

London & Quadrant Housing Trust – Response to Housing Ombudsman Report

The Housing Ombudsman carried out an investigation into L&Q's complaints handling earlier this year and has now published a report highlighting their findings and recommendations.

The report highlights several cases where L&Q let down our residents and did not deliver the service they deserve. You can read [the Ombudsman's full report](#) including their recommendations for L&Q on the Housing Ombudsman website.

Responding to the report, L&Q's Group Chief Executive, Fiona Fletcher-Smith, said:

"We recognise that we've got things wrong, and we welcome this extremely valuable learning process.

My senior leadership colleagues and I are personally contacting the residents whose complaints the Ombudsman judged to have involved service failure or maladministration on our part. We have apologised for the completely unacceptable service they have received. L&Q has let them down, and I'm truly sorry for that.

What really matters to us is putting things right for residents and using the report's learnings to correct historic failings, continue building a resident-centred culture, and ensure we deliver a quality service every time.

The Ombudsman's investigation draws conclusions from complaints made between March 2019 and October 2022 - a period when our services were severely disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic. As the Ombudsman has recognised, when I became Chief Executive in 2021, the Board and I put in place a new five-year improvement and investment strategy to tackle the problems that had emerged. This was developed through listening to residents, and resolutely focused on the safety and quality of existing homes and services.

I'm pleased the Ombudsman has endorsed these plans, and I welcome both residents' and the Ombudsman's input on how we can further strengthen, accelerate and embed the positive changes we're making.

Central to our approach is putting residents at the heart of our decision-making, and I wholeheartedly agree with the Ombudsman about the importance of the resident voice. We published a report in May 2023 setting out how we will embed resident involvement at every level of L&Q and put residents in control of the decisions that affect them. This builds on what we've already done to place residents at the top of our governance through our resident-led Resident Services Board, regional committees, and 600-strong body of involved residents.

We've also made significant progress to address the operational issues highlighted in this report, and these are already delivering improvements:

Our £3 billion, 15-year major works investment programme, launched last year, is making sure every resident's home is safe, decent and more energy-efficient, and will also drive down repairs. In 2022/23 alone we installed over 1,500 new bathrooms, 1,400 new kitchens, and almost 2,800 new windows. Every resident will experience improvements to their home or building, and when completed we will have fitted 42,000 new kitchens and 50,000 new bathrooms through our programme.

We deliver 400,000 repairs each year, and we're transforming the quality and responsiveness of this service so we can deliver more repairs each day, and a first-time-fix whenever possible – this has already increased by 20% across day-to-day repairs. We're also progressing further improvements to tackle damp and mould through our Healthy Homes Project, which has already carried out 20,000 home visits and installed 14,000 humidity sensors.

The new, localised housing management approach we implemented last year is putting 30% more front-line colleagues in local neighbourhoods where they're better placed to proactively support residents and

communities and be more responsive to the needs of vulnerable residents. We've also established an extensive training programme for resident-facing colleagues to help us deliver an empathetic and responsive resident experience and manage poor performance.

We are overhauling our complaints handling, investing in additional staff, training and other resources, prioritising efficiency and good communication, and embedding learning from complaints in our process. We're already seeing a reduction in the time it takes to resolve complaints and in the number progressing to stage 2. The Ombudsman's report acknowledges the improved quality of our complaint responses.

Underpinning these changes is a £40m investment in a new housing management system and other technologies that will improve how we manage our data and information, and how we communicate with residents, and in particular vulnerable residents who may need different types of support.

We have a clear plan, a dedicated and committed team to deliver it, and we are confident that the changes we're making will ensure residents receive the quality homes and services they deserve. We are grateful to the Ombudsman for their work, and we look forward to ongoing collaboration to make further improvements."

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