

**Housing Ombudsman
Special Report on
Lewisham Council**

Contents

Introduction	3
Our approach	4
About Lewisham Council	5
Investigation findings	7
Themes identified	8
Hazards	8
Preparing for Awaab's Law	11
Knowledge and information management	12
Data confidence	13
Know your residents	14
Contractor management	17
Quality repairs	20
Systems	21
Case Management System	22
Contractors' systems	23
Attitudes, respect, and rights	25
Communication	26
Trust	27
Complaint Handling Improvement Plan	29
Contact Centre	30
Resident engagement	32
Call volumes	33
Knowledge and information management	34
Complaint handling improvements	36
Quality assurance	36
Learning from complaints	37
Compliance	39
Conclusions	40
Recommendations	42
Statement from Lewisham Council	43
Annex A – List of cases determined	45

Introduction

The Housing Ombudsman makes the final decision on disputes between residents and member landlords. Our decisions are independent, impartial, and fair. We also support effective landlord-tenant dispute resolution by others, including landlords themselves, and promote positive change in the housing sector.

This special report follows an investigation carried out under paragraph 49 of the [Housing Ombudsman Scheme](#), which allows the Ombudsman to conduct further investigation into whether there is a systemic failure. The investigation was announced in July 2024. As part of the investigation we met with the landlord, requested information and evidence, and carried out a 2-day site visit in January 2025.

Factors that may be indicative of a wider service failure may include, but are not limited to the following:

- a policy weakness,
- repeated service failure,
- service failure across multiple service areas,
- service failures across multiple geographical locations,
- failure to learn from complaints, or
- lack of oversight and governance to identify and act on repeated issues.

The decision to start this investigation followed the landlord's handling of leaks, damp and mould, complaints and repairs. The landlord's maladministration rate was 85% from 2023 to 2024, including 16 findings of severe maladministration.

The Ombudsman issued a wider order to the landlord under paragraph 54(f) of the Scheme in November 2023 to which it had delayed providing evidence of compliance. The landlord has recently been through housing management changes, and we sought to identify if this was the cause.

This report provides insight to help the landlord further strengthen its complaint handling and address the substantive issues giving rise to complaints, to help extend fairness to other residents and prevent complaints in future.

We also publish the report to help other landlords identify potential learning to improve their own services. This is part of our wider work to monitor landlord performance and promote active learning from complaints.

The landlord engaged extensively with the Ombudsman as part of this investigation, providing the requested evidence to allow us to draw conclusions in the aim of assisting in its ongoing improvement.

Our approach

We have considered cases relating to the landlord which were determined between July 2024 and October 2024, and whether they highlighted any systemic issues that went beyond the circumstances of those individual cases. Case references are included where these cases are referred to, and a list of cases can be found in [Annex A](#).

In order to gain a better understanding of how the landlord is currently operating we arranged to visit Lewisham Council. During the 2-day visit we spoke to a variety of housing staff, the Member Responsible for Complaints, as well as meeting with residents. This allowed us to review the most up to date position and to understand firsthand the impact on residents.

We also made evidence requests to the landlord which included:

Complaint handling

- Complaints procedure
- Learning documents
- A snapshot of its current complaint caseload on a specific date, including:
 - A count of open complaints at each stage
 - A count of open complaints at each stage that are overdue for a response
 - Details of whether residents with overdue complaints were informed of the reason for the delay and the expected response date.
- Details of staffing arrangements in place for handling complaints and any changes to this structure since the ALMO came back in house.

- Any learnings the landlord captures following Housing Ombudsman determinations or Complaint Handling Failure Orders and any review of root cause analysis.
- Root cause analysis carried out against repair complaints.
- Training documents
- Details of quality assurance measures

Emerging themes from our casework

- The landlord's self-assessments against or responses to the recommendations in our Spotlight reports, including:
 - [Damp and mould](#)
 - [Knowledge and information management](#)
 - [Attitudes, respect, and rights](#)
- Repairs and hazards:
 - Current number and category of disrepair claims and of claims made over the previous 12 months
 - A collection of varying housing policies and procedures

About Lewisham Council

Lewisham Council (the landlord) is the local authority for the London Borough of Lewisham in Greater London. It is one of 5 London Borough Councils led by an elected mayor. The Council is a landlord and social housing provider with over 20,915 properties.

Lewisham has a population of over 300,000 and its population has been increasing over the last 10 years at a greater rate (8.9%) than the average in London (7.7%) and the rest of England (6.6%).

The increase in population in turn means a greater demand for homes. The landlord confirms there is currently a waiting list of over 10,500 people on its housing register. The landlord predicts that its residents could be waiting between 6 months and 154 years for a home depending on the size of their family and circumstance.

The shortage of suitable properties, the age and condition of its housing stock, along with the challenging financial climate has created a difficult operating environment for the landlord.

In October 2023, Lewisham Council resumed ownership of its housing stock and management by ending the involvement of the Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO), Lewisham Homes.

The new regulatory standards and legislation introduced in 2017 following the Grenfell fire meant greater accountability for landlords, accountability that could not be passed on to an ALMO. Lewisham Council had an opportunity to assess its options with Lewisham Homes. It made the decision, considering the new regulatory standards and a drop in resident satisfaction, to resume control of its housing.

For the change to take place, Lewisham Council consulted with its residents. 71% responded to the consultation supporting the removal of the ALMO, showing an appetite for housing services to improve and be delivered more efficiently. Residents were becoming dissatisfied with timescales to complete repairs and to answer phones, as well as addressing damp and mould in their homes.

Investigation findings

We investigated 28 cases between July 2024 and October 2024. These included 9 severe maladministration findings (6 related to leaks, damp and mould).

The cases and our findings are listed in the table at [Annex A](#).



Determinations

28



Findings

69



**Maladministration
Findings**

61



**Maladministration
Rate**

92%



Orders Made

140



Recommendations

14

Themes identified

Upon review of cases brought to this service by residents, we were able to identify patterns within complaints and repairs.

We saw issues concerning:

- hazards
- communication with, and attitude towards, residents
- contract management
- knowledge and information management
- systems

The landlord has acknowledged many of its failures and has made plans to set about trying to change.

Hazards

[The Housing Health and Safety Rating System \(HHSRS\)](#) has put in place a minimum standard for the condition of a property. It has identified 29 hazards that landlords need to assess its properties against. The hazards outline potential dangers within social housing that can negatively impact the health and safety of residents. These range from damp and mould and excess cold to asbestos and carbon monoxide issues.

The HHSRS has categorised the hazards, but it is up to the landlord to carry out assessments and rank its homes as a category 1 or a category 2 hazard as necessary. Category 1 are considered serious, with immediate risks to residents' health and safety, while category 2 is less serious.

A property failing to meet the HHSRS minimum standard would be considered non-decent under the [Decent Home Standard](#). This is a government measure which aims to ensure social homes meet a certain quality standard.

In case 202335783, a mother and her 2 young children, one of which is disabled and asthmatic, was forced to live with leaks, damp and mould for a number of years. The landlord sent 3 separate surveyors to the property to assess the extent of the issues but each time the landlord failed to carry out the recommended repairs and was unable to provide evidence of previous surveyors or its record of the household vulnerabilities.

The resident reported having to chase the landlord for updates and explain the effects of the situation on her young family, reporting chest infections and sickness. It is understandable that with asthmatic children in the property, the worry this mother experienced while waiting for a solution was heightened. Following the third property inspection, the surveyor spoke about the worsening conditions and the risk of a ceiling collapse. It took the landlord 2 months to arrange any follow on works to address the latest hazard. The landlord had attended to fix a leak previously, but the resident confirmed the leak had continued and further works to prevent the mould had not been carried out.

We had to order the landlord to carry out the repairs that had been identified at the property 3 years prior. By leaving the work outstanding, the resident was then forced to live with an avoidable hazard of potential structural collapse of the ceiling and damp and mould.

The average of non-decent homes across local London authorities sits at an average of 10.8%. Within its evidence, the landlord told us that as of March 2023, 17% of its homes did not comply with the Decent Homes Standard. This figure increased to 24% of homes as of September 2024. This does not necessarily mean that the landlord's homes became worse over that short period, but that a review of its data found that 30% of past information about its houses was cloned from potentially out of date information held about the properties. The latest stock condition survey provided the landlord with a more accurate depiction of the state of its homes.

Other factors contributed to the issues with non-decency that the landlord faced. It states that as of September 2024, the leading cause was damp and mould, with 3,295 cases open at the end of September 2024. This figure has since reduced to 1,794 cases open at the end of July 2025.

The landlord also admits to previously not using the HHSRS to assess the severity of damp and mould, and failing to keep a record of category 1 and 2 hazards.

This is evident in case 202327529 where our investigation found that a resident was forced to continue living with damp and mould after the landlord had failed to act in line with its own repairs policy or considered its obligations under HHSRS. We made a finding of severe maladministration for this issue after the household experienced serious detrimental impact due to the landlord's failures to put things right and learn from its outcomes.

Because of this lack of data, the landlord's capital improvement programmes did not reflect the true nature of what was needed.

The landlord set about putting actions in place to get full oversight of its homes in turn allowing for better repairs and maintenance planning. Following its stock condition survey, it has told us that it has now been able to rank all the hazards found within the properties its reviewed.

When looking at the [statistical data on the Government website](#), the landlord has maintained a large number of non-decent homes over the past 10 years, with 2 exceptions. Between 2016 and 2018, the number dropped to as low as 464 non-decent homes. However, it is unclear if this drop is down to work carried out to improve homes or a lack of available data and records.

While the ALMO was responsible for maintenance during the majority of that period, it is concerning that the number of non-decent homes was allowed to continue for an extended period. It would be reasonable to expect the landlord to have some awareness of its housing conditions in order to ensure major issues do not continue. That being said, it is notable that the landlord has only recently begun to put measures in place to try to reduce the growing number of hazards its residents are dealing with.

As part of its evidence, the landlord has provided a brief overview of the actions it has taken. The landlord told us that the majority of its category 1 hazards were addressed by April 2025.

However, in January 2025 the landlord said its initial actions were to downgrade the hazard from severe to moderate. It did not provide any plans or assurances at the time that the actions taken were going to remove the risks associated with the hazards and instead implied a temporary fix. The landlord has since said that it has a plan to reduce and remove all hazards with clear delivery routes for various hazards regardless of category. The landlord states it is on track to eliminate moderate hazards by December 2025.

The landlord needs to assure itself and its residents that it is taking proper and complete action to remove hazards, and not to forget about the root cause of any issue. As outlined in [A Decent Home: Definition and guidance for implementation](#), decent homes must be sustainable in the long term. In our casework we have seen the landlord taking limited action, such as applying a mould wash treatment to a home which continues to experience leaks, which is not a long-term solution. By ensuring a good level of oversight and scrutiny will help to identify and reduce hazards.

In case 202321470, a family and their 6 children were forced to live with a leak and subsequent mould. The resident expressed her distress over the leak and that it had caused a potential hazard following a hole appearing in her ceiling. The leak and hole led to a concern over a ceiling collapse within her bathroom. The landlord put a temporary board in place but did not look to offer a permanent solution to the leak, and gave no reassurance to the resident. The landlord did offer to fix another board over the ceiling but did not look to address the main cause of the leak.

The resident reported being scared in her home of what might happen with the ceiling and said she felt ignored by the landlord for its lack of action and communication.

Preparing for Awaab's Law

The government has confirmed changes in housing legislation due to come into effect in October 2025, known as Awaab's Law. These changes currently address hazards associated with damp, mould and emergency repairs according to the HHSRS. There will be a phased introduction to other hazards in 2026 and 2027.

The legislation requires landlords to take action within strict timeframes.

They include investigating potential significant hazards within 10 working days, providing a written summary of the findings within 3 working days and outlining next steps. It also includes undertaking any necessary safety work within 5 working days and within reasonable timeframes, and keeping the resident informed throughout the process.

During our site visit, we met with those responsible for ensuring the landlord complies with the new legislation. While passionate about ensuring residents receive a good service, there were some obstacles discussed that the landlord would need to remove prior to fulfilling its plans.

Staff spoke of delays they are facing due to the lack of available surveyors and issues faced with recruiting. As a result, the landlord is not always able to send someone out to survey a property within the projected timescales, leaving residents waiting for action. The landlord aims to assess damp and mould within 24 hours but admit at present that is unlikely.

In terms of the category 1 hazards associated with damp and mould, and other HHSRS hazards, the landlord has said they are not struggling currently in dealing with the initial hazard but the long-term fixes ensuring the hazard won't return.

While the landlord has until October 2025 to be prepared for the changes, it does not currently appear to be in a position to fulfil them. Residents already face delays in receiving repairs and any additional resource will come at a cost the landlord doesn't have. Changes to its operation must be well considered to ensure resources needed to fulfil its obligations under Awaab's Law do not come at a sacrifice to other areas of the business.

The landlord provided an update on its progress against its preparations for Awaab's Law. As of September 2025, the landlord states it has recruited 7 new surveyors and currently developing a career path for decorators to become technical operatives. It has also recruited additional administration roles to aid adherence with time scales and monitoring.

Knowledge and information management

Record-keeping and the ability to accurately capture and hold data is imperative to the success of a landlord.

Without a good system in place, different landlord functions will struggle to communicate with each other, ultimately leaving residents disadvantaged.

Data also contributes to the removal of risk. The more data held about residents and housing stock means the less chance for hazards to go unseen.

However, as outlined in our [Spotlight report on knowledge and information management](#), it is not only a good system that a landlord needs, but it also cannot “overlook that it is those who use the systems – the organisation and its staff – which are often the weak link. No system will ever be good enough to compensate for incorrect data entry, user error and a lack of quality assurance measures aligned to performance management”.

A key theme running through our casework was the landlord’s confused and disjointed approach to data collection, storage, systems, quality assurance and a general lack of control over the information it holds. While some of this seems to have been inherited from the ALMO and the reported poor or cloned data held when it was in charge of housing, the landlord itself still has work to do in ensuring it can be confident in the information it holds.

The landlord has begun turning the tide on the issues it faces but acknowledges there is still more to be done. The realisation and acceptance that the data and how it is used is not where it needs to be is an important initial step. It has provided plans and updates about its various projects to transform data gathering and how it then plans to use that data, but the landlord recognises that this is a slow process.

Data confidence

When the landlord regained control of its housing stock from the ALMO, it told us that it had little confidence in it. The landlord acknowledges that information held on its housing was often missing, cloned from past surveys, or not up to date.

The landlord has started regaining confidence by carrying out its own stock condition survey which involves a review of its properties to identify repairs or buildings needing major works. The landlord will use this information to decide where its investment needs to be concentrated.

As of January 2025, the landlord had assessed just over 80% of its properties. This is valuable information that should allow the landlord, if stored and deciphered

properly, to make a big impact to those residents with the greatest need for improvement. While the progression is positive, it is concerning that residents have been left for a lengthy time without the landlord being fully aware of the condition of its properties. This is despite fewer than 50% of residents reporting satisfaction with the maintenance of their homes since 2022. The landlord should have had a basic oversight of its housing conditions under the ALMO or been aware of the ALMO's lack of it.

The landlord has told us its next step is to conduct a further survey of its residents to understand who is living in its properties and their needs.

Know your residents

The landlord's plan to expand its knowledge of who is living within its properties by carrying out a further survey should be coupled with a plan to ensure all of its new data is stored and used effectively.

The landlord and its staff have been relying on multiple systems to hold its resident data, notes and records. The landlord explained its systems do not feed into each other and what may be held on one system is not on another. Staff have told us this makes it confusing and difficult to track repairs, resident, and housing information.

The impact the systems have on residents runs throughout our investigations. In case 202312090, we found that the landlord's lack of information regarding a leak in the property likely impacted its ability to monitor the repairs, stopping it from ensuring any follow-on works were promptly raised and completed.

The resident reported feeling helpless and spending a lot of time cleaning up water and mould and reapplying paint to their property. The resident said the issue impacted their wellbeing and they had been unable to work for 2 years as a result.

The resident reported water leaking into their cooker, which should have prompted a safety assessment by the landlord, leading to an emergency repair. The landlord acknowledged it needed to assess the roof as a potential cause but did not take any impactful action for over a year.

The lack of available records prevented us from identifying a clear timeline of repairs. The delays caused as a result meant distress and inconvenience for the resident.

The landlord's ability to hold vulnerability information on its system also appears to be lacking. During our site visit, the landlord told us of a disjointed recording method. We spoke to many different members of staff, each adding new pieces of information regarding registering vulnerability.

Following an Ombudsman finding into a complaint about the landlord and the handling of its repairs, we made an order that the landlord find the root cause of the adopted ALMO issues. The landlord commissioned an external review by an independent consultant to look into its repair practices.

In March 2024, the consultant completed its report and identified 4 main themes to the repairs function; those being cultural issues, service delivery failures, systemic failures and training gaps.

The cultural issues identified included a lack of accountability and absence of a 'right first time' culture within the landlord. Outlined in its Repair Policy is the following statement:

"We will adopt a 'right first time' approach, where we proactively manage repairs, and the resident does not have to chase works. Wherever practicable, we aim to complete repairs in a single visit to both minimise disruption and deliver an efficient service".

When the review was completed in March 2024, it highlighted that the landlord ranked 11 out of 13 benchmarked landlords on the number of repairs it completed right first time. We do not have a current benchmarking figure to show where the landlord ranks today, but many of the issues identified within the report are still outstanding.

The review also found that during the transfer from the ALMO's system to the landlord's current system, all the flags reflecting vulnerability were lost. However, we were told by a different team that this wasn't the case and instead the flags are shown in another way. While the latter team admit that the recording system isn't perfect and, depending on which part of the system you are using, affects whether you see a resident's vulnerability flag. For example, a member of staff could raise a vulnerability flag against an individual person or against their property.

This means that if the flag is raised against the person only, an operative or contractor would not have visibility of this due to them using the part of the system registered against the property.

Another team told us that during the complaint process, if a resident mentions that their vulnerability hasn't been taken into account, the only record left of that is in emails sent to the individual next to take action on the case. There did not appear to be any ownership of recording resident information for the next person who may need to be aware.

A third team advised us that when a resident tells of their vulnerability, the information has to be checked by the relevant housing officer before it can be verified. The housing officer has to ensure the information is updated on the system for future acknowledgement. When speaking to residents about damp and mould, the landlord says it does ask about vulnerabilities but that the information is then stored on a separate spreadsheet outside of its main system.

Outside of these examples, many other staff members spoke about their lack of trust in their vulnerability data, citing that it is not at the fingertips of those that need it. The landlord widely recognises their gaps and while they are taking measures to correct this by carrying out their survey, the impact on residents has been and will continue to be felt.

The staff we spoke to showed real understanding of the importance of holding such data and displayed a passion for ensuring they were able to help vulnerable residents, but the lack of available technology was a blocker for progression.

The residents we spoke to during our site visit raised the issue of the landlord's lack of vulnerability information as a barrier to their repairs being prioritised or completed. The residents' view is the landlord consistently failed to record vulnerabilities, impacting residents and third parties trying to act on their behalf.

In case 202321211, an elderly resident who suffers from a chronic illness with vulnerabilities affecting her balance reported a broken communal porch light. The resident told the landlord that the doorway was very dark and that they were likely to fall if unable to see their footing.

The landlord arranged and failed to attend 3 separate appointments to fix the light. It took a total of 64 days to complete the repair, which is considerably outside of its repair timescales. Despite the resident informing the landlord of her balance issues and the broken light posing a health and safety risk, the landlord did not act with any urgency to carry out the repair.

The landlord is currently undergoing a major data gathering exercise, both of its properties and residents. The robust recording, storage and organisation of this data will be imperative to its success and the landlord's ability to effect change using said data. The landlord should ensure that changes are made both with its ability to hold data but also avoid important data being held outside of its systems.

In September 2025, the landlord provided an update on its approach to vulnerability and home checks. It explained that its home checks service requires housing officers to visit residents with a questionnaire. To date it has carried out 310 home checks. The checks have allowed it to make 45 referrals for support and identify 91 repairs. The landlord has also rolled out a "3 questions approach" with its contact officers, asking them to check resident contact details are up to date and if there are any vulnerabilities in the household.

Contractor management

Prior to the ALMO moving back in house, one of the reasons for residents supporting the move back into the Council was based on a desire for quicker and higher quality repairs.

The desire for this is still evident within our case work, with residents facing delays, failed appointments, multiple visits for the same work, being provided incorrect information and being left to live in substandard accommodation.

When we met with the landlord, its residents and staff from varying levels of seniority and departments raised repairs and more specifically, contract management, as a barrier to success.

As the ALMO was a 'lift and shift' of staff and contractors in October 2023, rather than a new start, many of the issues residents previously faced continued after the move. The landlord, if not already fully aware of the impact to its residents, were provided with an update from its Resident Scrutiny Panel published in November 2023. The panel concentrated on resident experiences with repairs and complaints identified as areas for improvements.

It spoke of resident frustration due to having to raise recurring complaints about incomplete or poor-quality repairs, citing that vulnerable residents were disproportionately affected by delays, with insufficient adjustments made for their needs.

The landlord has cited its overall contractor management as a key area for improvement, with it being a factor of concern raised internally at various times during our site visit.

The landlord acknowledged that the procurement of contractors had not previously been well handled, and it is reviewing how it could change its current situation to improve the contractor functions. It acknowledged effective and successful procurement and contract management is a skill in its own right, and an area it needs to improve in.

While the landlord is working to improve this area, its residents are still left on the receiving end of poor management and lack of oversight of the function. During our site visit, the landlord's internal repairs team spoke about its concern over some contractors and their attitude towards jobs. They were worried that contractors do not have a long-term understanding of the property and as such, do not care as much about the work needed.

They talked about some contractors being slower to deliver repairs and failing to spot opportunities for further necessary work. While the in-house repairs team criticised the speed of contractors, the landlord told us that its in-house repairs team were completing an average of 2 jobs per day. The industry average is 4 jobs per day, meaning its own in house team were half as productive as the average. Although this shows a failing on the part of the repairs staff themselves, the landlord is ultimately responsible for their performance.

In September 2025, the landlord told us that it has launched a new 'Back to Basics' repairs pilot which has seen its in house electricians and plumbers jobs increase from an average of 1.7 jobs per day to 4.8 in June 2025. It is extending the programme to the rest of its in-house repairs teams but did not provide a full overview of what the pilot involved.

Other residents told us they are aware that some contractors drive by residents' properties without even stopping to knock, passing the charge for the 'missed appointment' on to the landlord.

During our site visit resident session, one resident voiced that "the landlord is a cash cow for the contractors and in turn we are a cash cow for the landlord".

The landlord advised that it doesn't pay contractors for missed appointments meaning no cost is associated with it. However, it did not make comment on the contractors driving by properties without knocking.

The landlord's lack of oversight into what the contractors are doing, the quality of their work, and their outstanding work, aids in any undesirable actions continuing.

The landlord is taking steps towards improvement, it has begun regular meetings with the contracting teams. With a standardised agenda to monitor performance of all repairs contractors.

Teams are looking at areas highlighted from complaints to present to their Heads of Service to factor into improvement conversations taking place with contractors. However, this appears to be the initiative of one team leader and not a set process, meaning it is not an official feedback channel, presumably stopping should that staff member leave

Our [Spotlight report on repairs](#) highlighted how the improvement of contractor relationships needs a commitment from both the landlord and the contractor; open communication, an investment in relationship management, and defined expectations are crucial.

Overall, better insight into the contractor performance, costings, function, availability, values and accountability measures should force improvement by allowing less room for unnoticed failures.

It needs a strong steer from the landlord to get work back to an acceptable level and reducing the number of outstanding repairs by implementing systems improvement to allow monitoring.

Quality repairs

The landlord also has a lack of oversight on work being carried out by its internal and external repairs teams. Our casework demonstrates that residents are having to repeatedly make requests for work to be completed because they are not satisfied with the initial job, or because the issue persists.

In case [202309875](#), a resident with 3 vulnerable children, including a child with a life-threatening brain tumour, had to repeatedly contact the landlord after repair works failed to fix damp and mould within her property.

The landlord took over 32 months to complete some of the extensive list of repairs needed with further work outstanding or unaccounted for. The landlord had attempted to fix the damp issues twice within that time with necessary follow on works being abandoned without explanation. The landlord also sent repairs staff unannounced to the property at inconvenient times for the resident leading to further delays. This showed a disregard for the vulnerabilities in the household and the disruption they caused.

Delays to repair works which may not even be sufficient only adds additional stress and pressures, including cost, on both the landlord and resident. In the example above, had the landlord ensured the issues were fixed initially, it would have benefitted the resident but also meant the landlord could then concentrate on a new resident's repair, instead of spending further time trying to refix something that wasn't handled correctly in the first instance.

As highlighted in our [Spotlight report on repairs](#), quality assurance is an integral part of performance and contract management. It needs to start with clear expectations, as well as clear frameworks for post-work quality checks. Strong quality assurance practices may help to evaluate performance and raise service standards.

Implementing a robust quality assurance process is listed as a recommendation within the Spotlight report.

The landlord did not carry out any post-works surveys on the 21,991 repairs it completed in the 2023/2024 financial year. This was the transitional period between the ALMO and the landlord, but it showed no improvement across either organisation.

Within the evidence the landlord provided, it explained that it has reintroduced post-inspection of repairs with more rigorous quality assurance and post-repair inspections with a commercial team to interrogate completion data and inspect 100% of jobs valued over £500.

On the surface, the improvements the landlord is making to its repairs quality checks sound reassuring but it later goes on to say that although post-inspections are in place, the process is manual and difficult to report and monitor. The landlord hopes its new system will improve this reporting.

However, the willingness to put actions in place to improve prior to ensuring it can assess whether they are working could create future pressures. The improvements in many of the areas the landlord is addressing, including quality, are only as good as its assurances that any measures are working.

As outlined above, the landlord needs to look at the whole picture to make improvements, or search for other areas where it can pull that learning from to measure any success.

Quality assurance is imperative in an organisation, especially one going through so much change and facing many challenges. It brings consistency, accountability and allows insight into any areas that need improvement.

Systems

The landlord is adopting a new case management system for repairs which it hopes will alleviate many of the issues previously recognised in its review. The landlord has listed it as an expected solution to almost half of the review's recommendations.

The review identified that previously, when a resident wanted to arrange a repair, they telephoned and were met with unprecedented wait times, or they arranged a repair via the online platforms and were given a random repair appointment not of their choosing. Ultimately, this had resulted in residents having to telephone the landlord regardless of how they raised the repair in order to rearrange.

The landlord's IT systems were set up in a way that took confidence away from residents and call centre staff in ensuring they were booking the correct type of appointment. This is because the online option and call centre staff did not have access to a repairs diagnostic tool, leading to incorrect diagnosis of what repairs were needed.

Upon completion of its report in March 2024, the review found that 42% of calls to the call centre were regarding existing repairs. The landlord has confirmed that residents calling about existing repairs remained steady throughout 2024, making up 45%-50% of its inbound contact, showing no consistent improvement throughout the year.

The volume of calls regarding existing repairs puts double the pressure on the landlord's staff than it should. If the new system the landlord has chosen can allow for better diagnosis of repairs and direct appointment options for residents, then it should naturally see a reduction in the number of calls received.

Case Management System

The new system should allow the landlord to record detailed resident information, including vulnerability data and ensure it is highlighted for operatives prior to attending a property to carry out repair work.

The landlord tells us that it also prompts operatives to leave notes following work they have carried out and allows for follow on jobs to be recorded at the time they are identified. The landlord says that most importantly, the new system speaks to its other systems, sharing data with the intention that less information will fall through the cracks. This means staff should be able to rely on one system to organise a repair, rather than the 6 currently being used in unison.

While the improvements are being made, it is too soon to understand what impact the system will make. It should allow the landlord to begin narrowing down further any weaknesses in its processes by identifying what has improved and what continues to need focus. However, in exploring any successes gained from it, the landlord should avoid assuming that one new system will hold the answers alone.

There also needs to be a shared understanding of the importance of data, and how good knowledge and information management acts as an enabler. Equally, an understanding of the link between poor KIM and significant detriment to residents.

For example, while the system prompts repairs teams to leave notes following completed work, the notes have to be detailed. If the landlord does not look to change its oversight of such records being left, an operative could simply write 'complete' in the job notes, leaving no detail for whoever may need it. This is only one area of many where the positive changes the system brings may be undermined.

Currently, when visiting properties, contractors are meant to look out for specific hazards within the property to feed back to the landlord to help understand the nature of any issues. The landlord has said that they often struggle getting the information back from some contractors. This is an example of where reliance on a system to fix people-related problems, such as skills and capacity, may not work, and stresses the importance of a culture change, encouraging a willingness to ensure key information is noted and shared.

It is important for the landlord to ensure the embedding of the system changes and that its staff are fully trained, and there is an understanding of the importance of what they are trying to achieve. It will be the landlord's staff that are the real instigators behind the success of the system transition.

Contractors' systems

One of the issues the landlord may face is the interface between the landlord and its contractors' systems. Stressing the importance of the new system and its benefits to the many contractors it employs is integral to ensure a consistent approach.

Within our casework we saw repeated examples of residents making complaints about contractors, whether that be complaining about them missing appointments, the quality of the work or their attitude. These issues were also echoed by residents we met with during our site visit and similar concerns were raised by members of staff.

Residents are feeling the impact of negative experiences with some contractors which in turn impacts their trust and relationship with the landlord.

As outlined in our latest [Spotlight report on repairs](#), contractors act as an extension of the landlord. Landlords need to be more aware of the emotional significance of a home and any disruptions caused to it. Arriving late, not having the correct identification prepared or failing to meet residents' vulnerability or special needs impacts trust. It also does not convey empathy towards residents and the situations they have been left to live in.

In case 202328076, the resident reported leaks on 5 different occasions. Following a formal complaint, the landlord arranged to fix the issue. However, the resident advised that the contractor had only applied a temporary fix. The contractor then failed to attend the property on 2 further occasions, by which time the issues within her property had worsened and led to an infestation of flies and maggots within the damp cupboards. The landlord confirmed that the leak had been fixed but the resident had not received any further contact from it or its contractors to carry out the associated repair work needed.

The investigation also found a lack of clear records left following contractor visits- there was no information provided on what actions were taken on the visits. This approach made it difficult to know if the actions taken were appropriate.

While the IT systems have been an ongoing issue, this has been exacerbated by a huge volume of contractor work being held on spreadsheets outside of any landlord systems, resulting in the landlord being unaware of the progress against it. The knock-on impact of this being that if it is unaware, it is unable to provide any update to its residents or monitor ongoing work in their homes.

Within its evidence, the landlord told us that as part of its Housing Transformation Programme, it planned to reduce the number of repairs marked as 'work in progress' from 18,786 in October 2023 to 3,000 by March 2025. The landlord was able to reduce the number to around 9,000 by this date with further aims of reducing it further. It has recruited a dedicated member of staff to go through the work in progress list, removing any duplicate records. This allows the landlord to reflect the true number of outstanding repairs.

During the site visit, the landlord told us that much of the work in progress had been completed, only requiring the repair to be closed on its systems.

It is concerning that such base knowledge of a repair being completed was not being communicated between the 2 parties or the system being kept updated. If the landlord is not receiving much of the information needed to provide updates to the resident, even if it had the structure in place to do so, it would not have information to pass on, consequently putting the onus on the resident to chase the repair.

While still high, the reduction to the work in progress repairs show the landlord is now aware of the challenge it faces. Previously, it appeared to have little awareness or management over this work stream, but it now makes up a strand of its improvement plan.

The landlord hopes its new system will further provide the ability to track work by forcing contractors, both in house and external, to leave notes prior to being able to progress a repair.

The sheer number of repairs outstanding is likely to have a direct impact on budgeting for repairs. As outlined in our [Spotlight report on repairs](#), the consequences of work being logged outside of the main system means the landlord has no way of tracking related or follow-up jobs or applying the correct costings to them. It also leads to missing paper trails, causing difficulties in evidencing what further work is required and their cost.

Attitudes, respect, and rights

As set out in our [Spotlight report on attitudes, respect, and rights](#), culture is vital. We stressed the benefit for leaders of learning from complaints and using them as a barometer for their service

We have found residents of the landlord have not consistently been afforded respect. This includes through tone of correspondence, a failure to prioritise repairs, complaints and updates, a lack of emphasis on learning, or the landlord's displayed attitude.

We explored many areas where the culture within the landlord service, including the attitude towards residents and their complaint, did not meet the expected standard.

Communication

An overriding challenge that the landlord has is its need to improve communication, both internally and externally.

A lack of effective communication is a catalyst for many of the issues the landlord is facing and can lead to continued complaints. Even if landlords carry out improvements or are working in the background to sort an issue for a resident, it can all be undermined by poor communication.

As well as existing, communication should be empathetic and individually focused, it is also about tone. To foster a successful relationship with residents, there needs to be trust and open communication. It must not be forgotten that residents are contacting the landlord about their home, and the place they may be raising their family. When a landlord loses sight of how emotive and important any issue is to an individual it can lead to frustration, stress, despair and a break down in the trust. That negative experience can lead to a complaint, which could have been avoided with effective, responsive and sensitive communication.

In case [202313145](#), a resident had raised a complaint about the landlord's lack of communication following a neighbour installing unauthorised CCTV. The resident told the landlord that the CCTV was making him feel extremely uncomfortable and like he was being watched. The landlord had provided assurances over a year that it would take action and provide him with updates. It did not do this and as a result the resident raised a further and avoidable complaint about the landlord's lack of communication with him.

The landlord is carrying out work over many different projects to improve its complaint, repairs and housing functions, but we have not seen a dedicated plan to improve communication. This is concerning, given the lack of communication with its residents is a barrier for many.

Throughout our casework and during the site visit, communication was a constant theme, being mentioned repeatedly by many different residents and the landlord's own staff. Residents on landlord panels, those who attend meetings to represent their community, are aware of the work the landlord is undertaking. While they acknowledge the work is not as fast as the borough would like, they understand it is being done.

However, one resident, while talking about the variety of work being carried out told us the landlord needs to have “their heads down to do improvement work but heads up to do communication”.

The sentiment was repeatedly expressed in the different resident groups we met, with an appreciation that there can be delays to getting work done, but if residents aren’t told about them then it leads to feeling ignored.

We have found a variety of reasons that may explain the communication failures during our investigation. Discussed within this section but not limited to it, are the behaviour of those working in the call centre, staff availability and a lack of call notes.

Trust

Successfully building relationships relies a lot on trust. Throughout our casework we saw many examples of trust being broken by the landlord because certain actions were not taken and the impact it had on residents.

Our investigation into case 202335053 showed a family experienced persistent damp at their property. They contacted the landlord to complain about the ongoing issues they were facing and the impact the damp was having on their home and family.

The landlord sent its initial stage 1 complaint response 6 days late and explained that it was aware of the leak and understood the urgent need for repair. However, the resident was originally not due to be visited by the repairs team for a further 3 months after it was unable to gain access to the neighbouring property to investigate.

The resident escalated her complaint to stage 2 the following month after continuing to live with the leak. The landlord was due to respond within 20 working days, but the resident did not hear from it for another 3 months and only after our intervention.

Within that time the landlord had fixed the leak originating from a neighbouring property but had not informed the resident.

Within the reviewed cases, nearly all showed residents experienced delays receiving a complaint response from the landlord. When things have gone wrong for residents and they resort to raising a complaint to try to resolve their issue, it creates further damage when that complaint is not handled with respect or in a timely manner.

Residents who experienced delays should begin to see improvements with the landlord's complaint acknowledgment timescales, providing evidence that it acknowledged 91% of complaints on time in January 2025, up from 37% in November 2024. The progress made to acknowledge residents' complaints shows some improvements are being made.

The acknowledgements should contain information for the resident as to when the landlord will take its next steps with the complaint, including sending its stage 1 complaint response within 10 working days. However, the data that the landlord has provided does not reflect confidence in its ability to meet the response time.

In December 2024, the landlord responded to approximately 20% of its stage 1 complaints on time. The majority of the residents who had made a complaint were left waiting for a response and the realisation they were unable to trust the landlord in managing their complaint.

We have also been contacted by residents asking for assistance in gaining a response to their complaints made to the landlord. If a resident has already made a complaint and the response time has passed without a reply from the landlord, we can then request the landlord respond to the resident within a short timescale. This is because the landlord has already had the allocated time to respond and did not.

During 2024/2025, we had to ask the landlord to send complaint responses on 17 occasions and we had over 100 instances of the landlord either not responding to our requests for information or not complying with our complaint orders.

The trust breakdown did not end at delays in response times; our casework showed a multitude of examples where the landlord had failed, including not addressing all points residents had raised in their complaint, failure to carry out promised actions and a lack of proper resolutions.

The collection of issues alludes to a lack of focus and importance placed on resident complaints and what can be gained from them. A complaints process is essentially a mechanism for residents to express their views on the service and raise issues. If a landlord does not value or respect its own complaints process, this may be experienced by residents as a lack of respect or devaluation of them and their needs.

As of July 2025, the landlord states it has seen improvements to its complaint handling, responding to 83% of stage 1 complaints and 88% of stage 2 complaints within timescales.

Complaint Handling Improvement Plan

The landlord has recognised that it needs to provide greater guidance to its staff to aid improvement. It has implemented a Complaints Handling Improvement Plan (CHIP) with one of the aims being to improve response quality.

The landlord has explained that it has provided a suite of how-to-guides to support its complaint handling staff as part of its transformation programmes. It provided a sample of these documents as part of its initial evidence.

The guides give some practical reminders to staff on how to investigate complaints, effective complaint handling, as well as reviewing complaints.

However, the guides could create issues with fair and consistent handling, and the tone of some of the guides could be improved to foster a positive complaints culture.

For example, it speaks about the importance of providing individual staff email addresses because should a resident email the generic system email then it will be lost in the system. In knowing this, it is unreasonable that the landlord would be confident in knowing if any contact is the first.

A further concern relates to the landlord's message to its staff about carrying out a timeline for their complaint investigation. The guide offers good advice and the benefits of this approach but then goes on to encourage complaint staff to organise this in whatever way they prefer. While this shows acknowledgment of different working styles, it removes consistency. Throughout the documents, staff are encouraged to do things their way but by creating a standard approach to each step and ensuring all staff are then trained and confident, means that every complaint is approached in the same way and receives the same treatment regardless of who it is assigned to.

Staff are also encouraged to make notes, and investigation plans outside of the complaint system. The problems may occur if staff leave or are off, leaving big gaps for anyone else trying to assist the complainant.

The guides also appear to fail to look at complaints in a neutral way and assess what the evidence tells them.

Within the how-to-guides on ‘investigating a complaint’ and ‘principles of effective complaint-handling’, each alludes to the complainant “making up” complaints or the landlord not being at fault. It encourages staff to keep an open mind and not to get defensive but that sometimes residents “make things up” or citing that “for most complaints, nothing went wrong, but we need to be able to evidence this”.

While these things may happen, setting them out at the forefront of these guides does not aid a culture of fairness and risks organisational defensiveness.

The landlord needs to decide how a complaint should run from start to finish, ensure it is all dealt with in the system with a standard approach for all, providing full training to those that need it and ensure measures are in place to assess success.

Contact Centre

While the guides referenced above are internal documents, our concerns that these attitudes run deeper, as evidenced by residents’ feedback about their experiences dealing with the landlord’s contact centre.

Our casework included accounts from residents about the treatment they received when speaking with the contact centre. Residents reported not receiving call backs or responses to their emails. We also heard residents receiving responses with an unwelcome tone or lacking details.

In case 202343712, a resident raised concerns over damp and mould in her property leaving walls wet to the touch. The resident raised the issues with the landlord and spoke of concern due to her young daughter having asthma. She repeatedly raised the issue with the landlord but received no assistance. Upon raising a complaint, the landlord said it had no prior knowledge of the damp and mould in the property.

In case 202325375, an elderly resident was left without a functioning window after part of the window fell from the frame. The resident contacted the landlord on multiple occasions but reported “at every step, I have been lied to, fobbed off and information has not been correctly relayed”.

When speaking with a resident group during our site visit, they also reported issues with some of the call centre team. Some residents told us they just want to feel like a human being with their issues addressed with empathy.

The landlord's own staff supported the issues raised and showed concern for the treatment of residents seeking help.

We were provided with examples of certain staff members neglecting to log repairs on the system because they took a dislike to the resident they were speaking to. Or with others loudly voicing their negative opinions of residents following calls, or not leaving notes on the system, meaning there was no record of residents asking for help.

As outlined in our [Spotlight report on attitudes, respect, and rights](#), internal communications about residents should be factual, respectful and avoid opinion or judgements. Where a culture exists which permits residents being described in such personal and emotive ways, that will undoubtedly be reflected in their direct communication, and subsequently their relationship, with residents.

The accounts from staff support the feelings being described by residents, both from our case work and during our visit. Some of the case work and, or actions we see and have heard of is prior to the dissolving of the ALMO. However, the landlord has confirmed that staff were transferred over to it without any additional training or levelling exercise to ensure better treatment of residents.

We discussed the concerns raised with senior management who described dealing with a 'gossip culture' within the call centre. However, it is important for the landlord not to minimise the issues within the contact centre or view it as an outlier. It should explore any potential wider cultural issues, including those we have seen involving contractors, to ensure the landlord is consistently demonstrating a respectful approach towards residents.

While residents may have felt the effects of the culture, we recognise the landlord has begun to take action in dealing with the situation.

In November 2024, the landlord discussed the 'continued trend of unprofessional conduct among a small number of staff'. It accepted the impact the behaviour has on its residents' trust and suggested additional training for staff that cause continuous complaints.

In April 2025, it reported actions being taken to promote a better culture, citing a plan to 'grow their own culture' by dealing with values and behaviours. The plan includes further training and webinars to aid staff with continued learning and development.

A change in senior management who oversee the call centre has attempted to address some of the issues, with the managers now being visible within the team by sitting and working from within the centre. Although these actions show a willingness to address the issues, it again limits it to the call centre. It appears the landlord has not yet identified it potentially has a wider problem in this area.

The landlord also spoke about the pressures placed on staff due to the amount of work required of them. The landlord has said it is trying to tackle these issues by recruiting an additional 8 staff members into the call centre, who were in training for the role in April 2025. The additional staff should not only ease some of the pressure on the landlord but also provide a more positive experience for residents.

Although the increase of staffing may alleviate some of the pressures on the landlord's call centre, it is imperative the new staff are clear on the expected standards and conduct. Otherwise, there is a risk of them absorbing some of the current negative attitudes and approaches to residents.

More recently the landlord has explained that it has made changes to who residents speak to when reporting a new repair. Residents seeking a new repair are now dealt with via the Corporate Contact Centre. The staff in this area have been trained on the relevant systems to raise repairs, the result of which is a reduction to the call waiting times.

Resident engagement

During our site visit, we raised the issue of engaging better with residents. The landlord discussed work it is starting to do to be not only more visible, but also to be available to assist residents within their area.

The landlord spoke about repair open days at certain estates for residents to bring their repair issues to it. Examples provided by the landlord include offering more face-to-face services, like road shows with different staff, essentially providing a platform for residents to speak more easily with the landlord and log repairs quicker.

The above initiatives are a starting point to strengthen relations, although we encourage the landlord to prepare for the increase in volume such engagement is likely to bring; engagement work without the means to meet raised expectations could further undermine landlord and resident relationships.

The landlord has acknowledged its telephone wait times are already not to the consistent standard it aims to achieve. There is a risk that further engagement work prior to setting up a strong foundation to work from will only cause further issues and create greater damage to its relationship with residents.

Call volumes

In January 2024, residents looking to report a repair were met with a wait time averaging 40 minutes, reducing to an average of 21 minutes in January 2025. While the effort made to reduce the call times is positive, the number of calls being abandoned by residents trying to report a new repair remains high. Residents abandoned 37% (1,262) of the 3,359 calls made in January 2025.

Residents with existing repairs faced similar challenges, with 34% (950) of the 2,767 calls being abandoned in January 2025, following reduced, but long, wait times. The landlord is aware of the additional pressures it faces due to the amount of calls it receives about existing repairs. It must question what further improvements it can make to its communication in order to reduce this number.

The landlord will need to think about how it can engage with its residents more in spite of financial and demand pressures.

The additional staff members being introduced into the team should assist with the positive improvements the landlord is making. The number of incoming calls were at their lowest in June 2024, averaging 6 minutes for residents enquiring about existing and new repairs. The reduction in answering time had a positive impact on the number of abandoned calls, with only 12% (288) of the 2,262 calls not being completed.

More recently the landlord has been able to reduce wait times further, it attributes this to the involvement of the Corporate Contact Centre helping to book new repairs. In May 2025 the wait time fell to 5 minutes and continued to fall in June and July, with recent wait times hitting just over 3 minutes.

If the landlord can achieve a position where the wait times and abandoned calls are consistently reduced year-round, it should lead to a more positive relationship with its residents.

However, the benefits provided by the additional staff will only help to repair relationships if the landlord can ensure all of its staff are able to provide an improved service.

Knowledge and information management

Within our cases, we have seen examples of residents having to repeat requests for repairs, with the landlord having no prior record of previous conversations or agreed works. The reduction in the number of systems being used should help to ensure information is readily available and easy to locate. However, during our site visit we heard from residents and staff about the lack of notes being left on their accounts.

Staff members confirmed they don't leave notes against all calls received, only against those that require further repairs or actions. If staff are being given the option to leave a call note, rather than it being compulsory, it provides opportunities for members of its contact centre to abuse the system. While the landlord did not think this posed an issue when asked, it could go some way to explain why residents are reporting actions not being followed up or feeling like their repairs and complaints are falling through the cracks.

To support the landlord's stance on the link between call notes and communication not being an issue, it has provided us with a report from January 2025. The report shows the number of answered calls, the number of repairs raised, and the number of notes left on resident accounts.

The landlord accepted 3,668 calls in January 2025 and raised 2,366 repairs. In contrast, the call centre left 761 notes on residents' accounts. This is only 20% of the total calls accepted in January 2025 and 32% against the repairs raised. With so few notes being recorded against accounts, it is of no surprise that residents and staff become frustrated, having little or no recorded history to review.

The landlord defends this position by outlining that the raising of repair is in replacement of a note. However, there is concern that the details of that repair are not being recorded and should anything happen whereby a repair fails, there is no history to review.

The decision not to leave a call note can have more impact on not only the resident but also the landlord than maybe it realises.

It means there is no or limited history of a resident's repair request. Simply raising a repair and not leaving a note does not allow the landlord to understand the history and impact a required repair can have on a household.

The landlord does not currently capture the length of time a resident has been affected by an issue, or how long they have been waiting for help. We heard from residents during our site visit that they are forced to explain again the circumstances they are dealing with, be it repair or vulnerability. A lack of notes takes away the continuity a resident could get even when dealing with different people.

One resident told us how she heartbreakingly had to explain about the recent death of her son every time she called the landlord. She asked it to acknowledge the information and the impact it was having on her at the time. Despite her requests, she told us it was not noted on the account, leading her to explain to every staff member she spoke to. While we have not investigated her complaint, the lack of empathy and understanding reported by the resident may have been avoided by a note placed on the account for staff to refer back to.

For its own staff, a lack of records leads to resident frustration and potentially impacts the volume of complaints the landlord receives. It takes away the call handlers' ability to know what has taken place and what actions would be best to take next. We have seen multiple examples within our casework of the wrong operative being booked or the same inspection being carried out again due to a lack of records left or follow on action taken.

It must also be acknowledged that if the landlord's staff do not leave notes on every call, there is a risk of important information being missed. It would be a hard task for the landlord to ensure that its staff were leaving notes for every call that required one - only by listening to each and every call, cross referencing it with the notes, would this be possible.

As we are aware of the behavioural issues and pressures highlighted within the contact centre, the risk that relevant notes aren't being captured increases.

While the additional time taken to leave a note may impact residents in having to wait slightly longer, the benefit this could bring to a resident's experience could be greater. It is something the landlord could consider changing upon the recruitment of their new contact centre staff.

Complaint handling improvements

Complaints can help a landlord to identify areas for improvement. By reviewing the complaints we have received about the landlord, it shows clear areas needed for improvement.

While many of those areas have already been discussed throughout this report, complaint handling is a strong contributor. While it is accepted that things can go wrong, the way it is dealt with is a cornerstone to maintaining a positive relationship between a landlord and its tenants.

Quality assurance

There are many different ways the landlord will be able to measure its success, and it is not for us to set out how it can ensure an achievement. However, it could look to strengthen its internal quality assurance, such as checks carried out on the complaint responses, as well as phone calls, call records and repairs raised.

During our investigation, we found the landlord had a gap in its oversight of the quality of its complaint responses. Its central Corporate Complaints team, responsible for quality checking complaint responses, had only conducted a handful of quality checks directly following our announcement of this investigation. The checks were all based on stage 1 complaints it had sent to residents and showed a 40% pass rate from the 15 sampled.

It is unclear what happened on the back of any quality failing, whether colleagues had been told of their failure or assisted with how to improve. The landlord did not provide any next steps or corrective action plan examples. However, the lack of continued quality checking would suggest that this exercise was not a priority, potentially rendering it pointless.

The information provided did not show any quality checks conducted on stage 2 responses. As the last step in the landlord's complaint process, it would be advisable for the landlord to assess the quality of these responses as well. This could potentially help it to establish the reason for any failures, and work with individuals to improve.

Since conducting this report, the landlord has done further quality checks on complaint responses across more of its stage 1 complaints.

Over the 11 checks done, they achieved a pass rate of 27%, with many of the failure reasons mirroring those from previous months. Again, it did not provide information on what it would do following this result, but CHIP and other improvement plans are still running in the hope to impact change.

In June 2025, the landlord tells us it carried out further quality assurance with only one of the checks failing to meet criteria. The landlord did not provide further details to explain how many checks it did in June 2025 or why the one failed.

The landlord told us it is currently developing a quality assurance approach, updating guidelines to align with ours. However, our statutory Complaint Handling Code has been in place since April 2024. Ideally, landlords would prepare for the changes in advance rather than making retrospective ones. Providing guidance and processes after the fact allows for bad habits to begin while that guidance is being developed.

Learning from complaints

As the landlord employs a small complaints team, it is concerning that learnings do not appear to be filtering to them individually to aid development. Whether this be down to lack of process, inefficiencies or lack of their available time for learning is unclear.

The landlord has provided a brief document outlining learnings it has taken from our findings and larger root cause analysis, the results feeding into its transformation programmes.

One of the measures discussed was the production of templates containing all of the information residents need in their responses, like the complaint escalation information. The remaining information is tailored to the individual complaint.

The landlord confirmed that templates were all uploaded onto its complaints system in October 2024 as part of CHIP. However, this predates some of the quality checks we have reviewed and suggests that some staff are not using the up-to-date templates or choose to remove information prior to sending.

The continued quality checking is one of the easiest ways to assess whether changes have been effective. Changes being made from learning is not going to be effective if it isn't embedded. While some managers during the site visit said they carry out their own quality assurance work, this appears to be done on an individual basis and used for learning delivered within their own team meetings. The checks are manager dependent and would not necessarily account for any changes within the wider team or focused learning.

During our visit, we met with a Senior Leader of complaints who spoke about an array of measures the landlord have for helping them gain actionable insights from their learning from complaints. They explained to us their designated team specialists would be able to share examples with us for review during the visit. However, when we met with the team, they were unaware of the reports and were not able to share examples with us.

The landlord has since provided 2 documents and a summary to support its earlier statements. The landlord states it has a suite of reports in place and being developed to provide real-time insight that helps to serve its transformation programmes as well as its everyday work. Based on the information provided, the landlord now has access to a lot of data surrounding its complaint performance, but the summary document only gives a brief overview of actions it has taken and does not appear to have success measures.

For example, its resident satisfaction with complaints stands at only 27% as per its Quarter 3 2024/2025 tracker. While it plans to deliver complaint handler training to its staff and to provide residents with better updates, it is unclear how it is going to realistically achieve this.

Although training and ongoing learning is important, it is only one element of service improvement. For example, it won't help to address the high number of outstanding repairs, a lack of clear notes to work from, system issues and overall staff shortages.

The secondary planned improvement is providing acknowledgments and resolution updates to residents with better transparency on the complaint progress. The landlord is self-aware of the areas in which they need to improve. But realistically, if they are currently unable to send acknowledgements and complaint responses on time, the aim of providing further updates without any major changes being made is not likely to be successful.

Compliance

In the 28 cases monitored, we ordered the landlord to apologise to 18 residents and pay £32,228 in compensation. Moreover, we made several orders and recommendations to try to prevent the same problems happening again.

The individual orders and recommendations can be found in the investigation reports on our [website](#). Our decisions are published to our online casebook 3 months after determination. In some cases, we may decide not to publish a decision if the resident's anonymity may be compromised. Full details of what and when we publish are set out in our [publication policy](#).

The key or repeated orders made to the landlord are summarised below.

Complaint handling

The landlord was ordered to carry out 3 senior management reviews following the completion of our investigations.

Communication

We made 19 separate orders asking the landlord to communicate further with residents.

Knowledge and information management

We have already made a wider order regarding the necessity for the landlord's record keeping improvements, meaning we made no further individual orders about it.

We made 3 additional individual orders requiring the landlord to ensure specific resident data, including disability data, was added to its system.

Contractor management/repairs

We made 6 orders requiring the landlord to complete follow-on repair work.

Hazards

We made 17 separate orders asking the landlord to carry out either an inspection or complete a survey to assess works.

Conclusions

The landlord is on a long road towards improvement. It appears to now have a stable management team in place that are focused on improving despite the many challenges councils face.

The landlord realises the areas it needs to focus on and spoke openly about them during our site visit. It cannot be ignored that it is going to be a vast challenge and will take skill to ensure the landlord is concentrating on the priority elements while not allowing other areas to suffer as a result of a shift in focus.

The landlord has work to do in dealing with hazards and being prepared to meet its legal obligations under Awaab's Law. Currently, the landlord does not appear sufficiently prepared for the change and with only a few months until Awaab's Law comes into force, the landlord needs to assess its current plans and priorities to be ready for the October 2025 start.

The landlord is trying to deal with its category 1 hazards at the same time as preparing for Awaab's Law and it is only through strengthening its relationships, contract management, and procurement practices that this will happen.

Inserting a strong quality assurance step into its repairs function is key, but the landlord needs to ensure that any underperformance from contractors is addressed and dealt with under stricter performance management measures. This includes holding contractors to account and taking a greater interest into their practices and works.

The landlord's work to trust and rely on its data is the first step in understanding where to concentrate its efforts to achieve the most impact. Its aim of gathering intelligence on who lives in its properties should also allow it to build a better picture

of its residents. In turn, allowing it to create a plan of how to provide safe, comfortable housing, while also being responsive to residents' individual circumstances, and futureproof its service.

The new system the landlord has put in place and the strengthening of its old system should allow for better recording of resident details, stock condition and repairs. It is too early to understand what impact the systems will have but it is the first step to inciting change.

There also needs to be an understanding from the landlord that a new case management system is not a panacea for all of the issues it and residents face.

At this time, the new system appears to be the primary answer to the landlord's issues and those addressed by its own commissioned review. But what is the contingency plan if the system isn't adopted or used as anticipated? The launch of any new system should be surrounded by clear expectations and measures to ensure its success. It needs regular check in points for the landlord to assess if it is creating the expected change.

The landlord also needs to put a strong emphasis on its internal culture, specifically reviewing how it views and respects residents. This includes the tone it adopts at key touch points. We have seen how this lack of respect presents itself throughout the landlord's service delivery - in not providing a complaint response on time; failing to make residents aware of any delays; not providing call backs or replying to emails; a failure to understand and investigate a resident's complaint or repair; a lack of contact notes to show account history; or the tone of correspondence and internal documents. These examples reflect a culture issue that is deeper than just the 'gossip culture' referenced by the landlord. It speaks of an ingrained culture that the landlord needs an 'eyes open' approach to confront, challenge, and change. This could be a critical area for the Member Responsible for Complaints and its governing body.

While further engagement work with residents is welcome, the landlord needs to be realistic in its approach and ensure that prevailing communication problems are fixed before encouraging more contact from residents.

The landlord has a balancing act in trying to show its residents that it is willing to offer more support, and be more accessible and available, while ensuring it can deliver on it. Otherwise, it risks only causing more resident frustration and disillusionment.

The trust between resident and landlord can be rebuilt but we encourage open communication from the landlord to its residents over what can be achieved by when. Putting into place a comprehensive plan of how it will aim to tackle the areas outlined in this report may serve as a helpful starting point. Its plans need to be coupled with a self-awareness of how much progress is actually being made; not only to achieve open and respectful communication with residents, but also for the landlord to update and amend its plans throughout this period of change.

Recommendations

In the post monitoring period, we will ask the landlord to:

Contractors

- Provide a plan to its governing body on how to improve procurement, contract, performance and relationship management of contractors.

Hazards

- The governing body and Member Responsible for Complaints' to test preparedness for Awaab's Law.
- Set out how it will ensure category 1 hazards are resolved rather than reduced to category 2.

Communication

- Consider developing a communication strategy to aid service delivery and build trust and confidence with residents.

Attitudes, respect, and rights

- Explore the cultural issues identified in this report and whether the attitude and tone adopted towards some residents extends beyond the self-identified 'gossip culture' of one service area.

- Consider how it will achieve a fair and open-minded complaint process.
- Consider how the data being collected about residents will be used to provide reasonable adjustments based on individual circumstances.

Quality assurance

- Review areas identified in this report where quality assurance could be strengthened to support embedding changes and delivering consistently better outcomes.

Statement from Lewisham Council

We acknowledge the significant impact that failures in our housing services have had on residents, particularly those affected by delays, poor communication and unresolved repairs. The cases highlighted in the Ombudsman's report are a crucial reminder of the importance of getting the basics right – safe, decent homes and respectful, timely service.

Since the cases examined in this report (July-October 2024), we have taken decisive steps to address the issues and we appreciate the Ombudsman's recognition of the improvement work already underway.

Our repairs teams are completing more jobs per day and we have strengthened quality assurance processes, including post-repair inspections and regular contractor reviews. Waiting times for residents contacting us have fallen significantly, and we have recruited additional staff to improve responsiveness. We have also reduced open cases of damp and mould and improved our stock condition data through a survey of over 80% of the homes we manage.

We are now strengthening performance management of our contractors and continuing to embed respectful, resident-first communication that includes awareness of vulnerabilities. A major focus is on meeting new Awaab's Law requirements and introducing a new case management system to ensure better oversight and record-keeping.

We recognise that rebuilding trust takes time and sustained effort. We are committed to learning from complaints, embedding a culture of respect and accountability, and preparing for new legal standards.

Our focus remains on delivering lasting improvements, engaging openly with residents, and ensuring that every lesson from complaints leads to better outcomes in the future.

Annex A – List of cases determined

Our decisions are published to our [online casebook](#).

Findings	Severe maladministration	Maladministration	Service failure	No maladministration
<u>202229024</u>		Complaint Handling Planned works – cost Planned works - scaffolding		
202302821	Leaks/damp/mould	Pest control Complaint handling		
<u>202335053</u>	Leaks/damp/mould Record keeping	Responsive repairs Complaint handling		
<u>202325734</u>		Leaks/damp/mould	Complaint handling	Cyclical works
<u>202328076</u>		Leaks/damp/mould	Complaint handling	

Findings	Severe maladministration	Maladministration	Service failure	No maladministration
<u>202309875</u>	Leaks/damp/mould	Record keeping Complaint handling	Responsive repairs	
202335234		Leaks/damp/mould		Complaint handling
202327529	Leaks/damp/mould	Record keeping		
<u>202313145</u>		ASB Complaint delays		
<u>202233750</u>		Leaks/damp/mould x 2 Complaint handling	Responsive repairs Communal areas	
202314688		Complaint handling	Window repairs	Staff conduct
<u>202207457</u>	Leaks/damp/mould	ASB Pest control		
<u>202217117</u>		Leaks/damp/mould		

Findings	Severe maladministration	Maladministration	Service failure	No maladministration
		Complaint handling		
202321470		Leaks/damp/mould Complaint handling		
<u>202335783</u>	Leaks/damp/mould			
202321211			Responsive repairs	
<u>202224509</u>	Window repairs		Complaint handling	
202303781		ASB		
202317278			Responsive Repairs	
202309984		Shower repairs	Leaks/damp/mould	
<u>202302915</u>		Complaint handling Responsive repairs	Planned works	
<u>202304881</u>		Communal area - lift	Responsive repairs	

Findings	Severe maladministration	Maladministration	Service failure	No maladministration
			Complaint handling	
202312090		Leaks/damp/mould Record keeping	Complaint handling	
202216774	Responsive repairs	Complaint handling Record keeping		
202319225			Response repairs	Complaint handling
202319152		Leaks/damp/mould		
<u>202325844</u>		Planned works		
202307209		Complaint handling Pest control		