

Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement report

April 2024 - March 2025

Introduction

Under the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, Aspire is required to produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge.

We know that things can go wrong and when they do we want you to tell us so that we can put things right. Complaints provide us with a firsthand account of your views and experiences and highlight problems we may otherwise be unaware of.

This report tells you about the complaints we received between the 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, how we have used what you told us to improve the way we do things and includes¹:

- Aspires annual self-assessment against the Code
- Our complaint handling performance
- Information about investigations by the Housing Ombudsman Service
- Actions we have taken to improve the way in which we deliver services and handle complaints

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The analysis presented in this report is based on our Financial Year 2024/25, Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) submission, specifically relating to low-cost rental accommodation (LCRA) stock.

Housing Ombudsman Service

Our approach to handling complaints is regulated by the Housing Ombudsman Service (ombudsman) and our annual assessment against their code of practice is published at the end of September each year. This assessment together with information about how to make a complaint can be found on our website aspirehousing.co.uk

The code sets out a two-stage process and expects Aspire to respond to complaints effectively and fairly.

We have 10 working days to investigate and respond at stage one and 20 working days at stage two.

Sometimes we may need longer to investigate things, and we may ask if you are agreeable to an extension of time beyond this period. If you are still unhappy with how your complaint has been handled at stage two you can ask the ombudsman to investigate housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint

We're pleased to report that we have received no findings of non-compliance with the Code.

Our year in summary

We’re committed to creating a positive complaints culture, where your feedback is valued, listened to, and used to drive meaningful change. Over the past year, we’ve continued to strengthen how we manage complaints, and while we’re proud of the improvements we have made in our handling performance, we recognise there is always more to do.

Aspire receives just under 60 complaints each month. Between April 2024 and March 2025, customers raised 613 Stage one complaints and 62 Stage two complaints. This represents a reduction of 113 complaints compared to the previous year, aligning with trends seen across the housing sector. However, while Stage one complaints have declined, there has been a slight increase in the number of complaints escalated to Stage two.

We’ve worked hard to promote our complaints service and remain committed to ensuring that every complaint is taken seriously, handled fairly, and resolved as quickly as possible.

The most common reason for complaints continues to be dissatisfaction with our repairs service. Our Homes Transformation programme is actively addressing these concerns to improve the customer experience. We’ve also seen a rise in complaints involving multiple service areas and in response, our collaborative, multi-team approach has proven effective in resolving these more complex cases.

To support this, mandatory training for complaint handlers has continued throughout the year. Combined with centralised support and guidance, this has strengthened our overall approach and as a result, over 95% of all complaints were responded to within target timescales, an increase of 20% compared to last year.

Complaint handling performance overview

Headline	Number	Number
	2023/24	2024/25
Number of complaints received (Stage one and two)	788	675
Number of stage one complaints	741	613
Number of stage two complaints	47	62
Satisfaction with how complaints have been handled	43%	50.4%
Complaints per 1,000 properties – (Stage one and two)	88.9	76.7

Complaints responded to within timescales

Stages	23/24	24/25	Trend
STAGE ONE	76.1%	94.6%	
STAGE TWO	63.8%	93.5%	

Customer satisfaction

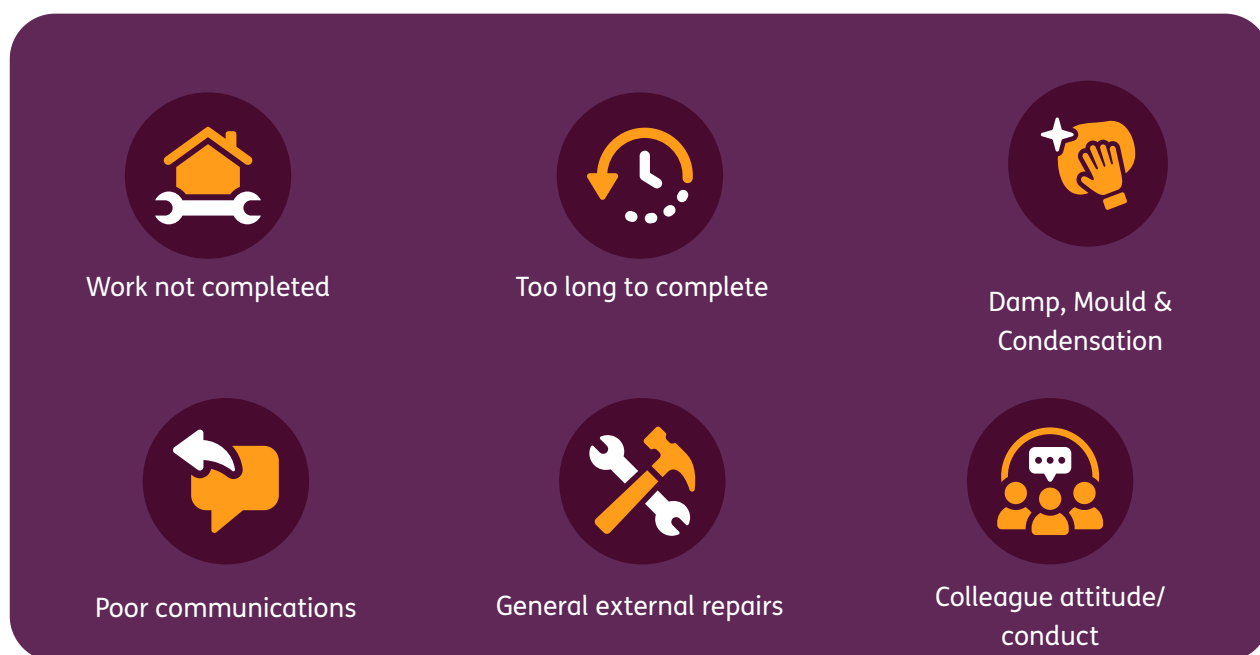
Measurement of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) is a regulatory requirement and each month we survey some of our customers and ask their opinion about our services. A key section of the survey is about how satisfied customers are with our approach to complaint handling. During the period April 24 - March 25, out of 122 customers who indicated they had made a complaint in the last 12 months, 50% were satisfied with the way their complaint was handled. This is an increase of 7% compared to the previous year and places Aspire among the highest-performing providers in the sector for complaint satisfaction.

In addition to our TSM survey, we also issue a transactional satisfaction survey shortly after a complaint is closed. This approach allows us to gather timely feedback on customers' most recent experiences, which can offer a more immediate and accurate reflection of how they felt about the complaint handling process. During this reporting year, 80% of customers who responded to the transactional survey indicated that they were satisfied with the handling of their complaint, a 6% increase compared to last year.

Refusal to accept complaints

No complaints were refused

Top complaint themes



A large proportion of the complaints we receive relate to a level of dissatisfaction with our repairs service. Upon closer analysis, the most commonly raised concern is the time taken to complete repairs. This is often followed by issues around incomplete repairs or outstanding follow-up works. Customers also frequently highlight frustrations with communication and the accuracy of information provided throughout the process

Housing Ombudsman investigations and outcomes

During the reporting year, five complaint cases were referred to the Housing Ombudsman Service. Of these, three determinations were made, while two cases were found to be outside the Ombudsman's jurisdiction.

Included in the Ombudsman's determinations were six findings of maladministration: one case of severe maladministration, two of maladministration, and three service failures. We have apologised to the customers affected and taken steps to compensate them for the upset and inconvenience caused.

In response to these findings, we established a dedicated working group to review the Ombudsman's feedback and identify opportunities for improvement. This has led to both process changes and the development of service improvement plans, reflected in our Listening, Learning and Improving section below. Most importantly, we've taken steps to ensure that lessons are learned and that our customers receive the high standard of service we expect to deliver.

The Housing Ombudsman Service's Annual Performance Report provides further insight into our performance for 2024/25 and can be accessed [here](#) (add in link).

Board Member Responsible for Complaints

Our Board monitor how we deliver against our strategic objectives set out in our Corporate Plan 2030 and has a member who is responsible for complaints (MRC). The MRC champions a positive complaint handling culture and provides assurance to the board that complaint handling within Aspire promotes service improvement for customers and learning and business improvement for the organisation.

Customer Advocacy and Resolutions Evaluation group



As part of our commitment to customer engagement, we work closely with several dedicated customer panels on key service areas. Our CARE group focuses specifically on complaints handling. Meeting quarterly, the group reviews performance data and a selection of anonymised complaint cases chosen at random. Their valuable insights and suggestions help us identify opportunities to improve our approach and enhance the customer experience.

Aspiring Complaints Excellence (ACE)

Aspire Housing established the Aspiring Complaints Excellence (ACE) group in November 2024 to support sector-wide learning and improvement. Chaired by Aspire's Customer Relations Manager, the group brings together 30 complaint professionals from 21 housing organisations across the West Midlands. Meeting quarterly, ACE provides a collaborative space to share best practice, engage with the Housing Ombudsman, and promote learning from complaints to improve services. The group also helps members stay aligned with the Complaint Handling Code through regular communication and shared insights.

Our response to complaints

We train all our complaint handlers using the Chartered Institute of Housing's professional standards, which focus on seven key areas of good practice:



Integrity



Inclusive



Ethical



Knowledgeable



Skilled



Advocate



Leadership

All our new colleagues learn how to record complaints properly and understand why customer feedback is important for improving our services.

Everyone who handles complaints takes part in regular mandatory training, including yearly refreshers, to ensure they can respond efficiently and effectively to your concerns. They also commit to our Complaints Charter, which supports a people-first approach by nurturing positive attitudes and behaviours.

In addition to our complaints handlers, we have a multi-disciplinary team of High-level Oversight and Unresolved Situation Experts (HOUSE). This group meet weekly to review complex cases and make sure they're resolved as quickly and effectively as possible.

Compensation

If we make a mistake that affects you, we'll make it right, whether that's with flowers, vouchers, rent credit, or financial compensation. We follow the Housing Ombudsman's Remedies Guidance to ensure our approach is fair and consistent.

This year, we paid £71,817 in compensation. While it's important to put things right, our goal is to get it right first time, so we can invest more in improving our services and your home

Listening, learning and improving

When you make a complaint, we listen, and we work to resolve it. But that's not the end of it; we also look at why you've had to make a complaint, and what we can do to improve things so that it doesn't happen again. We also look at what else is happening in the social housing sector and combine this information with things like customer satisfaction surveys, rulings from the housing ombudsman, and our own research to help us get a clear view of what matters most to people.

Here are some examples of changes we've made in response to feedback and complaints

You told us...	We listened and improved
The time we take to complete repairs is too long	<p>Our Repairs and Empty Homes recovery plan concluded in March 2025, successfully reducing jobs in progress to under 1,000. In August 2024, customers waited an average of 50 days for repairs; by April 2025, that dropped to just 16 days.</p> <p>We're continuing to improve our repair service productivity through new ways of working and by relocating our stock suppliers to a more central hub.</p>
We do not communicate effectively or accurately about the progress of repairs	<p>We've merged the Scheduling and Customer Excellence teams to streamline the repair journey. Customers now receive text confirmations with a 24/7 rescheduling link.</p> <p>We're also exploring live tracking for trades colleagues to give customers more visibility and flexibility on the day of their appointment.</p>
There are issues with incomplete repairs and outstanding follow-up work	<p>We're reviewing operational plans to allow more flexibility in appointments. This includes enabling colleagues to stay until repairs are fully completed, with next jobs reassigned if needed. Where follow-up work is required, our aim will be for the same colleague to return at a time that suits the customer, supporting consistency, building trust, and ensuring greater accountability.</p> <p>We've also improved our repair triage process by capturing more detailed job information upfront, ensuring colleagues have the right time and tools to complete the work efficiently.</p>
There are issues with general external repairs	<p>Our 2025/26 Home Improvement Survey plan will see the team visit 1,900 homes. These surveys support future investment planning, identify housing health and safety hazards that require remediation, and help keep customers safe and warm in their homes. We plan to complete surveys on all our customers' homes within five years.</p>

You told us...	We listened and improved
<p>That our response to Damp, Mould and Condensation Repairs needs improving</p>	<p>Over the past year, we have invested in new technology to treat damp and mould, including equipment that eliminates spores from the air, walls, and furniture. We've also reviewed our processes to ensure full compliance with Awaab's Law, which takes effect on 27 October 2025.</p> <p>Under the new law, landlords must investigate emergency repairs within 24 hours and significant hazards within 10 working days, with remedial works starting within 5 days of investigation completion.</p> <p>In addition to this, our team is actively using reporting tools to monitor and respond to recurring cases, ensuring we continue to work towards and improved and accountable service.</p>
<p>We need to improve our general communication</p>	<p>We've identified repeat enquiries from some customers and now use system alerts to monitor contact patterns. This helps us proactively reach out to customers when needed, support our Contact Centre in resolving issues more effectively, and guide our Locality team in offering wraparound support.</p> <p>Our upgraded telephony system has improved colleague availability, helping resolve more enquiries at first contact.</p> <p>Following feedback about delayed responses from colleagues, we've prioritised adherence to our Customer Promises. Performance has improved over the past year, and we continue to focus on this.</p>

You told us...	We listened and improved
You have concerns regarding some colleague's attitude/conduct	<p>We've delivered practical, scenario-based training to support vulnerable customers and embed Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) principles, informed by real case studies. Our EDI Group also ran three targeted toolbox talks through team meetings.</p> <p>Mandatory EDI eLearning launched in September 2024 to ensure a consistent baseline of understanding, and all front-facing colleagues completed additional face-to-face training aligned with Chartered Institute of Housing professional standards and Ombudsman case studies to drive lasting behavioural change.</p> <p>A learning needs analysis completed with our Neighbourhoods and Customer Excellence teams is shaping tailored development, which will be extended to other customer-facing roles.</p> <p>We've also introduced Team Leaders into our Repairs Service structure who carry out site safety audits, including behavioural assessments.</p>

Looking forward to 2025/26

Over the past year, Aspire has made meaningful progress in strengthening our complaints handling approach and embedding a culture of listening, learning, and improvement. The reduction in overall complaint volumes, improved response times, and increased customer satisfaction reflect the positive impact of our efforts.

We recognise that complaints are not just a measure of dissatisfaction, they are a vital source of insight. Through continued investment in training, collaboration across teams, and a commitment to transparency, we have taken significant steps to ensure that every complaint is treated as an opportunity to improve.

While we are proud of the progress made, we remain focused on the work still to be done. We will continue to act on feedback, learn from Ombudsman findings, and work closely with our customers and colleagues to deliver a service that is fair, responsive, and puts people first.

Looking ahead, our priority will be to strengthen Stage 1 investigations and responses. By improving the quality and clarity of our initial complaint handling, we aim to reduce the number of cases that customers feel need to be escalated to Stage 2 and further increase overall satisfaction with the complaints process. In addition, we will focus on enhancing our lessons learnt framework to ensure that learning from complaints is consistently captured, recorded, and embedded, helping us prevent similar issues from recurring.

Aspire remains committed to delivering high-quality services and ensuring that every voice is heard. Together, we will keep improving.





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