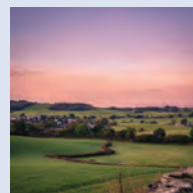


HOUSING MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

AUG/SEP 2023



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profits fall

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standards

Ombudsman
imposes more fines



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deadline looms

Homeless and
rough sleeping
rates rise



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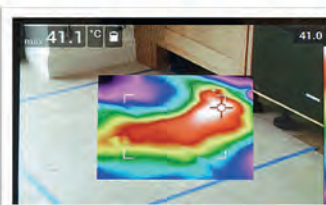
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Aug /Sep 23

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Editor's comment

Tackling homelessness gets the Royal seal of approval



Patrick Mooney,
News Editor

The worrying rise in the numbers of people recorded as homeless and those who are sleeping rough should be a concern to all of us and not just to Prince William who has made a very public commitment to tackle the issue. It was certainly a bold move by the heir to the throne, but also one for which he should be applauded. Normally members of the Royal family do not get involved with, or do not comment publicly on matters that could be seen as political. However, in this case it is clear that economic forces and a combination of housing policy failures requires something dramatic to happen if we are to eliminate this scourge of modern society and provide all people with a decent and affordable home. It is a bit of a hackneyed phrase, but the housing sector really has been hit by a perfect storm, or several of them in fact! Sadly there is no sign of this buffeting from ending anytime soon. A series of interest rate rises has sent shock waves through the home ownership market with the inevitable consequence of falls in demand, sales prices and building rates.

The private rented sector is exhibiting signs of extreme distress after several decades of growth. That trend is now reversing, with growing numbers of landlords and investors looking to reduce the number of properties they let. At the same time demand for rentals continues to grow which is pushing rents up to unaffordable levels for many. In fact people with below average incomes and those reliant on benefits are finding themselves marginalised and with reduced choices – only able to afford the cheapest of properties. The banning of Section 21 evictions may not be the panacea, it was once hoped for. And Housing Secretary Michael Gove has promised private landlords that he will provide alternative grounds for regaining possession of their properties. Only time will tell if he has managed to get the balance right, or if further reforms will be necessary.

The Ombudsman continues to find appalling cases of property neglect and poor service in the social housing sector, with some landlords seem unable to perform even the most basic administration when responding to complaints. It is disheartening to repeatedly read that basic safety requirements are not being performed routinely and timescales for completing simple but essential tasks (like the servicing of gas boilers) are regularly missed. Mistakes will always happen, but where are the systems and processes that identify them and ensure that timely corrections are carried out? The management of complaints should be a relatively easy and straightforward task, but too many housing associations and councils are still failing to deliver an effective and efficient service. The housing sector's leaders and bosses will need to redouble their efforts, if they are to maintain their credibility and positions of power and influence.

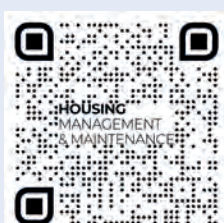
The regulatory regimes for both the private and social housing sectors are being reformed and toughed up, and not before time in the eyes of many.

The legislative changes being made are welcome, particularly if they drive out the rogue landlords, give greater security of tenure and deliver higher quality homes. But much of the responsibility for policing the changes in the private rented sector falls back on local councils, whose private sector housing teams have been cut back over the past decade. It is imperative that councils' private sector housing teams have the resources, skills and expertise if they are to deliver the benefits intended by the changes. Meanwhile the pressure to deliver will also be increasing on the regulator of social housing. It was very revealing that all of the consumer standards breaches identified at local authorities last year were actually the result of self referrals from the offending councils themselves – the regulator didn't spot any of these. Lets hope they perform a lot better under the new regime, with more tools at their disposal otherwise the outlook for tenants does not look anymore rosy. Of course having a home is better than having no home and returning to the topic of homelessness, I think we've got to admit we are in the position now where a lot more resources need to be provided for building homes at rents which people can afford to live in, backed up by the sort of support which means they can sustain their tenancy. Prince William gets my support for bringing the problem of homelessness to the nation's attention, I just hope he can maintain his enthusiasm and drive to the point where the Government's target of ending rough sleeping is achieved by the end of this Parliament.

Patrick Mooney

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On the cover...

Riverside and Countryside Partnerships have completed the affordable housing development agreement for the 170-home redevelopment of the Pike Close estate in Bromley. See Page 20.

Independent landlords are vital to a fair rental market

Independent landlords are “vital” to ensuring a fair and functioning private rented sector, the Housing Secretary has said.

Writing for the National Residential Landlords Association’s members magazine, Michael Gove spoke of the importance of landlords in providing tenants “with flexibility and choice, and the value for money options that go with them.”

The Minister also explained the Government’s plans to reform the sector following publication of the Renters (Reform) Bill. Noting that there are few relationships as important as that between a landlord and tenant, he spoke of the common interests both have in a property as being: “a place that can be at the same time a home and an investment, a valued asset and precious security, a shelter and haven.”

“It is vital”, he said, “that these relationships work for everyone, and that we strive to strike a balance for all.”

Focussing on the Government’s plans to reform the sector, which includes ending Section 21 repossessions, Gove warned that in the minority of cases where relationships between landlords and tenants breakdown “it is important that the law is there for the victim – whether tenant or landlord.”

He pledged to provide “more comprehensive grounds for landlords to recover properties” and to make it “easier to repossess them where tenants are at fault.”

The Minister went on to pledge to improve the system where repossession cases end up in courts, citing the use of “digital platforms” as a



way of speeding up the processing of legitimate repossession claims.

The Housing Secretary ended by declaring that the Government looked forward to working closely with the NRLA “to shape the sector for the good of landlords, and tenants, right across the country.”

Responding to the article, Ben Beadle, chief executive of the NRLA, said: “We welcome the Housing Secretary’s commitments, and his recognition of the importance of individual

landlords. As he rightly notes, the Bill needs to work for responsible landlords every bit as much as tenants. Without this it will serve only to exacerbate the rental housing shortage many tenants are now facing.”

“The NRLA will continue to work closely with ministers to ensure the details of the Bill work for all. This includes campaigning for improvements to the courts system to ensure landlords are not left for months on end where they have a legitimate reason to repossess a property.”

Only 5% of private rentals are affordable for tenants on housing benefit

Families on housing benefit are being driven to live in areas of high crime and low employment because only one in 20 private rented homes are now affordable.

A freeze on housing benefit rates since April 2020 and a series of rent hikes have pushed the number of homes on the market that can be paid for through welfare down from 23% in April 2020 to 5%, according to the Institute of Fiscal Studies. Currently around two million households in England and Wales receive housing benefit.

Increasing interest rates are creating difficulties for homeowners with mortgages, while private landlords are also seeing the cost of their buy to let loans ramp up. A growing number of BTL landlords are reacting by threatening to sell up some or all, of

their property portfolio.

The three year freeze in housing benefits also means renters are being forced into homes that are less well-insulated. The IFS found that affordable properties had heating and hot water costs that were 19% higher.

Polly Neate, chief executive of Shelter, the housing charity, said: “We have families coming to us who are forced to put up with disrepair like mould and damp because they can’t move anywhere else that’s covered by housing benefit. We’re also regularly hearing from people who have been given an eviction notice and are facing the real threat of becoming homeless because they can’t find anywhere they can afford locally as rents are skyrocketing.”

Rents on new lettings advertised on Zoopla increased by 10% or more every month from February 2022 to January 2023, and new-let rents are up by a fifth since September 2019.

“It’s crucial that the Government unfreezes local housing allowance and ensures it reflects market rents so that families aren’t forced to choose between homes that are unsafe or homes they can afford,” said Darren Baxter, policy adviser at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which funded the IFS study.

A Government spokesperson said: “We’re helping ease the pressure of rising rents by maintaining 2020’s £1bn boost to Local Housing Allowance rates, giving more than a million people an extra £600 a year on average.”

“We are set to spend over £30 billion on housing support this year, on top of significant cost of living support worth an average £3,300 per household,” the spokesperson added. “Building more affordable homes is key, which is why we’re investing £11.5 billion to deliver more social and affordable rented homes across the country.”

Culture of apathy unearthed at London social landlord

The Housing Ombudsman has released a special report into the London Borough of Haringey, uncovering a 'culture of apathy' at the landlord that has led to a distinct lack of ownership, accountability, and intrinsic motivation when handling complaints.

Where shortfalls are identified, there was no evidence of learning to prevent failings reoccurring, and little evidence of contrition or a resolution-focused approach to complaints handling.

The investigation was initiated by concerns about the landlord's approach to leaks, damp and mould where more than three-quarters of cases were upheld determined since 1 April 2021 where leaks, damp and mould formed part of the investigation. The landlord also featured in the Ombudsman's 2021 report Spotlight on damp and mould: It's not lifestyle. The special report followed the Ombudsman issuing a Complaint Handling Failure Order to the landlord in December 2022 regarding its approach to compensation, compliance with Ombudsman orders, and handling of complaints.

The special report is formed of 32 individual investigations and engagement with the landlord over the last six months. The Ombudsman made 77 findings across the cases, 18 of which involved severe maladministration, mostly for major repairs, damp and mould and complaint handling. The overall uphold rate was 82%.

Among the cases investigated, the landlord withdrew all services from a resident for a period of 12 months after reports of unacceptable behaviour. The resident disputed this, and the landlord could not provide supporting evidence, yet it continued to withdraw all services including not carry out repairs works. The Ombudsman identified eight key themes and set out a series of recommendations:

- **Leaseholders:** The handling of leaseholder complaints involving repair issues has been extremely poor. It has also been slow to support residents with insurance claims and placed undue onus on the resident to facilitate these, resulting in financial detriment to leaseholders. The Ombudsman has recommended a new policy for leaseholder complaints to encourage improved redress.
- **Disrepair:** There were unreasonable delays in the landlord's response to reports of disrepair. It would delay before inspecting a property after the resident reported a problem, then delay in carrying out necessary repairs, and would be unable to adequately explain the reasons for these.
- **Damp and mould:** Despite featuring in the Ombudsman's 2021 damp and mould report, the landlord did not introduce a new policy until April 2023. While this new policy adheres to the report's recommendations, internal guidance is still lacking in many areas and the Ombudsman has recommended the landlord reviews this guidance to ensure it is consistent with its policy.
- **Vulnerabilities:** The landlord does not always adhere to its own Vulnerable Residents Policy. Despite being mentioned in the policy, there was no evidence of either enhanced support or repair service for vulnerable residents, or indeed any consideration at all of vulnerability within repairs or associated complaints handling. The Ombudsman recommended a review of policies in these areas and to produce vulnerability and safeguarding procedures for housing management and staff.
- **Unreasonable behaviour policy:** Aims to deal with customers fairly, proportionately, impartially and in an open manner is not reflected on the ground. The Ombudsman recommends a new policy is created for this and a new monitoring process introduced to track progress.
- **Knowledge and Information Management:** There was a concerning lack of key documents, jobs being raised and then left open, and a lack of learning. Underpinning the landlord's handling of information, data and records, was a cultural acceptance of poor practice. This includes a lack of ownership, professional pride and accountability. The Ombudsman has recommended the landlord self-assess against the Spotlight report on Knowledge and Information Management.
- **Complaint handling:** The landlord's complaint handling exposes residents to delay, confusion, uncertainty, and unfair treatment. Additionally, its complaints handling is not in line with the Complaint Handling Code. The landlord does not keep records of complaints at Stage 3, which undermines learning. The Ombudsman has recommended it updates its complaints policy, including the removal of 'Stage 0' and a review of Stage 3.
- **Compensation:** The landlord is routinely not offering compensation as part of its complaints handling, despite clear evidence of service failure and the associated time, trouble, distress and inconvenience. The Ombudsman has recommended a creation of a new compensation policy that is in line with the Complaint Handling Code and related guidance.

The landlord has expressed a willingness to use this report as a further mechanism to help drive its improvement and transformation agenda.

Richard Blakeway, housing ombudsman, said: "The findings in this report are stark, with failings across a range of areas which need prompt action. The landlord recognises the current approach is not working for residents, services or its teams, and that the whole organisation needs to change its approach. There was frequently a loss of focus on achieving the right outcome for residents."

"The senior leadership is to be commended for the focus it is bringing to improving housing management and starting to put in place the resources and structures to deliver change. We look forward to working with the landlord on these changes. This report also offers salient lessons for other landlords, particularly councils."

"This includes those planning to bring ALMOs back in house or where leaseholders form a significant part of its responsibilities. Too often leaseholders can be failed, with a lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities between landlord and leaseholder. These poor outcomes need to end."

Regulator warns of increase in gas safety breaches

The chief executive of the Regulator of Social Housing has expressed concern about a recent rise

in gas safety breaches after it thought the issue had already been "cracked".

Speaking during a panel discussion at the Housing 2023 conference in Manchester, Fiona MacGregor said: "Not taking your eye off the ball in any area remains an absolute top priority."

"We thought gas safety had been cracked. We'd had very few cases of breaches of gas safety requirements – and we've had some recently."

"That's why we put the damp and mould (issue)

in a context. It's not, 'You chase one ball, and forget what is going on on the pitch elsewhere.'"

"The majority of social landlords take damp and mould very seriously," Ms MacGregor said. "We've seen some really good examples of good practice in the sector, and an indication that there are some significant improvements that have been made" since the coroner's report was published last year.

But, she added, "there will always be room for further improvement".

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Chartered Institute of Housing joins calls for the Government to tackle poor energy efficiency in the private rented sector

The Chartered Institute of Housing has joined a coalition of charities and consumer groups, Warm this Winter, to ask that new legislation going through Parliament tackles poor energy efficiency in the private rented sector.

The Energy Bill will redefine several aspects of regulation in the energy market. CIH is supporting calls for the bill to commit to enhancing energy efficiency in the private rented sector, and has joined a coalition of charities and consumer groups to write to Housing Secretary Michael Gove, to encourage the Government to move forward with necessary regulations without delay.

The Government consulted on improving minimum energy efficiency standards in private rented homes back in 2020, but has yet to legislate for a new target of getting all privately rented homes to EPC Band C by 2028.

This delay has intensified the negative impacts of cold, damp homes for private renters. Those in the least efficient homes live in the deepest fuel poverty of any tenure, and calculations by Citizens Advice show that failing to raise energy efficiency standards has collectively cost renters £2.3 billion since the Government's initial consultation closed in January 2021.

The lack of progress continues to hold back the Government's Net Zero and Levelling Up agendas. To reach Net Zero by 2050, the Government's Climate Change Committee advises that all rented homes need to achieve a good level of energy efficiency by 2028. In 2022, over 2.5 million private rented homes did not meet this standard.

Analysis by CIH also shows that over half of the



"It is time for the Government to follow through on its promise to legislate for minimum energy efficiency standards in the sector"

Rachael Williamson, head of policy and external affairs at CIH

top 50 deprived local authorities in England have worse than average energy efficiency in their private rental homes. This means that the negative health impacts of these homes, including costs to the NHS, more sick days, and decreased productivity, are likely to be more marked in those areas that are central to the Government's Levelling Up agenda.

Rachael Williamson, head of policy and external affairs at CIH, said: "Residents in the private rented sector often live in the most inefficient properties and suffer the daily consequences of not being able to keep warm and safe at home. The sector has the highest prevalence of damp of any tenure, and the evidence is clear that poor

energy efficiency is often to blame."

"It is time for the Government to follow through on its promise to legislate for minimum energy efficiency standards in the sector, something that will have positive ripple effects for Net Zero and Levelling Up as well as the health and wellbeing of private renters."

CIH have submitted evidence to the Public Bill Committee and are continuing to work with partners to ensure that this crucial amendment is included in the Energy Bill in its final form. It also wants to see the Decent Homes Standard, which includes thermal comfort, applied to the private rented sector through the Renters (Reform) Bill.

Deadline for registering high rise buildings with new regulator looms

Thousands of high-rise buildings have to be registered with the new building safety regulator by the end of September, as the stricter regime to protect residents begins.

The process for registering high-rise buildings with the new Building Safety Regulator (BSR) opened in April. All high-rise residential buildings must be registered with BSR by law and failure to register could result in prosecution.

Up to 12,500 buildings in England are covered by the new regulator, set up in response to the Grenfell

Fire tragedy and officially launched earlier this year.

BSR is an independent body set-up by the Building Safety Act 2022 and part of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Its launch is the biggest change in building safety for a generation.

HSE's Director of Building Safety, Philip White, said: "We were pleased with the early response from industry but I urge owners and managers to act now and register their buildings if they haven't already done so."

"Registration is a crucial part of the new regime

and our efforts to ensure residents of high-rise buildings feel protected and safe in their homes."

High-rise residential buildings that are at least 18 metres in height or have seven or more floors containing at least two residential units must be registered with BSR.

Building owners or managers must provide the number of floors at or above ground level, height in metres, the number of residential units, and the year of construction.

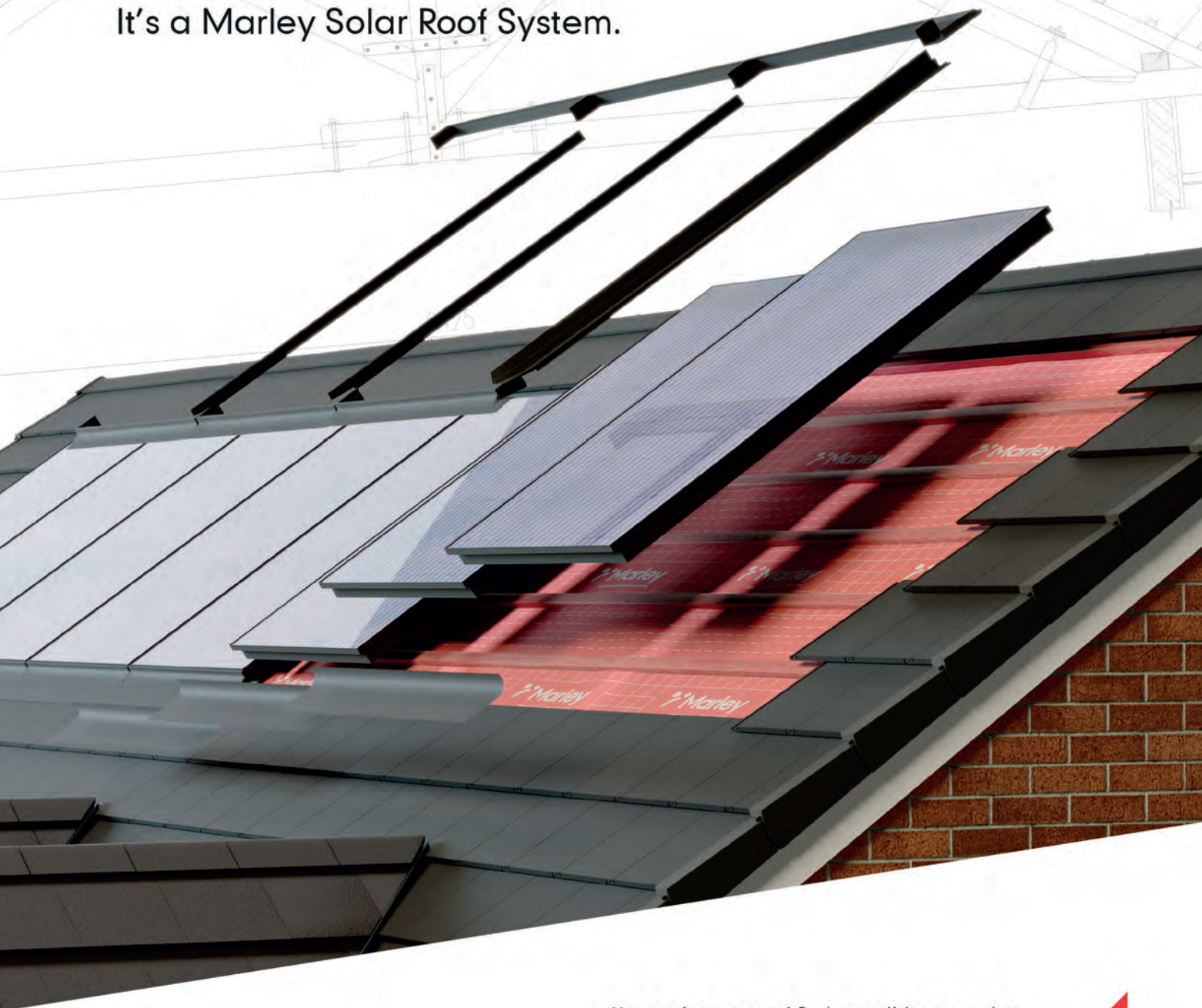
Guidance on the key building information (KBI) that will also need to be recorded under the new building safety laws has been published. This KBI registration element was added to the HRB online registration portal this summer, allowing sufficient time for owners and managers of buildings to submit their KBI by the end of September.



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Private rental listings in London fall sharply by 41%

Research has revealed a 41% reduction in the number of properties available for private rent in London since the Covid-19 pandemic, giving rise to warnings that the rental market is worsening with near-record levels of homelessness across the capital.

The analysis – which represents the most comprehensive study yet published of London's private rental market and its relationship to homelessness pressures – was undertaken jointly by the LSE and Savills and commissioned by a partnership led by the cross-party group London Councils.

London's buy-to-let market is contracting as landlords exit the sector which, coupled with the freeze to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and skyrocketing rents, is compounding the challenges faced by low-income households seeking affordable accommodation and by London boroughs working to prevent homelessness.

London Councils and the report's co-funders (Trust for London, Capital Letters, and the London Housing Directors' Group) say the research is the latest evidence of London's broken housing market and the need for urgent Government action to address rising homelessness.

London Councils estimates that 166,000 Londoners are homeless and living in temporary accommodation arranged by their local borough. This figure is equivalent to the entire population of some London boroughs or a city the size of Blackburn or Oxford.

On current trends, London will see its highest ever number of homeless households in temporary accommodation by the end of the summer. With boroughs in the capital collectively spending more than £52m each month on temporary accommodation and suitable accommodation for

homeless households increasingly scarce, London Councils has branded the situation "unmanageable". Key findings from the LSE and Savills research include:

- Rental listings have fallen across London, with the number of one, two, and three-bedroom properties listed for rent in both inner and outer London down by around 36% since the pandemic (comparing January-March 2023 to the January-March average across 2017-19);
- Listings for four-bedroom properties declined the most. Over the same period, listings of four-bedroom properties almost halved (46.6%);
- Across, one, two, three and four-bedroom properties the overall reduction is 41% down on the 2017-19 average. This reduction in the availability of private rental accommodation is higher in London, compared to a fall of 33% nationally;
- At the same time, rental prices listed by London landlords (the 'asking rents') are 20% above their pre-Covid level in March 2020; and
- The buy-to-let market is contracting nationally and more private landlords in London are reducing rather than growing their portfolios. The number of rental properties being advertised for sale has more than doubled since the pandemic, and the proportion is rising. This has a clear impact on low-income households looking to rent, and on boroughs seeking temporary accommodation for homeless residents.

The researchers also investigated affordability for the 300,000 London households reliant on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) to meet their housing costs. Eligible households receive LHA as part of their housing benefit or Universal Credit payment if they have a private landlord, and the Government has frozen LHA rates since April 2020.

In the face of fast-rising rents, the decision to keep LHA rates frozen has significantly reduced the number of properties affordable in London under LHA. Only 2.3% of London listings on Rightmove in 2022/23 were affordable to those using the benefit to pay their rent, falling from 18.9% in 2020/21.

London Councils and its partners are calling on ministers to take further measures to help low-income renters meet their housing costs and address homelessness pressures, including by raising LHA to cover at least 30% of local market rents and boosting investment in building more affordable homes.

Councillor Darren Rodwell, London Councils' Executive Member for Regeneration, Housing & Planning, said: "This research is the latest evidence of how the capital's broken housing market is worsening the unsustainable and increasingly unmanageable pressures we face in London."

"A bad situation is now becoming disastrous. We're seeing fast-rising private rents and reduced availability of rental properties against a backdrop of continuing cost-of-living pressures and London's longstanding shortage of affordable housing."

"Homelessness is a national emergency but with London accounting for two-thirds of England's temporary accommodation placements we are at the epicentre of this crisis. Urgent action is needed from the Government to help households avoid homelessness and to reduce the number in temporary accommodation."

Ombudsman praises three landlords for good practice

The Housing Ombudsman has highlighted good practice at three social landlords and has encouraged other landlords to learn from such examples to help extend fairness across the social housing sector.

Newham Council, LiveWest and Birmingham City Council have all been praised for their responses to issues faced by tenants, including anti-social behaviour and disrepair.

LiveWest was praised for its response after a ceiling collapsed in one of its homes. It responded within 24 hours of being notified, moved the family out of the home and then raised the damage with its insurers and carried out inspections.

While the family was away, the landlord went

above and beyond to salvage their possessions and provide furnishing. LiveWest also offered appropriate compensation to the family for the distress and inconvenience.

Birmingham City Council was found to have acted in accordance with its anti-social behaviour policy. The landlord escalated its actions with the alleged perpetrator when new evidence came to light and responded immediately to any new reports of ASB.

"It then showed effective use of other tools such as setting up mediation and working with third parties such as the police," the ombudsman said.

Newham Council was praised for its initial response to reports of damp and mould. When the

issue was first reported, the council did prompt surveys and carried out multiple repairs to try to resolve the problem.

The ombudsman said: "It then followed this up by using different surveyors to ensure independent findings showing how landlords can achieve an effective diagnosis by engaging with the right expertise."

Richard Blakeway, the 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 prompt action, fulfilling commitments made and maintaining effective records so the landlord knows what it did, when and why."

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Councils are responsible for the most breaches of consumer standards

More than three-quarters of the social housing landlords that breached the consumer standards last year were local authorities.

In a review of consumer regulation work during 2022/23, the Regulator of Social Housing reported that 13 landlords had breached the consumer standards. Ten of them were councils and in each case, the councils had referred themselves to the regulator.

“This transparency and willingness to self-refer is a cornerstone of effective regulation and is welcomed,” the RSH said. In all instances, local authorities had worked “effectively” with the regulator following a breach.

During 2022/23 the regulator received a total of 940 referrals from tenants and other sources, representing an increase of 44% from the previous year. It investigated some 438 referrals and found a breach of the consumer standards had occurred in 13 cases.

The regulator concluded that many of the breaches (of failing to meet all legal health and safety requirements, particularly the completion of safety checks on time) were due to weak data and an incomplete understanding of the condition of tenants’ homes. In each case, the breaches posed actual, or the potential for, serious harm to tenants.

The report has been published as the sector gets ready for the biggest transformation to social housing regulation in a decade, including the re-introduction of landlord inspections. The report also includes details of case studies and lessons learned.

Kate Dodsworth, chief of regulatory engagement at the RSH, said: “Every tenant deserves to live



During 2022/23 the regulator received a total of 940 referrals from tenants and other sources, representing an increase of 44% from the previous year

in a safe and decent home. Our work shows that some tenants have been let down by their landlord, and this needs to change. We expect all social landlords to be respectful, transparent and responsive to their tenants when things go wrong, and we will hold them to account if they fail.”

“We’re gearing up for stronger consumer regulation, with our inspections starting from April next year. All social landlords should read our report carefully, and make sure they are providing a good-quality service to their tenants.”

In the foreword to the report, chief executive Fiona MacGregor wrote: “Given the changes to consumer regulation that will be implemented from April 2024, including the proactive consumer assessments of large landlords and that all providers will have to collect tenant satisfaction measures, it is vital that social housing providers act now to ensure compliance.”

“Some registered providers are not getting the basics right and failing to ensure that tenants are safe within their homes; where that is the case, this must change.”

Ombudsman criticises council for leaving family in flat with faulty windows

Ealing council has been criticised by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for leaving a young homeless family in a tenth floor flat with faulty windows for nearly 18 months.

The council agreed the flat was unsuitable and had disrepair issues which also included leaks, damp, mould, and exposed electrical cables when the family complained about the temporary accommodation in May 2021.

It placed the family on its transfer list, but it was not until late October 2022 – some 17 months later – that the family was eventually moved to alternative accommodation.

The family complained to the Ombudsman when they were not satisfied with the West London council’s response to their concerns. The Ombudsman’s investigation found the council was not properly recording the actions it was taking to secure alternative temporary accommodation, which meant there was no audit trail for staff to refer to.

The council also could not demonstrate the action it took to find suitable accommodation for the family. The investigation also criticised the council’s delay in finding suitable accommodation for the family.

Nigel Ellis, chief executive at the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, said: “While we are mindful of the difficulties councils face – particularly in London – in securing

accommodation, councils must ensure that the accommodation they do provide is suitable.

“In this case, not only was the accommodation not suitable, it was beset with disrepair issues. The family have told me of their concerns for their children living in a high-rise flat with unsafe windows and exposed electrics.

“I am pleased the council has accepted my recommendations to remedy the situation for this family. It has told me there are 31 other households on its transfer list for temporary accommodation, so I have asked it to consider remedying any complaints of injustice to those other households too.”

The council agreed to apologise to the family and pay them £3,400 to acknowledge the 17 months they lived in unsuitable accommodation with disrepair issues. It will also review its record keeping procedures to develop a system of recording actions taken to find accommodation for individual applicants.



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Warning more funding needed to enforce no-fault evictions ban

Councils in England have warned they will need more staff and funding to effectively enforce the ban on no-fault evictions in the private rented sector.

The Renters (Reform) Bill which is going through Parliament will ban landlords from evicting tenants without justification, with councils given responsibility for enforcement of the new rules.

While the Local Government Association has welcomed the changes it has said councils will struggle to police them properly even though the Government has said it will fully fund any additional costs for councils.

Councils will be able to keep any revenue from civil penalties imposed on rogue landlords, with the money ring-fenced for further enforcement activity but there are concerns that serious costs can be racked up before court action is begun especially as council officers try to resolve cases without going to court.

Most councils say they do not currently have the staffing resources to proactively find landlords who are breaching rules and they rely on tenants to report concerns.

The new law will only allow landlords to evict tenants in certain circumstances, including when they wish to sell the property or when they or a close family member want to move in. If they do so, they will not be allowed to re-let their property for three months. Breaching the new rules carries a fine of up to £30,000.



Most councils say they do not currently have the staffing resources to proactively find landlords who are breaching rules and they rely on tenants to report concerns

In addition the bill introduces a new database, which landlords will be legally required to sign up to. The database should make it easier for

councils to enforce the legislation by saving time and allowing them to identify who was letting out properties and flag any breaches.

Darren Rodwell, the LGA's housing spokesman, said "every council I'm aware of" has a shortage of environmental health officers and tenancy relations officers, who investigate potential offences related to private rented housing.

"New regulation is important, and we welcome it, but we need to make sure we have the right financial package to be able to enforce and deliver it," he added.

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, which represents the sector, also said more funding was needed to ensure the new legislation was effective.

Henry Dawson, a member of the organisation's housing advisory panel, said there was a "desperate shortage" of environmental health officers and tenancy relations officers.

"At the moment it's very much about firefighting in major cases. If we're about to bring in a whole raft of new responsibilities for local authorities, we need to bring in more staffing to support that and also a sustainable model for funding of new staff"

A Department for Housing, Levelling Up and Communities spokesman said: "We will continue to support councils financially so they have the right resources to put tenants first, that includes fully funding any additional costs that may fall on councils as a result of our proposed reforms."

Ombudsman orders council to pay £5,500 after 120 repairs raised over four years

The Ombudsman has made a finding of severe maladministration against Milton Keynes Council after its inappropriate complaint handling led to a disabled resident and her son living with multiple repairs issues outstanding for years.

For its failures the landlord was ordered to pay £5,500 in compensation.

The complaint relates to various repairs jobs that were not completed, with repairs logs showing at least 120 jobs raised for the one household alone over four years.

But it was the complaint handling where the

Ombudsman found severe maladministration, with a host of issues hampering the resolution of the repairs issues.

Firstly, the landlord failed to raise the resident's formal complaint when it came in, with a councillor's attempts to chase a formal response also unsuccessful.

There were also then delays to both the stage one and two responses, despite the Ombudsman getting involved. When it did respond, the landlord failed to provide a thorough investigation of its repairs handling and address the outstanding issues raised by the resident.

On top of this, it failed to recognise the amount of time and the number of appointments it took to resolve some of the issues. Linking to this, the landlord did not express any empathy towards the resident or recognise the impact on her child given their vulnerabilities.

This was inappropriate, caused additional frustration and may have contributed to the resident's accusation that she was being discriminated by the landlord based on her disability.

On top of the compensation, the Ombudsman

ordered the landlord to apologise to the resident, carry out repairs and a damp and mould inspection and subsequent works arising from that report.

Richard Blakeway, housing ombudsman, said: "A mother and her son, who both have disabilities, were not treated with the respect they deserved. Understandably, the family felt discriminated against because of the landlord's poor communication, compounded by repeated failings on repairs.

"The landlord failed to respond within the timescales of the Complaint Handling Code and its policies, did not address the key failings within the case and continues to show few signs of learning from these errors."

"While we often see landlords without repairs logs, this case shows the importance of not only recording data but using it as intelligence to ask questions about where services may be going wrong."

The Ombudsman also found maladministration in how the council handled repairs at the property and its record keeping for not keeping adequate repairs records or obtain any records from its contractors.



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Private landlords profits fall to a 16-year low

Landlords' profits have hit their lowest rate since 2007 according to new research, with fears that many of them could leave the sector for good.

Average net profits for investors in the PRS dropped below 4% in the first quarter of this year, according to a report by property agent Savills, and they are now at their lowest since 2007.

Landlords have seen their profit margins hit by 12 successive increases to the Bank base rate, a situation exacerbated by restricted tax relief.

The Savills report describes 2023 as a 'turning point' for the private rented sector and claims the impact of the current pressures will dictate the shape of the PRS in the future.

It warns that, despite growing tenant demand, landlords' ability to turn a profit depends on their level of mortgage debt, with smaller buy-to-let landlords reliant on borrowing the most vulnerable, while larger, wealthier landlords are best placed to take advantage of increased demand.

The report also warns of the impact of landlords retiring from the sector, reflecting findings from estate agent Hamptons which showed 73% of all landlord sales in 2022 were made by landlords retiring from the sector.

The Savills report reveals that a total of 1,911,000 properties are currently owned by 620,000 landlords



aged 65 or over, with a further 1,982,000 properties owned by landlords aged between 55-64.

Lucian Cook, head of residential research at Savills said: "Following a boom period for buy-to-let landlords, 2023 marks a turning point for Britain's private rented sector."

"Between 2014 and 2021, landlords on average were making 'year 1' cash profits of 23% of rental income, but successive interest rate hikes have seen this figure plummet to under 4% this year."

"The incoming Renters Reform Bill, abolition of the Assured Shorthold Tenancy, and increasing EPC regulations, are expected to add to investors'

caution as landlords now face the prospect of having to invest to bring their properties up to a minimum EPC, further eating into profits."

"There is a very real risk that landlords will exit the sector, particularly those with high levels of borrowing, putting increased pressure on a sector where demand significantly outweighs supply in many locations."

The NRLA has said the findings added weight to its call for a full review of the taxation of the private rented sector. NRLA policy director Chris Norris said: "The concerns raised by Savills echo those of the NRLA, which has warned the perfect storm of economic uncertainty, tax changes and increased regulation could have a devastating impact on the supply of homes to let."

"However there are things the Government can do to support those landlords who, despite providing vital homes to let, now find themselves struggling to make ends meet."

"We are calling for a comprehensive review of the way the private rented sector is taxed to assess the impact recent tax hikes, including changes to Mortgage Interest Relief and Stamp Duty, are having on supply. We then need the Government to bring forward pro-growth measures to encourage landlords to remain in the sector and continue to invest."

HA's severely protracted complaints handling left resident without redress for nearly a year

The Ombudsman has found severe maladministration in the Hyde Group's poor handling of a residents' complaint and its subsequent compensation offer, which was often delayed, did not address resident concerns and appeared to require her to accept compensation to close the complaint.

The initial complaint was made in respect of noise nuisance, but it was the handling of the complaint that the Ombudsman took issue with. It's Stage 1 response was four and a half months after the initial complaint, well outside the

landlord's timescales and that of the Complaint Handling Code.

When the resident escalated her complaint to stage two, the landlord did not learn from its first response time and took five and a half months to respond to the escalation. That only occurred because the Ombudsman issued it with a Complaint Handling Failure Order.

Moreover, the landlord appeared to make its offer of compensation for delays conditional on the resident accepting that the complaint was resolved. This led it to presenting the resident with Acceptance Form it seemed like they were expected to sign and agree the complaint was closed.

The landlord's compensation offer at Stage 1 was £50. However, with the noise issues still ongoing and the compensation offer not even addressing that as part of its offer, this approach was unacceptable. This was increased to £150 at Stage 2.

The Ombudsman ordered the landlord to undertake a senior management review into its compensation policies and pay the resident £450 in compensation for the failings.

In its learning from the case, the landlord said it has improved its notification system for staff, is clearer with its compensation letters and systems and introduced a new Customer Relationship Management system.

Richard Blakeway, housing ombudsman, said: "While the landlord's handling of the noise nuisance itself was broadly reasonable, the landlord's handling of the complaint responses was very poor."

"The use of a so-called Acceptance Form where the resident would be paid compensation in exchange for the complaint to be closed, when it was evident the redress was inadequate and the dispute unresolved, was concerning. The landlord failed to recognise this approach as unfair and contributed to the lengths the resident had to go to obtain a response."

"In addition, the landlord failed to learn from its errors in stage one which were repeated at stage two, causing additional inconvenience to the resident. Our Complaint Handling Code, which is due to become statutory under the Social Housing Regulation Bill, requires landlords to deliver fair, accessible and effective complaints procedures."

"We are now hosting monthly drop-in sessions on the Code and would encourage landlords to sign up to these to ask any questions or if they need guidance on compliance."

The Ombudsman also found maladministration for how the landlord communicated with the resident throughout the case, with lengthy gaps where she had to chase for updates. In addition, there were several occasions where it failed to respond to questions and queries.



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Riverside and Countryside Partnerships agree affordable housing deal in Bromley



Riverside, a national housing association and care provider with over 75,000 homes under management, and Countryside Partnerships have completed the affordable housing development agreement for the 170-home redevelopment of the Pike Close estate in Bromley. This includes the provision of new homes for the 92 Riverside households currently in social rent homes on the estate, with their rent and tenancy terms protected.

Enabling works began in July 2022 and are now complete, allowing for construction of the new homes to begin in July 2023. Completion of the first phase of new homes is expected in early 2025. Every home in this first phase will be for social rent, which means that existing residents will only need to move home once.

Designed by architects HTA, the new development will replace the current social housing with high quality new homes that meet the specific needs of existing residents, as well as delivering 78 additional private homes to meet the pressing housing need in the local area.

Landscaping and open space is at the centre of the designs for Pike Close, with a central green space that will form the heart of the community,

providing a place for residents to relax, enjoy the outdoors and for children to play. The layout of the development has been designed with nature and green spaces in mind, with residents guided through the network of green spaces towards the heart of the community which will provide an open and welcoming entrance to the new Pike Close.

The regeneration promotes sustainable transport measures, through the provision of electric charging points, a car club offering two years free membership to residents, and 311 bicycle parking spaces. The proposed development also utilises efficient building design to reduce energy bills for residents, alongside the installation of rooftop solar panels.

The regeneration follows five years of consultation and engagement with residents residing at Pike Close, which resulted in an 82% ballot in favour of redevelopment in May 2019. Following the successful ballot result, Countryside and Riverside have worked together with residents, the London Borough of Bromley and the wider community in order to positively develop the design of the scheme, including over 18 consultation events prior to planning submission as part of the partners' commitment to inclusive design.

Nathan Gravesande, director of development and regeneration (London South) of Riverside, commented: "We are delighted to have reached this milestone agreement with Countryside. This is wonderful news for our residents and the local community, and we are excited to begin construction work on the first new homes following extensive enabling works. Residents' feedback has been crucial to our proposals throughout the planning process, and we are looking forward to creating a scheme which meets their needs and help tackle the ongoing shortage of quality homes in London."

Stephen Teagle, chief executive of Countryside Partnerships, said: "Our redevelopment of the Pike Close estate will deliver a significant number of new, high-quality homes for local residents and support the existing community, and we are proud to have signed the affordable housing development agreement with Riverside so we can officially begin construction following the completion of enabling works. Having worked tirelessly with residents, the council and wider community to design a scheme that delivers for everyone, we are excited to start bringing this vision to life."

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Bromford purchases 91 homes in Bristol

Housing association Bromford has announced the purchase of 91 new homes from housebuilder Keepmoat which has started construction on its new housing development, Park View, at Hawkfield Way on the outskirts of Bristol.

Bromford purchased the new homes to provide affordable housing in the area. 69 of the new homes will be available for social rent, with the remaining 22 homes available to part-buy, part-rent through its shared ownership scheme. The development will be made up of 74 two, three and four-bedroom houses in addition to 17 one and two-bedroom apartments.

Planning permission for Park View was granted in March 2023 & construction will take around two years, with the first of the new homes expected to be complete by the end of 2023. Overall completion is expected towards the end of 2024.

The start on site was celebrated by a visit from local dignitaries including Councillor Tom Renhard, Cabinet Member for Housing at Bristol City Council, John Smith, Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration; and Louise Davidson, Housing Strategy & Enabling Manager.

Cllr Renhard said: "I welcome this proposed development of much needed affordable homes that will add to the 11,000 new homes already completed in the city between 2016 and 2022. This will see new homes for social rent and affordable



home ownership delivered for Bristol's citizens in housing need, adding to the 474 new affordable homes built in Bristol in 2021/22. With over 19,000 households on the council's housing register, including many families looking for larger homes, I am particularly pleased to see two, three, and four bedroom family homes being built here as we continue to accelerate affordable housing delivery across the city."

Will Gates, project manager at Bromford, said: "We're really excited to see work getting underway here at Parkview. The partnership with Keepmoat to build these new homes is a testament to our commitment to providing new affordable housing in Bristol, which has become one of the most expensive cities in the country to buy or rent a home in recent years. We can't wait to hand over the keys to our first customers and see them move in."



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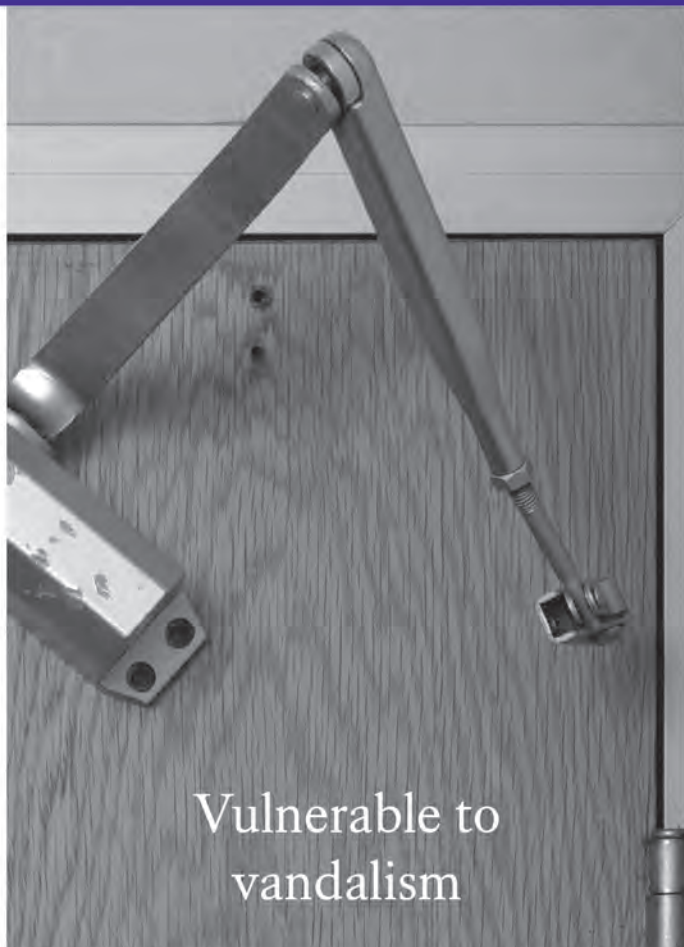


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INDUSTRY VIEWFINDER

Revisiting the approach to Fire Safety in Social Housing

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fire Safety is the highest priority in social housing, and housing fires are preventable more often than not. Despite this, fires in UK housing are no thing of the past – with the Grenfell Tower fire affecting the national consciousness perhaps more than any other.

Housing associations and private landlords have a legal – and moral – obligation to ensure that every resident is safe, and there has been a push in the last decade to reassess the safety of their stock, and complete vital building safety works such as cladding remediation, fire compartmentation, sprinklers and fire doors.

Despite this, in 2021, four years after the Grenfell Tower Fire, *Housing Management & Maintenance* discovered a range of potentially lethal shortcomings in fire safety were a constant issue. One in five (22%) of failed fire risk assessments took three months to a year to be addressed, and 16% of our respondents had been in a position where it would be uncomfortable to report fire safety issues or malpractice to a superior or relevant authority.

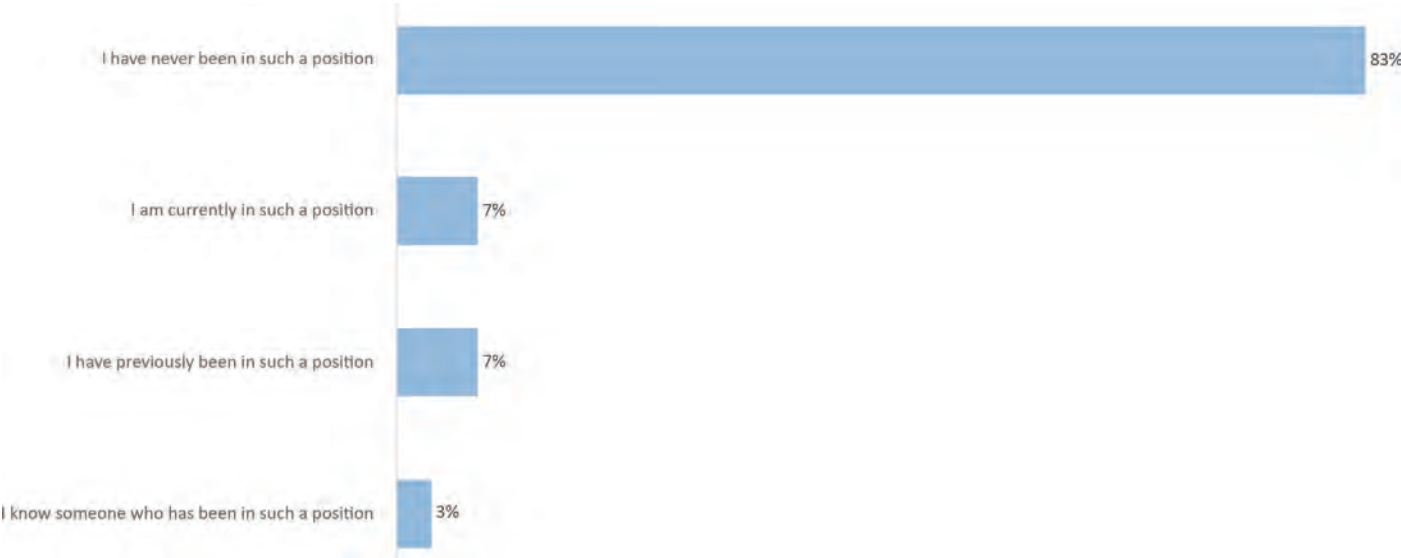
Since that study, policy and reviews have progressed. Two years after our last study, the Grenfell Tower Inquiry has revealed widespread failings across over 1,600 witness statements and more than 300 public hearings, and the Fire Safety

Regulations 2022 – realising some of the measures from the Hackitt Review into the fire – has introduced new duties under the Fire Safety Order for building owners or managers.

Now, in 2023, *Housing Management & Maintenance* conducts a further study to see if the industry has made progress in the last two years, if fire safety measures have improved, if housing professionals feel equipped to carry out the standards required, and if not, what is preventing them from doing so.

In this study, *Housing Management & Maintenance* reveals that, while there has been some improvement – with the average frequency of fire risk assessments being conducted almost tripling – there were still over one in 10 respondents who only conducted them every two years or more, and 4% who never do, almost a quarter (23%) who only partially, slightly or don't at all understand fire safety regulations, 14% – down just 3% from the last study – who have been, or are currently in, a position where it would be uncomfortable to report fire safety issues, and a fifth of respondents reported that 10-100% of their housing still has unsafe cladding installed.

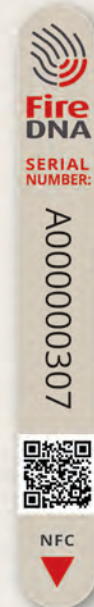
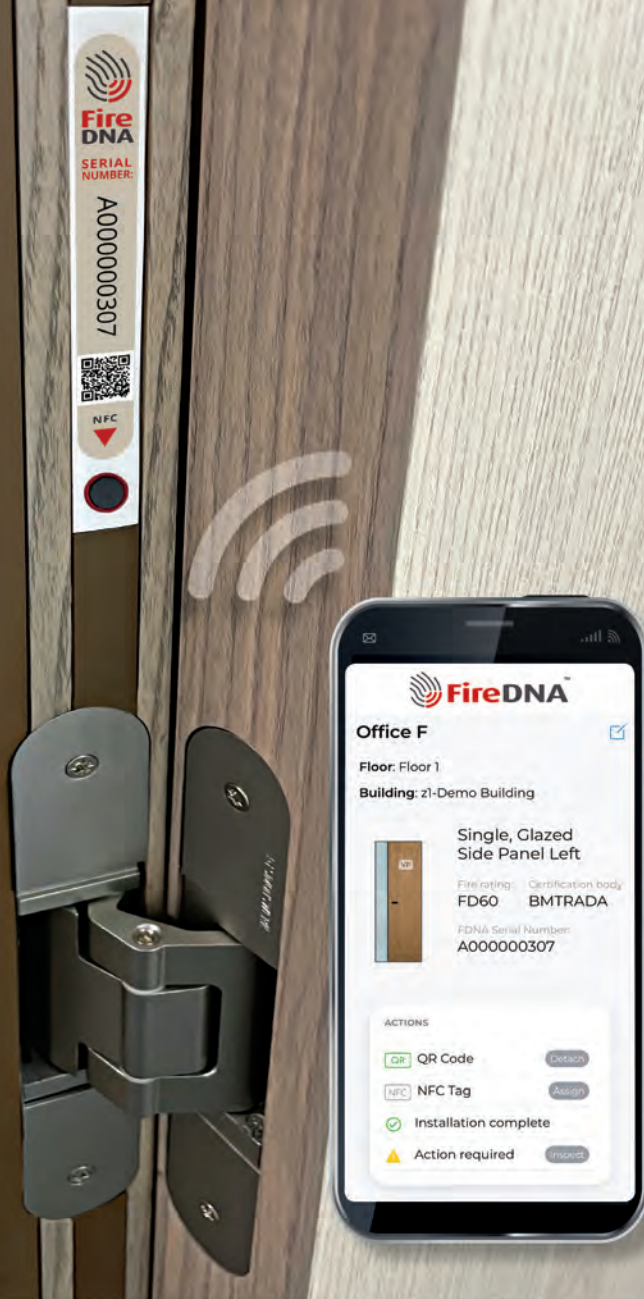
Compounded by at least 7%, and up to 27%, of respondents yet to take action on measures applicable to their properties in recent legislation, *Housing Management & Maintenance* provides data that help explain such failings among the still too high minority.



"It has been reported that many housing professionals at some point in their career have been put in a position where it would be uncomfortable to report fire safety issues or malpractice to a superior or relevant authority, or that their voices would not be heard in the matter. Which of the following options best suits your experience of this?"



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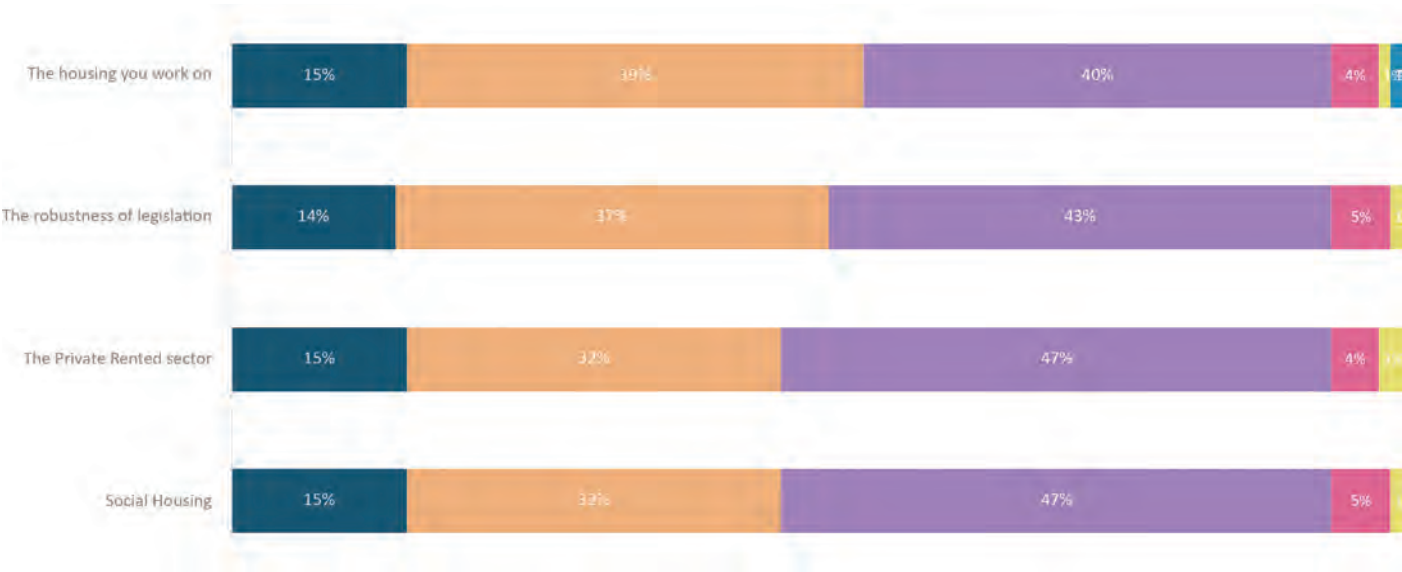


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In the last five years, how would you rate the improvement of fire safety in the following areas?

■ Vastly improved ■ Improved ■ Slightly improved ■ Slightly worsened ■ Worsened ■ Vastly worsened

INTRODUCTION

THE FIRE SAFETY (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2022

In our 2021 Delivering Better Fire Safety Industry Viewfinder a significant resistance to change was shown.

Since then, many more changes have been introduced, with multiple initiatives introduced following the Hackitt review and the Fire Safety Act.

One of the most significant implementations since the last study is The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 – an important step forward for the industry – bringing about an overhaul of the way fire safety is conducted in the housing sector, intended to implement the majority of the recommendations made by the Grenfell Inquiry in its Phase 1 report, brought into force at the start of this year.

Among the new regulations are the requirement for a ‘responsible person’ for residential buildings at least 18 metres in height (or over seven storeys), responsible for a swathe of fire safety measures including regular discourse with their local fire and rescue service, keeping plans and records of the building, installing signage, and a minimum of monthly checks on lifts which may be used by firefighters as well as any essential pieces of firefighting equipment.

On smaller buildings, for all multi-occupied buildings over 11 metres in height responsible persons must undertake quarterly checks on all communal fire doors, and annual checks on apartments’ entrance doors, and in all multi-occupied residential buildings of any height, the responsible persons must provide residents with relevant fire safety instructions and information about the importance of fire doors.

RESPONSE TO CHANGE

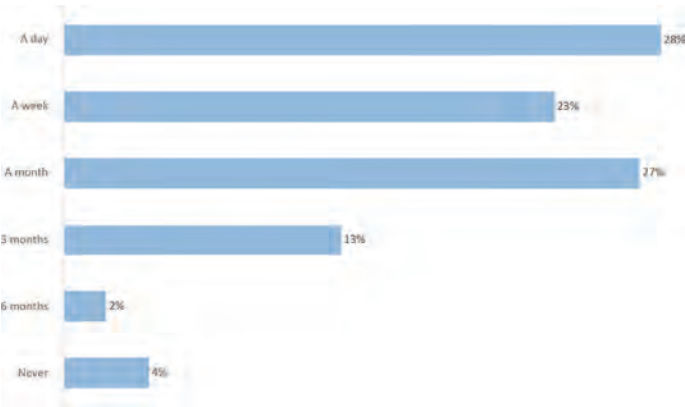
In this study, *Housing Management & Maintenance* used the adoption of these regulations as a marker to gauge the industry’s engagement with fire safety, asking this year’s respondents whether they have actioned the measures applicable to their stock prior to the updated legislation, actioned them because of it, or if some are still yet to take action.

For those who currently work with buildings over 18 metres high, the majority (62%) had already installed proper wayfinding signage before the legislation was introduced, and 19% have done so following them. Unfortunately, this leaves another 19% of respondents who believe the legislation is applicable to their properties that are yet to action this critical measure of fire safety.

Similarly, with a high level of adoption, but still not nearly enough when considering the risks to lives of residents, 50% of respondents were already carrying out monthly checks of fire lifts and firefighting equipment within their properties, with 33% having done so since. Still, 17% of respondents who have buildings over 18 metres high in their stock have not actioned this measure.

As for the rest of the listings for this height, when it came to having installed a secure information box, 54% of those with properties relevant to these measures had already done so, 22% had done so since the measures were introduced, and 24% were yet to take action. Of those who had prepared a floor plan and building plan, 52% had done so already, 38% had done so since the measures, and 10% still have not. Then, of those who have prepared a record of the design of external walls in such buildings, 40% had already done so, 33% had since, and 27% are yet to.

Of those who work on buildings over 11 metres high, 61% have been checking fire doors in communal areas at least three months prior to the legislation, 32% have done since, and 7% don’t yet reach this standard, and similarly, 53% already checked the fire doors at the entrances of individual flats every 12 months, 40% have done so since, and 7% are yet to meet this.



How long does it take on average for these issues to be addressed?



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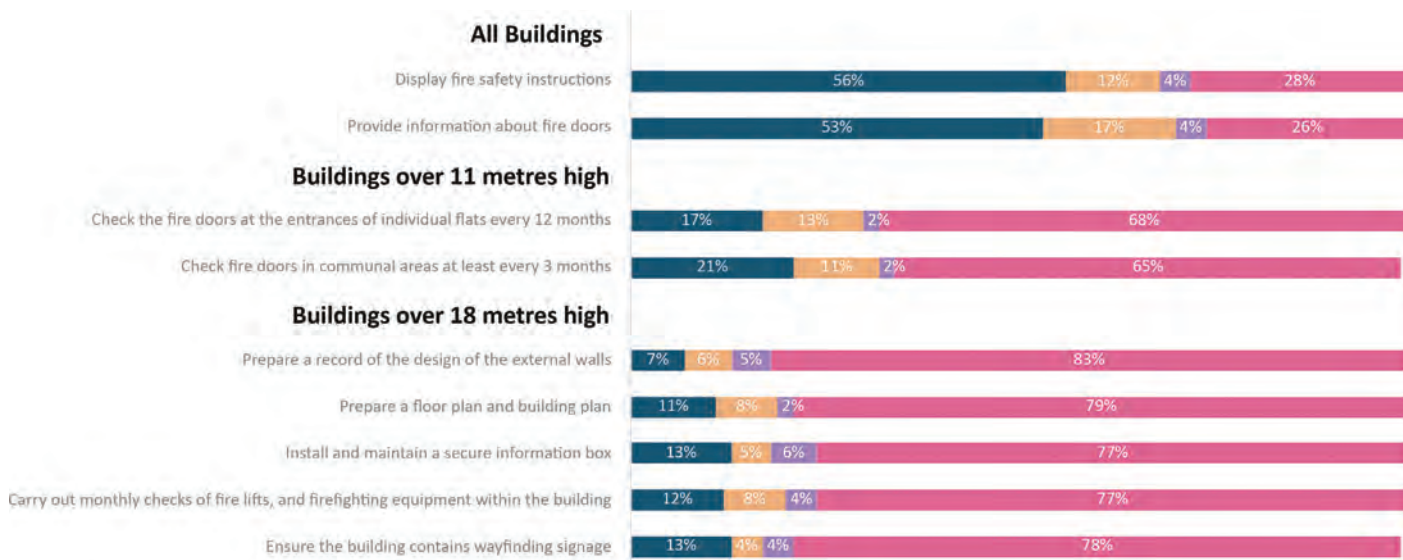
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Following these updates at the start of this year, what options best suit your actions on the following updates?"

■ Actioned prior to updated legislation
 ■ Actioned because of legislation
 ■ Yet to action
 ■ Not applicable to my properties

Lastly, of those that work buildings of any size, 77% were already displaying fire safety instructions prior to the legislation, with 16% doing so because of it and 7% yet to do so, and 71% were already providing information about fire doors, with 22% having done so because of it and 7% yet to do so.

Overall, though the vast majority of housing professionals are meeting these new standards, and many were already meeting them prior to their introduction, the level of respondents who cannot – or will not – meet these requirements are far too high.

PROBLEM ASSESSMENT

HAS THE SECTOR PROGRESSED?

While from these results when taken in isolation it seems as though a minority of housing professionals continue to resist change – change that is proven to save lives – *Housing Management & Maintenance* also looked into other areas where progress may have been made.

As such, beyond the new measures introduced after the last study, *Housing Management & Maintenance* have also produced some data on whether this year's respondents show a better adoption of wider fire safety measures compared with our last study.

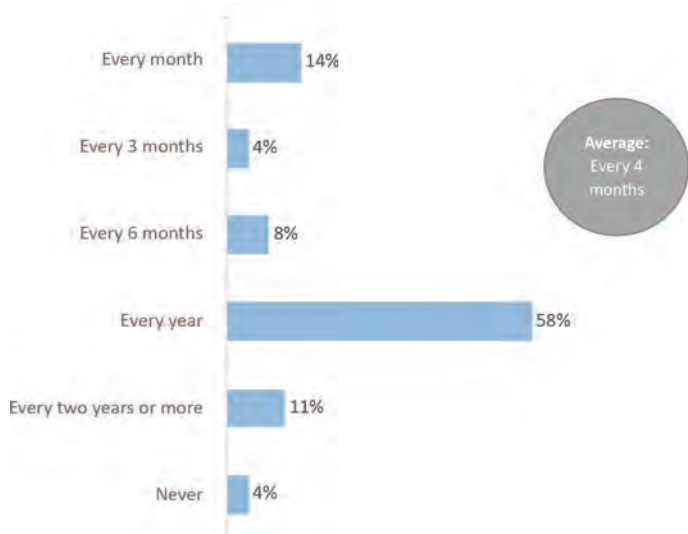
When asked how often our respondents (or their organisations) conducted fire safety assessments on their properties, for example, progress has been made – with the average frequency almost tripling to every four months (last year's average being at 11.5 months). 14% (+7% from last year's study) reported that fire risk assessments are conducted every month, followed by 4% every three months (equal to last year), 8% every six months (-4%), 58% every year (-1%), 11% every two years or more (-2%), and shockingly 4% still never conduct fire safety assessments, just as in the last study.

Though less prominently, the number of assessments receiving a pass has also improved a little. 32% of our respondents reported that an average of 100% of these assessment pass (+13%), 36% passed around 90% of the time (+6%), 17% passed between 70-80% of the time (+15%), 5% passed between 40-60% of the time (-2%), 3% between 10-30% of the time (-4%), and 5% never (the same as last year).

When it came to the average length of failings to be addressed, 28% said failed assessments would take a day to remediate (up a significant 20%), with 23% a week (-17%), 27% a month (-3%), 13% three months (-2%), 2% six months (-4%), and a small, yet still far too high 4% never being addressed (+4%).

There was some improvement seen in the understanding of fire safety regulations, though three quarters still do not completely understand them. 2% reported that they do not understand fire safety regulations at all (+2%), with 5% slightly understanding them (+0%), 16% partially (-8%), 54% mainly (+0%), and an improved 24% completely (+7%).

This year, we also asked respondents how they believe other areas of the sector have improved – or not – in terms of fire safety over the last five years. When it came to the housing that our respondents had worked on, 15% said their fire safety had vastly improved, with 39% saying it had improved, 40% slightly improved, 4% slightly worsened, 1% worsened, and 1% vastly worsened. Similarly, when considering how the private rented sector has improved its fire safety over the last five years, 15% said it had vastly improved, 32% improved, 47% slightly improved, 4% slightly worsened, 3% worsened, and none vastly worsened. 15% believed social housing as a whole has vastly improved in this area, followed by 32% improved, 47% slightly improved, 5% slightly

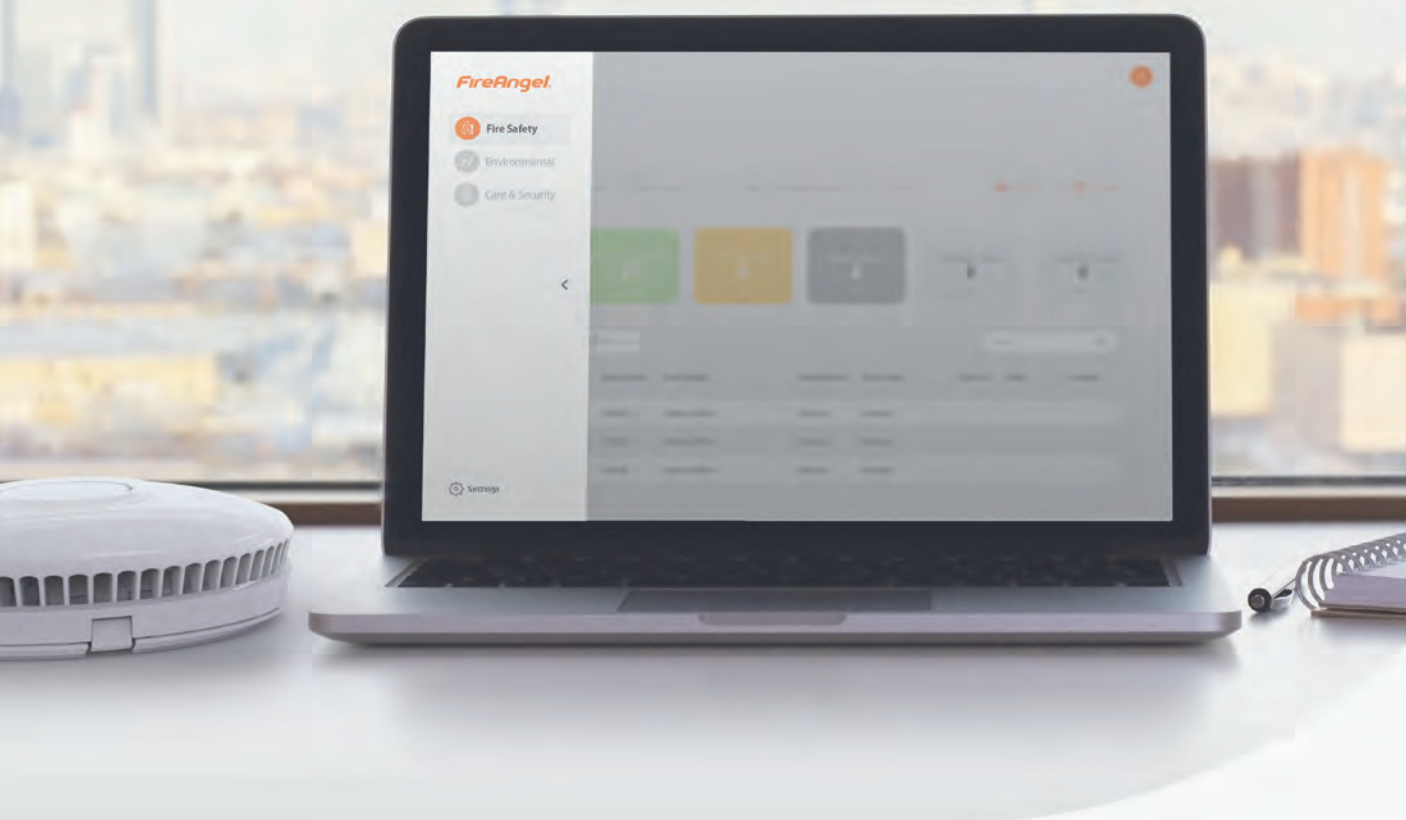


How often do you or your association/organisation conduct fire risk assessments on each property under your company's remit?

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o Security

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worsened, 1% worsened, and none vastly worsened. And lastly, the robustness of legislation was seen as having vastly improved by 14%, where 37% said it had improved, 43% slightly improved, 5% slightly worsened, 1% worsened, and none vastly worsened.

Another additional question introduced this year, *Housing Management & Maintenance* asked respondents what percentage of the housing they have worked on in the last six months they estimate has unsafe cladding still installed. While 81% have worked on no housing with unsafe cladding on in the last five months, 12% said between 10-30% still retained such cladding, with 4% between 40-60%, and another 4% between 70-80% – meaning that one in five respondents are still working on properties with unsafe cladding.

THE BARRIERS TO ADOPTION

Though some areas have seen improvement, the sector clearly has a long way to go. As such, there must be major barriers present which were preventing the adoption of fire safety measures.

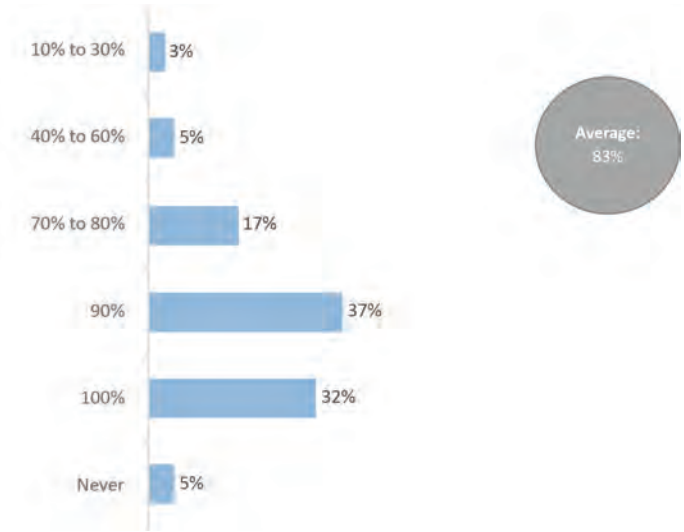
In this section, *Housing Management & Maintenance* looks at some of the most significant barriers still present, and if this has remained consistent with our previous results, or if new barriers have been encountered.

When asked what the main reasons are that fire risk remains present in their properties, for example, as ever costs came front and centre, with 60% citing costs as a major reason (+7%), 30% a minor reason (+12%), and 10% being unsure (-19%).

Following this however, the remaining reasons given fluctuated a little from the last results. This year, the second most common barrier was listed as uninformed tenants (up from eighth last year). Next was lack of government support, retaining its position in third place. Cheap products was next at fourth (up from seventh), followed by ‘malicious tenants’ fifth (up from ninth), poorly maintained stock sixth (down from fifth), barriers to reporting issues in seventh (up from twelfth), landlord malpractice eighth (up from tenth), and poor legislation at ninth, retaining its place from the last study.

Among the less popular options were poor tradespeople at tenth (up from eleventh), untrustworthy manufacturers (up from thirteenth), a lack of sprinklers at eleventh (up from fourth), a lack of council funding at twelfth (up from sixth) and flammable products at thirteenth (down dramatically from second).

Another barrier highlighted in our study was a lack of clarity around who is ultimately responsible for fire safety in rented social housing. While the majority

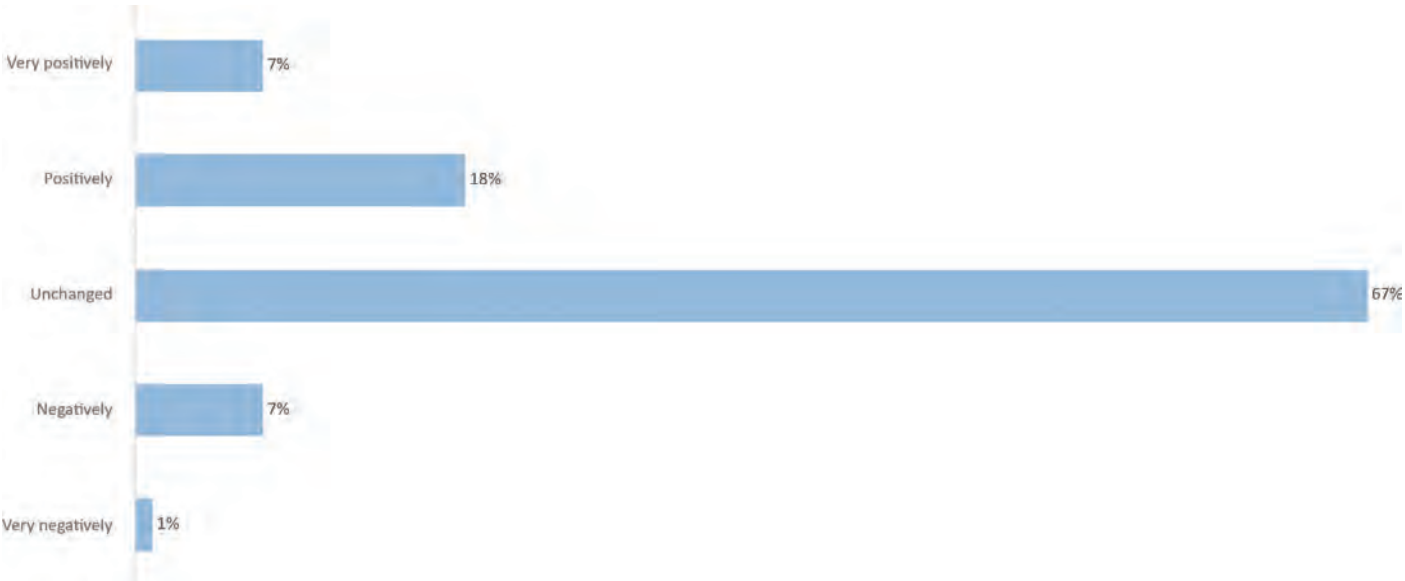


How often on average would you say these assessments pass?

(57%) believed landlords are ultimately responsible (+6% from our last study), another 27% believed building owners to have the main culpability (-13%), 9% tenants (+7%), local council 3% (-2%), 1% builders (-1%) and 10% ‘other’ (+10%) – including a range of answers, from ‘everybody’ to property managers.

Another barrier shown in the survey results was around reporting issues. Though this statistic would be unlikely to change drastically over the last two years, the relative consistency in numbers of those saying they have recently, or have ever been in a position where they felt uncomfortable or lacked the ability to report issues of fire safety or malpractice again highlights the persistent reality that there are still many housing professionals who are confronted with this problem.

This year, while 83% reported that they have never been in such a position (-1% from the last study), 17% either know someone that has been (3%; -7% from last year), have previously been in such a position (7%; -4%) or are still in such a position (7%; +3%) – meaning that again, almost one in five housing professionals have seen pressure exerted to prevent them reporting vital safety issues.



In the last year, how has your trust in product manufacturers been affected?



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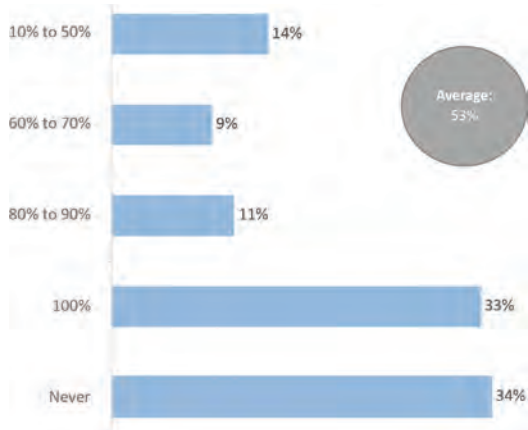
At Siderise, we've been developing technically advanced passive fire protection solutions for over 50 years, creating systems which make buildings safer without impacting on their design.

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What percentage of your properties have a Category LD2 fire detection system installed?

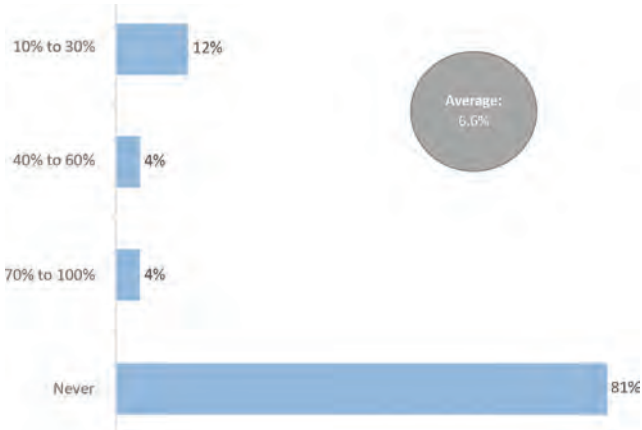
Trust in product manufacturers also remains a barrier for a minority of respondents, and fortunately this had reduced in the last two years. When asked how respondents' trust levels had changed recently, 8% said it had changed negatively or very negatively (down significantly from 35% in the previous study). Similarly, 67% reported their trust is unchanged (+16%), 18% positively (+9%) and 7% very positively (+4%).

CONCLUSION

The imperative nature of fire safety in housing cannot be overstated, as evidenced by tragic incidents like the Grenfell Tower fire that have left a lasting stain on the national consciousness, and the social housing sector.

Housing associations and private landlords carry both a legal and moral responsibility to ensure the safety of residents within their properties, yet despite efforts to enhance building safety standards, *Housing Management & Maintenance* has highlighted persistent deficiencies in fire safety practices, even four years after the tragedy.

A substantial portion of failed fire risk assessments still take an extended period to be addressed, some respondents still feel uncomfortable reporting safety concerns to authorities, and a concerning proportion of



What percentage of the housing you've worked on in the last six months would you estimate has unsafe cladding?

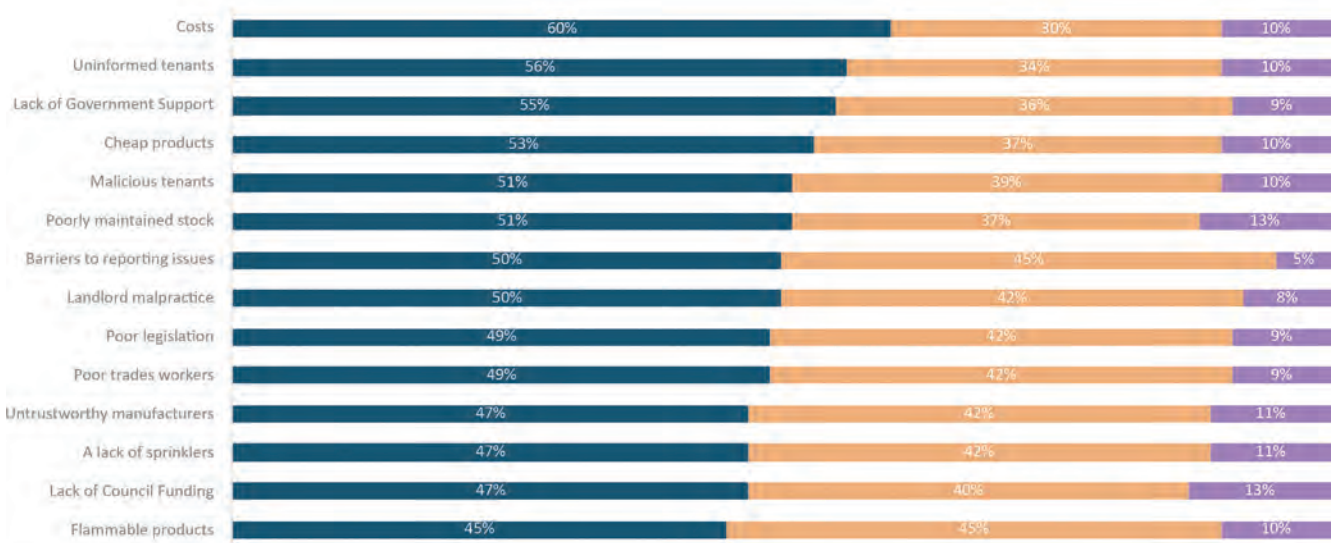
respondents still lack understanding of fire safety regulations. Moreover, despite some advancements, a sizable number of housing professionals continue to struggle with implementing vital safety measures, including unsafe cladding yet to be remediated.

A number of barriers remained problematic for our respondents and were hindering the adoption of fire safety measures, with cost remaining a significant impediment, while issues such as uninformed tenants, lack of government support, and poor product quality were further contributors to the ongoing challenges.

Despite the continued experience of these barriers however, it is imperative that the sector as a whole finds ways to overcome them to ensure a safer living environment for their residents. Regulatory changes and enhanced practices have driven improvement, but the pressing need to address lingering challenges and enhance collaboration across the housing industry remains.

The majority of respondents may be acting accordingly, but the minority who aren't is still far too high. Lives are at risk. The housing sector has to tackle the issues acknowledged in our survey, and well known across the industry.

The full white paper can be downloaded free of charge at housingmmonline.co.uk



What do you think are the main reasons these risks remain present?

Major Reason Minor Reason Unsure/Don't know

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Winkhaus launch range of UKCA external fire doorsets

Following an 18-month development, test and accreditation program, door and window hardware manufacturer and fire door solution systems house Winkhaus UK Ltd are launching a range of timber and composite UKCA 3rd Party certified external fire doorset recipe solutions this autumn to massively increase the scope and market offering for existing and prospective fire doorset manufacturing partners.

Mark Alton Fire Product Manager states: “Fire safety and fire door legislation has changed significantly in recent years, with the testing and accreditation requirements for external fire doorsets significantly different than those for internal solutions. The design and test evidence for a fire doorset is the “Golden Thread” that flows through the lifecycle of a fire door and is the reference point for the other stages of specification, manufacture, installation and maintenance. It is therefore critical for specifiers to understand the differences in legislative requirements between an internal and external doorset so that they are included in any specification.”



WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FIRE DOORSET?

An external doorset as defined in EN14351-1 is “a doorset which separates the internal climate from the external climate of a construction, for which the main intended use is the passage of pedestrians”.

There are three main differences in legislation between an internal and external fire doorset:

1. Testing for external fire doorsets must be carried out to the European standard EN1634 for fire resistance and for smoke control.
2. Under the Construction Products Directive (CPD), all external fire resistant doorsets are covered by a harmonised standard and therefore must be conformity marked CE or UKCA. They are also subject to the Assessment and Verification of Constancy of Performance (AVCP) system 1 requirements, which effectively means that the AVCP must be completed by a

3rd Party to deliver a 3rd Party UKCA certified solution.

3. External fire doorsets require a Declaration of Performance (DoP) and a 3rd Party classification as specified under EN13501-2.

In addition, weather protection testing is only completed for external fire doorsets.

3rd Party certification and verification is not only in place to ensure solutions are fit to be brought to market, but that they are continually manufactured, installed and maintained to the same levels as identified in the original testing and declaration of performance. Design & Test is not only the initial activity required to create a range of fire doorset solutions, but the Golden Thread that is referenced throughout the lifecycle of a fire doorset. Fire doorset manufacturers are 3rd Party audited to ensure they continue to manufacture the same products with ongoing factory process audits, traceability through manufacturing and annual samples testing.

The table below highlights the requirements to be included in both internal and external fire door specifications and should be used as a checklist when reviewing tenders for new fire doorsets to ensure all the required points are covered in any proposal.

The introduction of the external range of fire doorset solutions is in addition to the existing range of 3rd Party accredited timber and composite internal fire doorset recipe solutions from Winkhaus. Earlier this year Winkhaus expanded this range introducing a wider scope of internal fire doorset door designs and glazing options for their

manufacturing partners to take advantage of.

All Winkhaus internal and external, timber and composite fire doorset solutions are DLUHC compliant, are tested to EN1634 for fire resistance and smoke control, are tested to PAS24 for enhanced security and are 3rd Party certified as part of the BM Trada Q-Mark certification scheme, offering a truly mirrored range. Our new mirrored range of external timber and composite fire doorset solutions are also 3rd Party UKCA certified.

Over the past decade the Winkhaus UK Technical team have been involved in the creation and implementation of the latest standards and guidance for fire doorsets. Winkhaus fire doorsets solutions are manufactured through our partner network of over 50 3rd Party certified companies. With our partner fabricators, we have the one of the largest evidence banks of compliant solutions for both timber and composite fire doorsets, all independently audited by BM Trada as part of their Q Mark scheme. This not only ensures our test evidence is always compliant, but always expanding to provide the most comprehensive range of options for all your project requirements.

For further information on the new ranges of external timber and composite fire doorset solutions or our expanded ranges of internal timber and composite fire doorset solutions, or for advice and support with your specifications, please visit the website or send an email.

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www.winkhaus.co.uk/en/firedoorsets



Design requirements for specifications	Internal Application	External Application
Compartmentalise sections of buildings in the event of a fire	✓	✗
Protect stairwells, rooms and escape routes in buildings	✓	✗
Protect stairwells and open walkways on escape routes in buildings	✗	✓
Provide weather protection	✗	✓
Provide resistance to fire (application dependent 30-120+ minutes)	✓	✓
Provide smoke control	✓	✓
Provide security performance	✓	✓
Complete durability assessments (cycle testing)	✓	✓
Include conformity marking (CE/ UKCA)	✗*	✓
Declaration of Performance (DoP)	○	✓
Acoustic Performance	○	○

Key: ○ Optional ✓ Requirement ✗ No Requirement

* Due to there being no harmonised standards for internal doors, it is not possible to apply AVCP system 1 conformity mark to internal fire doors.

Driving forward standards in fire door safety

Fire Door Safety Week raises awareness of the vital role that fire doors play in keeping building occupants across the UK safe. Helen Hewitt of the British Woodworking Federation (BWF), explains how greater awareness coupled with new legislation is moving fire safety standards forward



Fire doors are required in most public, commercial and multiple occupancy buildings. They play a vital role in helping to hold back the spread of fire and/or smoke to allow for a safe means of escape for building occupants while enabling the emergency services to enter the building. They consist of specialist components which have been designed and tested to control the passage of smoke and withstand fire for a specific period.

However, fire doors continue to be used and treated improperly. They're often left propped open or damaged, and these issues frequently go unreported. For a fire door to fulfil its life-saving role in the event of a fire, it must be properly specified, installed and maintained, as well as properly used, and it's everyone's responsibility to play a part.

NEW FIRE DOOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Regulation is what underpins the entire fire safety ecosystem when it comes to housing, so let's start there. New building fire safety regulations, known as the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 came into force in January 2023 implementing many of the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report. Highlighting the important role that fire doors play in a building's fire safety, the new legislation primarily focuses on the role of the 'responsible person' and multiple occupancy buildings, particularly high-rise properties.

Within Regulation 10 of the new legislation, there are two key areas surrounding fire doors the responsible person needs to be aware of: keeping residents informed and fire door inspections.

The responsible person needs to ensure that all residents are aware of crucial information over fire doors. This should cover basic use information, such as that fire doors should remain closed when not being used to enter/exit an area and should not be tampered with in any way.

Information also needs to be provided over how and who to report fire door faults and damage to.

This should be communicated to new residents as soon as possible and reissued to all residents every 12 months to maintain awareness of the role and importance of fire doors in maintaining fire safety.

The second key area of the legislation highlights the responsible person's requirement to regularly monitor and check the condition of the building's fire doors. This allows for maintenance issues to be quickly spotted and addressed, enabling the door to perform as designed in the event of a fire.

The frequency of fire door checks specified by the new legislation varies depending on the height of the building. For example, if the top storey is taller than 11 m or four storeys high, the fire doors should be checked by the responsible person at least every 12 months while fire doors in communal areas should be checked every three months.

The regulations highlight that these checks should be visual and simple to carry out – without the need for a specialist or tools. This should include a visual inspection to confirm that the self-closing device is working, and that there are no alterations, large gaps or damage to the fire door. To support the checks needed, the government has developed a helpful checklist.

For all fire door checks, data should be captured electronically for a digital record of the inspection date, details of fire doors checked, and any observations.

RAISING AWARENESS

This year's Fire Door Safety Week follows the introduction of new building and fire safety legislation and will highlight how greater awareness needs to go hand in hand with regulation to move fire safety standards forward.

Since its launch in 2013, Fire Door Safety Week has been crucial in raising awareness and addressing the ongoing misunderstanding of the vital role that fire doors play in keeping building occupants safe. The annual campaign, which will take place this year from 19-25 September 2023, is funded and managed by the British Woodworking Federation and is supported by a wide range of partners in the industry.

Each year the campaign draws attention to specific issues related to fire doors such as poor installation and maintenance. It calls on building owners and users to check the operation and condition of their fire doors, and report those that aren't fit for purpose. It also engages and educates property owners and the whole building industry to help them better understand the correct specification, installation, maintenance and inspection of fire doors.

This year's campaign will focus on the need for education to empower building users to be able to spot common fire door issues and provide them with the confidence to report issues to the responsible person for maintenance. It will also bring to life the importance of the life-saving role that a fire door fulfils and the need for everyone to play a role in reporting issues to ensure fire doors remain fit for purpose and able to perform as designed to save lives.

As part of the campaign this year, we will be launching new research bringing to attention the common misconceptions over fire door maintenance,



Regulation is what underpins the entire fire safety ecosystem when it comes to housing

inspection and reporting. We'll also be hosting educational webinars to give fire safety professionals a platform to share their latest insights and industry best practice on fire door specification, installation and maintenance.

There's no question that fire doors perform a life-saving role in the event of a fire, but they can only perform effectively if they are correctly specified, installed and maintained – and more needs to be done beyond the introduction of new regulation. Through this year's Fire Door Safety Week campaign, we aim to ensure everyone can play their part in being able to recognise and report issues that, if corrected, might make the difference in saving peoples' lives.

Helen Hewitt is CEO from the British Woodworking Federation (BWF)



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LOR132 – introducing the new RJ007 slimline letterplate for FD30 & FD60

Lorient – a leading manufacturer of high-performance sealing systems is delighted to offer a new slimline fire & security rated letterplate into its door hardware protection range. When letterplates are added to fire doors; elements of the fire-resistant door core are removed and replaced with ironmongery which has a higher thermal conductivity. This can create a weak point in the door, where fire can take hold and affect the integrity of the doorset. That's why fire-rated ironmongery must be used on timber doorsets and be tested to a relevant standard – often accompanied by an intumescent kit. The new slimline RJ007 letterplate from Lorient combines fire and security performance with functionality and aesthetics. Designed to meet the exacting security standards of TS008:2015, it is tested to withstand a series of physical tests based on the common methods of burglary. It features an innovative pivoting stay mechanism that reduces the opening to 37° for protection against key 'fishing' and lock manipulation. The RJ007 can provide up to 30 and 60 minutes fire resistance and is tested in accordance BS 476-22:1987; and smoke tested in accordance with BS EN 1634-3:2004. It is CERTIFIRE (CF5688) approved from Warringtonfire Testing & Certification Limited; and is TS008: 2015 accredited and Document Q and PAS 24:2016 compliant.

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Passing on the BAL and ARDEX baton

After more than 20 years with ARDEX and over 10 years with BAL, Peter Bell, managing director, is passing on the baton to his deputy, David Hackett. Peter has enjoyed a stellar career with the ARDEX Group underpinned by his leadership of ARDEX and BAL, two highly successful, market-leading UK businesses. Testament to his commitment and legacy, Peter also holds a group steering position as an ARDEX Global Management Committee member as well as roles on various group boards, including India, Ireland, and the Middle East. He will retain these roles until the end of 2023. As commented by Peter Bell: "David's promotion to UK managing director is a great example of how the ARDEX group opens development pathways for its key people. It also demonstrates how we promote from within, and how we encourage people to take on international assignments to open up career progression opportunities. As part of passing the baton to David, we expect our UK businesses to continue to thrive under his leadership. His commitment to our people, our customers and our strategic vision make him a great choice to lead our talented team into the future. I am confident that ARDEX & BAL will continue to succeed and achieve new milestones under his leadership." David said: "I am excited and honoured to be stepping into the role of Managing Director and look forward to building on Peter's impressive legacy."

01782 591100 www.bal-adhesives.com



Mountain trek raises monumental £15,000

Surrey based sign manufacturer **Stocksigns** has recently raised £15,000 for The Children's Trust, thanks to the company's latest annual fundraising challenge. This year's adventure took the team to the mountains of Slovakia where they descended into the gullies and ravines of the Paradise National Park and climbed to the top of Mount Rysy in the High Tatras. Danny Adamson, managing director at Stocksigns said: "Giving back to the community is something we feel incredibly passionate about and we are already turning our thoughts to the next challenge."



01737 774072 www.stocksigns.co.uk

Vent-Axia supports BEAMA's guidance

Vent-Axia is delighted to support BEAMA's 'Guidance for Improving Indoor Air Quality in Existing Homes'. The guide explains the risks of poor indoor air quality in existing homes due to inadequate ventilation and then sets out general ventilation guidance in three parts: ventilation requirements when undertaking energy efficiency measures; selecting and installing suitable extract ventilation and commissioning new or upgraded ventilation in dwellings. Vent-Axia is committed to improving IAQ and energy efficiency and has produced a Building Regulations webinar for installers to explain the new requirements.



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Passive fire safety explored

Graham Laws from Siderise Insulation explores some of the ways residential building owners and managers can ensure that buildings and their occupiers are properly protected with accurate passive fire protection such as cavity barriers and firestops



Ensuring the passive fire safety of the building envelope is a key concern for every building owner and manager. It is something that must be considered at every stage of the construction process – from initial design and selection of products, through to the quality of their installation and on to the long-term maintenance. However, with ever-evolving legislation and standards to keep up with, as well as requirements increasingly diverging within England, Scotland and Wales, it can be challenging for project teams to ensure their work is in line with the Building Regulations and best practice. So, what are some of the steps we can take to ensure the solutions are specified and fitted correctly?

CHECK MANUFACTURERS AS WELL AS PRODUCTS

The starting point for passive fire safety is checking the requirements of the Building Regulations, understanding the required test standards, and the fire resistance performance needed. Evidence from manufacturers is a must. Misrepresented or misinterpreted claims increase the risk of ineffective specification or substitution, poor installation, inadequate classification, and noncompliance. At best, this will need additional work to put right. But at worst, this can severely compromise safety. It is essential that applicable test evidence to the correct standards is available. Therefore, demanding that the performance of any passive fire protection products is backed up with clear, up-to-date testing data and third-party certification, is vital. This information should be easy to find on manufacturer's websites or from their technical team.

SEEK ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

For projects with complex or stringent regulatory requirements, it is important to engage with experts in this field. Manufacturers are the ultimate experts in

their products and their applications, and some offer extensive technical design support and clear and honest guidance on which products would meet the requirements for a specific project. They can also provide CPDs to help all kinds of project stakeholders – from architects or developers to fire engineers – to better understand how products work, how their performance is measured and what advancements are happening in the field.

This can also be supported by independent, area-specific consultants. They can be hired to help check and confirm that any specification details are as accurate and reliable as possible. These consultants will have an in-depth knowledge of the product families, their requirements and how they are tested.

ENSURE SITE TEAMS ARE COMPREHENSIVELY SUPPORTED

Even the best product's performance can be undermined by poor installation. Therefore, it is important that this is carried out by competent contractors who can not only demonstrate their commitment to proper workmanship but have access to the right support. Manufacturers that offer site services can help to ensure correct installation through training, assessment, and auditing. This support can also reduce the risk of contracting teams changing the specification to products they are more familiar with, but which may not meet the project's performance targets.

VERIFY THE ACCURACY OF PASSIVE FIRE PROTECTION INSTALLATIONS WITH INSPECTIONS

Inspections are a regular requirement for many projects. While some projects may need or prefer an in-person inspection, manufacturer-developed inspection apps can allow for this extra layer of assurance without the added time and



The starting point for passive fire safety is checking the requirements of the Building Regulations, understanding the required test standards, and the fire resistance performance needed

hassle of arranging an in-person visit. Suitable for standard systems, they can allow users to capture images as each area/element is installed and update the data input fields using their smartphone or tablet. These can then be reviewed offsite by the manufacturer's technical team to ensure the installation meets recommendations and quickly identify any potential issues.

MAINTAIN THE GOLDEN THREAD

Where a manufacturer inspection has taken place, either by app or in-person, the final report can be included in the handover information, providing a clear record of exactly what's in the building and how it was installed. This helps to maintain that vital 'Golden Thread' of product information and be a useful reference point for any future modifications to the project that may affect the building envelope.

GO BEYOND FOR PASSIVE FIRE SAFETY

There is no room for compromise when it comes to the fire safety of our buildings, and to achieve the best results, this means that all parts of the construction chain need to come together. Manufacturers of passive fire protection solutions for the building envelope have a vital role to play in this. They must go beyond simply providing tested and certified solutions, by supporting them with tools, services and guidance that will enable project teams to create multi-storey, multi-occupancy residential buildings that meet the highest safety and performance standards – both now and in the future.

Graham Laws is technical director at Siderise Insulation

AKW Electric Showers

USE LESS, SPEND LESS

AKW Electric Showers are designed to be gentler on the environment, and the purse strings:

- + Use electricity to heat water, rather than a boiler
- + Only heat the water used meaning they're often cheaper to run
- + Use less water than mixer showers, great if you're on a meter



iTherm
Intuitive thermostatic protection and LED display



SmartCare Lever
DSDC dementia-friendly design also supports those with reduced dexterity



SmartCare Plus
RNIB tried and tested design ensures accessibility for the visually impaired



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SHOWERS LIMITED

Delivering savings in water usage and tenant bills

A big consumer of water in social housing is the bathroom. Here, Stuart Reynolds from AKW discusses how inclusive sanitaryware and showers are now being designed to promote water and energy-saving, delivering long-term savings that ultimately benefit tenant bills

With water bills seeing their largest rise in England and Wales in almost 20 years, many social housing providers are looking at incorporating water efficiency into their energy saving and fuel poverty agendas. Starting with the bathroom.

The design, construction and management of buildings is key in delivering savings in water usage and associated energy bill reductions for tenants. However, the way in which the building is managed and maintained to ensure efficient operation and the minimisation of leaks is also important, along with the specification of low water consumption products and encouraging responsible use by tenants.

Obviously, it is easier to deliver water efficiency in a new build, compared to refurbishment projects, however there is still an argument for replacing some water-using fittings with ones that deliver net savings over their lifecycle period. Also, for those existing fittings where it isn't practical to replace them, there is an increasing wealth of retrofit devices that can deliver cost-savings by improving the performance of the original fitting.

STEP-BY-STEP WATER EFFICIENCY

When it comes to water efficiency, WRAP recommends three 'practice levels' of efficiency for procurement requirements: Baseline practice – fittings and appliances that meet legal requirements but do not offer appreciable water savings compared to others on the market; efficient practice – fittings and appliances offering reduced water consumption in comparison to baseline practice products, without materially impacting cost or performance for most types of use; and highly efficient practice – fittings and appliances offering reduced water consumption in comparison to efficient practice products, but which are not necessarily comparable in cost or performance.

Looking at the levels of efficiency in practice, moving from one level to another can deliver significant savings on high water usage fittings. Taking the mixer shower as an example, using WRAP's figures, it has a 12 l/min at baseline, but in efficient practice this can drop to ≤10 l/min and ≤6 l/min in highly efficient practice. With baseline showers having a flow of 12 l/min and the average shower being 10 minutes long – that's up to 150 litres of water with every shower. It is no surprise therefore that reduced flow mixer electric showers that can monitor water usage, frequency, and energy consumption are increasingly being specified in social housing.

The popularity of mixer showers is due in part to the water and energy savings they can deliver. A case in point is an eco-save mixer shower, which is ideal for social housing, as it is a thermostatic and pressure balancing mixer shower that has been designed to deliver anti-scald, anti-legionella, efficiency, and value for money benefits. The environmentally friendly design of this shower also means it achieves water and energy savings of up to 70% compared to typical mixer showers, while ensuring that there is no compromise in comfort for users.





The design, construction and management of buildings is key in delivering savings in water usage

Although a lot of today's sanitaryware is being designed with water efficiency in mind, adding water saving products to existing sanitaryware and ensuring that leaks are resolved quickly can also save a lot of water. Using a toilet cistern displacement device for example, saves up to 5,000 litres of water per year and fixing leaking toilets and taps up to five full bathtubs of water per day!

INCLUSIVE BATHROOMS & WATER SAVING

Energy- and water-savings can also be achieved with the right choice of showers in inclusive bathrooms too. For example, the flow on AKW's SmartCare Plus care shower can be reduced via audible and illuminated indicators, making it easy to use, even for those with visual impairments. It also has automatic shut off after 30 minutes in case the user forgets to turn off the water.

Some tenants need toileting aids such as bidets. It might seem counter-intuitive, but it takes more water to manufacture toilet paper than it does to operate an efficient bidet. This might not mean a direct reduction to water bills, but bidets do reduce consumption of toilet paper and contribute to environmental savings. There are also now a wide range of options available, from free-standing to built-in and over-toilet seat attachments. Over recent years there has been an increase in demand from social landlords for non-permanent solutions, such as AKW's Side-Entry Bidet, as they are quick to install, and cause minimum disruption to tenants.

Sanitaryware and shower design is evolving to suit today's needs, and contemporary and water efficient designs are on the rise. Now is the time to make sure that your new or refurbished inclusive bathrooms meet the tenant's financial as well as functional needs.

Stuart Reynolds is UK marketing and product management director at AKW

Beauflor Builds at Housing 2023

Beauflor® attended Europe's largest housing festival to show its sheet vinyl flooring that meets the quality and affordability challenges of the sector. Beauflor used June's Housing 2023 show in Manchester to demonstrate the suitability of its floors for social and affordable homes. Beauflor sheet vinyl floors offer benefits for housebuilders, developers, local authorities and housing associations. Meeting the quality and affordability challenges of the sector, while providing tenants with a floor that's homely, comfortable and easy to look after; providers can ensure a floor that's not just lasting but one that also helps to create a good quality home for tenants. Cost-effective and fast to install thanks to a sheet format, Beauflor sheet vinyl provides a surface that's not only durable, but also simple to maintain and which stays looking good throughout use. Beauflor ranges are also the only sheet vinyl floors available for social housing five-metre wide. Free from seams after installation in all but the largest of public areas, the seamless finish provides a 100% water-resistant and a more authentic natural look. Chris Roberts, sales director UK, Beauflor says: "With enhanced benefits such as improved noise absorption and slip-resistance or suitability for high-traffic public areas, our collections can create an affordable floor specification that works for every room and every type of housing."

info@beauflor.com www.beauflor.com/global/en



Reformulated Dulux Trade Diamond Matt

Dulux Trade Diamond Matt has been reformulated in line with customer feedback to deliver durability and improved sustainability credentials, helping the industry move towards a more sustainable future. Available from June, architects and specifiers can be confident that Dulux Trade Diamond Matt meets key industry standards and will provide their clients with quality results for years to come. Dulux Trade Diamond Matt delivers ultimate durability and is compliant with BS EN ISO 11998 Class 1 and BS 7719 Class C and can withstand 10,000 scrubs (the equivalent of five hours non-stop scrubbing).



0333 222 7070 www.duluxtrade.co.uk/diamondmatt

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

Dulux Trade Diamond Matt: The preferred choice



Dulux Trade has upgraded its Diamond Matt paint to meet the demand for a more sustainable solution. This advanced product now offers both durability and sustainability, making it a superior option for professionals in the housing sector. Here, Pete Howard, sustainability & CSR lead at AkzoNobel, delves into the key attributes that makes the revamped Dulux Trade Diamond Matt an indispensable asset for residential spaces.

SUSTAINED DURABILITY FOR HIGH-TRAFFIC AREAS

Within homes, surfaces experience regular wear and tear, demanding frequent cleaning and maintenance. The upgraded Dulux Trade Diamond Matt has retained its robustness, making it an ideal choice for these environments. Compliant with BS EN ISO 11998 Class 1 and BS 7719 Class C, it can endure an impressive 10,000 scrubs – equivalent to five hours of uninterrupted scrubbing. This resilience ensures that stains can be effortlessly removed without compromising the paint's film or flawless finish.

Enhanced durability also means Dulux Trade Diamond Matt can help to extend maintenance cycles and drive down the environmental impact of a building over its life. This also means minimal disruption for residents.

The new Dulux Trade Diamond Matt offers improved opacity and the innovative binder technology ensures that this water-based paint delivers quick drying times, helping professionals work quickly and efficiently.

A SUSTAINABLE CHOICE

Sustainability is an imperative thread woven into the very fabric of design, construction and operation – fostering eco-conscious practices that minimise environmental impact. Dulux Trade Diamond Matt aligns with this ethos as it is now 99.9% volatile organic compound (VOC)

free. This significantly reduces its impact on indoor air quality and the overall carbon footprint of a project compared to the previous formulation. The paint also adheres to BREEAM and LEED environmental standards.

TESTED AND APPROVED

On top of rigours lab testing, we ensure that paints undergo a thorough review process with professional decorators to ensure that they live up to expectations and genuinely deliver on the benefits promised. Following laboratory testing under controlled conditions, we then have three further stages to test the products:

1. Assessments by a member of the internal Dulux panel of professional decorators – which is a blind test
2. Assessments by a panel of external professional decorators – which is also a blind test
3. Field trials that put the product to the test under external conditions

Thanks to this process, the new Dulux Trade Diamond Matt has received the 'Tested & Approved by Professional Decorators' seal of approval.

www.duluxtrade.co.uk/testedandapproved
www.duluxtrade.co.uk/diamondmatt





Effectively venting all year round

Richard Carter from EnviroVent looks at how installing effective mechanical ventilation systems can reduce the maintenance burden that some housing associations experience in the winter months, and in turn positively impact tenant health

As we approach Autumn, thoughts turn towards planning maintenance programmes and the likely increase in demand as the weather turns colder, and condensation and mould growth becomes a problem in homes once again.

Excess moisture in the home is produced by people breathing, as well as through everyday activities like bathing, cooking, washing and drying out clothes – which can release an average of 18 litres of water vapour per day into the home. During the colder months, indoor air is much warmer and holds more moisture than outdoor air. When warm, humid indoor air comes in contact with windows and cold spots on walls, the moisture cools and forms condensation.

As homes have been upgraded to become increasingly airtight, with double glazing and insulation, humidity cannot escape, leading to condensation forming. If the problem is left, unsightly black mould can be the result, causing damage to walls, curtains and furnishings in the home and also exacerbating health issues such as asthma and respiratory conditions.

Housing providers will be aware that the DHLUC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) has published guidance covering damp and mould in rented housing. Known as Awaab's Law, this guidance is intended to ensure all homes meet the Decent Homes Standard and for any that do not the housing provider must undertake rapid remedial works.

ENERGY CRISIS, LOWER TEMPERATURES IN HOMES

The energy crisis and rising fuel bills during last winter saw many tenants

turning their heating down, or off completely, causing a problem in some homes.

When a home is heated effectively, the air is warmer, and has a higher capacity to hold moisture. However, when there is a reduction in temperature this can lead to the air holding less moisture and therefore is more likely to form condensation on walls and windows.

Condensation itself may not be a problem, but in cold houses with inadequate ventilation, this can make mould growth more prevalent.

WHOLE HOUSE SOLUTION

Many social housing providers are choosing to retrofit Positive Input Ventilation (PIV) systems which work by drawing in fresh, filtered air from outside into a property to gently ventilate the home at a continuous rate from a central position, such as on a landing in a house or a central hallway in a flat or bungalow. PIV systems run quietly and automatically in the background, reducing the overall maintenance costs of a property by protecting the fabric of the building. They prevent the condensation and mould growth that are the cause of so many complaints. To minimise energy usage, many modern PIV units are fitted with an ultra-low watt motor.

These ventilation systems offer a minimal running cost, especially when compared to everyday household items like TV's, fridges and kettles – a small price for healthy indoor air quality. They should also eliminate condensation and issues associated with mould growth.

An effective ventilation system keeps a home environment healthy as it prevents the build-up of excessive levels of humidity, therefore preventing condensation and mould

HOW GOOD VENTILATION HELPS

Having a mechanical ventilation system in place means that social housing landlords can have peace of mind that residents are living in homes with good indoor air quality and with less risk of developing or exacerbating respiratory conditions.

An effective ventilation system keeps a home environment healthy as it prevents the build-up of excessive levels of humidity, therefore preventing condensation and mould.

In the past many homes relied on natural ventilation, such as opening windows or doors, passive air vents and the natural leakage of the building to keep them condensation-free. However, with modern properties being more airtight, natural ventilation is often insufficient.

In new homes, updates to Building Regulations Approved Document L and F were introduced in 2022, which require increased levels of air tightness and enhanced ventilation rates in new homes. This has led to a need to review the ventilation systems specified to ensure they are meeting increased airflow rates.

Whole house heat recovery units offer a cost-effective way of meeting Building Regulations Part F requirements, as well as providing low running costs for tenants. These updated Building Regulations are relevant both to new homes and those undergoing refurbishment, making effective ventilation systems increasingly important and mechanical ventilation a compliant solution.

Installing an effective mechanical ventilation system into a property keeps relative humidity under control and delivers improved indoor air quality.



Occupants find they often experience an improvement in their symptoms of respiratory conditions such as asthma and other conditions that are known to be exacerbated by poor indoor air quality.

For a relatively small investment in an effective ventilation system, the result is a long-term solution that reduces the maintenance burden and provides an all-round healthier indoor environment.

Any social housing provider concerned about how condensation and mould growth could affect the fabric of their properties and the health of their tenants, is advised to contact their local ventilation manufacturer. Many offer free surveys that will assess any condensation, damp or mould problems in a property, measure relative humidity levels, identify any underlying problems and make recommendations for a permanent solution.

Richard Carter is regional sales manager at EnviroVent

How to enhance accessibility and independent living

With 22% of the population now disabled and the growing demand for social housing, AAT GB is highlighting a rapid way for Housing Associations to support their disabled tenants. Now, more than 50% of tenants have a long term illness and impairment with a similar number who need an adaptation not having it. The most common reported impairments affect mobility, lifting or carrying. AAT's top-selling and Class 1 Medical Device certified S-Max stairclimber delivers an almost immediate way to enable a tenant with reduced mobility – whether a short- or long-term limitation – to safely transfer up, down almost any stairs or steps. Thus, every home be it flat (some 20% of housing stock) or house, can become accessible without impact on common parts. The battery-powered, German-engineered unit is available in two versions, one which fixes to a wheelchair, one with an integral seat. Operated by the carer, the mobile unit safely moves its passenger up, down stairs and onward. It is not fixed in any way to the building fabric. Thus it optimises risk management by reducing or eliminating transfers at the top of stairs, and eliminates impairment of the stairway for other users. The portability of the S-Max also means there is no delay for DFG funding, survey nor installation. A safe solution for the tenant can be effected within days. Full details can be found on the website, where a free, no obligation assessment can also be booked.

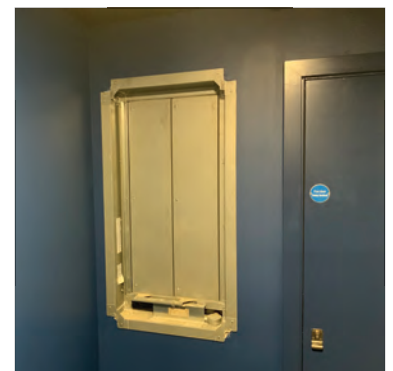
01978 82 18 75 www.aatgb.com/s-max



A new discovery in smoke protection

Gilberts' "first of its kind" Series 60 damper were chosen by leading smoke control systems company Baiceir to protect the 14-storey Discovery Quay development. Some 26 dampers – each capable of providing up to two hours' fire integrity – were incorporated into the common corridors to protect the two stairwells within the £24.5m building, comprising 400 student bedrooms and ancillary communal space. Baiceir managing director Andy Baker said: "We believe in doing things right. Gilberts' new Series 60 is claimed to be 'the best yet' in British smoke evacuation dampers. It enables us to deliver a smoke control system that will meet the most rigorous standards in every detail and deliver a best value solution." Manufactured from galvanised steel with intumescent material and gaskets within, Series 60 has passed all relevant smoke and fire tests (EN12101-8 and EN1366-10), retaining its integrity and performance when incorporated into evacuation shafts and risers. Thus customers have the assurance that they are meeting, if not surpassing, current Standards for smoke ventilation in multi-storey buildings- new build and refurbishments. Believed to be the only vent of its kind designed and manufactured in the UK, Series 60 offers what Gilberts claims will be the biggest standard range of EN12101-8 compliant fire-tested dampers. The initial launch provides seven sizes, from 440mm x 440mm up to 1,000mm x 1,125mm.

01253 766911 info@gilbertsblackpool.com



The five steps to improved fire safety

The housing sector continues to adapt to a raft of new guidance, statutory tightening and regulatory change associated to fire safety. As a result, leading door manufacturer JELD-WEN UK has released a new CPD resource, to support the industry's understanding of doorsets and the steps required to improve fire safety standards.

Here, Ruth Deardon, UK Product Line Manager at JELD-WEN, outlines why there is a need to go beyond current compliance, and how stakeholders throughout a project lifecycle can work together to deliver better – and safer – outcomes.

IGNITING CHANGE

Since the Grenfell Tower tragedy in 2017, we have seen a number of important step changes in guidance and legislation in relation to fire safety, with the aim to improve standards and build reassurance for tenants as part of a longer-term regulatory overhaul, which many would argue was long overdue.

The most recent change was the introduction of the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, which came into force on 23 January 2023 and imposes regular, legally-mandated checks on millions of fire doors.

Although more robust legislation is a welcome step towards absolute best practice, there is still a need for the industry to go beyond compliance and strive for even higher standards in fire safety.

JELD-WEN's recent white paper, *'Fire Safety: Time to Shut the Door on Risk'*, explored the ways in which tenants can be better protected, with suggested measures that could improve fire safety standards beyond the current compliance, including:

- A legal requirement for all fire door installations and maintenance work to be conducted by qualified installers, validated through a UKAS-accredited certification scheme.
- A mandatory standard which outlines how fire door information should be stored, updated and shared in an easily accessible digital format.
- A legal requirement to mark every fire door in the UK with its performance and the name of the manufacturer.

In support of this, JELD-WEN has launched a newly-accredited Continuing Professional Development (CPD) resource: *'Five things to look for in fire doorsets to improve long term fire safety'*.

The resource is designed to equip housing sector professionals with further knowledge around fire doorsets – which are often the



first line of defence against fire risk – and how doorset manufacturers can provide support in understanding legal requirements, technical expertise, and product value.

NAVIGATING FIRE SAFETY

A fire door is one of the most critical components of limiting the spread of fire through communal buildings, and, ultimately, can help to save lives.

There is a shared responsibility throughout a project's lifecycle to ensure the safety of a property, and the occupiers within it. However, a lack of understanding around the latest products and protocols can leave homes vulnerable to risk.

JELD-WEN recently conducted research of housing associations and social housing landlords, which reported challenges in delivering high quality fire safety in multi-occupancy properties. According to our survey, nine in 10 respondents had an inspection on internal fire doors in the last two years, with 50% finding a flaw. These include poorly fitted doors, damage to door closers and hardware improvements required.

Our new CPD resource aims to help address this issue, outlining five key areas of importance when procuring and using fire doorsets:

1. Product testing – ensuring current standards are met
2. Doorset accessories – choosing the correct hardware
3. Third-party accreditation – demonstrating compliance and performance consistency
4. Product traceability – engaging manufacturers to implement the 'Golden Thread'

5. Whole-life considerations – ensuring installation doesn't compromise fire safety

HITTING THE STANDARD

As one of the UK's largest door manufacturers, JELD-WEN offers a wide range of certified doorsets, which meet rigorous independent standards in testing, auditing and accreditation.

JELD-WEN's SecureSET doorsets are dual tested and certified to provide 30-minute fire, smoke protection and security protection as listed under the CertiSecure (CS5059) and Certifire (CF5965) certification schemes, as well as full compliance with BS 476-22 (fire), BS 476-31 (smoke), PAS24 (enhanced security) and Approved Documents M, B, E, L and Q.

By ensuring our products meet these high standards, customers can have confidence that they will perform as needed – with complete clarity on design, manufacture and documentation.

However, it's equally important for stakeholders across the sector to equip themselves with the knowledge and expertise they need to not only meet current compliance, but exceed it. Now's the time for all housing sector professionals to go the extra mile for fire safety, and ensure they are firmly shutting the door on risk.

To find out more about JELD-WEN's fire doorset CPD seminar: *'Five things to look for in fire doorsets to improve long term fire safety'*, please visit the website.

0345 122 2891

www.jeld-wen.co.uk/advice/cpd-training

Help on the road to zero carbon homes

The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund could see social housing providers upgrade the energy efficiency of up to 90,000 homes. Some of these homes will be relatively straightforward to upgrade, others will require a joined-up approach as Caroline Bowler of SIG explains

Any maintenance team charged with improving the quality of aging housing will know that it's challenging. Many social housing providers are struggling with deteriorating properties that can be cold and subject to damp. Improving their thermal performance can be complicated and no one solution will work for every property.

THE SOCIAL HOUSING DECARBONISATION FUND

This is a timely and much-needed stimulus to give social housing providers the opportunity to improve their housing stock. In doing so, the initiative has the potential to demonstrate how older homes can be retrofitted, which could provide valuable lessons for both social and private housing.

This is important for zero carbon objectives because private sector owners seem very reluctant to invest in their own homes. In its December 2022 report *Hitting a brick wall*, the Resolution Foundation pointed out that "Close to half (47%) of owner occupier households with inefficient walls think that upgrades are unsuitable for their homes"; are "too much hassle"; and that with an average cost of £8,000 per property, it "would take 18 years to recoup through bill savings", even with today's energy prices.

Government funding to reduce carbon emissions is therefore welcome, particularly when the immediate beneficiaries will be the tenants. The funding announced in March will make a huge difference in improving the quality of life for residents. The current phase sees a total of £788m awarded to improve the energy efficiency of social housing.

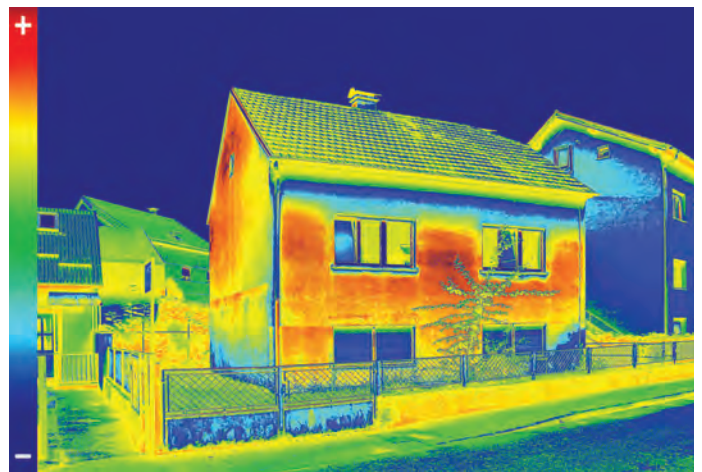
This fund will enable social housing providers to add cavity wall, loft and external insulation, improve ventilation, install heat pumps and replace windows to upgrade as many as 90,000 homes with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating below C.

The Greener Futures Partnership, a collaboration of like-minded housing associations, has secured £40m in funding under the scheme. It plans to retrofit 5,495 homes with enhancements to the fabric of the buildings and, in addition, replace existing heating and hot water systems with technologies such as air source heat pumps (ASHP), and solar photovoltaic panels (PVs) with battery storage.

As with any retrofit initiative, the real challenge for Greener Futures and other social housing providers is that some homes will be easier and more straightforward to decarbonise than others.

In the National Housing Federation and Local Government Association's report 'Hard to decarbonise social homes', a number of characteristics are identified that may make homes harder to decarbonise including:

- Solid walls, where internal or external insulation is required
- Flat roof homes or homes with an inaccessible loft where low-cost loft insulation cannot be installed
- Terraced homes, where some of the homes are owned by private occupiers unwilling to participate in retrofit schemes which can limit economies of scale
- Heritage homes, particularly in conservation areas
- Narrow, hard to fill cavities (less than 50 mm) that are difficult to fill effectively



The UK government is beginning to ramp up efforts to retrofit at least some of the UK's old and energy inefficient homes

- Space constrained plots, which can affect the installation of external wall insulation or the siting of an ASHP
- High rise flats, particularly those with mixed tenure
- Housing on the coast or homes at risk of flooding may make homes harder and more expensive to insulate
- Homes with bespoke features such as bay windows, which make homes harder to insulate and where technical expertise is required to develop appropriate solutions.

There may also be external constraints such as planning policy, which may impact which retrofit measures can be installed.

Some of these issues require complex solutions to produce improvements in energy efficiency without producing unwanted side-effects that can actually damage the fabric of an older property.

HOME UPGRADE GRANT

Alongside the funding under the SHDF, the government has also awarded an additional £630m to councils through the Home Upgrade Grant to improve the energy efficiency of poorly performing homes without mains gas central heating.

A deep retrofit project by Swansea Council – in partnership with the Welsh School of Architecture – to refurbish a terrace of six council bungalows shows the types of measures that could be applied under this initiative. The project included external wall and loft insulation, installation of high specification



double-glazed windows along with a ground source heat pump, PV panels on the roof and a large battery capable of storing surplus electricity generated by the PVs. The properties were also fitted with an MVHR system to provide a constant source of energy efficient ventilation.

These are complex projects and, given the time limitations of the funding (all funding must be drawn down by the end of 2025), there is pressure on housing maintenance teams who may lack the resources to consider exhaustive options for each housing type.

Manufacturers have identified the opportunity and many are providing specific product solutions designed to work in a retrofit environment. Some merchants may also provide advice on product selection while contractors will tender based on suppliers that they know.

For the maintenance teams there is a fourth option – and that is to work with a distributor such as SIG. A distributor should be able to offer detailed technical advice which is also product agnostic. Since distributors work with a huge range

of manufacturers their advice is based purely on performance evaluations, will include the very newest products on the market and will be able to suggest substitutions should there be any unforeseen disruptions in supply. A partnership between a distributor and a social housing provider will allow the provider to explore the widest range of alternative solutions to the more complex retrofit characteristics that make some homes harder to decarbonise.

What these two initiatives show is that the UK government is beginning to ramp up efforts to retrofit at least some of the UK's old and energy inefficient homes. The climate emergency and the energy crisis mean that funding for retrofit is likely to accelerate, along with the number of homes that are harder to decarbonise. All of which means that the diversity of product solutions and depth of technical expertise offered by SIG will become increasingly important in helping decarbonise social housing.

Caroline Bowler is regional sales manager south – residential of SIG Distribution

Wraprite® works with Comfort Frame IWI to achieve energy efficiency

The Wraprite® external air barrier system from A. Proctor Group has been installed in combination with the innovative and unique Comfort Frame Internal Wall Insulation system to deliver impressive energy efficiency savings to a housing retrofit project. Comfort Frame's IWI system is the only Fabric First solution that is isolated from the existing wall, which eliminates the risk of thermal bridging and condensation. Designed to improve the performance of solid walled properties, this transition to a lower carbon-built environment delivers 50% savings on tenant energy bills. Wraprite is the only self-adhering vapour-permeable air barrier certified by the BBA and combines the critical properties of vapour permeability and airtightness in one self-adhering membrane. This approach saves on both the labour and material costs associated with achieving the energy efficiency demands in buildings. Graham Harrison, managing director of Motion Frame Limited, explained: "The Wraprite breather membrane was applied to the inside face of the existing fabric of the building enabling us to create a highly efficient airtight finish." Also specified alongside Wraprite was Spacetherm® from the A. Proctor Group. The Spacetherm insulation range comprises high-performance aerogel insulation that can be bonded to various boards to suit specific applications.

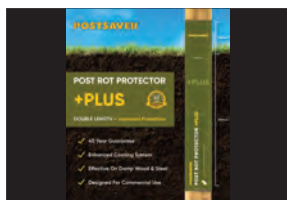
01250 872261 www.proctorgroup.com



Postsaver +Plus launched

Postsaver, a wood life extension specialist company, has developed Postsaver +Plus, a new protective sleeve for wood fence posts and fruit supports. Postsaver +Plus is based on technology that is proven to protect critical utility infrastructure like power and telecom poles from rot under various environmental conditions around the world. Postsaver +Plus, when used with UC4 water-based copper wood preservative, is guaranteed for 40 years and can be a reliable alternative to Creosote or C.C.A. wood preservative treatment. Creosote may cause cancer and will be banned in Europe in the near future.

01452 849322 www.postsaver.com



Understanding SterlingOSB Zero

All West Fraser's Oriented Strand Board (OSB) products are manufactured using selected fibres of timber that are laid in cross directional layers and mechanically pressed to form a structurally-engineered panel, designed for construction and other industrial applications. OSB is viewed by many as the natural successor to plywood because it is more eco-friendly, is home produced and far more affordable, while it contains none of the voids or knots which have historically weakened plywood. There is no need to sand OSB boards anymore, as West Fraser is now able to produce them to industry leading tolerances.

uk.westfraser.com



Wrap it or regret it – now! Don't let the cold catch you out this winter

Burst pipes are the most common cause of home insurance claims in the UK and cost an average of £3,500 in damage to property and contents. The expense is not the worst of it; months of disruption follows as the property is dried out and repaired.

Throughout the winter, frost is the greatest threat to water services. UK Water Regulations require any fitting or apparatus to be correctly insulated to prevent frost, unless in a location that is heated for more than 12 hours a day. It seems obvious when you are scraping the ice from the car on a frosty morning. However, the insurance claims show that many homeowners, landlords and tenants seem to be unaware of this requirement.

In the worst-case scenario, the replacement of water supply pipes is required. Traditionally this has required major excavations outside a property and usually a great deal of disruption and trauma within, over several days and possibly weeks – inevitably at high cost.

Water supply replacement – an easy alternative!

Whether or not the cause is bad weather, the replacement of a leaking, or an old and unreliable water supply can extend timelines and inflate costs, sometimes to the detriment of other aspects of a project. However, there is now a cost-effective solution to this previously expensive operation.

The use of Groundbreaker's INSUduct allows the new water service to be routed up the external face of the building and connected to the internal plumbing above ground level.

"We've been putting pipes in holes in the ground to protect them from frost for decades," explained Steve Leigh, developer of the range and managing director of Groundbreaker, "Although it works, today's new materials allow for a much better solution. Keeping pipes on the surface reduces the risk of leaks developing and allows for easy repair and maintenance. It's just a much better method of working."

INSUduct only requires one simple core drilled hole through the wall, at an appropriate point to connect with the internal plumbing. This enables most water supply replacements to be completed within a couple of hours, without the traditional mess and disruption to the householders or occupiers. The improvement in work efficiency and reduction on the impact to occupants is a win for both contractor and customer. There is also little impact to the exterior appearance of the property, as the INSUduct system provides a neat, clean finish to the job – perfect for planned replacements of old lead water supply pipes.

INSUduct is also perfect for redevelopment and refurbishment projects. It is the ideal product for the replacement of original lead water pipes,



turning a disruptive and intrusive job into a quick and easy task. INSUduct is also ideal for developments of multi-occupancy properties. Designed to optimise space within the insulating casing, up to three 32 mm OD water pipes can be installed to the exterior of the building, allowing supplies to be installed at multiple levels of a property with a single insulated duct running up the property exterior.

Groundbreaker products are designed to provide long lasting and effective thermal protection to water pipes and fittings outside the thermal envelope of a building. They offer frost protection for 3 days or more with temperatures as low as -15°C – temperatures we rarely reach in the UK, even with today's erratic climate!

Carefully fabricated to provide long lasting and effective thermal protection to water pipes and fittings in external situations, the products exceed British Standard 5422 and all relevant Water Regulations for frost protection.

01379 741993 www.groundbreaker.co.uk

pam building
SAINT-GOBAIN

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

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

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Grand Union Housing Group turns to smart home tech to gather real-time information



Milton-Keynes based Grand Union Housing Group has introduced smart home technologies across its housing portfolio of 12,500 properties to improve resident safety, reduce damp and mould concerns, and ensure compliance with shifting regulations on social housing.

Aico's HomeLINK Connected Home Solution Internet of Things (IoT) sensors were selected to monitor real-time indoor environmental conditions such as humidity and temperature, which are the main causes of damp and can lead to mould; and fire and carbon monoxide events. Access to this data has saved Grand Union's team of 400 precious time and resources while freeing them up to better support their customers.

Martyn Cheeseman, electrical delivery manager (responsive) at Grand Union, explains: "Within days of utilising the HomeLINK Environmental Sensors and Gateway, we can already validate the effectiveness of new ventilation systems we are installing to resolve condensation, damp and mould issues. Real-time data insights provided via the HomeLINK Portal make it very simple for us to make informed decisions on the future specification of fans that are proven to be effective in the treatment of humid and damp living conditions." The properties within Grand Union's housing portfolio include general needs

housing, supported housing accommodation, shared ownership, leasehold and market rental properties. Following the Grenfell disaster, Grand Union changed its corporate strategy to prioritise accountability and transparency in all dealings with its 27,000 residents across Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Hertfordshire.

Grand Union wanted to deliver cost-effective, efficient, relevant and quality services to ensure resident safety and comfort. So, it introduced digital technologies, including Aico's advanced 3000 Series of Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide alarms, as part of its corporate strategy. By implementing Aico's solution, Grand Union is quickly able to identify and implement urgent building repairs and maintenance, while also ensuring properties remain legally compliant and fit for human habitation.

Aico's HomeLINK IoT sensors provide accurate automated data collection, which eradicates human error, and gives Grand Union actionable insights to strengthen residential safety, health and wellbeing. The housing provider has also developed an environmental sustainability strategy focused on the thermal efficiency of its entire housing portfolio. This new strategy ensures all its homes are well insulated, as well as offering a range of heating options to increase efficiency.

Grand Union's data strategy from its use of HomeLINK includes enhanced decision-making across the business, making the shift from responsive to planned maintenance seamless. It also ensures data governance and security, an efficient data architecture including "single version of the truth" data exchange insights, and a real-time view of property compliance.

"It's great to be working so closely with housing and asset management teams across Grand Union Housing Group," said Ben Malton, regional specification manager at Aico. "They recognise that the links between health and housing are long established and well known, and that housing can be a significant determinant to health and resident wellbeing. Utilising our HomeLINK sensors, data, alerts and insights, we are already providing value to the numerous teams across the organisation ensuring housing compliance, safer homes, enhanced resident wellbeing and communication. With 12,000 homes, housing 27,000 people, our sensor technology provides a scalable and cost effective solution to deliver services to residents efficiently for Grand Union."

To find out more about Aico's HomeLINK Connected Home Solution, please visit the website.

enquiries@aico.co.uk
www.aico.co.uk/homelink



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