aico®

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CASE STUDY

UTILISING HOMELINK TECHNOLOGY TO REVOLUTIONISE PRIVATE LANDLORD PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

TOGETHER WITH

LJ & G

EXPLORING HOW AICO'S PRODUCTS & HOMELINK TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP TO REVOLUTIONISE PRIVATE LANDLORD PROPERTY MANAGEMENT.

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In light of recent legislation changes, and the introduction of Awaab's Law to the social housing sector in July 2023, private landlords have found themselves with the increasing need to upskill and seek better solutions to maintain and improve the quality of socially rented properties. One such landlord, Gary Cocks of LJ & G Property Limited, has taken a forward-thinking approach by installing Aico's HomeLINK Connected Home Solution across their portfolio of over 20 properties throughout the UK. Gary's portfolio consists of buy-to-let family residential housing, which plays a key factor in his approach as a landlord, and as such, this proactive move is setting a precedent for private landlords as they adapt to evolving requirements for safety, tenant welfare, and property maintenance.

WHY ARE PRIVATE LANDLORDS USING IOT TECHNOLOGIES?

With the evolving landscape of property management and legal obligations, many private landlords are turning to IoT (Internet of Things) technologies like the HomeLINK Connected Home Solution, to not only protect their investments, but also provide safer, higher-quality homes for tenants.

Gary saw the value of this type of solution after having attended a seminar with an open mind and the aim of finding things to benefit his housing portfolio. While attending the National Landlord Investment Show at the Borehamwood Hilton, he connected with Aico Relationship Managers, Tristan Potkins and Bradley Wain, who demonstrated how IoT Technologies could significantly benefit his properties.
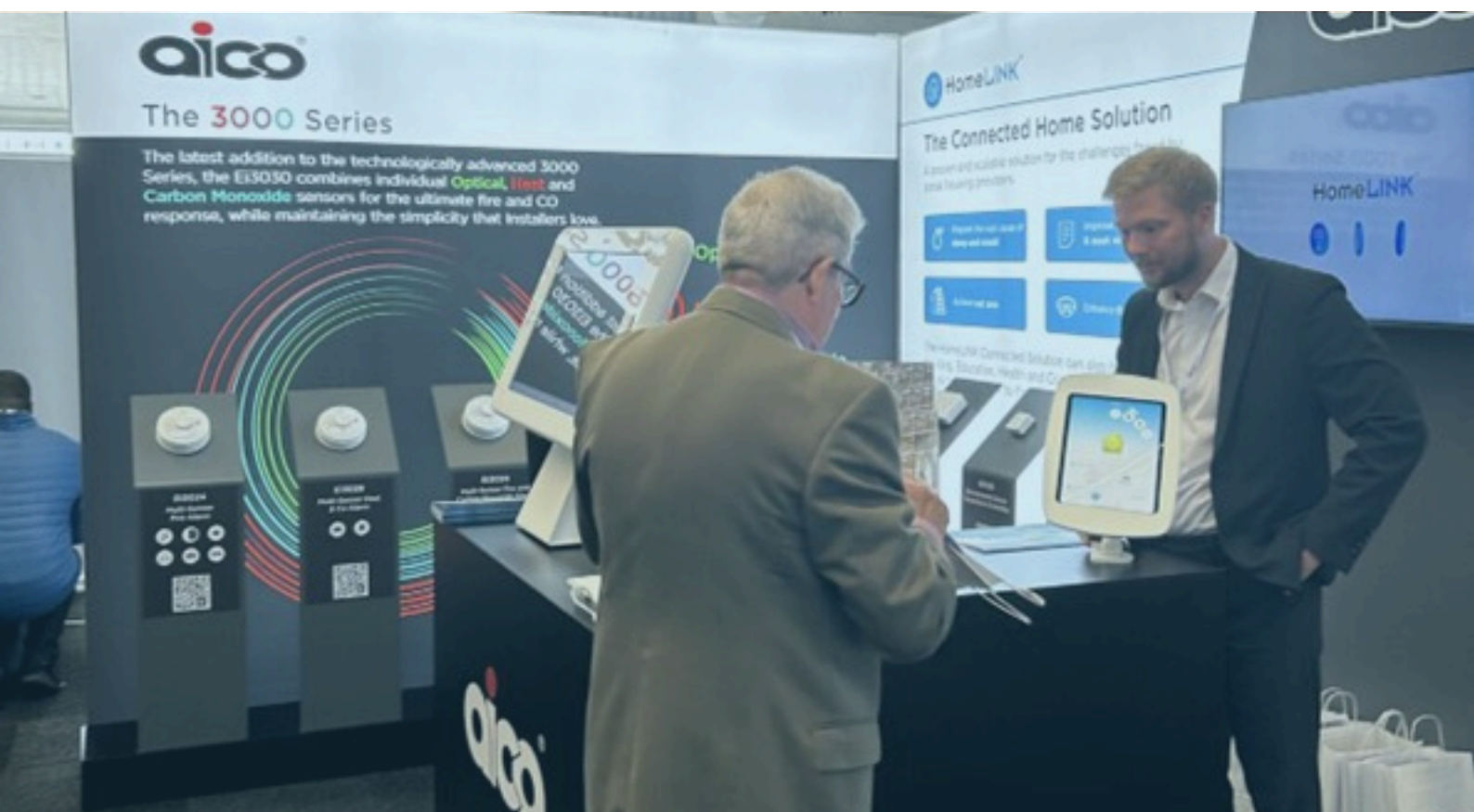
The key reasons why Gary adopted these technologies include:

Enhancing Tenant Well-being – Above all, Gary wanted to improve the living conditions for his tenants, moving beyond the stereotype of absentee landlords. The Connected Home Solution allows him to create safer and healthier environments within his properties, benefiting tenant well-being in the process and reducing maintenance issues.

Mitigating Disrepair Claims - By monitoring issues like damp and mould with IoT solutions, landlords can safeguard themselves against costly claims of neglect or disrepair.

Cost-effectiveness – The cost over the course of 10 years is negligible, at around £200 per year for each of Gary's properties, making it a sound long-term investment.

Legislative Compliance – Gary also recognises the legal obligation to meet certain safety standards, and comply with legislation such as Awaab's Law.

Awaab's Law has been introduced to the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, requiring private and social landlords to investigate and fix reported health hazards in their properties within specified timeframes. This follows the tragic death of two-year-old Awaab' Ishak in December 2020 as a direct result of exposure to damp and mould in the social home his family rented.

WHY AICO?

During Gary's conversation with Aico Relationship Manager's Tristan Potkins and Brad Wain post-presentation, the clear advantages of the HomeLINK technology for both landlords and tenants were highlighted. Following this introduction, Gary began his journey toward integrating Aico's products into his properties, starting with a trial installation at a property he had intended to purchase. Although the purchase fell through, the learning gained was invaluable and laid the groundwork for future implementations.

Gary's focus was clear: Ensuring that his properties were compliant, safe, and tenant-friendly. This initial foray into the Aico's products prompted him to undergo Aico's free award-winning Expert Installer Training, deepening his understanding of how the HomeLINK Connected Home Solution works, and reinforcing his commitment to resident safety.

INSTALLATION JOURNEY

The first complete installation of the HomeLINK products occurred during a full refurbishment of a detached rental property. Tristan guided Gary through the process, helping him navigate the nuances of various product combinations, including hard-wired, battery-powered, and radio-frequency units. Gary decided to utilise Aico's 3000 Series alarms alongside the Environmental Sensors.

Working together, the HomeLINK Environmental Sensors and Gateway monitor key environmental factors within the properties such as temperature, humidity and CO_2, to provide insights into issues including:

- Damp and mould risk
- Fuel poverty
- Void risk
- Energy efficiency
- Indoor air quality
- Compliance

The installation allowed Gary to work closely with his tenants, providing them with access to the HomeLINK Resident App, which simplifies the data in an easy-to-understand format. This empowers both landlord and tenant to work together to monitor their environment, and implement proactive maintenance and preventative measures for safer, healthier and more sustainable homes.

Remote monitoring became essential to Gary's management approach, allowing him to stay on top of property maintenance and tenant safety. In fact, through Gary's communication of the benefits that HomeLINK IoT technology offers, his tenants have embraced the Connected Home Solution.
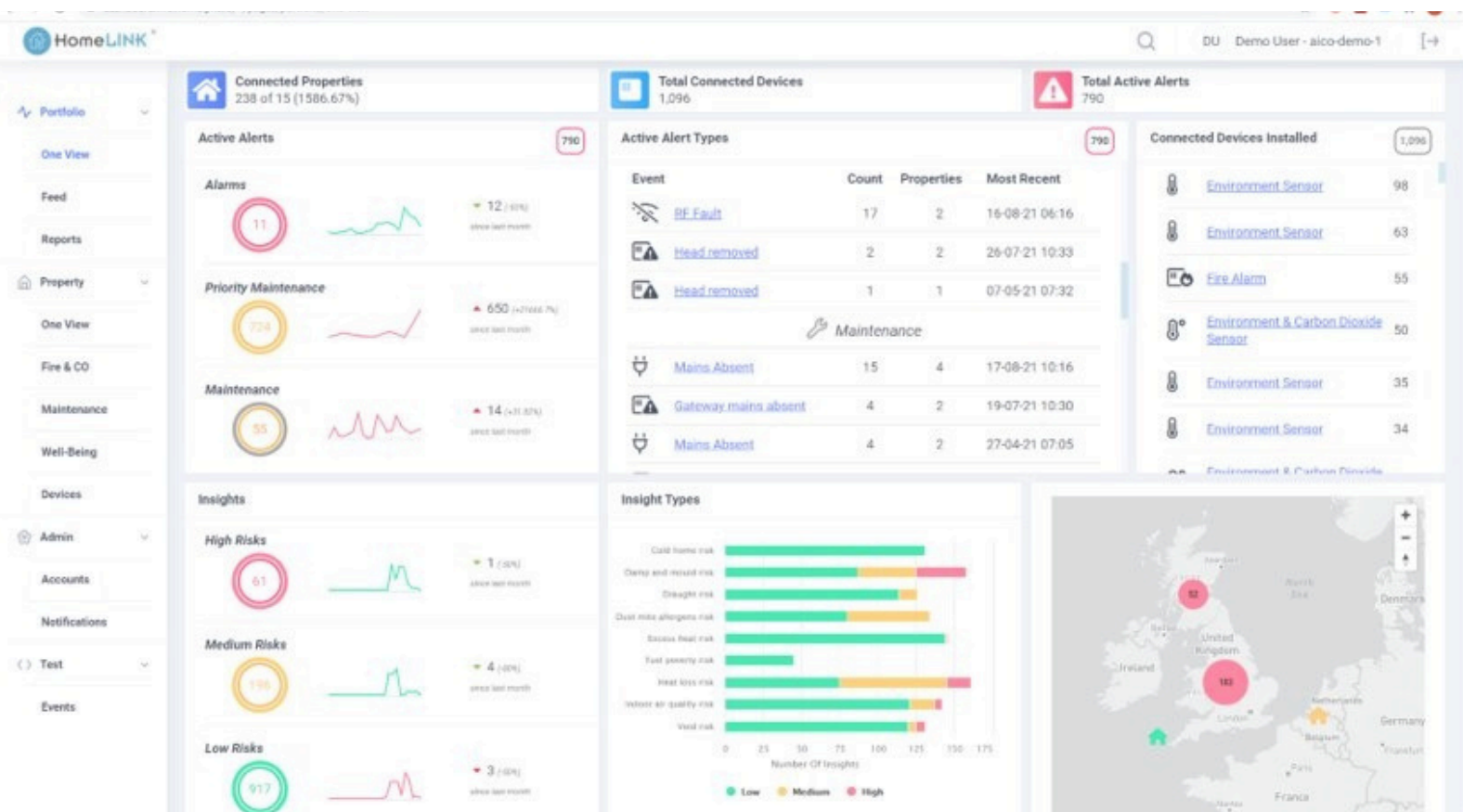
ADDRESSING DAMP AND MOULD ISSUES

One of the more pressing issues that Gary encountered was damp and mould, specifically in a property with poor ventilation in the bathroom and kitchen. To resolve this, he installed a full HomeLINK Connected Home Solution, enabling damp and mould monitoring. The HomeLINK App provides invaluable insights, helping to identify the causes of damp and inform the tenants of necessary lifestyle changes to improve air quality and reduce mould growth.

Monitoring these changes allowed Gary to ensure tenant welfare and protect his property, safeguarding against potential claims of neglect related to damp or mould. In light of Awaab's Law, and in alignment with the Renter's Rights Bill.

The Renter's Right Bill provides tenants with security and stability in their homes, addressing common issues such as damp and mould. By clearly outlining landlords' legal responsibilities, it makes it easier for landlords to understand their duties. This not only protects tenants and ensures safer homes but allows landlord to avoid costly legal disputes by maintaining compliance with these regulations.

THE ROLE OF TRAINING

Gary's journey with Aico didn't stop at installation. Aico's Tristan Potkins and Oliver Barlow provided him with further training on AudioLINK, a tool that allows landlords to monitor each alarm directly via an app. This enabled Gary to ensure the alarms across his properties were functioning properly, providing tenants peace of mind and accountability. The AudioLINK App also allowed tenants to send Gary monthly reports, ensuring consistent maintenance and safeguarding tenant safety.

RESULTS AND LOOKING FORWARD

Gary's proactive approach has already begun influencing the way other private landlords manage their properties, adjusting their practices to align with modern technological standards and safety requirements. Aico products are now present throughout his properties, and Environmental Sensor installations are planned across the remainder of his portfolio. In addition, Gary is keeping spare alarms from previous installations for emergencies and replacements, ensuring no resources are wasted.

Two more properties are set to receive Environmental Sensors in the coming months, with the rest of the portfolio being upgraded with an economic strategy, ensuring a smooth transition across his full property portfolio.

Gary's experience has underscored the importance of understanding legal requirements and legislation, as well as the critical need for a strong partnership with both a supplier and contractor. A well-executed site survey, clear communication with tenants, and ongoing learning are essential to staying compliant and safeguarding properties.

By utilising the HomeLINK Portal, Gary can oversee all his properties with ease, identifying any issues as they arise. Tristan's support has been instrumental in this learning curve, and the insights gained from the system ensure that Gary is well-prepared for any potential claims against his company, particularly related to issues such as damp and mould, as he introduces five new properties to his portfolio in the coming months.

LEADING THE WAY FOR PRIVATE LANDLORDS

Gary's commitment to utilising Aico's HomeLINK Connected Home Solution is paving the way for other private landlords to follow. His collaboration with WG McGregors, a trusted contractor who has installed hundreds of HomeLINK systems for Barnet Homes, is an example of how private landlords can benefit from the same advanced systems used by social housing providers. This ensures compliance with ever-evolving standards and the broader application of Awaab's Law to private landlords.

Gary's early adoption of Aico's HomeLINK technology allowed LJ & G Property Ltd to be ahead of the curve, through a focus on tenant welfare, compliance, and proactive management, offering a blueprint for private landlords seeking to ensure the safety and well-being of their tenants, while also protecting their properties from potential claims.

Gary is leading the way in something that the private market is going to find extremely beneficial. I believe more and more private landlords will start to take Gary's lead, as they are already beginning to do.

Tristan Potkins, Relationship Manager, Aico

To find out more about HomeLINK Environmental Sensors and how they can help provide safer, healthier and more sustainable homes, please visit: www.aico.co.uk/homelink