



Housing Services

Annual complaints performance and service improvement report 2025/26

Service Area

Housing Services

Report Owner

Housing Services

Report Category

Regulatory annual report

Version controls

Version	Category	Trigger	Review cycle	Owner	Date
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1 Introduction

Complaints help us understand where residents need a better service and what we can do to put things right. This report covers Winchester City Council's landlord complaint performance from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, the Housing Ombudsman's findings and the learning informing our improvement programme.

There are encouraging signs of progress. Published complaint handling satisfaction increased from approximately 34% in 2024/25 to 37.1% in 2025/26. Published response performance was 99.1% at Stage 1 and 100% at Stage 2 against the Complaint Handling Code timescales. We want to build on this by improving communication, ownership and the completion of promised actions, so residents experience a fair and helpful process.

More residents used the complaints process during the year. We welcome feedback and recognise that complaint volumes can reflect awareness and accessibility as well as dissatisfaction with services. The increase in Stage 2 requests gives us a clear opportunity to understand what residents need from the first response and to improve how we resolve concerns.

Tenants and leaseholders help shape this work through TACT, the Complaints Focus Group and policy co-creation. Their feedback is strengthening our focus on resident experience, themes and visible learning. Progress after 31 March 2026 is reported separately so that the reporting year remains clear.

The headline complaint volumes follow the Council's landlord TSM dataset, which excludes housing options, allocations, private sector housing, shared ownership and garages. Wider operational analysis is identified separately. Complaints relating to the Council's statutory housing functions follow the appropriate complaints and Ombudsman route.

2 Self assessment and continuous improvement

The statutory Complaint Handling Code provides the framework for our two-stage landlord complaints process. Appendix A contains the 2025/26 self-assessment. It brings together the annual performance evidence, current arrangements and subsequent progress.

Appendix A records the position supported by the evidence available at this review. Existing complaint handling arrangements provide a foundation for improvement; provisions affected by unresolved policy wording, publication or assurance gaps are rated No with proposed actions and timescales. Draft policy changes do not establish current compliance. The Council will reassess those provisions following approval, implementation and evidence review.

The original assessment received Decision Day approval on 9 September 2026. The service has confirmed approval of the previously revised report and assessment. The proposed policy will now be considered by February 2027 Cabinet, as we have experienced unexpected staff absence and a service restructure.

Our aim is to combine clear policy, trained staff, reliable records and resident scrutiny so that learning is reflected in day-to-day service delivery.

3 Complaints performance

Complaint volumes	2024/25	2025/26
Stage 1 complaints received	116	211



Complaint volumes	2024/25	2025/26
Stage 2 requests received	23	50

Stage 1 volume increased by 81.9% and Stage 2 requests by 117.4%. Stage 2 is an escalation within the complaints process and is not added to Stage 1 to calculate unique complaints. The annual ratio of Stage 2 requests to Stage 1 receipts was 23.7%, compared with 19.8% the previous year; it is not a measure of escalation within a matched cohort.

Published Tenant Satisfaction Measure	2025/26
Stage 1 complaints per 1,000 homes CH01	41.0
Stage 2 complaints per 1,000 homes CH01	9.7
Stage 1 responses within Code timescales CH02	99.1%
Stage 2 responses within Code timescales CH02	100.0%
Satisfaction with complaint handling TP09	37.1%

Source: Council annual complaint figures and published 2025/26 TSM data, as of June 2026. The improvement in satisfaction is approximately three percentage points, using the rounded 2024/25 figure. Satisfaction remains a priority: a timely response must also address the resident's concerns and lead to appropriate action.

Complaint outcomes

Recorded outcome	Number	Share of records
Upheld	135	64.0%
Partially upheld	25	11.8%
Not upheld	36	17.1%
Withdrawn	15	7.1%
Total	211	100.0%

These outcomes are recorded in the annual report dataset. Recognising fault where it has occurred allows us to apologise, offer an appropriate remedy and identify improvements. Withdrawals are reported separately from findings on the merits of a complaint. The recording basis and withdrawal categories are subject to final data assurance.

Response times and resident communication

We work to acknowledge, define and log complaints within five working days, respond at Stage 1 within ten working days of acknowledgement and issue the Stage 2 response within twenty working days. Where additional time is needed, the reason and revised date are explained, Ombudsman details are provided and suitable update arrangements are agreed.



The published CH02 figures are retained in this report. The operational record of 30 Stage 1 responses beyond the standard deadline is being reconciled with extension and acknowledgement records. A response outside the standard period may meet the TSM measure where the applicable extension requirements are met. This assurance work will support clearer and more consistent reporting.

Complaints not accepted and service requests

The service has confirmed that no complaints were refused during 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. There are therefore no refusal types or reasons to report for this period. Individual assessment and clear explanations remain central to future exclusion decisions.

The revised policy strengthens fair, individual consideration of complaints, including discretion for older complaints and the right to challenge an exclusion with the Housing Ombudsman.

Service requests are recorded and monitored separately. If a resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response, a Stage 1 complaint is linked to the service request and the underlying service action continues. Fifteen records previously described as local resolution are being checked to ensure they are classified consistently and are not double-counted with complaints or withdrawals. Early resolution of a complaint takes place within the two-stage process.

Complaint themes and trends

Repairs, heating and hot water, damp and mould, communication and the ownership of actions are recurring themes in the annual learning. The September 2026 operational dashboard provides a further view of records categorised to 2025/26 and supports more detailed analysis.

Operational complaint category	2024/25	2025/26
General repairs and maintenance	11	25
Boiler and heating	15	25
Compensation	6	21
Damp and mould	14	19
Service failure	16	18
Contractor	7	12

Source: September 2026 dashboard, landlord theme analysis for the stated years, excluding MP enquiries. This operational view includes records across complaint stages and has a different scope and basis from the headline TSM receipts. Categories describe how records are coded; a compensation category is not itself a count of compensation payments. The table is not a breakdown of the 211 Stage 1 complaints.

The rise in repair and heating records reinforces the focus on coordination and updates. Damp and mould learning highlights the importance of tracking recommendations through to completion. Compensation and service failure records show why responses need to explain both what happened and how the impact on the resident will be addressed.



4 Learning and service improvements

Complaint learning informs service reviews, staff training and contractor discussions. The following themes connect residents' experiences with the actions being taken. Current arrangements are described at the October review date where their introduction dates have not yet been established within the reporting year.

Resident experience and learning	Current response and next step
Clear ownership and follow-through	Action and learning trackers support agreed remedies and improvements. Fortnightly complaints meetings bring handlers and investigators together to review actions and barriers. Further work will strengthen completion evidence and theme analysis.
Accessible ways to complain	Training and published information explain telephone, email, written, staff and online routes. Resident scrutiny helps identify barriers and improve the complaint journey.
Heating and complex repairs	Contractor discussions focus on clearer communication, escalation and coordination. Investigation evidence and action tracking support oversight of complex cases and resident updates.
Damp and mould	Dedicated case handling and sharing complaint learning with damp and mould officers support ownership and tracking. Reviews focus on timely action, updates and completion of inspection recommendations.
Sensitive support	Learning from a domestic abuse-related complaint reinforces sensitive communication, appropriate staff conduct and support. Case learning is shared without identifying residents.
Reasonable adjustments	Acknowledgements offer help and invite disclosure of needs. Adjustments are agreed with the tenant, recorded on the tracker and Ideagen, shared with relevant teams and reviewed.
Clear policy and consistent handling	Revised wording strengthens the distinction between service requests and complaints, the two stages, individual exclusions and stage requirements. Approved changes will be reflected in procedures, templates and published information.

Resident involvement during the reporting year

A policy co-creation session in March 2026 explored what a good complaints process should feel like. Residents wanted respectful communication, named contacts, clear ownership including contractors, accessible channels, understandable timescales and action-focused responses. They also considered conversations before a written response, feedback after completion, appropriate remedies and visible service improvement tracking.

These views are informing the policy review and operational development. Prompt explanations and apologies remain valuable within Stage 1. A resident's access to the formal process and Stage 2 must remain clear and timely.



Staff learning

The service's training record reports 89 of 140 staff trained, equivalent to 63.6%. Training is tailored to staff responsibilities and uses complaint cases and Ombudsman learning. Standard complaint handling objectives reinforce collaboration, collective responsibility and professional conduct. Completion of remaining training, refresher sessions and induction are priorities for 2026/27; the attendance-period basis is being confirmed through final assurance.

Progress since the year end

Current reasonable adjustment recording and review arrangements are in use. Published complaints information invites residents to complete a feedback survey, helping us understand their experience beyond response times. The September 2026 dashboard provides monthly performance, category, outcome and remedy information, supporting the development of more useful insight for managers and resident scrutiny.

August 2026 procurement changes introduced contractor complaint handling arrangements. The policy and procedure review will clarify how these fit within the Council's two-stage process and retain Council accountability. A proposed centralised Stage 1 intake through Housing Customer Support is also being developed to improve allocation, case records and deadline monitoring. It remains subject to approval and an agreed start date.

Recent staffing changes have prompted additional cover for logging and acknowledgements, with management escalation for unclear cases. Our next step is to embed arrangements that maintain continuity and enable specialist complaint investigation, reporting and learning.

5 Housing Ombudsman findings and orders

The Ombudsman's landlord report, refreshed in May 2026, reports decisions made between April 2025 and March 2026. One determination may contain several findings, and may concern a complaint first raised in an earlier year. Incoming cases, determinations and findings are separate measures.

Measure	2025/26
Determinations excluding wholly outside jurisdiction or withdrawn cases	5
Determinations including those cases	6
Findings across complaint categories	18
Severe maladministration findings	0
Maladministration findings	5
Service failure findings	1
No maladministration findings	6
Outside jurisdiction findings	6
Maladministration rate excluding outside jurisdiction	50%
Cases received / duly made cases	22 / 7
Orders / recommendations	11 / 1

Measure	2025/26
Compensation ordered	£1,600
Complaint Handling Failure Orders	0

The 50% rate combines five maladministration and one service failure finding across twelve findings within jurisdiction. It compares with 89% in 2024/25, a national 2025/26 rate of 62% and a similar size and type comparison of 67%. This is encouraging, while the small number of determinations and changes in investigation practice mean the trend should be interpreted carefully.

Category	Maladmin.	Service failure	No maladmin.	Outside jurisdiction	Total
Responsive repairs/activity	4	0	0	0	4
Managing relations	1	0	2	1	4
Estate management	0	0	2	1	3
Moving/buying/selling home	0	1	0	2	3
ASB/abuse/nuisance	0	0	1	1	2
Financial	0	0	0	1	1
Occupancy rights	0	0	1	0	1
Total	5	1	6	6	18

All four responsive repair findings were maladministration findings. The practical learning is to maintain clear ownership, act on inspections and communicate reliable timescales. Three findings appear within the complaint handling subcategory; their specific outcomes and related actions need to be drawn from the individual determinations and case log.

Orders and follow-through

The annual report records eleven orders: six compensation orders, two apologies, one case review, one repair order and one other action. Compensation ordered totalled £1,600. The Ombudsman records 100% compliance within three months for eleven orders with target dates in the year. This provides positive assurance on that measure; payment evidence, original deadlines and the recommendation remain subject to the case log checks.

Case-level Ombudsman findings and action completion remain to be verified against the internal case log before publication; the evidence register identifies the required records.

No Complaint Handling Failure Orders are recorded in the annual landlord report. We consider this alongside individual decisions and the self-assessment, rather than treating it as confirmation of compliance with every Code provision.

Public decisions and local learning

Decision 202322119, dated 30 May 2025, found maladministration in responses to damp and mould, heating and ventilation, and associated debt concerns. It ordered compensation and a schedule of works. The learning supports prompt follow-through on repair recommendations, coordinated support and clear resident updates; necessary repairs should not be delayed while wider improvement options are considered.

A subsequent decision, 202505386 dated 28 May 2026, found maladministration in communal area management and complaint handling. It identified missed expressions of dissatisfaction, incomplete responses and record keeping gaps. This decision falls outside the annual totals above, but its learning is relevant to current work on complaint recognition, complete responses and reliable records. Order completion must be verified through the internal case log; publication of a decision does not confirm that its orders have been completed.

Wider Ombudsman learning

Publication or guidance	Relevance to our improvement programme
Spotlight on damp and mould and its follow-up	Clear responsibility, proactive action and learning from recurring damp and mould cases.
Spotlight on knowledge and information management and its follow-up	Accurate records, shared information and reliable evidence of decisions and completed actions.
Remedies guidance	Remedies proportionate to resident impact, with clear explanation and follow-through.
Annual complaints review 2025/26	Sector context for complaint trends and local findings.

Relevant guidance and Spotlight learning are shared with complaint handlers and senior managers. Our improvement programme applies these themes through training, case review and action tracking. A record of the publications considered and resulting actions will support continuing assurance.

6 Complaints Focus Group

Established in 2024, the Complaints Focus Group brings tenants and leaseholders into scrutiny of complaint handling. Its work includes reviewing policy wording, performance information and sample responses, examining the resident journey and challenging how learning is captured and shared.

The service records the group's review of the self-assessment before submission in August 2025. The March 2026 policy co-creation work provided further practical feedback. Together, this involvement supports clearer communication, accessible routes, ownership and visible improvements. The 2026/27 programme will build on this through survey review, accessibility work and scrutiny of recurring repair themes.



7 Improvement plan for 2026/27

The plan builds on the progress described in the self-assessment. Leads below are proposed by role for approval. Original milestones are retained where available; delivery and revised dates will be confirmed through management reporting. Success will be assessed through better resident experience and evidence that actions are completed. Immediate interim actions A1–A6, with proposed dates and responsibilities, are set out in document 06 and must be agreed before submission.

Priority and intended outcome	Proposed lead	Milestone and current position
Strengthen performance insight and MRC reporting, including trends, outcomes, timeliness and Ombudsman actions.	Complaints / performance lead	strengthen analysis and confirm reporting schedule.
Review Stage 2 themes and improve the completeness and effectiveness of Stage 1 responses.	Complaints / service leads	Review and targeted actions to be agreed through ongoing case analysis.
Embed recording and active review of reasonable adjustments.	Complaints	Original milestone June 2026. Tracker in use; strengthen review evidence and learning.
Approve revised complaints policy and align procedures, contractor routes, templates and website.	Policy owner / senior lead	Cabinet consideration planned February 2027 implementation follows approval.
Review unreasonable behaviour policy with residents, including proportionate restrictions and equality considerations.	Policy owner / Complaints Team	December 2026; review underway.
Promote accessible complaint channels and refresh resident information.	Housing Services / resident engagement	check promotion and accessibility with residents.
Resident scrutiny of survey questions, accessibility, recurring repairs and performance.	Focus Group / Complaints Team	September 2026 to March 2027; agree and monitor the scrutiny programme.
Complete remaining training and induction; test application through case audits.	Service leads / Complaints Team	2026/27; confirm attendance baseline and rescheduled training dates.
Develop centralised Stage 1 intake with clear allocation, records, deadline monitoring and follow-up.	Housing Customer Support / Complaints	Proposal developed; approval and implementation date to be agreed.

8 Governance and oversight

Karen Thorburn, Corporate Head of Housing, provides senior oversight of complaints performance, supported by Paul Salter and the complaints team. Councillor Mark Reach, Cabinet Member for Good Homes, is the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC).

The MRC was briefed on the self-assessment and Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report, which were formally considered at the Decision Day on 9 September 2026.



The outcome of the Decision Day was approval of the report and self-assessment for submission and publication. The MRC supported this outcome and has access to staff and relevant information to enable effective oversight of complaints performance and compliance.

Tenant and Council Together (TACT) receives quarterly complaints performance information, while the Complaints Focus Group provides additional resident scrutiny. Housing Leadership Board (HLB), senior management and contractor meetings provide further opportunities to review performance, identify themes and trends, consider learning from complaints and agree improvement actions.

These arrangements provide ongoing officer, Member and resident oversight and support the Council's formal governance arrangements.

Governing Body Reponse

The Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report and self-assessment were reviewed and scrutinised through the Council's governance arrangements and formally considered at Decision Day on 9 September 2026. The governing body approved the report and self-assessment and is satisfied that they provide a true reflection of the Council's complaints performance for the reporting year, including the learning and service improvements arising from complaints.

9 Publication and annual submission

The approved report, self-assessment and governing body response will be published together on the housing complaints webpage, alongside the complaints policy. The electronic annual submission will use live links to the approved documents.

The planned February 2027 policy decision is separate from the annual submission requirements.

Residents can find complaint routes, Ombudsman contacts and opportunities to provide feedback at www.winchester.gov.uk/housing/complaints. For help or another format, contact customerservice@winchester.gov.uk or Housing Customer Service on 01962 848 400.

