



# **Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report**

**1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025**

## **Response to the report from Cllr Tracey Carter – Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)**

I hope that you read the Annual complaints performance and service improvement report with interest and note the considerable work we have undertaken in the last 12 months.

Complaint numbers have increased, not due to increased dissatisfaction, but due to an immense shift in culture and attitude our department now has towards complaints. We welcome them, we encourage them, and we want to enact change and improvements based on them to prevent negative experiences for other tenants and residents. The complaints journey is now a more positive experience for you, and I want to ensure that you feel heard through every step of it.

Throughout the report, you will also see other improvements we have made to all departments within housing, such as repairs and maintenance. You will continue to see improvements across the service throughout our Transformation programme.

Please also take a look through the "You Said, We Did" section so you can see at a glance some of the specific changes we have implemented as a direct result of your feedback. This section highlights how your voices have translated into tangible improvements to our services.

Thank you to those who have complained and played your part in improving the service. Please continue to raise your issues and concerns so we can continue to make your service better for you.

**Cllr Tracey Carter**

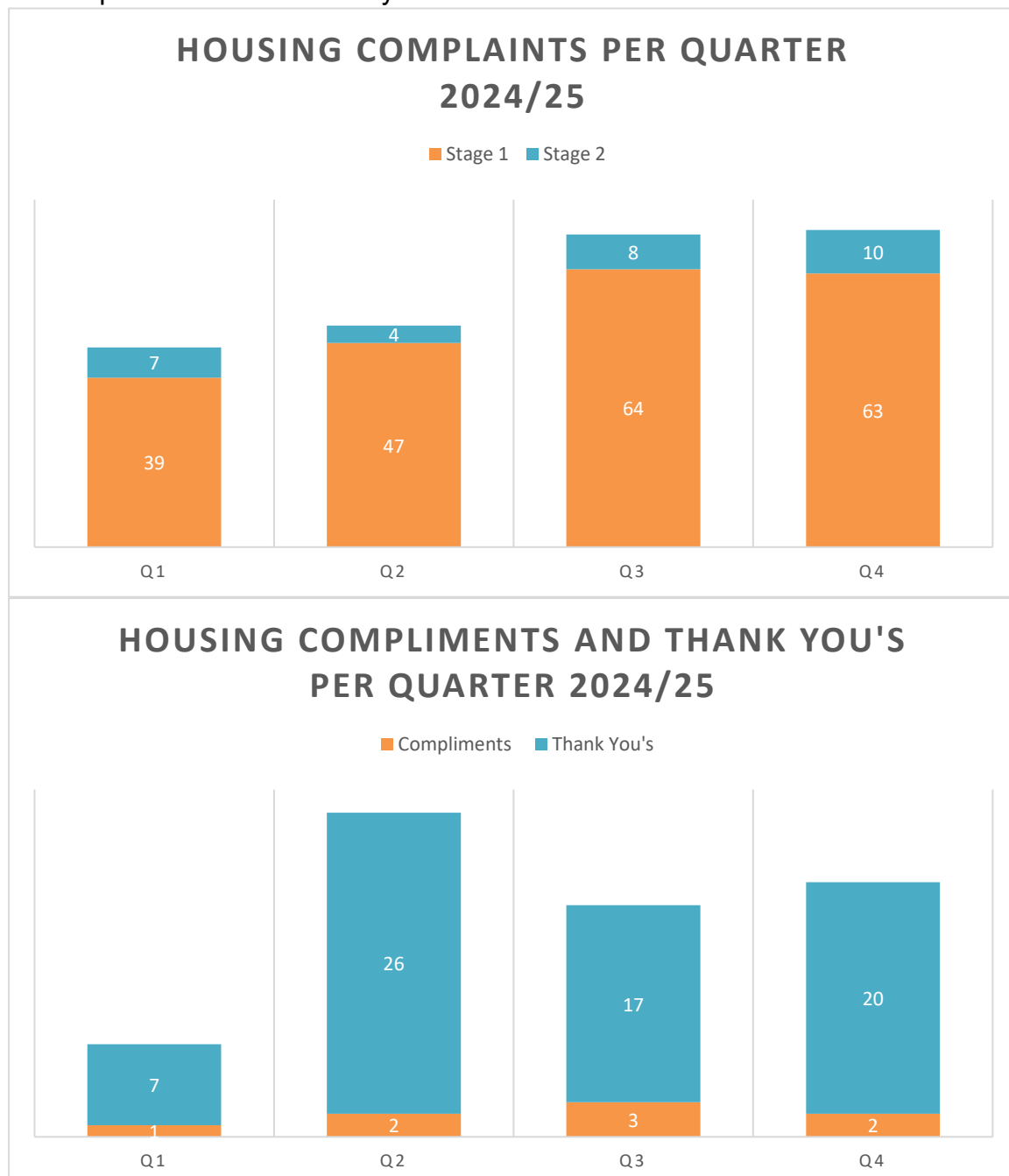
**Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Operational Housing**

## 2024/2025 Performance

South Holland District Council recognises that complaints are a valuable opportunity to gain feedback, learn and improve services. The Council is committed to providing a positive and proactive response to complaints and encourages feedback so that positive action can be taken.

The Complaints process comprises a two-stage internal process. Stage one complaints which are dealt with by Service Managers and stage two complaints where a Director or Assistant Director reviews the stage one response. Where a complainant remains dissatisfied with the Council's response, they can refer the matter for independent review by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or Housing Ombudsman.

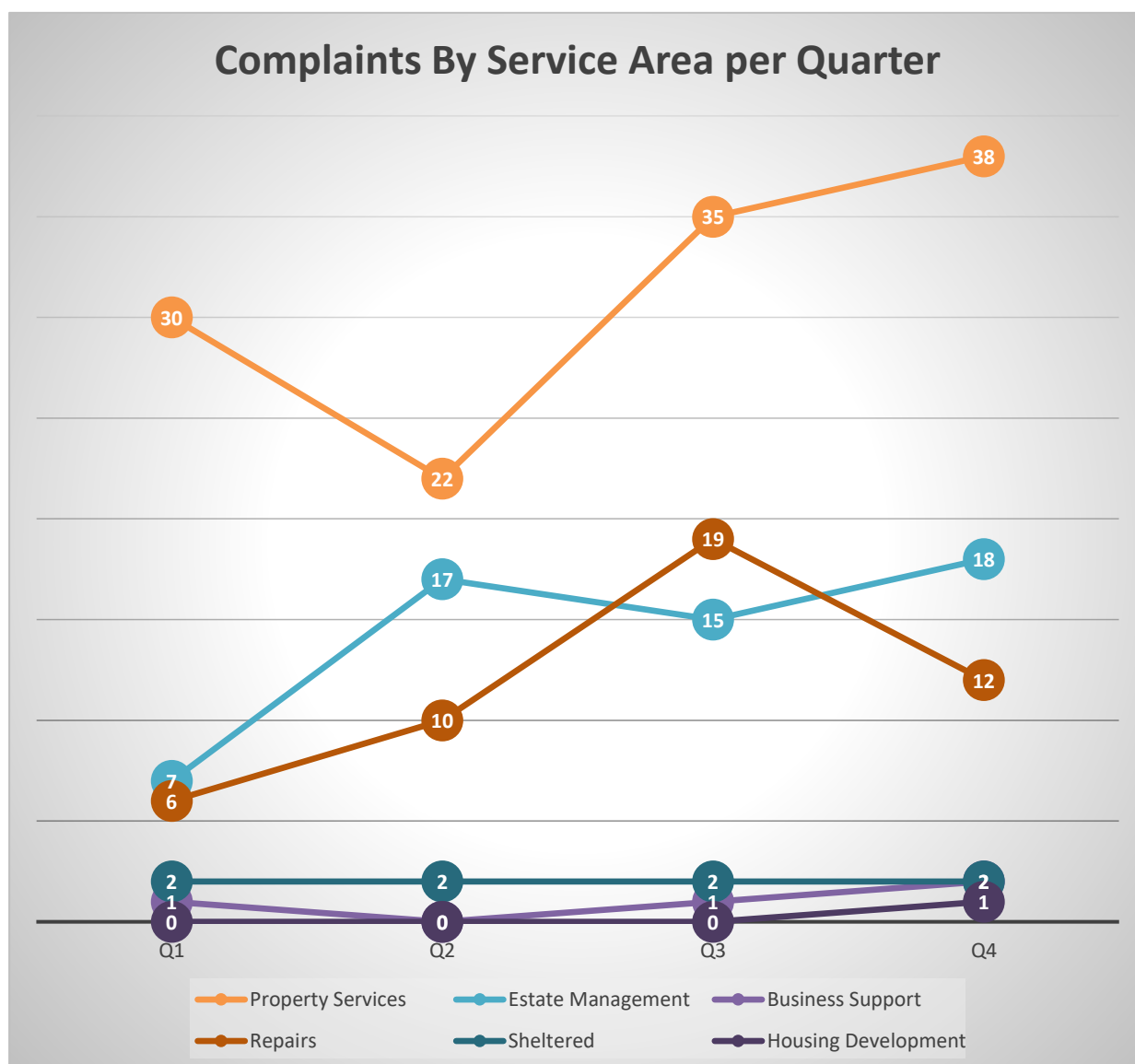
In 2024/25, the Housing department received 242 formal complaints from customers, 8 compliments and 70 thank you's.



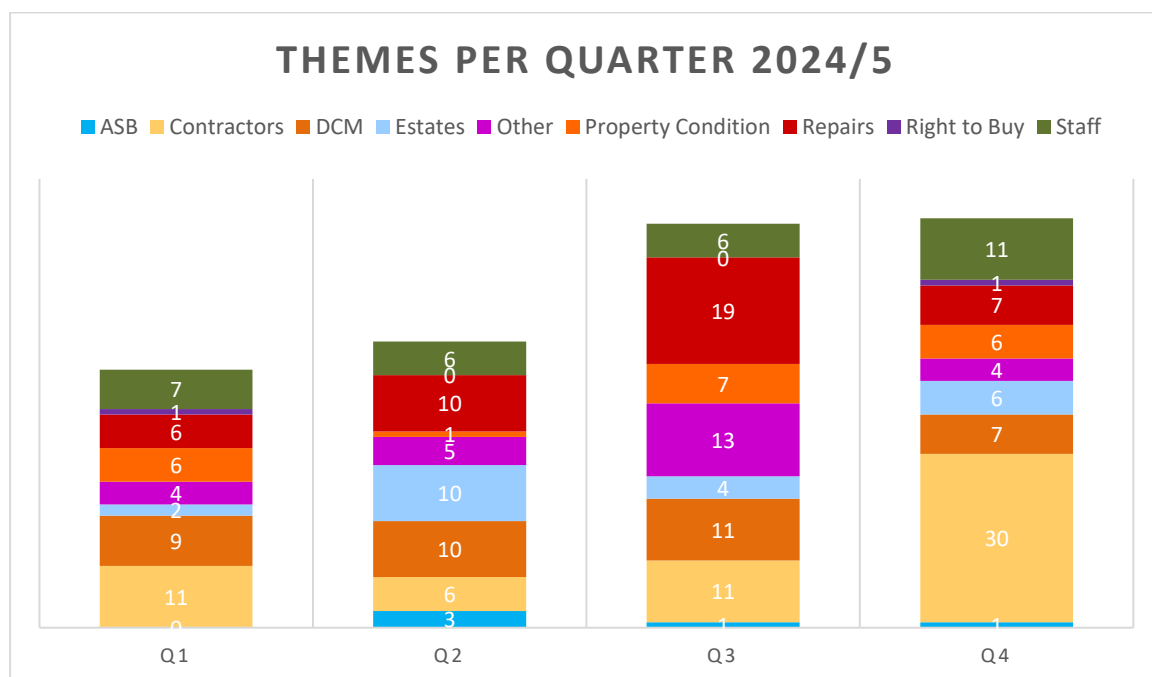
## Complaints by Service Area

Of the formal complaints received from customers in 2024/25, 125 of these relate to Property Services, followed by Estate Management with 57. Complaints relating to Property Services as a service area were 51.65% of total complaints received in Housing for 2024/25. The breakdown of these complaints by Service Area is shown below.

*Note – Property Services handle planned maintenance and safety checks for homes, including upgrades to kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems, and annual checks for fire, Legionella, asbestos, gas, and electric safety. The repairs service addresses reactive maintenance, such as tenant-reported repairs.*



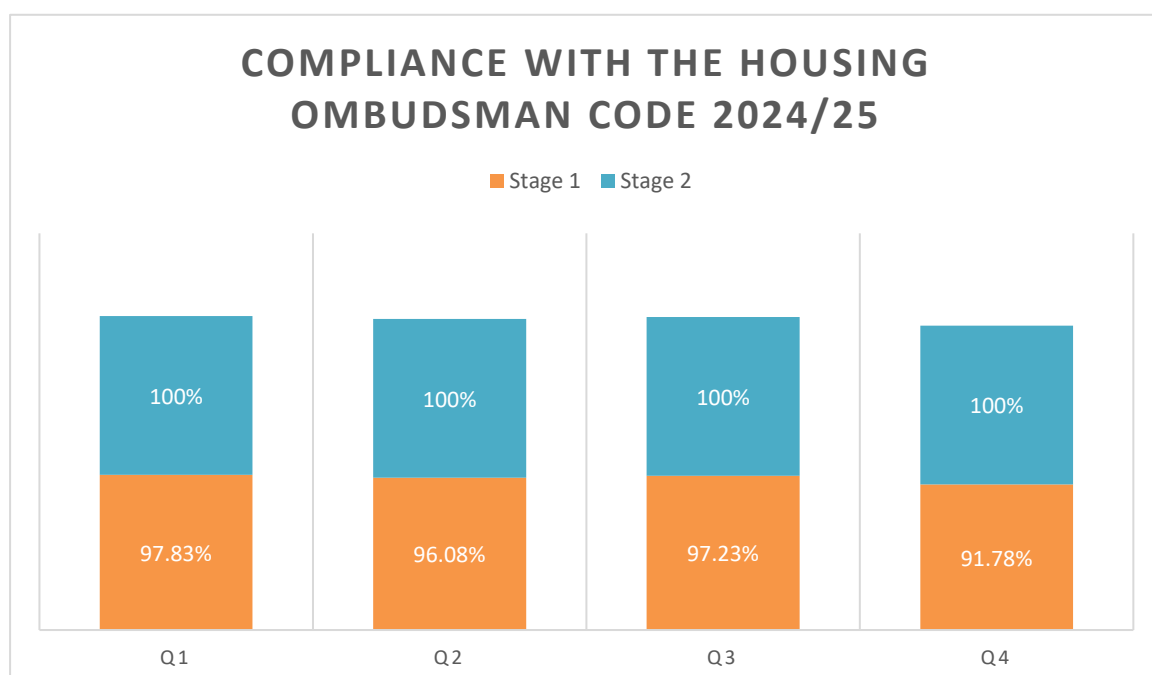
## Theme Analysis of Housing Complaints



## Compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Code

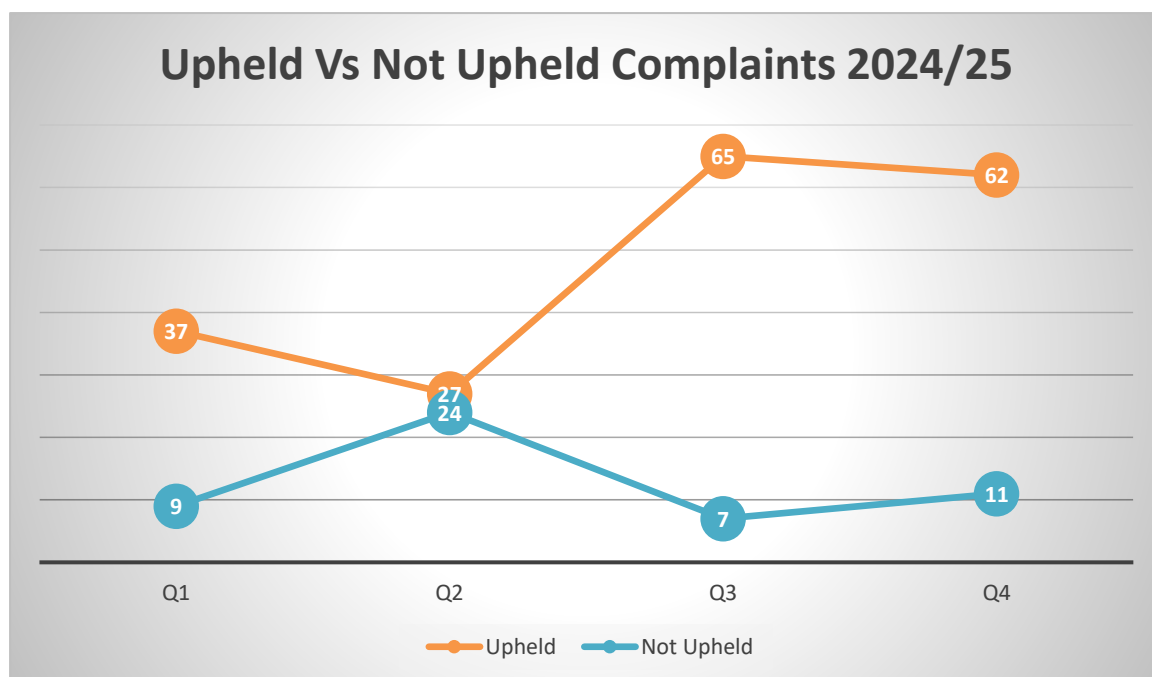
In 2024/25, the Housing department as landlord received 242 formal complaints from tenants, 213 of those were Stage 1, and 29 of those were escalated to Stage 2.

During 2024/25 the Council responded to 94.84% of stage 1 complaints and 100% of all stage 2 complaints in the timescales set out in our policy as demonstrated in the graph below.



## Complaints upheld or partially upheld

Of the 242 formal complaints received this year in Housing from tenants 191 of these have been upheld or partially upheld by the service. This equates to 78.93% of all housing complaints being upheld. This leaves 51 remaining complaints as not upheld. The amount of upheld vs not upheld complaints is demonstrated per quarter in the graph below.



During 2024/25 the Council's Housing Team did a lot of work promoting our complaints service to tenants and encouraging them to complain if they needed to. As a service we try to resolve any complaints at the earliest opportunity.

Information about the Council's Complaints Policy and process, and the ways in which complaints can be made is included on the Council's website.

Information about making a complaint is on the Council's [main website](#).

The webpages include information on:

- Complaints policy and process including how to make complaint
- Referring to Ombudsman Services
- Access to corporate complaint forms
- How to raise regulatory concerns (housing) and designated officers for health and safety, and consumer standards (and their deputies).

## Analysis of Complaints Upheld

We have undertaken analysis of all complaints in Housing that have been upheld this year and these are set out below that specifically relate to our landlord function:

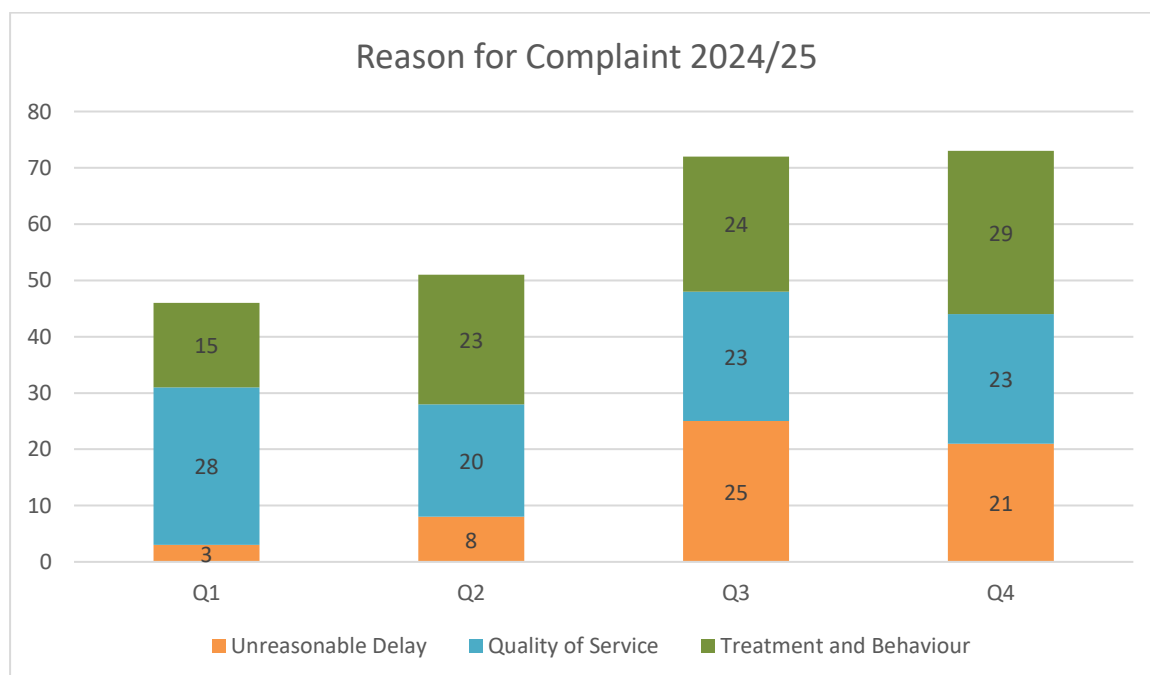
- **Improve Communication:** Many of the upheld complaints cite lack of

communication as a reason for dissatisfaction. Implementing better communication protocols between staff and residents/customers as well as contractors can help manage expectations and keep both parties informed throughout the process. This may include regular updates on repair status, clear explanations of procedures, and providing avenues for clients to easily reach out with concerns or inquiries.

- **Regular Monitoring and Feedback:** Establishing regular monitoring mechanisms to review tenant satisfaction can help identify issues early on and proactively address them. Additionally, seeking feedback from tenants about their experiences with repairs and communication can provide valuable insights for continuous improvements.
- **Enhanced Contractor Management:** Several complaints mention delays due to issues with contractors, such as cancellations or lack of commitment. Regular contractor meetings have been implemented to set out our expectation.
- **Streamline Repair Processes:** Complaints about delays in repairs highlight potential inefficiencies in repair processes. Conducting a thorough review of repair workflows, identifying bottlenecks, and implementing measures to streamline processes can help expedite repairs and reduce client dissatisfaction. We will look at the repairs customer journey with the team as part of the ongoing corporate customer journey review. Add some word

## Why were these formal complaints made?

In terms of the 242 complaints received in 2024/25, there are three main themes as to why our customers were not satisfied with the service we provided and made a complaint to the Council. These are shown below with the quality of service being the main reason cited followed by treatment and behaviour of tenants. This includes complaints about external contractors that carry out work on behalf of South Holland District Council.



## Service Improvements following complaints

### Looking to the future – changes to better manage the complaints process

There are a number of actions that have stemmed from complaints, including:

Issue	Resolution
<i>1. Contractors identified as a key theme for complaints</i>	In order to resolve this, regular meetings have been scheduled with Contractors to ensure works raised are completed in line with deadlines and tenants are always treated with respect and fairness
<i>Varying quality of complaint responses at Stage 1, leading to an increase of Stage 2 escalations</i>	The Lead Officer responsible for Complaints spot checks responses per 5 complaints to ensure that the quality of the contents is up to standard.
<i>No data available to see if complainants are satisfied with the complaint handling procedure</i>	A feedback survey is now sent to all tenants that submit a complaint, including questions that determine their satisfaction with the service provided, and whether they felt communication was sufficient throughout the process. Responses indicate that tenants feel listened to and treated with fairness and with respect, where tenants indicate that where they are dissatisfied that there is correlation in escalations to stage 2. We will continue to monitor responses.
<i>Stage 2 complaints increase due to actions agreed at Stage 1 not being followed up on</i>	An internal action tracker has been created to update with complaint-led actions, regularly monitored by managers.
<i>Increase of Complaints, Compliments and feedback received by Housing</i>	A dedicated Complaints Coordinator has been introduced as of December 2024 to manage administration and acknowledgement of complaints, compliments or feedback.
<i>Equality and Diversity of complaints not recorded</i>	The internal complaints procedure now includes the checking of vulnerabilities and reasonable adjustments, tracking nationality and ethnicity to identify barriers



## You said, we did

Issue	Resolution
Failings identified with current Aids and Adaptations process revealed through Stage 1 Complaint	Changes to the Aids and Adaptations process has been introduced based on key failings outlined in previous process, and taking into consideration tenant feedback. As part of the project the process is continuing to be developed.
Increase of DCM complaints received via housing complaints	Dedicated DCM Triage officer resource, with independent email and telephone number created so that tenants can directly report DCM through this channel. We have also improved our triage process with Customer Contact.
Survey results from tenants showing they felt a lack of communication throughout complaint process	Implemented additional phone calls to complainant before response is sent, and an implementation of a call prior to acknowledgement being sent to explain the complaint process and who will be their point of contact for the handling of the complaint
Tenants in Sheltered Housing raised they would like more support and presence at their sheltered sites	An independent living team was introduced to visit all new tenants to welcome them to sheltered housing, and provide them with up to date information of the service, and identify areas of support required.
Tenant feedback stated that some of the letters and correspondence sent out is confusing and have difficulty reading and interpreting letters	We are working closely with our tenants to ask for their assistance in proofing our letters and documents before we send them out. From this, we have made the complaint response letters more accessible based on the feedback we have received.
Tenants unsure of who their Housing Officer is	All Housing Officers are delivering contact leaflets giving tenant information on who and how to contact their Housing Officer.
Complaints from bereaved families about the lack of support and compassion during the process of handling the property of deceased council tenants	We engaged with affected families to understand their experiences. We implemented changes including allocating dedicated officers for regular communication, training staff in grief support, and providing comprehensive resources on our website. These measures aim to ensure a more empathetic and supportive approach for future bereaved families.

## **Housing Ombudsman**

**Any findings of non-compliance with the Code by the HO.**

None.

**Actions following any annual report about our performance from the HO.**

Not applicable.

**Actions following any other relevant reports or publications produced by the HO in relation to our work.**

One case review by Housing Ombudsman, Maladministration found around Decant Procedure. Following the review an apology by senior management was made face to face, letter to follow visit, review of the decant procedure including an appendix with an inventory for staff to use in future incidents of this nature and compensation paid direct to the tenant.