

---

**Date of Meeting:** 29 June 2026

**Agenda item:** 09.1  
Paul Fagan, Housing Services Manager  
Nikki Homewood, Director of Advice and Support Services

**Report prepared by:** Rachael Kenny, Director of Mental Health and Support Services  
Sarah Butler, Board Member responsible for complaints (MRC)

**Contact Details:** [Paul.Fagan@bht.org.uk](mailto:Paul.Fagan@bht.org.uk)  
[Nikki.Homewood@bht.org.uk](mailto:Nikki.Homewood@bht.org.uk)  
[Rachael.Kenny@bht.org.uk](mailto:Rachael.Kenny@bht.org.uk)

**Subject:** Complaint Report 2025/26

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides the Board with the Complaint figures for 2025/26 (April 2025 to March 2026).

## 2. Decisions Required by the Board

- 2.1 The Board is asked to note the report and, in accordance with Housing Ombudsman requirement, provide a response to the report which must be published by 30 September 2026.

## 3. Points to Note

- 3.1 Sarah Butler is the current Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC). Mary Davies will be taking over this role when Sarah steps down from the Board later this year. A handover has commenced.
- 3.2 The scope of this BHT Sussex annual report is organisation-wide and therefore covers complaints from services that fall outside those regulated by the Housing Ombudsman, please see section 4 below.
- 3.3 It is noted that quarterly data on complaints has been provided to the Operations and Personnel Committee (OPC) since April 2024. This quarterly data is summarised and collated in a spreadsheet that is organisation wide. The information is analysed, reviewed and discussed each quarter by a scrutiny group (comprising the MRC and the relevant three Directors/Heads of Service involved) as a basis for preparing the quarterly digest and report to the OPC. Both the quarterly report and the spreadsheet have continued to evolve in the light of this group's reflections and decisions. For instance, it was decided to have a breakdown of the types/categories of complaint specifically for those

complaints that were upheld from 2024/25. From 2025/26, greater granularity was added to the types/ categories listed under 'Nature of the complaint'. We also decided, from this year, to differentiate between 'Lessons Learnt' that were applicable to individual services (the majority) and those that were organisation wide.

- 3.4 The MRC has had an opportunity to challenge or question the data or issues arising at these group meetings. In addition, each quarter, the MRC selects a small number of individual complaints to sample and examines the correspondence and documentation to confirm that the correct procedures and processes have been followed. This practice has led to the identification of some potential changes/ improvements. For instance, the need to establish protocols for the consistent recording of communications relating to individual complaints (see para 5.5 below) and the proposal that complainants be invited, in the final response letter, to indicate whether they are satisfied with the outcome (see 3.9 below).
- 3.5 From this year, we have included data on the numbers of complaints in relation to the size of the landlord in order to comply with the Housing Ombudsman requirements and as recommended in our internal audit report on Tenant Scrutiny Measures (TSMs)
- 3.6 47% of complaints in 2025/26 were either fully or partially upheld.
- 3.7 Complaints received in 2025/26 have led to a number of learning points and service improvements (see para 5 below).
- 3.8 It has been very difficult thus far to identify any systemic or recurrent trends in the complaints (all appearing to be individual instances). The additional categories of complaint were introduced partly to assist with this. But there has been a recurring theme related to communication; this is less related to failure /omission in communication but rather more to the quality and frequency of communication which applies both to communication with clients/ tenants but also to communication between BHT Sussex staff. Complaint trends will continue to be analysed in future years.
- 3.9 The scrutiny group referred to in 3.3 above has also agreed the following measures for the future:
- Equalities data, covering the nine protected characteristics, will be collected from Q2 2026/27. This data will be analysed annually, in future, as part of the annual complaint report.
  - The columns on the organisation-wide spreadsheet of complaints which record any learning as a result of the complaint should, as from Q2 2026/27 also record the action taken to implement this (and the date) to facilitate monitoring of implementation.
  - Going forward the templates for final response letters will include an invitation /request for the complainant to advise whether or not they are satisfied with the outcome.

## 4. Complaint Data

|                                   | 2023/24<br>Apr-Mar | 2024/25<br>Apr-Mar | 2025/26<br>Apr-Mar |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>No. of Complaints Reported</b> | 30                 | * 121              | 67                 |

\* It is noted that 61 of the 121 complaints received in 2024/25 related to issues in and around the area of Phase One, the majority of which relate to antisocial behaviour in the vicinity of Phase One. They don't all directly relate to our service.

It is noted that 52 complaints (78%) received in 2025/26 relate to accommodation-based services that are regulated by the Housing Ombudsman

### Outcome of Complaints

|                                                       | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| % Resolved at Stage 1                                 | 77%     | 89%     | 71%     |
| % Resolved at Stage 2                                 | 23%     | 11%     | 28%     |
| % Responded to within agreed time                     | 93%     | 95%     | 89%     |
| % With an extended timeframe                          | 7%      | 8%      | 13%     |
| % Fully upheld                                        | 33%     | 32%     | 22%     |
| % Partially upheld                                    | 17%     | 18%     | 25%     |
| % Not upheld                                          | 50%     | 50%     | 54%     |
| % Complainant satisfied with outcome<br>(where known) | 100%    | 78%     | 56%     |

### Nature of Complaints

|                          | 2023/24 | 2024/25 |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|
| % Maintenance Issue      | 27%     | 9%      |
| % Client to client Issue | 13%     | 3%      |
| % Service Delivery       | 40%     | 33%     |
| % Communication Issue    | 7%      | 7%      |
| % Other                  | 13%     | 46%     |

It is noted that the 'nature of complaints' categories were revised in 2025/26

|                                            | 2025/26 |
|--------------------------------------------|---------|
| Home/ Building maintenance                 | 6%      |
| Home/ Building Safety                      | 11%     |
| Repairs satisfaction - quality             | 9%      |
| Repairs – time taken                       | 6%      |
| Damp & Mould                               | 0%      |
| Maintenance of communal areas              | 6%      |
| Listening & Acting on tenant/ client views | 0%      |
| Being kept informed                        | 14%     |
| Being treated fairly & with respect        | 10%     |
| Complaint management                       | 4%      |
| Quality of Care &/or Support provided      | 9%      |
| Neighbourhood issues                       | 6%      |
| Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) handling        | 12%     |
| Staff Communication                        | 10%     |

**Stats Relating to Upheld Complaints (full and partial)** (introduced in 2024/25)

|                          | <b>2024/25</b> |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| % Maintenance Issue      | 4%             |
| % Client to client Issue | 3%             |
| % Service Delivery       | 37%            |
| % Communication Issue    | 6%             |
| % Other                  | *50%           |

\* It is noted that most 'other' complaints related to neighbourhood issues around Phase One

|                                            | <b>2025/26</b> |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Home/ Building maintenance                 | 8%             |
| Home/ Building Safety                      | 6%             |
| Repairs satisfaction - quality             | 7%             |
| Repairs – time taken                       | 8%             |
| Damp & Mould                               | 0%             |
| Maintenance of communal areas              | 8%             |
| Listening & Acting on tenant/ client views | 0%             |
| Being kept informed                        | 24%            |
| Being treated fairly & with respect        | 3%             |
| Complaint management                       | 0%             |
| Quality of Care &/or Support provided      | 7%             |
| Neighbourhood issues                       | 7%             |
| Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) handling        | 15%            |
| Staff Communication                        | 11%            |

**Complaints relative to the size of the landlord**

(no of complaints divided by the no of dwellings multiplied by 1000)

|                           | <b>2025/26<br/>Stage 1</b> | <b>2025/26<br/>Stage 2</b> |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| No of Complaints          | 52                         | 22                         |
| No of Dwellings           | 751                        | 751                        |
| No of complaints per 1000 | <b>69</b>                  | <b>29</b>                  |

## 5. Organisational Lessons Learnt / Areas of Improvement Identified

- 5.1 Analysis of complaints received in 2024/25 and 2025/26 has highlighted a small number of themes and/or areas of improvement applicable to individual services. These will be shared with operational managers for reflection and action at the September Operational Managers Team meeting. These include, for example:

- a. Remind Managers that all residents should be clear on house rules and tenancy obligations around visitors.
- b. Highlight the importance of timely approval process for white/kitchen goods so tenants are not left without facilities.
- c. The quality of subsequent repairs should be inspected when the initial repair has been the source of dissatisfaction
- d. Liaison with contractors: Contractors should be asked to keep a log of access attempts for repairs; the need for contractors to communicate with BHT Sussex if an emergency repair cannot be resolved at the first attempt; the need for contractors to liaise with BHT Sussex about alterations to annual servicing schedules affecting residents.

5.2 Lessons learnt that apply on an organisation-wide basis are:

- a. An organisation-wide record keeping guide for staff, outlining the filing and storage of all documentation relating to each individual complaint within a unique folder has been developed and agreed. It is being circulated to all staff and made available on The Toolbox to ensure consistency in how complaint records are stored and recorded.
- b. Communication (better quality and more frequent) continues to be identified as a recurring theme that underlies complaints. It is important to recognise, however, that communication with clients and tenants often involves those with complex issues (such as neurodiversity), and we acknowledge that our approach should be adjusted to reflect this.
- c. The need to ensure that complaints are directed to the right place to ensure swift attention (perhaps an issue for mandatory training).

## 6. Internal Audit of Complaints

- 6.1 BHT Sussex has decided to include an audit of complaints handling as part of its schedule of internal audits for 2026/27. This is due to be completed in June.

## 7. Annual Self-Assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

A small group, including the MRC, conducted the annual self-assessment of the BHT Sussex Complaint Policy and Procedure against the Housing Ombudsman (HO)'s Complaint Handling Code. The template was completed recording compliance and citing evidence. In addition, consequential changes required to the BHT Sussex Policy and Procedures were identified. These were small in number but included:

- A requirement to act in accordance with the HO's Compensation Policy
- Reference in the procedures to the use of the organisation-wide templates for response letters

It was also agreed that future annual self-assessments should double-check the template letters and any additional "Simple Guide" to the Complaints procedure to ensure consistency with the HO Code and the BHT Sussex Complaint Procedures.

## **8. Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP)**

- 8.1 From October 2024, quarterly and annual complaints reports have been presented to the TSP and comments/ responses have been recorded and shared as part of reports.
- 8.2 The TSP were part of the 2026 annual review of the Complaints Policy and Procedure and the self-assessment against the HO Complaint Handling Code.
- 8.3 The TSP is also in the process of completing a fuller review the Complaints Policy and Procedure and they are aiming to present their report to the OPC in October 2026. This will also presumably feed into the internal audit process referred to in 6. above

## **9. Cases involving the Housing Ombudsman**

- 9.1 A former resident at Mid Sussex Supported Housing appealed the outcome of a complaint issued by BHT Sussex on 26 October 2023 regarding a warning letter to the complainant. Our response was sent to the Ombudsman on 31/10/25, within the mandated timeframe, and there is no ruling to date.
- 9.2 In March 2026, the Housing Ombudsman gave their final decision of maladministration regarding an Anti-Social Behaviour case in Hastings which dated back to late 2021/ early 2022. As a result, we paid the complainant £450 in compensation as instructed by the Ombudsman,