

Annual Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

Reporting period: 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

1. Executive summary

Dawson Housing Limited (Dawson) has prepared this report to support its 2026 annual submission under the Housing Ombudsman statutory Complaint Handling Code. The review is intentionally evidence-led: it records what Dawson can substantiate, acknowledges specific weaknesses where these are evidenced, and sets out the controls introduced to improve complaint handling and assurance. It does not assume that gaps in historic records mean that every complaint was mishandled. The report should be read alongside Dawson's annual self-assessment, governing body response and Complaints Handling Policy v3.0.

Data assurance and transparency

The records available for this annual review do not contain a complete complaint-level register for the full reporting period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. One complaint record within that period can be verified from the available historic register (DHL2203/112, dated 22 March 2026). This must not be interpreted as Dawson's total complaint volume for 2025/26. Dawson has not estimated or retrospectively reconstructed an annual total where source records are unavailable. This is reported as a historic record-keeping and management-information limitation. It limits the level of assurance Dawson can provide for the period, but it is not treated as evidence that every complaint was mishandled. Corrective controls are set out below.

2. Reporting scope and governance

The reporting period for this annual report is 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. For a landlord submitting by 30 September 2026, the Housing Ombudsman's annual-submission guidance requires the complaints report to cover the previous financial year, April 2025 to March 2026. Dawson's complaint handling arrangements are overseen through the Board, the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC), the accountable senior lead and the Resident Engagement / Complaints function. Complaints Handling Policy v3.0, approved by the Dawson Housing Limited Board on 1 January 2026, establishes a single two-stage process and expressly retains Dawson's accountability where services are delivered through managing agents, contractors or other third parties.

Governance role	2026 position
Approval body	Dawson Housing Limited Board
Member Responsible for Complaints	Neil Thorneycroft
Policy owner	CEO
Operational complaints function	Resident Engagement Team / designated Complaints Officer
Accountable senior lead	Nizam Hussain – Head of Operations

3. Complaint performance - 2025/26

The Ombudsman requires both quantitative and qualitative analysis of complaint handling performance, including the types of complaints refused. The records available for this annual review do not evidence a complete complaint-level dataset for the full period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. Dawson has therefore reported the evidence that is available, disclosed the limitation clearly and avoided creating unsupported annual totals or percentages. The absence of a complete historic dataset limits assurance over performance for the period; it is not, by itself, evidence that all complaints were handled incorrectly.

Measure	2025/26 evidence available	Validation status
Verified complaint data available for 2025/26	One complaint record can be verified from the available historic register	Important: this is not Dawson's total complaint volume for 2025/26. Complete complaint-level records for the full 12-month period are not available, so no annual total has been estimated or retrospectively reconstructed.
Stage 1 complaints	Not verifiable	Stage coding for the evidenced complaint / full-year dataset is not available in the supplied register
Stage 2 escalations	Not verifiable	Complete escalation records for the reporting period are not available
Complaints refused / not accepted	Not verifiable	No complete exclusions record is available for the reporting period
Stage 1 responses within Code timescale	Not verifiable	The evidenced complaint shows 'response received: yes', but the register does not provide sufficient stage/date information to calculate Code timeliness for the year
Stage 2 responses within Code timescale	Not verifiable	Complete Stage 2 acknowledgement / response-date data is not available
Extensions used	Not verifiable	Complete extension records are not available
Outcome of verified record	Upheld	The single record that can be verified within the reporting period (DHL2203/112) was subsequently recorded as closed / upheld. Full-year outcome totals are not verifiable.
Financial remedies / compensation	Annual total not verifiable	No financial remedy is recorded against the verified March 2026 record in the supplied log; Ombudsman determination 202423189 separately ordered £600 compensation.

For the reporting period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, the historic records available for this annual review do not contain a complete 12-month complaints dataset. One complaint record within that period can be verified from the available live register: DHL2203/112, dated 22 March 2026. This is not presented as Dawson's annual complaint total and must not be interpreted as the total number of complaints received during 2025/26. Because complaint-level records for the remainder of the reporting period are not available within the evidence supplied, Dawson cannot reliably quantify the full-year complaint volume, stage profile, timeliness or outcomes. Dawson has therefore not estimated or retrospectively reconstructed missing figures and has strengthened the central register, mandatory complaint-record fields and governance oversight so that future annual reporting can be supported by a complete audit trail.

4. Housing Ombudsman findings and published performance

During the reporting year, the Housing Ombudsman published determination 202423189 on 10 October 2025. The Ombudsman made five findings: three findings of maladministration (ASB / related staff conduct, repairs, and complaint handling), one service failure (incorrect information), and one finding of no maladministration (support). The Ombudsman ordered a senior apology, £600 compensation and organisational learning to be shared with relevant staff, including the managing agent.

The determination highlighted weaknesses in complaint handling, record keeping and communication, including a late Stage 1 response, insufficient escalation information at Stage 1, an inadequate Stage 2 response and weaknesses in the previous approach to redress. Dawson has treated these findings as specific learning points and has used them to strengthen its complaint-handling controls rather than assuming that the findings describe every complaint or every part of the service.

The Housing Ombudsman's landlord-performance archive lists an individual 2025/26 performance report for Dawson. The Board should consider that published performance information alongside the October 2025 determination when scrutinising this annual report and self-assessment.

Housing Ombudsman determination 202423189: <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/decisions/dawson-housing-limited-202423189/>

Housing Ombudsman - Dawson Housing Limited landlord page: <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords/dawson-housing-limited/>

5. Learning and service improvement

The 2026 regulatory review has been used to translate complaint learning into clearer operational and governance controls. Dawson's approach is to acknowledge evidenced failures, remedy them where appropriate, and use them to improve the wider service. Complaints Handling Policy v3.0 strengthens the areas identified through the Ombudsman determination and Dawson's own review of complaint handling, including managing-agent accountability, Stage 1 and Stage 2 standards, remedies, record keeping, quality assurance and Board oversight. Complaint records from 1 April 2026 onwards fall outside the 2025/26 quantitative reporting period and are therefore not counted in the annual performance figures; they may, however, be considered as clearly identified post-period evidence of implementation, learning and the direction of improvement.

Improvement	2026 control / action
Managing-agent accountability	Dawson now expressly retains accountability for complaints about services delivered on its behalf. Managing agents and contractors form part of Dawson's two-stage process, must provide evidence promptly and cannot require residents to complete a separate complaints route first.
Clear Stage 1 / Stage 2 control	The approved policy sets five-working-day acknowledgement standards, 10-working-day Stage 1 and 20-working-day Stage 2 response standards, mandatory response content, controlled extensions and resident-update requirements.
Remedies and putting things right	Complaint handlers can provide apologies, corrective action, reimbursement and proportionate financial redress at any stage. Remedies must reflect resident impact and be tracked through to completion.

Improvement	2026 control / action
Record keeping and data quality	A minimum complaint record is now defined, including stage, acknowledgement and response dates, complaint definition, evidence, findings, remedy, outstanding actions, learning and closure. The central register will be reconciled and quality-checked so that future annual reports are fully evidenced.
Quality assurance and timeliness	Dawson will use the policy response checklist and routine case-file review to test acknowledgement dates, response times, decision quality, escalation rights and completion of agreed actions. Missed deadlines or material weaknesses will be escalated rather than obscured.
Board and MRC oversight	Complaint volumes, categories, outcomes, timeliness, remedies, themes, Ombudsman outcomes and improvement actions will be reported regularly to the MRC and Board so that assurance is based on evidence rather than policy alone.
Learning, resident voice and culture	Complaints are treated as a core service and a source of intelligence. Learning can be shared through staff training, resident engagement, the Resident Voice Panel, the Managing Agent Panel, Board reporting and other assurance mechanisms, with a focus on preventing recurrence rather than allocating blame.
Direction of travel	Recent complaint records show stronger use of formal stages, clearer investigation records, findings, remedies and identified learning. Dawson will continue to test whether the strengthened framework is being applied consistently and will report exceptions transparently.

6. Progress against previous commitments

The 2024/25 report committed Dawson to improve accessibility and visibility, broaden complaint channels and strengthen resident engagement. Complaints Handling Policy v3.0 now provides complaint routes in person, by telephone, email, website, writing and through an authorised representative, and embeds accessibility and reasonable-adjustment requirements. Since 1 April 2026, Dawson has also moved toward clearer formal Stage 1 / Stage 2 recording, stronger management of complaints involving managing agents, more explicit remedy and learning records, and greater use of complaint information through resident, management and governance assurance routes. These post-period developments are reported as improvement evidence only and are not included in the 2025/26 complaint totals.

7. Priorities for 2026/27

- Complete a single reconciled complaints dataset with reliable Stage 1 / Stage 2 coding, acknowledgement dates, response dates, outcomes, remedies and closure evidence.
- Introduce routine quality assurance of complaint responses against the mandatory response checklist in Policy v3.0.

- Report complaint volumes, categories, outcomes, timeliness, remedies and recurring themes to the MRC and Board at an agreed regular frequency.
- Use complaint themes to test managing-agent performance and require evidence of completed corrective actions.
- Embed a standard complaint-handling objective for all relevant employees and third parties, aligned to Code provision 9.8.
- Continue resident awareness work so that low complaint volumes are not assumed to represent satisfaction or absence of service issues.
- Publish clear evidence of completed service improvements and report back to residents and relevant governance forums.

8. Self-assessment and governing body assurance

Dawson has prepared an updated self-assessment against all provisions of the statutory Complaint Handling Code. The assessment distinguishes between the existence of compliant policy and process controls and the strength of evidence that those controls have been applied consistently in historic cases. Where the annual review has identified an evidence or assurance gap, this is stated openly and linked to a corrective action. The final self-assessment must be reviewed and approved by the Board and published alongside this report and the governing body response.

9. Source material

- Complaints Handling Policy v3.0 - approved by Board 1 January 2026
- Dawson Housing Complaints Log - current live tracker supplied September 2026
- Dawson Housing Self-Assessment 2025
- Dawson Housing Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Plan 2024/25
- Housing Ombudsman determination 202423189 - 10 October 2025
- Housing Ombudsman annual submissions guidance and statutory Complaint Handling Code