

Housing

Ombudsman Service

Repairing Trust Spotlight launch webinar
Zoe Miller and Chris Harrison

What is a Spotlight report?



- Thematic investigation
- Based on casework and research
- Sets out learning and recommendations for the sector
- Helps residents know their rights

Why repairs and maintenance?

Since 2019:

- Covid-19
- Building Safety Regulator
- Grenfell Tower Inquiry
- Awaab's Law
- Better Social Housing Review



474%

increase in repairs
and maintenance
investigations between
2019-20 and 2024-25

2019-20 and 2024-25
investigations between
and maintenance

Our approach

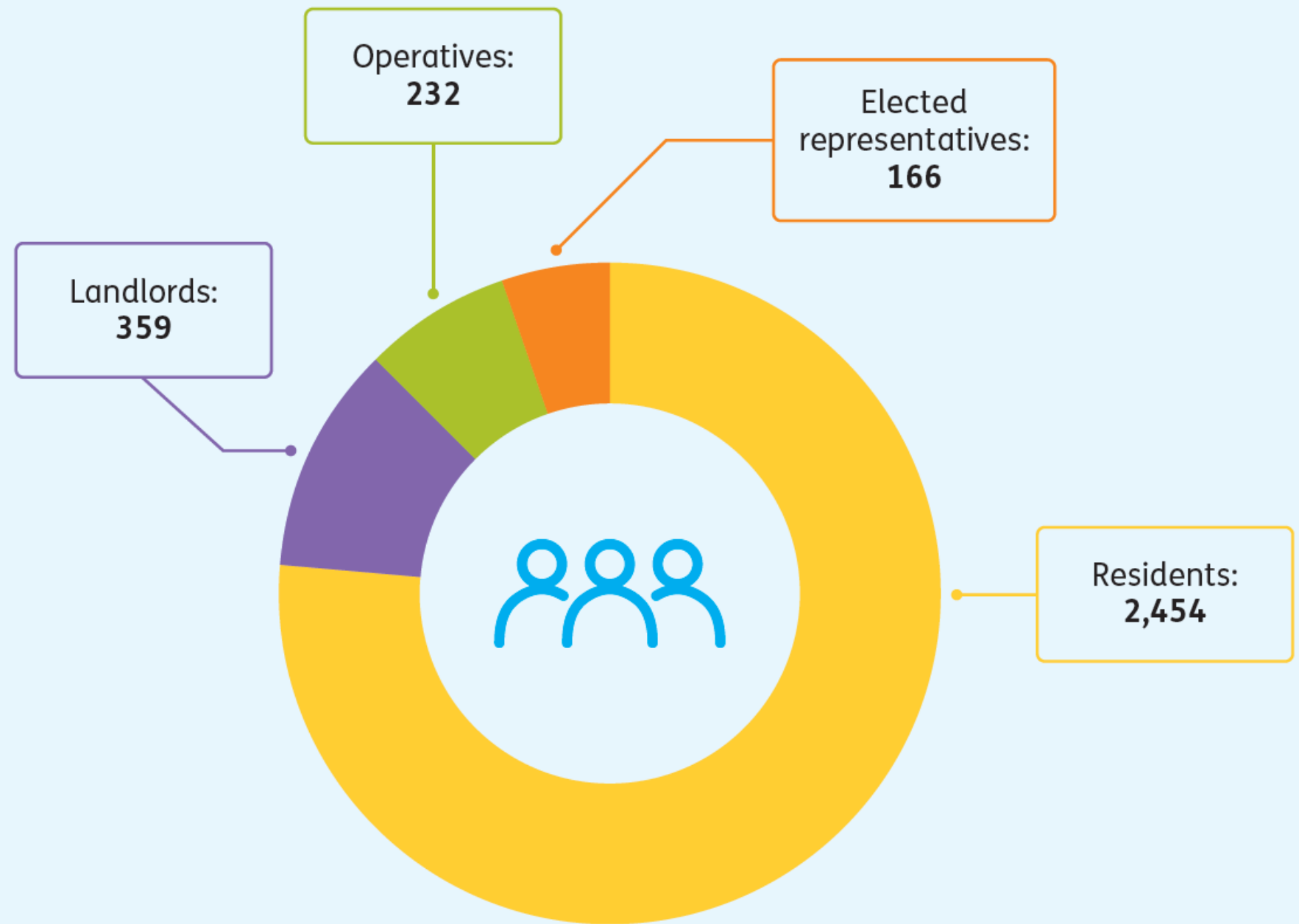


“

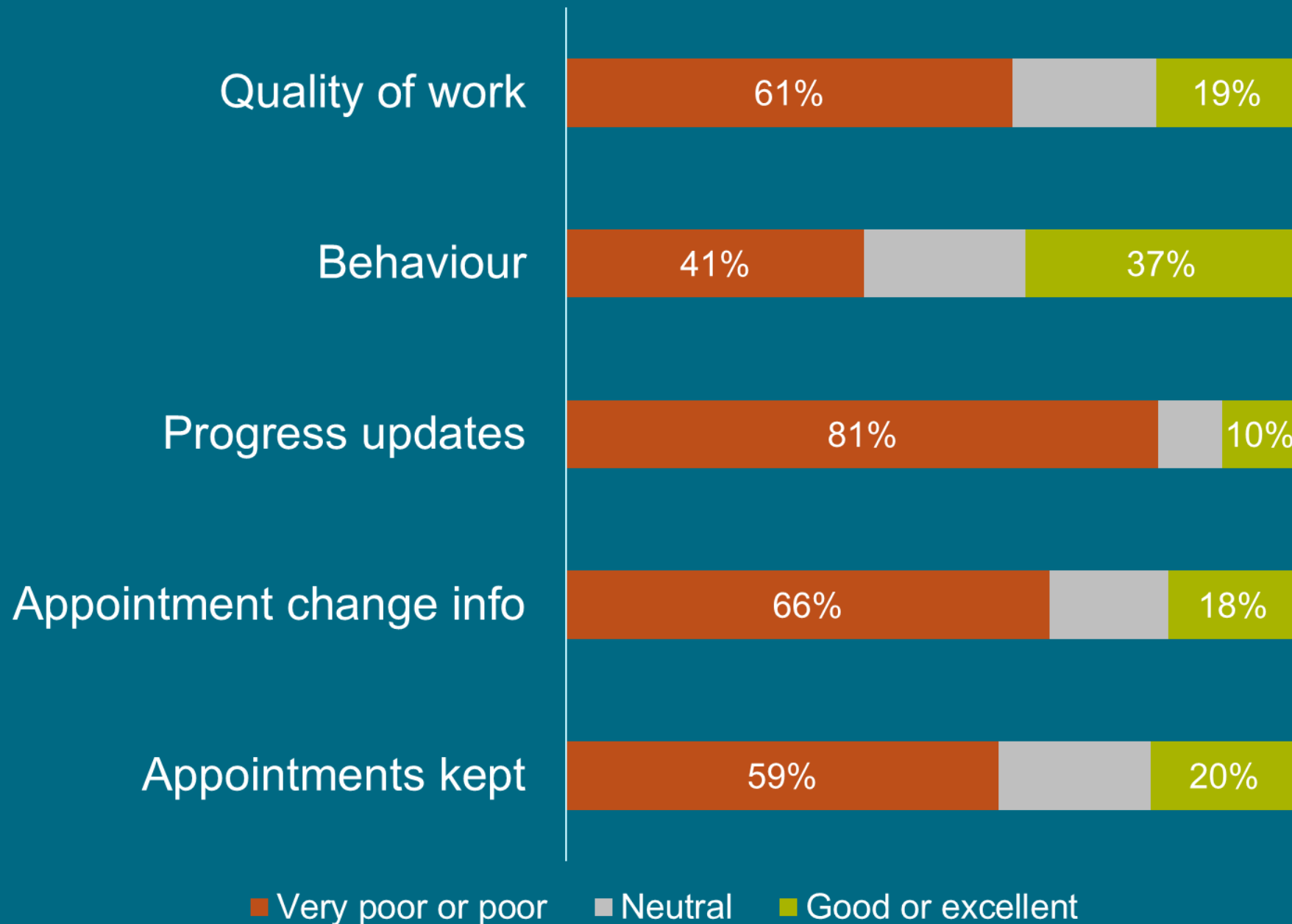
*“For us, it’s a job.
For them, it’s
their home.”*

– Contractor

Call for evidence



Resident satisfaction with operatives



Landlord and operative perspective



More than
60%
of landlords said they
outsource some or
all of their repairs



20%
of landlords who outsource
some or all of their repairs also
outsource some complaint
handling responsibilities.



Only
60%
of landlords have
an operative's
code of conduct

Elected representative perspective



40%

report increased
repair-related
contacts



80%

feel concerns
are not handled
appropriately



2/3

have a negative experience
of communicating
with landlords
and/or contractors

Trust



SPOTLIGHT REPORT ON

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

REPAIRING TRUST

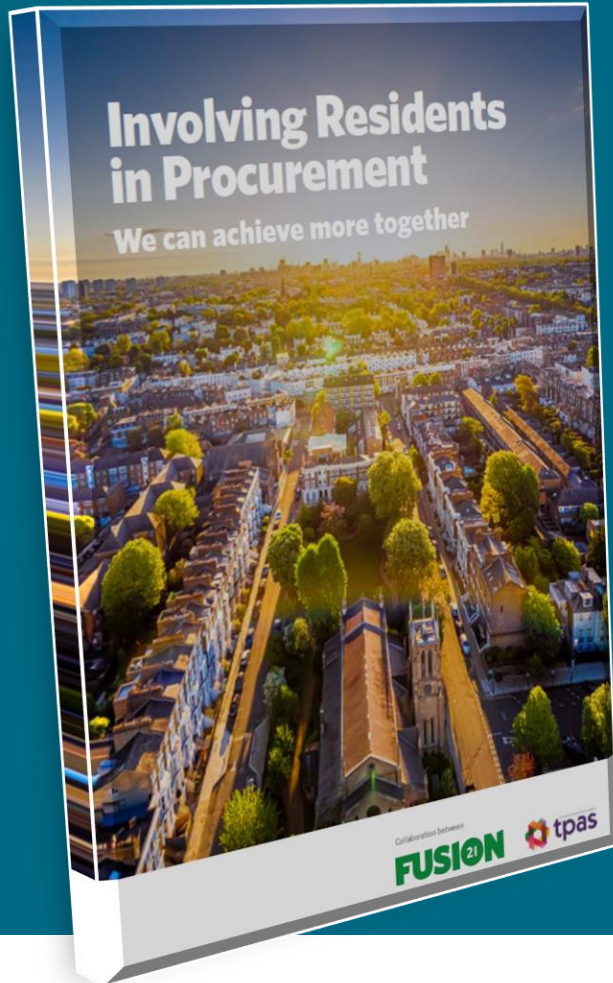
- Building empathic relationships and understanding
- Blame and accountability
- Safety, risk and complaint management

Building meaningful and trusting relationships

- Access
- “Home as an emotional place”



Building meaningful and trusting relationships



Procurement - an exercise in trust.

Resident involvement

Building meaningful and trusting relationships



- Relationship management
- Return to “in-person” contact
- ‘Communication gulf’ between start and end of contract

Building meaningful and trusting relationships – good practice

- Poor resident feedback
- Warning of contract termination...
- ...but no dialogue.
- Communication and the chance to improve



Building meaningful and trusting relationships - Behaviours

“

“Housing is so important and represents the very foundation of people’s ability to build a life for their families. If only the landlord cared as much for where we live as we do.”

– Resident

Root causes of resident frustration:

- Property condition
- Expectations
- Past experience
- Avoidable delays

Building meaningful and trusting relationships - Behaviours

Root causes of contractor frustration include:

- inadequate information
- the unknown
- safety concerns

We recommend a Code of Conduct



Recommendations for landlords

- Learning exercises post contract termination.
- Implement or review quality assurance processes, including a damage compensation procedure.
- Code of conduct
- Resident involvement at procurement stage



Good practice for housing professionals



- Terminating contracts – no panacea
- Lessons learned

Good practice for housing professionals

- Clear quality control processes
- Look at the both the emotional and practical aspects of the resident experience.
- Evidence



33%

of residents perceive a lack of quality assurance activities being carried out by the landlord during and after works, and **40%** believe social housing landlords carry out a poor standard of work.

Good practice for housing professionals – case study

neither landlord nor contractor have been able to verify what condition the items were at the start of the process and consequently, not able to say with any certainty whether they are responsible for the damage.

In some cases, we have seen landlords accept responsibility, and compensate for, the damage caused without there being supporting evidence their contractors were responsible. Although this approach is good from a relationship perspective, landlords may be paying out money unnecessarily which is not a fair or effective long-term approach to take.

In other cases, there has been a protracted back-and-forth exchange between resident, landlord, and contractor about the damage and responsibility. Such an approach often causes animosity, suspicion, and delay in resolving the issue.

Where items are damaged or identified as needing discarding, it is vital landlords have a clear evidence base for this, and the resident's consent is sought. Keeping personal belongings safe and respecting these, and the resident's home, are the cornerstone of trust.



Spotlight report: Repairing Trust



Case study – damage to property and belongings managed well

Mrs C's home was flooded, and her landlord arranged for her family to stay in a hotel while repairs were made. Before they returned, a gas check revealed a leak, delaying their return by 3 weeks. Upon returning, Mrs C found her sofa stained with paint and her freezer turned off, spoiling food.

The landlord compensated over £200 for the food and the landlord cleaned the sofa but did not investigate the damage, leaving Mrs C unhappy. She was also worried about contractors having keys and asked for the locks to be changed. The landlord agreed but took 6 months to do so, later apologising and offering compensation. A meeting at Mrs C's home led to an offer for a professional sofa cleaning, but she remained unsatisfied as the sofa still seemed damaged. The landlord apologised, acknowledging the contractors' failure to protect the sofa, and offered £250 plus a new sofa through a hardship fund.

We recommended the landlord consider carrying out a 'settling in visit' when residents return home after an extended period away from the home because of an extended temporary move or refurbishment. This might provide an opportunity for issues to be identified and resolved at an earlier stage. This is something for other landlords to consider introducing.

43

- Damage to belongings during decant
- Acknowledged delays
- Appropriate redress
- Recommend 'settling in' visit

Questions



Contact us



Telephone 0300 111 3000



Email insight@housing-ombudsman.org.uk



Follow us on LinkedIn [@HousingOmbuds](https://www.linkedin.com/company/HousingOmbuds)



Sign up to our newsletter via our website



www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk