

Paper Sensitivity Level:
PUBLIC

Title:	Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report 25/26				
Author(s):	Sarah Houghton-Grimshaw - Director of Operations				
Report to:	Alpha Board				
Date:	15/09/2026				
Action:	For Noting				
Recommendation(s):	Members are asked to note the complaints performance for 2025/26, including the key themes, learning and improvements made as a result. Members are asked to note the self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman code and to provide feedback on the assessment results. Members are also asked to note the work underway to improve how we identify, record and learn from complaints, alongside the increased opportunities for residents to tell us when something is not working. Early 2026/27 complaint data is included for context only and does not form part of the formal 2025/26 annual complaints assessment. The response from the Board to this report will be collated and agreed with Alpha's Member Responsible for Complaints following the meeting.				
Link to Corporate Strategy:	☐ Create Exciting Communities ☐ Reach As Many People As Possible ☒ Safe and Sustainable Home ☒ Sustainable Business ☒ Influencing				
Main Strategic Risk:	Effective Governance				
Risk Appetite:	Cautious				
Additional Risk:	Emerging Risks				
Risk Appetite:	Balanced				
Current Risk Scoring:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Medium - 12 Likely (4) Moderate (3)</td><td>Controlled Risk Rating</td></tr> <tr> <td>Medium - 12 Likely (4) Moderate (3)</td><td>Controlled Risk Rating</td></tr> </table>	Medium - 12 Likely (4) Moderate (3)	Controlled Risk Rating	Medium - 12 Likely (4) Moderate (3)	Controlled Risk Rating
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Financial / Resource and Value for Money (VfM) Implications:	Non-compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code could bring include compensation orders.				

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Considerations:

Our residents have a wide range of needs, and some will require additional support to understand or access the complaints process.

During the year we have continued to look at how easy it is for residents to raise concerns and whether our information is clear and accessible.

This includes clearer complaints information, different ways for residents to provide feedback and ensuring colleagues recognise dissatisfaction when it is raised.

The aim is to make sure residents are not disadvantaged because of disability, communication needs, digital exclusion or because they require additional support or advocacy.

Customer Impact / Views:

Complaints are one part of how we understand resident experience and should not be looked at in isolation.

We have continued to bring complaints together with Tenant Satisfaction Measures, resident listening sessions and wider feedback to give us a better picture of what residents are telling us.

Our TSM results highlighted a gap between the number of residents who felt they had made a complaint and the number we had formally recorded. This told us that we needed to look again at how we recognise and record dissatisfaction.

Resident listening sessions have also given residents more opportunities to raise concerns directly with us. This has increased the visibility of dissatisfaction, but importantly it also gives us more information to learn from and more opportunities to put things right.

Legislative / Regulatory Compliance:

Complaints are managed in line with the Housing Ombudsman (HO) Complaint Handling Code ("Code"). Alpha has completed a self-assessment against the Code and will submit to the HO before 30 September and published on the website. Feedback from The Board will be recorded as part of the process and will be made available on our website.

The annual complaints review provides assurance around complaints performance, learning and the improvements being made as a result.

Work has continued during the year to strengthen complaints recording, accessibility and oversight and to make sure learning is being used to improve services.

AI and Data Quality:

No AI has been used in writing this report.

Consultation / Approval Route:

Individual / Department / Committee Name:	Date:	Action / Outcome:
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Business Management Team	August 2026	Annual complaints performance, learning and improvement activity reviewed
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Executive Summary:

This report provides members with an overview of complaints performance for 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, including what residents complained about, what we have learned and what we are doing differently as a result.

There were 27 complaints recorded within the year, all of which were resolved at stage one except one complaint relating to an equipment failure which was escalated to stage two and was subsequently resolved in August 26. No complaints were escalated to The Housing Ombudsman during the year demonstrating that our process of hearing and resolving complaints within the Alpha process is working.

Complaint themes identified include dissatisfaction with repairs, communication, housing management and service delivery. Communication is a cross-cutting factor present in many of the complaints received. In several cases, the original issue may have been a repair or another service problem, but the resident's poor experience was compounded by lack of update or clarity of information leading to the service issue resulting in a complaint.

Examining the data has highlighted that the headline number of complaints should not be viewed in isolation and that further investigation is required to provide context. Several complaints can relate to one underlying service issue. St Peters Court, for example, had three complaints relating to water pressure and temperature. This represents 22% of the total number of complaints received during the year.

Our tenancy satisfaction measure (TSM) results for 2025/26 have also highlighted a gap between residents' perception that they have made a complaint and the number of complaints formally recorded. This has led us to look more closely at how we recognise dissatisfaction and whether concerns are sometimes being dealt with without being recorded as a complaint.

Alpha has adopted the Housing Ombudsman definition of a complaint as, *“an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.”*

A significant amount of work has already started to strengthen our processes, this includes improving complaints recording within Civica CX our housing management system, clearer information for residents, reviewing our policies and increasing resident involvement in the process of thematic complaint reviews.

Early 2026/27 figures have been included for context only. Between April and July 2026, 22 complaints were recorded compared with 11 during the same period in 2025. Whilst this is a 100% increase, most of that increase happened in April following the introduction of resident listening sessions. During the sessions information was shared regarding what constitutes a complaint and how complaints can be made. Residents were encouraged to use the complaint system as one of the tools for service improvement.

A self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code has been undertaken which has found that Alpha is broadly compliant and identifies several positive areas of practice. However, the assessment highlights that some areas require strengthening to ensure the policy, procedure and supporting evidence consistently reflect both the requirements of the Code and Alpha's day-to-day practice. Work is underway to close those gaps.

1. Introduction

This report covers Alpha Living's complaints performance for 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Complaints are an important source of resident feedback. They tell us where something has gone wrong, but they can also show us where communication could have been better, where expectations were not managed or where the same problem is happening more than once.

During the year we have continued to improve how we use this information.

The focus is not simply on how many complaints we receive. We need to understand why residents are complaining, whether the same issues keep coming up and what we are doing differently as a result.

2. Complaints performance 2025/26

Complaints during the year covered a range of services and developments.

The main themes were:

- repairs and property services
- communication
- housing management
- service delivery
- anti-social behaviour and resident behaviour.

Communication continues to be one of the clearest themes. Residents told us about not being kept updated, delays in responses, unclear information and not always knowing who was dealing with an issue. There is evidence that in some cases, the original problem was outside of our control or could not have been avoided. However, the way we communicated while dealing with it made the resident's experience worse. This is something we can improve and remains a focus for 2026/27.

3. Looking at what sits behind the numbers

One of the things the annual review has reinforced is that we need to gain a deeper insight into the detail of the complaints and identify themes for improvement as opposed to focussing purely on the numeric data. Several complaints about one issue can quickly increase the overall figure.

For example, at St Peters Court several residents raised concerns about ongoing issues relating to water pressure. This doesn't make those individual complaints any less important, but it does change what the data is telling us. Rather than looking at each complaint separately, we need to be able to identify when several complaints are linked and establish the solution for the root cause.

During 2026/27 we will improve how we report:

- repeat complaints
- outlying developments where unusually high or low numbers of complaints are received
- recurring service failures
- repeat issues with specific contractors or services.

This will help us spot issues earlier and intervene before they generate further dissatisfaction.

4.Complaints and resident feedback

Complaints are only one part of the picture. Our Tenant Satisfaction Measures showed a gap between the number of residents who said they had complained and the number of complaints we had formally recorded. The TSM data recorded satisfaction with complaint handling as 64.5% whilst this is a marginal improvement from the previous year where satisfaction was 57.1% this represents the lowest scoring satisfaction measure.

It suggested that some residents may have raised dissatisfaction that was dealt with as an everyday service issue rather than recognised as a complaint. Colleagues can become solution focused when an issue arises and whilst that is a proactive approach and can be crucial in resolving the core issue, the recording of the resident's dissatisfaction with a situation or occurrence can be lost. We have therefore been looking at how colleagues recognise complaints even when the word complaint is not used and making sure we are recording dissatisfaction appropriately.

During March and April as part of the new Director of Operations introduction to the business resident listening sessions were delivered. This gave residents another opportunity to tell us directly what is working and what isn't. This approach will be taken forward into the monthly resident meetings once the listening session feedback visits have concluded.

We should not assume that fewer complaints automatically equals increased satisfaction. There is a need to make it easy for residents to complain and make sure that, when they do, we recognise it and respond in a timely manner and keep them involved and updated as the complaint progresses toward resolution.

5. What we have changed

Learning from complaints and assimilating that learning into service improvement is crucial in increasing resident satisfaction with the complaint handling process. There are some good examples from the year where complaints have led directly to changes.

Rent payments

A complaint identified that a resident could not make a rent payment because an appropriate colleague was not available. This was also identified as a theme during the listening sessions. A change has been made to the arrangements to make sure appropriate cover is available on advertised payment days. We are also exploring the use of an automated payment platform to give resident wider options to make rental payments at a time that suits them.

Lift communication

A complaint about lift problems highlighted that we needed to communicate better with residents when contractors are attending and works are taking place.

Emergency response

A complaint following a significant water leak identified a gap in our escalation arrangements when colleagues are not on site. This resulted in clearer arrangements with Progress around when colleagues are unavailable and how an emergency should be escalated.

Complaint handling

A complaint about communication and how the complaint itself had been handled resulted in changes to processes and additional training.

There will be increased focus on closing the loop after a complaint, ensuring the complainant has been informed about the resolution, any delays or the rationale if we cannot meet their desired outcome. Making it easier to complain

We have continued to look at how easy it is for residents to understand and access our complaints process. A new complaints leaflet has been developed and reviewed with residents and will be supported by clearer information across our developments. We are also developing more accessible complaints information through One Alpha and the website including video content.

Residents should know:

- what a complaint is
- how to make one
- what will happen next
- when they can expect a response
- what they can do if they remain unhappy.

We don't want residents to have to understand our internal processes before they can tell us something has gone wrong. Making the process more accessible may mean we initially record more complaints, that isn't necessarily a bad thing. It means we have a better picture of where residents are dissatisfied and more opportunities to do something about it.

6. Improving our complaints data

Complaints, compliments and concerns functionality is being developed within Civica CX, our historic data didn't always give us everything we need. Complaint categorisation, improvement measures and learning have not always been recorded consistently, which makes it harder to look back and identify trends.

The new approach will give us better information about:

- what residents are complaining about and root cause
- where complaints are happening
- response times

- outcomes / learning / improvements
- repeat complaints.

This should make future reporting much more useful and allow us to identify issues earlier.

7. 2026/27 Position: Context only

The following information relates to 2026/27 and is included for context only. It does not form part of the formal 2025/26 annual complaints assessment.

We have included the first four months of 2026/27 because it gives some early context around what has happened since we introduced resident listening sessions and started putting more focus on recognising dissatisfaction.

Month	2025	2026	Change
April	2	10	+8
May	3	6	+3
June	5	2	-3
July	1	4	+3
Total	11	22	+11 / 100%

Complaints increased from 11 to 22 across the comparable period for the previous year. However, ten complaints were recorded in April, immediately following the introduction of resident listening sessions. This evidences a spike following the socialising of the complaints process with the resident community.



Complaint numbers then reduced to six in May and two in June before increasing slightly to four in July. It is still too early to say whether this represents a longer-term increase. What it does tell us is that giving residents more opportunities to speak to us is increasing our visibility of dissatisfaction.

8. Resident complaints review forum

During 2026/27 we will introduce a quarterly Resident Complaints Review Forum, where a group of residents will look at a selection of anonymised complaints and tell us:

- Did we understand what the resident was actually complaining about?
- Did our response answer it?
- Was the response clear and fair?
- Did we identify the right learning?
- Was any compensation appropriate?

This gives us another level of assurance and embeds the resident voice within the complaint review process. Feedback gained from the forum reviews will inform training, communications and service improvements.

9. Policy and Communication

The Complaints Policy and Compensation Policy are being reviewed.

The Complaints Policy will make it clearer what constitutes a complaint, who can complain and any circumstances that fall outside of the complaints process and will be aligned to the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

The Compensation Policy will provide clearer guidance around when compensation is appropriate and how decisions are made to ensure payments are less subjective and equitable.

10. Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment

Alpha's 2025/26 self-assessment demonstrates broad compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. The assessment confirms that Alpha has a single two-stage complaints process, has adopted the Ombudsman's definition of a complaint, makes its complaints policy and associated information available to residents, and has established roles for complaint handling, Board oversight and Member Responsible for Complaints scrutiny.

The self-assessment also identifies several positive areas of practice, including the publication of complaint information on Alpha's website, the use of complaint template letters, resident-facing complaint information, Board reporting, involvement of the scrutiny panel in developing complaint materials, and evidence that learning from complaints is considered as part of service improvement activity.

However, the assessment highlights that some areas require strengthening to ensure the policy, procedure and supporting evidence consistently reflect both the requirements of the Code and Alpha's day-to-day practice. There are several provisions where practice appears to be in place, but the supporting policy wording, procedure, evidence base or reporting route should be clarified. Following the self-assessment the complaints policy has been reviewed to address any gaps identified.

Key actions and improvements include:

- The complaints policy has been updated to make key definitions, exclusions, escalation rights, resident representation, timeframes, remedies and Ombudsman contact arrangements clearer and easier for residents to understand.
- Supporting procedures are being strengthened to evidence day-to-day complaint handling practice, including complaint triage, vulnerability and risk considerations, reasonable adjustments, record keeping, response quality, extensions, outstanding actions and service recovery.
- Training is planned to improve colleague awareness and consistency through additional complaints training, induction materials, clear scripts or model responses, Development Manager guidance and regular complaint discussions at operational meetings. A complaints reel is under development and will be available on the internal One Alpha site and published on the website.
- We are Strengthening arrangements for service requests and resident feedback, including clearer distinction between service requests and complaints, improved recording and monitoring through CX, and clearer signposting to the complaints process when dissatisfaction is raised through surveys or feedback channels.
- Enhancing accessibility and resident-facing information by keeping the website, complaint booklet, communal information and alternative-format arrangements under review so that the process remains visible, inclusive and easy to use.
- Formalising oversight, reporting and learning arrangements by clarifying senior accountability, strengthening reporting to the Member Responsible for Complaints, Senior Leadership Team, Board and Scrutiny Panel, and using complaints data to identify themes, trends, contractor issues and service improvements.
- Considering the introduction of clearer remedy guidance, including a decision-making matrix, to ensure remedies are proportionate, consistent, reflect the impact on residents and are followed through to completion.
- Review procurement and third-party arrangements to ensure contractors and commissioned providers understand Alpha's complaint handling expectations and support compliance with relevant complaint handling requirements.

The full self-assessment is attached at Appendix A

11. Conclusion/Next Steps

The annual review has presented us with a clearer understanding of the detail behind the headline complaint data. Combining this with the insight from the listening sessions and TSM responses has allowed us to form a much fuller picture of the end-to-end complaints process.

The outcome of the self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Code will be essential in informing the service improvement and strengthening practice.

Our priorities for 2026/27 are therefore to:

- improve complaints recording through Civica CX
- improve our complaints dashboards and reporting
- identify repeat complaints and development hotspots earlier

- improve how we record learning and actions
- check whether actions taken following complaints have been successful
- refresh the Complaints and Compensation Policies
- improve complaints information for residents
- introduce the Resident Complaints Review Forum
- complete resident scrutiny around first-contact communication
- use complaints, TSMs and resident listening together to give us a better picture of resident experience.

The early 2026/27 figures are included for context only. Complaints have increased, but this has happened alongside a deliberate increase in opportunities for residents to tell us when something isn't working.

Having open and honest conversations with our residents about our service and where we have fallen short can only benefit both Alpha and our residents unlocking the power of the resident voice in setting standards and improving services.

Appendix A:

Alpha's performance against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code 2025/26

Appendix B

Complaints at a glance infographic

Annual Complaints — At a glance

