

# Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2025/26

**2025/26**



Co-operative and Community  
Benefit Society No. 30348R

Regulator of Social Housing  
No. L4507

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## 1. Our Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment

- 1.1 Our self-assessment outlines our full compliance with Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code. This is available on our website at [Make a Complaint | Southway Housing](#).

## 2. A Review of Our Complaint Handling Performance

### Volume of Complaints

#### All complaints

|         | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | Percentage change |
|---------|---------|---------|-------------------|
| Stage 1 | 419     | 545     | 30%               |
| Stage 2 | 83      | 141     | 70%               |

**Social and Affordable Tenures Only**

|         | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | Percentage change |
|---------|---------|---------|-------------------|
| Stage 1 | 364     | 516     | 42%               |
| Stage 2 | 59      | 131     | 122%              |

**Home Ownership Only**

|         | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | Percentage change |
|---------|---------|---------|-------------------|
| Stage 1 | 55      | 31      | -44%              |
| Stage 2 | 24      | 10      | -58%              |

- 2.1 In the 2025/26 period, there has been an increase in both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints, which shows that customers are now more familiar with our complaints process.
- 2.2 Over the past year, we have focused on raising awareness by promoting our Complaint Handling Policy through our website, Southway Stories (our tenant magazine), and by improving our team's understanding and knowledge of the complaints process.
- 2.3 The growth in Stage 2 investigations is significant, mirroring wider industry patterns identified by the Ombudsman. Our analysis confirms that Southway's Stage 2 complaints are primarily driven by two factors: delays in fulfilling actions agreed in our Stage 1 response and insufficient Stage 1 investigations. Improvements in these two areas are a priority for 2026/27.

2.4 From April 2026, we are piloting a new position: Senior Customer Experience Officer (Repairs). This role will oversee Stage 2 investigations specifically for complaints related to repairs. Through this initiative, we aim to pinpoint additional ways to improve our processes and reduce the likelihood of customers needing to escalate their concerns to Stage 2. This will include introducing a commitment tracker and one to one coaching with Stage 1 investigating managers.

### Complaints Responded to On Time

|         | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | Change       |
|---------|---------|---------|--------------|
| Stage 1 | 83%     | 99%     | 16% Increase |
| Stage 2 | 92%     | 100%    | 8% Increase  |

2.5 We are pleased to report a marked improvement in our response times to complaints, ensuring compliance with the Ombudsman’s Code. This progress reflects our ongoing commitment, supported by increased investment in the Customer Experience team and the implementation of better systems for monitoring complaint performance.

### Upheld Complaints

2.6 An upheld complaint is one where following investigation, Southway agrees that the customer’s complaint is valid, either in full or in part, because something went wrong in how a service was provided, a decision was made, or a policy or procedure was applied.

2.7 We frequently assess complaints that have been upheld to determine how well we are meeting our service standards. These standards define what customers should expect from services such as repairs, including the timeframes in which we promise to complete the necessary work.

|                               | <b>2024/25</b> | <b>2025/26</b> | <b>Change</b> |
|-------------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Stage 1 Upheld or Part Upheld | 80%            | 85%            | 5% Increase   |
| Stage 2 Upheld or Part Upheld | 93%            | 87%            | 6% Decrease   |

2.8 We have seen an increase in the overall proportion of complaints that are upheld or partially upheld, driven primarily by decisions made at Stage 1. At the same time, there has been an increase in the proportion of Stage 2 complaints that are not upheld. This suggests some improvement in the quality, accuracy, and robustness of Stage 1 investigations and responses. Improving this is a key measure for assessing the quality of our complaints service, and this will be a focus in 2026/27.

### **Causes of Complaints**

2.9 At Southway, we record the reason for each complaint to help us understand what is driving customers' concerns. We can see that delays and poor communication remained the most significant cause for new complaints in 2025/26:

| <b>Complaint Reason</b>   | <b>2024/2025</b> | <b>2025/2026</b> | <b>Change</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Damage / Workmanship      | 16%              | 15%              | 1% Decrease   |
| Delays / Communication    | 60%              | 52%              | 8% Decrease   |
| Policy / Decision Made    | 7%               | 13%              | 6% Increase   |
| Staff Conduct / Behaviour | 10%              | 6%               | 4% Decrease   |
| Damp and Mould            | 4%               | 4%               | No Change     |
| Other                     | 4%               | 11%              | 7% Increase   |

2.10 We're able to review complaint volume by service area, which helps us to understand which services generate complaints:

| <b>Service Area</b>                  | <b>Stage 1</b> | <b>Stage 2</b> | <b>Share of All Complaints</b> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Compliance, Health & Safety          | 13             | 0              | 2%                             |
| Housing Management                   | 32             | 7              | 6%                             |
| Income                               | 23             | 2              | 4%                             |
| Assets                               | 97             | 26             | 18%                            |
| Property Services                    | 293            | 73             | 53%                            |
| Customer Hub                         | 32             | 7              | 6%                             |
| Southway Homes                       | 28             | 11             | 6%                             |
| Age Friendly                         | 8              | 0              | 1%                             |
| Communities and Customer Involvement | 4              | 2              | 1%                             |
| Development                          | 1              | 1              | 0%                             |
| Environment                          | 9              | 0              | 1%                             |
| Advice Services                      | 1              | 0              | 0%                             |
| Other                                | 4              | 12*            | 2%                             |

- 2.11 This figure includes Stage 2 complaints where the classification was amended in order to more accurately reflect customers’ concerns as identified during the Stage 2 review process.
- 2.12 Complaint data categorised by service area indicates that in 2025/26, 53% of all complaints pertained to repairs. This outcome aligns with our benchmarking with other housing providers and underscores the priority customers assign to home maintenance and upkeep.
- 2.13 To address this, we implemented targeted improvements during 2025/26, including routine quality checks on 10% of all completed repairs, as well as 100% inspections of repairs related to complaints. These measures have enhanced our ability to identify and resolve issues promptly, leading to a noticeable uplift in customer satisfaction, as evidenced by our Tenant Satisfaction Measure performance.
- 2.14 However, we do also recognise the shortcomings of our current complaint categories, which prevent root cause analysis and detailed thematic review. To address this, we are introducing new, clearer complaint categories that better reflect our current services. This will allow us to clearly monitor areas of failure and implement changes and improvements more effectively.

**Customer Satisfaction**

|   | <b>2024/25</b> | <b>2025/26</b> | <b>Change</b> |
|---|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| TP09 - How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Southway’s approach to complaints handling? | 32%            | 45%            | + 13%         |

- 2.15 The Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey is a survey used by social housing landlords to gather tenants’ views on how well homes and services are being provided. It asks tenants about key areas such as repairs and maintenance, safety, communication, complaint handling, neighbourhood management, and overall satisfaction. The results are used to measure performance, identify areas for improvement, and reported to the Regulator of Social Housing.
- 2.16 One of the TSM questions- TP09- asks Southway’s tenants how satisfied they are with our complaints service. We are delighted to report a marked increase in customer satisfaction with our complaints handling during

2025/26. With this improvement, our ranking is now in the top 25% of landlords nationwide based on the 2024/25 benchmark.

- 2.17 Feedback from customers indicates that our swift resolution of concerns, consistent communication throughout the complaints process, and equitable approach to outcomes and remedies have driven these positive results.

### **Rejected Complaints**

- 2.18 In 2025/26, we rejected 20 customer complaints on the following grounds:

- 9 were rejected as they pertained to matters already investigated and resolved.
- 6 were instances where complaint requests were made but they were routine service requests.
- 2 were additional concerns raised during an ongoing Stage 1 investigation that were then included in the scope of the active investigation.
- 2 were rejected as they were made by people who were not Southway leaseholders or tenants.
- 1 was rejected as it was a historic issue that the customer had not previously made us aware of.

- 2.19 In all instances, customers were signposted to the Housing Ombudsman Service for support.

### 3. Our Housing Ombudsman Performance

#### Ombudsman Determinations

|                          | 2024/25 | 2025/26 |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|
| Determinations received  | 12      | 9       |
| Total Findings           | 28      | 27      |
| No Maladministration     | 2       | 3       |
| Reasonable Redress       | 1       | 5       |
| Service Failure          | 9       | 5       |
| Maladministration        | 16      | 12      |
| Severe Maladministration | 0       | 2       |
| Maladministration rate   | 89%     | 70%     |

3.1 The Ombudsman can investigate how Southway has managed a complaint. As a result, the Ombudsman publishes determinations, which can be made up of multiple findings which can include:

- No maladministration- The complaint is not upheld, and the landlord is found to have acted in line with service standards throughout.
- Reasonable redress- The Ombudsman identifies service failure, but notes the landlord has addressed the issue appropriately, usually offering redress
- Service failure- There is service failure, with some impact on the customer.
- Maladministration- There is significant maladministration, which has impacted the customer.

- Severe maladministration -There has been a significant failure which has severely impacted the customer.

- 3.2 The Ombudsman evaluates how well landlords manage complaints. Performance is measured by comparing cases with positive outcomes against those with negative outcomes. This allows the Ombudsman to report an annual maladministration rate for each landlord. A lower maladministration rate means complaints have been well managed. Southway benchmark against the sector average as this is the KPI used by the Ombudsman.
- 3.3 In 2025/26, we received fewer determinations and findings compared with the previous year, with 16 cases currently under investigation. During this period, we received two findings of severe maladministration relating to a single determination concerning repairs and the management of damp and mould in 2023 and 2024. This case has been reported to our Board, with oversight provided to ensure completion of related orders.
- 3.4 We are pleased to report a reduction in our overall maladministration rate, now standing at 70% based on our analysis and recognising that the Ombudsman will confirm each landlords' maladministration rate in due course. This represents a significant improvement on our 2024/25 performance and places us below the sector average of 72% reported by the Ombudsman for Quarter 2 of 2025/26, reflecting meaningful progress.
- 3.5 In December 2024, we established a dedicated Customer Experience team to oversee complaint management. The positive impact of this investment can be seen in the increased number of cases reporting no maladministration or reasonable redress, demonstrating improvements in our approach to handling complaints. Sustaining and furthering these improvements remains a key priority for the year ahead.

### **Findings of Non-Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code**

- 3.6 Southway was issued one Complaint Handling Failure Order (CHFO) by the Housing Ombudsman in 2025/26. The CHFO was received due to our failure to provide timely confirmation that two orders arising from a previous determination had been completed.
- 3.7 In response, we have fully complied with the CHFO and implemented a new tracking system for all determination actions, alongside weekly progress

reviews led by senior managers. These measures are designed to ensure prompt and effective compliance in future.

### **Annual Report about the Landlord's Performance from the Ombudsman**

- 3.8 The Ombudsman has yet to publish their 2025/26 landlord performance report for Southway. We will share this as soon as it's available by updating this report. You can read our 2024/25 report [here](#).

### **Any other Relevant Reports or Publications Produced by the Ombudsman in Relation to the Work of the Landlord**

- 3.9 The Ombudsman hasn't published any additional reports or publications around our performance.

## **4. Learning from Complaints**

- 4.1 Learning from complaints continues to be a core focus for Southway. In 2025/26, we identified 396 lessons arising from our complaints, with every upheld case serving as a catalyst for improvement.
- 4.2 By analysing recurring themes and prioritising actions, we have driven substantial and tangible enhancements across our services, ensuring our commitment to continuous improvement is embedded in our organisational culture.
- 4.3 In 2025/26, we have strengthened our approach to learning from complaints through the implementation of comprehensive Learning from Complaints Framework, overseen by our Head of Customer Access and Service Improvement.
- 4.4 This framework is designed to ensure that lessons identified through complaints are addressed strategically, with coordinated cross-team action to redesign services, policies, procedures and even to create new customer offers where broader improvement is required. This shift enables us to drive impactful change and embed continuous improvement across the organisation.
- 4.5 This approach has supported us to make coordinated improvements to critical services, undertaking cross team reviews in 2025/26. This includes:

## **Evaluation of a Complex Ombudsman Determination around Repairs and Damp and Mould Management**

- 4.6 Following a review by senior management, several service enhancements have been identified and are currently being implemented. Progress to date includes the launch of an updated Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Policy, which ensures we consider customers' personal circumstances when we're managing complex situations. Additionally, a new procedure will be introduced to facilitate effective use of single points of contact, in line with Ombudsman best practice, along with comprehensive guidance for colleagues regarding our approach to no access appointments, including legal processes.

## **Assessment of our Approach for Managing Heating-Related Service Charges for Tenants Utilising Communal Boilers or Heat Networks**

- 4.7 This review was prompted by 11 complaints in January 2026 regarding prior communications. We identified the need to clarify how we communicate service charges to tenants and increase internal awareness of our approach. In response, we've launched a service charge improvement plan and appointed a Project Officer to oversee customer communications and review our service charge processes.

## **Improving our Approach to Defects**

- 4.8 In December 2025, we evaluated our response to a shared owner's complaint about defect management and identified several improvements. Residents can now report jobs and track progress through Clixifix (an online platform which is simple to use and provides real time updates), and we've introduced a user-friendly guide. We've also established a single scheme-based point of contact for updates on communal issues.
- 4.9 We'll continue to monitor progress and target ourselves to undertake at least one strategic review each quarter, to ensure we're driving significant and meaningful learning from complaints service improvement across our services.

## **Listening to Customer Voice**

- 4.10 Listening to customers is also at the heart of our approach to learning from complaints. Over the last twelve months, we have refreshed our Complaints Service Influence Group (SIG), which meets on a quarterly basis to provide valuable feedback on our complaints approach.

- 4.11 At the March 2026 meeting, the Complaints SIG considered our methods for learning from complaints and provided constructive feedback to help shape our ongoing improvements.
- 4.12 Further details on lessons learned from complaints can be found in our Customer Insight reports, which provide comprehensive updates on our approach. You can find more about how we learn from complaints [here](#).

## **5. Our Governing Body's Statement on our Complaints Performance**

- 5.1 Katie McGrouther, Member Responsible for Complaints and Shefali Kapoor, Chair of the Customer Voice Committee have responded to our Annual Performance and Service Improvement Report on behalf of Southway Housing Trust's Board:

Improving our complaints performance was a central priority for the Board in 2025/26, with particular emphasis on delivering timely responses that meet the Housing Ombudsman Service's expectations and deadlines and resolve concerns more quickly for our customers.

We are pleased to report that our decision to strengthen resources within the Customer Experience team, responsible for managing complaints, has led to substantial improvements – with 99% of responses shared with residents on time this year. This investment, combined with a renewed, organisation-wide commitment to best practice, has resulted in notable progress across our complaints handling processes.

Our latest Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM TP09) results highlight this positive trajectory, with satisfaction with our complaints approach rising from 32% in 2024/25 to 45% in 2025/26. This places Southway among the highest performing landlords in Greater Manchester and nationally, and most importantly, reiterates the high value our team of colleagues place on resolving customer's concerns fairly.

Whilst we are pleased with the progress made in our complaints management, we understand there is still room for improvement to meet our customers' justifiably high expectations. Our priority moving forward is to resolve a greater proportion of Stage 1 complaints swiftly, thereby reducing the number of cases that need to be escalated to Stage 2. Additionally, we will enhance our systems and processes, which will support us in preventing any further issues with complaint handling.

We expect to receive confirmation of our annual maladministration rate from the Ombudsman by September 2026. Meanwhile, our internal review indicates that the maladministration rate - measuring maladministration findings against effective resolutions - has dropped to 70% from 89% in 2024/25, marking positive progress.

We also want to note how much we appreciate the valuable contributions of our customers in reviewing our Complaints Handling Policy, Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Policy, and Compensation Policies for 2025/26. These changes were made in collaboration with tenants, enabling us to enhance our procedures and achieve full compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, as confirmed by our recent self-assessment.

We want to emphasise that we remain committed to ensuring Southway learns from customers' complaints and the wider customer voice. For us, complaints provide essential insights that are invaluable for enhancing our services, and we review complaint performance at least quarterly to ensure we are making the most of every opportunity to improve. Progress in 2025/26 has been significant, highlighted by the introduction of the Complaint Learning Framework. We will also be able to undertake much more detailed root cause analysis of complaints from April 2026 onwards due to new complaint categories.

We remain unwavering in our commitment to ensuring that the lessons learned from complaints translate into genuine, positive changes for our tenants. Whether it's through investment in boundary improvements, expanding our team of housing officers, or launching our new solar panel netting programme- all set to commence in 2026- we are determined to make a real difference.

We deeply value the ongoing support and participation of our tenants, and we warmly invite you to continue engaging with us through our various groups and events. Together, we are shaping a stronger, more responsive Southway for the future.

## **6. More Information**

- 6.1 If you'd like more information about Southway's approach to complaints, please visit our website [here](#). You can also read quarterly updates on our approach to customer voice- including on how we're managing complaints- [here](#). If you're one of our tenants and would like to get involved in our

Complaints Service Influence Group, we'd love to hear from you and you can get in touch [here](#).