



COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

Housing Service

Planning, Performance and Involvement Team

GetInvolved@sheffield.gov.uk



Introduction

We aim to deliver high quality services, but we know that sometimes things go wrong and that you might not always be satisfied with our services. If that happens, you can make a complaint and we will deal with that complaint as fairly, effectively and promptly as we can.

When dealing with housing-related complaints from our tenants or leaseholders, we follow the Housing Ombudsman's **Complaints Handling Code**. This sets out how landlords are expected to deal with and learn from complaints, and it is a statutory requirement for all social housing landlords to abide by the Code.

You can find out more about the Housing Ombudsman and the Code here: [Home | Housing Ombudsman Service \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#)

Each year, we assess ourselves against the Code to ensure that we are compliant, and that we are handling complaints as fairly and as effectively as we can. You can see a copy of our latest self-assessment here: [Complain about the Council Housing Service | Sheffield City Council](#) (It is available on this webpage as a downloadable document).

This report accompanies the self-assessment and covers three main topics:

- How well we deal with complaints
- Any issues the Housing Ombudsman has found in how we deal with complaints
- What service improvements we have made by learning from complaints

If you have any questions about this report, or any comments on how we deal with complaints, please contact us at GetInvolved@sheffield.gov.uk

What were the most common complaints last year?

Between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026, we received a total of 3,012 complaints (Stage 1 and Stage 2 combined) from tenants and leaseholders. This is a slight increase on 24/25's total number of complaints, which was 2,708.

The service areas which most frequently received complaints were Responsive Repairs, Neighbourhood Teams, Planned Repairs, Working at Heights (scaffolding, etc) and Gas Servicing. The most common reason for complaints is poor customer service and delays in repairs being carried out.

The Housing Ombudsman says that "Receiving a high volume of complaints is not necessarily indicative of a failing. Rather it could indicate the complaints process is accessible, the organisation is open and transparent, and our citizens feel they can complain and believe there is value in doing so."

We treat all complaints as an opportunity to learn from feedback, and to improve the services we deliver to our tenants and leaseholders.

How quickly do we deal with complaints?

The Housing Ombudsman expects us to aim to respond to Stage One complaints within a total of 15 working days (5 days to acknowledge the complaint, then a further 10 days after the acknowledgement to fully respond).

If a customer isn't happy with our initial response to their complaint, they can ask for it to be reviewed by a more senior manager. These are classed as Stage 2 complaints. We have 25 working days (5 days to acknowledge the complaint, then a further 20 days after the acknowledgement to fully respond) to carry out the review and send a final response to the complaint.

Whilst we work hard to respond within these timescales, we don't always meet them. Between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026, we responded to **51% of Stage One complaints** within the Housing Ombudsman's timescales. This is a significant decrease in performance from the previous year, when 64% of Stage One complaints were responded to within timeframes. Our current performance is well below our target.

59% of Stage Two complaint reviews were carried out and completed within the required 20 working day timeframe. This is a significant improvement on last year's performance which was 22%.

Our stage one figures are disappointing, and we know these delays in responding to your complaints mean that you are having to wait too long for your issues to be resolved.

A large proportion of our delayed complaints relate to repairs, and we have now implemented 'Complaints Improvement Plan' for this area. This plan is being monitored by senior managers and Elected Members. It aims to improve how we handle repairs-related complaints, and ensure they are managed fairly, consistently and in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

Key actions and improvements in the Plan include:

- Provide more training for staff and managers so they can handle complaints better. Provide additional training to improve complaints handling and increase the capacity of investigating managers within the service.
- Make sure there are enough staff available to respond to complaints. Review case coordination to better support the administration of complaints and improve record keeping.
- Keep tenants better updated on their complaints. This will include contacting them early and providing regular updates.
- Improve our data so we can track complaints more easily, spot common issues and use what we learn to improve services.
- Use learning from complaints to improve repairs, record keeping, appointment scheduling and monitoring follow-up work.
- Improve how we use information about a tenant's specific needs so that we can provide better support.
- Work more closely with tenant groups to get their feedback about complaints and use their views to help shape future improvements.

This plan will help us improve the way we manage complaints, learn from customers' experiences and deliver better repair services for tenants

The plan was shared at the May meeting of the new Homes Panel. Future updates will shortly be provided in the tenants bulletins. We will keep you updated on our progress against the Plan and share complaints performance more frequently with you.

How satisfied are our tenants with how we have handled their complaints?

Every month, an external partner organisation called Viewpoint undertake telephone satisfaction surveys with a random sample of our tenants. **350 surveys** are done every month and as part of this, tenants are asked if they have made a complaint to us in the last 12 months. The percentage of those who told us they had raised a complaint is **21%**.

Those that say they have made a complaint are then asked how satisfied they are with how we handled that complaint: they are also invited to provide further comments if they respond that they are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026, **33%** of respondents said they were satisfied with our complaint handling, and a further 8% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. This is a slight decrease in performance on the year before, where 34% of respondents said they were satisfied.

Complaint handling remains our lowest tenant satisfaction score. However, our satisfaction score of 33% does compares well to the complaint's satisfaction scores for comparable landlords which average at 32%.

We have made significant changes in our complaints handling process, including the launch of a new CRM system to record and respond to complaints. We are hopeful that numbers will improve next year as staff become used to the new ways of working.

Are there any complaints which we have rejected?

Very occasionally, there may be a complaint made to us by a tenant which we are not able to deal with as a complaint or which falls outside the scope of the complaints policy. Examples include:

- First requests for a service (e.g. first-time request for a repair)
- Issues which the Council is not responsible for (e.g. buses running late)
- Where there is a formal appeals process to deal with the issue (e.g. Housing Benefit claims)

- Situations where there are safeguarding issues (as there is a separate procedure which must be followed)
- Where we receive the same complaint from the same customer and have already fully investigated and responded to it

Between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026, we rejected a total of 84 complaints. Most of the complaints that were rejected were actually first requests for service and so were dealt with as appropriate by the relevant service. Other complaints were rejected because the issue had already been fully investigated and responded to previously, or because the issue was already being investigated as a complaint.

Whenever we cannot accept a complaint we will always explain to the customer the reasons for this.

What does the Housing Ombudsman think of how we handle complaints?

If tenants are not happy with how we have handled their complaint, they can refer it to the Housing Ombudsman and ask for it to be reviewed by them. This can result in the Housing Ombudsman telling us that we have done something wrong in how we handled the tenant's complaint or delivered a service and giving us recommendations or instructions for how we should put things right. They may also review the case and decide that we dealt with the complaint satisfactorily and that there is no further action to be taken.

The Housing Ombudsman publishes annual performance reports about individual social landlords, and the latest reports can be viewed here: [Landlords Archive - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://www.landlordsarchive.org.uk/) To find their latest report about us, type "Sheffield City Council" into the 'search by name' box.

Between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026, the Housing Ombudsman determined **14 complaints** from our tenants and issued **32 individual complaints findings** in respect of these complaints (a single complaint can result in a number of findings). These findings are split across the different categories as follows:

Category of finding	Explanation (as provided by the Housing Ombudsman)	No. of these in 25/26
---------------------	---	--------------------------

No maladministration	No failure by the Landlord was found. The Landlord acted in accordance with its obligations and policies/procedures. Minor failings may have been found but these caused no detriment to the resident.	8
Service failure	A minor failure by the Landlord in the service it provided, which was not appropriately acknowledged or fully put right. Service failure is a form of maladministration	6
Maladministration	A failure which adversely affected the resident	13
Severe maladministration	A failure which had a significant impact on the resident. The circumstances for maladministration apply and the redress needed to put things right is substantial	0
Redress	When there is evidence of maladministration, but the landlord has identified and acknowledged this prior to the Ombudsman's formal investigation and has, on its own initiative, taken steps and/or made an offer of compensation, that puts things right.	3
Outside jurisdiction	The complaint will not or cannot be considered by the Ombudsman	2

In addition, two complaint handling failure orders (CHFO) were issued by the Housing Ombudsman. A CHFO is a formal order where a Landlord has failed to comply with its complaint handling obligations under the Housing Ombudsman Scheme and the Complaint Handling Code. Its purpose is to ensure that complaints are handled accessibly, consistently and within the required timescales, allowing residents to progress their complaints fairly.

For further information please see: [2025-26 Sheffield City Council's Annual Ombudsman Report](#)

What have we learned from complaints?

It is very important that we directly address a tenant's complaint and put things right for that tenant. It is also very important that we learn from that complaint on a wider basis and

where necessary make changes to how we do things. This means that our services for all tenants improve as a result of individual complaints made to us.

Once a complaint has been fully investigated and a response sent to the tenant, the investigating manager then considers what we can learn from that complaint. Service improvements are then agreed and put into practice based on what we have learned.

These improvements can range from relatively small changes to processes or to how an individual team works, to larger-scale service wide changes.

Senior managers also look at the learning from complaints to identify any common themes or issues, so that service-wide improvements at a higher level can be made where necessary.

Below are some examples of improvements made as a result of learning from your complaints:

New Vulnerability Policy

Feedback from complaints, tenants, partner organisations and our own staff showed that we needed a better understanding of vulnerability and a more consistent approach to supporting vulnerable tenants.

We listened to this feedback and developed a new Housing Service Vulnerability Policy. The policy helps staff identify vulnerability earlier and makes sure tenants receive the support they need in a consistent and fair way.

The policy was developed in consultation with stakeholders and is now being used across the Housing Service.

New Safeguarding Procedures

Learning from complaints, statutory reviews and feedback from partner organisations highlighted the need for clearer guidance for staff on safeguarding issues.

In response, we developed and launched new Adult and Child Safeguarding Procedures for the Housing Service. These procedures clearly set out how staff should respond to safeguarding concerns and help ensure that vulnerable residents receive the right support at the right time.

This gives tenants confidence that safeguarding concerns will be identified and managed consistently.

Easier ways to report repairs

Some tenants told us that it could take too long to get through on the phone to report a repair.

In response, we introduced a new 24-hour automated telephone service which allows tenants to report repairs at any time of the day or night without needing to wait to speak to an adviser.

This gives tenants more choice about how and when they contact us and makes it easier to report repairs when it is convenient for them.

Better communication during contractor improvement works

A complaint highlighted that tenants did not always feel informed about progress when contractors are carrying out improvement work in their homes.

As a result, the Asset Management Team introduced work-in-progress visits carried out by Council staff alongside contractors. These visits provide a visible presence on site, help answer tenants' questions and give reassurance while works are ongoing.

This has helped improve communication and the overall customer experience during improvement projects.

Action on fly-tipping and neighbourhood cleanliness

Tenants and residents told us that fly-tipping, litter and environmental issues were affecting some neighbourhoods and communal areas.

We responded by taking a range of actions, including installing cameras and signage in known problem areas and carrying out environmental improvement works where residents had reported concerns.

These improvements have helped reduce environmental issues and improve the appearance of neighbourhoods for local residents.

Improving safety and communal spaces

Feedback from tenant complaints, estate walkabouts and Local Area Housing Forums highlighted a range of concerns about safety and the condition of communal spaces.

In response, we carried out a variety of improvements, including repairing or replacing fencing, improving communal areas, replacing damaged seating, tackling overgrown land and carrying out environmental improvements to make shared spaces cleaner, safer and more welcoming.

These improvements have helped create neighbourhoods that residents can take pride in and enjoy more safely.

Further information

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions about anything in this report, or would like further information about how we handle complaints, please contact us at

GetInvolved@sheffield.gov.uk or by calling us on 0114 2930000.

You can also find more information about our complaints policy by visiting our website:

[Complain about the Council Housing Service | Sheffield City Council](#)

Thank you for taking the time to read our report.