



South Tyneside Council

SOUTH TYNESIDE COUNCIL
**HOUSING
SERVICES**

Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvements Report 2025/2026

South Tyneside Council Housing Services

Introduction

South Tyneside Council Housing Services aims to provide excellent services to all our customers, but it is acknowledged that on occasion the service delivered may fall short of excellence resulting in customers being dissatisfied. Where problems do occur, South Tyneside Council Housing Services is committed to investigating and resolving incidents of dissatisfaction and learning from them.

This report provides an update on Housing Services' complaint handling performance over the last financial year and highlights the changes and service improvements implemented as a result of learnings from customer feedback.

This report will cover:

- Self-Assessment 2026
- Complaints Performance 2025/2026
- Refused Complaints
- Learnings and Service Improvements from Customer Feedback
- Customer Journey Mapping
- Compliments

Self-Assessment 2026

The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code sets out requirements for member landlords. The purpose of the Code is to enable landlords to resolve complaints raised by residents quickly and use the data and learning from complaints to drive service improvements.

From 1 April 2024, the Code became statutory meaning that member landlords are obliged by law to follow its requirements.

South Tyneside Council Housing Services have completed the Housing Ombudsman's Annual Self-Assessment to measure ourselves against this code to see if we are compliant and where we can improve.

South Tyneside Council Housing Services are fully compliant with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and there are no areas of non-compliance.

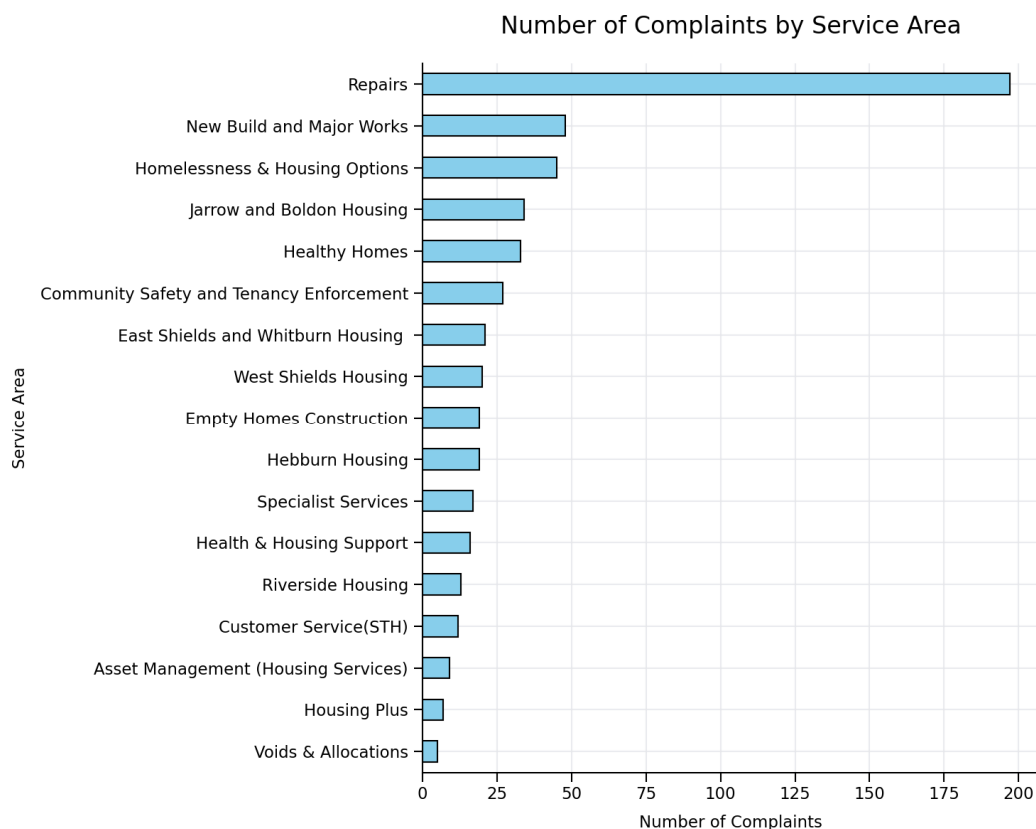
The completed Self-Assessment for 2026 can be found on our website's complaints page to view alongside our updated Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy.

Complaints Performance 2025/2026

South Tyneside Council Housing Services handled 543 Stage 1 complaints and 137 Stage 2 complaints during the 2025/2026 financial year. While these volumes may appear high, they reflect an accessible, well-promoted service and demonstrate our commitment to transparency, accountability, and continuous learning from complaints.

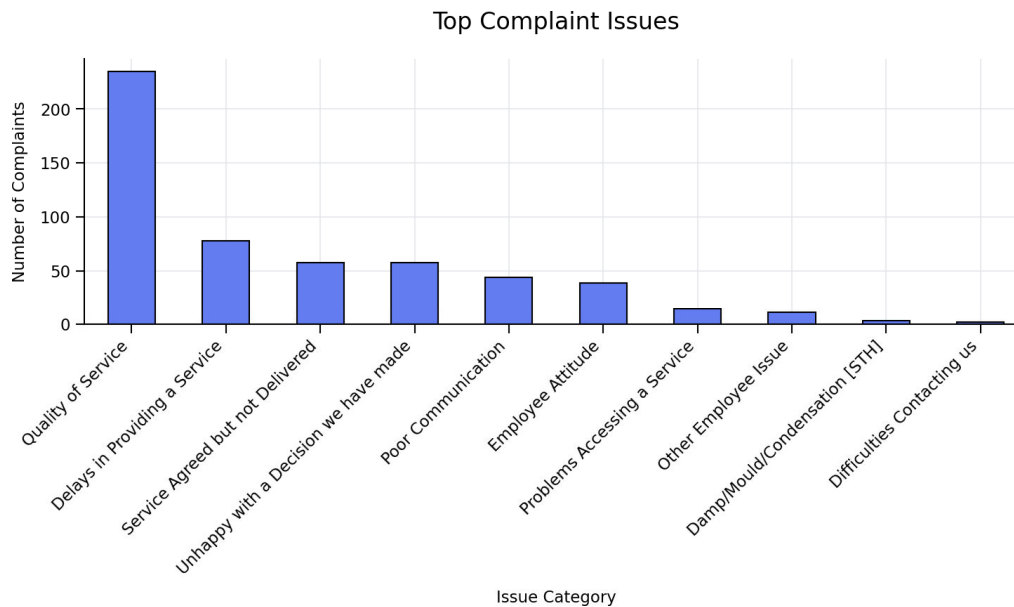
Of the complaints investigated, 91% of complaints were completed within timescale at stage 1 and 100% of complaints were completed within timescale at stage 2.

The chart below shows the number of complaints received by each service area.



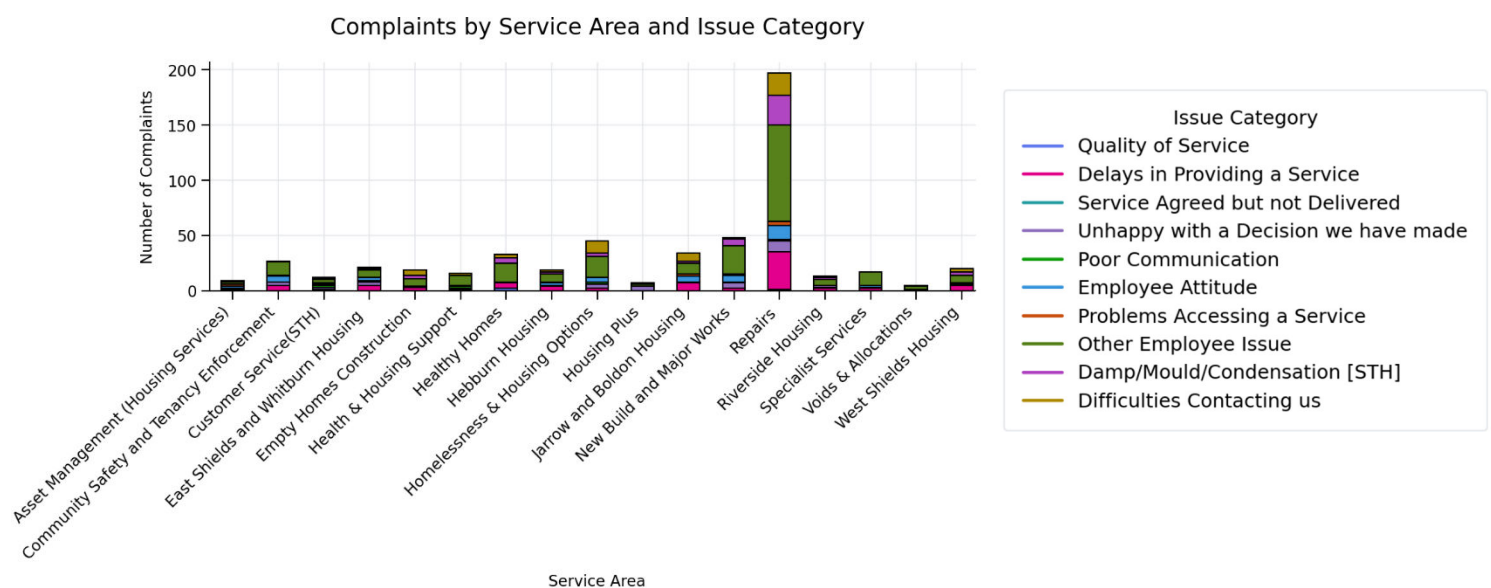
Complaints are largely concentrated within Repairs, making it the primary driver of dissatisfaction. Focusing improvements on Repairs, alongside other high-volume areas, will have the greatest impact. Although complaint volumes in Repairs remain high, they have significantly decreased compared to last year and will continue to be a key focus for improvement.

Complaints received by South Tyneside Council Housing Services are recorded on the central Corporate Feedback System and categorised by reason. The chart below shows the breakdown across the 10 complaint categories.



The chart shows the top 3 reasons for complaints in 2025/2026 were; quality of service, delays in providing a service and service agreed but not delivered.

The chart below shows the breakdown of complaints by service area and issue category.



The three main drivers of complaints within Property Services are service quality, delays in delivery, and services promised but not completed. This indicates that the primary issue is overall operational performance—particularly around timeliness and quality—rather than isolated cases.

In contrast, the top three reasons for complaints within Housing Management are dissatisfaction with decisions made, poor communication, and service quality. This suggests that complaints in this area are more strongly influenced by customer perception and experience, rather than operational delays alone.

This insight enables us to focus our resources more effectively on targeted service improvements, helping to reduce future dissatisfaction in these areas. This approach is demonstrated in the '*Learnings and Service Improvements from Customer Feedback*' section later in this report.

Refused Complaints

South Tyneside Council Housing Services Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy sets out the criteria for complaints which may be refused. If a complaint is not accepted, the customer will be informed of the reasons why and provided with the contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service should they wish to seek their advice and guidance.

In 2025/2026, the most common reasons for refusing a complaint were as follows:

- The complaint had exhausted our two stage complaints process
- The complaint was in relation to a service provided by South Tyneside Council
- An alternative policy or process was required to resolve the issue, for example an appeal or review
- a first-time request for service
- reports of anti-social behaviour

Learnings and Service Improvements from Customer Feedback

South Tyneside Council Housing Services is committed to listening to and learning from customer feedback. We value input from all our customers, as it helps us identify areas where our services can be improved.

As a result, a range of service improvements were introduced across all service areas in 2025/2026 to enhance the overall customer experience, including the following:

- Improved communication for planned repairs by proactively informing customers of assigned subcontractors, timescales, and contact details, reducing enquiries and complaints related to lack of updates.
- Introduced a dedicated Repairs Feedback Officer to oversee and track agreed works from Stage 1 through to completion, reducing repeat complaints and escalation to stage 2 by ensuring actions are followed through.
- Strengthened oversight of repairs through proactive intervention by the Repairs Feedback Officer, ensuring timely updates on changes, reducing repeat complaints and escalations, and introducing post-completion checks on complex works to confirm customer satisfaction.
- Implemented a repairs job prefix system to clearly identify works linked to complaint resolutions, improving tracking, prioritisation, and ensuring repairs are completed correctly at the first visit.
- Strengthened the follow-on process by requiring operatives to agree next steps and confirm subsequent appointments with team leaders before leaving, ensuring customers are informed and reducing the need for them to chase updates.
- Enhanced customer communication by introducing follow-on text messages confirming next steps after repairs visits, alongside ad hoc messaging to proactively inform customers of delays, reducing inbound enquiries and complaints about missed or late appointments.
- Our Housing Service Centre introduced enhanced customer profiling alerts by adding on-screen pop-up notifications for customers with specific needs, ensuring advisors are aware of individual requirements and can tailor their approach accordingly.
- Streamlined the insurance claims process by removing intermediary support, enabling direct communication between customers and the insurance service to improve accuracy, reduce delays, and minimise ambiguity, while signposting support for those who need assistance.

- Created a reporting tool to support the monitoring of complaints, including tracking progress, assigned ownership, and key deadlines.
- Development of a tracking tool to identify and monitor all ongoing complaints involving damp, mould, or condensation.
- Our Electrical services team issued updated electronic Electrical Alteration forms to managers and customer service teams. They also implemented the following service improvements:
 - Reinforced use of plain, non-technical language in tenant communications.
 - Introduced a system flag to record tenants' preferred Saturday appointments.
 - Strengthened requirements for subcontractors to provide "what next" cards outlining follow-on works.
 - Reinforced adherence to S239 access procedures in line with STC EICR specifications.
 - Emphasised timely tenant contact and completion of follow-on actions within 28 days.
 - Decided not to extend a subcontractor contract due to repeated non-compliance with STC requirements.
- Introduced foyer-based whiteboards in Housing Plus schemes to clearly display staff presence on-site, improving visibility and managing customer expectations around officer availability.
- Appointed a new grounds maintenance contractor to improve the standard of Housing Plus schemes environments, resulting in better-maintained outdoor areas, reduced informal complaints, and decreased demand on frontline staff for reporting and follow-up.
- Introduced enhanced risk assessments and procedures for more independent Housing Plus customers, ensuring consistent contact, improved support, and clearer records for staff where regular wellbeing checks are not in place.
- Our Community Safety and Tenancy Enforcement team introduced a standardised action plan agreed with customers at the outset of cases, setting clear expectations for communication methods and frequency.
- They also developed a comprehensive officer checklist to ensure consistent case management in line with policy and to support new staff.

- In addition, they strengthened case review processes to ensure timely progression or closure, improving transparency and managing customer expectations.

Customer Journey Mapping

Customer Journey Mapping is a structured approach used to visualise a customer's experience across different stages of interaction with a service. It breaks down the journey into key touchpoints, capturing the customer's actions, perceptions, and emotions at each stage.

The Housing Ombudsman Service emphasises that a positive complaint handling culture is fundamental to effective dispute resolution. Complaints should be treated as a valuable source of insight, enabling landlords to identify service issues and drive continuous improvement.

To support this approach, bi-monthly customer journey mapping of the complaints process is undertaken to assess customer experience, identify pain points, and highlight any barriers encountered. This enables South Tyneside Council Housing Services to develop targeted, evidence-based service improvements.

Insights and learning identified through this process are shared with relevant service areas to support implementation and ongoing monitoring of improvements.

Compliments

South Tyneside Council Housing Services received 643 compliments from customers in 2025/2026, and we value and celebrate all positive feedback shared with us.

Customers primarily provide compliments based on two key aspects:

- The quality of service received
- The attitude and approach of our employees

Across these areas, feedback consistently highlights the professionalism, supportiveness, and friendliness of our staff, alongside the high standard of work delivered by operatives within customers' homes.

Below is a selection of examples that reflect the positive experiences and appreciation expressed by our customers.

"Operatives were very polite, chatty and efficient. They explained everything and were very professional, I am really pleased with the work they have done. I have had a bad week and it is just nice to be nice."

"Two Joiners from the Healthy Homes team came out today they were really nice, I was going to send a thank you card but didn't know their names. They were brilliant couldn't fault them anything I asked them was not too much trouble. They even helped me with a light in my bathroom until electrician comes."

"I would like to make you aware of the excellent, professional, kind service I got off Taylah. I have spoken to her multiple times. She is so professional and friendly. She gives an excellent service thank you."

"Customer would like to put in a compliment for the repair that was carried out today for the front door lock. He is very happy with the service provided. He advises that he received a text notification of when they were on the way, which is very good. He advises that it is very good communication. Overall he is very pleased with the repair that was carried out. The workman was very professional and even sorted all the hinges on the door. Very professional."

"Roofers were brilliant and polite, the best workers they have had. They did a good job of cleaning up after themselves and were just really nice."

"I would just like to say a massive thank you to both South Tyneside Council and the lads who have installed my wet room, it looks like something out of a show house, the lads that did the work are an absolute credit to the council, very professional, courteous and respectful, it's been a pleasure having them in my home, thank you so much."

"Paula of the contact centre went above and beyond expectations, taking her time to resolve every problem customer had, good communication skills and providing of customer service."

"Compliment for our Housing Officer - I've just had a home visit, we're in our 70s and lived in the same house for a very long time. She explained all of the changes and what help is available to us, she advised what we can and can't do. It's brilliant to have that kind of service and help to let us know what's what. She was absolutely brilliant."

"Just want to say thank you to healthy homes for getting the damp sorted out again hopefully this time my house will be alright and thanks to the plasterer who done a great job very professional, on time and lovely manner."

"Excellent service the help I got was outstanding Claire always kept in touch the whole time and supported me every step of the way even when I felt like giving up she kept me going."

"Job was done today by a workman called Alan. Just to say thank you & what a good job he has done. Could you please send a big thank you over to him. What a very good worker and cleaned everything after he finished. Thank you."

"Katie met me this morning with a beaming smile to welcome me to my new apartment. I was really happy and impressed with the way she explained the details with lots of attention. Thank you so much Katie."

"I would like to thank everybody concerned with a repair to the chimney yesterday, in all there were 3 bricklayers involved, the first person to arrive could not do the work alone but after a phone call to your office very quickly help came and the job was completed. So just please say thank you for a job well done as there was a tree growing from the chimney, so it was a gardening job also. Many Thanks Again to all and to the customer service team who were so helpful when I explained the nature of the repair. Excellent Service from Excellent Lovely People. Please pass on my kind regards to all. Hope you all have a lovely weekend when it comes."

"The allocation process has been faultless. Sarah is a credit to South Tyneside Council. Communication fantastic, so much understanding in a sensitive situation. Thank you."

"My Wife and I would just like to say a big Thank You for all the hard work and care that Davey and Gary put into to renewing our rear garden path. It's made such a difference and it feels safer to walk in the garden now. The location to get materials in and out wasn't easy by any means but the lads persevered and got on with the job to the highest standard. They are a true credit to Council. Please pass on our Thanks to them."

"I have just had a new bathroom fitted and could not be happier, the gents and lady were amazing from plumbing, joiners, electricians and more. They have gone out of their way to help to cater to my needs and fixed and issues I had on the spot, fantastic service all round thank you."