

Classification: Open	Decision Type: Key
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date: 09 September 2026
Subject:	Annual Complaints Performance and Learning Report 2025/26 and self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code	
Report of	Cabinet Member for Housing Services	

Summary

1. The Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) Complaint Handling Code requires social landlords to produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge.
2. The report includes:
 - the annual self-assessment against the Complaints Handling Code
 - a qualitative and quantitative analysis of performance
 - any findings of non-compliance with the complaint handling code by the HOS
 - the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints.
 - annual report from the HOS on the landlord's performance
 - Any other relevant reports or publications produced by the HOS in relation to the work of the landlord
3. The council is also required as part of the Complaint Handling Code to publish and submit to the HOS the Annual Complaints Performance and Learning Report and the annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code.
4. This report presents, for approval, the Council's Annual Complaints Performance and Learning Report for 2025/26 together with the self-assessment against Complaints Handling Code that forms part of the annual submission.
5. There is an expectation of the HOS and the Complaints Handling Code that the self-assessment and the annual report is signed off by the governing body of the organisation, which in this case is Cabinet.

Recommendation(s)

6. a) Note and approve the Annual Complaints Performance and Learning Report 2025/26 for publication and submission to the HOS.
- b) Approve the self-assessment against the Complaints Handling Code for submission to the HOS and publication.
- c) Note the learning, service improvements and actions identified to further strengthen complaint handling performance and compliance with the Complaints Handling Code.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

7. The HOS Complaints Handling Code requires landlords to undertake an annual self-assessment of compliance and publish both the assessment and an annual complaints performance and learning report. Consideration by Cabinet demonstrates appropriate oversight, transparency and accountability, whilst supporting the Council's commitment to learning from complaints, improving services and delivering positive outcomes for tenants and leaseholders.

Alternative options considered and rejected

8. The publication of an annual self-assessment and complaints performance and learning report is a requirement of the HOS Complaints Handling Code. Failure to do so would reduce transparency and could result in non-compliance with the Complaints Handling Code and HOS expectations.

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Background

9. The HOS Complaints Handling Code sets out the requirements landlords must meet to ensure complaints are handled fairly, consistently and effectively. The Complaints Handling Code requires landlords to publish an Annual Complaints Performance and Learning Report that demonstrates how complaints are used to drive service improvement. As part of this report landlords are required to undertake a self-assessment against the Complaints Handling Code.

Annual self assessment

10. The Council has completed its annual self-assessment against the requirements of the Complaints Handling Code. The findings are that the

council is fully compliant with the Complaints Handling Code. The self-assessment is attached at Appendix 1.

11. The annual self-assessment has been reviewed and signed off by the Cabinet Member for Housing Service in her function as the “Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)”. (The HOS Complaints Handling Code requires social landlords to appoint an MRC to meet the Complaints Handling Code’s scrutiny and governance arrangements).

Annual Complaints Performance and Learning Report

12. The Annual Complaints Performance and Learning Report for 2025/26 is attached at Appendix 2. This has been reviewed by the Cabinet Member for Housing Service in her function as the ‘Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)’ and Housing Advisory Board at its meeting on 28th July 2026.
13. The tenant’s Complaint Review group has also been involved in reviewing complaint performance and learning. We have incorporated feedback received from tenants into the Annual Complaints Performance and Learning Report and tenant feedback has helped shape improvement priorities focused on communication, policy compliance and demonstrating learning from complaints. This reflects the Council’s commitment to working in partnership with tenants to improve complaint handling and service delivery.
14. The report provides an overview of complaints handling performance between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026. The report covers complaints received, performance against complaint handling timescales, outcomes achieved for residents, HOS determinations received during the year, and the learning and service improvements implemented as a result of complaints.
15. During 2025/26 we received 188 Stage 1 complaints. This is a significant increase from 62 complaints received in 2024/25 and shows the work we have undertaken in the last year to improve our complaint handling culture. 188 complaints equates to 25.66 complaints per 1,000 homes.
16. We resolved 72% of complaints at stage 1. This is an improvement on the previous year where we resolved 50% of complaints at stage one and reflects improvements in our complaint handling and in our understanding of tenants complaints. We upheld or partially upheld 48% of stage 1 complaints. This is an improvement on 2024/25 when we upheld 61% of complaints.
17. Of the 189 complaints, 52 (28%) were escalated to stage 2 review. The main reasons for this were complainants stating they were unhappy with the response received at stage 1 or because the actions promised at stage 1 were not completed. 54% of Stage 2 complaints were fully or partially upheld. This is an improvement from 62% in the previous year.

18. The services that received the most complaints were the repairs service receiving 66 complaints (34%), neighbourhoods that received 50 complaints (27%), followed by assets that received 30 complaints (16%).
19. The top three stated reasons for complaints during 2025/16 were:
- Failure to follow policy – 33 complaints (17%)
 - Delays in taking action – 31 complaints (16%)
 - Poor communication and customer service – 25 complaints (14%)
20. During 2025/26, the HOS made 8 determinations on complaints relating to Bury Council Housing Services which included 21 findings. This included 14 findings of severe maladministration (2 findings), maladministration or service failure and 7 findings of no maladministration or reasonable redress. This means that we had a 66.7% maladministration rate. The national average is 74%.
21. 4 of the 8 maladministration determinations related to Anti-social behaviour services. Due to this we carried out a review of all the Anti-social behaviour complaints and HOS decisions to identify whether there were any systemic failings in our approach to Anti-social behaviour or common themes for improvement. The review found the need to improve consistency, communication and case management. The outcome of the review mirrored the findings found in the Housemark review of Anti-social behaviour services carried out earlier in the year. In response, we have strengthened oversight, of anti-social behaviour case management, improved performance monitoring, introduced regular case reviews, and created new specialist anti-social behaviour roles. These changes will help ensure tenants concerns are dealt with more effectively, learning is acted upon more quickly, and tenants receive a more consistent service.
22. We track tenant satisfaction with the complaint handling in two ways. The first is using the Tenants Satisfaction Measures. This is an annual survey sent to all tenants on the anniversary of their tenancy start date which asks a number of mandated satisfaction questions including satisfaction with complaint handling. The second is through a complaints transactional survey undertaken after a complaint is closed.
23. The complaints transactional survey records a higher satisfaction with complaint handling at 58% compared to 38% satisfaction with complaint handling through the Tenant Satisfaction Measure. The difference in satisfaction is explained through the difference in timing of the surveys with the transaction survey being carried out after the complaint is closed. This is a fairly standard difference across different housing providers. Analysis of dissatisfaction with complaint handling shows a link between a complaint not being upheld and a tenant being dissatisfied.

24. The Tenant Complaints Review Group has reviewed complaint performance information and identified the issues they believe should be prioritised during 2026/27. These are;

- Improving communication and customer service
- Reducing delays and resolving issues faster
- Services tenants can rely on

25. These priorities are being taken forward in our service improvement plans for this year.

Governing body statement and approval

26. The Leader of the Council has reviewed the Report and provided a supporting draft Governing Body Statement which is attached at Appendix 3.

27. Cabinet ("governing body") approval is required under the HOS Complaint Handling Code and is essential to ensure the approved documents can be published and submitted to the HOS by the statutory deadline of 30 September 2026.

Links with the Corporate Priorities:

29. This report supports the Let's Do It! Strategy by promoting openness, accountability and continuous improvement across housing services. Effective complaint handling ensures residents' voices are heard, services are responsive to customer needs and learning is used to improve service delivery. The report contributes to the Council's ambition to work with residents, build trust and confidence in public services, improve customer experience, and ensure that services are designed around the needs of communities.

Equality Impact and Considerations:

30. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been considered in relation to this report. Effective complaint handling supports equitable access to services and provides all residents with the opportunity to raise concerns and seek resolution where service standards have not been met. The Council's complaints process is available through a range of accessible channels and reasonable adjustments can be provided where required. There are no adverse equality impacts arising directly from this report. The continued monitoring of complaint themes supports the identification of any disproportionate impacts on protected groups, including Looked After Children where relevant.

Environmental Impact and Considerations:

- 31 There are no significant environmental impacts arising directly from the recommendations contained within this report. The continued use of digital systems for complaint recording, monitoring and reporting supports the Council's commitment to reducing paper use and promoting efficient service delivery.

Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Failure to comply with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.	Annual self-assessment, governance oversight and ongoing monitoring of compliance requirements. Complaint Housemark Improvement Plan

Procurement Implications:

Not applicable

Legal Implications:

The HOS CHC became a statutory requirement from 1 April 2024 under the *Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023*. It requires all landlords within the HOS jurisdiction to assess their compliance with the CHC annually. Bury Council falls under this jurisdiction. Landlords must complete a formal self-assessment against every provision of the CHC, obtain review and approval from their governing body (for Bury this is Cabinet) and reassess compliance whenever there are significant organisational changes affecting complaint handling. The completed self-assessment must be published and any areas of non-compliance, together with proposed remedial actions and timescales, must be clearly identified.

The CHC also requires landlords to produce an annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report (often referred to as a “complaints and learning report”). This report must be considered by the “governing body” (Bury Council Cabinet in this instance), published on the landlord's website alongside the governing body's response, and explain complaint-handling performance, lessons learned from complaints, and resulting service improvements. As part of the annual compliance process, landlords must submit to the HOS links to their complaints policy, published self-assessment, annual report, and governing body's response. Failure to comply may lead to regulatory intervention, including the issue of a Complaint Handling Failure Notice by the HOS.

The Appendices to this Report form Housing Services proposed Bury Council submissions to HOS and for publication in compliance with HOS CHC. The form and nature of the submissions in the Appendices are compliant with HOS CHC. The Director of Housing Services is accountable for the factual content of the documents.

Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications

Appendices:

Appendix 1 The Complaint Self – assessment 2025/26

Appendix 2 Annual Complaint Performance and Learning report

Appendix 3 – Governing body statement 2026

Background papers:

Please list any background documents to this report and include a hyperlink where possible.

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term	Meaning
HOS	Housing Ombudsman
ASB	Anti - Social Behaviour