

## **Learning from mistakes – our response to the Ombudsman’s determination**

We want to be open and transparent about where things have gone wrong, what we’ve learned, and how we’re improving our services.

On 23 June 2025, the Housing Ombudsman issued a severe maladministration finding against Accent relating to our handling of a repair complaint at a shared ownership flat for older people in the Northwest.

### **What the Housing Ombudsman found**

The Ombudsman looked into a complaint made by our customer and found:

- Severe maladministration in how we handled reports of leaks, damp and mould, and the related repairs.
- Service failure in how we handled the complaint.
- No maladministration in relation to the customer’s concerns about vandalism in the communal car park.

We fully accept these findings, and are very sorry that our customer did not receive the service level we expect.

### **What happened**

Our customer first reported leaks and damp in November 2022, highlighting issues including:

- Damp and mould in the entrance porch
- A hole in the roofline causing leaks
- Rotten soffits and missing lead flashing
- Birds and insects nesting due to the hole

Despite raising these issues multiple times, repairs were delayed and not completed until August 2024 – almost two years later. During this time, the customer had to redecorate several times due to ongoing leaks and damp. Concerns about health and safety, including damp near electrical fittings, were also not dealt with promptly.

At times, we gave unclear or incorrect information, failed to follow through on actions, and didn’t keep proper records of inspections or communications. The customer’s complaint, raised in August 2023, was also not handled properly – responses were delayed and did not fully address all the issues raised.

## **What went wrong**

- Our customer first reported issues in November 2022. Repairs were not fully completed until August 2024, nearly two years later.
- There were long delays, poor communication, and confusion over what work was included.
- Some inspections didn't happen, or weren't recorded properly.
- Our complaint responses were delayed and didn't fully address the issues.
- We didn't follow our own repair and complaint handling standards.

## **What we've learned and what we're doing about it**

We're taking this determination seriously and using it to drive improvements across Accent. We have already made several changes and have more planned.

Since the complaint, we've made a number of improvements:

- Set up a centralised complaints team, introduced a Quality Assurance process and a new dashboard to track complaints.
- Delivered complaints training to all staff and contractors.
- Introduced a triage service and new procedures for damp and mould cases.
- Brought in training to help staff spot health and safety risks.
- Improved how we track and monitor repairs and inspections, and
- Developed a clearer approach to Section 20 works and how we explain them to customers.

## **What's next**

We're continuing to strengthen how we work:

- We'll meet with our customer to explain the actions taken and listen to feedback.
- A new customer guide to Section 20 works is being developed.
- We're improving our systems to give better oversight of repairs and record-keeping.
- Our leadership team will continue reviewing this case to ensure lessons are embedded.
- Continue to improve how we manage damp and mould reports and repairs.

- Roll out better tools for tracking repairs and communications in real-time.
- Review our approach to supporting customers with additional needs.

We're sorry for the impact this had on our customer. We're committed to learning from this and delivering a better, more responsive service for all our customers.