

Accent

**Complaints Performance and
Service Improvement Report**

2024/25

Introduction

Improving our complaint handling service is a key priority for Accent. Customers are at the heart of everything we do, and we are committed to improving our services to make the customer experience better.

We continue to listen, learn and act on customer feedback to improve service delivery.

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*

I am pleased to introduce this year's Complaints Performance and Improvement Report. At Accent, we recognise that every complaint reflects a moment when we've fallen short. While our aim is always to get things right first time, when things do go wrong, we are committed to putting them right, and to learning from every single one.

Our approach to complaints is shaped by a clear principle: we put our customers at the heart of everything we do. That means listening closely, responding effectively, and making sure the insights we gain from complaints drive improvements across our services. We've worked hard to embed a culture where everyone at Accent understands their role in delivering great customer experiences and where complaint resolution is seen not as the job of one team, but a shared responsibility.

Over the past year, we've made significant changes to how we manage complaints. We've established a dedicated, centralised Complaint Resolution team, invested in systems and training, and introduced a quality assurance framework. These steps have helped us understand what needs to change and where we need to do better, particularly around how long it takes us to respond. Crucially, we've seen real improvement in how satisfied customers feel with the way their complaints are handled, giving us a strong foundation to build on.

We've also introduced a Customer Champion role to ensure customer perspectives shape the improvements we make. This, alongside the work of our new team, is driving better outcomes in key areas.

We must also be honest about where we've not lived up to our standards. We have received findings of severe maladministration from the Housing Ombudsman linked to historic issues, particularly around damp and mould. We are sorry we didn't get these right. Since then, we've taken clear steps to change how we work, strengthening our processes and training. We are beginning to see the impact, including a sharp reduction in new referrals to the Ombudsman.

We will continue to face complaints with transparency and urgency. Where we can resolve issues, we will do so quickly. When we see patterns in complaints, we will ask ourselves why, and we will change what needs to change.

This report shows the progress we've made and the areas where we must continue to improve. We remain focused on driving change, building trust and making sure that every learning opportunity leads to a better experience for our customers.

The work we've done to improve over the past 12 months (2024/25)

- Complied with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling code.
- Developed, published and delivered the 2024 Complaints and Performance Improvement Report.
- Introduced a quality assurance framework to embed a consistent approach to customer care and complaint handling.
- Ensured customers and colleagues have clear access to our complaint and compensation policy, supported by the launch of a new website and complaint section.
- Actively promoted our complaint handling service through local newsletters to increase awareness and accessibility.
- Conducted a comprehensive review of our complaint handling service and established a centralised, specialist Complaint Resolution team.
- Delivered complaint handling training to all customer-facing colleagues and key contractors.
- Launched a Service Improvement Forum to drive a culture of continuous improvement across Accent, with a focus on:
 - Listening, learning and acting upon customer feedback and service failings.
 - Sharing positive changes we have made to service delivery.
 - Learning from sector wide Housing Ombudsman cases.
 - Learning from our Accent Housing Ombudsman determinations.
- Delivered a service improvement action plan using learning from our two severe maladministration cases.
- Strengthened compliance with Housing Ombudsman orders by introducing enhanced control measures based on a complaint handling failure order.
- Introduced a shared objective for all Accent colleagues to foster a positive complaint handling culture, reinforcing accountability and commitment for doing what is right for our customers.



A customer led approach

Our Customer Experience Committee commissioned a comprehensive review of our complaint handling service, which was influenced through our Customer Champion initiative.

This initiative has made a significant contribution to our complaint handling service review, supporting the development of a new centralised complaint resolution team.

Below is a snap shot of the work carried out by the Customer Champions over the last twelve months:

- Shadowed key roles across the organisation to shape the new approach to complaint handling.
- Visited customers who had raised complaints and offered feedback to improve the customer experience.
- Contributed to the development of our annual self-assessment.
- Supported the recruitment of our new Head of Customer Service Improvement.
- Agreed the compensation matrix that was applied in response to our first severe maladministration determination.
- Active membership in the Service Improvement Forum.

Focus on Culture

Significant investment in our customer centric cultural programme, 'Be Accent', which is built on the foundations of the Mary Guber Principles and further equipping colleagues with the skills, knowledge and techniques to positively respond to, learn from and address service failure.

Improving Data

As part of our 'One Accent' transformation programme we are embarking on a journey to better understand our customers through improved data, insights and customer engagement. This programme is not only helping us to design services more closely around customer need, but it is also improving how we record and use relevant data more effectively to support improved levels of performance on complaint handling and supporting customers to access and receive services.



Our complaints handling performance in *2024/2025*

- In 2024-25, we received a total of **1,387 stage 1 complaints** and **262 stage 2 complaints**.
- This represents an **increase of 394 stage 1 complaints** compared to 2023-24 which is a **40% increase**.
- **Stage 2 complaints rose by 113 cases**, making a **76% increase** from the previous year.
- **53% of stage 1 complaints were responded to on time**, a **5 % decrease** from the 58% achieved in 2023-24.
- **38.9% of stage 2 complaints were responded to on time**, a **37% decrease** from the 76% achieved in 2023-24.
- In 2024-25, we **did not accept seven complaints in line with our Complaints and Compensation Policy**. These included one case where the issue had occurred more than 12 months prior to being raised, two cases that were subject to active legal proceedings, one that was identified as a service request rather than a complaint, two that related to services not provided by Accent, and one involving an individual who was not an Accent customer. We are committed to treating all customer complaints fairly and impartially, and we carefully consider each case on its own merits to ensure our approach remains transparent, consistent and fair.
- **59 customer complaints were escalated to the Housing Ombudsman Service** after completing our internal complaint handling process.
- While the number was higher than desired, the improvements made to our complaint handling service contributed to a significant reduction in referrals over the course of the year.



Our complaints handling performance in 2024/2025

Table 1: Number of Complaints referred to the Housing Ombudsman Service per Quarter.

Quarter	Number of cases referred
1 (April 24 – June 24)	29
2 (July 24 – September 24)	18
3 (October 24 – December 24)	9
4 (January 25 – March 25)	3

- The Housing Ombudsman Service concluded investigations on 39 cases during the year.
- These included two cases of severe maladministration related to our response to damp and mould and one complaint handling failure order due to delays in fulfilling the terms of the determination in a timely manner.

We have used learning from all Housing Ombudsman determinations to drive improvements in the services we deliver to our customers. An example of this would be our new approach to supporting customers who experience damage to their personal possessions.

- Customer satisfaction with our complaint handling service for 2024-25 was 46.1% which was a significant improvement from 22.4% in 2023-24.
- We are committed to further improving customer satisfaction levels using transactional surveys to gather real-time feedback and drive service enhancements.

Table 2: Complaint handling satisfaction per quarter

Quarter	% of customer satisfaction
1 (April 24 – June 24)	26.2
2 (July 24 – September 24)	39.4
3 (October 24 – December 24)	51.7
4 (January 25 – March 25)	68.2

Complaint handling satisfaction increased alongside the development of the specialised, centralised complaint resolution team that adopted the quality assurance framework.

Complaint handling performance improvement plan

We are committed to improving the speed and quality of our complaint resolution and enhancing customer satisfaction with our complaint handling service. To achieve this, we will:

- Continue delivering a consistent and empathetic complaint handling service.
- Strengthen cross-team collaboration to improve response times.
- Further integrate key stakeholders, including our contractors, to streamline the complaint resolution process.
- Enhance our triage process to ensure that urgent complaints are prioritised and resolved effectively.
- Improve oversight and accountability in delivering agreed complaint resolutions.
- Deliver annual complaint handling training sessions to all customer-facing roles.
- Implement tighter controls to ensure that complaint extensions are minimised and when actioned are in line with the complaint handling code.
- Implement system enhancements to improve complaint handling work flows and data quality, including the review of our complaint categories.
- Launch a new insights dashboard to provide detailed information on customer demand, root cause analysis and trends to support continuous service improvement.
- Conduct an internal audit to gain greater insight into the strengths and areas for development within our complaint handling process.

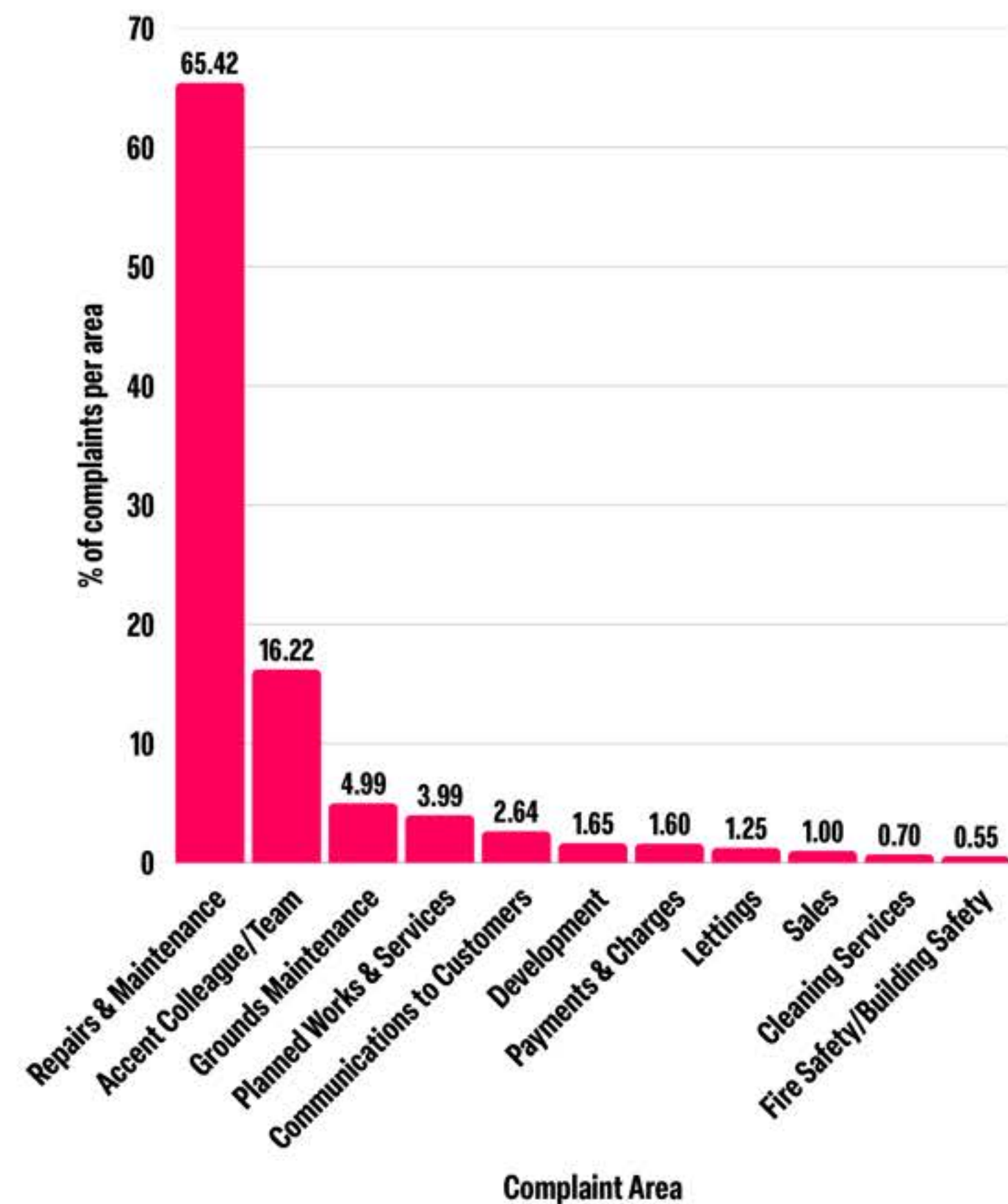


Nature of complaints

Our top three complaint categories accounted for 85% of all complaints in 2024-25.

These were:

- Repairs & Maintenance
- Accent Colleague / Team
- Grounds Maintenance



Improving complaints relating to repairs & maintenance

Repairs & maintenance

The most common subcategories for R&M complaints are:

- Work not complete
- Standard of work is poor
- Contractor missed appointment

Learning applied

- Introduced a new Damp & Mould Procedure to improve how we manage and respond to reports of damp and mould.
- Launched a visual engagement platform in our Technical Hub to enhance the accuracy of repair diagnostics.
- Reconciled our repairs & maintenance contracts under a consistent contractual framework to strengthen our service delivery.
- Introduced new Customer Excellence roles focusing on improving communication and outcomes for repairs and maintenance issues.

Action for 2025-26

To further enhance our repairs & maintenance service, we will:

- Implement enhanced ICT integration to enable real time data transfer, improving communication and transparency for our customers.
- Introduce final mile tracking, allowing customers to track operatives enroute to their homes for improved convenience and confidence.
- Deliver a Repairs & Maintenance Service Improvement Action Plan, shaped by customer feedback to address key service challenges.
- Develop targeted customer engagement initiatives to ensure customer voice influences and shapes ongoing improvement in the repairs and maintenance service.



Improving complaints relating to Accent colleagues

Accent colleagues

The most common subcategories for Accent colleague complaints are:

- Poor communication
- Poor case handling – Anti-social behaviour
- Incorrect advice given

Learning applied

- Held culture workshops for all Accent colleagues to embed our values and promote the behaviours that support customer-focused service delivery.
- Trained a number of colleagues in the Trauma-Informed Approach, which helps them better understand the challenges people face and the reasons behind their behaviours. This approach encourages more empathetic interactions, ensuring customers feel listened to and understood.
- Introduced a new Anti-Social Behaviour Case Management System to streamline how we manage and respond to reports of anti-social behaviour.
- Launched a Customer Data Project to improve our understanding of customer needs and preferences to enable a more tailored and effective service.

Action for 2025-26

To further strengthen our customer-centric approach, we will:

- Design and implement a new Diverse and Additional Needs Policy, to ensure all our services are inclusive and accessible for all our customers.
- Review and enhance customer interaction channels, introducing new contact options to improve accessibility and efficiencies.
- Develop and launch a new Customer Charter that clearly defines and sets consistent expectations for our customers.



Improving complaints relating to grounds maintenance



Grounds maintenance

The most common subcategories for grounds maintenance complaints are:

- Gardening not done
- Work is poor standard
- Contractor caused damage

Learning applied

- Appointed a new Estate Services Manager to strengthen the management of our grounds maintenance contractors and enhance service delivery.
- Reprocured a grounds maintenance contract in a key area where customer dissatisfaction had been identified, ensuring improved standards and accountability.

Action for 2025-26

To further strengthen our grounds maintenance service we will:

- Improve customer communication to ensure that customers clearly understand the level of service they can expect.
- Introduce an Estate Services Contract Management Framework to strengthen oversight and accountability in service delivery.
- Trial a new approach to managing fly-tipping, aiming to reduce incidents and improve the cleanliness and safety of our communities.

Housing Ombudsman Service

Our learning from our Severe Maladministration cases

We received two severe maladministration findings from the Housing Ombudsman in 2024-25, both of these linked to the handling of damp and mould issues and the associated complaint process. Key failings included delays in resolving the repairs, poor communication and a lack of support for our customers.

In response to this Accent implemented a damp and mould procedure, established a specialist resolution team and delivered group wide complaint handling training. We delivered a learning and action plan that was shared with the Housing Ombudsman that was overseen by our Customer Experience Committee to ensure future accountability and learning from the case leads to meaningful change.

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](#)





0345 678 0555



customerservices@accentgroup.org

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