

Independent 54(f) Review: Damp and mould cases



1. Executive Summary

This report examines the implementation of recommendations from case reference 202126742, which received a determination from the Housing Ombudsman Service in December 2023 regarding our handling of damp and mould issues. The Housing Ombudsman Service directed Notting Hill Genesis to conduct a review under paragraph 54(f) of The Housing Ombudsman Scheme, which we submitted on 8th March 2024.

Following the submission of our report, a comprehensive action plan was developed to address all recommendations identified. This action plan established clear accountability for each recommendation, set specific timelines for implementation, and identified measurable outcomes to track progress. The report recognises findings and learnings in the following areas:

- Responsive repairs case management
- Customer experience
- Recognising and responding to vulnerable residents
- Complaint handling

Implementation of the action plan has progressed according to the established timelines, with regular monitoring and reporting through our governance structure. This approach has enabled us to address the issues identified in the original determination and establish more robust processes for managing damp and mould cases.

Progress reports have been presented to the Operations Committee, with specific updates on the implementation of key enhancements. This reporting structure has ensured appropriate senior oversight and accountability throughout the implementation period.

This report provides an account of the actions taken to address each recommendation, based on our implementation tracker and associated documentation. It outlines the current status of each action and the governance arrangements in place to ensure sustained compliance with our commitments.

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2. Completed Actions

2.1 Responsive Repairs

The repairs policy was updated in May 2024 to include clear standards for communication with residents, including guidance on when it is appropriate for residents to engage directly with contractors. These standards aim to provide consistency in approach and clarity for residents on what they can expect from the repairs service.

Our Damp and Mould policy was reviewed and updated in May 2024 and again in January 2025. This update incorporated recommendations from an external consultant and aligned the policy with industry best practice and the requirements of Awaab's Law. While awaiting the final outcome of the consultation on Awaab's Law, an interim policy update was implemented to ensure improved practice in the meantime.

A repairs improvement plan was developed based on resident journey mapping work. This plan sets out specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) actions to address the gaps identified in the resident journey. Progress against this plan has been reported regularly to the Operations Senior Management Team.

Repairs performance metrics were reviewed and updated, with new Key Performance Indicators agreed by the Executive Board.

Contractor performance is now actively managed through regular weekly and monthly operational and strategic reviews, with performance improvement plans in place where necessary. This structured approach to contract management ensures more consistent delivery of the repairs service and enables prompt intervention when performance issues are identified.

Since the report our dedicated repairs hub is now operational, with new induction processes in place for new Housing Officers and Property Management Officers to ensure consistent understanding of repairs processes and responsibilities.

2.3 Customer Experience

Standards and expectations for record keeping were clarified across the organisation. A new training module for resident-facing staff and managers was developed and rolled out through e-learning in July 2024. Expectations for managers to conduct spot checks of cases for accurate record keeping were established and communicated in regional meetings.

The importance of logging all communication as interactions on our system was reinforced with all staff through departmental quarterly meetings. This requirement was specifically referenced in regional meetings to ensure widespread awareness and compliance.

A new Resident Forum was established to embed resident feedback and insights within the resident experience framework. A Voice of Customer pack is produced which incorporates updates from this forum and reported into the Operations Committee through an agreed governance structure with the Chair of the Operations Committee and the Chair of the Board.

A review of all residents who are temporarily relocated for more than four weeks was implemented, with a paper on these cases now presented to the Operations Senior Management Team every four weeks. This process ensures regular oversight of relocated residents and helps to maintain clear communication on works progress and return dates.

2.3 Recognising and responding to vulnerable residents

The Vulnerable Persons Policy was presented and approved at the Policy Review Group in February 2024. Following approval, the policy was implemented across the organisation with support from the communications team to ensure effective rollout.

A policy guidance video was prepared for colleagues to complete, with a supplementary questionnaire to track completion levels. This was completed by the end of July 2024.

In addition to the policy, a supplementary reasonable adjustments procedure was completed and published. The policy and guidance were incorporated into the wellbeing campaign and training on the new policy was incorporated into mandatory training requirements for new starters.

Contact centre advisors now ask residents about vulnerability at the time they make contact and record this information in our system. This process was communicated to staff through team meetings and is monitored through quality assurance checks from Contact Centre Managers, which are reported to the Director of Customer Experience.

Regular reporting on vulnerabilities is being compiled by the consumer standards team. A proposal for an automated process was completed and submitted for approval. In the interim, manual monthly reporting continues to ensure that vulnerability information is captured and appropriately actioned.

2.4 Complaint Handling

The Complaints policy was updated to include the changes implemented via the new Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. This updated policy was approved at the policy review group in April 2024,

ensuring alignment with the latest regulatory requirements.

The new centralised complaints service was launched in July 2024, representing a significant change in our approach to complaint management. This service brings expertise and consistency to complaint handling, improving the quality and timeliness of responses.

Letter templates were refreshed in line with the new Complaint Service rollout, encouraging more empathetic language and a more compassionate approach to responses. These updated templates include prompts to ensure that, where there is a delay in responding, an apology is provided together with a reasonable explanation for the delay.

Compliance with complaint handling procedures was included in the objectives for the new centralised complaints team members, with the Head of Complaints and Service Recovery maintaining accountability for ensuring this happens. This approach helps to embed consistent practice and maintain focus on service quality.

2.5 Staff Training

HR commenced mapping role competencies to role profiles, establishing a framework for identifying training needs and ensuring role specific skills development. All learning objectives from the two week induction and for the duration of probation were outlined, providing a structured approach to onboarding new staff.

Our Onboarding & Induction team is working with our insights team to review any changes required to training content based on resident feedback and service delivery challenges. This collaborative approach ensures that training remains relevant and responsive to identified learning needs.

This work represents a significant undertaking that requires time and resources. The comprehensive nature of the project reflects our commitment to ensuring that all staff have the knowledge and skills needed to deliver high quality services to our residents.

2.6 Compliance with HOS Spotlight Reports

Accountability for the implementation of the findings from the self-assessments against the Housing Ombudsman Service spotlight reports was confirmed. The Head of Complaints and Service Recovery is now responsible for implementing quarterly reviews of the self-assessments and updating actions as required.

Work is underway to refresh the desktop review documents using a template that allows for document control, trackable actions, and progress updates. This structured approach ensures that relevant colleagues are included in the process and that progress can be monitored effectively.

The refreshed documents will provide a comprehensive view of our compliance with the recommendations in the spotlight reports and identify any areas requiring further attention. This approach enables us to demonstrate our commitment to implementing best practice and responding effectively to regulatory guidance.

3. Governance and Monitoring

We developed an initial report with a comprehensive action plan, establishing target dates for completion within a six-month timeframe for nearly all recommendations, with only two exceptions requiring longer timelines.

Regular progress updates were provided to the Operations Senior Leadership Team throughout the implementation period, ensuring consistent monitoring and allowing for timely interventions when needed. This ongoing oversight helped maintain momentum and accountability throughout the process.

Six months following the initial report, we presented a formal update to both the Operations Committee and Board, confirming successful implementation of the recommendations according to the established timeline. The structured governance approach facilitated effective tracking and ensured all actions were completed within the agreed timescales.

The comprehensive implementation process has strengthened our operational framework and established more robust procedures for future initiatives.

4. Enhanced Damp and Mould Management Framework

Following our zero-tolerance approach to damp and mould outlined in our policy, we have implemented a comprehensive new management framework in March 2025. Key enhancements include:

Risk-Based Assessment Process

We've developed a structured triage system that categorises cases as either high-risk or standard, ensuring vulnerable residents receive prioritised attention with 48-hour contractor attendance for high-risk cases.

Standardised Case Management

Our new five-step process ensures consistent handling across all reports:

1. Creating dedicated inspection cases before raising repairs
2. Conducting standardised risk assessments using systematic triage questions
3. Following clearly defined workflows based on risk categorisation
4. Using templated repair specifications with comprehensive treatment requirements
5. Implementing follow-up procedures including mandatory annual property visits

Enhanced Technical Remediation

Treatment specifications now include fungicidal washes, anti-fungal paint application, ventilation system checks, and root cause identification requirements to prevent recurrence.

Improved Monitoring and Governance

All damp and mould issues are now documented in linked inspection cases, enabling comprehensive trend analysis and performance monitoring through established KPIs reported to senior management.

These enhancements demonstrate our commitment to providing healthy homes while addressing the Housing Ombudsman Service recommendations.

5. Conclusion

We implemented the Housing Ombudsman Service determination recommendations with clear accountability and regular monitoring. This work has strengthened our approach to managing damp and mould cases through:

- Updated key policies (Damp and Mould, Repairs, Vulnerable Persons, and Complaints) to align with regulatory requirements
- Enhanced operational processes including the new repairs hub and centralised complaints service
- Comprehensive staff training to ensure consistent application of policies
- Improved resident engagement through the Resident Forum and involvement in repairs service procurement

These changes provide a strong foundation for ongoing service improvement and more effective response to damp and mould issues in our properties.