

GOVERNING BODY RESPONSE TO THE COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2025/26

The Governing Body has reviewed Onward's Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for 2025/26, the annual Complaint Handling Code self-assessment and feedback from customers involved through the Customer Resolution Forum. The report gives assurance on progress, while also being clear about where further improvement is needed.

Complaints remain a key source of insight into service failure and customer experience. They help Onward understand what is not working, respond fairly when things go wrong and use learning to improve services.

The Board is encouraged by improvements during the year, including fewer complaints overall, quicker resolution times, more cases closed within Housing Ombudsman timescales and an increase in customer compliments.

We welcome continued compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and full compliance with Ombudsman orders. This demonstrates a clear commitment to fair complaint handling, learning and effective remedial action. The stronger focus on learning from complaints is also positive, including improved customer communication, better oversight of agreed actions and more structured analysis of trends and root causes.

However, the report shows that customer experience is still inconsistent. Increased stage two escalations and Ombudsman referrals indicate that some issues are not being resolved effectively at the first opportunity. Repairs, communication and failure to deliver agreed actions remain the main causes of dissatisfaction. The Board has challenged the business to maintain focus on these recurring themes and deliver improvements customers can feel.

Customer scrutiny through the Customer Resolution Forum continues to provide valuable challenge and ensures improvement activity is informed by lived experience.

Looking ahead

Over the coming year, the Governing Body will continue to monitor performance, learning and improvement closely. Moreover, Governance will be further enhanced through the appointment of customers to full places on our strengthened Customer Committee. We expect sustained progress in reducing escalation, improving communication, strengthening the repairs services, delivering commitments on time and overseeing the impact of the new business management system.

Every complaint represents a customer whose experience has not met expectations. The Board remains committed to ensuring Onward listens, learns and acts on feedback, and will continue to hold the business to account for delivering better services and outcomes.