

Fixflo

Unlocking Property Management with PropTech Innovations

EBOOK



Unlocking Property Management with PropTech Innovations

2020 has been a testing year right from the start. With Storms Ciara and Dennis causing £184m+ worth of damage to domestic properties¹ in the first quarter alone, quickly followed by the COVID-19 crisis, it has never been harder to be a property manager. During the initial weeks of lockdown, almost all facets of life were put to a halt. High street businesses normally buzzing with trade remained shut for months. Sales and lettings agents, like other businesses, had to operate remotely, many with little to no prior experience. Property managers of rented homes and leasehold buildings have had to triage repairs and maintenance works in order to prioritise

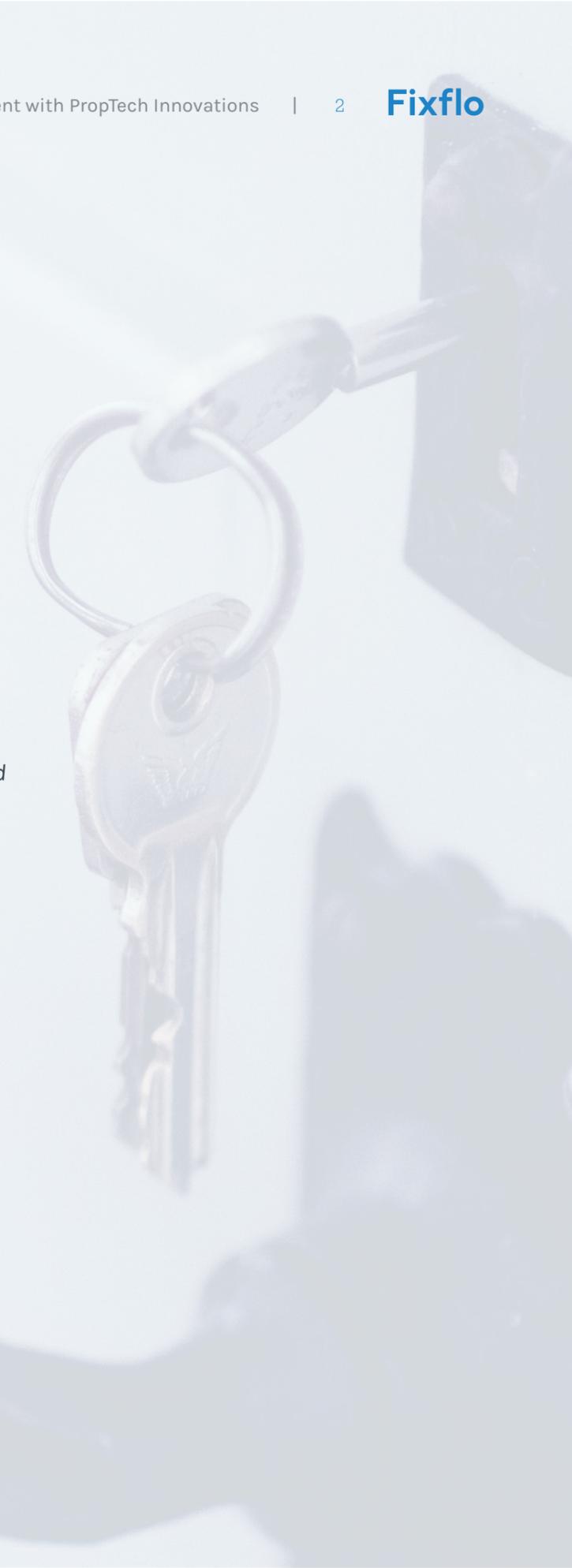
the most urgent issues amidst stringent social distancing measures. This ruthless pandemic has changed our world, our country and perhaps us profoundly.

In May, the Government 'unlocked' estate and letting agencies with little warning, making property agents one of the first industries to come out of lockdown and to learn to adapt to the pre-vaccine, post-coronavirus business world. Many predict a paradigm shift in how technology will be used in the 'new normal' to fill the gaps created by a lack of social interaction. Property management, a people business, is perhaps one of the areas most impacted, and therefore, will be most altered in the future.

In this eBook, we look at how you can safely and efficiently deliver property management services with the assistance of tech innovations.

DISCLAIMER: This ebook is intended for information only and does not constitute legal advice. If you have any questions related to issues in this ebook, we strongly advise contacting a legal professional.

¹[UK Insurance Claims from Storms Ciara and Dennis Estimated at US\\$473.7M](#), March 9, 2020



Supporting your H&S policies

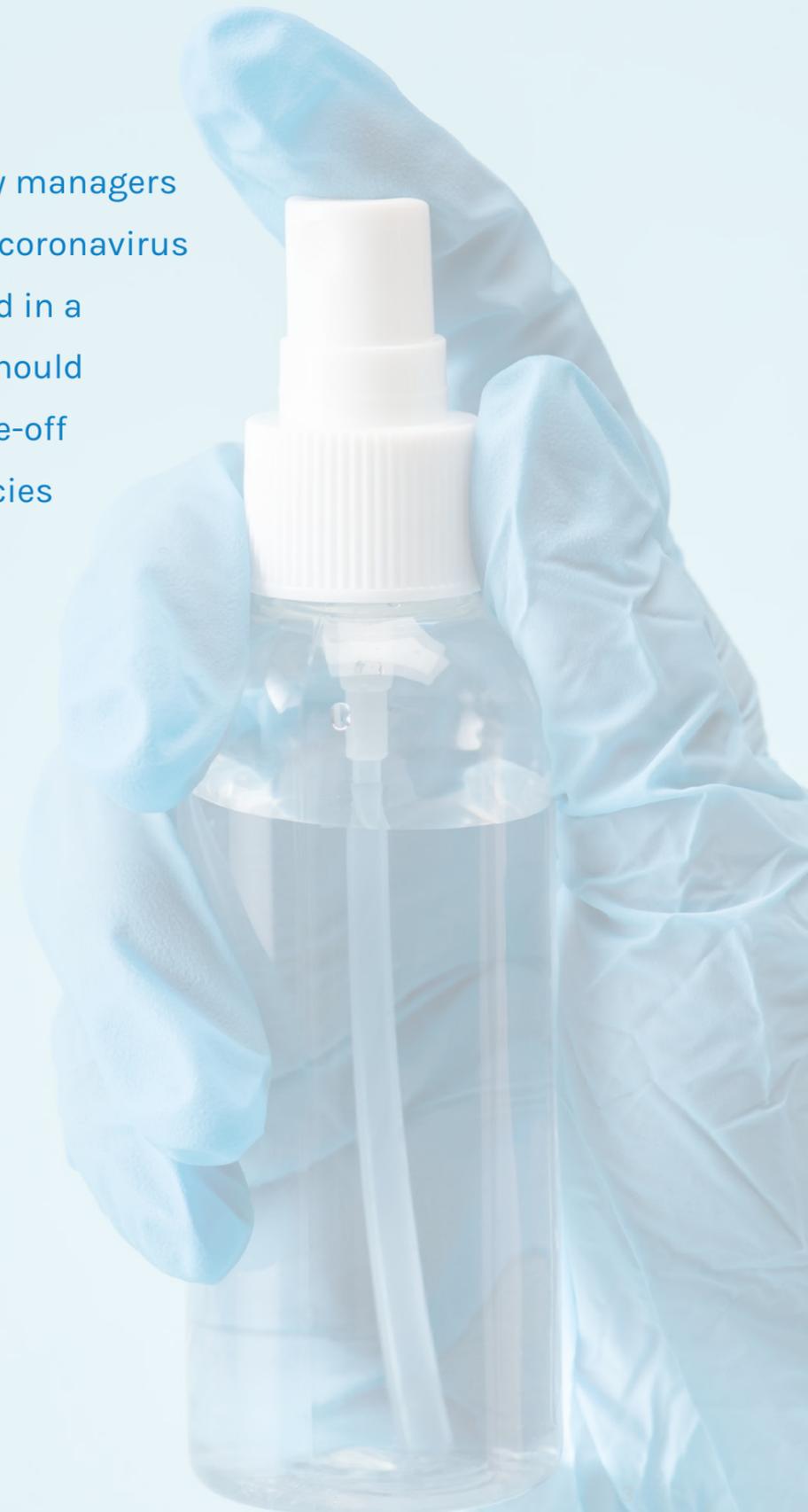
Advice from the Government on the subject of returning to work has been updated multiple times since March with one exception - people who are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms or self-isolating must not go to work and this rule has not changed². On top of this, the guidance document titled "[Other people's homes](#)" outlines specific guidelines for those 'working in, visiting or delivering to other people's homes'³. Part 7.3.1 of the document describes a two-step approach to ensure all workers understand coronavirus related safety procedures:

1. *"Providing clear, consistent and regular communication to improve understanding and consistency of ways of working amongst your workers."*
2. *Engaging with workers through existing communication routes and worker representatives to explain and agree any changes in working arrangements."*

It is, therefore, crucial for property managers to capture and assess occupiers' coronavirus circumstances systematically and in a compliant manner. Contractors should also be made aware of all your one-off and ongoing health & safety policies before they attend any managed property. These three objectives can be easily fulfilled by Fixflo's innovative solutions.

² [Stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#), 16 June 2020

³ [Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#), 29 May 2020



Recording the presence/absence of COVID-19 in the household

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You can take steps to minimise transmission risks by asking occupiers to declare their COVID-19 circumstances when they report maintenance issues. See fig. A.

You can select which questions to ask and occupiers will be prompted to answer them before submitting a repair request. This information is then made available to you in the issue report. The contractor will also be informed when they are invited to quote or awarded the job. Based on the nature of the maintenance issue and the household’s health data, you and your contractor can then make an informed decision about the request.

For example, for less urgent issues in a home with someone self-isolating, you might wish to delay the works until the self-isolation period has elapsed for all occupiers in the household. If this is the case, you would want to check in and make sure that no one has shown any symptoms before instructing the contractor’s visit.

The screenshot shows a form with a warning icon (a triangle with an exclamation mark) on the left. To the right of the icon are four questions, each with 'Yes' and 'No' radio button options:

- Does anyone in your household have any symptoms of coronavirus?**
The symptoms being a new continuous cough and/or high temperature. Click here for more information
- Is anyone in your household being tested for coronavirus?**
- Is anyone in your household self-isolating due to potential coronavirus infection?**
- Has anyone in your household been in contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus?**

Below these questions are two checkbox questions:

- Is there a **vulnerable occupier** at this property?
- I agree to the **terms and conditions**

Fig. A

Providing contractors with additional documents

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With Fixflo, you can attach additional health & safety documents to quote requests and job instructions consistently or on an ad-hoc basis.

- Attach an ongoing document**

With Fixflo’s ‘document library’ feature, you can make sure certain health & safety disclaimers or best practice documents are sent to contractors every single time you request a quote and award a job. You will need to upload these documents and select them as your ‘default instruction documents’. See fig. B.
- Attach a one-off document**

In some circumstances, you may need to provide contractors with a one-off document. For example, a copy of your best practice advice for contractors which requires their signatures. You can easily accomplish this with Fixflo’s ‘certifications’ feature. By uploading a new ‘certification’, it will be added to your contractor profiles. Contractors will be prompted to review and sign this document via an automated email. This is useful both in communicating your updated health & safety policy and evidencing your act of communication.

General

Create purchase order document Yes No

Create quote request document Yes No

Enable permit to work process Yes No

Require costs Yes No

Require cost code Yes No

Require job duration Yes No

Contractor invoice options Uploaded, generated within Fixflo or no invoice ▼

Default instruction documents × COVID-19 Contractor Safety × COVID-19 Contractor Key Collection Procedure | ▼

Select documents from Document library to include them by default on all job instructions and quote requests

Fig. B

Workforce management

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Automation

7.1 of the "Other people's homes" guidance aims 'to change the way work is organised to create distinct groups and reduce the number of contacts each worker has'. The three-step approach is one of the more recent updates made to the guidance document:

1. *"Where multiple workers are in a home, creating fixed teams of workers who carry out their duties in those teams, and minimising contact between each team.*
2. *Identifying areas where people need to hand things to each other (such as shared tools and domestic appliances) and finding ways to remove direct contact, for example, by using drop-off points or transfer zones.*
3. *Allocating the same worker to the same household each time there is a visit, for example, the same cleaner each time."*

Fixflo's rules-based automation feature, Co-pilot, can be applied to auto-assign works to the right contractor based on a selection of criteria/rules. This can be based on portfolio, postcode, type of repair and more.

Similarly, when it comes to creating fixed teams of property managers, you can set up assignment rules to allocate properties to certain agent users or a team (a group of agent users in the Fixflo system). This simple automation feature frees you up from repetitive manual tasks so you can invest time back into more meaningful tasks.

Managing reactive repairs and planned maintenance more efficiently

Contractor self-management

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Contractor certification

With Fixflo's cloud-based technology, you can easily transfer your day-to-day management of your contractor workforce online.

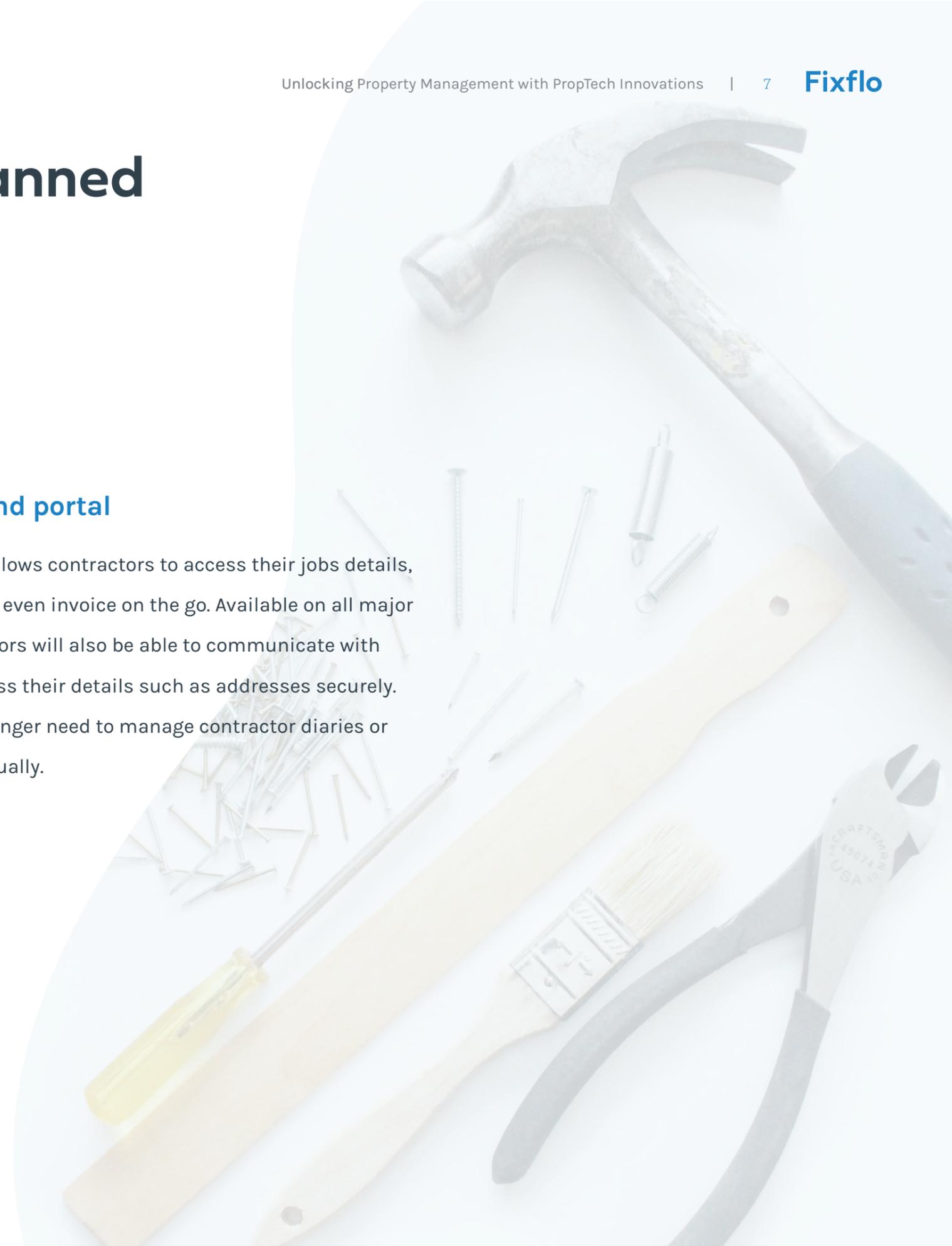
Fixflo's contractor certification tool allows the request and submission of contractor certification to take place entirely online.

Contractors will never need to step foot in a branch to receive or submit certificate documents.

Once a certificate is required from a contractor, Fixflo will remind them automatically to submit it. This automates the process and improves efficiency.

Contractor app and portal

Fixflo's contractor app allows contractors to access their jobs details, update job progress and even invoice on the go. Available on all major mobile devices, contractors will also be able to communicate with your occupiers and access their details such as addresses securely. With Fixflo, you will no longer need to manage contractor diaries or produce job sheets manually.



Managing reactive repairs and planned maintenance more efficiently

Contractor self-management

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Contractor availability

Some contractors may not be available for work during these times. With that in mind, Fixflo now allows contractors and the property managers working with them to set contractor availability. The system will then warn agent users whenever they attempt to instruct contractors who have been previously marked unavailable. See figures C & D.

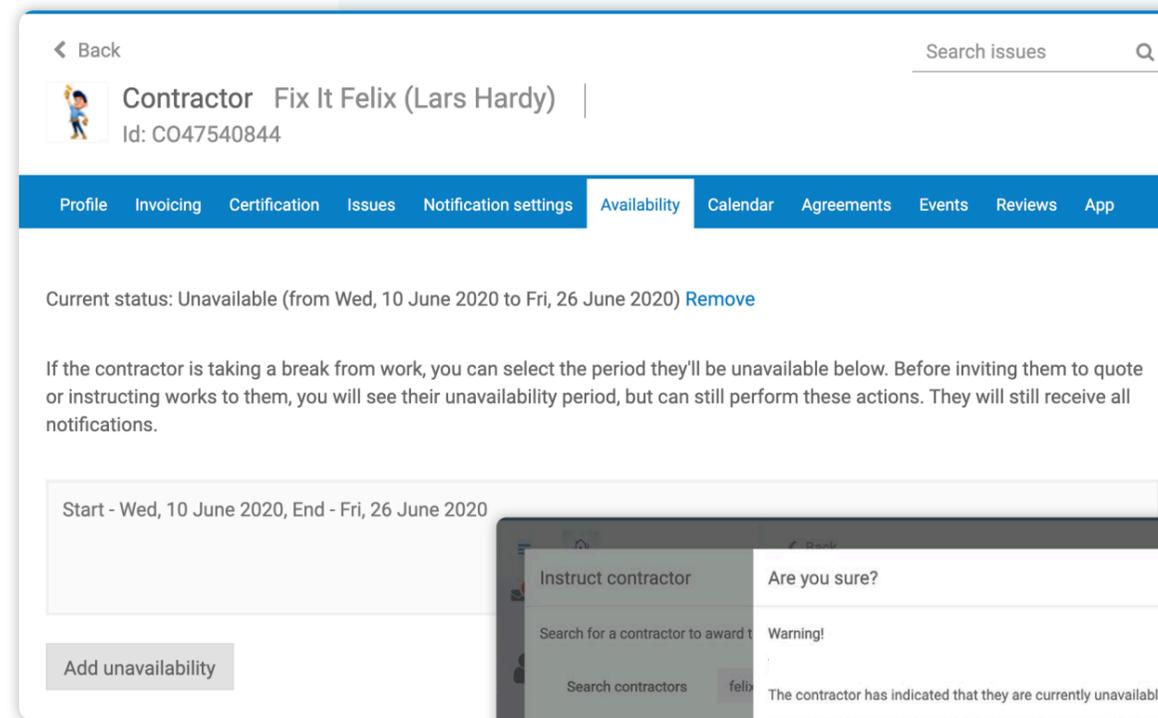


Fig. C

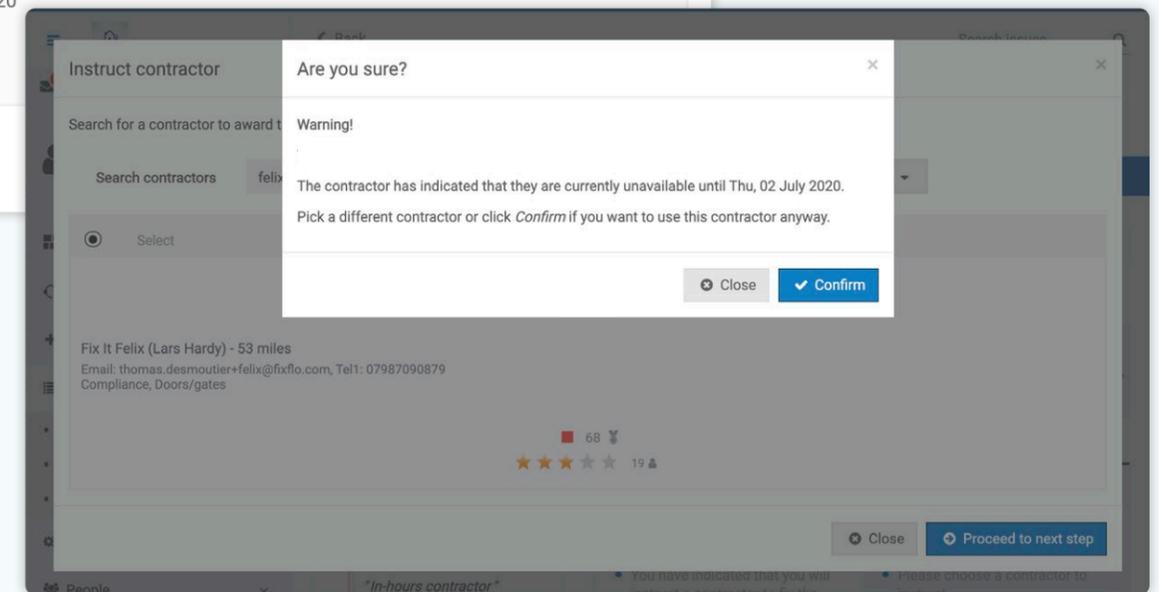


Fig. D

Efficiency gains for reactive repairs

Your business may have furloughed some of their staff during the lockdown. Your property management team may be operating with reduced capacity. There are lots of ways in which Fixflo can help you better manage reactive maintenance in these situations.

Inform occupiers of changing response times

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All occupiers who report an issue are automatically sent an email confirming their issue has been raised and received by their property manager. If you wish, you can amend the template for this email with any additional information relating to COVID-19 and your response times. You may need to update your phone numbers if these have changed due to remote working. You can also include any updates or safety announcements in your email footer.

Note that you can customise the default definition of ‘vulnerable occupiers’. This is the message made available to an occupier when they report an issue. (For instance, you may wish to add shielded people⁴ to the definition.) See fig. E.

⁴ [Guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19](#), Updated 5 June 2020

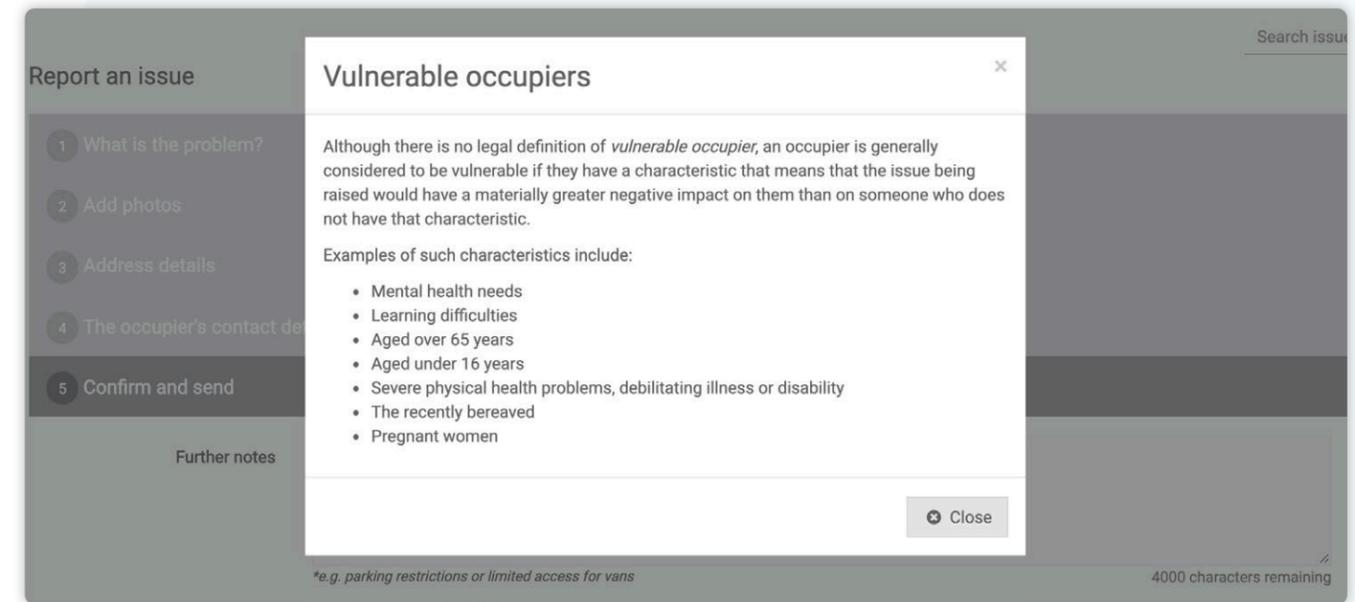


Fig. E

Inform occupiers of changing response times based on issue priority

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Fixflo automatically assigns a priority rating to an issue based on its category.

The ratings range from 0 (Emergency) to 5 (Low priority).

Using Fixflo’s automation feature, Co-pilot, you can automatically notify occupiers who have reported low-priority issues that the response time to their request may be longer than usual.

Automation

You can also automate manual tasks such as job instructions and quote requests with a simple "if this, then that" logic. For example, if jobs are raised in a specific category, the system then automatically invites your usual contractor for that category to quote for the job.

AXA's on-demand emergency contractor network is fully integrated with Fixflo. This means that using Co-pilot, you can choose to automatically alert AXA's emergency response team when an issue is reported out-of-hours. AXA's team will call your occupier and if the issue is a genuine emergency, AXA will send out a fully vetted contractor to attend the property. This not only saves you time, but ultimately minimises the damage made to your client's property, and saves them money.

Efficiency gains for planned maintenance

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Fixflo's planned maintenance module is designed to help you eliminate recurring manual tasks and make the planned maintenance management process more efficient. The following are just some of the many manual tasks handled for you automatically:

- Contractor instruction
- Contractor reminders and chasers
- The management of service agreement start and end dates

How Fixflo can help you manage regular gas and electrical safety inspections during the ongoing pandemic

3.13 of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for Landlords and Tenants⁵ states that, "safety in the home remains extremely important and therefore all landlords should **make every effort** to abide by existing gas safety regulations – and in the private rented sector, the new electrical safety regulations which will come into force on 1 July – providing this can be done in line with guidance on working in people's homes."

The guidance document also illustrates what actions can constitute "reasonable steps", hence demonstrating that they have **made every effort**.

With Fixflo, you can put the issue on hold if it is not possible for you to carry out the statutory inspection in accordance with public health advice. You can then decide whether the new completion date should replace the old date for future recurrences.

Electrical and gas safety in privately rented properties

"The new **Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector Regulations 2020** were made on 18 March and will apply to all new tenancies on 1 July 2020 and for existing tenancies on 1 April 2021.

The Electrical Safety Regulations will require landlords to:

1. *Have the electrical installations in their properties inspected and tested by a person who is qualified and competent, at least every five years;*
2. *Provide a copy of the report (known as the Electrical Safety Condition Report or EICR) to their tenants, and to the local authority if requested.*
3. *If the EICR requires investigative or remedial works, landlords will have to carry this out.*

⁵ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Guidance for Landlords and Tenants](#), June 2020

The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 require landlords to have annual gas safety check on each appliance and flue carried out by engineer registered with the Gas Safe Register and to keep a record of each safety check. Further advice can be found on the Gas Safe Register's website at <https://www.gassaferegister.co.uk/help-and-advice/covid-19-advice-and-guidance/>.

Both regulations are clear on the issue of compliance. With regards to the Electrical Safety Regulations, a landlord would not be in breach of the duty to comply with a remedial notice if the landlord can show they have taken all reasonable steps to comply. With regards to a landlord's duties under the Gas Safety Regulations, a landlord would not be liable for an offence if the landlord can show they have taken all reasonable steps to prevent the contravention.

A landlord could show reasonable steps by keeping copies of all communications they have had with their tenants and with electricians as they tried to arrange the work, including any replies they have had. Landlords may also want to provide other evidence they have that the installation, appliance or flue is in a good condition while they attempt to arrange works."⁶

⁶ [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Guidance for Landlords and Tenants](#), June 2020

Automate Compliance with Fixflo

Electrical Safety Regulations (England) came into force in June 2020: All your rental listings and managed properties will need to be assessed.

Use Fixflo and automate compliance today!

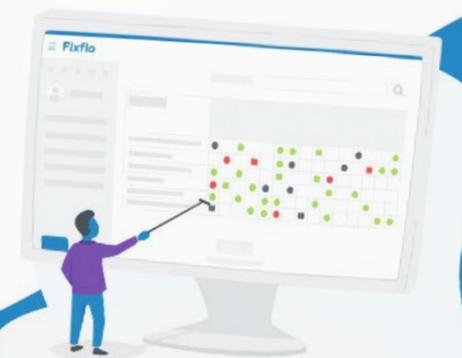
Fixflo

How Fixflo Automates Regulatory Compliance

Electrical Safety Standards (ESS)

Get Your Free Guide

STEP BY STEP GUIDE



Always ready for remote working

Fixflo is a cloud-based software. This means that no matter where you are, you can access the system as though you were in the office. For added security, you can restrict access to known IP addresses, such as your staff's networks and your office network.

Performance reporting

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You may wish to present performance reports to demonstrate the effectiveness of remote working.

We have made a number of reports available to our users, such as:

1. **Count of status changes, per agent**

This will let you know how many changes an agent user has made to how many issues over a specified time range. It will also let you know when they were last online.

2. **Count of comments sent, per agent**

This will let you know how many comments an agent user has sent over a specified time range. It will also let you know when they were last online.

3. **Issues - by age, per agent**

This will let you view a list of issues by age per user.

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+44 (0)20 7183 1222 • sales@fixflo.com • www.fixflo.com

