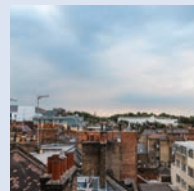


HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

JUN/JUL 2023



Landmark rental
reforms issued

Ombudsman
orders
compensation
payments

Fire safety
campaign
launched

Homelessness at
20 year high

Private rents top
£1K a month





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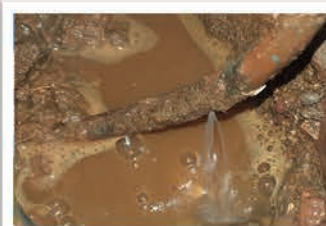
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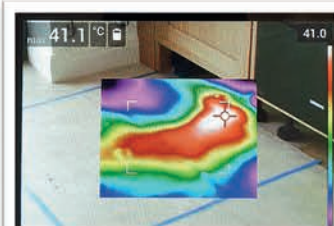
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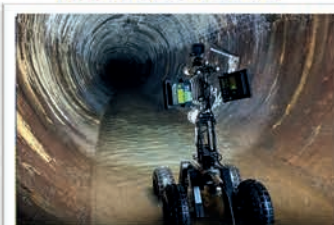
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Editor's comment

Will private renting reforms deliver lasting changes



Patrick Mooney,
News Editor

The long awaited legislation to modernise the private renting market in England finally arrived after a number of false dawns, but whether it will deliver the promised reforms of abolishing unfair revenge evictions while reassuring both landlords and tenants remains to be seen. Section 21 evictions have contributed hugely to the rise in homelessness, as well as destabilising many lives, but landlords are anxious that the safeguards for tenants do not go so far that they make it impossible for them to recover their properties for legitimate reasons, particularly where tenants are breaking the terms of their tenancy agreements. Only time will tell if the interests of both sides can be satisfactorily accommodated.

The Bill was launched with a degree of showmanship by Michael Gove, who declared it was a once in a generation opportunity to deliver sweeping reforms but reservations were quick to emerge on both sides of the debate. Some felt this was an unnecessary intrusion by the Government and it could drive many landlords out of the market, with the unintended outcome of reducing the stock of rental properties, making it harder for tenants to find a home and driving up rents. On the other side of the fence there are complaints that loopholes for revenge evictions still exist, that squalid property conditions are not being tackled adequately and not enough resources are being allocated for enforcement. Mr Gove brushed such reservations aside and declared: "These reforms will ensure that everyone can live somewhere which is decent, safe and secure – a place they're truly proud to call home." We cannot fault his ambition for the draft legislation!

No doubt the Bill will face intense scrutiny as it progresses through Parliament and there will be a race to get it onto the statute book before the next general election. The Labour Party is unlikely to oppose the majority of the planned reforms, but is expected to push for more safeguards for tenants as well as for stronger actions against rogue landlords. It is even possible that the biggest opposition to the proposed changes could come from the Government's own backbenchers – many of who are themselves private landlords. The launch of the Bill was quite timely, as it came in the same week that we heard of record high rents being charged outside of the capital and statistics showing further increases in homelessness to an almost 20 year high. Clearly the housing market is not working properly and reforms to correct this are necessary and long overdue.

Meanwhile the introduction of another Ombudsman into the sector will be viewed with interest. Whether they can have the same impact as the Social Housing Ombudsman is anyone's guess. The watchdog is continuing to champion the cause of tenants and berate their landlords. The most strident criticisms are reserved for the handling of long running complaints about poor property conditions, such as damp and mould, which are characterised by poor communications, poor record-keeping and a failure to empathise with the residents, even where they or their family members have serious medical conditions which are being made worse by the landlord's service failures. The catalogue of cases being adjudicated on by the Ombudsman do not appear to be declining, in fact the number and size of compensation orders are rising and at some point we are going to have to see some meaningful change in landlord services and behaviours. Otherwise we can probably expect further intervention from the Social Housing Regulator and from Mr Gove.

The regulator has been trialling different approaches to landlord inspections, which will begin in earnest next April and over the Summer it is consulting on changes to the consumer standards. These could see stronger measures and sanctions being introduced for poorly performing landlords. It might take the threat of personal fines (on executives, board members and managers) and disqualifications from holding positions of responsibility, before systemic improvements are delivered across the sector. After a period of time when rented housing did not appear to feature as a priority in the national debate, we finally appear to be witnessing something of a change. People living in the private and social housing sectors make up about a third of the population and their votes will be all important when it comes to deciding who will form the next Government. The proposed legislative and regulatory changes being discussed over the next year will give politicians plenty of opportunities to canvass for our votes. It will be down to all of us to see what we can extract in the way of positive changes.

Patrick Mooney

HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE
JUNE/JULY 2023

On the cover...

West Town Edinburgh Ltd has agreed a joint approach with the City of Edinburgh Council to deliver a major new '20-minute neighbourhood' for the city.

See page 17

Government introduces Bill designed to deliver a fairer Private Rented Sector for both tenants and landlords

The Government has formally begun the process of overhauling the rental market in England by introducing its long awaited Renters' (Reform) Bill to Parliament, which it hopes will deliver safer, fairer and higher quality homes.

The private rental sector has more than doubled in size in recent decades and is now home to about 11 million people, with up to two million landlords. The key change grabbing the headlines is the abolition of Section 21 'no fault' evictions which has driven an upsurge in homelessness.

But the new Bill also makes it easier for landlords to recover properties from tenants committing anti-social behaviour or who regularly withhold their rent, break their tenancy agreement or damage the property. Campaigners will be vigilant in their efforts to ensure any loopholes for evicting tenants on dubious grounds are closed and opportunities for large rent increases are removed.

To ensure the new tenancy systems works for landlords and tenants, the changes will be introduced alongside a reformed courts process. For the minority of evictions that do end up in the courts, more of the process will be digitised – which is expected to reduce delays.

A new Ombudsman will be established with the aim of providing quicker and cheaper resolutions to disputes, while a new digital Property Portal will enable landlords to understand their obligations and help tenants make better decisions when signing a new tenancy agreement. The intention is to give confidence to good landlords, while driving the criminal minority out of business.

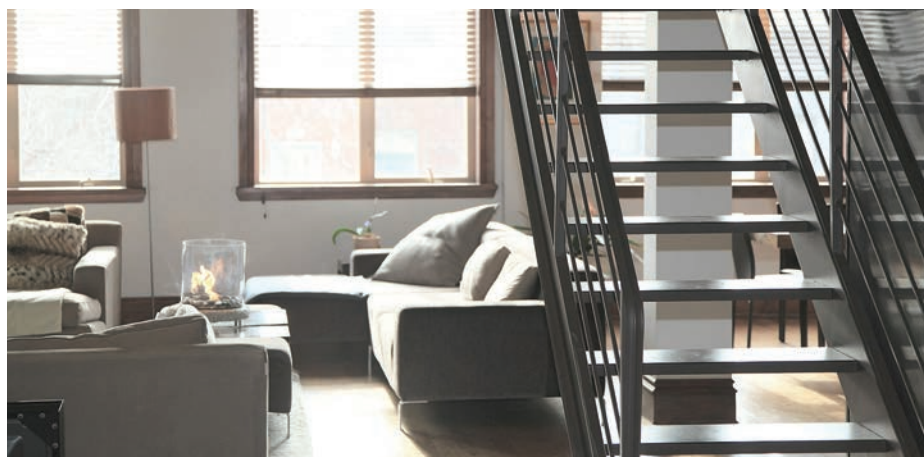
A NEW DEAL FOR TENANTS

Housing Secretary Michael Gove said: "Too many renters are living in damp, unsafe, cold homes, powerless to put things right, and with the threat of sudden eviction hanging over them."

"This Government is determined to tackle these injustices by offering a New Deal to those living in the Private Rented Sector; one with quality, affordability, and fairness at its heart."

"Our new laws will support the vast majority of responsible landlords who provide quality homes to their tenants, while delivering our manifesto commitment to abolish Section 21 'no-fault' evictions. This will ensure that everyone can live somewhere which is decent, safe and secure – a place they're truly proud to call home."

Tenants will also be given the legal right to request a pet in their home, which the landlord must consider and cannot unreasonably refuse. Landlords will be able to require pet insurance to cover any damage to their property.



The Government will also bring forward legislation as part of the Bill to:

- Apply the Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector for the first time, giving renters safer, higher quality homes. This will help deliver the Government's Levelling Up mission to halve the number of non-decent rented homes by 2030.
- Make it illegal for landlords and agents to have blanket bans on renting to tenants in receipt of benefits or with children – ensuring no family is unjustly discriminated against when looking for a place to live.
- Strengthen councils' enforcement powers and introduce a new requirement for councils to report on enforcement activity – to help target criminal landlords.

The Bill is a key part of the Government's mission to level up across the country and follows the wider housing reforms in the Social Housing Regulation Bill and Building Safety Act. These address many of the issues identified following the Grenfell Tower tragedy on improving the safety and quality of social housing and how tenants are treated by their landlords.

FAIRNESS WILL BE KEY

Dan Wilson Craw, acting director of Generation Rent, said: "The Renters' Reform Bill is a huge opportunity to improve the lives of the 11 million people who now rent from private landlords in England. Arbitrary Section 21 evictions make it impossible for tenants to put down roots and report problems about their home with confidence. Abolishing them will take away much of the stress of renting and improve communication and trust between tenants and landlords."

"The new Property Portal and Ombudsman have the potential to make it much harder for

criminal landlords to operate. We look forward to reading the Bill and working with ministers and parliamentarians to make sure the legislation achieves what it sets out to do."

Ben Beadle, chief executive of the National Residential Landlords Association, said: "We welcome the Government's pledge to ensure landlords can swiftly recover properties from anti-social tenants and those failing to pay their rent. Plans to digitise court hearings will also improve the speed at which legitimate possession cases are processed. The NRLA will continue to work with the Government to ensure the detail of the Bill is fair for responsible landlords and tenants alike."

Michael Webb, head of policy & public affairs at Battersea Cats & Dogs Home, said: "Tenants being unable to find anywhere to rent with their pet is sadly one of the most common reasons people bring their animals to Battersea. Not only will this Bill bring us one step closer to significantly reducing the number of dogs and cats we see being needlessly separated from their owners, it will also open up the many joys of pet ownership to millions of renters in the future. As this Bill now begins its journey through Parliament, we look forward to continuing to work with the Housing department, tenants and landlords to help ensure a fairer rental sector for pets and people alike."

Timothy Douglas, head of policy & campaigns at Propertymark said: "Reforms to the private rented sector in England have been long awaited and the Bill will bring much needed clarity to letting agents, their landlords and tenants. Propertymark will support the Government to ensure the specific details work in practice for those on the ground, whilst providing both security and fairness for both parties of the rental agreement. It is also important implementation is well planned and managed as these reforms are significant for the sector."

310,000 children in overcrowded homes forced to share a bed with parents or siblings

More than 310,000 children (313,244) in England are forced to share beds with other family members, due to severe overcrowding, caused by a critical shortage of affordable homes. This is according to a report published by the National Housing Federation.

The research, which uncovers the true state of overcrowding in England, reveals that one in every six children are being forced to live in cramped conditions with no personal space because their family cannot access a suitable and affordable home. This equates to two million children from 746,000 families.

The findings also demonstrate structural inequalities in our society, with households from ethnic minority backgrounds three times more likely to be affected by overcrowding than white households.

Families are considered to be overcrowded if more than two children under the age of 10 are sharing a room, two teenagers of different sexes are sharing a room, or two adults (aged 16 years or over), who are not in a relationship, are sharing a room.

The report includes polling carried out by Savanta which reveals the detrimental impact that living in overcrowded conditions has on the health, wellbeing and daily lives of those affected.

- In just under half (41%) of overcrowded homes, children or teenagers are sharing a bedroom with their parents. This could affect more than 300,000 families and half a million children, including 142,000 teenagers;
- A quarter of parents in overcrowded homes are regularly forced to sleep in a living room, bathroom, hallway or kitchen because of the lack of space. This affects 180,000 families;

- Parents in more than half (53%) of overcrowded homes worry that their children are too embarrassed to bring friends home. This could affect more than one million children;
- In almost half (48%) of overcrowded homes, children struggle to do their homework because of the lack of space. This could affect 900,000 children; and
- Over two thirds (70%) of overcrowded families say they have experienced both poor mental and poor physical health as a direct result of overcrowding. This could affect over half a million families.

The leading cause of overcrowding in England is a chronic shortage of social housing. Families already living in social housing are the most likely to be overcrowded as there are no larger social homes available for them to move to and they cannot afford any other type of home. They make up around half (48%) of all overcrowded families.

Families on low incomes who cannot access a social home are forced to rent privately, where rents can be more than double that of social housing, meaning many cannot afford a suitable sized home. A third (33%) of overcrowded families live in private rented homes.

In 2010 the Coalition Government cut funding for affordable housing by 63%, the biggest cut to any capital budget at the time. It also cut all funding for new homes at social rents. This led to a rapid decline in the number of new social homes being built, thereby intensifying an already existing shortage.

In recent years the Government has allowed grant funding to be used to build homes for social

rent, funding remains at historically low levels. Last year only 6,554 social rent homes last year were built, 81% fewer than in 2010.

There are now 4.2 million people in need of social housing in England, including those in overcrowded, unaffordable and unsuitable homes, and homeless people. Research by the National Housing Federation and Crisis shows 90,000 homes for social rent need to be built in England each year to meet existing demand and house all those in need.

The National Housing Federation is calling for a long term, national plan for meeting housing need, with the aim of driving a drastic increase in the number of affordable homes over the next decade.

Kate Henderson, chief executive at the National Housing Federation said: "Our homes are meant to be places of comfort, safety and security. For children growing up in overcrowded homes they instead become chaotic and stressful environments with little personal space or privacy. This can have a devastating impact on a child's self-esteem, wellbeing, and future life changes, as well as affecting family relationships and making it harder for parents to nurture their child's growth."

"Every child deserves the right to have a home that is suitable for their needs and allows them to grow as individuals. Overcrowding is a direct result of our broken housing system, caused by underfunding by successive governments and a failure to prioritise building new homes for people on low incomes. As a country, we are failing these families and these children and this must stop. We need an urgent, long term, national plan aimed at drastically increasing the number of affordable and social homes across England."

Average monthly rent outside London now more than £1,000, says agency

The average new monthly rent outside London has passed £1,000 for the first time, latest figures show, with private tenants now typically paying 25% more than they were at the start of the Covid pandemic.

The estate agent Hamptons, which issued the data, warned that the rate of rent rises was "unlikely to slow due to the number of landlords looking to pass on their rising costs" and this may force some tenants to downsize or relocate to cheaper areas.

Many landlords with buy-to-let mortgages have seen their costs rise sharply after a series of interest rate rises and the chaos of last autumn's

mini-budget.

The average rent on a newly let home outside the capital rose to £1,002 a month in April, according to Hamptons, which was 7.8%, or £72, higher than the figure a year earlier.

Meanwhile, the London rental market is continuing to speed ahead of the rest of the country: annual rental growth in the capital was running well ahead of inflation at 17.2%, said the firm, with the average monthly bill passing £2,200 for the first time last month. That would cost the average tenant moving into a new home an extra £3,895 a year.

Across Great Britain as a whole, the average monthly rent rose 11.1% year-on-year in April to reach a new high of £1,249 – the second-highest figure for rental growth across the country on record. Overall, rents across the country have leapt 25% since the eve of the pandemic.

Hamptons said that in February 2013, when it launched its lettings index, the average tenant who moved into a new home outside London paid £677 a month – £325 less than in April 2023. That represents a 48% increase in a decade.

Aneisha Beveridge, the firm's head of research, said: "Affordability constraints will likely hit the brakes on rental growth at some point this year; however, it's unlikely to slow considerably due to the number of landlords looking to pass on their rising costs."



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Private landlords planning to sell properties at a record rate

The number of private landlords planning to sell rented properties has reached its highest rate on record despite this coinciding with demand from tenants continuing to grow.

Polling by research consultancy BVA-BDRC found that in Q1 2023, 33% of private landlords in England and Wales said they planned to cut the number of properties they rent out.

This is an all-time high recorded by BVA-BDRC and is up from the 20% who said they planned to cut the number of properties they let in Q1 2022. By contrast, just 10% of landlords now say they plan to increase the number of properties they rent out.

The planned disinvestment comes despite demand being at a record high. According to the research, commissioned by the National Residential Landlords Association, 67% of landlords said demand for properties from prospective tenants was increasing.

In every region of England and Wales more than 70% of landlords said demand had increased, with the East of England recording the highest levels of demand.

The NRLA is warning that the supply crisis is set to deepen further without action by ministers. It is calling for the Government to undertake a full review of the impact of tax rises on the sector and develop new, pro-growth policies.

Alongside this, when ministers end Section 21 repossession, landlords need confidence that where they have good reason to end a tenancy – such as for tenant anti-social behaviour or rent arrears – the courts will consider and process such cases swiftly. At present it takes an average of around six months between a landlord seeking to possess a property via the courts to it actually happening.

Ben Beadle, chief executive of the National Residential Landlords Association, said: “Renters are bearing the brunt of the supply crisis. Without change, matters will only worsen over the coming year. The Government needs to reverse its damaging tax hikes on the sector, which have discouraged the provision of the homes tenants desperately need.

“Moreover, responsible landlords need to have confidence that they can take back possession of their properties swiftly and effectively when they have good reason to when Section 21 ends.”

Ombudsman highlights good practice decisions to promote positive learning



In a change to its normal critical reporting of service failures by social landlords, the Ombudsman has published a selection of good practice cases it has seen recently to share where other landlords can improve their services.

The examples selected are intended to show where the sector is getting things right. Learning can often be found where landlords get things wrong, but the watchdog says there are plenty of lessons in good practice casework too.

The Ombudsman is looking to increase a positive complaints learning culture from its work with landlords. Among the chosen cases are:

- How AnchorHanover dealt with a pest infestation case effectively. The landlord was proactive and attended the home the day after the report, visited regularly to ensure the pests were eradicated and included a follow up inspection. On top of this, the landlord cleaned and disinfected the home and allowed the resident to stay elsewhere during the works. And while the eradication was dealt with well, the landlord recognised it should not have put the resident in that position in the first place and offered appropriate compensation.
- A case involving a rent arrears letter being sent in error by One Manchester and how the landlord offered reasonable redress. When it realised its error, the landlord apologised to the resident and reassured her that the account was not in arrears. It also followed the Ombudsman's Dispute Resolution Principles in making things right by offering explanations to the resident and evidencing learning to prevent a future occurrence.

- How Guinness Partnership responded well to a sink blockage. In this case the landlord responded within timescales on multiple occasions, visiting the home and attempting to fix the issue. When that did not work, it took steps to arrange a CCTV survey to further explore the problem. While it was not able to facilitate it due to a lack of options, it respected and tried to get the resident rehoused during this time. This showed the landlord took the residents' concerns seriously.
- A case involving bpha where despite the resident not being satisfied with the final outcome, the landlord acted well throughout. The complaint was about the installation of a wood burning stove. The Ombudsman found that the landlord apologised when an earlier request was not dealt with clearly enough and reopened the request to fairly look at the issue. It communicated effectively during the case, meeting the resident in person to explain its decision. It also looked into alternatives with the resident and evidence the learning it could take from the complaint.

Richard Blakeway, Housing Ombudsman, said: “Every month we share cases where we have found landlords responding well to complaints to provide learning across the sector. Often these cases demonstrate clear communication, effective records and swiftly putting things right where they have gone wrong. I encourage landlords to learn from these examples of good practice to help extend fairness across social housing.”

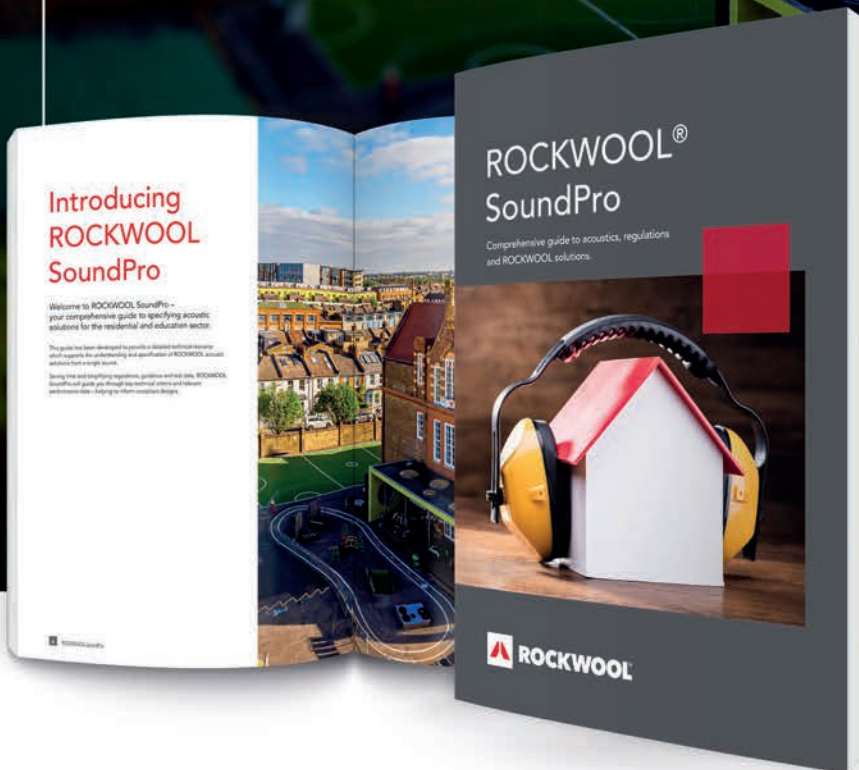
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Councils reminded of duties to investigate private renters' housing concerns

A recent Ombudsman investigation has highlighted local councils' duties to investigate disrepair concerns in private rented accommodation and to take legal action where dangerous conditions are found.

A woman complained to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman about the way Worcester City Council handled a complaint about disrepair issues in her rented flat.

The council found both Category 1 & 2 Hazards when it investigated her concerns: its report found excessive damp and mould, and a heating system that was not controllable by the occupants. It also found issues with the electrical system, which was old and had also been affected by the damp.

The woman had to move out of the flat for seven months while remedial work took place. The Ombudsman's investigation found the council did not take formal action against the woman's landlord when it discovered the Category 1 Hazards, as required by law, and when it did contact the landlord, its email missed out vital information.

The ombudsman's investigation also found the council failed to keep tabs on the ongoing work at the flat and did not keep the woman updated on the situation.

Paul Najsarek, local government & social care Ombudsman, said: "This case highlights that poor living conditions do not just affect people living in social housing, as we have seen recently in the news; it can impact many people living in the private rented sector too."

"The woman has told me it has been devastating living as she has: her physical and mental health



Worcester City Council will amend its investigation procedure to ensure it takes formal enforcement action upon finding a category 1 hazard, in line with the law

have suffered and she has suffered financial loss, not only because of damage to her belongings, but from malfunctioning energy pre-payment meters which she believes were caused by the damp."

"For many people in rented accommodation, it's often not a simple question of just moving to a better place – in many areas there is a lack of suitable, affordable alternatives. But equally people should not have to move out of their homes for prolonged periods to ensure

that their homes meet the minimum standards of safety."

In this case the council agreed to apologise to the woman, provide her with an update on its enforcement action and pay her £500. It will also amend its investigation procedure to ensure it takes formal enforcement action upon finding a Category 1 Hazard, in line with the law and train its staff responsible for housing disrepair complaints in line with the new process.

Regulator runs second round of pilot inspections

The Regulator of Social Housing has run a second wave of consumer inspection pilots, as it beefs up its preparations for a new framework of consumer regulation to be rolled out from April 2024.

Inspections are part of a package of measures being introduced via the Social Housing Regulation Bill, which is in its final stages in Parliament. They will build on the regulator's existing in-depth assessments that scrutinise landlords' compliance with the economic standards.

The regulator has already introduced the Tenant Satisfaction Measures from 1 April 2023, under which all social landlords need to collect data from their tenants about the quality of their services – including repairs and complaint handling – and large landlords with over 1,000 homes need to submit the results in annual returns to the regulator.

The regulator will continue its work to prepare for new consumer regulation over the next 12 months. Another key milestone will come in the summer, when the regulator launches its consultation on the revised consumer standards.

The pilot inspections will enable the regulator to test and refine its approach before rolling them out to housing associations and councils next year.

A four yearly cycle of inspections of social landlords is expected to be launched in April, with the regulator given stronger powers to hold landlords to account including sanctions of unlimited fines and ordering transfers of property management to other landlords.

The landlords involved in the second round of pilot inspections are the Aster Group, Leeds Federated Housing Association, the Accent Group

and Wythenshawe Community Housing Group.

The landlords who took part in the first wave of pilots were Bernicia Homes, Brunelcare, Cheshire Peaks and Plains, Eastbourne Borough Council, Folkestone and Hythe Council, Guinness Housing Association and Torus62.

Fiona MacGregor, chief executive of RSH, said: "We are gearing up for new consumer regulation, which is less than one year away. Inspections will be a cornerstone of this new framework, and the pilots are an important way for us to test and develop our approach."

"Tenants deserve quality services from their landlords, and homes that are safe and of a decent standard. Our message to all social landlords is clear: don't wait for us to inspect you; act now to put things right if there are issues in your organisation."

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More than 1,600 homeless families are stuck in hotels and B&Bs beyond the legal time limits

The number of homeless families being housed by English councils in hotels and B&Bs for longer than the legal limit of six weeks is at its highest level in 20 years.

The latest Government figures show that 1,630 families were being housed in hotels and B&Bs by councils in England for longer than the six-weeks statutory maximum, between October and December last year.

This is the highest reported figure since 2003. It also marks the highest quarterly increase ever recorded, jumping 35% since data was reported for the July to September period of last year.

Many of these families have been evicted from private rentals. While living in temporary accommodation they generally have no access to cooking and clothes washing facilities and have to pay for laundry, storage services and takeaway food.

The problem is particularly serious in London, where data from London councils shows there was an 180% increase in families being housed in hotels and B&Bs for more than six weeks from 2021 to 2022.

In Enfield there are 200 families being housed in hotels by the council. Enfield council says that at least 6,000 homes in the borough are being used by other councils and government departments, including the Home Office.

An Enfield council spokesperson said: "In February this year alone, 464 homeless families approached the council for help, compared to 196 in October 2021. Enfield residents are bearing the brunt of a national housing crisis."

A Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities spokesperson said: "Over 600,000 households have been prevented from becoming homeless or supported into settled accommodation since 2018 but we know there is more to be done to help families at risk of losing their homes.

"We are giving councils £1bn through the homelessness prevention grant over three years. This is on top of £26bn cost-of-living support this year. Local authorities have a duty to ensure no family is without a roof over their head, and temporary accommodation plays an important role in this."

Over 12 million homes need energy retrofitting in next five years



The Government must commit to investing £10 billion over the next five years to help ensure one million of England's most deprived homes become energy efficient, according to a group of local authorities.

Analysis by SIGOMA reveals that 12.6 million properties in England have an EPC Rating of D or below, with higher concentrations of these properties located in typically more deprived areas.

Around 56% of all dwellings in England have an EPC rating of D or below. Across Yorkshire and Humber the figure stands at 63%, with the West Midlands at 61% and the North West at 59%.

Further south, the figures drop considerably due to better insulation as part of the original construction, or subsequent improvements. In London the percentage of dwellings with EPC Band 'D' or below is 50%, while in the South East, it stands at 54%.

Chair of SIGOMA Councillor Sir Stephen Houghton, said an immediate investment of £10bn should be made available to provide retrofitting solutions that would help to improve the efficiency of 10% of the most deprived households across England.

In 2019, the Conservative Manifesto promised £9.2 billion to improve the efficiency rating of all UK homes. However, the real estate company Savills estimates that the cost of decarbonising all homes in the UK could reach £300bn.

Improving the efficiency of homes is vital to reach the Government's net-zero target and relieving the cost-of-living crisis for the most deprived households and communities. Local authorities will be key to helping the Government achieve these targets, both in the enforcement of renting rules and assisting in the uplift of residential properties with energy efficient solutions.

SIGOMA has laid out a series of policy priorities that the Government should adopt in order for all

Improving the efficiency of homes is vital to reach the Government's net-zero target and relieving the cost-of-living crisis for the most deprived households and communities.

UK households to reach a minimum EPC rating of C by 2028: These are:

- Invest £10bn to help support the most deprived households in improving energy efficient homes;
- Create a dedicated Net Zero goal funding pot to help councils fund net zero projects;
- Provide block funding to Combined Authorities and other devolved bodies to avoid expensive and time-consuming bidding processes;
- Commit the adequate funding to uplift all housing to EPC C by 2035, and 2028 for private rented accommodation, furthering net zero goals and alleviating fuel poverty.
- Increase funding provided through the Air Quality Grant Scheme to assist local authorities in tackling air pollution.

Sir Stephen Houghton, said: "The Government needs to act quickly if we have any hope of reaching the EPC target, which is now just five years away. Our proposal today sets out a clear strategy that can give our members the tools and support to uplift housing in some of the most deprived areas of the UK and put us on a clear path to achieving our net-zero objectives, while also helping to ease the cost-of-living crisis for the most deprived households and communities."

An aerial view of a city, likely Tokyo, with a dense grid of buildings. Overlaid on the image are several glowing blue lines that form a network, connecting various points across the cityscape. The lines are semi-transparent and have a soft glow, creating a futuristic, data-driven aesthetic. The overall color palette is dominated by dark blues and greys, with the glowing lines providing a contrast in light blue and white.

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Ombudsman awards over £18,000 compensation as Hammersmith & Fulham Council issued with seven findings of severe maladministration

The Ombudsman has ordered Hammersmith and Fulham Council to pay residents over £18,000 in compensation after significant failings led to one resident living in damp and mould for four years.

A total of seven findings of severe maladministration were made against the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham for various repairs failings in three cases.

In Case A the council left a resident and his young daughter living with water pouring down their walls in heavy rain and subsequent mould and damp for approximately four years, which damaged plaster, decorations, and belongings.

The landlord visited the home on multiple occasions to take photographs and to treat the problem but failed to resolve it. There were also significant periods where the resident had to chase for updates and a number of issues raised by the resident were not addressed.

At every stage of the complaint, the landlord's complaint handling was delayed and its offer of £150 compensation was completely inadequate and disproportionate. Instead it was ordered to pay the resident £5,080 in compensation and inspect other properties in the block.

In Case B three findings of severe maladministration were made for the landlord's response to leaks, its complaint handling and its consideration of the residents' vulnerability.

Despite assurances made to the Ombudsman, the landlord failed to fix the leak coming in from

a neighbouring flat, causing significant distress, inconvenience, time and trouble to the resident over a five-year period.

The landlord repeatedly failed in its management and oversight of the repair, and did not take into account the residents' vulnerability, failing to offer any support or make appropriate safeguarding referrals which could have reduced the impact on the resident.

The landlord's complaint handling was severely inadequate, and the resident had to repeatedly chase a response which caused further distress. As in Case A, the landlord's complaint response failed to acknowledge where it went wrong, identify areas of improvement, or provide evidence it can prevent similar failures happening again.

The landlord was ordered pay the resident £7,185.50 and carry out reviews into various policies, including on resident vulnerabilities.

In Case C three findings of severe maladministration were made for the landlord's failure to make multiple repairs, its complaint handling and poor record keeping.

The failings in the repairs jobs meant damage within the toilet was left unresolved for two years, damage to a bathroom caused by its contractors was not fixed for seven months and intermittent hot water outages that lasted for two and a half years caused significant distress for the resident – who was undergoing cancer treatment at the time.

The landlord's complaints handling was poor and differed significantly from the timescales and

guidance in its complaints policy. On top of this, the landlord's compensation offers were not detailed and did not go far enough to provide redress.

Poor record keeping was found, including an insufficiently detailed audit trail of its repairs, what action was taken, and what follow-up action was required.

The landlord was ordered to pay £5,950 to the resident, apologise in person and ensure all follow up repairs are completed.

In its response to all three cases, the landlord said it has now completed the repairs to the homes, apologised to the residents and undertaken work to improve in multiple areas such as complaint handling and repairs.

Richard Blakeway, Housing Ombudsman, said: "The experiences of each resident engaging its landlord is shocking. There were significant, multiple and common failings across these cases, which raises serious concerns about the landlord's services. In all three of the cases, there was a vulnerability present that the landlord either did not take into consideration or ignored. This is simply unacceptable from a social landlord.

"Running through of all these complaints are failings in repairs, which we see often in our casework. However, it is the length of time residents have been waiting in appalling circumstances that is of greatest concern. There were multiple opportunities for the landlord to resolve all of the issues uncovered in our investigations and yet the urgency to do so wasn't there."

More than 100,000 housed in temporary accommodation

The number of households forced to live in temporary accommodation has exceeded 100,000 for the first time in nearly 20 years.

The latest published statistics on homelessness in England, which cover the period between October and December 2022, show that on 31 December 2022, 101,300 households were in TA, an increase of 5.2% from the same day the previous year and the highest figure since 2005.

Of the households in TA, 12,220 were housed in B&Bs, an increase of 31% compared with the same time last year.

The number of households with dependent

children housed in B&Bs more than doubled in final quarter of 2022 compared with the same period the year before to 2,980, a rise of 129% in a year.

There has also been a 50% rise in homelessness due to no-fault evictions in the past year.

The statistics showed that 24,060 households were threatened with homelessness as a result of a Section 21 eviction in 2022, 50% higher than in 2021.

Section 21 evictions allowed landlords to ask a tenant to leave with just two months' notice and without having to give any reason for doing so. They are due to be outlawed under the Renters'

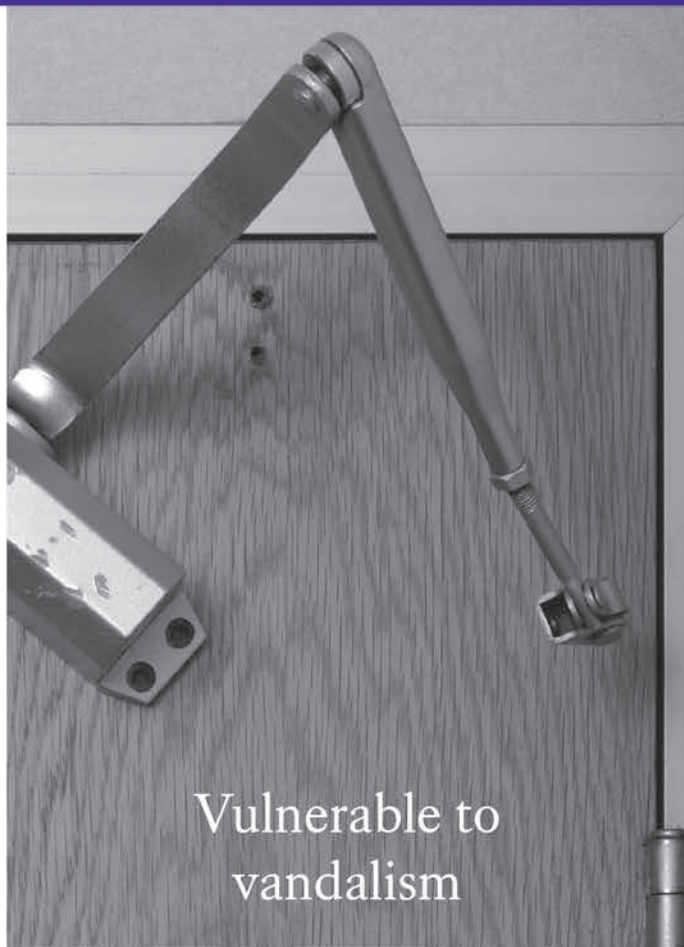
Reform Bill.

Overall in 2022, more than 290,300 households faced homelessness in 2022 in England, a rise of 6% compared with the year before.

The data showed that between October and December, there were 3,790 more households with children living in TA compared to the same period the previous year.

Households with children in TA increased by 6.6% to 62,410, and single households increased by 3% to 38,890. Compared with the previous quarter, the number of households in temporary accommodation increased by 2.5%.

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Fire safety campaign launched following e-bike fire at Salford tower block

Salix Homes has launched a fire safety campaign following a serious fire at one of its tower blocks sparked by an e-bike battery. It is urging tenants to be aware of the potential dangers posed by the lithium-ion batteries in e-bikes and e-scooters.

It comes after a fire at Mulberry Court, Pendleton, last December, gutted a 10th floor flat at the tower block and resulted in the building being partially evacuated.

A report by Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) concluded the fire was caused by an e-bike battery that had been charging in the bedroom of the property.

Stewart Kerr, building safety manager at Salix Homes, said: "Thankfully no one was injured during the fire at Mulberry Court, but the outcome could have been very different, and we want to warn our residents about the dangers associated with charging the lithium batteries in e-bikes and e-scooters."

"We've carried out extensive fire safety improvements to all our tower blocks in Salford, and fortunately the fire was contained to the flat

where it originated. The ferocity at which the fire took hold and the damage it caused is quite shocking."

Most e-bikes and e-scooters on the market in the UK bought from reputable manufacturers meet stringent safety regulations, but many safety issues are arising from converter kits, which are lithium-ion battery packs designed to convert a standard bike to an e-bike.

There are growing concerns about these converter kits sold online, which do not meet UK safety regulations and present an increased fire risk. Last year, GMFRS attended 14 fires that had been sparked by e-bikes and e-scooters, an increase from eight in 2021 and three in 2020.

GMFRS's Head of Prevention Area Manager Billy Fenwick said: "This is an incident that could have been a lot worse had firefighters not acted so quickly in controlling and extinguishing the fire, alongside the building's fire safety measures.

"The fire started due to a faulty lithium-ion battery pack that was left charging. We are urging everyone with an electric bike to please be responsible and follow our safety guidance.

Last year, GMFRS attended 14 fires that had been sparked by e-bikes and e-scooters, an increase from eight in 2021

Batteries can be a fire risk if they're over-charged, short circuited, or damaged, so it's important to protect them against being damaged and to charge them safely."

"It's also really important that when buying an electric bike, purchase them – as well as the batteries and chargers – from a reputable seller. It's the same if you are buying a kit to convert your normal bike to an electric one; buy from a reputable seller and check that it complies with British or European standards."

As part of the e-bike safety campaign, Salix Homes has now issued safety advice for residents, which includes:

- Never charge your electric bikes or scooters while you're sleeping or not at home;
- Unplug your charger once it's finished charging;
- Never block your escape route with your e-bike or scooter;
- Never tamper with the battery and always follow the manufacturer's instructions;
- Ensure your battery and charger meets UK safety standards and always use the correct charger;
- Never cover your charger as this could lead to it overheating or setting on fire;
- Be wary of DIY kits bought on-line to convert a standard bike into an e-bike.

Older private sector landlords are 'retiring' in their droves and not being replaced

Around 140,000 buy-to-let landlords 'retired' from the lettings business last year, according to the estate agency Hamptons, accounting for almost three quarters of all property sales by investors.

It says this figure is likely to continue rising over coming years, with around 96,000 landlords turning 65 each year across the UK. The latest Government survey of landlords put the age of the average buy-to-let investor at 59, with just 15% under the age of 45.

It is predominantly these older investors who are leaving the rental market, according to Hamptons, many of which were early adopters of the first

buy-to-let mortgages launched in 1996. This means many purchases were made by these landlords 15 to 25 years ago, and they still make up the majority of privately rented homes in the UK.

Hamptons estimates that just over half of today's outstanding buy-to-let mortgages were taken out between 1996 and 2007. This cohort of ageing investors bought when the sector was growing rapidly and they are now increasingly likely to sell up and cash out.

Almost half of homes (45%) sold by landlords so far in 2023 were bought at least 15 years ago, a figure which has risen each year since 2018 when it stood at just one third.

This proportion is likely to continue rising as more landlords reach retirement having bought their buy-to-let a couple of decades ago, leaving behind a gap which is not being filled by new, younger landlords entering the sector.

This is because today's new landlords are unlikely to make as much of a profit as their predecessors. On top of a wave of unfavourable tax and regulation that has hit the sector since 2016, higher mortgage rates are now also dragging down landlords' profit margins.

The average two-year fixed rate mortgage for a

landlord has risen from 3% to 5.62% over the past two years. On a £200,000 interest-only mortgage, that has pushed payments up from £500 to £937 a month.

Add that to a 3% stamp duty surcharge when buying a second property, not being able to fully offset mortgage interest payments against income tax on rent and higher capital gains tax bills, and there is not much appeal for many at present.

Aneisha Beveridge, head of research at Hamptons, said: "Two decades on from the birth of buy-to-let mortgages in the late 1990s, early investors are starting to sell up. Demographics alone will push up the number of landlord sales over the next five years to reach a new peak.

"This was likely to happen irrespective of the tax or regulatory changes introduced since 2016, and the more recent higher interest rate environment.

While the tax and regulatory changes haven't driven a buy-to-let sell off, they have stemmed the next generation of landlords.

"The number of new purchases by landlords has remained relatively muted. Millennials, who have struggled to get onto the housing ladder, have not been in a position to afford or consider purchasing a buy-to-let too."

Proposed new £2 billion, sustainable neighbourhood in Scotland's Capital



West Town Edinburgh Ltd, the development consortium which owns more than 200 acres of prime development land to the west of Edinburgh, has agreed a joint approach with the City of Edinburgh Council to deliver a major new '20-minute neighbourhood' for the city.

Both parties have agreed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' which sets out how they will work closely together to prepare a delivery strategy for the sustainable expansion of Edinburgh at the West Town site. The agreement was announced by Cammy Day, leader of the City of Edinburgh Council and Graeme Bone, group managing director of Drum Property Group, developers of

West Town, at the UK Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum (UKREIIF) in Leeds.

The 205-acre West Town site – located between Ingliston Park and Ride and the Gogar Roundabout at the western gateway of Edinburgh – is one of the most strategically important development areas in Scotland. The £2 billion project presents the opportunity to help meet the housing needs of the nation's capital while delivering a significant sustainable urban expansion for the city. The area is identified in the City of Edinburgh Council's City Plan 2030 as having the potential to become a vibrant, high-density city extension with a capacity for 7,000 homes, along with the commercial and community facilities required for a 20-minute neighbourhood.

Subject to the development of a delivery strategy as set out by the joint Memorandum of Understanding, as well as the approval of City Plan 2030 and in accordance with all relevant Council policies and the appropriate planning consents, it is hoped that work will start on site next year with the first phase of homes and community amenity being ready for occupation from early 2026.

Welcoming the agreement, City of Edinburgh Council leader Cammy Day said: "Edinburgh is quickly becoming a trailblazer for the type of affordable, sustainable homes our residents need and this overlooked land at West Town could pave the way for thousands more. We are leading the way

City of Edinburgh Council leader Cammy Day said: "Edinburgh is quickly becoming a trailblazer for the type of affordable, sustainable homes our residents need"

as a city to harness new technologies to make developments greener and fairer – building low and zero carbon homes which are energy and cost efficient – so I'm looking forward to working with West Town Edinburgh to build on our net zero ambitions. As a Council we've been modernising planning and procurement policies so that we can maximise the amount of affordable and social housing and community benefits each new development brings. Currently, over 150 households bid for every council and housing association home that becomes available, so we must set our sights on this development unlocking a huge amount of social housing. With demand for affordable homes higher than ever before, this is what our city desperately needs."



Encasement's versatile pipe boxing and casings

Encasement pipe boxing and casings have been used for more than 15 years to conceal interior and exterior pipework in a range of social housing projects across the UK, from fire sprinkler installations and heating system upgrades to the latest low carbon solutions, including ground source heat pump and shared loop arrays.

To cover external services, such as gas supply and distributed heating systems, as well as air source or ground source heat pump installations, Arma metal boxing provides tough and durable protection for exposed pipework and associated components.

Arma is also used to conceal interior runs of fire-sprinkler pipework where there are no sprinkler heads, such as in communal areas, as Arma is non-combustible and can help compliance with fire safety requirements.

For projects involving the refurbishment of heating systems, or the installation of individual ground source heat pumps inside flats, the Riva range of pre-formed pipe boxing provides a quick, easy and cost-effective method of concealing unsightly pipework installed at skirting level.

Versa pre-formed pipe boxing is already installed in countless retrofit fire sprinkler projects to cover pipework in flats, lobbies and corridors, while for applications where flame retardant boxing is required, Versa FR pipe boxing provides an ideal solution.



Arma metal boxing

Where high efficiency boilers are installed, boiler pipework, valves and flues can be hidden easily, using Encasement's purpose designed boiler pipework casings. Also, as the casings are free-standing, they can be simply removed and replaced without damage, allowing unrestricted access for routine inspection and maintenance.

With the exception of Versa FR, which is produced from MDF with a white painted finish, all Versa, Riva and boiler pipe casings are

manufactured from pre-formed plywood, using sustainably sourced UKTR compliant timbers.

They are also pre-finished with white resin impregnated decorative paper, so don't require painting, which helps save time and money on site.



01733 266 889

www.encasement.co.uk

The importance of drainage in local authority housing blocks: A comprehensive guide

The quality of life in a tower block depends on several factors, one of which is effective drainage. The drainage system in a building is often overlooked, but it plays a crucial role in ensuring that residents are comfortable and safe. Poor drainage can result in a range of problems, from unpleasant smells and minor leaks to complete flooding of homes.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF DRAINAGE IN HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS

The drainage system in a high-rise building comprises a network of pipes that carry waste to the sewer system. The system is designed to ensure that waste flows away from the building and does not accumulate in the pipes.

If blockages occur, this may lead to backups, resulting in leaks into the residents' homes. Tracing these leaks and faults within a high-rise building can be challenging, as access to the riser areas is not always possible, and the waste may ingress a resident's home, many floors below where it originated from.

ENGAGING A SPECIALIST MANUFACTURER FOR HIGH RISE BUILDINGS

Surveying the drainage system in a high-rise building is a complex and challenging task that requires expertise and experience.

Where surveys are carried out, detailed reports should include photographic evidence, ultrasonic readings, and an indication of lifespan so that a capital investment plan and budgets can be put in place for the most urgent works, before issues escalate.

COMMON DRAINAGE PROBLEMS IN HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS

One of the most common is where runout connections to the main stacks have failed. Gaining access to repair these connections may be challenging for plumbers, and often the fittings are obsolete. Repairs teams may be faced with little choice but to carry out temporary repairs, using bandaging tape. These temporary repairs generally end up being left in place for many years.

DRAINAGE SOLUTIONS FOR HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS

A drainage specialist can assess the condition of the drainage system and recommend the best course of action. Where a building requires a completely new system, pre-assembled SVPs are the best option, as they can be installed quicker, meaning the residents do not need to be rehomed while the work is undertaken. Located within common riser areas, these replacement SVP products should not pose a



risk of fire spread, and so installing an A1 Fire Rated product gives peace of mind to residents and building managers. Longevity should also be considered to ensure they continue to serve the building for many more decades, therefore, choosing the right system is crucial.

01952 262 529

www.pambuilding.co.uk/stack-replacement



Are sub-roof systems the answer?

With increased scrutiny on the state and repair of social housing, when looking at new roof specification, should landlords be thinking about a whole refit, or employing more cost-effective retrofit opportunities? Ardit Strica from Onduline Building Products asks the question

Several initiatives, including the recently launched 'Make Things Right' campaign spearheaded by the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities and the publication of the government's Social Housing White Paper are precursors to a general tightening of the rules, regulations and standards associated with building construction and condition.

In particular, the Make Things Right initiative is set to place increased scrutiny on the safety and quality of social housing and ultimately make social housing landlords far more accountable for the state and repair of their properties in the eyes of the law, while giving tenants a greater voice to be able to complain about substandard housing.

Local authorities, housing associations and independent social housing landlords will be required to get to grips with a new era of oversight and reporting connected to the safety and condition of property construction and maintenance to remain compliant.

When it comes to housing maintenance, one important area that will need to be focused on is the roofing system, its specification, and its ongoing performance. As a vital element in efforts to ensure a property is up to the standards required, badly specified or performing roof systems can lead to ongoing and costly problems such as leaks, condensation and even poorly fixed tiles falling off. The new protections being given to social housing tenants mean that such issues will need to be attended to without delay.

The fitting of a sub-roof system offers an ideal solution for making a roof completely watertight without having to completely renovate, saving time and money

SUB-ROOF SYSTEMS

A sub-roof system is an additional and protective layer within the roof structure. It is used as a secured waterproofing layer, under the tiled roof, which acts as a barrier against potential leaks.

The fitting of a sub-roof system offers an ideal solution for making a roof completely watertight without having to completely renovate and buy new tiles, saving time and money.

There are different types of sub-roof systems. Flat sub-roofs are typically developed with non-breathable felt, which can be prone to a higher risk of moisture being trapped beneath the membrane thereby rotting the timber underneath.

More recently, corrugated sub-roof systems have been developed, offering



greater protection and advanced longevity of materials. Due to the corrugations within the sub-roof, there is increased ventilation and airflow both above and below the sheet; tile battens positioned above the corrugations allow moisture to drain to the eaves which, with the enhanced ventilation, maintains excellent moisture control within the cavity.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A SUB-ROOF SYSTEM FOR LANDLORDS?

As the sub-roof system acts as the main waterproofing element of a roof, it means that the original aesthetics of a building can be preserved. Existing tiles can be re-used, or reclaimed tiles, which can save on cost and time, as well as reducing the carbon footprint. This ensures that the traditional look and feel of the properties remains the same.

Integrating a sub-roof system provides an extra guarantee and protection should there be any cracked or broken tiles, a low pitch or incorrect fitting of tiles, as well as giving the option of using more cost-effective reclaimed tiles. The increased ventilation and performance this offers means that the roofing material will remain in good condition for longer.

The management of moisture and condensation within buildings has long been recognised as an important aspect of ensuring the longevity of a building's fabric, by using a sub-roof system, landlords can hopefully not only save money and improve the aesthetics of their buildings, but also make the most of a maintenance-free roofing solution for years to come.

Ardit Strica is technical manager at Onduline Building Products

Celebrating Women in Construction

Leading building products distributor, CCF, recently joined forces with mineral wool insulation specialist ROCKWOOL to host a special event to celebrate women in construction. The event was organised by CCF's Edinburgh Branch Manager and Regional Account Manager, bringing together 23 CCF and Rockwool colleagues and customers at the Alea Casino on Glasgow Quay for a networking afternoon. As well as celebrating the role that women play in construction today, attendees were also encouraged to build connections to support each other.



www.ccf ltd.co.uk

Vent-Axia supports Clean Air Day

British ventilation manufacturer Vent-Axia supported Clean Air Day on 15 June and welcomed the theme "Clean up our air to look after your mind this #CleanAirDay". Clean Air Day is led by environmental charity Global Action Plan and is the UK's largest campaign on air pollution. It aims to improve public understanding of air pollution, build awareness of how air pollution affects our health, and explain the easy actions we can all take to tackle air pollution, helping protect the environment and our health. The theme for Clean Air Day 2023 reflects the raft of recent research on how air pollution can affect the brain.



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Robust SterlingOSB Zero PrimedPlus

SterlingOSB Zero PrimedPlus from West Fraser is a sturdy board which is ideal for the construction of screening and walkways, either for privacy or to fulfil health & safety requirements; it's able to withstand the inclement British weather too. As with all West Fraser's SterlingOSB Zero products, no extra formaldehyde is used during the manufacturing process, so it is safe to specify in hospitals, schools and other public realms. Furthermore, its ultra-smooth surface means the boards can be adorned with graphics so can be used to offer directional information as well as branding, promotional material and artwork.



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

Titon vent range grows to meet market demand



Titon's recent investment in new tooling and assembly machinery is now coming to fruition with a wider choice of options in its mainline plastic vent ranges.

Changes in customer demand since the revision to the Building Regulations last year have meant the need for a broader range of colours in both ventilators and external canopies. Window and door profiles are now offered in a standard palette of colours, so ventilator manufacturers are expected to keep the majority of these in stock to cope with demand and shorter lead times. Titon's newest machinery will enable

more flexibility in replenishing those stocks and bring efficiencies to production.

In addition three plastic vent sizes, 2000mm2EA, 4000mm2EA and 5000mm2EA mean most applications can be covered in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, with a choice of grilles for use in overhead sections or canopies for use externally.

The increase in demand following on from the revision to the Ventilation Regulations proved difficult for vent manufacturers, fabricators and specifiers last year but Titon is in a great position to supply according to demand with

stock on the shelf in the majority of options.

Titon is a leading provider of innovative ventilation solutions, with over 50 years of experience in the industry. The company offers a wide range of ventilation products, including mechanical ventilation with heat recovery, whole-house ventilation, and passive ventilation solutions. Titon is committed to providing its customers with innovative products and exceptional service.

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Safer by design

Flooring plays a vital role in the safety as well as the comfort of our lives and is a critical consideration in the social housing, care and retirement sectors. Louise Walters from Designer Contracts explains

Providing a comfortable and safe foundation in homes where more vulnerable people may live, begins with the floor. As a joint report – ‘Floored’ – from TPAS Cymru and Tai Pawb in Wales into the provision of flooring in newly-let social homes found, flooring is not just a nicety: for the majority of tenants who took part in the survey and did not have carpets or suitable flooring in their home, the lack of it actually impacted on their health and wellbeing.

They listed issues such as a lack of warmth, safety and sound in their homes; health issues, including breathing difficulties; and depression. Responses from tenants with children highlighted safety issues and an increase in isolation and loneliness in not being able to invite friends to visit.

Consider also that the number of people living with dementia in the UK is forecast to cross the one million mark by 2025 (Alzheimer’s Society) and it’s clear that specialist flooring has a growing role to play in providing a safe, reassuring and comfortable environment.

Therefore, taking the end user of the product into serious consideration is essential when it comes to specifying the correct type of flooring. And for those responsible for providing floorcoverings to these sectors, it means there are three key considerations – safety, practicality and durability.

SAFETY, PRACTICALITY AND DURABILITY

High traffic areas require a more hardwearing, durable flooring than anywhere else in a property. Over time, excessive use can mean the floorcovering can

lose its appeal. Hard flooring such as vinyl or safety flooring provides robust options that will help with appearance, retention and durability. Underlay plays an important role too – with a good quality option highly recommended to help prolong the life of flooring. It can also reduce noise on harder surfaces and provide added warmth and insulation.

The simple addition of an entrance mat will also help to protect the flooring inside a domestic property or communal space. It keeps the dirt and moisture out and stops it from being tracked inside, helping to prolong the life of flooring and keep it looking good for longer.

The use of a slip-resistant, water-resistant flooring in areas such as the kitchen and bathroom is a must. Due to the increased potential risk of slip hazards in these areas it is essential to select a floor that offers excellent slip resistance and meets any necessary health and safety guidelines required for the type of property or area.

There is a further risk of slips in specially adapted wet rooms or bathrooms which will require an enhanced slip resistant vinyl safety floor with a raised emboss that is designed for continuous wet areas.

Softer options like carpet will always be a popular choice for bedrooms and living areas, particularly something durable and easy to maintain, such as polypropylene which is naturally stain resistant. This makes it ideal for homes where spills and accidents easily happen.

Communal areas such as corridors, stairs and lounges in shared living space are busy and noisy and demand a safe, durable and potentially sound reducing

Taking the end user of the product into serious consideration is essential when it comes to specifying the correct type of flooring

flooring solution. We work with multiple manufacturers who produce excellent safety flooring solutions for all types of applications. While the tendency is to think of this kind of flooring as quite clinical in appearance, there are many ranges available with a choice of patterns, designs and colours to complement both modern and more traditional interiors.

Being able to provide a stylish option is important, whether it's for the social or private sector. People have an expectation that floorcoverings are not only safe and practical, but modern and aesthetically pleasing too.

This is just as true for the 70% plus of residents in care homes suffering from dementia where floor covering choices for living, communal or social areas need to be carefully considered. Appropriate flooring should be selected to ensure the highest in safety standards, as well as a reassuring and comfortable environment.

There are several important characteristics of dementia-friendly flooring. A matt finish with reduced sparkle is just one of them, along with a surface that reduces impact sound and one that provides a smooth transition between rooms.

CASE STUDY

Designer Contracts supplied dementia-friendly flooring to Dorothy Terry House at Redditch in Worcestershire. The flooring solution offered practicality throughout the 42-bedroom retirement complex – specialising in dementia care living – while in keeping with an interior decor.

Over 1,000 m² of communal corridors, stairs, landings and lounge areas, spread over five floors, were identified as areas in need of replacement. All the existing flooring was fitted with PolySafe Wood FX safety vinyl, a high



specification safety floor, combining decorative designs with sustainable slip resistance and high durability.

Featuring authentic reproductions of popular and high clarity wood designs, the range incorporates a light to dark colour spectrum with non-intrusive safety aggregates in the vinyl to create a safe yet attractive interior.

Whether in social housing, care settings or retirement homes, safety is incredibly important with a number of statutory requirements that need to be met. These include the addition of stair nosings to communal staircases, which can help reduce accidents by defining the edge of a step. Transition strips between rooms and differing flooring types are another essential accessory that help provide a safe passage between rooms.

Whatever the special requirements or location, the aim should always be to deliver a safe and durable solution, while creating a space that feels like home.

Louise Walters is commercial director for Designer Contracts

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Designer Contracts are one of the UK's largest flooring contractors. Their unrivalled national supply and installation service is delivered via their 14 regional warehouses and supported by their own national distribution centre that holds in excess of £3m worth of stock. No other flooring contractor can offer this capability on a such a scale.

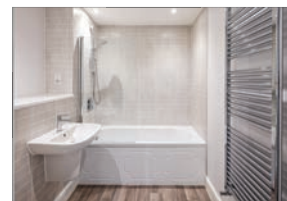
Since they started serving the new build market back in 1992 they have become a trusted partner to many housebuilders and developers, both large and small.



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Colourful, homely feel for housing

Altro Tegulis tile-effect wall panels have added a splash of colour with a luxury feel in Sanctuary Housing's latest affordable development. "We were really pleased to discover Altro Tegulis," says Neil Ruecroft, head of construction at Sanctuary Group. Altro Tegulis™ tile-effect wall panels offer the ideal alternative to traditional tiles for wet rooms, bathrooms, kitchens, and retail spaces. With a range of tile-effect patterns offering a grout-free alternative to tiles, Altro Tegulis offers a more familiar feeling than traditional wall panel sheets. Altro Whiterock Splashbacks™ were also installed in the kitchens.



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A good quality of flooring for social housing

With Blacktex sheet vinyl floors from **Beauflor**®, affordable housing refurbishments can benefit from a floor that's fast to install, durable and comfortable in use. The BBC has reported that anti-poverty campaigners are calling for housing associations to stop ripping out carpets and leaving tenants with bare floors. The report also recorded that there is a number of forward thinking organisations looking for a solution to the crisis. Finding a floor that's affordable, fast to install, durable and comfort in use is paramount in the hunt for answers. Beauflor's Blacktex sheet vinyl flooring makes a good option. With a format that can be installed over old floor coverings and without glue (rooms up to 35 m²), these floors make refurbishing within properties fast and easy. Available in two, three and four-metre width options on selected designs, it can also reduce installation waste. In a range of modern wood and stone tile looks with Natural Look texture, Blacktex leaves tenants with a comfortable and warm finish that feels homely and inviting. As well as the minimum requirement for floors in kitchens and bathrooms, it is suitable for living areas, bedrooms and hallways. The collection features a Premium Coating that reduces the chances of permanent stains and marks and that makes maintenance easier for tenants, preserving the floor's look and enhancing its durability.

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Vinyl floors for good quality social homes

Social and affordable housing providers can look towards **Beauflor** for a floor that contributes to a supportive and good quality interior for tenants, while fulfilling the need for a solution that's cost-effective to purchase and install, durable and low maintenance. With natural wood designs, as well as tile, stone and modern looks like concrete and terrazzo, there's a Beauflor sheet vinyl floor to match any design scheme and make social housing feel like a home. Combined with added benefits, such as slip-resistance for use in bathrooms or sound reducing floors for multi-occupancy homes; providers are assured of a floor that comforts tenants with a design that's attractive and homely and with function that supports wellbeing. As a multi-layer design floor that's supplied on roll, Beauflor sheet vinyl floors are an affordable entry into natural look flooring. The sheet format means quick installation and in smaller rooms such as bathrooms, often without the need for adhesive. Beauflor's textile back floors such as Blacktex can also be loose laid in rooms up to 35 m² over certain existing floors, making them particularly suitable for refurbishment. Durability is also an advantage of specifying Beauflor: the hardwearing Xtreme range achieves a Class 34 wear rating that makes it suitable for heavy commercial use, while still providing a welcoming and homely natural look.

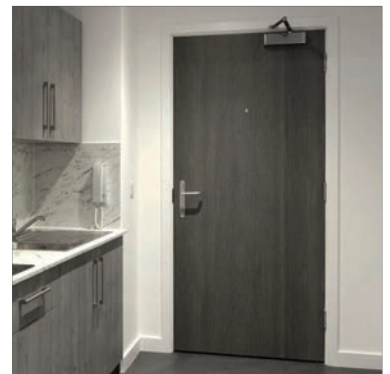
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JB Kind launches innovative new PAS 24 compliant door leaf

Derbyshire-based door distributor **JB Kind** is launching its new PAS 24 door leaf to doorset manufacturers, and its PAS 24 fire resistant security doorsets service to developers, architects and specifiers, after investing in an innovative new door core which has met the stringent set of standards required to be awarded the PAS 24 accreditation. Forming the basis of the company's new PAS 24 fire resistant, security doorsets, the new PAS 24 door leaf enables manufacturers to use it within their current offering, or for residential developers to purchase fully assembled PAS 24 compliant entrance doorsets. Doorset fabricators are able to integrate JB Kind's innovative new door leaf into their current product ranges whereas developers are able to specify PAS 24 compliant doorsets, in both standard and bespoke sizes, and in a wide range of alternative finishes. Architects and specifiers now have the option to request the new JB Kind fire resistant PAS 24 doorsets, as well as its matching internal doorset counterparts. Suitable for apartment and flat entrances, and compatible with a range of door designs and styles, developers, architects and specifiers can choose from a selection of veneered, painted and primed finishes, available as plain flush or with a number of grooved design options, all with the knowledge that whichever they choose, the security doorsets have met the stringent PAS 24 criteria.

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FIREFLY™ APOLLO Lite™ helping protect Hertfordshire homes

A leading passive fire protection contractor is employing fully tested and trusted products from the range of **TBA's FIREFLY™** for the creation of half hour fire barriers within roofspaces of low rise sheltered housing in the St. Albans district of Hertfordshire: with the manufacturer providing on-site assistance in respect of regular inspections and the provision of recommended fixing details to ensure the work is fully compliant with current regulations. Manchester based **JPS Projects Ltd.** is a fully accredited, FIRAS approved family run company working across the country in a number of sectors, including care homes and hospitals, as well as housing and commercial buildings. The Contracts Manager for JPS Projects, Matt Tucker, commented: "Although we have been employing FIREFLY™ systems for some eight years and I had a lot of experience of the range from working with other specialists in the past, the APOLLO Lite™ 30:30 was specified here by the client's own fire consultant." APOLLO Lite™ 30:30 has been developed for use in vertical separation or compartmentation situations, offering 30 minutes integrity and insulation and is able to be sealed around penetrations. It is widely specified to form fire barriers within roof voids and floor voids in many different property types, including tower blocks and other HMOs.

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Protecting tenants from the silent killer

Simon Jones from Kidde Safety Europe explains the role of carbon monoxide alarms in ensuring a robust life safety approach – and why it is so important that the models chosen meet the requirements of EN 50291

Last year, the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015 were extended to include new obligations for registered providers of social housing regarding carbon monoxide safety. As such, the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022 came into effect on 1 October 2022, which require all landlords, including the previously exempt housing associations and local authority landlords, to ensure that a carbon monoxide alarm is installed in any room used as living accommodation that contains a combustible appliance – such as a gas boiler, water heater, wood stove, or fire (gas cookers are not included).

THE DANGERS OF CARBON MONOXIDE

Known as the silent killer, carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless, tasteless, toxic gas that is produced when fuels such as gas, oil, charcoal, coal and wood

do not burn completely – a common result of old, poorly maintained or incorrectly installed household appliances. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headaches, dizziness, weakness, vomiting, chest pain and confusion. With higher exposure or when levels increase, it can cause seizures, loss of consciousness, paralysis and death.

The government identifies people with diseases that affect the delivery of oxygen to the heart or brain, such as those with coronary heart disease, angina, asthma or anaemia as being particularly at risk from carbon monoxide poisoning, as the amount of oxygen being carried to the heart or brain is further reduced by carbon monoxide.

With the cost-of-living crisis and surging energy prices, it is expected that households on lower incomes could also be at increased risk, as they look to find alternative ways of heating their homes which may expose them to CO, toxic

fumes and fire incidents. In fact, the National Fire Chiefs' Council home safety committee has formed a cost-of-living crisis working group to help address this issue.

The only way to alert occupants to the presence of carbon monoxide is the correct installation of a working CO alarm that meets the required European Standard. This will provide an early warning in the event that CO is detected, before the levels become dangerous and enabling householders to take action before experiencing any symptoms of CO poisoning and having unknowingly been inhaling toxic gas over time.

THE CURRENT LEGISLATION

Under the legislation in England, landlords and housing providers are obligated to ensure that carbon monoxide alarms are correctly cited and in working order. Any alarms that are reported as faulty or not working must be repaired or replaced as soon as is reasonably practical. Any provider found to be in breach of the regulations can be fined up to £5,000.

As we approach the anniversary of the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022 coming into effect, landlords and housing managers will undoubtedly be familiar with, and complying with, the legislation. However, it is imperative that landlords and managers take a proactive approach in regularly testing alarms to make sure they are in working order, as well as ensure that any newly acquired portfolios of tenanted stock are swiftly assessed for compliance and appropriate action taken quickly where necessary. It is also important to check the manufacturer's quoted lifetime for the alarm and replace it no later than recommended, to ensure continued protection.

Under the regulations, any carbon monoxide alarm, whether already installed or one that needs replacing, should adhere to the European EN 50291-1:2018 Standard. To comply, CO alarms must feature an 'End-of-Life' indicator that provides the occupant with a warning when the sensor is reaching the end of its service life. At this point, the entire CO alarm must be replaced. This warning must consist of a warning sound (usually a chirping noise) and a flashing LED to provide both audible and visual alerts. Specifically, the audible sound output must offer 85dB(A) at 3 metres. There are Carbon Monoxide Alarms

The only way to alert occupants to the presence of carbon monoxide is the correct installation of a working CO alarm that meets the required European Standard

on the market which use an electrochemical CO sensor, providing continuous monitoring of CO levels and tested for a 10-year lifespan, to offer long-term peace of mind.

To identify these alarms, make sure that products have been tested and certified by an accredited third-party agency such as BSI or TÜV, and always purchase life safety products from reputable manufacturers at trusted merchants and retailers.

A quality CO alarm will also offer stability against any environmental changes such as humidity and temperature fluctuations. As such, they are less likely to give false alarms, which over time, can become a nuisance to the occupant and risk being turned off or ignored, which can have fatal consequences. A sealed unit CO detector can provide extra peace of mind and safeguarding for long lasting protection as these are tamper proof.

IN CONCLUSION

The regulations are a welcome move in reducing the number of fatalities and health risks associated with carbon monoxide. As part of a wider safety package, the government has also updated legal obligations surrounding the correct installation and maintenance of smoke alarms. Landlords should familiarise themselves with the latest smoke and CO legislation in their region to ensure they are providing sufficient protection while also meeting the legal standards required.

Simon Jones is marketing manager at Kidde Safety Europe

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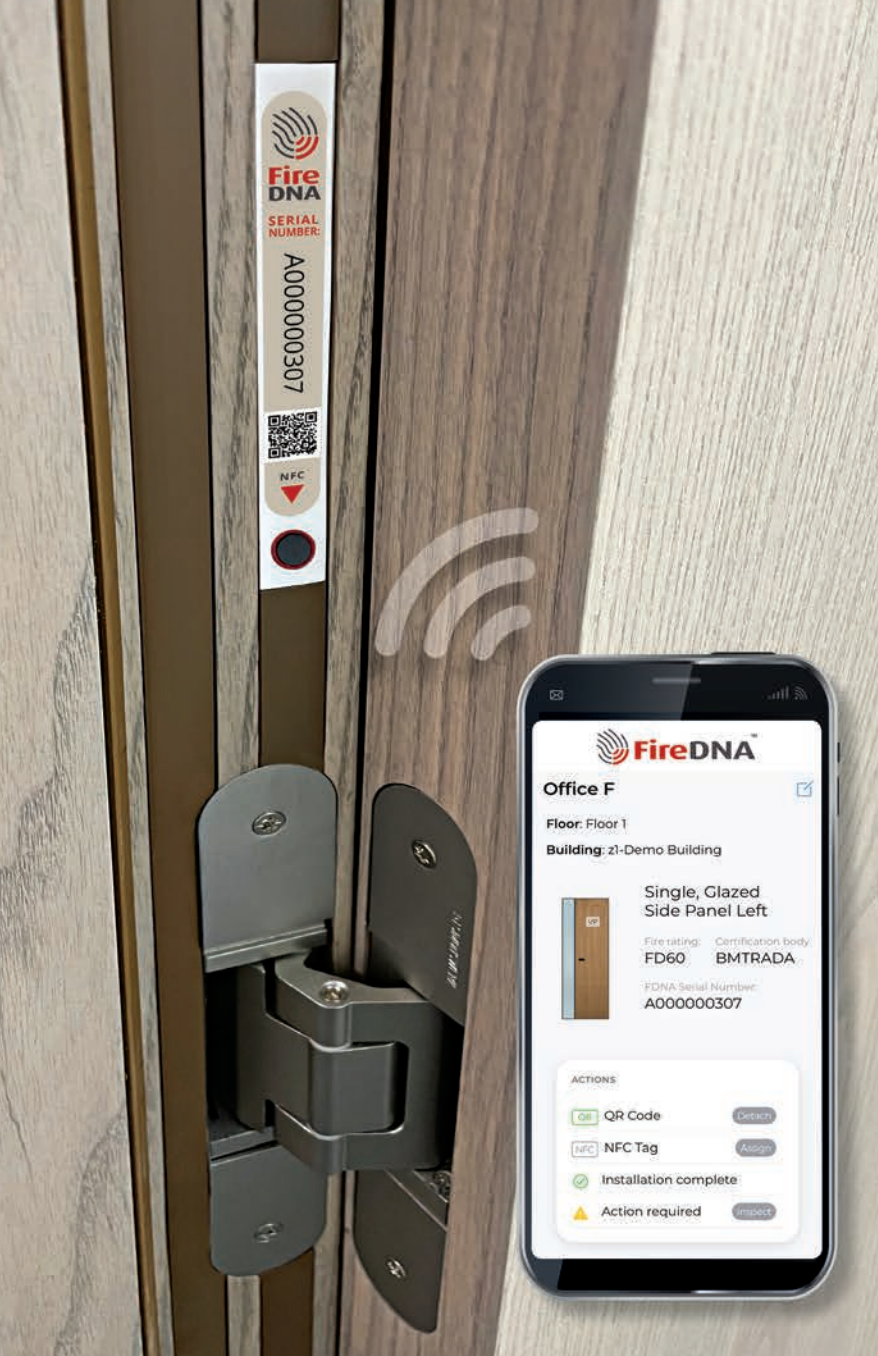
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Introducing the Ei3030 – the next evolution in Home Life Safety



Introducing the newest innovation in Multi-Sensor alarms from Aico, the Ei3030 Multi-Sensor Fire and Carbon Monoxide (CO) alarm. The flagship alarm in Aico's technologically advanced 3000 Series, the Ei3030 combines individual Optical, Heat and CO sensors, for the ultimate fire and CO response.

Aico continues to evolve its offering to provide products that align with its customers' requirements while maintaining the simplicity that Installers love.

The Ei3030 multi-sensor Fire and CO specifications include:

- Fire Response – The device contains a Thermistor Heat Sensor and high-performance Optical Sensor that intelligently work together, but will also operate independently.
- CO Response – The proven electrochemical CO Sensor provides an accurate CO response. The CO response is in line with BS EN 50291-1:2018.
- Visual Indicators – The Ei3030 has visual Fire and CO indicators. The relevant indicator flashes depending on what has triggered the alarm.

- Kitemarks – This device holds Kitemarks for British Standards BS EN 14604:2005, BS 5446-2:2003 and BS EN 50291-1:2018.

Michael Wright, product development manager at Aico comments: "The Ei3030 continues Aico's pioneering development of Multi-Sensor Fire and CO alarms for domestic properties by offering both Multi-Sensor fire detection and CO detection from one alarm. This maximises coverage whilst making installation simpler and easier. The alarm sits alongside the Ei3028 Multi-Sensor Heat and CO alarm, meaning users can achieve combined fire and CO coverage for all areas of the home from our flagship 3000 Series."

The Ei3030 also has a range of additional benefits, including built-in dust compensation technology. The unique self-monitoring dust compensation mechanism reduces the risk of false alarms. The optical sensor chamber continually self-monitors minute changes in dust levels, automatically recalibrating the alarm's trigger point when necessary to reduce false alarms. The

Ei3030 can also be fitted in any room where both Fire and CO protection is required (excluding the kitchen) meaning coverage can be provided with fewer alarms.

Like all alarms in the 3000 series, the Ei3030 utilises an easy-fit base, is mains powered, has a 10-year rechargeable lithium cell backup, and is compatible with other Aico mains-powered units. The device is also compatible with the Ei3000MRF Module for wireless interconnection and data extraction via the Ei1000G Gateway.

The Ei3030 also includes Aico's award-winning AudioLINK+ technology, making it simple to gain data directly from the alarm head via the AudioLINK+ app, reporting on information such as alarm activations, sensor status and record of testing.

To learn more about the Ei3030, please visit www.aico.co.uk/product/ei3030-multi-sensor-fire-and-carbon-monoxide-alarm

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Why wall panels are the greener option

With the environmental impact of the built environment well known to most, housing managers are always looking for new ways to reduce their carbon footprint. Scott Beattie from Fibo, explores why wall panels can offer a more sustainable option for bathroom and kitchen spaces

As we approach ever closer to the Net Zero 2050 target, many housing managers are becoming more environmentally conscious with the materials they use and their approach to refurbishment projects. Research shows that the built environment generates nearly 40% of global Carbon Dioxide emissions, with building and infrastructure materials and construction accounting for 13% of this per year. With this in mind, reducing these emissions and finding more sustainable methods of construction are key.

Through the specification of more sustainable materials in properties, together we can build the greener homes of the future. For example, when looking at bathrooms – one of the busiest and most popular rooms to refurbish in any home – opting to use a waterproof wall panel system rather than traditional tiles can provide numerous environmental benefits.

SUSTAINABLE COMPOSITION

Typically manufactured with a multi-layered plywood core – an inherently sustainable and renewable material – wall panels made from PEFC-certified wood can help to reduce a project's carbon footprint. Ensuring that any timber products used are PEFC-certified is a great way of ensuring that it comes from a sustainably managed forest source.

EASE OF INSTALLATION

Wall panels are famously easy to install, offering an installation that is up to five times quicker than tiles. As well as being great on-site, this also brings with it more environmental benefits, such as a reduction in waste, with wall panels able to be fitted directly on top of existing tiles (as well as plasterboard or timber stud work). This eliminates the need to strip old tiling off bathroom walls or time-consuming wall preparation work, something which can contribute to Carbon Dioxide emissions.

Not only this but, with no specialist tools or wet trades required to fit wall panels, any additional materials used in the installation process are further reduced.

DURABILITY

That said, it is important to look beyond the initial installation too. Once a product or system is installed, you need to have the reassurance that it will last and won't need replacing further down the line. A key way of achieving this is by installing long-lasting and strong building materials that require little maintenance or upkeep. Wall panels yet again can help with this.

Extremely durable, with minimal upkeep required to keep them looking



brand-new, you can also forget about the worry of cracks or chips, unlike their tile counterparts. Due to the absence of real grout due to the grout line being routed in, wall panels are far easier to clean than regular tiling. This makes them perfect for social housing, where there can be a quick turnaround needed between one tenant vacating the property and the new tenant moving in.

Some wall panels even come with a 25-year guarantee, providing they are installed correctly in line with the installation instructions, offering the assurance that they will stand the test of time.

AESTHETICS

Of course, it's no good having a product that fits sustainability requirements if it doesn't look visually appealing – it's important to balance sustainability with durability and aesthetics if we are to truly deliver the housing of the future.

Previously, wall panels may have been seen as a cheap or dull option, but this is no longer the case. Thanks to the latest market developments, wall

panels come in a wide variety of beautiful and contemporary designs. This even includes tile-effect panels for those who aren't quite ready to move wholly away from the tile aesthetic. There are a range of product designs on the market, offering plenty of choice no matter what your budget.

With all of this in mind, it's clear that wall panels are the smarter and greener choice, and in some instances can reduce carbon footprint by as much as 37% when compared to tiles. If manufactured with high-quality plywood timber materials in ISO 14001 accredited environments, they offer excellent durability and cost-saving benefits.

If you make careful and informed choices when looking at building materials for housing developments and refurbishments, it's possible to ensure you are doing your bit for the environment, while still creating beautiful living spaces for residents.

Scott Beattie is managing director at Fibo

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The fight to tackling fuel poverty

Dane Ralston from iOpt Ltd looks at how the internet of things (IoT) can potentially help with fuel poverty and tenant well-being

Most people know the definition of fuel poverty. It's been an issue since the 1970s and has taken centre stage in the last 12 to 18 months with the massive increase in fuel costs.

What a lot of people don't know is just how big the impact fuel poverty has on millions of people across the UK – it can have a huge effect physically, mentally and socially. Many lives get completely ruined along with homes and personal items damaged by the knock-on effects such as mould.

FUEL POVERTY VS GENERAL POVERTY

Some people argue that fuel poverty is also general poverty, which to a certain extent is true. However, fuel poverty can also have a disproportionate effect on those worse off, especially in poorly insulated homes where tenants can have no impact on a property's energy efficiency. Often we come across people in social

homes paying significantly more than others in bigger private homes. The fact that prepayment metre users get charged more is just a further kick in the teeth.

Energy prices have increased five times over in the last five years, which nobody could have predicted.

HOW CAN WE TACKLE THIS SITUATION?

Clearly we do not have all the answers but the use of sensors and the internet of things (IoT) can help in significant ways.

The idea of using IoT networks to help manage and maintain assets has been around for decades – and in a variety of sectors from ATM machines through to aircraft engines and electricity networks. Housing is on the catch up and as a sector, housing probably has the potential to benefit the most from IoT.

Key to understanding the range of benefits from IoT systems is that value can



be delivered at both macro and micro levels. This means we can use technology to help individuals living in homes as well as housing providers, their teams and indeed even their funders and insurers.

Firstly, how do we even know if a household is in fuel poverty, especially if, as we see regularly, people are not willing to come forward to say they are living in fuel poverty? At the most basic level we can remotely use temperature sensors to show that a home is constantly at a low temperature. An interaction with the tenant can be arranged and an intervention managed such as the provision of a fuel voucher.

We see this all the time and not just through the winter. Any home sitting at sub 16°C generally is not a pleasant place to be and this can easily happen in a UK summer. It's not unusual in a UK winter to see sub 6°C in many homes that are monitored.

At a more in depth level, by installing sensors that track energy consumption, heating system performance and building comfort, homeowners and building managers can get a better understanding of how much energy is being used, when it is being used, what it is being used for and where it is being wasted. This information can then be used to identify ways to reduce energy consumption and save money on energy bills.

At the next information level up, quite often a property is highly inefficient at retaining heat so the decision may be taken to carry out a retrofit on that property. When you carry out this work, there are several parties who want to know that the work has actually made a difference. Those that pay for it (or even insure it), those that benefit from it, and those that regulate it. By using sensors, we can quantitatively prove investment has been worth it on a specific property – or not.

At the macro level the biggest challenge is to reduce the cost to heat a home in the first place. When you see information such as that recently published by Birmingham City Council – that their current budget for retrofit leaves them with a £3.5bn shortfall to retrofit all their properties – you really understand the scale of the challenge. This is not an area where decisions can be made based on anecdotal evidence. We are led to believe this happens more often than not.

At the macro level the biggest challenge is to reduce the cost to heat a home in the first place

IoT systems can give you direct evidence of where to spend your money, what to spend it on, and when.

A PERFECT EXAMPLE

Four tower blocks that all had the same work carried out – in theory – were monitored. However, the findings showed that one of the four tower blocks was showing a 10% higher humidity than the other three. It turns out the contractor had used a different type of insulation for this block, which may have been cheaper in the short term but in the long term was just storing up mould and damp issues. That cladding type was subsequently taken off the shopping list. The same project also allowed the local authority to evidence that spending an extra 5% of budget on ventilation would save them approximately five times their spend that a year in maintenance costs.

These are just some very simple examples of how data can be used to tackle issues in a home or in a whole stock. While fuel poverty is clearly a very pressing issue, from a purely commercial point of view it's very hard to justify the spend on IoT on this alone. However there are so many more use cases that stack up across a whole organisation including maintenance, tenant management, revenue protection through to informing C-suite strategies and reporting.

We all want to help those in fuel poverty, and the solutions can have huge impacts beyond the initial use case. Sensors installed to identify fuel poverty can be used in a huge number of other ways. Energy efficiency measures installed to help reduce bills can generate jobs and also have a positive impact on climate change. It's a win-win!

Dane Ralston is director at iOpt Ltd

Ei3030

MULTI-SENSOR FIRE & CO ALARM



The latest addition to the technologically advanced **3000** Series, the Ei3030 combines individual **Optical**, **Heat** and **CO** sensors for the ultimate fire and CO response, while maintaining the simplicity that Installers love.

Smart, connected and future-proof.

 Add the Ei3000MRF for wireless interconnection and data extraction via the Ei1000G Gateway



WE'VE PUT OUR EXPERTISE INTO BRICKS AND MORTAR

At Siderise, we've been developing technically advanced passive fire protection solutions for over 50 years, creating systems which make buildings safer without impacting on their design.

It's an approach which we've applied to some of the world's largest tower blocks and most prestigious stadia, and which we're now bringing to external masonry walls.

Backed by independent testing, Siderise cavity barriers, firestops, balcony bracket cavity barriers and cavity trays simply make masonry projects safer, without caveats, conditions, or exceptions.

Siderise. Our ingenuity now available in bricks and mortar.

BY
YOUR
SIDE

