



Annual Complaints Report and Service Improvement Plan 2024-2025

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Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This is the Bristol City Council Landlord Service 'Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report', provided to the Homes and Housing Delivery Policy Committee Chair, in line with requirements set out in the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

1.2 Under section 8.1 of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (the Code), Bristol City Council (BCC), in its role as a social housing landlord, must produce an 'Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report' for scrutiny and challenge, which must include:

- a. an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Code to ensure our complaint handling policy remains in line with their requirements.
- b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of our complaint handling performance, which must include a summary of the types of complaints we have refused to accept.
- c. any findings of non-compliance with the Code by the Ombudsman.
- d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints.
- e. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and
- f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.

In addition, section 8.2 of the Code states that the annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

1.3 This report provides complaints performance by the landlord service between April 2024 – March 2025.

Complaint cases received

2.1 Within Landlord Services, a total of 1562 complaints, 55 comments, 11 compliments were received. A breakdown by service area is shown in the table below.

Service	Complaint
Housing Management & Estates	380
Repairs & Maintenance	1178
Business Development	4
Total	1562

Landlord Services only

Service	Complaint
Housing Delivery (new homes)	5
Housing Options	203

Private Housing	21
Total	229

Housing Services only

Compared to 2023-2024 there were sizable changes in complaints volumes and the number of complaints for the Repairs and Maintenance service increased by 36% whereas complaints decreased by 18% for the Tenancy and Estates service.

During 2024-2025 the Repairs and Maintenance is responsible for planned maintenance, response repairs and voids services, the service recorded 88415 repairs with 90% of repairs being completed within the target timescale by the service and 70% of emergency repairs being completed within the specified timescales. The number of complaints recorded and allocated to the Repairs and Maintenance service represent 1.7% of all repairs logged or completed.

The Housing Management and Estates service is responsible for managing tenancies, leaseholder properties and the communal spaces of low rise and high rise areas of 26,768 rented and 1,956 leaseholder properties. During 2024-2025 less than 1.3% of residents made a complaint against the service.

NB: The table above includes complaint cases for the Housing Options Service and Housing Delivery and may contain cases where the complainant is not a council tenant or leaseholder.

2.2 There were no complaints refused between April 2024-March 2025.

Top 10 classifications for complaints

Complaint Classifications	% 2024-2025	2023-2024
Time waiting for works repairs	18%	+ 7%
Delivery or non-delivery of a service	14%	+2%
Other	9%	-3%
Quality of appropriateness of a service	8%	-1%
Application of a council policy	7%	-5%
Attitude or behaviour of staff	6%	No change
Quality of workmanship	4%	+1%
Quality of communication	4%	-5%
Dissatisfaction with action taken	3%	No change

Building Safety Issue	3%	Not applicable
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The complaints trends increase for the top 3 are largely associated with operational challenges within the Repairs and Maintenance, this area is under review and the service has introduced a range of measures to respond to repairs promptly and deliver a high quality service in line with our policies and procedures. We are pleased to see a decrease in “other” and this attributed to the introduction of specialist staff at the triage stage to correctly identify our complaints which allows to have further visibility of complaints sources. Additionally, the service has seen a decrease in “application of policy” due to our regular development and review of policies, procedures with services to ensure that they are working and effectively implemented.

Responses in target

In April 2024 the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code introduced the 10 day timescale to respond to Stage 1 complaints. Bristol City Council’s Housing and Landlord Service has updated their policy and procedures to reflect this and introduced a new KPI measuring compliance against the 10 day timescale.

Service	Within 10 day SLA	Outside SLA
Tenancy and Estates Service	88%	12%
Repairs and Maintenance	53%	47%
Housing Options	76%	24%
Housing Delivery	80%	20%
Total for landlord service	62%	

The Housing Ombudsman require landlords to respond to housing complaints within 10 working days. During 2024-25, the landlord service responded to 62% of stage one complaints within 10 working days and 47.8% of stage 2 complaints were responded to within 20 working days.

Complaint resolution stages

87% of cases were resolved at stage 1. 87% of complaints were resolved at stage 2 and 36 cases progressed to the Housing Ombudsman. The complaints resolution stages remain largely consistent with previous years with a 1% decrease in the number of complaints resolved at Stage 1.

Complaints Outcomes

At Stage 1 28% of complaints were not upheld, with 58% being upheld or partly upheld. 12% of complaints showed as other or no outcome. The outcomes showed a 13% decrease in the number of complaints being not upheld.

At Stage 2 26% of complaints were upheld, 27% Not Upheld and 33% Partly Upheld.

Customer satisfaction

7.1 Transactional satisfaction survey

250 complainants went on to complete a satisfaction survey following their complaint. The overall satisfaction rating for complaint handling is 50%. This is an increase of 12% compared to previous year 2023-2024.

7.2 Tenant satisfaction measure (perception survey)

During 2024-25, 2230 residents (council tenants and leaseholders) responded to the quarterly resident satisfaction survey (TSM's). 29% of residents were satisfied with the how BCC (as a landlord) handled complaints, this has decreased by 3% from 32% in 2023/2024.

Findings of non-compliance by the Housing Ombudsman

During 2024-25, there were no findings of non-compliance with the Housing Ombudsman code for Bristol City Council. The Housing Ombudsman reviewed 56 complaints against Bristol City Council and made 19 determinations including 81 orders made and 13 recommendations.

Determination Type	Count
Severe Maladministration	2
Maladministration	4
Service Failure	5
No Maladministration	3

Note: this table shows the leading determination outcome per case

The Housing Ombudsman issued £9160 in compensation, this is a 39% reduction in compensation compared to 2023/2024.

Compensation

The Landlord service issued a Complaints Policy and Procedure in January 2025 to enable the service to issue consistent and fair financial remedies when responding to complaints. During 2024-2025 £60197.13 was spent on compensation across the service.

Self Assessment

A self-assessment against the Ombudsman Code is provided in appendix a. Below is a summary of the self-assessment findings:

Housing Ombudsman Code	Self-Assessment Score
Section 1: Definition of a complaint	Compliant
Section 2: Exclusions	Compliant
Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness	Compliant

Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff	Compliant
Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process	Compliant
Section 6: Complaints Stages	Compliant
Section 7: Putting things right	Compliant
Section 8: Putting things right	Compliant
Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement	Compliant

Service improvements made as a result of learning from complaints.

A service improvement plan for complaint handling within Housing and Landlord Services has been in place since January 2024. The following improvements have been made or are underway:

Improvements to complaint handling

- Case review meetings have been introduced as standard practice for all stage two complaints and housing ombudsman cases where BCC is found to be in maladministration.
- Recruited dedicated complaint handling staff to acknowledge and provide a written acknowledgement within 5 working days and ensure that they are allocated to the appropriate team.
- Established a governance pathway to ensure complaints performance and learning is communicated with senior leaders and the Member Responsible for Complaints
- Updated our IT systems to introduce new templates and system flow
- Increased complaint handling training for all Housing and Landlord staff
- Introduced a compensation policy and procedure
- Improved our complaints website accessibility and literature
- Housing staff and the customer relations team are completing e-learning on damp and mould to improve knowledge and understand the legal requirements for housing.
- Updated our procurement guidance to ensure third party contractors handle complaints in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

Learning from complaints

- Apologies: Issued apologies for delays, errors, and communication issues.
- Compensation: Offered as a financial remedy in recognition of when we got things wrong
- Communication: Improving communication with tenants and ensuring regular updates
- Staff Training: Training staff and providing feedback on errors.
- Reviewed policies and procedures to incorporate feedback from our complaints including the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and procedure, Gain Access Policy and procedure.

Below are examples of complaints where the service delivery model has been amended and improved based on the feedback of residents following a root cause analysis of the complaint.

Case Study 1 (Accessible Homes)

Issue Raised:

A resident was left without a working panic alarm or landline for three weeks and tried to escalate the request without success. As a result a full and thorough Stage 1 complaint investigation was undertaken by the Accessible Homes team. The investigation and outcome concluded:

Council's Response (Stage One Complaint):

- Apology issued for the poor service and communication failures.
- Acknowledged that the call centre lacked knowledge on how to escalate the issue properly.
- Complaint upheld due to service not meeting expected standards.

Actions Taken:

- Engineer visit arranged to install a new digital alarm that works via the mobile network, bypassing the need for a landline.
- Additional training provided to call centre staff to prevent similar issues in the future.

Case Study 2 Income and HRA Team

Issue Raised:

A resident had received a letter to pay a charge to the service and received conflicting advice and guidance from the service. As a result a full and thorough Stage 1 complaint investigation was undertaken by the Income and HRA Team. The investigation and outcome concluded:

Council's Response (Stage One Complaint):

- Apology issued for the poor service and distress caused
- Acknowledged that our written communication should have been more tailored to the residents circumstances
- Complaint partly upheld due to service not meeting expected standards.

Actions Taken:

- Provided a written charges update to the resident
- Updated literature to include tailored advice to residents individual circumstances

Case Study 3 Quality of Communication Surveying

Issue Raised:

- The service did not provide an adequate interpreter which led to the resident not being able to communicate concerns or receive advice and guidance related to their home. As

a result an investigation into the root cause of the complaint was undertaken and it was concluded that:

Council's response (Stage One Complaint)

- Poor record keeping caused by human error lead to residents needs not being updated

Actions Taken:

- An apology for the poor record keeping and impact on the resident
- Compensation
- Briefings to all involved teams to highlight the importance of accurate and up to date information

Action plan for 2025-26

In addition to learning from complaints, we will continue our journey towards achieving our improvement plan objectives:

1. Ensure that Bristol City Council is compliant with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code
2. Improve complaint handling performance at Stage 1 and Stage 2
3. Embed the complaints policy, procedures and framework
4. Incorporate learning from complaints and Housing Ombudsman determinations into service delivery
5. Improved complaints communication, reporting and training for staff and residents

We are taking steps to ensure compliance with the housing ombudsman code in all areas which includes:

- Introduce a residents panel to have oversight of complaints and influence our process
- Reduce the number of complaints that are overdue at Stage 1
- Increase oversight and monitoring of complaints at both stages
- Introduce a complaints service standard
- Increasing dedicated complaint handling resources to respond to complaints at Stage 1 and Stage 2
- Increase visibility and awareness of complaints process and performance for residents

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