Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council

Housing Complaints



Quarter 1 Report

April 2026 - June 2026

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1. Introduction

The Housing Resolution Team is focused on building on the progress made over the previous year, by continuing to improve our response times and the quality of our responses and resolutions.

The Complaints Review Panel is now up and running, with residents giving insight into our complaint responses to drive improvement.

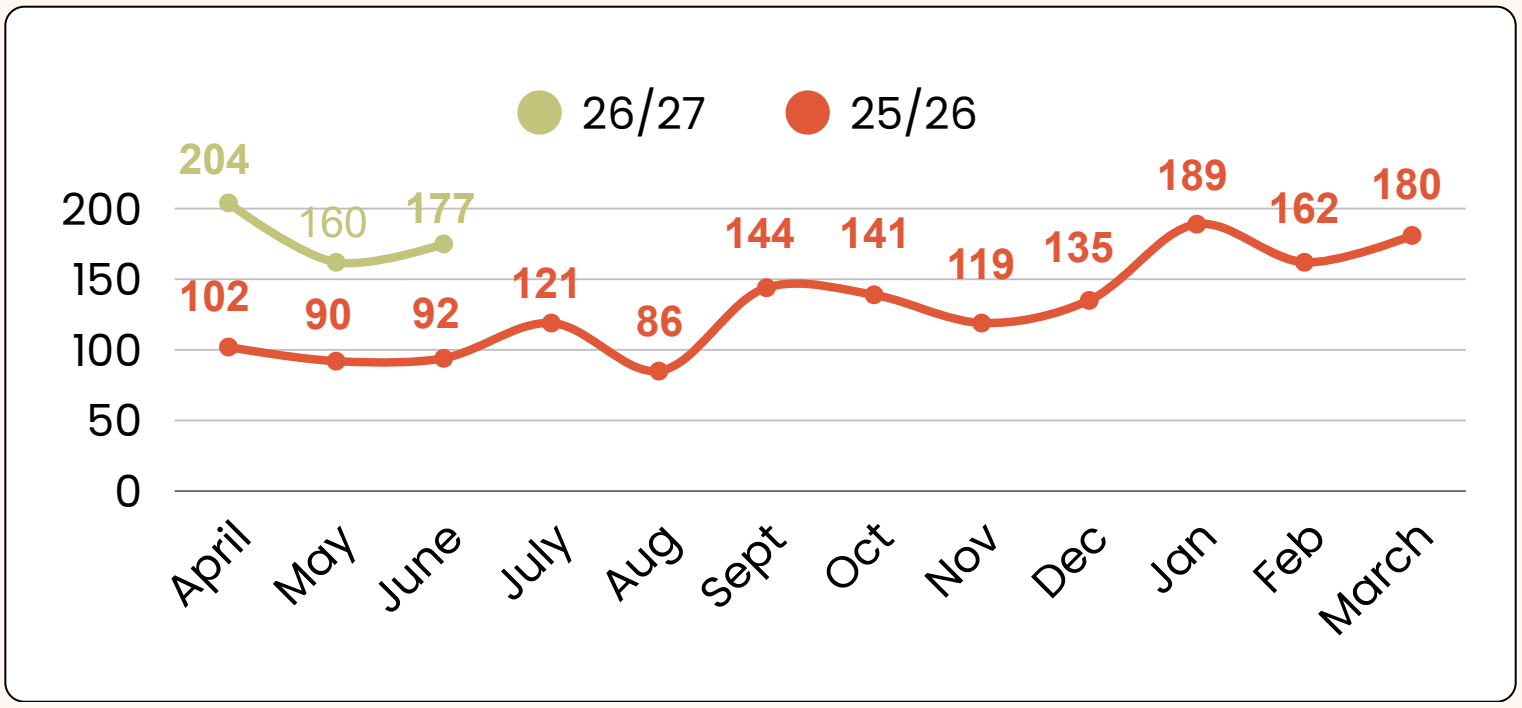
Along with Repairs complaints, the Housing Resolutions Team are now also managing Local Office complaints, which has increased demand and pressure on the team. However, an imminent restructure will increase resources and oversight to allow us to meet growing demand. A focus on understanding the reasons complaints are escalated to Stage 2 will improve our Stage 1 resolutions and provide satisfactory outcomes for complainants at the first opportunity, which in turn will reduce demand at Stage 2 of the complaints process.

2. Complaints performance

Stage 1 complaints

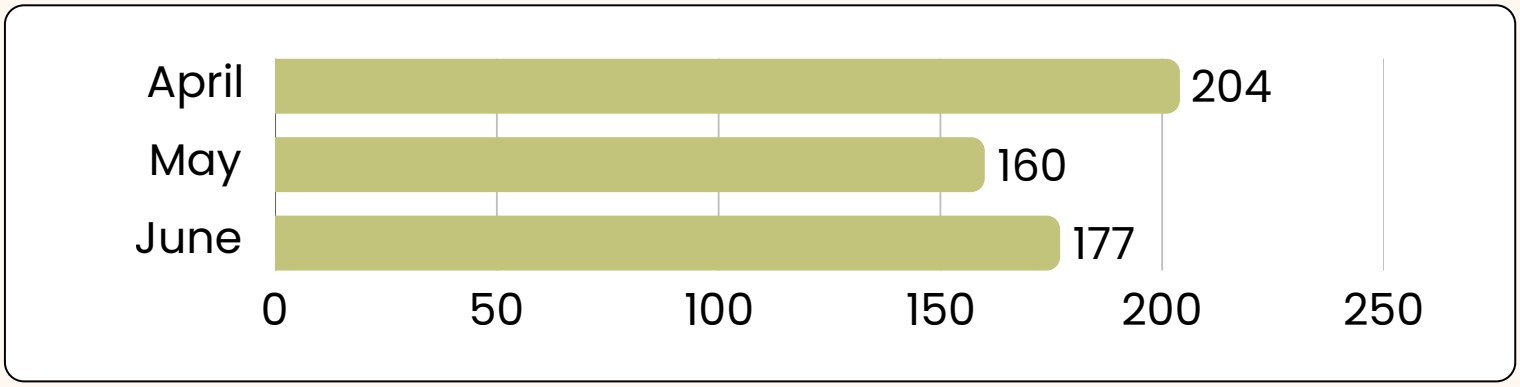
Stage 1 is the investigation stage. We will try to resolve your complaint straight away - when we can't, we will investigate and provide you with a formal response.

Stage 1 complaints received each month compared to last year



541 stage 1 complaints were received in quarter 1

Stage 1 complaints received

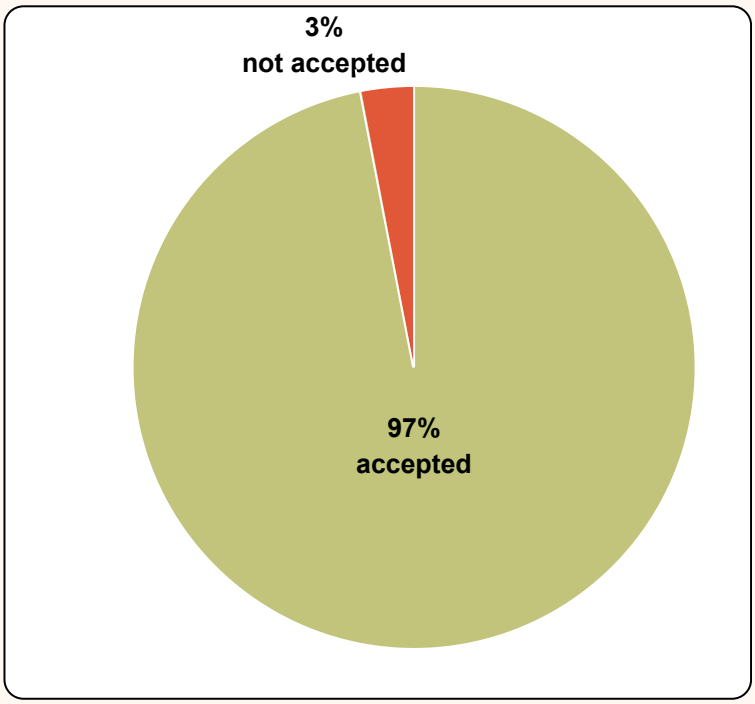


**The following information relates to closed stage 1 complaints that were received in Quarter 1. 9 stage 1 complaints received in Quarter 1 are still open.*

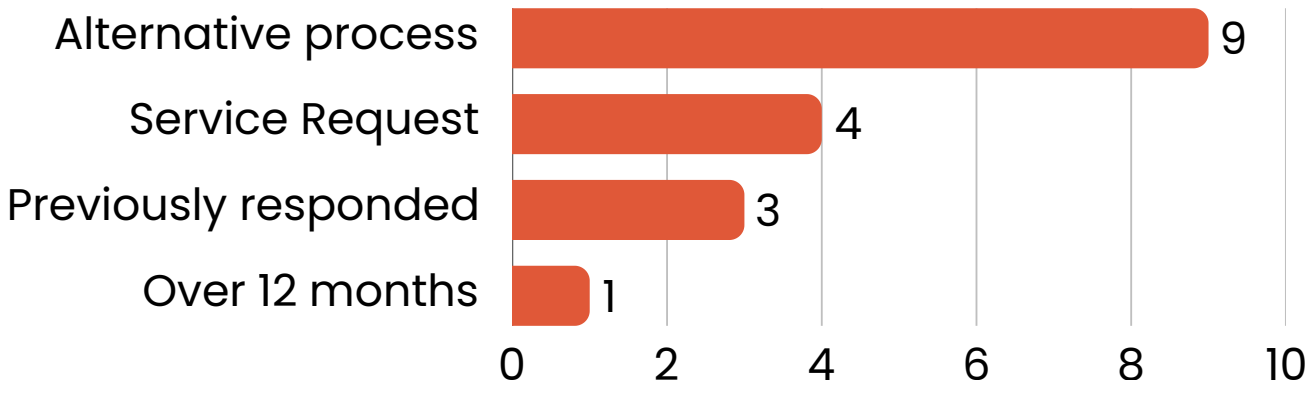
532 stage 1 complaints were closed

Accepted stage 1 complaints

There are some complaints that we do not investigate, these are set out in the Housing Ombudsman Service's Complaint Handling Code.

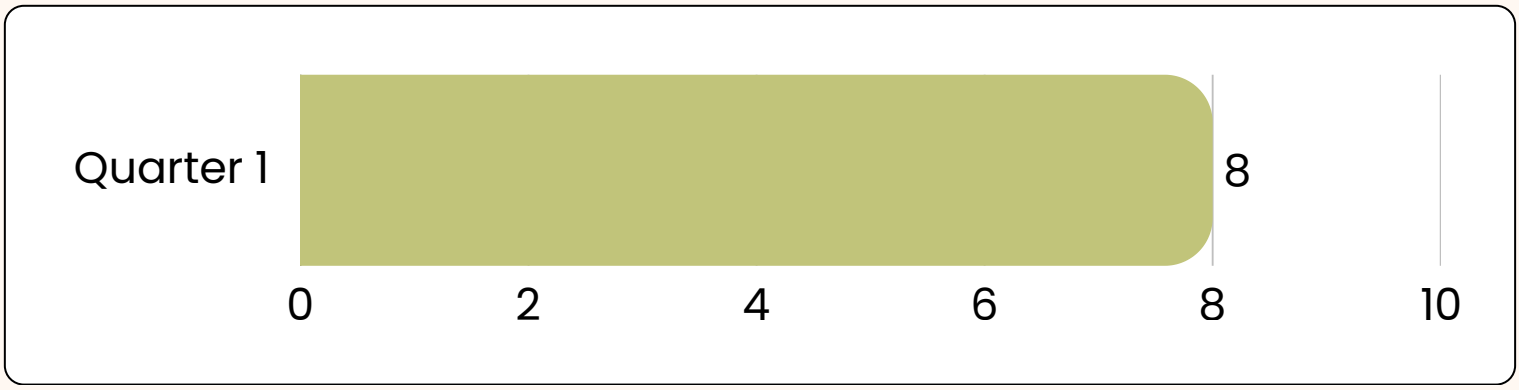


Reasons complaints were not accepted



Closed as fast fix

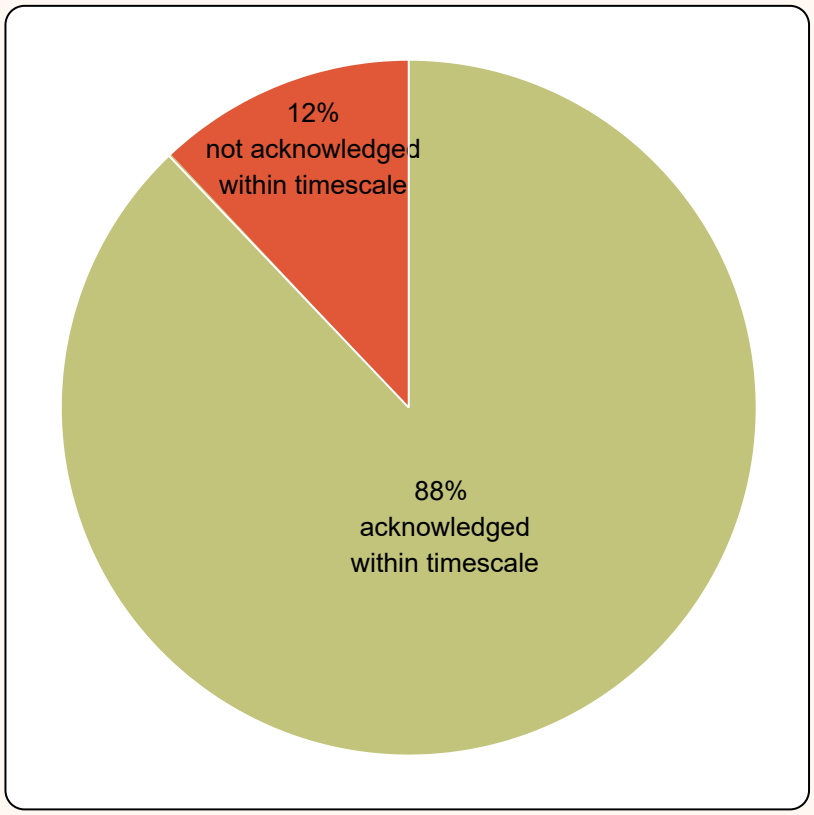
Where your complaint is resolved to your satisfaction and you do not wish to continue with the formal investigation, the complaint will be closed as a fast fix.



507 stage 1 complaints were progressed for formal investigation

Acknowledged stage 1 complaints

Where your complaint progresses for formal investigation, the Housing Ombudsman Service's Complaint Handling Code allows 5 working days for a stage 1 complaint to be accepted and acknowledged.



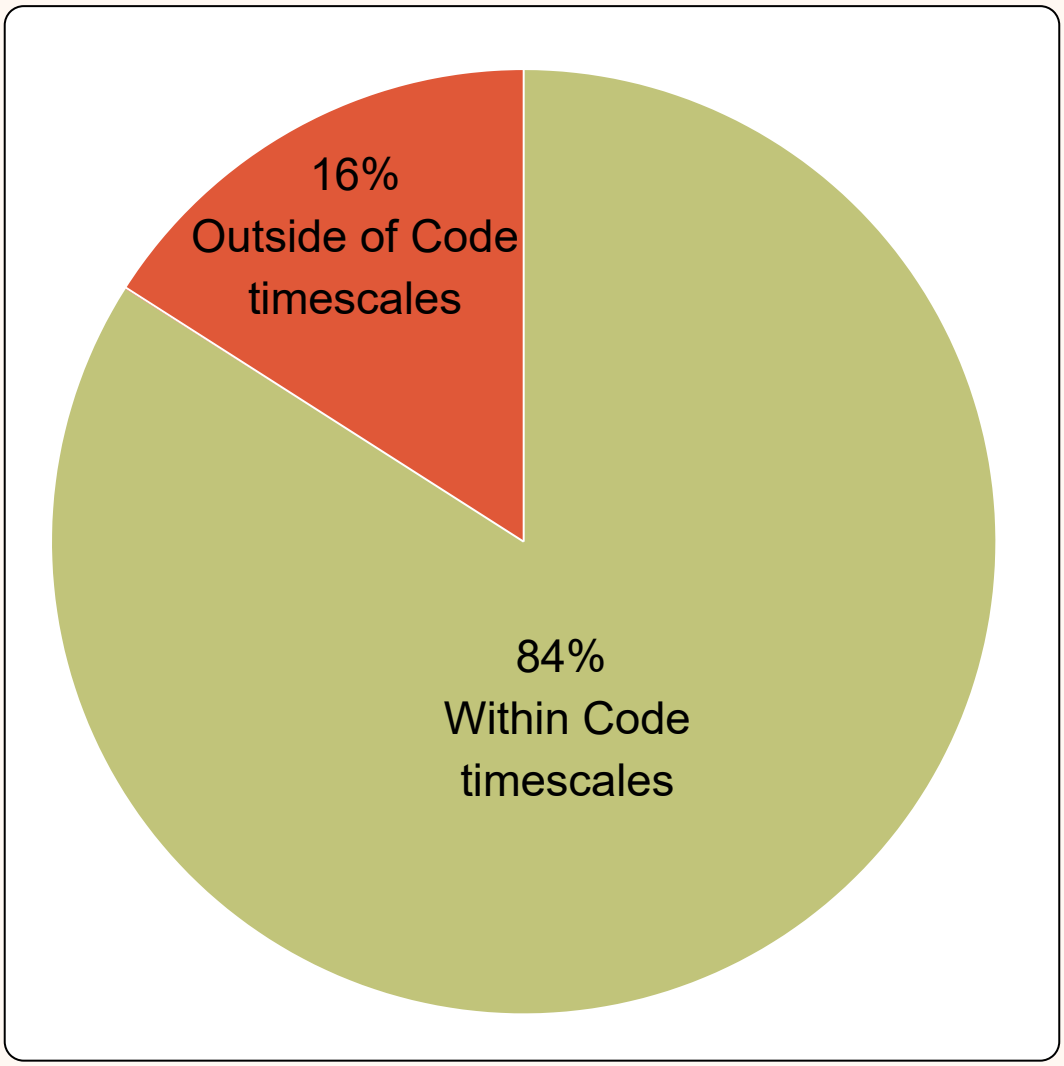
88% of stage 1 complaints were acknowledged within timescales.

To respond to complaints within the Housing Ombudsman Service's Complaint Handling Code we must acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days **and** provide you with a response within 10 working days from the date of acknowledgement. We can extend the response time to 20 working days if needed and with your agreement.

352 stage 1 complaints were not extended

155 stage 1 complaints were extended

Response to stage 1 complaints



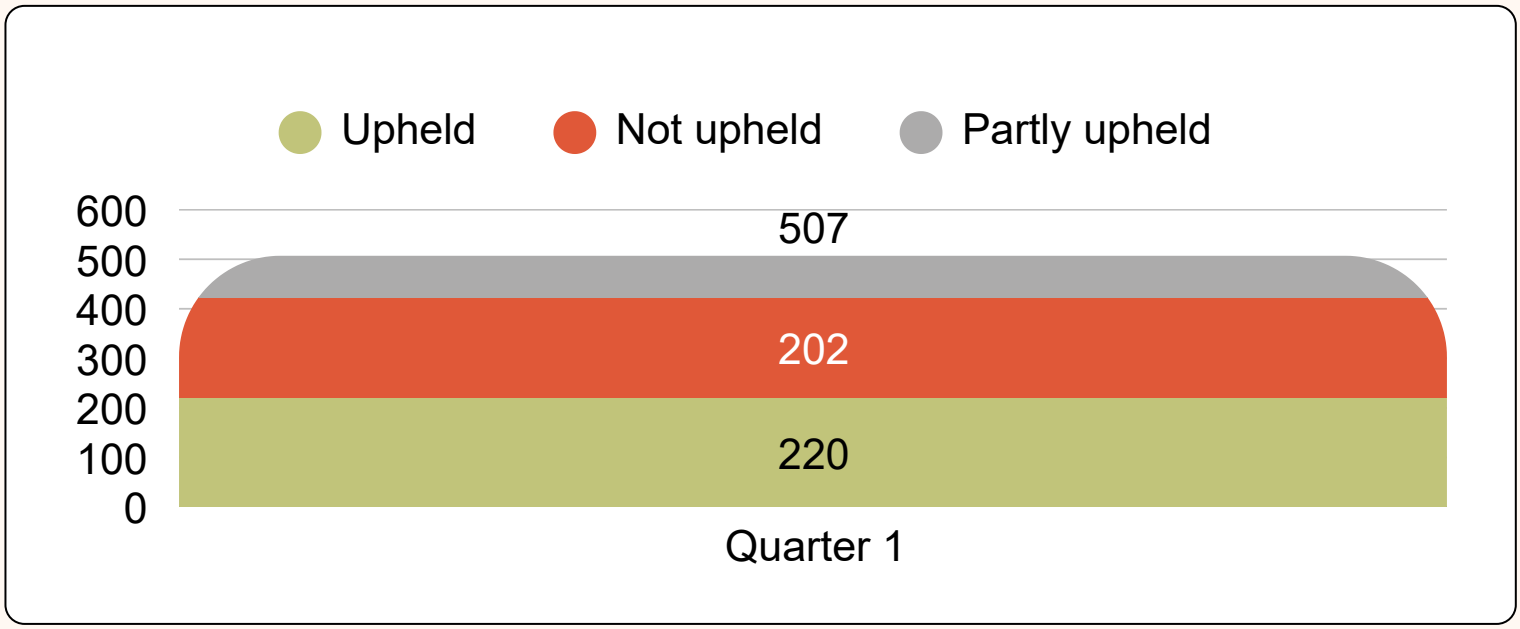
Average time to respond to stage 1 complaints

10 Working Days

220 (43%) stage 1 complaints were upheld

Outcomes of accepted and closed stage 1 complaints

Below are the figures for outcomes of stage 1 complaints as at the end of quarter 1.
Previous quarters figures will change as complaints are responded to.



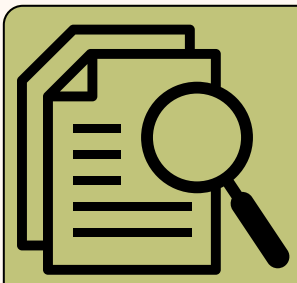
As part of our response to a complaint we may offer compensation, in the form of a compensation payment to recognise loss, suffering or inconvenience.

105

Stage 1 complaints were offered compensation

£11,185

Total compensation was awarded



Case Study

A resident raised concerns about delays in the Occupational Therapy process and communication regarding the family's circumstances. The Housing Resolutions Officer thoroughly reviewed the case, considered the issues raised, and spoke directly with the complainant to explain the current position and address their concerns. The complainant subsequently provided positive feedback regarding professionalism, empathy and communication, particularly appreciating the detailed response, our acknowledgement of service delays and communication shortcomings, and the time taken to listen to and understand the impact the situation has had on the family.

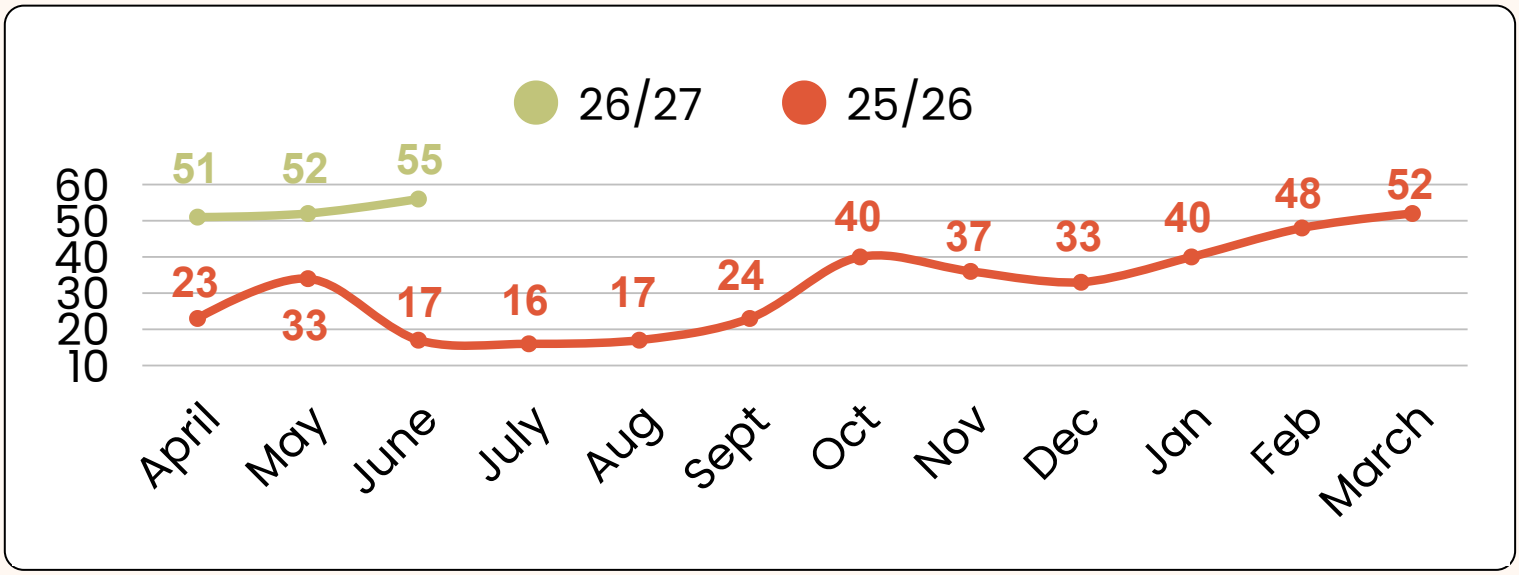
The complaint highlighted concerns around case backlogs and that communication with residents is vital. As an outcome from this complaint letters will be sent to residents affected by the backlog to ensure they are kept fully informed.

Stage 2 complaints

Stage 2 is the review stage - if you are not happy with the outcome of your stage 1complaint, you can ask for the outcome to be reviewed.

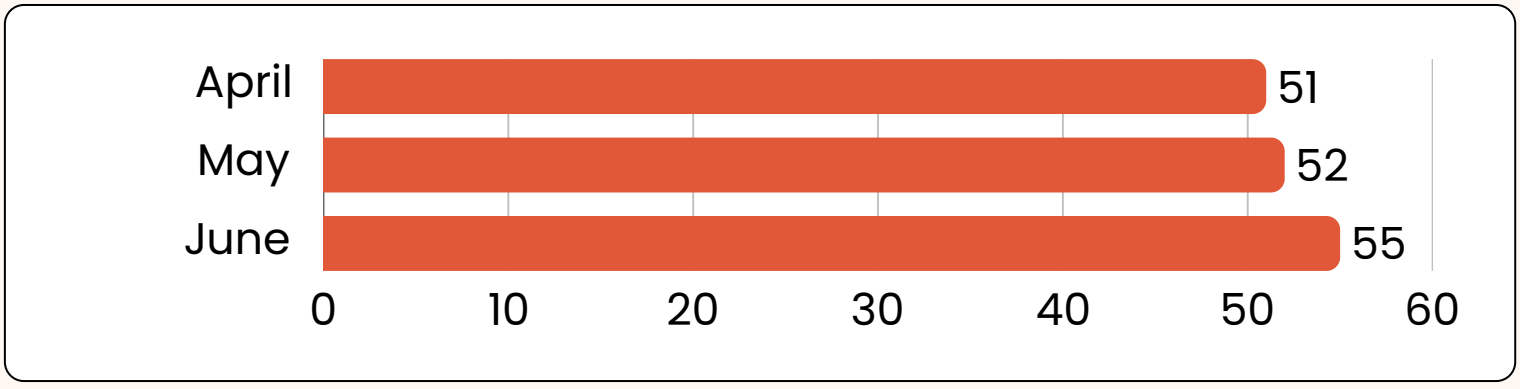
You will need to tell us why you were unhappy with the stage 1 response that you received - a different officer will review your stage 2 complaint.

Stage 2 complaints received so far this year compared to last year



158 stage 2 complaints were received in quarter 1

Stage 2 complaints received



**The following information relates to closed stage 2 complaints that were received in Quarter 1. 3 stage 2 complaints received in Quarter 1 are still open.*

1 stage 2 complaint was not accepted

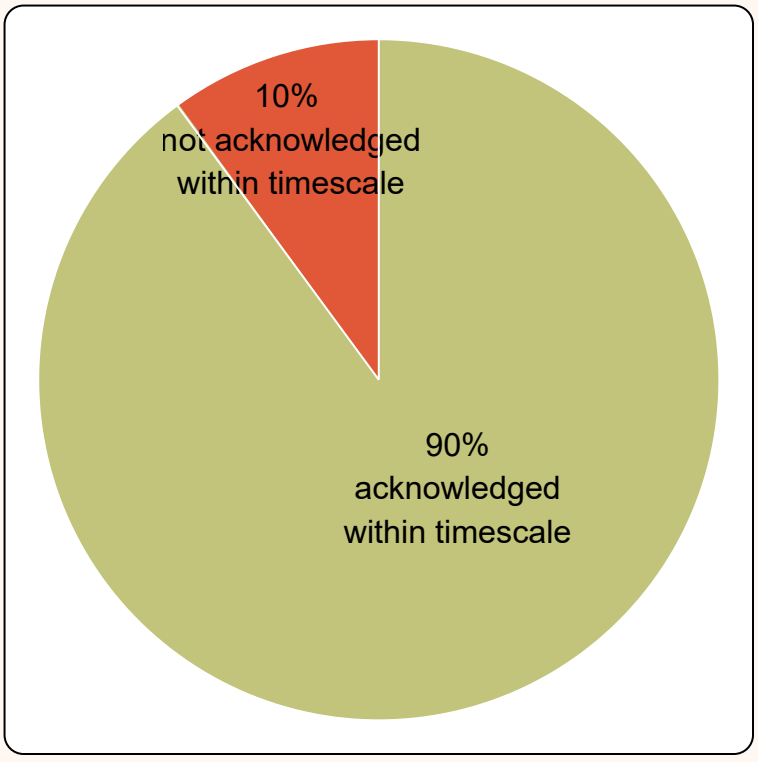


1 stage 2 complaint was closed as fast fix

153 Stage 2 complaints progressed for formal investigation

Acknowledged stage 2 complaints

Where your complaint progresses for formal investigation, the Housing Ombudsman Service's Complaint Handling Code allows 5 working days for a stage 2 complaint to be accepted and acknowledged.



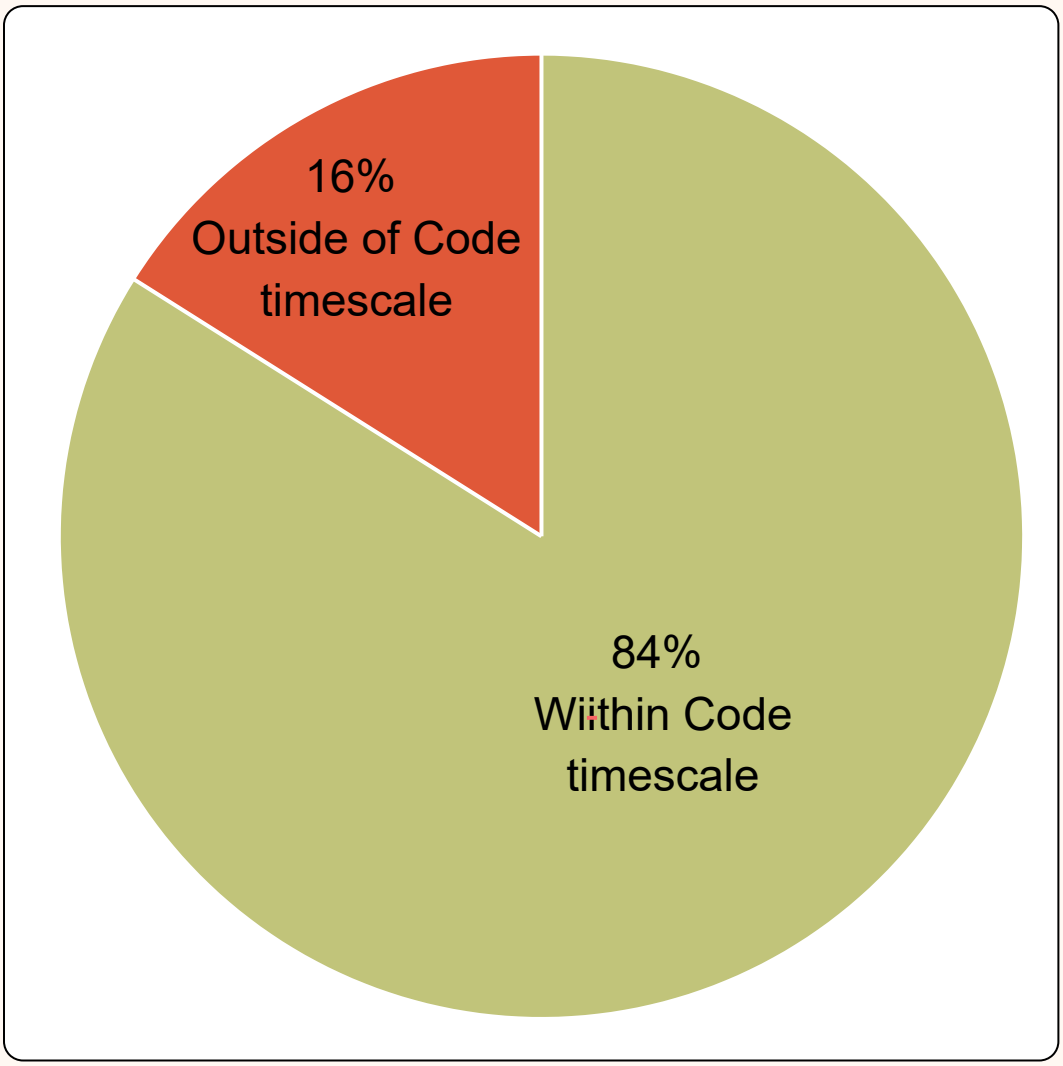
90% of stage 2 complaints were acknowledged within timescales.

To respond to complaints within the Housing Ombudsman Service's Complaint Handling Code we must acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days **and** provide you with a response within 20 working days from the date of acknowledgement. We can extend the response time to 40 working days if needed and with your agreement.

64 stage 2 complaints were not extended

89 stage 2 complaints were extended

Response to stage 2 complaints



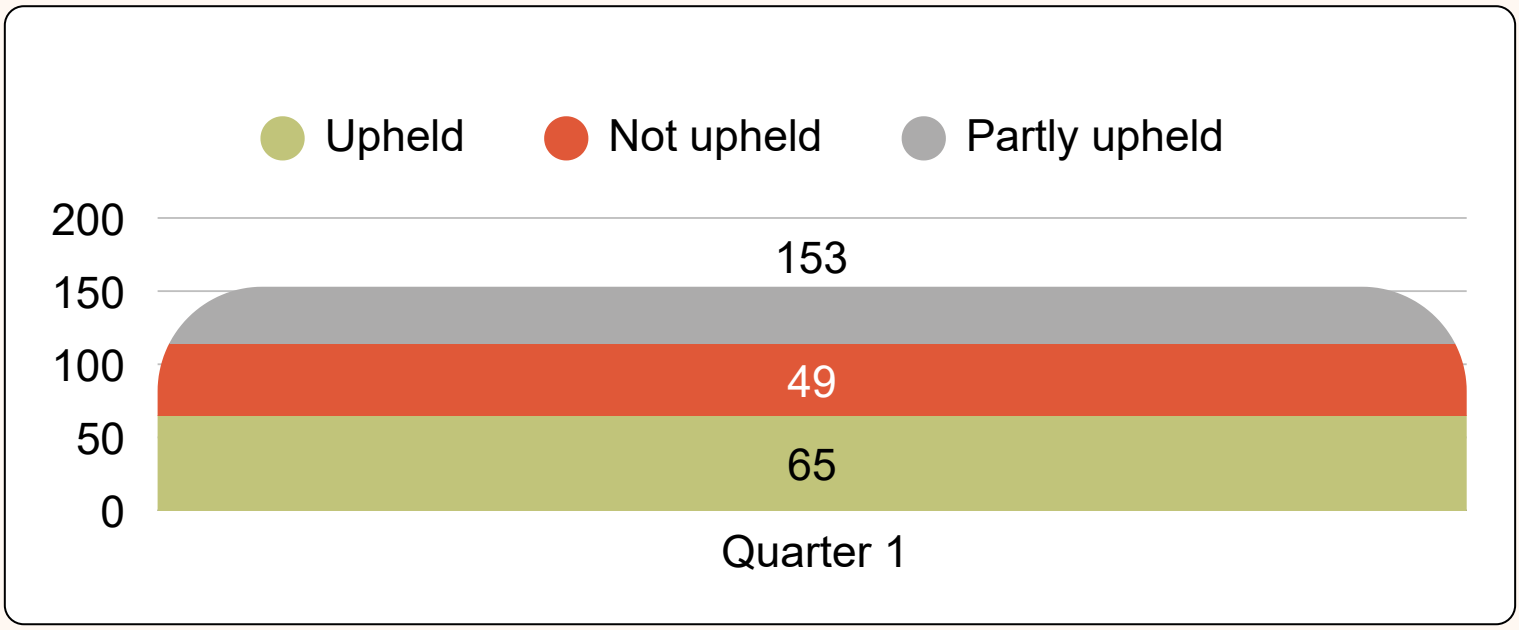
Average time to respond to stage 2 complaints

25 Working Days

65 (42%) stage 2 complaints were upheld

Outcomes of accepted and closed stage 2 complaints

Below are the figures for outcomes of stage 2 complaints as at the end of quarter 1.
Previous quarters figures will change as complaints are responded to.



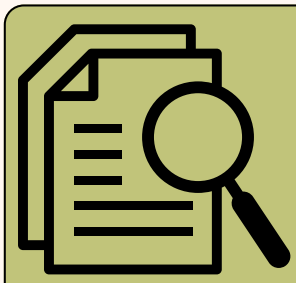
As part of our response to a complaint we may offer compensation, in the form of a compensation payment to recognise loss, suffering or inconvenience.

57

Stage 2 complaints were offered compensation

£8750

Total compensation was awarded



Case Study

A tenant complained about delays in replacing a privacy fence panel between their property and a neighbouring privately owned property. The repair had been reported and inspected, but the work remained outstanding beyond the target completion date.

The Housing Resolutions Team investigated and found that the delay was caused by the fence being on a shared boundary with a private owner, meaning it was subject to the Council's shared-costs process. Progress was impacted by unsuccessful attempts to obtain agreement from the neighbouring landlord.

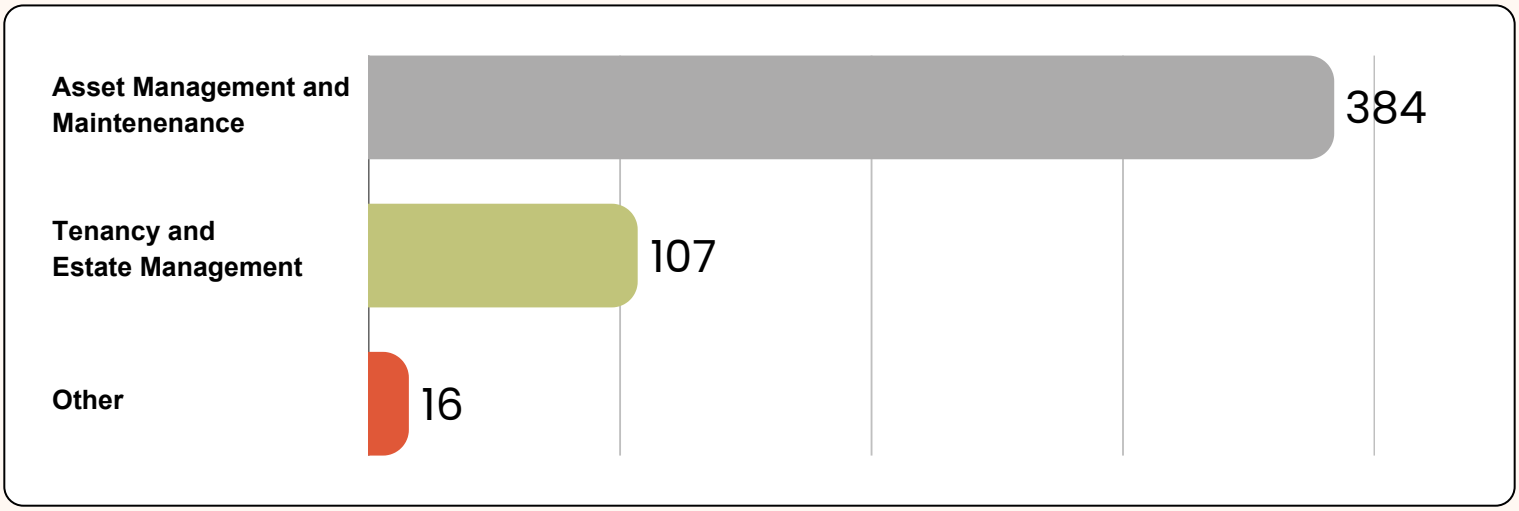
Recognising the impact on the tenant, particularly concerns about privacy and dogs accessing the boundary, the investigating officer upheld the complaint. While the Council could request a contribution from the private owner, it could not compel them to pay.

To avoid further delay, the investigating officer worked with the Repairs Service to arrange the fencing works and agreed to fund the repair through the complaint's compensation budget. This provided a practical and customer-focused resolution without waiting for the shared-costs process to conclude

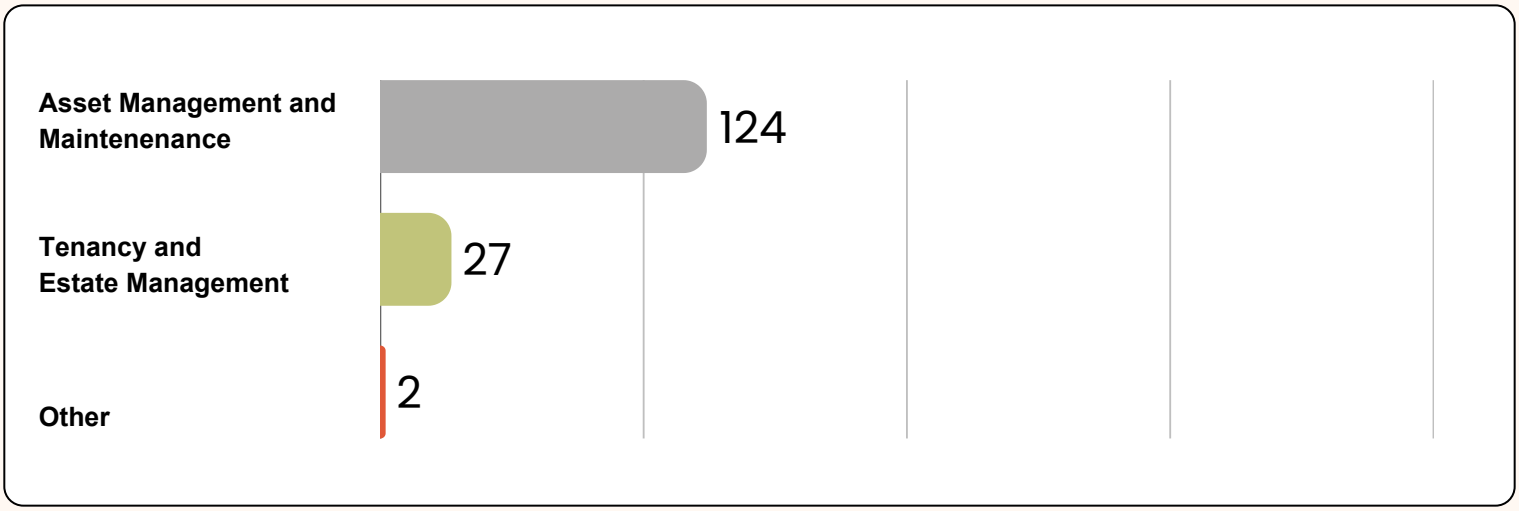
3. Complaints by service area

Breakdown of complaints progressed for formal investigation and closed.

Stage 1 complaints



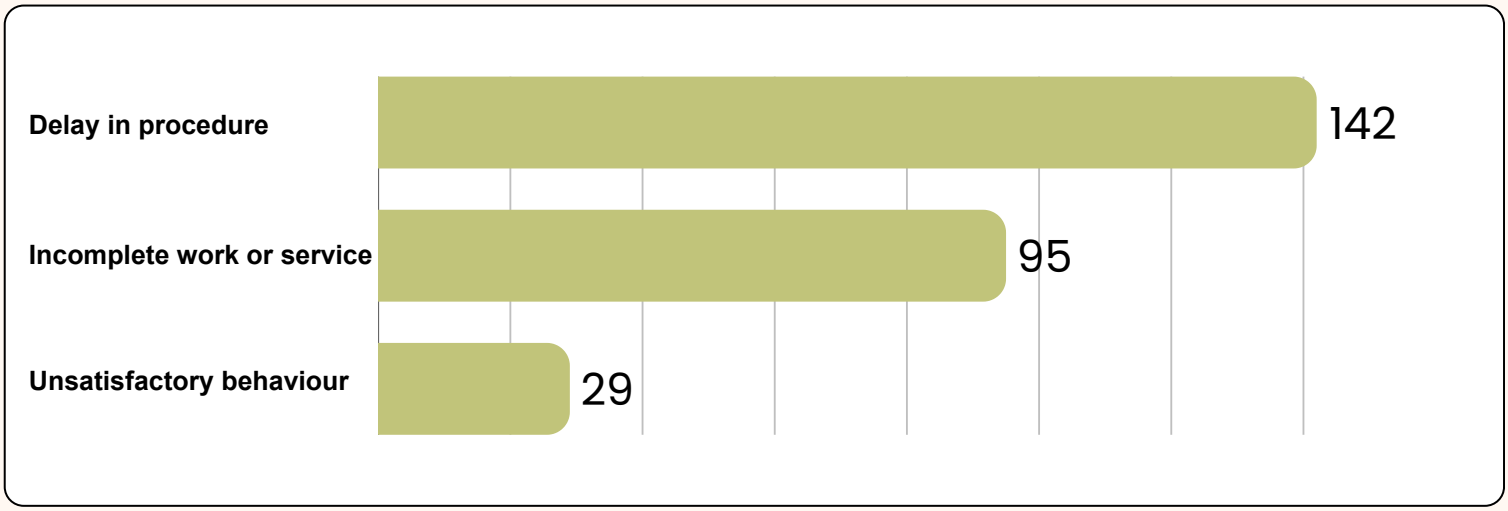
Stage 2 complaints



Asset Management and Improvement

Repairs and maintenance are carried out by our Asset Management and Improvement service. They ensure your safety, security and comfort by providing well-maintained and high-quality homes and communal areas.

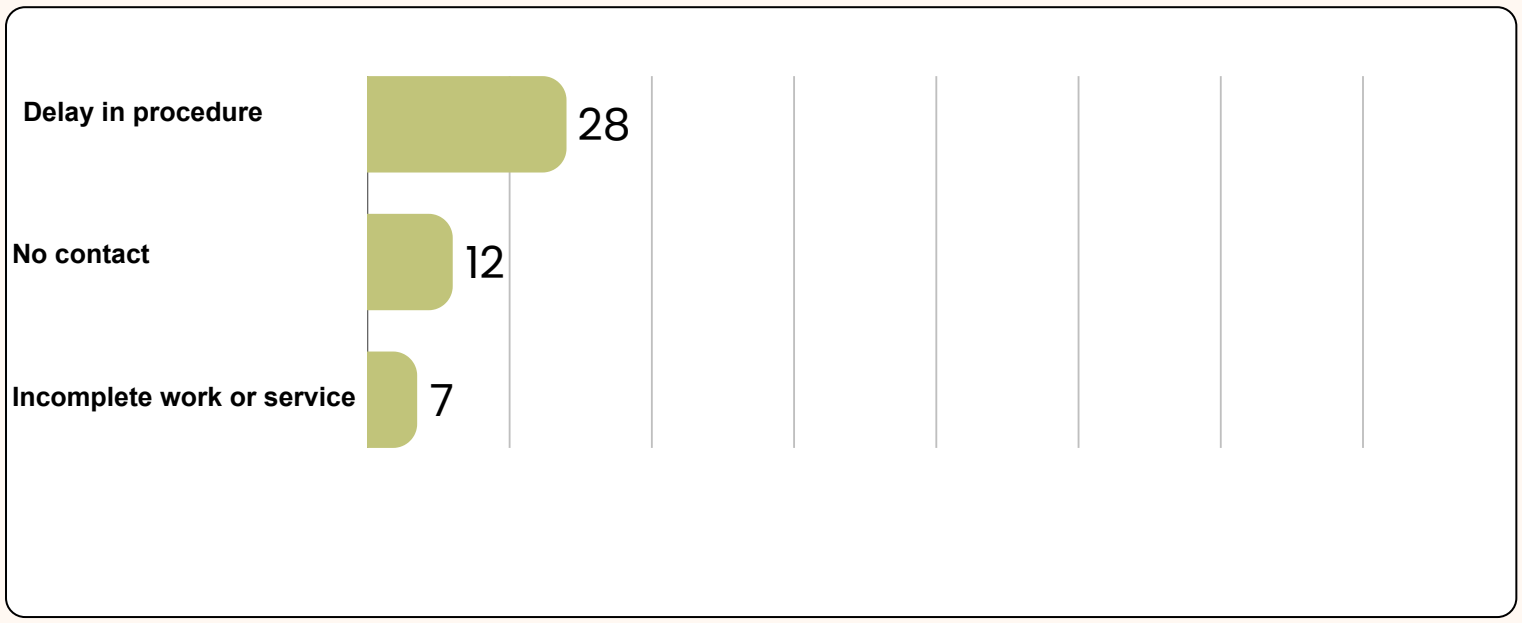
Top 3 Reasons for stage 1 complaints



Tenancy and Estate Management

Tenancy and Estate Management services help you live in your home and community and manage surrounding housing areas. This service includes housing officers, caretakers and cleaners.

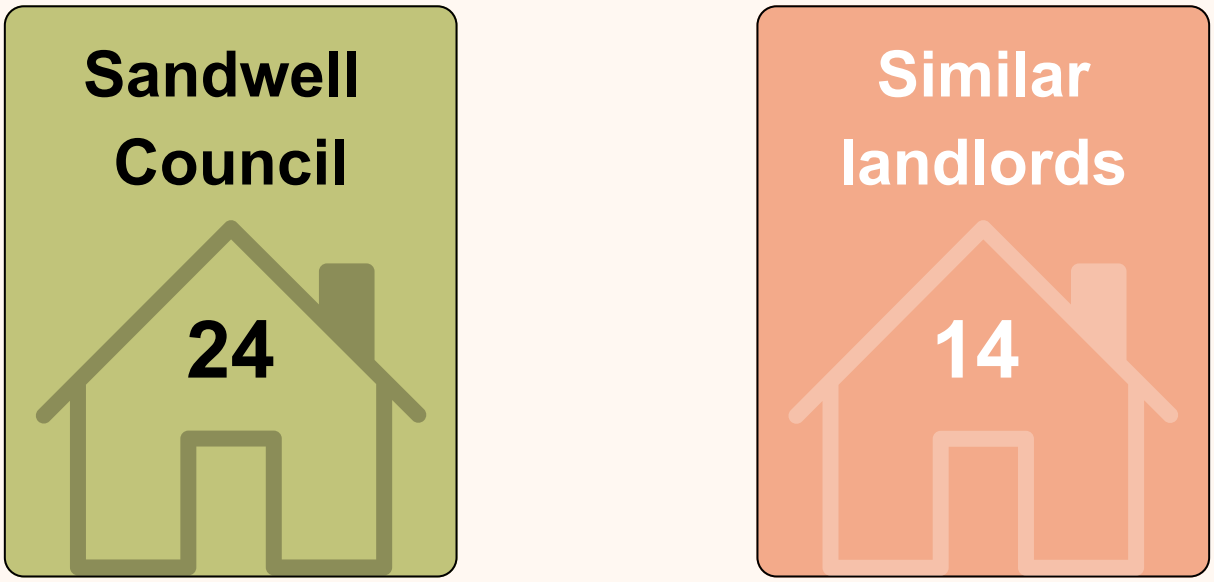
Top 3 reasons for stage 1 complaints



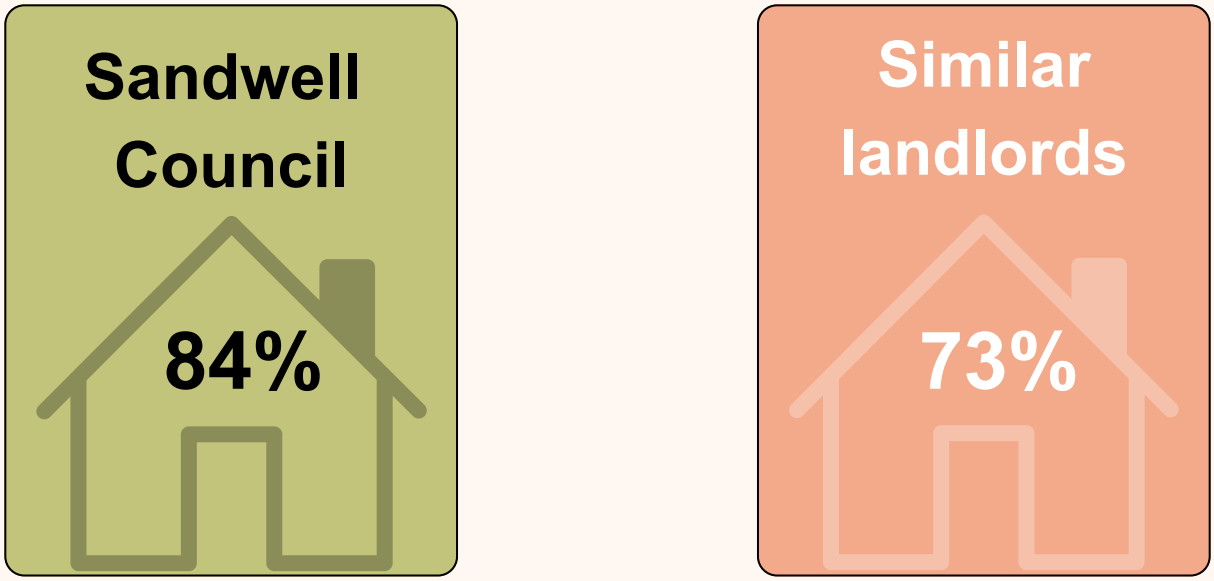
4. How are we doing?

It's helpful for us to see how we are doing compared to similar landlords.

Number of stage 1 and 2 complaints per 1000 properties

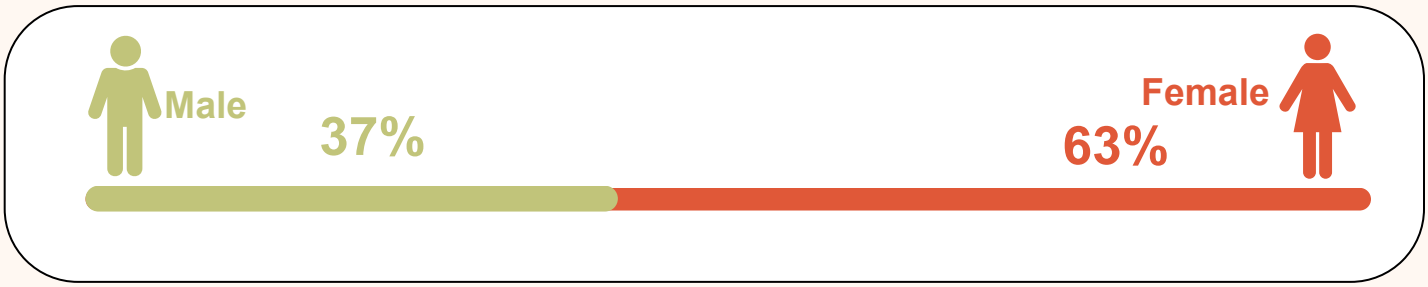


Stage 1 and 2 complaints responded to within Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timeframes



5. Stage 1 demographics

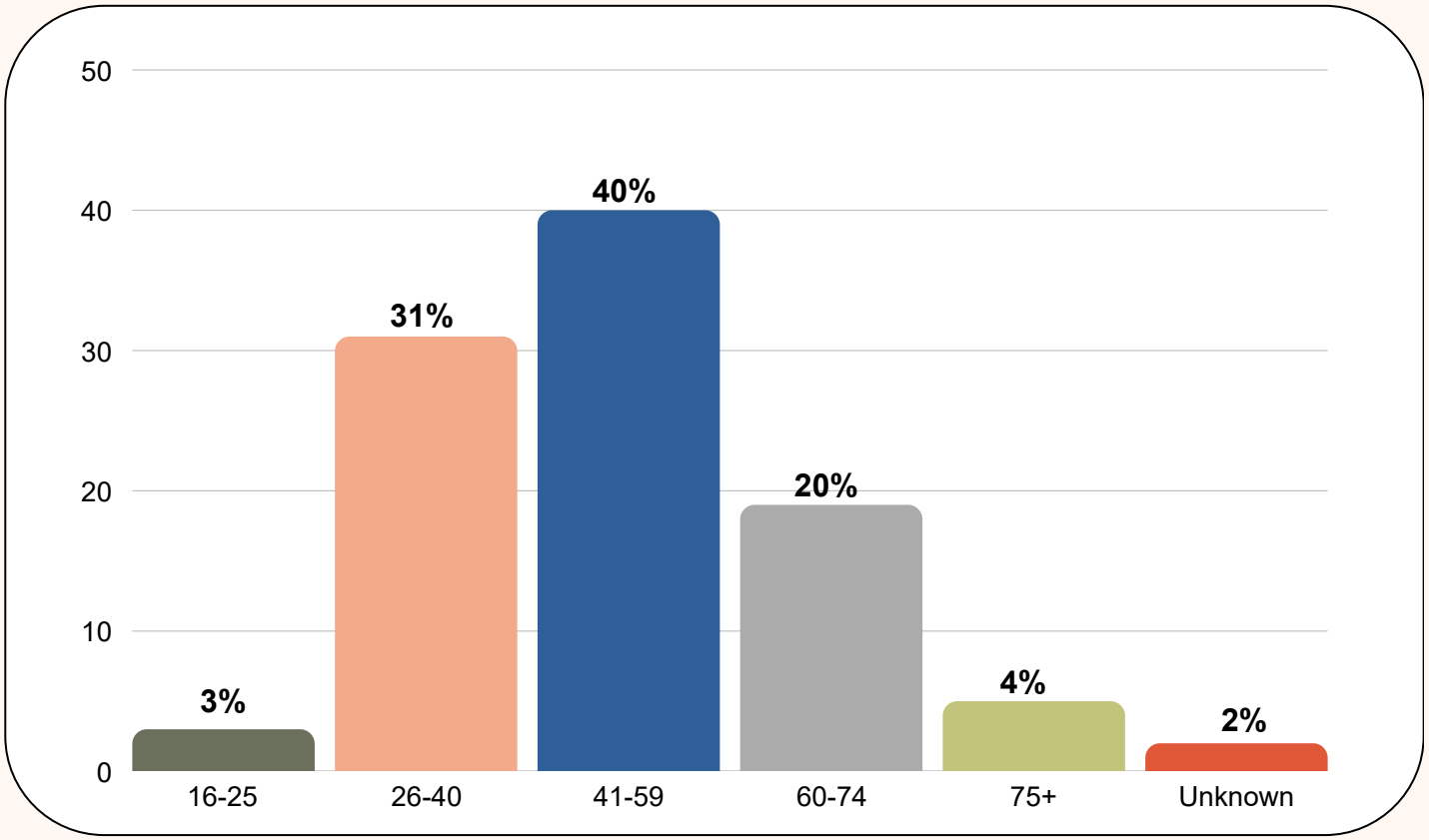
Gender



Ethnicity

White British	55%	Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	2%
Refused	14%	Asian or Asian British Other	1%
Black or Black British Caribbean	11%	Asian or Asian British Pakistani	1%
Asian or Asian British Indian	4%	White Irish	1%
White Other	3%	Mixed White and Asian	1%
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	3%	Mixed Other	1%
Black or Black British African	2%	Chinese or Ethnic Group Other	1%

Age



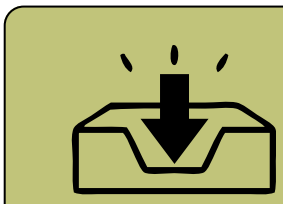
6. Housing Ombudsman cases

The Housing Ombudsman Service is an independent, impartial, and free service for social housing residents.

They make the final decision on disputes between residents and landlords that are registered members of its scheme - including tenants and leaseholders of social landlords.

The Ombudsman can only consider a complaint for investigation where they are satisfied that the complaint issues have been raised and investigated by a landlord through its dedicated complaint procedure and provided a final response.

They will also consider a complaint where they are satisfied that the resident has raised the issues and there has been failure by the landlord in its complaint handling.



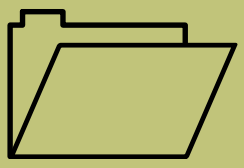
9

case were received



2

case were completed



30

case are still open

**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.*

Outcomes

The Ombudsman can issue determinations and / or actions following their investigations.

Determinations

Following investigations, the Ombudsman can find that there has been maladministration. This means the landlord has failed to do something, done something it shouldn't have or has delayed unreasonably.
A total of **1 maladministration determinations** were received for closed cases.

1	**Maladministration for handling of report of repair**

Service Failure

A total of **2 service failure determination** received for closed cases.

2	**Service failure for handling fo complaint**

Reasonable redress

There were no **reasonable redress determinations** received for closed cases.

Actions

The Ombudsman can also issue actions that the landlord must complete to prevent similar future failings.

A total of **5 actions** were given, including **2 compensation awards** for closed cases.

1	**Provide action plan**
1	**Apologies**
1	**Develop escalation process for safety critical repairs**

Total Compensation
£250

7. Improvements

We see complaints as an opportunity to learn lessons and drive continuous improvement. We will acknowledge faults when they occur and take responsibility for putting things right and avoiding recurrence.

Improvement	Benefit	How we will record/measure completion
Officers will verify contractor completion dates rather than relying on information held on electronic systems	This will ensure the information we are giving you is correct	Reduction in complaint escalations
Your long-standing repairs will be proactively escalated	Ensure oversight of, and reasons for, your overdue repairs	Reduction in overdue repairs
You will be advised of your right to appeal refusals of adaptations, and a process will be defined for this	Clear and transparent process for adaptations	Reduction in disatisfaction with the adaptations process and reduction in complaints
We will put a process in place for handling requests for leaseholders to install Heat Pumps	Clear process for leaseholders to follow	Clear process in place and being followed
Clear responsibility for overseeing complex repairs must be assigned	Clear ownership will ensure you receive a co-ordinated response to complex repairs	Reduction in delayed repairs and cancelled appointments
Findings to your stage 2 responses will be shared with the stage 1 investigator and the manager of the responsible team	Continual learning and development for investigating officers and an improvement on responses to your stage 1 complaints	Reduction in complaints being escalated to stage 2.

To keep a track of our progress on the improvements that have been identified visit https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/housing/housing-complaints-improvements

8. Get involved

As a council tenant, or leaseholder, you have the right to be consulted on matters affecting your tenancy and the housing services you receive.

There are a number of methods available for you to have your say.

- Volunteer as part of a regularly meeting group
- Get involved with specific subjects and tasks for a short term
- Attend work shops for group discussions
- Complete surveys and feedback requests

If you would like to get involved or would like more information on what is available, please call us on 0121 569 2537.