



Putting things right,
and learning to improve.

Annual Complaints Performance 2024/25

Statement from the Board.

“If something goes wrong, we want to put it right and learn from our mistakes to stop it happening again.”

We strive to deliver good customer experience, but we recognise that we don't always do this. During the year Irwell Valley Homes responded to 608 complaints. Whilst this is a reduction of 159 from last year, this is still 608 too many. Of these complaints, 425 were either fully or partly upheld. We are deeply sorry and accept that for these customers we got it wrong.

We know the personal impact we have when our services are not up to scratch, so we are committed to making things right, understanding the issues and ensuring our complaints team provide the very best service and support for customers.

We have made significant improvements to enhance our approach to complaints. As part of this, over the last year we have:

- Introduced automated learning forms for every complaint and action learning panels to help us identify actions to drive improvement.
- Significantly boosted resources within the complaints team, providing improved support and communication for customers, greater accountability, and enhanced complaint handling.

- Rolled out extensive training in-house and via the HOS Learning Hub, boosting competence and conduct.
- Refreshed our complaint policy and process, our compensation policy and resource templates. This has supported thorough investigations, appropriate remedies and comprehensive responses.
- Remained focused on giving colleagues the tools and autonomy to act on issues at the earliest opportunity. This now extends to cases referred to the Housing Ombudsman where we are proactively issuing redress letters and enhanced remedies ahead of any outcome if we feel we have failed the customer.
- Created and reported a new HOS improvement plan and action tracker to our Board via the Audit and Risk Committee, enhancing the complaint reporting that members receive.

We remain committed to striving to provide consistently good services for customers. We would like to thank our customers who have helped us with this over the last year and the Housing Ombudsman Service for its recommendations.



Niki Stockton (Chair of Irwell Valley Homes)



Christie Finegan (Board Member Responsible for Complaints).

Our approach to complaint handling.

We welcome complaints as they provide invaluable insight to help improve customer experience. Our two-stage process focuses on putting things right for the customer at the earliest opportunity and learning to drive improvement. We understand the impact poor service has on our customers and their families, so we aim to deal with complaints sensitively and efficiently, with a focus on support, communication and accountability. All complaints are handled in-line with the HOS Complaints Handling Code and the Regulator of Social Housing's Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

When we receive a complaint, the Complaints Team acknowledge it within 5 working days. A Complaint Officer will be assigned to the case, and they will contact the person to discuss the issue and carry out a thorough investigation. They will provide a response within 10 working days from the date of acknowledgement. If the complainant is unhappy with the response, we will escalate the complaint to Stage Two.

At Stage Two, the Head of Service or Senior Manager will contact the complainant within 5 working days of the Stage Two complaint being logged. They will contact them to discuss the complaint, review the handling of the complaint at Stage One and carry out their own investigation. They will provide a response to the customer within 20 working days of complaint escalation.

We always aim to meet the timescales set in our policy. There may be times when we need more time to fully investigate the issues raised and it may be beneficial for the customer for us to do this. For example, if we need to carry out a specialist survey. At Stage One we can agree with the customer to extend our response by up to 10 days. At Stage Two we can agree with the customer to extend our response by up to 20 days.

Customers do not have to explain their reasons for wanting to escalate their complaint from Stage One to Stage Two and we will not refuse an escalation. Within every acknowledgement and response, we make the customer aware of their right to escalate their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) and explain how they can do this.

Complaints in relation to Building Safety are only investigated at Stage One of our process before being escalated to the Building Safety Regulator. During the year we were not notified by the Building Safety Regulator of any complaints that had been referred onto them, or receive any orders from them.

Our Compensation Policy is used alongside the Complaints Policy. In awarding compensation this year, we have considered whether any statutory payments are due, any losses incurred, and the impact on the customer and anyone else living in the property or communal building.



Complaints performance 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025.

Month	Number of stage one complaints made	% of Stage 1 complaints resolved within 10 days or within an extended timescale agreed with the customer	Number of stage two complaints made	% of Stage 2 complaints resolved within 20 days or within an extended timescale agreed with the customer	% of complaints upheld	Compensation paid	Compensation ordered by HOS
April	119	90.9%	23	64.5%	65.5%	£27,498.28	£0.00
May							
June							
July	160	85%	59	87.3%	72.5%	£20,165.40	£0.00
August							
September							
October	175	87.8%	31	83.8%	66.8%	£26,900.40	£350.00
November							
December							
January	154	91.5%	27	100%	73.2%	£28,035.88	£3,400.00
February							
March							
Annual 2024/25	608	89%	140	84%	70%	£102,599.96	£3,750.00

Tenant Satisfaction Measures	Annual performance
Number of stage 1 complaints per 1,000 homes.	126.6
Number of stage 2 complaints per 1,000 homes.	20.8
Proportion of stage 1 complaints responded to within Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Time (10 days).	89%
Proportion of stage 2 complaints responded to within Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Time (20 days).	84%
Customer satisfaction with the Landlord's approach to handling complaints	35%



Housing Ombudsman Cases.

Over the year we received 20 requests for evidence from the HOS. This is a slight reduction from 23 requests in the year 2023/2024.

We received determinations and orders relating to four cases that were reviewed by the Housing Ombudsman Service. This compares to seven the previous year. For one case, no determination or order was given, but a recommendation was made.

We have complied with all evidence requests and submitted relevant information to the HOS to help with their investigations. All orders and recommendations have been actioned. Details of the actions we have taken following the recommendations can be seen in below.

Housing Ombudsman Findings 2024/25				
Date of	Reasons for complaint	Determination	Orders	Recommendations
27/11/2024	Communal cleaning	Maladministration in our handling of the residents' concerns about communal cleaning A service failure in the residents' reports of repairs to the communal entrance	Pay £350 compensation. Display a communal cleaning schedule in the block.	None
19/02/2025	Damp and mould	Maladministration in response to reports of damp and mould Maladministration in complaint handling. Maladministration in record keeping.	Apologise to the resident in writing. Pay compensation previously offered by IVH of £1,400, plus a further £650 to reflect the distress and inconvenience. Provide details of how to make a liability claim for damaged belongings. Complete a damp and mould survey. Write to the resident with the findings and an action plan for any required repairs.	Consider training for the complaints team around sending acknowledgements in line with its complaints policy.



Housing Ombudsman Findings 2024/25				
Date of	Reasons for complaint	Determination	Orders	Recommendations
			Provide weekly updates to the resident.	
20/03/2025	Void process, damp and mould, and asbestos.	Maladministration in relation to the void checks prior to the customer moving in and their concerns relating to damp and mould.	Pay £1,300 compensation. (At the time IVH had offered £1,450 during its complaints process but the customer but they did not accept it until the outcome of the HOS investigation)	Re-offer £1,450 in compensation.
24/03/2025	Refusal to install an EV charger unit.	None	None	We explain any plans to install local electric car charging points to the customer.
28/03/2025	Repairs to bathroom, kitchen and doors.	Maladministration in the handling of repairs to the bathroom Maladministration in the handling of repairs to the kitchen and doors. Maladministration in complaint handling.	Apologise to the resident in writing. Pay £800 compensation. Arrange for a specialist property inspection and share findings. Detail any outstanding work, or further work identified as part of its inspection. Provide a schedule of any work. Include details of support we can provide the resident, if required.	Contact the resident to discuss any other potential issues prior to the inspection.
08/04/2025	Handling of ASB.	Maladministration in the handling of the residents' reports of ASB. Maladministration in complaint handling.	Apologise to the resident in writing. Pay £650 compensation.	None



Action learning.

We are committed to learning from our mistakes.

After every complaint a learning form is completed which identifies the cause of the complaint. These forms are reviewed by an Action Learning Panel – a group of relevant colleagues which is facilitated by our Business Improvement Team. Colleagues on the panel delve deeper into the cause of the issues and identify any learning and actions that need to be taken to improve customer experience.

The learning from complaints is grouped into four overarching learning themes:

1. Service Standard
2. Communication
3. Policy and Process
4. Culture and Behaviour.

Breakdown of complaints by learning category this year.

- 82% related to service standard.
- 7% related to communication
- 6% related to culture and behaviour
- 5% related to policies and procedures.

As a result of our action learning we have made significant changes to drive improved customer experience and accountability. Below is a snapshot of the actions we have taken this year to make things better for customers going forward.



Service standard

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82% of the Stage 1 and stage 2 cases relate to issues around the standard of our service. This is largely based on our repairs service and some neighbourhood services which is to be expected given it is the most used service. The main issues identified through complaint learning this year were:

- **Delays to repairs or rescheduling of appointments.**

Customers want us to do repairs when we say we will and for waiting times to reduce.

- **Poor communication about completed work.** Customers want to know what we are going to do, when we'll do it, and what we have done when we complete a job.

- **Subcontractor and colleague performance.** Customers want a quality job and want our colleagues and contractors to treat them with respect.



Actions we have taken to improve:

During the year we began a Repairs Transformation Programme. This has addressed learning from complaints, general feedback from our transactional surveys, and the annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures. We know that customers want repairs to be done quickly, professionally and for issues to stay fixed. Some key elements of the transformation which will help to achieve this include:

- **Moving to area-based repairs teams.** Our new operating model works around three geographical areas. This has created greater flexibility for us to respond to customers' needs. It reduces travel time, allowing colleagues to do more jobs each day, to help reduce waiting times. Working in distinct areas is also helping to improve our knowledge of our homes and customer's and giving customers a dedicated contact – something they have told us is important to them.
- **Improved performance monitoring and insight.** Our new performance dashboards give greater oversight of performance including customer satisfaction. Managers are held accountable for the performance of their area, whilst a new artificial intelligence tool is giving us valuable insight where there is multiple or repeat issues within a home where we need to take a different approach.
- **New van stock process.** By re-setting the materials we stock on our vans and providing onsite deliveries, we can ensure colleagues have everything they need to complete the job on the first visit.

- **Boosting resources to drive up standards.** We have recruited a dedicated Customer Experience Repairs Lead to oversee all repair works relating to complaints and drive learning and improvement across the service. We've increased onsite supervision to ensure standards are being met, plus each area has a property inspector responsible for ensuring that issues are fixed right first time and remain fixed.

- **Improving customer service.** We have changed our repairs planning process and provided training to improve scheduling efficiency. Our process for issuing inspections has also been improved to reduce cancellations and overruns. Property inspection reports will begin to be issued to every customer upon completion of works, so customers understand what has been completed and how we have met any necessary standards. Updates on major works are now available on our website and digital notice boards to keep customers in the loop.

Within this theme it was also identified that complaints from leaseholders about their repairs increased towards the end of the year. The key issues identified were around delayed repairs and poor communication. A review of the leasehold service has been undertaken, resulting in a action plan that includes:

- **Outsourcing repairs to specialist contractors** for Leasehold buildings due to the non-standard construction of these buildings.
- **Tailored communications** per building, ensuring leaseholders receive relevant, timely updates – including the use of digital notice boards.



Communication

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We have worked hard to improve communication with customers this year and we are really pleased that from our transactional surveys; we can see that customers feel that we have achieved this. Customers scores for being kept informed and communicated with increased from 59% April 2024, to 81% in March 2025. This is the biggest improvement across the surveys reflecting the work done on that back of complaint learning and customer feedback.

However, 7% complaints made this year still relate to communication, highlighting that we still have some gaps mainly across our Community and Repairs Services. The main issues that were identified through complaint learning this year were:

- **Being kept informed about an ongoing case** – Customers want to be kept informed of their enquiries and where they are up to.
- **Difficulty in speaking to the right person** – Customers want to have a direct contact for ongoing cases.
- **Knowing what to expect** – Customers want to understand what will happen and when, and the process we will follow.



Actions we have taken to improve:

During the year we commenced a Customer Transformation programme. As with our Repairs Transformation, this looked to address learning from complaints and general feedback from customers as part of our transactional surveys and annual Tenant Satisfaction measures.

We know that customers want us to be more visible within their neighbourhood. They want to know who to contact and when they get in touch, they want to get to the right person who can help them there and then. Some key elements of the transformation which will help to achieve this include:

- **Understanding what's working** – We carried out a thorough analysis of all contact into our services to identify where we are serving customers well and where we need to improve.
- **Move to area-based teams and increased working within communities** – All customer facing teams now work as part of our new geographical area teams. This new way of working is helping us to be more present in communities, improving collaboration between colleagues to resolve issues more effectively, and helping customers to know us better. We've created easier access to colleagues within communities by increasing community drop ins and areas inspections, plus boosted communication through regular community newsletters and personalised notifications.

- **Getting to the right person at the right time** – By using post code recognition, when customers contact us, we are now able to direct customers to the right person who can help in their local area team on the first attempt.
- **Knowing what to expect** – Our Resident Scrutiny panel helped us to create a new Customer Service Policy setting out what to expect when they contact us. This now includes timescales for all contact. We have also begun consultation on our service standards which will feed into a new Customer Strategy that we're working on with customers.
- **Improving customer service** – We've significantly reduced call waiting times from 7 minutes to 2 and half minutes. We've created greater capacity within our customer service team to carry out proactive service and support by using more automated communication and self-service options. As well as increasing text reminders, colleagues now call customers on their way to a customers home to give them an estimated time of arrival.



Culture and Behaviour

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We have had a huge focus on improving our culture and behaviour this year. Across our transactional survey programme, the percentage of customers who felt we treated them fairly and with respect increased from 75% in April 2024 to 87% in March 2025. This was also our highest scoring TSM. However sadly, 6% of complaints that we received this year still related to culture or behaviour. This included.

- **Being late or leaving their homes without resolving the issue** – Customers want us to arrive on time with everyone we need to help them on that visit.
- **Being rude and not listening** – Customers want to be treated fairly and with respect, they want to feel listened to and understood.
- **Being unprofessional** – Customers want us to work safely and professionally.

Actions we have taken to improve:

- Contractors have been given direct feedback regarding professional standards and our expected behaviours and values.
- Complaint learning is being shared with managers to encourage faster resolution and improve accountability.
- The Repairs Transformation Programme is expected to drive behavioural improvements, as well as a cultural shift across the teams.
- All Complaints Officers are completing the Housing Ombudsman's e-learning programme, a CPD-accredited course, reinforcing their skills and compliance with national standards.



Policy and Process

Several improvements have been made to improve policies and procedures as a direct result of complaint learning this year. Training on these changes has also been provided to help improve colleagues with understanding and adherence.

- Customers felt **Antisocial Behaviour** cases, were taking too long to resolve. The process was revised with customer input to set expectations early with residents and manage outcomes realistically.
- **Complaint handling** was a picked up in several of the HOS determinations. A new Complaints Procedure was introduced to align with the Housing Ombudsman's Code of Practice. Within this, timescale management was strengthened to ensure we meet deadlines for updates, resolutions, and closures. The Compensation Policy was also updated to reflect best practice and guidance from the Housing Ombudsman. Action plan monitoring is now in place for all Housing Ombudsman orders, and progress is reported and tracked at the Audit and Risk Committee.
- Our transactional surveys and complaints show that customers with a known **vulnerability** are generally more dissatisfied. Refresher training has been provided on the processes in place to support vulnerable customers, with a renewed emphasis on safeguarding and referrals to the Tenancy Sustainment Team. A service adjustment policy is being developed with customers to set out clear expectations around adjustments and support.
- **Damp and mould** - was a key theme across internal complaints and the HOS determinations. The Damp and Mould Policy has been improved based on complaint learnings, best practice and Awaab's Law. Record keeping has been strengthened, and we rolled our training to all colleagues to support with this. Customers now get a copy of all damp and mould inspections, and we have improved communication by embedding feedback loops.
- **Communal Bins** continue to be a theme for complaints and a big draw on our estates team. The bin usage has been reviewed and further bins provided to mitigate the issues. We have increased estate inspections and bin skimming across fly tipping hotspots have been increased and we have provided information to customers around recycling effectively. Working with Local Authority waste management teams, we have taken proactive enforcement.
- Updated the **Repairs Policy** with customers to provide greater clarity on who is responsible for what.
- Some customers noted a lack of clarity about the support available with rent arrears. **Rent support** processes were revised to provide better guidance and support.
- **Record Keeping** was noted in several of the Housing Ombudsman determinations. We have strengthened record keeping and case tracking through Rubixx our Housing Management system, with focused training to ensure records are up to date and comprehensive.

Conclusion

We are deeply sorry for the times we have failed our customers this year. We would like to thank customers who have made complaints this year for sharing their experiences, along with every customer who has taken part in surveys, or formal customer groups. The learning we have taken has been invaluable in helping us to understand the issues and the root causes and take action to improve things going forward.

Complaints continue to be a vital source of learning, enabling us to deliver meaningful service improvements. Across the organisation, there is now greater awareness, accountability, and action in response to issues raised by our customers.

With structural changes, new systems, enhanced training, and better process ownership, we are steadily embedding a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring complaints are not just resolved, but used to drive service improvements.

As we go into the new year, we are committed to embedding the changes we have made this year and remain hopeful that customers will start to see the difference in the services we provide. We will continue to work with the HOS and welcome their recommendations as part of our improvement journey.



Supporting colleagues to enjoy work, learn and grow



Making a difference in the communities we serve



Providing safe, affordable and good quality homes

