



Annual Housing Report for **Tenants and Leaseholders 2025**

April 24 to March 25



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Welcome to the Annual Housing Report

for Tenants and Leaseholders

Dear Tenants and Leaseholders,

Welcome to this year's Annual Housing Report for tenants and leaseholders, created with your needs in mind. As a Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group representative, I've seen how your feedback influences decisions made by Sandwell Council, our housing provider.



This report gives you an honest look at how our housing service has performed over the last 12 months, where progress has been made, and where improvements are still needed.

Inside, you'll find updates on the types and number of homes managed by Sandwell Council, along with information on Right to Buy (RTB) activity and the home checks completed. You'll also find information on tenant satisfaction, anti-social behaviour (ASB), complaints, tenancy fraud and how Sandwell Council is working to raise standards and move out of the current C3 regulatory grading, given in October 2024, which highlights serious failings with Sandwell Council's housing services.

While there have been challenges, there's also been real progress, including stronger community spirit and more open conversations.

This report is more than just a summary; it's a reflection of your voice and a tool for accountability. Over the past year, I've been reminded of just how powerful resident and leaseholder involvement can be. Through meetings, surveys, and personal conversations, your insights have been instrumental in shaping Sandwell Council decisions and direction.

There is always more to improve on, but I'm proud of the progress that we've made this year.

Remember that your continued feedback is vital. This Annual Report highlights how your input has influenced key changes. I encourage you to: read the report, ask questions, get involved, challenge what doesn't work and celebrate what does. This is our shared story, and we all have a role in shaping what comes next.

Best wishes,

Phillippe Brown
Chair of Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group



A word from Councillor Smith

It is a privilege to present this Annual Housing Report for tenants and leaseholders, which provides a comprehensive overview of our performance and progress in delivering housing services over the past year. As your Cabinet Member for Housing, I am committed to ensuring our services are not only efficient and effective but also responsive to the needs and priorities of our tenants.



This report demonstrates our dedication to accountability and transparency, as we strive to meet the obligations set by the Regulator of Social Housing. It outlines our

achievements, addresses areas where we need to improve, and showcases the positive impact of our collaborative efforts with tenants.

This past year has seen its share of challenges, including the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, which has impacted many of our residents. However,

I am proud of the way our team has responded, by providing support and developing innovative solutions. This report provides a detailed account of these efforts.

Your feedback is invaluable to us, and we encourage you to carefully review this report. We are committed to learning from your experiences and using your insights to shape our future service delivery. We believe that by working together, we can create a housing service that truly meets the needs of our community.

Thank you.

Councillor Smith



Our C3 Status

What does having C3 Status mean?

In October 2024 our housing services were assessed by the Regulator for Social Housing. The Regulator found that we had not met important standards relating to repairs and the safety and quality of our homes. The Regulator graded us C3, meaning that significant improvements in our services are needed.

What did we get wrong?

The inspection found that:

- Only about 2% of our buildings had the required asbestos surveys completed.
- Although we had completed electrical inspections on 96% of our homes, we couldn't track repairs completed as a result of these checks. This failure was partly caused by having outdated online housing management systems.
- There were more than 14,000 overdue repairs jobs.
- We only had up-to-date stock condition surveys for 5% of our homes.

How we are improving

While disappointed with the result, we fully accept the Housing Regulator's C3 judgement and have taken strong and decisive action to put things right.

- We are completing a stock condition survey of all council properties so that we have accurate and up-to-date information on all our properties.
- We are upgrading our housing management systems to better track repairs, appointments, and follow-ups.
- Dedicated teams are working to reduce the repairs backlog and address overdue jobs as a priority. We are prioritising safety, vulnerability and the most urgent repairs. We are looking to recruit more repairs officers to prevent any future backlog.
- As of July 2025, 100% of asbestos surveys have been completed.



Our stock

At the end of the financial year our housing stock consisted of 27,781 properties. 26,817 of these properties are managed by Sandwell Council and 964 by the Riverside Group housing association.

There are currently 20,423 households on our housing register, who are waiting for one of our properties. This number has significantly increased in the last three years.

5,476 households on the housing register are current Sandwell Council tenants, making up 27% of the housing register.



14,720
Houses



10,837
Flats




1,576
Bungalows




648
Maisonettes




Right to Buy




174 properties
were sold under Right to Buy
in the last financial year.




From the sale of these properties,
the council generated
£14,673,730
worth of income.







On average, buyers were
given a discount of
£75,248
on the purchase value of
their property.



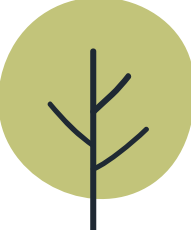
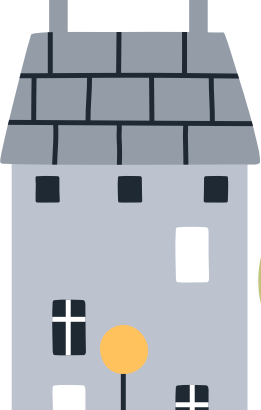
To contribute to the replacement
of housing lost through the right
to buy scheme, in the last financial
year, we built **14 new properties**
and purchased **23 properties**.




This is fewer than our annual target, set out in our Housing Strategy.




Our Housing Strategy sets a
target of building
100-150
new council homes each year
until 2028.






Right to Buy helps tenants
to buy their homes at a
discounted rate. For more
information visit:
[www.sandwell.gov.uk/tenanthandbook/
tenant-handbook/buying-home](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/tenanthandbook/tenant-handbook/buying-home)

What We Spent



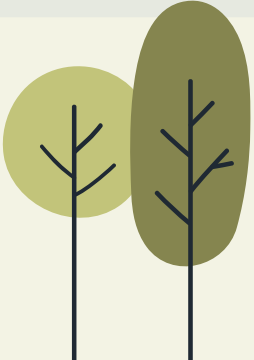
**For every £1 spent last year,
we did so on:**

20p	day-to-day repairs
21p	delivering our services, including staff wages
9p	investing in new builds
12p	interest we pay on existing loans
20p	home improvements and maintenance
13p	money set aside to invest in future building programmes
1p	money set aside for the future
2p	adapting houses
2p	other



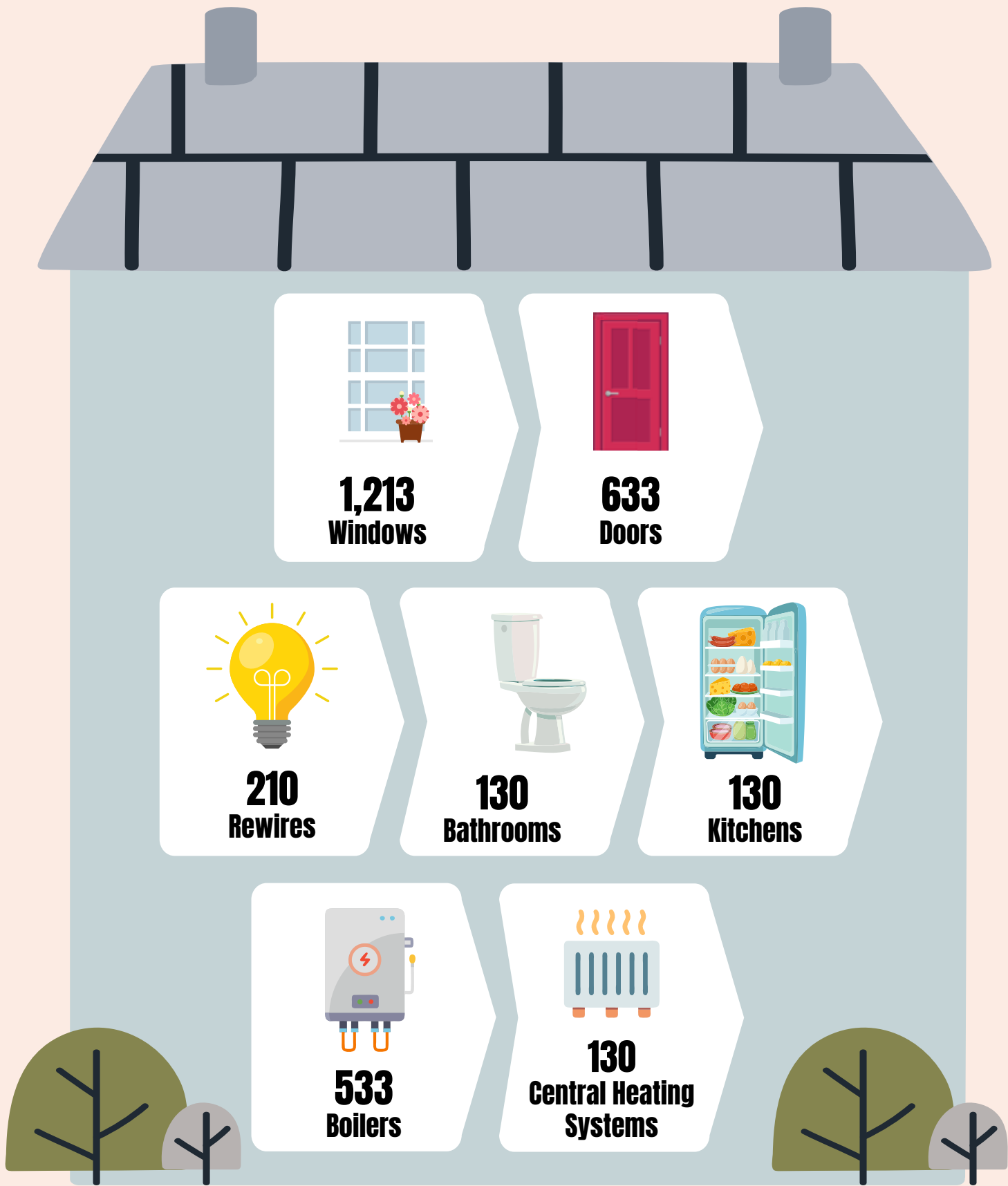
**For every £1 we spent last
year, this money came from:**

65p	rents and service charges
8p	property sales
11p	use of our savings
5p	money we borrowed
6p	government grants
6p	other activities



Investing in your home

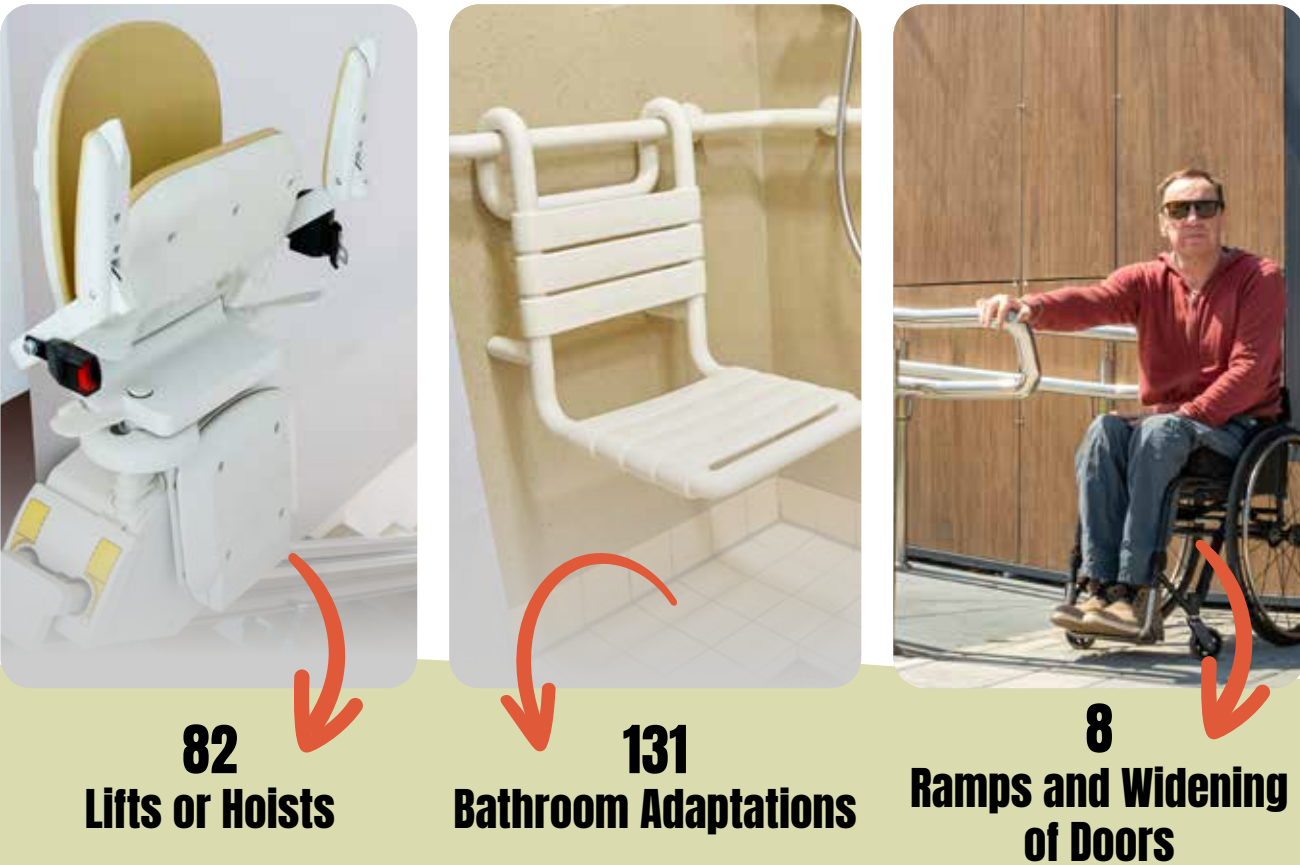
This financial year, we invested £46.7 million in refurbishments and improvements to your homes. Work we completed included:



Adaptations

Our adaptations service helps tenants with disabilities to live independently. Homes are made accessible through the use of ramps, widening of doorways, and replacing baths with shower facilities.

We adapted a total of 161 homes, and this included installing:





Repairs Data

➤ Improved compared to last year

➤ underperformed compared to last year

— Similar to last year

113,448  

responsive repairs



A responsive repair is undertaken in response to a report of a fault, such as a broken boiler, as opposed to a planned repair such as an annual gas boiler service.

44,222  



emergency repairs completed

1,189 homes  

were repaired and relet

23.73 days  

was the average time taken to complete repairs

82%  

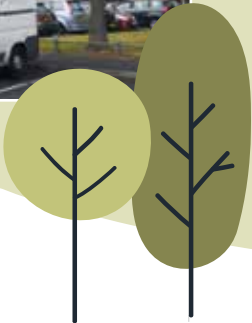
of emergency and urgent jobs were completed on time

On time emergency jobs are completed within 24 hours, and on time urgent jobs are completed within three working days.

Tenants satisfied with a completed repair 95.5% 

We recognise that many tenants have been waiting longer for repairs than we would like and we are now taking major steps to improve our repairs service.

1. We're investing in better systems and new ways of working to ensure repairs are completed right first time.
2. Our upgraded housing management system will improve how we track appointments, reduce delays, and enable better communication with you, our tenants.
3. We're also making it easier to report and track repairs online or by phone, with real-time updates.
4. We have dedicated teams currently tackling the repairs backlog, prioritising safety and urgent cases.



Tenant Satisfaction Measures

An independent research team completed a survey with tenants, to find out how we are performing. We use these findings to improve our services by focusing our resources on areas that need attention.

- Tenants were less satisfied with our services this year compared to last year.
- Tenants were also less satisfied with the time taken to complete repairs.
- Tenants were more satisfied this year with how we handle complaints.

	2023/24	2024/25	Change
Overall Satisfaction	74%	67%	➤
Well Maintained Home	72%	70%	➤
Safe Home	77%	75%	➤
Communal Areas	67%	69%	➤
Repairs Last 12 Months	76%	73%	➤
Time Taken Repairs	71%	65%	➤
Neighbourhood Contribution	64%	64%	—
Approach to ASB*	55%	57%	➤
Listens & Acts	57%	59%	➤
Fairly & with Respect	77%	75%	➤
Kept Informed	69%	67%	➤
Easy to Deal With	67%	70%	➤
Complaints Handling	29%	33%	➤
NPS (Promoters)	39%	41%	➤

*Anti-social behaviour



You said, we did, what's next

At Sandwell Council, we want the views of our tenants to help shape and improve our services. Our aim is to develop a culture where tenant engagement is not just an add on, but it's how we work.





You said
Make the telephone systems easier to use and navigate.

We did
We have reduced the number of menu options.

What's next?
We are creating a new and simpler system with just one number for all enquiries.

You said
You wanted us to make it easier to report repairs.

We did
We have reviewed our online reporting channel.

What's next?
We will add features to our website that allow you to upload photos and videos of repair issues.





You said
Make it easier for us to speak to the officer we want to speak to.


We did
We have introduced an appointment booking system.

What's next ?
We will upgrade to a self-service booking system.

You said
You wanted more information about your repairs.

We did
We have enabled you to see a history of your repairs online.

What's next ?
We will create the option of digital receipts for agreed repairs





You said
You wanted more clarity, when moving into a property, on who is responsible for completing and funding repairs.

We did
We have published a repairs policy that underwent tenant consultation. We are also producing a handy tenant checklist guide to repairs.

What's next?
To provide more information such as boundary plans for new tenants.

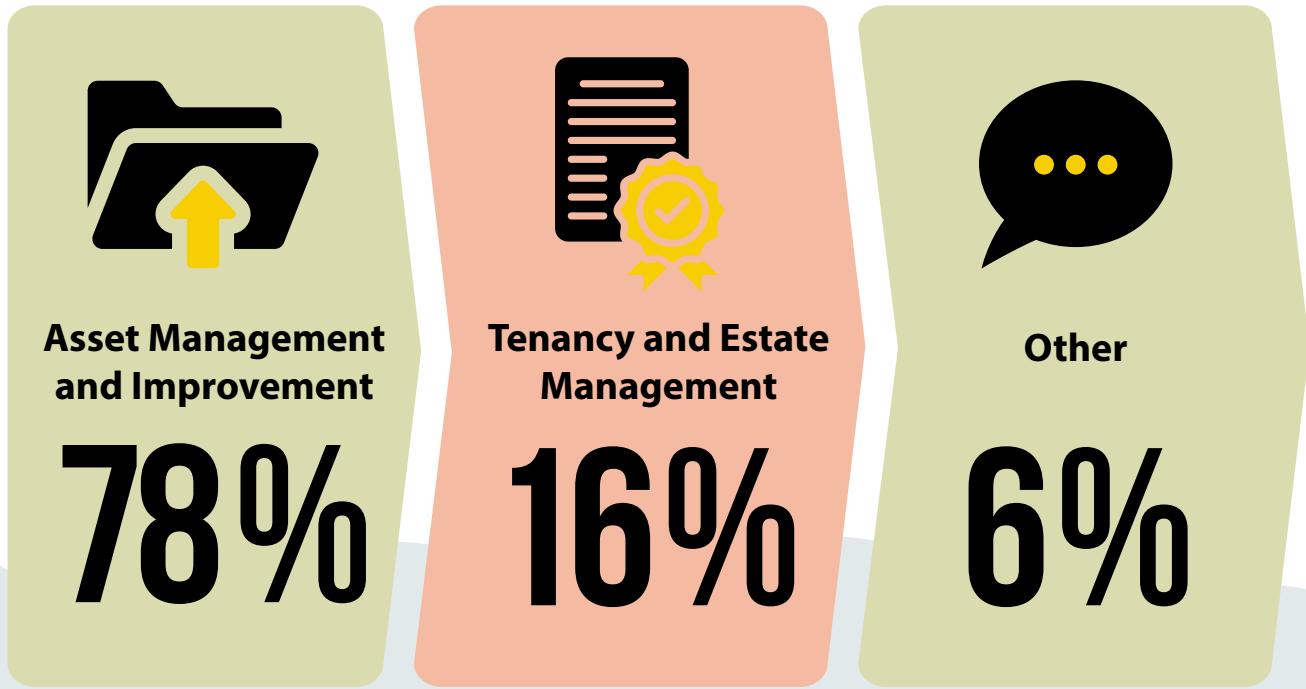
Complaints and the Housing Ombudsman

We received 890 stage one complaints this financial year

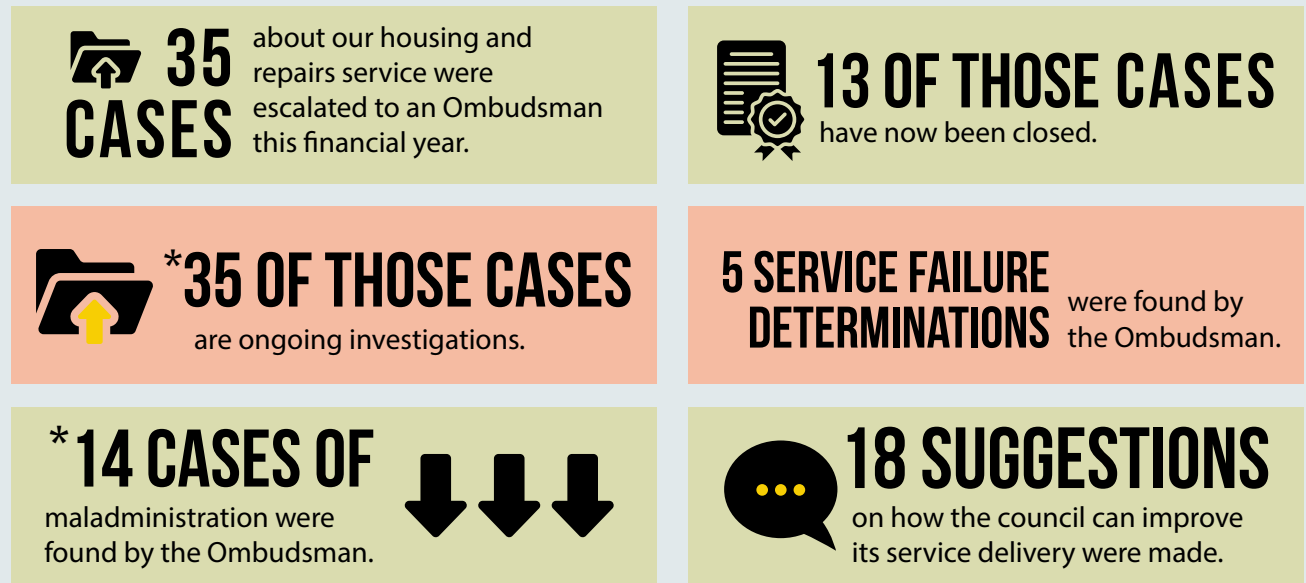
Our target is to respond to complaints within 10 working days. Last financial year we closed 36% of cases within 10 working days. The average time to resolve and close a complaint was 24 working days.

For more information on how we performed with complaint handling, please see our complaints **Annual Report**.

Complaints by service area



The Housing Ombudsman and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman



* The length of time it takes the Ombudsman to investigate cases means they may not always be received and closed within the same financial year.

Housing Complaints Improvements

We have taken a series of actions in the last financial year to improve our housing complaints service.

Improvement	Benefit	Complete?
Provide complaint handling training for all officers that have involvement with complaints.	Officers are able to provide a higher quality service of complaint handling	
Our repairs team now capture customer vulnerability information and consider it when appointing repairs staff.	This will enable us to provide a more personal, high quality and tailored service.	
Compensation is now considered when a complaint is received. A new Complaints Compensation Policy is now in place. The policy explains when and how compensation will be given.	As part of a response to your complaint, you may now receive compensation to address how our failings have affected you.	
A new process has been put in place for enquiries about existing repairs.	The new process will reduce the time it takes to contact you about your enquiry.	

Performance of The Housing Hub

The Housing Hub is a specialist housing team, who are here to answer your questions and support you when using our online services. The Housing Hub aims to answer 80% of your enquiries at the first point of contact.

- For **2024/25** we answered **67%** of enquiries at the first point of contact.
- In **2024** we launched a call back pilot for queries that we couldn't resolve at the first point of contact. In **2024/25**, the Housing Hub booked **569** callback appointments.
- 78%** of customers who came through to the Housing Hub were satisfied with the service they had received.



Home Checks

We introduced home checks in September 2021, so that we hold all of the correct information for the household. This means that we can offer support and guidance to tenants, and check on the condition of properties and gardens.

8891 home checks were completed this year
(more than last year's 6504)



"Home checks aren't just about checking the condition of your property. As Housing Officers, we are here to check on your welfare and ensure that you feel safe and happy in your home. During a home check we will ensure that you are receiving the support you need as our tenant."
Sukjit Singh
Housing Officer for Wednesbury

As a result of completing home checks this year, we have:



Anti-social behaviour

This year we received **6,828** cases of anti-social behaviour. Top three types of ASB reported:



Noise nuisance
20%



Litter/Rubbish/Fly Tipping
17%









Misuse of communal areas
12%

The Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group

Since December 2021, the Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group (TLSG) made up of eight tenants and two leaseholders, has been working with the housing service to improve services for all council tenants and leaseholders in Sandwell.



In 2024/25 the group:

-  Met quarterly with senior officers to discuss and make recommendations on a number of policies including: the lift breakdown policy, and the good neighbourhood management policy. Both policies have been made more tenant friendly by the group.
-  The two leaseholders have been working with the Home Ownership Unit to look at improving council communications with leaseholders, including the addition of QR codes to letters, and the potential for a leaseholder conference in 2025.
-  We have also been concerned about damp and mould in properties and have requested regular updates on what the council is doing to improve performance in this area.
-  Some members of the group alongside members of the Tenant Auditors Group have been involved in the recruitment of senior officers to the Asset Management Team.
-  The biggest challenge of the year for the group has been tracking the delivery of the Housing Improvement Plan and challenging the council to show how the delivery of these targets is benefitting tenants and leaseholders in Sandwell.
-  We also continue to challenge the housing service to improve how it communicates information with tenants and leaseholders.

We know Housing has some way to go to deliver all of the improvements needed to provide a first-class service, but we continue to work with them and encourage other tenants and leaseholders to get involved.



The Tenant Auditors Group





The Tenant Auditors Group (TAG) currently has six members who come from across the borough. We carry out audits of various housing services to see how they can be improved.

In 2024/25 we decided to tackle two very important issues for tenants:

1. Repairs complaints
2. The customer experience of reporting Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Since the Repairs Complaints report was completed an action plan has been agreed and a number of the actions completed.

Four of the main outcomes TAG would like to see as a result of the audit are:

-  Higher levels of satisfaction with the complaints process
-  A solution which allows a differentiation between councillors enquiries and complaints on behalf of their constituents
-  Improvement in keeping to the required timescales for dealing with complaints
-  Evidence of better communication with complainants

Some of the recommendations from the ASB audit are now being addressed, linking into an internal and external review of the service.

For 2025/26 the group will be starting off with a look into Choice Based Lettings.

We are always happy to welcome new members.

If you are interested in becoming a Tenant Auditor, please contact the Tenant Engagement Team.

Email: Comm_Partnerships@sandwell.gov.uk or call and leave a message on 0121 569 2537.



Building Safety

Building safety remains a top priority for Sandwell Council, and we are committed to working closely with residents to ensure your homes are safe and secure.

In November 2024, we launched the Building Safety Forum. The group is an opportunity for residents to meet with council officers, talk openly about safety issues, share ideas and help shape how we work.

We also started a pilot project to introduce Block Representatives in some high-rise blocks. These volunteers act as a point of contact for their neighbours, helping them to report safety issues and feeding these issues directly back to the Council.

Earlier in the year, we also reached out to every resident in our high-rise blocks to take part in a Building Safety Survey. The results helped shape a new Resident Engagement Strategy, which has been shared with residents in print and online.

We've continued to support residents who want to get more involved, whether that's by attending meetings, learning more about building safety, or helping us co-design engagement activities.

Looking ahead to 2025/26, we will:

Review the Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy.

Expand and evaluate the Block Representatives pilot.

Develop the forum's role in shaping how we engage with residents.

Offer ongoing support and learning for involved residents.



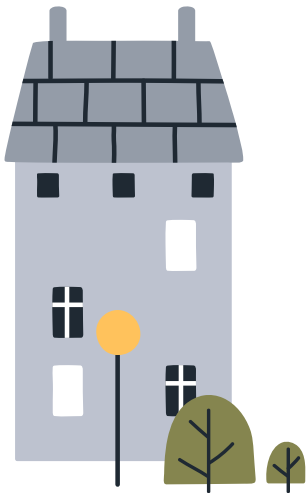
How We Tackle Housing Fraud

The Counter Fraud Unit is responsible for carrying out investigations into areas of suspected or reported fraud and misconduct. The table below presents the number of investigations that the unit have completed this financial year.

Completed Investigations - Financial Year 2024-25	
Completed investigations	194
Prosecutions	20
Housing applications cancelled prior to allocation	26
Right to Buy purchases prevented	2
School places withdrawn	1
Warning letters issued for Blue Badge misuse	12

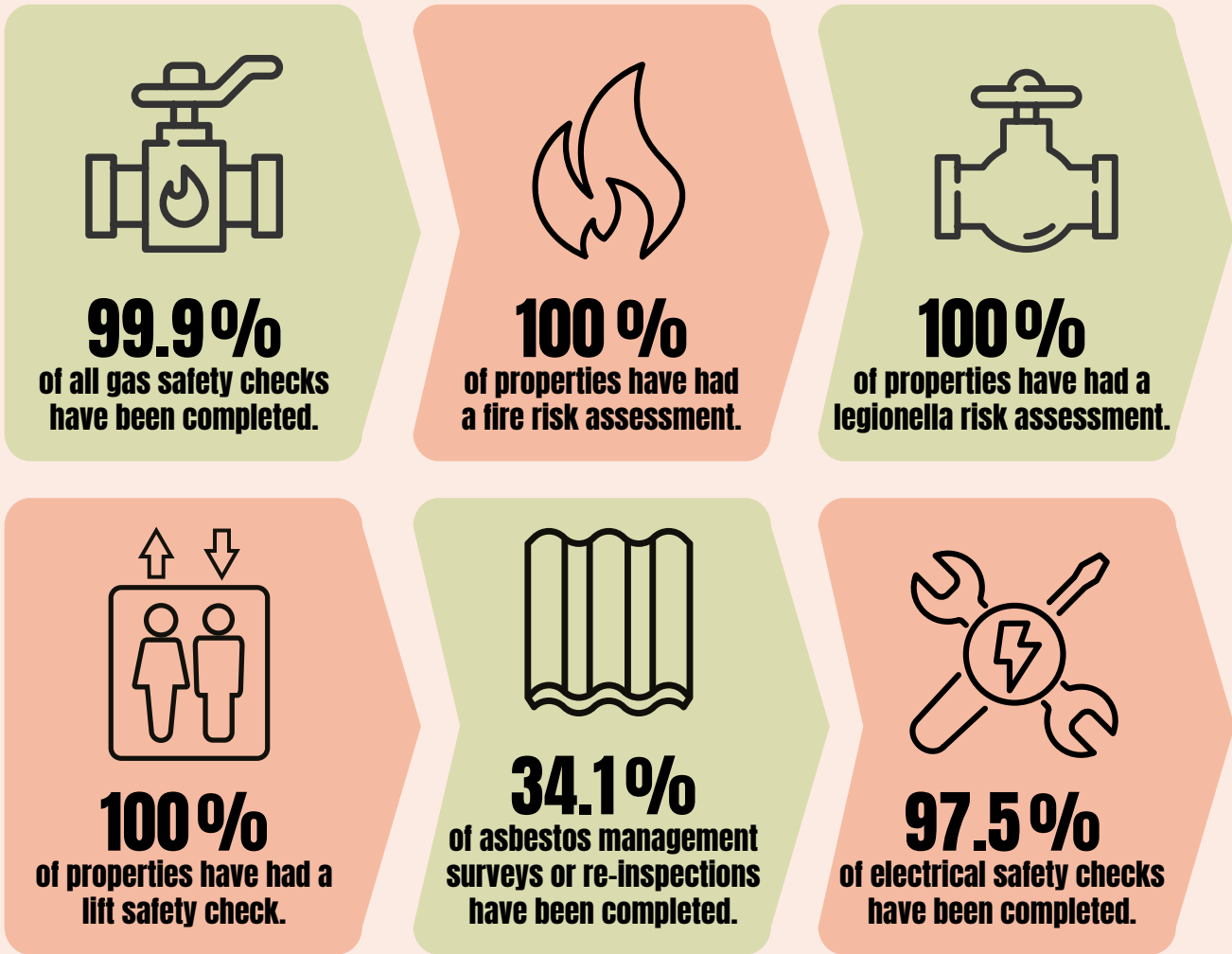
By investigating cases of suspected fraud, the council have made significant savings. This can be viewed in the table below:

Value of Fraud for Completed Investigations - Financial Year 2024-25	
Council Tax Reduction Scheme Fraud	£40,275
Direct Payments Fraud	£3,600
Housing Benefit and DHP Overpayments	£53,044
Unlawful Profit Order Value	£8,911
Value of housing applications cancelled* (notional value)	£84,240*
Value of housing properties recovered* (notional value)	£3,069,000*
Value of Right to Buy Discount (prevented sales)	£114,600



How we keep your home safe

Your safety is one of our top priorities. It is our duty as your landlord to ensure that you can live safely in your home. We complete a rolling programme of risk assessments to ensure that your property is safe to live in.



Fire risk assessments are undertaken in line with the Fire Safety Regulations.



All high-rise buildings are assessed every 12 months. You can access the fire risk assessments for your block at www.sandwell.gov.uk/fire-safety/fire-risk-assessments.

all figures correct as of 31 March 2025



STOP LOAN SHARKS

Stop Loan Sharks investigates and prosecutes illegal money lenders and provides support for borrowers in the UK.



If you have borrowed from a loan shark or are worried about someone else, we're here to help and keep you safe.

**Call Stop Loan Sharks 24/7
on 0300 555 2222**

**YOU CAN
REPORT
ANYTHING
SUSPICIOUS TO US!**



**The council operates a zero tolerance to fraud and corruption.
All instances are investigated and the perpetrator(s) dealt with
in accordance with the Counter Fraud Policy.**



Contact us on:

Online: www.sandwell.gov.uk/council/report-fraud

Email: fraud_investigation@sandwell.gov.uk