Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Review 2025/26

1.1 The aim of this report is to give an overview of complaints received in the year.

Overall Complaint Levels

1.2 Complaints levels continue to rise, both at NDH and across the sector. During 2025/26 we logged, investigated and responded to a total of 224 formal complaints, this was an increase from the 173 that we responded to in 2024/25 *(Housemark's January 2026 "Monthly Pulse" survey found an average of **5.79 complaints per 1,000 units**, up from 3.90 in January 2024).*

1.3 It is likely that the increase, at least in part, continues to reflect the rising profile given to complaints alongside the associated external campaigns of the Government and Ombudsman who continue to raise the profile of complaints. There is also some evidence from sentiment analysis studies that dissatisfaction with services beyond the sector continues to fall.

1.4 The impact of Awaab's Law on resources within our repairs service is also a likely factor and is reflected in an increase in complaints relating to repairs in the Winter months of 2025-26.

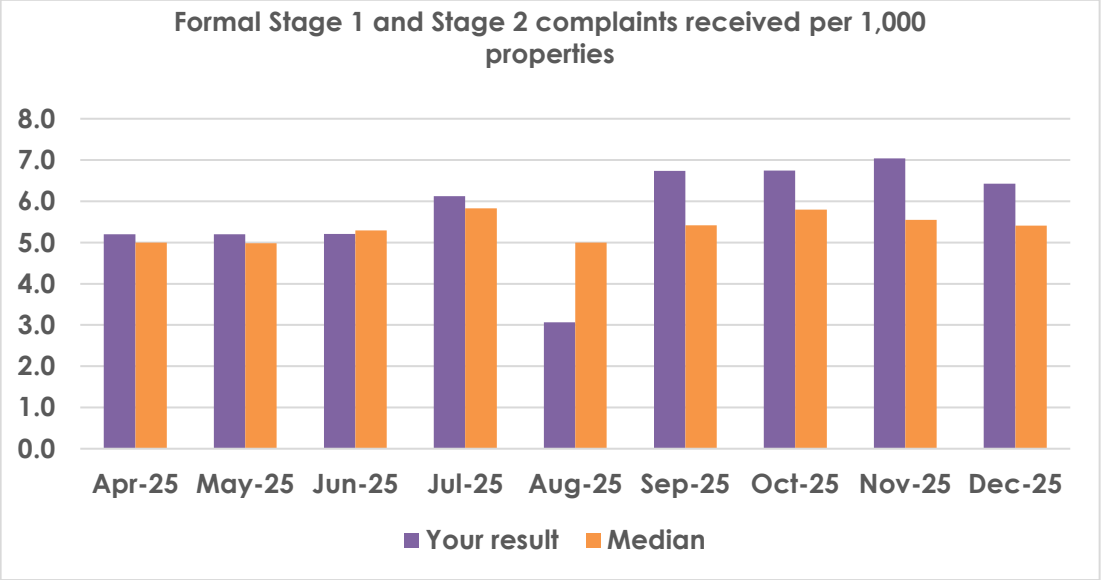
1.5 Seen in the wider context, general Consumer Sentiment continues to drive up complaint levels.

1.6 Taken in combination, the above factors increase the significance of complaints learning and feedback in our understanding of the NDH Customer Experience, informing our understanding of Tenant Satisfaction Measures and cross-referencing with feedback through our strong Customer involvement Strategy (as reflected in our C1 rating).

1.7 The table below illustrates the upward trend in complaints activity in recent years:

2021-22		**2023-24**		**2024-25**		**2025-26**	
Stage 1	37	Stage 1	114	Stage 1	173	Stage 1	224
Stage 2	9	Stage 2	15	Stage 2	27	Stage 2	29
Ombudsman	0	Ombudsman	3	Ombudsman	4	Ombudsman	1

1.8 An increase in complaint levels during Quarter 3 saw NDH complaints go marginally above the national median.

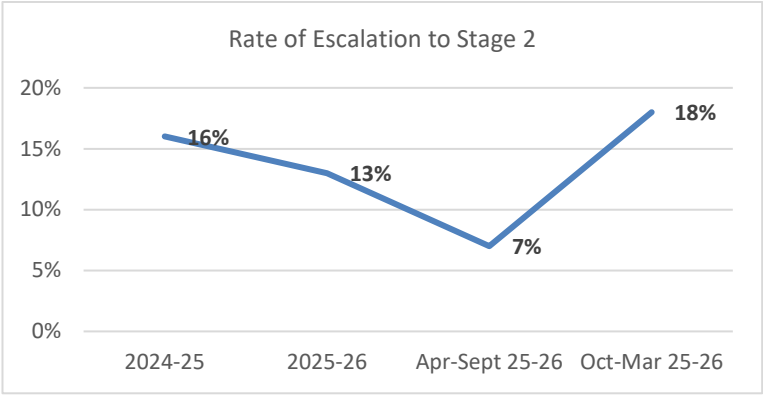


Complaints Escalation to Stage 2

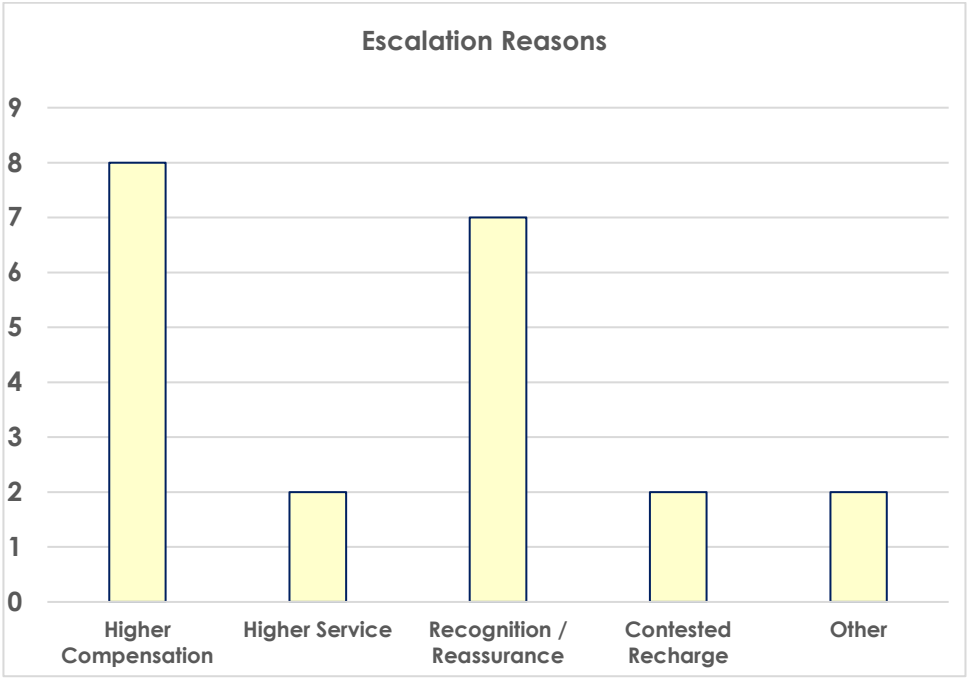
1.9 Due to the rise in complaint levels in the previous year, some thought was put into Stage 2 escalations at the start of 2025-26. The wording on standard letters was revised and levels of dialogue around Stage 1 Complaints was increased. Overall, percentage of Stage 1 Complaints escalating to Stage 2 decreased from 2024-25 the year. However, this overall decrease could mask a considerable increase in escalation levels in the 2nd half of 25-26 after a very low levels of escalations in the early part of the year.

Escalation to Stage 2			
2024-25	2025-26	Apr-Sept 25-26	Oct-Mar 25-26
16%	13%	7%	18%

1.10 Plotting these figures on a graph gives a graphic demonstration of the variations in the rate at which Stage 1 Complaints escalate to Stage 2 over time.



1.11 There is no clear reason for the variations in escalation levels over time. Analysis conducted later in the year showed the main reasons that complainants chose to escalate their complaints.



1.12 The main reasons that customers chose to escalate their complaints were that the felt that compensation offered at the Stage 1 resolution did not adequately reflect the impact of the issue on their household, or that they felt that the resolution had not provided sufficient recognition or reassurance.

1.13 In the complaints sample studied, where customers required higher compensation levels, the majority were not asking for large sums, but something that equated more closely to a week's worth or rent, rather than the lower sums recommended by the guidance used such as the Right to Repair.

Housing Ombudsman

1.14 Despite the increase in Stage 1 Complaints, there was a pleasing reduction in cases escalating to the Housing Ombudsman over the year.

1.15 NDH invests significantly in our Stage 2 Complaint Review Panel, which reviews all Stage 2 Complaints individually and is attended by the Executive Team and senior Service Leads. These meetings take the time needed to explore the complaint in full to provide challenge and assurance that the process has been followed and appropriate learning captured and actioned.

1.16 Analysis of Complaints conducted through the year (November 2025) showed that there is good consistency of outcomes in complaints progressing through the escalation stages. Only 4 out of 173 complaints received in 2024-25 had

their outcome completely overturned at Stage 2 Review (i.e. from Not Upheld to Upheld).

1.17 NDH received 3 determinations from investigations by the Housing Ombudsman through the year.

Housing Ombudsman Determinations		
No Maladministration	Maladministration	Severe Maladministration
2	1	0

Case Ref	Case Created	Case Determined	Outcome
202432929	27.11.2024	19.11.2025	No Maldaminstration
202332031	11.12.2023	26.11.2025	No Maldaminstration
202315979	01.08.2023	26.01.2026	Maladministration

1.18 There continue to be delays in cases being determined by the Housing Ombudsman. Of the 3 cases determined by the Ombudsman in 25-26, the average time between Ombudsman case creation and determination was 25 months.

1.19 The Maladministration finding in case 202315979 was our first since March 2024 and results from a protracted and complex dispute with a leaseholder. NDH were found to have failed to set out a clear path to resolution of building issues in our complaint response and we were ordered to pay £360 in compensation. Internal learning was that we should not have waited on the determination from the Ombudsman before redoubling efforts at resolution, given the length of time determinations are currently taking.

1.20 Determination letters for each case are to be found at Appendices i – iii.

1.21 In the Housing Ombudsman's Landlord's Report for 2024-25, NDH were praised for receiving no Maladministration verdicts from 5 Findings over 2 Determinations. As one of only 2 landlords in the country to achieve No Maladministration from Findings across this period, NDH were asked to present on our approach to Complaints handling in an online seminar hosted by the Housing Ombudsman. The presentation focused on:

- The NDH Community Landlord identity
- Our culture of partnership with customers
- Our centralised complaints handling approach

The presentation took place on 25th March 2026, and we received the following feedback from the Housing Ombudsman;

" *Thank you again for preparing and delivering such a great session this morning. I've just come out of a meeting with my team and they all said how brilliant it was and how much they enjoyed it. The fact that we didn't get through all the questions really shows how engaging and interesting landlords found it".*

Exemptions & Refusals

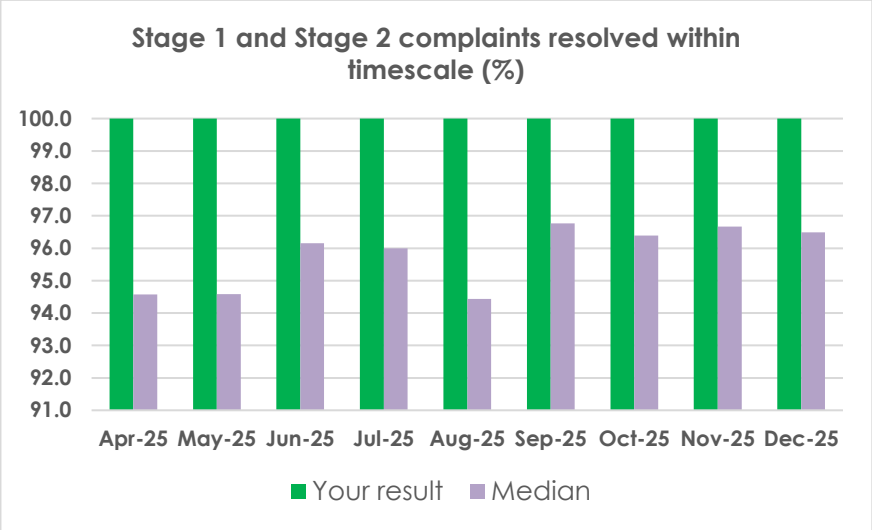
1.22 We have not refused to take any complaints under the exemptions provided for in the Complaints Handling Code in 2025-26. Complaints from private residents are dealt with through a management response and are not included in this report.

KPI's & Performance

1.23 Despite the ongoing rise in complaints levels, the team worked hard to maintain performance. 100% of Stage 1 and Stage 2 Resolutions were sent within the timescales set out in the Complaints Handling Code of the Housing Ombudsman. One Stage 1 Complaint Acknowledgement was late due to a delay in the complaint being forwarded into the Complaints service.

Communication	Cases	Outcome	Target	Performance
Stage 1 Acknowledgement	224	223	100%	99.6%
Stage 1 Resolution	224	224	100%	100%
Stage 2 Acknowledgement	29	29	100%	100%
Stage 2 Resolution	29	29	100%	100%

1.24 The table below gives an indication of NDH performance on Complaint Resolution times against sector averages between April and December 2025:



1.25 As reflected in the presentation to the Housing Ombudsman, NDH operates a centralised complaints handling process with all Stage 1 Complaints investigated and responded to by a dedicated and specialist Complaints Adviser.

1.26 The January 2026 report from the Hosing Quality Network entitled "Landlords Approaches to Managing Complaints – Staffing & Structures" sets out the strengths of this approach and notes the increasing trend within the Housing Sector towards a centralised approach.

1.27 We take assurance from our customer focus groups, and broader feedback, that our customers are aware of how to make a complaint and we will continue to publicise this in a range of ways to ensure that we are hearing from our customers when things are not going as well as they or we would wish.

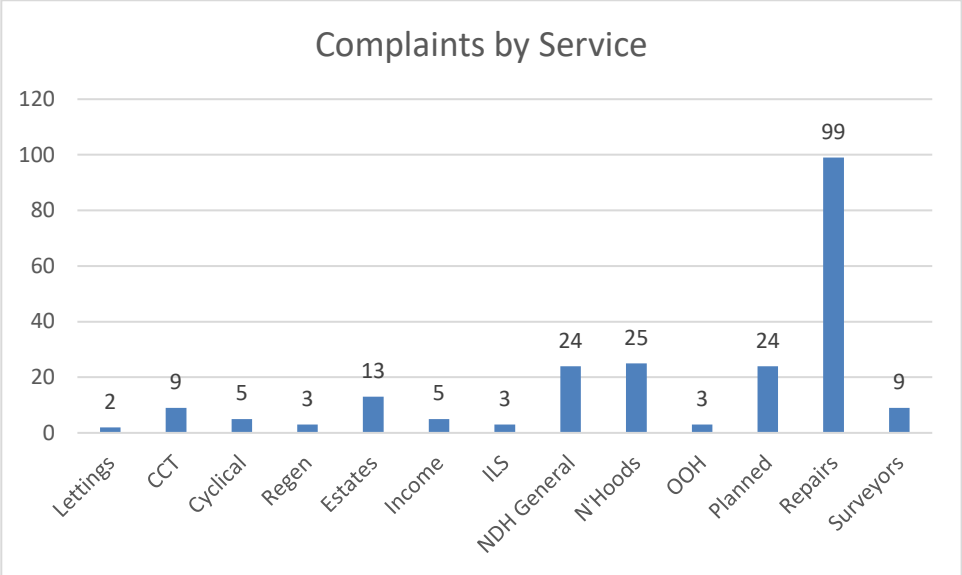
Tenant Satisfaction Measure – Complaints Handling

1.28 Our Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) outcomes for 2025-26 show a slight decline in satisfaction levels across all themes, including Complaints Handling.

1.29 Our weighted TSM complaints handling satisfaction level of 40.1% remains closer to last year's 42% and compares well with our weighted score from 2023/24 of 35.4%. The latest available national benchmark satisfaction levels from the 2024-25 surveys gave satisfaction with complaints handling across the sector at 35.5%.

2 Complaints by Service Area and Themes Arising

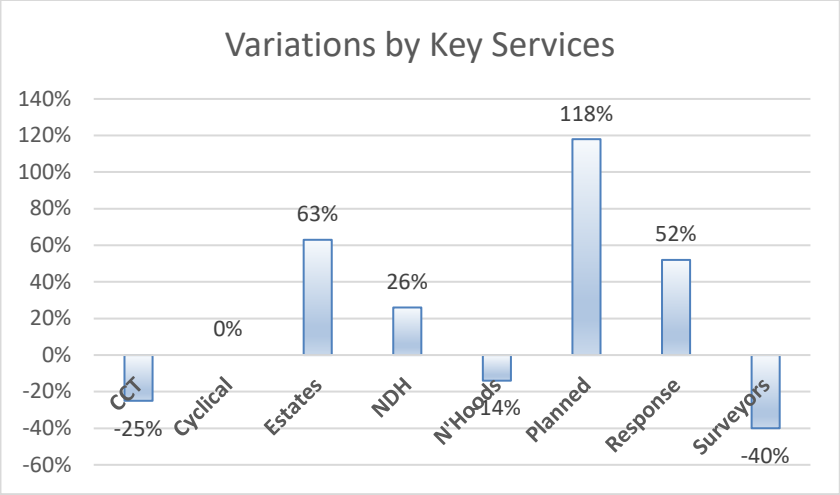
2.1 The following graph presents a breakdown of complaints by service area.



Response Repairs

2.2 It is customary that Response Repairs receive the highest level of complaints. The 99 complaints should be set in the context of over 14,000 repairs completed in 25-26.

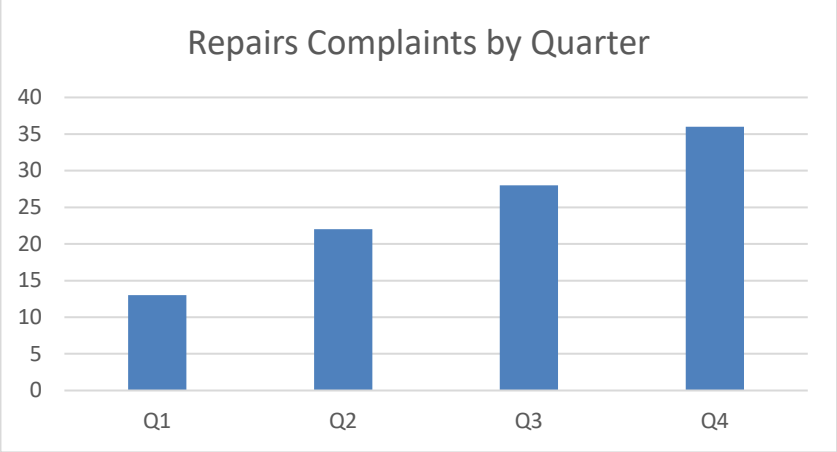
2.3 The 52% increase in Repairs complaints this year on last year compares to an overall complaints increase of 30%. By comparison, other key customer-facing areas of complaints have increased as follows:



2.4 Whilst the match is not exact as some services have decreased complaints, it is reasonable to conclude from the figures that the increase in complaints is primarily driven by increases in complaints relating to Response Repairs, Planned Maintenance, Estate Services and NDH General (complaints which incorporate 2 or more NDH services). The greatest numerical increase (as opposed to %) is in Response Repairs (34 more than last year) and Planned Maintenance (13 more).

2.5 We should always consider when looking at numbers and percentages by service that some services generate a low volume of complaints so can be subject to some volatility, particularly when looking at percentages. As a medium – small landlord, our complaints sample sizes are not large.

2.6 The increase in complaints relating to Response Repairs is the most numerically significant but is not consistent throughout the year. Looking at the level of complaints through the year points towards explanatory factors:



2.7 Repairs complaints levels in the first half of 25-26 ran at 35, in the 2nd half of the year at 64, an increase of 82%. This increase coincides with the launch of Awaab's Law and works under a specific project which impacted the resources that we had available for general repairs.

2.8 The increase in complaints around Repairs and also Grounds Maintenance fits with this year's TSM results, which show the greatest fall in satisfaction levels in these areas.

2.9 It is encouraging that feedback through our Complaints Process matches feedback through TSMs, customer involvement activities and staff experience.

Repairs Contractors

2.10 Due to the prevalence of complaints regarding one of our contractors, the Complaints Service began tracking repairs which related to external contractors. These were recorded as follows:

Liberty Gas	18
Spirebourne (Drainage)	1
Jed Mason (Plumbing)	3
James Electrics	2
West Country Maintenance Services (General works)	1
Sureserve / LCX (Renewable technology and cavity insulation)	2

2.11 27% of Repairs complaints related to contractors. Liberty Gas have consistently attracted complaints, largely relating to delays and appointment / scheduling issues. Contract meetings have been held with company Directors and a Service Recovery Plan is being delivered.

2.12 There is an increase in the proportion of complaints being upheld when compared to last year. This may relate in part to a higher proportion of complaints around Repairs. These complaints tend to be upheld at a higher rate than some other service areas.

Complaint Resolution Outcome	Frequency 25-26	Frequency 24-25
Not Upheld	43%	48%
Partially Upheld	17%	21%
Fully Upheld	40%	31%

3 Themes and areas of focus for Service Improvement

3.1 During the year, all complaints have been reviewed by our Complaints Review Group, (a continuous improvement group which comprises of front-line Service managers and the Executive Team), to identify learning opportunities and to ensure that actions are carried out and embedded across the organisation.

3.2 In addition, we have a dedicated Customer Complaints Review Group where the Head of Customer and Housing Services and Customer Experience Manager meet with customers to review anonymised complaints. They feedback to service managers on learning opportunities and how they think that complaint handling is working. Customers also track learning and follow up on recommendations to changes in service.

3.3 Some thought has been given to the role of the Complaints Review Group and the process of defining and tracking Complaints Learning in the context of such elevated complaint numbers. We can anticipate that we may process as many as 240 formal complaints in 26-27 and to aspire to create, record and publish an action of Complaints Learning for each individual complaint in a way that explains what we are doing would be more challenging.

3.4 In order to support and promote the culture and impact of Complaints Learning, preparatory work has been carried out through the year on a shared resource under the heading of Complaints Academy. Our Complaints Academy is a Sharepoint site which will create clarity on Complaints Learning and Resolution actions, allow service leads to monitor complaint themes and levels for their service and self-serve in signing off completion of actions. The Academy will also produce monthly business-wide updates on Complaints themes and build a library of resources relating to Complaints, such as the Housing Ombudsman's Learning from Severe Maladministration reports. Complaints Academy will launch in Q1 of the current year.

3.5 In reviewing our complaints, we have identified some areas where we have focused our learning and will be looking to improve how we design and deliver our services.

3.6 For example, we have achieved 'quick wins' as well as responding to themes. For instance, our cleaning contractors went out to check on the quality of communal areas in blocks following a complaint. They found issues and staff were spoken to as a result. This links to our TSM results on communal areas noted above and contributes to the decision to take this theme as a topic for our Scrutiny Panel later in 26-27. We have reviewed information given out to customers when scheduling repairs appointments following confusion over the flexibility to move an appointment within a morning slot when the customer had previously been given a fixed time slot.

3.7 We have worked with teams to reinforce the importance of note taking and recording and provided the Business Support team with training on trauma informed working and managing challenging interactions.

3.8 Following complaints relating to alterations in outhouses, we will be updating our customer information around the construction, use and maintenance of non-habitable areas of the home.

3.9 Our Complaints Process has acted as a gateway for additional support for customers with complex needs or facing specific challenges. We have intervened in at least one case following a complaint to make representation to Devon Home Choice to increase the customer's priority banding for a move. Several referrals have also been made to our in-house Specialist Support service to good effect.

3.10 Early complaints regarding property maintenance issues in Slade Valley informed the decision to create a liaison role to ensure that affected households have access to information and updates concerning their housing circumstances.

3.11 We have also identified trends, such as focussing discussions with a particular contractor who has generated a high level of complaints. The issue has been discussed with the Head of Asset Management and Director of Neighbourhoods who are managing the contract and feeding complaints into performance review with the contractor.

3.12 We have also used themes from our complaints to inform other areas of work, such as Scrutiny Panel reviews, the analysis of our annual TSM surveys and the business case for and specification of a new Asset Management and Repairs IT system.

3.13 Our Neighbourhoods Team have also launched the new Complainants Compact to assist communications and relationships through the management of longer term ASB cases. The majority of complaints regarding Neighbourhood Services are generated out of ASB cases and are rooted in communication issues. This theme in complaints informed our Scrutiny Panel's look at ASB and the Complainants Compact arises from a recommendation in the Scrutiny Report.

3.14 Our Upkeep of Common Parts Policy has been updated to include specific guidance on disabled parking bays in car parks owned and maintained by NDH following the Housing Ombudsman's determination on case 202432929.

3.15 Analysis of complaints carried out last year showed that in 72% of upheld complaints, communication failure was an element of the complaint. Feedback from our Customer Involvement work, Tenant Satisfaction Measures and Complaints all support the view that Communication will continue to be a focus of our TSM Response in 26-27.

3.16 In the year ahead, we will work to ensure that feedback and learning through our Complaints process informs the development of the new IT system, which has the potential to address historic themes in Complaints by creating a step change in the ability of teams to track repairs and maintenance issues through our systems and keep customer informed. Analysis of TSM outcomes shows that Repairs is the greatest driver of customer satisfaction.

3.17 There have also been many compliments about staff, and we are proud that our TSM score for treating customers fairly and with respect – understood by the Regulator to relate primarily to frontline staff interactions with customers - remains our highest TSM score.

4 Complaints Profile and Diversity

4.1 A detailed profiling exercise carried out last year established the following positions (see Complaints Review 24-25):

- Overall, customers with declared disabilities were not hindered in accessing the Complaints process or in achieving fair outcomes in terms of levels of complaints upheld relative to customer without disabilities.
- Customers with a recorded mental health diagnosis escalated to stage 2 of the complaints process at a higher rate than other customers.
- Older customers are under-represented in the complaints process.

4.2 During the year 2025 / 26 there was one complaint raised that directly cited differences in service, attitude or outcomes directly relating to one of the protected characteristics. The complaint questioned (rather than overtly alleging) possible racial discrimination in the allocation of planned upgrades. The complaint was investigated thoroughly and not upheld. The customer had contacted the Housing Ombudsman but did not progress their complaint further beyond the Stage 1 Resolution and assurances given there.

4.3 Working with our Customer Complaints Review Group, we conducted some in year analysis on age profiling, seeking to investigate the under-representation of older customers in complaints. Last year's profiling exercise found that over 62's were 17% under-represented in complaints. Customers were reassured that:

- Between April – November 2025, the gap had narrowed slightly to 15.3% below representative levels, so is not widening.
- Over 65's are not reluctant to give feedback, as they are an over-represented group in our TSM survey responses.
- Over 65's are also significantly more satisfied with services in TSM responses.

	Difference
18–24	0.2%
25–34	2.7%
35–44	6.7%
45–54	2.1%
55–64	3.6%
65–74	-9.6%
75–84	-4.5%
85+	-1.2%

4.4 We were unable to obtain benchmarking data through the Housemark service, as this level of profiling is not reported by landlords. However, we will continue to monitor and seek some benchmarking data through networks and contacts in 26-27.

4.5 The relationship between the Complaints process and our in-house Specialist Support service will be investigated further by our Scrutiny Panel as part of their review of the Specialist Support team, set to begin in April 2026.

Appendix 1

Complaints Satisfaction Survey

2 separate surveys of customers who made a complaint in 2025-26 were undertaken during June 2026.

Survey 1 – Microsoft Forms Survey

Respondents for this survey were separated into 3 groups, depending on the outcome of their complaint:

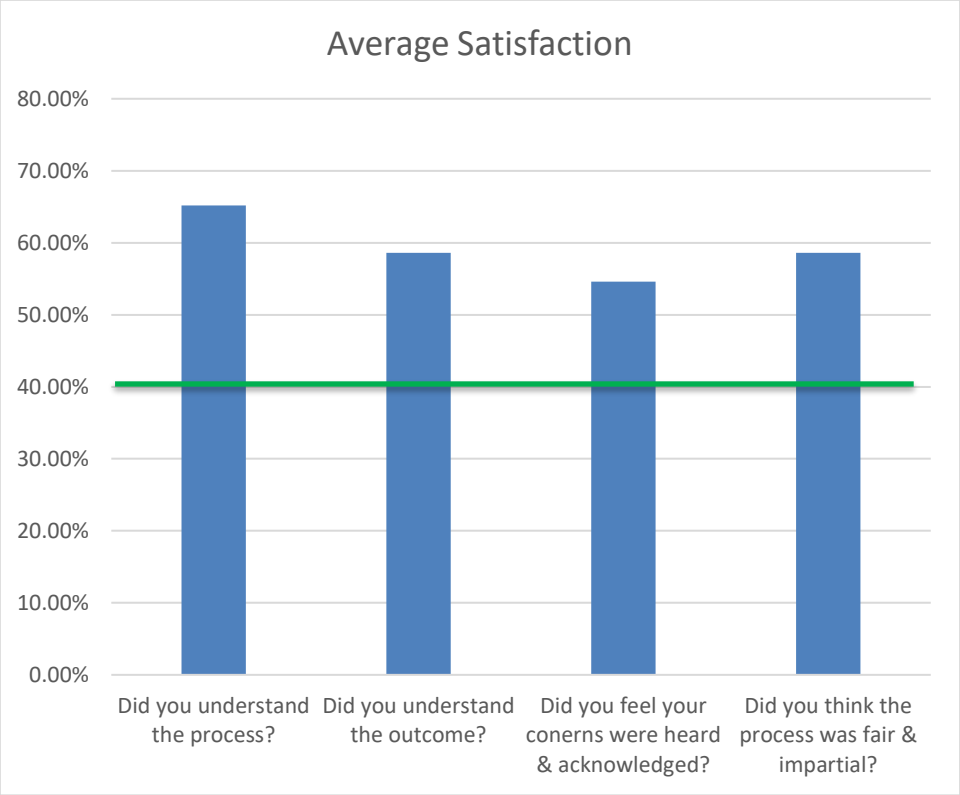
Survey 1 – Complaint Upheld
Survey 2 – Complaint Not Upheld
Surbey 3 – Multiple Complaints within the year.

The advantage of this approach is that it allows an insight into whether the outcome of the complaint is significant in influencing satisfaction levels. The disadvantage is that it reduces sample sizes, so that, by the time we had excluded customers who have stated that they do not wish to participate in surveys, the sample for Survey 3 was reduced to 20, and just 1 response was received.

The survey was carried out by sending a link to a Microsoft Forms survey via text message. A message on the NDH website reassured respondents that the survey is genuine.

A total of 15 responses were received – a 9.3% response rate.

Respondents were asked 4 questions about their experience of the Complaints Process. Overall satisfaction rates are in the table below:

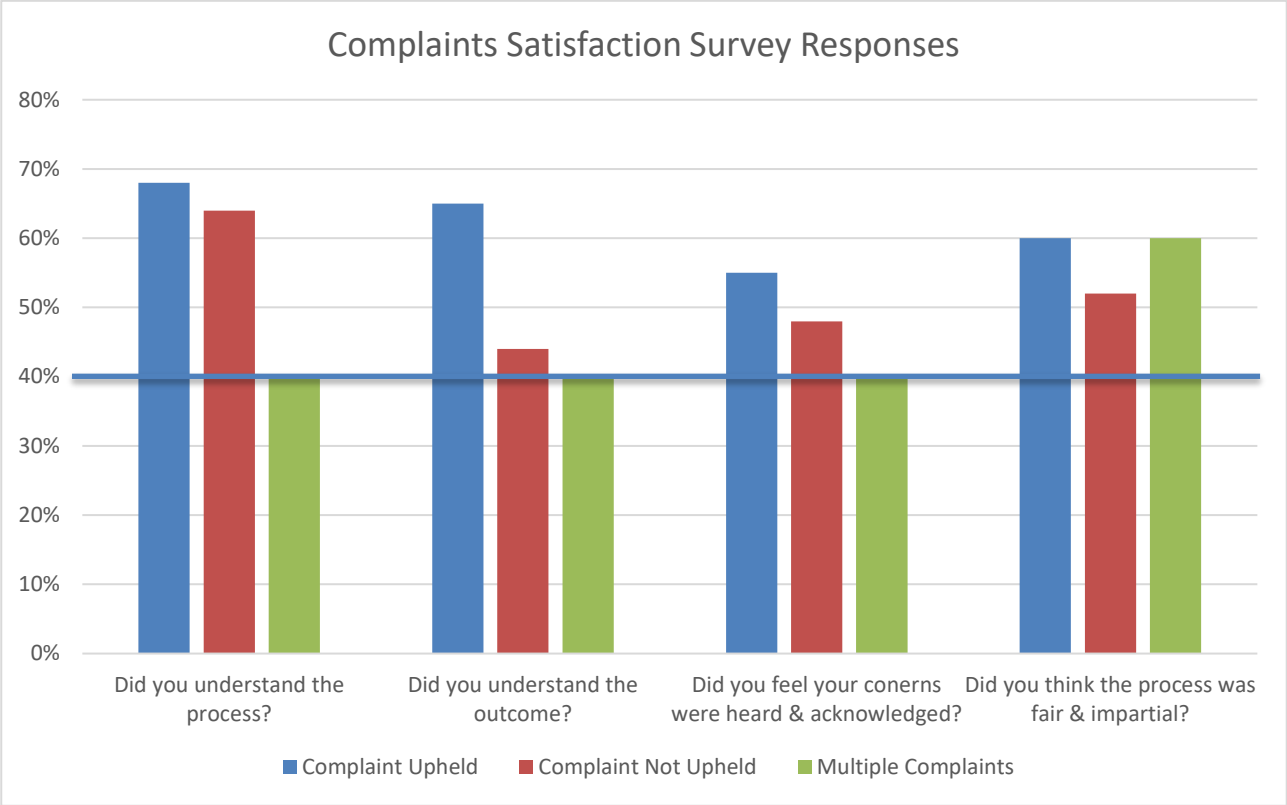


Combining responses to the 4 questions gives an **overall satisfaction rate** of **59.25%.**

Customers were asked to rate their satisfaction on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is not satisfied at all and 5 is highly satisfied. The satisfaction rate has been calculated by taking a numerical average of the resulting scores, rather than recording the number of customers who have answered 3 or above.

The outcome is significantly higher than the satisfaction rate on TSM Question 9 (Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints?) which this year recorded a satisfaction rate of 40.1%. The green line on the graph above approximately marks the TSM outcome for comparison.

The 2nd Graph compares results by complaint outcome. The survey shows higher satisfaction levels for those whose complaint was upheld, although the difference may not be as significant as might be anticipated.



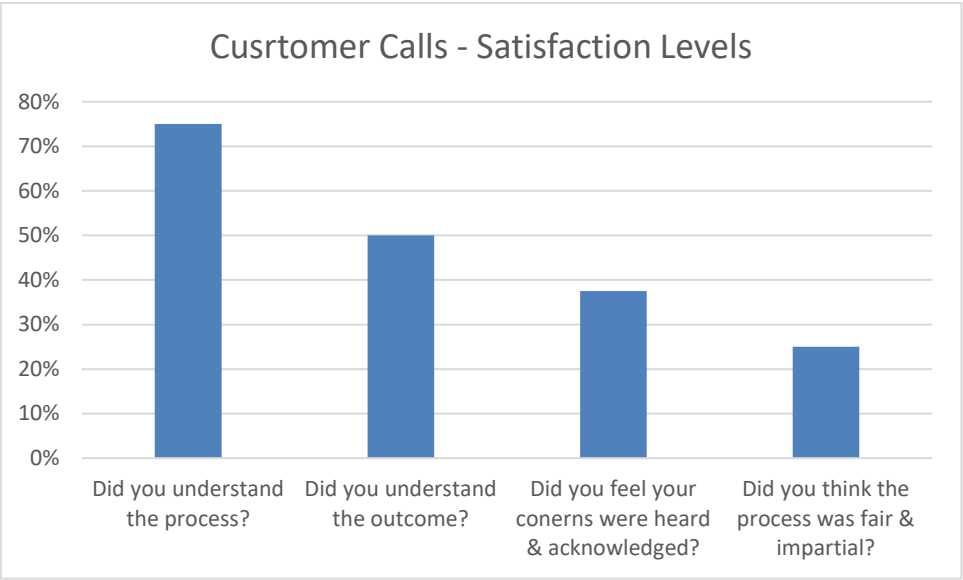
Interestingly, the gap in satisfaction between these 2 groups is largest in the question "Did you understand the outcome of your complaint?"

Generally lowest satisfaction rates were in the survey of customers who make most use of the complaints process. However, it is noted that this is based on just 1 response.

Survey 2 – Customer 2 Customer

Our customer volunteers made calls to residents who had made us of the Complaints Process in 2025-26. They held in depth conversations with 8 respondents.

Customers were asked the same 4 questions in the phone calls as a prompt to conversation. Accepting the small sample size, the responses should be taken as indicative rather than statistically significant. Responses were as follows:



It is noticeable that there is a wider range of satisfaction levels across the questions on the 2nd survey with significantly lower satisfaction levels on being heard and acknowledged and impartiality and fairness.

In the conversations held, it was observed by our callers that respondents were largely talking about the issue which originally prompted the complaint rather than the process of the complaint resolution. This makes it difficult to draw clear conclusions about the Complaints Process. In the wider context, responses show that customers value proactive communication, updates and timely resolution of issues. Complaints are largely prompted by unresolved service issues and failures in communication.