

Complaints performance, and service improvement annual report April 2025 to March 2026

WestKent

Places to live. Space to grow.

Foreword to the annual complaints performance, and service improvement annual report 2025/26

Introduction

We want our customers to have a positive experience regardless of who they are, where they live, or how and when they choose to interact with us. Everyone at West Kent shares responsibility for delivering this, from the way we communicate to how we provide services.

We take complaints seriously and recognise that sometimes we get things wrong. When this happens, we aim to resolve issues fairly and use what we learn to prevent them from happening again. Learning from complaints is essential to improving services and strengthening trust with our residents.

During 2025/26, we continued to focus on improving how we listen to residents and respond to their concerns. This led to improvements in complaints handling overall, including greater consistency in the payment of compensation and strengthened internal processes, which was recognised by the Housing Ombudsman as an example of best practice.

While complaint volumes and Stage 2 escalations increased during the year, this reflected wider sector trends and fewer complaints were upheld at Stage 2. We recognise there is still more to do, particularly in improving communication, responsiveness and how we support vulnerable residents, especially in relation to repairs. An action plan is being developed to address these areas and drive further improvement.

We also strengthened how we capture and embed learning across the organisation, supported by oversight from senior leaders and the Board. This report outlines our complaint handling performance and highlights the improvements we have made as a result of feedback from residents, Housing Ombudsman findings and wider sector learning.

Piers White, MBE
Chair of the Board and Member Responsible for Complaints



Introduction

Listening to our residents is central to how we improve our services. Complaints help us understand what's working and what isn't. This report covers how we handled complaints between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, and what we've learned as a result.

When our residents make a complaint, it's often because something hasn't met their expectations. We aim to respond quickly, fairly, and with respect.

We don't just resolve individual issues. We use complaints, Tenant Satisfaction Measures, transactional feedback and resident involvement insight together to spot patterns earlier, understand where residents may be experiencing repeated frustration, and take action before issues escalate into formal complaints. This helps us address root causes, improve first-time resolution and design services that better reflect residents' needs.

We are open about where things go wrong. We also explain what we've done to improve and how we make sure those improvements last.

Glossary of terms

This report includes both qualitative (descriptive) and quantitative (numbers-based) analysis of our complaint-handling performance.

We also talk about how we've followed the rules set by the Housing Ombudsman Service. We use various terms and phrases that may be uncommon to some readers. To help, please see a summary below.

- **Maladministration** – refers to a failure by a landlord to provide adequate service, which can include not addressing complaints properly, causing unreasonable delays, or failing to meet housing standards.
- **Determination** – is a formal decision made by the Housing Ombudsman Service. It details the agreed terms for resolving a complaint between a resident and a landlord. The Ombudsman follows up to make sure that actions have been completed.
- **Timescales** – stage one complaints should be responded to within ten working days. Stage two complaints should be responded to within twenty working days. The Ombudsman will allow an extension for good reason by ten working days at stage one and twenty working days at stage two.
- **Complaint Handling Code** – sets out best practice for landlord's complaint handling procedures, to enable a positive complaints culture across the social housing sector, regardless of the size or type of landlord. The code encourages landlord-resident relationships so that residents can raise a complaint if things go wrong.
- **Median** – this is the value or number at the middle of the data, after we've arranged it from the lowest to highest. Half the values or numbers are below it and half are above.
- **Spotlight reports** – are from the Housing Ombudsman Service and focus on areas of landlord services where they see a high amount of failure across the social housing sector.
- **Safeguarding** – Safeguarding is defined as protecting a person's health, wellbeing, and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse, and neglect.

West Kent completed its annual Complaint Handling Code self-assessment in June 2026. The assessment confirmed compliance with the Code requirements. The full self-assessment is published alongside this report.

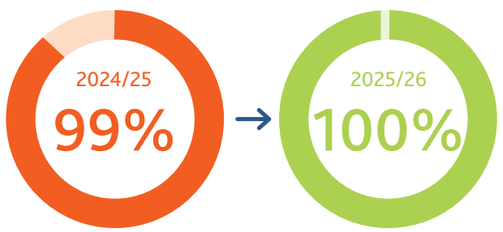
Complaints handling performance: April 2025 – March 2026

Key data (all complaints managed)	April 2024 to March 2025	April 2025 to March 2026
Complaints managed	565	690
Complaints managed within timescales – including allowed extensions	99%	100%
Complaints managed within initial Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) timeframe of 10-20 working days	77%	82.8%
Complaints stage one and stage two upheld	79%	60.6%
Complaints not accepted	4%	2.4%
Escalation rate to stage two	23%	31%
Average days to respond	Stage one = 10 days Stage two = 22 days	Stage one = 9 days Stage two = 22 days
Complaints satisfaction score out of five	2.4	1.97
Compliments*	568	398

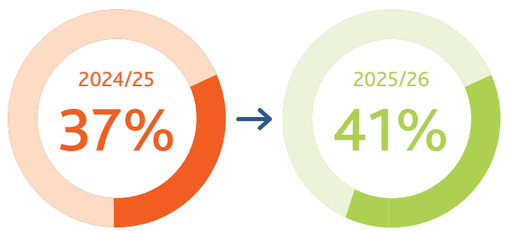
**We've changed how we record and report compliments. In previous years, we included residents thank-you messages as compliments, but we recognise this may not align with wider industry practice. This means our data for 2025/26 will show a drop in compliments.*

13 Housing Ombudsman case determinations 2024/25

23 Housing Ombudsman case determinations 2025/26



Complaints managed within timescales – including allowed extensions



Complaint handling satisfaction

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM)

These figures only include complaints from residents and shared owners.

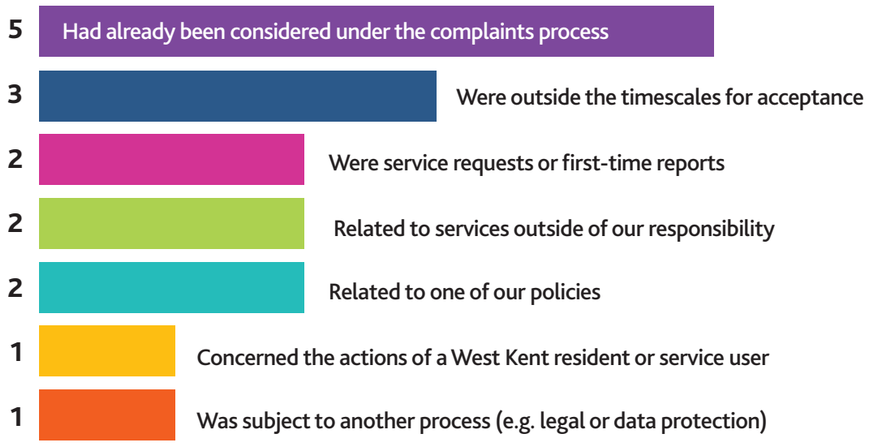
Measure	Rented	Home ownership	How we compare (Rented)	How we compare (Home ownership)
Satisfaction with complaints handling	40.6%	40.4%	**Above average. The industry average in 2024/25 was 35.5%**	**Top 25%. The industry average for 2024/25 is 23.4%**
Stage one complaints per 1,000 homes	53.7	50.1	**The national average score was 53.5, so we are in line with this**	**The national average score was 40.1, so we are higher average**
Stage two complaints per 1,000 homes	17	17.3	**The national average score was 8.3, so we are over double in terms of escalations**	**The national average was 10.9, so we are higher than average**
Stage one complaints handled within Housing Ombudsman timescales – including allowed extension times	100%	100%	**We are in the top 25% with the average at 89.9%**	**We are in the top 25% with the average at 86%**
Stage two complaints handled within Housing Ombudsman timescales	100%	100%	**We are in the top 25% with the average at 88.9%**	**We are in the top 25% with the average at 86%**

Overall, results show improvement in areas closely linked to complaints handling, including communication, feeling listened to, and ease of contact.

Complaints not accepted

16 out of the 690 complaints were not accepted as per the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.

The reasons are:



Complaint and compliment trends

Trends in data

Complaints and compliments help us understand our residents' experiences. We treat complaints as valuable feedback. We know it takes time to raise concerns, and we respect that.

We want our customers to have a positive experience whenever they contact us, whatever the reason and however they choose to do so. Complaints and compliments are an important part of understanding how our services are experienced in practice. They help us identify where things have gone wrong, where services have not met expectations, and where individual actions and good service have made a real difference.

We're using learning from complaints to inform our work with resident-led steering groups, coordinated by the resident involvement team. These groups provide residents with a meaningful opportunity to share their experiences and priorities, helping us better understand where additional support or changes to approach are needed.

In January 2026, we completed a focused review of our complaints process to strengthen how learning is identified, shared, and acted upon across the organisation.

This reinforced our commitment to treating complaints as 'gold'; not simply as expressions of dissatisfaction, but as valuable opportunities to learn, improve, and build trust. This work demonstrates our continued focus on using customer feedback to improve services and this is reflected in improvements seen in Tenant Satisfaction Measure results for complaints handling and feeling listened to.

During 2025/26, we managed 690 complaints, an increase compared with 565 complaints in the previous year. While this increase reflects ongoing service pressures, performance in handling complaints remained strong. All complaints were managed within agreed timescales, including permitted extensions, and 82.8% were responded to within the Housing Ombudsman Service's initial timeframes, an improvement from 77% in 2024/25.

The proportion of complaints upheld reduced from 79% to 60.6%, indicating complaints are being seen as lessons to be learned and contributing to improved service delivery. Average stage one response times decreased to 9 days, showing a commitment to responding promptly while ensuring responses are accurate and get things right first time.

Average response times at stage two remained stable at 22 days, despite a 71.7% increase in the number of complaints (from 92 to 158). This shows we have been able to maintain a consistent level of performance under increased demand and reinforces the need for strong stage one investigations to fully understand and resolve issues as early as possible.

Tenant Satisfaction Measure results show that residents who have vulnerabilities or disabilities report feeling less well served than those without additional needs. We recognise this disparity and are taking steps to ensure that all customers receive a consistent and high standard of service, considering individual circumstances. We have a dedicated management-led steering group to deliver a new vulnerability policy to ensure our vulnerable residents receive an equal service.

Repairs

Repairs continue to be one of the most common themes raised through complaints and resident feedback. While many residents are satisfied with the quality of completed works, dissatisfaction often relates to the time taken, missed appointments, and a lack of communication once repairs are reported. Tenant Satisfaction Measure results show that satisfaction with repairs and the time taken has remained broadly stable, while complaints highlight that delays or poor communication can undermine confidence, particularly for residents with vulnerabilities or additional needs.

Residents have also told us that when repairs involve multiple visits or extended timescales, it is the lack of clear information and follow-up that most often leads to complaints, rather than the repair itself.

Part of our complaints review focused on how we use learning from complaints to improve communication and follow-up throughout the repairs process. Work is underway to improve how our residents can contact us and manage their account online; including how to make it easier to report and track repairs. A new online portal will become available in 2026.

A group of involved residents work alongside our contractors to offer lived experience feedback on how repairs are completed, including in our communal areas. Their feedback has changed how we deliver our services and how we work with contractors to ensure customer voice is the main performance measure.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

Complaints relating to anti-social behaviour increased during 2025/26 and continue to feature strongly in resident feedback. Residents tell us that concerns are often not only about the behaviour itself, but about how quickly concerns are acknowledged, how clearly updates are provided, and whether they feel supported once an issue is reported. Tenant Satisfaction Measure results reflect this, showing satisfaction with the approach to anti-social behaviour at lower levels than the organisation's overall satisfaction, despite some improvement during the year. This highlights the importance of timely communication, clear expectations, and visible action when concerns are raised.

We are strengthening how anti-social behaviour cases are managed, with a focus on clearer communication, improved responsiveness, and stronger coordination between teams and external partner organisations. Learning from complaints has helped us identify where more consistent updates and reassurance are needed, particularly in complex or ongoing cases. Complaint insight and TSM feedback are being used alongside wider ASB performance data to inform improvement activity and oversight.

Staff conduct and communication

A number of complaints during the year related to staff conduct or the information provided during customer interactions. Of the 76 we received, we found evidence to agree with 48.7% (37) of them. Common themes were where residents had told us that information was unclear or incorrect which could lead to frustration, delays, and a lack of confidence in our services. While these complaints represent a minority of cases, they highlight the importance of accurate information, consistent advice, and a respectful tone, particularly when residents are already experiencing difficulties.

We have strengthened our induction and training arrangements to ensure that from the start of their employment colleagues are equipped with the knowledge and confidence to support residents effectively. We have reviewed how we record the information we hold on our systems about our residents, to ensure it's updated at appropriate intervals and is as accurate as possible. Learning from complaints is shared across teams to reinforce expected standards of customer care and communication provided at every point of contact.

Trends in satisfaction

Tenant Satisfaction Measure results for 2025/26 show satisfaction improving across most measures when compared with the previous year. For both Low Cost Rental Accommodation (LCRA) and Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) residents, overall satisfaction increased year on year, despite ongoing pressures across core services and the wider housing sector.

The most notable improvements were seen in measures closely linked to customer experience and complaints handling. Satisfaction with complaints handling increased significantly for both LCRA (+3.6% taking us to 40.6%) and LCHO (+11.5% taking us to 40.4%). All TSM results are compared across the housing sector so industry trends can be recognised and understood.

For complaints handling, results put us in quartile two for our LCRA residents and quartile one for our LCHO residents (four quartiles). Improvements were also seen in feeling listened to and acted upon, being kept informed, being easy to deal with, and approaches to anti-social behaviour. These improvements align closely with complaint themes throughout the year and reinforce the importance of communication, engagement, and early resolution in shaping residents' experiences.

Satisfaction with core service areas, including having a safe home, repairs, and neighbourhood contribution, remained strong, and, in most cases, increased compared with 2024/25. Measures such as having a safe home and being easy to deal with continue to score highest, providing reassurance that we perform well in areas that matter most to residents. Communal areas and neighbourhood related measures, while improving, remain lower than the overall average and will continue to be key areas of focus for service improvement.

Overall, satisfaction trends for 2025/26 indicate that West Kent is making progress in areas most closely linked to customer confidence and trust, while maintaining a clear focus on those areas where further improvement is needed. Combined with complaints data, these results provide assurance that customer feedback is being used actively to understand performance, identify risk, and drive service improvement.

Competency and Conduct expectations for housing staff

From October 2026, the Regulator will introduce new Competency and Conduct requirements as part of the Consumer Standards framework. These are designed to strengthen professionalism and address long-standing resident concerns about staff behaviour, communication, and consistency.

Landlords will be expected to:

- Ensure staff and contractors delivering housing services have appropriate skills, knowledge and behaviours
- Maintain a written workforce development policy
- Implement and embed a code of conduct for housing staff
- Ensure senior housing managers are qualified or working towards recognised housing management qualifications
- Enable residents to influence and scrutinise workforce standards.

Complaint categories and sub-categories

Category & total number	Reason	Number of complaints	Trend (up or down from last year)
Repairs 294 (upheld 191) *One complaint has been recorded under more than one category, which results in a category total of 295.	Length of time	118	Complaints relating to repairs increased by 31%. Communication complaints decreased from 26% to 16%, whilst quality increased from 7% to 12% and damage to goods from 6% to 10%.
	Communication	48	
	Policy	41	
	Damage to goods or	30	
	Quality	36	
	Other	22	
Housing and estate management 170* *One complaint has been recorded under more than one category, which results in a category total of 171	Grounds maintenance	42	Complaints relating to housing and estate management increased by 38% Grounds maintenance complaints decreased from 54% to 25% whilst ASB increased from 20% to 35% and tenancy issues 3% to 17%.
	ASB	59	
	Other	24	
	Cleaning	3	
	Tenancy action	28	
	Parking	15	
Damp and Mould 42* *One complaint has been recorded under more than one category, which results in a category total of 43.	Length of Time	23	Complaints relating to damp and mould increased by 30%. Length of time complaints decreased from 64% to 54%, whilst communication reduced significantly from 12% to 2%. In contrast, quality of works increased from 3% to 14%, with 'other' and 'policy' emerging as new complaint categories.
	Quality of works	6	
	Damage to Goods	3	
	Reoccurrence	3	
	Policy	2	
	Communication	1	
	Other	5	
Staff 76	Staff attitude	38	Complaints relating to staff increased by 33%. Staff attitude related complaints increased from 39% to 50%, whilst timeliness decreased from 21% to 12%.
	Timeliness	9	
	Incorrect information	13	
	Other	16	
Charges 20	Rent account	8	No significant changes were identified in this category, with rent accounts and 'other' remaining the main drivers
	Other	8	
	Recharges	3	
	Direct Debit	1	
Moving home 41	Management transfer or direct let	8	Complaints relating to moving home increased by 64%. Property condition decreased from 19% to 9%, whilst management transfers or direct lets increased from 11% to 20% and mutual exchange from 11% to 22%.
	Property condition	10	
	Mutual exchange	9	
	Decant issues	4	
	Shortlisting or Bidding	2	
	Other	8	
Defects 13	Length of time	5	Complaints relating to defects increased by 117%. Length of time complaints reduced from 83% to 38%, whilst communication increased from 17% to 31%.
	Communication	4	
	Policy	1	
	Quality	2	
	Other	1	

Equality, diversity, and inclusion

Understanding whether all residents receive a fair and consistent service is an essential part of our approach to complaints handling and service improvement. To support this, we routinely analyse complaints alongside Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) data by demographic characteristics, including disability, age, tenure, and location.

This helps us identify differences in experience and ensures that learning from complaints informs inclusive service delivery. We use our findings to design our action plans. Data is also used to influence our strategies that lead direction of service delivery across the company.

TSM results for 2025/26 show that residents with recorded disabilities report lower satisfaction across most measures when compared with those without additional needs. The largest differences are seen in areas closely linked to customer experience, including complaints handling, being kept informed, ease of contact, and neighbourhood contribution. We are working with residents to understand this further.

Complaints raised by residents with disabilities also more frequently reflect challenges around communication, delays, missed appointments and the need for greater flexibility or understanding when services are delivered. These insights reinforce the importance of fairness, empathy and responsiveness, particularly where residents may be more reliant on our services. We've carried out an independent review of how we provide services to our vulnerable residents and are using the findings to change the way we process and use our data to improve our services. We are also working with residents who are happy to be involved with providing direct input into their lived experiences, through our resident involvement team.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion considerations are embedded within our complaints process, governance, and service improvement activity. By using complaints and TSM insight together, we are better able to identify where experiences differ and take action to improve outcomes for all residents, particularly those who may be at greater risk of disadvantage.

Dissatisfaction with complaints handling is higher for younger lead residents than for older households.

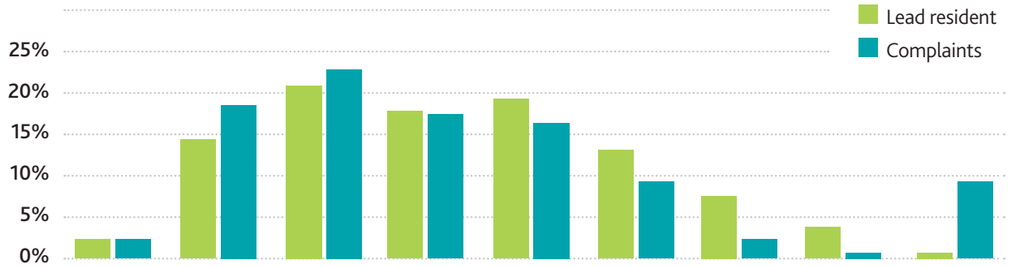
Complaints broken down by ethnicity shows that over 58% of complaints are from white people which is aligned with our resident demographic.

As a result of these learnings around equality, diversity, and inclusion, we are implementing the following across 2026/27:

- **Embedding vulnerability-focused improvements**
- **Using insight to shape service design**
- **Reviewing how we train and equip our contractors to deliver a service that suits everyone's needs**
- **Making our policies clear, fair and considered around what we can provide to our most vulnerable**
- **Strengthening governance and oversight of equality data.**

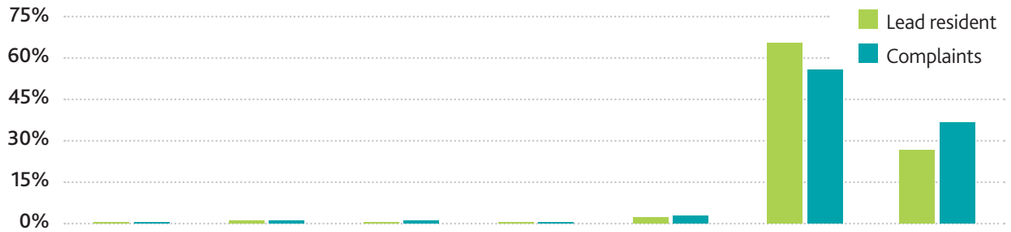
Data that shows our demographics on complaints in comparison to our lead resident profile is broken down below.

Age Information



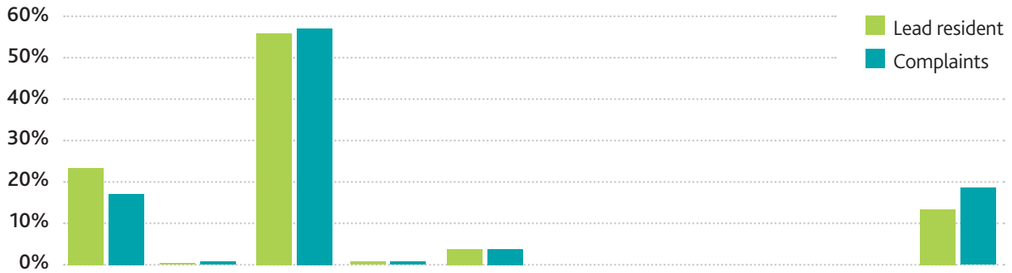
	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65-74 years	75-84 years	85+ years	(blank)/no response
Lead resident	2.33%	14.71%	20.86%	17.15%	18.67%	13.01%	8.48%	3.76%	1.04%
Complaints	2.33%	18.65%	22.84%	17.02%	16.32%	9.09%	2.80%	1.17%	9.79%

Ethnicity Information



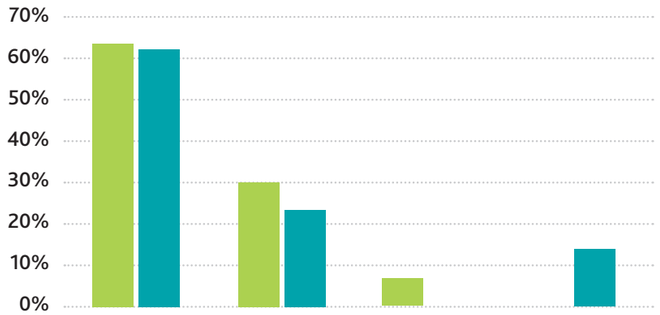
	Asian or British Asian	Black or Black British	Multiple ethnicity	Other	Prefer not to say	White	(blank)/no response
Lead resident	0.90%	1.18%	0.78%	0.74%	3.47%	67.63%	25.29%
Complaints	0.47%	1.40%	1.40%	0.70%	3.96%	58.28%	33.80%

Religion Information



	Christian	Muslim	No religion	Other	Prefer not to say	Hindu	Jewish	Sikh	Prefer not to say	(blank)/ no response
Lead resident	23.68%	0.71%	55.09%	1.33%	3.82%	0.12%	0.07%	0.05%	3.82%	14.96%
Complaints	17.25%	1.17%	56.88%	1.17%	3.96%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.96%	19.58%

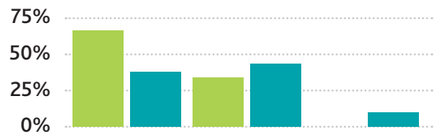
Gender Information



	Female	Male	Prefer not to say	(blank)/no response
Lead resident	62.25%	30.87%	6.81%	0.07%
Complaints	61.31%	25.41%	0.23%	13.05%

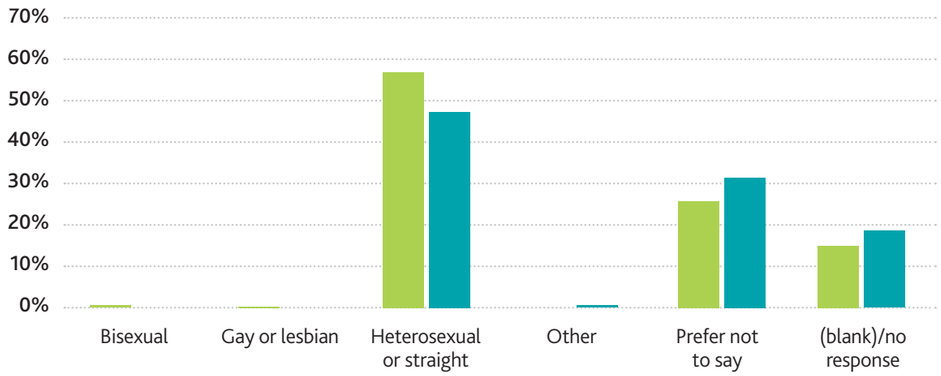
A higher percentage of our residents who have a disability make a complaint.

Disability Information



	No	Yes	(blank)
Lead resident	69.35%	30.65%	
Complaints	43.82%	48.02%	8.16%

Sexual orientation Information

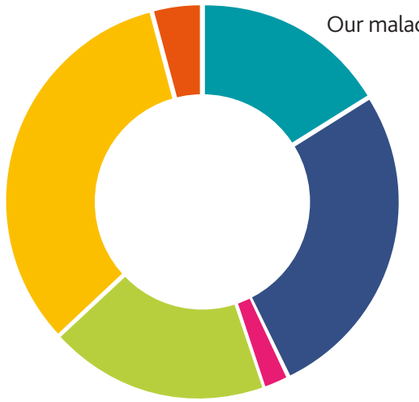


	Bisexual	Gay or lesbian	Heterosexual or straight	Other	Prefer not to say	(blank)/no response
Lead resident	0.57%	0.46%	57.83%	0.31%	25.91%	14.92%
Complaints	0.23%	0.23%	48.72%	0.47%	30.77%	19.58%

Ombudsman determinations

We continue to learn from Housing Ombudsman outcomes and use these to inform improvements. Learning is shared across teams and monitored to ensure actions are implemented.

Landlord findings



Our maladministration rate for 2025/26 was 46.9% (31% for 2024/25)

Severe maladministration	**0** (0)
Maladministration	**8** (6)
Service failure	**15** (5)
Mediation	**1** (1)
Reasonable redress	**9** (10)
No maladministration	**16** (14)
Out of jurisdiction	**2** (1)

Numbers in brackets are 2024/25 figures.

Determinations received

The table below sets out the number of determinations we received and the category.

Category	Maladministration	Service Failure
Responsive repairs/activity	4	6
Managing relations	1	6
ASB/abuse/nuisance	0	2
Moving/buying/selling home	1	0
Information and data management	1	0
Estate management	1	0
Occupancy rights	0	0
Financial	0	0
Planned works	0	1
Total	**8**	**15**

Key learning and service improvements

Overview

You'll have seen throughout the report some of the learnings and service improvements made as a result of complaints. Complaints provide essential insight into how residents experience our services. Learning is an essential part of the complaint process and this year we have added to our complaints procedure to improve how we learn from individual cases.

The focus of our learning from complaints has been on communication and transparency, timeliness and follow-up, and consistency of service delivery.

Learning from complaints-handling

In 2025/26 we focused on taking the valuable lived experience insight from complaints and turning them into solid learning outcomes that residents can see and feel. As well as working closely with service heads to design service improvement plans, we set up more involved resident groups to work alongside our contractors to provide improvement suggestions on how we manage and repair our homes and communal areas. This hands-on approach means our contractors get to feel what it's like to live in our homes and understand the huge importance of getting it right first time. Detail on our learnings from complaints can be found throughout this report. Below, you'll see what we have learned from our complaint-handling process specifically, and our response.

Learning:

- Complaints highlighted the importance of early resolution, clear explanations, and accurate information.

Response:

- Improved stage one complaint handling
- Stronger oversight of escalations
- Better sharing of learning across teams.

Learning from Ombudsman determinations

Learning:

- External findings reinforced themes around communication, delays, and complaint handling.

Response:

- Actions monitored at senior level
- Improvements embedded into service delivery and governance.

Housing Ombudsman spotlight reports

The Housing Ombudsman Service has a wide and comprehensive understanding of the issues impacting all residents across the housing sector. We consider the knowledge they share to be helpful for the improvement of all services, not just complaints handling.

This includes focus on:

- Damp and mould (including Awaab's Law)
- Vulnerability and safeguarding
- Compensation guidelines
- Communication and service standards.

What this means for our customers

New regulation means stronger oversight of how landlords deliver services, with a greater focus on fairness, communication, and how well complaints are handled.

For our customers, this means clearer information, higher standards of staff conduct, better use of feedback, and greater confidence that concerns are listened to and used to improve services.

This report was updated on 27 October 2026. The originally published version incorrectly stated that our maladministration rate was 31%, which was our 2024/25 figure (correct figure for 2025/26 is 46.9%). The report has been amended accordingly.

Highlight:

Ombudsman Praise for service improvements

In September 2025, the Housing Ombudsman Service reached out to us about how we performed in its annual Landlord Performance Report for 2024/25.

Our results showed a big improvement: our maladministration rate dropped from 62% to 31%.

The Housing Ombudsman Service called this a "significant improvement recognition." This was especially important in a year when there was a 30% rise in determinations across the country and a national maladministration rate of 71%. The report included 37 findings from 13 determinations.

The Ombudsman said this year's progress shows we have a strong culture for handling complaints and that it deserves to be recognised.

They also said they want to use our performance as an example of good practice and share these results more broadly.



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