IMPROVING HOUSING. ENHANCING LIVES.



Samantha Alleyne, Head of Business Development & Major Bids at Anglian Building Products urges the sector to consider new ways of working to create Healthy Homes, by asking: **Does your window specification work for every home?**

PLACE-BASED SPECIFICATION

I'm just back from the National Housing Forum Maintenance Annual Conference where one phrase was on everyone's mind: Healthy Homes. A strategic move to integrate the Decent Homes Standard and SHDF energy efficiency initiatives into a unified workstream, Healthy Homes is rapidly shifting from a buzzword to a strategic lens. As organisations reach the end of one cycle of asset strategies and begin shaping the next, the concept is being pulled into sharper focus. And rightly so.

At its core, Healthy Homes is about something profoundly simple yet systemically difficult: enabling people to live well within their homes.

Achieving this goal requires a fundamental rethink of how we diagnose problems, how we procure solutions, and how we collaborate across the supply chain. The sector's current structures - packages of work, procurement routes, and specification processes – were never designed for the complexity of real homes or the lived realities of residents. If we want healthier homes, we need healthier systems and processes.

Homes are not the same, so why do we treat them as if they are?

Damp and mould have become emblematic of the Healthy Homes challenge, yet the drivers behind them vary dramatically from property to property. Ventilation performance, heating affordability, building fabric, resident behaviour, incomplete repairs, and seasonal effects all play a role, often in combination. Significantly, just as the root cause varies from house to house, the pathways to root causes and ultimately the treatment, vary too. This matters. A one-size-fits-all approach simply can't solve a multi-faceted problem.

This is where the sector's traditional procurement and works delivery programmes begin to show their limitations.

From fixing assets to supporting wellbeing

Healthy Homes is not just about bricks and mortar. It's about how organisations think, act, and collaborate. It requires a cultural shift from viewing homes as collections of components to viewing them as environments that shape human wellbeing.

Take a simple example. A resident reports excess cold from a window with damp and mould in the same room, and a faulty window mechanism. That's potentially three issues, three jobs, three teams - none of whom speak to each other – and three visits for the resident.

The result? Disconnected fixes that fail to address the underlying problem and an unhappy resident. This fragmentation is baked into the way work is packaged.

Traditional packages of work are holding us back

Most organisations still operate within familiar, siloed programmes such as planned or responsive works, window and door replacements, kitchen and bathroom upgrades and retrofit.

These structures are tidy on paper but rigid in practice. They leave little room for expert intervention, innovation, or adapting the scope once a contract is underway. Procurement routes reinforce this rigidity. They rarely support combinations of work or enable specialist contractors, who often hold the deepest technical knowledge, to contribute meaningfully. By the time procurement is complete, the opportunity for innovation has already passed.

The untapped value of specialist contractors

Specialist contractors bring intimate product knowledge, yet they are often handed specifications that are outdated, copy and pasted, or misaligned with the real needs of the property. Market engagement tends to focus on volume, geography, and workforce structure, rather than innovation, added value, and how work could be packaged differently.

This is a missed opportunity. Smaller specialist contractors often collaborate exceptionally well, share expertise, and reduce the burden on clients by truly committed to creating Healthy Homes. But current procurement routes rarely create space for them.

Scenario-based specifications

If we want healthier homes, we need healthier specifications. Instead of relying on 20-year-old Decent Homes' era templates or defaulting to Building Regulations, we should be designing scenario based, environment-based specifications.

We should also consider the impact on residents, for example when fitting a window, we could be conducting a damp and mould investigation, fitting sensors to monitor humidity or temperature, reviewing ventilation strategy holistically, and adding solar panels while scaffolding is already in place.

Imagine a model where specialist contractors, who are best placed to join the dots, help manage these integrated work-streams. These are not extravagant ideas. They are efficient, resident centred ones.

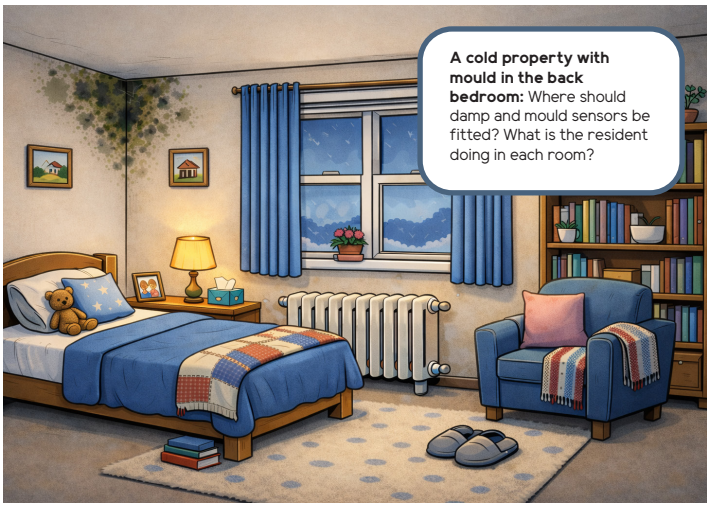
Healthy Homes demands this kind of joined up thinking. When measures are disconnected across asset management, repairs and resident engagement, correction takes time and money. Healthy Homes demands procurement that enables innovation, specifications that reflect real scenarios, and collaboration that centres residents' wellbeing.

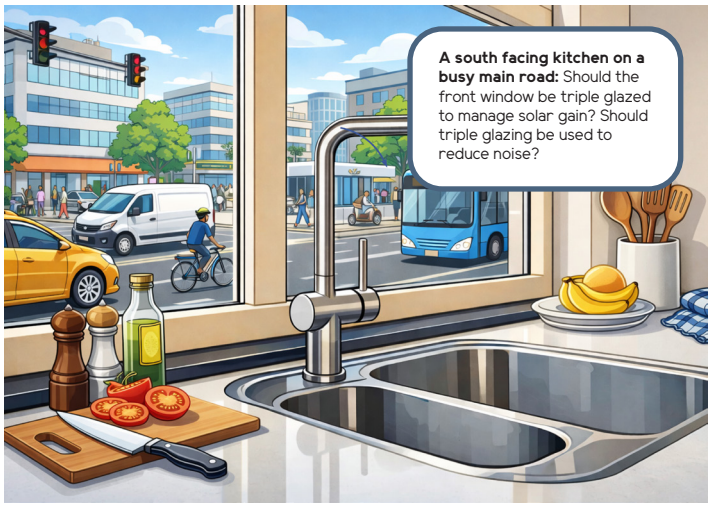
If we want people to live well in their homes, we must build systems that allow us to work well together.

See below for some examples of different scenarios that affect window specifications:











Samantha was recently a speaker at the NHMF Conference Plenary: From Damp & Mould to Healthy Homes - Effective Interventions to find out more. Sam shared the stage with chair Tessa Barraclough (Assistant Director Asset Strategy and Sustainability, Riverside Group and Lead for NHMF' Healthy Homes Working Group), Dale Holroyd, Co-Founder and Managing Director, ZapCarbon, Danny Bird, Interim Assistant Director of Regulated Delivery, Aster Group, to talk more about place-based specification and the new way of thinking.

Scan the QR to watch the full session!