



Report to:	Customer Focus Committee
	19/05/2025
Report Title:	Customer Feedback Annual Report 2024/25
Report Type:	Assurance
Report of:	Director of Customer Services
Purpose of Report:	This report provides the Customer Focus Committee with details of customer feedback received during 2024/25.
Recommendation(s):	The Customer Focus Committee are asked to note and comment on the contents of this report.
Confidentiality:	Non Confidential
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<p>Links to SHG strategic objectives (please mark all that apply)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deliver excellent customer service, driven by customer feedback and experience. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide safe, sustainable homes in neighbourhoods where communities can thrive. <input type="checkbox"/> Contribute to making Stockport fairer by reducing inequality, poverty and supporting customers in all aspects of their lives. <input type="checkbox"/> Maximise resources through growth, efficiency, and business transformation. <input type="checkbox"/> Work collaboratively, influencing locally, regionally, and nationally to achieve more. <input type="checkbox"/> Be an inclusive great place to work, where our values shine through everyone and everything, we do.
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Risk	SHG has a 'minimal' or 'averse' appetite for anything that might harm the organisation's reputation or relationships with its customers, or put their safety at risk, so this report gives assurance about how services are perceived by customers and for any areas of concern to be addressed.	
Risk Appetite	Averse	
<u>Risk Number</u>	<u>Risk Description</u>	<u>Risk Mitigation</u>
6	SHG does not deliver excellent customer services in the way that customers require them and does not maintain a strong, positive reputation where stakeholders have trust and confidence in SHG	Dealing with and learning from complaints will provide customers with a strong level of confidence in SHG

Customers	The report analyses customer feedback about Stockport Homes' services. Any areas for improvement are communicated to leaders to improve the service received by customers. The report demonstrates improvements and changes implemented in response to customers' concerns.
Resources	There are no financial or value for money implications arising directly from the recommendations of this report.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)	Diversity monitoring forms part of the data analysis for the report. It has not highlighted any significant issues faced by customers with protected characteristics, or other groups, when using the customer feedback service.
Regulatory Compliance	The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard requires providers to ensure that the views of tenants inform the setting of the strategic direction of the organisation and decisions about the management of housing services. This report provides information that will inform business planning and service improvement and gives insight into the lived experience of customers.



1. INTRODUCTION

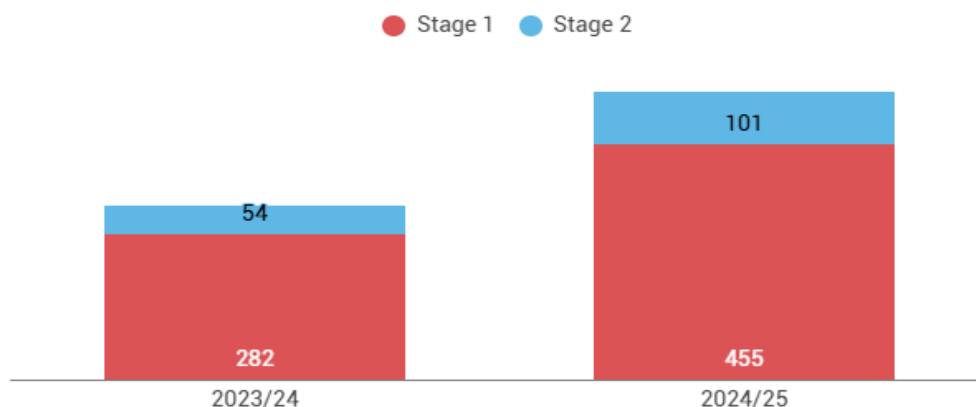
- 1.1. Customer feedback is reviewed and shared with the Customer Focus Committee (CFC) every quarter. This Annual Report provides a summary of customer feedback received in 2024/25, ensuring adherence to the Housing Ombudsman Service's (HOS) statutory Complaint Handling Code.
- 1.2. Stockport Homes Group (SHG) remains strongly committed to fostering a positive complaint handling culture, where feedback is valued as a key driver of service improvement. This commitment is reflected in the organisation's continued efforts to learn from complaints, act on customer concerns, and improve the overall experience.
- 1.3. Complaint volumes have increased across the housing sector, driven by greater public awareness through Housing Ombudsman Service campaigns and a better understanding of compensation rights. Despite this wider context, fewer than half of Stage One complaints received by SHG in 2024/25 were upheld or partially upheld, meaning that in the majority of cases, no service failure was identified. SHG also continues to perform strongly compared to the sector on Housing Ombudsman determinations, with a lower rate of maladministration than the national average. While this is a positive reflection of current practices, SHG remains committed to strengthening its complaint handling culture and using feedback to support ongoing improvement.

2. OVERVIEW

Formal Complaints

- 2.1. The chart below provides an overview of the number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints closed during each of the four quarters, along with comparisons to the same periods in the previous year.

Stage 1 & 2 Complaints Received



2.2. Below is a breakdown of Stage 1 complaints by Service Area, with comparisons to the same period last year.

Team	Q1 to Q4 2023/24	Q1-Q4 2024/25	Increase/Decrease
Housing Options, Homelessness and Allocations	14	22	8
Carecall & Concierge	12	8	-4
Customer Access	5	5	0
Customer Engagement and Inclusion	2	0	-2
Independent Living Services	1	1	1
Safer Neighbourhoods	18	33	15
Assets & Development	22	33	11
Caretaking	4	9	5
Compliance	16	15	-1
Greenspace	5	9	4
Investment	27	15	-12
Maintenance and Commercial Services (Three Sixty Maintenance)	111	250	139
Three Sixty Living	3	3	0
Tenancy and Estate Services	35	45	10
Customer Finance	7	8	1

2.3. Throughout the year, 22 complaints were declined in line with the Customer Feedback Policy. The reasons for these refusals are outlined in **Appendix 1**.

Compliments

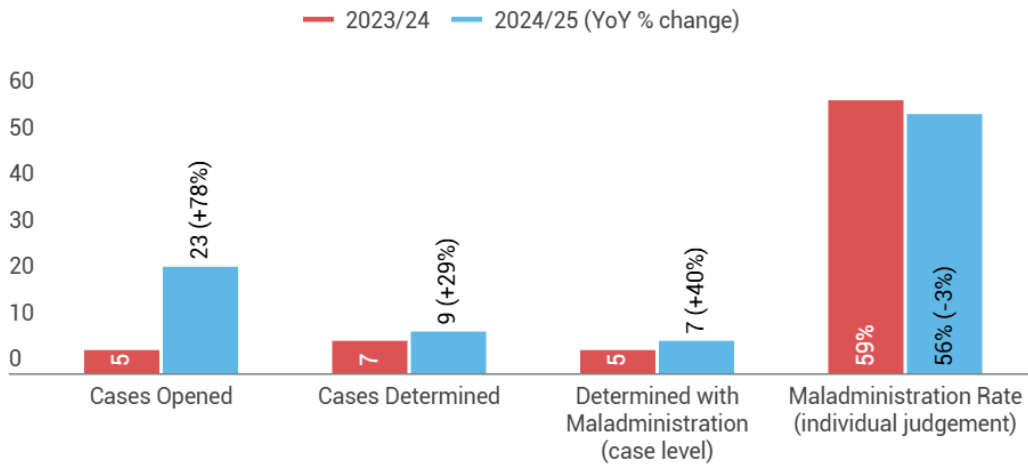
2.4. During 2024/25, 243 compliments were received from customers, reflecting the positive impact of the services provided. This represents a 10% increase from the 220 compliments received in 2023/24. The highest proportion of compliments, 39%, were received by the repairs service. A more detailed breakdown of compliments by service area is provided in **Appendix 2**.

Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS)

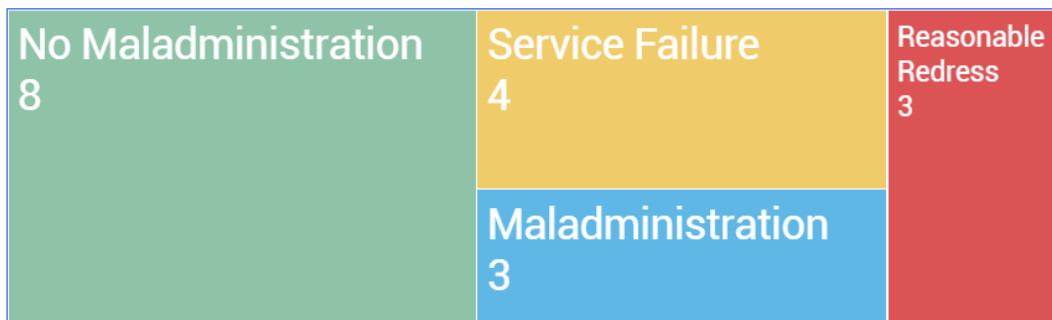
2.5. As member landlords, SHG are subject to the Housing Ombudsman Service's Complaint Handling Code and determinations. The chart below summarises the

volume of HOS cases opened and where determinations received during the year:

Housing Ombudsman Cases



2.6. The graphic below provides a breakdown of the individual judgements received during the year. More detail on HOS cases for 2024/25 is provided in **Appendix 3**.



2.7. The HOS reported a sector-wide Maladministration Rate of 73% and a significantly increasing caseload in their 2023/24 Annual Complaint Review. SHG's Maladministration Rate for 2024/25 was 56%, well below the sector-wide average.

2.8. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) issued one determination regarding SHG's services for the Council, related to the Allocations Policy. They found 'injustice' in how SHG explained the decision-making process for medical assessments and priority awards. In response, SHG has fully complied with the order by revising standard medical assessment letters to provide a more detailed explanation of how medical assessments and priority awards are determined, in accordance with the Allocations Policy.

Service Requests

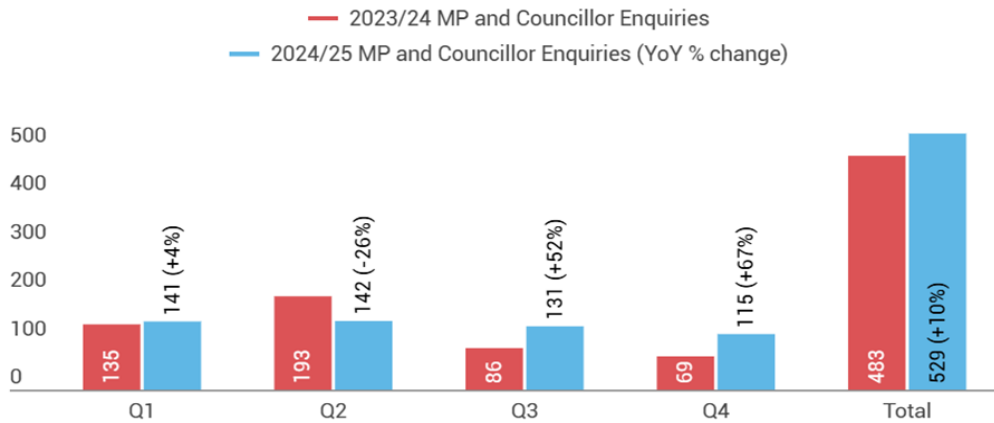
2.9. In 2024/25, 546 Service Requests were closed. These include first time issues or quickly resolvable situations, agreed upon with the customer, without escalating to

formal complaints. This year marks the first full year of reporting Service Requests under the HOS Complaint Handling Code. A detailed breakdown of Service Requests by Service Area is provided in the attached Appendix 2.

MP and Councillor Enquiries

- 2.10. Elected Members (MPs and Councillors) may contact SHG on behalf of residents or regarding specific issues. Complaints are recorded per the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code, while requests for information, service, and support are logged as MP and Councillor Enquiries.
- 2.11. The chart below summarises the volume of cases closed across the four quarters, with year-on-year comparisons.

MP and Councillor Enquiries



- 2.12. A detailed breakdown of MP and Councillor Enquiries by Service Area is provided in the attached **Appendix 2**.

3. PERFORMANCE AND TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES

Complaint Handling Performance

- 3.1. The table below provides details on complaint handling during the year. This is measured by the percentage of formal complaints closed within the timeframe set by

the HOS Complaint Handling Code, as well as the average number of days taken for a formal complaint to be closed¹.

Case Type	% Handled in Time	Avg. no. of Days to Handle	HOS Complaint Handling Code Timeframes
Stage 1	99.1%	11.3	10 Working Days (+10)
Stage 2	98%	19.9	20 Working Days (+20)

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

- 3.2. Tenant Satisfaction Measure CH01 requires landlords to report the volume of Stage 1 and Stage 2 cases per 1,000 properties. At year-end, SHG handled 39.86 Stage 1 complaints per 1,000 properties, and 8.83 Stage 2 complaints per 1,000 properties.
- 3.3. As part of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) perception survey, customers are asked if they have made a complaint within the last 12 months. If they answer 'Yes' they are then asked about their satisfaction with their landlord's approach to complaints handling:

TP09: Proportion of respondents who report making a complaint in the last 12 months who are satisfied with their landlords approach to complaints handling.

Number of TSM survey respondents	Number of respondents who said 'Yes' to having made a complaint within last 12 months	% Satisfied with landlord's approach to complaint handling	% of respondents to TP09 who had made a formal complaint within the last 12 months	% Satisfied of those who had made a formal complaint
1731	201 (12% of all respondents)	56%	12%	52%

- 3.4. Given the small volume of respondents who had formally raised a complaint with SHG, it is apparent that a wider range of factors drive customer perceptions of the approach to complaint handling.
- 3.5. In addition to TSM perception surveys, SHG also undertakes a transactional satisfaction survey, which is sent to customers after they have been through the formal complaints process (either after Stage 1, or after Stage 2).

¹ HOS Complaint Handling Code and TSM Measure includes case extensions of +10 days for Stage 1 and +20 days for Stage 2 complaints.

Number of complaints	Number of responses	Response Rate	% Satisfaction with how the complaint was handled overall
455	42	9%	33%

- 3.6. The survey responses received during the year highlighted the importance of regular and timely updates for improving satisfaction levels. Key areas for enhancing the customer experience include better communication, empathy from staff responding to complaints. While the organisation has a positive complaint handling culture, further efforts and consistent customer engagement can reduce escalations to Stage 2 and the HOS.

4. CUSTOMER PROFILING AND DEMOGRAPHICS

- 4.1. 4.1. The profiles of customers who have made complaints are analysed to identify any potential inadvertent barriers to accessing the complaints process that may be faced by different customer groups, particularly in relation to relevant protected characteristics as set out by the Equality Act. This analysis also examines whether different customer profiles experience variations in service delivery. Understanding the profile of the customers who are complaining is a requirement of the HOS Code and is crucial for assisting landlords in 'finding their silences'. Going forward, this new reporting will enable the Feedback Team to review trends over time, providing valuable insights for continuous improvement
- 4.2. The Customer Feedback Team has worked with the Data Team to further enhance customer profile analysis and reporting, aiming to link customer groups with service specific issues. This will enable targeted improvements, demonstrating SHG's commitment to addressing 'silences' and meeting all customer needs per Consumer Standards Regulations.

5. ANALYSIS

- 5.1. The volume of formal complaints handled by the organisation continues to be higher than the previous year. Stage 1 complaints have increased by approximately 61%, and Stage 2 complaints have seen an even more significant rise of 87%. This notable increase in escalations to Stage 2 poses operational challenges and risks of exposure to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS).
- 5.2. The majority of Stage 1 complaints (55%) relate to the Repairs service, consistent with the previous year. The primary drivers for complaints in this area are repeated repairs and time taken to resolve, indicating dissatisfaction with multiple visits for the same issue. Other significant areas include Safer Neighbourhoods, with a higher increase in Stage 1 complaints related to handling reports of anti-social behaviour (ASB).
- 5.3. Of the Stage 1 complaints closed during 2024/25, 29% were fully upheld, 19% partly upheld, and 51% not upheld.

- 5.4. Analysis of the complainants' profiles compared to the previous year reveals several key insights. Female complainants consistently make up the majority, with a slight increase in Stage 2. The 35 to 44 age group has seen a significant rise in complaints, particularly at Stage 2, while the 75 to 84 age group has experienced a notable decrease. White British complainants dominate both stages, with a slight increase in Stage 2. The demographics of complainants during 2024/25 were in line with the overall customer base, indicating that the complaints process is accessible and reflective of the broader customer population.
- 5.5. There was an increase in complaints from individuals with known disabilities, especially at Stage 2. This is likely due to on-going exercise to obtain and record customer vulnerability data. Although further detailed analysis will be undertaken to fully understand the reasons for this increase.
- 5.6. The repairs and maintenance service remains a significant focus due to its high volume of complaints. Significant efforts continue to be made to improve the "right first time" approach to reduce repeated repairs and associated dissatisfaction. There is also continued focus on improving complaint handling at Stage 1 to reduce escalations to Stage 2. Training and process improvements are being implemented to address specific issues.

6. LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENTS

- 6.1. Several operational improvements have been implemented during the year as a direct response to formal complaints and have included:
- Enhancing the communication process for lift breakdowns to residents in medium-rise blocks.
 - Conducting a toolbox talk by the Greenspace contractor to ensure operatives understand SHG's code of conduct and expectations.
 - Providing additional training to repairs Service Managers to ensure detailed Capital Investment and Assets referrals, preventing delays in complex repairs.
 - Creating a leaflet for neighbours of properties where scaffolding is being erected to explain the process.
 - Improving procedures after the removal of electric fires.
 - The One Number Team now contacts customers who e-mail repair requests to confirm appointment details.
 - Introducing a form to inquire about any reasonable adjustments when customers first contact the Customer Feedback Team.

- Eliminating the need for customers to visit Cornerstone to re-programme fobs when there is a fault, and establishing a fail-safe emergency process to ensure residents can access their homes overnight.
- Enhancing letters detailing Homechoice applicants' medical points assessment for greater clarity and transparency regarding evidence assessment against the Allocations Policy.
- Providing clearer guidance to Shared Owners on making insurance claims when reporting repair issues for their buildings.

6.2. The Repairs Service Review carried out in early 2024/25 identified several key areas for improvement in SHG's performance around the Repairs service. The review highlighted that repeated repairs and the time taken to resolve issues were the most common drivers of complaints. To address this, SHG is focusing on a 'right first time' approach to minimise repeated visits and improve resolution times. Additionally, actions have been put into place to reduce the volume of overdue repairs and ensure non-urgent repairs are completed within set timescales. Service Excellence training delivered to repair operatives and the introduction of a 'doorstep' guide aimed to set clear expectations and improve the chances of completing repairs successfully on the first visit.

6.3. These actions are expected to lead to a reduction in the proportion of complaints about the Repairs service and to improve TSM perception survey responses related to this service during 2025/26.

6.4. Overall satisfaction with the repairs service, based on transactional surveys sent upon job completion, has improved over the last 12 months. Among the top five comments in responses, three are positive, with the words "polite," "professional," and "respectful" frequently mentioned. This indicates a positive trend in customer perceptions of the repairs service.

6.5. Customer Service Excellence is a national quality mark designed to recognise organisations that have a customer-focused culture and promote continuous improvement. Certification to the Customer Service Excellence Standard is achieved through a rigorous assessment process, which includes a review of documents submitted to an impartial assessor and an on-site visit to establish whether an organisation meets the requirements of the scheme. SHG has held the Customer Service Excellence accreditation since 2009. The annual on-site assessment carried out in December 2024 found the following:

"It was clear throughout the assessment process that the organisation continues to meet the requirements of the standard and the recommendation is therefore that accreditation be granted. In addition to meeting all the requirements of the CSE standard, there were also a number of areas where evidence shows that they are going above and beyond what could be expected and, as a result, 14 elements have been scored as 'compliance plus'. This is more compliance plus scores than Stockport Homes have achieved in previous assessments".

- 6.6. The assessor noted several strengths in SHG's customer service approach, including a strong cultural commitment to excellence, motivated and enthusiastic staff, positive customer feedback and an organisation that listens to residents and takes appropriate action. Some areas for development were also suggested by the assessor which included formalising a culture of ethical decision-making, learning from successes as well as failures, using numerical scoring for more detailed feedback, and emphasising the concept of internal customers.
- 6.7. A new Customer Complaints Advisory Panel was formed during 2024/25 and is now meeting on a quarterly basis to review complaints received from customers and the response provided by SHG. The panel aims to offer customer-driven insights and feedback to enhance SHG's complaint handling processes.
- 6.8. The Continuous Improvement Group (CIG) will utilise HOS spotlight reports and insights from formal complaints to drive and monitor service improvements and changes to processes and policies where appropriate. The upcoming HOS spotlight report on repairs will be thoroughly reviewed and integrated into our improvement strategies through the CIG.
- 6.9. Efforts will be made to ensure that all compliments are systematically shared with and recorded by the Feedback Team, rather than being retained solely within service areas. This will provide a comprehensive view of positive customer feedback, help identify areas of excellence, and facilitate the sharing of lessons learned from positive feedback.
- 6.10. In the first quarter of 2025/26, SHG is collaborating with Wordnerds, specialists in customer feedback data analysis, to test a new way of analysing customer feedback using advanced text analytics. This project will look at feedback from various surveys conducted over the past year to better understand customer feelings, find the main causes of issues, and improve our ability to predict future problems. By combining feedback from different sources in real-time, we aim to enhance our service delivery and overall customer satisfaction through a more data-driven and responsive approach.

7. CHALLENGES AND RISK

- 7.1. Managing the operational challenges of increasing caseloads and stretched capacity is crucial. Adequate resourcing of the Feedback Team and operational efficiency is essential to uphold service quality and meet performance standards in accordance with the HOS Complaint Handling Code timescales.
- 7.2. Continuing to address the high proportion of complaints related to repairs and maintenance is an on-going priority. Monitoring the impact of the Repairs Service Review actions and continuing to improve satisfaction with this service is crucial to improving the customer experience and perception of the organisation.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1. As observed across the sector, the volume of formal complaints handled by the organisation increased compared to the previous year. This applied to both Stage 1 and Stage 2 cases, with the number of escalations to Stage 2 posing an operational challenge and risk of exposure to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS). This indicates the need for SHG to continue improving complaint handling at Stage 1. The establishment of the Complaints Advisory Panel in 2024/25 shows commitment to this, but focus should remain on ensuring processes and resources are optimal for meeting ongoing and future challenges around complaints.
- 8.2. Complaints related to property repair and maintenance were the predominant issue driving caseloads and were also an outlier in terms of the proportion of complaints where service failure was identified. The drivers of these complaints align with the findings of the Repairs Service Review, and it is expected that the implementation of its recommendations will continue to positively impact customer experience and reduce complaints and service requests.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 9.1. That the Customer Focus Committee and comments on the contents of this report.