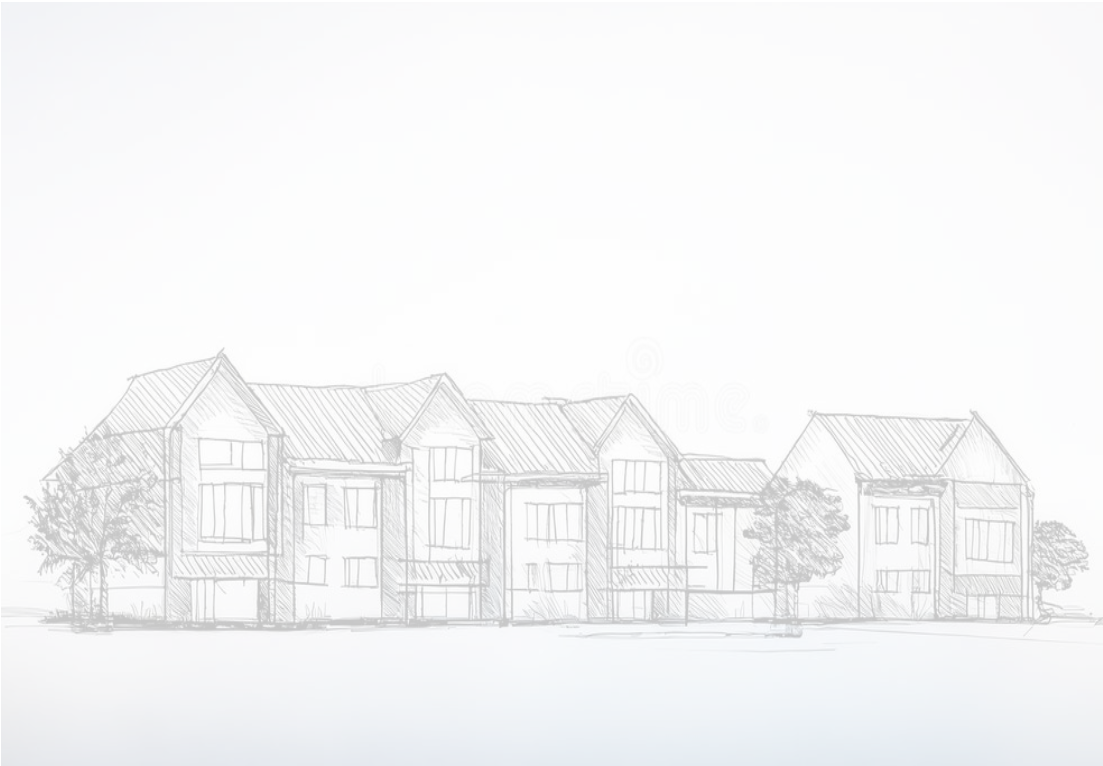


HOUSING OMBUDSMAN

Complaint Handling Code



Annual Complaint Handling &
Service Improvement Report 2025-2026
LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING

Introduction

Throughout 2025/26, we have continued to strengthen our complaints service, with a clear focus on compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, improving customer outcomes, and embedding a culture of learning and continuous improvement across Housing Services.

A key priority during the year was the review and update of our Complaints Policy to ensure full alignment with the Complaint Handling Code and to support the delivery of a fair, accessible and customer-focused complaints process.

To provide assurance on the quality of complaint handling, we introduced a programme of complaint case audits during 2025/26. These audits assessed compliance with the Complaint Handling Code, reviewed the quality of responses provided to residents and identified areas where further training, support or performance improvement was required. This work will continue throughout 2026/27 as part of our commitment to maintaining high standards of customer service and regulatory compliance.

Governance arrangements were further strengthened through the establishment of the Complaints Board, which held its first meeting in December 2025. Meeting every other month, the Board reviews complaint performance, monitors emerging themes and trends, and oversees the implementation of service improvements arising from complaints and customer feedback.

During the year, Complaints and Housing Services also undertook a comprehensive review of complaint handling through consultation activities and workshops with managers and key stakeholders. This deep-dive exercise has helped identify areas of good practice and opportunities for improvement, with an action plan being developed to deliver the recommendations and outcomes agreed through this process.

Recognising the importance of effective complaint handling at all levels of the organisation, vital information was delivered to most managers within Housing Revenue Account (HRA) services as part of the Deep Dive exercise. The training focused on complaint resolution, the requirements of the Complaint Handling Code and Housing Ombudsman expectations. This programme will be expanded during 2026/27 to include a wider group of staff, further embedding a positive complaint handling culture and supporting our commitment to continuous improvement. Together, these initiatives demonstrate our commitment to listening to residents, learning from feedback and ensuring complaints are used as a valuable tool to improve services and enhance the customer experience.

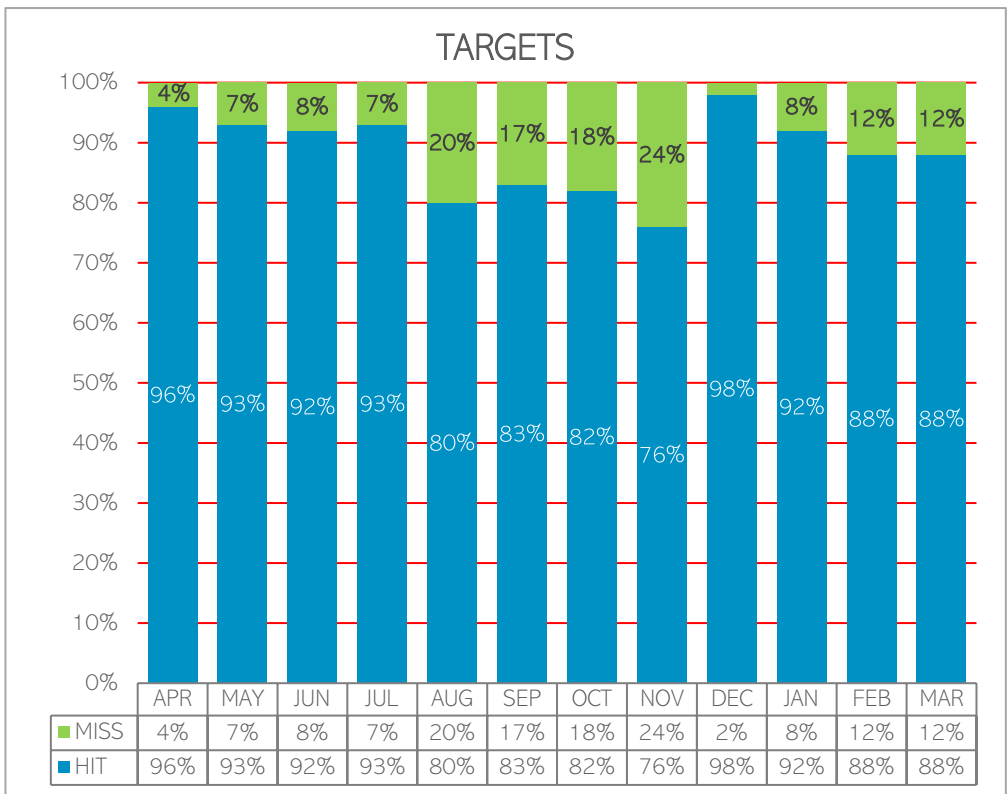
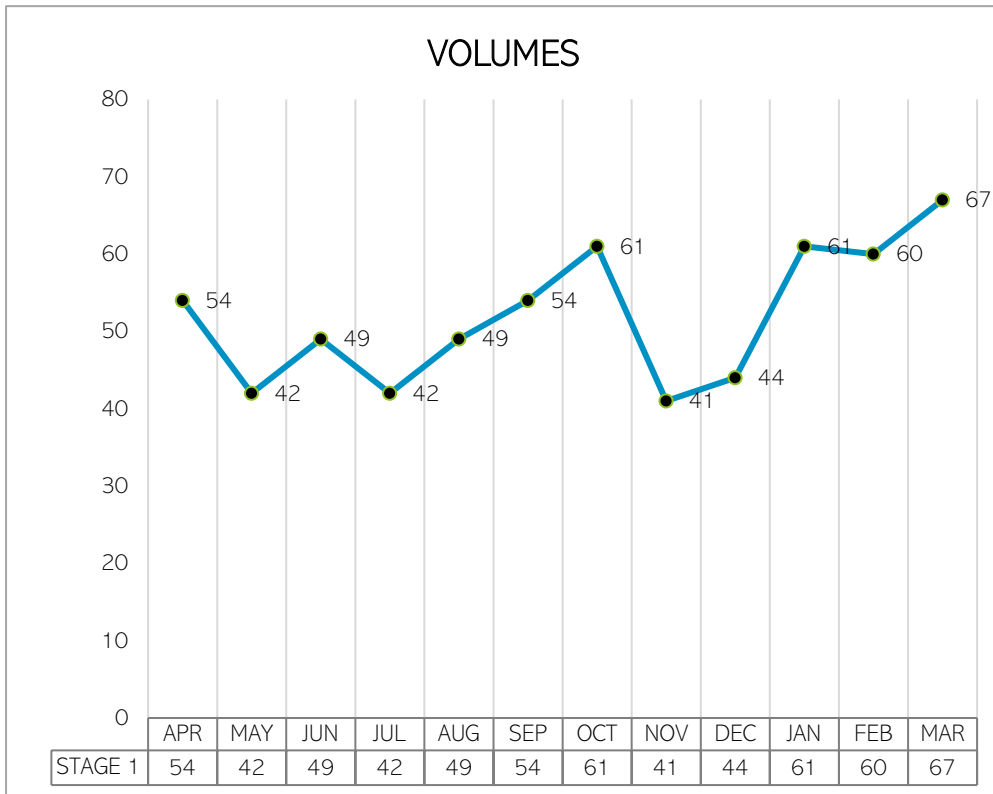
Report Highlights - This year's report provides a detailed overview of:

- Complaint volumes and response times
- Common themes and trends
- Service improvements achieved
- Planned next steps for 2025/2026

Havering Council currently manages 9350 properties and 9195 tenants and completed 43,570 responsive repairs during 2025- 2026. We remain committed to continuous improvement and to ensuring that our complaint-handling processes are efficient, transparent, and responsive to residents' needs.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING & PERFORMANCE

STAGE 1 VOLUMES & TARGETS

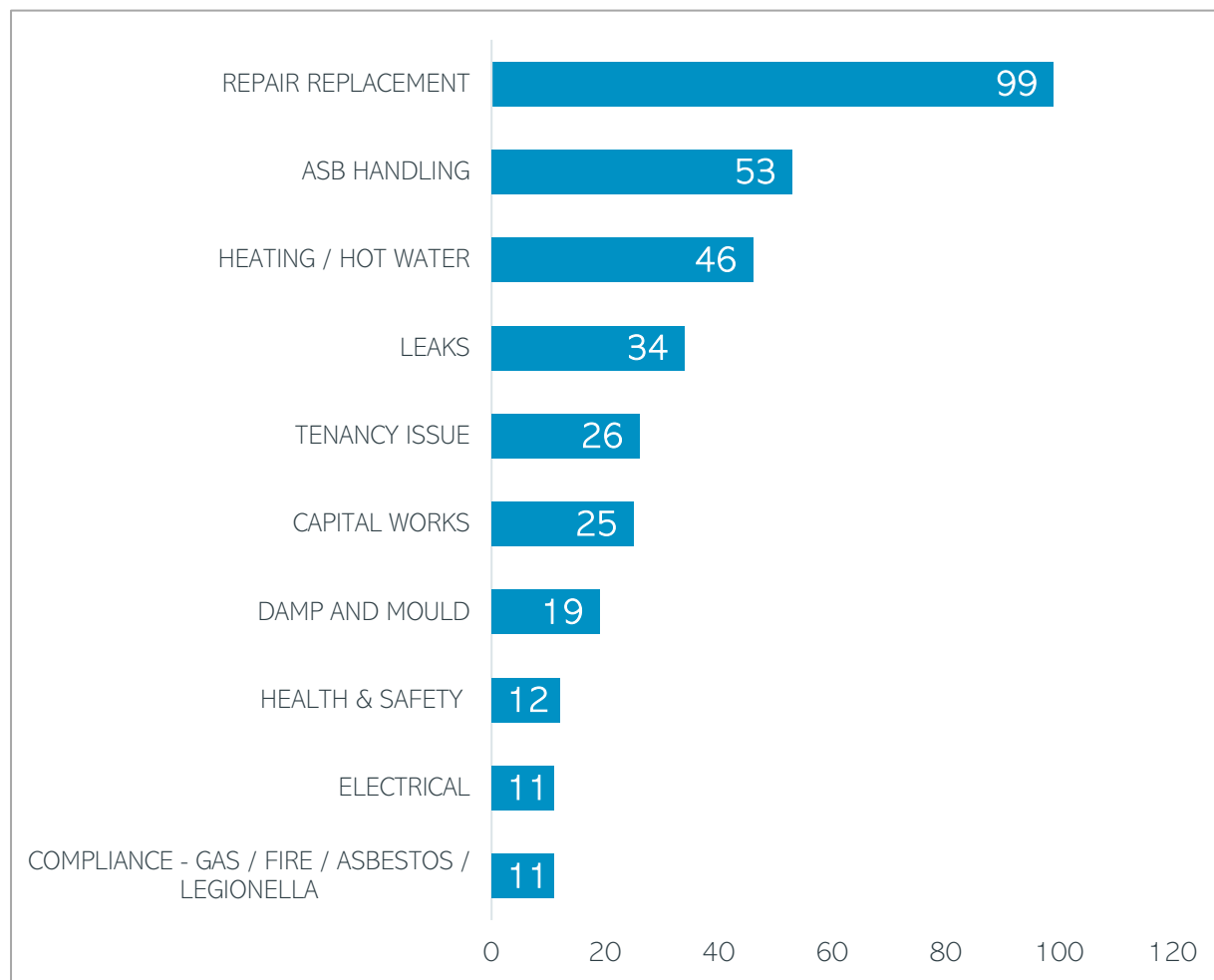


Overall performance was strong at the beginning of the financial year, with on-time response rates exceeding 90% between April and July 2025. Performance declined between August and November, ranging from 76% to 83%, with November recording the lowest level of compliance at 76% on time and 24% late. This was due to unforeseen staffing and resourcing pressures.

Following the resolution of these issues, performance recovered significantly, with on-time response rates exceeding 90% from December 2025 through to March 2026. The highest level of performance was achieved in December 2025, when 98% of responses were provided within timescales. Overall, the average on-time performance for 2025/26 was 88.42%, representing an improvement on the 81.33% achieved in 2024/25.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING & PERFORMANCE

STAGE 1 TOP TEN LEADING THEMES



The chart opposite highlights the ten most common complaint themes within Social Housing during 2025/26. While the top three themes remained consistent with previous years, complaint volumes reduced across all areas.

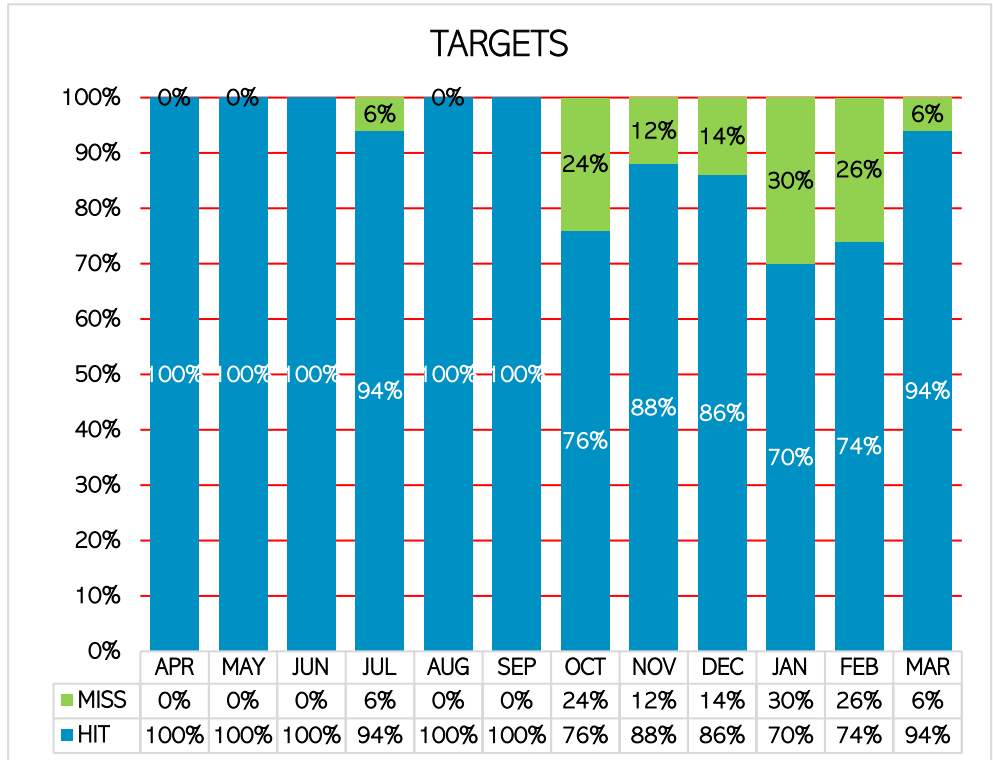
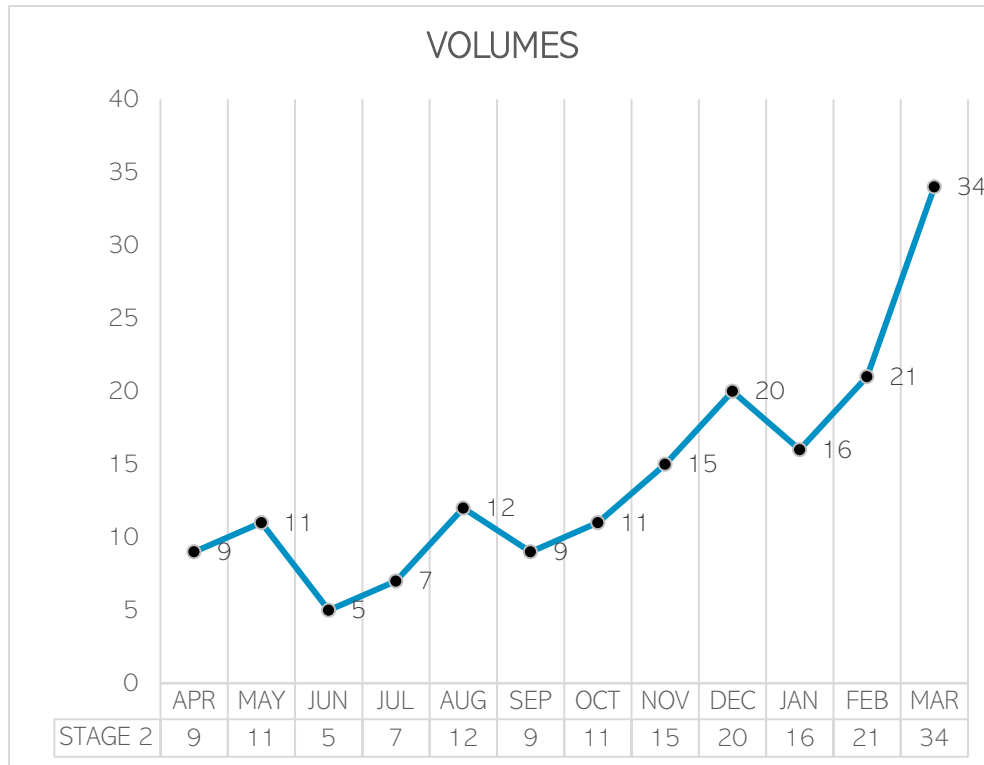
Repair Replacement complaints decreased by 31% (144 to 99 cases), ASB Handling reduced by 29% (75 to 53 cases), and Heating and Hot Water saw the largest reduction, falling by 58% (63 fewer cases) compared with 2024/25.

Although these remain our three highest complaint themes, the reduction in volumes is encouraging. We will continue to review these areas during 2026/27 to better understand emerging trends, identify root causes and target service improvements.

The ten themes shown account for 336 of the 624 Stage 1 complaints received during 2025/26. This excludes complaints which fell outside the top ten categories.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING & PERFORMANCE

STAGE 2 VOLUMES & TARGETS

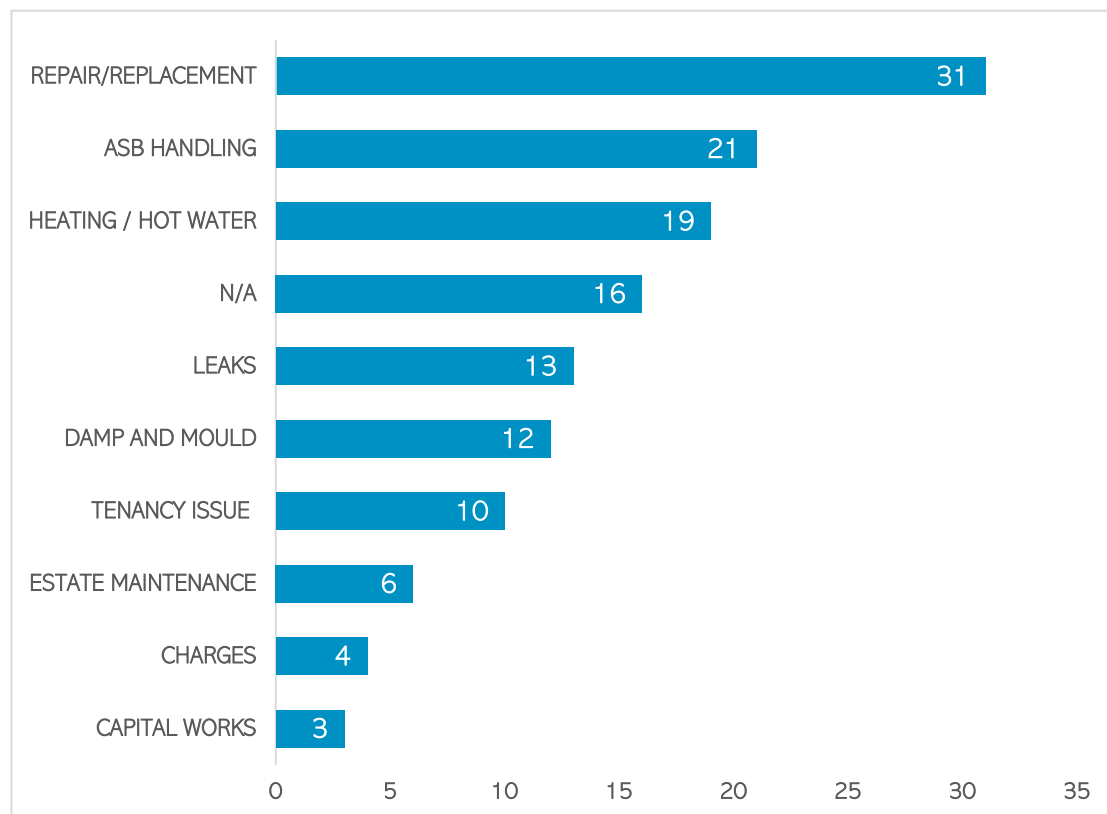


Performance remained consistently high throughout much of the year, achieving 100% compliance in April, May, June, August and September, and maintaining compliance above 85% in most other months.

Performance dipped between October 2025 and February 2026, with compliance ranging from 70% to 88%. This was largely due to the impact of increased Stage 2 demand following efforts to clear a backlog of overdue Stage 1 complaints created by staffing and resourcing pressures during the summer months. Despite these temporary pressures, performance recovered strongly in March 2026, increasing to 94% compliance. Overall, the service achieved an average compliance rate of 90.17%, representing a substantial improvement of 60.84% percentage points on the previous year's average of 29.33%, demonstrating the significant progress made in the timeliness of complaint handling.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING & PERFORMANCE

STAGE 2 TOP TEN THEMES



The chart highlights the most common themes for Stage 2 complaints within Social Housing during 2025/26.

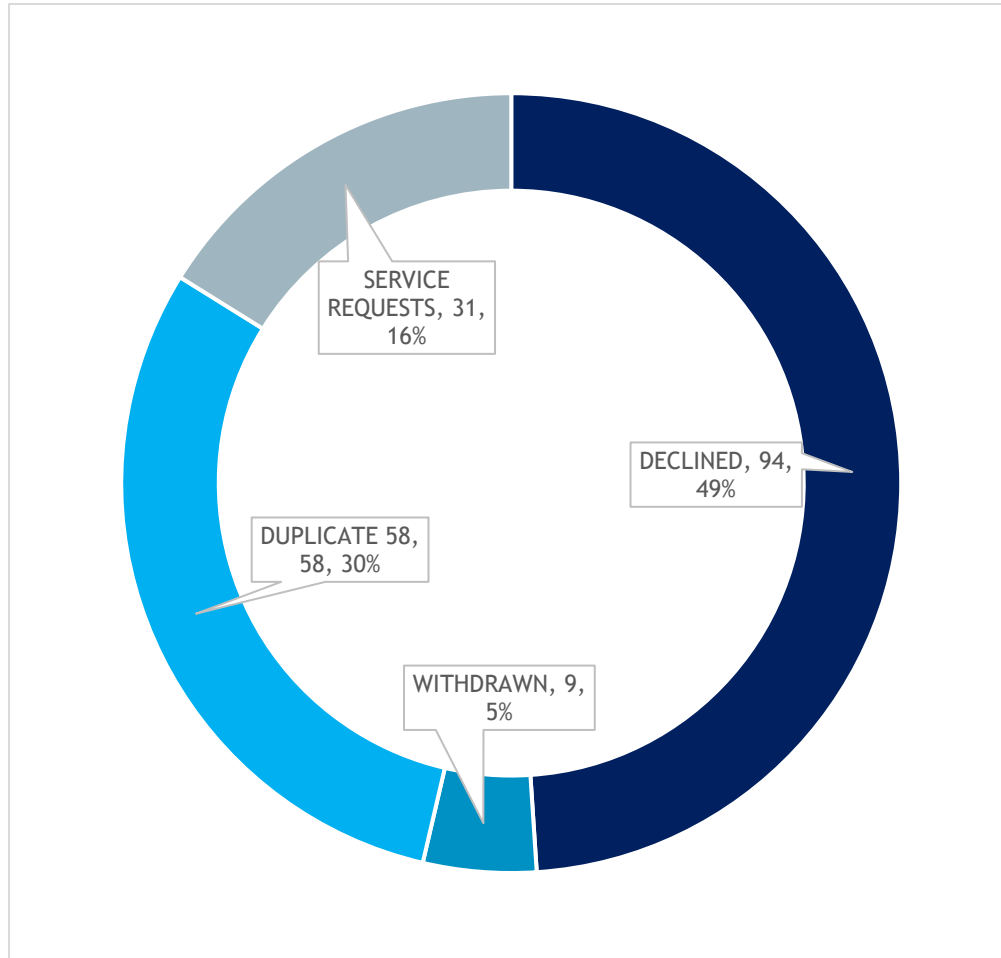
Repair Replacement was the most common complaint theme, with 31 cases, followed by ASB Handling (21 cases) and Heating/Hot Water (19 cases). Together, these three categories accounted for 71 complaints, representing over half of the complaints included in the analysis.

Property-related issues also featured prominently, with Leaks (13 cases) and Damp and Mould (12 cases) remaining significant complaint themes.

This pattern is consistent with the trends identified at Stage 1, where repairs, property condition, anti-social behaviour and heating-related concerns were also the most common reasons for complaint.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING & PERFORMANCE

DECLINED COMPLAINTS



For the annual reporting period, a total of 192 complaints were declined. Of these, 49% were declined as they did not meet the organisation's complaints criteria, making this the largest category.

A further 30% were identified as duplicate complaints, where the issue had already been raised or was being managed through an existing complaint.

Service requests accounted for 16% of declined cases, as these matters were more appropriately managed through routine service delivery processes rather than the complaints procedure. This represents a significant reduction from 2024/25, when 73% of declined cases were categorised as service requests. The decrease suggests an improved understanding of the complaints process and more accurate identification of complaints at the point of contact.

The remaining 5% were withdrawn by the customer before the complaints process was completed.

This breakdown demonstrates the importance of effective triage and assessment at the point of receipt, ensuring that cases are directed to the most appropriate process and resources are focused on investigating eligible complaints.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING & PERFORMANCE

COMPLIANCE & SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

The Complaints Team and Housing Services continues to use customer feedback, complaint outcomes, and performance data to identify opportunities for service improvement and strengthen compliance with internal policies, procedures, and regulatory requirements. Learning from complaints remains a key driver for improving service delivery, ensuring that residents' experiences directly inform organisational development and decision-making.

During the reporting period, using learning from has created a significant progress in strengthening complaint handling processes and governance arrangements. Complaint triage procedures have been enhanced to ensure that complaints, service requests, and enquiries are accurately identified and routed at the earliest opportunity. This has improved consistency, reduced delays, and ensured that customers receive the most appropriate response through the correct process.

Staff guidance and support have also been strengthened, with a continued focus on complaint handling requirements, response quality, and compliance with timescales. Regular quality assurance reviews on complaints staff are undertaken to ensure complaint investigations remain thorough, evidence-based, and customer-focused, while promoting consistency in decision-making and response standards across services.

To improve organisational oversight and accountability, monthly complaints performance reports are now provided to the Social Housing Management Team. These reports support the identification of emerging complaint themes, recurring issues, and service areas requiring improvement, enabling proactive action to address concerns and reduce repeat complaints. Governance arrangements have also been strengthened through regular reporting to both the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and the Complaints Board, ensuring senior leaders maintain visibility of complaint performance, service learning, and compliance outcomes.

Enhanced monitoring of complaint response times has further improved accountability across services and contributed to increased compliance with corporate complaint handling standards and statutory requirements. Performance is regularly reviewed, and targeted interventions are implemented where improvement is required.

A comprehensive review of the previous year's complaints (2025/2026) is currently underway; customer feedback surveys will follow shortly. This review aims to ensure that the resident voice remains central to service improvement activity and will be used to inform future enhancements to both service delivery and complaint handling practices.

The organisation has also embedded the Housing Ombudsman's Remedies Guidance within its complaints process to promote transparency, consistency, and fairness when service failures are identified. This approach helps ensure that remedies offered are proportionate, appropriate, and focused on achieving positive outcomes for residents.

Reports continue to be shared with service managers and operational teams throughout the year. By identifying root causes, monitoring trends, and implementing corrective actions, the organisation seeks to prevent recurring issues, improve customer experience, strengthen compliance, and foster a culture of continuous learning and accountability across all services.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING & PERFORMANCE

The Housing Ombudsman's Landlord Report for 2025-2026 identified failings in 18 cases, compared with 13 cases in 2024-2025. The number of maladministration findings increased from 24 to 35, while Ombudsman orders increased from 50 to 67.

Despite these increases, Complaint Handling Failure Orders reduced by 50%, falling from six in 2024-2025 to three in 2025-2026. This reflects improvements in complaint handling processes and compliance with Ombudsman requirements.

Remedy payments ordered by the Ombudsman reduced from £10,623 in 2024-2025 to £7,225 in 2025-2026, a reduction of 32%. This suggests remedies are being identified and addressed earlier through the Council's complaints process.

Overall performance indicators also show positive improvement. The overall maladministration rate reduced from 80% to 78%. By landlord size, maladministration findings reduced from 42% to 41%, service failure findings reduced from 24% to 23%, and findings of no maladministration increased from 13% to 16%. By landlord type, maladministration findings reduced from 41% to 35%, while findings of no maladministration increased from 13% to 16%.

Complaints relating to complaint handling, repairs and anti-social behaviour remain the most common areas receiving Ombudsman scrutiny.

As part of its commitment to continuous improvement, Havering Council remains focused on:

- Resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity and reducing escalation to the Ombudsman.
- Improving remedies and outcomes for residents.
- Learning from maladministration findings and embedding service improvements.
- Ensuring fair and timely remedy offers where service failures are identified.
- Using Ombudsman decisions to inform training and development.
- Maintaining compliance with all Ombudsman orders and recommendations.

This work supports the Council's commitment to delivering fair, responsive and resident-focused housing services.

Housing Ombudsman Landlord Report: [Landlords Archive - Housing Ombudsman](#)

ACTIONS FOLLOWING OMBUDSMAN LANDLORD REPORT 2025-2026

COMPLAINTS HANDLING & PERFORMANCE

RELEVANT REPORTS AND NEXT STEPS

Key Achievements 2025/26

- Successfully implemented the Housing Ombudsman's Remedies Guidance, ensuring greater consistency, transparency and fairness when providing remedies and redress to residents.
- Completed a review of complaints policies and processes in line with Housing Ombudsman requirements, achieving full compliance with the Complaint Handling Code.
- Introduced quarterly monitoring of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) relating to complaints to strengthen performance oversight and identify improvement opportunities.
- Continued delivery of the Knowledge and Information Management (KIM) Action Plan, improving record management, data quality and organisational learning.
- Strengthened governance arrangements through regular reporting to senior management and the Complaints Board, providing greater oversight of complaint performance, trends and service improvements.

Priorities for 2026/27

- Analyse resident satisfaction and complaint feedback survey results to inform future service improvements.
- Introduce quarterly resident and member engagement sessions to review complaint performance, learning outcomes and improvement actions.
- Deliver additional staff and manager training in line with Housing Ombudsman guidance, focusing on investigations, communication, remedies and complaint handling best practice.
- Further enhance performance and governance reporting to strengthen oversight, accountability and compliance.
- Complete upcoming restructure of the Complaints Service to ensure continued compliance with the Complaint Handling Code and regulatory expectations.

Building on the improvements achieved during 2025/26, we are in a stronger position to ensure residents receive a high-quality and responsive complaints service. During 2026/27, our focus will be on strengthening learning from complaints, using insights to drive service improvements across key areas, and further enhancing early resolution.