

# New Homes Ombudsman Case Study: **Customer felt pressurised to complete purchase and found numerous snags**



## Issue

The customer complained to the New Homes Ombudsman Service (NHOS) that they had felt pressured into completing their purchase, and that they found a number of snags which took longer than expected to resolve.

## Relevant sections of the New Homes Quality Code

Part 2

Legal documents, information, inspection and completion

Part 3

After-sales, complaints and the NHOS



## Circumstances

- The property was complete at reservation, but the customer's purchase involved a chain leading to some delays and an extension of the reservation agreement.
- Shortly before the revised expiry date of the reservation agreement, the developer indicated that they intended to remarket the property if the transaction was not completed by the end of the month.
- Although the customer would have preferred a few additional days, they were able to meet the deadline for completion, but it was not possible to arrange a home demonstration until the day of completion.
- After moving in, the customer raised a number of snagging issues with the developer, all of which were accepted but took longer than should be expected to fix. All but two were addressed with the outstanding issues being external and held over until the weather improved.

## Ombudsman's decision

The Ombudsman acknowledged efforts from both parties to resolve transaction issues. However, the developer's refusal to extend the agreement again, though unsettling for the customer, did not breach the Code so this complaint was not upheld.

While home demonstrations should occur before completion, scheduling one before the completion day was not possible, so this complaint was also not upheld.

The developer admitted their after-sales service was substandard, apologised, and acknowledged the need to improve their process for handling after-sales issues on developments without a site presence.

However, due to the delays in addressing issues and the customer's repeated follow-ups, the Ombudsman upheld this part of the complaint and awarded the customer £250 for the inconvenience.

# New Homes Ombudsman Case Study: **Customer felt pressurised to complete purchase and found numerous snags**



## Outcome

The complaint was **upheld in part**

## Learnings



- Pressure to complete a purchase can cause undue stress and dissatisfaction. As the developer indicated they intended to remarket the property if the transaction was not completed by a certain date, the sense of pressure experienced by the customer negatively impacted their perception of the overall process.
- While delays in completion may sometimes be unavoidable due to external factors, re-marketing a new home should be considered only as a last resort. It's important to ensure this approach does not create undue pressure on customers.
- Although there was no longer a site team present in the development, the time it takes to address any snags should match the requirements set out in the Code and be treated as if the site was still an active development. The customer in this case had to repeatedly follow-up for updates on when the issues could be resolved, which caused the complaint to be upheld on this part.

## Recommendations for developers

Provide customers with clear timelines and milestones from the start to ensure they understand the implications of deadlines and do not feel unduly pressurised.

Train customer-facing staff to empathise with customers' frustrations, and provide proactive support and reassurance during periods of uncertainty.

Maintain consistent communication channels for customers to report and track snagging issues, even in developments where there is no longer a site team present.

