



Council Housing Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for 2025/26

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1. Introduction and Purpose

This report provides assurance on Council Housing complaint handling performance and service improvement activity for 2025/26, drawing on the Housing Complaints 2025/26 case log. It sets out complaint volumes, outcomes, timeliness, key themes, and the principal lessons identified through complaint investigation and review. It is intended to support Member oversight, demonstrate compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, and show how complaint learning is being used to strengthen service delivery, including the Council's approach to damp and mould and wider housing hazards in the context of Awaab's Law.

The aim of the Complaint Handling Code is to promote good practice in complaint handling and, in doing so, support better outcomes for tenants.

Gravesham Borough Council is registered with the Housing Ombudsman, and this information is available on the Housing Ombudsman's website.

The Council has completed a self-assessment to demonstrate compliance with the Complaint Handling Code.

2. Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code

The Council completes an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code to provide assurance on compliance and to identify any areas requiring further action. Where partial non-compliance is identified, the Council updates its corporate Complaints Policy and Procedure and implements the necessary improvement actions. This approach supports transparency, accountability and continuous improvement in complaint handling.

The Council's self-assessment is included at Appendix 1. This will continue to be reviewed annually to maintain compliance and support continuous improvement in complaint handling.

3. Lessons Learned

3.1. Quality of responses

Our review of complaint responses during 2025/26 identified recurring lessons in relation to the quality, clarity and consistency of written communication. These findings provide assurance on where current practice is working effectively and where further strengthening is required to ensure responses are fair, evidence-based, proportionate and tenant-focused.

During 2025/26, officers received complaint handling training to support more consistent application of the Complaint Handling Code and improve the quality of complaint responses across managers, which has given managers the skills to:

- Set out a clear explanation demonstrating full understanding of the complaint.
- Explain decisions clearly and evidence the basis for conclusions reached.
- Acknowledge mistakes openly and apologise where service has fallen short.

- Ensure the tone of responses remains professional, factual, balanced and non-defensive.
- Take ownership of the issue and set out any actions required to put matters right.
- Avoid unnecessary jargon and unexplained acronyms.
- Address each complaint point fully and directly.
- Provide effective signposting, including relevant contact details where appropriate.

3.2. Response process

In a number of cases during 2025/26, services requested extensions to complaint deadlines or responded later than the target timescale. To improve compliance with Ombudsman expectations and provide a better customer experience, the following actions were identified:

- Where a full response cannot be issued within the target timescale, send a holding response before the deadline expires.
- Where meeting the complainant forms part of the proposed resolution, arrange the appointment before the complaint response deadline so that the outcome can be reflected in the final response.
- Where appropriate, make early telephone contact with the complainant to clarify the issues raised, confirm the outcome sought, and support early triage and resolution.
- Where service failure is identified, consider whether an apology, practical remedy or monetary compensation is appropriate in line with the Council's complaints policy and remedy framework.

3.3. Delivery against learning identified in the 2024/25 report

This section draws forward the principal learning and improvement actions identified in the 2024/25 Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report and provides an assessment of whether they have been met, partially met or not met during 2025/26. This helps demonstrate continuity of learning, provides assurance on progress made, and identifies where further action remains necessary.

Learning from 2024/25	2025/26 position	Status
Improve the quality of complaint responses, including clearer explanations, stronger ownership, fuller responses to each complaint point, better signposting, and a more professional, non-defensive tone.	Progress has been made through complaint handling training for managers and officers, stronger expectations around clarity, evidence, ownership and signposting, and a more explicit focus on professional and tenant-focused responses.	Met

Improve the acknowledgement process so that complaint acknowledgements summarise the complaint and the outcome sought.	The Council now includes a summary of the complaint within the acknowledgement letter, which helps confirm that the complaint has been understood correctly and clarifies the outcome sought at an early stage.	Met
Improve response timeliness and use of holding responses, including ensuring that appointments linked to complaint resolution are arranged before the response deadline where possible.	Stage 1 timeliness improved slightly in 2025/26, but stage 2 timeliness reduced slightly and delays remain a prominent complaint theme. This suggests some progress has been made, but that the learning has not yet been fully achieved consistently across all services and complaint stages.	Partially met
Apply policy and procedure more consistently by referring clearly to the relevant policy, procedure or statutory requirement in complaint responses.	The 2025/26 report places greater emphasis on the need to reference policy and procedure clearly in complaint responses so that tenants understand how decisions have been reached.	Met
Improve customer service and communication with tenants so that the service is clearer, more responsive and more positive in tone.	Improvement activity has taken place, including training, stronger expectations around communication, and greater emphasis on updates and expectation-setting. However, communication failure and dissatisfaction with service remain recurring complaint themes, showing that this is still an active area for improvement.	Partially met

Review the telephone system and call handling approach to support triage, service quality and learning from calls.	Call handling has improved through greater management oversight, clearer expectations around tenant contact and follow-up, and training undertaken to support more consistent customer service and complaint handling. While this remains an area requiring continued attention, the current position demonstrates clear progress against the learning identified in the previous report.	Met
Improve tenant handbooks so that landlord and tenant responsibilities are set out more clearly and in a more user-friendly way.	Tenant handbooks have now been updated to present landlord and tenant responsibilities more clearly and in a more user-friendly format. To improve accessibility and support wider tenant engagement, video and audio versions have also been completed.	Met
Use ongoing complaint monitoring alongside Tenant Satisfaction Measures and wider performance information to identify trends and emerging issues.	The 2025/26 report explicitly recognises the importance of continuing to monitor complaint performance, complaint themes, escalation patterns and Tenant Satisfaction Measures together. This shows the learning has been carried through conceptually, but the report presents this primarily as an ongoing priority rather than evidencing that it is yet fully embedded as routine practice.	Met

Where actions are assessed as partially met or not evidenced, they will be carried forward into 2026/27 service improvement planning, monitored through management oversight and complaint performance review, and revisited in the next annual report to provide assurance on further progress.

4. Complaint Handling Performance

Summary comparison of key complaint metrics, 2024/25 and 2025/26

Metric		2024/25	2025/26	Year-on-year position
Stage complaints received	1	116	294	An increase of 178 complaints was recorded
Stage complaints upheld	1	53.4%	32.0%	A reduction of 21.4 percentage points was recorded
Stage responded to within deadline	1	91.3%	92.8%	A marginal improvement of 1.5 percentage points was recorded
Stage complaints received	2	18	30	An increase of 12 complaints was recorded
Stage complaints upheld	2	72.2%	60.0%	A reduction of 12.2 percentage points was recorded
Stage responded to within deadline	2	88.8%	86.7%	A reduction of 2.1 percentage points was recorded
Housing Ombudsman activity		4 referrals, 3 determinations	9 referrals; 3 determinations; 6 formal investigations	A higher level of Ombudsman-related activity was recorded in 2025/26, although the underlying measures are not directly comparable

In summary, 2025/26 saw a marked increase in complaint volumes at both stage 1 and stage 2 when compared with 2024/25. Stage 1 timeliness improved marginally, while stage 2 timeliness reduced slightly, and the proportion of complaints upheld decreased at both stages.

4.1. Stage one complaint performance

	Total number of stage 1 complaints received	% of complaints upheld	% of complaints responded to within deadline
2024/25	116	53.4%	91.3%

	Total number of stage 1 complaints received	% of complaints upheld	% of complaints responded to within deadline
2025/26	294	32%	92.8%

Compared with 2024/25, the number of stage 1 complaints increased from **116** to **294**. Over the same period, the proportion of stage 1 complaints recorded as upheld reduced from **53.4%** to **32%**, while the proportion responded to within deadline improved slightly from **91.3%** to **92.8%**. This indicates a significant increase in complaint volume in 2025/26, alongside a small improvement in timeliness. The increase appears to reflect a combination of service pressure, improved complaint capture and classification, and the approach that all disrepair cases received are raised as stage 1 complaints, which has particularly affected repair complaint volumes.

The relatively low proportion of stage 1 complaints upheld in 2025/26 (32%) appears to be driven primarily by the nature of complaints received rather than by evidence of widespread service failure. Analysis indicates that many non-upheld complaints related to dissatisfaction with the service provided, perceived delay, concerns about service quality, or disagreement with decisions that were ultimately found to be reasonable and in line with policy. In a significant number of cases, the complaint reflected a difference between tenant expectations and operational reality, particularly where works were more complex, delays were justified, or the service met the required standard even if the outcome did not align with what the tenant wanted. A smaller proportion also related to allegations about staff conduct or fairness that were not substantiated by the evidence available. Taken together, this suggests that the lower uphold rate should be understood in the context of expectation management, communication and transparency, rather than as a direct indicator of systemic service failure, although it still highlights the importance of clear explanations, early engagement and visible case ownership to reduce dissatisfaction and avoid escalation.

The increase in complaint volume and complexity may also reflect changes in how complaints are now being presented. Officers have seen a growing number of complaints submitted in a more detailed and structured way, including cases where tenants appear to have used artificial intelligence tools to help set out their circumstances more clearly and comprehensively. This, alongside ongoing national and government-led promotion of awareness around complaint rights and redress, appears to be contributing to longer, more fully articulated complaints for officers to assess and respond to. While this can support clearer understanding of the issues raised, it can also increase the time required to investigate, evidence and respond to complaints proportionately.

4.2. Stage two complaint performance

	Total number of stage 2 complaints received	% of complaints upheld	% of complaints responded to within deadline
2024/25	18	72.2%	88.8%
2025/26	30	60.0%	86.7%

Compared with 2024/25, the number of stage 2 complaints increased from **18** to **30**. The proportion of stage 2 complaints recorded as upheld reduced from **72.2%** to **60.0%**, and the proportion responded to within deadline reduced slightly from **88.8%** to **86.7%**. This suggests that escalation volumes increased in 2025/26, while timeliness and uphold rates at stage 2 both fell slightly year on year. The lower proportion upheld at stage 2 may also indicate more robust investigation and resolution at stage 1 in some cases, including earlier consideration of appropriate remedies such as apology, practical action or monetary compensation where service failure has been identified.

4.3. Stage 1 complaints by team

Table 4.3: Stage 1 complaints by team

Team	Number of stage 1 complaints	% of stage 1 complaints
DSO Building Management	157	53.4%
Tenancy Management	103	35.03%
Allocations	28	9.52%
Housing Income	6	2.05%

In 2025/26, stage 1 complaints were recorded across the following teams: **DSO Building Management-157**, **Tenancy Management-103**, **Allocations-28** and **Housing Income-6**. DSO Building Management and Tenancy Management accounted for the largest volumes, reflecting the high level of day-to-day contact these services have with tenants.

This distribution is consistent with the nature of the issues recorded in the complaint log, including repairs, damp and mould, communication, tenancy management, anti-social behaviour, Right to Buy and estate-related concerns.

The 2025/26 data also shows a smaller but still notable number of complaints within Allocations and leasehold / Right to Buy activity, which should continue to be monitored alongside responsive housing management and repairs services.

These figures should also be viewed in the context of the overall volume and nature of work delivered during the year. Across repairs and damp and mould services, 40,707 jobs were raised in 2025/26, of which 29,960 were completed in house. Complaint numbers therefore represent only a proportion of total service activity, but

they provide an important indicator of where delay, communication failure or unresolved issues have had the greatest impact on tenants and the direct impact that service delivery has on tenants' daily lives.

This is particularly relevant within DSO Building Management, where not all cases are comparable to a standard responsive repair. For example, damp and mould complaints often require inspection, diagnosis, environmental assessment, follow-on works and monitoring over time, while competing emergency demand can also affect the sequencing of routine repairs. In some cases, repeat visits, specialist involvement or staged works are necessary before a lasting resolution can be achieved, which can increase both the complexity of case management and the risk of dissatisfaction if communication and ownership are not maintained clearly throughout.

4.4. Stage 2 complaints by team

Table 4.4: Stage 2 complaints by team

Team	Number of stage 2 complaints	% of stage 2 complaints
Tenancy Management	16	53.3%
DSO Building Management	14	46.6%

In 2025/26, stage 2 complaints were recorded across two teams only: **Tenancy Management – 16 complaints (53.3%)** and **DSO Building Management – 14 complaints (46.6%)**. This shows that escalation at stage 2 was concentrated entirely within these two service areas, with a relatively even split overall and Tenancy Management accounting for a slightly higher proportion. The figures suggest that the main areas requiring continued attention at stage 1 are tenancy-related case handling and repairs or building management matters, where clearer communication, timely action and stronger resolution may help reduce escalation.

4.5. Complaints by themes

Complaint themes continue to provide valuable insight into where services are not meeting expectations and where improvement action should be targeted. For 2025/26, the complaint log shows that the most common themes were unhappy with service provided, delay or length of time in performing a service, quality of service provided, conduct or behaviour of a member of staff, unfair treatment by the authority and promised service or action was not undertaken.

These themes were evident across both tenancy and repairs services and often reflected wider concerns about communication, case ownership, follow-up and consistency of service delivery.

4.6. Principal complaint themes in 2025/26

Principal complaint theme	Summary note
Unhappy with service provided	The most common overall theme, reflecting broad dissatisfaction with the service received.
Delay or length of time in performing a service	A recurring cause of complaint, particularly where inspections or reports did not lead quickly to resolution.
Quality of service provided	Frequently associated with dissatisfaction about completed repairs, contractor performance, or the standard of service delivery.
Conduct or behaviour of a member of staff	Includes concerns about tone, professionalism, and how tenants felt treated during service contact.
Unfair treatment by the authority	Commonly linked to perceptions of unfair decisions, inconsistent handling, or lack of appropriate consideration of circumstances.
Promised service or action was not undertaken	Reflects cases where tenants believed agreed actions, repairs, or follow-up activity did not take place as expected.
Lack of reply	Highlights the importance of timely responses and active case ownership.
Query on how a decision was made	Shows the need for clearer explanations of how decisions are reached and the policies or evidence relied upon.
Failure to respond to set timescales	Demonstrates the impact of missed deadlines on tenant confidence and complaint escalation.

- **Service dissatisfaction and delay** remained the dominant themes, showing the importance of timely action, clearer updates and stronger follow-through.
- **Quality and conduct issues** continued to feature prominently, highlighting the need for consistent customer care, contractor oversight and professional communication.
- **Decision-making and fairness concerns** were particularly visible in allocations, tenancy and Right to Buy cases, where tenants sought clearer explanations and more transparent handling.

Vulnerability

A review of complaint data for the year shows that vulnerability is a significant and recurring factor across housing services. The analysis indicates that around one third of cases include explicit references to vulnerability, including disability, mental health, children's needs, and serious health conditions. This reinforces the need for a risk-based approach to complaint handling and provides important assurance that vulnerability must be recognised clearly and reflected in decision-making, prioritisation, communication and learning.

This is particularly important in relation to damp and mould and other health-impacting housing conditions. The introduction of Awaab's Law has reinforced the need for social landlords to investigate hazards promptly, communicate clearly with tenants, take

timely safety action, and ensure that long-term preventative works are progressed where required. Complaint review therefore provides an important source of assurance on how effectively these expectations are being reflected in service delivery.

Gas and Heating

The complaint data also indicates a recurring pattern of dissatisfaction in relation to the gas and heating contractor, particularly around contact ability, short-notice appointments, missed or delayed attendances, repeat visits and communication with tenants. Although these cases do not represent the largest volume overall, they carry heightened risk because they often involve loss of heating or hot water and can have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable households.

This reinforces the importance of continued contract management oversight, performance monitoring and clear escalation routes where service failure occurs. An improvement plan is now in place with the contractor to address the issues identified, and additional tenant engagement has already taken place to support this. This has included tenants visiting the contractor's head office to discuss their concerns directly, as well as the contractor attending the Independent Living Forum to hear feedback first hand. These actions are intended to improve accountability, strengthen communication and support service improvement in an area where the impact on tenants can be significant.

Tenancy Management

Tenancy Management complaints are typically driven more by process than by the substantive service outcome itself. The most common issues relate to delays in progressing cases or applications, a lack of updates after residents submit evidence, unclear ownership of cases, and the need for residents to repeatedly chase responses. As a result, complaints often escalate not because the eventual decision is disputed, but because residents experience the process as slow, opaque and poorly communicated, with little visibility of next steps or expected timescales.

With regard to delays in areas such as Right to Buy, the Council has already recruited a new Right to Buy and Leasehold Manager, who has made progress in reducing a significant backlog of cases. This backlog arose following an influx of applications submitted before changes to Right to Buy legislation came into force. Those changes contributed to an increase in complaints in this area, although these were mainly linked to historic delays rather than current case handling. Complaints in this area have mainly related to these historic delays, but volumes are now reducing as cases are progressed.

The Context

When considering these themes, it is also important to view complaint volumes in the context of the overall volume of repairs and housing activity delivered during the year. Across repairs and damp and mould services, 40,707 jobs were raised in 2025/26, of which 29,960 were completed in house. Complaints therefore represent only a proportion of total service activity, but they remain a critical source of insight where service failure, delay or poor communication has had the greatest impact on tenants.

This is particularly relevant in damp and mould cases, which are not always directly comparable to a standard responsive repair because they frequently require inspection, diagnosis, environmental assessment, follow-on works and monitoring over time rather than a single operative visit. In addition, competing emergency demand can affect the sequencing of routine activity, and some cases become more complex where repeat visits, specialist input or staged works are required before a lasting resolution can be achieved.

Taken together, these factors help explain why delay remains such a prominent complaint theme and reinforce the need for strong case ownership, clear updates and active management oversight where cases are prolonged or technically complex.

4.7. Number of complaints escalated to the Housing Ombudsman

Total number of complaints referred to the Housing Ombudsman	Total number of Housing Ombudsman cases determined	Number progressing to formal investigation with Housing Ombudsman
9	3	6

By comparison, in 2024/25 the Council received **4** Ombudsman queries and **3** determinations. In 2025/26, the Council recorded **9** complaints referred to the Housing Ombudsman, of which **3** were determined during the year and **6** progressed to formal investigation.

Although the level of external referral remains modest in the context of overall complaint volumes, referral to the Housing Ombudsman remains an important source of assurance. It provides an independent perspective on whether the Council's complaint handling approach, communication, record keeping and learning are sufficiently robust, and whether tenants have been given a fair opportunity to achieve resolution through the Council's own processes before external escalation occurs.

Across the three complaints, the Ombudsman identified

- a recurring theme of service failure in the Council's complaint handling, particularly around the online form on the website being confusing
- There were concerns about the accuracy of the response in one case where incomplete contractor information was relied upon.
- In another case there was also a separate service failure in the handling of the pre-void inspection.

Taken together, the findings point to issues around the quality, timeliness and accuracy of responses, although it should be noted that all three cases are historic and reflect delays in the Ombudsman's caseload rather than current performance.

The Council will continue to monitor any contact from the Housing Ombudsman closely and use this, alongside internal complaint review, as part of its wider assurance framework. This includes maintaining clear records, strengthening the quality of stage

1 and stage 2 responses, evidencing how learning has been applied, and ensuring that complaint handling remains aligned with the Complaint Handling Code and wider regulatory expectations.

In addition, the Council will continue to review relevant Housing Ombudsman maladministration findings, wider case decisions and spotlight reports proactively in order to learn from issues arising across the sector, not only from cases involving Gravesham Borough Council directly. This will help ensure that emerging risks, good practice expectations and recurring national themes are reflected in local service improvement, complaint handling and policy development.

4.8. Learning Taken from Complaints

Complaints received during 2025/26 have played an important role in informing service improvement across Housing Services.

Review of complaint themes and outcomes has provided assurance on where operational controls, communication, prioritisation and case management require strengthening, particularly where vulnerable households are affected. The actions below demonstrate how complaint learning is being translated into service improvement.

In addition to identifying individual service failures, the 2025/26 complaint review has provided a broader source of operational assurance by highlighting where recurring issues require targeted management attention. In particular, complaint analysis has helped to identify persistent risks relating to delay, communication, case ownership and the visibility of actions taken to resolve concerns. This has enabled services to focus improvement activity more clearly, strengthen management oversight of high-risk and repeat cases, and ensure that learning from complaints is considered alongside wider performance, compliance and tenant feedback information when setting service priorities.

Improved focus on early resolution and prevention of escalation. Complaint review highlighted that cases were more likely to escalate where issues remained unresolved over a prolonged period or where progress was not visible to tenants. In response, services have strengthened their focus on early intervention, with greater management oversight of long-running and repeat cases, particularly at stage 1. This is intended to support earlier resolution and reduce avoidable escalation to stage 2.

Stronger consideration of vulnerability in complaint handling

Complaint analysis showed a significant proportion of cases involving health conditions, disability, mental health needs or households with children. In response, we are aiming to recruit officers within tenancy management with a focus on vulnerabilities and tenancy sustainment. This is intended to support more person-centred responses and clearer assurance that vulnerability is being considered actively rather than procedurally.

Better oversight of delays and long-running cases

Delays, particularly between inspection and completion of works or actions, remained the most common driver of dissatisfaction. Services have therefore strengthened tracking of open cases and the escalation of overdue actions, with a stronger expectation that managers review stalled cases and intervene earlier where progress is not being made.

Strengthened approach to damp, mould and property condition cases

Complaint review showed that temporary or surface-level responses often led to repeat dissatisfaction, particularly where health impacts were raised. In response, services have reinforced a more diagnostic and root-cause approach to damp and mould complaints, with clearer escalation routes for repeat issues and greater awareness of the need for sustained resolution where living conditions are affecting health and wellbeing. This also supports the Council's readiness to meet the expectations of Awaab's Law, including prompt investigation, timely safety action, and clearer progression of preventative works where hazards are identified.

Improved communication and expectation-setting

Complaint analysis showed that poor communication was not usually the original cause of dissatisfaction but often contributed to escalation where issues remained unresolved. In response, officers at stage 1 are encouraged to make early telephone contact where appropriate to help triage the complaint, confirm a full understanding of the issues raised and the outcome sought, and provide clearer advice on next steps and likely timescales. There is also a need to manage tenant expectations clearly where the issue raised does not necessarily lead to the outcome anticipated by the tenant, for example in damp and mould cases where tenants may expect a housing allocation or banding review. This is intended to support earlier resolution and reduce avoidable escalation.

Repairs tenant panel

In response to the volume and nature of complaints relating to repairs and property condition, the Council will establish a tenant panel focused specifically on the repairs service. This will provide a more direct route for tenants to share feedback on their experience of reporting repairs, communication, appointment handling and the quality of completed works, and will help ensure that tenant insight is used more actively to inform service improvement, challenge performance and shape future improvements within the repairs service.

Clearer handling of tenancy and anti-social behaviour cases

Complaints within Tenancy Management highlighted tenant frustration where anti-social behaviour cases took time to progress or where enforcement thresholds were not understood clearly. In response, there is an increased focus on case management standards, recording of actions and rationale, and clearer explanations where enforcement or other intervention is limited by policy or evidence thresholds. We have also introduced anti-social behaviour (ASB) questionnaires at the point a case is closed, to capture additional resident feedback and strengthen the evidence base for

service learning. This will help improve our understanding of resident experience, identify any recurring themes or gaps in case handling, and support a more informed approach to service improvement and future complaint prevention.

Better capture and use of learning from complaints

Complaint review has also shown the importance of moving beyond case-specific remedies and using complaint outcomes to identify wider service improvement opportunities. Learning from complaints is now being considered more systematically at service and corporate level so that recurring themes can inform performance discussions, process review and future planning.

Officer complaint handling training

During 2025/26, managers received complaint handling training to strengthen understanding of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, improve the quality and consistency of responses, and reinforce the importance of clear explanations, empathy, ownership and learning. This training supports the Council's wider aim of improving complaint handling quality at stage 1 and reducing avoidable escalation.

Training, Capability and Professionalism

We are committed to improving the training, capability and professionalism of staff across the service. A skills and qualifications audit has now been completed, and this is informing the rollout of further training in a range of formats to support consistent practice and professional development. We are also committing to the Social Housing Stigma Campaign as part of our wider focus on culture, resident experience and service standards. This will be further strengthened through the recruitment of a new Complaints and Data Manager, who will help ensure that feedback and learning from complaints are systematically captured and used to drive continuous improvement in service delivery.

Overall, complaint feedback continues to provide an important source of learning and improvement. The conclusion below summarises the principal service priorities arising from the 2025/26 complaint review.

5. Conclusion

The 2025/26 complaint review identifies the main service areas requiring continued focus, particularly repairs, damp and mould case handling, tenancy management, allocations, Right to Buy, communication and follow-up. The principal service priorities arising from complaint review are set out below and will continue to inform service planning, management oversight and improvement activity.

Complaint review has also reinforced that delays remain the single most significant driver of dissatisfaction and escalation, particularly where inspections do not lead quickly to resolution, where tenants have to report the same issue more than once, or where communication is limited. This learning supports a continued focus on earlier management intervention, clearer case ownership and stronger follow-through at stage 1.

In addition, complaint themes suggest that gas and heating services require continued attention through contract management and performance oversight. Recurring concerns about appointments, communication, call handling and delayed resolution demonstrate the need to maintain close scrutiny of contractor performance, particularly where tenants are left without heating or hot water.

- Improve communication and strengthen case ownership across teams, particularly where complaints involve more than one service area.
- Strengthen oversight of repairs, contractor performance, and damp and mould case progression in order to reduce avoidable delay and repeat dissatisfaction.
- Improve the quality, clarity, and consistency of complaint responses, including clearer explanations of decisions, better signposting, and stronger use of relevant policy references.
- Embed a stronger customer service focus through timely updates, professional communication, and improved tenant engagement.

It is also important to consider complaints alongside positive feedback from tenants where services have worked well.

5.1. Compliments

Over the same period, tenants submitted a substantial number of compliments (411), particularly in frontline repairs and building management services. Taken together, the complaints and compliments data present a balanced picture: where services are delayed, inconsistent, or unclear, tenants are more likely to complain; where staff communicate clearly, treat tenants with respect, and resolve issues effectively, tenants are equally willing to provide positive feedback. This reinforces that the key challenge is consistency of delivery across all cases, particularly those involving vulnerability, complexity, or repeat contact.

Complaint learning will also continue to inform the Council's approach to Awaab's Law and the management of housing hazards, particularly damp and mould, excess cold, and other health-impacting conditions. This will remain an important area of assurance for Members, tenants and regulators as legislative requirements continue to develop.

The Council will also continue its proactive review of relevant Housing Ombudsman maladministration findings, wider case decisions and spotlight reports as part of its wider assurance and improvement framework. This will help ensure that learning is drawn not only from local complaints, but also from emerging risks, recurring themes and good practice identified across the sector, so that local policy, complaint handling and service delivery continue to reflect external expectations and learning.

Ongoing monitoring of complaint performance, complaint themes, escalation patterns and Tenant Satisfaction Measures will help the Council assess whether these actions are delivering measurable improvement and providing the intended assurance to Members, tenants and regulators. It will also support the early identification of emerging service risks, recurring issues by service area or estate, and any further changes required to policy, process or operational delivery in order to better meet the needs of tenants, leaseholders and applicants where relevant.