

# PropertyWeek.com Residential

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## James Andrew Residential to provide 'virtual concierge'

8 February 2013

Almost a year since its launch, James Andrew Residential, the residential property management arm of Harvey Soning's James Andrew International, has landed its 30th management contract.

From 18 February it will take charge of the 25 flats at Londonewcastle's Embassy Court in St John's Wood, north London, taking over from Harrods Estates' property management arm.

Indeed, Fiona Docherty, who joined as managing director in January last year to launch the company, has had a busy few months: during the period between Christmas and new year alone, she says, the division took on four new buildings. The goal for this year is to add "at least another thousand units" to its books.



As part of this, the firm plans to launch a "virtual concierge" service for developments too small to justify a full-time porter.

The online system will first be rolled out at the nine flats at United House's scheme in Paul Street, east London, in March. Docherty says James Andrew will "provide residents with all the services that would normally be available in a block with on-site concierge, from organising cleaners to arranging theatre tickets".

However, she adds that, although growth is at the heart of its strategy, the company is keen to avoid the problems encountered by some of the competition who, in her view, "grew too fast".

"The problem is finding staff. It's really difficult to find good property managers, because most people come into the industry by default — it's not their chosen career," she says.

Docherty's solution has been to pay for would-be surveyors to train for their MRICS qualification part-time, at the same time as being on a contract with James Andrew Residential.

"They get their qualification, and they're tied to me for five years. From my point of view, it's better because I get an unqualified surveyor as well."

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