

# HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

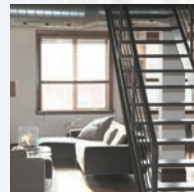
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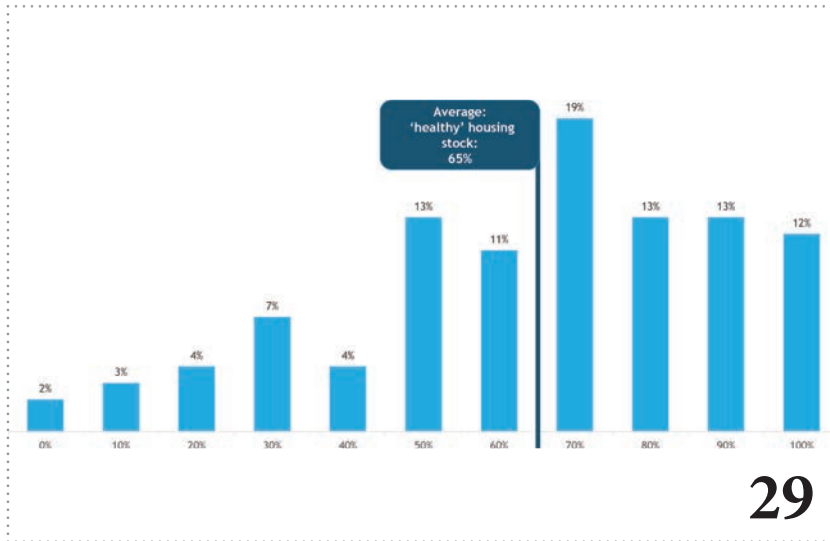


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Sustainability Project of the Year  
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## Editor's comment

# A busy agenda, but will this deliver positive outcomes?



Patrick Mooney,  
News Editor

2022 has started with something of a bang for the housing world, with a lot more due to happen in the coming weeks and months. Government spokesmen have been very busy making housing-related announcements, particularly on policy development and future legislation. Belatedly we are hearing that regulation is to be beefed up and we are finally seeing the prospect of some meaningful action being taken in England to improve services to tenants and their safety, albeit this is happening more than four and half years after the Grenfell Tower fire.

No one can accuse the Government of jumping the gun or making a knee jerk reaction after the fire in August 2017. The relatives and friends of the 72 people who died as a result of the Grenfell fire have patiently waited while the public inquiry has been running, with no prospect yet for any criminal prosecutions until 2023 or even 2024.

Michael Gove's announcement that he will make developers pay the estimated £4 billion cost for cladding removal from medium rise flatted blocks is welcome BUT only in as far as it goes. First of all he has to get the money out of the developers, or failing that he needs to get any balancing or residual sum out of the Treasury, who up until now have proven reluctant to stump up. What Mr Gove needs to avoid at all costs is that his budget for building new social housing is raided to make up any shortfall.

The other obvious question is 'What about all of the other safety work required to put right sub standard workmanship on flatted blocks?' The cost of replacing dodgy insulation and fire doors, or installing new fire alarms and water sprinkler systems in hundreds or possibly thousands of residential blocks could easily match or exceed the cost of cladding removal and replacement. We need to know how this is to be paid for. Saving leaseholders and shared owners the cost of cladding removal is only a first step Mr Gove!

And then there are the proposals for correcting the operating culture within social housing landlord teams, which is currently leaving many tenants feeling stigmatised, marginalised and ignored. Imagine being made to feel like a 2nd class citizen in your own home. Property ownership should not really be a factor in whether you are able to feel 'at home' or not, nor should whether you rely on benefits for some or all of your income affect how others treat you.

I know there are many, many good (even excellent) people working very hard to deliver truly great services in housing associations and local councils, but their efforts are being undermined by others (colleagues, contractors, managers, decision makers) who do not operate to the same high principles. When visiting social landlords throughout the year, I have been privileged to meet some great and inspirational individuals. But nearly all of them speak about encountering obstacles or blockages somewhere in their organisation.

Reviewing the quality and content of training courses for housing staff is probably a necessary thing to do, but it cannot achieve much on its own. There clearly needs to be a sea change in the culture operating in many landlord organisations. Similarly sorting out the nuts and bolts of how the sector is regulated will not provide the answer. For meaningful change the power in the relationship between landlord and tenant will have to change, with tenants given a much greater say on what is acceptable, how resources should be spent and what are the best ways of measuring quality. There is a crying need for more resources to pay for works to upgrade properties to a modern, decent standard and for decarbonisation works to proceed.

Sadly we are seeing the Housing Ombudsman is having to take action against more social landlords – in this issue there are reports of long running leaks which have not been fixed in a reasonable timescale. Instead the councils have got bogged down in bureaucratic arguments and inertia, while their tenants have been left living in wholly unsuitable and unhygienic conditions. In one case a leaking roof was left unrepaired for six years – a wholly unacceptable situation, which defies all logic. Surely if any of the decision-makers involved at these councils had put themselves in the shoes of their unfortunate customers, they would have got things sorted sooner. At least I would like to think so.

Against this backdrop it is particularly interesting to see the housing law changes being made in Wales which are designed to improve conditions for tenants – providing them with greater security and greater safety. Perhaps the biggest and most significant change will be the actions taken to ensure rental properties need to be fit for human habitation in order to be let. To do otherwise will be illegal and heavily punished. We do not know how landlords will react, but it is interesting to see that social and private landlords are to be held to account by the same set of standards. This could well be something for Mr Gove to consider implementing in England.

Patrick Mooney



## On the cover...

*With the Grenfell Tower Inquiry resuming, Paul Richards of Aquarian Cladding Systems discusses the continuing impact of the disaster, and how the cladding industry must adapt.*

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# Increase in empty homes hidden by holiday lets 'flipping' ruse



**E**mpty homes being recorded as holiday lets by owners who want to avoid paying council tax on them is to blame for an apparent drop in the numbers of vacant properties recorded across the country.

The group Action on Empty Homes claim that without this practice of 'flipping properties' the number of empty homes recorded nationally is actually 20 per cent higher than it was five years ago.

According to AEH the number of long-term empty homes (vacant for more than six months) has risen from 200,145 in 2016 to 238,306 in 2021. This means long-term empties are now at their highest level since 2012, if the exceptional rise during the housing market shutdown caused by the pandemic (2020 data) is ignored.

The group is drawing attention to the data ahead of its national focus on what it terms as 'this wasted resource' during Empty Homes Week 2022, which this year is taking place from 28th February to the 6th March. This year there is an emphasis on retrofitting empty homes and bringing them back into use for social rent and genuinely affordable housing.

While national totals released by Whitehall appear to show the number of 'second homes' falling by around 10,000 in the latest 2021 data, AEH claim that true figure actually rose as over 11,000 second homes had flipped their status to show them as holiday lets. In places such as Cornwall, AEH says that as many as 1 in every 18 properties are unavailable either by virtue of being a holiday let, second home or being left empty in the long term.

Homes classified as holiday lets are no longer part of the residential property council tax base and

instead become liable for business rates. However, AEH estimate that the owners of as many as 96 per cent of such homes can avoid paying local taxation altogether due to generous business rates discounts introduced by the Government.

This scheme ostensibly designed to protect small local businesses is now being exploited by the owners of more than 67,000 properties in England which are now classified as holiday lets. Adding these to the national total of 253,000 second homes means that across England the second homes and holiday lets market has sucked over 320,000 homes out of residential supply.

Will McMahon, director of Action on Empty Homes, said: "In the last five years we have seen an escalating housing crisis while the number of long-term empty homes and second homes keeps rising. This year's figures seemed to show second homes numbers dropping at a time when communities around the country were reporting the opposite – now we know why.

"It turns out this isn't happening at all, they are just switching to business rates in huge numbers to dodge council tax and avoid penalties for being kept empty.

"Today there are nearly 100,000 families and over 120,000 children stuck in overcrowded and insecure temporary accommodation because of a shortage of social housing. Yet over half a million homes have no one living in them because they are either long-term empty or are used as holiday lets."

While around 1million homes currently have no one living in them, over 550,000 long-term empty homes, second homes and holiday lets are without residents in the long-term, he added.

## £200bn worth of empty homes sitting vacant across Britain

Research by a leading lettings and estate agency has found an estimated £200bn worth of property is sitting vacant across Britain's housing market - up 2.1 per cent on the previous year alone.

Barrows and Forrester analysed Government data on the number of vacant dwellings across each area of the property market as well as the average value of these dwellings, to reveal how much this dormant bricks and mortar is worth in current market conditions.

With an estimated total of 665,628 vacant residential dwellings, England is home to by far the highest total value, worth an estimated £190bn in the current market.

Regionally, London is home to the highest total value of all English regions, with 80,295 empty homes worth an estimated £41bn. The capital has also seen the largest annual increase in vacant dwellings stock, up 12 per cent in the last year.

The South East and East of England also rank high, with an estimated £36.2bn and £22.9bn worth of vacant dwellings across their respective markets.

The North East is home to the lowest total value of vacant dwellings of all English regions, but even still, its 43,735 empty homes are estimated to be worth £6.5bn in current market conditions.

In Scotland, the total value of vacant dwellings sits at almost £8bn, while Wales is home to the lowest total value at £5.2bn. Across Britain as a whole, the 735,095 homes believed to be empty total just over £200bn.

Managing Director of Barrows and Forrester, James Forrester, commented: "We currently find ourselves in the middle of a property market boom and huge levels of buyer demand and insufficient stock to satisfy this hunger for homeownership have pushed house prices to record highs.

"While there's arguably never been a better time to sell, there remains a huge number of homes sat empty across the nation and the value of these vacant properties is quite staggering, to say the least.

"Of course, there will be varying reasons as to why these homes are empty but they could certainly go some way in addressing the current housing crisis and bringing a much needed stock boost to the market."



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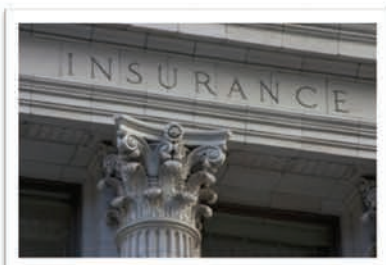
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# Tax loophole on second homes to close

Owners of second homes who abuse a tax loophole by claiming their often-empty properties are holiday lets will be forced to pay under tough new measures announced by the Government.

The changes will target people who take advantage of the tax system to avoid paying their fair share towards local services in popular destinations such as Cornwall, Devon, the Lake District, East Anglia, West Sussex and the Isle of Wight.

Currently, owners of second homes in England can avoid paying council tax and access small business rates relief by simply declaring an intention to let the property out to holidaymakers. However, concerns have been raised that many never actually let their homes, leave them empty and are unfairly benefiting from the tax break.

Following a consultation exercise last year, the Government is to change the tax system, so that second homeowners must pay council tax if their properties are not genuine holiday lets.

From April 2023, second homeowners will have to prove holiday lets are being rented out for a minimum of 70 days a year to access small business rates relief, where they meet the criteria.

Holiday let owners will have to provide evidence such as the website or a copy of the brochure used to advertise the property, letting details and receipts. Properties will also have to be available to be rented out for 140 days a year to qualify for this relief.

Secretary of State for Levelling Up Michael Gove said: "The Government backs small businesses, including responsible short-term letting, which attracts tourists and brings significant investment to local communities.

However, we will not stand by and allow people in privileged positions to abuse the system by unfairly claiming tax relief and leaving local people counting the cost.

"The action we are taking will create a fairer system, ensuring that second homeowners are contributing their share to the local services they benefit from."



The changes will target people who take advantage of the tax system to avoid paying their fair share towards local services in popular destinations such as Cornwall, Devon, the Lake District, East Anglia, West Sussex and the Isle of Wight.

Kurt Jansen, Director of the Tourism Alliance said: "Establishing these new operational thresholds for self-catering businesses is welcomed by the tourism industry as it makes a very important distinction between commercial self-catering businesses that provide revenue and employment for local communities, and holiday homes which lie vacant for most of the year.

"It is recognition that tourism is the lifeblood of many small towns and villages, maintaining the viability of local shops, pubs and attractions. The move will protect genuine small holiday letting businesses across the country and will support local

economies by encouraging tourism and by ensuring second homeowners pay a fair contribution towards public services."

Around 65,000 holiday lets in England are liable for business rates of which around 97 per cent have rateable values of up to £12,000. Currently there is no requirement for evidence to be produced that a property has actually been commercially let out.

The Valuation Office Agency will be responsible for determining whether a property should be assessed for council tax or business rates under this new system.

## London council awards contract to remove Grenfell-style cladding

Camden Council in north London has awarded a £77.2million contract for cladding removal work on four tower blocks at the Chalcots Estate, after nearly three years of stop-start delays.

The council initially awarded a contract to Wates for cladding remediation and fire safety work in early 2019, but contractual disagreements resulted in the work being retendered and a new contract

was won by McLaren Construction. The contractor has committed to employing 20 per cent of its workforce for the project from the local community.

Work is expected to commence early in 2022, with the installation of new cladding starting in June as part of a schedule of works that will see McLaren working on two blocks at the same time, the council said.

Due to its different structure, a separate two-stage design and build contract was awarded to John Graham Construction last September for the fifth tower block on the estate, known as Blashford. All five towers are due to be completed by December 2023.

Meric Apak, cabinet member for Better Homes at Camden Council, said the appointment of McLaren was a "significant step forward". He added: "Our sights are now firmly set on quality and the safe completion, and I look forward to a shared resident-focused approach as we move forward with the delivery of this project."



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# Social housing trade bodies give a guarded welcome to Gove's building safety announcement

Representative bodies from across the housing sector have warmly welcomed the Government's plans to sort out the cladding crisis, but they have universally asked for more details and highlighted concerns about the funding of other essential fire safety works and new social housing building.

The reaction of Rachael Williamson, the Chartered Institute of Housing's head of policy and external affairs, to Michael Gove's announcement on how building safety will be improved, was typical of many.

"While there are still elements of the building safety crisis not addressed by the announcement, it was a significant step forward and represents a clear policy shift from the Government.

"The overall principal is right – leaseholders shouldn't be left with the bill for a system-wide failure and those responsible should cover the costs. Everyone should feel safe in their home and should know where to go if things go wrong.

"However, the debate highlighted issues which need further attention. How will developers be forced to pay up? What about leaseholders in buildings under 11m and those who've already paid out significant sums? What about liability for non-cladding costs? What analysis has been made of the impact on future house building and what does this mean for social housing? And where does the social housing bill fit within all of this?"

She concluded with "The Government's acknowledgement that more radical change is needed is

welcome. But let's make sure the cladding crisis doesn't add to further pressure to the housing crisis – safety and supply should go hand in hand. Further assurance is needed on the detail to ensure clarity for leaseholders and the sector. We look forward to seeing it.

Kate Henderson, Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation, said: "We welcome this important move from the Government to find a solution to the cost of dangerous cladding on buildings above 11m, and we agree that those responsible – developers, contractors and manufacturers – should make a major contribution to funding the remediation needed. Innocent leaseholders should not have to pay for building safety issues created by the big building firms.

"In the absence of funding, charitable housing associations have been left to pick up the bill. These not-for-profit organisations already estimate they will spend £10bn – over double the sum being talked about today – on remediating homes where social renters live, impacting their ability to build more social housing and improve existing properties.

"As ever when it comes to this crisis, speed, clarity and certainty are of the essence. We need urgent and decisive action to end the misery leaseholders are experiencing and ensure people are safe in their homes. We look forward to seeing more detail from the government and will continue to work with ministers to put an end to the cladding scandal"

Polly Neate, chief executive of Shelter, said: "More than four years on from the horrors of Grenfell,

"The Government must act to make buildings safe as quickly as possible, but it must remember that safety and supply are both critical."

Polly Neate, chief executive of Shelter

many people are still trapped in dangerous homes. This announcement is a welcome step in the right direction. Developers played a part in this cladding scandal so it's only right they help to fix it.

"The Government must act to make buildings safe as quickly as possible, but it must remember that safety and supply are both critical. As MPs including the former Conservative housing secretary made clear, funding shouldn't come from the social housing budget. Right now, 126,000 children are homeless in England and many are waiting for a social home. The government and developers must get on with building the new social homes needed to fix the housing emergency once and for all."

Members of the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities select committee have also expressed concerns about the possible failure to reach agreement with developers. Its chair, Clive Betts said: "We want to examine the risk to the department's budget, particularly around social housing, if it is not able to secure sufficient funds from industry."

## How do we fund all of the post Grenfell safety works?

Among the many questions left unanswered by Michael Gove's commitment to make developers pay for resolving the cladding crisis on Britain's block of flats, perhaps the most important one is how all of the other necessary safety works are to be funded.

Phase One of the Grenfell inquiry exposed a whole host of problems with the safety of residential blocks of flats and these affect not just the high rise tower blocks over 18 metres high. These are just a few of the issues:

- Inefficient and flammable insulation
- Flawed compartmentation
- Inappropriate, absent or incorrectly applied fire breaks
- Defective fire doors

- Sprinkler systems
- Fire alarms
- Flammable balconies

Going forward these problems can be relatively easily fixed in new buildings, but retrofitting the solutions to our existing stock will be costly, disruptive and time consuming. Work has already started on dealing with some of the above, but so far this only affects a relatively small percentage of the many thousands of flatted blocks when remedial action is required.

When the timetable of works to remove cladding is looked at in terms of what has been completed to date, it is clear that the current rate of progress is wholly inadequate.

The new building safety regulator should

ensure that a greater focus is applied. But the resources required for these works (labour, materials and money) will often be competing with decarbonisation retrofitting work which is necessary to meet the Government's carbon reduction targets.

The Grenfell inquiry heard repeatedly that the landlord and its many contractors had ignored questions and safety warnings from the tenants who lived in the block before, during and after the refurbishment. If we are not to repeat the mistakes of Grenfell, then ways need to be found to ensure tenants' views and opinions are sought, considered and where possible, acted upon.

But alongside the question 'How do we achieve truly safe residential buildings?' we also need to ensure that the building of new homes to rent, both for social and private renting continues at a pace in order to tackle the current homelessness problem. Michael Gove appears to have made a decent start on tackling the cladding problem, but his in-tray of other urgent housing issues to resolve at the Levelling Up department is pretty full.





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# Developers told to stump up for building safety measures, but uncertainty remains over responsibility for landlords' costs

**M**ichael Gove broke the stalemate over who has responsibility for cladding removal costs by demanding that developers pay up, but his solution may only provide a partial relief for individual leaseholders.

Developers have been given until early March to agree how they will fund the estimated £4billion cost of removing cladding from medium-rise flat blocks (between 11m and 18m in height). Gove said he wants to publish a fully funded plan of action at this stage and he is prepared to enforce a solution, if a deal is not agreed by that date.

A similar demand for financial contributions has been made of cladding and insulation manufacturers. Gove has also asked that they provide comprehensive information on all buildings over 11m which have historic fire-safety defects to which the companies have supplied products or services.

The motivation for the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, is to spare individual leaseholders, including shared owners, from having to shoulder the cost of removing unsafe combustible cladding from their homes. This follows the Government funded remediation programme for making high-rise blocks safe across the social and private sectors.

But his initial announcement and subsequent communications have not clarified responsibility for other costly and essential building safety works, such as replacing faulty insulation and fire doors, installing fire alarms and water sprinkler systems. So it is possible that leaseholders will still face some hefty bills. Developers have also pushed back saying that responsibility for the remediation work should

be shared with manufacturers and the Government.

Although social landlords are not expected to contribute to the £4bn funding pot, they have not been given access to any other Government backed loans or grants to complete cladding removal or other safety works to medium and low-rise flat blocks they own and manage.

Instead Gove has encouraged councils and housing associations to recover remediation costs from responsible parties (presumably developers and builders) where possible, and absorb any costs that they themselves are responsible for.

## FURTHER CLARIFICATION REQUIRED

Similarly there is uncertainty over the position of landlords who own individual leasehold flats in medium rise blocks and rent them out. Buy to let flats will exist in both the social and private sectors. The NRLA has written to Mr Gove highlighting that at least half of their landlord members are basic rate taxpayers and own a single rental, which they let out to boost their pensions.

The NHF and LGA are working with the Government to clarify how non-cladding related works will be paid for, as well as details of how housing associations can access the £4bn funding.

Gove has acknowledged housing associations' unique social purpose and the impact that building safety costs have on the sector's wider work, and has offered to work closely with the sector to mitigate this impact.

The Secretary of State also set out a strong commitment to increasing the supply of social housing and improving the quality of existing homes – and offered to work closely with the social

housing sector to achieve this. Other steps taken by the Government include:

- Withdrawal of the consolidated advice note on building safety and its replacement with a new Publicly Available Specification (PAS 9980), which contains risk-based guidance for assessing external wall systems;
- Commencement of the Fire Safety Act will extend fire safety responsibilities to cover all external walls and common parts, including doors to individual flats, in any multi-occupied building regardless of height;
- A new scheme will be brought forward to provide professional indemnity insurance for building assessors, to help increase capacity in this field;
- Buildings between 11m and 18m in height will be considered safe unless there is evidence to the contrary. Building owners are encouraged to challenge judgements from building assessors that they believe may be excessively risk averse; and
- The Building Safety Fund will be reviewed to ensure it is in line with the Government's expectations of a risk-driven approach to remedial works, and information on the progress of applications to the funds will be made available to residents.

As an incentive to react positively to his demands, Gove has warned developers, manufacturers and installers that any of them who fail to contribute to the remediation fund face being frozen out of future publicly funded contracts, or even being banned from trading in the UK.

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## Poor social housing has been a problem for decades

Poor social housing conditions have been a problem for 30 or 40 years and the Government, together with social landlords, face an uphill battle to solve the issue according to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

During an interview with ITV News, the Archbishop said the poor housing conditions faced by some social housing tenants (and highlighted for much of the previous year by the broadcaster) were "tragically familiar".

The Archbishop said: "It's not just a Government issue, it needs housing associations, national government, local government, landowners. We need a revolution in social housing and affordable housing to sort it."

When asked what hope he has that all of the various bodies will act, he said it is a "considerable uphill struggle" and that the problem could take 10 years to solve. "This has been going on for 30 or 40 years," he added.

He then said: "We need people who say, 'In politics, my life's ambition is to deal with that – I want to be the person who goes down in the history books as having made a difference on this in my local government or at national level'."

"We need landlords who say, 'I'm not happy with building another estate of unaffordable houses...' "We need to build communities, not just houses. And that's what will change things most fundamentally."

While the Archbishop said it would take at least 10 years to solve the problem, he said "acute issues", such as mould growing across ceilings in tenants' homes, could be solved in as little time as three months.



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## Government to publish housing regulation bill in March

The long-awaited legislation setting out how the social housing sector is to be regulated in future is expected to be laid before Parliament in early March.

The Bill is expected to include plans for a more active Regulator of Social Housing, with a greater focus on delivering higher quality customer services, while also assessing social landlords' performance across a range of services, including disrepair and tenants' health and safety in their homes.

Other proposals include a new obligation for landlords to identify a nominated person responsible for building safety compliance, plus a requirement to improve tenant engagement and a review of the Decent Homes Standard.

It will also look to speed up the complaints process by improving access to the Housing Ombudsman and removing the democratic filter. The filter was introduced by the Coalition Government in 2012 and requires residents to wait eight weeks or consult a politician before escalating their case.

The new legislation was initially prompted by the Grenfell disaster four and a half years ago and widespread reports of how tenants have long felt stigmatised, marginalised and ignored.

Publication of the Bill will mark a significant step in a journey that began as long ago as September 2017. In November 2020 the Government published a Social Housing White Paper and late last year the regulator began a consultation exercise on a new customer focused regime to improve housing standards.

# Government announces drive to improve service standards in social housing

The Government has announced a package of measures to ensure social housing residents are listened to and better protected in the future, with their new rights enshrined in law.

Among the measures announced by the Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing Eddie Hughes, are the following:

- A review of staff training and qualifications to improve social housing services and ensure residents' complaints are dealt with effectively;
- Residents will be encouraged to come forward and have their say on the future of social housing; and
- The Social Housing White Paper will make sure tenants are safe, listened to and live in good quality homes.

A new charter will make sure tenants know how to raise concerns when things go wrong and can be confident that their landlord will make things right. The Government says it will also be bringing forward legislation as soon as practicable to strengthen consumer regulation of the sector.

However, there was no mention made of additional resources being made available to make improvements to tenants' homes, or to pay for a widespread drive to increase staff training. This might come later, but without it some tenant groups will be sceptical that the cultural changes can be delivered.

The Government hopes a review on qualifications and professional training will drive up standards by making sure social housing staff are better equipped to support tenants, deal effectively with complaints, and make sure homes are good quality.

A working group is being set up to lead on this and it will include representatives from the Chartered Institute for Housing, tenant engagement experts TPAS, as well as North Star Housing Group and Sanctuary Housing.

The Social Housing White Paper Professionalisation Review will explore the qualifications currently available for staff, with landlords, residents and trade bodies putting forward recommendations to the government. It will also consider if additional training is required to improve the service to residents.

### HAVE YOUR SAY

The Government is now urging social housing residents to come forward and have their say in the review and talk about their experience dealing with social housing staff. They can also suggest what



changes they would like to see.

The Social Housing White Paper set out how the Government will ensure residents in social housing are safe, listened to, live in good quality homes, and have access to redress when things go wrong. This review is a crucial step in ensuring staff and trained to support residents and listen to their concerns.

The announcement comes after thousands of social housing residents told the Government (after the Grenfell tragedy) that they felt their landlords were failing to treat them with courtesy and respect.

It also follows the latest English Housing Survey report, which shows that more than 59 per cent of social housing residents who complained were not happy with the response to their complaint. At the same time the Housing Ombudsman has seen a 139 per cent increase in complaints in the past year.

Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing Eddie Hughes MP said: "Too many social housing residents have told me they feel like they are not listened to or treated with respect – raising complaints time and time again only for the problems not to be fixed."

"This needs to stop. This review will drive up the standard of services received by residents, making sure their concerns are taken seriously and they have somewhere safe to live. The review is a key element of our Social Housing White Paper, which is bringing forward wide-ranging improvements for tenants."

Chartered Institute for Housing CEO Gavin Smart said: "As the professional body for housing, CIH is delighted to be involved with DLUHC's Professionalisation Review. Home is the foundation on which we all build our lives, our experience during the Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced just how important home is."

"We are pleased to have the opportunity to take part in the review to help make sure that housing professionals have the right tools to deliver good quality homes and services with people at the heart."

Landlords, residents and other interested parties can contribute to the Social Housing White Paper Professionalisation Review by emailing: [Professionalisation.Review@communities.gov.uk](mailto:Professionalisation.Review@communities.gov.uk).



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# Homelessness is disproportionately affecting women

Sixty per cent of all homeless adults living in temporary accommodation in England are women, despite only making up 51 per cent of the general population analysis by the housing charity Shelter has found.

The charity's new report, *Fobbed Off*, used in-depth interviews with 34 women and one non-binary person with lived experience of homelessness and bad housing, alongside statistical evidence to expose the disproportionate impact of the housing emergency on women.

In the past decade, the number of homeless women living in temporary accommodation has almost doubled from 40,030 in 2011 to 75,410 today – a rise of 88 per cent. To uncover why so many women are being tipped into homelessness, Shelter commissioned YouGov polling, which revealed the dramatic impact of affordability issues:

- Of those with cost of housing issues, women are 36 per cent more likely than men to be in arrears or constantly struggling to afford their costs – this equates to 4.7 million women.
- Lone mothers face the most acute affordability issues with almost 1 in 3 in arrears or constantly struggling to keep a roof over their heads – this equates to 321,000 single mothers.
- 69 per cent of women who rent privately, worry they would not be able to afford anywhere decent to live if their relationship broke down – this equates to 2.7 million women.

Shelter also collaborated with a team of peer researchers, with direct experience of homelessness and poor housing, to carry out an investigation into

the biggest barriers women face in finding a safe and secure home.

## COMMON CAUSES

Using their own lived experience to build trust and provide insight, Shelter's peer researchers interviewed 34 women and one non-binary person living in Birmingham, Bristol and Sheffield who were either homeless or living in poor housing at the time. Key findings revealed:

- Domestic abuse is the third most common cause of homelessness. A third of interviewees had experienced domestic abuse, which often triggered their housing problems.
- Single mothers are hit hardest - 1 in 38 lone mothers are homeless in England right now. Interviewees said they faced additional barriers to accessing support, with some disclosing that they did not seek help for fear their children could be removed from them.
- Rising private rents and a lack of affordable social homes are a major issue. Almost three quarters of interviewees were struggling to afford their housing costs. Several said their housing benefit didn't cover the rent, others had to borrow money from family or friends.
- Women are more likely to claim housing benefit and be harmed by welfare squeezes. Two fifths reported housing benefit problems, including discriminatory behaviour from landlords, and welfare restrictions like the Benefit Cap meaning they could not afford a suitable home.
- A common barrier was being treated poorly by professionals. Two thirds said professionals made them feel like a burden or re-victimised them,

one woman described feeling "fobbed off". Over half said they did not know where to get help or how to navigate a maze of services.

## ESCALATING CRISIS

Polly Neate, Chief Executive of Shelter, said: "Women are bearing the brunt of our escalating housing crisis, and they are being failed at every turn. No mother should have to choose between buying food or paying her rent. No woman should have to stay with her abuser or face the streets.

"The hike in living costs and cuts to Universal Credit mean it's only going to get tougher for thousands of women barely hanging on to their homes. It's appalling women are being fobbed off by professionals who are supposed to help them, and it's no wonder they feel scared and alone. If we're going to turn back the tide on women's homelessness, we need to listen to women and better understand their needs."

A spokesperson at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities said: "Tackling homelessness is a Government priority – that's why we are spending £316m on this in the next year to build on the success of the Homelessness Reduction Act, which has prevented 400,000 households from becoming homeless or supported them to settled accommodation. We are continuing to work with councils and charities to meet our target of ending rough sleeping by the end of this parliament.

"These figures reflect the increase in support for vulnerable groups which is preventing thousands of women from becoming homeless. However, we're clear that temporary accommodation should only be a last resort.

## Levelling Up funds should be made available for HAs' regeneration work

The PlaceShapers group of housing associations is calling on the Government to make funds available for its members' work on regenerating housing estates and decarbonisation work on existing stock.

Backed up by published research in a new report 'Stay local, go far', the group believes it has made the case for Levelling Up funds to be invested in existing and future work with local communities.

In particular it wants access to Homes England funding programmes (normally reserved for new build work) to pay for the improvement and replacement of existing homes.

The group also wants money made available from the £3.8 billion Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and the allocated £800 million for the 2022/25

period as part of the Heat and Buildings Strategy, to be increased. This would help pay for the retrofitting work to existing homes.

Matthew Walker, Chair of PlaceShapers, said: "Our mission is to put place-shaping at the heart of decision-making to improve lives and communities. So, it is unsurprising that we are fully supportive of the Government's commitment to level up.

"We know that housing associations already deliver a variety of services to level-up where they have homes, however the scale of the challenge requires a different approach, where Government works more with local communities and adequate investment and support is provided for truly effective levelling-up and regeneration."

Among other recommendations, the

PlaceShapers groups is asking for:

- Combined and local authorities to be granted funding and powers to lead on efforts to improve social infrastructure, working with housing associations, local businesses and wider civil society.
- For greater certainty and opportunities for long term funding to be provided through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to enable housing associations to deliver services, such as direct employment assistance.

The report also includes PlaceShapers member case studies on how they have been involved in levelling-up their communities to date.





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# Consultation on new tenant satisfaction measures underway

The Regulator of Social Housing is consulting on a new set of tenant satisfaction measures, as proposed in the Government's Social Housing White Paper, but the closing date for responses is imminent.

The Social Housing White Paper was published over a year ago in November 2020. It outlined what social housing residents should expect from their landlords and sought to rebalance the relationship between residents and landlords, and enable residents to hold their landlord to account and understand how they are performing.

The proposed tenant satisfaction measures are among the tools that could be used to do this. They are intended to provide a set of clear, comparable metrics on issues that matter to residents, and would be applied to housing associations, local authorities and other registered housing providers.

The measures would enable residents to hold their landlords to account, and allow the regulator to ensure that housing associations (and other social housing providers) are delivering on consumer regulation. They would be used alongside other tools to gain assurance from social housing providers on compliance.

The consultation is open until 3 March 2022, and it seeks views on 22 tenant satisfaction measures across five themes from the white paper:

- Keeping properties in good repair.
- Maintaining building safety.
- Effective complaints handling.
- Respectful and helpful tenant management.
- Responsible neighbourhood management.

Twelve of these will be measured using a perception survey, while the remaining 10 will be measured using housing providers' management information. This could include complaints handling, building

The consultation is also proposing a new Tenant Satisfaction Measure standard. To comply with this, housing associations will need to meet detailed technical and tenant perception survey requirements

safety, neighbourhood management, repairs and stock quality information.

The consultation is also proposing a new Tenant Satisfaction Measure standard. To comply with this, housing associations will need to meet detailed technical and tenant perception survey requirements.

The proposals represent a significant U-turn from the Government and the regulator as they previously scrapped the use of performance indicators for comparing services delivered by different social landlords. However, in the aftermath of the Grenfell tragedy some four and a half years ago, it has faced repeated calls to focus on performance issues and particularly those relating to the health and safety of tenants.

The Levelling Up Housing and Communities select committee has also started its work looking at the effectiveness of social housing regulation. Commenting on the committee's first open session in January, housing guru Alistair McIntosh described the sector as a 'fact free zone' and said collecting analysing and publishing facts about



conditions across the sector must be a top priority for any new regulatory regime.

Speaking at the select committee hearing, Suzanne Muna from the Social Housing Action Campaign was critical of the proposed tenant satisfaction measures. "Any of our members that we've talked to have just shrugged their shoulders and said 'how will this help me?' I can't say that empowers tenants in any way," she said.

Ahead of launching the consultation back in December the regulator had worked with others, including the National Housing Federation, in shaping the proposed measures through the Tenant Satisfaction Measure Sounding Board. It remains to be seen what other measures of service delivery are to be introduced within a more customer focused regulatory system.

## HA awards a new 10-year repairs and maintenance contract

South-east based Moat has awarded a ten-year contract worth over £200 million to Morgan Sindall Property Services to deliver property repairs and maintenance services.

The contract will start from the beginning of April 2022 with Morgan Sindall Property Services providing responsive repairs, out-of-hours services and void works to 11,500 of Moat's 20,000 homes across south-east London, Kent, Essex and Sussex.

The contract is for an initial period of ten years with the option to extend for a further five

years and has the flexibility to include additional requirements, such as cyclical redecoration and building safety works.

Moat's tenants were heavily involved in the multi-stage tender exercise with evaluation based on an assessment of both cost and quality of service, focusing heavily on customer experience and high-quality service delivery.

Steve Nunn, Executive Director of New Business and Development, said: "The delivery of a high-quality, customer-focused service is of paramount

importance to us, so it was great to have so much customer involvement in the tender process and to have their input at the heart of this new contract.

"We look forward to working with Morgan Sindall Property Services who clearly demonstrated in the tender process how they will deliver an exceptional service that meets the diverse needs of our customers, alongside exciting social initiatives for our communities."

Alan Hayward, Managing Director of Morgan Sindall Property Services, said: "We are so pleased to be working Moat who clearly share our values and are passionate about delivering a high-quality service and the best possible experience to customers. We are looking forward to delivering social value initiatives which are relevant and engaging for customers and communities."



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# West London council slated by Ombudsman over roof leak lasting six years

A series of complaint handling failures by the London Borough of Ealing led to a lengthy and frustrating delay for a resident in getting a leaking roof replaced, causing damp in her flat and impacting on her health.

The leaseholder complained in 2019 that she had been affected by extreme mould throughout the property for a number of years. The council initially identified that the flat's roof needed to be replaced after an inspection in 2015.

The council said this would be included in its next planned programme of works but would complete temporary work to address the roof leak that was causing the damp. The resident complained the temporary work was of a poor standard and the ongoing dampness had a bad impact on the property, her health and her finances.

In its response the council focused on the single issue of the delay to the roof replacement works referring to procurement issues and then COVID-19 related issues. It failed to address the other issues raised by the resident. The council also failed to escalate the complaint as requested by the resident and missed her response to its stage two complaint. This resulted in a protracted and unsuccessful complaints process.

The Ombudsman found severe maladministration for the landlord's complaint handling and maladministration for its response to the resident's reports about water coming into her flat and the repairs carried out. It ordered the landlord to pay the resident compensation of £3,600 for the unreasonable delay in completing major

Richard Blakeway, Housing Ombudsman, said: "It is clear that the resident experienced a significant detriment over an extended period of her time. She encountered significant difficulty in progressing her complaint, even with our assistance, and did not receive a final response at any point"

works to the building, for the standard of temporary works to resolve the issues and for its complaint handling.

## SIGNIFICANT DETRIMENT

Richard Blakeway, Housing Ombudsman, said: "It is clear that the resident experienced a significant detriment over an extended period of her time. She encountered significant difficulty in progressing her complaint, even with our assistance, and did not receive a final response at any point. The landlord's consideration of her complaint lacked customer focus and led to a deterioration in the landlord and resident relationship.

"While it was appropriate to complete temporary repairs, the timeframe that the resident has been asked to wait for these works, approximately six years, to take place is not reasonable."

A spokesman for the council, said: "While we are disappointed at the persistent failure of service execution that have led to the Ombudsman's determination of maladministration, we welcome this as an opportunity to learn lessons, review our

working practices, and put in place new measures to ensure there is not a repeat of the issues identified in this case.

"With water ingress first identified in 2015, temporary repairs were made while a full replacement of the roof was planned to take place in 2018 as part of a major works programme. Due to procurement issues the Council was unable to call on contractors to carry out these types of works until 2020. In the interim, we were only able to carry out responsive 'patch' repairs in response to further reports of water ingress. We have learnt a number of lessons from this case, and have put in place, and plan to implement, improvements."

In a separate case, which also resulted in a finding of maladministration, the Ombudsman ordered Great Yarmouth Borough Council to pay a tenant £1,700 in compensation on top of the council's original payment of £500 for failing to deal with mould growth throughout the resident's home that was causing damage, and then delayed in putting right faulty improvement works that worsened the situation.

## Another council refers itself to regulator over H&S failings

A unitary council on the south coast of England has referred itself to the Regulator of Social Housing over shortcomings in its electrical and fire safety work to tenants' homes, leading to a probable breach of the Home Standard.

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council manages 9,560 homes which are split into two neighbourhood teams. The Bournemouth stock of 5,058 homes is directly managed by the council, while the Poole stock of 4,502 homes is managed by an ALMO.

The council referred itself "in the spirit of openness and transparency" after it found shortcomings in the council's electrical safety programme, which it said was "particularly affected

by the COVID-19 pandemic as the work requires access to the whole of a property for a considerable period of time".

An action plan was put in place after it identified several issues in late October, which included targeting resources, contracting additional subcontractors and refocusing its in-house team. It has been carrying out weekly checks in communal areas and a programme of checks to reassure and prioritise the most vulnerable tenants and properties "as quickly as possible".

Late last year the council found 780 outstanding electrical safety inspections, with some properties having never been inspected. It also found 19 outstanding "high-priority" fire safety inspections

and a number of issues found with recording cases. 18 domestic properties and 64 communal areas had never been inspected.

A review in the third quarter of 2021/22 revealed that 19 high-priority actions identified by fire risk assessments between 2016 and 2020 were still outstanding in Bournemouth. There were also 189 medium-priority actions outstanding.

The council expected all outstanding fire safety work to have been completed by the end of January and for the backlog of electrical inspections to be cleared by spring 2022 at the latest. It expects the implementation of a new IT system will help to better manage fire safety work in the future.



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# New tenancy regulations in Wales to become effective from July

**J**ulie James the Welsh Minister for Climate Change has announced that a raft of changes to housing and tenancy law in the country will come into effect from 15 July 2022.

Under the new law (The Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016), tenants and licencees will become 'contract-holders' and tenancy agreements will be replaced with 'occupation contracts'. The new law is intended to make renting easier and to provide greater security to residents.

For tenants (or contract-holders, using the new terminology) it will mean:

- receiving a written contract setting out their rights and responsibilities;
- an increase in the 'no fault' notice period from two to six months;
- greater protection from eviction;
- improved succession rights, these set out who has a right to continue to live in a dwelling, for example after the current tenant dies; and
- more flexible arrangements for joint contract-holders, making it easier to add or remove others to an occupation contract.

For landlords it will mean:

- A simpler system, with two types of contract: 'Secure' for the social rented sector and 'Standard' for the private rented sector;
- Councils and housing associations will both be called community landlords. All other landlords

will be called private landlords;

- Ensuring homes are fit for human habitation (FFHH). This will include, electrical safety testing and ensuring working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are fitted;
- Rent can only be charged for a property that meets the FFHH requirements; and
- Abandoned properties can be repossessed without needing a court order.

Electrical inspections of rented properties will be required every five years by a competent person, with condition reports detailing any remedial work necessary being issued after each inspection. Failure to comply with the new requirements will see properties deemed unfit for human habitation and fines of up to £30,000 imposed.

The Welsh Government believes these represent the biggest changes to housing law in Wales for decades giving tenants (contract-holders) a minimum security of tenure of one year from the date of moving in. This means they will have the greatest protection from the start of their contract than in any other part of the UK.

The Act also provides protection against retaliatory eviction. If a landlord responds to a request for repair by issuing a possession notice, they will no longer be automatically entitled to possession if the Court is satisfied the landlord issued the notice to avoid carrying out the repair.

In addition, joint contract-holders can be added or removed from occupation contracts without the



need to end one contract and start another. This will make managing joint contracts easier and help those experiencing domestic abuse by enabling the perpetrator to be targeted for eviction.

Responding to the news, Chris Norris, Director of Policy & Campaigns at the National Residential Landlords Association, said: "There is still a pressing need for more clarity as to what the supporting framework of the Act looks like. The extent of landlords' future obligations under this legislation also underlines how crucial it is that existing legislation be made fit for purpose before new regulations are introduced.

"While we welcome the introduction of the Act, it is vital that the supporting legislation is fit for purpose and scrutinised sufficiently. In particular, the occupation contract terms, which all landlords must use, needs to improve significantly from its original consultation draft. These important steps must be taken before more complex regulations are introduced by the Welsh Government over the course of this year"

## Skills and data holding back social landlords' from digital transformation of services

The lack of both skills and quality data is holding back social housing landlords who are attempting to digitally transform their organisations and better serve residents.

A new survey, commissioned by conversation-as-a-service leader Futr, has found that social landlords see the value in digital services, but still have some way to go before they can properly implement them.

More than half (54 per cent) of respondents said that a lack of digital skills and resources was their top barrier to digital transformation, closely followed by a lack of good quality/robust data, and a lack of investment (32 per cent).

However, this does not appear to be diminishing enthusiasm for the digital transformation process – just 2 per cent of respondents had no strategy and no plans to implement one soon, while 40 per cent had implemented a clear strategy, and 20 per cent had developed the strategy but had yet to implement it.

"The focus on digital transformation is positive," said Kitty Hadaway, Head of Sales for Housing at Futr, which commissioned the research of 140 social landlords. Over 80 per cent of the landlords had seen an increase in resident demand for digital products in the previous 18 months.

Ms Hadaway added: "Landlords recognise the importance of delivering services and engaging with their tenants in a way that meets the needs and preferences of residents.

"Nine in 10 housing associations we spoke to said that it was very important for tenants to have a choice in how to contact landlords, and in today's increasingly digital world that means complementing telephone lines with web, social, chatbots and messaging channels. But to deliver that in a coherent, integrated and consistent manner requires many to digitally transform."

It was not just residents demanding digital means of communication; 90 per cent of landlords said staff were also pushing for these services,

highlighting how important digital transformation is in supporting teams to work effectively.

Ms Hadaway said: "A lot of people will often say that new technology means cutting jobs, but forward-thinking organisations will always see it as a way to augment their teams, not scale them back.

"Particularly when a lack of skills is a major concern, being able to introduce new services that help employees do their jobs, or focus on more complex matters, can help accelerate that digital transformation process while improving employee engagement. And that's all on top of the boost to the customer experience."

First Choice Homes Oldham has seen the benefits of pushing on with digital transformation. It deployed Futr's chatbot and live chat services to support its contact centre team, going live in December 2020. Its customer satisfaction scores are averaging 89 per cent, with the chatbot handling an average of 1,000 customer interactions a month.



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# Ombudsman to focus on complaints about noise and managing agent relationships

The Housing Ombudsman's next two Spotlight reports for 2022 will examine learning from cases that involve social landlords' engagement with managing agents, followed by an investigation into noise nuisance.

They are part of the Ombudsman's ongoing series of Spotlight reports that uses insight from the real-life experiences in its complaints investigation casework to share learning and drive improvements for the benefit of all residents.

The first of the reports, due to be published in the early part of this year, follows a number of cases where maladministration was found and a managing agent was involved in the response to the resident's issues. In these circumstances the landlord is deemed responsible for the relationship with the resident and is responsible for working with other parties to resolve issues. The areas to be covered in the learning report are:

- Repairs
- Service charges

- Cladding/building safety
- Estate management
- Heat networks.

Complaints about noise, often including anti-social behaviour, are a large proportion of the Ombudsman's casework and increased significantly during the first Covid lockdown. Anti-social behaviour was the second highest complaint category in 2020/21 at 15 per cent of the total. The report, due to be published in the summer, will cover:

- Noise caused by other residents
- Noise from works, contractors or other external sources
- Noise attributed to poor soundproofing or other building defects.

Richard Blakeway, Housing Ombudsman, said: "Our work is rooted in the real-life experiences of residents and our objective is to ensure their

complaints are treated fairly, and any lessons arising from them are taken seriously.

"Increasingly residents want the lessons from complaints to be shared and acted on. There is also a strong appetite from the sector to learn from complaints to improve services. Our next two Spotlight investigations will look at two areas which can lead to immense frustration for residents. Cases involving a managing agent can be complex in terms of establishing the nature of the relationship between the landlord and the managing agent and their relative responsibilities. This should not prevent residents getting their issue resolved or act as a barrier to redress.

"Anti-social behaviour is typically one of our highest areas of complaint. Noise can be a significant element but it is not the only reason we receive complaints about noise. Our reports will examine both areas carefully from our unique and independent perspective, identifying key areas for improvement and making practical recommendations."



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## Millions of families in England face biggest social housing rent rise in a decade



Nearly five million families living in social housing in England are facing rent rises of up to 4.1 per cent from April – their biggest increase in a decade, according to the Resolution Foundation thinktank.

The organisation has forecast a troubling coincidence of economic ill winds that will hit tenants – a peak in the cost of living (forecast to reach 6 per cent), significant tax rises coming into effect, a huge increase in the energy bill cap and now the above inflation rate rent hike.

Social rents are expected to rise by 4.1 per cent in April, calculated by the consumer price index from last September (of 3.1 per cent) plus 1 per cent. While this is a cap rather than a requirement, most housing providers are expected to raise rents by the full amount, increasing the average social renter family's rent by £202 per year.

The latest increase comes on top of a decade in which housing costs have risen faster than incomes for those living in social housing. Social renters now spend 19 per cent of their income on housing costs, net of housing benefit, up from 15 per cent a decade ago. This rise is equivalent to an extra £786 per year for the average social renter family.

In contrast, the share of income that private renters spend on housing has stayed flat over the same period (albeit at a far higher 31 per cent of income), while housing costs for homeowners have fallen to 9 per cent of income.

### STATE AID FALLING

Housing benefit will take the strain for some social renters, but the share of social renters receiving state support with their housing costs has fallen in recent years, as more have moved into employment. Almost half of social renters (44 per cent, equivalent to over 2 million families) are not in receipt of housing benefit, and as a result will have to find the funds to cover their April rent rise entirely by themselves.

The thinktank reports that families living in social housing in London, the South East and South West are the least likely to have part of their housing costs covered by housing benefit, and therefore they are the most exposed to the big rise in rents coming next April.

Despite the worsening financial situation of many low-income families during the pandemic, Government support – including the £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit and extra support provided via Discretionary Housing Payments – has prevented housing arrears in the social rented sector from growing significantly so far.

But with this support now largely withdrawn, and the cost of living crunch expected to peak in April 2022, the Foundation notes that social landlords can limit the financial pressures facing their tenants by avoiding rent rises of the full 4.1 per cent this year.

Lindsay Judge, Research Director at the Resolution Foundation, said: “Social renters have already seen the largest rise in housing costs over the past decade, as rent rises have outstripped income growth since 2005. The latest increase will put particular pressure on the two million social renters who don't receive housing benefit, but who are likely to face falling real wages, rising taxes and soaring energy bills.

“While Government support has helped to limit rent arrears from building up among social renters so far, raising rents to the maximum uprating would be unwise given the cost of living crunch hitting families hard this spring.”

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# Futurebuild returns for 2022

Futurebuild, the event that's championed a sustainable built environment for the past 16 years, has opened registrations. Taking place from March 1 to 3, 2022, the event will connect specifiers, decision makers and disruptors with major brands and start-ups from across the built environment.

In the aftermath of the COP26 conference, Futurebuild — previously Ecobuild — will be perfectly timed to focus on the key issues and actions needed to work towards net zero. The focus is no longer about ambition — it is about delivery. Attracting 20,000+ senior professionals from right across the built environment, Futurebuild is the perfect opportunity for the industry to meet and collaborate together, to achieve the transformational change needed if the built environment is going to reach net zero by 2050.

As the home of innovation, Futurebuild 2022 will be organised into six sections — Buildings, Offsite, Interiors, Resourceful Materials, Energy and Critical Infrastructure.

## CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Sponsored by Construction Innovation Hub, Futurebuild 2022's conference programme will explore some of the key questions and issues around closing the gap between net zero ambition and delivery. It invites panels of industry experts to share their experiences on a range of topics, from embodied carbon to investing in education, skills and diversity.

The second day of the conference programme will focus on leading transformative change and will include a panel discussion about how the built environment can lead by example to raise aspirations. If the industry is going to achieve net zero, it must nurture a talent for excellence. Bea Natzler, senior analyst business and buildings, climate change committee, chairs a panel as they discuss how the built environment can engage more widely and move from following orders to being more influential and ensure that delivering net zero is a fundamental part of all contracts with clients.

## SPOTLIGHTS

The event will also feature six spotlights, Digital Impact sponsored by Glider, Whole House Retrofit in partnership with the Retrofit Academy, Circular Materials in partnership with 540 World, District Energy in partnership with UKDEA, Future Installer in partnership with MCS and Intelligent Buildings in partnership with KNX. These spotlights will include a mixture of presentations, discussions and practical demonstrations that will cover the fundamental issues



facing the built environment.

Retrofit is the big problem facing our existing building stock. Around 80 per cent of the buildings that will exist in 2050 have already been built, so to reach net zero the built environment must focus on making existing buildings zero carbon as well as resilient for the future. The Whole House Retrofit spotlight will tackle the grand challenges of retrofit and promote best practice, through curated seminars, clinics and an exhibition showcase.

## COLLABORATION IS KEY

The curated event will showcase over 250 leading brands, the companies who are developing the most innovative technologies, products and solutions. Visitors can participate in the innovation trail, which highlights the event's innovation partners. The winners of the Big Innovation Pitch, a competition that celebrates new approaches to the biggest challenges facing the industry, will also be announced during the event.

By bringing together individuals and companies from all areas of the built environment, we can accelerate innovation and provide everyone with access to the products and processes needed to deliver change.

"Now it is more important than ever to meet in person and do business face to face because our exhibitors and attendees are all working towards a common goal — achieving net zero" explains Martin Hurn, event director at Futurebuild. "To ensure we can deliver a sustainable future we've curated an event that cultivates cross-sector collaboration, addresses key industry issues and inspires transformational change."

If you're interested in visiting Futurebuild 2022 and exploring the most innovative products and solutions in the built environment, register for your place here:



# A UNIFORM FRAMEWORK FOR INVESTIGATING REPORTED DAMP AND MOULD

We recognise the Ombudsman is calling for a fresh attitude to dealing with the prevailing issues and adds moving from a 'blame' to 'responsibility' culture as a key directive. The Property MOT® flexible surveying platform answers the call for a proactive response demonstrating change and meaningful support

for residents with fact-based resolutions. The uniform framework has been developed to be undertaken by trained and certified persons via a support based licensed application resulting in the issuance of Certifications for property conditions alongside any pertinent Advisories.

## A CERTIFIABLE ADAPTIVE PROCESS WITH DISTINGUISHED EXPERT SUPPORT

In line with Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018, a property should be deemed fit for human habitation for occupants at the commencement of and during a lease period.

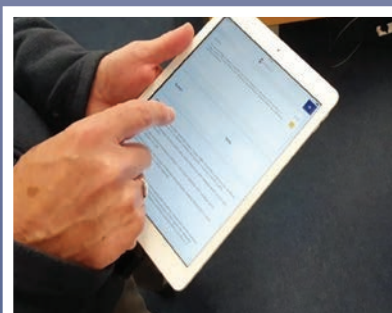
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## INDUSTRY VIEWFINDER

# The importance of healthy homes

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Poor quality housing can have a serious detrimental impact on both the physical and mental wellbeing of tenants, with the potential to cause many preventable diseases and injuries, and even death.

In 2018, 17,000 people died because they couldn't afford to heat their homes (E3G), and in the following year, 4.1 million homes were found to fall short of even the basic minimum requirements of the Decent Homes Standard, with almost half of these homes occupied by people over the age of 55 (MHCLG).

Even when looked at from a purely economic standpoint, the annual cost to the NHS attributed to low-quality housing is estimated at £1.4 billion for first year treatment costs (Nicol et al). Research from the King's Fund shows that money spent on remediating such housing would outweigh those costs in savings for the NHS.

This problem has not gone unrecognised by the Government, with a review of the Decent Homes Standard currently underway. As part of the review, recommendations were made by a report from the Good Home Inquiry, which helps to define what a decent, good, or healthy home is. Calling for a national strategy to improve England's existing housing stock, the inquiry has defined a good home as safe, secure, easy to warm and cool, affordable, and not damaging the life chances of its inhabitants, either through its design, location or connectedness.

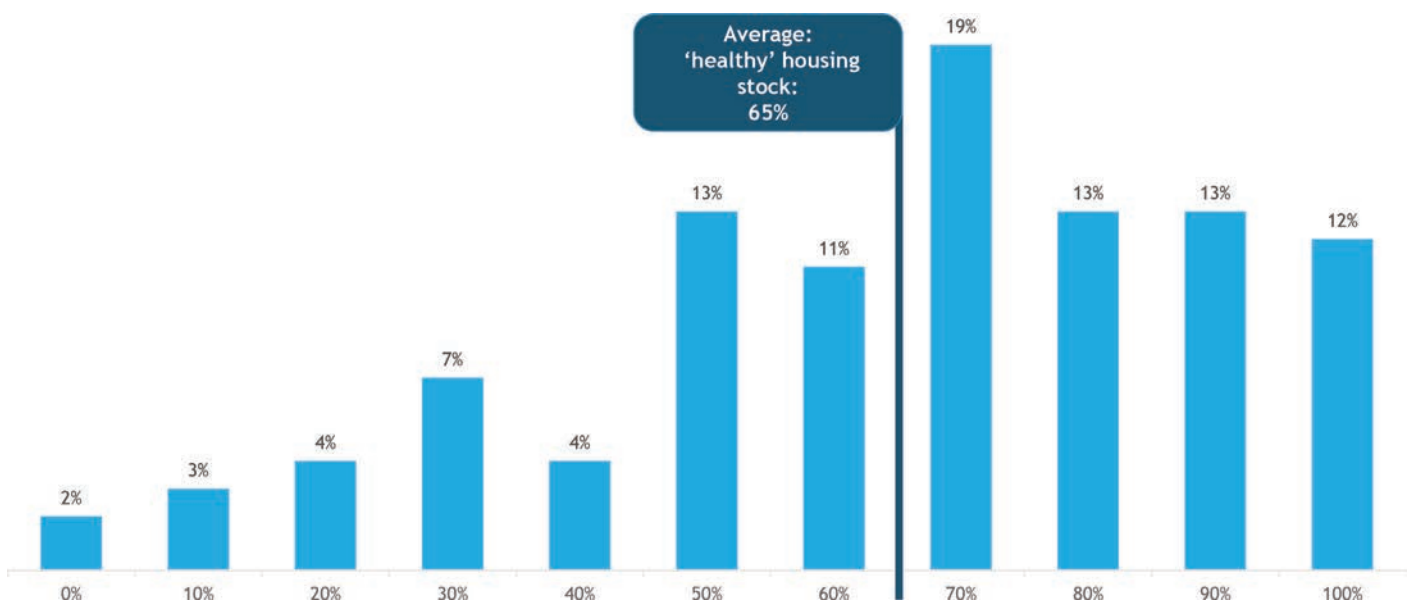
Remediation is a key part of this, with a huge number of homes in England in need of retrofit works to ensure their safety and suitability for future tenants.

In 2018, 17,000 people died because they couldn't afford to heat their homes (E3G), and in the following year, 4.1 million homes were found to fall short of even the basic minimum requirements of the Decent Homes Standard

It is estimated that more than 80% of the homes that will be needed by 2050 already exist today, so the Government's current focus on new build is arguably severely misplaced.

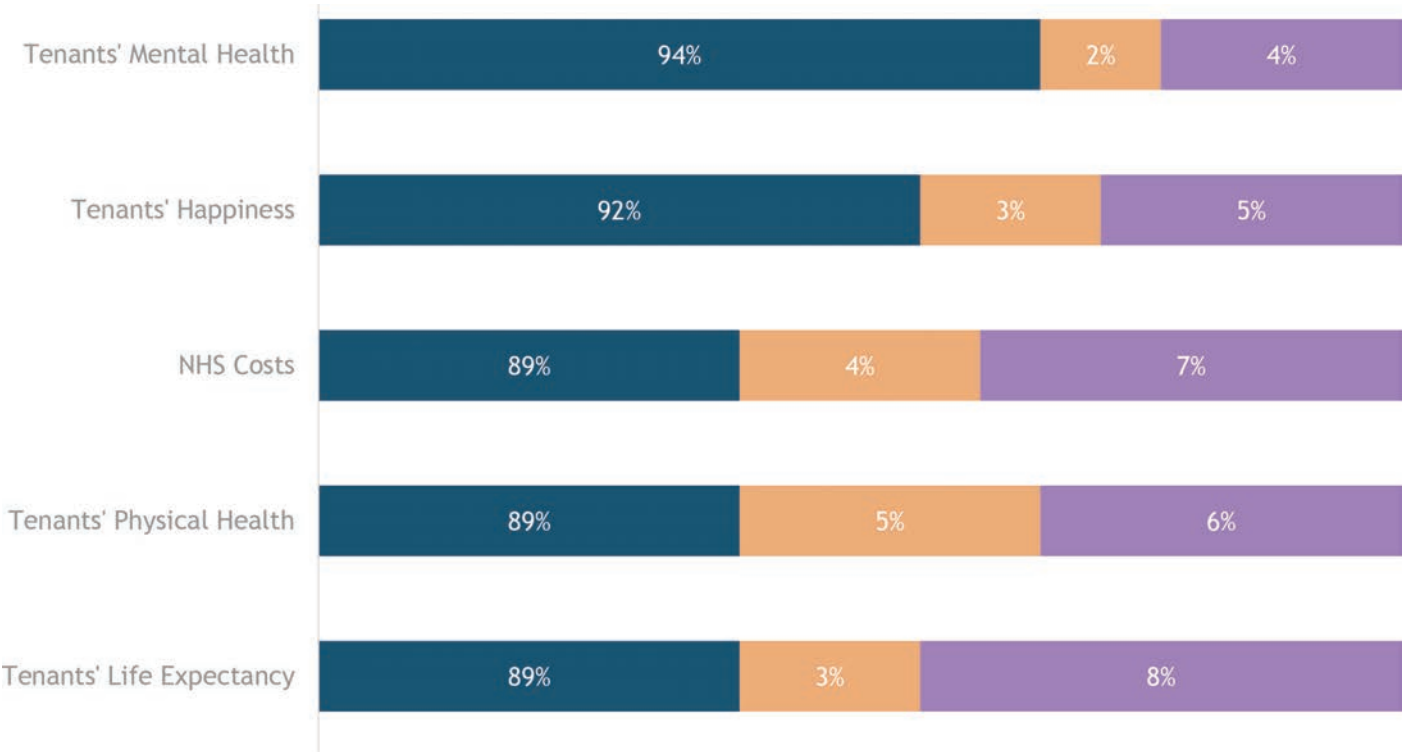
Though this is a gargantuan task for the industry, the benefits of acting now could literally be life saving, and research has shown that unhealthy homes are only likely to cause more issues in the future. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), by 2041, one in four people in England will be aged 65 or over, likely skyrocketing the number of vulnerable tenants in the next few decades, and many argue that the UK housing stock is falling in quality as it ages alongside the population.

At first, with such dire consequences apparent, it would seem a simple choice to follow the Inquiry's recommendations – to use the highest quality products,



"What portion of the housing stock you have owned or worked on would you describe as 'healthy'?"





“Do you believe a healthy home can positively affect the following?” ■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure/Don't Know

designs and repairs available to bring housing stock up to a higher standard – but Housing Management & Maintenance’s research of 120 landlords and housing professionals has highlighted a number of barriers to doing so, ranging from costs to a lack of Government attention on retrofit.

In our survey, of which 54% of the respondents were in the position of director, with an average of 1,163 homes managed, we hoped to ascertain not just the barriers to improving housing stock, but what housing professionals perceive a healthy home to be, and how much of their stock they would describe as such.

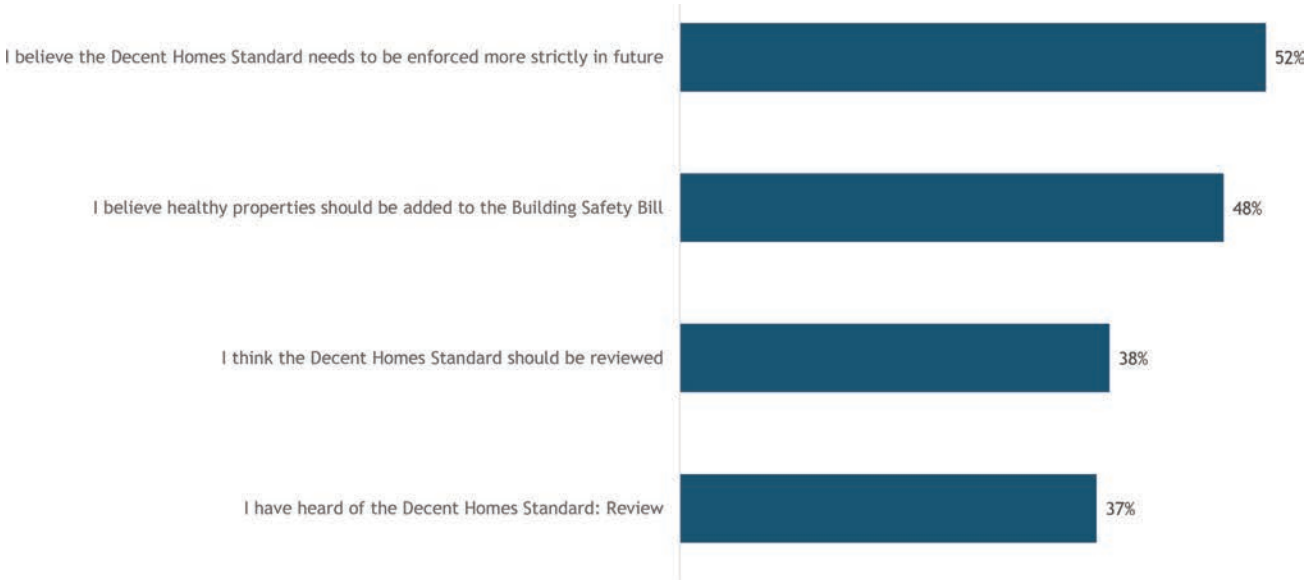
With the vast majority of respondents (89%) believing that healthy homes can increase tenants’ life expectancy being contrasted with a shocking 1 in 3

respondents (35%) reporting that they would only describe 50% or less of their housing stock as healthy, this white paper provides an interesting insight into the industry’s position on this dilemma.

INTRODUCTION

From a broader perspective, housing in England has improved dramatically over time, from the inception of housing regulation and the Garden City Association – which would later become the Town and Country Planning Association – in the 19th century, to the boom in social housing in the early 20th century, to the slum clearances throughout the century’s remaining decades.

In more recent times, however, progress seems to have stalled somewhat, and



“Do you agree with any of the following statements?”





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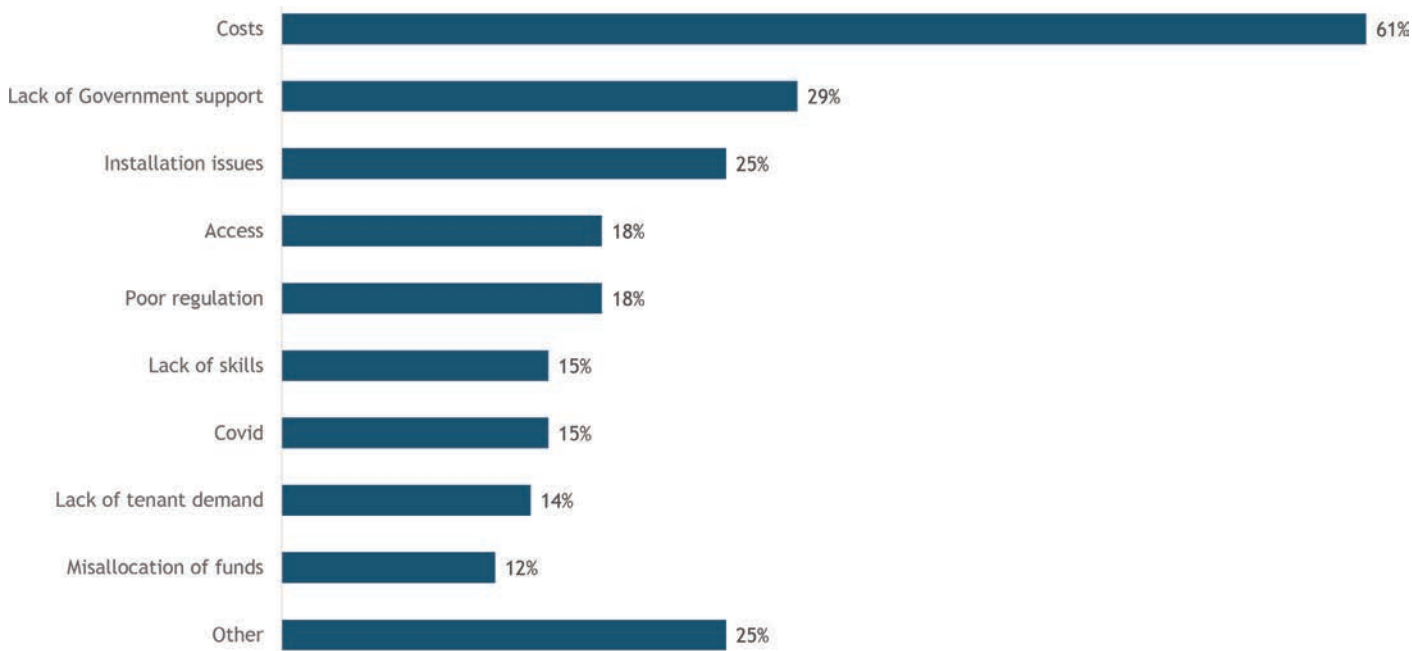
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*"What are the main barriers to addressing these issues?"*

There is perhaps reason to hope for improvement in the near future, with rising awareness in the industry and a number of new standards and bills in the works to put the health of a home into legislation

England's housing stock has been shown to be woefully inadequate.

When we asked our respondents whether they believe that homes have become more healthy at all in recent decades, only a small majority (53%) agreed, and almost half (47%) argued that homes have in fact become less healthy in the same timeframe.

When asked what portion of the housing stock our respondents had owned or worked on they would describe as healthy, 2% said they would define none of their housing as such, 7% said between 10-20% of their housing stock, 11% said 30-40%, 24% said between 50-60%, 32% between 70-80%, and a quarter (25%) report 90-100%.

This shocking amount of unsuitable housing supported the estimations of the Good Homes Inquiry. The Inquiry argued that the English Housing Survey's data – which claimed that 10 million people in England are living in homes classified as 'non decent' – is an underestimation, not factoring in accessibility, for example. Even this potentially low-ball figure represents 17% of the total housing stock, and our data is double this, with 35% of our respondents' housing stock being self-described as unhealthy.

## PROGRESS

Despite this doom and gloom, there is perhaps reason to hope for improvement in the near future, with rising awareness in the industry and a number of new standards and bills in the works to put the health of a home into legislation.

The Town and Country Planning Association's Healthy Homes campaign, for example, recommends that the Building Safety Bill be amended to cover a building's health as well as safety, alongside increasing the Bill's coverage to buildings of all heights. This would improve upon local councils' capacity

to provide tailored support and to have more control of the quality of development. The aforementioned Decent Homes Standard Review could make tangible changes to the quality of housing in regulations.

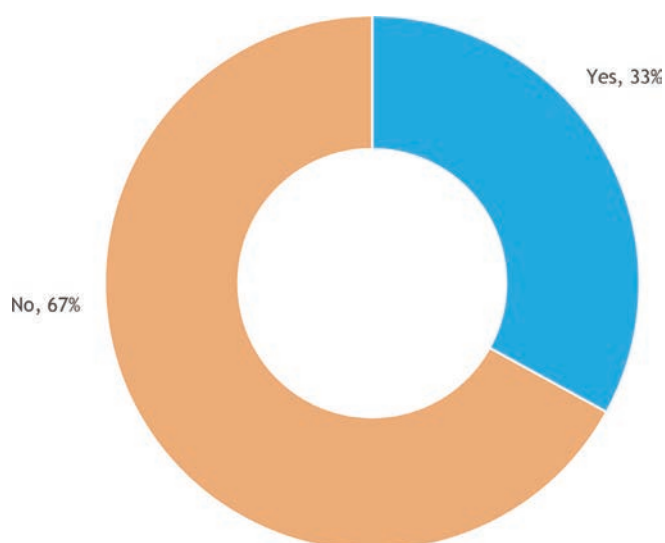
As these movements continue in policy, however, it is only natural to wonder, what are the reasons behind the current lack of movement from the industry itself?

Our survey attempts to find the answer to this by ascertaining three things: are housing professionals aware of and ready for these upcoming changes; do they understand what a healthy home is, and accept that unhealthy homes need to be addressed; and, if so, what then are the barriers to the adoption of these measures?

## PROBLEM ASSESSMENT

### UNDERSTANDING HEALTHY HOMES

When it came to understanding the benefits of a healthy home, our respondents were clear.



*"Do you believe a 'healthier' property costs more to maintain?"*







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#### The HomeLINK Dashboard

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#### The Resident App

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With such a strong consensus on the benefits of making homes more healthy, and many of the problems behind unhealthy homes being fairly common to most of our respondents, it is clear that there are major barriers preventing

One of the review's recommendations to address these issues, property MOTs – approaching property maintenance in a similar way to vehicles, performing regular checks and assessments – was shown to be even less recognised than the review itself, with 46% having not heard of property MOTs before, and a further 32% having heard about them, but knowing very little about what they entail.



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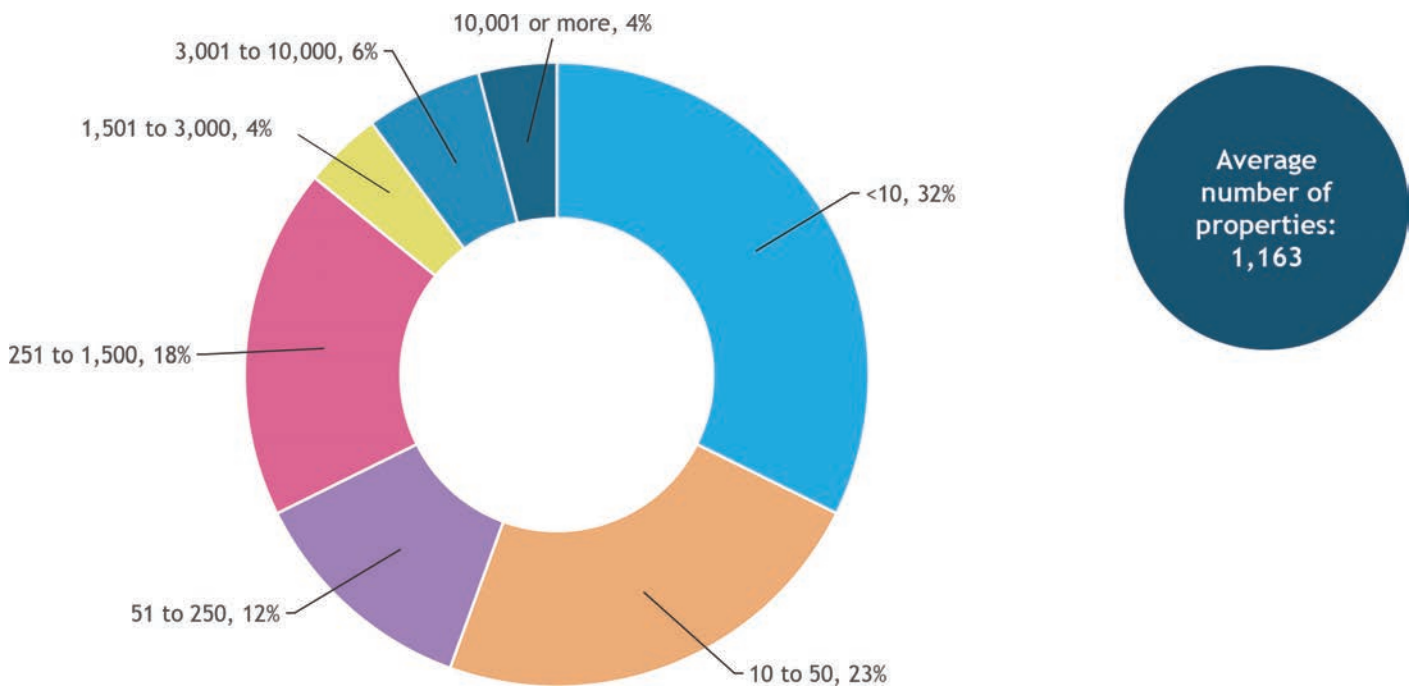
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"How many rental properties do you have in management?"

Whatever the movements or barriers are, however, the message is clear: the UK's ageing housing stock needs to be addressed at pace, and housing professionals know it. Change must happen now, and inaction puts lives at risk

This trend continued to an even higher degree with the TCPA's Healthy Homes Campaign, with 42% having not heard of it, and a further 48% having heard of it but having little understanding of it. This is unfortunate, because the same share (48%) were shown in a different question to believe that healthy properties should be added to the Building Safety Bill, which is one of the tenets of the TCPA's campaign.

#### CONCLUSION

There is no getting around it; unhealthy homes risk lives, and the UK's housing stock has been found to be lacking.

Poor design, specification and repair can lead to homes that strangle their inhabitants, some by encouraging fuel poverty, others by poisoning the air they breathe, or by denying them simple human necessities such as clean water or daylight.

Our survey demonstrated a wide acceptance of the dangers of unhealthy homes, and the benefits of their healthy counterparts. Though their perception of the most important aspects of such a home varied somewhat, the vast majority of our respondents believe that healthy homes lead to longer, happier lives for their inhabitants.

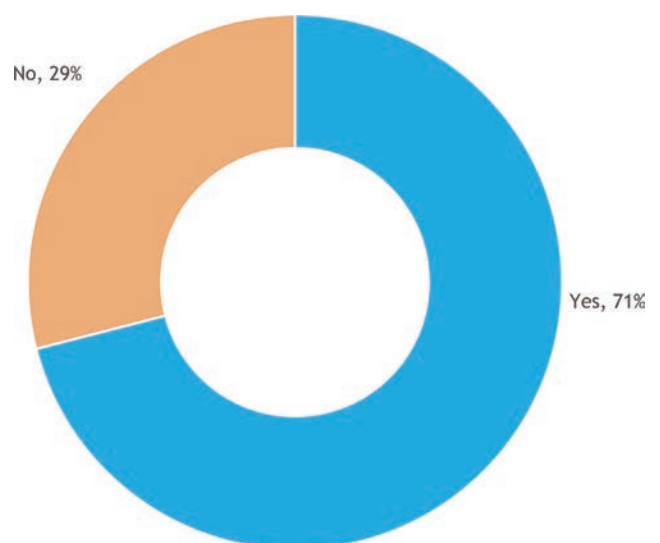
Despite this, just a quarter of our respondents would describe 90-100% of their own housing stock as healthy, with an average of over a third of our respondents' stock being self-described as unhealthy, and a shocking 47% believing that the country's homes as a whole have become less healthy over recent decades.

The research identified a number of barriers to making a property healthy, with costs coming up front and centre. Failings of the Government were also highlighted here, with respondents complaining of a lack of focus on retrofitting properties, as well as insufficient financial support for landlords and housing associations in doing so, and poor regulations.

When it came to our respondents' understanding of such regulations, and the

industry's current movements to improve the country's housing stock, this too proved to be a barrier, with many not aware that the Decent Homes Standard is being reviewed – something that could bring sweeping changes to the regulations behind a home's health.

Whatever the movements or barriers are, however, the message is clear: the UK's ageing housing stock needs to be addressed at pace, and housing professionals know it. Change must happen now, and inaction puts lives at risk.



"Do you believe the Government is paying too little attention to retrofitting older properties?"





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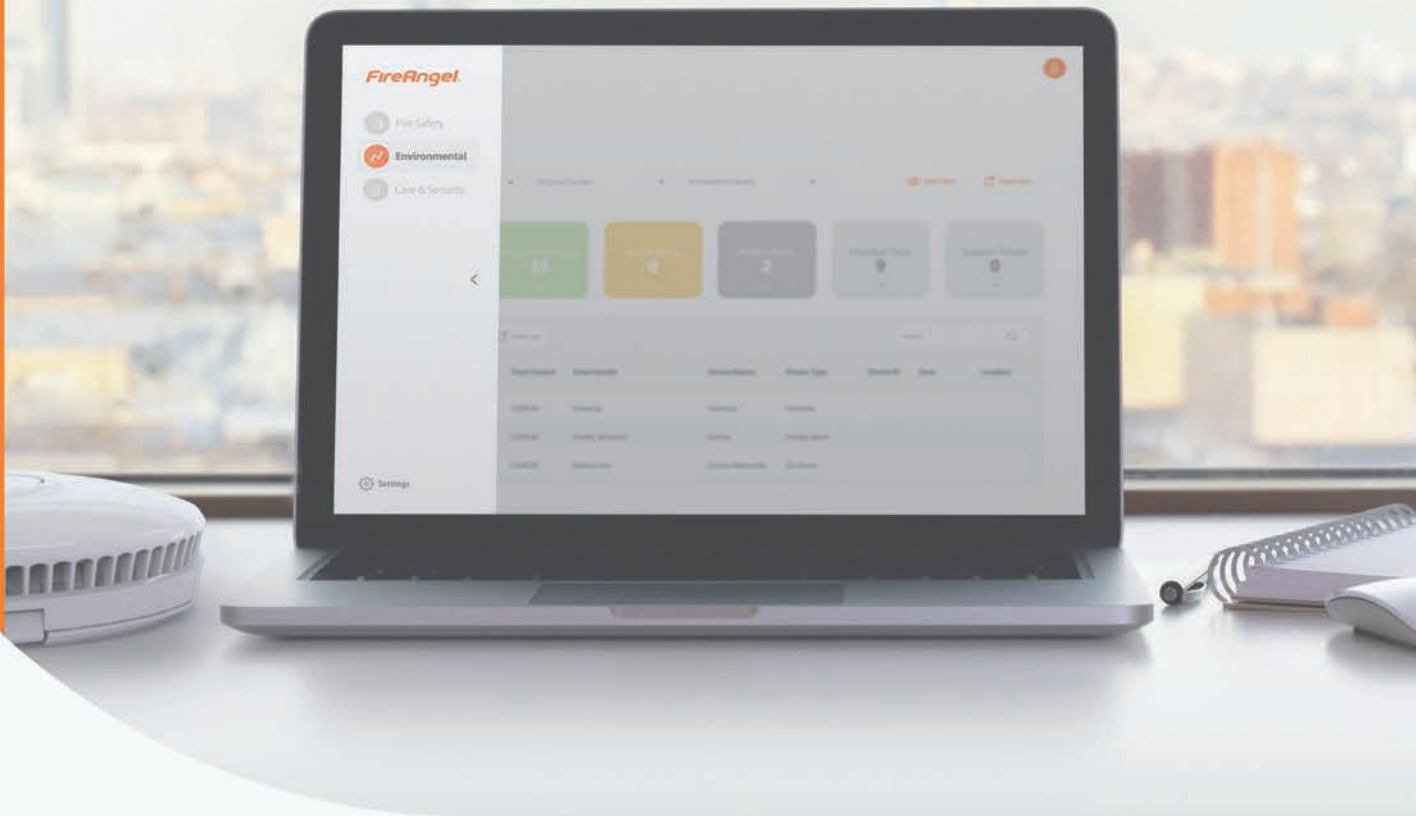
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# Concealing pipework simply & cost-effectively with Encasement

In any property, whether it's a new build or a refurbishment project, there are often exposed interior and exterior pipes that need concealing to improve safety or aesthetics. Covering exterior pipework is also common practice to provide protection from accidental damage and act as a deterrent to tampering or vandalism.

For social housing providers, large quantities of exposed pipework can present several challenges, as part of the property management process, especially when dealing with older housing stock requiring upgrades such as retro-fit fire sprinkler systems or low-carbon, fuel efficient heating system improvements.

To illustrate this, where fire sprinklers need to be located within individual flats and communal areas, they can be readily incorporated into new builds at the design stage and can be hidden within risers and ceiling voids. However, for retro-fitted installations, this is not an option and in most cases the surface mounting of sprinkler pipework is the only practical cost-effective solution.

It's a similar situation for heating system refurbishment programmes. Upgrading boilers to more fuel-efficient models together with new radiator pipework or the installation of low-carbon district heating schemes, all involve the surface mounting of pipes and, in many cases, electrical cabling, all of which need to be concealed.

A key advantages of surface mounted pipework, whether it's for sprinklers, heating systems or boilers, is the simplicity and comparative speed with which it can be installed by skilled contractors, which helps keep costs under control. Clearly, choosing a method of concealment that is also quick and easy to install, makes sound economic and practical sense.

Encasement's pre-formed plywood boxing and casing solutions have become the preferred solution for many HAs and LAs when concealing interior pipework, while its 'Arma' range of metal pipe boxing, manufactured from tough aluminium, is used to cover and protect exterior services, such as



Versa 5 sprinkler boxing

gas supply pipes, electrical cabling and distributed heating pipework.

For interior use, the company's comprehensive range includes Riva; Versa 5 and Versa 8 pipe and fire sprinkler boxing products, as well as boiler pipe casings, which are all pre-finished in white melamine. This removes the need for on-site painting, which helps save time and money.

Information gathered by Encasement from its own experience of working with contractors on countless UK social housing projects has shown that the company's pre-formed pipe and fire sprinkler boxing can be fitted in less than half the time of traditional boxing methods that are fabricated on site.

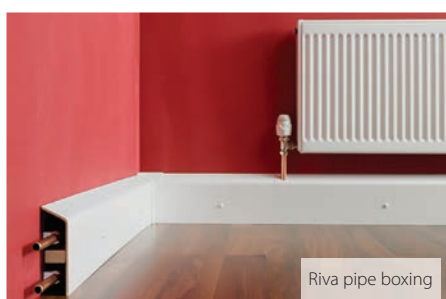
A further advantage to Encasement's pre-formed casings is apparent when assessing 'whole life' costs, which escalate significantly when routine maintenance visits are considered. In most situations, site made casings are damaged or destroyed during their removal, as screw heads are usually filled and painted over, making them impossible or extremely time consuming to dismantle or re-assemble.

Managing routine maintenance and inspection can also become more complex. For example, a joiner may be required to remove the site made boxing prior to any maintenance being carried out by a service engineer and would then need to revisit the property once the work is completed to either refit the casing or construct a new one.

With preformed pipe boxing solutions, it is usually a simple process of removing the securing screws and then the individual lengths of boxing can be removed and replaced quickly and easily. For boiler pipe casings, this process is even simpler, as they are often self-supporting and require no screws to hold them together, so they can be easily removed and replaced in just a matter of seconds.

With more than 40 years manufacturing experience in the design, manufacture and supply of casings to this sector, Encasement estimates that well over 100,000 kilometres of its pipe-boxing have already been installed in social housing projects throughout the UK.

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Riva pipe boxing



Arma metal boxing



Boiler casing

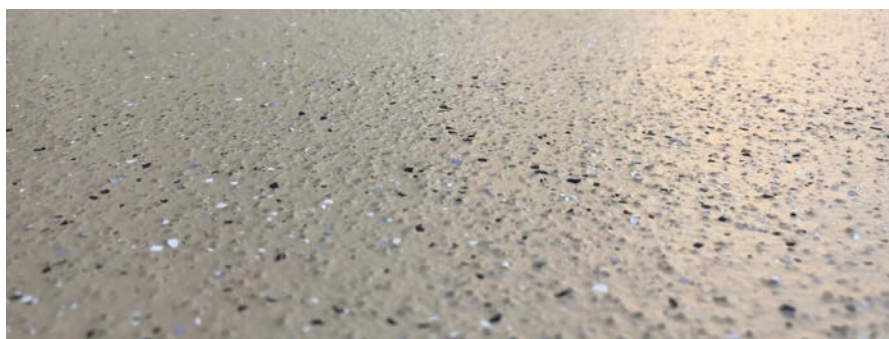
## Sika launches new low odour balcony waterproofing range

Developed at Sika's world-leading Global Technology Centre in Preston, the new liquid applied MonoFlex LO range harnesses Sika's pioneering patented i-Cure technology within its polyurethane waterproofing element. This improved system maintains its high performance, workability and curing time, but with the odour-causing components engineered out. With this comes the benefits of lower emissions, reduced hazard classification and reduced occupational health risks during application.

By using this new advanced technology, which is now included in over 50 patented Sika products worldwide, Monoflex LO systems have a number of advantages for the architect, contractor, client and end user. Most notably, building occupants are not disturbed by unfamiliar odours during the application and curing of the solution. Whether that be on access walkways for sensitive areas such as social housing, hospitals or schools, buildings can remain occupied while external works are being carried out, meaning less logistical hassle for all parties.

Highly durable, Monoflex LO has a life expectancy of 25 years and comes in a range of colours, coatings and surface finishes, such as textured for slip resistance or buried beneath decorative tiles, allowing the architect to have design freedom.

It has also been launched with an ETA certificate covering the waterproofing



element, providing third-party verification of high performance.

Fiona Irvine, Sika Product Engineer for liquid and bituminous membranes, said: "Unlike some systems in the marketplace that claim low odour utilising masking components, we're proud that the new MonoFlex LO range is truly low odour, as evidenced by its Olfasense certification — an independent, comparative, sensory analysis service.

"It has also been tested across a wide range of performance criteria during our rigorous product development process to ensure it is incredibly safe and hardwearing, as is demanded for areas such as balconies and walkways. This means that we can subsequently offer this system with a range of attractive guarantee options."

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facility in Preston — one of Sika's key manufacturing sites in northern Europe exporting globally — specifiers and contractors can be confident that production and delivery will be both reliable and dependable.

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## Titon Ventilations Systems gets social

Titon's Ventilation Systems division continues its planned growth with the timely appointment of a dedicated sales person responsible for the social housing sector.

Titon Ventilation Systems identified the greater need for understanding and support in this key area, and has appointed Roy Byom as Area Sales Manager for Social Housing. Roy's background is in Building products and he has been in the industry for nearly 15 years selling into the social housing market, previously as a sales manager at Envirovent. Lee Caulfield, Director, UK Sales (Ventilation Systems) said: "I worked with Roy for 8 years at my previous company and I'm absolutely delighted he's joined us to spearhead our sales drive into the Social Housing sector. His knowledge of the client base and the unique demands of this environment will be a real asset to Titon."

Roy is looking forward to the challenge his new role offers, and to sharing and expanding his knowledge and experience of the social housing sector alongside Titon's excellent range of ventilation solutions. If you would like to find out more about Titon's Social Housing Products, please contact Roy Byom.

07984 239805 [roy.byom@titon.co.uk](mailto:roy.byom@titon.co.uk)



## Leading the way to a fitter future

Designer Contracts is spearheading a new industry initiative aimed at reversing the crisis level shortage of skilled fitters. On January 17, 2022, the company took on its first cohort of 10, 16 to 18-year-old apprentices under a new block release training scheme launched as a joint venture between FITA and Webs Training Ltd.

The apprentices will attend the FITA training centre for practical training for one week in every eight. In between – over the course of the three-year apprenticeship scheme – they will train with one of Designer Contracts' employed or sub-contract fitters.



01246 854577 [www.designercontracts.com](http://www.designercontracts.com)

## Siderise launches mullion overlaid system

Siderise Special Products has launched the new SIDERISE® MC System — a decorative mullion liner designed to provide a simple yet robust solution for enhancing the acoustic performance, or acoustic and fire performance, of curtain wall facade systems. Hollow and lightweight aluminium mullions can provide an easy channel for noise to travel between adjoining spaces. The new system is an external treatment that is installed over the top of curtain walling mullions where partitions about. This improves their acoustic performance, with acoustic only and acoustic plus two-hour fire rated versions to choose from.



01473 827695 [www.siderise.com](http://www.siderise.com)



# Lessons still being learned from Grenfell

With the Grenfell Tower Inquiry resuming, Paul Richards of Aquarian Cladding Systems discusses the continuing impact of the disaster, and how the cladding industry must adapt.



Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy in 2017, fire safety has been at the forefront of the minds of everyone involved in the built environment – including housing associations and building owners – with the fire performance of products and their impact on both new and existing buildings continuing to be scrutinised.

The tragedy has had a huge impact on the construction industry globally, but here in the UK cladding sector it has been felt particularly deeply.

After Grenfell, more than 11,000 buildings in England were identified with dangerous cladding, with unofficial estimates putting the cost of removing that unsafe cladding at £50bn.

There has already been a much greater sense of responsibility and caution when specifying, using, and supplying materials on new buildings of any scale.

We must however remind ourselves that we are learning what was wrong about a system and process of design, procurement and refurbishment of a building which started in 2012 and was completed in 2016.

Almost 10 years after the process began, we know that the use of combustible cladding was a contributory factor but the whole industry has had to have a good look at itself to reflect on a culture described by Dame Judith Hackitt as a

‘race to the bottom’ which drove those decisions.

Importantly, we are seeing evidence of a new culture influencing a new process, which will hopefully ensure it will never happen again.

## MISINFORMATION

Phase 2 of Module 2 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry put the spotlight on the testing, certification, and marketing of cladding products and identified a catalogue of misleading, ambiguous, and misrepresentative information provided by suppliers, as well as flaws in the testing and certification process.

The industry is already addressing some of these issues, with the Construction Products Association (CPA) consulting with industry on a proposal to adopt the Code for Construction Product information (CCPI), which will ensure that product information is presented by manufacturers using unambiguous and transparent language with greater data traceability.

This will ensure suppliers raise their game and stop sailing close to the wind with their clever use of misleading case studies, which in some cases suggested that because a particular material was right for a certain project, it is right for another when used with different materials through the wall.

As we now know, Grenfell wasn't the only building that used a combination of cladding materials that had been mis-sold because they had never been tested together and proven safe to be used.

This culture has left us with the cladding scandal legacy, and how to address the problem of properties clad in materials deemed unsafe. Many homeowners are living in properties rightly condemned; however, many aren't, due to a lack of understanding by lenders and cladding consultants quick to condemn.

#### VIABLE SOLUTIONS BEING MISSED

With Dame Judith Hackitt repeatedly calling for an outcome-based solution, rather than prescriptive legislation, the biggest challenge is to provide, as a matter of urgency, a balanced and unambiguous method of demonstrating fire safety to the entire industry. Stakeholders can then confidently make informed decisions when specifying, building, warranting, and funding their projects.

It's not healthy for the industry that there is a 'binary' view that all non-combustible materials are good, and all combustible materials are bad. Some perfectly viable solutions are being missed because of the confusion perhaps created by those in a position to benefit commercially from scaremongering.

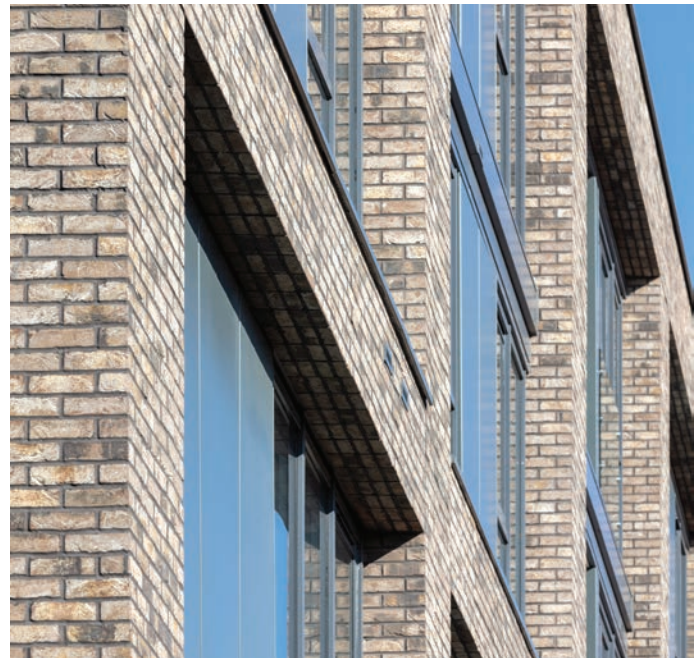
Insisting that everything should be A1 or A2 is a very challenging delivery due to an over-reliance on a limited range of suppliers and the impact on our environment of using cement-based materials and unsustainable mineral resources such as sand and cement.

We also must not lose sight of the fact that if non-combustible materials are designed and assembled incorrectly they too can be vulnerable in a fire.

#### MOVING FORWARD

With innovation and new products being brought to market, questions around technical performance are heavily focussed on combustibility. Previously it was weathertightness, fatigue and thermal movement related questions and the importance of these issues should not be overlooked as statistically cladding systems are exposed to the elements, rather than fire, 99.9% of the time.

Requests for third-party evidence to prove the performance of materials have increased. Companies who have invested historically in people and testing, to



enable the provision of clear and robust technical support, are being rewarded with specifications as there are no long waiting periods for busy test houses to become available for testing retrospectively.

Changing a culture of ignorance and indifference won't happen overnight, but with changes to roles and responsibilities, as well as regulatory reform, there is reason to remain optimistic that our industry has the desire and ability to take collective responsibility for change.

*Paul Richards is managing director of Aquarian Cladding Systems.*

## Carl F Groupco Successful in Tai Tarian Tender

Leading hardware distributor, Carl F Groupco has successfully secured a tender to continue hardware supply to one of the largest social housing providers in Wales, Tai Tarian. Having supplied window and door hardware for the past five years, the contract has recently been awarded for another three to five years.

Servicing over 9000 properties in the Neath Port Talbot County Borough, Tai Tarian is one of the only housing associations in Wales that manufacture PVC windows and doors for its own properties, leaseholders, and external clients. Doors and windows supplied by Tai Tarian are fabricated to Secured by Design and PAS 24 security standards and provide Energy Rating Scheme certification.

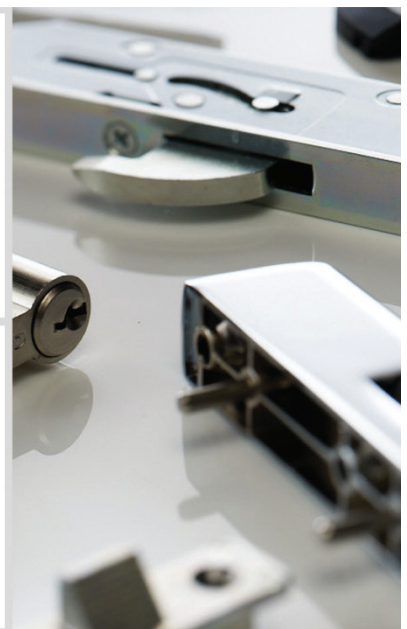
With a proven history supplying large scale projects, Carl F Groupco are well placed to continue hardware supply to Tai Tarian. As one of the only major independently owned distributors in the UK, Carl F Groupco's access to leading hardware brands including Cotswold, FUHR, Hoppe, Kenrick, Rapier Star, Roto and Yale has been key in securing the tender.

Commenting, Steve Meredith, Production Manager for Tai Tarian said: "Aside from the product range and delivery service, a big reason for Carl F Groupco being awarded the tender is down to their customer service levels. Especially Andrew Price, Nathalie McKee, Lyn Richards,



Carlia Corras and Lorraine Robinson. They've all been exceptional, all period."

With a trading history dating back over 70 years, Carl F Groupco has a strong reputation for hardware expertise and the company prides itself on supplying its UK fabricator partners



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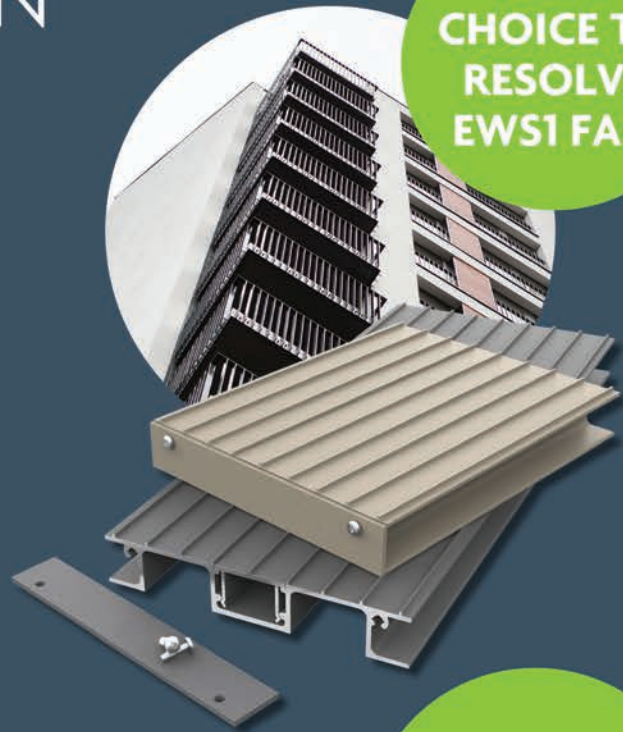
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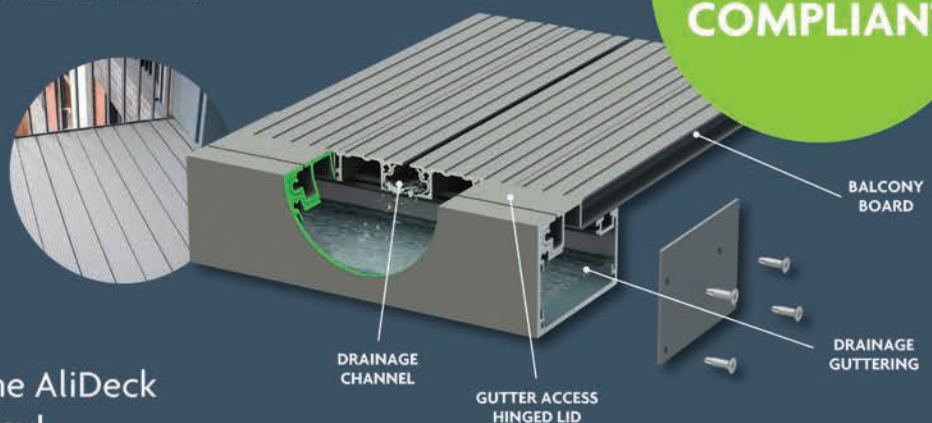
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01732 743003 [www.urbanenvironments.co.uk](http://www.urbanenvironments.co.uk)

## Consort Claudgen launches app

Consort Claudgen have launched Consort Connect app which allows users to have complete control over their heating remotely via their smartphone or tablet. The app is free and downloadable from Google Play or Apple Store. It controls Consort's Wi-Fi enabled heaters or SL heaters connected to an SLPBWIFI wireless controller. It features a 7-day timer with 24 heating periods per day, lock function, open window tracking and response capability, and custom automations. A self-learning control ability utilising occupancy and temperature sensors is also available but only on the SLPBWIFI and Consort 'MW' heater models.



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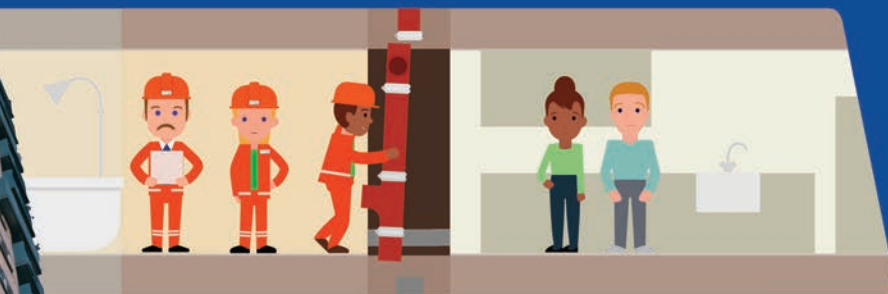
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# Ensuring safe and efficient heating

The pressure to decarbonise existing homes continues to grow, as does the desire to end fuel poverty. Anthony Watton of Baxi Heating explores how social housing providers can implement heating solutions that prioritise both efficiency and safety for occupants.



**W**ith domestic heating being a significant contributor to carbon emissions, the UK government is intensifying its focus on decarbonising this sector. As part of this process, fuel poverty stands out as a particular problem that must be broached.

## RIISING EFFICIENCY STANDARDS

Lack of energy efficiency in homes and economic vulnerability – coupled with the rising cost of energy – are driving factors of fuel poverty status in the UK. In order to address this issue, the government is looking to impose aims that will raise efficiency standards across housing stock. With figures showing that the majority of fuel poor occupants live in EPC band D or E properties, these aims disclose aspirations to move as many homes as possible to a minimum of Band D by 2025, and a minimum of Band C by 2030.

As the public sector constitutes almost a quarter of fuel poor households, the onus is on social housing providers to increase EPC ratings for meeting fuel poverty targets and improving living standards.

## FINDING SOLUTIONS

In terms of solutions, increasing the thermal retention of a home through insulation upgrades is a familiar approach. However, improving building fabrics can be a lengthy and costly undertaking, especially in hard-to-treat homes.

As such, many housing associations look to upgrade heating systems by replacing appliances. Yet, certain components such as FGHR devices and control systems are often neglected, resulting in old and inefficient parts that are at higher risk of breaking down. Upgrading the components of current boiler

systems therefore offers an easier route for enhancing efficiency measures, while also maintaining reliability.

## KEY COMPONENTS

As heating systems are specified to a “design day” temperature, a correctly designed, specified, and installed heating system should perform optimally around this temperature range. However, in instances where the outdoor temperature exceeds such levels, the appliance may be operating at overcapacity.

Upgrading a boiler’s control interface with smart controls can help to ensure efficient output is maintained in these circumstances – through monitoring both outdoor and indoor temperatures, these controls can be modulated to provide weather or load compensation by lowering the firing rate and flow rate to suit ambient conditions. Correctly specified and commissioned controls can therefore reduce energy consumption and improve the efficiency of a boiler.

A flue gas heat recovery (FGHR) device can also greatly enhance the energy-saving capacity of a heating system. Situated between the boiler and the flue, an FGHR component extracts heat from the waste flue gases that would normally be expelled into the atmosphere. This heat is recycled and used to pre-heat water coming into the boiler from the cold mains supply, reducing the amount of gas required for water heating.

While raising the EPC standard of a boiler, FGHR has the added benefit of being a sealed-for-life unit that does not require any maintenance down the line. As a result, homes will be able to take advantage of more efficient heating with added reliability.



## Upgrading boilers with components such as smart controls and FGHR is a sensible approach for retrofit projects

### QUALITY ASSURANCE

It must be acknowledged that while energy efficiency is clearly a priority for domestic heating systems, social housing providers also have a duty to ensure living conditions are as safe as possible for occupants.

Upgrading boilers with additional components, such as smart controls and FGHR, is a sensible approach for retrofit projects. But housing associations will still need to be diligent when replacing boiler parts to improve performance.

Non-branded, refurbished or copied parts might be more attractive when it comes to cost, but they pose considerable risk to functionality. Counterfeit components are highly unlikely to have been tested to the same high standards as those produced by the boiler manufacturer. As a result, they can be poor quality and wear quicker, which in turn increases the risk of system failure. In worst cases, this can increase the likelihood of accidents or fires in the home.

With this in mind, a range of products on the market look to provide not just highly efficient heating solutions, but also reliable components through genuine parts. Reputable boiler parts are tested rigorously to meet tough quality standards, while also ensuring they are fully compliant with Gas Safe regulations. By supplying parts that are safe, reliable and legal, housing providers have peace of mind when retrofitting boiler systems across the public sector.

While boiler upgrades emerge as an effective route for social housing in meeting fuel poverty targets, it's evident that the safety of occupants must be equally considered alongside energy-saving measures. Heating manufacturers must therefore recognise their role in supplying heating products that encompass every requirement, which is why reliability and safety are an integral part of energy efficient solutions.

*Anthony Watton is head of residential specification at Baxi Heating.*

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# Manage heating the easy way

Nicola Martin at RadiWarm explains the simplicity and efficiency of electric pipeless radiators.



For landlords and housing managers, heating presents some pressing challenges; sharply rising prices and the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions, to name but two. In terms of solutions, we hear a lot about heat pumps and solar panels, and rightly so. Electric pipeless radiators are also a good solution for both landlords and tenants but are not as well-known as they deserve to be. Furthermore, while some new heating appliances require expensive infrastructure that can be disruptive and time-consuming to install, pipeless radiators, by contrast, are a simple plug-and-play solution, needing only a standard 3-prong plug.

Until recently, pipeless radiators were generally used as an additional heat source, but that is changing; nowadays they are being specified as the main heating system in housing and apartments.

## EFFICIENT

Two stand-out benefits are their controllability and energy efficiency achieved whilst maintaining a comfortable ambient temperature similar to a traditional “wet” system. How is all this achieved? The answer is smart radiators. They are often water or silica-sand filled and contain, for example, an internal miniature boiler, pump and thermostat with software to manage temperatures. So when

a room reaches the preset temperature, the software will switch to eco-saving mode to maintain it. For the duration of the programme, typically it only needs to consume electricity for 1/3 of that time and then is switched off for the remaining 2/3 of the period. Another reason they consume so little energy is that there is no hidden pipework (as in a conventional heating system) which wastes heat. And as they are electric, they are obviously more sustainable than oil or gas.

## HOW IT WORKS

Landlords and managers like the ease and speed of installation compared to conventional heating systems (no floorboards to take up nor external pumps or pipework to fit). Usually the radiators arrive fully sealed, ready to be mounted on wall brackets in a matter of minutes. Standard wall brackets are usually included in the price. Once that’s done, landlords know there is almost no on-going maintenance – no need for flushing, bleeding, topping up nor annual service checks. All this saves money and avoids inconvenience for tenants.

Most pipeless ranges are offered in a variety of sizes sometimes including upright ones for tight spaces or with special thin shells for small rooms. Many manufacturers offer interactive guides to help calculate the correct size of



radiator for any room. Additionally, some are IP44 rated, enabling them to be used in bathrooms or at least in a “Zone 2” bathroom space where there is no risk of water spray.

Different ranges have different features, some very sophisticated in terms of heating management. For anyone trying pipeless radiators for the first time, an entry-level silica-sand filled range is a good place to start.

#### IN CONTROL

Any heating system needs a good control function. Thankfully pipeless radiators are controllable either individually or grouped into zones (say all the radiators in the bedrooms are grouped into one zone). A control system might include a programmable thermostat and timer device fitted in the home, whereby each radiator can be connected by radio frequency (RF) link to the control unit so heating can be programmed from a central point with different settings for each day of the week and for each zone, if needed. And often there are additional

functions like boosts, overrides and the ability to see the heating status of each zone at a glance – the current temperature vs the target temperature. Tenants are reporting that this precise heating control noticeably contributes to lower bills.

A very useful but usually more expensive option, offered by many radiator manufacturers, is remote controllability. Using a gateway that plugs into an existing wifi router, heating programmes can be managed from a web-based app on a smartphone or tablet. In most accommodations we have seen, however, the in-home RF-based controller is specified.

#### SAFETY

Landlords know how vital safety is. Hot radiators can sometimes cause scalds or burns and the elderly are particularly vulnerable. A good idea is to choose a protective low-temperature cover for pipeless radiators which ensures they never exceed 43°C but are still warm enough to heat the space efficiently. Many low surface temperature (LST) models also meet strict NHS safety guidelines making them ideal for retirement accommodation.

#### WHEN NOT TO USE

Pipeless radiators are usually designed with industry standard shells like Type 22. But where interior design is paramount, a bespoke radiator might be needed which many manufacturers cannot currently offer cost-effectively.

Although pipeless radiators are available in various sizes, some rooms have insufficient wall space or have internal walls so thin that they cannot support the radiators, not even with additional load-bearing discs.

#### CONCLUSION

Electric pipeless radiators, once considered suitable only as additions to main heating systems, are now widely specified for houses and apartments. Managers are reporting improved efficiency and lower heating bills. And with almost no on-going maintenance, they are set to become the heating system of choice for many.

*Nicola Martin is sales manager at RadiWarm.*

## Heating controls: a path to energy savings

Effective heating controls are an ever more vital part of an efficient central-heating system. And heating controls manufacturer ESi says it makes huge sense to look more closely at heating control selection. Clever use of controls can help minimise energy consumption by ensuring each room is at the right temperature for comfort, while avoiding overheating. The ESi range all offer 24 Hour / 5/2 day and 7 day programming options for each channel. ESi's ESRTTP4 model provides true 7 day, 5/2 day or 24-hour programming options, with up to six time and temperature events being available each day and is OpenTherm compatible.



01280 816868 [www.esicontrols.co.uk](http://www.esicontrols.co.uk)

## Fibo's wall panels: The antibacterial solution

In response to the industry demand for certified hygienic products, Fibo's waterproof wall panels have now been independently tested and verified in accordance with ISO 22196:2011; in addition to an assessment in accordance with the limit value stated in JIS Z 2801. This certification confirms that the wall panel's surface is able to inhibit the growth of microorganisms that form E. coli and Staphylococcus aureus – bacteria that can cause various infections, or even lead to pneumonia and other serious illnesses. Fibo's wall panels also come with a market-leading 25-year warranty, providing peace of mind.

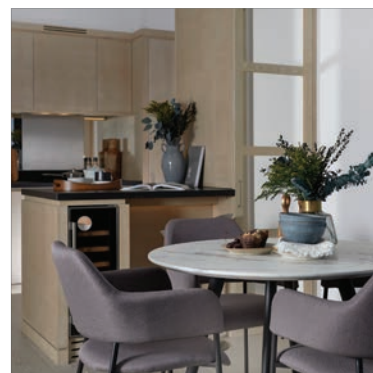


01494 771242 [www.fibo.co.uk](http://www.fibo.co.uk)

## Tactile Design: Embassy Gardens with David Phillips

Embassy Gardens is a premium development in the Nine Elms regeneration zone. Recognised for its iconic glass Sky Pool suspended 115 feet in the air, this prestigious property surrounding the US embassy boasts both residential and business units. Built by the Ballymore Group, this beautiful London building features a furnishing solution from David Phillips to inspire prospective tenants on the endless design possibilities. Comprised of 1, 2 or 3 bedroom and penthouse apartments, David Phillips worked in collaboration with Ballymore to offer something unique to its customers, with the option of turn-key furniture packs or incentive vouchers. Targeting both owner-occupied and sales to investor buyers through Savills and JLL, the design team worked closely with tenants, providing an informative design consultation as part of the incentive. Unlike its competitors this exclusive offering provided an opportunity to revolutionise the traditional retail experience for property professionals. For this particular project, David Phillips supplied and installed stock within 2-3 days; as the specialist services provider holds all product in stock there was no wait time or delay which is rare within the industry. The design brief for the show apartment was to create something impactful, using block colours, design-led furniture and neutral wallpaper – to show customers that they can be brave when it comes to interior design by creating a unique statement in each individual space.

020 3966 2598 [davidphillips.com](http://davidphillips.com)







# The changing climate of water conservation

In the UK, water conservation has been on the agenda for years. However, Steve Leigh of Groundbreaker Systems explains why our growing population and increased demand will result in critical water situations more regularly, especially in the driest parts of the country.

Coinciding with COP26, there was a wide range of projects, public education events and even TV series telling us how to improve our 'lifestyle' to minimise our impact on the environment. Although extreme weather has been highlighted, the general day to day use of water is rarely mentioned.

In the UK, water services are relatively cheap – both environmentally and financially – especially when compared to energy costs. However, for those on a limited budget water bills can be one of the many straws that eventually breaks the camel's back.

There are two main options for reducing water consumption: usage awareness and supply modification. Both can help residents reduce their water bills.

## WATER METERS

'Smart metering' has been shown to have some impact on domestic consumption, in the same way as it has in the energy market. However, many properties have architectural or water supply structures that make traditional metering options impractical. One option is an insulated, surface mounted

enclosure for a secure water management system and smart water meter. This point of entry location makes it the perfect solution for installation in existing properties with a shared supply or challenging architecture. Its location on the building also means no street furniture or liability in the highway.

The main advantages of the surface mounted system are the single joint free connection and the above ground location of the meter housing. Compliance with no joint policies has been shown to contribute to minimising leakage, in particular customer side leakage, which can cause issues to both the landlord and water provider.

## CONTROLLED FLOW

'Time controlled' usage e.g. cleaning teeth, taking a shower or running a hose pipe, can use excessive water. The simple measure of regulating the flow and pressure of the water supply to a particular outlet has been shown to significantly impact household usage.

Single outlet flow restrictors can impact on this use, and low flow shower heads or aerators for taps are widely available. However, not all householders are





happy with the limited supply, and individual attachments can be replaced.

Our water companies are regulated to provide a minimum level of water, but in many areas due to network structure and gravity fed systems supply is much greater. So, run a hose for five minutes at the bottom of the hill, and your lawn will be greener than the gardener that does the same at the top. These 'time controlled' uses, e.g. teeth cleaning, taking a shower, running a tap to rinse dishes could be 'standardised down' if all households received the same acceptable, 'standardised' supply.

#### IN PARTNERSHIP WITH WATER PROVIDERS

Water companies are keen to work with developers and housing associations to provide low consumption options, and in some cases can provide discounted infrastructure charges for new developments demonstrating significant water conservation interventions.

*Steve Leigh is managing director at Groundbreaker Systems.*



## Illuminating Springhills

Luceco has recently supplied interior and exterior amenity lighting to Springhills Independent Living Scheme at Outwood, provided by Wakefield and District Housing Limited. Springhills is a purpose built retirement development of 33 flats that has recently enjoyed a refurbishment and the lighting played a key part in creating a safe and comfortable environment. Atlas circular bulkhead fittings were used throughout the interior with the perimeter of the building lit with Atlas with metal eyelid cover decors. Standard, emergency, and integral microwave sensor versions were used to reduce energy consumption in circulation areas. With the corridor function selected, the sensor adjusts the light level to 10% of the normal level when the space is unoccupied creating a safe and secure yet well-lit environment with cost effectiveness and environmental issues in mind. LuxPanel luminaires were also installed, in particular LuxPanel Circular which is available in 120, 150, 180, and 240 mm diameter options with high performance PMMA light guide. LuxPanel Circular is designed to be recessed mounted in exposed grid or plasterboard ceilings and secured with springs. The fittings were used in communal areas and corridors along with Tempest emergency downlighters with area optic, providing 3 hours non maintained emergency lighting which is an essential element to the lighting of a communal space.

01952 238 100 [www.luceco.com](http://www.luceco.com)



## CaberFloor provides a solution

When considering flooring products for new-build or refurbishment projects, the housebuilder and specifier can be sure that West Fraser's CaberFloor range includes the perfect solution. Just as sound foundations are essential for any building, the right flooring system lays a good foundation for a quality flooring finish, saving problems and costs later. The West Fraser website contains a handy flowchart to help builders, specifiers and architects choose the right flooring system for every project, coupled with handy installation guides and videos for the individual CaberFloor products.



[uk.westfraser.com/resources/help-advice/installation-instructions](http://uk.westfraser.com/resources/help-advice/installation-instructions)

## Housing Management & Maintenance

The Housing Management & Maintenance (HMM) website is an online provider of past and present news items dedicated to keep professionals within this sector updated with a wide range of topics including legislation, projects, products and more. [housingmmonline.co.uk](http://housingmmonline.co.uk) is a one-stop source for all the latest press releases providing any visitor with access to information about products and services that they may require. From the website, you can find links to digital issues that have live links to advertisers' sites, as well as email alerts to keep you as informed as possible.



[www.housingmmonline.co.uk](http://www.housingmmonline.co.uk)



# Paving the way for nature

Chris Hodson of Interpave discusses why concrete block permeable paving (CBPP) is a key sustainable drainage system (SuDS) technique.

**E**xtensive new tree planting with provision for long-term nurturing is now a requirement for developments, with new government policies taking effect. Concrete block permeable paving offers an important opportunity to help satisfy these requirements with minimal maintenance requirements over the long-term.

## PLANNING POLICY

The 2021 'National Planning Policy Framework' (NPPF) states: "Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined and that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments."

However, measures are needed to nurture and allow trees to mature and deliver their real potential – including net carbon storage, urban cooling through shading and evapotranspiration, biodiversity and public wellbeing. So, the NPPF also requires that: "Appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees."

## PAVING AND TREES IN HARMONY

Urban trees and paving have traditionally been seen as in conflict, creating maintenance problems. But this is not the case with concrete block permeable paving (CBPP), a key sustainable drainage (SuDS) technique designed to reduce flood risk and make cities more liveable. CBPP offers unique opportunities to collect, attenuate and convey rainwater runoff, removing pollutants before irrigating green infrastructure and supporting biodiversity.

Unlike conventional impermeable hard landscape materials, CBPP allows the same pattern of run-off transfer to the ground as natural vegetation, allowing water – and importantly air – to reach tree and shrub roots, still providing an attractive, safe surface above. Long-term tree maintenance measures will now be included in planning consents and a straightforward spatial solution – such as CBPP providing irrigation – offers a multifunctional solution over the long-term.

## BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIP

The benefits of CBPP for trees while retaining accessibility are recognised by the current Code of Practice BS 8300-1:2018, which states that: "Tree grilles should be avoided. Smooth or paved permeable surfaces should be used wherever practicable." Permeable paving can be laid level and still avoids puddles, as well as potholes, without the need for drainage gullies. It provides a safe surface for everyone – including wheelchair users and people pushing prams. Two decades of experience in the UK demonstrate the long-term performance of CBPP with minimal, if any, maintenance.

Essentially, CBPP technology shares the same impressive performance as conventional modular concrete paving, being slip resistant, durable, strong and sustainable. The difference with CBPP is enlarged joints, filled with a permeable aggregate, and the materials used below the blocks, which are specifically selected to accommodate water. It's important to remember that CBPP is unlike – and not to be confused with – permeable materials, which behave very differently.

## DEMONSTRATING MINIMAL MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

Probably the most persistent misconception with CBPP is that – without regular maintenance – the joints soon become clogged and impermeable, preventing water from draining into the paving. In fact, over time detritus and silt do collect in the joint material between blocks, where a surface 'crust' is formed, protecting the laying course and sub-base material but still allowing water infiltration. CBPP is not significantly affected by moss or weeds in the joints,



or by leaves collecting on the surface. Even if occasional localised blockages do occur, in a storm excess water simply flows to more permeable, adjacent areas.

Recent trials of concrete block permeable paving following long-term use, endorse current minimal maintenance recommendations, with important implications for whole-life-costs on all types of housing. One of the projects – Martlesham Park and Ride, Suffolk – is the subject of a video of the trials and an illuminating interview with the project designer about long-term performance, and also the benefits of CBPP for trees.

The 13,000 m<sup>2</sup> CBPP project has delivered problem-free performance over 17 years. Extensive mature trees around and within the site were simply retained as part of the scheme. Maintenance has effectively been cosmetic, occasionally





Concrete block permeable paving in harmony with trees at Martlesham Park and Ride

## Research has shown that permeable paving does not suffer from the root damage commonly experienced with impermeable surfaces near trees

sweeping tree debris and vegetation from the surface and leaf fall in the autumn. Tree roots have continued to grow within the permeable pavement sub-base but – importantly – there have been no visible signs of block rutting or lifting, or roots coming through the surface – and there is plenty of international research supporting this benefit.

### REGENERATION AND RE-USE

As well as new construction, concrete block permeable paving can also be used as an overlay, regenerating and re-using existing, conventional road bases or other hard surfaces, as well as their embedded carbon. These thin overlays create attractive, safe and sustainable shared-surfaces that can supply a gradual flow of clean water horizontally into rain gardens or bioretention areas with trees and other green infrastructure, to store water for irrigation, biodiversity and SuDS.


This approach is exemplified in Bridget Joyce Square, London, an important, award-winning regeneration project. Here, a typical, adopted asphalt street and adjacent parking areas were transformed for community use with CBPP overlay shared surfaces and tree-planted rain garden basins – an exemplar for future urban landscapes. The basins provide water storage for SuDS to reduce overloading existing drains, as well as for irrigation. Interpave revisited the project in August 2021, around 5 years after completion, and noted that trees and other green infrastructure were healthy, substantial and particularly well-established. The permeable paving is also performing well and, it is understood from local sources, experienced no problems during this year's extreme summer storms, despite extensive flooding nearby.

*Chris Hodson is consultant to the trade association Interpave.*

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## Shelforce looking to increase fire door manufacturing capacity

**B**irmingham window and door manufacturer Shelforce is looking to increase its capacity to cope with the demand for its Fireshel 30-minute fire resistant door.

After launching the Fireshel into the market in 2020, sales of the door exceeded expectations last year for local authority projects in Birmingham.

From a standing start, Shelforce was manufacturing 70 fire doors a week from its headquarters in Erdington – and projections for 2022 mean the company is set to be even busier this year.

Howard Trotter, Business Manager at Shelforce, proud winners of four awards last year including the 2021 Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce (GBCC) Business of the Year, said: “With the projects we have booked in this year, plus the enquiries we are getting, we will have to increase our production capacity to cope.

“With almost 35,000 fire doors to replace in Birmingham, demand is set to remain both high and constant for local authority projects both this year and into the future.”

The Fireshel provides the perfect solution for local authorities who need fully EN tested 3rd Party Accredited, replacement Fire Door sets, which are compliant with the latest 2020 MHCLG Annex A recommendations.

Fire and smoke tested from both the inside and outside and PAS 024 Security tested, the door set, complete with fanlight glazing panel, achieved 49 minutes fire resistance when EN1634-1 tested.



The Fireshel offers the end user assurance that all the components used in its manufacture have been tested and approved against the new 2020 Q Mark Fire and Security Composite door Set requirements.

“The reason we launched the Fireshel was to set the standard for local authorities when it comes to fire doors as it ticks every single fire, smoke and security box,” added Howard. “We have always prided ourselves on providing products that allow

our citizens and communities to enjoy a safe and comfortable environment.”

Shelforce specialises in providing high-quality PVCu and aluminium products to local authority building projects such as Birmingham City Council. For more information, please contact the company.

0121 603 5262  
www.shelforce.com

## Yeoman Shield Fire Door Services offer assurance to clients

**Y**eoman Shield Fire Door Services division continues to go from strength to strength with the addition of a new team member and new personnel accreditations.

Technical Advisor, Richard Bingley and Technical Supervisor, Shaun Stevenson, already have the Diploma in Fire Doors. Both have now increased their portfolio of certification, having recently sat for, and to their credit, achieved the FDIS Fire Door Inspection qualification.

“The FDIS Fire Door Inspection qualification assures our clients that our Fire Door Services supervisors have the essential skills to carry out fire door inspections with the knowledge

to identify non-compliant issues,” commented Contracts Director, Richard Good.

With an in-depth understanding of the regulations, components, compartmentation, and function, Richard and Shaun can also advise on remedial work required to bring damaged fire doors back to an acceptable standard under best practice guidance.

Offering accepted repair techniques can help reduce the cost of remedial work to non-conforming fire doors whilst a regular Fire Door inspection and maintenance routine will ensure that problematic issues can be dealt with before they get to the point of total fire door replacement.

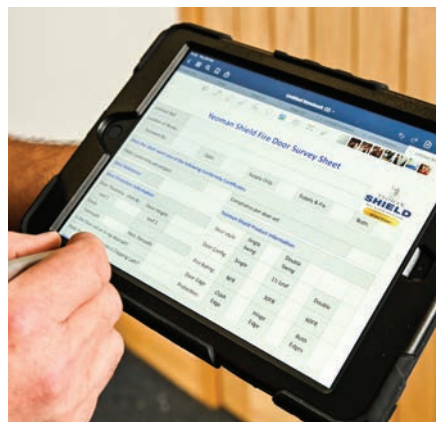
Yeoman Shield Fire Door Services has been further enhanced by the internal promotion of Gemma Batley to the team.

Richard Good explained: “Gemma has worked within the company for many years as a Senior Sales Coordinator and has great understanding of our fire rated door protection products and will certainly be an asset to the division.”

Gemma has been appointed as a Fire Door Supervisor and will undertake training to achieve both the FDIS Fire Door Diploma and Fire Door Inspection qualifications as she progresses.

For more information on Yeoman Shield Fire Door Services as well as Yeoman Shield's range of Wall & Door Protection products please contact the company or visit the website.

0113 279 5854 www.yeomanshield.com



## Take fire doors to a new level

A recent survey into fire safety in social housing carried out by Housing Management and Maintenance reported that 95% of respondents named fire doors as the most important fire safety product and more than half cited broken fire doors as the main reason for properties failing fire safety assessments.

With the Hackitt Review calling for greater care in the specification of fire safety products, door closer manufacturer, Samuel Heath asserts that the type of door closer fitted to fire doors in social housing stock should be given as much consideration as the fire door itself.

The right door closer will not only meet relevant fire and accessibility requirements, but also assure continued reliability of the fire door, tenant safety and well-being, as well as help to control whole life costs.

Samuel Heath's Powermatic, jamb-mounted, concealed door closer delivers in all these areas, meeting the necessary performance standards and delivering a host of additional benefits thanks to its total concealment when the door is closed.

Where overhead, surface-mounted door closers have arms and boxes on show, Powermatic door closers are totally concealed, making them less likely to be damaged, either through a deliberate act, lack of care, misuse or tampering. This means enhanced reliability of the fire door and less chance of the door closer and fire door needing repair or replacement in the future.

Powermatic also rises above other concealed



devices; unlike other jamb-mounted devices, Powermatic door closers facilitate a door's compliance with the accessibility requirements of Approved Document M and do not have to be removed from the door to be adjusted.

In addition, Powermatic is the only Certifire jamb-mounted door closer and has been fitted to door sets which have successfully completed security tests to PAS 24.

British designed and manufactured, Powermatic door closers come with a 10-year warranty and, of course, there is also the comfort of knowing that they are manufactured in the UK by Samuel Heath, who, with more than 50 years' experience, is probably the foremost authority when it comes to concealed door closers.

0121 766 4200 [info@samuel-heath.com](mailto:info@samuel-heath.com)

## £92 million student accommodation project receives Advanced protection

Five new towers at the University of Brighton's Moulsecoomb Campus are now protected by a fault-tolerant network of MxPro 5 fire panels from global fire systems leader, Advanced.

The 13 networked MxPro 5 panels have been installed to protect the five student accommodation towers varying between eight and 18 storeys, which will provide more than 800 student bedrooms as well as ground-floor fitness facilities and amenities for the students' union.

Responsible for the fire system design, supply and commissioning were West Sussex-based Southern Fire Alarms (SFA) Ltd, who also installed the equipment alongside mechanical and electrical engineers, J&B Hopkins. The fire system is integrated with multiple third-party interfaces, including automatic opening vents (AOVs), sprinklers and access control.

Careful consideration was given to the complex cause and effect programming that needed to be applied across the site. Each building is configured with a six-minute investigation period, with sounders on the floor of origin initiated after a single device activation. A single subsequent device activation will escalate into full evacuation of the specific tower. A master key switch has also been introduced, to allow for full evacuation of all towers if required.



MxPro 5 is the fire industry's leading multiprotocol fire system solution, certified by FM Approvals to the EN 54 standard. It offers customers a choice of four detector protocols and a completely open installer network, backed up by free training and support. MxPro 5 panels can be used in single-loop, single-panel format, or easily configured into high-speed networks of up to 200 panels covering huge areas. Ease of installation and configuration, as well as a wide range of peripheral, make MxPro 5 suitable for almost any application.

Advanced, owned by FTSE 100 company Halma PLC, protects a wide range of prestigious and high-profile educational facilities across the globe – from Scotland's University of Edinburgh



and Serbia's University of Belgrade to Myanmar's British International School.

Advanced is a world leader in the development and manufacture of fire protection solutions. Advanced's reputation for performance, quality and ease of use sees its products specified in locations around the world, from single-panel installations to large, multi-site networks. Advanced's products include complete fire detection systems, multiprotocol fire panels, extinguishing control, fire paging, false alarm management and reduction solutions as well as emergency lighting.

0345 894 7000  
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# Legislation is set to change in Wales to ensure rented properties are fit for human habitation



**I**t has recently been announced that the legislation, Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 will change, effective from 15th July 2022. The new regulations are designed to ensure that social and private rented properties in Wales are fit for human habitation, including the provision of an adequate Fire and Carbon Monoxide alarm system.

Section 91 of the Act places an obligation on the landlord to ensure that their property is fit for human habitation from the beginning of the tenancy and throughout. The requirements of the legislation are within The Renting Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) (Wales) Regulations 2022.

The updates significantly affect the requirements for Fire and Carbon Monoxide alarms within rental properties. Under The Renting Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) (Wales) Regulations 2022, landlords in Wales must ensure that there is a working Smoke alarm on every storey of a property, e.g. hallway and landing; in addition, all Smoke alarms must be mains powered and interconnected with other Smoke alarms in the

property. Landlords should refer to BS 5839-6:2013 for the recommended installation of the required Smoke alarms, however Aico would encourage landlords to reference BS 5839-6:2019+A1:2020. The manufacturer's replacement date should also be noted to ensure the alarms remain fully operational.

Additional Smoke alarms can be installed in the property at the landlord's discretion, for example, a larger property would benefit from additional Smoke alarms for greater protection and coverage. A landlord may also consider installing a Heat alarm in the kitchen.

The Renting Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) (Wales) Regulations 2022 also requires landlords to ensure that a Carbon Monoxide alarm is present in any room which has a gas, oil or solid fuel burning appliance installed.

Aico's National Technical Manager, Andy Speake, comments: "The updated legislation is a great step towards ensuring there is adequate fire safety in rented properties. The enforcement of The Renting Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) (Wales)

Regulations 2022 is a positive move in the right direction and will ensure greater levels of protection for tenants in Wales."

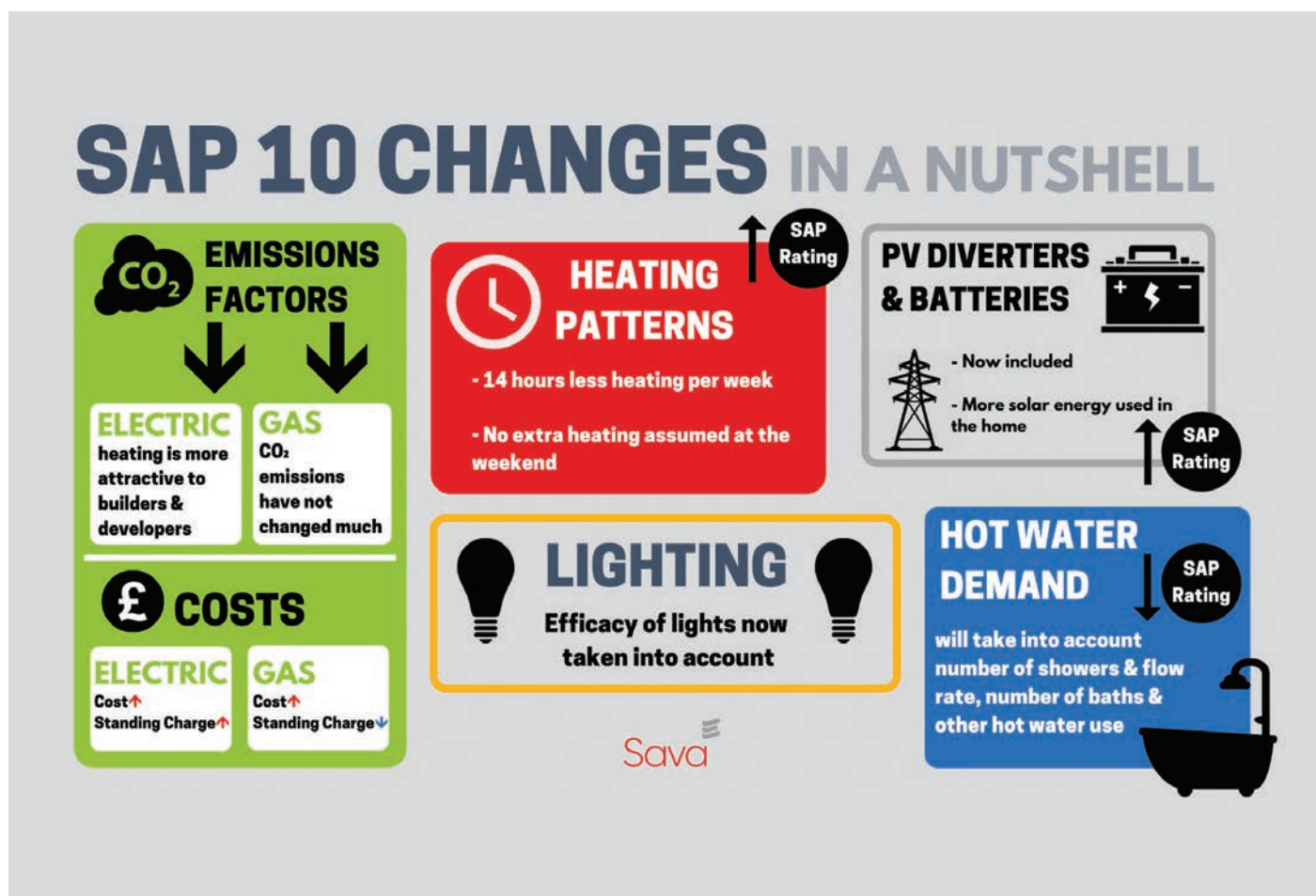
In total, there are 29 matters and circumstances set out in the Act which determine whether a rental property is fit for human habitation, examples including damp and mould growth, fire, Carbon Monoxide, excess cold and heat and electrical hazards.

For more information on the legislation, visit: <https://gov.wales/fitness-homes-human-habitation-guidance-landlords-html#section-86350>

01691 664100 [www.aico.co.uk](http://www.aico.co.uk)



# How we model the energy efficiency and carbon output of our homes is changing



## WHY THE CHANGE?

There are some big changes coming to the way we measure the energy efficiency and carbon emissions of UK homes. SAP is the national calculation methodology used for everything from building regulations compliance through to Energy Performance Certificates, and the new Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

The last major revision to SAP was in 2014, and this year the new version – SAP 10 – is being released. These changes have been driven by homes become more energy efficient due to insulation and air tightness. Other energy demands such as hot water, lighting and renewables will account for a higher percentage of energy use and therefore need to be modelled more accurately. In addition, unless SAP takes account of new technologies, it will suppress their take up.

## WHEN'S IT COMING?

The new SAP will first make its appearance for new build homes in the new Part L of the building

regulations in England, due Summer 2022.

Exactly how it will be implemented in the RdSAP calculation used for existing homes is still being finalised, but we expect the calculations to be introduced in late 2022 / early 2023.

## CARBON FROM ELECTRICITY IS DOWN 75%

The most significant impact for those modelling their carbon emissions is an updating to the carbon factors for electricity with SAP 10 using a factor of just 0.136 kg/kWh compared to the current 0.519 kg. This reflects the decarbonisation of the UK electricity grid and will make a significant reduction in carbon when modelling homes using any form of electrically driven heating system.

## FIND OUT MORE

Check out our range of free technical webinars including SAP 10 and many other issues facing housing providers at [www.sava.co.uk/software/technical-webinars/](http://www.sava.co.uk/software/technical-webinars/)

## ABOUT SAVA

Sava provides analysis software and consultancy to help housing providers gain a better understanding of their housing stock and carbon zero objectives. Sava established the UK's first energy rating scheme over 30 years ago and its software is now used by over 200 social housing providers.

01908 442100

[www.sava.co.uk](http://www.sava.co.uk)

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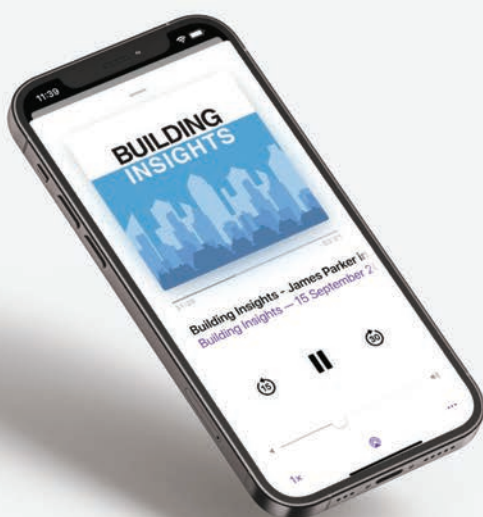


# HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

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