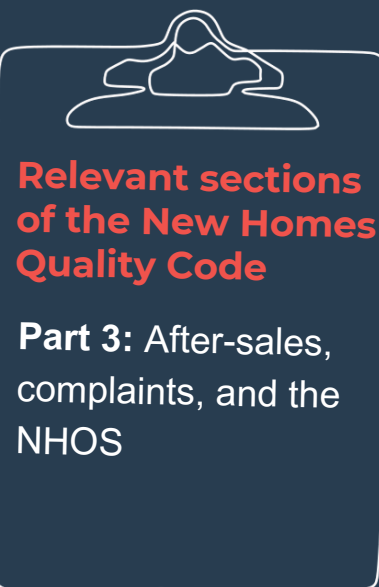


New Homes Ombudsman Case Study: **Delayed Repairs, Leaks, Mould, and Damp**



Issue

The customer reported long delays in completing repairs, poor workmanship, and ongoing issues with damp, mould, and fungal growth, which they believed posed health risks to their children. They also experienced plumbing leaks and other unresolved snagging issues. Despite providing a snagging report, the developer completed only limited work and failed to address all outstanding items. The customer said the developer missed appointments, sent discourteous emails, and failed to deliver promised goodwill gestures.



Circumstances

- During their seven-day check after moving in, the customer raised several issues with the developer, including mould in the lower ground-floor toilet. Over time, further damp and mould appeared in the hall, bathroom, and living area, which the customer believed posed health risks to their children.
- They said the developer had monitored the problem but failed to take effective remedial action.
- The customer also experienced plumbing failures that led to leaks from the downstairs toilet and a radiator. A professional snagging report identified additional defects, including out-of-plumb walls and a damaged canopy. Although the developer arranged for some work to be completed, several issues remained outstanding.
- The customer reported inconsistent communication from the developer, with contractors missing appointments, and limited updates provided on progress. They felt the developer's attitude changed after they submitted feedback through a customer survey.
- Promised goodwill gestures, including a complimentary garden shed and a contribution towards utility bills, were not delivered, leaving the customer frustrated and disappointed with the overall level of service.

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Outcome

Partially upheld. The customer was awarded £6,158 in compensation.



Ombudsman's decision

The Ombudsman upheld the complaint in part, fully upholding the customer's concerns about damp, mould and fungal growth, and other elements relating to workmanship, delays, and complaint handling. Independent specialist evidence and site visits confirmed persistent moisture issues in the basement, problems with tanking, ventilation, drainage, and fungal activity in the brickwork — matters that had not been resolved despite prolonged monitoring and some repairs.

The developer carried out some remedial works, installed additional ventilation and dehumidification, and offered gestures of goodwill. However, the Ombudsman found that the developer's approach was reactive, failing to identify the root cause, and that some promised works were not completed in a timely manner. Several snagging items and external defects (including garden drainage and flooring) remained unresolved or were unfairly excluded from the developer's scope. Missed appointments and inconsistent communication exacerbated the customer's distress.

As a result, the Ombudsman concluded the developer had not met the Code's standards for quality or fair treatment.

Learnings

- Persistent damp and mould can distress homeowners and raise health concerns. This highlights the importance of identifying and addressing root causes promptly.
- Reactive, poor remedial work, missed appointments, and inconsistent communication significantly weaken customer trust and satisfaction, even when some gestures of goodwill are offered

Recommendations for developers

Investigate thoroughly and provide lasting solutions, not temporary fixes, for moisture, insulation, and drainage issues, ensuring timely remediation.

Communicate transparently, honour commitments, and treat customers fairly throughout the after-sales process.

