Presented by	Jonathan Earnshaw, Complaints Manager
Board Paper title	*Quarterly Complaints Report (July-September 2025)*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This quarter saw a continued focus on improving complaint handling and resident engagement. Key initiatives included the development of a refreshed complaints guide, planning for a new podcast to share best practices, and the introduction of drop-in sessions for frontline managers. The organisation also submitted its annual self-assessment to the Housing Ombudsman and published its Annual Complaints & Service Improvement Report.

Complaints primarily related to maintenance, care delivery, and staff conduct. Lessons learned from upheld complaints have led to a range of service improvement actions, including policy reviews, enhanced communication protocols, and contractor performance monitoring.

Resident involvement was strengthened through collaboration with the Residents Panel and the launch of a dedicated Complaints Panel. Compliments received reached a new high, reflecting frontline excellence. Efforts to improve satisfaction survey response rates are ongoing, with more personalised engagement planned for the next quarter.

BACKGROUND

In the last quarter we received 37 formal complaints **(22 Housing, 8 Care & 7 Independent Living)** up from 32 the previous quarter.

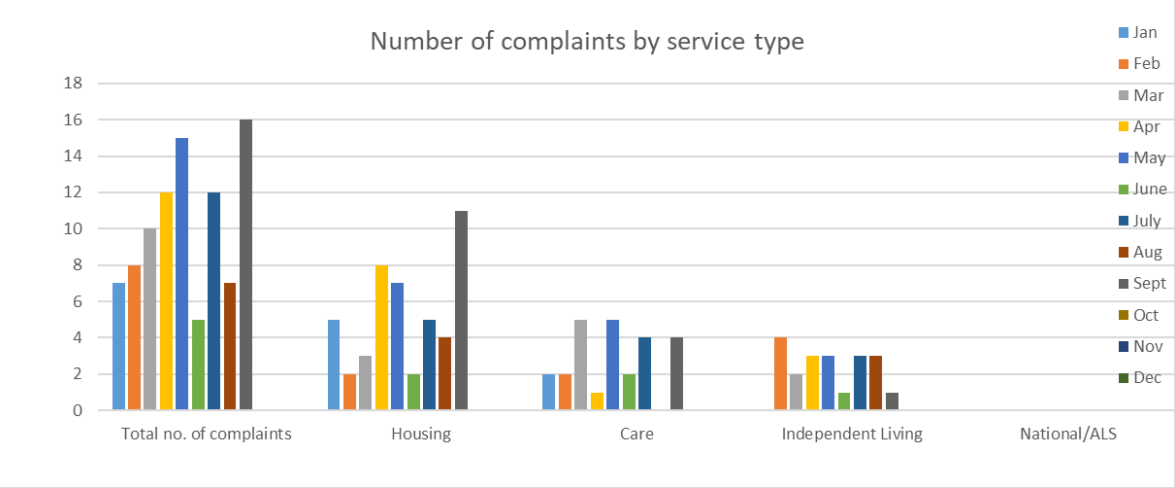
Work began in this quarter on reviewing and refreshing the current ‘Making a Complaint’ guide which will be launched in Q3 alongside the complaint’s poster, to support & provide further accessibility of our feedback routes for residents, their families and visitors.

Plans are currently being finalised, to launch a new Complaints & Compliments podcast on effective complaint handling and are planned to commence later in 2025 sharing best practice, hints, and tips on complaint handling & the use of feedback to further drive service improvements. In addition, a new ‘Complaints Drop-in’ session will launch in October 2025 for frontline managers to discuss complaints and seek help & guidance on managing complaints effectively locally.

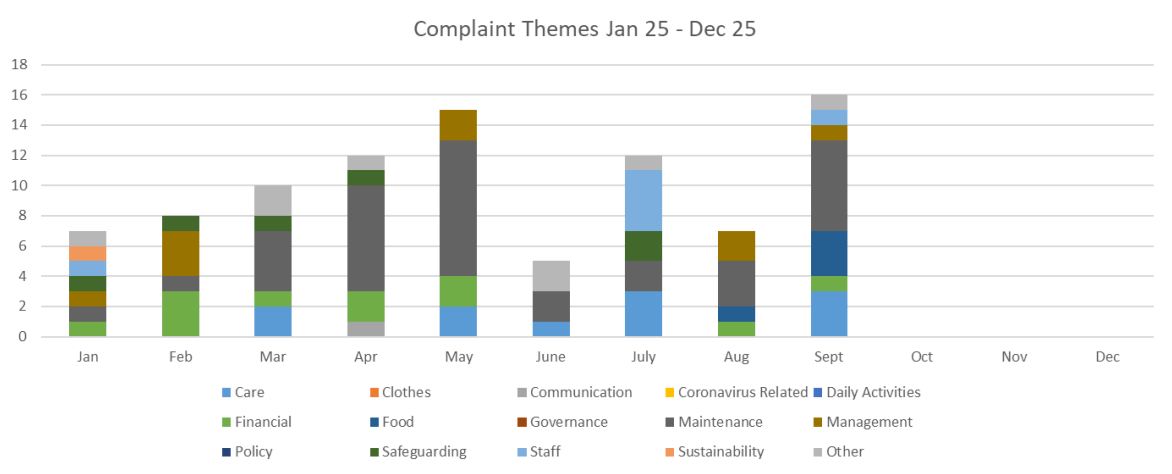
The Annual Complaints Self-assessment was completed and submitted this quarter to the Housing Ombudsman. In addition, we have also published the Annual Complaints & Service Improvement Report in the last quarter too.

KEY INFORMATION

Total number of complaints received.
The total number of complaints by service type is provided in the graph below.



The graph below highlights the top themes were identified from complaints received since January 2025. There may be multiple themes from a single complaint due to the complaint being related to a number of items.



The data in the table below is based on complaints received relating to Abbeyfield Living Society properties from residents or their representatives – and complaints received about ALS as a corporate body.

	01/10/24 to 31/12/24	01/01/25 to 31/03/25	01/04/25 to 30/06//25	01/07/25 to 30/09//25	Trend)	Target
No. of complaints received (average per month)	33 (11)	26 (8.6)	32 (10.6)	37 (12.3)	↑	N/A
No. which relates to damp/mould or risk of damp/mould	2	0	3	2	↓	0
Acknowledgement						
% acknowledged within target (2 working days)	90%	100%	100%	98%	↑	100%
Stage 1						
% responded within target (10 working days)	100%	100%	100%	100%	↔	100%
% responded within target (10 working days) or with agreed extension	100%	100%	100%	100%	↔	100%
% of response letters which included details of how to escalate	100%	100%	100%	100%	↔	100%
% of complaints fully upheld at Stage 1	24%	34%	56%	40%	↓	0%
% of complaints partially upheld at Stage 1	45%	38%	18%	35%	↑	0%
Stage 2						
% of complaints escalated to Stage 2	9%	3%	18%	10%	↓	0%
% responded within target (15 working days)	100%	100%	100%	100%	↔	100%
% responded within target or with agreed extension	100%	100%	100%	TBC		100%
% of complaints fully upheld at Stage 2	0%	0%	16%	TBC		0%
% of complaints partially upheld at Stage 2	33%	100%	16%	TBC		0%
Ombudsman						
No. of complaints escalated to Housing Ombudsman or Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman	1	1	0	1	↑	0

Ombudsman Update

At the time of writing this report, we are awaiting two **Housing Ombudsman** determinations.

The cases are:

(Marsh House) & (Garstang)

During the last quarter, we have also received three determinations (one from **the Housing Ombudsman** & two from the **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman**)

Housing Ombudsman - (Burnham Court)

The complaint was about:

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

Determination

- Outside of their jurisdiction and case closed.

Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman – (Sandwood) & (Speedwell Court)

(Sandwood)

The complaint was about:

- The family complained about the care their mother, received from Sandwood which was arranged by the Council. There was fault in how the Sandwood Care Home, on behalf of the Council, managed the mother's medication and how it decided to prevent her children from visiting her.

Determination

- The Council agreed to apologise for the impact of those failures and pay a financial remedy £1,700.

(Speedwell Court)

The Complaint was about:

- Mr X states Speedwell Court failed in the care of his father, that ALS's administration is inefficient, causing stress, time and trouble. Mr X was seeking a financial payment and the care home to be put on an improvement plan.

Determination

- The LGSCO decided not to investigate this complaint. They concluded there is not a *significant enough injustice* to justify their involvement. The resident has sadly since died, so the LGSCO also concluded that they couldn't provide a remedy for any poor care.

Complaint Review

Main complaint reasons across the quarter (from the **37** complaints)

- **Maintenance – 12** (include lift outage, stairlift fault, pendant faults, damp & mould*, water leak, delayed repairs) – **33% of complaints**
  Care – 6 (medication missed & incorrectly provided, care delivery concerns, poor personal hygiene - **16% of complaints**
- **Staff– 5** (concerns about individual staff members, customer service concerns) – **13% of complaints**

***=** 2 damp & mould reports at Church Road, Cowes & Leylands Lane, Bradford

Top Complaint Locations

- Harrowside, Blackpool – **4**
- Church Road, Cowes **– 3**
- Burnham Court, Malmesbury – **3**

To note: We currently have 4 x stage 2 complaints that were logged in this quarter period which are awaiting a response (to be issued shortly) so we have been unable to confirm our performance in this area currently, until these are fully completed.

From our latest resident count (as at the time of this writing this report) of 1,181 residents (Care 396, Independent living 374 & Housing 411 – this quarter we have received complaints from 3.13% of our residents) and through our membership of HQN now, we are exploring to see if we can benchmark this with other similar sized organisations to understand our position within the sector.

Complaint Lessons Learnt

We have logged lessons learnt following 38 complaints being partially or fully upheld in 2025 which resulted in 97 actions. Of which, 47 of those actions have been completed and 50 are currently in progress. There have been five completed lesson learnt actions shared with the wider business.

Identified outputs include:

- Exploring if mandatory haircare & footcare for care staff is possible
- Policy review of setting care fees at Lee House in the next finance review,
- The property services team feeding back to the project team on future resident preferences on lock replacements at our locations following feedback, and reminding colleagues of the procedure to raise emergency repair jobs out of hours and delays to responding and actioning repairs
- The need for improved communication between Property services and operations so resident's can be kept updated.
- Property services to track and ensure repair orders are fully completed & contractors arrive as planned as we seeing a high % of complaints related to these issues
- Review meetings with property contractors to discuss complaint outcomes and to support service improvements
- Budget packs to be revamped
- Review Adaptations policy
- 19 different rent letter templates which have been identified to be reduced • Review and check current decant process

Compliments

All the houses and care homes have been busy receiving compliments about all the amazing work they do on the front line, and we like to shout about it.

We continue to share a 'Compliment of the Month' in the Weekly Digest to share the wonderful compliments being received. Alongside this, we also add mentions to the Thanks/Recognise Someone function on the Connect home page and share some in the All Staff Briefing.

In this quarter we received 50 compliments achieving the KPI for the first time with 17 of these being shared in the various methods mentioned above.

Complaint Handling satisfaction

Whilst surveys have been issued for complaints received in this quarter, the response rate remains very disappointing – despite recent changes to the survey approach, by including the option to complete the satisfaction survey within the complaint response, we did trial now a telephone-based survey, which had limited

success, however, in Q4 we will engage with residents through individual & personal reach outs by the complaints team, to hopefully understand why they may not have completed the survey, to see if we better support & understand to improve for the future.

CUSTOMER/STAKEHOLDER IMPACT AND VOICE

Collaboration with the residents panel continued this quarter with the panel reviewing further redacted complaints to be reassured on our complaint handling performance but to also gather feedback on what works well and where improvements they feel could also be made, this is in addition to sharing complaint performance information and outputs from our complaint's lessons learned approach too. This work has evolved further with the collaborative working with the new dedicated residents' complaints panel, comprising of resident panel members, who have expressed an interest to working in partnership with us on effective complaint handling.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Compensation/Goodwill Gestures

We have awarded a financial gesture in 11 complaint cases totalling £6310.70 since January 2025. With £5,084.45 provided in relation to maintenance related issues (lift outages, water leaks, damp and mould & required maintenance work)

LINK TO MISSION AND AIMS

Our approach to effective complaint handling and gathering of feedback, helps drive change through service improvements, to support our values on Community, Integrity and Excellence

APPENDICES

N/a

The following people have been involved in the preparation of this paper:

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