Information, advice & guidance
for RMCs and Property Managers

FlatLiving Magazine

April 2021

Feature: Customer Service

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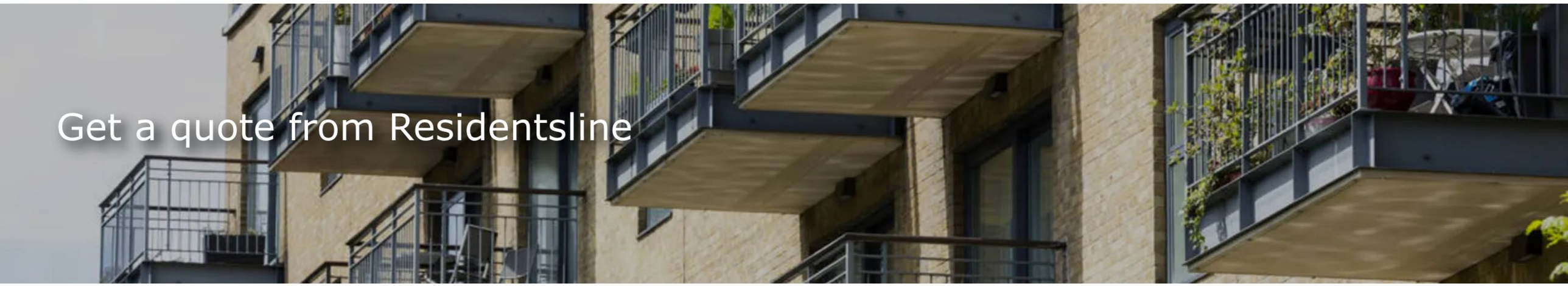

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Welcome

Welcome to the April issue of Flat Living Magazine

It's been a busy and hectic month as we have had a complete refresh of Flat Living Magazine and I really hope that you like the new look.

You can navigate through the magazine using the arrows on the right hand side of the screen, by using the arrows on your keyboard or if you're on a mobile device you can swipe.

Whilst things are looking a bit different, the content is still packed full of useful articles, news, directories, events and more.

In this issue we take a look a customer service with what you feel makes good customer service, how it can be improved and lots of advice about achieving the best standards.

I hope you enjoy this issue, head to our contents on the next page to start reading.

Rebecca Kelly
Head of Partnerships, Flat Living

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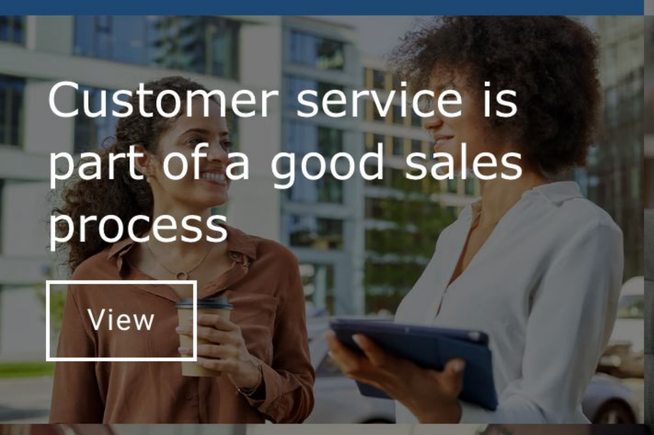
Customer Service



Customer service is part of a good sales process

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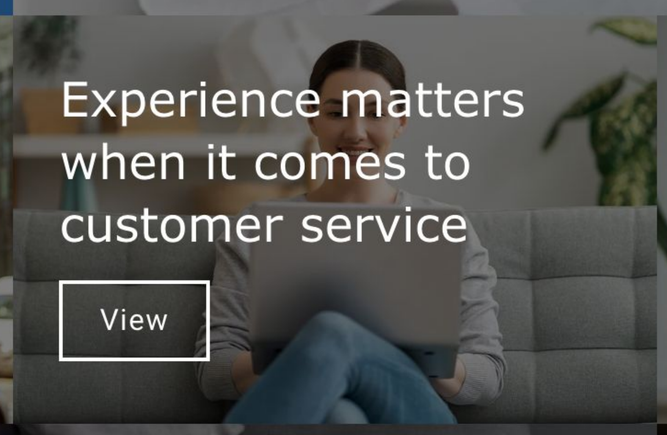

Experience matters when it comes to customer service

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Grow your business with effective customer service

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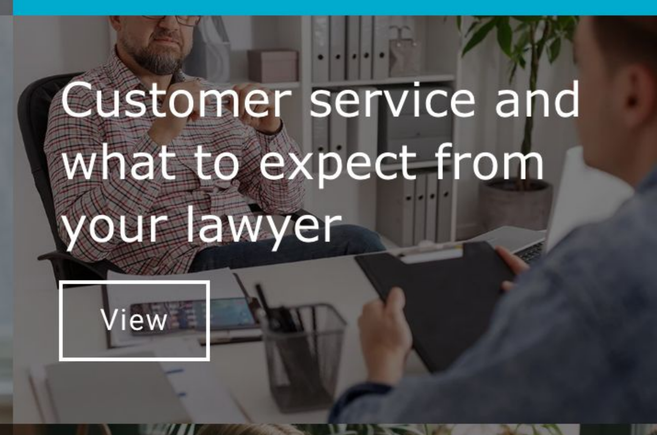

Customer service and what to expect from your lawyer

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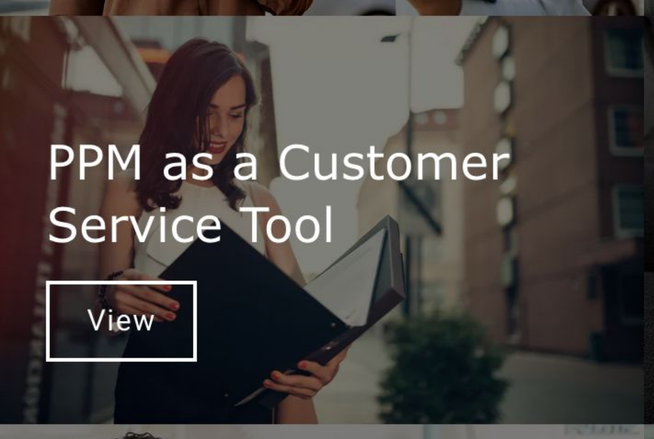

PPM as a Customer Service Tool

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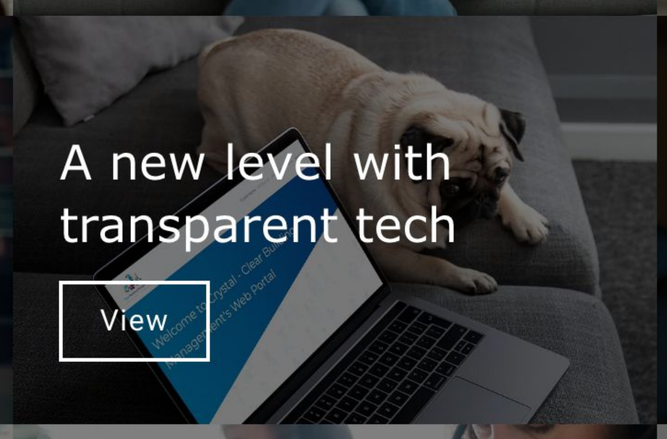

A new level with transparent tech

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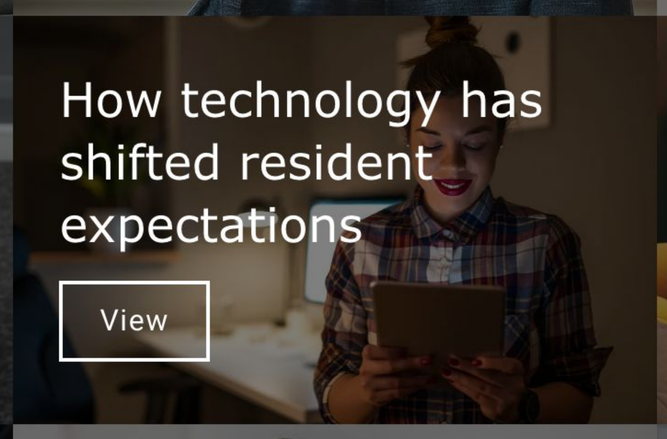

How technology has shifted resident expectations

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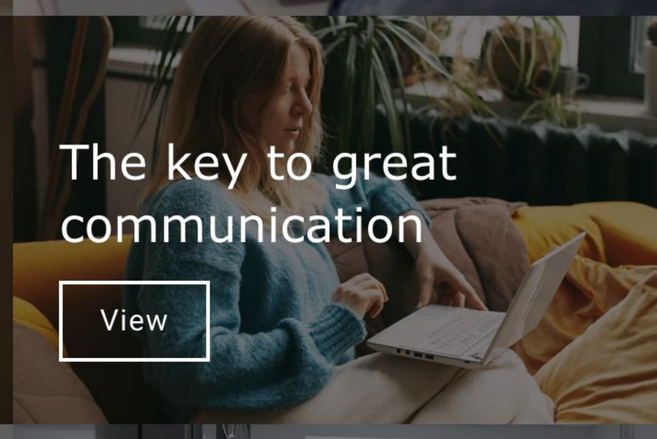

The key to great communication

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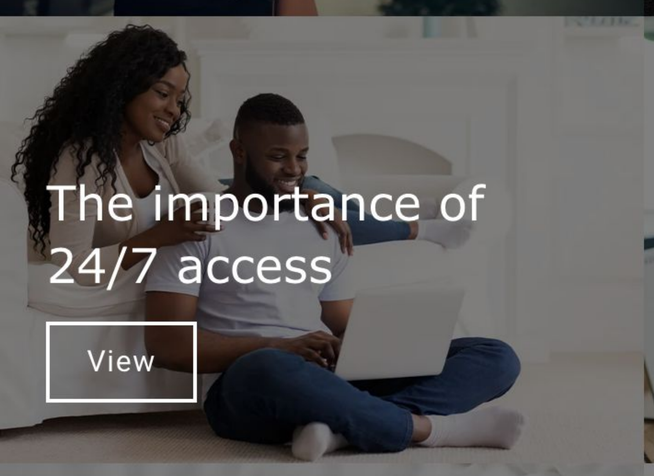

The importance of 24/7 access

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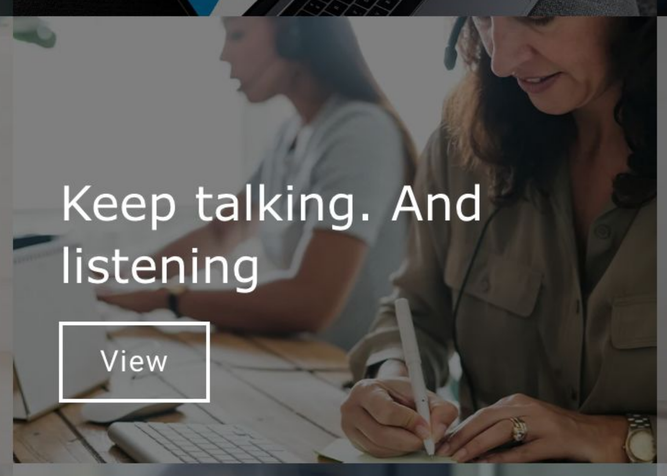

Keep talking. And listening

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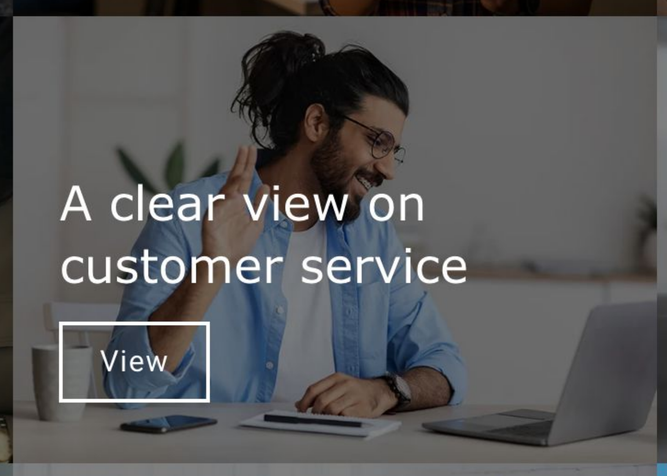

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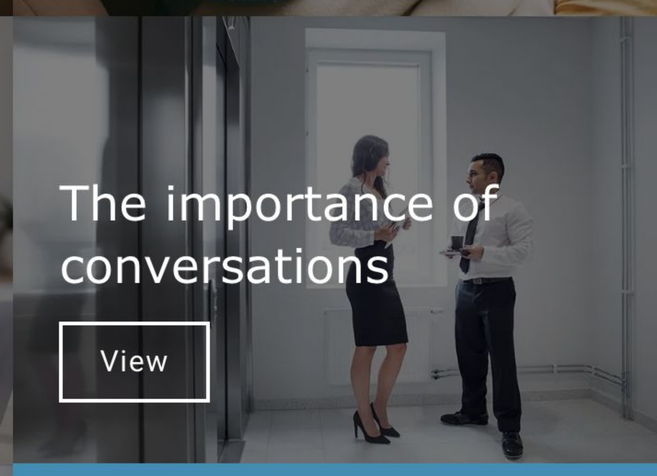

The importance of conversations

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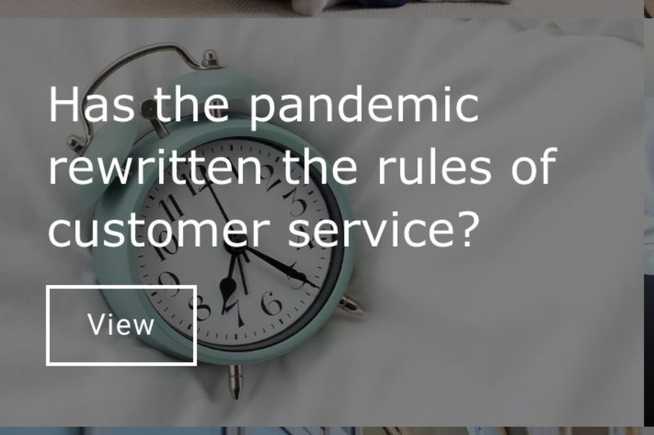

Has the pandemic rewritten the rules of customer service?

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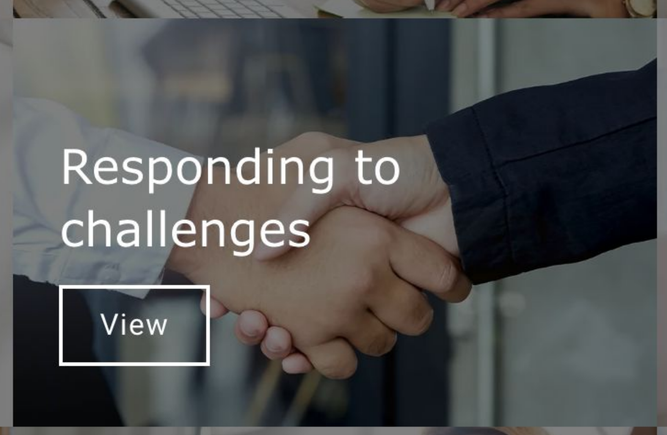

Responding to challenges

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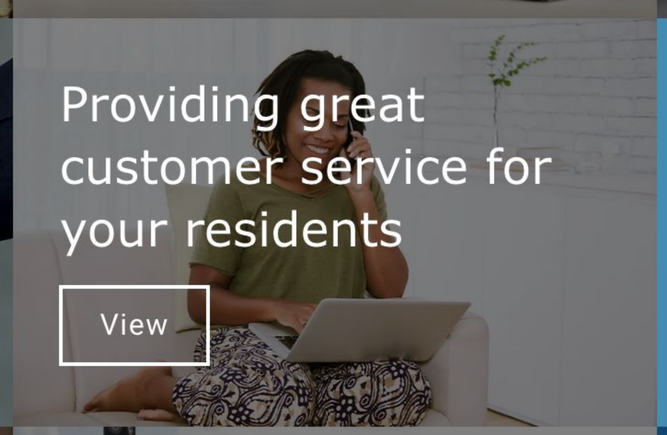

Providing great customer service for your residents

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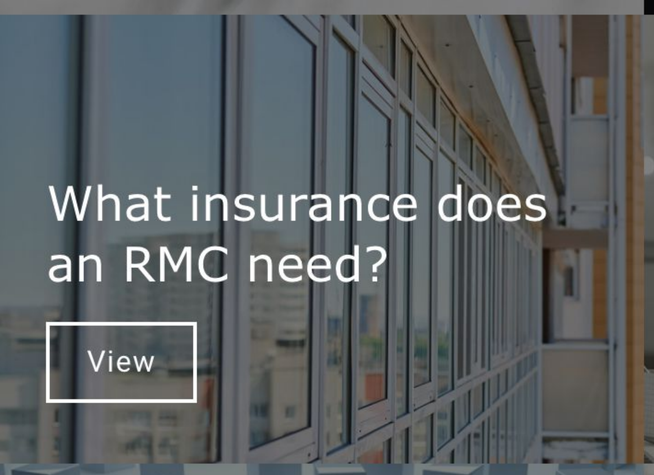

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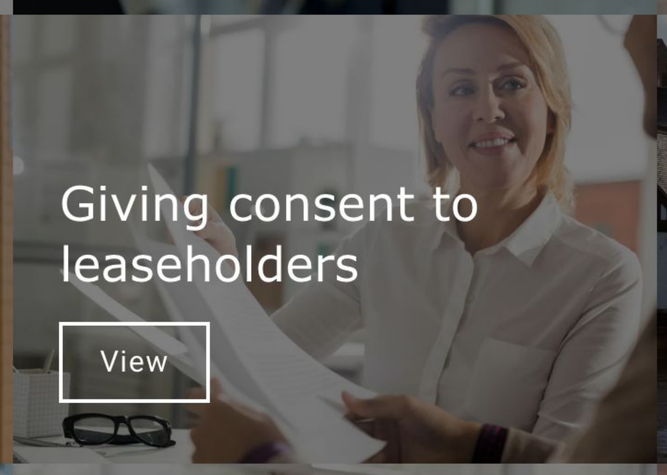

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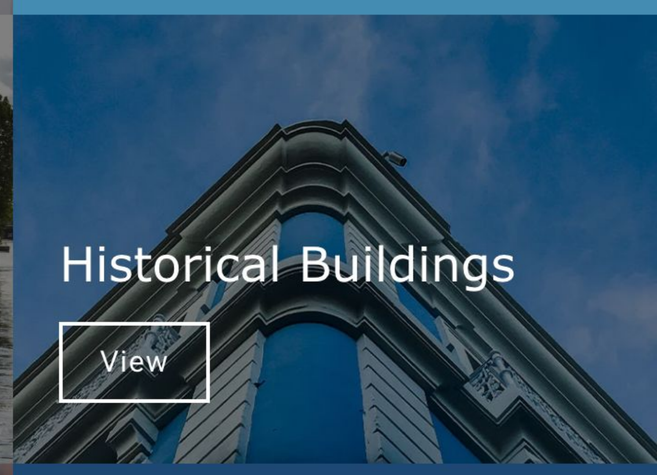

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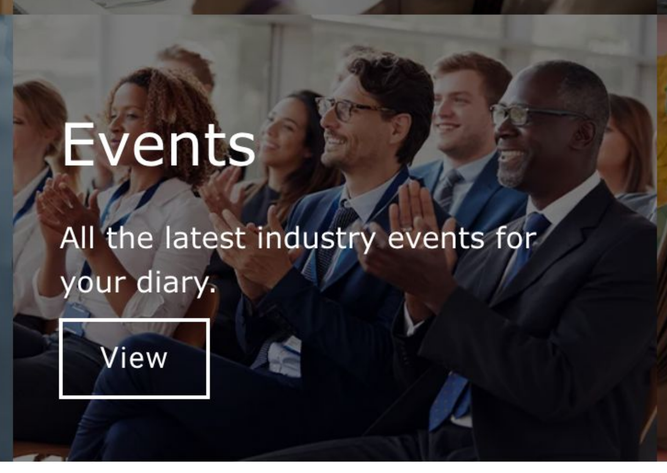

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All the latest industry events for your diary.

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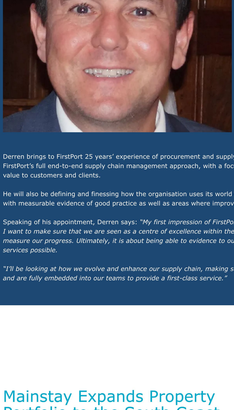


New Supply Chain Operations Director appointed by FirstPort

FirstPort has appointed a Director of Supply Chain Operations to ensure that customers and clients are at the centre of its strategy.

Derren Chamberlain has joined FirstPort from ISS where he was Chief Procurement Officer for just over four years, as well as being part of the senior leadership team for UK and Ireland. Whilst there, he led a full-scale transformation of the function; including policy, processes, people, and systems.

Prior to this, he was Supply Chain Director for the Maritime Services at BAE Systems where he designed and executed a supply chain strategy to improve operational performance, with a strong focus on Estates and facilities Management.

Derron brings to FirstPort 25 years' experience of procurement and supply chain leadership. His first priority will be to review and transform FirstPort's full end-to-end supply chain management approach, with a focus on improving engagement with its suppliers to create demonstrable value to customers and clients.

He will also be defining and finessing how the organisation uses its world class procurement system, Coupa; making sure it is providing FirstPort with measurable evidence of good practice as well as areas where improvements are needed so that they can quickly be addressed.

Speaking of his appointment, Derren says: *"My first impression of FirstPort is a committed team which is professional and holds very strong values. I want to make sure that we are seen as a centre of excellence within the business to support colleagues, and across the industry as we refine and measure our progress. Ultimately, it is about being able to evidence to our customers and clients that we are delivering the best quality and value services possible.*

"I'll be looking at how we evolve and enhance our supply chain, making sure our local and national contractors are working in partnership with us and are fully embedded into our teams to provide a first-class service."

Mainstay Expands Property Portfolio to the South Coast

Residential property management company, Mainstay, has expanded its property portfolio to the South Coast by taking over the operational management of Dolphin Quays, a prestigious development in Poole, Dorset.

Built in 2002, the 104 residential unit prime waterfront development overlooks Poole Harbour, and boasts views to the National Trust owned Brownsea Island, the prestigious Sandbanks peninsular, and the rolling Purbeck Hills.

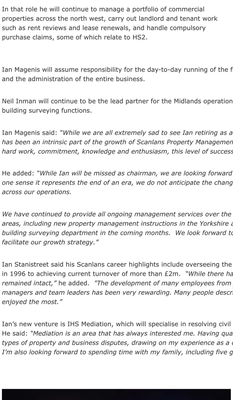
This latest contract, alongside another upcoming new business win in Bournemouth, has enabled Mainstay to gain a foothold in the region to further expand its existing portfolio and continue to offer its wealth of expertise and experience in residential property management.

Mainstay won the contract, which begins on the 25th March, following a six property management company tender process held by the Dolphin Quays (2009) Limited Resident Management Company after the departure of its previous managing agent

Mainstay Technical Director Charles Lucas says: *"It has been a long held Mainstay aspiration to grow our presence on the South Coast, and we are thrilled to be doing so in such a prominent and stunning location."*

Dolphin Quays (2009) Limited Director Neil Fuller says: *"Mainstay came highly recommended and emerged quickly as the frontrunner in our selection process. We are looking forward to working with the Mainstay team to improve the service and value we deliver to our leaseholders."*

The Mainstay management team will work with the development's previous managing agent to ensure a smooth transition of services over the coming weeks. A full audit will also be carried out to identify cost efficiencies and service improvements for the development and its residents. Mainstay is part of the wider FirstPort Group, the UK's leading residential property services provider.



ALEP Celebrates 10-Year Partnership with Kerry London

The Association of Leasehold Enfranchisement Practitioners (ALEP) is celebrating the 10th anniversary of its partnership with leading insurance brokers, Kerry London.

Kerry London has supported ALEP in the decade that saw the Association grow and become the leading voice of leasehold best practice and advice, which now brings together more than 260 professional enfranchisement member firms throughout the sector.

To mark the occasion, Kerry London has launched a range of exclusive services and a fast-track online insurance quote system targeted specifically at ALEP's solicitor and valuer members.

Clare Grove, ALEP's Communications and Marketing Manager commented on the partnership: *"Kerry London has played a huge part in our operations over the last decade. As our main sponsor, the firm has supported ALEP at our flagship Conferences and Lectures which have enabled us to bring our membership together to share advice and discuss important topics and issues impacting the enfranchisement sector."*

"Celebrating a decade of working together is true testament to the strength of our partnership with Kerry London, as the organisation is incredibly well versed in the complexities of enfranchisement transactions through the insurance work it undertakes.

"We would also like to thank the team for making bespoke insurance solutions available to our membership and encourage members to take advantage of this offer."

Dean Calaz, Regional Managing Director at Kerry London, said: *"Kerry London is proud to continue our partnership with ALEP and support its members of the enfranchisement community. A ten-year partnership is no mean feat in the commercial world and this goes to show the effective dynamics between both organisations."*

"We look forward to continuing our partnership and supporting ALEP and its essential work as the entire enfranchisement sector faces huge transformations in the coming years."

Scanlans Chairman hands over the reins

The chairman of property management and surveying practice Scanlans is handing over the reins as he embarks on a new career as a mediator.

Ian Stanistreet, 61, has been a partner at Scanlans for 31 years and its chairman since 2016, when he succeeded David McKee. Ian has also continued to head the firm's property management division alongside partner Ian Magenis.

He will stand down as chairman and retire as a partner at the end of March, but will remain with Scanlans as a consultant.

In that role he will continue to manage a portfolio of commercial properties across the north west, carry out landlord and tenant work such as rent reviews and lease renewals, and handle compulsory purchase claims, some of which relate to HS2.

Ian Magenis will assume responsibility for the day-to-day running of the firm's property management operations in the north west and Yorkshire, and the administration of the entire business.

Neil Inman will continue to be the lead partner for the Midlands operation. Partner Tony Mancini will continue to oversee and administer Scanlans' building surveying functions.

Ian Magenis said: *"While we are all extremely sad to see Ian retiring as a partner, we are pleased he will be remaining with us as a consultant. He has been an intrinsic part of the growth of Scanlans Property Management, taking it from a department of three people to over 40. Without his hard work, commitment, knowledge and enthusiasm, this level of success would not have been possible."*

He added: *"While Ian will be missed as chairman, we are looking forward to working closely with him in his new role as a consultant. Although in one sense it represents the end of an era, we do not anticipate the change to have any impact on our existing client base, and it's business as usual across our operations.*

We have continued to provide all ongoing management services over the last 12 challenging months. Indeed, we've seen growth in a number of areas, including new property management instructions in the Yorkshire and Midlands regions, and we anticipate considerable expansion for our building surveying department in the coming months. We look forward to an exciting future for Scanlans, having also invested in new technology to facilitate our growth strategy."

Ian Stanistreet said his Scanlans career highlights include overseeing the growth of its residential block management division from a standing start in 1996 to achieving current turnover of more than £2m. *"While there have been staff changes over the years, the culture of Scanlans has remained intact,"* he added. *"The development of many employees from junior roles and apprenticeships to become accomplished property managers and team leaders has been very rewarding. Many people describe Scanlans as a family, and the culture of the firm is what I have enjoyed the most."*

Ian's new venture is IHS Mediation, which will specialise in resolving civil and commercial disputes.
He said: *"Mediation is an area that has always interested me. Having qualified as a civil and commercial mediator, I will be looking to resolve all types of property and business disputes, drawing on my experience as a chartered surveyor and as a partner of a nationwide surveying practice. I'm also looking forward to spending time with my family, including five grandchildren, and pursuing my hobbies of cycling and hill walking."*

Qube Residential Strengthens Relationship with C4's The Circle as Show Returns to Manchester Apartments for Filming

As Channel 4's social media-inspired gameshow The Circle makes a return to screens, leading north west managing agent Qube has revealed that it has continued to work with Studio Lambert North, the team behind the programme – with its Adelphi Wharf scheme used as the filming location for the show.

The Circle sees players move into separate tech-enabled apartments, to live alone and only communicate with one another via a social media system called The Circle. In the game where anyone can be anyone, players compete to stay in the game, become the most popular and walk away with a cash prize.

The Circle S3 will be preceded by a week-long celebrity edition of the show in aid of Stand Up to Cancer UK.
The apartments managed by Qube Residential, located in Salford, were used to film both series of the show, with the property managers facilitating Studio Lambert North's move into the block, for the last two series.

Dave Seed, managing director at Qube, said: "It's fantastic to be back working with the team at Studio Lambert North and strengthening our relationship with them once again. They have been great to work with and we look forward to future projects with the team.

"It's been a great experience as always and we love seeing the apartments transformed each time they come in to build the set.

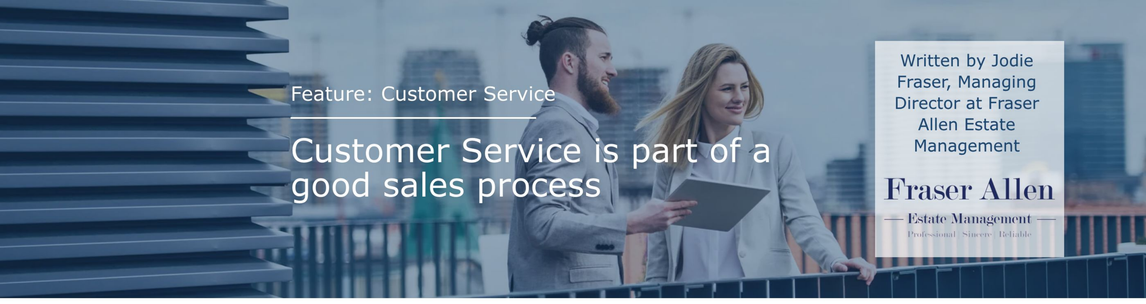
"Anticipation is high for the next couple of series of The Circle, and we know they won't disappoint. It's brilliant to see Manchester put on the national and global stage as a result of being on the programme. Our creative, digital and media sectors are thriving, and I hope this will help to push them forward even further."

Tim Harcourt, creative director at Studio Lambert said: *"We are always well looked after by the team at You Are Home Mcr & Qube Residential and are delighted that we've been able to keep bringing The Circle back to these apartments in Manchester."*

Studio Lambert has used the 76 apartments to film The Circle in for the past two series. Each time, the team comes into the block and spends several weeks preparing the apartments for filming, bringing in interior designers to elevate the spaces into the sleek, contemporary homes seen on screen.

The instruction comes off the back of a year of transformational growth for Qube Residential, with the firm winning appointments on developments including the 700 unit Fortis Quay development in Salford, True Student in Liverpool and filling the 193-unit Silkhouse Court development in less than eight weeks.

Qube has two offices in Manchester & Liverpool and was founded by managing director Dave Seed in 2016. The company has also just been shortlisted for the Residential Insider Awards, later this year.



Feature: Customer Service

Customer Service is part of a good sales process

Written by Jodie Fraser, Managing Director at Fraser Allen Estate Management

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Exceptional Customer Service

When I started my own business Fraser Allen Estate Management, I wanted to offer block management and property management with exceptional customer service.

I wanted to do this because, having been in the sector for 14 years, and for ten of those years in other companies – I'd seen too much of the opposite.

I could list so many examples when I experienced a lack of care, a lack of commitment and a disrespect for the people in this sector. For some it was all about numbers, profit, efficiency savings, processes and procedures – and not about the people.

This always puzzled me as people buy from people, don't they?

Even now, as my business celebrates four full years of operation, I'm staggered by how many people don't realise that customer service actually means sales.

Not any old sale. Not sales for the sake of it. It means sales which are meaningful, which are long term and which are based on healthy relationships with clients and residents.

In the service sector, relationships really, really matter in my view – and I believe as a younger entrepreneur will matter even more in the future.

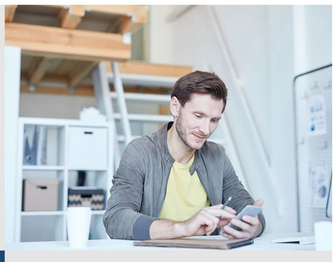
Although processes matter and balance sheets matter – the key to having a thriving business with an excellent reputation lies in building relationships, having the right relationships and offering wonderful customer service.

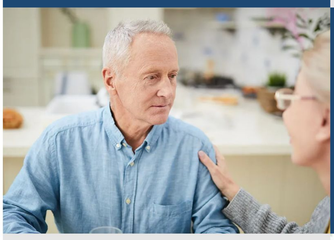
When a business can demonstrate that kind of value, that kind of service and that kind of approach – discussions over price and costs become much easier. Then the right customers see your value and they would rather pay for the service and its value. Rather than any old price.

These are the ways in which I seek to provide a great service in my business:

I seek to serving clients in the way they feel most **comfortable**. Do they prefer to communicate via the phone, email, WhatsApp or social media? Clients often want to connect with you on the same channels they use to talk to friends and family. So being able to help a client on their preferred support channel is one of the best ways to create an excellent customer service experience.

I ensure that my team are **friendly and supportive** – and I ensure they maintain that kind of positive energy. No one wants to deal with someone who is moaning, whinging or complaining, it's emotionally and mentally draining – especially over the last year.





Empathy when dealing with all clients, especially with those who may have specific needs such as dementia, disability etc. My business is dementia friendly so that any resident or family member is confident their loved one will be treated with respect and dignity, even if they are confused, worried or distressed.

Being **proactive**- if you know your sector well, you can proactively anticipate someone's needs. They could be your client or a resident. This could be around many and multiple things from sorting out repairs, to gardening, to sending information early because you know they are off on holiday. It shows you've learned about them and you really are there to make their lives easier.

Information is critical – we always try to communicate clearly with clients to ensure they are aware of what is happening within their block or within Fraser Allen Estate Management.

Relationship building is so important – this can be as simple as addressing a customer by their name or following up on an issue to make sure the client is happy. It can be a 'how are you?' or a 'happy birthday' to show you see them as people not just as names or numbers on a balance sheet.

I seek and offer **fairness** – this is very important in my world where you are often dealing with various parties, sometimes with different viewpoints. I always seek to look at a situation in a fair and reasonable way.

For example, if a client owes me their service charge, I will try to arrange payment plans or look at ways to manage the arrears to ensure it is fair for all parties. Should arrears collection go as far as legal action, the courts would accept a payment plan anyway so why put someone through additional costs if it will end in the same way? It is always better to try to work with someone than against them if at all possible.

Respond in a **timely manner** – when someone employs you to provide a service, getting a response says 'I care about communicating with you'.

For different businesses that response time will be something you can pick up – it may be instant or it may be within 24 hours. Rarely should it be longer than that. In business generally being timely is an indication of the quality of your delivery and that instils confidence for your customer and can make them a huge sales ambassador for you.

Fraser Allen Estate Management specialise in Residential Block Management and are committed to ensuring your needs are put first.

We bring an innovative, organised and reputable approach to the industry with a friendly team who are on hand to assist you.

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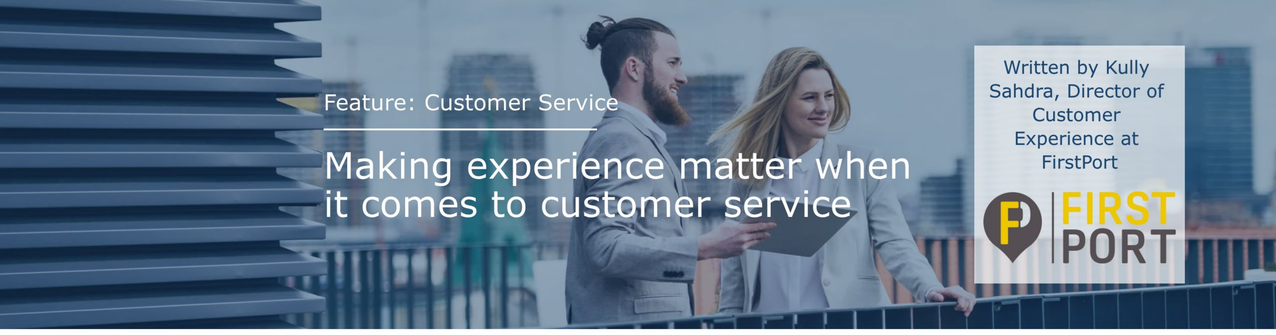


Feature: Customer Service

Making experience matter when it comes to customer service

Written by Kully Sahdra, Director of Customer Experience at FirstPort

Making sure customers are happy in their home

In the constantly evolving world of customer services, the pandemic has provided valuable insight and reason for reflection and change. As property managers, our job is to make sure that customers are happy in their home, and the way we've been living over the last year makes a property manager's role even more important. More time at home for our residents means they can clearly see the benefits of a good property management company brings, but also results in higher expectations in terms of the service we provide.

Experience matters

It is so important that our customers recognise us, not just for the service we deliver, but also for the experience we provide them. This means that we can make an impact from the moment they buy a property to the time they sell it, and everything in between.

Key to this, is making sure our colleagues understand how customers 'experience' our service. In recent months we've focused all of our teams on online review platforms, such as Trustpilot as a tool to learn and develop. Because of this sole focus, we've seen better and more consistent engagement from our customers with these platforms too. Trustpilot in particular has become a priority customer service channel for our customers to share both good experiences and those where we can improve. Our responsiveness to those who leave a review has helped us better understand our customers' experiences and how we can improve them. It has also meant that we have been able to turn some reviews around from a negative experience to a positive one.

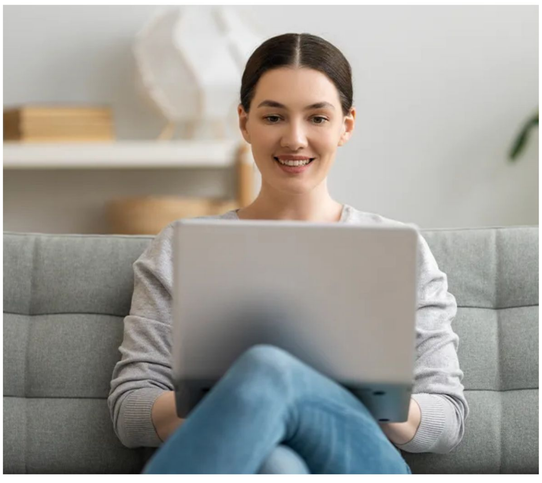
Our now four-star Trustpilot rated service is reflective of our colleagues' efforts, but also reminder that we don't always get it right and there's always room for improvement (we're aiming for five stars, of course!).

More choice means better engagement

This appetite for engagement is not unique to TrustPilot. In the consumerised society we now live in, our customers rightly expect a seamless property management service which makes their lives easier and is tailored to suit their lifestyles. This means it is important that we have a range of customer service channels available for them to use.

Our contact centres are the engine rooms that support our field-based colleagues to provide the very best service, and we've made changes to make them more agile and customer focused in recent months.

This includes the introduction of Webchat, which is a popular choice for our customers with over 4,000 interactions since its soft launched late last year. In addition, our online residents' portal has proven to be a much-valued resource - particularly during the pandemic - helping us to respond quickly and proactively and to update residents in real-time.



Taking ownership

We've always encouraged customer ownership across FirstPort, and in recent months we've set our contact centres ambitious targets around 'first time resolution' which sees our customer contact centre colleagues empowered to take complete ownership for every single interaction. They don't pass queries on if they can't answer them. Instead, they find a way to resolve the issue from start to finish so that the customer has a single point of contact.

This focus on ownership is also ever-present amongst out field-based colleagues. A big part of this is ensuing visibility and availability for our customers. Whilst our teams working from developments have continued throughout the pandemic, many of our field-based employees have had to be more inventive to stay in touch. Zoom meetings have now become a common way of 'meeting' residents, not just 9-5, but at times that are more convenient for customers.

Around a third of the homes in our care are in independent retirement communities. We wanted these more vulnerable customers to feel supported through this challenging time. Our Development Managers rose to the challenge of making sure our residents' experience was as good as it could be with pen pal schemes, weekly newsletters and entertainment packs posted under doors- all designed to keep our residents physically and mentally active and to help them combat loneliness.

Providing confidence, clarity and choice for customers is our ethos. Everyone at FirstPort is committed to, and takes ownership for, providing a brilliant experience for our customers and we'll use the lessons we've learned over the last year to set the bar even higher.

FirstPort is the UK's leading residential property services provider.

With more than 40 years' experience, we work with over 1,000 resident managed developments, helping RTM and RMC Directors meet their management and legal obligations, all while delivering a great service for residents too.

firstport.co.uk | 01582 393756 | rmc@firstport.co.uk

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Feature: Customer Service

How to Grow Your Business with Effective Customer Service

Written by Belinda Thorpe, Managing Director of Residentsline

Amazing customer service can grow your business

Residentsline offer an array of market-leading products and are lucky enough to have access to special rates from many A-rated insurance companies but, without the excellent customer service provided by our team, this would mean nothing. Belinda Thorpe, Managing Director of Residentsline describes how to grow your business by providing amazing customer service.

If your customer service is unhelpful, unreliable, or if you are just plain hard to get in touch with, folks will hear about it and you'll lose customers. Investing in outstanding customer service is definitely key to long-term business success.

So, how can you ensure that every customer has a great experience with your company when they reach out for help?

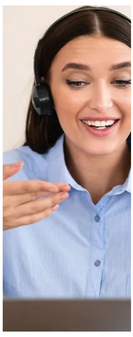
Well, great customer service means following best practices; valuing your customers' time, maintaining a pleasant attitude and providing knowledgeable and resourceful responses. But you need take things a step further to exceed (rather than just meet) expectations.

We've identified several ways to make your customer service stand out from the crowd for all the right reasons:

Know Your Products

Extensive knowledge of your product is vital in providing great customer service. Ideally, you should believe in your product, be able to discuss features and use example cases in an insightful way while showing your customers how the product can benefit them- not to mention being able to troubleshoot anything that's not working as it should.

Your job is to help your customers get the most out of their purchase and provide true value for money. Make it your goal to learn everything there is to know about your product so you can amaze your customers with timely recommendations for using new features and services.



Maintain a Positive Attitude

Attitude is everything. A positive attitude goes a long way in providing excellent customer service, especially when handling complaints or issues.

Your attitude should be reflected in your language and tone of voice which are easy to misinterpret through written communication- email communication can also come across as cold.

The brain uses multiple signals to interpret someone else's emotional tone, including body language and facial expression, so don't be afraid to pick up the phone if an email exchange is getting tense.

Creatively Problem-Solve

There will always be problems to solve no matter what product or service you sell and thinking on your feet to resolve issues should be a huge part of a customer service rep's skill set.

Don't be afraid to wow your customers as you seek to problem-solve for them. You could just fix the issue and be on your way, but by creatively meeting their needs in ways that go above and beyond, you'll create customers that are loyal to your brand and your product.

Respond Quickly

66% of people believe that valuing their time is the most important thing in any online customer experience. Resolving customer queries as quickly as possible is a cornerstone of good customer service. Speed should be of the essence- especially for smaller issues that don't take much time to solve.

That being said, great customer service beats speed every time. Customers understand that more complex queries take time to resolve. There's a difference between the time it takes you to respond and the speed at which you resolve their problems.

Get back to your customers as quickly as possible, but don't be in a rush to get them off the phone or close the ticket without resolving the issue completely.

Personalise Your Service

40% of customers say they want better, more human service. That means they want to feel like more than just a ticket number. They get angry when they're not being treated like a person; receiving standard responses or being passed around to different people.

Customers want to interact with a person, not a company.

Do you know not only your customers' names and account numbers, but also a bit about their interests or hobbies? Can you make them laugh? It's obviously not possible to do this for everyone, but going off script and giving the personal touch when you can is an important way to show your customers you know them and you care.

Help Customers to Help Themselves

That said, customers don't always want to talk to someone- often, they want to quickly resolve their issue themselves.

Among consumers, 81% attempt to take care of matters themselves before reaching out to a live representative. Further research shows that 71% want the ability to solve most customer service issues on their own.

It's a great idea to consider regular questions that are raised by your customers and pop the answers to these on your website as an FAQs section. This can save your customer service team time in repeating the answers to common queries while also empowering your customers to find the answers themselves if they'd like to.

Make Your Website or App More Helpful

It's great to include relevant 'help' content, offer live chat, and give customers instant access to their history- all without leaving your site.

Focus Support on the Customer

Your customers are the most important element of your business- they come before products or profit. Treat them like they are the centre of your world, because quite frankly, they are.

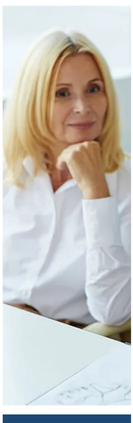
Actively Listen

Paying attention to customer feedback includes looking back over the data, as well as listening in real-time.

Show your customers you hear them when they take the time to speak to you. Listening increases the chances that you'll hear the real crux of your customers' problems and can solve them effectively.

Listen to what they have to say without pushing your own agenda. Don't assume that you know what your customer is going to say and avoid interrupting at all costs.

Active listening also means you are mindful of your customer's unique personality and current emotional state so you can tailor your response to fit the situation. Customer service is not one-size-fits-all.



Keep Your Word

If you promise something, make sure you deliver on it. This is just common-sense when it comes to customer service. Don't let your customers down. Keeping your word is about respect and trust.

If you do ever break your word, like saying you'll get back to a customer within 24 hours and not doing so, offer something to make up for it. If your customer's delivery goes awry, offer to replace it and refund their money for their trouble. You might lose some money in the short term, but you'll gain a loyal customer.

Interestingly, customers do not feel extra grateful when you deliver more than you promised. They do, however, feel angry if you break a promise. It's still better to under-promise and over-deliver so you can make sure you never break this important social contract.

Be Proactively Helpful

Going the extra mile is one of the most important things you can do to deliver great customer service. This is when you have ticked all the standard boxes, yet you still want to do more.

When customers feel like you value them, like they're truly special to you, they'll keep coming back. This may be linked with the phenomenon of reciprocity in social psychology: if you do something nice for your customers, they will want to do something in return, like buy your products!

All of the elements above combine to produce great customer service and it's great customer service that keeps your customers loyal to you and your business.

Residentsline provides weekly training and support for each member of its team to ensure that they know their product and can articulate the benefits to their customers. We pride ourselves on continued 5-star ratings, we're happy to see our efforts are appreciated.

Residentsline's sole focus has always been insurance for blocks of flats. Today, 25 years on, Residentsline is still the best choice for flats insurance.

At Residentsline, our flats insurance policies are tailored to your needs, created for all sizes and types of blocks of flats and apartments. Our insurance cover also includes the option to include directors and officers liability insurance, terrorism insurance, lift cover or legal expenses protection as part of your policy or as a separate policy if desired.

residentsline.co.uk | info@residentsline.co.uk | 0800 281 235

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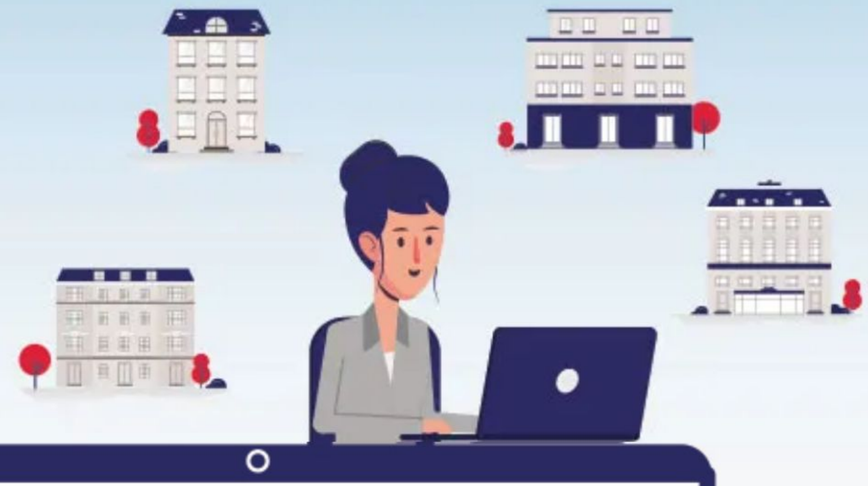

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BARRETT CORP HARRINGTON

Feature: Customer Service

Customer Service, and what to expect from your lawyer

Written by Charles Jamieson, Solicitor at Bishop & Sewell

Well, here is a topic to tempt fate if there ever was one!

I have been asked to write this month about what makes 'good customer service'… I do not doubt that the prevailing view of many businesses asked to write on this topic would be that it is an opportunity to pitch about how wonderful their company is, how efficient and friendly the staff are, and how they are looking forward to helping you along whichever magical journey you are embarking.

However, that's not me (the pitch bit, not the friendly bit!) and, more importantly, I think I would be doing the reader a dis-service if that was the focus of this piece.

During a plethora of jobs before finding a home in the law, I have worked in retail, hospitality and on helpdesks servicing internal and external business (somewhere along the way I even picked up an NVQ in customer service) and, on reflection, the thing I find most striking about all of those 'client / customer centric' roles is that there is no out-of-the-box perfect customer service process which can be universally applied; the customer service process to be adopted depends on the service being provided, and the customer receiving it.

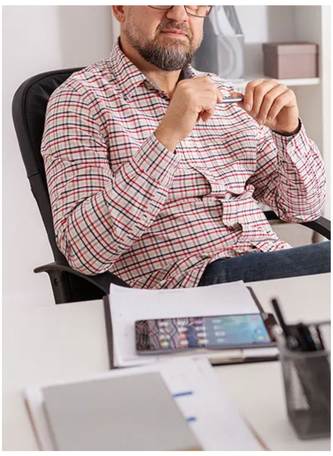
If you do not understand the customer, or they do not understand the service, it can be a recipe for disaster.

Many of you will have had some engagement with a lawyer at some stage, whether this was:

- having a Will or Power of Attorney drafted,
- taking advice on an Employment Contract; or
- purchasing / selling a Property.

Assisting someone in Dispute Resolution is not like any of these scenarios. Whereas my non-contentious colleagues have the privilege of making dreams come true, my peers and I are charged with trying to stop the nightmares continuing (I often joke about only being brought out on 'rainy days').

With that in mind, and because I try to be as frank with my clients as I would want someone to be with me if it were the other way round, here are the top three things you should expect when instructing your litigation lawyer:



You will not always hear what you want to hear

The first thing your lawyer will want to do is to advise you on the 'merits' of your case. This means they will tell you its strengths and weaknesses. Often a client will only tell their lawyer what they think their lawyer wants to hear, or cherry pick the information which is helpful to their case – do not do this. If a lawyer is only provided with half the information, any advice they give is based on imperfect evidence and as such the advice may be compromised.

You may go to your lawyer and say:

"I want an injunction / I want to sue them …",

and whilst it will be disappointing if your lawyer says that you:

"do not have a cause of action (legal basis to do what you have asked) / have no defence",

it is a far better service to be told this at the beginning rather than just hearing "yes of course" and discovering several thousands of pounds later that you had no case in the first instance.

If you are faced with a litigation lawyer who simply says 'yes' to everything, you may want to ask them to clarify what the weaknesses and risks of any dispute might be also, because regardless of how good your case might be, there will always be a risk, no matter how small, that you might lose and/or become liable for your opponent's legal costs.

There are no guarantees

Whenever a caveat is used, i.e.: 'you could try this but there are no guarantees', often a client will think this is some form of back-covering technique being engaged by their litigation lawyer to protect them from blame being allocated if it all goes wrong. As mentioned, it is part of a litigation lawyer's job to warn you about the risks, but fundamentally your lawyer will be aware of the 'inherent litigation risk'.

What this means is that once you get to court, all bets are off. No matter how strong a case may seem on paper, your litigation lawyer has no way of guaranteeing how a Judge will decide the case, nor do they have any control over the credibility or performance of a witness or how their evidence will stand up under cross-examination.

If you ask your litigation lawyer for your chances of success as a percentage, and they come back with 60%, that generally means that they think you have a pretty strong case / position.

Litigation is expensive

Before you confirm the instruction of your litigation lawyer, you will be provided with a letter of engagement and be made aware of their charging structure. Read this.

If a litigation lawyer is charging you per hour, and you spend three hours on the telephone to them, expect a bill for three hours' work. That is the service and charging structure which you signed up to.

Often a client may be caught unaware with the offer of a 30-minute free consultation or some other offer to get the instruction started. However, you need to be alive to what you are signing up for or asking your litigation lawyer to do before you tell them to start doing anything.

Also, be aware that litigation costs are seldom ever fully recoverable even if you are successful, or at least cannot be guaranteed to be such. If you do not have a contractual or statutory right to recover your legal fees from the other side, then it is up to the court to decide how much they want to award you (and they can still assess sums demanded under any other prevailing right).

It may be that your litigation lawyer can extricate you from a nasty dispute at a pre-action stage, but it will cost money to do that (either through engaging with your opponent or through an activity like mediation), and whilst you may feel morally vindicated, there may be no opportunity to recover the costs which you have incurred in pursuing or meeting that claim.

As such, be aware that whatever the outcome, instructing your lawyer may inevitably leave you out of pocket.

Ultimately, litigation lawyers are regulated on the services they provide (by the Legal Ombudsman), held to a code of conduct (by their regulator, the SRA) and have oversight of their conduct of litigation (by the court) – this is the list without going near the Know Your Client obligations, anti-money laundering checks, or accounts' rules for handling client monies. You are therefore right to expect a certain minimum standard from them.

For me, customer service in litigation primarily comes down to clients understanding what they are getting into or are already in the middle of. If you are instructing a litigation lawyer and you do not understand the document you are reading, the advice being provided, or the question put to you: Ask.

There is no shame in it, and there is no reason to feel embarrassed.

Your litigation lawyer will have spent many years learning and training to reach their level of understanding and you should not feel abashed in seeking clarification.

As for me, I am left in a quandary over whether offering a visitor a cup of tea falls within 'good customer service' or simply 'social etiquette', but I suppose with COVID it is a moot point for now.

PS: Bishop & Sewell is a great firm and the staff are really friendly and knowledgeable, and they look forward to taking you on your journey!

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The law isn't always as simple as it should be, so having the right expertise on your side is essential. We provide beautifully straightforward legal advice..

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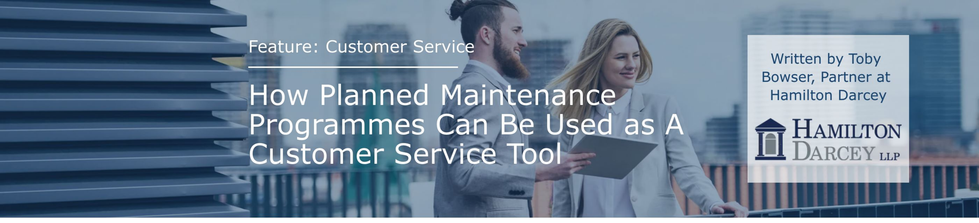


Feature: Customer Service

How Planned Maintenance Programmes Can Be Used as A Customer Service Tool

Written by Toby Bowser, Partner at Hamilton Darcey

HAMILTON DARCEY LLP

Transparency

I'm sure we don't need to tell any property manager or leaseholder reading this article that transparency in communications and financial matters is a top priority and is important in building a trusting and cooperative relationship between all parties involved in the world of block management.

At Hamilton Darcey LLP we believe that Planned Maintenance Programmes can be a vital customer service tool for Property Managers. In this article we will look at why we believe this is the case and why a Planned Maintenance Programme is a great investment for leaseholders and property managers alike.

Reduced Maintenance Complaints

Without a PMP in place for a block, repairs are likely to be mostly reactive, meaning something will have gone wrong with the building. It's likely that the first reports of a defect in a block will be from an occupier who is experiencing the issue.

From this point onwards the property manager is on the backfoot, as repairs can rarely be rectified instantaneously, as the issue needs to be diagnosed and an appropriate remedy agreed on. Following this, a competent contractor needs to be engaged with and their costs confirmed, before any works to fix the problem have been agreed. This delay can often be frustrating for all involved.

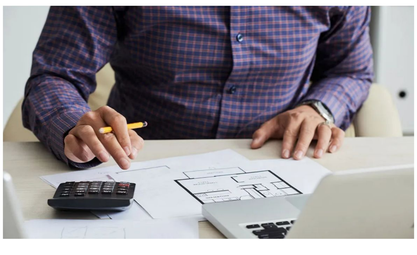
Having a PMP strategy in place allows for a more proactive maintenance regime to be put in place. In most cases this will mean that the properties are being preserved and the building is being maintained before defects are able to occur.

This proactive approach will lead to reduced maintenance complaints received by property managers, as the number of defects being reported should be greatly reduced.

Who Should I Speak to About Planned Maintenance Programmes?

To put an effective PMP in place for your block, you should commission a professional – preferably a Chartered Building Surveyor – to draw up a costed schedule of works for you that will identify any work that needs to be done urgently and pinpoint future maintenance issues.

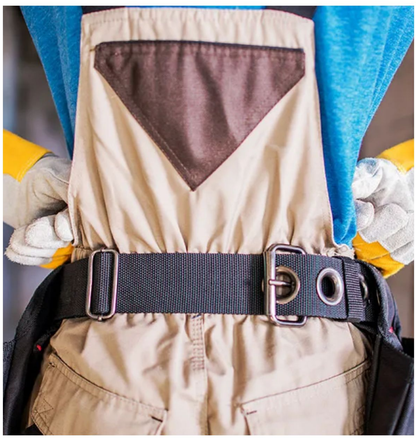
The first step is for the surveyor to produce a detailed survey of your building so that any necessary work on the building can be prioritised and to ensure that any initial structural work is carried out at the same time to create economies of scale in relation to fixed costs like scaffolding and access.



What is a Planned Maintenance Programme?

A Planned Maintenance Programme (PMP) is an inspection and report on a building, which looks to preserve the condition of the property and plan for Major Works projects, in accordance with the freeholder's legal requirements in a lease.

As part of this exercise an assessment of the building is undertaken, along with a review of the lease and any other supplementary information, such as asbestos surveys, health and safety reports, fire risk assessments, etc. This information can then be used to ascertain the likely expenditure required on a block over the agreed reporting period.



Transparency on Service Charge

A PMP is a vital tool to help managing agents or property owners set reliable levels of service charge expenditure or reserve funds for the cost of future repair and maintenance of a building. This can help reduce spikes in the service charge and reduce the risk of having to issue demands on leaseholders, which are never popular.

Additionally, if the levels of service charge are queried, block managers can rest assured that the figures have not been manufactured from thin air and can in fact present the report as evidence for the calculations to leaseholders. This is particularly true when an independent and qualified practitioner is engaged with to produce the PMP.

All of this leads to greater transparency on the financial position of a block, which is often of great concern to leaseholders. In our experience, increased transparency leads to increased trust between parties, which is the bedrock of good customer service.

What will it cost?

Once this work has been carried out, the surveyor should be able to put in place a plan to demonstrate the best way to maintain the building in that condition, avoiding any spikes in expenditure. Depending on the size of the property, the detailed plan and cost schedule should only cost between £500-£3000.

This is a small price to pay for the reassurance and transparency it provides and the issue-avoidance that results from proactive management.

Hamilton Darcey LLP is an RICS regulated Chartered Surveying practice with offices in London and Birmingham. We undertake instructions relating to all aspects of Building Surveying and Design services with particular specialist knowledge in the commercial and high end residential sectors.

With a wealth of experience spanning a range of disciplines, including major works project management, party wall and neighbourly matters, Licence for Alterations, Dilapidations and technical due diligence, we act as a trusted advisor to both individuals and corporate entities.

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Feature: Customer Service

Transparent Tech takes customer service to a new level

Written by Ian Hollins, Director at Clear Building Management

Clear Building Management
QUALITY | VALUE | TRANSPARENCY

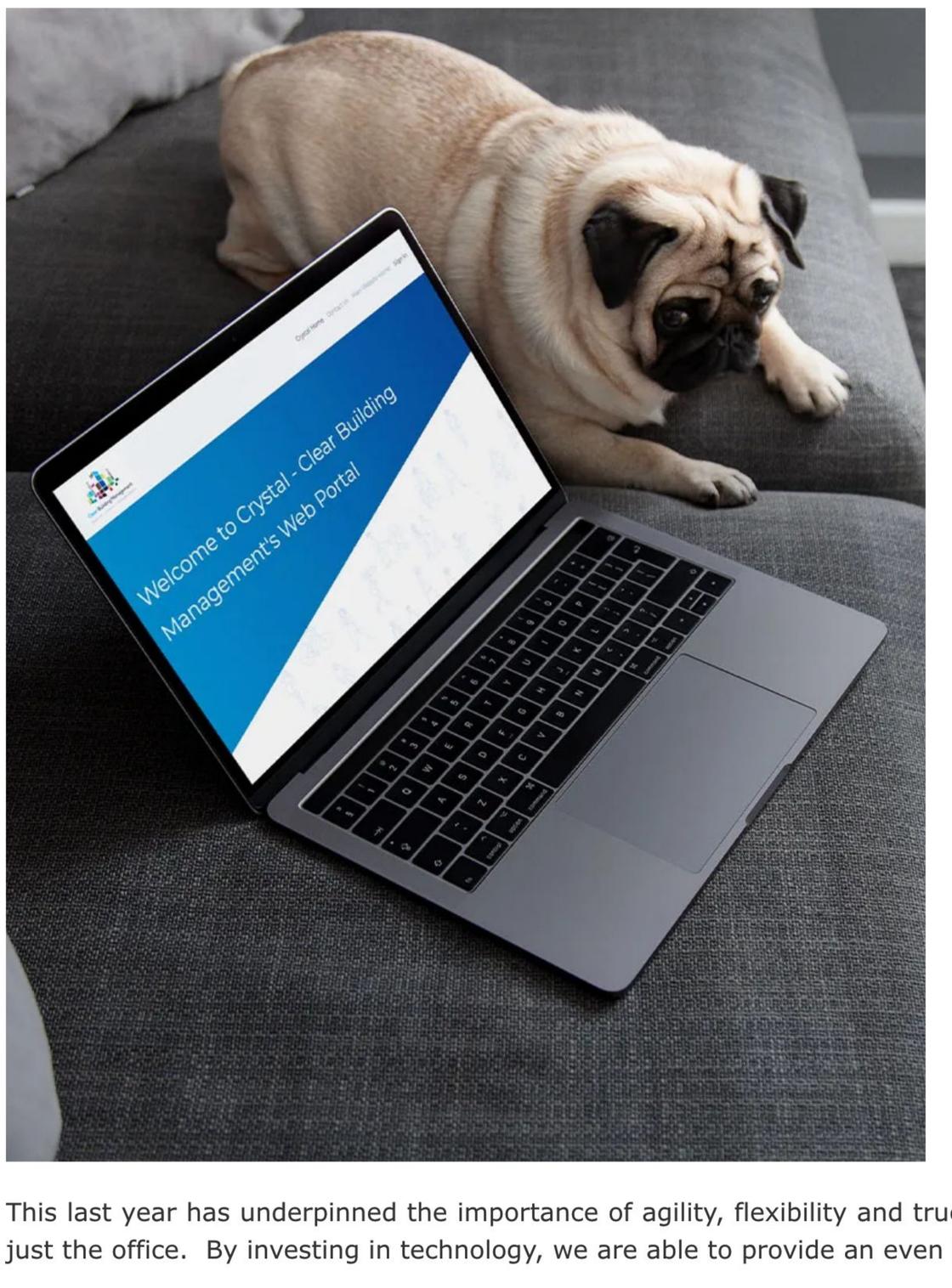
Ian Hollins explains how Clear Building Management's investment in technology is driving an enhanced customer service experience for directors, leaseholders and residents.

Effective and transparent communication has always been key to the way we do things at Clear. Indeed, transparency, quality and value are the three fundamental pillars that our company is built upon. Clear was the first managing agent to secure the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) award back in 2016, and in our latest CSE assessment we were awarded Compliance Plus status, positioning Clear among the elite in delivering services that continually exceed customer expectations.

Alongside the essential human interaction, we have however always recognised the importance of technology in helping us to deliver an excellent property management service.

In our early years, Clear invested in a robust and proven leasehold accounting package, which had a pre-built integration with what was at the time the market leading communications and supplier management system. But we could see that even this industry leading technology was still not going far enough for us to have the real impact we required; there was no singular IT system available for our industry at that time that would give the level of interaction, service and visibility that we were striving to deliver to customers.

This has been exacerbated over the past 12 months, when it has been essential to be able to easily stay in touch with leaseholders and residents, particularly when you cannot be on site.



Crystal clear

This need for a transparent, real-time technology solution led us to develop a powerful new customer platform, with the ability to share information on multi-unit issues, evidence multiple quotes of jobs, share all types of documents and reports, as well as send out email updates and gather feedback through surveys and polls.

Directors have full visibility of contract and job invoice authorisation, and leaseholders have a self-service area where they can view their account and amend their direct debits. This gives everyone total transparency over how their properties are being managed and their service charges allocated – to the very last penny.

The Crystal platform also frees up the Clear team by taking care of reams of admin in the background – allowing us to focus our efforts on maintaining the human touch (even if it is largely by video call in current times!).

The platform is being used internally and we will be rolling it out to clients on 6 April.

We're mindful there are some people that the digital world hasn't yet reached, and more often than not technology fails to be inclusive of this demographic. Importantly with Crystal – and exclusively to Clear – if a leaseholder or resident doesn't use email, then hard copies of relevant communications are posted out automatically to them, meaning none of our customers get left in the dark.

This last year has underpinned the importance of agility, flexibility and true customer focus, whilst being able to operate viably from anywhere, not just the office. By investing in technology, we are able to provide an even better and more transparent level of service for our valued customers.

Clear Building Management offers a fresh approach to residential property management.

Formed by qualified and experienced professionals from the UK residential block management agent industry who recognised that there is a better and more inclusive way to manage residential buildings and apartment blocks, a way that embodies our core values of Quality, Value and Transparency.

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BLOCK BY BLOCK

"Stella was great throughout the whole process. She was very easy to speak to, always answered my calls and emails promptly. Excellent service!"

- Melissa Bagot

"With Alice's help and using the information she gave me I have secured a role with an amazing company and I couldn't be more grateful. If you're looking for someone with a wealth of knowledge and a real passion for what they do I couldn't recommend Alice enough"

- Max Braun

www.blockrecruit.co.uk

Feature: Customer Service

How technology has shifted resident expectations

Written by Stuart Armstrong, Digital Copywriter at Fixflo

Today's building residents are living in an increasingly service-dominated culture, which is naturally leading them to expect more from their block manager. Ten years ago, residents may have compared their experience as an occupier of one place to their experience of another. Now, with instant access to information at their fingertips and an avalanche of choices, residents are more likely to compare their experiences as residents to every customer service experience they've ever had. All too often, it's found wanting.

A need for instant gratification

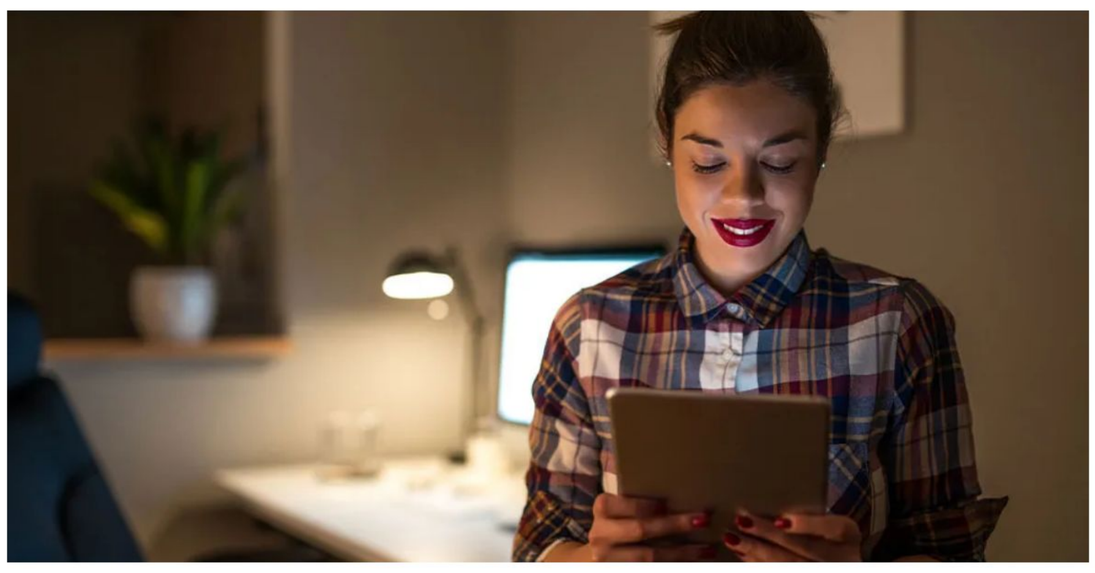
The Internet and portable technology such as smartphones have provided access to a wealth of information that the modern consumer can choose to engage with, however, and whenever they wish. They have become used to receiving immediate service, and this has changed their expectations for the property management services they receive. To account for this, block managers should allow residents to track the progress of planned maintenance or reactive repairs issues in the same way that consumers track the progress of their food delivery services.

Greater focus on relationships

Ironically, the rise of the use of technology and proptech within the building sector has also created a renewed need for the presence of a block manager within a building. Even in an instant-access culture, residents want the experience of speaking to a real person in order to feel like they're connected to the person resolving their property issues.

Residents are looking for a relationship, rather than a transaction. Clear language and transparent communication can help build this sense of connection, but it's also important to let them know that when they choose to make contact, they're going to be heard and will be able to easily have a conversation if necessary. Having multiple points of contacts for different types of enquiries can be off-putting; it's much better to have one main property manager who residents know they will be able to get hold of whenever they need to.

Ensuring the regular presence of a block manager and investing in uniforms for maintenance and building staff to increase their visibility can also help to build long-lasting relationships between a building's management services and its residents.



Residents expect more choices

The abundance of 'choice' is one of the most fundamental ways technology has shifted resident expectations for their customer experience. Today, the customer has more choice than ever afforded to them. They want to choose how and when they have a conversation with their building managers, how they report a repair issue or send a complaint and when an issue is going to be resolved.

Do you still rely on a phone number or email inbox to respond to resident enquiries during office hours? The chances are that your residents would much prefer to, and are hence more likely to, report maintenance issues if you let them do it on a self-service platform that is available anywhere and accessible at any time.

Make technology work for you

The industry will need to move away from reactivity and towards proactivity if it is to keep up with what customers expect.

Using proptech to meet customer expectations in areas such as repairs and maintenance – for example, implementing software that allows residents to track the progress of their repair and keeps them aware of maintenance or events around the building to increase the transparency of the process – frees up one of a block manager's most important assets: time. Reinvesting this time into building the relationships and creating the trust that residents require will allow technology to no longer be part of the problem when it comes to resident expectations, but part of the solution.

Managing residential blocks is a huge responsibility. You could be in charge of the health and safety of thousands of residents in one building alone. On top of that, you need to make sure that communal facilities are serviced regularly.

Manage proactive and reactive maintenance tasks, communicate with stakeholders and stay compliant easily with Fixflo's leasehold and block management solution.

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Feature: Customer Service

The Key to Great Communication

Written by Christopher Bevan, Commercial Director at 30Seconds Tech

For Managing Agents, reaching out and connecting with residents can be a big challenge.

One of the biggest complaints we hear in the property management industry is that there is a lack of communication between Managing Agents and their residents says Christopher Bevan. Luckily, with everyone having to spend more time at home at the moment, there's no better time to improve your engagement.

Unfortunately, there's no one size fits all approach when it comes to building relationships and creating content that hits the mark, but the good news is that a mixed medium approach is easy to implement and sees great results.

So, what is the best way to create outbound communications that reach the highest percentage of tenants at any one time?

Keeping things traditional

There is still a time and place for good old fashioned snail mail, or through the door communications. Some people connect well with this type of comms, because they like having a physical reminder to keep hold of, a call to action on paper. However, post from Managing Agents could look like spam, and the recipient might not bother to open it. If your important announcements are ending up in the bin, you may benefit from some other options.

Noticeboard updates are another traditional way to make contact, but it's a job in itself to manage their upkeep. Does your notice stand out against all the others? Is there any space left on the board? Will you remember to take down any out-of-date notices? What's the footfall like in the area? When you actually analyse the effectiveness of paper notices in this day and age, you may find that it isn't the most cost efficient or environmentally friendly option for you.

A more modern approach

One of the quickest ways to reach people is by email. You can personalise it, you can use generators to send them out at 'ideal' times of the day, but depending on your residents security settings, there's a high chance those emails will go straight to the junk folder, never to be seen again, not to mention the challenges of keeping an up to date email address for tenants moving in and out.

Lots of property management companies have made the move over to virtual platforms, such as an app or an online hub, to share information quickly, send out notifications pertaining to different events, or for their tenants to be informed of any issues concerning the building. However, as good as tenant portals are these days it is tough to get 100% of the building and visitors to actively engage with information a property manager needs to push out.

With all these elements combined, you can expect to see engagement rates of around 50%. This is huge as a standalone, but that means there are still ways to hit the other 50% of your tenants plus visitors.

So how else can Managing Agents close the gap?

Time to Innovate

Digital Display screens are the latest in innovative communications technology, enabling Managing Agents to provide both proactive and reactive updates to their residents, as well as including information to catch the eye. The latest NHS updates, BBC news and sports results, weather, and even something so simple as what time it is, can be displayed in high definition right next to the lifts. Important reminders can be interspersed throughout your choice of filler content, meaning that while your residents are waiting for the lift to hit the ground floor, they can catch up with the news of the day for their block.

It's eye-catching, it's engaging and it's effortless for residents. 30Seconds Tech, a Manchester-based commercial and residential Proptech specialists, are working hard to redefine tenant communications.

They've seen a 300% increase in their screen usage since the pandemic hit in 2020.

Each form of communication plays a big part in Managing Agents building relationships with their tenants, but no one form alone is perfect. Using a carefully crafted, well-branded combination of all of the above will help you to reach a higher percentage of your tenants, and ensure that no matter their communication preference, no one is left in the dark.

30Seconds Tech are passionate about implementing new and innovative methods in communication between manager and tenant within the residential and commercial property sector.

Our goal is simple. We aim to redefine how you communicate with your tenant. Furthermore, we strive to increase levels of engagement and experience during the dwell time of your clients, and push the overall satisfactory levels to new heights.

Our bespoke product is built completely in-house and operates as a gateway to a user-controlled digital notice-board platform, including portals to live news feeds, weather reports and local advertising.

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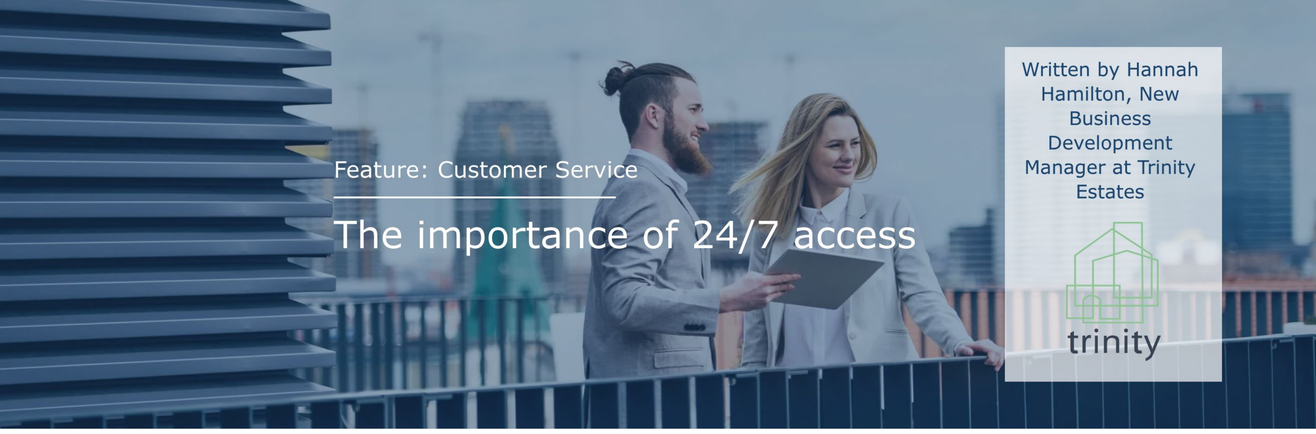


Feature: Customer Service

The importance of 24/7 access

Written by Hannah Hamilton, New Business Development Manager at Trinity Estates

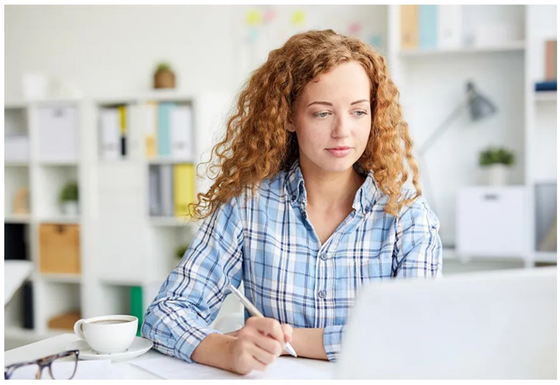
Proactive customer communication

The model of building ownership is changing, and residents are taking greater control. This is due, in the main, to Leasehold reform which should be celebrated as it will greatly improve the model under which our industry operates.

With increasing regulation and higher standards, there is now greater accountability on the manager and more redress when things go wrong which can only benefit the consumer and enhance the working relationships.

Trinity are in full support of the way the market is moving and with higher standards across the sector, choice is important to the customer. Trinity as a business, and our Property Managers, need to keep pace with the changing environment to give our customers confidence in our knowledge and how we operate. We train all our staff on the latest legislation and we remain proud to be fully ARMA-Q registered, being the first agent in the industry to gain full accreditation under the new ARMA-Q guidelines.

Attitudes and expectations of customers are shifting with the need to have 24/7 access to information and customer support. Modern lives can be stressful and busy enough without having to contact companies during the normal 9 to 5 office hours only. Technology now allows for more flexibility in communication and Trinity are moving with the times.



Accessible 24 hours a day

To communicate and be accessible 24 hours a day we need the right tools. Training of staff and digital innovation are paramount to improving services and the recent lockdown has shown us that technology can underpin the way society operates and how we support customers and colleagues alike.

We are constantly improving the way we communicate with our residents, contractors, and our staff to make these demands easier. We have introduced automated systems to reduce time and minimise delays and improve visibility.

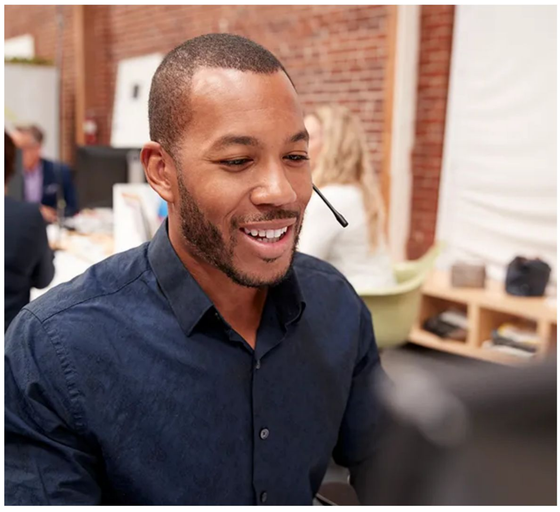
Via our website, on your computer, tablet, or phone, we have made it easier for customers to report maintenance issues by simply clicking the 'report a fault' button which takes you to our repair reporting system which also provides real-time updates and gives greater transparency. All the information is available for our customers to see without having to ask and wait for it.

Simple & Clear

In addition to reporting issues, customers can, check statements, pay bills and generally research service charges and leaseholder information at a time that suits them with the option to elect to receive updates.

For our properties with Resident Management Companies (RMC), it provides a simple and clear way for the RMC Directors to keep updated on the status of all issues within their property via the RMC portal. This provides a simplistic way to drive information direct to our customers.

If our customers prefer to speak to one of our dedicated customer support team our lines are open from 9 am to 5.15 Monday to Friday. If you have an emergency issue outside of those hours, you will be directed to our dedicated emergency out of hours team. Alternatively customers can contact their dedicated property manager who will live local to their sites and will have a good understanding of local needs and will use local contractors to do the work.



The customer service we provide is affected by how proactive, rather than reactive we are. At Trinity we are confident we have the right tools and technology in place with the right people to deliver a first-class service and support to the industry and residential customers wherever they are based in England and Wales.

Trinity Estates Property Management Ltd is part of the Trinity Property Group Ltd which has been established for 20 years and has grown to manage over 80,000 properties with another 50,000 properties committed to our management.

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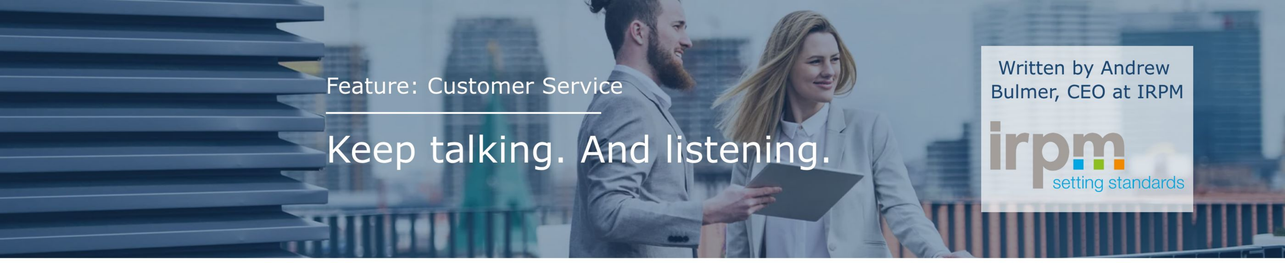


Feature: Customer Service

Keep talking. And listening.

Written by Andrew Bulmer, CEO at IRPM

IRPM CEO Andrew Bulmer tells us why communication is the key to great customer service

A decade ago, a great property manager was one who could demonstrate strong technical skills delivered efficiently within budget. In the last few years our sector has undergone a huge cultural shift and today's clients and residents expect a whole lot more from their agents. Property managers are still expected to possess a forensic understanding of how leases and buildings work, to keep blocks running efficiently, to be compliant with all the relevant legislation and to set and work within realistic budgets. But what customers increasingly expect from their property agents in addition to all that is, we are told, excellent service.

Customer service, which we wrap up into 'Customer and consumer' is one of the IRPM's 4 Elements of professional property management. This aspect of service delivery is about a great deal more than just responding rapidly to enquiries and providing a contact for complaints.

Developing strong relationships with clients and customers for me has four components

Competence.

Doing the basics well. I.e., being a competent, qualified professional

Creating trust.

I.e., behaving ethically and being transparent about what you do and why.

Having empathy.

There are some genuinely bad people in the world, but not many. Mostly, we are all just trying to rub along without too much grief. It's not easy when homes and money, both of which have star billing in the pantheon of emotive triggers, are our subject.

Communication.

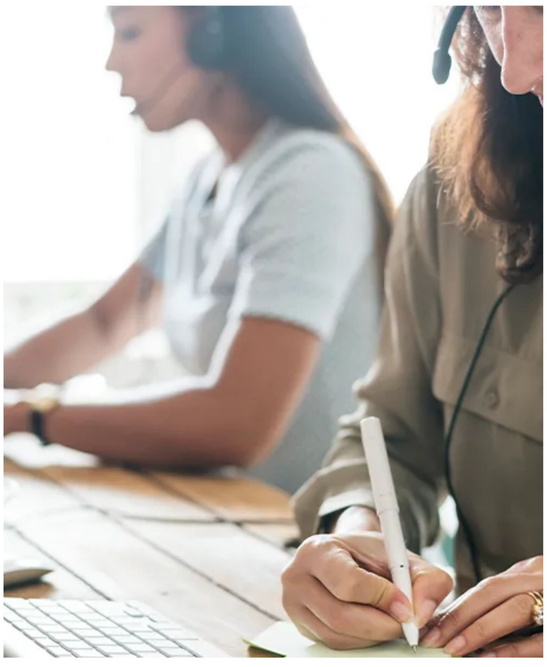
We've gone beyond 'say what you do' into a more complex world of different channels carrying information, and sometimes disinformation, in all directions. Mastery of communication is key to demonstrating competence, conveying empathy and securing trust.

These things are fundamental to customer service.

Our clients and customers inhabit a fast-paced digital environment where companies like Amazon, Uber and Netflix can deliver a virtually seamless service and respond instantly to queries and this is what consumers now expect from all providers.

Residents expect to be given open and easy access to information about their block, rather than it simply resting in the hands of property managers. With so much digital technology now at our fingertips, property managers can communicate with their customers more easily than ever before. We need to embrace digitisation to help us pin down what our customers want so we can develop better services and build trust.

Customer service in our industry is more nuanced than in sectors such as retail. Technical competence is key but first class service delivery also encompasses resident engagement, relationship building - which we all know isn't always easy - and keeping the lines of communication open, even when there is bad news to be delivered. This is the human face of property management and it has really come into its own in the last 12 months.



Customer service has been elevated to prime position in the property management skill set during the Covid-19 pandemic. With residents in lockdown spending more time at home than ever before and conscious of every property niggle, a fast and efficient response has been key to ensuring customer satisfaction, not easy when your own world of work is grappling with home working, while your contractor has just gone down with Covid.

This is a tough time for everyone.

Plus, many leaseholders are also under huge stress from building safety risks and the financial strain of waking watches and paying for remediation. Small wonder they can get super-stressed. The property managers who really stand out to their customers can be the ones who have gone beyond just keeping buildings clean, compliant and well-maintained and have offered support to residents who are struggling, sometimes while struggling themselves. All that is about much more than just putting a process in place. It means embracing the soft skills around trust and empathy that are harder to learn - and to teach.

Perhaps the key to all this is to scrap the phrase 'customer service' altogether and focus on customer relations instead. After all, that's really what we're talking about here. If we can put ourselves in the shoes of our clients and leaseholders and genuinely understand what they need from us – beyond the practical skills that all professionals can provide - that's when building management services will really be moved up the value chain. That way lies success - and professional managing agents, as well as their client base, will benefit.

The Institute of Residential Property Management (IRPM) is the professional body for residential property management specialists and provides nationally accredited qualifications, guidance on career pathways and resources, to assist property managers within their roles.

IRPM is dedicated to supporting, building, and setting the standards of the profession.

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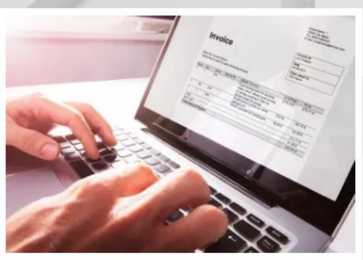

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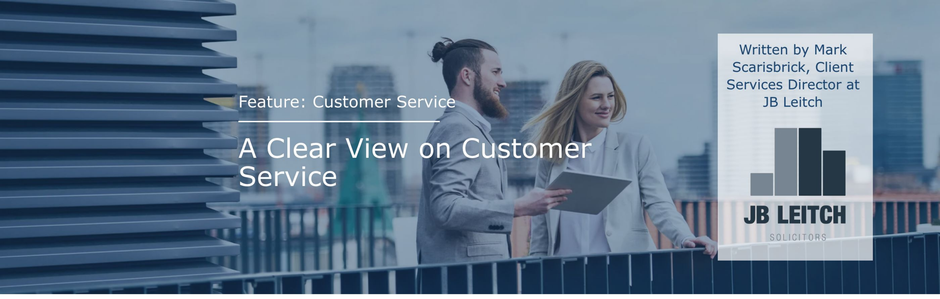

Feature: Customer Service

A Clear View on Customer Service

Written by Mark Scarisbrick, Client Services Director at JB Leitch

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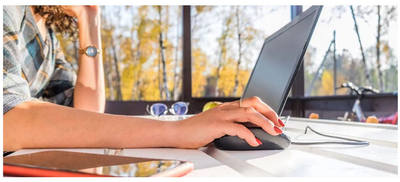
How Good Communications & Engagement Have Been Critical in Providing Effective Client Services

Almost a year ago exactly, I provided an article for Flat Living on the importance of building and maintaining a positive client experience. In the twelve months since then, the arrival and disruption wrought by coronavirus has tested these principles thoroughly, and in this follow up piece I can hopefully illustrate that the elements we discussed have proven to be a bedrock in our ability to provide continuity, resilience and reassurance during this turbulent time.

In our previous article we highlighted that engagement, communication, knowledge, guidance and consistency are some of the key factors that shape client perceptions, create a lasting impression and inspire confidence.

Given the uncertainty and change which accompanied emergency legislation, particularly with regard to the actions landlords and managing agents could continue with, analysis on the implications of change - with clear guidance - became paramount.



We adopted a pro-active and timely plan for client communications and engagement, by listening to the key questions being asked by clients, concurrently monitoring legislative change, adding the insight of our experts and drawing these together into an ongoing suite of guidance notes and industry updates covering the coronavirus legislation and impacts on property management, comment on the Law Commission leasehold reform proposals, the Building and Fire Safety Bills, Courts, Tribunals and forfeiture, property maintenance, arrears recovery, the EWS1 process, Insurance and the Building Safety Fund amongst others. Frequent, direct communication enabled these supporting resources to be focused, relevant and of practical benefit to clients in modifying operations in unprecedented circumstances.

With clarity also comes assurance.

When the Coronavirus Act (2020) was introduced, the government clearly indicated that frequent communications between landlords and leaseholders would be essential in addressing any issues concerning ongoing payments and the provision of services. The implications were broad ranging – covering the need to maintain service charge payments to access to property for urgent repairs and moratoria on forfeiture. Uncertainty and risk were compounded by confusion. With many organisations rightly concerned about their ongoing viability and revenue streams, not to mention the wellbeing of their staff and clients, we also provided guidance on the process of communication and engagement, from the validity of notices to use of electronic communications. Importantly, a key message of assurance was in reiterating that many core operational activities would remain unchanged despite the upheaval. With many others advising changes to practice and operations on a wholesale basis, we urged caution, balance and where practical, continuity.

Our aim was to mitigate costly - and potentially needless – disruption, and support managing the expectations of clients and in turn their leaseholders. In considering what makes good "customer service" we can ask ourselves – and keep asking - key questions: do we provide value - and added value? Do our levels of client retention reflect this? Do the endorsements we receive validate our approach? Perhaps another key question to ask is whether we continue to learn and adapt, to not only meet, but anticipate change.

Legal 500

Despite the challenges, last year saw JB Leitch elevated to Tier 3 status in the Legal 500, in no small part supported by the testimonials provided by our clients and the commitment of our team. We are pleased to say that our client retention remains strong. Many of us will know that the last year has necessitated and tested our ability to adapt, maybe a point to reflect on will be whether we have acted to innovate as well as mitigate.

The LEGAL 500
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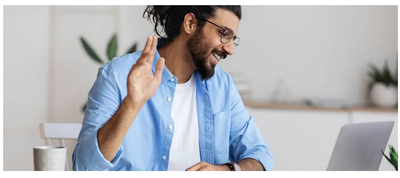
2021

Digital Connectivity and Digital Service Provision

Understandably, many will have been focused on the consolidation of resource and operational activity. Undoubtedly, we have all realised the place of digital connectivity and digital service provision. In recent months we have expanded our online service offering to provide ID verification services to assist land registry applications. This is an innovative approach provided in response to changing legislation, but in the context of customer service, offering a cost effective and convenient alternative to interpersonal engagement in a covid-secure fashion. As we look ahead, the increasing place of digital offers us further considerations on maintaining good customer service.



On face value, there is the perceived dilemma of digital services offering immediacy and rapidity, but reducing the quality and extent of interaction in personal client / customer relations. The answer is probably in balancing the best of both. Personal engagement with customers can be a platform to signpost and guide customers to digital services, advocating the advantages whilst providing direct support both before and afterward. Greater operational efficiency meets increased customer convenience and control.

In summary, the coming months will continue to provide us all with challenges as we navigate our businesses and support customers out of the current crisis. We have found that recognising the core principles of continued engagement and frequent - meaningful - communication have helped give our clients a clearer view on the way ahead.

About the Author

Regarded with respect and affection by the JB Leitch team and clients alike, Mark has been an integral part of the JB Leitch team for over 20 years. As Client Services Director, no detail is too small or unimportant under Mark's 'hands on' approach to ensuring that client expectations are exceeded on a daily basis.

With vast knowledge and experience of clients' requirements and granular expertise in our operations, Mark has consistently ensured that all matters received from clients are managed to the highest and most efficient standard. A key to Mark's success is not only in providing rigour and a culture where quality is a prerequisite, but by developing and maintaining relationships with clients that shows an innate understanding of their operations, objectives and consequently, how services should be truly tailored to need.

Alongside business owner and principle solicitor Jonathan Leitch, Mark has ensured that JB Leitch has become the best in class and go-to provider of legal support across the property management industry. Mark's dedication to excellence, efficiency and above all results, is complemented by his integrity, good humour and warmth – factors that have made Mark a familiar name and memorable partner for clients over many years.

JB Leitch are specialist solicitors for freehold investor and property management companies.

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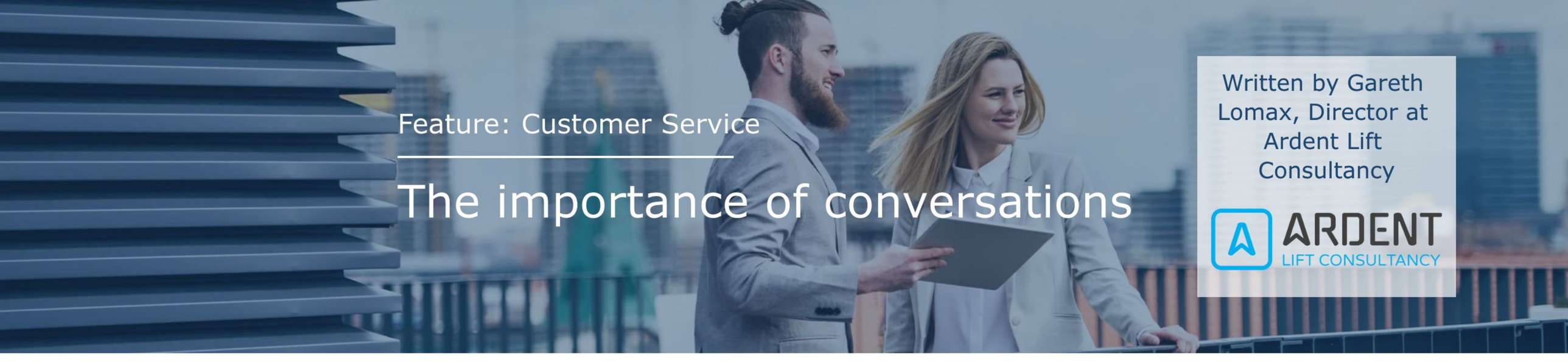

Feature: Customer Service

The importance of conversations

Written by Gareth Lomax, Director at Ardent Lift Consultancy

When Ardent Lift Consultancy was formed in 2012, customer service was identified as a key consideration for the business. The thrill of getting a new client is always rewarding and building on the initial introduction to our business is a priority for the team. By working on these relationships, we find that our client retention rate is excellent.

One of the original initiatives we introduced back then was a ‘hot line’ for Property Managers to contact us on a Monday (11am to 1pm) to discuss their lift issues and obtain free, impartial advice from our team. This approach worked for an emerging business and the mindset has remained with us to this day.

Whilst most of our day-to-day communications are conducted over email these days, there is no real substitute for a conversation with a customer, whether it is someone you have known for years, or someone new. Both parties get more from a conversation than they do over email and this one-to-one connection helps to build on these relationships.

This has never been more applicable than during the lockdown periods we have all encountered over the last 12 months. Teams became fragmented working from home. The isolation this has brought on has been felt by us all in some way, shape or form and a 10-minute chat to break up a morning can help enormously.

Whilst the ‘hot line’ initiative is not something we outwardly advertise any more, we do underline to our clients (existing and new) that we would rather spend 10 minutes talking through a potential problem with them in a bid to resolve it, than have them spend hours looking for an answer we may already know.

Consultations

We have found that face to face consultations with stakeholders has worked extremely well for our projects. During these consultations:

- We give the stakeholders the relevant information on the upcoming project.
- People with a vested interest in the project are given an opportunity to ask questions to gain clarity.
- Issues can be highlighted allowing us to offer a resolution.
- The programme timings are discussed and agreed upon.

If we did not hold these consultations, risks and issues could escalate and become bigger problems further along into the project. Having consultations improves transparency, promotes buy-in, and instils confidence in the project’s successful delivery.

We are committed to lead the way in customer service in the industry and continually improving in this area as we seek better ways of working.

As independent lift consultants, ARDENT Lift Consultancy recognise the importance of offering unbiased and accurate advice to our clients. This has developed mutual respect between our team of lift consultants and those we work with.

Whether working with architects looking to build practicality into their vision, or a property manager with time constraints seeking immediate solutions, we totally understand individual client requirements and provide timely, well considered and accurate advice.

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Feature: Customer Service

Has the pandemic rewritten the rules of customer service?

Written by Daniel Bull, Client Service Executive at 4site Consulting

4site Consulting Ltd

Daniel Bull from 4site Consulting discusses how his role in Client Services has had to adapt over the last year.

Over the past year we have all undoubtedly seen a huge shift in the way we live and the way we work. Many of us are still working from our homes and this has had a huge impact in the way we communicate with our team members, clients and customers.

But, has the way in which we experience and provide customer service changed drastically due to the pandemic? Daniel Bull, a vital part of the 4site Consulting Client Services Team, has discussed how his role in customer service has had to adapt to the current situation.

What is your role with 4site Consulting?

At 4site Consulting I am a Client Services Executive. I liaise with all of our clients to provide support and offer guidance in relation to the health and safety of their buildings.

My day-to-day responsibilities range from answering questions and queries regarding our services and the industry, providing training and workshops, and preparing and issuing quotations.

Working in a predominantly client facing role, how have you had to adapt due to COVID-19?

It was around this time last year that we were preparing for the first national lockdown.

As a company, we have pretty much been working from home ever since; with the exception of our Advisors and Surveyors who have been carrying out essential safety services in a COVID safe way throughout the pandemic!

But for those of us that work in the office, we have been working from our homes for almost a year now and have of course had to adapt the ways in which we work because of this.

In my role, this meant that team meetings became 'Teams' meetings, asking a colleague in the office for help became a quick phone call, and catch ups with clients over a coffee are now done virtually.

How have you responded to this?

Since we can't meet face-to-face, 4site have started to run free Technical Workshops via video call with our clients as a way to catch up and discuss some of the latest industry updates such as in relation to the Building Safety Bill and the Fire Safety Bill.

This way we ensure that our clients are kept in the loop and have a way to voice any questions or thoughts they may have on certain industry updates.

What has worked well whilst working from home?

Like many of us, I have enjoyed the luxury of not having to get up as early, and missing out on two lots of rush hour traffic five days a week!

Personally, I have felt that my productivity levels have remained high. After all, we are a species known to adapt to change!

Likewise, getting to see my 4-year-old daughter grow up - which I would have otherwise normally missed out on - has helped me maintain a more positive outlook!

My team and I have stayed in touch throughout, and we have found that even simply saying good morning to each other every day helps us to stay connected.

What have you struggled with most?

The realisation of how much we rely on technology to allow us to function definitely hit home (excuse the pun)!

Working from home meant that I was reliant on my router to be able to work as fast as me, whilst still maintaining the power to provide the internet so my wife could do her work, and so that my son could play his games.

It was also further irritating not being able to have face-to-face meetings with our clients. Web meetings, whilst convenient in these times, led to several issues such as hearing the background noise of children screaming or similar, and not forgetting the most used phrase of 2020: 'You're on mute.'

Do you think that customer service in general will have changed when we do get back to 'normal'?

I think customer service will always have the same ethos, but the way it is delivered will have changed undoubtedly due to the pandemic.

Customer service isn't just about how the customer is treated, but also how the business presents itself throughout the entirety of the customer journey.

Higher levels of cleanliness are always great to witness and will hopefully stay around long-term! Things such as mask wearing, distancing and virus-related signage will have of course affected people's customer journey and customer experience throughout the pandemic; particularly in shops and restaurants.

However, there is no reason why we cannot provide the same high level of customer service whilst working from home as we do in the office. At the end of the day, we can only do the best we can to try and maintain some form of normality, and whilst I continue to be in a customer service role, I will strive to ensure that all of our clients feel as assured as they can be.

4site Consulting Ltd

4site Consulting provide independent residential and commercial assessments and surveys for owners and managers of property.

A family run company at its core, 4site Consulting completes in excess of 9,000 property visits each year for property professionals across the UK. They employ all advisors directly, never sub-contracting, to control and maintain consistency and quality of reporting, providing the best service and keeping prices realistic and stable.

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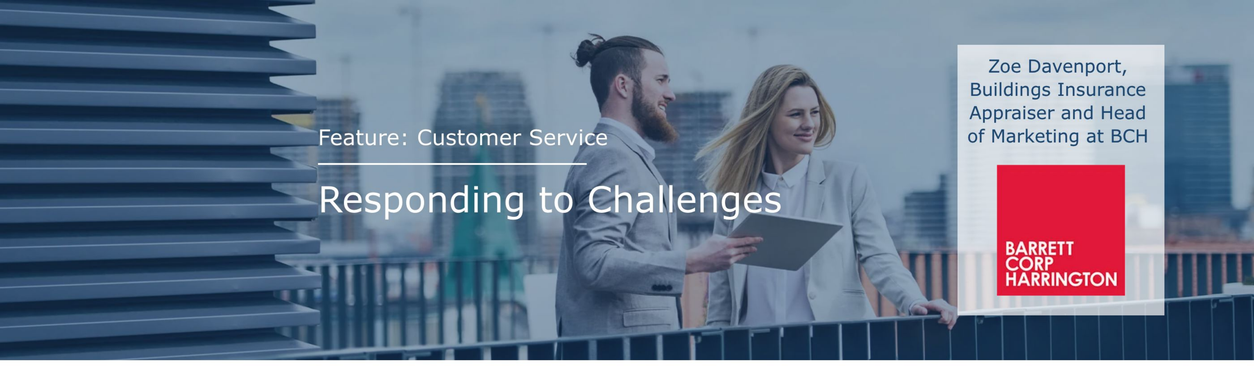

Feature: Customer Service

Responding to Challenges

Zoe Davenport, Buildings Insurance Appraiser and Head of Marketing at BCH

This month's topic of 'Customer Service' coincides with the first anniversary of Covid restrictions being imposed. Here at BCH we are proud of how we have responded to challenges of lockdown and restricted methods of working which has enabled us to maintain our high standards of service. We are delighted to say we have lost no customers in this trying period and indeed our customer base has grown significantly.

Interested to hear our staff and customers opinions of BCH, we commissioned Investors in People to undertake a thorough survey of our business. Amongst other things, the survey showed us that we respond quickly and are readily available to deal with queries, which our customers like. Building upon this, we will also strive to directly communicate any significant changes to insurance values following our surveys.

We appreciate the impact a significant change to value can have and are happy to help customers understand the various reasons why they might have found themselves in the situation where they are underinsured. We regularly look at the content of reports of other surveyors as the clue for inaccuracy may lie within. We see incorrect measurement and the liberal use of inappropriate rebuilding values or standard rates.

Understanding the origins of differences is one thing, communicating to the customers in terms they understand is important and a skill which we have honed over many years. (Quite honestly, with us all working largely from home at the moment, we're grateful for the contact!) We prioritise quick and clear communication with our customers, treating them how we like to be treated by our own suppliers, so it is good to hear from Investors in People, that we were succeeding in delivering this.

It's just not the same

Though we have continued attending sites and conducting surveys, albeit in a socially-distanced manner, with full PPE, our reflections this month, remind us how much we miss seeing our customers.

In-person training for property managers and brokers and attending and presenting at conferences were all halted. Much like the rest of the world, a lot of this migrated to Teams and Zoom, but it is just not the same! Events are booking back in our diaries and we are very much looking forwards to getting out there and (safely) seeing our customers, in person, face to face, and dare we say it maskless, in the Autumn (all being well)!

Benchmark, our recently launched e-valuation service, offers those insuring single blocks or conversions with current values of £5m an option for a totally desk based survey which is becoming increasingly accepted by insurers and brokers. With a fee of £125 plus VAT, it is causing quite a stir in the market.

Using our vast data base of full, site-based assessments and many other data sources, the new e-valuation service has been years in the making and is being launched into the flats market at just the right time to help customers get their insurance values right as insurers get tough on underinsurance. Sitting alongside our full site- based service, we think BCH is offering the 'best of both worlds' to its customers.

The customer is always right, but that doesn't mean their current sums insured are.

Revaluing a property for insurance purposes continues to be essential, and we are offering more ways of revising a buildings sum insured than ever before.

About the Author

This article was written by Zoe Davenport. Having joined BCH in 2013, she continues to work across all of our product lines. Zoe splits her time between attended appraisals and marketing.

If you would like to speak with Zoe directly (who, having spent a year working from home alone, would be very happy to hear from you), please email her using this link.

If you're looking for a practice that focuses exclusively on buildings insurance valuations, you've come to the right place. That's all we do and we do it very well.

We survey all types of property from private homes and blocks of flats to commercial and industrial premises. And that includes historical and Grade II* Listed buildings.

In order to continue offering a first-rate service, we always welcome feedback and are happy as always to discuss any queries you may have.

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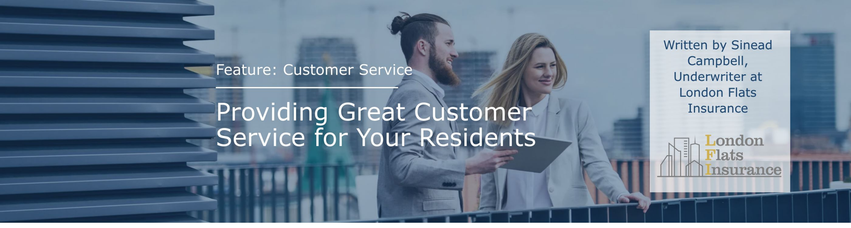


Feature: Customer Service

Providing Great Customer Service for Your Residents

Written by Sinead Campbell, Underwriter at London Flats Insurance

London Flats Insurance understands the importance of providing excellent customer service to ensure repeat business. We experience different levels of customer service in our day to day lives - everywhere from a trip to the Post Office to calling our broadband provider (shudder!).

The difference outstanding customer service can make to your view of a company, your loyalty to a provider and not to mention your mood for the rest of the day is enormous. It has the power to leave us feeling valued, heard and happy with an outcome.

Poor customer service on the other hand can leave even the most mild-mannered customer absolutely enraged, ready to close their account and prepared to tell their tale of woe to any and all who will listen. Not great for them, and definitely not great for business.

As a Managing Agent for a block or as Director of a Residents' Management Company (RMC), your approach to customer service can make the difference between happy, flexible residents and ones that want to call a mutiny and will make mountains out of molehills wherever possible.

Going Above and Beyond

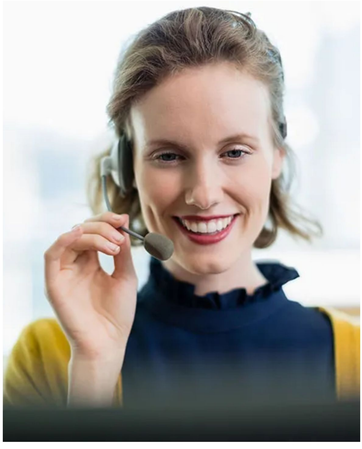
A large part of customer service is simply about making the customer happy wherever possible.

While not every issue will be fixable at a wave of your magic wand, it's your willingness to listen, to act wherever possible and to give your resident the time they need to feel heard and understood that make all the difference.

No-one can work all the hours under the sun or control everything outside of their remit as well as in. But your attitude and approach can either leave an impression of going above and beyond, or just give a sense of mediocrity.

For example, here at London Flats Insurance, we will often go out of our way to make our customers happy by approaching insurance companies to ask for special discounts and tailoring our cover to suit specific properties.

In addition to this, it is not uncommon for businesses to point customers in the direction of a more suitable company if they cannot provide the services the client is looking for. This comes from a genuine desire to help the client, even without having any benefit to the company itself.



Communication

Outstanding communication is absolutely vital for great customer service.

How many times have you spoken to a company representative on the phone, been promised an update on your situation within 24 hours and not heard a thing until you call back, angry, 3 days later to explain the whole situation again to a different person? Absolutely enraging isn't it?

Effective time management, diary reminders and a genuine interest in the outcome of complaints will all go towards a better experience for your customer, and for you!

Clear, concise communication is also key. Jargon-heavy conversations will alienate customers who are not familiar with the terminology used within your field. Giving too much detailed information can be overwhelming for some, while not enough detail can cause a lack of trust in others- get to know your customers and change your approach accordingly.

Courteous, friendly and professional communication should be the expected norm when communicating with clients. This is the best way of ensuring a productive and mutually respectful exchange that will show the client that they are in good hands and set the foundation for a relationship that will last.

Making Sure Out of Hours Emergencies are Handled Effectively

This can be something of a challenge.

RMC Directors and Managing Agents can't be by their phones 24/7, and the vast majority of out of hours calls will involve a high-stakes incident and emotional, stressed residents- it's a hell of a lot to deal with (especially at 2am).

Here's a typical one: a burst pipe discovered in the middle of the night. A panicked resident will pick up the phone and call their Director or Managing Agent. They are, of course, unavailable and water continues to pour into the flat (you can read our article on how to reduce water damage here). This type of situation leads to frustrated, distressed lessees and ever-increasing levels of damage.

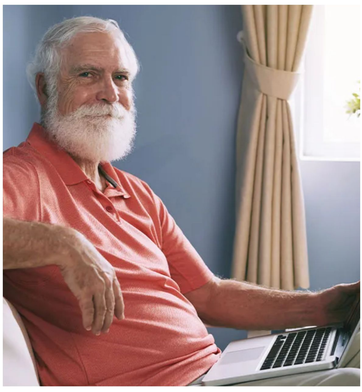
Very often, the insurance broker or insurance company doesn't hear anything about the burst pipe until they receive a claim for the resulting damage. That means the single biggest factor driving the cost of that claim (the length of time the water is pouring into the residence) is completely out of their control.

This is why an out of hours emergency assistance policy is vital.

Swiftly responding to emergencies, whether insured or not, will help mitigate losses at the earliest possible opportunity.

To continue with our example; water is discovered pouring through the ceiling on a Saturday evening and the lessee in the flat below doesn't know where to find the stopcock so he calls the out of hours emergency assistance service. Within two hours, a plumber is on site to trace and repair the damaged pipe and stop the flow of water. As a result, the total cost of the damage was limited to £500.

In comparison, the water could have been left flowing until Monday morning, leading to much more serious repairs and emergency accommodation being required. This cost could be anywhere between £5000 and £25,000.



Our Approach to Customer Service

We work hard to ensure that we adhere to exceptional customer service standards and offer bespoke insurance policies which put our customers first. Our team are all specialists, so you can be sure you're in great hands and we will always have you covered, no matter what.

- 24-hour claims line in case of emergency
- Cloud-based portals which have been specifically designed to give you somewhere secure to store your insurance documentation and communicate with residents and emergency contractors
- All our insurance policies and products are underwritten by the most reliable A-rated insurance companies in the UK
- Whilst our products are of the highest quality, we have worked hard to ensure our prices are still competitive in the market
- Our team comprises of insurance specialists who are professional, friendly and will go above and beyond to ensure you are satisfied with our services

We invest a lot of time in ensuring our brands are something we can be proud of, and we think that starts with you. The happiness of our customers is paramount to how we measure our own success, which is why we work so hard to make sure you're happy.

At London Flats Insurance, we only provide policies for blocks of flats and apartments, which means that we are specialists in this field.

We know that each block of flats is different, which is why every flats insurance policy we offer is tailor-made to suit you, your block and its residents. Plus, we always work with A-rated insurance companies, so you can be sure that our insurance policies are great solution when insuring your block of flats.

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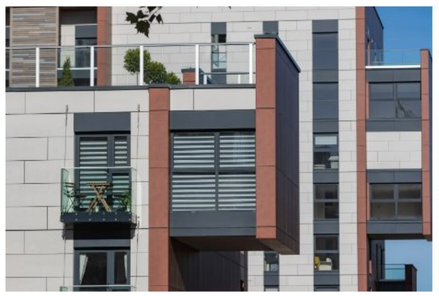


Buildings Insurance

Learn more

Directors & Officers Insurance

Learn more

Terrorism Insurance

Learn more

Lift Insurance & Inspection

Learn more

What Insurance does a Residents Management Company need?

Written by Rich Smeeton
at Block in a Box

Block in a Box provides a range of services and solutions for those that self-manage their blocks of flats.

Taking on the responsibility of organising the insurance for your block can be understandably daunting, so the team at Block in a Box have teamed up with Flat Living Insurance to make sure you're covered.

Before you find yourself needing to make a claim, have a read of our essential cover guide below.

Residential Buildings Insurance

Step one should be to ensure that your Buildings Sum Insured is up to date and accurate.

Tip: This is not the same as the price paid for the property or a current market valuation.

Your Buildings Sum Insured is the maximum amount of money your insurer will be willing to pay out to rebuild your property from the ground up (to its current design and to current specs) should the very worst happen. This valuation includes demolishing and clearing away any remaining structures before rebuilding with modern materials and professional labour.

The cost of materials and labour continue to rise despite any setbacks the property market may be experiencing so it's never safe to assume that if the market is slow, your reinstatement costs will be lower.

Your property should be re-valued at least every 5 years by a Chartered Valuation Surveyor. They will take into account any improvements made to the property since the last valuation as well as the current costs involved in reinstatement.

Tip: Many people assume that is the cost of repairing their property falls below the sum insured that the full amount needed will be automatically paid. This is not the case. Pay-outs are based on the level of cover being sufficient to reinstate the whole property.

Residents' Management Company (RMC) directors should always check that the description of the property insured is accurate and includes cover for the outbuildings, gates, fences, underground pipes and cables that the RMC is responsible for insuring.

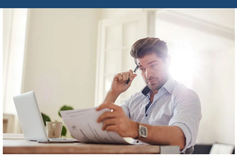
Also, most policies are index-linked to ensure the sums insured remain adequate – do confirm with your insurer that this is the case.

Step two is also of utmost importance - check your potential policy wording!

Not all policies are the same, and the company offering the cheapest deal may not be offering the same level of cover as a slightly more expensive option. That could mean the difference between your leaseholders being out of pocket in the worst-case scenario or being properly covered- the latter definitely makes the higher premium justifiable.

So, before you commit to a policy, check that it includes the following:

- "All Risks" cover (including subsidence)
- Employers Liability Insurance
- Public and Property Owners Liability cover
- Lessees' fixtures and improvements
- Alternative Accommodation or Loss of Rent
- Loss or unauthorised use of Metered Utilities (Water)
- Cost of tracing leakage of oil or water
- Loss of or Damage to contents in communal areas
- Damage to underground Pipes and Cables



- Unrestricted cover on vacant or rented flats or apartments
- Machinery break down
- Damage to fixed glass, shower trays and sanitary fittings
- Storm damage to fences and gates
- Legal expenses
- Replacement of communal door locks following theft of keys
- Personal accident cover for voluntary workers
- Fidelity guarantee

Tip: Most residential buildings insurance policies have a minimum of £1,000 subsidence excess, however, the excess for all other damage is usually negotiable.

Head to our website for an outline of our buildings insurance offering, specifically designed for blocks of flats.

In addition to your buildings insurance, there are some specialist areas of cover that RMC's should also be aware of:

Directors and Officers

RMC Directors and/or Officers can be held personally liable for their actions while working on behalf of leaseholders. While this may seem unfair when most directors are handling things on behalf of their fellow leaseholders out of a desire to help, sometimes things can go sour- especially if finances are impacted due to RMC decisions.

Taking out Directors and Officers Liability insurance provides cover for defence costs and/or compensation for civil liability charges relating to a "wrongful act" in connection with RMC matters.

Such acts are defined as any actual or alleged:

- Breach of trust
- Breach of warranty
- Neglect
- Error
- Omission
- Misstatement
- Misleading statement

Tip: Different policies may contain different definitions so do read the small print.

There will also be Limitations and Exclusions to this type of cover- for example:

- Dishonesty, Fraud, Malicious Conduct or Personal Profit
- Bodily injury (other than defence costs)
- Property damage
- Fines, penalties and damages
- Pollution

Here's a brief outline of an example claim:

Leaseholders of a block of flats successfully brought an action against the residents committee for failing to appoint a building company in a timely fashion to repair external brickwork on the building.

Damage had been caused following a heavy rainstorm and reported to the committee, however repair work had not commenced several months later, when a subsequent rainstorm caused further damage.

This is the kind of situation that could have been successfully "managed" had the committee in question put an appropriate insurance policy in place. You can find out about our Directors and Officers cover here.

Got a Lift?

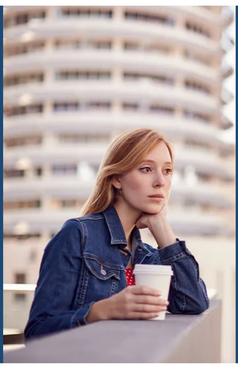
You'll need Engineering Insurance and Inspection cover then.

While most blocks' buildings insurance policies will cover damage to passenger lifts as a result of an insured peril (such as fire, accidental damage and malicious damage), these policies do not normally extend to damage caused by the breakdown of the passenger lift or to the legal requirement to have lifts regularly inspected.

Enter the specialist Engineering Policy, which many of the specialist insurers offer.

These policies are designed to help property owners comply with their legal obligation to have their lift inspected by a competent authority at six-monthly intervals. A record of these inspections must be kept and/or a certificate issued.

You can find more details re the cover Flat Living Insurance can provide here.



Terrorism: Could Your Building be a Target?

Unfortunately, this is something all RMC directors must consider.

Even in the quietest, most rural areas, terrorism is a real threat and, during the untold stress of being involved in an incident, the last thing your leaseholders will need is to be told that their insurance doesn't stretch to this sort of situation.

It's tempting to skip this policy to save a little on your premiums- we understand that. But at the same time, ignoring the potential for your building to be affected could cost your leaseholders their homes.

The threat could be indirect; individual residents could be threatened if, for example, they are employed by a laboratory that uses animals for medical testing purposes. Or the threat could be right next door - no leaseholder will advertise the fact that they're building a bomb in their living room after all.

A standard buildings insurance policy will not provide cover for a terrorist attack and, however unlikely it may appear, if an incident did occur and there was no insurance in place, the RMC directors could be held responsible.

Tip: Don't forget that directors have personal responsibility for their decisions and actions within the Residents Management Company. Taking out the appropriate cover is a small price to pay in comparison to risking your personal assets.

Be careful not to leave yourself or your residents high and dry. Working with Flat Living Insurance to ensure your building is covered in every way it should be takes the hassle out of this huge responsibility and will help you avoid any potential pitfalls further down the line.

Head to the Flat Living Insurance website for details of the policies covered above as well as other products such as Cyber Liability Insurance, Out of Hours Assistance, Roads and Private Estates policies and more. You can also find details of the services we provide such as Manage Your Block and more about Block in a Box- tools specifically designed to make the lives of RMC directors simpler and easier.

Block in a Box was been created to assist self-managed Residents' Management Companies, Right to Manage Companies and Residents' Associations, their blocks of flats and the leaseholders that live in them by providing a mix-and-match toolbox supplying all the services you need.

We designed it with a steering committee of directors and association members to provide something that would truly help.

Blockinabox.co.uk | info@blockinabox.co.uk | 0333 015 4145

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Consent to Leaseholders and Qualifying Covenants

Written by Liz Rowen, Legal Director & Head of Residential Property Management at Keebles LLP

Landlords must give their consent to leaseholders in certain circumstances, such as the keeping of pets and making alterations to the property.

Liz Rowen, Legal Director and Head of the Residential Property Management team at UK-top 200 Yorkshire law firm Keebles LLP, explains how to deal with consent and why it should be given promptly.

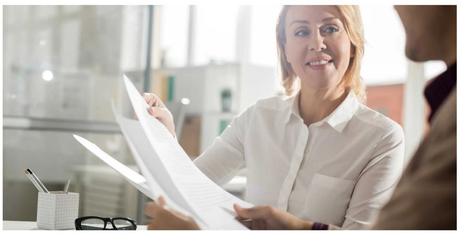
In certain circumstances the leaseholder may have to obtain the consent of their landlord or management company before they carry out a certain activity. These are often referred to as qualifying covenants.

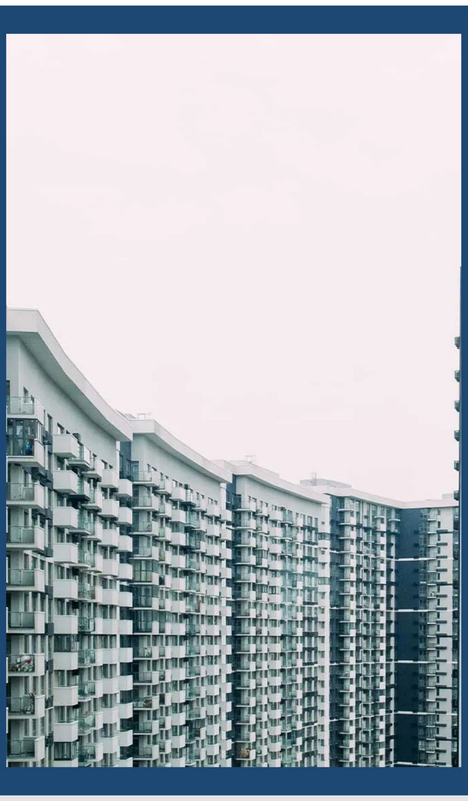
Qualifying covenants come in a number of forms but typically relate to the dealing of the property such as what happens on a sale, alterations and the keeping of pets. Often, such covenants provide that consent will not be unreasonably withheld or delayed.

Dealings

Where a lease sets out that a landlord's consent to assignment or underletting is required, there is some statutory protection for them in the form of Sections 1 and 2 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1988 (LTA 1988).

Under this act, a landlord has a duty to give consent, provide the leaseholder with a written notice of their decision and pass on any application to appropriate people.





Reasonable time

Section 1(3)(A) LTA 1998 also sets out that where an application of consent is served, the landlord then owes a duty to the tenant to respond 'within a reasonable time'.

What is deemed to be a reasonable time will vary from case to case and will depend on the facts of each one, but the number of court cases would suggest that a landlord should be responding in a matter of days rather than months. Clearly more complex requests or transactions will warrant more time, but leaseholders should be responded to as quickly as possible when consents in relation to dealings are required.

Similarly, where a lease provides for the landlord's consent, that consent should not unreasonably be withheld. Customer service is key here and therefore acknowledging the receipt of a request and having a time frame in which to deal with it is important.

If after the submission of a request for a consent, the leaseholder is not responded to in a timely fashion, they may take the view that silence equates to consent being unreasonably withheld.

The leaseholder may then look to apply to the county court seeking a declaration that consent has been unreasonably withheld. Court proceedings can be time consuming and costly and therefore it is best to avoid them where possible.

Clearly there are circumstances where a landlord may wish to withhold consent and, in these cases, we suggest that detailed reasons for withholding it are sent as quickly as possible. Time is of the essence and therefore a prompt and clear response should always be given.

If you would like to discuss any of the issues above or have any other questions around how Keebles can help you, contact the firm's Residential Property Management team today.

As leading experts within the sector, we understand the services that you require, and we work with you at every stage to achieve the right outcome.

We pride ourselves in our expertise within the field but also going above and beyond for our clients and the positive partnerships we have with the people we work with.

Not only do our range of services make us your ideal legal partner, our Residential Property Management team will guide you through every step of the way.

keebles.com | liz.rowen@keebles.com | 01302 308675

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Getting the best from your Insurance Broker

Written by Darren Bagnall, Managing Director Flat Living Insurance

FlatLiving INSURANCE

Darren Bagnall, Managing Director of Flat Living Insurance explains how choosing the best protection for your property is vital and how to get the best from your insurance broker or intermediary.

As a director or officer of a Residents' Management Company (RMC) choosing the right policies for your block is essential. Your fellow leaseholders are relying on your judgement to ensure that, should the worst happen, your block will be covered.

Insurance policy details and quotes are readily available online so it can be tempting to make your decisions based on website content alone to get the job done, but the process is not that straight forward.

How do you know which policies to go for?

How do you know for sure that the policy sat conveniently in your online basket is really going to provide the cover you need and how do you make sense of all the small print?

The solution is of course to go through a specialist insurance broker or intermediary; an independent professional who will act on your behalf to get the job done properly- allowing you full peace of mind once all the decisions are made.

Their task is to help you ascertain and locate the insurance cover that best suits your requirements and to canvas the insurance market to obtain the best protection at the most competitive price. This should be coupled with information on the levels and type of cover you need, together with help when claims are made.

Finding the Best Value for Money

Your insurance broker will gather the information they need from you to figure out exactly what sorts and what levels of cover your building may need. Their next job is to find you the best price for the coverage required, and to do this they will approach a number of different specialist Insurance Companies for quotes.

This results in you having access to several suitable options at different price points and from across a wide spectrum of providers, with all the advantages and disadvantages of the different policies clearly explained to you. You can then make a truly informed decision and come away comfortable in the knowledge that you have found the best value for money for you and your leaseholders without compromising on cover.

Simplify Your Complex Role

Being an RMC Director is complex enough without having to become an expert in every aspect of property ownership. Hand over some of the load to your trusted insurance broker and allow them to take the stress out of this aspect of handling a block.

You can tick the huge task of finding insurance off your list, safe in the knowledge that all brokers and intermediaries operating in the UK are regulated and authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority which gives you the security of knowing that:

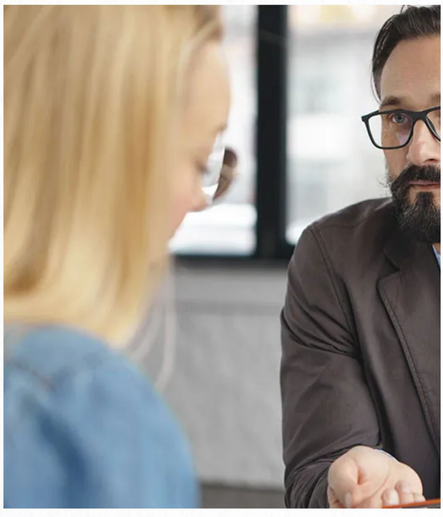
- There is someone you can complain to if things go wrong
- Your money is held securely in an 'insurance broking account'
- The solvency and working capital of your broker will be regularly tested by the FCA
- Your broker will have many years broking experience and has a first duty of care to you and not to the insurer

If you find yourself a longstanding, trusted insurance broker, they may also be able to advise you and your fellow directors in areas such as risk management, key legislation changes and how to keep your claims to a minimum while ensuring you're covered for the risks that are unavoidable.

What if Your Managing Agent is Responsible for Insurance?

RMC directors do not always take responsibility for arranging insurance- many will have their policies arranged by their managing agent.

Agents can be FCA authorised in their own right, enabling them to obtain quotes from many sources. Royal Institutes of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) members may be authorised under their RICS membership, but this is not an automatic right. Some agents are Appointed Representatives. This ties them to one broker or intermediary but allows them to complete many functions, such as notifying insurers of a claim and arranging an insurance policy. Agents can also be Introducer Appointed Representatives, which allows them to introduce insurance products to their client(s) but they cannot decide which product is suitable or arrange cover (this needs to be done by the RMC) and nor can they notify a claim, although they can be involved once the incident has been notified.



If you are not sure which, if any, of these categories your managing agent may fall into, just ask. They should be only too willing to explain what their status in term of insurance means for you and your fellow leaseholders.

To check the current FCA status of any brokers, head to the FCA website.

Flat Living Insurance only provides insurance for blocks of flats and apartments. Our flats insurance policies are designed to concentrate on understanding what protection your block of flats needs and delivering it.

Head to the website for details of the policies Flat Living Insurance offer. You can also find details of the services we provide such as Manage Your Block and Block in a Box- tools specifically designed to make the lives of RMC directors simpler and easier.

FlatLiving INSURANCE

flatlivinginsurance.co.uk | info@flatlivinginsurance.co.uk | 0333 577 2044

Share this page on social media

Historical Buildings

Written by Laura McGill, Associate Director at Town and City Management, for Learning Curve Group

Laura McGill is an Associate Director of Town and City Management, she is currently doing a level 4 course in Housing and Property Management in readiness for the ROPA requirements if and when they come out.

She has demonstrated a clear passion for her subject and wanting to offer her customers more added value than the usual property manager, therefore delves into the history of property to make sure she gets things right from the start.

This is an extract from her blog post which she does as part of her course with Stuart Shield, her tutor at the Learning Curve Group in association with the IRPM.

It is a well-known fact that the Property Management industry has grown considerably in recent years and along with it, the role of the Property Manager has had to adapt and change. From the outside looking in, our jobs probably look easy – that we just arrange maintenance or collect rent but this industry to those within it has become so much more than just these simple tasks.

We often have to consider social issues; financial issues, safety issues and recognise our responsibilities in all of these areas, which also now equate to legal requirements in some instances.

One area of our job that I find is not looked at in any great detail is the historical issues that we face. This subject splits into two areas, the first being historical buildings and the importance of maintaining their features to retain the value and aesthetic impact. The second being historic issues where this has not always happened.

Preserving our history

From a young age, I have always had an interest in historic locations and buildings. I have two parents who recognised the importance of preserving our history and a way of introducing that to the next generation was to do day trips to historically significant buildings and places.

As an adult now working in the property sector, I recognise that we are dealing with people's homes and communities. Therefore, the historical buildings within those areas need to be nurtured and maintained in keeping with their aesthetic value and to retain its heart and soul, which means so much to the people who have purchased homes within then and around them.

Unfortunately, the impact of someone who does not appreciate these factors, completing maintenance can be detrimental.

Town & City manage a 1930's purpose-built block of flats in North West London. The building has a number of wonderful period features that help it to maintain its charm and character, whilst fitting in perfectly with the other properties in the community.

Prior to Town & City's management, a project was undertaken to fit a new communal heating system into the building.

The presence of an efficient heating system would undoubtedly increase the value of any apartment building, however in this instance the project manager did not pay any attention to the aesthetic content of the building which resulted in modern, heavy heating pipes being fitted into small communal hallways with period aesthetics.

The effect on not only on the look and feel of the building but the financial value and mental health of the residents has been astronomical. It has also made our job, as the current property managers much more difficult as we are currently undertaking a external and internal refurbishment project here, where we have had to implement meticulous planning to cover these pipes, whilst ensuring the maintenance of the period features and trying not to impact the residents any further by blocking light etc, where the pipes have also been allowed to drop down over windows.

This has made me realise that this is a subject which is often not considered or discussed enough with Property Managers, which could be detrimental in areas where we hold the responsibility for completing maintenance and construction projects. There should be formal CPD training which enables Property Managers to recognise and appropriately plan to maintain these features.

Without it, I fear that we will be setting a new generation of Property Manager's up to make the same mistakes.

At Town & City, we pride ourselves on being able to offer a personable, tailored service to the buildings under our management. As such, we will be making a commitment to discuss this matter further with our industry peers and look to provide all our staff with the bespoke training required to continue their professionalism in this regard.

Learning Curve give businesses and individuals access to a better future. Whether you're looking to upskill your workforce or ready to progress your career but aren't sure where to start, we break down the barriers you are facing.

To find out more about Housing & Property Management Courses, get in touch with Stuart Shield, Head of Housing at Learning Curve Group.

learningcurvegroup.co.uk | stuart.shield@learningcurvegroup.co.uk

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Featured Job Vacancies

Are you looking for a new role, maybe a step up the career ladder? Take a look at a range vacancies in the block management sector from Block Recruit.

Exclusive Vacancies

Property Manager

Location: Central London

Salary: £40k

A national, award-winning Property Management Company that continuously challenges the norm of the industry we work in.

Tell me more

Property Manager

Location: Gloucestershire

Salary: £30-£35k

Working at a growing, evolving Property Management company operating nationally and reaping the rewards of success.

Tell me more

Property Manager

Location: Hertfordshire

Salary: £30-£35k

Tell me more

Block Manager

Location: Kent

Salary: £35-£40k

Tell me more

Block Manager

Location: Devon

Salary: £23-£26k

Tell me more

Property Manager

Location: Essex

Salary: £24k

Tell me more

Property Manager

Location: Dorset

Salary: £25-£35k

Tell me more

Block Manager

Location: East Sussex

Salary: £25-£30k

Tell me more

Block Recruit

Block Recruit speicalise in providing property professionals to all areas of the block management industry in the UK.

Visit the Block Recruit website to find out about other vacancies they have and how they can support you in finding the perfect new role.

BLOCK RECRUIT

ManageYourBlock™

Manage Your Block is a property portal designed to help **you** manage your block of flats.

Call for a free demo on 0333 577 9070

Who can use Manage Your Block?

We've designed Manage Your Block portal for:

- Residents' Management Companies
- Right to Manage Companies
- Residents Associations

We know that handover periods between new directors can be a challenging time. Managing a block comes with an enormous amount of information, from insurance documents to residents' contact information as well as the entire documented history of the block.

With our Manage Your Block portal, you'll never have to worry about finding information again. We'll provide you with a safe, reliable place for you to store and amend your documentation, contact your residents and manage your service charges…plus much more!

What can I do on the Manage Your Block portal?

The Manage Your Block portal has a massive range of functions, all created to make your processes as streamlined and simple as possible.

Share account information with other directors

You'll be provided with a username and password for your account which you can share with other directors, so that you're all always on the same page. This is especially handy during handover periods, as new directors will have all the information they need available to them at the touch of a button.

Have access to a contact list

Store, view and easily change your contacts list, making sure your residents' information is always up to date

Use the calendar

Our easy-to-use calendar function will help you to keep your block as organised as possible.

Send alerts

If your block suffers a power shortage, a broken lift or even crime-related incidents in the local area, you'll be able to send an alert out to your residents through your Manage Your Block account. Not only does this make it simpler for you, it makes communication a lot quicker and easier between your residents

Keep contact info for your contractors

Maintain all your contractors' details in one place so you never lose a name or number. This is especially handy in case of an emergency.

Quotes

You'll be able to obtain quotes for maintenance around your block from your preferred contractors or one of ours. You'll be able to choose from a range of discounted specialist services such as legal assistance, accounts and buildings insurance valuations, and manage all quote requests from your Manage Your Block account.

Manage your documentation

On Manage Your Block, you'll be able to store all the documentation relating to your block in one easy-to-reach place. This may include copy leases, financial records, fire evacuation procedures, along with other day-to-day procedure documents. You will have instant access no matter where you are; it's everything you need at the click of a button.

Keep a diary

Receive diary reminders to ensure you don't forget anything, such as health and safety risk assessments, gate inspections, fire drills and much more.

Notes

To make sure you don't forget anything, you can now keep important notes which will be saved securely on your account.

And now also collect service charges

This year, we've upgraded our property portal to include a function which will help you manage your service charges. You'll now be able to prepare, process and print out service charge demands for your block, meaning your in-house processes can be far more streamlined and efficient. Likewise, all the documents you produce will be collated with the required Summary of Tenants' Rights and Obligations.

ManageYourBlock™

For more information, or for a free, no-obligation demonstration of the Manage Your Block Portal, please contact a member of the team on 0333 577 9070 or visit manageyourblock.co.uk

Property Management Events

All the latest conferences, seminars, webinars and events taking place in the industry.

April 2021

ARMA Training

ARMA offers Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced & Refresher online training courses which run as half-day or full-day courses.

Find out more

29th June 2021

Golf Day

Join Claws Consultants at Moor Park, Rickmansworth for this 2021 Charity Golf Day.

Find out more

14th October 2021

ARMA Annual Conference

Save the date for the ARMA Annual Conference at 133 Houndsditch, London.

More details coming soon

Date TBA

Proper Awards

The Proper Awards is an annual awards ceremony honouring the property industry's top suppliers taking place later this year.

Find out more

11th May 2021

IRPM Annual Seminar

Previously taking place at the QEII Centre, London the 2021 event will now be online.

Find out more

September 2021

NLG Service Charge Conference

The 2nd NLG Service Charge Conference will bring together leading figures from across the sector to share their expert knowledge on the key issues facing us today.

More details coming soon

18th November 2021

NLG Annual Conference

Save the date for the NLG Annual Conference taking place in London.

More details coming soon

Proper Awards

Recognising all suppliers to the Property Industry

properawards.co.uk

Customer reviews are so powerful

Studies have shown that over 90% of consumers will read a review before purchasing a product or service.

It should really be a no-brainer, for any business, that you get in the habit of asking your customers for reviews and posting these reviews somewhere potential clients can see them.

At Proper Awards we make it simple for you to quickly, professionally and securely ask your customers to leave you reviews.

What's more if your customers routinely score you highly for having a great product/service, offering outstanding value for month and deliverying top customer service then you win a Proper Award 🏆

It's totally free to sign up, just visit properawards.co.uk

You can have your account opened in minutes, you could have your first review in by the end of the day and later this year your could be lifting one of the first awards handed out 🚀

What are you waiting for?

Proud Partners include

CLAWS Consultants

FlatLiving

Property tv

ACTION FOR A-T FUNDING RESEARCH, FINDING HOPE

Partnering with Proper Awards puts you in the spotlight and gives you a unique opportunity to support the property industry. We've got some brilliant partnership opportunities still available. Interested? Contact our partnership team today partners@properawards.co.uk

ARMA Training Courses in April

In April, ARMA will be delivering training courses covering property management for new-starters, fire safety management and company law basics. Our experienced and engaging tutors will split each course into manageable chunks of time to maximise the benefits of remote learning.

Also taking place in April are two one-hour webinars covering a crucial topic impacting the property management world; GDPR. Both webinars will be tutored by Cassandra Zanelli, with W3 covering subject requests and W4 delving into how companies can manage data breaches.

ARMA training courses and webinars are available to both members and non-members, with ARMA members and IRPM members able to benefit from discounted rates. Information on Block Booking discounts can be found after the listings below.

TC1: Introduction to Residential Property Management

Dates: 13/04/21, 14/04/21, 16/04/21

Daily Timings: 10:00 – 12:00

Tutor: Helen Christie

A six-hour course being run over three days (two-hours per day) by ARMA's Technical Officer, for those new to residential leasehold property management. It will provide an overview of the controls and processes required to effectively manage a leasehold block. The course will cover regulation and codes of practice, terminology and statistics, the role of the managing agent, and more.

Book your place

TC100: Company Law Basics for Management Companies

Date: 29/04/21

Timings: 14:00 – 16:00

Tutor: Cassandra Zanelli

Residents' Management Companies and RTM companies are subject to the same rules and regulations as all other limited companies. With corporate-based challenges from members on the increase, it is important that managing agents are familiar with company law basics.

At the request of members, ARMA has designed an interactive workshop focusing on the fundamentals of company law for management companies and troubleshooting some of the most common issues and challenges that managing agents face.

Book your place

W4: GDPR – Handling Data Breaches

Date: 30/04/21

Time: 12:00 – 13:00

Tutor: Cassandra Zanelli

The GDPR defines a personal data breach as "a breach of security leading to the accidental or unlawful destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure, or access to, personal data". In this webinar, we'll explore what a data breach is, and the typical protection, investigation and internal reporting procedures agents should have in place. We also consider some examples which will help agents when they are making decisions about whether or not to advise the ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) or effective individuals about a data breach.

Book your place

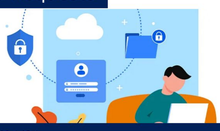
TC62: Fire Safety Management for Residential Managing Agents

Dates: 26/04/21, 27/04/21, 28/04/21
Daily Timings: 10:00 – 12:00
Tutors: Cassandra Zanelli and Mark Snelling

A 6-hour course being run over 3 consecutive days (2-hours per day) for directors and senior managers who undertake and are responsible for fire safety management. Please note this course will not enable you to: provide safety assistance as required by Regulation 18 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, undertake a fire risk assessment as required by Regulation 9 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Book your place

W3: GDPR – Dealing With Subject Access Requests



Date: 30/04/21
Time: 10:00 – 11:00
Tutor: Cassandra Zanelli

GDPR gives individuals a variety of rights. One of those rights is a right of access, commonly referred to as subject access. Every data subject has the right to obtain a copy of their personal data, to help them understand how and why their data is being used, and to check that it is being used lawfully. In this webinar, we'll explore what the right of access is, how a subject access request might be made, and how a managing agent should deal with any request.

Book your place

To view ARMA's full list of training courses, click here.

Block Booking Discounts

ARMA members who invest in staff training in 2021 can now save money on block bookings of ARMA online training courses. Pay for 10 or more full-day (six-hour) training course places in one booking (they can be different courses) and you'll save 20% on the usual member price; equating to a saving of £20 per place.

How to claim your discount:

Drop us an email on info@arma.org.uk to book your 10+ places and claim your 20% discount on the usual Members price of £100 + VAT per place. Please note this offer is only available to ARMA members & all course places must be booked by 31/12/2021.

With plenty of training sessions already lined up on ARMA's calendar, it's the ideal place to start if you're looking to up-skill and deliver an even better service to your clients. Browse and book our sessions here.

Get in touch

Website: www.arma.org.uk

Phone: 0207 978 2607

Twitter: @ARMAleasehold

IRPM Annual Seminar (online)
11th May 2021

IRPM Annual Seminars are the best in the business, famous for swift, punchy, forward-looking sessions on industry changes, latest trends and essential need-to-knows. Previously taking place at the QE11 Centre, London we are now moving our event for 2021, online.

We are taking advantage of the new format to deliver the very best content at speed and directly to you. The rapidly changing landscape means that our IRPM Annual Seminar taking place on the 11th of May 2021 will delve into critical policy changes, convening principal figures and lead on the vital issues and debates in the sector.

This year will be pivotal for all property managers and companies that are involved in the residential property management sector. There is no better time to come together with your peers to understand exactly what 'is' and what 'will' be happening in the industry. We will be investigating the pressing issues and concerns that are prevalent in the industry, dissecting new initiatives, trends and innovations for property managers, that will certainly excite.

We are delighted to announce that our platinum sponsors of this event are 4site Consulting Ltd and Data Energy – without our platinum sponsors our event cannot be possible, so we want to extend a massive thank you for helping us make sure we can run one of the most important residential property management events of the sector.

With brilliant industry relevant speakers, the legendary IRPM Legal Updates and breakout sessions for the technical aspect of your roles, this is the one event you cannot afford to miss. We look forward to welcoming you on the 11th May 2021 to the IRPM Annual Seminar (Online).

Tickets are FREE* to IRPM members so book your place today

If you are not already a member of IRPM to receive your FREE place, join today.

Joining as a member means you will not only receive your FREE place on the IRPM Annual Seminar 2021, you will also have access to a plethora of technical and soft skill courses and resources in our FREE CPD library, a monthly IRPM Update full of critical information for your role and access to our vast Resource Hub, a comprehensive ever-expanding resource centre for property managers.

Setting Standards in Residential Property Management

The Institute of Residential Property Management (IRPM) is the professional body for residential property management specialists and provides nationally accredited qualifications, guidance on career pathways and resources, to assist property managers within their roles. IRPM is dedicated to supporting, building, and setting the standards of the profession.

IRPM Key Objectives

Setting & Raising Standards across the residential property management sector

To be the **trusted** source of **expertise**, **knowledge**, & **qualifications**

Providing individuals with an independent **professional accreditation**

Provide **knowledge**, **leadership**, and **proficiency** in the property management sector

Join the IRPM

CLAWS Consultants

Golf Day 2021

Raising funds for Action for AT

TUESDAY JUNE 29TH 2021

MOOR PARK GOLF CLUB

HOSTED BY NAGA MUNCHETTY

Join us at Moor Park, Rickmansworth for this 2021 Charity golf day. With numerous prizes to be won, start the day with a breakfast tee off for 18 holes of golf on the impressive high course, then join your celebrity host and fellow players for a sit down meal, entertainment and prize giving ceremony.

THE COURSE

Set amidst 300 acres of mature woodland and parkland, Moor Park features not one but two championship courses. Designed by Harry Colt in 1923 to blend into the grounds of the estate, this course is ideal for all standards of golf.

ACTION FOR A-T

PRICES FROM £595 PER TEAM OF 4

To join us for our 2021 Golf Day, get in touch at alan@clawsconsultants.co.uk

Claws Consultants are Action for AT's official Golf Day Partner for 2021.

Visit www.actionforat.org for information.

Claws Consultants works with the following sponsors & partners

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EarlKendrick Building Surveyors

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National Leasehold Group

The NLG (National Leasehold Group) is a countrywide networking group of leasehold management professionals with the Social Housing sector.

We have a stated aim of improving property management standards and achieve this through a variety of training, seminar and conference offers.

The NLG prides itself on quality events that are accessible to all members at affordable rates

Upcoming Training & Events

Leasehold Management Training

Two training courses providing the basics and advanced training on Leasehold Management.

Find out more

Health & Safety for Property Managers

Online zoom sessions taking place in April with Dr Shaun Lundy covering Health & Safety Law, Risk Assessments & more.

Find out more

Fire Safety & The Property Manager

Online zoom sessions taking place in May with Dr Shaun Lundy, covering Fire Safety Law & Assistance, Fire Risk Assessments & more.

Find out more

With thanks to our 2021 Partners

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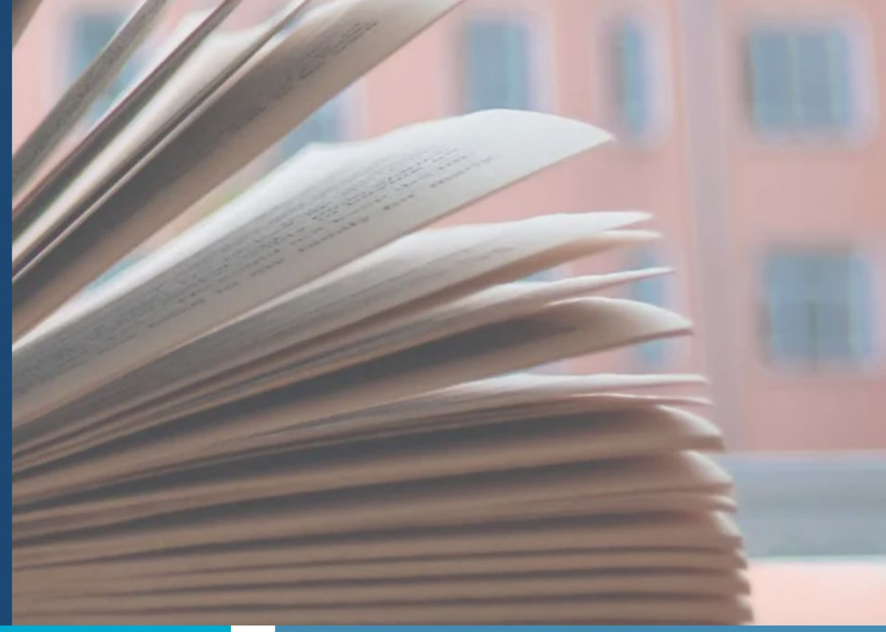
Directories

Find Managing Agents, Suppliers and ALEP Professionals who know and understand leasehold property.



01
Managing Agents

02
Suppliers

03
ARMA Agents

04
ALEP Members

Find an Agent

Featured Managing Agents are listed alphabetically.

Nationwide

Clear Building Management

Find out more

Nationwide

FirstPort

Find out more

Bristol / South West

Fraser Allen Estate Management

Find out more

Nationwide

Omnia Property Group

Find out more

Nationwide

Trinity Estates

Find out more

AM Surveying & Block Management

Find out more

Bellharbour

Find out more

Casserly Property Management

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Crabtree Property Management

Find out more

Evolve Block Management

Find out more

Hillcrest Estate Management

Find out more

Hobdens Property Management Ltd

Specialising in Block & Estate Management since 1946

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Homestead

Find out more

Mainstay Residential

Part of the First Port group

Find out more

Metta Property Management

Find out more

PMS Managing Estates

Find out more

POD we'll take care of it

Find out more

Remus

Find out more

Scanlans Property Management LLP

Find out more

Find a Supplier

Featured suppliers are listed by category and then alphabetically.

Accountants

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BUSINESS ADVISORS & ACCOUNTANTS

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Accountants

JW HINKS
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

Find out more

Accountants

Numerico
CHARTERED CERTIFIED ACCOUNTANTS

Find out more

Fire Protection

PLP
FIRE PROTECTION

Find out more

Health & Safety

4site®

Find out more

Insurance

FlatLiving
INSURANCE

Find out more

Insurance

London Flats Insurance

Find out more

Insurance

Residentsline
Flats Insurance

Find out more

Insurance Valuations

BARRETT CORP HARRINGTON

Find out more

Lifts

ARDENT
LIFT CONSULTANCY

Find out more

Lifts

Hemsworth
Lift Consultants

Find out more

Lifts

ilecs
LIFT CONSULTANTS

Find out more

Out of Hours Response

adiuvo

Find out more

Maintenance

tna building services
elite property maintenance

Find out more

Mailboxes

POST BOXES UK
VALUE ENGINEERED SOLUTIONS

Find out more

Parcel Delivery

Locker
simply smart

Find out more

Principal Contractor

STONE
CONTRACTS LIMITED

Find out more

Recruitment

BLOCK RECRUIT

Find out more

Software

Fixflo

Find out more

Software

ManageYourBlock™

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Bishop & Sewell
Monro Wright & Wasbrough

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Solicitors

JB LEITCH
SOLICITORS

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Keebles

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Surveyors

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LEARNING CURVE GROUP

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Training

PROPel
Learning & Development for the Property Industry

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ARHM

Raising standards in retirement housing

RAISING STANDARDS FOR OVER 25 YEARS

The ARHM are the largest trade association body for the retirement sector, with 55 members representing more than 100,000 homes across the UK.

Our mission is to continually raise standards within the sector by promoting best practice and ethics amongst those managing retirement housing.

About Us

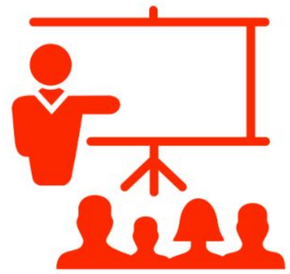
Discover more about the ARHM and our mission

Find out more

Code of Practice

Our Government approved Code goes above and beyond statutory legislation, providing good practice for managers of leasehold retirement developments.

Find out more



Events & Training

Regional training, events and conferences

Find out more

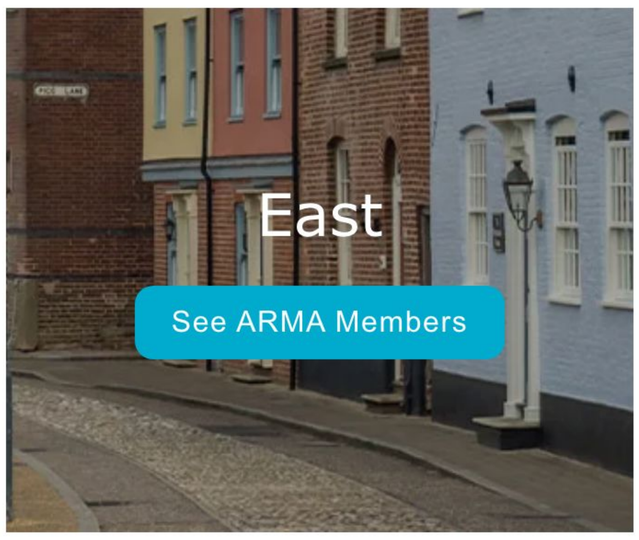
arhm.org | enquries@arhm.org | 07974 311 421

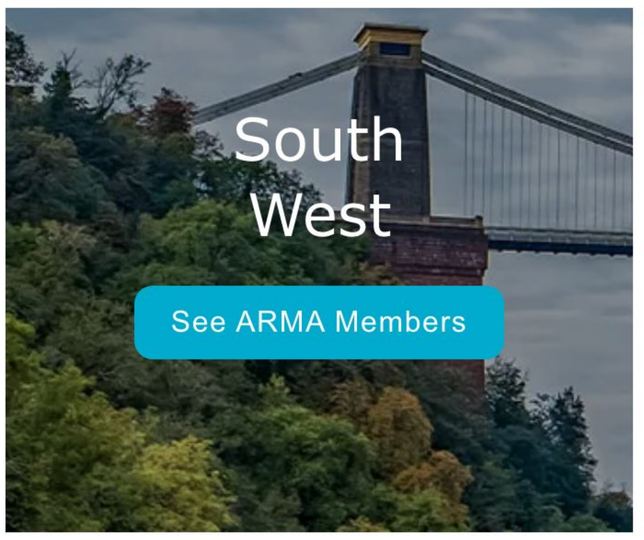
Find an ARMA Member

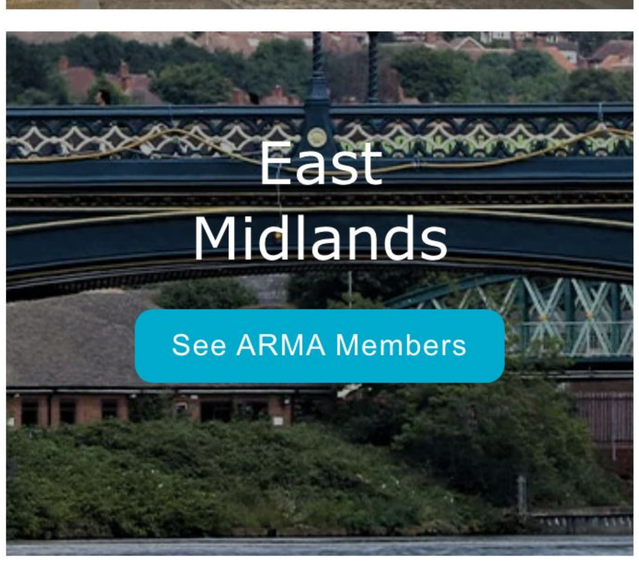
Are you considering a new managing agent?

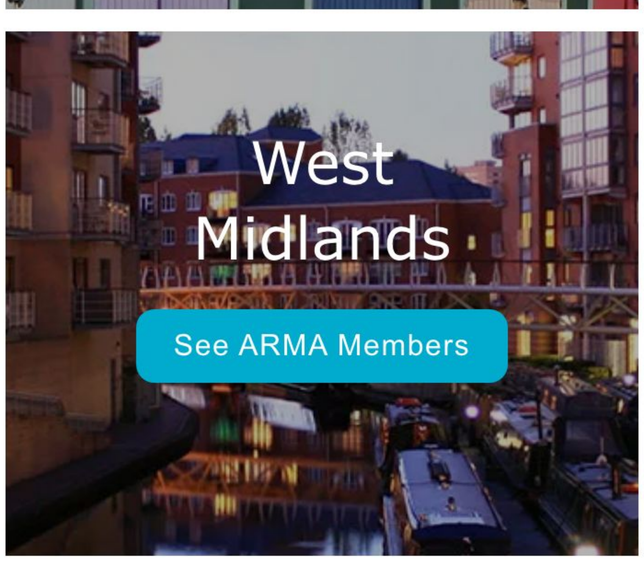
Below are a list of ARMA (Association of Residential Managing Agents) members by region.

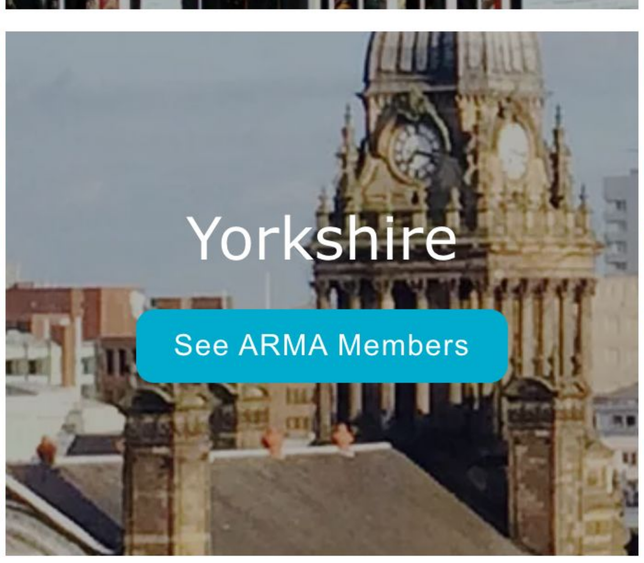
A managing agent that is a 'member' of ARMA will have successfully achieved ARMA Accreditation and is required to comply with the ARMA Bye-Laws, RICS Code, relevant legislation and ARMA Consumer Charter & Standards.

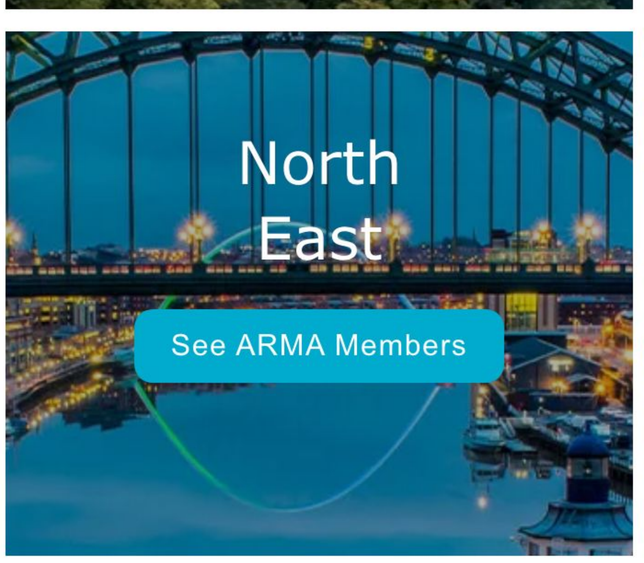


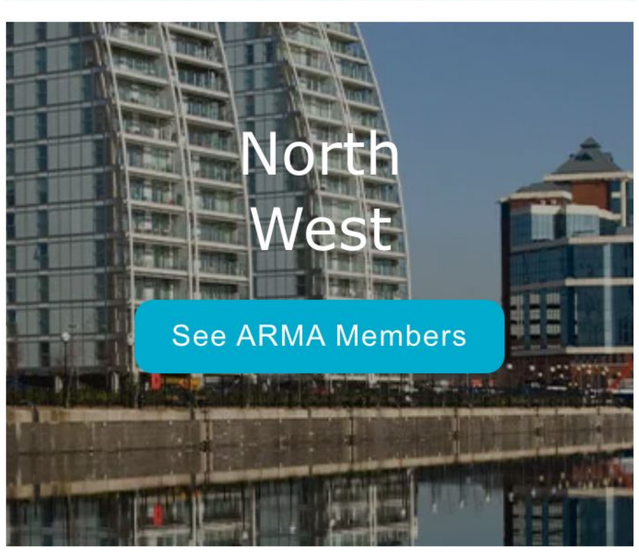


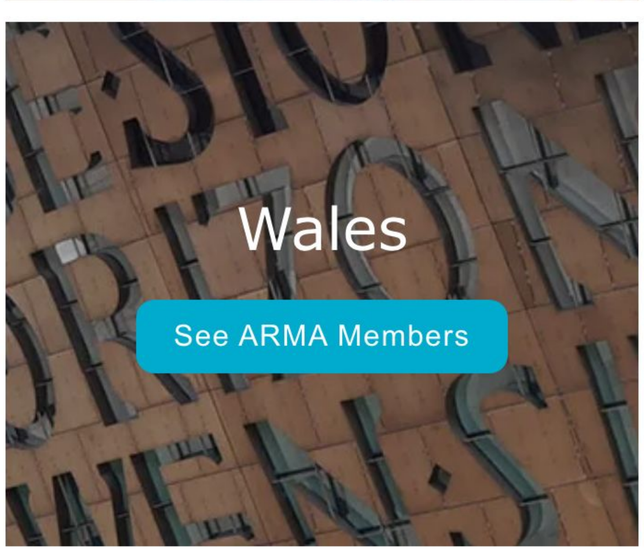


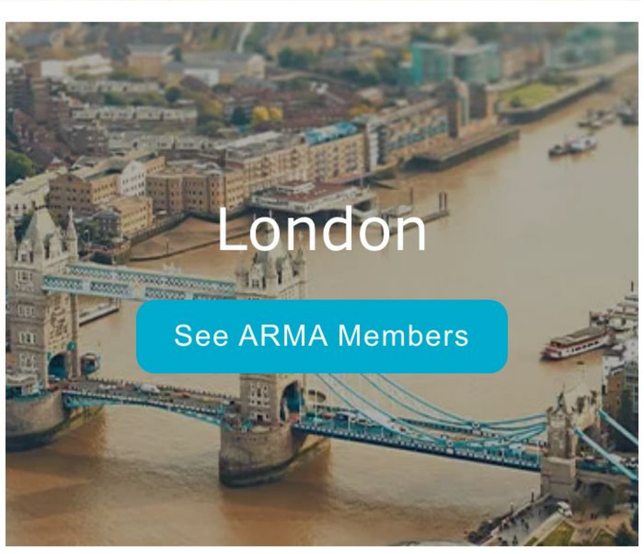


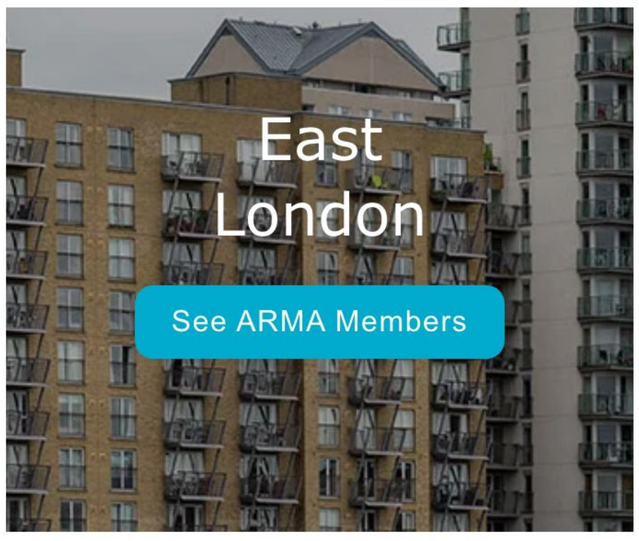












Setting the Standards in Property Management

TRANSPARENT
STANDARDS
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SERVICE
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Whether you are a leaseholder, residents' management company, developer, landlord or freeholder - you need a managing agent you can rely on to professionally manage your apartment block.

So look for the ARMA logo for accredited managing agents who are compliant, audited, independently regulated, transparent and will hold your service charge in TRUST.

For information on the advantages of appointing an ARMA member contact:

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Find an ALEP Member

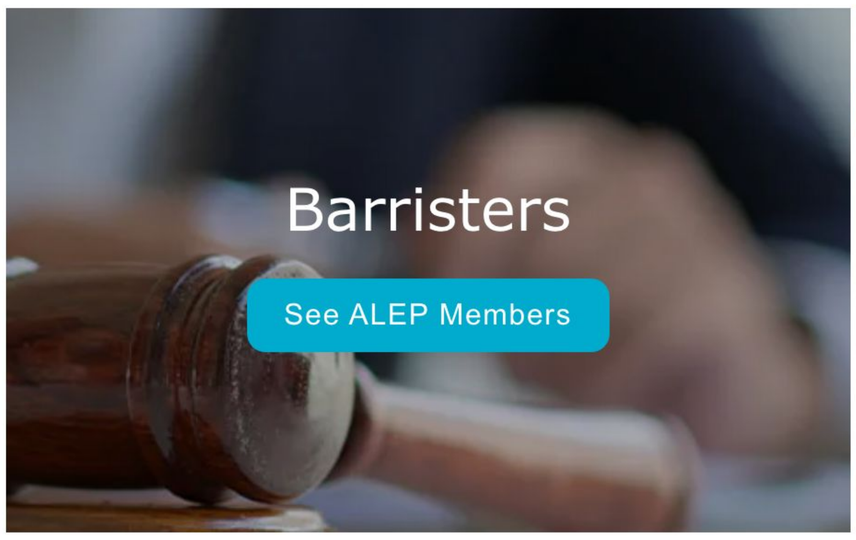
ALEP (Association of Leasehold Enfranchisement Practitioners) member firms are rigorously vetted so you can be confident that they have a proven track record in leasehold enfranchisement.

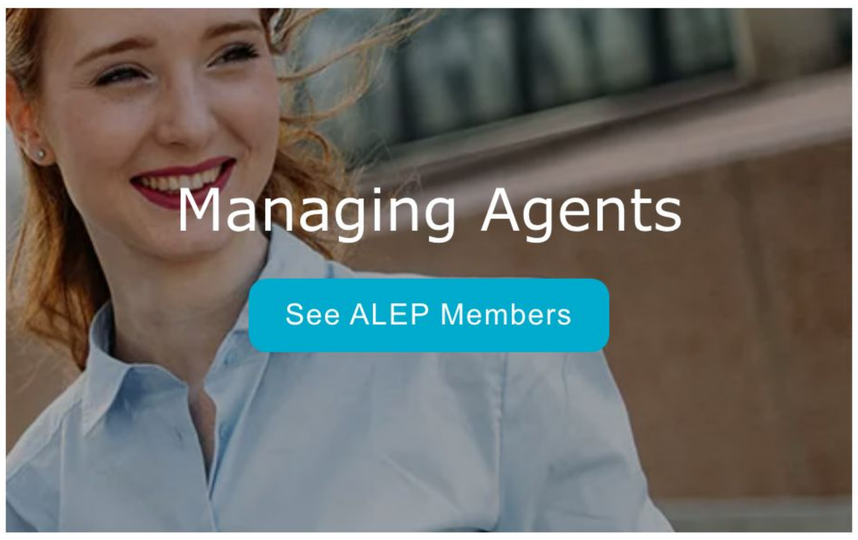
ALEP members can advise or assist with:

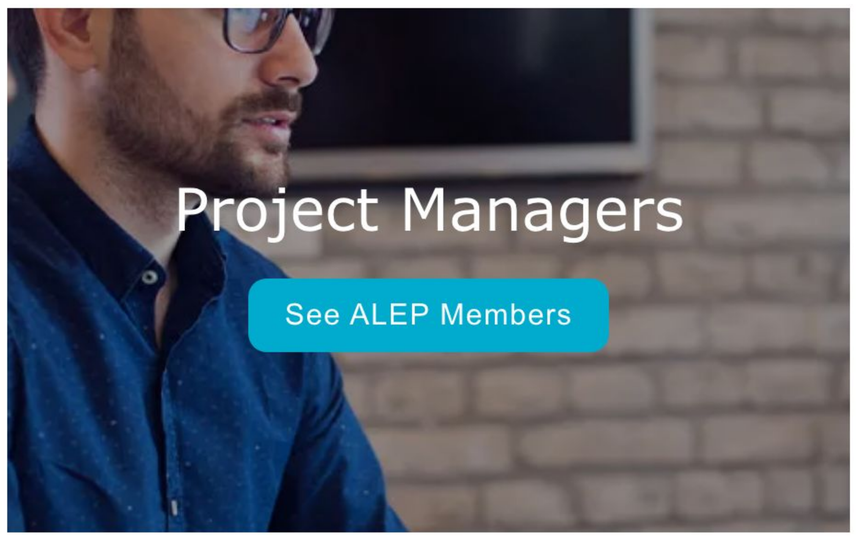
- Extending a lease;
- Buying a share or freehold of a building;
- Exercising the Right to Manage;
- Section 5 Notice;
- Dealing with freeholder or leaseholder disputes

Below are details of ALEP Professionals (alphabetically) in the following areas:

- Barristers
- Managing Agents
- Project Managers
- Solicitors/Legal
- Surveyors/Valuers







ALEP
ASSOCIATION OF LEASEHOLD ENFRANCHISEMENT PRACTITIONERS

ALEP - the voice of the enfranchisement sector promoting best practice

Leasehold enfranchisement includes the processes of lease extension, freehold acquisition and correction of management problems within leasehold properties.

The Association of Leasehold Enfranchisement Practitioners (ALEP) serves as the leading organisation representing professionals working in this sector.

Established in 2007, ALEP was formed to bring together firms working within leasehold enfranchisement under one, all-encompassing membership organisation. Barristers, managing agents, project managers, solicitors and valuers all form part of the ALEP community.

Our Work

One of ALEP's key aims is to work with member firms within this sector to raise and maintain standards across the board. The Association holds regular seminars and networking sessions, as well as its popular annual Conference and Lecture events, all with the objective of bringing the sector together to share ideas, discuss key issues and encourage best practice.

ALEP also acts as the 'voice of the sector' and represents its members' views to the wider industry, the media and to the general public. More recently, ALEP is proud to have been invited by the government to contribute to several consultations concerning the future of leasehold enfranchisement.

Our Members

ALEP has 260 highly respected member companies and individual barristers – this equates to just under a total of 1,000 professionals – all of whom operate within the enfranchisement sector and who regularly come together to network, compare notes and agree best practice.

ALEP accreditation acts as a badge of assurance for leaseholders and freeholders alike when looking for professionals to handle their enfranchisement transactions. All members are vetted to ensure they are experienced in dealing with the various and complicated issues surrounding leasehold enfranchisement.

Areas ALEP members can help with include:

- Extending a lease
- Leaseholder vs. freeholder disputes and resolutions
- Informal lease extension implications
- Marriage value
- Collective enfranchisement
- First-tier Tribunals
- Leasehold Valuation Tribunals
- Over-inflated ground rent, service charges and insurance

For more information and to find an ALEP member in your area please visit: www.alep.org.uk

LEASE

THE LEASEHOLD ADVISORY SERVICE

Government funded, independent advice for residential leaseholders and park home residents

www.lease-advice.org

We hope you enjoyed this issue of Flat Living Magazine

You can read more on the Flat Living website which has over 1,000 articles for Residents Management Companies, Directors and Managing Agents.

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We would love to hear from you if you have a question or would like to find out about working with us.

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Dauntons Soar Management Limited	London	02078 341 032	Full Member
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Lucy Block Management Limited	Oxford	01865 559973	Full Member
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Park Lane Block Management Ltd	Southampton	02380 330706	Full Member
Peerless Properties (Oxford) Limited	Oxon	01869 331198	Full Member
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PJJS Management Services Limited	Maidstone	01622 861 533	Full Member
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Rushbrook & Rathbone Ltd	Hitchin	01462 420201	Full Member
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Sensible Property Management (Eastbourne) Ltd	Eastbourne	01323 738886	Full Member
Sheridan's	Beds	01462 814087	Full Member
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Eaves Property Management Services Limited	Maidenhead	01628 947908	Associate
LevelUP Property Management	Northfleet	07920 000144	Associate
Livingwell Group Ltd	Canterbury	03300011187	Associate
Metta Property Management Limited	Westcliff-On-Sea	0330 133 0242	Associate
Orchard PM Limited	Worthing	07796 465 875	Associate
Sennen Property Management Ltd	Camberley	01276 804 781	Associate
Vertical Village	Esher	020 8399 0170	Associate
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• Hadrian Property Management Company Limited	Lichfield	01543 410922	Full Member
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• KWB Property Management Limited	Birmingham	0121 233 2330	Full Member
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• Mainstay Residential Ltd	Worcester	01905 357777	Full Member
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• Principle Estate Management	Birmingham	0121 289 4315	Full Member
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• Specialist Property Asset Management Ltd	West Midlands	0121 725 3620	Full Member
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• Griffin Freehold Management Ltd	Birmingham	0121 389 2815	Associate
• Proxim Property Management	Alcester	07401 867567	Associate

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• Stevenson Whyte	Manchester	0161 312 7171	Full Member
• Town & City Management Limited	Darlington	01325 389 689	Full Member
• Enitre Spaces	Manchester	07875 120 221	Associate

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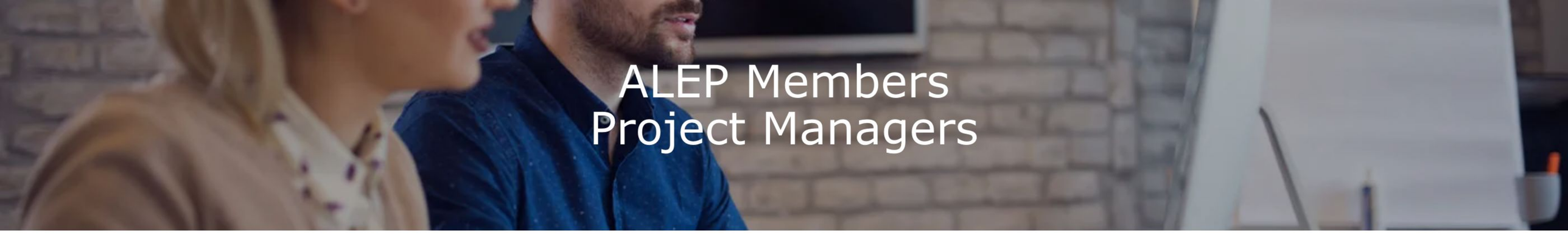
ALEP Members
Solicitors/Legal

Mark Adcock	Adcocks Solicitors	01543 442100
Thomas Roberts	AK Law (London) Limited	020 8280 0810
Daniel O'Doherty	Amphlett Lissimore Bagshaws LLP	020 8768 6852
Ian Mitchell	Anthony Gold Solicitors LLP	07525 071699
Joe Arnold	Arnold & Baldwin	020 8642 2999
Salvatore Amico	Attwaters Jameson Hill Solicitors	020 3871 0039
John D Chart	BACI	020 8349 7680
Jeremy Donegan	Bate & Albon Solicitors	01903 369959
Nick Tompkin	Bennett Griffin LLP	01903 229910
Simon Elliott	Bennett Oakley Limited	01444 235232
Jennifer Gadsdon	Birchall Blackburn Law	01772 427606
Nicola Lebish	Birketts LLP	01473 232300
Mark Chick	Bishop & Sewell LLP	020 7631 4141
Anushka Nicholas	Blacks Solicitors LLP	0113 227 9284
Steven Thom	Blake Morgan LLP	020 7405 2000
Mike Hansom	BLB Solicitors Limited	01225 462871
Darren Coleran	Bolt Burdon	020 7288 4775
Jennifer Slater	Bonallack & Bishop	01722 422300
Simon Kerrigan	Boodle Hatfield LLP	020 7079 8112
Russell May	Boyes Turner	0118 952 7206
Colin Hussey	Brady Solicitors	0115 985 3450
Jacqui McCoy	Brecher LLP	020 7563 1046
Roger Hardwick	Brethertons LLP	01295 661453
Shimmie Pariente	Bude Nathan Iwanier LLP	020 8209 2481
Roland Pingree	Carter Bells LLP	020 8939 4000
James Souter	Charles Russell Speechlys LLP	020 7427 6716
David Haines	Charles Russell Speechlys LLP	01483 252525
Claire Allan	Child and Child	020 7235 8000
Erin Iley	Clarke Mairs LLP	0191 245 4725
Eleanor Murray	CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang LLP	020 7367 2739
Nick Balchin	Coles Miller LLP	01202 338905
Mark Brassey	Collins Benson Goldhill LLP	020 7436 5151
Emily Fitzpatrick	Commonhold & Leasehold Experts Ltd	01273 839555
James Compton	Comptons	020 7485 0888
Carla Figueira	Cook Taylor Woodhouse	01322 394164
Jonathan Everett	Coole Bevis LLP	01903 534505
Thomas Lumsden	CooperBurnett	01892 515022
Mike Brown	Couchman Hanson Solicitors	01428 722189
Bonnie Twiggs	Crane & Staples	01707 329333
Anna Favre	Cripps Pemberton Greenish LLP	020 7591 3318
Tim Selley	Crosse & Crosse	01392 258451
Jason Richardson	Davies and Partners Solicitors	01454 619619
Claire Whiteman	Dean Wilson LLP	01273 249229
David Payton	Dentons UK & Middle East LLP	020 7320 6857
Tina George	DMH Stallard	01293 605193
Chris Sykes	Druces LLP	020 7638 9271
Louise Uphill	Dutton Gregory LLP	01962 624469
Katherine Simpson	Edwin Coe LLP	020 7691 4000
Kate Chatters	Farrer & Co	020 3375 7219
Paul Dench	Field Seymour Parkes	0118 951 6253
Primal Laxman	Fitz Solicitors Ltd	01753 592000
Natasha Rees	Forsters LLP	020 7863 8400
Francesco Cuffaro	Gisby Harrison	01707 878300
Jon Tawse	Glanvilles LLP	01329 282841
Tyrone Grant	Grant Saw Solicitors LLP	020 8858 6971
Graham Jaffe	Gregory Abrams Davidson	020 8209 2653
Sarah Finch	Hamlins LLP	020 7355 6085
Andy Finkel	Harold Benjamin Solicitors	020 8872 3066
Sarah Osborne	Hart Brown Solicitors	01483 887766
Andrew Pluck	Hart Reade	01323 727321
Joshua Watkins	Herrington Carmichael LLP	01276 854948
Tom Henry	Hethertons Solicitors	01904 528200
Ashley Connell	Hetts Solicitors	01724 843287
James Garvey	Hockfield & Co	020 7582 8784
Tim Reid	Hogan Lovells International LLP	020 7296 5873
Callie Tuplin	Holmes & Hills LLP	01376 320456
Ash Oberoi	Housing and Property Law Partnership Solicitors	020 7553 9000
Amanda McNeil	Howard Kennedy LLP	020 3755 5598
Craig Rennie	HRJ Foreman Laws	01462 458711
Joanna Themistokli	Irwin Mitchell LLP	020 7650 3809
Marcelle Turner	Irwin Mitchell LLP	01243 813101
Amelia Hayes	Jefferies Essex LLP	01702 332311
Daniel Swimer	Joelson JD LLP	020 7580 5721
Yashmin Mistry	JPC LLP	020 7625 4424
Daniel Tang	Judge and Priestley LLP	020 8290 7373
Julie West	Julie West Solicitors	01372 383273
Patrick Kelly	Keebles LLP	0114 276 5555
Harriet Thornton	LCF Law	01274 386597
Jade Wilson	Lease Law Limited	01622 750851
Belinda Walkinshaw	Leasehold Law LLP	020 8688 1519
Suki Samra	Lester Aldridge LLP	01202 786317
Polja Atkins	Longmores Solicitors	01992 305211
Richard Hornby	Lynch Hall & Hornby	020 8864 0722
Tamara Lester	Manuel Swaden Limited	020 7431 4999
Joanna Ironside	Mayo Wynne Baxter LLP	01273 407462
Joanna Ironside	Mayo Wynne Baxter LLP	01342 310600
Joanna Ironside	Mayo Wynne Baxter LLP	01323 730543
Joanna Ironside	Mayo Wynne Baxter LLP	01903 743201
William Essex	McGlennons Solicitors	020 8946 6015
Tim Wild	Mills & Reeve LLP	020 7648 5289
Shazda Ahmed	Monarch Solicitors	0161 820 8888
Shazda Ahmed	Monarch Solicitors	020 8889 8888
Jolanda Peters	Moore Barlow LLP	020 8939 2731
Matthew Hearsum	Morrisons Solicitors LLP	020 8971 1085
Shelley Fitzpatrick	Mullis & Peake LLP	01708 784000
Gemma Hawthorne	Naylor Solicitors LLP	020 7963 8689
Lucy Riley	Nockolds Solicitors Limited	01279 712586
Chris Connor	Norton Connor Limited	0113 239 0088
Tim Morgan	ODT Solicitors	01273 710712
Deborah Mantell	Oliver Fisher Solicitors	020 3219 0145
Guy Osborn	Osbornes Solicitors LLP	020 7485 8811
Nick Demos	P George & Co Solicitors	020 8341 9080
Laura Simpson	PainSmith Solicitors	01420 565310
Jennifer Sanders	Paris Smith LLP	02380 482125
Lorraine Lancaster	Paul Robinson Solicitors LLP	01702 338338
Reece Wheeldon	PDC Law	01992 668168
Denise Pearlman	Pearlmans Solicitors LLP	020 8201 6311
Martin Codd	Penningtons Manches Cooper LLP	020 7457 3000
Lease Extension Team	Peter Brown & Co	020 8447 3277
Dee Puckering	Philip Ross Solicitors	020 7636 6969
Stephen Eccles	Pinney Talfourd LLP	01708 463202
Stephen Soper	Powells Law	01934 623501
Rebecca Kefford	Preston Redman	01202 292424
Stephen Simmons	Redferns	020 8424 7070
Lee Harle	Ringley Law LLP	020 7428 1977
Unknown	Rix & Kay Solicitors LLP	01273 766929
David Moore	Rodgers & Burton	020 8939 6300
Elizabeth Clarkson	Rollits LLP	01482 337260
Sarah Taylor	Royds Withy King	01225 730151
Shabnam Ali-Khan	Russell-Cooke LLP	020 3826 7306
Gary Dunger	SA Law	020 7183 5683
Gary Dunger	SA Law	01727 798020
Stephen Kenmir	Sampson Coward LLP with Whitehead Vizard	01722 410664
Saul Marine	Saul Marine and Company	020 8959 6090
John Midgley	Seddons	020 7725 8068
John Summers	Setfords Law Limited	020 3962 4031
Sarah Goodall	Shoosmiths LLP	03700 86 8498
Julian Spalter	Spalter Fisher LLP	020 3328 5822
Gary Scott	Spector Constant & Williams	020 7269 5120
Glenn Stevenson	Stevensons Solicitors	01362 869100
Mark Coupe	Stillwells LLP	023 8072 7173
Elizabeth Cobb	Stone Rowe Brewer LLP	020 8891 6141
Jane Canham	Storrar Cowdry Solicitors	01244 400567
Matthew Strain	Strain Keville LLP	020 7323 5000
Iris-Ann Stapleton	Streathers Solicitors LLP	020 7034 4200
Kathryn Millner	Streather Highgate LLP	020 8347 2480
Tim Farrington	Streeter Marshall	01883 622433
James Khakpour-Smith	Taylor Walton LLP	01727 818513
Jim McKeever	Teacher Stern LLP	020 7242 3191
Vikki Herbert	Thackray Williams LLP	020 8290 0440
Frances Watts	The Head Partnership Solicitors LLP	0118 920 9499
Jason Winton	Thirsk Winton LLP	020 8505 4777
Laura-Pauline Adcock-Jones	Thompson Smith and Puxon	01206 574431
Gemma Featonby	Thrings LLP	01793 412107
Alan Tibber	Tibber Marks Solicitors	020 8954 4705
Samantha Wicks	Tinklin Springall Solicitors	020 8402 7222
Robert Plant	Tolhurst Fisher LLP	01702 352 511
William Bethune	Trowers & Hamlins LLP	020 7423 8558
Becky Budd	TWM Solicitors	01483 752700
Christina Le Riche	Veale Wasbrough Vizards LLP	020 7665 0929
Samantha Bone	Wallace LLP	020 7636 4422
Matthew Jones	Weightmans LLP	0113 213 4008
Richard Barca	Wilson Barca LLP	020 7272 2072
Alexandra Sollohub	Wilsons Solicitors LLP	01722 427741
Mark Vinall	Winckworth Sherwood LLP	020 7593 5163
Chris Ledgerwood	Womble Bond Dickinson (UK) LLP	0191 279 9000
Nick Kephalas	YVA Solicitors LLP	020 8445 9898
Nick Kephalas	YVA Solicitors LLP	020 7493 7888
Mark Curtis	Z Group	020 8944 1180



ALEP Members
Project Managers

• Anna Bailey	Leasehold Solutions	020 3327 1177
• Jane Pilkington	Start Lease Extensions	020 8315 6901

ALEP Members
Managing Agents

• Colin Cohen	Colin Cohen Property Management	020 8959 6870
• Fiona Docherty	James Andrew Residential	020 8349 7171
• Chris Hollis-Browne	Maunder Taylor	01707 871711
• Michael Jacobs	Michael Laurie Magar Ltd	020 8492 9850

ALEP Members Surveyors/Valuers

• John Rhoades	ABV Rhoades Chartered Surveyors	0161 242 1334
• Bruce Collinson	Adair Paxton LTD	07740 321999
• Arun Nimba	Adelaide Jones	020 7725 5800
• Karl Charalambous	AK Property Consultants Limited	01202 469908
• Alison Stone	Alison Stone Surveyors	07917 106437
• Andrew Lester	AML Surveys & Valuation Ltd	020 8960 7573
• Andy Christou	Andrew Creighton Chartered Surveyors	020 3696 1090
• Tom Hobman	Andrew Pridell Associates Ltd	01273 202620
• Patrick Oliver	Aston James Associates	020 8771 5035
• Stewart Gray	Austin Gray LLP	01273 201988
• Henrietta Hammonds	Beckett & Kay LLP	020 7439 6667
• Roshan Sivapalan	Blakes Surveyors Ltd	020 8296 1234
• Katy D'Souza	Brasier Freeth LLP	01707 392080
• Graham Bridgeman-Clarke	Bridgeman Clarke Chartered Surveyors	01268 745119
• Christopher Spratt	C G Spratt & Son	01903 234343
• Kevin Ryan	Carter Jonas	01233 346604
• Keith Chapman-Burnett	Chroma Surveyors Ltd	01202 871116
• Colin Rickard	Colin Rickard & Partners	020 8364 2609
• Johanne Coupe	Coupe Property Consultants Limited	01179 596487
• David Coleman	David Coleman & Company	0121 655 0998
• David Graham	David Graham (Chartered Surveyors)	0845 812 1954
• Adrian Hau	Douglas and Gordon	020 7591 8746
• Wilson Dunsin	Dunsin Surveyors	020 7233 6762
• Roger Nelson	Each Side Leasehold	01737 237811
• Emma Biddle	Egerton Ltd	020 7664 6648
• Chris Clark	Ely Langley Greig	023 8027 4211
• David Haines	Extend Your Lease	020 7586 0044
• Angus Fanshawe	Fanshawe White	020 7099 8465
• Andrew Georgiou	Fifield Glyn	020 7205 7172
• David Toogood	Harding Chartered Surveyors	020 7736 2383
• Harriet Fleming	Harriet Fleming Surveyors Ltd	07855 454707
• Kevin Broadhurst	Jackson Green & Preston	01472 311113
• Joe Fraser	Joe Fraser Chartered Surveyors	01642 262728
• Marcus Clark	Joe Fraser Chartered Surveyors	020 7206 2612
• Andrew Tucker	Johnson Tucker LLP	0191 269 7890
• Simon Coates	Jones Lang LaSalle Limited	020 7087 5911
• Julian Wilkins	Julian Wilkins Chartered Surveyors	01903 872211
• Nathan Hall	Kempton Carr Croft	01628 771221
• Gavin Lewis	Kingston Morehen Chartered Surveyors	01323 411088
• Steven Harding	Kinleigh Folkard & Hayward	020 8739 2040
• Jean Howe	Kirkby Diamond	01582 738866
• Jeremy Dharmasena	Knight Frank	020 7861 1587
• David Parkin	Lamberts Chartered Surveyors	020 7520 2317
• Keith Chew	Lawrence & Wightman	0121 779 0999
• Justin Bennett	LBB Chartered Surveyors	020 7822 8850
• Kevin Broadhurst	Leasegevity Ltd	0300 400 3279
• Robert Kaye	Leasehold Assist Ltd	07714 570858
• Steve Jones	Leasehold Valuers Limited	020 8688 8984
• Tim Harrison	Lester Harrison & Partners	020 7629 4383
• Ryan Bridges	MAP Chartered Surveyors	020 8300 1144
• Prosper Marr-Johnson	Marr-Johnson Stevens LLP	020 7499 3199
• John Keenan	Mathieson Keenan	01932 345698
• Ross Maunder Taylor	Maunder Taylor	020 8492 5526
• Chris Baker	McDowalls Surveyors Ltd	020 8472 4422
• Kieron Mckeown	Mckeown & Co LLP	01722 439518
• Tim Palmer	McNeill Lowe & Palmer	01582 469946
• Michael Lee	Michael R Lee Chartered Surveyors	020 3376 3032
• Michael Boaden	MJ Boaden Chartered Surveyors	0191 495 6182
• Paul Holford	Morgan Sloane Chartered Surveyors	0800 161 5767
• Chris Glew	myLeasehold Ltd	020 7034 3435
• Simon Levinson	OCK Chartered Surveyors	020 8202 7948
• Tom Olden	Olden Property Consulting Ltd	07708 807362
• Michael Aldous	Perry Hill Chartered Surveyors	01483 237333
• June Dunne	Prickett and Ellis Surveyors Ltd	020 8442 2491
• Paul Holder	PS&B	01273 274018
• Panicos Loizides	Quest Property Consultants LTD	020 7813 9155
• David Nesbit	RES Property Surveyors Limited	0207 9711 240
• David Nesbit	RES Property Surveyors Limited	07824 441673
• Angela Commons	Richard John Clarke Chartered Surveyors	020 7499 8043
• David Robson	Robsons	020 8402 6666
• Saul Gerrard	Saul Gerrard Surveyors	020 8203 2012
• Alastair Stimson	Savills Commercial Ltd	020 7016 3728
• Clive Scrivener	Scrivener Tibbatts Ltd - Chartered Surveyors	020 8947 7040
• Stephen Prichard	SDL Property Management	0121 233 8979
• Adam Robinson	Selkent Surveyors Ltd	01732 752099
• Matthew Gawne	Shaw & Company (Surveyors) Ltd	020 8948 1122
• Tim Sheridan	Sheridan's Surveyors	01462 814087
• Simon Brook	South East Leasehold	020 8832 9069
• David R Aspey	Sussex Surveyors LLP	01273 821969
• Andrew Symington	Symington Elvery Ltd	020 3324 0360
• Ray Smith	Watsons	01603 751577
• Daniel Knowles	Websters Surveyors	020 8017 1943
• Roger Armstrong	Westburys Chartered Surveyors	07801 258330
• Simon Hanton	Willmotts Chartered Surveyors	020 8222 9915
• James Bush	Woodward Chartered Surveyors	01923 920950
• Ian Young	YA Property	01635 262590

ALEP Members
Barristers

• Paul Letman	Falcon Chambers	020 7353 2484
• Tom Jefferies	Landmark Chambers	020 7430 1221
• Aaron Walder	Landmark Chambers	020 7430 1221
• Ellodie Gibbons	Tanfield Chambers	020 7421 5300
• Philip Rainey	Tanfield Chambers	020 7421 5300
• Mark Loveday	Tanfield Chambers	020 7421 5300
• Christopher Heather QC	Tanfield Chambers	020 7421 5300
• Nicola Muir	Tanfield Chambers	020 7421 5300
• Jonathan Upton	Tanfield Chambers	020 7421 5300
• Piers Harrison	Tanfield Chambers	020 7421 5300
• Daniel Dovar	Tanfield Chambers	020 7421 5300