



National Housing  
Maintenance Forum

## **Appendix: Other shortlisted entries: Rising Star Award Ettan Bazil (Help Me Fix) | James Hiron (Kinovo Group)**

### **What made these people a rising star?**

**Ettan Bazil** has been actively committed to delivering change in the Social Housing sector for the past 12 months after successfully bringing video triage to the private rented sector for over 3 years. After being invited to speak about video triage by Direct Works Chair, Russell Thompson at a Direct Works seminar in 2022, Ettan started speaking to key stakeholders in the Social Housing sector about decarbonisation and efficiency in repairs. Ettan then pitched to, and was selected to take part in a Disruptive Innovators Network Pilot (DINLab) at the beginning of 2023, and has since planned and launched several pilots in the sector. Ettan comes from a different background to most technology suppliers. Originally a Gas Engineer and Plumber with a trades business of his own, he founded Help me Fix as a way for semi-retired tradespeople to come off the tools and offer their services remotely. Since founding Help me Fix, Ettan has worked with many semi-retired and retired tradespeople, providing access to repairs generated from the residents of social housing providers, private landlords and their agents. Ettan is a prolific speaker and an advocate for apprenticeships in the UK, the decarbonisation of repairs processes and age and gender diversity in the workplace. As well as his work with retired and physically impaired tradespeople, he has recently formed a partnership with a female-only trades network to introduce more female tradespeople into the sector via remote triage to support tradeswoman that juggle work with childcare responsibilities. Help me Fix, the platform that connects residents to tradespeople over video, is still in the early stages of maturity, and currently serves around 50,000 homes in the private rented sector and is now being trialled across 70,000 homes in the social housing sector.

**James Hiron** a newly appointed Contracts Manager at Spokemead, joined in July 2023. He was previously at another Kinovo Group company, Purdy Contracts for 4 years. Recognised for his 'above and beyond' performance at Purdy, when an opportunity arose at Spokemead, James' promotion across the group was the obvious decision. In addition to being a qualified electrician, James is such a forward-thinking and positive team leader, who lives the Kinovo values. They wouldn't be without him. From day one on the tools at Purdy, James knew it was the place for him. His willingness to learn, supported by his original Purdy training and development, meant he quickly progressed to being a Supervisor (looking after 10 Engineers and 4 apprentices) and then Assistant Manager (looking after 1 supervisor, 9 engineers and 5 apprentices). He is now a Contracts Manager responsible for a 5-year project looking after domestic testing and remedial works across 1000s of people's homes, as well as an Aids and Enablement contract. In addition to his electrical and business skills, James embraces social value and has been keen to learn more. He has completed the Social Value Portal Academy: Foundation Level 1 in this area, and personally delivered on their social value project with Southwark Council: Be Enriched, where he has volunteered to cook and serve meals to residents using surplus food. He was also among the first to sign up for their latest Walk Around the World initiative for their chosen charity: Teens United. James enjoys spending time with his wife and two boys Harry 8 and Joey 5 and also enjoys playing golf regularly with friends. He has just taken on a recent role to coach Harry's football team which he enjoys doing and helping the boys develop more.

## What impact have they had on the organisation or sector?

**Ettan** has just scratched the service with regard to the decarbonisation of the Social Housing Sector, but has worked together with NHMF and The Direct Works to raise awareness in the sector about the impact of video in repairs processes through the launch of a remote triage pilot in conjunction with both member organisations. He has spoken at a NHMF Conference and Supplier Forum about the use of triage to help cover the trade skills gap, and how organisations can leverage video to improve customer experience and make their repairs processes less harmful. Ettan is working not only with housing providers, but with their contractors in a collaborative effort to improve service on both sides, help contractors to meet their SLAs and to help Providers improve customer experience. This collaborative approach with both HA and Main Contractor is in the interest of supporting both sides of the equation and empowering Contractors to deliver on SLAs while they build the internal infrastructure to deliver triage in-house with their own senior technicians. In the DINLab that Ettan is a part of, an impressive 83% of repairs have been diagnosed or resolved, with a 30% of issues in the heating category completed without the need for a physical repair visit at the time of writing. Although a small data set, the implications for the sector are significant. Ettan is hands-on and gets involved with every pilot personally, ensuring the best experience for all stakeholders involved.

**James** – Spokemead is obsessed with looking after and developing everyone on its team by taking a real practical interest in their personal development. Employees with progressive career plans, will often be more willing to work over and above what's expected of them, to show their level of dedication to a company who is equally committed to their long-term career goals. James is just that person. He has also committed to his own development that helps them become a company that naturally attracts and retains top talent because their employees stay longer, helping them maintain their in-house expertise, grow their offering, and raise standards. James is a role model, and is already having an impact on the business by having two apprentices on his team whom he is developing and mentoring. Anybody who embraces an apprenticeship model is an ambassador not only for Spokemead, but for the industry as whole as it is desperate to recruit new talent to meet the huge challenges ahead. James is also in pole position to help it break into and develop new services and markets. He is qualified to fit EV charging points and solar panels, and brings with him an in-depth understanding on the retrofit sector, which represents huge challenges and opportunities to our sector as a whole. James is already helping Spokemead grow.

## Why did they deserve to win this award?

**Ettan** has a deep commitment to changing the way that repairs are approached in the UK and a personal passion for the UK Trade Community as a whole. He coaches tradespeople on the use of technology and provides support for trades businesses looking to make their own businesses more efficient. He often runs courses and workshops in Trade community groups. Ettan goes the extra mile when it comes to understanding an organisation's unique needs and processes. For one provider, he went out on the tools for a day with a repair technician, to understand their frustrations and how their day-to-day job processes could be improved. He is utilising the data generated from the nearly 20,000 repairs that have been triaged by Help me Fix to create AI models that can further enhance customer experience and reduce physical visits by arming remote engineers with additional support in diagnosing issues. Ettan still takes Help me Fix calls personally in the evenings and on weekends, helping customers on the ground, face to face, in support of the nationwide network of semi-retired and physically impaired tradespeople that he has built, and is still a part of.

Because **James** has been on the tools and done the job, he loves being in a position to give the team practical support. His phone is always on to help with queries. He engenders team

work and through his time at Purdy, learned how to create and nurture teams. When talking about their values and commitment to sustainability and social value, James is living proof that he lives these values. James comments: "One of the best things about this promotion was that I was able to take it as form of sabbatical, so I had a safety net in case things didn't work out and wanted to go back. But I have seized the opportunity and it's the best thing I've ever done. Between Purdy and Spokemead, and ultimately Kinovo, I have reached a place in my career that I had never foreseen and am excited for the future." We will leave the last words to Spokemead Commercial Director, Nicole Rooney: "I've followed James' career with great interest and always been impressed with the calm and thoughtful way he approaches tasks. Everything he has done previously at Purdy; he is now doing for us - and more. He is totally trustworthy and incredibly conscientious. He does the right things and does them correctly and brings others along on this journey with him, creating sustainable teams we're proud of. In such a short space of time, his impact has been really special, and I want him by my side. We actually thought twice about submitting this entry and sharing how good James is as we want to keep him all to ourselves and our clients!"

### **What do you see them contributing in the future?**

**Ettan** is determined to transform the way that repairs are delivered, not only in the UK Social Housing sector, but in the construction industry as a whole. He has partnered with Industry Leaders such as Fixflo, Aareon, DIN, and leading membership organisations in the sector to bring about lasting change to the way repairs are delivered in the social housing sector. This change, once adopted sector-wide will hopefully result not only in happier residents, but will reduce the carbon footprint associated with construction at a national level and will be one more step towards net-zero. By resolving issues remotely within minutes, and not days or weeks, will ease the pressure on the UK trades-gap, allow housing providers and contractors to work together to re-balance the scales, which have been disturbed by macro issues such as a lack of new apprenticeship entrants, the exit of the European Union, and rising fuel and staff cost due to global conflict and inflation.

**James** is in pole position to help Spokemead break into and develop new services and markets. He is qualified to fit EV charging points and solar panels, and brings an in-depth understanding on the retrofit sector, which represents huge challenges and opportunities to the sector as a whole. James is already helping them grow and they see this continuing. A business always wants a pipeline of next generation leaders, and they believe that he will be an inspirational leader for Spokemead. James is definitely one to watch in our sector.