

CUSTOMER COMMITTEE MEETING PAPER

Date of meeting: 12 August 2026

Presented by	Jonathan Earnshaw, Complaints Manager
Board Paper title	<i>Quarterly Complaints Update (April-June 2026)</i>

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the last quarter, we received 44 formal complaints (**17 Housing, 5 Care and 22 Independent Living**), a small increase from 42 in the previous quarter.

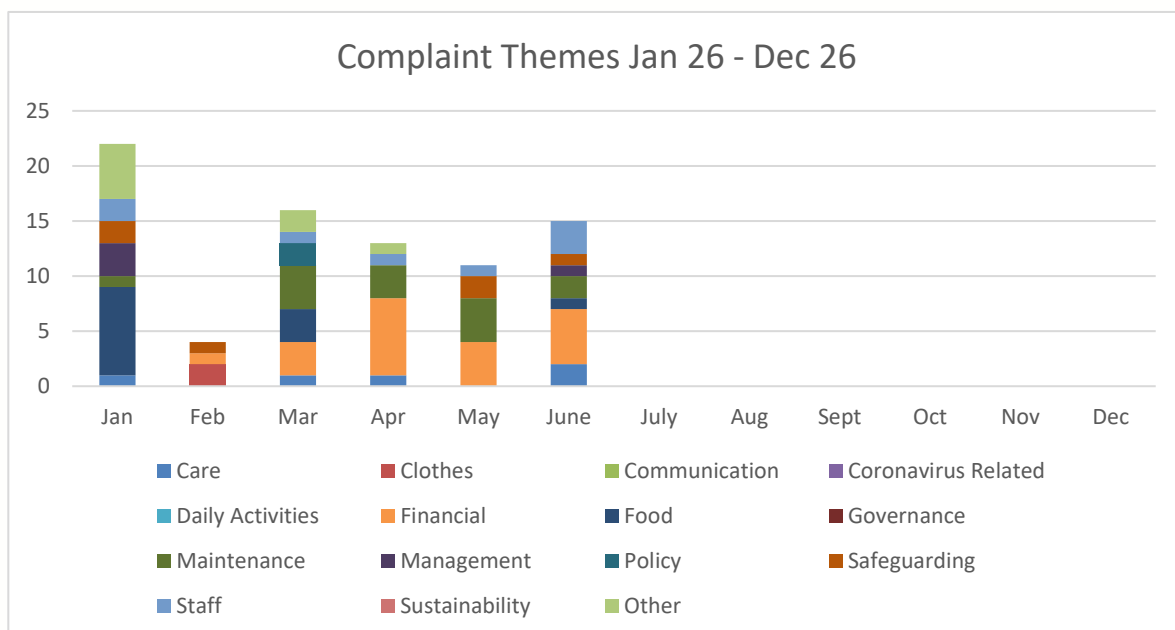
In April, we introduced the logging of service level complaints and compliments through safety Culture. This gives colleagues a consistent way to record issues locally and supports our wider cultural shift towards resolving concerns early, wherever possible, before they escalate further.

We also launched our new Stage 1 complaint investigation pool in April, made up of CHMs and SHMs. This approach helps bring SHMs and CHMs closer to Stage 1 complaints, while also providing a valuable development opportunity for colleagues who wish to further strengthen their skills in complaint investigation and resolution.

This quarter, we re-launched the Complaints Drop-in sessions for SHMs and CHMs. Ten managers attended, with discussion focused on service level complaints and effective complaint handling. The next sessions are scheduled to take place in August.

Several other complaint-focused initiatives were also completed during the quarter. These included sharing *complaint lessons learnt* through *the Weekly Digest*, promoting *the Housing Ombudsman's Centre for Learning*, using *Alertacall* where possible to follow up *complaint satisfaction survey responses*, proactively reviewing comments linked to *complaints from the annual satisfaction survey*, and continuing our work with the *Resident's Panel complaints sub-group* to review complaints and overall practice.

During this quarter, the Resident's Panel complaints sub-group reviewed three redacted complaints, alongside the quarterly complaint's performance information, as part of their ongoing work to support learning and improvement.



KEY INFORMATION

Ombudsman Update

At the time of writing this report, we are aware of five 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 at the time of writing this report.

In April 2026, the Housing Ombudsman published their Business Plan for 2026-27, setting out how they will respond to rising demand and deliver faster, fairer outcomes for residents.

The number of cases they accepted for investigation has risen nearly 500% in 5 years. In 2020-21 they accepted 2,253 cases. By 2025-26, this had grown to over 13,000. They predict a further 60% increase in 2026-27.

To address this, the Business Plan sets out a phased approach focused on 3 priorities:

- stopping the number of open cases from growing
- resolving older cases more quickly
- delivering faster outcomes for residents

They will increase their caseworker headcount by almost 80 and invest in digital systems to work more efficiently. They have introduced new casework targets: 80% of cases will be resolved within 12 months, and no case will exceed 18 months.

Further reading: [Business Plan for 2026-27](#)

In May 2026, the Housing Ombudsman published their latest 'learning from severe maladministration' report. This focused on issues relating to windows

In 2025-26, 9% of their findings relating to windows resulted in severe maladministration. The norm is around 2%.

This report looks at how windows and other hazards can often be interlinked, especially damp and mould or excess cold. It also shows how repairs can often be treated in isolation, rather than together. The report also looks at the importance of risk assessments in reaching a timely resolution.

Further reading: [Landlords must 'avoid apathy' on window disrepair as learning shared](#)

Finally, in June 2026, the Housing Ombudsman published their latest Insight report, providing an overview of the common themes from their further investigation reports.

In this Insight report, they have highlighted common themes, causes, and lessons. They also share lessons from the landlords and how they made improvements.

Further reading: [Housing Ombudsman sets out lessons from root cause analysis to 'inform responses to new issues'](#)

Over at the, **Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman**, back in April they launched a campaign to help adult social care providers deliver fair, transparent and accountable complaints handling – particularly for self-funding care users.

The campaign encourages providers to ensure their complaints processes are clear and accessible - and confidently inform self-funded residents and their families about the LGSCO's role in independently and impartially reviewing complaints that cannot be resolved.

By embedding strong signposting and clear escalation routes, providers can reduce misunderstandings, resolve concerns earlier and demonstrate a positive complaints culture to regulators and prospective customers alike.

To support providers in assessing their current approach, the Ombudsman has developed a new interactive quiz, enabling providers to quickly benchmark their complaints process against best practice.

On completing this quiz, we can confirm that our complaints process has passed as meeting best practice, in supporting fair and transparent complaint handling.

Further reading: [Social care ombudsman launches best practice guidance for handling self-funder complaints - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

Complaint Review

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.

Main complaint reasons across the quarter (from the **44** complaints) the top 3 complaint reasons are:

- **Financial - 18 (40.91% of complaints in the quarter)**

(6 upheld or 33%)

- The Firs, Nottingham x 6** – 5 complaints related to increase in service charges & 1 related to a tenancy that was cancelled by the family after shortly moving in
- Burnham Court, Malmesbury x 3** – Level of rents charged and affordability criteria
- Ing Royde, Halifax x 2** – Complaint regarding compensation offered of £25 and was told it would be £50 for loss of TV service, and complaint regarding service from finance team
- Esk Moors Lodge, Whitby x 2** – Paying for a gardener and not having one, and a complaint about the service from the finance team
- Girton Green, Cambridge x 1** – Difficulties in selling leasehold properties due to high service charge
- Middleton House, Nottingham x 1** – starting of tenancy without a financial assessment been completed
- Hampton House, Solihull x 1** – Concern at increase in charges
- Ivy House, Wellington x 1** – Concern at increase in rent
- The Old Vicarage, Wellington x 1** – Concern at increase in rent

- **Maintenance/Delayed Repairs – 9 (20.45% of complaints in the quarter)**

(8 upheld or 88%)

-**Barnoldswick, Gisburn Road x 1**- Loss of hot water and new fire doors too heavy
 -**Tamar, Gosport x 1**– Delay in replacing the tumble dryer
 -**Ing Royde, Halifax x 2** –Fire doors won't shut and lock & delayed repair
 -**Emsworth Road, Havant x 1** – Scaffolding in place, several weeks after work completed
 -**The Firs, Nottingham x 1** – Loss of heating/hot water
 -**Hampton House, Solihull x 1**– Loss of hot water
 -**Ivy House, Wellington x 1** – Excess heat from towel rail and resident living with condition impacted by this
 -**Esk Moors Lodge, Whitby x 1** - prolonged delays, poor quality and incomplete refurbishment and incorrect flooring supplied

- **Staff/Management – 8 (18.18% of complaints in the quarter)**

(5 upheld or 62.5%)

-**Fleet Street, Beaminster x 3** – Staff shortages and impact to food provision
 -**Burnham Court, Malmesbury x 2** – Concerns raised about staffing
 -**Proctor House/Bolton Lodge, Bolton Le Sands x 1** – Concerns about staffing
 -**Hill House, Honiton x 1** – Concerns regarding management of concerns
 -**Ing Royde, Halifax x 1** – Concerns from resident about staffing

Damp & Mould - There were **0** damp and mould reports through the complaints route in this quarter.

Since April 2025, we have received 193 complaints & the 44 complaints received this quarter, continue to indicate a modest increase rather than a disproportionate spike, just like we have seen in previous quarters as complaints continue to rise quarter on quarter.

In this quarter, a total of **7** complaints were escalated to Stage 2 of complaints procedure which is an escalation rate of **15.91% (the sector average is 10-20%)**

We have completed complaint lessons learnt calls within 10 working days of the closure of the complaint this quarter on upheld or partially upheld complaints, except on **four** occasions due to annual leave of the investigator and in two cases where the invite had been declined and the session needed to be re-scheduled, whilst delayed, the calls did still take place.

In this quarter, we have received 37 completed complaint investigation records (from the total of 42 complaints). A reminder in ensuring this document has been issued via the weekly digest, and we are now tracking receipt of these documents and chasing where required.

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. **Responsive Repairs** – Heating & hot water failures, leaks and structural defects, damp & mould and pest infestation
2. **Managing Relations** – 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 2025-26. 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 our focus throughout 2026, to maintain resident trust and improved service delivery.

Future Initiatives

During 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 during 2026.

Complaint Lessons Learnt

In this quarter, we have logged **18** lessons learnt following complaints being partially or fully upheld which resulted in **23** actions, where updates are awaited in most of these actions. This year, there have been **11** lessons learnt that have been shared more widely through the weekly digest, 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
10. Reminder to log service level complaints & compliments through safety culture
11. A reminder to sign up to the Housing Ombudsman's centre for learning to boost awareness and learning on effectively handling complaints

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

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' a year ago 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 Meetings.

In this quarter we received **73** compliments achieving the KPI which is very encouraging

Compliment of the Month winners have been:

- **April – Stockport, Bramhall**
- **May – Wellington, Old Vicarage**
- **June – Whitby, Esk Moors Lodge**

Challenges & Concerns

- We continue to embed completion of the complaint investigation record, so complaint investigators complete this on every complaint, good to see the positive direction of travel on this during this quarter.
- As reported last quarter, we are starting to see more ASB (Anti Social Behaviour) reports entering 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. That said, an ASB working group has been formed now and development of a new approach to reporting, handling and managing ASB is underway, once agreed and confirmed, training for frontline colleagues will be developed.

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 a telephone-based survey, which had limited success, however, we are working

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 whilst also utilising Alertacall to issue reminders to residents who have received a link to complete a satisfaction survey.

We have also now received the comments from residents who have participated in the annual housing customer satisfaction survey, and whilst the majority of these appear to indicate gaps in how the complaint was handled at a service level, we are reviewing these fully and have followed up directly with residents where they have requested contact to discuss their feedback further.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

We have awarded a financial gesture in **4** complaint cases totalling **£2,936.41** in this quarter, mainly for loss of heating and hot water 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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