

Operations Sub-Committee of Tamil Community Housing Association
Monday 12th May 2025
6.30pm

Report Title	Complaints Performance 2024/25 Performance
Agenda Item	8
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Report Type	For Approval
Date:	16 th April 2025

1. Introduction

This report provides the Operations Sub-Committee with an overview of TCHA's complaints handling performance during the 2024/2025 financial year. It details the nature of complaints, our handling processes, and areas for improvement. The aim is to ensure that complaint data informs service improvements and enhances resident satisfaction.

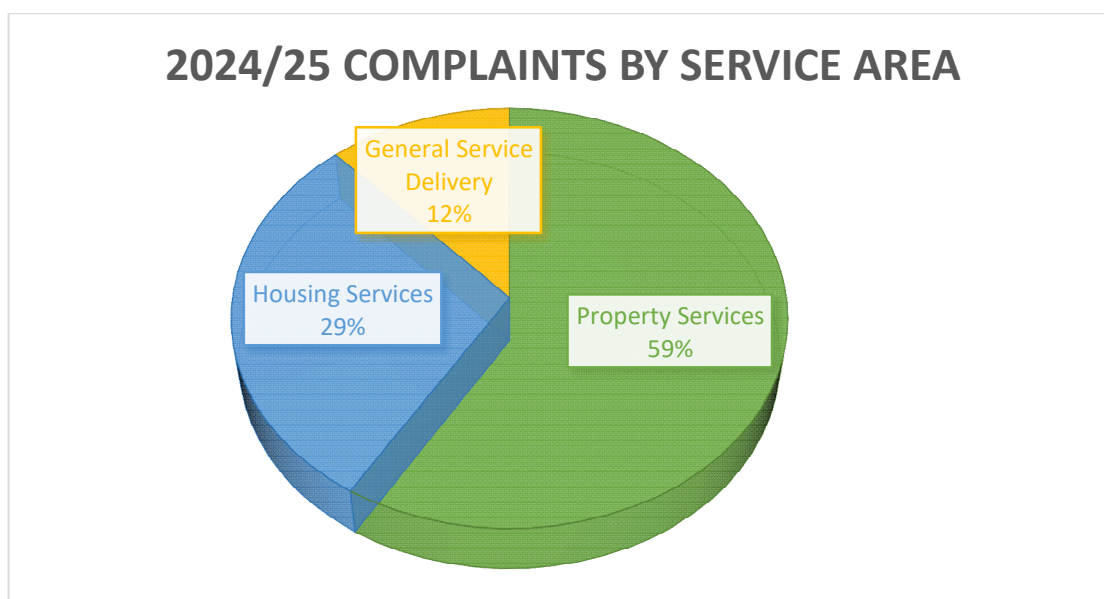
2. Key Highlights

- Total Complaints Received: 17
- *Primary Complaint Areas:*
 - Repairs and Maintenance (59%)
 - Housing Services (29%)
 - General Service Delivery (12%)
- *Complaint Resolution Stages:*
 - Stage 1: 14 (82%)
 - Stage 2: 3 (18%)
- *Complaints responded to within policy timescale: 11 out of 17 (65%)*
- *Key Complaint Themes:*
 - Delays in repairs

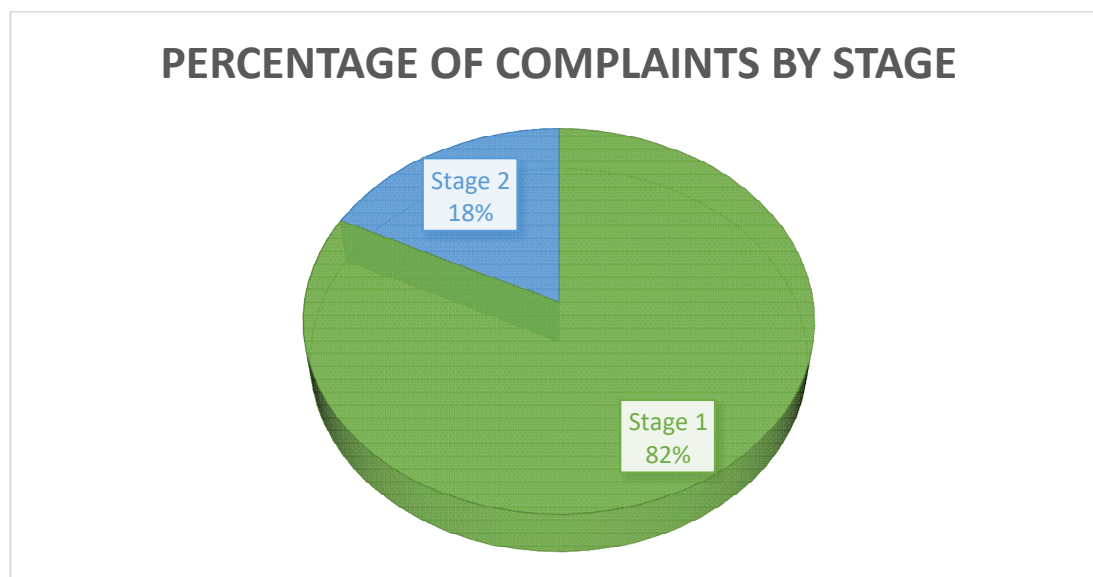
- Incomplete repairs
- Lack of communication

3. Complaints Breakdown

3.1 Complaints by Service Area



3.2 Complaints by Complaint Stage

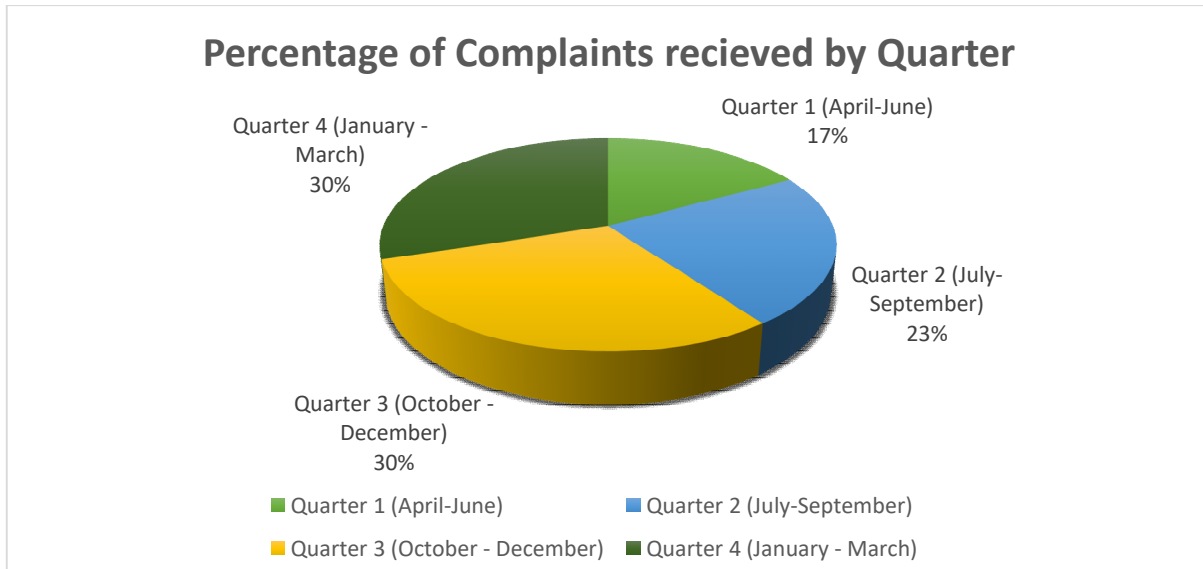


3.3 Complaints Responded to in Time

TCHA responded to 11 out of 17 complaints within the timescales stipulated in our policy (65%), with one extension granted. This is below our target of 100%.

- Reasons for overdue responses at Stage 1 included: staff vacancies, complex complaint investigations, and poor record keeping.
- Since the Senior Management Team has been in place from mid-December 2024, all complaints have been responded to within the target timescales.

3.4 Complaints by Quarter



4. Issues Raised Through Complaints

The most frequent issues raised by residents were:

- **Repairs and Maintenance:** Delays in completing repairs, lack of response to repair requests, and repairs not completed to a satisfactory standard. This is, in part, due to unsuitable contractors.
- **Communication and Customer Service:** Residents reported a general lack of communication from TCHA.

5. Compensation

For the 2024/2025 financial year, we awarded **£11,950** of compensation and reimbursements as a result of complaints received. Where a matter has been brought to our attention prior to a complaint, we have compensated in line with our Compensation and Good Will Policy.

Compensation for complaints was broken down as follows:

- **£1,000** for distress and inconvenience
- **£250** for failure to meet timescales
- **£200** for poor complaints handling
- **£10,500** for reimbursements

Of the 17 complaints received, we awarded compensation to 6 complainants. We also offered an additional two complaints compensation but these were either declined or we are awaiting a response.

6. Learning & Development

Learning from complaints is, for TCHA, one of the most valuable parts of the service improvement process. It allows us to reflect honestly on where we've fallen short, understand the reasons behind service failures, and apply those insights to strengthen our systems, culture, and customer experience. The complaints received in the past year have highlighted consistent patterns, many of which relate to how we communicate with residents, how we manage repairs, and how clearly roles and responsibilities are understood across the organisation and with our partners.

To enhance customer satisfaction, our efforts are guided by the Complaints Action Plan (Appendix A). This document sets out clear initiatives to tackle the underlying causes of complaints. Members will see how this plan addresses complaints comprehensively, strengthening accountability within the board and across the resident body.

Key lessons learned and proposed actions:

- a) **Contractor Management:** Tender for a new Repairs and Maintenance contract to improve contractor performance and oversight.
 - **Action:** Head of Property Services to lead the tender process and report progress to the Operations Sub-Committee.
 - Property Services will be tendering for a Repairs Contract which will allow them to closely monitor contractor performance. This is being introduced as a specific KPI at contract meetings going forward and contractors will be asked to report on their performance against this. The goal is to find a contractor who is an extension of TCHA; holds to our values and customer service standards. Part of our learning is understanding that there are additional services that could have been identified or provided by the contractors who attend, or escalated to TCHA for formal intervention.
- b) **Communication and Customer Service:** One of the most common challenges raised by residents has been around communication. In too many cases, residents were left waiting for updates about repairs or decisions, and in some instances, they felt forgotten entirely. These communication breakdowns not only undermine trust but also escalate situations unnecessarily. We need to ensure that all staff understand the importance of maintaining contact, even when there is no new progress to report. Silence creates frustration, a quick call or email to say "we're still working on this" can go a long way in maintaining resident confidence. We've agreed that all teams must reinforce the habit of keeping cases open and active until resolution, and making sure that each repair or issue is visibly assigned to a responsible officer.

- **Action:** Include customer service training in the 2025/26 plan.
- Customer Service is the cornerstone of our organisation and there is a clear gap in how we handle resident enquiries. There is an opportunity to equip our staff with problem solving skills, trauma informed practices, conflict resolution and de-escalation skills. Once equipped with these, we should see a turnaround in some of our complaint of this nature.
- We have upgraded our Housing IT system and the new system allows for far easier communication management. As part of the upgrade, we included comprehensive training for all staff, including recording conversations on the system so there is a clear communications record for resident contact. This will reduce the likelihood of requests being missed or 'lost in the system'. Senior Management will be monitoring this closely and will look to see how we can further enhance this aspect of the system.
- We will review our mission, vision, values and behaviours during 2025/26 and ensure that our culture and behaviours reflect our aim to communicate, well and clearly with residents and stakeholders.
- c) **Repairs Monitoring:** Another significant learning has come from the way we manage repair responsibilities. Several complaints revealed a lack of clarity between what the resident is responsible for and what falls under TCHA's remit. In some cases, the properties involved were managed by third-party landlords or freeholders, adding further confusion. It's become clear that tenancy agreements, leases, and internal repair guidance need to be reviewed and simplified, so that all staff, and residents, are confident in understanding who is accountable for specific types of repair.
- We're now developing a responsibility matrix and will ensure that it's embedded within our team processes and made available to residents.
- Property Services will monitor repairs performance to keep an overview of jobs that are likely to go out of time and to proactively manage this. There may be times when this is unavoidable and where this happens, the team will make sure the resident is kept updated and knows when they should expect the work to be done.
- d) **Post-Repair Inspections:** Contractor performance has also featured heavily in complaint cases. Some residents have experienced missed appointments, delays in completing works, or poor communication from contractors, particularly out-of-hours services. While it is expected that contractors occasionally face resourcing or scheduling challenges, we must have robust performance management systems in place to detect these early and act decisively.
- We are introducing tighter KPIs in our contracts and have begun reviewing our OOH provision with a view to re-tendering the service. It's also essential that staff understand how to escalate contractor issues internally so that early intervention can prevent issues from developing into formal complaints.

- Ensuring that repairs are completed to a high standard is another learning from our complaints assessment. We need contractors to make sure that all repairs are completed efficiently and to a standard that meets our expectations, and are post inspected where possible. Where a post inspection is not possible, we ask our contractor to take pre and post repair photographs of the repair. In all cases, the resident must be contacted by the TCHA team once the repair is completed to make sure they are happy with the outcome.
- e) **Managing Expectations:** Stock condition and the way we manage resident expectations around long-term works was another key theme. In one particular case, dissatisfaction arose from confusion about a kitchen replacement that had been promised but never scheduled. This highlighted the importance of maintaining accurate asset data and ensuring residents receive realistic and honest timelines for improvement works. We need to be transparent about our priorities, and where works are not due for some time, explain clearly why that is and what residents can expect in the interim.
- f) **"Lessons Learned" Clarification:**
- All managers to make sure they fully understand what 'lessons learned' are and mean. A lessons learned will be an analysis of why we failed, for example, to respond to the repair request, and what needs to change to make sure we do respond to the repair request in future.
- g) **Complaint Handling and Lessons Learned:** Finally, the way we handle complaints themselves needs ongoing attention. In some cases, complaints were held open while waiting for repairs to be completed, and staff hesitated to respond formally without full resolution. We must separate the complaint process from the repair process, residents deserve a timely, well-explained response even if the physical works are still underway. At the same time, once a repair is completed, residents should be contacted to ensure they are satisfied with the outcome and that any concerns are followed up. Complaint cases should always end with a clear reflection, what did we learn, what went wrong, and what will we change as a result?
- To support these improvements, several key steps are being taken. All staff will receive refresher training in complaints handling, case ownership, and resident communication. Property Services staff will also receive additional training in contract management and landlord and residents responsibilities. We are introducing a centralised Lessons Learned Register to log issues, track follow-up actions, and enable quarterly reviews by the Senior Management Team. Where policies or procedures are shown to be unclear or insufficient, they will be reviewed and updated promptly, with clear communication to all staff.
 - Our focus is now on embedding these lessons into the day-to-day running of services, so they don't just remain reactive responses to complaints but become proactive safeguards against them. With stronger systems, greater clarity, and more consistent

communication, we aim to reduce complaints and improve the experience of every resident we serve.

- All managers make sure that every complaint they handle is managed correctly and that they take time to consider the lessons learned from the complaint. They must make sure these are clearly articulated and communicated to the Housing assistant, so they are captured accurately, and shared with staff, to make sure lessons are learned, and with the wider management team to share good practice. Where policies or procedures need to be updated following a complaint, this is carried out and completed as quickly as possible.

h) **Complaints Handling Training:**

- Staff to have ongoing Complaints Handling training to remind staff of the TCHA's timescales for the various types of complaint, along with an emphasis on the importance of logging and learning from complaints.

i) **Complaints Management:**

- To ensure that complaints are taken seriously at all levels, all stage 1 complaints are investigated and managed by a head of service, and all stage 2 complaints are investigated and managed by the Chief Executive. The Housing Assistant provides administrative support for managers.
- It is expected that in all cases, management will meet and/or speak with the complainant to fully understand their complaint and discuss and agree a suitable resolution.
- Managers are expected to monitor complaints until all actions agreed to resolve a complaint and check back with the complainant to make sure actions taken have addressed the issues raised
- TCHA holds a monthly complaints review meeting, chaired by the Chief Executive, to provide clear focus to this area.
- TCHA have appointed a Board Member Responsible for Complaints and drafted a Terms of Reference for this role. During 2025/26 we will work to embed this role within our service to ensure it has the right impact and provides enhanced reassurance to the Board.

7. Interaction with the Housing Ombudsman Service

Over the past year, the Housing Ombudsman has advised us that they are carrying out investigations into two cases. Both of these relate to complaints raised in the previous financial year. In both cases, TCHA have worked with the Ombudsman to provide the required information to enable them to complete their investigations. We are awaiting the outcome of one case, and have just been contacted about the second case, where the resident decided to withdraw their complaint, and TCHA have been advised as follows:

My Decision

I have carefully assessed the evidence provided by both parties and decided to accept the resident's withdrawal. I have made this decision based on the following considerations:

- 1. The risk posed by any outstanding issues, which I deem to be low in view of the resident's report that the repair completed in August 2024 remains effective at this time.*
- 2. The landlord's response to the resident's complaints, in which the landlord has provided an offer of compensation which appears to be evidence-based, and which was made in consideration of the likely adverse effect to the resident caused by the landlord's handling of the leak.*
- 3. That I have not identified a significant need for any wider learning. This was based on the landlord's complaint responses and in consideration of other evidence provided, such as internal correspondence and correspondence with the landlord's contractors.*
- 4. That I did not identify any wider issues, or failings which merit further investigation at this time.*

This is a positive result and reflects well on the actions we took last year to address this during the Housing Ombudsman's investigations.

In addition to the two investigations, the Ombudsman has also contacted TCHA on five occasions to raise concerns about issues raised directly with the Ombudsman by residents. In all cases the Ombudsman has asked TCHA to treat the matter as a stage 1 complaint and to provide the Ombudsman with a copy of our response. This work was completed in all cases.

8. Customer Satisfaction

Once a response has been sent to the complainant, within 28 days we contact them to understand their satisfaction with the process and the resolution that was offered. If the resident is satisfied then we will close the complaint.

Last year only 50% of the complainants were satisfied with the outcome of their complaints and 50% were dissatisfied with the outcome. The main reasons for the dissatisfaction were the time taken to resolve their complaints and the general lack of follow up to check that work orders have been completed.

This is disheartening to hear, but we recognise we need to make step change improvements to address this. This is reflected in the lessons learned above where managers will make sure, in every case, that they contact the resident to ensure they are happy with their repair, or what we've agreed to do with their complaint. This should be done before the satisfaction survey, and we expect the satisfaction result to significantly improve next year.

Our aim is to put things right for residents when things have gone wrong and TCHA will be expecting the resident to have received the highest quality of customer service in how their complaint was handled, from taking the complaint to the resolution.

9. Board Member Responsible for Complaints

At its last meeting the Board elected Charline McGrowder as its Board Member Responsible For Complaints. The CEO has worked with Charline to agree the Terms of Reference for the role, which is before the board for approval at this meeting. The CEO and SMT look forward to working with Charline to review complaints management and provide added reassurance that TCHA is getting this right.

10. Approval of Report

10.1 Members are asked to Approve this report.

11. Conclusion

The way TCHA responds to and manages complaints is an important indicator of our success as a social landlord, not only in the eyes of regulators, but also in the eyes of our residents. It links to our behaviours and values and reflects our ability to listen and learn from our residents' concerns, acting fairly and promptly, apologising when we get things wrong, and learning from mistakes. Complaints reporting and monitoring is now a key area of focus for TCHA and is robustly monitored internally.

Whilst TCHA are still implementing best practice when it comes to complaints, we have made some progress in this area, and over the course of the year have brought our response times in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code. There were several clear themes running through the complaints and these need to be clearly understood and these growth opportunities need to be monitored to make sure they are effective and mistakes are not repeated. This is an ongoing piece of work, and the committee should expect to see an improvement this coming year.