into effect on 1st January 2021 which will place an even greater emphasis on social value in procurement.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO THE BUYER?

Buyers want to see social value relevant to them and their community. A boilerplate response will not score well; buyers want responses that show an understanding of their specific needs. For example, a deprived area may have a greater focus on education and training for the long-term unemployed.

Most public sector bodies publish a Social Value Plan that sets out their specific goals. You can also attend meet the buyer events, check committee papers, and ask clarification questions during bids to identify key local needs.

WHAT COUNTS AS ECONOMIC VALUE?

The focus is on four main areas:

1. Jobs
2. Apprenticeships
3. Training
4. Local spending

Can your organisation create jobs, apprenticeships and training opportunities in the local area? These may target a specific group like young people or the long-term unemployed.

Demonstrate your understanding of the barriers faced by these groups. Evidence that you can overcome them and set out clearly how you will do so. Partnering with local schools and community groups is a great way to get this local focus.

Social value offerings that are tailored, costed, measured, monitored, reported, delivered and committed to, will resonate with buyers

Any commitments must be supported by equivalent spend from the client. Be specific – “for every £1m spent we will deliver this amount of jobs, apprenticeships or training opportunities”. If you are the incumbent contractor, state the number of jobs you will retain and the new jobs/opportunities you will create. Be bold, give guarantees and stand behind those commitments. Avoid woolly statements such as “we will aim to,” “we aspire to,” “we will strive to” – this is not the language of successful bidding.

Bring the bid to life and detail what you will achieve at specific stages. For example, in year one, two Apprentices will start, attending a named local college on day release each week. In year two, a further two Apprentices will be employed. Give as much detail as possible on what, when, where, who and how, thus giving the buyer a clear picture of your commitments.

Think outside the box. One housebuilder recognised a dearth of community facilities in the local area, so converted their site office into a community venue at the end of the project.

Social value can also be achieved through the goods and services you buy. Some authorities will now ask for the percentage of your supply chain within a certain radius of the local area. If you are bidding into a new area, engaging with local suppliers during the tender process is a good way to demonstrate your commitment.

Pledge to get a quote from at least one local company for all your needs. Demonstrate a culture that is positive about Small and Medium Enterprises, charities and supported businesses. For example, prompt payment terms and low barriers to join your supply chain.

WHAT COUNTS AS ENVIRONMENTAL VALUE?

Sustainability can be achieved through social value offerings. Talk about what your organisation already does and what it will do to offset its carbon footprint. Say that you will plant a number of trees per ton of carbon dioxide produced.



Make use of the various schemes and renewable energy projects that organisations can sign up to in reducing carbon emissions.

State what you will do to meet energy efficiency targets and the renewable energy you will use. Will your vehicles provide good fuel economy and low emissions? Will you plan journeys and hold virtual meetings to cut down on environmental impact?

WHAT COUNTS AS SOCIETAL VALUE?

What pro bono support you can offer to local groups? For example, if you are a construction company, can you help refurbish a local venue?

Regarding charitable funding, you could match-fund employee giving. If you have an annual charity fundraising day, make clear that if awarded the contract, local charities will benefit. You can also provide volunteer days for your staff to support the community.

Collaboration is a great story. Working with local groups helps generate and circulate wealth in the local area – multiplying its positive impact on jobs and the community.

For example, one NHS bidder funded adverts on local radio about health initiatives. This boosted local wellbeing and provided a revenue boost for the community radio station.

HOW CAN YOU TAILOR SOCIAL VALUE OFFERINGS?

It is vital to submit tailored social value offerings relevant both to the buyer and to their local communities. You may be based in London but bidding in Scotland. Therefore, due diligence is required to establish what is important to the buyer and the local community.

Demonstrate that you have given thought to current issues, such as the economic and societal effect Covid-19 will continue to have on certain groups. Linking with local organisations/groups who are seeking help (e.g. isolation and befriending services) will resonate well. If possible, go and meet local organisations to discuss what they need. This helps you score well and gives you a good relationship and reputation in the local area.

Use a social value calculator (e.g. Housing Association Charitable Trust have a free tool) to work out the pound value and societal benefit of your offer. This will give the buyer a clear and measurable return on investment.

Buyers will want to see that your commitments are not just window dressing

REPORTING AND MONITORING SOCIAL VALUE

It is critical to have a system for monitoring and reporting on social value. This could include:

- A dedicated Social Value Lead for your organisation who promotes social value among your workforce and helps identify good causes
- Processes for capturing and analysing social value data
- A schedule for producing and sharing social value reports
- Sharing case studies and good news stories on your website

Buyers will want to see that your commitments are not just window dressing. You need to treat social value as a critical Key Performance Indicator and have measures in place to implement it effectively.

SUMMARY

Social value offerings that are tailored, costed, measured, monitored, reported, delivered and committed to, will resonate with buyers. Bids will score highly when they address economic, environmental and societal issues, and especially if they leave behind some kind of legacy with long-lasting benefits.

External bid specialists can assist you in designing meaningful and measurable social value offerings that will inspire your target customers. They spend time looking at what public bodies are doing to achieve social value and can make recommendations to help you maximise your bid scores and positive impact.

Andrew Morrison MSc FCIH CP APMP MIOD Founder of AM Bid is a qualified housing and bidding professional.

Meet the water hygiene experts in social housing



Urban Environments is the UK's leading supplier of Legionella control expertise in the social housing sector. Working with the country's largest social housing organisations, including many of the G15, the company's qualified team of water hygiene engineers provides a comprehensive nationwide service.

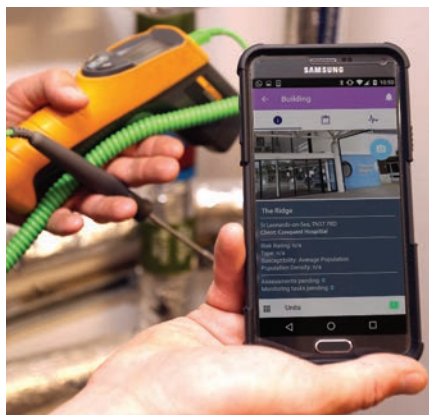
Paul Nweze, senior water hygiene officer at L&Q, comments, "We work seamlessly with Urban Environments to manage Legionella control across our portfolio. The integrated use of the CAT-SI compliance app ensures that all information is at our fingertips and we have complete trust in them and their team."

Long-term client Catalyst Housing has worked



Legionnaires' disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia caused by inhaling tiny droplets of water containing Legionella bacteria. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and greater awareness of the risk of aerosol-borne disease, there is a pressing need to prioritise Legionella control.

The assessment and management of the risk of Legionella has long been a legal requirement for landlords, with an obligation to comply with the Health & Safety Executive's L8 Approved Code of Practice. If a property has been lying empty or is under-occupied, the risk of Legionella growth is increased due to water stagnation.



with Urban Environments for over a decade. Stuart McDonnell comments, "Our enduring relationship is down to the total reliability of Urban Environments to deliver on their promises. In their hands, both we and our tenants can feel confident in the safety of our water supply."

Andrew Lister of Clarion Housing Group echoes this view: "From risk assessments to remedials, the professional service we receive from Urban Environments ensures that water hygiene in our housing stock is carefully controlled and managed at all times."

www.urbanenvironments.co.uk
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Legionella concerns post-lockdown

Legionnaires' disease could be on the rise in post-lockdown properties, according to a recent report by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH). HMM Features Editor Jack Wooler investigates why this is, and the actions required under law for landlords



As tenant activity increases and landlords begin moving residents into homes that have remained empty throughout lockdown, it is essential that water systems are not put back into use without considering the risks of Legionnaires' disease.

In a report from the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH), it has warned that as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic there is potential for an increase in susceptibility of Legionnaires' disease.

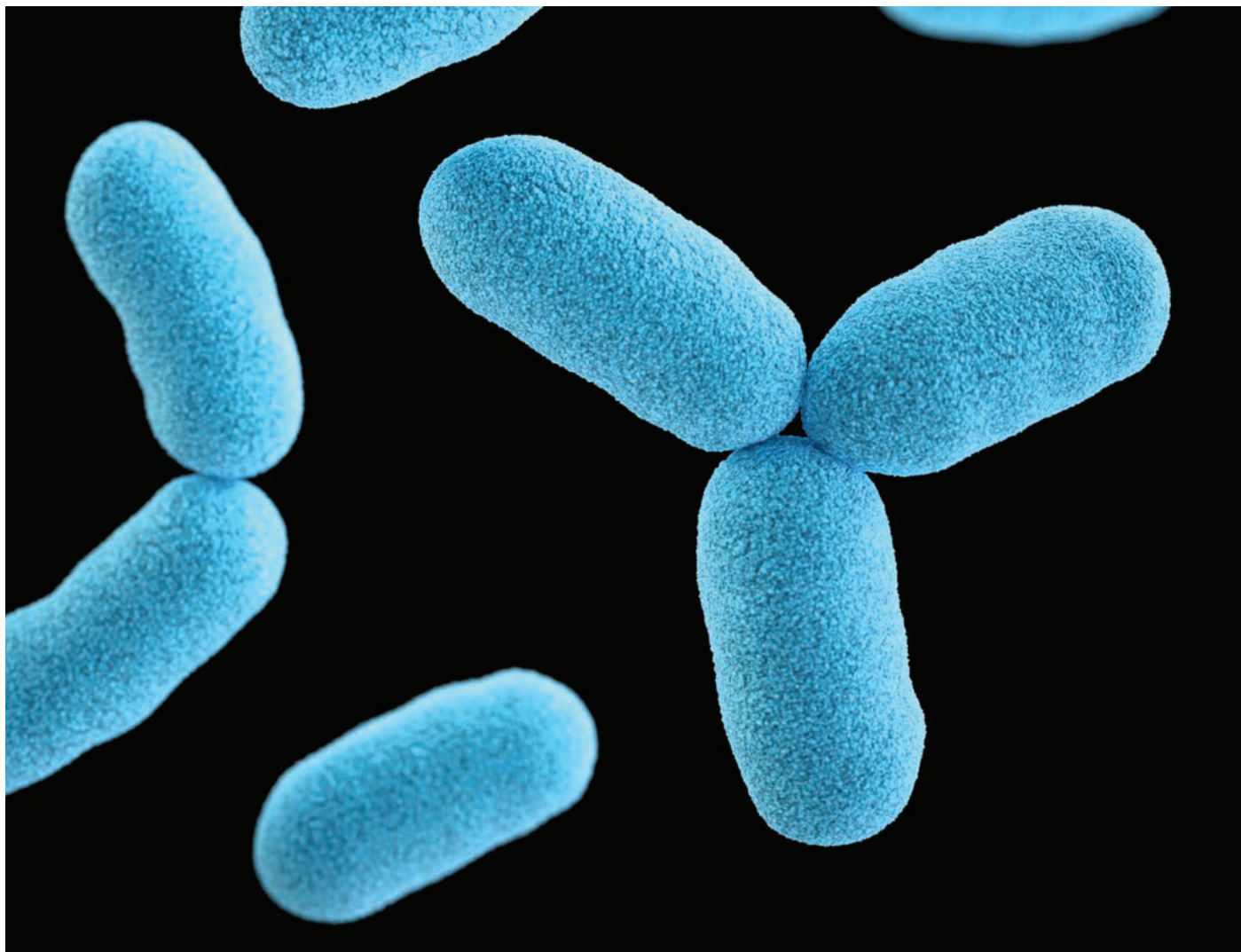
The *Legionnaires' Disease: lockdown risks and reopening safely* report advises that there are multiple reasons for an increased likelihood of the waterborne pathogens responsible for Legionella being present in the conditions that lockdown has created.

Such reasons include the fact that there will be more compromised respiratory systems during or after infection with the virus, and that (though

Ideally, changes in Legionella risk will have been considered at an early point in planning lockdown arrangements

housing has perhaps suffered less than other property types) the increase in empty buildings that Covid has produced provides the perfect breeding ground for Legionella.

With Legionella bacteria - the root of Legionnaires' disease - being caused by water system stagnation, landlords should be more careful than ever with unoccupied premises.



As tenant activity increases and landlords begin moving residents into homes that have remained empty throughout lockdown, it is essential that water systems are not put back into use without considering the risks of Legionnaires' disease

INCREASED RISK

Legionnaires' disease is a type of pneumonia which can cause serious respiratory illness, caused by tiny droplets of water containing Legionella bacteria that are breathed into the lungs of susceptible people.

Legionella bacteria will inevitably enter man-made water systems, both hot and cold, and the degree of risk it poses will vary - but the results can be severe.

During the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown, the report states two main risk factors that may have increased within properties, creating ideal conditions for Legionella bacteria to grow in your water system - temperature, and time for stagnation to occur.

Legionella bacteria thrive at temperatures between 20°C and 50°C, so a key control measure for minimising the risk is to ensure that cold water is below 20°C and hot water is above 50°C. When water meets these requirements, Legionella bacteria will not grow.

However, water between those temperatures presents a greater degree of risk, particularly where it is left to stagnate. Generally, where water is left within a system without movement for more than a week the risk of growth will increase.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

As stated by The Legionella Control Association (LCA): "Simply reopening a building that has stood idle, without addressing the safety of its water system, is unacceptable and is likely to be in breach of the law."

Under health and safety law, all landlords must manage the risks of exposure to Legionella bacteria. As such, owners and operators of water systems have a duty to keep them safe.

To ensure this safety, a scheme of control should be in place to address risk. Such a scheme will typically include checking water temperatures, programmed maintenance/checks, and flushing parts of the system that may contain stagnant water due to low use.

Where the risks within the water system change, the risk assessment must be reviewed and revised to address those changes.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has advised that if the premises closed or had reduced occupancy during lockdown, the duty holder should review its risk assessment and manage the Legionella risks when they reinstate a water system or start using it again, or restart some types of air conditioning units.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Ideally, changes in Legionella risk will have been considered at an early point in planning lockdown arrangements.

If not, it is vital to consider that risk now, particularly if it is foreseeable that buildings and water systems may remain shut down or subject to low usage for several weeks. Where conditions for Legionella bacteria growth exist, there is always an opportunity to put measures into place that reduce that risk.

For simple hot/cold water systems, a review could be straightforward, and duty holders can carry out the Legionella risk assessment if they are competent or they can use an independent contractor.

Covid has provided challenges for all in the sector, but it is vital that tenant safety is not put on the back-burner. Legionella can and will develop in empty properties, and landlords have an obligation to ensure their tenants can enjoy safe, clean water

The main objectives should be to prevent stagnation and keep water temperatures outside of the 20-50°C range. If possible, it is advised to aim to ensure the turnover of any water stored in tanks every 24 hours and movement of water through pipework and outlets at least once a week to prevent it from becoming stagnant.

If this cannot be achieved because the building is closed, or there is significantly reduced use, landlords will need to take additional steps beyond their current control measures to ensure this can be achieved as far as possible. This may include flushing the entire water system (all outlets) weekly and, if possible, dropping the level of stored water in tanks.

If hot water systems are switched off to conserve energy, it is advised to ensure water stored in any associated tanks is also turned over within 24 hours.

MOVING FORWARDS

Covid has provided challenges for all in the sector, but it is vital that tenant safety is not put on the back-burner.

Legionella can and will develop in empty properties, and landlords have an obligation to ensure their tenants can enjoy safe, clean water.

By undertaking the measures provided by CIEH however, landlords can forget at least one of the worries of retaining empty stock.



Remote Legionella Monitoring

Alliot
Technologies

1

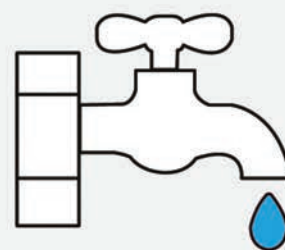
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2

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3

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The 'new normal' in access control

Intratone takes a look at how the latest access control technology can ensure tenant security and safety as we emerge from lockdown

Tenant safety and security have always been a priority for housing and property managers – everyone has a right to feel safe in their own homes.

From regular health and safety checks to building repairs, maintenance, and access control, a managers' remit in terms of keeping tenants safe is a broad one.

Taking access control in particular, housing and property managers need to ensure that entry for residents, visitors and contractors is seamless, while unwanted visitors are kept out. With traditional access control systems this can prove challenging, both to implement a system that meets these requirements, and also to manage it on a day-to-day basis, especially as time-consuming site visits are often necessary to ensure the system's smooth operation.

Now, with COVID-19 adding a whole new layer of complexity to property management in terms of social distancing and tenant safety, how can housing professionals ensure that their buildings stay secure – while at the same time keeping both themselves and their residents safe during a pandemic?

SAFE AND SOUND

Multi-dwelling properties often house a broad range of tenants, including the elderly or those with a physical disability, as well as young or single occupants, with commonplace safety and security concerns.

Safety initiatives such as fire risk assessments and emergency evacuation plans, which guarantee that residents know the actions they should take in the

event of an alarm or fire occurring, are just two ways property and housing managers can grant them peace of mind.

In terms of security, tenants want to know that no-one except residents can gain access to their building, that key fobs cannot be copied, for example, and that housing and property managers are in full control.

Access control is a crucial, and relatively simple way that building security can be enhanced. It can be achieved through the installation of proximity readers with key fobs that can't be copied, and can quickly be disabled when lost, as well as through door access systems such as wireless intercoms and coded keypads. Plus, by installing video-enabled access technology, tenants can identify exactly who is calling for them before they open the door, to help them feel as safe as possible in their own home.

REDUCING ON-SITE INTERACTION

With traditional access control devices, site visits and face-to-face contact are still necessary. From granting access to contractors on-site, to managing keys or key fobs and updating ever-changing tenant details, access control management can be time-consuming.

Indeed, COVID-19 has made this task even more difficult. Housing professionals now need to complete these tasks while maintaining a social distance, reducing the overall amount of site visits, and minimising on-site contact.



Wireless GSM-based devices' remote management capabilities make life significantly easier for housing professionals too by reducing the amount of time they need to spend on-site via real-time, remote monitoring and updates.

For housing and property managers, a solution that delivers secure access control – and which also allows for operation in our 'new normal' – is vital. Fortunately, the latest wireless access control technology reduces the need for on-site contact, while simultaneously boosting time and management efficiencies.

GSM AS THE SOLUTION

GSM, or the Global System for Mobile Communications, offers an answer to these challenges. A digital cellular technology that transmits data such as voice and video to other devices, it uses Subscriber Identification Module cards – or SIM cards – to connect users across the network.

The implementation of SIM cards and GSM capabilities into access control systems, like intercoms, allows tenants to grant property access to visitors via their own smartphone or tablet. In contrast to traditional, radio frequency-

based systems, wireless GSM-based devices have an unlimited range – making property management infinitely more practical.

Plus, when connected to online property management systems, GSM-based devices make access control processes achievable remotely: for example, making changes to residency access, adding new users to the building, or changing key fob details. This significantly reduces both the need to be on-site and the number of interactions with service providers and residents – making things safer all round.

SOCIALLY DISTANCED INSTALLATIONS

As a wireless, handset-free access control technology, GSM also allows for easier fittings and is ideal for retrofit installations. Service engineers' time on-site and their interaction with residents is significantly reduced, as there is no need to enter individual dwellings or flats to connect receivers to handsets. Similarly, with no cabling to flats or handsets required, there is little requirement for ongoing maintenance.

ACCESS CONTROL FOR THE 'NEW NORMAL'

By harnessing the power of GSM, property and housing managers can keep their residents safe while also making their access control processes more intuitive and efficient: removing the need for clunky plastic handsets and complicated installations.

Wireless GSM-based devices' remote management capabilities make life significantly easier for housing professionals too by reducing the amount of time they need to spend on-site via real-time, remote monitoring and updates.

With GSM-based access control, tenant safety can be prioritised while their security is also enhanced: all without compromising on efficiency.

A proactive approach to fire safety

The Regulator of Social Housing's third temporary monthly survey found challenges around gaining physical access to properties across the UK due to the risks posed by the Coronavirus pandemic. Here, Nick Rutter of FireAngel explores what connected and cost-effective fire safety solutions can do to help



As essential works continue to recommence following over four months of disruption to usual management strategies and activities, social housing providers are faced with the challenge of understanding the level of risk each resident / property now poses, particularly in regards to fire safety.

Since March, the ability for contractors to gain access to a property to conduct necessary maintenance checks and repairs significantly reduced for a number of months, as many vulnerable and elderly residents shielded from the virus and refused other individuals from entering their home.

As contractors now work to overcome the backlog of repairs and complete a build-up of necessary maintenance checks, concerns are focused on ensuring the safety and wellbeing of both themselves and residents to mitigate any potential spread of the virus.

This is combined with the ever-present threat of the rate of infection rising, which would once again place an immediate and substantial halt on essential maintenance due to the inability for contractors to gain physical access to a property and potentially increase the fire risk level for some residents.

So, how can social housing providers think ahead to overcome access and maintenance issues, successfully future proof installations, and gain understanding of the levels of fire risk within their portfolio?

In short, remote real time monitoring.

REAL TIME MONITORING

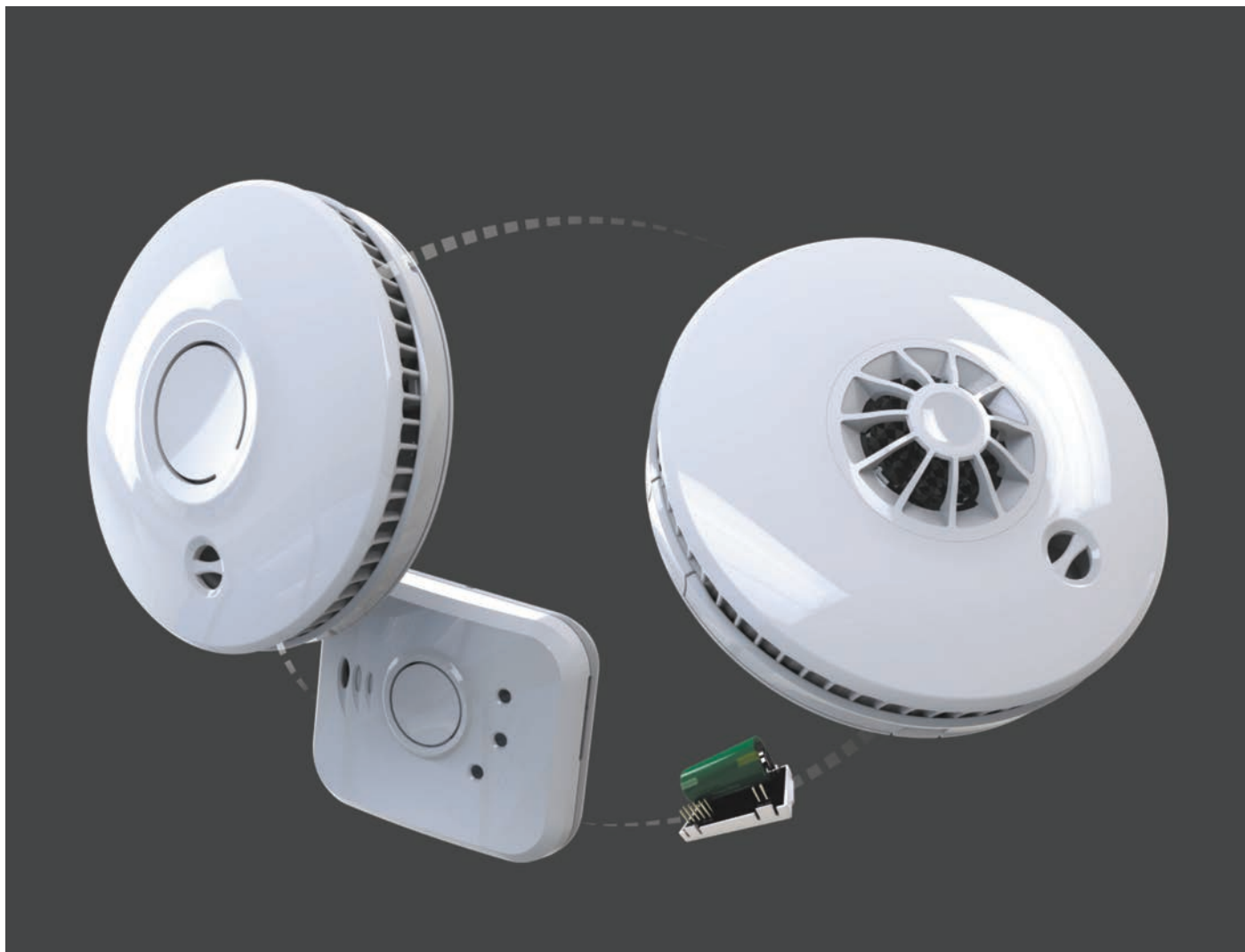
Remote monitoring capabilities are not only offering a wide range of benefits for existing social housing portfolios, they are also transforming the future of fire

Remote monitoring capabilities are not only offering a wide range of benefits for existing social housing portfolios, they are also transforming the future of fire safety and paving the way for a new generation of social housing digital developments that place IoT at the core of their construction

safety and paving the way for a new generation of social housing digital developments that place IoT at the core of their construction.

The activation of a connected cloud-based gateway allows instant remote real time monitoring of Smart RF smoke, heat, and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms, enabling social housing providers to achieve full traceability, audit, and compliance management across an entire housing portfolio by simplifying the monitoring of alarm networks across every property.

Through some connected systems, providers can further future proof and enhance their fire and CO protection by receiving an overview of fire risk across the entire property portfolio to help pinpoint increasing risk levels and enhance overall efficiency. This subsequently supports a long-term reduction in overheads as assets are applied in the most efficient way.



The activation of a connected cloud-based gateway allows instant remote real time monitoring of Smart RF smoke, heat, and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms, enabling social housing providers to achieve full traceability, audit, and compliance management across an entire housing portfolio

Through the use of a connected gateway, providers can also activate instant access to vital information including alarm diagnostics for every alarm across the network to ensure 24/7 legislative compliance. Properties can also be futureproofed against potential regulatory changes with systems that offer the ability to be adapted at a later date to meet a change in resident risk, which may require enhanced safety systems.

The ability to view the performance of each alarm in real time also aids proactive asset maintenance as social landlords can adopt a targeted approach to the application of resources, subsequently simplifying fire risk management. Providers can have instant access to vital information from every alarm across each property, including current status, alarm history, replacement dates and network health.

Systems like this also deliver complete freedom to accommodate a hybrid network, which support the specification of mains and battery powered alarms in the same property. This optimises the utilisation of existing wiring for mains alarms, while the ease of installation of battery powered alarms offers

cost and resource savings by reducing the amount of time a contractor spends inside the property.

INTELLIGENT SOLUTIONS

As connected technology continues to pave the way for fire safety, social housing providers can benefit from IOT and connected fire safety technologies which use AI to bridge the gap in communication between a property and its residents.

Latest research by the Local Government Association (LGA) found that over 100,000 affordable homes will need to be constructed each year as part of the national recovery from the virus, and the 'new generation' of social housing aims to provide residents with affordable, high quality homes that are fit for purpose.

The social housing sector has the opportunity to take an alternative approach to the fire safety installed within future properties by procuring intelligent connected solutions that offer the ability to be cost-effectively upgraded and adapted at a later date to meet the individual needs of each resident. This can be achieved by utilising a connected fire safety system that features such technologies.

An AI driven approach can provide automatic stratification of risk across an entire housing stock, saving providers valuable time and money, while also ensuring compliance with current and future legislation to deliver residents with the highest levels of fire and CO protection.

As the Coronavirus pandemic continues to have a significant impact on the social housing sector, not only nationally but globally, social housing providers should take an alternative approach to the provision of fire safety solutions to successfully streamline their asset management through the facilitation of remote real time monitoring.

Nick Rutter is Chief Product Officer at FireAngel Safety Technology.

Ealing Council and FireAngel announce pioneering IoT partnership

One of Europe's leading smoke, heat and carbon monoxide (CO) alarm suppliers, FireAngel, has agreed a partnership with Ealing Council in conjunction with CEF to deliver one of the largest IoT roll outs of its kind currently available in the UK.

The ground-breaking contract will see the supply of FireAngel's advanced connected technology, FireAngel Spec Connected, which will cost effectively provide Ealing Council with a remote monitoring solution that ensures maximum levels of fire and CO detection for its tenants.

Ealing Council will oversee the supply and installation of over 122,000 smoke, heat and CO alarms across an initial 14,000 of 17,000 properties located throughout West London, whilst also benefitting from FireAngel's patented Predict™ technology, which will highlight trends and high-risk patterns of behaviour to prompt earlier intervention before an actual fire event.

The new agreement will revolutionise the way in which Ealing Council monitors and manages its entire housing stock, eliminating the requirement for gaining physical access to a property, as all of the required device data is transmitted wirelessly in real time via a secure cloud network.

FireAngel and Ealing Council have together developed a bespoke recyclable cardboard 'kit

pack' that contains no plastic waste, significantly reducing the amount of packaging materials the installer needs to dispose of during the installation process. The packs contain FireAngel's battery-powered Specification Range of smoke, heat and CO alarms, which will be installed across Ealing Council's housing stock in line with an LD1 Category specification.

As the alarms are wirelessly interlinked across a secure private network, the technology will allow Ealing Council to easily monitor and manage the status of the alarms in real time, highlighting any potential issues as and when they occur. FireAngel's Predict™ technology will also enable Ealing Council to remotely understand the trends and levels of risk each property presents and as tenant needs change.

Ealing Council and FireAngel have also streamlined the installation process through the development of an innovative commissioning system, which includes photographic records, auditing facilities and the automatic production of certifications.

James King, Director of Connected Homes at FireAngel, said: "We are extremely proud to be supporting Ealing Council in one of the biggest IoT roll outs of its type currently available in the UK. Over the last seven years, FireAngel has spent in excess of £8 million on its IoT strategy



to deliver connected fire safety technologies that revolutionise asset management for housing providers.

"We are looking forward to working closely with Ealing Council throughout the installation and implementation stages to provide its tenants with enhanced quality of service and support with regard to fire safety."

FireAngel's Specification Range enables continuous monitoring of fire and CO safety devices within domestic properties via a central, secure cloud based system. Featuring Smart RF technology, the range of mains and battery-powered alarms supports the interlink of up to 50 devices together on a wireless network by fitting a Smart RF module.

The devices include smoke, heat, CO alarms and assisted living solutions, which can be interlinked via a private network so that when one alarm sounds, they all sound. This also immediately notifies tenants of a potential fire or CO event, providing a faster response time that allows individuals to safely and quickly exit the property.

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A property 'MOT'

Mark Lowe of Pinacl explores how conducting a property 'MOT' can provide an overall view of the health of a property portfolio

Everyone requires a home that is at least fit for purpose, but unfortunately that isn't the case for many living in the UK. A home should be somewhere you can feel safe and shouldn't negatively affect your health or hold back your opportunity to succeed. Maintaining healthy properties is one of the most difficult tasks in the Housing sector.

The Scape Group analysed data from the Office for National Statistics to explore the decline in social housing standards and, with councils facing huge budget cuts over the years, the total spent on repairs and maintenance of social housing properties fell from £9.3bn in 1997 to £7.1bn in 2018.

The reduction in maintenance spending has had a severe effect on the quality of housing in the UK, with 4.5 million homes failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard through damp and mould growth, electrical hazards, and water supply.

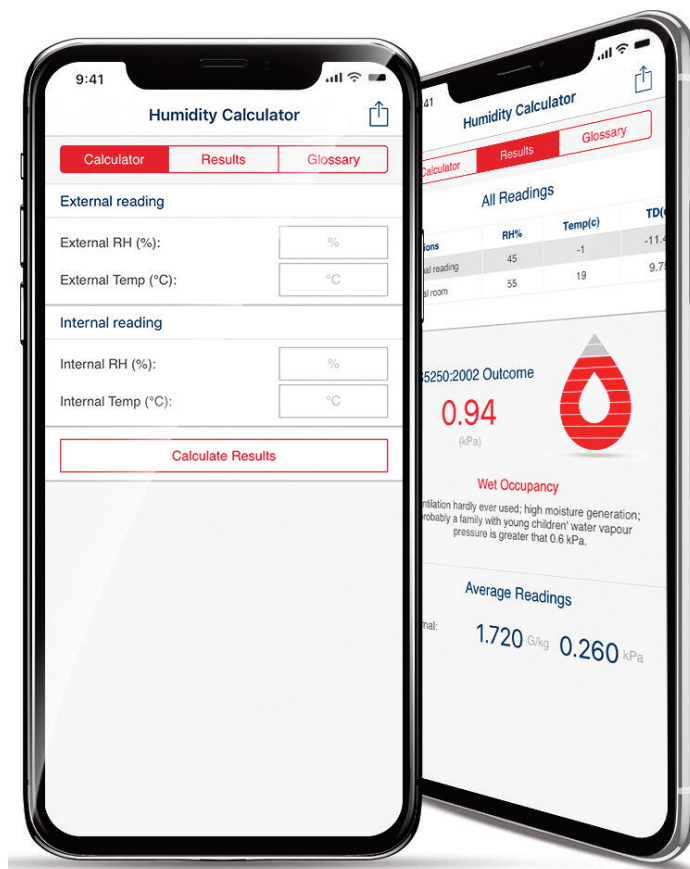
The housing sector can however improve their overall property health. Property managers should improve the everyday management of properties by performing a property 'MOT' - now easily facilitated by property management software - assessing the health of different aspects of housing and providing tenants with greater security.

VENTILATION

Many properties see a significant number of damp, condensation and mould related issues which align to the ventilation of a property. It is important to assess the detailed performance of installed elements including forced vents, passive vents and background ventilation with each fully analysed and aligned to:

- Occupancy Levels
- Property geographical location and orientation
- System performance, management and utilization
- The effect installed systems have on each accompanying device within a property

A home should be somewhere you can feel safe and shouldn't negatively affect your health or hold back your opportunity to succeed. Maintaining healthy properties is one of the most difficult tasks in the Housing sector



MOISTURE

To combat moisture, landlords and property managers must confirm the structure age, type, location, and occupancy levels, and conduct a detailed review of the structure both internally and externally, and note any defects or damage that can impact internal elements.

A 'moisture profile' can alert any existing issues or, conversely, acknowledge the dryness of the structure at the time of the survey.

Also important is to provide an overview of the existing ventilation, its use by the occupants, plus the installation and effectiveness of existing insulations.

ATMOSPHERIC CONDITIONS

Some software providers can offer smart IoT sensors with alarm parameters to deliver timely awareness of prevailing conditions that can give rise to future issues.

This kind of process can provide a long-term overview of structural and occupational behaviour with alarms linked to a 'knowledge centre' - providing immediate information for both landlord and tenant.

INSULATION

An insulation 'MOT' should measure the suitability of new and proposed insulation installations, and ideally incorporate a thermal imaging survey alongside physical and visual assessments.

Poor existing installation can develop into areas of concern during colder periods of the year. Surveys can be used to counter this, as well as to provide

By using such a property management software service to perform an ‘MOT’ of their housing, landlords and property managers can provide a wide and accurate view of the health of their property portfolio to ensure tenants and landlords alike can rest easy.

respective installation guidance aligned to property type, age, geographic location, and orientation.

DRONES

Using modern technology, drones can now be used by professionals to survey structural elements not readily accessible by standard means.

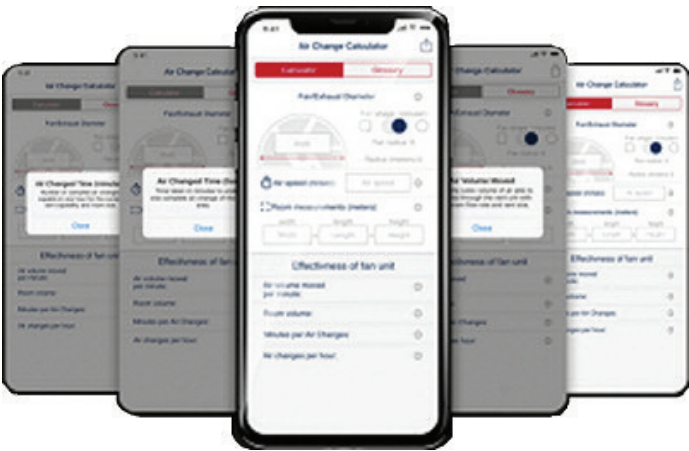
In addition to any reported structural damage, specialised drones can aid thermal and carbon footprint assessments of properties alongside topographic and demographic surveys.

CARBON FOOTPRINT

The air permeability of a building can have major impacts for tenants. It’s important to confirm the energy efficiency of existing installations and determine and optimise heating and ventilation performance in line with the structure type and occupancy levels.

OUTCOMES

Through property management software, specialised companies are able to offer a certified baseline condition of the health of every property provided to a



tenant when they take up occupancy.

As well as achieving all the above, this could ensure all properties comply with building regulations, and moreover, the new Fitness for Human Habitation Act that is now in effect.


Further to this, landlords can ensure that properties are deemed healthy at commencement and during a lease term, that complaints are reduced by combating early warning signs, that staff knowledge is increased, and that key information is provided to tenants based upon pertinent fact-based data.

By using such a property management software service to perform an ‘MOT’ of their housing, landlords and property managers can provide a wide and accurate view of the health of their property portfolio to ensure tenants and landlords alike can rest easy.

Mark Lowe is business development director at Pinacel

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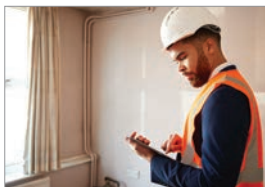


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Future of repair diagnostics and reporting

Craig Oosthuizen, Head of Client Operations, M3: As the social housing sector continues to manage the impact of Covid and the subsequent repairs backlog, we have seen an increasing demand for innovative tools that harness the latest software developments in reporting and diagnostics. With the focus on mitigating risk and greater efficiency, landlords are recognising the benefits of investing in apps that allow residents and maintenance teams to report, diagnose and schedule repairs at the touch of a button. Apps such as M3Central mean tenants can upload photos and use step-by-step guides to ensure repairs are diagnosed quickly, without the need for an expensive callout.

www.m3h.co.uk/products/repair/m3central



Airtech helps landlords tackle condensation

Condensation and mould lead to poor indoor air quality (IAQ) which can have health consequences for households, made even more serious by the Coronavirus pandemic which adversely affects those with existing health conditions. Airtech can help landlords meet their duty of care by offering comprehensive property surveys to identify condensation, damp and mould problems and recommendations to solve the issues; mould removal treatment and redecoration and a full ventilation installation service for both responsive and planned maintenance. The treatment and mould removal is backed by a unique three-year guarantee that the mould will not return.

01823 690 292 www.airtechsolutions.co.uk



PIV is effective solution to condensation

A recent study by Vent-Axia looked at the effect of installing Positive Input Ventilation (PIV) in a home with ongoing condensation and mould problems. PIV was installed in a trial house for four months and two main air quality factors were measured during this time. The data collected showed a significant improvement in indoor air quality in the home. The Lo-Carbon PoziDry Pro and Lo-Carbon PoziDry Compact Pro PIV units from Vent-Axia provide a highly effective solution to help landlords control condensation and mould, as well as offering high levels of air filtration. The PIV units are highly energy efficient, unobtrusive, near silent and help provide a healthy environment.

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