

# News from around the sector

Thursday 7 March 2019

Here's a roundup of the week's sector news, updates, announcements, and more:

## **Thursday 7 March 2019**

### **Grenfell survivors hit out at 'two-year wait' for charges to be brought**

The Metropolitan Police said it would be “wrong” to bring any charges ahead of the final report of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, the second phase of which is unlikely to begin before the end of this year.

[Read more...](#)

### **Rising number of councils issuing fines for rough sleeping**

Use of public spaces protection orders in England and Wales comes despite guidance not to target homeless.

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### **Government to compensate council to remove cladding**

Portsmouth City Council has been successful in its application to get £1.3m back from government to cover the cost of removing cladding from two tower blocks.

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### **PM challenged to 'take ownership' of issues behind rise in knife crime**

The London mayor is urging the prime minister to intervene earlier to help “vulnerable children”, and said that he is also focusing resources on addressing the problem.

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## **NHF makes ‘thin argument’ against putting associations under Fol**

The debate on the making associations public authorities for the purposes of Fol – as proposed in a Private Members Bill before Parliament – heard specific reference to the struggles by Grenfell residents to access information from KCTMO ahead of the disaster.

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## **Wednesday 6 March 2019**

### **Chair of Grenfell Tower Inquiry hopes to publish first report by spring**

An update published to the inquiry’s website gave the spring date as the expected time for Sir Martin Moore-Bick to complete his report on the first phase of the inquiry.

[Read more...](#) (registration required)

### **UK promises safeguards on workers’ rights after Brexit**

Prime Minister Theresa May will on Wednesday offer parliament a greater say over changes to workers’ rights laws after Brexit, seeking to win the support of wavering lawmakers as she prepares to put her EU exit deal to the test next week.

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### **NAO says government Verify programme fails to set ‘clear objectives’**

The Government Digital Service (GDS) considered it to be a ‘strategically ambitious’ programme, identifying that 25 million people would use Verify by 2020, and 46 government services would be accessible through Verify by March 2018.

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### **Women’s Aid report: The Economics of Abuse**

Economic abuse is often misunderstood but it is a key tactic used by perpetrators of domestic abuse to control their partner and stop her from leaving. When you have no access to money and other economic resources, the barriers to escaping domestic abuse can seem insurmountable.

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## **Being near a supermarket and a park is important for tenants in Britain**

But high crime rate, noisy neighbours and nearby sewage works are the most off-putting nearby amenities, the survey from tenant referencing and insurance firm HomeLet has found.

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## **Tuesday 5 March 2019**

### **Council tax bills in England to rise an average of 4.5%**

Average council tax bills in England will increase by 4.5% a year from April, reaching more than £1,800 in some regions, research suggests. It is the second highest rise in a decade, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (Cipfa) said.

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### **UK construction activity declined in February 2019 for first time in 11 months**

The drop in construction work was led by reductions in commercial building and civil engineering activity. A soft patch for new orders so far in 2019 also meant that job creation remained subdued in February.

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### **Tory MPs express unease over £1.6bn boost for poorer towns**

The government has come under immediate pressure from its own MPs over a £1.6bn funding boost for deprived English towns, as it emerged the guaranteed spending in some regions would amount to as little as 58p per person per year.

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### **Citizens Advice: People with mental health problems pay over the odds for essential services**

This can cost people £1,100—£1,550 a year depending on how much their mental health problem affects their day-to-day life. These costs come from inaccessible services and inadequate support.

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Download the full report from [here](#).

## **Universal Credit ‘ruining lives’ and making mental health patients more ill, report warns**

Obstacles ‘at every stage of the system’ cause unnecessary distress and mean vulnerable people miss out on crucial support.

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### **Monday 4 March 2019**

## **Government launches £1.6bn Stronger Towns Fund**

The Stronger Towns Fund will be targeted at places that have not shared in the proceeds of growth in the same way as more prosperous parts of the country.

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## **Help-to-buy scheme pushes housebuilder dividends to £2.3bn**

The nine biggest housebuilders listed on the London Stock Exchange declared the dividend payouts in their last full financial years, according to an analysis by AJ Bell, an investment platform.

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## **High Court rules Right To Rent breaches human rights**

Mr Justice Martin Spencer ruled that the scheme breached the European Convention on Human Rights on the basis that it led to discrimination against non-UK nationals with the right to rent and British ethnic minorities.

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## **Government announces up to £26m for vulnerable rough sleepers**

Vulnerable people sleeping rough will receive specialist tailored support they need to recover from life on the streets and find accommodation.

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## **Letting adverts that discriminate against tenants on housing benefit could be banned**

Ministers in England are set to meet representatives of landlord associations, tenant groups, property websites and mortgage providers in a bid to clamp down on discrimination against people on housing benefit in the private rented sector.

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## **Friday 1 March 2019**

### **Thousands of poorest pensioners will lose out, government reveals**

A rule change coming into force on 15 May means that pensioners who have partners under the state retirement age of 65 will no longer be able to claim for pension credit, a means-tested top-up for older people on very low incomes.

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### **Government urged to produce rural strategy ahead of Brexit**

Rural services providers call on government to seize opportunity to end “rural mainstreaming”.

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### **‘Grave concern’ over new cladding tests which will not have failure criteria**

The latest round of cladding tests commissioned by the government has come under criticism for being less comprehensive than those done on cladding made from aluminium composite materials (ACM), the kind found on Grenfell Tower.

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### **Property prices in the UK are just 0.4% above where they were a year ago**

This means that the average price of a property was £211,304, down from the average of £211,966 in January 2019, the data from the Nationwide shows.

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