



CITIZEN

# Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2024/25





**Madeleine Nelson**  
Chief Operating Officer

# Introduction

Over the last year, we've taken an honest look at how we handle complaints. Not just to meet the Housing Ombudsman's requirements, but to make sure we're truly listening to our customers and acting on what they tell us.

This report sets out how we've scrutinised and challenged our compliance with The Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code by:

1. Reviewing our annual self-assessment to ensure our complaints policy meets the requirements of the Code.
2. Analysing our complaints handling performance to understand what's going well and where we need to improve.
3. Setting out the service improvements we've made as a direct result of learning from complaints.
4. Sharing how our Board has scrutinised, challenged and responded to this report.

In 2024/25 we closed 4,596 Stage 1 complaints and 746 Stage 2 complaints. Whilst no landlord wants things to go wrong, we are encouraged that customers feel confident to raise their concerns and trust us to put things right.

When that happens, we want to resolve issues quickly, explain clearly, and prevent them from happening again. This means looking closely at the main reasons complaints are made, such as delays in resolving repairs, poor communication, and service quality.

We've already made changes: from improving how we keep customers updated, to strengthening our repair processes, and there's more to come in 2025/26 as we continue building a stronger, more preventative complaints culture.

I'm proud of the progress we've made so far, but I know there's more we can do. We'll keep listening, keep learning, and keep working with our customers to make sure our services are the best they can be.

# Statement from the Board

As the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) at Citizen, I am committed to ensuring that our approach to complaint handling is transparent, fair, and continuously improving. My role is to provide Board-level oversight and challenge: ensuring that complaints are not only resolved effectively but also used as a vital source of learning and service improvement.

Over the past year, I have worked closely with the Customer Experience team and the wider Board to review performance data, Housing Ombudsman determinations, and root cause analysis. These insights have informed strategic decisions and helped shape action plans to address recurring issues, particularly around communication, responsiveness, and support for vulnerable customers.

I receive regular reports on complaint volumes, categories, outcomes, and trends to ensure accountability and alignment with our values.

While significant progress has been made, we acknowledge that there is still more to do to achieve our goals fully. As a Board we have increased the complaint handling performance target from 95% to 100% as see this as a priority activity.

I have reviewed examples from other housing associations and participated in training sessions to deepen my understanding of complaint handling best practice. These experiences have reinforced my belief that Citizen is committed to continuous improvement and to delivering a service that reflects our values.

I would like to thank the teams across Citizen who work tirelessly to resolve complaints and improve outcomes for our residents. I remain committed to ensuring that our approach to complaints is not only compliant, but compassionate, consistent, and customer focussed.



**Angela Carpenter**  
Board member - MRC (Member Responsible for Complaints)



# Complaint Handling Code

The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code was first introduced in 2020 and became statutory on 1 April 2024.

Its aim is simple but important: to create a positive complaints culture where landlords listen to their customers, learn from what they hear, and take action to make things better.

Now that the Code is law, it is a legal requirement for us – and every other landlord – to follow it in full. The Housing Ombudsman has a duty to make sure that we do.

The Code sets clear expectations for how we handle complaints, including:

- A universal definition of a complaint.
- Easy access to our complaints process, and making sure customers know they can also go to the Housing Ombudsman.
- A simple two-stage process with clear timescales for responses.
- Fair, transparent, and customer-focused handling at every stage.
- Taking action to put things right and find the right solutions.
- Building a culture of continuous learning and improvement.
- Showing what we've learned from complaints in our annual reports.
- Completing – and publishing – an annual self-assessment against the Code.



# Compliance with the Code

Every year, we carry out a detailed self-assessment against the Code. For 2024/25, this was reviewed by our Customer Assurance Committee alongside our Board Member Responsible for Complaints.

They examined the evidence in full, challenged our findings, and scrutinised the performance information to make sure our self-assessment was fair, accurate, and realistic.

Here is a summary of our 2024/25 self assessment outcomes:

	Requirements	
	Required outcomes	Compliance
Section 1 - Definition of a complaint	5	5 (100%)
Section 2 - Exclusions	5	5 (100%)
Section 3 - Accessibility and awareness	7	7 (100%)
Section 4 - Complaint handling staff	3	3 (100%)
Section 5 - Complaint handling process	15	15 (100%)
Section 6 - Complaint stages	20	20 (100%)
Section 7 - Putting things right	4	4 (100%)
Section 8 - Self-assessment, reporting and compliance	5	5 (100%)
Section 8 - Scrutiny and oversight: continuous learning & improvement	8	8 (100%)
Total	72	72 (100%)



# Working with the Housing Ombudsman

We work closely with the Housing Ombudsman, engaging constructively with any investigations, learning from their decisions, and acting quickly on any recommendations.

We see this relationship as an important part of improving our services and building trust with our customers.

[You can read the Housing Ombudsman's latest landlord performance report by searching for Citizen on their website here.](#)

# Listening to our customers

Alongside complaints, we regularly gather feedback from customers in other ways, including the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and our ongoing programme of customer surveys.

These give us valuable insights into how customers feel about our services and where we can improve, even when a formal complaint hasn't been raised.

[You can read our latest TSM results here.](#)



# Complaints handling performance

Responding to customer complaints is a key element of ensuring that we meet our promises and commitments.

We aim to respond on time, explain the next steps, and deliver the outcomes that our customers expect.

This report summarises complaint cases raised during 2024/25 that have been closed:

Stage 1 Complaints: **4,596**

Stage 2 Complaints: **746**

In total, 71 of the Stage 2 complaints were escalated from Stage 1 cases that were raised in 2023/24.

# Overview

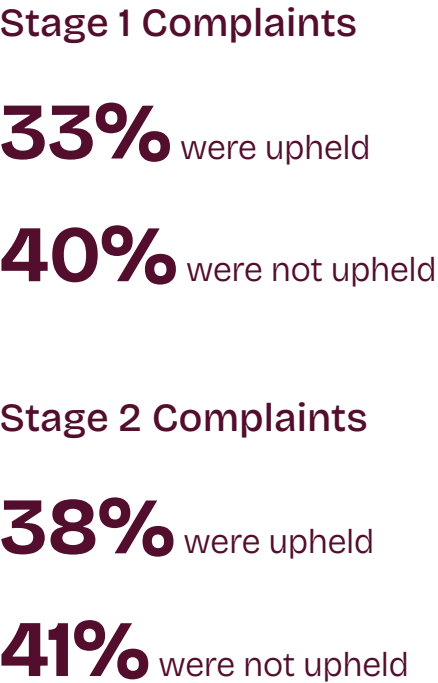
## Service areas with most complaints



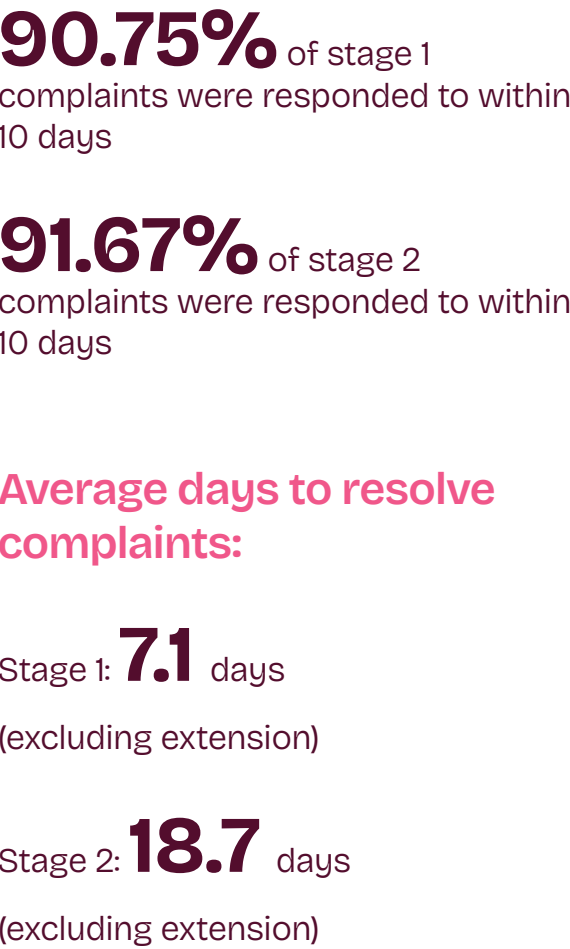
## Most frequent complaint reasons



## Upheld complaints



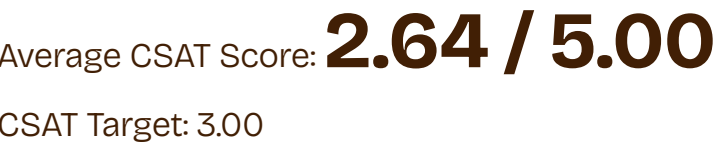
## Complaint performance



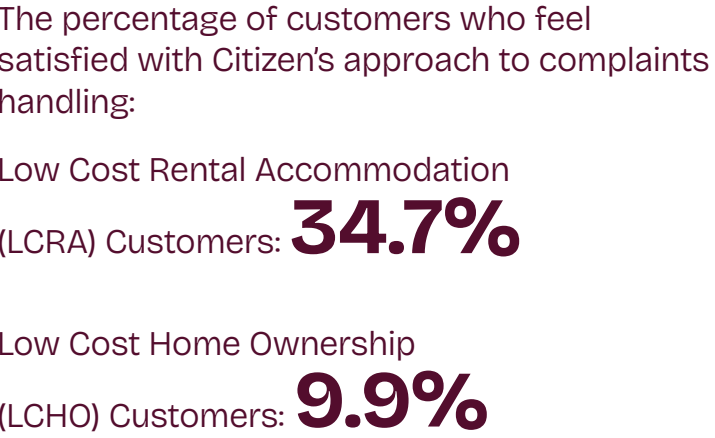
## Escalated complaints



## Satisfaction (transaction) survey result (2024/25)



## Perception survey result (2024/25)





# Our Learnings

Complaints are one of the most important ways our customers tell us what isn't working.

We know it's frustrating when things go wrong, but every complaint gives us the chance to put things right and improve the way we work.

In 2024/25, most complaints we received were about delays in repairs, poor communication, or the quality of our service. By listening closely and looking at each case, we've identified where we can do better and have already made a number of improvements:

## Repairs and damp & mould

- We introduced stronger procedures to prioritise urgent damp and mould cases, particularly where customers are vulnerable.
- Our engineers now use improved record-keeping and "call before you go" practices, so customers know when to expect them.
- We've reduced the number of outstanding repairs from 14,000 in February 2024 to 6,000 in February 2025, thanks to extra resource and better scheduling.
- If a leak is caused by another property and we can't immediately gain access, we no longer close the job, we keep trying until it's resolved.
- Surveyors will soon use a fully electronic system, giving us better visibility and enabling us to share a clear summary of work and timescales with customers within three days.



## Communication

- We launched new appointment cards so that if a follow-on visit is needed, customers leave their first appointment knowing when the next one will take place.
- We've retrained our engineers to provide proactive updates and we're reviewing the text messages we send, so they're clearer and more helpful.
- We've pulled together all repairs information into one place on our website and will review the text messages that are sent out to customers as part of their repair ensuring they are clear and outline timings.

## Service quality

- Our Scrutiny panel carried out a review of cleaning and grounds maintenance, which made 25 recommendations. They also reviewed our complaints communication and made a further 21 recommendations of areas of improvement. These are now being implemented
- We've enhanced post-inspection surveys after repairs to make sure our quality checks are more robust.
- We've run customer engagement sessions in Coventry, Birmingham and Worcester to understand satisfaction with cleaning services, and we're building action plans based on the feedback.

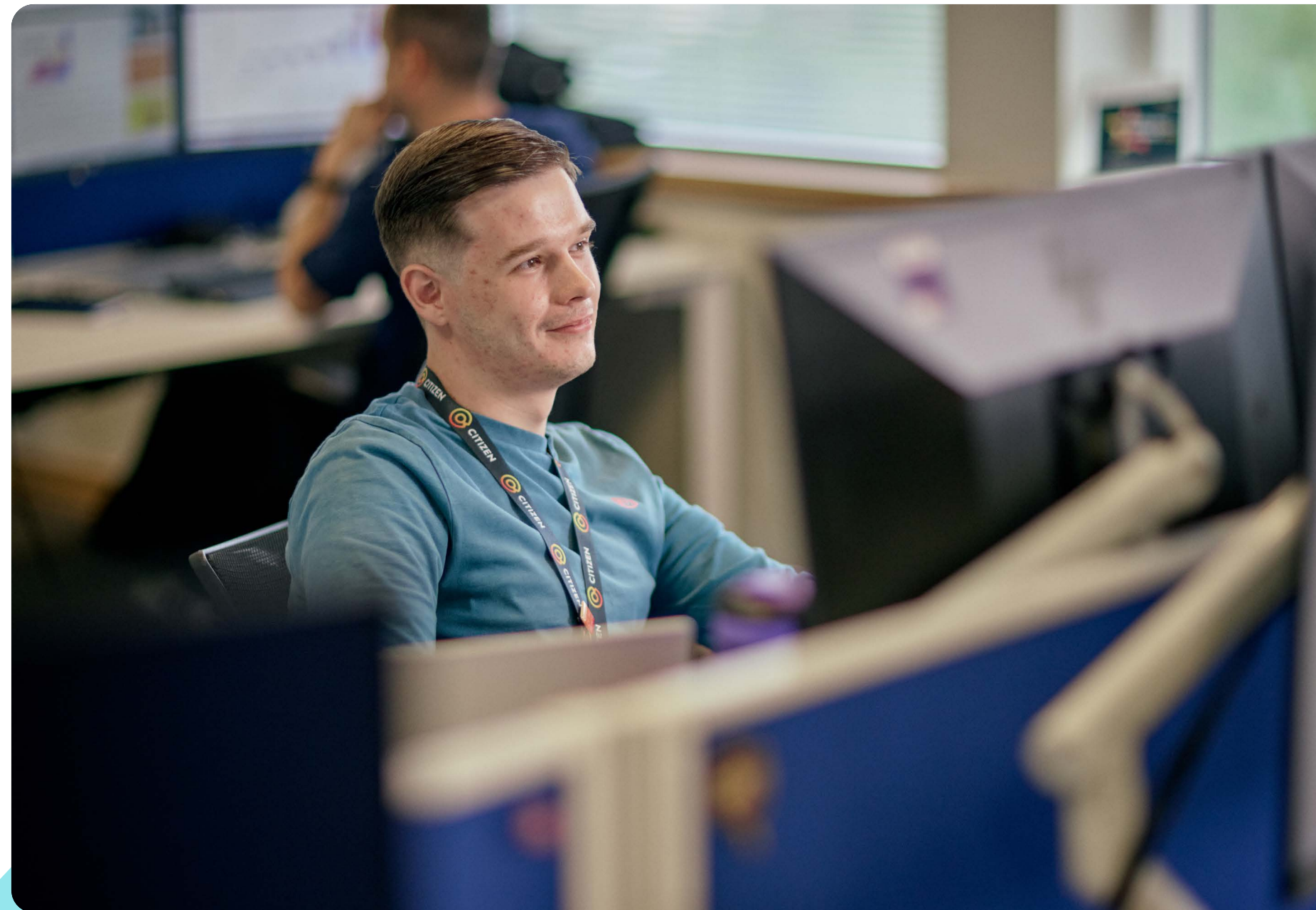


## Record keeping

- We launched a campaign to improve how colleagues record information, recognising this as a common theme in the Housing Ombudsman findings.
- Teams across Citizen, including Asset Management, have received training to strengthen how we log, store, and share data. This helps us keep our promises and ensure consistency in how we manage cases.

## Making complaints clearer and easier

- We've updated all our complaints letters to explain how customers can escalate their case if they're unhappy.
- We've removed the "quick resolution" process, to simplify the steps to getting a complaint resolved.
- We've also expanded the number of colleagues trained to handle complaints, so more colleagues can step in and help.



## Putting customers first

- We've relaunched our Citizen First approach, putting customer experience at the heart of everything we do.
- Our "We Hear You" campaign makes sure lessons from complaints are shared across the organisation so that learning leads to action.
- We've strengthened awareness of our Vulnerability Policy and made sure colleagues consider vulnerabilities when responding to complaints.
- Colleagues have received additional training, including on domestic abuse awareness and customer experience e-learning, to support customers in the right way.



# Improvements for 2025/26

We know that handling complaints well is important but preventing them from happening in the first place is even better.

That’s why in 2025/26 we’re focusing on building a preventative complaints culture at Citizen.

Our vision is to keep improving the way we listen to and act on customer feedback, so that problems are solved earlier and services keep getting better.

Here’s what we’re working on:

## Making reasonable adjustments

We’ll fully embed our new Vulnerability Policy, so that where customers have specific needs or vulnerabilities, we adapt our services wherever we reasonably can.

## Using customer feedback to improve

We’ll continue to review results from the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and our own surveys to understand where we can do better. Customer feedback has already helped us improve, but we want to go further.



## Training colleagues in customer excellence

We’ll roll out new customer excellence training across Citizen, helping colleagues to provide a consistently great experience at every interaction.

## Improving of communication channels

We’re making it easier for you to contact us in the way that suits you best, whether that’s by phone, chatbot, or your MyAccount. All through one simple and connected system.

By focusing on prevention, listening carefully to what customers tell us, and giving colleagues the tools to deliver excellent service, we’re working to reduce the number of things that go wrong – and to make sure that when they do, we put them right quickly and fairly.

We know there’s always more to do, but with these improvements we’re confident we’ll keep making it easier for customers to feel heard, respected and supported.



# How to make a complaint

We want to make it as easy as possible for you to tell us if something has gone wrong. If you're unhappy with our service, please let us know, we'll do our best to put things right quickly.

You can make a complaint in the way that suits you best:

- **Online:** Use the complaints form on our website [www.citizenhousing.org.uk/customer-services/feedback](http://www.citizenhousing.org.uk/customer-services/feedback)
- **Phone:** Call us on 0300 790 6555
- **In writing:** Write to us at Citizen, Lakeside, 4040 Solihull Parkway, Birmingham, B37 7YN
- **In person:** Speak to a Citizen colleague

If you'd like support to make a complaint, you can ask a friend, family member, or advocate to do it on your behalf.

You can also contact the Housing Ombudsman at any time for advice or support.

If you've completed our complaints process and are still unhappy, you can ask the Housing Ombudsman to review your case.

- **Website:** [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
- **Phone:** 0300 111 3000
- **Email:** [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)







CITIZEN

Complaints  
Performance and  
Service Improvement  
Report 2024/25

[www.citizenhousing.org.uk/](http://www.citizenhousing.org.uk/)

