# Awaab’s Law prompts urgent overhaul as social landlords struggle with repairs and complaints rise



The Housing Ombudsman’s recent Annual Complaints Review 2024-25 discloses a troubling picture of social housing landlords continuing to underperform in their repair and maintenance duties, even as Awaab’s Law is poised to come into effect next month. This new legislation will obligate social housing landlords to address dangerous damp and mould issues within prescribed time limits and to carry out emergency repairs within 24 hours. Despite some improvements, the review reveals that complaints are escalating and are upheld in a majority of cases, signalling persistent failures in housing management.

The report highlights a 43% increase in complaints related to repairs, with poor property conditions remaining the dominant concern. Alarmingly, 71% of complaints investigated resulted in maladministration findings, a rate that, while showing a slight 2% drop overall from previous years, remains unacceptably high. Certain landlords demonstrate acute difficulties, especially local authorities and housing associations managing between 1,000 and 10,000 homes, who struggle to respond effectively to complaints in a timely manner.

The review paints a grim reality for some tenants. In one London case, residents endured two years with bin bags covering a hole in their ceiling that posed an asbestos risk. Another household lived three years without functioning heating or hot water. Such examples underscore the severity of disrepair issues faced by vulnerable communities. Additionally, complaints involving damp and mould have risen, with this category accounting for over 40% of compensation payments to tenants. Notably, compensation orders often reflect the rent tenants paid while living in substandard conditions, with 578 cases resulting in compensation exceeding £2,000 and the largest single award reaching nearly £32,000.

There are signs of progress, albeit uneven. The Ombudsman’s review notes a 7% reduction in maladministration findings related to complaint handling and 117 fewer severe maladministration determinations compared to the previous year. Some landlords, such as North Devon Homes and Pickering & Feren Homes, were investigated but found to have no failings, suggesting that better practices are achievable. Furthermore, there has been a noticeable increase in voluntary corrective actions by landlords, with over 800 instances where issues were rectified without formal orders from the Ombudsman.

Richard Blakeway, the Housing Ombudsman, points to culture, communication, and data integrity as pivotal factors influencing complaint outcomes. Speaking about the findings, he emphasised the opportunity for governing bodies to view complaints as a constructive catalyst for change rather than a threat. Blakeway stresses that while some landlords are making progress, others remain under acute pressure, continuing to impact residents adversely. His message is clear: social housing providers must use the current review as an impetus to improve practices, policies, and performance to meet rising legislative and regulatory expectations.

Looking forward, Blakeway draws attention to the broader evolving landscape of social housing management. The sector faces challenges and opportunities from digital innovations such as Artificial Intelligence integration in complaint processes, alongside upcoming reforms like the Decent Homes Standard and the Regulator’s Competence and Conduct Standard. He underlines that successful implementation of these changes hinges on continued learning from complaints to protect the interests of current and future tenants.

The Housing Ombudsman’s wider data reinforce the ongoing challenges. Property condition complaints accounted for 64% of all complaints in the first quarter of 2025, maintaining this issue as the sector’s predominant concern. Compensation and remedial recommendations remain common outcomes following Ombudsman investigations.

In sum, while the Housing Ombudsman notes early signs of improvement in some areas of complaint handling, the persistent prevalence of poor housing conditions remains a critical concern. The imminent arrival of Awaab’s Law adds urgency for social landlords to rectify long-standing maintenance failures and improve responsiveness to tenants' needs, ensuring safe and habitable homes. The coming years will be crucial in transforming social housing management to offer residents the dignity and quality of life they deserve.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.property118.com/social-housing-landlords-fail-to-tackle-repairs-ahead-of-awaabs-law/), [[2]](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/annual-complaint-review-reports/annual-complaints-review-2024-25/), [[3]](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/2025/09/23/annual-complaints-review-2/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.property118.com/social-housing-landlords-fail-to-tackle-repairs-ahead-of-awaabs-law/), [[6]](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/reports/landlord-complaint-statistics/q4-quarterly-data-2024-25/), [[3]](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/2025/09/23/annual-complaints-review-2/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.property118.com/social-housing-landlords-fail-to-tackle-repairs-ahead-of-awaabs-law/), [[2]](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/annual-complaint-review-reports/annual-complaints-review-2024-25/), [[6]](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/reports/landlord-complaint-statistics/q4-quarterly-data-2024-25/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.property118.com/social-housing-landlords-fail-to-tackle-repairs-ahead-of-awaabs-law/), [[5]](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/2023/10/17/ombudsmans-annual-complaints-review-reveal-a-323-rise-in-severe-maladministration-findings/), [[7]](https://www.housingtoday.co.uk/news/ombudsman-cautiously-hails-first-signs-of-improvement-as-complaint-handling-maladministration-rate-drops-7/5138313.article)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.property118.com/social-housing-landlords-fail-to-tackle-repairs-ahead-of-awaabs-law/), [[7]](https://www.housingtoday.co.uk/news/ombudsman-cautiously-hails-first-signs-of-improvement-as-complaint-handling-maladministration-rate-drops-7/5138313.article), [[2]](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/annual-complaint-review-reports/annual-complaints-review-2024-25/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.property118.com/social-housing-landlords-fail-to-tackle-repairs-ahead-of-awaabs-law/), [[7]](https://www.housingtoday.co.uk/news/ombudsman-cautiously-hails-first-signs-of-improvement-as-complaint-handling-maladministration-rate-drops-7/5138313.article), [[2]](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/annual-complaint-review-reports/annual-complaints-review-2024-25/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.property118.com/social-housing-landlords-fail-to-tackle-repairs-ahead-of-awaabs-law/), [[7]](https://www.housingtoday.co.uk/news/ombudsman-cautiously-hails-first-signs-of-improvement-as-complaint-handling-maladministration-rate-drops-7/5138313.article)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.property118.com/social-housing-landlords-fail-to-tackle-repairs-ahead-of-awaabs-law/), [[6]](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/reports/landlord-complaint-statistics/q4-quarterly-data-2024-25/)
* Paragraph 9 – [[1]](https://www.property118.com/social-housing-landlords-fail-to-tackle-repairs-ahead-of-awaabs-law/), [[2]](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/annual-complaint-review-reports/annual-complaints-review-2024-25/), [[7]](https://www.housingtoday.co.uk/news/ombudsman-cautiously-hails-first-signs-of-improvement-as-complaint-handling-maladministration-rate-drops-7/5138313.article)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.property118.com/social-housing-landlords-fail-to-tackle-repairs-ahead-of-awaabs-law/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/annual-complaint-review-reports/annual-complaints-review-2024-25/> - The Housing Ombudsman’s Annual Complaints Review 2024-25 reveals a 2% decrease in the overall maladministration rate, with a 7% drop in complaint handling and a 9% reduction in fault handling of anti-social behaviour. Despite these improvements, poor property conditions remain a significant issue, with a 43% increase in findings related to repairs. The review also highlights that 120 landlords had a maladministration rate exceeding 75%, while 16 landlords showed significant improvement. Notably, North Devon Homes and Pickering & Feren Homes were investigated without any failings found.
3. <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/2025/09/23/annual-complaints-review-2/> - The Housing Ombudsman’s Annual Complaints Review 2024-25 indicates a 2% fall in the overall maladministration rate, with a 7% decrease in complaint handling and a 9% reduction in fault handling of anti-social behaviour. However, poor property conditions continue to dominate casework, with a 43% increase in findings. The review also notes that 120 landlords had a maladministration rate of over 75%, while 16 landlords improved significantly. Two landlords, North Devon Homes and Pickering & Feren Homes, were investigated without any failings found.
4. <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/2024/11/05/annual-complaints-review/> - The Housing Ombudsman’s Annual Complaints Review 2023-24 reveals a 329% increase in interventions to rectify issues for residents, totaling 21,740 interventions. The review also highlights a 4% rise in severe maladministration findings, with 73% of decisions resulting in maladministration due to landlords not following legal requirements or policies. Additionally, 73% of property condition findings were upheld, and 84% for the handling of complaints. The Ombudsman has published 271 landlord performance reports and written to 126 landlords where failings were found in 75% or more of its decisions.
5. <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/2023/10/17/ombudsmans-annual-complaints-review-reveal-a-323-rise-in-severe-maladministration-findings/> - The Housing Ombudsman’s Annual Complaints Review for 2022-23 reveals a 323% increase in severe maladministration findings, with over 5,000 complaints received, a 28% increase from the previous year. The review highlights poor property conditions, legislative changes, media attention, and the inquest into the death of Awaab Ishak as contributing factors. The Ombudsman also notes an increase in maladministration findings where service requests were not handled reasonably and a decrease in findings of no fault, indicating more than half of findings were upheld for the first time.
6. <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/reports/landlord-complaint-statistics/q4-quarterly-data-2024-25/> - The Housing Ombudsman’s Q4 Quarterly Data 2024-25 indicates that 'property condition' was the most complained about category, accounting for 64% of all complaints, followed by 'complaint handling' at 17%. In this quarter, from January to March 2025, the Ombudsman made 1,962 determinations, with 71% resulting in maladministration. The data also shows that in 47% of cases, landlords were ordered to pay residents compensation, and in 30% of cases, recommendations were made for landlords to take non-specific action.
7. <https://www.housingtoday.co.uk/news/ombudsman-cautiously-hails-first-signs-of-improvement-as-complaint-handling-maladministration-rate-drops-7/5138313.article> - The Housing Ombudsman’s Annual Complaints Review for 2024-25 shows a 7% year-on-year decrease in the maladministration rate for complaint handling by social landlords. The report also indicates a 2% fall in the overall maladministration rate and a 9% drop in fault handling of anti-social behaviour. Additionally, there were over 800 more findings where landlords took reasonable steps to rectify issues voluntarily, rather than being ordered to do so by the Ombudsman. However, disrepair investigations increased by almost 50%.