

Hexagon

2024-2025

Annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report

ANNUAL REPORT

Purpose

This report provides an examination of the complaints service at Hexagon Housing Association (Hexagon). This report will be shared publicly with Hexagon residents, staff, Board members, and the Housing Ombudsman Service. Hexagon values transparency and accountability and we will share both the challenges of, and our progress with, delivering a fair and effective complaints process, and our completed and ongoing service improvements.

How do we manage complaints at Hexagon?

We aim to deliver a fair and accessible complaints process that ensures Hexagon provides a responsible and accountable service in line with our corporate values. We also aim to ensure we learn from any failings and continually improve our services.

Historically, complaints at Hexagon were managed directly by the relevant service areas (for example, a complaint relating to repairs was managed by the Repairs Team). We found that this approach did not deliver a good service for our residents. To address this, Hexagon created a centralised Complaints Team within the Governance, Risk and Assurance function to handle complaints independently of the front-line services. This team was fully staffed by January 2024, and a performance improvement plan was implemented to address the shortcomings of the prior approach.

Our complaints policy and procedure describe how we handle complaints in more detail. These are closely aligned with the requirements set out by the Housing Ombudsman Service in the Complaint Handling Code, as reflected in our annual self-assessment against the Code. These documents, including the self-assessment, and this report, are available on our website.

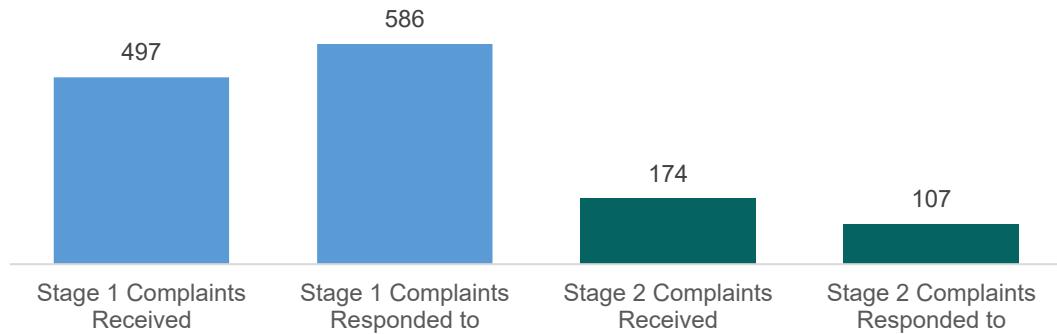
Our complaints policy, and this report, applies to all Hexagon-owned properties, including those owned by our wholly owned subsidiary, Horniman, and those managed on our behalf by other organisations, including co-operatives and managing agents¹.

Complaints Performance

We analyse our complaint handling performance (for the complaints we have accepted) using five Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which our Board monitors. Four of these are part of the Regulator's

¹ The data relating to total volumes of complaints, and responses within deadline, represents performance across all Hexagon-owned properties, including those owned by Horniman, and those managed on our behalf by co-operatives and managing agents. All other data relates only to properties owned **and managed by** Hexagon or Horniman (i.e. does not include properties managed on our behalf by third parties)

Complaints Volumes 2024-25

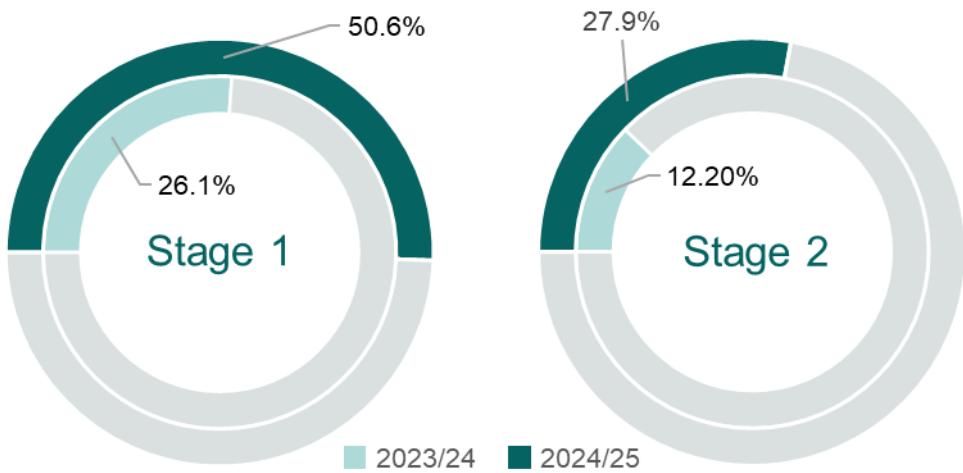


Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)². Our performance against these KPIs for the year 2024-25 is below:

These results show that our performance improved dramatically over the course of 2024-25, as our service improvement plan was implemented. Due to successfully clearing our backlog of complaints over this period, the volume of stage 1 complaints responded to exceeded the volume received.

In addition to our strategic KPIs, a more comprehensive suite of operational data is presented to the Customer Services Committee (CSC), a sub-committee of our Board, to allow them to more closely

Complaints Responded to Within HOS Deadline

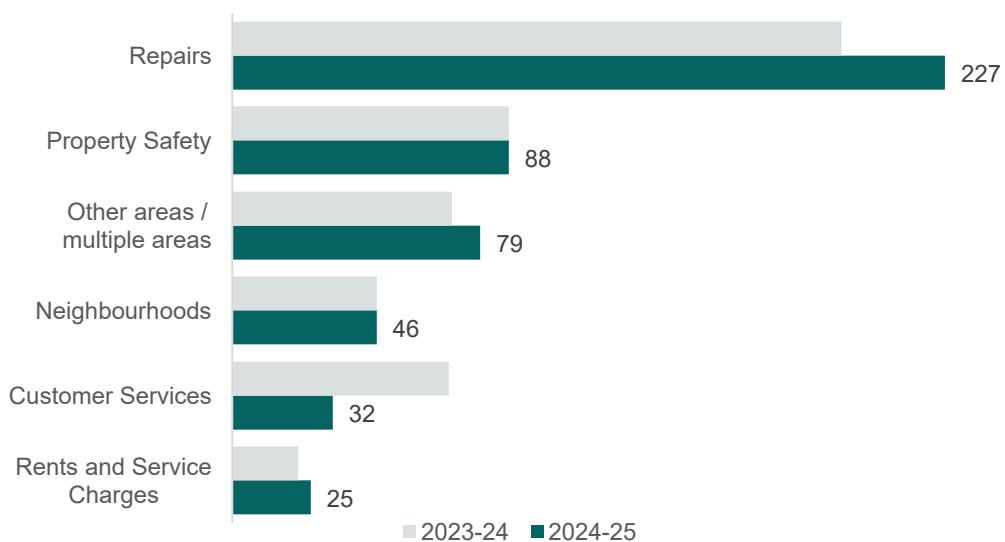


² Note that, because of our stock size, our TSM submission only reflects our performance on complaints from residents of low-cost rental accommodation properties (i.e. does not include complaints from leaseholders and shared owners). However, in our quarterly performance updates to our Board, we include complaints from all residents.

scrutinise our performance. Similar data is presented to our Leadership Team on a monthly basis and reviewed weekly by the management of the Complaints Team.

In 2024/25, the distribution of complaints across our service areas was broadly similar to the previous year. We observed an increase in complaints relating to our repairs service, and a decrease in complaints relating to our customer services centre. We attribute this to the ongoing transfer of repairs-related call handling to our repairs contractors. 2023/24 was the first full year with this arrangement in place but ensuring that residents were consistently contacting our contractor's call centre, instead of Hexagon's, took some time. With that transfer fully implemented in 2024/25, a number of the complaints that would, in 2023/24, have been attributed to the performance of our contact centre, are now attributed to the performance of our contractor's contact centre. This indicates to us that there are important improvements to be made in how we manage our repairs contract, both in the delivery of works, and in the handling of calls. This is a focus area for Hexagon in 2025/26. Meanwhile, the appointment of a Complaints Project Manager within the repairs team has helped strengthen our approach to handling these complaints.

Complaints by Service Area 2024-25



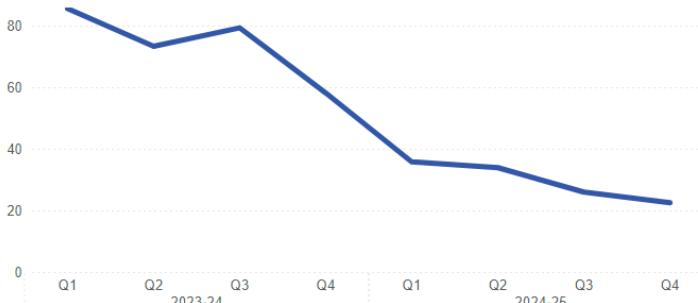
Volumes of complaints relating to our other service areas were flat, compared to 2023/24, which indicates that our performance in those areas may have plateaued or stabilised. Our Corporate Plan 2023-2028³ describes three steps, the first of which is "Reset". This Plan states that "*Within the first two years of this plan, we will focus on turning around under-performing services*". Our complaints data indicates that, after substantial increases in complaints in many areas in 2022/23 and 2023/24, we have successfully stabilised these services. The persistent high volume of complaints indicates that there are still substantial performance improvements to be made in many areas, and this is the focus of the second step of our Corporate Plan ("Stabilise"), which states that "*We will continuously improve our core services making year on year improvement to achieve our success measures*". Achieving the necessary performance improvements, and therefore decreasing the number of complaints we receive, is a priority for all of Hexagon's service areas for 2025/26.

³ This document available on our website, hexagon.org.uk

Response Times

In working days, year-to-date as of end of period

Stage 1 Average Response Time



Stage 2 Average Response Time

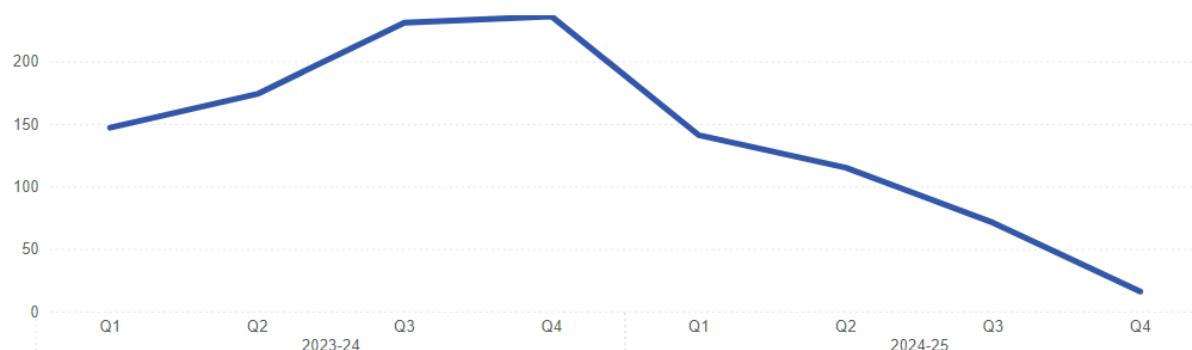


As noted in our 2023/24 annual report, Hexagon's complaints team faced a number of challenging legacy issues, which were significantly affecting its performance and the delivery of the service for our residents. To address this, a service improvement plan was developed and implemented over the course of 2024. This plan included staffing increases, training, process improvements, and changes to our systems, all with the intention of ensuring our complaints handling was more efficient and effective. The delivery of this plan has allowed the team to achieve meaningful performance improvements in 2024/25, including reducing average response times significantly. The proportion of cases responded to within the deadlines set by the HOS Complaints Handling Code remains far too low, but our ongoing improvement in average response times indicates to us that the changes we are making are having an impact, and we expect to perform far better in 2025/26.

Backlog of Legacy Cases

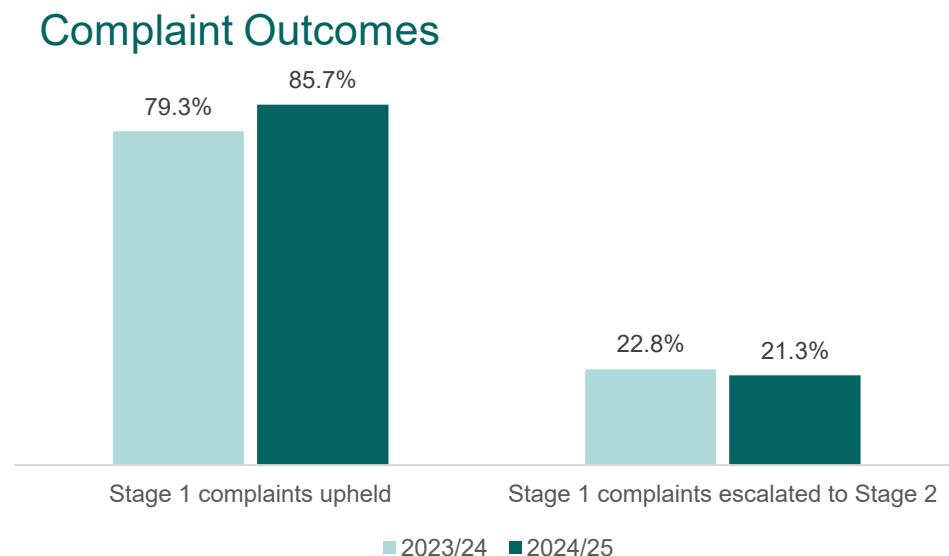
Response times in 2024/25 were negatively impacted by our ongoing effort to resolve our backlog of legacy complaints. Beginning in January 2024, Hexagon had a backlog of over 200 open Stage 1 complaints. Over the course of Q1 and Q2 2024/25, all of these were resolved.

Stage 1 Cases Pending Response



Complaint Outcomes

Our analysis shows that the vast majority of cases that we accepted in 2024/25 were fully or partially upheld. We attribute this, and particularly the increase vs 2023/24, to the resolution of the legacy cases



described above. All complaints which were not responded to in good time were, for the purposes of our analysis, at least partially upheld on the basis that they included a failure of complaint handling. Our expectation is that the proportion of complaints upheld should return to normal levels in 2025/26, and as our other service areas begin to deliver their planned service improvements, should reduce further in future years. We also note that our escalation rate (the proportion of Stage 1 complaints that the resident requests be reviewed at Stage 2) remains flat at around 20%. While we welcome complaints as an opportunity to learn from our mistakes and want to ensure that residents are empowered to request reviews of our decisions if they wish, it is our aim to resolve as many cases as possible at Stage 1. To achieve this, the complaints team is introducing a formal quality assurance process in 2025/26. This will enable us to better understand and improve the quality of our responses at Stage 1 and, if necessary, to make changes to our approach so that fewer residents feel the need to escalate their cases to Stage 2.

Analysis of Excluded Complaints

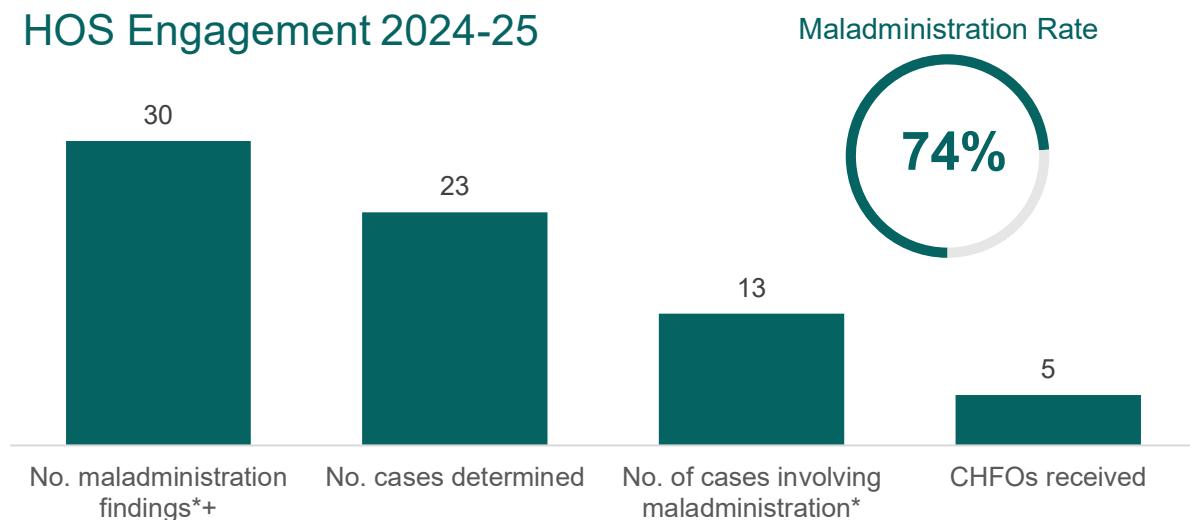
Reason	No. cases
Service request	7
Clerical error	6
Not appropriate channel	4
Withdrawn	1

Area	No. cases
Repairs	11
Lifts	2
ASB	2
Rent setting	1
Communal cleaning	1
Heating	1

In 2024/25, Hexagon excluded a total of 18 complaints from our complaints process, in line with the permitted exclusion criteria set out in the Complaints Handling Code. The majority of these were identified as 'service requests', or otherwise not appropriate for the complaints channel (e.g. reports of ASB, or formal challenges to rent setting). A small number were attributable to administrative errors in our complaint handling process, which we acknowledged, apologised for, and corrected. In our end-of-year analysis, we identified no trends in the pattern of complaints we excluded from our process that requires further attention.⁴

Housing Ombudsman Service

Hexagon had a high volume of engagements with the Housing Ombudsman Service in 2024/25. These are summarised below:



* Includes maladministration and severe maladministration

+ Individual cases can include more than one finding

In 2024/25, Hexagon received a performance report from the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) covering our performance in 2023/24. This report was reviewed by our Directors Group, and included important insights into our performance, and how the HOS analyses its results. The first was the maladministration rate. We had not previously been aware of this metric but quickly replicated their methodology and now report it to our Board on a quarterly basis. Our maladministration rate for 2023/24, as reported by the HOS, was 88%. In 2023/24, this fell to 74%, closely approaching the national average of 71%. Management continues to respond to themes identified from HOS cases to reduce the maladministration rate further.

⁴ This data relates to all properties owned and managed by Hexagon, including those owned by its subsidiary Horniman. It does not include properties managed on Hexagon's behalf by third parties (including our resident-owned cooperatives and managing agents). We will include data from those properties in 2025/26.

In addition to the 2023/24 performance report, Hexagon received 23 other reports from the HOS in 2024/25, relating to their findings on individual cases referred to them by our residents. These included 30 findings of maladministration and are summarised below.

HOS Determinations Issued in 2024/25, by Finding and Topic

	Severe maladmin.	Maladmin.	Service failure	Reasonable redress	No maladmin.	Outside jurisdiction	Withdrawn	Total
Property condition	2	9	2	2		3		18
Complaints handling	1	6	3	5				15
Anti-social behaviour	1		1		1			3
Estate management		2		1				3
Information and data management		3						3
Moving to a property		2			1			3
Charges				1				1
Other		4	1	2			1	8
Total	4	26	7	11	2	3	1	54

In 2024/25, Hexagon also received five reports relating to non-compliance with the HOS Complaint Handling Code, also known as Complaint Handling Failure Orders (CHFOs). Of these five, three related to failure to provide the HOS with information they requested in a timely manner, and two related to failure to comply with orders issued by the HOS of which one was subsequently rescinded after Hexagon demonstrated that we had, in fact, complied with the relevant order. As noted below, significantly improving our compliance with the HOS is a key priority of the complaints service in 2025/26.

Lessons Learned

Learning from complaints is a key component of our complaints process. Over the course of 2024/25, Hexagon has iteratively improved its approach to learning lessons from complaints, with a focus on identifying systematic issues that are affecting our residents across a wide range of our service areas.

The first iteration of this process involved clearly documenting lessons in our response letters on individual cases and recording those in our housing management system. The second iteration consisted of systematically reviewing those lessons and introducing a standing item on the agenda for the monthly meeting of managers and heads of service, where a thematic analysis of these lessons can be shared and discussed. The third iteration, which will be further developed in 2025/26, consists of supplementing the discussion at the monthly managers and heads of service meeting with an additional, more focused, discussion with Hexagon's operational leadership, where specific action items are identified and monitored, to ensure that real changes are being made to implement the lessons we are identifying.

As identified in last year's report, there continue to be two thematic areas, which are noted below that are responsible for many of Hexagon's complaints and service failures. These lessons are consistent with the findings reported by the HOS in their determinations, and as a result are a key priority for Hexagon to address in 2025/26 through our various service improvement and annual delivery plans.

1. Co-ordinating complex cases

In the vast majority of cases, Hexagon effectively manages routine issues. However, through our complaints process, we continue to identify service failures in how we handle complex or multifaceted cases. These are cases where resolution requires the input and coordination of multiple members of staff or teams, working across multiple timelines and often with multiple external contractors. Many complaints relate to the fact that, in these circumstances, residents do not receive clear and consistent communication, workstreams are not properly coordinated, and can be subject to unnecessary delays.

Hexagon made a number of important changes in 2024/25 to address this issue, including the introduction and expansion of a dedicated complaints resolution team within our Property Services function. While our complaints team is responsible for investigating complaints and determining the appropriate resolution, this team is responsible for ensuring that when that resolution involves works to a property, those are properly coordinated and completed in a timely manner. The introduction of this team has improved our handling of these cases, but we recognise that there continues to be more work to do.

The second important change that Hexagon made to address this issue in 2024/25 was the introduction of task management tools within our housing management system. When a complaint is resolved, we now have the ability to log, assign, and monitor the remedial actions we have committed to. This allows better coordination and resolution of cases that have been determined by the complaint team. We are working to further develop this process and to establish consistency across all complex cases. However, we acknowledge that it should not be necessary for a resident to make a complaint, and have that complaint reviewed and upheld, in order to receive that standard of service. We are therefore expanding our case and task management systems in 2025/26 to cover more of our processes and workflows, to allow us to deliver a more joined-up service for our residents.

2. Communications

A consistent theme in our complaints, and in the determinations issued by the Housing Ombudsman Service, is the consistency, quality, and timeliness of our communication with our residents. As noted in our report last year, this issue acts as an exacerbating factor. Our review of complaints cases frequently identifies 'service requests' which, with appropriate communication to the resident, might have been resolved without needing to involve the complaints process, but due to communication failures the resident felt it necessary to raise a complaint. Frequently, these residents have not received responses to their queries, sometimes for several weeks, or are not kept informed of the progress addressing an issue that they have raised.

Throughout 2024/25, Hexagon has significantly increased its use of the customer relationship management (CRM) system. In addition to logging our interaction with residents, this tool also allows us to monitor how quickly we are responding to queries, and to track improvement over time. This tool was fully rolled out in 2024/25, and we expect to see the positive impact in 2025/26. However, we

recognise that communication is not solely a ‘system issue’ and so are also committed to ensuring that our staff are regularly trained, and managed, to communicate clearly and consistently with residents and to regularly keep them updated when issues take time to resolve.

Ongoing Service Improvements

1. HOS Compliance

Hexagon is committed to complying with the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS). To address the instances of non-compliance that took place in 2024/25, we are implementing a number of changes to our processes for responding to contacts from the HOS. These include dedicated staff time, increased usage of the HOS Portal to manage and respond to requests and ‘standing meetings’ multiple times per week within the team to ensure all orders and requests for information are being promptly reviewed and actioned.

2. Lessons learned

Hexagon’s lessons learned process developed significantly in 2024/25, and we are continuing to improve it in 2025/26. In addition to the series of meetings described above, we have also committed to sharing a summary of themes and lessons learned with our Board as part of the standing item on their agenda presented by the Member Responsible for Complaints. This will provide an additional layer of scrutiny and help us ensure that lessons from complaints are systematically learned and properly implemented and embedded in service changes across the organisation.

3. Follow up actions

Hexagon has made strides in managing its completion of remedial actions arising from complaints in 2024/25, but further improvements are needed in 2025/26. These planned enhancements include improved business intelligence tools to allow us to more quickly identify, and more rapidly respond, when tasks are not being properly progressed. We also plan to further improve the links between our task management and our housing management system, so that all staff can better communicate with residents regarding our progress resolving their requests.

4. QA process

Ensuring that our complaint responses are both timely and high-quality is a priority for the complaints team in 2025/26. We are implementing a systematic approach to quality assurance and will report the results of that to our Board and use the insights it generates to inform the training and development of our team.

5. Resident satisfaction

Hexagon has identified resident satisfaction as one of our two “Wildly Important Goals” for 2025/26. This means that all of our service areas are aligned with the objective of achieving improved resident

satisfaction. Every team meets on a weekly basis to discuss specific actions they can take to improve satisfaction, and to report on their progress with the actions agreed the previous week. As these actions and service improvements are implemented over 2025/26, we expect to see complaints decrease, and satisfaction with all of our services (including satisfaction with complaint handling) to increase.

Self-Assessment against the Complaints Handling Code

We have conducted the annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code in which we can evidence that we have complied with all aspects of the Code. Our self-assessment is available on our website.

Board response

Board Statement in Response to the 2024-2025 Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report

As the Member Responsible for Complaints at Hexagon, I have prepared this statement on behalf of the Board in response to the 2024/25 Complaints Performance Report. This response complies with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

Achievements

Complaints performance this year has improved considerably compared with last year, though we recognise there is still further to go.

We ended the 2024/25 with 50.6% of responses sent within Ombudsman targets, compared with a low of 8% in December 2023. We also made significant progress with our 'legacy' complaints, cleared our backlogs and reduced our average Stage 1 response time from 36 working days in Q1 to 12 in Q4. We remain committed to improving the number of Stage 1 complaints responded to within the Ombudsman targets over 2025/26, and aim to meet our corporate KPI, which is set at 75%.

Complaint performance, themes and learnings are now discussed monthly with the Hexagon Leadership Team and Member Responsible for Complaints. Complaint performance is also scrutinised by the Customer Services Committee and monitored by the Board at each Board meeting.

Key areas for Improvement

There is more to do to coordinate complex complaints which involve multiple service areas and contractors. The use of task management tools and a dedicated resolution team will help deliver a more integrated service. The need for improved communication has also been identified as a common theme across our complaints, particularly in terms of progress updates and clarity around next steps. We will work to address this over the course of the year.

We are continuing to take steps to meet the Housing Ombudsman Service's standards and to respond to its recommendations. Looking ahead to 2025/26, priorities include introducing a systematic quality assurance process for complaint handling, reporting findings to the Board, and embedding resident satisfaction as a core organisational goal through coordinated service improvements and weekly action reviews.

Board's Commitment and Response

The performance of our complaints service continues to improve. We are pleased with the progress made over the year and are keen to make further improvements through the embedding of lessons learned and working with our partners to improve communication with our residents at each stage, and to address underlying complaint causes.

Having addressed the backlog of complaints which significantly impacted our response times over 2023/24, we look to further enhance the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of our service delivery while also increasing customer satisfaction with complaints handling.

Compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Code

We are happy to report that our self-assessment against the Complaints Handling Code shows full compliance.

Sonji Nurse

Member Responsible for Complaints

Hexagon