



Complaints Performance and Service Improvement

Report

2025/26



CITIZEN



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Welcome

Complaints are one of the clearest ways customers tell us where our services have not worked as they should. They help us stay honest about where ownership, communication or follow-through has broken down, and where we need to be brave enough to change how we work.

This year's report shows progress in reducing complaint volumes, particularly in repairs, and in improving wider customer perception of our approach to complaints. That progress matters, but we know it's only part of the picture. The experience of each customer who complains depends on whether we listen, respond clearly, take ownership and put things right in a way that reflects Citizen's values and customer-first approach.

Operationally, our priority is to turn complaint learning into consistent practice. We need to resolve more issues at the earliest opportunity, keep customers informed, complete agreed actions, and make sure that teams and contractors work together effectively to prevent avoidable repeat contact and escalation. That means being ambitious about improvement while staying focused on what matters most to customers.

The report also highlights where we must focus further improvement. Customers continue to tell us that delays, poor communication, recurring repairs, incomplete handovers and inconsistent follow-through affect their trust in our services. These are practical issues, and they require practical, visible action.

We will continue to use complaint data, customer feedback and Housing Ombudsman determinations to identify the root causes of dissatisfaction and to check whether the changes we make are improving customers' lived experience. This includes strengthening early resolution, improving the quality of investigations and responses, and ensuring remedies properly reflect the impact on customers.

I would like to thank customers who have taken the time to tell us when things have gone wrong, and colleagues who have listened, put matters right and used that feedback to improve services. We have made progress, but we recognise that trust is built through consistent delivery. We will continue to listen, learn and act so that our services better reflect the standards customers expect from Citizen.

Madeleine Nelson
Chief Operating Officer

Statement from the Board

As the Member Responsible for Complaints, and on behalf of the Board, I am pleased to introduce Citizen's Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for 2025/26.

The Board recognises that complaints are a vital source of assurance, insight and accountability. They help us stay honest about where services have fallen short, understand whether customers have been treated fairly, and check whether learning is leading to meaningful and sustained improvement.

During the year, the Board maintained oversight of complaints performance, compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, Housing Ombudsman determinations, key themes and root causes, and the actions being taken to improve services. This reflects the Code's requirement for annual reporting, governing body oversight and a clear response to complaint learning, as well as Citizen's commitment to being brave, ambitious and honest in how we listen and respond.

The report shows important progress, including fewer complaints overall and a reduction in repairs-related complaints, which remain the largest source of dissatisfaction. It also shows where further

challenge is needed, particularly around escalation, consistency of complaint handling and customers' confidence that issues will be resolved when they first raise them.

The Board welcomes the service improvements described in this report but is clear that complaint volumes alone are not a sufficient measure of success. Our focus remains on whether customers receive a fair, accessible and timely complaints service, whether remedies reflect the impact experienced, and whether learning is embedded across the organisation in a way that strengthens trust and delivers better outcomes for citizens.

Having reviewed and challenged this report, the Board considers that it provides a fair and transparent account of Citizen's complaint-handling performance, Housing Ombudsman findings, learning and service improvements during 2025/26. The Board supports the priorities described in the report and will continue to seek assurance that agreed actions are delivered and that they result in better outcomes for customers.

Angela Carpenter

Member Responsible for Complaints
On behalf of Citizen Board



Complaint Handling Code

The Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code was first introduced in 2020 and became statutory on 1 April 2024.

Its aim is simple but important: to create a positive complaints culture where landlords listen to their customers, learn from what they hear, and take action to make things better.

Now that the Code is law, it is a legal requirement for us – and every other landlord – to follow it in full. The Housing Ombudsman has a duty to make sure that we do.



The Code sets clear expectations for how we handle complaints, including:

- ✓ A universal definition of a complaint.
- ✓ Easy access to our complaints process, and making sure customers know they can also go to the Housing Ombudsman.
- ✓ A simple two-stage process with clear timescales for responses.
- ✓ Fair, transparent, and customer-focused handling at every stage.
- ✓ Taking action to put things right and find the right solutions.
- ✓ Building a culture of continuous learning and improvement.
- ✓ Showing what we’ve learned from complaints in our annual reports.
- ✓ Completing – and publishing – an annual self-assessment against the Code.

Compliance with the Code

Every year, we carry out a detailed self-assessment against the Code. For 2025/26, this was reviewed by our Customer Assurance Committee alongside our Board member responsible for complaints.

They examined the evidence in full, challenged our findings, and scrutinised the performance information to make sure our self-assessment was fair, accurate, and realistic.

Requirements		
	Required outcomes	Compliant
Section 1 - Definition of a complaint	5	100%
Section 2 - Exclusions	5	100%
Section 3 - Accessibility and awareness	7	100%
Section 4 - Complaint handling staff	3	100%
Section 5 - Complaint handling process	15	100%
Section 6 - Complaint stages	20	100%
Section 7 - Putting things right	4	100%
Section 8 - Self-assessment, reporting and compliance	5	100%
Section 8 - Scrutiny and overnight: continuous learning & improvement	8	100%
Total	72	100%

Working with the Ombudsman

We work closely with the Housing Ombudsman, engaging constructively with any investigations, learning from their decisions, and acting quickly on any recommendations.

We see this relationship as an important part of improving our services and building trust with our customers.

You can read the Ombudsman's most recent published findings relating to Citizen [here](#).



Listening to our customers

Alongside complaints, we regularly gather feedback from customers in other ways, including the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and our ongoing programme of customer surveys.

These give us valuable insights into how customers feel about our services and where we can improve, even when a formal complaint hasn't been raised.

You can read our latest TSM results [here](#).

Complaints handling performance

Responding to customer complaints is a key element of ensuring we meet our promises and commitments.

We aim to respond in time, explain the next steps, and deliver the outcomes our customers expect.

This report summarises complaint cases raised during 2025/26 that have been closed:

Stage 1 Complaints

3164

Stage 2 Complaints

655

In total 65 of the Stage 2 complaints were escalated from Stage 1 cases that were raised in 2024/25.



Overview

Service areas with most complaints

40%
of total repairs.

17%
Neighbourhood
Services.

14%
Building Safety
& Compliance.

8%
Strategic Asset
Management.

8%
Estates &
Services.

Most frequent complaint reasons

43%
failure or delay to resolve
an issue or repair.

15%
Poor communication.

13%
Quality of service.

9%
Damage to/loss
of customers property.

9%
Appointment.

Upheld complaints

Stage 1 Complaints

32%
were upheld.

42%
were not upheld

Stage 2 Complaints

38%
were upheld.

40%
were not upheld.

Complaint performance

93.51%
of stage 1 complaints were
responded to within 10 days.

96.42%
of stage 2 complaints were
responded to within 20 days.

Average days to resolve complaints

Stage 1

5.6 days
(excluding extension).

Stage 2

16.8 days
(excluding extension).

Escalated complaints

19%

of Stage 1 complaints
escalated to Stage 2

High escalation rate

32%

Programmed Works.

31%

Development Services.

26%

Income.

Satisfaction survey result (2025/26)

2.58/5.00

Average CSAT Score
(customer satisfaction with
complaint handling).

3.00

CSAT Target.

Perception survey result (2025/26)

34.8%

Low Cost Rental Accommodation
(LCRA) customers.

20.4%

Low Cost Home Ownership
(LCHO) Customers.



Our Learnings

Complaints are one of the most important ways our customers tell us what isn't working.

We know it's frustrating when things go wrong, but every complaint gives us the chance to put things right and improve the way we work.

During 2025/26, we've used complaints, complaint escalations, customer satisfaction scores and Housing Ombudsman determinations to understand where we can do better.

It's about understanding what matters to our customers, taking ownership, communicating clearly and making sure we learn from what has gone wrong.



Communication

- We've been told by customers they want they want timely, accurate and proactive communication, particularly when repairs are delayed or they are dealing with a complex issue.
- We've introduced clearer communication expectations, increased oversight of delayed actions and strengthened expectations around keeping customers updated.
- We've learned that poor communication can sometimes have a greater impact on customer satisfaction than the original problem. Listening to this feedback has helped us improve communication and coordination between teams.



Taking ownership

- We've learned that issues are more likely to escalate when ownership is unclear or action is delayed.
- We've strengthened complaint triage, clarified responsibilities and increased management oversight of actions arising from complaints.
- We're also improving how we track recommendations and learning actions through to completion, so that identifying a problem leads to action.



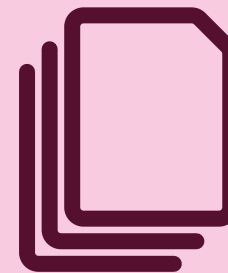
Preventing repeat problems

- Complaints have highlighted recurring issues with repairs, communication, record keeping and coordination between services.
- We've increased our use of root cause analysis and thematic reporting to understand why problems are happening, rather than simply responding to individual complaints.
- We're using this learning to inform operational and service improvement plans, helping us make changes that prevent the same problems happening again.



Getting complaints right

- Learning from escalated complaints and Housing Ombudsman investigations has reinforced the importance of understanding all the issues a customer has raised and providing fair, evidence-based outcomes.
- We've strengthened quality checks on complaint responses, improved guidance for colleagues and increased the focus on proportionate remedies, apologies and compensation where appropriate.
- We've also learned that responding on time is only part of good complaints handling. Customers need clear explanations and confidence that their concerns have been properly considered.



Keeping better records

- Some complaint investigations have highlighted where records were incomplete, fragmented or difficult to find. Good records help us understand what happened, make informed decisions and resolve concerns fairly.
- We've reinforced expectations around record keeping and retention, strengthened quality checks and increased the focus on recording customer vulnerabilities and agreed actions.



Turning feedback into improvement

- Complaints provide valuable insight into the lived experience of our customers and can help us identify where services need to change.
- We've established regular complaint learning reviews, increased reporting of themes and lessons to senior leaders and governance groups and strengthened the way we track improvement actions.
- Our biggest learning is that a complaint should not simply be seen as a case to close. It is an opportunity to put things right for the customer and make changes that improve services for everyone.

Improvements for 2026/27

We know that handling complaints well is important, but preventing problems from happening in the first place is even better. In 2026/27, we'll build on what we've learned from complaints and Housing Ombudsman investigations, with a focus on resolving issues earlier, improving communication and making sure customers can see the difference their feedback makes.

Improving our complaint handling
We'll continue to improve compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, with a focus on reducing overdue cases and our reliance on extensions. We'll also strengthen capacity planning and use performance information to identify any areas for improvement.



Resolving more complaints first time

We'll strengthen investigations at Stage 1, making sure we fully understand the issues customers are raising and what outcome they are looking for. We'll also increase quality checks on higher-risk cases and make sure actions agreed as part of a complaint are followed through to completion.

Keeping customers informed

We'll continue to improve communication across customer journeys, particularly during repairs, damp and mould cases and other complex issues. We'll provide clearer information about what customers can expect, what happens next and when they can expect an update, particularly when there are delays.

Learning from the Housing Ombudsman

We'll carry out regular reviews of Housing Ombudsman determinations and share the learning across Citizen. We'll monitor the actions arising from Ombudsman orders and recommendations and use recurring themes to help shape our service improvements.

Using complaints data to spot problems earlier

We'll strengthen our analysis of complaint themes and root causes so we can identify emerging issues sooner. By looking at patterns across services, rather than individual complaints in isolation, we can target improvements where they will have the greatest impact and reduce repeat problems.

**Giving customers
a greater voice**

We'll give customers more opportunities to influence how we learn from complaints and improve our services. We'll share more "You Said, We Did" updates, involve scrutiny and assurance groups in reviewing improvement activity, and show customers what has changed as a result of their feedback.

**Showing the difference
our learning makes**

We'll move beyond simply recording what we have learned and what actions we have taken. We'll introduce measures to help us understand whether improvements are making a difference and share case studies that show how customer feedback has led to change.

By focusing on early resolution, clear communication and meaningful learning, we want to reduce repeat problems, make it easier for customers to get issues resolved and give customers greater confidence that when they speak up, we listen, we act and we make things better.



How to make a complaint

We want to make it as easy as possible for you to tell us if something has gone wrong. If you're unhappy with our service, please let us know, we'll do our best to put things right quickly.

You can make a complaint in the way that suits you best:

- Online: Use the complaints form on our website www.citizenhousing.org.uk/customer-services/feedback
- Phone: Call us on 0300 790 6555
- In writing: Write to us at
Citizen,
Lakeside, 4040 Solihull Parkway,
Birmingham, B37 7YN
- In person: Speak to a Citizen colleague

If you'd like support to make a complaint, you can ask a friend, family member, or advocate to do it on your behalf.

You can also contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at any time for advice or support.

If you've completed our complaints process and are still unhappy, you can ask the Ombudsman to review your case.

- Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- Phone: 0300 111 3000
- Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk



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