



Portfolio Lead Meeting

Approved by: Councillor Natalie Thomas, Lead Member for Housing / Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)

Approval date: 15 September 2026

Status: Approved for submission and publication alongside the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment 2025/26 and Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report 2025/26.

Report title: Housing Ombudsman compliance reporting

Date: 11 September 2026

Key decision: Yes

Purpose

Each year the Housing Ombudsman Service mandates that a council member or governing body responds to the Housing service's annual complaints report. The purpose of this submission is to provide the Member for Complaints and Councillors with

- Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self Assessment 2025/6
- Annual Complaints performance and Service Improvement Report
- Service Improvement Plan
- Complaints Policy

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

30 September 2026	EMT to review reports
30 September 2026	Deadline for report submission to the Housing Ombudsman and publication on the Lewisham Council website.

1. Summary

- 1.1. This covering report supports the Council's annual statutory Housing Ombudsman submission for 2025/26. It accompanies the Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report 2025/26, the Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment 2025/26 and the formal response from the Portfolio Lead Member for Housing, acting as the Member Responsible for Complaints.

- 1.2. The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code requires the annual complaints performance and service improvement report to be reported to the landlord's governing body or equivalent, with the governing body or Member Responsible for Complaints response published alongside it. This report records that the Portfolio Lead Member for Housing / Member Responsible for Complaints has reviewed the annual report, self-assessment and supporting evidence, and has approved the formal response for publication.
- 1.3. The Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment 2025/26 has also been reviewed and is submitted alongside the annual report and Member Responsible for Complaints response as part of the Council's annual statutory submission.
- 1.4. All documents must be published on the Council's website for external scrutiny by 30 September 2026 to achieve compliance.
- 1.5. The council has established several oversight pathways for complaints performance including reports to scrutiny committees, resident service and performance panels, resident review panels and Corporate Assurance Board.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Members are asked to note the contents of the Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report 2025/26, the Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment 2025/26 and the Member Responsible for Complaints response.
- 2.2. The Portfolio Lead Member for Housing, acting as the Member Responsible for Complaints, is asked to approve the formal response for publication alongside the annual report and self-assessment by 30 September 2026.

3. Appendices

- 3.1. Appendix A Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment 2025/26
- 3.2. Appendix B Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report 2025/26
- 3.3. Appendix C Service Improvement Plan
- 3.4. Appendix D Complaints Policy
- 3.5. Appendix E Member Responsible for Complaints Response

4. Report author and contact

- 4.1. Lisa Keating, Director of Housing Resident Engagement and Services
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Appendix E

Member Responsible for Complaints response to Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report 2025/26

Approved response from the Portfolio Lead Member for Housing / Member Responsible for Complaints

Approved by: Councillor Natalie Thomas, Lead Member for Housing / Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)

Approval date: 15 September 2026

As Lead Member for Housing and Member Responsible for Complaints, I confirm that I have reviewed Lewisham's Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report 2025/26 and the accompanying self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. I welcome the openness of the report and the evidence of progress made during a challenging year.

There have been encouraging improvements. Stage 1 complaints responded to within deadline increased to 71%, the internal audit provided satisfactory assurance with no high-severity findings, 90% of Housing staff completed complaints training and Complaint Handling Failure Orders reduced from 13 to four. These are positive indications that the complaints improvement and wider Housing Transformation work are beginning to have an impact.

At the same time, I recognise that significant challenges remain. In particular:

- Repairs, damp and mould, and leaks continue to be the main causes of complaints and Housing Ombudsman findings.
- Communication, record keeping and follow-through remain recurring weaknesses, including residents having to chase for updates and actions agreed through complaints not always being completed promptly.
- Stage 1 timeliness improved to 71%, while Stage 2 timeliness reduced to 69%; both areas require continued focus and further improvement.
- Resident satisfaction with complaint handling remains low at 26%, demonstrating that improvements in processes are not yet consistently being felt by residents.
- The level of Housing Ombudsman maladministration findings shows that further work is needed to improve service quality, strengthen accountability and prevent repeat failures.

As Member Responsible for Complaints, I expect the service in 2026/27 to maintain the progress already achieved while placing greater emphasis on the quality, consistency and effectiveness of complaint resolution. Learning from complaints must result in demonstrable improvements across the whole service, not just improvements in timeliness.

Assurance should demonstrate not only that actions have been completed, but that they are reducing repeat failures, improving resident satisfaction and delivering better outcomes. I will continue to scrutinise the Council's performance, challenge the evidence provided and seek assurance that improvement actions are embedded across the Housing service.

I welcome the commitment to continued improvement and will continue to work with residents, officers and partners to support a more responsive, accountable and resident-focused Housing service.