

HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

DEC/JAN 2023



Landmark prosecution
of Margate landlord

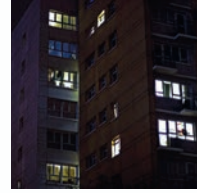
Ombudsman criticises
landlords over noise
complaints

HA tenant endured
leak for 18 months

Rentals shortage
fuels homelessness
pressures

£1.6bn cost
of temporary
accommodation

Surge in no fault
evictions



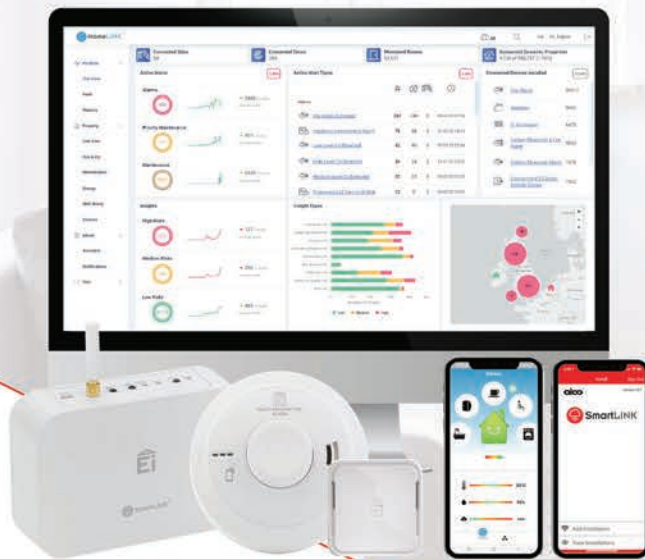
Smoking in the hot seat in balcony fires report

A report has revealed that smoking is the leading cause of a 46% year-on-year increase in balcony fires. In this issue, Richard Izzard from construction materials supplier AliDeck looks at what the findings mean for the sector. See report inside.



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The HomeLINK App

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Editor's comment

Delivering positive changes in 2023 will not be easy, but we should accept nothing less



Patrick Mooney,
News Editor

This has not been a particularly good year for the housing sector and there is a very real risk that we enter 2023 with many difficult challenges unresolved and in urgent need of fixing. The tragic case of Awaab Ishak, who died at the age of two from the mould spores in his parents' damp flat in Rochdale, is the latest tragedy to make us question what has gone wrong in the social housing sector. The coroner at his inquest referred to Awaab's untimely death as a defining moment for the sector. While it may be alarmist for some in social housing to say they are facing an existential crisis, it is certainly true that there is no room for complacency and some fundamental changes are necessary.

The reports of disrepair, poor customer service, repeated instances of properties suffering from water leaks, condensation, mould and little or no insulation for tackling noise or extremes of heat, poor handling of complaints and weak communications just keep on coming. The cases that ITV News first reported on in early 2021 have not gone away. If anything we are hearing of more troubling cases where tenants have been badly let down and the Ombudsman is getting busier as more residents turn to the watchdog in desperation or frustration. The fact that a requirement for better training of staff and professional standards is being legislated for is surely a sad indictment of the sector.

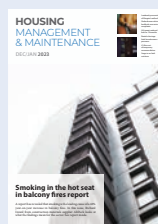
Of course not all landlords are delivering bad services, indeed there are many really good ones (in both rental sectors) with many talented and committed staff. High levels of customer satisfaction would tend to bear that out. But the fact remains that there are worrying issues with the culture in many organisations, where not enough priority is given to providing good services and a good product. Not enough staff walk in the shoes of their customers. Many landlords are now reporting on problems of their own with staff retention and recruitment, so things could get worse for a while yet. It seems that many housing officers are voting with their feet and leaving the sector, similar to the problem being reported in other public services like education, health and the care sectors.

An obvious question but one that is perhaps not asked often enough is – are the Boards and other key decision makers doing a good enough job? Are they asking the right questions, which enable them to monitor what is really going on and are they managing their organisations competently and with the interests of their tenants at the core of their work? And what about looking at their quality, training and professionalism? After all if it's going to be a requirement for their staff...then surely similar standards need to be applied to Boards and the councillors in decision-making roles.

Delivering high quality services is, of course, a difficult business when additional duties (such as the decarbonisation of existing stock) is not accompanied by the resources to pay for them, but this cannot excuse the poor service and continuing stigmatisation of tenants. It is over five years since the Grenfell Tower tragedy and yet the problems being reported by tenants in the immediate aftermath of the fire are still being experienced now! The cost of making residential buildings safe and compliant with new standards will run into the billions of pounds. Next year's rent increase will not be providing all of the extra resources required to pay for this work, even if development programmes are cut right back. Now is the time for chief executives, many of them on six-figure salaries, to step up and find creative solutions to the sector's problems. Now more than ever chief executives need to show they are not too remote from the front line and they can deliver high quality services to tenants. If they can't, then people might conclude that social housing has lost its way and the executives may find themselves being replaced.

After a Summer and Autumn of madness in the world of politics with even more churn than usual in housing minister posts, much is now expected of Michael Gove in his second term. He returned to the cabinet after four months away and he needs to focus on delivery. Tackling the homelessness crisis is probably his biggest problem and it is strange to think that the measures which worked so well during the lockdowns, were quickly jettisoned and we are back to square one. At this time of year it is normal practice to end columns like this with a season's greeting to readers and wish that the New Year brings good news and a change in our collective fortunes. This year more than most we could do with some reasons to celebrate.

Patrick Mooney



On the cover...

A report has revealed that smoking is the leading cause of a 46% year-on-year increase in balcony fires. Richard Izzard looks at what the findings mean for the sector. See page 27.

Mould in Rochdale flat caused boy's death, coroner rules

In a finding that could have widespread repercussions for landlords across the country, a coroner has ruled that a two-year-old boy died as a result of a severe respiratory condition caused by prolonged exposure to mould in his home.

Delivering a narrative conclusion, the Manchester North senior coroner Joanne Kearsley said ventilation in the one-bedroom flat where Awaab Ishak lived with his parents, was not effective.

"This was a direct contributing factor in the development of the mould," Ms Kearsley said. "It is acknowledged by Rochdale Boroughwide Housing and I find as a matter of fact that a more proactive response should have been taken to treat the mould which was present."

Ms Kearsley said RBH were not "proactive" and asked: "How in the UK in 2020 does a two-year-old child die as a result of exposure to mould?" She said the case "should be a defining moment for the housing sector".

The coroner said she will be writing a report for the prevention of future deaths and will write to the Minister for Housing and Health Secretary to raise issues. Kearsley said mould in properties was not particular to Rochdale, or only a social housing problem. She supported a call for the government's Decent Homes Standard to be strengthened to include damp and mould.

The Housing Ombudsman has been increasingly warning social landlords about their treatment of conditions in tenants' homes, including condensation, damp and mould.

The inquest heard that Awaab had consistently suffered from cold and respiratory issues

throughout his short life. His father repeatedly raised the issue with Rochdale Boroughwide Housing but no action was taken.

Ms Kearsley added that Mr Abdullah had "some understanding and ability to converse in English", but his wife had "very little", a fact that was important as it impacted "the ability of professionals to engage in discussions with the family and the ability of the family to explain any worries or concerns they had and to understand advice".

Rochdale Coroner's Court heard Awaab's father Faisal Abdullah - who came from Sudan to live in the UK in 2016 and was joined by his wife Aisha Amin a year later - reported mould developing in the one-bedroom flat to RBH in 2017 and was told to paint over it, which he did on several occasions.

The following year, Awaab was born prematurely at 31 weeks, but there had been no concerns from any health professionals about his development. In June 2020, Mr Abdullah instructed solicitors and initiated a claim over the recurring mould issue, but the landlord's policy meant any repairs would not be done until an agreement had been reached.

WAKE UP CALL

The court heard Awaab was taken to Rochdale Urgent Care Centre on 19 December that year suffering shortness of breath and transferred to Royal Oldham Hospital before being discharged.

He deteriorated the next day and his parents were advised by the community children's nursing team to take him back to the urgent care centre. He then went into respiratory arrest and cardiac arrest while being transferred to hospital and died after arriving there.

After the hearing Awaab's parents said via their solicitor: "We cannot tell you how many health professionals we've cried in front of and RBH staff we have pleaded to, expressing concern for the conditions ourselves and Awaab have been living in."

"We shouted out as loudly as we could, but despite making all of those efforts, every night we would be coming back to the same problem." They also called on RBH to "stop being racist" and providing "unfair treatment" to people moving to the UK from abroad, refugees and asylum seekers.

RBH chief executive Gareth Swarbrick responded by saying his organisation would continue to "learn hard lessons". He said he was "truly devastated about Awaab's death and the things we got wrong. We know that nothing we can say will bring Awaab back or be of any consolation to his family."

"We didn't recognise the level of risk to a little boy's health from the mould in the family's home [and] we allowed a legal disrepair process, widely used in the housing sector, to get in the way of promptly tackling the mould."

In response to the family's comments that RBH needed to "stop discriminating and stop being racist" against refugees or asylum seekers, he said: "As a community owned organisation we support the diverse communities of Rochdale."

"We are proud of the work we do with all our tenants." He said Awaab's death "needs to be a wake-up call for everyone in housing, social care and health", adding: "We will take responsibility for sharing what we have learnt about the impact to health of damp, condensation and mould with the social housing sector and beyond."

Huge jump in 'no-fault evictions' prompts calls to renew UK-wide ban

Close to 20,000 households in England were made homeless by landlords using Section 21 notices in 2021/22, up from almost 9,000 in the previous year according to official figures.

Pressure is growing on the Housing Secretary Michael Gove to take action, with the former head of the civil service, Sir Bob Kerslake, warning of a "catastrophic" homelessness crisis unless the Government reintroduces the eviction ban that protected tenants during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Section 21 notices are allowed under the 1988 Housing Act and permit property owners to evict tenants at two months' notice without giving a reason. Housing rights campaigners allege they are often used in response to tenants'

complaints about property conditions or rent rises.

The Government has promised since 2019 to end the practice and it has included this in draft legislation, the Renters Reform bill, but there have been delays in its passage through Parliament. Under Liz Truss it looked like the draft bill was being severely watered down, or might be axed altogether, but Gove's return to the cabinet looks to have ended those fears.

The proposal is that a tenancy can end only if the tenant ends it, or if the landlord has a valid ground for possession. New grounds will be created to allow landlords to sell or move close family members into the property and grounds concerning persistent rent arrears and anti-social behaviour will also be strengthened.

The latest figures show no-fault evictions are now causing more homelessness than in 2018/19 and 2019/20. This is understood to be largely down to the fact that landlords were prevented from using the eviction system for much of the pandemic.

The figures also show a 24 per cent increase in the number of households with children asking for help from councils to prevent them becoming homeless, compared with the previous year, and notable increases in the number of working people and black and Asian people presenting as homeless.

Overall, however, the number of households threatened with homelessness remained below the pre-Covid level in 2019/20. A spokesperson for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities said: "A fair deal for renters remains a priority for the Government. We are giving councils £316m to tackle homelessness and make sure families are not left without a roof over their heads."

Regulator identifies key risks facing social housing sector in 2022 and beyond

The Regulator of Social Housing has set out its view of the key risks and challenges facing the social housing sector and some of the actions registered providers should be taking to manage those risks.

Against a very challenging and fast-moving economic backdrop, the Sector Risk Profile highlights a number of specific risks for social housing providers that boards need to manage in meeting the regulator's standards. Some areas of risk are also relevant to councillors where their local authority owns and manages its own homes.

In the current economic climate with the highest inflation for 40 years, a deep recession looming for 1 – 2 years and a squeeze on household incomes, this could probably have been boiled down to getting through the next couple of years intact, while supporting tenants and delivering on legal commitments and regulatory standards.

Fiona MacGregor, chief executive at the regulator, said: "Providers must take a strategic approach to managing the significant risks we have identified in our Sector Risk Profile and act appropriately to maintain their continued financial viability.

"Boards and councillors are the custodians of people's homes, and it's absolutely vital that tenants' homes, safety and the delivery of essential landlord

services are not put at risk." The key risks are identified as:

- The impact of high inflation
- Cost of living crisis
- Tenant safety
- Delivering landlord services
- Investing in stock to meet quality, safety and decarbonisation commitments
- Development of new homes

The report shows that providers face substantial financial pressures, with high inflation levels impacting on operating costs and the cost of debt also rising at the same time as increased cost of living pressures on tenants, a proposed rent cap, and a weakening housing market.

To maintain financial resilience, providers need to continue responding appropriately to the changing conditions. Boards and councillors will need to have a clear sense of their priorities and make trade-offs. They must ensure that their mitigating actions are strategic and timely, underpinned by stress testing and robust planning, and communicated effectively to stakeholders.

Alongside their financial viability, tenant safety and the delivery of landlord services are key responsibilities which boards must continue

"It's absolutely vital that tenants' homes, safety and the delivery of essential landlord services are not put at risk."

Fiona MacGregor

to prioritise. Providers are planning significant investment in existing homes to meet quality, building safety, and decarbonisation commitments. This must be underpinned by robust data on stock condition, a clear understanding of policy changes in these areas, and properly engaging with and listening to tenants. Boards will also need to recognise that delaying investment in existing stock could increase cost pressures over the long term and damage the sector's reputation.

Demand for new homes remains high even as the economics of development become more uncertain. Providers will need to consider carefully how to assess new development, ensuring that risks are tightly managed, including investment in market-sale homes which could affect providers' core social housing business.

Mayor demands higher standards from social housing landlords in London

The Mayor of London has warned the capital's affordable housing providers that they could lose access to funding if they fail to maintain their properties at the high standards tenants deserve.

While Parliament is currently debating new legislation on strengthening consumer protection, the Mayor is clear that Londoners should expect high standards immediately. Sadiq Khan is calling for leadership from the Government, with additional affordable housing funding and reforms, such as a Commissioner for social housing residents, to drive better conditions.

A growing number of councils and housing associations operating in London have been embarrassed by exposures in the media of poor repairs and complaint handling, while the regulator has also served regulatory notices over health and safety failings affecting thousands of tenants' homes.

The Mayor's warning follows a letter to City Hall's housing investment partners sent from the Deputy Mayor for Housing & Residential Development, Tom Copley. In this letter Mr Copley set out the actions City Hall will take if the Regulator issues either a non-compliant grade or a Regulatory Notice against a housing provider. Both notices indicate that a provider has breached a consumer or economic regulatory standard.

In extreme circumstances, the GLA may limit access to funding to a specific set of projects, including those already underway, and in the most severe cases, withdraw all funding and revoke investment partner status.

The Mayor of London's new £4bn 2021-26 Affordable Homes Programme already requires higher standards on design, safety and environmental performance for new homes than

those funded outside London. The Regulator has a requirement to assure these standards are maintained in the long-term where they exceed the Decent Homes Standard benchmark.

The GLA is also introducing additional scrutiny of the housing maintenance track-records of newly qualifying investment partners, and in the requalification process for partners who have had their investment status restricted.

Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said: "Most social housing in London is well managed and maintained. However, this is unfortunately not always the case and I am determined to use my funding powers to drive up standards in both new build and existing homes. We owe it to all Londoners to provide better, safer, and fairer housing in the capital.

"London is building some of the most impressive new affordable homes in the country, but it is vital that existing residents experience high standards too. I will continue to call on the Government to also take responsibility for pushing for higher standards, including by making much needed additional funding available."



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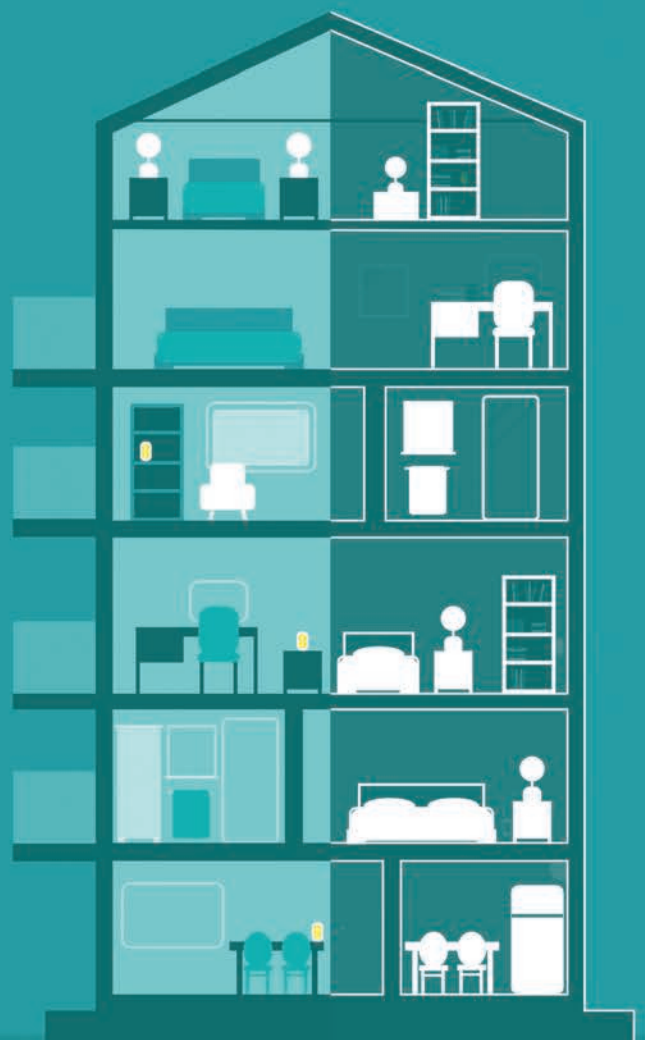
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England's private rented sector could top 5 million homes by 2025

Research by a specialist rental platform has led it to forecast that the private rented sector will continue to grow and could reach 5.2 million homes in the next couple of years.

Over the past ten years, the number of private rentals in England has risen by 18.8 per cent, increasing from 4.1 million homes to just under 4.9 million.

The fastest growth in this time period has been in the South West where the sector's stock level has increased by 31.2 per cent from 404,768 homes to 530,975.

The West Midlands market has grown by 25.4 per cent, in London the market has grown by 21.7 per cent, and in the North East, the number of PRS homes is 17.3 per cent higher than it was a decade ago.

Based on these historic growth trends, Ocaso has forecast the Private Rented Sector will grow by a further 6.4 per cent between now and 2025. This is equivalent to an additional 313,906 homes, which will bring the national total to just under 5.2 million.

Regionally, the most new homes are expected to be added in London (68,336), the South East (47,500), and North West (38,075). Meanwhile, the smallest increase in market size is forecast to come from the North East where just 13,291 new homes will be added by 2025.

Sales and Marketing Director at Ocaso, Jack Godby, commented: "The Government is trying to dampen the Private Rented Sector by making it less and less cost effective to purchase additional homes for investment purposes such as buy-to-let. But there is still a huge need for rented homes in England - not every can or wants to buy their own home.

Average monthly rents in Great Britain hit record highs

The growing gap between the supply and demand for private rentals is pushing monthly charges up to their highest levels across all parts of the country and creating fierce competition between tenants looking for a home.

Increases in mortgage rates, particularly for first time buyers, and fewer mortgages being available since the Kwartend mini-budget has meant many aspiring buyers are having to remain as renters for longer than they planned.

According to figures from Rightmove the average monthly private rent in Great Britain is now £1,162, up 11 per cent on a year ago, and up by 3.2 per cent since the Summer. This is only the third time that rents have risen by 3 per cent or more in a three-month period.

The highest average monthly rent as always is in London and now stands at £2,343, up by 16.1 per cent on a year ago. However, many of the biggest year on year increases have recently taken place outside of the capital.

Particular hot spots in the rental markets have recorded annual increases of up to and over 20 per cent, with the biggest jumps since 2021 recorded at: Newbury (up 22.2pc to £1,226); Manchester (up 20.5pc to £1,157); Cardiff (up 19.6pc to £1,041); Sale (up 18.8pc to £1,037); Wilmslow (up 18.3pc to £1,142); Edinburgh (up 18.0pc to £1,182) and Torquay (up 17.7pc to £899 a month).

Some good news is that in almost every region of Great Britain, with the exception of London, there are more homes available to rent now than there were earlier in the year. Sadly this is not easing the problem as the number of properties becoming available is still not keeping up with the growing number of people looking to move.

The widespread shortage of available properties has sparked competition between tenants and seen a rise in the phenomenon of bidding wars, "tenant auditions" and landlords demanding six to 12 months rent in advance.

Far more homes will need to come onto the market and be made available for rent before the current levels of demand can be met. According to the lettings and property agency Foxtons an average of 29 renters are competing for every property in London - slightly down on the 33 applicants per new listing in the late Summer - the highest levels seen for at least three years

The market is seeing lots of home-movers looking to rent homes in, or close to, cities across Great Britain. During the pandemic, many people chose to move to coastal towns and the countryside, but there is now a reversal of that trend with cities like Manchester, Cardiff and Edinburgh among the areas with the fastest rising rents.

Studio flats have overtaken one-beds as the



Some good news is that in almost every region of Great Britain, with the exception of London, there are more homes available to rent now than there were earlier in the year

most in-demand flat type for renters, with agents suggesting stretched budgets and the returning popularity of city centres are contributing to the shift. There are now four times as many tenants looking for a studio flat as there are studio flats available, a 71 per cent increase on a year ago.

John O'Malley, CEO at Pacitti Jones in Glasgow, says: "In essence younger professionals want the same things as they always wanted - to go out and have a good time - and this means being back in the heart of our cities and enjoying the social amenities available."

And it's not just the younger generation looking to live in vibrant city centre locations: "The dramatic rise in the cost of living means that we are now starting to see older people downsizing to apartments to reduce household bills. And this is something we expect to see more of," said O'Malley.

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Most landlords are wrongly treating noise nuisance complaints as the result of anti social behaviour

A fundamental unfairness in the social housing sector's approach to noise complaints sees most of the issues treated as anti-social behaviour issues, even when they concern general household noise.

This is the central message in the latest Spotlight report from the Ombudsman, which reviewed more than 800 noise related cases dealt with over three years, together with insight from 374 responses to its call for evidence plus interviews with front line staff and residents of some individual landlords.

After faulty or long-running repairs, problems with noise are one of the most complained about issues raised with the Ombudsman, with tenants recording very high levels of dis-satisfaction with how their landlords have dealt with cases.

The Ombudsman is now calling for the sector's response to noise nuisance to be strengthened. It wants to see landlords developing strategies for handling non-statutory noise seriously, sensitively and proportionately. Issues such as poor building design or construction and a lack of noise dampening attributes such as anti-vibration mats under washing machines need to be considered.

During its investigation, the Ombudsman found the maladministration rate for non-statutory noise complaints was high at 62 per cent in 2021/22 compared to the rate across all noise cases at 43 per cent.

It found that noise transference is often viewed through the lens of ASB by landlords. Treating the noise as something it's not, is unfair for both the complainant and the complained about. It is also harder for the landlord to make consistent and reasonable decisions if it does not have the right framework for all types of noise reports.

The Spotlight report sets out how noise nuisance can easily escalate, entrench and expand into other

issues, leading to a deeper sense of dis-satisfaction. It also highlights the perception of bias from residents that their reports of noise were being dismissed because of their circumstances such as having complained before or being elderly.

No evidence of actual bias was found but it reinforces the importance of landlords being sensitive to the tone of communications as well as consistently following their policy in all cases.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES FOUND

The investigation identified some good practice from landlords, such as information leaflets given to new residents explaining the common trigger points for neighbour disagreements, and led to a set of 32 recommendations including:

- A call for the Decent Homes standard to be revised to fully reflect the causes that can result in residents experiencing noise nuisance. By focusing exclusively on external noise, and primarily noise from vehicles or factories, it does not reflect modern living for most residents.
- Updating void standards to ensure that carpets are not removed unless in poor condition and hard flooring is removed when there have been reports of noise linked to the property, that properties have adequate insulation from transference noise and anti-vibration mats are fitted into the washing machine space as standard.
- Adopting a proactive good neighbourhood management policy, distinct to the ASB policy, with clear options for maintaining good neighbourhood relationships, such as mediation and information sharing, and reviewing the presence of staff on estates.
- Adopting a triage methodology to identify if a

noise report should be handled under the ASB policy or the neighbourhood management policy, and reviewing ASB policies to ensure they are realistic and practicable.

- Ensuring that residents who make noise reports are given information about their right to make a complaint if they are dissatisfied with the landlord's proposal for handling the situation or the actions taken to address the situation.

Richard Blakeway, Housing Ombudsman, said:

"Noise is a significant driver of complaints after repairs, and it costs. It costs individuals their mental health and well-being and it costs landlords in protracted and often futile interventions, multi-agency liaison and staff morale. These costs are underestimated and may be avoidable, to some extent, by adopting the different approaches set out in this report.

"The unintentional offence caused by describing the noise as 'low level' because it is seen through the prism of ASB – when it is causing distress to the resident – could be avoided, as would residents completing countless diary sheets to no avail.

"We recognise that landlords are under increasing financial pressure and the role of sound insulation should be considered as part of wider strategies. Few of our recommendations present a significant cost. Rather, our practical recommendations could be cost effective, as well as providing better outcomes."

The report details the responses to the call for evidence. It reveals 85 per cent of landlords use mediation but only 29 per cent of residents who responded had it offered to them. Additionally, 66 per cent of landlords use noise monitoring equipment whereas only 7 per cent of residents had it fitted.

Cost of temporary accommodation in England rises to £1.6bn

Spending on temporary accommodation for homeless households in England rose by more than four per cent to reach £1.6 billion last year. According to the housing charity Shelter this was an increase of 61 per cent compared with five years ago.

A quarter of the total bill, some £407 million was spent on emergency B&B hotels and hostels, with spending on B&Bs alone increasing by 20 per cent in the past five years. The bill included £160 million

spent on administering temporary accommodation by local authorities.

Commenting on the figures, Shelter's chief executive Polly Neate said: "It defies all logic to shell out over £1.6 billion on grim B&Bs and grotty flats, instead of helping people to keep hold of their home in the first place."

She added: "Allowing homelessness to rise unchecked during the cost of living crisis will only cost more in the long run. The Government

must unfreeze housing benefit now so people can pay their rent. And to end homelessness altogether, it needs to build decent, truly affordable social homes."

Temporary accommodation is mainly funded by central government spending, but some homeless households also have to contribute towards the costs through household income.

Shelter said its own research, which surveyed homeless households in temporary accommodation, showed that a third (33 per cent) said they have had to turn to foodbanks. In addition, around half (47 per cent) said they have had to borrow money to cover the costs of their temporary accommodation.

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Ombudsman issues special report on Clarion following investigation

The Ombudsman has issued a special report on the country's biggest housing association following concerns about the social landlord's response to users' complaints about damp, mould and pest control in their homes.

Based on a review of 13 investigations at Clarion featuring issues of leaks, repairs and rodent infestation and determined over a six-month period up to June 2022, the report looked at cases involving residents living in eight local authority areas.

Three-quarters of the findings across the cases were service failure or maladministration, including five findings of severe maladministration, and there were five findings of reasonable redress or no maladministration.

The report identified five key findings and sets out a series of recommendations:

- Damp and mould – the landlord's approach was often inconsistent which seriously impacted residents. It did not have a sufficiently robust and detailed policy in place, and the policy aims that it did have were not met in practice. Recurring themes in the majority of relevant cases include a failure to accurately diagnose the cause within a reasonable timeframe, poor communication and failures to update residents on inspection findings and the actions to be taken. The recommendations are focused on ensuring that policies are published and shared with residents, including reviewing its practices on how to successfully gain access to properties.
- Pest control – there was no evidence of wider service failure in the landlord's overall approach but some weaknesses found in its response to individual cases. The landlord should ensure that early action is taken where there is any indication that reports of pests may not be solely within the resident's own property, or could be caused by disrepair.
- Complaint handling – evidence of service failures were found that are indicative of wider service

failures in the landlord's handling of formal complaints, with poor complaint handling often adding to existing delays in addressing the service provision issue. Four of the five severe maladministration findings related to complaint handling. The report recommends the landlord produce an action plan to improve the timeliness, quality and consistency of its complaint responses and the clarity of the information available to residents about its complaint handling procedures.

- Compensation – the landlord offered sizeable compensation in two of the cases with severe maladministration findings. This practice at the end of the complaints procedure may be appropriate but should not be routine. The landlord should review where it has made repeated, significant compensation offers to identify any improvements that could facilitate earlier resolution of complaints.
- Record keeping and communication – Poor record keeping and communication were recurring themes in the majority of the cases, both in the response to the service request and subsequent handling of the complaint. The landlord should ensure that a resident has a clear point of contact when dealing with ongoing issues.

Clarion engaged positively and actively with the Ombudsman during the investigation. It responded to and acted on the orders and recommendations made in the 13 individual cases involved in the investigation.

Richard Blakeway, Housing Ombudsman, said: "This investigation has brought a focus to the key weaknesses we identified and makes recommendations for the landlord to further learn and improve.

"The fact remains that residents had to raise formal complaints to prompt action from the landlord and the complaint handling was then often

Clarion engaged positively and actively with the Ombudsman during the investigation. It responded to and acted on the orders and recommendations made in the 13 individual cases involved in the investigation.

slow and ineffective, adding to their dissatisfaction. While the landlord has regularly self-assessed against our Complaint Handling Code, this has not led to significant adjustments to its published policy.

"The landlord should consider how it achieves a positive complaint handling culture, developing the required leadership to promote this approach across the organisation. It should also involve residents in reviewing the content of this report and addressing the recommendations."

The aim of the report is to provide insight to help the landlord strengthen its approach to damp and mould and pest control, as well as complaint handling, to help extend fairness to other residents and help prevent complaints in future. It also aims to help other landlords identify potential learning to improve their own services and is part of our wider work to monitor landlord performance and stimulate learning from complaints.

It is only the second time the Ombudsman has used a power dating from September 2020 giving it the ability to conduct systemic or thematic investigations beyond an individual complaint or landlord.

Sefton council extends its licensing scheme for private rentals

After a three-month consultation exercise earlier this year Sefton Council on Merseyside is extending its Selective and Additional (HMO)

Licensing schemes for private rented homes until February 2028.

Sefton Council introduced Licensing in March 2018 and has used the scheme to improve the management of privately rented properties, including the removal of over 3,000 serious health and safety hazards from licensed properties. These have included fire safety, electrical hazards, damp & mould and excess cold.

Any property owner who lets a rental property or HMO in Sefton without a licence from March next year, will be liable to a fine of up to £30,000.

Councillor Trish Hardy, Sefton Council's Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing

said: "Having these Licensing schemes in place has helped the Council to step in and deal with thousands of hazards being faced by private rented tenants across Sefton.

"The vast majority of cases are resolved informally by us working with the landlord, but we do not hesitate to use formal enforcement powers when necessary.

"Sefton Council's approach is very much at odds with recent reports implying councils across the country are 'failing' private renters by failing to use enforcement powers and I am pleased we are continuing the Licensing schemes for a further five years from 2023."

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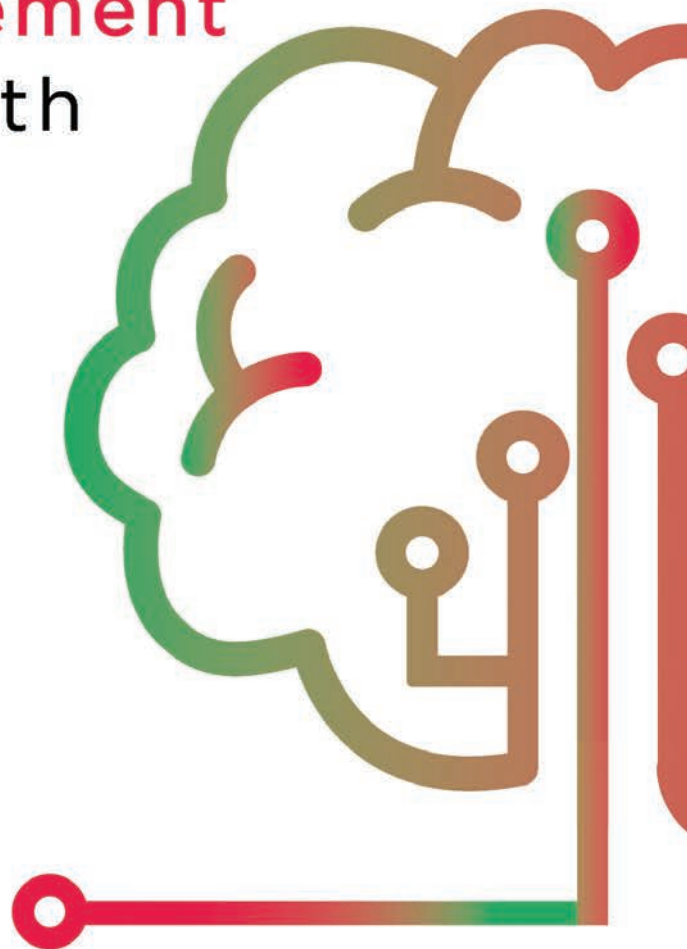
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Two more councils breach Home Standard over safety failings

Another two council landlords have been found in breach of the Regulator's Home Standard after reporting themselves for health and safety failings involving thousands of tenants' homes.

A regulatory notice was handed to Great Yarmouth Borough Council in Norfolk over a variety of failings, including it completing insufficient fire risk assessments (FRAs) and having overdue fire risk actions.

An internal audit by the council identified failings across fire, gas, electrical, asbestos and water safety services. This included a lack of reconciliation between management systems, meaning the council did not have up-to-date records of health and safety compliance.

The regulator was not taking statutory action at this stage, as it felt the council understands the work it needs to undertake to rectify the problems. However, because of the seriousness of the issues and the number of tenants potentially affected, this meant a breach of the Home Standard had occurred.

A recent fire safety management review commissioned by the council found the FRAs in place were "neither suitable nor sufficient" and could not be relied upon. It also identified a small number of high-risk actions overdue for at least six months. The council is now completing almost 200 new FRAs for all of its stock.

The council also found checks for water hygiene and asbestos were not always fully completed or marked as completed in records. It found that 180 properties had not had electrical inspections within the target date of every five years. An action plan is now in place and all outstanding work should be completed by the summer of 2023.

Newark and Sherwood District Council in Nottinghamshire also received a regulatory notice after an internal investigation found overdue gas inspections for more than 1,000 properties, representing nearly 20 per cent of the council's housing stock.

Although the inspections were typically overdue for a "relatively short period of time", because of the seriousness of the issues and the number of tenants potentially affected, the regulator concluded there was a risk of "serious detriment" to tenants during this period.

Regulator urges landlords to prepare early for new tenant satisfaction measures



Housing associations and councils are being urged to get ready for collecting the new range of tenant satisfaction measures ahead of their introduction from April 2023.

The biggest change to the measures was clearly separating out how satisfied tenants were that their home is safe, from their satisfaction it is also well maintained.

This used to be a single question but in the light of concerns over the safety of residential buildings post-Grenfell and the high profile reports of poorly maintained homes that have appeared in the media in the past couple of years, it was inevitable that these would be measured separately.

Among other changes made, the Regulator has clarified the definition of several TSMs, including the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales, complaints relative to the size of the landlord, and safety checks. The definition of repairs has been amended to include emergency as well as non-emergency repairs.

The definition of anti-social behaviour cases was amended to exclude domestic abuse to reflect government guidance. The Regulator will consider further how to monitor compliance with regulatory requirements concerning domestic abuse.

The Regulator of Social Housing finalised the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) following a consultation earlier this year, which received over 1,000 responses. In all there are 22 measures covering five themed areas of repairs, building safety, resident engagement, complaints and neighbourhood management.

Ten measures will be collected directly by landlords with 12 covered by tenant surveys. It is possible that electrical safety checks and a measure for the standard of communal areas will be added at a later date.

While social landlords will need to collect data from next April, their first annual submissions will not be due until Summer 2024, with the first collective report published in the Autumn.

The measures are intended to enable residents to scrutinise their landlord and hold them to account and provide a source of intelligence to the Regulator on whether landlords are meeting the regulatory standards. TSMs will be used alongside other tools to gain assurance from social housing providers.

The new TSMs will be used by the regulator along with other tools to scrutinise landlords across a range of areas and gain assurance from social housing providers.

A spokesman for the National Housing Federation, said: "We know some members will be concerned about some measures being used in a way that doesn't reflect the context they operate in. The Regulator has acknowledged that care will need to be taken in interpreting the results of some measures and says that its regulatory view of providers' performance will be based on a range of sources of assurance, not the TSM data alone.

"We will work with NHF members to understand the final measures and requirements in preparation for the implementation of the TSMs from April 2023."

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Fears grow for a Ukrainian refugees homelessness crisis

Government Ministers are being warned they need to act quickly to prevent a homelessness crisis among Ukrainian refugees in the New Year, exacerbating an already difficult situation over the supply of rental properties.

More than 130,000 people were resettled in the UK, mostly by becoming guests of British families under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. However, many of the Ukrainians have come to the end of their initial six-month stays and are having difficulty in extending their accommodation with their original host families, or in finding new places to stay.

With the refugees being given visas to stay for up to three years, the Government's plan was for Ukrainians to either rent their own homes in the private rental sector or to "rematch" with other hosts. Despite a small growth in the total number of private rentals, the sector is already struggling to keep up with demand from the domestic population.

Increases in mortgage rates are forcing many potential first time buyers to put off their plans to purchase and are continuing with renting. And local authorities who are responsible for overseeing the scheme say they are struggling to find new hosts to take in the refugees.

The Local Government Association, the national representative body for councils, said that they were "deeply concerned" about the growing number of Ukrainians presenting as homeless. "In particular, the significant rise in the number of those who

Council leaders and charities are calling on the Government to establish a national move-on programme so that the Ukrainian guests and their hosts are not left in limbo. There are also calls for payments to hosts to increase, to compensate them for rising costs caused by energy price increases

arrived through the Homes for Ukraine scheme," Councillor James Jamieson, chairman of the association, said.

The District Councils Network, which represents 183 mostly rural local authorities, said that it had received many reports of hosts deciding not to rematch. And an ONS survey of nearly 18,000 hosts found that 25 per cent of sponsors said they only wanted to provide accommodation for six months or less.

Council leaders and charities are calling on the Government to establish a national move-on programme so that the Ukrainian guests and their hosts are not left in limbo. There are also calls for payments to hosts to increase, to compensate them for rising costs caused by energy price increases and the highest rate of inflation in over 40 years.

By Christmas, about 14,000 Ukrainians are expected to have come to the end of their stay and if they cannot find another host or private accommodation then they will be homeless. Latest figures show that over 2,000 Ukrainians have

presented to councils as homeless, many of them are households containing children.

At the moment, 4,000 Ukrainians are looking for sponsors, according to the Ukrainian Sponsorship Pathway, a charity set up to support the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Figures compiled by the District Councils Network found that the highest ratio of refugees to local residents were in small, mainly rural areas, with South Cambridgeshire, South Oxfordshire, Chichester, Waverley and Wealden having the largest numbers on a proportional basis.

A government spokesperson said: "We have protected more than 136,600 Ukrainians since Putin's invasion and the vast majority of these arrivals are settling in well.

"ONS survey results show the majority of sponsors want to stay on beyond the initial six months. All arrivals are able to work, claim benefits and we're giving councils £10,500 per person to cover any additional costs, including emergency accommodation if needed."

Number of people sleeping rough in capital returning to pre-Covid levels

More than 3,600 people were found sleeping on London's streets between June and September according to an official count, representing a 24 per cent rise in the past year, as charities say 'hard won' progress is being lost.

More than half were found sleeping rough for the first time by outreach teams – 35 per cent more than the same time last year – as street homelessness in London heads back towards pre-pandemic levels. There are fears that over the Winter these figures will escalate, with thousands more people losing their homes.

A total of 481 people are now deemed to be living on the streets full-time – up from 264 at the start of the pandemic, when hotels were used as hostels, and an increase of 17 per cent on the previous three months. Many more people are believed to be intermittently rough sleeping.

Half of London's rough sleepers are UK nationals, while the largest foreign populations are from Romania and Poland. The majority are aged between 36 and 55, half have mental health problems and a third need help with drugs and drinking.

"These figures are frightening, and it is disastrous to see the incredible progress made during the pandemic evaporating before our eyes," said Matt Downie, the chief executive of Crisis, a homelessness charity that is also seeing rough sleeping and wider homelessness "rising fast" in other parts of the UK.

"This is made worse by the cost of living crisis, but these dire economic times are only adding fuel to a crisis that has been burning away for years. The government must take decisive action in the autumn statement to invest in housing benefit. This

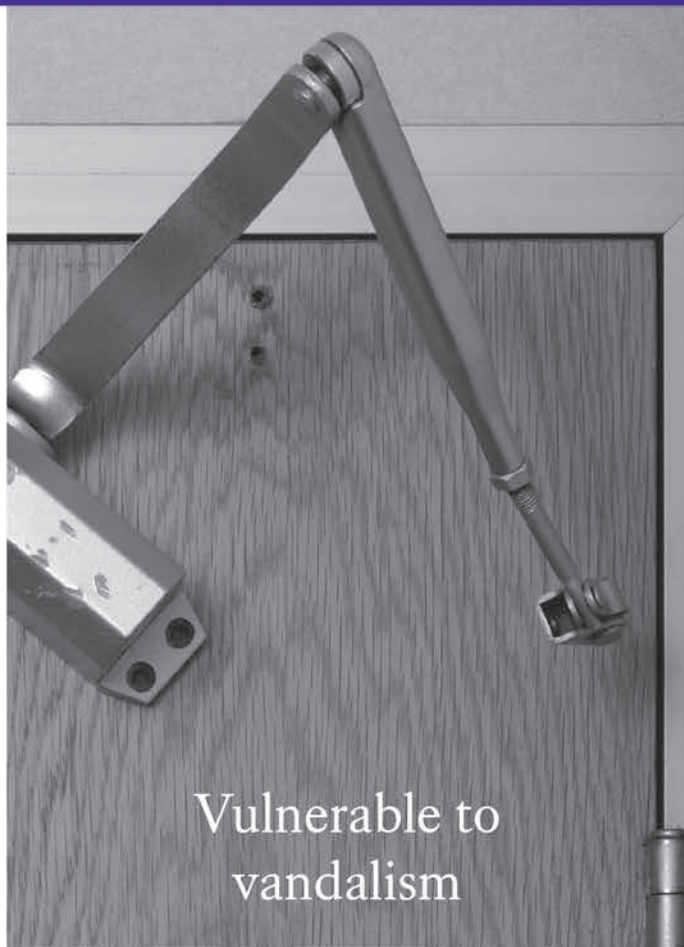
will stem the flow of people on to our streets, and help people who are homeless to afford a place to live."

A combination of rising private rents, frozen benefit levels, increasing rates of evictions and a reluctance to leave temporary shelters and move into permanent housing because of fears of unaffordable energy bills have all been cited as driving factors by homelessness campaigners. St Mungo's, a homelessness charity operating in London, said it feared "worse is yet to come".

A spokesperson for the DLUHC, said: "The Government is providing £2 billion over the next three years to tackle homelessness and end rough sleeping. The latest official rough sleeping statistics show that rough sleeping has fallen to an 8-year low and has almost halved since 2017.

"We are also supporting London boroughs and the GLA with up to £172 million from the Rough Sleeping Initiative, which will provide thousands of beds and help individuals find work, manage their finances and access mental and physical health services."

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Exempt housing and support services are a 'complete mess', says Commons Committee

The current system of exempt accommodation, a type of supported housing that is used to house a range of people with support needs, is a 'complete mess' that is failing too many residents and local communities at the expense of the taxpayer, says a cross-party committee of MPs.

The Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee's report calls on the Government to bring forward a series of urgent reforms for the sector, including the introduction of enforceable national standards and compulsory registration, to help boost the quality of accommodation and support services.

The report also calls for action to close the loopholes in the current system which "offers a licence to print money to those who wish to exploit it". The LUHC's Committee's inquiry followed reports, including from the West Midlands, of unscrupulous landlords failing to provide the support and care that vulnerable tenants need, or to maintain the properties to a decent standard.

Exempt accommodation is a type of supported housing that is used to house a range of people with support needs, such as homeless people, people who have experienced domestic abuse, prison leavers, and those recovering from alcohol and drug addiction. The Committee's report recommends that the Government:

- Introduce compulsory national minimum standards for exempt accommodation, including on referrals, care & support, and quality of housing
- Give local councils the powers and resources to enforce these standards
- Require all exempt accommodation providers to be registered
- Create a National Oversight Committee to

join-up existing regulators and mend the current 'patchwork regulation'

- Ensure the providers of exempt accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse have recognised expertise to provide specialist support and a safe environment
- Review the system of exempt housing benefit claims and clamp down on the exploitation of the lease-based exempt accommodation model for profit

SHOCKING FINDINGS

Clive Betts, Chair of the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee, said: "While there are many good providers of exempt accommodation, our findings on the state of exempt accommodation are shocking. The current system is a complete mess which lets down residents and local communities and which rips off the taxpayer. The Government must act now to help councils to tackle this situation and ensure people get the quality housing and support services they need to move on with their lives.

"The best examples of exempt accommodation highlight quality housing and specialist services, with proactive staff helping to support residents. However, in the worst cases support amounts to little more than a loaf of bread left on the table or a support worker shouting at the bottom of the stairs to check on residents.

"Residents and communities are being failed while unscrupulous providers make excessive profits by capitalising on loopholes in the system. Recently it has been reported in the media that these providers have included organised criminal gangs, who use the system to launder money. It is crucial the Government brings forward reform on a range of areas including on standards, regulation and oversight, and on funding to put



this right. We are not asking for any additional expenditure; we are calling on the Government to get a grip on the vast sums it is paying out without effective oversight".

The report acknowledges the potential impact on neighbours and local communities of high concentrations of exempt accommodation, which can attract anti-social behaviour, crime, rubbish, and vermin. These impacts also risk undermining local support for supported housing.

The report recommends the Government take forward planning reforms, and close existing exemptions in legislation, to assist local councils in helping to manage supply in line with need and to balance with much needed family housing in local communities.

The report highlights the lack of data on exempt accommodation making it difficult to determine how widespread the worst examples are and whether this taxpayer funded system is delivering value for money. The Committee calls on the Government to organise, within the next year, the collection, collation and publication of a range of key exempt accommodation annual statistics at a local authority level.

Property management industry worth £30 billion plus by 2025

The UK's property management services industry is on track to have a market value of more than £30 billion by 2025 as a pandemic slump makes way for consecutive years of steady growth.

The property management services industry covers all businesses that provide third-party or outsourced services to oversee the management and maintenance of property, as well as tenant relations, on behalf of owners or landlords.

Today, the industry is made up of 22,245 businesses employing 309,172 members of staff, combining to generate a market value of £27.7 billion. This value represents an increase of 5.3 per cent since last year but it still is not enough to bring market value back to where it was prior to the pandemic.

The current market remains 4.9 per cent below its peak value of £29.1 billion in 2019, although

today's value is still 26.8 per cent higher than it was a decade ago.

Projected figures from Warwick Estates suggest that 2022's start towards post-pandemic recovery is paving the way for at least three years of continuous market growth culminating in 2025 when the property management services industry is expected to be worth £30.4 billion, a 9.8 per cent increase on today's value.

If this comes to fruition, it will mean that the market reaches a higher value than at any other point in the past decade, including its pre-pandemic peak of 2019.

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Ombudsman orders HA to compensate tenant almost £3k for repeated failings over a long-running leak

A housing association with more than 23,000 homes across London, the south east and the Midlands, was strongly criticised by the Ombudsman for failing to properly repair a water leak which left its tenant unable to sleep in her bedroom for more than 18 months.

The Ombudsman found severe maladministration in PA Housing's repeated failings in dealing with the leak coming into the disabled woman's groundfloor bedroom from the property above. The tenant had to sleep in her living room for at least 84 weeks, while waiting for the leak to be repaired.

The long-running leak was previously reported on by ITV News, as part of a series of reports highlighting disrepair cases endured by tenants of social landlords. In this case the tenant's condition was made worse by being forced to sleep on an airbed for long periods.

PA Housing repeatedly failed to provide updates on works to fix the leak and repeatedly offered to reimburse the costs of a running a dehumidifier but then failed to do so. It failed to respond to the resident's queries about compensation for damage and what support it could offer in relation to her disabilities. At one point it even closed the tenant's complaint.

The landlord acknowledged in August 2020 that it needed to carry out works to the tenant's property following the leak. It did work on the neighbour's property upstairs to address the leaks, but no

evidence was found of work done in the resident's property. It made arrangements but then failed to follow up or the works were delayed.

LACK OF SUPPORT

It later acknowledged that the leaks had caused damage to the resident's bedding and this had led to the resident having to sleep in her living room. The landlord raised the possibility of compensation but never followed it up. It was also aware that the resident had a disability and initially failed to offer any support. When it said it could offer support by adapting her spare bedroom to her needs, it never did this despite further queries from the resident.

The Ombudsman also found maladministration for the landlord's complaint handling and ordered it to pay a total of £2,830 compensation (replacing the landlord's previous offer of £150), apologise to her, provide a timescale for completing rectification works and carry out a review of its overall management of the case.

Richard Blakeway, Housing Ombudsman, said: "Throughout this complaint there were multiple instances where the landlord's lack of communication caused distress to the resident. Even where it did provide timeframes for works, these were often not met and no communications given to the resident with an explanation or updated timeframe for works.

"The landlord's failure to acknowledge the resident's reports of leaks, having previously advised

that it would keep her up to date, would have caused considerable distress for the resident, who remained unsure about how and when the leak would be resolved and continued to leave her without the use of her bedroom.

In a statement, a spokesperson from PA Housing said: "We're deeply sorry for the errors made throughout this case, and the distress it has caused our resident. Our hope is always to provide the best possible services to our customers, and it's clear this did not happen here."

The association also revealed that it has employed TPAS to provide many of its front line staff with specialist training, including how to empathise with tenants. It is also more actively managing complex cases such as complaints and leaks, with daily reports on the longest running cases.

Homeless families being rehoused outside their local area

Thousands of homeless households across England are being uprooted and rehoused many miles from their families, friends, jobs and schools in contravention of good practice advice and the number of lives it is disrupting.

An investigation by the Guardian newspaper has revealed that more than 6,000 households were moved more than 20 miles from their local

neighbourhood in out-of-area placements by 53 councils in the last four years.

The figures were obtained by reporters using Freedom of Information Act requests. They said their figures are probably an under-estimate as the majority of the councils did not provide figures for 2021/22 figures.

Overall, more than 32,000 outside-council placements have been made by 66 local authorities since 2018/19. However, the figure could be far higher given that a lot of councils did not respond to the FoI requests.

The practice of rehousing homeless families outside of borough boundaries started in London but has now spread to other parts of the country due to the shortage of homes and high cost of temporary accommodation.

Half of out-of-council placements outside of London involved moves of more than 20 miles in

2020/21 compared with only a third in 2018/19. Ninety-seven placements made by non-London councils in 2020/21 were more than 50 miles away and 11 were more than 100 miles away, both up on previous years.

The housing charity Shelter said the lack of affordable housing was making it difficult for councils to find suitable homes for homeless families. But it warned that out-of-area placements left councils open to legal challenge.

Polly Neate, Shelter's chief executive, said: "The law is clear that councils should always try to keep homeless families within their local areas, and if they can't, they must make sure moving them doesn't cause disruption.

"In practice, we know this doesn't always happen and families are forced to uproot their entire lives and move away from jobs, schools and vital support networks, causing immense trauma."

Private landlord given five-year prison sentence for multiple offences of harassment and illegal evictions

In a landmark case Thanet District Council in Kent successfully prosecuted two private landlords and their associates for a string of offences against their tenants at a multi-occupancy property in the seaside town of Margate.

Sitting at Canterbury Crown Court, Judge Rupert Lowe passed sentence on four defendants involved in managing rented flats at the former hotel in Athelstan Road, Margate. The main defendant, Sohila Tamiz, was given 14 custodial sentences ranging from six to 12 months, some of which were concurrent and some consecutive. This culminated in a total sentence of five years' imprisonment.

Thanet District Council brought what is believed to be the largest ever prosecution of its type, for offences under the Protection from Eviction Act 1977, after investigating a series of related allegations of criminal activity taking place in a building containing 26 flats.

Tenants of the Athelstan Road property were routinely harassed, threatened and unlawfully evicted without notice; locks were changed and some tenants' belongings removed or thrown onto the street. Electrical supplies were regularly cut off.

Council officers said the prosecution was brought to achieve justice for some of the most vulnerable residents in the community and to deter others from committing similar acts.

Of the other three defendants in the case, Pedram Tamiz was given seven custodial sentences ranging from five to 11 months, some of which were concurrent and some consecutive, culminating in a total sentence of three years and four months' imprisonment.

Adam McChesney was subject to five custodial sentences ranging from six to eight months, some of which were concurrent and some consecutive. This culminated in a total sentence of one year and eight months' imprisonment. Mr McChesney's total

In total the four were found guilty of a total of 28 offences including conspiring to unlawfully evict a tenant, conspiring to burgle and conspiring to interfere with, and directly interfering with, the peace or comfort of a residential occupier. The council also applied for compensation for the victims

sentence was suspended for 24 months by Judge Lowe, who further ordered that he must carry out 250 hours of unpaid work.

Kasem El Darrat was sentenced to a 12-month community order, and must carry out 150 hours of unpaid work and attend 15 Rehabilitation Activity Requirement days.

COMPENSATION ORDERS MADE

In total the four were found guilty of a total of 28 offences including conspiring to unlawfully evict a tenant, conspiring to burgle and conspiring to interfere with, and directly interfering with, the peace or comfort of a residential occupier. The council also applied for compensation for the victims.

Judge Lowe agreed to the applications, saying: "these are genuine victims who have suffered terror, shock and distress, the loss of property, and in one case serious injury. I therefore believe compensation orders are appropriate."

Ten compensation orders were made totalling £30,500, which must be paid by Sohila Tamiz, Pedram Tamiz and Adam McChesney in varying proportions.

Councillor Ash Ashbee, Leader of Thanet District Council, said "The sentences that the judge handed

down reflect the severity of the crimes committed by these four individuals.

"This was a landmark prosecution for us, and one of the largest ever brought for this kind of criminal activity in England. This outcome sends out a strong message to other landlords and agents in the district that we will not hesitate to prosecute you if you unlawfully evict or harass your tenants."

Applications for Criminal Behaviour Orders were also made by the council. The court agreed to orders against both Sohila Tamiz and Pedram Tamiz. The orders, which are for an indefinite period of time, unless subject to a further order, ban them from engaging in letting agency or property management work, and from acting as a residential landlord in England. Neither party is permitted to enter Athelstan Road or Hadlow Drive, Margate for any purpose.

Judge Lowe also ordered Sohila Tamiz, Pedram Tamiz and Adam McChesney, in varying proportions, to pay prosecution costs of £200,000. Sohila Tamiz must pay £125,000 within 18 months; Pedram Tamiz must pay £62,500 within 18 months, and Adam McChesney must pay £12,500 within 36 months. All four guilty parties must also pay a statutory surcharge.

Landlords call on Gove to get rental reform right for landlords as well as tenants

A national body representing private landlords has responded to Michael Gove's reappointment as Housing Secretary, by demanding that he works constructively with the sector to implement reforms fairly.

Ben Beadle, Chief Executive of the National Residential Landlords Association, said: "Top of his in tray will be progressing with the plans he

previously worked on to reform the private rented sector, including ending Section 21 repossession.

"Our survey data shows that most landlords can envisage operating without Section 21 provided other proposals, such as on court reform and reformed grounds for possession, have their confidence.

"We will work constructively with the new

Secretary of State to ensure the final reform package has the confidence of responsible landlords and tenants alike.

"This includes the need for action to tackle anti-social tenants, scrapping plans that would decimate the student housing market, and reforming the courts to ensure legitimate possession cases are dealt with more swiftly."

The creative spark in boilers

Adam Taylor from Beesley & Fildes, discusses the potential of electric boilers as an affordable, easy to install alternative to both gas and air source heat pumps

The energy cap for domestic properties is due to rise on 1 April and the Government is already warning that there may be more price rises to come. Meanwhile businesses unable to benefit from the cap are also faced with the challenges of increased costs and continued price volatility.

With challenging carbon emissions targets to achieve, the UK Government is keen to nudge homeowners, landlords and homebuilders towards alternative approaches to heating our properties over the next few years. There is a keen appetite, among both consumers and businesses to embrace renewable energy and look for technologies that are cleaner as well as more cost effective and reliable, but what's the answer?

The smart money is tipping nuclear and wind power to be the target areas for investment when the energy strategy is released, but the horse the Government is backing for domestic properties is air source heat pumps. A grant scheme has been made available to encourage take-up of air source heat pumps but, even with the financial incentives, the upfront costs are high and the payback period is considerable. Moreover, air source heat pumps are not suitable for all properties, they require electricity to operate the pump, and they can be difficult to retrofit.

While there does need to be a focus on transitioning domestic heating systems to more sustainable options, there also needs to be more creativity and pragmatism applied to this issue. Homeowners, landlords and developers that have the right resources and conditions in their properties can choose to invest in air source heat pumps and other renewable energy sources. Those who do not, also need an affordable way to heat their homes – and hot water supply – using renewable energy where possible. Electric boilers offer an affordable, easy to retrofit, fit and forget solution for doing just that.

AN EASY ALTERNATIVE

The need to transition from gas to alternative energy sources for heat and hot water is environmental, financial and political, which makes for a compelling need to find viable solutions. But any transition is easier if we can find an alternative that is similar enough to what we're used to – being easy and familiar, while still providing the advantages of something different. Electric boilers provide that potential.

For existing properties, electric boilers can be installed using legacy pipework and radiators. In effect, the electric boiler is a like-for-like switch for its gas predecessor. This not only minimises disruption for the homeowner or landlord, but also reduces the installation costs and avoids any additional costs involved in modifying the property for new technology.

For landlords, it's a particularly beneficial switch, because an electric boiler requires no flue, no gas safety certification and no mandatory maintenance inspections. For rented properties and social housing, an electric boiler reduces maintenance costs and provides an assurance of tenant safety, with no risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, gas leaks or explosion.

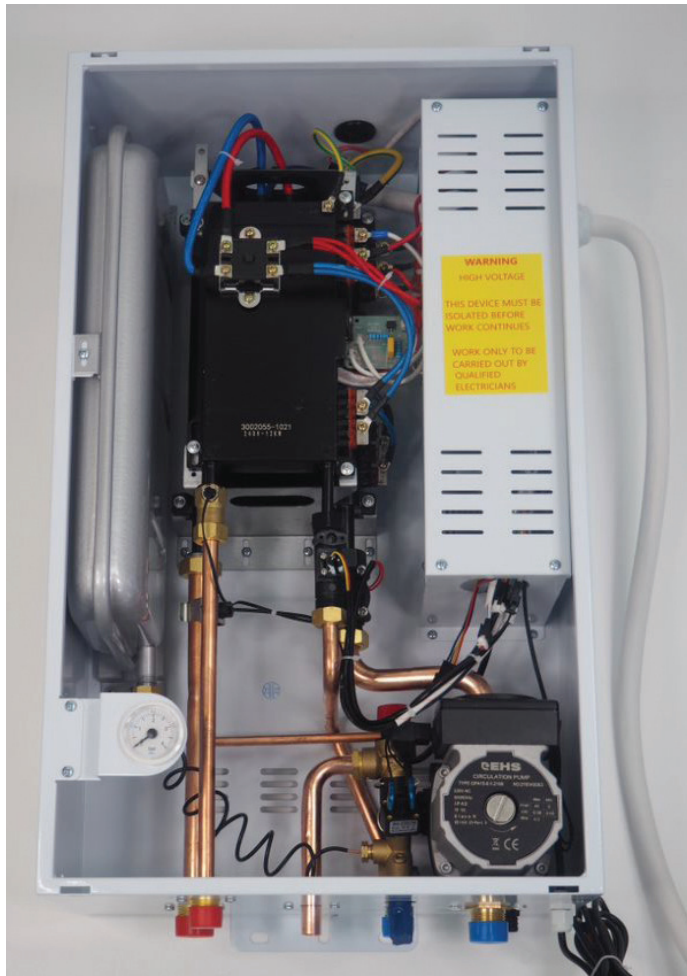
MYTH BUSTING

One of the common push backs when it comes to electric boilers is the running costs. Electric boilers often seem cost prohibitive compared to gas, but they can be operated using renewable energy sources to keep running costs



down. An ideal configuration for a smaller property, for example, would be an electric combi boiler and a solar power installation. For larger properties, an electric boiler combined with an unvented cylinder can take advantage of lower electricity tariffs during the night to heat enough hot water to last for the whole day at low cost. Electric boilers also provide an ideal energy source for underfloor heating, delivering a solution for contemporary homes and new builds.

Government policy, developers, landlords and homeowners are not just considering the financial costs of alternatives to gas, they are also focused on



Electric boilers offer an affordable, easy to retrofit, fit and forget solution

the environmental costs of heating homes. In addition to combining electric boilers with renewable energy sources installed at the property, homeowners and tenants can choose to select energy providers that supply customers exclusively from renewable sources. In this way, electric boilers can contribute to reduced carbon emissions while offering reliability, ease of installation and low maintenance benefits.

The other key factor that must be considered is comfort. Contemporary electric boilers are efficient and reliable; the key is to specify the correct size and type of boiler for the property. Just like gas boilers, they can also benefit from the use of smart controls, enabling the homeowner to programme in their own requirements or control their heating remotely for improved comfort, energy efficiency and cost management.

EASIER UP-SELL

For heating engineering businesses, the prospect of moving away from gas boilers to new renewable technologies is daunting, because it requires both additional skills and an upsell to customers who may recognise the environmental value of renewables but be unwilling to pay the price of higher purchase and installation costs.

Electric boilers are a much easier sell to the customer and a much easier transition for the installer, while providing improved sustainability for the property.

With the investment in sustainable energy infrastructure promising low costs and environmental impact from electric heating, CO₂ savings compared to gas, and practical considerations compared to heat pumps, electric boilers should be an important part of the future of domestic heating and hot water.

Adam Taylor is a heating and plumbing product specialist for Beesley & Fildes

Airtech gives 5 important radon facts

Airtech, the condensation, mould and radon specialists, supported UK Radon Awareness Week (07-13 November 2022) by giving five important facts about radon. Ran by the UK Radon Association, this year's theme for UK Radon Awareness Week was 'Give Me 5' with the campaign giving five important facts about radon, covering five sectors in five days. Airtech therefore advised households, private landlords, social housing landlords and employers, to take 5 minutes to read the facts and make themselves radon aware since this could be one of the most important decisions they make this year.

01823 690 292 www.airtechsolutions.co.uk



Consort Connect app launched

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

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Our FREE Consort Connect app lets you control your heating from wherever you are.

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Electrorad's new single feed ThermaStore High Heat Retention Storage Heater

Electrorad's newest edition to its family of electric heating has launched!

Richard Brown, Managing Director at Electrorad says "the R&D team have worked tirelessly to ensure the BRE, BSRIA and LOT20 boxes are firmly ticked and that we are recognised on the SAP database within the high heat retention category. Our ThermaStore HHR Storage System really does bring all the great advantages of storage heating without any of the negatives".

The ThermaStore HHR has high quality internal insulation around its core, enabling longevity of heat retention which ensures you have heat whenever you want it throughout the whole of the day, unlike the more traditional heaters that can often only provide enough heat for start of the day then run out toward the end. The ThermaStore also has optional app control too which is compatible with Alexa and Google Home giving you voice control of your heating!

With built in digital controls and clever thermostat the ThermaStore HHR has the ability to learn what charge is required to heat your rooms day to day, which means it really makes your Economy 7 tariff work hard for you and is



proven to be up to 27% cheaper to run than a standard storage heaters!

The ThermaStore HHR is an exciting development within the High Heat Retention

marketplace and is available from all wholesalers nationally NOW!

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ThermaStore HHR By **Electrorad**

- High Heat Retention Storage Heater
- Single connection for storage and boost elements
- Up to 27% cheaper to run than a standard storage heater*
- Simple TFT screen with optional app control
- Improved EPC rating**
- SAP approved



*Calculated using SAP 2012, Claims verification:
www.electrorad.co.uk/thermastore-hhr-storage-heater

** When replacing other types of electric heating

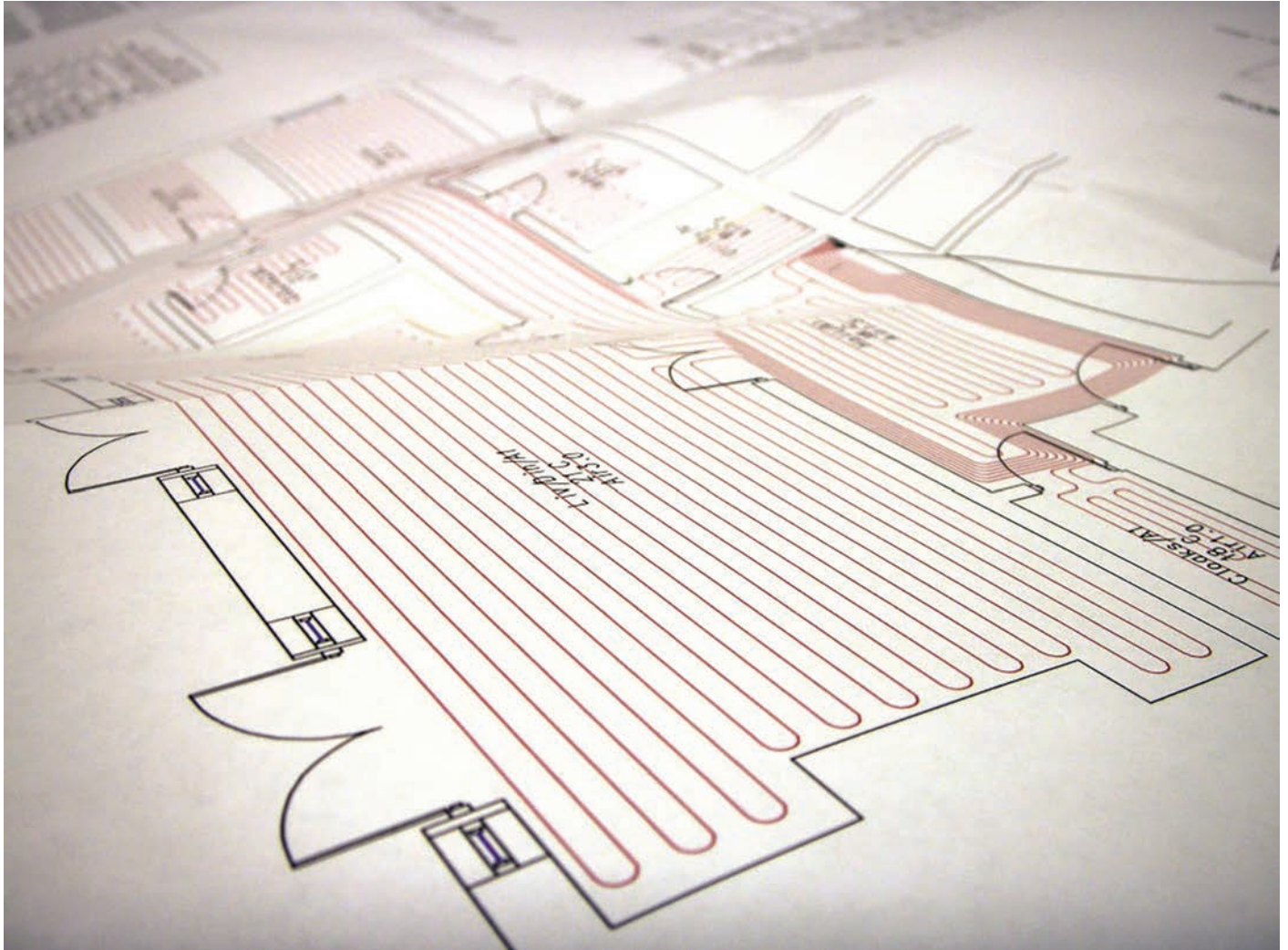
-  OPEN WINDOW FUNCTION
-  100% ENERGY EFFICIENT
-  NO MAINTENANCE REQUIRED
-  HIGHLY ACCURATE THERMOSTATS
-  APP CONTROL AVAILABLE
-  LOT 20 COMPLIANT
-  ADAPTIVE START FUNCTION

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Heating from the ground up

Craig Edwards of WMS, explains how to incorporate affordable warmth into the very fabric of a home with underfloor heating



Rising energy bills in the UK are set to push even more households into fuel poverty this winter. The stakes are high and creating energy efficient homes is no longer just a regulatory need, but one that can make it more affordable for people to stay warm and healthy at home.

A recent report from National Energy Action predicts that 6.7 million UK households could be in fuel poverty – an increase of 2.2 million from 2021 and set to rise. Those people will be unable to afford to heat their homes to the temperature needed to keep warm and healthy, which then has a knock-on effect on other vital services.

While there are many measures which can be implemented to increase efficiency of the UK's existing housing stock and newly built dwellings, the heating system itself will always be a key component to ensure homeowner bills are kept as low as possible. Hydronic (water based) underfloor heating, by its very nature, is designed to use less energy, while delivering many additional benefits to residents and the environment alike.

Hydronic (water based) underfloor heating is designed to use less energy, while delivering many additional benefits to residents and the environment alike

MINIMAL MAINTENANCE

As well as offering energy saving benefits and affordable warmth for households, underfloor heating also minimises maintenance costs.

Typically, radiators require an annual check for air in the system/bleeding and sometimes more invasive inhibitor dosing is needed, plus they may need to be fully replaced every 10-15 years. In contrast, underfloor heating requires very little maintenance, with many systems offering a 75-year pipework warranty,

As well as offering energy saving benefits and affordable warmth for households, underfloor heating also minimises maintenance costs

making it possible for the system to outlive the life of the building itself. So underfloor heating truly demonstrates a solution to achieve affordable warmth for today and years to come.

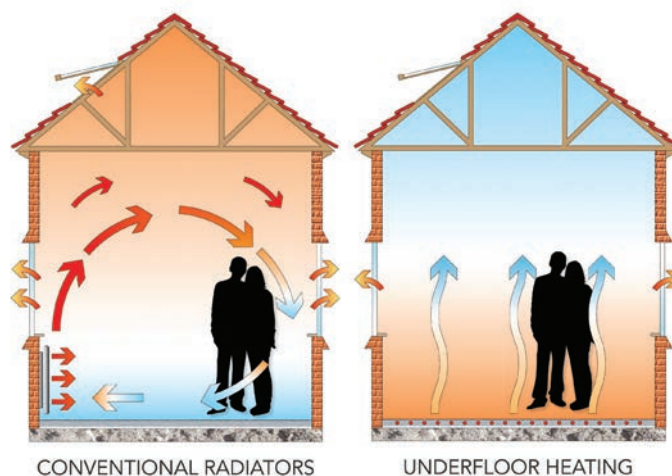
EFFICIENT AND HEALTHY BY DESIGN

As underfloor heating covers a much greater surface area than radiators and will run at a lower temperature 24 hours a day, the system uses less energy while creating a comfortable environment. As there is less heat being used, it also makes underfloor heating up to 15-40% more efficient than an equivalent radiator system. Once in place, a well-designed system will be able to run at the coolest possible settings, which in turn reduces bills and environmental impact. Radiant heat also reduces the movement of dust and eliminates cold spots from a room where mould could develop, making it one of the healthiest ways to heat a building.

READY FOR RENEWABLES

With the low water temperature update to the Building Regulations and Part L now in force, every newly built home must now prove a 31% reduction in CO₂, compared to previous standards, and demonstrate a maximum flow temperature of 55°C. The Government expects heat pumps will become the primary heating technology for new homes, however for these renewable heat sources to work at their most efficient (COP) level, they need to run between 35-45°C. By design, underfloor heating can easily achieve the low temperatures required and, when the system is correctly designed the energy source doesn't need to work as hard.

While heat pumps and underfloor heating are the perfect zero-carbon pairing, precision system design and installation is vital to ensure the system



reaches the required efficiency – as such, it's crucial to seek suppliers who are willing to work together and view the entire new build heating system design from a holistic point of view.

KEEPING THE SYSTEM UNDER CONTROL

Whether retrofitting or installing into a new build, controls are a must due to the behaviour of underfloor heating as it requires more careful management than a traditional radiator system to ensure consumers can heat specific rooms as required.

The ability to zone underfloor heating not only ticks a crucial regulatory box to meet the demands of the new Building Regulations and Part L update, but it also ensures no energy is wasted as each zone can be controlled individually from a central thermostat, or even via a smartphone app.

Craig Edwards is sales manager at WMS




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


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Balcony fires up 46% year-on-year, smoking the leading cause

A shocking new report has revealed that balcony fires increased by 46% year-on-year, highlighting a significant threat to buildings in cities across the UK and with smoking the leading cause. Richard Izzard from AliDeck, the producer of the report, details their findings



As a manufacturer of aluminium decking and balcony components, we work to find the most cost-effective and future proof solutions. In the context of the ongoing building safety crisis, fire safety is key and non-combustible materials are essential on balconies.

While the challenge is easily overcome within new-build by simply specifying only fire safe construction materials, there are a vast amount of multi-storey, multi-occupancy buildings across the UK that have combustible materials in the external wall system, including on balconies. Much progress has been made to resolve this issue via large-scale remediation programs but there is much more work to do.

To highlight the risk posed by combustible balconies, we produce an annual report on the prevalence and causes of balcony fires, with data gathered through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to UK Fire and Rescue Services.

These reports outline the shocking truth and underscore the need for urgent interventions.

THE BALCONY FIRES REPORT 2021-2022

Balcony fires were up 46% year-on-year, with 310 in total compared to 213 in the previous period. London alone accounted for 163 fires on balconies, an increase on the prior year's tally of 150. With smoking once again by far the leading cause, accounting for 59% of all balcony fires, the immediate conclusion must be that balconies should become a strictly no-smoking area. Doing so would clearly prevent scores of fires each year.

With other causes identified such as arson, candles, fireworks, and barbecues alongside smoking, the report shows that 76% of all fires on balconies were caused by reckless human behaviour. This devastating fact suggests that, even



Remediation of balconies is often still recommended. The removal of combustible material, such as timber or composite decking, and replacement with non-combustible alternatives significantly minimises the risk posed by balconies

with a firm program of outreach and education, the human factor in balcony fires will be immensely difficult to mitigate.

Flammable materials such as timber or composite decking can be ignited by one carelessly discarded cigarette, stubbed into a plant pot, say, or dropped through a deck. There are even fires each year started by still-ignited cigarettes landing on balconies, flicked from floors above and destroying innocent residents' homes. The cost of rectifying these fires is often many tens of thousands of pounds, yet the truth is that these are entirely avoidable.

THE WAY FORWARD

Following the introduction of PAS 9980 in January 2022, a risk-based format was introduced to fire safety appraisals. Intended to introduce more pragmatic decision making than was possible under the withdrawn Consolidated Advice Note, PAS 9980 has been a positive step forward for the housing sector.

Balconies are classed as "specified attachments" to the external envelope and are considered one and the same with the external wall system for new build construction with regards safety requirements. PAS 9980 also highlights balconies as posing a particular danger for fire spread and guides risk assessors to closely examine their construction and position before reaching conclusions on fire risk.

Remediation of balconies is often still recommended. The removal of combustible material, such as timber or composite decking, and replacement with non-combustible alternatives significantly minimises the risk posed by balconies. Looking again at the stark data in the latest balcony fires report, the conclusion must be that remediation is the most effective way to prevent dangerous fires from taking hold and spreading into or across buildings.

Whether it is by strict implementation of rules on use or by remediation of combustible materials, action must be taken to stop these fires. The large increase in balcony fires year-on-year simply isn't acceptable.

A minor positive note, though, is the reduction in fires on balconies caused



by barbecues, dropping to 15 from 22 in the year prior. During the summer's heatwave, the London Fire Brigade issued stern warnings to the public on the use of barbecues and several major retailers removed them from sale, so we might conclude that this message began to make an impact.

If so, maybe a similarly zero-tolerance attitude to smoking on balconies could result in a major reduction in these avoidable and dangerous fires? There seems to be little to lose from making such an effort, and we would applaud any landlord or local authority that does so.

The Balcony Fires Report is available in full on the AliDeck website.

Richard Izzard is managing director at AliDeck

Setting the standard for certification and compliance

Marcus Parnham from Profab Access, discusses the importance of specifying fire integrity products to ensure the suitability and safety of a building for its entire lifecycle



Focused on improving the safety of high risk residential buildings, the Building Safety Act will drive significant culture changes throughout every aspect of the industry to facilitate the design and construction of buildings that are not only fit for purpose, but fit for the future.

Key requirements of the legislation include changes to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, in addition to the establishment of the Building Advisory Committee and Industry Competence Committee as part of the Building Safety Regulator, which will have additional powers for the regulation of construction products.

This is summarised throughout the Construction Products Regulations 2022, which identifies the general safety requirements that all construction products being placed on the UK market must meet.

These regulations aim to reform the government's current testing regime to overcome concerning ambiguities regarding present guidelines and regulations, in addition to the initial capture and communication of key product data to achieve a successful golden thread of building information throughout every stage of the design, construction and maintenance stages.

OVERCOMING REGULATORY DISPARITIES

For housing and facilities management professionals looking to specify fire-rated riser doors throughout their portfolio, choosing products that are

supplied with comprehensive third-party certification can help to safeguard the suitability and safety of each building for its entire lifecycle.

Currently, there are differences between the guidelines outlined in BS EN 1634 Standard and Annex B of Approved Document B2. As a result, some riser door manufacturers may only conduct product assessments via a third party, while others may undertake continuous independent product testing and certification. For manufacturers who submit evidence in the form of assessment reports, it is often based upon primary testing that may have been conducted many years ago.

Providing that the manufacturer states nothing has changed in terms of product materials, specifications and manufacturing techniques, assessments will often be renewed for a further five-year period, without any substantial fire performance tests being completed.

However, while the new Construction Products Regulator will have the ability to conduct its own tests of building materials specified in fire critical environments, it will also be the responsibility of the manufacturer to ensure the products they supply now are not only compliant, but suitable for the proposed application.

This responsibility is also shared by the customer, who has a legal obligation to undertake and evidence comprehensive due diligence by ensuring they request demonstration of compliance and subsequent testing reports, not



just product assessments, for each building component specified on their project. This will ensure no assumptions are made regarding the suitability and performance of the materials installed to secure the long term suitability and safety of the building for its entire lifecycle.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIRD PARTY TESTING

By undertaking product testing and certification by an accredited third party, manufacturers can prove they have fulfilled their duty of care in terms of best practice. This can be done by providing evidence that the solution is not only fit for purpose but goes above and beyond current requirements to offer the highest possible standards in quality, performance and safety.

With regard to riser doors in particular, extensive bi-directional testing processes of both sides of the door leaf will guarantee a manufacturer goes above the guidance outlined in BS EN 1634 to ensure complete compliance with the legislation defined in Annex B of Approved Document B2. This consistently

provides construction professionals and their clients with the highest levels of protection, certification and compliance.

However, for manufacturers to completely fulfil their duty of care and for customers to also ensure they are taking all reasonable measures to ensure the building is compliant, safe and suitable, third party testing should be undertaken for the complete doorset, including each individual component, to successfully futureproof the project.

Beyond the testing of the doorset, it is also critical that it is installed into an approved wall construction in a method consistent with the sample originally tested. In practice, the installation process poses a number of risks to the overall fire integrity of a construction through variables such as the packer type and intumescent mastic bead application.

ACHIEVING COMPLETE COMPLIANCE

To overcome this potential gap in compliance, housing professionals should look to work with manufacturers that are taking this commitment to third party testing and certification even further through latest advancements in technology and product design, which are providing a revolutionary approach to the installation and maintenance processes.

This includes unique adjustable frames that precisely adjust to the specific dimensions of each structural opening, without the need for traditionally used packers during installation, reducing fitting times by up to 30%.

The requirement for intumescent mastic bead application as a secondary operation on site is also eliminated, as factory applied integral all-in-one smoke, intumescent and acoustic FS1000 seals are utilised to provide fire stopping between the frame and the wall.

While eliminating the reliance of the correct thickness of intumescent mastic bead, it most importantly ensures the compliance and adequacy of the entire installation, as its fire integrity performance has been sufficiently documented by an independent assessor. As a result, this also subsequently increases the efficiency of installation and removes any potential margins for error.

Marcus Parnham is commercial director at Profab Access

Platon Comfort combats damp and sound for wooden flooring

The Platon Comfort membrane, from Triton Systems, offers a range of benefits in new-build or retrofit situations when installing timber or laminate flooring over concrete as well as screeded surfaces, giving lasting protection. Recently re-launched by the Kent based company to emphasise the cushioning effect of the dynamic studs on the underside of the ultra-slim cavity membrane, Platon Comfort is simply loose laid direct onto the substrate to prevent moisture transmission when the relative humidity remains as high as 95%. In fact it can be installed as soon as fresh concrete is dry enough to walk on and avoids the need to include a foam underlay. As well as delivering three times the water vapour resistance of conventional film products, Platon Comfort achieves an impact sound reduction of 17-19 dB as the specially profiled studs absorb load. The underlayer is also compatible with electric as well as conventional underfloor heating systems. Significantly, the studs create an air gap beneath the 0.5 mm continuous polypropylene membrane which facilitates the natural drying process for concrete, while weighing just 450 g/m² and increasing the total build height by only 2.5 mm. Supplied in rolls of 1.0 x 20 metres, Platon Comfort is easy to lay, needing just scissors or a knife to cut, along with a roll of Triton's Platon Comfort Tape to complete the joints before installing insulation, timber flooring or a low-voltage UFH system.

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Safe and sustainable working platform

CaberShieldPlus, from West Fraser (Trading as Norbord Europe Ltd), is a durable, P5 flooring which features a permanent, waterproof coating on both sides. Almost exclusively preferred now to P4 boards – for both new-build and refurbishment applications, the P5 particleboard panels are able to withstand the unpredictable British climate without deterioration. In fact, if installed using CaberFix D4 adhesive, the boards have BBA approval for 60 days exposure to the weather while, for safety, the upper face is non-slip and colour-coded to distinguish this: making them an ideal choice for flooring.



uk.westfraser.com

Housing Management & Maintenance

The Housing Management & Maintenance (HMM) website is an online provider of past and present news items dedicated to keep professionals within this sector updated with a wide range of topics including legislation, projects, products and more.



housingmmonline.co.uk is a one-stop source for all the latest press releases providing any visitor with access to information about products and services that they may require. From the website, you can find links to digital issues that have live links to advertisers' sites, as well as email alerts to keep you as informed as possible.

www.housingmmonline.co.uk

Safe, inclusive bathrooms are the future

Bathrooms can be a danger zone and entirely unsuitable for disabled people in many homes across the UK. Stuart Reynolds from AKW, explores the challenges facing both landlords and tenants and considers solutions to the problem



When is a house not a home? When the layout or fittings could put a tenant in danger of accidents or prevent them from performing basic tasks, such as washing and toileting. Inaccessible bathrooms, in particular, rob people of their right to independence and dignity, and yet this is the reality for thousands of disabled people living in unsuitable housing across England.

THE STATISTICS

One in five British people is disabled, with 49% of them experiencing mobility impairments, including the country's 1.2 million wheelchair users. More than

half of socially rented homes (55%) have at least one household member with a long-term illness or disability. In the private rented sector, that figure is almost a third (29%).

However, just 9% of all homes across the country feature the main requirements to make them even visitable, such as a flush threshold, sufficiently wide doorways, and a toilet at the entrance level. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the problem even further as people were told to stay in their homes during lockdowns. Research at the time showed that almost one in four disabled people did not have a home that met their access needs. Bathrooms proved especially challenging, with disabled people 22 times more likely than

non-disabled people to be unable to use all parts of the room without assistance during lockdowns. Separate research shows that falls in the bathroom are almost two and a half times more likely to result in injury than in the living room.

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) exist to overcome these problems and to allow disabled people to afford to make adaptations to their homes, such as installing ramps or improving the accessibility of the bathroom. But securing the grant proves difficult for thousands of people across the UK. The DFG application and delivery process has a government-mandated timescale: a maximum of six months to approve an application and a further 12 months for the adaptation work to be completed. However, these deadlines are not always met because of local authority delays, leaving disabled people sometimes waiting for years in unsuitable housing.

When adaptation work is complete, the positive impact on tenants' wellbeing is significant. A quarter of people who have had even minor adaptations to their homes need less help than before the work was carried out, and 95% said their quality of life was better.

FUTURE PROOFING

As policies are aimed increasingly at ensuring equality for disabled people both in and outside of their homes, and the government works to tackle DFG backlogs, ensuring bathrooms are accessible is essential to meeting future needs. Equally, bathrooms that are safe and future proof are among the most important factors to housing association managers when it comes to specifying and installing these rooms, research carried out by AKW found. An inclusive bathroom for life that meets the needs of all people benefits landlords, housing managers and tenants alike.

Knowing precisely what current or future tenants require at the time of building, renovating, or installing a new bathroom can be tricky though, because of the unique needs of each individual. What disabled and non-disabled people need can change over time too. But typically, it is wise to include features such as a walk-in shower with either a low- or level-access shower tray or wet room, a shower seat, shower screen, a raised height toilet and easy-to-use paddle taps on an ergonomic washbasin.

An inclusive bathroom for life that meets the needs of all people, benefits landlords, housing managers and tenants

One thing to keep in mind is the time it could take to upgrade or adapt a bathroom. Wet rooms can take between five and seven days to install, which can result in considerable labour costs besides those of materials. Landlords also need to be confident of a long-lasting solution, and that can change through the years according to tenants' needs and industry regulations.

AN EASY AND AFFORDABLE OPTION

Striking a balance between the competing goals of keeping costs down and meeting accessibility targets may sound challenging, but there are solutions that could help achieve both. A stand alone cubicle, for example, is a stylish, futureproofed showering and toileting solution that takes two to three days to install – reducing the time taken to complete a traditional wet room conversion by up to 60%. Such solutions offer true flexibility because the shallow 26mm anti-slip show tray can be fully recessed or used with a ramp for wheelchair users, and mobility aids; shower seats and grab rails, can be fitted at any time. Plus, it can be removed as easily as it is to install. The cubicles are often competitively priced to make DFG-funded installation a reality, while lifetime guarantees provide confidence in the solution's ability to stand the test of time.

Everyone deserves a home that feels safe and comfortable and supports independent living. Landlords and housing managers can also benefit from futureproofing their properties as accessible, flexible bathroom solutions allow for a fit-and-forget approach. It is time to take control of any accessible bathroom installation backlogs and enjoy peace of mind that tenants' wellbeing is protected as their needs are being met.

Stuart Reynolds is head of product and marketing at AKW



navlin Sanitaryware

Navlin sanitaryware combines long-lasting quality, broad choice, high functionality, and style in one beautiful range.

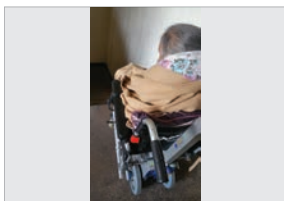
- + Contemporary, minimalist aesthetic
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- + Choice of close-coupled, back-to-wall and wall hung installations
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If you would like to discuss this product with your local AKW representative call **01905 823298**, email **marketing@akw-ltd.co.uk** or visit **www.akw-ltd.co.uk/contact**

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Social housing landlords face a growing problem – the majority of their tenants have a long term impairment, do not have the adaptations they need, yet the housing stock is increasingly flats. AAT GB believes it has an answer. AAT's stairclimber will execute 300 steps from one charge. Versions include integral seats, clip-to-wheelchair, and tracked. It can be accessorised to provide safeguarded, personalised correct postural support. When not in use, it folds compactly away. A stairclimber delivers compliance with the Equality Act Section 36. It can also eliminate the need for DFG funding.



01978 821875 www.aatgb.com/mobility-stairclimbers

Housing Management & Maintenance

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



www.housingmmonline.co.uk



Roofs being upgraded using Zeus Lite 90/30

A specialist fire contractor is employing the Zeus Lite 90/30 flexible fire barrier and Collaroll wrap from the range of TBA FIREFLY™ in undertaking a major fire protection programme in Sittingbourne. A phased scheme set to continue till its entire stock is upgraded. Established in the 1990s, DC Fire Protection Ltd. works right across the country covering multiple sectors of the construction industry, installing active as well as passive fire protection systems. It is currently engaged in lining the roofspaces to dozens of terraced houses on an estate in Sittingbourne, Kent. Director of DC Fire Protection Ltd., Daniel Mabbott, commented: "We have been dealing with FIREFLY™ for a number of years, including buying large quantities of the Zeus Lite, which we use for commercial contracts as well as residential work such as this - where we are upgrading the performance of pitched roofs right across a landlord's portfolio of properties. We have a good working relationship with FIREFLY™ whose technical team are always ready to come to site to offer advice on issues which arise, or to provide a bespoke detail. We also rely on them to give our operatives the hands-on training required. In this case the installation work is fairly straightforward also using the Collaroll to wrap beams and the project, which is set to continue for several years, is progressing well."

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SALTO launches Homelok, an all-in-one smart access solution for residential living

SALTO Systems, a global leader in smart electronic access control solutions in the hospitality and commercial industries, is launching a groundbreaking new platform aimed at the residential market.

SALTO Homelok is set to revolutionize residential living with its all-in-one solution that integrates smart access control technology, hardware, cloud software, digital keys, a smart living ecosystem, and global service support.

SALTO Homelok will provide smart access control solutions across the residential market, from multi-family to single-family housing, vacation rentals, and home care/assisted living establishments. SALTO Systems' electronic locking solution is modern and easy to install and maintain, without the cost and complexity of traditional access control solutions.

SALTO Systems brings a wealth of smart building expertise, groundbreaking innovation, a unique combination of flexibility and control, and a market-leading portfolio to its residential solution, with a specific focus on the following value propositions:

- **OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY**

Homelok uses digital access technology, rather than mechanical keys, and can be accessed from anywhere – allowing property

management activities to be streamlined and carried out more efficiently.

- **AN ELEVATED EXPERIENCE**

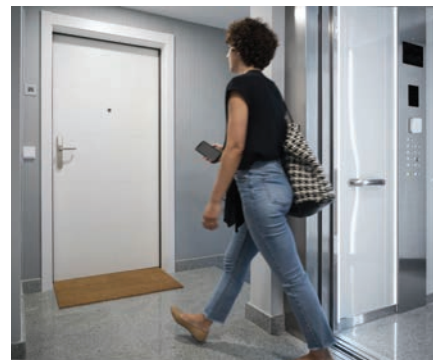
Homelok delivers the smart living experience by providing a convenient and digital experience for residents, enabling seamless keyless access and management capabilities for day-to-day living.

- **FUTURE-PROOF SVN ACCESS-DRIVEN TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLOUD**

Homelok utilizes cutting-edge, innovative, and reliable SALTO SVN data-on-card technology from a high-value, versatile, and globally-compatible product range that will continue to evolve into the future to support any developing access control requirements.

- **ENABLING THE SMART LIVING ECOSYSTEM**

Homelok delivers a core smart access solution within the Smart Building Ecosystem, by working with world-class Technology Partners and Property Management Systems (PMS) providers. It is an open platform that can be fully integrated to meet the growing demands for connected home living as well as enable greater control and visibility across property management systems.



Homelok gives the reassurance of robust 24/7 security and unmatched data protection and privacy using a unique combination of cloud-based and smart stand-alone access technology to create a market-defining level of safeguarding.

SALTO provides the ultimate all-in-one smart access experience for residents and property managers. Through SALTO's Homelok platform, users are now able to add their resident keys to Apple Wallet, allowing residents to unlock SALTO smart locks with a simple tap of an iPhone or Apple Watch.

01926 811979 saltosystems.com/en

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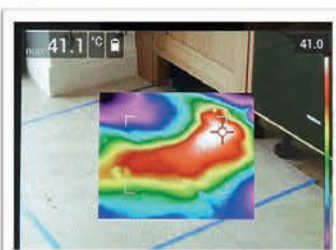
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