



# *Gravesend Churches Housing Association*

## **Annual Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report**

*April 2024 - March 2025*



# Welcome



On behalf of Gravesend Churches Housing Association (GCHA) and as the nominated Board Member responsible for overseeing complaints, I am pleased to share GCHA's Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for the financial year 2024/2025 with our residents, colleagues, and key partners.

As an organisation, we remain committed to delivering the highest quality services to our residents. We acknowledge when things go wrong and, in collaboration with our residents, strive to put things right by implementing effective solutions that resolve concerns and enhance their experience of GCHA services.

We are committed to improving how complaints are handled, especially in areas that matter most to our residents, such as repairs. We work closely with our residents and contractors to ensure a responsive service is delivered without compromising on quality.

We recognise that for effective complaints handling to work, we cannot do this in isolation of our residents. For this reason, we work in partnership with our Resident Engagement Panel, our wider resident group, colleagues and contractors to listen to feedback and learn from it. Such collaboration fosters trust and enables a deeper understanding of services from the viewpoint of our residents.

As the nominated (MRC), Member for Complaints, my role is to act on behalf of the Board and GCHA to work with the staff to review complaints and identify areas for improvement. The Board receive quarterly updates on complaints performance and our staff on the front line meet weekly to review complaints, discuss lessons learnt and identify areas for improvement.



As part of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, GCHA completed its annual self-assessment which along with its annual complaints and service improvement report was presented to the Board in July 2025 for review and approval.

Our corporate strategy includes maintaining good quality, safe and affordable homes, as well as providing customer focused services, which supports our vision, culture, and values. In 2024/25, our front line operations team responded to 66 complaints of which 8 were carried forward from the previous year 2023/24.

Further complaint performance data is presented later in this report. We completed an internal audit on Complaints in June 2025 and were pleased to note the findings of 'reasonable redress'. We received 4 recommendations for improvement relating to data validation; minuting complaint meetings and lessons learnt, whilst ensuring that all complaints receive an acknowledgement and response letter in line with the Complaint Handling code. We accept the recommendations and have addressed the actions.

This report evidences the Board and GCHA staff's commitment to continuous improvement, by working with our residents, colleagues and contractors to transform lessons learnt into services and homes that residents are proud to live in and staff are proud to work for GCHA.

**P Sylva**  
*(MRC) Paul Sylva*



# Introduction



GCHA is a small Housing Association that owns and manages just over 600 properties across three local authorities, Gravesham, Dartford and Maidstone, which includes 578 general needs properties and 35 market rent properties. In addition, we support local communities through strategic partnerships with Kasbah and Clarion Housing Association.

Our vision is “Opening doors to safe, secure, and affordable homes,” and GCHA’s culture represents core values: Adaptable, Responsive, Inclusive, Trustworthy, and Accountable. These values apply across our organisation and act as our guiding principles in everything we do, especially when investigating and responding to complaints.

Inclusive

Responsive

Accountable

Adaptable

Trustworthy

The Housing Ombudsman service requires Social Landlords to comply with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code which became statutory from 1 April 2024. Landlords must demonstrate compliance annually by producing and publishing an Annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report, including a review of the complaint handling code self-assessment.

We can advise that a review of the Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment was completed in March 2025 and along with this report, presented to the Board in July 2025. The Board of Directors reviewed and approved the Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report and Self-Assessment, delegating overall responsibility of our (MRC) Paul Sylva to agree any final updates or amendments before final submission by 30 September 2025.

This report provides an update on GCHA’s Complaint Handling performance over the last financial year covering 2024/25 and highlights improvements made because of the learnings from complaints received.

# Complaints Performance Overview: 2024-2025



In the past year, we received a total of 66 complaints of which 8 complaints were carried forward from 2023/24. This represents a (50%) increase in complaints compared to the previous year. One of the key reasons for the increase is due to GCHA promotion of its complaints policy through resident newsletters, our website and generally speaking to residents, encouraging all forms of feedback including complaints.

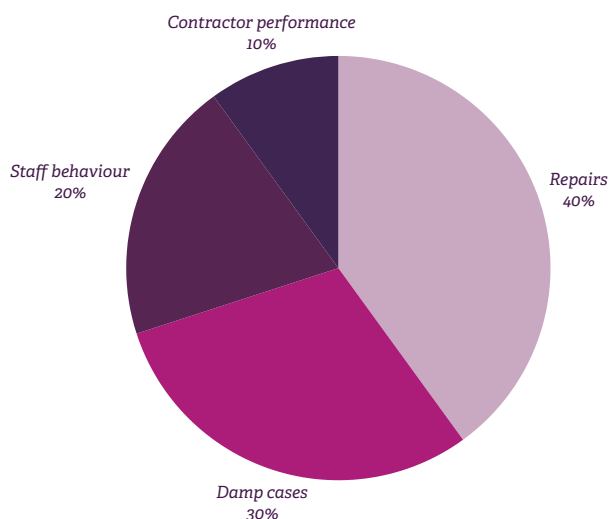
## STAGE 1 COMPLAINTS

Out of the 66 complaints received in 2024/25, (91%) of Stage 1 complaints were acknowledged within 5 working days and (53%) of Stage 1 complaints were responded to within 10 working days. At the end of March 2025, there were 6 live stage 2 complaints carried over to 2025/26 financial year of which 2 complaints were with the Housing Ombudsman.

## STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS

During 2024/25, 10 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 of which (90%) were acknowledged in 5 working days and (40%) were responded to within 20 working days. Out of the 10 Stage 2 complaints received, (40%) were related to repairs, (30%) were damp cases, (20%) were staff behaviour and (10%) related to contractor performance.

While the overall response times were poor, this was due to the complexity of some of the issues involved. Our staff continually kept the individual residents updated until the complaint was resolved. A key lesson learnt was the importance of documenting communications and effective data management.



- 66 complaints received (8 carried over from 2023/24)
- 6 live complaints carried into 2025/26
- 2 complaints with Ombudsman

# Housing Ombudsman Determinations

During 2024/25, we engaged with the Housing Ombudsman on a small number of complaints. These cases were handled transparently, with outcomes ranging from resident satisfaction to Ombudsman investigations that led to improvements in our services. The summary below outlines the progress and status of each complaint.

- **Total complaints (2024/25):** 4
- **Withdrawn:** 1 – resident satisfied with actions taken
- **Housing Ombudsman investigated 2 complaints** – one identified a service failure, the other highlighted service handling issues. In both cases, redress was provided, recommendations were implemented, and the complaints are now closed.
- **Outstanding:** 1 complaint awaiting Ombudsman allocation/review

## Complaint Analysis

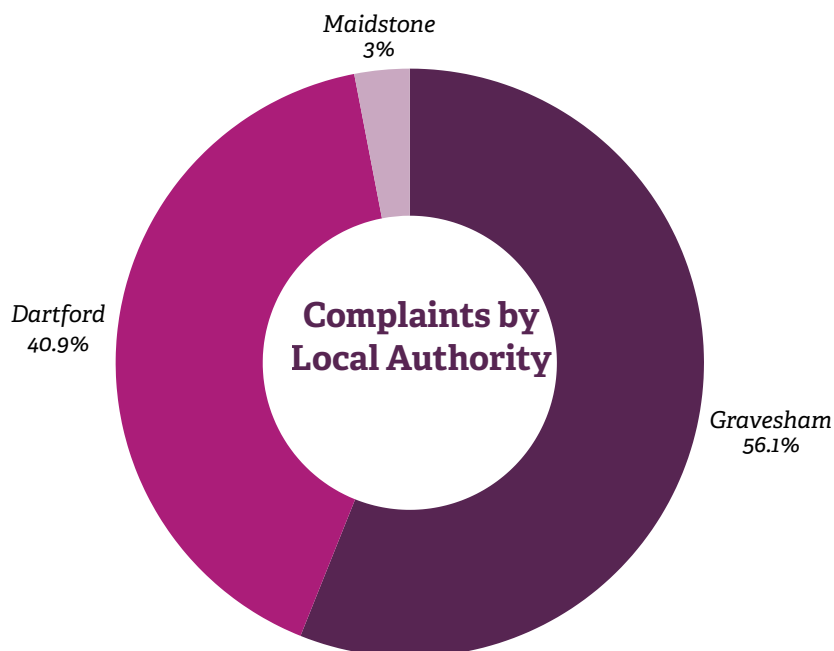
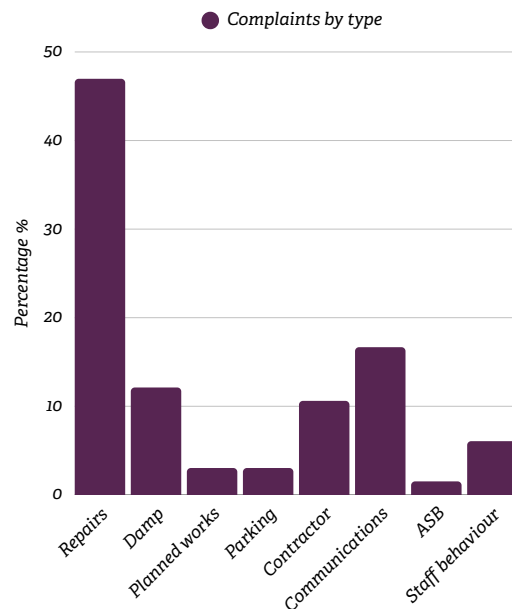
An analysis of the complaints data helped us identify key demographics by complaint type, age, location and gender of the residents. This analysis helps us to identify patterns and trends that can help us improve services and address specific needs of different resident groups.



# Key Complaint Themes

The top 4 complaints related to Repairs (46.9%), Communications (16.6%), Damp (12.1%), and Contractor performance (10.6%). One common theme throughout was poor communication, primarily keeping residents informed.

We listened to residents and improved our communications by keeping residents updated on their repairs.

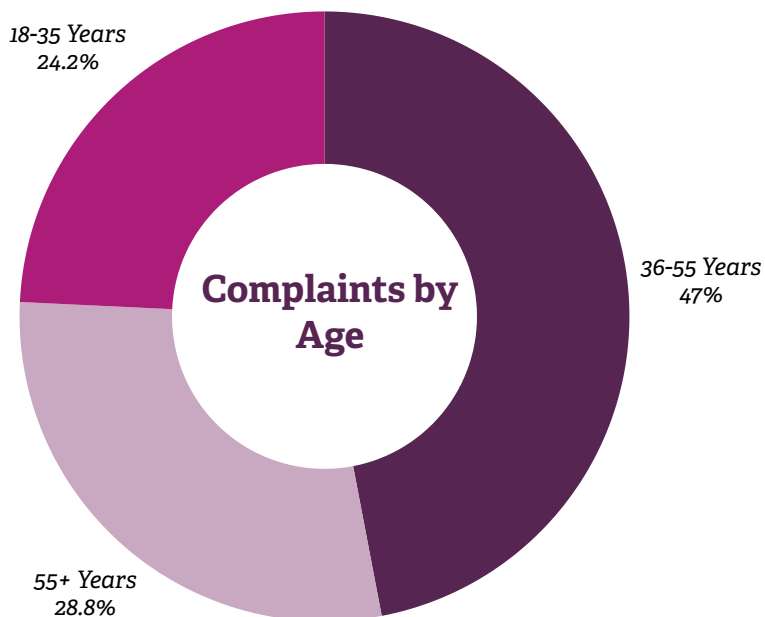
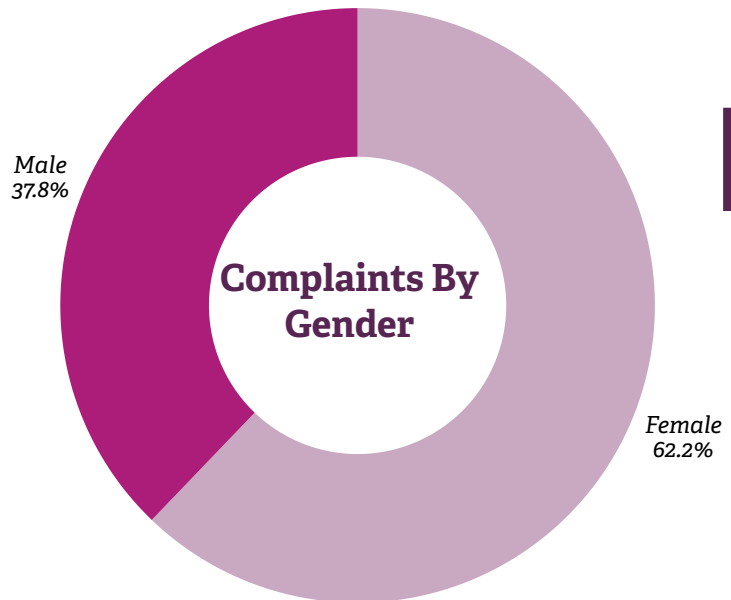


(56.1%) of all complaints came from residents living in Gravesham, whilst (40.9%) of complaints were from our second largest local authority area, Dartford. (3%) of complaints were from Maidstone.

This is not unusual as (73%) of our properties are based in Gravesham and (19%) of our properties are in Dartford, with a small proportion of properties (7%) in Maidstone.

# Key Complaint Themes

(62.2%) of all complaints were received from female residents and (37.8%) from male residents.



(47%) of complaints came from residents aged between 36-55 and (28.8%) from residents 55+. (24.2%) of complaints were from residents aged between 18-35 years old. The results indicate that the majority of complaints come from residents aged between 36-55.



# Valuable feedback from Residents

Following an analysis of resident feedback, where they had reported a complaint in the last 12 months, there were key themes which are summarised below.

**GCHA should keep their promises**

**Keep residents updated throughout the repair journey**

**Listen to your residents more**

According to our Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) completed in 2023/24, (34%) of residents stated they were satisfied with GCHA's approach to complaint handling.

While disappointed with the results, the feedback was based on resident 'perceptions' and not necessarily where a resident had made a complaint in the last 12 months. We look forward to implementing the TSM survey in September 2025 and with the improvements made to date, we hope to increase the overall customer satisfaction results by a further (15%) to improve on the previous results in 2023/24 which was (65%).

## Compliments/ Customer quotes

*Whilst we acknowledge that we need to improve our overall complaints handling process, it is equally important that we recognise and acknowledge areas where we are performing well. During the last 12 months we have received a number of compliments from our residents of which are summarised below:*

**Thank you for your empathy & professionalism**

**Pass on my gratitude for resolving issues quickly**

**Thank you for your ongoing support & going the extra mile**

**Thank you for your kind, caring and understanding of my issues**

# Learning from Customer Feedback

If we are going to improve our complaints handling performance and achieve (80%) or above in customer satisfaction levels, it is important that we take a step back and reflect on our complaints handling performance.

(46.9%) of overall complaints related to repairs; (16.6%) related to poor communications; (12.1%) related to damp and mould and (10.6%) related to contractor performance. Further analysis identified that poor communication was a common theme throughout the majority of complaints, by not keeping the residents updated throughout the journey of their repair, either by the contractor or GCHA staff. In addition, we acknowledge that there are also areas for improvement in our overall response times.

To help improve in these areas, we delivered complaints training to our staff in August 2024 and held a joint staff away day with our main contractor to look at repairs overall and identify areas for improvements. In addition, we meet regularly with our contractors to review customer feedback and KPI performance. Ongoing investment in our staff and improved communications with our contractors has seen a positive improvement in our complaint handling for 2025/26.

Learning from other Housing Associations and the Housing Ombudsman Spotlight reports has also helped GCHA improve its policies and processes on damp and mould.

During 2024/25 we worked in partnership with Acuity Benchmarking group to carry out quarterly transactional customer satisfaction surveys. Based on the surveys completed, (67%) of our residents stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall service delivered by GCHA. When compared to the TSM survey completed in 2023/24, (65%) of our residents stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall service delivered by GCHA.

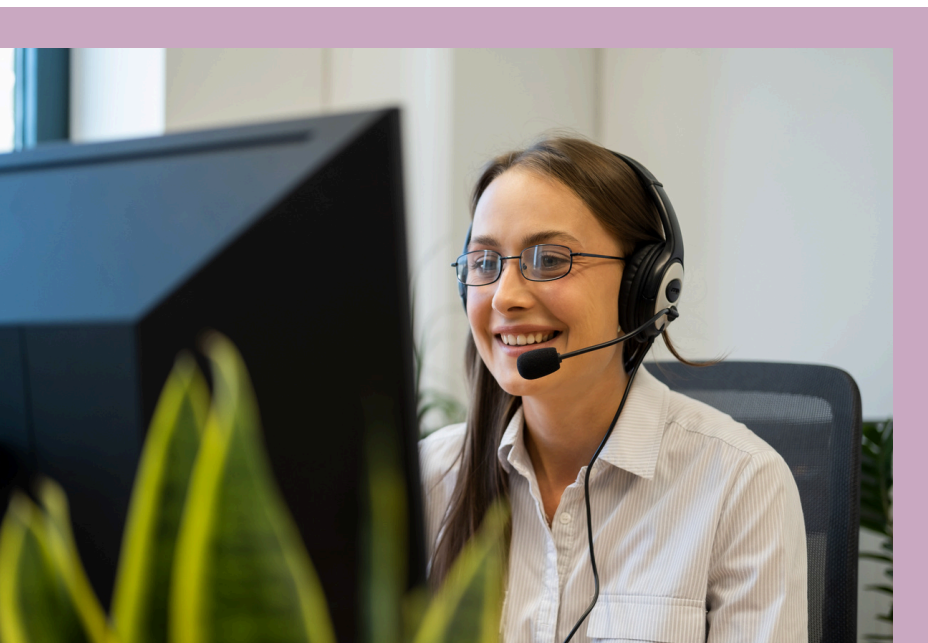
The results show that we improved our overall customer satisfaction levels by (2%), which may seem a small milestone, but it demonstrates that we are listening to our residents and taking a step in the right direction.

# Service Improvement

In the last 24 months we have been working diligently to improve customer services and our complaint handling processes. As a result, we implemented a Customer Service Improvement Plan which is regularly updated and presented to the Board to provide assurance that we as an organisation are working closely with our staff, residents, and contractors to improve services

## Some of the key achievements delivered are:

- In March 2025, we reviewed and updated the Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment Complaint Handling Code
- We worked in partnership with our resident engagement panel to review the complaints policy and the Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment Complaint Handling Code
- We introduced customer call backs before closing down repairs and complaints to seek customer feedback. Overall customer feedback has been positive
- We discuss complaints as part of staff team meetings and now record lessons learnt
- We provide quarterly updates on complaints performance to the Board of Directors, who scrutinise and provide constructive feedback



# Learning from Customer Feedback

- We delivered complaints training to staff in August 2024 and will provide a refresher training course in 2025/26
- We have a dedicated board member who holds the operations staff to account to ensure that we are managing complaints in line with our Complaints Policy and the Housing Ombudsman guidance
- We went live with our Resident Portal which allows residents to raise queries, repairs, and complaints. A positive step forward in improving communications between GCHA and our residents
- Following a full consultation process with our residents, staff, and board members, we go live with our new Customer Service Standards in September 2025
- We have developed a complaint leaflet which again goes live in September 2025
- We completed an internal audit on complaints in 2025/26 and identified some key areas for improvement, on data accuracy and improving complaint acknowledgement and response times
- Where we were using manual spreadsheets for monitoring and managing complaints, we are now utilising our IT system more with the aim of having one version of the truth for recording and managing complaints performance

## This year, we will:

- Focus on driving forward key improvements started in 2024/25. We will ensure that we keep to our promises and listen more to our residents
- Provide refresher complaints training to all staff in 2025/26
- While already in operation, we will work with our IT Provider to improve the complaint end to end process to ensure that it aligns with the revised complaints policy and enables improved reporting and complaint analytics
- Review our compensation policy against the Housing Ombudsman guidance
- Enhance our overall complaint response times to improve customer satisfaction with the 'complaints handling process' currently at (34%)
- Continue to listen to our residents and implement lessons learnt from complaints with the aim to increase our 'overall customer satisfaction' levels with GCHA services from (67%) to over (80%) via the TSM surveys currently in progress.

# Conclusion

The Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report aims to provide a clear understanding of the complaints received, the Board's performance in addressing them, and the strategic measures to enhance service quality.

By implementing the outlined improvement plan, we aspire to reduce the number of complaints and increase customer satisfaction significantly.

## Annual HO Complaint Handling Code: Self Assessment

The Housing Ombudsman Service Complaints Handling Code requires all members including GCHA to self-assess their complaint policy and processes against the requirements of the Code. The self-assessment must be reviewed and approved by the Board at least annually. Once approved, the self-assessment is to be published on our website along with this annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report.

This year's self-assessment can be viewed on our website and outlines our full compliance with the revised Code which came into effect from 1 April 2024. To ensure compliance, the Complaints Policy was updated and approved in August 2024. The Complaints Policy is also updated onto our website. Useful Links can be found below:

**Please refer to the following documents:**

**GCHA self-assessment of the HO  
Complaint Handling Code**



**GCHA Complaints Policy**

