



## **Putting things right after a Housing Ombudsman investigation, May 2025**

**We always want to be transparent with you. When we get things wrong we are committed to putting them right and sharing our learning.**

**The below details a complaint from September 2023 and the subsequent severe maladministration judgment from the Housing Ombudsman in December 2024.**

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### **Overview**

The Housing Ombudsman has investigated a complaint from an Accent customer and found that we got things wrong.

The Ombudsman found ‘severe maladministration’, which means there was a serious failure in our service. It involved not dealing with a repair issue properly, and our responses to a customer’s complaints not being good enough.

We accept the Ombudsman’s findings and know our service wasn’t up to the standard our customers expect and deserve.

We’re sorry for the distress this caused and we’ve taken quick action to make sure it doesn’t happen again.

### **This is what happened, and what we got wrong**

- A customer reported a leak to us and we didn’t treat it as an emergency – taking 4 days instead of 24 hours to look at it.
- The leak was stopped that day, but the delay left the customer feeling overwhelmed and unhappy.
- The customer involved their GP for help with their wellbeing, but we didn’t check in to see they were safe and coping.
- Our record keeping of the repair was poor, and it couldn’t show what actions had been taken.
- Despite the floor being wet, we did not inspect the home for damp or mould.

- It took too long to fully investigate and fix the cause of the problem, which caused the customer more distress.
- When the customer complained, we admitted we got some things wrong, apologised, and offered compensation.
- However, we did not share with the customer what we had learned from the situation.

#### **Things we've done to improve our service as a result**

- We've improved the way we deal with damp and mould to follow best practice.
- We now use a central system to keep track of all damp and mould cases.
- Surveyors keep better records, and we make sure customers know what to expect.
- We contact customers three months after repairs to make sure everything is okay.
- If a surveyor stops working for us, their work is picked up by a manager so there are no delays in dealing with repairs.
- We now have a dedicated complaints team and a clear process to handle all complaints in the same way.
- We've delivered training to all our colleagues about our culture, with a focus on making sure we are all accountable for delivering the best service for customers.

#### **Things we are still working on to make more improvements**

- We're introducing a new system to help us keep better track of damp and mould complaints.
- We're improving our reporting for our colleagues to report and track problems, through online forms.

We're committed to delivering great services for customers and will learn from our mistakes to make service improvements.

#### ***Here is our learning statement, which we sent to the Housing Ombudsman:***

*"We accept the Housing Ombudsman's finding of severe maladministration and we have apologised to the resident and her family for the distress caused.*

*We have taken extensive action to address the failings in this case. Our damp and mould procedure has been fully reviewed to meet the Ombudsman's Code, and we've refreshed our self-assessment. A new triage process is in place to prioritise cases based on risk, supported by a central tracker providing live oversight.*

*Surveyors now maintain detailed logs, leave clear information with residents, and follow-up calls are made three months after works are completed. We've strengthened continuity when staff move on, ensuring no cases are left unmanaged, and we now*

*review all live complaints weekly to manage risk.*

*Our wider improvements include a trial of enhanced case management technology, a centralised complaints service, monthly case reviews, a new quality assurance framework, and a dedicated service improvement forum to embed learning.*

*These changes are already shaping how we deliver our services to ensure this doesn't happen again."*