

Complaint Performance & Improvement Report

2024/25

Hanif Malik

Karbon Board Member Responsible for Complaints

Dear Customers, Colleagues and Partners,

Karbon's Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)

As Karbon's Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) I have lead responsibility for complaints, which includes fostering a positive complaint handling culture.

I am supported by Ian Johnson, Executive Director of Customer Services who is our Executive MRC, to oversee more closely the operational side of complaints.

Here we're presenting the response from Karbon's Board to our 2024/25 annual complaints performance and service improvement report, including our annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code.

Scrutiny of the annual report

We reviewed the annual performance and service improvement report to scrutinise the data and performance information.

We have closely reviewed the volume of complaints per 1,000 homes across the year, as last year we reported below average. Whilst our satisfaction scores highly we wanted to assure ourselves that we were handling all complaints appropriately. Pleasingly this increased this year and on average we achieved 6.8 per month and the median was 5.2 per month.

In our scrutiny, across the year and in this report, we investigated complaint response performance. We asked for this focus to be prioritised in our last annual review, following the prior year performance and the outcome of some Ombudsman adjudications. Here we found a positive year on year improvement, achieving 97.9% of complaints responded to timescales, this was a good improvement on the prior year of 88.1%. Despite the improvement, we continue to have focus here to ensure all customers have their complaints responded on time.

We had anticipated an increase in formal complaints, with the change in the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Code. However, we wanted to ensure we acted on key themes to improve services to reduce avoidable complaints. The most notable increase related to complaints about the wait time for repairs. We were pleased to see complaints decline in the second half of the year with the successful implementation of the repair recovery plan.

Whilst our satisfaction with complaints is comparatively positive compared to others, we need to improve this. We are pleased to see the investment in the new Feedback Team to support this. We sought assurance from the Customer Experience team on how this team would be quality assured and were satisfied that this has been thoroughly considered. We recognise that we need to implement new processes and reporting to improve on the complaint experience. We are confident this will lead to better communication which customers are saying we need to do.

The extent of complaint learnings and service improvements were positive, but we support the need to further refine our approach to ensure we are maximising all the learnings, to improve the customer experience. So, we support the focus on next year, especially to embed the Feedback team to improve the complaint experience, to develop our approach to learning from complaints and maintain focus on our repairs service performance as a key driver for complaints and satisfaction.

We also sought assurance on how the commentary and context were critically evaluated, to ensure that it is a fair and reasonable assessment. With involvement of multiple colleagues in the development of the report and the scrutiny from ourselves, we can confirm it is accurate, reliable and consistent with that reported on a quarterly basis throughout the year.

Scrutiny of the self-assessment

We reviewed the evidence cited in the self-assessment, ensuring it's complete and accessible to readers including colleagues and customers. We sought an update on the Complaint Policy which is being updated with the new Feedback team, and we found assurance that we continue to report being compliant with the Code. We concluded the evidence in the self-assessment to be thorough and satisfactory, with no further queries or challenge needed.

Risks identified

In our assessment, we identified risks with our performance and compliance with the code. However, we are satisfied that these risks are addressed in the complaint forward plan. These areas include where we want to maintain or to improve on performance. These are:

- Launching and embedding the new Feedback Team
- Improving our complaint response times
- Better understanding the cause of complaints, to deliver more service improvements
- Engaging customers more in learning from complaints

Areas of achievement and challenges in the annual report

We would like to highlight some key areas of achievement and challenges through the year:

- Reducing the wait time for repairs - we successfully implemented a repairs recovery plan in response to increased demand for repairs and to address the longer wait times for appointment. This resulted in completing an additional 6,000 repairs this year, leading to shorter wait times for customers and a reduction in complaints in the second half of the year.
- Handling the increase in complaints – we acted quickly to resource teams so we could continue to improve our complaint response times. We also developed a new approach with the Feedback team which commences in May 2025.
- Improving Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) case handling – with briefings and training across the Housing team so colleagues are better informed to handle ASB cases and complaints.
- Improving Repair Communications – expanding our repair communications approach, with text messaging and the introduction of outbound call messaging.
- Improving complaint response times – from 88.1% in 2023-2024 to 97.9% in 2024-2025.

In conclusion

On behalf of Karbon Group Board we were pleased to see improvements in our complaint performance and focus remaining on areas we need to improve on. Seeing the many service improvements was also reassuring, as we aim to use learning to improve all our customer's experiences. We also found assurance in the focus on the forward plan, as we continue to strive to deliver a positive complaint experience and ultimately the service our customers deserve across all our services.

Hanif Malik
Karbon Board Member Responsible for Complaint