

Complaints Annual Report

2025/26



ASTER
GROUP

Foreword

Response by Bjorn Howard, Group Chief Executive Officer for Aster Group and Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC).

We're committed to delivering a positive housing experience, shaped by what our customers tell us, where things aren't working and what we can do to put them right.

Complaints provide us with invaluable insight into where services have fallen short of expectations. We welcome all feedback, treat concerns with fairness and respect, and use every complaint as an opportunity to improve.

As shown in this report, the number of complaints we receive continues to rise. While we of course want to address this, we also recognise the ways in which we've made it easier for customers to raise concerns, promoting these through varied communications and making sure all accessibility needs are met. We're focussed on early resolution of complaints, improving communication, and ensuring that customers feel heard at every stage of the process.

Our commitment to listening is strong, whether through complaints, surveys, or our broader engagement. Our refreshed Customer Voice Committee and Designated Complaints Panel provides customer-led scrutiny and challenge on our service. We have embedded clearer accountability across all our teams, improved the quality and timeliness of our responses, and strengthened our oversight of complaint handling.

We know there's still more for us to do. Some of our customers experience delays, inconsistent communication, or outcomes that do not fully meet expectations. We are committed to addressing these challenges by maintaining a strong focus on learning and how we capture and analyse complaint data, to identify recurring themes, address issues, and drive service improvements more effectively.

I have reached the end of my two-year term as Member Responsible for Complaints and in July 2026 I will be handing over responsibility for the role to Mehul Desai, Aster Board Member. I look forward to seeing progress in this area over the coming years.

I would like to thank our colleagues for their dedication in managing complaints with professionalism and empathy, and our customers for taking the time to share their experiences with us.



Bjorn Howard
Group Chief Executive Officer



Overall Performance

2275

Formal Complaints
26% increase
from 2024/25



836

Service Requests
5.7% increase
from 2024/25



3111

Complaints and
Service Requests
19.7% increase
from 2024/25



95.5%

Stage 1 in target
(acknowledged
and sent)



86.9%

Stage 2 in target
(acknowledged
and sent)



93.8%

Overall Compliance



62

Stage 1 complaints
per 1000 properties



14

Stage 2 complaints
per 1000 properties



38%

Maladministration rate,
down from 50% last
financial year



76

Complaints per
1000 properties



22

Complaints
refused



Of the 22 complaints we didn't accept, 14 were not made within 12 months of the issue happening, and 8 had already been investigated through our complaints process.

In this report, we provide an overview of all our complaints. It's worth noting that these may be different from the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) which focus on complaints solely from Low Cost Rental Accommodation (LCRA) and Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) (which can be found on our website or in our customer annual report).

Performance

2025/26

Complaint Type:

- This year we received 2275 formal complaints and 836 service requests
- There were 26% more formal complaints compared to 2024/25 and service requests have increased by 6% over the same period
- On 1 April 2024, the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code changed to no longer recognise fast track complaints. All complaints recorded are managed within the standard complaint framework.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Formal Complaints	614	769	878	1,810	2,275
Fast Track Complaints	785	915	1,158	792 (Service requests)	836 (Service requests)
Total:	1,399	1,684	2,036	2,602	3,111

Days taken to investigate

- **Stage 1**

Average days
at Aster:

8 days

- **Stage 2**

Average days
at Aster:

29 days



The Housing Ombudsman allows for:

- Stage 1 investigations within 10 working days and extended to 20 Stage 2 investigations within 20 working days and extended to 40
- On average this year we have responded to Stage 1s within eight days, and Stage 2 in 29 days
- We are currently undertaking a review of Stage 2 process and time-frames to make further improvements to the service you experience.

Responding in time

Time-scales

Despite receiving more complaints this year, we have responded more quickly, with a 1.5% improvement in responding to complaints in time.

We created a new case officer team to support complaint investigations, and made improvements to our systems, processes and reports to manage any complaints going out of target.



Performance in the top 5 areas of volume

Service	Total Stage 1 Responses sent	Stage 1 In Target	Total Stage 2 sent	Stage 2 In Target
Response Repairs	799	762	253	207
Housing and Neighbourhoods	554	483	172	156
Planned Maintenance	334	322	101	92
Heating Repairs	216	215	34	31
Electrical Repairs	100	96	25	22

Escalation of Complaints

(Stage 1 to Stage 2)



- If you're not happy with the response you receive at Stage 1, you can ask for your complaint to be escalated for a further review
- We keep track of how many complaints are escalated and report on this regularly, this year, escalations increased by 4%
- We've taken this seriously and made it a key area to improve. We have put improvement plans in place and are already starting to see positive changes.

Compensation

We know we don't always get things right. When this happens, we may offer compensation as a way of recognising when our service has fallen short. It's also an important part of the complaint handling code that we follow.

In total, £498k in compensation was rewarded for service failures in 2025/26

This was an increase of £146k from 2024/25.



- We provided £309k (£264k 2024/25) in compensation to customers for service failures about repairs and maintenance
- This is 62% of all compensation and down from 76% in 2024/25.



- Our planned maintenance service compensated £89k to customers
- This is a 101% increase compared to 2024/25.



- For every 1000 homes, we provided £13k compensation over the year.

The Housing Ombudsman Service - Compensation

- We follow the Housing Ombudsman's guidance to help us decide if compensation is appropriate
- In early 2026, new guidance was introduced, and we've updated our approach slightly to reflect this
- When we offer compensation, we clearly explain this in our Stage 1 and Stage 2 responses, so you understand what has been offered and why.

Housing Ombudsman

Annual Self-Assessments and Code Compliance

Our self-assessments against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code can be found on our website.

Ombudsman Annual Report for Aster Group

The Housing Ombudsman's performance report for Aster Group for 2024/25 can be found here: **landlord performance report**. This year's report is likely to be published in Autumn 2026.

Ombudsman Publications for Aster Group

- The Housing Ombudsman investigates some escalated complaints to decide if any maladministration has happened, where a landlord has failed to meet their obligations, causing service failures or significant impacts on customers
- As of the end of 2025/26, there are 46 complaint cases under investigation
- 36 investigations were completed, five fewer than the previous year
- Our Maladministration Rate, the number of investigations where maladministration had happened, improved to 38% (29 adverse findings and 39 no adverse findings) in comparison to 50% last year
- This is lower than the national maladministration rate of 71%
- We received one determination of Severe Maladministration, and four decisions with at least one finding of maladministration
- There were 22 decisions published decisions, 52 orders and 22 recommendations
- Some of the actions from these orders and recommendations were:
 - Paying additional compensation
 - A personal or written apology to the customers
 - Case deep dives, policy and process reviews
 - Further repairs to customer homes or additional actions
 - Staff training and communications
- All orders and recommendations have been complied with and have had no Complaint Handling Failure Orders issued
- The Housing Ombudsman also celebrates some cases where it identified good practice, and during the year highlighted one of our cases, recognising the strength of our ASB case handling.

Category	Number
Severe Maladministration	1
Maladministration	10
Service failure	19
Redress	25
No Maladministration	25
Outside jurisdiction	3
Total	83

38%
improved
Maladministration Rate



Learning from our complaints

As an organisation we are continually reviewing and improving our services. We use all insight available to drive a strong learning culture that enables us to improve our services and our approach to complaints.

This includes:

- Identifying learning from complaints
- Reviewing feedback in our customer satisfaction surveys
- Deep dives undertaken by our customer Designated Complaints Panel
- Regularly reporting complaints performance to our customers
- Learning circles attended by customers and colleagues
- Compliments relating to complaints handling which helps us to share best practice to drive service improvement.



Improving our complaints service and culture

Meet the Housing Ombudsman Event:

- We were pleased to have been able to continue building our relationship with the Housing Ombudsman by hosting a virtual question and answer session, joined by over 100 customers and colleagues
- The session provided insight into the Housing Ombudsman's role and reinforced the importance of fairness, respect and challenging stigma within social housing
- The event was shared in our December customer e-shot, with a link to the recording for customers to watch and was also promoted through our social media channels.

Compensation changes

- This year the Housing Ombudsman published guidance on compensation and what counts as reasonable redress when a service failure has happened
- In response, we have reviewed and updated our compensation guidance to make sure the payments we offer for reasonable redress are in line with the guidance.

Improving our complaints service and culture

Accessibility

- We have reviewed how accessible our complaints service is. As well as the accessibility tool (Recite Me) on our website, you can now also raise a complaint online through MyAster
- We can also provide letters and documents in different languages and formats, including accessible options like coloured paper.

Customer Deep Dives

- Our customers who are part of our Designated Complaints Panel help us learn from complaints and ensure issues lead to meaningful change
- This year, it developed an action plan focused on subcontractor performance, with the aim of improving consistency and quality
- As a direct result of their recommendations, we're investing in improved technology to provide customers with clearer, more timely updates on the progress of their repairs.

Learning logs

- We are building a culture of continuous improvement. We use complaints and performance information to help us improve our services and to check that the changes we make deliver the right outcomes
- Every complaint is an opportunity to learn and improve our service, and this year we've introduced a learning log, set stronger quality checks on responses, and carried out learning sessions with both customers and colleagues so complaints lead to real service improvements.

Proactive Feedback

- In response to customer feedback, we've improved how we update customers on the progress of their repairs
- We also review complaints and survey feedback quarterly to identify trends and make improvements to services such as grounds maintenance and damp, mould and condensation responses
- We publish updates on complaint performance learning and actions in our customer eShot and on our website.



Embedding learning in our services

Access to information and self serve

You've told us that it's important to be able to see information about your home and log an issue easily, and it's a key theme from feedback about communication. We continue to invest in our portal MyAster and made several improvements this year including:

- Clearer account information for homeowners
- Easy access to historic and current rent increase and service charge statements
- Our phone number added to the repairs section following customer feedback
- The ability to raise a complaint directly through MyAster
- Improved guidance on reporting and managing damp, mould and condensation in the home
- The option for customers to apply for, or give notice on a garage through MyAster.

Fencing

- We received a complaint that through MyAster a customer was advised that a fencing repair was their responsibility
- Fencing responsibilities are complex and impacted by tenancy type and individual property details
- Following feedback we reviewed the wording on MyAster, updated the guidance on responsibilities and added repairs which are available to all customers.

Electrical checks

- We have clarified responsibilities around electrical safety checks and updated our process so that engineers must make sure everything is switched back on for the customer before they leave the property.



Embedding learning in our services

Insurance Liability

- We have updated our training to give clearer information to you about insurance liability if you raise a complaint. This updated training has been rolled out as mandatory learning for staff.

Mutual Exchange

- Housing Officers have been doing visual inspections before a mutual exchange takes place
- Customer feedback identified that often some issues are hidden which leads to dissatisfaction following a move
- We are carrying out more thorough pre inspections as part of a wider service review.

Safeguarding

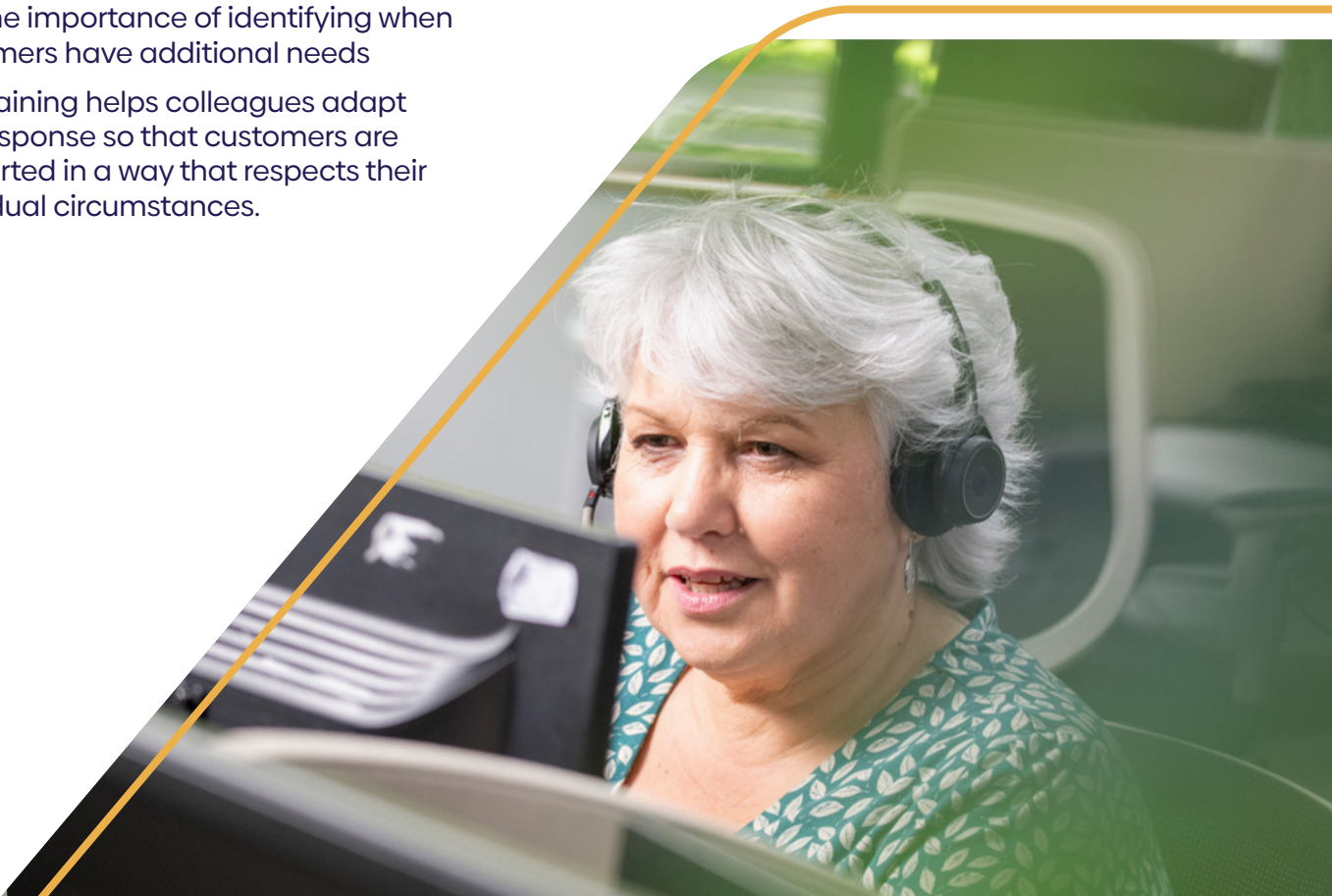
- We have completed training to improve our team's awareness of safeguarding risks and the importance of identifying when customers have additional needs
- This training helps colleagues adapt you response so that customers are supported in a way that respects their individual circumstances.

Resolving queries first time

- Learning from complaints has shown us that service failures can happen when our Contact Centre is not able to resolve issues the first time you get in touch with us, for example when the right information or knowledge is not available

To address this:

- This year we trialled a new team to support customers who contact us regularly about repairs
- This helped improve communication, and we now hold weekly meetings with contractors so we can give you better updates and reduce the need to chase
- We will continue aligning more teams into our one dynamics system to give live information to the contact centre to help with queries.



Ombudsman Publications and Opportunities for Learning

Learning

The Housing Ombudsman publishes monthly 'Learning from Severe Maladministration' reports, which look at themes from cases it reviews, and provides summaries of the cases. We review these when they are published and embed the learning into what we do (alongside learning through the Centre for Learning). When these are published, they can be found here: **News - Housing Ombudsman**.

Some of the focus of these reports from the previous year have been on:

- Communication
- Emergency Repairs
- Leaseholder Complaints
- ASB Complaints
- Windows Complaints
- "Silent" Severe Maladministration areas - such as subsidence, adaptations and rent accounts
- Damp and Mould
- Complex Leaks
- Temporary Moves
- Repairs - providing a more person-focused repairs service
- Compensation Awards
- Meaningful Apologies
- Early warning signs of hazards.

We were not highlighted within any of these reports.

Over the last year, the Housing Ombudsman has also tried to make its service more accessible and has created a set of short videos to help you understand how to make complaints and access the service, which can be viewed in multiple languages. These can be found here: **More multilingual videos released to support residents making a complaint.**

The Housing Ombudsman publishes its Annual Report, reflecting on the wider sector. The report for 2024/25 can be found **here**.

In line with our own performance, this noted that the overall number of complaints across the sector are increasing, and there was an improvement in complaints handling. Our complaints performance is favourable when compared to the wider sector, as noted above.



Ombudsman Publications for Aster Group

202431017 – Service failure found due to shortcomings in communication.

202336098 – Service failure in complaints handling and reasonable redress related to unreasonable delays in repairs.

202428820 – Reasonable Redress relating to handling of reports of damp and mould, and no maladministration in relation to the handling of the complaint.

202404232 – Service Failures relating to our response to reports of damp and mould and our response to a request to move, and no maladministration in relation to our complaints handling, our response to ASB and our response to being informed of vulnerabilities.

202346098 – Maladministration relating to our handling of reports about drainage issues, service failure in relation to our complaint handling and reasonable redress in relation to our handling of a leak.

202328085 – Reasonable redress related to the way we handled anti-social behaviour, and no maladministration related to the way we handled the complaint.

202338819 – Reasonable redress in our handling of pest control, and service failure in relation to our complaint handling.

202429120 – Service failure relating to our handling of communal door repairs and the quality of the works, and service failure in our complaints handling.

202341575 – Reasonable redress in relation to moving a resident to alternative accommodation following damp and mould in property.

202419335 – Reasonable redress in relation to handling of property condition following a mutual exchange.

202430598 – Reasonable redress relating to our handling of reports of a drainage issue, and no maladministration in relation to repairs to the roof.

202403568 – Maladministration in our handling of a request for replacement windows and reports of damp and mould, and reasonable redress in relation to our complaints handling.

202325757 – Reasonable redress in relation to our handling of repairs following a mutual exchange.

202450788 – No Maladministration in relation to our handling of requests for kitchen, bathroom and roof to be replaced, and no maladministration for our handling of damp and mould and associated repairs.

202332051 – No maladministration in relation to our communication with a resident about fire safety concerns, and no maladministration in relation to complaints handling.

202438674 – Reasonable redress in relation to handling a customer's concerns about rent, and no maladministration in our handling of reports of asbestos.

202405025 – Service failures in relation to our handling of concerns about staff conduct, concerns about works to the car park and complaint handling. No Maladministration was found in our handling of damp and mould reports.

202424253 – No maladministration in how we handled reports of issues with a neighbour.

202309278 – No maladministration in relation to our handling of a request for information about the certification of a gas boiler, and reasonable redress for complaint handling failures.

202327863 – Maladministration was found in our handling of alleged ASB and maladministration in relation to our handling of the associated complaint.

202321356 – Severe Maladministration in respect of our response to a customer's reports of damp and mould, and service failure in respect of our complaints handling.

202324111 – Maladministration in relation to our handling of repairs to a bathroom, maladministration in respect of our response to reports of drainage issues causing damp and mould at the property, and maladministration in respect of our complaints handling.



ASTER
GROUP

aster.co.uk