

Housing Services Annual Complaints Report

Complaints falling within the Housing Ombudsman's jurisdiction

London Borough of Newham 2025-2026

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1. Introduction

Improving the experience of residents remains a central Newham corporate priority and is a key focus for Housing Services. Complaints play a vital role in this, providing residents with a clear route to raise concerns where services have not met expectations, while also giving the Council critical insight to learn, improve and put things right.

This report sets out the annual performance of Housing Complaints for the London Borough of Newham from April 2025 to March 2026, in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, which became statutory in April 2024. The Code reinforces the importance of a positive complaint handling culture, focused on fairness, early resolution, accountability and learning from outcomes.

Complaints are also a key driver of our improvement activity. Following the Regulator of Social Housing's inspection in October 2024, which identified serious failings and resulted in a C4 grading, the Council published the Improving Your Homes: Housing Services Improvement Plan in May 2025, and in June 2026 entered into a voluntary undertaking, underscoring our commitment to delivering on our improvement programme. Through this process, we are embedding stronger governance, enhancing oversight of complaint handling, and using insight from complaints, particularly those relating to repairs, damp and mould, to inform service redesign and improve outcomes for residents.

This report forms part of our wider commitment to transparency and accountability. It provides an overview of complaint volumes, performance against timescales, outcomes, and learning, alongside the actions we are taking to deliver sustained service improvement. It demonstrates how we are using complaints not only to resolve individual issues, but to drive systemic change as part of our ongoing transformation of Housing Services.

1.1. Highlights from this year's Ombudsman's annual report:

- A total of 1,578 complaints were received between April 2025 and March 2026, compared to 1,603 in the previous year. This represents a small reduction in overall complaint volumes, indicating a stabilisation in demand.
- Stage 1 complaints totalled 1,343, continuing the downward trend from previous years. 73% of Stage 1 complaints were responded to within timescales, showing an improvement from 69% in 2024/25 and reflecting improved early-stage complaint handling.
- Stage 2 complaints increased significantly to 235, up from 171 in the previous year. Despite this increased demand, 93% were responded to within timescales, demonstrating a substantial improvement in performance compared to 31% in 2024/25.
- Overall, 76% of complaints were responded to within timescales, an improvement from 65% in the previous year, indicating stronger compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

- Throughout the year, we have continued to embed the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, including strengthening processes, improving oversight, and ensuring greater consistency and transparency in how complaints are managed.

1.2. Scope of this performance report

A formal complaint is defined under the Housing Complaint Handling Code and Newham's Housing Complaints Policy as 'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals'.

The report includes key performance information related to the following:

- Housing Complaints (Stage 1 and 2)
- Members Enquires
- Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) complaints

The figures presented in this report cover only those complaints and enquiries that fall within the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman. This includes:

- Tenancy management
- Repairs and maintenance of HRA stock
- Estate services
- Leasehold and service charge issues
- Customer service and complaint handling

It is important to note that this report does not include complaints or enquiries related to the following areas, as they fall outside the Housing Ombudsman's remit.

- Temporary accommodation rent
- Temporary accommodation repairs where the Council is not the landlord
- Temporary accommodation tenancy management where the Council is not the landlord
- Lettings
- Housing Options
- Housing Supply

This means that the figures presented in this report differ from those published elsewhere (notably the Tenant Satisfaction Measures) and do not capture the full workload covered by the Housing Complaints Team.

1.3. Context

The year 2025/26 has continued to present significant challenge and transformation for Housing Services, both in terms of demand and the scale of improvement required across the service.

The introduction of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code in April 2024 marked a fundamental shift in how housing complaints must be managed. Over the past two years, we have continued to embed the requirements of the Code within our processes. Following engagement with the Housing Ombudsman in 2025 and 2026, we reviewed and refined our Housing Complaints Policy in April 2024 and March 2026 to ensure full compliance with the statutory Code, strengthening clarity, accessibility and consistency in how complaints are handled.

The Council was inspected by the Regulator of Social Housing and received a C4 judgement in October 2024, which identified serious failings in safety, quality, and accountability standards. Since then, we have continued to work closely with the Regulator and the Housing Ombudsman to strengthen our approach to complaints and wider service delivery. This includes ongoing engagement to ensure compliance with regulatory expectations and to embed improvements in complaint handling and learning.

In June 2026, the Council entered into a Voluntary Undertaking with the Regulator of Social Housing. This is a formal legal commitment to deliver the improvements set out in our Housing Services Improvement Plan within agreed timescales, alongside regular reporting on progress.

Complaints remain central to this improvement journey, both as a key measure of how services are performing and as a critical source of insight to inform service redesign and improve outcomes for residents.

At the beginning of the financial year we also implemented a new complaints management system, Microsoft Dynamics 365, replacing the previous iCasework system. The complete transition for the new system took place between March and April 2025. As with any significant system change, some initial implementation challenges were experienced while processes were embedded, and staff became familiar with the new platform. However, these issues were resolved quickly, and the system is now providing improved oversight, accountability and reporting. The new platform supports improved compliance with the Complaint Handling Code by strengthening oversight, accountability and reporting. It also provides a more accessible route for residents to raise complaints and enables enhanced performance monitoring through improved data and insight.

The Housing Complaints Team has undergone significant change to better respond to increasing demand and the need for improved quality and learning. This has included the recruitment of additional resources, a reorganisation of the team structure, and the creation of dedicated capacity to focus on learning from complaints and driving service improvement. While these changes have taken time to embed, they are strengthening the service's ability to respond effectively and consistently to residents.

1.4. Improvements made over 2025/6

1.4.1. Response times

In 2024/25, it was reported that 69% of Stage 1 complaints and 31% of Stage 2 complaints were responded to within target timescales. During 2025/26, we increased capacity within the Housing Complaints Team and strengthened performance monitoring to improve response timeliness.

While performance was challenging at the start of the year, a sustained improvement was achieved from September 2025 onwards. Stage 1 complaint performance increased from 34% in April 2025 to 94% by March 2026, while Stage 2 performance remained above 88% from July 2025 onwards and exceeded 95% for much of the second half of the year. This demonstrates that the additional resources and focus on complaint handling have had a positive impact. Maintaining this level of performance remains a priority, particularly as complaint volumes continue to increase and demand on services remains high.

1.4.2. Quality of the responses

The Council recognised that improving timeliness alone was not sufficient and that greater focus was also needed on the quality of complaint responses. During 2025/26, officers received training delivered by an external specialist organisation covering the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, effective complaint investigation, and response writing. The training aimed to strengthen the quality of responses, ensure greater consistency across services, and support full compliance with the Complaint Handling Code. As a result, complaint responses are now subject to increased quality assurance, with a stronger focus on addressing all complaint points, providing clear outcomes, and demonstrating learning where service failures have occurred.

To provide additional assurance on the quality of complaint handling, a mid-year review was undertaken during 2025/26. This review was carried out by senior officers, including two officers independent of the Housing Complaints Team and involved a quality assessment of a random sample of 30 Stage 1 complaints and 30 Stage 2 complaints. Each case was reviewed against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and the Council's complaint handling requirements. The review identified areas of good practice, provided assurance regarding compliance with the Code, and informed further improvements to the quality and consistency of complaint responses.

1.4.3. Complaints procedure and officer guidance

As identified as a need in the 2024/25 Annual Complaints Performance Report, Housing has developed a Housing Complaints Procedure to support the Housing Complaints Policy and provide greater clarity and consistency in the handling of complaints. The procedure sets out clear expectations for officers and managers at each stage of the complaints process, including responsibilities for sign-off, escalation requests, and the monitoring of agreed actions.

To support compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, the procedure includes guidance and checklists to assist officers in preparing high-quality complaint responses and ensuring all complaint points are fully addressed. Housing has also reinforced oversight arrangements to provide greater assurance that agreed processes are being followed consistently across Housing Services.

In addition, guidance has been developed for officers on recognising, recording and managing complaints through the case management system. This has helped improve the consistency of complaint recording, strengthened data quality, and supported a more effective and resident-focused approach to complaint handling.

1.4.4. Data confidence has improved, but data governance remains a priority

In the 2024/25 Annual Complaints Performance Report, concerns were identified regarding the consistency of complaints data reported across different datasets. During 2025/26, work was undertaken to improve data quality and assurance processes through workshops and bi-weekly complaints meetings. As a result, the complaints data reported through the Housing Ombudsman annual complaints submission aligns with the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) dataset, providing greater confidence in the accuracy and reliability of reported performance.

The Housing Complaints team has also seen a significant reduction in the number of complaints recorded as "resolved by mediation". Improved guidance, oversight and recording practices have helped ensure that complaints are only closed with clear outcomes, providing greater transparency and compliance with the Council's Complaints Policy and the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

While confidence in complaints data has improved considerably, the Council continues to develop its data governance and assurance arrangements through the Housing Services Improvement Programme to further strengthen reporting, oversight, and service improvement activity.

1.4.5. Corrective Action and Senior Management Oversight

During 2025/26, Housing improved arrangements for monitoring and learning from complaints. Following increased capacity within the Housing Complaints Team, responsibility for overseeing the corrective action tracker was enhanced to ensure that commitments made to residents at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 are completed within agreed timescales. This provides greater assurance that service improvements identified through complaints are implemented and helps reduce the risk of repeat issues and unnecessary escalations.

Housing has also introduced greater senior management oversight of Housing Ombudsman determinations. Where the Ombudsman issues a finding of maladministration or severe maladministration, a dedicated lessons learned meeting is convened with relevant service managers to review the failings identified, assess whether improvements have already been made since the complaint occurred, and agree any further actions required. This approach helps ensure that learning is embedded across the service and that opportunities for improvement are acted upon promptly.

In addition, regular lessons learned meetings are held with Property Services and Repairs to review complaint trends, identify recurring issues, monitor progress against improvement actions, and share learning from Ombudsman cases. This has supported a more proactive approach to service improvement and accountability across the Housing Service.

1.4.6. Ongoing Complaints Assurance and Quality Monitoring

During 2025/26, Housing Services strengthened its assurance arrangements to improve the quality, consistency and oversight of complaint handling. Enhanced monitoring processes have been introduced to provide greater assurance that complaints data is accurately recorded and reported, complaint handling processes are being followed, responses are of a high quality, and actions agreed through the complaints process are completed.

This includes regular quality assurance reviews of complaint responses, oversight of corrective actions arising from complaints, and routine reporting on complaint trends and emerging themes. Housing Services has also strengthened its focus on ensuring that learning from complaints is embedded into service improvement activity and that recurring issues are identified and addressed at an early stage.

These measures have contributed to improvements in complaint handling performance, increased confidence in complaints data, and stronger accountability for delivering service improvements arising from resident feedback.

2. Complaints Performance

2.1. Performance Targets

The complaints performance service level is to answer 95% of complaint cases within the timescale set. We acknowledge that this is an ambitious target, set by the corporate complaints team to promote continuous improvement and efficiency, and it is a target set against the context of increasing demand and number of complaints received.

2.2. Complaint Demand

Over the past three years, we have seen a downward trend in the total combined number of eligible Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints received for Housing services, as set out in Figure 1.

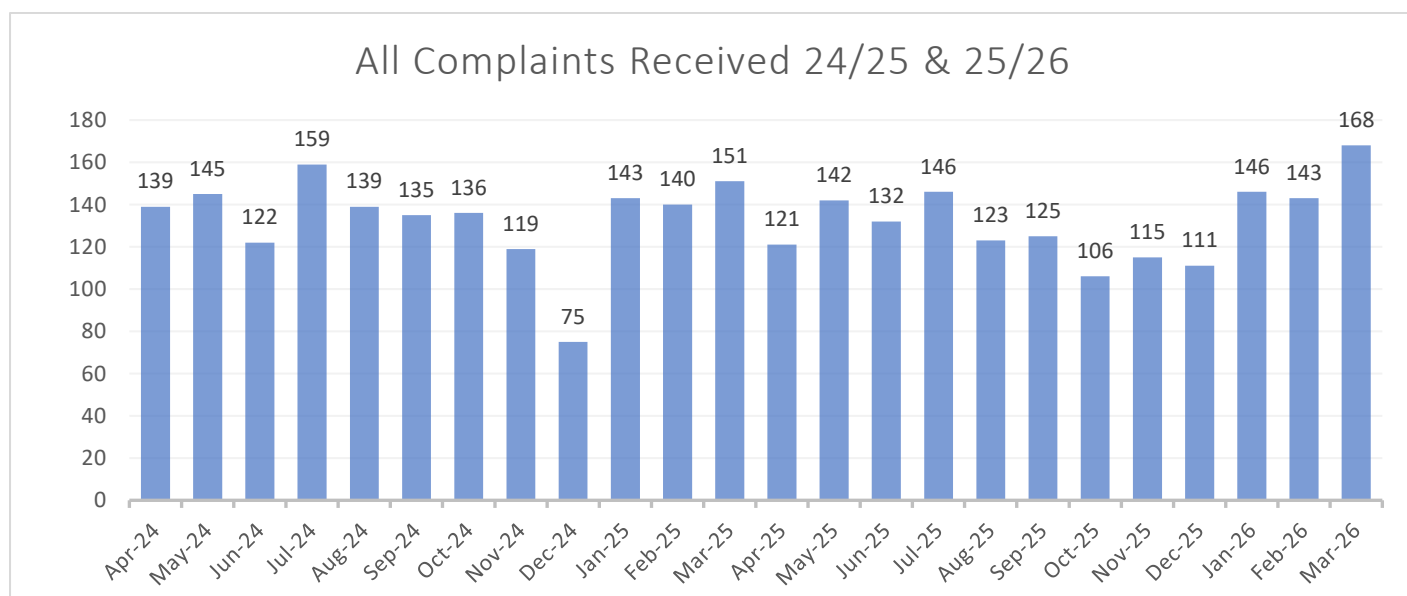
Figure 1: Total stage 1 and stage 2 complaints received by year

Year	Combined total of stage 1 and stage 2 complaints	Difference from previous year
2023 - 24	1,743	-13.33%
2024 - 25	1,603	-8.03%
2025- 26	1,578	-1.56%

This suggests that service improvements may be leading to fewer complaints. These include better responses to service requests, better initial triaging and greater accountability for services.

Despite that overall downward trend, Figure 2 illustrates that there can be substantial monthly fluctuations within those annual totals.

Figure 2: Total Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints received by month



2.3. Performance against timescales

Figure 3 shows a breakdown and year on year comparison of the received cases per case type. It also shows the number of cases completed in the same period. The performance of each year is calculated as the share of completed cases that were responded to within the timescales set out in the Complaint Handling Code and the Council's Housing Complaints Policy.

Complaints may not be completed in the same time period as the received date. This, coupled with the fact that some complainants withdraw cases or there may be duplicate cases, means there is often a discrepancy between complaints received and completed within a time period.

Figure 3: Complaints received and resolved within timescales

Complaints Stage	2025/2026				2024/2025			
	Received	Cases Complete	Cases completed on time (number)	Cases completed on time (percentage)	Received	Cases Complete	Cases completed on time (number)	Cases completed on time (percentage)
Stage 1	1343	1329	976	73%	1432	1436	995	69%
Stage 2	235	228	215	94%	171	164	51	31%
Ombudsman Enquiry	25	25	25	100%	42	22	22	100%
Members Enquiry	1076	1012	760	75%	853	846	573	68%

Figure 3 indicates an improvement in complaint handling timeliness during 2025/26, both at Stage 1 and Stage 2, reflecting a stronger focus on timely complaint resolution and compliance with the Complaint Handling Code.

Stage 1 complaints decreased from 1,432 in 2024/25 to 1,343 in 2025/26, continuing the downward trend in overall complaint volumes. Performance improved, with 73% of cases responded to within timescales, compared to 69% in the previous year. This indicates increased consistency in early-stage complaint handling and a greater ability to respond to residents promptly, despite ongoing demand pressures. From October 25 – March 26, 95% of Stage 1 complaints were responded to on-time.

Stage 2 complaints increased significantly from 171 to 235, demonstrating that a higher number of residents chose to escalate their complaints. Despite this rise in demand, performance improved substantially, with 94% of Stage 2 complaints responded to within timescales, compared to 31% in 2024/25. This represents a marked improvement in managing escalated complaints and reflects targeted actions taken during the year to prioritise Stage 2 responses, strengthen oversight, and improve accountability in the sign-off process.

Ombudsman enquiries remained steady in volume, with 25 enquiries received during the year, all of which were responded to within timescales, maintaining 100% compliance. This demonstrates a continued ability to respond promptly and effectively to external scrutiny.

Member enquiries increased from 853 in 2024/25 to 1,076 in 2025/26, representing a notable rise in demand. Despite this increase, performance improved, with 75% of enquiries responded to on time, compared to 68% in the previous year. The increase in volume is likely influenced by the local elections,

held in May 2026, which typically generate higher levels of resident contact with elected members. From October 2025-March 2026, Member enquiries responded to on time sustained 95% timeliness. The improvement in timeliness reflects strengthened case management and a continued focus on responding to member enquiries more efficiently. This suggests that, while demand has grown, services have adapted to manage the increased volume more effectively.

Overall, the data demonstrates a clear improvement in performance across complaint handling, particularly at Stage 2, where timeliness has significantly improved despite increased volumes. This reflects the impact of the changes introduced during the year, including strengthened processes, improved monitoring, and increased management oversight.

Figure 4: Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints resolved within timescales by month

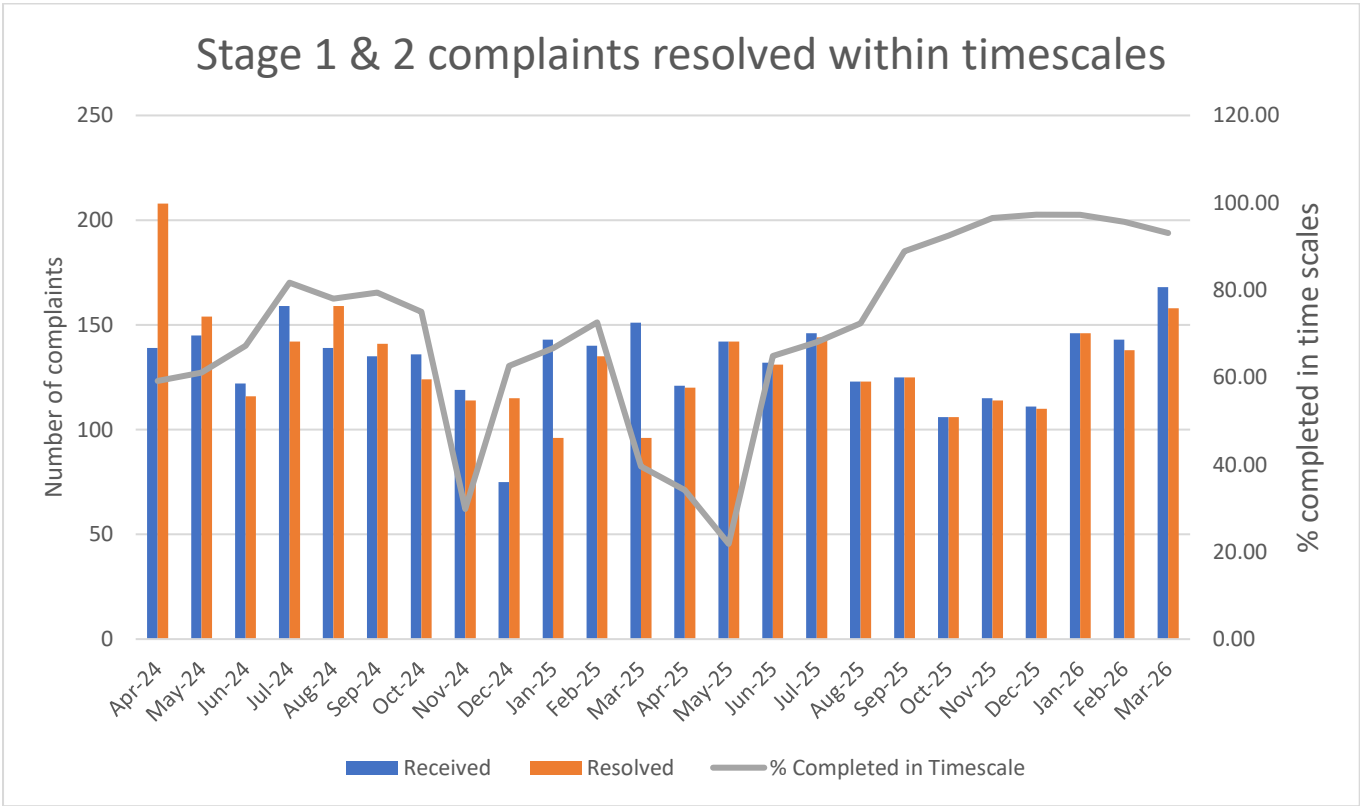


Figure 4 provides a two-year monthly breakdown of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaint handling performance from April 2024 to March 2026. It tracks three key metrics: the number of complaints received each month, the number resolved, and the percentage of complaints completed within the required timescales.

The data shows that, while there continues to be some fluctuation in the number of complaints received month by month, the number of complaints resolved is now more consistently aligned with demand. In contrast to the previous reporting period, the gap between complaints received and resolved has reduced significantly, indicating that the service has made sustained progress in addressing backlog pressures and improving operational capacity.

Performance in meeting timescales has also improved markedly over the year. While there are some dips in performance during the early part of the period, particularly around late 2024 and early 2025, where the percentage completed within timescales falls sharply, this is followed by a strong and sustained recovery from mid-2025 onwards. From summer 2025 through to the end of the reporting period, the percentage of

complaints resolved within timescales increases significantly, reaching consistently high levels and approaching or achieving full compliance in several months.

This improvement reflects the impact of targeted actions taken during the year, including increased resourcing, strengthened oversight, improved processes, and a focused effort on clearing historic backlogs. The data suggests that these changes have not only improved timeliness but have also enabled the service to respond more consistently to fluctuating demand.

Overall, the trend demonstrates a transition from a position of variable performance and backlog pressure to one of greater stability, improved responsiveness, and sustained compliance with complaint handling timescales.

2.4. Escalation

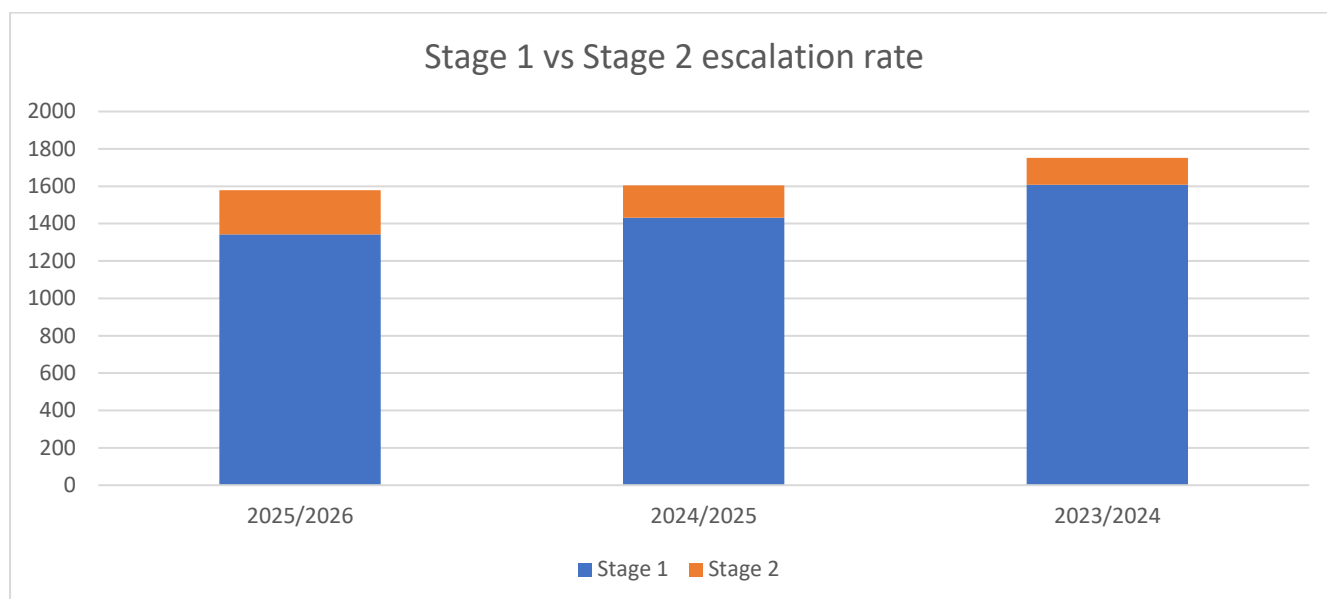
Figure 5 shows that the volume of complaints escalated to Stage 2 has continued to increase over the reporting period.

In 2025/26, a total of 1,343 Stage 1 complaints were recorded, of which 235 progressed to Stage 2, representing an escalation rate of approximately 17%. This is a notable increase compared to 12% in 2024/25 (173 of 1,432 cases) and 9% in 2023/24 (144 of 1,608 cases).

This upward trend indicates that a growing proportion of residents are choosing to escalate their complaints, suggesting that initial responses are not consistently resolving the issues raised or meeting resident expectations. It may also reflect increased resident awareness of the complaints process and greater confidence in progressing complaints through to Stage 2.

While escalation rates have increased, it is important to consider this alongside the significant improvement in Stage 2 performance during 2025/26. The service has responded to this increased demand by prioritising escalated complaints, strengthening oversight, and improving response times, resulting in a marked improvement in timeliness at Stage 2.

Figure 5: Stage 1 to Stage 2 escalation rate



The number of Ombudsman Enquiries received in this year was 25. However, it is not possible to provide a clear annual escalation rate as a share of cases for the last year because not all these enquiries originated from stage 2 cases in 2025/26. As figure 6 sets out, over half originated from cases in previous years. This is because there is no set timeframe within which a stage 2 must be escalated to the Housing Ombudsman.

Figure 6: Breakdown of 2024/5 Housing Ombudsman enquiries by year of stage 2 complaint

Year of stage 2 complaint response	No. of Cases	Share of 2024/5 Ombudsman enquiries
023/24	3	12%
2024/25	11	44%
2025/26	11	44%

Figure 6 shows that Housing Ombudsman enquiries in 2024/25 related to complaints across multiple years, with 44% linked to 2024/25 Stage 2 responses, 44% to 2025/26, and a smaller proportion (12%) relating to earlier cases from 2023/24. This demonstrates that Ombudsman investigations often span across reporting years, reflecting the time taken for cases to progress through the complaint handling process and into external review.

Despite the volume and cross-year nature of these enquiries, the service maintained a 100% response rate to the Housing Ombudsman’s initial information requests within the required timeframe, demonstrating strong compliance at the highest level of complaint escalation. However, in 24/25 three Complaint Handling Failure Orders were issued following Ombudsman determinations, due to non-compliance with orders within the specified timeframe. While overall engagement with the Ombudsman remains strong, this highlighted the need to strengthen internal processes to ensure that all post-determination actions are completed promptly and in full. Additional resources have since been recruited, and responsibilities realigned, to ensure sufficient capacity within the team to maintain full compliance and effectively share learning from Ombudsman outcomes.

2.5. Service Areas

The categories of complaint referenced in this report are defined as follows:

- **Housing Services:** This includes tenancy management, communal housing estates, concierge and caretaking services, council rent payments, the housing neighbourhood response team, leasehold services, Right to Buy scheme and PFIs
- **Housing Repairs:** This covers issues related to damp and mould, gas management, responsive repairs, and technical services.

Across the year:

- In line with expected patterns, repairs-related services accounted for the largest share of complaints, followed by core Housing Services functions.
- A majority of complaints were upheld or partially upheld, reflecting that issues raised by residents often had a valid service-related component

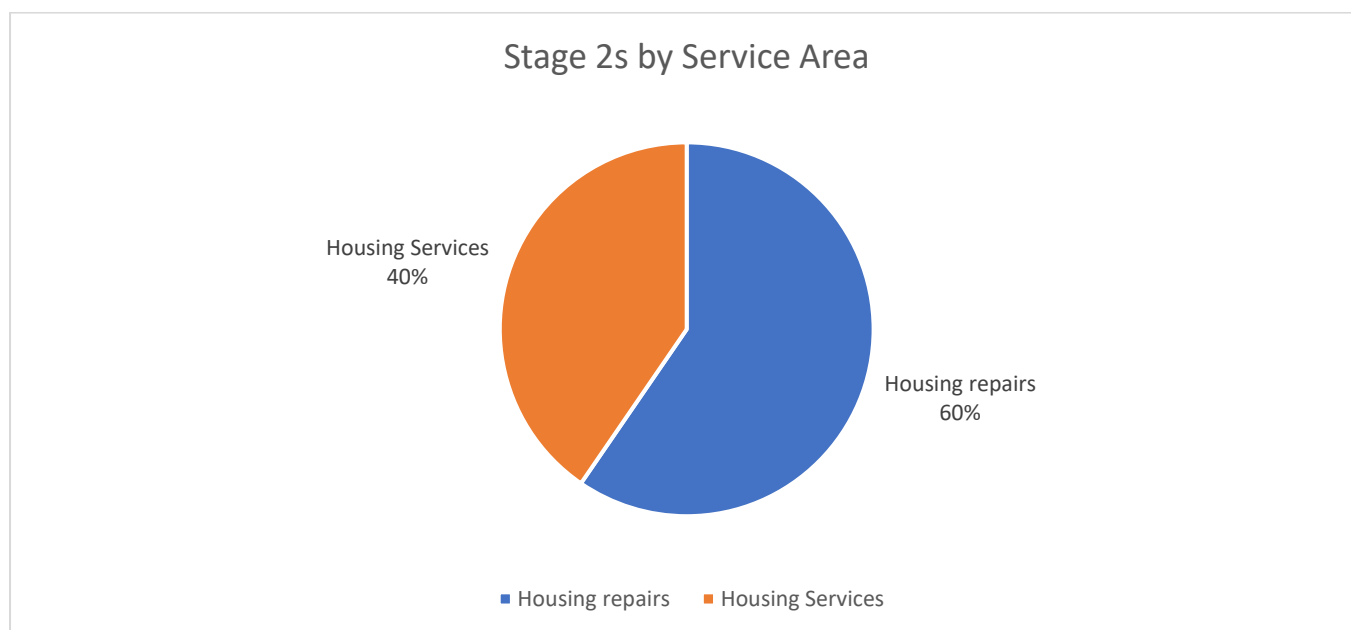
A smaller proportion of complaints were not upheld, often where policy or statutory requirements had been correctly applied

Figure 7 presents the distribution of Stage 2 escalations across Housing service areas for 2025/26. The largest proportion of escalations continues to relate to Housing Repairs, accounting for 60% of all Stage 2 complaints. While this remains the most significant category, it represents a slight decrease from the previous year, indicating some early signs of improvement in how repair-related complaints are being managed at Stage 1.

Housing Services accounts for 40% of escalated complaints, showing a notable increase compared to 24% in 2024/25. This shift suggests that a higher proportion of dissatisfaction is now associated with broader housing management functions, such as tenancy management, communication, and service delivery, rather than being concentrated predominantly within repairs.

Overall, while repairs continue to drive the majority of escalations, the data shows a broadening in the distribution of complaints across service areas, highlighting the need for continued focus not only on repairs performance, but also on improving the quality, consistency, and responsiveness of wider housing services.

Figure 7: Stage 2 complaints by service area



Analysis of complaint trends during 2025/26, alongside regular lessons learned reviews, has identified communication, monitoring of works, and follow-up as the primary drivers of complaints - particularly within Housing Repairs.

Repairs continue to generate a higher proportion of escalations due to the direct impact on residents' homes, safety, and overall quality of life. Our analysis shows that dissatisfaction is often not solely linked to the repair itself, but to how the service is delivered. In particular, residents report frustration where there is a lack of timely updates, unclear expectations, or insufficient follow-up once works have been raised or completed.

Monitoring of repair cases has also been identified as a key issue. Where works are not actively tracked or where ownership is unclear, delays can occur, leading to repeat contacts and escalation. This is particularly evident in more complex cases, such as damp and mould, where multiple visits or stages of work are required. In these instances, ineffective coordination and limited communication between teams can contribute to prolonged resolution times and reduced resident confidence.

Follow-up after works completion has been another contributing factor. Complaints have highlighted instances where issues reoccur or are not fully resolved, and where residents feel required to re-report problems without clear accountability. This has reinforced the importance of closing the loop with residents and ensuring that repairs are completed to a satisfactory standard.

In response, we have strengthened performance monitoring, introduced more active case tracking, and embedded regular reviews of high-risk and high-priority cases. Additionally, housing services have implemented a patch-based Housing Management model, which is intended to improve visibility, accountability, and relationships between residents and Housing Liaison Officers. In addition, the Resident Involvement Team are carrying place-based engagement by delivering Estate Walkabouts, Housing Surgeries and Estate Action Days monthly as per the Resident Involvement Strategy. Over time, this approach is expected to support earlier resolution and reduce the need for complaints and escalations.

3. Outcomes

3.1. Upheld rate

A complaint outcome can be one of the following:

- Upheld - the investigation will find in favour of the complaint entirely.
- Partially upheld - the investigation finds in favour of the complaint, in part.
- Not upheld - the investigation does not find in favour of the complaint.
- Resolved by mediation– a resolution was provided but not enough evidence from the resident for an outcome to be upheld or not upheld.
- Out of jurisdiction – the complaint is found not to be within the remit of the local authority, or there is a separate process that will provide a route to a resolution.

Figure 8: Number of cases by outcome

Outcome	Number of Cases
Upheld	374
Not upheld	257
Partially upheld	577
Resolved by mediation	82
Not investigated/Out of jurisdiction	78

Figure 8 shows the frequency of each type of outcome over the year 2025/26. The most common outcome is that the complaint is partially upheld.

There are a number of outcomes marked as “resolved by mediation”. All complaints should follow the two steps set out in the policy and an initial mediation process is not included in this process. In the 2024/25 Annual Complaints Performance Report, concerns were raised regarding the number of complaints recorded as "resolved by mediation", as this outcome is not a formal stage within the Housing Complaints Policy. A review was subsequently undertaken to understand the reasons for these recordings. The review found that the majority of cases had been incorrectly categorised by individual officers rather than representing a failure to follow the complaints process.

In response, additional guidance and training were provided to officers to strengthen understanding of complaint outcomes and recording requirements. As a result, the number of complaints recorded as "resolved by mediation" during 2025/26 was significantly lower than in the previous year and additional monitoring and quality assurance has been introduced to ensure the outcomes are recorded appropriately, as well as the introduction of a new Complaints Procedure.

The table at figure 9 below provides a summary of complaint outcomes (both stage 1 and stage 2) over 2025/6.

Figure 9: Upheld rate

Outcome	Housing Repairs		Housing Services	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Complaints upheld	641	82%	310	73%

Figure 9 shows the final outcomes for completed complaints at Stage 1, 2 or by the Ombudsman over 2025/26. It sets out the complaints upheld and partially upheld as a share of total outcomes across each service (which differs from the number shown in figure 8 as it does not include cases resolved by mediation or those out of jurisdiction as they are not considered to have a comparable outcome). This indicates that Housing Repairs saw not only the highest numbers of complaints, but also the highest share of complaints upheld, when compared with Housing Services.

3.2. Housing Ombudsman Outcomes

In 2025/26, the Council received a significantly higher number of Housing Ombudsman determinations compared to the previous year, increasing from 22 to 44. This reflects the conclusion of a greater number of investigations during the year and resulted in a corresponding increase in the overall number of findings, which rose from 64 to 91.

Figure 10: Housing Ombudsman Determinations by year

	2025/26	2024/25	2023/24
Determinations	44	22	34
Findings	91	64	81
Maladministration Findings	43	45	67
Orders Made	131	79	138
Compensation (£)	27,455	14,023	41,071
Maladministration Rate (%)	67	71	87

In Housing Ombudsman cases, findings refer to the individual conclusions reached during an investigation regarding a landlord's actions, while determinations are the overall decisions issued by the Ombudsman based on those findings. As shown in Figure 10, although the number of determinations doubled in 2025/26, the number of maladministration findings reduced slightly from 45 to 43. Consequently, the Council's maladministration rate improved for the third consecutive year, decreasing from 87% in 2023/24 to 71% in 2024/25 and further to 67% in 2025/26.

The number of orders issued by the Ombudsman increased from 79 to 131, broadly reflecting the higher volume of determinations concluded during the year. Compensation awarded also increased from £14,023 to £27,455. While this represents an increase on the previous year, it remains substantially lower than the £41,071 awarded in 2023/24.

The continued reduction in maladministration findings and the overall maladministration rate indicates progress in complaint handling and service delivery. However, the increase in Ombudsman investigations concluded during the year, together with the rise in orders and compensation awarded, highlights that further improvements are required, particularly in areas that continue to generate Ombudsman decisions, including property condition, repairs and complaint handling.

The Council continues to review all Ombudsman determinations, implement lessons learned, and monitor compliance with Ombudsman orders and recommendations to drive service improvement and improve outcomes for residents.

3.3. Orders made

The Housing Ombudsman made 131 orders on cases determined between April 2025 and March 2026, compared to 79 orders in 2024/25 and 138 in 2023/24, as shown in Figure 11. The increase reflects the higher number of Ombudsman determinations concluded during the year, with 44 determinations issued compared to 22 in the previous year.

Figure 11: Orders made by type

Order	2025/26	2024/5	2023/4
Policy review	2	5	1
Compensation	54	35	62
Repairs	11	4	8
Specific action (non-repair)	18	11	17
Apology	29	16	25
Case review	8	6	11
Process change	1	0	0
Staff training	1	0	0
Other	7	2	14
Total	131	79	138

Compensation orders remained the most common type of remedy, increasing significantly from 35 in 2024/25 to 66 in 2025/26. There were also notable increases in orders requiring specific actions (non-repair), which rose from 11 to 29, and apology orders, which increased from 16 to 29. Orders relating to repairs increased from 4 to 12, while policy review orders rose from 5 to 8.

For the first time, the Ombudsman also ordered process changes and staff training, although these remained limited, with one and two orders respectively. These types of remedies are intended to address underlying service issues and promote learning and improvement across the organisation. The increase in orders does not necessarily indicate a worsening of current performance, as Ombudsman determinations often relate to complaints raised and investigated over a prolonged period. However, the volume and nature of orders continue to provide valuable insight into areas where services can be strengthened. The Council reviews all Ombudsman orders and recommendations, incorporates lessons learned into service improvement activity, and monitors compliance to ensure residents receive the outcomes directed by the Ombudsman.

Of the orders where the target completion date fell between April 2025 and March 2026, 100% were complied with within the required timescale. This demonstrates the Council's continued commitment to complying with Ombudsman remedies and implementing learning arising from investigations.

3.4. Remedy

Figure 12 shows the compensation ordered and recommended by the Housing Ombudsman for cases determined in 2025/26. The total level of compensation increased compared to 2024/25, although it remains lower than in 2023/24. Most compensation related to property condition and responsive repairs,

followed by moving, buying and selling home cases and complaints handling. It should be noted that compensation awards relate to cases determined by the Ombudsman during the reporting year and may be linked to service failures that occurred several years earlier.

Figure 12: Compensation ordered

	2025/26		2024/25		2023/24	
Category Heading	Ordered	Recommended	Ordered	Recommended	Ordered	Recommended
Property condition/Responsive Repairs	£15,210	£50	£7,120	£650	£29,250	£750
Complaints handling	£2,525	£2,350	£3,203	£900	£5,170	£700
Antisocial behaviour	£1,600	-	£1,350	-	£2,700	-
Occupancy rights	£1,050	-	£200	-	-	-
Health and safety		-	£100	-	-	-
Staff	£50	-	£100	-	-	-
Estate management	£100	-	-	-	£1,150	£400
Moving/Buying/Selling Home	£3,320	-	-	-	£700	-
Information and data management		-	-	-	£250	-
Recharges	£100	-	-	-	-	-
Service charges – amount or account management	£1,100	-	£150	£250	-	-
Total	£25,055	£2,400	£12,223	£1,800	£39,220	£1,850

4. Members Enquiries

The Housing Services Complaints Team are responsible for responding to and managing enquiries from Councillors and MPs, which are usually concerns that have been raised on behalf of their constituents.

Figure 14: Members enquiries performance against timescales

Year	Members enquiries	Members enquiries responded to on time	Percentage responded to on time (performance)
2023/4	935	582	62%
2024/5	846	573	68%
2025/6	1076	760	75%

Figure 14 shows a continued improvement in the timeliness of responses to Members' Enquiries over the last three years. In 2025/26, Housing Services received 1,076 Members Enquiries, an increase of 27% compared with 846 received in 2024/25. Despite this increase in demand, the number of enquiries responded to within timescales rose from 573 to 760, resulting in performance improving from 68% to 75%, a further increase of 7 percentage points. Between October 2025 and March 2026, Housing Services consistently achieved a 95% on-time response rate for Members Enquiries, demonstrating sustained improvement in performance.

The increase in Members Enquiries received during 2025/26 may be partly attributable to the local elections, which saw newly elected councillors engaging with residents and raising a higher volume of enquiries on their behalf. Increased member engagement often results in a greater number of service requests and resident concerns being escalated through the Members Enquiries process.

Despite the higher volume of enquiries received, performance has continued to improve. This suggests that changes introduced within Housing Services and the Housing Complaints Team to strengthen the management and oversight of Members Enquiries have enabled a greater proportion of cases to be responded to within target timescales. Improvements to case monitoring, escalation processes, and performance reporting have supported more timely responses and helped ensure enquiries are progressed more effectively.

The sustained improvement over the three-year period, from 62% in 2023/24 to 75% in 2025/26, may also reflect wider service improvements across Housing Services. Increased focus on complaint handling, clearer processes aligned with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, and stronger collaboration between service areas have contributed to more efficient case management. While performance has improved substantially, the increase in enquiry volumes highlights the continued importance of addressing the underlying causes of Member escalation and maintaining a focus on service improvement across key areas of resident concern.

5. Ombudsman Review of the Council's Housing Complaints Policy

In April 2024 the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code came into force and the Council published its new draft Housing Complaints Policy which was aligned to both the Corporate Complaints Policy and the new Complaint Handling Code. Further small changes were made following publication in May and June 2024 to allow the draft to align with the requirements of the Building Safety Regulator and more closely meet the Complaint Handling Code. The amended draft Housing Complaints Policy was open for consultation from 17th June – 2nd August and the final version was adopted following Cabinet approval on 1st October 2024. The final version of the Housing Complaints Policy was adopted in October 2024 and we also submitted our first annual self-assessment against the new Complaint Handling Code.

On 13th February 2026 the Council was notified by the Housing Ombudsman that they would be commencing a second review of the Housing Complaints Policy to ensure alignment with the Complaint Handling Code. The results of this review were shared with the Council on 12th March 2026.

The Ombudsman's review made five further recommendations for changes to wording of the policy to improve compliance with the Complaint Handling Code. These have all been integrated into a revised Housing Complaints Policy, confirmed by the Housing Ombudsman and published in March 2026. The changes made have also been set out in this year's Annual Self-Assessment against the Complaint Handling Code.

In order to further embed the recommendations, a complaints procedure has been produced to provide additional guidance on the operation of the policy for members of the Housing Complaints Team.

6. Learning Opportunities

Complaints are first and foremost an opportunity to listen to our residents and make service improvements. They provide valuable insight that helps the Council identify areas for improvement, better understand residents' experiences, and prevent issues from recurring. While improvements have been made since last year's annual complaints performance report, leading to positive changes in a number of areas, some challenges remain. This section sets out the actions we will take to tackle ongoing areas of concern and continue improving services and complaint handling performance.

6.1 Too many cases are still escalating

While Housing has made significant improvements to complaint response times and quality during 2025/26, a relatively high number of complaints continue to progress from Stage 1 to Stage 2. Many Stage 2 escalations related to Housing Repairs and Property Service (140 cases), followed by Housing Services (95 cases).

The distinction of repairs-related escalations is consistent with previous years and reflects the complexity of some repair cases, particularly where works involve multiple visits, specialist contractors, ongoing damp and mould issues, or delays in completing follow-on actions. Residents may also escalate complaints where communication is not sufficiently clear or where they do not feel that agreed actions have been completed within expected timescales.

Housing has improved oversight of corrective actions arising from complaints to provide greater assurance that commitments made to residents are delivered. Improvements have also been made to the quality of complaint investigations and responses through additional training and quality assurance measures.

Further analysis has been undertaken to better understand the drivers of complaint escalation. The key themes identified relate to communication with residents regarding the progress of works, the quality of repairs completed, and delays in completing follow-on actions. In response, these issues are now reviewed through regular lessons learned meetings with relevant service areas, particularly Property Services. The meetings consider the root causes of complaints, identify opportunities for improvement, and monitor the implementation of actions to improve service delivery and the resident experience. This approach supports a culture of continuous learning and helps ensure that identified failings are addressed to reduce the risk of similar complaints occurring in the future.

However we aim to go further to automate the reporting of areas giving rise to the greatest number of complaints, allowing the data to be more easily classified by service area and reason for complaint; currently this analysis is done manually. This will help us to identify the areas driving complaints and escalations, and target improvements at those service areas. Ongoing monitoring of complaint themes will help identify emerging issues at an early stage and support a proactive approach to improving the resident experience.

Action: amend the online complaints reporting form to drill down into the detail of service area and reason for complaint, to allow analysis of which areas are driving complaints to be carried out automatically, and targeted improvements.

6.2 Lessons learned meetings

Housing Services will continue to develop and embed a programme of lessons learned meetings across service areas to ensure that complaint trends, recurring issues and common causes of dissatisfaction are regularly reviewed. These meetings provide an opportunity to identify the root causes of complaints, share learning from Housing Ombudsman determinations, and monitor the effectiveness of actions taken to address service failures.

By bringing together managers from relevant service areas, Housing Services aims to strengthen accountability, improve communication between teams, and ensure that learning from complaints translates into tangible service improvements.

Action: learning from the success of existing lessons learned meetings held following Housing Ombudsman determinations, aim for regular programme of lessons learned from wider range of complaints