

# Annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report 2024/25

## Foreword

This report provides a comprehensive overview of our complaints management over the past year. At Eastlight, we embrace complaints as invaluable sources of unfiltered insight, pivotal to enhancing our services. We firmly believe that every complaint represents an opportunity to learn and improve.

As the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC), I oversee our approach to complaints management. Throughout the year, I receive regular updates and reports that provide essential oversight and assurance. This enables me to identify emerging themes, challenge service outcomes, and ensure that our customers receive the high-quality service they deserve.

Our commitment to transparency and accountability is reflected in our interactions with the Customer Influence Committee and our Board. Regular scrutiny of our complaints performance and engagement on escalated cases with the Housing Ombudsman underscores our dedication to resolving issues effectively.

Central to our Corporate Strategy is our unwavering focus on responding to the customer voice. Initiatives such as our transition to a place-based model and advancements in digital transformation are poised to deliver tangible improvements in service delivery. By the year's end, our customers will benefit from a dedicated neighbourhood level housing service and a self-serve portal, streamlining processes for rent queries, repairs, and appointments.

Our Think Customer programme exemplifies our dedication to enhancing the customer experience across all touchpoints. By investing in these strategic initiatives, we aim to foster better customer outcomes, improve communication, and minimise hand-offs between teams.

This report not only highlights our performance and achievements but also identifies areas where we continue to strive for excellence. Together, we remain steadfast in our commitment to listening, learning, and evolving to better serve our residents.

**Catherine Turner**

**Member Responsible for Complaints**

## Complaint Volumes

Complaint volumes for the last two years is as follows:

Year	Stage 1	Stage 2
2023/24	1016	62
2024/25	576	65

Key points to note are:

- Complaints fell significantly in 2024/25, with 576 recorded — a major reduction on the previous year — driven by better call centre resourcing and managing service requests at first contact rather than through complaints.
- Complaints per 1,000 homes dropped by almost 40%, from 69.4 to 43.0, outperforming the sector median of 48.1.
- 89% of complaints are now resolved at stage 1, with only 11% escalating to stage 2.

## Complaint Performance and Outcomes

Complaint Stage	% resolved within target timescale	% resolved in compliant way*	% of complaints upheld
Stage 1 (10 working days)	69%	99.12%	75%
Stage 2 (20 working days)	54%	80%	65%

\*extension agreed with customer

Key points to note are:

- 99.12% of stage 1 complaints are resolved compliantly, but 31% require an extension beyond 10 working days; improving response times remains a key focus.
- Stage 2 compliance with Housing Ombudsman timescales stands at 80%, with performance now reviewed monthly by the Leadership Team to drive improvement.

## Customer Satisfaction with Complaint Handling

We measure customer satisfaction in complaint handling. Customer Journey Surveys are our method for collecting transactional customer satisfaction i.e. how customers feel about a service immediately after having received it.

Key points to note are:

- Customer Journey Surveys show mean satisfaction scores of 5.4 (handling) and 5.3 (outcome) out of 10.
- Customers are most positive about the Customer Experience Team, ownership of issues, and ease of reporting.

- Less positive feedback relates to the quality of letters and being kept informed, with dissatisfaction often linked to poor communication, unresolved repairs, and ineffective issue handling.

Customer satisfaction with complaints is one of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). The latest performance is as follows:

2023/24	2024/25	Median	Top quartile
35.1%	33%	37%	43.4%

Key points to note are:

- 2024/25 satisfaction is 33%, down from 35.1% in 2023/24, and currently sits in the third quartile.
- Over the past two years, the overall number of complaints has decreased, reflecting our improved approach in distinguishing between service requests and formal complaints. This has resulted in a more accurate picture of complaint volumes. However, we have seen a slight decline in satisfaction with how complaints are handled. Dissatisfaction is notably higher among customers with genuine complaints, as opposed to those whose concerns were previously misclassified as complaints.
- Improving satisfaction remains a priority, supported by initiatives such as the Think Customer programme, investment in a new customer portal, and service redesigns to better meet customer needs.

## Cause of Complaints

We define a ‘complaint’ as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by Eastlight, our own staff, or those acting on our behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents. Customers are not required to use the word ‘complaint’ for us to handle it like one.

- In line with Housing Ombudsman guidance, we distinguish between service requests and complaints; service requests are resolved at first contact and not logged as complaints.
- Our *Complaints and Resolutions Policy* clearly sets out what is and isn’t considered a complaint, with service requests handled separately by the Customer Service Team. Complaints that fall within the definition are not refused.

The root cause of complaints over the last year is:

Root Cause	%
Standard of service	23%
Poor communication	21%
Contractor failure	19%
Policy	13%
Mould, damp, condensation	8%

Waiting times	7%
Staff attitude or behaviour	7%
Missed or late appointments	2%

Key points to note are:

- Standard of service, poor communications with customers and contractor failure make up the biggest cause of complaints, together contributing to 63% of complaints.
- We have taken action to address the root cause of complaints and that is detailed further on in this report.

### Cases that escalate to the Housing Ombudsman

In 2024/25, we received 30 determinations across 16 cases, up from 12 determinations across 5 cases last year — reflecting sector trends for organisations of our size.

Key points to note are:

- Determinations are reported to the Member Responsible for Complaints and shared anonymously with the Customer Influence Committee for oversight and assurance.
- No findings of severe maladministration or non-compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Code.
- Last year, 91% of determinations involved maladministration or service failure (compared to 71% sector average).
- This year, 70% involve similar findings, mainly relating to complaint handling, property condition, ASB, and estate management. We await sector figures to benchmark this enhanced performance.
- There have been no findings of non-compliance with the Code by the Housing Ombudsman.

### Housing Ombudsman Publications

We self-assess against the Housing Ombudsman’s sector spotlight reports to identify gaps in our services and opportunities for improvement. These reports include:

- Room for improvement: Complaints about repairs
- Damp and Mould – it’s not lifestyle
- Knowledge and Information Management
- Noise complaints – time to be heard
- Attitudes, respect and rights (A relationship of Equals)
- Leasehold, shared ownership and new builds
- Complaints about heating, hot water and energy

An action plan is in place to address recommendations and apply sector best practice, leading to service improvements such as:

- Clear recording of disrepair reports, ensuring all staff have visibility of repair cases.
- Regular reviews of the Damp and Mould policy for a faster, more effective response.
- Development of a data strategy to strengthen knowledge and information management.
- A new "Good Neighbour" leaflet included in all new tenancy induction packs.
- Clear advice for Mutual Exchange residents about the impact on Right to Buy/Right to Acquire, with records maintained for transparency.

### **Service Improvements as a result of learning from complaints**

Analysis of Housing Ombudsman determinations highlights key themes:

- Poor communication and lack of updates.
- Unclear outcomes and next steps following visits.
- Delays and unrealistic service delivery expectations.
- Unachievable timescales set out in previous policies.
- Inconsistent record-keeping, especially in asset and contractor management.

Responding to customer voice is central to our Corporate Strategy, with two major transformation projects underway:

- Place-based working model (launching 2025/26) — introducing multi-skilled teams serving defined neighbourhoods to reduce hand-offs and build trusted customer relationships.
- Digital transformation — improving the customer portal and implementing a data strategy to strengthen communication, service delivery, and self-service options.

Colleagues are continually reminded of the importance of adhering to policy standards to avoid service failure and maladministration.

Service delivery and complaint management remain key risks, closely monitored by the Customer Influence Committee and Board.

Practical improvements to address the root cause of complaints include:

### **Standard of Service**

- Developed a repairs recovery plan to reduce waiting times, addressing a key source of dissatisfaction.
- Increased call centre resources to resolve issues faster and reduce complaints.
- Launched and enhanced the Healthy Homes service to tackle damp and mould more efficiently, in line with Awaab's Law.
- Introduced a new IT system to track and complete commitments made during complaint resolutions.

- Personal letters from CEO to customers who escalate complaints to the Housing Ombudsman, seeking to restore trust.
- Strengthened complaints handling by creating a new senior manager role, empowering staff to resolve issues early, and embedding learning from complaints.
- Improved customer service through joint case reviews and better resourcing in Lettings and Intervention teams, increasing satisfaction rates.
- Upgraded storage heater specifications following feedback on cost and performance.

### **Improving Communications**

- Reviewed all standard letters for empathy, plain English, and a customer-focused tone.
- Introduced a 'buddy system' in key teams to ensure continuity of service when staff are absent.
- Appointed Customer Liaison Officers to support customers through complex works.
- Provided Customer Services teams with better access to defect information, improving first-contact resolution.
- Ensured gas contractors inform customers about temporary heating support where needed.
- Built additional controls and internal audits into the assurance framework, targeting high-complaint areas like repairs, disrepair, estates, and ASB.

### **Contractor Failure**

- Acted quickly to terminate a failed grounds maintenance contract and secured a new provider; customers were reimbursed for missed services.
- Enhanced the new grounds maintenance contract following resident consultation, increasing grass cuts and improving weed control.
- Strengthened contract management with staff training, better case tracking, and a new Customer Liaison Officer in Assets.

### **Policy Changes**

- Updated Complaints and Compensation Policies to strengthen customer focus and decision-making.
- Developed a Managing Behaviour Policy to handle repeated or unreasonable complaints in line with Housing Ombudsman guidance.

### **Focus on Our People**

- Reinforced the importance of delivering services in line with policy to all staff.
- Set a complaints management objective for every colleague.

- Rolled out the Think Customer programme to drive a culture of quality communication and service.
- Introduced a 2025/26 staff bonus linked to positive customer outcomes measured through TSM scores

### **Further Information**

For more information or queries please contact the Customer Experience Team  
[customer.experience@eastlighthomes.co.uk](mailto:customer.experience@eastlighthomes.co.uk)