

Listening to you

Complaints Insight Report: 2025/26

We are committed to delivering a great customer experience and listening to your feedback to improve our services. We believe in being open, and honest and building trust through a transparent feedback process.

This is the eleventh edition of our Complaints Insight Report which is now published annually and made available for our customers. We highlight any trends, the lessons we have learnt and any changes we have made to our services. We also give you an overview of any complaints which have been escalated to the Housing Ombudsman.

Summary of 2025/6:

- We had a total of 406 formal complaints recorded across 7011 homes.
- We had 242 compliments reported
- Complaint handling has improved, and our justification rate has decreased from 86.9% to 81.8% compared to the prior year, showing an increase in our service delivery.

In the past 12 months, WCH experienced a 49.2% increase in complaints, in line with others in the sector. This has been driven by:

- Informing customers how to raise a complaint. On our last Big Door Knock campaign where we knocked on over 4900 doors, 87.6% of our customers told us they knew how to make a complaint.
- Better awareness of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Code
- Media coverage of Awaabs Law and Disrepair
- An increase to our stock of more than 500 homes including a transfer of engagement from Notting Hill Genesis

Although the volume of complaints has increased, we have remained 100% complaint with responding to complaints within the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code timescales.

CASES	2025/26	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23
Complaints	406	205	178	171
Service request	387	443	568	231
Compliments	242	229	311	174
No. of complaints escalated to Stage 2	113	42	36	11
% escalated complaints	27.8%	20.5%	20.2%	6.4%
No. of complaints escalated to Ombudsman	15	5	6	6
Complaints responded within Ombudsman's timescales Stage 1	100%	100%	100%	86%
Complaints responded within Ombudsman's timescales Stage 2	100%	100%	96%	100%
% of Complaints Justified	81.8%	87%	96%	89%

Customer Representatives

We currently have six volunteer Customer Representatives who work alongside our Leadership Team and Directors. Together, they have supported the resolution of 113 Stage 2 complaints. Their role is to bring customer perspective into the complaints process and help ensure that outcomes are fair and balanced.

All Watford Community Housing customers are welcome to get involved in our complaints-handling process through our Involvement Menu. Anyone interested in becoming a Customer Representative will need to complete the required training, which is delivered by TPAS as part of our ongoing training programme. If you would like to learn more about this role or express your interest, please contact our Customer Relations Team at Feedback@wcht.org.uk.

Root Cause

The root cause of most dissatisfaction is outstanding repairs and overall poor communication. We continue to manage our repairs and aim to achieve the timescales in our Responsive Repairs Policy and focus on improving communication with our customers. We have increased our workforce and are seeing improvements in our satisfaction with repairs which, has moved from 73.4% to 77.8% from 2024/5 to 2025/6.

We have also seen increased satisfaction with the ease of reporting repairs, which has moved from 73.1% to 79.2%. Our data also shows us that 74.3% of customers were satisfied with the time taken to complete their most recent repair after it had been reported which has improved by 8% compared to 2024/5.

We acknowledge we cannot always meet our key repair targets and have recorded dissatisfaction due to waiting times. We are working hard to improve our repair services and key service changes are highlighted below.

What are we doing to improve?

- Following a Housing Ombudsman Policy review we have made changes to our Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy to ensure the policy fully aligns with the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.
- We held a feedback session with customers and our Gateway Membership Team to complete a deep dive into complaints accessibility. We took the group through a presentation that covered; our complaint handling responsibilities, our obligations around creating equitable outcomes and access, our current process and approach, lived experiences, their challenges with accessibility of the process and information.
- We invested in our Repairs Team and on-boarded two new plumbing / gas apprentices in September.
- Our road map for 2027/8 will see us implement a new repair system that will integrate with our current platforms. The new system will enable us to record, plan and manage a repair job more effectively. The system will assist with ease of reporting, first-time fix and customer satisfaction
- We will take a more innovative approach to managing repairs, using historical data to understand the most common causes of repairs and proactively manage our service. By anticipating where problems are likely to occur, and addressing them before they lead to bigger issues, we'll deliver a better service for customers as well as reducing our repairs workload.
- We believe in being forward-thinking, so we will also embrace modern technology where it allows us to deliver a more effective service, such as carrying out drone surveys of guttering on our Croxley View Estate, so that we can target our efforts where there is a greater risk of leaks inside people's homes
- We have simplified our repair codes and priority timescales, to make it easier to book repairs for customers and staff.
- We are updating our [repairs website](#) page frequently to reflect our current timescales against each trade.

- We have changed the way we deliver feedback to our Repair Operatives by creating trade talks per trade where we discuss customer feedback and best practices.

Outstanding repairs and timescales

We have an action plan to address ongoing repairs. We have increased our contractor base to utilise resources and keep completion times within target. We are on the right track and have seen an improvement in our response times.

- Our average first-time fix rate is 85.7% compared to 83.4% in 2024/5 and we have seen positive improvements in gas servicing and plumbing.
- We launched our External Contractors satisfaction survey in 2024/5 and have seen an increase in satisfaction of 18.6% year on year from 60% to 78.6%.

Our Customer Service Team have completed training sessions with our Repairs and Resource Planning teams and external providers to ensure repairs are recorded accurately to assist with first-time fix to include damp and mould in line with Awaabs Law. We continue to encourage customers to book their repairs on their online accounts as the first port of call, 24hrs per day. As of March 2026, over 59% of our customers have an online account.

Communication

- As a Community Gateway Organisation, we provide a range of opportunities for our customers to get involved and ensure their voice is heard. Our annual Big Door Knock in June 2025 visited over 4900 homes and we completed 1370 surveys.

The survey results told us:

76% of our customers were overall satisfied with services

87.6% of our customers knew how to make a complaint

29% of our customers were able to report immediate concerns

- Managers investigating complaints call every customer to understand their concerns. We ensure our complaint responses meet any needs such as learning difficulties and offer a customer advocacy service.
- The Customer Relations and Customer Services Team have participated in internal training to understand the difference between a service request and a complaint in relation to our Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy and the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Code.
- We are engaging more with our interpretation services to support our customers who don't use English as their first language and have translated documents into the required languages.
- We will be sharing materials provided in different languages by the Housing Ombudsman to our customers via our social media channels.
- We have updated our repair call scripts to our out-of-hours provider, to ensure our customers receive continuity of service at evenings and weekends.

- We have sent out regular communications by email and SMS to keep customers up to date on repairs and service issues.
- We implemented a new telephony platform to improve the customers experience when calling into our Contact Centre. We have made changes to how customer calls are routed into the organisation - this will enable our customers to speak to the right person first time around, increasing first call resolution and improving the overall customer experience.
- The new customer platform gives more options available for customers to choose from, such as damp and mould. There will also be more staff to take the calls, as our Customer Services, Customer Relations and Resource Planning teams will be integrated into the new system in 2026. We have also updated our call and email wrap up codes which means we will get better intelligence on our data to help shape the services we provide.
- 1763 post call surveys were completed, with averaging scores of 76% for first call resolution, 89% for happy overall and 93% in our Customer Service Officers being polite and knowledgeable.
- We have added service messages to our phone system to promote customers to check their heating during the Autumn / Winter months and to acknowledge busy call periods.

The impact of your feedback

- Our Gateway Membership Team (GMT) selected and led a customer scrutiny session in January 2026 on lift management, this aligns with our complaints data where we had recorded 17 complaints in the past 12 months related to lift outages, response times and maintenance schedules. The scrutiny generated an action plan to include a review of our compensation policy and how we can reassure customers and communicate more effectively with service failures. Our compensation policy now includes a section on lifts and this goes above what is expected of us in the Housing Ombudsman Code.
- We successfully launched our Love Your Neighbourhood Campaign to work with our residents to create cleaner, greener neighbourhoods that we can be proud of. Staff and residents volunteered in August 2025 to clean and repaint some of our play equipment, making it look as good as new for residents in Gadswell Close, Hillfarm Avenue. and Croxley View.
- Our welfare fund panel has approved 77 applications, resulting in a spend of over £50,347 to support our customers with essential items needed to help sustain their tenancies and ease financial pressures.
- We have identified training needs for our Contact Centre around offering a better first-time resolution. From feedback collated from our post call surveys, we recognise the need to make sure our customers can resolve issues when they call first time. This includes more training on damp and mould enquiries, repairs diagnostics, setting clear expectations and using our digital platform.
- Our Housing Managers regularly review Housing Ombudsman case determinations with the Housing Team to discuss case learnings and to ensure best practice is followed in line with our Anti-Social Behaviour and Good Neighbourhood Management Policies.

Who is making complaints?

We review demographic information about who is making complaints, against our whole customer base every year. This enables us to see if there are any trends or if certain groups are not reporting anything to us.

- In 2025/26 73%% of complaints were reported by females compared to 27% of males. The amount of females making complaints was much higher when compared to our data, where females make up around 64% of our customer base.
- Customers from male and female genders in the age bands of 30-39 (29.8%) and 40-49 (28.1%) reporting complaints are also much higher than we would expect.
- A deep dive was completed to understand the root causes of dissatisfaction with these customer groups and this revealed issues far wider than the ones cited with the initial complaints. Particularly with family pressures, aspirations for larger or new homes and financial struggles. We will continue to target these customers with our communications and community projects in a bid to improve their satisfaction overall.
- We hear less from customers over 70 years old so we have ensured that we have engaged with them recently at an accessibility review on 1st April 2026. Some of these customers have told us that they have been fearful of making complaints in the past as they did not want to lose their homes. So communicating with this group to reassure them that we welcome feedback, will be a focus in 2026/27.

Complaint handling - Notting Hill transfer of engagement

At the point of transfer in March, Notting Genesis handed over 12 active complaint cases open with customers from the 509 homes that transferred to Watford Community Housing (WCH). There were no further cases reported to WCH up until 31st March 2026. Three cases have since received compensation and determination which was resolved and sat under the remit of Notting Hill Genesis. We have made the Ombudsman aware of the cases awaiting determination and will be able to provide summary of learning from these cases in the next edition of this report.

Compensation

During 2025/26, compensation was awarded in 175 complaint cases, with a total expenditure of £60,691. Awards ranged from £25 to £7,100, with the highest payment relating to a subsidence case. The average compensation payment was £347 per case. We also received seven Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) determinations during the year. In these cases, we were ordered to pay an average of £550 compensation per case.

In March 2026, we reviewed and updated our Goodwill Gestures Policy, replacing it with a new Compensation and Remedies Policy. This change aligns our approach with the Housing Ombudsman's expectations and the sector-wide reforms designed to strengthen fairness, consistency and learning from complaints.

Housing Ombudsman Complaints

We are committed to providing an open and accurate picture of our complaints performance, including cases that are escalated to the Housing Ombudsman. You can view our landlord annual performance reports or seek independent advice by visiting the Housing Ombudsman website: Home – Housing Ombudsman ([Housing Ombudsman Service](#)).

Our maladministration rate has significantly improved, reducing to **50% in the 2024-25 landlord report**, compared with **91% in 2023-24**. As part of our ongoing service improvements, we are working with the Ombudsman to deliver a complaint-handling webinar in May 2026.

We report Housing Ombudsman determinations on a quarterly basis to both our Customer Experience Committee and Gateway Membership Team. This ensures senior leaders are held accountable and that learning from complaints is embedded across the organisation.

We also share Ombudsman determinations and press releases with our Leadership Team to support a positive complaints culture. In addition, weekly complaints and compliments reports are provided to the Leadership Team to maintain visibility of customer feedback. The table below outlines the reasons why cases were reviewed by the Housing Ombudsman, whether they remain open or closed, and any final determinations issued.

Determination Type	Case total 2025/6	Case total 2024/5	Case total 2023/4	Case total 2022/3
No Maladministration	1	2	0	0
Maladministration	3	4	6	0
Severe Maladministration	1	1	1	0
Customer Withdrew Case	-	-	1	-
Service Failure	1	1	0	0
Complaint Failure Handling Order	-	1	0	0
No Jurisdiction	1	-	-	-