



Complaint and service improvement report

April 2024 to March 2025

WestKent

Places to live. Space to grow.

Foreword to the annual complaint performance and service improvement report 2024/25

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 needs to have ownership and responsibility of this, from the language we use, to the way we work with and deliver services to our customers. We take complaints seriously and recognise that sometimes we get things wrong. We make sure we learn from complaints, to prevent issues in the future and continually improve our services. You will see in this report how we have been learning over the last year not only from our own complaints but also from the sector more widely.

As the Member Responsible for Complaints at West Kent, I get to see all Housing Ombudsman Service findings and I am pleased that our number of maladministration determinations from the Ombudsman have decreased. We have also seen an increase in their determinations of reasonable redress and no maladministration. We were also recognised as a good practice example by the Ombudsman this year for a case regarding a resident who is a shared owner. All of this reflects the great services that we deliver most of the time.

In this report you will read how we use our data to seek to provide the best service possible, taking account of people’s protected characteristics where we know them. I hope you enjoy reading about our complaint performance and service improvements for 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

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



Introduction

We consider each complaint in a fair way and do our best to put things right for our residents. Where there are failings, we undertake a root cause analysis and learn from what has been identified. Each case referred to the Ombudsman is considered at executive director level to ensure a satisfactory resolution, as are Ombudsman findings. The member responsible for complaints considers each finding and challenges the executive team on whether changes proposed will stop recurrence.

Glossary of terms

This report includes both qualitative (descriptive) and quantitative (numbers-based) analysis of our complaint-handling performance. We’ll also talk about how we’ve followed the rules set by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Within this report we refer to various terms and phrases, that may be uncommon to some readers. For ease, please see a summary below.

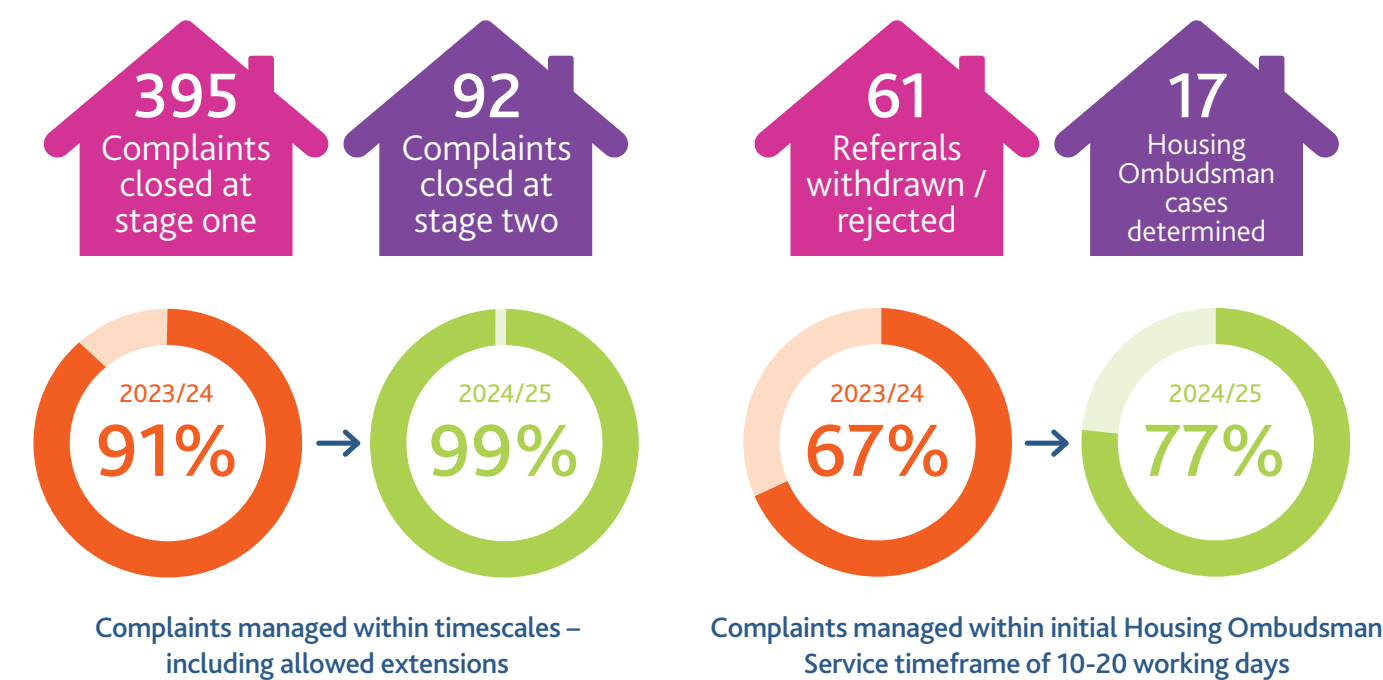
- **Maladministration** – refers to a failure by a landlord to provide adequate service, which can include not addressing complaints properly, causing unreasonable delays, or failing to meet housing standards.
- **Determination** – is a formal decision made by the Housing Ombudsman Service. It details the agreed terms for resolving a complaint between a tenant 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.

We have continued to reflect on the Ombudsman spotlight reports and their severe maladministration reports to assess any improvements we could make to our service for the benefit of our residents and the local communities we support. The outcomes of these reviews are also reported annually to the Communities and Housing Committee.

- **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-tenant 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 report** – are from the Housing Ombudsman Service and focus on areas of landlord services where they see a high amount of failure through casework.
- **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.

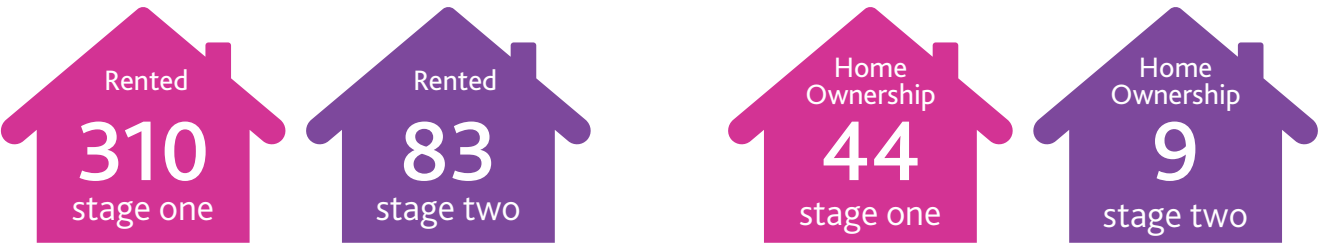
Complaints handling performance: April 2024-March 2025

Key data (all complaints managed)	April 23 to March 24	April 24 to March 25
Complaints managed	558	565
Complaints managed within timescales – including allowed extensions	91%	99%
Complaints managed within initial Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) timeframe of 10-20 working days	67%	77%
Complaints stage one and stage two upheld	66%	79%
Complaints not accepted	4%	4%
Average days to respond	Stage one = 11 days Stage two = 21 days	Stage one = 10 days Stage two = 22 days
Escalation rate to stage two	23%	23%
Complaints satisfaction score out of five	2.4	2.4
Compliments	411	568



Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) as defined by the Regulator

These figures only include complaints from tenants and shared owners.

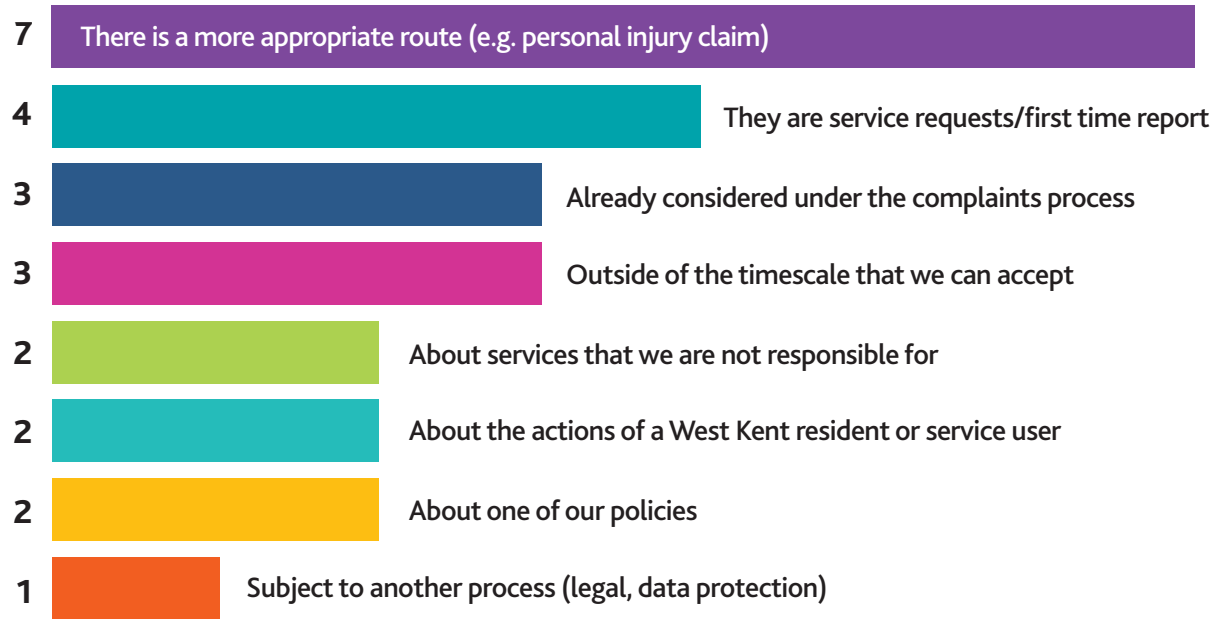


Measure	Rented	Home ownership	How we compare (Rented)	How we compare (Home ownership)
Satisfaction with complaints handling	37%	29%	Above average. The industry average in 2023/24 was 34.5%	Top 25%. The industry average in 2023/24 was 19.4%
Stage one complaints per 1,000 homes	41.5 (310 complaints)	43.2 (44 complaints)	Fewer complaints than average. The industry average in 2023/24 was 42.5 complaints per 1,000 homes.	More complaints than average. The industry average in 2023/24 was 35.2 complaints per 1,000 homes.
Stage two complaints per 1,000 homes	11.1 (83 complaints)	8.8 (9 complaints)	More complaints than average. The industry average in 2023/24 was 5.7 complaints per 1,000 homes.	Fewer complaints than average. The industry average in 2023/24 was 9.0 complaints per 1,000 homes.
Stage one complaints handled within Housing Ombudsman timescales	99.4% (308/310 complaints)	100% (44/44)	Top 25%. The industry average is 82.3% stage one complaints completed in time.	Top 25%. The industry average is 73.2% stage one complaints completed in time.
Stage two complaints handled within Housing Ombudsman timescales	97.6% (81/83 complaints)	100% (9/9 complaints)	Above average. This industry average is 83.6% stage two complaints completed in time.	Top 25%. The industry average is 78.6% stage two complaints completed in time.

24 complaints not accepted

24 out of the 565 complaints were not accepted as per the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaints Handling Code.

The reasons are:



Complaint and compliment trends

Trends in data

Since the introduction of the new Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code in April 2024, there has been a significant change in how we manage complaints. We have focused on responding to our residents earlier as this is what they expect from us. Sometimes cases require longer due to the complexity, but we will always discuss this with our residents.

- 77% of complaints were completed within the initial Housing Ombudsman timeframes of 10 days at stage one, and 20 days at stage two.
- Complaints completed within the accepted extended timescales set by the Housing Ombudsman Service increased from 91% to 99% this year.
- We handled stage one complaints within an average of 10 working days.
- The escalation rate of complaints from stage one to stage two has continued at approximately 23%. However, this year we have had a specific focus on the learning we can take from our complaints.

- All stage two complaint responses are shared with the relevant heads of service, to ensure teams are fully aware of the concerns our residents have raised with us. A weekly heads of service meeting, specifically focused on complaints, has helped extend collaborative learning across the different teams at West Kent.
- In 2024/25, we have focused on making sure dignity and respect is at the centre of our learning. We are also promoting the importance of listening to residents. This is the reason we have seen an increase in the number of complaints that have been upheld by the customer resolution team this year. The number of complaints upheld has increased from 66% to 79%.
- Our overall complaints satisfaction score measured through transactional surveys, remained at 2.4 out of 5 in the last year. However, we have seen an increase in compliments, and the customer resolution team has received 16 positive compliments this year, compared to nine last year. This has highlighted the improvement we are making as a team to treat our residents fairly and listen more actively.

- We receive on average 11 stage two complaints per 1000 homes we manage. This is more than the sector average which is 5.7. We have reviewed how we compare to organisations of the same size and similar location to us and this shows that our performance moves to being inline with the average for this group.

Anti-social behaviour

There have been reductions in anti-social behaviour (ASB) complaints this year. These improvements reflect the progress we have made with the management of ASB over the past 18 months, including work with our resident scrutiny panel.

Members of staff

We believe in treating people with dignity and respect has led to the reduction in complaints about members of staff. We continue to reflect on and improve our services and how we ensure our values are embedded in all areas of our complaints handling process.

Repairs

The length of time for repairs to be completed in our homes and our grounds maintenance service, continue to be the main concerns raised by residents in their complaints.

This year, we engaged with over 600 residents to understand their concerns with grounds maintenance and estate services generally and finished the year publishing our estate services standards and a new neighbourhood management policy, which residents have contributed to. As part of this we have clearly defined the standards we expect from our operatives, and, more importantly, been clear with residents about the level of service they should receive.

The customer resolution team are meeting regularly with the operatives to share the feedback we receive and support staff learning and as a result Nurture, who deliver the grounds maintenance contract, have changed the way they will deliver services in 2025/26.

Trends in satisfaction

Across the housing sector, repairs are the main source of complaints, and this impacts on customers’ overall satisfaction with us, so it is critical we get this right.

Our TSM feedback shows that almost 76% of residents in rented homes were satisfied with their overall repairs service. This is a good result, when compared against the average across the housing sector. We also only received 260 complaints in the last year regarding repairs against over 28,000 completed. Whilst these are both excellent examples of how well our teams are working, we want to continue to get better at repairs, based on the feedback from residents.

We are committed to improving on this and have plans to complete an end-to-end review of repairs in 2025/26, including resident feedback. Our transactional survey result for 2024/25 was 4.51 out of 5 for satisfaction with repairs. This narrowly beat our ambitious target of 4.5 out of 5.

The Housing Ombudsman Service reports that property condition is the top complaint category for cases they review. Although we know complaints are likely to remain high for repairs, overall, we have seen a reduction in the number of complaints relating to repairs. Residents’ concerns with the length of time for a repair, have been balanced with a significant reduction in complaints about quality and damage to goods while repairs are being carried out.

Complaint categories and sub-categories

Category & total number	Reason	Number of complaints	Trend (up or down from last year)
Repairs 260	Length of time	121	↑
	Communication	63	↑
	Policy	25	↓
	Damage to goods or compensation	18	↓
	Quality	16	↓
	Other	14	↓
	Reoccurrence	3	↑
Housing and estate management 123	Grounds maintenance	66	↑
	ASB	24	↓
	Other	23	Same or 1 more
	Cleaning	4	Same or 1 more
	Tenancy action	4	↑
	Parking	2	Same or 1 more
Staff 57	Staff attitude	22	↓
	Timeliness	12	↓
	Incorrect information	12	↑
	Other	11	↓
Charges 20	Rent account	7	↓
	Other	7	↑
	Recharges	3	↓
	Direct Debit	2	Same or 1 more
	Service charges	1	Same or 1 more
	Rent charges	0	↓
	Void	0	↓
Moving home 16	Other	5	Same or 1 more
	Management transfer or direct let	4	↑
	Property condition	3	↑
	Mutual exchange	3	↓
	Decant issues	1	↓
	Transfer issues	0	↓
Other 3	Other	3	↓
Defects 6	Length of time	5	↓
	Communication	1	Same or 1 more
	Damage to goods or compensation	0	↓
	Quality	0	↓
	Other	0	↓
Home ownership 2	Other	1	↓
	Sales process leasehold or freehold	1	Same or 1 more

Equality, diversity, and inclusion

We want our residents to have a good experience with us. This means that when they contact us, we take into consideration all of their needs and tailor services where appropriate. We recognise that we don't always gets things right and we want our complaints process to be fair, open, and easy to use so that residents feel respected, included, and heard.

We analyse our complaints using data on age, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion and faith and disability. If it looks like we receive more complaints from particular groups, we will investigate this to make sure we are treating everyone fairly. By checking complaint themes across all our residents, we learn how fairly we are delivering services. Our analysis on sex, sexual orientation, religion and faith very closely matched the profile of all our residents, telling us that there are no outliers in this area. This learning is being shared across our teams to help drive improved colleagues' awareness of complaints handling, for more information on this, see the learning section of this report.

In 2024/25, most complaints came from people who are aged 35-44, which matches our resident profile. We received fewer complaints from those aged over 65, compared to our profile of all residents but the difference was small.

The complaints we received from minority ethnic groups were similar to the wider resident profile.

We noted that we received a higher number of complaints from residents with a disability – about 40% of our complaints compared to our wider profile of 22%. When we looked at the data, we noticed that we had about 10% of residents who have complained more than once which means this increased our percentage.

We review all of our complaints on a case-by-case basis and where relevant, and identify where we could have improved. These lessons are tracked and monitored.

We also review the results of our tenant satisfaction measures and other surveys to track any feedback from residents on their experience of making a complaint. This supports our continued improvement across our complaints handling processes.

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

For our rented tenants, there is a noticeable difference around complaint handling between those with and without a disability. We know that a driver of complaints around repairs is often that we have not taken disability or vulnerability factors into account when delivering repairs.

We are completing extra work on treating our residents with dignity and respect, which is a theme from our complaints analysis for us to improve.

Complaints broken down by ethnicity shows that over 70% of complaints are from white people, which is broadly in line with our household demographics.

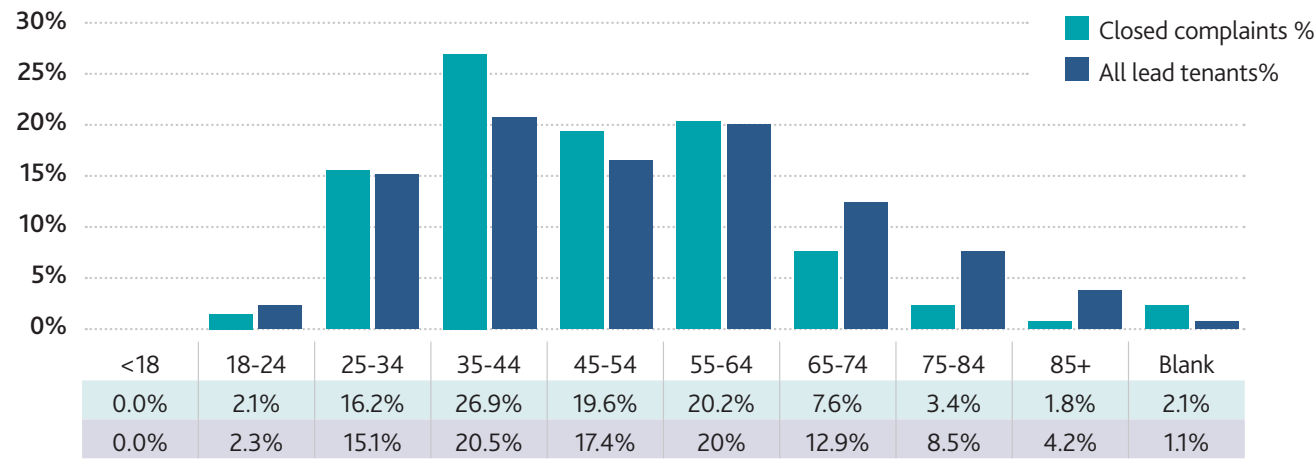
As a result of these learnings around equality, diversity and inclusion, we are implementing the following across 2025/26:

- Quarterly reporting to our communities and housing committee
- Dignity and respect training for all staff
- Embedding our vulnerability policy, which was approved in December 2024.

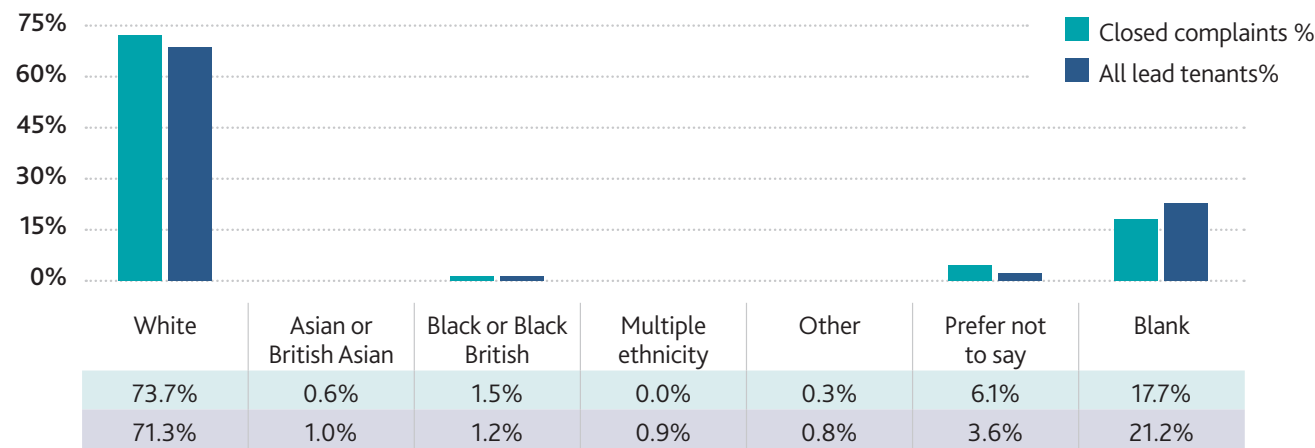


Data that shows our demographics on complaints is broken down below.

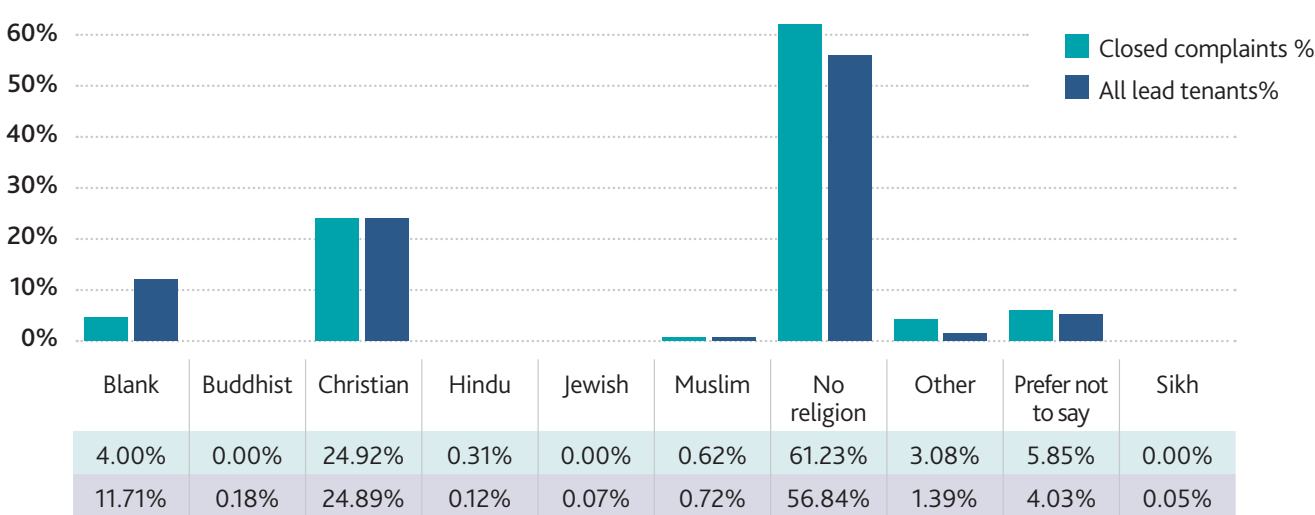
Age Information



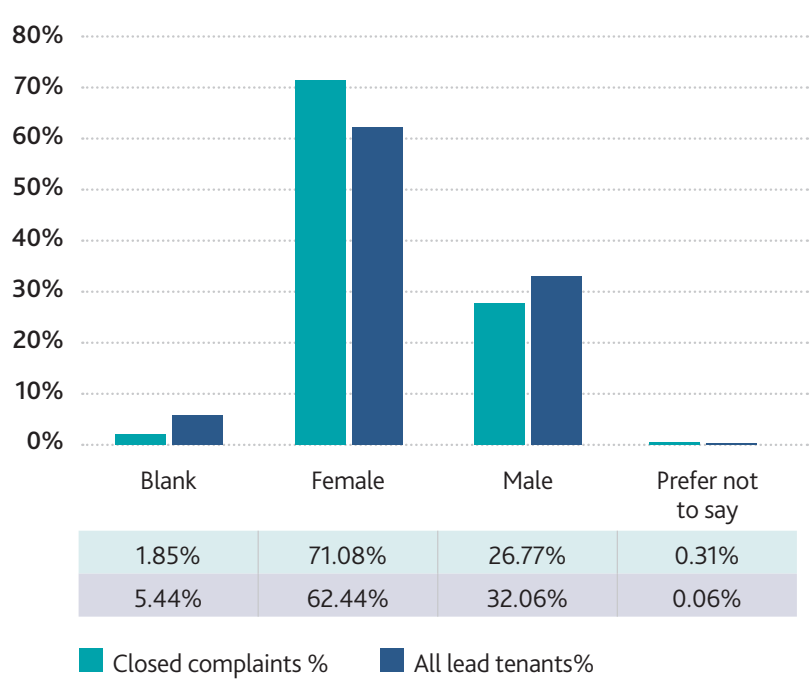
Ethnicity Information



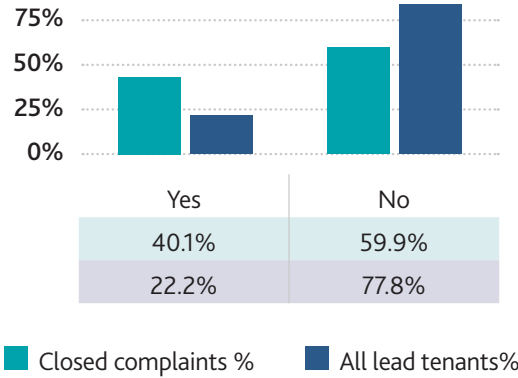
Religion Information



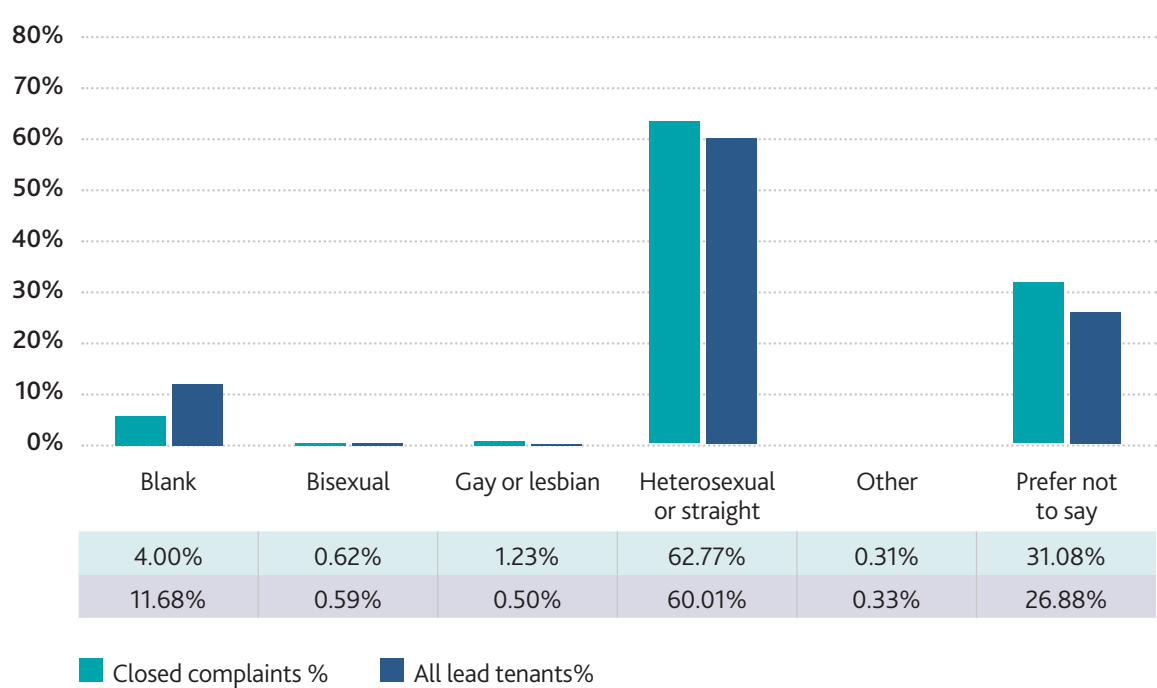
Gender Information



Disability Information



Sexual orientation Information



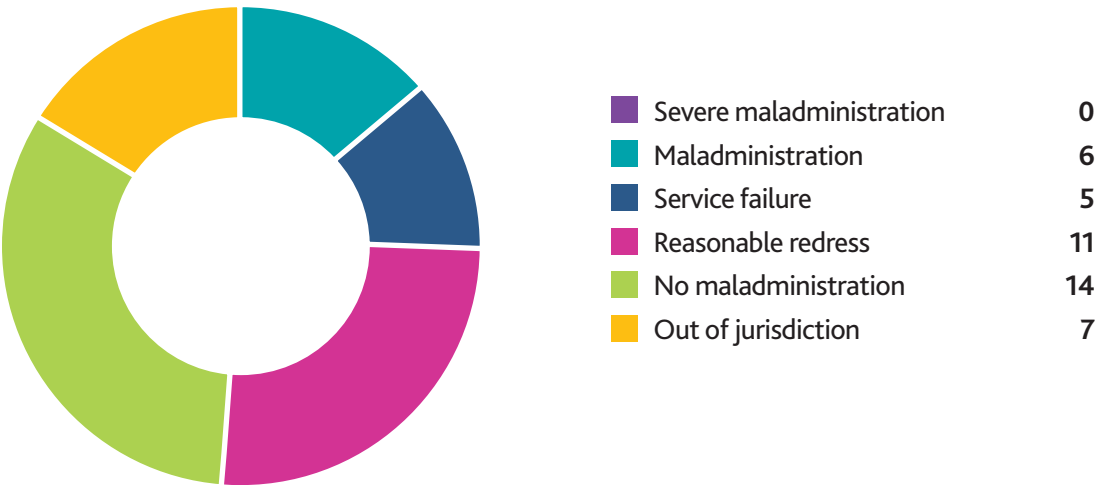
The figures used in this table have been rounded to one decimal place.

Ombudsman determinations

We have seen a reduction in the number of maladministrations we received from the Housing Ombudsman Service. We have also recorded an increase in their determinations of reasonable redress and no maladministration.

There has been no maladministration in relation to ASB and complaints about staff, which reflects the wider trend in improvements in complaints that we saw with the complaints at stage one and stage two.

Determinations received



See glossary of terms for definitions.

Category	Maladministration	Service Failure
Complaints handling	2	3
Anti-social Behaviour	-	-
Defects	2	-
Communication	-	-
Staff Conduct	-	-
Repairs/Contract/Service Charges	2	2

Key learnings and service improvements from complaints

Overview

Learning is an essential part of the complaint process and this year we have added to our complaints procedure to highlight how we learn from individual complaints.

The focus of our learning from complaints has been on vulnerabilities, communication, and the importance of dignity and respect across all our services.

Stage one and stage two learning

Dignity and respect

Learning:

- A resident wanted us to adjust how we communicated with them. We identified how our communications were failing to adhere to their requests, as our housing management system would not alert staff to specific requests.

Response:

- We worked across teams to introduce a new communication alert to our housing management system. The alert informs staff as soon as we review a resident’s record, about specific communication needs.

Learning:

- A resident raised concerns about the presentation of correspondence sent to them about the gas safety appointment.

Response:

- We reviewed the standard template for the gas safety appointment letters and made changes to the format and content using resident insight and feedback to improve engagement with the request.

Housing Ombudsman determinations

Dignity and respect

Learning:

- A key determination we received this year, which contributed towards our learning and service improvements, was a case that identified three areas of maladministration. Although we were aware of vulnerable people in the household, it was determined that we had not taken into consideration the household’s vulnerabilities. We wanted this determination to improve how all our staff place the individual needs of a resident at the centre of what they do.

Response:

- We have communicated to all staff the importance of understanding vulnerabilities and the impact for those living in our homes.
- Our neighbourhood housing officers have attended training about dignity and respect.
- We are also introducing new e-learning training modules on dignity and respect to all staff by summer 2025.
- We are working on two new policies linked to this complaint, relating to home improvements and recharges.

Housing Ombudsman spotlight reports / severe maladministration 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 year, we have reflected on their spotlight reports but also used their severe maladministration reports to assess any improvements we could make to our service for the benefit of our residents and the local communities we support.

Attitudes, rights and respect

A spotlight report was released on attitudes, respect, and rights. The report assessed what it means to be vulnerable in social housing in 2024 and how social landlords can better respond to the needs of those residents.

We reflected on our practices with involved residents to ensure that the most vulnerable residents are not ignored.

Responses

- The main changes we have made is to introduce a new vulnerability policy, which covers reasonable adjustments (modifications made to support individuals with disabilities) and how key services are impacted.
- We have also introduced a video to explain the complaints process for those that are unable to read. We have also completed a complaints leaflet to help explain the process to those that do not have access to the internet, which has been shared with front line staff who work directly with residents, as well as in our older person schemes.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) – Severe maladministration report

The Housing Ombudsman Service reports ASB as the second highest driver of complaints for many other housing associations.

Although we know this is not the case at West Kent, we wanted to review the areas highlighted in the severe maladministration report to determine whether we can improve our service to reduce the risk of a severe maladministration determination.

Responses

- We amended our ASB Risk Assessments to ensure that risk management of ASB cases is central to case management.
- We have a community safety policy, which refers to hate crimes, but we have decided to introduce a separate hate crimes policy in 2025.

Hazards and damp and mould – severe maladministration report

The report focused on the management of health and safety hazards, highlighting severe maladministration where landlords failed to address issues such as unsafe electrics, contaminated water, and damp and mould.

The report highlighted the impact of poor communication, delays, and lack of proactive inspections. This was followed by an additional report focused specifically on damp and mould. The reports have informed our review of the repairs service in preparation for the introduction of Awaab's Law (Awaab's Law will be come into place through a phased approach from October 2025. This an amendment to the Social Housing Regulation Bill and will set timeframes for investigating and fixing serious issues. The law will focus first on damp and mould before covering further housing hazards from 2026). The findings helped us to identify areas where we can improve, while also recognising examples of good practice already in place.

Responses

- We are strengthening our processes for recording and reporting all hazards, with a particular focus on identifying repeat repairs. This will help ensure that, where appropriate we consider more permanent solutions such as improved ventilation systems to prevent ongoing issues or work to tackle over crowding.
- We recognise that safeguarding as well as health and safety hazard awareness are critical for all our staff visiting residents' homes. To support this, we are using toolbox talks (specifically for our engineers) and staff briefings to include focused training on identifying risks in properties ensuring the appropriate action is taken.
- We know the importance of clear and timely communication when repairs relate to health and safety hazards. Building on the improvements we made this year, we will review our current processes for managing damp and mould cases to identify any further enhancements needed to strengthen the service we provide to residents.

Aids and adaptations – severe maladministration report

It is reported that approximately half of landlords' households, have one person with a long-term health condition.

We have reviewed our aids and adaptations policy this year so we are clear on our roles and responsibilities.

Aids and adaptations sets out how we can support residents to remain in their home independently for as long as possible.

Responses

- We work with Kent County Council on larger adaptations, and offer an in-house enablement service for minor adaptations or equipment in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council. For our other local authority areas, we work closely with the local authority concerned to ensure we offer these services to customers.
- We are introducing neurodivergence training in 2025/26 to help improve our understanding of the neurodiversity of our residents. Neurodiversity describes differences in brain function from person to person that affect daily mental functions.



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