Feature: Mental Health and Wellbeing Awareness

FlatLiving Magazine

Information, advice & guidance for RMCs and Property Managers

May 2024

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Welcome

Welcome to our May issue of Flat Living Magazine!

As May is the month of Mental Health and Wellbeing Awareness, our contributors have covered everything from how you can support happier living environments to the importance of workplace wellbeing.

Be sure to visit page 7 where 4site have covered the latest on fire door requirements and page 8 for a Building Safety update from JB Leitch.

Don't forget to read more on our exciting new venture, Flat Living Lifestyle on page 6!

In news - You can find new guidance for preparing a building safety assessment certificate application and evacuation guidelines for fire and rescue services from TPI. You can also find the link to buy your tickets to this years ACE Awards dinner on Friday 21st June.

As always, we have included training opportunities from ARMA and job vacancies from Block Recruit to help you upskill or move on to new pastures.

If you have any questions you would like us to organise an article on, or if you have any interesting articles to add – please send them directly to the team via info@flat-living.co.uk.

Happy reading!

Belinda Bagnall and The Flat Living Team

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News

Home Office: Evacuation Guidelines for Fire and Rescue Services

The Home Office has published (5 February 2024) 9 national guidelines to the FRS, intended to support operational guidance and operational practices during a full or partial evacuation from high rise residential buildings.

These guidelines arise from recommendation 33.22a from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry (Phase 1), which was "That the government develop national guidelines for carrying out partial or total evacuations of high-rise residential buildings, such guidelines to include the means of protecting fire exit routes and procedures for evacuating persons who are unable to use the stairs in an emergency, or who may require assistance (such as disabled people, those with cognitive impairment, older people and young children)."

To access the guidance, **click here**

Read the full article **here**

Fire Safety Reinsurance Facility For Buildings With Safety Issues launched

The Association of British Insurers (ABI) has today (13th March 2024) announced a risk-pooling Fire Safety Reinsurance Facility, with cover starting from 1st April 2024.

Reinsurance support is now in place to launch the Fire Safety Reinsurance Facility, in an industry intervention to help improve the availability of insurance for certain buildings with combustible cladding and other fire safety issues.

The Facility has been established by (re)insurance broker McGill and Partners with extensive support from the Association of British Insurers (ABI) and through working in partnership with the British Insurance Brokers' Association (BIBA) which will ensure brokers are made aware of the Facility.

It has two key intentions - to expand capacity for insurers already writing business for affected buildings and to encourage competition across the market so that more firms will provide cover. The ultimate solution remains the urgent need for works to take place to make buildings safe and resilient. The Facility is expected to run for three to five years whilst this happens.

Read the full article here

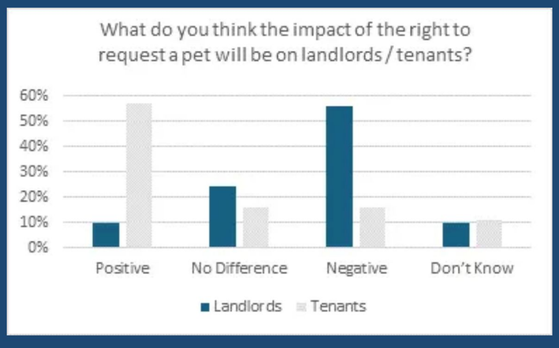
Pets are a Big Concern for Landlords in the Wake of Renters Reform Bill

As landlords across England brace themselves for the implementation of the Renters (Reform) Bill, Leaders Romans Group (LRG) has unveiled findings from a recent landlord survey, highlighting significant concerns among landlords about pets in rented properties.

According to Statista 57% of UK households had a pet in 2023. However, it introduces a host of challenges for property maintenance, tenant relationships, and building management.

The Renters (Reform) Bill proposes comprehensive changes, including the abolition of "no-fault" evictions under Section 21, the introduction of a "lifetime" deposit system, and, notably, provisions for tenants to request permission from their landlords to keep pets. While these changes aim to offer more stability and security for tenants, they raise significant questions about the impact on landlords and the management of their properties.

LRG's survey, which took into account responses from landlords and tenants across England, indicates a palpable apprehension. 56% of landlords predict negative impacts due to the Bill's approach to pet ownership in rental properties; in contrast, only 9.81% see a positive impact. This concern surpasses even the potential effects of abolishing Section 21 evictions, demonstrating the magnitude of the pet policy issue within the private rental sector.





56% of landlords perceive the impact of the "right to request a pet" as positive for tenants, whereas 16% view it as negative, and 16% believe it will make no difference. Only 10% are unsure of the impact. Interestingly, tenants were less concerned about pet ownership; 68% said when they last moved, they didn't ask to keep a pet, as they didn't own one. 18% asked and were accepted, 9% had difficulty but did find somewhere to rent, and only 2% said they had difficulty and therefore, didn't get a pet.

Allowing tenants to request permission to keep pets would require a change in tenancy agreements and acknowledges the importance of pets in people's lives.

Commentary gathered from landlords echoes this sentiment, with one landlord noting, "ownership of Dogs in flats [is] negative unless [there is] outside space – barking can be a problem!!" Another adds, "Don't think people should be able to have dogs more easily – they are destructive if left alone, damage gardens, but most importantly, can create difficulties with neighbours as so many bark for long periods." A third comment reflects a broader concern: "Better for tenants but re the pets, more constraints on landlords trying to maintain decent standards of property."

Kim Lidbury, Group Director, Property Management at LRG, underscores the complexity of the situation, "The introduction of pet-friendly policies in rental agreements is a nuanced issue that requires careful consideration to balance the interests of tenants with those of landlords. Not all property types may be suitable for pets, for instance flats within blocks and properties without gardens. The Third Reading of the Bill recently included a mandate that tenants either maintain insurance to cover potential pet damage or compensate the landlord for the reasonable cost of obtaining such insurance. This is a positive step forward which does seem to address landlords' concerns while also enhancing the lives of tenants and their pets. However more detail is still required to ensure that pets can only be requested in an appropriate property.

"LRG is dedicated to engaging with both landlords and tenants to navigate these legislative changes effectively. By leveraging insights from the landlord community and advocating for balanced policies, LRG aims to contribute to a fair and sustainable rental market that meets the needs of all parties involved."

Anyone wishing to read the full report of landlord and tenant sentiment can download it here

New Guidance: Preparing a Building Assessment Certificate Application

The Health and Safety Executive has published new guidance today (4 April) on preparing a Building Assessment Certificate (BAC) application for Principal Accountable Persons (PAPs).

The PAP for a high-rise residential building must apply for a BAC when told to do so by the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) within 28 days - the new application portal is also live here.

ACE is back for 2024

Date & Time: Friday 21st June, 6.00pm - 12:30am

Venue: Old Billingsgate, London

Theme: The Great Gatsby/Roaring Twenties

Join us for an evening celebrating the outstanding accomplishments of the property sector's managing agents and the impactful work of their people in improving the welfare of millions of leaseholders across the country.

Ticket sales are now open - make sure you reserve your spot or table for this summer's event. **Click here to book now**

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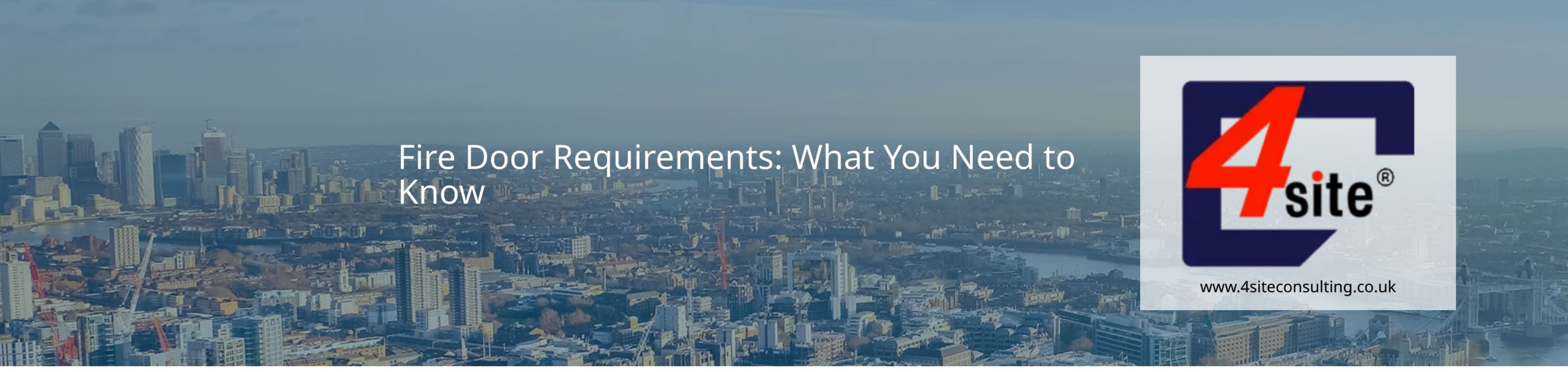

Fire Door Requirements: What You Need to Know

www.4siteconsulting.co.uk

Since The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 came into force in January 2023, responsible persons of multi-occupancy buildings of over 11 metres in height have faced new obligations.

Here we'll be explaining the fire door responsibilities outlined in the regulations, and exploring whether a specialist inspection is required to ensure compliance.

Why Did the Rules Change?

Following the catastrophic fire at Grenfell Tower in London, an inquiry was carried out in an attempt to narrow down the reasons for the tragedy. One of the findings from the inquiry was that the fire doors in the building didn't work as they should have- likely due to disrepair or damage.

The phase one report noted that

"Fire doors play an essential role in preventing or inhibiting the spread of smoke and toxic gasses and in preserving the effective compartmentation of buildings."

Because of this, the Government changed the legal requirements of property managers of multi-occupancy blocks in England to include the regular inspection of fire doors.

What Are The Requirements?

Since the 23rd January 2023, it has been a legal requirement for those responsible for multi-occupied residential buildings of over 11 metres in height to:

- undertake quarterly checks of all communal fire doors (including self-closing devices) in common parts of the building
- undertake (on a best endeavour basis) annual checks of all flat entrance doors, including self-closing devices, that lead onto the building's common parts

The regulations also require property managers to "provide to residents of all multi-occupied residential buildings with two or more sets of domestic premises (that have common parts) information on the importance of fire doors to a building's fire safety."

What Does That Mean in Practice?

The first point is fairly straightforward; every 3 months, property managers need to carry out a visual inspection of all the fire doors in the common parts of their building.

The second part requires checks on individual flat entry doors that lead to a common area; referring to a 'best endeavour basis' due to the need for access to individual units.

The Governments provided notes on this which state that *"it will be for responsible persons to determine the best approach to engage with residents in order to get access to undertake the annual checks of flat entrance doors. This could include the responsible person agreeing with residents a date, so access can be granted."*



As for the third point, the information you need to provide to residents should include guidance re:

- The importance of keeping doors closed
- The dangers of tampering with doors and self-closing devices
- The importance of reporting any faults or damage to doors or self-closing devices immediately

This information should be provided to all residents (in whichever accessible format is preferred) when they move in and on an annual basis from there on.

Who Can Carry Out the Inspections?

The Government's notes on the new requirements state that responsible persons are allowed to carry out the new inspections themselves. They provide a checklist of considerations for the responsible person to use while carrying out the inspection.

They should be checking:

- If there has been any alteration or damage to a door's glazing apertures or air transfer grille
- If there are any gaps around the door frame
- That seals and hinges are fitted correctly
- That the door closer shuts the door
- That the door closes correctly around the whole frame
- That there is no visible damage (either deliberate or from wear and tear) to the door or door closer



Should You Instruct a Specialist?

For the sake of peace of mind for you and your residents, as well as saving you time, we would recommend asking a specialist to carry out your quarterly and annual checks. A specialist will know exactly what to look for, and their input will speed up any remedial works deemed necessary.

A specialist should certainly be instructed if any issues are found during your own checks- the Government notes suggest that

"if any issues are identified from these checks, it might be appropriate to undertake more detailed checks of doors (or the self-closing device)…This could include engaging a specialist."

If you, as the responsible person, feel that an expert eye is needed to ensure your compliance and to uphold resident safety, then asking your fire risk inspector to complete the basic quarterly and annual checks alongside the usual assessments may be best. This can also help to ensure a trail of paperwork that will ensure you can evidence your compliance with the regulations.

As fire safety specialists, we're more than happy to support you with general fire risk assessments as well as the annual and quarterly fire door inspections you need to undertake. Feel free to get in touch with our friendly team if you have any questions or would like further information.

We're happy to advise with no obligation.

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Building Safety Update

www.jbleitch.co.uk

The opening months of 2024 have brought a number of important updates in building safety. In this update, the building safety team at JB Leitch provide a succinct overview of the most notable areas property management professionals should be aware of.

Reinsurance Support

In mid-March, The Association of British Insurers (ABI) announced a risk-pooling Fire Safety Reinsurance Facility, with cover starting from 1st April 2024.

Reinsurance support is now in place to launch the Fire Safety Reinsurance Facility, in an industry intervention to help improve the availability of insurance for certain buildings with combustible cladding and other fire safety issues.

The Facility has been established by (re)insurance broker McGill and Partners with extensive support from the Association of British Insurers (ABI) and through working in partnership with the British Insurance Brokers' Association (BIBA) which will ensure brokers are made aware of the Facility.

It has two key intentions – to expand capacity for insurers already writing business for affected buildings and to encourage competition across the market so that more firms will provide cover. The ultimate solution remains the urgent need for works to take place to make buildings safe and resilient. The Facility is expected to run for three to five years whilst this happens.

The first step will be for the participating insurers – Allianz, Aviva, Axa, RSA and Zurich – to enter higher-risk buildings they currently insure, and which are awaiting remediation works, into the Facility at the point of their annual renewal. These firms have continued to be active in the market and are the top five firms providing insurance cover for commercial and residential buildings.

Buildings insurance premiums will continue to be based on a variety of risk factors, such as the type and age of the building, previous claims history and other property risks such as storm/flooding or escape of water. External factors such as construction costs and supply shortages will also have an impact.

More information on how the Facility will work is available here. Information for brokers representing the affected buildings is available from the British Insurance Brokers' Association.



Remediation & Remediation Contribution Orders

Readers will no doubt be aware that attention has been given to questions such as the interpretation of what is just and equitable and how, in practical terms, the BSA will be applied in practice. Taking the recent Triathlon Homes LLP v Stratford Village Development Partnership and others [2024] case as an example, the decision will be of interest to residential block landlords and managers, supporting earlier judgments finding that RCOs may be made in respect of costs incurred prior to the commencement of the Building Safety Act 2022, that conditions may be imposed on an RCO – in this case, that funds should be repaid where actions against third parties are successful – and providing some guidance on the application of the 'just and equitable' test to determine when an RCO should be granted.

Please make sure you continue to visit the Case Law & Comment section at JBLeitch.co.uk where we will soon be publishing some more notable decisions on the trajectory of RO & RCOs.

Preparing a Building Assessment Certificate Application

The Health and Safety Executive has published new guidance (4th April) on preparing a Building Assessment Certificate (BAC) application for Principal Accountable Persons (PAPs).

The PAP for a high-rise residential building must apply for a BAC when told to do so by the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) within 28 days.

The Golden Thread

On 13th January 2024, new Regulations (the sixth commencement regulations made under the Building Safety Act 2022) have brought into force various sections in Part 4 of the Building Safety Act. Sections now enacted include:

- Sections 79 to 82 which impose requirements with regard to registration of occupied higher-risk buildings and obtaining and displaying a building assessment certificate for such a building;
- Sections 83 to 86 which impose duties with regard to assessing and managing building safety risks, the safety case report and its provision to the regulator;
- Sections 87, 88 and 90 which impose and are in relation to duties to report certain safety information, keeping prescribed information and documents for higher-risk buildings and for sharing that information and documents with various interested parties;
- Sections 91 to 94 which impose requirements in relation to a resident engagement strategy for a higher-risk building, requests by residents for further information or documents about their building, and the complaints procedures to be operated by the principal accountable person and the building safety regulator;
- Sections 95 to 97 which impose duties on residents and provide for contravention notices when those duties are breached and for access to residential units;
- Sections 98 to 101 which impose requirements in relation to enforcement by the regulator;
- Section 102 (and the accompanying Schedule 7) which creates the special measures regime, an enforcement tool of last resort; and;
- Section 111 which makes provisions in relation to articles of associations of resident management companies.

Readers will note that sections 91 and 94 relate to the requirements in relation the resident engagement strategy, part of the "golden thread" of information. The HSE guidance outlines how Principal Accountable Person's and those supporting them, should approach the Resident Engagement Strategy.

A range of case studies is also available to help others gain insight on good practice in resident engagement. The guidance document sets out key considerations and principles to help the Building Safety Regulator Principal Accountable Persons (PAPs) and Accountable Person (APs) engage effectively with residents and is available via the link below:

hse-engaging-with-residents.pdf (buildingsafetyhub.org.uk)

The HSE case studies to assist on the process of developing and implementing the strategy can be found on the Making Buildings Safer campaign website here:

Residents Engagement Strategy Case Studies (buildingsafety.campaign.gov.uk)

With regard to the development of building safety case reports, The BSR has published a 'Safety Case Toolkit' guide for Accountable Persons (defined under section 84) to assist them in preparing a safety case report. A safety case report must demonstrate that all reasonable steps have been taken to prevent building safety risks happening and reduce the seriousness if they do. Readers will be aware that the safety case report is a document that summarises the safety case for a high-rise residential building. It identifies the building's safety risks and explains how the risks are being managed. Building safety risks are the risk of the spread of fire or structural failure.

A safety case report should be submitted as soon as possible when:

- the building is already occupied or becomes occupied
- you become the principal accountable person

Approved Document B & Second Staircases

In October last year, the government announced intended transitional arrangements to accompany new guidance relating to second staircases in new residential buildings in England above 18 metres.

In a statement released on the 19th February 2024, Michael Gove stated that the Building Safety Regulator will publish the new guidance on second staircases before the end of March, making clear the need for a second staircase in new multi-occupancy residential buildings that have a top occupied storey above 18 metres, and confirming that evacuation lifts will not be called for as a matter of course, providing housebuilders with the clarity they need to progress developments.

The official statement goes onto state that the revised statutory guidance, known as Approved Document B, represents general guidance: it will not be exhaustive, and the design of each high-rise building will continue to receive individual scrutiny from experts, now via the Building Safety Regulator. The fire safety design for any higher risk buildings above 18 metres will be subject to review at Planning Gateway One by fire safety professionals, and by a multi-disciplinary team at Gateway Two, who must be satisfied that the final fire safety provisions are appropriate to the requirements of each individual building. It remains the responsibility of the owners and those carrying out building works, including developers, to demonstrate that the functional requirements of the building regulations have been met.

Read the official statement here:

Written statements – Written questions, answers and statements – UK Parliament

Should you wish to discuss any areas of building safety, contact the team directly at: BuildingSafety@jbleitch.co.uk

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Understanding the Right to Manage

www.bishopandsewell.co.uk

Chris Macartney and Mark Chick from the Bishop & Sewell Landlord and Tenant team recently hosted the latest in their webinar series, Leasehold Question Time. Entitled 'Understanding the Right to Manage,' the webinar guest was Mark Loveday of Tanfield Chambers.

The webinar can be viewed OnDemand here: Webinar: Understanding the Right To Manage by Bishop and Sewell LLP (bigmarker.com)

In this article, Chris and Mark outline the Right to Manage, explaining what it is and how the process works.



Understanding the Right to Manage

The Right to Manage ('RTM') is a statutory no-fault right introduced by the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002 and provides a useful alternative to buying the freehold as there is no capital outlay (other than costs).

Exercising the RTM enables leaseholders to take over the landlord's management functions in respect of their building, without having to buy the freehold or gain the agreement of the landlord. Doing so puts the leaseholders, via their RTM company, in control of their own destiny as regards management and expenditure.

However, exercising the RTM can be a technical and complex process and the Government is considering changing or reforming these rights and the qualification criteria with the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill, which is currently progressing through Parliament.

The biggest proposed change in relation to RTM is that buildings with up to 50% of the property in non-residential (e.g. commercial) use would now qualify for these rights, meaning many more buildings will fall within the ambit of the Right to Manage. The Bill also proposes that the freeholder will not be able to recover its costs of dealing with the claim from the leaseholders.

Leaseholders can exercise the RTM without the need to prove a complaint against their landlord or managing agent, meaning the right can be exercised at any time, provided the qualifying criteria are met. The relevant legislation is the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002 ("the 2002 Act") which sets out what was intended to be a simple process, beginning with the leaseholders setting up a dedicated RTM company of which the leaseholders are members.

If the RTM is claimed successfully, the leaseholders, through the RTM company, take control of services, repairs, maintenance, improvements, and insurance in respect of their building. RTM does not entirely displace the freeholder from the process of making decisions and enforcing the covenants contained in the leases but does give the leaseholders substantial powers. It should be noted that the RTM company needs to maintain a sufficient membership to maintain the right, and failure to do so could lead to the removal of the right and reversion of management functions to the freeholder.

QUALIFYING FOR THE RIGHT

Any person who is a qualifying leaseholder of a flat in the premises is entitled to be a member of the RTM company. However, the building itself must meet certain qualifying criteria to be eligible for RTM, which are briefly that:

- The property must be a self-contained building, or part of a building, either with or without surrounding estate areas;
- At least 50% of the leaseholders within the property must sign up for the process and become members of the RTM company;
- At least two thirds of the leaseholders within the property must have long leases (a long lease being defined as having a term greater than 21 years at the time of issue).

In general, meeting the above requirements means there is a good probability that the Right to Manage process would succeed for the property, although it would be wise to seek the advice and input of a professional party first, such as an experienced managing agent, with respect to the specific circumstances surrounding your property and the obligations the RTM company would inherit.

THE PROCESS

Step 1 – Invitation to Participate

To exercise the Right to Manage, the RTM company must first serve a notice on all the qualifying leaseholders who are not already members of the company, inviting them to become members for the purposes of acquiring the right. This is known as an 'Invitation to Participate' and this invitation notice needs to be served before claiming the right to manage from the freeholder.

The Notice is in a prescribed format and must state both the name of the RTM company and that the RTM company intends to acquire the Right to Manage. It must invite the recipient to become a member of the RTM company.

Step 2 – Notice of Claim

The Notice of Claim must be given by the RTM company itself. It needs to be served on the freeholder and anyone else who is party to a lease other than as the Landlord or Tenant (e.g., an intermediate Landlord or management company that is a party to the lease). There is also a requirement to serve the Notice on each qualifying leaseholder, regardless of whether they participate or not.

Step 3 – Counter Notice

The freeholder, once they receive the Notice of Claim is entitled to serve a Counter Notice either accepting the claim, stating that they admit that the RTM company will be entitled to acquire the Right to Manage or disputing it – stating that the company is not entitled to do so. The only formal grounds on which the Freeholder may object are based upon eligibility criteria (see above), and the Counter Notice must stipulate the statutory grounds for objection.

The freeholder can also potentially raise a procedural challenge if the procedural requirements relating to the relevant notices have not been met. There has been a significant amount of case law on this topic.

If the freeholder does not accept that the RTM company is entitled to acquire the right to manage, then the leaseholders may apply to the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) for a determination that they are entitled to acquire the Right to Manage. This application must be made not later than two months from the date on which the Counter Notice is served.

Step 4 – Acquisition and Management

If there is no dispute about the entitlement of the RTM company, the acquisition date will be the date stipulated in the Claim Notice. If there is a dispute, the acquisition date is three months after final determination of the matter. The right to manage is registrable as a unilateral notice against the freeholder's title.

BENEFITS OF RTM

Whether the leaseholders simply wish to take matters into their own hands, there are historic issues relating to management as a 'no fault' right the RTM process allows leaseholders to acquire the management of their property without having to worry about proving why.

A viable alternative to pursuing enfranchisement, successful completion of the RTM process also empowers leaseholders with the ability to fully control the running of their block, including how and where funds are spent and service charge levels. Providing the covenants of the various leases are adhered to, the RTM company can decide how to manage the block. Often the management costs can be reduced, as the leaseholders will have a vested interest in running the property as cost efficiently as possible.

After completion the freeholder is entitled to become a member of the RTM company, and this may well be useful in terms

SHOULD YOU CONSIDER PURSUING THE RIGHT TO MANAGE?

Many leaseholders have now been waiting years to see changes to the law around leasehold but the Right to Manage allows action to be taken now which, by putting them in charge of the service charge budget, is likely to be of long-term economic benefit.

With the current uncertainty as to the nature and effect of the changes to the enfranchisement regime in terms of the extent of the changes and the timing of when these are likely to take effect, the Right to Manage represents a good option for those looking to take immediate action to take over the management of their property.

To find out more about the Right to Manage, email leasehold@bishopandsewell.co.uk or call 0207 631 4141 and ask to speak to a member of Landlord and Tenant team.

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Feature: Mental Health and Wellbeing Awareness

Mental Health Crisis Cleaning: Assisting Those in Need

Fraser Allen
— Estate Management —
www.fraserallenem.co.uk

In recent years, mental health has become a prominent topic of discussion, and the importance of maintaining a clean and healthy living environment for individuals experiencing mental health crises cannot be overstated.

Property management companies play a crucial role in providing support and assistance to those in need during such challenging times.

Here we will explore the concept of Mental Health Crisis Cleaning and how property management companies can partner with cleaning companies, as we have with So Fresh and So Clean, to help individuals facing mental health struggles.

Understanding Mental Health Crisis Cleaning

Mental Health Crisis Cleaning is a specialised service that focuses on restoring and maintaining a clean and safe living environment for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis.

These episodes can manifest in various ways, such as hoarding disorder, severe depression, or anxiety disorders.

A cluttered and unhygienic living space can exacerbate these conditions, contributing to increased stress and worsening mental health symptoms.



The Impact of Mental Health Crisis Cleaning

Promoting Physical and Mental Wellbeing

A clean and organised living space is essential for promoting physical and mental well-being. A cluttered living space can pose significant health risks, including mould growth, pest infestations, and unsanitary conditions. Through Mental Health Crisis Cleaning, property management companies can help mitigate these risks and create a healthier living environment for those in need.

So Fresh and So Clean specialises in providing customised cleaning solutions tailored to the specific needs of individuals experiencing mental health crises. Their team consists of trained professionals who understand the sensitivities surrounding mental health.

Their compassionate approach ensures that individuals are treated with respect and empathy throughout the cleaning process, creating a supportive and understanding environment.

Property management companies can establish a collaborative partnership with So Fresh and So Clean to ensure a seamless integration of Mental Health Crisis Cleaning services into their existing support systems. This approach allows for effective communication, coordination, and ongoing support for individuals in need.

Mental Health Crisis Cleaning is an essential service that property management companies can offer to support individuals in need during challenging times.

However, as block managers, it is important to recognise that our responsibilities primarily lie within the communal areas of the building. While we may not have direct control over the living spaces of individual residents, it is crucial to acknowledge that the well-being of residents living in the flats can have a significant impact on the overall community.

When someone living in one of the flats is affected by hoarding or another mental health condition, it can lead to challenges within the communal areas. The clutter and disorganisation associated with hoarding can create safety hazards and affect the quality of life for other residents. Additionally, the mental health struggles of an individual can create tension and discomfort within the block.

To ensure that all residents are treated fairly and feel safe to come to us as agents for help, it is essential to adopt a collaborative approach. For example, by educating all residents about hoarding and mental health conditions, we can create understanding and empathy within the community. This can be achieved through informational sessions, workshops, or distributing educational materials. Increasing awareness can help reduce stigma and encourage residents to seek help or support when needed.

Creating an open and non-judgmental environment where residents feel comfortable discussing their concerns is crucial. Establishing regular communication channels such as community meetings or online forums can provide a platform for residents to express their needs and seek assistance.

Collaborating with local mental health organisations and professionals can ensure that residents have access to the necessary support services. By establishing partnerships, we can provide information about available resources, organise support groups, or facilitate referrals to professionals who specialise in hoarding disorder or other mental health conditions.

Implementing clear policies and procedures can help address issues related to hoarding and mental health conditions in a fair and consistent manner. These policies should prioritise the well-being of all residents while ensuring that individuals affected by these conditions are treated with compassion, confidentiality and understanding.

Conducting regular inspections of communal areas can help identify any potential hazards or issues related to hoarding. By addressing these concerns promptly, we can ensure the safety and cleanliness of the communal spaces for all residents.

While our responsibilities may be limited to the communal areas, it is important to acknowledge the impact that hoarding and mental health conditions can have on the overall well-being of the community.

For more from Fraser Allen, click here.

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Feature: Mental Health and Wellbeing Awareness

Enhancing Lift Safety and Wellbeing: A Guide for Building Owners and Contractors

ARDENT LIFT CONSULTANCY

www.ardentlc.co.uk

In this edition of Flat-Living magazine, the focus is on Mental Health & Wellbeing. As owners of lift equipment that requires regular maintenance from a Lift Contractor, there is a duty to provide a safe and secure environment for operatives as well as users/passengers.



- **Accessibility and Safety:**

Ensuring that lifts are well-maintained, clean, and safe can help alleviate anxiety for equipment users. Regular inspections and maintenance routines should be in place to ensure reliability of service. Prompt attendance to any call outs/entrapments that arise are essential.

- **Design and Comfort:**

Designing lifts with user comfort in mind can contribute to a more positive experience. This includes factors such as adequate lighting, ventilation, and spaciousness to reduce feelings of claustrophobia. Upgrading lifts to comply with EN 81-70 to improve accessibility requirements can endorse inclusivity.

- **Clear Communication:**

Providing clear instructions on how to use the lift and what to do in case of emergencies can help users feel more confident and in control. This includes clear signage, audio announcements, and accessible information for users with disabilities. Additionally, good communication from your maintenance provider is key to instil confidence that any issues are being addressed in a timely manner.

- **Empathy and Support:**

Training staff to be empathetic and supportive towards users who may be experiencing anxiety or stress is essential during lift issues. Having knowledgeable and compassionate staff available to assist users can make a significant difference in their experience.

For those who service and install the lift equipment areas to consider include:

- **Work Environment:**

The nature of the job in the lift industry often involves working in confined spaces, at heights, and sometimes under high pressure to meet deadlines. Providing a safe and supportive work environment is essential for maintaining good mental health among employees. Advancements in lift regulations and legislation means older lift installations, particularly those predating the Health and Safety at Work Act, may require additional safety measures to be put in place.

Before H&S improvement works



After H&S improvement works



- **Physical Demands:**

The physical demands of the job, including lifting heavy equipment and working in tight spaces, can contribute to both physical and mental strain. Employers should undertake site specific risk assessments and provide the relevant control measures to reduce this.

- **Supportive Leadership:**

Leadership plays a crucial role in promoting mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. Managers should be trained to recognise signs of distress in their team members and provide support and resources as needed.

- **Regular Check-Ins:**

Regular check-ins with employees can help managers stay informed about their team members' mental health and wellbeing. These check-ins can be informal conversations or more structured meetings, depending on the preferences of the employees and the culture of the organisation.

What can you do to improve the wellbeing of building users?

Ensuring all the above considerations are in place with the lifts at your property and the company that maintains them comes with added responsibility.

Ardent Lift Consultancy can aid by undertaking lift condition surveys and make recommendations to improve safety of lift equipment for users, and to create a safer, healthier more supportive work environment for lift contractors working within your building.

ardentlc.co.uk

info@ardentlc.co.uk

07792 395 259

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: Mental Health and Wellbeing Awareness

Community Engagement: How Property Managers Can Promote Happy Neighbourhoods

www.firstport.co.uk

Estate management extends far beyond standard property management services; it must be integrated into the community fabric. Jonny Holmes, Operations Director – Estates at FirstPort, explains the difference a specialist Property Manager can make in engaging diverse communities for a happier home life.



Going Beyond Property Boundaries

An average residential estate can encompass affordable homes, shared ownership, private ownership, tenanted properties, first-time buyers, second homeowners, downsizers, upsizers, relocators, and everything in between.

Because every customer's property is unique, we must look beyond boundaries and focus instead on the holistic environment – its sights, sounds, and the people immediately surrounding our homes. This proves crucial to our feelings of safety, security, happiness, and general wellbeing.

Reflecting on my early career, working on Community Initiatives for a Housing Association in the South-West of England, I gained firsthand insight into the value of placing communities at the heart of our activities. One of my first projects required engaging and consulting with residents to construct a low maintenance sensory garden for the benefit of the community. The residents threw themselves into the project over a 12-month period and also assisted with the build. Witnessing their huge pride in their achievement was a fantastic example of the importance of community, working together to achieve a common goal, selflessly for everyone's benefit.

I brought this insight into my role at FirstPort by creating resident communication and engagement plans early on for all sites under my remit. These plans outline various communication and engagement opportunities with our customers and communities, fostering a positive atmosphere among residents. When collaborating with Resident Management Companies (RMC), this approach is a great way to develop a shared understanding and strengthens the community we are serving.

Early Engagement

Engagement ideally starts upon notification of a property sale, with a welcome letter and introduction. Early contact with homeowners is essential to establish trust from day one.

For all newly mobilised management schemes, we aim to hold homeowners' meetings within six weeks of the handover. These meetings provide an opportunity to explain our on-site activities, familiarise homeowners with our processes, and explain the service charge, including how their funds are held in trust. These meetings not only establish initial contact but also provide comfort and reassurance that we are committed to ensuring a happy community.

We encourage customers to join our estate walkabouts with our Property Managers, held pre-season in Spring and at the end of each Autumn. These walkabouts facilitate seasonal planning and enhance understanding of the managed environment and habitats. Surprisingly, many residents have not fully explored their own estates, and this gives them a wonderful opportunity to do so, guided by someone who knows their estate well and can answer any questions.

During a recent homeowner walkabout in Dorset, a customer expressed disappointment that a five-meter section of maintained land along one boundary had not been strimmed by the grounds maintenance contractor. We were able to explain that the site hosts special habitats for Hazel dormice, protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. To preserve their habitat and ensure protection, a 5-meter corridor is left uncut. This reassured the resident and cemented in their mind our abilities to manage their estate to a high standard.

Misconceptions surrounding estate management sometimes arise, which I encourage my team to address proactively to promote transparency and understanding. For instance, clarifying the distinctions between the role of the property manager and that of the local council helps residents appreciate the value we add in areas that would have otherwise been un-adopted.

Giving Back

We take pride in the communities in which we live and work. Our Property Managers undertake various community projects and initiatives, such as beach cleaning and litter picking in areas local to the estates they manage, as a means of giving back.

Volunteer events serve as opportunities to unite the estate and foster community pride. Planting days in particular promote collective pride and achievement while enhancing the natural beauty of the area for residents to enjoy.

While core services remain central to the role of a Property Manager, my overarching ambition is to harness the power of community fully. By building lasting relationships and integrating into the estate culture, we aim to cultivate a positive environment that can have a remarkable impact on residents.

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.

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www.firstport.co.uk/resident-directors

BRITISH SAFETY COUNCIL
Five Star Occupational Health and Safety Audit 2023

FIRST PORT

Feature: Mental Health and Wellbeing Awareness

Let’s Stress the Importance of Wellbeing

www.earlkendrick.com

Highlighting Health and Happiness

At Earl Kendrick Group, we understand the importance of setting the standard for workplace wellbeing, demonstrating a steadfast commitment to the Mental Health and happiness of our employees.



Coaching

In celebration of Mental Health Awareness week, we have partnered with a coaching provider to host a movement session aimed at stimulating and re-focusing the minds of employees.

The sessions are delivered alongside a themed music playlist to boost mood, energy and build coping mechanisms to reduce the risk of stress, helping to break away from the traditional desk-bound routine.

Unwind, destress and recharge

Through a series of dynamic and interactive activities, our employees will have the opportunity to unwind, destress, recharge and enjoy a rejuvenating break from the demands of the workday. These movement session promise to be both inclusive and engaging with a focus on inclusivity.

This Spring Earl Kendrick introduced a comprehensive Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) named Health Assured. This program provides colleagues with round-the-clock access to confidential support services by trained counsellors through a phone helpline, app, and online portal. Alongside advice on health and wellbeing, our employees can also seek guidance on financial and legal matters.

Employee Challenges

Recognising the unique challenges that some employees may face, Earl Kendrick has also taken steps to support individuals affected by the menopause. Understanding the potential impact on work performance, the company is committed to offering necessary adjustments to accommodate their needs.

Flexibility lies at the heart of Earl Kendrick’s approach to employee wellbeing. Embracing the benefits of remote working and family-friendly practices, the company promotes a healthy work-life balance. Furthermore, initiatives such as eyecare vouchers and a Cycle to Work scheme underscore the company’s commitment to holistic wellbeing.

Unlimited Leave policy

A standout feature of our ethos is our Unlimited Leave policy. This pioneering initiative empowers employees to take ownership of their time off, acknowledging the value of rest and relaxation in maintaining mental and emotional health.

Speaking on these initiatives, our Managing Director, Chris Stansell MRICS, MAPM, expressed enthusiasm about prioritising employee wellbeing. “At EK, our employees are our most valuable asset. By investing in their mental health and overall wellbeing, we not only enhance productivity but foster a culture where employees feel valued and supported”.

By implementing these innovative strategies, Earl Kendrick Group consistently raises the bar for workplace wellness, showcasing unwavering dedication to the mental wellbeing and satisfaction of our employees.

If you have any questions, contact Earl Kendrick:

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Feature: Mental Health and Wellbeing Awareness

The Importance of Accessible Mental Health Services for Residents

www.residentsline.co.uk

From the 13th to the 19th of May 2024, the UK will be observing Mental Health Awareness Week. It is an important time for raising awareness of this ever-present issue and one for the property management industry to pay particular attention to.

Leasehold dwellings make up roughly 20% of the UK's housing stock and the millions of people that live in leasehold properties represent every class, race, religion, age and ability. With huge numbers experiencing common mental health issues such as depression and anxiety as well as a rise in the number of people being diagnosed with more severe issues, a sizeable percentage of leaseholders will no doubt be experiencing problems with their mental health.

This huge swathe of our community has also experienced common challenges over the past few years. From cladding and fire safety issues to Covid, to the cost-of-living crisis...many will still be reeling. Leaseholders are also more likely to reside in city settings and high-rise blocks which bring their own sets of challenges.

Here we will be discussing how property managers can support struggling residents and why they should be considering the mental health of their residents in everything they do.



Why is Mental Health a Concern for Property Managers?

Looking out for the mental health of those we interact with is a job for all of us. For property managers this certainly extends to the leaseholders whose home they maintain and investments they protect.

For some leaseholders (especially elderly, isolated or disabled residents), their property manager may be one of few people they are in contact with regularly. It is important that they feel they can speak freely and trust that they will be heard and sign-posted to the right support network.

For these secluded residents and all others, the effective maintenance and running of a block can have a huge effect on the enjoyment and peace they experience in day-to-day life.

Aggressive service charge collection procedures, delayed maintenance plans and disorganised communication can all add stress to an already stressful existence. If property managers can keep the (sometimes fragile) mental health of their residents in mind, they can have a hugely positive effect. They can also act as a first responder for someone in crisis.

Preventative Action

Preventing issues is always better than remedying them. There is quite a bit that property managers can do to boost the mental health of their residents and stay ahead of the game for anyone struggling. Considerations include:

- **Effective maintenance plans**

Reducing stress and anxiety by maintaining a safe, secure, clean and comfortable environment.

- **Clear and accessible communication**

All communications around maintenance and financials should be clear and concise. Different formats should be available to suit the needs of all residents. Offering to chat things through once written communications have gone out can also reduce any anxiety or misunderstandings. This could be one-to-one, or you could arrange a resident meeting.

- **Creating a welcoming sense of community**

Make sure your residents are aware of any community activities or online social groups. Creating relationships between neighbours can play a huge part in enriching lives and growing the connections needed to avoid isolation.

- **Getting to know residents on a personal level**

Take the time to get to know your residents and check in with those you haven't heard from in a while. If you know someone is lonely, introduce them to others in the building and check on them regularly. If you know a few residents in similar positions e.g. single parents or work from home freelancers, give them the opportunity to connect.

- **Maintaining flexibility for those in need**

Knowing your residents on a personal level can help when making decisions around payment flexibility or allowing fair allowances and accommodations for those in need.

- **Training staff in mental health awareness and first aid**

Consider enrolling for mental health awareness and first-aider training for you and your team. You may well become a first responder for someone in crisis one day- be ready.

- **Open signposting of relevant resources in the area**

Utilise community notice boards and online social groups for signposting residents to local resources. Mind centres, crisis centres, counsellors and holistic therapists can be helpful to name a few.

What to do if a Resident is in Crisis

It may be clear to you that someone is in crisis. They may simply tell you, or you may have a hunch based on their behaviour, appearance or the state of their unit.

Regardless of how the issue comes to light, your first step is to listen. Listen without judgement- simply let them talk it out if that's what they need to do.

You can then gently signpost them towards the services they may find useful. Make sure they know they can come to you if they need someone to speak to or any further assistance. Check in with them regularly to ensure they have support in place.

If it is clear that there is an issue but your resident doesn't want (or cannot) talk to you, contact them by private means with signposting information and a caring, supportive tone. Check in regularly to follow up on their progress.

If you are aware of more than one resident experiencing issues, you could consider creating a safe space for them to come together. This could be face-to-face in a private, communal area or online. They may find comfort in knowing their neighbours are experiencing similar issues and find it easier to talk to someone in the same position.

Head to the Residentsline website for information on all of our products and services or, if you'd like to speak to one of our fantastic, specialist team, give us a call on 0800 281 235.

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Feature: Mental Health and Wellbeing Awareness

Enhancing Safety Measures in Blocks of Flats

www.flatlivinginsurance.co.uk

Feeling safe and secure in your home should be the expected norm. But for those living in urban areas and in close proximity to multiple neighbours, safety can be a genuine concern.

Building managers should keep in mind the close link between perceived bodily safety and mental health issues such as anxiety, depression and agoraphobia.

Helping residents feel safe in their homes and able to express their opinions on the running of the block, while alleviating any worries about theft and criminal damage, will go a long way to improving their quality of life.

Here, we will be discussing what resident management companies can do to improve safety and security in their blocks. This will be a benefit for their own sake and that of their fellow residents.

Maintenance and Safety

Residents want to see their block looked after properly, and that must start with safety. Being open with residents about upcoming inspections and their outcomes can go a long way toward alleviating any fears around structural integrity or fire safety.

Residents are more aware than ever of the importance of above-board practice. With so many horror stories in the news about crumbling foundations, unsafe cladding and fire safety, being completely transparent is vital.

Make sure you are up to date with your obligations and publicly publish the results. Online forums or the building pinboard will do. Make sure your residents know you are taking care of the basics and that their home is safe.



Security and Safety

Coming in a close second for residents is building security. This is vital for all multiple occupancy buildings, but blocks in large towns and cities need to pay particular attention due to higher crime rates.

Basic security for blocks of flats should include:

- Access control for all entrance doors
- Appropriate lighting for communal areas and entranceways
- CCTV
- Speedy maintenance for security issues
- Frequent lock changes

Access control should ideally include a video entrance system so residents can view their visitor and allow access from their individual unit. It should be made very clear to all residents that no access should be given to strangers, and that ID should be requested from any contractors or delivery drivers before buzzing anyone in.

If you use key cards or fobs, tight control should be maintained over the system you use to give and deny access. Anyone moving out of the building should be immediately denied access once they have moved, and the fob or card should be returned.

Well-lit communal areas and motion-activated lighting for entranceways is ideal. No one wants to get home in the evening and be fumbling for their keys in the dark. Great lighting makes everyone feel safe and improves the look of the building- it also allows your CCTV to capture the best images possible (recordings of which should be kept well organised).

Main entrance locks should be changed every few years regardless, but essential maintenance should always be carried out immediately if door or window locks are showing signs of wear and tear. Changing the locks on flat door's should be standard practice for all new leaseholders. They should not need to worry that the previous lessee and their acquaintances may still have a key.

Community and Communication

The management plays a crucial role in cultivating a sense of community within a block of flats, which is essential for residents to feel safe and secure. Neighbours who know each other, have healthy communication and look out for one another feel far safer than those who live entirely separate lives.

Encouraging resident groups and activities and providing several different means of communication will allow all demographics to join in. A sewing club, an exercise class, a social media group, or a simple suggestion box all actively foster communication and facilitate the building of connections.

As a manager of the block, directors should be aware of any vulnerable members of the block. This is so they can make sure to be checking in on them personally. Listen to concerns raised by residents. Get the wheels in motion for any ideas that could increase a sense of safety and security.

Summary

You can take simple steps to reduce concerns about crime and vandalism in or around your block. Adequate lighting and CCTV coverage is essential, as is listening to the concerns of your residents.

Taking care of practicalities of living in a city-centre block may well alleviate some of the stressors faced by residents. This can allow them to live as peacefully as possible and protecting their mental health.

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Feature: Mental Health and Wellbeing Awareness

Addressing Noise Pollution in Flats and Apartments

London Flats Insurance
www.londonflatsinsurance.co.uk
020 7993 3034

While city-living is a great option when it comes to convenience, settling down amid the hustle and bustle can have its drawbacks. You may have shops, restaurants and entertainment venues right outside your door, but with that comes noise.

You may expect traffic, crowd noise and music to make its way inside, but you are likely to experience noise from your neighbours too. Close quarter living means shared walls, lots of footsteps, noise from children, pets and parties.

There is a thin line between vibrancy and disturbance – but thousands of residents make it work and enjoy the lifestyle that comes with apartment-living.

Here we will be discussing the work-arounds residents can use to combat noise disturbances, as well as how resident management companies can support their leaseholders in this area.

How Noise Can Affect Residents



It is important to acknowledge that noise pollution can have a very negative affect of people. For most, the noise experienced in an apartment building will amount to an occasional annoyance. For others, the experience may be genuinely detrimental to their physical and mental health.

Persistent noise can lead to high stress levels and sleep disturbance. We all know that high cortisol levels and persistent exhaustion are awful for overall health. World-wide research has shown that there is a definite link between consistent noise pollution and increased cases of depression and anxiety.

Studies also show that being sleep deprived can alter the activity of the brain, leading to issues with making decisions, solving problems, controlling emotions and behaviour and coping with change. Sleep deficiency has also been linked to depression, suicide and risk-taking behaviour.

So, as you can see, consistent issues with noise should not be ignored or thought of as an acceptable part of living in an apartment. But what can you do to reduce your exposure, or that of your residents?

Residents: What Can Be Done?

If you are a resident yourself, there are a few simple steps you can take to tackle ongoing noise issues, either caused by neighbours or that seep in from outside:

- **Earplugs**

Investing in high-quality earplugs can help you get the best night's sleep possible. Obviously, this doesn't hold anyone to account or help change their behaviour, but it may mean you get the sleep you need to keep yourself well and able to go about your day.

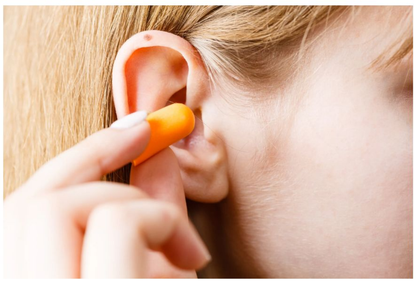
It is a simple solution to night-time disturbances, but it is not ideal for parents or carers who need to be "on duty" at night for those in their care, or for those who find them physically uncomfortable.

- **Keep a diary**

Keeping a record of each disturbed night, each bout of loud music etc will arm your resident management company with the details they need to be able to raise the issue with the neighbours at fault. It will also give them an insight into the kind of rules they could put in place to combat the behaviour.

- **Have a chat**

If you are on good terms with your neighbours and feel comfortable knocking on their door, sometimes simply making them aware of the issues you are experiencing is enough. They may not have realised the damage they were doing and appreciate being given a chance to rectify things without the need for any outside input.



Managers: What Can Be Done?

For Resident Management Companies or property managers, severe issues between neighbours or those caused by noise from outside may require significant intervention. Here are some actions you may need to take:

- **Soundproofing**

If multiple residents are complaining of street or neighbourly noise affecting the enjoyment of their property or their quality of sleep, building-wide soundproofing may be the solution.

Double glazing, thick carpeting and door seals can reduce the occurrence of noise travelling between units, as well as noise coming in from outside. Landscaping can make a surprising difference when it comes to external noise. A well-placed shrub or a wall of hedges can dampen road noise significantly.

For any communal spaces in the building, adding soft furnishings or lining shelves with books can help reduce echo and stop noise travelling so far from these areas. Soft-close doors and drawers can also be a great addition.

- **Building Rules**

Based on the feedback received from residents, building-wide rules and subsequent enforcement may be the answer. Setting "quiet hours" for neighbours to respect can be very helpful. These should be reasonable and possibly slightly relaxed at weekends.

- **Community Engagement**

As part of your community engagement strategy, you should be highlighting the effects of noise disturbance and re-iterating the building rules. Encouraging a culture of mindfulness around noise pollution can have a great effect.

- **Quiet Spaces**

If you have the space and budget available, providing a truly sound-proofed quiet room for reading or a peaceful seating area in the garden can offer excellent respite.

- **Remain Empathetic**

While some noise is to be expected when living in a block of flats, continuous disturbance can be hugely detrimental. Always listen with understanding and empathy when residents make a complaint. Your understanding and willingness to help may go a long way with a stressed, sleep-deprived resident.

Harmony in a Hive of Activity

Managing noise pollution in flats and apartments is not always simple, but it is crucial. Residents will have invested a huge amount, both emotionally and financially, into their units and they have the right to peaceful enjoyment. With the right approach, residents and managers can work together to create an oasis of calm in the heart of the city's hustle and bustle.

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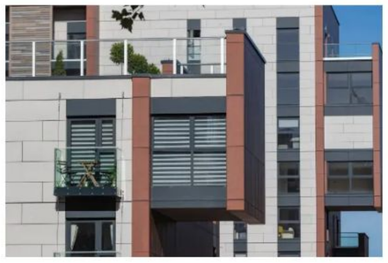

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Feature: Mental Health and Wellbeing Awareness

Cultivating a Sense of Community

ManageYourBlock™

www.manageyourblock.co.uk

tel: 0333 577 9070

Communication and community are at the forefront of the fight against mental health issues among block residents. Feeling isolated despite living wall-to-wall with other humans can be the loneliest experience. So cultivating a sense of community is imperative.

Building connections, fostering friendships and creating lines of communication can lead to a happier and healthier existence for all block residents.

Here we will be covering what block managers can do to maintain a sense of community in their buildings; tackling loneliness and mental health issues among residents in the process.



Social Connections and Mental Wellbeing

Loneliness is interconnected with mental and physical health issues. The Campaign to End Loneliness found in their research that 60% of people experiencing chronic loneliness also experience mental distress, while only 15% of people who are not chronically lonely experience the same issues.

Social isolation and loneliness are twice as harmful to physical and mental health as obesity, and research by the Mental Health Foundation has shown that these factors increase the pressure on local services enormously:

"As well as being deeply distressing for individuals, loneliness has wider implications for our communities and society. Evidence shows that loneliness leads to greater pressure on public services through, for instance, increased GP visits, longer hospital stays, increased likelihood of entering residential care and the costs of associated conditions such as depression and diabetes."

Essentially, humans are social beings. We need connection and community to truly thrive. Not being able to share experiences, thoughts and feelings with others undoubtedly leads to issues. Unhealthy choices go unchecked, thoughts can spiral downwards and physical health declines.

Building a Community Among Neighbours

Taking residents from mere neighbours to a community that look out for each other is a simpler task than you may think. Your first step is to open the lines of communication.

Forming an online community for your residents is a great way to get people talking. Take the time to explain its use to any technophobic residents and make sure you encourage conversation by posting and commenting regularly yourself.

In addition to online groups, you can offer in-person meetings to discuss maintenance-related issues, and get-togethers for either the whole block or individual demographics. Some great examples are clubs for different games and hobbies, meals out and annual events for religious celebrations and non-denominational special days.

If your block is lucky enough to have some outside space, getting residents together to cultivate an area of the garden can be great. A vegetable patch, a great seating area and an all-weather BBQ can really bring people out of their flats and encourage conversation.

As people get to know each other, you could facilitate online or in-person spaces for support groups. Single parents, the elderly, home-workers and differently abled residents are some that spring to mind. Feeling the support of others in the same position can be a huge help.

Resident-Manager Communication

Another key to creating community is making sure that you and your fellow directors are approachable. Keep an open-door policy, encourage feedback and act on the needs of your residents.

For new leaseholders, you'll be the first point of contact, so make sure you're friendly and relaxed. With this in mind, make sure you attend the events held for and by residents whenever possible – you may be the only person newer members know and being there may encourage them to attend.

Make sure you provide plenty of options for getting in touch and expressing opinions about the management of the block. Everything from a simple opinions box in the lobby to a dedicated online space. Make sure everyone has a way of contacting you that is comfortable and accessible to them.

Overall, a well-maintained block where conversation and community are encouraged is great news for everyone. You'll hear about changes you can make to improve things, and your residents will look out for each other and the building. What's not to like?

For more from Manage Your Block, click here.

Manage your Block has been created to assist Residents' Management Companies, Right to Manage Companies and Residents Associations to self-manage their block.

It's a secure, easy-to-use portal that offers access to your block's details at the touch of a button. Designed to make your life easier, it saves you time and offers a fast and efficient interface to connect you, your residents, and your block.

manageyourblock.co.uk | info@manageyourblock.co.uk | 0333 577 9070

ManageYourBlock™

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ManageYourBlock™

Self management software for blocks of flats!

VISIT OUR WEBSITE



An **online portal** designed for RMC's, Directors and Owners of apartment blocks. With Manage Your Block, you can update, control and navigate your documents all in a user-friendly hub. This is accessible through any device at a touch of a button 24/7 personalised to suit your needs.

Who is Manage Your Block For?

Manage Your Block is a nifty online portal specifically designed for anybody managing a block of flats, including:

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

Do you want to make managing your block easier? Consider our trusted software solution used by thousands of professionals nationwide!

Tel: 03335779070 Email: info@manageyourblock.co.uk

OUR FEATURES

Diary

Set diary reminders to ensure you don't forget anything.

Documents

Securely hold all your block's documents in one place. Examples of what you may want to store include: copy leases, financial records, fire evacuation procedures, along with other day-to-day procedural documents.

Notes

Make sure you have an audit trail by adding notes for anything important.

Quotes

Request quotes from your preferred contractors or use one of our recommended specialists. You can also issue work orders to accept quotes.

Save

Our trustworthy online space lets you keep your most important documents safe, and you will have access day and night, wherever you are.

Contractors

Keep a list of your key contractors, for example, plumbers, decorators, gardeners, window cleaners in one place.

Contacts

All the owners and residents in your block can be added to your contact list, so you can keep track and update it. You'll always have all of this contact info at your fingertips.

Calendar

Record key dates and reminders, for example insurance renewal date, health & safety risk assessment due date, date to send out service charges.

Alerts

Broken down lift? Power shortage? Local crime issues? Provide instant alerts out to all residents with one simple alert.



Feature: Mental Health and Wellbeing Awareness

The Importance of Green Spaces in Blocks of Flats and Apartments

www.blockinabox.co.uk

In the bustling concrete jungles of urban landscapes, amidst the towering blocks of flats and office buildings, lies an often-overlooked treasure – green spaces. These pockets of nature, whether parks, gardens or even small community planters are not just aesthetically pleasing; they play a pivotal role in enhancing residential mental well-being.

Exploring the impact of green spaces within blocks of flats and apartments unveils a significant correlation between access to nature and improved mental health, while highlighting the repercussions of their absence.

In this article, we discuss the mental health benefits of green spaces in blocks of flats and apartments and how you can create or enhance these spaces.

The Mental Health Benefits of Green Spaces

Research consistently proves the positive influence of green spaces on mental well-being. Access to nature has been linked to reduced stress levels, alleviation of symptoms associated with anxiety and depression and an enhanced overall psychological resilience. Individuals residing in environments with ample greenery report greater satisfaction with their living conditions and are more likely to experience a sense of tranquillity amidst the urban hustle.

Green spaces within blocks of flats and apartments offer residents a retreat from the pressures of city life providing enhanced assistant for relaxation and reflection. Whether it is a rooftop garden, communal courtyard or landscaped terrace – these spaces facilitate opportunities for social interaction, physical activity and a chance to be within nature. Engaging in activities such as gardening, leisurely strolls or simply basking in the sunlight can promote mindfulness, reduce rumination and uplift mood.

Drawbacks of Green Space Absence in Urban Dwellings

On the flip side, not having green spaces in close proximity to blocks of flats and apartments can profoundly impact the mental well-being of residents. The scarcity of green areas deprives individuals of essential opportunities for unwinding, engaging in outdoor activities and interacting with neighbours resulting in a decrease in mental resilience and maybe even overall contentment with ones living situation.

Furthermore, the lack of green spaces within residential complexes may contribute to a sense of social fragmentation and decreased community cohesion. Without communal areas for residents to gather and interact, the sense of belonging and support within the community may diminish increasing feelings of loneliness.

Suggestions for Creating and Enhancing Green Spaces

To enhance residents' well-being in blocks of flats and apartments, it is imperative to prioritise the creation and enhancement of green spaces within these urban dwellings. Here are some suggestions for achieving this:

- Rooftop Gardens: Utilise the rooftops of residential buildings to create vibrant rooftop gardens featuring a variety of plants, seating areas, and recreational amenities. Rooftop gardens not only maximise green space in densely populated areas but also offer panoramic views of the cityscape fostering a sense of tranquillity and connection with nature.
- Communal Courtyards: Transform underutilised areas within residential complexes into inviting communal courtyards adorned with greenery, walking paths and seating alcoves. Communal courtyards serve as focal points for social interaction and community engagement fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie among residents.
- Vertical Gardens: Install vertical gardens on the exterior walls of apartment buildings to introduce greenery and biodiversity into urban landscapes. Vertical gardens not only enhance the aesthetic appeal of buildings but also improve air quality, reduce noise pollution and provide habitat for birds and insects.
- Indoor Green Spaces: Integrate indoor green spaces such as atriums, indoor gardens or plant-filled common areas into the design of residential complexes. Indoor green spaces not only purify the air and enhance the indoor environment but also create inviting spaces for relaxation and socialisation during inclement weather.
- Community Gardens: Establish community gardens within residential complexes to provide residents with opportunities for urban agriculture, gardening and outdoor recreation. Community gardens promote sustainable living practices, foster a sense of stewardship for the environment, and encourage social interaction and collaboration among residents.



Conclusion

In conclusion, green spaces within blocks of flats and apartments play a pivotal role in enhancing residents' mental well-being and quality of life. By prioritising the creation and enhancement of green spaces within urban dwellings property managers can create healthier and more liveable environments that nurture the body, mind and spirit.

For more from Block in a Box, visit our website!

Or call our team on 0333 0154 145 or email info@blockinabox.co.uk and we will be in touch.

Block in a Box has 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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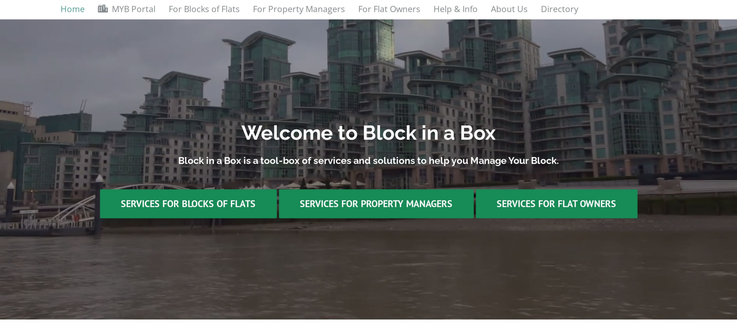

Welcome to Block in a Box

Block in a Box is a tool-box of services and solutions to help you Manage Your Block.

SERVICES FOR BLOCKS OF FLATS | SERVICES FOR PROPERTY MANAGERS | SERVICES FOR FLAT OWNERS

View Our Services and Products



3D Surveys



Aerial Surveys



Accounting Solutions



Alternative Accommodation



Asbestos Survey and Management



Broadband Services



Cladding Consultancy



Commercial Property Surveying



Contractor Accreditation



Cyber Security Training



Decarbonisation



Directors and Officers Liability



Drone Surveys



Electric Charging Points



Emergency Assistance



Enfranchisement



EV Connected



EWS1 Forms



Fire Door Inspection



Fire Risk Assessments

Flat Living



Fire Risk Appraisal of External Walls



Fire Safety Information Posters

FPRA

Health and Safety



Health and Safety Awareness Training



Health and Safety Risk Assessments



Higher-Risk Building Registration



Historic Building Repair



Housing Associations



Insurance Solutions



Insurance Works Surveying



Landlord Home Emergency



Lease Extensions



Lease Variation



Legal Solutions



Legionella Risk Management



License to Alter



Lift Wrapping



Neighbourly Advice: Daylight, Sunlight and Overshadowing



Out of Hours Helpline



Party Walls

Planned Maintenance Program

Pre-Purchase Building Surveys

Quantity Surveying

Reinstatement Cost Assessments

Representative for Cladding Remediation Funding

Retrofit and Green Upgrades

Right to Manage

Rights of Light

RMC Director Training

Rooftop Extensions

Rope Access Surveys

Section 20 Major Works

Service Charge Arrears

Service Charge Collections

SmartLink45 Prepay Meter

Utilities

Water Leak Prevention Systems

Find local services for your Block of Flats

Can't find the service you wanted?

Contact us via the contact page or email info@blockinabox.co.uk.

CONTACT US

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The Importance of Directors and Officers Liability Insurance

Protect your Directors with Residentsline
www.protectyourdirectors.co.uk

Belinda Bagnall, Managing Director of Residentsline explores the significance of Directors' and Officers' Liability Insurance for your Residents' Management Company.

As a member of a Residents' Management Company, you have a range of responsibilities to ensure the smooth running of your block of flats.



This may include:

- Finance and accounting
- Service charges
- Insurance needs
- Maintenance
- Inspections
- Major works and reparations

This can sometimes be an exhaustive list; it requires a great deal of planning and experience to successfully manage a block of flats or apartments. As such, it can often be easy to make mistakes.

A vital thing to remember here is that, whilst mistakes often happen, any mistakes which cause an incident such as damage or personal injury can result in legal action being taken against the Residents' Management Company.

This is because the directors and officers of the Residents' Management Company are held liable for any decisions taken when acting in their position.

This may seem unfair. After all, being a director or an officer of a Residents' Management Company is a voluntary role which requires a lot of time and effort on behalf of the residents in the block. As such, it can be difficult to understand how directors and officers can be penalised so heavily. Regardless, the fact remains that directors and officers require suitable protection in case of legal action being taken against them.



Directors' and Officers' Liability Insurance

This type of insurance cover provides protection towards members of Residents' Management Companies and their legal liability. Underwritten by AVIVA Insurance, our policy protects directors and officers against the cost of potential claims for alleged wrongful acts.

These may include:

- Breach of trust
- Breach of duty
- Neglect/error/omission
- Misstatement
- Libel and slander
- Breach of warranty of authority
- Wrongful trading

To get Directors and Officers Liability insurance cover today, please visit the Protect Your Directors with Residentsline website.

Did you know that by using our portal to get your quote and to place cover, you can save on admin fees?

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 officer's 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

Protect your Directors with Residentsline

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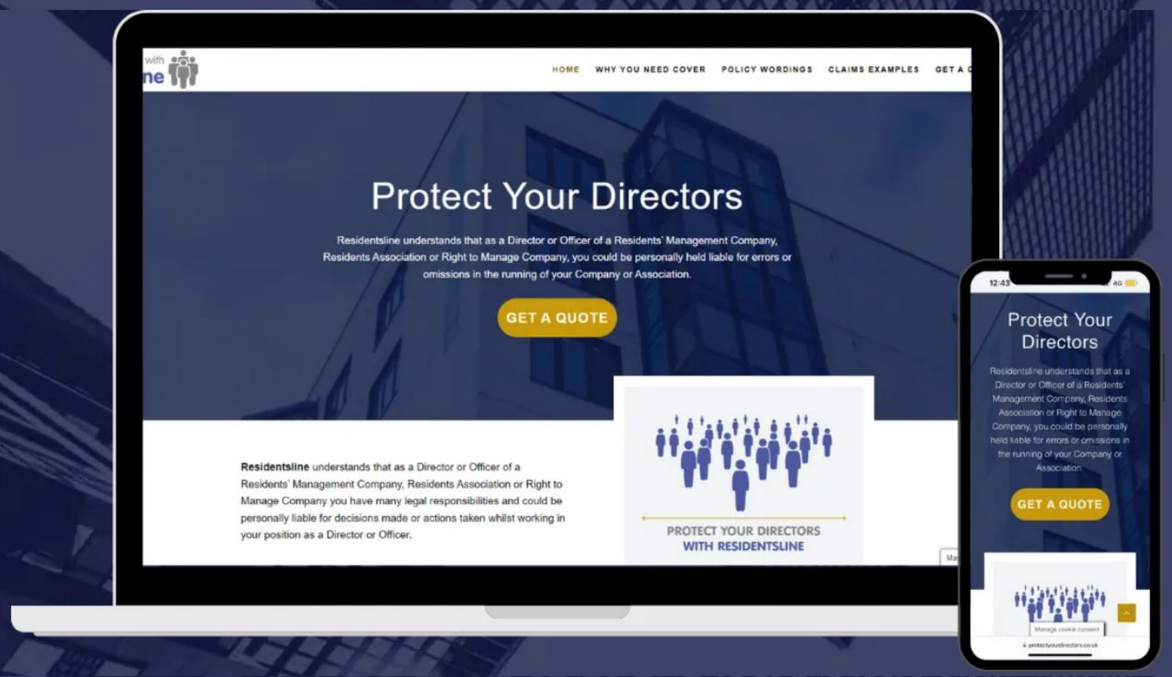
Protect your Directors with **Residentsline**

CLICK HERE TO GET A MANAGEMENT LIABILITY INSURANCE QUOTE AND COVER TODAY!

One mistake or misjudgement could end up being expensive. Get a quote for Directors & Officers Liability Insurance with us today, a specialist insurance broker you can trust.



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HELPING YOU
BUILD YOUR FUTURE,

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

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.

BLOCK RECRUIT

Block Property Manager

Location: Gloucestershire

Salary: £39,000

Tell me more

Accounts Assistant

Location: Hertfordshire

Salary: Up to £28,000

Tell me more

Block Manager

Location: West Sussex

Salary: £30,000 - £37,000 + £3,000 car allowance (£40K Max)

Tell me more

Junior Block Manager

Location: Hertfordshire

Salary: Up to £35,000

Tell me more

Property Manager

Location: Kent

Salary: £26,000 - £30,000

Tell me more

Residential Sales Consultant / Client Relationship Manager

Location: West Sussex

Salary: £30,000 - £45,000 (OTE after 2 years £80,000)

Tell me more

Property Administrator

Location: Hampshire

Salary: £20,000 - £23,000

Tell me more

Block Manager

Location: Central London

Salary: Up to £40,000

Tell me more

Block Recruit

Block Recruit specialise 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

Upcoming TPI Training Courses

TC110: Leaseholder Protections And Landlord's Certificates And Leaseholder Deeds Of Certificate



Dates

Wed 10 July 2024

Who should attend?

Those dealing with the scope of the Leaseholder Protections regulations, and involved in collating/reviewing Leaseholder Deed of Certificates and/or have been instructed to support or compile Landlord Certificates.

A half day course exploring the leaseholder protections under the Building Safety Act

Book your place

TC1: Introduction to Residential Property Management



Dates

Tue 9 July 2024

Mon 16 September 2024

Tue 8 October 2024

Who should attend?

This introductory course is ideal for those new to the sector with less than six month's experience in residential property management and those moving from letting to residential leasehold management.

Book your place

TC116: Resident Engagement Strategies



Dates

Wed 19 June 2024

Who should attend

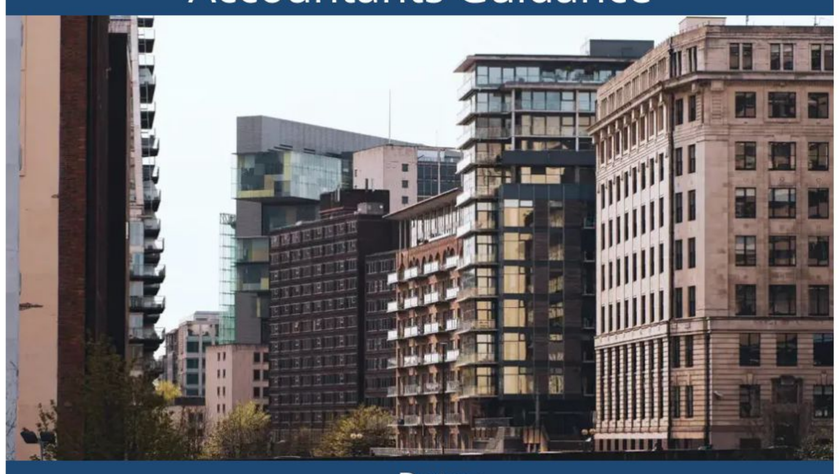
The course is suitable for anyone who has a role in managing leasehold properties.

Course Contents

- Introduction to The Building Safety Act 2022
- Understanding the difference between accountability and responsibility
- What is resident engagement
- And much more!

Book your place

TC11: Residential Service Charge Accountants Guidance



Dates

Mon 17 June 2024

Mon 18 November 2024

Who should attend?

- Accounts staff who need to understand the requirements of lease and law in the production of accounts
- Property managers whose input is required during the service charge year from their clients
- It may also be suitable for senior managers who are responsible for the corporate strategy within their accounts department

Book your place

TC114: Introduction to Being an RMC/RTM Director



Dates

Mon 15 July 2024

Course Contents

If you are a Director of a Residents' Management Company (RMC) or Right to Manage Company (RTM), or thinking of becoming a Director, this course is for you. RMCs/RTMs are companies which own and run blocks of flats.

Each flat owner is typically a member or shareholder in the RMC and members are appointed from amongst their number to become Directors. The RMCs are then run by these Directors. The duties of the company towards each Leaseholder are set out in the Leases for each flat. There is a mix of contractual duties, such as repairs, maintenance, insurance, and service charge accounting, and statutory duties, including setting reasonable levels of service charges and consulting on major works.

Book your place

TC66: Introduction to Fire Safety for Property Managers



Dates

Wed 26 June 2024

Who should attend?

The course is suitable for anyone who has a role in responding to, managing or overseeing building safety of those properties in scope of the Building Safety Act.

Course Contents

The aim of this course is to help you, your team and your clients understand who has accountability for the development of a Building Safety Case Report but also understand what is required, what support can be offered to AP/PAPs and how best to manage building safety in the long term.

Book your place

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

Get in touch

Website: https://www.tpi.org.uk/

The Property Institute

Upcoming Events

The Property Institute Annual Seminar 2024



Dates: Thursday 16th May 2024

Venue: Queen Elizabeth II Centre

The Property Institute Annual Seminar promises to deliver important industry updates directly to members whilst also serving up unbeatable networking opportunities with peers and top industry suppliers.

Ticket Prices: Members - £149 Non Members - £299

Sponsorship interest: Email abanasiak@tpi.org.uk

Book your place

Tanfield Property Conference June 2024



Date: Tuesday 4th June 2024

Venue: The View, Royal College of Surgeons

Time: 09 AM – 5 PM, followed by a networking drinks reception

Fee: £150 + VAT

Following their sell-out annual conference last year, Tanfield are once more offering you the opportunity to join your legal peers for a day reflecting on key recent developments in property law.

Book your tickets

ACE Awards 2024



Date: Friday 21st June 2024

Venue: Old Billingsgate, 1 Old Billingsgate Walk, London EC3R 6DX.

ACE Awards 2024 will be heading back to the Roaring '20s with a Great Gatsby theme. Get creative and start planning your frocks & tuxedos for an evening of glitz and glamour!

The 2024 ACE Awards will recognise excellence and exceptional achievements by UK managing agents, their suppliers and the work of their people in improving the lives of millions of leaseholders.

Book your tickets

The Active Bystander Conference



Date: 10th July 2024

Location: Hartpury University in Gloucester

The Active Bystander Conference by the Hollie Gazzard Trust

The conference promises a dynamic day of discussions led by prominent industry and academic experts, focusing on the empowerment that an Active Bystander programme can bring.

The goal is to inspire a culture of intervention and support, equipping attendees with the tools needed to stand up against harassment, abuse, and violence.

Register here

ARMA SAVE THE DATES - 2024



The Date for ARMA's Annual Conference will be Released soon!

- **Annual Seminar -** Thursday 16th May 2024
- **The Property Institute Regional -** Southampton - 5th September
- **The Property Institute Regional** - Newcastle - 12th September
- **The Property Institute Regional -** Birmingham - 7th November
- **The Property Institute Regional -** Manchester - 12th November
- **The Property Institute Regional -** Bristol - 26th November
- **The Property Institute Regional -** London - 5th December



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



Directories

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



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Flat Living Directory

02
Recommended Suppliers

03
Find an ARMA Member



FlatLiving® Directory

FIND SERVICES FOR YOUR BLOCK OF FLATS

0808 175 1371 www.flatlivingdirectory.co.uk



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BLOCK in a BOX



Accounting Solutions

Flat Management Co. Accounts Limited

Find out more

Alternative Accommodation

ICAB Insurance Claims Accommodation Bureau

Find out more

Asbestos Surveying and Management, Fire Risk Assessments and many more

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Find out more

Broadband Services

4thUtility

Find out more

Cladding Consultancy, Commercial Property Surveying

EarlKendrick Project & Building Consultancy

Find out more

Cyber Security Training

intelectGroup eLearning

Find out more

Neighbourly Advice: Daylight, Sunlight and Overshadowing

McQuade Neighbourly Matters

Find out more

Directors and Officers Liability

Find out more

Drone Surveys

MIRU

Find out more

Electric charging points

ESTD 1859 BRITISH ENGINEERING SERVICES

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Emergency Assistance

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Find out more

Enfranchisement

BRADY SOLICITORS

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Future Group

FUTURE GROUP

Find out more

Fire Risk Appraisal of External Walls, Higher-Risk Building Registration and Representative for Cladding Remediation Funding

FRC an RSK company

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FPRA

FPRA FEDERATION OF PRIVATE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS

Find out more

Historic Building Repair, Housing Assoiations, Party Walls, Planned Maintenance Programs and License to Alter

EarlKendrick Building Surveyors

Find out more

Insurance

FlatLiving Insurance

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Lease Extensions and Lease Variation

BRADY SOLICITORS

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Licence to Alter

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Lift Wrapping

OXY LIFT WRAPS

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Out of Hours Helpline

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Party Walls

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Quantity Surveying

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Right of Light

McQuade Rights to Light Specialists

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RMC utilities specialists in resident management energy

Find out more

Water leak detection and solutions

Waterguard

Find out more

Setting the Standards in Property Management



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:

020 7978 2607 | www.arma.org.uk



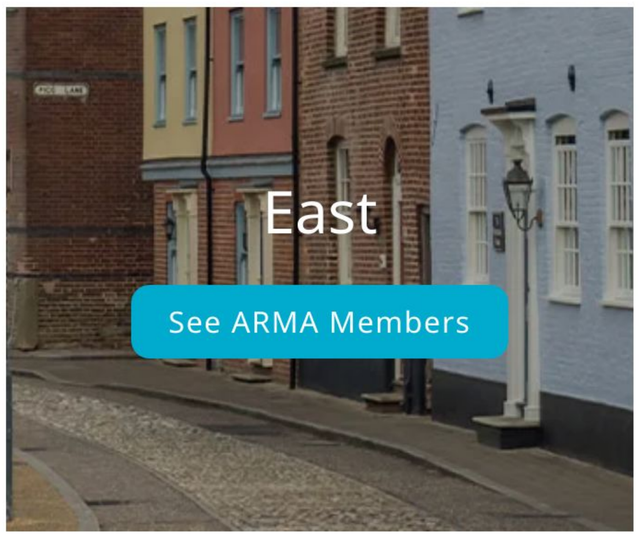
Find an ARMA Member

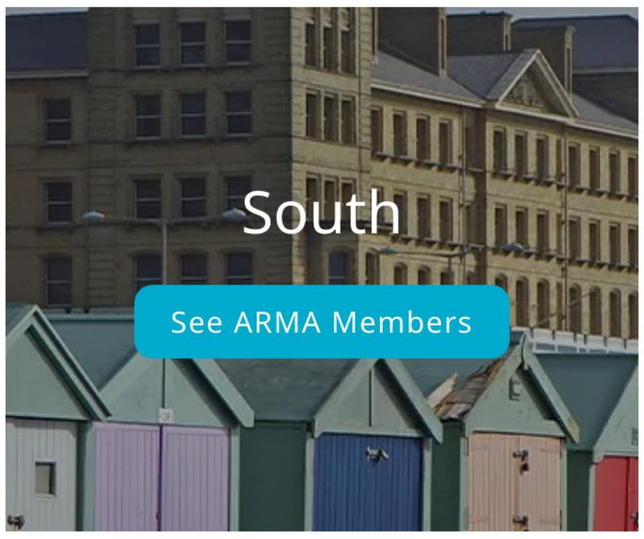


Are you considering a new managing agent?

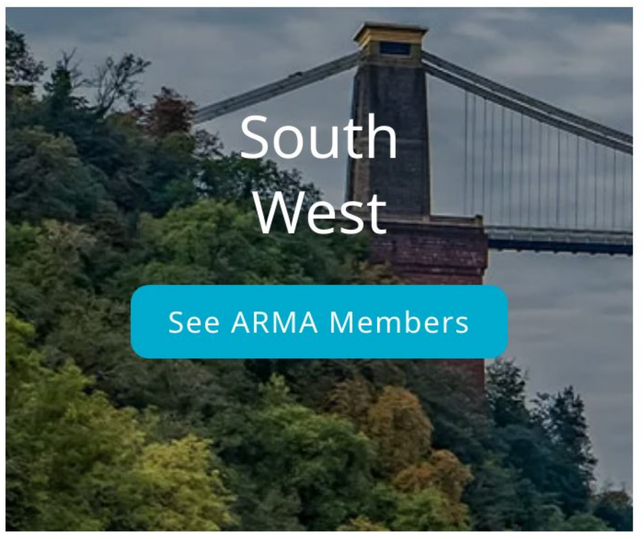
Below are a list of ARMA (Association of Residential Managing Agents) members by region.

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.





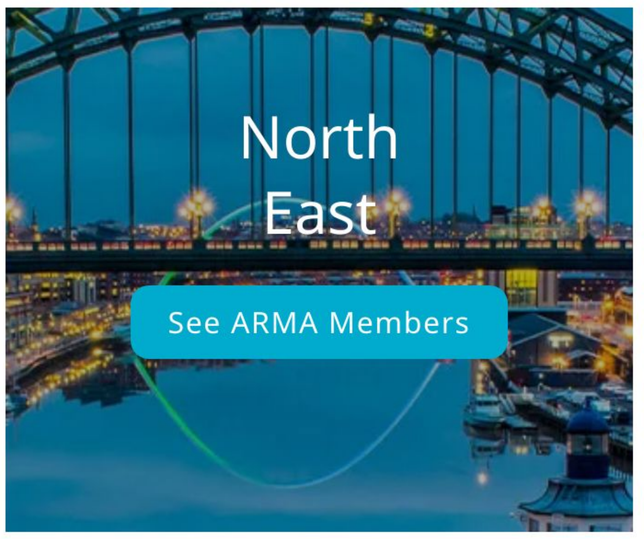


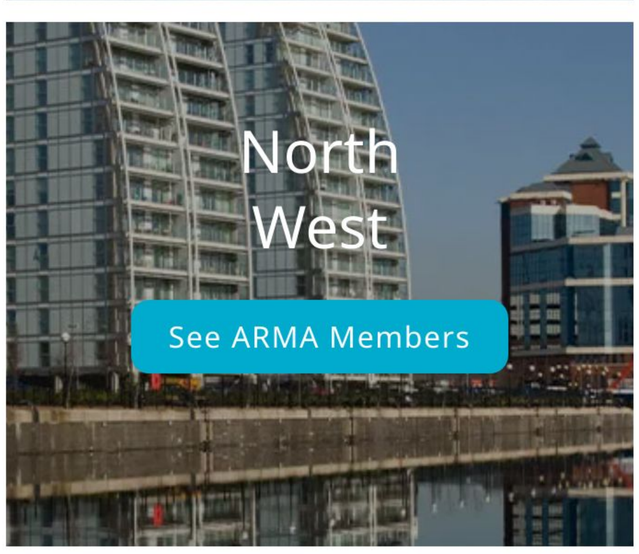


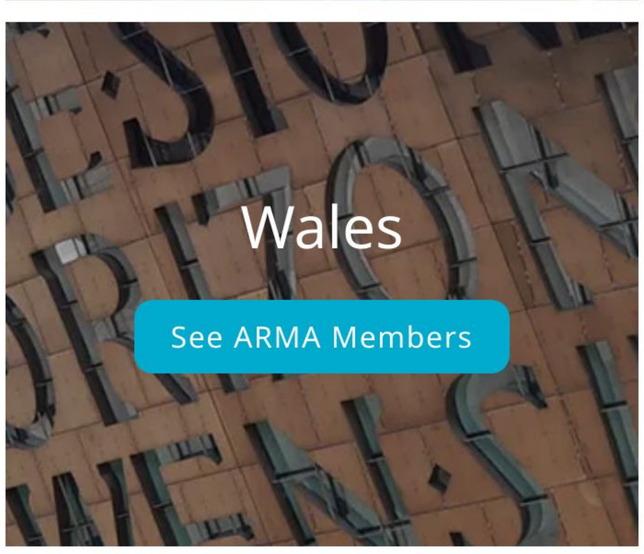


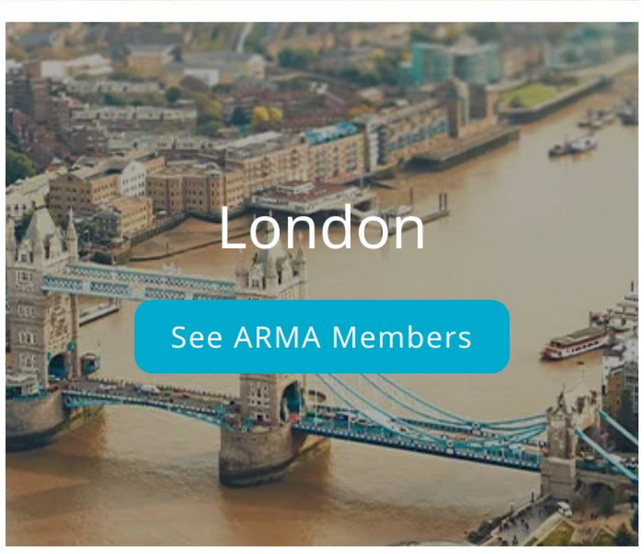




















ALEP ASSOCIATION OF LEASEHOLD ENFRANCHISEMENT PRACTITIONERS

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



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
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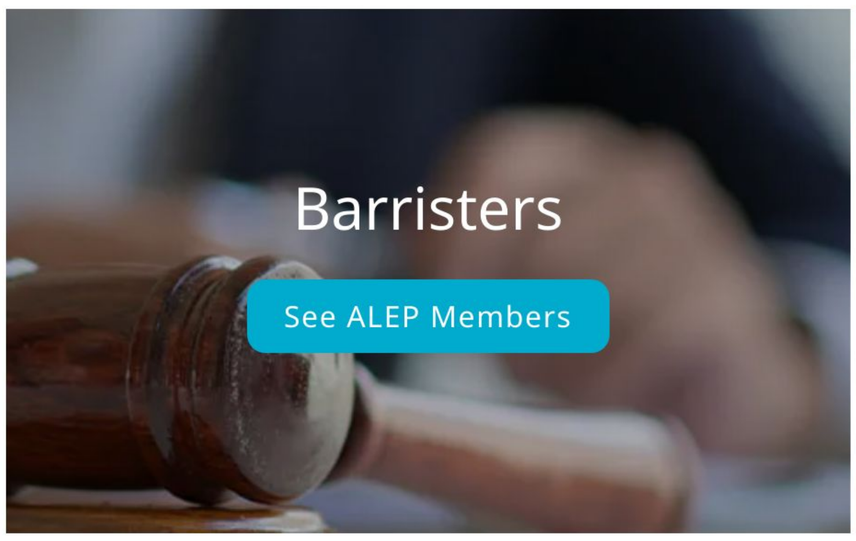
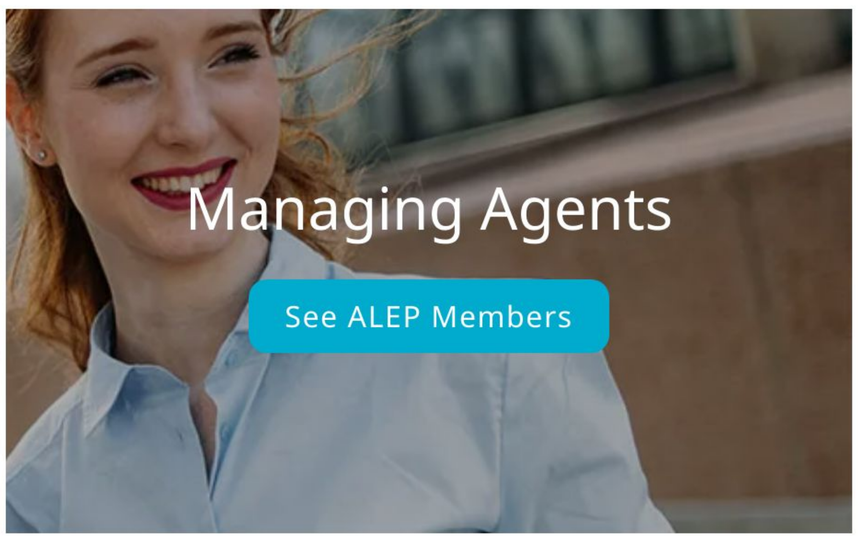
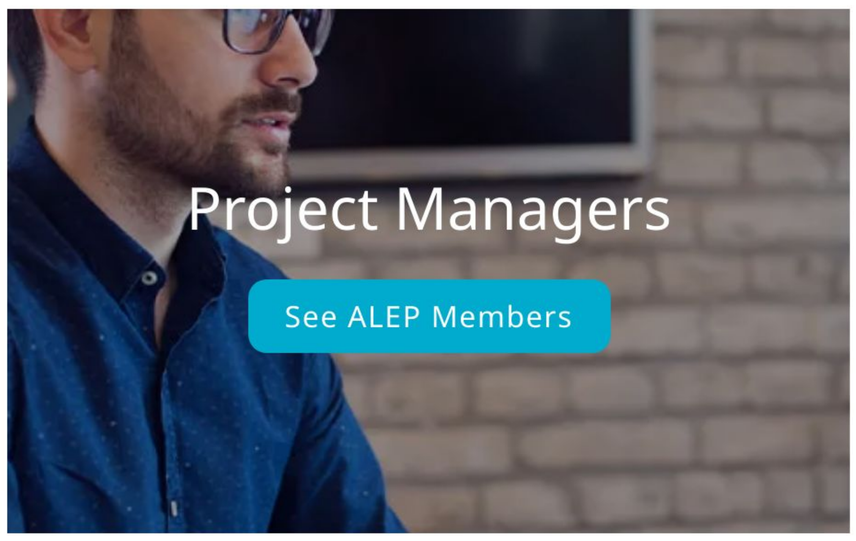
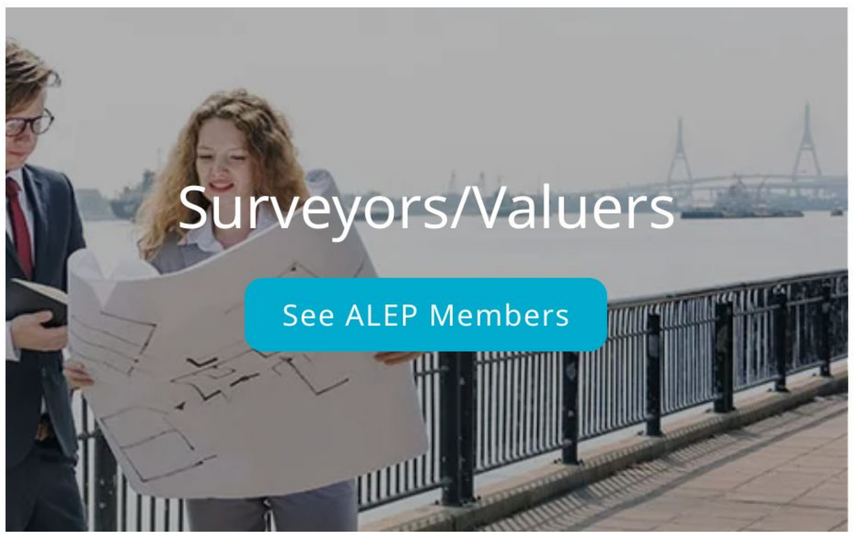
- Surveyors/Valuers











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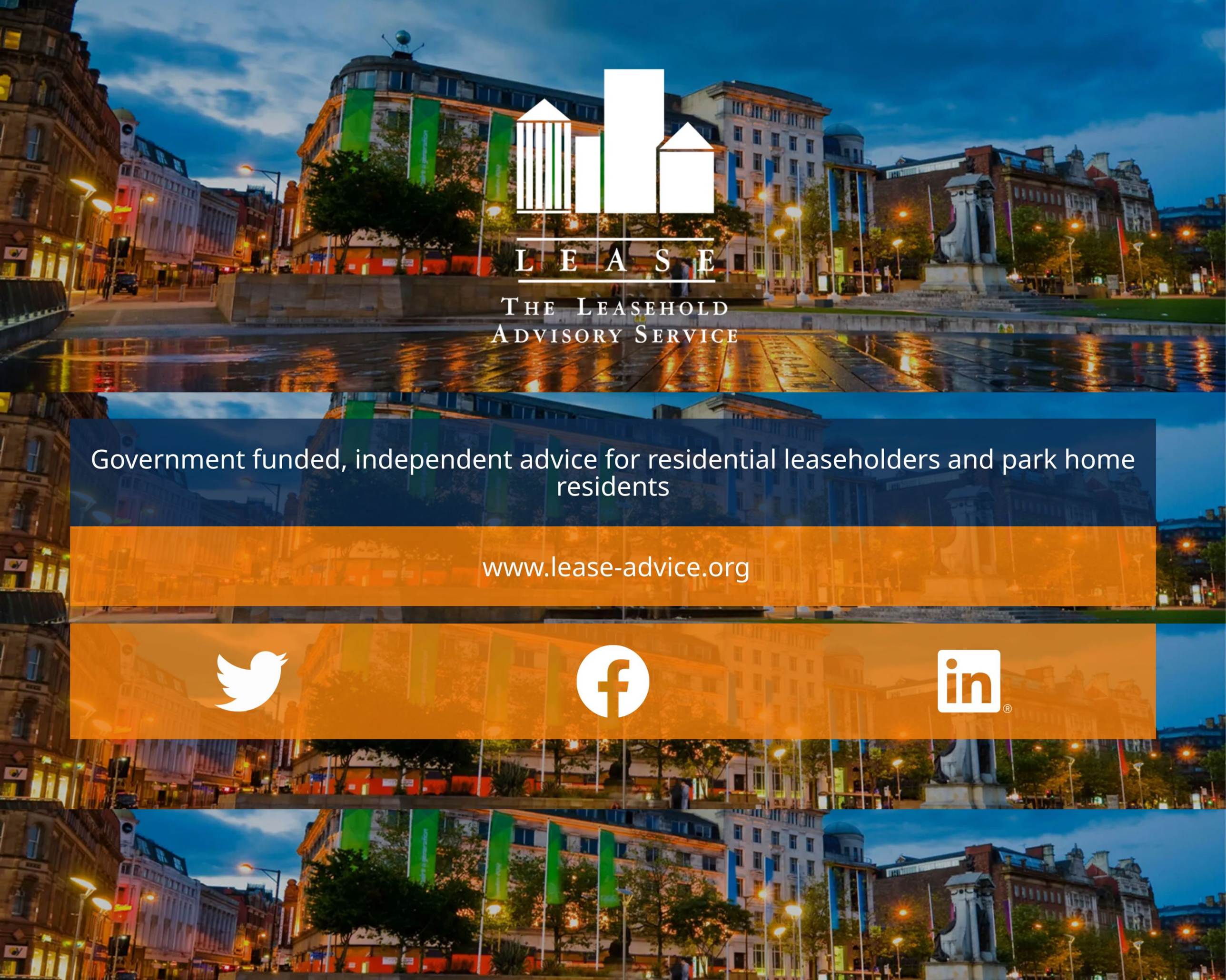

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- Tuffin & Co Property Management Ltd Plymouth 01752 254 222 Full Member
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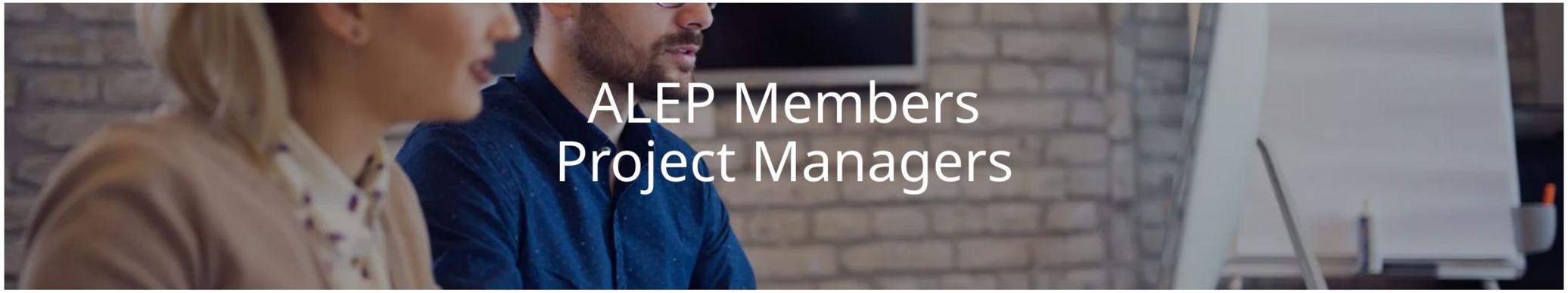

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