

## Communication Scrutiny Project Output Report

### Executive Summary

20 participants completed the Communication Scrutiny project.

### All communication channels- Key findings

#### Key Themes and Findings

1. **Listens and Acts (19 mentions)**

Tenants report delays in responses, missed call-backs, and unresolved repairs, leading to frustration and reduced trust.

*Example:* "I emailed housing about a tenancy query... missed one phone call and they never got back to me."

2. **Call Back and Follow-Up (15 mentions)**

Lack of timely call-backs and follow-ups creates a perception of poor communication and broken trust.

*Suggested Improvement:* Enforce CRM usage for logging call-backs and review service standards.

3. **Repairs and Maintenance (14 mentions)**

Issues include missed appointments and incomplete repair logging. Recent changes to scheduling and surveys aim to improve satisfaction.

*Suggested Improvement:* Monitor Total Mobile system and ensure accurate repair logging.

4. **Internal Communication (11 mentions)**

Poor inter-department communication delays resolutions and frustrates tenants.

*Suggested Improvement:* Introduce single point of contact and accountability for tenant queries.

5. **Accessibility and Vulnerability (11 mentions)**

Gaps in supporting vulnerable tenants and using data effectively were noted.

*Suggested Improvement:* Maintain updated vulnerability database and adapt services accordingly.

6. **Stigma (9 mentions)**

Social housing stigma persists, with assumptions about tenant availability and stereotypes impacting service delivery.

*Suggested Improvement:* Staff training on stigma and unconscious bias; ensure appointment times are agreed.

## Telephone - Key Findings

- Strengths: Polite/helpful when ownership is clear; next steps explained.
- *Suggested Improvement*: Reduce filler words; avoid abrupt endings; set callback timeframes; log notes consistently.

## Email - Key Findings

- Strengths: Concise answers resolving queries.
- *Suggested Improvement*: Standard templates acknowledging all items; timeframes; contractor identity; rescheduling instructions; one-job-per-report; photo guidance.

## Live Chat - Key Findings

- Strengths: Process explanations when agents engage.
- *Suggested Improvement*: empathetic response; accessibility support, fix time zone.

## Complaint Response - Key Findings

- Strengths: Clear timelines when present; acknowledgement of failings and next steps.
- *Suggested Improvement*: Structured updates; single-point of contact for complaint handling, realistic timescales; improve recording contact on CRM system.

## Recommendations

17 recommendations approved by Tenant Board with 16 recommendations approved by the Customer Experience Team.

## **Introduction**

The Tenant Board voted to conduct a scrutiny review of the Customer Services housing telephone line with a specific focus on how we communicate with our tenants. The Tenant Board has chosen this project as communication is often a comment made on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey and is a reoccurring theme in our complaints. Our current TSM score on “Listen and Acts” is 48.3% for Babergh and 54.7% for Mid Suffolk. The Tenant Board feels this exercise may help to identify incidents of failure of demand and recommendations for improvements. After reviewing the data around the council’s Customer Services Centre alongside tenant satisfaction data, the Board voted to scrutinise this service including the review of all main communication channels including telephone, emails, live chat and complaints responses.

The Tenant Board understands that poor communication is a common theme when tenants give feedback on our services, including our two most recent scrutiny projects around anti-social behavior and complaints.

## **Aims of the project**

- To understand the ability of our Customer Services Officers to resolve enquiries at the first point of contact and reduce the need for double handling and improve customer experience.
- To understand how excellent customer service is defined, recorded and good practice is implemented across the Customer Services Team.
- To try and improve the service that our tenants receive when contacting their landlord.
- To understand where we can improve internal communication

## **Preliminary Analysis**

The Tenant Board reviewed comments from all 4 satisfaction surveys from 24-25 and 25-26.

- Tenant Satisfaction Measures
- Anti-Social Behaviour Transactional Survey
- New Lettings Transactional Survey
- Repairs Satisfaction Survey

The Tenant Board recognise that “Communication”, “Timeliness and Responsiveness” and “Listening and Acting” feature as highly commented on categories for 24/25 and 25/26.

## Categorisation of Tenant Feedback 25/26

### Attributes

Attribute	Count	%	Sentiment Score
Accessibility	1	0.3%	-5.00
Accountability	17	2.8%	-3.35
Appointments / Convenience	10	1.5%	-4.50
Communication / Transparency	145	24.9%	-4.21
Consistency			-
Effort	50	8.4%	-4.10
Empathy	16	2.0%	-4.88
Fairness	4	1.0%	-2.50
Listening / Acting	243	39.1%	-3.93
Quality of Work / Service	80	11.7%	-4.10
Resolution	152	24.4%	-3.89
Safety	22	3.3%	-3.64
Satisfaction	4	1.0%	-2.75
Staff Conduct	7	1.0%	-3.57
Trust	18	3.0%	-5.00
Worker Conduct	10	1.3%	-4.60
Timeliness / Responsiveness	313	42.4%	-4.12
No Comments	10	2.5%	-1.00
Subcategory, no attribute (yet)	134	27.2%	-2.65

### Categorising Resident Feedback: Our Approach

Not every category in the Acuity framework includes cross-cutting attributes. Some categories - such as Property Condition, Building Safety, Neighbourhoods, Estate Services, and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion - capture highly specific topics or issues in their own right. For these, attributes are not always relevant or applicable. Instead, they provide direct insights on particular themes (e.g., “damp”, “anti-social behaviour”, or “wellbeing and inclusion”) without layering on further attributes.

For categories such as Property Services, Housing Services, Support Services, Estate Services, and Tenancy Management, we apply a suite of cross-cutting attributes to capture the underlying drivers of sentiment and identify what matters most to residents within those service areas.

#### How We Categorise Comments

Turning unstructured resident feedback into meaningful insights requires a careful, multi-stage process:

**Model Design:** We start by defining a robust categorisation model tailored to the complexities of social housing feedback - balancing top-down knowledge of sector priorities with bottom-up analysis of real resident language.

**Expression Building:** For each category and attribute, we develop comprehensive Boolean expressions, using both natural language variations and real comment data. These expressions identify key terms, phrases, and patterns relevant to each theme or attribute.

**Testing & Tuning:** We rigorously test and refine each expression to maximise both precision (how accurately comments match the intended theme) and recall (how many relevant comments we capture). This is an iterative process that balances depth, breadth, and business relevance.

**Deployment:** Once expressions are built and quality assured, comments are automatically categorised by the model, enabling us to quantify feedback at multiple levels (category, sub-category, attribute) and track sentiment for each.

The table shows the number & percentage of mentions and the sentiment score for each attribute across your entire survey dataset, across all questions. Click the number or percentage to explore the corresponding resident comments.

### Why Are Some Comments “Uncategorised”?

No matter how comprehensive our model, there will always be a proportion of comments that remain “uncategorised - which can be seen in the “Sub category, no attribute” section.” This is perfectly normal - resident language is endlessly varied, and some comments fall outside the scope of defined themes, offer too little detail, or reference issues not yet captured by the model. Currently, the uncategorised bucket is larger than usual as we are actively writing and expanding our expressions. Over time, as our model matures, the proportion of uncategorised comments will reduce, helping us ensure the vast majority of meaningful feedback is captured and analysed.



## Categorisation of Tenant Feedback 24/25

### Attributes

Attribute	Count	%	Sentiment Score
Accessibility	1	0.2%	-5.00
Accountability	18	2.9%	-3.72
Appointments / Convenience	18	1.9%	-5.00
Communication / Transparency	161	25.7%	-3.22
Consistency	1	0.2%	-5.00
Effort	35	5.6%	-3.80
Empathy	8	1.5%	-3.75
Fairness	4	0.5%	-2.50
Listening / Acting	471	87.9%	-2.39
Quality of Work / Service	45	6.1%	-4.42
Resolution	99	13.3%	-3.76
Safety	5	0.7%	-5.00
Satisfaction	1	0.2%	+5.00
Staff Conduct	5	0.7%	-1.40
Trust	13	2.7%	-1.62
Worker Conduct	4	0.2%	-5.00
Timeliness / Responsiveness	233	33.9%	-3.46
No Comments	12	2.7%	-0.83
Subcategory, no attribute (yet)	63	11.4%	-2.30

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Tenant Board also reviewed below data from transactional and perception satisfaction surveys.

Measure	Survey	Timeframe	score
Kept Informed (satisfaction)	Anti Social Behaviour	Q1 24/25- Q1 25/26	49%
Kept Informed	Tenant Satisfaction Measures	Q1 24/25- Q1 25/26	68%
Listen and Acts	Tenant Satisfaction Measures	Q1 24/25- Q1 25/26	52%
Kept informed	Repairs	April 2024- June 2025	83%
<u>Kept informed</u>	Lettings	April 2024- June 2025	82%

Using the above information along with commentary from Anti-Social Behaviour and Complaints scrutiny project the Tenant Board made the decision to complete a scrutiny project on Communication.

## Scrutiny Methodology

Participants volunteered to take part in this scrutiny project which was advertised in the My Home Bulletin newsletter. Initially 46 participants volunteered, which were separated into 5 groups. Each group received:

- 1x telephone transcript
- 1x email transcript
- 1x live chat transcript
- 1x complaint and 1x complaint response

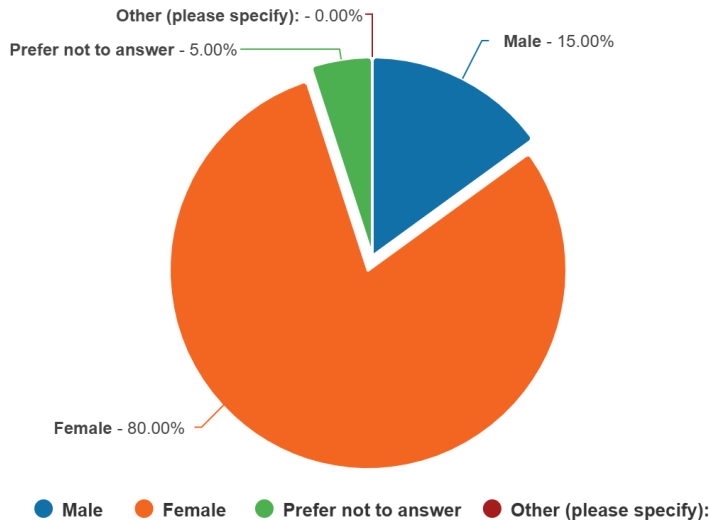
Participants then completed a survey and were asked to provide feedback on the above about how we could improve this communication channel. There was also an opportunity to comment on their own experiences of communicating with the council.

## Summary

- 20 responses
- District: Babergh:13, Mid Suffolk:7.
- Gender: Female: 16, Male: 3, Prefer not to answer: 1. Our tenant base is made up with 63.2% Females 63.2% and 36.% Male. **In this project Females make up 80% with only 15% Males and 5% (1 participant) choosing to answer this question.**
- Age: 56-65: 7, 66+: 6, 46-55: 4, 25-35: 2, 36-45: 1. **The average age of Babergh and Mid Suffolks tenant base is 57, the average age of our participant group was 56-65.**
- Ethnicity: White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British: 19, I do not wish to disclose my ethnic origin: 1. **White British makes up 83.75% of our tenant base, whereas White British makes up 95% of this project.**
- Vulnerabilities/adaptations disclosed: 12 vulnerabilities declared from 4 participants total. **42.93% of Babergh tenants have reported at least one vulnerability, with 44.41% of Mid Suffolk tenants. Tenant reporting at least one vulnerability in this project is 20%. 21.62% of our tenant's base (combined) have told us of two or more vulnerabilities, in this project 15% told us about two or more vulnerabilities.**

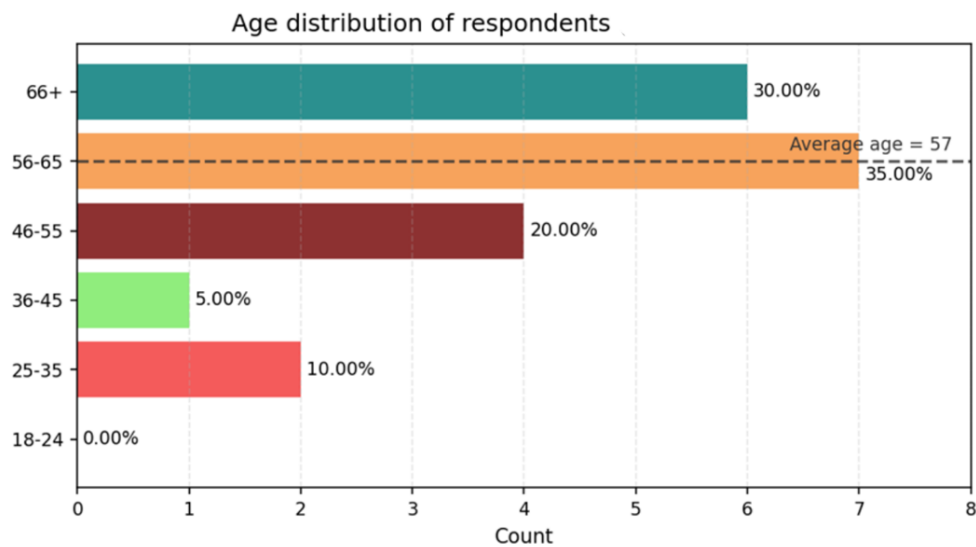
## Participants Demographics

### Participant Gender Distribution:

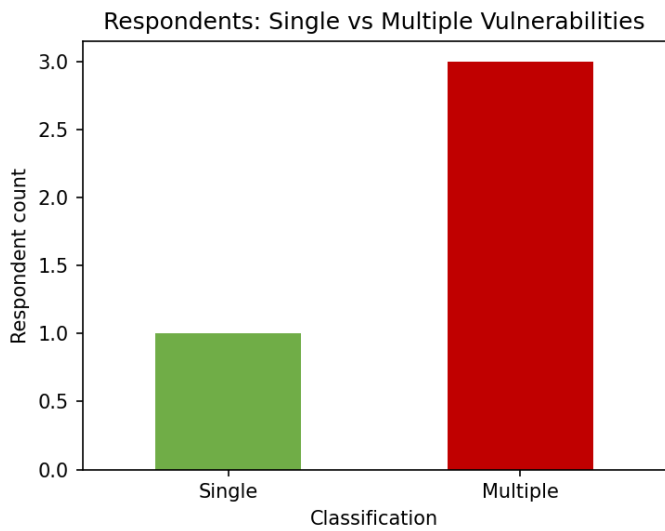
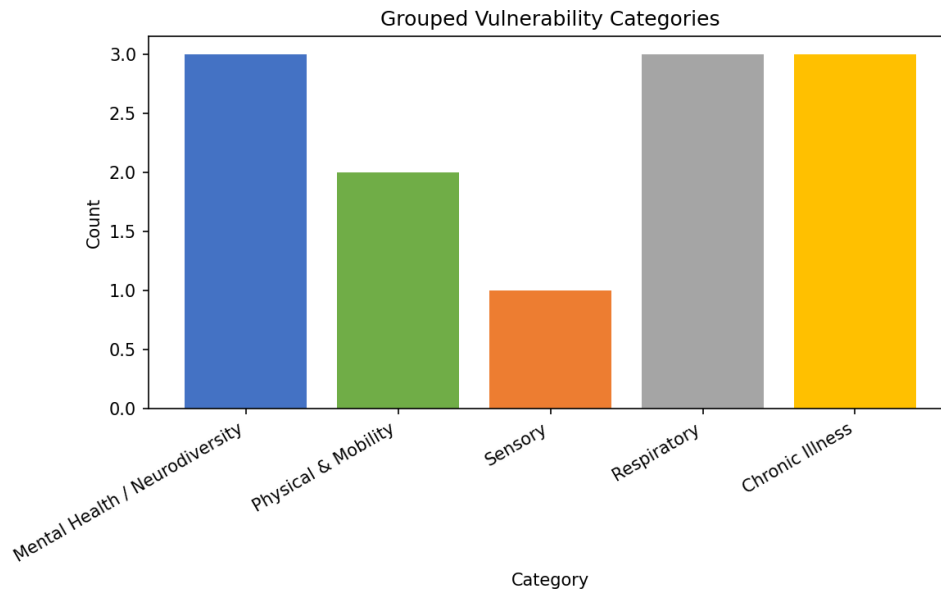


### Age distribution of Participants:

**Graph to show participants age distribution. The dotted line represents the average age of the Babergh and Mid Suffolk tenant base.**

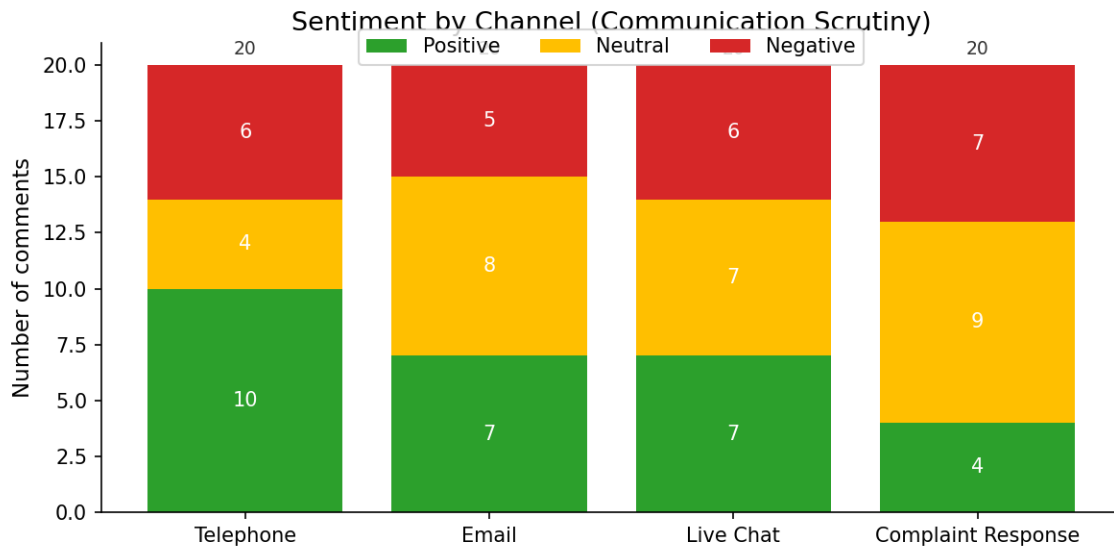


Vulnerabilities of participants:



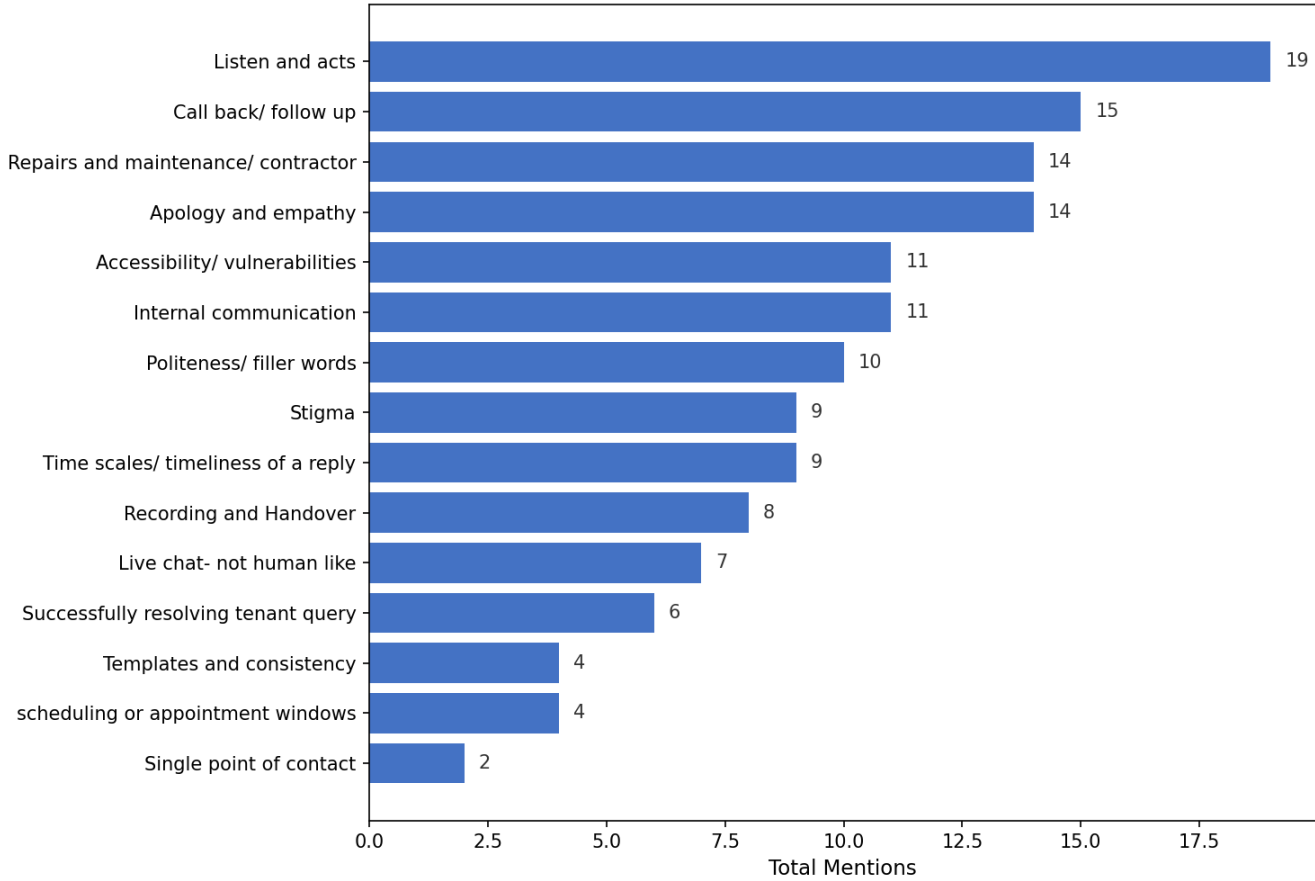
### Sentiment by Channel

Sentiment using positive/negative keywords.



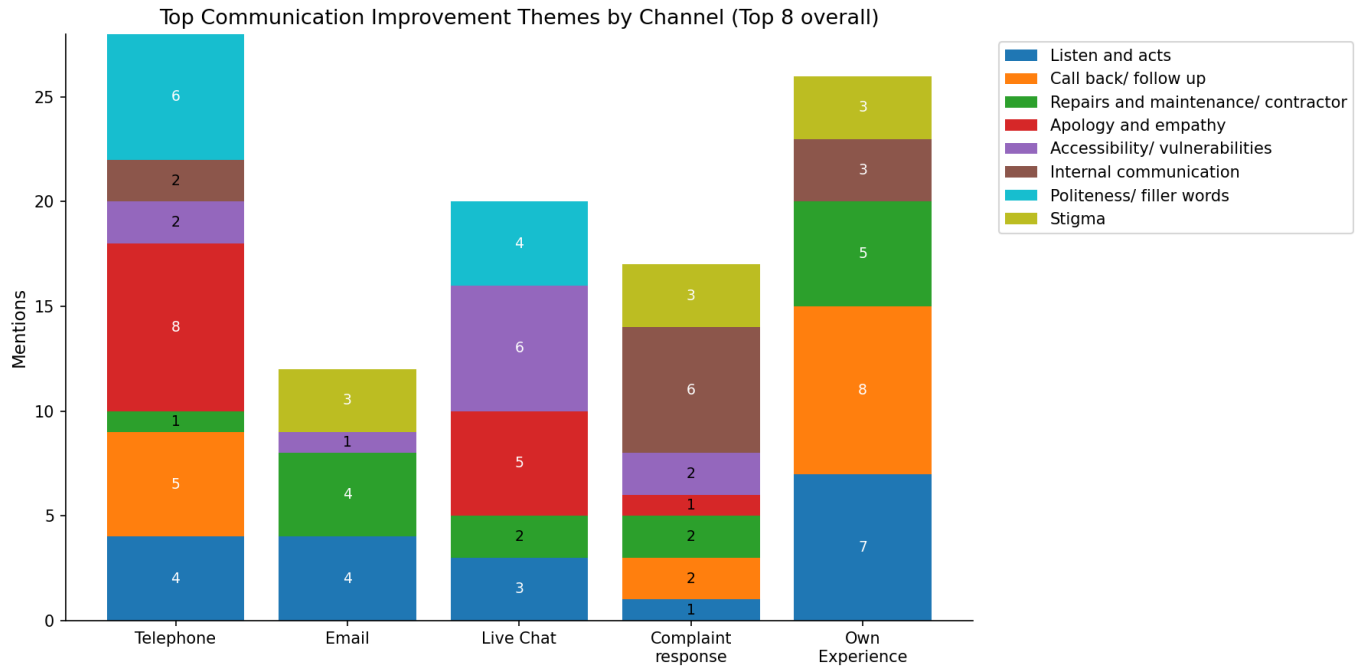
## Top Themes All Channel

Most Talked-about Themes Overall (All Channels)



## Top Themes by Channel

Stacked counts of the eight most frequently referenced improvement themes across channels.



## Overall Theme Analysis and definition of all Communication Channels

Theme	Total Mentions	Definition
<b>Listen and Acts</b>	19	Listening to what the tenant asks and acting on this request in a timely and professional manner.
<b>Callback and Follow-up</b>	15	Communication with our tenants within the timeframe agreed. Clear, time-bound callback promises, and proactive updates prevent repeated chasing and rebuild trust.
<b>Repairs and Maintenance / Contractors</b>	14	Ensure repair has been scheduled to avoid callbacks. Coordinate with contractors and track quality and communication compliance.
<b>Apology &amp; Empathy</b>	14	Residents value sincere apologies for missed actions and early, empathetic acknowledgement of impact.
<b>Accessibility and Vulnerability</b>	11	Using Vulnerability data and using this information early on to provide assisted routes (phone, in-person) when

		age/disability/digital barriers are present.
<b>Internal Communication</b>	11	Ensure we are recording communication and using Customer Relationship Management tool (CRM) to escalate callbacks. Ensure internal communication is timely. Officers to take responsibility early with tenant queries/issues.
<b>Politeness &amp; Filler Words</b>	10	Minimise “yeah/um”; professional tone and warm closures improve perceived care.
<b>Stigma</b>	9	Treating tenants with fairness and respect, ensure officer isn’t “assuming” a tenant’s lifestyle based on the fact they are a tenant.

**Overall Themes across all communications**

Listens and Acts (19)

Across all communication channels and participants own experiences the theme of “Listens and acts” is captured multiple times. This is referring to tenants requesting a service and the council acting on this and resolving the issue. Using the transcripts and participants’ own experience, participants feel that improvement can be made to how the council listen to tenants’ queries/ issues and resolve them. This assumption is based on tenants not receiving a call back when requested and repair jobs not being actioned.

Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) “Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their landlord listens to views and acts upon them.” is a way of measuring how well a landlord “Listens and acts”. In the TSM’s 2024/25 return we reported that 48.3% Babergh tenants and 54.7% Mid Suffolk tenants reported they were satisfied in the area. This is one of the council’s lower scoring areas on TSM, and therefore ensuring we can make improvements in this area is crucial in ensuring tenants are satisfied with the service they receive from the council as a landlord.

**Suggestion for Improvements:**

- Understand how we can improve the other themes identified in this scrutiny project such as;
- Call back mechanisms, recording and handover, internal communication and how we are using vulnerability data to deliver our services to tenants. Have detailed and published service standards so tenants understand the minimum standard they can expect from their landlord.

- Using satisfaction data from transactional surveys to understand how we can improve

*“Last year we had a visit from a council employee, who checked out our windows and informed us that due to the drafts and insulation of them that the council are changing them. We have not heard anything else. The council website is good to report a fault and easy to access but the follow up and response is hit and miss.”*

*“I have emailed housing about a tenancy query (6 months ish ago). Several weeks later I missed one phone call and they never got back to me again I did ring up and leave a message for the person concerned and they never returned my call. Communication is poor.”*

*“This communication seemed to have not been read! the tenant stated her interior doors but the response was `I have booked an appointment for your front door`. Also then then proceed to ask for more detail of the doors which the tenant had already given.”*

*“If we had been listened to in the first instance the final works carried would not have been necessary.”*

## Call back and follow up (15)

Across multiple communication channels, it was noted that in the communication responses and in participants' own experience that improvements need to be made around call backs and follow-ups. Examples of this include comments in telephone transcripts where a tenant has called customer services after not receiving a call back, or tenants waiting for a call back that never happened. Therefore, tenants have described feeling that there is a lack of trust as a landlord, as tenants do not believe they will get a resolution to their issue. It could be suggested that ensuring we are calling back tenants in a timely manner will improve tenants' perception of how we listen and act.

### **Suggestions for improvements:**

- Ensuring council officers are using the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool to log back a call.
- Ensure the Housing Team are using CRM to view and respond to escalation call back requests.
- Review Service Standard on call back times.

*“Tenant describes not first time calls not made. Council needs to address this to regain potential or real broken trust issues. I found the whole Council response confusing and disjointed.”*

*“I do think there should be more follow ups on repair jobs as I have had some issued which i did raise but never heard anything more back about despite being told that they would be passed to the appropriate person”*

## Repairs and Maintenance and Housing Contractors (14)

Across all communications an issue around Repairs and Maintenance or Housing Contractors was raised. It should be noted that for the majority of the comments around this was due a negative experience in this area. Examples include appointments not being made or operatives/ contractors turning up without an appointment. In 2025 we have made a lot of changes to our repair scheduling service, with a survey now going to all tenants who have had a repair completed, therefore, we should begin to see satisfaction rise in this area. However, 4 comments were raised around an email chain in which the operative did not appear to log all of the repairs a tenant had reported in the conversation. It could also be suggested that ensuring our repairs are completed in a timely manner will improve tenants’ perception of how we listen and act.

### **Suggestions for Improvement:**

- Continue to monitor Total Mobile (repairs scheduling system) and repairs satisfaction results to identify where improvement can be made.
- Ensure Customer Services are logging all repairs logged by tenant as well as communicating the correct process to log a repair.

*“The agent only addressed one of the repairs on the form and could have took that opportunity to request each repair be sent in separately so it can be dealt with efficiently with the correct departments.”*

*“We had contractors calling about electric venting installations of which we knew nothing about.”*

## Internal Communications (11)

Although internal communications was a key theme in mostly the complaint response channel, it has also been noted in multiple of the other communication channels including own experience. It was understood by the participants that internal communication within the council was the cause of multiple complaints due to the time taken for a response between departments and then to the tenant. Single point of contact for tenant queries/ issues was raised twice; this suggestion could limit the number of enquiries between departments. This theme can also impact other themes

that have been raised by participants such as “recording and handover” and “timely communication”. If we are not communicating internally and logging this communication, deadlines are likely to be extended or missed. Additionally, ensuring that an officer is taking responsibility of a query/issue early on will ensure that a response or action is taken in a timely manner.

### **Suggestion for improvement:**

- Service standards for tenant contact time to be in place.
- Single point of contact to be utilised more to ensure responsibility has been taken for tenant query and contact.
- Officers to take responsibility of tenant query/issues or pass on these to the correct department in a timely manner.

*“There seemed to be no notes made from the previous call regarding the nature of the call, what action was taken, whether the message was emailed to the Tenancy Management or to the person they originally called to speak to who.”*

*“I feel that staff should be accountable if customer queries go unanswered or get lost. One way to do this, would be for a staff member to be responsible for a query from start to finish (i.e. taking an initial call, gathering the required information/passing the query to the relevant department, and calling the customer back to update them with the information or to tell them who shall be actioning their query from here and what they can expect in terms of a timescale or investigation).”*

### Accessibility and Vulnerability (11)

Ensuring we are collecting and using vulnerability information is crucial to ensure of tenants have access to our services and the right support. In some examples participants felt we could have done better to support tenants who needed additional support. In one example a 90 year old tenant was using the live chat function for additional support around a support grant. The operative sent him the link, however the tenant still needed support when the chat had ended. Although, this is one example, it could be suggested we should understand how we can provide additional support to tenants who use the live chat function. Additionally, it is crucial we are collecting and using tenant data to understand if we need to adapt our services across all areas of housing, this will help to reduce complaints in this area.

### **Suggestions for Improvement:**

- Ensuring we have an up to date tenant data base including vulnerability information which is updated when a tenant informs us of changes.
- Making a proactive effort to understand tenant vulnerability data when they contact the council to understand if we could adapt our services if needed.
- Ensuring we are using this information when contacting any tenant.

*“Why is there not a register of disabled or vulnerable customers / tenants held by the council with their permission of course? If communication is a problem for this tenant this should be passed directly to the contactor that the customer should be contacted only via email and that no cold calling should take place.”*

*“This is an elderly tenant trying to ascertain whether they can access a grant for a Walk in Shower and Bath grant. They state they have been visited by OT who is enabling grab rails and steps. The OT tells Tenant she doesn't know if they are eligible. Hence Tenants live chat. Although the Council has given the link to further advice for the Tenant, the Tenant hasn't seemed to understand this and thinks chat has terminated leaving an unsatisfactory experience and frustration for Tenant as they have no answer to their query and no help to know what to do next.”*

*“To do this, please visit Our Compliments, comments and complaints information or phone 0300 123 4000 (Option 7).’ The person had already stated that they are unable to communicate.”*

## Stigma (9)

Social housing stigma is the negative stereotyping and prejudice faced by people living in council or social housing. Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council are currently members and early adopters of the “Stop the Social Housing Stigma” campaign, a tenant-led campaign that celebrates the value of social housing and its residents, breaking down stereotypes and challenging the stigma that surrounds it.

An example of stigma that was noted by participants was that it felt like there is an assumption that council tenants do not work and they are at home all day on the off chance we may attend. We need to ensure that appointments are given within the appropriate timescales based on urgency, but also to understand when the tenant is available for appointments and being flexible in our service delivery, considering tenants vulnerabilities but also their life commitments, such as work or caring responsibilities.

Additionally, this links in to the “Listen and acts” theme as part of the stigma social housing tenants commonly feel, is their experience that their landlord does not listen and act on requests because they are social housing tenants. Therefore, additional work needs to be completed around “Listen and acts” to reduce the perceived stigma tenants’ experience.

### **Suggestion for Improvements:**

- Ensuring tenants have avenues to report stigma.
- Training on social housing stigma and unconscious bias for all housing staff.
- Ensuring appointment times are agreed with the tenant and not assumed.
- No cold calling for appointments (turning up without an appointment)

- Completion of our Stop Social Housing Stigma Campaign.

*“If we had been listened to in the first instance the final works carried would not have been necessary.”*

*“Unfortunately the council always assumes everyone is in all day and people who work cannot just be home during working hours for 8 hours if no appointment time is given.”*

*“I have been told I have missed appointments and phone calls when none had taken place and repairs closed just down to bad or lack of communication. I understand customer services is a difficult job but please stop stereotyping your tenants, we all have different circumstances and reasons for needing social housing and there should no longer be any stigma or assumptions.”*

*“The date of the appointment and the hours between that the repair may take place 8am - 5 pm (not everyone is home all day most people who work need to take time off for repairs etc. so a rough guide to the time of the appointment would help)”*

## Telephone – Other themes

### Apology and Empathy (8)

In the examples reviewed, participants told us that they felt the call handler could have been more empathetic and apologetic to tenants who have had a previous bad experience and are calling to remedy this.

*“They could have also apologised for the previous support officer not ringing them back. That was obviously an issue that the customer felt was a failure due to mentioning it a couple of times.”*

*“I feel an apology should have been made, simply and profusely”*

### Politeness and filler words (6)

Participants of the scrutiny project felt that filler words were used multiple times such as “yeah” and “um”. Additionally, comments were made about interruptions to the tenant on the phone. **It is important to note that participants were given transcripts, so natural flow of a conversation may not have been easy to distinguish in the transcripts**

*“Additionally, comments were made about interruptions to the tenant on the phone”*

*“There seem to be lots of 'yeahs' which maybe if listened to aren't as obvious as when actually listened to.”*

*“I totally understood the tenants issue, firstly I think the `um` and repeated `yeah` comments from the support officer was very unprofessional.”*

## **Suggestion for Improvements:**

- Continue to monitor telephone calls through “Golden Call” scheme to ensure officers are using polite and empathetic language
- Understand how we can improve polite and empathetic languages used by teams other than the Customer Services.

## **Email – Other themes**

### Reporting Repairs (4) and Listens and Acts (4)

In one communication example, participants reviewed an email chain between a tenant who was raising a repair and a Customer Services Officer. It was noted that the operator did not appear to log all of the repairs into the email.

*“There is no indication that the request to have the internal doors eased had been noted and could (or could not) be done at the same time as the request mentions.”*

*“This communication seemed to have not been read! the tenant stated her interior doors but the response was `I have booked an appointment for your front door`”*

## **Suggestion for Improvements:**

- Review email communications in a similar way to how we review Telephone calls (golden calls).
- Ensure there is enough guidance for tenant's to report repairs online.

## **Live Chat – Other themes**

### Bot like responses (5) and Apology and Empathy (5)

When reviewing the live chat Transcripts, it was noted that the responses felt “bot like” and lacked empathy. Live Chat does utilize a bot response system for simpler questions which the chat bot has been set up to answer. The bot asks the user what they can help with, once there is a response it is handed over to an agent. The lack of empathy may be due to the type of communication, as it is hard to show emotion and engagement through text, especially when the answers are short.

*“Why is the time zone Africa/Abidjan? The whole chat sounds as though it was done by a bot - very terse and too keen to just hve the enquiry off to a web address. No consideration given to the fact that the 'caller' was so elderly and probably struggling to function via a chat system, especially one so unsympathetic sounding. Terrible”*

## **Suggestion for Improvements:**

- Understand how we can demonstrate empathy and personal touch when communicating to tenants using the Live chat function.

## **Complaints- Other themes**

### Recording and Handover (6)

Participants noted a lack of recording and handover in communication examples but was a more prominent theme in complaints. The lack of adequate recording was believed to have led to a complaint being made by the tenant. This was due to callbacks not being made, or tenant communications not being logged fully.

*“Ensure time, date and person spoken to, along with complaint and advise given is logged so if follow up call is made, customer service can read and respond accordingly.”*

*“Internal communications are difficult if working from home. Messages, memos or emails can get lost or unintentionally bypassed. The recipient should acknowledge all internal communication to record that it has been received, and a record of any actions taken may help”*

### Timescales and Timeliness of a reply (8)

In multiple communications but prominently in the complaint response review, it was clear that not adhering to the timescales or responding in a timely manner was the cause of a complaint being made. In multiple examples, participants found that the action needed to resolve a query/ issue took an extended period of time. Additionally, the timescales were not communicated to the tenant which led to frustration and a complaint being made.

*“The findings are clear but if the depth of the works by the voids team had been clearly communicated then the resident could probably have accepted why it took such a long while. It seems unfair that this part of the claim was rejected as it was down to poor communication. The complaint response is clear however looking at the timeline there was a distinct failing in communication and the resident had to chase matters several times. The findings are very clear to read and next steps are given for the resident to follow if they feel the need.”*

*“Well if it had been handled properly in the first place would have been a good idea. I would not have been happy if it had taken this long to sort out”*

*“I honestly believe that there was a general lack of timely communication throughout the complaint. Clear contact with adhered to timescales should have been provided and stuck to so that the tenant wouldn't have needed to contact”*

## Suggestion for Improvements:

- Additional training on the CRM for officers' system to ensure officers are updating the system. This also ensures other staff members can review this data if needed (e.g., the original officer is absent).
- Implementing a single point of contact system to ensure responsibility for communicating and uploading information on the system when a tenant raises an issue or complaint.
- Having Service Standards in place will ensure transparency in our delivery service timescales. This would ensure we would have a better understanding of what areas need improving if operating outside of timescales but also will enable tenants to understand what to expect when receiving a service from the council.
- Ensure we are communicating timescales for relevant procedures and actions to take place and communicate to the tenant if we expect to operate outside of these timescales due to unforeseen circumstances.

## Implications

### Implications for Service Delivery and Tenant Satisfaction

#### 1. Low TSM Scores Signal Urgent Action Needed

With only **48.3% Babergh** and **54.7% Mid Suffolk** tenants satisfied that the council “listens and acts,” this theme directly impacts regulatory compliance, poor customer service and negative reputation. Failure to improve could lead to increased complaints, reduced trust, and negative scrutiny from external bodies.

#### 2. Broken Trust and Reputational Risk

Missed call-backs, poor follow-up, and unresolved issues create a perception of neglect and could mean tenants are unnecessarily being left at risk. This erodes tenant confidence and may result in higher complaint volumes, social media criticism, and potential escalation to the Housing Ombudsman.

- 3. Operational Inefficiencies Increase Costs**

Lack of internal communication and poor handover processes lead to duplicated work, extended timelines, and unnecessary contractor visits. This inefficiency drives up operational costs and delays service delivery as well as creating unnecessary delays and inconvenience to tenants.
- 4. Compliance and Data Governance Risks**

Inadequate use of vulnerability data could result in failure to meet equality and accessibility obligations. This exposes the council to legal and reputational risks, particularly under the Equality Act and consumer standards. We need to ensure we are mitigating the risks to tenants whilst ensuring they receive a proper and legal landlord service.
- 5. Impact on Staff Morale and Workload**

Poor processes (e.g., unclear accountability, missed callbacks) increase staff stress and reactive workload. Without clear service standards and CRM discipline, staff face repeated tenant chasing and complaint handling, reducing morale and productivity which impacts the quality of service our tenants might receive.
- 6. Tenant Perception of Bias and Stigma**

Social housing stigma and assumptions about tenant availability undermine trust and fairness. If unaddressed, this could damage the council's commitment to equality and inclusion, and conflict with the "Stop Social Housing Stigma" campaign. Additionally, making tenants feel stigmatised and judged because of where they live leading to them being dissatisfied with the service they receive. Tenant stigma also creates unnecessary risk when their queries or issues are ignored and not acted upon.
- 7. Digital Exclusion and Accessibility Gaps**

Over-reliance on digital channels without assisted options risks excluding vulnerable tenants. This could lead to formal complaints and negative media coverage around accessibility failures as well as potentially vulnerable tenants not being able to access services they need.
- 8. Training and Culture Gaps**

Themes around politeness, empathy, and filler words indicate a need for cultural and skills development. Without targeted training, tenant interactions may continue to feel transactional and unsupportive, impacting satisfaction scores. Additionally, understanding where training is needed will help the Councils meet the Competence and Conduct Standard by ensuring our staff have the specific and required skills, knowledge and experience to work in the housing sector.

## January 2026

The Tenant Board reviewed this report along with the Customer Relationship Manager Dashboard findings and created a list of recommendations to present to Head of Customer Experience and Assistant Manager of Customer Experience. The Tenant Board ranked the recommendations as they were going to take forward 10 actions,

however at the meeting it was discussed they would take forward all 17. All 17 recommendations were approved by the Tenant Board at the January 2026 Tenant Board meeting.

## Recommendations Ranked

Recommendations were ranked by the Tenant Board in order of importance.

Item	Total Score	Overall Rank
<b>Increase in 'first time resolution' by Customer Services staff - where queries can be resolved on first contact (and not escalated to other departments).</b>	73	1
<b>Ensure Housing team are using CRM to view and respond to escalation call back requests</b>	65	2
<b>Implement a single point of contact system when tenants raise issues or complaints</b>	64	3
<b>Ensure council officers use the CRM (Customer Relationship Management) tool to log call backs</b>	64	4
<b>Review call back mechanisms, recording and handover, internal communication and how we use vulnerability data.</b>	62	5
<b>Set timescales stated from the start of communication</b>	53	6
<b>Improve empathy and have a more personal approach when using Live chat function</b>	45	7
<b>Review email communication in the same way we review calls</b>	44	8
<b>Ensure there's enough guidance for tenants when reporting repairs online</b>	44	9
<b>Cross reference CRM system with complaints to identify issues</b>	43	10
<b>Continue to monitor calls through 'Golden Call' scheme to ensure officers are polite and empathetic</b>	39	11
<b>Change recorded messages to reminders to advise the operator if anything has changed in circumstances (phone, email, vulnerability etc.)</b>	39	12
<b>Have detailed and published service standards.</b>	34	13
<b>Improve consistency of advice given using Tenant Handbook</b>	30	14
<b>Ensure tenants have clear avenues to report stigma</b>	29	15
<b>Investigate if email chains can be shared when repair is being booked - so this can be read by operative to ensure everything is included</b>	19	16
<b>Investigate having a drop-down menu in live chat function to speed up service</b>	18	17

## March 2026

The Customer Experience Team alongside the Housing Team reviewed all recommendations and approved 16 out of 17. They have created an action plan on how they will progress the 16 recommendations from Communication Scrutiny. Please see below their outcomes of the recommendations and the action being to complete each recommendation.

Ref	Recommendation	Owner	Category	Rank	Outcome	Comments
1	Increase in 'first time resolution' by Customer Services staff - where queries can be resolved on first contact (and not escalated to other departments)	Customer Experience	Process	High Effort, High Impact	Approved	Customer services have already instigated a project to update processes to increase the first point of contact resolution rate (FPOC), which currently stands at 67%. We will now seek to create a joint Housing Customer Services FPOC improvement taskforce.
2	Ensure Housing team are using CRM to view and respond to escalation call back requests	Housing	Process/System	Low Effort, High Impact	Approved	Spot checks to be completed.
3	Implement a single point of contact system when tenants raise issues or complaints	Housing	Process/Policy	Low Effort, High Impact	Approved	Our complaints system assigns complaints to a single officer who should contact the tenant and will personally acknowledge within 5 working days.  Each team has their own process for managing issues that are raised and ensuring the correct person responds appropriately.
4	Ensure council officers use the CRM (Customer Relationship Management) tool to log call backs	Customer Experience & Housing	Process/System	Low Effort, High Impact	Approved	Set up a joint CRM Quality Group to set minimum standards and agree monitoring approach.
5	Review call back mechanisms, recording and handover, internal	Customer Experience & Housing	Process	Medium Effort, High Impact	Approved	Set up a joint CRM Quality Group to set minimum standards and agree monitoring approach.

	communication and how we use vulnerability data.					
6	Set timescales stated from the start of communication	Housing	Policy/Governance	Low Effort, High Impact	Approved	Queries to be resolved at first point of contact wherever possible. Timescale for callback requests/emails is three working days. Letter communication responses within 10 working days.
7	Improve empathy and have a more personal approach when using Live chat function	Customer Experience	Training	Low Effort, High Impact	Completed	We have recently changed our live chat provision, and this is a straight to agent service without the need to navigate a chat bot. As part of this process all the template responses have been reviews, and quality monitoring will take place.
8	Review email communication in the same way we review calls	Customer Experience	Tenant Experience	Medium Effort, High Impact	Approved	Email communication to be reviewed in the same way calls are currently to quality monitor responses.
9	Ensure there's enough guidance for tenants when reporting repairs online	Housing	Tenant Experience	Low Effort, High Impact	Approved	The Customer Experience team will work with the Housing Repairs team and housing web champions to agree website wording and implement any identified improvements.
10	Cross reference CRM system with complaints data to identify issues	Housing	Process	Medium Effort, High Impact	Completed	Where CRM data is available and relevant to the complaint, it is considered within the investigation.
11	Continue to monitor calls through 'Golden Call' scheme to ensure officers are polite and empathetic	Customer Experience	Process	Low Effort, Medium Impact	Completed	Customer services continue to use this approach and have introduced more frequent spot checks.

12	Change recorded messages to reminders to advise the operator if anything has changed in circumstances (phone, email, vulnerability etc.)	Customer Experience	Tenant Experience	Low Effort, Low Impact	Approved	Customer services will record a new message and implement.
13	Have detailed and published service standards.	Housing	Policy/Governance	Low Effort, High Impact	Approved	Combined with recommendation 6, timescales to be communicated with residents and published in a transparent way.
14	Improve consistency of advice given using Tenant Handbook	Customer Experience & Housing	Training	Medium Effort, Medium Impact	Approved	Ensure there are clear processes in place for changes to the tenant handbook/changes in process or policy to be communicated to the relevant teams. Quality monitoring of officer communication to ensure correct advice is given.
15	Ensure tenants have clear avenues to report stigma	Housing	Tenant Experience	Medium Effort, High Impact	Approved	Recommendation to be rolled into Stigma Working Group arranged by the Tenant Engagement Coordinator.
16	Investigate if email chains can be shared when repair is being booked - so this can be read by operative to ensure everything is included	Housing	Process/System	High Effort, Low Impact	Rejected	Relevant information is already being communicated via our job management system. For repairs completed by approved contractors, job notes include pertinent information.
17	Investigate having a drop-down menu in live chat function to speed up service	Customer Experience	System	Low Effort, High Impact	Completed	We have recently changed our live chat provision and this is a straight to agent service without the need to navigate a chat bot.

