

Housing Landlord **COMPLAINTS** **ANNUAL REPORT**

April 2024 to March 2025



www.rotherham.gov.uk/complaints

FOREWORD AND MANAGEMENT BOARD RESPONSE

Rotherham Council has an ongoing commitment to being open and accountable, listening to the views of tenants, residents and communities and placing them at the heart of its services. Customer feedback through formal complaints and the way that the Council responds to complaints are vital indicators of the overall performance of the organisation. When the Council cannot resolve a problem straight away, our residents have the safety net of a formal complaint procedure through which they can find a resolution.

The Council can then also use the information gathered from the record of formal complaints, to consider how it delivers services. The Council is able to analyse trends, identify learning and service improvements. This can then be used to improve customer care and make changes where necessary to our policy and procedures.

In 2024/25, the number of formal complaints received from Council tenants was 367, which was below the number recorded in the previous year (2023/24) at 511 received, a decrease of 144, or 28 %.

Overall, in terms of the complaints' procedure, the Council continued to maintain a high level of performance and improved the quality of service offered to residents via our learning from complaints process. This includes the formation of our new Tenants' Learning from Complaints panel meeting, which provides an opportunity to discuss with our tenants how we have learned from complaint investigation outcomes. Please see Appendix One – How we learn from complaints.

The purpose of this report is to outline the formal complaints the Council received from its tenants between the 1 April 2024 and the 31 March 2025, highlighting key themes and trends. The report also explains how Housing Services has performed against the required standards, including how the Council has learned from formal complaints received.

In addition, information is included on other enquiries received, including, compliments and Housing Ombudsman determinations (see Appendix Two). Appendix Two explains what action has been taken in response to each determination from the Ombudsman. Finally, Appendix Three shows how the Council's Housing Regulatory Assurance Board meeting has considered the information contained in the Annual Report.

As Cabinet Member for Housing and the Member Responsible for Housing Complaints and as Chief Executive of the Council and Chair of the Housing Assurance Board, we confirm that we have scrutinised the contents of the report and are satisfied it accurately reflects the landlord's position regarding complaints.



John Edwards

Chief Executive of Rotherham Council
and Chair of Housing Regulatory Assurance Board



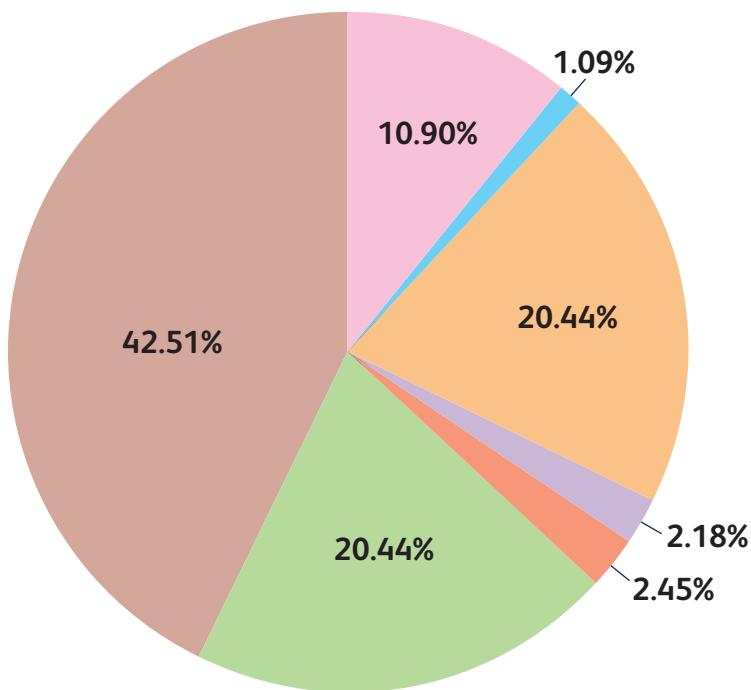
Councillor Linda Beresford

Cabinet Member for Housing
and Member Responsible for Complaints

FORMAL COMPLAINTS RECEIVED (STAGE I, 2)

The following three charts show the numbers of complaints received by Complaint Category (this is a general categorisation that applies to all Council complaints) and Complaint Issue (these break down the general category description into issues relevant to that category).

Complaints received by complaint categories



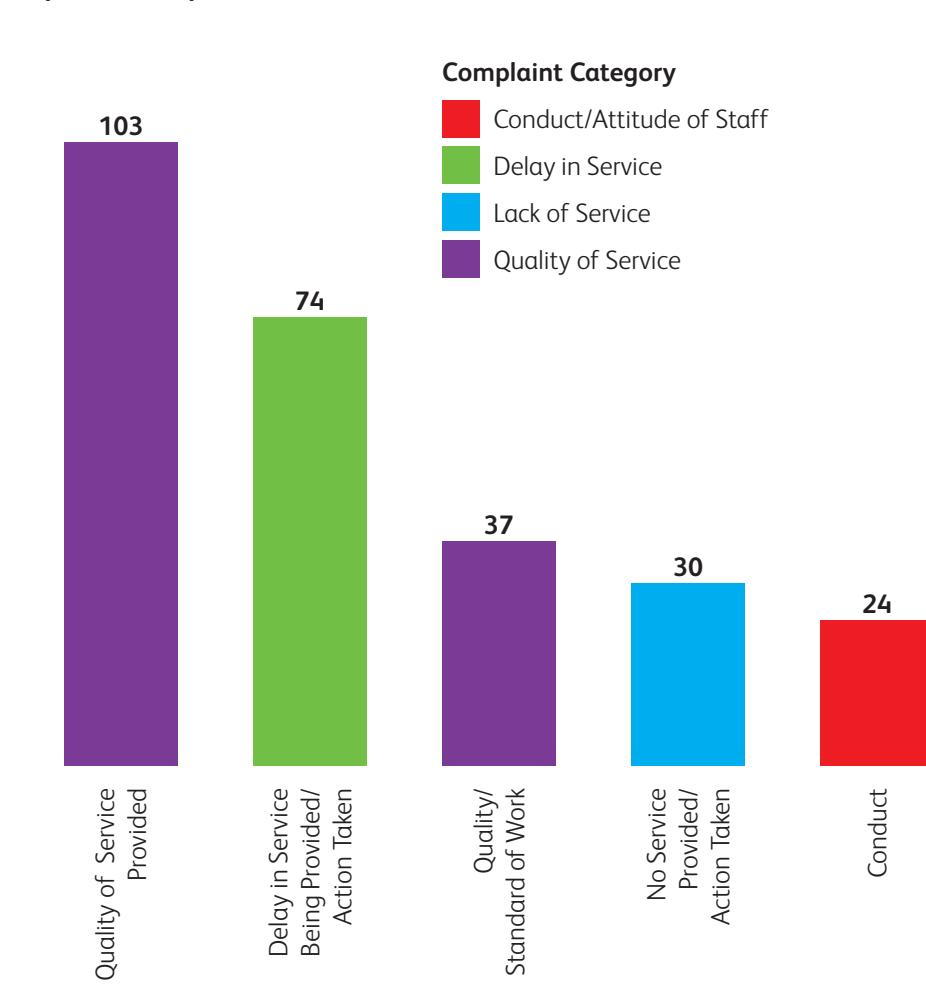
Conduct/Attitude of Staff	40
Cost/Charge for Service	4
Delay in Service	75
Disputed Decision or Outcome	8
Information and Advice	9
Lack of Service	75
Quality of Service	156
Grand Total	367

In 2024/25, the number of formal complaints received from Council tenants was 367, which was below the number recorded in the previous year (2023/24) at 511 received, a decrease of 144, or 28 %.

The chart above shows the number of formal complaints received by general category. The largest number of complaints in this category was quality of service (42.51 %), followed by lack of service and delay in service, which both received 20.44 % of all complaints.

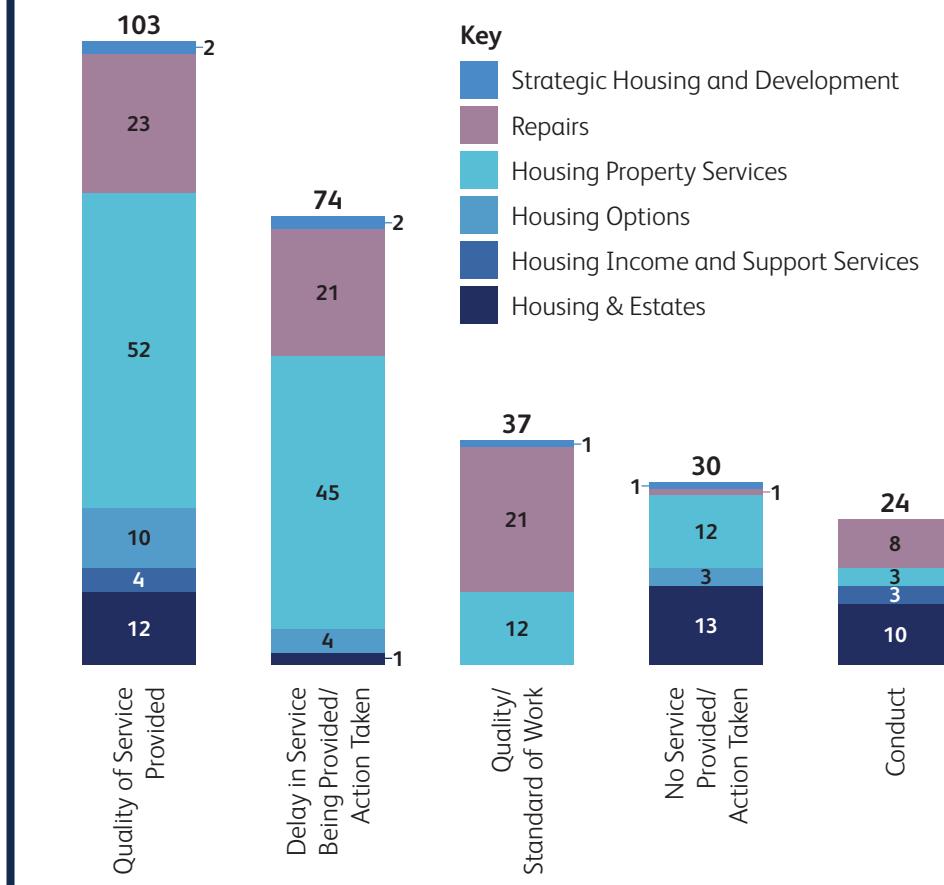
The chart to the right shows a further breakdown of formal complaint by more specific categorisations. Quality of service provided is the highest number of complaints received (103), followed by delay in service provided / action taken (74).

Top five complaint issues



Top five complaint issues by service area

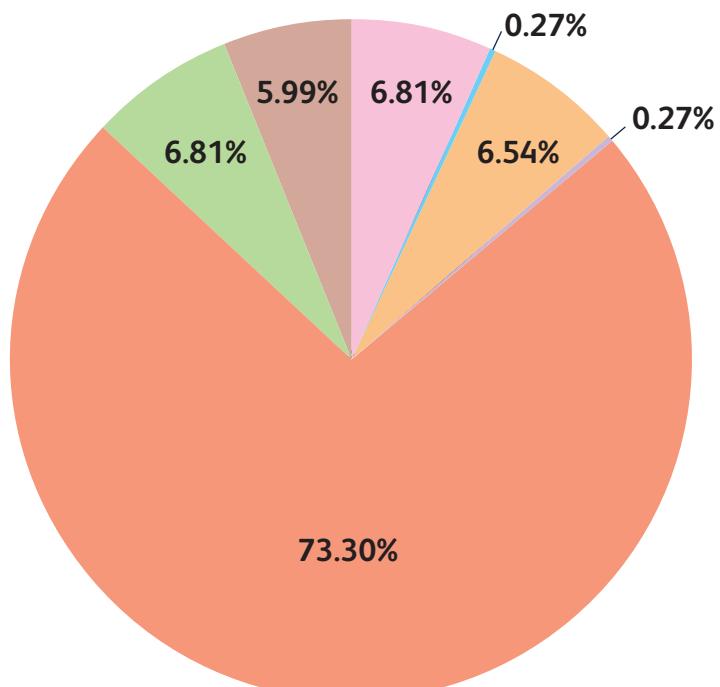
The chart to the right shows a breakdown of complaint issue by Service Area. Housing Property Services (they deal with complex repairs and carry out repair inspections) received the most complaints about quality of service and delay in service being provided, which totalled 92 complaints across both these categories.



The following three charts show the number of complaints received by two additional category classifications. These are Housing Ombudsman complaint category and Housing Ombudsman complaint issue. These are categories aligned with the categories and issue classifications used by the Housing Ombudsman Service in their reporting – these are not Housing Ombudsman investigations.

The chart below shows that the majority of complaints were regarding Repairs and Maintenance issues, followed by Rents, Anti-Social Behaviour and then Tenancy Management.

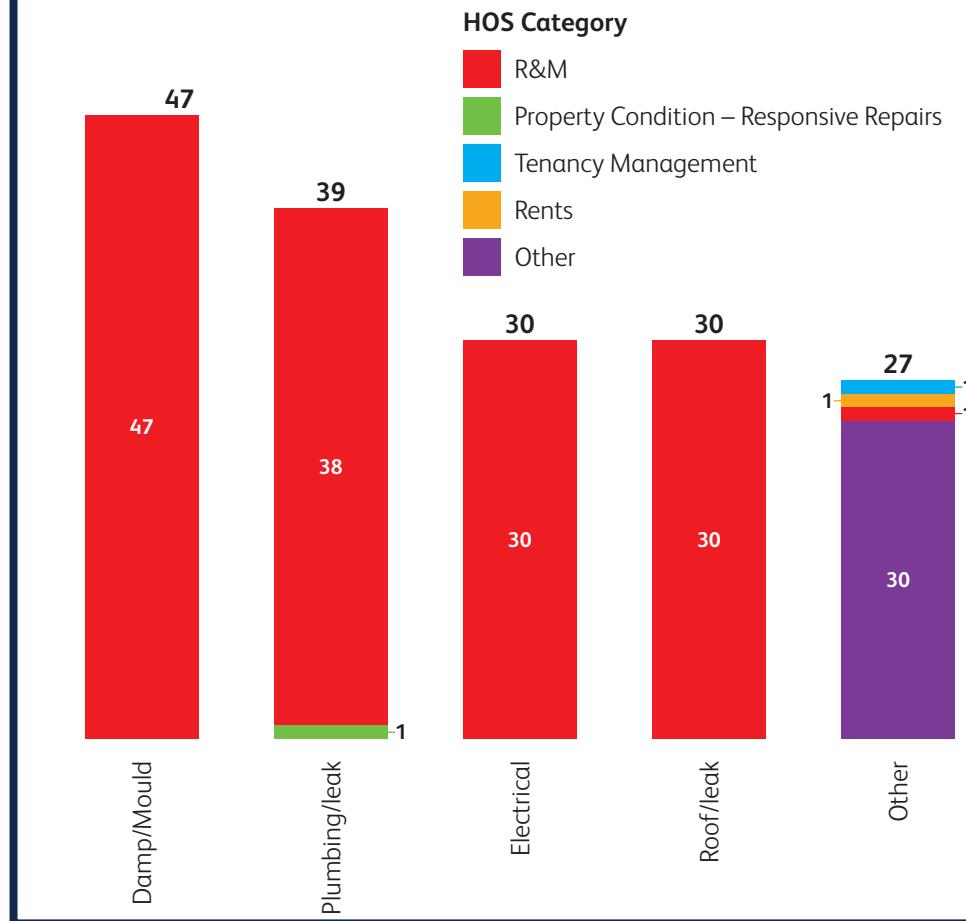
Complaints received by Housing Ombudsman complaint categories



ASB	25
Estate Services (ES)	1
Other	24
Property Condition – Responsive Repairs	1
Repairs and Maintenance	269
Rents	25
Tenancy Management (TM)	22
Grand Total	367

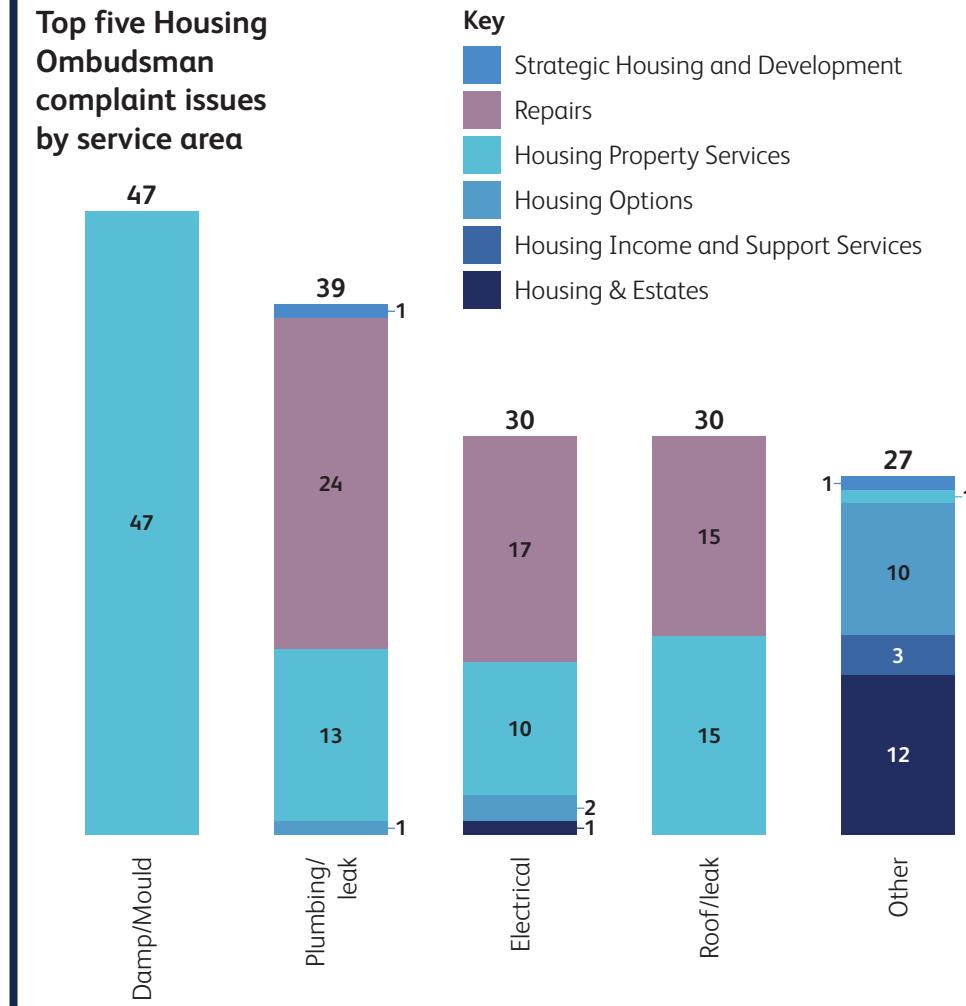
Top five Housing Ombudsman complaint issues

This chart shows that the Repairs and Maintenance (R&M) category received the most complaints, which was driven by complaints regarding Damp / Mould (47) and Plumbing / Leak (39).



Top five Housing Ombudsman complaint issues by service area

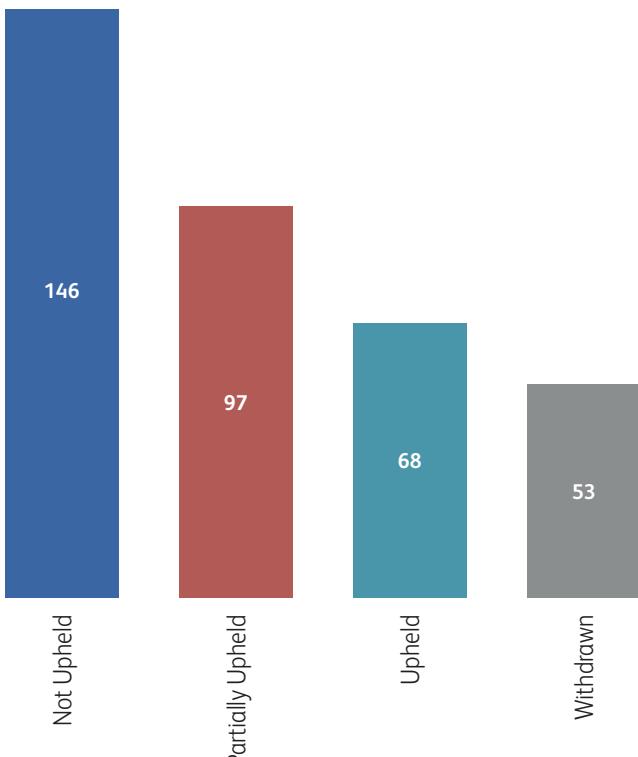
This chart shows that Housing Property service received the most complaints about Damp / Mould (47) . Repairs Contractors received the 2nd largest number of complaints about Plumbing / Leak (24).



FORMAL COMPLAINTS CLOSED (STAGE I, 2)

Closure category (Did we agree with the complaint) Timeliness (10 or 20 working days).

Complaints close by outcome



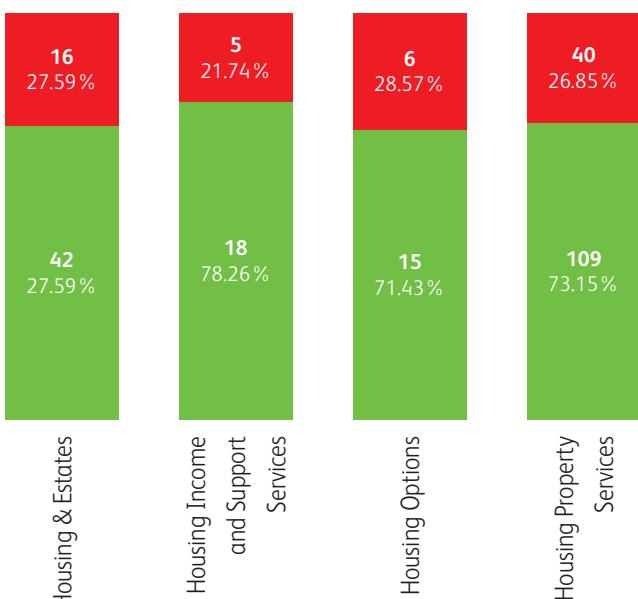
68 out of 364 (19 %) of all complaints closed were upheld, this means that we agreed with the complaint points raised.

Complaints closed - Timeliness

275 (75.55 %) 89 (24.45 %)

This chart shows how many complaints were responded to in line with stated timescales. For stage 1 complaints this is within 10 working days and 20 working days at stage 2. Overall, 75.5 % of complaints were responded to within the required timescales across Housing Services.

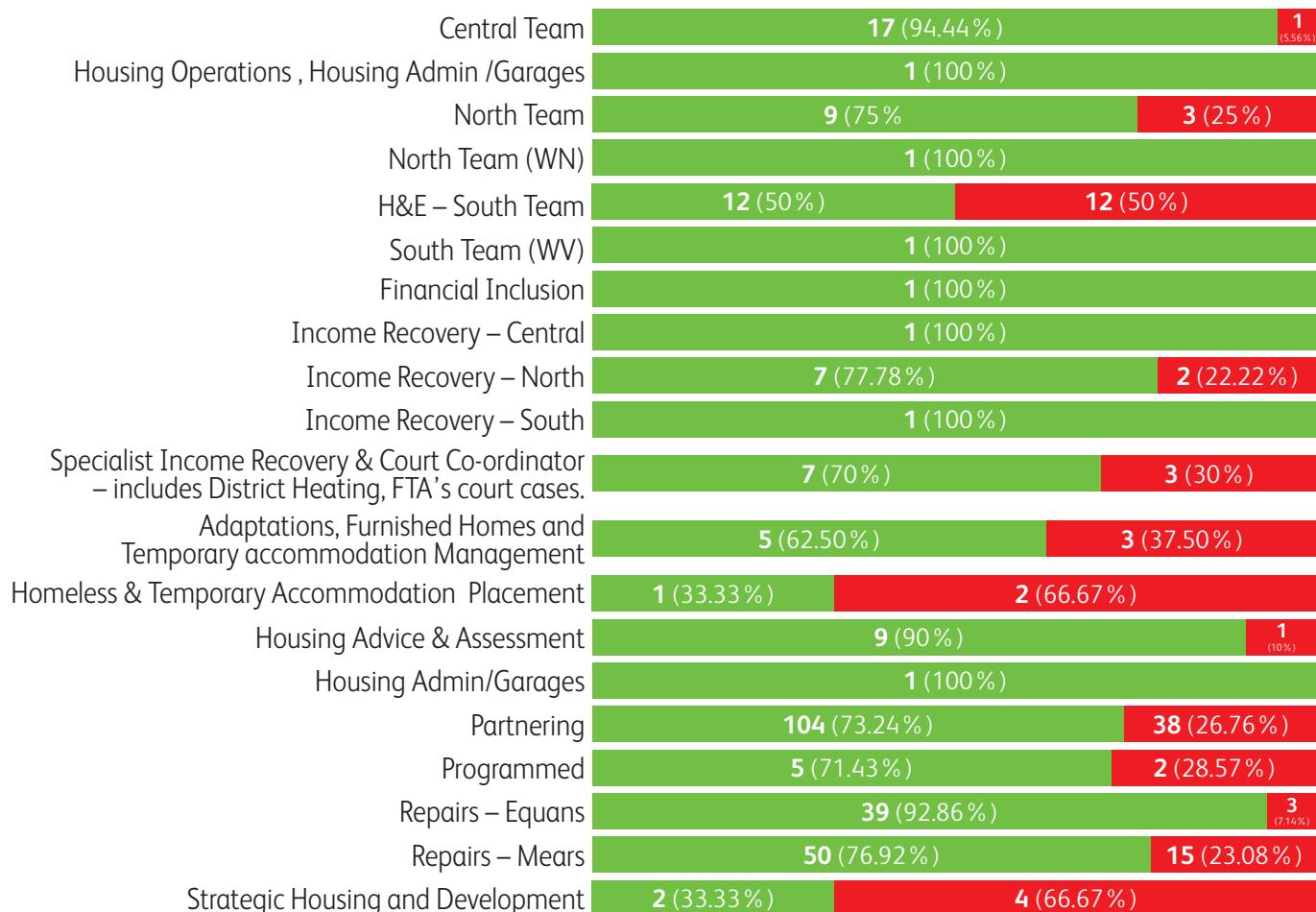
Complaints closed - Timeliness by service area



This chart shows that the Strategic Housing and Development service had the worst performance in terms of the percentage of complaints responded to within timescales. However, Housing Property Services responded to the most out of time, followed by Repairs contractors and Housing and Estates.

This chart shows that Homeless & Temporary Accommodation Placement and Strategic Housing and Development teams had the worst performance in terms of the percentage of complaints responded to within timescales. However, in absolute terms, the Partnering team responded to the most out of time, followed by Mears and then Housing and Estates – South Team.

Complaints closed - Timeliness by team



HOUSING OMBUDSMAN CASES – FINAL DECISIONS

Cases subject to formal investigation. Also please see Appendix 2 HOS Landlord Report.

Ombudsman final decision cases by service area

Key

Housing Property Services

All 4 Housing Ombudsman determinations were received and responded to by Housing Property Services. This Service deals with complex repairs and carry out repair inspections.

4

Ombudsman final decision cases by complaint category

Key

Disputed Decision or Outcome

Quality of Service

4

1

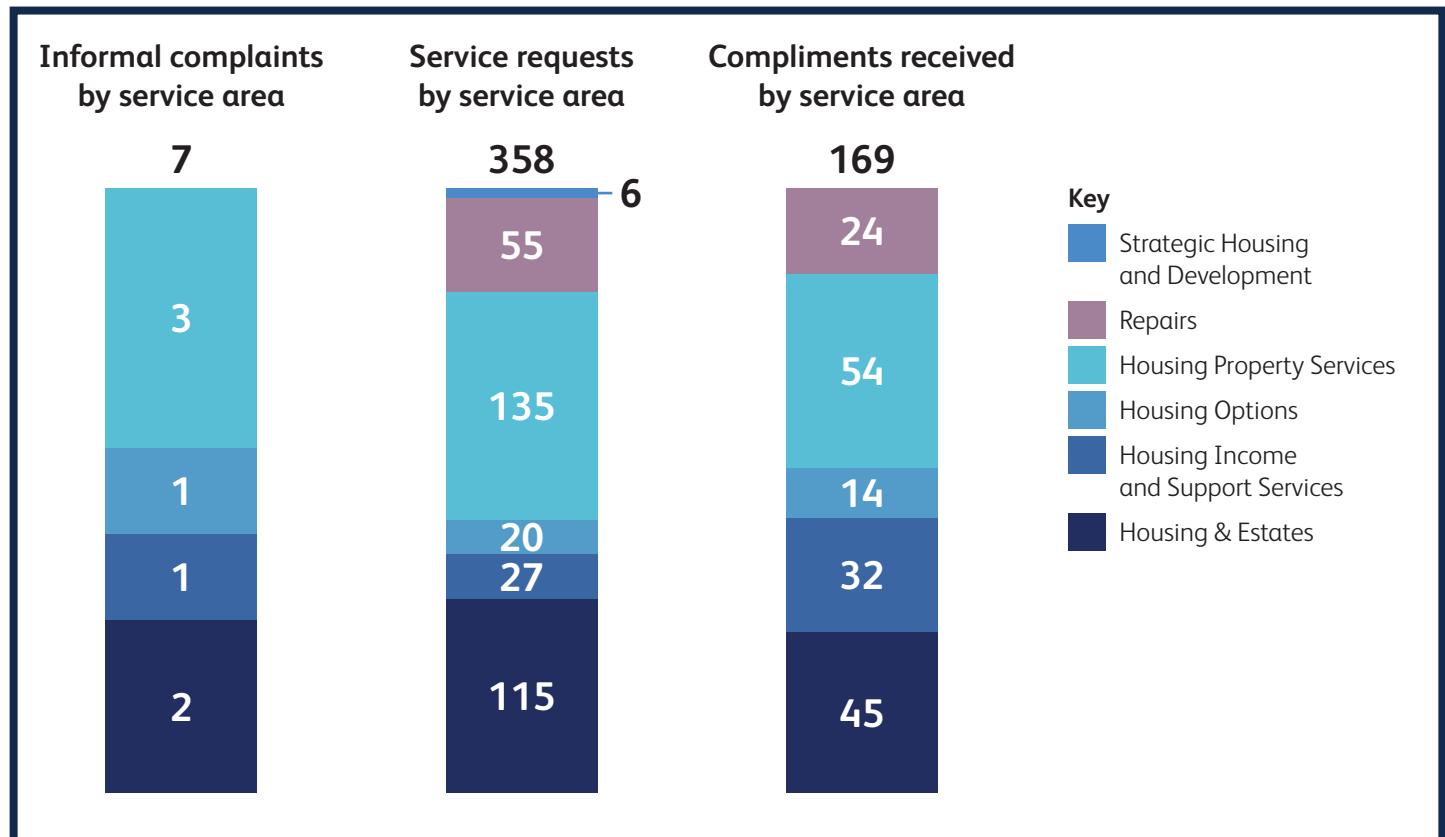
3

The majority of complaints were regarding a disputed decision or outcome.

INFORMAL COMPLAINTS – SERVICE REQUESTS – COMPLIMENTS

Informal complaints are complaints that have not been accepted under the formal complaint procedure. Service requests are enquiries where staff can offer a quick informal response to resolve the issue without formal investigation.

These follow similar trends to formal complaints. They show that the majority of enquiries were received by Housing Property Services, followed by Housing and Estates, who deal with tenancy management issues including anti-social behaviour and neighbour nuisance.



APPENDIX ONE - HOW WE LEARN FROM COMPLAINTS

Housing Services has added to its change and improvement programme 2024/25 by introducing a tenant learning from complaints panel.

Background

The purpose of the panel is to build an effective partnership between tenants and the RMBC Complaints team to improve how the Council is learning from tenants' complaints.

What does the panel do?

Provide tenants with the opportunity to analyse real complaints and give feedback on how they feel the Council responded.

Provide an opportunity for tenants to examine and challenge Housing Services performance in relation to learning from complaints.

Council officers share with the panel how their feedback has been used and the positive difference it can make to tenants.

The Council uses the feedback captured from the panel to develop services and report into senior management. The Council works with Rotherfed to share with the group how their feedback has been used. Rotherfed informs the wider tenant population about the impact the panel has had on improving services and how complaints are responded to.

The panel meets every three months.

Who is better off?

This will benefit all current and future Council tenants.

Learning from Complaint examples.

The following topics were discussed by the panel and report into housing management meetings:

- Communication breakdowns
- Contractor and sub-contractor conduct
- Property condition and voids
- Respect for tenant's homes
- Accessibility and inclusion
- Accountability and follow-through

APPENDIX TWO – HOUSING OMBUDSMAN DETERMINATIONS RECEIVED IN 2024 – 2025.

4 Ombudsman decisions were received during 2024/25; they were all upheld in part. All actions were completed by the Council as required by the Ombudsman.

In addition to taking action following Determination, the Council reports other publicised cases and special reports by the Housing Ombudsman to its Housing Quality and Improvement Board for their consideration and action.

Complaint Summary	Housing Ombudsman Determination	Action taken
<p>A complaint regarding the landlord's handling of the resident's request to install a multi fuel burning stove, or to open a fireplace in the property to burn smokeless fuel. The Ombudsman also investigated the landlord's complaint handling.</p>	<p>In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Scheme, there was service failure in the landlord's handling of the resident's request to install a multi fuel burning stove, or to open a fireplace in the property to burn smokeless fuel.</p> <p>In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Scheme, there was service failure in the landlord's handling of the resident's complaint.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paid the resident directly a total of £200 in compensation. Compensation is broken down as follows: a. £100 for time and trouble. b. £100 for distress and inconvenience. 2. Wrote to the resident with a decision regarding their request to open a fireplace within the property to burn smokeless fuel, giving full reasons for its decision. 3. Ensured that the policy regarding wood burning stoves is available for residents via our website and online tenancy handbook.
<p>A complaint regarding the landlord's response to reports of problems with the communal television ariel, and its decision not to compensate the resident and the landlord's complaint handling.</p>	<p>In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was service failure by the landlord in respect of the complaints about the landlord's response to reports of problems with the communal television ariel. In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was maladministration by the landlord in respect of its complaint handling.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apologised to the resident for the failings identified by the Ombudsman. 2. Paid the resident £100 compensation. 3. Concluded its drafting of the repair and maintenance policy within three months of the determination to ensure clarity on its processes, which has been shared with all relevant staff and contractors. 4. Investigated a new repair issue reported to the Ombudsman during their investigation.

<p>A complaint regarding the landlord's handling of the resident's concerns about staff conduct and damp and mould.</p>	<p>In accordance with Paragraph 42 of the Scheme the complaint about staff conduct is outside of our jurisdiction. In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Scheme there was maladministration in the landlord's response to damp and mould.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paid the resident £500 compensation to acknowledge the distress, inconvenience and time and trouble that they experienced in relation to the damp and mould 2. Apologised to the resident in writing for the failings identified in this report 3. Considered the resident's request for compensation for damage to their belongings 4. Explained in writing to the resident why there was conflicting information regarding the outcome of the damp proof course assessments, and any action taken to prevent this in future
<p>A complaint regarding the landlord's decision to repair the living room windows and not replace them. The Ombudsman also investigated the landlord's complaint handling.</p>	<p>In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was no maladministration by the landlord when it made its decision to repair the living room windows and not replace them. In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was maladministration by the landlord in its complaint handling.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apologised to the resident in writing for the failings identified. 2. Paid the resident total compensation of £150 in recognition of the complaint handling failures and the time, trouble, and inconvenience caused

APPENDIX THREE – CONSIDERATION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT BY HOUSING REGULATORY ASSURANCE BOARD

MINUTES	MEETING:	Housing Regulatory Assurance Board
	DATE:	Monday 4 th August 2025
	VENUE:	
	CHAIR:	
	MINUTE TAKER:	
In Attendance		
Stuart Purcell		Complaints Manager
Councillor Linda Beresford		Elected Member
Item	Subject/Discussion	Action
6.	<p><u>Complaints</u></p> <p>SP presented the item to the Board.</p> <p>Several key documents were discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlord Annual Complaints Report 2024 – 2025 • Update from Tenants' learning from complaints panel • Housing Ombudsman Service's landlord performance report • Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code 2025 review <p>SP stated that complaints relating to Right to Buy, and homelessness will not be included, as these areas are treated separately and will be reflected differently within the annual report.</p> <p>A reduction in formal complaints was noted, particularly in repairs from 149 to 106, with contributing factors including staffing challenges, service delays, and unmet expectations. While service request volumes have decreased, there has been an increase in complaints being upheld, and performance against timescales has dipped to 76%.</p> <p>LR raised several questions regarding the use of data, benchmarking with other local authorities and ALMOs, and the definition and handling of complaints. LR also asked about the training provided to staff and how support is delivered across teams. SP responded that bespoke training has been delivered to frontline staff in customer services, focusing on the concept of</p>	

complaints and managing expectations. Workshops have also been held with key teams to improve complaint handling practices.

Further discussion highlighted the need for a consistent definition of complaints across all service areas. PW questioned whether all teams, including those handling ASB cases, are using the same criteria, particularly when dissatisfaction is expressed but not formally logged as a complaint. It was agreed that any expression of dissatisfaction should be captured, even if no further action is taken, to ensure a complete and accurate picture of service performance.

IS suggested the development of a clear complaints model to ensure consistency and alignment with consumer standards. Cllr Beresford emphasised the importance of learning from complaints, improving the quality of responses, and preventing escalation to formal stages.

DJ confirmed that there is a separate forum dedicated to discussing complaints. It was suggested that benchmarking should be completed to understand how other organisations are approaching complaint handling. This would help identify best practices and ensure our processes are aligned.

A key question raised was whether we are comfortable allowing complaints to escalate to formal investigations, or whether earlier intervention could prevent progression to a stage 2 complaint. Consideration was given to how the Regulator might perceive our approach, and whether it would be seen as unusual. It was agreed that we should refer back to the Complaint Handling Code and carefully consider how workload is escalated and managed.

There is a need for greater clarity around what constitutes a formal complaint and how we prepare staff, members, and the public to manage expectations. HQIP data indicates low satisfaction levels with complaint handling, and questions raised in the TSMs could have a knock-on effect on overall performance.

The group discussed the need to define a clear complaint handling model. This model should reflect our commitment to doing the right thing for tenants and delivering appropriate responses. There was interest in seeing this modelled clearly, with an understanding of what it means for the organisation and its wider impact.

Cllr Beresford raised a query asking whether responsibility lies with [REDACTED] or herself as the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC). It was agreed to be discussed and confirmed at a later date once further investigations and benchmarking has taken place.

Next steps include completing the benchmarking exercise, reviewing the Complaint Handling Code and associated guidance, and developing a clear, organisation wide model for complaints handling.

	<p>SP stated that a customer-friendly version of Appendix One should be created and published on the website to improve transparency and accessibility.</p> <p><u>Actions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To agree the findings that need to be signed off for SP to send on by the 30th September 2025. • Collate a clear model for handling complaints. • Research who is the MRC at other local authorities. 	ALL SP LY
6.	<p>Date and time of next meeting -</p> <p>Monday, 8 September 2025, 1.00pm – 2.00pm</p>	