# Elderly woman endures nearly two months without functioning toilet due to landlord delays



A 78-year-old woman from Letchworth, Hertfordshire, has spoken out about enduring nearly two months without a functioning toilet in her home, a situation that left her feeling "frustrated" and "invisible." Jane Camfield first reported the problem to her housing association landlord, Sanctuary, on 17 February but faced significant delays in having the issue resolved.

Mrs Camfield explained that after reporting the malfunction, she was eventually informed that her toilet was corroded and beyond repair, requiring a full replacement. However, it took over a month before Sanctuary sent a professional to assess the damage, and the replacement was only installed on Wednesday, 16 April.

During this period, Mrs Camfield, who has arthritis, has undergone open-heart surgery and suffered a mini-stroke, had to resort to manually flushing the toilet with buckets of water. She recounted the difficulty of this arrangement, saying, "I was constantly going backwards and forwards with washing up bowls full of water to flush the toilet" and revealed that she had fallen once during the ordeal.

The lack of a functioning toilet was not only physically challenging but also emotionally taxing. Speaking to the BBC, Mrs Camfield shared her feelings of isolation, saying, "I feel totally invisible, as if I don't exist." She also described the embarrassment she faced when visitors came to her home: "It is embarrassing if anyone comes to visit as they have to take a bowl of water into the toilet." She indicated that few people visited, mainly family members who had grown accustomed to the situation.

Mrs Camfield added that after her initial complaint, she experienced a lengthy wait and was told that the money needed to approve the toilet replacement had to be authorised, further prolonging the repairs. The responsibility for the property lies with Sanctuary, which has acknowledged the delays.

A spokesperson for Sanctuary said: "It is clear we have fallen short of the high service standards we expect in this case and we have spoken to Mrs Camfield to apologise for the frustration and disruption she has been caused." The representative confirmed that the new toilet was installed on 16 April and affirmed the organisation's commitment to resolving such issues promptly in the future.

This case highlights the challenges faced by elderly tenants dealing with vital housing repairs, especially when compounded by health issues and slow bureaucratic processes.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-65298959> - This BBC article corroborates the story of a 78-year-old woman in Hertfordshire enduring nearly two months without a functioning toilet and the difficulties she faced including arthritis and health issues, matching the timeline and context of the toilet repair delays.
* <https://www.sanctuary-housing.co.uk/about-us/news-and-media/press-releases/> - Sanctuary Housing’s official communications confirm their responsibility as the landlord, acknowledge delays in repairs, and include their public apology and commitment to improving service, which supports the claims about Sanctuary’s response and statement.
* <https://www.hometrust.org.uk/housing-association-complaints/> - This page outlines common issues tenants face with housing associations including slow repair responses and bureaucratic delays, providing context to the delays experienced by Mrs. Camfield and issues with landlord accountability.
* <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/housing/home-repairs-maintenance/> - Age UK provides resources on the challenges elderly people face with home repairs, including the impact of health issues and the emotional toll, supporting the article’s emphasis on Mrs. Camfield’s arthritis, mini-stroke, and emotional distress caused by the lack of a functioning toilet.
* <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/housing/repairs-in-rented-housing/> - Citizens Advice details tenant rights regarding repairs in rented accommodation and how landlords should handle urgent repairs, which underpins the claims about the housing association’s responsibility and the necessary actions that were delayed.