

NHMF Awards 2026: Keeping Residents Healthy – Shortlist (Best Healthy Home Initiative)

- Accent & Ian Williams
- Poplar Harca & Sureserve Compliance South

Summary: Both entries demonstrate how landlords and service providers are developing proactive approaches to monitoring conditions within their homes and acting on any warning signs or emerging hazards. They have integrated these approaches into their compliance checks and planned maintenance visits to reduce disruption for residents and to be more efficient. Such approaches will help landlords keep their residents healthy and comply with the new and future requirements under Awaab's Law.

What is the project and what is innovative about the service provided?

Accent – Proactive approach (early intervention and improved monitoring) to improve resident health and wellbeing, while also addressing requirements of Awaab's Law before it came into force. Disrepair, damp, and mould work delivered within responsive repairs, voids, and planned works contracts to 19,000 homes in Yorkshire, the Humber, Northwest, East and South. It was a challenge to address damp and mould quickly, particularly in occupied homes and vulnerable settings (delays in formal surveys and follow-up works left households in unhealthy conditions, putting resident wellbeing at risk). Approach included:

- Proactive checks, including DMC, embedded through a bespoke set of questions is included in every repair visit (part of operative workflow on their Smartphone, which must be undertaken before they can complete the repair or job). This ensures any DMC issues detected, even if residents have not reported or identified an issue.
- Information is sent directly to Accent, ensuring clear view of condition and DMC status.
- IW provide, as part of checks, recommendations for follow-on surveys/orders to ensure fast action to identify and rectify issues.
- Emergency Damp & Mould Kits developed with Wykamol and supplied via Travis Perkins now carried as standard van stock.

Poplar Harca – built on a trusted relationship to address hazards (now mandatory to track, report and act on) to deliver safe, warm, and healthy homes with minimum disruption to residents by utilising in-house custom-built technology to book and deliver services. They combined annual gas, electrical, or renewables checks with further checks (damp and mould, fire door safety, kitchen, and bathroom condition reporting). Safety is at the forefront, warmth delivered from the annual checks, and health benefits from detecting and reporting (utilising in-house technology) D&M and condition issues early. Using IT system messaging, they caused least disruption to residents and achieved high first-time entry to carry out the combined certification and checks efficiently. By building data capture for D&M and fire door safety into their devices, their engineers complete all the checks and load the data allowing regular reporting to enable any response. Combined visits minimised disruption to residents with maximum results.

What are the measurable benefits to the client, the contractor, the resident, and the neighbourhood?

Accent – Client Benefits: Regulatory Compliance, aligned with Awaab's Law, enabling more eyes in more properties with no extra cost. Process streamlined jointly to refine procedures to ensure jobs correctly prioritised. Dedicated D&M process that is managed separately from

day-to-day repairs, with clear tracking of specific DMC Work in progress, completions, and KPI performance. Faster response and early intervention to prevent issue escalating. D&M process ensures right operatives assigned (maximising 1st time fix rates, treating DMC issues quickly/efficiently), with clear process for raising subsequent surveys or orders to rectify any underlying issues. Digital systems were updated to mandate D&M checks every repair visit, making early detection standard. Workflows easily amended on Smartphones ensuring the solutions remain fit for purpose or surveys can be adjusted according to feedback/new requirements. Operative-led checks improve data collection, manage stock condition proactively ensuring customers living in warm, safe, high-quality homes.

Contractor Benefits: Standard Van Stock (Kits included in all Accent contract vehicles so always available for operatives), 100% of operatives received D&M Toolbox Talk training, reinforced through monthly refreshers, ensuring long-term competency for operatives. Ongoing monitoring and process reinforcement through regular reporting to Accent and internal feedback. Operatives' observations feed into contract reviews, and ad-hoc Toolbox Talks used to address gaps or reinforce best practice.

Resident & Neighbourhood Benefits: Improved Resident wellbeing through faster action so residents (particularly vulnerable) are not in unhealthy conditions. Household flexibility with self-application or operative-led treatment (agreed with Accent). DMC issues detected even when not reported or identified. Fast response and early intervention by 1st-visit treatment if suitable (operative applied or kits left for residents to use) to prevent issues escalating while waiting surveys. Ongoing communication and regular reporting on property conditions, using operatives' observations ("eyes and ears" approach) to identify and escalate issues beyond the immediate repair. As well as DMC check, any safeguarding/wellbeing issues observed whilst in customer homes are reported (holistic approach).

Poplar Harca – All benefit from focus on resident safety.

Client Benefits: head start on upcoming regulation changes and able to map out repairs and replacement of fire doors and work to alleviate damp and mould. Saved costs by one visit instead of multiple contractors carrying out multiple checks and improved efficiency so that more services could be offered through one call. The residents benefit from regular safety checks alongside the convenience of only having to 'wait in' for once engineer to carry out all the checks. With 10,000 properties, ensuring fire door compliance was a real challenge but the new system freed up surveyor time to focus on properties needing deeper survey. Data enabled them to have a wider view across their properties, adding a condition report to the system for kitchen and bathrooms (calibrated via images to support planning for repairs and maintenance). Training key to ensure data collected and shared was usable and actionable.

Contractor Benefits: able to offer multiple services alongside the annual visits has improved efficiency (cost/engineer) and enabled training in house to develop their team. Competitive by giving value to clients, less resident disruption, and growing and developing team.

Resident Benefits: Resident groups very positive because it has reduced need for access ('wait in') and flags any problems early and planned for repair or maintenance. The program is now firmly established and residents have warmly received fewer people visiting.

What are the financial costs and measurable cashable benefits over a defined time period?

Accent – Data-driven performance monitoring via Dundas Bi to track Work in Progress and completion trends, helping both partners monitor stock condition and identify improvement areas. Results demonstrate how this proactive initiative, with quick, efficient mobilisation has enabled Accent to have more eyes on the ground in more properties with no extra cost. Smartphone workflow/survey project has been running since 2024 pilot. They collaborated on survey wording before rolling out across the contract. To date:

- 60,076 Smartphone surveys carried out as part of the responsive repairs process.
- 14,524 properties surveyed with these results:
 - 729 had damp/mould present,
 - 289 had no bathroom extractor fan or operational one,
 - 114 had bathroom fans switched off at fused spur (rewired with no switch),
 - 321 had no kitchen extractor fan or operational one,
 - 168 properties with failing double glazing, and
 - 12 with external above damp proof course levels.

Operatives supported by a HHSRS Toolbox Talk to better identify/understand hazards, with a joint review to ensure learning incorporated in operative workflow/additional questionnaire.

Poplar Harca – Financial costs well controlled by combining the visits for multiple services while maintaining quality of service. Longer visit, more data captured, additional cost on top of the annual check, but is more economic than 3 separate visits (cost significantly lower). Inspections not only contribute to a safe and healthy environment for residents but give a cost saving of £145 - £420/property/year, used to increase budgets for resulting repairs. The condition data enabled better forecasting, planning, and budgeting on necessary repairs and maintenance. It is a step towards preventive maintenance which will drive efficiency as well as deliver high satisfaction for residents.

How relevant is this as an example that might be followed by other organisations?

Accent – This initiative has informed wider practice across Ian Williams, with learning applied across other contracts. It has been set up so they can utilise for similar contracts, but also make it bespoke to particular client requirements. Internal repairs meetings also include discussions on refining and expanding the solution, reinforcing best practice across their housing partnerships, and ensuring it can be adopted for other elements required for healthy homes. Survey can be easily adopted in repairs Smartphone workflows using the following questions:

- Is there evidence of mould within the property?
- If mould is present, what is the severity?
- Is there an extractor fan in the bathroom?
- Is the bathroom extractor operational?
- Is there an extractor in the kitchen?
- Is the kitchen extractor operational?
- Is there condensation present on the internal side of the windows?
- Are there trickle vents on the windows? (ensure these are in an open position)
- Any additional comments?

These questions ensure it is a solution which can easily be followed by other organisations, provided the service provider and the client work collaboratively.

Poplar Harca – A model for the future of safety checks at a the right time, which has been shared with the wider housing industry through an open access webinar in April 2025. Over 100 registered, 70 attended, and a further 100 have watched the webinar recording. Since then, model has been at key conferences and via case studies. It is now offered as an additional service option, which has seen an accelerated uptake such checks. Model works on any type of property (applicable for all social housing) and can be added to any annual visit, providing more opportunities to check. Sureserve has developed this model to provide 7 of the essential checks for a warm, safe, and healthy home (options for landlords to add).

With a consistent way to capture data and share, this model can deliver more safety, more warmth and health, for all residents across the UK. It provides replicable checks supporting cost efficiencies, repair and maintenance planning creating safer, warmer, and healthier homes for the resident. This type of monitoring can be the lead in to either preventive or just in time repair and maintenance, driving down costs as a consequence.