

Cornerstone Housing Limited

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| Report title | Complaints review 2025 |
| Board or committee | Board |
| Status | For comment |
| Summary | This report shows complaints data 2024/25. |
| Recommendations: | The board is asked to comment on the complaints performance. |
| Effect on risk assessment: | Risk 8 - Inadequate and ineffective customer service and/or engagement. Risk 2 – legal and regulatory – it is a requirement to complete the housing ombudsman self assessment and publish it alongside an annual report |
| Specific impacts for customers: | Responding to complaints in a timely manner is important to build resident trust. |
| Customer voice – where is it heard in the report? | Complaints are generally from tenants and the themes provide useful feedback on services |
| Equality, diversity & inclusion implications | Listening and acting upon a range of views will ensure that all customers, whatever their demographic, receive good service. |
| Environmental impact | No direct impact but complaint themes could include environmental issues |
| Resources and VFM | Resources are required for compensation and to rectify issues. VFM is sought through making improvements to services. |
| Report compiled by | Nicky Hallam |
| Date | 28 th May 2025 |

1. Introduction

1.1 The following is an annual report on complaints including:

- Improvements introduced in the last year
- Number of complaints and related KPIs
- Themes
- Self-assessment
- Non-compliance areas
- Actions

2. Background

- 2.1 In April 2024 the new CRM system was introduced. The first module to be implemented was complaints. This was due to the previous year's performance being below standard.
- 2.2 The aim with the system was that all complaints would be held in one place with greater capacity to monitor and run reports.
- 2.3 The system was set up to monitor against the 5 day target for acknowledgement, and 10 and 20 days for stage one and stage two respectively.
- 2.4 Training was provided to all staff dealing with complaints on how to respond and document these. All managers and board members completed the Housing Ombudsman complaints training module.
- 2.5 As CRM was implemented issues were resolved and reporting amended. The use of the system showed an improvement in the number of complaints responded to within time.
- 2.6 However, in quarter 4 there was an issue with CRM, as reported previously to the board. Due to a configuration error in the system, a number of emails from the system remained unsent for a period even though staff had drafted them. This has impacted the KPIs.
- 2.7 In the detailed analysis below you will see the figures presented for when the responses were actually sent. Also included is what the figures would have been if the emails had been sent on the day they were written.
- 2.8 Although the figures are therefore only a slight improvement on the previous year, it is important to recognise that without the computer issues, there would have been a marked improvement. This is partly due to the introduction of the CRM and easier monitoring but also due to the hard work of complaint handlers.

3. Complaints data

3.1 The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code became mandatory on 1st April 2024, there is a legal duty for the Housing Ombudsman to monitor compliance with the code and Cornerstone completed the Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment and subsequently published on the Cornerstone website in June 2024.

3.2 The complete self-assessment for 2024/25 is attached as Appendix 1 and the table below show performance. Note that before the CRM issue the % responded to, within time was 95.4% at stage one and 93.8% at stage two.

Table one - number of complaints

| Complaint level | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | Trend |
|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|---|
| Stage 1 complaints | 39 | 33 | 57 | 86 |  |
| Stage 2 complaints | 4 | 2 | 8 | 16 |  |

Table two – KPIs

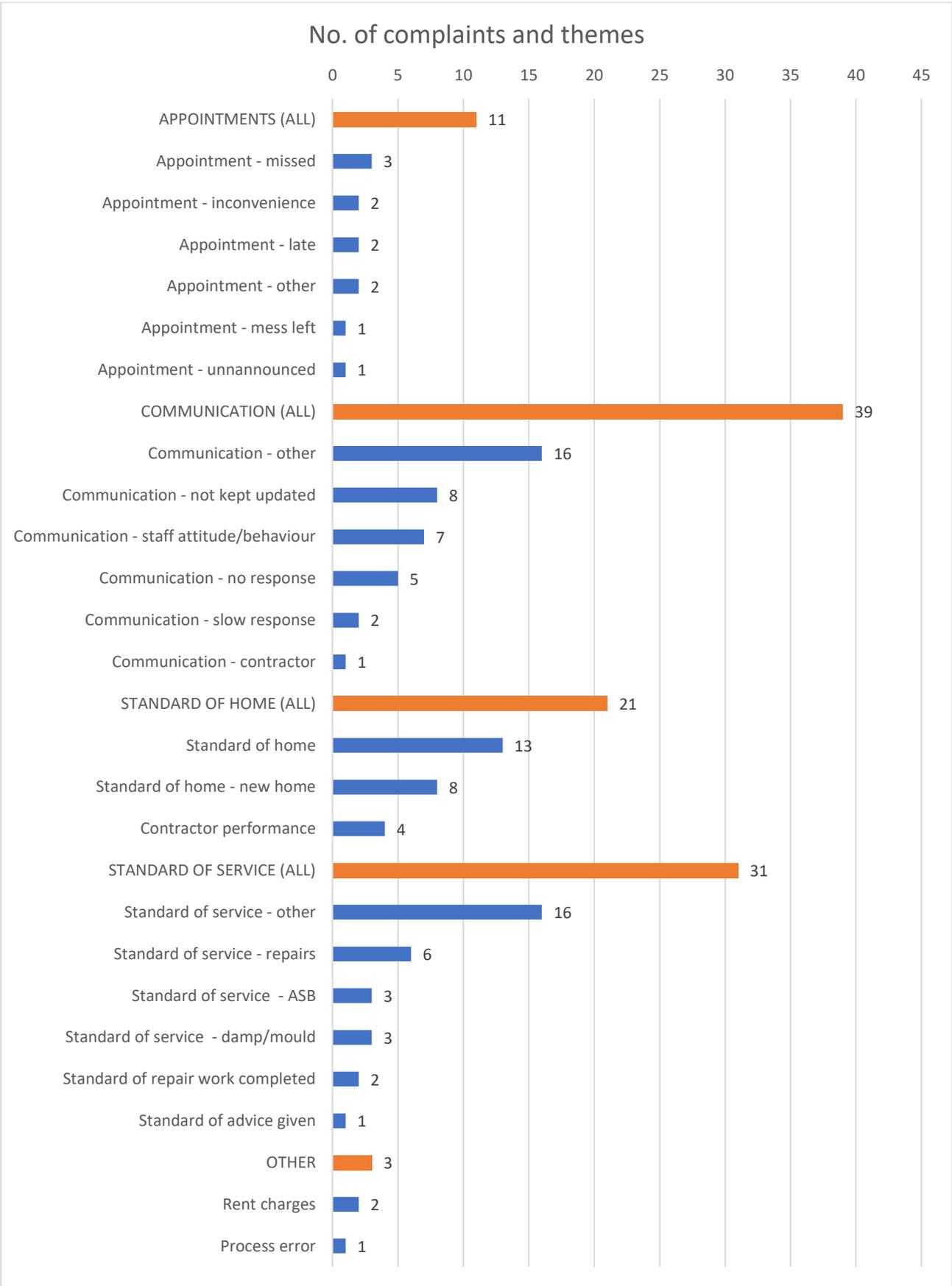
*indicates a new measure

| TSM Measure | Stage 1 23/24 | Stage 1 24/25 | Stage 2 23/24 | Stage 2 24/25 |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| No. of complaints received | 57 | 86 | 8 | 16 |
| % acknowledged within 5 days | * | 88% | * | 79% |
| Average no. of working days to respond | 12.5 | 15.92 | 13.06 | 19.00 |
| % responded to within HO code | 80.7% | 77.9 | 80% | 87.5 |
| No. of complaints received per 1000 homes | 39.8 | 62 | 5.2 | 11.5 |

- 3.3 Complaint satisfaction at year end was 59% this is an improvement on 53% in 2023/24. However, there is still some way to go to improve this.
- 3.4 There were 12 complaints recorded on the system as cancelled. In all of these cases this was because they were either raised incorrectly on the system or were duplicates. Where complaints were raised that were duplicates they were either combined into an open complaint or raised as a stage two.
- 3.5 Our complaints policy outlines the circumstances under which we may not accept a complaint. We have not refused to accept any complaints in 2024/25.

4. Themes

- 4.1 The data shows that the largest volume of complaints were related to communication. This covers a wide range of issues but in general is related to residents not being kept up to date, especially when there are changes to appointments.
- 4.2 There was a wide range of complaints but they are still from a relatively small number of residents. Additional feedback has been sought throughout the year from surveys, TSM, big plan door knocking. This provides a wider view of the services provided. All of this taken together will inform the development of the customer strategy.
- 4.3 Where communication issues were reported, these were across the business but in general were related to not being kept up to date, not getting a response or slow responses. Complaints about appointments were mostly related to communication issues.
- 4.4 Complaints about the standard of the home generally involved multiple issues. This suggests that there is a point at which the number of issues causes a resident to call and make a complaint.
- 4.5 There were very few complaints about damp and mould. This suggests that the process is effective in addressing these issues. Where people had complained it was related to their belongings being damaged.
- 4.6 The chart on the following page shows the number and type of complaints received grouped by key themes. There is also a word cloud showing the main themes.



- Mutual exchange – policy reviewed and updated based on feedback.
- No access- policy reviewed and updated based on feedback.
- Pronouns – all staff to complete EDI training on pronouns. System to be updated to allow display of pronouns.

There were also additional learning points on clarity of communication, providing accurate information and recording data. All of which are being addressed through current projects as part of the knowledge and information strategy.

6. Self assessment

6.1 Cornerstone is compliant with the Ombudsman code. The self assessment will be added to the Cornerstone website. The annual submission to the ombudsman will be completed before the end of June.

6.2 Compliance is based on the code being followed and not on the KPIs. The KPIs are more relevant to the performance against the consumer standards set by the regulator.

6.3 Although in relation to complaints Cornerstone is compliant there is an aim to improve performance over time. Before the glitch with CRM the response times were on target. However, more important is the KPI on satisfaction with complaints handling and the improvements made as a result of complaints. Therefore, there are a number of actions set out below.

7. Statement from board

7.1 As part of the Housing Ombudsman code the board are required to give a response to this report which will be published on the Cornerstone website.

8. Actions

8.1 Publish self assessment, annual report and board response on Cornerstone website.

8.2 Complete ombudsman form to confirm self-assessment has been carried out and published.

8.3 Improve KPIs by:

- Providing appropriate training and guidance to all staff
- Continue to make improvements to CRM for ease of use
- Monitoring deadlines to ensure response times are met

8.4 Improve satisfaction by:

- Implementing improvements as per ombudsman reports for example the 4 Ts (tone, timely, tailored, transparency)
 - Improve services based on feedback
 - Improve data so that it is easy for staff responding to complaints to access the information they need.
- Collect EDI data to ensure that communication preferences are met and complaints can be effectively addressed by plotting them against this data.