

Housing Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report

July 2026



HILLINGDON
LONDON

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1. Introduction

Hillingdon Council is required to comply with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and to demonstrate compliance on at least an annual basis. This document sets out our annual complaint's performance and service improvement report, which forms part of our annual submission to the Housing Ombudsman. The report includes:

- Our latest self-assessment of compliance against the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.
- An analysis of complaint handling performance in the year from April 2025 to March 2026.
- Findings of non-compliance with the Code by the Ombudsman between April 2025 and 2026.
- Learning from Complaints and Service Improvements.

The annual complaints performance and service improvement report and the annual self-assessment is reported annually to a Senior Officer level HRA Operational Group , Corporate Management Team (CMT), the Cabinet Lead with responsibility for Housing, and Residents' Services Select Committee. The report is shared for feedback with our Tenant Complaints & Compliments Special Interest Group and is published on the council's website at [Complaints - Hillingdon Council](#). Information from the report is also shared more widely with tenants.

The Council's Landlord Service recognises that complaints should perform a strategic role providing an essential source of intelligence on evolving risks and performance. They have the potential to identify issues which are not being identified elsewhere and provide insight and learning to help improve services for tenants.

As part of its approach to scrutiny, from 2025/26, the Landlord Service adopted a standard template for reporting purposes to 'build-up' the annual report via a series of rolling quarterly updates. These updates include documented feedback on the preceding quarters complaints from the Tenant Complaints & Compliments Special Interest Group and are reviewed by Corporate Management Team and the Cabinet Member lead for the Landlord Service.

2. Summary of Self-Assessment against Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

A completed self-assessment form is included at appendix A.

Section1: Definition of a complaint - Compliant

In general terms a complaint can be considered as: *"an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the council, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals."*

Section 2: Exclusions - Compliant

- although a complaint can be submitted against Council **policy**, please be aware that Council policy cannot be overturned through the complaint process as this can only be done through the statutory decision-making procedure;
- we will not deal with issues through the complaint procedure where a claim has been made in a court such as a disrepair claim; and
- issues relating to employment or application for employment with the Council cannot be addressed through the complaint procedure.

Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness - Compliant

Complaints can be made in person, by telephone, in writing, email or via our website at www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints. If an adjustment is needed complainants are asked to call the complaint team.

Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff - Compliant

All staff within the team are experienced and fully trained to deal with complaints and any adjustments that are required. Online training sessions have been delivered for staff dealing with complaints on 29 April and 5 May 2026 which were attended by over 200 staff. A recording was made of the session on 29 April and is available for staff to view at any time.

Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process - Compliant

The Corporate Complaints Policy and Procedure was revised in June 2026, and approved by CMT, the Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing in July 2026. The updates to the policy are minimal and do not alter the process itself. They are primarily intended to enhance the wording, clarify certain points, and reinforce the intent of key statements.

Our procedure:

- allows managers to address issues of unsatisfactory service and seek improvements in service delivery;
- ensures that customers are treated fairly, consistently and with respect;
- ensures that a proper and adequate investigation takes place before any action is taken;
- requests for reasonable adjustments will be considered in line with the Equality Act 2010 and appropriate training is provided for staff; and
- safeguards the integrity and good reputation of the Council.

Section 6: Complaint Stages - Compliant

In line with the Code, we have a Service Request step and 2 formal complaints stages, after which the complainant can apply to the Ombudsman.

Section 7: Putting things right - Compliant

Where we have identified adverse impact, service failure or hardship suffered, we will always try to put the complainant back to the position they would have enjoyed before the situation went wrong. Types of redress include:

- an apology;
- providing the service that should have been received at first;
- taking action or making a decision that should have been done before;
- reconsidering an incorrect decision;
- improving procedures so that similar problems do not occur again; and
- if after an investigation by Council staff or the Ombudsman, it is concluded that as a result of maladministration there is no practical action that would provide a full and appropriate remedy or if the complainant has sustained loss or suffering, financial compensation may be the most appropriate approach.

We now capture all extensions granted, at what complaint stage and the reason why the extension has been granted.

Section 8: Self-assessment reporting and compliance - Compliant

Our self-assessment will be published on the complaint page www.hillingdon.gov.uk

Section 9: Scrutiny & Oversight: continuous learning and improvement – Compliant

All staff involved in the management and response to complaints have received a management instruction that they are responsible for: working collaboratively to resolve resident issues, taking shared responsibility for addressing areas of development identified through complaints and acting in accordance with any relevant professional registration that they hold. These obligations are woven into relevant job descriptions when reviewed / updated or created.

The Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) is a role performed by Cllr Nick Denys. This emphasises the importance of complaints within the Council.

3. Analysis of Complaint Handling Performance April 2025 to March 2026

The Council recognises that Complaints present its Landlord Service with valuable insight into tenants' experiences of interacting with their landlord. As a direct consequence the Landlord Service is committed to making good use of this learning to improve outcomes and services for tenants, bringing about change at both a service and organisational level where appropriate. As part of this learning commitment, the Landlord Service has introduced a permanent role into its structure to accelerate work on analysing trends and themes, learning from complaints and resolving underlying and recurring issues.

A corporate complaints report is provided to the Corporate Resources and Infrastructure Select Committee in September. This includes information on housing complaints associated with the Council's Landlord Service and the minutes from this meeting are available on the Council's website [London Borough of Hillingdon - Browse meetings - Corporate Resources & Infrastructure Select Committee](#)

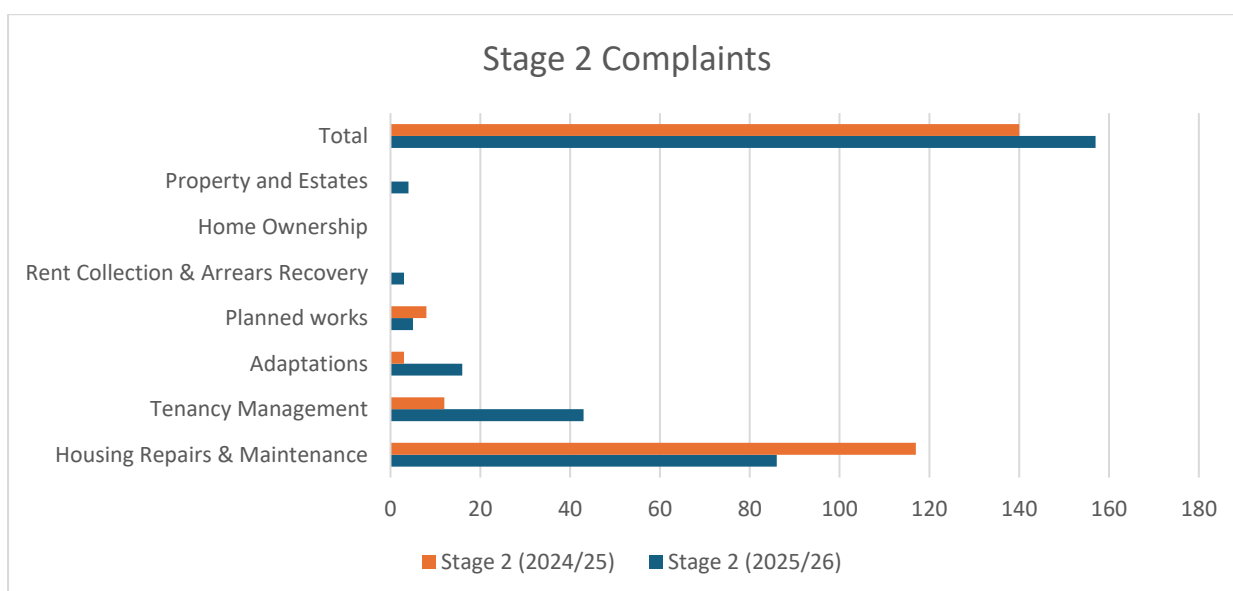
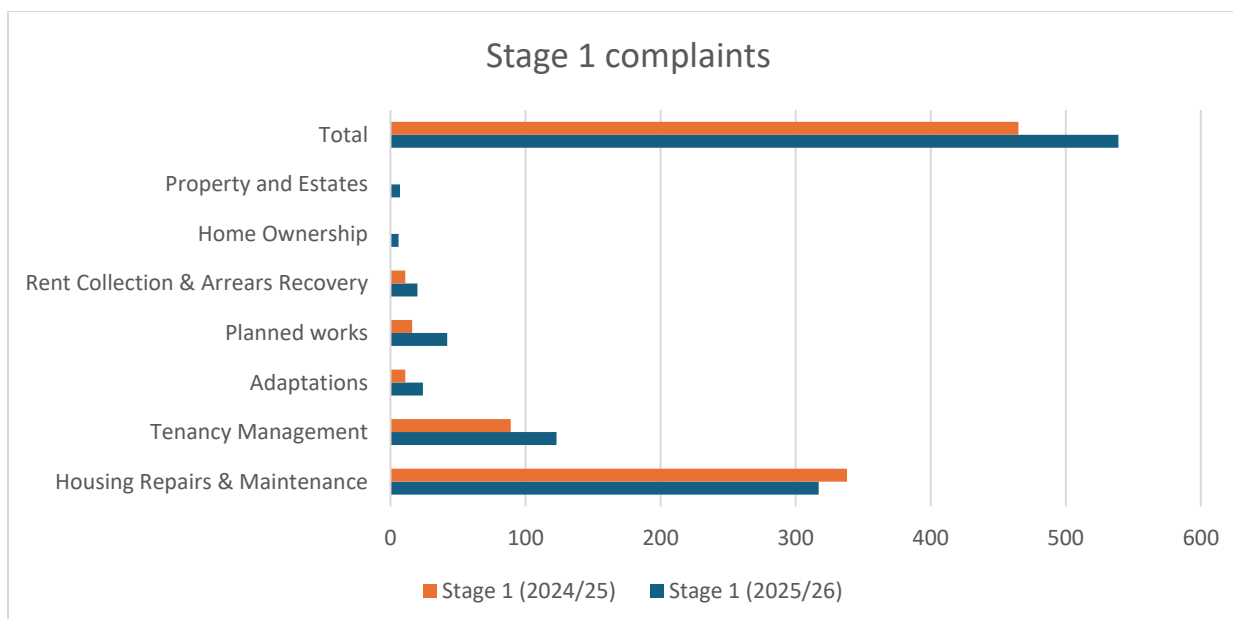
Aside from quarterly complaints data reporting into the Landlord governance structure, including HRA Operational Group and the Cabinet Member Lead, complaints data and learning outcomes are now shared with tenants on a rolling quarterly basis via our 'Complaints and Compliments Special Interest Group.' These meetings provide a direct and ongoing opportunity for tenants to review and scrutinise data and understand how it is being used to shape the delivery of services and provide better outcomes for tenants. An overriding theme from tenants in 2025/26 was that they wanted to see improvements in the depth and breadth of complaints data shared with them during 2026/27.

In line with other housing providers' complaints, a high proportion of complaints recorded in 2025/26 were focused on housing repairs. The table below shows that repairs accounted for 58.8% of all Stage 1 complaints and 54.7% of Stage 2 complaints. This was followed by Tenancy Management which accounted for 22.8% of all Stage 1 complaints and 27.4% of stage 2 complaints

Breakdown of complaints by service area 2025/26

Service Area	Stage 1	Stage 2
Housing Repairs & Maintenance	317	86
Tenancy Management	123	43
Adaptations	24	16
Planned works	42	5
Rent Collection & Arrears Recovery	20	3
Home Ownership	6	0
Property and Estates	7	4
Total	539	157

Between April 2024 and March 2025, a total of 605 complaints were received; 465 Stage 1 complaints and 140 Stage 2 complaints. Between April 2025 and March 2026, a total of 696 complaints were received. Of these 539 were Stage 1 complaints and 157 were Stage 2 complaints.



Overall complaints increased from 605 in 2024/25 to 696 in 2025/26, representing an increase of 91 complaints (+15.0%). While complaint volumes increased, the growth was driven primarily by Stage 1 complaints, which rose by 74 cases (+15.9%), while Stage 2 complaints increased by only 17 cases (+12.1%). The most notable trend is that although Housing Repairs & Maintenance continues to generate the highest number of complaints, both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints in this area have reduced. On the contrary, significant increases were seen in Tenancy Management, Planned Works, and Adaptations, suggesting emerging service pressures in those areas.

Overall Complaint Volumes

Complaint Stage	2024/25	2025/26	Change	% Change
Stage 1	465	539	74	15.90%
Stage 2	140	157	17	12.10%

Total	605	696	91	15.00%
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Complaint demand increased across the Housing Service. Stage 1 complaints account for approximately 77% of all complaints in both years. The lower rate of growth in Stage 2 complaints compared with Stage 1 suggests that, despite increasing demand, complaint resolution at Stage 1 is helping to prevent a larger escalation into Stage 2.

Stage 1 Complaint Analysis

Service Area	2024/25	2025/26	Change	% Change
Housing Repairs & Maintenance	338	317	-21	-6.20%
Tenancy Management	89	123	34	38.20%
Adaptations	11	24	13	118.20%
Planned Works	16	42	26	162.50%
Rent Collection & Arrears Recovery	11	20	9	81.80%
Home Ownership	0	6	6	New category
Property and Estates	0	7	7	New category

Housing Repairs & Maintenance

- Remains the largest complaint category.
- Complaints reduced by 21 cases (-6.2%).
- Share of Stage 1 complaints fell from 72.7% to 58.8%.
- This is a positive indication that repair-related service performance may be improving.

Tenancy Management

- Increased by 34 complaints (+38.2%).
- Contributed almost half of the overall increase in Stage 1 complaints.
- Indicates growing resident dissatisfaction with tenancy-related services.

Planned Works

- Increased dramatically from 16 to 42 complaints (+162.5%).
- One of the fastest growing complaint categories.
- May reflect major programmes, project delays, communication issues or contractor performance concerns.

Adaptations

- More than doubled from 11 to 24 complaints (+118.2%).
- Suggests increasing demand and/or delays in delivering adaptation works.

Stage 2 Complaint Analysis

Service Area	2024/25	2025/26	Change	% Change
Housing Repairs & Maintenance	117	86	-31	-26.50%

Tenancy Management	12	43	31	258.30%
Adaptations	3	16	13	433.30%
Planned Works	8	5	-3	-37.50%
Rent Collection & Arrears Recovery	0	3	3	New
Property and Estates	0	4	4	New

Housing Repairs & Maintenance

- Stage 2 complaints reduced significantly by 31 complaints (-26.5%).
- This is one of the strongest performance improvements in the data.
- Data suggests either better service delivery or more effective complaint resolution before escalation.

Tenancy Management

- Increased from 12 to 43 complaints.
- Growth of 258.3%.
- Represents the most significant emerging risk area.
- Escalations indicate residents may feel initial responses are not fully resolving issues.

Adaptations

- Increased from 3 to 16 complaints.
- Growth of 433.3%.
- Although volumes remain much lower than repairs and tenancy management, the rate of increase is substantial and warrants attention.

Planned Works

- Stage 1 complaints increased substantially while Stage 2 complaints decreased.
- This may indicate improved complaint handling and resolution despite increased resident concerns.

Escalation Rates (Stage 2 as a Percentage of Stage 1)

Service Area	2024/25	2025/26
Housing Repairs & Maintenance	34.60%	27.10%
Tenancy Management	13.50%	35.00%
Adaptations	27.30%	66.70%
Planned Works	50.00%	11.90%
Rent Collection & Arrears Recovery	0%	15.00%

Positive trends

- Housing Repairs escalation reduced significantly.
- Planned Works escalation reduced dramatically.
- These suggest better complaint resolution and service recovery once issues are identified.

Areas of concern

- Tenancy Management escalation rate more than doubled.
- Adaptations escalation rate increased sharply.
- These services appear to be generating more dissatisfaction and are less successful at resolving issues at first stage.

Strategic Conclusions

What's improving?

- Housing Repairs & Maintenance complaints reduced at both Stage 1 and Stage 2.
- Additional investment has been allocated to the Planned Works and Decarbonisation Programme. The investment has been incorporated into the planned works programme to improve the condition of housing stock and support compliance with required standards.
- Areas with the highest prevalence of damp and mould were prioritised for investment and intervention. Targeted works have been undertaken to address identified issues, improve living conditions for residents, and reduce the risk of future occurrences.
- Planned Works appears better at resolving complaints despite increased demand.
- Overall Stage 2 growth (+12.1%) is lower than Stage 1 growth (+15.9%), suggesting some success in preventing escalation.

What needs attention?

- Tenancy Management has become the second-largest source of complaints and shows substantial escalation to Stage 2.
- Adaptations show both high growth and high escalation rates, indicating a potential systemic issue.
- Rent Collection, Home Ownership and Property & Estates are now generating complaint volumes that should be monitored to identify whether these are emerging trends or one-off increases.

Complaint response times and compliance

Stage 1 Complaints - Compliance to Response Times

Month	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Month 1	97%	95%	74%	89%
Month 2	97%	85%	70%	92%
Month 3	96%	89%	45%	94%
Average	97%	89%	63%	92%

Stage 2 Complaints - Compliance to Response Times

Month	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Month 1	100%	80%	84%	87%
Month 2	94%	91%	85%	89%
Month 3	100%	100%	83%	71%

Average	98%	90%	84%	83%
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Complaint response time compliance was strong during the first quarter for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints, achieving average compliance rates of 97% and 98% respectively. Performance declined during Q2 and Q3, with Stage 1 experiencing a significant reduction to 63% compliance in Q3. Following targeted interventions, Stage 1 performance recovered to 92% in Q4.

In contrast, Stage 2 compliance showed a gradual downward trend throughout the year, falling from 98% in Q1 to 83% in Q4. Further analysis is required to understand the factors contributing to the sustained decline in Stage 2 response times and to ensure performance remains within target levels. Moving forward, the Quarterly updates will provide a more detailed breakdown of performance by team. This information can then be used to improve complaint handling and compliance with the HOS guidelines.

Escalation of complaints from Stage 1 to Stage 2

The table below shows the ratio of complaints escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2 across each quarter of the year. Stage 1 complaint volumes increased significantly during the year, particularly in Q4, and while Stage 2 escalations also increased, the proportion of complaints progressing to Stage 2 remained relatively low.

Ratio of Complaints Escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2 by quarter

Stage	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Stage 1	89	107	86	257
Stage 2	31	35	19	72
Ratio	3	3	5	4

Across the year, the service handled 539 Stage 1 complaints, of which 157 progressed to Stage 2, equating to an overall ratio of approximately 3.4:1.

The data demonstrates that while complaint volumes fluctuated significantly throughout the year, particularly in Q4, most complaints were resolved at Stage 1 and did not require escalation. The strongest performance was achieved in Q3, when only one in five complaints progressed to Stage 2. Although escalation numbers increased in Q4, this appears broadly proportionate to the substantial increase in overall complaint volumes rather than indicating a deterioration in complaint handling outcomes.

4. Complaints considered by the Housing Ombudsman

Of the 11 cases reviewed:

- 9 cases resulted in findings of maladministration or service failure
- 1 case resulted in no maladministration findings
- 1 case found only minor complaint handling issues

The most common Ombudsman complaints during the period related to damp and mould management, repair delays, property condition and complaint handling, highlighting the

importance of robust repairs management, contractor oversight, communication with residents and accurate record keeping.

Complaints considered by the Housing Ombudsman 2025/26

Theme	Number of Cases
Damp, mould, leaks and water ingress	4
Planned works, repairs and property condition	3
Fire safety / neighbour issues	1
Staff conduct and tenancy management	1
Heating and hot water	1
Gas servicing appointments	1

Case Reference	Complaint Description	Outcome	Upheld/not upheld
202329442	Resident disputed rechargeable repairs following a move due to damp and mould, arguing that damage charged to her account resulted from the property's poor condition and damp issues rather than tenant neglect. Complaint also concerned complaint handling.	Service failure in repairs recharge decision-making and complaint handling.	Upheld
202402273	Resident complained that contractors failed to remove protective floor coverings following bathroom adaptation works, which she said caused her to fall and injure herself.	No maladministration. Landlord's investigation and response were considered reasonable.	Not Upheld
202439557	Resident complained about delays and disruption during kitchen and bathroom replacement works, including lack of basic facilities, poor communication, a leak, and incomplete follow-on works.	Maladministration in handling the works and service failure in complaint handling.	Upheld
202415289	Leaseholder raised concerns about a neighbouring property involving hoarding, fire safety risks, odours, pests and items stored in communal areas.	Maladministration in handling safety concerns and complaint handling.	Upheld

202329872	Resident complained about property condition at letting, prolonged loss of gas supply, leaks, requests for a permanent move and concerns regarding the lettings process.	Maladministration regarding property condition, leaks and complaint handling; service failure regarding rehousing requests.	Upheld
202453498	Resident reported long-term damp and mould, water ingress, ineffective repairs and delays in identifying roof defects that were causing ongoing issues.	Maladministration in handling damp and mould reports.	Upheld
202427669	Resident complained that a newly let property was unsuitable, citing lack of fridge space, poor workmanship, decoration issues and inadequate support during the tenancy start.	No maladministration regarding property condition; service failure in complaint handling.	Upheld
202452711	Resident complained about recurring damp and mould, incomplete repairs, failure to resolve root causes and delays in carrying out remedial works.	Maladministration in damp and mould management and service failure in complaint handling.	Upheld
202423080	Resident raised concerns about staff conduct, missed contact arrangements, garden maintenance responsibilities and overhanging trees affecting her enjoyment of the property.	Maladministration regarding staff conduct investigation and handling of garden/tree concerns.	Upheld
202322717	Resident reported prolonged loss of hot water and concerns regarding heating, with repairs taking almost a year to fully resolve.	Service failure in handling reports of loss of heating and hot water.	Upheld
202323642	Resident sought compensation after a contractor failed to attend a scheduled gas safety appointment and subsequent appointments were poorly managed.	Service failure in handling missed gas safety appointments and compensation request.	Upheld

5. Learning from Complaints and Service improvements linked to complaints management

A review of the 11 Housing Ombudsman determinations indicates that most adverse findings were not caused by a single service area but by recurring issues around repair

delays, damp and mould management, communication, record keeping, vulnerability awareness, and complaint handling.

Compensation awards ranged from **£75 to £900**, with the highest awards linked to significant delays in resolving damp and mould issues and failures to identify underlying causes of defects.

Damp and Mould/Leaks

Four of the cases related directly to damp, mould, leaks or water ingress. Common findings included:

- Delays in identifying root causes.
- Repeated reactive repairs rather than permanent solutions.
- Poor oversight of contractors.
- Failure to complete works within policy timescales.
- Insufficient consideration of residents' health concerns.

The Ombudsman repeatedly highlighted the need to focus on diagnosing and resolving the underlying cause rather than treating symptoms alone.

Record Keeping and Case Management

Poor record keeping was a feature in several determinations. Issues included:

- Missing inspection notes.
- Incomplete repair histories.
- Lack of documented conversations.
- Inconsistent information between contractors and the Council.
- Lack of evidence to demonstrate decision making.

The Ombudsman specifically identified record keeping weaknesses as contributing to poor complaint investigations and delayed resolutions.

Complaint Handling

Although some complaints were handled within timescales, several investigations found that responses:

- Failed to address all complaint points.
- Did not fully investigate concerns.
- Overlooked escalation requests.
- Failed to signpost residents appropriately.
- Did not acknowledge service failures where these existed.

A recurring criticism was that responses focused on process rather than fully addressing resident concerns and outcomes.

Communication and Resident Engagement

Poor communication was identified across multiple cases, including:

- Residents having to repeatedly chase updates.
- Lack of explanation for delays.
- Insufficient management of expectations.
- Failure to keep vulnerable residents informed.

The Ombudsman consistently noted that timely updates and proactive communication could have significantly reduced resident frustration and escalation.

Consideration of Vulnerabilities

Several cases involved residents with physical or mental health needs, disabilities, or vulnerable household members.

The Ombudsman found instances where:

- Additional support was not adequately considered.
- Reasonable adjustments were not evidenced.
- Household vulnerabilities were not properly recorded or acted upon

This reflects an ongoing need to ensure vulnerability information is accurately recorded and actively informs service delivery.

Positive Findings

Not all determinations were critical. The Ombudsman found:

- No maladministration regarding protective floor coverings following a resident's fall, recognising a reasonable investigation and evidence-based decision making.
- No maladministration in the handling of a property let standard complaint, with the Council demonstrating appropriate inspections and support arrangements.

These decisions demonstrate that where evidence, records and investigations are robust, the Council can demonstrate that its approach was reasonable and proportionate.

Key themes and learning across all four Quarters

A review of Q1–Q4 complaints, learning outcomes and service improvements highlights several recurring themes across Housing Services. While individual service areas experienced different challenges, the same core issues appeared consistently throughout the year.

Communication and Customer Contact

A review of complaints, learning outcomes and service improvements across all four quarters identified communication and customer contact as the most consistent theme across Housing Services. Communication failures were the most common cause of

dissatisfaction and were evident across a range of service areas including Tenancy Management/Neighbourhood Management, Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), Adaptations, Planned Works, Repairs and Income Maximisation.

Common issues included delays in responding to residents, difficulties contacting officers, a lack of updates on ongoing cases, insufficient explanations of policies, procedures and decisions, and situations where residents believed no action was being taken despite work progressing behind the scenes. In many cases, complaint investigations found that dissatisfaction stemmed from poor communication rather than an underlying service failure.

Key learning from these complaints demonstrated that residents are more likely to remain satisfied with a service when they receive regular updates, clear explanations and realistic expectations, even where delays or operational challenges exist. Effective communication was therefore identified as a critical factor in building trust and reducing complaint escalation.

In response to this learning, several service improvements were implemented throughout the year. These included the introduction of a Tenancy Management Duty Line to improve accessibility, the establishment of mandatory update expectations for ASB cases, enhanced communication protocols between services and contractors, and more detailed complaint responses. Greater emphasis has also been placed on maintaining regular contact with residents, particularly in complex or long-running cases, and on providing clearer written explanations of service responsibilities, processes and limitations. Collectively, these improvements are intended to increase transparency, improve resident confidence in council services and reduce complaints arising from misunderstandings or lack of communication.

Repairs, Disrepair, Damp & Mould

Repairs-related complaints remained the largest category of complaints throughout the year and continued to be a significant area of focus across all four quarters. The most common issues raised by residents related to disrepair, damp, mould and condensation (DMC), leaks, delays in completing repairs, follow-on works not being raised or completed, repeated visits without resolution, and concerns regarding contractor performance.

A review of quarterly trends shows that disrepair was the most common complaint theme in Q1, with damp and mould also featuring prominently. Complaints relating to compensation frequently arose where repair delays had caused inconvenience to residents. During Q2, the volume of disrepair complaints increased further, while damp and mould remained a significant concern. The service also saw a rise in complaints relating to the quality of completed repairs and contractor workmanship.

In Q3, disrepair, damp and mould, and leaks emerged as the three most frequently reported complaint themes. Seasonal factors contributed to an increase in damp and mould reports during the colder months, while higher volumes of leak-related complaints were also recorded. By Q4, the focus of complaint investigations increasingly shifted towards procedural and process-related failures. This included missed escalations, follow-on works

not being raised or completed appropriately, and inconsistent adherence to established repairs procedures and communication protocols.

The key learning identified throughout the year was that many complaints did not arise solely from the original repair issue itself, but from how the issue was managed. Common contributory factors included failures to escalate unresolved problems, incomplete repairs, poor coordination between operational teams and contractors, and inadequate communication with residents regarding progress and next steps. These issues often led to frustration, repeat contact, and complaint escalation.

In response to this learning, a range of service improvements were implemented across the Repairs Service. These included the introduction of enhanced escalation procedures, mandatory site-to-office escalation processes, strengthened contractor monitoring arrangements, and improved recording practices through more detailed OneServe case notes. Monthly lessons learned reviews were also established to identify recurring issues and ensure corrective actions were implemented. Additional investment was made in staff training, including Damp, Mould and Condensation specialist accreditation and comprehensive Awaab's Law training to ensure compliance with emerging regulatory requirements.

Collectively, these improvements aim to strengthen procedural compliance, improve repair resolution rates, enhance communication with residents, and reduce the likelihood of similar complaints recurring in future reporting periods.

Contractor Management and Quality Assurance

Contractor performance emerged as a recurring theme across Repairs, Planned Works and Adaptations throughout the year. Complaints frequently related to poor workmanship, missed appointments, unauthorised access to properties, delays in completing works, poor communication from contractors and a perceived lack of accountability when issues arose.

Reviewing complaint outcomes highlighted the significant influence contractor performance has on both resident satisfaction and complaint volumes. In many cases, dissatisfaction was not solely related to the works undertaken, but to the overall customer experience, including the quality of communication, reliability of appointments and how effectively issues were resolved when problems occurred.

The learning identified through complaint investigations reinforced the need for stronger oversight of contractor activity and greater consistency in service delivery.

In response, a range of improvements were introduced throughout the year. These included regular contractor performance meetings to review service standards and complaint trends, increased quality assurance inspections, and more frequent spot checks of completed works. Clearer expectations and responsibilities were established for contractors, supported by strengthened documentation requirements to improve accountability and auditability.

In addition, greater emphasis has been placed on pre-start communication with residents to ensure expectations are clear before work begins. These measures are intended to improve the quality of works, strengthen contractor accountability, reduce service failures and ultimately enhance the experience of residents receiving repairs, planned works and adaptation services.

Planned Works Delays and Resident Expectations

Delays to planned works and the management of resident expectations emerged as a growing theme throughout the year, particularly in relation to kitchen and bathroom renewal programmes, window replacement schemes and roofing projects. As major investment and maintenance programmes continued across the housing stock, complaint volumes reflected increasing resident concerns about both the delivery and communication of planned works.

The most common issues raised by residents related to delays in the commencement or completion of works, uncertainty around replacement schedules, limited communication about revised timescales and concerns about the impact of waiting for works to be completed. In some cases, residents reported that property conditions, including damp, draughts or ageing fixtures and fittings, were affecting their comfort, health and wellbeing while they awaited inclusion in planned maintenance programmes.

A key learning identified through complaint investigations was that residents were generally more understanding of delays when expectations were managed effectively and clear information was provided about timescales, programme priorities and progress updates. Complaints were more likely to escalate where residents felt uninformed, where schedules changed without explanation, or where there was uncertainty about when works would take place.

In response to this learning, the service introduced several improvements aimed at strengthening programme delivery and resident communication. These included a review of the window replacement programme to identify opportunities to accelerate delivery, the development of new procurement frameworks to increase capacity and flexibility, and enhanced communication arrangements between contractors and residents.

Greater management oversight of planned works complaints has also been introduced, alongside improved complaint tracking and investigation processes to ensure recurring issues are identified and addressed more effectively. These improvements are intended to provide residents with greater clarity and confidence regarding planned maintenance programmes, while also improving accountability, communication and overall customer satisfaction.

Tenancy Management Responsiveness

Responsiveness within the Tenancy Management service remained a persistent theme throughout the year and was a recurring factor in both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints. Residents frequently reported difficulties contacting officers, delays in receiving responses

to enquiries, and concerns that cases were not progressing within reasonable timescales. This was particularly evident in relation to mutual exchange applications, where delays in case allocation or officer absence sometimes resulted in applications not being progressed promptly. Complaints were also received regarding tenancy breach investigations and enforcement actions, where residents felt that issues were taking too long to resolve.

The consistent learning from these complaints was that residents expect a service that is accessible, responsive and proactive in keeping them informed. Even where cases are complex or require time to investigate, timely communication and regular updates play a crucial role in maintaining resident confidence and preventing dissatisfaction from escalating into formal complaints.

In response to this learning, several service improvements were introduced. These included a more collaborative approach to case allocation across teams to ensure workloads could be managed effectively and service continuity maintained during periods of absence. A dedicated Duty Line was also established to provide residents with a more accessible route to contact the service and obtain support. Additional measures were implemented to improve officer cover arrangements and minimise delays when staff were unavailable. Furthermore, the Housing Management restructure has enabled the recruitment of additional officers, increased overall service capacity and supported improvements in responsiveness and tenant engagement.

These actions are intended to improve resident access to the service, reduce delays, strengthen communication and ensure that tenancy-related matters are progressed more efficiently and consistently.

Vulnerability and Person-Centred Services

Supporting vulnerable residents became an increasingly important theme throughout the year, with several complaints highlighting the challenges faced by residents with serious health conditions, disabilities, mental health concerns, domestic abuse risks and other complex vulnerabilities. These cases often involved residents whose personal circumstances heightened the impact of service delays, communication failures or unresolved housing issues.

Complaint investigations demonstrated that a standardised service approach does not always meet the needs of residents experiencing vulnerability. In many cases, residents required more tailored communication, enhanced support, greater sensitivity to their circumstances and closer coordination between service areas. The learning identified through these complaints reinforced the importance of adopting a person-centred approach, recognising that the same service issue can have a significantly greater impact on vulnerable residents.

In response to this learning, several improvements were implemented across services. Vulnerable cases are now more routinely identified and prioritised to ensure appropriate support and intervention. Within the ASB service, trauma-informed approaches have been

embedded to help officers better support residents experiencing distress, domestic abuse or mental health challenges. Services have also increased the use of welfare updates during prolonged repairs or complex cases to ensure residents remain informed and supported throughout the resolution process.

Additional improvements include strengthened support for residents experiencing financial hardship or rent arrears, with greater emphasis on early intervention, advice and signposting to appropriate assistance. Closer partnership working between services has also been encouraged to ensure vulnerable residents receive a more coordinated and holistic response to their needs.

These changes aim to improve outcomes for vulnerable residents, ensure services are delivered more compassionately and effectively, and reduce the likelihood of complaints arising where residents require additional support or understanding.

Adaptations Service Learning

The Adaptations Service identified several recurring themes through complaints received during the year. The most common concerns related to delays in assessments and the delivery of adaptations, poor communication with residents, misunderstandings regarding Occupational Therapist (OT) recommendations, confusion surrounding Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) processes and eligibility, and instances where important documentation had been misplaced or delayed. These issues often led to frustration for residents who were seeking timely support to meet health, mobility or accessibility needs.

A key learning from complaint investigations was the need to provide residents with clearer and more consistent information throughout the adaptations process. Residents required a better understanding of what adaptations can and cannot be provided, how decisions are made and by whom, and the eligibility, warranty and funding arrangements associated with different types of adaptations. Complaints also highlighted the importance of ensuring that residents understand the distinction between recommendations made by Occupational Therapists and the final decisions that can be implemented by the Adaptations Service.

In response to these findings, several service improvements were introduced. Resident correspondence was reviewed and updated to provide clearer information and reduce the risk of misunderstanding. Improvements were also made to document management and tracking processes to help prevent the loss of important paperwork and provide better audit trails. Communication standards were strengthened across the service, with greater emphasis placed on early engagement and regular updates for residents. In addition, work was undertaken to clarify roles and responsibilities between Adaptations and other service areas to ensure residents receive accurate advice and are directed to the appropriate team at the earliest opportunity.

These improvements are intended to increase transparency, improve resident understanding of the adaptations process and provide a more consistent and customer-

focused service for residents requiring support through adaptations and accessibility-related works.

Complaint Handling Maturity

A significant area of development throughout the year has been the growing maturity of complaint handling across Housing Services. Complaint investigations have increasingly been used as a mechanism for identifying service improvements, with many service areas demonstrating a stronger focus on learning from resident feedback and implementing changes in response to identified issues.

Throughout the year, services introduced a range of improvements designed to strengthen complaint management and improve outcomes for residents. These included refresher training for staff on effective complaint handling, greater use of complaints management systems to improve monitoring and accountability, and increased management oversight of complaint performance. Services also invested in analysing complaint trends to identify recurring themes and underlying causes, allowing targeted interventions to be implemented where needed.

Improvements were also made to record-keeping practices to ensure investigations were supported by accurate and comprehensive information. Alongside this, there was a clear focus on improving the quality, consistency and timeliness of complaint responses, helping to ensure residents received clearer explanations and more satisfactory resolutions.

The key learning from this work is that complaints are increasingly being viewed as a valuable source of organisational learning rather than solely as a performance measure. By using complaint outcomes to identify root causes, address service weaknesses and inform staff development, the Council has strengthened its approach to continuous improvement. This shift will continue to help embed a culture where resident feedback is actively used to shape service delivery, improve customer experience and reduce the likelihood of recurring complaints in the future.

Staffing, Capacity and Service Demand

Staffing, capacity and service demand were significant underlying factors influencing complaint volumes and service performance throughout the year. Across several service areas, complaints were linked to operational pressures arising from vacant posts, high workloads, ongoing service restructures, recruitment challenges and the implementation of new systems and processes. In addition, seasonal fluctuations in demand, particularly within repairs and housing management services, placed further pressure on available resources and response times.

These factors often contributed to delays in responding to residents, reduced opportunities for proactive communication and, in some areas, an increase in complaint volumes. The combination of high demand and limited capacity meant that services occasionally

struggled to maintain expected response standards, particularly during periods of organisational change or when key posts remained unfilled for extended periods. Complaint investigations and service reviews identified the need for greater resilience within teams, improved workforce planning and stronger operational support to manage periods of increased demand. In response, a range of measures were introduced across services to strengthen capacity and improve service delivery. These included targeted recruitment campaigns to fill vacant positions, service restructures designed to improve organisational effectiveness and the introduction of new software and case management systems to enhance efficiency and oversight.

Alongside these changes, enhanced training programmes were delivered to support both new and existing staff, ensuring officers had the knowledge, confidence and skills required to respond effectively to resident enquiries and complaints. Services also placed greater emphasis on workforce planning and performance monitoring to ensure resources could be deployed more effectively and emerging pressures identified at an earlier stage.

The learning from complaints throughout the year demonstrates that staffing capacity and service demand have a direct impact on residents' experience of council services. By investing in recruitment, technology, training and organisational development, services aim to improve responsiveness, maintain service standards during periods of pressure and provide a more consistent experience for residents.

Overall Corporate Learning

The review of complaints, learning outcomes and service improvements across all four quarters highlights several consistent themes that have shaped the Council's approach to service improvement throughout the year.

The most significant finding is that communication remains the primary driver of complaints across Housing Services. While many complaints originated from genuine service issues, investigations repeatedly demonstrated that resident dissatisfaction was often amplified by delays in communication, limited updates, difficulty contacting officers or a lack of clarity about decisions, responsibilities and next steps. As a result, improving communication standards has become a key priority across all service areas.

Repairs-related services continue to represent the highest area of risk for complaints, particularly in relation to disrepair, damp and mould, leaks and planned maintenance programmes. These services generate the greatest resident contact and are often linked to issues that directly affect residents' homes and wellbeing. Complaint investigations highlighted that delays, repeat visits, incomplete works and poor coordination between teams and contractors can significantly impact resident satisfaction and increase the likelihood of escalation.

The review also demonstrated growing resident expectations for timely resolutions, clear accountability and high-quality service delivery. Residents increasingly expect officers and contractors to take ownership of issues, provide accurate information and resolve concerns

without unnecessary delays or repeated intervention from the resident. Where accountability was unclear, complaints were more likely to escalate and confidence in the service was often reduced.

A further key learning point relates to vulnerability and the need for more personalised service delivery. Complaints involving residents with health conditions, disabilities, mental health concerns, domestic abuse risks or other complex circumstances highlighted that a standard approach is not always sufficient. Services have increasingly recognised the importance of tailoring communication, prioritising vulnerable cases and working collaboratively across teams to deliver a more person-centred response.

Finally, the year has demonstrated the value of effective complaint management as a driver for organisational learning and improvement. Increased investment in staff training, stronger management oversight, enhanced complaint analysis and a greater focus on identifying root causes have contributed to meaningful service improvements across several areas. The evidence from all four quarters shows that early intervention, effective complaint resolution and a commitment to learning from customer feedback can reduce escalation, improve service outcomes and strengthen resident confidence.

Overall, the organisation has demonstrated a positive transition from a largely reactive approach to complaint handling towards a more proactive, learning-led culture. Complaint feedback is increasingly being used to inform operational improvements, staff development, policy reviews and service redesign. This approach has enabled services to identify recurring issues, implement targeted improvements and strengthen the quality and consistency of service delivery for residents. Further work is required to improve consistency with complaint handling across teams and ensure timely responses to complaints. Accurately recording learning from complaints on JADU requires further improvement which will be the focus in the new financial year, 2026/27.

Governance			
Effective from:	April 2025	Review Date:	July 2026
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Version Number:	1.03		