midland heart

COMPLAINTS SERVICE

IMPROVEMENT REPORT

2025/26





FOREWORD

Over the past year, we have heard from slightly more tenants who wanted to raise a complaint. We see this as an important sign that people feel able to speak up and tell us when something hasn't gone as it should.

Most of the complaints we receive continue to be upheld. This matters, because it shows that when tenants raise concerns, we listen carefully, acknowledge where things have fallen short, and use that feedback to improve our services.

While the majority of complaints were responded to within our published timescales, we recognise that our performance was not as consistent as we would want it to be, particularly during periods of increased demand. Although this pressure is reflected across the wider social housing sector, we know that for our tenants, what matters most is how well we respond. We are clear that there was more for us to do.

Earlier in the year, some operational challenges emerged within our Complaints Team. Although our complaints handling remained compliant with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, we accept that the experience for some tenants could have been better.

We took this seriously and acted quickly. Targeted actions to strengthen capacity, oversight and resolution led to a significant improvement in performance from the summer onwards. Our more recent results give us confidence that our processes, support arrangements and governance are now operating at the standard we expect. This was further reinforced by our Internal Audit in May 2025, which provided positive assurance over the systems and controls in place.

One of the highlights of the year for me has been seeing the growing influence of tenant voices in shaping our approach to complaints learning. Our Complaints Learning Group, with tenants at its heart, has played a central role in driving improvements and strengthening our learning culture.

This report sets out what tenants have told us, what we have learned, and the changes we have made as a result. We remain committed to learning from every complaint and to using this insight to deliver better, more reliable services for the people who live in our homes.

Adele O'Brien
Director of Customer Experience

COMPLIANCE WITH THE COMPLAINT
HANDLING CODE

Handling complaints properly is really important to us. We work hard to make sure we always meet the standards set out in the Complaint Handling Code.

We're pleased to share that, after completing our annual self assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, we have been found to be fully compliant.

In undertaking our self-assessment we worked closely with tenants from our My Assurance Group, including tenants who have used our complaints process themselves. Their experience, questions and challenge helped us test the evidence used in our assessment and make sure our service really meets the required standards.

More details of our self-assessment can be found here [link tbc]

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

METRIC	24/25	25/26*
Stage 1 complaints received	1,833	1,706
Stage 2 complaints received	521	494
% complaints upheld Stage 1 Stage 2	79.2%	 73% 73%
Ombudsman escalations	67	
Stage 1 per 1000 homes (LCRA & LCHO only)	52	55.3%
Stage 2 per 1000 homes (LCRA & LCHO only)	14	14.8%
Stage 1 responded to in timescales	95.4%	84.6%
Stage 2 responded to in timescales	84%	79.4%
Maladministration Rate	49.4%	46%
Total Compensation		£592,072.45
Average Compensation Payment		£278.88

Overall, what we see from our complaints performance this year is that tenants feel confident to raise concerns. That is important, because it helps us understand where things have gone wrong and how we can improve.

In most cases, when tenants do complain, we find there is something we could have done better. Even when a complaint is not upheld, we still take time to understand why someone felt unhappy with how their concern was handled, so we can learn from the experience.

We know that some areas of our complaints performance fell below our expectations earlier in the year. To address this, we appointed a new Complaints Manager in January 2026, who brings strong experience in complaint handling. This has helped us strengthen our approach and reduce the risk of issues happening again.

We also brought in temporary additional support to improve how we monitor and manage complaints performance across our teams. As a result of these actions, tenant satisfaction with complaint handling increased by 8% for tenants and almost 10% for homeowners.

These improvements give us confidence that we are moving in the right direction and continuing to put tenants' experiences at the centre of how we learn and improve.

EXTERNAL ASSURANCE

In May 2025, an independent external audit reviewed how we handle complaints. The aim was to check that our processes are working well, identify any gaps, and make sure we are learning and improving over time.

The review looked at how tenants raise complaints, how complaints are handled, and how we learn from them. This included reviewing real complaint cases, Ombudsman evidence, interviews with staff, and how we share learning with tenants and internal teams.

The auditors highlighted several areas of good practice, including strong performance monitoring, quality checks, and clear trend analysis to help us learn from complaints. They also recognised our positive approach to involving tenants in our annual complaints self assessment, giving tenants the opportunity to challenge and discuss how we meet the Complaints Handling Code.

The review also found that some tasks relied too heavily on a small number of staff, which could cause delays if they were unavailable, and that some processes could be clearer. In response, we have trained more colleagues to provide cover and have fully documented our complaint handling processes to improve consistency and resilience.





LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENTS

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.

LEARNING FROM OTHER HOUSING PROVIDERS

Learning from complaints isn't just about looking at how we're doing, it's also about learning from other landlords and using these ideas to improve our service for tenants.

We carried out a review comparing Midland Heart's learning from complaints with nine other housing providers, using information they shared in their own complaints learning reports.

We identified 23 improvement ideas from the review. We're pleased that many of these ideas have already been put in place at Midland Heart, or are currently underway.

IMPROVEMENTS ALREADY IN PLACE

- A new online portal to improve how contractors manage repairs
- New vehicles and better tools for frontline staff
- A sensitive cases list so serious repair complaints get extra care and attention
- Teams working together to close any outstanding complaints
- Extra training for colleagues who handle complaints
- Quality checks on completed repairs by a dedicated inspections team
- A new system to better record and manage anti-social behaviour cases
- Tenants being involved in reviewing how we communicate as well as in the procurement of new contracts.

WHAT WE'RE CURRENTLY WORKING ON

- Reviewing contractor service standards
- Improving how we keep in touch with tenants through clearer text messages
- Making sure tenants leave their first appointment knowing when the next visit will be
- Ensuring all tenants receive 'text ahead' reminders
- Sharing lessons learned from complaints across the whole organisation

WHAT WE COULD LEARN FROM OTHERS

- Better linking our noise reporting app with anti-social behaviour case records
- Using video calls to help diagnose damp and mould issues more quickly
- Providing contractors with learning and insight packs to improve outcomes
- Targeted work on leaks, including equipment to reduce damage and quicker escalation if appointments are missed



UNDERSTANDING WHO MAKES

A COMPLAINT

AGE GROUPING	ALL TENANTS	STAGE 1	STAGE 2
16-14	2%	2%	1%
25-34	15%	21%	21%
35-44	22%	26%	29%
45-54	19%	20%	20%
55-64	19%	19%	17%
65-74	12%	9%	9%
75-84	7%	3%	2%
85+	4%	1%	1%
Undisclosed/Unknown	1%	0%	0%

*based on data available as of 13.05.26

GENDER	ALL TENANTS	STAGE 1	STAGE 2
Female	64%	70%	69%
Male	36%	30%	31%
Refused/Unknown	1%	0%	0%
Non-binary	0%	0%	0%
Prefer to self describe	0%	0%	0%

SEXUAL ORIENTATION	ALL TENANTS	STAGE 1	STAGE 2
Heterosexual / Straight	66%	73%	71%
Gay / Lesbian	1%	1%	1%
Bisexual	1%	1%	1%
Other	1%	1%	2%
Refused/Unknown	32%	24%	25%

RELIGION	ALL TENANTS	STAGE 1	STAGE 2
NONE	29%	31%	32%
CHRISTIAN	27%	28%	29%
Refused/Unknown	25%	18%	19%
MUSLIM	14%	16%	13%
OTHER	4%	5%	5%
SIKH	1%	1%	1%
HINDU	1%	1%	1%
BUDDHIST	0%	0%	0%
JEWISH	0%	0%	0%

MARITAL STATUS	ALL TENANTS	STAGE 1	STAGE 2
Undisclosed/Unknown	63%	63%	64%
Single	21%	23%	23%
Married	8%	8%	8%
Divorced	3%	3%	2%
Separated	2%	2%	0%
Widowed	2%	1%	1%
Co-habit	1%	1%	2%
Civil Partnership	0%	0%	0%
Other	0%	0%	0%

DISABILITIES	ALL TENANTS	STAGE 1	STAGE 2
Mobility	11%	13%	10%
Visual Impairment	2%	2%	1%
Aurally impaired	2%	3%	1%
Learning Difficulties	3%	5%	4%
Mental Health	12%	15%	14%
Other Health Condition	10%	12%	11%

ETHNIC GROUP	ALL TENANTS	STAGE 1	STAGE 2
Asian or Asian British	10%	12%	12%
Black or Black British	18%	26%	30%
Mixed	4%	6%	6%
Other	3%	3%	3%
White or White British	46%	37%	33%
Unknown	20%	16%	17%

STRONGER

TENANT VOICES

Across our engagement work, tenants told us that problems with contractors were a key reason for dissatisfaction, and this also came through as a trend in Complaint analysis.

Members of our Tenant Led Complaints Learning Group looked closely at complaints about contractors. They highlighted recurring issues with booking appointments, managing “no access” visits, and poor communication particularly when compared with in house repair services.

Tenants asked for the chance to speak directly with contractors. In response, we held a tenant led learning event in November 2025, bringing together tenants and nine different contractors to share experiences and hear first hand what needs to improve.

Following this event, contractors made clear commitments to tenants to improve how they communicate and behave areas that matter most to tenants and are the biggest causes of complaints.

You can find out more about the event here: **Building better services together - Midland Heart**

New features in the repairs portal now provide clearer appointment information and better tracking of contractor visits through a new Contractor Portal, helping us keep track of what’s happening and when if we ask Contractors to carry out work on our behalf.

LISTENING. LEARNING. IMPROVING.



Giving tenants the opportunity to review our processes and performance helps us stay transparent, learn from feedback, and make sure our services continue to improve.

Want to get involved?
Email customerscrutiny@midlandheart.org.uk and we’ll be in touch!

A FRAMEWORK FOR

LEARNING

Our review of complaints has shown clear patterns in where things are going wrong, and where we need to do more to learn and improve. When these issues are not addressed, it can lead to ongoing dissatisfaction for tenants and an increase in compensation payments.



In response, we launched our first Lessons Learned framework in November 2025. This work was developed with tenants and key service teams, with the aim of improving service quality and reducing complaints by learning more effectively from complaints and repeat contact.

Tenants are at the heart of this framework. They help shape where we focus our efforts by sharing their lived experiences in meetings and through complaints, feedback and satisfaction surveys.

Through this work, tenants highlighted an important underlying issue. While repair delays and poor communication were often reported, the root of the problem was frequently linked to how appointments are managed. This insight has helped us focus more clearly on what is causing these difficulties and where changes are needed.

As a result we identified system changes that meant tenant could have access to increased SMS messaging about their appointments, including being able to know when Operatives were on the way.

We also identified improvements that could be made in our Planning Teams to prevent multiple jobs from being raised, which caused confusion, increased calls and missed appointments which often lead to complaints.



HOUSING

OMBUDSMAN

We saw Ombudsman escalations increase (from 67 to 100), which reflects both higher complaint volumes and tenants being more aware of their right to escalate if they remain unhappy.



We've worked hard to ensure that where the Ombudsman has found failing in our Complaints handling we learn from these, and this year we saw our maladministration rate fall from 49.4% to 46%, showing early signs that changes we are making are starting to have a positive impact.

Repairs is our biggest service we deliver to tenants so we know its likely to be the biggest areas where things can go wrong. We also saw Complaint Handling as a key root cause of complaints this year, reflecting some of the challenges we've had in performance.

Where the Housing Ombudsman found failures in our service they can issue orders to put things right. On many occasions this has been to offer an apology, complete outstanding actions and offer additional redress.



ORDERS ANALYSIS	2025-2026
Compensation	31
Learning Review	8
Apology	27
Follow on actions	33

The Housing Ombudsman recently issues new guidance for redress and as part of our self assessment this year we've undertaken a full review of our complaints compensation policy and awards process to ensure it aligns with the Complaints Code and sector best practice, to ensure our redress is fair and proportionate.

WHAT WE'RE DOING
DIFFERENTLY

RECORD KEEPING

We have seen some complaints move to stage 2 because the actions we agreed with tenants were not always completed on time. In some cases, this happened because our follow up actions were recorded in different places, which made them harder to track and meant some were missed.

To improve this, we are strengthening our systems. Going forward, all actions agreed with tenants and included in their response letters will be clearly recorded in one place.

This will help us keep better track of what we've promised to do and ensure actions are completed as agreed.

GETTING IT RIGHT FIRST TIME

Many complaints start when tenants feel frustrated because their service requests are not being resolved. This can happen when it is unclear who is responsible for the issue or when problems rely on a call back from another team.

To improve this, we now have housing experts from across our services working together in our Customer Hub. This means our Customer Service Officers can get quick answers and specialist advice, helping to resolve issues properly the first time, without the need for repeated calls or complaints.



SPOTLIGHT ON:
REDUCING ASB COMPLAINTS



The top reason for complaints in Tenancy Services relates to ASB casework. A service improvement plan was launched in May 2025 and completed in December 2025 to enhance casework quality and customer experience.

Some of the actions we took to improve our support to tenants experiencing ASB include:

- 'No evidence' is no excuse for no further action. We know its frustrating when a case is closed due to no evidence and we've been clear with our teams that we need to explore all available actions that we can take and communicate this empathically and effectively. A guide produced by ASB help (ASB Language – The Practitioners Guide) has been shared with our teams to support this. This year we saw tenant satisfaction with how the case was handled rise from 64.5% in 2024/25 to 70.7% ytd.
- Missed Communication: We often see complaints when an officer fails to call a tenant when agreed due to reasons such as sickness, cover or dealing with an emergency. Measures are now in place so Team Leaders have better oversight to delegate calls appropriately. Almost 80% of tenants now report that they felt they were kept updated throughout their case, an increase from 68% the previous year.

To make a complaint:

Contact our Hub on
0345 60 20 540

Visit:
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/

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