



ANNUAL COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE & SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT

2024/2025

Every year, we publish an Annual Complaints & Service Improvement Report that sets out how we are performing around complaints.

We know that complaints are an important issue for our customers. In this report we will share how we are improving our complaints handling service in response to what you are telling us. Within this report we have included:

- Data on how we are performing around complaints compared to last year
- Information around the types of complaints that we have received and those that we have not accepted
- A summary of what we have learnt from complaints and the improvements that we have made, or plan to in order to deliver a better service

Compliance with the Complaints Handling Code

We are required to complete a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code every year. We have worked with our Customer Resolution Forum, which is made up of members from our Customer Engagement Community, to review compliance against the Code. You can view this [here](#).

This review found that we are compliant with the Code and have maintained 100% compliance with orders issued to us by the Housing Ombudsman.



Our performance at a glance

The table below shows how we have performed around complaints in 2024/25 compared to the previous year.

	2023/24	2024/25	Difference
Number of complaints received	1,388	2,159	+771
Number of Housing Ombudsman complaints	27	79	+52
Complaints closed within 10 days	81%	84%	+3%
Average time taken to resolve complaints (working days)	9	11	+2
Number of complaints upheld	77%	71%	-6%
Number of customer compliments received	378	413	+35
Complaints per 1,000 properties	48	70	+22
Complaints not accepted	67	114	+47
Number of complaints escalating to Stage 2	158	318	+160

We also look at what is driving complaints to help us understand where we need to improve our services. In 2024/25, the top three causes of customer complaints were:



Time taken to complete repairs
1,058 (679 in 2023/24)



Incomplete repairs
251 (77 in 2023/24)



Inaccurate/inadequate
information provided
82 (74 in 2023/24)

These reflect the reasons that customers complained to us most about last year too. Incomplete repairs replaces property damage as a top reason for complaints. You can read more about how we're improving our services on page 5 of this report.

Our repairs and maintenance service continues to be a key area of focus and we are pleased to report that we are seeing improvements in the number of repairs completed first time and in customer satisfaction as we deliver more repairs through our in house team and improve delivery arrangements with our contractors.

Key findings

Our complaints show that there are areas where we can do better and we have significant plans in place to do so. In summary:

- There has been a 56% increase in complaints this year compared to 2023/24. New requirements set out by the Housing Ombudsman have removed informal complaints. This means that issues that would have been dealt with informally are now categorised as complaints, which may have contributed to this increase. However, any increase in complaints is disappointing and we are implementing changes in response to what we have learnt.
- Using feedback from our engaged customers and our complaints data, we have made improvements to our processes and systems meaning that our Customer Resolutions Team has resolved 66% more complaints this year compared to last year. This year we have also responded to a higher number of cases within the Housing Ombudsman's ten-day target compared to last year.
- After a customer has been through our complaints process we share a survey to understand how we have done. In 2024/25, 41% of customers surveyed told us that they were satisfied with the complaints service compared to 31% in the year before.
- Unfortunately, we have received three severe maladministration determinations in 2024/25 which is consistent with the number received last year. While this is disappointing, we have used the learnings highlighted by the Ombudsman to make our services better. We are pleased, however, that the number of maladministration cases has reduced this year from 52% to 43%.
- 15% of complaints have escalated to a Stage 2 compared to 11% last year. We have already made improvements in response and are starting to see that this is making a positive impact around the number of complaints that are escalating.
- The Housing Ombudsman has found that we have responded reasonably to more cases this year, with this figure increasing from 6% to 12%. This is referred to as 'reasonable redress'. Whilst we can still do more, this increase shows that we are improving the way that we respond to complaints.

In December 2024, Onward featured in a Learning from Severe Maladministration Report by the Housing Ombudsman. In response to these findings, we have introduced a new process that ensures that any issue in a customer's home, building or neighbourhood which poses a risk is highlighted with a specific category in our system and managed to ensure customer issues are resolved promptly and effectively.

You can learn more about how the Ombudsman has evaluated our performance by reading our [Annual Landlord Performance Report 2024/25](#).

Complaints that have been rejected

We recognise the importance of addressing customers' concerns and providing an accessible complaints service. However, in a smaller number of cases, customers report issues to us that do not meet the definition of a complaint and these are rejected. In 2024/25, the main reasons that we rejected complaints were:

- Complaints raised after 12 months of the event. In line with the Housing Ombudsman's Code, complaints after 12 months are only accepted in exceptional circumstances.
- A repeat of previous complaints.
- A lack of necessary information being provided by the customer to allow us to investigate the complaint.

Putting learning into action

Our complaints show us that there are areas where we need to improve. In response to customer feedback, we have made a number of changes to our complaints service:

In September 2024, we created a new Customer Service Intervention Team. The team proactively contacts customers that have been identified as being more likely to report complaints to understand how we can help before this becomes a complaint. This means we are getting ahead of issues and improving customers' experiences. To date the team has helped over 1,600 customers.



Customers have told us that sometimes they find it difficult to reach their complaint case handler at a convenient time. In response we have introduced an appointment booking process so that customers can schedule appointments to speak at a time that works for them.



New guidance and resources around remedies and financial redress has been shared with colleagues. This has been designed to help colleagues find suitable ways to address complaints and make sure these are dealt with fairly and consistently.



Over the last twelve months, we have reviewed our approach to customer contact during the complaints process. Training has taken place across Onward as well as development programmes to support these improvements in customer service.



We now meet more often with our Customer Resolution Forum, changing the frequency from quarterly to bi-monthly, to give us more opportunities to learn and improve. Furthermore, colleagues handling complaints meet weekly to monitor complaints performance and address issues raised by customers.



Looking to the future

Whilst we hope that our customers will soon start to feel the benefits of the changes that we have already made to our complaints service, we are always aiming to improve what we do. Over the next twelve months, we will:

- Increase the size and scope of our Customer Service Intervention Team, with an increased focus on early intervention. The team will continue to use insights and data to get ahead of issues for customers, add to our learning and improvement plans, reduce the number of complaints and improve the overall customer experience.
- Deliver further training across Onward on customer care and improving knowledge and information management so that we can get the basics right and support better customer service.
- Introduce a new housing management system which will improve how we manage cases and customer communications. These improvements will lead to better internal working practices and contribute towards faster resolution of complaints.

Working with our Customer Resolution Forum

Our Customer Resolution Forum reviews our performance around complaints and helps us to continue to learn and make improvements to services.

Last year, the Forum met with members of Onward's Board alongside customers from the Onward Scrutiny Board. At the workshop, we discussed what was important for customers when they complain and how we can improve communication throughout the process.

One of our Forum members also recently met with colleagues from across Onward to share their valuable insight and provide recommendations based on their experience of the resolution process.

We will be working with the Customer Resolutions Team over the coming months to implement some of these ideas, such as ensuring problems are resolved in a timely manner, regularly updating customers on the status of their complaints, and improving communication with customers about ongoing issues and repairs.

Get involved

Our Customer Engagement Community helps us to make important improvements to your homes, neighbourhoods and services. With over 3,700 members there are lots of ways to get involved from answering surveys, to joining one of our groups, forums, or the Onward Scrutiny Board, we offer different levels of involvement to suit your lifestyle and interests, so you can participate as much as you like.

If you'd like to become a member, please email customerengagement@onward.co.uk or call 0300 555 0600. You can also visit the website (onward.co.uk/get-involved).