

Annual Complaints and Improvement Report 2025/26

How we handled complaints, what we learned, and what we are doing to improve services for residents.

At a glance:

- We received 791 complaints from 573 addresses.
- 367 complaints were accepted for stage one investigation, 129 more than the previous year.
- 88% of complaints were acknowledged within five working days.
- 90.81% of stage one complaints were responded to within our policy timescales.
- Late stage one responses reduced to 9.19%, compared with 12.68% in 2024/25 and 32.29% in 2023/24.
- 78 complaints, or 21%, were escalated to stage two.
- 96% of stage two complaints were responded to within policy timescales.
- Total compensation paid during the year was £24,764, down by £34,591 from the previous year.

Why we publish this report

We publish this report each year to explain how we have handled complaints, what our performance shows, what residents have told us, and what we are doing to improve. It also helps us meet the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

The purpose of this report is to comply with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

What the Complaint Handling Code asks us to do

The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code says landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report. This must include:

- our annual self-assessment against the Code;
- an analysis of our complaint handling performance, including complaints we did not accept;
- any findings of non-compliance with the Code by the Housing Ombudsman;
- service improvements made because of learning from complaints;
- any annual report about our performance from the Housing Ombudsman; and
- any other relevant Housing Ombudsman reports or publications about Hastoe.

Our overall position in 2025/26

We have completed our annual self-assessment and assessed ourselves as compliant with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. We also recognise that we need to keep improving, especially how quickly we acknowledge and respond to complaints.

Complaint handling performance

During the year, we received 791 complaints from 573 different addresses. Of these, 367 were accepted for investigation at stage one. This was 129 more than the previous year.

Complaint numbers have increased across the housing sector since the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and wider regulatory reforms were introduced. A higher number of complaints does not automatically mean services have got worse. It can also show that residents know how to complain and feel able to do so. Our focus is on resolving issues quickly, learning from complaints, and improving services.

Complaints we did not accept for formal investigation

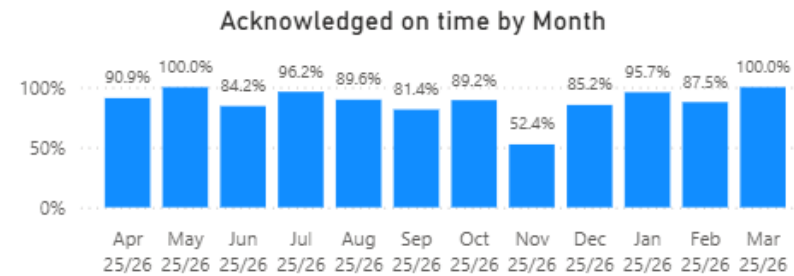
Sometimes an issue is not raised as a formal complaint. The reasons for exclusions are detailed in our complaints policy. In most cases, this is because we have not had the opportunity to deal with this issue. These are then logged as a Service Request.

Reason	Number of cases
Service request	195
Service or repair delivered to standard	175
Already investigated as a formal complaint	21
Not enough information provided	21
Issue happened more than 12 months ago	10
Withdrawn by the complainant	6
Legal proceedings had started	2

In most service request cases, residents were satisfied with that process. In 72% of cases, residents did not go on to raise a formal complaint afterwards.

How quickly we acknowledged complaints

The chart below shows the performance of complaints acknowledged within 5 working days. This gives a yearly figure of 88%, which is below our target of 100% compliance with the code. Of the 367 complaints received, 46 were acknowledged outside of the 5 working day target:

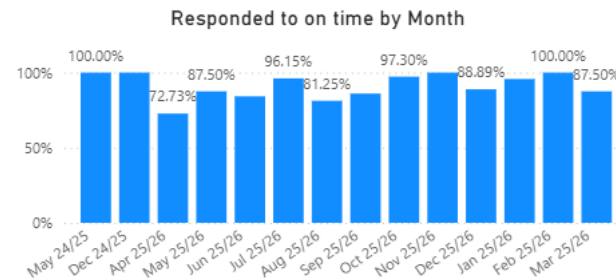


We acknowledged 88% of complaints within five working days. Our target is 100%, so we know this needs to improve. Of the 367 complaints accepted, 46 were acknowledged later than the five-working-day target. For late acknowledgements, the median response was eight working days.

Performance was affected by higher demand in our Customer Services team, particularly in November 2025. We have filled vacancies and trained Property Services colleagues to help review and triage complaints from June 2026. This should help us acknowledge complaints more quickly throughout the year.

Stage one complaints

90.81% of stage one complaints were responded to within our policy timescales.



We have not yet achieved 100% compliance every month. In total, 33 stage one complaint responses were late during the year. However, performance has improved over the last three years:

Year	Stage one complaints responded to late
2023/24	32.29%
2024/25	12.68%
2025/26	9.19%

For late stage one responses, the average response time was 20.45 working days. This is slightly above the 20 working days allowed under the Complaint Handling Code and suggests that some responses were late because the complaint handler did not formally extend the response from 10 to 20 working days.

Because more complaints are being accepted for investigation, we are increasing the staff resource available to handle complaints. This will also help operational managers focus more time on making improvements to services.

Stage two complaints

Of the 367 complaints accepted at stage one, 78 were escalated to stage two. This means 21% of stage one complaints were escalated, compared with 12% the previous year.

The increase in escalations suggests that some residents were not satisfied with the stage one response they received. One possible reason is that fewer complaints were upheld or partially upheld. In 2024/25, 206 of 238 investigated complaints were upheld or partially upheld, which was 86.5%. In 2025/26, 184 of 367 complaints were upheld or partially upheld, which was 50%.

96% of stage two complaints were responded to within policy timescales. One stage two complaint was late because of an oversight, and we apologised for this.

What we are improving because of complaints

The full improvement log is included as an appendix. Complaints in 2025/26 continued to show recurring themes in repairs, contractor management, communication, policy application and frontline service standards.

The main improvement actions focus on:

- strengthening oversight of repairs and recalls;
- improving contractor performance and communication;
- reviewing key policies and procedures, including damp and mould and allocations;
- reinforcing staff training and accountability; and
- using complaint outcomes to make practical service improvements and improve operational control.

What the Housing Ombudsman said

There was one finding of non-compliance with the Complaint Handling Code by the Housing Ombudsman. This related to the recording of one complaint. In December 2025, the Housing Ombudsman contacted us about a complaint handling failure. We explained that this resulted from a system issue where one complaint had two separate references. We provided evidence that the complaint had been escalated and responded to. The finding has still been recorded in our annual performance report, and we have appealed the decision.

The Housing Ombudsman made determinations on four complaints during the year. These are set out in the appended Landlord Performance Report. In summary, performance improved compared with the previous year, with a 7% decrease in maladministration findings and a maladministration rate 6% lower than the national average. There were no findings of severe maladministration during the year.

The Hastoe Board has set a target of 0% severe maladministration findings. We met this target in 2025/26, and we will continue to focus on reducing the overall maladministration rate.

There were no other relevant Housing Ombudsman publications about Hastoe during the year.

Board response

The Board was pleased to see improved performance during the year. It also recognised that the increased number of complaints means we need more dedicated resource. In the coming year, the focus will be on giving operational managers more time to act on learning from complaints and improve services for residents.

Compensation and value for money

We paid £24,764 in compensation during the year. The average compensation payment was £269. This was £34,591 less than the previous year, and the average payment also reduced by £98.

This amount may increase in the coming year. We have had two findings from the Housing Ombudsman where service failures were found. In those cases, we had offered apologies and the Ombudsman ordered compensation.

Legal and regulatory requirements

We must comply with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code to meet the requirements of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

The Regulator of Social Housing's Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard also requires us to make sure complaints are dealt with fairly, effectively and promptly.

How we are strengthening our complaints service

To improve complaint handling, we will introduce additional resource and create a centralised complaints team. This will support more independent complaint investigations and help operational managers spend more time improving service delivery.

How residents have helped shape this work

We meet with residents twice a year to review selected Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Reports. Feedback from residents helped inform the review of our policy in 2026. We are also reviewing feedback about repairs and maintenance to improve services.

Minutes from these meetings are published on our website. Key service changes and improvements are also shared through resident newsletters and our annual report to residents.

Residents who attended complaints scrutiny sessions, or who told us they wanted to be more involved in complaints, were consulted remotely on this report and our self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Code. We used this approach because online meetings in previous years had not provided the right environment for feedback.

Residents told us that Hastoe should move away from a defensive approach to complaints and focus more on rebuilding relationships. This feedback has shaped our decision to add more complaints resource and move towards a centralised complaints team. We expect this to support better relationships and improved services.