



# **Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2024-2025**

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## **Homes in Somerset**

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## Forward Statement from Member Responsible for Complaints on behalf of Homes in Somerset Board

As the Customer Board Member Responsible for Complaints, I can confirm the Board of Homes in Somerset fully endorse our approach to handling complaints and support the learning outlined within this report. As an organisation, we promote a transparent, accountable, and customer-focused culture toward complaints, embedding regulatory standards and colleague engagement into our practices. Complaints are treated as opportunities for learning and service improvement, with leadership oversight, inclusive access, and strategic integration into broader customer engagement efforts.

The Homes in Somerset Board have reviewed and endorsed the submission of the self-assessment and proposed revisions against the Housing Ombudsman Service's Complaints Handling Code (CHC) at their meeting of 29th July 2025.

To improve customer experience, this year we have completed several customer-led reviews to ensure we are supporting improved opportunities for customers to influence and access our services.

The Board receives reports on a 6-monthly basis to understand the impact services have on our customers. These reports provide the Board with an oversight of our complaints handling performance, headline numbers, trend analysis and learning themes. We also work closely with our strategic customer-led Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee (STAC) to gain first-hand assurance and insight to verify this.

The Code aims to achieve the best practice in complaint handling and ultimately provide a better service to customers. I believe that this year we have further developed our approach to resolving customer complaints and made significant improvements in our response and learning.

Chris Fisher  
Customer Board Member Responsible for Complaints

## Executive Summary

The Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2024/25 provides a comprehensive analysis of the complaints received over the financial year, evaluating the performance and effectiveness of our complaint handling processes. This report aims to identify trends, highlight areas for improvement, and recommend actionable steps to enhance customer satisfaction and operational efficiency.

### Key Findings:

- Volume of Complaints: The total number of complaints received during the 2024/25 financial year decreased by 7% compared to the previous year.

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- **Response Time:** The average response time for addressing complaints was 6.2 days at Stage 1, showing a slight decline from the previous year's average of 4.8 days.
- **Resolution Rate:** The resolution rate for complaints within the first contact was 95.4%, indicating a 1% increase from the previous year.
- **Customer Satisfaction:** Customer satisfaction scores for complaint handling (TSM) noted 4 out of 10 were satisfied. However much higher results have been reported for transactional responses as 8 out of 10.

### Conclusions:

- The data indicates that while there have been improvements in certain areas, there are still challenges that need to be addressed to enhance the overall effectiveness of our complaint handling processes.
- Specific departments or issues that consistently receive higher volumes of complaints have been identified, and targeted strategies are recommended to address these areas.

### Recommendations:

1. **Enhance Training Programmes:** Implement comprehensive training programs for colleagues to improve their complaint handling skills and customer service.
2. **Improve Response Times:** Develop and implement strategies to reduce the average response time for complaints.
3. **Increase First Contact Resolution:** Focus on increasing the resolution rate at the first point of contact to improve customer satisfaction.
4. **Leverage Technology:** Utilize advanced technology and data analytics to better track, manage, and resolve complaints efficiently.

## Background

Homes in Somerset (HiS), is an Arms-Length Management Organisation (ALMO). Following the creation of a single unitary authority in April 2023, ownership of HiS transferred to the new Somerset Council. We changed our company name from Homes in Sedgemoor to Homes in Somerset on 01st April 2025. Somerset Council has two housing service delivery models – Homes in Somerset (managing 4000 homes) and an 'in house' team that manages c6000 homes.

This Annual Complaints Performance and Improvement Report and our self-assessment is provided by Homes in Somerset as the ALMO for Somerset Council. The report outlines the annual complaint performance for the financial year 2024/25 and the key improvements in learning and service delivery. This report is a requirement of the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code (section 8.1).

## Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code

The Board of Homes in Somerset (HiS) acknowledge from 1st April 2024 that all landlords are obliged by law to follow the requirement of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act which empowers the Housing Ombudsman to issue a code of practice for handling complaints. The Board accepts the provisions of



the Code, and this is reflected in our revised Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy, associated documents, and relevant processes.

The Homes in Somerset Board has reviewed and endorsed the submission of the self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Service's Complaints Handling Code (CHC) at their meeting of 29th July 2025 and can confirm Homes in Somerset is compliant with the Code.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures	TSM Title	2024-25	2023-24	Housemark 2024-25	RSH 2023-24
TSM01	Overall tenant satisfaction (TSM TP01 results)	82.9%	81.6%	79.7% (Upper Quartile)	78.4% (Upper Quartile)
TSM09	Satisfaction with the landlords approach to handling complaints	38%	40%	35.3% (Median Quartile)	34.5% (Median Quartile)
CH01 (1)	Number of stage one complaints received per 1,000 homes	32.5%	35.3%	37.2% (Lower Quartile)	42.5% (Median Quartile)
CH01 (2)	Number of stage two complaints received per 1,000 homes	2.5	1.3	5.6 (Lower Quartile)	3.2 (Lower Quartile)
CH02 (1)	Proportion of stage one complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales	95.4%	96%	93.4% (Median Quartile)	92.9% (Upper Quartile)
CH02 (2)	Proportion of stage two complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales	100%	100%	100% (Upper Quartile)	97.8% (Upper Quartile)
<b>Total Complaints Received</b>					
Stage 1	2024-25 - 41 complaints overall were Upheld = 32%	130			
Stage 1	2023-24 - 56 complaints overall were Upheld = 40%		140		
Stage 2	All requests to escalate complaint to Stage 2 were accepted in line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code	10	5		

Compensation Paid to Customers				
Compensation Payment was made to 47 customers in 2024-25	£9,029			
Compensation Payment was made to 27 customers in 2023-24		£7,947		

## Housing Ombudsman Service Determinations

Housing Ombudsman Service Determinations	2024 -2025	2023 -2024
Cases Determined by the Housing Ombudsman	2	2
Number of findings received (note, there can be multiple findings per case)	3	2
Number of cases determined as severe maladministration	1	0
Number of cases determined as maladministration	1	0
Number of complaint handling failure orders received	1	0
Number of requests for information from Housing Ombudsman	10	3

## Cases Determined by the Housing Ombudsman

In 2024-25, the Housing Ombudsman Service determined 2 cases referred by Homes in Somerset customers. This included 1 Complaint Handling Failure Order made due to a complaint not being escalated to Stage 2 of the process in a timely manner. Details of these cases are as follows:

### Severe Maladministration.

**Summary of complaint** – The customer reported various (13) repairs and issues to HiS between August 2020 and August 2022. These included damp in the hallway, damp in the bedrooms, a suspected rat infestation in the loft area and a potentially defective concrete lintel. The customers' complaint to the Ombudsman outlined communication concerns, as they felt that as an organisation, we did not listen to them or understand their communication needs.

## Maladministration

**Summary of complaint** Within their determination, the Housing Ombudsman Service found there was maladministration by Homes in Somerset, in respect of the landlord's handling of an associated complaint for a customer in respect of reports of poor drainage causing flooding and damp and mould in the bathroom. The finding outlined a service failure linked to inappropriate record-keeping.

Learning from these cases is captured in the Service Improvement & Learning section of this report.

## Complaints Performance 2024-25

### Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

Just over one-fifth of customers (21%) fed-back they had made a complaint to HIS in the past 12 months. Of these customers, less than four out of ten were satisfied, with a score of 38%.

Satisfaction with complaint handling fluctuated throughout the year; starting with a score of 31% in Q1 2024/25, satisfaction rose to a high of 43% in Q3 2024/25, before a slight fall of 3% in Q4 2024/25. Alongside this, dissatisfaction has trended downwards throughout the year, concluding in Q4 2024/25 at 48%, 7% below the score in Q1 2023/24, which was 55%.

To better understand our complaints, we embarked on a trial to gain additional feedback. Customers were asked to specify the nature of their complaint and the route through which they made the initial contact. The majority were related to anti-social behaviour issues, accounting for 41% of these complaints. Another common complaint type was the repairs service. "Other complaints" related to communal areas, damp & mould and staff attitude.

Most complaints (68%) were made via a telephone call to the contact centre, with a further quarter (26%) being made by email to the contact centre. Only 6% were made through the complaint's procedure, highlighting that some respondents may not be talking about official stage 1 complaints or may not be aware of the best route to make a complaint.

Customers were asked to provide reasons for their score, and the responses noted several areas of dissatisfaction. Respondents expressed frustration over a lack of action taken on their issues, particularly regarding anti-social behaviour and property maintenance. Common themes included feelings of being ignored, with several individuals noting that their complaints were either not acknowledged or inadequately addressed.

Some respondents reported that despite initial prompt responses, follow-ups were either slow or were not received at all, leading to unresolved issues over extended periods. Some customers even felt their concerns were not taken seriously.

There were also some positive comments, with a few respondents appreciating quick resolutions or effective communication from specific colleagues. However, the overall sentiment from customers was

a desire for improved responsiveness, better follow-up procedures, and a more proactive approach to customer concerns to enhance satisfaction and trust in the service provided.

Customers were asked to suggest ways that HIS could improve the complaints handling procedure. The most common response was to improve communication and keep customers up to date throughout the process. Another common response was for HIS to be more proactive in resolving complaints. There were also calls for us to listen more, which would help with understanding customer needs at the start of the complaint. The management of internal processes was also mentioned, with some customers asking for increased communication between teams, better staff attitude during the process and be better at acknowledging complaints.

Some respondents also selected the options 'Make it easier to make a complaint' and 'Make it clearer how to make a complaint', further showing that this process may be too complex, and customers are not aware of where to report their complaint.

HIS saw the complaints trial as positive and included additional questions for 2025-26 surveys to capture all valuable feedback and support further learning.

## Transactional Surveys

In 2024-25 we had 130 customers access the formal complaints process with 10 being escalated to Stage 2 of the process.

Between October and March 2024-25, we undertook to assess what customers who had accessed the formal complaints process thought about the complaint handling process. Responses were as follows:

Transactional Complaint Handling Survey	% Satisfied	Very satisfied / Fairly satisfied
How satisfied are you with the overall complaints process?	78.67%	Total Satisfied 11 Total Surveys completed 14
How easy was it to report your complaint?	71.43%	Total Satisfied 10 Total Surveys completed 14
How satisfied are you with the communication from Homes in Somerset	64.29%	Total Satisfied 9 Total Surveys completed 14
How satisfied are you with the outcome/response to your complaint?	71.43%	Total Satisfied 10 Total Surveys completed 14

Indications are that those who did use the formal process are significantly more satisfied than those who did not use the process. Our challenge going forward is to ensure colleagues record all complaints so that they are managed appropriately and that customers have greater awareness of the reporting process if their issue is not resolved.



## Service Improvement and Learning – Service Improvement Report

The Code aims to achieve best practice in complaint handling and ultimately provide a better service to customers. This year we have further developed our approach to listening to customers to influence how we manage customer complaints and make improvements to services.

### Learning from Housing Ombudsman Complaints

The primary learning from the Housing Ombudsman complaints during 2024/25 was as follows:

- All customer complaints are now logged when a customer expresses dissatisfaction with our service; a formal response is sent to the complainant even where it has been resolved at first contact
- All requests to escalate a complaint to Stage 2 are accepted as per the revised HOS Complaint Handling Code
- Recognising the needs of neurodiverse customers to provide improved support and communication through bespoke communication plans, a single point of contact allocated to build trust and manage their service issue or complaint.
- Improved processes to accurately record all communication, to ensure transparency and accountability

### Learning from Complaints

Acuity, our independent survey organisation was tasked with completing the Tenant Satisfaction Measure surveys on our behalf and have provided HiS with a comprehensive analysis of customer feedback including customer recommendations for improvement. As a result of the comments received, we have.

- introduced a Complaint Learning Panel, consisting of executive team members, senior managers, and involved customers, to review overarching complaint themes and ensure a lessons-learned approach.
- Commenced our corporate project to improvement customer insight, “knowing our customers” reaching out to all customers, particularly those “silent voices” enabling a more proactive approach to understanding customers’ requirements.
- Completed service reviews based on findings from the Housing Ombudsman Spotlight reports, including Noise Nuisance and Attitudes, Respects, and Rights.
- Embedded key roles in the business to enable follow-up to all customer feedback received via formal and informal complaints processes, Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM’s) and transactional surveys; demonstrating we are listening and responding to our customers.

### Learning from Customer-Led Scrutiny

The Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee (STAC) is a sub-committee of the Board and are tasked with providing assurance to the Board that services delivered are the experience of customers living in the homes we manage. As a committee. They commission customer-led scrutiny activity based on a matrix of information that includes customer satisfaction, service cost and customer impact.

In 2024-25 the scrutiny panel conducted 2 independent reviews of services delivered by HiS. The group was made up of 22 formally involved customers and customers who had expressed an interest in the area to be scrutinised. Overall, they made 18 recommendations for improvement.

The recommendations implemented include:

- Completing more analysis of customer insight data to have a better understanding of customers not allowing access, e.g understand what % does not have English as their first language?
- Improved the sign-up process to make the process an in person sign up to support customer understanding of everything involved in managing a tenancy to ensure their safety.
- Closer work with contractors to improve communication and approaches when contacting customers - customers are advised when operatives cannot attend; when they do they knock loud enough and give customers time to get to the door.
- Reviewed the communication process regarding informing customers of work from initial contact through
- to completion including managing changes.
- Created a specific web page relating to compliance and building safety to promote safe practices within the home and highlight key checks that will be carried out.
- Ensured more regular and face-to-face visits to discuss the complaint with the victim. Discussing with the victim is the best method of communication for them.
- Reworded our ASB communication so it is clear and supportive for complainants and more direct toward alleged perpetrators
- Customer facing policies are added online for customers to view

All recommendations have been monitored by STAC to completion. The reports have also been provided to HiS Audit and Risk committee.

## Service Improvement Action Plan

We recognise we have more work to do and have developed a service improvement action plan to ensure we capture and deliver the improvement influenced by customer feedback.

Complaints Service Improvement Action Plan			
	What	By Whom	By When
	Complaint Handling		
1	Handling of complaints was the lowest-scoring measure in the 2024/25 survey. The open response questions have provided HiS with very helpful insight into reasons why customers are more dissatisfied than satisfied with the way complaints are handled. Several respondents felt that their complaints were not acknowledged or taken seriously at initial contact, while many others felt that they were not kept up to date throughout the process or that their complaint had not been adequately resolved.		
1.1	Review complaints data, at stage 1 and 2 to ensure that all are adequately captured;	Customer Focus Manager	30 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2025

1.2	Ensure colleagues log complaints correctly.	Customer Focus Manager	30th Sept 2025
1.3	Ensure the process of making a complaint is simplified as much as possible and communicated to customers where they can go to make a complaint.	Customer Focus Manager	31 July 2025
1.4	Review complaints data to make sure that customers are updated and all complaints are resolved and closed promptly.	Customer Focus Manager	30 Sept 2025
<b>2.</b>	<b>Anti-social behaviour</b>		
	The approach to the handling of anti-social behaviour was the second lowest scoring measure in the survey. In the open response questions, several tenants mentioned they were experiencing problems of loud neighbours, pets, drug use and threatening behaviour. There was also a feeling that, in several cases, HIS had not taken adequate action to address this		
2.1	Review the ASB process to ensure all incidents are captured and suitably acted upon.	Housing Manager	30 Dec 2025
2.2	Capture robust ASB data to improve the service	Housing Manager	30 Sept 2025
2.3	Use the data provided from this survey to investigate specific issues mentioned	Housing Manager	30 Dec 2025
<b>3.</b>	<b>Repairs and Maintenance</b>		
	Repairs measures have scored very high levels of satisfaction, repairs in the last 12 months and well well-maintained home both features as key drivers of overall satisfaction with the service. The repairs service was a common reason for complaints and feature regularly in the open response questions. Incidents such as long timescales to complete repairs and a poor standard of repairs were mentioned, although these are likely to be isolated incidents.		
3.1	Review the repairs data and make further improvements to enhance customer satisfaction.	Property Services & Investment Manager	30 Sept 2025
3.2	Ensure all reported unresolved damp & mould problems are rectified as a matter of urgency; there is a robust process to follow-up all reports received.	Property Services & Investment Manager	30 Aug 2025
<b>4.</b>	<b>Communal areas</b>		
	More than a fifth of tenants were dissatisfied with communal areas are kept clean and well-maintained. Many customers mentioned areas such as garden paths, bin storage and hallways which were not cleaned regularly, causing them to look unsightly and in some cases create fall risks.		
4.1	Review TSM data provided and identify communal areas which are commonly mentioned,	Customer Focus Manager	30 Aug 2025
4.2	Ensure maintenance schedules are being followed, particularly if this is being done by contractors.	Housing Manager	30 Aug 2025

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Our revised customer complaints handling policy defines the role of the Customer Focus Manager as

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the Designated Complaints Officer. They ensure reports are provided to the relevant committees and the Board.

During 2024-25 reports have been 6-monthly for Board and Executive team, and quarterly to Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee as the assurance committee. Going forward we have enhanced our reporting cycles to be more frequent with Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee receiving a Quarterly Update; Senior Leadership Team: Monthly; Executive Team and the Customer Board Champion Responsible for Complaints; Three-Monthly and Board Six-monthly.

In addition, the Customer Focus Manager:

- Leads on the Complaints and Learning Panel to ensure organization wide learning, including tracking progress.
- Collates all Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints and reports this monthly as Key Performance Indicators.
- Ensure SMART action plans are monitored by our customer-led Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee (STAC).
- Ensures compliance with the Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy

Somerset Council receive updates through Partnership meetings annually.

## Conclusion

This year's report reflects both progress and ongoing challenges in how we respond to and learn from customer complaints. While we have seen improvements in first contact resolution and transactional satisfaction, we acknowledge that overall satisfaction with complaint handling remains below our aspirations.

We are grateful to our customers for their honest feedback, which continues to shape our approach. Through strengthened governance, deeper engagement with the Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee, and a renewed focus on learning and service improvement, we are committed to doing better.

We recognise there is more to do—and we are listening. Our focus remains on building trust, improving responsiveness, and ensuring every customer voice is heard and acted upon.