

Accent

Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report

2023/24



1. Introduction

Everyone at Accent Housing is responsible for delivering excellent services to our customers and for ensuring that when things go wrong, we respond positively, professionally and put things right.

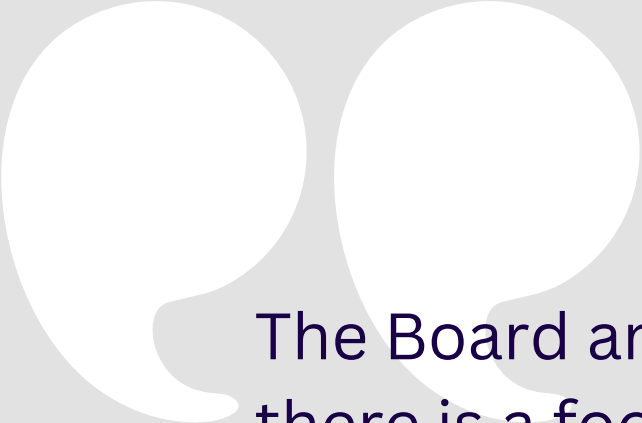
We encourage customers to use our complaints policy if they are unhappy with our services. We use customer complaints as an opportunity to understand why things go wrong and to put measures in place to prevent them happening again.

We have produced this report to tell our customers about our complaints service, how we performed against our agreed service standards and what we are doing to improve our services because of customer complaints.

You can find our complaints policy here: www.accentgroup.org/media/5940/complaints-and-compensation-policy-080524-v12.pdf




Response from Helen Jaggar
*Member Responsible for
Complaints, Accent Group
Board*



The Board and Customer Experience Committee are assured that there is a focus across the organisation to hear and proactively respond to customer dissatisfaction, both individually to the customer, and to ensure we are learning from complaints themes to identify, implement and embed service improvements.

We are committed to strengthening our approach to complaint handling and have recently appointed a Director of Customer Relations who will head up our new centralised complaints resolution team. We have also appointed a resident Customer Champion who sits on our Customer Experience Committee and is responsible for overseeing our work in this important area from a customer perspective.



2. Our complaints handling performance in *2023/2024*

Performance Area		2023-2024	Our target 2024/25
		How did we perform?	
1.	Stage 1 complaints received	1103	N/A
2.	Stage 1 complaints received per 1000 homes	51.09	56.59
3.	Stage 1 complaints responded to in timescale	58%	85%
4.	Stage 2 complaints received	172	N/A
5.	Stage 2 complaints received per 1000 homes	7.66	8.52
6.	Stage 2 complaints responded to in timescale	75.8%	85%
7.	Complaints escalated to the Housing Ombudsman Service	23	N/A
8.	Customer Satisfaction with complaint handling	25%	32%

Our data is based on complaints received from customers who own and rent their homes. We compare our performance information with other similar organisations, however there is no comparable data available in our benchmarking club for complaints made by homeowners.

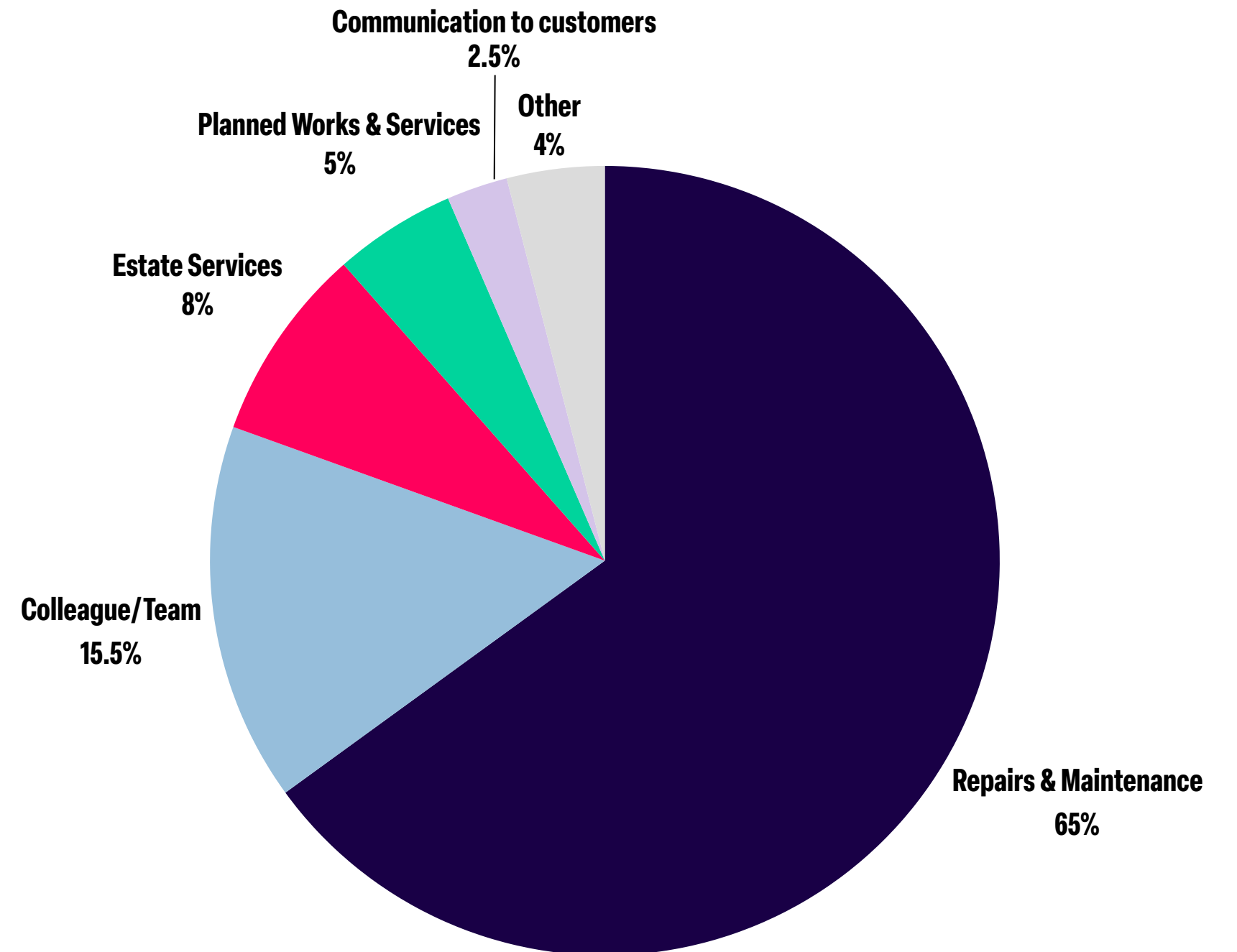
3. Customer Complaints

2023/2024

Last year we received 1,103 new complaints from customers.

The top five reasons customers complain

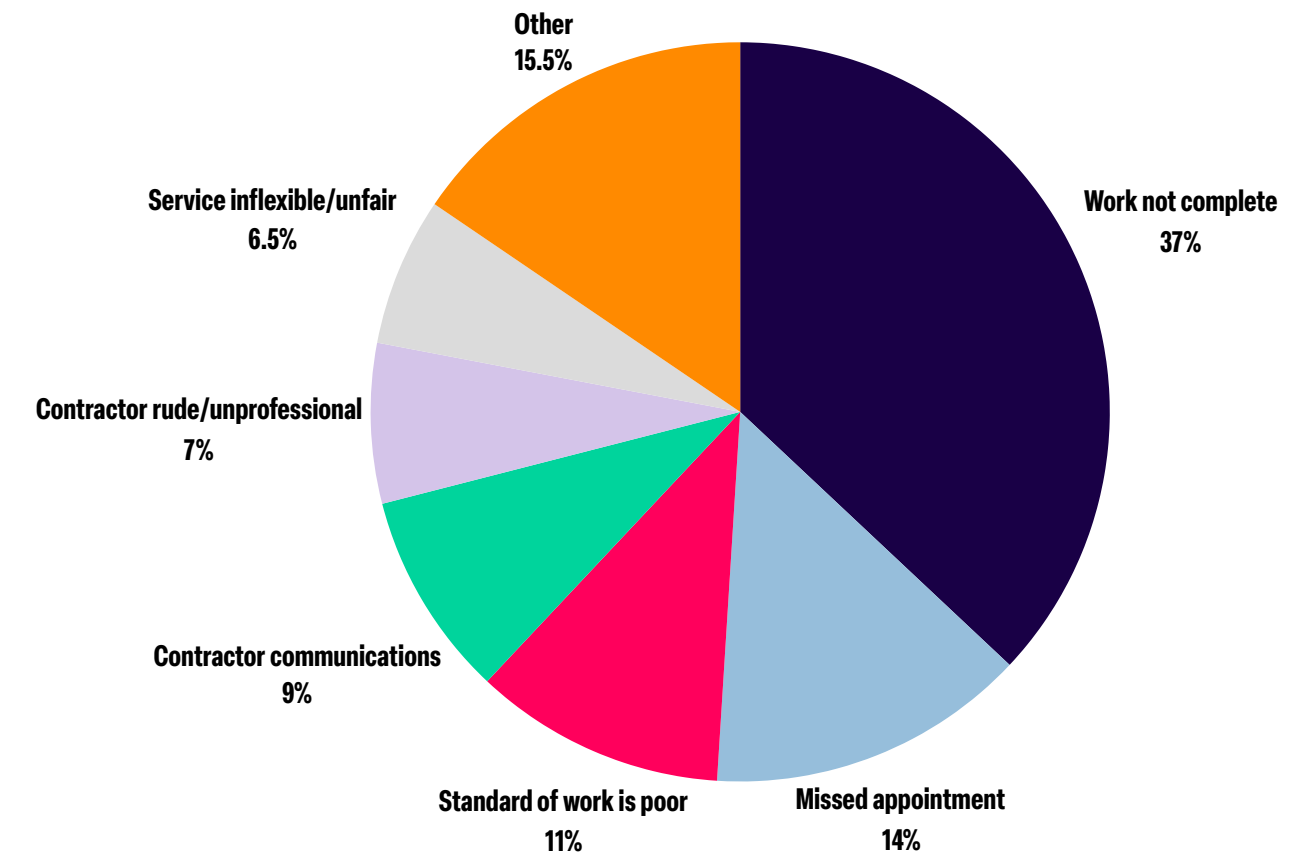
1. Repairs and maintenance.
2. Issues relating to our staff.
3. Grounds maintenance and communal cleaning services.
4. Planned maintenance.
5. How we communicate with our customers.



3.1 Repairs & Maintenance

Why customers complained about the repairs and maintenance service

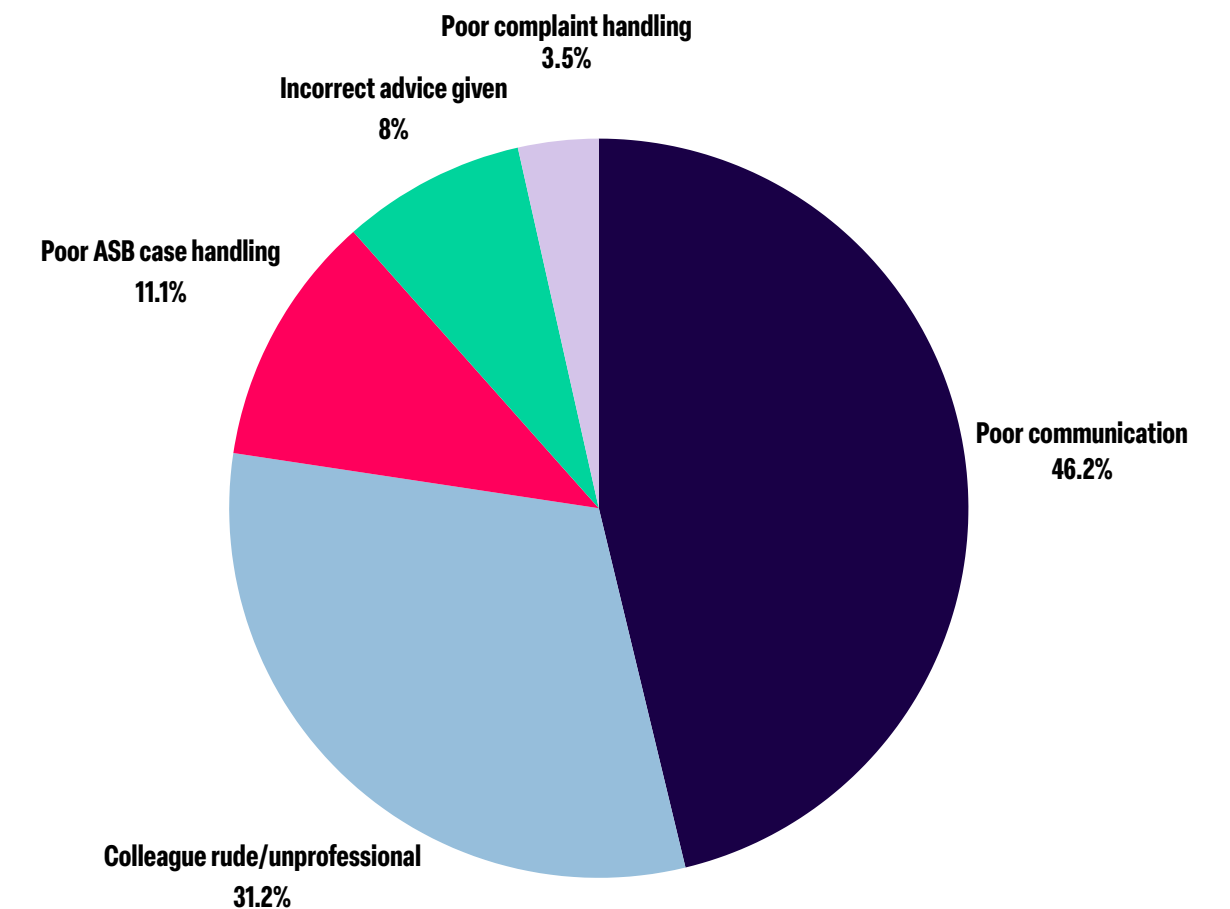
- Work is not complete.
- Contractor missed appointment.
- Standard of work is poor.
- Contractor communications/no follow up.
- Contractor rude/unprofessional.



3.2 Accent colleagues and teams

Why customers complained about our colleagues and teams

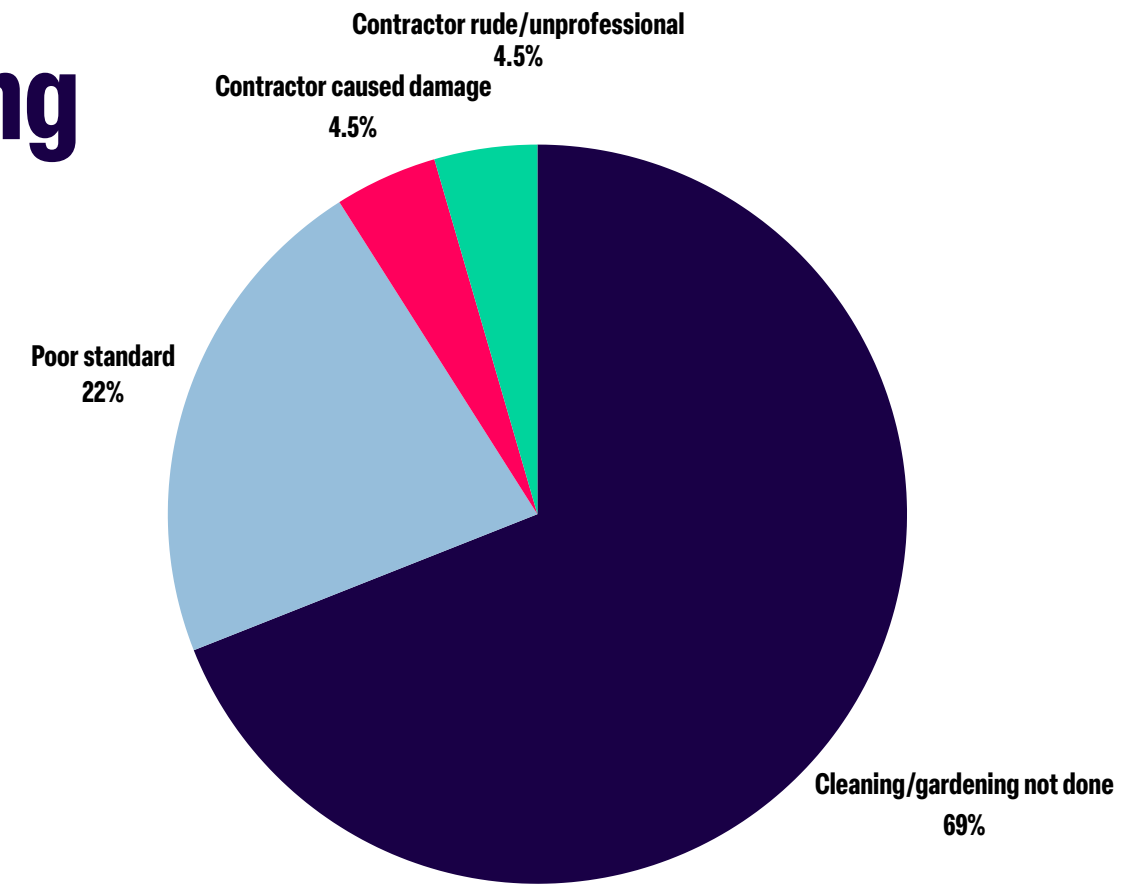
- Poor communication.
- Colleague rude/unprofessional.
- Poor case handling – anti-social behaviour.
- Incorrect advice given.
- Poor case handling – complaints.



3.3 Grounds maintenance and communal cleaning

Why customers complained about grounds maintenance and cleaning services

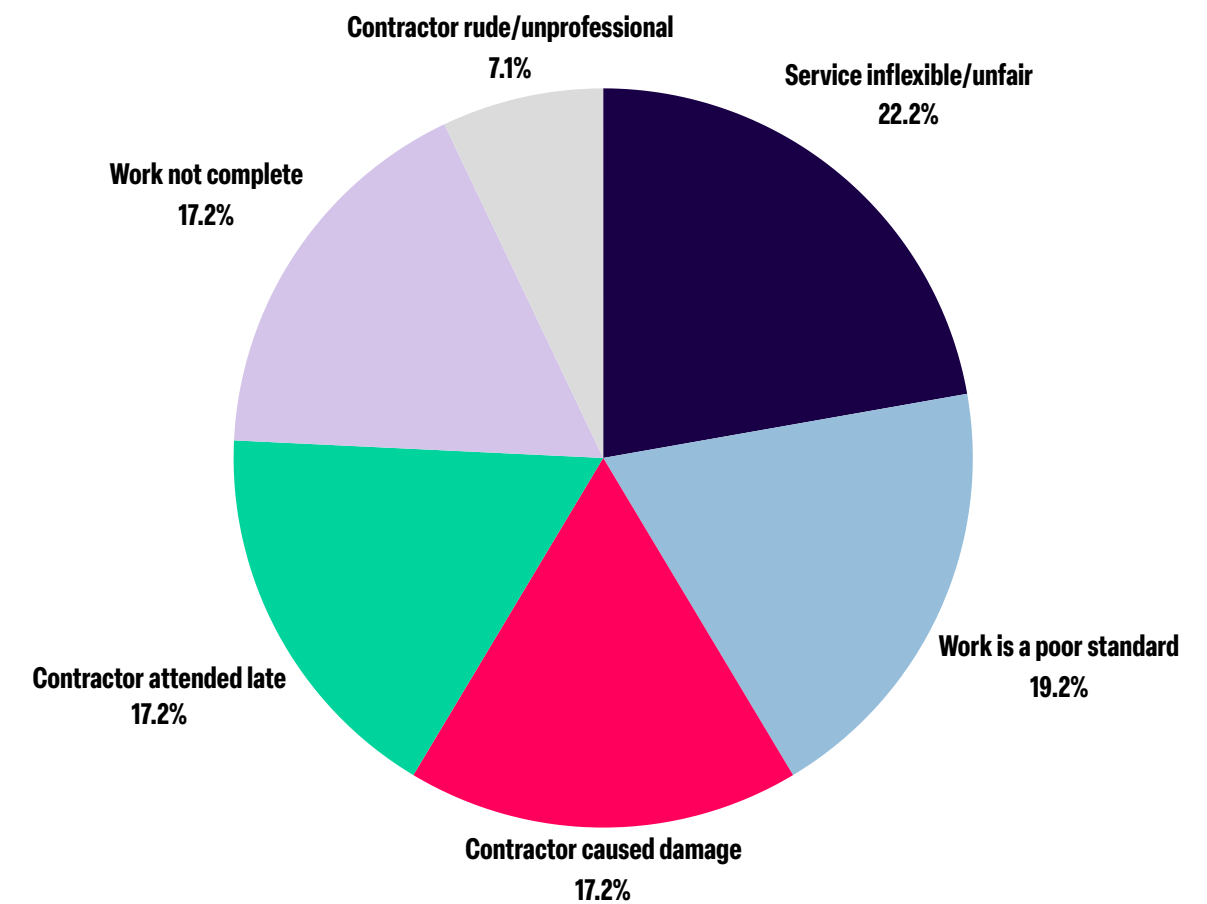
- Cleaning/gardening not done.
- Work is a poor standard.
- Contractor caused damage.
- Contractor rude/unprofessional.



3.4 Planned Maintenance

Why customers complained about planned maintenance and services

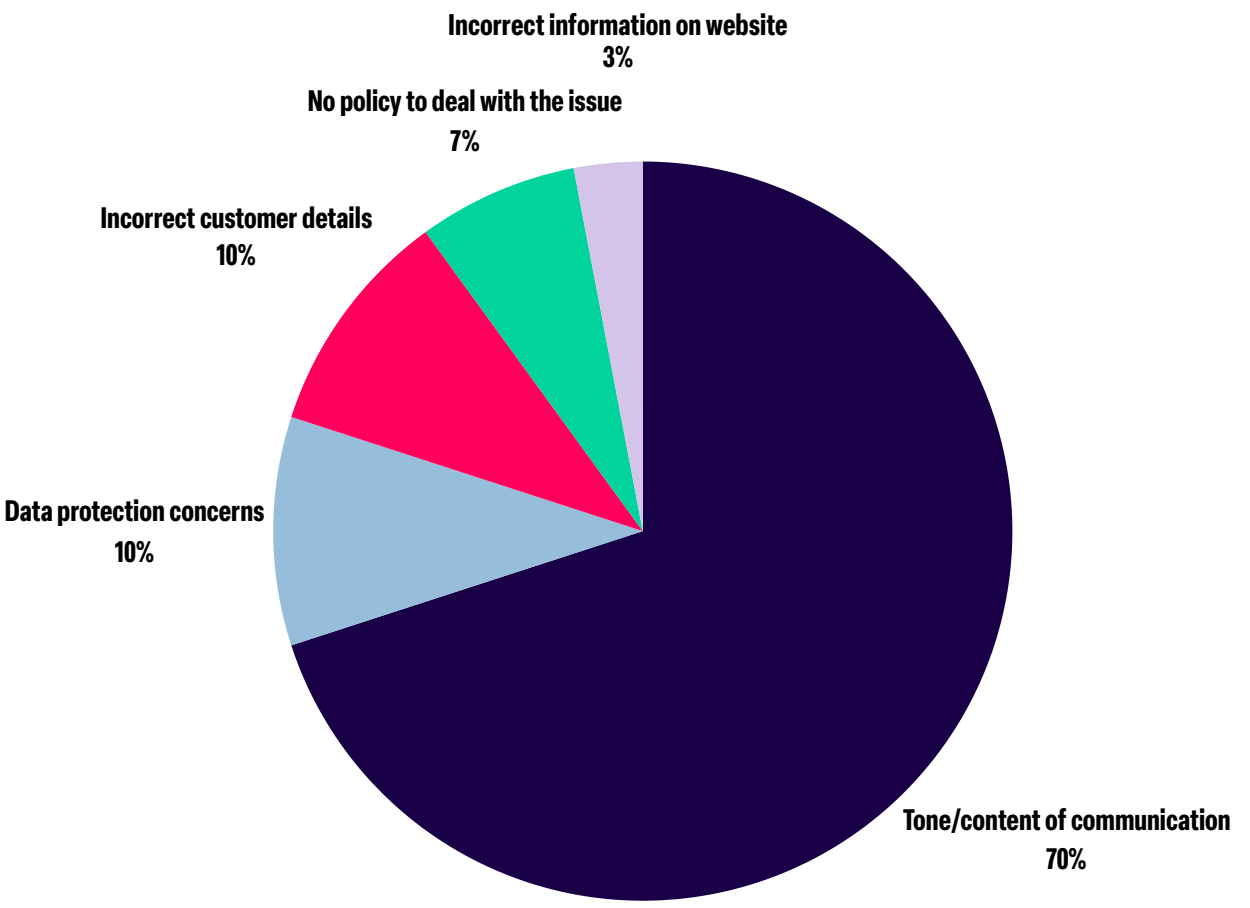
- Service is inflexible/unfair.
- Work is a poor standard.
- Contractor caused damage.
- Contractor attended late.
- Work not complete.
- Contractor rude/unprofessional



3.5 Communication to customers

Why customers complained about how we communicate with them

- Tone/content of communication.
- Data protection concerns.
- Incorrect customer details.
- No policy to deal with the issue raised.
- Incorrect information on website.



4. Housing Ombudsman Service

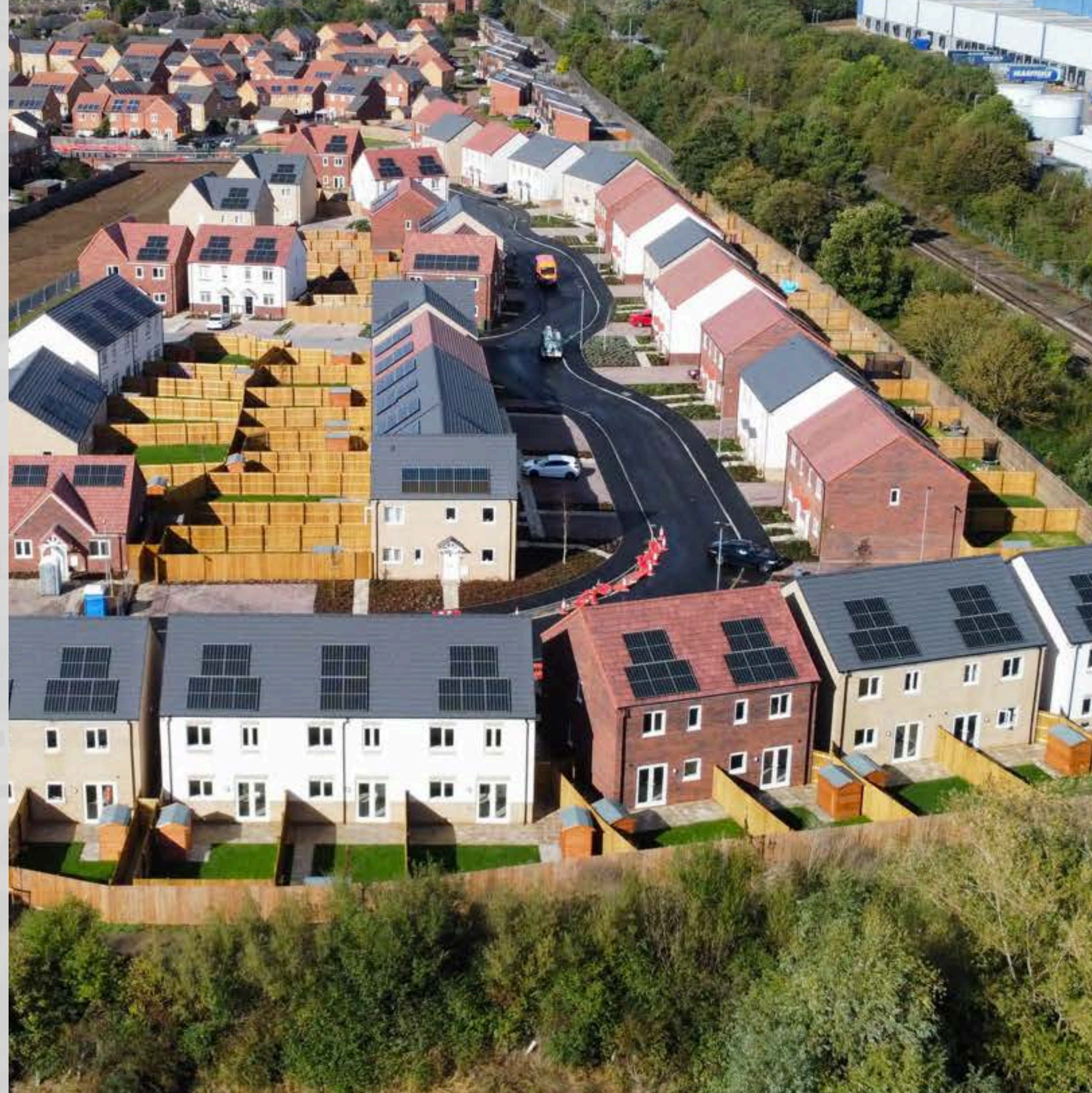
The Housing Ombudsman Service provides an independent and impartial service to our customers. It offers dispute resolution for complaints that have not been resolved after going through our internal complaints procedure.

Customers can approach the Housing Ombudsman Service for advice and guidance at any time, however, the Ombudsman would normally only investigate once the complainant has exhausted our complaints process.

Contact details:

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 1484
Unit D
Preston
PR2 0ET

Fax: 020 7831 1942
Telephone: 0300 111 3000
E-mail: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Online complaint form



4.1 Housing Ombudsman Investigations 2023/2024

If a customer remains dissatisfied after their complaint has been through our complaint process, they may ask the Ombudsman to review their complaint.

During 2023/2024, we received 15 determinations, following investigations carried out by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

In four cases the Ombudsman found no maladministration, or that we had made reasonable redress to the customer. In 10 cases there were findings of maladministration or service failure, and in one case there was a finding of severe maladministration.

Where the Ombudsman finds maladministration or severe maladministration, they make orders and recommendations that we must comply with to resolve the complaint. These may include:

- Apologising to the customer.
- Paying compensation.
- Reviewing policies and procedures.
- Reviewing working practices.
- Staff training.

We received our first finding of severe maladministration in March 2024. This case related a complaint made by a customer in February 2023 about repairing responsibilities. We were very disappointed with the finding, and although a number of changes to our policy and procedure had already been made since the complaint was raised, there was some valuable learning for us to take on board. We made immediate changes to our repairs responsibilities guidance. In accordance with the orders and recommendations made by the Housing Ombudsman, we carried out an independent, detailed review and produced a learning report to confirm the actions being taken to address the issues raised in the complaint.

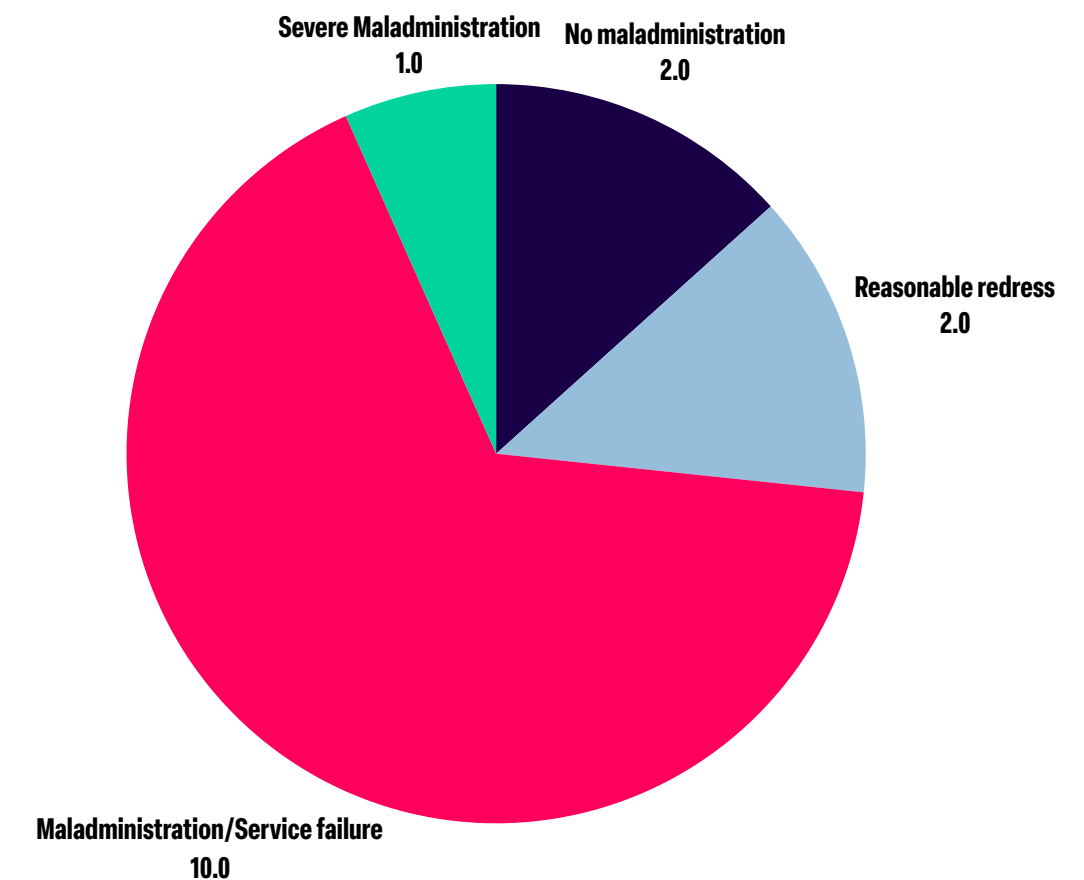
The learning report is available on our complaints webpage

<https://www.accentgroup.org/contact-us/comments-complaints-and-compensation/>.

The actions from the Learning Report are included in our action plan for the coming year.

Housing Ombudsman Determinations – key themes

- Handling of repairs.
- Repairs responsibilities.
- Planned maintenance.
- Complaint Handling.
- Anti-social behaviour case handling.
- Record Keeping.



5. Service Improvement Plan

What we are doing to improve our services.

Service Area	Service improvements 2023/2024	Service Improvements 2024/2025
Repairs and Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We assessed our service against the Housing Ombudsman’s Spotlight on Damp and Mould. • We reviewed our guidance on repairs responsibilities. • We have built up our supplier base to ensure we have additional contractors available, if needed, to support service delivery. • We have provided dedicated resources to manage disrepair cases and improve service delivery. • We held roadshows with customers to promote customer engagement with planned maintenance activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are reviewing our policy and procedures for dealing with damp and mould. • We will carry out a second review of our self-assessment against the spotlight report on damp and mould. • We will issue reminders to customers on how to report repairs to be included in each issue of our customer newsletter, ‘In the Loop’. • We will improve how we consult with customers on policies that affect them. • Contract reviews will take place to ensure suitable key performance indicators are in place to help us measure performance.
Grounds Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the complaints in this category came from two of our schemes. We conducted customer consultations to consider the options available. • As a direct result of these complaints both contractors have been replaced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We conduct regular estate inspections which include monitoring contractor performance. • We have appointed a customer champion for estates services who is a member of our Customer Services Committee. • We plan to introduce a customer scrutiny/focus group specifically addressing grounds maintenance within Accent later in the year.
Complaint Handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We reviewed our complaints policy and procedure in April 2023, to ensure it aligned with the complaint handling code. • We reviewed our complaints system to align with the changes to our policy and procedure. • We developed new systems guidance and provided training for colleagues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have completed our self-assessment against the new Complaint Handling Code. • We have reviewed our complaints policy and procedure to reflect the Code. • We have appointed a Member Responsible for Complaints who chairs our Customer Experience Committee and sits on our Board. • We have appointed a Customer Champion responsible for complaints who sits on our Customer Experience Committee and will report their findings to the Board in March 2025.

Service Area	Service improvements 2023/2024	Service Improvements 2024/2025
Complaint Handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We self-assessed our complaints service against the new complaint handling code and developed an action plan. • We self-assessed our services against the Ombudsman Spotlight reports and developed an action plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Knowledge and Information Management ◦ Noise ◦ Repairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further complaint handling training is being provided. • We have appointed a Director of Customer Relations who has responsibility for complaints. • We are investing in our complaints resolution service to include a new, centralised complaints resolution team. • We are conducting a review of our complaints process and system.
ASB Case Handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We set up an ASB working group including colleagues from across the business. • We developed a new victim centred ASB and Hate Crime Policy, including a new risk assessment matrix, interview and action plan templates and standard letter templates. • We carried out a self-assessment against the spotlight report on noise. • We reviewed the ASB procedure and developed a new ASB toolkit for colleagues. • We reviewed our Domestic Abuse Policy and Tenancy Fraud Policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have updated our e-learning package for colleagues and a full review of this training resource is planned. • We delivered external training to all Housing Partners and Housing Hub colleagues (Janine Green training). • Housing Partners attended ASB training delivered by the Chartered Institute of Housing • We have developed a Good Neighbourhood Policy following our self-assessment against the 'Spotlight on Noise'. • We will be implementing an ASB case management system in Q3. • We have appointed a Customer Champion responsible for ASB who sits on our Customer Experience Committee.
Communication with customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We delivered 'Tone of Voice' training to colleagues to improve communication with customers. • All colleagues attended 'Inside Out' training, our bespoke customer service training developed and delivered by Mary Gober International. • We reviewed our complaints letter templates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to embed the importance of good communication with customers in our ongoing complaints training.

Service Area	Service improvements 2023/2024	Service Improvements 2024/2025
Knowledge and Information Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We completed a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman’s knowledge and information management framework, along with a supporting action plan, which includes how we will record customer vulnerabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The requirement for good record keeping is included in our complaints training for colleagues. We have recruited a new Chief Information Officer and a Head of Data. We are developing a Knowledge and Information Strategy to underpin our document management processes.
Vulnerable Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All customer facing staff are all required to complete safeguarding training which helps to identify customers who are vulnerable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All customer facing policies and procedures are being reviewed to include a section that addresses customer vulnerabilities and the requirement to have a flexible approach. We are reviewing safeguarding training for colleagues. Our Learning and Development Team will provide support for colleagues to improve their understanding of vulnerabilities and how to identify them. We have a project underway to address how we collect and record customer data, including vulnerabilities, and the steps required to enable to us to tailor or services effectively to meet the needs of vulnerable customers.



 **0345 678 0555**

 **customerservices@accentgroup.org**