

HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

JUNE/JULY 2022



Big changes
to regulation
announced

Ombudsman
launches special
investigation of HA



No fault evictions
to be banned

New quality
standard
consultation
in Wales

Raising the roof for social housing retrofits

Stuart Nicholson of Marley discusses some of the ways a full roof system, incorporating solar PV, can have a positive impact on rising energy prices. See report inside





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Subscription costs just £24 for 6 issues, including post and packing. Phone 01435 863500 for details. Individual copies of the publication are available at £3.25 each including p&p.

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Printed in England



Editor's comment

Will fixed penalty fines be issued to housing managers?



Patrick Mooney,
News Editor

The Government has outlined its very busy agenda for housing, with new beefed-up regulatory systems outlined for both the private and social rented sectors. In among the detail of the new powers for the social housing regulator we saw that fines could be levied where disrepair cases and tenant's complaints have not been dealt with satisfactorily. Does this raise the prospect of senior managers being stuck with fixed penalty notice fines, in a similar way to how the Metropolitan Police have been issuing fines for those in and around 10 Downing Street who broke lockdown rules by attending parties?

I guess it might do (in which case what about the senior executives and board members who are supposed to oversee their work?) but we will have to wait for the Bill to be published before deciding whether this is a good or bad thing and is it likely to deliver improved housing conditions and better services for tenants. What is more likely I suspect is that any fines will be levied on the landlord organisations, rather than on the individuals. However, if this is the route taken then I can see tenants getting very hot under the collar. After all is it right to use rent money to pay fines for service failures and in doing so, take money away from the housing service?

I can see a whole new set of insurance schemes being devised to provide cover for worried managers and executives, to protect them from fines or being sued for poor service. It will certainly kick off an interesting discussion about responsibility and liability. Management Team and Board discussions on this topic should be particularly informative. This is not to trivialise the matter, far from it but something clearly had to be done to change the narrative. Over the past 18 months we have seen a string of bad news stories, prompted by investigations on ITV news and in other news outlets, about poor services being endured for years at a time by tenants of both housing associations and councils. Tenants had often been raising wholly legitimate concerns about disrepair cases involving damp, mould, condensation, leaks and infestations. They had either been patronised and ignored, or where action was taken, it was ineffectual and failed to resolve the problem.

Ministers clearly decided enough was enough and decided to toughen up the regulatory framework, giving the regulator of social housing a wider brief to intervene and take firmer action. Of course it could be argued that such action should have been taken twelve years ago when the last major changes to regulation were made. This established the co-regulatory approach where social landlords were expected to take much of the responsibility for regulating and governing themselves. The changes now being made suggests in the firmest of terms that the co-regulatory approach has not worked. If we are to avoid a 'disrepairgate', then fundamental changes in the culture of social landlords and how tenants are treated is badly needed and overdue.

The Government has also been busy making changes to the private rented market, finally delivering the axe to Section 21 no fault evictions, which have been a bone of contention between landlords and tenants for many years. But alongside this, Ministers are making other changes including establishing an Ombudsman to settle disputes without going to court, providing an information portal and extending the Decent Homes Standard to the private sector. It has stopped short of introducing rent controls (despite the cost of living crisis) and it has not established a national register of landlords, but taken together this is probably the biggest set of regulatory demands imposed on the private rented sector for an awfully long time. For this to be done by a Conservative Government, which says it is aiming to lighten the burden on businesses it was something of a surprise.

Much remains to be seen in the detail of the new legislation, not least of which in the timing of the changes and whether financial support will be forthcoming to help with implementing new duties and responsibilities. A beefed up regulator and a new Ombudsman does suggest that additional staff will be needed to oversee both parts of the rented sector, but how smoothly will these be set up when the Government has said it is intent on cutting 90,000 civil service jobs. Another mystery is whether the Government will proceed with its threat to extend the right to buy to housing association tenants. If they do, then who would rule out it being extended to private tenants in the future.

Patrick Mooney

On the cover...

Stuart Nicholson of Marley discusses some of the ways a full roof system, incorporating solar PV, can have a positive impact on rising energy prices.

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No fault evictions to be outlawed at last



The long-term promise to remove Section 21 'no-fault' evictions from the country's private rented sector is finally to become a reality after it was included within the Government's new legislative programme.

The procedure allows landlords to evict tenants without giving a reason and there is no right of appeal for tenants. It has proved extremely contentious in recent years with tenants and campaign groups critical of the threat and uncertainty it carries. It has also contributed heavily to increases in homelessness.

In an effort to appease private landlords, Government ministers say it will be replaced with new stronger possession grounds for tackling incidences of anti-social behaviour or repeated incidences of rent arrears. Details of the replacement system are expected to be announced in the summer when the Government publishes its Renters' Reform Bill.

The Bill's inclusion within the Queen's Speech drew a positive reaction from all sides of the sector, with the Government keen to focus on additional rights for tenants in terms of greater security, as well as being empowered to challenge poor practices and unfair rent increases.

Other aspects it will include are making the Decent Homes Standard apply to private rentals (in a bid to improve property standards) and introducing a new Ombudsman to resolve issues between private landlords and tenants without them having to go to court.

A new property portal will also be introduced, where landlords can access information about their obligations and tenants can get performance information that will help them hold their landlord to account.

A WELCOME CHANGE

Responding to the Queen's Speech, Councillor Darren Rodwell, housing spokesperson for the

Local Government Association, said: "We are pleased that the Government has committed to introducing legislation to strengthen protections for private renters and abolish 'no-fault evictions'. This is something the LGA and councils have been calling for the Government to introduce since it was included in its 2019 manifesto.

"A dramatic recent rise in the number of 'no fault evictions' from the private rented sector is putting additional pressure on homelessness services, so we are glad that a plan to strengthen safeguards for private renters is finally in place, allowing renters to challenge poor practice and unfair rent increases without fear of eviction."

National Residential Landlords Association chief executive Ben Beadle welcomed the Government's commitment to tackling arrears and anti-social behaviour and will continue to lobby Ministers to ensure other grounds for possessions are fair.

He said: "We welcome the Government's acceptance that reforms to the rented sector need to strengthen the ability of landlords to tackle anti-social tenants and those with repeated rent arrears. We will continue to work to ensure that these and other grounds for possession are fair and workable.

"While we support proposals for an Ombudsman to cut the number of possession cases needing to go the court, this cannot be a substitute for proper court reform as well. At present it can take almost a year for a private landlord to repossess a property through the courts where they have a legitimate reason to do so. This is simply not good enough."

Mr Beadle added that landlords need to be able to regain possession of their property efficiently when needed. "We know landlords want to keep good tenants in their homes, but should they wish to, for example, sell up, or move into the property themselves the mechanisms need to be in place to allow them to do this. We will continue to campaign to this end."

Private rents forecast to climb by as much as £1,500 in next year

In just 12 months time the average private sector tenant could be paying between £800 and £1,500 more a year in rent, according to research by a rental platform specialising in affordable homes.

Following a turbulent 24 months, the UK rental market is 'back on track' and analysis of rental market values by Ocase shows that the average UK tenant is now paying £12,936 per year for a rental property.

This annual cost of renting has already climbed by £1,032 since this time last year and Ocase predicts that it could increase by a further £803 over the next 12 months. This means the average tenant would be required to pay £13,739 a year to rent a home.

London remains by far the least affordable region of the UK rental market, with the average tenant in the capital currently paying £21,140 per year. Ocase estimates that the capital's tenants will see this cost increase by a further £1,140 per year over the next 12 months.

While London's renters are paying the highest price to rent, it is those in the North West that could see the sharpest increase with their average rent of £10,452 per year predicted to increase by £1,504 over the next year.

The East of England could be set to see the third largest hike in the annual cost of renting, climbing by a further £898 to a total of £13,426 per year. In the South West, this increase in annual rental costs is estimated to hit £790, while Ocase also estimates that renters in the South East (£750) and East Midlands (£717) will be required to pay over £700 more a year in rent.

Renters in the North East stand to see the lowest increase in the cost of renting, Ocase predicts that the average annual cost of renting in the region could still climb by £617 in just 12 months' time.

A spokesperson for Ocase said: "Despite a rather unsettled rental market landscape as a result of the pandemic, the average UK tenant is still paying over a thousand pounds more a year versus just 12 months ago. This cost is set to climb even further over the next 12 months and will be particularly concerning for existing tenants.

"Renting is already the most substantial outgoing they face but in recent weeks, many will have also seen their finances squeezed by the increasing cost of living. When you add an increase in rental costs to this mix, it paints a very bleak picture for the year ahead."

New Social Housing Regulation Bill aims to tackle poor conditions across the sector

Nearly five years after the Grenfell Tower fire, the Government is promising to deliver a beefed up regulatory framework for social housing which puts tenants' voices and interests at the heart of it.

Ongoing reports of poor housing conditions, disrepair and health and safety breaches across the sector over the past 18 months have clearly influenced the final shape and content of the new legislation. Perhaps the most eye-popping feature was the empowerment of the regulator to undertake surveys and order repairs to tenants' homes at very short notice.

The new Social Housing Regulation Bill means councils and housing associations that fail to deliver homes and services of a decent standard will face unlimited fines, with the Regulator given a stronger set of powers to intervene on tenants behalf and to enforce higher standards.

Tenants are being promised greater transparency in how their landlord is performing with a new set of performance measures that social landlords will be judged on, such as health and safety, repairs and complaint handling.

This should raise the profile and importance of consumer standards, which have played second fiddle to financial and governance standards until now. We need to await sight of the Bill before knowing if the consumer standards will be toughened up significantly and whether the

Kate Henderson, Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation, said: "Every person in this country deserves to live in a safe, secure, good quality and affordable home"

threatened re-introduction of inspections is to delivered.

New powers being given to the regulator mean that it will be able to impose emergency repairs to properties where there is evidence of a systemic failure by the landlord, or where the landlord appears unable or unwilling to act.

NEW POWERS

Much will depend upon the details written into the Bill during its passage through Parliament, as well as the resources provided to the regulator to carry out its work. At present we know the regulator will only need to give 48 hours notice before carrying out a survey on a tenant's home, but this is potentially an area fraught with difficulties.

Under the new rules, housing association tenants will be able to request information from and about their landlords under the Freedom of Information Act in a similar way to council tenants. This had been strongly resisted in the past by HAs, who said this could compromise their status as non-public sector bodies. Responding to the Queen's Speech, Councillor Darren Rodwell, housing spokesperson

for the Local Government Association, said: "Proposals to strengthen both the role of the Housing Ombudsman and the Regulator in the Social Housing Regulation Bill are positive, to increase the rights of tenants and enable tenants to better hold their landlord to account.

"Councils want their tenants to have the security of a safe and well-maintained home with any issues quickly and satisfactorily addressed, and we are keen to continue working with councils, the Regulator and the Ombudsman to support the implementation of the reforms.

Kate Henderson, Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation, said: "Every person in this country deserves to live in a safe, secure, good quality and affordable home; and to have a voice and clear route to redress if their home isn't up to standard. We fully support the government's aim to strengthen tenants' rights through the Social Housing Regulation Bill and housing associations stand ready to work with their residents and the government to ensure every home delivers on the high standards they expect.

Strong criticism of plans to revive RTB for HA tenants

Government plans to introduce the legal right for housing association tenants in England to be able to buy their existing homes at discounted prices have been met with strong objections from across the sector.

Since its introduction in 1980 the statutory right to buy has existed for council tenants and around 2 million local authority homes have since been sold, although many of them have been sold-on (some estimates are as high as 40 per cent) and are now re-let as private rentals at higher rent levels than previously.

The Chartered Institute of Housing said it is supportive of measures to help people into home ownership, but extending the Right to Buy to housing associations is not the right policy to achieve this. It said the policy would lead to a reduction in the overall number of affordable homes with little prospect of homes sold being replaced on anything like a one for one basis.

"We are at a point of crisis in this country, with

over 1.1 million households on waiting lists for social housing. The number of households living in temporary accommodation has nearly doubled in the last decade. We need more, not less, affordable social homes."

It added that the Government was talking about selling assets that do not belong to the state. The homes belong to housing associations, many of them are charitable organisations, which exist to provide benefit to the community, holding their assets in trust for the community by providing affordable homes for rent. Imposing the change could create enormous legal and financial difficulties.

Polly Neate, chief executive of Shelter, was more strident in her opposition, saying: "The hare-brained idea of extending Right-to-Buy to housing associations is the opposite of what the country needs. There could not be a worse time to sell off what remains of our last truly affordable social homes.

"The cost of living crisis means more people are on the brink of homelessness than homeownership – nearly 34,000 households in England became homeless between October and December last year, more than 8,000 of them were families with children.

"Right to Buy has already torn a massive hole in our social housing stock as less than 5 per cent of the homes sold off have ever been replaced. These half-baked plans have been tried before and they've failed. Over one million households are stuck on social housing waiting lists in England, and with every bill skyrocketing, the Government should be building more social homes so we have more not less."

The new right did not appear in the Queen's Speech and the strength of the opposition to it may have caused it to be dropped from the Prime Minister's plans. The right to buy has been abolished in Wales and Scotland by the devolved administrations.

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Complaints against property agents provides mixed feedback

The annual report on complaints made against property agents showed a slight increase in overall numbers, but a reduction in the complaints made against individual agents.

The Property Redress Scheme (PRS) is operated by the Hamilton Fraser Group, owners of mydeposits, Landlord Action, Total Landlord Insurance, Ome and Client Money Protect. Its annual report provides consumer feedback on estate agents, letting agents and property management companies.

The 2021 report covers the activities of 16,272 agencies including 791 private and corporate landlords who have registered on a voluntary basis. Separately, the PRS has recently partnered with the National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA) to launch a pilot landlord redress scheme of an additional 4,250 landlords and over 32,000 properties (this pilot will form part of next year's report statistics). Highlights from the 2021 PRS report include:

- 1,872 complaint enquiries compared to 1,828 in 2020 – a slight increase of 2.4 per cent. This is a sizeable net reduction when the substantial increase in the number of 2021 UK property transactions is factored in;
- Total complaints accepted – 609 (down from 639 in 2020) and down 4.7 per cent year on year;
- Total membership numbers increased by 8.97 per cent from 14,932 to 16,272;
- Total amount of early resolution awards recommended – £239,365 up from £110,144 and up 117.3 per cent year on year;
- Total amount of decision awards issued – £351,212 up from £171,427, and up 104.9 per cent year on year;
- Average (early resolution) award per complaint upheld – £1,012;
- Decision awards complied with – 87 per cent, up from 78 per cent in 2020;



- The reason that attracted the most complaints – Lettings: duty of care. Sales: marketing and advertising issues. Landlords: property maintenance issues;
 - The level of compliance with decisions increased from 78 per cent in 2020 to 87 per cent in 2021. This shows more PRS agents complied with decisions to the benefit of consumers; and
 - Number of agencies expelled – 46 (45.7 per cent based in London).
- Sean Hooker, Head of Redress at the PRS says: “Despite huge challenges in the property sector for agents of late, we should note that the number of complaints per agent has reduced considerably in net terms. A far greater number of sales and lettings were transacted in 2021 versus

2020 yet complaints made via the PRS rose by just 2.4 per cent.

“I’m delighted that our membership numbers have increased so substantially, taking our total membership to 16,272 and cementing us as the largest lettings redress scheme in the UK now.

“It’s fair to say that customer service satisfaction within the estate and lettings industry is also trending in a positive direction, with only a minute proportion of our members seeing complaints issued against them.

On the 46 expulsions, he explained this amounted to only 0.28 per cent of the membership. “That’s regrettable but also shows the property industry and its customers that our approach is one with teeth where needed.”

Over 18,000 affordable houses lost in office-to-residential conversions

The representative body of 350 councils in England and Wales is lobbying for permitted development rights to be removed to ensure all conversions and new developments contribute to the delivery of affordable homes across the country.

The LGA claims more than 18,000 affordable houses have been lost as a result of office-to-residential conversions under permitted development. A total of 73,575 new houses have been converted from offices under permitted

development rights, where full planning permission is not required, since 2015.

It also says that developments that go through the planning system are subject to more stringent quality assurance, subsequently improving the overall quality of housing on offer, a key priority in the Levelling Up White Paper.

Councillor David Renard, housing spokesperson for the Local Government Association, said: “There is a need for more affordable housing across the country but regrettably premises such

as offices, agricultural buildings, shops, restaurants and light industry can now be converted into houses without the need to provide any affordable homes.

“This is why we would like to see the permitted development rights removed. Giving planning powers back to councils will also support local ambitions to revive and reimagine high streets and town centres.

“A local, plan-led system is crucial in delivering on levelling up ambitions to ensure councils can deliver the right types of homes in the right places with appropriate infrastructure, ensuring a mix of high-quality affordable housing that meets the needs of local communities, while also giving those communities the opportunity to shape and define the area they live in.”

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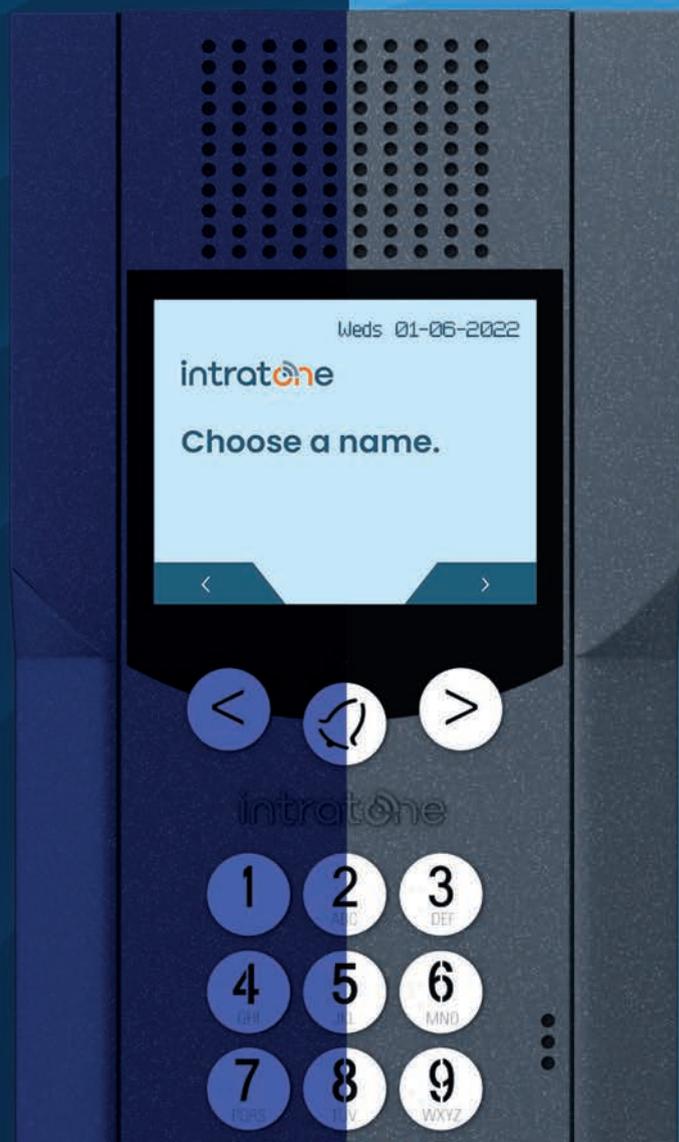
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Clarion strongly criticised for its complaint handling failings

The Housing Ombudsman plans to conduct an investigation of property maintenance services at the country's largest social housing landlord after issuing two severe maladministration findings within a few weeks of each other.

After the second critical judgement was published Richard Blakeway, Housing Ombudsman, announced that a systemic investigation was being launched as they were dealing with similar cases of damp, mould and pest infestation, which may be indicative of repeated failures and to identify areas for Clarion to learn from and improve.

A spokesperson for Clarion, which owns and manages 125,000 homes, responded by saying their processes had changed substantially since the second case was resolved, they were disappointed by the public comments about a 'wider investigation' and were determined to drive improvements in the services provided to residents.

In their published finding of the second case, the Ombudsman said: "Our investigation found there were extensive delays in resolving water issues and leaks and repairs. There were instances where the resident lacked hot or cold water for days and months at a time, and there were overall delays of more than 15 months in dealing with a number of necessary repairs that were known to the landlord following reports of leaks in the resident's home and outside her door, damp and mould and rodent issues.

"We found service failure for the landlord's response to a rodent infestation which clearly led to some distress to the resident, who reported mice in almost every room at one point. Delay in carrying out works and missed opportunities in assessing the issue contributed to the ongoing lack of resolution."

Clarion apologised to the resident and offered compensation for the delays and the impact on them, but there were unacknowledged failings in its response.

RECORDING OF VULNERABILITIES

During the course of the complaint there were issues with complaint handling, communication and consideration of the resident's vulnerabilities. The resident reported her vulnerabilities but there was no evidence the landlord took steps to review and make further enquiries about these, to consider any additional needs or appropriate variations in service delivery.

The Ombudsman explained that the resident asked to be emailed rather than called on multiple occasions, but this was largely disregarded for five months. A finding of severe maladministration was made because the landlord's responses to the resident's complaint did not go far enough to acknowledge specific issues and reasons for the

In their published finding of the second case, the Ombudsman said: "Our investigation found there were extensive delays in resolving water issues and leaks and repairs. There were instances where the resident lacked hot or cold water for days and months at a time, and there were overall delays of more than 15 months in dealing with a number of necessary repairs that were known to the landlord".

delays she experienced across the full 15 months of her complaint, and the cumulative impact.

"It's concerning in this case that there is no evidence that the resident's vulnerabilities were given consideration. In the information provided to us from the landlord during our investigation, it stated that the resident had no vulnerabilities. The landlord's communication with the resident was poor and this lack of communication appears relevant as to why matters became so protracted."

The Ombudsman ordered Clarion to pay additional compensation of £600 in recognition of the distress and inconvenience caused by its complaints handling. It also ordered the landlord to review the failures identified in this case to consider how it will ensure that complex complaints are progressed appropriately through the complaints procedure.

A spokesperson for Clarion Housing Group commented that it was a complex and challenging case, which has concluded with the resident moving to a new Clarion home. They did not feel the judgement reflected all of the support provided, but acknowledged they were too slow to act in the early stages of the case.

"A number of issues were exacerbated by the resident refusing to grant Clarion staff access to the property. Housing associations do not have the same power as private and local authority landlords to access homes and we'd like to see this changed, so the problem does not recur in the future."

REPEATED FAILURES

In the earlier case the Ombudsman found severe maladministration for Clarion's repeated failure to respond to a resident's complaints and her

requests to escalate them. The resident had regularly reported a leaking roof, damp and mould and cracks to the interior of her property. She complained about the landlord's lack of action and then had to chase for updates on action it was taking or to respond to her, resulting in considerable time, trouble and frustration.

The resident complained in November 2019 about a delayed start to roof replacement works but her complaint was not escalated by the landlord until the Ombudsman intervened. The landlord did not respond to her later complaint in 2020 which by then concerned additional matters including worsening damp and mould and interior cracks.

Following further intervention from the Ombudsman, the landlord provided a stage 1 response, some five months after the resident had submitted the complaint and then she had to chase again for a final response at review stage. This came 12 weeks after she had first requested it, a delay that was way beyond the landlord's 20 day standard for such a response.

During this time the resident and her family were living in deteriorating conditions, and she made repeated reference to the detrimental impact of the damp and mould on her family's health. The Ombudsman ordered the landlord to pay additional compensation of £1,100 on top of the £1,200 it had previously offered for failing to provide adequate recognition of its service failures.

A Clarion spokesperson said: "We have issued renewed guidance to staff on when to escalate an enquiry to a formal complaint. We are also piloting the introduction of Resident Liaison Officers who have a specific focus on managing complex cases and seeing them through to resolution."

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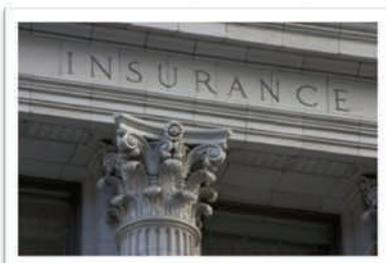
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Family of seven left to live in a one bedroom flat by Bromley council

Bromley Council in south east London has agreed to pay a family £6,000 after it did not do enough to help them when they were threatened with homelessness, following a Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman investigation.

The family of seven were given an eviction notice by their landlord in July 2019 and the council accepted it had a duty to the family in September. However, the family was not evicted by their landlord because of the COVID-19 restrictions and they were not offered more suitable interim accommodation until November 2020.

That same month the council accepted its main housing duty to the family and in December added them to the housing register, backdated to late August 2019.

Prior to the claimant, 'Mr B' complaining to the Ombudsman, the council had already apologised and made a £4,000 payment to acknowledge the time the family had spent in unsuitable accommodation.

The Ombudsman's investigation commended the council's early offer to the family in recognition of its faults. However, it also found the council did not do enough to ascertain the family was living in overcrowded circumstances, or consider early enough whether the family needed interim accommodation.

Had it done so it is likely it would have found the family homeless, eligible and in priority need.

The Ombudsman's investigation commended the council's early offer to the family in recognition of its faults. However, it also found the council did not do enough to ascertain the family was living in overcrowded circumstances,

Instead it took 13 months too long to do this. Mr B said the council's failings placed his family under a high level of stress as his children (aged between six months and eight years) were sleeping in the hall and kitchen due to the lack of space, the report said

The investigation also found the council did not review its prevention duty or the personalised housing plan until the man complained, or have any consideration as to whether the family's living conditions enabled them to enjoy a family life under the Human Rights Act.

Michael King, Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, said: "Because of the lack of action by the council in this case, a family of seven had to live in a single bedroom flat for more than a year longer than they should have. That this happened during the first lockdown, when people's movements were significantly restricted, can have only increased the distress they felt.

"While I am pleased the council has already gone

some way to remedying the injustice to the family, I have asked it to pay a further £2,000 to acknowledge the effect such a degree of overcrowding will have had on the family. I hope the changes the council will also make to the way it deals with homeless issues will ensure other people are not put in the same situation."

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's role is to remedy injustice and share learning from investigations to help improve public, and adult social care, services. In this case the council has agreed to apologise and pay the family £6,000 for having to remain in overcrowded conditions for so long.

The Ombudsman has the power to make recommendations to improve processes for the wider public. In this case the council should evidence how it will ensure all relevant staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to assessing homeless applicants.

Gravesham Council to deliver carbon savings through retrofitting of heat pumps

Work has started on installing ground source heat pumps at two of Gravesham Borough Council's housing developments, as part of the authority's work towards achieving net-zero status by 2030.

Boreholes are being drilled at Merston Court and Hermitage Road, in Gravesend, Kent, ahead of the installation of the pumps, which are predicted to save almost 36 tonnes of carbon over the next 20 years and reduce energy bills for residents.

The introduction of a ground source heat pump in 11 properties in Hermitage Court is expected to see a saving of 24 tonnes of carbon over 20 years, while at Merston Court, ground source heat pumps in 5 retrofitted properties will see 13.67 tonnes of carbon saved over the same period.

Councillor Jenny Wallace, Gravesham Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Housing Services, said: "Our independent living homes at Merston

Court currently rely on electric storage heaters, which are inefficient, expensive to run and have reached the end of their lives, while the flats at Hermitage Road have gas boilers.

"Ground source heat pumps are a tried and tested technology here in the UK. These new ground source heat pumps will improve the energy efficiency ratings of all these homes and significantly reduce their carbon footprint, and bring real financial benefits for our tenants."

The work comes at the same time as the news that more than 350 homes owned by the council will have their energy efficiency improved after the authority successfully applied for more than £800,000 from the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

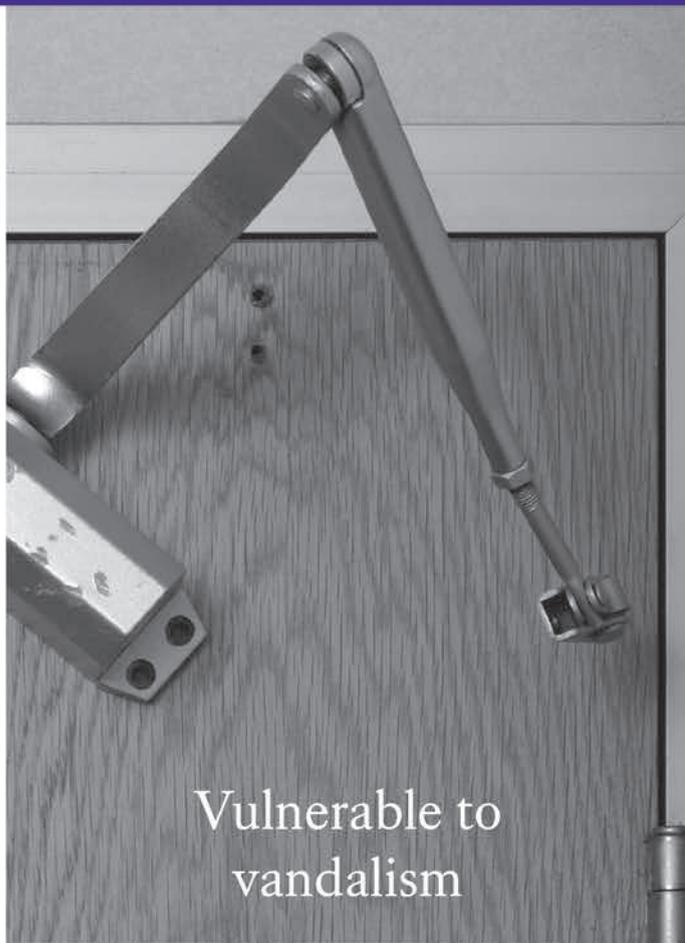
The council is one of only two in Kent to successfully apply to the fund and will receive a grant of £823,337. Gravesham will contribute £800,170 to the project, meaning a total of

£1,623,507 will be spent on upgrading the energy performance of 364 council-owned properties in the Borough in 2022/23.

Councillor Wallace said: "We are doing all we can to upgrade our council-owned homes and help us towards our net-zero target. The installation of these new ground source heat pumps will bring real benefits for the environment and our residents alike."

Stuart Gasden, Commercial Director of Kensa, said: "We are delighted to be working with Gravesham to install ground source heat pumps at Merston Court and Hermitage Road. The project's success is a result of close collaboration between the council, its residents and Kensa and will significantly reduce carbon emissions and positively impact residents' lives. We look forward to developing our partnership with the council and installing this technology at further locations around Gravesham."

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London is leading the decline in Houses of Multiple Occupation

Market analysis from specialist property lending experts, Octane Capital, has revealed that the number of HMOs in England has declined in the past year, adding to the pressures in the private rented sector.

The latest data shows that, on an annual basis, the number of HMOs in England fell by three per cent, from 511,278 in 2019/20 to 497,884 in 2020/21.

This overall national decline has been driven by the London market where the level of total HMOs has declined by 13 per cent, by far the biggest reduction of all regions

In the capital, 11 different boroughs have reported a drop, with the biggest coming in Ealing where HMOs have declined by 59 per cent, followed closely by a 58 per cent decline in Lambeth.

Redbridge has seen its numbers halved, and Barnet's decline sits at 37 per cent. The number of HMOs has also declined considerably in Greenwich (down 34 per cent), Enfield (30), Wandsworth (18), Croydon (13), and Hillingdon (10).

Jonathan Samuels, CEO of Octane Capital, commented: "It's only right that all efforts should be made to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the nation's tenants and that everyone is afforded the right to a basic standard of living.

"The changes to HMO licensing have certainly looked to ensure this, but as a result we have seen a decline in the level of operational HMOs across the rental market, particularly within London.

"This essentially means that those reliant on the rental sector now have even less choice when it comes to finding suitable, safe accommodation, but that's not to say it can't be found."

In 2018, the UK government introduced new regulations which require a Houses of Multiple



In the capital, 11 different boroughs have reported a drop, with the biggest coming in Ealing where HMOs have declined by 59 per cent, followed closely by a 58 per cent decline in Lambeth

Occupancy (HMO) licence is required for all properties that are occupied by five or more people who are not members of one family.

Previously, a licence was only required for properties of three storeys or more in which five or more people live and are not members of one family. In order to obtain a licence, all rooms in a HMO must exceed a minimum size and can only sleep a certain number of people over 10 years old.

Since 2018, the rules change, for which the purpose is to ensure a better, safer standard of living for tenants, have been gradually rolled out across districts and boroughs. As a result, the number of HMOs on the market has decreased with many landlords choosing to offload their buy-to-let stock instead of negotiating more hurdles due to legislative changes.

Ombudsman investigating reports of noise complaints

The social housing ombudsman has launched a systemic investigation into noise complaints and is expected to issue a report later this year.

The investigation is exploring how social landlords manage reports of noise nuisance and what drives complaints about how those are handled. It will enable the Ombudsman to make recommendations and share best practice across the sector – helping landlords to develop their services and improve the experience of residents.

The service has determined 848 complaints relating to noise over the last three years and

identified maladministration in 41 per cent of cases. A call for evidence from social landlords and their tenants was made earlier this year and closed in mid May.

The lines of enquiry for the investigation include:

- How do policies around noise work in practice?
- How do landlords work with other agencies?
- What is successful in mitigating for/dealing with inherent modern noise?
- What is successful intervention?

As well as survey responses, the Ombudsman will draw on insight from its own casebook and from Resident Panel members, together with fieldwork in five landlords of varying size, type and location and their residents. It hopes this breadth of approach will ensure it can make far-reaching recommendations that promote greater understanding of the complexity of tackling noise complaints.

Richard Blakeway, Housing Ombudsman, said:

"Noise complaints can have a particularly significant impact on residents causing deep frustration and stress, and it's an area that also presents difficult challenges for landlords."

"We are keen to examine all aspects of noise related complaints and particularly how complaints are managed under anti-social behaviour policies. The statutory thresholds can be high and result in a lengthy process for residents while they may continue to experience the disturbance."

"Our investigation will examine the relationship between anti-social behaviour and noise transference from our unique and independent perspective, so we can share best practice and learning across the social housing sector."

The Spotlight reports are part of our ongoing commitment to share insight from our casework and use our systemic powers to investigate beyond individual disputes to drive learning and improvements for the benefit of all residents. All reports are available on the Ombudsman service's website.



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New quality standard being introduced for all social homes in Wales

The Welsh Government has launched a consultation on updating the social housing quality standard, with a specific aim of delivering on improving energy efficiency and helping to achieve net zero carbon emission targets.

Climate Change Minister Julie James said the new standard would build upon the achievements of its predecessor, which was introduced in 2002 and by the end of 2020 had brought 99 per cent of social housing in Wales up to the existing decent homes standard.

The new standard is due to be introduced next year and is planned to be achieved by 2033. The consultation exercise closes in early August. More than 900 tenants, as well as technical experts and social housing professionals, have been involved in drawing up the proposals.

The aim of the new standard is to deliver homes that are in a good state of repair, is safe and secure, is affordable to heat and has minimal environmental impact, has an up-to-date kitchen, utility area and bathroom, is comfortable and promotes wellbeing, has a suitable garden and an attractive outside space.

Speaking in the Senedd Ms James said: “I am sure members will agree that, after 20 years, the standard is due to be reviewed, especially to acknowledge the considerable changes to how people live, work and feel about their homes.

“The world has moved on apace in the last 20 years and our expectation of our homes has moved on too. The proposed standard aims to be bold but ultimately achievable. We aim with our consultation to ensure that the voice of the sector is taken into



Climate Change Minister Julie James said the new standard would build upon the achievements of its predecessor, which was introduced in 2002 and by the end of 2020 had brought 99 per cent of social housing in Wales up to the existing decent homes standard

account in finalising these standards and getting them right.

“Setting standards is not an easy business at the best of times. It is even more challenging setting standards relating to the decarbonisation of homes - which is a developing area where we are learning what works best on an ongoing basis.

Ms James, added that the £220m committed over this term of Government to the Optimised Retrofit Programme, aimed at to decarbonising existing homes will help. It will provide some of the answers to how effectively and efficiently carbon emissions

from homes will be reduced in line with the Net Zero Wales plan. However, in the face of the climate change emergency she said it was not possible to stand still, and the Government must continue to push progress and set standards to address decarbonisation through a variety of measures in existing social housing.

Lessons learnt from working on the 230,000 social homes in Wales will then be applied to how improvements can be delivered to the 1.2 million homes in private ownership, including private rentals.

Sefton Council launches consultation over extending PRS licensing scheme

A consultation is underway to see whether local people want Sefton Council's housing licensing schemes for privately rented properties extended for a further five-years.

Since March 2018, Sefton Council has had a Selective Licensing scheme for private landlords in the Bootle area. There is also another licensing scheme which is called 'Additional (HMO) Licensing which is only for houses of multiple occupancy (rented to at least three people, who are not part of the same family) for privately rented property situated in parts of Seaforth, Waterloo, Brighton-Le-Sands and central Southport.

With the current schemes due to end on 28th February 2023, Sefton Council is now carrying out a 12-week consultation on its proposal to extend

them until February 2028. Information about the proposals and a link to the consultation can be found at www.sefton.gov.uk/licensing-consultation

Councillor Trish Hardy, Sefton Council's Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing, said: “Introducing the current licensing schemes has enabled Sefton Council to work with private landlords in the areas covered to improve their standards of management.

“This, in turn, has resulted in improved living conditions for their tenants as well as improvements for the wider areas, such as reduced anti-social behaviour. By extending the scheme for a further five years, we want to build on this success and bring about further benefits for landlords, tenants and those communities.”

Since the introduction of the Scheme in March 2018, serious health and safety hazards have been removed from over 300 licensed properties. These include issues relating to fire safety, electrical hazards, damp & mould and excess cold.

Although nearly 60 per cent of the properties inspected did not initially meet the required housing standards, 98 per cent of these were subsequently improved. 81 private landlords have received Civil Penalty Fines for failing to licence their properties.

Councillor Hardy added: “Our view is that by renewing these schemes we can deliver benefits for tenants, landlords and the neighbourhoods they cover and the costs for landlords would start from just £2.67 per week.”

London council self refers itself to regulator over safety breaches

A west London Council has been found to be in breach of the regulator's Home Standard after referring itself over a failure to provide assurance it was delivering the full range of safety measures to tenants and their homes.

During internal audits of building safety work Ealing Council identified a series of shortcomings in its record keeping, compliance checks and follow up actions in the areas of fire risk assessments, gas services, asbestos checks, electrical inspections, lift inspections and legionella checks.

It referred itself to the regulator and in May the Regulator of Social Housing determined that although the council was taking action to deal with the shortcomings, the lack of assurance presented a

potential serious detriment to its tenants.

A council spokesperson said "Several factors have led us to this point, and the COVID-19 pandemic played a substantial part. For example, lockdowns and social distancing rules made it impossible for us to complete annual gas safety checks in the homes of some residents who were isolating. That created a backlog in completing checks, which immediately put us in breach of the necessary standards."

They added that the council was fully up to date on inspections, had completed the necessary gas and fire safety checks while 6,000 follow-up checks on various technical aspects of our buildings will be completed over the coming year. Ealing is the latest council to refer itself over health and safety issues.

It is also working on improvements to its data systems, policies and processes to ensure that all required safety checks including gas, electricity and water are recorded and monitored properly in the future.

The regulator's statement concluded: "As Ealing is putting in place a programme to rectify these failings and assured the regulator that it fully understands the work that is needed to rectify these failures, we will not take enforcement action at this stage. The regulator will work with the council as it continues to address the issues which have led to this situation, including ongoing monitoring of how it delivers its programme."

Plight of older tenants forced to cut back on spending revealed

Research by the charity Independent Age has highlighted the struggles of older tenants who are reliant on benefits to pay their housing and living costs, with campaigners demanding a rent freeze to prevent an upsurge in evictions.

There are 382,000 households in the private sector headed by a person aged 65 or older, and 1 million in the social rented sector. Many of these are living on fixed incomes, with recent rent rises outstripping pension increases and housing benefit

levels remaining frozen at 2020 levels.

Dan Wilson Crow, the deputy director of the campaigning group Generation Rent, responded to the survey findings, saying "We need a freeze on rents and another suspension of evictions to protect tenants during this crisis."

The charity's research found almost two-thirds of older tenants have cut back on their general spending as a result of the cost of living crisis. Older people who do not own their homes are particularly vulnerable to rising bills.

Some 62 per cent of renters over 65 were having to cut back on their general spending and a quarter said they would not be able to afford a £10-a-month increase in their living costs, while 71 per cent said they would not be able to cover a £50 rise. More than half said they felt anxious about their finances.

Independent Age's survey of 2,000 adults in England over 65, of whom 391 were renting, found 57 per cent of tenants were cutting back on heating,

42 per cent said they had reduced how much food and drink they were buying and 29 per cent were buying less vehicle fuel.

Morgan Vine, the Independent Age head of policy, says older renters are "left in increasingly precarious financial situations" and need help and protection from the Government.

"Our research found that older renters are one of the most at risk groups of dropping into poverty past state pension age and are more likely to experience long-term poverty," she said. "We also know older renters are at increased risk of living in poor-quality homes and face higher costs and greater financial insecurity than other groups."

Vine says older renters have shared their concerns with the charity about high rents and that their landlord could sell up at any time. "With the cost of living crisis squeezing people's budgets from every angle, these worries are only going to get worse," she warned.

Council brings housing management in-house after wrongful use of HRA money

Nottingham City Council will bring its housing service back in-house after discovering that millions of pounds intended for tenants' homes and services were spent on other council run activities and services.

Council leader David Mellen has written to council tenants and leaseholders advising them their services will be transferred back from the ALMO by May 2023. "We will ensure this is done with no negative impact on the services you receive and how you access them," he wrote.

An investigation found that upto £40 million intended for services like housing repairs had been misused. The money was transferred from the Housing Revenue Account over a period of years from 2014 but will now need to be repaid.

The HRA is funded from council house rents and is meant to be ring-fenced, with money only spent on housing services. The investigation discovered money was regularly transferred to the council's General Fund, which pays for all other services and expenditure.

An independent investigation resulted in eight recommendations, including bringing housing management back in house, paying back the £40m to the HRA, bringing in external support to guide the council's finance team, and reviewing the council's constitution. All recommendations were accepted by the council's executive board.

Many councils which set up ALMOs in the period 2000 to 2010 did so to access funds to improve their housing stock and deliver the Decent Homes Standard. Most have since transferred management of the stock back to their host council.

Winding up the ALMO, Nottingham City Homes, and transferring the service back in-house will cost an estimated £750,000. Mr Mellen has promised to consult tenants and leaseholders on further steps and that housing management patches and ways to access the housing service will be unaffected by the transfer.

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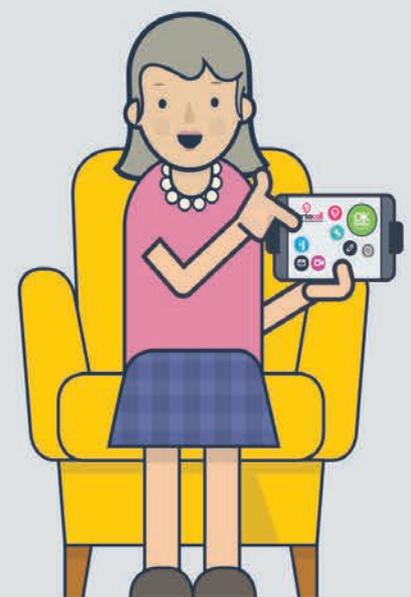


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INDUSTRY VIEWFINDER

Meeting the needs of an ageing population

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UK population is ageing rapidly. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), by 2041, one in four people in England will be 65 or older, and by the same year, the number of English citizens aged 85 or over will double to 3.2 million.

As well as bringing consequences to the active workforce – with the balance between those of working age and those retired likely to shift to an uncomfortable degree – our country does not at present have a housing stock that can provide for the needs of such a population, regardless.

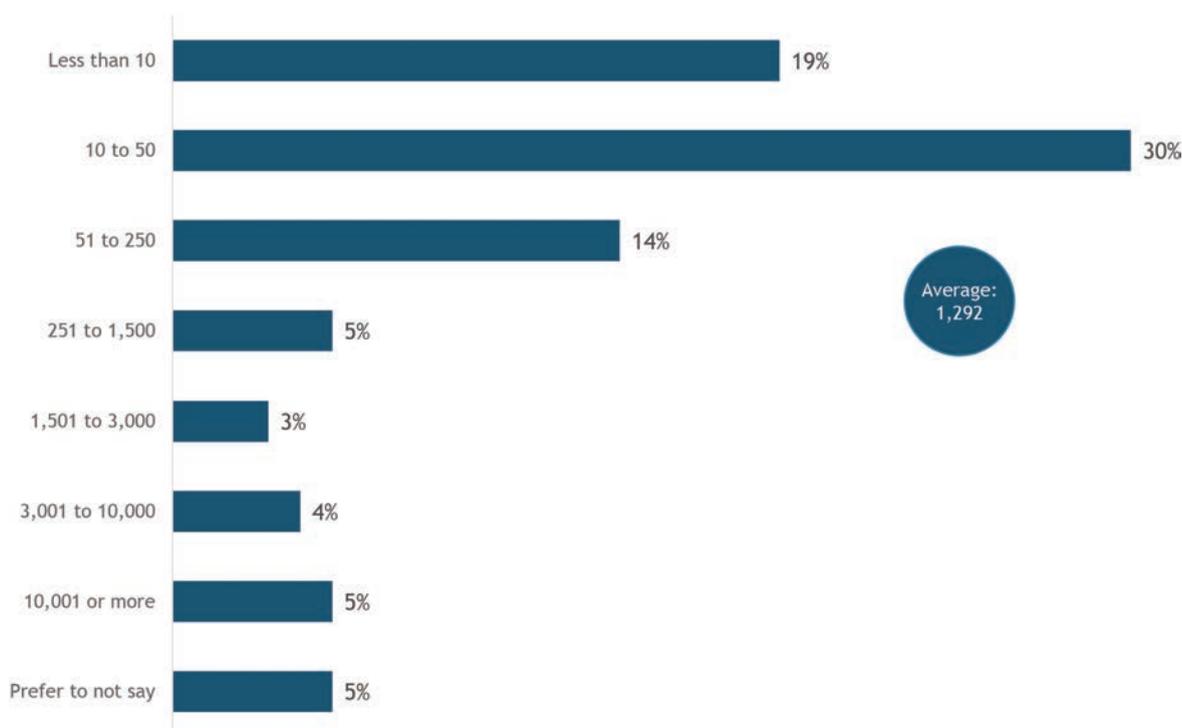
This is no simple task, however. It is not just a case of building more appropriate housing, but also retrofitting the stock we already have. It has been estimated that more than 80% of the homes that will be needed to meet UK population demand in 2050 are already in existence today, and, according to recent research by Housing, Management & Maintenance magazine, just 28% of housing professionals would describe the majority of their housing stock as fit for older residents at present.

Despite these challenges, however, the solutions available to retrofit properties to meet the needs of these residents are numerous – with many products available on the market today able to bring both comfort and safety to older residents with ease.

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), by 2041, one in four people in England will be 65 or older, and by the same year, the number of English citizens aged 85 or over will double to 3.2 million

With the prospect of preventing the array of potentially lethal dangers the average home can produce – many of which are disproportionately dangerous to older residents – such products include grab rails to stop trips and falls, thermostatic showers to avoid scalding, secure access to retain safety and independence, or even insulation, which can keep a home warm and prevent the all too common cold-induced deaths in winter.

With the benefits here were well-understood by our respondents – the vast majority agreeing that the right products can help older tenants to lead happier,



“How many rental properties do you have in management?”



Today, people are living longer than ever, and with advances in modern medicine, they are thankfully remaining healthier for longer too

safer, and even longer lives – the question remains, why aren't more housing professionals preparing for this looming crisis?

As well as delving deeper into the level of suitability of our current social and privately rented housing stock for older residents, this whitepaper will look into the reasons housing professionals have not already begun to prepare for our ageing population, from costs to a lack of understanding and Government funding.

INTRODUCTION

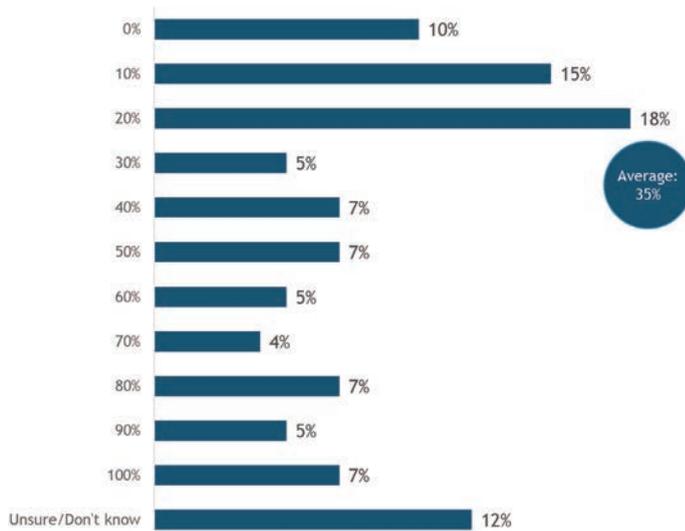
ORIGINS OF SUPPORTED HOUSING

Homes tailored to older residents have been around since at least the middle ages in Europe, starting with charitable residences for older men, of which the first known example is St Peter's Hospital in York, founded in the year 936.

It was not until the Tudor period however that Parliament intervened, and legislated the first public poor houses – or, as they later became known, workhouses – which provided accommodation for both the poor, and the older residents.

These workhouses were relatively few in number, and varied significantly in quality. It wasn't until the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 that a programme began to ensure each parish built its own workhouse, and base requirements were set.

Slowly, nursing and care homes began to appear across the country in a somewhat familiar form to today, and the first sheltered and retirement homes were introduced for those who needed some care, but wanted to retain more independence.



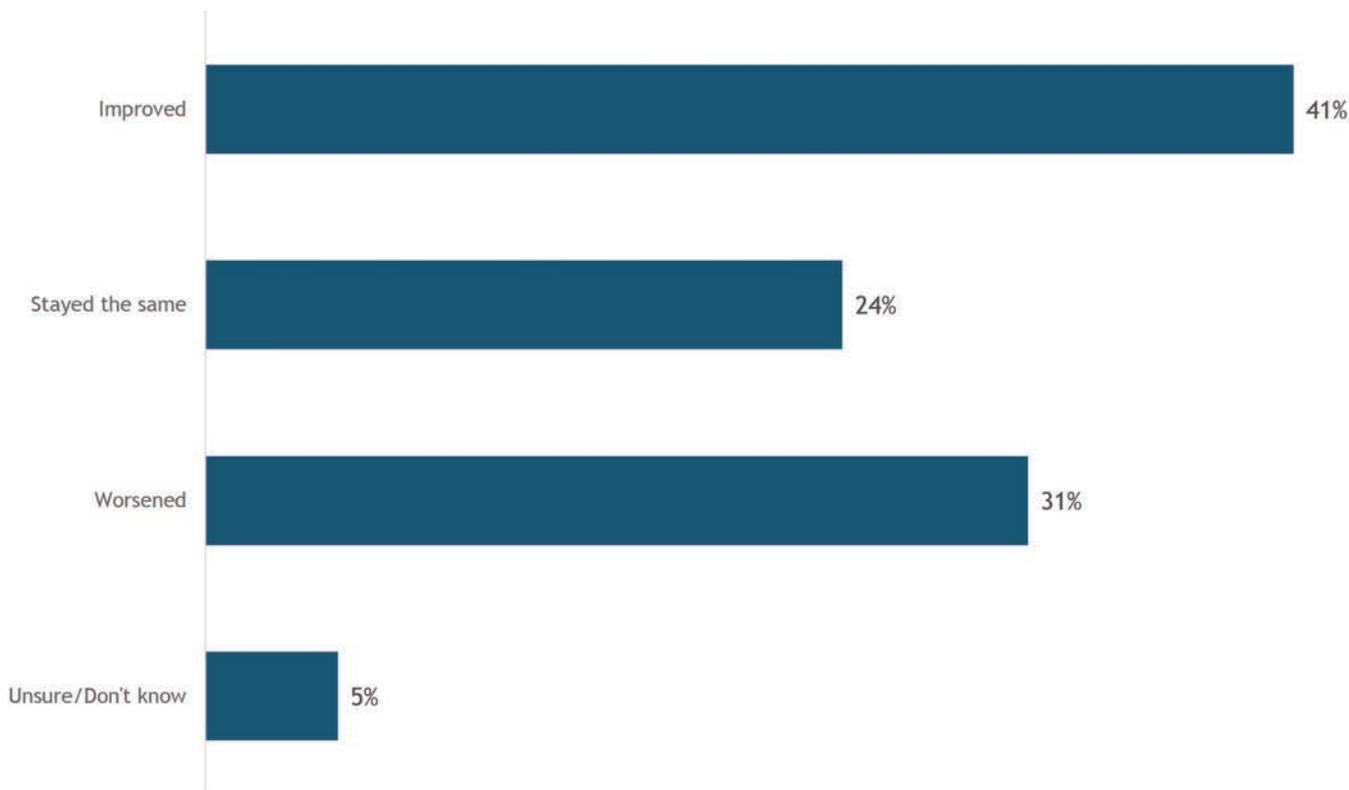
"How much of your housing stock do you believe meets the needs of those 85 and over?"

HOUSING OPTIONS TODAY

Today, people are living longer than ever, and with advances in modern medicine, they are thankfully remaining healthier for longer too.

The range of housing options for older residents has only continued to expand – with a multitude of supported to full care options available. But many are choosing to live longer in their own homes, due in large part to both their continued health in their later years, and the ability to modify their accommodation to account for any decrease in mobility as necessary.

Unfortunately, however, it appears that our current housing stock is lacking at present when it comes to such accommodation in the rental sector.



"Do you believe the quality of the UK's housing stock has improved, worsened, or stayed the same in recent decades?"



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To find out more about our Future Homes campaign, contact Karter Kane, Policy and Public Affairs Advisor.

<https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/what-we-do/our-policies/westminster/future-homes/>

karter.kane@electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk

When it came to their own housing stock, 62% of our respondents would describe half or less of their properties in management as suitable for those 85 or older, with just 26% describing the majority of their housing stock as such, and 12% being unsure.

Despite this, even at present, when asked what percentage of their tenants they would estimate as 65 or older, this was on average 34%. Similarly, the majority of our respondents (61%) believe the average age of their tenants is already increasing, with just 10% believing it is decreasing, and 29% staying the same.

Supporting this, the majority (74%) of our respondents argued that the number of older adults renting in general has increased in recent decades, and 90% agreed that the UK population as a whole is ageing.

WHAT'S COMING

As indicated above, it is widely agreed in the UK (and in much of the world at present) that due to a number of factors – not the least being our ever-increasing life spans – the average age of the population is going to continue to increase.

Unfortunately, when it comes to our ability to meet these demands in the future, our research was not entirely promising.

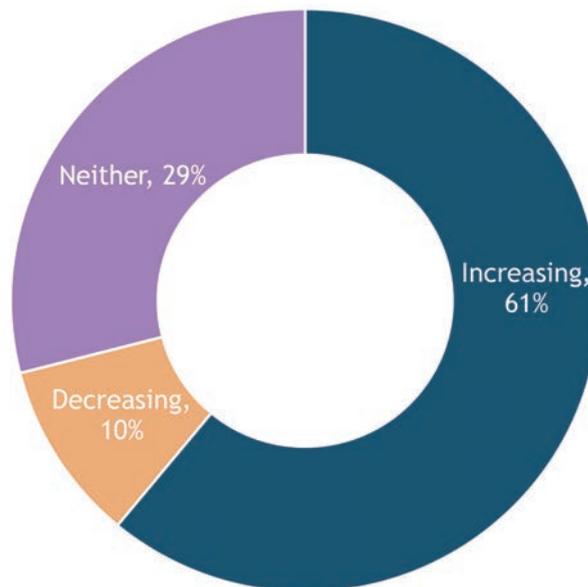
When asked if they believe the UK's housing stock as a whole is not prepared for the ageing of our population, the majority agreed – with 69% saying yes, just 20% saying no, and 11% being unsure.

Even when it came to the overall quality of the country's housing stock as a whole, things didn't seem to be improving.

When asked whether they believe the quality of the UK's housing stock has improved, worsened, or stayed the same in recent decades, for instance, just over half (55%) believed that our housing stock has either remained the same or worsened, with just 41% believing it's improved, and 5% being unsure.

It was not all doom and gloom here, however. When asked if they expected more of their accommodation to meet the needs of residents aged over 85 in the next 10 years, for example, the majority (72%) said yes.

Also, when asked if they would support the introduction of a 'Good Home Agency' – a local authority body to ensure access to information and advice



"Do you believe the average age of your tenants is increasing or decreasing?"

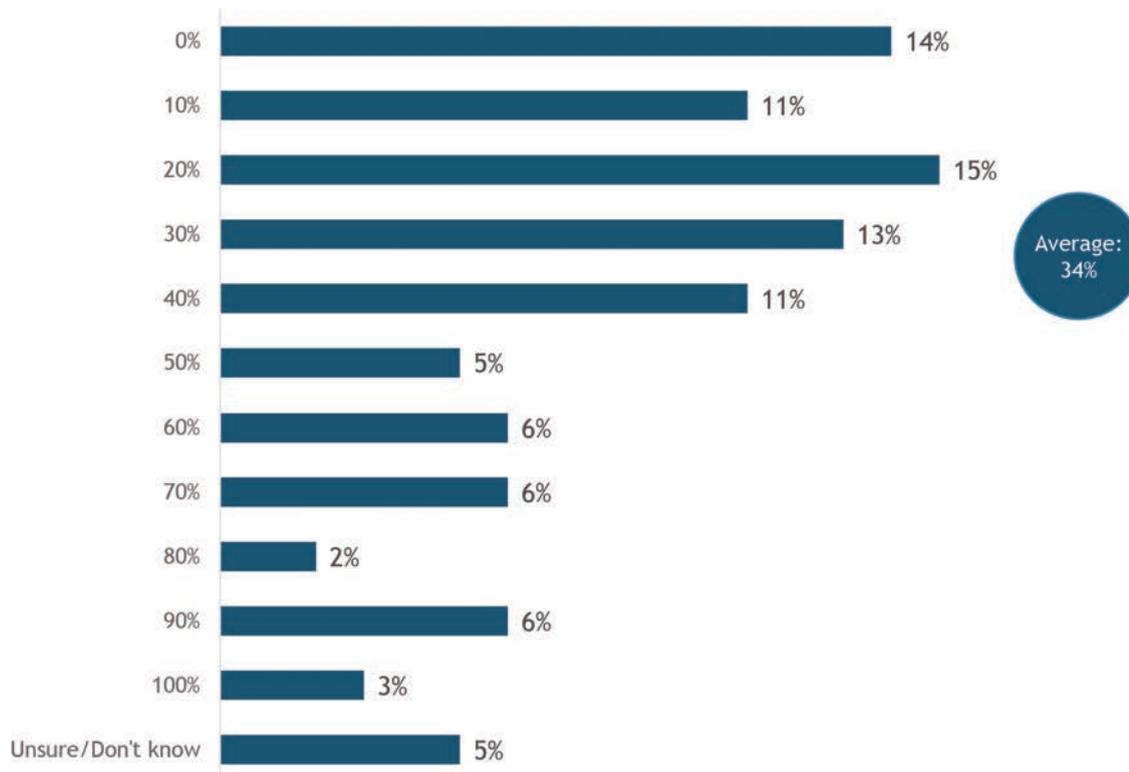
on the finance, home repairs and adaptations, particularly for those with older residents – 79% said yes.

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

WHAT WE CAN DO

How we deal with many of the problems this potentially unsustainable balance introduces is outside the scope of this whitepaper.

Despite this, there are in fact many aspects of an ageing population that housing professionals' can combat, with the capability to ensure at least that the



"What percentage of your tenants would you estimate are 65 or older?"



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Making small changes through home adaptations and aids such as grab rails and walk-in showers, alongside repairs, could also help to avoid or delay the use of NHS and social care services (Ageing Better, 2017)

housing stock will be suitable for this changing landscape, saving lives, as well as public costs.

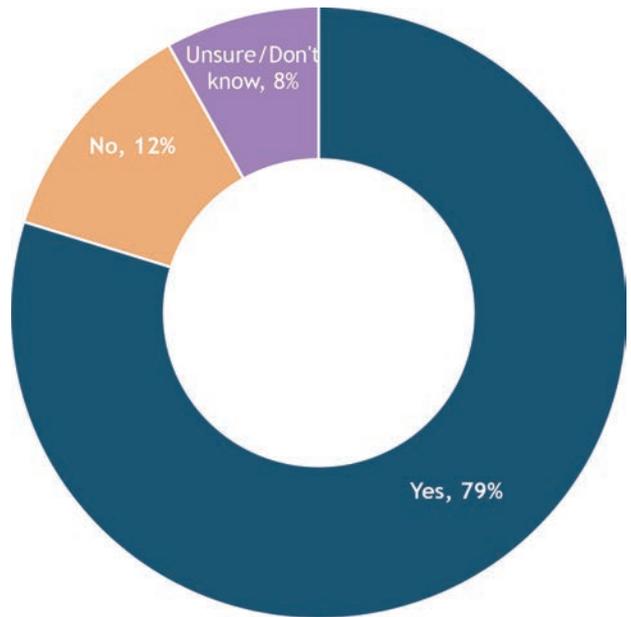
The success of these solutions are well-evidenced – the King’s Fund (2020), for instance, reported that every £1 spent on improving warmth in homes occupied by vulnerable households yielded £4 in health benefits, while every £1 spent on home improvements to reduce falls lead to £7.50 worth of savings for the health and care sector.

Further, making small changes through home adaptations and aids such as grab rails and walk-in showers, alongside repairs, could also help to avoid or delay the use of NHS and social care services (Ageing Better, 2017). The same report also made the case that installing home adaptations and undertaking home repairs in order to reduce falls on stairs could lead to savings of £1.62 for every £1 spent, and a payback period of less than eight months.

Fortunately, this appeared to be well understood by our audience. When asked if ‘the right’ products could help older tenants lead a happier life, for instance, 93% said yes, with just 6% saying no, and 1% being unsure. Then, when asked if those products could help older residents lead a safer life, 95% said yes, with 4% saying no, and again 1% being unsure. Slightly less popular, but still clear, when asked if such products could help older tenants actually live longer, 87% said yes, alongside 7% no and 6% unsure.

THE BARRIERS IN DOING SO

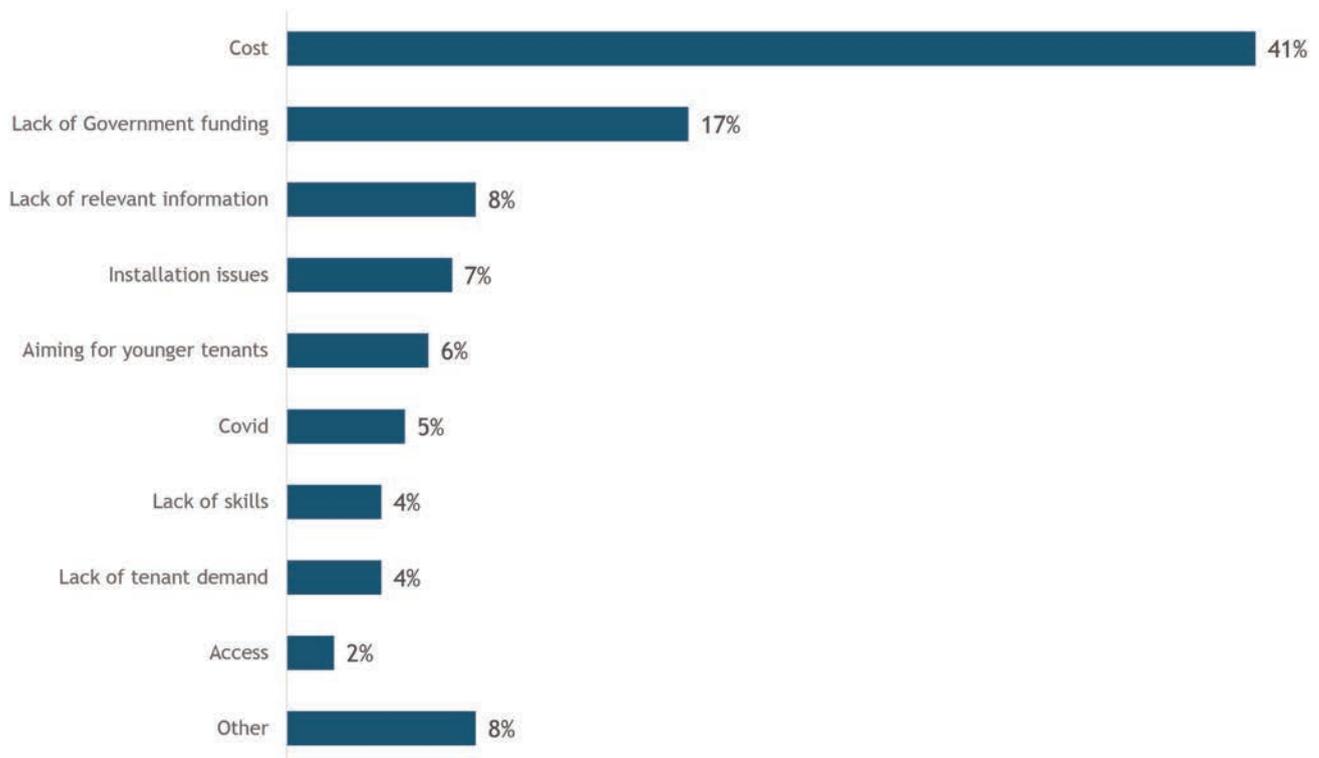
With such a strong understanding of the looming crisis, along with the benefits of installing the already available products to help mitigate it in terms of our



“Would you agree with the institution of a ‘Good Home Agency’ – a local authority body to ensure access to information and advice, finance, home repairs, adaptations etc?”

housing stock, it is clear that there must be barriers to the adoption of such products if landlords and housing professionals have not begun to do so already on a wide scale – the latter demonstrated in our results above.

In order to ascertain what these issues might be, we asked our respondents what the main barriers to the adoption of products and services that can aid older residents are. Allowing them to choose as many options as they liked, the issues listed were numerous – one common among almost half of our



“What are the main barriers to the installation of such products?”





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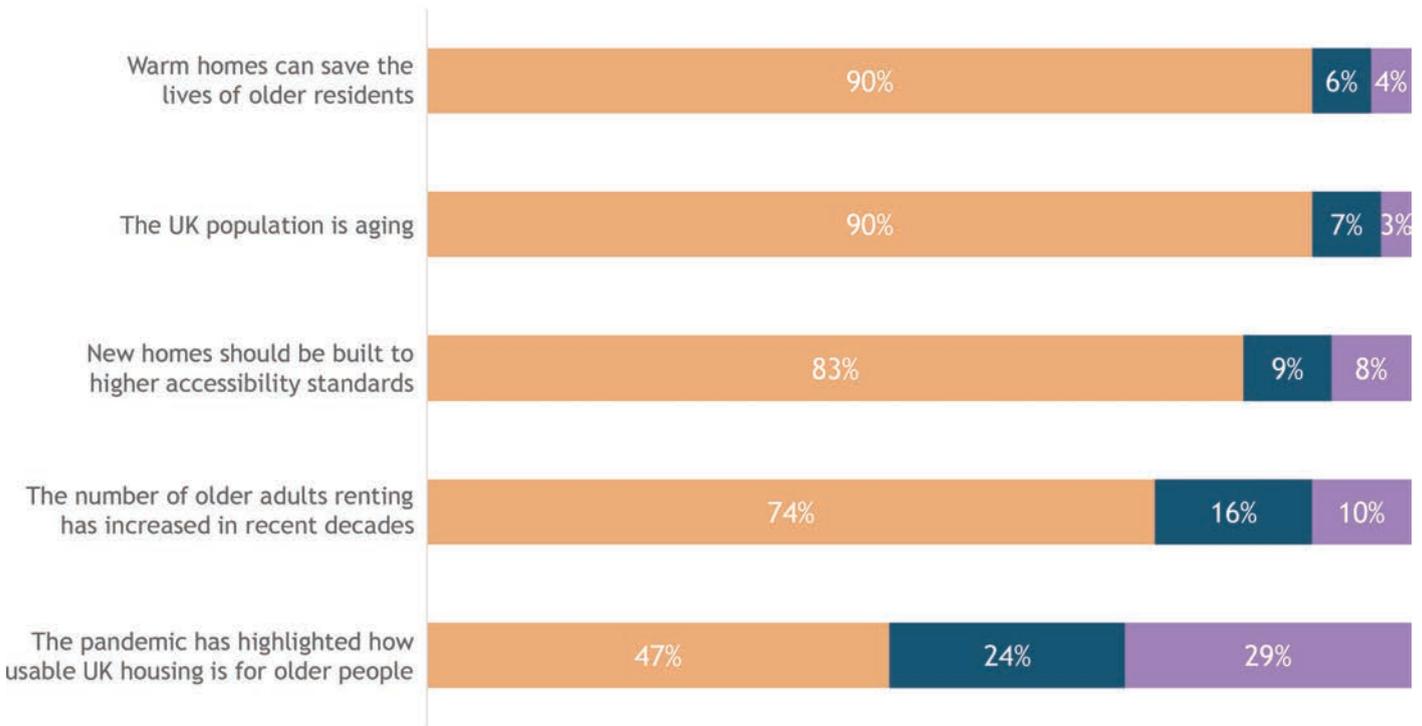
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"Do you believe the following statements are true or false?" True False Unsure/Don't Know

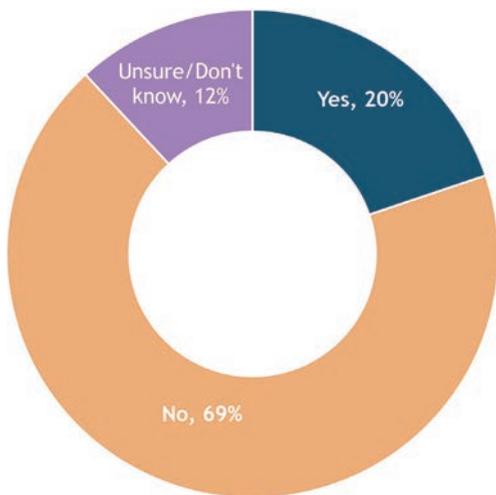
respondents, but most being more rare, showing little uniformity.

By a long stretch, the most common barrier – cited by 41% of our respondents – to the adoption of such products was, perhaps unsurprisingly, costs. In a similar vein, the next most popular option, jumping down significantly however, was a lack of Government funding, listed by 17% of our respondents.

Below these barriers, the remaining options chosen by our respondents were done so by less than 10%, which included, in descending order, a lack of relevant information (8%), installation issues (7%), aiming for younger tenants (6%), Covid (5%), a lack of tenant demand and skills (both at 4%), and access (2%).

CONCLUDING SUMMARY

Our survey has demonstrated that housing professionals are under no illusion – our population is ageing.



"Do you think the UK housing stock as a whole is prepared for the ageing population?"

Unfortunately, as confirmed by our respondents, the UK's housing stock is unprepared to deal with this at present, with just a small portion of the properties under our respondent's management – or the country's as a whole, for that matter – being suitable for older residents at present.

The silver lining here, however, is that our respondents almost unanimously agree that the right products can rise to this challenge, updating our housing stock to meet these needs, and save lives in the process.

When attempting to bridge the gap here – between the clear need for such products to be installed in our housing stock on a wider scale, and this having not happened already – two main barriers came front and centre: costs, and a lack of Government intervention.

It appears then, that by and large, until the Government is willing to involve itself here, little will change among housing professionals until the cost of doing so is lower than inaction.

It is unclear whether this time has arrived yet, or not – but the clock is ticking, and all the while, older residents will continue to suffer in unfit, unsafe homes.

For the full version of this whitepaper, please visit: www.housingmmonline.co.uk/white-papers

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We are grateful to our survey sponsors for their participation in this white paper research report:

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Additionally, several seating areas constructed from timber were also scheduled for replacement with aluminium benches constructed from AliDeck joists, brackets and decking boards.

Returning to base with the survey data, AliDeck were able to prepare a comprehensive plan for the supply of materials, with quantities of all components accurately calculated.

“A combination of our 30mm Senior Decking Board and 50mm Low Joist were specified to ensure the most effective solution, both in terms of practical utility and cost,” explained Richard. “Our Adjustable Pedestal Brackets and Spreader Plates provided the correct build-up height for the terrace and ensured the load did not interfere with the roof’s waterproof membrane.”

Recognising that the terrace area could be considered as two rectangular areas of 5.5m and 6m width, AliDeck proposed that decking boards be supplied in 6m stock lengths to neatly lay the boards to avoid the “patchwork” visual effect of the existing timber deck. Off-cuts could then be repurposed for use in the planters

and seats to minimise waste aluminium. Specification of 6m board lengths presented logistical challenges, though, specifically in how to transfer the material from delivery lorry to the 8th storey roof terrace. Unable to be carried up the internal stairs or to fit inside the elevator, it was agreed that to minimise resident disruption, a contract lift and crane solution would be used.

Arranging this involved liaison with local authorities for road closure and traffic management, so it became imperative that the project was operationally managed flawlessly, and that delivery was achieved on the scheduled day.

The one variable that couldn’t be accounted for was the weather. With a wind speed limit in place for lifting to this height, AliDeck arranged emergency back-up to divert the delivery and store the materials in the event that the lift was unable to go ahead. Fortunately, the weather was favourable on the day and the lift was successful.

The installation of the aluminium terrace deck was completed by AliDeck’s Approved Installer, Wrightweld Fabrications. The team at Wrightweld

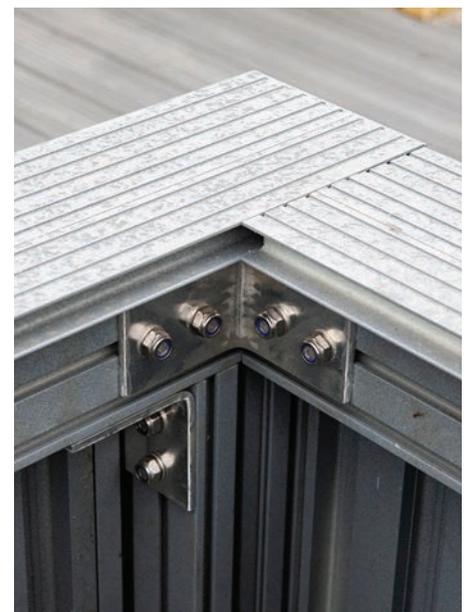
have been working with AliDeck for decking installations for a long time and are experts with their full range of decking systems. It was no surprise, then, that the removal and replacement of the terrace went exceedingly well, satisfying all of the goals of the project.

“All parties are delighted with the product, installation, and support from AliDeck throughout this project,” said Jon Fellows, Contract Manager at AD Construction Group.

It’s an excellent outcome for all stakeholders. The close collaboration between The Hyde Group, AD Construction Group, Wrightweld Fabrications, and AliDeck was key to the project’s success. This unified approach to working together for the right end result has helped to revitalise the living space of another major building for its residents.

Find out more about AliDeck and the solutions they can provide for decking refurbishment projects.

01622 534 085
www.alideck.co.uk



Yorkshire Housing Visits Aico Headquarters for a Product Development Day

Aico, the European Market Leader in Home Life Safety, recently welcomed Yorkshire Housing, winners of the Inside Housing Innovation Week award to their headquarters. Part of the prize for winning the Inside Housing Innovation Week Award was £10,000 and support from Aico to develop their innovation idea, with Aico recently conducting a product development session within their Centre of Excellence for Yorkshire Housing.

The visit provided a selection of informative sessions led by Aico colleagues, as well as a tour of Aico's Centre of Excellence. A Product Development session guided Yorkshire Housing attendees through Aico's development process from a hardware perspective, showcasing many of Aico's product development journeys, including Aico's connected home products and the benefits they can bring to both Housing Associations and their tenants.

These sessions highlighted the uses of Aico's Environmental Sensors and Ei1000G Gateway to the Multi-Sensor Alarms, emphasising that all products supplied by Aico are thoroughly tested and designed with end users in mind. Creating accurate and reliable home safety systems, that are beneficial to all who use them.

HomeLINK's Product Manager & DPO, Jordan Toulson walked Yorkshire Housing through



the development and innovation behind Aico's Internet of Things platforms, commenting: "It was great to welcome Yorkshire Housing to the CoE – as part of their prize for winning the Housing Innovation Week Award we showed them how we go about innovating both our hardware and software products, as well as some sneak-peaks at upcoming products and features."

The day concluded with a Product Feedback session, that enabled Aico to hear Yorkshire Housing's thoughts and opinions on their product development process and the products themselves. This offered insight into what housing associations want to see next when it comes to fire alarm safety systems and connected home offerings.

Lauren Hemmings, Yorkshire Housing's ICT Service Development Manager, reflected on their

visit to Aico: "It was fantastic when Yorkshire Housing won the first Inside Housing Innovation Award, including the opportunity to visit Aico at their Centre of Excellence and get a peak behind the scenes of how products are developed and tested. The day was informative, interactive (including a demo of how devices work in reality) and opened up a chance to collaborate on future ideas for products that will enable our customers to receive insights via emerging technology. I cannot wait to see how Yorkshire Housing's customers will benefit from the feedback that Aico and HomeLINK use for future innovative development ideas."

Aico's Product Development Manager, Michael Wright, comments: "We were delighted to welcome colleagues from Yorkshire Housing to Aico. It was great to be able to share in an involving and dynamic day, discussing all aspects of product innovation within housing to bring safer and healthier homes for residents."

For more about Yorkshire Housing and the services they offer within the affordable and social housing sector visit www.yorkshirehousing.co.uk.

Find out more about Aico's connected home offerings and home life safety systems that benefit so many housing associations and their tenants.

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Conceal and protect pipework with Arma metal boxing

With de-carbonisation and the move toward net zero goals prompting the increased use of low carbon district heating schemes, as well as air-source and ground source heat pump installations, Arma metal pipe boxing is the ideal solution to conceal and protect external pipework.

Already used in a range of social and affordable housing projects, Arma is a tough and versatile solution that helps increase security on applications where external pipework could be at risk from damage or vandalism, while also improving aesthetics and creating a uniform finish.

In addition, where fire sprinklers are installed in high rise residential blocks, Arma is also used to conceal interior runs of pipework where there are no sprinkler heads, such as in communal areas, as it is non-combustible and aids compliance with fire safety requirements.

All Arma boxing is bespoke manufactured from strong, lightweight and corrosion resistant aluminium, to the dimensions and requirement of individual projects, which helps simplify installation while enhancing the overall fit and finish.

Available with either a flange or angle fixing method, Arma's 'U' shaped channel profiles can be readily secured to external walls with suitable fixings, while lockable



hinged inspection doors can also be incorporated to ease routine inspection and pipework maintenance.

PPC finish in any RAL paint colour can be specified to contrast or blend in with wall colours and surroundings, while a range of dedicated pre-formed accessories is also available,

which includes internal and external corners, as well as joint covers and end caps. Encasement also offers a supply and install service on the Arma product range.

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www.encasement.co.uk



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Advanced's latest line of EasySafe low-voltage, LED emergency luminaires and exit signs offers higher performance and greater energy efficiency benefits than ever before. All EasySafe products are designed to work with LuxIntelligent, Advanced's emergency light testing system. Powered directly from the LuxIntelligent panel, Advanced's EasySafe devices require no local power supply. All devices are compatible with any existing LuxIntelligent luminaires and exit signs, enabling the easy installation of devices onto existing wiring to form a single, comprehensive intelligent emergency lighting system. The low-voltage lights offer quick and easy fitting and service, with a simple 'twist and click' installation onto a first-fix base. EasySafe has been designed to offer true scalability, with just one LuxIntelligent panel supporting up to 200 EasySafe devices alongside an additional 796 locally-powered devices. Switching to EasySafe's low-energy LED emergency lighting is quick, simple and will on average deliver 20 per cent energy efficiency savings compared with fluorescent alternatives.

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Changes to ventilation in existing homes

Leading ventilation manufacturer Vent-Axia has hosted a webinar aimed at the social housing sector on the recently launched Building Regulations. 'Domestic Retrofit Legislation and Guidance for Ventilation', which updated delegates on the recent changes to the legislation and explained how these changes will affect ventilation in domestic retrofit, especially when adding energy efficiency measures to existing housing stock. A recording of this informative webinar 'Domestic Retrofit Legislation and Guidance for Ventilation' is now available to view online.



0344 856 0590 www.vent-axia.com/building-regulations-webinars

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 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.



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Housing returns to Manchester this June

Housing, the Chartered Institute of Housing's annual conference – and what is said to be Europe's largest housing festival – returns to its usual timeline and will take place 28-30 June at Manchester Central.



In 2022, there is more to talk about than ever before: the levelling-up agenda; professionalism and skills; leadership and innovation; town-centre regeneration; partnerships for the delivery of more affordable housing; sustainability and retrofitting of old housing stock; delivery of safe, high quality housing; funding and driving the economic recovery.

All this sits under the umbrella of what drives us all across this sector: ensuring the needs of tenants and residents at the heart of our endeavours.

Housing will bring over 150 hours of CPD accredited content covering the economic landscape, building safety, homelessness, housing delivery, affordability, funding, climate change and lots more of relevance to everyone working in UK housing.

Government speaker, the minister of state for housing The Rt Hon Stuart Andrew MP is a confirmed speaker, who'll be joined by a range of industry leaders such as:

- Joanna Averley, chief planner, DLUHC
- Peter Baker, chief inspector of buildings, Health and Safety Executive

- Grace Carroll, head of home workplace and destination EV charging policy, Office for Zero Emission Vehicles, Department for Transport
- Kate Dodsworth, director of consumer regulation, Regulator for Social Housing
- Richard Blakeway, housing ombudsman
- Michael Wayne Bexton, director of carbon reduction, energy and sustainability, Nottingham City Council
- Ellie Horwitch-Smith, assistant director of route to net zero, Birmingham City Council
- Martin Brown, managing director of special projects, McCarthy Stone
- Alysha Burrell, assistant land and planning manager, Taylor Wimpey
- Georgina Patel, decarbonisation strategic lead, Halton Housing
- Andrew Yuill, director of strategic asset management, Flagship Group

OVERVIEW

Discover six stages of CPD accredited sessions on the show floor, including the Fringe Festival stage, Connected Futures stage, Unlock Net Zero stage, Knowledge stage, Insight stage, and Pfh Live.



There will be a strong focus on meeting net zero targets throughout the programme.

- Expert speakers on the Unlock Net Zero stage
- A climate change hackathon
- An exclusive funding guidance workshop with BEIS

Visitors will be able to network with the whole supply chain including the main procurement frameworks, key technology providers, contractors, and innovative product solutions.

The event will provide the opportunity to reconnect with colleagues, peers, key partners and friends at exclusive drinks receptions and networking events, in-depth breakfast briefings. Also, visitors will be able to share best practice during tailored round-tables.

Housing is the must-attend event for local authorities, housing associations, key partners and suppliers, government, housebuilders, and developers. Everyone will be united under one roof to discuss, debate, partner and learn. Housing has something for everyone!

Visitor passes are free to housing associations, local authorities, public sector, housebuilders, master developers, funders, architects, planners and BTR landlords, student accommodation, retirement living and extra-care providers. Fees will apply to other commercial organisations.

Book your place for Housing 2022 at: cihhousing.com/register

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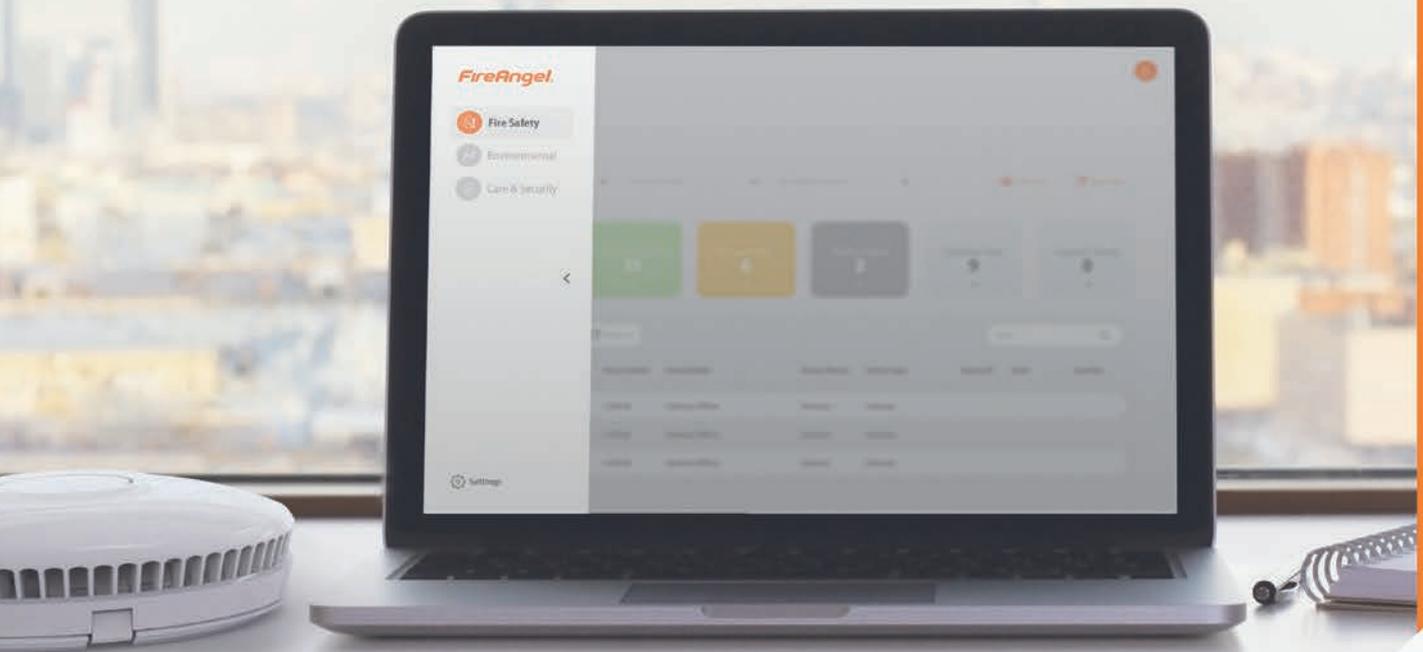
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YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO REQUEST A COMPLIMENTARY MOT ASSESSMENT

COME AND SPEAK TO US ON STAND D60

The certified assessment of tenanted properties is gathering pace with a number of housing clients seeing a clear difference with an MOT certifying the health of their properties. This new framework aids determining current and future stock conditions whilst upholding better decision making with noted issues resulting in a reduced 're-spend' by landlords.

David Bly, Director of Cornerstone Professional Services (UK) Ltd, the organization behind the Property MOT®, explains why Social Housing providers are requesting further details and sample MOT surveys aligned to this unique framework:



"The MOT survey demonstrates a user-friendly yet detailed algorithmic assessment of a structure alongside elements controlling the internal atmosphere with each assessment aligned to a property and its residents upholding bespoke outcomes. This approach aligns to the housing stock within the UK as a whole whereby a myriad of stock types, ages and periods plus geographical location and orientation can and do, affect the structural behaviour alongside the internal atmospheric management".

"In addition, recognizing the net zero journey is upon us, the assessment of each property includes its air permeability and appropriate measures to retain heat etc. That said, the current drive to 'Insulate Britain' cannot be a broad-brush affair rather an individual assessment to determine efficacy and anticipated outcomes such that, with a vastly differing structural type and age perspective across the UK, in the absence of specific assessment criteria, we will have to consider 'Ventilating Britain'."



With SMART Knowledge embedded in the MOT Application process, the best way to understand more about this opportunity and how your team could be more informed is by requesting complimentary MOT surveys for properties of your choice. This limited opportunity will allow you to learn more of your stock and how it is being utilized.

023 9200 1374 propertymot@cornerstone-ltd.co.uk

www.propertymot.uk



Free trial for social housing sector

Fibo, a leading manufacturer of tile-effect waterproof wall panels, is giving housing associations the chance to trial its wall panel system for FREE. For many years, tiles have been the go-to solution for bathroom installations and renovations, despite wall panels being the optimal solution. Recognising this, Fibo is offering private and public housing associations the chance to trial its range of waterproof wall panels for free on a bathroom project. The trial will enable both housing associations and their tenants to benefit from the many advantages the wall panel system offers. From an installation perspective, Fibo's wall panels are five times faster to install than tiles, as they can be fitted directly over existing tiles, plasterboard and studwork, and with only standard carpentry tools required – enabling housing providers to complete more bathroom renovations in a shorter period of time. What's more, with its Aqualock tongue and groove system, you can be sure of a waterproof, secure join every time! For tenants, they are provided with a bathroom that is long-lasting, easy to maintain, and contemporary in design. In fact, Fibo can offer panels that feature routed 'grout lines' to create the traditional look and feel of tiles. As the panels do not require grouting, it means the wall panels are more hygienic and easier to clean.

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Raising the roof for social housing retrofits

Stuart Nicholson of Marley discusses some of the ways a full roof system, incorporating solar PV, can have a positive impact on rising energy prices.



The social housing whitepaper outlined the Government's commitment to review the Decent Homes Standard to consider if it should be updated, including how it can better support the decarbonisation and energy efficiency of social housing. In February 2021, the Government announced it was commencing a two-part review of the Standard, which at the time of writing, was still ongoing.

With this in mind, local authorities and housing associations responsible for retrofitting and maintaining existing properties, are essential when it comes to transforming household energy efficiency performance and future sustainability.

SOLAR PV

Solar PV technology is tried and tested, readily available, and has become much more affordable in recent times. Indeed, such is the momentum behind the adoption of the technology, Solar Energy UK predicts the changes to Part L could lead to a five-fold increase in the number of new homes specified with solar technology.

Yet, when it comes to improving the efficiency of existing housing stock, solar PV can also play a significant role here too.

Solar PV technology is tried and tested, readily available, and has become much more affordable in recent times

Within the retrofit market, housing associations will understandably be looking at a way to further maximise the benefits of solar PV. One way to do this is to take a complete view of retrofit projects, so rather than examining housing stock roofing upgrades on an incremental basis, local authorities should view property stocks holistically and collectively by age.

When retrofit, maintenance or roof replacement is required for a volume of houses, it makes both economic and resource sense to incorporate technologies such as solar PV at that stage, as opposed to taking a piecemeal and operationally inefficient approach. This approach ensures housing associations can invest primary capital expenditure as effectively as possible so the most expensive cost items such as labour and scaffolding are incurred just once.



The Government estimates that the inclusion of solar panels on the roof can help reduce average electricity bills by £330 a year, helping to mitigate the cost pressures tenants will be feeling

The most up-to-date figures recently released on GOV.UK show that 13.2% of households in England are in fuel poverty. The spectre of even more homes adding to this figure is causing concern for many.

With tenants expecting social housing landlords to help them and tackle the energy challenge through a range of measures such as improved insulation, better build quality and the inclusion of low carbon, energy efficient technologies including solar PV, they should actively promote the message that sustainable energy generation can also lead to lower energy costs.

This will be welcomed by many tenants and can help create more solar PV advocates to support future implementation. And the effort is worth it, as the Government estimates that the inclusion of solar panels on the roof can help reduce average electricity bills by £330 a year, helping to mitigate the cost pressures tenants will be feeling.

THE BENEFIT OF THE FULL ROOFING SYSTEM

For ultimate peace of mind, however, housing associations should look to specify a full roof system from a single manufacturer.

By taking a considered technical view about integrated roofing solutions, housing associations can underpin their ongoing tenant duty of care and budgetary responsibilities, as well as being confident in the knowledge that the full roofing system specified will stand the test of time and deliver long-term lifecycle cost efficiencies.

Stuart Nicholson is roof systems director at Marley

MITIGATE ENERGY PRICE SHOCKS

It should also be acknowledged that solar PV solutions are more accepted now. This is helped by improvements to the final aesthetics viewed on the roofscape. Aside from better system visual appeal, local authorities and social housing providers are under pressure from tenants worried about the cost-of-living crisis and the current dramatic rise in energy prices.

Months from Part L and still much to do

Changes to Part L of the Building Regulations – which sets the standards for the energy performance and carbon emissions of new and existing buildings – come into force in just a few months' time. And, according to an exclusive survey of housebuilders, architects, and specifiers conducted by Marley, almost two thirds of respondents are 'unaware' of the changes outlined in Part L. The survey found that for those that expressed knowledge of the new Part L regulations, 'cost pressures,' 'a lack of skills to implement the changes,' and low levels of 'client understanding around sustainability' were viewed to be the biggest challenges. Questioned about confidence levels associated with the changes and their resulting responsibilities, 79% admitted they 'did not feel confident' or were 'unsure' about their understanding of the new responsibilities ahead of the impending revisions. Just over one in ten (14%) agreed that they felt 'confident'. Stuart Nicholson, Roof Systems Director for Marley, comments: "Just a matter of weeks away from the introduction of changes to Part L as part of the roadmap towards 2025's Future Homes Standard, and it appears that awareness and subsequent confidence around the impact of this important milestone among housebuilders, architects, and specifiers is currently low." For more information from Marley, or the ways Marley SolarTile® can help housebuilders meet Part L changes, visit www.marley.co.uk/solar

01283 722588 www.marley.co.uk/blog/a-sustainable-supply-chain-on-the-road-to-net-zero



Setcrete LVT subfloor preparation system

Subfloor preparation products manufacturer, Setcrete has created a subfloor preparation system for luxury vinyl tile (LVT) installations to optimise both the aesthetics and longevity of the flooring. The system comprises Setcrete High Performance levelling compound, Setcrete Acrylic Primer and Setcrete Rapid Set DPM.

The huge increase in popularity of luxury vinyl tiles is a result of the plethora of styles and designs that are now available – often mimicking other materials such as stone and timber – while offering long-term durability and practicality.



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Timesaving solutions for flooring installations

Flooring installations in social housing settings often face pressure to be completed as quickly as possible. Fortunately, certain processes and combinations of innovative new products can dramatically cut the time this takes. Neil Sanders from F. Ball and Co. Ltd., offers solutions for installing floorcoverings in time-critical situations.

More than ever before, flooring contractors face pressures to complete flooring installations to ever-shorter timescales without compromising on finished results. This is frequently because the pace of modern construction leaves a small window in which to install floorcoverings, or areas can only remain off limits for short periods. In these situations, it is useful to be aware of procedures and product innovations that can speed up each step in the floor covering installation process – from making sure the floor is smooth enough to receive floorcoverings to finally securing floorcoverings using an adhesive.

MOISTURE MANAGEMENT

The first step in any flooring installation should be to check that the subfloor is suitably sound, smooth and dry, including conducting a moisture test to determine subfloor moisture levels. Where a moisture test indicates that relative

humidity (RH) levels within the subfloor are above 75% (65% if wood floor coverings are to be installed), a moisture management solution will be required to prevent floor failure.

For these situations, single coat waterproof surface membranes are available that will fully cure in as little as three hours to isolate residual construction moisture or rising damp where RH values are up to 98%.

Two-coat systems can create a barrier against residual construction moisture where there are RH values of up to 95% in less than two hours. The first coat requires 15-20 minutes curing time; the second requires a further 30 minutes to cure.

LEVELLING COMPOUNDS

A levelling compound is recommended to create a perfectly smooth base for the receipt of floorcoverings. Levelling compounds, in particular, have seen

significant reductions in drying times, the result of advancements in cement technology. Nowadays, the fastest setting levelling compound on the market is walk-on hard from 30 minutes and allows textile and resilient floor coverings to be installed from as little as 45 minutes after application. Self-levelling properties also make them easy to apply, with minimal trowel work.

Where flooring installations are part of a refurbishment and old adhesive residues, such as bitumen and carpet tile tackifiers, are present after the removal of old floorcoverings, contractors can save time by using a levelling compound that has been specially formulated for use over old adhesive residues. This eliminates the need for mechanical preparation. When used in these situations, it is not essential to prime the subfloor before the application of this levelling compound, saving further time. It also means contractors can use the same product in situations where newly installed subfloors and areas with old adhesive residues present are next to each other.

ADHESIVE SELECTION

Once the levelling compound has cured, the contractor can then select a suitably fast-working adhesive to install appropriate floorcoverings. The choice of adhesive will often be determined foremost by what type of floor coverings are to be installed and where, but there are options for when timesaving is a priority.

Innovations in adhesive technology have also enabled the development of hybrid temperature tolerant pressure sensitive vinyl floorcoverings, which can be used to install vertical flooring accessories, such as skirting, capping and coving, providing an alternative to contact adhesives. This will save contractors time where vinyl floor coverings are taken up the wall, such as in wetrooms.

LOW-HAZARD SOLUTIONS

When it is required to install flooring in social housing settings that remain open to tenants, contractors should be sure to select a low odour product to avoid any unpleasant smells that could cause irritation to residents.

Advances in adhesive technology mean that most adhesives are now formulated to be solvent-free and low odour. Contractors will find solvent-free,



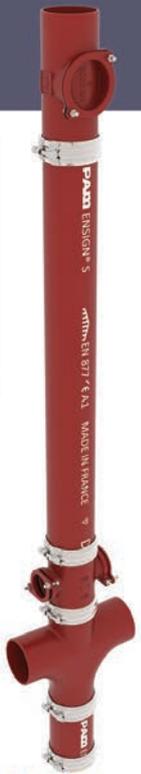
low odour adhesives that are also fast-drying, for use with a wide variety of floorcoverings. These adhesives have been developed with a range of other specialist properties, including the ability to be applied over under floor heating systems, on vertical surfaces and in areas subject to extreme temperature fluctuations.

CHECKING COMPATIBILITY

To prevent a substandard finish or even complete floor failure, contractors should always ensure that adhesives are compatible with the chosen floorcoverings. To do this, they can consult the floorcovering manufacturer's instructions.

F. Ball offers a Recommended Adhesives Guide (RAG®) which lists adhesives recommended for use with over 6,000 floorcoverings, produced by over 200 manufacturers. A continually updated version of which is available on the website and as a free app.

Neil Sanders is technical director at F. Ball and Co. Ltd

The drainage system within a building has a fundamental impact on the quality of life for the occupants. Therefore a system which leaks after decades of service will eventually need replacing.

The question is when is the best time to change and what is the right product to reinstall.






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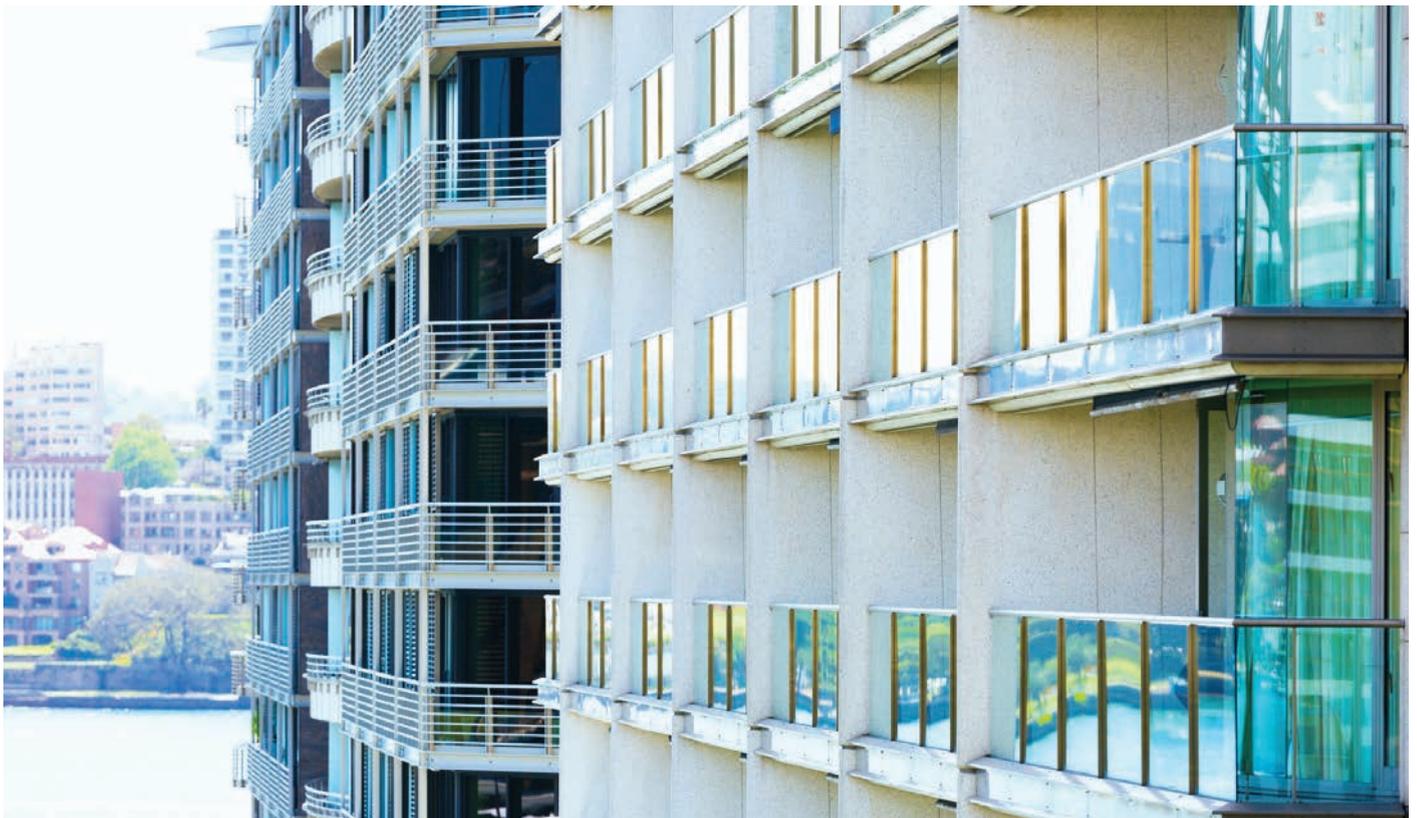
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Bridging the funding gap for social housing retrofits

The social housing sector is faced with a retrofit funding deficit of over £90bn, and so far, government grants and private sector investments are falling short. Tim Meanock of Tallarna explains how an ecosystem approach overcomes this challenge to deliver affordable warmth that pays for itself.



To meet the UK's 2050 net zero targets, social housing providers must undertake the enormous task of retrofitting over four million homes.

Not only does this involve building work of considerable magnitude, it also comes with an eye-watering price tag of £104bn. That's almost the equivalent of paying rent for all social and private tenants in the UK over a 15-month period.

While the government has mandated such decarbonisation work, their financial contribution amounts to less than 10% of the total cost. The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) and ECO grants combined only cover £7.8bn of the required finance. Obtaining private investment, therefore, is essential. However, this remains hard to achieve in a way that is mutually acceptable to both parties. Current financing options require security against assets (such as social homes themselves), as opposed to the cash flows generated from retrofits (savings on the bill). This is too risky for most landlords. And the reason for these terms? Investors' lack of confidence in retrofit outcomes.

BRIDGING THE UNCERTAINTY GAP

Bridging the private sector's uncertainty gap requires data and proof-points. One technology that plays a vital role in this early in the project development

cycle is thermal imaging. It helps establish objective energy baselines without human bias or limitations.

Infrared thermal imaging surveys provide an accurate insight into properties' energy efficiency issues – many of which would otherwise go undiscovered. These include missing or inadequate insulation, draughts, porous brickwork, and waterproofing issues.

Thermal imaging can be combined with open data sources and statistical analysis on archetypal building performance and enhanced by artificial intelligence (AI) to provide a clear retrofit pathway. This empowers social housing providers to understand which homes need to be addressed first, what measures carry the most risk, and whether a project is financially viable. Doing this early on optimises the balance between energy, carbon, and bill reductions.

Accurately predicting project outcomes is a key part of the decision-making process. Social housing providers need to know the ratio of cost-to-savings, what cash flows will look like post-retrofit, and how to structure projects across an entire portfolio. Only then will they be able to make the right choices.

But providers' decisions can only be as good as the data they rely on. And, as investors are acutely aware, expectations are often different to reality. This is where risk quantification comes in. By using AI to understand the likelihood

Infrared thermal imaging surveys provide an accurate insight into properties' energy efficiency issues – many of which would otherwise go undiscovered.

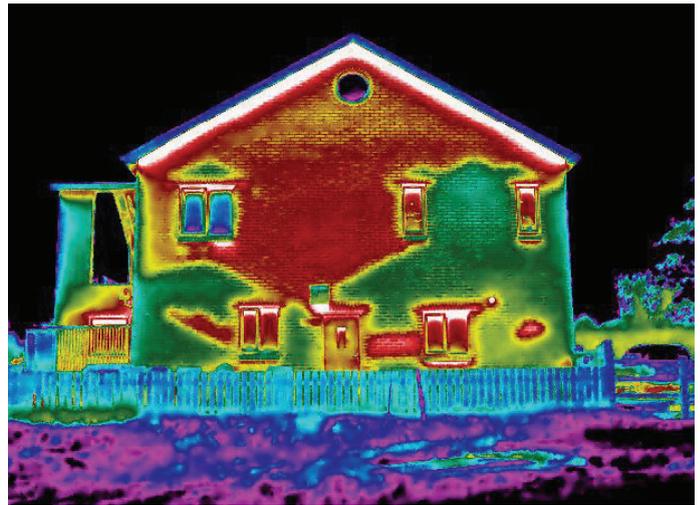
and magnitude of retrofit underperformance, project outcomes are guaranteed. This allows landlords to align retrofit measures with what will work in practice. And guaranteeing retrofits' energy savings reassures private investors as well. Should technology defect or a shortfall in bill savings occur, they know they will be compensated.

BALANCING THE BOOKS

For ESG funders, insurance policies function as a safety net. Not only do they backstop underperformance, but they transform retrofits into financial assets. In other words, Energy Savings Insurance translates a piece of building modelling into a concept investors can understand and get behind. The result? Access to institutional funding at a higher loan-to-cost ratio which has the capability of being off-balance.

Blending private and public funding extends social housing providers' existing budgets and makes deep retrofits possible. By connecting the worlds of data analytics, engineering, insurance, and finance throughout the retrofit process, stakeholders can get on the same page, working towards the same pre-defined goals, in possession of the adequate funds. Such collaboration offers a streamlined approach to financially, socially, and environmentally sustainable retrofits.

While third-party funding enables project execution, it ultimately needs to be repaid. Using a 'pay-as-you-save' model, housing associations use a percentage of the realised energy bill savings to service this third-party capex. Up to 25% of the savings stay with residents from day one, providing insulation against future price hikes. This increases to 100% once repayment ends.



AN ECOSYSTEM APPROACH IN PRACTICE

Joining the dots between each stage of the retrofit planning cycle is known as an ecosystem approach. Described above, this method can be seen in action in the partnership between climate tech company, Tallarna, and net-zero pathfinder, IRT Surveys. Their integration enables social landlords to identify, design, insure, fund and contract retrofit projects in one place. Crucially, they draw together the worlds of private and public finance – showcasing available grants and institutional funds to bridge the retrofit deficit.

If the social housing sector is going to reach its net zero mandates, it needs to get all building stakeholders around the same table, speaking the same language. Only then will retrofitting Britain's 4 million social homes go from an uncertain aspiration to a funded reality.

Tim Meanock is CEO of Tallarna




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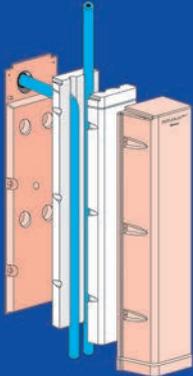


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Improving Home Life Safety, Aico Launches AudioLINK+

AudioLINK+ is now faster, quieter, and more reliable than ever before. The second iteration of Aico's award-winning AudioLINK technology makes it easy to access real-time data from alarms via the free AudioLINK+ app.

AudioLINK+ extracts the same data as AudioLINK, but does this quicker and quieter than before to reduce disturbance and does not affect any other functionality of alarms. With the average time to take a report taking between 4-7 seconds, AudioLINK+ technology makes getting real-time data from Smoke and Carbon Monoxide alarms more efficient – saving time, money and lives.

The AudioLINK+ app is backwards compatible, meaning AudioLINK alarms currently installed do not need to be replaced to utilise the new technology and will work with the new version of the app. However, users will need to update to the latest version of the app to download reports from any AudioLINK+ alarms installed within their properties.

The App generates a simple to read colour-coded report giving information on a range of alarm data including; alarm activations, sensor status, alarm testing information, battery and back up cell status, recorded Carbon Monoxide (CO) levels within CO alarms, and advice on dust contamination levels within the 3000 series alarms.



All of this information can be emailed directly from the phone or tablet to one or multiple addresses, being sent as a PDF report for the property or exported as a .csv file for simple integration with housing management and maintenance systems. Additional information can be added to the report to help link it to a specific alarm and to communicate important and helpful information. There is no change in the pricing

of alarms sold by Aico, just an improvement in the technology offered within the alarms. AudioLINK+ data extraction technology is built-in to all Aico's Carbon Monoxide alarms such as the Ei208, and the entire 3000 series alarm range.

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Hurst sets the standard for FD30 with high-performance fds fire door system

A high-performance GRP fire door system is the latest offering from one of Britain's leaders in the field. With an experienced, dedicated team, extensive customer support, and an uncompromising commitment to quality, Hurst Doors has earned itself a reputation for excellence over the past 25 years.

Now, by offering the new fds fire door system, it looks set to continue that legacy.

All stages of the fds supply chain, up to and including the doorset manufacturer, are third-party certified to the BM Trada Q-Mark certification scheme.

The result of significant investment and months of rigorous testing and expert consultation, the fds FD30 fire doorset system has been subjected to meticulous independent auditing, as have Hurst Doors' own manufacturing capabilities.



The fds GRP composite fire door system has undergone in excess of 30 bi-directional tests featuring 60 individual door sets, undertaken in 3 independent accredited European countries' test Laboratories and achieving an average of 45 minutes integrity (equating to 50% over run of the 30 minute pass criteria).

Tested to the more demanding EN1634-1:2014 European standard it satisfies our UK National Test standard method and delivers compliance to UK building Regulations for fire door safety.

Testing has been completed on both solid and glazed door options, with or without overhead fanlights. Testing has also recently been successfully completed on glazed side panels, with plans to introduce these imminently.

Hurst Doors Sales Director Mark Atkinson comments: "Recent years have seen Britain address its attitudes to fire safety following the Grenfell tragedy.

"Today, the industry demands a GRP Composite fire door system that can consistently demonstrate compliance and dependable performance, and this can only be achieved through bi-directional testing and third-party certification.

"In addition, it is also crucial to have that transparency of the supply chain, in order to provide full traceability of the product.



"That's exactly what the fds fire door system has been designed to provide, and we're delighted with the results."

Dave Walker, Technical Director of Distinction Doors, and the brainchild of the fds fire door system, commented: "We're delighted Hurst Doors are part of our trusted and accredited network to manufacture the fds system.

"We will be supporting them in educating the market about the benefits of the fds GRP Composite fire door system and working closely with them to introduce the product to local authorities, housing associations, house builders and developers."

Hurst manufacture fds fire doors in 10 door styles, with or without an overhead fanlight, and in a variety of colours.

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Effective passive fire protection

Playing a fundamental role in the long-term safety of their properties and their occupiers, building managers have a clear responsibility to ensure effective passive fire protection methods are in place, as Graham Laws of Siderise Insulation explains.

Just over a year ago, the Fire Safety Act 2021 was introduced into UK law. It clarified that the people who have control over multi-occupancy residential buildings — such as developers, owners, and managers — are ultimately responsible for reducing fire risk in the building's structure, external walls and common parts. A crucial aspect of this is ensuring that appropriate passive fire protection measures have been specified, installed, and that information about what they are, how they perform, and where they have been used is preserved for the property's lifetime.

However, as a solution that is usually hidden behind the facade long before building management takes over, how can owners and operators both demonstrate the passive fire safety of their building and make informed decisions on how any future remedial or upgrade works should be approached to maintain that level of safety?

WHY IS PASSIVE FIRE SAFETY IMPORTANT?

Passive fire protection is a legal requirement for both domestic and non-domestic properties under Approved Document B of the Building Regulations (Fire Safety). It is incorporated into the building structure and works by limiting the spread of flames, heat and smoke to create areas of manageable risk through the use of fire-resistant materials and gap-filling measures. This is known as compartmentation and serves to keep the fire in one location, protecting escape routes, making it easier for the fire service to gain control, and preventing further damage.

Solutions encompass an array of products, from fire doors to cavity barrier and firestops installed within the wall cavities which can, if left unprotected, act as a chimney for fire to spread into other building compartments.

As its name suggests, passive fire protection does not need any input to work, but it must be specified and installed properly to work.

ENSURING QUALITY SPECIFICATION AND INSTALLATION

Exactly what fire protection measures need to be taken will be dictated by the specifics of the building and the project. However, like any building product, passive fire solutions should be appropriate for the application. Specifiers or engineers should have access to clear and accurate product data to effectively assess their suitability and any key performance claims should be backed with third-party testing. This provides unbiased assurance that the performance stated by the manufacturer is what it will achieve in the event of a fire. Often, a manufacturer's technical service teams can also help to provide guidance on the best solutions for a particular project or issue.

As these systems are hidden away within the building's construction, it can be difficult for building safety assessors to pick up on faulty installations. Therefore, it is important installation is undertaken by competent and skilled contractors who can demonstrate their commitment to accurate workmanship. Manufacturers can often offer comprehensive technical and site services and training, as well as options to audit the installation of their products.

Inspections are a regular requirement for many projects. However, with tight deadlines to meet, project teams often rely on the Building Control inspection which typically takes place when the passive fire protection products have been covered by the facade. While some projects may need or prefer an in-person



Fire safety must be of the highest priority for all kinds of residential building owners and managers

inspection, manufacturer-developed inspection apps can allow for this extra layer of assurance without the added time and hassle of arranging an in-person visit from their site services.

Typically only suitable for standard systems, they can allow users to capture images as each area/element is installed and update the data input fields using their smartphone or tablet. The app then immediately turns this into a comprehensive report which can be reviewed offsite by a technical team to ensure the installation meets recommendations and quickly identify if any areas

Remote tools can help ensure high quality installation and provide a record of what has been installed on the building

need remedial actions. Additionally, the report generated by the app provides a valuable visual record of hidden elements of a construction once the build is complete.

IDENTIFICATION

Where a manufacturer inspection has taken place, either by app or in-person, the final report can be included in the handover information, providing a clear record of exactly what's in the building and how it was installed – maintaining that all important 'golden thread' of information.

There are also new digital tools being brought to the market which will make this process much easier in the future. In recent years, the importance of accurate and accessible product data in construction has been made increasingly clear. While much of the focus has been on specification, installers and building owners also need access to this valuable information both onsite and during future works. Digital identification platforms, such as BSI Identify, can provide a straightforward solution to product traceability.

Dedicated QR codes are added to products which are linked to BSI UPINs (unique persistent identification numbers) which are applied to every construction product within the BSI Identify database. When scanned, this will take the user to the exact product data supplied by the manufacturer, attributable to the day it was manufactured, whether that was yesterday or a decade later. This ensures that anyone can easily find all the correct product information relating to specification, testing, installation, and maintenance – including historic performance credentials, safety data and more.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SAFER FUTURE

Passive fire protection is an essential of any building's fire risk management



plan. By ensuring you understand the importance of passive fire protection and what to look for when managing properties, you can ensure your building is continually compliant and occupants are safe.

Graham Laws is technical director from Siderise Insulation

Aico launch City & Guilds Assured qualification

Aico have expanded their educational offering with the launch of their City & Guilds Assured qualification on Domestic Fire & Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarm Systems.

As the European Market Leader in home life safety, Aico place education at the forefront, promoting best practice and delivering a range of free training for their supply chain across the UK. To further support their customers, Aico are proud to introduce their City & Guilds Assured qualification – a global quality benchmark that recognises excellence in training and learning.

The qualification is a continuation of Aico's FIA CPD-accredited Expert Installer training, which provides installers with the essential knowledge to correctly install Aico Fire and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Systems and Environmental Sensors.

To provide participants with a detailed understanding, this one-day course, AA2426-01, focuses on the design, installation, maintenance, interconnection, siting, and electrical connection of Aico domestic alarm systems. The qualification has a mixture of theory-based and practical sessions and concludes with a multiple-choice assessment, that must be successfully completed to earn the City & Guilds qualification.

Duncan Orr, Regional Specification Manager for NI & IOM and Supply Chain Education Lead comments "At Aico we are passionate about education. It is a cornerstone of our business, with tens of thousands of participants having received our award-winning, FIA



accredited, Expert Installer training. In an ever changing and fast-moving landscape, the City & Guilds assured AA2426-01 course builds on this foundation and takes our educational offering to the next level. It is our privilege to bring this City and Guilds Assured qualification to the market and continue to promote the raising of standards, knowledge, and competence in the life safety industry."

AA2426-01 will officially launch on Friday 6th May, with the first session taking place at Aico's Centre of Excellence in Oswestry and delivered by a member of their expert Technical Team.

To be eligible for the City & Guilds Assured qualification, participants must have completed Aico's Expert Installer training and be a member of the Aico Installer Community – a connected online platform built to support Expert Installers.

To find out more and to sign-up, please visit www.aico.co.uk/our-services/domestic-fire-co-alarm-systems

To find out more about Aico Expert Installer, please visit www.aico.co.uk/our-services/expert-installer-training

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Connected housing

James Gray of Videx Security explores the role that the internet of things (IoT) plays in social housing access control and door entry.

The Internet of Things (IoT) has moved on from a new phenomenon to an everyday technology with the number of connected devices worldwide increasing by nearly 21 million in 2020. In the last five years alone, the IoT has contributed to over £300m to the UK economy, highlighting its worth to populations and businesses alike.

Given the wide range of benefits it provides to end users and businesses, it's no surprise that IoT is being used across every sector, including the housing sector, where it provides specific advantages to social housing in particular.

Social housing developments are often home to the most vulnerable people – from elderly people who need 24/7 homecare support to those living with disabilities or impairments. IoT, in a nutshell, makes their homes safer. There are many various examples of applications we can reference, from devices detecting leaks on pipes before they become an issue, to smoke detectors being able to call the fire service directly.

From an entry and access control point of view, there are many advantages that IoT technology provides. On a very simple level from an end user perspective, it enables residents to open their door from a mobile device or talk

Given the wide range of benefits it provides to end users and businesses, it's no surprise that IoT is being used across every sector, including the housing sector, where it provides specific advantages to social housing in particular

to a visitor without authorising entry to ensure they know who they are. It also means they can answer calls to their door when not at home too.

Due to the growing infrastructure with regards to IP networking and smart devices, we are also experiencing a large trend in remote management and a more detailed understanding with regards to fault finding and diagnosis with access control and door entry. Social housing in particular has seen a large



growth in the use of smart systems with a focus on fault finding/reporting and remote management, saving on time, money and also reducing carbon emissions. For example, if a management company has to amend the current list of residents for a certain property, in the past they may have had to arrange for an engineer to visit site, to then find they don't have the correct key for the maintenance cupboard, whereas with an IoT smart solution, they can program a new key fob there and then within the office and have the new key fob sent out to a secure person or location where the tenant collects it. The same applies when a resident needs to be removed or their entry authorisation edited.

Another great use for IoT entry systems is if there is a fault on the system, watch dogs within the hardware can normally report issues back to a central hub. This saves time on site with fault finding and can also give a good indication on what parts, if any, are faulty. With the ability to send and receive information about live or stored events, for example who used what key fob when and on what entrance point, can be sent back to a central hub. Usually alerts or email notifications can also be sent for further information which can inform an operator if a fire door is being propped open, for instance. The operator can now see in real time who the last person to unlock the door in question was so that they can be contacted.

Another benefit results with the use of alarm inputs and IP or hardwired systems with an IP interface. All local alarms can be received and transmitted back to a central hub. So, for example, if a property has fire, intruder and flood alarms, these would all have to be received and managed via various means, whether a mobile device, text or paging system. If these are then networked, all alarm signals can be managed from one point and via one operator. This should be a top priority for emergency alarms so that a call can be placed to the resident to check if the alarm is legitimate or false in order to prevent an unnecessary emergency callout.

IoT developments are continuing at pace which can only continue to bring even more benefits to residential living, helping to provide safe and convenient access control management to social housing properties and their residents.

James Gray is national sales manager at Videx Security

Residential living: GSM technology powers highly customised, secure and effective door entry

The Great Northern Tower is an impressive 72-metre (236 ft) high-rise tower block tailor made for residential living. With 25 floors, it's home to 287 self-contained apartments in the heart of Manchester. An effective door entry system plays a critical role in convenient, secure and flexible access control as well as the safety and wellbeing of residents. The tower block has a concierge service too that also requires specific authorisation for entry into and exit out of the building.

The building was completed in 2007 and fitted with a door entry system that, 15 years later, was hugely outdated and causing issues for entry into the tower block by residents, visitors and for concierge use too.

The existing system was very complicated, and visitors had to look up a flat number on the system and then get a three-digit code to dial. This often led to people, from visiting friends and family to tradespeople and delivery drivers, dialling the wrong apartments and calling the wrong people. There also needed to be a specific concierge function on the system that could alert the main reception desk of a tradesperson coming to visit, or a parcel being delivered, for a resident who wasn't home.

Replacing the system with a bespoke solution but retaining the existing access control fob reader



aspect, all fitted within a glass wall, was highly complex. Installer Access Ability UK Ltd opted to fit a Videx 4G GSM system that was highly customised, integrated perfectly with the existing fob reader but solved the key entry challenges residents and the concierge team were facing.

Barry Kimber, a director at Access Ability UK Ltd, said: "By installing a GSM intercom system with a VX2200 panel it meant residents could receive notification of someone at the entrance straight to their phone, whether they were home or not. For example, they could be on holiday or

at work but receive a call to say a delivery had arrived, grant entry to the courier driver who can leave the parcel with concierge for safe keeping until the resident returns."

"The GSM powered intercom system also enables the concierge team to authorise entry for visitors to deliver parcels or fix appliances for example, when the resident is away. Conveniently, the intercom is very easy to adapt and modify and the concierge team can programme the system both locally and remotely when flat residence changes as people move into and out of the tower block."

Alongside the GSM technology, Videx also supplied a highly customised entry panel that was not only specifically manufactured for The Great Northern Tower, to sit within a very difficult-to-navigate glass wall, and feature the existing third-party access control reader, but also carried bespoke engraving too. For example, the block numbers are clearly identified as well as the concierge service button.

The Videx 4G GSM system is extremely flexible and provides the utmost convenience and security to users. Programming can be done via apps, text messages and PC software both local and remotely.

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