

An aerial photograph of a city street. In the foreground, a large red brick building with a white roof and a sign that reads "Freebridge COMMUNITY HOUSING" is visible. To the left of this building are several smaller residential houses with red and grey roofs. In the background, a large stone church with a tall, ornate spire and Gothic-style windows stands out. The street is paved and has some trees and greenery along the sides. The overall scene is a mix of urban architecture and green spaces.

# RESPONSE TO THE ANNUAL COMPLAINTS & SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2024/25

**Freebridge**  
COMMUNITY HOUSING





## Jo Ward

**Board Member, Chair of Operations Committee and Member Responsible for Complaints**

**As the Board member responsible for complaints, I welcome the publication of the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2024-25 and commend the organisation's commitment to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.**

### Background

Freebridge is committed to hearing the voice of our customers at all levels within the organisation. We strive to deliver excellent customer service and to provide experiences to customers that enable 'getting it right first time'. We recognise that on occasion things go wrong, and in these situations, we endeavor to do our very best to make things right for our customers, effectively and promptly. Freebridge fosters a learning culture and complaints are a valuable opportunity for us to learn from and improve for the future. In my capacity as the Member Responsible for Complaints I am a passionate champion of the insight and opportunities that this, and wider, feedback provides.

### Progress

This report reflects a year of significant progress, particularly in response performance, where Stage 1 complaint timeliness improved from 66% to 97%, and Stage 2 responses rose from 70% to 78%.

These improvements demonstrate the positive impact of internal procedural changes and a renewed focus on customer service excellence. We have further work to do but I am encouraged by the progress made so far.

### Areas for Improvement

The report also highlights areas where further work is needed. The Tenant Satisfaction Measure for complaint handling remains low at 28.5%, and the escalation rate to Stage 2 complaints stands at 29%. We are not satisfied with these results, but they underscore the importance of, not only resolving complaints promptly, but also ensuring that customers feel heard, respected, and satisfied with the outcomes. We have an unwavering commitment to achieving this.

### Encouraging Initiatives

Initiatives I am particularly encouraged by include:

- **Quarterly complaint scrutiny by Customer Service Champions.** This ensures a

customer-focused lens is applied to real-life cases, driving actionable learning.

- **Enhanced engagement through platforms including MyFreebridge, Service Champions, and Customer Ambassadors.** These enable and empower tenants to shape service delivery.
- **Targeted improvements in areas such as damp and mould, where specialist contractors and improved risk assessments have led to demonstrable progress.**

## **Future Priorities**

Looking ahead, I fully support the 2025/26 priorities, including the development of a Customer Vulnerabilities Strategy. This will include the introduction of bespoke customer service training, and the piloting of smart technology to proactively address damp and mould. These actions align with the Ombudsman's emphasis on the importance of learning from complaints and embedding a culture of fairness, accessibility, and accountability.

## **Role and Oversight**

A component of my role includes continuing to work closely with the newly formed Operations Committee, a committee with primary focus on our tenants. This will ensure robust oversight of complaint handling. I also champion the integration of root cause analysis into our governance framework, a fundamental step in ensuring that good action and insights from complaints lead to effective and sustained service improvements, alongside reduction in complaint causation.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this report provides a strong foundation for further progress. By maintaining our focus on timely resolution, customer engagement, and learning from feedback, we can continue to build trust and deliver services that meet the needs and expectations of all our tenants.

