

Annual Complaint Handling & Service Improvement Report

Report author:	Jonathan Earnshaw, Complaints Manager
Reporting Period:	1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026

As the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC), I am delighted to introduce our third annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report, covering the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

This report is an important opportunity to reflect on the progress we have made, celebrate the improvements already delivered, and look ahead to the exciting work continuing across the organisation. A positive complaint handling culture matters to us all: effective complaint handling is everyone's responsibility, and every complaint gives us a valuable opportunity to listen, learn and improve.

Within the report, we set out the number of formal complaints received, the key trends and themes identified, and the learning and actions we have taken in response. It also includes details of Housing Ombudsman and Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman determinations received during the year, alongside the steps taken as a result.

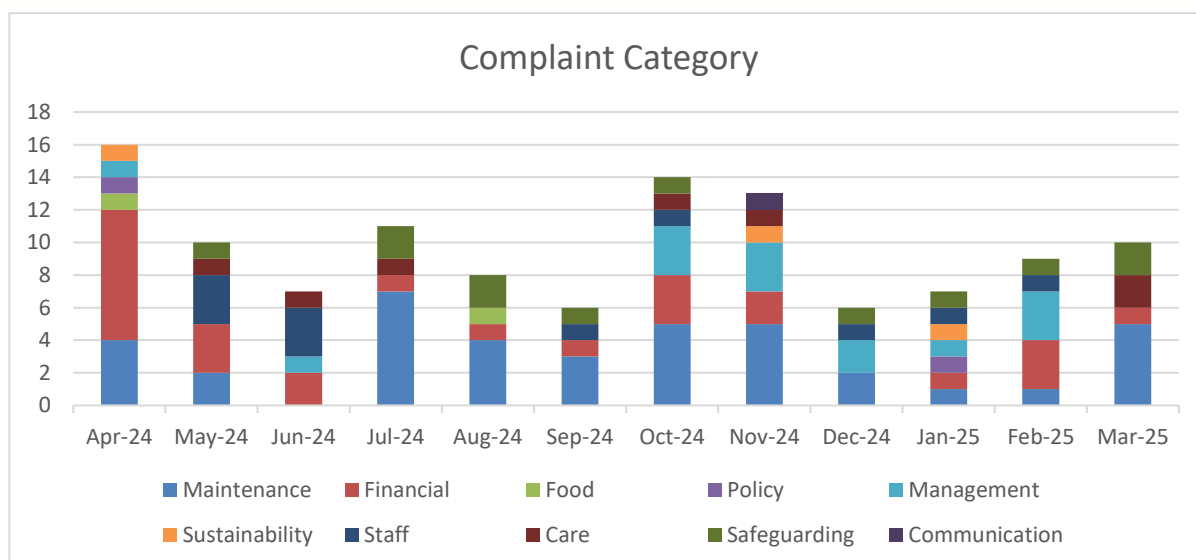
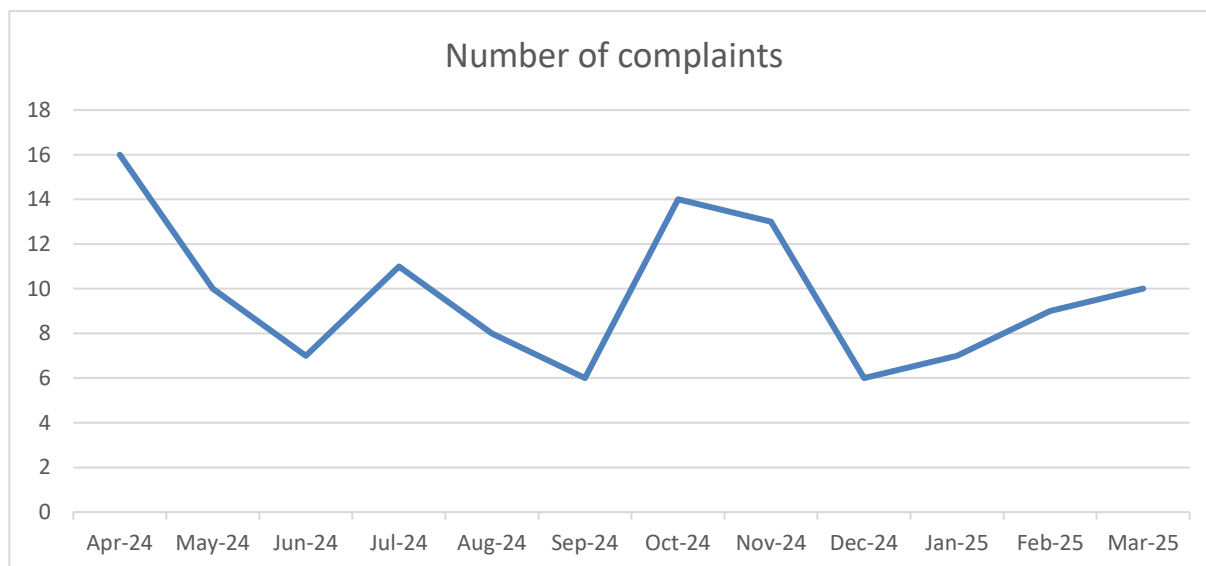
It is encouraging to see the positive steps taken over the last year. The Customer Committee and I, in my role as MRC, continue to support the organisation's commitment to building a learning-led, open and constructive approach to complaints. During 2025–26, our focus has rightly been on working collaboratively and embedding our Complaint Lessons Learnt approach, launched in 2024, so that learning is captured, shared and translated into meaningful service improvements.

I am also pleased that we have continued to work closely with our Residents Panel. Their scrutiny of our complaint handling approach and performance has provided valuable insight into what we are doing well and where we can do even better. Their contribution helps ensure the resident voice remains central to how we shape and improve our services.

A particular highlight has been the launch of the new 'Open House' initiative in summer 2025. By meeting more residents in person, listening directly to their feedback and working with colleagues locally to resolve concerns early, this initiative is helping us respond more quickly, strengthen relationships and prevent issues from escalating unnecessarily. It is a great example of listening in action.

Sara Beamand
Chair, Customer Committee & Member Responsible for Complaints

The graph below highlights the volumes & themes of complaints we received since April 2025 (in terms of volumes) and (on themes of complaints)



Complaints Review

During 2025/26, we received 149 complaints at stage 1 of the complaint's procedure, compared with 117 in 2024/25. A further 33 complaints were escalated and handled at stage 2, compared with 17 in 2024/25. The increase in complaint volumes provides helpful insight into the areas where residents, families and customers are asking us to focus our attention, and supports our ongoing commitment to listening, learning and improving our services.

The main reasons for complaints received during the year were:

- **Maintenance – 46** (loss of heating & hot water, water leaks, delays to repairs) – **30.87% of complaints**
- **Staff/Management – 31** (local communication, decision making & engagement opportunities) – **20.81% of complaints**
- **Food – 17** (limited options & quality of provision) - **11.40% of complaints**

Overall, 45.64% of complaints received in 2025/26 were upheld. This learning continues to inform our service improvement activity and helps us identify where changes to processes, communication or local practice may be needed.

Complaints were received across the following service areas:

- Care Homes – **27**
- Rented Housing – **72**
- Independent Living (including Leasehold) - **50**

Tenant Satisfaction Measures & Complaint Satisfaction Survey

In 2025, 50% of respondents to our Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey said they were satisfied with our approach to complaint handling, while 72.6% were satisfied with our approach to handling anti-social behaviour. These results provide a useful baseline for measuring progress and highlight the importance of continuing to strengthen communication, responsiveness and confidence in how concerns are managed.

After every formal complaint, we invite complainants to share feedback on their complaint handling experience. This gives us further insight into what worked well and where improvements can be made. The survey invitation link is now included with complaint responses, helping us gather feedback more promptly and giving us an additional opportunity to address any remaining concerns.

We welcome your Feedback

Every House and Home now displays a 'We welcome your feedback' poster, encouraging residents, families and visitors to tell us about their experiences. This includes recognising examples of great service and sharing where colleagues have made a positive difference, as well as letting us know when something has not gone as expected so we can listen, learn and take action.

Compliments

While it is important that we maintain a responsive and effective complaints process when things go wrong, we also actively encourage residents, families and visitors to share positive feedback. Compliments help us recognise colleagues who have made a difference, identify good practice and celebrate the service our teams provide. In

June 2025, we launched a 'Compliment of the Month' initiative through our monthly virtual All Staff Briefing to highlight colleagues or services that have gone above and beyond.

Resident Panel Involvement

Throughout 2025/26, we have continued to work with our Residents Panel to review and strengthen our approach to complaint handling. The Panel has scrutinised how complaints are managed, reviewed redacted complaint responses and provided valuable insight to help shape future improvements. Their involvement helps ensure our approach remains closely aligned with the voice of the customer.

We value the contribution the Panel has made and look forward to continuing this collaborative work in 2026/27 and beyond.

Complaint Lessons Learnt

We launched our Complaint Lessons Learnt approach in autumn 2024. Under this approach, learning from complaints is recorded, assigned to an owner and reviewed regularly. Updates are captured and shared with department heads where progress is delayed, helping to maintain accountability and ensure learning leads to action.

Throughout 2025/26, virtual Complaint Lessons Learnt sessions were held with complaint owners and key stakeholders in 90% of complaints that were upheld or partially upheld.

This approach has already identified a range of practical learning points and improvement actions, with owners assigned to progress each one.

Examples of learning and improvement actions include:

1. Encouraging residents to use call pendants for out-of-hours issues, rather than making telephone calls, to support faster response times.
2. Ensuring the Bristol Stool Chart is available and visible on Nourish, with a reminder shared to colleagues.
3. Reviewing and sharing the Smoking Policy.
4. Implementing shower seat checks and incorporating them into existing audit activity.
5. Adding a link to the accident and incident portal for local managers to access on mobile devices.
6. Reminding operational managers to ensure colleagues understand the correct process for reporting sickness and unscheduled absence.
7. Sharing best practice through the Weekly Digest on changing key safe codes for emergency service access.
8. Reminding colleagues to record service-level complaints and compliments through Safety Culture to promote local ownership and resolution.

9. Encouraging colleagues to sign up to the Housing Ombudsman's Centre for Learning to strengthen awareness and learning around effective complaint handling.
10. Revamping budget packs to improve clarity and usability.
11. Identifying the need for mental health first aid training for colleagues.
12. Strengthening shower seat checks on safety grounds.
13. Reviewing the Aids and Adaptations Policy.
14. Reducing and simplifying 19 rent letter templates to improve consistency and clarity.

Housing Ombudsman Determinations – 2025/26

During 2025/26 we have received two Housing Ombudsman determinations regarding complaint cases which had been referred to the Housing Ombudsman

1. The complaint

- The complaint the Ombudsman considered was about:

- a) Reports of repairs to the shower, and a lack of hot water.
- b) Query about the removal of the previous tenant's furniture.
- c) Query about council tax.
- d) Concern about its handling of matters at the start of his tenancy in May 2020.

Determination (decision)

In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme there was **maladministration** in the landlord's response to the resident's reports of repairs to the shower, and a lack of hot water.

In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme there was **no maladministration** in the landlord's response to the resident's query about the removal of the previous tenant's furniture

In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme there was **no maladministration** in the landlord's response to the resident's query about council tax.

In accordance with paragraph 42.c. of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme the

resident's the landlord's response to the resident's concern about its handling of matters at the start of his tenancy in May 2020 is **outside of their jurisdiction**.

The full report can be read here:

Complaint: 202314572 - [The Abbeyfield Society \(202314572\) - Housing Ombudsman](#)

2. The complaint

The complaint the Ombudsman considered was about:

- a. The information provided by the landlord to the resident when they purchased their independent living accommodation about its provision of care services and whether this amounted to mis selling.
- b. The landlord's decision to end its care service provision and whether this amounted to a breach of contract or neglect of duty of care to a vulnerable adult.
- c. The landlord's response to the resident's request for it to buy back the property.

Determination (decision)

After carefully considering all the evidence, they determined that the complaints, as set out above, were not within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction.

The full report can be read here:

Complaint 202402794 - [The Abbeyfield Society \(202402794\) - Housing Ombudsman](#)

Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Determinations

We have not received any determinations from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman during 2025-26.

Complaint Self-Assessment

We have recently completed our complaints self-assessment and submitted our findings to the Housing Ombudsman, along with this annual report, we publish our annual complaints self-assessment via our website [Compliments and Complaints | Abbeyfield Living Society](#)

Jonathan Earnshaw
Complaints Manager
August 2026