

Knowledge and Information Management (KIM) FAQs

The importance of Knowledge and Information Management (KIM)

Why did the Housing Ombudsman Service create the Spotlight report on Knowledge and Information Management (KIM)?

We found that it was a recurrent and dominant theme in our case work, our paragraph 49 investigations, and our thematic Spotlight reports.

There is a clear link between poor knowledge and information management and the direct effects experienced by the landlord's residents, and the landlord itself.

Why is good Knowledge and Information Management (KIM) so important in the housing sector?

When landlords don't hold knowledge and information about their homes, or importantly about their residents, it limits their ability to provide a responsive, safe, and high-quality service.

Good KIM benefits both landlords and residents and creates better working relationships with increased trust.

Landlords can target their resources, give greater clarity to both residents and their teams, and there's reduced reputational risk for the landlord and financial savings from reduced resident compensation.

Assessing against the recommendations

Where should landlords start with the 21 recommendations? Which one would have the biggest impact the quickest?

If you are going to undertake a merger or structural change, start with those recommendations as they are designed to help minimise some of the issues and service failure we commonly see post-merger.

If that doesn't apply, then knowing what your standards are for your organisations should come first, because you can't do a lot of the others without knowing this first, and most of the other recommendations actually flow from this one.

What recommendations do you have for landlords around repairs?

Landlords must have clear processes for what staff and third parties do when they attend a property. This should cover:

- what system should be used for recording
- how many attempts you're supposed to make
- who you notify that you've made those attempts
- how you evidence that you attended

Ideally, landlords should be notifying residents before they attend the property with a text message or phone call.

Finally, landlords must record and analyse why appointments were missed. You need to look at the information to see what's driving that missed appointment and what can be done to rectify it in the future.

Do you suggest landlords do a review/RAG rating of current services in relation to the recommendations?

We suggest you self-assess against the recommendations. You might want to also do a RAG rating/review. As part of the review of the report, we will be contacting landlords and asking them what changes they have made as a result, so it will be good for you to be ahead of the curve in case you are one of our randomly selected landlords!

In terms of best practice, as we get examples of this, we will share it through our Centre for Learning. We also do a follow up report for each of our Spotlight reports and as part of this we contact landlords to ask them what they are doing with the recommendations. We then share the good practice identified in the follow up report.

What are the expected timescales for landlords to implement recommendations in terms of our self-assessment?

We always give 12 months for landlords to carry out the self-assessment and start prioritising and making some of the changes.

When we do the follow up report, we don't expect landlords to be able to tell us 'we are exactly in the position we should be' necessarily. We expect within 12 months for there to have been a self-assessment, an awareness of where those gaps are, and the actions have started to be put into place. There might be some quick wins, but we appreciate that some of the recommendations may take longer to implement.

Did you check the recommendations with housing associations and landlords before you published them to check that they resonated?

With all our Spotlight reports, we have an expert panel which includes landlords.

We also have a Resident Panel, so we get the perspective from both sides.

What are the expectations of recommendation 1 on Governance teams?

We found that not all landlords define the oversight role of governance for knowledge and information management.

If you are a landlord that already has this woven into your governance structure, that's great. We found though that for some landlords, there wasn't an overarching strategy or clear definition/recognition that this was something you had to have as part of your governance and quality assurance. Who is responsible for it, and who is going to have that oversight?

When we talk about 'knowing products, services and residents well' this is about knowing your housing stock, the condition it is in, and with residents and knowing them, we mean knowing their vulnerabilities, making sure your records are up to date with information held about residents for example.

What are the minimum standards for knowledge and information?

The minimum standards for knowledge and information refers to what you decide your own internal standards for KIM are. These are then monitored to ensure they are adhered to, and action taken where there are shortfalls. At the procurement stage, landlords should set out the minimum standards so expectations are clear, and you can ensure the third-party contract is the right one for you. Specifically, can they provide assurances these standards will be followed?

What does it mean to train staff in the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 – particularly with relevance to the importance of Knowledge and Information Management in practice?

This refers to the link between demonstrating compliance with the Equality Act and good KIM.

For example, being able to evidence that reasonable adjustments were agreed, recorded, shared appropriately, and reviewed. Without an audit trail, landlords will struggle to show they have acted in accordance with their legal responsibilities.

Vulnerabilities information

How do you capture vulnerabilities information if you're not in regular contact with that customer? Particularly with temporary vulnerabilities.

This is something that we will capture in the follow up report to this report, but also something that will be covered in our next [Spotlight report on attitudes, respect and rights](#). Vulnerabilities features prominently in that report, too.

Communication is key, building relationships and maintaining that communication with residents to make sure that you're capturing that their situations have changed.

We appreciate this is difficult as some housing officers because they cover a large patch, but that designating housing officer and the building of this relationship and trust is key.

But it is everyone's responsibility. For example, a contractor could highlight something, they attended a property, and the person isn't on crutches anymore or whatever it may be. A holistic approach is needed because one approach isn't going to solve something as complex as keeping on top of vulnerabilities.

Data

How will ATIS work? Is it more akin to the FOI Act publication scheme or transparency codes within the public sector rather than the full provisions of the FOI.

This is correct, it is more akin to the publications scheme.

It will operate in terms of the same principles of the FOI and we are going to be the investigative body for residents rather than them going to the Information Commissioners Office.

If you have any questions, please email them to: dpo@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Did you find any organisations that had too much data or were holding too much incorrect/historic data?

It was more insufficient data than too much data that we found, although we did find that some records contained too much opinion of the person inputting the data rather than just the fact, and so that is an example of too much of the wrong type of data.

We saw examples of residents letting landlords know their vulnerability, these are the adjustments I need/how the service should be tailored for me, that the landlord has just not captured, shared appropriately, or acted on and so that was a theme regarding holding on to data. Over time, that can become historic information that is still being retained.

Follow up report

When will the follow up report for the Spotlight report on KIM be available?

We start working on it about 12 months after the initial report is issued to give landlords time to start to make headway with the recommendations.

We then start contacting landlords for information and once we have this information back, we collate and analyse it.

With the Spotlight on damp and mould, we released the original report in October 2021 and the follow up report was published in February 2023.