



Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2025 - 2026

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Appendices

- Complaint Handling Code self-assessment (approved May 2026)
- Homes in Somerset Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy (Reviewed May 2026)
- Performance Infographic for Customers 2025/26

1. Purpose of the report

This report provides Homes in Somerset's (HiS) annual review of complaints managing performance for the year ended 31 March 2026 and sets out the key service improvements identified through complaint learning. It outlines our compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and provides a transparent account of how complaints have been managed, what customers have told us and how services have changed as a result. The report sits alongside the Homes in Somerset Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy, the annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code and the governing body response.

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2. Forward statement from the Board Member Responsible for Complaints

As Board Member Responsible for Complaints, I am pleased to present this Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report on behalf of Homes in Somerset.

Complaints remain an important source of insight into the experience of our customers and an essential mechanism for holding our services to account. We treat complaints not only as requests for a resolution, but also as opportunities to gain experience, improve and rebuild trust where things have gone wrong.



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During 2025/26, HiS has continued to strengthen its complaints framework, improve accessibility, and embed learning from complaint outcomes, Housing Ombudsman cases, tenant feedback, and customer-led scrutiny. The Board has maintained regular oversight of complaint handling performance and has supported further work to strengthen recording, escalation, communication, and accountability across all service teams.

This report demonstrates that the organisation has made progress in several areas, while also acknowledging those aspects of resident experience that still require sustained improvement, particularly around communication, follow-up, and confidence in the complaint journey. The Board expects the action plan within this report to be monitored through routine governance arrangements during 2026/27.

Signed: Craig Green

Customer Board Member Responsible for Complaints

3. Executive Summary

Homes in Somerset received 139 stage 1 complaints and twenty-six stage 2 complaints during 2025/26. Complaint handling timeliness has remained strong, with 95.6% of stage 1 responses and 100% of stage 2 responses issued within the relevant Complaint Handling Code timescales. Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to with landlord services, indicating that while process compliance is strong, the customer experience of complaint managing still requires improvement. We have reviewed and updated our policy to address this.

Key findings

- Complaint volumes increased in 2025/26 compared with the previous year, with communication and complaint experience remaining as areas of customer dissatisfaction.
- The formal process performed well against timescales; however, customer survey findings suggest that some customers remain unclear about how to make a complaint or do not always feel their concerns are fully heard.
- Transactional feedback from customers who used the formal process was significantly more positive (78% satisfied) than the perception survey data (36%).
- Learning from Ombudsman cases and customer scrutiny has been used to strengthen record keeping, complaint escalation, support for neurodiverse customers and the wider learning culture across the organisation.
- Completed our improvement action plan and closed the learning loop through embedding service improvement into business as usual.

Conclusion

This performance and improvement report for 2025/26 shows HiS continues to demonstrate a compliant complaints process, with clear strengths in response timeliness and governance. The main challenge for 2026/27 is to translate procedural compliance into improving customer experience through better communication, increasing confidence in the process, and strengthening the quality and consistency of first-time resolution and follow-up. Our action plan sets out how we will achieve this in the coming year including measures of success to confirm we have achieved what we set out to do.



4. Organisational Context and Complaints Approach

Homes in Somerset is Somerset Council's Arms-Length Management Organisation managing approximately 4,000 homes. Following the creation of the new unitary council in April 2023, ownership transferred to Somerset Council, and the organisation changed its name from Homes in Sedgemoor to Homes in Somerset on 1 April 2025.

Our approach to complaints handling highlights that customers can make a complaint by telephone, email, private message, in person at reception or in writing. Complaints are acknowledged within five working days, and a full response is normally provided within ten working days at stage 1. Complaints are investigated by the complaints lead together with the relevant service manager. The Homes in Somerset website also signposts customers to the complaints policy, self-assessment and lessons learned information.

The policy defines each area required for compliance under the Code and is set out in our policy as outlined below:

	Homes in Somerset Statement
Definition of a complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by Homes in Somerset, its staff or those acting on their behalf, affecting an individual or group of customers.
Accessibility	Complaints can be made through multiple channels, with support available for reasonable adjustments, representatives and alternative formats where required.
Complaint stages	Two-stage process with access to stage 2 review where the customer remains dissatisfied with the stage 1 response.
Service requests	Service requests are recorded separately so that customers receive prompt action, and the organisation can track whether unresolved service failures later become complaints.
Learning approach	Themes, outcomes and customer feedback are reviewed through management oversight, customer-led scrutiny and Board reporting to drive service improvement.

5. Complaint Handling Performance

5.1 Complaints Received and Trend Summary

The table below provides an overview of our complaint handling performance for the past two years compared with the latest benchmarking results from House Mark and the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH).

Headline Measures	2025/26 Position	2024/25 Position	House Mark 25-26	RSH 24-25	Commentary
Overall tenant satisfaction (TSM)	84.2%	82.9%	83.3% (Upper Quartile)	78.9% (Upper Quartile)	
Stage 1 complaints received	139	130			

Stage 2 complaints received	26	10			All requests to escalate a complaint were accepted
Stage 1 complaints per 1,000 homes	34.9%	32.5%	37.2% (Lower Quartile)	40.1% (Median Quartile)	
Stage 2 complaints per 1,000 homes	6.5%	2.5%	5.6% (Lower Quartile)	5.2% (Lower Quartile)	Increase reflects greater acceptance of escalation requests
Stage 1 responses in time	95.6%	95.4%	93.4% (Median Quartile)	94.5% (Upper Quartile)	
Stage 2 responses in time	100%	100%	100% (Upper Quartile)	98.5% (Upper Quartile)	
Average Stage 1 Response Time	4.8 days	6.2 days			
Satisfaction with complaints handling (TSM09)	36%	32.5%	35.3% (Median Quartile)	35.5% (Median Quartile)	Lower than overall landlord satisfaction and a priority area for improvement
Compensation paid	£13,060 21 customers	£9,029 to 47 customers			Remedies applied where service failure identified or to provide additional support
Housing Ombudsman determinations	0	2			

In 2025/26 formal complaint volumes rose by 7.5% from 2024/25. The increase in stage 2 complaints reflects a clearer commitment to accepting escalation requests in line with the Code and ensuring customers access the review stage and that the organisation has moved toward a more transparent approach to complaint progression.

HiS has continued robust performance against published response timescales. The slight increase in average response time at stage 1 continues to be monitored, particularly where complaints involve cross-team input or contractor information. Current performance does remain timely and broadly effective, however.

5.3 Compensation, Complaint Outcomes and Remedies

Outcome	2025/26	2024/25	Comment
Stage 1 complaints upheld	41 (37%)	41 (32%)	A significant proportion of complaints identified service failure or opportunities to put things right.

Stage 2 escalations accepted Stage 2 Complaints Upheld	26 (100%) 10 (38%)	10 (100%)	Stage 2 increases are consistent with the organisation's revised approach to escalation. All requests to escalate complaint to Stage 2 were accepted in line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
Compensation payments linked directly to a complaint	21 Customers	47 Customers	Redress is used where appropriate and proportionate to do so. Consideration is given to customer impact and support requirements.
Total compensation paid	£13,060	£9,029	Compensation remains one part of the wider remedy framework, alongside apology, action and learning.

In 2025/26 compensation was paid to twenty-one customers who made a formal complaint, totalling £13,060. We use a variety of means to provide redress to those who have experienced a service failure. This demonstrates our willingness to acknowledge service failure and resolve issues proportionately using a variety of options including replacement items, access to assessment for assistance and support to minimise hardship because of service failure.

HiS will continue to review compensation trends alongside root causes to ensure that systemic issues are addressed at source rather than repeatedly compensating after the event.

6. Customer Experience and Feedback

An independent provider Acuity conducts our Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). They contacted 1,256 households in 2025/26 on our behalf. This is 31.6% of the properties managed and provides greater statistical accuracy when assessing customer satisfaction. Overall, 18% (260/1256) of customers stated they had made a complaint in the previous 12 months, of which 36% stated they were dissatisfied with the response received. Where customer information is provided, expressions of dissatisfaction are followed up by our resolute Customer Focus Assistant and frequently relate to a service request rather than a formal complaint request.

While formal complaint handling performance against timescales was positive, customer feedback shows that perception of complaint handling remains mixed. This gap between process performance and lived experience is a key theme to be addressed and will continue to shape our improvement priorities.

Customer Feedback measures	2025/26	2024/25	Comment
Customers reported they had made a complaint in the past 12 months and are satisfied with complaints handling (TSM09)	36.4%	38.4%	A sizeable number have stated they have made a complaint but may not have

			experienced the formal complaint handling process.
Satisfaction with overall complaints process (Transactional)	87.5%	78.67%	Users of the formal process reported a much more positive experience

Whilst we have achieved TSM target of 84% for overall satisfaction, we have continued to see a downward trend for satisfaction with complaints managing year to date. Moving from 38.4% to 36% in March 2026. Supplementary complaint handling questions indicate customers are seeking increasing levels of communication (55%), more initiative-taking action to resolve complaints (47%), and stating listening more (43%) as the top three suggestions for improvement in complaint handling.

Where customers have engaged with the complaint handling process their experience has been significantly more positive with over 87% who responded to our transactional survey stating they have been satisfied with the process.

6.1 Route into the complaints process

As part of our reporting, we track how customers have made their complaint to us. The results are as follows:

Route to complaints reported by customers in feedback	Proportion 2025-26*
Telephone call to contact Centre	68%
Email to contact Centre	26%
To Housing Officer	26%
Direct use of complaints procedure	6%

*Indicates multiple methods used

This pattern suggests that many customers may not distinguish between raising a concern and entering the formal complaints process. To address this we are ensuring we continue to communicate a clear and accessible process for customers to access, we have improved signposting and better recording of dissatisfaction at first contact and reinforced messaging with our teams when speaking with customers what they need to do to record a complaint. This remains a service priority.

7. Housing Ombudsman Cases and Learning

HiS can report that no cases were determined by the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) during 2025/26. We have seen an increasing number of customers seeking further review of their complaint after exhausting our complaint process however, with ten customers recorded as seeking further advice from the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS).

As a learning organisation we have continued to review themes identified from published cases and HOS Spotlight reports.

Learning area	Homes in Somerset Statement
Complaint escalation	All requests to escalate a complaint to stage 2 are now accepted and tracked in line with the revised Complaint Handling Code expectations.
Recording and evidence	Processes have been strengthened to improve the accuracy and completeness of records, correspondence and service history on complaint files.
Reasonable adjustments	Greater recognition is being given to neurodiverse customers and others requiring tailored communication plans or a single point of contact.
Culture and accountability	Complaint outcomes are used more explicitly to reinforce ownership, transparency and organisational learning.

Spotlight reports are used to inform, support and evidence how the organisation has changed policy, systems, behaviours, or governance following our analysis and scrutiny. We have begun to demonstrate this more clearly, although the impact of changes will continue to be evaluated through customer feedback and quality assurance particularly around attitudes, supporting neurodiverse customers, noise complaints, and record-keeping.

8. Service Improvement and Lessons Learned

The Code places significant emphasis on learning from complaints and being able to show customers how complaint insight has shaped improvement. During 2025/26, Homes in Somerset took several positive steps to strengthen the learning loop between complaints, customer insight, and service design.

Our 2024/25 action plan set out service improvement actions. We have completed eleven identified actions and some of the outcomes are highlighted below.

Source of learning	Completed improvement during 2025/26	Impact / expected benefit
Complaint cases	All expressions of dissatisfaction are logged, and a formal response is issued even where the issue is resolved quickly.	We have improved transparency to reduce the risk of informal concerns falling outside of our oversight arrangements.
Complaint escalation review	Requests to move to stage 2 are accepted in line with the revised Code expectations.	Strengthened fairness and resident confidence in the process.
Resident support needs	Use of bespoke communication plans and single points of contact for some customers.	Improved accessibility understanding and supported more equitable outcomes for all customers.
Customer insight project	Further work launched to improve organisational understanding of customer	Supported earlier intervention and improvement for tailored services,

	needs and so-called “silent voices”.	using a single point of contact for more complex complaints.
Complaint Learning Panel	Senior managers, executive leads and involved customers review cross-cutting themes and lessons learned.	Embedded a stronger culture of challenge and continuous improvement across the organisation.
Customer-led scrutiny	Two independent scrutiny reviews were completed, resulting in 18 recommendations for improvement.	Provided external challenge and resident assurance on service performance and accountability.

Taken together, these improvements show a more systematic route to move from complaint handling as a casework function to complaint handling as an organisational learning system. The next stage of maturity is to demonstrate outcome impact more explicitly, for example through reductions in repeat complaints, improved satisfaction with complaint handling, better contractor communication, and increased confidence in resolution at first point of contact.

9. Compliance summary against the Complaint Handling Code

This 2025/26 report highlights that the Board reviewed and endorsed the self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code at their meeting of 26th May 2026 and confirmed compliance as outlined below:

Code area	Sample status	Evidence / commentary
Definition of a complaint	Compliant	Complaint policy and website information reflect the Code definition and support multiple channels for complaints.
Accessibility awareness and	Complication, with ongoing improvement	Multiple complaint routes are available; further work remains on awareness, clarity and customer understanding of the process.
Two-stage process	Compliant	Homes in Somerset operates a two-stage complaints process with stage 2 access available where customers remain dissatisfied.
Timeliness	Compliant	2025/26 performance against stage 1 and stage 2 timescales remained strong.
Putting things right	Compliant	Use of apologies, practical action and compensation demonstrates that remedy is considered where service failure is identified.
Learning from complaints	Compliant	Learning panels, scrutiny reviews and improvement activity show complaint learning is increasingly embedded.
Self-assessment, reporting and Board oversight	Compliant	Board endorsement, published annual reporting and routine performance oversight are in place.

10. Governance, Scrutiny and Assurance

Board and committee oversight of complaints remains an important part of demonstrating a positive complaints culture. In 2025/26, the Board received six-monthly complaint performance information and worked alongside the Sedgemoor

Tenants Assurance Committee to gain customer assurance on service experience and learning. Our oversight and assurance framework is highlighted below:

Assurance	Governance Statement
Board oversight	The Board received six-monthly reports on complaints handling performance, trends and learning themes.
Member Responsible for Complaints	The designated Portfolio holder from Somerset Council and the Board members meet monthly with the Executive Director to challenge and support complaint culture, learning and reporting.
Customer-led scrutiny	The Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee commissioned two scrutiny activities and provided assurance on service delivery and customer experience.
Performance monitoring	Complaint volumes, response times, themes and satisfaction feedback were monitored through performance reporting arrangements.
Action tracking	Service improvement actions arising from complaints, Ombudsman cases and scrutiny were tracked through management and governance channels.

11. Improvement action plan for 2026/27

Continuous improvement is important to us. From what customers have told us, we have identified the following themes and actions to support our action to improve complaint handling in the coming year. We will monitor delivery against this plan supported by our measure of success.

Priority	Why this matters	Action	Lead owner	Due date	Success measure
Improve complaint communication	Customer feedback consistently identifies updates and follow-up as weak points.	Introduce standard update points, communication expectations and quality checks for all complaint stages.	Customer Focus Manager	30 Dec 26	Improved transactional satisfaction with communication and fewer complaints about lack of contact
Increase awareness of how to complain	Many customers raise dissatisfaction through general contact routes rather than the formal process.	Refresh website wording, contact Centre scripts and customer literature to explain service requests vs complaints and routes to stage 1 and stage 2.	Customer Focus Manager	30 Oct 26	Increase in correctly logged complaints and reduced ambiguity in first-contact records

Strengthen learning from ASB and repairs complaints	These themes continue to generate dissatisfaction and repeat contact.	Quarterly thematic review of ASB and repairs complaints with action tracking through Leadership Team and tenant scrutiny.	Service Managers – ASB and Repairs	Quarterly	Reduction in repeat complaint themes and improved case closure confidence
Improve data quality and record keeping	Ombudsman learning highlighted the importance of accurate records and escalation evidence.	Complete complaint file audit programme and introduce monthly dip-sampling of complaint cases.	Customer Focus Manager	30 Mar 27	Audit compliance above agreed threshold and fewer record-keeping failures
Embed reasonable adjustment practice	More personalised complaint handling is required for some customers.	Create guidance and flags for communication plans, advocates and accessibility needs within complaint workflows.	Complaints Lead	30 Dec 26	Evidence of tailored support in case files and positive resident feedback

12. Somerset Council Response as Governing Body

I have considered the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for the year ended 31 March 2026, together with the Complaint Handling Code self-assessment on behalf of Somerset Council. I am satisfied that I have received sufficient information to review complaint handling performance, understand the customer experience, assess compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, and consider the effectiveness of learning and improvement activity.

In scrutinising the report, together with Homes in Somerset Board, I have considered complaint volumes, trends and escalation rates; compliance with response timescales; customer satisfaction findings; Ombudsman determinations and learning; service improvements delivered during the year; and the adequacy of the action plan for 2026/27. I have also reviewed how customers engage in assurance through scrutiny and feedback activity.



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The Board challenged management on the gap between strong timeliness performance and lower satisfaction with complaint handling, the need for clearer communication with customers during the complaint journey, and the importance of ensuring that all dissatisfaction is recognised and recorded consistently. In response, management are committed to a strengthened action plan focused on communication, awareness, record keeping, accessibility and thematic learning from complaints.

As Lead Member and together with the Board, I will continue to monitor progress through routine governance reporting during 2026/26 and expect regular assurance that the improvement actions set out in this report are being delivered and are leading to a better customer experience as part of the larger ALMO supporting landlord services to 10,000 homes on behalf of the local authority.

Signed: Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts

Lead Member for Communities, Housing Revenue Account, Culture, Equalities and Diversity and Member Responsible for Complaints on behalf of Somerset Council

13. Publication and Accessibility Statement

This report is intended for publication on the Homes in Somerset complaints webpage alongside the Complaint Handling Code self-assessment, the Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy and the governing body response. Alternative formats can be made available on request to ensure accessibility for all customers.

We would like to thank our customers for their honest feedback, which continues to shape our services to continually improve. Through stronger governance, deeper engagement with the Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee, and a renewed focus on learning and service improvement, we are committed to doing better.

Appendix 1 – Supporting Publications

- Complaint Handling Code self-assessment (approved May 2026)
- Homes in Somerset Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy (Reviewed May 2026)
- Performance Infographic for Customers 2025/26