



Castle Point Borough Council

**Annual Housing Complaints
Performance and Service
Improvements Report
2025/26**

**Lead Member and Member body responsible for monitoring implementation of the
action plan:** Cllr Robert Lillis, Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Housing

Annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report 2025-2026

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report is an annual requirement of Housing Ombudsman Service. The Social Housing (Regulations) Act 2023 empowered the Housing Ombudsman to issue a code of practice about how social landlords should deal with complaints.
- 1.2 Landlords are required to share performance details on the complaints they receive and to make improvements to their services as a result of learning from the mistakes. We are also required to complete a self-assessment on how we are meeting the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code (the Code) each year. You can read more about the Housing Ombudsman Service on their website www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- 1.3 This report sets out an overview of the complaints we received between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, It looks in detail at the complaints that were made and how we dealt with them. It also sets out the improvements we have made and will take to ensure we improve the way in which we handle complaints. It will highlight what we have learnt through the complaints we have received to improve our services.

2. Complaint Summary

- 2.1. A clear complaints process is now in place, and full guidance on how tenants can submit a complaint is publicly available on our website. We have also introduced multiple routes for tenants to report dissatisfaction, ensuring the process is accessible to a wider audience. Complaints can now be submitted online, by email, by telephone, in writing, or in person, making it easier for all residents to raise concerns in a way that suits their needs.
- 2.2. Housing Complaints are managed by the Senior Leaseholder and Customer Relations Officer, and the Customer Relations Officer. These post's were recruited in February 2025 following the Housing Service's review. The team completes a triage of every complaint received, establishes a direct relationship with the tenant, and manages each case from start to finish, including any follow-up actions required after the formal response. The officer also remains involved where repairs or additional actions are still outstanding, ensuring continuity and consistent support for the tenant throughout the process.
- 2.3. Housing Complaints operate a two-stage complaints process in line with our Housing Complaints Policy and Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code, which defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of a service, actions, or lack of action by the Council or those acting on its behalf. The Policy ensures a clear and consistent approach to handling complaints, with all cases initially reviewed at stage 1 and escalated to stage 2 if the resident remains dissatisfied. This structured process provides transparency, accountability, and a clear route for residents to have their concerns formally considered and resolved.

3. Complaint Overview

- 3.1. Between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, the Housing Service received 153 stage 1 complaints, with 35 of these escalated to stage two. Two complaints were refused.
- 3.2 The table below shows the number of all complaints reported and the number escalated to stage 2 of the complaints procedure:

Year	Stage 1	Stage 2	Escalation Rate
2024-25	47	6	12.5%
2025-26	153	35	22.8%

- 3.3 We have seen significant growth in the number of complaints logged, increasing from 47 in 2024–25 to 153 in 2025–26. This rise reflects the introduction of the new complaints procedure and the improvements made to how complaints are recognised and recorded. Staff are now better equipped to identify when an issue should be treated as a formal complaint, ensuring concerns are logged appropriately rather than managed informally. As a result, more complaints are being captured accurately and transparently, providing a clearer picture of resident feedback and service performance.
- 3.4 During 2025–26, 153 stage 1 complaints were received, of which 98 were upheld. At stage 2, 35 complaints were investigated and 23 were upheld. A total of £8,725 in compensation was issued across 38 complaints.

4. Response Times

- 4.1. In line with the Housing Ombudsman’s Code and our Complaints Policy we are required to meet the following targets:
- Acknowledgement to be sent 5 days after receipt of complaint.
 - Stage 1 response to be sent 10 days after acknowledgement.
 - Stage 2 response to be sent 20 days after escalation.
- 4.2 This table shows our performance for complaint response times:

Year	Acknowledgement (target 95%)	Stage 1 (target 80%)	Stage 2 (target 85%)
2025-25	58.3%	64.6%	66.7%
2025-26	96%	88%	77%

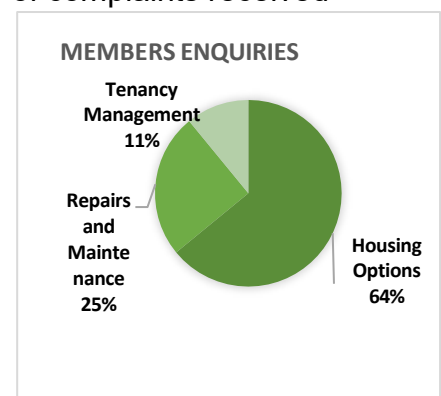
- 4.3 We have seen an increase in response times to tenants’ complaints, which reflects the introduction of a more robust and structured process. The newly established Housing Customer Relations Team now oversees and quality-checks all responses in collaboration with the relevant service managers, ensuring consistency and accuracy. In addition, the Customer Care system provides automated prompts to chase outstanding responses, strengthening oversight and improving the overall management of complaint handling.
- 4.4 A formal response provides residents with a clear written record of their complaint, outlining the investigation carried out, the decision reached, and any

actions agreed. It also ensures residents understand the next steps available to them should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome.

- 4.5 As part of our quality-assurance framework, monthly spot-checks are undertaken to review complaint responses and confirm that all of the issues raised have been properly acknowledged, investigated, and addressed in full.
- 4.6 Quarterly reports will be provided to senior officers and Members in 2026-27 to give regular oversight of our complaint-handling performance. All stage 2 complaints now undergo a full root cause analysis and a comprehensive lessons-learned review to identify underlying issues and drive service improvement, while stage 1 complaints have an individual root cause and lessons learnt recorded, which are reported back to the relevant service lead on a quarterly basis to highlight any emerging trends. Regular deep-dive exercises are also undertaken, particularly for complex cases involving multiple service areas, to ensure learning is maximised and embedded across the organisation.

5. Complaint Performance

- 5.1 During 2025–26 we introduced a dedicated Housing Complaints Team to oversee and manage the complaints process. This has strengthened our approach by ensuring every complaint is formally logged and handled in full accordance with the principles of the Code, including issuing formal responses within the required timescales. We have also implemented new spreadsheets and a more robust folder structure within Microsoft Teams, providing a clearer and more comprehensive system for tracking, monitoring, and managing complaints from start to finish. In addition, the new Housing Management System will incorporate a dedicated housing complaints process, further improving consistency and oversight.
- 5.2 A new Housing Complaints Policy has been developed to ensure full compliance with the Housing Ombudsman’s requirements. The updated Policy will be published online on 19 June 2026.
- 5.3 Customer feedback has highlighted that tenants do not always feel their concerns are recognised as formal complaints, and in some cases issues are being treated as service requests instead. To address this, comprehensive Complaints Training for all Housing staff commenced in Q1 2026-2027 and will continue into Q2, focusing on how to identify a complaint and to ensure that it is logged correctly in line with policy.
- 5.4 Social landlord complaints are measured by the number of complaints received for every 102 per 1,000 Council-owned properties. Last year we recorded 153 complaints per 1,000 properties, a figure that has increased significantly compared with the previous year. This rise reflects the introduction of a more robust and consistent complaints-logging process, ensuring that more issues are formally captured. We anticipate further growth as enhanced Complaints Training is rolled out to all Housing staff, improving their ability to recognise when



a concern should be logged as a complaint and ensuring it is recorded correctly.

- 5.5 We received 108 MP and Councillor enquiries over the same period. The majority of these relate to our Housing Options service and are from applicants seeking rehousing.
- 5.6 Each year we are required to carry out a tenant satisfaction survey. Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) are a set of performance indicators used by the Regulator of Social Housing to assess how well social housing providers are performing in delivering quality homes and services.
- 5.7 In 2025–2026, customer satisfaction with our handling of complaints was 26%. This represents a slight increase on the previous year, and with the recruitment of our new Engagement Team, we anticipate further improvement going forward.
- 5.8 In 2025–2026, we began completing transaction surveys with every tenant who made a complaint. This process started in Q2, and the details are set out below:

Question	Metric					Score
How easy was it: To make a complaint	Very Easy	Fairly Easy	Neither	Fairly Difficult	Very Difficult	
To make your complaint?	8	3	10	2	0	41%
Where you satisfied:	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neither	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	
That you were kept informed?	8	0	2	1	9	32%
How your complaint was handled?	8	0	2	5	10	32%
With the outcome of your complaint	6	0	1	5	13	24%

41% found it easy to make a complaint and 12.5% found it difficult to make a complaint.

32% were satisfied with how they were kept updated and 50% were dissatisfied.

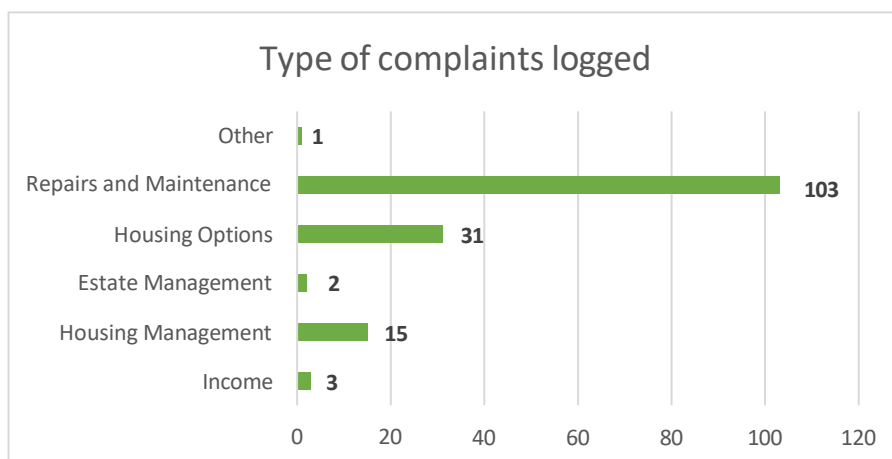
32% were satisfied with how their complaint was handled and 62% were dissatisfied.

24% were satisfied with the outcome of their complaint and 68% were dissatisfied.

- 5.9 Feedback levels have been low compared with the overall number of complaints received. This has been due to several factors, including tenants being unfamiliar with this type of engagement and that we were awaiting our new Customer Relations Team to onboard and complete their training period. In 2026-2027 we aim to complete 100% of surveys with all tenants who have needed to make a complaint, to ensure we gain a true reflection of how our tenants are feeling.

6. Complaint Themes

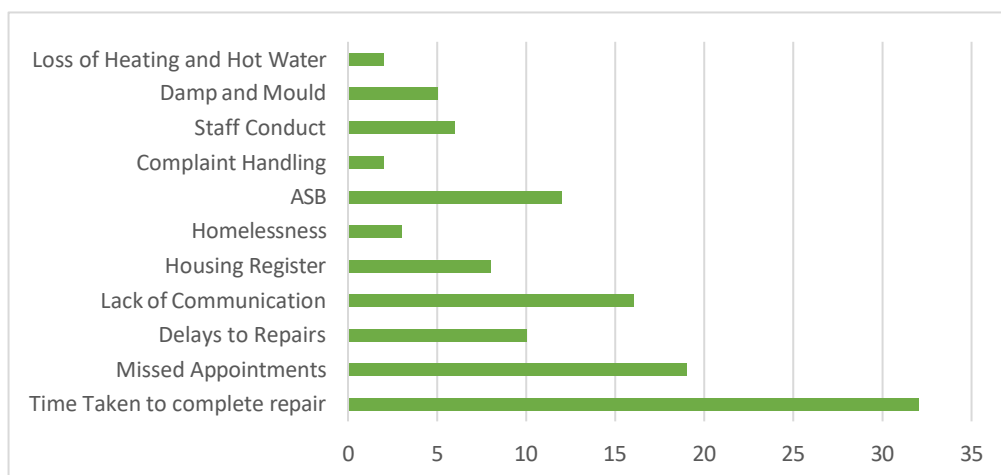
- 6.1 This table sets out the type of complaints that have been logged.



- 6.2 Part of understanding complaints is identifying which service areas they relate to and the issues raised. As expected, the majority of complaints were for our repairs and maintenance service, as this is the area most frequently used by tenants. The former repairs contractor, MCP, experienced significant operational challenges and subsequently went into administration, which led to reduced capacity and a decline in service provision. As the contract neared its end, we saw increasing failures to commit to scheduled appointments, delays in arranging visits, and instances of contractors not attending.
- 6.3 For some context, a total of 6651 repairs were raised during 2025-2026 resulting in 102 Stage 1 complaints. This equates to 1.5% of repairs raised resulting in a complaint and therefore 98.5% of repairs raised did not escalate to a complaint.

Stage 1 complaints			
	No of jobs raised	No of Stage 1 complaints	% resulted in a complaint
2025-26 Q1	1,473	21	1.4%
2025-26 Q2	1,874	26	1.4%
2025-26 Q3	1,841	33	1.8%
2025-26 Q4	1,462	23	1.5%

- 6.4 Complaint Training for all Housing staff and our main repairs contractor will ensure that going forward all complaints are formally recognised and acknowledged as such. This will enable us to identify common areas of concerns and to review our services and delivery of services to ensure a better customer experience for those with concerns.
- 6.5 We also looked at what the issues have been about. This enables us to carry out a deep dive to identify trends and areas of concerns. We have identified three main areas of concern from this year's complaints.



- 6.5.1 **Time Taken to Complete Repair's** We identified a number of complaints relating to the time taken to complete repairs, largely due to the breakdown of our previous contractor, MCP, which resulted in repairs not being completed within the required SLA. With our new contractor onboarding in April 2026, we anticipate a reduction in these types of complaints as service performance stabilises and improves.
- 6.5.2 **Lack of Communication** We recognise that tenants were not always being informed or kept up to date, largely due to the absence of a dedicated Customer Relations Team. This has now been addressed, with a new team recruited in February 2026. All tenants now have a named point of contact, every complaint receives a full triage, and residents are kept updated throughout the duration of their complaint.
- 6.5.3 **Missed Appointments** – We identified that tenants were raising complaints about missed repair appointments, which, as noted above, was largely due to the breakdown of our previous contractor, MCP. With our new contractor, Wates, mobilising in April 2026, we expect to see a marked improvement in appointment attendance and a reduction in these types of complaints over the coming year.

7. Housing Ombudsman

- 7.1. Throughout our complaint process, we make residents aware of their right to contact the Housing Ombudsman. They can contact them at any stage for advice and can ask that they investigate how we have handled their complaint once they have been through our complaint process.

- 7.2 During 2025-26 we received three determinations from the Housing Ombudsman.
- 7.3 **Case 1:** The resident, complaint concerned the landlord's handling of a request to be permanently rehoused, a leak and associated repairs, ongoing damp and mould, asbestos within the property, other repairs, and the associated complaint. The Ombudsman found no maladministration in relation to the rehousing request or the handling of other repairs. Maladministration was identified in the landlord's response to the leak and associated repairs, the reports of damp and mould, the asbestos issues, and the complaint handling. The landlord was ordered to complete the outstanding works order, arrange an asbestos inspection, provide a formal apology, and pay £1,150 in compensation.
- 7.4 **Case 2:** The resident complained about the landlord's handling of a flood that occurred during a boiler replacement, which caused damage to the kitchen floor and several household appliances. The Ombudsman investigated both the response to the flood and the complaint handling, finding maladministration in both areas. We the landlord was ordered to provide an apology, pay £650 in compensation, arrange an inspection of the works, and establish clear communication with the resident regarding the contractor's insurance claim.
- 7.5 **Case 3:** The resident complained about the landlord's failure to respond to reports of damp and mould and to address the underlying structural issues, The Ombudsman found maladministration in both the landlord's handling of the damp and mould and the related repairs, and in its complaint handling. We the landlord was ordered to provide an apology, pay £900 in compensation, arrange an inspection of the works, and request evidence of the resident's increased energy bills.
- 7.6 All 3 cases were reported and discussed by the HIP Board.

8. Communications

- 8.1. Communication around complaint handling had previously required improvement, as some complaints were closed prematurely, which risked tenants feeling unheard or not treated with sufficient respect. Since the appointment of the new Complaints Team, communication with tenants has improved, It has been subsequently identified that tenants were not consistently receiving this level of service prior to the team being onboarded.
- 8.2. Feedback from tenants indicates that they do not always feel their complaints are being recognised as formal complaints, and instead are being treated as issues to resolve 'in the moment' rather than being logged and managed through the appropriate complaints process.
- 8.3. The website has now been updated to include clearer information on complaints and compensation, ensuring residents are better informed about their rights to make a complaint, how it will be handled, and whether it may be considered for compensation.
- 8.4. Housing Ombudsman determinations are also published on our website.

9. Learnings

- 9.1. It is crucial for us to learn from complaints and identify areas where we can improve our customer service. The contents of this report have been shared with all Housing staff and the Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Housing.
- 9.2. 2025–2026 has highlighted the need to share complaint trends and root causes with all Service Leads so we can understand where issues are arising and what changes are required. To support this, we have scheduled meetings with all Area Service Leads to review learning and drive service improvement.
- 9.3. In February 2026, we recruited a new Housing Engagement team and working alongside Tpas who are an organisation who have been supporting us to engage with residents, and support in establishing tenant panels. One of these will be a dedicated Complaints Panel, through which residents will scrutinise our complaints process and help shape future improvements.

10. Summary / Focus for the year ahead

- 10.1. As a responsible social landlord, are committed to providing the best service for our residents and understand the value in using feedback to improve. We will regularly review our performance, to include:
 - Number of complaints we receive
 - Number of complaints that are escalated
 - Time taken to resolve complaints
 - Common themes and trends
 - Identify and implement learnings
 - Transaction survey feedback
- 10.2. For 2026–2027, the Complaints Team will continue to strengthen our approach to complaint handling, with a focus on effective triage, improved monitoring and tracking, stronger landlord–resident relationships, higher quality investigations, increased ownership of cases, and clearer communication with tenants, supported by lessons learned through root-cause analysis. All stage 2 complaints will undergo a formal Lessons Learned process, with outcomes summarised in the Quarterly Complaints Report. Working closely with our new Tenant and Leaseholder Panel who are a tenant panel that is essentially a structured group of residents who work with the housing service to influence, challenge, and improve how services are delivered. From a housing perspective, it serves several important functions: including a dedicated Complaints Panel that will scrutinise our complaints process and provide resident-led insight to drive improvement. Alongside this, wider tenant engagement activity will continue to gather feedback on residents' priorities and identify opportunities to strengthen services across the organisation.

Complaints Service Improvement Plan 2026-2027

Action	Timeframe
Roll out enhanced complaint handling training for all Housing staff, focusing on how to recognise a complaint and the different routes for logging it, to ensure complaints are managed consistently and in line with the requirements of the Code.	July 2026
Complete 100% transactional surveys with every tenant that logs a complaint.	July 2026
Quarterly reports will be shared with all Heads of Service, and Portfolio holder for Health Wellbeing and Housing, highlighting the trends identified.	July 2026
Improve our recording of disabilities and vulnerabilities to ensure we know when reasonable adjustments may be needed.	August 2026
Work with the newly established Complaints Panel to review our processes and identify opportunities to strengthen and improve the complaints procedure following their scrutiny exercise.	August 2026