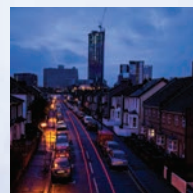


# HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

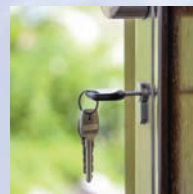
OCT/NOV 2022



Rent cap for social housing tenants

Decent homes standard for private sector

£2bn programme to combat rough sleeping



Housing Ombudsman re-appointed

Council misses thousands of safety checks

## Design out crime

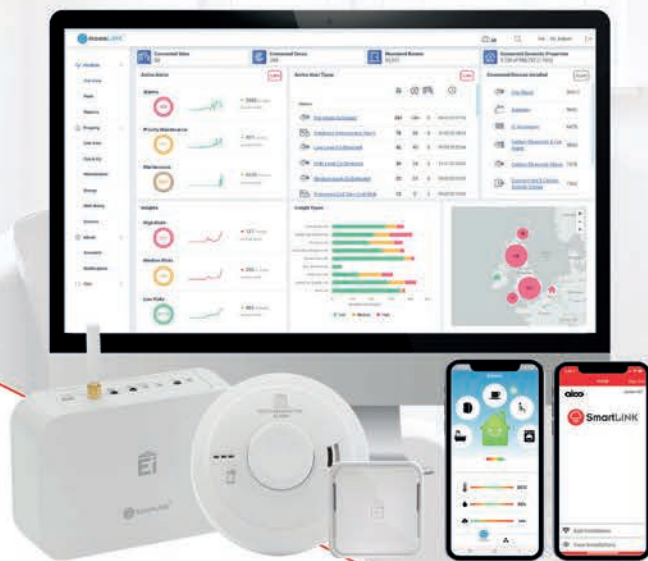
Matthew McTighe from CAME UK discusses the importance of Secured By Design (SBD) and their role in securing developments around the UK. See report inside





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# Oct/Nov 22

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## Editor's comment

# A chilly winter awaits for tenants and landlords alike



Patrick Mooney,  
News Editor

Probably the least surprising outcome of the Conservative leadership contest was that within the new Prime Minister's first cabinet we saw another change in the Housing Secretary. The speed of change is incredible and on this occasion Simon Clarke became the fourth politician to hold this post within 12 months. Whatever the views and policies of the new Housing Secretary, he faces a daunting set of challenges. Housing barely featured in the leadership contest, except in terms of whether the candidates supported the use of centrally set house building targets and whether they were prepared to sanction building on the Green Belt or not, but there is some optimism that Mr Clarke will actively support work to improve the insulation of the nation's housing stock and reduce our reliance on expensive, carbon based fuels for our energy needs.

It is unlikely he will be able to implement Green changes in time for this coming Winter, but there are high expectations that Mr Clarke will be a strong advocate for retrofitting within the cabinet – assuming there is still money available to fund such largescale investment. Dealing with the cost of living and energy price crisis has been the dominant feature of the national agenda. While some of the pain may have been averted for many households with the announcement of an energy price cap, there are still an awful lot of people who will be going cold over the coming months. In fact the End Fuel Poverty Coalition pressure group estimates that if the energy price cap is frozen at around £2,500, 6.9 million UK households will still be in fuel poverty this winter - up from 4.6 million last winter. That's equivalent to roughly a quarter of the population.

The introduction of price caps is becoming a more popular tactic, even though it is not something we associate with Liz Truss's economic beliefs that were revealed during the hustings. The Government had previously declared it was working to limit the size of the hit on social housing tenants by imposing a cap of 5 per cent on next year's rent increases, rather than the freeze which some tenant representatives in the sector were asking for – but it is not considering taking similar action for either private sector tenants, or shared owners. It has been pointed out by many others that tenants on low incomes need and deserve financial assistance irrespective of who their landlord is. Private tenants are already paying higher rents than those who live in social housing, while shared owners have to pay rent on the portion of the property they do not own. The rent on the unsold equity will in all probability go up by a double-digit percentage increase unless their landlords forgo some of the rent increase they can charge.

The rent cap will require social landlords to trim their budgets by considerable sums which will be a difficult task for all concerned. The estimated hit on landlords' budgets is projected to be £1.3 billion next year and a whopping £7.3 billion over the next five years. And this comes at a time when logically both private sector and social landlords should be increasing spending on improving the insulation of their tenants' homes, to make them more energy efficient. Such investment would reduce the consumption of energy to heat our homes and limit the increase in future energy costs. However, it is also likely that given the other cost of living pressures, rent arrears will inevitably rise, affecting the income streams and budgets of landlords by a lot more. The costs of repairs and maintenance services are rising faster than inflation, so it is inevitable that services provided to tenants will be cutback in the next few years.

Maybe one of the reasons why a rent cap is not being announced for the private sector is because there are already considerable changes planned for this sector and being consulted upon. Back in June the Government published its Renters Reform White Paper. Proposed changes include abolishing Section 21 'no-fault' evictions, introducing a new ombudsman (to resolve disputes away from court), limiting rent rises to once per year, and banning landlords from refusing to rent properties to people on benefits. Now the Government is also consulting on the introduction of a decent homes standard to the private rented sector for the first time, bringing a degree of consistency with the social housing sector. The NRLA are welcoming the introduction of a legally defined property standard, but they rightly point out that how property standards are checked and implemented is key - if local authorities do not have adequate resources to regulate the private rented sector in their locality, then this could be a meaningless step which only offers false protection to tenants. This is an interesting challenge for the new Housing Secretary and one we hope he will deliver on, along with the many others in his bulging in-tray.

Patrick Mooney



## On the cover...

*Matthew McTighe from CAME UK discusses the importance of Secured By Design (SBD) and their role in securing developments around the UK*

See page 37





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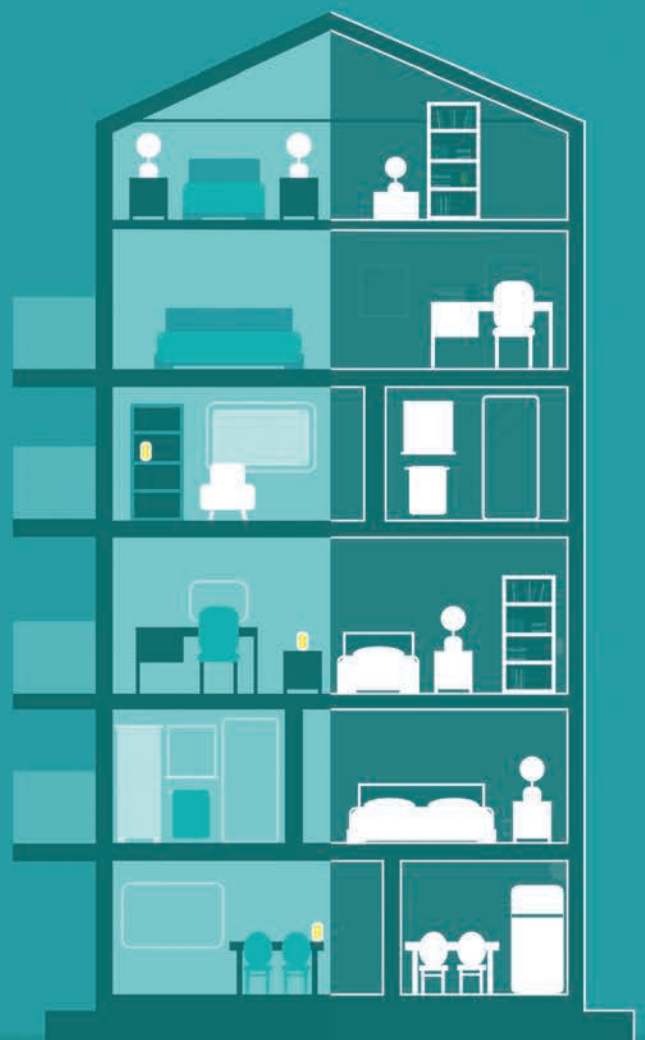
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# Consultation on imposing a social housing rent cap launched

A consultation has been launched by the Government inviting views from social housing tenants and landlords on the introduction of an upper limit to any rent increases made next year.

Under the proposals, a cap on social housing rent increases would be put in place for the coming financial year, with options at 3, 5 and 7 per cent all being considered. It is also seeking views on extending the cap into 2024/25.

The move would prevent rents for an estimated 4 million council and housing association houses from rising significantly, saving tenants an average £300 per year (based on the preferred option of a 5 per cent cap) and providing some financial stability as inflation and energy bills rise.

The consultation exercise runs until 12 October, with a final decision to be announced later this year when the Secretary of State will direct the Regulator of Social Housing on rent standards, confirming the maximum amount social housing landlords can increase rents by for 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

However, there was no statement on whether the housing benefit element of Universal Credit would rise by a similar amount as the rent cap, nor on whether a similar restriction on rent increases would be imposed on the private rented sector. It is also unclear in what circumstances landlords might be granted exemptions from the cap.

In response to the consultation announcement, campaigners criticised the proposals and called for a complete freeze on rents and service charges, while representatives of social landlords asked what



additional support would be made available to fill the gap between rising costs and a restriction on their main source of income.

Landlords say the cap would restrict their income at the same time as they are expected to spend more on building safety, decarbonisation works and improving energy efficiency. In addition the cost of building new homes rose 12 per cent in the year to June and repair costs are up 14 per cent, they said.

## TEMPORARY MEASURE

The Government regulates how much social housing rents can increase each year. Currently this is set at up to the consumer price index (CPI) rate plus 1 per cent – meaning potential increases next year of more than 10 per cent, in line with recent Bank of England forecasts.

Launching the consultation, Housing Secretary Greg Clark said: “We must protect the most vulnerable households in these exceptional circumstances during the year ahead. Putting a cap on rent increases for social tenants offers security and stability to families across England.

“The rent cap would be temporary and would apply from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The consultation also seeks views on whether to set a limit for 2024/25. The Government understands this will impact social housing landlords and is engaging fully with the sector.”

When asked if the cap would encourage social housing landlords to increase rents, Mr Clark said there was no requirement on landlords to increase rents up to the cap and the Government wanted to provide reassurance to tenants.

Labour’s shadow Housing Secretary Lisa Nandy said families in social housing already faced “impossible choices” between heating and eating, while the Opposition was also calling for emergency legislation to prevent evictions and a fully-funded energy bill freeze this winter.

She said: “This announcement is welcome clarity that social renters shouldn’t be facing rent rises of 11% or more in just a few months’ time. But we urgently need clarity on how the shortfall will be funded because social landlords, including hard-pressed local councils, can’t be expected to take the hit.

“There is also a huge hole in this plan to address the hundreds of thousands in the private rented sector who face a cost of living crisis.”

## 400,000 households unprotected by energy price cap

The National Housing Federation is warning that 400,000 households in England are not protected by the energy price cap because their energy is supplied through a communal heating system.

Over half of households on communal heat networks (227,848) are living in social housing and on low incomes. Without the domestic cap, the price these people pay for energy depends on the commercial contract their housing provider negotiates with the energy company.

Recent contracts are as much as 500 per cent more expensive than the previous year, with bills in low usage homes projected to rise by as much as £68 a week. This increase alone is £1,130 per year over October’s energy price cap for other domestic users.

Nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) of the affected social housing tenants are older people over the age of 55, mainly living in supported or sheltered housing. These residents have their heating supplied through a central boiler that supplies all homes in the building, rather than an individual boiler in

their home, and they pay for their heating bills via service charges.

In normal times heat networks usually save these residents money, as housing associations can obtain cheaper prices than individuals on domestic contracts by bulk buying energy.

Many HAs are now looking at whether they can recover some of the cost from other funds, rather than pass on the full increases to residents. Because associations are not-for-profit businesses this means cutting back on other services for residents, or reducing investment in their homes.

Heat networks are not regulated by Ofgem, who sets the domestic gas and electricity price cap. The uncapped energy price increases will be felt as energy contracts come up for renewal, either yearly or every few years.

The National Housing Federation has called on the Government to ensure people on heat networks receive the same protection as customers on domestic gas supplies.

They should do this either by allowing heat network operators to purchase gas at the capped domestic tariff rates and pass on the saving to consumers, or by providing additional payments to residents or heat network operators to compensate for prices increases above the cap.

Kate Henderson, Chief Executive of the NHF said: “It is unjust that hundreds of thousands of people, through no fault of their own, are exposed to uncapped heating bills just because of the way they pay for their energy. Worst still, the majority of those affected are vulnerable people on the lowest incomes in this country, who will already be struggling to pay for food and essentials.

“The Government has a duty to act urgently and fairly to protect these people in the same way as the rest of the country. With the new price cap coming into force in October it is essential the Government acts now and negotiates with energy companies to ensure every resident is protected from rising energy bills.”





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## Bills included becomes 'most searched for term' and renters double search area

Analysis from the UK's biggest property website Rightmove reveals the effect the rising cost of living and record rents are having on people searching for a new place to rent.

People looking for 'bills included' has jumped up to the top position for renters using Keyword Sort, a Rightmove tool where people can prioritise their property search results by choosing specific terms.

It has overtaken those looking for pet friendly homes for the first time, and is now also a higher priority than gardens and garages. Last year, bills included was just outside the top five.

Many people are also contacting agents about available rental properties across a much bigger area than four years ago, to have a better chance of finding somewhere available within their budget.

Hybrid working is also a likely factor as many people have more flexibility about where they live. The average area renters are searching and contacting agents in has expanded from 70 km<sup>2</sup> in July 2018 to 137k m<sup>2</sup> currently.

While the number of new rental properties coming onto the market is slowly increasing, there is still a huge imbalance between demand and supply with total available rental properties remaining 25 per cent behind this time last year.

The result is a fiercely competitive and fast-moving rental market, with prospective tenants seeing properties being snapped up twice as quickly as they were two years ago.

Rents continue to reach new records, with the average asking rent outside London now standing at £1,126 per calendar month, 19 per cent higher than two years ago.

Tim Bannister of Rightmove, said: "People looking for a new place to rent are casting their net much wider than before, in the hope that it will help them find a suitable place that they can afford. Although it's not as constrained as it was a few months ago, the number of homes is still nowhere near enough to meet demand from tenants.

"The lack of homes is down to more people choosing to stay put and sign longer contracts, some landlords selling up due to more onerous taxes and others taking advantage of record house prices, and hybrid working shifting some demand to more rural and suburban pockets of Great Britain. This has all led to a fiercely competitive rental market in many areas with agents reporting that in some cases properties are being rented out in just a few hours."

## Impact of proposed rent cap criticised across the sector



Landlord representatives have warned that a rent cap will mean less investment in new houses and their existing housing stock, while a housing charity has called on tenants to refuse to pay any rent increases at all.

As part of an impact assessment carried out by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities ahead of the consultation, civil servants looked at all of the cap options and the impact they would have.

Analysis of the impact of the 5 per cent cap (favoured by the Government) estimated that social landlords would receive £1.3 billion less in rent next year, compared to if no change was made. Looking forward five years, housing associations would see £4.9 billion less and local authorities would have £2.4 billion less.

Without any compensatory payments from Government, this would force social landlords to make substantial cuts to planned works and services to tenants, as well as other budgets such as for staff salaries.

Tenants warned that any rent cap was inadequate, because it would not stop rents from increasing and it did not apply to rises in service charges. Instead they called for a complete freeze on rents.

"Between 3 and 7 per cent is not enough," said Suzanne Muna, the secretary of the Social Housing Action Campaign, who stressed tenants were also facing rising food, fuel and other costs. "This would still be a huge problem for tenants who can't absorb a 3 per cent increase." SHAC said that housing associations could absorb inflationary costs and do not need to pass them on to tenants and residents.

The campaign said that even before the Covid pandemic and the cost of living crisis, rent arrears among housing association tenants and residents were building at a steady rate of about 10 per cent annually. Between March 2018 and March 2021, rent arrears grew from £591m to £704m. It

is calling on tenants to refuse to pay any increases in rent.

Social landlords said the cap would mean tens of billions of pounds less would now be invested in social housing stock at a time of rising public concern about safety and conditions in some estates. The cost of building new homes rose 12 per cent in the year to June and repair costs are up 14 per cent, they said.

In a joint statement, James Jamieson, chair of the Local Government Association and Kate Henderson, chief executive of the National Housing Federation, said: "Councils and not-for-profit housing associations are very concerned about the impact rising living costs are having on social housing residents.

"Housing providers have been carefully considering their approach to next year's rents and will do all they can to keep increases low where possible. Working with partners, councils and housing associations will continue to do what they can to protect people from hardship, targeting help at people facing the most complex and acute challenges.

"We are very concerned that a new cap on social housing rent increases will significantly impact on housing providers' ability to provide critical services for residents and invest in new and existing homes.

"Decisions on the level of rent increases for tenants need to be made by housing providers within the existing government rent policy commitment, ensuring that there is a careful balance between affordability for tenants and investment in the homes that they live in.

"If the Government does take forward a lower cap, then it should provide additional funding for 2023/24 and for future years so that housing providers can continue to safeguard services and meet the country's future housing needs."



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## Better Social Housing review aims to improve quality of social housing

The Better Social Housing review, launched earlier this year by the CIH and NHF, has begun the second phase of its work with a call for views from as many different people and organisations as possible with an interest in social housing in England.

The review's aim is to address the poor quality of some social housing and the unacceptable conditions some tenants are having to live in. Led by an independent panel, it will assess the physical, cultural, and economic reasons why some social housing is falling short of basic standards for tenants in areas such as maintenance and repairs and the responsiveness of housing providers to their tenants.

It was established in the wake of a series of ITN investigations into the poor service and living conditions endured by social housing tenants in different parts of the country. This was reinforced by a number of high-profile investigations by the Housing Ombudsman, resulting in severe maladministration findings against a number of social landlords.

The members of the panel leading this review have been meeting with stakeholder organisations since the beginning of August to gather insights and evidence on the issues involved.

During September and October they continued to meet with a wide range of organisations including social housing providers, central and local government, regulators, and charities. They also held series of face-to-face meetings with tenants and customer-facing housing staff.

Two surveys were launched alongside the stakeholder meetings with one version for tenants and another for all other stakeholders. The findings from these will directly contribute to the final report and recommendations for change which the panel will make to Government and those who develop and manage social housing by the end of the year.

Helen Baker, chair of the Better Social Housing Review, said: "All social housing should feel like a home, a place for people to feel secure and safe, where they can live well and thrive. But we know this isn't always the case, and the poor quality of some social housing has very much been in the spotlight recently.

"This is an opportunity to listen to those who experience the kinds of issues being raised so that we can address them head on. The panel is committed to delivering a thorough review, culminating in practical, workable solutions for a better way forward."

## New standards for privately rented homes outlined

A consultation has been launched by the Government on introducing a new Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector for the first time and as part of a drive to halve the number of poor-quality rented homes by 2030.

Millions of renters could benefit from a set of improved standards for rented homes, in one of the biggest reforms of the private rented sector in 30 years. The social housing sector has already been subject to a Decent Homes Standard since 2001 and over the last decade poor quality social housing has reduced by over a third.

The proposals aim to make private landlords legally bound to make sure their property meets a reasonable standard, with a particular emphasis on safety and security. The consultation will run until mid October.

The majority of landlords in the private rented sector already meet high standards but a minority are failing to meet these, with over a fifth of the 4.4 million privately rented homes in England in a poor condition.

The consultation asks whether privately rented homes should be required to be kept in a good state of repair with efficient heating, suitable facilities, and free from serious hazards like major damp or fire risks. The consultation seeks views on whether such new standards should be introduced and how they should be enforced.

It is estimated that private landlords will receive £9.3 billion in rent for homes that fail to meet the proposed standard this year, of which £3 billion is funded by the state from housing benefit.

Housing Secretary Greg Clark said: "I want to see a thriving private rented sector, but that does not mean that tenants should have to suffer homes that are not of decent standard. This consultation asks what the minimum standard for privately rented homes should be."

### SIMPLIFYING EXISTING LAWS

Responding to the consultation launch, Ben Beadle, Chief Executive of the National Residential Landlords Association, said: "Standards in the private rented sector are generally good and continue to improve. The Government's should focus on making it easier for private landlords, tenants and councils to understand what is expected of them by simplifying the almost 170 laws already affecting the sector.

"The plans need to recognise crucial differences between private and social rented housing, including in the age and types of properties in each. In the end, all the laws in the world will do nothing without improved enforcement against the minority of landlords



who tarnish the reputation of the responsible, law-abiding majority. That requires properly resourced councils tackling the criminals and rogues, while allowing the responsible majority to easily prove their home is safe and compliant."

Alicia Kennedy, Director of Generation Rent said: "We welcome these plans to extend the Decent Homes Standard to private rented homes. As the private rented sector has grown to overtake the social sector in size, not enough action has been taken on the poorer conditions private tenants must put up with. Private rented homes are more costly to heat and at a higher risk of disrepair and damp problems.

"There is no reason why private tenants should expect a worse service than social tenants. This crucial measure will help tenants get value for money, whoever they rent from, and stop landlords from profiting by cutting corners.

Gavin Smart, Chief Executive at Chartered Institute of Housing said: "All renters should be able to live in decent, well maintained homes. We welcome the commitment to introduce a new Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector as part of the government's new deal for renters. We look forward to seeing the details set out in the consultation and discussing the proposals with our members."

The introduction of a Decent Homes Standard in the private rented sector was outlined in the Government's Fairer private rented sector white paper in June.



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## Rental reforms risk becoming charter for ASB

Government plans to reform the private rented sector risk becoming a charter for anti-social behaviour unless urgent changes are made to the draft legislation.

This was the warning given to MPs on the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee by Ben Beadle, Chief Executive of the National Residential Landlords Association.

The latest data shows that around a third (32 per cent) of landlords asking a tenant to leave a property had done so because the tenant had engaged in anti-social behaviour.

Under Government plans to end Section 21 repossession, landlords will be reliant on convictions if they are to have certainty about tackling problem tenants. Recent polling indicates the public have little faith in the ability of the police and councils to tackle anti-social behaviour.

A survey of almost 3,500 landlords and letting agents by the NRLA has found that of those who had served a notice to a tenant due to anti-social behaviour, 84 per cent had received no assistance from their local authority. 75 per cent said they had received no help from the police.

Without urgent changes to the Government's planned reforms, the NRLA warn that it will become more difficult to tackle behaviour that blights the lives of neighbours and fellow tenants.

The NRLA is calling for full implementation of the Victims' Commissioner report on anti-social behaviour. Alongside this, the police and local authorities should be required to check the planned property portal when tackling nightmare tenants and work closely with landlords to take swift action against them. The courts should also prioritise possession cases brought as a result of such behaviour.

Ben Beadle said: "Anti-social behaviour blights the lives of fellow tenants, neighbours and communities alike. It is vital that it is tackled swiftly wherever it is found. The Government's proposals simply do not achieve this, and we are calling on new ministers to look again at the plans. Without change the reforms will become a charter for anti-social behaviour."

Addressing the Committee, Ben Beadle also raised concerns about the damage the Government's proposals will do to the student housing market and the urgent need for reforms to the court system. Scrapping Section 21 will lead to more possession cases ending up in the courts and at present they are not processing legitimate cases swiftly enough.

Mr Beadle warned the Committee that unless the reforms had the confidence of responsible landlords it would be tenants that suffer as the supply crisis in the rental market worsens.

## London sees the biggest increase in private landlord numbers



The number of private landlords operating within the British rental market has risen by 2.4 per cent since 2016/17, but in the capital the rate of increase is at a far higher 8.4 per cent.

Market analysis from Total Landlord Insurance revealed the current estimated number of landlords with income generated via property and how this has changed over time. The figures show that across Britain, almost 2.6 million make a living as a landlord.

London is both home to the most landlords at 463,200 and it has seen the biggest increase since 2016/17 - up by 8.4 per cent. The East of England (4 per cent) and South East (3.4 per cent) have also seen some of the largest uplifts in landlord numbers, while the South East is home to the second highest number at 459,410.

But not every area has seen this figure increase. In Wales, the number of landlords has fallen by -3.9 per cent in the last three years. The South West has seen a decline of -1.5 per cent, with the North East (-0.6 per cent) and Scotland (-0.3 per cent) are also seeing a decline.

London has also seen some of the largest increases in landlord numbers at local authority level. The City of London has seen a 37 per cent increase in the number of landlords since 2016/17, with Barking and Dagenham home to the second

highest increase at 20 per cent.

Outside of London, Slough has seen the largest increase, up by 20 per cent. Newham (16 per cent) and Thurrock (16 per cent) also rank within the top five where the largest increase in landlord number is concerned.

However, in Pembrokeshire, the number of operational landlords has declined by -13 per cent since 2016/17, along with Allerdale and Gwynedd. Ceredigion (-12 per cent) and Scarborough (-12 per cent) have also endured some of the largest declines in landlord numbers.

Steve Barnes, Associate Director at Total Landlord Insurance, commented: "In recent years, the nation's landlords have been served up an unsavoury cocktail of restrictions to income tax relief, buy-to-let stamp duty increases and changes to capital gains tax.

"Despite this, the number of landlords has not only remained robust across Britain, but we've actually seen an increase which is proof, if it were ever needed, that property remains a very attractive investment.

"Of course, this hasn't been the case completely across the board and some areas have seen a notable decline. Unfortunately for tenants in those areas, this decline in rental investment will only limit the options available to them, driving up the cost of renting in the process."



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# Zoopla partners with Crisis to support their mission to end homelessness

Leading property portal Zoopla and the homelessness charity Crisis have launched a three-year partnership which aims to dramatically reduce the numbers of people being made homeless.

Zoopla will leverage its unique data, brand recognition and leading industry position to support Crisis with changing the perceptions of homelessness, and call for meaningful reform when it comes to housing benefits and the shortfall in affordable housing.

Over the coming year, the organisations will be working together on a range of initiatives including:

- Campaigning together to increase the public's understanding of homelessness and of the different ways they can support people experiencing homelessness;
- Carrying out joint research into the challenges of accessing affordable private rented accommodation for those on the lowest incomes; and
- Providing support for Crisis' Venture Studio, which invests in, builds and scales ventures that aim to end homelessness.

Zoopla employees are aiming to raise £50,000 directly for Crisis this year and will be engaging in volunteering opportunities to support Crisis' Skylight centres, the annual Crisis at Christmas project and Shop from Crisis operations across Great Britain.

Kicking off the ambitious partnership, Crisis and Zoopla have jointly published new research

Crisis and Zoopla have jointly published new research which highlights how low-income renters across England are facing a 'housing black hole' due to a combination of rising rents and a freeze on housing benefit

which highlights how low-income renters across England are facing a 'housing black hole' due to a combination of rising rents and a freeze on housing benefit – with these factors leaving a major shortfall in genuinely affordable homes.

Crisis and Zoopla are calling on the Government to increase housing benefit at the next budget in order to avoid thousands of individuals from being pushed into homelessness. Zoopla believes this needs to be coupled with boosting the supply of homes across all tenures, especially in the rental sectors.

Zoopla will also be leveraging its Lettings Advisory Board to inform its partnership with Crisis. The Board, which is composed of industry experts and influencers from across the lettings sector, aims to support the sustainable growth of the rental market and create a sector that maintains supply and supports renters, landlords and agents to evolve with the changing market and policy environment.

Commenting on the partnership, Charlie Bryant, CEO of Zoopla, said: "We're proud to join forces with Crisis to support their mission to end homelessness. Homelessness is a real problem around the UK, with rough sleeping only the tip

of the iceberg, and many more relying on sleeping in their cars, couch surfing, or relying on hostels and B&Bs. We recognise the cost of living crisis is going to put even more pressure on those at risk of homelessness and we are keen to ensure we're using our wide-ranging relationships across the property industry to be a force for good on this issue. This not only means educating consumers and our customers on homelessness, but also advocating for real change to limit the number of people affected and ultimately end homelessness for good."

Matt Downie, Crisis Chief Executive, said: "We know that homelessness isn't inevitable and that with the right insight, we can develop evidence-based strategies to ensure no one has to endure the hardship of being without a home.

"That's why we're delighted to be working with Zoopla, who will bring their extensive knowledge of the housing market and hugely expand the range of data we can draw from. They will also be adding their voice to the conversation on the systemic issues pushing people into homelessness in the first place. We look forward to working closely with them over the next three years as we strive to end homelessness for good."

## Searches for homes with air conditioning triple in a year

New analysis from the UK's biggest property website Rightmove reveals that searches for homes with air conditioning have soared compared to last year following the record-breaking hot summer.

Searches for homes for sale with air conditioning using Keyword Sort, a Rightmove tool where people can prioritise their property search results by choosing specific terms, have more than tripled (up 234 per cent) compared to this time last year, while searches for homes to rent with air conditioning are up 74 per cent.

On the 19th July, the hottest day on record in the UK with temperatures of more than 40 degrees, searches for homes for sale with air conditioning nearly quadrupled and they nearly tripled in the

rental market, compared to the same day in 2021.

The number of available property listings mentioning air conditioning has also more than quadrupled compared to this time last year. This is likely a combination of more homes having the feature, and more agents highlighting it as a key selling point as temperatures rise and people imagine next summer in their new home.

However, those dreaming of a new home with air conditioning may have found their choice limited, as homes for either sale or to rent with air conditioning still make up less than one per cent of all available properties despite the rise in mentions.

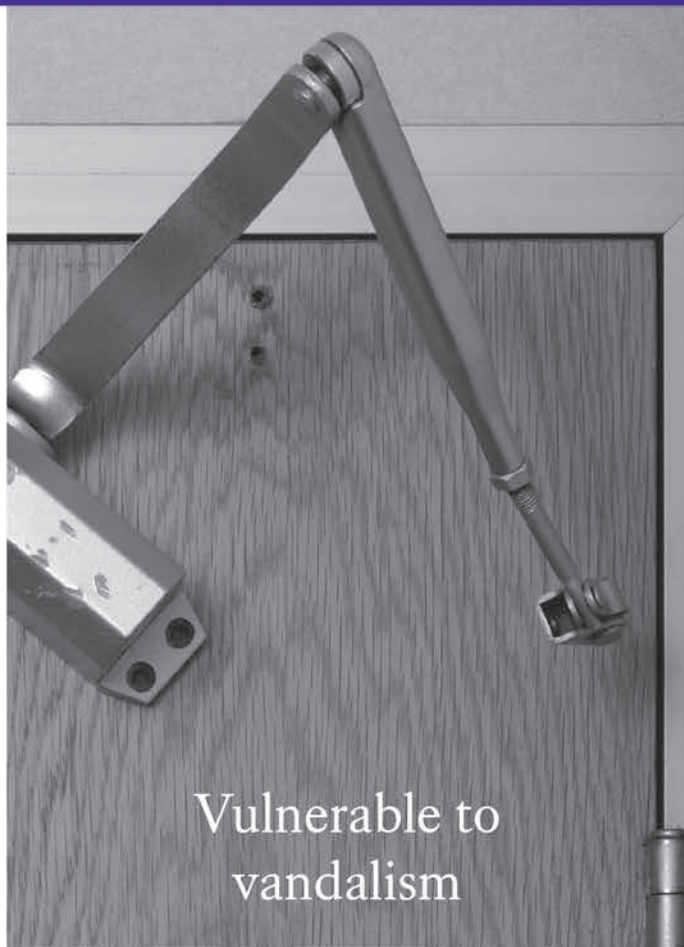
There has also been an increase in agents highlighting other features and using key terms to

describe how a home may stay cool in the summer for both buyers and renters, ahead of more potential hot summers. Mentions of 'ceiling fan' have increased seven times, 'airy' six times and 'shade' five times.

Tim Bannister of Rightmove, said: "During the hottest days of the year we've seen people across the UK jump straight onto Rightmove to see where they could live with the luxury of air conditioning. Though they make up a very small portion of the current property market, homes with air-con and other features that keep a home cool could attract even more interest in the future if we experience similarly hot summers, and these features rise up the priority list."



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# New Rough Sleepers strategy launched with £2bn support package

The Government has published a new £2billion strategy aimed at putting a roof over the heads of thousands of people living on the streets and ending rough sleeping for good.

The package of measures, includes a commitment to provide the following:

- 14,000 beds and 3,000 support staff this year to help individuals find work and access mental health services;
- An extra 2,400 long-term supported homes to be created for those with the most complex needs; and
- To break the cycle of addiction and rough sleeping, drug and alcohol treatment services will be expanded.

The cross-government Rough Sleeping Strategy is backed by £2 billion and builds on previous actions which have seen a 43 per cent drop in rough sleeping since 2019 with rough sleeping now at an 8-year low.

The allocations include up to £500 million over 3 years for the Rough Sleeping Initiative, which this year will help provide 14,000 beds for rough sleepers and 3,000 staff to provide tailored support across England. This includes helping individuals find work, manage their finances and access mental and physical health services.

An extra 2,400 long-term supported homes for those with the most complex needs, including young people, will also be provided, through a new £200 million Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme. This is on top of 3,200 homes that have already been delivered.

To break the cycle of addiction and rough sleeping, the Government is also expanding its Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant programme to an additional 20 areas in England, bringing the total to 83. The scheme provides funding for substance misuse treatment services for people sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough.

Secretary of State for Housing Greg Clark said:



To improve transparency and accountability for the mission to end rough sleeping, the Government has said it will publish quarterly data showing progress in delivering against the strategies aims

“Ending rough sleeping in this parliament is an important manifesto commitment. We’ve made great strides towards that goal in the last few years, and this strategy backed by £2 billion of support will give some of the most vulnerable people in our society a roof over their heads and targeted support so they can rebuild their lives.

“The full weight of government is behind this very necessary pledge and this landmark strategy will give us the right tools to identify people at risk of rough sleeping earlier and provide the help they need.”

To improve transparency and accountability for the mission to end rough sleeping, the Government has said it will publish quarterly data showing progress in delivering against the strategies aims.

Mr Clark added: “Finally, as part of our support we are repealing the outdated Vagrancy Act as no-one should be criminalised simply for having

nowhere to live. However, to ensure we don’t weaken the ability of police to protect the public and communities from crime and anti-social behaviour we are considering bringing forward new legislation, while also embedding rehabilitation and support at the heart of our approach.”

Interim CEO at St Mungo’s homeless charity Rebecca Sycamore said: “As a leading homelessness charity we know first-hand how important it is to focus on the root causes of rough sleeping in order to help break that cycle. We deliver a huge range of services to support people out of homelessness and into rebuilding their lives and so welcome this new strategy.

“Currently there is a significant gap in supported accommodation for people with complex needs and the announcement of an extra 2,400 homes in particular, is a step forward to helping people sustain a life away from the streets.”

## Simon Clarke is the latest housing secretary

Simon Clarke has been named as the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Secretary of State in the new cabinet announced by incoming Prime Minister Liz Truss.

The MP for Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland was previously the chief secretary to

the Treasury, a role he held since September 2021. Earlier in his political career he was Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government.

He is the fourth person to hold the housing brief in the past 12 months, following in the footsteps of Robert Jenrick, Michael Gove and Greg Clark.

Mr Clarke has inherited a busy brief with several White Papers and consultations underway, which include far reaching changes in both the private and social rented sectors.

In the past he has supported measures tackling climate change, while also advocating regeneration and more housebuilding although while at the Treasury he wrote to Michael Gove restricting the amount of public funding available to fix safety issues on high-rise buildings above 11 metres.





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# Housing Ombudsman re-appointed for another three years

Richard Blakeway has been re-appointed as the Housing Ombudsman for a further three years by Eddie Hughes, the Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing.

The re-appointment runs until 31 August 2025. Blakeway was first appointed to the role in 2019 and since then the Ombudsman service has become noticeably higher profile in championing tenants' causes and holding social landlords to account.

Further backing for the Ombudsman's work was evident when the Government declared it will name and shame all social landlords that receive severe maladministration findings from the Housing

Ombudsman, as well as writing to them.

The Ombudsman has a total of 2,316 member landlords representing 4.7 million households. In 2020/21 the Ombudsman issued 3,455 orders and recommendations following investigations and made awards of compensation totalling £450,000 towards tenants and leaseholders.

The Ombudsman can make findings of maladministration where they find a landlord has failed to do something, done something it should not have done or its actions have caused unreasonable delays in service delivery or putting things right.

In the most serious cases residents have usually experienced problems over a lengthy period and there were missed opportunities for the landlord to resolve the issue. Recently this has often included completing repairs, or dealing with leaks, damp and mould.

There have been 20 severe maladministration findings against social landlords between September 2021 and August this year. Six were against councils while the other 14 were against housing associations. The largest association in the country, Clarion has received three of the severe maladministration findings.

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## Severe maladministration for social landlord's inadequate response to silverfish infestation

Metropolitan Thames Valley's failings in responding to a silverfish infestation at a resident's flat led to a finding of severe maladministration by the Housing Ombudsman. It was also ordered to apologise to the resident for its failings and to pay her additional compensation of £1,800 for the distress and inconvenience caused.

The Ombudsman found the landlord's original offer of compensation did not reflect the significant impact on the family, caused by the association's failure to carry out adequate repairs to address the damp caused by leaks which led to the continuing silverfish infestation.

The resident reported an infestation of silverfish that she said had been there for a long time. The landlord arranged for an insecticide spray under the bath but a few months later said it would not treat the infestation. The landlord was responsible for leaks in the flat and did ask the pest control contractor to check for leaks but there was no evidence it was done at the time.

The resident reported the infestation continuing and commissioned a survey which found silverfish in several rooms and identified three leaks, which the resident told the landlord of. There

was conflicting evidence about when these were resolved, as the resident had continued to report leaks that she said had not been checked.

The Ombudsman found that dampness caused by leaks was still affecting the property a year after they were reported to the landlord, although it is recognised that completing repairs was affected by lockdown.

During this time the landlord had a lot of evidence about the impact on the family. The resident said she had moved out because her two daughters were scared. She had contacted an advice agency who wrote to the landlord saying the silverfish had got into clothing, children's toys and books and in the beds.

The family had to check clothing before putting them on and inspect food packets before eating.

Richard Blakeway, Housing Ombudsman, said: "This infestation had a profound impact on the resident and her family. The landlord's delay in dealing with the repairs and putting right the ongoing dampness together with its failure to use its discretion to consider a decant amounted to severe maladministration.

"Although the landlord acknowledged that it had

not resolved the matters in an acceptable timeframe and had offered compensation, this did not reflect the significant impact on the family. It would have been fair to have considered a temporary decant in the circumstances.

"We made an order for additional redress to be paid to the resident to reflect the considerable inconvenience caused and the landlord's failure to consider a decant. The sum reflects that three people were affected by this failing.

"We found no maladministration for the landlord's handling of the resident's request to be rehoused."

A spokesperson for MTVH said it has since consulted with environmental health experts to review its approach towards silverfish and acting on their advice, silverfish have now been added to its list of hazardous pests.

"We have redesigned our processes to better support our residents. Reports for silverfish are now sent to our pest control contractor to survey, treat the site, and provide a report to our Estates team on the cause of infestation. This report is then actioned by the relevant team to ensure appropriate action is taken swiftly."

---

## Rent freeze and ban on evictions for tenants in Scotland

The Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has announced a rent freeze for public and private properties and a ban on winter evictions, in a package of measures to combat the cost of living crisis.

The announcement came just a week after the Scottish Housing Regulator said the number of social tenants in rent arrears in Scotland was at its highest ever level, with social landlords owed rent arrears of £169,626,857, representing 6.3 per cent of

the total due, up from 6.1 per cent.

Describing pressures on household budgets as a "humanitarian emergency", Ms Sturgeon set out the annual programme for government as the Holyrood parliament met for the first time since the summer recess. The freeze on rents and evictions is expected to run until the end of March next year.

The Scottish tenants' union, Living Rent, welcomed the freeze but added: "We know that rents are already too high and have increased by

over 60 per cent in Scottish cities in the last 10 years. This rent freeze will need to stay in place until the Scottish government brings in proper rent controls that push rents down."

But John Blackwood, the chief executive of the Scottish Association of Landlords, accused the government of "attacking landlords for political reasons", suggesting that the proposals "will only further reduce the supply of housing, putting more people at risk".





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# Landlords warn that Renters Reform Bill is not fit for HMO properties

**P**latinum Property Partners (PPP), a UK-wide network of professional HMO landlords, has urged the Government to reconsider the impact of proposals in the Renters Reform Bill on multiple occupancy properties.

Some of the measures set out in the white paper will have a significant detrimental impact on shared households if implemented, potentially deterring HMO landlord investment and denting the supply of such affordable accommodation for tenants.

Although the Bill specifically exempts purpose-built student accommodation, there is no clear mention of excluding professional or student Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

Among the changes, set to come into force in 2023, is the abolition of Section 21 'no fault' evictions, a ban on fixed-term tenancies and giving tenants the right to request a pet.

For professional HMOs, where three or more unconnected people rent individual rooms and

share communal spaces, none of these proposals make sense, claims Emma Hayes, Managing Director of PPP.

"A few of the key areas of the proposal are simply unfit for HMO landlords and tenants and will cause serious problems to arise if exemptions or amendments are not made," she says.

"We're all for a fairer PRS, where tenants can be assured that their accommodation will be of a certain quality and that they won't be evicted for speaking up, but these measures will not work in a shared living environment"

When it comes to introducing periodic tenancies, this not only removes any security of medium to long-term income for landlords in any buy-to-let property, but will discourage HMO landlords in particular to cater for tenant requests.

Ms Hayes continues: "As all our professional HMOs are fully furnished, it's not unusual to receive specific tenant requests, perhaps for things like

additional bike sheds or an orthopedic mattress. But if that tenant were able to leave on two months' notice at any time, it's unlikely our landlords will risk the additional investment."

PPP claims that there is no way HMO landlords could reasonably consent to tenants having pets in shared houses.

"The proposals state that landlords may ask tenants to take out pet insurance and that this will not be a prohibited payment under the Tenant Fees Act 2019," says Ms Hayes. "However, pet insurance only covers the health of the animal, so what the paper should actually state is pet liability insurance that may, or may not, cover wear and tear caused by pets.

"For HMO landlords, having to scrutinize each insurance policy per tenant and then taking it in good faith that they will recoup costs that would be paid directly to the policy holder is not feasible."

## The capital is home to a quarter of the nation's HMOs

There are nearly 56,000 HMOs registered across England, with 13,528 of these found in the capital, meaning that London alone accounts for 24 per cent of the national total.

The East Midlands is not far behind, where a total of 10,737 HMOs sees the region account for 19 per cent of the national total. The South West (16 per cent), the South East (12) and the West Midlands (10) also account for double-digit market shares of the nation's HMO market. With 715 HMOs, the North East is home to just one per cent of the nation's HMO housing stock.

When it comes to current HMO investment opportunities there are 886 such properties currently listed for sale across England. The south east accounts for almost a quarter of stock, with the 210 HMOs currently for sale equating to 24 per cent of total listings.

There are 125 HMOs up for sale across the East Midlands, equating to 14 per cent of total market stock, with the North West (13), Yorkshire and the Humber (12), South West (11) and West Midlands (11) also ranking high.

Founding Director of Revolution Brokers, Almas

Uddin, commented: "When it comes to the HMO capital of the nation, London continues to dominate the market and it's easy to see why.

"The capital is home to the greatest abundance of stock providing a superior level of choice to investors. This high level of stock has been driven by the consistent demand for multiple occupancy rental properties from tenants and while initial investment costs may be higher than elsewhere across the country, stronger wage levels allow for a much stronger return where rental income is concerned.

"As the nation's capital, there is also a revolving door of tenants, both domestic and international, moving to London to live and work. As a result, void periods are also far lower which again helps to maximise returns."

## Unregistered gas installer fined after failing to answer questions from HSE inspector

A plumber who was suspected of having undertaken dangerous gas work while unqualified to do so, was fined for failing to answer questions put to him by a Health and Safety Executive inspector.

In February 2020 Luke Rodgers was alleged to have carried out unlawful gas work to replace a boiler at a house in Tingley, Wakefield. The new boiler was left in such a dangerous condition that a Gas Safe registered engineer who attended the house had to make it safe by disconnecting it from

the gas supply.

During a HSE interview under caution, Rodgers claimed to have only been hired to do the installation work up to the point where it would then be connected to the gas supply. He claimed that he had arranged for a friend who was qualified to complete all the gas work. Rodgers also stated that another friend had assisted him with general labouring at the property.

During the interview, Rodgers was unwilling to provide the identity of either people

which is an offence as it prevented the inspector from following reasonable lines of enquiry as part of the investigation.

At Huddersfield Magistrates' Court Luke Rodgers of Chapel Street, Wakefield, West Yorkshire pleaded guilty to breaching Section 33(1)(e) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. He was fined £583 and ordered to pay £1,500 in costs.

After the hearing, HSE inspector David Beaton said: "The defendant blatantly failed to comply with a requirement under the Health and Safety at Work (etc) Act 1974. This prosecution would not have happened had the defendant provided the information.

"Hopefully, this will send a warning to others that failing to comply with Her Majesty's Inspectors while they exercise their lawful powers will not be condoned by the HSE."



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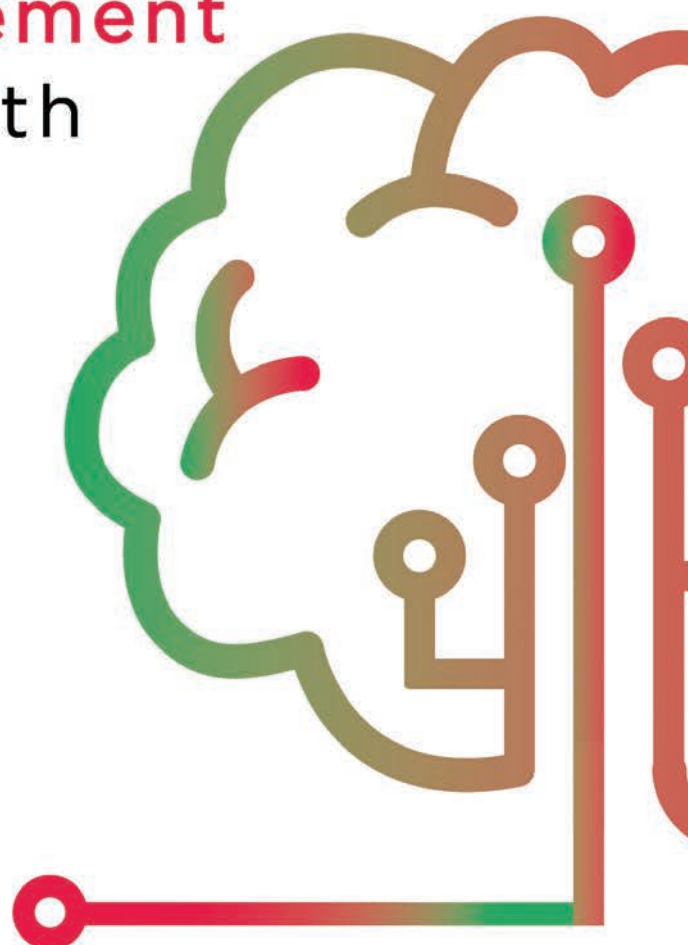
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# London council found to have missed essential safety checks on thousands of its homes

**G**reenwich Council in south east London has been issued with a regulatory notice after checks found it had failed to carry out essential health and safety assessments on thousands of its homes, including checks for fire, electrical, water and asbestos safety.

The council self referred itself to the regulator earlier this year and had started putting in place a programme to address the issues identified. The regulator of social housing is closely monitoring how it delivers this work.

Kate Dodsworth, Director of Consumer Regulation at the regulator, said: “We welcome the council’s self referral which recognises that the failure to meet health and safety requirements has put tenants at potential risk.”

Greenwich told the regulator it had not completed electrical safety checks for every property which needed one, and that remedial actions from fire risk assessments were overdue. It also reported that it did not have current water

safety risk assessments for all communal residential blocks and there was not a programme for reviewing asbestos surveys.

As a registered provider, Greenwich Council is required to comply with the consumer standards, including the Home Standard. The Home Standard requires registered providers to have a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service and to meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of tenants in their homes.

An investigation by the regulator found there were more than 400 outstanding fire risk assessments, and hundreds of high-risk remedial actions from the assessments were also outstanding.

With regards to electrical safety, the council reported that more than 1,000 communal and in excess of 10,000 domestic properties did not have a current electrical condition report.

For asbestos safety, Greenwich did not have valid communal asbestos surveys for hundreds

of blocks and there were just over 300 overdue high risk remedial actions which had not been complete since July 2019. With regards to water safety, Greenwich did not have current risk assessments for more than 80 residential communal blocks.

The regulator considered the case as a potential breach of part 1.2 of the Home Standard and concluded that Greenwich Council did not have an effective system in place to allow it to meet its statutory health and safety responsibilities across a range of areas, and to demonstrate that it was compliant across these areas.

The council has started to put in place a programme to rectify these failures and has assured the regulator it is taking action to remedy the breach of standard. The regulator decided not take statutory action at this stage but will work with the council as it continues to address the issues, including ongoing monitoring of how it delivers its programme.

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## More people looking at shared housing to combat rising costs

With rising energy bills and inflation at a 40 year high, an increasing number of tenants are looking for cheaper, all-inclusive rented accommodation in shared housing.

Since the last increase in utility bills was announced, many landlords in the professional HMO investment network, Platinum Property Partners (PPP), have received more than 30 applications for every room to rent within the first 24 hours of it being advertised.

Going forward they are expecting this to at

least double, with Houses in Multiple Occupation appearing to offer an affordable renting alternative. Compared to renting a one-bedroom flat plus bills, renting an all-inclusive room in a professional HMO remains more than 40 per cent cheaper and ensures greater certainty with just a single bill.

Emma Hayes, Managing Director of Platinum Property Partners, said: “The astronomical hike in energy costs is causing a significant spike in tenants looking to rent a room in a shared house compared to a single-occupancy property.

“As they struggle to pay current market rents and rising bills, HMO accommodation provides a level of certainty with one monthly payment inclusive of bills, which is more than 40 per cent cheaper than renting alone. But even HMO rents are not immune to the soaring cost of living and running a business and even housemates will see a rise in rents eventually.

“The actual cost of running a professional HMO property has increased 50 per cent almost overnight and irrespective of higher mortgage rates, we’ve calculated that our landlords would need to increase rents by £100 per room per property just to cover this increase in energy costs, which they pay for.

“Despite HMO investment generating up to four times as much rental income as single-occupancy buy-to-let, there is not an endless pot of reserves.”

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## Improved access to Ombudsman services from October

Changes to the Ombudsman’s service from October have made it easier for social housing tenants to access the service if they remain unhappy with their

landlord’s final response to their complaint.

The ‘democratic filter’ has been removed after a change in the law, so tenants no longer have to refer their complaint to a designated person or wait eight weeks before the Ombudsman can consider their complaint.

Under the previous process, if residents were unable to resolve their complaint through their landlord’s complaints own procedures they could contact a designated person (such as their MP or local councillor) to help find a solution or refer it direct to the Ombudsman service.

If residents decided against contacting a designated person, legislation required eight weeks

to pass before the complaint could be sent to the Ombudsman. Both aspects have now been dropped.

Removing this barrier is meant to ensure that tenants have direct access to the Ombudsman, as well as helping to speed up the complaints resolution process. The Ombudsman is expecting an initial influx of complaints with demand for their service expected to increase, affecting processing timescales.

Tenants complaints are not investigated before they have completed their landlord’s complaints process, but steps can be taken to encourage landlords and residents to work together to resolve a complaint.



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# The above inflation cost increases hitting social landlords revealed

The National Housing Federation has revealed the scale of the above inflation cost increases hitting vital areas of their operations.

A report commissioned from the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) analysed inflation data in relation to the major costs facing social landlords. It found:

- annual construction price growth accelerating to 9.6% in June 2022.
- building new homes has suffered annual price growth at 12.3% more expensive than a year earlier.
- repair and maintenance prices have surged with annual price increases for repair and maintenance materials hitting 14% in July, down from a peak of 16.8% in April 2022.
- over the first half of 2022, employees' earnings increased by 6% on average over the past year.

Kate Henderson, the NHF's chief executive said: "This report demonstrates the huge financial pressures housing associations are currently facing, with the cost of repairs materials and building new



homes already rising well above inflation by 14% and 12.3% respectively.

"This is likely to worsen over the coming months, feeding through to all areas of spend and is on top of the pressures of building safety costs and the costs of retrofitting homes. We know there will be particular challenges for supported housing

providers who operate on very tight margins."

She stated that landlords must continue to be able to maintain their homes and provide vital services to residents in the years ahead. Ms Henderson added: "They are also concerned about the impact rising living costs are having on social housing residents."

## Water leaks are the most common cause of insurance claims by landlords

Market analysis from Total Landlord Insurance has revealed the most common reason for landlords to submit an insurance claim is damage caused by water escaping, but that fires and storms result in the biggest insurance payouts overall.

Escaped water was the most common reason for a claim, with internal flooding - from burst pipes to leaking toilet cisterns - accounting for 35.5 per cent of all claims.

This was followed by storms at 22.4 per cent, accidental damage at 13.1 per cent and then

malicious damage at seven per cent.

The average landlord insurance claim results in a payout of £6,512. But when it comes to fire, this increases to a scorching £31,621. Storm damage resulted in an average claim of £11,568, with subsidence also one of the most costly reasons to claim, with an average claim of £7,954.

Resolving water leaks from pipework or fittings cost £2,843 on average, whereas dealing with water ingress due to events like prolonged spells of rain cost £721 on average.

Melissa Choules, Lead Claims Technician at Total Landlord Insurance, commented: "When it comes to insurance claims, the reasons for claiming are often either common or costly. The most common generally revolve around damage caused to the property, such as water damage.

"A claim can often be avoided if a landlord takes the correct steps to care for and upkeep of their property. Unfortunately, the most costly are often out of their control and there is no real way of preventing damage as a result of storms."

## Landlord insurance claims on the rise

Market analysis from Total Landlord Insurance has revealed the number of landlord insurance claims increased by 13 per cent during the pandemic, with malicious tenant damage among the fastest growing causes of a claim.

The figures show that landlord insurance claims increased by 13 per cent between 2019 and 2021, from 536 annual claims up to 603. During this time, the fastest growing reason for a landlord insurance

claim was storm damage which increased by 93 per cent during the pandemic, from 70 claims in 2019 up to 135 in 2021.

Malicious damage has also been an increasingly common cause for landlord insurance claims during the pandemic, rising by 50 per cent between 2019 and 2021.

During the pandemic, the average landlord insurance claim size also increased. A rise of 29 per

cent was seen between 2019 and 2021 as the average claim rose from £5,773 to £7,429.

The biggest rise in the size of a claim was seen in liability insurance claims. Liability insurance is that which protects the landlord against any harm or injury that befalls a tenant while inside the property, and during the pandemic, the average claim increased by 270 per cent from £1,306 to £4,827.

At the same time, the average claim for storm damage increased by 140 per cent, break-in claims rose by 101 per cent, and claims for underground services went up by 95 per cent.



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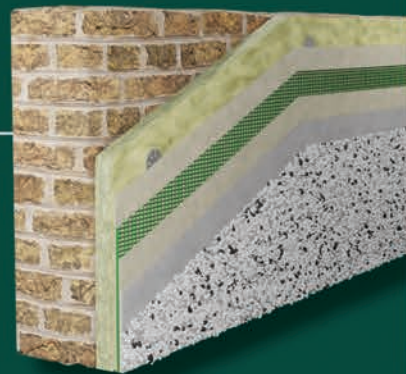
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CHM and MXM profiles are also used to conceal fire sprinkler supply pipework mounted in open balconies, or externally to flats, to provide added security and weather resistance. In addition, as metal boxing is non-combustible, it is used in high rise residential blocks to conceal interior sprinkler pipework where no sprinkler heads are present, such as communal areas.

Usually supplied with a PPC finish, which can be selected from any RAL colour to blend in or contrast with the surroundings, Pendock's metal boxing profiles are available in lengths of up to 4.0 metres, as standard. Other lengths and material thicknesses are available on request, as well as options to include perforations and hinged access hatches.

A range of dedicated accessories is included within the CHM and MXM metal boxing range,



which includes internal and external corners, stop ends and joint covers, as well as fixing angles, access panels and TEK fixings, which can be colour coded if required.

Metal boxing is part of the Pendock Profiles range of pipe boxing and casings, which includes pre-formed plywood pipe and fire sprinkler

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0330 055 7629 [retrofitacademy.org/fully-funded-retrofit-training-west-midlands](http://retrofitacademy.org/fully-funded-retrofit-training-west-midlands)



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M-AR has completed the first of three new housing schemes in partnership with Bromley Council, all designed to provide 'Bromley Homes for Bromley People'. The housing development contains 25 modern one- and two-bedroom apartments and is amongst the first housing schemes developed on council land to create more affordable housing in the borough. M-AR worked as main contractor in partnership with the Council to deliver these homes using offsite methods, as well as 10 further apartments on a site adjacent to Anerley Town Hall and a mix of apartments and townhouses under construction at York Rise, Orpington.



01482 635 081 [www.m-ar.co.uk](http://www.m-ar.co.uk)

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**About us**  
Since its inception in 2016, Housing Management & Maintenance has garnered attention from a diverse readership comprising over 8,000 housing and facilities management professionals, including local authority and housing association representatives, buy-to-let investors and student accommodation providers.

An ABC-qualified magazine produced by established business publisher metInfoMedia, Housing Management & Maintenance provides a comprehensive insight into current affairs in the affordable housing and letting sector in its Industry News section, which is overseen by highly experienced News Editor Patrick Kinney.

Patrick has spent over 30 years in the housing sector working for various local authorities, housing associations and regulatory bodies, and is currently a consultant, helping landlords to improve their services, performance, value for money and governance.

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## Decarbonise residents' heating through wave 2 of the SHDF

The government recently announced an energy price cap freeze. However, charity National Energy Action expects that even so, "6.7 million UK households could be...unable to afford to heat their homes to the temperature needed to keep warm and healthy." It is clear that more needs to be done to protect people from fuel poverty. Improving the energy efficiency of homes is crucial to tackling this. More than 80% of homes will still be in use by 2050 and 71% are EPC E, F & G.1. The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) offers social landlords the chance to upgrade housing stock currently below Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C standard. There is up to £800 million of funding available to help deliver warm, energy-efficient homes and reduce carbon emissions at the same time. Eliminating the carbon emissions from existing housing stock will leave it more comfortable for tenants, and cost-effective to run. Ground source heat pumps (GSHPs) are the most efficient and effective way to decarbonise heating, the technology delivers heat with the lowest carbon emissions, lowest running costs and lowest lifecycle cost. GSHPs are eligible under SHDF and the funding could cover up to 88% of installation costs. Kensa are experts in supporting clients build strong funding applications and can project manage to install GSHP systems within the SHDF deadlines. Book a one-to-one feasibility study with Kensa today to discuss project eligibility.

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Leading British ventilation manufacturer Vent-Axia has re-launched its Lo-Carbon PoziDry Pro™ Loft Positive Input Ventilation (PIV), which is now made from recycled plastic. These changes are another step towards more sustainable choices for customers and will help social housing providers meet their environmental goals. This move to using recycled plastic in the PoziDry Pro™ Loft PIV forms part of the company's commitment to becoming increasingly sustainable, including using recycled plastic in an ever-widening number of products.



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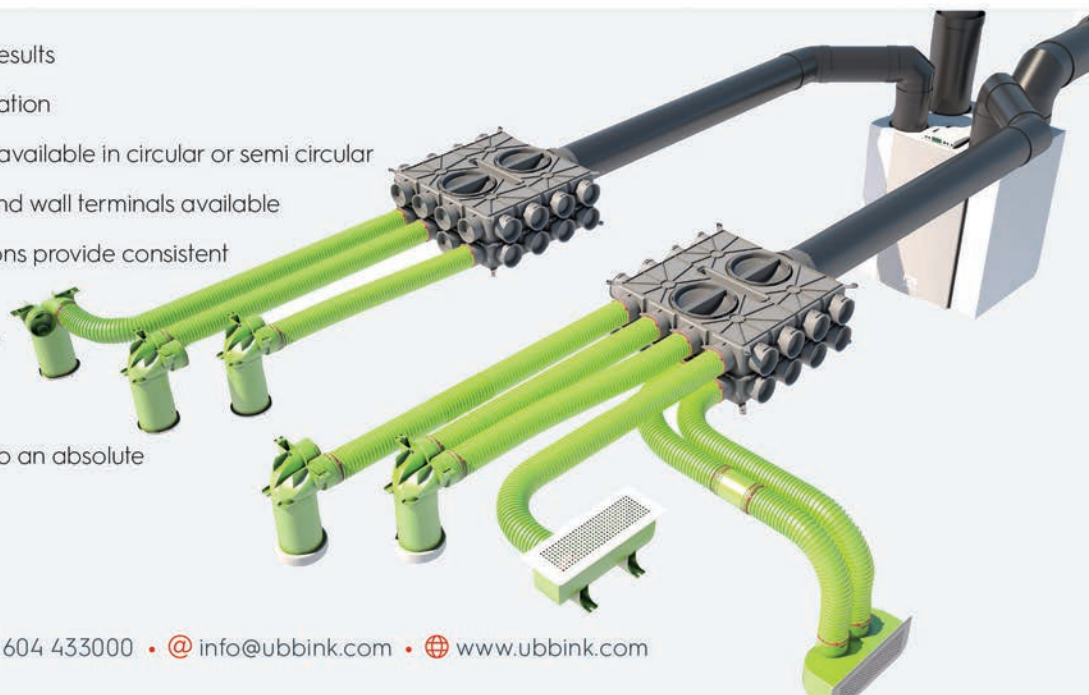
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# A guide to the correct paint specification

The finishing touches to a project can make all the difference to the sustainability and safety of dwellings. The Dulux Decorator Centre team looks at how the correct specification of paints and coatings can drive up building efficiency, improve fire safety and deliver on aesthetics



Research shows that the built environment accounts for 30-40% of UK carbon emissions – and a sizeable percentage comes from domestic buildings. In addition, the construction and demolition of buildings accounts for 32% of landfill waste. As such, it is imperative that the construction industry finds ways to drive down inefficiencies – and for the housing sector, this means carefully selecting building materials and extending maintenance cycles to ensure minimal impact over the lifetime of a property.

As well as the bricks and mortar, housing managers should consider the important role that paints and coatings play in improving sustainability. Firstly, opting for water-based products is an easy way to minimise environmental impact. Solvent-based products contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs) – chemical vapours that contribute to greenhouse gases, global warming, rising sea levels and ground level pollution. In addition, exposure to high levels of VOCs can have negative effects on the health of the user and occupant; with symptoms including eye, nose, and throat irritation, as well as headaches, loss of coordination and nausea in more severe cases.

## A SUSTAINABLE CHOICE

In contrast, water-based products contain very low VOC levels, so they are much safer for the environment and residents. There is also no need to ventilate

rooms so occupants can return to site as soon as the paint is dried, keeping disruption to a minimum.

Another benefit of today's water-based products is that they deliver the high durability traditionally associated with solvent-based alternatives. Maintenance cycles can be extended by choosing paints and coatings that will stand the test of time and reduce the need for regular redecoration. As a result, the emissions produced across a dwelling's life cycle are significantly cut – as well as the hassle, disruption, and cost of the work.

It is also important to think beyond the application process and ensure that empty paint cans are disposed of responsibly. Offerings like 'Dulux Decorator Centres can recycling schemes' are ideal. This free of charge service means that empty and dry cans can be either collected from site or delivered by the painting contractor to a local Dulux Decorator Centre. All plastic is then shredded and sent back into the plastics market where it is turned into low-grade plastic products like underground pipework – and metal is melted down and returned to the general market.

## SAFETY FIRST

Another key consideration for housing managers is the safety of building occupants. In older buildings, there can be multiple layers of existing coatings

A space should feel homely, warm, and welcoming and the right choice of colour is crucial to instilling these emotions in the people that call your premises 'home'

that have built up over a number of years. These can be a hazard and contribute to the spread of fire.

To ensure occupant safety, paints and coatings used must be compliant with building regulations. Approved Document B – which is concerned with the fire safety in and around buildings – states that internal linings in buildings should 'adequately resist the spread of flame over their surfaces' and if ignited 'have either a rate of heat release or rate of fire growth which is reasonable in the circumstances'. They must therefore be compliant with BS476-6: 1989 (also known as part 6) and BS476-7: 1997 (or part 7) and achieve Class 0.

BS476-6: 1989 refers to the amount of heat released when the product is burned and BS476-7: 1997 looks at how quickly flame can spread across a surface. BS476 also defines products based on four classes, with Class 4 indicating that the flame will spread across the surface rapidly and Class 0 showing that the spread of flame and heat released from the surface are limited. To achieve Class 0 a product must achieve Class 1 when tested to BS476-7: 1997 and pass the test for BS476-6: 1989.

To ensure the correct specification, suppliers can work with customers to conduct a fire-risk assessment and recommend the products that will achieve Class 0. They can also work with painting contractors to ensure that products are applied correctly and in line with the manufacturer's instructions – to ensure that paints and coatings perform as intended.

#### COLOURING LIVES

A space should feel homely, warm, and welcoming and the right choice of colour is crucial to instilling these emotions in the people that call your



premises 'home'. Over the last 20 years, we have seen trends go in and out of style; between 2004-2007, cooler blues and greys were making their mark, whereas yellows featured between 2007-2013.

Over the last few years, there has been a trend towards the soothing and inspiring colours of nature and this year's Colour of the Year continues in a similar vein. Wild Wonder™ is a hue inspired by the warm tones of harvested crops and looks to create a sense of energy and positivity.


When designing or refurbishing dwellings, housing managers should carefully consider how paints and coatings can improve sustainability, occupant safety and wellbeing.

*Dulux Decorator Centre team*

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# A smart approach to the energy crisis

Could smart metering technology help ease the financial pain of rising living costs? Insite Energy's Gareth Copland, considers the pros and cons

Navigating a disaster pile-up of a global pandemic followed by worsening energy and cost-of-living crises is proving increasingly challenging for many housing providers. Residents are under financial stress, particularly in the social housing sector where there is a higher proportion of vulnerable tenants, and significant numbers have already experienced furlough and job losses during Covid times.

For housing schemes with heat networks, the situation is even more dire, because the national energy price cap does not apply. Consequently, numerous heat network residents are suffering tariff increases several times higher than those experienced by households with individual boilers. In many cases, that has already meant increases of over 300%. Worse is to come, as the preferential three-year fixed-rate energy tariffs that lots of housing associations used their heavyweight buying power to secure are now coming to an end. These contracts are now being renegotiated, often with big price rises. When you also factor in that heat network customers can't switch energy providers to get a better deal, the picture looks bleak indeed.

## RISING DEBT

It is unsurprising, then, that many housing association residents are struggling to pay their bills. A comparison of two similar heat network sites for which Insite Energy provides metering and billing – one housing association (HA) and one privately-owned scheme – reveals alarming differences in the scale and character of resident energy debt. The HA scheme currently has nearly four times as much debt as the private development. Furthermore, the private scheme's figure is consistent year-on-year and is largely down to forgetting to organise payment – one chase with the resident and the debt is settled. The housing association residents, meanwhile, simply can't afford to pay.

Since the start of the pandemic, many housing associations have been striving to protect their most at-risk residents from financial hardship by absorbing the increasing costs of unpaid energy bills. However, as larger and larger numbers of residents who were not previously considered vulnerable fall into arrears, this is becoming unsustainable. Cash reserves are exhausted, but people's money struggles are multiplying. The number of tariff-related queries we're receiving is the highest ever – 2022 figures are currently five to six-times higher than last year.

## SO, WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

Sadly, there are no easy fixes to this unprecedented situation. But there are some proactive steps that can be taken, with judicious use of modern technology, to minimise costs and ease some of the financial stress for both residents and housing providers.

Installing smart metering technology is one such measure. At a time when housing associations need to be seen to be doing something practical to help their residents, this is a very constructive, measurable and accountable way of making a difference.

## THE POWER OF DATA

It might seem counterintuitive to invest in new technology during a financial crisis. At first glance, it may seem that you are loading more costs onto residents already struggling to pay their bills. However, it's now known that access to



real-time energy usage data from PAYG smart metre displays leads to changes in behaviour that can dramatically reduce personal consumption. In our own client base, we've observed that residents who can easily monitor how much heat and hot water they're using each day consume up to 55% less than credit-billed customers who have no way of knowing what actions could really impact their bill, or by how much. After all, once a bill arrives a month-and-a-half after the fact, it's very hard to know what behavioural changes could have made a difference, and by how much.

Another benefit of smart metering technology is that when used alongside a digital scheme management platform, housing managers are equipped with real-time data about occupancy levels and peak-usage patterns. These can also alert them to any potential issues within the network, which can then be resolved quickly. This is important because, if systems are underperforming or bypasses are running incorrectly, wastage can continue undetected, with expensive consequences. Furthermore, as well as speeding up repairs, remote diagnosis via field service management software such as Big Change, can save maintenance teams copious amounts of time and fuel.

## CONVENIENCE, COMFORT AND COST

While smart metering solutions have historically been regarded by some as best suited to private build-to-rent developments with 'tech-savvy' tenants, the stats show that social housing residents respond very well to the technology too. Earlier this year, a survey of residents using a digital smart-metering pay-as-you-go app for heat networks called KURVE showed that 95% of



## Outdated technology can ultimately end up costing more in energy use and maintenance than the price of its replacement

users make payments online – 60% of respondents live in local authority and housing association developments. Residents can view, monitor, and manage their energy account from any internet device, whenever or wherever they like, enabling them to keep track of their spending. This feeling of being in control can be very valuable, given that many housing associations are telling us that mental health problems are becoming increasingly prevalent among residents as their financial struggles worsen.



Despite all the savings and benefits that smart technology offers, it can still be hard to justify the cost when everyone is feeling the pinch. The good news is that using a web app reduces capital (CapEx), operational (OpEx) and replacement (RepEx) expenditure by avoiding the need to install and maintain in-home display units. This translates into cost savings of up to 56% which can be passed onto residents through tariff reductions. Furthermore, smart technology reduces costs by making processes, such as billing, paperless and automated.

As inflation continues to rise, the pressure on housing associations to protect their residents will continue to build. It's incumbent on them to seek out every possible solution to ease the financial stress, and act swiftly to maximise the benefits of the measures they take, rather than delaying and prolonging the agony. Outdated technology can ultimately end up costing more in energy use and maintenance than the price of its replacement.

*Gareth Copland is Group Operations Director at Insite Energy*



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# Design out crime

Matthew McTighe from CAME UK discusses the importance of Secured By Design (SBD) and their role in securing developments around the UK



Established in 1989, SBD plays a significant crime prevention role in the planning process to design out crime in a wide range of building sectors. It is part of the Police Crime Prevention Initiatives (PCPI), a police owned organisation that works on behalf of Police & Crime Commissioners and chief constables to deliver a wide range of crime reduction initiatives across the UK. They have already seen significant success, including a million homes built to SBD standards, resulting in an 87% reduction of crime rates.

SBD has many partner organisations, ranging from the Home Office, Ministry of Housing, communities and local government and the police service; through to local authorities, housing associations, developers and manufacturers. All organisations collectively work to develop a clear standard of regulations that can be applied across an entire development project, with the unrelenting goal of reducing crime across the UK.

## KEY DEVELOPMENT AREAS

SBD's product-based certification scheme is recognised across 30 crime categories focused on attack resistant crime prevention. There are product

guides that document requirements for all types of developments.

SBD compliance stretches across an array of property components, from fitted windows to external lighting units, with each element collectively contributing to a more secure development.

## IMPORTANCE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local councils, housing authorities and private developments are making it a planning condition to meet all SBD standards, as well as meeting the Building Regulations in approved document Part Q; subsequently ensuring the housing developments they deliver are safe and secure for residents. Working closely with SBD, they can be confident in the living accommodation offered due to the strict regulations established by the Police driven initiative.

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

It is vital to get the design right in the early stages of planning to design out crime by improving the physical security of buildings and incorporating crime prevention techniques. Manufacturers need to embrace the responsibility





of supporting these initiatives by ensuring that all solutions that leave their production line are compliant with SBD Regulations – if not specified correctly at the start of a project, retrofitting can be costly.

#### SBD ACCREDITED MANUFACTURER

To meet the SBD standard, products have to be subjected to vigorous testing and auditing by an accredited third party organisation. Only once tests are completed and approved, can an organisation carry the SBD logo.

For the select manufacturers who carry the SBD accreditation, it is an acknowledgement that their design and manufacturing process delivers robust and secure systems that installers can trust.

#### DOOR ENTRY AND ACCESS CONTROL: HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS

Door entry and access control systems integrate to protect and monitor access to residential and commercial developments. A critical element within SBD is the compliance, robustness, and security of a door entry solution.

A secure durable solution comprises a vandal resistant video door entry panel and an accompanying encrypted access control solution. In addition, access control platforms must have integrated activity log/data logging, that summarises visitor and resident activity across a system, and should be stored for at least 30 days – subject to General Data Protection Regulations.

#### SBD DOOR ENTRY AND ACCESS CONTROL REQUIREMENTS

The most up to date requirements from the SBD Homes 2019 section 27 incorporates different systems and levels of system to match the building size. Act 27.24 – which applies to 25+ dwelling residential properties specifically – include external vandal resistant door call panels with integrated panel cameras for facial recognition integrated to separate CCTV dome cameras which look across at the whole entrance with both video feeds displayed on the resident receiver. A secure lobby with video entry panel to minimise tailgating, only allowing permitted personnel access to dwelling areas is another option. Other

## SBD plays a significant crime prevention role in the planning process to design out crime in a wide range of building sectors

systems include access to the building via the use of a security encrypted key (e.g. fob, card, mobile device, key etc.), along with compartmentalisation of the building by use of a landing video call panel, access control and lift control. The ability to release the entrance doors from the dwelling room terminal and live audio/visual communication between the occupant and the visitor is also included under Act 27.24.

Additionally, doors must be supplied and tested to the relevant standards and DOCO requirement with the locking devices fitted as per the SBD test for LPS 2081 Security Rating B+, STS 201, LPS1175 SR2 (minimum), STS202 BR2 (minimum) and PAS 24:2016 in order to obtain the SBD accreditation.

#### MEETING THE STANDARDS

Royal Wharf on the banks of the Thames in London is a perfect example of how designing out crime standards can be achieved to deliver a development with SBD status. Encompassing 3,385 dwellings, shops, restaurants, and leisure facilities, this project was Europe's largest residential development when building commenced in 2019.

As the development phases progressed and design parameters shifted, the delivered system still had to be SBD compliant. They were able to do this via a door entry solution with full onsite concierge integration, which is present across the site. The system successfully manages the development, while maximising the safety and security of residents and properties, due to the site visibility and durability delivered by the door entry and access control solution.

*Matthew McTighe is product marketing coordinator at CAME UK*



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## Innovation of multi-sensor alarms continues with new product range

Innovation continues for Aico, the European Market Leader in Home Life Safety, as they launch two new products, the Ei660i and Ei660iRF multi-sensor fire alarms. These brand-new additions to Aico's 600 Series, boast all of the benefits of their award-winning multi-sensor fire alarm in a self-contained battery-powered unit.

With Aico striving to deliver products that align with their customers' requirements, the Ei660i and Ei660iRF were developed to fulfil the need of a battery-powered multi-sensor fire alarm within their product range.

The products are a complementary addition to the multi-sensors within Aico's mains-powered 3000 Series, and include the same technologically advanced heat and optical smoke sensors to offer total fire protection, with an increased resistance to false alarms.

Michael Wright, Product Development Manager at Aico comments: "Our new Ei660i and Ei660iRF models continue our innovation of multi-sensor alarms across our product range. The lithium battery-powered alarms complement our existing 3000 Series mains-powered multi-sensor alarms and provide users with improved



fire response and reduced risk of false alarms. We're delighted to be able to launch the products as part of our new 600 Series and provide users with our proven and award-winning multi-sensor technology across both mains and battery-powered alarm series."

The Ei660i is a stand-alone device, while the Ei660iRF includes built-in RadioLINK+ technology, offering wireless interconnection with compatible Aico alarms via radio frequency.

The new products have a range of additional benefits, including built-in dust compensation technology. The unique self-monitoring dust compensation mechanism allows the alarm to tolerate up to twice as much dust contamination than a conventional optical alarm. The optical sensor chamber continually self-monitors minute changes in dust levels, automatically recalibrating the alarm's trigger point when necessary to reduce false alarms.

Both the Ei660i and Ei660iRF also include Aico's award-winning AudioLINK+ technology, making it simple to get real-time data directly from the alarm head via a mobile app, reporting on information such as activations, sensor status and record of testing. To find out more about the Ei660i and Ei660iRF, please visit the website.

[www.aico.co.uk/series/600-series](http://www.aico.co.uk/series/600-series)



## 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.

0370 300 1240 [www.videxuk.com](http://www.videxuk.com)



# Key considerations when specifying smoke vents

Mark Baird from Bilco UK discusses how NSHEVs can be utilised to ensure the highest standards of safety for social housing and the key considerations that should be addressed to ensure successful specification



**N**atural Smoke and Heat Exhaust Ventilators (NSHEVs), more commonly known as smoke vents, provide essential ventilation in the event of a building fire. Installed in the roof, they open by sensors or remote control in response to exhaust smoke and noxious fumes.

Suitable for installation throughout social housing properties, the aim of a smoke vent is to make a dangerous situation safer for all individuals.

## DANGERS OF SMOKE INHALATION

While many may presume that the biggest danger of a fire are the flames, smoke inhalation can be far more dangerous and life threatening. Statistics from the UK Fire and Rescue Services stated that the most common cause of death for fire-related fatalities between April 2020 and March 2021 was being overcome by gas or smoke.

As a fire develops inside a building, it burns the oxygen in the air, removing most of the available oxygen as part of 'incomplete combustion', which in turn produces toxic and potentially deadly carbon monoxide.

When a fire ignites in an enclosed space the smoke rising from the fire gets trapped by the ceiling. It then begins to spread, forming an expanding layer that leaks into any gaps in the floors or walls. This can lead to individuals becoming disorientated, with their vision becoming increasingly clouded, hindering safe evacuation.

The installation of smoke vents in appropriate locations will protect occupants in the event of a fire by preventing the excessive build-up of smoke and noxious fumes. This subsequently reduces the risk of smoke inhalation, horizontal fire spread and secondary ignitions as the smoke is quickly exhausted, enabling fire-fighters to safely enter the building to tackle the blaze and building occupants to exit quickly.

## COMPLIANCE CHECK LIST

As a social housing provider, ensuring the right product is used in the correct context is paramount to not only ensuring it is fit for purpose, but is also compliant with relevant regulations and provides the highest levels of safety.





Suitable for installation throughout social housing properties, the aim of a smoke vent is to make a dangerous situation safer for all individuals



When specifying a smoke vent for a roof, it should be compliant with the Construction Products Regulation 305/2011, CE-marked with a Declaration of Conformity. It should also be manufactured to meet the demands of Building Regulations, Approved Document B, BS9999 and BS EN12101-2.

Choosing a smoke vent that meets all of these legislations will help to not only achieve compliance, but ensure the operational reliability and performance of the smoke vent throughout its lifetime.

The control of the smoke vent should also be considered, whether this is in the form of a dedicated management system or a solution integrated into a wider networked fire alarm system.

#### AESTHETIC CONSIDERATIONS

While the functionality and quality of the smoke vent will be the primary consideration, aesthetics can also be an important factor. Here a 'one size fits all approach' shouldn't be applied as there are a wide range of elements to choose from to ensure the product is tailored to meet the project's unique needs. Customisation may include elements such as hardware, paint finishes, curb liners, manual or automatic control units, open-close switches and rain and wind sensors.

While a NSHEV plays a pivotal role in fire protection by successfully exhausting smoke, for projects that require infrequent personnel access to the roof for maintenance, it is worth considering a smoke vent that can also be utilised as a roof access hatch.

By installing the smoke vent with the addition of a fixed vertical safety ladder, it can provide an adequate means of escape from the roof and offer access to contractors for infrequent maintenance.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Combining these functions into a single application, social housing providers also have the opportunity to take the proficiency of the installation even further, by choosing solutions that also act as a rooflight. This is particularly beneficial for social housing applications, where the installation provides the opportunity for natural light to enter the interior space, including corridors and stairwells.

This eliminates the requirements for multiple roof penetration, which can impact the overall thermal performance of the structure, as a significant proportion of heat is typically lost through the roof.

When specifying smoke vents for social housing applications, taking an alternative approach to specification that minimises roof penetrations, while addressing the individual requirements of each application, will ensure the solution is not only fit for purpose, but compliant with all relevant legislation.

*Mark Baird is sales operations manager at Bilco UK*



# What is the Golden Thread in the Building Safety Bill?

## WHAT IS THE BUILDING SAFETY BILL?

The Building Safety Bill was first proposed in 2019 as part of the response to the Grenfell tragedy, which laid bare issues contained within some British residential properties. The central goals of the Building Safety Bill were to reform the regulatory system for buildings and to prioritise the safety of those within them, particularly in high-rise buildings.

It sought to make clear where the responsibility rested at every stage of the construction and maintenance process, and to strengthen sanctions for those who failed to reach the legal standards. After several drafts, and a series of amendments, the bill was made law as the Building Safety Act in April 2022.

## WHAT IS THE GOLDEN THREAD WITHIN THE BUILDING SAFETY BILL?

First proposed within Dame Judith Hackitt's interim report following the Grenfell fire, the golden thread is designed as a consistent line of important safety information for all buildings, covering design, building, and management. This golden thread will need to be thorough and stored at contemporary digital standards, ensuring that the original design of the building is adhered to and that the building is safe for residents.

This information would be in the hands of the duty holder, usually the building's accountable person, and would need to be added to as necessary over a building's life cycle. Establishing, contributing to, and maintaining the golden thread would be a legal duty. The golden thread information would also be provided to a building safety regulator at key gateways.

## WHAT CONSTRUCTION INFORMATION WOULD BE COVERED BY THE GOLDEN THREAD?

The golden thread would be started during the planning stages and would be updated with all relevant information from the design and construction processes, including all planning around building regulations and fire safety. In the Building Safety Bill proposal, the golden thread would also be retroactive, with the accountable person in an existing building expected to start a golden thread with all information available to them. In the case of a new building, the golden thread would be handed to the responsible person after the building work was complete.

All information relevant to the safety of the building and those within it would need to be added to the golden thread. This includes all registrations and certifications, safety case reports, and mandatory occurrence reports. If a building was being refurbished, all documents relating to building control applications would need to be added.



## HOW DOES THE BUILDING SAFETY ACT INVOLVE THE GOLDEN THREAD?

The Building Safety Act is the final version of the Building Safety Bill, which was passed into law in April 2022. It contains differences from the various drafts of the Building Safety Bill, due to amendments during the consultation period. While the final version of the act does not specifically mention the golden thread as the Building Safety Bill and the Hackitt report both had, the central tenets of the idea remain in place.

The focus within the Building Safety Act is squarely on high-risk buildings (HRBs), which means residential buildings over 18 metres or seven stories, and also includes hospitals and care homes. Under the act, the owners of a building must be able to prove that safety has been at the forefront of the planning, construction, and long-term maintenance processes, and that all safety risks are being considered. This information will need to be maintained digitally. The standards required to meet these new regulations will be considerably more thorough than under previous laws.

## WHAT ELSE IS IN THE BUILDING SAFETY ACT?

Alongside the requirements to have a golden thread of information, the Building Safety Act covers other key areas. Funding for vitally needed building changes is a key element, particularly the replacement of dangerous cladding. For cladding, there is a fund available specifically, the Building Safety Fund (BSF) which has over £5 billion available to replace non-ACM cladding. Other payments could be the responsibility of original developers, landlords, or leaseholders.

## HOW SENTRY DOORS ENSURES GOLDEN THREAD COMPLIANCE

We have recently launched a golden thread

solution on all of our fire doors, partnering with leading fire door compliance solutions Door Data Systems to install a data tag within each door during manufacture. This means that every fire door produced by Sentry Doors will have a permanent digital record, easily accessed via an app. This full record of manufacture, installation, and maintenance will follow a fire door through its lifespan, ensuring that the accountable person within a building has easy access to the golden thread, and will be able to update it with any vital information as needed. Find out more about our golden thread compliance at [sentrydoors.co.uk/golden-thread](https://sentrydoors.co.uk/golden-thread)

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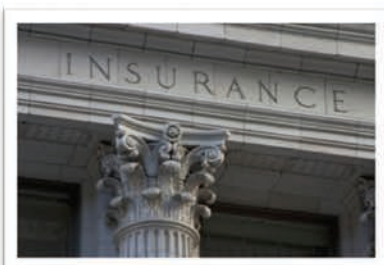
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