

Back in control:

A bolder vision for tackling
social housing repairs
and maintenance

March 2026

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Foreword

The quality of our social housing stock is fundamental to the health, dignity and life chances of millions of people.

As we saw in the case of Awaab Ishak, the failure to address damp and mould has devastating and tragic consequences. These consequences have rightly sharpened our collective focus. Yet as this report makes clear, the challenge is not simply one of faster reaction to such problems, but of smarter and more proactive prevention.

Local authorities and housing associations are operating in an environment of tightening regulation, rising costs and ageing homes. The introduction of Awaab's Law and the strengthening of standards across the UK are necessary and welcome steps. But compliance alone will not deliver the step-change residents deserve. If we remain locked in a cycle of crisis management and emergency repairs, we risk exhausting resources without ever addressing the root causes.

This report from Sureserve argues persuasively for a more proactive, planned and preventative approach to repairs and maintenance.

It highlights practical examples of how existing touchpoints, such as compliance visits, can be used more intelligently, how better data can inform and support the right interventions, and how collaboration can rebalance effort from reactive to preventative work.

Boards, chief executives, asset managers and those teams leading repairs, maintenance and customer engagement, all agree that prevention is not an optional extra. It is central to protecting residents, strengthening trust and improving value for money.

I encourage social landlords across the country to engage closely with the evidence and ideas set out here. By working together and embracing new ideas, we can move beyond managing damp and mould to designing it out, and in doing so, ensure that every social home is truly safe, healthy and fit for the future.

Lord Best OBE



Executive Summary

The tragic death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak in Rochdale in December 2020 brought national attention to the severity of the impacts of damp and mould. Awaab died from prolonged exposure to mould in his family's social housing flat.

The coroner found that the mould had been caused by inadequate ventilation and that the response from their landlord was inadequate. Initially, the family's complaints were dismissed and then promised remediation was never carried out.

Awaab's death triggered – rightly – a critical focus across the housing industry on tackling damp and mould.

Awaab's Law, which came into force in October 2025, places strict limits on response times for landlords to take corrective action to address reported mould.

This new focus on tackling damp and mould is good news, but it presents new challenges to the housing sector.

Rising costs

Repairs costs in housing are rising at an unsustainable rate. Figures from the Regulator of Social Housing show the sector's spending on repairs and maintenance in 2024/25 reached an unprecedented £10bn – 42% higher than pre-pandemic levels.¹ Tackling damp and mould, along with improving fire safety, is a key driver.

Meanwhile, related complaints are going up.² Addressing these issues in a short-term, reactive way risks creating a costly pattern of repeated repairs and resident disruption.

As a sector we need to find more financially sustainable, longer lasting and less disruptive ways to address damp and mould. Since Awaab's death, the Housing Ombudsman,⁴ National Housing Federation³ and others across the sector have made clear calls for the sector to move towards a more proactive, preventative approach.

Finding out more

With this report we wanted to find out more, and set ourselves a challenge: how can we help landlords to improve quality while reducing costs? So, in late 2025, we commissioned a survey of our national client base to understand how they view this issue.

The findings highlight sustained concern around damp and mould across housing portfolios, alongside increasing financial pressure. Many organisations expect higher spending on both responsive and proactive repairs in 2026, though budgets are still heavily weighted toward responsive and emergency works rather than preventative strategies.

A total of 31 survey responses, including from some of the UK's biggest social landlords, showed that the sector is struggling with this burden – and perhaps more than the official figures suggest:

- **The average estimated increase in repairs costs was 23% vs a 13% increase suggested in the Regulator's Global Accounts.**
- **Most respondents estimated that 10-25% of homes require remediation. This is much higher than formal reports of damp and mould, which in 2023 stood at just 7% of social housing properties.⁴**

Respondents reported that new compliance requirements, including Awaab's Law, are contributing to demand pressures and rising material and labour costs.

There is broad recognition that a switch to more proactive maintenance could deliver cost savings and better long-term outcomes. However, there are significant barriers to achieving this.

The challenges include limited capacity, budget constraints, data quality issues, lack of integrated systems, regulatory pressures, and organisational risk aversion.

Many participants expressed scepticism that damp and mould can ever be fully eradicated. Contributing factors cited include fuel poverty, ageing or non-traditional housing stock, overcrowding, retrofit complexities, and resident behaviours that are outside landlord control.

Overall, the survey painted a picture of a sector that recognises the need to shift from reactive to preventative maintenance, but remains constrained by operational realities, compliance demands, financial pressures, and capacity challenges.

¹ [Regulator of Social Housing 2025 Global Accounts published](#) – Regulator of Social Housing, January 2026

² [Spotlight report on damp and mould](#) – Housing Ombudsman Service, October 2021

³ [Action plan in response to the Better Social Housing Review](#) – National Housing Federation, May 2023

⁴ [Spotlight report: Repairing Trust](#) – Housing Ombudsman Service, May 2025

“The entire service model is predicated on resident-reported issues. We lack early warning systems that don’t require massive capital investment. Even with Awaab’s Law driving policy, the operational reality hasn’t shifted – repairs budgets are consumed by crisis management, leaving no capacity for prevention.”

Head of maintenance services (survey respondent)

Our survey – as well as wider sector literature – suggests that most landlords see a more proactive approach to maintenance as an opportunity that offers long-term savings and improved service quality. But there are many challenges presented by making this change.

Smarter compliance

We’re already working with our clients to trial new proactive approaches to bring down costs, reduce disruption and tackle damp and mould at source.

Here, we’re setting out a selection of approaches we’re seeing and supporting, to manage the risks better, to think ahead and to tackle root causes and prevent issues from occurring in the first place.

What should a proactive approach include?

- ✓ Emphasising long-term solutions over short-term measures such as mould washes.
- ✓ Investing in resident and staff training, education and communication about signs, causes and solutions to damp and mould.
- ✓ Highlighting the importance of appropriately specified, designed and operated ventilation to staff, contractors, and residents.
- ✓ Trends captured on every visit to build rolling stock-condition insight, and surveys would be updated every time teams go in.
- ✓ Clear information provided to residents and staff, and landlords listening and responding in a timely manner.
- ✓ Social housing professionals working as one team towards clear goals, from CEOs to caretakers, to ensure that every visit improves property quality and health.
- ✓ Property Health Checks (which involve adding whole-home checks to gas safety ones at marginal cost). Carrying them out boosts productivity, reduces burdens on residents, delivers better homes and frees budget for priorities such as safety and new supply.

Although there can be an upfront cost, acting early cuts complaints, surveys, decants, legal fees and health impacts, while extending asset life, lowering operating costs and – most importantly – improving living conditions and the health of residents.

Proactive approaches to tackling damp and mould, and all housing hazards, requires changing how we budget, monitor performance, utilise data, procure, communicate and collaborate.

A challenge to the sector: Can we go further?

At Sureserve we want to see more of this move to prevention over cure. We're calling on landlords to reflect their increasingly proactive approach in tender documents and strategic budget decisions. Give us the scope and remit to get creative to solve issues of damp and mould together.

To accelerate this change we think the sector needs a clearer strategic goal that would focus resources – both within landlords' teams and the supply chain – on the systemic change we need.

With this in mind, we're calling on the sector to set a strategic challenge:



We think the industry should set a target to rebalance spending by 2030 – from roughly **70:30** reactive:preventative to at least **30:70** in favour of prevention.



A proactive, planned and preventative approach includes:

Data-driven, outcome-focused asset management

- Predictive analytics: Landlords use data from stock condition surveys to identify properties most at risk of damp (reviewing specific house types, ages or construction) and proactively invest in them before issues arise.
- Smart technology (IoT sensors): Installing low-cost, battery-operated sensors in high-risk homes to monitor temperature and relative humidity in realtime. Routine data collection, in-home energy and air quality monitoring with resident and landlord dashboards.
- Targeted improvements: Using data to trigger preventative, planned maintenance rather than waiting for failures, such as replacing old windows with newer, higher performing ones or upgrading insulation.
- Savings and positive, measurable resident outcomes specified in tenders, rewarding partners who prevent problems.

Planned maintenance and investment

- Upgrading ventilation: Systematically installing mechanical ventilation systems, Passive Stack Ventilation or Positive Input Ventilation units in kitchens and bathrooms to prevent moisture buildup.
- Structural repairs: Proactively fixing roof leaks, blocked gutters and failing brickwork (penetrating damp) to prevent water from entering the building.
- Cyclical servicing: Regular, scheduled cleaning of existing ventilation fans and checks on heating systems.

Rapid, root-cause focused response

- Specialist teams and training: Employing specialist damp teams who understand building pathology, rather than general maintenance staff, and training all staff to recognise the warning signs of damp.
- Root cause analysis: Moving beyond just removing surface mould to investigating the cause (for example, via moisture meters and thermal cameras).
- Adherence to Awaab's Law: Investigating potential hazards within 10 working days, providing a written summary within 3 days of inspection, and starting emergency repair works within 24 hours (or significant hazard work within 5 days).

Customer engagement and education

- Shifting from blame to support: Eradicating the 'lifestyle issue' culture, where landlords blame tenants for condensation. Instead, focusing on collaboration and providing practical support.
- Proactive advice and tools: Distributing humidity monitors to help residents track humidity levels and offering advice on heating and ventilation.
- "Making Every Contact Count"⁵: A principle that originates from health and social care. 'Healthy Homes Checks' added to existing visits. Training housing officers and using existing compliance checks to identify signs of damp during any visit, such as rent collections or gas safety checks.

	Reactive approach	Proactive, planned or preventative approach
Trigger	Customer complains / mould is already visible.	Sensors / data indicate high risk, or routine inspections pick up early signs.
Action	Typically, wipe down, mould wash, repaint, install a fan.	Identify and fix root cause, including fixing ventilation, repairs to structure, increased customer education and support.
Focus	Treating the symptoms.	Preventing recurrence.
Technology	None.	IoT sensors, data analytics and dashboards, apps for use by residents.
Attitude	"It's a lifestyle issue".	"It's a building issue" (with focus on support and solutions).
Outcome	Repeated repairs, unsustainable costs, poor resident experience.	Long-term fixes, managed cost planning, improved health, wellbeing and customer experience.

⁵ [Working in partnership to improve repairs and maintenance services: How to respond to recommendation three of the Better Social Housing Review](#) – Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), National Housing Federation, May 2024

The burden of incessant repairs

Numbers published by the Regulator of Social Housing show that in the last full financial year (2024/25), the social housing sector in England alone spent a record £10bn on repairing, maintaining and improving the quality and safety of existing homes.⁶

These costs have increased materially for several years in a row. In real terms, the sector's spending on repairs and maintenance is now 42% higher than pre-pandemic levels. Tackling damp and mould – along with improving fire safety – is a key driver in this increasing spend.

Records are being broken in Scotland too, where the total direct maintenance cost per unit per year increased in 2023/24 by almost 9% to £1,479, driven by a continuing increase in reactive works.⁷

And in Wales, social housing providers have invested an average of £2,500 per dwelling, focusing on the need to improve safety, energy efficiency, and meet quality standards.⁸

Of course, such investment is not always negative. Carefully planned and capitalised home improvement programmes are underway across the UK, designed to improve living standards, regenerate local communities, demonstrate compliance and create meaningful social value.

But there are also less positive reasons why the UK's housing repairs and maintenance bill keeps on rising – reasons directly linked to the age, condition and quality of our housing stock.

For example, England has more of its population living in a home with a leaking roof, damp walls and similar issues than anywhere in the EU.⁹ A joint ACE and EBR briefing in 2015 compared the state of the UK housing stock and fuel poverty levels with 15 other European countries.¹⁰ It concludes that no other country of the 16 assessed performed as poorly overall as the UK across the range of indicators.

Despite the fact that it has among the lowest energy prices, the UK ranks very poorly in terms of the affordability of space heating (it ranks last out of 16) and fuel poverty (ranking 14th).

It is the poor state of our housing stock that is the main cause of these problems. In terms of households reporting that their home is in a poor state of repair, the UK ranks 12th out of 16.

In terms of energy efficiency, out of 11 countries for which data is available, the UK's walls are ranked 7th, roofs are ranked 8th, floors are ranked 10th and windows are ranked 11th.

The social housing sector has a highly professionalised workforce and millions of repairs are completed successfully every year. But without careful management, the changing standards and compliance environment for social landlords could result in a complex, disruptive and expensive cycle of remedial works.

⁶ [2025 Global Accounts of private registered providers](#) – Regulator of Social Housing, January 2026

⁷ [Analysis of Registered Social Landlord Audited Financial Statements 2023/24](#) – Scottish Housing Regulator, March 2025

⁸ [Assistance for housing improvement: April 2023 to March 2024 \(headline results\)](#) – Llywodraeth Cymru Government, May 2025

⁹ [Housing Horizons: Examining UK Housing Stock in an International Context](#) – Home Builders Federation (HBF), October 2023

¹⁰ [Cold Man of Europe 2015 Update](#) – Association for the Conservation of Energy (ACE), Energy Bill Revolution (EBR), October 2015

A new urgency

There is a wide range of strengthening and overlapping regulations and standards covering health in both new and existing housing, increasingly backed up by stronger enforcement.

The focus on damp and mould looks slightly different in each of the UK's devolved nations – but all areas are facing new regulation that ups the urgency. We've summarised some of the key policies relating to damp and mould below.

Awaab's Law – Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

The first phase of Awaab's Law came into force on 27 October 2025. It sets statutory deadlines for social landlords in England to tackle dangerous housing hazards, starting with damp and mould. It creates an implied term in social tenancy agreements that landlords must meet fixed response times, with legal consequences if they do not.

To comply with phase one, landlords must act to the following maximum timeframes:

- Investigate any potential emergency hazard and complete safety work within 24 hours.
- Investigate potential significant hazards, including significant damp and mould, within 10 working days.
- Complete safety work within five working days after the investigation concludes.
- Give tenants a written summary of findings within three working days.

If a home cannot be made safe in time, suitable alternative accommodation must be provided at the landlord's expense until safety work is completed.

In October 2026 (phase two), the regime is expanding to cover additional high-risk hazards such as excess cold and heat, falls, structural collapse, fire and electrical hazards, and domestic hygiene and food safety.

By October 2027 (phase three), it is due to cover all remaining Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards except overcrowding.

Social landlords should start preparing for phases two and three now, by collecting more data on their stock, identifying problematic homes and developing plans for resident outreach and work to upgrade these properties.



Decent Homes Standard (DHS)

In January 2026, the government published its policy statement confirming a reformed DHS.

This signals a move towards a clearer, consolidated standard focused explicitly on safety, decency and warmth. It confirms strengthened expectations around damp and mould, disrepair, energy efficiency and the quality of stock condition data.

Providers will be expected to evidence compliance more robustly, supported by reliable asset data and clear, deliverable investment pathways.

This will apply across the social rented sector by 2035 and, for the first time, the private rented sector too. Detailed technical guidance is expected during 2026.

EPC reform

Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) are being overhauled in England, with a move away from a single headline A–G rating towards multiple metrics (eg. fabric/heat demand, cost, carbon) and clearer consumer presentation.

In parallel, the UK government's Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) is being replaced by the Home Energy Model, with SAP 11 and updated RdSAP (RdSAP 10) on the transition path.

Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016

For most social housing tenancies (now “occupation contracts”), Welsh law implies key terms requiring landlords to:

- Keep the dwelling in repair (structure/exterior and key service installations).
- Ensure the dwelling is fit for human habitation at the start and throughout the contract.

The Renting Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) (Wales) Regulations 2022

These set the framework for deciding if a home is fit for human habitation, using 29 “matters and circumstances”, including damp and mould growth.

Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) and the new “Responding to Hazards” rule

WHQS is the Welsh Government’s standard for social housing quality. In late 2025, Welsh Government confirmed it is updating WHQS to set clear timescales for investigating and remedying hazards including damp and mould, plus expectations on reporting/publishing performance.

The WHQS addendum – Responding to Hazards – introduces a new Element 1c and a Rule effective 1 April 2026. It applies to Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards (including damp and mould growth) where the hazard presents a potential significant risk and results from defects/disrepair within the landlord’s control.

Scottish Housing Quality Standard and the policy landscape in Scotland

Social homes must meet the tolerable standard and the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. The tolerable standard requires that a house is substantially free from rising or penetrating damp, and has satisfactory ventilation, heating and thermal insulation. Compliance is monitored through the Scottish Housing Regulator’s framework and Annual Assurance Statements.

The Regulator has told landlords to identify damp and mould and to fix it proactively and quickly. Ministers have also announced regulations to implement Awaab’s Law in Scotland.

In the meantime, under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, tenants that hold a Scottish Secure Tenancy (the standard agreement for council and housing association tenants) also have the right to have small urgent repairs carried out by their landlord within a given timescale. This includes a range of repairs for leaks.

Damp and mould risk is closely linked to fabric performance and ventilation. The existing Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing is being replaced by a new Social Housing Net Zero Standard, now in development, to align with the Heat in Buildings policy.

In parallel, Scotland has legislated EPC reform that takes effect on 31 October 2026, changing how energy performance is assessed and reported.

Reactive vs proactive: what social landlords tell us

Earlier this year, Sureserve conducted a poll among a limited group of its contacts and customers, to understand their views on the benefits of a more proactive, planned and preventative approach to repairs and maintenance.

Most of the 31 respondents work in asset management and repairs and maintenance roles. They represent a wide range of landlords from across the country, with most managing between 5,000 to 20,000 homes.

The results were both striking and mixed. While some landlords reported no forecast increases in costs, others forecast costs to rise by over 50%. Overall, the picture from within the sector suggests that the official figures understate the burden that some landlords are facing.

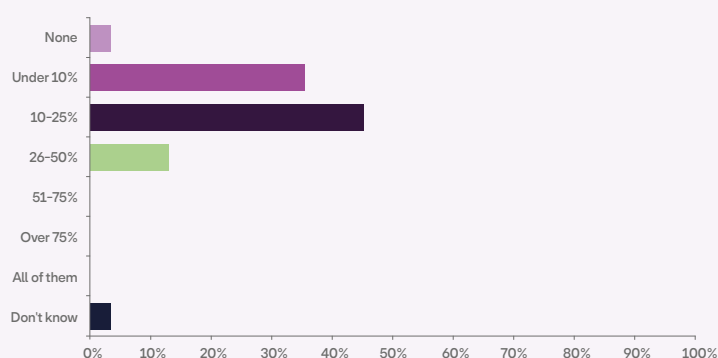
Two findings really stand out:

- The average estimated increase in repairs costs was 23% vs a 10% increase suggested in the Regulator's Global Accounts.
- Most respondents estimated that 10-25% of homes require remediation versus the Housing Ombudsman's estimate that 7% of properties are affected by damp and mould.

Some of the comments showed that the sector is under real strain on capacity and resource to respond.

The scale of the problem

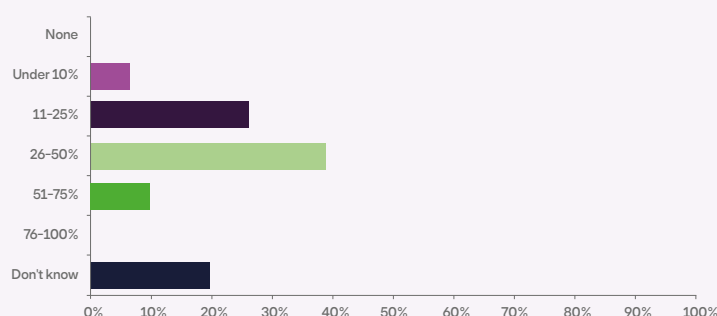
What is your closest estimate of the current percentage of homes in your portfolio identified as having damp and mould issues that require remediation (HHSRS Bands A-H, excluding the mildest hazards)?



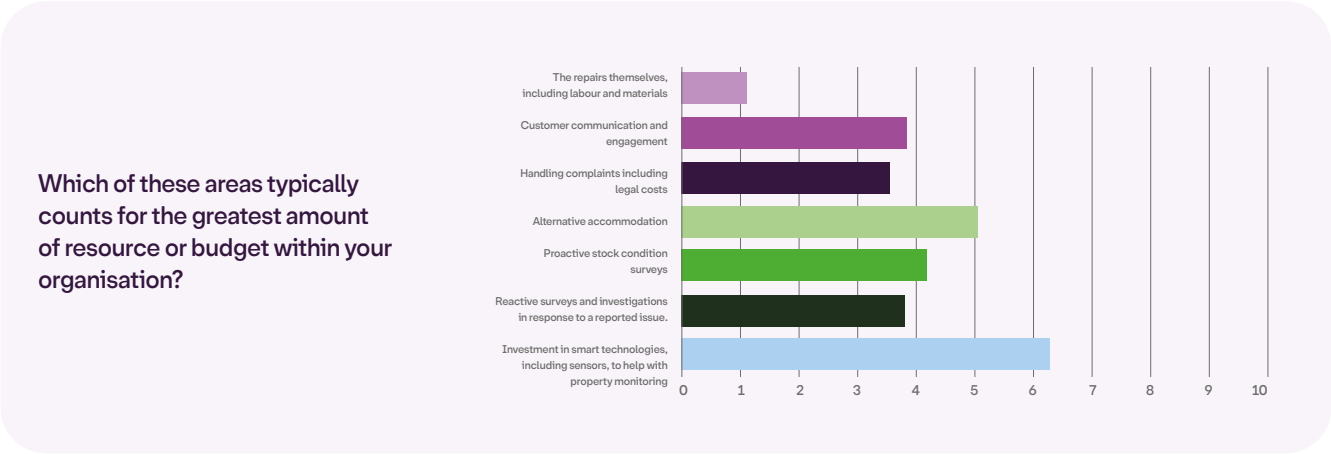
Increasing costs

Over 80% of our respondents expect to pay more on responsive repairs and maintenance this year – most are expecting up to 25% more compared to last year. They are also expecting a greater proportion of total resources to go into responsive and emergency repairs and maintenance. Over half of respondents think it will demand up to half of all resources this year.

Looking at your plans and total budgets and resources for the year ahead, approximately what proportion of resources are earmarked for responsive and emergency repairs and maintenance?

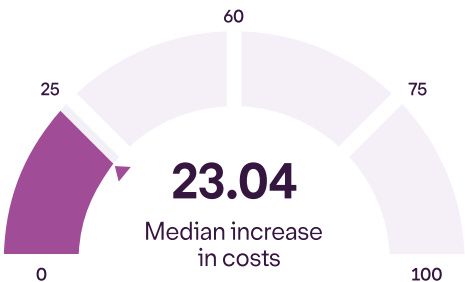


The largest areas of expenditure are on the repairs themselves (including labour and materials), followed by handling complaints (including legal costs) and customer communication and engagement.



On the financial impact of increased repairs and maintenance, over 70% of respondents agree that the demand surge caused by new compliance requirements such as Awaab’s Law has already resulted in measurable market price escalation for materials and/or labour costs for repairs and maintenance projects.

The median cost increase has been 23%.

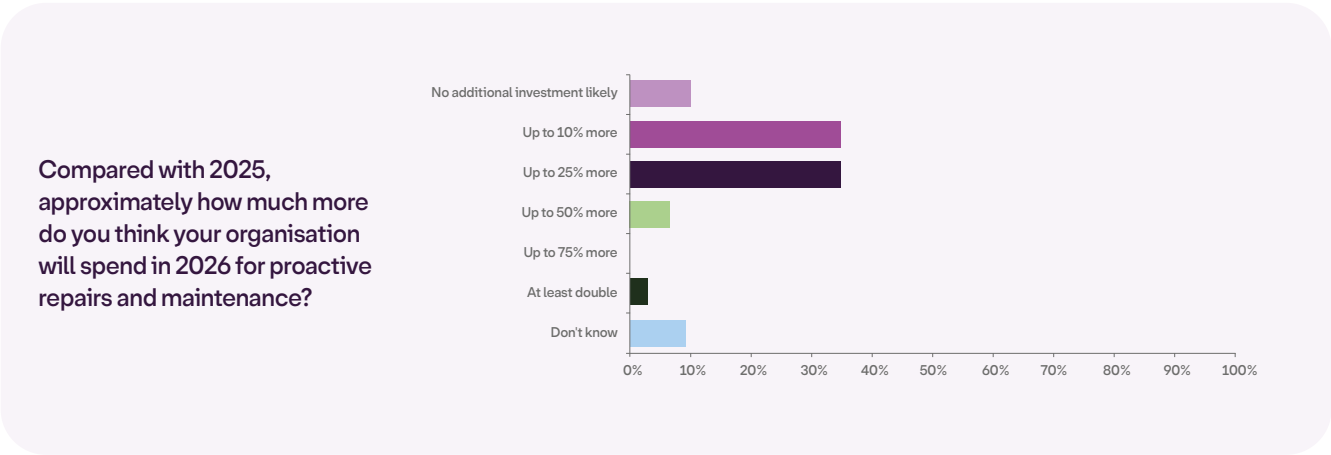


The appetite for a proactive approach

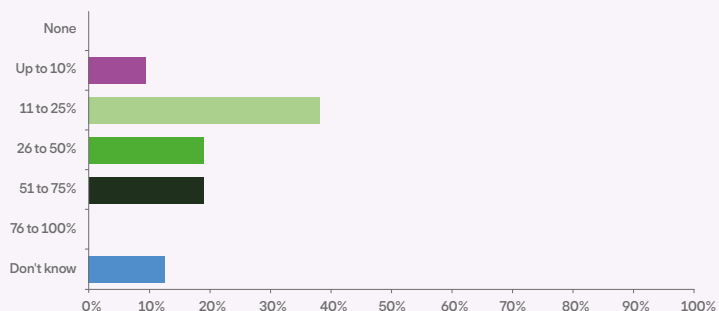
A move to proactive repairs

Most of the social landlords we heard from said that they would probably spend more on proactive, planned and preventative repair and maintenance (PPM) strategies in the next 12 months – three quarters say this is “likely” or “very likely”.

Respondents think the additional expenditure this year on proactive, planned and preventative work could increase by a quarter compared to last year. Some are allocating over half of their resources for the year ahead on proactive programmes.



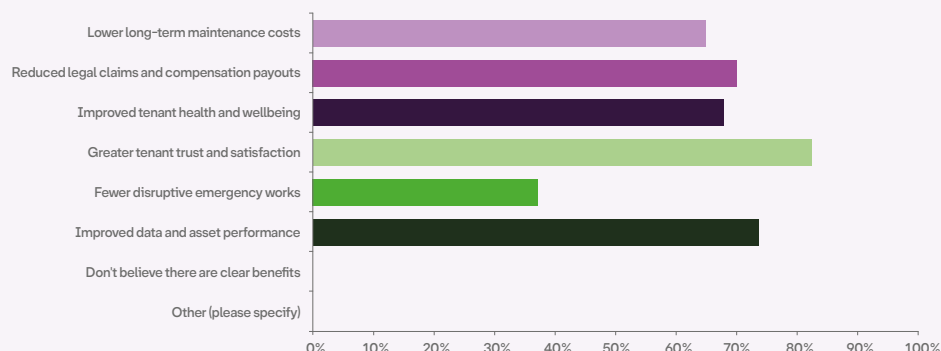
Looking at your plans and total budget and resources for the year ahead, approximately what proportion of resources are earmarked for planned, preventative major repairs?



Moving towards proactive maintenance is expected to bring significant benefits, particularly greater tenant trust and satisfaction, followed by improved data and asset performance.

Almost three quarters of respondents think that more proactive programmes would lead to reduced legal claims and compensation payments. Two thirds of respondents think that it would lead to improved tenant health and wellbeing, and a similar proportion think it would lead to lower long-term maintenance costs.

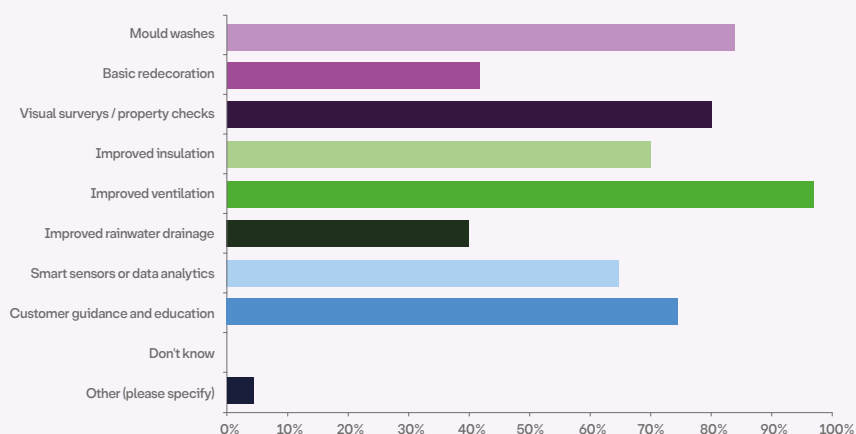
In your view, which of the following benefits would drive a shift to more proactive, planned and preventative repairs and maintenance regimes in the social housing sector overall?



Proactive solutions

Ventilation measures and mould washes are the most common solutions being used (or are planned for use) by our respondents to tackle damp and mould proactively.

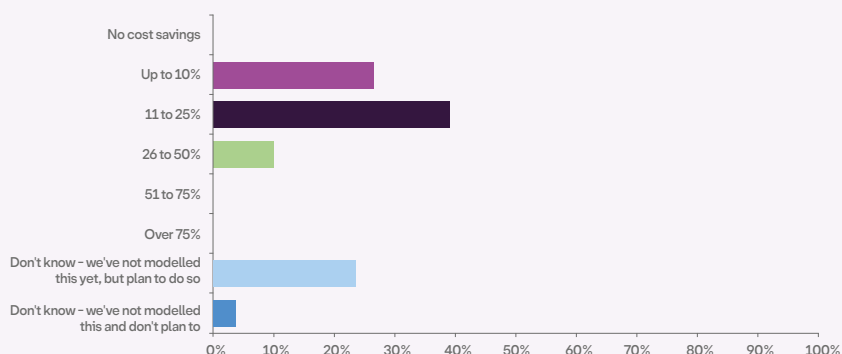
Which types of solutions does your organisation currently use (or plan to adopt) to tackle damp and mould proactively?



Saving money

Two thirds of respondents believe they can achieve cost savings by adopting a more proactive, planned and preventative approach to tackling damp and mould-related repairs and maintenance (a third think it could be as much as a 25% saving).

What level of cost savings do you think you could achieve by adopting a more proactive, planned and preventative approach to tackling damp and mould-related repairs and

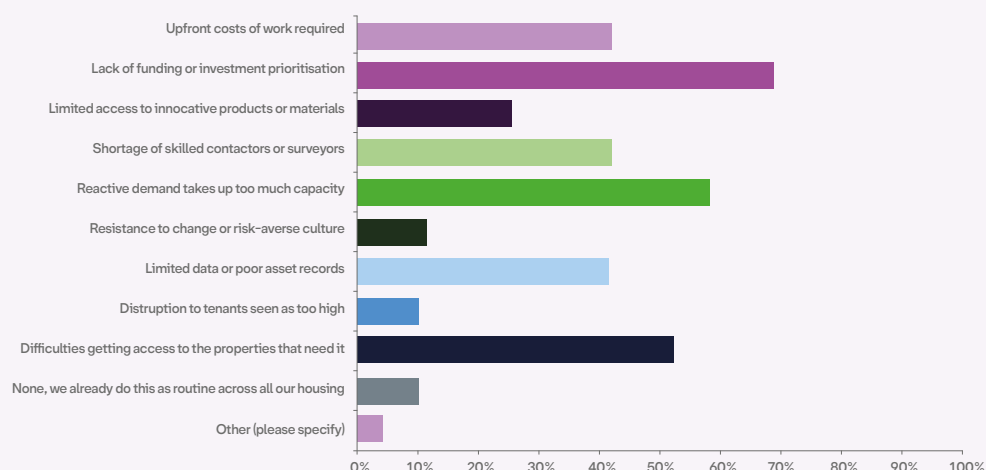


Barriers to adoption

There were six main reasons why a more proactive, planned and preventative approach to repairs and maintenance was difficult for the social landlords we surveyed:

- The lack of funding or investment prioritisation.
- The fact that reactive demand takes up too much capacity.
- Difficulties getting access to the properties that need it.
- The upfront cost of work required.
- The shortage of skilled contractors or surveyors.
- Limited data or poor asset records.

What are the main barriers to adopting more proactive, planned and preventative repairs and maintenance solutions in your organisation?



But the good news is that the vast majority of respondents said that collaboration across different departments such as compliance, repairs and legal, when tackling damp, mould and housing hazards, was somewhat very effective.

Examples of a new approach

Sureserve is the UK's leading energy and compliance services provider to the social housing and public buildings sectors. We have been dedicated to improving energy efficiency, reducing bills, and lowering emissions in social housing since 1988.

We employ more than 4,700 people, two thirds of which are fully trained and qualified engineers delivering a range of essential and affordable heating, renewables, energy efficiency and compliance solutions to over 1.6 million social homes each year.

Our compliance services include electrical and gas safety, fire compliance, market leading heating and hot water services, and water and air hygiene. Sureserve covers installations and repairs and maintenance across these services.

Sureserve plays a vital role in the decarbonisation of social housing and related public sector buildings and provides solutions including smart meters, energy storage, air and ground source heat pumps, solar PV and solar thermal, insulation, ventilation and energy efficient lighting to create healthy homes, help alleviate fuel poverty through lower bills, improve energy efficiency and reduce CO2 emissions.

Our research shows that landlords commonly believe there is significant potential to save money and improve resident experience through more proactive approaches. And they are striving to make this shift – we've highlighted a few examples over the next few pages.

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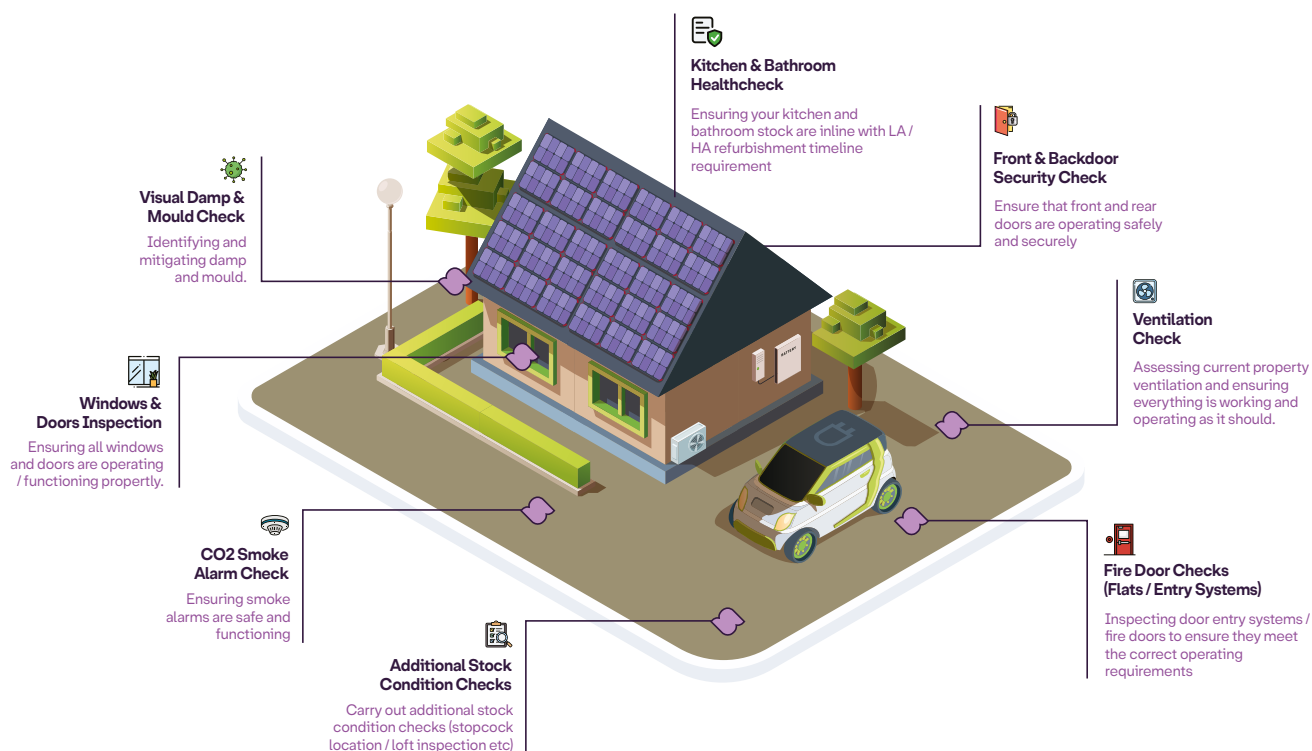




Property MOTs: Healthy Homes Check

One small but meaningful approach is the 'property MOT' concept. This is being delivered in different ways by several landlords and suppliers.

Our Healthy Homes Check incorporates property condition checks as part of our everyday compliance services. We're training our gas engineers to complete additional checks and give advice to residents whenever they visit a property. We've also developed a system for reporting problems before they escalate.



Making compliance more than just a tick box

Sureserve has been working with Poplar HARCA, an east London housing association with more than 10,000 homes, to make a Healthy Homes Check part of every annual gas safety visit.

By adding a short, disciplined damp and mould observation to the same visit, Sureserve engineers gather better evidence, earlier, without expecting residents to host an extra appointment.

During the gas check, operatives record any visible damp or mould, note the room, capture photos, and submit the data in real time. Poplar HARCA receives a daily report and applies a clear triage process for further investigation or remediation.

One touchpoint creates a time-stamped audit trail and a direct route to action. It helps solve access issues, because statutory visits reach 'quieter' households (the customers who don't tend to complain).

It also improves timing, because the landlord is catching risks before failures materialise. And it strengthens evidence with photographs, notes and a consistent checklist.

How technology amplifies the model

Poplar HARCA are also installing Aico HomeLINK sensors during voids, five-year electrical inspections and planned kitchen or bathroom works. A central dashboard highlights homes where humidity, temperature or ventilation trends suggest rising risk.

Residents can also view their own data in an app, which demystifies the technology and encourages practical behaviours without shifting responsibility for structural or ventilation shortcomings.

Diagnostics can flag degrading components and faults so that parts can be replaced before failure and residents are left without heating.

Recognising that damp and mould can signal affordability or vulnerability, any noticeable patterns of non-use can also prompt welfare checks.

Interpreting the data

Results across seasons are being collated, but the operational benefits are clear: earlier risk identification, fewer blind spots, and stronger evidence on every case.

Because the model rides on visits Sureserve already makes, it scales easily, without unnecessary appointments. It also supports tightening expectations on damp and mould response times.

The next phase of work will involve testing rules that trigger targeted surveys or remedial works, and standardising the workflow so other landlords can adopt it with the same emphasis on data discipline, operative training and resident communication.

Sureserve are proud to be working with:



More data, more insight

In this digital age, monitoring tools also have the power to jump even further ahead of issues. Without the ability to monitor homes, how do we know whether they are performing as expected?

Sureserve is helping to increase the digital monitoring of air quality by installing sensors to alert landlords to poor energy performance or the presence of damp issues. We're taking the pressure of handling and interpreting large amounts of data away from housing providers by providing a managed data service.



Resident-led engagement and connected compliance to prevent damp and mould

Sureserve is rolling out a WhatsApp resident engagement platform and combining it with a sensor-led Connected Compliance service.

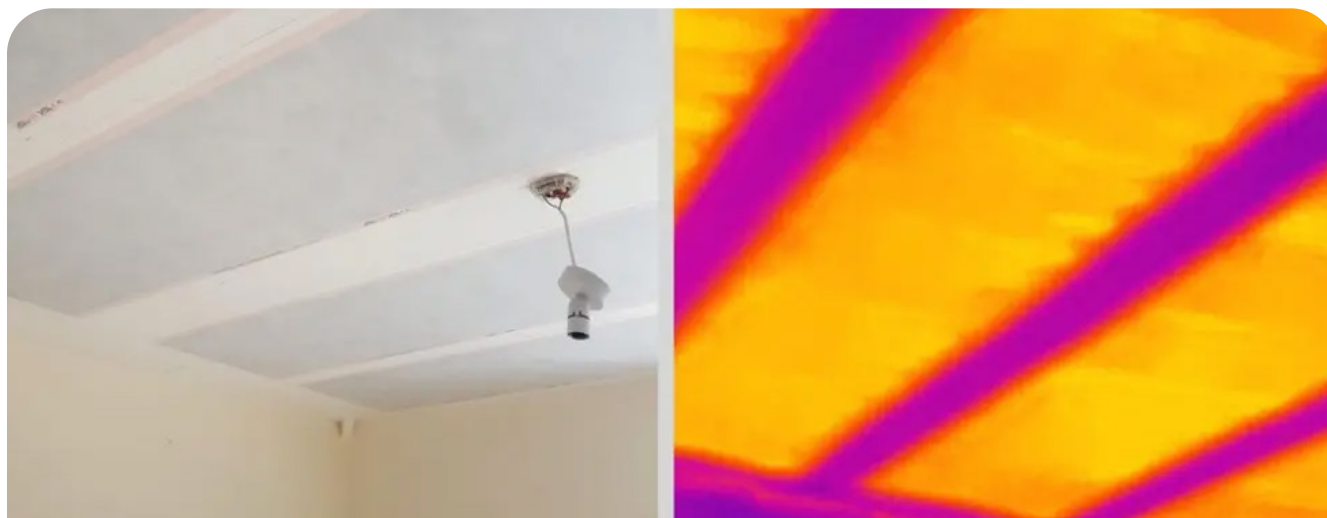
- **Residents can use WhatsApp to self-report damp and mould with photos or short video:** This supports rapid triage and risk-based prioritisation rather than first-come, first-served call queues. It could also lead to the ability to apply image analysis to grade severity, so we get to the right homes first.
- **Proactive follow-up is built into the workflow:** After a mould treatment, automated WhatsApp nudges will request new images at two weeks and again at three months to confirm the issue has been resolved, helping landlords verify outcomes and avoid recurrence.
- **Simple environmental sensors for temperature, humidity and CO₂ detect the conditions that lead to mould:** Data is assessed against duration, low temperature and high humidity to categorise properties on a 'red', 'amber' or 'green' basis so resources go where risk is persistent, not just where complaints are loudest.
- **Amber alerts can be acted on in a cost-effective way:** Instead of sending an operative immediately, Sureserve messages residents to check extractor fans or behaviours, then adds a targeted check to the next scheduled visit. This keeps costs down while addressing early warning signs.
- **Dashboards trigger action:** Rather than leaving housing providers with lots of data they don't have the time or resource to interpret or act upon, we use our operational scale to do so. For example, we instruct engineers already in the area to undertake checks at nearby properties – eliminating the need for a return visit.
- **Missed appointments are reduced:** Letting residents choose appointment times and adding live tracking is designed to cut no-access rates that can reach 50% in peak seasons. This frees capacity to deal with higher-risk homes earlier.

Connected Compliance is explicitly about proactivity: detecting patterns and conditions early and intervening before damage and costly remedial works occur.

Focused measures

Damp and mould rarely have a single cause. They tend to result from how the building fabric, heating, ventilation and day-to-day use interact, and they are often worst in older, hard-to-treat homes. This is why blanket fixes are slow to implement and deliver limited results.

A targeted approach is more practical. If landlords focus on the specific drivers in a given home or archetype, such as cold surfaces, trapped moisture or uneven heat distribution, they can act quickly and with better effect. These measures cut immediate risks to residents' health, require less capital, and buy time while longer term retrofit programmes are developed.



Bringing hard-to-heat homes back to life with radiant ceilings



One of the innovations emerging in alternative heating is far-infrared radiation, often described as electric wallpaper.

It can be powered by 100% green electricity and heats people and building fabric directly, making performance less sensitive to air-change rates than more traditional convective systems.

Working with West of Scotland Housing Association (WSHA) in 2024, Sureserve ran the first trial of a ceiling-mounted far-infrared heating system to replace failing heating systems and to help tackle damp, mould and condensation in hard-to-heat homes.

In Kirkfieldbank, a small off-gas grid community managed by WSHA, residents were living with the consequences of ageing heating systems that had been poorly specified for a low-lying, moisture-heavy environment near the River Clyde. Homes were cold, damp and uncomfortable, and expensive to heat.

With no access to gas, limited capital budgets and the residents' health at risk, WSHA needed an interim solution that could stabilise living conditions while

longer-term plans were developed. Though unproven at scale, far-infrared heating aligned with the realities of off-grid, hard-to-treat stock.

Initial installations took place in occupied properties, using traditional trades. Early lessons quickly emerged, prompting a shift from wall-mounted systems to rigid far-infrared boards installed on ceilings. This reduced installation time, improved durability and better suited lived-in social housing environments.

Once commissioned, the impact was immediate and profound. The ceiling looked unchanged; the warmth was simply present.

While not a universal solution, the WSHA trial demonstrated that far-infrared heating can significantly outperform conventional systems in off-grid, moisture-heavy homes.

The strategic goal

As a sector, we've recognised the impact of damp and mould. There is a new urgency – enforced in Awaab's Law – to tackle damp and mould as soon as they arise.

These are good, and needed, developments but cost increases are unsustainable.

The potential to manage these costs and improve resident experience is clearly and widely recognised. Many organisations are taking steps towards a more proactive approach, from property MOTs to data monitoring.

We know we need to go further, to shift more of our focus towards prevention. But change is challenging, and landlords tell us that resources are stretched.

What is the strategic objective?

If we're really serious about tackling costs and quality, we need clearer strategic goals to drive long-term change. Such clarity is important in allocating constrained resources – both within landlords and the supply chain – but as yet, the strategic goal for the sector is unclear.

We want to spark a debate on this subject that can help drive the change we need.

For example, Bromford Flagship has spoken about applying engineering principles to its maintenance regime, presenting a “zero repair” home concept.¹¹

This focuses on redesigning specifications, components and processes so the most common failures are engineered out through smarter lifecycle costing, standardised specifications and closer collaboration with manufacturers.

We think the industry should set a target to rebalance spending by 2030 – from roughly 70:30 reactive:preventative to at least 30:70 in favour of prevention.

We want your thoughts on this. What else would help make the move to a more proactive, planned and preventative approach to tackling social housing repairs and maintenance?

Share your views with us at our events and on LinkedIn or better still work with us to help pilot more innovative approaches to proactive repairs and maintenance.

Whether you are a technology provider or a social landlord, we're interested in hearing from others innovating in this area. It's only together that we can provide solutions that produce a lasting impact.

If you're interested to know more, contact us at: Ssg.Marketing@sureserve.co.uk

#SureserveHealthyHomesCheck

¹¹ [Designing Out Repairs: How Bromford Is Rethinking the Future of Home Maintenance](#) – Healthy Homes Hub, December 2025



