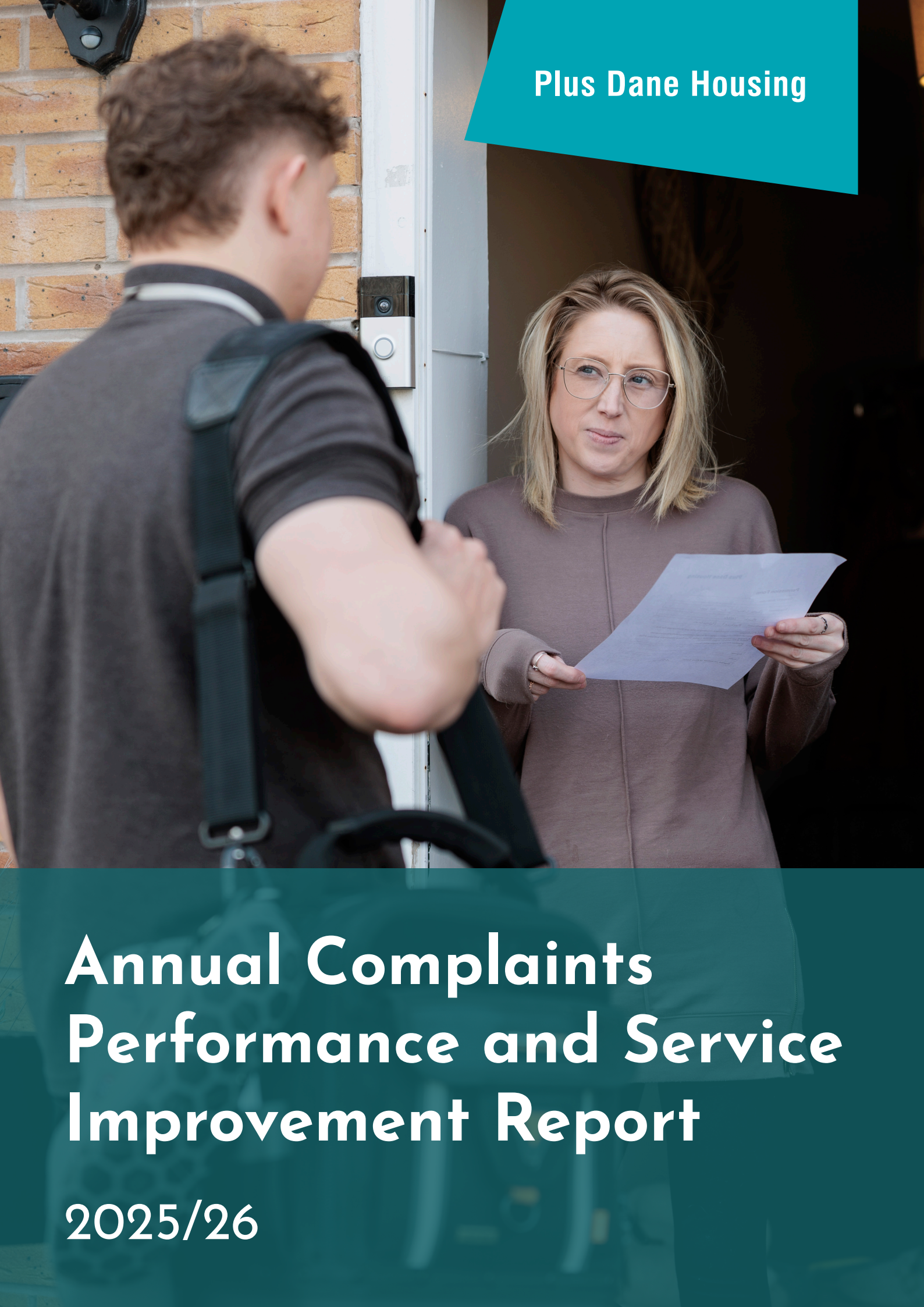




Plus Dane Housing

Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report

2025/26

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Introduction

Welcome to our Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for 2025/26. This report is published each year in line with requirements set by the Housing Ombudsman Service, which are designed to support better performance and continuous service improvement. We have a legal duty to meet these requirements.

Find out more on the Housing Ombudsman's website at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk.

We know that sometimes things do not go as planned. When this happens, we want you to tell us so we can understand what went wrong and work to put it right.

Complaints help us learn. They tell us what matters to our customers and show us where we need to do better.

This report looks at the complaints we received between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026. It explains what customers told us, what we learned, and the changes we have made as a result.

In this report, you can read about:

- How we are meeting the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.
- How well we handled complaints.
- Investigations carried out by the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- Changes we have made to improve our services and the way we handle complaints.



Board's Reflection

The Board has considered the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for 2025/26, together with the self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

Through our Purpose Committee, we have scrutinised the content of the report and have sought assurance that it provides an accurate and balanced reflection of complaint handling performance over the reporting year. This scrutiny has included review of complaint volumes, outcomes, compliance with timescales, Housing Ombudsman determinations, and the effectiveness of arrangements to capture learning and drive service improvement.

We are assured that the self-assessment represents a true reflection of Plus Dane's complaint handling during the year and that it demonstrates compliance with the requirements of the Complaint Handling Code. No areas of non-compliance have been identified, and we note that all Ombudsman orders have been complied with fully and within required timescales.

Performance and improvement

The Board recognises that complaint volumes have remained broadly stable, in the context of continued increases across the sector, and that performance has improved in several key areas, including timeliness, upheld outcomes and customer satisfaction.

Whilst we also note that our maladministration rate remains significantly below the sector average, providing additional assurance regarding the quality of complaint handling and decision-making. We are committed to driving further improvements and have requested additional focus on learning from determinations linked to complaint handling to ensure that we put measures in place to address areas identified.

At the same time, we have challenged ourselves on areas where further improvement is required. Escalation rates remain higher than desired and reflect both internal factors and wider sector trends. We have sought assurance that the planned Stage 2 escalation deep dive will provide a robust analysis of root causes and lead to clear, measurable actions to reduce avoidable escalation.

The Board recognises that persistent themes, particularly communication, timeliness of service delivery, and completion of follow-on actions, continue to drive dissatisfaction and escalation. We have been clear in our expectation that these issues are addressed through sustained operational focus and through the delivery of major transformation activity, including the new repairs system, changes to the contact centre model, and wider service redesign.

Learning and service improvement

We are encouraged that learning from complaints is increasingly embedded into service design and strategic decision-making. We note the tangible impact of this approach, including improvements to repairs scheduling, clearer customer communications, strengthened contractor management, and changes to service delivery models.

Governance and assurance

The Board continues to place importance on strong governance and independent assurance. The Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) has provided additional scrutiny throughout the year, including direct case reviews, oversight of Housing Ombudsman determinations, and challenge on the use of insight and data, particularly in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion. This provides an important level of independent challenge and strengthens our overall assurance framework.

We also recognise the importance of customer voice in informing our understanding. Feedback from complaints is considered alongside other sources of customer insight to ensure a holistic view of service performance, recognising that some groups may be less likely to formally complain.

The Board is satisfied that appropriate arrangements are in place to support effective complaint handling, regulatory compliance and continued service improvement. We are assured that learning from complaints is being translated into tangible actions and that there is a clear focus on preventing repeat issues, improving communication and resolving concerns at the earliest opportunity.

We have recently strengthened the Terms of Reference for our Customer Assurance Panel to incorporate monitoring the lessons learnt from complaints.

Priorities for the year ahead



Looking ahead, the Board expects continued focus on:

- Reducing avoidable escalation and improving early resolution.
- Sustaining improvements in communication and customer experience.
- Embedding learning into operational delivery and transformation programmes.
- Strengthening data quality and insight, including EDI analysis.
- Maintaining strong compliance with the Complaint Handling Code and regulatory expectations.

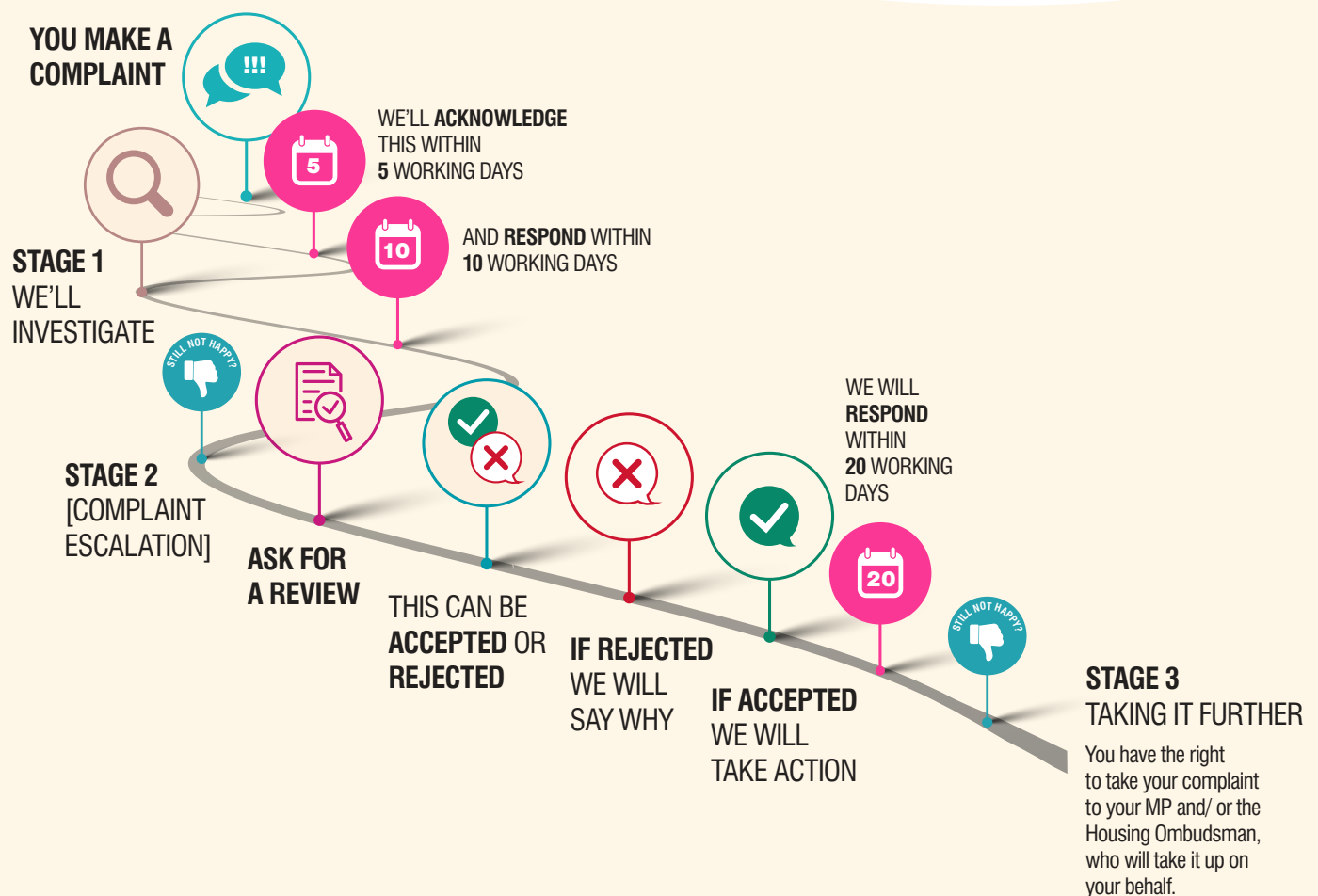
Conclusion

In a context of rising demand for Ombudsman services and increasing regulatory focus, the Board will continue to maintain close oversight of complaint handling performance and its role in providing assurance on the quality of services delivered to customers.

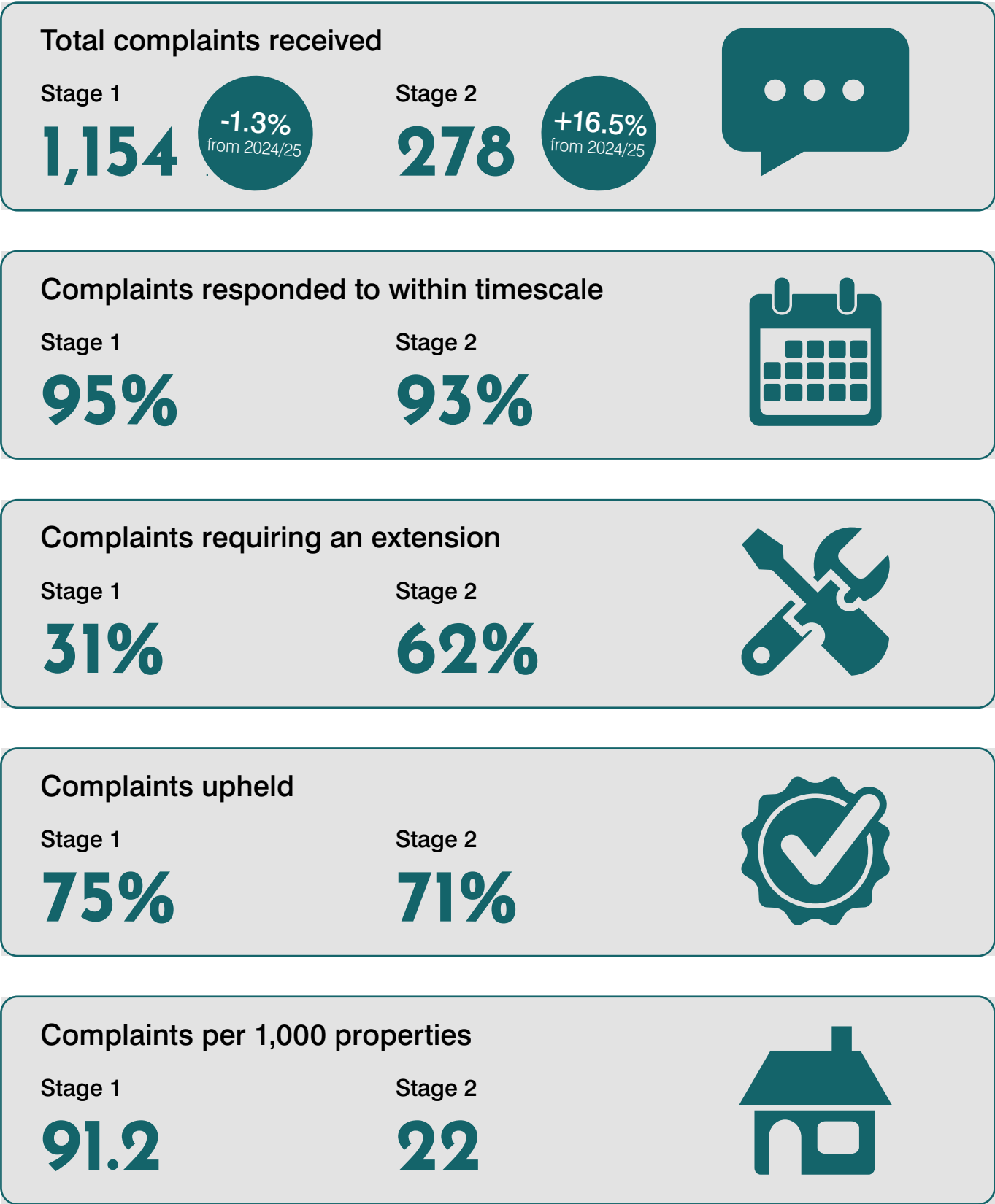
Our Complaints Process

We know that sometimes, despite our best efforts, we don't always get things right. When this happens, we want to make it as easy as possible for customers to tell us. By hearing about problems early, we have a better chance of putting things right quickly, learning from what went wrong, and improving our services for the future.

That's why we encourage customers to get in touch as soon as an issue arises. Our complaints procedure is designed to handle concerns promptly and fairly, making sure every complaint is taken seriously and responded to appropriately. Here's how it works:



Performance Overview



Note: This performance data includes all complaints and may differ from Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), which are based on specific tenure types only. Some out-of-target cases are due to late acknowledgment, even when the response was on time.

Rejections

12 complaints were formally rejected within the year as the issue related to an exclusion listed within our policy. The reasons for the rejections are shown in the table below.

Rejection reason	Number
An initial request for a service and there has been no service failure	5
Complaint raised by third party – unable to identify customer	1
12 or more months ago	1
Complaint has already exhausted the complaints process	1
Best decided through other means, such as court	4

Top three complaint categories

Ranking		Service area	No. of complaints		Variance to PY	
2024/25	2025/26		2024/25	2025/26	2024/25	2025/26
1	1	Repairs and Maintenance	675	642	-33	-5%
2	2	Neighbourhoods	77	95	18	23%
4	3	Environmental Services	52	71	19	37%

Key themes

Work is underway to review complaint categorisation to deliver improved insight and to allow for it to be better triangulated with insight gathered through other channels. Using the categories available to us, service delivery generated 59% of complaints, a reduction of 2% compared to last year.

Category	Percentage of overall		YoY change
	2024/25	2025/26	
Service delivery	61%	59%	-2%
Other	5%	1%	-4%
Property condition	8%	7%	-1%
Quality of repair	6%	9%	3%
Policy and process	6%	8%	2%
Communication	7%	8%	1%
Staff attitude/behaviour	5%	6%	1%
Admin/system error	1%	2%	1%

'Service Delivery' comprises several subcategories, with timescales identified as the biggest driver of complaints, accounting for 12% of all complaints. Other key areas included grounds maintenance (8%), scheduling (6%), and both damp and mould and gas heating/hot water (5% each). These complaints relate to the overall time taken to deliver a service and the responsiveness of the service provided.

Housing Ombudsman

There were 16 cases decided by the Housing Ombudsman Service this year, with 36 separate findings. We were 100% compliant with all orders.

The table below presents landlord findings categorised by type, for cases determined between April 2025 and March 2026:

Category	Maladministration	Service failure	Redress	No maladministration	Total
Responsive repairs/activity	6	3	3	1	13
Managing relations	1	3	3	3	10
Estate management	1	0	1	3	5
ASB/abuse/nuisance	1	1	0	1	3
Financial	0	0	2	1	3
Moving/buying/selling home	1	0	0	1	2
Total	10	7	9	10	36

To view the Housing Ombudsman Service's latest performance report, [click here](#).



Learning and Improvements

We value the feedback our customers give us through complaints, as it helps us understand where we need to improve. Over the past year, we have used what we learned from complaints in previous years to make changes across our services. While some issues continue to be raised, we have made positive progress in a number of areas. The table below sets out the improvements we have made and the impact they are having for customers.

Where we've made good progress

Some things we know have been an ongoing issue for a long time, but this year we received very few complaints in the following areas, suggesting we are making real progress in fixing the problem.



Timescales for Right to Buy/Acquire or Staircasing

A new process was implemented following analysis last year that highlighted dissatisfaction with timescales for home ownership processes. Additional monitoring and weekly engagement with our solicitors led to a reduction in these complaints.



Lack of clarity over roles and responsibilities for repairs

Activities related to this theme have supported the reduction in rates of complaints by creating increased transparency with customers relating to roles and responsibilities and facilitating appropriate signposting when considering a complaint.



Communal cleaning - value for money and quality of service

Since bringing the cleaning service in-house, missed cleans and concerns about quality of cleaning are no longer recurring issues. We still receive occasional complaints about communal cleaning; however, these more often relate to expectations about service frequency and presentation between scheduled visits (for example, where some day-to-day build-up is unavoidable) rather than service failure or poor-quality work.



Areas taking longer to improve or address the root cause

These are areas that we have seen come up in previous years, and while we are working on them, there is still more to do. This table shows what we've done already, and what we are going to do going forward.

Complaint theme reported in 2024/25	Further improvement action delivered in 2025/26	Impact and next steps
Lack of communication relating to appointment date or time of appointment when reporting a repair	Continuous improvement plans by trade to improve availability of appointment slots. Scheduling task force concluded in Q1, resulting in additional management positions in the team to oversee performance and approach.	Further increase in the % of appointments scheduled at first point of contact to 60% at the end of January 2025 to 75% at the end of March 2026 for all repair types, increasing to 93% for routine 28-day repairs.
Grounds maintenance - value for money	Internal reviews have led to an increase in the cutting window, starting earlier in March and extending to October to support delivery of the agreed specification. The impact of this will be seen in 2026/27.	Focus group is being piloted in Castlefields to engage with customers when reviewing the specification of grounds maintenance. An external assurance review of the service is underway to produce recommendations to provide value for money going forward.
Communication about increases in service charge costs	A joint review group updated the rent and service charges letters for this year, as well as the statement of account documents for Shared Owners. The changes were moderate and restricted by the data architecture currently in place. An intensive piece of work was completed in relation to service charges at the Gateacre estate to address dissatisfaction and resolve outstanding concerns.	We have received fewer queries around understanding the annual rent review letter, indicating the changes have been well received. We recognise there is more work to do. We are exploring options with a third-party supplier to improve our data architecture and produce clearer, tailored communications.

New themes identified this year

These are new issues we have been made aware of, and the table shows what we are doing to address them.

Complaint theme reported in 2025/26	Action	Impact and next steps
Contractor service quality (Repairs)	Roofing defects and damp-related failures as persistent causes of dissatisfaction, linked to repeat visits and poor root cause analysis. Improved reporting of contractor-related complaints introduced in Q3.	Stronger use of contract performance meetings, directly addressing complaint level issues, including removal of contractor staff where behaviour did not meet the required standard. A roofing approval was agreed in year with existing contractor who is performing, and a wider strategy is being considered for review in Q2/3.
Clearer complaint communication and reducing avoidable escalation	Revised response letter layouts and wording were developed to improve empathy and clarity, particularly for partially upheld outcomes as complaints often escalated due to customers feeling that explanations were unclear or defensive, even where the underlying decision was correct. Letter review weeks and targeted letter writing training were embedded by Q3 to improve tone, structure and explanation of decisions at Stage 1.	A reduction in upheld and partially upheld outcomes over time. Improved customer satisfaction with complaint handling, both transactional and perception-based.

As well as looking at ways to improve our service to customers, we have also invested in some large-scale changes to help put us in a better position to serve customers well.

Here are some examples of the major projects we have delivered and what will be coming soon as a result.

The Homes Transformation project has been designing our new repairs system for the last 12-18 months, and learning from complaints and learning loops has significantly shaped its design and associated processes to deliver meaningful and sustainable change. The system goes live in Q1 2026/27 and has been configured to reduce recurring failure points, including improved oversight of incomplete repairs and mandatory steps that prevent job closure until key actions are completed (including attempting to book follow-on appointments), improving certainty and reducing repeat contact.

Other large-scale changes designed to address feedback from complaints include:

- Approval of a new operating model for our contact centre to ensure more enquiries are resolved at the first point of contact, removing friction for customers.
- Development of a new service delivery model for our customer-facing services to improve our visibility in our neighbourhoods, provide consistent and equitable services for customers, and meet the evolving needs of current and future customers.

We are seeing an increase in complaints and escalation requests that appear to be AI-assisted. In response, we have drafted guidance and tips to support customers to make effective use of AI, which has been tested with customers and can now be found on our website.



Customer Satisfaction

Satisfaction increased across both transactional and perception-based surveys during 2025/26, indicating that service improvements are having a positive impact. Transactional satisfaction increased from 41% to 43%, while perception-based satisfaction rose from 37.2% to 43.5%.

““

Great communication and what appears to be a very thorough investigation into my concerns.

““

We've had a few complaints and they've always been handled very well and kept confidential.

““

My complaint was dealt with efficiently, and I was happy with the outcome.

““

I like the way this was dealt with and the staff's understanding of the nature of my complaint. Thank you.

““

Fantastic service from start to finish. Thanks.

““

They dealt with my complaint very well.

““

It was dealt with very professionally and compassionately, and I was kept updated throughout.

““

Very quick to respond to and handle complaints.

Self-Assessment

We are required to complete an annual self-assessment of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. This helps us ensure our complaint handling remains in line with best practice and the Ombudsman's expectations.

To view our completed self-assessment, please [click here](#).



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