



Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report

2024-25



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Foreword Board Statement

We're determined to provide the best possible services to our residents. However, we know that sometimes things go wrong. We aim to put things right as quickly as possible and improve so we avoid making the same mistakes. We're listening to feedback and are working with residents to improve services and homes.

This report outlines our performance and self-assessment for the year April 2024 to March 2025 against the Housing Ombudsman Code. Our Board member responsible for complaints, and the Resident Complaint Panel have ensured the self-assessment gives a true reflection of our complaint handling, the improvements we've made, and where we'll focus future improvement.



Introduction

This report and self-assessment cover Southern Housing compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, and our complaints handling performance from April 2024 to March 2025. It also covers our subsidiaries, including:

- ◆ Charity for Julia Spicer for Almshouses
- ◆ Samuel Lewis Foundation
- ◆ Amicus Group Ltd
- ◆ Crystal Palace HA
- ◆ Southern Home Ownership
- ◆ Fellowship Houses Trust
- ◆ Hewitt Homes
- ◆ Triathlon Homes



OUR REPORT INCLUDES:

- ✓ A statement from the Board
- ✓ A summary of complaints including the numbers of complaints received and resolved, and the response times
- ✓ Compliance with the [Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code](#) 
- ✓ Housing Ombudsman cases and reports on our complaint handling
- ✓ Service improvements we've made as a result of learning from complaints and the Housing Ombudsman spotlight and insight reports for the sector.



THE COMPLAINT HANDLING CODE VIDEO



THE RESIDENT COMPLAINTS PANEL VIDEO



Making progress in 2024-25



We listen, learn, and are improving services with residents. When we make changes, we work with residents to cocreate improvements that work for them. Thank you to all the residents who have given their feedback and helped us to shape service improvements. In 2024-25 we improved our:

- ◆ **Complaint service:** More complaints are answered on time, communication is better, and there is more certainty for residents
- ◆ **Repairs service:** Replacing poorly performing contractors with our own in house team and recruited over 90 additional repairs staff. We've also brought repairs call handling in house to improve communication and resolution times.
- ◆ **Anti-social behavior service:** acting faster with better resident communication, and ensuring we take account of risks to vulnerable residents.



There is more we can do, and we'll continue to work with residents to improve. You can read more about our improvement plan on page 14.

Resident involvement in our self-assessment

Our self-assessment of compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code has been scrutinised by our Board Member Responsible for Complaints and the Resident Complaints Panel. The Resident Complaints Panel, which is made up of individuals from diverse backgrounds, brings a range of perspectives to influence improvements to complaints handling. Over the past year the panel reviewed and challenged performance to help drive better resident experiences including making sure our standard letters and communication work for residents and making changes to our complaints leaflet.

Our self-assessment can be found [here](#) .



Complaints handling performance

During 2024-25 we responded to 8,162 complaints compared to 5,359 in 2023-24. We've continued to improve complaints handling performance over the last year, and this includes:

- ➊ **Acknowledging more complaints on time:** We acknowledged 95% of Stage 1 complaints in 5 working days in 2024-25 compared to 89% in 2023-24 and 90% of Stage 2 Complaints (there was no requirement to record in 2023-24)
- ➋ **Responding to more complaints on time:** We responded to 90% of Stage 1 complaints on time in 2024-25 compared to 77% in 2023-24 and 91% of Stage 2 Complaints in 2024-25, compared to 55% in 2023-24
- ➌ **Improving our complaints information and communication:** Working with residents to create a new resident information leaflet (Putting it Right) and letters – this means clearer and more empathetic information for residents
- ➍ **Improving our service for vulnerable residents:** We updated guidance for teams and changed systems so we can respond better to individual needs
- ➎ **Training:** We trained colleagues and contractors to help respond to complaints more effectively complaints effectively
- ➏ **Improving performance management of complaints:** So that all our teams and contractors remain focused on achieving the best results for residents, we set complaints performance objectives for all teams
- ➐ **Improving processes:** Updating our systems for recording and triaging complaints that are handled through alternative routes such as service charge disputes or as service requests
- ➑ **Technology:** Implementing a single complaint handling system, which will help us to offer a more efficient service and improved experience for residents.

We'll continue to improve the complaints handling experiences through the next year and beyond.

- ✓ We've introduced a single phone number and email address from June 2025 for all residents, regardless of legacy organisation. Website information and published literature has been updated in line with changes and this information has been shared with residents
- ✓ We're continuing to improve our data collection of additional needs and reasonable adjustments
- ✓ We've implemented revisions to our Unacceptable Behaviour Policy from June 2025
- ✓ We're making technology system changes to improve how we deliver agreed complaint actions and reduce the time it takes to resolve complaints
- ✓ We're simplifying the compensation payment process and making it easier for residents
- ✓ We're embedding and monitoring our contractor guidance expectations, to ensure all complaints are channelled to, and managed by, the Complaints Resolution team effectively
- ✓ We're continuing to learn lessons to improve complaint handling.

Complaints Performance

BELOW IS A SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS APRIL 2024 TO MARCH 2025:

Number of complaints received at stage 1

8116

2023/24: 5315

Stage 1 acknowledged in line with Ombudsman Code

95%

2023/24: 89%

Number of complaints responded to*

8162

2023/24: 5359

Stage 1 complaints responded to in line with Ombudsman code

90%

2023/24: 77%

Number of complaints received at stage 2

2285

2023/24: 1102

Stage 2 acknowledged in line with Ombudsman Code

90%

2023/24: n/a

Number of complaints responded to Stage 2

2221

2023/24: 970

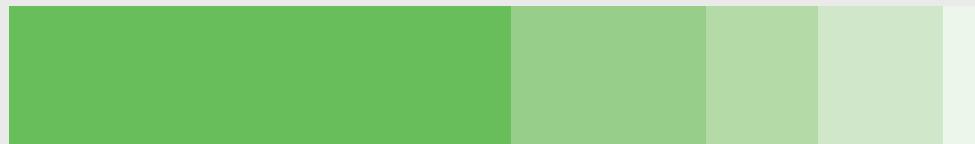
Stage 2 responded to in line with Ombudsman code

91%

2023/24: 55%

*Includes complaints first reported before 31 March 2024 and responded to after 1 April 2024

Sometimes it's more appropriate to direct complaints through other channels, for example because of legal issues. In 2024-25 we handled 70 cases in this way, in line with the Ombudsman code and our [Complaints Policy](#). Below is a summary of the cases handled through an alternative process:

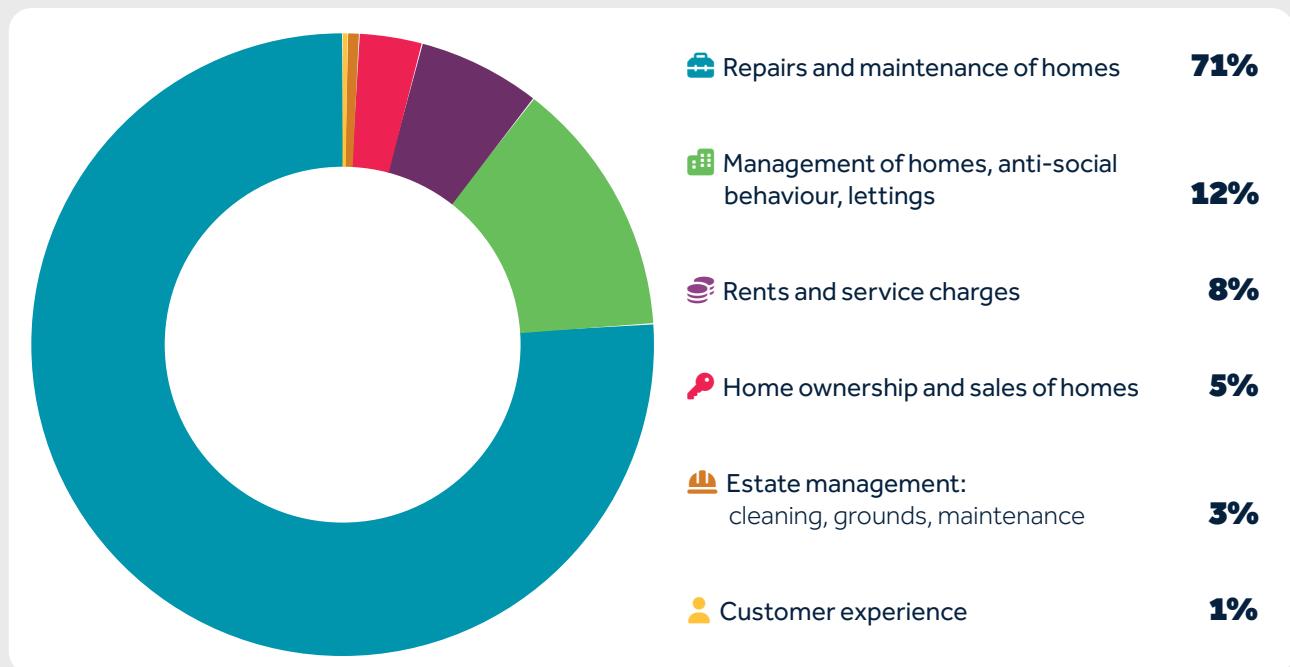


- Service request – not reported before
- Rent and Service Charge Dispute
- ASB issue handled under ASB process
- Legal and insurance claims
- Complaint outside policy timeframe

2024-25
36
14
8
9
3

Reasons for complaints

The chart below shows the service areas where we received complaints from April 2024 to March 2025.



Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman is a free (to residents), independent, and impartial service. You can find out more about the Housing Ombudsman service by visiting their [website](#).

The Ombudsman investigates complaints and resolves disputes involving the tenants and leaseholders of social landlords, like Southern Housing. Residents can take a complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service for investigation after going through the landlord's (Southern Housing) complaint process, if the issues have not been resolved to the resident's satisfaction. The service also helps where the landlord is not responding to a resident's complaint.

Members of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme must comply with the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. The Ombudsman has the power to make orders to landlords, this might mean ordering the landlord to apologise, carry out works or pay compensation. The Housing Ombudsman work is funded through compulsory landlord subscription fees, which for Southern Housing were £609,000 in 2024-25, rising from £409,000 in 2023-24.



HOUSING OMBUDSMAN DETERMINATIONS

The Housing Ombudsman will make recommendations and a determination when they review a complaint. There are several types of determination including:

- **Maladministration:** where the landlord, for example, has failed to comply with its legal obligations, its policies and procedures, or unreasonably delayed dealing with the matter. This could be a finding of **service failure, maladministration or severe maladministration**, depending on the seriousness of the failure and the impact on the resident. Service failure is the lowest level of maladministration and is reserved for minor failings where action is still needed to put things right
- **No maladministration:** where the landlord is found to have acted appropriately
- **Redress:** where the landlord resolved the complaint satisfactorily.
- **Resolved with intervention:** where the complaint was resolved with Ombudsman help
- **Outside jurisdiction (OSJ):** where the Ombudsman didn't have the authority to investigate. This could be for a variety of reasons including: the complaint had not been made within a reasonable timescale; the complaint did not meet the conditions of the scheme; or the matter was more appropriately dealt with by the courts, a tribunal, another complaint handling body or regulator.



Housing Ombudsman determinations

2024-25

The tables below summarises the determinations made by the Housing Ombudsman for Southern Housing from April 2024 to March 2025*.

SERVICE DETERMINATIONS

	No Maladministration	Redress	Service Failure	Maladministration	Severe Maladministration
2024-25	47	34	51	142	21

COMPLAINT HANDLING DETERMINATIONS

	No Maladministration	Redress	Service Failure	Maladministration	Severe Maladministration
2024-25	2	21	34	68	3

*These figures are correct at the time of publication but are subject to change following appeals and final ratification with HOS July-October 2025

Most of the determinations in 2024-25 related to complaints made between April 2022 and March 2024, as the Ombudsman needs time to review the case. The Ombudsman currently aims to complete an investigation within 12 months from the time a resident refers their complaint to them. You can find individual cases on the Housing Ombudsman website by following this link, although not all cases are published due to data protection issues.

We were fully complaint with responding to orders and requests made by the Housing Ombudsman, meaning we received no Complaint Handling Failure Orders.

If you need help finding information, please contact the [Housing Ombudsman Service](#).



The Housing Ombudsman annual report about Southern Housing: 2023-24

The Housing Ombudsman publishes reports each year for some organisations. The latest report for Southern Housing is for April 2023 to March 2024. You can see a summary in the table below, or for more detail please see the [Housing Ombudsman report here](#).

From April 2023 - March 2024 Southern Housing had a maladministration rate of 79%, compared to the national average of 73%.

Housing Ombudsman outcomes		Southern Housing 2023-24
 Determinations		177
 Findings		418
 Maladministration findings		313
 Orders Made		586
 Recommendations		157
 Complaint handling failure orders		0
 Compensation		£145,155
 Maladministration rate		79%

Notes for table above:

Determination: The overall outcome of the findings of a case.

Findings: If several issues are raised within one case a finding is made on each issue.

Maladministration findings: a finding of service failure, maladministration or severe maladministration

Orders: Remedies to put things right to resolve the individual complaint. These can include compensation, ordering a repair to be undertaken or a survey to be completed, as well as apologies and reviews of policy.

Recommendations: further opportunities for improvement

Complaint Handling Failure Order: Issued if a landlord does not comply with any orders made.



Special Investigation into Southern Housing by the Housing Ombudsman:

In May 2024, the Housing Ombudsman published a report following its investigation from June 2023 to May 2024. The report covers service delivery between October 2018 and September 2023. You can find the [full report here](#) and [our response here](#). We've worked with the Ombudsman to successfully complete all of the recommendations made in the report. The Ombudsman has now signed this off as complete.

Listening, learning and making improvements

In this section, we'll focus on how we've listened, learned, acted and improved based on complaints from residents and recommendations by the Housing Ombudsman. We've also included learning from the [Housing Ombudsman Spotlight reports](#) (best practice guidance). Working with residents we cocreated improvements.

IMPROVING OUR REPAIRS SERVICES

Repairs is a key service for residents, with over 150,000 completed each year. To improve, we increased our repairs workforce, replacing and insourcing (we directly employ workers) the repairs carried out by underperforming contractors. We strengthened our contract performance management practice. In addition, we implemented a five-day completion time for communal repairs under our London repairs contracts. In December 2024, we worked with residents to revise our repairs policy to include clearer timescales for completing repairs.

Residents said repairs communication must improve. We brought our repair calls in house so we can book repairs faster and have introduced automated text messaging to confirm appointments. The improvements we've made to record keeping and sharing information internally will also help to make sure residents don't have to repeat information when contacting us. When surveyed after a repair, 84% of residents said they'd been kept up to date about their repair compared to 68% in 2023-24. Similarly, the ease of dealing with repairs increased to 86% compared to 75% in 2023-24.

Residents also said we carried out many visits to identify the repair issues, which meant delays. Recently we introduced a resident video calling function, allowing us to diagnose more repairs remotely. This helps us to diagnose the repair quickly and more accurately and will reduce the number of visits needed to complete the repairs.

With these changes we're seeing improvements to the resident repairs experience. Resident satisfaction with their repair increased to 87% compared to 71% in 2023-24. Improved resident experience of our repairs service is our top priority.

CONTACTING US

Our teams manage over a million contacts with residents every year, so we're focused on getting our phone and digital services right. We used feedback from over 2,000 residents to cocreate our technology systems to improve how residents contact us. In June 2025 we'll no longer have different numbers based on our legacy organisations, and there will be a single email and single phone number for all residents which will make it easier to contact us and get the services they need.

We've listened to resident concerns of being told that 'someone else needs to answer their query' and that they'll respond in "x" days. We have also heard about the difficulty of having to contact multiple teams to get answers. In response we're reshaping our service around a single front door designed to resolve more residents' enquiries in one contact.

RESPONDING TO RESIDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

We've trained colleagues and changed guidance for colleagues to recognise, respond and record information relating to residents' needs and adjustments. This means we can take more effective action to tailor services for residents. We're making good progress on our action plan against the recommendations of the Housing Ombudsman spotlight reports on [Attitudes, Rights and Respect](#) and [Knowledge and information management](#) and we'll do more to improve in the coming year.

IMPROVING DAMP AND MOULD SERVICES

Living in a home with damp and mould can affect the health and wellbeing of residents. We reviewed damp and mould complaints, asked residents to review the service, and cocreated improvements with residents. We now have a specialist Damp and Mould Team and have increased our dedicated damp and mould contractors. This means better diagnosis of damp and mould in our homes, faster repairs, and better communication. We trained frontline colleagues to assess the impact on health when residents report damp and mould and prioritise repairs for residents who have health conditions and additional needs. In addition, we're implementing recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman Spotlight report on [damp and mould](#) and changes to our processes in line with [Awaab's Law](#).

INVESTING IN WELL MAINTAINED HOMES

Residents have said that a well-maintained home is essential to their overall satisfaction. When surveyed 72% said they were satisfied that their home was well maintained. This score is amongst the highest of all large London housing associations. We want to improve and are investing £370 million in our existing home improvements over the next five years.

We're giving residents more influence over the aesthetics of their homes, fostering a sense of pride in their communities and meeting the governments Decent Homes Standards. We're mid-way through crafting our future long-term contracts with residents, focusing on efficiency and consistency to ensure we collaborate effectively with our new partners to deliver the best possible service for our residents. Our team ensures resident feedback informs every stage of contract design. By understanding what works, what doesn't, and areas for improvement based on their experiences, we can ensure the new contracts align with residents need.

ESTATE SERVICES, CLEANING AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

Residents said that our in-house service offers better quality, and this gives rise to fewer complaints than when we employ contractors. So, we insourced contracts in the Isle of Wight, Sussex, and North London with plans for more insourcing over the coming year.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB)

Residents contacting us about ASB shared they often felt like they were passed around to different teams without getting real solutions. Others mentioned they wanted faster updates on what's being done about their ASB case. Listening to resident concerns, we've taken steps to improve our ASB service. We trained colleagues on our co-created ASB process and risk assessments to help them respond to anti-social behaviour more effectively and improve communication with residents. Our new "Local Link" model also introduces a dedicated team responsible for overseeing ASB issues in local neighbourhoods. This will allow us to provide more personal, local support and help build stronger relationships with residents.

Additionally, the ASB team are making it easier to report issues online and have introduced useful tools like a [noise app](#) to help record problems. By implementing these changes in line with the recommendation in the Housing Ombudsman spotlight report on [noise nuisance](#), we aim to create safer and friendlier communities where everyone is proud to live.

LOCAL COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

We reorganised our teams' responsibilities, so every resident has a dedicated "Local Link" supporting them and their neighbours. This ensures we have local relationships, knowledge and expertise to improve local services. Our resident involvement teams are helping to ensure that residents are able to influence and cocreate improvements in their communities.

SERVICE CHARGE ENQUIRIES

Residents are naturally concerned about value for money, and this can lead to complaints about service charges. Communication was also raised as an issue by residents. We are making good progress against our Service Charge improvement plan based using resident feedback. We shared tailored information leaflets about how we work out service charges and the reasons behind an increase. We also improved our estimating process and simplified the information in rent notification letters. Our Service Charge Team is larger and will enable us to answer service charge queries more quickly. Our residents have also endorsed our new Service Charge Policy. We are continuing to listen to and work with our residents as we transform each stage of the multi-year service charge cycle.

EXTERNAL MANAGING AGENTS (EMA)

Some of our homes are in blocks and on estates where we don't own the freehold. This means we're not responsible for many of the services we'd normally provide ourselves, such as, cleaning in communal areas, grounds maintenance, repairs to the common areas, keeping the lifts in service etc. These services and many more are the responsibility of the building owner (usually the freeholder), who, in these arrangements, is also our landlord. Freeholders usually employ a managing agent to act for them (we refer to them as External Managing Agents).

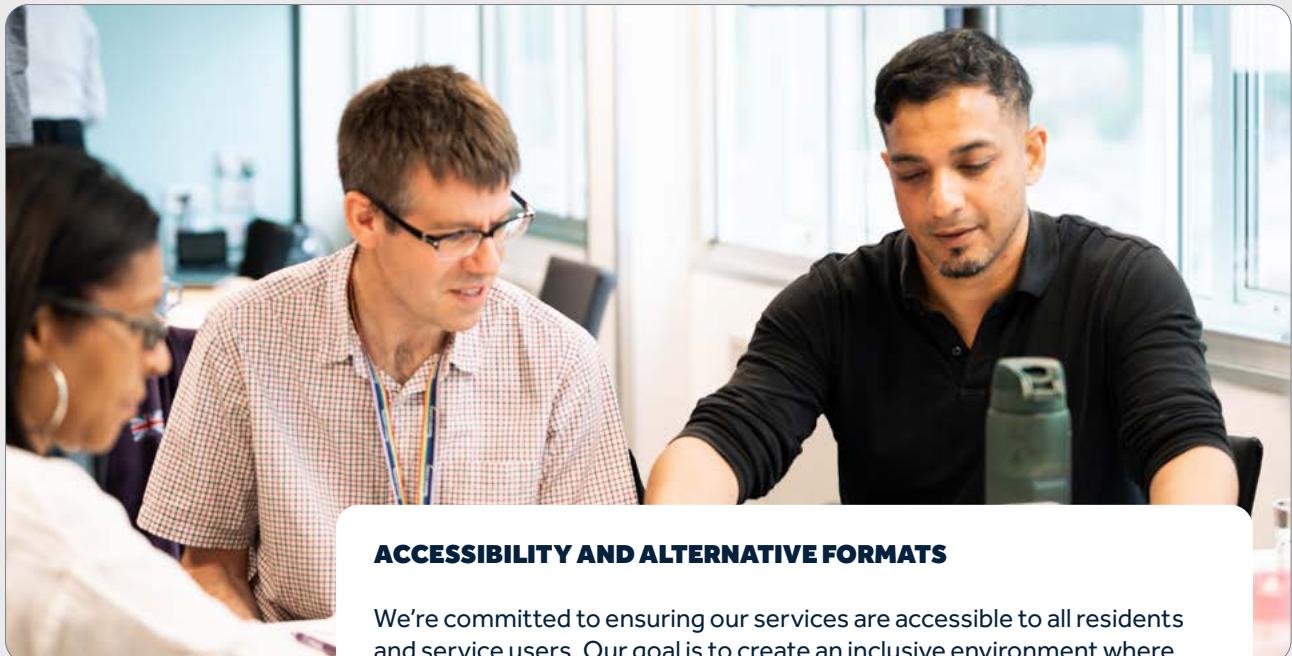
We created a specialist Managing Agents Relationship Team to improve how we work with managing agents (EMA's). The team make sure we are working collaboratively with EMA's, so residents have the best possible services. This includes:

- ◆ Liaising with EMAs and making sure obligations are clear, as they vary between estates and buildings
- ◆ Delivering our action plan and the recommendations in the [Housing Ombudsman spotlight report on managing agents](#) ☺.



Conclusion

We're continuing to improve our complaints service and use complaints from our residents to listen and learn so we don't repeat the same mistakes. By working together with residents to cocreate solutions we'll continue to improve their service experience and work towards creating communities where residents are proud to live.



ACCESSIBILITY AND ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

We're committed to ensuring our services are accessible to all residents and service users. Our goal is to create an inclusive environment where everyone can engage with us in a way that suits their needs.

We're happy to provide the information in this report in an alternative format to ensure you have the best possible experience. We've an accessibility and language translation tool on every page of our website that you can use alongside this report. The tool can be accessed by selecting the orange ReachDeck button located in the bottom right corner of your screen when on the relevant website page. ReachDeck allows users to:

- ✓ Increase text size
- ✓ Change colour schemes
- ✓ Translate content into multiple languages
- ✓ Convert text into audio.

If there's a way we can adjust our services to better support you, we encourage you to let us know.

