

An interactive guide to the Spotlight Report on Repairs and Maintenance: Repairing Trust

BY DEWBIEN PLUMMER

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BACKGROUND



The Spotlight report on Repairs and Maintenance, Repairing Trust was published by the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) in May 2025.

The HOS provides impartial resolution services for disputes involving UK social housing tenants and leaseholders as well as learning resources for the sector. Spotlight reports focus on thematic issues identified through casework, offering in-depth analysis and recommendations for areas showing frequent service failures.

Repairs are the biggest driver of complaints and a key factor in resident trust. A repair is more than a job – it affects how safe, respected and valued people feel in their homes. The Housing Ombudsman (HOS) has seen a 474% rise in complaints since 2019-20, often linked to delays, poor communication, and repeat failures.

The report highlights the human cost of systemic issues and warns of rising anger and potential unrest. It calls for landlords and contractors to recognise the emotional significance of home, and for better transparency about the scale of the challenge.

Trust is shaped by a three-way relationship between landlords, residents and contractors. Complaints must be used as early warning signs, not simply case closures. While the operating environment is tough, sustained improvement will require both cultural change and long-term government support.

ROOT CAUSES OF RESIDENT FRUSTRATION



Frustration often stems from poor living conditions, unmet expectations, and a lack of trust. Long-standing issues like damp or mould can cause shame and distress.

When service standards aren't clearly communicated or met, residents feel let down. Past negative experiences can deepen mistrust, especially if not addressed. Delays, missed appointments, and poor communication further erode confidence and increase tension.

RECOMMENDATIONS



The report has 19 recommendations for government (3), and landlords (16) – to support a trust-based, resident-focused repairs service:

1. Independent funding review (government)
2. Review barriers to modernising maintenance (government)
3. Establish a statutory resident advocacy body (government)
4. Implement advanced information management
5. Collect and analyse service-impacting data
6. Leverage insights for service improvements
7. Conduct learning exercises post-contract termination
8. Collaborative policy review
9. Develop and review a code of conduct
10. Involved procurement design
11. Establish a damage compensation procedure
12. Clarify repairs procedures
13. Implement robust quality assurance processes
14. Review communication strategies
15. Publicise maintenance and improvement plans
16. Address communication gaps
17. Facilitate feedback sharing
18. Develop trust recovery plans
19. Invest in operative training

1. BUILDING EMPATHETIC RELATIONSHIPS



Trust begins with empathy. Missed appointments, cold-calling, and poor communication undermine confidence, especially where access is a sensitive issue. Residents' emotional responses are often overlooked, yet it's the landlord's responsibility to listen and adapt.

Contractors and operatives aren't always given key information about repairs, residents' circumstances, or safety risks – leaving both parties exposed. Few landlords have clear, visible codes of conduct for operatives, and too often complaints about behaviour are ignored or passed on without feedback.

False promises in procurement and failure to trust contractor judgment also damage relationships. The report urges better co-design, staff training, and greater collaboration between all parties. Investing in knowledge and information management (KIM) is essential, with digital tools and AI offering opportunities to do better.

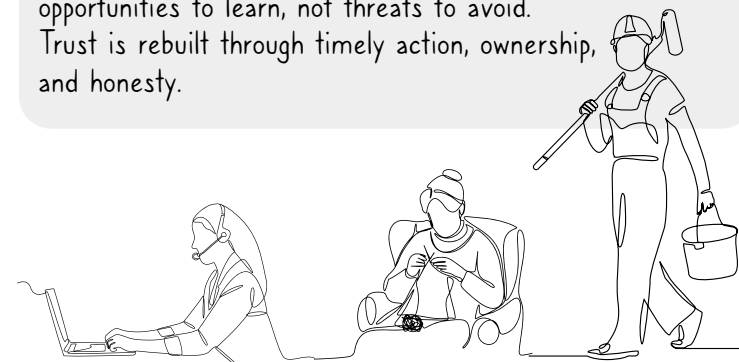
3. SAFETY, RISK AND COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT



Staff and operatives are often the eyes and ears in residents' homes. Training in soft skills and safeguarding is vital to uncover issues early and respond well. Awaab's Law sets new expectations on damp and mould, but other repairs must not be deprioritised.

Effective risk management should consider the property, the resident's situation, and operative safety. Reactive models are not enough – predictive maintenance is needed.

Complaint handling remains a key concern. Backlogs, poor follow-through, and unclear responsibilities erode trust. Contractors sometimes avoid difficult truths, leading to unresolved problems. Complaints must be treated as opportunities to learn, not threats to avoid. Trust is rebuilt through timely action, ownership, and honesty.



THE FINDINGS

2. OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY



The sector needs stronger contract and performance management. The Procurement Act 2023 and Tenant Satisfaction Measures raise expectations, but many contracts don't reflect these standards. Contracts are terminated as a means of addressing poor performance, without fixing the infrastructure and systems behind failure – leading to disruption and worse outcomes, especially for vulnerable residents.

Planning and scheduling remain weak points. Operatives prefer jobs scheduled in advance with full details, but often get poor or incomplete information with short notice. Urban and rural areas face different logistical challenges, which aren't always taken into account.

There is also little assurance over the quality of completed work. Good data, proactive planning, and better landlord-contractor partnerships are essential for sustainable improvement.

CONCLUSION

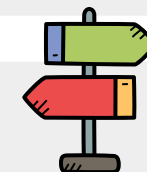


Trust is central to effective repairs and maintenance and it must be actively built and maintained. Strategic solutions are needed to address long-standing structural challenges, including funding, skills, and accountability.

Landlords should focus on building trust through clear communication, timely action, and a culture of empathy.

Complaints must be seen as early indicators of failure and used to drive service improvement. Aligning values, policies, and frontline behaviours is essential to delivering a service that respects residents and restores confidence in social housing.

READING LIST



Spotlight on Attitudes, respect and rights

Spotlight on Knowledge & Information Management

HOS Complaint Handling Code

HOS Centre for Learning

University of Birmingham Understanding Home as an Emotional Place

CIH Rethinking Repairs and Maintenance

NHF Making Every Contact Count

Procurement Act 2023

