



Housing Services

2025-26 Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report

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1. Introduction

The past year has been one of continued progress and reflection for Housing Services, as we work to deliver safe, high-quality homes and responsive services for all of our tenants. As a council that places our communities at the heart of everything we do, we recognise the vital role feedback plays in shaping the way we deliver our services. Complaints are an essential part of this learning process. They help us understand where things have gone well, where we need to improve, and how we can better meet the diverse needs of residents across Redditch.

This report sets out our performance in handling housing-related complaints over the past year, the improvements we have delivered, and the actions we are taking to ensure we continue to meet the Housing Ombudsman's expectations. Our focus has been firmly aligned with the priorities outlined in the Council Plan 2025–28: providing decent, safe and warm homes; ensuring our services are accessible, fair and responsive; and working transparently to strengthen trust with our tenants.

We remain committed to addressing issues such as damp and mould proactively, maintaining our housing stock to a high standard, and supporting residents when problems arise. Through improved case handling, stronger communication, and a renewed emphasis on listening to tenant voices, we are driving service improvements that reflect both local needs and national regulatory standards.

2. Analysis of our complaint handling performance 2025-2026

Complaint Volumes

This table shows Housing Complaint volumes from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026 and a comparison with last year:

| Key Complaint Stats | 2024/25 | 2025/26 |
|--|---------|---------|
| Complaints Received at Stage 1 | 124 | 130 |
| Complaints Responded to within Timescale | 62% | 88.7% |
| Complaints escalated to Stage 2 | 17% | 22% |
| Stage 1 Complaints upheld | 47.5% | 50% |
| Ombudsman requests received: | 12 | 19 |

The increase in the percentage of complaints received compared to the previous year should not be interpreted as a failure in service delivery. Over the reporting period, the organisation has taken deliberate steps to promote, encourage and normalise complaints as a legitimate and positive form of customer feedback. This

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approach is intended to improve accessibility, transparency and trust, ensuring that tenants feel confident and supported in raising concerns when things fall short of their expectations. As a result, an increase in complaints reflects greater awareness of the complaints process and increased tenant engagement, rather than a deterioration in service standards.

Complaints provide valuable insight into service performance and play a critical role in helping the organisation identify areas for learning, improvement and service redesign.

How we compare with other local authorities:

During 2025-2026, the Council received 135 Stage 1 housing complaints across a housing stock of approximately 5,500 homes. This equates to around 25 complaints per 1,000 homes, which is below the national median reported through the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Satisfaction Measures. This indicates that a high proportion of issues continue to be resolved through normal service delivery or early action, without the need for formal complaint escalation. The Council remains committed to ensuring that tenants feel able to raise concerns and that complaints are welcomed, responded to fairly, and used as a key source of learning to improve housing services.

Across published local authority housing complaints reports, Stage 2 escalation rates commonly fall in the range of approximately 20%–30%, with lower rates often reflecting stronger early resolution and remedies at Stage 1.

There is no published national average for the proportion of Stage 1 housing complaints upheld by local authority landlords. However, analysis of published annual complaints reports across the sector indicates that Stage 1 upheld (including partially upheld) rates typically fall in the region of 40%–60%. On this basis, Redditch Borough Council's proportion of complaints upheld is in line with the range commonly reported across the sector.

A total of 20 complaints required an extension to the acceptable 20-working-day response timescale. Extensions were applied where investigations were more complex, where additional information or input was required from relevant officers or contractors, or where further issues were raised during the complaint that needed to be considered before a full response could be provided.

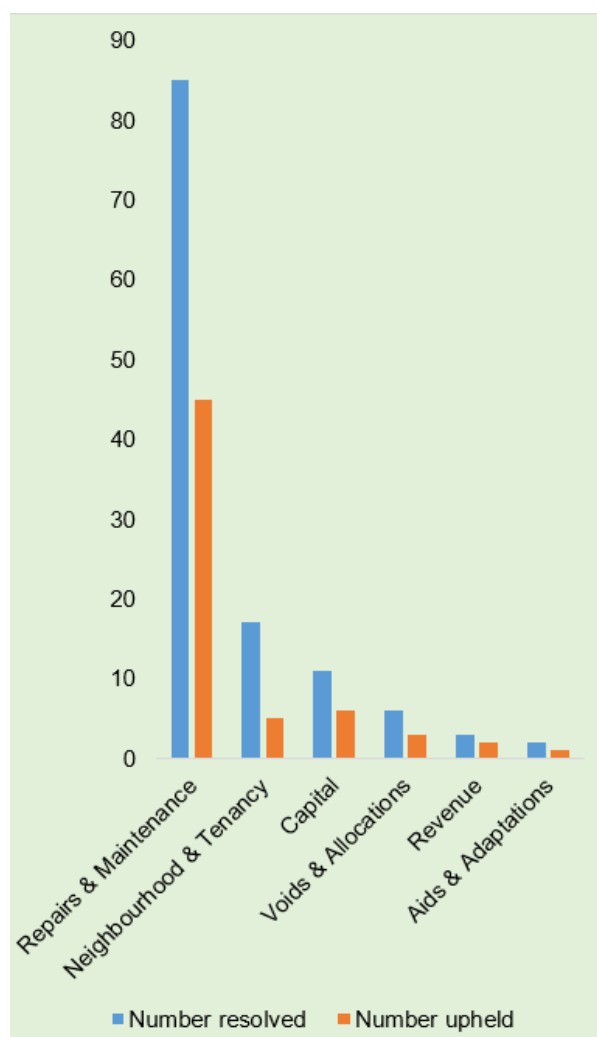
Late responses beyond the acceptable 20-working-day extension equating to 6% of complaints, were primarily associated with more complex complaints that cut across multiple service areas, requiring coordination between teams to ensure a full and accurate investigation. In addition, a small number of complaints were initially handled outside of the formal complaints process in error, which delayed escalation and formal registration. Once identified, these cases were brought back within the complaints process; however, this contributed to timescales exceeding the extended response period. Learning from these cases is being used to strengthen early

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identification of complaints and improve cross-service coordination to reduce the risk of recurrence.

Complaints Upheld - by Department

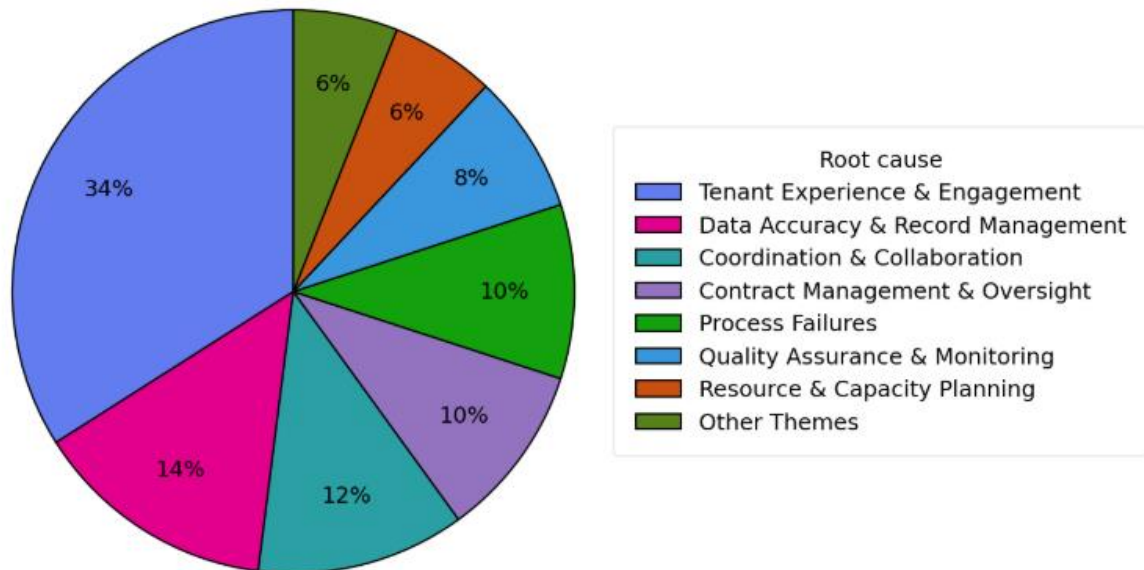
Repairs and Maintenance continue to account for the largest proportion of housing complaints, which is consistent with wider national experience across local authority landlords. This service area generates the highest level of day-to-day contact with tenants and covers issues that most directly affect residents' homes, safety and quality of life, such as heating failures, leaks, damp and mould, and delays to essential repairs. As a result, where expectations are not met or communication breaks down, concerns are more likely to escalate into formal complaints.



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Root Causes

The top root causes of complaints during 2025-2026 were:



- The most common root cause of complaints relates to poor communication with tenants, including missed call-backs, lack of updates when appointments were cancelled or delayed, and inaccurate or unclear information being provided by staff or contractors. In many cases, tenants reported frustration not because the repair itself was complex, but because they were not kept informed or felt ignored once an issue had been reported.
- A significant number of complaints arose due to incomplete, inaccurate, or missing records, including lost repair tickets, unprocessed online reports, missing notes on our IT system, or incorrect bookings. These failures often led to delays, confusion, repeat reporting by tenants, and difficulties in fully investigating complaints once escalated.
- Delays remain a key driver of dissatisfaction, particularly where follow-on works were not booked, inspections were not acted upon, or repairs were repeatedly cancelled or rescheduled. In some cases, delays were linked to staffing pressures or contractor availability, while in others they stemmed from process failures or poor coordination after the initial visit.
- Complaints frequently highlighted problems with contractor conduct, quality of work, and lack of notice, including unprofessional behaviour, damage to tenant property, inadequate protection of homes during works, and contractors attending without appropriate identification or prior notification. These issues point to the need for stronger contract management and clearer expectations when working in tenants' homes.

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- Several complaints were caused by poor coordination between internal teams or between the Council and contractors, particularly where vulnerabilities, priority needs, or safeguarding information were not shared effectively. These breakdowns sometimes resulted in inappropriate advice being given, urgency not being recognised, or residents experiencing avoidable risk or distress.

3. Learning from Complaints

The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code stipulates we must look beyond the circumstances of an individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made because of any learning from the complaint. A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes. Landlords must use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.

This year has been focused on not only capturing the learning and understanding trends, but also seeking assurance that steps have been taken to address the learning. This should not only seek to eliminate further complaints about a same occurrence but can be utilised during training and development of new staff and demonstrates continuous service improvement.

Between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026, 50 learning outcomes were recorded because of complaints that were fully or partially upheld.

We have taken clear and practical action to put things right and improve services based on what we have learned from complaints. These include:

- Improved communication standards, including reinforcing expectations around call-backs, appointment updates, and keeping tenants informed when delays occur.
- Additional staff training for Repairs scheduling teams, call handlers, and complaint handling officers, particularly around customer care, vulnerability awareness, and safe advice.
- Strengthened record-keeping controls, including retaining repair tickets, improving case notes, and investigating failures where reports were not actioned.
- Process reviews and changes to ensure follow-on works are booked correctly, cancelled works are recorded promptly, and repeat failures are avoided.
- Enhanced contractor management, including direct feedback to contractors, reaffirmation of expected standards, and action taken where behaviour or quality fell below expectations.

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- System-based improvements, such as alerts for vulnerable households and dispersed units, clearer job ticket wording, and improved access to accurate technical information for staff.
- Increased management oversight, with recurring issues reviewed in team meetings, learning logged formally, and actions tracked to completion.

Complaints have directly informed service improvements during the year. Feedback from residents has led to clearer communication standards, stronger record-keeping, improved coordination between teams and contractors, and increased focus on vulnerability awareness. These changes demonstrate how complaints are being used positively to improve services and prevent repeat issues.

Complaint performance is presented to the Portfolio Holder for Housing quarterly and included within the Housing Performance Quarterly report to Executive Committee, to enable regular oversight for Councillors on our performance and identified learnings.

4. Housing Ombudsman Determinations received 2025-2026

A Housing Ombudsman determination is the outcome of an independent investigation carried out by the Housing Ombudsman Service after a complaint has exhausted the landlord's internal complaints process. The determination sets out whether maladministration, service failure or no fault has been found, explains the Ombudsman's reasoning, and may include orders or recommendations requiring the landlord to act or make improvements.

Two Housing Ombudsman Determinations were received during 2025-2026.

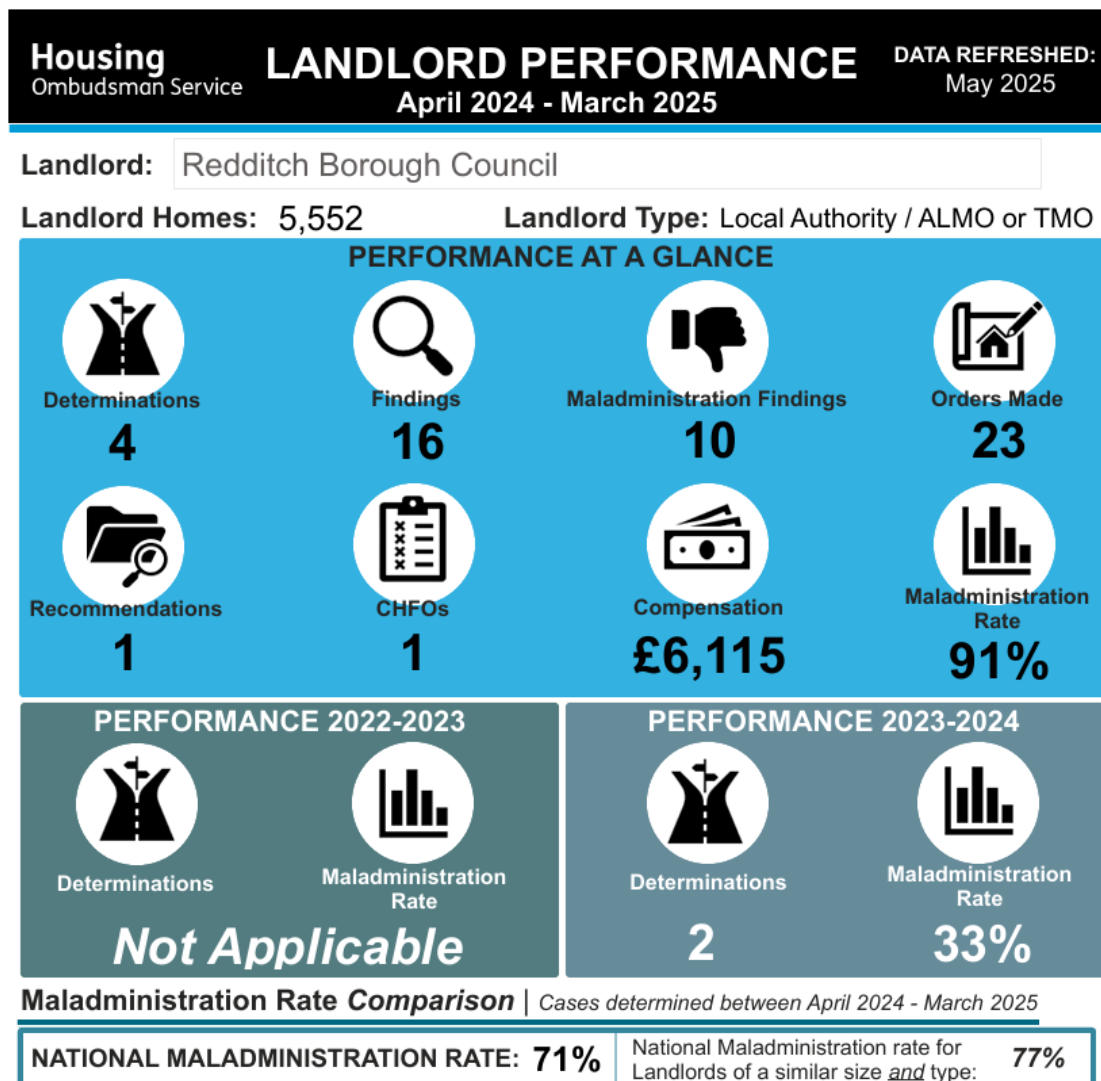
- The Housing Ombudsman issued one determination finding maladministration in the Council's handling of reports of damp and mould and in its complaint handling. The Ombudsman identified delays in addressing the underlying causes of damp and mould, as well as failures in communication and in using the complaints process effectively to put matters right. The Council was ordered to issue a senior management apology, carry out further inspections and repairs, and pay a total of £800 compensation, comprising £600 for distress and inconvenience relating to the damp and mould and £200 for complaint handling failures. The Council has complied with all orders and has used the findings to strengthen services and embed learning to improve outcomes for residents.
- The Housing Ombudsman issued a determination finding maladministration in the Council's handling of reports of damp and mould, related structural repairs, reasonable adjustments, and complaint handling. The Ombudsman identified failures to adequately investigate and address damp and mould, delays in completing associated repairs, and shortcomings in coordinating adaptations and managing issues affecting communal areas. The

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Ombudsman also found that aspects of the complaint handling process did not fully comply with the Complaint Handling Code. The Council was ordered to issue a written apology, commission an independent damp survey, review accessibility and adaptations at the property, confirm completion of outstanding repairs, support an insurance claim for damaged belongings, and pay a total of £2,200 in compensation for distress, inconvenience, time and trouble. The Council was also required to review its complaints procedure to ensure compliance with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code. All findings have been used to inform service improvements and strengthen processes to improve outcomes for residents.

5. Ombudsman: Landlord Performance Report 2024-2025

Individual landlord performance reports are published each Autumn, for landlords with 5 or more cases determined within a full financial year. We have received the Landlord Performance Report for Redditch Borough Council for 2024-25:

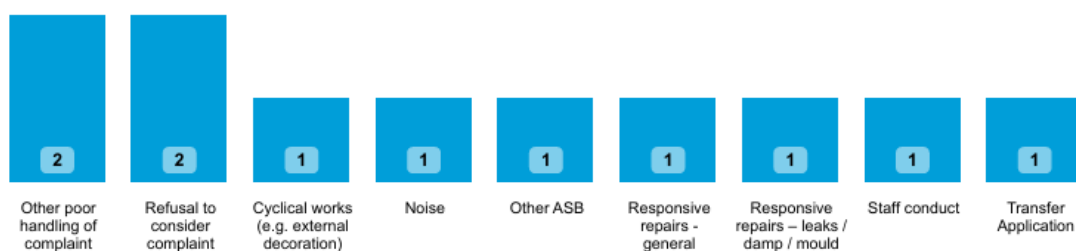


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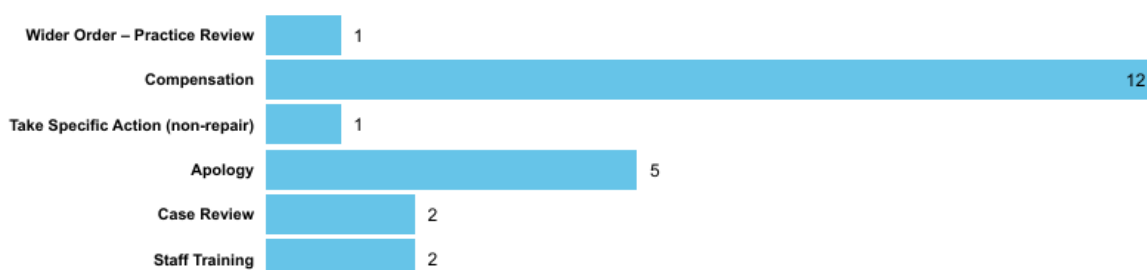
Landlord Findings by Category | Cases determined between April 2024 - March 2025 Table 2.3

| Category | Severe Maladministration | Maladministration | Service failure | Mediation | Redress | No maladministration | Outside Jurisdiction | Withdrawn | Total |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------|----------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Complaints Handling | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Property Condition | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Anti-Social Behaviour | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Moving to a Property | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| Occupancy Rights | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Staff | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 3 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 16 |

Top Sub-Categories | Cases determined between April 2024 - March 2025 Table 3.5



Orders Made by Type | Orders on cases determined between April 2024 - March 2025 Table 4.1



During the 2024–2025 reporting period, the Housing Ombudsman made four determinations relating to Redditch Borough Council, resulting in 16 findings across a small number of cases. These findings primarily related to complaints handling, property condition, and anti-social behaviour, which are areas that commonly feature in Ombudsman casework across the sector.

The Ombudsman identified instances of maladministration and severe maladministration, particularly where there were delays, communication failures, or weaknesses in how complaints were handled or followed up. While the number of cases investigated was low relative to the size of the housing stock (5,552 homes), the findings highlighted the importance of consistent processes, accurate record-keeping, and effective communication with tenants, especially where issues are complex or prolonged.

Importantly, the Council fully complied with all 23 Housing Ombudsman orders, achieving a 100% compliance rate within required timescales. Orders included apologies, compensation payments, case reviews, procedural reviews, and staff training. This demonstrates the Council's commitment to putting things right for residents and responding constructively to independent scrutiny. Learning from these

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cases has been actively used to inform service improvements, strengthen complaint handling, and reduce the risk of repeat failings.

Performance in context – comparison with national averages

The Housing Ombudsman reviewed a small number of complaints about the Council between April 2024 and March 2025. In those cases, the Ombudsman found that service failings occurred more frequently than is typically seen nationally. As a result, the Council's maladministration rate for these determinations was higher than both the national average and the average for local authority landlords of a similar size.

It is important to view these figures in context. The Ombudsman's assessment is based on a very limited number of cases, meaning that individual cases have a disproportionate impact on the overall results. The findings do not represent the standard of day-to-day service provided across the Council's wider housing stock but instead highlight specific failures within a small number of more complex cases that escalated to formal determination.

Across the sector, local authorities tend to record higher maladministration rates than housing associations, reflecting the complexity of services delivered, the condition and age of stock, and the broader responsibilities councils hold. Nevertheless, the Council acknowledges that the findings point to areas requiring improvement, particularly in relation to complaint handling, record-keeping, communication, and the management of cases that span multiple service areas.

The Council has responded constructively to the Ombudsman's findings. All Ombudsman orders were complied with in full and within required timescales and learning from these cases has been embedded into service improvement activity. This approach reflects the Council's commitment to transparency, accountability, and using complaint outcomes to strengthen services and improve the experience of tenants.

How to contact the Housing Ombudsman Service

The best way to get complaints resolved is to contact us directly. We have a procedure in place to ensure that your complaint is dealt with effectively.

However, you are able to contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at any point for independent help and advice.

If you have exhausted our Complaint Procedure and you remain dissatisfied, you are able to refer your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service. The details for the Housing Ombudsman Service are as follows:

You view their website at <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/> where you can find their online complaint form.

You can call the Housing Ombudsman Service on: 0300 111300.

You can write to them at: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

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6. 2025/26 Annual Self-assessment

We are required to publish the mandatory self-assessment of our Housing Complaints Policy against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code to ensure that it remains in line with their requirements. This is a positive experience and ensures the Council is meeting its statutory requirements and provides quality services to our tenants.

Following completion of the annual Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code self-assessment for 2025-26, we can confirm our Housing Complaints Policy is fully compliant with all provisions of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

This reflects the strength of the Council's complaints framework, the robustness of our policies and procedures, and the commitment of officers to handling complaints fairly, transparently and within required timescales. Full compliance provides assurance to tenants, elected members and the regulator that complaints are managed in line with statutory expectations and supports a positive complaint-handling culture that values learning and service improvement.

This achievement builds on the progress made during the year and provides a strong foundation for continued improvement and tenant confidence in our complaints process.

The Annual Self-assessment for 2026 along with the Housing Services Complaints Standard 2025 will be available and can be found at:

<https://www.redditchbc.gov.uk/residents/my-home/housing-complaint-or-enquiry/i-am-a-council-tenant>

7. Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard requires all registered providers to generate and report tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs) as specified by the regulator. The central aims of the TSMs are to provide tenants with greater transparency about their landlord's performance and inform the regulator about how a landlord is complying with consumer standards.

We are required to provide TSMs generated from management information for housing complaints data for the full period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026.

This year's TSM measures for CH01 and CH02 are as follows:

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TSM measure CH01 Complaints relative to the size of the landlord (based on housing stock of 5541) as follows:

- 1) 22.54 Stage 1 complaints per 1000 homes (2024-25 was 22.37)
- 2) 4.54 Stage 2 complaints per 1000 homes (2024-25 was 3.79)

TSM measure CH02 Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales as follows:

- 1) 88.7% Stage 1 responses responded within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescale. (2024-25 was 62%)
- 2) 92% Stage 2 responses responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescale. (2024-25 was 80%)

This indicated that performance against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code has improved significantly during 2025-2026, demonstrating the impact of focused work to strengthen complaint handling arrangements across the service.

Responses issued within the Complaint Handling Code timescales increased markedly at both stages of the complaints process. At Stage 1, 88.7% of complaints were responded to within the required timescale, representing a substantial improvement from 62% in 2024–25. This reflects stronger triage arrangements, clearer ownership of complaints, and improved monitoring to ensure deadlines are met.

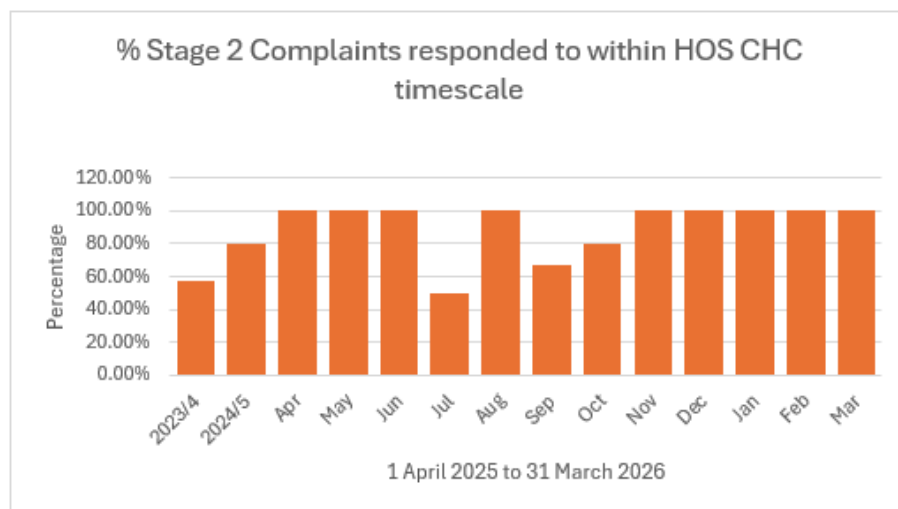
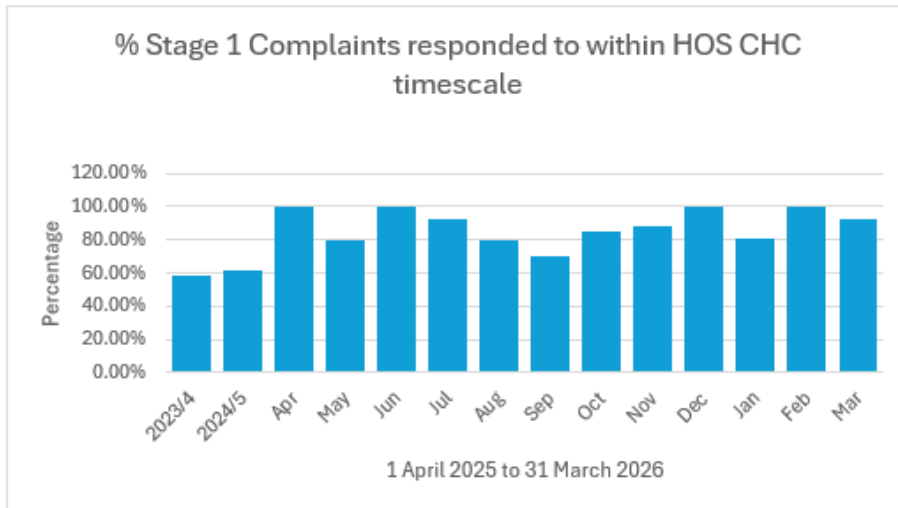
Similarly, performance at Stage 2 improved to 92% of responses issued within timescales, compared with 80% in the previous year. This improvement shows greater consistency in the escalation process and more effective oversight of complex cases requiring senior review.

While complaint volumes per 1,000 homes have increased slightly at both stages, the Council has demonstrated a much stronger ability to respond promptly and in line with the Housing Ombudsman's requirements. This improvement provides greater assurance to tenants that complaints are taken seriously, handled fairly, and resolved in a timely manner.

Maintaining compliance with the Complaint Handling Code remains a key priority. The progress made during 2025–26 provides a strong platform for continued improvement and reflects a positive shift towards a more responsive, resident-focused complaints culture.

The graph below shows the percentage of complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman code requirements per month, including the years figures for 2023/24 and 2024/25 for comparison.

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8. Tenant Engagement

During 2025–26, we began the development of a dedicated Tenant Engagement Team as part of our wider commitment to placing tenants at the heart of service improvement. This new approach recognises the importance of listening to customers, understanding lived experience, and involving tenants more meaningfully in shaping housing services.

The Tenant Engagement Team will provide a clear and consistent framework for how tenants can influence decisions, share feedback, and participate in service reviews. This includes opportunities to be involved in shaping policies, reviewing performance information such as complaints and Tenant Satisfaction Measures, and contributing to service improvement initiatives.

By strengthening tenant engagement, we aim to ensure that feedback is gathered proactively rather than only through complaints, helping us to identify issues earlier and design services that better reflect tenant priorities. The team will also support clearer communication and help close the feedback loop, so tenants can see how their views have informed change.

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Residents are encouraged to get involved in the Tenant Engagement Team in a way that suits them, whether through forums, surveys, task-and-finish groups or other engagement activities. Participation does not require previous experience – only a willingness to share views and help improve services for the wider community.

As the Tenant Engagement Team becomes established, it will play a key role in supporting transparency, accountability and continuous improvement. We believe that working in partnership with tenants will strengthen trust, improve outcomes, and contribute to better housing services for all residents.

A new Tenant Engagement Policy has been drafted ready to be agreed by our Executive Committee in June 2026. This Policy will be reviewed as one of the first tasks for the Tenant Panels when they are up and running later this year. The Panels will then set to work on developing our Tenant Experience Strategy, which will further enhance our commitment to having the tenants voice at the heart of all our decision making.

If you would like to influence decisions, share your experiences and help improve housing services, we encourage you to join our Tenant Panels. To register your interest you can complete a short online form found at <https://www.redditchbc.gov.uk/residents/my-home/renting-and-home-tenancy/shaping-your-housing-services/>. Alternatively, you can email the team at neighbourhood.tenancy@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk or call the duty line on 01527 587000 where one of our officers will be happy to take your details.

Conclusion

Overall, 2025–26 represents a year of meaningful progress in the Council's handling of housing complaints. There has been a significant improvement in response times at both stages of the complaints process, alongside stronger compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. While complaint volumes increased slightly, this reflects improved accessibility and trust in the complaints process rather than a decline in service standards. Complaints have continued to provide valuable insight into service pressures, particularly within Repairs and Maintenance, and have been used constructively to drive learning and improvement.

Looking ahead, the focus for 2026-27 will be on embedding a positive complaint-handling culture, strengthening early resolution, improving communication at every stage of the customer journey, and ensuring learning from complaints leads to measurable and sustained service improvements. The development of enhanced tenant engagement arrangements will further support this work, ensuring that tenant voices are heard not only through complaints, but through wider service design and scrutiny.

The Council remains committed to listening to residents, learning from concerns, and using complaints as a powerful tool to improve services, strengthen trust, and ensure that tenants live in safe, well-managed, and well-maintained homes.