

Learning from: Severe Maladministration



**Taking the key lessons from our
severe maladministration decisions**

Published December 2025

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Introduction

These complaints involve a wide range of repairs from faulty doors, windows, and roofs to kitchens and bathrooms.

It is always important to see the person behind the repair.

Outcomes in these cases could have been different. If landlords had adequately considered individual circumstances when making these decisions.

Instead, landlords made service failures worse when they failed to support disabled residents, domestic abuse survivors, and children.

This means a domestic abuse survivor lived with a faulty entry door for 9 months and another survivor reported anxiety about being unable to lock a door.

A ceiling collapsed on a child's bed while they were asleep.

Another child was exposed to live electrical cables and yet another hurt themselves on uneven flooring after repairs took 18 months.

A resident with disabilities had no functioning shower in his wet room for 12 months and a child with additional needs had to use a broken toilet for 5 months.

With Awaab's Law, there will be a greater focus on connecting the household's circumstances to the condition of the property.

This will make for more person-focused repairs services.

And these cases show the importance of a customer focus in one area: appointments.

Throughout these cases, repairs appointments do not take place. This is inefficient for landlords and can waste resident's time. A missed appointment can trigger a series of events from which the landlord finds it hard to recover.

Repeatedly 'no access' is recorded on systems. This implies the resident has refused to cooperate with the landlord to complete a repair.

This can happen. But our investigations show a different side.

We found the landlord:

- did not tell the resident it would be attending the property
- did not attend at the time agreed
- did not attend at all
- did not have the right contact information for the resident
- did not observe reasonable adjustments

These appointments were not always rebooked or only 'all day' appointments were offered, despite requests for timed slots.

It is important for residents to allow access for landlords to do repairs. But these cases indicate inadequate or outdated systems or approaches to appointments which lack a customer focus. This makes it more difficult for landlords to complete repairs, rather than difficult residents.

This was an area we explored earlier this year in our **Spotlight report on repairs and maintenance**. This is a timely reminder for the sector to revisit its findings.

That report also highlights the tension which can exist between responsive repairs and planned works, especially where faulty windows are concerned. Once more these cases show the risk that some landlords are relying on later works when more immediate action to mitigate risks may be required.

I was asked recently whether damp and mould was a 'grey rhino' event - in risk management, unlike 'black swan' events this is something that could be predicted. It was. And faulty windows and domestic abuse, both of which appear in this report, could be other 'grey rhinos'.

This report is part of a wide range of resources available to landlords through our **Centre for Learning** to embed the lessons from complaints.

Richard Blakeway

Housing Ombudsman

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse survivors may rely on social housing to provide security and safety following a traumatic experience. Repairs, especially for work that relates to security, may need to be treated with urgency and care.

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic abuse, there is help to support you. You can call the National Domestic Abuse Helpline for free 24/7: 0808 2000 247.

A2Dominion

A2Dominion (202427132) failed to repair the entry door for a domestic abuse survivors' home. The landlord knew about the issue before the resident raised it. Despite this, repairs took 9 months.

At the same time as reporting the broken door, the resident told the landlord that she was a survivor of domestic abuse.

The resident's repair request was not logged on the system.

The landlord should have treated the repair as an urgent priority because of the household's circumstances.

The landlord did not carry out a risk assessment to help prioritise the repair.

The landlord knew about the door repair before the resident raised it. It took some action to inspect it but failed to inform the resident of this.

It also did not consider temporary fixes before arranging a replacement.

After the completion of the complaints process, it did not monitor the progress of the repair. This meant the resident and her Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Advisor (IDSVA), were both forced to chase the landlord for updates.

19 working days after the IDSVA email, the landlord raised the door repair as urgent. It did not fix the door until 9 months after the resident first reported it.

The landlord took an unreasonably long time to resolve the issue. It failed to communicate proactively or show care, which severely affected the resident. She experienced symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) including panic attacks due to the security of the door. The resident repeatedly told the landlord she did not feel safe, but it did not act on this.

Landlord learning statement

The landlord has put in place refresher training on domestic abuse and prioritisation policies for staff. All staff have had focused training on timely and professional responses. The training also covered improvements to record keeping.

The landlord is setting up a new repairs IT system. This will make sure it does not miss surveys and follow-up work.

Orbit Group

Orbit Group (202411340) failed to resolve repairs for a domestic abuse survivor for over 2 years.

The repairs included leaks, damp, mould, and doors. This directly impacted the resident's health and safety. The issues were unresolved for so long that her kitchen ceiling collapsed due to water damage.

The home had a broken back door. The resident could not lock it. The resident said this was causing her anxiety and loss of sleep. There is no evidence the landlord considered temporary measures or fast-track the repair.

The resident had to frequently chase the landlord for updates and action.

On occasions it marked jobs as closed after one failed attempt at access. This is despite not informing the resident of the appointment. When it did make repairs, sometimes these were not effective in resolving the issues. On 2 occasions the landlord arrived with incorrect equipment or came to complete a job out of sequence.

The landlord's contractor reported evidence of rodents and slugs. The works to proof this were outstanding at the time of our determination.

The landlord promised it would complete the repairs in its complaint responses, but it failed to do so. Our orders put right the situation for the resident.

Landlord learning statement

In addition to implementing learnings from this specific case, the landlord is working with residents to introduce a change to its customer journey.

Learning from domestic abuse

It's vital that landlords recognise and adapt service delivery based on the individual circumstances of the household. Domestic abuse survivors may require urgent repairs to security features to feel safe in their homes.

Landlords should consider how it records and acts on information from a household. This helps make informed decisions about prioritisation and urgency. It can also be key to deciding whether there's need for mitigating measures or even a temporary move.

Repairs, such as a faulty entrance door, can be the highest priority for a domestic abuse survivor. Proactive and empathetic communication should also be central to responses. It also ensures that landlords are keeping correct records about the household circumstances up to date.

We understand that dealing with domestic abuse and survivors may be challenging for social housing staff. There are plenty of organisations that provide training and support:

- Addressing Domestic Abuse
- Standing Together
- Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance

Children

When deciding which property condition case to deal with first, landlords should assess the circumstances of each household. This may mean faster repairs, quicker temporary moves, or more caring approaches. Where children are involved, this can be even more important.

London Borough of Lambeth

London Borough of Lambeth (202428007) failed to complete repairs for nearly 2 years. The house contained a child with neurodiverse needs and a newborn baby.

Due to poor records throughout this case, some details are lacking. The landlord raised jobs for repairs. But we cannot tell if these were appropriate because it did not provide any inspection reports.

The landlord failed to keep the resident updated throughout the works, whether this was a schedule of works, arranging appointments, or general updates. On one of the surveyor visits to her home, the operative said it forgot to raise any repairs following a previous visit.

There were several issues within the property, including a leak that was leading to damp and mould. The landlord said it would keep in contact with the resident. However, it failed to do so. It took the landlord's stage 1 response to contact the resident. This came 8 months after the last time it contacted her about the repairs.

After this stage 1 response, the landlord raised several jobs that were still uncompleted by the time of our determination. The resident asked the landlord to complete some of the jobs during the school holidays. She wanted to reduce the disruption to her child's routine.

The landlord needed to authorise the works. There's no evidence it tried to do this as a priority to fit with the resident's request.

The landlord said it delayed some of the repairs due to the resident refusing access. There is little evidence of this, except one occasion the resident agreed with.

Our orders in this case resolved the situation for the resident.

Landlord learning statement

Since this case, the landlord has created a comprehensive action plan of remaining works. It is also working with the resident over a temporary move.

Birmingham City Council

Birmingham City Council (202420180) left a vulnerable child with an unsafe bathroom for nearly 2 years.

The landlord reported the issue several times in a year. While the landlord responded within appropriate timescales on all occasions, it did not find a lasting solution.

The landlord knew of the vulnerabilities within the home. However, it did not take this into account when making decisions. The resident clearly explained how the broken bathroom impacted his son's needs.

The landlord failed to take effective action, even when the resident raised a formal complaint. It took 5 months to fix a loose toilet. The issues caused by the loose toilet included flooding as it pulled the clean water pipe off. However, despite knowing this the landlord failed to inspect the bathroom.

It later said, before completing any work in the bathroom, it needed to test for asbestos. This was 7 months after the resident's complaint.

Some of the appointments failed due to communication issues. The landlord sent incorrect text messages and failed to make sure that its contractors phoned the resident on arrival. The landlord mistakenly cancelled another appointment.

Landlord learning statement

The landlord now has intelligent reporting to target properties of concern and to identify potential issues for escalation. This is for both internal colleagues and with its repair contractors.

Notting Hill Genesis

Notting Hill Genesis (202344083) did not consider the vulnerabilities of a child in its repairs decision making.

After reporting the issue, the landlord visited the resident's home to assess the works required. It did not tell the resident what it needed or what action it was taking.

When it found some of the fire and smoke detectors to be faulty or missing, it did not repair these within timescale. It discussed the repairs internally but again failed to keep the resident up to date. This is despite there being live electrical cables exposed with a vulnerable child in the home. It did not act with the urgency it should have done.

The landlord on one occasion cancelled repairs as the resident could not give a day for the contractors to attend. There is no record the landlord contacted the resident to arrange the repairs. After this there was no rearranging of the repairs.

It often did not act on the surveys quickly or tell the resident about them.

The landlord kept poor records for this case. This makes it hard to show that it managed the repair properly.

Landlord learning statement

The landlord has introduced a dedicated repairs hub. It will oversee work from first report through to completion. Officers are now responsible for triaging, diagnosing, and holding contractors to account. This has improved satisfaction.

Learning from children

When a child is present in the home, it can significantly change the response that a landlord needs to provide. This may mean that safety is more of an issue, or the impact of delaying repairs worsened.

Landlords should consider doing an early risk assessment. Or keeping risk assessments up to date as the repair develops. Landlords should keep in regular contact with the household. This will ensure it has a firm understanding of how the issue is impacting any children.

It may also mean that landlords need to consider temporarily moving residents earlier or at a time they would not usually. However, there are different aspects landlords should consider as part of this. For example, how close the home is to schools or family who can help with childcare.

Accessible housing

Getting adaptations or repairs right where a disability is present can be a complex area of repair for landlords. Making homes accessible for those that live in them is a vital part of social housing. This is why, in our **Spotlight report on attitudes, respect, and rights**, we say that “general needs does not mean no needs”.

Freedbridge Community Housing

Freebridge Community Housing (202422538) delayed repairing a wet room. The landlord did not offer a temporary move despite the vulnerabilities of the household.

The delay led to damp and mould appearing.

The landlord failed to quickly visit the home after the resident reported the issues. It did not explain to the resident why the delay occurred. When it visited, it inspected the room and noted the works it needed to do.

It failed to raise these works until the resident chased it 3 months later.

Another inspection found the wet room needed a full replacement and the home unsafe to live in.

The landlord failed to act on this advice. It did not temporarily move the resident out to complete the works. There was no evidence the landlord considered the resident's vulnerabilities.

It did not complete works for months after. The landlord left the resident in a home it considered uninhabitable for 14 weeks.

Landlord learning statement

The landlord has introduced stronger oversight for complex damp and mould cases. This includes mandatory early inspections and clearer escalation routes for surveyors. It has also improved its temporary moves process.

Basildon Council

Basildon Council (202447527) took 18 months to fix an issue identified by a surveyor and Occupational Therapist. This posed a risk to a family with vulnerabilities.

The resident first reported the issues when she moved in. The landlord's surveyor inspected the house a couple of months later. They visited the home with the family's Occupational Therapist. The inspector checked whether the home needed adaptations because the resident has 2 children with neurodivergent conditions.

During the inspection, the landlord found missing floorboards that could cause injury. It said it would replace them. The Occupational Therapist also wrote to confirm that the floorboards need replacing.

The Occupational Therapist wrote to the resident a few months later. They explained the delay was due to staff shortages. The landlord did not inform the resident of this. The resident was worried about the safety risk to her children.

When the landlord turned up to repair the floorboards, only 1 engineer was present when it knew it needed 2 to resolve the repairs.

The Occupational Therapist again wrote to the landlord to say the children had now hurt themselves on the floorboards. This was not an accessible home for them. They asked for the works to be prioritised.

The landlord fixed the floorboards 18 months after the resident first reported the issues.

Landlord learning statement

The landlord has carried out an internal case review. This found the causes of delays and evaluated its decision-making and communication. It has strengthened its processes for prioritising repairs and supporting residents with additional needs.

Birmingham City Council

Birmingham City Council (202404739) failed to repair a wet room for 12 months. This left a disabled resident without cleaning facilities.

The landlord failed to do a risk assessment or consider a temporary move.

During the 12 months the landlord cancelled appointments with no further communication with the resident. When it did attend there were no notes on any works carried out.

There was no evidence that the resident was aware of appointments before the landlord attended. This meant the landlord cancelled some appointments and recorded them as 'refused access'.

During appointments, it was unclear if any work had taken place. There is no evidence the landlord considered temporary fixes. This is despite the resident having no shower facilities.

The landlord said in its complaint responses that the sub-contractor could have done more. But it had overall responsibility for the repair.

It marked the job as complete, but the resident was soon raising similar issues again. The landlord could not show what the sub-contractor did to justify marking the job as complete.

Due to the ongoing issues, the resident's Occupational Therapist requested a new toilet, sink, and level access shower, and fixing existing drainage issues. The landlord accepted this. However, it again did not consider temporary fixes or moves. This is despite knowing the works would not complete for weeks.

The lack of shower worsened the resident's mental health. He mentioned to the landlord he had suicidal thoughts. Only the police and ambulance services visited about the resident, referring him to adult social care. The landlord failed to address this.

Landlord learning statement

Since this case, the landlord has resolved the issues for the resident and is reviewing how it will take these lessons forwards.

Learning from accessible housing

Repairs that make a home more accessible or involve adaptations can be complex. Clear and proactive communication with the resident must be at the heart of this work.

Landlords should carry out risk assessments early and follow any advice from Occupational Therapists.

Repairs can seriously affect someone living with a disability. Landlords should decide if they need to arrange a temporary move. As this may change as the works develop, this should be kept under review.

Adaptations and repairs to make a home accessible can be complex. Tell residents what's happening at each step. Where we have seen good practice in this area, landlords have appointed a single point of contact.

Roof repairs

Roof repairs can be complex and take a long time. This means landlords need to manage many aspects correctly throughout the repair.

L&Q

L&Q (202426266) failed to investigate or assess a hazard relating to a roof repair. The lack of repair led to damp and mould in the home.

The landlord failed to maintain good records throughout this case. This included details of damage caused by the lack of repairs or whether its contractors came to appointments.

It also did not respond to the resident's queries or update him on the progress of the repairs. It delayed in taking action and did not complete a damp and mould assessment for over a year.

The roof leaked because the landlord failed to repair it. It only fixed the problem after we ordered it to.

Despite promising in its stage 2 response, it did not assess the roof or contact the resident about the repair.

During the time of the complaint, the landlord did not consider a temporary move or mould washes to reduce the impact on the household.

Landlord learning statement

The landlord has completed its Repairs Change Project to improve request handling and communication with residents. The surveying team now handles complex repairs. This lets frontline staff focus on everyday reactive jobs.

Harlow Council

Harlow Council (202432277) delayed fixing the roof even though it was due for replacement.

The landlord knew about the issues for years but failed to act effectively.

The landlord had covered the roof with temporary sheeting after the resident reported issues. The landlord inspected again 3 years later and refixed the sheeting. There is no evidence of the inspection report. It is unclear if there were any recommendations made at this time to resolve the issues.

The landlord's repairs management company confirmed it could not replace the roof due to it being metal. The landlord did not look into whether other contractors could do the work. It did not consider if other repairs could take place to resolve the roof repair.

Landlord learning statement

The landlord has reviewed its roofing repairs and replacements. It has also developed a specialist customer experience team to promote a positive complaint handling culture.

Learning from roof repairs

Roof replacements are often major in nature and the process of agreeing the scope of works can be lengthy.

Good proactive communication with a resident is key to the success of any repair in this area. Strong records also help to avoid too many repeat inspections.

As replacements can take a while, landlords should consider temporary fixes or moves early. Consider this along with a household risk assessment. Use both to set the right priority for actions.

Windows and doors

We have raised windows as an emerging issue over the past year, with health and safety issues being present where we see failure. We also see issues with doors, as evidenced by some of the earlier decisions in this report regarding domestic abuse.

Moat Homes

Moat Homes (202444922) failed to repair a window that would not close for years.

The landlord was aware that only the manufacturers approved contractors could repair the windows.

The landlord's agent sent a contractor out to service the window. They found the lock corroded and the window open. The resident reported after this visit that the window still did not shut. He was worried about his child falling out of the window because of this.

The landlord asked both the agent and an unapproved contractor to do the repairs. Neither of these could do it. Therefore, the resident experienced more delays.

When chased by the resident and MP, there was a flurry of activity. But this led to nothing, and the resident had to chase again months later. The landlord's complaint responses did not address the issues he raised about safety concerns. Nor did they explain fully the reasons for the delay.

The landlord found the resident a new home. It seems that the resident would still be reporting this issue had they not.

Landlord learning statement

The landlord has created a dedicated role to support colleagues working with managing agents. This aims to strengthen complaint follow-up processes. It also introduces new measures to improve the customer experience.

Hyde Housing Association

Hyde Housing Association (202429476) failed to address exposed cabling and a defective communal door for over a year.

The landlord made several failings in this case. It has not provided a record of the resident first reporting the issue. It also failed to gain access to the building on several occasions, but it had not told the resident the date for the changed appointment. Therefore, she arranged to work from home on the day they did not turn up.

The landlord has not provided evidence it tried to gain access following the first appointment. It noted that the team should rebook the repair because of exposed live cables in the hallway. It did not follow up, despite the risk.

The landlord also closed the repair on its online system. It only reopened it because the resident checked and chased for answers. The landlord then raised and cancelled a job with no explanation.

On 2 separate occasions a staff member and an elderly resident got stuck in the communal hallway due to the door not working. However, it again cancelled the emergency repair due to its lack of understanding of the issue. This is despite it already having the necessary information to resolve the issue through previous visits.

After the landlord marked the job as complete, the resident raised further issues with the cables.

Landlord learning statement

The landlord has improved how it diagnoses problems. It focuses on reducing follow-up appointments, so it completes repairs with minimal delay. For complex repairs, such as communal entrance doors, it now attends with its specialist contractors. This ensures they diagnose the problem at the outset.

It has introduced new systems to take videos and gather better information. It has also improved communication throughout the repairs process, confirming appointments while operatives are in attendance.

The landlord has used its online portal so that residents can track repairs and complaints in real time.

L&Q

L&Q (202234897) failed to act for 6 years. It did not assess the risks or ensure it completed works to the windows.

The windows were rotten and falling apart. The frames contained large holes. The landlord inspected on multiple occasions but failed to take any action.

When the resident chased the landlord for an update, there is no evidence it responded. The resident could not open her windows and worried that it may fall out onto someone. It also meant there was no air flow in the home.

Landlord learning statement

The landlord has completed its Repairs Change Project to improve request handling and communication with residents. Its surveying team now manages complex repairs. This allows day-to-day colleagues to focus on reactive work.

Newlon Housing Trust

Newlon Housing Trust (202324954) delayed fixing faulty windows. This led to leaks and excessive cold impacting the home, which included a child.

The landlord itself confirmed there was a category 2 risk of excessive cold but failed to act with the speed required. In the summer, she was unable to open the windows which meant she had the opposite issue, the home being too hot.

The landlord arranged for inspections but took no action. On one occasion it recorded no access despite not telling the resident about the appointment. The resident was worried as the windows had gaps, which let rain in.

The landlord did take some action, which was appropriate. However, following these works the resident had more issues with the windows. They now slammed shut in the wind. The resident was worried they would smash.

The landlord arranged an inspection with recommended restrictors. The contractor said it could not do this. The landlord failed to update the resident. There is no evidence there was any contact from the landlord despite chasing emails from the resident.

The resident said the windows continued to leak when it rained and were not shutting securely. It inspected again and found it needed to replace the windows.

The landlord then did not confirm whether the resident was in its window replacement programme or how long this could take. There were no other mitigating measures put in place.

Landlord learning statement

The landlord has added a check to ask residents whether the repair has been successful. It has added resource to its service resolution team to support handling complaints more quickly and effectively.

Learning from windows and doors

We have set out a range of key learning in our reports, specifically on windows. This includes landlords ensuring they promptly inspect homes when residents report window safety concerns. This inspection can assess whether landlords need to replace or repair windows. It can also look at the impact on the household. This should then inform how the landlord proceeds with the case.

We acknowledge that window replacement can take time. This is especially true in high rise blocks. Therefore, landlords should consider what temporary fixes they can put in place to reduce the risks while they schedule those works. This may include preparing a temporary move for the household.

Some of this learning is also true for doors, where replacements are not always simple.

Sometimes major works suit a job better than one-off fixes. We understand that many things can change work timescales. This includes contractor availability, and the scope of works that landlords require.

However, the risk to the resident's safety should be a priority and landlords should adequately assess this.

Landlords should assess how timely future works will be before deciding not to replace windows and doors outside of this schedule. They should assess how likely these works are to happen on time. They should also evaluate the seriousness of the issues and household circumstances, along with any expert advice received.

If landlords decide to replace windows or doors as part of major works, this can take time. They should consider what temporary repairs they can do in the meantime.

Landlords should provide timescales for future works. They should also regularly communicate throughout. It keeps residents informed, especially if there are delays or changes.

There are also lessons in these cases for landlords managing other tenures such as shared ownership or leasehold. It's important the landlord is sure in its responsibilities and whether they need to conduct section 20 consultations.

Homeownership

Complaints involving leaseholders or shared owners can need a different approach. Landlords may need to consider different factors depending on what the repair requires.

A2Dominion

A2Dominion (202342027) repeatedly failed in its handling of cyclical works. This meant a leaseholder was left without essential repairs for 2 years.

The landlord provided multiple conflicting explanations for the delays, none of which were supported by evidence.

There was a lack of oversight or supervision of the works, as well as understanding its repair responsibilities. Poor communication made this worse. The resident had to chase the landlord for responses or correct information.

When the landlord took steps to put things right, it then repeated previous failings. Due to the lack of action from the landlord, water ran down the outside of her walls when it rained and there was a leak in one window.

Landlord learning

The landlord has put in place new complaint tracking and dashboard systems. It has monthly meetings with Heads of Service to review complaint trends and address service area issues. It is also expanding its complaints team and has created a new centralised team to focus on improving stage 2 responses.

Learning from homeownership

Landlords should maintain and repair the structure and exterior of properties, as most leases state.

Most repair policies say landlords do not need to repair internal damage to leasehold properties. The exception is when a fault in the building's structure causes the damage.

Some repairs can be complex, and landlords can find it challenging to treat leaseholders fairly in these situations. Early communication and effective record-keeping are central to a strong response.

We've set out other failures in **previous reports**. This includes delays to inspections and not progressing repairs. These failures affect leaseholders as much as any other resident.

Landlords should also know what enforcement action it can take. When landlords reach the thresholds for enforcement action, it should take it. The purpose is to keep all residents safe. This includes using injunctions and taking legal action.

Access

Gaining access to a resident's home mostly goes smoothly for landlords. However, it was a key theme from our recent **Spotlight report on repairs and maintenance** where landlords needed to improve.

A2Dominion

A2Dominion (202415320) failed to gain access due to not following the correct communication preferences.

There were long delays to the repairs. This was after the landlord recorded multiple no access visits or closed repairs when the resident did not answer its phone calls. However, the resident had told the landlord it must book repairs via email. Despite this, the landlord continued to call instead of using this method.

The landlord's failure to follow this simple communication preference caused delays to the repair of the home.

Landlord learning statement

The landlord has expanded its team of specialist surveyors. This will help carry out inspections faster, manage complex repairs, and ensure the quality of the works is at a high standard. It has brought the Customer Contact Centre and the repairs team together to assist with team working and resolve issues faster.

Learning from access

When making appointments landlords should give sufficient notice to the resident and try to accommodate their preferred timings.

Landlords should also consider confirming appointments. This could include sending reminders by text message or other contact method agreed with residents.

Landlords could also update the resident at the earliest opportunity if there is a need to reschedule. We provide recommendations about the impact of missed appointments in our **Spotlight report on knowledge and information management**.

Landlords should make sure contractors or operatives understand what work they need to do. They should also explain any specific requirements.

This will reduce the number of missed appointments.

Failings within internal complaints procedures

The complaints procedure is an opportunity to recover any service failings. However, these cases show landlords compounding failures in its service areas during the internal complaints procedure.

London Borough of Lewisham

London Borough of Lewisham (202337288) failed to recognise a complaint. This led to significant delays resolving repairs.

When the landlord failed to recognise the complaint, the resident had to raise it again multiple times. When it issued a stage 1 response, it was outside of timeframe by 139 working days.

The response said it was not considering the complaint due a disrepair claim.

However, the resident had only taken the first steps in taking legal action by issuing a letter of claim. There is no evidence the resident filed this at court. It was therefore unreasonable the landlord did not consider the complaint.

The landlord then failed to escalate the complaint. If it did not think it should escalate to stage 2, it should have explained this to the resident. It did not. It took our intervention for the landlord to issue a stage 2 response. This was outside of timescale by 114 days.

It took the resident over a year to complete the landlord's internal complaints process. This delayed the completion of repairs in the resident's home. At the point of our determination, they were still outstanding. Our orders put this right for the resident.

Landlord learning statement

The landlord has redesigned its complaints process in line with the Ombudsman's Code and put in place monitoring systems.

It has upgraded its repairs operations, with a new system to manage scheduling and monitoring. This will help the landlord to track repairs, follow-up work, and manage its contractors. The landlord will clearly define responsibilities at every stage of the process.

London Borough of Haringey

London Borough of Haringey (202307195) failed to carry out a temporary move for 2 years.

A temporary move would have improved the resident's experience and made sure that the landlord completed repairs. However, these delays meant that at the point of our determination, they were unresolved.

At one point a bedroom ceiling fell onto a child's bed while they slept.

The landlord acted quickly to raise the temporary move request when a surveyor recommended it. However, the resident continued to report problems such as plaster falling off her bedroom ceiling.

Its Housing Decision Panel approved the temporary move. However, the landlord did not inform the resident for 2 months. It then failed to move the resident for another 13 months despite the resident continually raising the same concerns.

The landlord was often not able to complete much mitigating works due to overcrowding in the home.

The landlord repeated that no permanent fixes could take place as there was not a suitable property for her to move into. It is not clear that the landlord ever examined the need for private accommodation.

Had the landlord used the internal complaints process to resolve this issue for the resident, it would have potentially avoided a severe maladministration finding. However, the landlord did not consider the individual circumstances of the household. This meant the resident and her family were stuck in a house with collapsing ceilings for over 2 years.

Learning from access complaints procedures

A landlord's internal complaints procedure plays an important role in resolving an issue for a resident. It is also an opportunity for the landlord to learn. While there are important timescales involved through our Complaint Handling Code, key is ensuring that responses are ethical too.

This means providing genuine apologies, demonstrating learning, and setting out clear timeframes for resolving issues.

Accurate records are key for landlords, being able to rely on this evidence means landlords can make informed complaint responses. This also means a resident can be confident in the landlord's approach and improve relationships.

Centre for Learning resources

Repairs key topics page with reports, podcasts, and case studies.

Repairs and property condition fact sheet

Knowledge and information management key topics page with reports, podcasts, and case studies.

Knowledge and information management eLearning on the Learning Hub.

Temporary moves key topics page with reports, podcasts, and case studies.

Damp and mould key topics page with reports, podcasts, and case studies.

Damp and mould eLearning on the Learning Hub.

Attitudes, respect and rights key topics page with reports, podcasts, and case studies.

Attitudes, respect and rights eLearning on the Learning Hub.

The Complaint Handling Code

Glossary of terms used

Term used	Meaning
Severe maladministration	A finding made by the Housing Ombudsman. Where a landlord has failed significantly in its duties. It shows serious service failure that caused residents harm, distress, or disadvantage.
Leaseholder	Someone who bought a property from a social landlord. They own the home for a fixed period but not the land.

Term used	Meaning
	They have responsibility for internal repairs. The landlord is responsible for the building structure and shared areas.
Section 20 consultation	Must be carried out if any one leaseholder's contribution to the work is estimated to, or does, exceed £250

Housing
Ombudsman Service

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