

# Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report 2024/25

## 1. Cabinet Member's Introduction

This year's Annual Housing Complaints Handling and Service Improvement Report reflects on a period of learning, improvement and change for Stevenage Borough Council.

Following the inspection last year the Regulator of Social Housing awarded the Council a [C2 outcome](#), the second highest rating. While this shows we are performing well against the standards in most areas there is room for some improvement. As part of their judgement the Regulator recognised the progress we've made specifically around how we deal with complaints; noting clear evidence that we had identified weaknesses in how we had handled tenant complaints, but we had taken meaningful steps to improve our approach as a result. The Regulator's acknowledgement of our corrective actions, and the resulting positive change in our complaint handling, demonstrates that we are listening, learning and acting.

We know how important it is that when things go wrong, residents feel heard and confident that their concerns will be taken seriously. Over the past year, we've worked hard to put things right where we have fallen short. These efforts have already led to better outcomes for many residents, and we're determined to build on that progress.

This report presents the key themes and trends in complaints received over the last year, identifying areas where performance has improved and where further attention is needed. Importantly, it also sets out how we are using insight from complaints as a valuable source of learning and as a tool for continuous improvement.

Thank you to every resident who has taken time to tell us when something hasn't gone well. Your voice is helping us improve.

Councillor Jackie Hollywell (Cabinet Member –Housing)

## **2. Purpose of this report**

This report provides an overview of how the Council Housing Service has managed complaints during the period April 2024 to March 2025 and the improvements made to services because of complaint findings.

It supports transparency, accountability and the continuous development of our council housing services in line with regulatory expectations and resident feedback. We value customer feedback and see complaints as an important part of gathering insight.

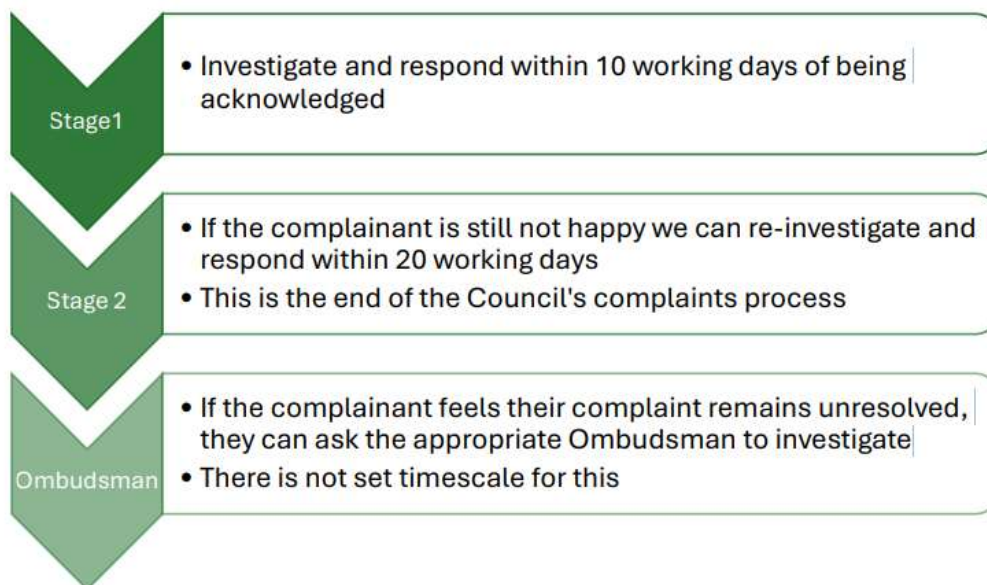
The Housing Ombudsman Service was set up to look at complaints about social housing organisations. It regulates dispute resolution for social landlords and requires us to publish an annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report, and to complete an Annual Self-Assessment against their Complaint Handling Code. The findings from this Self-Assessment have directly informed service improvements and continue to shape our approach to complaint handling, ensuring we remain aligned with sector expectations and resident needs.

This report and the supporting documents will be submitted to the Housing Ombudsman and made available to our tenants as required, alongside any annual reports prepared by the Ombudsman that relate to our performance as a landlord.

We are dedicated to providing excellent customer service and we welcome this opportunity to update our tenants, leaseholders and other residents on how we have complied with the Complaints Handling Code, and to share our commitments to measures we are taking to improve services as a result of complaints received.

## **3. How the Council considers complaints**

We operate a two-stage investigation process, with the option to refer to the Ombudsman if the complainant remains dissatisfied. Our Complaints Policy sets out the details of how we consider, investigate and respond to complaints.



There are two Ombudsman involved in the regulation of our complaints:

***Housing Ombudsman Service*** –covering complaints relating to our housing landlord functions such as repairs and maintenance or rent and service charges.

***Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)*** –covering complaints relating to our non-landlord housing functions such as homeless applications and decisions along with housing allocations and waiting lists.

The Housing Ombudsman also set out rules for us to follow called the Complaint Handling Code. This was developed jointly with the LGSCO to enable consistency in approach across housing and other key related services. With the current code coming into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024; we have reviewed our Complaints Policy to ensure it aligns with this code and reflects recognised best practice.

## 4. Complaint Volumes and Trends

### 4.1. Total Complaints Received

As captured in Figure 1 & 2 below, in 2024/25 we received a total of 688 Stage One complaints: a 16% reduction on the previous year's figures of 818. Of these, 85 were escalated to a Stage Two complaint, which equates to just over 12%.

Housemark benchmarking, recognised as a leading sector measure, shows that in 2024/25 we received 88.7 Stage One complaints and 10.9 Stage Two complaints per 1000 homes, compared with national medians of 55.2 and 8.8. While our figures are above the benchmark, this may in part reflect residents' confidence in using our accessible complaints process. But we also accept that there are areas in which we are currently improving the delivery of services, and acknowledge that there is further work

to do. We will, however, look to our higher-performing peers to understand the drivers behind their lower volumes and identify opportunities for improvement.

We are pleased to see that once again our complaint escalation rate sits comfortably within the typical range of 10-15% as seen by the Housing Ombudsmen Service, suggesting that volumes are not high enough to indicate an obvious issue with our stage one resolution phase; or low enough to suggest service-users could be discouraged and/or misinformed about the complaint escalation process.

Figure 1

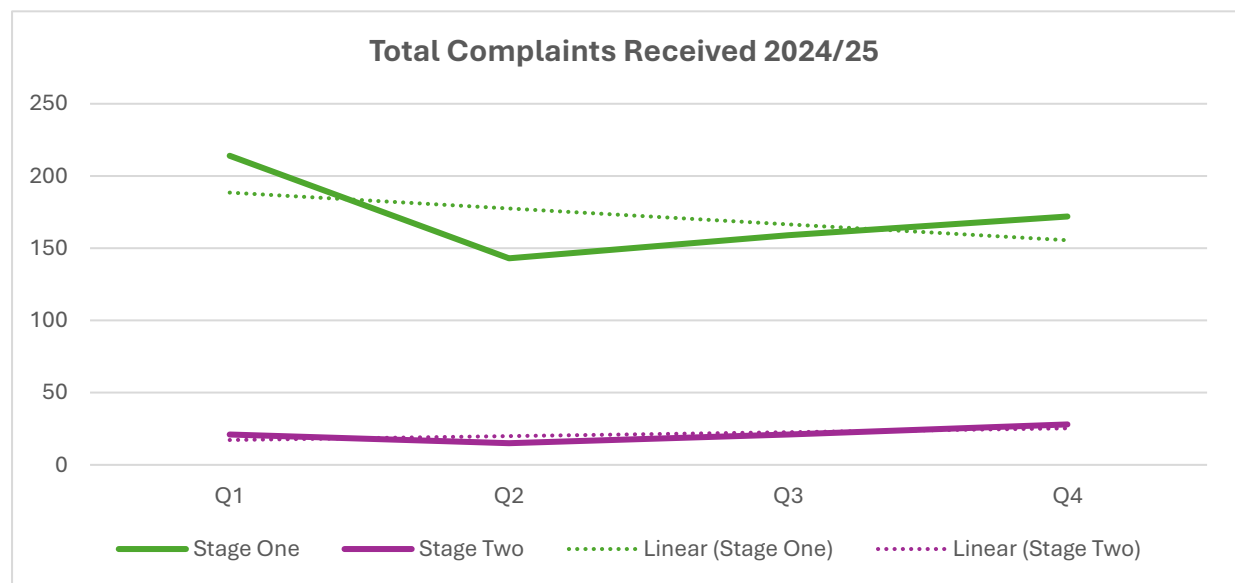
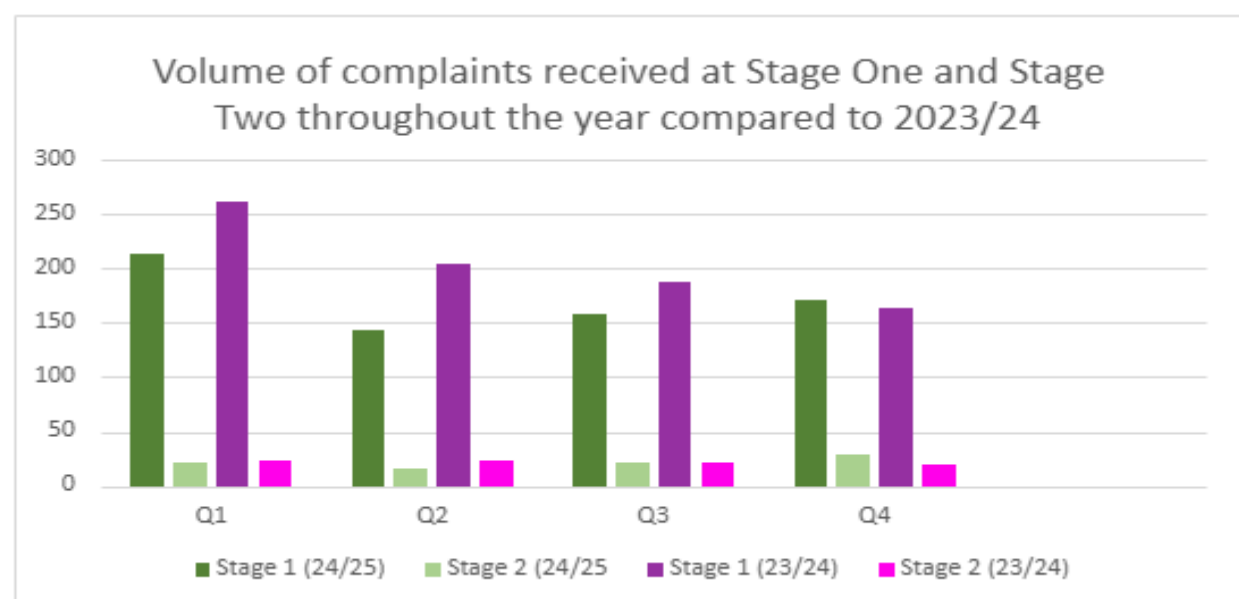


Figure 2



While Stage Two complaint volumes are consistent throughout the year, we have seen a

spike in Stage One complaint volumes, in quarter one, over the last two years. These spikes can be largely attributed to seasonable repair work volumes.

We have been working to evolve our Repairs Service to better meet the changing needs of our tenants and properties. This period of transition has not been without its operational challenges, some of which are reflected in our complaints data. Issues around delays and service quality have been key themes. In response, we have taken steps to strengthen the service, including bringing in new contractors and introducing a revised set of Contractor Standards. These changes aim to improve the quality, consistency and timelessness of repairs, and are part of our wider commitment to providing a more responsive and resident-focused service.

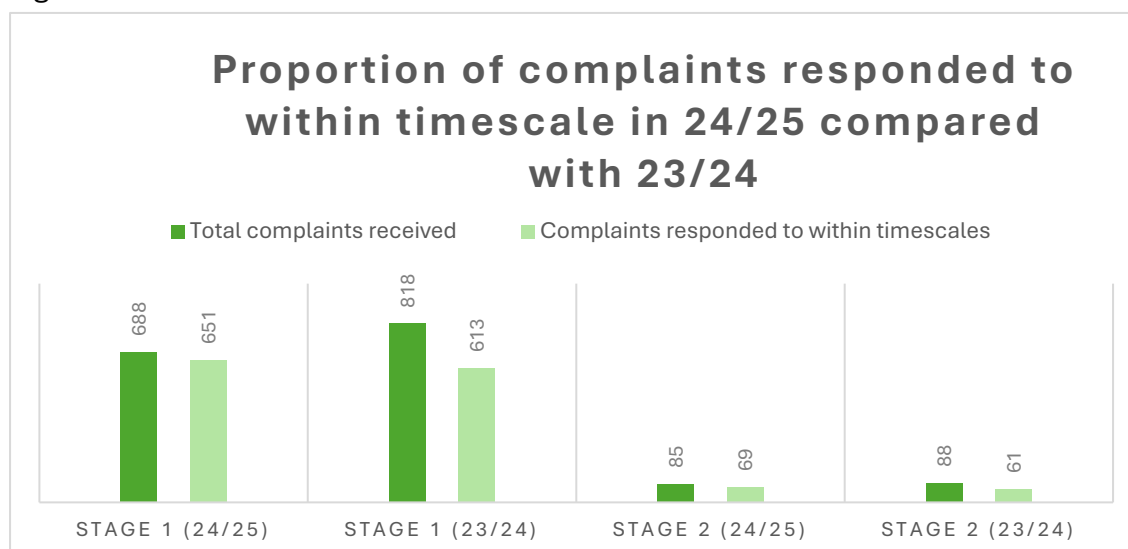
#### 4.2 Timeliness and Performance

As seen in Figures 3, 4 and 5 below, nearly 95% of Stage One complaints received in 2024/25 were responded to within the timescales set out in the Complaints Handling Code. This is a significant improvement on 2023/24, which sat at 77%, and above the benchmark set by our peers by a notable margin.

Of all the Stage Two complaints received in 2024/25, 81% were responded to within timescales; again, a significant improvement on the 2023/24 figures of nearly 12%, however, further progress is required as we remain slightly behind our peers.

It is recognised that the Repairs Service has consistently recorded a higher proportion of complaints outside of the expected timescales compared to other service areas. This reflects ongoing operational pressures and historic backlogs, particularly during 2022/23 which has taken time to address. However, progress is being made to the service through the implementation of the Repairs Improvement Plan. Whilst complaint management has been heavily supported by the rollout of regular Complaints Clinics, which provide a valuable platform for early intervention and resolution, and ensure that the importance of meeting response targets is consistently reinforced by Strategic Complaints Managers.

Figure 3



We had anticipated that we may find a higher proportion of Stage One complaints responded to within timescale, owing to the dedicated resource provided through the Strategic Complaints Management team. Stage Two complaints are managed independently from this team and reviewed by an Assistant Director or Head of Service, in line with the principles of fairness and impartiality. However, competing strategic and operational priorities has resulted in delays in meeting the required timescales, on a few occasions.

A common theme across some of our more complex complaints, that exceeded expected timescales, was ‘no access’ delays, where missed appointments or difficulties gaining entry to properties contributed to prolonged resolution times and increased resident frustration. Reviews of complaint cases highlighted a large variation across services in how ‘no-access’ situations are managed, leading to inconsistent approaches and delays in resolution. In response, we have commissioned the development and implementation of a universal no-access process, to ensure a consistent, fair and efficient approach across all housing services.

While current performance demonstrates significant progress, we recognise the importance of consistent compliance with timeframes, along with the prioritisation of complaint handling, set out by the Housing Ombudsman Service in the Complaint Handling Code. We are committed to ensuring that all complaints are responded to within the timescales set out in the Complaints Handling Code, as we appreciate that timely and effective complaint handling is essential to delivering a positive resident experience and maintaining trust. In the coming year, our Strategic Complaints Team will continue to monitor performance closely to deliver further improvements in this area of complaint handling.

Figure 4

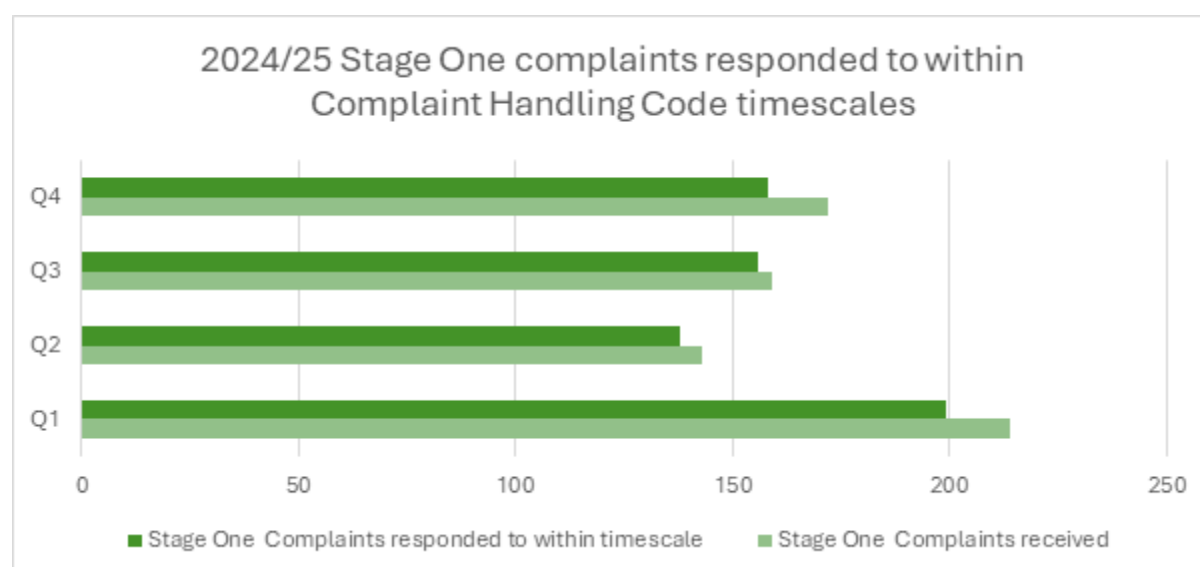
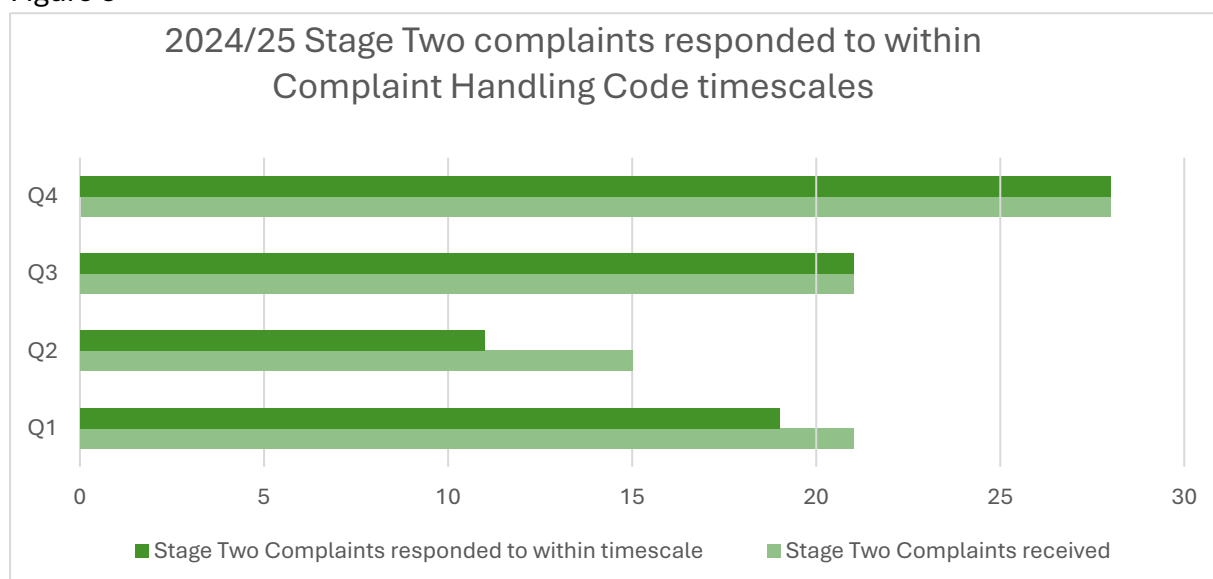


Figure 5

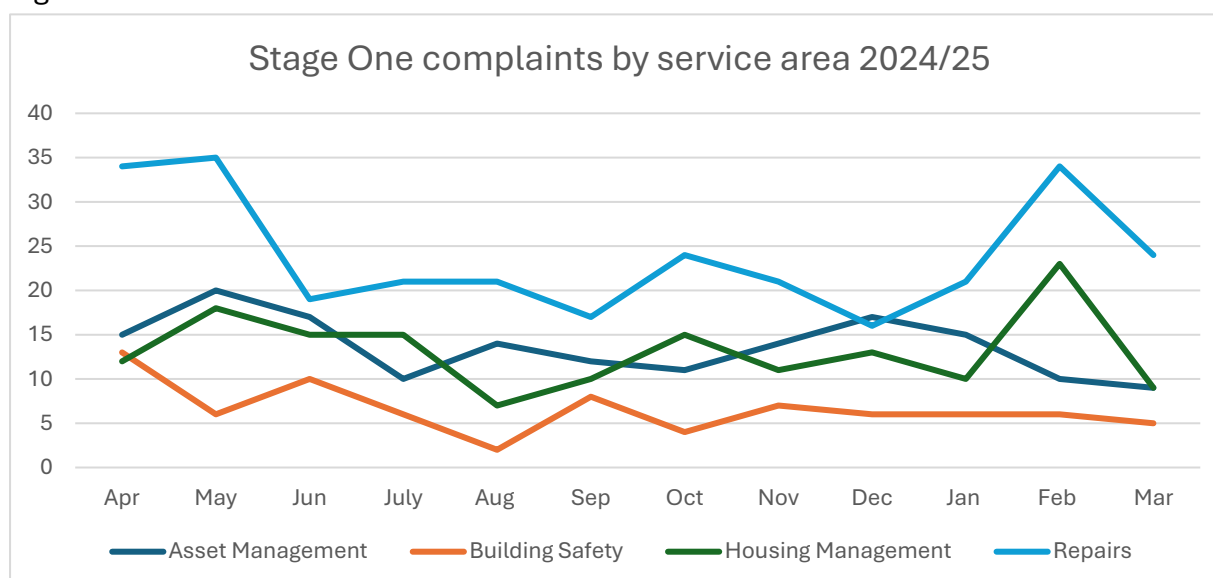


### 4.3 Complaints by Service Area

Complaints relating to the Repairs Service continue to represent the highest proportion of all complaints received (Figure 6). This trend is reflective of that reported by the Housing Ombudsman Service. In its May 2025 *Spotlight Report on Repairs and Maintenance – Repairing Trust*, the Housing Ombudsman found a 474% increase in complaints concerning substandard living conditions between 2019-20 to 2024-25.

Despite this, it was positive to see a reduction in the overall volume of repairs-related complaints this year, which suggests that some of the recent changes and improvements, being delivered through the Repairs Improvement Programme, may be having a positive impact. This programme was heavily shaped using learning from repairs-related complaints and we will continue to monitor feedback closely to ensure sustained improvement in this area, as we recognise further progress is needed.

Figure 6



As see in Figure 7 below, higher proportions of complaints were escalated to Stage Two in the Housing Management and Asset Management service areas. These areas typically manage complex, high-impact issues such as anti-social behaviour (ASB) and property condition, where tenants are more likely to escalate if the Stage One response does not fully resolve the issue or meet expectations.

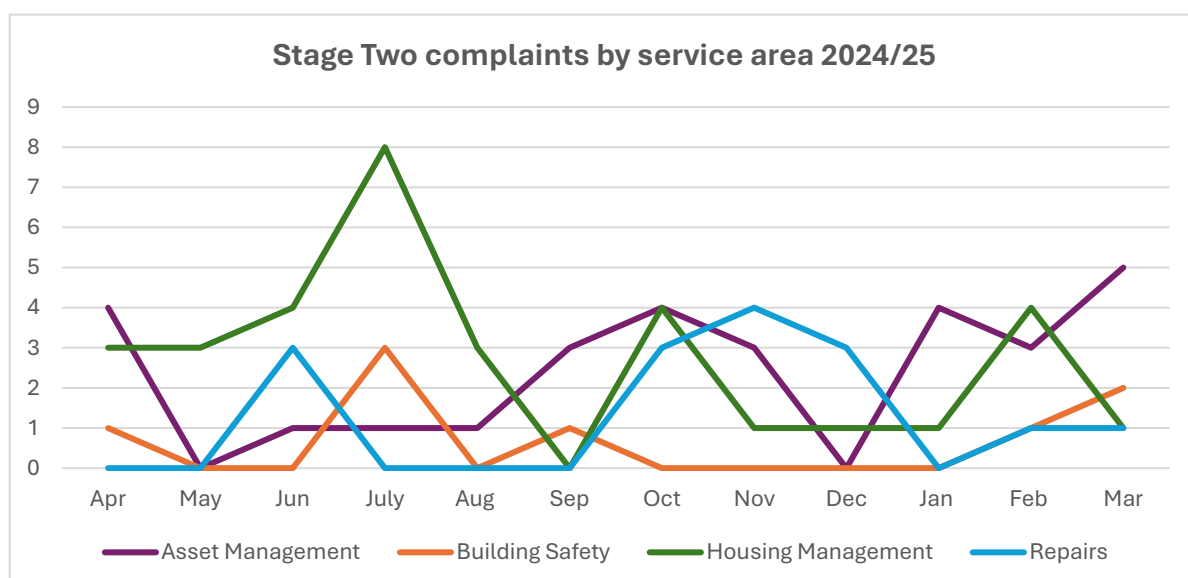
Complaints relating to Asset Management are more likely to escalate due to the nature of the works involved, which often form part of multi-year investment programmes, delivered by external contractors. Unlike responsive repairs, these planned works do not deliver immediate resolutions, which can lead to tenant frustration where expectations for swift action are not met. The longer timescales, programme-driven priorities, and need to coordinate communication with multiple external contractors can make it more difficult to address individual concerns quickly and with clarity, increasing the likelihood of dissatisfaction and Stage Two escalation.

To address this, we are working to strengthen contractor communication processes and ensure that residents receive consistent updates on progress, delays and next steps as part of our commitment to improving the customer experience in planned work delivery.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) cases can be sensitive and complex, requiring multi-agency input, ongoing investigation and careful handling, which can make it hard to manage complainant expectations. Tenants experiencing ASB may feel that not enough is being done quickly enough, even when appropriate steps are in progress, leading to dissatisfaction and escalation to Stage Two. This would include instances where the council is not the lead agency, or the speed of resolution or approach does not meet with residents expectations.

The Housing Ombudsman Service has been clear that managing expectations is a key part of effective ASB case handling. We are in the process of reviewing how we communicate with residents throughout the ASB process to ensure that they are informed from the outset about the scope of our powers and the likely course of action.

Figure 7





#### 4.4 Complaint Outcomes

This year, the majority of complaints were resolved at Stage One, with a limited number escalating to Stage Two. Of the total complaints received, over 69% (70.35% of Stage One and 60% of Stage Two) were upheld or partially upheld. We are satisfied to see a reduction in the proportion of complaints that were upheld or partially upheld when compared with the previous year, indicating improvements in both the quality-of-service delivery and in the robustness of our initial decision making.

	Complaints Upheld	Complaints Partially Upheld	Complaints Not Upheld
<b>Stage One (2024/25)</b>	<b>55.67%</b>	<b>14.68%</b>	<b>29.65%</b>
Stage One (2023/24)	59%	19%	22%
<b>Stage Two (2024/25)</b>	<b>31.76%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>28.24%</b>
Stage Two (2023/24)	54%	21%	25%

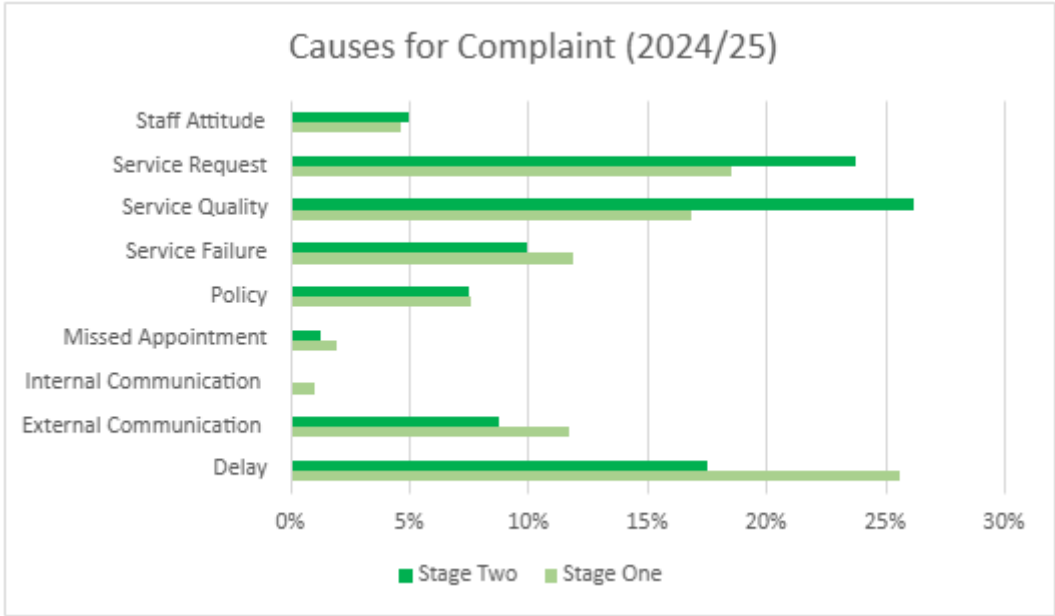
As captured in the table below, our Repairs Service saw a far greater proportion of complaints upheld or partially upheld, highlighting where service delivery fell short of expectations. This reflects the recurring issues seen in this area and further justifies the need for sustained focus on improving the Repairs Service, through the delivery of the Repairs Improvement Programme.

<b>Complaint Outcomes by Service Area (Stage One)</b>			
	Complaints Upheld (%)	Complaints Partially Upheld (%)	Complaints Not Upheld (%)
<i>Asset Management</i>	50%	15.75%	34.25%
<i>Repairs</i>	74.10%	10.76%	15.14%
<i>Housing Management</i>	29.93%	21.17%	48.91%
<i>Building Safety</i>	50.70	15.49%	33.80%
<b>Complaint Outcomes by Service Area (Stage Two)</b>			
<i>Asset Management</i>	19.23	38.46	42.31
<i>Repairs</i>	75	5	20
<i>Housing Management</i>	29.17	37.5	33.33
<i>Building Safety</i>	0	14.29	85.71

As a whole, learning from upheld complaints has informed a number of service improvements this year including the procurement of new contractors, training for front-line teams and the implementation of new software to support with complaint handling.

The decrease in upheld rates indicates progress in embedding preventative action and resolving concerns before they escalate into formal service failings. Nonetheless, we will not view an upheld complaint as a failure but instead as valuable insight and an opportunity to improve our services, so long as those as these learning lead to change.

Figure 8



As seen in Figure 8 above, across both Stage One and Stage Two complaints, the most frequently identified causes were service quality, service requests and delays. This trend suggests that while services are being accessed, there remain ongoing issues relating to the standard of service delivery, the effectiveness of handling initial requests, and the timelessness of responses. Complaints relating to service quality typically reflect concerns about the outcome or conduct of the service provided, whereas service requests and delay-related complaints often stem from communication gaps and extended resolution times. The consistency of these themes across both stages of the complaints process highlights the importance of strengthening operational delivery, contractor performance and customer communication, to reduce escalation and improve overall satisfaction.

In contrast, the lowest reported causes of complaints, at both Stage One and Stage Two, were linked to internal communication, missed appointments and staff attitude. While still important to track, the relatively low volume of complaints in these areas suggests that internal coordination, appointment management and the professionalism of staff interactions are generally meeting resident expectations. Continued monitoring will be important to ensure these areas remain stable and do not emerge as growing themes in future reporting periods.

## 5. Ombudsman Cases

During 2024-25, the Ombudsman investigating made a determination on 15 of our cases, split between the Housing Ombudsman (12) and the LGSCO (3).

### 5.1 Housing Ombudsman Service

The most recent year for which a Housing Ombudsman Landlord Performance Report is available is 2023-2024 [Landlord-Report-Stevenage-Borough-Council.pdf](#). The Housing Ombudsman report relating to the year 2024-25 is not due to be published until October 2025. Once published, it will reflect the twelve HOS determinations captured below.

Of the 12 determinations made in 2024/25, the majority (10) related to cases associated with Housing Property Services (Housing Asset Management, Housing Repairs and Building Safety). There were two cases relating to Housing Management Services (Income Services, Resident and Estate Services and Specialist Support Services). With one case spanning across both Property and Housing Management Services.

Across these 12 determinations, the Housing Ombudsmen Service made 23 findings as captured in the table below.

No Maladministration	1
No Fault Found	1
Resolved with Intervention (Case resolved directly with the Council)	4
Service Failure	5
Maladministration	12

The Council has taken the following action to comply with the recommendations set out by the Housing Ombudsmen Service:

- ✓ Issuing apologies;
- ✓ Financial redress;
- ✓ Review of repair policies and procedures;
- ✓ Property Inspection; and
- ✓ Offered to carry out repairs

We anticipate a maladministration rate of around 65%, which will be confirmed by the Housing Ombudsman Service, in their Annual Report, later this year. If so, this will be a positive reduction on the maladministration rate recorded last year.

We are keen to see how our performance this year compares across landlords of a similar type and size.

Maladministration findings highlight instances where our complaint handling did not meet the expected standards. In response, we will be scrutinising complaint cases to highlight missed opportunities to resolve issues at an earlier stage, as well as carrying out targeted service reviews to assess consistency of application process.

As part of the Councils Corporate Performance Framework, all determinations from the Housing Ombudsmen are reported to Cabinet, these reports include details of outcomes, actions and findings.

## 5.2 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has shared our Annual Summary of complaint statistics for the year ending 31 March 2025. Stevenage Borough Council - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Of the 17 complaints they considered, three were investigated; all of which were upheld. Stevenage Borough Council has a 100% compliance rate with the recommendations made by the LGSCO, with action taken including:

- ✓ Issuing apologies;
- ✓ Financial redress;
- ✓ The review and amendment of processes and procedures relating to Right to Buy applications.
- ✓ The review of complaint investigation procedures, with particular focus on ensuring case managers consider Council actions as a whole and not solely whether an individual department acted appropriately; and
- ✓ Reconsideration of a decision relating to homelessness.

Again, in all cases details of determinations are reported as part of the Corporate Performance Framework to Cabinet.

## 6. Complaints not accepted

A small number of cases received during the year were not accepted as formal complaints under our policy. In line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, we assess each submission to determine whether it meets the criteria for a complaint.

Cases not accepted typically relate to issues outside of the landlord's control, matters already subject to legal proceedings, or initial service requests that had not yet been given the opportunity to be resolved through normal channels.

Where a complaint is not accepted, we ensure residents are given a clear explanation, signposted to the appropriate route for resolution, and informed of their right to challenge the decision or escalate the matter. This approach

supports fair, transparent handling while maintaining the integrity of the complaints process.

We are developing our new complaints handling system to capture this information going forward to improve the information we hold on these cases, whether formally logged as a complaint or not, to enable us to identify recurring themes and to use the learning to drive improvements and increase customer satisfaction.

## 7. Tenant Satisfaction Measures - Tenant Perception Survey

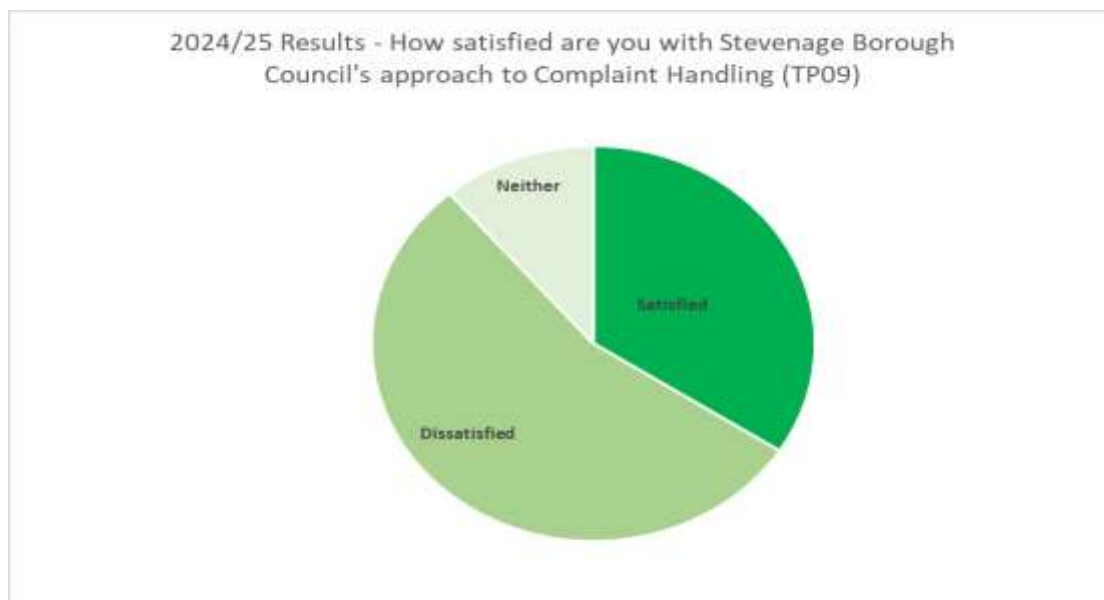
The Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), introduced in 2023/24, are a regulatory requirement for all Registered Social Landlords in England. Of the suite of 22 TSM measures, 12 are perception measures, which mean they focus on how tenants feel about the services they receive, and are captured through a tenant perception survey. Of these 12 perception measures, one is directly associated with satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints (TP09).

As prescribed by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), residents were asked:

*“Have you made a complaint to Stevenage Borough Council in the last 12 months?”*. A total of 26.1% (250 respondents) stated ‘Yes’ compared to 73.9% (709 respondents) who stated ‘No’.

Those who stated ‘Yes’ were then asked, *“How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Stevenage Borough Council's approach to complaints handling?”* As shown in Fig 9, a total of 34.1% (85 respondents) were satisfied compared to a total of 54.6% (136 respondents) dissatisfied, and a further 11.2% (28 respondents) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Figure 9



Although our ambition remains to achieve higher levels of satisfaction than dissatisfaction in complaint handling, we are encouraged by the improvement of over 11% to satisfaction seen in this reporting period.

Root cause analysis of our Tenant Perception Survey results shows us that tenants who have made a complaint but are highly satisfied with the way the complaint was handled, are significantly more satisfied overall than those who have not made a complaint at all.

When handled effectively, complaints can turn a negative experience into a positive one. We are committed to customer satisfaction and building trust, and improvements to complaint management gives us the opportunity to show our customers that their concerns are valued and that the Council is serious about addressing issues.

It is noted that some respondents to the TSM Tenant Perception Survey provided feedback on complaint handling despite never having lodged a formal complaint. This may reflect perceptions based on informal service experiences, misunderstandings of what constitutes a formal complaint, or broader dissatisfaction with services.

Whilst still valuable insight, we need to be able to pinpoint the sentiment of those that have experienced our complaints process. As such, we will consider the satisfaction rates determined by the TSM survey contiguous with the satisfaction results obtained through our transactional survey programme.

Furthermore, this highlights the importance of clarifying the complaints process and ensuring residents understand how to raise formal concerns, while also capturing and responding to informal feedback as part of wider service improvement.

## **8. Transactional Satisfaction Survey Results**

This year, we introduced a transactional satisfaction survey that we share with all complainants once their case has been closed.

This transaction survey data provides critical insight into how residents experience our complaint handling in real time.

In 2024/25, satisfaction surveys were conducted over the telephone with 92 of our complainants; 80 with Stage One complainants and 12 with Stage Two complainants. The results confirmed:

- *46% of Stage One complainants were satisfied with the way their complaint was handled;*
- *71% of Stage One complainants found it easy to raise their complaint;*

- *80% of Stage One complainants felt that we had summarised the main points of their complaint in our response;*
- *68% of Stage One complainants felt that they were made aware of their right to take their complaint further;*
- *75% of Stage Two complainants found it easy to escalate their complaint;*
- *49% of Stage Two complainants were satisfied with the outcome of their complaint*
- *91% of Stage Two complainants were aware of their right to escalate their complaint to the Ombudsman*

In 2025/26, we will be outsourcing these satisfaction surveys to an external, independent organisation. The objective of this is that service users will be more comfortable responding honestly and this will add credibility to the survey results.

The insight gained through these surveys will dovetail with the insight gained through performance data and wider engagement feedback, to help build a rounded picture of the tenant experience of the complaint process, and ensuring the process is open to customer scrutiny.

Moreover, it will help us to understand the customer experience routinely throughout the year, enabling us to monitor performance, identify learning and inform service improvements using a more agile and responsive approach.

## 9. Governance

Over the past two years, the Council has taken proactive steps to strengthen housing complaints governance to ensure greater accountability, transparency and service improvement. This has included improving oversight through regular performance monitoring and reporting. Our existing governance structure is made up as follows:

### *9.1 Strategic Complaints Managers (SCMs)*

We have a team of SCMs to handle housing complaints, with access to staff at all levels to facilitate prompt resolution of complaints. They have autonomy to resolve disputes fairly and support consistent resolution practices.

### *9.2 Housing Complaints Management Clinic*

*A group that meets regularly to monitor and review complaint data, including trend analysis and lessons learned.*

*It is attended by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Complaints, along with the Strategic Director, Assistant Directors, relevant Service Heads and representatives from our Strategic Complaints Management team.*

### **9.3 Complaints Development Group – Task and Finish**

*A temporary group that was commissioned by the Housing Complaints Management Clinic, to conduct in-depth research and analysis into the areas of individual cases of concern to develop learning and make recommendation to improve service delivery.*

### **9.4 Executive Housing Working Group (EHWG)**

*Our EHWG was formed to provide strategic oversight of the Council's Housing Management Services.*

This Group is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Complaints, with attendance from both the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, along with the Strategic Director, Assistant Directors and relevant Service Heads.

The group meets monthly with a formalised agenda and Terms of Reference. It receives quarterly reports on complaint handling, along with the Annual Self-Assessment and the Improvement Report.

### **9.5 Cabinet Meetings**

Housing complaints performance metrics are included in the Corporate Performance Report that is submitted for review by the full Cabinet, on a quarterly basis. Details are also included on all Housing Related Ombudsmen determinations.

Improvements in our complaints performance this year is in part attributable to our reformed governance structure, which allows for greater strategic oversight and accountability, and in turn leverages data-driven decision making and the continuous improvement of the delivery of our housing services.

## **10. Assessment against the Complaints Handling Code**

As part of our commitment to improving how we respond to and learn from complaints, we completed a thorough self-assessment against the Housing



Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code. This assessment is published alongside this report.

This exercise helped us to identify where our current processes fell short of best practice and guided us in settling clear priorities for improvement. Areas such as timely responses, and improved oversight and accountability of complaints have been brought into sharper focus as a result.

Below we have highlighted some of the key areas we have strengthened in the past year, as well as the areas we are committed to improving in the coming year.

## **11. 2024/25 Achievements**

Last year, we have:

- Reformed our governance structure, to provide improved oversight and accountability, leading to fair outcomes and continuous service improvement
- Implemented ad-hoc quality assurance checks with a particular focus on ensuring consideration to complainant individual needs and vulnerabilities
- Introduced transactional surveys to give us a deeper understanding of tenant views on complaint handling and help us to drive improvements that respond to the customer voice
- Implemented a new complaint handling IT system, enabling more effective case management and to improve learning and insight into trends and causes of complaints
- Published a summary version of the Allocations Policy as a direct result of complaints feedback telling us our policy was too complex

## **12. 2025/26 Commitments**

This year, we will:

- Continue to develop and improve the transactional survey process by outsourcing to an independent organisation, adding credibility to the survey results
- Continue to refine the new complaint handling system to develop further its reporting capabilities, including records of complaints that are not accepted

- Initiate a programme of complaint case reviews, to be assured of the quality of our responses, adherence with the Complaint Handling Code and consistency across teams
- Increase resident satisfaction with our complaints process by using feedback from the survey programme to drive continuous service improvement
- Review and implement a Compensation Policy and supplementary Compensation Framework, to ensure consistency across cases where compensation is offered, incorporating learning from compensation cases to date
- Seek to respond to 100% of complaints within Complaint Handling Code timescales
- Continue to deliver the Repairs Improvement Plan to address recurring issues raised in complaints, including improved repair timescales and resident communication
- Appoint new contractors to help manage repair backlogs and improve service delivery and reduce delays for customers
- Strengthen external contractor communication processes, to ensure residents receive frequent and timely updates on progress, delays and next steps in respect of planned work programmes
- Review resident communications throughout the ASB process, to ensure expectations are managed and outcome explanations are given, to maintain trust in the process
- Review our Communication Plan for 2025/26, to ensure it captures the need to clarify the definition of a complaint, our Complaints Policy and the process for lodging complaints
- Develop and implement a universal no-access process to ensure a consistent and resident-focused approach across all services

## **Conclusion**

This report demonstrates our continued commitment to listening to our residents, learning from complaints and delivering service improvements.

This year we have made significant progress in strengthening our complaints handling approach with a clear focus on robust governance. We have enhanced oversight through regular reporting and senior scrutiny, ensuring greater accountability and learning at all levels of the organisation.

Investment in our IT systems has unlocked improved functionality around how we track, monitor and respond to complaints, enabling more efficient handling and better data insight. The insights gained from complaints have been invaluable in shaping better outcomes and we remain focused on strengthening our complaint handling processes. These insights will be further enhanced this year through the introduction of the

transactional satisfaction survey programme which will allow for timely, case-specific feedback, helping us target improvements where they matter most. We will use this resident feedback as a driver for positive and lasting change in our housing services.

### **Response of the Executive Housing Working Group**

Our Executive Housing Working Group (EHWG) was formed to provide strategic oversight of the Council's Housing Management Services.

This Group is chaired by the Housing Portfolio Holder, with attendance from both the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, along with the Strategic Director, Assistant Directors and relevant Service Heads.

The group meets monthly with a formalised agenda and Terms of Reference.

This report has been reviewed by the EHWG, who have provided their response below.

*'The Council welcomes this report as a transparent reflection of how we have managed complaints and acted on resident feedback over the past year. The Council has found the Housing Ombudsman's annual assessment process to be a constructive and valuable experience, providing clear opportunities to reflect on our services, celebrate progress, and identify where further improvements can be made. We are pleased to recognise significant improvements in the timeliness of complaint responses and reaffirm our determination to respond to all complaints within the timelines specified in the Complaint Handling Code going forward.'*

*We will maintain close oversight of key areas including repair services and tenancy management, and ensuring that lessons from complaints directly inform service design and investment decisions. Looking ahead, we remain committed to strengthening our positive relationship with the Ombudsman, continuing to embed a culture where complaints are opportunities for learning and improvement, and enhance services that meet and exceed residents' expectations.'*