

COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

2024/25



FOREWORD



DAREN NOWLAN – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF TENANCY SERVICES

At Midland Heart, we don't view complaints simply as a sign of failure — we see them as a clear opportunity to learn and improve for our tenants. We want services that are reliable, responsive, and fair. When things go wrong, tenants deserve to be heard and to see things put right.

We've seen a rise in complaints this year which, whilst never something we want to see, is something we believe in part reflects some of the positive changes we've made. We've worked hard to make it easier for tenants to raise complaints and have given colleagues clearer processes for recognising and acting on issues. We believe this has helped build trust in our complaints service and has made it more accessible and consistent.

However, we know that ease of access isn't the whole story. With nearly 80% of complaints upheld, the message is clear: we need to improve the quality, consistency, and reliability of our services — especially when it comes to repairs and communication.

We've invested a lot of time and effort this year to improve how we handle complaints. Satisfaction with complaint handling rose from 32.4% in Q1 to 73.7% in Q4 and tenants have told us they feel more listened to and better informed. This tells us we're moving in the right direction, but we're not complacent.

We've refreshed our internal Complaints Directors Group, launched a tenant-led Complaints Learning Group and introduced stronger aftercare and more robust follow-through. But we know there's still more to do — and we're using every insight from complaints to help us do it.

Looking ahead, our goal is not just to comply with the Ombudsman's Code. We want to deliver a service that tenants trust, that responds quickly and fairly when things go wrong, and that drives the improvements they deserve.

Our direction is clear: we must resolve more complaints swiftly and effectively, reduce the occasions where our tenants feel the need to escalate to the Ombudsman, and provide a process that tenants trust. This report sets out our performance and learning for 2024/25, and our priorities to continue improving in 2025/26.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE COMPLAINT HANDLING CODE

The Complaint Handling Code, introduced in 2020 and made statutory in April 2024, sets out clear expectations for how landlords must approach complaint handling. The Code is centred on creating a positive complaint handling culture, rooted in fairness, accessibility, and accountability.

KEY AREAS OF THE CODE INCLUDE:

- A universal definition of a complaint
- Easy access to the complaints procedure and awareness of tenants’ rights
- A straightforward two-stage process with set timescales
- Fairness and transparency in handling complaints
- Focused action to put things right
- Learning and continuous improvement
- Annual self-assessment and publication of results

We’ve completed our full annual self-assessment and published the results. Our compliance is supported by internal audit and oversight from the Complaints Directors Group. Training, communication and system enhancements continue to be made to support adherence to the Code.

Despite improvements made in 2024/25, we’re working hard to continue to improve how we handle and learn from complaints. Towards the end of the report, we outline some of our plans for 2025/26 that will help us to achieve this.

OUR COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE

We think it’s vital that our self-assessment is completed not just by us, but by our tenants too. This isn’t a requirement of the code, but we feel this gives us an extra level of assurance that our complaint handling matches up with the expectations of our tenants as well as the Code. This year, during their review of our compliance with the code, tenants told us that they felt we complied with all elements of the code and were pleased to see improvements made to our policy to make our approach clearer to tenants.

Whilst it’s positive that tenants agree that we’re compliant with the code, there were four areas where we have agreed with tenants that we can improve further. Action have been agreed with tenants and will be monitored through to completion by our Complaints Learning Group.



SECTION	REQUIRED OUTCOMES	COMPLIANT
1. Definition of a complaint	5	100%
2. Exclusions	5	100%
3. Accessibility and awareness	7	100%
4. Complaint Handling Staff	3	100%
5. Complaint handling process	15	100%
6. Complaint stages	20	100%
7. Putting things right	4	100%
8. Self-assessment, reporting and compliance	5	100%
9. Scrutiny and oversight: continuous improvement and learning	7	100%
Total	72	100%

COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

In 2024/25, we received 1,833 Stage 1 complaints and 521 Stage 2 complaints — an increase on the previous year.

On one hand, we believe our work to develop a positive complaint handling culture encourages early recognition and recording of complaints, rather than deflection. On the other hand, we recognise that an increase in complaints about our core services — especially repairs — is telling us that there is more work for us to do in putting tenants’ experiences at the centre of how we design and deliver services.



METRIC	24/25	23/24
Stage 1 complaints received	1,833	1,140
Stage 2 complaints received	521	220
% complaints upheld	79.2%	81.35%
Ombudsman escalations	67	34
Stage 1 per 1000 homes	52	32
Stage 2 per 1000 homes	14	6
Stage 1 responded to in timescales	95.4%	95.2%
Stage 2 responded to in timescales	84%	96.5%
Maladministration Rate	49.4%	46%

LEARNING AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

We recognise the importance of learning from our complaints. This is especially important given the increase in complaints we received last year. Throughout the year we’ve looked to identify the key drivers of complaints and make improvements to our services.

IN 2024/25, OUR THREE AREAS OF FOCUS WERE:

- Repair Delays
- Communication
- Complaint Handling

A) TACKLING REPAIRS; DAMP AND MOULD

It’s clear where we need to make improvements to reduce the number of complaints we receive. Delays in completing repairs — particularly those involving damp and mould — continue to drive a significant proportion of complaints. These issues are often more complex and are more common in our older housing stock, with nearly half of our homes built before 1946. The main concerns raised have centred on the time taken to resolve complex issues, and on the quality of communication during the repair journey — especially when multiple visits or subcontractors are involved.

To help address this, in the last year, we’ve invested in our repairs team, creating a new team of 17 specialists focussed on complex repairs and strengthened the way we manage repairs through the introduction of a new repairs and maintenance management structure.



COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

We are only part way through our work to improve how we complete repairs to tenants’ homes. Looking ahead to the next 12 months, investment in a new IT system will help us to manage repairs better, alongside a clear focus on improving how we manage repairs completed by our contractors and partners. Our new five year Corporate Plan, Tenants at Heart, was created after listening to what was important to our tenants. It sets out a goal that by 2030 we want to deliver all responsive repairs within 14 days and invest £300 million in our existing homes.



IMPROVING COMMUNICATION

Last year, poor communication was a major cause of dissatisfaction. To address this, we rolled out local communication pilots and launched a dedicated Housing Advice Team to support tenants with complex tenancy issues. Improvements to our tenant app and proactive updates at key complaint stages have helped tenants stay better informed.

We also strengthened our approach to reviewing customer communication touchpoints, making sure that they were supporting a good tenant experience. Communication and culture are at the centre of our Tenants at Heart Corporate Plan, and our new mindset which we’ve launched alongside this.

B) STRENGTHENING COMPLAINT HANDLING

Recognising that we needed to improve, we’ve invested in our Complaints team increasing the number of people focussed on complaint handling. This has allowed us to have a renewed focus on after-care, reduce the time taken to resolve complaints and to communicate better during the process. We’re pleased that satisfaction with the ease of making a complaint increased significantly — from 52.6% in Q1 to 77.6% in Q4.

We’ve also refreshed our complaint handling toolkit and trained all relevant staff. As a result of this focus outcomes have improved, helping boost complaint satisfaction to 78% by the end of the year.

In the next 12-months we want to invest more resource into how we learn from complaints.



HOUSING OMBUDSMAN ENGAGEMENT

In 2024/25, there were 67 cases escalated to the Housing Ombudsman. Our maladministration rate was 49.4%, which is better than the sector average.

We continue to learn from Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Reports. We completed self-assessments against reports on Knowledge and Information Management and Service Charges, developing tenant-led action plans to address identified gaps.

We have introduced new toolkits for service charge management and strengthened our record-keeping, supporting greater transparency and tenant confidence.

There were 48 cases with the Ombudsman for determination at the end of the year.



TENANT INVOLVEMENT AND ASSURANCE

Tenant involvement has been critical to our improvement work. Our new Complaints Learning Group, meeting quarterly, has helped shape new processes, inform action plans, and ensure improvements are tenant-led.

Wider tenant involvement through the My Impact panel and various service co-design projects — such as on damp and mould — has helped to embed tenant voice at the heart of service improvement.

The role tenants will play in our improvement journey for complaint handling will only increase next year.



CASE STUDY:

WHERE WE GOT IT WRONG BUT PUT THINGS RIGHT

A tenant was experiencing some damp and mould in their property and reported this to us. We visited their home to undertake an inspection and identified a leak that needed repairing and some repairs needed to windows. We responded quickly to undertake treatment of the mould and raised a repair for one of our contractors to complete the remaining work.



Unfortunately, our contractor didn't communicate this well enough with our tenant and the repair went incomplete for a period of time. This meant that our tenant felt ignored and had incomplete repairs in their home for longer than they should have had.

When our tenant complained to us, we worked quickly to re-arrange appointments for the outstanding repairs ensuring these were complete within a week by our in-house maintenance team. We also identified opportunities to improve the thermal comfort of the home by installing some additional insulation in the loft. As a gesture of goodwill, our in-house maintenance team supported the tenant to re-bed some slabbing in their garden whilst they were at our tenant's house, as a way of making things right for that tenant.

After the complaint, our tenant wrote in to say thank you, and also said:

"all the operatives have been great from MH but Paul has been exceptional. He really does deserve a medal"



LOOKING AHEAD TO

2025/26

We've made good progress but we want, and need, to continue to improve further. We've completed a more in-depth review of the root causes of complaints in the final three months of 2024/25 and set out some key areas of focus for the next six months.



KEY AREAS OF FOCUS FOR THE NEXT SIX MONTHS:

- Reducing repair delays, particularly around leaks, roofing, and damp/mould
- Improving the quality of anti-social behaviour investigations
- Enhancing transparency and communication around rent increases and service charges
- Strengthening the quality of planned improvement works
- Further improving complaint investigations and communication
- Improving how we handle heating and hot water breakdowns during the Winter

These priorities will be overseen by the Directors Group and scrutinised by our tenants through our Complaints Learning Group.



To make a complaint:

Contact our Hub on
0345 60 20 540

Visit:
**[www.midlandheart.org.uk/
complaints](http://www.midlandheart.org.uk/complaints)**

Complaints - Midland Heart

Write to:
Midland Heart
20 Bath Row
Birmingham
B15 1LZ

To contact the Housing Ombudsman
Fill in the online complaint form
**[www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/
make-a-complaint/](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint/)**

Email: **info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk**
Phone: **0300 111 3000**

Write to:
Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston PR2 0ET

Fax:
020 7831 1942



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