



Tendring
District Council

ANNUAL HOUSING COMPLAINTS AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT FOR 2025/2026



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Welcome to our complaints performance and service improvement report for 2025-26.

The Council owns and manages just over 3,000 homes and our tenants are important to us. Handling complaints effectively allows us to address issues, learn from them, prevent future occurrences and improve our services.

We understand that there will be times when we do not meet the expected level of service that our tenants deserve. Where this is the case, it is important that we put things right.

The Housing Ombudsman is responsible for investigating complaints about social housing providers.

In April 2024, the Housing Ombudsman introduced a new Complaint Handling Code to ensure complaints are addressed fairly, effectively and promptly.

In this report we cover how we have scrutinised our compliance against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. We provide information on the complaints we have received during 2025-26, some examples of service improvements we have made or are planning as a result of learning from complaints and an overview of a case that the Housing Ombudsman has made a decision on during 2026-26.

Our Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy sets out our approach to complaint handling, so we can resolve complaints effectively and comply with the code.

[Corporate and housing complaints policy](#)

Complaint handling code self-assessment

We have completed a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

This ensures we align our policies and practices to provide a prompt and effective complaints service.

Our assessment is that we fully complied with the code in 2025-26 and we will continue to improve our service during 2026-27 to ensure ongoing compliance.

[Please follow this link to view our full assessment](#)

In June 2026, the Housing Ombudsman wrote to the Council to highlight some areas of the Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy that could be revised in order to more closely align with the requirements of the Complaints Handling Code. Amendments to the policy have been drafted and shared with the Ombudsman for confirmation that they meet its requirements.

Our complaint handling performance during 2025-26

We received a total of 102 complaints between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026. This is an increase of 13% compared to the previous year.

84 complaints were responded to at Stage 1 of our complaints process and 18 were escalated to Stage 2

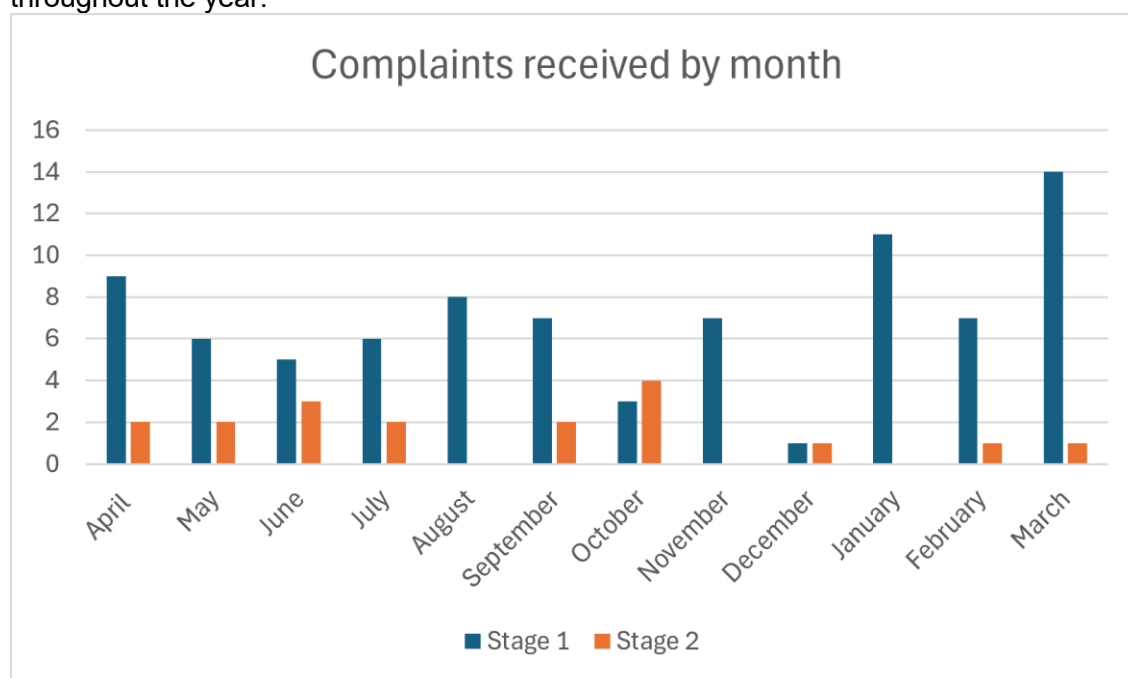
Complaints received	Number	Change compared to previous year
Total number of complaints received: April 2025 to March 2026	102	13% increase (<i>Total complaints received April 24 to March 25 was 90</i>)

Complaints received by stage	Number	Change compared to previous year
Stage 1	84	8% increase (<i>previous year 78</i>)
Stage 2	18	50% increase (<i>previous year 12</i>)

Complaints were received across the following service areas:

Service area	Stage 1	Stage 2
Repairs, planned maintenance or improvements	46 (55%)	10 (55%)
Rents or service charges	4 (5%)	0
Tenancy matters	28 (33%)	7 (39%)
Neighbourhood issues	4 (5%)	1 (6%)
Transfers or mutual exchanges	0	0
Right to Buy or leasehold matters	2 (2%)	0
Total	84	18

Complaints were received throughout the year with the graph below showing the distribution throughout the year.



Response times

Complaint response times	
Response to Stage 1 Complaints sent within Code timescales - 10 working days unless extended as permitted in the Code	95.24% (previous year 93.6%)
Response to Stage 2 Complaint sent within Code timescales – 20 working days unless extended as permitted in the Code	83.33% (previous year 91.7%)

Use of the extension periods permitted in the Code

We aim to respond to all complaints within the Housing Ombudsman code timescales and the table below shows how we have performed:

Stage 1	Number	Percentage
Response to Stage 1 Complaint sent within Code timescales without the use of the 10-day extension permitted in the Code	61	72.6% (previous year 69.9%)
Response to Stage 1 Complaint sent within Code timescales with the use of the 10-day extension permitted in the Code	19	22.6% (previous year 30.1%)

Stage 2	Number	Percentage
Response to Stage 2 Complaint sent within Code timescales without the use of the 20-day extension permitted in the Code	12	66.7% <i>(previous year 72.8%)</i>
Response to Stage 2 Complaint sent within Code timescales with the use of the 20-day extension permitted in the Code	3	16.7% <i>(previous year 27.2%)</i>

Complaints not included in the table above were responded to outside of the timescales set out in the Complaint Handling Code

Outcomes to complaints

The table below shows the number of complaints that were either upheld (where the council acknowledged some degree of fault) or not upheld. In accordance with the implementation of the revised Complaint Handling Code from 1 April 2024, a complaint can no longer be recorded as partially upheld. If an organisation has got something wrong, it must record the complaint as being upheld, even if there are elements of the complaint it has not upheld.

The proportion of complaints that were upheld in 2025/26 has decreased over the 2024/25 figures although it remains the case that more complaints were upheld than not upheld.

Stage 1	Upheld	Not upheld
Repairs, planned maintenance and improvements	43	3
Rents or service charges	0	4
Tenancy matters	5	23
Neighbourhood issues	0	4
Transfers / mutual exchanges	0	0
Right to Buy or leasehold matters	2	0
Total	50	34

Stage 2	Upheld	Not upheld
Repairs, planned maintenance and improvements	9	1
Rents or service charges	0	0
Tenancy matters	4	3
Neighbourhood issues	0	1
Transfers / mutual exchanges	0	0
Right to Buy or leasehold matters	0	0
Total	13	5

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

From 1 April 2023, all social housing providers have been required to collect data for tenant satisfaction measures on areas such as repairs, safety checks and complaints.

The measures are aimed at helping improve standards for people living in social housing, by:

- Providing visibility, letting tenants see how well their landlord is doing. And enabling tenants to hold their landlords to account
- Giving the Regulator insight into which landlords might need to improve things for their tenants

There are 22 Tenant Satisfaction Measures and, in relation to complaints, the relevant measures are:

- Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling of complaints (TP09 - measured by a tenant perception survey)
- Complaints relative to the size of the landlord (CH01 - measured by landlord's management information)
- Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales (CH02 - measured by landlord's management information)

The Council's performance in relation to these indicators in 2025/26 was as follows:

Measure	Performance
TP09 - Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to complaint handling	36.3%
CH01 - Complaints received per 1,000 homes: Stage 1 Stage 2	26.9 5.8
CH02 - Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code Stage 1 Stage 2	95.2 83.3%

Any findings of non-compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 places a duty on the Housing Ombudsman to monitor compliance with its statutory Complaint Handling Code. This means that the Housing Ombudsman is required to ensure that all landlords meet the standards set out in the Code for complaint handling. To assist with this, all landlords are required to submit their self-assessment by 30 September each year (previously 30 June).

Should the Housing Ombudsman identify any concerns with a landlord's compliance with the Code, they will engage with them to bring them back into compliance promptly. If there is evidence of ongoing failures in compliance, the Ombudsman will consider using their wider powers including Complaint Handling Failure Orders.

The Council's Housing Complaints Policy was reviewed and revised in 2025 to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Complaints Handling Code. It was amalgamated with the council's more general complaint handling policy and renamed the Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy. Following a review of the Corporate and Housing Complaints Policy by the Housing Ombudsman in June 2026 following which it was highlighted that the policy could be improved to more fully align with the Complaint Handling Code, the policy has recently been revised.

Housing Ombudsman determinations

During the financial year 2025/26, the Housing Ombudsman determined one complaint received by it in respect of Tendring District Council and found that there was a service failure. A summary of the case is provided below (as published on the Housing Ombudsman's website):

Complaint reference 202317086:

Background

The resident lives in a second-floor flat with her daughter. She has health conditions and has said the complaint has negatively impacted her mental health. She has been reporting leaks to her landlord since 2021 and has raised concerns about the presence of asbestos in her property.

What the complaint is about

The landlord's handling of a roof leak.
The landlord's complaint handling.
Our decision (determination):

There was reasonable redress in the landlord's handling of a roof leak.
There was service failure in the landlord's complaint handling.
We have made orders for the landlord to put things right.

Summary of reasons

The landlord's handling of a roof leak.

There were significant delays in the landlord completing the repairs to the roof. The landlord did not provide regular updates to the resident. It has now completed the work and it acknowledged in its stage 2 complaints response that the delays had been unreasonable. It identified learning and said how it would improve things in the future. It offered £900 compensation which we consider to be reasonable in line with our remedies guidance. This is because there were significant delays and the matter had a detrimental effect on the resident.

The landlord's complaint handling

The landlord issued its stage 2 response outside of the timescales in its complaints process. It did not acknowledge the delay, despite the resident needing to chase the response.

£950 compensation offered and accepted by complainant

Housing Ombudsman Landlord Performance Report

In May 2025 the Housing Ombudsman published a report on the Council's performance as a housing landlord. Such reports are usually published where there have been more than five findings against the landlord in a year. The report covered the 2024/25 financial year.

Housing Ombudsman Spotlight reports

From time to time the Housing Ombudsman publishes spotlight reports that identify trends in the complaints that are escalated to them. The reports are useful for landlords in highlighting these trends and providing guidance.

Their most recent report is a Spotlight on repairs and maintenance <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/reports/spotlight-reports/repairing-trust/>

Repairs is the biggest cause for complaints for the Council as it is for the Housing Ombudsman. The findings presented in this report resonate with the Council's own experiences. We have identified that we need to improve our performance in respect of repairs and working with members of our Tenant Panel, drawing on their experiences, we are changing our culture. Our aim is that it is easy to report a repair, that the report is acknowledged and responded to quickly and that the repair is undertaken well and within an appropriate timeframe.

Service Improvements and Learning from complaints

During 2025/26 we have observed a shift in the nature of complaints received. This has largely been around the complexity and level of challenge involved in the complaints, with some complainants clearly making use of artificial intelligence (AI) to assist them in making their complaint. The increased level of complaints has resulted in more complaints escalating to Stage 2. There have also been occasions where it has been difficult to meet the response times set out in the Complaint Handling Code.

We have continued to provide our Housing Portfolio Holder (as member responsible for complaints) with quarterly data on the complaints received. During the year we also introduced a Tenant Panel subgroup focusing on complaints and tenant satisfaction measures, that our member responsible for complaints also attends. We feel that tenant involvement and scrutiny of our complaint handling performance is important.

Reflecting on the quality of complaint responses, particularly at Stage 1, it is evident that the Council needs to become better at resolving matters at Stage 1. There needs to be a genuine review of the case at that point and a reflection on what it is that the complainant is seeking as redress. A complaint response should not be issued without that thorough assessment taking place.

The Council has been reviewing how its services are resourced and is making changes so that it has more capacity to respond effectively to complaints.

It is proposed that a sample of complaints responded to at Stage 1 will be reviewed by the Assistant Directors each month, in order to monitor thoroughness and quality. The Portfolio Holder for Housing & Planning will also be involved in this process.

In addition to reviewing the way in which complaints are dealt with it is important that the Council captures all complaints, however made. It is possible that there are more tenants who are dissatisfied about the services they receive and maybe are unaware of how to complain or have expressed dissatisfaction that has not been captured and responded to as a complaint.

The Council has recently joined Housemark which is an organisation specialising in data analysis. Housemark will help us to understand our data better and assist us in making service improvements.

The quarterly tenant newsletter and annual report includes details about how to complain and this information is available on the council's website. The website has recently been updated to include an online complaint form that can be fully completed and submitted online. This form is in addition to more traditional methods that remain available.

New posters have been produced that will be displayed at sheltered housing schemes and in communal areas of flats that explain how to make a complaint.

Complaints from those experiencing vulnerabilities require a special focus and is an area where the Council needs to improve. Firstly, the vulnerability needs to be recognised and then appropriate adjustments made to ensure the vulnerability is taken into account and the complaint response provided in a format that the tenant is able to understand. Information on tenant vulnerabilities and diverse needs is being gathered at tenancy sign up and for existing tenants via a rolling programme of tenancy check visits that is approximately halfway through.

Officer training in respect of complaint handling and working with those with diverse needs is something that has not been prioritised. Dedicated training will equip officers with the tools to recognise customer dissatisfaction in the first instance and then be able to provide a response that addresses the complaint. This will be addressed during 2026/27 with the provision of training for those who require it and is something the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Planning is fully supportive of.

The Council does not use a dedicated customer relationship management (CRM) system for housing complaints and as such is restricted in the extent to which complaint data can be analysed. It is an aspiration to develop a dedicated CRM system in the future.