

Annual complaints performance and service improvement report

2025-2026

This report details all complaints received by SLH between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, including low-cost rental accommodation (LCRA), low-cost home ownership (LCHO), homeowners and waiting list applicants. (This differs from our Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) reporting requirements – in line with NROSH guidelines, SLH report on LCRA only).



There has been a 22% decrease in the number of formal complaints received, compared to 311 last year.

One case progressed to Housing Ombudsman (HO); the investigation determined maladministration in both how we handled the issue and our complaint handling. We were ordered to issue an apology and pay the customer £650 compensation.

We also received an outstanding determination from a 2024/25 case, this was completed without the need for a full investigation and identified two service failures. We were instructed to compensate the customer £50. One 2024/25 case remains in the HO's triage system and has not yet progressed to investigation.

The HO has published performance reports for landlords with five or more findings between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026. Since SLH didn't hit that number, there's no report for us for 2025/26.

Visit our [complaints page](#) for the most recent annual report about SLH's performance from the HO from 2023/24.

Timescales



July 17

90% of stage 1 complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales.

Seven complaints were acknowledged outside of timescales and 17 complaints were responded to outside of timescale.

July 17

86% of stage 2 complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales.

Three (of 21) complaints escalated to stage 2 were acknowledged or responded to outside of timescales..

We acknowledge that we are not fully complying with achieving time scales for all complaints. We recognise this is an area where we need to improve. Therefore, corrective actions have been taken to improve the process of acknowledging and responding to complaints, including:

- We have improved our systems and reminded colleagues of the correct process for acknowledging complaints.
- We now encourage the use of a central customer feedback inbox to ensure all complaints are managed consistently.
- Complaint deadlines are actively monitored, with early alerts in place to prevent delays.
- We have strengthened our administration processes to provide better oversight and smoother handover instructions if a member of the team is on leave.
- We work closely with our contractors to monitor progress and manage complaints on time, with early action taken to prevent delays.

Satisfaction with complaint handling



54%

satisfaction with **approach** to complaints handling (complaints made in last 12 months)

 TSM measure: We are in the top quartile for performance, compared to other housing associations

Complaints refused

One complaint was refused during 2025/26.

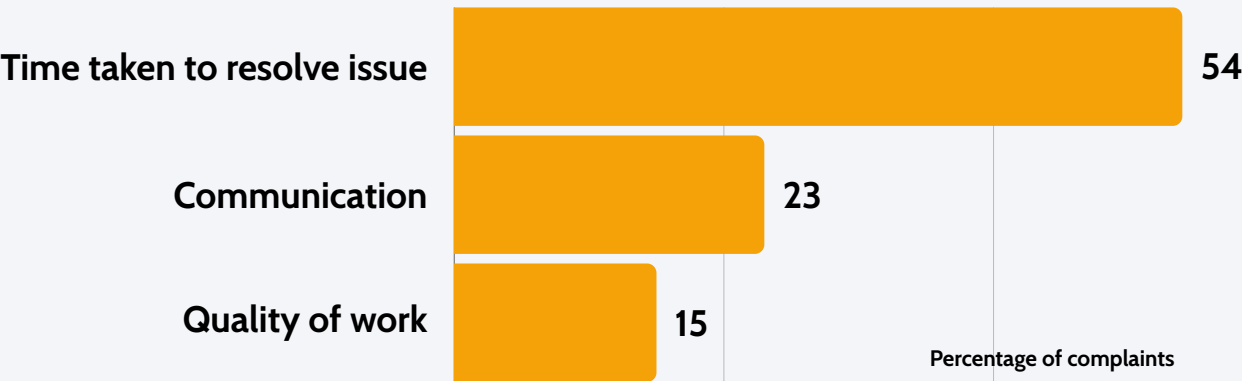


One case where the compensation level had already been dealt with previously at stage 2 and so had therefore exhausted SLH's formal process.

We wrote to the residents to advise them why we were unable to handle the matter in line with policy and their right to approach the Housing Ombudsman about this decision.

Top three key themes for avoidable complaints

Of the 244 complaints received during 2025/26, arguably 131 could have been avoided. The top three drivers of these complaints were:



Number of formal complaints received by service area



154
complaints
63%
of complaints
received

Asset management

Asset management - Responsive repairs has received 154 complaints, accounting for 63% of all complaints received.

Of the responsive repair complaints received, 40% relate to outstanding repairs. The most common themes when reviewing the root cause of these complaints are the timescale for repairs to be completed and inadequate communication.



27
complaints
11%
of complaints
received

Neighbourhood services

Neighbourhood services (tenancy management and community safety) have received 27 complaints, accounting for 11% of all complaints received. Most complaints relate to community safety and tenancy management, with our handling of ASB cases the most common theme.



23
complaints
9%
of complaints
received

Planned works

Asset management – planned works has received 23 complaints, accounting for 9% of all complaints received. This is a reduction from 2024/25 in which Asset Management – planned works accounted for 15% of complaints. The common themes when reviewing the root cause of these complaints are again the timescale for works to be completed, communication - in keeping the customer updated and quality of workmanship.



Demographics

We use demographic data, to help us identify if certain groups of people receive a difference in service from us, as a result of a protected characteristic.

Age

The percentage of complaints received for those aged between 25– 59 years old represents a higher proportion compared to SLH's customer profile. In comparison, the percentage of complaints received for those over 60 years old represents a lower proportion compared to SLH's customer profile. However, this is expected, given that satisfaction across all measures is highest for older customers.

Gender

The percentage of complaints received by gender is broadly reflective of SLH's overall customer profile.

Ethnicity

Most complaints received are from tenants who identify their ethnicity as white British, which is reflective of our customer profile. BAME stands for Black, Asian and minority ethnic. The number of complaints we have received from tenants who identify their ethnicity as BAME is reflective of our customer profile.

Disability

We review all complaints to identify if any tenants are receiving a disparity in service, as a result of their disability/medical condition, we include an update in each monthly customer feedback report of any instances where the nature of a complaint has a direct impact on any disability and if any reasonable adjustments have been requested.

Other protected characteristics

From our knowing our customers campaign, we have increased our data capture of protected characteristic information, including sexuality, gender reassignment, and religion. This helps us better understand the diverse needs of our tenants and informs our aim to make our services more inclusive.

Where we need to improve

We review complaints to identify themes where complaints could arguably have been avoided.



We have identified the following themes:

- Better communication surrounding appointments, particularly if they change or are cancelled.
- Improved ownership and follow-up on repairs to ensure the work fixed the problem, as follow-on repairs often lead to complaints.
- Better responsiveness to ensure reported issues are actioned more promptly.
- Greater ownership of the quality of repairs, resulting in improved standards of workmanship and getting things right the first time.
- Managing customer expectations by keeping them informed of next steps, therefore reducing customer effort in having to chase updates.
- Ensuring appointments are kept.

This analysis is shared in our monthly customer feedback report which is shared with managers and the leadership team. We also report this to our customer services committee and board on a quarterly basis.

The power of feedback

Feedback from our tenants has resulted in several changes to how we do things, with a focus on better communication and satisfaction with our repairs and maintenance service:



- We've introduced a handheld electronic survey device that surveyors use in tenants' homes. This allows them to record required works room by room, add photos, and submit everything directly to the system on the spot. Previously, surveyors took notes on site, then returned to the office to raise and input jobs, resulting in duplicate effort. The new approach removes this, reduces handling, and ensures jobs are raised more quickly.
- We have ensured that the scheduling team offer Saturday morning appointments for safety checks to accommodate tenant's work commitments and availability.
- Recognising that tenants may be concerned when receiving written communications from us about wishing to visit them, we have re-worded the KNOC appointment letters, to alleviate any concerns over the nature of the visit.
- After a tenant was unsure about the status of their complaint, we have reiterated the correct withdrawal process for complaints, to ensure that when tenants agree to withdraw a complaint, they receive written confirmation of this agreement.
- We have increased the number of post inspections. Each day we carry out random inspections on repairs undertaken to ensure customer satisfaction. If there are issues with an operative's work, further checks are carried out to see if there is an additional training need.
- To check that all housing applications have been received and processed, we now receive a daily report form our IT supplier with all application statuses, so we can ensure none are missed.
- After noticing three instances of complaints where the tenant did not have any home contents insurance, saying it was a luxury they could not afford, we promoted the importance of this and provided details of affordable home contents insurance from £1.47 per month on both our website and via our social media channels.

A review of learning outcomes from complaints during 2025/26 shows that a number of issues were arguably preventable, and stemmed from recurring weaknesses in communication, follow through after inspections, and inconsistent application of established processes. While individual actions were taken throughout the year, there are repeated themes.

Communication

Complaints analysis identified communication as the most frequent cause of dissatisfaction. In response, we have:

- Reinforced expectations around notifying tenants of appointment changes, delays, and outcomes.
- Introduced clearer confirmation and reminder processes for appointments.
- Updated letter templates and guidance to improve tone and clarity, particularly in arrears and compliance correspondence.
- Established clearer points of contact for complex or ongoing cases.
- These actions have improved consistency of messaging and reduced avoidable follow-up contact and escalation.
- Right first time” repairs. A significant proportion of complaints related to repeat visits and unresolved repairs. During the year, we have:
- Re-emphasised repeat-repair and leak escalation processes through staff briefings and toolbox talks .
- Introduced changes to scheduling and job allocation to ensure operatives have sufficient time and information to complete works.
- Reviewed repair histories more systematically before raising repeat jobs.
- Strengthened post-inspection and quality assurance checks.

These improvements have reduced unnecessary repeat visits and improved repair resolution rates.

Closing the gap between inspections and action

Complaints highlighted delays between inspections and works being raised or completed. In response, we have:

- Clarified ownership for raising and progressing follow-on works.
- Implemented system and process changes to enable jobs to be raised more quickly following inspections.
- Improved information sharing between SLH teams and contractors.
- Introduced or progressed mobile and electronic solutions to support real-time job logging.

This has improved oversight and reduced delays following inspections.

Improving consistency in applying procedures

Learning from complaints showed that procedures were not always applied consistently. During 2025/26, we have:

- Reviewed and refreshed key procedures, including no-access, repeat repairs, and compliance processes.
- Delivered targeted staff training, briefings, and toolbox talks to reinforce expected practice.
- Addressed compliance risks through system controls and clearer guidance, particularly for gas and electrical safety.

These actions have strengthened procedural compliance and assurance.

Embedding a more person-centred approach

Many complaints involved vulnerable tenants where service failures had a heightened impact.

As a result, we have:

- Reinforced the importance of identifying and recording vulnerability at first contact.
- Improved the use of reasonable adjustments when arranging appointments and visits.
- Strengthened guidance to ensure tenant circumstances are considered throughout case management.
- Shared learning cases across teams to promote greater awareness of impact on tenants.

This has supported more consistent, trauma-informed, and responsive service delivery.

Overall, the learning from complaints during 2025/26 has resulted in improvements to communication standards, repair delivery, process adherence, and vulnerability awareness. The actions implemented demonstrate that complaint learning is being used as a driver for service improvement, not simply case resolution.

In addition, there has been staff discussions, training and individual feedback provided across the service areas. Toolbox talks with Avela Home Service operatives have been held throughout the year focussing on effective communication with our tenants. Our leadership team review lessons learnt from complaints monthly, to ensure that a multi-disciplinary team approach is taken to identify and embed learning across the organisation.

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

On an annual basis, we carry out a self-assessment against the Code, to ensure our policies and procedures remain in line with the Code's requirements. The [2025/26 self-assessment](#) demonstrates that we are not fully complying with achieving time scales for all complaints. We recognise this is an area where we need to improve. Corrective actions are detailed on page two of how we will improve our responsiveness to timescales.