

Senior management review of Complaint 202424890

August 2025

Introduction

On 30th June 2025 we received a determination from the Housing Ombudsman Service relating to Complaint 202424890. The determination was severe maladministration by the landlord of its handling of structural defects, damp and mould at the property, and the customer's request for a permanent move. The orders made in the determination included:

Complete a senior management review of the failings identified in this report and provide us with a report of its findings. The review should be independent of the service area involved, and the learning report and actions be shared with its governing board. The review should include:

- Its delay in providing the resident with an action plan to address repairs after promising to do so after these were left unfinished in June 2024.
- Its failure to arrange a temporary move.
- Its failure to communicate adequately with the resident.
- A summary of improvements it can make which will address failings identified and address structural issues at the block going forward.

This review was completed by the Head of Risk & Assurance and was undertaken through assessment of records and interviews with key colleagues involved in the case or in the current actions.

Alongside this review and the other orders made by the Ombudsman, additional actions were taken by the business. These included: reviewing complaints responded to by the lead officer for this complaint to identify outstanding commitments and ensure action is being taken; contacting the customer (who was no longer a tenant); inspecting the customers' apartment block to address any similar issues in other customers' homes.

This report focuses on the review points requested by the Ombudsman.

Repairs post June 2024 and communication with the customer

We considered the reasons for the delays in providing the customer with an action plan to address repairs after promising to do so when these were left unfinished in June 2024. And we considered our failure to communicate adequately with the customer.

It is evident from both records and discussion that there were delays in specifying the works required after the works started in June 2024. There was a delay in arranging for a structural engineer to attend and scope the works after the initial works were put on hold, and an appointment was not secured until the customer complained.

The structural engineer visited the customer on the 30th July and undertook site monitoring in August 2024. However, the structural engineer delayed sending their report (which was not received until 24th October 2024). It is evident that our team repeatedly chased for the engineer's report, but there is no evidence that we considered an alternative plan for addressing the customer's concerns. There was also no evidence of consideration being given to returning the

customer's home to its previous condition (e.g. replacing the radiator or flooring) while determining the plan of works.

There was then a further delay (October 2024 to April 2025) in the structural engineer providing a quote for the works requested, and little evidence of us proactively chasing this during that period.

There was no evidence of communication with the customer between the stage 1 and 2 complaint responses (June and December 2024). Additionally, there is limited evidence of communication with the customer in relation to the repairs between December 2024 and April 2025.

We communicated with the customer in relation to the stage 1 and 2 complaints, although we did not provide timelines for keeping the customer informed of planned actions. We failed to record the commitments made in the complaint to our system (CRM) and the complaint was closed without completion of the commitments. We did not find any evidence that the lead officer had been in communication with the customer.

The above issues appear to have been caused by a lack of oversight of works in progress and a lack of central record keeping within the planned investment delivery team. This was compounded by a restructure in the team at the end of 2024. High volumes of work related to performance management of our repairs contract also contributed.

Temporary move

We reviewed our failure to arrange a temporary move.

A lack of records makes it hard to determine why a temporary move was not arranged as set out in the stage 2 complaint response letter. Additionally, there is no evidence that a temporary move was considered after repair work started in June 2024 and works were left unfinished.

The stage two lead officer (no longer in post) failed to request a temporary move when the stage 2 response was sent. The lack of oversight of cases within the service meant this omission was not detected.

The customer moved out of the property in April 2025.

Improvement actions

We have identified the improvements we need to make to address the failings identified. Some of the improvements were made before receiving the Ombudsman's findings in relation to this case but were not in effect at the time of this case. Further improvements were identified as part of an independent review we commissioned from KPMG in June 2025 to assess changes made to our processes and their effectiveness in preventing complex cases.

A **quality assurance process** is now undertaken by Directors to identify where complaints processes are not being followed and where CRM is not being appropriately updated. This includes where commitments are not entered onto the system. Additionally, all stage 2 complaint responses are now reviewed by an Executive Director.

The changes to the **services team structure** came into effect from 1st September 2025). This introduces Investment Contract Managers to increase oversight and management of contractors; Contract Liaison Officers to ensure ongoing communication with customers; and a separate function for undertaking surveys and scoping works. It is believed that this will increase oversight of contractors, ownership and monitoring of works completion, and communication with customers.

A new **Building Framework** came into effect from 1st August 2025 and ensures robust contracts are in place.

Regional **meetings between planned investment and neighbourhoods** have been expanded to include a range of high-risk cases – not just those cases where a temporary move has been made.

Additionally, wider improvements have been made to our oversight of complex cases with the introductions of a panel that reviews these cases to ensure suitable action is being taken.

Monitoring of the capturing and completion of commitments has also been strengthened as has the oversight of our tier 2 contractors.

Block structural issues

Actions to address structural issues at the block going forward have been identified by the business.

Records relating to the whole block (5 flats in total) were reviewed and it was confirmed that there are no health & safety issues, with the customers home being the only property to report damp and mould. Ongoing issues with rainwater goods (primarily guttering) were identified as not having been scheduled for repair.

There are indications that the removal of trees has resolved issues relating to subsidence and nearby shrubs may also be removed to prevent any further chance of movement.

While not a structural issue, the concerns raised by the customer in relation to the water tank were reviewed. There was evidence of attempts made to arrange a risk lite assessment with the customer which were unsuccessful despite several attempts having been made. Services have confirmed there are no complaints from other customers in block. Our contractor has been sent out to review the block.

The business has specified an action plan for addressing the block structural issues noted above.

Reporting

The findings and actions from this report went to our Executive Team on 18th September and then onto our Customer and Communities Committee and Board.