

COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2025/26

Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2025/26 AT A GLANCE

Measure	2024/25	2025/26	Change
Stage 1 Complaints	349	510	+46%
Stage 2 Complaints	102	101	-1%
Escalation Rate	29%	21%	-8%
Stage 1 Responses within Timescale	97%	100%	+3%
Stage 2 Responses within Timescale	78%	99%	+21%
Overall Satisfaction (TSM)	66.0%	69.8%	+3.8%
Complaint Handling Satisfaction (TP09)	28.5%	38.7%	+10.2%

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- 510 Stage 1 complaints were received during 2025/26, providing valuable customer insight to support service improvement.
- 100% of Stage 1 complaints were responded to within Housing Ombudsman timescales.
- 99% of Stage 2 complaints were responded to within Housing Ombudsman timescales.
- Escalation rates reduced from 29% to 21%, indicating more complaints were resolved successfully at Stage 1.
- Complaint handling satisfaction increased by 10.2 percentage points.
- Overall customer satisfaction increased to 69.8%.
- A dedicated Customer Experience Team and Service Recovery Process were introduced.
- A Complaints and Maladministration Learning Framework and Lessons Learned Group were established to strengthen accountability and organisational learning.

INTRODUCTION

At Freebridge Community Housing, complaints are one of the most valuable sources of customer insight available. Complaints, compliments, customer feedback and Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) help us understand customer experiences, identify where services have not met expectations, and ensure lessons learnt result in meaningful and lasting improvements.

This report has been produced in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and should be read alongside the annual Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment. It provides an overview of complaint performance, customer insight, learning from complaints, service improvements delivered during the year, and priorities for the year ahead.

The report also demonstrates how complaint insight supports delivery of the Corporate Strategy, *Building Better Futures 2026-2031*, and the ambition to provide a reliable, good quality customer experience to all customers.



STATEMENT FROM THE MEMBER RESPONSIBLE FOR COMPLAINTS

Complaints are an important source of customer insight and play a vital role in helping us understand where services have fallen short and where improvements are required.

During 2025/26, Freebridge continued to strengthen its approach to complaints, customer experience and organisational learning. We introduced a Complaints and Maladministration Learning Framework and established a dedicated Lessons Learned Group to ensure learning from complaints, Ombudsman determinations and customer feedback is translated into meaningful service improvements.

Whilst complaint volumes increased during the year, there were significant improvements in key performance indicators. Response times improved, escalation rates reduced and customer satisfaction with complaint handling improved considerably. These results provide evidence that the work undertaken to strengthen complaint management, oversight and learning is beginning to have a positive impact.

Continuous improvement is a core principle in the organisation's approach to complaints, as demonstrated by the commissioning of Altair to carry out a deep dive review. The learnings from this work will support ongoing improvement into 2026/27.

We recognise there is more to do. Repairs, customer trust, communication and complaint satisfaction remain areas of focus and will continue to be priorities throughout the coming year.

Jo Ward

Member Responsible for Complaints



COMPLAINTS & OUR CORPORATE STRATEGY

Customer feedback and complaints play a vital role in helping Freebridge deliver the ambitions outlined within our Building Better Futures 2026-2031 Corporate Strategy.

Reliable, Good Quality Customer Experience: Helps improve repairs, communication, complaint handling, estate services and customer satisfaction.

Growth: Ensures service quality remains central as Freebridge invests in homes and communities.

Value for Money: Identifies repeat demand, inefficiencies and service failures.

A Great Place to Work: Supports colleague development, leadership capability and continuous improvement.



LISTENING TO OUR CUSTOMERS



Freebridge uses a wide range of engagement and feedback channels to understand customer experiences and ensure customers influence decisions that affect them.

Engagement Route	Purpose
Community Voices	Customer consultations, surveys and engagement activity.
Mystery Shopping	Independent reviews of customer experience.
Customer Insight Panel	Customer assurance and scrutiny: review of complaint themes, learning and improvements.
Tenant Satisfaction Measures	Understanding customer perception of services.
Transactional Surveys	Feedback following service interactions.
Customer Experience Team	Service recovery and complaint prevention.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE & SERVICE RECOVERY

During 2025/26, Freebridge established a dedicated Customer Experience Team focused on customer insight, service recovery and early intervention. Working closely with the Complaints Team, the service helps resolve customer concerns before they escalate into formal complaints and restores customer confidence where service failures have occurred.

Alongside this, a formal Service Recovery Process was introduced to:

- Resolve issues sooner.
- Improve ownership and accountability.
- Improve communication.
- Support vulnerable customers.
- Reduce avoidable complaints.
- Capture learning from service failures.



COMPLAINTS OVERVIEW (APRIL 2025 - MARCH 2026)

Complaint Performance

Measure	2024/25	2025/26
Stage 1 Complaints	349	510
Complaints per 1,000 Homes	50.4	68
Average Complaints per Month	29	42.5
Stage 2 Complaints	102	101
Escalation Rate	29%	21%
Complaint Refusals	9	18

During 2025/26, Freebridge received 510 Stage 1 complaints, equating to 68 complaints per 1,000 homes and averaging 42.5 complaints per month. This represents an increase from 349 complaints received during 2024/25.

Whilst complaint volumes increased during the year, Freebridge achieved significant improvements in complaint handling performance. Response times improved to 100% at Stage 1 and 99% at Stage 2, complaint satisfaction increased by 10.2 percentage points, and the proportion of complaints escalating to Stage 2 reduced from 29% to 21%. This suggests that whilst more customers are accessing the complaints process, concerns are increasingly being resolved earlier and more effectively.

Seasonality of Complaints

The highest volume of complaints occurred during Quarter 4 (January-March 2026), when 174 complaints were received. These trends will continue to be reviewed through thematic analysis and the Lessons Learned Group.

Complaint Response Performance

Performance Measure	2024/25	2025/26
Stage 1 Responses Within Timescale	97%	100%
Stage 2 Responses Within Timescale	78%	99%

Despite increased complaint volumes, performance against Housing Ombudsman timescales continued to improve significantly.

Main Reasons for Complaints

The most common reasons for complaints during 2025/26 were:

Complaint Category	% of Complaints
Property Condition	27%
Repair Appointments (in-house operatives)	25%
Repair Appointments (external contractors)	18%
Estate Management	9%

Repairs and property condition continue to represent the most significant drivers of complaints and remain a key focus area for improvement.

Housing Ombudsman Findings

During 2025/26, 10 cases were reviewed by the Housing Ombudsman.

Outcome	Number
Severe Maladministration	2
Maladministration	4
Service Failure	1
No Maladministration	3
Total Determinations	10

The severe maladministration findings related to damp and mould cases. The maladministration findings also included damp and mould and wider service delivery concerns.

Whilst we acknowledge where services have fallen short, it is encouraging that three cases reviewed by the Ombudsman resulted in findings of no maladministration. Every determination is reviewed through governance arrangements and the learning framework to ensure lessons are identified, actions are implemented and improvements are embedded across services.

Understanding Our Customers

Age Profile

Age	Complaints	Customer Base*
18-29	8%	6%
30-39	31%	15%
40-49	19%	18%
50-59	19%	18%
60-69	11%	Under Validation
70+	12%	22%

** Customer base figures remain subject to final validation.*

Key Insight

Customers aged **30-39** continue to be significantly overrepresented within complaint data, accounting for 31% of complaints whilst representing only 15% of the customer base. This remains an important area of focus for future customer insight and service development activity.

Complaints by Gender

Gender	Complaints	Customer Base
Female	73%	63%
Male	26%	36%

Women continue to be proportionately more likely to raise concerns or complaints.

Vulnerability

During 2025/26, **39%** of customers who raised a complaint identified as having one or more vulnerabilities.

The independent Altair review identified opportunities to strengthen how vulnerabilities are considered during complaint investigations. Improving our understanding of customer vulnerabilities will remain a priority for 2026/27.

First Language

- **89.1%** of complaints were received from customers whose first language is English.

We will continue reviewing customer communications and website content to ensure services remain accessible regardless of language or communication needs.



TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURE (TSM)

During 2025/26, Freebridge completed 854 Tenant Satisfaction Measure surveys, significantly exceeding the required sample size and providing a representative view of customer experiences.

Key TSM Performance

Measure	2024/25	2025/26	Change
Overall Satisfaction	66.0%	69.8%	+3.8%
Repairs Satisfaction	72.4%	75.1%	+2.7%
Home Safe	71.9%	76.6%	+4.7%
Listens & Acts	53.3%	60.5%	+7.2%
Keeps Me Informed	63.1%	69.7%	+6.6%
Treated Fairly & With Respect	72.1%	77.8%	+5.7%
Complaint Handling	28.5%	38.7%	+10.2%
ASB Handling	57.9%	60.8%	+2.9%
Communal Areas	67.2%	66.0%	-1.2%

Strongest Drivers of Satisfaction

The analysis identified two key drivers of customer satisfaction:

Maintaining Homes

Customer perception that their home is well maintained remains one of the strongest influences on overall satisfaction.

Listening and Acting

Customers continue to tell us they want to feel heard and see visible action being taken as a result of feedback.

SERVICE FOCUS AREAS

Based on complaints, customer feedback, TSMs, Ombudsman learning and the independent Altair review, Freebridge has identified three key areas where improvement will have the greatest impact on customer trust and satisfaction.

1. Getting Repairs Right First Time

Improving the quality, reliability and completion of repairs whilst reducing repeat visits and long-running repairs.

2. Building Trust Through Complaints

Strengthening complaint handling so issues are resolved clearly, fairly and consistently.

3. Listening, Communicating and Acting

Ensuring customers feel heard and can clearly see how their feedback influences change.

Supporting Priority

Customer Segmentation and Vulnerability

Developing a deeper understanding of customer needs and tailoring services appropriately.

INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS REVIEW

During 2025/26, Freebridge commissioned Altair Consultancy and Advisory Services to undertake an independent review of complaint handling.

The review concluded that:

- Complaint response performance was significantly above sector averages.
- Governance arrangements were generally strong.
- Customer scrutiny arrangements were established.
- The Complaints and Maladministration Learning Framework represented a significant step forward in organisational learning.

The review also identified opportunities for improvement in:

- Customer scrutiny.
- Complaint visibility.
- Investigation quality.
- Vulnerability consideration.
- Organisational learning.

These recommendations have informed our priorities for 2026/27.





COMPLAINTS LEARNING & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Complaints and Maladministration Learning Framework

During 2025/26, Freebridge implemented a Complaints and Maladministration Learning Framework to create a structured approach to learning from complaints, Housing Ombudsman determinations, TSMs and wider customer feedback.

Lessons Learned Group

A cross-service Lessons Learned Group (LLG) was established to:

- Review complaint trends.
- Undertake root cause analysis.
- Monitor improvement actions.
- Review Ombudsman determinations.
- Assess evidence of impact.

This provides a clear golden thread:

Customer Feedback → Root Cause → Action → Service Improvement → Customer Outcome

ACTIONS DELIVERED DURING 2025/26

Theme	Service Improvement Delivered	Customer Benefit
Customer Experience	Established a dedicated Customer Experience Team and Service Recovery Process.	Earlier intervention and quicker resolution of concerns.
Complaint Learning	Introduced the Complaints and Maladministration Learning Framework.	Stronger accountability and organisational learning.
Governance	Established the Lessons Learned Group.	Improved oversight and action tracking.
Customer Scrutiny	Continued quarterly Customer Insight Panel complaint reviews.	Increased customer influence.
Complaint Handling	Improved complaint monitoring, performance and response management.	Faster responses and improved customer confidence.
Ombudsman Learning	Embedded learning from Housing Ombudsman outcomes.	Reduced risk of repeat service failures.
Customer Insight	Increased use of TSMs, complaints and customer feedback.	Better understanding of customer priorities.
Damp & Mould / Healthy Homes	Continued proactive focus on damp and mould and Healthy Homes activity.	Earlier intervention and safer homes.

Governance and Assurance

Oversight is provided through:

- Complaints Team
- Customer Experience Team
- Lessons Learned Group
- Leadership Team
- Operations Committee
- Member Responsible for Complaints
- Customer Ambassadors
- Board

Regular reporting includes complaint performance, customer satisfaction, Ombudsman outcomes, learning from complaints and service improvement activity.

PRIORITIES AND COMMITMENTS FOR 2026/27

Priority	Commitment
Getting Repairs Right First Time	Improve repair quality, completion and communication.
Building Trust Through Complaints	Improve complaint handling and customer confidence.
Listening, Communicating and Acting	Improve communication and visibility of service improvements.
Embed Complaints Learning Framework	Complete implementation review and embed learning culture.
Strengthen Lessons Learned Governance	Ensure learning is embedded across services.
Improve Customer Insight & Segmentation	Better understand customer needs and vulnerabilities.
Improve Estate Services	Respond to customer feedback regarding communal areas.
Strengthen Complaint Systems	Implement Puzzel complaint management and visibility improvements.
Deliver Altair Recommendations	Continue implementing independent review recommendations.

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