



Annual Complaints & Compliments report
Cheltenham Borough Council and Cheltenham
Borough Homes

2025-2026



INTRODUCTION

- CBC Housing and Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) remain committed to delivering a high standard of service to all customers. Complaints play an essential role in this commitment, as they provide valuable insight into where our services are performing well and where improvements are needed.
- We welcome complaints as an important form of customer feedback. When we get things right, this helps us maintain and build on strong performance. When our service falls short, complaints enable us to identify what went wrong and take action to prevent issues from recurring.
- CBC Housing completed its annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. A separate self-assessment was also completed and submitted for Cheltenham Borough Homes. Following this, we reviewed the latest guidance and aligned our internal policies and procedures to ensure continued compliance with the Code.
- To strengthen our complaints handling approach, we have introduced new QL system actions and appointed an additional temporary staff member dedicated to supporting the complaints process. These steps help ensure the Code is followed consistently and that we maintain a strong focus on tenant satisfaction.
- We are determined to provide the best possible services to our residents. This includes putting things right quickly when issues arise, learning from feedback, and working proactively with residents to enhance services and improve the quality of homes.
- Our self-assessment has been reviewed by our Tenant Panel, which comprises individuals from diverse backgrounds who bring a broad range of perspectives. Over the past year, the panel has challenged and scrutinised our performance, helping us drive better resident experiences. Their work has included ensuring our standard letters and communications are clear and effective for residents and supporting improvements such as establishing a single complaints email inbox for better accessibility and consistency

Stage 1

298 complaints were received in 2025/26. This shows a steady increase from 207 in 2023/24 and 244 in 2024/25. As of 1st April 2026, 293 complaints have been responded to. 5 cases were withdrawn or closed as no tenant contact, 2 of these were for CBH properties.

Complaint volumes have steadily increased across the three-year period. The rise from 2023/24 to 2024/25 was 17.9%, while the year 2025/26 saw an even larger increase of 22.1%. This indicates not only a consistent upward trend but also an acceleration in complaint growth during the latest period.

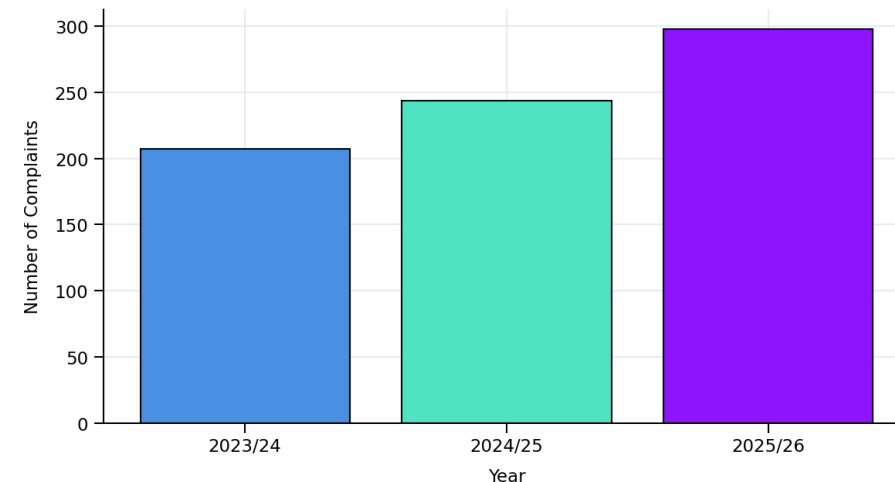
100% of complaints were responded to within agreed timescales, some of these had agreed extensions.

183 complaints were responded to within 10 working days, 110 complaints extensions were applied. This was more noticeable in the first two quarters of the year, supported by the increased number of days to respond. A decline in the later part of the year has been identified, this improvement has been the result of the addition of a new Complaints Officer to the team, and this positive trend is expected to continue into next year.

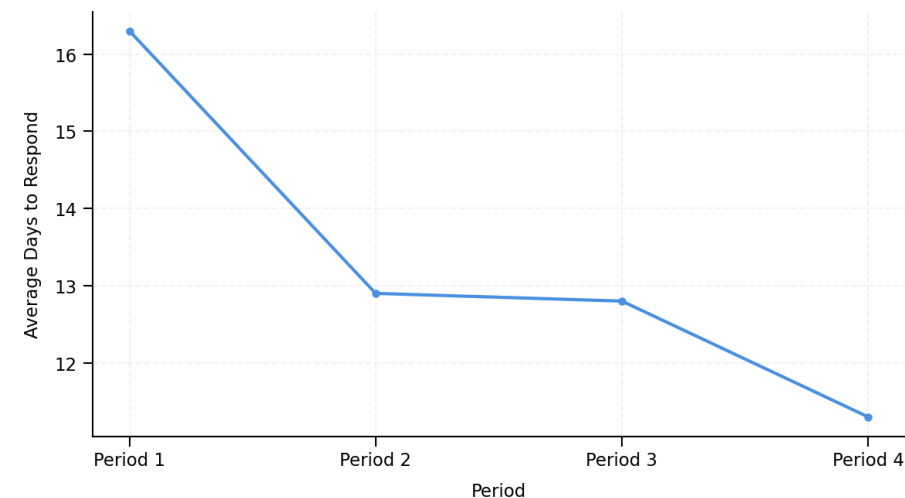
Across the four reporting periods, the average days to respond to Stage 1 complaints show a clear and consistent improvement:

- Response times dropped from 16.3 days at the start down to 11.3 days, the best performance in the sequence.
- This represents a 31% reduction in response time overall.
- Each period shows a continued downward trend, demonstrating stronger service efficiency and faster resolution for customers.
- The overall average of 13.3 days highlights that performance is now significantly better than earlier periods. v the Housing Ombudsman mandated timescale of 10 days. This has increased from last years average of 12.8 days, there has been an increase in number of cases that have had extensions, in 24/25 ,76 cases had agreed extensions in comparison to 110 cases with extensions this period.

Complaint Volumes by Year



Trend of Stage 1 Response Times



2025 – 2026 Continued

In 2025/26, 203 complaints were upheld, compared with 123 in 2024/25, representing a 65% increase. When looking at all complaints upheld either in full or in part, this year saw a total of 258, compared with 171 last year. This reflects a 51% overall increase in upheld outcomes at response stage

UPHELD	PARTLY UPHELD	NOT UPHELD
203	55	35

During the period 2025/26 we have:

- Improved our complaints information and communication on our webpage and automated letters
- Improved performance management of complaints, so that all our teams and contractors remain focused on achieving the best results for residents by providing training to new staff
- Technology: Implemented a single complaint handling inbox system, which will help us to offer a more efficient service and improved experience for residents.

There were 32 complaints escalated to Stage 2 this year, compared with 21 last year, representing a 52.4% increase, and significantly higher than the 9 recorded in 2023/24. There were 0 Stage 2 complaints related to CBH properties. Of the 32 complaints opened during the year, 1 was withdrawn. In the period 32 complaints have been responded to. Of the cases responded to , 24 were upheld, 7 not upheld, and 1 partially upheld. Only two cases progressed to the Housing Ombudsman, giving a 93.8% success rate in resolving complaints within our internal process.

Of the 32 complaints responded to, the service areas they relate to are as follows:

- ASB: 3
- Tenancy Management: 5
- Leasehold: 2
- Planned Maintenance: 14
- Rents: 1
- Repairs: 7

Throughout the year, and within the quarterly reports, the Complaints Team has highlighted the high number of complaints from the Planned Maintenance department. This increase was due to the issues experienced at the beginning of the kitchen installation programme.

CBC received two determinations from The Housing Ombudsman during the period, and both have been appropriately responded to within the required timescales.

Compensation Summary 2025 – 2026

Quarter	Amount	Service Area
Quarter 1	£10,166.99	Technical and Investment – 3 Repairs – 5 Disrepair – 4 ASB - 1 Tenancy Management – 2 HOS Determination -1
Quarter 2	£3,737.72	Repairs – 7 Technical and Investment– 4 Estates Services – 1 Community Services - 1
Quarter 3	£7,487.24	Repairs -3 Technical and Investment – 11
Quarter 4	£4,704.81	Repairs – 4 Technical and Investment – 15 Tenancy Management – 1 Development – 1 HOS Determination - 1
Total	£26,096.76	

Of the 293 responses sent, 63 complaints were offered compensation (21.5%) at Stages 1 and 2.

This figure reflects contributions from a range of service areas; however, Building Services accounts for the majority, with 57 of the 63 compensation payments arising from this area, totaling 90.5% of the compensation paid out. This included reactive repairs, planned maintenance, estates and disrepair complaints.

This year, 63 complaints were awarded compensation compared with 47 last year, which represents an increase of 34%.

CBC has increased the amount of total compensation paid from £23,008.60 last year to £26,096.76 this year.

This represents an increase in total compensation awarded, and may be explained by additional requests for compensation stemming from kitchen complaints and a higher number of Stage 2 complaints.

This year, we have had two maladministration findings issued by the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS), both of which resulted in compensation orders (£750 and £100).

LEARNING FRAMEWORK

We listen, learn, and are improving services with tenants. When we make changes, we work with residents to cocreate improvements that work for them. In 2025-26 we used our learning framework below and made the following changes:

Area	Learning Summary	Actions / Considerations
Individual Colleague	Learning that can be attributed to an individuals' action/s	• Conversation with colleagues through 121 processes • Follow up any learning actions with individuals • Put forms of support in place for colleague to succeed next time • Performance Management – 3 complaints • Value of talking to whole team about it
Teams	Learning that can be attributed to actions or decisions made within or across a team or multiple teams	• Conversation with colleagues through 121 processes • Conversations with colleagues at team meetings • Follow up any learning actions with teams • Re-training including managers • Are there policies/procedures that need updating or that are missing
Service Quality	Learning that can be attributed to the quality of service delivered	• Consideration of process or system change
Organisational Culture	Learning that can be attributed to the culture of our organisation	• Consideration of process or system change • Look to other social housing organisations and structures
Contractor	Learning that is attributed to the actions and decisions of a contractor, which is managed by CBC	• Discuss at monthly contract meeting with contractor • Review complaints element of procurement to ensure correct mechanism in place – CBH complaints policy needs to be part of all new contracts • Random spot checks on physically identifiable work

LEARNING CONTINUED

CBC is committed to continuously improving the service we provide to our tenants. Below are some examples of what we have learned from complaints received over the past year, and the actions we have taken in response

Issue: Callbacks in relation to planned works were not answered

What we did: An additional staff member was brought in to support the kitchen program.

Issue: Tenant queries submitted via the online portal were not responded to

What we did: CBC has introduced action MT0279 for contacts received through the tenant portal requesting updates on orders. These are now monitored through the customer service work tray to ensure timely responses.

Issue: Callbacks and update requests were not consistently responded to

What we did: CBC has launched a new Customer Charter, currently being rolled out to all staff, to ensure a consistent approach to responding to tenant enquiries.

Issue: Delays in responding to enquiries regarding issues at blocks

What we did: The tenancy management team now directs tenants to a central email address, ensuring all correspondence is logged. Additionally, staff now divert tasks through the internal housing management system to one central task tray in cases of absence.

Issue: Delays and poor communication during kitchen installations

What we did: Meetings were held with contractors to address delays in kitchen and bathroom installations. Contractors are updating their information sheets to provide clearer guidance on timelines and potential delays.

Issue: Callbacks marked as complete without successfully contacting the tenant

What we did: Enhancements have been made to the CRM system to generate follow-up tasks before closure, ensuring multiple contact attempts are made. This is currently being trialed in one service area.

Issue: Delays in fencing works

What we did: CBC identified that not all staff had access to the correct cost codes to raise fencing orders. This has now been addressed and communicated across teams.

Issue: Dissatisfaction with contractor conduct during works

What we did: The Planned Maintenance team is reviewing contractor codes of conduct and KPIs. Surveyors are also following a standardised agenda during contract management meetings.

Issue: Concerns about service from the out-of-hours provider

What we did: CBC reviewed and amended contractor call scripts to improve the quality and clarity of communication.

LEARNING CONTINUED

Issue: Multiple visits and request for updates unanswered in the repairs department

What we did: We have reviewed and restructured the Responsive Repairs Team, ensuring that each workstream has the capability and resources required to deliver the service effectively. We have also recruited supervisors who are customer-focused to strengthen service delivery.

Issue: Poor quality of work

What we did: At the front line, regular team meetings are held with operatives, focusing on service delivery and continuous improvement

Issue: Lack of updates from jobs contracted out

What we did: The number of non-performing or unclear contracts has been reduced, and regular contract performance meetings are now in place to address any contractual issues promptly.

COMPLIMENTS

Tenant praised the trade for the way that he dealt with the situation with mum being stuck in living room away from daughter due to jammed Door. Tenant was in a state of panic, and she told us that the trade talked her through the entire process, even explaining when he was going back to the van for tools.

What a great job the plasterer has done carrying out works today, arrived prompt and on time and has done a really really good job wanted to pass on his compliments as aware that not everyone gets the appreciation for a job well done.

The customer service staff member who booked in the repair. She called through to see if we could attend today which we did. Thanks to repairs for making this happen. Also to the trade that attended as they were very helpful, Very appreciated. Pass on thanks all round

The fencing and the gate are brilliant thank you, so much better and finding it a lot more peaceful to get on with my normal day than to keep having to interact and try to ignore what's going on. Really appreciate it thank you.

Been speaking to the customer service team and the BMA Team. Both teams have really listened to me. Just wanted to say how much I appreciated it.

Tenant called to pass his thanks onto the trade from yesterday as they attended for DMC. He was very polite, efficient, cleaned up after himself. Many thanks

Tenant expressed her gratitude and thanks to the tenancy assistant who showed empathy and understanding.

Q1	24 Compliments
Q2	19 Compliments
Q3	10 Compliments
Q4	27 Compliments

COMPLAINTS COMPLIMENTS

I would like to thank you for your clear communication throughout the complaints process

I figured it would be easier to respond to your email, thanks so much for getting back to me and sorting my complaint so quickly. Thanks also for just being on it and making the process so easy!

I'd like to take this opportunity of thanking you, for your great help in expediting my complaint to such a positive outcome.

And to her I am extremely grateful to, she is obviously someone that should be in charge of situations like this as she obviously has the customers well being and concerns at the forefront of her role

to let you know, that she did more than her duty to help me out, she did a very detail investigation and had lots of communication with me and inform me of everything, which I really appreciate it. I think she is a asset to your organisation.

I conclude the work for my complaint has been completed due to your efforts, thank you

The Complaints Team

- Will continue to improve the complaints handling experiences through the next year
- We've introduced a single email address from March 2026 for all residents regarding complaints
- Website information and published literature has been updated in line with changes and considerations from the HQN mock inspection
- We're continuing to improve our data collection of additional needs and reasonable adjustments
- We're making technology system changes to improve how we deliver agreed complaint actions
- We're simplifying the compensation payment process and making it easier for residents, we now use bank transfers instead of cheques
- We're continuing to learn lessons to improve complaint handling
- We trained colleagues and contractors to help respond to complaints more effectively

NEXT STEPS

- To continue to improve and maintain our response times for stage 1 complaints
- To continue to maintain our 100% response rates to complaint responses
- To take on board consideration provided by the HQN mock inspection and implement these within the upcoming months
- To arrange and attend the next 6 monthly complaint feedback group
- Review staff engagement and share with service managers, to reduce number of extensions to complains due to information delay
- To continue to review Stage 2 complaints received in the period
- To continue to develop our approach to learning from complaints
- To continue our relationship with the Housing Ombudsman and continue to provide requested information and submissions within time frames.
- To review Compensation guidelines as set out by The Housing Ombudsman
- To keep updated in relation to the code and continue to learn using the Housing Ombudsman tools and newsletters
- To attend quarterly tenant panel meetings to present complaints data and updates
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- Complete Self-Assessment for 26-27

GOVERNANCE RESPONSE

- Cheltenham Borough Council Cabinet Housing Committee and Cheltenham Borough Homes are committed to ensuring that customer complaints are handled effectively and in a timely manner, and that as an organisation we identify learning to deliver a great customer experience.
- The committee routinely scrutinise complaints performance data, and this has been enhanced through the appointment of Councillor Flo Clucas, Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Service, into the role of Member Responsible for Complaints ('MRC').
- This appointment will ensure that there is a strong awareness of complaint performance within the Housing Committee and wider members, and that there is scrutiny of complaints handling and of emerging themes.
- The Committee recognise that further improvements are required in repairs and planned maintenance, and the ASB service as these are the key drivers for complaints, and this will be a focus over the next 12 months.
- The MRC and Housing Committee aim to both challenge and support colleagues to embed a culture of positivity and learning from complaints by identifying themes and implementing changes to ensure continuous improvement.