

REPORT TITLE: Complaints Improvement Programme

Meeting(s):	Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel
Date(s):	20 July 2026
Cabinet Member (if applicable)	Cabinet Member for Transport & Housing
Key Decision	No
Eligible for Call In	No
Purpose of Report This report provides Scrutiny Members with an overview of the Homes and Neighbourhoods Complaints Improvement Programme. It sets out the evidence behind the programme, the main areas for improvement and the work underway to strengthen complaint handling for tenants and leaseholders, improve the resident experience and make better use of learning from complaints. Members are asked to consider the approach, challenge the priorities and comment on the governance arrangements and measures of success.	
Recommendations Members are asked to: - Note the evidence informing the Complaints Improvement Programme, including tenant satisfaction measures, tenant insight, complaints performance information, Housing Ombudsman learning and the findings of the independent complaints review. - Consider whether the proposed programme appropriately addresses the issues identified through resident feedback and complaints analysis. - Review the proposed governance and assurance arrangements and comment on whether they provide sufficient oversight of progress and impact.	
Reasons for recommendations - To support effective scrutiny of the Complaints Improvement Programme and the evidence that underpins it. - To enable Members to test whether the proposed actions respond to the issues residents have raised through complaints, tenant satisfaction measures and wider feedback. - To provide assurance that the programme has appropriate governance, oversight and measures of success in place.	

Electoral wards affected: All wards

Ward councillors consulted: N/A

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? Yes

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Complaints are recognised as an important source of feedback from tenants and leaseholders. They help show how services are experienced, not just how they are designed to work.

- 1.2 The Council, through its Homes and Neighbourhoods service is a Registered Provider of Social Housing, and via its regulatory framework is required to work with the Housing Ombudsman. The Housing Ombudsman has a Complaint Handling Code that applies to complaints from both tenants and leaseholders. It requires landlords to handle complaints fairly, effectively and promptly and to demonstrate how learning from complaints is being used to continuously improve services.
- 1.3 The Homes and Neighbourhoods service has well established governance arrangements for complaints with regular reporting to service and Place Leadership Teams, Cabinet, directly and via the Portfolio Holder, our Tenant Led Panel and the Homes and Neighbourhoods Improvement Board.
- 1.4 There are controls and governance arrangements in place, but the evidence is clear that further improvement is needed. Complaints performance, resident feedback, Tenant Satisfaction Measures, Ombudsman determinations and the independent review all point to the need for more consistent, timely and resident-focused complaint handling for tenants and leaseholders.

2.0 Key drivers for improvement programme

2.1 Tenant Satisfaction Measures and engagement insight

- 2.1.1 Tenant Satisfaction Measures show that whilst improving, complaints handling remains one of the lowest areas of tenant satisfaction. Satisfaction with the measure 'the landlord's approach to complaints handling' increased only marginally from 22% to 25%, but this is still the lowest-performing perception measure and remains below the draft benchmark position. While this measure relates to tenants, the improvement programme also covers leaseholder complaints handled under the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- 2.1.2 Other perception measures have improved, including whether the Council listens and acts, keeps tenants informed and treats tenants fairly and with respect. However, complaints remain an important test of tenant trust and confidence, particularly where tenants feel they have had to chase, repeat information or wait too long for issues to be resolved.
- 2.1.3 Feedback from complaints, engagement forums and routine contact shows recurring issues around communication, delays, ownership between services, residents having to chase for updates and concerns that issues are not always resolved first time. These are also the issues most often seen when complaints escalate or when Ombudsman cases identify service failure.

2.2 Complaints performance

- 2.2.1 Service complaints reporting shows continuing issues with timeliness, escalation, response quality and repeat themes across tenant and leaseholder complaints. Repairs, property condition, communication and anti-social behaviour continue to appear strongly in complaint themes and Ombudsman findings.

- The evidence also shows that complaints provide valuable insight beyond the complaints process itself. They help identify wider service issues and create an important opportunity to strengthen learning, improve service delivery and address the root causes of concerns, rather than treating each complaint only as an individual case.
- 2.2.2

2.3 Housing Ombudsman Learning

- 2.3.1 Annual complaints reporting and self-assessment work have shown that we need to strengthen how learning from complaints is identified, owned and acted on. Ombudsman cases continue to highlight learning around communication, ownership, customer experience and service coordination. These issues are reflected in the improvement programme.

2.4 Independent complaints review

- 2.4.1 In June 2026 the Council commissioned an external independent review of complaints handling. The review found that Kirklees has a sound starting point, including a clear complaints framework, central coordination and improvement activity already underway.
- 2.4.2 The review also identified areas that need further work. These included the quality of investigations and complaint responses, recognition of vulnerability and resident impact, turning learning into service improvement, tracking actions through to completion, capacity pressures, case management arrangements and cross-service working.
- 2.4.3 The review confirms that the Council has a strong platform to build from, with clear opportunities to further strengthen consistency in complaint handling and ensure learning translates into visible, meaningful improvements for residents.

3.0 The complaints improvement programme

- 3.1 Building on learning from the last 12 months and feedback from the external independent review we have established a complaints improvement programme. The programme aims to improve the quality and timeliness of complaint handling for tenants and leaseholders, improve the resident experience, reduce avoidable escalation and make better use of complaints as a source of learning. It also supports compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- 3.2 The programme is focused on improving residents' experience of the complaints process, strengthening early contact and communication with tenants and leaseholders, improving the quality and consistency of responses, increasing service accountability, reducing avoidable escalation, strengthening learning from complaints and showing where complaints have led to service improvement.
- 3.3 The programme focuses on four areas.

1. Quality and timeliness, including early contact with residents, better response quality, audit and case oversight.
2. Accountability, so that complaint handling, escalation and resident experience are owned within normal service management arrangements.
3. Learning and service improvement, including clearer recording of themes, root causes, actions and ownership.
4. Governance and assurance, so progress is reported, challenged and monitored through to delivery.

4.0 Progress to Date

- 4.1 These include weekly monitoring of live complaints and overdue cases, alongside stronger reporting to senior leaders and Members. Formal monitoring of Ombudsman determinations and learning actions is also in place.
- 4.2 Further progress includes the introduction of the Complaints Panel, recruitment to the tenant-facing Service Quality Panel and completion of the independent DTP review. There has also been work to strengthen governance, complaint guidance, learning arrangements and the consistency of redress and remedies.
- 4.3 Success will be measured through performance, resident experience and improvement indicators. This will include complaint timeliness, escalation rates, quality assurance outcomes, tenant satisfaction with complaints handling, evidence that learning has been acted on, reduction in repeat complaint themes and examples of service changes made because of complaint learning across tenant and leaseholder complaints.

5.0 Governance and Assurance

- 5.1 Progress is overseen through existing governance arrangements. Complaints are reviewed through weekly operational oversight, monthly Complaints Panel meetings, quarterly governance reporting and annual statutory reporting.
- 5.2 Performance information is reported to Homes and Neighbourhoods Senior Leadership Team, the Portfolio Holder, the Tenant Led Panel and the Homes and Neighbourhoods Improvement Board.
- 5.3 The Complaints Panel is currently staff-led, but in the coming months will welcome tenants onboard, strengthening resident challenge and bringing lived experience directly into the review of complaint themes, learning and service improvement.
- 5.4 Progress against the DTP recommendations will be built into programme reporting and monitored through the same governance arrangements.

7.0 Risks

- 7.1 The Homes and Neighbourhoods Directorate Risk Register contains a risk relating to complaint handling so that effective monitoring is in place at a strategic level ensuring appropriate exposure and monitoring.

7.2	Risk	Why it matters	Mitigations
	Complaint handling does not improve quickly enough	Tenant satisfaction with complaints handling remains low, increasing only from 22% to 25% , and remains the lowest-performing perception measure. If progress is slow, resident confidence may weaken.	Weekly monitoring of live and overdue complaints; stronger reporting to senior leaders and Members; focus on timeliness, early contact, response quality and escalation reduction.
7.3	Learning from complaints is not embedded	Ombudsman cases and the independent review highlight recurring themes around communication, ownership, customer experience and service coordination. If learning is not acted on, the same issues may continue to recur.	Clearer recording of complaint themes, root causes, actions and ownership; formal monitoring of Ombudsman determinations and learning actions; tracking DTP recommendations through governance reporting.
	Poor-quality or inconsistent responses continue	The independent review identified issues with investigation quality, complaint responses, recognition of vulnerability and resident impact. This could lead to avoidable escalation and further Ombudsman findings.	Quality assurance, case oversight, complaint guidance, Complaints Panel review, clearer expectations for response standards and consistency of redress/remedies.
	Governance and accountability are not strong enough to sustain improvement	The programme depends on complaint handling being owned within normal service management arrangements, not treated as a separate process. Weak ownership could limit delivery and assurance.	Weekly operational oversight, monthly Complaints Panel, quarterly reporting, HNIB oversight, SLT reporting and clearer management accountability.
	Resident voice is not sufficiently built into assurance	The Complaints Panel is currently staff-led. Without tenant involvement, there is a risk that lived experience and resident challenge are not fully reflected in improvement activity.	Recruitment to the tenant-facing Service Quality Panel; planned tenant involvement in the Complaints Panel; reporting to the Tenant Led Panel and use of Scrutiny feedback to shape delivery.

8.0 Next Steps

- 8.1 Delivery of the programme will continue during 2026/27.
- 8.2 Progress will be monitored through the existing governance arrangements and reported through the quarterly complaints reporting cycle.
- 8.3 Feedback from Scrutiny Members will be used to shape the continued delivery and development of the programme.

9.0 Contact officer

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10.0 Background Papers and History of Decisions

10.1 The key supporting papers are listed as appendices to this report.

11.0 Appendices

11.1 Appendix 1: Complaints Improvement Programme Plan

12.0 Service Director responsible

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