

Newark and Sherwood District Council

Housing Services Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2025 - 26

Introduction

Complaints help us identify where services can improve and play an important role in shaping support for residents and tenants. People should feel confident raising concerns with us, knowing their complaint will be considered fairly and used to help us learn.

This year, complaints increased by 25% overall compared with 2024 - 25. This reflects a wider national trend. A clear example of this is the Housing Ombudsman who accepted 2,253 cases for investigation in 2020 - 21, rising to more than 13,000 in 2025 - 26, and has predicted a further 60% increase in 2026 - 27.

Although we work hard to improve the services we offer, we also want residents and tenants to tell us when standards fall short and we have promoted this message across a range of channels. As complaints rise nationally, our focus remains on learning from them and improving how we manage and resolve concerns.

To support this increased demand, we recruited a temporary Housing Complaints Coordinator in May 2025, creating a single point of contact for stage 1 complaints. This is believed to have helped improve satisfaction with the housing complaints process to 66%, up from 57% last year and 55% the year before. Stage 2 performance still needs to improve, and we are taking action to support this.

The coordinator role was made permanent in July 2026, and we also recruited a further temporary Housing Complaints Coordinator and a Housing Complaints and Improvement Officer. These roles aim to reduce escalation to stage 2, support more effective case management and improve response times.

We have strengthened how we investigate and learn from complaints. Our system can now link complaints from the same address or person, helping us identify themes, connect related issues and carry out more thorough investigations.

We remain committed to using feedback to refine our approach and better serve our communities. We fully comply with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and continue to use its reports and guidance to support learning and best practice.

Following a review with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service, we have strengthened our Tenant Engagement Structure.

The first two tenant scrutiny exercises in 2026 - 27 will focus on repairs and complaints, with viable recommendations considered, approved and adopted where appropriate.

By listening to feedback, learning from complaints and taking meaningful action, we will continue to improve services and encourage tenants to tell us when they are unhappy with the service they receive.



Councillor Lee Brazier, Portfolio Holder for Housing at Newark and Sherwood District Council
Councillor Mike Pringle, Chair of Policy and Performance Improvement Committee at Newark and Sherwood District Council

Overview of Feedback

- 1.1 The table below illustrates the total number of stage 1 and stage 2 complaints received by Housing Services during 2025 - 26.

Stage 1 Complaints	Stage 2 Complaints	Total Complaints
376	126	502

- 1.2 All figures shown above exclude complaints that were withdrawn. These tend to be enquiries which are submitted as complaints, but upon investigation were found to be service requests or duplicate complaints. The customer is contacted and if they agree then the complaint is withdrawn and treated as a service request or combined into one complaint. Refusals are different, the service has not refused to accept any complaints for the period.

Trend	Comment
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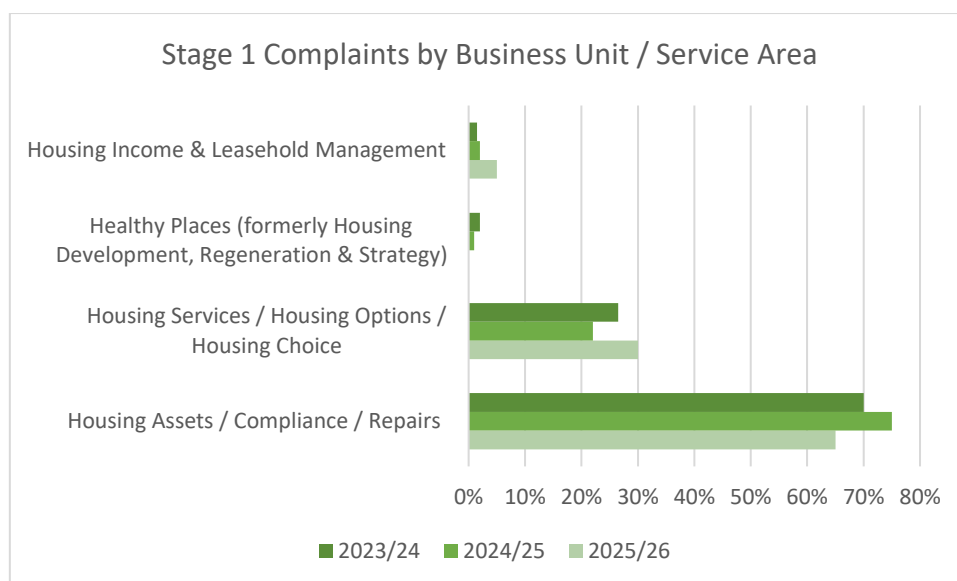
Combined, this is an additional 100 complaints when compared to 2024 - 25: specifically, a 10% increase in stage 1 complaints, a 142% increase in stage 2 complaints and a 25% increase in complaints overall. The sector (including the Housing Ombudsman) has also seen a huge increase in complaints. The increase in stage 1 complaints has slowed down compared to previous years, but stage 2 escalations are increasing dramatically.

1. Complaints by Business Unit

- 2.1 The largest proportion of stage 1 complaints received were for Building Safety and Asset Investment and Housing Repairs and Empty Homes, with the majority (53%) solely within repairs. The services cover repairs, compliance (including gas) and major and cyclical works.

Business Unit / Service Area – Stage 1	2025 - 26	2024 - 25	2023 - 24
Housing Assets / Compliance / Repairs	65%	75%	70%
Housing Services / Housing Options / Housing Choice	30%	22%	26.5%
Healthy Places (formerly Housing Development, Regeneration & Strategy)	0%	1%	2%
Housing Income & Leasehold Management	5%	2%	1.5%

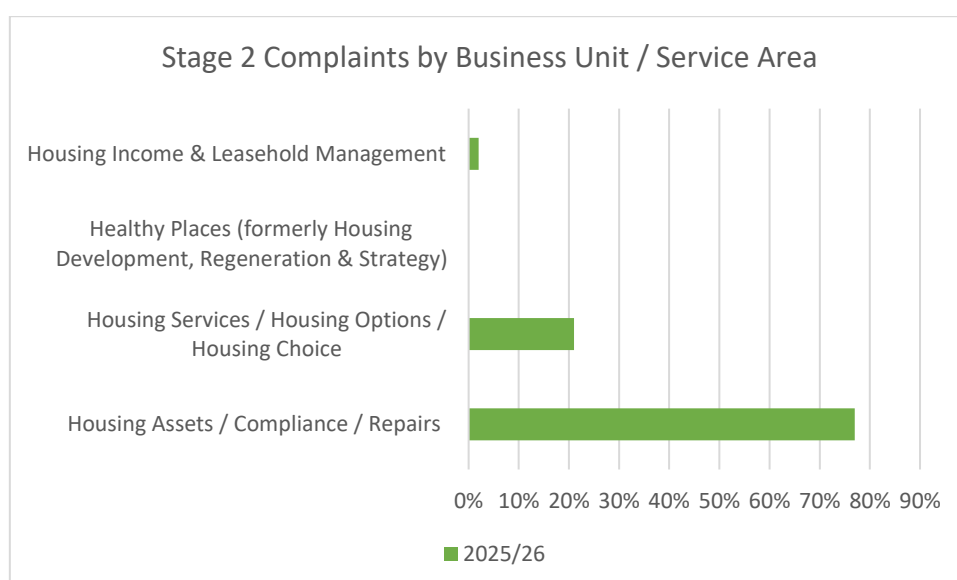
- 2.2 For context, the housing repairs service received 201 complaints and completed 19,161 repairs during the period, which equates to 1.05% of transactions resulting in complaints.



2.3 Stage 2 complaints continue to rise, increasing by 189% in 2024 - 25 and a further 142% in 2025/26.

Stage 2 Complaints	2025 - 26	2024 - 25	2023 - 24
Number Received	126	52	18

2.4 Due to the continued increasing number of stage 2 escalations, the complaints team began analysing the business units / service areas as well as the reasons and themes in 2025 - 26.



2. Breakdown of Complaints

3.1 Of the 376 stage 1 complaints received, the highest volumes of complaints related to:

- Quality of service (37%)
- Waiting time (25%)
- Communication (13%)
- Staff conduct (11%)

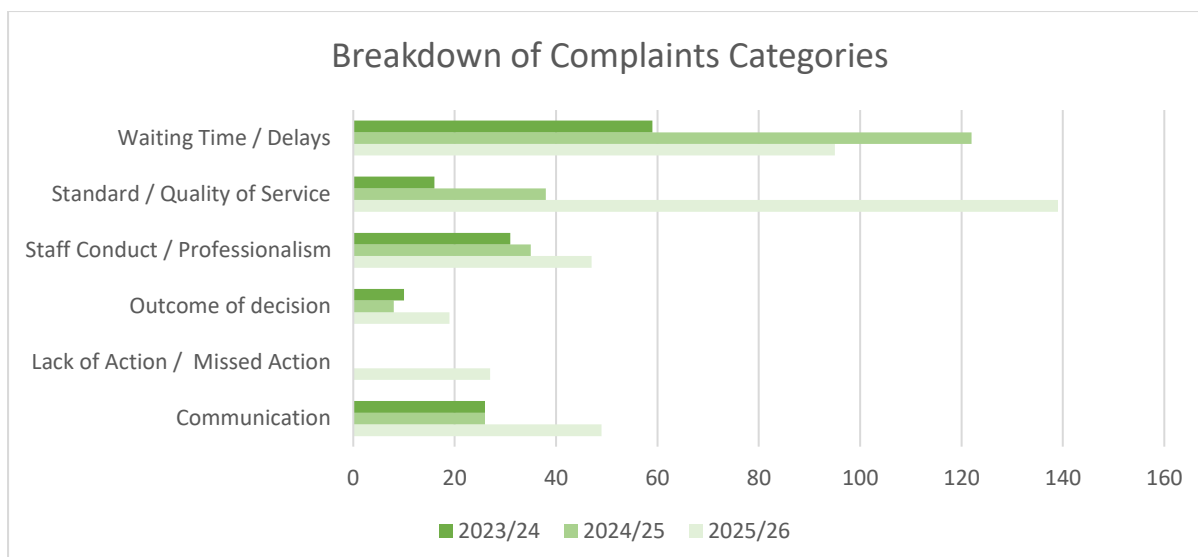
Although the complaints categories were reviewed and amended from April 2025, the order has changed, but the themes remain the same when compared with 2024 - 25 and 2023 - 24.

3.2 The majority of the 126 stage 2 complaints were related to repairs:

- Waiting times and lack of action (40%)
- Quality of service (38%)

3.3 The previous annual report highlighted that a number of staff conduct complaints were found to be in relation to policy or legislative decisions that the staff member had delivered to the customer rather than their conduct or attitude. When the complaints categories were reviewed, there was a new category introduced called 'disagreement with council policy / legislation / officer decision'. This ensured these were recorded separately to staff conduct complaints and therefore reflected accurately. The anticipated reduction in the number of staff conduct complaints in 2025 - 26 did not materialise, however this was impacted by the increase in overall complaints. For context, staff conduct complaints equated to 10% of complaints in 2024 - 25 and 11% in 2025/26.

3.4 The table below shows the breakdown of all complaints categories. Whilst there appears to be a huge increase in some categories compared with previous years, a small part of this is down to the reduced number and amalgamation of former categories. The revision of categories has allowed services to clearly determine where the issues lie.



3. Complaint Response Performance

4.1 To ensure compliance with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code (CHC), our policy sets out specific timescales for responding to complaints. The amended Code came into effect on 1 April 2024.

- **Stage 1** - acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days of the request being received and provide a full response within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.
- **Stage 2** - acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days of the escalation request being received and provide a full response within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.

4.2 The table below details the percentage of complaints which have been responded to within the CHC timescales.

Year	Stage 1 in CHC Target	Stage 2 in CHC Target
2025 - 26	99%	78%
2024 - 25	41%	42%
2023 - 24	99%	100%

4.3 In 2024 - 25 there were several reasons for the decline in complaints response performance and the service recognised significant improvements were required. Modifications to the complaints system were embedded by the start of 2025 - 26 so to address the increased number of complaints, we recruited a temporary Housing Complaints Coordinator in May 2025.

- 4.4 Whilst stage 2 performance still requires improvement, there is a huge improvement in both stage 1 and stage 2 response rates when compared to 2024 - 25. Following its success, the Housing Complaints Coordinator role was made permanent in July 2026 and at the time of writing this report, a further two roles were being recruited: a temporary Housing Complaints Coordinator and a Housing Complaints and Improvement Officer. It is hoped that the Housing Complaints and Improvement Officer will be able to reduce the number of stage 2 escalations and take on the majority of stage 2 complaints, which are currently all handled by Heads of Service. This should have a positive impact on stage 2 responses within target.
- 4.5 The system also now allows us to link complaints from the same address or person, which has helped us both connect the dots, conduct a more thorough complaint investigation and offer more appropriate remedy, both at stage 1 and stage 2.

4. Outcome of Complaints

- 5.1 The officer responsible for investigating and responding to a complaint will determine if the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. The issues of the complaint and resolutions sought are established with the customer at the acknowledgement stage. The response clearly states the outcome and addresses each element recorded in the acknowledgement. Often complaints are regarding several issues, some of which may be upheld, and some may not and, in this instance, partially upheld will be determined.
- 5.2 Most complaints are either upheld or partially upheld, which gives assurance to customers that there is value in making a complaint. Despite the increase in complaints numbers, there is also consistency in outcome level percentages between 2025 - 26 and 2024 - 25.

2025 - 26

Stage	Number Upheld	Number Partially Upheld	Number Not Upheld
Stage 1	231 (61%)	86 (23%)	59 (16%)
Stage 2	84 (67%)	16 (13%)	25 (20%)

2024 - 25

Stage	Number Upheld	Number Partially Upheld	Number Not Upheld
Stage 1	213 (61%)	87 (25%)	50 (14%)
Stage 2	34 (66%)	8 (15%)	10 (19%)

5. Learning from Complaints

- 6.1 Analysis of customer feedback and complaints enables us to identify specific issues and address them. Whilst complaints are encouraged, the service aims to avoid repeat complaints about the same or similar issues.
- 6.2 The tables below show the improvements the service has made as a direct result of complaints.

Housing Assets / Compliance / Repairs	
Area of concern	Action taken to improve
Standard /Quality of Service	When properties become void, asset replacements must now be factored into works.
Standard /Quality of Service	Post Inspections now take place, particularly regarding contractor works and weekly contractor meetings now have a segment where all outstanding repairs are reviewed.
Waiting Time / Delays	Repairs linked to or raised as part of a complaint are now prefixed with S1/S2 in our housing management system so they can be effectively monitored and managed.

Housing Services / Housing Options / Housing Choice	
Area of concern	Action taken to improve
Standard /Quality of Service	Mutual exchange toolbox talks have been introduced.
Communication	Posters are displayed in extra care scheme communal areas to remind people to be considerate to neighbours.

Housing Income and Leasehold Management

Area of concern	Action taken to improve
Communication	The arrears recovery process now ensures DD letters include a better explanation of missed payments and linkages.

- 6.3 General training for all relevant staff has also taken place regarding domestic abuse awareness, call handling and refund applications.

6. Ombudsman Complaints

- 7.1 The Housing Ombudsman outcomes for the past 5 years are shown in the table below.

Year	Decided by the HO	Number Upheld
April 2025 – March 2026	7	3
April 2024 – March 2025	4	4
April 2023 – March 2024	1	0
April 2022 – March 2023	1	0
April 2021 – March 2022	1	0
April 2020 - March 2021	1	0

- 7.2 Tenant complaints to the Housing Ombudsman have increased again, but it is pleasing to see that only some of these complaints were upheld in 2025 - 26, compared with all in 2024 - 25. All orders made have been met and will be published by the Housing Ombudsman as part of the Council's Landlord Performance Report 2025 - 26.

8. Complaints Satisfaction

- 8.1 During 2025 - 26, 66% of customers were satisfied with the housing complaints handling process, compared with 57% in 2024 - 25 and 55% in 2023 - 24. The almost 10% increase in the last year is likely attributed to the single point of contact for stage 1 complaints and the relevant senior manager handling stage 1 staff conduct complaints.
- 8.2 From the qualitative feedback, it is still evident that many customers are dissatisfied with the entire process, from the root cause of their reason for making a complaint, rather than just the complaints process itself. This is unsurprising considering the majority of complaints are regarding delayed repairs / time taken and at the point the customer makes complaint, issues have often been going on for a considerable time.

9. Making Things Right

- 9.1 We always sincerely apologise where we have failed, i.e. a complaint has been either upheld or partially upheld and always aim to make things right. We are required by the Housing Ombudsman to close complaints within timescales and often this means that repairs works are raised with a date after the complaint has been resolved and closed. The complaints team monitors all new and outstanding repairs and actions to ensure these obligations are met.
- 9.2 Once a complaint is closed, this does not mean case handling is closed and the complaints team and case handling officers maintain open communication with customers to monitor the progress of outstanding works from a customer impact perspective.
- 9.3 Performance and customer feedback is considered when reviewing how policies and service delivery can be improved. It is anticipated the Housing Complaints and Improvement Officer (once recruited) will identify specific areas for improvement and work collaboratively with the respective teams to introduce and embed positive changes to processes. The role will also support those teams during the transition phase and monitor the ongoing impact of any changes.
- 9.4 Following a review and work with the Tenant Participation and Advisory Service, our Tenant Engagement Structure has been strengthened. The first two involved tenant scrutiny exercises in 2026 - 27 will be regarding repairs and complaints. Any findings will be considered and any viable recommendations will be approved and adopted.