



Complaints Annual Performance Report 2024/25

1. Foreword from the Board member responsible for complaints

The Sparrow Shared Ownership Board views complaints as a valuable opportunity for feedback and learning from our customers. It is important that the Board sets a culture where feedback from customers is seen as positive, where we are proactive in addressing any service failures and we are quickly learning any lessons.

Appointing a Non-Executive lead for complaints demonstrates that we take this subject extremely seriously. Up until May 2025 Sparrow has relied on Sage Homes to handle all complaints under the terms of a management agreement and Sage have reported regularly to the Board on the volume and nature of complaints received. Useful lessons have been learned from the experiences of Sage Homes which have helped to shape the service offering which is now delivered by the Sparrow team. The reports to Board from the Sage Chief Customer Officer not only highlights where complaints have arisen, but also details the work carried out by Sage Homes to rectify or resolve the issues raised.

Sparrow is committed to excellence in the services we provide to our customers. We are confident that we will continue to see improvements in our complaint handling as Sparrow progresses its journey to self-management.

Amanda Davies, Board member responsible for Complaints and Chair of the Customer Scrutiny Panel

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report presents the complaints annual performance for the 2024/25 financial year and was reviewed and approved for publication by the Sparrow Board on 13th June 2025.
- 2.2 As reflected in this report, while complaint levels are around the median for the sector, the Sparrow Board accepts that encouraging complaints and making it easy to complain is crucial. Performance in the 2024/25 financial year showed positive progress.
- 2.3 148 complaints were received, compared to 168 the previous year, and there was a significant improvement in the percentage of responses sent within the Housing Ombudsman's complaint response target.
- 2.4 The quantity of Stage 1 (St. 1) complaints upheld increased compared to 2023/24 however decreased for Stage 2 (St. 2).
- 2.5 Across 2024/25, Sage Housing Ltd (which became Sparrow Shared Ownership) received 19 rulings across seven complaints from the Housing Ombudsman's formal investigations. 42% of the determinations found maladministration (8) with 58% receiving 'no maladministration' (4) 'reasonable redress' (4) or 'service failure' (3).



- 2.6 The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code requires all scheme members to assess their complaint policies and processes in accordance with the Code. The self-assessment has been reviewed and approved by the Board at least once a year is published on our website along with this report.

3. Complaints performance

- 3.1 The Regulator of Social Housing introduced a comprehensive set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) designed to shine a light on landlord performance and empower tenants. 2025 will be the first year when TSMs are reported for Sparrow, for the reporting year April 2024 – March 2025. There are 22 TSMs overall, of which three (CH01, CH02 and TP09) relate to complaints, and performance against these measures in relation to the sector are shown below:

Tenant Satisfaction Measures			Sector Performance		
			Lower Quartile	Median	Top Quartile
CH01	St. 1 complaints relative to size of landlord	33.7	52	35	22
CH01	St. 2 complaints relative to size of landlord	12.5	14	9	5
CH02	St. 1 complaints responded to within timescales	84%	63%	73%	87%
CH02	St. 2 complaints responded to within timescales	93%	64%	79%	94%
TP09	Satisfaction with complaints handling	15%	15%	19%	25%

- 3.2 CH01 is the number of complaints received per 1,000 homes, with Sparrow performance sitting ahead of the sector median for St. 1 complaints, whilst sitting behind the median for St. 2, which means Sparrow customers are more likely to raise a St. 2 formal complaint compared to the sector.
- 3.3 Complaints have been responded to within timescales (with extensions where required for more complex cases) for the majority of complaints, with performance sitting ahead of the median for both St. 1 and St. 2 complaints.
- 3.4 15% of customers are satisfied with the way in which their complaint was handled, sitting below the median. There has been significant focus throughout 2024/25 to improve the customer experience, highlighted throughout this report.
- 3.5 The Sparrow Board have set the ambition to deliver top quartile customer satisfaction and therefore complaint levels are expected to fall alongside improvements in responses to customers.
- 3.6 2024/25 performance versus 2023/24 is shown in the table below:

	Sage Housing Limited 2023 / 2024	Sparrow 2024 / 2025
St. 1 complaints logged	115	108
St. 2 complaints logged	53	40
Total complaints logged	168	148
St. 1 complaints responded to within timescales	55%	84%
St. 2 complaints responded to within timescales	74%	93%

- 3.7 In 2024/25, the number of complaints received has decreased by 12%, when compared to previous years. This is against a backdrop where there has been an increase in complaints across the housing sector (the Housing Ombudsman saw an increase of +2,000 formal investigations in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24).
- 3.8 This can be attributed to the resolution of defects over time, as early years for this cohort had relatively high levels of complaints related to defects.



- 3.9 These levels also reflect improvements in the service provision by the teams across Sage Homes, who provided Sparrow's services, as lessons have been learned from past failings.
- 3.10 Only 20 complaints (14%) were responded to outside of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling timeframes this year. Of these, 17 were St. 1 complaints. This is a positive result as it would have been possible for all these complaints to be escalated to St. 2, in accordance with the code, but 17 complaints were resolved to the customers' satisfaction at St. 1. This is also a marked improvement from the previous year where 39% (66) complaints were responded to outside of the Complaint Handling timeframe. This improvement was a result of growing the Complaints team and building a stronger culture from all teams across the business in responding to customers and the complaints team promptly. Mistakes will be made but it is the response from all employees to those failings that customers recognise.
- 3.11 The complaint outcomes are highlighted in the table below:

Complaint Outcome	Stage 1		Stage 2	
	2023/24	2024/25	2023/24	2024/25
Upheld	38%	54%	61%	50%
Partially upheld	44%	30%	24%	28%
Not upheld	19%	16%	15%	22%

- 3.12 During 2024/25, 54% of complaints at Stage 1 were upheld (+16% vs 2023/24) demonstrating that we are acknowledging where Sage Homes/Sparrow has done something wrong at the earliest opportunity. This is supported again by a reduction in complaints being escalated to Stage 2 and an increase in complaints not upheld, demonstrating that the Stage 1 investigations are thorough and are being increasingly accepted by our customers as fair responses.
- 3.13 In 2024/25, Sparrow received three no maladministration, three reasonable redress, eight maladministration and three service failure determinations from the Ombudsman. We have summarised these complaints below and the lessons learned by Sage Homes. The lessons have also benefited Sparrow in the development of the new service offering and processes relating to working with Sage Homes moving forwards.
- Complaint 202305214: 1x Reasonable Redress. Summary: the complaint related to delays and communication issues during the resale process of a shared ownership property, including documentation queries and solicitor coordination. The Ombudsman found that while there were service shortcomings, the landlord acknowledged these, apologised, offered proportionate compensation, amounting to reasonable redress. Lessons learned: while the Ombudsman determined the outcome offered a constituted reasonable redress, this case highlighted process and communication weaknesses in managing resales. As a result, we implemented a clearer SLA for pre-sales document turnaround, improved liaison procedures between the Legal and the Homeowner Services teams, and introduced pre-emptive guidance in Welcome Packs to set accurate expectations with customers at the point of resale.



- Complaint 202225000: 2x Maladministration (defect handling and communications) and 1 Service failure (complaint handling). Summary: the landlord's unclear communication around responsibilities and inconsistent defect processing led to confusion and delays. Lessons learned: Sage Homes implemented a new system to handle defects which provides better monitoring and communication, revised our defect reporting guidance, aligned developer and internal expectations and delivered refresher training on complaint escalation timelines, with a new joint oversight process between teams managing defects and customer relations. This complaint related to 2022/23 issues and we have since made significant improvements to guidance and internal processes, including clearer information of defect liability and stronger communication protocols. Ombudsman ordered £1,250 in compensation and improvement actions.
- Complaint 202306928: 2x Maladministration (ASB report handling and complaint handling), 1 Service failure (handling reports of dog without lead) and 3 x No Maladministration (handling reports of the neighbours' inconsiderate parking, handling of the resident's concerns for the welfare of the neighbours' cats and dog and handling of the resident's concerns about the placement of a hedge). Summary: this was regarding antisocial behaviour and the underlying matters were complex and often outside Sage's direct control. Lessons learned: Sage took steps to improve complaints handling, antisocial behaviour procedures and employee training. They implemented improved ASB risk assessment training, clarified team responsibilities in neighbourhood disputes, and provided further training on empathetic communication training across frontline roles. ASB tracking and intervention tools have also been added to internal systems.
- Complaint 202211908: 2x Maladministration (Damp and Mould handling and Complaint handling). Summary: After delays in handling damp and mould issues, Sage offered £300 compensation but the Ombudsman found this not proportionate. Lessons learned: Sage increased compensation to £750 and introduced a new damp and mould policy to align with Ombudsman guidance, alongside updating the Complaints policy. Sage has also launched a formal damp and mould triage process and introduced mandatory record-keeping protocols to ensure communication and defects are consistently tracked.
- Complaint 202219349: 2x Maladministration (handling noise concerns and complaint handling). Summary: Sage failed to act promptly to support a customer with health vulnerabilities regarding concerns about noise transference within the property. After acknowledging the issue and offering compensation, Sage also resolved the issue and continued to support the customer in engaging with their local authority. Lessons learned: This case demonstrated gaps in support for vulnerable residents and poor follow-through on noise related complaints. Sage refined their escalation routes for unresolved defects and instituted a clearer process for developer engagement in a shared ownership context.



- Complaint 202331546: 1x Service failure (handling repair request). Summary: while Sage were entitled to refuse to repair broken tiles outside of the Defect Liability Period, it was found our communications and policy wording were unclear. Sage ultimately replaced the tiles as a goodwill gesture and on Ombudsman orders, paid compensation and reviewed the Defects policy. This case exposed how unclear defect liability guidance and poor documentation can undermine trust. Lessons learned: Sage has updated all move-in and welcome materials to clearly explain the defect liability period responsibilities, delivered new training for staff attending end-of-defect inspections, and introduced an escalation path when disagreements arise over what was recorded.
- Complaint 202303096: 2x Maladministration (Defect handling and complaint handling). Summary: this case involved long delays in resolving a drainage defect at a shared ownership property, resulting in extended disruption for the resident. There were also failings in communication and complaint resolution throughout the process. Lessons learned: Sage introduced a live defect tracking dashboard to flag unresolved issues and formalised a contractor follow-up process to avoid escalation delays.

4. Lessons learned and service improvements

- 4.1 Of the complaints received, the department with largest number were for Homeowner Services (47), followed by Aftercare relating to customer's property defects (30) and Rent and Service Charge team (17). This is not unexpected given the volume of interactions that these services have with customers and the nature of new build properties and the establishment of new communities, buildings and estates. When analysing the category of complaints further, the top reasons for customers complaining related to:
- Communication issues
 - Resale delays (often out of Sage/Sparrow's control due to Land Registry registration)
 - Latent defects
 - Service charge breakdown and increases
 - Maintenance and repair issues
- 4.2 These complaints revealed underlying issues touching on different themes that are important to our customer throughout the entirety of their journey. Many relate to our customer's initial sale and defect experience provided under Sage. Sage have learnt from these issues and made adjustments to their processes covering these areas. Sparrow will not be handling initial sales and defects but will note these learnings as some of these issues may still be raised by our customers. Sparrow have noted specifically the key learnings highlighted with the broader issue of communication during key processes. Like resales and staircasing. In particular, where our customers highlighted they felt responsibilities were unclear and there was inconsistent information. This has shaped our customer strategy and customer charter with a focus on clear communication by listening to our customers and taking accountability
- 4.3 All complaints are seen as a learning opportunity and efforts are made to ensure that this learning is captured and implemented, to prevent similar complaints arising in the future.
- 4.4 Sparrow Shared Ownership is fortunate to have the learnings from a larger company in Sage Homes. The experiences of Sage Homes has helped to shape the service design for Sparrow Shared Ownership with the aim of delivering high quality customer service.



Sparrow has also managed to attract some of the Sage Homes Homeowner Services team who bring a wealth of experience and customer knowledge with them.

4.5 A summary of the learning that has been identified during 2024/25 is set out below. Each of these changes was made with the customer experience in mind.

4.6 Customer service:

- Review and restructure of Homeowner Services team to patch or 'Hub' basis: existing cases reassigned as per new structure to ensure ownership and action by Hub officer. This allows officers to get to know their 'patch' and customers now have a dedicated officer who understands their area, leading to faster, more personalised service and better relationship building. This has been adopted in the operating model for Sparrow.
- Review case Service Level Agreement (SLA) to ensure they are appropriate for Homeowner Services tasks: produced and publicised formal SLAs for team to work to and identified risk areas where not being met, with improvement plans. Residents benefit from clearer expectations and quicker responses.
- Streamline shared mailboxes: reviewed and reduced the number of shared mailboxes. Reduces missed or delayed responses and ensures customer queries are handled promptly by the right team who feel more accountable.
- Process for dealing with ad hoc and "on the day" enquiries from solicitors during resales process: process has been reviewed and closer working with the Legal team means better communication and handling of enquiries. Improves the speed and accuracy of sales transactions, reducing stress for the sellers.
- Hub list and post code look-up tool required: provision of spreadsheet with look-up for hub/ officer information for current portfolio and pipeline. Ensures customer queries are routed efficiently to the appropriate officer for quicker resolution.
- Clarity between resales and staircasing processes: procedure developed and cross-checking for issues and opportunities in place. Helps both staff and customers understand and navigate these distinct processes correctly, reducing delays.
- Not all officers received legal training: legal training rolled out to all officers including the Complaints team. Legal training improves the accuracy of responses and consistency of advice given to the leaseholders.
- Differences in abilities and skills across the team: Competency Matrix and personal development plans implemented. The Competency Matrix and development plans ensure all customers receive the same quality of service.
- Unclear parking schedules and allocations: new data requirements set for customer management system now formalised through standard templates with mandatory fields. These templates reduce disputes and confusion over parking entitlements.
- Time taken for pre-sales pack is too long: new SLA on turnaround time agreed and implemented. New SLAs give sellers more certainty and reduce delays in property transactions.
- Customer not aware of their responsibilities (e.g. boundary management, grass cutting of demised area etc): agreed that Hub officer will explain responsibilities to the customer, reducing complaints and misunderstandings.
- Frequent complaints regarding land registry, despite this not being in Sage's control: tick-box added to resale, staircasing and remortgaging online forms to ensure customers are aware of possible land registry delays and to acknowledge that this is not in Sage's control before proceeding with their application. Clear warnings on forms prepare customers for possible legal delays and reduce complaints due to miscommunication.

4.7 Third parties:



- Managing the Managing Agents: challenge service charge budgets by reviewing deficits, including extraordinary and non-budgeted expenses, and communicating with customers when this occurs. Tighter scrutiny over service charge budgets helps protect customers from unexpected costs.
- Review structure and use of consultancies, third parties and national agents: third party agency log created with breakdown, analysis and recommendations. Ensures value for money and improves the consistency of external services provided to customers.

4.8 Payments:

- Review arrears management and reporting: procedure updated to ensure a standard approach and new Hub reporting is comprehensive and accurate. Standardisation ensures consistent support and clearer communication for customers struggling with payments.
- Shared Ownership repayment plans should be no longer than 12 months in duration: Income Collection Policy reviewed and updated to reflect this. Offers manageable, time-bound payment options that are easier for customers to plan for.
- Understand causes of increased arrears and create action plan to reduce: arrears breakdown has focus for each team member and is tracked daily. Enables earlier, more targeted interventions to prevent financial difficulties from escalating.
- Advise advance payers of new charges: identified need to communicate new charges and requirements around payment dates to avoid multiple adjustments. Prevents unexpected bills and maintains customer trust through early communication.

4.9 Customers can raise enquiries through third parties outside of the complaints process. During 2024/25, 4 MP enquiries were received and 100% of these were responded to within five working days. These enquiries related to service charges, damp and mould, estate maintenance and outstanding repairs.

5. Implementing Learning

The design of Sparrow's operating model and systems has already been influenced by some of the learning in this report with the aim of making communication more straight-forward. Sparrow phone lines have a simpler IVR with one option for customers to connect directly to the Customer Service Team. Sparrow has one customer enquiries email and a portal channel that are all overseen by the same team ensuring all customer communications come back to the same team. We acknowledge that this won't solve all the concerns raised by customers around communication and work still needs to be done on keeping customers informed with clear information.

The summary of learnings above will be used to follow through actions already initiated and to implement changes where they can be. This will be done in collaboration with our customers. This will initially be through our customer scrutiny panel but will try to draw on the feedback from our customers raising these complaints or who have experienced a particular process.

6. Conclusion



Sparrow is in a unique position as a new Registered Provider, in being able to draw on the experiences and learnings of Sage. This has already helped inform the way Sparrow was created but gives us the ability to check back with our customers on known areas of dissatisfaction at an early stage. This gives us the opportunity to work with our customers in our first year to address the issues that mean the most to them.