



Report Title	Customer Voice and Experience Annual Report 2024/25
Report of	Executive Director Homes and Communities
Report to	People and Places Committee
Date	20 May
Item Number	7
Action	For Discussion and Decision

Executive Summary

This is the second Customer Voice and Experience Report to be presented to the Committee. The report includes information relating to quarter 4 and the full year 2024/25.

The main priorities in the last quarter have been to finalise and launch the new Customer Voice Strategy – detailed at **Section 1** of the report, and to continue to improve complaint performance.

Positively 100% of complaints have now been responded to in target every month since November 2024. Complaints detail and improvement actions including EDI impacts are shown at **Section 2**.

The report also contains a breakdown of Customer Satisfaction and feedback and EDI impacts with actions being taken to address any issues at **Section 3**.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. **Discusses and comments** on the information in the report.
2. **Notes** that a draft revised Customer Compensation Policy will be presented to the November meeting of Committee for consideration and approval.

1. Customer Voice Strategy Update

- 1.1 The 2025-2028 Customer Voice Strategy was approved in principle by People and Places Committee at its 11 February 2025 meeting.
- 1.2 Final sign off was delegated to David Hampton who worked with the Customer Involvement Manager to incorporate the changes discussed at the Committee meeting.

- 1.3 The Strategy has been designed using the new branding and launched on the website and via social media. It is also featured in Southway Stories with the article detailing some of the opportunities to get involved and a request to customers to consider doing so.
- 1.4 A copy of the Strategy has been sent to all customers who commented on its production and other involved customers with an invitation to join a new Customer Voice Panel to oversee the delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan. To date nine customers have agreed to participate either by attending face to face meetings or via email.
- 1.5 An Action Plan has been developed and sent to the nine customers for comment, and this will be reviewed quarterly by the Customer Voice Panel. An update will also be provided through this report to each Committee meeting.
- 1.6 Copies of the Strategy have been left in community centres and doctors surgeries/health centres across the Southway area.
- 1.7 Q1 customer involvement activity includes:
- Launch of the new Customer Voice Strategy on the website and social media.

- Door knocking, telephone calls and attendance at Cosy Mondays to gather general feedback, promote the new Strategy and encourage participation.
- Presentation of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) Action Plan to the Tenant Scrutiny Panel. The Panel will be overseeing the delivery of the Action Plan and reviewing quarterly results of the TSMs.
- A mock interview held with the Tenant Scrutiny Panel by consultants.
- Observation of a Scrutiny meeting and an interview by the Regulator.
- Meetings of the Repairs (21.05), Anti-Social Behaviour (04.05) and Complaints (12.06) Service Improvement Groups (SIGs).
- The forming of two new SIGS; Assets and Customer Access. First meetings to be held in quarter 2.

1.8 The Strategy states that its successful delivery will be achieved by meeting the targets set within it. By 2028:

Target	End of 2024/25 Position
At least 75% of customers will say that we listen to their views and act upon them	60%
At least 75% of customers will say that we keep them	71%

informed about things that matter to them	
At least 85% of customers will say that we treat them fairly and with respect	76%
At least 70% of customers will be satisfied with our approach to handling complaints	32%
At least 100 customers will have directly influenced services, policies and decision making	46

2. Complaints Performance

2.1 There has been significantly improved complaints performance since the introduction of the dedicated Customer Experience Team, as shown in the table below:

Quarter	Number of Stage 1	% Completed in time	Number of Stage 2	% Completed in time
Q1 24/25	92	66%	11	91%
Q2 24/25	96	67%	23	78%
Q3 24/25	93	84%	19	100%
Q4 24/25	144	100%	29	100%
Total	425	83%	82	92%

2.2 As can be seen in the table complaint volumes are continuing to rise at an unprecedented rate. In 2024/25 Stage 1 complaints increased by 204% and Stage 2s by

134% from the previous year. This trend has not reduced in Q1 to date.

- 2.3 Anecdotally other providers have advised they are experiencing the same increase, and we are now benchmarking with other providers.
- 2.4 In terms of the TSM results on complaints performance we have benchmarked with GMHP and have moved from fourth quartile to third Quartile on Stage 1 complaints performance and from fourth Quartile to second Quartile on Stage 2s.
- 2.5 Whilst there has been a significant increase in complaint volumes, the percentage of complaints escalating to Stage 2 reduced by 5.1% indicating an improvement in the quality of Stage 1 complaint handling.
- 2.6 The most common cause cited for complaints is Delays and Communication. This accounted for 250 (60%) of Stage 1 complaints and 48 (58%) Stage 2 complaints.
- 2.7 As the highest volume transactional area Property Services received the largest proportion of complaints in this category at both Stage 1 (192 – 46%) and Stage 2 (28 – 34%). We have a designated Customer Experience Specialist who meets weekly with the Repairs Management Team and the team routinely do joint visits with Repairs Managers to customers' homes on more complex issues.

2.8 From 1st June identification of Lessons Learned is mandatory on all part or fully upheld complaints in this area.

Improvement Actions

2.9 The team has implemented several improvements since the last report:

- A case-management approach where Customer Experience Specialists personally manage several live complaints whilst also providing support and quality-checking for all Stage 1 responses. The aim is to achieve a consistent and quality standard of response.
- Utilising the 5 working day triage period in line with the Complaints Handling Policy to identify requests that do not meet the criteria to be dealt with as formal complaints (such as service requests). This should reduce the number of contacts that become complaints and enable us to deal with service requests more quickly.
- Implementing a “Fast Fix” process where some complaints are dealt with very quickly during the 5-day triage period. An example would be a failed appointment where we can apologise and offer a

resolution. These are still logged as Stage 1 complaints, so data and lessons learned are captured.

- 2.10 During Q4 we also started capturing lessons learned from complaints in the system (we have always acknowledged these in complaint responses but now have a more formal process). We logged 70 lessons learned at the end of Q4, 49 were from Stage 1 and 21 from Stage 2.
- 2.11 59% of lessons learned were around communication which aligns with complaint themes, the second highest was staff behaviour which accounted for 11% of the lessons learned.
- 2.12 A monthly exercise is now being put in place to ensure we are actioning the learnings to reduce repeat complaints and details of how this is working will be included in the July report to Committee.

EDI Impacts

- 2.13 At the last meeting, an issue was identified where one non white group represented 3.3% of the population but made 10% of all complaints. Officers have reviewed the cases and found there to be no common themes or trends. The next stage is to complete a survey of the complainants to see if we can draw any other intelligence and ensure we mitigate any findings.

2.14 The EDI dashboard is attached at **Appendix A**. We have identified 3 areas that we are looking in to in more detail to understand if we need to do any work with these customer groupings and findings and mitigations reported to the Committee. These are:

- 380 (79%) complaints in 2024/25 were made by women, 123 (21%) made by men. Women account for 70% of tenants, and men 30%.
- 75 (16.3%) of complaints were made by customers in the 25-34 age group whereas they only accounted for 8% of the customer base.
- 113 (31%) of complaints were made by customers with no religion whereas they only accounted for (21%) of the customer base.

Housing Ombudsman Service Update

2.15 There were 12 determinations made by the Ombudsman in 2024/25 as shown in the table below (there may be multiple findings within each complaint review):

Determinations Made 01/04/2024 - 31/03/2025	
12	
2	No Maladministration
1	Complaint Handling Failure Order

8	Service Failure
13	Maladministration
3	No Jurisdiction
1	Reasonable Redress
1	Severe Maladministration (Appealed)

2.16 5 of the 12 determinations relate to 2 tenancies and 1 is a shared ownership customer. We have appealed the outcome of one case in which we were given Severe Maladministration. Much of the severe fining relates to cases from 2014 and 2018 which we feel we satisfactorily dealt with at the time that they were raised.

2.17 The cases that go to the Ombudsman generally cover more than one issue or service area, but the top 3 areas were ASB (3), Pests (2) and Damp and Mould (2).

2.18 Since November 2024, officers have completed all required actions from the Ombudsman to timescales. Prior to this we had an issue with the webform and a complaint handling failure order, which had prevented full compliance with timescales - we have since implemented a detailed tracker to monitor cases and ensure actions have been completed.

2.19 We are currently awaiting a determination on a further seven cases that are with the Ombudsman, the oldest of these is from July 2024 and the most recent from February 2025.

Priorities for Q2 2025/26

2.20 The main priorities are:

- Maintaining 100% performance on complaints.
- Ensuring lessons learned are translated to actions that are taken to reduce repeat complaints.
- Measuring the quality of complaint responses, using satisfaction data, and continuing to target a reduction in the escalation of complaints to Stage 2 from 20% to 15% by end of 2025/26.
- Work with Communications on an internal campaign that reframes complaints as opportunities to learn, rebuild trust and improve. We are in the process of procuring Complaints Handling Training which we will link to our values for colleagues dealing with complaints.

2.21 We also have plans to increase accessibility to complaints management and in Q3 we will start monthly drop-in trials at Westcroft Community Centre.

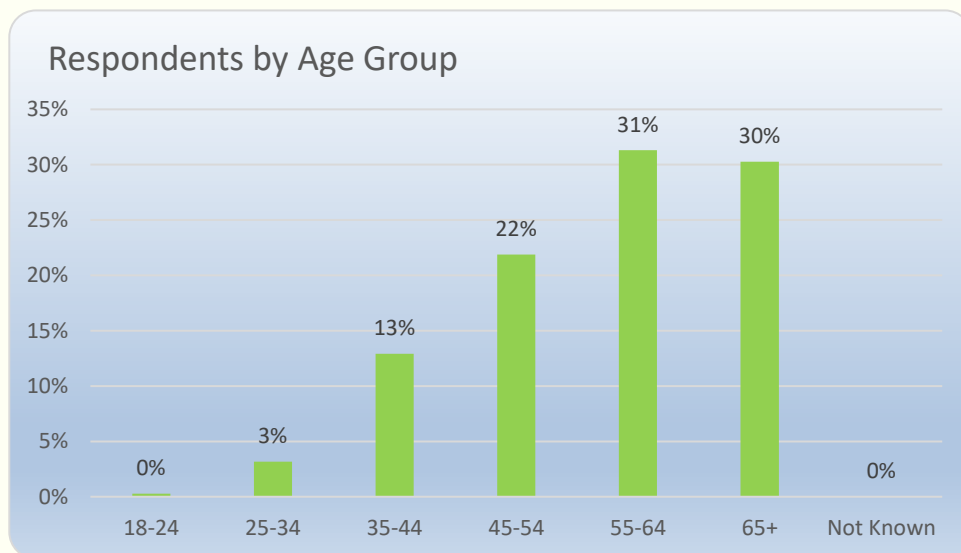
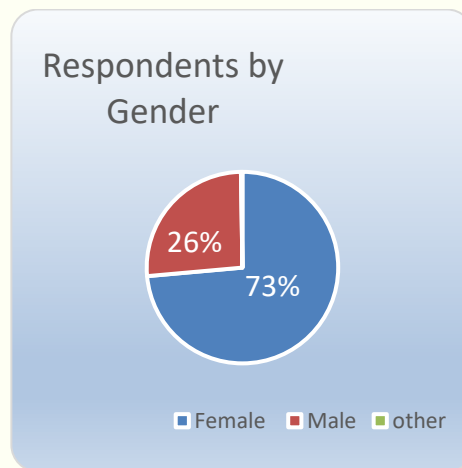
MP & Councillor Enquiries

2.22 We average circa 55 of these enquiries per quarter. There is now a dedicated officer managing all activity from elected members. We are launching a new performance

management system on 1st June to ensure Members receive a consistent and high-quality service.

3. Customer Feedback and Satisfaction

- 3.1 Transactional customer feedback surveys are automatically sent out (via text message) following any contact with a tenant using a 1–5-star rating.
- 3.2 During 2024/25 a total of 7097 surveys were completed by customers.
- 3.3 Most tenants completing surveys (73%) are female and most respondents (83%) are over the age of 45. This is consistent with previous years.



3.4 The year end satisfaction score across the organisation for 2024/25 was 91%. This is the same result as the previous year. The table below shows that there have been some areas of significant variance.

3.5 However, in some cases the number of surveys completed was extremely low meaning that the results are not statistically relevant:

Service Area	23/24	24/25	% CHANGE	# surveys completed
Adaptations	98%	98%	-	73
Advice Service	92%	93%	+1%	8
Age Friendly Housing Management	98%	96%	-2%	94
Age Friendly Repairs	95%	98%	+ 3%	58
ASB	68%	47%	-21%	3
Asset Services	90%	60%	-30%	4
Complaints - Handled	48%	58%	+10%	25
Complaints - Outcome	43%	53%	+10%	25
Customer Experience	n/a	100%	NEW	3
Customer Hub	89%	87%	-2%	1816
Damp and Mould	80%	90%	+10%	27
Housing Management	85%	87%	+2%	115
Income	88%	93%	+5%	482
Planned Cyclical Works	n/a	100%	NEW	1
Repairs	93%	93%	-	4333
Tenancy Sign Up	81%	96%	+15%	54
Tenancy Support	100%	100%	-	1
AVERAGE	91%	91%	no change	7122

- On ASB 24 other surveys were received see **Item 10**.
- Positive performance of 93% was achieved for Property Services.
- The Income Team, despite working with people in rent arrears has received 93% satisfaction.
- On Damp and Mould: the 90% satisfaction rate reflects the improvements made to the service in the year.

3.6 Areas where improvements are needed are Complaints Satisfaction – see Section 2 and Housing Management and the Customer Hub.

- 3.7 Both Housing Services and the Customer Hub achieved 87% satisfaction in the year. This was a 2% improvement for housing and a 2% reduction for the Hub.
- 3.8 Housing Services received 115 surveys of which 100 were good or excellent. Half of the negative surveys were repair related rather than service related. Each negative survey result is discussed in one to ones and training provided if needed (more information on work to upskill officers is at **item 10**).
- 3.9 On the Customer Hub 1560 of the 1861 surveys were responded to as good or excellent. Negative trends around the remaining 300 linked to several factors. During Q1&2 there was dissatisfaction at call waiting times and as performance improved in Q3/Q4 this satisfaction improved. Communication around outstanding repairs remain an issue and as with housing management any HUB specific matters are picked up through training and one to ones.
- 3.10 On Assets the number of surveys were so low they are not statistically representative.
- 3.11 More information on ASB is detailed at **item 10**.

Comments & Themes

- 3.12 Positive and negative feedback is routinely shared and discussed at team meetings and one to ones. We have

audited our teams this quarter to ensure that this is happening.

- 3.13 Poor feedback is often linked to the need for better communication. In terms of improving this, we continue to measure performance around our response times to requests for call backs and avoidable contacts. During Q2 a review of call backs and contacts will be carried out working with the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.
- 3.14 Wider work is being carried with customer facing teams aimed at both improving and bringing consistency to our communication with Customers. Specifically:
- Tone of Voice guidelines were produced by the Communications Team and training is now being rolled out to all teams.
 - Letter templates **will be** revised to ensure that the language and tone is consistent and aligns with our values.
- 3.15 Satisfaction feedback is routinely analysed against customer profiles using the protected characteristics held against tenancies.
- 3.16 This exercise is carried out quarterly and highlights any areas where a particular customer group may be either more or less satisfied with services.

- 3.17 The dashboard for the full year 2024/25 is attached at **Appendix A**. Key information to note is:
- Younger tenants (25-34 and 35-44) are less likely to be satisfied than older tenants with older tenants with the +64-age group significantly more satisfied.
- 3.18 Certain non-white and religious groups are also statistically less satisfied than others.
- 3.19 In 2024/25 Southway procured the services of a company called Word Nerds that use sophisticated AI sentiment analysis. This should provide us with far better insight in terms of understanding the precise reasons behind both satisfaction and dissatisfaction.
- 3.20 From the end of Q1 we will be able to include analysis in this report. Bite sized articles will be regularly posted for discussion and comment on both our website and staff intranet.
- 3.21 The Word Nerds analysis will also allow us to analyse the comments attached to these specific surveys to gain a better understanding into any impacts from an EDI perspective.

4. Reasonable Adjustments and EDI 2024/25

4.1 During Q4 we have carried out a review of data we hold and of the way in which we use this data.

4.2 This has included looking at EDI and at reasonable adjustments/tailoring services based on the circumstances of individual customers.

4.3 Examples of the areas where we may make reasonable adjustments are:

- Prioritising certain repairs – e.g. we do this for older customers and people with specific health conditions for no heat/hot water.
- Communicating differently- e.g. using translation serviced where English is not the occupants first language.
- Offering a female officer or operative.
- Giving someone time to answer the door or the phone if we know they have mobility issues or are hard of hearing.

4.4 The Head of Housing Management and Support has been going to Team Meetings for the last few months to deliver a presentation on how to record and use individual's circumstances and how we use this data.

- 4.5 In addition, the BI Team is looking at where there are gaps in data and information. Specifically, Sexuality and Religion are key areas where we have less data. Also, our knowledge of customers outside of main and joint tenants i.e. children is limited.
- 4.6 We are currently developing a new tenant portal (part of our new website) and are exploring options around tenants submitting changes through the portal and using push reminders to get these updated.
- 4.7 Recent examples of using EDI data/individual circumstances are detailed below.
- 4.8 A higher proportion of customers who said they were disabled were disappointed with our services. A decision was made to appoint the services of an external specialist disability charity Breakthrough UK to help us better understand the barriers being faced by individuals/families.
- 4.9 The report highlighted some key themes which have now been pulled into an action plan and included the need for more accessible systems for tenants and accessible communication in multiple formats. Transactional survey results for 2024/25 now show no difference between disabled tenants and the general population profile.

4.10 A customer had been successful in getting agreement from MCC Adaptations/Southway to get an agreement for an extension at their 3-bed home. They have 3 children with special needs. However, they were told it would be another 18 months before the adaptation is completed.

Although in Band 2 priority rehousing, the customer had been there for 10 years and had fully explored House Exchange to see if a mutual exchange was available.

The adaptation was going to cost circa £100k and it transpired that family needed an additional bedroom rather than full adaptations. An exceptional move was provided to move to a larger home and her existing home was freed up for a family from homelessness. This also meant the house move was supported through removals etc from the MCC homelessness budget and £100k of costs were saved.

Impacts

Legal	Legal advice is sought from solicitors and our insurers to ensure we both remain compliant and make decisions that are fair and reasonable.
Financial/VFM	The amount of voluntary compensation awarded has increased over recent years. The budget for 2024/25 was £25k and £65k was spent. Much of this is due to the level of payments being awarded by the Housing Ombudsman Service and a significant increase in the number of complaints. We use the Ombudsman Remedies to help calculate compensation and have a clear financial value attached to certain service failures through the compensation policy. The policy will be reviewed during Q2 2025/26 and return to the Committee for approval at the November meeting.
Human Resources	An additional Customer Experience Officer has been recruited due to the volume of complaints received to ensure we remain compliant. This is for 12 months fixed term in the first instance. The three Community Feedback Officer posts at 13 hours per week was reduced to one Customer Feedback Officer at 21 hours per week as part of the budget setting process.

Governance	The Customer Experience Team has a positive working relationship with the Housing Ombudsman Service. Work is carried out in line with the statutory complaints handling code which is set by this service www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/. The Complaints Policy was reviewed in August 2024 and included a review of by the Housing Ombudsman to ensure it was compliant.
Equality and Diversity	Complaints and feedback are routinely analysed on a quarterly basis against our customer profile using our EDI dashboard. We have also started to map lessons learned linked to protected characteristics and we are trialling a data analytics organisation to identify and potentially predict trends and themes using transactional survey data.
Risk	Not meeting complaint handling targets and/or not providing a consistently good response that covers all points raised creates risks in terms of losing customer confidence in our services, directly impacting TSM results and potentially our Consumer Standards rating. There is also a risk if we do not learn lessons from mistakes made, increasing the likelihood of maladministration or complaint handling failure orders from the Housing Ombudsman Service.
Carbon Impacts	No specific impacts.

Customer Impacts	The way we handle customer complaints impacts all customers. We work with several involved tenants to review our approach, and the quality of responses provided.
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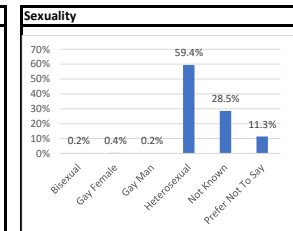
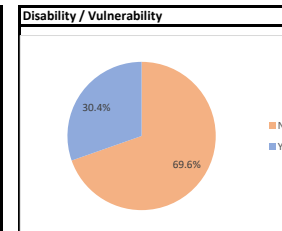
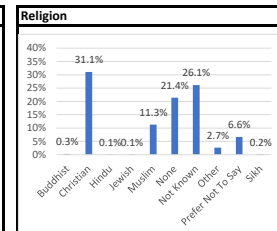
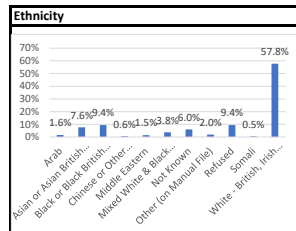
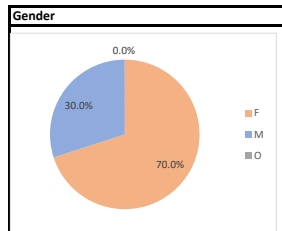
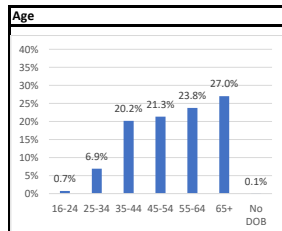
Officer Contact Details

Jane Gant

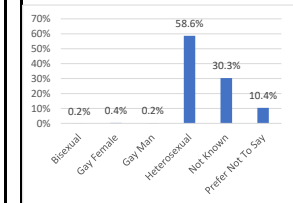
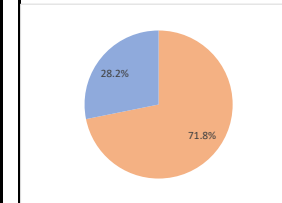
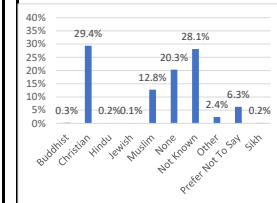
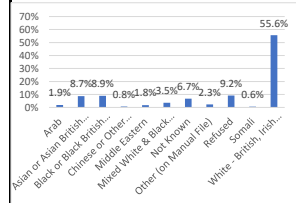
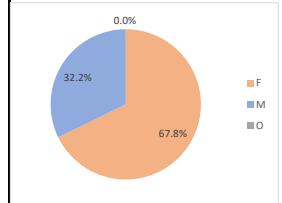
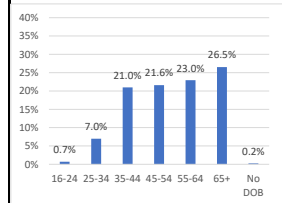
Executive Director of Landlord and Community Services

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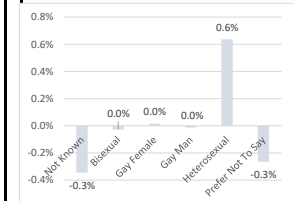
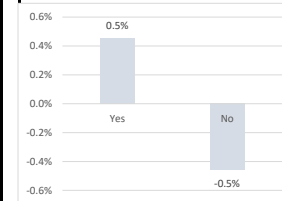
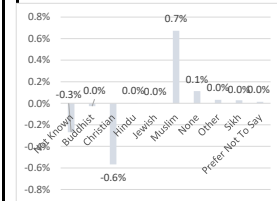
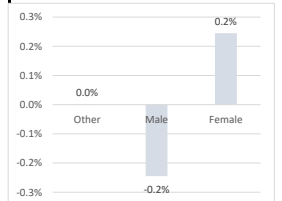
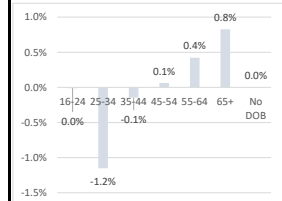
Social / Affordable / With Care Main Tenants



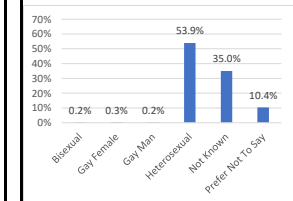
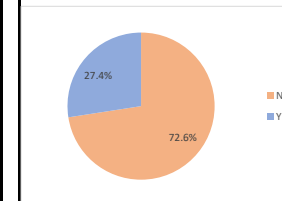
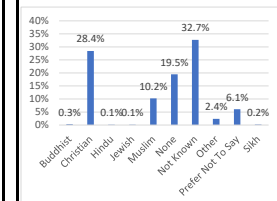
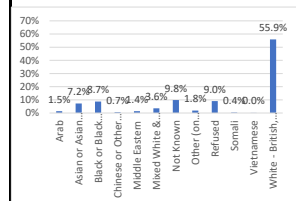
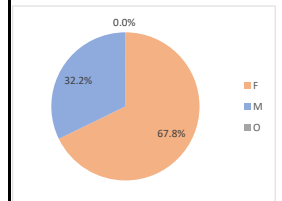
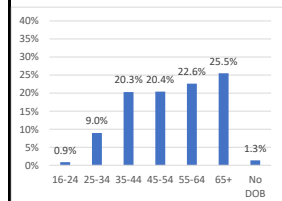
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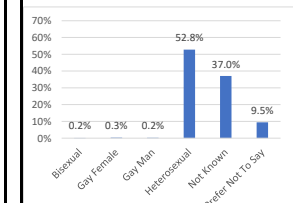
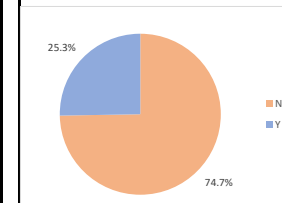
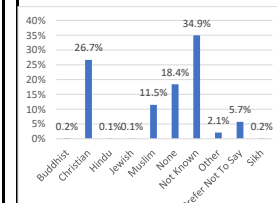
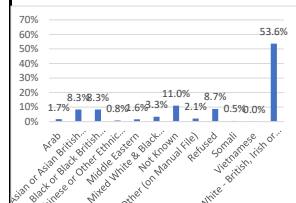
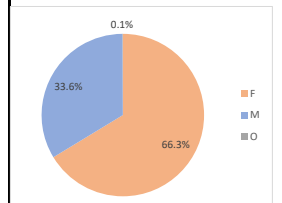
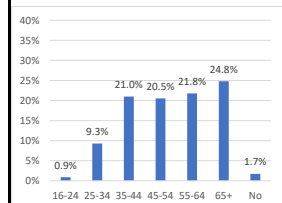
Social / Affordable / With Care Main and Joint Tenant 24/25 vs 23/24



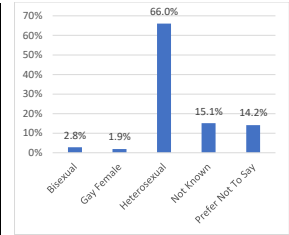
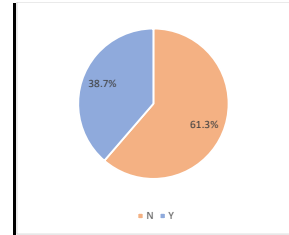
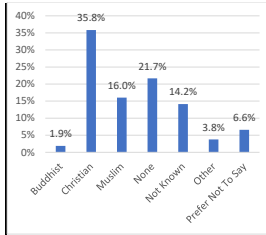
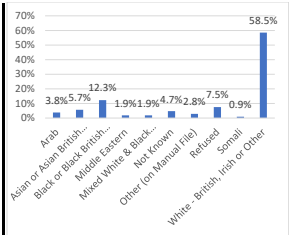
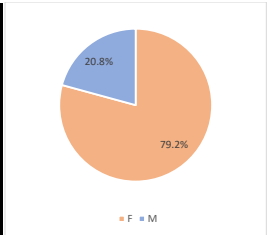
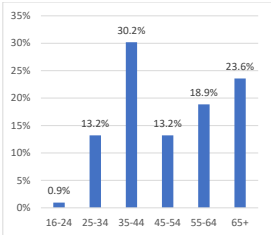
All Schemes Main Tenants



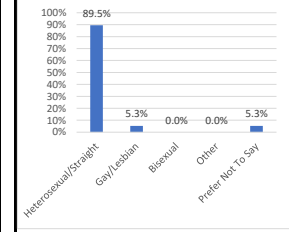
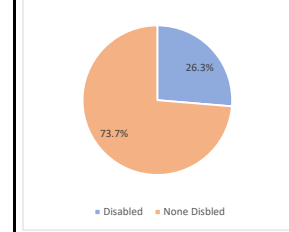
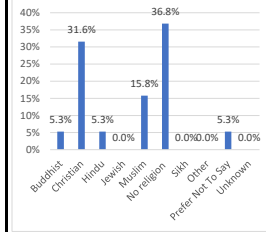
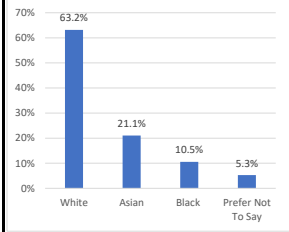
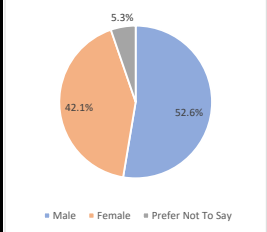
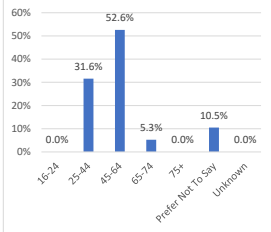
All Schemes Main and Joint Tenants



**Involved
Customers with
Active Tenancy
in 24/25**



Board



7.	Customer Voice and Experience Report	
7.1	Jane Gant presented the report.	
7.2	Cllr Azra Ali congratulated the Customer Experience Team and asked if there was targeted work planned for those who complain with disabilities, in line with the data reported. Jane Gant confirmed that the Team will continue to look at themes and trends using equality data, with the intention of meeting with customers from a learning perspective.	
7.3	David Hampton raised that a consistent theme in complaints was communication, and that extra training could resolve this. Jane Gant agreed, referencing ongoing compulsory customer care training for all staff and work from the Comms Team on Tone of Voice. She confirmed that Committee would receive a comprehensive update on lessons learnt at their next meeting.	Johnny Turner
7.4	David Hampton queried if the targets set in the Customer Voice strategy were ambitious enough. Paul Howes confirmed that these targets were a product of benchmarking exercises against upper-quartile results from other Registered Providers. Paul assured Committee that if targets were reached that they could be re-set, stressing a commitment to continuous improvement. The Chair and Jane Gant agreed that Committee and the Customer Voice Panel could inform this through challenge if necessary.	
7.5	Cllr Dave Rawson, referencing the EDI Dashboard, suggested that the percentage of complainants who were women was similar to the percentage of women in the overall tenant profile, so could be deemed as unsurprising. Jane Gant confirmed that the 9% differential would be investigated, and further analysis would be brought back to Committee. Both Cllr Dave Rawson and Jane Gant agreed that the EDI Dashboard needed to be formatted differently when presented to members.	Paul Howes
7.6	The Chair requested further detail on Word Nerds and said that AI can be biased as it doesn't always recognise protected characteristics. Ian Hardingham reinforced that Word Nerds was in pilot stage due to concerns regarding bias, non-bias and cyber-security. Paul Howes stressed that AI would not inform decisions for customers, and that there would always be human involvement in decision making. The Chair agreed with this, that AI was a useful tool for productivity, but that human interaction remained important, as did tone of voice. Referencing the AI Policy in place, Ian Hardingham confirmed that access to AI tools beyond CoPilot was restricted, and that colleagues with access to CoPilot had not used it with customers.	
7.7	The Committee: Discussed and commented on the information in the report. Noted that a draft revised Customer Compensation Policy will be presented to the November meeting of the Committee for	

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	consideration and approval.	
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