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Welcome to 2025 A year of purpose and innovation

George Grant, CEO, Broadcaster & Publisher, Housing Technology

As we begin 2025, Housing Technology is excited to bring you a year of fresh ideas, transformative innovation and purpose-driven strategies. This edition sets the tone for what promises to be a pivotal year, focusing on data standards, cutting-edge technologies and the amazing potential of housing providers to reshape our communities.

We're thrilled to announce that **Jason Bradbury**, the renowned face of The Gadget Show, will deliver the keynote address at the **Housing Technology 2025** conference in March. His talk, The Thousand Year Decade, will explore the technological transformations of the coming years, with actionable insights on AI, robotics, energy and sustainability. His ability to make complex ideas engaging and accessible promises to inspire and challenge us all. Don't miss the opportunity to hear Jason's bold vision for how these innovations can create smarter, more sustainable housing solutions.



Our focus on data standards continues with the launch of our **'Data Standards in Social Housing 2025' report** (see page 50). Developed in collaboration with HACT, Open Data Exchange and the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, this report highlights the importance of unified standards in driving efficiency, compliance and innovation. With practical guidance on adoption, barriers and integration, it's an essential tool for anyone wanting to future-proof their housing operations. The report can be ordered now from housing-technology.com/report/data-standards-2025.

At the heart of this year's discussions is the role of purpose-led housing providers. In a sector driven by a mission to create thriving communities, housing providers have a unique opportunity to lead the way. By embracing technologies such as AI, IoT and robotics, they can accelerate housing delivery without compromising on quality or sustainability.

Here's to a year of progress, innovation and purpose. We look forward to seeing you at the Housing Technology 2025 conference!

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

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Solving the data-quality curse



Aidan Dunphy, Chief Product Officer, Esuasive

In his influential book 'Crossing The Chasm', Geoffrey Moore defined new labels for innovators and early adopters as 'technology enthusiasts' and 'visionaries'. I use the blanket term 'geek' and I'm proud to call myself one.



Cartoon of Aidan Dunphy, by Michael O'Keefe 2018

In my long career with software product companies, I've been involved in many 'innovative' new product launches. A few years ago, one of my team members drew a cartoon of me, portraying me as obsessed with trendy tech gadgets. I often think about this because it highlights the undue emphasis we can place on new technologies, perhaps neglecting opportunities to find new ways to create value using our existing technologies.

If we look at the 'proptech' space at the moment, there's a plethora of exciting, upcoming vendors doing amazing things with AI, IoT, VR/AR, data analytics, cloud native, integration and mobile tech. Mmmm, lovely tech.

AI is all the rage, still

If you read any technology news then you'll be aware that the 'hyperscalers' (Google, Meta, Microsoft et al) are

engaged in an arms race of investment into ever-more powerful large AI models. Microsoft, Amazon and Meta each have plans to secure nuclear power plants (yes, really) specifically for powering datacentres building AI models. Of the 25 technologies listed on this year's Gartner Hype Curve for Emerging Technologies, 12 are AI technologies and half of the others rely on AI. Agentic AI (i.e. AI that can work out how to do what you want and then get on with it) supported by the development of 'large reasoning models' is the NKOTB (Google late 1980s/early 90s boy bands) and promises to revolutionise the use of AI in many contexts.

As Wharton professor and AI thought-leader Ethan Mollick recently put it, "...for better and for worse, we're far from seeing the end of AI advancement." Make no mistake, the amazing breakthroughs of recent years aren't about to dry up. Google has just announced that its NotepadLM tool now lets you interact verbally with the podcast it creates from your documents, so how long will it be before we're providing customer service via life-like, always-on avatars that never have a sick day or a bad mood?

However, I'd say that the most useful use-case for these exciting developments is possibly also the most boring.

It's the data, stupid

These days we like to describe ourselves as working in 'tech', 'digital' or 'innovation'. These cool-sounding epithets mask our true *raison d'être*; providing easy access to reliable information in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Adding any amount of cool-kids' tech, slick apps or eye-candy visualisation tools means diddly squat if your underlying data is fragmented, contradictory, inaccessible, out of date, miscategorised or just plain wrong. It's arguably 'jumping the shark' to try to predict that your tenant might suffer from mould due to damp if you can't respond to the fact that they've already told you about it many times.



“ The beginning of wisdom is the definition of terms.

Socrates

We've been trying to solve this problem for some time. My whole career has centred around it, whether it be attempts to create monolithic database systems, business semantic layers for reporting, open integration platforms, data standards, data-quality tools, design standards or business frameworks. Today, I'm working with Esuasive whose cloud-native platform is built around the principle of well-defined, authentic and up-to-date data integrated across the enterprise.

Today, it's sadly still common that housing providers have yet to achieve a single, trusted source of information for their businesses. In the end, the problem has always boiled down to the fact that it's human beings who do the important stuff, and humans generally aren't deterministic when it comes to describing or communicating things. IT leaders face a constant battle to provide solutions for their organisations that people can actually use, and with which they'll engage.

Not just the UI for AI

In a recent partner briefing, Microsoft's CTO for housing Kishore Rajendran described how it wants Copilot to be 'the UI for AI'. I'd go one step further and suggest that LLM-powered interfaces and agent technologies such as Copilot will become the UI for everything. Think 'Jarvis for Housing'.

I tried to make an image representing this, but copyright concerns and the preponderance of clichéd marketing technology images from which AI image generators seem to draw their inspiration have limited me to the above mediocre effort.

The point I'm trying to make is that today, we expect people to type information into screens or phones. This is an incredibly inefficient and error-prone method of information transfer. If you've used dictation when composing emails or texts, you'll know that it's now very accurate and much faster than even a seasoned keyboard jockey like me can do.

Taking this a step further, I'd say that the single most useful capability of LLMs isn't to generate terrible marketing images or write banal social media posts but to interpret what you say to them or show them. There's great potential to massively improve data quality (dare I say, information quality) by using Copilots to capture information from humans, interpret and classify it and sense-check and validate it before committing it to the corporate corpus. Arguably some of the main causes of data inaccuracies are:

- Effort required from, and friction encountered by, people typing stuff into screens, causing them to make mistakes or cut corners;
- Differences in interpretation or expression of facts or classifications between humans;
- Differences between product vendors in methods of data capture, storage and transmission.

To me it seems obvious that if people could capture information into a system simply by verbally describing or showing an intelligent assistant, with confidence that it will be interpreted into a commonly-accessible form, then this could dramatically reduce errors and at the same time hugely increase the richness of the information captured.

To do this doesn't even mean having to replace all of your existing systems; after all, it should be possible without huge difficulty to integrate Copilots and other AI tools into existing UIs.

However, it does raise the question: if you could replace your various UIs with a common, intelligent conversational interface, why wouldn't you then insist on your organisation having a single source of trusted

information? The case for tolerating disparate and/or legacy systems will be eroded further. I think we can now finally see how the dream of a 'single version of the truth' can be a reality, and the future is bright for platforms such as Esuasive that actually deliver this.

Aidan Dunphy is the chief product officer at Esuasive.



Barnet Group goes live with PIMSS Compliance

Barnet Group has successfully moved its compliance activities away from spreadsheets and manual processes following its deployment of the workflow-based PIMSS Compliance system.

Barnet Group's fire-risk assessments were the catalyst for its move to PIMSS Compliance, which has centralised and streamlined the housing provider's compliance data. Internal staff and external contractors can both update the system, alongside real-time dashboards of Barnet Group compliance status.

After the initial implementation of PIMSS Compliance for fire-risk assessment, the system has been extended to cover other key areas of compliance including electrical, water, lifts and asbestos.

Arun Jassel, implementation team member, Barnet Group, said, "There have been some very stressful moments when trying to meet deadlines but the PIMSS team always found the time to help me and answer any day-to-day queries.

"When working with a new system, there will always be a period of learning. The PIMSS team were patient, understanding and very easy to communicate with. The support PIMSS has given me to get modules live on time has been invaluable."

HOUSING TECHNOLOGY

Data Standards in Social Housing 2025

Market Intelligence | January 2025





From gatekeepers to service leaders

Reshaping social housing for the consumer standard

Mark Holdsworth, Sales Director, Civica

As social housing grapples with new consumer standards, Mark Holdsworth, Civica's sales director, explores how housing providers must transform their culture and technology to deliver outstanding tenant services.

The most significant cultural transformation in social housing in decades is underway. The introduction of consumer standards by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has fundamentally shifted expectations, moving housing providers from traditional gatekeepers of services to customer-centric organisations focused on tenant satisfaction and service excellence.

A seismic shift

This evolution isn't just about meeting regulatory requirements; it represents a complete reimagining of how housing providers operate, communicate and deliver services. The question is – are housing providers ready for this seismic shift?

In April 2024, the RSH introduced comprehensive new standards for all social landlords. The new framework included a consumer service measure (C1-C4 rating, where C1 represents the highest level of consumer service) alongside the traditional governance (G1-G4) and viability (V1-V4) measures, which assess an organisation's management effectiveness and financial stability, respectively.

Under these standards, housing providers must ensure tenants are safe in their homes, respond promptly to complaints, treat tenants with fairness and respect, maintain detailed knowledge of property conditions and effectively collect and use data across all service areas. The stakes are high; a provider could achieve G1 status for governance but still fail its inspection with a C4 rating for consumer service.

Early results and expectations

The early inspection results reveal the scale of the challenge. The RSH awarded 35 consumer grades to

social landlords managing over 1,000 homes from April to late October. Nine received the highest C1 grade, demonstrating excellence in tenant service, 13 were graded C2 and 12 received C3 ratings, indicating significant room for improvement.

In October 2024, the first housing provider received the lowest C4 grade, with the regulator finding "very serious health and safety issues" and at least 20 per cent of its homes failing to meet decent living standards.

The NHS's journey from a gatekeeper model to a more patient-centric approach offers valuable lessons for housing providers. Like the health sector, social housing is transitioning from a system focused on managing access to services to one centred on delivering positive outcomes for service users.

Consider how GP functions have evolved. Many have moved from restrictive appointment systems to more flexible, technology-enabled services prioritising patient needs. Online booking systems, text reminders and digital consultations have changed access to healthcare services. The housing sector must undergo a similar transformation but with its own unique challenges and opportunities.

Technology as an enabler

This cultural shift requires robust technological foundations. During a recent visit to a community housing group in Kidderminster, I witnessed at first-hand how technology can enable superior customer service. Their customer service team demonstrated excellence in tenant engagement, seamlessly moving between different types of interactions, from routine enquiries to complex cases, while recording everything in their CRM system.



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What's particularly striking is that many organisations already have the technological capability to transform their tenant services but they don't realise it. Modern housing management systems often come with built-in CRM capabilities, automated communication tools and sophisticated workflow management, but these features remain dormant without proper understanding and implementation.

Yet many organisations still need to improve with fragmented systems and manual processes. Some have invested heavily in measuring failure, such as sophisticated phone systems tracking dropped calls, without investing in the background systems needed to improve service delivery. It's rather like having a high-tech dashboard in a car with an unreliable engine; the measurements might be precise but the underlying performance isn't improving.

Building a customer-centric culture

Technology alone isn't enough. The shift from gatekeeper to service leader requires a fundamental change in organisational culture. This means empowering front-line staff with both the tools and authority they need to serve tenants effectively.

It involves developing new organisational skills, from customer service excellence to data literacy. Most importantly, it changes mindsets from 'managing access' to 'enabling service'.

I've seen this transformation in action. Housing providers who successfully make this shift don't merely implement new systems, they reimagine their entire approach to tenant interaction. Their staff become partners in tenants' success rather than administrators of processes. They use data to measure performance and anticipate and prevent problems before they arise.

Let's be honest – delivering exceptional customer service is expensive. It requires significant investment in technology platforms, staff development and process redesign. However, the cost of not changing is far greater. Poor consumer standard ratings could impact an organisation's ability to secure funding, develop new properties and maintain tenant satisfaction. Furthermore, efficient systems and processes can reduce the service cost over time.

The key is to view this investment not as a burden but as an opportunity to create more efficient, effective organisations. When implemented thoughtfully, new technologies and processes can streamline operations, reduce manual workloads and free staff to focus on serving tenants.

Transformational roadmap

The journey from gatekeeper to service leader requires a carefully considered approach. With the RSH's inspection programme now underway, housing providers must move fast to assess their capabilities, not just in terms of technology but of people, processes and culture. This



assessment should inform a clear transformation roadmap that aligns technology investments with organisational goals and specific requirements for consumer standards.

Success requires more than just implementing new systems. It demands a comprehensive approach to change management, ensuring staff are supported and empowered throughout the transformation. It means creating a culture of continuous improvement, where feedback from both tenants and staff drives the ongoing refinement of services.

The introduction of consumer standards isn't just another regulatory hurdle; it represents a fundamental shift in how housing providers must operate. The early inspection results demonstrate that even well-governed organisations can fall short of the required standard for tenant services. Those who embrace this change, by investing in both technology and cultural transformation, will be better positioned to thrive in this new environment.

Trusted partners

Housing providers need trusted technology partners who understand both the technical landscape and the unique challenges of social housing – partners who can help them maximise their existing systems while planning for the future.

Ultimately, those who seize this opportunity by investing in their people's digital skills, embracing cultural change and working with experienced partners, will create organisations that don't simply meet standards but set them.

The future of social housing will be shaped by those who recognise that technology, properly implemented and supported by the right culture and skills, isn't just a tool for compliance but the key to delivering exceptional tenant services.

Mark Holdsworth is the sales director at Civica.

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The reality of open APIs

Chris Shaw, Managing Director, Shaw Consulting

The promise of seamless integration and innovation through open APIs in social housing systems is appealing, but all too often, it's not fully realised.

At Shaw Consulting, we recently faced resistance from a well-known housing IT provider when trying to integrate a scheduling solution. Despite finding the ideal solution, the IT provider refused integration, prioritising its own competing product; this kind of resistance highlights the barriers to truly open integration in our sector.

Following a LinkedIn post on this problem and the subsequent online debate, we ran a series of polls to gauge the sector's sentiment around APIs. The results confirmed what we know; the promise of open APIs isn't being realised.

Poll results – Challenges integrating new solutions

We asked, "Have you faced challenges integrating new solutions into existing housing systems?" 100 per cent of respondents said yes. This underlines the extent of the problem and the urgent need for change.

The promise of open APIs

When housing system providers talk about open APIs, they promise seamless integration and limitless opportunities for innovation. Open APIs are supposed to allow housing providers to tailor their systems to meet specific needs, enabling them to create applications that, say, improve housing management, enhance tenant services or streamline operations.

In theory, open APIs should enable smoother data flows between platforms, break down silos and improve efficiency. They should help housing providers modernise their systems and offer better transparency. However, the reality is often far from this ideal.

The reality – A far cry from open

Many housing system providers claiming to offer open APIs provide only limited access. They allow developers to access basic functions but withhold the key features necessary for full integration. A platform may give access to basic scheduling or communications tools but the real value, such as core system features, is often locked down.

This selective access is problematic. Housing providers are forced to work around these limitations or abandon

the IT provider's system for one that offers full integration. This is exactly what we faced in our project, where the IT provider resisted integrating a better solution in favour of its own product.

Poll results – Open APIs in housing systems

When we asked, "What do you think of open APIs in housing systems?", 40 per cent said they had "some limitations", 40 per cent said they "fell short" and only 20 per cent thought that open APIs "gave them what they needed". This shows that while open APIs hold potential, they often fail to meet expectations.

Why IT providers resist openness

Why do providers resist open APIs? It's all about control. The more open their API is, the more they risk losing control over their platform. By keeping key features exclusive to their system, they lock housing providers into their platform, despite the existence of better alternatives.

For example, an HMS might restrict access to advanced reporting tools or analytics, ensuring that housing providers stay on their platform, even if it's outdated. This creates a barrier for developers who could offer better solutions if the APIs were truly open.

Furthermore, this control extends beyond technology. IT providers may tie customers to long-term contracts, making it difficult to switch to more open systems. This 'lock-in' strategy harms housing providers (and their tenants) because they are ultimately left with inefficient systems.

Poll results – API openness and recommendations

When we asked, "Would you recommend a housing system provider based on the openness of its APIs?", 44 per cent of respondents said "definitely" and 38 per cent said "maybe". However, 13 per cent were "unlikely" and six per cent said "not at all".

These results show that openness in APIs is important but it's not always the deciding factor. Housing providers need practical solutions that meet their needs and, if an IT provider's API doesn't deliver, it can't be fully recommended.

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The impact on innovation

Selective openness directly stifles innovation. Housing providers are limited because they can't access all the features necessary to create the best solutions. And without the freedom to innovate, they end up recycling outdated systems, rather than creating new, efficient ones that could improve tenant services and operations.

Moreover, when IT providers market their APIs as open but limit access, it feels deceptive. This lack of transparency erodes trust and harms their reputation.

Poll results – Open APIs and innovation

When asked, "How well do you think open APIs foster innovation in housing?", 64 per cent said "essential", 21 per cent said "important" and 14 per cent said "somewhat".

These results confirm that most people in our sector believe open APIs are crucial for innovation and improving services. If our sector embraces the true potential of open APIs, it could transform housing systems. But to do so, we must first break down the barriers to collaboration and openness.

Moving towards true openness

For the housing sector to benefit from open APIs, IT providers must move beyond the limited openness that

currently exists and offer full access to their systems' capabilities. This would allow developers to create integrated solutions that work for everyone.

Transparency is also key. If providers need to withhold access to certain features, they should be upfront about it. But ultimately, we need the ability to work with all system functionalities, not just those providers choose to share.

And....

The promise of open APIs is tremendous but to realise that potential, we must overcome the barriers created by providers who are unwilling to embrace true openness. Collaboration, not competition, is the way forward.

It's time for the sector to move towards true openness - where 'open API' means exactly that, and innovation can flourish without unnecessary restrictions.

Chris Shaw is the managing director of Shaw Consulting.

Platform Housing launches digital apprenticeships

Platform Housing Group has just launched its Digital Futures Academy, a paid apprenticeship programme designed to offer people from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to build a career in digital and data technologies.



With a focus on improving customer experiences in social housing, the programme aims to open doors for those who may have struggled with traditional academic pathways, including individuals who are neurodiverse or have faced challenges in the classroom.

The Digital Futures Academy will give apprentices the chance to gain hands-on experience and professional development across a range of disciplines within technology. Apprentices will have the opportunity to explore various career paths, including cybersecurity, data analysis and service-desk support, before selecting one that suits their strengths and ambitions.

Jon Cocker, chief information officer, Platform Housing Group, said, "We are excited to launch the Digital Futures Academy, focusing on developing digital expertise while fostering a customer-centric mindset.

"We want to encourage people from all backgrounds and abilities to apply, including those who may not have flourished within the traditional school environment but who possess the talent, drive and passion to succeed."

Prospective apprentices can find out more by visiting platformhg.com/digital-futures-academy or emailing apprentices.qual@platformhg.com.



Better technology to underpin temporary accommodation

Deborah Matthews, Managing Director for Social Housing, MRI Software

Local authorities are currently facing an ongoing budget crisis, with some spending over £500,000 each week on temporary accommodation. This situation is not only unsustainable but also deeply concerning because it drains valuable resources and fails to provide the lasting solutions that communities desperately need.

The problem is prominently featured in the headlines, with daily reports of families living in substandard conditions and local councils struggling to manage the demand. The consequences include damaged reputations, growing frustration among both council staff and tenants and a sense of helplessness stemming from the chronic shortage of housing. However, addressing the problem of housing shortages can't be done overnight, putting councils in a difficult situation.

Deficits and funding gaps

Social housing policy consultant Neil Morland said, "Bed and breakfast accommodation is the most expensive form of temporary housing for local authorities, with significantly higher costs than local authority or social housing stock. From April 2023 to March 2024, local authorities in England spent a record £2.2 billion on temporary accommodation, doubling from five years ago, and incurred a £1 billion deficit. Furthermore, at the end of March 2024, a record 117,450 households were in temporary accommodation.

"Despite accounting for nearly one-third of temporary accommodation expenditure (£700 million), B&Bs represented only 15 per cent of usage. The income generated from households in B&Bs covered only 40 per cent of their costs, forcing local authorities to absorb the remaining 60 per cent.

"Local authority and social housing stock comprised only four per cent of expenditure but accounted for 24 per cent of usage, resulting in a 30 per cent surplus. This was the only type of temporary accommodation that generated a net-positive expenditure.

"Reducing the number of households occupying temporary accommodation is the best way to reduce temporary accommodation deficit net expenditure. However, with high numbers of households continuing to seek homelessness help from local authorities, bringing

down the levels of temporary accommodation usage are unlikely to happen in the short-term."

Put away the spreadsheets

From a technology provider's perspective, we believe there are opportunities for improvement. Many councils face challenges managing substantial expenses and intricate cases using traditional spreadsheets, leading to errors and overlooked priorities. We see this as an area where enhanced technology solutions could make the process more efficient and support councils in navigating their responsibilities more effectively.

We understand the pressure local authorities are under, with massive waiting lists, nowhere to house people and no budgets remaining to fund alternatives. It's at a crisis point and it's been that way for too long so something needs to change now.

Affordable solutions

As a leading supplier to the sector, MRI Software encourages councils to evaluate their processes and identify any inefficiencies that might be exacerbating the current crisis. Investing in smart, purpose-built and, most importantly, affordable software solutions can be transformative. These tools can help councils manage temporary accommodation more effectively, track cases and ensure that the most vulnerable individuals receive the assistance they need before their situations deteriorate.

We know it's a tough job but we believe there's a way to make it easier. There are technology solutions designed specifically to manage temporary accommodation, helping staff manage caseloads, track and prioritise needs and keep people from falling through the cracks.

As the government greenlights 5,000 brownfield developments, local authorities must act quickly and make their internal processes more efficient. Investing in the right technology could make a big difference, helping councils stretch their budgets further and provide better outcomes for those in need.

Deborah Matthews is the managing director for social housing at MRI Software.



Human-powered transformation

Matthew Hedges, Products Director, TechLabs London

The housing sector is undergoing a profound transformation, driven not only by advances in technology but the dedicated individuals who have committed their careers to it. This evolution isn't just about the software, platforms or systems being implemented, but about the people behind these innovations.

For years, professionals within housing providers didn't see themselves as 'tech' people and instead viewed technology as the means to an end; our primary focus was always on our tenants, leaseholders, and communities. It's always been about delivering essential services to meet critical needs. As technology has evolved to become an indispensable enabler of services, a fascinating shift has occurred. Individuals from housing organisations, who may have been described as 'tech savvy' but never classically trained in IT or coding languages, have taken their sector knowledge and side-stepped into technology roles to drive meaningful change.

From traditional roles to tech innovators

Housing roles have traditionally required a profound understanding of the social and economic challenges faced by their communities. Technology was seen as a tool to support these efforts, rather than a central component of their work, but the rapid advance of technology has changed this perspective.

Digital platforms, data analytics and smart systems are now integral to the efficient management of housing services. This shift has necessitated a new breed of professionals within the sector, in the form of those people who can bridge the gap between traditional housing roles and modern technology solutions.

We've all been there, pointing at those handful of people who end up engaged in every project in the business and are often over-worked and stressed out. Why is that? From what I've seen, it was no coincidence that these people were often the most knowledgeable about the technology solutions in use; they'd taken it upon themselves to learn and adapt.

The most significant aspect of this transformation is how we now empower these 'super-user' housing professionals to become tech-innovators. These individuals bring a unique perspective to technology implementations, grounded in their intimate knowledge of the housing sector. They understand the specific needs and challenges of their businesses and communities, allowing them to tailor solutions that are both effective and empathetic. In the world of Microsoft, it's what we'd call the 'low-code revolution'. They embody curiosity for change while carrying the scars of experience.

Scaling expertise

When working within a single housing provider, my colleagues and I (all with similar housing backgrounds) found our sphere of influence was confined to the walls of that organisation. We championed improvements, refined processes and adopted new technologies to benefit the customers of our organisation. But we're all in housing for similar goals, right? We all have similar aspirations for our communities. Why then were we all doing the same things, differently and not together?

Some have said the answer is unifying our data models and systems, others think organisations and even technology providers should merge to gain the benefits of scale. The truth is the world is more complicated than that. After all, this isn't a race to the lowest common denominator; we may all have common ground but there's a large difference between uniform conformity and housing collaboration with healthy technology competition.

At iProperty Cloud, many of our team started their careers in housing, immersed in its challenges and opportunities. Today, they collaborate with housing providers of all sizes

FireAngel Connected

Remotely monitor interlinked alarms, environmental sensors, compliance updates and access real-time status updates with our Connected cloud-based platform.

Futureproof properties

FireAngel Connected has the adaptability to support social landlords in navigating evolving legislation and tenants needs.

Environmental monitoring

The Home Environment Gateway, with in-built temperature & humidity sensors, helps pinpoint properties at risk of damp & mould.

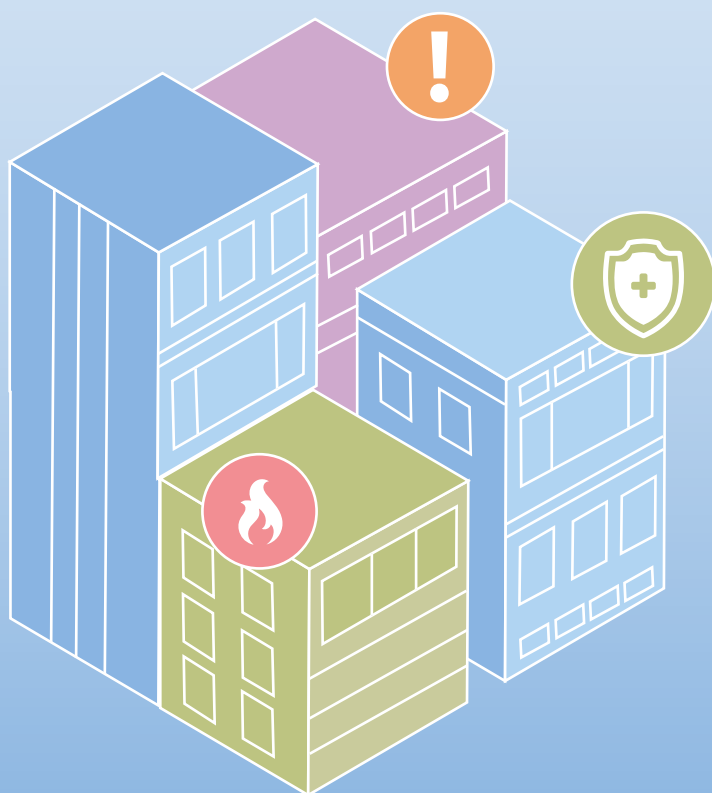
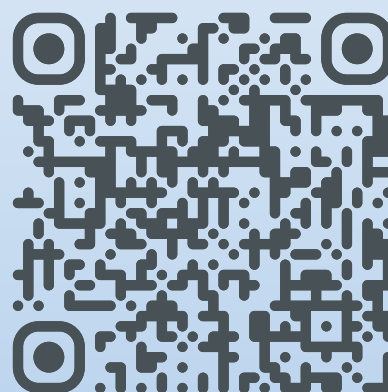
Remote monitoring made simple

The Gateway is easy to install and can be added as the base plate of an SM-SN-1 or HM-SN-1 device, reducing installation cost and time.

Fire, damp & mould risk insight

Predict® uses unrivalled insight to support busy housing teams in protecting residents, properties and communities.

Discover More



Smart solutions for safer homes

FireAngel CONNECTED



across the UK, using their insights to create solutions that solve problems for everyone. The impact of their work extends beyond any single housing provider yet they can scale and flex to the unique needs of each.

The impact of technology acquisitions

When it comes to technology solutions, the landscape is changing. We know we've had our part to play as the first true Microsoft Dynamics 'product' to enter the market and disrupt the traditional solutions we've all become accustomed to. Most recently, the current wave of consolidations, takeovers and acquisitions (however you want to categorise them) among HMS providers such as MRI Software, Civica, Aareon, SDM and NEC add a new dimension to this story. While they may promise scale and efficiency, I fear they sometimes dilute the sector-specific expertise that makes housing technology effective.

Scale doesn't always equate to progress. Large multinational corporations may bring a broader reach but housing's unique challenges require tailored, human-centred solutions.

The human toll

A troubling consequence of these acquisitions is the human toll. Those super-users who once felt they had so much to give to so many more than they could reach moved on to technology businesses to make a larger impact. Now as technology businesses merge, those experienced professionals who understand the intricacies of housing are potentially leaving the sector completely. Imagine waking up one morning and removing a handful of super-users from your own business, for good. What would happen to your existing projects and to your future aspirations? Could you replace them?

At TechLabs, we're a family-run, privately-owned business with a focus on sector success, not just profit. We believe these individuals are truly valuable, sector experts who have dedicated their careers to solving housing challenges. Their potential departure represents a significant loss, not only for their organisations but for the entire sector. When housing expertise is sidelined for a commercial imperative, the sector becomes a passenger and loses its compass.

Without the insights of those who know housing best, even the most sophisticated platforms risk becoming irrelevant to the people they aim to serve.

A call to action for housing professionals

For those housing professionals, those super-users, my peers, colleagues and hopefully one day future co-innovators, these moments in our sector's transformation are both a challenge and an opportunity.

If you're working in housing today for one specific housing provider or for a technology provider and you have a vision for change, consider how your expertise could drive innovation. The technology sector needs people like you who understand the heartbeat of housing; those who can design solutions that are as practical as they are transformative.

Transitioning into housing IT (at least for me) hasn't been about leaving housing behind for profit, it's been about scaling impact. It's been about using knowledge to create systems that empower others, enhance experiences and address sector-wide challenges.

In the end, technology is only as powerful as the people who build, use and improve it. The sector's ability to transform and innovate isn't just about adopting new tools (as much as we love those we've created), it's about empowering the people who know housing best to lead the way.


What I'm saying is that even for us as the people behind iProperty Cloud, built on Microsoft Dynamics365 and the Power Platform, the true power behind the Power Platform and indeed all transformative technology in housing, has always been and will always be, its people. We should never undervalue that.

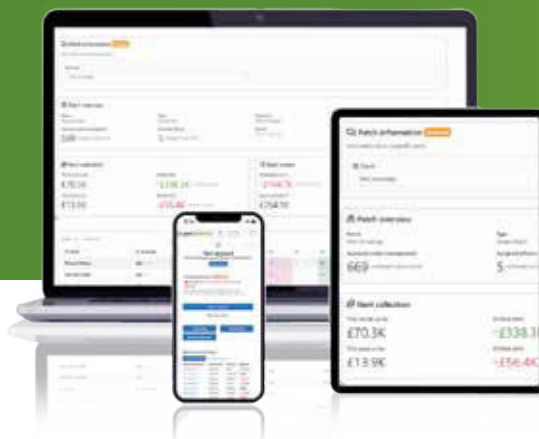
Matthew Hedges is the products director at TechLabs London.



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Do robots dream of process automation?

Craig Stephenson, Digital Participation & Innovation Officer, Link Group

The past few years have seen belts being tightened across social housing which, in some cases, have meant a reduction in services, particularly when a funding stream has come to an end. How do you deliver a service with potentially high social impact with diminished or discontinued funds?

At Link, we wanted to augment our welfare, money and debt advice service with a device loan scheme, in the form of a Chromebook and a 'mi-fi' unit to tenants without access to a large-screen device or connectivity. We could provide the hardware and the National Databank would support their mobile data requirements, but how could something like this be administered with no additional staff resources? Who would keep track of which tenant had which Chromebook? Who would order the SIM cards for the mi-fi units? Who would fill out the loan agreement, and how would we know when the loan was up?

The answer was robotic process automation (RPA).

For those not acquainted with RPA, this is where a trigger (i.e. an email arriving, a file being created, the submission of a form) will activate a number of actions, such as report generation, data entry or transaction processing.

There are lots of RPA products available, with UI Path and Automation Anywhere among the leaders, but because we work in a Microsoft environment, we use Power Automate.

The important thing for us was that there should be no manual administration of the loan scheme. There would need to be a referral, and our housing officer would need to physically deliver the device but **no-one** should be tracking the loan; that should be fully automated.

This is how we achieved that goal.

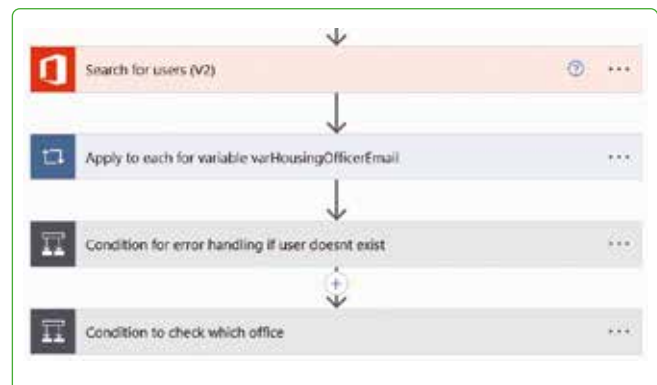
First of all, we created two process maps, one for the loan going out and one for it coming back.

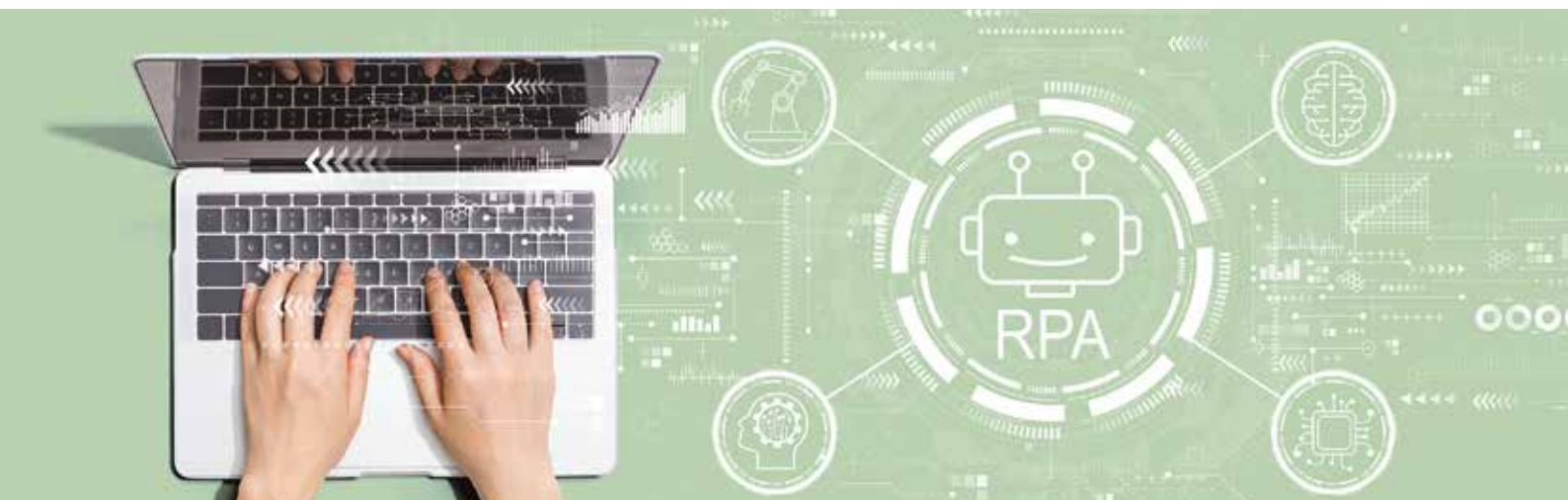
Once we understood what was needed, we could create the necessary structures to allow automation to manage the administration. This would use Microsoft Forms, SharePoint Lists, DocuSign and the in-built approval process within Power Automate.

A SharePoint List was created, allocating an asset number to each device (also replicated as a printed label on each

laptop bag). Each entry in the list was given a 'choice-pill' status (available, in-use or retired), with all starting with the status of 'available'. This list would capture the tenant's name and contact details, the date of referral and the housing officer's name.

Loan being made





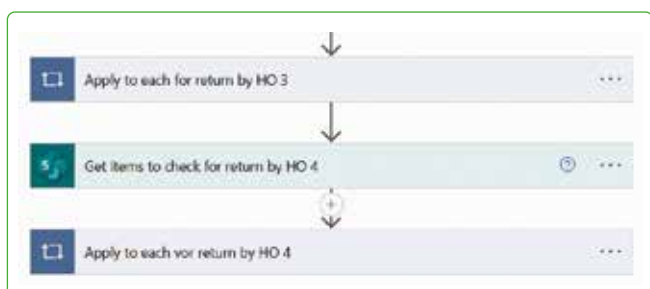
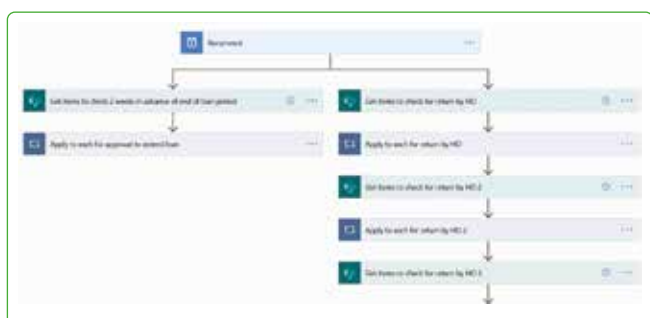
The trigger for the loan going out was the referral, via the submission of a Microsoft Form. Power Automate then checked the SharePoint List for the first asset with an 'available' status. The tenant's details were then inserted into the SharePoint List against that asset number, and the status changed to 'in-use'.

An email was then sent to the housing officer with the asset number of the device going out on loan and the tenant's details. An order was also made by email for a SIM card for the mi-fi unit.

Power Automate generated a Word version of the loan agreement and populated it with the tenant's details and uploaded it to Docusign, which then took over the management of that aspect with the housing officer and tenant both electronically signing the agreement on-screen.

Once these were all in place, the housing officer then delivered that specific loan device to the tenant.

Loan coming back



The trigger for the loan coming back is the date of referral plus six months; a Power Automate Flow runs every morning which reads the referral dates captured in the SharePoint List.

If the six months has been reached, an approval process email is sent to the money and debt advice officer who made the original referral asking if they want the loan to be extended. This email contains a 'yes/no' button; if the 'yes' button is chosen (to extend the device loan), the date in the SharePoint List is amended to the present date (after six months, the automation will be triggered against this again) and a new SIM card with a further six months' data is sent to the tenant's address.

If the loan has come to an end and the 'no' button is pressed, an email is sent to the original housing officer to pick the device back up from the tenant and perform a data cleanse on the Chromebook.

An approval email is also sent to the housing officer asking if they have picked up the loan device. Once this is confirmed, the automation clears the customer's data from the SharePoint List and changes the status against that asset number to 'available' again.

Down with admin

You can see from this that a service where its administration is key to its management can be put in place with no human interaction with any of the administrative duties.

Not only does this make it an attractive prospect for staff (who likes admin?) but it can also make the introduction of a new service, where the time and expertise of staff is better used elsewhere, a realistic prospect.

Craig Stephenson is the digital participation and innovation officer at Link Group.



BDHT signs with Housing Insight for customer engagement & repairs

Katrina Heyworth, Head of Sales, Housing Insight

Bromsgrove-based BDHT has partnered with Housing Insight to offer its customers a cutting-edge self-service app and portal.

Housing Insight is a UK-based software and technology company specialising in solutions for the social housing and local government sectors. Established in 2011, the company provides digital tools designed to enhance operational efficiency and tenant engagement for housing providers.

Housing Insight's resident engagement solution improves communication, keeps residents informed and engaged in community decisions and allows for the easy reporting and tracking of repair requests.

Accessibility & empowerment

To improve accessibility and empower customers to manage their accounts and services more effectively, BDHT opted for the modern digital platform as its new offering for residents.

BDHT provides affordable housing options, advice and services, primarily to people in the Bromsgrove area of the West Midlands. It manages and offers a wide range of homes, including affordable rent, supported housing for individuals with specific needs and shared ownership options.

As part of its partnership with Housing Insight, BDHT will benefit from a suite of tools designed to enhance communication with customers, streamline repairs and maintenance requests and improve overall satisfaction in the community. Importantly, the service will provide an alternative digital and interactive experience for customers, offering another level of support for its busy customer service team.

Seamless integration

The solution will seamlessly connect with BDHT's existing housing management system, offering a single access point for essential services including rent payments, help with arrears, self-triage, repairs management and issue reporting. The tools will also allow BDHT to enlist specialist teams to deal with more complex issues such as damp and mould or domestic abuse.

The app and portal will also allow customers to submit enquiries and access important documents through integration with SharePoint, ensuring streamlined communication and real-time updates.

Moving to 'digital first'

Ashlea Green, head of customer experience, BDHT, said, "We're really excited to be rolling out this new way for customers to get involved and interact with us. Moving to a digital-first option for many customers will be a natural and much-welcomed move, one which will also mean we can free up our customer support teams.

"The system as a whole will help to streamline our operations, from the first point of contact through to feedback, and is an important step so that our customers can self serve."

To learn more about BDHT, please visit bdht.co.uk.
To find out more about Housing Insight and its software solutions for housing providers, please visit housing-insight.co.uk.

Katrina Heyworth is the head of sales at Housing Insight.



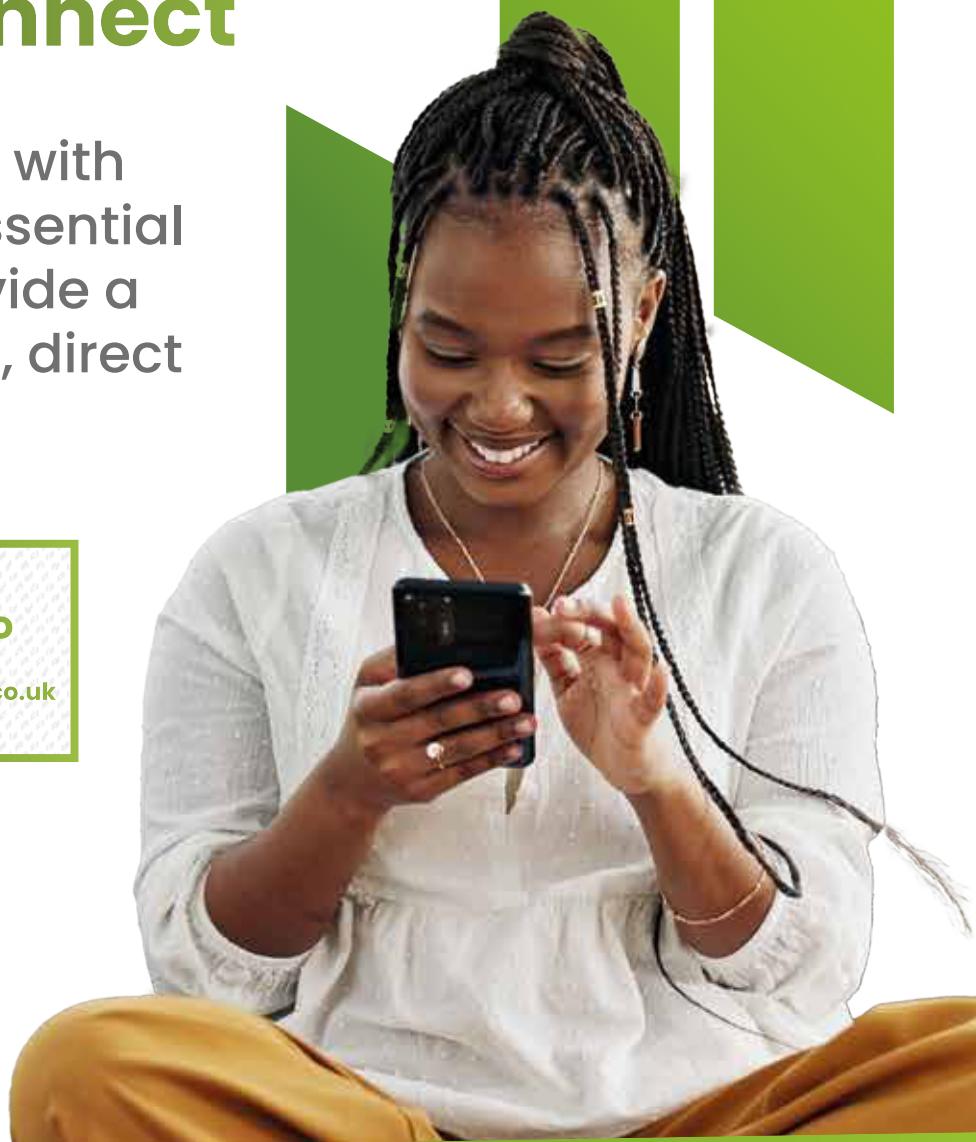
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✉ sales@housing-insight.co.uk



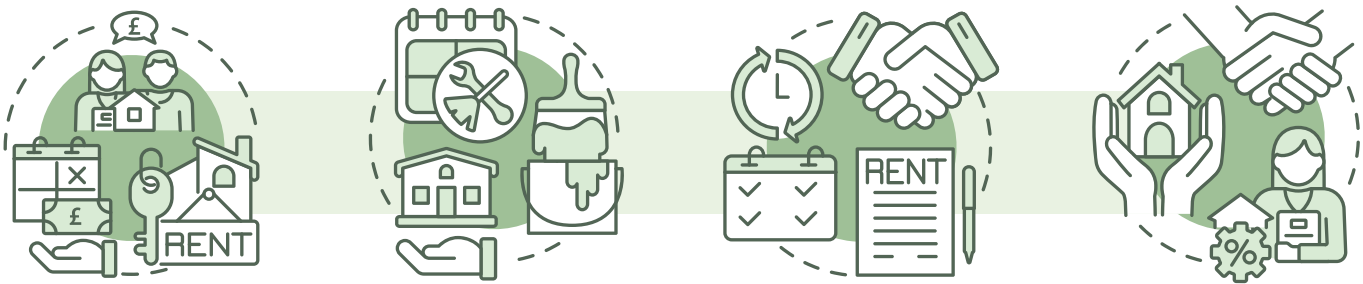
www.housing-insight.co.uk



Sutton Housing – Making residents feel heard

When residents feel heard and understood, social housing standards will quickly improve.

Steve Tucker, Managing Director, Sutton Housing Partnership



In every home, street and neighbourhood, social housing tenants have conversations their landlord may never hear – “I’ve lost my job and worried about paying the rent”, “We have black mould in our bedroom” or “I couldn’t sleep last night because of all the noise”.

These conversations are about so much more than a home’s walls and windows; they lift the lid on the reality of people’s lives, relationships and daily struggles.

Knowing about what’s going on for residents and their homes gives housing providers a deeper understanding of what it’s like to live in the communities they’re building. It also helps strengthen the relationship between tenants and their landlord, which encourages people to reach out for help, particularly when they feel they can’t turn anywhere else.

We’ve changed the way we work at Sutton Housing Partnership to give our tenants more opportunities to speak out and make it easier for our staff to listen and respond to people’s changing needs. This has helped us to deliver a more meaningful service, far beyond the provision of social housing.

Residents can click, call or come in

We manage over 7,500 properties which are home to both tenants and leaseholders with a broad range of needs. We also provide comprehensive housing services to two other social landlords including a for-profit provider, MTD Housing.

We realised that one way to encourage residents to engage was to give them more choice in how they could contact us.

People sometimes want to just report a leaky tap or check their rent account quickly online if they’re rushing to work or to pick up their children from school. Others prefer to speak with someone they know and trust, either over the phone or in person.

We’ve given residents both on- and offline options for engaging with us and they know they can get in touch however they prefer. Interactions have increased ten-fold as a result, and this has helped us to ensure that we have the information we need to better support them.

Human connections

Another step we’ve recently taken to increase engagement with residents is what we call the ‘new deal’; this is all about creating more opportunities for face-to-face contact.

Previously, each of our housing managers had over 900 households to visit, which made it impossible to get round every property with the regularity they wanted. Even when they could visit someone, there was never enough time to stop and have a meaningful chat with them.

This meant a housing manager was unlikely to know if a tenant was struggling financially following a relationship breakdown or that a young person in the

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NEC

household had suddenly become a carer for their elderly relative.

As part of the 'new deal', our housing managers became the go-to person for all housing matters, from managing rental payments to resident engagement and making sure people were receiving all the benefits to which they were entitled. The only thing they don't handle is repairs because this requires specialist skills such as expertise in building surveying.

Crucially, the number of tenancies each housing manager is responsible for has been reduced to around 370, which gives them much more time to be available to residents. Each household is encouraged to contact their housing manager direct if they have any problems or concerns, and any new information that could affect a tenancy is updated to our NEC housing management system.

Joining the dots

The accuracy of information is the heartbeat of a good housing service so we encourage our staff to make keeping it up to date a priority. It means we can join up the latest details on residents and their homes to highlight problems that might not otherwise come to light. We can quickly see if a report of damp and mould comes in from a young family's home, for example, and can then flag the repair as a priority.

The changes we've made also let us view a combination of information from residents' feedback, details of previous contacts and rental payment patterns in one place. This can tell you more about what help people need with their homes or other problems they might be struggling with than you'd ever be able to glean from looking at these pieces of information in isolation.

If a resident reports a noisy neighbour, our staff can quickly check for any related emails or online reports to decide if further action is needed, such as a property visit. Having all the relevant information on screen reassures residents that we're taking action and makes them feel heard. It could also encourage them to share additional details, such as if the noise is due to a late-night party or a crying baby (and therefore requiring different approaches to resolve).

What really matters

With the right mix of technology, people and data, we now have a better grasp of what really matters to our residents and how we can help.

The changes we've made have given us a glimpse into the conversations that shape our residents' lives. They have helped us move beyond managing properties to build real connections with people.

By listening to residents, we're building communities where people feel supported and understood. These are the foundations that encourage people to reach out to ask for help when it is most needed.

For more information on how technology can help you better support residents, please visit necsws.com/housing.

Steve Tucker is the managing director of Sutton Housing Partnership.

Mobysoft's practical guide to data

Mobysoft has published a guide to help housing providers unlock the power of their data.

'Becoming a data-driven organisation – A practical guide for housing providers' explains how housing providers can transform their decision-making processes by replacing intuition with evidence-based insights.

Paul Evans, CEO, Mobysoft, said, "Our guide demystifies the journey to becoming data-driven, making it achievable for housing providers of all sizes. Building a data-driven organisation isn't just about technology, it's also about culture, leadership, and collaboration."

Mobysoft's guide is available now from mobysoft.com/resources/guides/becoming-a-data-driven-organisation.



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Introducing Alix

Bee Small, Co-Founder & CEO, Project Alix

Project Alix is an AI tool that helps people like Rachel. She doesn't consider herself a 'computer person' but I think many of you would recognise Rachel because she's typical of many of the millions of vulnerable adults in the UK.

Rachel has been looking for work since last year, she's struggling with money and feeling really isolated on the estate where she lives. Until she used Alix's platform, she had no idea that there was free support available to her locally, that she could get help preparing a CV and getting ready for interviews or that she could access free food and cost of living resources.

People are trying to help Rachel. The founders of Alix talk to the CEOs of housing providers, local authorities and charities, and they all admit that they can't scale their services to the demand. Not only is it hard to know where to get support if you're Rachel, it's also difficult for those trying to help so many Rachels. What happens? We all know that Rachel falls through the cracks.



It's through these discussions with leaders from housing, local authorities and charities that the founders of Alix have designed a cost-effective, scalable and, to some extent, obvious way of helping Rachel and people like her, with direct help from Aster Group and Peabody Trust.

By combining AI with WhatsApp, Project Alix suddenly brings all this

resource and support to her virtual doorstep. All the good work that is already being done by housing providers, local authorities and charities is now within Rachel's grasp in a way that it wasn't before.

If Rachel isn't confident speaking English, no problem; Alix delivers services in her language, making use of open-source AI models. If Rachel needs to advocate for herself with bill providers, she can access bite-sized videos



Project Alix's co-founders: Bee Small (l) & Charisma Mehta

created by AI that help her do that and quizzes to help reinforce her learning and confidence.

Rachel's whole experience of Project Alix isn't scary; it feels friendly, thanks to the conversational, LLM-powered interface. It's on WhatsApp so there's no barrier to entry and it doesn't stoke some people's fear of technology.

After so many difficult years for people across society, forward-thinking organisations need to think differently about innovating around support. This inevitably means opening up scalable digital services, which maintain a user's privacy and can fit around busy work and family schedules. Thinking innovatively about support and engagement also makes good business sense because housing providers need to protect their incomes while also providing opportunities to align more closely to regulatory guidance.

Bee Small is the CEO and co-founder of Project Alix.



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Data integration & residents' voices



Gary Haynes, Managing Director, Voicescape

The social housing sector is almost unique in the way organisations share learning and expertise, supporting each other to evolve and improve. This year, a key theme of Voicescape's annual customer conference was the growing opportunity to unify data and allow it to flow across systems and departments, creating more consistent, customer-centric services.

Moving beyond fragmented services

It's no secret that while housing providers have always tried to listen to and act on the voices of their residents, they have often struggled to gain a truly holistic view.

Fragmented interactions across multiple teams and systems have historically resulted in customers providing information to one department that never reaches another, even when both departments interact with the same individual.

The outcome can be frustrated customers who are forced to give the same information multiple times and needlessly-duplicated workloads for housing staff. Most importantly, this lack of a unified customer perspective has hindered the development of more proactive and linked-up services that can support tenants based on their current and future needs, preventing problems before they arise.

This situation isn't due to a lack of foresight or concern; until recently, integrating the specialised technology stacks of housing providers' different business units, each tailored to meet their own requirements, has been an incredibly difficult job.

Aiming for a singular view

Technological advances are now making it increasingly possible to link and unite datasets across departments and functions, benefiting both housing providers and tenants. The significant opportunities this can present was a consistent theme across our recent conference.

One of our speakers, Matt Baird from the Social Housing Round Table, highlighted how these new innovations, somewhat ironically, are encouraging housing providers to return to basics and focus on getting the fundamentals right for customers.

For the first time, as it becomes possible to log more interactions in one place and join up data, housing providers can get a broader customer picture and transform raw information into actionable insights on customers as a whole, rather than a series of isolated interactions, to drive better results.

Importantly, this doesn't necessarily demand huge investment in an enterprise 'super system' to integrate everything because there's value in more agile and cost-effective approaches that can tackle the unique challenges facing housing providers in very bespoke ways.

Thirteen Group's housing services manager, Caroline Harraway, echoed this sentiment. She discussed her organisation's mission to efficiently achieve a single view of the customer – delivering a consistent, connected service wherever and however individuals choose to engage.

At the moment, Thirteen's multiple systems look and feel different and can cause confusion and inefficiency. Customer service teams might only see isolated snippets of a resident's information without a full picture, while customers attempting to self-serve can become frustrated as they are moved from one platform to another.

To address this, Thirteen is taking strides towards a single platform, bringing all information into one place. The goal



is to help its staff resolve problems more efficiently and enable customers to more effectively self-serve.

Automation plays a key role here, with Thirteen embedding AI and automation technologies, such as Voicescape's Caseload Manager, to proactively identify problems and free up resources so staff can spend more time with the customers who need it most.

The importance of co-creation

At Yorkshire Housing, the entire organisation is rethinking its approach, as its head of customer service delivery, Angela Havens, explained. Recognising that customers are struggling amid a cost-of-living crisis, Yorkshire Housing is using data to reshape its services to help tenants regain stability.

Previously, areas such as rent collection and arrears management were reactive and reliant on manual interventions, which added little real value and took time away from the customers who truly needed help. To address this, Yorkshire Housing worked with Voicescape to implement a more collaborative and proactive system that gains the right information at the right time to deliver better outcomes.

By introducing Voicescape Collections and Caseload Manager, Yorkshire Housing can capture, share and flag useful information in a way that previously wasn't possible, enabling better preventative and pre-emptive interactions.

Customer-obsessed services

This leads to more targeted working methods and streamlined processes for customers. For example, as a result of employing this approach in income analytics and

collections, Yorkshire Housing has maintained a strong position of two per cent arrears despite a challenging economic environment.

Yorkshire Housing's Angela Havens emphasised the importance of engaging customers in shaping services through co-creation. She also clarified that introducing automated systems isn't about reducing staff numbers; instead, it enables housing providers to free up time to deliver 'customer-obsessed services' and proactively resolve tenants' problems.

The power of residents' voices

We closed our conference by discussing Voicescape's own focus on closing the loop on data collection and consolidating all information in one place for our customers. In particular, we shared our mission to integrate data across our suite of products, from income analytics and collections to compliance and engagement, in order to fully harness the power of residents' voices.

While the social housing sector hasn't yet achieved a true 'single view of the customer,' many housing providers are progressing towards more consistent, efficient and proactive approaches to customer services and problem resolution via greater data integration.

It's an exciting prospect, with automated engagement, data collection and analytics platforms playing a crucial role in making this vision a reality.

Gary Haynes is the managing director of Voicescape.



Unleashing the potential of AI

Kateryna Stetsiuk, Head of AI Practice and Rob Lawrence, Chief Revenue Officer, The Dot Collective

AI will be a gamechanger for social housing. And those associations that balance today's needs with long-term goals will reap the benefits now and far into the future. The Dot Collective's Rob Lawrence and Kate Stetsiuk look at how AI, together with the company's signature 'steel thread' approach, can enable housing providers to deliver even better homes and communities.

We've all seen stories of how AI will transform our lives. But what exactly might it mean for a housing provider's day-to-day operations? Let's take a quick peek into the not-so-distant future for Alex, a maintenance engineer...

Alex reviews the daily schedule app. There's a new alert; a dripping pipe in one of the houses. Only this time, the resident hasn't even noticed that there's a problem, let alone reported it. IoT sensors have detected the problem, alerting Alex to deal with the drip before it becomes a major leak. As the car navigated the city, Alex reflected how repairs were a thing of the past. Thanks to the vibration data collected by boiler sensors and instantly analysed by AI algorithms, everything was now about pre-emptive maintenance, ensuring worn items were replaced before they could even break.

As Alex heads back to the office, his tablet displayed a congratulatory message, "Today marks our 1,000th day without a damp or mould problem being reported by a resident." Alex smiled, proud of his team and the network of IoT devices that had made such a milestone possible.

Alex thought about how they'd diverted the money saved from property maintenance over the past seven years to insulation upgrades. With Christmas just around the corner, it was heartwarming to know that people in their community would be warm and comfortable this winter.

Improving services & tenant experiences

This story is much closer to reality than you think and it only scratches the surface of what data and AI could mean for housing providers. You may already be using AI tools to support basic tasks, such as drafting documents or automating data entry. But unlocking AI's potential is where the truly transformative opportunities lie.

Here are just a few of the ways AI could benefit every resident by enabling you to streamline your operations and improve service quality:

- **Optimising workforce capacity** – AI can analyse workforce data to predict peak times for repairs and match engineers' skills to jobs to allocate resources better.
Practitioner's tip – Machine-learning models, such as XGBoost and neural networks, can forecast workload fluctuations and optimisation algorithms can then allocate resources effectively.
- **Digitalising paperwork** – This can transform paper-based records such as manuals and warranties into digital assets. Large language models (LLMs) can retrieve relevant information from thousands of files in seconds. Digitalised documents can support automated compliance checks, inventory tracking and asset lifecycle management.
Practitioner's tip – Use OCR for digitisation and LLMs and retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) algorithms for extracting relevant information.
- **Predictive maintenance** – By using IoT sensors and maintenance logs, AI enables proactive maintenance of housing providers' assets and helps to extend their lifespan by detecting malfunctioning equipment and predicting when it's likely to fail.

Practitioner's tip – Classical machine-learning algorithms or custom neural networks can analyse sensor data to detect patterns that indicate wear or malfunction. Your technology stack could include time-series modelling frameworks, such as ARIMA, for failure prediction, and integration with IoT platforms, such as AWS IoT or Azure IoT Hub, to manage real-time sensor data.

- **Tenant support and engagement** – Conversational chatbots can provide 24/7 support for residents by answering common questions, processing maintenance requests and escalating complex problems. AI algorithms can help improve residents' satisfaction by analysing feedback on community platforms and suggesting solutions to any problems.

Practitioner's tip – Look into pre-trained LLMs, such as GPT, BERT or T5, for dialogue generation and understanding, with the option to leverage third-party APIs, such as OpenAI's ChatGPT, for scalable, ready-to-use conversational solutions.

- **Safeguarding tenants** – Applying AI to IoT sensor data will be a gamechanger when it comes to the safeguarding and wellbeing of tenants. AI models can spot unusual patterns that could indicate a health problem (e.g. the front door wasn't opened for 48 hours) and quickly alert a support worker.

Practitioner's tip – Machine-learning models that analyse daily behavioural patterns can provide sophisticated and personalised monitoring.

- **Energy management** – By collecting real-time data from sensor and smart meters, machine-learning tools can analyse energy consumption in homes and forecast usage trends. Housing providers could then use the data to provide personalised energy-saving recommendations to residents and apply targeted solutions where anomalies are detected.

Practitioner's tip – Machine-learning models, such as LSTMs, can identify consumption patterns and forecast usage trends, enabling personalised recommendations. Integration with IoT platforms, such as AWS IoT or Google Cloud IoT Core, allows real-time data collection and analysis.

Harnessing AI's potential with a 'steel thread' approach

Unlocking all this potential is difficult. You need to find, retain and pay skilled professionals in a competitive market. Your existing systems might be outdated and unable to handle the large volumes of data needed to support advanced analytics. And you might need to integrate data from a variety of systems and formats, leaving you open to security and GDPR breaches.

At The Dot Collective, we use a 'steel thread' approach to address these challenges. We focus on delivering a working version of a system that makes sure each critical component works together cohesively. This provides a solid foundation that you can scale or enhance as your use of data and AI matures and grows.

Delivering results now and for the future

The first step is to identify critical and impactful areas where AI could be applied now, pinpointing what will deliver immediate tangible value. This often means targeting legacy systems that were never designed for modern data needs.

The first steel thread gives you a foundational infrastructure set-up you can then expand to handle additional data sources and use-cases. You can also use it to showcase the value you've unlocked and win support for investment in modern, cloud-native technologies that provide a flexible infrastructure that can grow with your organisation. And as your project gathers momentum, it will help drive a data-driven culture, helping to retain skilled staff and overcome resistance to change.

What's certain is that housing providers that get their data foundations right today will be best positioned to deploy AI long into their futures, delivering operational efficiencies that significantly improve the day-to-day experiences of the thousands of residents in their communities.

The Dot Collective is a new-generation consultancy of data and cloud practitioners who create the springboards for momentous organisational leaps. We specialise in building bespoke, cloud-native, future-proofed data platforms that help you to make the most of the latest advances in modern technologies.

Contact me at rob.lawrence@thedotcollective.co.uk for a chat about how your organisations can make the most of data and AI, wherever you are on your journey.

Rob Lawrence is the chief revenue officer, and Kateryna Stetsiuk is the head of the AI practice at The Dot Collective.





You can't manage what you don't measure

The role of sensors in transforming indoor air quality

Simon Jones, Founder, Air Quality Matters

Indoor air quality (IAQ) is no longer a topic confined to academic research or niche discussions among engineers. It's rapidly becoming a mainstream concern for housing providers and tenants alike. Increasingly, the conversation is being driven by the proliferation of affordable, reliable sensors and data-driven solutions. But how does sensor technology improve outcomes? And why is it now seen as best practice across the sector?

The power of measurement – why IAQ matters

The age-old adage of 'you can't manage what you don't measure' rings true when it comes to IAQ. For decades, addressing problems such as damp, mould, radon and other pollutants has relied on reactive strategies – fixing problems once they became visible or caused harm. Today, affordable sensor technologies offer a proactive alternative; continuous monitoring that can detect problems before they escalate.

Consider mould, a recurring challenge in the UK's housing stock. As discussed with experts on my 'Air Quality Matters' podcast, mould only becomes harmful when conditions such as humidity and temperature reach certain thresholds. Sensors can alert housing providers or tenants to subtle shifts in these variables, enabling timely interventions. This approach is vastly more efficient than waiting for visual signs of damage.

Historically, IAQ monitoring relied on spot checks but these often missed critical fluctuations in pollutant levels. Today, affordable sensors provide continuous monitoring, capturing a more accurate and dynamic picture of indoor environments. This data enables housing professionals to make informed decisions, reducing both operational costs and risks to occupants' health.

A practical tool

As Stanton Wong, a pioneer in sensor standardisation, shared during a podcast episode, the evolution of low-

cost sensors has brought reliable air quality monitoring to the mainstream. Wong said, "It's no longer the domain of academia, but a practical tool for building managers and housing providers to ensure healthier living spaces."

Real-time data isn't just about identifying problems, it's also about improving outcomes. For example, excessive levels of carbon dioxide in housing indicate poor ventilation, compromising comfort, energy efficiency and, most critically, health.

Using integrated systems such as Aico's HomeLink platform, housing providers can visualise data trends across entire portfolios. These insights enable maintenance teams to prioritise high-risk properties while also ensuring compliance with evolving standards around IAQ. It's a win-win; better living conditions for tenants and more streamlined operations for housing providers.

A holistic approach to IAQ

While carbon dioxide, temperature and humidity are essential metrics, the future of IAQ monitoring will include a broader range of pollutants, from radon to particulates such as PM2.5. Radon, for instance, remains a silent but deadly presence in certain regions; emerging sensor technologies are making it feasible to include radon monitoring as part of routine IAQ assessments.

Looking ahead, the integration of IAQ sensors into smart-home ecosystems will drive the next wave of innovation. Imagine a home where sensors not only monitor IAQ

but also trigger automated responses, such as adjusting ventilation rates, alerting occupants or even ordering replacement filters for systems.

Predictive analytics

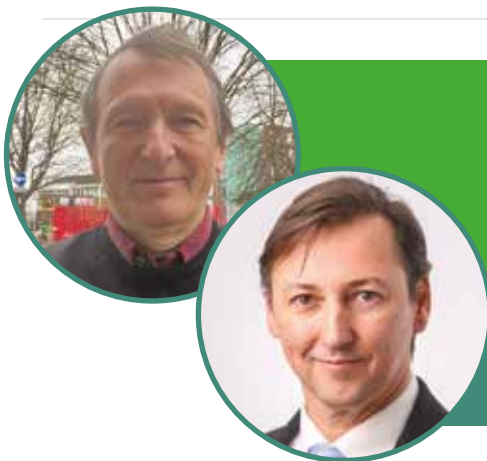
But the real game-changer will be predictive analytics. By leveraging historical data and machine learning, IAQ systems will soon anticipate problems before they arise. This shift from reactive to predictive management can transform housing standards, making healthier homes the norm rather than the exception.

For housing providers, embracing IAQ monitoring isn't just about compliance or reputation, it's about delivering tangible value to their tenants. At its core, this technology is a tool for empowerment. It equips us to address pressing health challenges, reduce energy consumption and create homes where people can thrive.

As an example, organisations such as Aico are leading the charge, demonstrating how the thoughtful integration of sensors and data platforms can drive meaningful change. The message is clear: you can't manage what you don't measure, and with today's technologies, there's no excuse not to measure.

IAQ monitoring will continue to evolve, incorporating new pollutants, improving accuracy and integrating seamlessly with other building systems. The question is not whether we can afford to adopt this technology, but whether we can afford not to.

Simon Jones is the founder of Air Quality Matters.



Community-first housing with J49

Simon Thomas, CEO, J49 and David Graydon, CEO & Founder, Spaciable

J49 is a social housing provider with large ambitions. While responding to the need for affordable housing in London, it's striving to create an environment of what it calls 'creative community living'. Spaciable's CEO and founder, David Graydon, visited J49's Deptford Hub scheme, where Spaciable Living has been rolled out to tenants.



Simon Thomas, CEO, J49, said, "Creative living' isn't J49's creativity, it's the creativity of individuals. This is about re-empowering people's lives – that's what social housing should be. Generally, social housing in this country is about people getting more disempowered. We're trying to switch it around and re-empower their lives.

"J49's creation stems from a desire to transform the spaces that people find themselves in, such as really pressurised situations and accommodations. Back in the 1990s, we did some work that involved people building their own houses out of disempowered situations."

On the back of this experience, J49 aims to empower its residents with long-term tenancies in well-built and affordable homes. As part of its plan to help its residents, J49 is currently implementing the Spaciable Living app at its Deptford Hub development in Lewisham.

Community building

Discussions with J49's tenants revealed a historic lack of trust within the community, the importance of security and the need to ensure a safe environment for residents.



Thomas said, "One of the things that we're trying to do at J49 is to build a sense of community, which is why the Spaciable app is so important.

"Community in the urban space is absolutely vital if we want to change the way that people think about the spaces they live in and even the kind of jobs they can do. That's why community is part of our plan; we use the app to get people on board and to create a community of communication rather than a community of suspicion."

An essential element of community-building in the urban environment is reducing the sense of suspicion among neighbours.

Thomas said, "That's a common aspect of people's backgrounds here. They're suspicious about their neighbours, typically resulting from their previous experiences. We need to remove those barriers and reintegrate these tenants into the community again."

Digitisation & building trust

Before residents meet each other at the Deptford Hub development, they are already using Spaciable Living to digitally interact and get to know one another, using our app's chat and neighbourhood updates features.

Thomas said, "One of the things that is really interesting is that a couple of residents have already said, 'I have my own app and this feels like the most empowered thing in my life.' Getting them from that place of disempowerment to then communicating with the outside community will revolutionise many of the things they're doing."

It's an interesting perspective, and one that many of us overlook or take for granted. Technology, especially social media, is sometimes criticised for its divisive qualities so it's refreshing to hear how inclusive and welcoming it can be. The personalisation of our app takes this a step

further because it demonstrates each tenant's value to the community.

Preventing isolation

Thomas said, "Our number-one vision is community rather than isolation. The city is all about isolation, separation and a disconnection from our ability to run our own lives, so we'd like to see a 'social transformation' at our Deptford Hub development.

"One of the greatest things about the UK is that it's a completely multicultural society. That should be the most fantastic thing but what it's caused over the last 15-20 years is a disconnection. J49 therefore wants to create a different culture, reintegrating the community aspect to city life."

An environment of purposeful living

When joining J49, new residents are asked, "What do you think you could add to this community?"

Thomas said, "This is a shocking question for many people. If you've been disempowered for so long, you don't think in that way so that question leads to a kind of deep searching.

"Residents mentioned things such as art, music and food, so we then asked them how those things could work in the community and what they would need to bring those into community life.

"Going back to the digital vs. human, this is where we need to interact with that kind of information and get people thinking. They can find groups in the Spaciable app, make connections and start chats. It must be part of the future."

Simon Thomas is the CEO of J49, and David Graydon is the CEO and founder of Spaciable.



Tackling the payment challenge

Rob Fleetwood, Public Sector Payment Specialist, Access PaySuite, part of The Access Group

With the value of rent arrears owed to local authorities alone skyrocketing by more than 70 per cent over the past five years, the housing sector is facing a critical crossroad. For many tenants, the cost of living crisis has compounded the strain on their finances, leading to difficulties in meeting their rent obligations. At the same time, local authorities and housing providers are facing rising costs and must balance operational and service delivery with rising arrears.

This leaves the sector grappling with a conundrum – how do you tackle the growing problem of rental arrears while optimising income collection?

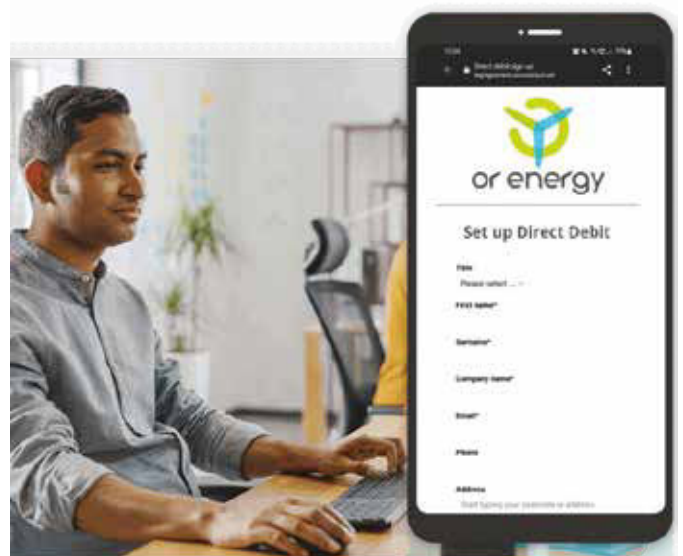
The arrears landscape

Drawing on data obtained through Freedom of Information requests, the findings from Access PaySuite's Rental Arrears Index are stark. On average, local authorities providing social housing are each owed £3.1 million in arrears, an increase from £1.8 million in 2019.

This represents a 71 per cent increase in just five years, with a 14 per cent rise occurring in the past year alone. These figures highlight the urgent need for innovative solutions that simplify rent collection, support tenants and ensure financial sustainability for housing providers.

Local authorities have seen not only an increase in the value of arrears but also a surge in the number of tenants behind with their rent. Over the past five years, the number of tenants in arrears has risen by 17 per cent, with 41 per cent of social housing units now affected.

Furthermore, the average arrears per tenant have risen from £492 in 2019 to £710 in 2024, a 44 per cent increase. These trends emphasise the need for proactive measures that can both ease tenants' burdens and streamline rent collection.



Leveraging technology for better outcomes

Smart mobile payment technologies offer a 'customer first' approach to rent collection. By providing tenants with flexible, accessible and secure payment options, these solutions empower tenants to stay on top of and manage their payments more easily while reducing the administrative workload for housing providers.

Features such as automated reminders, real-time account updates and seamless integration with housing management systems streamline the payment experience, making it more straightforward and less intimidating for tenants.

For local authorities and housing providers, the advantages of adopting such technologies extend beyond reducing arrears. Automation can alleviate the strain on staff, enabling them to dedicate more time to tenants' more complex needs, while advanced security features such as tokenised payments enhance data protection and ensure compliance, offering peace of mind in an increasingly digital landscape.

Embracing digital transformation

With a strong focus on tenant satisfaction and operational efficiency, Karbon Homes has embraced digital

transformation to tackle the challenges posed by rising arrears and an increasingly diverse tenant base.

Over the past 18 months, the housing provider has successfully implemented Access PaySuite's innovative payment solutions, delivering impressive results that highlight the transformative power of technology on rent collections and improving outcomes for tenants.

Secure, accessible & user-friendly payment systems

Recognising the need for secure, accessible and user-friendly payment systems, Karbon Homes introduced a range of our digital solutions, tailored to the needs of its tenants. Among these are Call Secure+, Touch Tone IVR, Pay-by-Link and Open Banking, each designed to overcome specific payment barriers, offering tenants flexible and convenient ways to manage their rent.

For example, Call Secure+ allows tenants to safely share their card details securely during a call without disclosing sensitive information to agents, ensuring a secure and seamless transaction.

Touch Tone IVR has proven particularly effective in enhancing accessibility by providing an automated, 24/7 payment solution, allowing tenants to make payments at any time without needing to interact with an agent, significantly reducing their reliance on contact centres. In parallel, the introduction of Open Banking has provided an alternative payment method that allows tenants to make payments direct from their bank accounts. This not only eliminates card fees but also provides a faster and more cost-effective payment process which is particularly helpful for tenants who prefer to make a payment at a time and a place that's convenient to them.

Noticeable impact

The impact of these innovations has been profound. Over the past year, Karbon Homes has reduced its arrears by over £200,000, a remarkable achievement that highlights the effectiveness of its technology-driven approach.

Additionally, the adoption of these tools has led to a 75 per cent increase in monthly self-service payments, more streamlined rent collections and a much-reduced the volume of calls to Karbon Homes' contact centre (approx. 900 fewer calls/month).

Tenant satisfaction has been boosted as well. In October 2024, 82 per cent of Karbon Homes' tenants reported being satisfied with the service they receive, a testament to the organisation's commitment to delivering a superior customer experience.

A key driver of this success is real-time payment integration, ensuring that payments are instantly reflected on tenants' rent accounts. This level of transparency and efficiency

has helped to build trust and confidence among tenants, further strengthening their relationship with Karbon Homes.

A forward-thinking approach

Karbon Homes' forward-thinking approach has positioned it as a leader in digital transformation within social housing. By embracing advanced payment solutions, it has addressed the challenges of rental arrears while supporting its long-term growth and development.

The modular design of these technologies ensures scalability, allowing Karbon Homes to seamlessly onboard new tenants as its housing portfolio expands. This adaptability ensures that all tenants, whether new or existing, benefit from the same high standards of service.

Success stories such as these show that with the right tools and a commitment to digital transformation, housing providers can tackle even the most complex challenges with confidence and success, such as addressing arrears and improving tenant outcomes.

The future of payments

Tackling the long-term challenge of arrears isn't easy but the solution lies in embracing approaches that prioritise accessibility, financial inclusion and ease of use. By offering a range of payment options, whether online, by phone or in-person, housing providers can meet tenants where they are and ensure that these methods are both cost-effective and secure.

By investing in smart technology, housing providers can not only reduce their arrears but also foster stronger and more trusting relationships with their tenants. While the housing sector faces immense pressure, the right methods and strategies can help turn the tide on rental arrears and pave the way for greater financial stability.

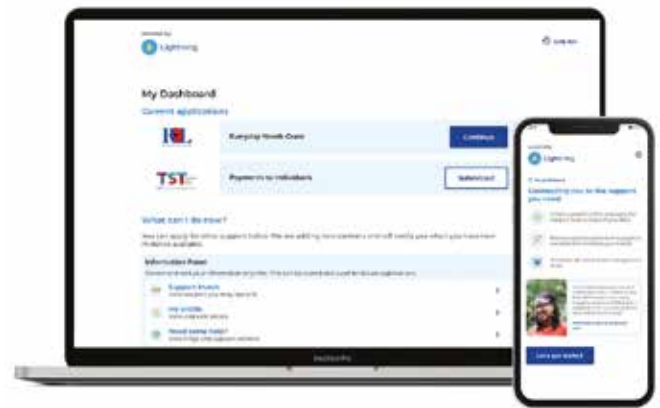
Leveraging innovative payment technologies can empower housing providers to enhance tenant satisfaction and focus on their core mission: delivering high-quality, affordable housing.

Rob Fleetwood is a public-sector payment specialist at Access PaySuite, part of the Access Group.



Plus Dane tenants save with Lightning Reach

Plus Dane Housing has signed up with financial support service Lightning Reach to help its tenants reduce their bills.



Lightning Reach's online portal is intended to make it easy for people to find and apply for a wide range of personalised support, including grants, benefits and help with bills.

Plus Dane's tenants only need to complete a simple online questionnaire to see a range of support they could be eligible for and then apply for multiple sources of financial support directly through Lightning Reach's portal.

The housing provider is promoting the service to all of its customers, particularly those in need of financial support to help pay for unaffordable or unexpected costs, such as food or utility bills, disability adaptations, replacement furniture or white goods.

Lightning Reach matches users to over 2,500 schemes from charities, support organisations and councils across the UK. It has enabled over £13 million in financial support for its users, with successful applicants saving an average of £1,000.

Emma Sneyd, head of social impact, Plus Dane, said, "We're excited to be working with Lightning Reach to help our tenants save money and as we head into winter, we want to offer the most useful support possible."

Voicescape's triple council win for income collection

Voicescape's Collections system has been chosen by Rugby Borough Council, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council to improve their respective income collection processes.



By using automations, behavioural insights and data-science tools from Voicescape Collections, the three councils want to improve their processes for collecting council tax, with an emphasis

on identifying the right people to contact at the best time and automating many of the time-intensive activities required to reach customers.

Richard Moore, revenues manager, Rugby Borough

Council, said, "One of the biggest challenges for collections teams is finding innovative approaches to managing arrears that strengthen relationships and foster long-term financial stability.

"Our aim is to empower residents to self-serve at the 'early intervention' stage, and our collaboration with Voicescape will help us to support and manage their council tax arrears and mitigate our financial risk."



Redefining property management

The game-changing HomeLink case management system

Demi Evans, Marketing Executive, Aico

The housing sector stands at a transformative juncture. As housing providers navigate increasing regulatory pressures, sustainability goals and rising tenant expectations, the need for innovative, comprehensive solutions has never been greater. Recognising this, Aico, Europe's leader in home-life safety, is introducing the HomeLink Case Management (HCM) system, a revolutionary platform poised to set new standards for managing properties in a safer, smarter and more sustainable way.



HCM isn't just another property management tool; it's an advanced system that empowers housing providers to tackle today's toughest housing challenges head-on by integrating data-driven insights, robust case management capabilities and seamless communication features.

Housing's growing challenges

Housing providers today face a perfect storm of challenges. Stricter safety regulations demand higher compliance standards, while growing awareness of

climate change puts decarbonisation at the forefront of housing priorities. At the same time, tenants expect better living conditions, with increased focus on health, comfort and sustainability.

Key among these challenges is the need to address damp, mould and other problems that compromise residents' well-being. These problems are not only expensive but also affect housing providers' reputations and their relationships with their tenants. Compounding these problems is the difficulty of ensuring compliance across large property portfolios. Complex case management processes, lack of tenant engagement and inconsistent record-keeping create further obstacles.

HCM is a direct response to these problems. Developed with direct input from housing providers, HCM is designed to make property management smarter, more proactive and more tenant-centric.

What makes HCM unique?

At its core, HCM is a platform built to simplify and enhance property management. It provides housing providers with the tools needed to identify problems early, streamline workflows and maintain compliance, all while fostering better communication with tenants.

Here's how HCM's core features set it apart:

- **Proactive issue identification:** HCM uses advanced data insights and tenant feedback to detect problems such as damp or mould before they escalate. By analysing trends across a portfolio, housing providers



can identify high-risk properties and prioritise their interventions accordingly. This proactive approach not only saves time and money but also protects tenants' health and safety.

- **Portfolio-wide case management:** Managing large portfolios is no longer a daunting task. HCM allows housing providers to create, assign and track cases seamlessly. It works without requiring pre-installed hardware, making it accessible for all properties. However, for those who choose to install HomeLink's smart devices, HCM provides even deeper insights into property conditions.
- **Powerful data visualisation:** Data is at the heart of effective property management, and HCM brings it to life with innovative visualisations. Housing providers can compare property conditions against portfolio averages or national benchmarks, assess the impact of interventions such as insulation upgrades, and monitor improvements over time. These insights support informed decision-making and long-term planning.
- **Comprehensive record-keeping:** Compliance is a significant burden but HCM eases it with meticulous record-keeping. Every action, from maintenance updates to tenant communications, is logged, creating a complete audit trail. This transparency not only ensures regulatory compliance but also builds trust with stakeholders.
- **Enhanced tenant communication:** Effective communication is the foundation of good landlord-tenant relationships. Through the HomeLink Resident App, housing providers can directly engage with

tenants, request updates and share progress. Tenants can provide real-time feedback, submit photos of problems and stay informed, fostering a stronger sense of partnership and trust.

The bigger picture

The launch of HCM is timely. Housing providers are under immense pressure to adapt to changing regulations, rising costs and heightened tenant expectations.

Here's why HCM is a critical tool for housing providers today:

- **Evolving regulatory landscape:** Stricter safety and environmental standards are raising the bar for compliance. From addressing damp and mould to ensuring fire and CO safety, housing providers are expected to meet rigorous benchmarks. HCM simplifies these processes by providing a centralised platform for tracking, managing and documenting compliance efforts.
- **Sustainability goals:** Climate change has put decarbonisation on every housing provider's agenda. While HCM's initial focus is on safety and compliance, future updates will include tools to monitor and manage energy efficiency upgrades. By supporting green initiatives, HCM helps housing providers align with broader sustainability goals and reduce long-term costs.
- **Rising tenant expectations:** Tenants today demand more than just a roof over their heads. They want homes that are safe, comfortable and well-maintained. HCM's tenant-engagement features enhance transparency and responsiveness, improving tenant satisfaction and retention.

- **Financial efficiency:** Managing property problems reactively can be expensive. HCM's proactive approach minimises repair costs by addressing problems early. Its data-driven insights also help housing providers allocate resources more effectively, ensuring that investments deliver the greatest impact.

Seamless integration

HCM isn't an isolated tool; it's part of our broader HomeLink platform. Existing HomeLink users can access HCM as an integrated extension of their current portal, making it easy to adopt without disrupting workflows. For new users, the platform offers a unified solution for compliance, communication and portfolio management.

This seamless integration reflects Aico's commitment to creating user-friendly solutions which meet housing providers' real-world needs. By combining HCM with HomeLink's smart property management tools, housing providers gain a comprehensive system that simplifies their responsibilities while delivering measurable results.

A transformative impact on housing

The potential impact of HCM extends far beyond individual housing providers. By enabling smarter, more proactive property management, HCM contributes to broader societal goals:

- **Healthier living environments:** Early interventions for problems such as damp and mould ensure safer, more comfortable homes for tenants.
- **Increased trust:** Transparent record-keeping and open communication foster better relationships between housing providers and their tenants.
- **Sustainability leadership:** By supporting decarbonisation, HCM positions housing providers as leaders in the fight against climate change.

- **Regulatory excellence:** Simplified compliance processes reduce the burden on housing providers and promote higher standards across the sector.

Chris Jones, Aico's product director, said, "HomeLink Case Management is a direct response to the needs and concerns of housing providers, delivering a robust solution that not only makes compliance easier but also promotes proactive management and tenant satisfaction."

A new standard for property management

In a world where the stakes are high and expectations even higher, HCM is a beacon of innovation. By combining cutting-edge technology with practical solutions, HCM empowers housing providers to navigate today's challenges while preparing for tomorrow's opportunities.

As the housing sector evolves, tools like HCM will play a vital role in shaping its future. Whether it's enhancing tenant satisfaction, meeting compliance standards or advancing sustainability goals, HCM is more than just a platform, it's a partner in progress.

Housing providers wanting to stay ahead of the curve would do well to explore HCM and embrace the possibilities it offers. With Aico leading the way, the vision of safer, smarter and more sustainable housing is closer than ever.

Demi Evans is a marketing executive at Aico.



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The new age of connectivity

How multi-net SIMs revolutionise IoT, phones, lift-lines & laptops

Jess Ross, Business Development Manager, Social Telecoms

Multi-network SIMs are set to make an unprecedented impact on the digital landscape for housing providers. Connectivity is a factor that affects every aspect of a modern organisation, with a huge number of applications in the housing sector. As such, the advances offered by multi-net SIMs will revolutionise the sector, providing major gains across the board.

While multi-net SIMs are nothing new in themselves, many people's current experience is with an older iteration of 'steered' SIMs. These SIMs are preset with a primary network and will only deviate when they receive zero signal. Despite access to multiple networks, a steered SIM will remain loyal to one, even if it provides poor signal.

The new generation of multi-net SIMs are 'unsteered', allowing your devices to move freely between networks and maintain the best possible signal. This enables a new standard for network resilience with a number of major benefits; increased internet speeds, an end to connection drop-outs, simple installation and flexible scalability.

From mobile phones that form the backbone of communications to laptop computers and a vast network of IoT devices, multi-net SIMs have no end of applications.

The solution posed by these SIMs arrives at a perfect time, with PSTN landlines on their way out and organisations needing a modern replacement. Simultaneously, the number of IoT devices is skyrocketing; there are around 16 billion IoT devices connected globally, with that figure expected to double by 2030.

Organisations need an effective solution to supersede old systems and enable new ones, with unsteered multi-net SIMs spearheading an as-yet-unseen standard for connectivity.

Down with downtime – Unparalleled network resilience

Of all the advantages multi-net SIMs offer, the most crucial is network resilience. From mobile phone signals that won't drop out to emergency voice systems that guarantee residents' safety, multi-net SIMs provide the ultimate 'always on' solution.

These unsteered SIMs offer access to the UK's four major networks (EE, O2, Three & Vodafone). As long as one of these titans of telecommunications has signal, you've got signal, providing constant connection for your phones and devices. Soon, drop-outs and disconnections will be a thing of the past.

With the ability to roam freely between networks for the best signal strength, unsteered multi-net SIMs offer a consistently better signal, especially for workers and devices that stay on the move.

An answer for everything – IoT applications

The internet of things is always growing, providing new solutions to boost efficiencies and keep things running smoothly. However, some organisations have found it easier to implement IoT projects than others.

A study by Beecham Research found that 58 per cent of adopters and buyers considered their IoT projects

to be unsuccessful, with all respondents identifying connectivity as a significant technical challenge. Other barriers included network coverage, reliability and scalability. Participants referenced pain points such as poor connectivity in rural areas and the lack of a single, universal network that could provide full coverage.

Notably, all of these problems are directly addressed with unsteered, multi-net connectivity – a single solution that offers total coverage, connectivity and reliability. With no need for physical infrastructure and data aggregation features available, wireless connectivity via multi-net SIMs also provides easy scalability.

The network resilience provided by multi-net SIMs benefits a vast array of IoT devices, such as lift-lines, CCTV, door-entry systems, mobile-safety devices, smart sensors and personal alarms.

IoT for emergency voice

Network resilience is important across all of your devices, but it's crucial for emergency voice. Protecting the safety and well-being of residents and staff alike, these are the connections you can't afford to drop.

In 2023, UK businesses suffered a cumulative 8.8 million internet failures and 50.5 million hours of disruptive downtime. A Which? survey found that 12 per cent of participants had been left without connection for at least an hour, while six per cent had been left without connection for more than a day.

This highlights the necessity of multi-net connectivity for emergency voice systems, preventing vulnerable residents from being left at the mercy of network drop-outs.

Smart devices to manage properties

IoT devices offer particular value to housing providers, with new solutions emerging to monitor homes and improve organisational efficiency. For example, IoT-enabled smart sensors can monitor humidity and air quality in real time, preventing hazardous living conditions and expensive repairs.

As an example of this new technology, Social Telecoms is launching a new Mould Monitor service for the housing sector, using the network resilience and connectivity of multi-net SIMs. This smart device helps housing providers meet their duty of care under the Social Housing Regulation Act and Awaab's Law, providing alerts and reports on the conditions of tenants' homes.

While innovative smart devices offer new solutions for housing providers, they are throttled by the existing PSTN landline infrastructure – a system that obviously wasn't developed with the IoT in mind. As PSTN lines are replaced by modern, digital infrastructure, we're sure to

see IoT devices become even more relevant, offering new services and features.

Dead lines... the PSTN switch-off

Sticking with your old landline connection isn't an option; PSTN phonelines are due for disconnection at the beginning of 2027.

As such, every organisation must find an alternative solution for any phones and devices that use traditional PSTN lines. However, Openreach's suggested replacement, SoGEA, relies on the same outdated copper cables as the previous system, while costing around 60 per cent more.

Physical lines are prone to failure and require substantial work to install, unlike the fully-wireless, future-proofed alternative provided by multi-net SIM cards. In fact, in many use-cases a SIM-based solution costs 40 per cent less than PSTN lines, providing better service with substantial savings.

The PSTN switch-off marks a deadline for organisations to transition to digital infrastructure, but why wait until then? Moving to multi-net SIMs now means you feel the benefits sooner, with more time to ensure a smooth transition away from any landline connections.

In addition to network resilience, multi-net SIMs are available with a wide range of tariffs and data allowances to suit your IoT systems. Whether you need large amounts of data for audio and video or the bare minimum for a smart sensor, there's an appropriate tariff. This ensures you only pay for the data your devices need, and in many cases offers a much cheaper alternative for IoT devices than a PSTN landline.

The future, available now...

Multi-net SIMs represent the future of connectivity – a future your organisation can implement today. Whether you want to introduce IoT systems or future-proof your existing devices, multi-net SIMs provide crucial reliability and versatility.

Social Telecoms is available to supply multi-net SIM cards to Procure for Housing members through 'Lot 4' of its telecommunications framework. This allows for a direct award, removing the need for lengthy tendering exercises. Demonstrations and trial SIMs are also available; please contact us for details.

Jess Ross is the business development manager at Social Telecoms.





Enterprise cybersecurity within your reach...

John Brett, Operations Director, Nexus Open Systems

For years, cybersecurity has been seen as a luxury reserved for big enterprises – complex, expensive and seemingly out of reach for every organisation. IT leaders in the housing sector understand the importance of keeping their data and systems secure but many have been deterred by the high costs and complexity associated with traditional solutions.

Thankfully, this is changing. Advances in AI and the emergence of managed services have made enterprise-grade cybersecurity accessible to all sizes of housing provider, helping housing IT managers meet increasingly stringent compliance requirements and tackle evolving cyberthreats, all while staying within tight budgets.

How AI is transforming cybersecurity

Traditional cybersecurity approaches have often relied on large teams of analysts to monitor systems, respond to threats and ensure compliance. This labour-intensive model was not only expensive but also slow to react to new cyberthreats. Today, AI is revolutionising this space by automating many of these tasks, making cybersecurity faster, smarter and more cost-effective.

AI excels at processing vast amounts of data at incredible speed, spotting patterns and anomalies that humans might miss. It can scan network traffic in real time, flagging unusual activity that could signal a cyberattack. This real-time detection is particularly important for housing, where tenants' sensitive data and operational systems need constant protection.

What's more, AI doesn't only react to threats, it can also predict them. By analysing historical data on past attacks, it can identify vulnerabilities before they are exploited, giving IT teams the ability to proactively secure their systems. This predictive capability is a game-changer in a sector that must balance tenant safety, compliance and operational efficiency.

Another long-standing challenge in cybersecurity has been false positives – alerts that seem to indicate a problem but turn out to be harmless. These can overwhelm IT teams, diverting resources from genuine threats. AI addresses this by using advanced algorithms to filter out false positives, ensuring that only real problems demand attention. This makes cybersecurity measures more effective while reducing the workload on overstretched IT teams.

Why housing providers need to prioritise cybersecurity

Social housing providers face many of the same cybersecurity risks as large corporations but often with fewer resources to address them. It's no secret that cyberattacks can lead to data breaches, disruption of services, financial losses and reputational damage. For housing providers' IT leaders, the stakes are high: safeguarding sensitive tenant information; ensuring operational continuity; and maintaining compliance with regulatory standards such as GDPR and Cyber Essentials Plus.

On top of this, housing providers' dedicated applications for areas such as tenant communications, repairs and maintenance, assets and housing management all expand the attack surface for cybercriminals. It's no longer a question of if your business will be targeted, but when.

Enterprise-grade security at a fraction of the cost

One of the most important advances in recent years has been the rise of managed security operations centres (SOCs). These provide around-the-clock monitoring, threat detection and incident response, traditionally reserved for large enterprises. Now, thanks to AI and economies of scale, managed SOC's are accessible to organisations of all sizes on a subscription basis.

Instead of building and maintaining an in-house 24/7 security team (expensive and resource-intensive), you can rely on a managed SOC to provide:

- **Real-time threat detection** – Continuous scanning of networks and systems for vulnerabilities or attacks.
- **Immediate response** – Quick action to contain and minimise damage when a problem arises.
- **Expert support** – Access to highly-skilled cybersecurity professionals without the need for in-house resources.

Affordable cybersecurity

While a managed SOC is a cornerstone of modern cybersecurity, it's not the only solution available through



the introduction of automation and AI. Other affordable options include:

- **Vulnerability scanning** – Regular checks to identify and address weaknesses in systems before they can be exploited.
- **Penetration testing** – Scheduled intelligent testing and attempting to gain access to the infrastructure externally and internally ensure that steps can be taken to remediate problems before they are exploited.
- **Patch management** – Automated updates to ensure software remains secure and compliant with regulations.
- **Phishing protection** – Training staff to recognise and avoid email-based attacks, combined with simulations to keep their skills sharp.
- **Backup and disaster recovery** – Cloud-based solutions to secure critical data and enable quick restoration in the event of an attack or failure.

At Nexus, we've seen at first hand how these solutions can transform IT security for housing providers. For example, our work with Cornerstone Housing included migrating its systems to a cloud-based environment, deploying Microsoft Intune for secure device management and improving its network connectivity. These steps not only enhanced security but also improved Cornerstone Housing's efficiency and tenant services.

Compliance and confidence

The housing sector continues to face growing regulatory pressures, with frameworks such as Cyber Essentials Plus becoming standard requirements for many tenders and partnerships. Achieving compliance can seem daunting, but the right cybersecurity solutions can make it much easier. Managed SOC's, vulnerability scanning and patch management all contribute to meeting these standards while ensuring robust protection against threats.

The human element

Technology alone isn't enough to keep your business secure. Cybersecurity is a shared responsibility, and staff at all levels need to be aware of the risks and how to mitigate them. From understanding the importance of strong passwords to recognising phishing emails, regular training is essential.

Online training platforms offer an affordable way to keep teams up to date with the latest threats and best practices. These tools can be tailored to the specific needs of your business, ensuring that your staff are equipped to play their part in protecting your organisation.

Take advantage now

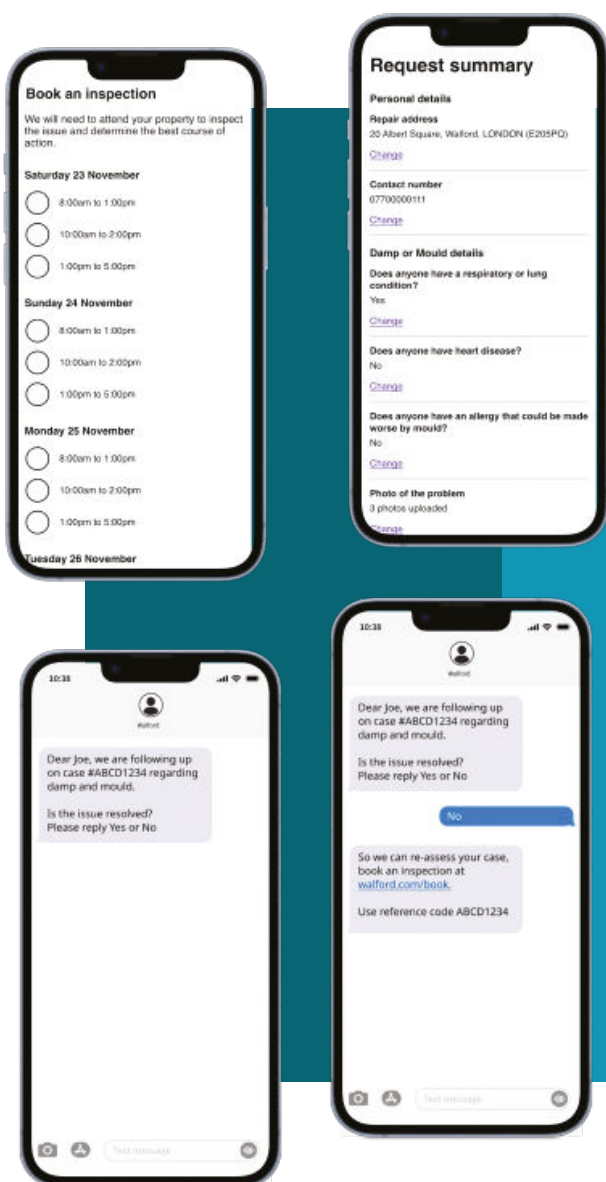
Through our experience of working with a variety of housing providers, we've designed our cybersecurity services to be accessible, effective and aligned with your specific needs. From managed SOC's to patch management, our goal is to provide IT leaders with the tools and support they need to protect their organisations, stay compliant and deliver outstanding services to their tenants.

Cybersecurity is no longer a luxury, it's a necessity. And with advances in AI and managed services, it's within closer reach than ever.

Whether you want to achieve Cyber Essentials Plus, protect tenant data or simply reduce the risk of costly disruptions, there's never been a better time to invest in cybersecurity.

John Brett is the operations director at Nexus Open Systems.





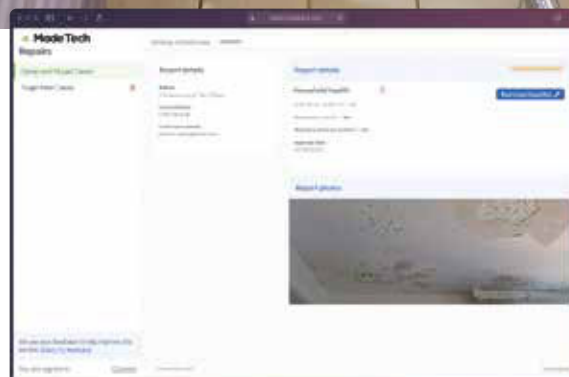
Made Tech launches damp and mould module

Made Tech has launched a new damp and mould module alongside its existing Made Tech Repairs system, built according to guidance from the Department of Health & Social Care. The module aims to help housing providers respond faster to damp and mould cases by streamlining the reporting, triaging and inspection processes.

The damp and mould module includes an intuitive self-service reporting tool for tenants while equipping housing providers' repairs teams with triaging, inspections and prioritisation capabilities. The module is compliant with Awaab's Law as well as guidance from the Department of Health & Social Care.

Made Tech's damp and mould module is available as a standalone product or with Made Tech Repairs, with an integration-free version offering a way for housing providers to get up and running within 48 hours.

Chris Cottrell, product manager, Made Tech Housing, said, "With growing concerns about damp and mould, many housing providers we've worked with have excluded these problems from their self-service repair reporting systems, worried that severe cases might not be identified or escalated properly. However, this approach often drives a surge in contact-centre demand during the winter when residents seek to report problems directly, putting unsustainable pressure on already-stretched resources."



Emerging technologies redefining housing safety & compliance



Tazmin Ahlfors, Business Development Manager, FireAngel

Social housing in the UK is undergoing profound change, driven by tighter regulations, increased tenant expectations and the urgent need to address safety and environmental issues. From the Social Housing Act 2023 to Awaab's Law, the pressure on housing providers to ensure compliance and deliver safer living environments has never been more intense. However, meeting these expectations is no small feat, especially when managing thousands of properties with limited resources. This challenge demands a transformative approach, and technology is at the heart of the solution.



The integration of innovative technologies such as the internet of things (IoT), predictive analytics and centralised platforms are revolutionising the way housing providers safeguard tenants and maintain compliance (IoT devices, in particular, are proving invaluable). Connected smoke alarms, CO detectors and environmental sensors offer real-time insights into property conditions. For example, a smart smoke alarm not only detects fires but also alerts housing teams instantly if it is tampered with or needs

a new battery. Such connectivity ensures problems are addressed before they escalate, protecting both tenants and housing stock.

Beyond reactive maintenance

Yet the value of IoT extends far beyond reactive maintenance. Predictive analytics, powered by the data collected from these devices, is enabling housing providers to identify risks before they become critical. By analysing trends, such as repeated alarm activations or consistent humidity levels in a specific property, housing teams can prioritise interventions where they are needed most. This proactive approach not only enhances safety but also optimises resource allocation, a critical benefit in a sector often constrained by tight budgets and stretched workforces.

Technology is also addressing one of the most persistent challenges in social housing – fragmented data management. For years, housing providers have relied on manual processes and siloed systems to track compliance and monitor property conditions.

This disjointed approach increases the likelihood of oversights, particularly when managing thousands of devices across a diverse portfolio. Centralised platforms now offer a way forward, integrating data from multiple



IoT devices into a single dashboard. Automated alerts, maintenance schedules and compliance reports can all be accessed in real-time, empowering housing teams to stay on top of their obligations with greater efficiency.

Environmental monitoring is another area where technology is making significant strides. Damp, mould and condensation are longstanding problems, with serious implications for tenant health and property conditions. IoT-enabled sensors that monitor temperature and humidity levels provide housing providers with continuous visibility into environmental conditions across their portfolios. When paired with water leak detectors, these systems can identify problems before they lead to expensive repairs or affect tenants' wellbeing.

Cutting-edge applications

FireAngel Predict represents a cutting-edge application of these technologies, combining IoT with artificial intelligence (AI) to transform risk management in social housing. By analysing data from smoke alarms, CO detectors and environmental sensors, Predict identifies behavioural patterns and environmental factors that increase the likelihood of a fire or other hazards. This level of insight allows housing providers to focus their efforts on the properties most at risk, improving safety outcomes while reducing unnecessary maintenance visits.

The benefits of these innovations are wide-reaching. At their core, they enhance tenants' safety by ensuring that potential hazards are identified and addressed quickly. Vulnerable tenants, such as older adults or individuals with disabilities, are particularly well-served by these systems, which offer tailored solutions to meet their needs. Beyond safety, technology also delivers measurable cost savings for housing providers. Proactive monitoring and predictive maintenance reduce the need for emergency callouts and minimise property damage, freeing resources to focus on long-term improvements.

Scalable with future regulations

Perhaps most importantly, adopting these technologies allows housing providers to futureproof their operations. Regulations are likely to evolve further in the coming years, with increasing emphasis on sustainability, energy efficiency and tenants' wellbeing. IoT solutions are inherently scalable, allowing housing teams to integrate new devices and capabilities as compliance requirements change. Whether it's air quality monitors, smart boilers or other innovations, a connected housing portfolio provides the flexibility needed to adapt to these demands.

Ultimately, the integration of new technologies into social housing is more than a matter of compliance. It is an opportunity to redefine the sector's approach to safety, sustainability and tenant satisfaction.

As housing providers navigate this changing landscape, embracing innovation will be key to building safer, smarter communities. By prioritising the adoption of IoT, AI and centralised platforms, housing leaders can not only meet today's challenges but also position their organisations for long-term success.

You can find out more by contacting our connected solutions team at fireangel.co.uk/trade/connected-solutions.

Tazmin Ahlfors is the business development manager at FireAngel.

FireAngel®

DATA STANDARDS IN SOCIAL HOUSING

Does one size fit all?



As many readers will know, Housing Technology has been working with the UK government's Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, HACT and Open Data Exchange to research, measure and report on social housing providers' views of housing-specific data standards.



After conducting an online survey (November 2024) of the Housing Technology community around attitudes to data standards, Housing Technology's research team has analysed, reviewed and compiled the results into our brand-new report, Data Standards in Social Housing 2025, copies of which you can order and download now from housing-technology.com/report/data-standards-2025.

As a taster of what our new data standards report covers:

- **Definitions of data standards**

There is a considerable mismatch between respondents' good understanding of data standards and their actual adoption of data standards in their business operations.

- **Internal, external & shared data standards**

There is strong support for shared data standards across the wider social housing sector.

- **Adoption of shared data standards**

Data standards are considered most important for housing providers' regulatory compliance, followed by for their executive teams and boards.

- **Barriers to adopting data standards**

Data quality is the main barrier to adopting data standards, while senior executives actively encourage the adoption of data standards.

- **Reasons for data sharing**

Regulatory reporting is the primary reason for housing providers wanting to share their data.

- **Resources for adopting data standards**

The most importance resources are data glossaries and dictionaries.

- **Usage & awareness of data standards**

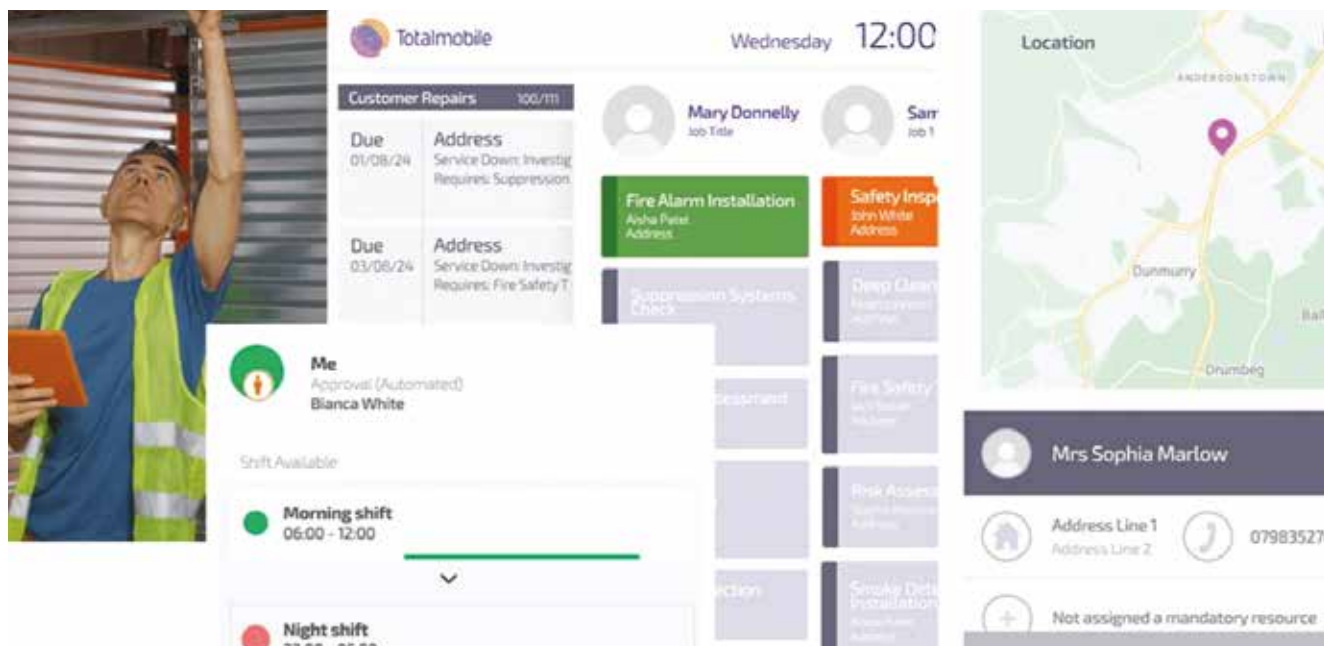
There is almost ubiquitous awareness and/or usage of the data standards for UPRN, SOR codes, HACT and stock-condition surveys; other standards are less familiar or little used.

- **Relevance to data management strategies**

Internal data standards are the most relevant to housing providers' data management strategies, alongside access to IT suppliers' APIs.

You can order and download Housing Technology's Data Standards in Social Housing 2025 report now from housing-technology.com/report/data-standards-2025 (there's no charge).





Chesterfield Council cuts voids with Totalmobile

Chesterfield Borough Council plans to implement Totalmobile's Connect, Mobilise and Protect systems to update its housing repairs service, improve operational efficiency and prioritise the safety of the council's staff.

With the implementation of Totalmobile's systems, the council wants to eliminate long-standing problems in its housing repairs, particularly around voids and turn-around times for its properties.

The council will use Totalmobile Connect and Mobilise for dynamic job scheduling and optimised routing in order to improve its housing repairs. Totalmobile Protect will introduce essential safety features for council staff in the field, such as real-time monitoring and instant alerts.

Cobalt's in-house repairs with Totalmobile

Cobalt Housing is bringing its repairs and maintenance services in-house using Totalmobile's workforce management software.

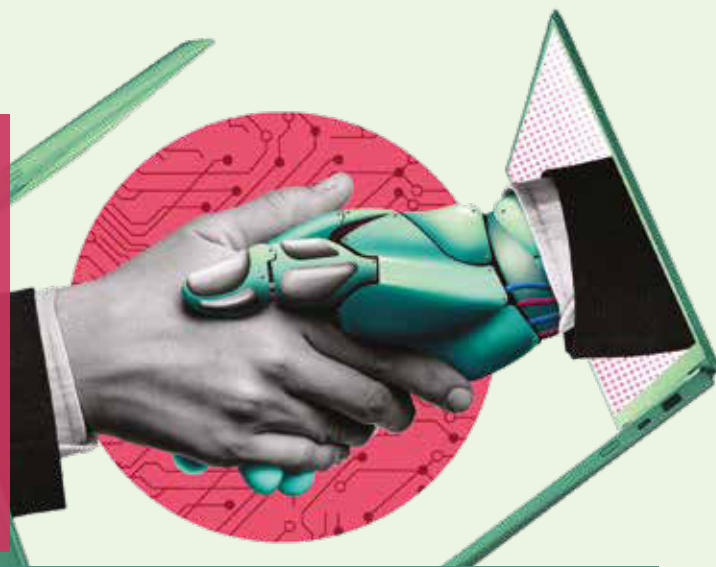
Until recently, the housing provider used external contractors for the majority of its repairs. By moving to an in-house service, Cobalt Housing expects to have greater control over its maintenance and repairs and deliver consequent benefits to its tenants.

The Totalmobile software will give the housing provider's operatives real-time access to all job information, helping them to arrive prepared, improve first-time fix rates and keep customers informed on progress at every step.

Ian Hancock, executive director of property, Cobalt Housing, said, "During our procurement of the new system, Totalmobile supported us through every stage of the implementation, delivering a system that will manage our repairs service and improve communication with customers."

The Totalmobile system is currently being rolled out to Cobalt Housing's operators, with a full implementation planned by mid-2025.

New technologies to watch



As 2025 begins, Housing Technology interviewed seasoned technologists from 8x8, Access Paysuite, FLS – Fast Lean Smart, Infinity Group, NEC Software Solutions and Plentific about which technologies housing providers should be considering for their future business plans.

Which technologies should housing providers be looking at?

Sue Michaelwaite, housing manager, 8x8, said, "One area that will gain considerable traction in housing this year is 'agentic' AI because it could revolutionise tenant services. Not only will you have AI-powered chatbots taking on tenants' enquiries, booking service visits and providing out-of-hours support, but it will also help property maintenance by using video for remote assessments, leading to faster and more accurate repairs."

Jeremy Squire, UK managing director, FLS – Fast Lean Smart, said, "Housing providers will be harnessing the power of AI in 2025. Some housing providers are already on their second or third generation of AI, moving beyond chatbots and automated messages to use sentiment analysis to prioritise their most complex calls. Other are piloting transformational AI use-cases to automate a myriad of time-consuming, manual processes. Furthermore, AI's potential to make emerging data volumes manageable will be exploited. For example, in dynamic scheduling, this will enable more accurate predictions for appointment durations and arrival times."

Sarah McRow, head of housing sales, Infinity Group, said, "Without doubt, housing providers should be looking at expanding their 'digital workforce' through the focused use of AI to automate processes that typically are carried out by staff."

Trevor Hampton, director of housing solutions, NEC Software Solutions UK, said, "Self-service portals currently give basic answers about enquiries such as rent payments. An explosion of generative AI in housing will develop this into a more sophisticated 'concierge' service. For example, a customer will be able to explain the

reasons for a problem with a rent payment and if they are worried about money, the portal will then present options specific to their situation. It will give a higher quality of personalised, proactive support to tenants."

Emily Shaw, director and product lead, Plentific, said, "Platforms that can centralise and optimise property operations present the most promising opportunity, largely because the data captured will be in a single place and will be well-structured; you can then apply AI and machine-learning technologies to that data to give you actionable insights."



"Agentic AI could revolutionise tenant services."

Sue Michaelwaite, Housing Vertical Manager, 8x8

"Another exciting area is repair diagnostics. It's well-evidenced that an effective diagnostic journey for residents can reduce the number of inbound queries and increase the number of first-time fixes. The interesting technologies for this part of the repair journey include video diagnostics and augmented reality (AR) tools as well as multi-modal AI which can ingest text and image-based data to intelligently diagnose and contextualise a problem."

Rob Fleetwood, public sector payment specialist, Access Paysuite, said, "One of the most significant areas for innovation is robust, automated payment systems. These can really ease housing managers' workloads while providing tenants with convenient and flexible ways to pay their rent. Modern payment technologies can streamline



"The benefits of new payment technologies extend across housing providers, tenants & contractors."

Rob Fleetwood, Public Sector Payment Specialist, Access PaySuite

financial processes, reducing administrative workloads and human errors. These systems allow tenants to pay via multiple methods such as credit cards, bank transfers, or digital wallets, offering more options and greater convenience than traditional legacy systems."

Better than the status quo?

Infinity Group's McRow said, "Most 'traditional' housing management systems simply have no capacity to automate manual processes. Imagine receiving an email from a contractor with a gas safety certificate attached; the AI-powered autonomous agent can identify the type of email, validate the certificate, extract the relevant information, update the property and compliance records, log the observations, generate the purchase order and notify the contractor of the billing status. That entire process can now be automated with no manual interventions, and that's just one example; think of all the other manual repetitive tasks that housing staff do every day."

NEC's Hampton said, "Customer service will become much richer and more personalised. We'll see tailored options, each suited to different types of residents, such as self-service for busy professionals and in-person visits for the elderly or vulnerable. Customer satisfaction will increase through improved repairs and maintenance services. For example, tenants will be able to hold their phone's camera over a leaking sink and AR technology will diagnose the problem. It might suggest that the waste fitting has come loose and needs tightening by turning clockwise, or if the repair is more complex, it will identify the parts and tradesman needed for the job."



"Housing providers part-way through digital transformation must retain the flexibility to pivot to AI & other new technologies."

Jeremy Squire, UK Managing Director, FLS - Fast Lean Smart

8x8's Michaelwaite said, "The other development that's really going to pick up in 2025 is the use of video for the remote fixing of problems. This has multiple benefits; customers don't need to wait for repairs or advice for

minor problems because they can often be solved over a call, and this frees staff to respond quicker to larger, more complex jobs needing an in-person visit."

FLS's Squire said, "Customer service, asset management and security are just some of the areas that could benefit from AI. Residents can be updated in real time on maintenance requests and the progress of jobs; service delivery can be improved by allocating resources more efficiently; and AI algorithms can be used to make housing allocations more accurate and fairer."



"Housing providers should expand their 'digital workforces' through AI."

Sarah McRow, Head of Housing Sales, Infinity Group

Access PaySuite's Fleetwood said, "The benefits of these new payment technologies extend across housing providers, tenants and contractors. Housing providers will have better financial stability through improved cash flow and reduced administrative costs; tenants will benefit from faster repairs and flexible payment options; and contractors will benefit from more reliable payments, in turn minimising delays and enabling them to focus on delivering quality services."

Fitting with existing technology estates

Infinity Group's McRow said, "Autonomous agents can be used tactically or as part of a wider migration to a platform solution. Most housing providers use Microsoft and therefore can take advantage of its tools, such as Azure AI and Copilot, to incrementally build their 'digital workforces', starting with small deployments in areas of immediate need and then growing over time."

NEC's Hampton said, "The most important consideration when implementing a new technology is the data that will feed it. Customer data must be accurate and all the property information such as housing type, associated assets and repairs and maintenance history needs to be joined-up for the full potential of new technology to be realised."

FLS's Squire said, "Further empowering residents with self-service tools such as portals will continue to be a strong theme in 2025, but an over-reliance on chatbots could lead residents to prefer human interactions for complicated issues. The next year will intensify housing providers' need for value creation, with AI helping with business intelligence and data-driven decision making."

8x8's Michaelwaite said, "Agentic AI is a game-changer because its ability to learn and adapt over time ensures that it can continuously improve its performance."

Barriers to new tools

Plentific's Shaw said, "Existing digital transformation programmes can often hinder the adoption of new or alternative technologies, as can technology teams working in a siloed manner from, say, the repairs team. Another challenge can be existing technologies and architecture choices, including being stuck with incumbent systems that don't integrate openly through APIs. However, given the rate of change in the broader technology landscape, it's imperative that long-running transformation programmes don't come at the expense of innovation."



"Long-running transformation programmes mustn't come at the expense of innovation."

Emily Shaw, Director, Product Lead, Plentific

Real-life examples in housing

NEC's Hampton said, "One of the most exciting pilots we are working on is with Hull City Council to use IoT technology to activate fire suppression systems. The IoT sensors are placed across whole housing blocks to sense changes in temperature and atmosphere to detect a fire and then activate sprinklers. This will have a huge impact for tenant safety because it will ensure fires are caught early, with safety systems activated and emergency assistance called immediately."

Plentific's Shaw said, "Our solution is digitalising Anchor's operations, serving as the central hub for Anchor's 180,000 work orders per year, integrating seamlessly with all of Anchor's third-party housing management, contractors and accounting software. Plentific is providing a single real-time platform which connects Anchor colleagues and residents with contractors, digitalises the supply chain and adds value via a frictionless and more responsive solution to managing property operations."

Infinity Group's McRow said, "With our help, North Star Housing has replaced its legacy HMS with a Microsoft-based solution and started reaping immediate benefits in terms of time savings, the automation of manual processes such as compliance certificate scanning, automated letter and email generation, and automating the DWP landlord submissions."



"The most important consideration when implementing a new technology is the data that will feed it."

Trevor Hampton, Director of Housing Solutions, NEC Software Solutions UK

FLS's Squire said, "Housing providers part way through a digital transformation strategy must still retain the flexibility to pivot to AI and other dynamic technologies. Housing providers must recognise that the inclusion of new tools within a technology stack doesn't necessarily involve dismantling the solutions that are working well. An openness to at least pilot some of these new solutions, as well as an ambition to move away from legacy systems, can take their operations to the next level."

Access PaySuite's Fleetwood said, "Upfront capital costs, especially for smaller housing providers, can be a problem, while training staff to use these tools properly requires time and money. At the same time, making sure that all tenants, particularly those less comfortable with the digital world, can adapt to new payment systems is vital for a smooth transition and continued engagement."

Infinity Group's McRow said, "Sometimes it's hard to understand which processes are suitable for automation. I was recently on a customer site talking to a housing officer who told me that she struggled to prepare the 'core' reports (for government reporting). The process was manual and required extensive use of spreadsheets. When I explained that the process could be automated, she was completely surprised. She explained that she had become so used to producing the figures manually that she had never considered there might be an automated alternative."

Housing Technology would like to thank Sue Michaelwaite (8x8), Rob Fleetwood (Access PaySuite), Jeremy Squire (FLS – Fast Lean Smart), Sarah McRow (Infinity Group), Trevor Hampton (NEC Software Solutions UK) and Emily Shaw (Plentific) for their editorial contributions to this article.

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We'll dive deep into the future of housing with sessions on AI, data, cyber security, business intelligence and much more. Plus, don't miss the return of the Housing Technology Awards, celebrating the sector's most innovative projects.



ANNOUNCEMENT

Jason Bradbury, the renowned face of The Gadget Show, will deliver the keynote address on Wednesday 12 March.

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