

Accent

**Complaints Performance and
Service Improvement Report**

2025/26

Introduction

Improving our complaints handling service a key strategic priority for Accent. We are committed to driving continuous service improvement, placing customers at the heart of our approach and embedding a clear 'listen, learn and act' model to strengthen service delivery, improve outcomes, and build customer confidence.





Response from Simon Brooksbank

*Member Responsible for
Complaints, Accent Group
Board*



I am happy to present this year's Complaints Performance and Improvement Report, which outlines how we have listened, learned and responded to customer feedback over the past year. Complaints are one of the most important sources of insight available to us. They help us understand where our services have not delivered the standard our customers rightly expect and provide clear opportunities to improve. Every concern raised gives us a chance to examine our performance, address issues and ensure we deliver better outcomes in the future.

Listening to our customers remains fundamental to how we operate. The experiences shared through complaints and feedback, help us to understand what matters most to customers. By responding constructively and acting on what we hear, we can make informed improvements that enhance both service quality and customer experience. During the last year we have continued to build and strengthen our complaints service. Following the introduction of our centralised Complaint Resolution Team in 2024/25, we have focused on embedding and expanding this approach across the organisation. Alongside this, we have enhanced our complaints framework, commissioned independent assurance activity, provided further training for colleagues and increased the transparency of our performance reporting to customers, the Customer Experience Committee and the Board.

Customer influence has played a significant role in shaping our improvement journey. Scrutiny activity undertaken by customers has explored key complaint themes, challenged our performance and informed the development of a structured complaints improvement programme. This work has helped us better understand recurring issues, identify where changes are required and target improvements in areas that matter most to customers, particularly the speed with which we respond and resolve concerns.

The progress we are seeing is encouraging. Customer satisfaction with complaint handling has increased and response times have improved considerably. These results suggest that the actions we have taken are delivering positive outcomes. However, we recognise that improvement is an ongoing process, and we remain committed to ensuring that customer feedback and lived experience continue to influence our decisions, priorities and service delivery.

At the same time, genuine improvement requires us to acknowledge where we have not met our own expectations. During the year, the Housing Ombudsman issued a finding of severe maladministration relating to a historic case of serious disrepair. We accept the Ombudsman's findings and deeply regret the impact the situation had on the customer involved. In response, we have reviewed our processes, strengthened oversight arrangements and introduced greater senior leadership scrutiny to ensure lessons are identified and acted upon consistently. Looking ahead, our commitment is clear. We will continue to handle complaints fairly, transparently and with urgency, while focusing not only on resolving individual cases but also on tackling the root causes behind them. Understanding why issues occur is critical if we are to prevent them from happening again and deliver lasting improvements.

This report demonstrates the progress we have made, while also recognising the work that still lies ahead. Our ambition remains to build trust, deliver better services and use every complaint as an opportunity to learn, improve and create a better experience for all our customers.





Response from Dean Anderson

*Executive Director of
Customer Experience*



Delivering excellent customer experiences remains a central priority for Accent, and complaints play an essential role in helping us achieve that goal. They provide valuable insight into where we are succeeding, where we need to improve and what matters most to our customers.

Rather than viewing complaints simply as service failures, we regard them as opportunities to learn, act and strengthen the services we provide.

During 2025/26, the number of complaints we received increased, reflecting a trend seen across the social housing sector. We view this positively, as it demonstrates that customers feel able to raise concerns and share their experiences with us. Every complaint provides important feedback, helping us better understand our customers' expectations and identify areas where change is required.

Over the course of the year, we have continued to develop our complaints service and have seen significant progress, particularly in recent months. While we are encouraged by the improvements achieved so far, we recognise that there is still more to do. Our focus remains on providing faster responses, communicating more effectively throughout the complaint journey and ensuring that customers receive clear updates on the actions we have committed to taking.

Creating a culture where complaints drive improvement is a responsibility shared across the whole organisation, and this report highlights both the progress made and the learning gained during the year.

One of the most important sources of insight has come from Housing Ombudsman determinations. The findings and recommendations arising from these cases have been carefully reviewed and translated into practical improvements through service reviews, management oversight and targeted learning with colleagues. Alongside this, we continue to work closely with our engaged and scrutiny group customers, who provide valuable challenge and help shape the areas we prioritise for improvement.

Repairs continue to be the service area most frequently associated with customer dissatisfaction. As a result, we have used complaint feedback to inform a comprehensive review of the repairs journey, alongside the development of our wider service improvement programme. By examining the customer experience from start to finish and learning directly from complaints, we are identifying opportunities to improve reliability, communication and service delivery, helping us meet our commitments and achieve better outcomes for customers.

Customer feedback has also influenced a number of specific improvement initiatives. Following requests from involved customers, we undertook a detailed review of complaints relating to colleague conduct and behaviour, sharing our findings and planned actions with the National Customer Group. In response to concerns about communication during repairs, we have also introduced "last mile" text messaging from contractors, providing customers with more timely updates and greater reassurance about upcoming appointments. These are practical examples of how customer feedback is directly shaping service improvements across the organisation.

As we look ahead, we will continue to monitor the impact of our improvement programme and measure the difference it is making for customers. Improving satisfaction with complaint handling remains a key objective, supported by a commitment to transparency, accountability and continuous learning. By listening to our customers and acting on what they tell us, we will continue to build a complaints service that not only resolves issues effectively, but also drives lasting improvements across Accent.



To improve our complaint handling service, in 2025-26 we have:

- Complied with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling code.
- Developed, published and delivered the 2025 Complaints and Performance Improvement Report.
- We have reviewed the role of the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) and strengthened oversight, accountability and engagement by introducing quarterly meetings to review complaint handling, alongside structured performance reporting and Housing Ombudsman insights. This has improved visibility of trends, strengthened challenge and assurance, and ensured closer alignment with the Customer Experience Committee to support effective oversight of complaints and service improvement
- Worked with a Continuous Improvement Manager to develop and implement a comprehensive Service Improvement Plan for complaints handling. This has included strengthening the management of “Promised Actions” to ensure clear ownership, improved oversight, and timely resolution of complaints. In addition, we have enhanced our induction programme and developed a dedicated knowledge bank to support colleagues involved in complaint investigation, enabling more consistent, informed, and effective complaint resolution.
- Conducted an internal audit to gain insight into the strengths and areas for development within our complaint handling process, and developed and implemented targeted actions to improve service quality and compliance.
- Strengthened the Complaint Resolution Team by introducing two additional roles dedicated to Stage 2 complaints, improving oversight and supporting more timely and effective resolutions.



To improve our complaint handling service, in 2025-26 we have:

- Strengthened our Complaint Handling Quality Assurance Framework, drawing on learning from internal audit findings, customer feedback, and wider insight from the Housing Ombudsman.
- Delivered annual training on the Complaint Handling Code and our complaints handling policy, embedding the Be Accent principles to ensure our values and expected behaviours are consistently reflected in our approach. This is supported through Mary Gobar International (MGI) customer service training, which focuses on building positive customer relationships through ownership, empathy, communication and accountability. MGI aligns closely with our organisational values, behaviours and competency framework, ensuring that complaint handling is not only technically compliant but also delivered in a way that reflects our culture and commitment to delivering a high quality customer experience.
- Actively promoted our complaints handling service through local newsletters and the annual customer report, increasing customer awareness and accessibility.
- Carried out a review of our Housing Management Service, leading to a reorganisation that strengthens consistency and ensures a more uniform, customer focused approach to service delivery.
- Implemented final-mile tracking with our principal repairs and maintenance contractor in response to the second highest complaint reason within the 2024–25 repairs and maintenance service. Poor contractor communication, which related to contractor communication in 2025–26, is no longer within the top three complaint reasons for the service with this implementation subsequently contributing to a reduction in the percentage of complaint in this category.
- During 2025/26, we strengthened our approach to Estate Services by revisiting and enhancing our communications framework, introducing operational KPIs for customer contact response times, increasing visibility through newsletters and social media, implementing a formal contract management framework to improve oversight and accountability, delivering a successful trial of a new fly-tipping approach resulting in faster response times and improved cost efficiency, and proactively engaging with customers to gather feedback and shape service improvements.



A customer led approach

The National Customer Group (NCG) brings together customers from across our communities so they can share their views and help shape how we deliver services. It gives customers a real voice in what we do, reviewing how services are performing, highlighting what's working well, and telling us where we need to improve, so decisions reflect the needs and experiences of our customers.

The Group is actively engaging with us, including commissioning a detailed review of complaints performance. As part of its 2026-27 work programme, it will focus its scrutiny on the two highest volume complaint categories, repairs and maintenance, and colleague conduct, to support continued service improvement.

Focus on Culture

We have embedded a positive complaint handling culture by positioning complaints as a valuable source of learning and service improvement, rather than solely a measure of performance. Through the Be Accent framework, we have strengthened our customer-focused culture by introducing tools and approaches that reinforce accountability, ownership, coaching and feedback. This includes the implementation of the 'Above and Below the Line' behavioural model, supporting colleagues to recognise and move away from blame, excuses and avoidance, and instead demonstrate ownership, accountability and solution focused behaviours when things go wrong.

In parallel, we have embedded a clear customer first mindset recognising that every interaction counts, all feedback is invaluable, and every colleague plays a role in making a difference. This has been supported by the development and delivery of targeted complaints awareness learning, improving understanding of what constitutes a complaint, Housing Ombudsman expectations, complaint handling timescales, early resolution, and the importance of learning from complaints.

During 2025/26, we undertook significant preparatory work in advance of the forthcoming Competence and Conduct Standard. This has included the development of Role Skills Profiles, training matrices, competency frameworks and qualification pathways to ensure colleagues have the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to deliver high quality services and customer outcomes.

This work reinforces a culture of professionalism, accountability and continuous improvement. It also supports complaint prevention by ensuring colleagues understand both the technical requirements of their role and the behavioural expectations associated with customer service, ownership and learning from feedback.



A customer led approach

Improving Data

In 25/26 we have strengthened our complaints reporting, publishing new reporting products that allow us to identify colleagues whose behaviour has generated complaints as well as to slice our complaints by geographic region, property type, service etc.

In 26/27 we have also invested in a free text assessment tool called WordNerds which uses AI to categorise and analyse the sentiment of our complaints and compliments. We have also invested in a new transactional survey platform, providing greater oversight and more detailed reporting on customer feedback from our complaints handling process. The platform uses AI to surface actionable recommendations, helping us close the loop with customers more effectively.

Alongside this, we have procured a new TSM partner in Acuity, whose enhanced reporting capabilities give us clearer visibility of our TSM satisfaction measures. We have also moved to quarterly capture, enabling us to review TSM feedback on complaints more regularly and implement changes based on customer feedback more responsively. We have also made further enhancements to our reporting suite, including the introduction of complaint tags to enable deeper root cause analysis. Significant development work has also been carried out on our promised actions tracker, improving visibility and oversight of commitments made to customers and helping to ensure we are keeping our promises.



Our complaints handling performance in *2025/2026*

- During 2025/26, 141 cases recorded as complaints were subsequently cancelled or closed without progressing through the formal complaints process. The majority related to service requests, matters outside Accent's responsibilities, issues that fell outside policy timescales, or cases where customers chose to withdraw their complaint after their concerns had been resolved. In all cases, the underlying service request or customer concern continued to be managed by the relevant service team, ensuring customers received appropriate advice, support and assistance where required.
- In 2025-26, we received a total of 2009 stage 1 complaints and 433 stage 2 complaints.
- This represents an increase of 622 stage 1 complaints compared to 2024-25, a 44.84% increase
- Stage 2 complaints rose by 171 cases, making a 65.27% increase from the previous year.
- 89% of stage 1 complaints were responded to on time, a 36% increase from the 53% achieved in 2024-25.
- 70% of stage 2 complaints were responded to on time, a 31% increase from the 38.9% achieved in 2024-25.
- This position is further supported by a defined Complaint Handling Performance Service Improvement Plan, which is set out in more detail within this report and provides assurance that we are taking structured, proactive action to continuously strengthen complaints performance
- A total of 39 customer complaints were escalated to the Housing Ombudsman following completion of our internal complaint process. We are actively focusing on resolving more complaints at the earliest opportunity, strengthening customer trust and reducing the need for unnecessary escalation to the Housing Ombudsman.



Our complaints handling performance in 2025/2026

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

Quarter	Number of cases referred
1 (April 25 – June 25)	3
2 (July 25 – September 25)	12
3 (October 25 – December 25)	15
4 (January 26 – March 26)	9

- The Housing Ombudsman Service concluded 30 investigations during 2025/26 (excluding cases determined as Outside Jurisdiction or Withdrawn). A single Ombudsman investigation may result in multiple findings, as each complaint issue is assessed separately. Across these investigations, the Ombudsman recorded 75 findings, comprising 1% severe maladministration, 29% maladministration, 35% service failure, 11% reasonable redress and 21% no maladministration findings.
- The outcome profile improved compared with 2024/25. No maladministration findings increased from 13% to 21%, reasonable redress findings increased from 5% to 11%, and severe maladministration findings reduced from 2% to 1%. Whilst service failure findings increased from 31% to 35%, Accent's overall maladministration rate reduced significantly from 82% to 67%, representing an improvement of 15 percentage points.
- Whilst these results demonstrate positive progress, we recognise that further improvement is required. During 2025/26, Accent received one Complaint Handling Failure Order (CHFO) and responded by strengthening governance, oversight and assurance arrangements for Housing Ombudsman activity. We continue to use Ombudsman determinations, lessons learned reviews, complaint insight, self assessment activity and service improvement plans to identify root causes, improve customer outcomes and strengthen service delivery. Our focus remains on reducing maladministration, preventing repeat service failures and ensuring learning from complaints is embedded across the organisation to drive continuous improvement.

Table 2: Complaint handling satisfaction per quarter

Quarter	% of customer satisfaction
1 (April 25 – June 25)	60.6
2 (July 25 – September 25)	55.6
3 (October 25 – December 25)	48.7
4 (January 26 – March 26)	57.4

Customer satisfaction with our complaint handling service for 2025-26 was 55.9% a significant improvement from 46.1% in 2024-25.

Complaint handling satisfaction has improved for the second year running, supported by the development of our Quality Assurance Framework. We have continued to focus on driving customer satisfaction, which remains a key priority for 2026-27, with a clear emphasis on improving the quality, consistency and timeliness of our complaint handling service.

Complaint handling performance improvement plan

We are committed to delivering high quality, responsive complaint handling services and continuously improving both the speed and quality of our resolutions. We will achieve this by actively using customer feedback, insight and learning from complaints to shape our services, ensuring we respond to what matters most to our customers and drive meaningful, sustained improvement. To achieve this, we will:

- Launch and embed our new Customer Charter, co-designed with our customers, clearly setting out our commitments, and underpinning how we will act and interact with customers across all services.
- Launch and embed our new Customer Support and Inclusion Policy, co-designed with our customers, to strengthen our ability to understand and respond to individual customer needs and ensure services are accessible, inclusive and responsive.
- Using complaint data and customer feedback, we will develop and deliver a targeted Repairs Service Improvement Plan, focused on our repairs and maintenance service as the highest volume source of complaints, to improve performance, reduce complaint volumes, and enhance customer experience.
- We are reviewing the effectiveness of the Service Improvement Forum, which will now be led by Dean Anderson, our new Executive Director of Customer Experience, to strengthen oversight, accountability and the delivery of service improvement, ensuring that changes are informed by customer feedback, insight, learning from complaints and best practice across the wider housing sector.
- Introduce a dedicated Housing Ombudsman Coordinator role to strengthen our relationship with the Housing Ombudsman Service and enhance oversight, coordination, and responsiveness to Ombudsman enquiries and requests.
- We are introducing a new Customer 360 platform to improve our services for customers. This includes a new complaint handling case management system that will enhance how we handle, track and learn from complaints
- We will undertake a review of our Complaints and Compensation Policy in collaboration with customers, redesigning the approach to ensure it meets the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and Compensation Guidance, and is informed by customer insight and experience.
- A new communications strategy has been co-developed with customers, with a clear focus on enhancing customer communications, and will be delivered over the next three years to improve engagement and service experience.
- During 2026–27, we will work closely with customers to improve green spaces and support biodiversity, using feedback and trial initiatives to shape our long-term approach. We will make it easier for customers to share their views by introducing more local and accessible ways to provide feedback, alongside our digital channels. We will also work with our Repairs teams to take a more preventative approach to pest control, helping to improve estate conditions, reduce recurring issues and create cleaner, safer neighbourhoods for our customers.

Nature of complaints

In 2025/26, Repairs and Maintenance remained the highest reason for complaints however, this reduced significantly from 65.42% in 2024/25 to 54.22%.

Complaints relating to Accent colleagues or teams remained the second highest area of customer dissatisfaction, also reducing from 16.22% to 11.27%.

Planned Works and services increased from 3.99% to 7.54%, becoming the third highest complaint category, while Grounds Maintenance reduced from 4.99% to 3.77%.

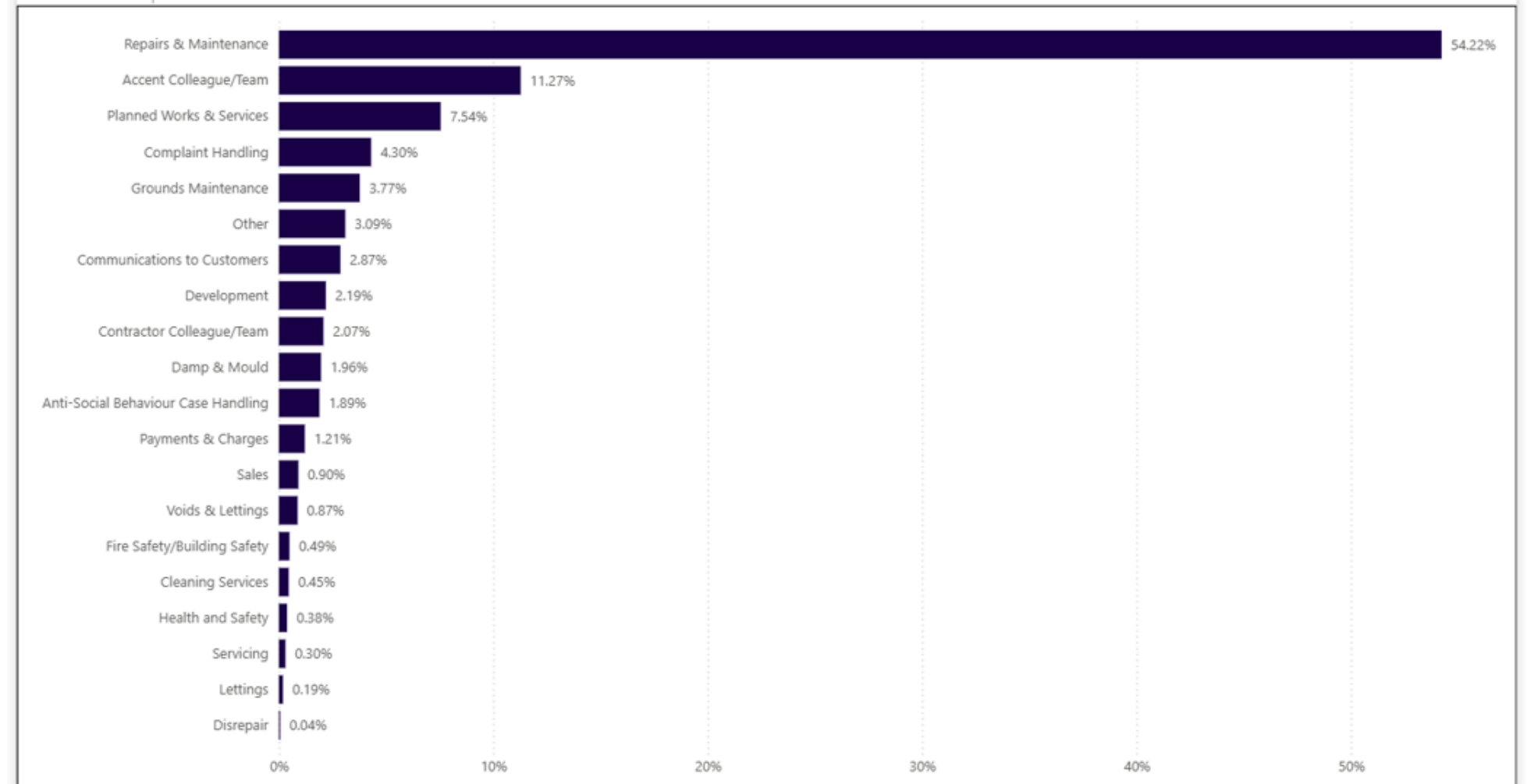
Development complaints increased from 1.65% to 2.19%, and Communication increased slightly from 2.64% to 2.87%.

In 2025/26, we introduced two new complaint categories – Complaint Handling and Anti-Social Behaviour. These accounted for 4.30% and 1.89% of complaints respectively.

Overall, the top three complaint reasons accounted for more than 70% of all complaints received during the year.

In 2025/26, the top three complaint categories accounted for over 70% of all complaints received, highlighting key service areas requiring continued focus. These were

- Repairs & Maintenance
- Accent Colleague / Team
- Planned works and services



Improving complaints relating to repairs & maintenance

Repairs & maintenance

The most common subcategories for Repairs & Maintenance complaints are:

- Work not complete
- Timescales not adhered to
- Standard of work is poor

Learning applied

We have strengthened our management of our principal repairs and maintenance contractor, using feedback from complaints to drive service improvements. This includes enhanced oversight through regular performance meetings, focused review of overdue works and missed appointments, and clearer tracking of actions and outcomes. We also review individual cases to identify learning and opportunities to improve communication and reliability, with a continued focus on addressing the key drivers of complaints and improving the overall customer experience.



Improving complaints relating to Accent colleagues

Accent colleagues

The most common subcategories for Accent Colleague / Team complaints are:

- Did not consider take into account customer vulnerability
- No response to carry out task / fulfill expectation
- Incorrect advice given

Learning applied

We worked with the Accent People team to strengthen our approach to colleague related complaints by improving data visibility, introducing clearer reporting on themes and behaviours, and implementing a consistent approach to identifying and addressing conduct issues. This was supported by reinforcing expectations through competency frameworks, performance objectives and complaints training, alongside targeted learning to promote accountability, customer focus and zero tolerance for poor service, ensuring colleague behaviour is consistently addressed and used to drive service improvement.

We co-designed a Customer Inclusion and Support Policy and Customer Charter with customers to strengthen how we identify and respond to individual customer needs and to set clear expectations for the standards of service our customers can expect. This work is fully aligned to our Be Accent values and reinforces our commitment to delivering inclusive, customer centred services. The new policy and charter will be rolled out in 2026–27, supporting a more consistent and empathetic service delivery.



Improving complaints relating to Planned Work & Servicing

Grounds maintenance

The most common subcategories for planned works & servicing complaints are:

- Work not completed
- Contractor did not keep customer updated
- Standard of work is poor

Learning applied

Planned Works

During 2025/26, we strengthened our approach to contractor management and customer experience by introducing regular collaboration meetings with delivery partners, setting clear expectations around customer service and service delivery. This has supported a more consistent, customer focused culture and improved oversight of performance through more structured engagement and clearer accountability. In addition, we launched a new suite of customer communications, including a “feedback-first” mechanism that enables residents to share concerns, personal circumstances and communication preferences ahead of works, supporting a more tailored, inclusive and responsive service.

Servicing

Accent worked in close partnership with our gas contractor in the South (Sureserve) to strengthen accountability and performance, including active engagement in lessons learned reviews and the implementation of targeted actions to address service failures and reduce complaint volumes.

To further enhance our Planned Works service, we will:

During 2026–27, we will strengthen our approach to planned works delivery by introducing a new Assets Coordinator role with a dedicated focus on customer contact, including coordinating notifications, responding to enquiries and carrying out mid-point check-ins during works. This will enable Project Managers to increase their onsite presence and support a more consistently customer-centred service.

We will also develop a customer facing “lookbook” of kitchens, bathrooms and finishes to help residents better visualise options and make more informed choices ahead of works. In addition, we will enhance planned maintenance specifications by embedding clearer expectations around customer service, including defined survey appointments, response times, communication standards and contractor responsibilities, driving greater consistency, accountability and improved customer outcomes.



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





0345 678 0555



customerservices@accentgroup.org

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