



Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report

Governing Body Response to the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report



As the governing body of Railway Housing Association, we welcome this detailed and transparent report on complaints performance and service improvement for the year 2024/25. We recognise the critical role that complaints play in shaping our strategic priorities and service delivery, ensuring accountability to our residents.

The Board and Resident Committee are pleased to see the significant strides made in embedding a culture of learning and responsiveness at Railway Housing Association, as evidenced by:

- A **100% increase in complaint reporting**, reflecting improved accessibility and trust in the complaints process.
- A **marked improvement in response times**, with 92% of Stage 1 complaints and 90% of Stage 2 complaints responded to within Housing Ombudsman Code timescales.
- **Resident satisfaction** for complaint handling through the Tenant Satisfaction Measures has increased by 11% in one year
- The establishment of our **Resident Committee** to ensure that the voice of residents is heard right across the governance structures of Railway
- Established a **Resident Hub**, and the appointment of a **dedicated resident experience manager**, all of which demonstrate a commitment to resident-centric service delivery.
- The introduction of **transactional satisfaction surveys** and the use of **Voicescape technology**, which provide valuable insights into resident experience and areas for further improvement.

We recognise the substantial progress Railway Housing Association has made in strengthening its operational practices and fostering a culture of openness and accountability in complaint handling. The continued oversight and challenge provided by both the Board and the Resident Committee have been instrumental in ensuring that the resident voice remains central to strategic decision-making and service delivery. We particularly welcome the establishment of the new Complaints Scrutiny Group and extend our sincere thanks to the seven residents who have joined this panel. Their commitment to reviewing Railway's compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code is invaluable, and we look forward to their ongoing scrutiny and insight throughout 2025/26.

We also note the proactive steps taken to address recurring themes, particularly in **repairs and maintenance, grounds maintenance, and resident communication**. The strategic reviews, contractor engagement, and internal audit findings show a robust framework for continuous improvement.

However, we acknowledge the areas where further progress is needed:

- **Demographic representation** in complaints, particularly among younger residents and minority ethnic groups, requires targeted engagement to ensure inclusivity and equity in feedback mechanisms.
- **Completion of agreed actions** following complaints must remain a priority, and we support the implementation of the new action tracker to ensure accountability.
- **Compensation practices** must continue to be fair, transparent, and reflective of both inconvenience and quantifiable loss.

We are encouraged by the absence of formal referrals to the Housing Ombudsman and the ongoing informal engagement, through the Centre for Learning, spotlight reports and opportunities to engage. This reflects a proactive and preventative approach to complaint resolution.

As a Governing Body, we reaffirm our commitment to:

- Monitoring complaint trends and performance through quarterly updates.
- Supporting the implementation of the **Data Strategy** to improve demographic insight.
- Ensuring that the **Resident Voice** remains central to our strategic decisions and service delivery.

We thank all residents who have provided feedback, whether through complaints or compliments, and we extend our appreciation to the staff and contractors who have responded with professionalism and care.

This report provides a strong foundation for the year ahead, and we look forward to continued progress in making Railway Housing Association a leading provider of resident-focused housing services.

Signed on behalf of the Governing Body

Yvonne Castle, Chair of Railway Housing Association

Richard Wilkinson, Member Responsible for Complaints and Chair of the Resident Committee



Background/Introduction

We exist for our residents and so not just listening but also acting on what they tell us is vital to ensure we meet their needs and constantly improve. That helps us ensure we put the resident voice at the centre of our decision-making.

We treat all feedback as essential information and we strive to talk and listen to residents through a range of different methods, from face-to-face events and meetings, to surveys, visits, calls and discussions, and use this to act and make clear service improvements.

One of the essential types of information we gather to help us get better for our residents is complaints, as set out in the 'Your Resident Experience' pillar in our On the Right Track delivery plan. This sets out a range of activity to make sure we deliver the best homes and services for our residents, including improving how we handle complaints and treat them as a valuable source of insight.

We love to get things right – however we also know that doesn't always happen – and so we take time to really listen, analyse and learn from complaints, identifying and addressing any issues and feeding back any changes we've made as a result.

The Housing Ombudsman

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 introduced several changes to complaint handling for social landlords like Railway Housing Association, aiming to enhance how we manage feedback.

This new legislation strengthened the Housing Ombudsman's role, enabling it to publish and monitor a mandatory code of practice for complaint handling from 1 April 2024.

Under this code, all social landlords must complete and publish an annual self-assessment to demonstrate how we follow the code and any ideas to be improved upon. Additionally, we must produce an annual report detailing complaint handling performance and service improvements. This report should be evaluated alongside the published self-assessment.

What we've done

In 2024, we created our new resident committee and four residents and three new board members have so far joined. The committee started meeting in March 2025 and looks at areas including complaints, feedback and how we're delivering services - and helps hold us to account.

We also created a resident engagement strategy, which sets the direction and priorities for how we can listen to our residents more and act upon their feedback.

A new resident hub has been set up as the first point of contact for residents, to answer calls more quickly and help with repairs.

For complaints, a new manager is dedicated to complaint handling and a single point of contact for logging and managing complaints has been set up, with weekly reviews of complaints to keep on track and help us learn and improve.

On top of that, all staff members have had new training to help spot and deal with complaints well.

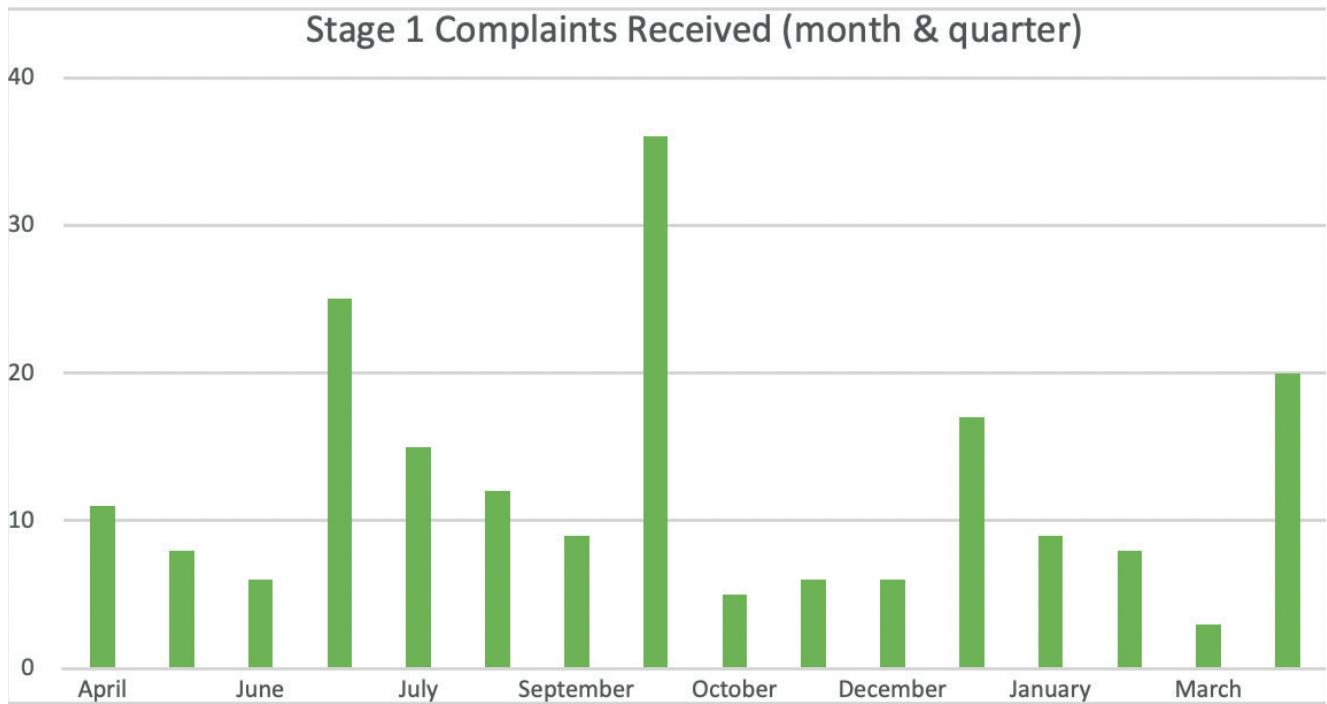
Complaints Received

The volume of stage 1 complaints received, as shown on the graph below, averaged 8.2 per month, with an increase in July and August 2024, which were as a result of the large volume of complaints relating to a new grounds maintenance contract we introduced.

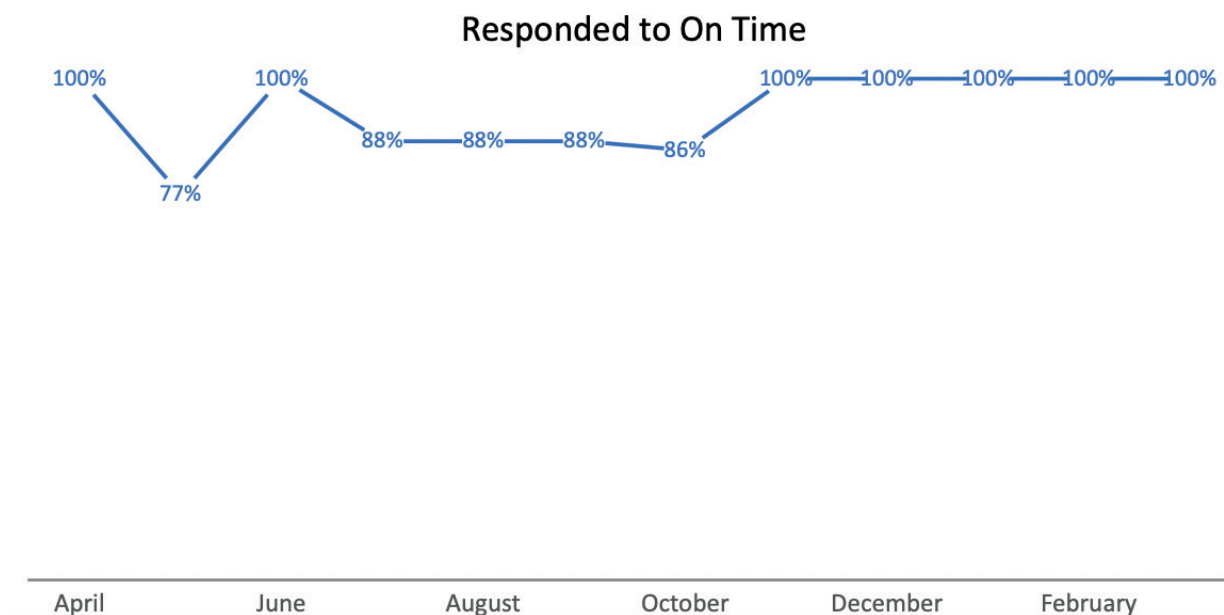
In total, 98 new stage 1 complaints were received in 2024/25, which is a 100% increase on the previous year, where 49 stage 1 complaints were received.

This is a positive increase, as it demonstrates a more positive culture of complaint handling and managing and learning from dissatisfaction.

For 81% (79) of the complaints received, the investigating manager felt that there had been a failure in the service or communication and 19% were not upheld.



Response times to stage 1 complaints also improved significantly from 2023/24, with 92% of complaints responded to on time against the previous year performance of 68%.



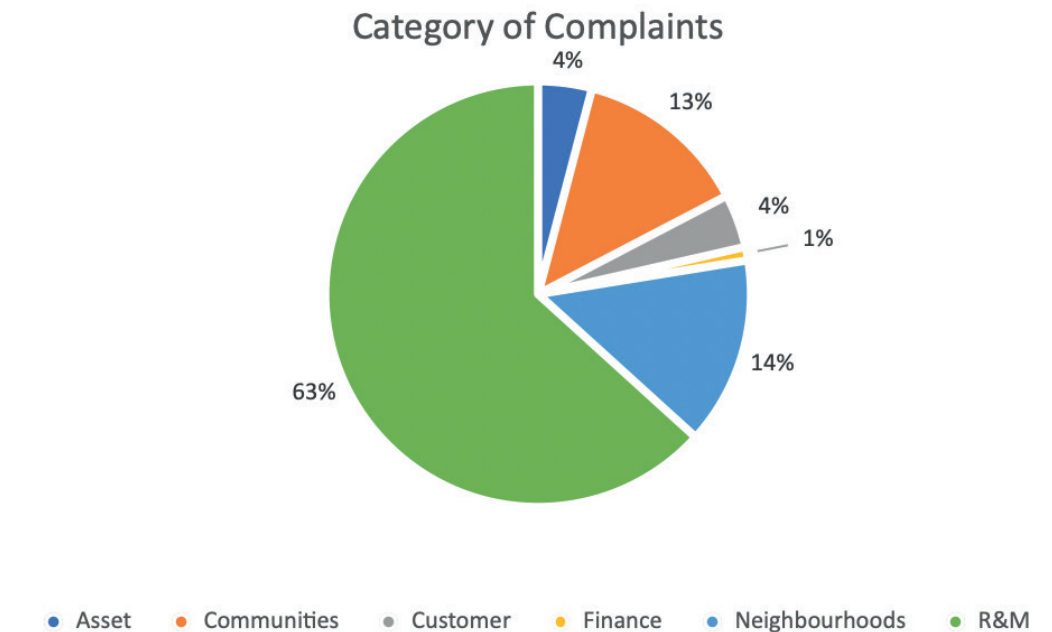
The additional resources and management controls put in place in November 2024 saw performance for stage 1 complaints responded to on time, stay at 100%.

Where a complaint is particularly complex, the Housing Ombudsman Code allows landlords to extend the ten working days deadline with agreement with the resident. Of the 98 complaints received, 11 (11%) were extended with the resident's agreement, meaning they are considered to have been responded to on time by the Housing Ombudsman Code.

Repairs and maintenance continues to be the biggest source of dissatisfaction and the largest reason for stage 1 complaints, making up 63% of complaints received.

This is a reduction on the previous year, where 83% of complaints related to repairs and maintenance, however, the percentage is impacted by an unusually large number of complaints relating to grounds maintenance, as a result of the contract changes mentioned earlier.

A breakdown of stage 1 complaints is shown in the graph and more details in the table below.



A total of 62 complaints were about our repairs and maintenance service, 14 were about grounds maintenance, 13 about communities, such as anti-social behaviour and rents, with the rest about customer service and our improvement plan in homes.

A contractor was involved in 56 stage 1 complaints, with our grounds maintenance supplier and two largest repair and maintenance contractors having the highest levels of complaints.

The information received from complaints and other resident feedback is shared through fortnightly meetings that are taking place with our two repairs and maintenance contractors and this insight will help to inform the strategic review of repairs and maintenance planned for 2025/26.

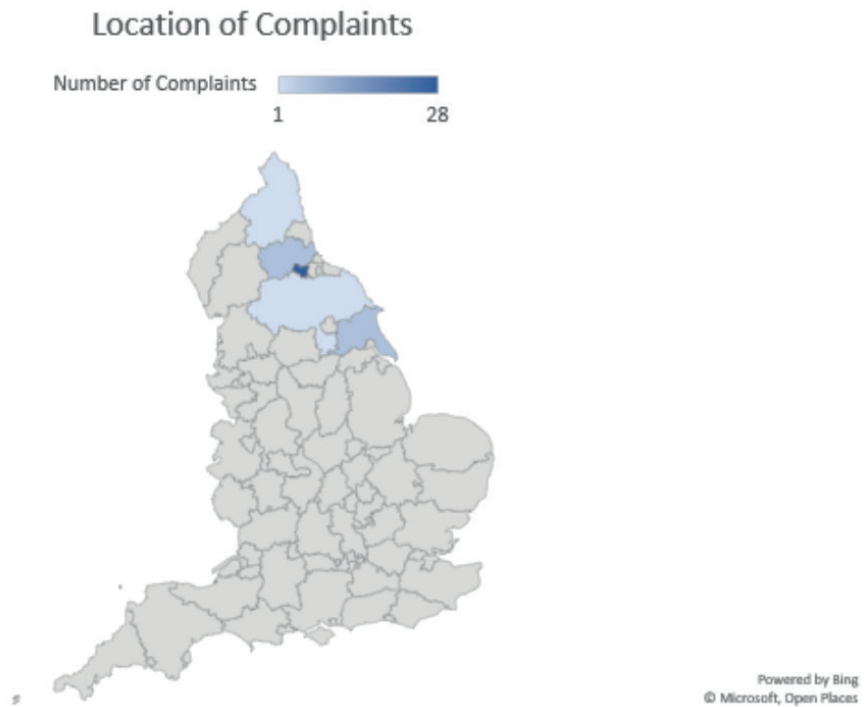
Location of Complaints

The geographical spread of stage 1 complaints is shown in the map below and are broadly in line with the proportion of number of homes owned by Railway in the relevant local authority area.

The largest number of complaints (28) was from Darlington, where we have our highest number of homes, followed by ten in Hull, nine in York and then a spread of between one and eight complaints across each other location, each relative to the number of homes in the area.

The only anomaly was a higher proportion of six complaints in Gateshead, and this is largely as a result of one street, where four residents submitted the same complaint relating to the grounds maintenance service.

Following the launch of the new contract and the accurate pricing based on mapping technology, the service charge for this street saw one of the biggest increases in service charges and this was coupled with concerns around the quality and timeliness of hedgerow maintenance. One of the complaints escalated to stage 2 and was resolved at this stage.



Compensation

The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code requires landlords to offer compensation when things have gone wrong and two key factors should be considered. Firstly, if there has been loss to a resident such as damage to possessions or lost earnings from time off work, and secondly where the service failure is at such an extent that it requires an apology for inconvenience and compensation.

A total of nine stage 1 complaints were offered compensation, totalling £1,934.47, with £150 of that credited to the resident's rent account at their request. This compensation was largely due to delays in service provision and compensation for redecoration, damage to possessions and compensation for additional electricity costs as a result of dehumidifiers or temporary heaters.

Complainant Demographics

Following the Board challenge about the demographics of complainants, demographic data from our housing management system is now being included in complaints data and is set out below.

There are some gaps in the existing data and our future approach to resident data collection will be set out in the Data Strategy. In the interim, from January 2025, any missing demographic data for complainants has been updated as part of the complaint investigation.

The age profile of complainants is broadly similar to the age profile of the wider Railway resident population, with the exception of no complaints received from the 215 residents aged 30 or under, a lower proportion from residents aged 80+, and a higher proportion from residents aged 41-50 and significantly higher for residents aged 71-80.

Complaints from this age profile relate to poor communication from contractors relating to the quality of repairs and outstanding work and dissatisfaction from the grounds maintenance service.

We are now working to ensure the 18-30 age group is aware of our complaints process and how they can contact us to feed back.



Ethnicity

The ethnicity profile largely follows the Railway resident population, with more than 63% of our residents identifying as White and a lower proportion of Asian/Asian British, Black/African, mixed and other ethnic groups, with more than 16% whose ethnicity is currently unknown.

However, only one complaint has been received from a resident that does not identify as White.



Sexual orientation

Of the people that complained, more than 67% identified as heterosexual, with 1% identifying as gay, 1% as other and more than 30% unknown.

Based on the existing data, the complainant proportion is broadly similar to the overall Railway population and this data categorisation and collection will be improved through the data strategy that is currently in development.

There is also further work required to understand the disability and additional needs of complainants to provide a more detailed insight and to ensure that any potential barriers to complaint reporting are removed.



Stage 2 Complaints

A total of nine complaints progressed to stage 2 of the process in 2024/25, which is a 125% increase from the previous year. Ten stage 2 complaints were resolved in 2024/25, as one was reported in quarter 4 of 23/24, however, the response was not due until quarter 1 of 24/25. Of the ten complaints resolved, nine were accepted as some element of failure and one was not upheld.

Of the 10 complaints responded to, seven were responded to within the 20 working day deadline and a further two were extended by agreement with the resident, resulting in performance of 90% responded to within the Housing Ombudsman Code timescales. This is a significant improvement on 23/24, when only 17% of stage 2 complaints were responded to on time.

The key themes from stage 2 complaints were that the resident was unhappy with the level of compensation offered at stage 1, the actions agreed at stage 1 had not been completed to the satisfaction of the resident and one case where the resident was unhappy at the findings of a damp and mould survey. As a result of the trend that actions agreed have not always been completed, a new action tracker has been implemented and this is now reviewed at the weekly complaints clinics to ensure promises made are followed through.

Further compensation was awarded to five of the nine stage 2 complaints, totalling £2,150 and a gesture of flowers to one complainant. Compensation was as a result of additional quantifiable loss and further inconvenience.

Learnings and Improvements

We have identified a number of key learnings and improvements through the ongoing analysis of complaint insight data. The key learnings are set out below:

Repairs and Maintenance	<p>Repairs and maintenance is still the biggest source of complaints and this is triangulated with some of the lowest scoring TSM results for Railway. A number of measures have already been introduced, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Additional resources through the restructure with an additional property surveyor and a maintenance delivery manager to more effectively manage contractors• The contractor access portal for our housing management system has been procured and is being tested, which will give greater access to and more robust data on repairs in progress and completion data• Damp and mould processes have been reviewed and improved, with more effective management of cases• Fortnightly meetings have been introduced with the key repairs and maintenance contractors to improve the relationship, share performance and resident satisfaction data• New contract terms were introduced in September 2024 for two of the largest contractors, including additional obligations around appointments and resident satisfaction• Empty homes meetings are held fortnightly with contractors to improve communication and prioritisation of the repairs to empty homes to improve relet times• The Board approved a revised asset management strategy to set a clear direction for the future of the service, including our approach to innovative technology following feedback from residents at The Laurels• Upgrades have been delivered to bungalows at The Laurels to improve the efficiency of the heating systems following resident feedback• The Board has approved a strategic options appraisal review of repairs and maintenance (including empty homes) as part of our On The Right Track delivery plan and Asset Management Strategy
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Learnings and Improvements

Resident Experience	<p>There has been a small number of complaints relating to the experience of residents and access to services. The following changes and improvements have already been made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changed the telephony system to streamline access by removing the press button options• Created the resident hub through the merger of two previous teams to improve resilience and resources to deal with resident queries at the first point of contact• Implemented an emergency on call escalations rota so the out of hours provider can escalate major incidents to a manager or the executive team• Reviewed the 'standard' letters sent at various points in processes to improve the tone of voice and language to be consistent with the MGI framework
Grounds Maintenance	<p>The grounds maintenance service has been the source of dissatisfaction in the summer of 2024. Additional measures have been taken including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A new leaflet that has been sent to residents in the 'south' grounds maintenance area to be clear about the specification and service standards• Carried out pre-season start meetings with the contractors to ensure that learnings from 2024 are embedded• Adjusted service charges where grounds maintenance visits were not made in 2024• Implemented an access portal so Railway colleagues have real-time visibility of the grounds maintenance schedules
Community Housing	<p>A small number of complaints have been received about the lack of action for anti-social behaviour (ASB). This has been prioritised for a full review of the ASB, safeguarding, domestic abuse and hate crime service, for implementation in October 2025.</p>

Housing Ombudsman Involvement

In 2024/25, we did not have any complaints referred to the Housing Ombudsman. The chief operating officer and resident experience manager continue to engage informally with the Ombudsman, including attending roundtables and networking events and the chief operating officer presented at a CIH session alongside the Housing Ombudsman to share Railway's complaints journey.

Transactional Satisfaction

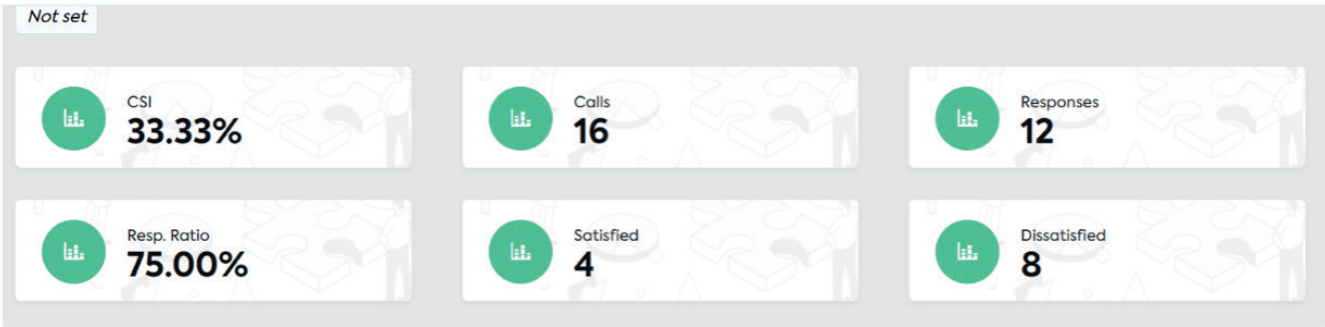
The tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs) for complaint handling for Railway have seen an 11% increase, to 42% in 2024, and whilst this is a significant improvement, further improvement is required to achieve the aim of being the country’s leading housing provider for 1,000 to 2,000 homes. To further improve insight and complaint handling, transactional satisfaction was introduced for complaint handling in quarter 4 of 2024/25. Voicescape’s feedback module has been procured and implemented, with a trial of quarter 4 data carried out in March 2025.

Voicescape means the resident experience team can upload the details of closed complaints, and automated calls, text messages and a web link are sent to residents to answer satisfaction questions. A total of 16 complaints were used in the trial of the system, with a 75% response rate, which is significantly higher than the average 20% from more traditional paper-based surveys.

The trial asked for the views of residents in three key areas:

- How satisfied or dissatisfied residents were with the overall handling of their complaint
- How effective was the communication during the complaints process
- How satisfied or dissatisfied residents were with the overall outcome of the complaint

There is also an option for residents to record a comment. A total of four of the 12 responses (33.33%) were very or fairly satisfied with how the complaint was handled, 50% of residents felt communication was effective and 40% were very or fairly satisfied with the outcome of their complaint. Only two residents took up the option to leave a comment and to improve the insight and qualitative feedback, the scripts are being updated to ask why a resident has given a particular score and to focus on the handling of the complaint as oppose to the original issue that led to the complaint.



From April 2025, the transactional surveys will be carried out monthly and will also track satisfaction from stage 1 and stage 2 complaints, and the results and analysis will be included in the quarterly complaint handling updates to the Resident Committee.

Internal audit

As part of our internal audit programme, complaint handling has been tested in quarter 4 of 2024/25 by our new internal auditors, RSM.

The report, recommendations and action plan have been approved and will be monitored by the Audit Committee and it is encouraging to receive a rating of Reasonable Assurance. The findings of the audit reflect the progress made with complaint handling and demonstrate that the additional management controls that have been put in place are working.

A small number of cases was identified where documentation was missing; however, all cases reviewed since November 2024, including two open complaints, were 100% compliant. This is a significant improvement in the culture and performance of complaint handling.

Compliments

From November 2024, compliments about colleagues and the service provided by Railway Housing Association have been logged, as positive feedback is also invaluable to understand and improve performance and service quality and also for staff morale.

A total of 15 compliments has been received from residents since November 2024, with the majority of compliments relating to repairs, service received from the resident hub and our property surveyors and compliments about work delivered by contractors. A sample of compliments is below.

Empty Homes	"I received a lovely thank you card from our new resident at XX. They are delighted with their flat and surroundings - the flat is in lovely condition, and she was able to move straight in."
Responsiveness	"A big thank you to Sue for all her help yesterday with her leak; contractors were there within ten mins – thank you very much."
Caring	Resident called to advise: "You were so caring and very nice and I am lucky to have you" following our prompt action to her report of a repair to the communal stair/ chair lift, as she was struggling to take her rubbish down and bring her shopping up.
Professional	Resident has spoken to Zoe several times about repairs to her boiler. She told us that Zoe had been brilliant! She said she has been professional and helpful even when things were not going as they should have been.
Complaint to Compliment	Mrs X spoke with Sean, a surveyor, and told him that she was impressed with the service she has received from our complaints team, since dealing with her repair and complaint.
Workmanship	Resident called to thank us and our contractor (Evenii) for their good and quick work. She said she knows people complain but she wanted to pass on her thanks. The contractors were nice and polite and swept up, left everything clean and clear and removed scaffolding same day so her son could park on her drive when visiting. Please pass on thanks to the contractor and the resident hub.