

Housing Annual Complaints Report 2024/2025.

September 2025

Contents page

| Section | Title | Page |
|---------|---|------|
| | Welcome from the Housing Complaints Board | 3 |
| 1.0 | Introduction | 4 |
| 2.0 | Complaints Policy | 5 |
| 3.0 | Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code self-assessment results | 9 |
| 4.0 | Summary data 2024/2025 | 10 |
| 5.0 | Housing Ombudsman 2024/2025 summary | 11 |
| 6.0 | Customer data | 13 |
| 7.0 | What we have learnt from feedback | 14 |

Welcome

This is Milton Keynes City Council's Annual Complaints Report for 2024/25.

This report reviews feedback received by the Council in 2024/25 under the Housing Complaints Procedure. It tells you about the quantity of complaints we received as your landlord, identifies recurring themes, and highlights lessons learnt which are changing the ways that we build working relationships with our residents and manage our properties.

We aim to get things right and make a difference in the lives of our residents and visitors. As recipients of our services, you are best placed to provide feedback. We have experienced a 15% increase in complaints across our Housing Services and we believe this is reflective of our engagement work through [service charge consultation](#) process and [tenant perception surveys](#).

This increase in feedback has been invaluable in helping us identify and address areas for improvement. It also demonstrates your confidence in complaining and a raised awareness of the process.

Our self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman complaints handling code helps us to follow good practice and monitor progress. With the three-pronged approach we look forward to keeping things moving in the right direction.

This report sets the scene and in future publications, we hope to share what we have learnt over the coming year and how we have put these learnings into practice as a responsible Social Landlord.

Your views are crucial in helping us make sure we're getting things right and letting us know when we are not as part of our continuous improvement.

1.0 Introduction

Effective complaint handling enables residents to be heard and understood. The starting point for this is a shared understanding of what constitutes a complaint.

A complaint is defined 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.’

Milton Keynes City Council is committed to managing its complaints in line with the Housing Ombudsman’s complaint handling code 2024/25 and is working to adopt all recommendations.

This report provides an analysis of the complaints, compliments and comments received by the Council during the financial year 2024/25 under the Housing Complaints Procedure. This report not only focuses on volume and timeliness of the responses but also aims, where possible, to identify themes and lessons learnt that result in service improvements; this includes the decisions made by the Housing Ombudsman (HO). More details of the HO cases can be found on their website [Housing Ombudsman Service website](#).

The main drivers for complaints are around communication and delays in processes in making sure works are underway. In relation to communication there has been improvements in the way we communicate with our customers throughout the organisation.

Our complaints policy reflects our commitment to an equitable process for all residents with:

- A universal definition of a complaint
- Providing easy access to the complaints procedure and ensuring residents are aware of it, including their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service
- Standardising the structure of the complaint’s procedure – only 2 stages necessary and clear times set out for responses
- Ensuring fairness in complaint handling with a resident-focused process
- Taking action to put things right and appropriate remedies
- Creating a positive complaint handling culture through continuous learning and improvement
- Demonstrating learning in annual reports
- Including our annual self-assessment against the ode

2.0 Complaints Policy

The following pages provide a shortened version of the MKCC Corporate Complaints Policy.

| Tell us about your complaint | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Visit our website | Complaints and Compliments webpage |
| Online form | Contact Us – MyCouncil |
| Email | complimentsandcomplaints@milton-keynes.gov.uk |
| Phone | 01908 253817 |
| Postal Address | Compliment and complaints, Milton Keynes City Council, Civic, Milton Keynes, MK9 3EJ |

It's important that all members of the community have the right to equal access to our Customer Feedback Policy. If you do not have English as a first language or might need help with interpretation and translation services or sign language, braille, or large print. We can make this policy available to you in an accessible format. Contact our complaints team on the information above.

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about a Council service (whether that service is provided directly by the Council or by a contractor or partner) that requires a response. We will consider complaints from individuals affected and representatives/advocates when the individual is unable to make the complaint themselves.

We will deal with all complaints under our complaints policy unless they are excluded, as defined in the policy. This definition should be interpreted widely. If in doubt a matter should be recorded as a complaint. This doesn't include everything, but some common examples of service failure that could cause a complaint are: -

- Delay
- Poor record keeping
- Failure to take action
- Failure to follow procedures or the law
- Poor communication
- Giving out misleading information

- Failure to investigate
- The Council not doing what it said it would

We may not be able to deliver the outcomes that customers expect from complaints, many services we deliver are highly regulated so leave little room for exceptions to be made for individual circumstance. We will be clear with you about what we can and cannot deliver. If we have to say 'No' we will explain why we cannot deliver the type of service or the response that is being requested.

Complaints governance

Your complaint will be recorded on our complaints system, and you will be given a CU reference number.

When we receive your complaint our complaints team will review it and allocate it to the correct service for a response, our Head of Customer Data and Insight has corporate responsibility for overseeing the process and our portfolio Holder (Elected Councillor) has cabinet responsibility and oversight. Annually we review our complaints performance and report this to audit committee.

Timescales

We acknowledge that the complaint handling codes from both the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman expect stage one complaints to be completed within 10 working days. We have incorporated these standards into our complaints policy and are working to improve our adherence to this. We are ambitious and working hard to reduce our timescales in line with these standards and are monitoring our performance. We are in a transitional position with the final adoption of these complaint standards.

| Process | Stage | Working days to complete |
|----------------------------------|-------|---|
| Acknowledgement [Initial triage] | ALL | 5 working days |
| Corporate | 1 | 10 or 20 working days plus 10 working days for complex cases |
| Adult Social Care | 1 | 60 working days - one stage process |
| Childrens Social Care* | 1 | 10 or 20 working days plus 10 working days for complex cases |
| Housing | 1 | 10 working days |
| | | |

| | | |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Corporate | 2 | 20 working days plus 10 working days for complex cases |
| Housing | 2 | 10 working days plus 10 working days for complex cases |
| Childrens Social Care* | 2 | 25 working days plus a maximum of 65 working days for complex cases |
| Childrens Social Care* | 3 | 50 working days to complete the process |

Complaints process

Acknowledgement

Once you have submitted your complaint, we will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days sharing with you a CU reference number. This is a unique reference number that you can use when corresponding with us regarding your complaint.

Triage

Complaints will be assigned to the correct service areas to investigate at this time. If the complaint looks to involve more than one service, covers a complex area of legislation, the root cause of the complaint happened longer than 12 months ago, or we need more specific information from you to understand your complaint (this is not an exhaustive list of reasons) we will write to you to explain that we will not be able to complete the complaint investigation within 20 working days and will provide you with a date that you can expect your complaint to be responded to.

Stage one (Comply or Explain)

We will aim to complete complaints within 10 working days (post acknowledgement). Complaints will be completed within a maximum of 20 working days from the date submitted, unless we explain why we cannot complete the complaints investigation within that time frame. If the complaint is more complex, we will add an additional 10 days to the investigation. A serious complaint or a case where we have previously corresponded with you may go directly to Stage 2 depending on the nature of the complaint.

If you are not happy with the response you receive at Stage 1, you can contact us within a month and ask for a senior officer to complete a full and fair investigation at Stage 2.

Stage Two

Complaints will be completed within a total of 20 working days from the date submitted we will need to understand.

- What specifically you remain unhappy about with the stage one response,
- The impact of the concerns you have raised on you, and

- What you expect the Council to do to put things right.

Your feedback on these points will be considered. If we believe the stage one response answered all these points, there will be no further action and we will not progress your complaint to a stage two investigation.

Depending on the investigation's complexity, we may need to extend the timescales for stage two investigations by 10 more working days, but this will be communicated to the customer in good time. We will keep you up to date on progress.

Note – We would expect you to send us a Stage 2 request within a month of the date of our Stage 1 response. We will use our discretion when considering Stage 2 requests received after this period, but we would be looking for a compelling reason to do so.

Once we have accepted a Stage 2 complaint, a Stage 2 officer will be assigned to investigate and respond to it.

The Stage 2 officer will contact you to: -

- introduce themselves as the officer investigating the complaint,
- agree the scope of the complaint and your desired outcome(s), and
- advise the target date for completion of the investigation.

Remedies

Providing a remedy is about putting right what has gone wrong and learning from it. We will aim to remedy any personal injustice to you or the person you are complaining on behalf of where an investigation into a complaint has identified fault on the part of the Council. There must be a clear link between the fault and the personal injustice.

The remedies we may offer are not necessarily about money. We would look to put you back into the position you would have been in if nothing had gone wrong. We would also look at the root cause of the complaint and aim to make sure that the fault does not happen again. We may issue a financial payment to reimburse you if you have suffered a quantifiable financial loss, or it might be more of a symbolic payment. This serves as an acknowledgement of the distress or difficulties you have experienced.

We do not offer compensation in the way a court would. In some cases, an appropriate remedy may be for us to apologise to you for the fault that caused the injustice. We may look at making a change to a practice, policy, or procedure if we think it is likely that further mistakes may affect other people in the future. When considering an appropriate remedy to a complaint, we will use the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Guidance on Remedies. You can find this document on the Ombudsman's website at www.lgo.org.uk

Next Steps

If you remain unhappy it is your right to contact either the **Local Government and Social Care** or If you are a tenant of the Council, you can contact the **Housing Ombudsman**.

The Ombudsman's role is to investigate complaints of maladministration by Local Authorities.

| Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman | |
|--|---|
| Website | www.lgo.org.uk |
| Postal Address | Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman PO Box 4771 Coventry CV4 0EH |
| Telephone number | 0300 061 0614 |

| Housing Ombudsman | |
|-------------------|---|
| Website | https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk |
| Postal Address | Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston PR2 0ET |
| Telephone number | 0300 111 3000 |

3.0 Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code self-assessment results

The Complaint Handling Code sets out good practice for landlords to respond to complaints. You can find it online on [Housing Ombudsman website](#). Each year we assess ourselves against the code. This year we successfully complied with 67 measures. We were non-compliant with three measures and have outlined below the work being undertaken to work towards compliance in the medium term. Actions will be carried out throughout the financial year 2024/2025 to meet these three measures in the code:

| Non compliant area | Our steps towards compliance |
|---|--|
| 5.10. Landlords must make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Landlords must keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review. | Our Corporate complaints policy reflects the need to consider the use of reasonable adjustment and its associated record keeping requirements on landlord back-office systems – our practice of recording this remains under review and is being implemented during the current financial year 2025 – 2026. |
| 6.16. When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman. | Our complaints policy has been updated to reflect the required standard and our practices are evolving to do the same. |
| 6.3. Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being acknowledged. | As per 6.1. our current timescale for stage 1 complaint responses is 10 days from acknowledgement. We know that the complaint handling code expects stage one complaints to be completed within 10 working days. We are ambitious and working hard to reduce our timescales in line with these expectations and will be closely monitoring our performance. |

4.0 Summary data for 2024/25

Context

As a Social Landlord, MKCC owns and manages over 12,000 tenanted properties, the vast majority are low-cost rental properties, the rest are low-cost home ownership properties and leasehold properties.

Complaint numbers

- **980** complaints were investigated about the Housing Service in 2024/25
 - **32%** increase in the number of complaints investigated year on year
- **47** of these 980 complaints were closed at triage

Of the remaining **943** complaints

- **83%** of complaints investigated at stage one were resolved at this stage
- **17%** of complaints were escalated to stage two

A number of cases have been escalated by residents to the Housing Ombudsman (HO) during this financial year for dispute resolution which is the initial step which assesses whether the case will be referred for investigation by the HO. There is a significant time differential on this process due to the volume of complaints received by the HO.

Complaint decisions

943 complaints were given a decision in the 24/25 period: table below shows the decision outcome

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Complaint upheld decision | 129 |
| Complaint partially upheld | 230 |
| Complaint not upheld | 584 |

Each fully or partially upheld complaint is given a reason for that decision, and one complaint / decision can have more than one reason. The Housing Ombudsman changed the way that complaint decisions are categorised during this period, with the removal of a 'partially upheld' decision and this will not be used during 2025/26.

The table below shows the reasons for the **359** upheld / partially upheld complaints from 24/25.

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Professional decision making | 108 |
| Service failure | 203 |
| Contractor related | 29 |
| Staff conduct | 18 |

5.0 Housing Ombudsman 2024/25 summary

For cases that are escalated to the Housing Ombudsman (HO), it can take some time for cases to complete their assessment stage. This means that some cases that were decided in 2024/25, were first raised with MKCC in previous years. Below is a summary of HO activity

28 contacts were received from the HO during 2024/25 - these include:

- i) evidence request – providing evidence to support the landlord’s reply to a complaint
- ii) information requests – providing specific details on a case
- iii) premature status checks – confirming where the resident’s complaint is in our corporate process

A significant number of the contacts received from the HO in 2024/25 have been classified as ‘premature’ – these means that our complaints process has not been completed and the HO will monitor this, giving the resident the opportunity to further escalate their case if they remain unhappy with our reply once completed.

of those cases have been identified as premature by the Housing Ombudsman and had either:

- a) not completed the MKCC complaints process or
- b) are still at the HO’s assessment stage following information submission by MKCC.

12 case outcomes have been issued to MKCC by the Housing Ombudsman during this 2024/25 resulting in **11** case determinations and included **19** maladministration findings.

Maladministration is defined as a formal decision by the Ombudsman that a landlord has failed to do something, done something it shouldn’t have or, in the Ombudsman’s opinion has delayed unreasonably –

11 case outcomes had an adjudication of maladministration for one or more parts of the original complaint.

Of those **11 outcomes**, **1** case also had an adjudication of severe maladministration for one or more parts of the original complaint.

A summary of all complaints upheld by the HO can be found in Annex A.

Action taken

We have identified number of outcomes from complaints upheld by the HO in relation to paragraph 52 of the ombudsman code, which looks at the below issues:

- A) failed to comply with any relevant legal obligations
- B) failed to comply with any relevant codes of practice
- C) failed to apply its own policies and/or procedures
- D) delayed unreasonably in dealing with the matter
- E) behaved unfairly, unreasonably, or incompetently treated the complainant personally in a heavy-handed, unsympathetic, or inappropriate manner

We have reflected this within an updated complaints policy which adopts the Ombudsman's standard for complaint responses as well developing other policies relevant to our residents. A new housing maintenance contract award gives us the opportunity to embed our evolved working practices within those of the new contractor to improve service delivery for our residents and provide a seamless approach to customer experience.

6.0 Customer data

It is optional for customers to share personal data with us when raising a complaint, and some choose not to. The below data provides an indication of the demographic profile of the tenants and leaseholders who are raising complaints with us, based on the proportion who choose to share their data.

Ethnicity data

Below is a summary of those who self- identified when raising a complaint.

| Ethnic Background category | No of people who provided this information |
|----------------------------|--|
| Asian, Indian | 1 |
| Black African | 1 |
| Black Caribbean | 2 |
| Mixed- White and Asian | 2 |
| Other | 3 |
| White British | 33 |
| White European | 3 |

Disability

35% of residents who had raised a complaint with us identified as having a disability. 65% identified as not having a disability.

Gender

Of those residents who had raised a complaint 70.6% of residents self-identified as female and 29.4% of residents identified as male.

Age

| Age range | No of people who provided this information |
|-----------|--|
| 18-30 | 49 |
| 31-50 | 144 |
| 51-65 | 61 |
| 66+ | 27 |

7.0 What we have learnt from feedback

We continue to use this opportunity to drive the learning from feedback into a practical application in our policies and practices, continually improving the service delivery to our residents and improving our performance as a social landlord.

We acknowledge that our residents remain dissatisfied with our performance and we continue to absorb the lessons shared from complaints, tenant perception surveys and service consultations to improve our working relationships with them and change their minds.

As the landlord, we are adopting a three-pronged approach to reviewing and resolving critical cases that have been escalated through our formal complaints process and/or to external statutory bodies.

What MKCC is doing holistically

Introduction and implementation of the Landlord Directors Board to drive accountability and awareness of our responsibilities as a Housing Landlord and provide assurance to the Corporate Leadership Team.

- Directors and senior colleagues as members who are empowered to make decisions and drive the consistent achievement of Corporate Landlord responsibilities across the authority
- Escalation and decision-making board focused on studying, challenging and directing the outputs of the service areas based on the Housing management information

Introduction and implementation of Housing Complaints Board to improve visibility of critical cases, using the review process to highlight specifics and/or commonalities and provide an opportunity to reflect on lessons learnt and inform the Landlords' Board.

What MKCC is doing strategically

Bringing our service areas together to complete a critical case review for escalated complaints that have been investigated by our corporate complaints process, as well as those submitted to the Housing Ombudsman.

Using our management information, gathered through channels like complaints, tenants surveys, contractor repair reports, and business systems data, to review our relationships with our tenants and listen to what they are saying to us.

We are using it to manage expectations and improve our service delivery by doing what we have said we are going to do, when we have said so and communicating with them if anything changes. Outcomes and action tracking owned by the specific services with corporate oversight.

What MKCC is doing as an operational housing service

Adopting a customer focussed approach to re-establishing the landlord and tenant relationship. We are taking ownership of the relationship with the tenant through our Neighbourhoods team, who are responsible for managing the people-side of our landlord responsibilities.

This includes:

- Delivering the big conversation – en masse door-to-door contact with our residents, introducing our housing officers and setting the scene for engagement
- Using the tenancy audit as an opportunity to agree contractor visit dates and establish the working relationship
- Resetting the contact points for the resident, specifically with the role of the housing officer for support in the first instance, and the contractor for repairs.
- Clarifying the escalation process for the tenant and for the contractor through the landlord
- Using the tenancy agreement and our MKCC housing policies to reframe the discussions that we are having with the resident so that we are able to work together collaboratively.