



Hillcrest Annual Complaints Report 2025/26

This document can be produced in different formats, for example, in larger print or audio format, and in other languages, as appropriate. We promote equality through seeking to eliminate unlawful and unfair forms of discrimination, as appropriate.



Hillcrest

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Foreword

Welcome to Hillcrest's Annual Complaints Report

At Hillcrest, we exist to serve our customers and communities well and that means being prepared to listen when we fall short, respond appropriately, and learn from every experience shared with us.

Complaints are an important part of that process. They give us honest insight into where we need to improve, where our systems or processes may not be working as they should, and where we must do better. Just as importantly, they also help shape the changes we make as an organisation.

This year, we received a higher number of complaints overall. While that tells us there is more work to do, it is encouraging that our average complaint resolution time reduced, even as demand increased. We also continued to identify meaningful learning from complaints, leading to improvements in our procedures and systems that will strengthen the service we provide in future.

I am equally pleased that we received more compliments from customers this year, recognition of the dedication, professionalism and care shown every day by colleagues across Hillcrest.

As Chief Executive, I am clear that how we handle complaints matters. It is a reflection of our culture, our accountability, and our commitment to continuous improvement. We will continue to listen, learn and act, always with the aim of delivering better outcomes for the people and communities we serve.



John Alexander
Hillcrest Chief Executive



Our mission, objectives and values

Our mission

Helping people live better lives.

Our objectives

- Build and maintain inclusive, sustainable and energy efficient homes at affordable rents;
- Work in partnership to create fairer communities;
- Deliver consistent, person centred support that enables people to fulfil their potential;
- Transition to a net zero organisation;
- Attract and retain an engaged, empathetic and skilled workforce providing excellent customer service.

Our key values



Inclusion

We listen to others points of view, learn from best practice and engage with our customers and communities as we recognise we are stronger and can contribute more if we have shared goals and collective efforts.



Respect

We value our staff and customers and empower them in a positive way to participate, to adapt and to be inspired to take ownership and make positive change.



Excellence

We are ambitious for what our organisation and customers can achieve and strive to deliver the highest quality and value possible.



Innovation

We look for new ways of solving problems, strive for continuous reflection and improvement and promote others to do the same.

Performance: Overview at a glance

Our complaints performance targets are guided by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). We aim to complete:

- Stage 1 complaints in 5 working days.
- Stage 2 complaints in 20 working days.

Below is a snapshot of our performance over the past year:



We received **1058**
Stage 1 complaints



Of all Stage 1 complaints
received, we upheld
38% of them



We completed our Stage 1
complaints in an average of
2.8 days



We completed **91%**
Stage 1 complaints within
the agreed timescales



We received **30**
Stage 2 complaints



Of all Stage 2 complaints
received, we upheld
40% of them



We completed our Stage 2
complaints in an average of
16 days

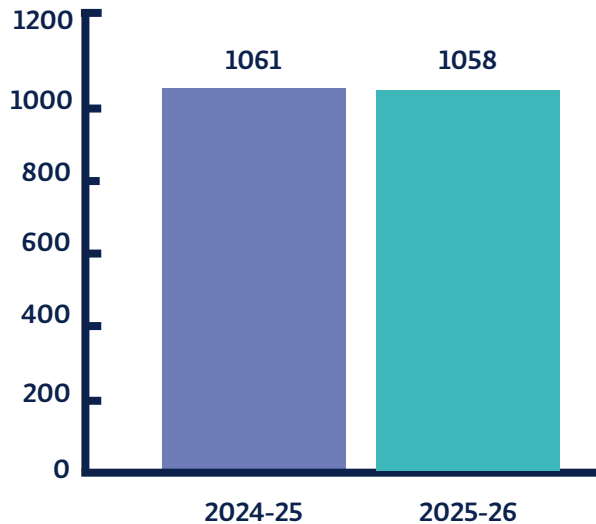


We completed **100%**
Stage 2 complaints within
the agreed timescales

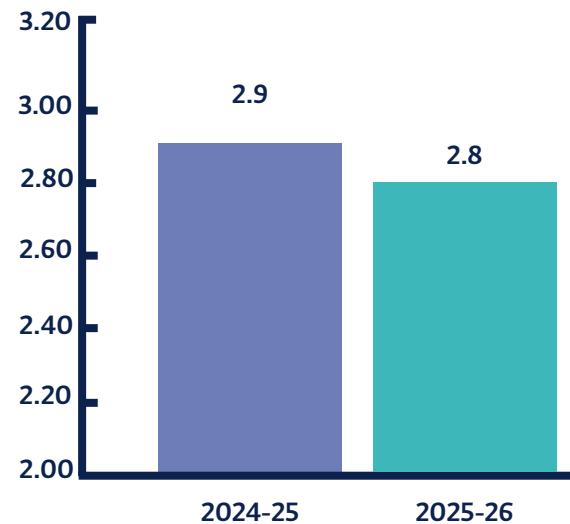
Performance: Comparison

In this section, we compare this year's results with those from last year. Comparing figures helps us understand how well we are doing and where we can improve our service:

Number of Stage 1 complaints received

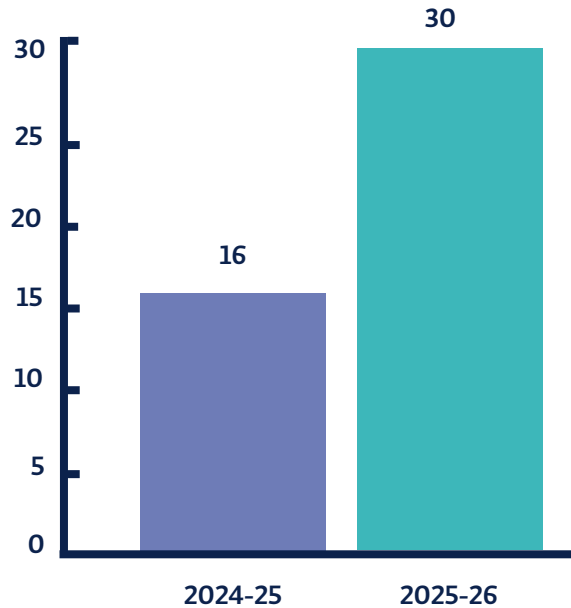


Numbers of days to complete Stage 1 complaints

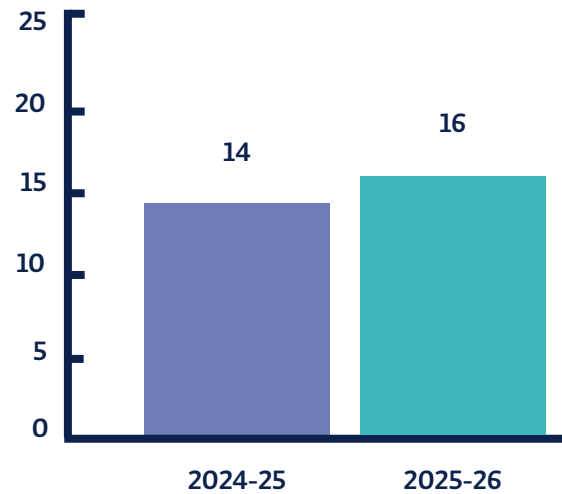


The charts above show we received less Stage 1 complaints during 2025-26. Our average time to complete these complaints was also lower.

Number of Stage 2 complaints received



Numbers of days to complete Stage 2 complaints



For Stage 2 complaints, we received almost twice as many as in the previous year. Of the 30 Stage 2 complaints received, 27 were escalated from Stage 1. This shows that our customers are making effective use of our complaints process to raise concerns where they feel issues have not been fully resolved. Further analysis of Stage 1 outcomes will help us understand the reasons for escalation and identify any areas for improvement.

Our average time to complete Stage 2 complaints was slightly higher than last year, however we continue to meet the SPSO's target of 20 working days.

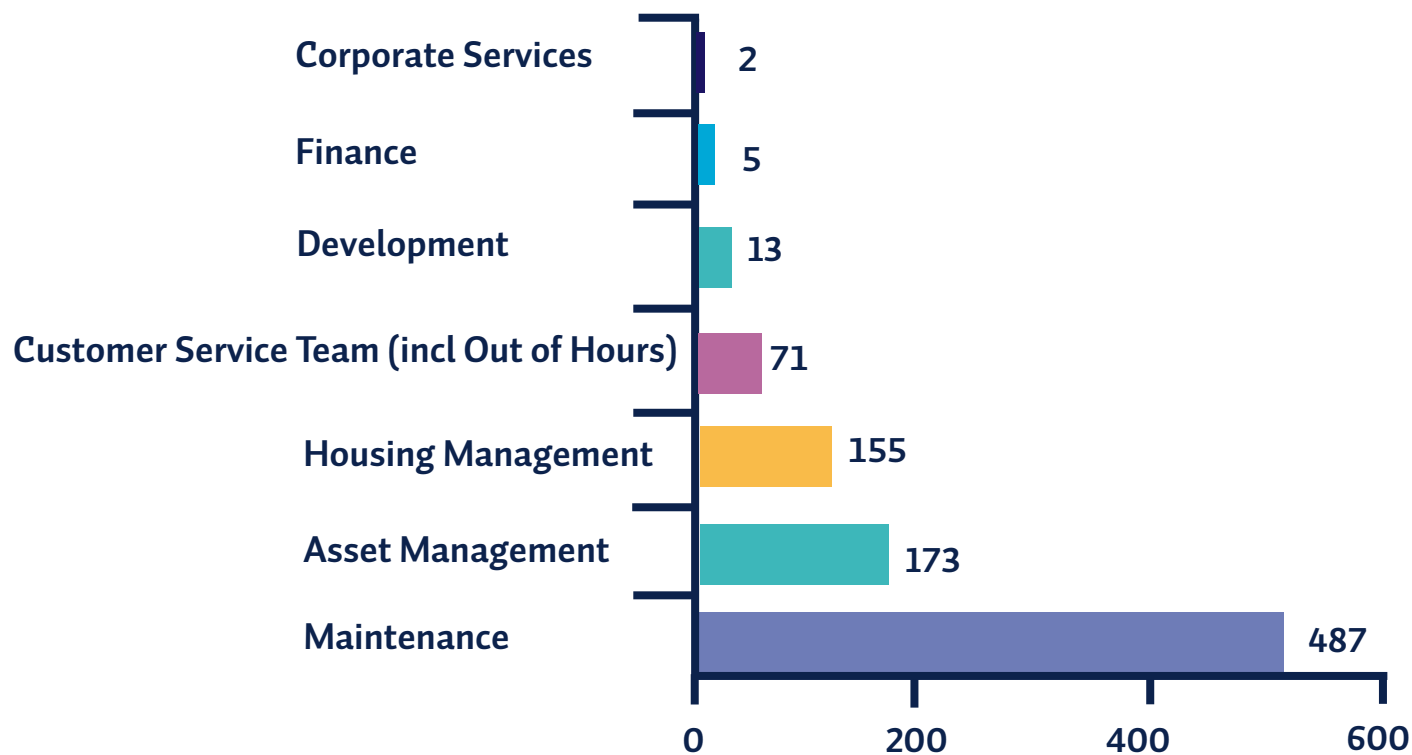
Performance: Analysis

In this section, we analyse the number of complaints received for each service area during 2025/26, the complaint outcomes, and their root causes.

Service areas:

The bar chart below shows the number of stage 1 complaints received against each of our service areas for Hillcrest Homes during 2025/26.

Stage 1 - Hillcrest Homes

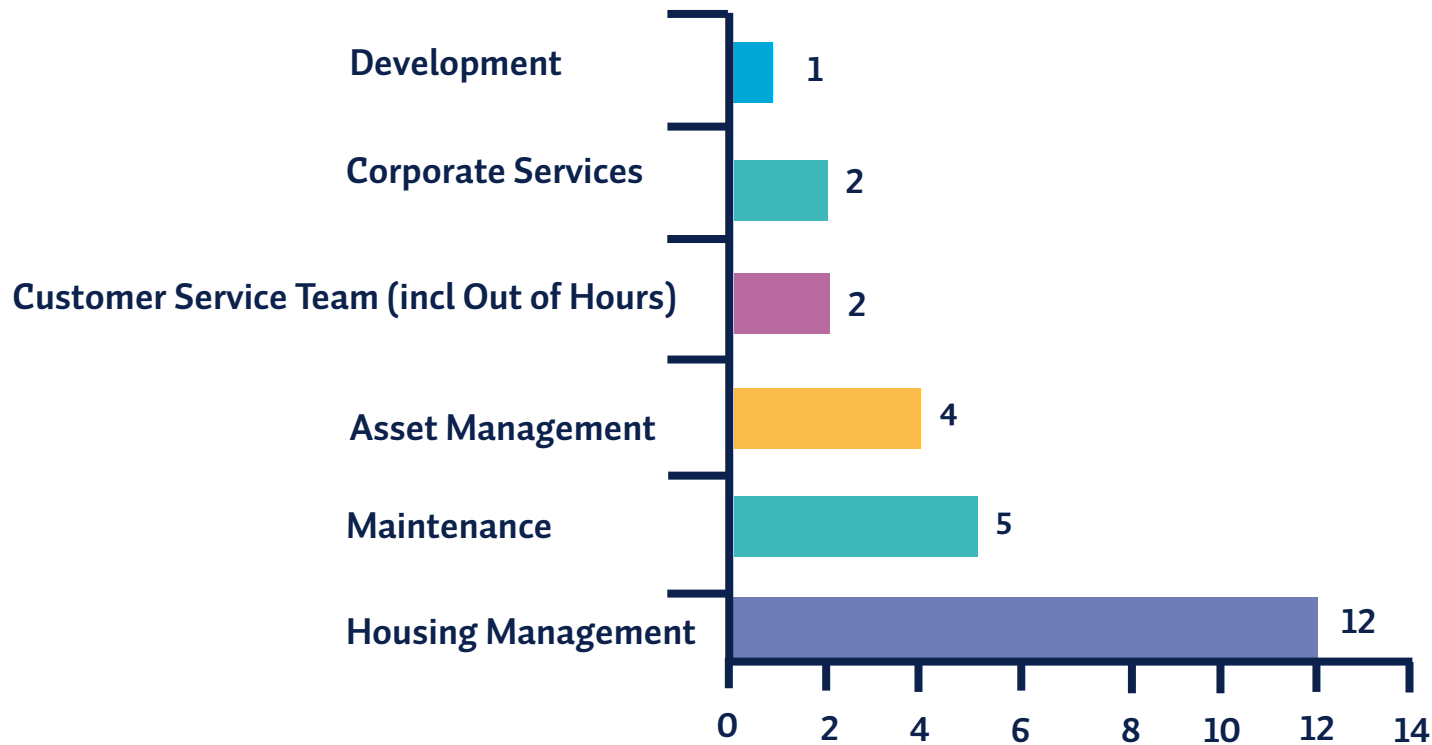


Our Maintenance department is responsible for the largest of our service areas, including reactive repairs, planned maintenance, cleaning, and gas safety checks. Maintenance received just under half (46%) of Stage 1 complaints during 2025/26. This figure is consistent with last year's report and within the housing sector.

The service areas for Hillcrest Homes Stage 2 complaints tell a different story. The bar chart below shows we continue to record the largest amount of Stage 2 complaints against Housing Management.

Housing Management covers a range of functions including income management, tenancy administration and tenancy support services.

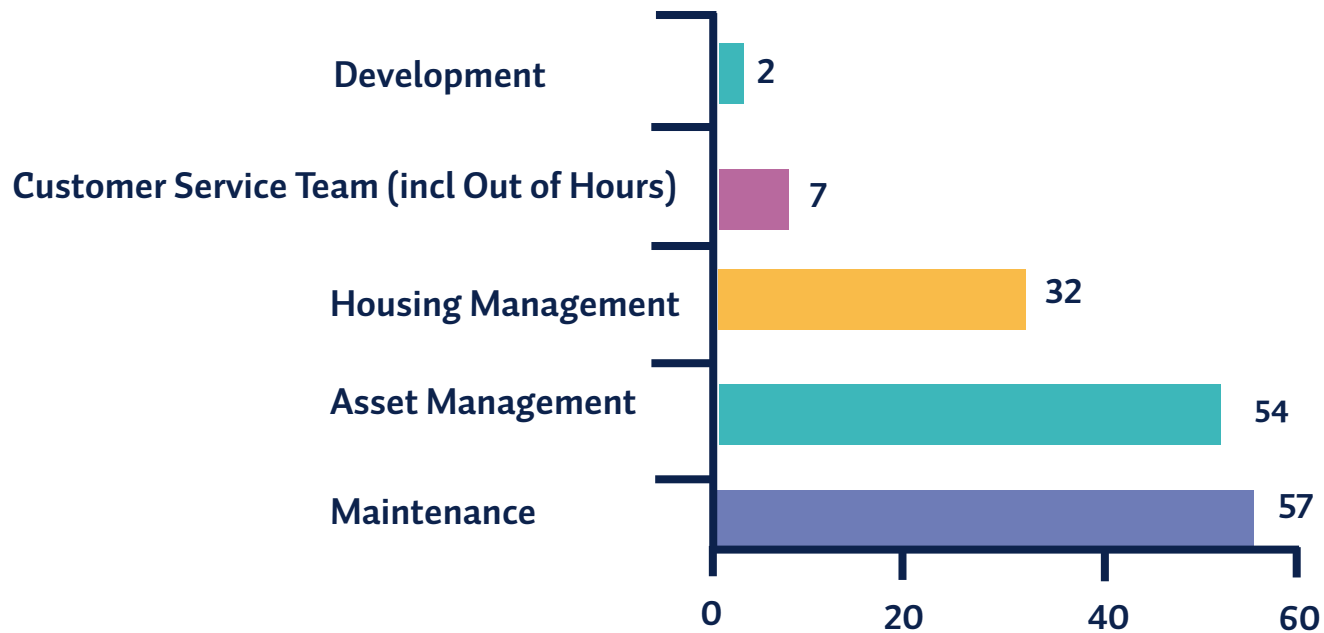
Stage 2 - Hillcrest Homes



The bar chart below shows the number of Stage 1 complaints received against each of our service areas for Hillcrest Enterprises during 2025/26.

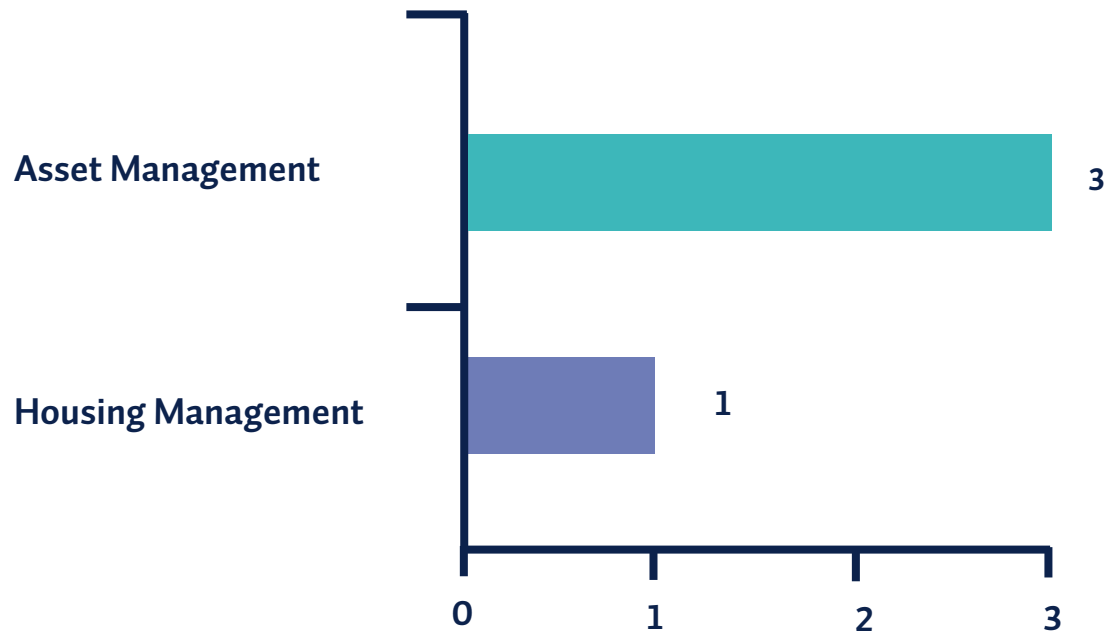
Like the results for Hillcrest Homes, the largest number of Stage 1 complaints for Hillcrest Enterprises were in relation to Maintenance.

Stage 1 - Hillcrest Enterprises



The bar chart below shows that most Stage 2 complaints for Hillcrest Enterprises were recorded against Asset Management, an area who deliver services related to the maintenance, improvement and sustainability of our housing stock and buildings.

Stage 2 - Hillcrest Enterprises

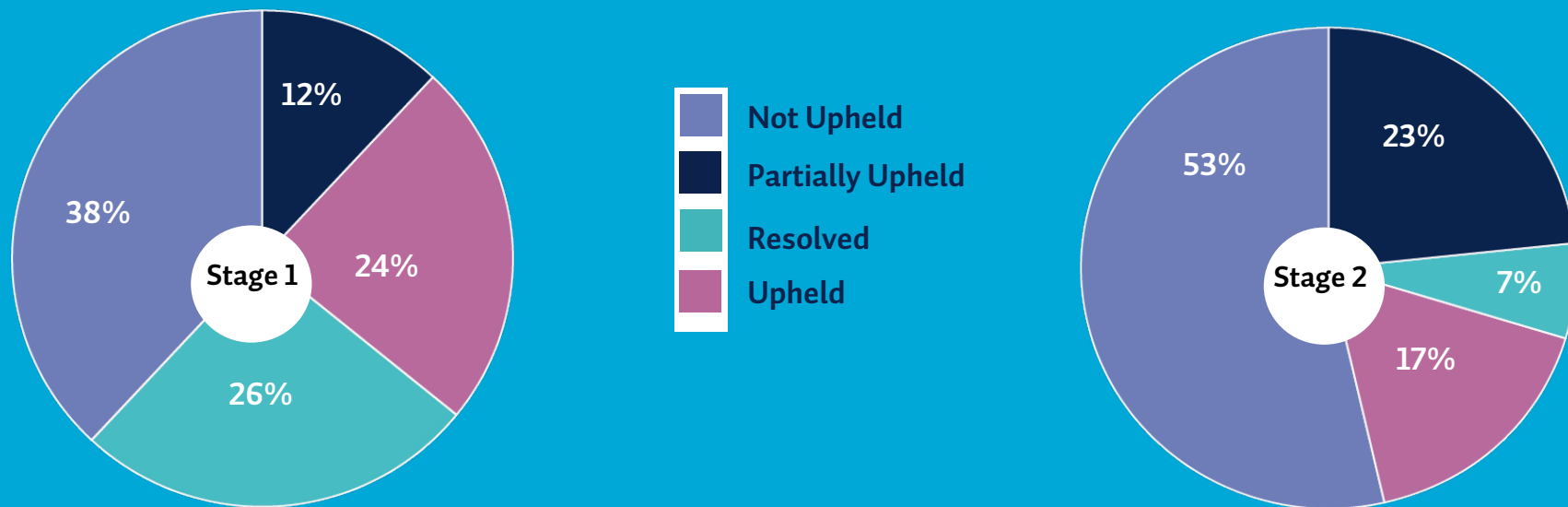


Complaint Outcomes

Stage 1 and 2 complaints have four potential outcomes:

- Upheld: We have been at fault
- Not Upheld: We have not been at fault
- Partially Upheld: We have been at fault for part of the complaint
- Resolved: Both parties have agreed actions to resolve the complaint, without the need for a full investigation or outcome.

The pie charts below show the outcomes for all Stage 1 and 2 complaints completed in 2025/26.

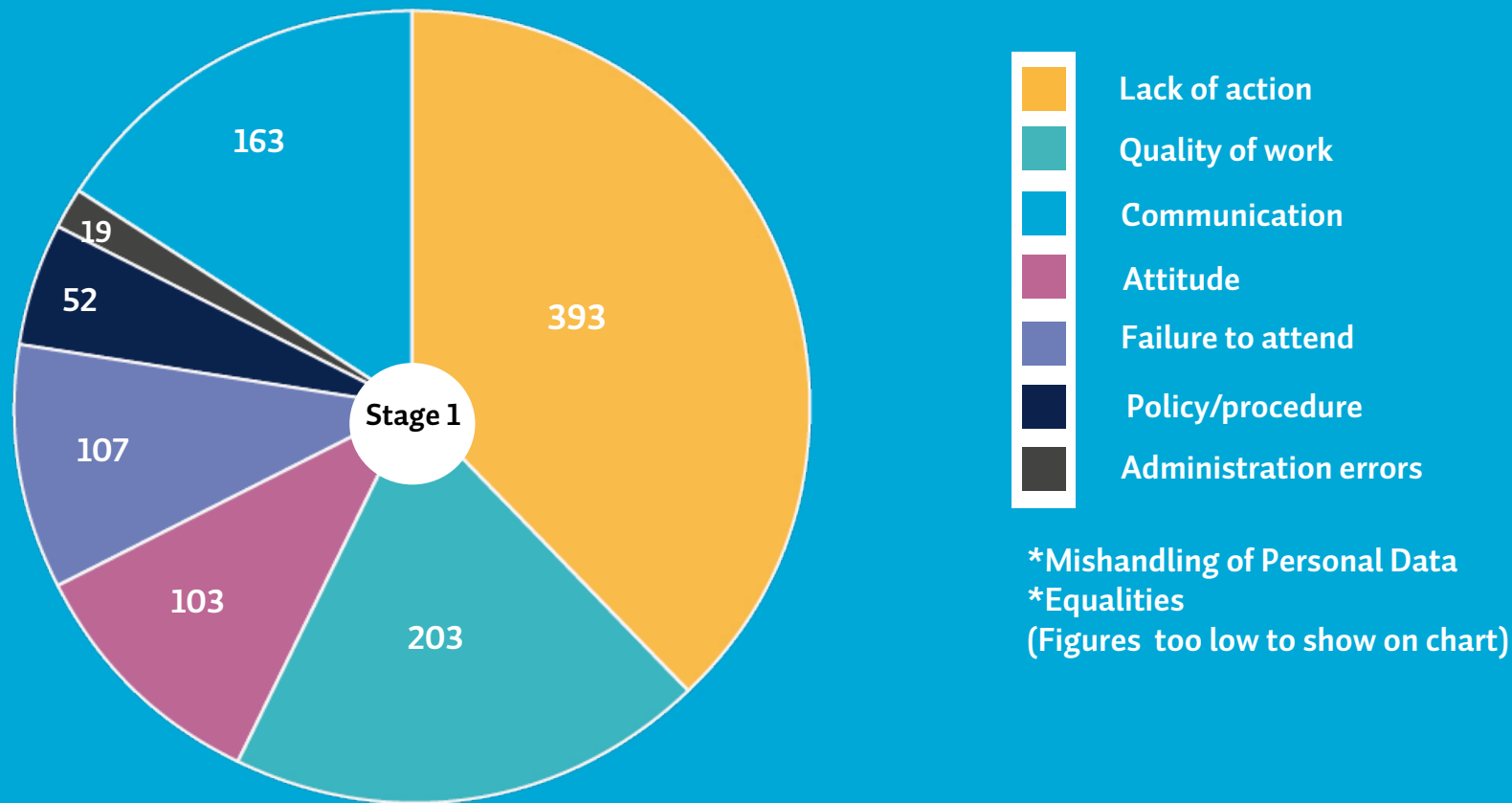


For reporting purposes, Hillcrest consider 'Partially Upheld' complaints to be the same as 'Upheld'. On that basis, 38% of Stage 1 and 40% of Stage 2 complaints were upheld last year. A total of 3% of Stage 1 complaints were escalated to Stage 2. We managed to seek resolution for 7% of our Stage 2 complaints, where the tenant was happy with the action taken.

Root causes of complaints

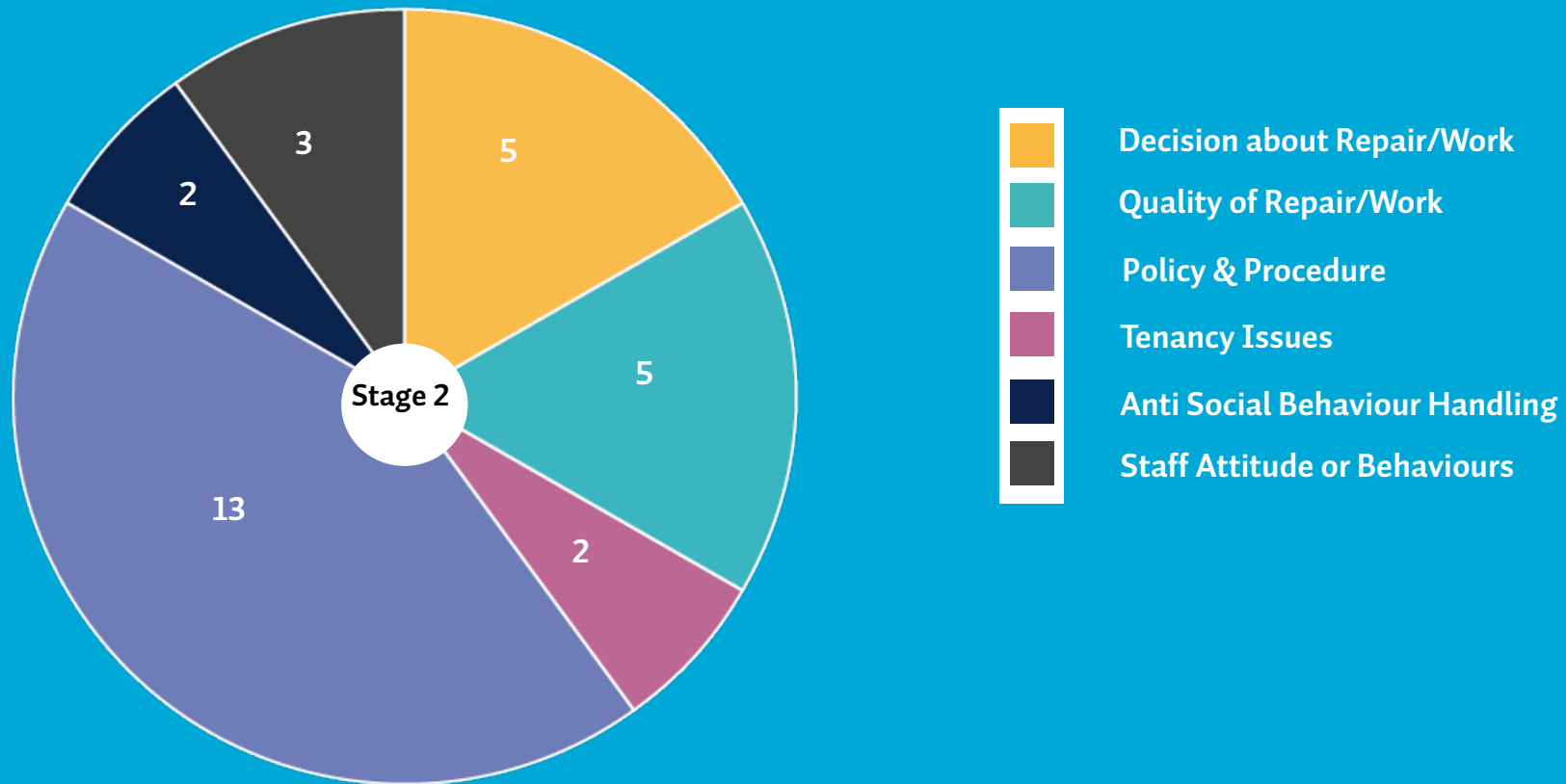
The following pie charts show the root causes of the complaints we received last year. Understanding the root cause of complaints helps us identify what went wrong, address underlying issues and reduce the risk of similar problems affecting our customers in the future.

The pie chart below shows the highest root cause of Stage 1 complaints was 'Lack of Action'. Many of these were related to repairs and maintenance. This is consistent with last year's report, and we have identified areas where we can improve our customers' experience.



The pie chart below shows similar results to last year, with 'Policy & Procedure' as the highest root cause of our Stage 2 complaints. Complaints about our policies and procedures offer opportunities for us to review whether they continue to meet the needs of Hillcrest and our customers.

As a result, we have made updates to some of our policies and procedures and have included one of our recent changes on page 20.



Our Customers: Compliments

We are delighted to have received more compliments during 2025/26 compared with the previous year. Of the 1,506 compliments received from our customers, most were captured through our post-repair surveys.

Compliments from our customers mean so much to us. They help us ensure our staff are recognised and rewarded for going above and beyond. Here are some of the compliments we received the last year:

“Extremely swift attendance, explaining what was wrong and what was happening next... job was completed very quickly. No mess. Very competent”.

“Top class service, great communication... very informative and caring while organising everything. Thank you again Team Hillcrest”.

“One of the kindest and most helpful people I’ve met... It’s so rare to come across someone who genuinely cares and takes pride in their work”.

“Every member of staff was friendly, professional, and extremely helpful, and the work was carried out quickly and with care. I am very pleased with the support I’ve received from Hillcrest and feel reassured and impressed by how smoothly everything was handled”.

“I truly appreciate the effort and dedication of your team in ensuring that all services are provided efficiently and promptly. Your commitment does not go unnoticed, and it is greatly valued”.

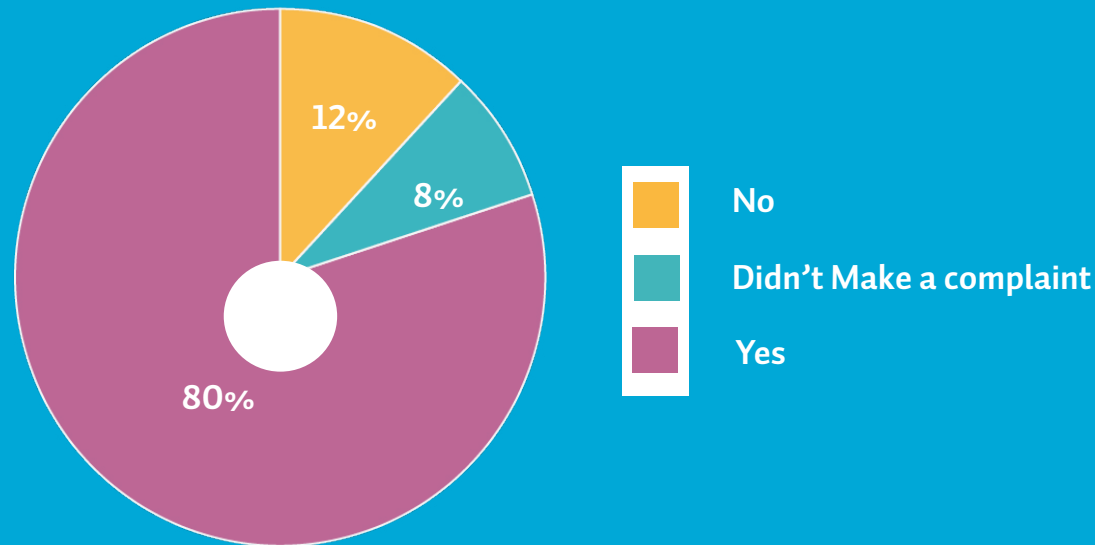
Our Customers: Satisfaction

Since launching our automated satisfaction survey in May 2024, customer feedback has played a key role in helping us learn from their experiences and strengthen our handling of Stage 1 complaints.

Last year, we achieved a 21% response rate from the surveys issued. Although this is a slight decrease from the previous year, we have taken the opportunity to refresh our survey questions to encourage higher participation and capture even more meaningful customer insight in the future.

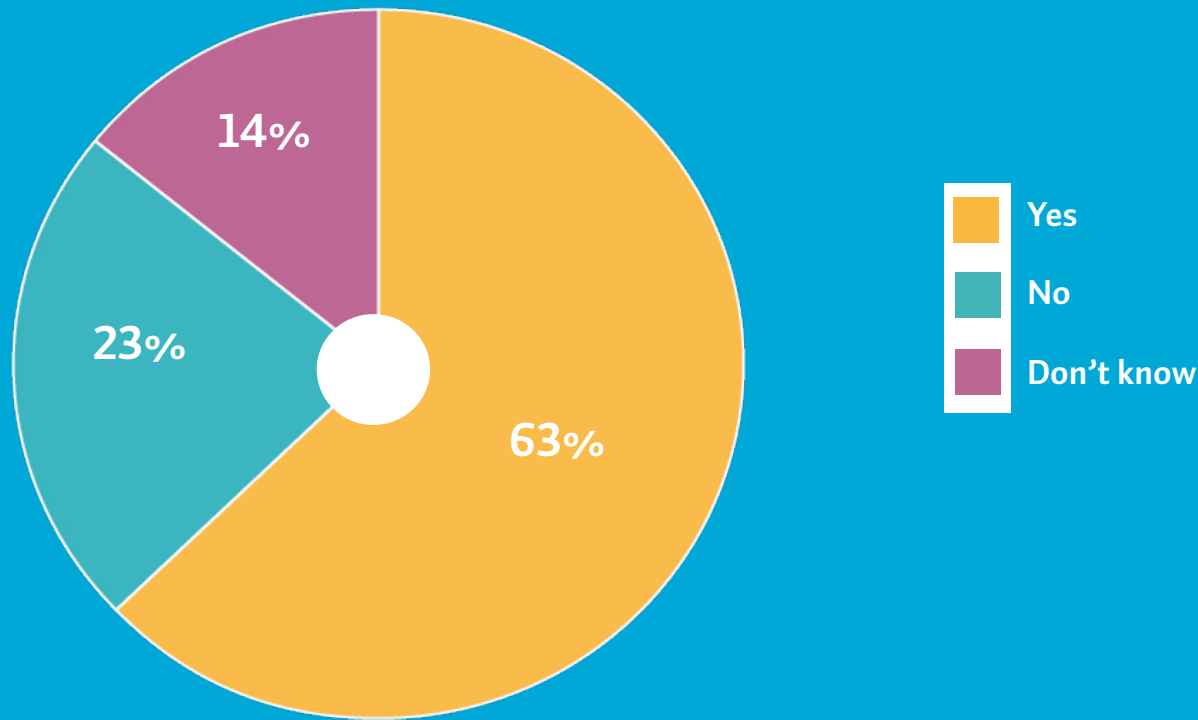
Here are the results for 2025/26:

Was it easy to make a complaint?



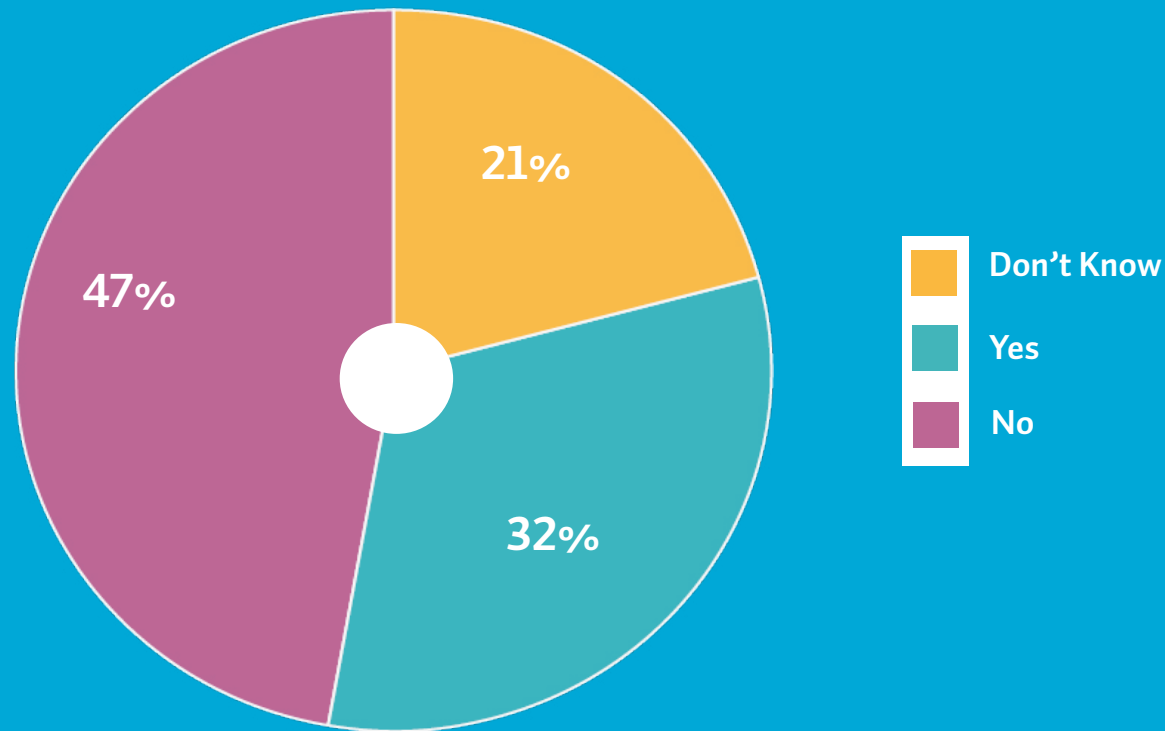
We record any level of dissatisfaction with a service we provide as a complaint. In line with last year, the above chart shows that a high percentage of customers felt it was easy to make a complaint. We are pleased to report that it also shows a drop in the number who said it was not easy or that they did not make a complaint. These figures show we have made improvements in how we log and communicate our complaints process to our customers.

Was the complaint responded to in time?



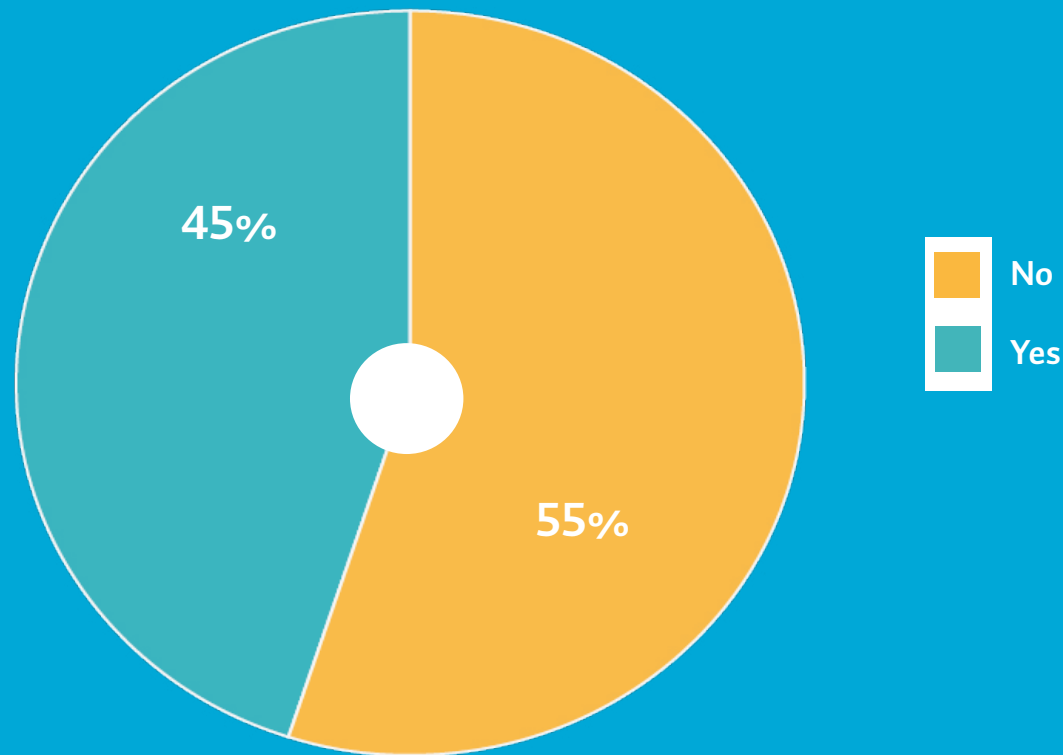
The above chart shows that 63% of our customers felt their complaint was responded to on time. While this is a slight increase from last year, it does not align with our evidence that shows we completed 91% of Stage 1 complaints on time. We will review how we can make sure our customers are aware of the 5 working day timescale for Stage 1 complaints.

Do you feel your complaint was investigated thoroughly and fairly, taking your views into account?



The above chart shows that only 32% of those making a complaint felt it was investigated thoroughly and fairly, taking their views into account. When customers respond “No” to this question, we ask a follow up question to understand the reasons behind their response. This feedback provides valuable insight that helps us learn from their experience and improve how we handle complaints.

Did we explain the outcome of your complaint?



The above chart shows that 55% of those who made a complaint to us did not understand the outcome of their complaint. While this result is disappointing, we have reminded staff of the importance of fully explaining the outcome of the complaint and checking their customer understands this.

Our Customers: Case studies

We would like to share with you some of the Stage 2 complaints we handled during the last year. These do not contain any personal information of those involved.

Case Study 1

Summary of Complaint

Our tenant complained about a recurring leak of water into their top-floor flat. They felt we hadn't taken appropriate action and that their home was not fit to live in.

Findings

The leak of water was a symptom of a larger issue with the roof of the building. At the time of the complaint, work to replace the roof had been delayed, but we had stopped the leak and carried out a damp and mould assessment.

Conclusion

The complaint was partially upheld. We agreed the tenant had repeated instances of leaks into their property. However, we had taken appropriate action each time an issue was reported.

Whilst we sympathised with their situation, our damp and mould assessment found nothing to suggest their home was not fit to live in.

Case Study 2

Summary of Complaint

We received a complaint that one resident in a shared-ownership building had not paid their share of maintenance costs.

Findings

Through our investigation, we discovered our previous advice to the other shared owners had been incorrect. As a direct result of the complaint, we created a new procedure to support and guide staff with shared ownership queries. We also developed a new page on our website with advice and information for shared owners.

Conclusion

The complaint was upheld. We explained our findings and the actions we would take to help improve our service for shared owners.

Driving Improvements

We continually look for ways in which we can improve how we handle complaints.

We monitor and review our complaints performance to identify trends, reduce repeat complaints, and apply learning to improve our complaint handling.

Last year, we created 25 learning actions from our stage 2 complaints. These actions included producing new guidance for staff and customers and updating our internal procedures and systems.

Our Complaints Review Group continue to meet and discuss complaints and any associated concerns. Attendees of this group are regularly reviewed to ensure we have the right people to support all areas of our business in complaint handling best practice.



Lesley Don
Director of Corporate
Services



Kirsteen Beeching
Customer Services
Manager



Denise Boland
Customer Complaints
Officer



Bruce Leslie
Contracts Manager



Derek Reid
Operations Manager



David Anderson
Senior Contracts Manager



Russel Gray
Operations Manager



Craig Brown
Operations Manager



Cristeen Fraser
Operations Manager



Craig Farnan
Operations Manager

Learning from complaints

We see complaints as an opportunity to identify areas where our services have fallen short and make changes that lead to better outcomes for our customers. Here are some of the improvements we have made as a direct result of stage 1 and stage 2 complaints during 2025/26.

We discovered a tenant owned too many pets for the size of their property and needed our help.

We created a guide to support tenants and staff when a pet needs to be rehomed.

We did not take effective action to eliminate an unpleasant smell in a tenant's property.

We created a new process for dealing with lingering smells.

After a complaint about use of parking spaces, we identified a need for clearer guidance for tenants.

We updated our vehicles leaflet with information and advice about parking issues.

Our tenant expressed difficulty with communication.

We have updated our systems to allow our tenant's communication preferences to be clearly noted.

What's next?

We are continuously striving to improve our complaints handling process. Here is what we have planned for the coming year:

We are developing an eLearning course to guide and support staff who investigate stage 2 complaints. We aim to launch this later this year.



Our existing 'Unacceptable Behaviour Procedure' will be updated and renamed 'Respectful Engagement', reflecting our approach to support everyone engaging with us to do so positively.



Our internal stage 1 complaints training will be updated to include a new section on Child Friendly Complaints.



We will introduce an improved tracking process for follow up actions to stage 1 complaints.



We will include regular communications to staff through our weekly bulletins about good complaint handling.