

CUSTOMER COMMITTEE MEETING PAPER

Date of meeting: 12 February 2026

Presented by	Julie Freear, Customer Operations Director
Board Paper title	<i>Quarterly Complaints Update (October-December 2025)</i>

PURPOSE (<i>add 'X' to appropriate box(es)</i>)	FOR INFORMATION	FOR DISCUSSION	DECISION(S) REQUIRED
	X		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the last quarter we received 38 formal complaints (**15 Housing, 6 Care & 18 Independent Living**) up from 37 the previous quarter.

The refreshed version of the 'Making a Complaint' guide was launched and distributed to Houses & Homes in October 2025 which compliments the complaint's poster, to support & provide further accessibility of our feedback routes for residents, their families and visitors.

A new 'Complaints Drop-in' session was launched in October 2025 for frontline managers to discuss complaints and seek help & guidance on managing complaints effectively locally. This wasn't as successful as we would have liked, so paused the sessions in December with a view to re-launching them in February 2026.

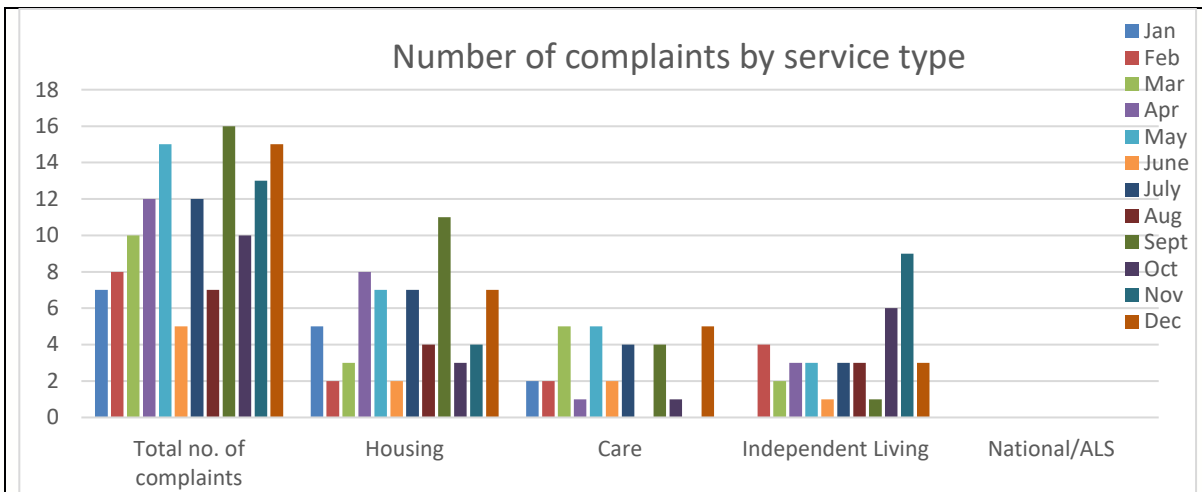
A new complaint investigation record was launched in November 2025 allowing every element of a complaint investigation to be documented by complaint investigators, including colleagues interviewed, evidence reviewed and lessons learnt extracted to support the lessons learnt approach.

In November 2025, the Complaints Manager attended the Contractors workshop in Wolverhampton, an event organised by the Head of Property Services to engage and meet our contractors, taking the opportunity to showcase the importance of effective complaint handling and to explore further how we can introduce our contractors into our complaint lessons learnt approach.

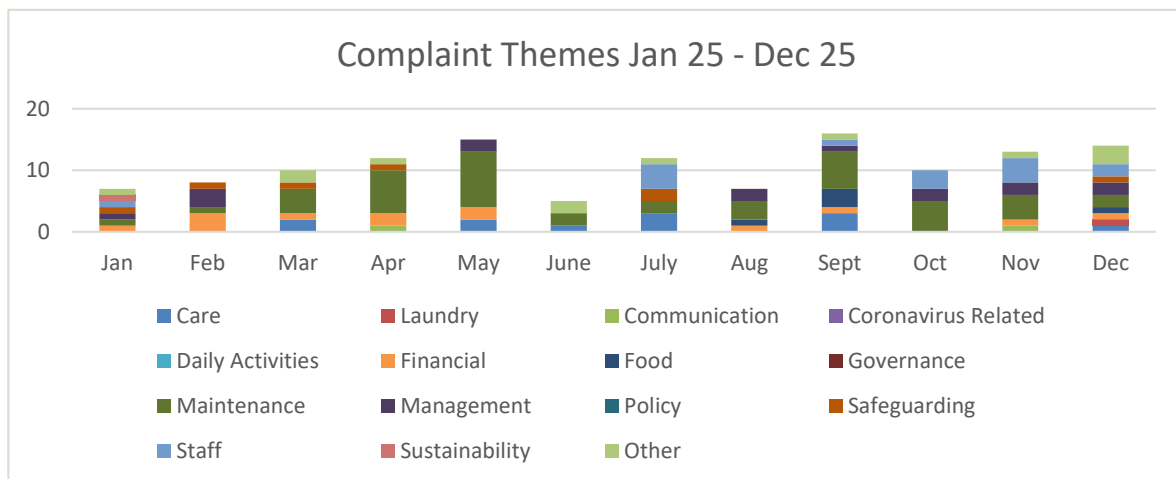
BACKGROUND

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.



KEY INFORMATION

Ombudsman Update

At the time of writing this report, we are aware of three cases which have exhausted the internal complaints process that have been referred to the **Housing Ombudsman (HOS)**

No determinations or information requests were received from **the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman** in this quarter.

The Housing Ombudsman published its Annual Complaints Review 2024-25 in November. Across our sector, this found complaints still rising, but some encouraging signs that landlord handling is improving.

Nationally, there was a 2-percentage point fall in their overall maladministration rate, a 7% drop for complaint handling and a 9% decrease in fault handling anti-social behaviour.

There was also over 800 more findings made where the landlord took reasonable steps to put things right itself, rather than being ordered by the Housing Ombudsman.

Complaints performance remains mixed across social landlords. There were 120 landlords where 75% or more complaints were upheld. There were also 131 landlords who received at least one finding of severe maladministration, some several times.

Despite this encouraging direction of travel, the overall maladministration rate still sits high at 71%. Poor property condition continues to dominate their casework with a 43% increase in findings – far above the overall rise in investigations – with no improvement in the maladministration rate. The findings show local authority landlords facing acute pressures handling housing complaints, alongside medium-sized housing associations.

The Housing Ombudsman made **7,082 determinations** – decisions following the investigation of a complaint - between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. This is a 30% increase from 2023-24.

In 2024-25 they:

- upheld 71% of complaints
- found 120 landlords had a maladministration rate of over 75%, and 16 landlords improved significantly since last year
- made 2,007 findings of reasonable redress, over 800 more than last year
- issued a similar number of Complaint Handling Failure Orders as last year despite receiving more complaints
- investigated 43% more complaints about repairs
- investigated and upheld fewer complaints about Antisocial Behaviour (ASB)
- found that local authorities, as well as housing associations with between 1,000 and 10,000 homes, are struggling more than other landlords to provide timely responses to complaints
- started to see evidence of improvements in the complaint handling category, including a 7% drop-in maladministration rate and 117 fewer severe maladministration findings
- made 26,901 interventions to put things right
- found some regional variations, including:
 - a high volume of ASB complaints in the Northeast and Yorkshire
 - a 50% increase in complaints from the East of England
 - the lowest uphold rate in the Northwest

The full report and further details are here on this link: [Annual Complaints Review 2024-25 | Housing Ombudsman](#)

For comparison and a reminder, in our own Annual Complaints & Service Improvement Report for 2024-25 (published in September 2025) we handled 117 complaints in 2024-25 with 17 complaints handled at stage 2 with two determinations received from the Housing Ombudsman.

We launched our own complaints handling e-learning at the start of this year, alongside starting a 'national conversation on complaints' to boost local complaint handling and encouraging feedback from our residents, family members, and visitors, helping us focus

on driving service improvements, through to more recently the launch of new complaint drop-in sessions for frontline managers to help provide support to local complaint resolution and a commitment to 'nip things in the bud'

The world of complaints remains busy, but now more than ever before, complaints provide opportunities to all of us to listen, learn, and act together.

Complaint Review

Main complaint reasons across the quarter (from the **38** complaints) the top 3 complaint reasons are:

- **Maintenance – 11 (28.94% of complaints in the quarter)**

- Privett Farmhouse, Gosport – delay in fitting of new shower
- Ing Royde, Halifax – lack of hot water
- Westall, Horsted Keynes – rainwater overflow issue
- Burnham Court, Malmesbury – water temperature
- The Firs, Nottingham – Sat on shower seat which came away from the wall
- Woodlands, Skipton – Lift broken down
- Hampton House, Solihull – Shower plate leaking, lift broken down x 2
- Girton Green, Cambridge – No central heating for 2 weeks
- Loveday House, Wigton – Stairlift out of action for 2 weeks and impact on resident

For context, it's worth noting that on average the number of repairs raised each month totals 400.

- **Staff – 9 (23.68% of complaints in the quarter)**

- Marsh House, Crosby
- Brows Lodge, Formby
- Burnham Court, Malmesbury
- New Malden
- Avondale, Newport
- Locksheath, Southampton
- Hope Bank View, Sunderland

- **Management – 6 (15.79% of complaints in the quarter)**

- Girton Green, Cambridge
- Church Road, Cowes
- Woodlands, Swanage
- The Firs, Nottingham
- Burnham Court, Malmesbury

No damp and mould reports through the complaints route in this quarter which is important as Awaab's law officially took effect from 27 October 2025, where emergency hazards should be investigated and made safe within 24hrs of the first report and with damp & mould to investigate within 10 working days of being notified and made safe within a further 5 working days after the investigation.

The 38 complaints received this quarter, contributing to a total of 133 complaints during 2025 calendar year, represent just over 28% of the annual total indicating a modest seasonal increase rather than a disproportionate spike.

How do we compare to the national sector picture in terms of the Top 3 complaint reasons?

The top 3 complaint reasons (taken from Housing Ombudsman data) are:

1. **Property condition/Repairs and maintenance** – Heating & hot water failures, leaks and structural defects, damp & mould and pest infestation
2. **Complaint handling and customer service delivery** – poor communication, lack of updates or record-keeping, delayed responses
3. **ASB (Anti Social Behaviour)** – Noise & harassment or nuisance behaviour

Given our size with 1,181 residents, the overall volume of complaints is not unexpected, considering the greater awareness of complaint routes and regulatory expectations during 2025. The sector continues to see increases in complaint reporting against this backdrop.

Continued focus on early resolution, clear communication and learning from complaints will continue to be in 2026, to maintain resident trust and improved service delivery.

Future Initiatives

In 2026, we will offer bitesize training on effective complaint handling for all colleagues, sitting alongside a refresh of the e-learning on complaint handling which is planned for later in 2026.

We will also launch a new remedies approach built on the principles of the revised guidance from the Housing Ombudsman.

Complaint Lessons Learnt

We have logged lessons learnt following 57 complaints being partially or fully upheld in 2025 which resulted in 128 actions. Of which, 78 of those actions have been completed and 50 are currently in progress. There have been 9 lessons learnt that have been shared more widely, these are:

1. Residents to be encouraged to use pendants & not make phone call with issues OOH. Possible from SHMs picking up phones in the past. Re-iteration made via digest post for resident meeting agenda item
2. Adding safeguarding referrals to Nourish on the relevant interaction
3. Adding CQC notifications to Nourish on the relevant interaction
4. Bristol Stool Chart available and visible on Nourish – reminder shared.
5. Smoking Policy has been reviewed and shared
6. Shower Seat checks implemented and added to a couple audits already in place
7. Link added to tablets for accident and incident portal
8. Reminder to all operational managers to ensure all staff know the correct procedure for reporting sickness and their unscheduled non-attendance at work
9. Weekly Digest post to share best practice in changing key safe codes for emergency service access

We will continue to build on our complaint lessons learnt approach by reviewing agreed actions and outputs every quarter, to highlight more effectively where change has been delivered because of complaints.

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 launched '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 announce the 'Compliment of the Month' winner in most All Staff Briefing's.

In this quarter we received 51 compliments achieving the KPI for the second time in 2025 which is very encouraging.

Compliment of the Month winners have been:

- **October -Privett Farmhouse, Gosport** – (feedback on developing the new five-week rolling winter menu)
- **November – Sandwood, Nottingham** – (feedback from an external entertainer regarding a performance they were hosting at the Home)
- **December – Beaminster** - (burst pipe & rapid flood response by local team)

Challenges & Concerns

- We need to embed completion of the complaint investigation record, so complaint investigators complete this on every complaint, which could also reduce the number of lesson learnt calls that need to take place if fully completed and we are engaging with complaint investigators to ensure these are completed.
- We are starting to see more ASB (Anti Social Behaviour) reports in the complaints process. It was identified in October 2024, that ASB training for frontline managers was needed alongside the review of the ASB process to ensure all reports are logged, tracked and handled effectively but the training has so far not been developed. A meeting of key stakeholders is now taking place on 16 February 2026 to discuss next steps.

CUSTOMER/STAKEHOLDER IMPACT AND VOICE

Residents Panel

Collaboration with the residents panel continued this quarter with the panel reviewing a further 4 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 learnt approach too.

Complaint Handling satisfaction

Whilst surveys have been issued for complaints received in this quarter, the response rate continues to be 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, from Q4 we will work collaboratively with the Quality team by sharing complaint data with them, so during their audit work, they can engage with residents who have travelled through the complaints process to capture feedback alongside working with the Resident Engagement Manager in establishing some workshops with residents to understand any barriers to completing the satisfaction survey issued at the same time as the complaint response.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

We have awarded a financial gesture in 19 complaint cases totalling £7980.70 since January 2025, covering a variety of issues including loss of heating and hot water payments and damage following water leaks making the highest number of compensation payments.

LINK TO CORPORATE PLAN

The content of this paper supports our work to ensure we continue to deliver Great services by delivering an excellent customer experience.

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

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Kelly Perry, Customer Operations Administrator