

Lewisham Council Housing Service

Annual Complaints Report 2025

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	7
Regulatory Context.....	7
Self-Assessment against the Complaint Handling Code.....	8
Background	9
Themes and Trends in Complaint Casework.....	9
Refused Complaints.....	11
Resident Engagement and Feedback.....	<u>1342</u>
Resident Engagement Activities	<u>1342</u>
Resident Satisfaction Surveys	<u>1443</u>
Themes and Trends from Resident Feedback.....	<u>1544</u>
Learning from complaints	<u>1746</u>
Housing Ombudsman	<u>1847</u>
Analysis of Determinations	<u>1847</u>
Relevant Publications	<u>2149</u>
Learning from Ombudsman Casework	<u>2120</u>
Service Improvement Work	<u>2224</u>
Housing Transformation Programme.....	<u>Error! Bookmark not defined.24</u>
Complaints Transformation (Housing Services)	<u>2224</u>
Complaints Handling Improvement Project (CHIP).....	<u>2224</u>
Repairs Transformation Programme (Housing Services)	22
Annex A: Housing Ombudsman Case List 2024/25.....	<u>2423</u>

Executive Summary

Lewisham Council is dedicated to ensuring that our complaint handling processes are transparent, efficient, and aligned with the highest standards. This annual report provides an overview of our Housing (Landlord) Service's complaint handling performance for 2024/2025, including analyses of complaints, Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) findings, and service improvements based on learning from complaints.

Regulatory Context

The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 introduced new consumer standards and a proactive regulation regime, effective from 1 April 2024. The 2024 Complaint Handling Code mandates compliance in Scrutiny and Oversight, Policy and Practice. Our self-assessment shows near complete compliance, with plans to close the final gaps by March 2026 through the Housing Transformation Programme.

Lewisham Context

Following the reintegration of Lewisham Homes into the Council in October 2023, a review revealed significant failings, especially in repairs, leading to increased complaints. In response, the council launched the Housing Transformation Programme in November 2023, focusing on Repairs, Complaints, Temporary Accommodation Reduction, and IT Transformation.

In December 2023, the Council made a self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing, highlighting breaches in Consumer Standards, particularly in repairs and fire safety. The Regulator issued a Regulatory Notice on 26 March 2024, acknowledging Lewisham's proactive approach to co-regulation, and continues to monitor progress.

Themes and Trends in Complaint Casework

Key themes from 2024/25 include:

- Repairs and Maintenance: Predominantly issues with leaks, damp, mould, and disrepair.
- Communication and Follow-Up: Delays in responses and poor record-keeping.
- Complaint Handling Process: Inconsistent policy application and poor quality responses.
- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB): Concerns over handling and resolution.
- Resident Feedback: Low satisfaction rates in surveys, including issues with resolution times and response quality.
- Housing Ombudsman Casework: High volume with frequent findings of maladministration, in repairs and complaint handling.

Resident Engagement and Feedback

Resident feedback has been crucial in shaping our improvements. Engagement activities included surveys, workshops, and feedback from the Resident Scrutiny Panel, leading to actionable recommendations such as improved training, quality assurance, and operational enhancements.

Service Improvement Work

We have continued with several initiatives to transform housing services and enhance complaint handling:

- Complaints Transformation: Updating policies, improving reporting, enhancing training, and analysing feedback and Housing Ombudsman casework.
- Repairs Transformation Programme: Aims to improve communication, tenant satisfaction, efficient operations, and budget control.

Tenant satisfaction with how we handle complaints rose slightly from 21% to 26% between 2023/24 and 2024/25 – which brings us up to the London local authority average.

However, our complaints statistics for 2024/25 are poor, showing a steep decline in Stage 1 complaints responded to on time (from 83% to 34%) and a smaller decline in Stage 2 complaints responded to on time (from 80% to 74%).

We are confident that this is because we completely overhauled our process and the computer system we use to track and monitor complaints. It has taken us some time to train staff and get our data right on the new system, particularly around acknowledging receipt of complaints.

By June 2025 we had resolved those problems and worked through our backlog. We are now responding to 88% of stage 1 complaints received on time and aim to reach our target of 90% by the end of 2025/26.

2024/25 Service Improvement Plan

Key achievements from our 2024/25 Service Improvement Plan include:

- A new Compensation, Reimbursement and Remedies policy developed in line with Housing Ombudsman Service guidance.
- Review of the website pages and search function so that residents can easily access information on how to complain about our services.
- Our case management system was updated in line with the Code to enable reporting on acknowledgments on time within five days for Stage 1 complaints.

The following were not completed in 2024/25 but have been completed in Q1 of 2025/26:

- Complete review into staffing/ resourcing for complaints handling in the Housing Directorate. Recruitment has taken place to three posts in 2025/26.
- The Corporate Complaint Handling Improvement Project (CHIP) developed a series of procedure documents and training for staff involved in complaint handling.
- Learning from complaints system enhancements within the iCasework system allows learning from complaints to be recorded and reported in a systematic way.

Outstanding actions include:

- The development of a Knowledge and Information Strategy and associated action plans. These are due to be agreed by Mayor and Cabinet in October 2025.
- Reviewing the Vulnerability Policy. This will be completed in 2025/26 following a recent mapping exercise.
- Developing a Reasonable Adjustments Policy. This is due to be agreed by Mayor and Cabinet on 10 September 2025.

2025/26 Complaints Service Improvement Plan

We have developed a new complaints service improvement plan for 2025/26 which we report on monthly in our meetings with the Regulator of Social Housing.

The objectives of the plan are:

- Improve timeliness of complaint responses: Ensure compliance with Complaint Handling Code: Stage 1 (acknowledged within 5 working days, responded to within a further 10 working days); Stage 2 (acknowledged within 5 working days, responded to within 20 working days).
- Enhance early resolution rates: Increase the number of complaints resolved at the first point of contact or at Stage 1.
- Improve performance with Housing Ombudsman casework: zero Complaint Handling Failure Orders.
- Strengthen processes and embed learning: Streamline and clarify complaint handling processes to achieve efficiency. Systematically embed learning from complaints into organisational practices.
- Improve resident experience: Enhance tenant satisfaction measures related to complaint handling, focusing on perceptions of fairness, respect, and effective communication.

- Policies and Strategies: The following to be agreed during the year;
Reasonable Adjustments Policy, Knowledge and Information Strategy and a revised Vulnerability Policy

These actions reflect our commitment to improving services and ensuring residents receive the highest quality of service. Resident feedback has been vital in shaping our plans, and we will continue to engage with residents to meet needs and expectations.

Introduction

At Lewisham Council we are dedicated to ensuring that our complaint handling processes are transparent, efficient, and comply with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

Our Values: In Lewisham Council, we are **ambitious** for the future of our borough. We are **inclusive** in working with our residents, partners, and colleagues, and **collaborative** in how we work together. We are **accountable** for our actions, and **trustworthy** in all we do.

This annual report provides a comprehensive overview of our Housing Service's complaint handling performance for the year 2024/2025. It includes qualitative and quantitative analyses, summaries of types of complaints, and our responses to findings of non-compliance by the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS). The report also highlights the service improvements made based on learning from complaints and outlines actions taken following the Ombudsman's reports.

Regulatory Context

The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 introduced new consumer standards and a proactive consumer regulation regime. This Act has enhanced the powers of the Housing Ombudsman, including the statutory Complaint Handling Code, a compliance framework, and a duty to monitor. The Statutory Code came into effect on 1 April 2024.

We have scrutinised and challenged our performance, looking at compliance in both policy and practice when carrying out the self-assessment. Our approach to this self-assessment is guided by the principles of compliance as outlined in the Code Compliance Framework.

According to the 2024 Code Compliance Framework published by the Housing Ombudsman, landlord compliance with the Code is assessed in three areas, and the requirements in all three areas must be met:

- *Compliance in Scrutiny and Oversight:* Ensuring that the landlord has produced an annual complaints performance and service improvement report, which must include the annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements.

The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) which in the case of Lewisham is our Mayor and Cabinet and published on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

- *Compliance in Policy:* Ensuring that the landlord's complaints policy meets the expectations of the Code contained in all other provisions.
- *Compliance in Practice:* Ensuring that the landlord's complaints handling meets the expectations of the Code in practice. This assessment is based on the landlord's own reported performance, data, and insights from the Ombudsman's casework and information from external data sources.

Self-Assessment against the Complaint Handling Code

Our self-assessment indicates that Lewisham is majority compliant with the 2024 Complaint Handling Code.

- *Our Compliance in Scrutiny and Oversight:* We have completed our self-assessment against the Code and produced this annual complaints report and a service improvement action plan.
- *Our Compliance in Policy:* Our Complaints Policy framework is up to date following work during 2024/25.
- *Compliance in Practice:* Complaints and Housing Ombudsman casework shows that we are not consistently meeting our targets for complaints handling.

In 2024/25 our performance at Stage 1 was very low with only 34% of complaints handled within timescales. There were a number of reasons for this which have been addressed within the Landlord Performance Report considered by Mayor and Cabinet in July 2025. Stage 2 performance was at 74% which is also below target and we continue to receive Ombudsman casework where Stage 2 complaints have not been responded to within timescale.

The volume of Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) casework continues to rise with 215 findings of maladministration received by the service year in 2024/25 including 184 findings of service failure or maladministration.

Results from surveys and resident engagement shows that resident satisfaction with complaints handling is low at 26% although this has risen slightly since last year's 21%. Lastly, our poor record keeping has been a recurring theme in Ombudsman casework.

Background

Lewisham Council has been responsible for the full range of housing services for the majority of the Council's tenants and leaseholders since the transition of Lewisham Homes to the Council in October 2023.

In March 2024, following a self-referral, the Council received a Regulatory Notice from the Regulator of Social Housing and monthly regulatory engagement meetings have continued since. While complaints were not part of the original self-referral the Regulator is now reviewing a Complaints Improvement Plan at the meetings. In July 2024 the Housing Ombudsman Service announced a special investigation into Lewisham under Paragraph 49 of their powers. Evidence was provided in December 2024 and the investigation team visited Lewisham in January 2025. The report is expected in summer 2025.

Themes and Trends in Complaint Casework

Throughout 2024/2025, several recurring themes and trends emerged from the analysis of our complaint casework, resident feedback, and Housing Ombudsman casework. These insights have been crucial in identifying areas for improvement and shaping our service transformation initiatives.

Repairs and Maintenance

- **Leaks, damp, and mould:** The majority of complaints centred around issues related to leaks, damp, and mould. Residents frequently reported dissatisfaction with the handling of these issues, including delays in repairs and inadequate responses to their complaints.
- **Disrepair:** Complaints regarding property disrepair have been significant. Issues such as structural problems and persistent maintenance failures have been commonly reported.
- **Failure to complete repairs despite multiple visits:** A number of complaints arise as despite multiple visits and interventions from a number of officers the repairs are not considered completed by the resident or the problem recurs.

Communication and Follow-Up

- **Delayed responses:** A notable trend in the complaints was the delay in responding to and resolving issues. Residents highlighted long waiting times for initial responses and subsequent actions.

- Poor record keeping: Investigations revealed that inadequate record-keeping practices hampered effective complaint resolution. This was a recurring theme in the Ombudsman's findings of maladministration.

Complaint Handling Process

- Inconsistent application of policies: The analysis showed that complaint handling policies were not consistently applied. This inconsistency led to varying resident experiences and outcomes.
- Quality of complaint responses: Feedback from residents pointed out the need for improvement in the quality of written communication. Residents reported that responses were often unclear or did not address their concerns comprehensively.
- Ombudsman casework: In 2024/25 there were 105 determinations (including nine which were either outside of jurisdiction or not investigated with agreement for the service to remedy) with 215 findings of service failure or maladministration, 66 of which were for failings in complaint handling. A total of £130,064.00 was awarded in compensation payments.
- Complaint Handling Failure Orders: We received 13 Complaint Handling Failure Orders in 2024/25, compared to 4 in 2023/24.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

- Handling of ASB complaints: While not as prevalent as repair issues, complaints regarding anti-social behaviour were significant. Residents expressed concerns over the handling and resolution of ASB cases.

Resident Feedback

- Low satisfaction rates: Surveys indicated low levels of satisfaction across various aspects of complaint handling. Specific areas of concern included the resolution of complaints, clarity of responses, and the overall handling process.
- Resident Scrutiny Panel: Feedback from the Panel highlighted issues such as the backlog of repairs, failure to meet commitments, and the need for better IT systems integration.

Housing Ombudsman Casework

- High volume of casework: The Housing Ombudsman received a high volume of casework related to Lewisham Council, reflecting both the accessibility of the complaints process and underlying service issues.
- Findings of maladministration: The Ombudsman's determinations frequently found service failures and maladministration, particularly in the handling of repairs and related complaint handling.

Refused Complaints

In the year 2024/2025, Lewisham Council received several complaints that were not accepted. The table below summarises the types of complaints that were refused and the reasons for their refusal.

Reasons:

- Duplicate complaint: Already lodged and in process.
- Not for this organisation: Pertained to matters outside Lewisham Council's jurisdiction.
- Customer refused to provide a name or address.
- Subject to legal proceedings: Involved ongoing legal cases.
- Issue more than 12 months old: Pertained to issues older than 12 months.
- The same complaint has already been dealt with at all stages of the procedure.
- Already investigated by Ombudsman: Previously addressed by the Housing Ombudsman.
- A complaint about council policy.
- Referred to a different team (such as Insurance and Risk).

These refusals ensure that genuine concerns are addressed efficiently while directing non-complaint enquiries to appropriate channels.

Reason for refusal	No.
Duplicate complaint	95
Complaint not for this organisation	8
Customer refused to provide a name or address	7
Same complaint already dealt with at all stages of the procedure	6
Complaint about an issue more than 12 months old	1
Referred to Insurance and Risk team	1

Same complaint already investigated by the Ombudsman	1
Complaint subject to legal proceedings	1
Complaint about council policy	1

Resident Engagement and Feedback

Resident feedback is pivotal to our service delivery, and we have actively engaged with our residents to understand their concerns and expectations. This year, our feedback channels included surveys, Resident Scrutiny, focus groups, and direct communication via our contact centre and online platforms. Residents have highlighted issues such as delays in repairs, communication gaps, and the handling of damp and mould cases. Their input has guided our service improvement initiatives and helped us shape a more responsive and accountable complaints handling process.

We promote the complaints process to residents, including information on how to contact the Housing Ombudsman, via monthly e-newsletters and a dedicated page on our website (search engine optimised to be easily found through keyword searches online).

Resident Engagement Activities

Complaints Workshops 2024/25

At the complaints workshop held in September 2024, several key concerns were raised regarding the handling of repairs and communication processes. A recurring theme was record-keeping, with residents expressing frustration about needing to repeat their issues each time they contacted a new person. There were also questions about whether post-inspections are conducted to verify the quality of work, particularly by contractors, and concerns that proposed remedies are not consistently followed through or tracked to completion.

Residents raised concerns about the behaviour and professionalism of subcontractors, including unnecessary jobs being added, poor workmanship, and inadequate cleaning up after repairs.

In January 2025, to conclude the Complaints Panel, there was a presentation on the upcoming report of the special investigation completed by the Housing Ombudsman Service investigation. The Resident Review Panel have taken on complaints work for 2025/26.

Resident Scrutiny Panel (RSP)

The Resident Scrutiny Panel assessed our approach to complaints handled by the repairs team. Their performance review was published in a report in October 2023. The recommendations from this report were agreed upon and formed the basis of an action plan, with progress regularly reported by Lewisham Council. The latest update at Service and Performance Panel in June 2025 outlined the following completed actions that were implemented in the period covered by this report.

Updates on actions for Key Recommendations from the Review:

- Training and development: HQN letter writing training delivered, this has now been complimented by Council wide complaints handling training.
- Quality assurance: The Corporate Complaints Team carry out quality checks across the Council's complaints and provide written feedback.
- Resident feedback and engagement: A number of workshops have taken place with residents on complaints.
- Policy and process review: Complaints policy was updated to comply with the Complaint Handling Code. The Compensation, Reimbursement and Remedies policy was agreed and is in operation.
- Operational improvements: As part of the Repairs Transformation Programme meetings have taken place with repairs operatives to set expectations about performance and to improve productivity. Stronger management of contractors has also been introduced.
- Transparency and accountability: Learning from complaints has started with the rollout of recording on iCasework but this is something that will be a focus in 2025/26.

Resident Satisfaction Surveys

We carry out two types of surveys on complaint handling: transactional surveys, which gather feedback immediately after a complaint is resolved, and perception surveys, which measure overall satisfaction with the complaint handling process over time.

Transactional

Complaints Handling Monthly Survey Performance: Transaction surveys to understand their experience of a recent complaint. Results indicated low levels of satisfaction, with the highest being 58% for the complaint response being clear and easy to understand, and the lowest being 13% for the handling of the complaint.

Perception

Complaints Quarterly Perception Surveys: Results showed low levels of satisfaction, with only 21% satisfied with the landlord's approach to complaints.

The figure for tenant satisfaction with the landlord's approach to complaints handling is 26% in the 2024/25 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) submission.

Themes and Trends from Resident Feedback

Feedback from residents throughout these engagement activities highlighted several key issues and areas for improvement:

Communication Issues

- **Lack of Updates:** Residents felt uninformed about the status of their complaints.
- **Response Time:** Long delays in responses to emails and calls.
- **Unclear Communication:** Residents were not informed about scheduled visits or repair actions.

Inefficiency and Poor Service

- **Repeated Contacts:** Multiple attempts were needed to get action.
- **Prolonged Resolution Times:** Issues took months or years to resolve.
- **Poor Process Management:** Described as cumbersome and unprofessional.

Accountability and Professionalism

- **Lack of Responsibility:** Residents felt the council did not take ownership of issues.
- **Unprofessional Behaviour:** Reports of rude interactions and accusations.
- **Follow-Up:** Lack of follow-up on reported issues.

Repair and Maintenance Issues

- **Incomplete Repairs:** Repairs were not completed satisfactorily or at all.
- **Quality of Work:** Ongoing issues even after repairs.

Accessibility and Support

- **Difficult Reporting:** Residents were concerned about difficulties contacting the service, specifically long waiting times when ringing the call centre.
- **Vulnerable Residents:** Need for better support for elderly and disabled residents. Ability to identify vulnerable residents and use that information to think/tailor how we provide a service to them.

Health and Safety Concerns

- Impact on Well-being: Significant impact on residents' mental and physical well-being.
- Damp and Mould: Poor handling reports of damp and mould, leading to poor health outcomes.

Conclusion

We have carefully considered all the feedback provided by our residents and have integrated their insights into our Complaints Service Improvement Plan. The Complaints Service Improvement Plan outlines specific actions to address the issues identified in the self-assessment and through resident feedback. Key areas of focus include:

- Developing a Reasonable Adjustments Policy and being more proactive across our frontline services in identifying resident vulnerabilities and needs.
- Improving reporting and monitoring systems.
- Enhancing staff training and resource allocation.
- Developing better communication and information management strategies including our Knowledge and Information Strategy.

By addressing the concerns and suggestions raised by our residents, we aim to build a more effective, responsive, and resident-focused housing service.

Learning from complaints

Damp and mould is an area where the Council receives a large volume of complaints and Housing Ombudsman casework. We have implemented the following changes to the way the service operates in response to learning from complaints:

- We have implemented training to all current and new admin staff on the damp and mould process. This has enabled the team to work collectively, and to understand the expectations of residents when they report damp and mould.
- We have also trained the administration team on mailbox management to ensure they are actioning each email and replying to residents and staff. By doing this each item in the mailbox will only be marked completed once it has been actioned. This has helped to create better communication within the organisation and assisted with building rapport with residents.
- For the complaints team, there is a damp and mould complaints inbox which is managed by a designated admin staff member. This mailbox is actively managed and actioned, which has enabled the complaints team to receive responses and updates in a timely manner and to prioritise any urgent cases.
- Our Property Conditions Manager has developed an efficient internal tracking system to ensure that all damp and mould related repair requests are properly logged and continuously monitored until fully resolved. By implementing a traffic light system to help prioritise cases based on severity. This has allowed the most critical and delayed cases to receive immediate attention.

Housing Ombudsman

Analysis of Determinations

Throughout 2024/2025, the failings in the repairs service have led to a significant rise in complaints, member enquiries, and Housing Ombudsman enquiries. The total number of determinations, findings, and orders made by the Housing Ombudsman has shown substantial increases compared to previous years. Specifically, findings of maladministration have risen sharply, reflecting persistent issues in our complaint handling and service delivery.

The majority of the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) casework pertains to repairs, particularly leaks, damp, mould, and disrepair. These cases often involve delays in carrying out repairs and failures to follow up on actions from complaint responses. Investigations and determinations indicate that poor record-keeping has been a recurring problem, hindering effective complaint resolution. Other categories of complaints include anti-social behaviour (ASB), rehousing queries, and pest control. Issues related to knowledge and information management, as well as the need for better complaints handling training, are frequently highlighted in the Ombudsman's determinations.

High Volume of Casework

The Housing Ombudsman received a high volume of casework related to Lewisham Council, reflecting both the accessibility of the complaints process and underlying service issues.

Determinations and Findings:

In 2024/2025, there were 105 determinations with 215 findings of service failure or maladministration, and 66 findings relating to complaint handling.

£130,064.00 was awarded in compensation payments.

Table showing volumes and type of findings for Lewisham Council 2024/25 compared to 2023/24 and 2022/23.

	2024/25*	2023/24	2022/23
Determinations (excluding Outside of Jurisdiction and Withdrawn)	105	36	8
Findings	265	64	12
Orders made	483	96	16
Service Failure Findings	45	8	
Severe Maladministration Findings	31	10	
Maladministration Findings	139	40	8
Other Findings (such as No Maladministration and Outside of Jurisdiction)	50	6	
Recommendations	99	27	11
CHFOs	13	4	3

Maladministration Rate	87%	83%	67%
Compensation Awards	£130,064.00	£65,461.86	£31,658.00

**data for determinations and findings based on Annex A*

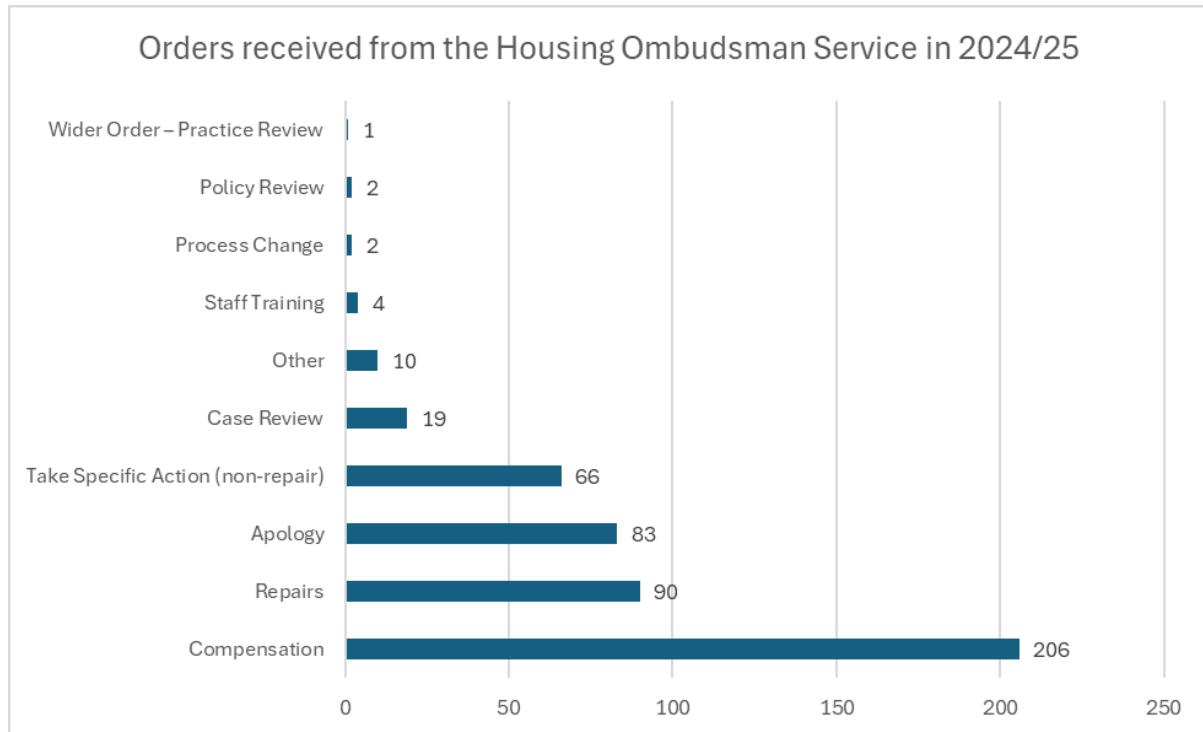
Table breakdown of complaint category headings for findings for Lewisham issued in 2024/25

Complaint Category Headings	No.
Property Condition	139
Complaints Handling	66
Anti-Social Behaviour	16
Information and data management	10
Estate Management	8
Moving to a Property	6
Charges	5
Health and Safety (inc. building safety)	5
Staff	5
Reimbursement and Payments	3
Buying or selling a property	1
Occupancy Rights	1
Total	265

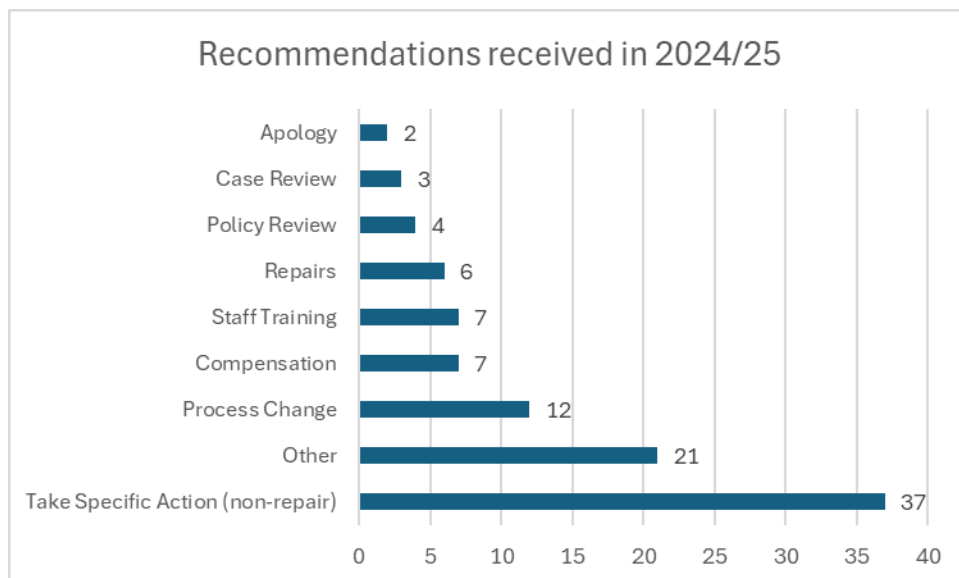
Table breakdown of findings for complaint handling issued as part of determinations in 2024/25

Number of complaints handling findings	No.
Service failure	22
Maladministration	38
Other (No Maladministration/Redress)	6
Total	66

Orders Received from the Housing Ombudsman:



Recommendations Received from the Housing Ombudsman:



Relevant Publications

In its May 2024 “Learning from Severe Maladministration” report, the Housing Ombudsman highlighted a case in which poor record keeping by Lewisham Council contributed to the lack of updates to the resident, the failure to meet agreed timescales and protracted delays in resolving a repair. It issued three maladministration findings for failure to carry out repairs and communications and complaint handling at different stages of the case.

On 30 July 2024, the Housing Ombudsman published an article announcing it had launched a special investigation into Lewisham Council due to high failure rate in cases, under paragraph 49 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme. It highlighted Lewisham Council’s maladministration rate for the previous 12 months standing at 85% and the 16 severe maladministration findings issued during the same period.

In its August 2024 “Learning from Severe Maladministration” report, the Housing Ombudsman highlighted a case in which Lewisham Council failed to repair a window for four years, noting failures in record keeping and communication.

In its October 2024 “Learning from Severe Maladministration” report, the Housing Ombudsman highlighted a case in which Lewisham Council left a leaseholder experiencing significant unexplained delays to a repair over a period of three years, with the council’s response hampered by poor record keeping.

On 12 November 2024, the Housing Ombudsman’s quarterly complaint handling report included four references to Lewisham Council, one under the “Unreasonable delays in providing the Ombudsman information” category and three under “Evidence of compliance not provided by the landlord”.

In its March 2025 “Learning from Severe Maladministration” report, the Housing Ombudsman highlighted a Lewisham Council case where sewerage leaks were unresolved for several months despite the repair being classed as an emergency and children being resident in the house.

Learning from Ombudsman Casework

The findings from the Housing Ombudsman casework have been instrumental in shaping our service improvement initiatives. The identified issues, particularly in repairs and complaint handling, have guided the development of our Housing Transformation Programme and the Complaints Handling Improvement Project (CHIP). The Complaints Service Improvement Plan has been developed by incorporating learnings to address the root causes of complaints, enhance communication, improve processes, and ensure accountability.

Service Improvement Work

Lewisham Council is committed to learning from complaints to drive meaningful service improvements. By analysing our self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code, feedback from residents, and determinations from the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS), we have developed a comprehensive Service Improvement Plan.

Complaints Transformation (Housing Services)

A new scope for the project was agreed in May 2024 with the following objectives:

- Compliance with Code in policy and practice.
- Learn from complaints for improved service delivery.
- Clear roles and responsibilities for complaints handling.
- Effective use of the systems.
- Alignment with Corporate team and existing transformation plans.
- Develop training plan for service.

These were fed into the Complaints Service Improvement Plan that was submitted with the self-assessment in 2024/25.

Complaints Handling Improvement Project (CHIP)

During 2024/25 Lewisham Council initiated a complaint handling improvement project. The aims of this project were to embed compliance with the complaint handling code within the culture and practice of the Council. It involved revision of policies, changes to software and templates, creation of clear operating instructions, and an extensive programme of staff training. The project continues into 2025/26 completing video and training updates for the new version of iCasework and with in-depth work in areas of the Council that have a high volume of complaints to ensure quality responses are issued.

Repairs Transformation Programme (Housing Services)

The Repairs Transformation Programme is a key initiative within the Housing Transformation Programme, designed to address the significant issues identified in our repair services. The programme focuses on enhancing the efficiency, responsiveness, and overall quality of the repairs service to better meet the needs and expectations of our residents. There is a focus on leaks, damp, mould, and disrepair.

Over 2024/25 the council has made significant progress in reducing the Works in Progress (WIP), decreasing call waiting times, enhancing Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) productivity, improving value for money, and increasing the percentage of repairs completed on time.

Although a substantial improvement has been made in reducing outstanding and overdue works, the number remains too high. We continue to focus on further reducing this number through increased productivity and effective contract management. Focused efforts with the Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) are enabling this workforce to take on a larger role, with over 60% of jobs now handled in-house. This shift represents greater value for money for our residents and responds to their concerns about the use of contractors.

A key component of this transformation has been improving the responsiveness of the repairs service, particularly in relation to call handling. Call times with relation to repairs have improved following recruitment, showing month-on-month improvement. Additional staff within the repairs team have been trained to assist during peak times, with support from other teams for the Contact Centre.

The average time to answer inbound repair calls decreased to 10 minutes in March 2025 from a peak of over 70 minutes in November 2023. Again this responds to a persistent criticism from residents that they could not get through to us to report repairs which led to them living with problems for longer.

Annex A: Housing Ombudsman Case List 2024/25

Reference	Category	Determination(s)	£ Award
202346860	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration	700.00
202321470	Repairs - Repairs Contact Centre	Maladministration, Outside of Jurisdiction	800.00
202231098	Repairs - Repairs Contact Centre	Maladministration, No Maladministration, Outside of Jurisdiction, Severe Maladministration	6597.00
202231797	Housing and Communities - Neighbour Nuisance	Maladministration, Outside of Jurisdiction	500.00
202302821	Repairs - Repairs Contact Centre	Maladministration, Severe Maladministration	1200.00
202303326	Housing and Communities - Sign Ups	Maladministration	150.00
202321345	Repairs - Damp	Severe Maladministration	1929.70
202206608	Housing and Communities - Neighbour Nuisance	Maladministration, Service Failure	350.00
202229068	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration, Severe Maladministration	2300.00
202229024	Repairs - Structural Repairs	Maladministration	800.00
202319152	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration	600.00
202327529	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration, Severe Maladministration	2300.00

202314688	Repairs - Window Repair/Replacement	Maladministration, No Maladministration, Service Failure	550.00
202008876	Repairs - Inspection	Maladministration, Severe Maladministration	5900.00
202335234	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration, No Maladministration	650.00
202325734	Repairs - External Fabric Repair	Maladministration, No Maladministration, Service Failure	300.00
202125843	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration, Severe Maladministration	4885.46
202310311	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration	1900.00
202302915	Repairs - Window Repair/Replacement	Maladministration, Service Failure	850.00
202320762	Repairs - Appointments	Maladministration, Severe Maladministration	4220.00
202312090	Repairs - Roof Repair/Renewal	Maladministration, Service Failure	875.00
202344279	Repairs - Plumbing	Maladministration	820.00
202309984	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration, Service Failure	300.00
202337128	Repairs - Repairs Contact Centre	Maladministration, Service Failure	650.00
202308862	Repairs - Roof Repair/Renewal	Maladministration, Severe Maladministration	1330.00
202319225	Repairs - Appointments	No Maladministration, Service Failure	450.00
202224509	Repairs - Window Repair/Replacement	Service Failure, Severe Maladministration	800.00
202335783	Repairs - Damp	Severe Maladministration	4504.06

202224592	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration, No Maladministration	1800.00
202328705	Repairs - Plumbing	Maladministration, Service Failure	450.00
202303781	Housing and Communities – Anti-social behaviour	Maladministration	250.00
202220112	Repairs - Repairs Contact Centre	Maladministration, Severe Maladministration	4900.00
202225216	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration	2210.00
202309875	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration, Service Failure, Severe Maladministration	3500.00
202232734	Home Ownership and Independent Living - Dispute between Leaseholders	Maladministration	600.00
202300804	Stock Investment & Asset Management - Structural Issues	No Service Failure, Service Failure	50.00
202321211	Repairs - Electrical	Service Failure	170.00
202317278	Repairs - Communal Area Maintenance	Service Failure	50.00
202221701	Repairs - Plumbing	No Maladministration	none
202224894	Repairs - External Fabric Repair	Severe Maladministration	2194.65
202322044	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration, No Maladministration	1115.40
202330074	Repairs - Window Repair/Replacement	Maladministration	none
202227774	Repairs - Plumbing	Maladministration, No Maladministration, Service Failure	500.00

202331775	Repairs - External Fabric Repair	Maladministration	900.00
202304362	Repairs - Structural Repairs	Maladministration, No Maladministration, Service Failure	none
202404632	Repairs - Roof Repair/Renewal	Maladministration, Service Failure	750.00
202344545	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration	800.00
202341904	Repairs - Plumbing	Maladministration, No Maladministration	600.00
202419769	Repairs - Plumbing	Maladministration, No Maladministration	400.00
202403730	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration, Service Failure	1050.00
202326309	Repairs - Plumbing	Maladministration	1150.00
202231859	Repairs, Housing and Communities (ASB)	Maladministration, No Maladministration, Service Failure	600.00
202231986	Repairs - Appointments	Maladministration, Severe Maladministration	3716.00
202319659	Housing and Communities - Mutual Exchange	No Maladministration, Service Failure	200.00
202311956	Repairs - Damp	Service Failure	50.00
202340776	Repairs - Plumbing	Service Failure, Severe Maladministration	900.00
202409565	Repairs - Appointments	Maladministration, Service Failure	250.00
202342177	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration, Outside of Jurisdiction, Severe Maladministration	1100.00

202405402	Repairs - Plumbing	No Maladministration, Outside of Jurisdiction	none
202319107	Home Ownership and Independent Living - Major Works Charges	Maladministration	none
202412719	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration	250.00
202340875	Repairs - Repairs Contact Centre	Maladministration	400.00
202342342	Repairs - Plumbing	Maladministration	none
202400955	Repairs - Roof Repair/Renewal	Maladministration	800.00
202340641	Repairs - Other	Service Failure	100.00
202346715	Repairs - Appointments	Severe Maladministration	none
202345128	Compliance & Building Safety - Boiler Breakdown	Maladministration, Not investigated, agreed for service to remedy, Service Failure	1016.50
202313134	Repairs - Repairs Contact Centre	Maladministration	1000.00
202308268	Compliance & Building Safety - Boiler Breakdown	Maladministration, Service Failure	none
202307209	Repairs - Roof Repair/Renewal	Maladministration	1300.00
202216774	Repairs - Appointments	Maladministration, Severe Maladministration	2800.00
202217117	Repairs - Repairs Contact Centre	Maladministration	1100.00
202313145	Home Ownership and Independent Living - Dispute between Tenants & Leaseholders	Maladministration	400.00

202233750	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration, Service Failure	1175.00
202401484	Home Ownership and Independent Living - Major Works Charges	Maladministration, Service Failure	none
202329854	Repairs - Appointments	Maladministration, Severe Maladministration	4116.94
202344524	Repairs - Plumbing	Maladministration, Service Failure	450.00
202319211	Home Ownership and Independent Living - Dispute between Leaseholders	Maladministration, Service Failure	595.00
202303812	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration, Severe Maladministration	none
202315835	Repairs - Plumbing	Maladministration	none
202314146	Repairs - Damp	Maladministration, Service Failure	300.00
202404751	Housing and Communities - Neighbour Nuisance	Maladministration, Service Failure	225.00
202405801	Income and Support - Support	No Maladministration, Service Failure	100.00
202321029	Repairs - Plumbing	Service Failure	100.00
202346520	Repairs - Damp	Service Failure	100.00
202336847	Repairs - Damp	Severe Maladministration	none