

As safe as houses

CASE STUDY: Asbestos, fire, and Legionella

If you are a social landlord, it's your legal responsibility to protect your customers from health and safety risks.

Ensuring that you assess, act and report on risks is all part of your duty of care to your tenants. Preventative measures are a small price to pay for peace of mind.

This case study looks at the real legal and operational challenges faced by one housing association, and how AEC's expertise has supported them in protecting thousands of properties.



If you provide housing to a tenant, it must be safe.



Even if they are responsible for what happens within their four walls, you have a legal duty to inform them of certain risks and minimise their exposure to them*. In a housing association property, **three of the most significant are:**

Asbestos:

Despite being banned in construction since 1999, asbestos is still installed in roughly 1.5 million buildings throughout the UK. Asbestos exposure is responsible for over 5,000 deaths each year.

- ✔ Before you start any work in a building that may contain asbestos, you are required to carry out a risk assessment and ensure that you take appropriate measures to deal with the asbestos that you identify.

Fire:

Fire and smoke inhalation pose a risk to life in social housing, but these risks can be mitigated with risk assessments, fire safety training for site managers, and information for residents.

- ✔ If you are responsible for multiple-occupancy premises, you need to carry out a fire risk assessment, keep a fire management plan, and act to remove critical hazards.

Legionella:

Poorly maintained water systems can be a breeding ground for Legionella, which is a form of pneumonia that can cause health problems for at-risk individuals.

- ✔ All water systems on your site will require a Legionella risk assessment – however, this doesn't require you to check every single individual water storage unit on site if they are of the same type.

***Knowing exactly where your compliance risks are allows you to make the best decisions.**

Our client looks after premises ranging from community centres to sheltered accommodation for the elderly. **This meant that when they approached AEC, they needed to overcome intricate legal and logistical challenges:**

CHALLENGE 1 Compliance

The client's main challenge was to understand (and act on) their legal duties surrounding asbestos, fire safety and water hygiene: three of the 'Big Six' in property compliance. This could range from carrying out:

- ✓ Asbestos surveys ahead of planned works within dwellings and communal areas
- ✓ Reinspections of asbestos within a defined programme
- ✓ Fire risk and Legionella risk assessments

Since the client operates such a diverse stock of housing, their responsibilities were never the same from one site to the next, and they needed to know how to act and report accordingly.

CHALLENGE 2 Disruption

The client also needed to carry out essential risk assessment and maintenance work thoroughly without disrupting tenants. This is especially true where they had a responsibility to enter a private household.

They needed to minimise delays and project costs by informing residents of this work ahead of time, managing contractors, and keeping a record of the completed work.



With a duty of care to thousands of residents, including many 'at-risk' people during the COVID pandemic, safe and effective ways of working were even more critical to the project's success than usual.

Risk-related projects can deliver immediate, actionable results, but the best partnerships should build a framework for long-term safety and compliance that provides peace of mind for both tenants and landlords.

This is exactly what AEC's expertise achieved, and as a result, the client has benefitted from:

- ✔ Surveying and risk assessment services that have delivered a consistently high standard of reporting in asbestos, fire and water hygiene compliance.
- ✔ Access to a bespoke online compliance portal that provides access to risk assessment data, clear reporting on actions to be taken, and re-inspection requirements.
- ✔ TMV Servicing, shower head and tank cleaning, which ensures that the water being fed to residents' properties meets L8 requirements and maintains and monitors water services.
- ✔ A five-year partnership which sees regular monthly meetings with key stakeholders in both businesses, alongside daily contact to ensure that essential work causes minimal disruption.
- ✔ Expertise to support energy-efficiency goals, with legally required asbestos surveys playing a key part in upgrading homes.



For housing associations and social housing providers, we know that care for your tenants is at the heart of your mission. As a social landlord or facilities manager, if you identify any health and safety issues, you can't take a chance with them. You must know where your issues are, have a management plan in place, and deal with those issues.

If you aren't compliant with the law, it's not just the prospect of prosecution or reputational damage that you face – the cost of fixing the damage will be far greater than laying the groundwork to prevent it.

AEC has provided consulting, risk assessment and legally-required surveying services to housing providers of all shapes and sizes throughout the UK for over 25 years.

If you need someone who understands that scale and depth of the challenges you face, talk to the AEC team.

Book a call with one of our specialists to discuss those challenges today.

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