



# **Annual Complaints Report**

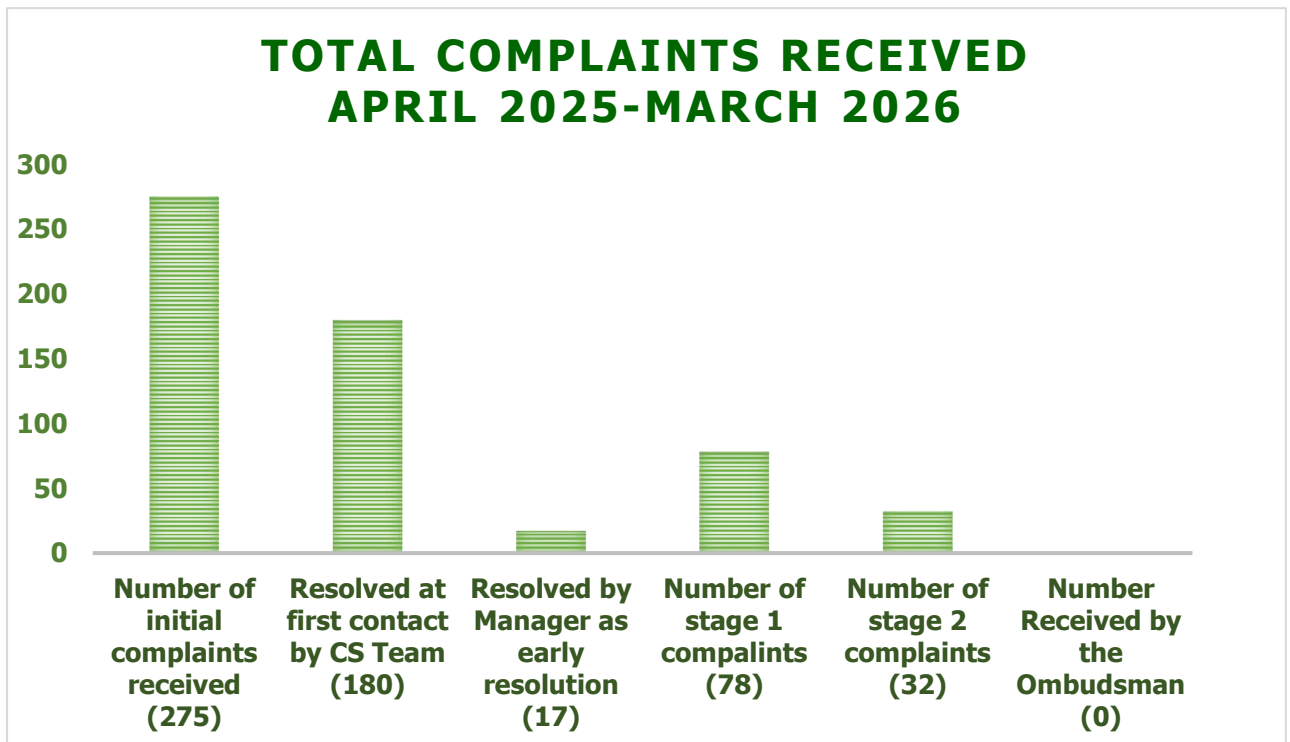
## **April 2025 – March 2026**

## Introduction

The report summarises our complaints performance during the 2025/2026 financial year, covering the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.

The purpose of this report is to review the complaints received by the Council over a twelve-month period, looking at the statistical data, in order to provide information about complaint themes, trends and the effectiveness of our current complaint's procedure.

## The Overall Picture



- The number of initial complaints received between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 was 275. This was an increase of 46 on the previous 12-month period.
- 180 complaints were resolved at first point of contact by the Customer Service team
- 17 complaints were resolved by managers as Early Resolution
- 78 complaints went through the formal complaints process and were investigated as Stage 1 complaints
- 32 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 complaints
- 0 corporate complaints were received by the Local Government Ombudsman

## How Complaints were handled.

The chart below shows how each complaint was handled:

Number Received	Resolved By Customer Services (Early Resolution)	Resolved By Manager (Early Resolution)	Percentage (Early Resolution)	Stage 1 Received
275	180	17	72% (Average)	78

Overall, 72% of the complaints received were dealt with either by Customers Services or by early resolution, without the need for an investigation and formal response. This demonstrates an effective, efficient and customer focused method of resolving customer complaints.

The chart below shows the stage 1 complaint comparison for April 2025 – March 2026 against the previous year.

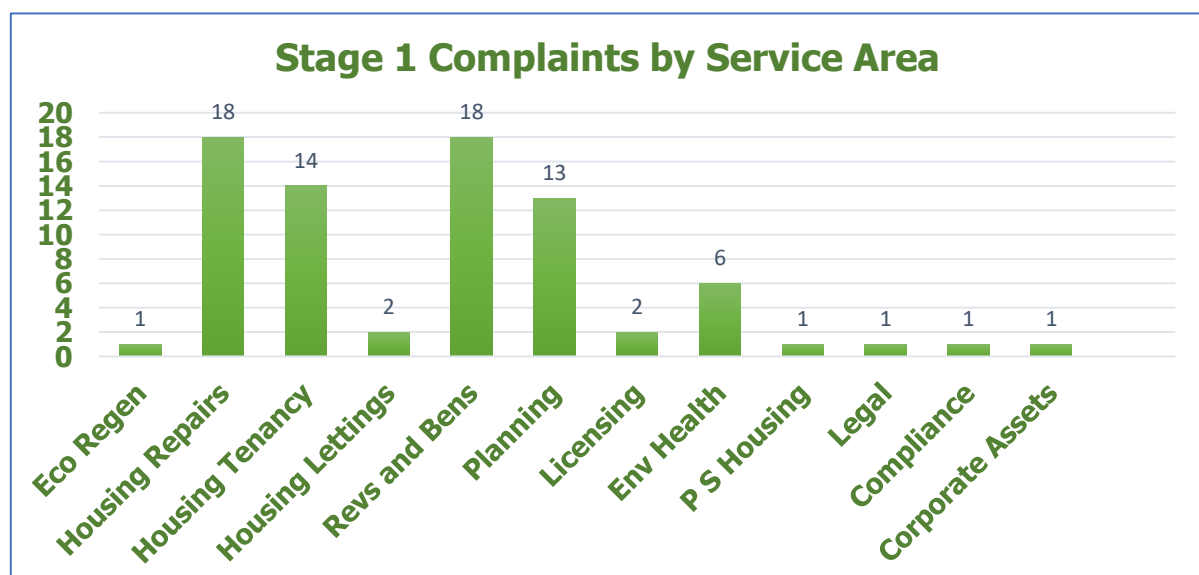
Apr 25-Mar 26 Stage 1 complaints received	Apr 24-Mar 25 Stage 1 complaints received
78	69

Over the past twelve months, there has been a slight increase in Stage 1 complaints. This increase is evident across a range of service areas, rather than being concentrated within any single service, and no consistent or systemic patterns have been identified.

Complaints remain varied in nature, reflecting individual service issues rather than recurring themes or widespread service failures. This suggests that, while overall volumes have increased slightly, there is no clear indication of underlying issues.

## Departmental Breakdown

The chart below shows all Stage 1 complaints received by each department.



The chart below shows the stage 2 complaint comparison for April 2025 – March 2026 against the previous year.

Apr 25-Mar 26 Stage 2 complaints received	Apr 24-Mar 25 Stage 2 complaints received
<b>32</b>	<b>18</b>

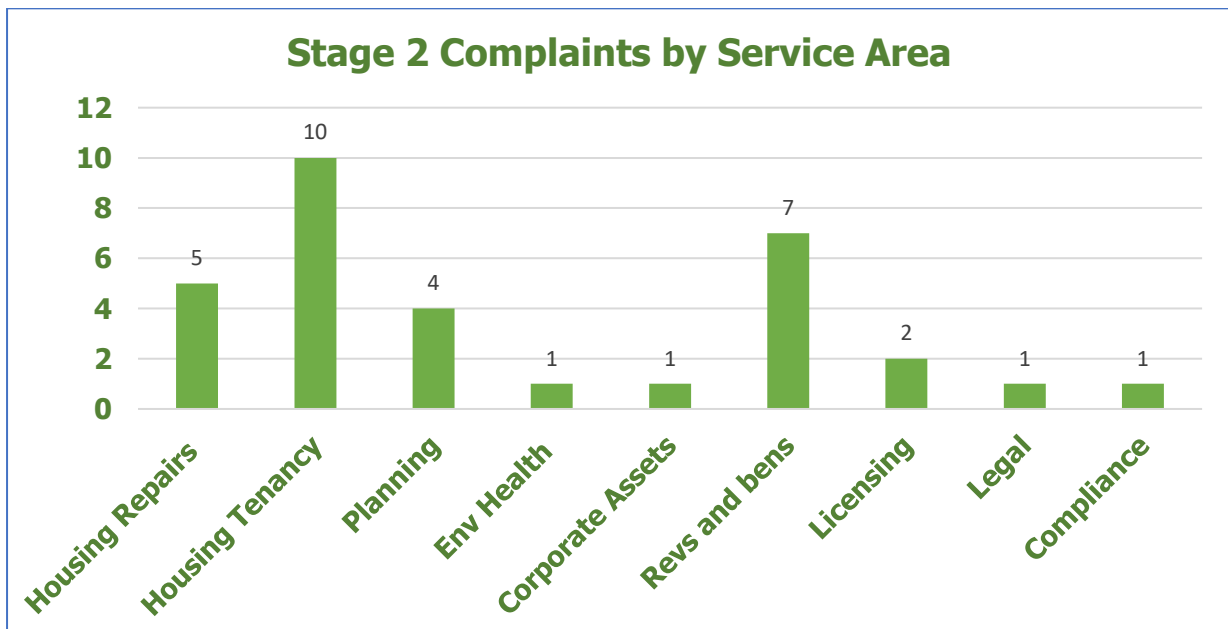
There has been an increase in Stage 2 complaints over the 12-month period. Analysis indicates that this is primarily due to:

- Stage 1 responses not fully addressing the issues raised;
- A perception that complaints have not been subject to a full and thorough investigation;
- High customer expectations; and
- A lack of clarity about next steps following the Stage 1 response.

Work has commenced with managers to strengthen Stage 1 investigation processes, with the aim of improving the quality of initial responses and reducing the number of complaints escalating to Stage 2.

### Departmental Breakdown

The chart below shows all Stage 2 complaints received by each department.



## **Built Environment**

### **Housing Tenancy/Repairs/Options/Estates**

Each year, the Housing Team produces an Annual Housing Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. This report contains the full set of relevant complaints data and analysis, and to avoid duplication, this information is not repeated here.

For completeness, the number of complaints received by the Housing Team is included below; however, the separate report should be referred to for full details and context.

<b>Stage 1 Complaints</b>	34
<b>Stage 2 Complaints</b>	15

### **Planning**

<b>Stage 1 Complaints</b>	13
<b>Stage 2 Complaints</b>	4

#### **Stage 1 Complaints**

- Delays in responses and poor communication from case officers.
- Dissatisfaction with planning decisions or enforcement outcomes.
- Complaints about pre-application advice and handling of applications.
- Perceived lack of support or clarity during the planning process.

Most complaints are not upheld, with responses focusing on process explanations and planning policy compliance rather than service failure

#### **Stage 2 Complaints**

- Alleged delays and poor communication from planning officers.
- Disagreement with professional judgment or outcomes, despite procedures being followed correctly.
- Frustration where customers feel the Council should do more, even when matters are civil issues or outside Council control.
- Stage 1 responses were seen as dismissive or insufficiently detailed.

At stage 2, Planning complaints are commonly about expectations vs statutory limits, rather than service failure.

## Planning Policy and Development Manager - Commentary

*Given the nature of the Planning profession, complaints are always going to be received when applicants are aggrieved with the decisions that the Planning Department is making, however, in the main, complaints are limited to the Development Control side of the Department at the Council.*

*Over the past year there have been 13 complaints received, however bearing in mind the number of applications determined and the consistent public interaction that the Department has with the local community, it is an extremely small number. The complaints received can be broken down into two main aspects: firstly, applicants in relation to the decisions that the Planning Department has made, for example an application has been refused and they do not agree with that outcome, or the matter at hand is not a planning matter and they do not agree; and, secondly, applicants suggesting that the time taken for the Department to determine planning applications is too long.*

*All complaints that are received are taken seriously and investigated thoroughly. The vast majority of the complaints received this year have been not upheld and there is legitimate reasoning as to why the Department has acted the way it has, for example statutory limitations and / or legislative reasoning, or correspondence has taken place between the Department and an appointed Agent and this has not been relayed to the applicant, however there have been examples when complaints have been warranted and the Department has fallen below the high standards and levels of service that it seeks to provide. In these instances, the Department seeks to learn and improve and ensure that such instances do not occur again in the future.*

### Economic Regeneration/Town Centre Management

<b>Stage 1 Complaints</b>	1
<b>Stage 2 Complaints</b>	0

#### Stage 1 Complaint

- Concern regarding officer conduct – failure to follow procedure during a business visit

The complaint was upheld with an apology issued.

### Town Centre Management – Commentary

*The complaint was upheld with an apology issued. The officer was reminded of the need to follow procedure and be mindful of respecting privacy and boundaries when visiting local businesses.*

## Revenues and Benefits

<b>Stage 1 Complaints</b>	18
<b>Stage 2 Complaints</b>	7

### Stage 1 Complaints

- Incorrect billing, arrears, or summons being issued.
- Confusion over payments, discounts, liability dates, and enforcement action.
- Poor communication or lack of clarity when customers queried charges.
- Data handling concerns, including occasional data breaches.
- Customers feeling enforcement action was insensitive to vulnerability or circumstances.

Many complaints are not upheld, but several are partially upheld where errors or poor communication are acknowledged, often with goodwill gestures or cost removal.

### Stage 2 Complaints

- Disputes over liability for charges or debt, often where complainants believe circumstances were not fully or fairly considered.
- Dissatisfaction with recovery action continuing despite vulnerability, domestic abuse history, or disputed facts.
- Customers escalating even where decisions were technically correct, because they felt the approach lacked discretion, clarity, or compassion.
- Several cases where complaints were not upheld but balances were written off or reduced using discretion, indicating resolution without fault being found.

### **Revenues and Benefits Manager - Commentary**

*The Revenues and Benefits team deal with a large volume of customer enquiries and complaints are very low in comparison to contact levels. Senior Officers attempt to resolve complaints through early resolution wherever possible to ensure we are delivering the best service to our customers.*

*I have reviewed all of the complaints received within the last 12 months and I am satisfied that where a complaint has been upheld, lessons have been learnt and any further training needed has been delivered.*

## Environmental Health

<b>Stage 1 Complaints</b>	6
<b>Stage 2 Complaints</b>	1

### Stage 1 Complaints

- Noise nuisance cases (slow progress, lack of updates, limited equipment).
- Fly-tipping, waste, dog fouling, and environmental cleanliness.
- Customers feeling issues are ongoing despite repeated reporting.

Complaints are often not upheld where investigations are still ongoing or where statutory thresholds have not been met

### Stage 2 Complaint

- Dissatisfaction that investigations were still ongoing or dependent on further evidence.
- Escalation driven by frustration with timescales rather than incorrect decisions.
- Customers wanting firmer enforcement action where officers are constrained by legal thresholds or evidence requirements.

## Environmental Health Manager - Commentary

*Many environmental health queries take time to investigate which can often frustrate customers. There is also a cross over between a number of teams within the Council. Conversations have been held between various teams to clarify processes and ensure teams receive notifications as early as possible to ensure a swift investigation and conclusion.*

## Licensing

<b>Stage 1 Complaints</b>	2
<b>Stage 2 Complaints</b>	2

### Stage 1 Complaints

- Enforcement officer conduct.
- Perceived rudeness, intimidation, or overly aggressive enforcement.

- Requests for a more balanced and respectful approach.

These are generally not upheld, with responses explaining statutory enforcement duties.

### Stage 2 Complaints

- Allegations about officer conduct, described as confrontational or intimidating.
- Complaints escalated as stage 1 response did not fully address the complaint.

Stage 2 responses focus on explaining statutory enforcement powers and professional standards.

### Licensing Manager – Commentary

*There have been some changes to processing timeframes within Licensing, these have been relayed to drivers, but this has caused some dissatisfaction. Officers are also taking a proactive approach to enforcement, and some licence holders have not liked this approach. Body worn cameras have been purchased to verify the conversations during visits.*

### Private Sector Housing

<b>Stage 1 Complaints</b>	1
<b>Stage 2 Complaints</b>	0

### Stage 1 Complaint

- Long-term unresolved issues including water ingress, damp and black mould.
- Customer states no action has been taken and they feel ignored

### Private Sector Housing Manager - Commentary

*Complaint not upheld, no legal action can be taken because the landlord and agent are cooperating and carrying out works, with delays due to periods of excessive rainfall.*

## Legal

<b>Stage 1 Complaints</b>	1
<b>Stage 2 Complaints</b>	1

### Stage 1 and 2 Complaints

- Challenge to the Council's handling of court processes and legal safeguards.
- Escalation linked to personal circumstances
- Focus on whether actions were lawful and procedurally sound rather than customer service.

### Legal and Democratic Services Manager – Commentary

*Following review at both Stage 1 and Stage 2, the complaints were not upheld. The matters raised largely related to ongoing or concluded court proceedings, including allegations concerning legal process and enforcement action. The review found that the Council had acted within its statutory functions and that the substantive issues complained of were matters properly falling within the jurisdiction of the court rather than the Council's complaints process.*

## Compliance

<b>Stage 1 Complaints</b>	1
<b>Stage 2 Complaints</b>	0

### Stage 1 Complaint

- Concern that personal information held on council systems had been access and shared by officers.

### Data Protection Officer – Commentary

*After a full investigation, including liaison with the IT Manager, there was no evidence to indicate that any information had been disclosed. CRM records are accessed by multiple officers in the normal course of their duties, where contacts, enquiries, and service requests are received and recorded.*

## Neighbourhood Services

### Corporate Assets

<b>Stage 1 Complaints</b>	1
<b>Stage 2 Complaints</b>	1

### Stage 1 Complaint

- Unresolved complaint regarding fly-tipped garden waste

### Stage 2 Complaint

- Escalation of unresolved complaint regarding fly-tipped garden waste.
- Lack of clarity regarding responsibility.

## Neighbourhood Services Manager – Commentary

*An apology was issued for delays in communication and lack of clarity regarding responsibility. Whilst the referral to Leicestershire County Council was correct, it was acknowledged that this caused unnecessary confusion and delay.*

### Complaints Monitoring

Every complaint is taken seriously, with the Council examining the reasons behind each case, identifying lessons learned, and taking action to reduce the risk of recurrence. Response times are closely monitored to ensure compliance with target timescales, alongside a focus on the quality and completeness of responses. Learning from complaints is essential to identify trends, improve processes, strengthen communication, and inform service improvements. This ensures complaints are not only resolved effectively but also used as a valuable tool to enhance customer experience and support continuous improvement across the organisation.

<b>Complaint Average Response Times</b>		
	<b>Stage 1 Complaints (Target 10 working days)</b>	<b>Stage 2 Complaints (Target 20 working days)</b>
April 2025 – March 2026	8 working days	15 working days

The response times are in target across the year. This is very positive and reflects the efficient management of complaints.