



Housing & Landlord Services Annual complaints and service improvement report

2025-2026

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Table of Contents	Page
1. Introduction	3
2. Complaint cases received	3
3. Classifications	4
4. Responses in target	4
5. Complaint resolution stages	4
6. Outcomes	4
7. Customer satisfaction	4
8. Findings of non-compliance with the Code by the Ombudsman.	5
9. Summary of self-assessment findings	5
10. Service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints.	5
11. Action plan for 2024-25	6
12. Recommendations	7

1. 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 2025 – March 2026.

2. Complaint cases received

2.1 Within Housing and Landlord Services, a total of 1724 complaints, 1723 comments, 0 compliments were received. A breakdown by service area is shown in the table below.

Landlord Service Area	Complaints
Housing Delivery	14
Private Housing & Accessible Homes (Landlord – Accessible Homes only)	37
Tenancy Management and Estates	430
Repairs and Maintenance	1,019
Asset Strategy (Housing Asset Management + Energy)	13
Capital Works and Special Projects	0
Landlord Compliance	0
Consumer standards	1
Total	1,481

Landlord Services only

Housing Service Area	Complaints
Housing Options	163
Private Housing & Accessible Homes	80
Total	243

Housing Services only

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 2025 – March 2026.

3. Top 10 classifications for complaints

Year: 2025/2026

Primary Classification ID	No. of Case
Time waiting for works/repair	443
Quality or appropriateness of a service	231
Attitude/conduct/behaviour of staff	122
Delivery or non-delivery of a service	102
Quality of communication	85
Quality of workmanship	69
Delay in decision making or provision of service	53
Other	53
Lack of response	53
Application of a Council policy	50
Grand Total	1261

Year: 2024/2025

Primary Classification ID	No. of Case
Application of a Council policy	145
Attitude/conduct/behaviour of staff	115
Damp and Mould	54
Delivery or non-delivery of a service	221
Dissatisfaction with action taken	49
Other	152
Quality of communication	91
Quality of workmanship	75
Quality or appropriateness of a service	149
Time waiting for works/repair	298
Grand Total	1349

Analysis of the top 10 complaint classifications across 2024/25 and 2025/26 shows that overall complaint volumes have remained broadly stable (1,349 compared to 1,261), but the profile of complaints has shifted significantly within Housing and Landlord Services. In 2024/25, complaints were more evenly distributed, with higher volumes recorded under delivery or non-delivery of services, application of Council policy, and “Other”, alongside consistent levels of dissatisfaction with communication and staff conduct.

In 2025/26, complaints are more clearly concentrated around service performance and timeliness, with time waiting for works/repairs (443 cases) now the most significant driver, followed by quality or appropriateness of a service (231 cases). While issues relating to service non-delivery, policy application and “Other” have reduced, complaints linked to delays, responsiveness, and overall service quality remain prominent. This indicates some improvement in service access and classification, but highlights ongoing pressure in repairs delivery, service standards, and customer experience, particularly in managing expectations and progressing cases efficiently.

4. Responses in target

The Complaint Handling Code requires landlords to respond to Stage 1 complaints within 10 working days. During 2025–26, the landlord service responded to 66% of Stage 1 complaints within 10 working days, with 25% responded to outside the required timescale, and a further 15% of cases where SLA compliance was not recorded.

Landlord Service Area	Within SLA (Yes)	Outside SLA (No)
Housing Delivery	6	8
Accessible Homes (Landlord only)	27	10
Tenancy Management & Estates	434	48
Property Services (Repairs & Maintenance)	500	300
Asset Strategy	7	6
Consumer Standards	1	0
Total	975	372

The service has introduced weekly reporting to increase oversight of complaints due with managers driving performance to ensure that residents receive timely and comprehensive complaint responses.

5. Complaint resolution stages

83% of cases were resolved at stage 1. 77% of complaints were resolved at stage 2 and 5% progressed to Ombudsman stage.

6. Outcomes

31% of complaints were not upheld, with 51% being upheld or partly upheld. 18% of complaints showed as other or no outcome.

7. Stage 2 Performance & Analysis

During 2025-2026, 226 complaints escalated to Stage 2 compared to previous years 229 complaints. There was a completion rate of 47.8% within 20 working days which is no change from the previous year.

Stage 2 Escalation Reason	No of Escalations
Disagree with decision	125
Failed to address all issues	65
Promised action not taken	36
Grand Total	226

The service has been strengthened through the recruitment of additional staff within the Customer Relations team to meet rising demand. We have also implemented further improvements to our Stage 2 complaint handling processes to enhance resident satisfaction.

8. Customer satisfaction

7.1 Transactional satisfaction survey

99 complainants went on to complete a satisfaction survey following their complaint. The overall satisfaction rating for complaint handling is 53%. This is an increase of 2% compared to previous year 2024-2025.

7.2 Tenant satisfaction measure (perception survey)

During 2025-26, 431 residents (council tenants and leaseholders) responded to the annual resident satisfaction survey (TSM's). 27% of residents were satisfied with the how BCC (as a landlord) handled complaints.

9. Findings of non-compliance by the Housing Ombudsman

During 2024-2025 the council received the outcomes of 18 complaints referred to the Housing Ombudsman and currently await the outcome of 37 complaints that are being investigated by the Housing Ombudsman service. The Housing Ombudsman has faced a significant uptick in demand from residents across the country and this has resulted in delays in complaint investigations and outcomes.

During the same period the council received 3 Complaint Handling Failure Orders due to the non completion of Housing Ombudsman Orders or information requests.

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

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 in all areas except:6.3, 6.14
Section 7: Putting things right	Compliant
Section 8: Putting things right	Compliant
Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement	Compliant

10. Service improvements made as a result of learning from complaints.

The following improvements have been made or are underway:

Improvements to complaint handling

A range of improvements have been implemented to strengthen complaint handling across Housing and Landlord Services, ensuring compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and improving resident experience.

Key improvements include:

- **Standardised Processes and Tools:** Introduction of consistent templates for complaint responses, acknowledgements, and case review meetings to improve quality and consistency across services
- **Enhanced Early Resolution (Stage 1 Focus):** Increased emphasis on resolving complaints at Stage 1 through early case reviews, peer challenge, and proactive engagement with residents.
- **Improved Communication with Residents:** Complaint handlers now contact residents at the outset to clarify issues and expectations, with improved recording of all contact to strengthen accountability.

- **Stronger Performance Monitoring:** Implementation of KPIs aligned to Ombudsman requirements (including 10-day response targets), supported by reporting tools such as Power BI dashboards and regular performance reviews
- **Better Oversight of Ombudsman Cases:** Introduction of structured processes to manage Housing Ombudsman cases, including action plans, tracking of orders, and formal case review meetings for maladministration findings
- **Improved Record Keeping and Evidence Handling:** Strengthened guidance and expectations for maintaining accurate case records and evidence to support decision-making and Ombudsman investigations
- **Training and Capability Building:** Delivery of updated training programmes for complaint handlers, managers, and frontline teams to reinforce best practice and ensure understanding of new requirements
- **Increased Accountability and Governance:** Regular reporting to senior leadership and Cabinet, alongside improved visibility of complaints performance and outcomes across services

These improvements have strengthened the consistency, timeliness, and quality of complaint handling, while embedding a culture of accountability and continuous learning.

Case Study: Learning from Complaints – Strengthening Repairs and Surveying Oversight

Background

A Housing Ombudsman investigation into a surveying and disrepair case identified significant failures in the management of repairs to a resident's home. The case involved long-standing damp, heating inefficiencies, pest issues, and delays in completing essential repairs, with the resident unable to use part of their property for an extended period. The complaint escalated to the Ombudsman due to prolonged delays, poor communication, and ineffective complaint handling.

Key Issues Identified

The investigation highlighted several critical service failures:

- Repairs and damp issues remained unresolved for multiple years, with one room unusable for over seven years
- Poor repair record-keeping and lack of coordinated case oversight
- Limited follow-up on pest reports and repeat repair failures

- Weak complaint handling, including delays at Stage 2 and lack of clear resolution planning
- Insufficient communication with the resident, leading to repeated contact and escalation

Actions Taken

Following the Ombudsman determination, a set of targeted corrective actions were implemented:

- Financial Redress: £1,750 compensation awarded to reflect distress, inconvenience, and prolonged loss of use of part of the home
- Surveying Review: Full review of repair records, pest reports, and case handling processes to identify gaps and improve oversight
- Repairs Assurance: Outstanding repairs and remedial works prioritised and tracked through to completion
- Complaint Handling Improvements: Review of complaint processes to ensure compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
- Process Strengthening: Clear requirements introduced for maintaining accurate records and evidencing actions taken

Outcomes and Impact

This case led to tangible service improvements:

- Improved tracking and completion of complex repair cases
- Stronger assurance around surveying oversight and record-keeping standards
- Increased accountability through clearer ownership of complaints and actions
- Enhanced compliance with complaint handling requirements
- Better alignment between repairs delivery and complaint resolution

For the resident, this resulted in financial compensation, completion of outstanding works, and improved living conditions.

Learning and Service Improvement

This case demonstrates how complaint learning has driven measurable change, particularly within Repairs and Surveying services. Key learning includes:

- The importance of end-to-end ownership of complex repair cases
- The need for robust record-keeping and clear audit trails
- Ensuring repairs, complaints, and surveying functions operate in a coordinated way
- Strengthening oversight and escalation at Stage 2
- Embedding accountability where delays or service failures occur

11. Action plan for 2026-2027

In addition to learning from complaints, we will continue to progress our improvement plan to ensure full compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and to improve outcomes for residents.

Our priorities for 2026–2027 are to:

- Ensure full compliance with the Complaint Handling Code
- Improve Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaint handling performance
- Embed complaints policy, procedures and governance frameworks
- Strengthen how learning from complaints and Ombudsman determinations informs service delivery
- Enhance communication, reporting and training for both residents and staff

To achieve this, we will:

- Maintain compliance and oversight by submitting the annual self-assessment and reporting regularly to senior leadership and committee, ensuring transparency and accountability
- Improve performance at Stage 1 and Stage 2 by maintaining adequate resourcing (including disrepair and Customer Relations teams), embedding service standards, and reinforcing clear escalation pathways
- Strengthen governance and performance management through improved access to performance data, enhanced reporting tools, and regular monitoring by managers and senior leaders
- Embed learning from complaints into business as usual by implementing a structured learning framework, including corrective action tracking, root cause analysis, and regular review of Housing Ombudsman determinations
- Improve quality and consistency of complaint handling by embedding Stage 1 and Stage 2 checklists, strengthening the use of remedies, and ensuring consistent identification of vulnerability and reasonable adjustments
- Enhance communication with residents by reviewing tone, clarity and timeliness of responses, and increasing awareness of how to raise complaints through targeted communications
- Invest in staff capability and training through ongoing training programmes, regular briefings, and monthly performance communications to complaint handlers and frontline teams
- Sustain improvements in complaint handling capacity by continuing to review resource levels and implementing recovery approaches where needed to maintain compliance with statutory timescales

This programme of work will ensure that complaint handling across Housing and Landlord Services is compliant, consistent, and focused on delivering fair and timely outcomes for residents, while embedding a culture of continuous improvement.

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