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Editor's Notes

November 2024

Setting the standard for data

What do you think about data standards in social housing?

Are they unnecessary or urgently needed? How could data standards help your internal and external operations? What's the role of the social housing sector's IT suppliers to support data standards? And how and where would you actually use data standards within your housing operations?

These are just a few of the questions that Housing Technology's editorial and research team is currently investigating through our online survey of social housing providers' views on data standards (of all flavours, complexities and scope), with support from the UK Government's Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, HACT and Open Data Exchange.

If you've not yet done so, we'd really appreciate it if you could spare *five minutes* (we promise – the survey is quick and easy) to complete our 'Data Standards in Social Housing 2025' survey at: **housing-technology.com/report/data-standards-2025**.

Our Data Standards in Housing 2025 survey (and subsequent report) covers:

- Housing providers' current understanding of data standards.
- The advantages and disadvantages of internal, external and shared data standards.
- Specific use-cases for data standards within housing providers' operations.
- Tools and resources for adopting data standards.
- IT and business drivers and barriers to the adoption of data standards.
- Data standards and the role of APIs, middleware & application integration.

Please complete our short online survey at:

housing-technology.com/report/data-standards-2025 (n.b. only applicable to social housing providers); in return we'll send you an advance copy of our final Data Standards in Housing 2025 report in January 2025.

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Forthcoming events







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| Maximising IT performance | with technical alignment | frameworks



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The importance of data ownership

Rachel Ratty, Sales & Marketing Director, Asprey Management Solutions

There is much talk about the value of data in our sector and about its ownership, possession or accessibility. When those key areas aren't well understood, future data gaps arise and these could be mission critical or at least expensive to fix.

Where do we start to ensure against future data gaps? Ensuring the ownership, possession and accessibility of all data generated by or on behalf of the organisation is overkill and a massive project. We would recommend 'keeping it simple'; our own consulting exercises start by splitting these types of projects into three stages:

1. An audit of the current status;

- The identification and categorisation of data needs;
- 3. Rationalisation of repositories.

By stage three, ownership, possession and accessibility can be taken forward, confident that the data can be housed and controlled in an appropriate, well-structured and segmented warehouse of data.

1. An audit of the current status

Most housing providers already have a plethora of data in their possession or held by third parties. Unfortunately, much of the data isn't codified or shared, being held in the heads of employees, third parties, spreadsheets or systems that render it barely useful to support future decision-making.

An audit of these data sources should cover its provenance and reliability. Apart from the stated purpose, such data audits can uncover problems and solutions with existing uses and collation as well as identifying wasteful practices, without the need for expensive business process reviews.

2. The identification & categorisation of data needs

The second difficulty with these projects is to predict the data (and information) that will help the organisation going forward. There's no textbook answer to this because it depends on the ambitions and requirements of each organisation. Desktop research, brainstorming, critical analysis and an investigation of predicted needs are the best way to build the hypothesis, but many advisors suggest requirements based on their own experience and knowledge as a less expensive alternative.

A basic example of the drawbacks to this latter approach is common in the sector: a stock condition survey should obviously be based on the defined data needs of the customer and their asset management system (assuming it is fit for purpose). However, we still see occasions where surveys are designed by the surveyors commissioned to execute them, without due regard to the customer's asset management system's needs. It is then left to the customer to shoehorn the results into their system for processing. While accepting that surveyors or customers may suggest valid additions to surveys defined from the asset management system, data gaps or poorly-matched data can undermine the outputs from that system and future decisions on which they are based.

This example is in a well-understood area of activity, yet it persists. With future data needs, everyone is a newcomer. Capturing and using the outputs from intelligent components, accommodating AI and unleashing the potential of predictive analytics are less well-understood areas of data. While we can all envisage potential future information sources, we should return to the 'keep it simple' premise because data can be expensive to collect, collate, interpret and act on. Hence, identifying those areas where data can add real value is crucial, and the ongoing monitoring of emerging needs goes hand-inhand with this.



We're all aware of the potential benefits of, for example, identifying component failure signals, monitoring tenant behaviours, complaints, asset usage and comparative information on product lifecycles, yet there are still difficulties with disrepair problems and avoiding them further down the line.

If your future data can reduce workloads, costs or customer dissatisfaction it can be of benefit, but if marginal improvements create major new administrative burdens, they may not be feasible without significant business system reviews and improvements. Again, 'keep it simple' and look for big wins, with a properly measured realisation of costs and benefits.

Setting up a usable data bank (i.e. reliable, good provenance, complete, without errors and so on) must be carefully planned to ensure data resolves these predicted problems of the future, which also establishes for us how we address the problems of ownership, possession or accessibility.

With third parties, ownership and possession must be secured contractually. Obviously, contractors and advisors will prefer to use their own systems. This isn't always a problem but where such data is deemed to have key future potential use, it needs to be either passed to the customer's systems or contractors must use the customer's systems in their work. Regardless of the size of a supplier, they can become insolvent and the underlying data lost to the customer. If we look at the more recent issues of repatriating EPC lodgement data from our government, there has to be a 'trust nobody' attitude to key data security.

3. Rationalisation of repositories

This area is simple to contemplate yet complex to implement. Not every IT system in an organisation allows full access to raw data but most modern systems allow users to design reports to output data to other systems for the BI uses we're considering here. Often, it may be effortless to combine data from more than one system for onward analysis and reporting using modern BI systems such as Microsoft's, but there may be legacy systems being fed with irrecoverable data of importance. With data being such an expensive investment, its accessibility even in the organisation's own systems must be considered.

These three simple key stages (an audit of the current status, the identification and categorisation of data needs and rationalisation of repositories) allow an organisation to drive its own future rather than be drawn into ad-hoc headline 'flavour of the month' initiatives as the only progressive strategy. This doesn't mean discounting such initiatives but embodying them into a strategic business case for future data usage.

Rachel Ratty is the sales and marketing director at Asprey Management Solutions.





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Maximising IT performance with technical alignment frameworks

John Brett, Operations Director, Nexus Open Systems

Aligning your IT services with best practice is vital. By adopting frameworks such as ISO-27001 and Cyber Essentials, IT teams can not only meet regulatory standards but also drive business value and enable future transformation. This article therefore explores the benefits of creating and implementing a technical alignment framework.

There is a significant investment in adopting and maintaining a security framework. By implementing your own alignment measurement tool, you can maximise this investment, improve your security posture, drive future transformation and increase efficiency. With a solid framework, IT support services become more proactive rather than reactive, reducing disruptions and allowing your organisation to focus on its core objectives rather than firefighting problems.

Think proactive rather than reactive

Proactively identifying and addressing remediation opportunities through alignment with a set of agreed metrics offers several advantages over a reactive approach. By anticipating and resolving issues before they escalate, IT support becomes less disruptive, enabling businesses to maintain their focus on their core objectives. This proactive strategy minimises downtime, enhances system reliability and allows companies to allocate resources more effectively, rather than constantly diverting their attention to resolving unexpected problems.



Key benefits

• Reduced disruption: Reactive problem-solving is disruptive, potentially preventing critical tasks from being completed on time. Proactive remediation minimises these disruptions, helping the business to operate smoothly.

- Efficiency: Proactively implementing improvements leads to less impact on business operations, resulting in increased efficiencies.
- Better resource management: Monitoring the time spent on reactive vs. proactive work aids in managing resources effectively. The short-term goal is to proactively identify (through alignment), address and resolve problems more than reactively fixing them.
- Improved service levels: Proactive remediation reduces the number of incidents, improving overall service delivery. By focusing on prevention, IT departments can provide a more seamless experience for their end-users.

How can you grade your alignment?

Grading your alignment is essential. It helps to track your IT department's performance against identified risks or changes since the last audit. Technical audits can cover anywhere from 60 to over 500 items, depending on the complexity of your infrastructure. In larger organisations, alignment can be assessed at the departmental, site or business unit level.

A simple scoring system, such as 'pass', 'fail' or 'not applicable' along with associated severity levels (high/ medium/low), provides a structured way to assess performance. For example, a pass with a high severity might score 20 points, while a low-severity pass might score only five points. This alignment scoring system offers a valuable metric for continuous improvement within the organisation.

Service delivery benchmarking, both internally and externally, complements alignment scoring. Improved alignment leads to enhanced service delivery, but multiple methods can measure this. While resolving incidents quickly might meet traditional SLA metrics, it's better to aim for a reduction in incidents altogether rather than just efficient problem resolution. In essence, address the root causes first.

- Reactive time vs. proactive effort: The real indicator of alignment success is how much reactive time you spend versus proactive effort. It's important to measure how often your team is pulled into reactive tasks, as opposed to planned, proactive work. Reducing reactive time by increasing proactive efforts avoids disruptions, enabling smoother operations overall.
- **Recording effort:** Track the time your team spends on reactive versus proactive tasks. This data gives clear insights into where improvements can be made, supporting better resource management and increased efficiency.

The reactive to proactive metric (RHEM)

A useful metric for tracking performance is calculating reactive time per end-user. This can be applied across different organisations: (tickets in month / reactive time spent in month) / number of users.

This formula gives a standard measure of performance, showing how much reactive time is spent per user. A starting benchmark figure for this metric is 1.0, with lower values indicating better performance. For example: 0.5 is acceptable; 0.4 is good; and 0.3 or below indicates optimal performance.

In my organisation, our average RHEM across 30+ clients started at 0.88. Over six months, it was reduced to 0.33, demonstrating significant progress in reducing unplanned disruptions. For larger organisations on a journey of technological alignment, we've seen RHEM values as low as 0.15, which equates to reducing unplanned disruptions by approximately 144 hours per month for businesses with over 800 users.

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Priority	Name Type	Audit Impact	Total One- Time Cost	Recurring Costs	Status
High	DPI Security Network Infrastructure	* 2% 1 issue	£2,700*		
	Training Requirement		FO		

Getting started with alignment

Process mapping: Start by documenting processes, even if they seem unnecessary for a smaller team. The size isn't what matters; it's recognising the relationships between processes. Missing these connections can lead to missed opportunities for improvement. Systems that 'just work' often get overlooked yet documenting their integration with other processes can unlock new potential. For example, a door-entry system may seem simple but it could integrate with an HR system to automate access control, leading to enhanced security and efficiency.



Automation: If a task needs to be completed repeatedly and you can control the process without introducing risk, automate it. Automating software provisioning and compliance tasks, for example, reduces manual intervention, freeing up valuable resources and providing a smoother experience for employees.

Outsource: The commoditisation of IT services presents opportunities to maintain control over the technology strategy while easing implementation. The continuous maintenance of standards like Cyber Essentials can be resource-draining. Today, previously-expensive services, such as 24x7 security operations centres (SOC), are now viable as commodity-based services. With the use of AI, these solutions are more affordable and accessible, helping organisations of all sizes to reduce their cyber risks.

One such solution is Microsoft Defender, a comprehensive Microsoft security service designed to enhance your IT security posture. Defender integrates Microsoft's advanced threat protection, continuous monitoring and compliance checks into a single, streamlined solution. By proactively identifying and neutralising threats, it significantly reduces the time spent on reactive incident management, freeing up resources for more strategic tasks.

In addition to Defender, Microsoft Intune is another key component, offering robust device management and security. Intune ensures that all devices across your organisation remain compliant and up-to-date, further aligning with security frameworks like Cyber Essentials and ISO27001. Together, these solutions help businesses maintain ongoing compliance without the operational burden.

For IT teams in the housing sector, technical alignment frameworks aren't just about meeting regulatory standards, they are about driving business value. By proactively managing your IT infrastructure, grading your alignment and investing in tools like Defender and Intune, you can minimise disruptions, optimise resource allocation and enhance overall efficiency. The goal is clear – move from a reactive stance to a proactive one, enabling your organisation to grow and adapt in an ever-changing digital landscape.

John Brett is the operations director at Nexus Open Systems.



Hyde's void time slashed in half with Engage Process

Hyde Group has halved its property void times, from 55 days to 27 days, following a service improvement project with Engage Process.

The significant reduction in void times was based on a comprehensive mapping and analysis by Engage Process of Hyde's previous property turnaround processes. The project goals were to reduce the turnaround time for empty properties, cut the cost of void repairs. make better use of tenancy notice periods and improve the quality of properties before they're returned to use.



Andy Kelly, business analyst and project lead, Hyde Housing, said, "We now have the processes, skills and technologies to ensure we have more homes available. Our continuous improvement approach follows the FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) model. This is a very different model to the way the housing sector generally approaches its growth and efficiency."



Kelly said, "Our 'base camp' approach enables us to strategically plan service improvements, starting with building a good foundation then moving to the visionary state. This means that we can gain immediate improvement through quick wins and continue to build long-term improvements as we move through base camps.

"We use the Engage Process platform as a group modelling tool. It helps us to understand our system touch points, indicate risk points, calculate costs to serve (including the resource times for each step) and gives us process data to highlight low performing processes."

MRI Software buys Capita One

MRI Software has now completed its acquisition of Capita One, a subsidiary of Capita Plc, after the regulatory conditions for the transaction were met. Capita One's solutions for housing, taxation, benefits administration and education will now sit alongside MRI's existing solutions for social housing and local government. Patrick Ghilani, chief executive officer, MRI Software, said, "We look forward to helping local authorities and housing providers to drive efficiencies and reduce complexity through the combined offerings from MRI and Capita One."

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Orbit app wins Microsoft competition with Infinity Group

A new Microsoft Power App from Orbit Group to transform the management of utility meter readings for all housing providers' homes has won a Microsoft UK competition.

Orbit is now working with Infinity Group to develop the app. Once completed, the Utilities Manager App will be available on Microsoft App Source for all housing providers to download and use.

The housing provider's staff had the idea for the app when they were looking for a more efficient way to take meter readings, record bills from utility providers and allocate costs to customers in order to improve its previous timeconsuming, manual processes. Once completed, the app will be available to be used on any phone or tablet by housing staff when visiting tenants' homes.



Caimin Stafford, Solutions Specialist, Microsoft

Caimin Stafford, solutions specialist, Microsoft, said, "We had some excellent entries in the competition but Orbit Group's Utilities Manager App is a worthy winner of the Power Platform Concept Competition for UK Housing. We are thrilled that this game-changing app will be brought to all UK housing providers."

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Locations Registers

Voids Registers Readings Registers

Accounts Registers Costs Registers

portionment Register

upplies Register

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Meter Image

Meter type SMETS1 NHH Electricity Requires manual reads

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Make

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Model

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Lisa Odedra, lead solutions architect, Orbit Group, said, "Not only will this app offer housing providers a much

more efficient way to carry out what can otherwise be a laborious process, customers will also get a much better and more accurate oversight of their utilities and associated costs."

Sarah McRow, head of sales for housing, Infinity Group, said, "We are delighted to be supporting Orbit Group in bringing the Utilities Manager App to life. Not only does it showcase what Microsoft Power Apps are capable of, but also how housing providers, Microsoft and its partners can collaborate to develop a transformative solution to help the wider social housing sector."



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Future-proofing social housing

Technology for smarter asset management

George Grant, CEO, Broadcaster & Publisher, Housing Technology

I grew up in a two-bedroom council flat in Stockwell, South London, in the early 1960s. For my father, a hardworking taxi driver, it provided stability and a chance to build a life. That modest home taught me that housing is more than just a roof over your head; it's also the foundation for opportunity and community. Today, I'm driven by a simple question – how can technology help ensure social housing continues to provide that vital foundation?

From personal roots to collective responsibility

Social housing has evolved since the 1960s but many of the same challenges remain. Ageing properties, rising costs and increased regulation demand innovative solutions. Yet the core mission remains the same; creating homes where people feel safe, valued and empowered.

Technology can bridge the gap between operational efficiency and tenant welfare. Beyond simply fixing problems faster, technology can ensure that no one has to live with the uncertainty of draughty windows, damp walls or faulty boilers. This isn't only about future-proofing housing portfolios, it's also about improving lives.

A smarter way to manage housing portfolios

1. Predictive analytics - Anticipating needs

In the past, repairs were only carried out after problems arose. Today, predictive analytics can anticipate issues before they happen. For instance, Ipswich Borough Council uses Mobysoft's RentSense software to reduce its arrears while proactively supporting tenants.

2. The internet of things – Listening to homes in real time Imagine homes that can communicate their condition. IoT devices monitor humidity and temperature, identifying problems such as damp and mould before they escalate. Guinness Partnership's adoption of Aico's HomeLink system demonstrates how real-time data can enhance housing management, making homes safer and more comfortable. 3. Artificial intelligence – From reactive to proactive Al can transform maintenance from a reactive to a proactive process. Systems such as Civica's Cx housing management software can predict failures and optimise schedules, ensuring faster and less disruptive repairs.

Real lives, real impact

These technologies are already delivering meaningful results. Hyde Group's use of software and services from Engage Process has halved its void times, helping families access homes faster. Wakefield & District Housing's integration of Cadcorp's geospatial data system has improved first-time fix rates, reducing the stress of repeated visits. These aren't mere operational improvements; they are life-changing solutions for tenants.

Technology with purpose

Empathy is at the heart of every successful innovation. Whether it's ensuring an elderly tenant isn't left without a working boiler or helping a single parent maintain a warm, dry home, technology must prioritise human outcomes.

The goal is to empower housing providers to become more effective. By embracing the potential of technology, we can achieve faster, smarter and more cost-effective solutions that meet tenants' needs. This isn't just about maintaining housing stock; it's also about safeguarding the well-being of the people who live there.



Building the future together

The journey from Stockwell's council flats to today's smart homes highlights the resilience and innovation within the housing sector. However, the mission is far from complete. As technology evolves, its role in supporting housing providers will become increasingly crucial.

By harnessing these advances, we can maintain what we already have, build more homes and invest in tenants' futures – this is the legacy we should strive to build together.

George Grant is the CEO, publisher and co-founder of Housing Technology.





Housing safety in a tech-driven era

Ian Ballinger, Director of Compliance, FireAngel

After the publication of the Grenfell Tower fire report and the introduction of legislation such as the Social Housing Act 2023, it's clear that there is an urgent need for better monitoring and maintenance of housing stock. As a result, housing providers must strike a delicate balance between tenant welfare, legal compliance and cost efficiency.



In today's data-driven world, technology offers housing providers powerful tools to meet these challenges headon. Connected solutions, particularly those that leverage the internet of things (IoT), are transforming the way housing providers monitor, maintain and safeguard their properties. By automating compliance checks and providing realtime data on property conditions, IoT-enabled devices are helping housing providers future-proof their housing stock and ensure tenant safety at all times.

Compliance in social housing

For housing providers, compliance has always been complex and time-consuming. With multiple properties to manage and evolving regulations to follow, ensuring that each home meets safety standards can be overwhelming. This task is made even more difficult by traditional methods of compliance tracking, which often involve manual documentation and infrequent checks. Reports and certificates, once filed, can quickly become outdated, leaving housing providers unaware of current safety statuses.

The introduction of the Social Housing Act 2023 and Awaab's Law have brought even greater scrutiny to housing compliance, with increased accountability for damp, mould and other health risks. Housing providers are now required to provide a 'golden thread' of information that shows a clear history of safety compliance for each property.

The role of IoT in enhancing compliance

The growing complexity of compliance has paved the way for connected technologies to revolutionise housing safety. IoT-enabled devices such as smart smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors and environmental sensors allow housing providers to monitor safety data in real time across their entire property portfolios.

With IoT, compliance is no longer a matter of periodic checks or guesswork. Devices can automatically send alerts to a centralised system if an alarm is disabled, batteries are low or a sensor detects dangerous conditions. This immediate visibility empowers housing providers to act quickly and efficiently, ensuring tenant safety while also staying on top of their regulatory requirements.

By integrating IoT systems with asset management platforms, housing providers can automate the tracking of compliance data, ensuring that every property is continuously monitored and potential risks are identified early.

FireAngel Connected

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Smart solutions for safer homes

FireAngel CONNECTED

fireangel.co.uk/connected





Future-proofing homes with smart safety solutions

Smart solutions such as FireAngel Connected are at the forefront of this technological shift. FireAngel Connected allows housing providers to remotely monitor safety devices across all properties, while its FireAngel Predict technology uses AI to identify patterns and predict risks before they materialise. This includes fire risks, environmental hazards such as damp and even tenant behaviours that could affect safety.

FireAngel's Connected platform supports the golden thread requirement by creating a continuous digital record of each property's compliance status. In the case of smoke and CO detectors, this means housing providers can instantly view which devices are functioning correctly, which need maintenance and where replacements are due. Additionally, installation certificates and maintenance records are stored digitally, ensuring that no documentation is lost or outdated.

As housing regulations evolve, smart solutions such as FireAngel Connected offer flexibility and scalability, allowing housing providers to adapt to new safety standards without overhauling their existing systems.

Proactive maintenance through smart data

One of the most valuable aspects of IoT technologies is their ability to turn reactive maintenance into proactive intervention. By constantly monitoring conditions such as temperature, humidity and air quality, smart sensors can alert housing providers to potential problems before they become serious health risks.

Predictive maintenance not only prevents costly repairs but also protects tenants from the adverse effects of environmental hazards. Instead of waiting for tenants to report issues, housing providers can rely on real-time data to prioritise visits and interventions, addressing problems before they escalate.

For example, if a sensor detects consistently high humidity levels in a property, the system can alert the housing provider who can then take steps to improve ventilation or insulation. This proactive approach not only enhances tenants' safety but also extends the lifespan of housing stock and reduces long-term maintenance costs.

Tenant safety & wellbeing

Beyond compliance and maintenance, smart technology plays a critical role in enhancing tenants' wellbeing, particularly for vulnerable populations. IoT devices such as FireAngel's Home Environment Gateway go beyond fire safety, offering comprehensive environmental monitoring that tracks temperature, humidity and air quality in real-time.

This level of monitoring is particularly important for elderly tenants or those with pre-existing health conditions who may be more vulnerable to environmental risks. With the ability to connect multiple sensors to a single platform, housing providers can ensure that each tenant's home environment is safe and healthy.

Tenant engagement is key to successful safety strategies. FireAngel's Connected app allows tenants to participate in their own safety, offering them insights into the status of their home's safety devices and giving them the ability to alert their housing provider to any concerns.

Building safer, smarter homes

As the social housing sector grapples with increased regulation and heightened scrutiny, connected technologies offer a clear path forward. By leveraging IoTenabled safety solutions, housing providers can improve compliance, reduce maintenance costs and protect their tenants in real time.

Investing in smart solutions such as FireAngel Connected not only future-proofs housing stock against evolving safety standards but also creates a safer, more responsive living environment for tenants. As we move into a future where technology plays a central role in every aspect of life, it's essential for housing providers to embrace these innovations and build smarter, safer homes for all.

For more information on FireAngel's solutions for housing providers, please contact our team of specialists at **fireangel.co.uk/connected-contact**.

Ian Ballinger is the director of compliance at FireAngel.

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Moving beyond 'good enough' for residents

Brendan Sarsfield, Housing Advisor at NEC Software Solutions & Former CEO of Peabody

Winter can be one of the toughest times for residents but with the right approach, housing providers can meet their regulatory obligations and help people through the colder months.

The cold weather often increases the likelihood of properties having problems such as damp, mould and water leaks. It's a time when older adults and vulnerable people can feel more isolated and the cost of keeping homes warm becomes a much bigger financial burden.

Housing regulations set minimum standards for property maintenance and the quality of service that should be delivered to tenants. But simply adhering to the rules isn't always enough to keep residents comfortable and safe in the winter.

Try these four strategies to take a proactive approach to property maintenance and give better support to your residents.

Forecast and act on property issues

Regulations such as Awaab's Law have ushered in strict time-limits for housing providers to address dangerous hazards such as damp and mould. However, meeting these standards is just the starting point.

Housing providers need to move away from demand-led repairs in order to deal with problems such as damp and mould early. With the right tools, you can start to pre-empt issues before they happen.

The technology driving this shift is predictive analytics, which can analyse existing property and people data and flag if it is at risk of damp and mould. It can also identify poorly-insulated homes and other problems that may affect the condition of properties, making it easier to prioritise maintenance and prevent future problems from occurring. IoT devices can also help if your baseline data is good.

Deliver targeted support for residents

The Housing Regulator's Safety & Quality Standard requires housing providers to repair, maintain and adapt homes to help residents live independently. Meeting these requirements relies heavily on accurate and accessible data.

A household's specific circumstances will greatly influence what constitutes a safe, high-quality home for them. When information on residents and their homes is all in one place, housing providers can gain a clearer understanding of how to create the best living environment for each individual or family. For example, data analytics tools can be used to highlight more complex needs such as drug dependency or mental health issues.

Data analytics can help housing providers better understand the specific needs of residents and better meet them.

Partner with local services

Fuel costs, debt and mental health struggles can become more difficult to deal with as the nights draw in. There are many local services available for people when they need some extra help, but they don't always know where to turn.

Housing providers can help their own service delivery by helping tenants get access to the support they need, beyond housing services.

Connect with local charities and public services in the area and signpost people to them on your website or through a dedicated residents' helpline. If you can link people with an energy advisor to help them cut their bills when times are tough or put them in touch with a local parenting group for support, you could improve their lives. You will also go a long way towards keeping them safer and happier in their homes.

Get better at listening

New regulations such as the Transparency, Influence & Accountability Standard have given residents a voice in their housing provider's decision-making.

They call on housing providers to build stronger dialogues and ensure people can access information they need. But the regulator will also want to see evidence that people are listened to.

With multiple communication channels to choose from, a resident could report a repair to a contact centre and in passing mention a health issue.

Al could be deployed to quickly scan communications and bring disparate pieces of information together that might otherwise be missed. This is critical to showing the organisation can listen and respond to the needs of its residents.



Multi-channel communication can be used to gather people's views on the services they need or understand the seasonal changes that can affect individual residents. The use of AI makes sifting through large amounts of data simpler and far less time consuming than it would be for a human.

Better homes for better lives

A leaky roof, faulty boiler or job loss can suddenly become a major challenge for a household already struggling to get through the winter months.

Housing providers that use technology to predict repairs, highlight vulnerabilities and mitigate financial difficulties can meet their regulatory requirements and go the extra mile to identify and support those residents who need it most. For more information on how technology can help you go above and beyond to deliver a great housing service, visit **necsws.com/housing**.

Brendan Sarsfield is the former CEO of Peabody and is now a housing advisor at NEC Software Solutions.



Data Standards in Social Housing 2025

What's your view of data standards?

See page 02



Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government



Complete our survey & get the report

WDH's 'pay rent as you shop' scheme with Housing Perks

WDH has teamed up with Housing Perks to enable its tenants to contribute to their rent accounts by using discounts on their day-to-day shopping.

With the Housing Perks app, WDH's tenants can buy vouchers for all major supermarkets as well as many other high-street shops and receive discounts on the vouchers, with the discounts being automatically applied to the tenants' rent accounts.

By using the Housing Perks app, WDH has found that tenants contribute around £5 per shop towards their rent and arrears. This is alongside WDH's analysis of its tenants' budgets which showed that tenants in arrears had an average deficit of £3.15 per week.

Leanne Brown, care and health manager, WDH, said, "Our financial inclusion toolkit has helped us achieve a low rate



of arrears. Despite this, tenants still face an average deficit of around \pounds_3 per week which can be a barrier to clearing their arrears.

"By co-creating a solution with Housing Perks, we've made it easy for tenants to automatically allocate their shopping savings toward rent. We're thrilled with the results so far, and tenant feedback has been overwhelmingly positive."

WDH reported that half of its tenants using the Housing Perks app were already in arrears and were actively making payments. Furthermore, 90 per cent of tenants who contributed towards their rent with the app went on to make additional contributions to their rent accounts.

Westminster tenants on board with Spaciable

Westminster City Council has signed up for a white-labelled property management and tenant engagement platform from Spaciable.

Spaciable will help the council onboard its tenants and provide the support required by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. As well as health and safety documents, certificates and tenancy documents, tenants will also have access to custom 'how to' videos in their

document library, filmed by Spaciable's video team. Westminster City Council staff will have access to a dashboard to streamline their processes and manage tenant communications.

Brian Arscott, lead development delivery manager, Westminster City Council, said, "We understand the importance of supporting families and individuals through the transition into their new homes so we're pleased to be working with Spaciable to improve the onboarding experience through an accessible digital platform."



NEC Housing

SIMPLIFY REPAIRS LOGGING AND REDUCE DISREPAIR

NEC Housing's Repairs Diagnostics enables the full repair lifecycle by simplifying identifying, reporting, and scheduling repairs. It helps improve first-time fix rates by making it easy for residents to request a repair, provides a fantastic user experience and ensures customer satisfaction with quick and easy diagnosis.

Utilising known property and resident data enables the correct pathway and assigns priorities, taking into consideration critical factors such as resident vulnerabilities. This intelligent approach improves efficiency and supports enhanced tenant self-service.



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Wrexham County Borough Council has just completed its implementation of new cloudbased asset management software from Asprey Management Solutions to support its portfolio of 15,000 properties and assets.

Asprey's software will also be used by the council to ensure its regulatory compliance, faster and better service delivery and end-to-end processing for its staff and business partners.

David Ellis, operations director, Asprey Management Solutions, said, "Wrexham's team has clearly-defined goals and objectives concerning both property condition and the health and safety of its customers, both of which will be fully supported by our comprehensive asset and compliance management software."

Phoenix rises with holistic asset management



with Asprey's asset management software and integrated business intelligence portal.

Phoenix

Community

Housing has

gone live

Phoenix is London's first resident-led housing provider. Its model enables tenants and leaseholders to take a central part in decision-making and become shareholding members.

Paul Monforte, corporate lead for homes and safety, Phoenix Community Housing, said, "We carried out a full procurement process for our asset management needs, covering both standard technical requirements as well as accommodating changes in housing regulations."

New asset lifecycle software from Totalmobile

Totalmobile has launched its new Asset Lifecycle Management (ALM) system, developed over the past two years with some of the UK's largest housing providers.

Complementing the company's existing Connect job management software, the ALM solution is designed to create a single source of truth for all asset processes by permanently digitising housing providers' asset records from across their entire operations.

David Webb, managing director of housing and facilities management, Totalmobile, said, "ALM is a significant advance and reflects our extensive collaboration



with housing providers to tackle their most pressing challenges.

"This isn't merely an enhancement; it's a transformation of asset management, equipping housing providers with the tools to manage their assets more effectively, comply with regulations and deliver better services to residents."

Let's chat



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Arrears fall at Ipswich Council with Mobysoft RentSense

Ipswich Borough Council has cut its rent arrears from 2.4 to 1.6 per cent over the past year since its introduction of Mobysoft's RentSense software.



Used by over 180 housing providers with over two million tenancies, the AI-powered RentSense automates routine tasks. This has been instrumental in the council's transition to having a specialised team solely dedicated to income collection. Rachael Grimmer, neighbourhood manager, Ipswich Borough Council, said, "RentSense has made a huge difference. The system prioritises the accounts that need attention, allowing us to focus our efforts on the tenants who need the most support. Automating routine tasks has also boosted job satisfaction."

WDH's geospatial plans with Cadcorp



Wakefield & District Housing is spending around £150 million on improving its housing portfolio, using Cadcorp's mapping software to inform its spending plans.

WDH's investment decisions are based on a whole dwelling, whole street and whole estate approach. Using Cadcorp SIS WebMap, WDH has created numerous interactive maps, informing teams across its organisation about the location of assets, ownership and development projects. All of WDH's business data is displayed on detailed digital Ordnance Survey maps.

Jessica Rieck, GIS analyst, Wakefield & District Housing, said, "Cadcorp SIS WebMap is our first point of reference because geospatial data is key in supporting our asset management requirements and enhances our analysis and reporting." WDH is also using SIS WebMap for its maintenance and repairs activities. The housing provider integrates data on its repairs, disrepair claims, EPC ratings and types of insulation with spatial data in easy-to-navigate maps to give its repairs teams a better understanding of WDH's estates, with SIS WebMap linking direct to WDH's asset management system.

Rieck said, "Over the past year, WDH made 102,000 general repairs, completed 5,600 emergency repairs, achieved 95 per cent 'first-time fixes' and took an average of 8.6 days to complete each repair."

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Irwell Valley Homes live with PIMSS

Irwell Valley Homes has completed its implementation PIMSS Data Systems' asset management software to cover stock condition data and planned maintenance.

Irwell Valley's decision to implement a specialist asset management database follows its 2022/23 stock condition survey and its resulting need to move away from holding its data in a variety of manual, labour-intensive spreadsheets.

After choosing PIMSS Data Systems, the housing provider went live just four months later, starting work on its longterm planned maintenance programme due to begin in 2025/26.

Ed Hogarth, head of asset management, Irwell Valley Homes, said, "We conducted a thorough procurement process to select the asset management system that aligned with our strategic goals, sustainability ambitions and operational needs; PIMSS Data Systems was chosen as our preferred solution.

"Thanks to seamless collaboration between our respective teams and a methodical implementation process, the project was delivered on time. We set ambitious timescales to align with our financial year's budget-setting process, ensuring we could use the system immediately.

"PIMSS Data Systems worked closely with us throughout, with a dedicated Microsoft Teams channel to facilitate real-time communication and progress tracking. PIMSS Data Systems' responsiveness and flexibility ensured swift issue resolution and progress, allowing us to meet all milestones as planned."

Local authorities' arrears up by 70 per cent – Access PaySuite

Local authorities' rent arrears have increased by more than 70 per cent in the last five years, according to Access PaySuite.

Based on over 80 responses to Access PaySuite's Fol requests to local authorities, the company has created its new Rental Arrears Index (accesspaysuite.com/rental-arrears-index-2024).

Local authorities providing social housing are owed an average of £3.1 million each in arrears, a 70 per cent increase from £1.8 million in 2019. Furthermore, the past year has shown a 14 per cent increase in local authorities' arrears since 2023. The value of arrears per tenant has risen from £490 in 2019 to £710 in 2024, an increase of 44 per cent.

Alex Common, divisional director for product and engineering, Access PaySuite, said, "If we apply our sample across the 221 local authorities which own social housing, the total value of rental arrears across local government could be as high as £650 million." Average number of social housing units in rental arrears vs. average arrears value (2019- 2024)



CalQRisk introduces ESG reporting for housing



With environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors becoming part of most housing providers' operational considerations, CalQRisk has launched its Carbon Accounting & ESG Reporting system for social housing to help organisations measure their carbon emissions, enhance their ESG reporting capabilities and meet sustainability goals.

CalQRisk said that its new one-stop platform enables housing providers to implement ESG programmes in just days rather than months. The platform's reporting tools allow for easy analysis of ESG and sustainability data as well as reporting in line with common sustainability frameworks and regulatory requirements.

As well as a full suite of dashboard-based tools for inhouse management, CalQRisk's system enables housing providers' ESG initiatives to be easily published externally for communications and collateral such as annual reports and investor relations. Chris Hanlon, CEO, CalQRisk, said, "ESG and carbon accounting have become important considerations. Our solution simplifies these complex processes by giving housing providers the ability to track emissions, manage sustainability data and ensure compliance with regulatory standards, all while aligning with their broader ESG objectives."

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Aico has recently collaborated with the University of Exeter (see page 35) on a series of guides exploring the use of home sensor systems and how housing providers can gain social value from them. Sam Collier, HomeLink's head of market intelligence, provided expertise, information and costings for the social return on investment (RoI) models used throughout these guides.

The risks of poor housing conditions

Condensation, damp and mould in homes can cause serious health problems, particularly for vulnerable people. To give an example for this, black mould releases harmful toxins that can lead to serious health problems such as asthma attacks. These conditions also have degrading effects on the buildings' structures, leading to higher maintenance costs. Action is therefore needed to reduce the risks to residents' health and address challenges such as fuel poverty. However, it is important to note that some housing providers might not be aware of the challenges at present.

Luckily, home sensors can help tackle this challenge.

The use of sensor systems

Identifying and reducing the risks caused by problems such as damp and mould or poor ventilation, begins with monitoring the indoor environment. This allows housing providers and residents to detect adverse conditions and act on the early warning provided, preventing problems from occurring. Additionally, sensors collect real-time data on a range of factors, including carbon dioxide, air quality, humidity and temperature.

This data supports housing provider to move towards proactive maintenance, improving the diagnosis of poor environments, enhancing living conditions and reducing long-term costs.



Furthermore, the data provided promotes compliance with regulations such as Awaab's Law, introduced in the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 and mandates prompt action on damp and mould issues in social housing. The improved insights and diagnoses



provided by home sensor systems enables both housing providers and their residents to be proactive in identifying and managing risks within their properties, acting on early warning signs.

The social value of home sensor systems

Social value is a measure (beyond the financial advantages) of the benefits arising from an activity and it explores the way that the activity affects people's lives. The guides published by Aico/HomeLink and the University of Exeter have analysed the social RoI of home sensor systems and how they can help housing providers evaluate their properties' environments in order to provide insights that support future budget allocations and funding.

By using home sensors and creating healthier indoor environments, there will be a reduction in damp-related issues such as asthma. Furthermore, proactive property management and repairs reduce inequality in housing conditions across a housing provider's portfolio. By enhancing maintenance quality and operational efficiency, there will be a wider impact on healthier and more affordable social housing.

Measuring social value helps housing providers align their impact with their long-term goals, supporting:

- Increased efficiency;
- Higher resident satisfaction;
- Improved compliance;
- Quality housing stock;
- · A reduction in maintenance requirements.

By enabling better health outcomes and more efficient property maintenance, these systems support housing providers' goals and contribute positively to their wider communities, offering many health and wellbeing benefits to residents.

Aico's Connected Home solution

Aico's Ei1000G Gateway is the hub of our HomeLink Connected Home solution. The Gateway works with connected fire and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms and HomeLink Environmental Sensors to gather real-time data on fire safety compliance and environmental risk factors.

The HomeLink Environmental Sensors work in conjunction with the Gateway to monitor temperature, humidity and indoor air quality, giving insights into problems such as damp and mould, fuel poverty, void risk, energy efficiency and compliance. Fire and CO alarms can also be connected, providing information on an alarm's activations, power status, replacement date, testing, battery levels and faults, all remotely monitored through the online portal.

Implementing such technology gives housing providers a platform to improve compliance while creating safer homes for residents. With the HomeLink Portal, housing providers can streamline their operations by having access to the necessary insights for early interventions, thus saving time and reducing call-out costs.

The HomeLink App for Residents syncs with the information on the portal but simplifies it in a way in which tenants can easily understand. Once downloaded by the resident, the app can send them, for example, alarm-testing reminders and suggestions on how to improve the conditions in their home, such as opening or closing windows within the property.

A large number of housing providers are already using our technology, with over 400,000 connected devices across the UK, feeding and analysing huge volumes of data and therefore dramatically increasing efficiency across the social housing sector.

Learn more about Aico's Connected Home solution and how it can provide social value at **aico.co.uk**.

Sam Collier is the head of market intelligence at Aico/HomeLink.



Aico multisensor alarms at Cheshire West & Chester Council



Cheshire West & Chester Council is now fitting Aico's Ei3030 multi-sensor alarms across its housing stock during all upgrade programmes and where replacements are needed, with the alarm fittings carried out by teams from Liberty Group.



With three sensors (optical, heat & carbon monoxide) in one unit to ensure accurate fire and carbon monoxide detection, the Ei3030 eliminates the need for multiple alarms, simplifying installation and maintenance. The council's new multisensor alarms can also be used in future with Aico's HomeLink technology to monitor problems such as damp and mould, air quality and compliance.

James Fishwick, electrical contracts manager, Liberty Group, said, "This is such a good alarm and it ticks so many boxes in one go. We were keen to start fitting them as soon as our client gave us the new specification. We're now starting to see them on others around the country as well – it's a no-brainer."

Carl Traynor, relationship manager for Merseyside, Aico, said, "As a former electrician and compliance manager, I was used to fitting multiple alarms to cover both smoke and carbon monoxide. I was always particularly cautious about the migration factor, where carbon monoxide can be produced in one room or even an adjacent property but then have devastating consequences in another. Aico's combined unit is ideal to mitigate those risks."



smart with Aico

The Guinness Partnership

is introducing Aico's HomeLink environmental monitoring system across its properties in the South West of England. The package of work includes IoT-based smart sensors and data analytics software.

Tim Lewry, regional head of service, Guinness Partnership, said, "Our collaboration with Aico on its HomeLink system has been exceptional. The expertise and dedication of the Aico team has been instrumental in making this project a reality."





New social value guides to home sensors

Dr Tim Walker, Research Fellow, University of Exeter

Dr Tim Walker, a research fellow at the University of Exeter, discusses the findings from a research project on the social value of home sensor systems in housing. of Housing (CIH) and Coastline Housing, have developed a series of guides and resources to help housing professionals understand the wider societal impact of sensor systems (the original research underpinning these guides is published in the Housing and Society Journal).

Sensor systems and housing

The quality of indoor home environments has a profound effect on the health and wellbeing of residents, particularly vulnerable groups. Issues such as damp, mould and poor ventilation pose significant risks not only to the physical and mental health of residents but also to the longterm structural integrity of properties. To address these challenges, housing providers are increasingly adopting sensor-based systems that monitor indoor environmental conditions in real-time, enabling a proactive approach to property management and resident support.



However, the value of these sensor systems goes beyond the early detection of problems. The potential for generating social value (measurable benefits that enhance the lives of residents and the broader community) is significant. Researchers at the University of Exeter, in collaboration with Aico/HomeLink, the Housing Associations' Charitable Trust (HACT), the Charted Institute You can download the guides for free at: https://t.ly/mntpC.



Understanding social value in housing

Social value refers to the broader benefits of an activity beyond its direct financial return. In the context of housing, social value measures how innovations such as sensor systems positively affect people's health and living conditions. It's a way to quantify the wider societal impact, for example reducing the strain on public services such as the NHS.

It's possible to assess social value by using the social return on investment (SROI) methodology. SROI gives a financial value to the positive impact of an activity in relation to the resources invested. In this project, we collaborated with Aico/HomeLink, Coastline Housing, HACT and the UK Social Value Bank to understand the costs and benefits of using SROI.



For every £1 invested in a home sensor system, we found that it creates £2.68 of social value (a SROI ratio of 2.68). For comparison, projects tackling homelessness typically have an SROI ratio of around five, and initiatives promoting sports and physical activity have a ratio of around three.

This positive SROI illustrates the potential of sensor systems. Just imagine the collective effect if we scaled this innovation across the UK housing sector. With the NHS spending £1.4 billion each year treating people affected by poor housing, adopting sensor technologies on a larger scale could make a real difference; it could not only improve living conditions but also reduce the pressure on the healthcare system and help other housing-related problems.

The Social Value Guides

As housing providers across the UK work to meet regulatory demands and improve the quality of their housing stock, understanding the social value of new technologies such as sensor systems becomes increasingly important.

We have produced a series of guides designed for housing providers (incl. local authorities & ALMOs) to help strategic and operational teams forecast the wider impacts of adopting a sensor system. The series includes:

• The Social Value of Home Sensor Systems: An Introductory Guide. This guide introduces housing professionals to the concept of social value as it relates to home sensor systems. It highlights how these systems can make homes safer and healthier and offers insights into how housing providers can measure this impact.







- How Home Sensor Systems Generate Social Value: An Evidence-Based Guide. This guide provides a practical tool for housing providers to plan and evaluate sensor system projects in alignment with their organisational goals.
- Evaluating the Social Value of Sensor Systems: A Case Study and Guide. This guide goes through the process of evaluating the social value of a sensor system. Using Coastline Housing as a case study, it provides a forecast for the potential SROI.

The overall purpose of these guides is to help housing professionals make informed decisions, ensuring that the adoption of sensor technologies aligns with their broader organisational goals and contributes positively to residents' lives. You can download the guides for free at: https://t.ly/mntpC.

Dr Tim Walker is part of an interdisciplinary research team at The European Centre for Environment & Human Health (ECEHH), studying the relationships between housing, health and the potential of sensor technologies. If you are interested to know more, please contact Dr Tim Walker at t.w.walker@exeter.ac.uk.

Dr Tim Walker is a research fellow at the European Centre for Environment & Human Health (ECEHH) at the University of Exeter. This project was funded by the Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and Aico/HomeLink. Technology for better repairs & maintenance (and happier tenants)

Housing Technology interviewed senior housing executives from Askporter, FLS – Fast Lean Smart, Infinity Group, MIS Active Management Systems, NEC Housing, Plentific, Propeller and Voicescape about how housing provider can improve their maintenance and repairs operations through fewer bottlenecks and unresolved repairs and more first-time fixes and, ultimately, happier tenants.

What are the common causes of poorly-performing repairs & maintenance operations?

Kay Aston, head of product at NEC Housing, said, "A successful repair starts with an accurate diagnosis of the problem that needs to be fixed. A plumber called in to fix a water leak might arrive to find that an electrician is also needed to replace a damaged wall socket, a plasterer to repair the wall and then a painter to redecorate. What seemed like a quick job suddenly becomes more complicated and can't be finished the same day.

"Good information is critical to the success of repairs and maintenance operations. You need to be able to see at a glance what jobs are in progress, which are at risk of running over agreed timescales and where follow-on repairs are needed. This helps housing teams to manage challenges and quickly address the issues that will affect customer satisfaction."

Chris McLaughlin, managing director of MIS Active Management Systems, said, "A common cause of underperformance is the lack of a full understanding of the types of repairs needed. It's important to have an



"A lack of coordination between tenants, call-centre staff, contractors and housing providers leads to delays and incomplete repairs."

Ben Yexley, Head of Business Development, Askporter

overview of not only how jobs are coordinated between operatives with different skills but also how they are managed across each day, if the right operative is available for the job and whether they are multi-skilled or if a specialist is needed.

"Furthermore, no-access rates significantly affect the effectiveness of operations, which are often the result of a lack of communication."

Ben Yexley, head of business development at Askporter, said, "Inefficiencies often stem from poor communication through archaic networks, fragmented information exchange and outdated processes. Lack of coordination between residents, call-centre staff, contractors and housing providers themselves leads to delays and incomplete repairs.



"Effective workforce scheduling requires real-time data, flexibility and a clear understanding of the cost and capabilities of the operatives and their equipment."

Jeremy Squire, Managing Director, FLS – Fast Lean Smart

"Inaccurate or incomplete information capture can lead to repairs staff having to make initial site visits solely for diagnosis. These visits often lack the necessary time, tools or expertise to resolve the issue at the first visit. The prevailing acceptance of a 'diagnosis-first visit' results in inefficient scheduling, contributing to growing backlogs of maintenance requests and unnecessary costs."

Ian Hippach, commercial director at Propeller, said, "In our experience, the main causes are a reliance on manual job-scheduling processes and poor contractor management.

"Adopting manual processes or not using a suitable system to organise repairs and maintenance visits takes up too much time, increases the risk of errors and often fails to allocate the right resources. Engineers can be assigned to jobs that don't match their skills or they're not prepared for.

"Inefficiencies then filter through a repairs and maintenance operation and snowball further because performance isn't properly monitored. If service level agreements aren't met, contractors are rarely held to account and when they are, the demand for remedial action isn't strong enough to drive positive change."

Where are the common technology bottlenecks?

Jeremy Squire, managing director of FLS – Fast Lean Smart, said, "Legacy systems without the ability to connect or unify repairs and maintenance operatives result in technology bottlenecks. Consider the right technology for the right job; for example, many housing management systems lack the necessary specialist functionalities that can solve persistent resourcing issues.

"Many housing providers are tempted to delay adopting these functions because of their perceived complexity, such as application integration. Service automation must be financially worthwhile; value creation isn't just cost savings, but ongoing business management to improve tenants' satisfaction."

Sarah McRow, head of housing sales at Infinity Group, said, "A lack of real-time integration to contractors' systems and an over-reliance on manual updates are the main problems. And where integrations do exist, there is often a lack of detail about the progress of jobs, resulting in both the call-centre and the resident being in the dark about the status of a job.

"With good integrations, not only do the resident and callcentre know the exact status of the repair but also service issues, such as a lack of resources for a given trade, can be reported and actioned.

"More generally, poor integration between systems for repairs, contractors, voids and asset management inevitably leads to a disjointed view of the overall maintenance history for a property – what was fixed or replaced when, and how much did it cost?"

Emily Shaw, product director at Plentific, said, "The main technology bottlenecks often stem from fragmented systems paired with disparate communication channels.

"Many housing providers rely on outdated systems which don't provide open APIs, making it very hard to streamline workflows or share data between teams and service providers. This elongates the repairs process unnecessarily and leads to information falling through the cracks."

Nicola Brown, head of account management at Voicescape, said, "The over-reliance on booking and rescheduling appointments manually is a key bottleneck; housing providers simply can't afford to do things this way any more.



"Incremental changes based on data analytics can drive huge improvements in job completions."

Chris McLaughlin, Managing Director, MIS Active Management Systems

"Many housing providers still rely on outdated methods, such as prescriptive appointment-setting, which lead to inefficiencies and missed visits. When you lack real-time data integration across platforms, it can also hinder the process and affect the customer experience, resulting in delays."

Why are some jobs unresolved for so long?

NEC Housing's Aston said, "When multiple tradespeople are needed to complete a repair, a lack of co-ordination between teams can cause unnecessary delays. This can be further complicated when work might need to be coordinated between different contractors, each running different systems.



"Effective planning is crucial to keep each stage on track. For example, a wall might need tiling in a bathroom after a toilet has been replaced. With the right plan in place, the tiler will know exactly when they must go in to start their part of the job and what equipment is needed to complete it. Details such as whether there are elderly people or those caring for vulnerable residents in the household should be shared too so work can be prioritised."

Propeller's Hippach said, "A lack of resources and budget can be to blame along with a tendency to put more complex jobs on the back burner. For example, if there's a leak into a tenant's front room which needs multiple trades to fix such as a plumber, electrician and plasterer. Trying to manually coordinate and manage those different trades can be challenging, so inevitably the job will take longer to resolve."



"The main causes of poor performance are too many manual job-scheduling processes and inadequate contractor management."

Ian Hippach, Commercial Director, **Propeller**

Voicescape's Brown said, "Our research shows that when jobs remain unresolved, it's often due to no-access problems and breakdowns in communications between tenants and housing providers. Without an efficient system to coordinate appointments or follow up with tenants, jobs get pushed back.

"It's therefore essential to engage tenants in the whole process; they need to understand how important these appointments are and that housing providers are invested in securing their family's safety."

How can you achieve more first-time fixes?

Plentific's Shaw said, "Housing providers can achieve more first-time fixes by thoroughly reviewing their current processes and identifying areas for increased optimisation. Breaking down the repairs process into its constituent parts, from diagnosis to delivery, can yield multiple opportunities for improvement.

"Some of these might be technology-led improvements, while others might be operational changes; I've found that the best results are often driven by a combination of the two. We've shown that first-time fix rates can rise to as high as 93 per cent through the use of real-time data and automations to make effective decisions from the outset of the repair journey."

FLS's Squire said, "To increase first-time fix rates, housing providers must set themselves suitable targets, such as 'time to respond', 'time to fix' and 'value for money', because managing asset data, better HMS-CRM integrations and seamless customer service tools only go so far.



"The main problems are a lack of real-time integration with contractors' systems and an overreliance on manual updates."

Sarah McRow, Head of Housing Sales, Infinity Group

"One example is to truly understand appointment types. Algorithm-backed dynamic planning supports housing providers in meeting their obligations and quality goals, including reactive repairs, compliance checks, annual upkeep, linking jobs and audits; these are all complex appointments to manage.

"Effective workforce scheduling requires real-time data, flexibility and a clear understanding of the cost and capabilities of the operatives and their equipment. A dynamic workforce scheduling system will consider factors such as operative availability, skills, proximity to job sites, job priority and SLAs when designing schedules."

Askporter's Yexley said, "Housing providers can achieve more first-time fixes by using technology for accurate diagnostics capture, scheduling and communication, all of which improve resident satisfaction.

"The first and most important goal should be getting an accurate diagnosis at first contact by capturing as much information as possible from the customer in a helpful and friendly way. Traditional diagnostics scripts unfortunately don't cut it anymore; instead, dynamic diagnostics are significantly more helpful. Acting in this way also avoids the need for investigatory visits and multiple emails back and forth.

"When teams have access to solutions which provide operatives with job details, history and resident information, the need for follow-up visits and multiple specialists at various times is reduced.

"Through data-driven insights and better communications between residents and teams, housing providers can ensure that operatives are better prepared, leading to a more efficient service provision and happier residents." Voicescape's Brown said, "Housing providers need to improve tenant engagement by using automation to achieve a more consultative approach to booking appointments. A system that allows tenants to choose convenient times creates greater choice and reduces instances of missed appointments or no-access visits, all helping towards more first-time fixes."

What do operatives & engineers need?

Propeller's Hippach said, "First of all, technology should be used to ensure an operative is assigned to the most appropriate task. For example, intelligent scheduling will allocate work by priority, availability, location and skills.



"Anyone who's taken time off work to be at home for a tradesperson who doesn't turn up when expected knows how irritating this can be." Kay Aston, Head of Product, **NEC Housing**

"When an operative arrives to do the job, instant access to property information such as details of asbestos registers, earlier repairs and the condition of appliances will save them significant time and improve performance. With the right software, all this information can be viewed via an app on a mobile device and updated in real time.

"The ability to validate electrical and gas certificates on a mobile app is another significant time saver, improving service levels, and minimising the risk of non compliance. For the housing provider, all information recorded during a visit can be fed into a dashboard to provide real-time visibility of compliance and any outstanding actions."

NEC Housing's Aston said, "Access to an accurate and full understanding of the repair needed, alongside relevant details on the household, can make a huge difference to a repair team's ability to do a good job.

"For example, a team sent to fix a broken roof should know if there is a young child or a dangerous dog on the property so they can make sure that access points, like garden gates, are secured for everyone's safety. And if operatives are aware of asbestos at the property in advance, they can carry out the relevant safety assessments before they start work."

MIS's McLaughlin said, "From a technology perspective, operatives and engineers need a better understanding of the role they play within the wider field of housing operations. "The training of operatives and engineers is key to accessing the wider benefits of technology. Often incremental changes based on the analysis of data can drive huge improvements in job completions."

Plentific's Shaw said, "To do their jobs better, operatives need access to real-time, accurate information via a centralised platform. This ensures they have the relevant details, tools and materials at the right time. Additionally, better communication paths to coordinate with tenants and property managers help prevent unnecessary delays.

"Giving operatives the ability to complete their work onthe-go with a native app that can be downloaded onto their phones or tablets will make them more efficient, yield better results and increase job satisfaction."

What drives tenant satisfaction?

Askporter's Yexley said, "Faster response times and efficient communication are the two key drivers for residents' satisfaction with repairs and maintenance. Residents appreciate when call-out requests are addressed as smoothly and quickly as possible. Quick and simple answers to confirm that maintenance is on the way or provide residents with self-help solutions or measures to stop problems evolving all help to reassure and build trust.



"Breaking down the repairs process into its constituent parts, from diagnosis to delivery, will yield multiple opportunities for improvement."

Emily Shaw, Director – Product Lead, **Plentific**

"Proactive communication is hugely important in keeping residents informed and thereby increasing satisfaction throughout the repair process. Regular updates reduce uncertainty and frustration because residents are in the loop. At the same time, creating a flow of automated information fosters a sense of transparency."

FLS's Squire said, "Some housing providers may prioritise reactive or emergency repairs over planned maintenance due to rising costs, such as fuel and skills retention. This approach can lead to a cycle of tenant dissatisfaction and escalating complaints.

"Real-time management helps mitigate these risks by optimising productivity and deploying operatives with the right skills and resources (including parts and training) at the right time. This ensures timely, effective service,





"Housing providers' manual processes for booking and rescheduling appointments are a significant bottleneck."

Nicola Brown, Head of Account Management, **Voicescape**

reducing the need for reactive repairs and improving overall maintenance. The balance between value for money and tenant satisfaction comes in cost-optimisation; what is the cost, both in real terms and the cost you have assigned to your SLAs and KPIs?"

NEC Housing's Aston said, "Anyone who has ever taken time off work or changed their normal routine to be at home for a delivery or a tradesperson who doesn't turn up when expected will know how irritating this can be.

"You are therefore much more likely to keep a resident happy if you can send an automatic email to confirm their report of a broken door has been received then ensure they are fully informed of the progress of the repair, including any changes in the time or date you are due to arrive so people can adjust their plans without being inconvenienced.

"Residents are far more likely to rate their housing provider highly in satisfaction surveys if their repairs are fixed on the first visit, with no need for repeat appointments, and they've been kept informed of progress along the way."

Quantitative metrics for improved repairs & maintenance

FLS's Squire said, "Predictive analytics are adding huge value for housing providers to improve their repairs and maintenance operations, achieving faster response times and more first-time fixes. For example, data is helping planning teams to avoid long lead-times for spare parts across different times of the year, as well as predicting mechanical failures years ahead of time.

"FLS has partnered with Amey Secure Infrastructure to meet its business needs across the 33,500 military homes it manages. Alongside Amey's customers, FLS has developed a customer self-service portal featuring SMS and email notifications with real-time tracking of operatives' arrival times.

"Our partnership is on track to surpass our repairs and maintenance targets, alongside significant cost savings, a 20 per cent increase in completed tasks and a 25 per cent reduction in carbon emissions." Plentific's Shaw said, "Housing providers using Plentific's platform have seen significant improvements in their repairs and maintenance operations, all of which can be reported on from within the platform's analytics offering.

"For example, housing providers have reported a 93 per cent first-time fix rate and 92 per cent resident satisfaction for repairs completed via the platform. Additionally, many have achieved up to 25 per cent operational cost savings through more streamlined repair processes and reduced inefficiencies. These tangible improvements show how a single platform for repairs and supply chain management streamlines workflows, using the latest technologies to improve performance."

Voicescape's Brown said, "Positive real-world results are being seen by many repairs and maintenance teams. For example, by using Voicescape Compliance, Places for People saw a 32 per cent decrease in its no-access rate for gas safety checks.

"Platform Housing Group also achieved an increase in access rates, and South Tyneside Homes reported engagement rates above 50 per cent since implementing Voicescape's automated communication platform."

Propeller's Hippach said, "For the past five years, we've been working with Ateb Group to improve the efficiency of its repairs and maintenance operation, with our cloudbased workforce management system replacing the housing provider's previous manual processes.

"Live reporting, which provides a real-time view of Ateb's compliance and servicing requirements, has helped Ateb to achieve a compliance status of 98-100 per cent.

"Our software also ensures consistent communications with tenants, improving engagement and no-access rates. This has enabled Ateb's heating and plumbing team to achieve consistently high customer satisfaction rates of 99-100 per cent."

Housing Technology would like to thank Ben Yexley (Askporter), Jeremy Squire (FLS – Fast Lean Smart), Sarah McRow (Infinity Group), Chris McLaughlin (MIS Active Management Systems), Kay Aston (NEC Housing), Emily Shaw (Plentific), Ian Hippach (Propeller) and Nicola Brown (Voicescape) for their editorial contributions to this article.

Housing Insight's PanConnect Staff App at North Devon Homes



North Devon Homes has recently partnered with Housing Insight and its PanConnect Staff App, a cutting-edge mobile working system which simplifies many day-to-day services for housing teams such as case management and operational efficiency.



The project represents a three-year contract between North Devon Homes and Housing Insight. The first phase of the project was delivered in just five weeks, demonstrating the speed and agility of both organisations to provide solutions that will have an immediate impact.

Martyn Gimber, CEO, North Devon Homes, said, "We are excited to work with Housing Insight on this project. PanConnect will not only make our operations more efficient but also provide our team with a more flexible way to manage cases and engage with residents while out in the community."

Katrina Heyworth, head of sales, Housing Insight, said, "We are happy to welcome North Devon Homes and support their organisation with PanConnect for more effective case management. North Devon Homes' commitment and the collaboration from both teams since the start of the project has been remarkable. We expect that North Devon Homes' implementation of our PanConnect App will significantly enhance user efficiency, boost staff performance and foster better resident engagement."

The ultimate goal of the partnership is to create more efficient ways of working for housing teams, allowing them to focus on delivering the best possible service to residents while leveraging the power of modern technology to simplify and enhance everyday processes.

Find out more about Housing Insight and its solutions that support housing providers at **housing-insight.co.uk**.

housing insight



Smart homes & happier tenants

Revolutionising maintenance & repairs

Mark Holdsworth, Sales Director, Civica

From AI-powered predictive analytics to IoT sensors and automated systems, Civica's sales director, Mark Holdsworth, delves into the game-changing technologies set to transform maintenance and repairs in social housing.

The Labour Party's ambitious plans to build 1.5 million homes, including a significant boost to social housing stock, present our sector with unprecedented opportunities and challenges.

Angela Rayner, the deputy prime minister, said, "We are facing the most acute housing crisis in living memory, with 150,000 children in temporary accommodation, nearly 1.3 million households on social housing waiting lists and under-30s less than half as likely to own their own home compared with the 1990s."

However, as the government focuses on building new homes, those working in the social housing sector mustn't lose sight of maintaining and improving their existing housing stock. Here, technology is set to play a pivotal role.

The Social Housing Act 2023 has laid the groundwork for a more professionalised, tenant-focused approach to housing management. Innovative technologies are poised to transform how we approach repairs and maintenance, creating smarter homes and happier tenants.

The IoT revolution

By embedding IoT sensors throughout properties

and integrating them with the data in their housing management systems, housing providers can monitor everything from damp and mould to energy usage and appliance performance in real time. For example, our Cx Housing system already has built-in links to both Switchee and Daisy devices so that IoT data can be consumed and analysed on our platform.

Imagine a world where, thanks to IoT, a faulty boiler alerts the maintenance team despite the tenant not noticing a problem, or where damp is detected and addressed well before becoming a health hazard.

Real-world implementations are already showing the transformative potential of IoT. For example, Stirling Council has plans to install 50,000 smart devices over the next decade, making it one of the UK's largest deployments of IoT sensors in social housing. The council's initiative will provide its tenants with real-time data on their home environments and energy consumption through a free app.

The council reported that early trials had revealed highrisk indications of condensation-caused dampness and mould in some properties, highlighting how this technology can identify issues before they become serious problems. By providing data-driven insights, the system enables proactive maintenance and empowers tenants to manage their homes better, potentially reducing reactive repair calls and improving tenant satisfaction.

AI-informed decisions

While IoT provides the data, AI helps to make sense of it. AI algorithms can analyse patterns in maintenance data, predicting when repairs are likely to be needed and then optimising maintenance schedules.

This shift from reactive to predictive maintenance is a game-changer. It allows housing providers to move towards a more nuanced, needs-based approach instead of the old model of fixed schedules and emergency call-outs. Not only does this save time and money but it also ensures that resources are directed where they're needed most.

Natural language processing (NLP) algorithms can comb tenant feedback and maintenance reports to spot recurrent issues and suggest systemic improvements. This data-driven approach to housing management aligns perfectly with the government's push for more accountable, tenant-focused services.

Automation-driven efficiencies

One of the most exciting aspects of these technological advances is how they free up human resources. By automating routine checks and data collection, housing officers and maintenance staff can focus more on providing personalised, high-quality service to tenants.

This capability aligns with the Social Housing Act 2023, which emphasises the need for qualified, professional housing managers. They should also be 'data savvy' and know how to use the available technologies to achieve optimal results.

By using technology to handle routine tasks, we create space for housing professionals to engage more deeply with tenants, address complex issues and contribute to community building. This is technology's true potential in social housing – not to replace human interaction but enhance it.

Going green

Sustainability must be a priority as we build and maintain social housing for the future. The government's commitment to building on brownfield and greenfield sites presents challenges and maintenance opportunities.

Smart-home technologies can play a crucial role in making these new developments and existing properties more energy-efficient. From smart meters that help tenants manage their energy usage to AI-controlled heating systems for optimising energy consumption, technology can significantly reduce the carbon footprint of social housing.

Furthermore, these technologies can help housing providers meet increasingly stringent environmental

regulations. For instance, IoT sensors can monitor air quality and energy efficiency, ensuring compliance with regulations and identifying areas for improvement.

Challenges and considerations

While the potential of these technologies is exciting, we must also be mindful of the challenges. Privacy, data security and digital exclusion are all areas that need to be carefully addressed when implementing these solutions.

And, as we automate more processes, we must ensure that we keep the human touch that is so fundamental to social housing. Technology should enhance, not replace, the relationship between housing providers and their tenants.

There's also the question of cost. While these technologies can lead to significant savings in the long run, the initial investment can be large. Housing providers will need support from both the government and the private sector to make these upgrades feasible.

Building momentum

Technology will play a central role in the future of maintenance and repairs. Innovations, from IoT and AI to blockchain and smart energy systems, can transform how we maintain and manage social housing.

But technology alone is not the answer. It must be part of a holistic approach that puts tenants at the centre, aligns with regulatory requirements and supports the professional development of housing staff.

The government's commitment to building more social housing presents an opportunity to embed these technologies from the ground up. As we build new homes on green-, brown- and grey-field sites, we can design them with smart technologies in mind, creating a new generation of sustainable, efficient social housing.

At the same time, we must remember our existing housing stock. Retrofitting older properties with new technologies will ensure that all tenants benefit from these advances.

The path ahead isn't straightforward but it is exciting because the potential rewards are immense. By embracing technology in maintenance and repairs, we can create homes that are not just places to live but platforms for improving lives and building communities.

With the proper application of technology, we can ensure that it's about providing smart, efficient and sustainable homes that support and empower tenants to thrive.

Mark Holdsworth is the sales director at Civica.



North Star transforms repairs with Infinity Group & Microsoft



North Star Housing has gone live with a new repairs system from Infinity Group, as part of its ongoing Microsoft-based digital transformation programme.

The housing provider has been working with Infinity Group for the past year to deliver an ambitious data transformation project and has already gone live with CRM, compliance, rent accounting and arrears management. Going live with the repairs management system marks the final stage of the process before North Star Housing can switch off its legacy housing management solution.

The repairs implementation is the most ambitious of all the modules so far deployed, featuring two-way integration with repairs contractors Ian Williams and Pacifica 0800. A portal for smaller contractors was also developed alongside the deployment of a mobile solution, enabling inspections for both pre-repairs and damp and mould.

Sean Lawless, director of insight and transformation, North Star Housing, said, "We knew that we had a lot to deliver in a short space of time, but we had confidence in our rapid delivery approach, the flexibility of Microsoft Dynamics and our partnership with Infinity Group to get it done."

The new repairs solution will automate processes that were previously carried out via email through integrations with the housing provider's repair contractors' systems and a dedicated contractor portal.

Lawless said, "We've already delivered huge benefits in this first phase but this is the first step towards where we want to take our repairs logging process. The next phase will be a self-service portal for residents and expanding what we do with Microsoft Copilot and AI."





Technology for better repairs – Active Assessor

Rob Mottram, Marketing Manager, Social Telecoms

8x8 has introduced the latest addition to its contact centre solution, developed with housing providers in mind. Proactively engaging customers, Active Assessor is set to revolutionise customer engagement and property maintenance.

In itself, Active Assessor sounds simple. This new solution uses 8x8 Contact Centre technology, enabling housing providers to send their customers an SMS survey to complete, asking about the condition of their homes and collating data. However, it has much larger implications – demonstrating customer care, reducing organisational workload and preventing expensive repairs down the line.

Not only this, but Active Assessor comes as a package with other powerful tools – Proactive Outreach, ICA, Remote Fix and Advanced Analytics – amplifying its usefulness exponentially. Working together, these services offer massive benefits for customers and housing providers alike by optimising efficiency, increasing customer satisfaction and reducing costs across the board.

With so much to be gained from this new approach to customer contact, we must ask – 'is this the future of customer experience?'

Better tools for safer homes

In April 2024, the Social Housing Regulation Act brought about new requirements for housing providers. These include ensuring the safety of residents in their homes, promptly responding to complaints and keeping up-todate with the condition of homes. Active Assessor has been developed with exactly these requirements in mind, and its scalability allows housing providers of all sizes to effectively monitor property conditions.

Where are we now?

In a 2023/24 study of Tenant Satisfaction Measures, Housemark found a 13 per cent drop in overall customer satisfaction since 2019. Not only this, but fewer than twothirds of customers (61 per cent) felt their housing providers listened to their feedback and acted on it. Housemark found particular concerns around call-handling times and complaint volumes, reporting a 34 per cent tenant satisfaction rate with how complaints are handled. Taken together, we're seeing two things – new regulations with a focus on customer satisfaction, while important metrics regarding TSMs trend downwards year-on-year. The data suggests that a re-evaluation of customer experience processes is needed, with Active Assessor providing all the right answers at just the right time.

First contact - proactive engagement

Right off the bat, Active Assessor presents an elegant, scalable solution to the situation facing housing providers. How do you ensure customers feel listened to, improve call-handling times and reduce complaint volumes? Easy – contact the customer before they contact you.

Purpose-built for handling the issues of the day, Active Assessor addresses all of these issues in one fell swoop. By contacting the customer first, this solution from 8x8 not only shows an organisation's commitment to customer care, it also enables you to recognise the early-warning signs of potentially larger problems.

Active Assessor bulk-sends customers a quick-and-easy SMS or WhatsApp survey, underpinned by conversational Al. With this, housing providers enable customers to identify issues such as damp or mould before they develop and become hazardous, ensuring the safety of residents.

SMS and WhatsApp messages boast an open rate of 98 per cent compared with only 20 per cent for emails, ensuring surveys actually reach customers. Not only this, but a proactive approach reduces call volumes and complaints by resolving tomorrow's problems today; data shows that early interventions can reduce formal complaint volumes by up to 50 per cent.

As an added benefit, repair costs are also reduced, allowing simple fixes before things get out of hand. In many cases, customers are reluctant to contact their housing provider as soon as a problem appears, holding off until it becomes a more substantial issue. Proactive engagement removes this barrier, encouraging early reporting.

Active Assessor presents an even greater benefit to buildings of multiple occupancy. By surveying a large number of customers at once, an organisation can find out whether a problem affects a single unit or the whole building. This allows housing providers to engage tenant



groups and coordinate repairs, preventing the time and expense of repeat engineer call-outs.

24/7 support – powered by AI

Sending out surveys is one thing, but how do you handle the responses? As part of Active Assessor, 8x8's Intelligent Customer Assistant (ICA) collects and processes survey results, prioritising situations that require immediate action.

Where appropriate, it will prompt customers to schedule an online evaluation or connect with an agent. With its conversational, AI-enhanced digital assistant, ICA is available to chat 24/7 across channels in a variety of language options, ensuring customers are heard, whenever and wherever they get in touch.

Synchronising with housing providers' CRM systems, ICA ensures customers receive a highly-personalised experience. Digital chats are also summarised so that human agents can quickly and seamlessly pick up the conversation if needed.

Based on past client data, automated services can typically resolve 40-60 per cent of calls. This shows the value of these services, reducing agents' operational workload and freeing them up for enquiries that require human intervention.

First-time fixes & faster repairs

Once a problem is identified and addressed with the customer, Remote Fix invites them to a one-way video interaction. This captures footage and images of the problem, including time stamps and geotags, and doesn't require a dedicated app to use.

Whether it's a leaking tap or patch of damp, videos enable agents and engineers to review the situation and advise on the best action to take. One housing provider informed us that a property visit to perform the same task costs an average of £200, highlighting the value that Remote Fix offers over time.

In some cases, this allows agents to talk their customers through simple solutions, such as restarting their boiler. Agents can also link customers to guides and resources, helping them in real time. This reduces unnecessary service visits, brings an immediate resolution for the customer and reduces costs for the housing provider. Additionally, by educating and empowering customers, this approach reduces their future reliance on the contact centre.

Video recordings are stored and easily accessed, allowing agents and engineers to monitor changing situations and advise remotely. This also gives engineers a better understanding of the issues faced, reducing the need for repeat callouts and increasing the rate of first-time fixes.

Report, review, resolve - made easy with 8x8

By developing Active Assessor with housing and local authority sectors in mind, 8x8 has introduced tools to revolutionise customer experience. Augmenting and automating the process from first contact, Active Assessor improves customer satisfaction while reducing costs and organisational workload, empowering housing providers to deliver a new standard of customer care.

Sue Michaelwaite, solutions and vertical marketing manager at 8x8, said, "Active Assessor is the latest in a range of solutions that leverage 8x8 Contact Centre technology to delivery organisation-wide benefits to the housing sector."

Social Telecoms works with 8x8 to deliver advanced customer experience and contact centre solutions for the housing and local authority sectors. We can provide PfH members with Active Assessor via Lots 2 & 3 of their telecommunications framework, giving the option of a direct award and side-stepping the need for tendering exercises (demonstrations are also available).

Rob Mottram is the marketing manager at Social Telecoms.



Thriving in a changing climate

Jack Weekes, Product Manager, Aareon

Winter is well on its way, bringing new challenges for social housing. With current financial uncertainties, sustainability pressures and more, it's never been more critical for housing providers to have the right software on their side. It must be flexible enough to grow and change with ever-evolving laws and keep their operations efficient.

As we know, housing providers particularly face a distinct set of challenges compared with other property management sectors. Being subject to specific regulations and funding constraints and often serving vulnerable populations with limited financial resources means that there are extra things to consider. Quite often, their properties may also be older and need more frequent repairs.

Legal expectations

The landscape of social housing is constantly developing. With the government having consulted on damp and mould and how long a housing provider should be given to deal with hazards, Awaab's Law is very much on everyone's minds. This law sets clear legal expectations about the timeframes within which housing providers must make homes safe where they contain serious hazards. For housing providers, it's essential to have software that helps them remain compliant with these regulations, ensuring the safety and well-being of their tenants.

As the colder months approach, now is the time to prepare. Maintenance needs typically increase during this time due to harsher weather conditions, and quick repairs become crucial. For example, a boiler breaking down during winter is much more pressing than in summer. Issues such as damp and mould also become more prevalent, needing fast and efficient repairs to ensure tenants' safety and comfort. In this way, operatives will spend more time out at their jobs and will be harder to keep in touch with.

Mobile solutions

Mobile solutions can help manage repairs quickly and effectively. Field operatives can be in constant contact with housing providers, accessing job details, receiving notifications about urgent issues and even scheduling follow-on work. This ensures that repairs are addressed promptly, minimising tenant discomfort and potential property damage.

Managing field staff can be difficult without the right tools. Mobile solutions offer the capability to keep field staff informed, whether it's new jobs, changing schedules or even warnings. By helping staff complete jobs quickly and efficiently, while keeping them safe, these solutions contribute to higher productivity and better service quality. Additionally, the reduction in miscommunication and delays leads to more streamlined operations, benefiting both staff and tenants.

Real-time information on-the-go

Aareon's Mobile Working app allows for real-time updates, ensuring staff are informed about risks and the specific needs of each job. This improves safety and efficiency, allowing staff to complete tasks quickly. It also helps them provide the exemplary service they promise to tenants by managing relationships with all relevant tenant and property data at their fingertips. This means that staff can feel empowered to act on customer requests directly and receive digitally-assigned jobs on the go, with all of the information and data they need in one place.



It also enables the tracking of job progress and the logging and documenting of work through to completion. A dedicated mobile app that covers a broad spectrum of core business needs, from maintenance work, inspections and compliance through to tenancy services, ensures no unnecessary time is wasted in the field and helps eliminate most of the associated paperwork that typically gets done afterwards.

Fewer errors & greater productivity

In turn, more efficient processing leads to better productivity. By streamlining these processes, mobile solutions not only save time but also reduce the likelihood of errors, ensuring that all tasks are completed accurately and efficiently. This holistic approach to field management supports a more organised and effective operation, ultimately enhancing the overall service delivery.

Financial uncertainty is also a major factor in the social housing sector, and it is only exacerbated during the winter months when heating costs rise and more resources are needed for emergency repairs. Meanwhile, housing providers face massive financial pressures and budget constraints as sustainability goals widen. It is becoming much more important for housing providers to be active in retrofitting and building sustainably.

As social housing faces increased challenges in winter, the right software can be a game-changer. By using digital solutions such as Aareon's Mobile Working app, housing providers can streamline their operations, ensure compliance and manage resources effectively, helping to navigate the complexities of the season and provide better services to their tenants.

Want to learn more about Aareon's mobile solution? Discover more at info.aareon.co.uk/mobileworking.

Jack Weekes is a product manager at Aareon.

Aareon

Home Group on schedule with Calabrio & Business Systems



Home Group is now live with new workforce management (WFM) software from Calabrio, implemented by Business Systems after the housing provider's previous WFM software reached the end of its useful life. The Calabrio One software covers resource allocation, workforce scheduling, forecasting and analytics.

Since the Calabrio system went live, Home Group reported that it is now saving £16,000 per month and passed its original two-year Rol target within six months. Furthermore, the housing provider's scheduling efficiency has increased by 20 per cent and responses across communication channels by 12 per cent. Gavin Rogerson, resource planning manager, Home Group, said, "We've gone from using pen and paper to a state-of-the-art digital solution. It might be a cliché but happy colleagues equal happy customers."



Plus Dane Housing is running a trial implementation of Vericon Systems' Surveyor Cube, designed to identify the causes of damp and mould problems in homes.

Plus Dane trials damp & mould monitoring from Vericon

The system comprises Vericon's plug -and-play boiler control module (BCM) and MultiDot temperature- and humidity-level sensors which can be quickly and easily installed throughout properties without the need for specialist knowledge or tools.

The BCM and MultiDot sensors can be monitored and managed through Vericon's online portal, allowing Plus Dane to instantly view and analyse the environmental conditions and status of every home in its trial.

Chris Roberts, sustainability manager, Plus Dane Housing, said, "Although the Vericon system has only been live for a couple of months, we're already seeing positive results. With the ability to proactively monitor, manage and evaluate humidity levels within our properties, we can prevent the build-up of damp and mould and all of the problems they bring."

SHAL Housing trials smart homes

SHAL Housing has launched a smart-home scheme in partnership with Vericon Systems, Adey and City Plumbing to evaluate the use of intelligent technologies to enhance the efficiency and management of its properties' heating systems.

City Plumbing kitted out five SHAL Housing properties with Adey's Sense range of digitally-enabled systems that help to prevent heating system breakdowns, integrated with Vericon's IoT sensors and boiler monitoring system.



Vericon's technology provides real-time data from IoT sensors, including the ability to monitor the temperature and humidity of individual rooms for the early detection of damp and mould.

Combined with Adey Sense's connected filters, SHAL Housing now receives real-time alerts to prioritise 'at risk' systems, allowing for timely maintenance before breakdowns occur.

The housing provider reported significant improvements in four out of the five properties in the trial, including the identification of faults and inefficiencies in their heating systems before the properties' tenants were even aware of them.

Angela Gascoigne, CEO, SHAL Housing, said, "The Vericon and Adey system enables us to make sure that our boilers and whole gas system is working as well as possible. We can monitor information from the system and be proactive in terms of maintenance instead of relying on tenants to tell us if there's a problem."

Kingstown Works' migration to Totalmobile



Kingstown Works, owned by Hull City Council, is implementing Totalmobile's work-order management software as a replacement for its existing in-house software.

Totalmobile's software will allow Kingstown Works to streamline job management, enhance communications and improve overall operational efficiency. The implementation is expected to reduce manual processes, cut costs and provide real-time data insights.

Darren Nicholson, chief financial officer, Kingstown Works, said, "We're not only updating our job management system but also rethinking how we operate. Totalmobile's team has been outstanding, offering deep expertise and support every step of the way."

Aico launches HomeLink case management system



Aico has launched HomeLink Case Management (HCM), designed to help housing providers maintain safe and compliant homes, particularly around damp and mould,

with fire, carbon monoxide and decarbonisation planned to be covered in future versions of HCM.

Based on end-users' feedback and insights from Aico housing customers, HCM's development includes identifying and managing cases, analysing data, recording actions and interventions, and communicating with residents.

Chris Jones, CEO, HomeLink, said, "HCM is a direct response to housing providers' needs, delivering a robust solution that not only makes compliance easier but also supports proactive management and tenant satisfaction."

Aico said that HCM helps housing providers address each stage of case management with greater ease and effectiveness:

• **Identify** – By using data insights and resident surveys, housing providers can detect and assess problems

earlier, enabling faster and more targeted responses.

- Manage Cases can be easily created and assigned to team members, with task management features to ensure issues are tracked and resolved from start to finish.
- Analyse Housing providers can gain insights into property conditions, including comparisons with portfolio and national averages. HCM also enables housing providers to overlay interventions, such as upgrades to insulation or heating, to see how these changes affect outcomes over time.
- **Record** Comprehensive record-keeping captures every detail of case management, from maintenance updates to resident feedback, ensuring full transparency and compliance.
- Communicate Housing providers can communicate directly with residents through the HomeLink Resident App, including requests for surveys and up-to-date photos of any problems.

HCM will be available to existing HomeLink customers as an integrated extension to their current portals, allowing them to manage cases with the same ease and reliability they expect from HomeLink's platform.

Jordan Toulson, head of product, HomeLink, said, "By developing HCM, we're equipping housing providers with the tools they need to navigate their biggest challenges in a way that is both practical and proactive."

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