

Sanctuary's complaint performance 2025/26

Foreword by Arvinda Gohil, Group Vice Chair and Chair of Group Housing Board and member of the Board responsible for complaints

Complaints are one of the clearest ways customers tell us when something has not worked as it should. They show us where we have fallen short and where we need to make changes.

During 2025/2026, Sanctuary made further progress in how we listen to customers, respond to complaints and use feedback to improve services. We responded to more complaints within the Housing Ombudsman's timescales and saw fewer severe maladministration findings than in the previous year. That is encouraging, particularly at a time when complaint volumes have continued to rise across the sector, but we know there is more to do.

We also recognise that numbers only tell part of the story. Every complaint represents a customer's experience of our services. Where that experience hasn't been good enough, we need to respond properly, put things right where we can and make sure the learning is used beyond the individual case.

Over the past year, we have continued to strengthen our complaints service by making better use of learning to identify recurring issues and by increasing our focus on completing the actions agreed through complaints.

We have also maintained clear oversight of complaint performance and learning. Sanctuary's Board reviews every severe maladministration finding and regularly considers complaint performance, ensuring the most serious cases and wider trends are visible at the highest level. Group Housing Board,

which includes customers, also reviews complaint learning at every meeting, with a focus on how it is being used to improve services.

That scrutiny is vital. It helps make sure complaints are not seen only as individual cases, but as an important source of evidence about what customers are experiencing and what needs to change.

Looking ahead to 2026, we are not complacent. Customers should expect a service that is responsive, fair and easy to access. Where we do not meet that standard, we need to listen, put things right and show that we have learned.

Our focus for the year ahead is to keep turning complaint learning into action, improve the services customers rely on most and be open about the progress we are making.

2025/2026 complaints overview

Sanctuary wants to provide safe, well-maintained homes and services that are easy to access and responsive when customers need us. We recognise that we do not always get this right. When that happens, we want to put things right, learn from what customers tell us and make practical changes that improve everyone's experience.

The number of complaints increased during the financial year 2025/2026. The most significant increase was in England, in line with the rest of the sector, but we also saw an increase in Scotland. The Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) reported a significant increase in cases across the sector between 2024/2025 and 2025/2026, and we have seen a similar increase in cases during the same period. From 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, Sanctuary learned the outcome of 260 Housing Ombudsman Service investigations. Each case can have multiple determinations. Within those cases, the HOS determined:

12 cases with findings of severe maladministration

- 201 cases with findings of maladministration
- 98 cases with findings of service failure
- 174 cases with findings of reasonable redress
- 50 cases with findings of no maladministration

In accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's requirements, each year Sanctuary publishes an annual report detailing our complaint performance. This edition covers the period 2025/2026. We also present our complaint performance and service improvements to Sanctuary's Group Board, and publish this information, alongside our self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, on our website.

Annual self-assessment

Our Group Board approved our self-assessment against the HOS Complaint Handling Code at its meeting on 24 June 2026. Prior to this, our self-assessment was reviewed by our Resident Board Members. Read our [self-assessment here](#).

The five main reasons we receive complaints are:

- Responsive repairs including damp and mould
- Managing customer relationships
- Housing management
- Estate services
- Anti-social behaviour

In financial year 2025/2026, we embedded a new Quality Assurance team, focused on ensuring that complaint outcomes are accurate, fair and consistent. This team is already making an impact, and we expect even greater benefits in the year ahead.

A key part of our Quality Assurance process is resident involvement. This gives us valuable feedback from a customer perspective and helps us ensure our service is truly resident-focused.

Our 2025/2026 complaint performance

As was the case across the wider social housing sector, we received significantly more complaints in England during 2025/2026, with a 28% increase at stage one and a 51% increase at stage two, recording a total of 11,708 stage one complaints and 2,931 complaints escalating to stage two.

'Stage one' is where we have investigated a complaint and given our first response to the resident who complained.

'Stage two' is our final response, when the customer is unhappy with the outcome at stage one.

2025/2026	Renters	Owners	Renter and owner combined
Number of stage one complaints received per 1,000 homes	124.7	52.3	120.9
Number of stage two complaints received per 1,000 homes	28.4	16.3	28.2

You'll see from the table above that most of the complaints we receive are resolved at stage one. Around one in every four housing complaints in England progresses to stage two.

Complaints responded to within the timescale set by the Housing Ombudsman:

2025/2026	Renters	Owners	Renter and owner combined
Percentage of stage one complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales	95.10%	88.74%	94.91%
Percentage of stage two complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint	97.04%	98.99%	97.12%

Handling Code timescales			
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We improved how quickly we responded to complaints in 2025/2026. Across Sanctuary Group, 94.91% of stage one complaints and 97.12% of stage two complaints were answered within the timescales set by the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code. This is an improvement from 92.3% at stage one and 79.85% at stage two in 2024/2025.

While performance improved during the year, we recognise that there is further to go to deliver the service customers expect. We are already seeing improvements in 2026/2027 and are confident this positive trend will continue.

Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) complaints

Customers can take their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service when they are unhappy with our response at stage one and stage two. In 2025/2026, we learned the outcome of 260 Housing Ombudsman investigations.

The 260 investigations sparked 565 determination findings:

- 12 severe maladministration findings
- 201 maladministration findings
- 98 service failure findings
- 174 reasonable redress findings
- 50 no maladministration findings
- 6 mediation outcomes
- 24 outside of jurisdiction

Percentage of total findings:

Finding type	2024/2025	2025/2026
Severe maladministration	6.2%	2.1%
Maladministration	32.8%	35.6%
Service failure	18.3%	17.3%
Reasonable redress	27.6%	30.8%
No maladministration	12.1%	8.8%

Mediation	0%	1.1%
Outside of jurisdiction	3.1%	4.2%

During 2025/2026, from the 565 findings the Housing Ombudsman issued 694 orders and 253 recommendations to Sanctuary. Compensation ordered or recommended totalled £226,078.

The total amount of compensation redress made by Sanctuary in 2025/2026 was £2,956,256 for stage one, stage two and Housing Ombudsman complaints combined.

We saw more customers taking complaints to the Housing Ombudsman Service in 2025/2026, which reflects a wider trend across the housing sector. Although the total number of findings Sanctuary received increased by 75%, the number of severe maladministration findings fell by 40%. This means that, while more cases were reviewed by the Ombudsman, fewer resulted in the most serious type of finding.

This is encouraging progress, but we know that every severe maladministration finding matters. Each one represents a customer who experienced a significant service failure. We review these cases carefully, put things right where we can, and use what we learn to improve services for other customers. These learnings are shared on our [webpage Learning from when we get it wrong](#).

Some of the most important improvements from 2025/2026 are:

- **Improved governance and service delivery:** The overall maladministration rate, made up of severe maladministration, maladministration and service failure, has decreased by 1.5%, reflecting the changes to how the complaints team handles and manages complaints, meaning more customers receive resolution.
- **Improved complaint response performance:** We responded to 95% of stage one complaints and 97% of stage two complaints within the Complaint Handling Code timescales. This reflects stronger complaint handling processes, improved monitoring and clearer ownership of complaints across services.
- **Reduction in severity of findings:** Despite the increase in cases and findings by the Housing Ombudsman, there has been a measurable decline of 40% in the number of severe maladministration cases compared to 2024/2025. This trend reflects the positive impact of the North Star transformation programme, which is contributing to a reduction in the severity of findings issued by the Housing Ombudsman.

- **Enhanced redress outcomes:** The total number of reasonable redress findings increased by 100%, from 87 in 2024/2025 to 174 in 2025/2026. This highlights the effectiveness of the complaint handling teams in ensuring timely completion of remedial actions and alignment with the Housing Ombudsman's remedies guidance in offers of compensation, meaning when our customers let us know we've got something wrong, we are now more than ever doing our best to set it right for customers through the complaint handling process.
- **Stronger assurance and learning:** Our Quality Assurance Framework, Resident Quality Assurance checks and Root Cause Analysis Framework give us better evidence about the quality of complaint responses, fairness of outcomes and the changes needed to prevent repeat issues.

2025/2026 complaint handling improvements

During 2025/26, we continued to improve how we listen and respond when customers complain. This was reflected in our Tenant Satisfaction Measures for complaint handling. Satisfaction increased by 2.61% at stage one and 17.27% at stage two. We know there is still more to do, but this shows we are making progress.

Sanctuary remains committed to improving how we handle complaints, check quality and learn from customer feedback. To help us respond more consistently, identify issues earlier and make sure complaints lead to practical improvements, we have:

Put a new Quality Assurance process in place with structured reviews to check our complaint handling outcomes are fair, consistent, clearly explained and meet customer, policy and regulatory expectations.

- Introduced resident quality assurance checks, with trained and accredited residents reviewing a sample of complaint cases to provide an independent customer perspective.
- Developed our root cause analysis approach, bringing together learnings from complaints, customer feedback, audit findings and quality assurance to identify recurring issues and aim to prevent complaints rather than just respond to them effectively when they occur.
- Used complaint learning to focus on priority areas including damp and mould, emergency repairs, gas and compliance and wider repairs-related concerns.
- Continued to publish complaint handling information every three months, available on our website.



Looking ahead to 2026/2027, we are excited to build on this progress.

Resident quality assurance has already given us helpful feedback. Residents agreed with our internal quality assurance conclusions in most of the cases they reviewed and recognised examples of clear, empathetic, and evidence-based communication. They also helped us identify where we need to do more, including explaining compensation more clearly, improving communication when complaints are closed before repairs are complete and making sure reviewers have the right information.

In response, we are reviewing our compensation guidance, improving the way we explain complaint closure and strengthening the information shared through resident quality assurance. This will help customers better understand what has been decided, what will happen next and who is responsible for any outstanding actions.

Looking ahead, we will continue to use complaints to improve services, with a focus on repairs, communication, and completing agreed actions. Our aim is to resolve more issues earlier, reduce repeat complaints and provide a fair, timely and high-quality complaints service for every customer.

We will continue to be open about our performance and the improvements we are making, so customers can see how their feedback is helping us learn and improve.