

**Follow up report:  
Spotlight on Knowledge and  
Information Management –  
On the Record**

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# Introduction

Effective Knowledge and Information Management (KIM) by landlords is fundamental for providing decent homes and services. The records made by operatives every minute will impact the experiences of residents – both positive and negative – and in aggregate will inform the decisions made in the boardroom about the landlord’s future. In turn, these will shape the view of risk in the sector and even national policy priorities.

This matters in a world where we rely on retrieving information to make decisions and is essential if the housing sector is to harness the opportunities offered by artificial intelligence – and mitigate the risks. An algorithm will only be as effective as the data it relies on. Only with more robust KIM will landlords be able, for instance, move from reactive to predictive repairs.

Complaints offer a unique window into the effectiveness of KIM – what information the landlord has, how it is used, and any gaps.

This follow-up report summarises our evaluation of our [Spotlight on Knowledge and Information Management, On the Record](#), which we published in May 2023.

The Spotlight made 21 recommendations, which are summarised in the box below. This report will set out some of the key changes landlords have made in response to the recommendations, as well as the main areas where they face barriers or challenges. We have also highlighted some of the significant sector developments since the publication.

<b>Governance and culture:</b>	<b>Mergers/structural changes:</b>
Define oversight	Stress test
KIM strategy	KIM risk assessments
Benchmarking	Due diligence
Review vulnerability-related policies	Data exception reporting
<b>Key recording standards:</b>	<b>Repairs:</b>
Key data recording standard requirements	Missed appointments

Service level agreements

Wastage analysis

ATIS/FOI categorisation

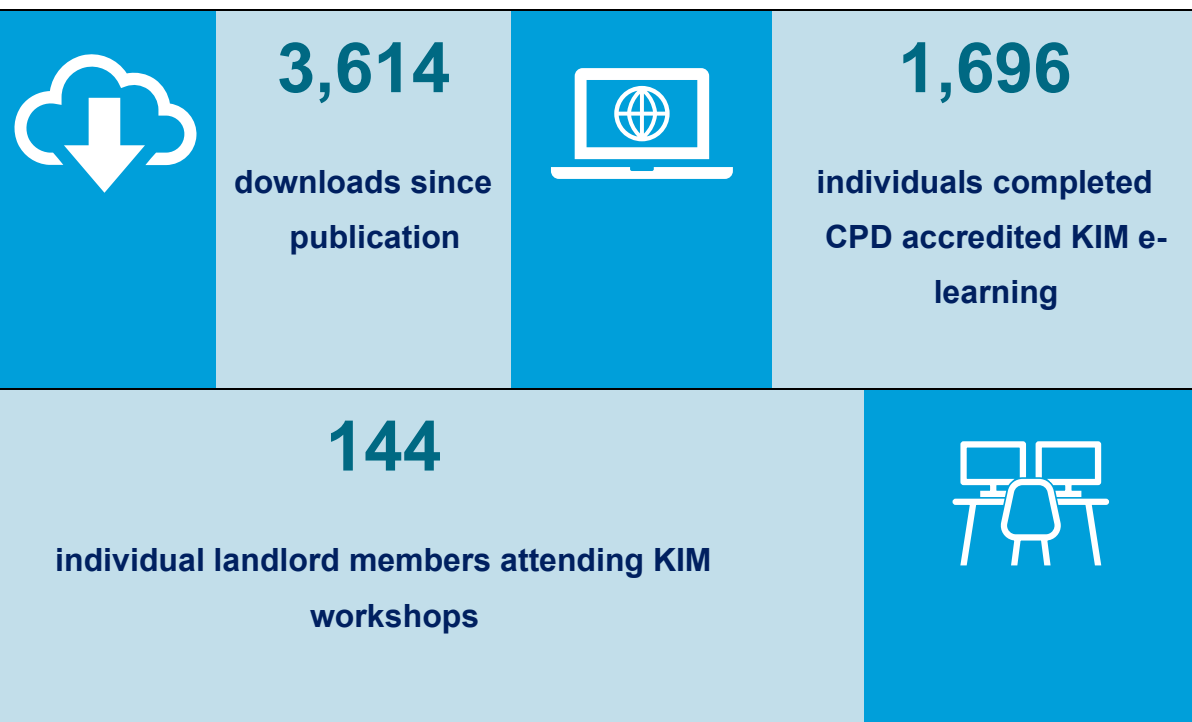
Appointment reminders


**Appropriate systems:**

Databases


Training

Sensitive information reviews



<p><b>30</b></p> <p>attendees at follow-up evaluation feedback session, representing <b>24</b> different landlords</p>	<p><b>50+</b></p> <p>pieces of documentation and feedback reviewed, including <b>17</b> self-assessments</p>	
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Information and data management	2022-23	2023-24
Number of complaints	<b>88</b>	<b>451</b>
Number of maladministration findings	<b>27</b>	<b>221</b>
Maladministration rate	<b>79%</b>	<b>90%</b>
Severe maladministration rate	<b>11%</b>	<b>4%</b>



## Sector references to KIM

In our previous report, we acknowledged that there are a wide set of expectations for knowledge and information management, from different sources, placed on landlords. Many of these expectations remain unchanged, including the National Housing Federation’s (NHF) Code of Governance; the Chartered Institute of Housing’s (CIH) Professional Standards; and the HACT UK Housing Data Standard. The government’s work on the Decent Homes Standard is still being reviewed<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [Update on the government’s work to improve the quality of social housing \(February 2024\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/update-on-the-government-s-work-to-improve-the-quality-of-social-housing-february-2024)

Since then, there have however been some notable additions to the topic, which we have summarised below.

## **Regulator of Social Housing**

Under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has statutory objectives which drive its approach to regulating registered providers. Following changes introduced by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, RSH put in place stronger and more active regulation of its consumer standards from 1 April 2024. The new consumer standards sit alongside the existing economic standards in setting the outcomes that landlords must deliver for tenants. The outcomes of the consumer standards apply to all landlords registered with RSH, including local authorities.

The consumer standards make it clear that RSH expects social landlords to have up to date information about the condition of each of their homes, as well as a clear understanding of the needs of the people who live in them. In addition, landlords need to collect and use data effectively across a range of areas, including repairs. To hold landlords to account, RSH scrutinise data about tenant satisfaction, repairs and other relevant issues.

In the RSH regulatory judgements published to date, for those who received a C3 or C4 judgement, poor knowledge and information management featured heavily in their findings.

## **The Better Social Housing Review**

The Better Social Housing Review (December 2022) found that housing associations do not have a shared, consistently detailed understanding of the quality of homes, and recommended that action should be taken to improve this. They also suggested that more should be done to robustly link information about residents' protected characteristics and additional needs, with information about the condition of their home. The CIH and NHF published a joint action plan in May 2023<sup>2</sup>, designed to help the sector implement these recommendations.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cih.org/media/lmzdndty/nhf-cih-action-plan-bshr-2023-final.pdf>

This included a programme of work called Knowing our Homes, to develop a shared approach to gathering and using information about property conditions and residents, across the social housing sector.

In October 2024 the NHF published their report 'Making every contact count' which sets out how social landlords can use routine and planned interactions with residents as opportunities to gather information about the condition of their homes, and their needs<sup>3</sup>.

## Information Commissioner's Office

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) have continued to highlight the detrimental impact of poor knowledge and information management, including inappropriate disclosures of personal information, lack of understanding on what constitutes personal data, and failure to keep accurate records<sup>4</sup>. Their data suggests that there is a lack of understanding about data protection law by some organisations in the UK housing sector. For example, in November 2023, the ICO issued a reprimand to a local authority landlord after it disclosed the new address of a domestic abuse victim to her ex-partner<sup>5</sup>. It urged other organisations to learn from this mistake and make sure that alerts are put on files if staff need to be especially vigilant when someone is a vulnerable service user. Landlords are encouraged to use the self-service resources on their website.

## Evaluation methodology

In August 2024, we contacted 137 landlords to understand what changes they have made, or intend to make, as a result of the Spotlight report and its recommendations. The invite list included the landlords who had featured in the tables published in the report, those who were already engaging with us through KIM related webinars and workshops, and a selection of landlords who had received a KIM or information management order or recommendation since the publication of the report.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.housing.org.uk/link/0deba755e40f4efeb5289d5fe2768260.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> [How data protection law can prevent harm in the housing sector | ICO](#)

<sup>5</sup> [ICO reprimands council for disclosing domestic abuse victim's details to ex-partner | ICO](#)

As part of our analysis, we reviewed over 50 pieces of documentation including written feedback and self-assessments by landlords against our report. We also held a workshop to invite verbal feedback, which was attended by representatives from 24 different landlords.

We conducted an anonymous survey with complaint handling staff, designed to allow them to share the impact of changes, as well as the key ongoing barriers to delivering a quality and timely service.

In the following sections we set out the themes identified from the evaluation, highlight successful practices, and discuss the barriers landlords face. This will be explored more in our Centre for Learning resource materials.

## Findings

### Complaint handler survey

Our call for evidence survey was open for 6 weeks from 26 July to 20 September 2024 and asked landlord complaint handlers for their experience of knowledge and information management since May 2023. We received 99 responses:

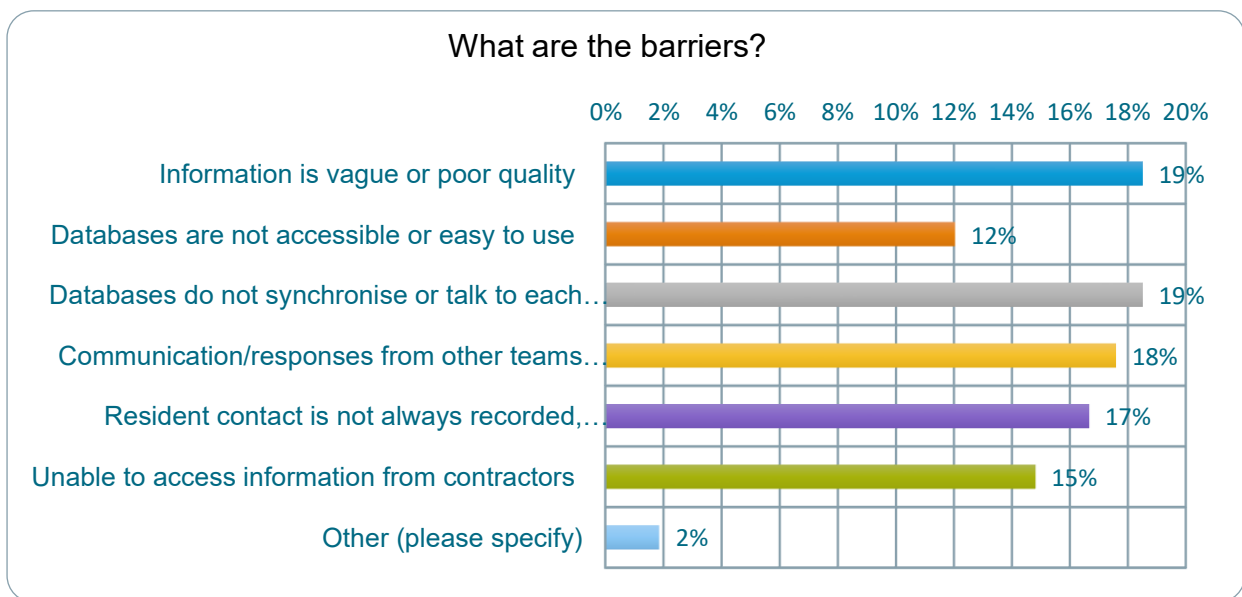
- 50 from housing associations
- 27 from local authorities or Arm's Length Management Organisations
- 14 from almshouses
- 2 from co-operatives
- 6 who described their organisation as 'other'

We asked whether complaint handlers were able to easily access the information they require to inform their decision making. Follow-up questions focused on how this impacted their complaint handling; whether there have been changes to the systems used to process or record data, and what kind of training they had received related to knowledge and information management.

26% of respondents told us they were having issues accessing the information they require to inform their decision making, compared with 56% of respondents who expressed similarly during our previous KIM survey in December 2022.



Those who were having issues accessing the information required were asked what the main barriers were. The highest proportion of respondents cited poor quality or vague information, and databases not synchronising or talking to each other as the main barriers (both 19%), followed closely by poor communication/responses from other teams (18%), and resident contact not always being recorded, leading to gaps in information (17%). When responding to a similar question in our previous KIM survey in December 2022, the highest proportion of those having access issues cited issues with databases as the main problem they experienced (57%).



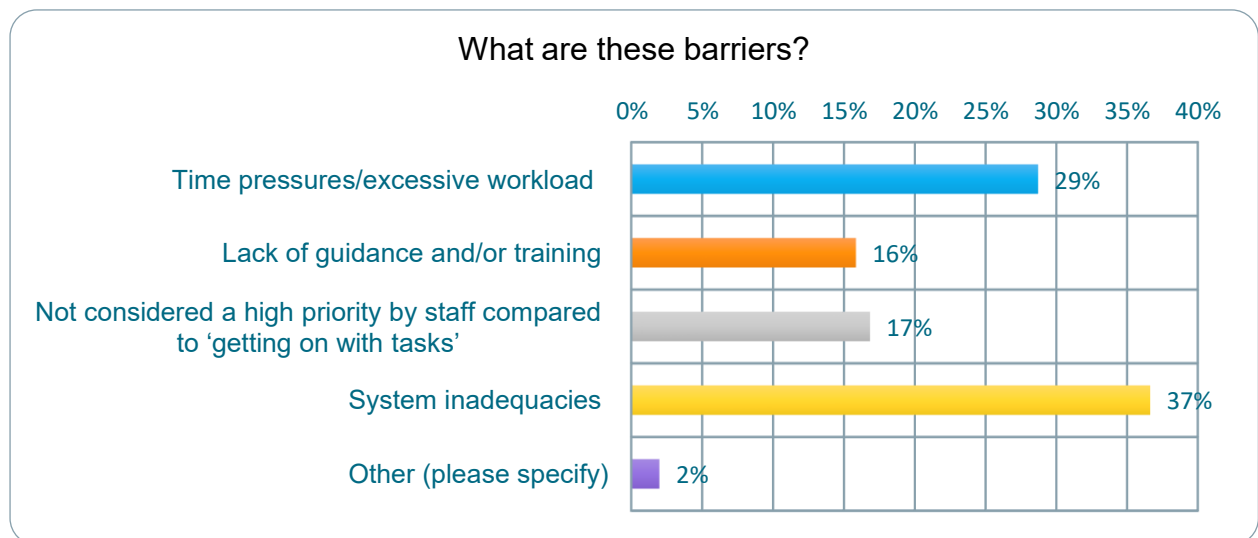
*Base: 26 respondents who answered 'No' to the previous question 'Are you able to easily access the information you require to inform your decision-making?'*

These respondents were also asked whether these issues impacted on their ability to meet their complaint handling timescales. The majority, 81%, said yes. This compared to 77% of respondents who expressed similarly during our previous KIM survey.

They were then asked whether these issues impacted on their ability to fully address the complaint. 92% said yes, with only 8% stating that these issues did not impact their ability to fully address the complaint.

All respondents were then asked whether the accuracy of data recorded is checked, for example through line manager quality assurance. Almost half (49%) stated that data accuracy was checked, however 24% said that data accuracy is not checked, and a further 26% were not sure.

46% of respondents stated that there are barriers preventing them from effective record keeping, whilst 54% did not experience any barriers. Of those who did experience barriers, these were most commonly described as system inadequacies (chosen by 37% of respondents) and time pressure/excessive workload (29%).

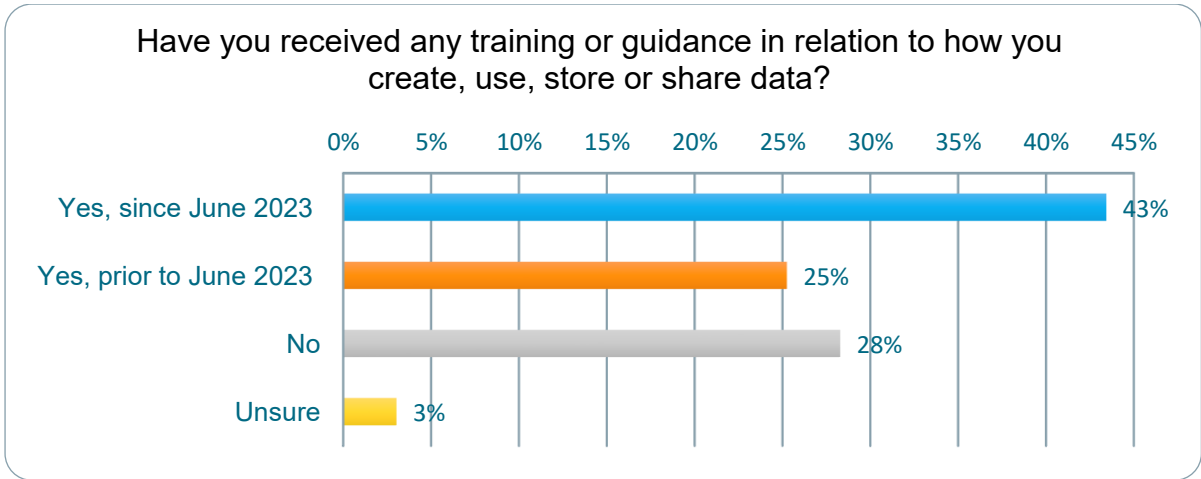


*Base: 46 respondents who answered yes to the previous question 'Are there barriers preventing you from effective record keeping?'*

In the last 12 months, 37% of respondents had experienced changes to the systems (databases) they use or processes they follow to record and access data. The remaining 63% either had not experienced change or were unsure.

Of those who had experienced changes, 89% said that they had improved things, with 5% suggesting these changes had made things worse, and 5% suggesting they had made no difference.

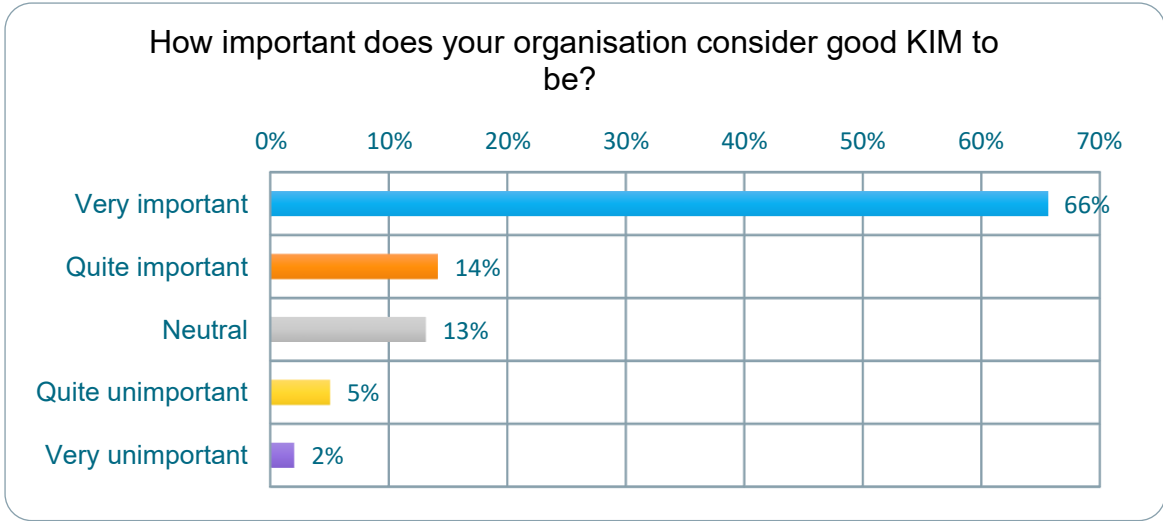
Encouragingly, 43% of respondents had received training or guidance in relation to the creation, use, storage or sharing data since the publication of the KIM report in May 2023, and a further 25% had received this training prior to the report publication.



Since the KIM report was published, nearly half of the respondents (46%) have received training on the Equality Act 2010, with an additional 33% having completed this training beforehand. However, 15% of respondents have yet to receive any training, and 5% were unsure.

Respondents were similarly asked whether they had recently received training or guidance on recognising and recording vulnerabilities, with 45% receiving this training since the publication of the KIM report, 16% receiving it prior, and almost one-third of respondents not receiving this training.

Finally, respondents were asked how important KIM was in their organisation. 80% suggested that their organisation considered KIM to be very or quite important, with only 7% suggesting it would be considered unimportant.



## Landlord engagement - good practice in implementing recommendations

### ***Governance and culture***

Our Spotlight report highlighted that senior leaders set the tone for their organisation; a data culture is required which fosters clear expectations and standards, is led from the top and is held up for scrutiny by governance. This message appears to have resonated with landlords, with many telling us that the KIM report served as a catalyst for change for senior leaders who are now overseeing the creation and implementation of KIM strategies, ensuring that effective information governance mechanisms are in place. Many landlords described setting up Governance Groups or committees, assigning owners to the recommendations in the report to ensure they are delivered, and tracking progress through regular reporting.

One landlord described allocating data owners at board level and data stewards at head of service level. These owners and stewards then work with a nominated member of the data team on a focused area; they reported this oversight has improved reporting and insight.

To embed the data culture at all levels, another landlord outlined that they were undertaking data lifestyle workshops with staff, so they understood the suppliers, the life cycle of data and key data processes.

Another landlord outlined an approach to overcome the erroneous perception that data is an IT problem, rather than a whole business problem. They described that data is a theme in the corporate plan, at Senior Leadership Team meetings and in each new project, so it is embedded in the approach.

Other landlords told us:

*'We included 'Data' as a cross-cutting theme throughout [the landlords'] corporate plan and extended that approach across all other strategies.'*

*'Our Information Governance Team review all Ombudsman findings relating to record management. They work with colleagues to drive continuous improvements and ensure positive changes are made throughout the business.'*

However, a few landlords in our workshop did suggest that organisational culture can be a barrier that is hard to overcome.

One landlord described how they are making the necessary KIM changes and have the people in place to manage it, but the rest of the organisation do not see KIM as a crucial area for improvement which means these projects get put on hold for other needs. Another suggested that it is hard to implement new processes or do the things needed to improve, because of difficulties with their organisational culture. Landlord staff who attended KIM webinars at the Ombudsman also highlighted the need for senior level buy-in to ensure that organisational culture is a key focus and related strategy is fully embedded at all levels. The Ombudsman has created a podcast exploring KIM and the role of senior leaders<sup>6</sup>.

Many landlords also outlined how they had reviewed safeguarding policies and procedures, along with internal guidance around recording vulnerabilities.

While for some these mechanisms were already in place, others have used these reviews to develop new tools and guidance to support staff.

One landlord in our workshop described how they had been talking to other landlords operating in their area about how they are addressing and assessing vulnerability, sharing good practice between them.

Other changes discussed included defining vulnerability criteria, setting up vulnerability working groups, and using new software to improve the recording of vulnerabilities. Landlords told us about improvements including:

‘... trialling new software which will improve how we manage the recording of vulnerabilities.’

‘We have now commenced a review of how we can better record vulnerability data, to ensure customer-centric provision. While we are refining system requirements, we have got [a] Vulnerable Persons Procedure.... We have designed a bespoke e-learning package .... that reinforces the recording requirements and links to requirements of the Equality Act, RSH Consumer Standards and HOS Complaints Code.’

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<sup>6</sup> <https://soundcloud.com/user-867978366-868555855/knowledge-and-information-management-interview-with-senior-leaader>

Another good example related to how the landlord's housing safeguarding leads worked with their partners to develop its self-neglect toolkit and new guidance to support staff working with people affected by cuckooing. It used the toolkit to work with a group of front-line staff to develop new guidance on working with people with hoarding behaviour. The landlord was also in the process of revising their approach (and guidance) to domestic violence and abuse and they are working towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation. It has a guidance hub which includes a dedicated space to support staff when they have safeguarding concerns, and safeguarding training is mandatory for all housing staff.

### **Case study**

Following a complaint by the resident that the landlord has failed to consider his individual needs in respect to reasonable adjustments, the landlord and resident mutually agreed the appropriate reasonable adjustments.

These included providing help with completing forms where needed, that its staff should consider appropriate use of language and phrasing to allow the resident to express himself during conversations, extra time to be given to the resident during telephone contact to facilitate clearer communication, and to provide explanations in clearer language to improve understanding. This demonstrated that the landlord discussed the resident's requirements and agreed to support him with his needs.

Furthermore, there is evidence that the landlord updated the resident's records on its customer management system, which alerted the landlord's staff to the resident's reasonable adjustment requests. This demonstrated effective record keeping by the landlord in its attempts to ensure it met his needs.

We also note that within the landlord's complaint responses, it offered the resident additional support. This was by way of a specialist advocacy officer. The landlord explained the officer would work alongside other teams, to assist the resident with any other unmet support needs. This demonstrated the landlord's attempts to support the resident with the complexities of its own housing functions.

Given that there was no evidence to support the residents' position that the landlord failed to consider his vulnerabilities and reasonable adjustment requests, we found no maladministration by the landlord.

Landlords also provided numerous examples of how they were making the most of contact with residents to get to know their residents and identify vulnerabilities.

One landlord told us that it has a 'skip day' where there is a skip placed in communities on certain days so residents can put their rubbish into it. The landlord staff are on site on these days to engage with residents.

Another example shared was the landlord undertaking a 'big door knock' around their homes, so they can see residents in their homes and reach those who are perhaps not digitally enabled. One landlord described that for one morning each month staff go out to be visible in the communities where they have homes, doing things like litter picking so that they can integrate and understand the communities that they serve. Landlords described that these opportunities allowed them to build relations, identify important information and update records, to ensure any subsequent contact was more effective.

While the innovative approaches are encouraging evidence of a cultural shift towards better understanding resident's needs, landlords must ensure that the gathering and processing of a resident's personal data, especially for 'special category data', is led by what that person needs and therefore for a lawful and necessary purpose.

Another landlord described that they are training staff on 'active listening' so when they speak to a resident, they can spot changes in their circumstances. For example, a resident called up to report a repair needed to her kitchen and explained that she had a new baby and the repair needed to be fixed as soon as possible. The record said she was a single woman and the call handler noted that while it did not feel appropriate to ask the resident on the call whether her circumstances had changed because she was quite distressed, they flagged the call to the housing officer to liaise with the resident and then update the system in accordance with the landlord's data standards.

Interestingly, while all landlords who mentioned training staff on the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 suggested that this is something that is now in place, our survey of complaint handling staff (discussed in the previous section) showed that 15% of respondents believed that they are yet to receive this training.

As the complaint handling survey was anonymous, it is not clear if the landlord responses and survey responses represent the same landlords; however, landlords need to ensure training records are accurate to ensure all appropriate staff attend.

### ***Devise key recording standards***

In our Spotlight, we recommended that landlords develop key data recording standard requirements to ensure good records that support the business and demonstrate compliance with national standards. Staff should be trained to use the agreed systems.

Landlords have spoken positively about their progress towards these recommendations, citing changes to data assurance and management processes.

Examples of good practice include:

‘The Spotlight report provided assurance that our framework is taking us in the right direction and gave additional traction to the Data Management Framework across the business. Themes highlighted in the Spotlight report have informed incremental change to our Data Management Framework and reporting of data quality, and we expect this will continue moving forwards. Following our initial response to the Spotlight report, we have set out to review the initial recommendations, with the goal of ensuring that we continue to meet or exceed in each area. This ongoing work involves engaging with data stewards and stakeholders across the business.’

‘As part of the Data Assurance Programme, we have established the business data dictionary for Property, Customer, Asset/Component, Finance and Supplier data domains to foster common data language across the business and set data recording standards. This is being managed and monitored in collaboration with the data & information owners.’

‘A data glossary is in development to catalogue terminology and define standard formats for datapoints across the organisation (for example date, time, currency etc.)’

Another landlord told us how they asked staff across the business to undertake a subject access request so that they can see all the information that can be pulled from the system. They described that this has made staff more mindful about the data they record and maintain.



Whilst progress is being made, landlords are at varying stages with this recommendation. One landlord told us:

‘This is an area we need to explore in more detail. The development of a data quality framework has started with system and data ownership being established, and we have started to define what the data quality core principles and standards will be for [landlord], however this work is in the very early stages.’

We acknowledge that agreeing and implementing a KIM framework effectively can take time and resources and that landlords only have a finite resource. However, from speaking to our landlords, it is clear that effort invested can be seen in both incremental gains and longer-term benefits.

In terms of data sharing, we recommended that landlords include KIM as part of their service level agreements with third parties. Landlords told us that they have taken forward this recommendation, updating guidance and agreements to include requirements for knowledge and information management. Positive progress has also been made in publishing and keeping up to date Frequently Asked Questions.

We also recommended that landlords have a clear categorisation system for ATIS/FOI requests (ATIS is now renamed as Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements - STAIRs). The aim of STAIRs is to drive a culture change whereby housing associations are more open with their tenants, requiring the sharing of a much wider range of information in relation to tenants' homes and the services housing associations provide. Council landlords, as public bodies, are already subject to the Freedom of Information Act. The government has committed to direct the Regulator of Social Housing to introduce new information requirements for social housing landlords. While the STAIRs scheme has yet to go live, it was positive to see that landlords are already considering the necessary KIM requisites

‘... we will develop a procedure to support the response to requests submitted under the Access to Information Scheme. As [the landlord] are not subject to FOI requests, we will utilise our partnerships with local authority colleagues to share best practice in the development of the procedure, in addition to guidance available from the Housing Ombudsman in relation to this.’

'Our Data Protection Team have the training and knowledge to identify ATIS/FOI requests. Work is ongoing to bring the whole business up to speed. A dedicated system is to be introduced to record requests and answers.'

## **Repairs**

Our Spotlight report highlighted that in two-thirds of the cases we upheld about repairs, poor records or information management played a pivotal part in the maladministration. The RSH's consumer standards also support the importance of effective knowledge and information management in respect of repairs.

In our Spotlight we recommended that landlords implement an automated appointment reminder system for repairs and maintenance appointments. Encouragingly, many landlords are now, or already were, implementing an automated appointment reminder system. One landlord explained:

'Part of the re-procurement of our responsive repairs contract... will include trigger points for standard communications to be sent at various points during the repairs process, including appointments. We intend to use this as a model upon which to base requirements for future contracts. We are also looking at options for live operative tracking and hope to include this in the final contract.'

Another landlord told us about the positive impact since the introduction of automated appointment reminders; they had seen a reduction in 'no access' visits from an average of 32% to 18%.

However, we heard that some of the more rural landlords find it challenging to implement such a reminder system. In our workshop, one landlord told us that as they are very rural, they require multiple service providers to make sure text message reminders arrive. Another described how text reminders sometimes don't arrive until after an operative has already left the appointment, or at all.

Some landlords described system challenges impacting how they can deliver improvements to automated reminders. One reported that:

'... the limitations to the text messaging system – if an operative arrives and can't enter the property or complete the task they have to mark it as cancelled as there are insufficient text options to select. Furthermore, the system does not have a function to say your follow up work is XYZ to keep customers up to date.'

We also recommended that landlords set out clear requirements of operatives before they are allowed to record an appointment as missed, including ensuring that the appointment was notified to the resident, it was made at a time they could attend, and checking that any contact requests were adhered to. Progress towards this recommendation is also in line with the RSH consumer standards, in particular keeping tenants informed about repairs, maintenance and planned improvements to their homes with clear and timely communication.

Landlords told us that they had amended their 'no access' procedures. Changes include:

- the option of automatic cancellation of jobs after one 'no access' visit has been removed - cancellations now only take place after thorough examination of whether the repair continues to be necessary and thorough documentation is required
- producing a new no access form for operatives to use - this requires operatives to call the customer and wait at least 5 minutes before leaving and marking as no access
- requiring operatives to phone the tenant prior to putting a no access card through the door and to attach a photo of them putting the card through the door to the job sheet - if the tenant responds within a short space of time such as within 2 hours, an operative will return to the property the same day to carry out the repair
- Housing Support Officers (HSOs) often accompanying visits for engineers or operatives to conduct repairs which results in high access rates - this follows on from it often being the HSO who has reported the repair on behalf of the tenant
- one landlord had mapped the resident journey for booking a repair with the resident which included sending a text when the appointment was made, a reminder the day before, when the operative was on the way, and when the appointment was completed. It also allowed the resident to communicate directly with the operative, similar to a tracked parcel delivery

These examples highlight some of the practical measures which can make a real difference to resident experience.

In our workshop, landlords told us that they had consulted with residents to understand the barriers of their current repair offer. One landlord told us that they were also consulting their residents on how often they would like their vulnerability information to be updated. Another told us that they consider it is key is to understand what repairs means to customers and what they are looking for. This engagement with residents can help ensure that repairs and maintenance services are informed by the needs of residents.

Finally, we recommended that landlords conduct wastage analysis on missed appointments, using the insight generated to identify efficiencies and action plans, including whether a broader time range of appointments would be of benefit. One landlord who successfully undertook this analysis has now introduced a new appointment slot, telling us:

‘A new appointment slot to avoid school run times has been introduced, based on review of missed appointment data. This combined with the increased communication has resulted in a reduction in 'no access' from 14% to 8.7% over a comparable period. Work is ongoing to identify where additional improvements can be made.’

## **Low engagement with recommendations**

Not all of the recommendations have been straightforward for landlords to implement. While some recommendations did not have a high engagement rate, others were specifically described by landlords as a challenge.

### ***Merger/structural changes***

We received limited feedback on our merger/structural change recommendations, likely because few landlords have experienced such changes since the publication of the KIM report. Indeed, a local authority landlord highlighted that they considered these recommendations not applicable given their council has no plans to dispose of its housing stock or to merge with other providers.

One landlord did describe how they were supported by a defined process, templates (for loading data), and a skilled team while undergoing several partnerships and data transfers. They described that there are several check points which are clearly communicated and documented for governance purposes and that they test data and migration plans and the approach to ensure effective system integration.

Another positive example, albeit ongoing, is a landlord who described that they have been planning their merger for over 18 months so that strategic decisions can be made on the data coming in. They told us they were utilising information asset registers and process flows so they could visually see the data architecture and allocate data owners and stewards.

### ***Appropriate systems***

While many landlords were able to implement staff training and sensitive information reviews successfully as per the appropriate systems recommendations, landlords told us that ensuring there are appropriate systems in place has proved more challenging.

This was also highlighted as a barrier in the complaint handler survey, where respondents cited databases not synchronising or talking to each, and 'system inadequacies' as barriers to their work.

While some landlords described new or improved systems that have enhanced functionality and supported the identification of trends, many said they now face challenges in ensuring sensible and reliable data flow between the numerous systems. One landlord told us:

'We have invested in acquiring and developing databases that meet our needs and have staff who are capable to configuring them easily as new requirements arise, however... we have arguably invested too much in different systems and now our challenge is more around ensuring that the data flow between them is sensibly designed and reliably implemented'

Other landlords described that ensuring they have adequate systems in place is part of a longer-term improvement programme, which will need to be delivered over several phases.

Nonetheless, there was some evidence provided of positive steps taken to overcome system challenges. One landlord told us that they had employed a data scientist to work with the housing teams to identify those residents they do not hear from, 'finding their silence'. This has enabled them to be more proactive in reaching out to these residents. Another example provided was that a landlord's move to a SharePoint system was underpinned by mapping NHF standards to the data they held. This has led to trigger reminders for the data owner to review information when it reaches a certain age, or to auto delete where appropriate.

With appropriate systems in place still proving to be a challenge for landlords and their staff alike, landlords should consider, and share ideas with their industry counterparts, as to how smaller, incremental changes may lead to significant improvements.

### ***Benchmarking***

Benchmarking was frequently discussed as a challenge during our workshop. While landlords could see the benefit of benchmarking, many found it hard to envision how they could do so effectively as KIM is such a wide-ranging topic. One landlord noted how benchmarking is easier for more defined topics such as stock condition surveys.

Benchmarking was also highlighted as an area where further support was required, with landlords suggesting that they would benefit from additional clarification and guidance. As part of our consultation for this follow-up report, we also received several responses requesting guidance around recommendation 3 in the report. In particular, providers wanted some guidance as to what we mean by benchmarking and how to go about benchmarking with other providers.

Benchmarking is the process of comparing your own processes and policies against similar organisations. It can bring in several benefits for social housing providers by giving them more scope to identify best practice across the sector. There are different types of benchmarking which may be useful to providers: landlords can benchmark performance measures, for example by sharing anonymised reports about KPIs, or procedural benchmarking, such as asking for advice on new processes before they are finalised. Benchmarking groups can also arrange training in the form of workshops and webinars.

Benchmarking in KIM can be achieved through meeting with organisations that landlords already have a relationship with, or providers with similar characteristics, such as size, location, demographic, or provider type. Landlords can share challenges they are facing with KIM and learn how others have overcome these challenges. For example, learning about new IT systems others are using, or methods of collecting useful data about housing stock and resident needs.

### **Case study**

In response to the KIM Spotlight recommendation, in September 2023, a group of London councils set up a KIM benchmarking group to facilitate collaboration on KIM matters affecting their members. They created a 'task and finish' group which set out to go through the recommendations from the Ombudsman's Spotlight report on KIM and share their approaches. It was set up to have monthly meetings for 6 months, at the end of which the group would dissolve. The group created a term of reference which set an agenda of going through a set number of recommendations each meeting, sharing best practice and how each member was addressing the recommendation. It also laid out what outputs would be expected, responsibilities for members, other activities it would participate in, and how it would report on its findings. This allowed all members to share insight into different methods of addressing challenges, as well as technical advice and signposting to useful sources.

At the end of the 6 months, the group created a repository for all the documents created during the group's existence, including guidance and best practices, workshop notes, findings from any research it did, and any benchmarking reports. The information remains available to members, ensuring that it can be used for continuous improvement.

A podcast has been recorded with the council who set up the above benchmarking group, which provides further detail of their approach and the benefits realised. This can be found in our Centre for Learning, as detailed below.

### **Final word**

The Ombudsman recognises that landlords face many challenges navigating knowledge and information management with low budgets. We are encouraged to see the various examples where landlords have taken positive action to make real

improvements in approach. In particular, there was noticeable improvement in landlords' approach to using effective knowledge and information management in respect to repairs, especially in their approach to missed appointments. Challenges around data need to be considered in both the strategic sense and in respect to practical application at the day-to-day operational level. We hope that in sharing some of the improvement actions and innovative approaches, we offer encouragement to those landlords who are working to meet the recommendations. Ultimately understanding their residents and homes better, will allow landlords to better target interventions and an improved experience for residents.

## Further resources

The [Housing Ombudsman public website](#) includes several resources for use by landlords and residents when dealing with noise complaints and other problems.

### Centre for Learning

The [Centre for Learning](#) is where member landlords can network, share, learn, and improve understanding. It is free to access and includes:

- training and events
- a library of our reports including Spotlight reports, special investigations, quarterly Insight reports, landlord complaints statistics and more
- information on key topics, including [Knowledge and Information Management \(KIM\)](#)
- podcasts, including our podcast on [KIM](#), and our podcast [KIM Buy-in from Senior Leaders](#), and the [London Knowledge and Information Management Benchmarking Group](#) podcast

Further advice for landlords is available on the [landlords](#) page where you can find information about the Complaint Handling Code, the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, and other helpful resources including guidance notes.



## Online casebook

All our decisions are published in our [online casebook](#) as part of our commitment to being open and transparent. You can search by complaint category, landlord type and decision date, and apply other filters to find relevant cases.

## Advice for residents

The [residents](#) page on our website has many useful resources for residents who are finding it difficult to resolve a complaint directly with their landlord.

## Housing

Ombudsman Service

PO Box 1484, Unit D

Preston

PR2 0ET

0300 111 3000

[www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

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