

Housing

Complaints report Q3 2025-2026

Author: Tonjo Korubo

Contact: housingcomplianceteam@luton.gov.uk

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Important items of note

The report is structured to provide a comprehensive view of how housing-related issues are handled, from initial contact to final resolution.

- All data in this report is correct as of 14/01/2026, some figures for previous periods included in this report may differ from data of previous reports. This is due to cases being ever changing and being updated, this can include things like: re-allocating to different services, cases being closed and cases being re-opened. This may mean that figures in this report may subsequently differ to any future reports.
- Complaints & Service Requests: Distinguishes between formal Stage 1 or 2 complaints and "service requests," which are handled earlier to prevent escalation.
- Timescale Analysis: Tracks how quickly the council responds to residents and Member enquiries.
- Thematic Analysis: Categorizes enquiries by cause (e.g., staff behaviour, delays, or errors) to identify recurring pain points.
- Member Enquiries: Specifically tracks concerns raised by local councillors (Members) on behalf of residents.
- Compliments & Lessons Learned: Highlights positive feedback and structural changes made to prevent future issues.
- When looking at timescales and themes for complaints, this includes all service requests, Stage – 1 complaints and Stage – 2 complaints.
- In previous reports "themes" were manually categorised, however they are now only what the complainant has selected when sending in their enquiry or what the most appropriate selection was when manually logged on caseworker.
- Some service areas not included in some graphs due to having either no cases or an average day to close of 0 days

Description of service areas

- Building and technical services (BTS) are responsible for answering complaints relating to housing repairs.
- Housing Needs respond to complaints relating to waiting times on the housing register and bidding for properties. They will also respond to enquiries regarding homelessness and complaints relating to temporary accommodation (TA) and allocations of TA as well as rough sleeping enquiries and enquiries relating to adaptations.
- Housing Operations will respond to complaints from tenants living in council housing and income complaints relating to TA.
- Housing Strategy will respond to complaints relating to new homes and latent defects. Claire Astbury (Head of Housing Strategy and Development) will respond to Stage 2 complaints on behalf of the wider housing service as an independent reviewer.

- Ombudsman current cases report: There are 4 closed cases, with 3 cases at the Initial enquiry stage, 2 cases are awaiting investigation.

Evidence gathering: there are 2 cases on evidence gathering and are undergoing investigation. With 2 cases currently on the evidence gathering which are awaiting investigation. There is 1 case currently on evidence gathering that is under investigation with the evidence submitted. There is also 1 case on evidence gathering – under investigation that was returned on 24.11.2025.

Referral Assessment: 2 cases are at Referral assessment, however there are 2 cases which are on referral assessment that will not be investigated.

Final Decision: 1 case has a final decision on 08.01.2026, result includes injustice finding, apology, symbolic payment, and procurement review.

Executive summary

This report provides an overview of housing complaints and service requests for the third quarter of the 2024-2026 period, including data on themes, timescales, and member enquiries.

1. Performance Overview

The third quarter of the 2025-2026 period shows a continuing trend of high volumes regarding service delays. A significant shift in reporting now includes Service Requests alongside formal complaints to provide a more accurate picture of total enquiry volume.

2. Top Complaint Themes

The data reveals the primary reasons residents are contacting the housing services units:

- Delay in providing a service: Remained the most frequent complaint, though it saw a decrease from 55 cases in Q2 to 45 cases in Q3.
- Additional information provided: Stood at 16 cases, a slight drop from the previous quarter.
- Staff behaviour: Increased to 12 cases, matching its highest level in the last two years.
- Failure to provide service: Remained consistent with 12 cases.

3. Member Enquiries

Member enquiries—concerns escalated through MPs and councillors—showed a notable improvement in some areas but challenges in others:

- Delays: Saw a dramatic decrease, dropping from 21 in Q2 to just 6 in Q3.
- Disagreements with decisions: Reached a peak of 6 cases, the highest recorded for this category.

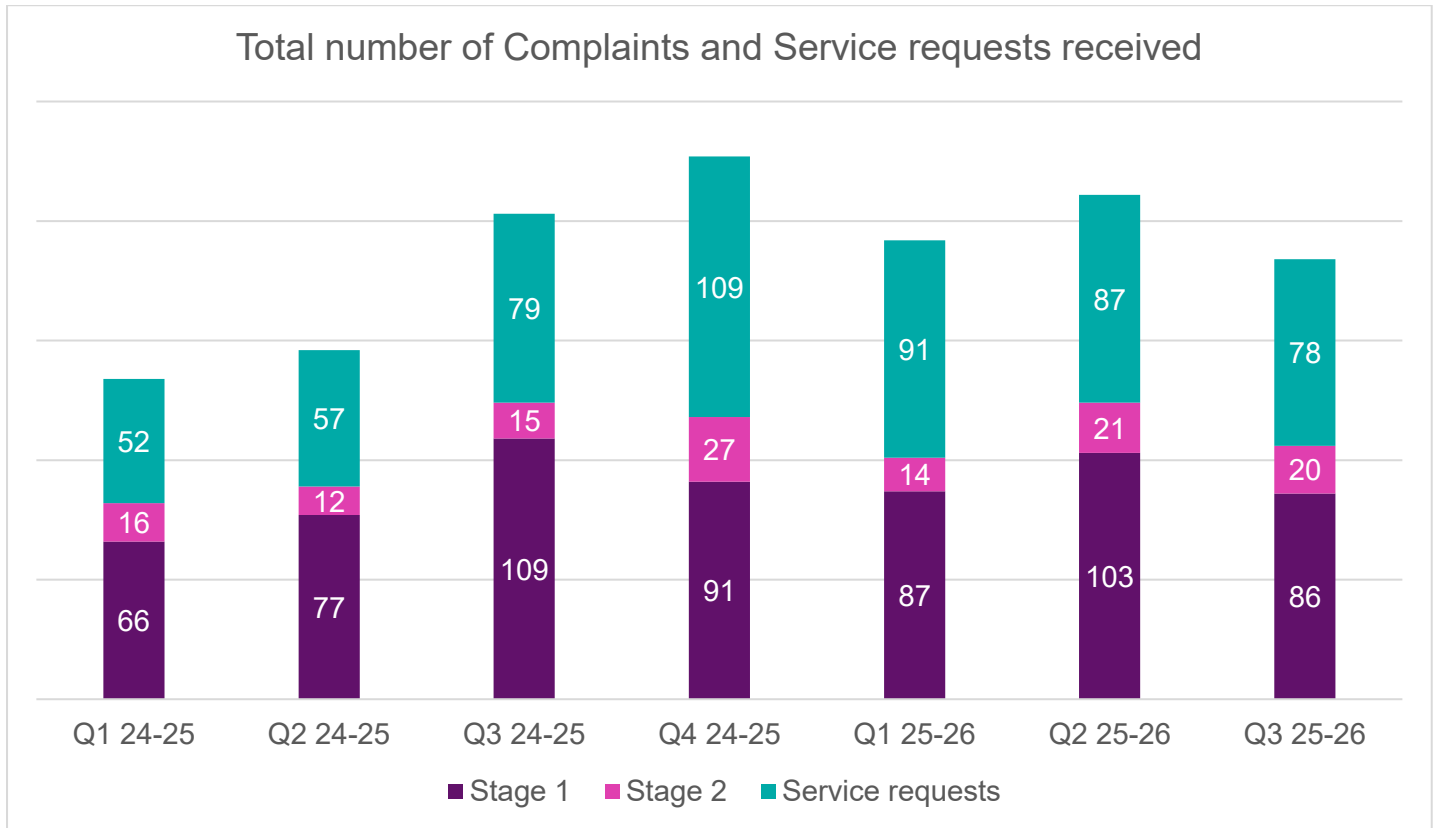
4. Complaints & Service Requests by Service

The data reveals the trend of Service request, Stage 1 and 2 complaints:

- The data reveal that there was a decrease in services request compared to Q2 in which 87 cases were handle while for 3Q it drops to 78 cases.
- The data also reveal that there is a stable trend in the stage 2 between the Q2 and Q3.
- Stage 1 and 2 indicate a significant downward movement in the Q3 compared to the Q2 it moves from 87, 103 cases while in the Q3 it 78 and 86 cases.

- The downward movement suggesting an improvement in service delivery, and to continue to maintain this improvement record, benchmark need to be put in place to compare with other services provided.

Complaints & Service Requests



This graph illustrates the volume and classification of housing-related inquiries handled by the council from Q1 2024-25 through Q3 2025-26. It breaks down these inquiries into three distinct categories: Stage 1 complaints, Stage 2 complaints, and Service requests.

Critical Explanation of Data Categories

- **Service Requests (Teal):** These are inquiries resolved at the first point of contact to prevent them from becoming formal complaints. The volume of service requests peaked in Q4 24-25 at 109 and has since stabilized to 78 in the current quarter Q3 2025-2026.
- **Stage 1 Complaints (Dark Purple):** These represent the initial formal complaints received. The data shows a peak in Q3 24-25 (109 cases) and Q2 25-26 (103 cases). In the current quarter (Q3 25-26), Stage 1 complaints have dropped slightly to 86.
- **Stage 2 Complaints (Pink):** These are escalations where the resident was unsatisfied with the Stage 1 response. These remained relatively stable in the most recent year, fluctuating between 14 and 21 cases per quarter.
- **Stage 2 Escalations:** These represent cases where a resident was dissatisfied with a Stage 1 response. These have remained relatively stable, with 20 cases this quarter.

Quarter-by-Quarter Trend Analysis

Period	Stage 1	Stage 2	Service Requests	Total Volume
Q1 24-25	66	16	52	134
Q2 24-25	77	12	57	146
Q3 24-25	109	15	79	203
Q4 24-25	91	27	109	227 (Peak)
Q1 25-26	87	14	91	192
Q2 25-26	103	21	87	211
Q3 25-26	86	20	78	184

- **Year-on-Year Improvement:** Total volume in Q3 25-26 (184) is lower than the same period last year in Q3 24-25 (203), showing a downward trend in overall complaints.
- **Resolution Efficiency:** The reduction in Stage 1 complaints from 103 in the previous quarter to 86 indicates a potential improvement in service delivery or more effective early-stage resolution.

Lessons Learned

1. **Stabilization of Demand:** After a surge in inquiries during the middle of the reporting period (peaking in Q4 24-25), the total volume is beginning to stabilize at a lower level.
2. **Early Intervention Works:** The consistent use of "Service requests" as a category suggests that nearly 42% of all resident contacts in Q3 25-26 are being handled without needing to enter the formal, more resource-heavy Stage 1 process.
3. **Escalation Control:** Despite fluctuations in Stage 1 volume, Stage 2 escalations have stayed below 30 cases per quarter, suggesting that the quality of Stage 1 responses is generally sufficient to prevent further escalation for the vast majority of residents.

Complaints & Service Requests by Service



Total Number of Complaints & Service Requests by Service Area

This grouped bar chart breaks down the current quarter's workload across specific Housing Services units.

- **Housing Needs:** This service area is recording the highest number of Stage 1 complaints (38) and Service Requests (24).
- **Building & Technical Services:** Follows closely with 27 Stage 1 complaints and 18 service requests.
- **Housing Operations:** Shows a more balanced distribution with 20 Stage 1 complaints and 18 Service Requests, though it has the highest number of Stage 2 escalations (8).
- **Private Sector Housing:** Primarily handles "Service Requests" (16) with very few progressing to formal Stage 1 complaints (1).
- **Housing Strategy:** has the lowest volume, with only 2 Service Requests and zero formal complaints.

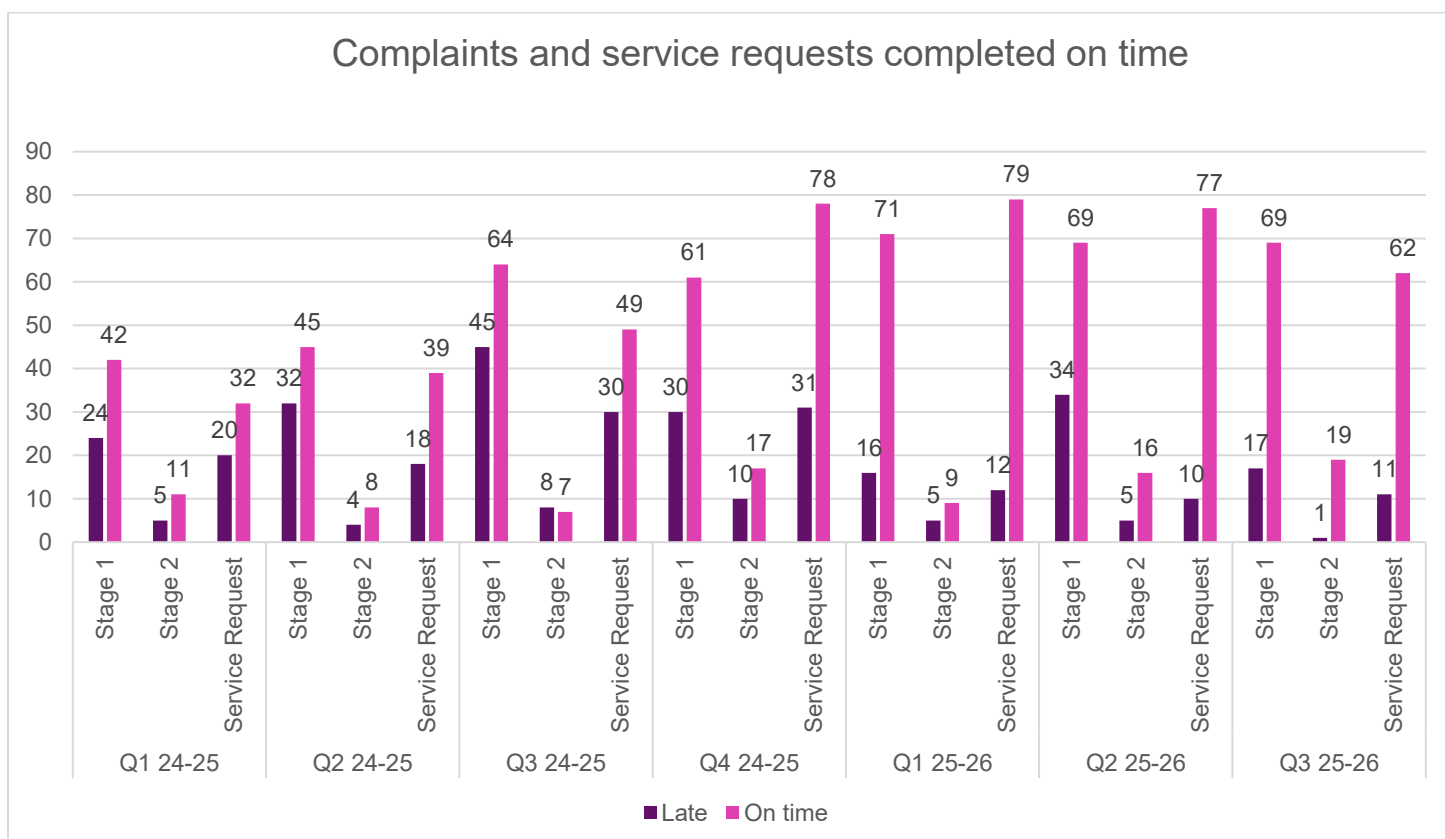
Lessons Learned

Pressure Points Identified: The data clearly identifies Housing Needs and Building & Technical Services as the primary drivers of resident dissatisfaction. Lessons learned should focus on increasing resource allocation or streamlining processes in these specific unit.

1. **Effective Early Filtering:** The high volume of "Service Requests" compared to "Stage 1" complaints—particularly in Private Sector Housing—suggests that addressing issues at the first point of contact is successfully preventing formal escalations.

2. Escalation Risks: While Housing Operations has lower overall volume than Housing Needs, it has more Stage 2 escalations. This indicates a lesson for this unit to improve the *quality* of their initial (Stage 1) investigations to ensure residents feel their concerns are fully addressed the first time.
3. Trend Stabilization: After reaching a total volume peak of 227 in Q4 24-25, the service has successfully brought the current volume down to 184 in Q3 25-26. The lesson here is that the current management strategies are beginning to reduce the overall complaints load.

Complaints & Service Requests Completed Timescale



Complaints and Service Requests Completed On time

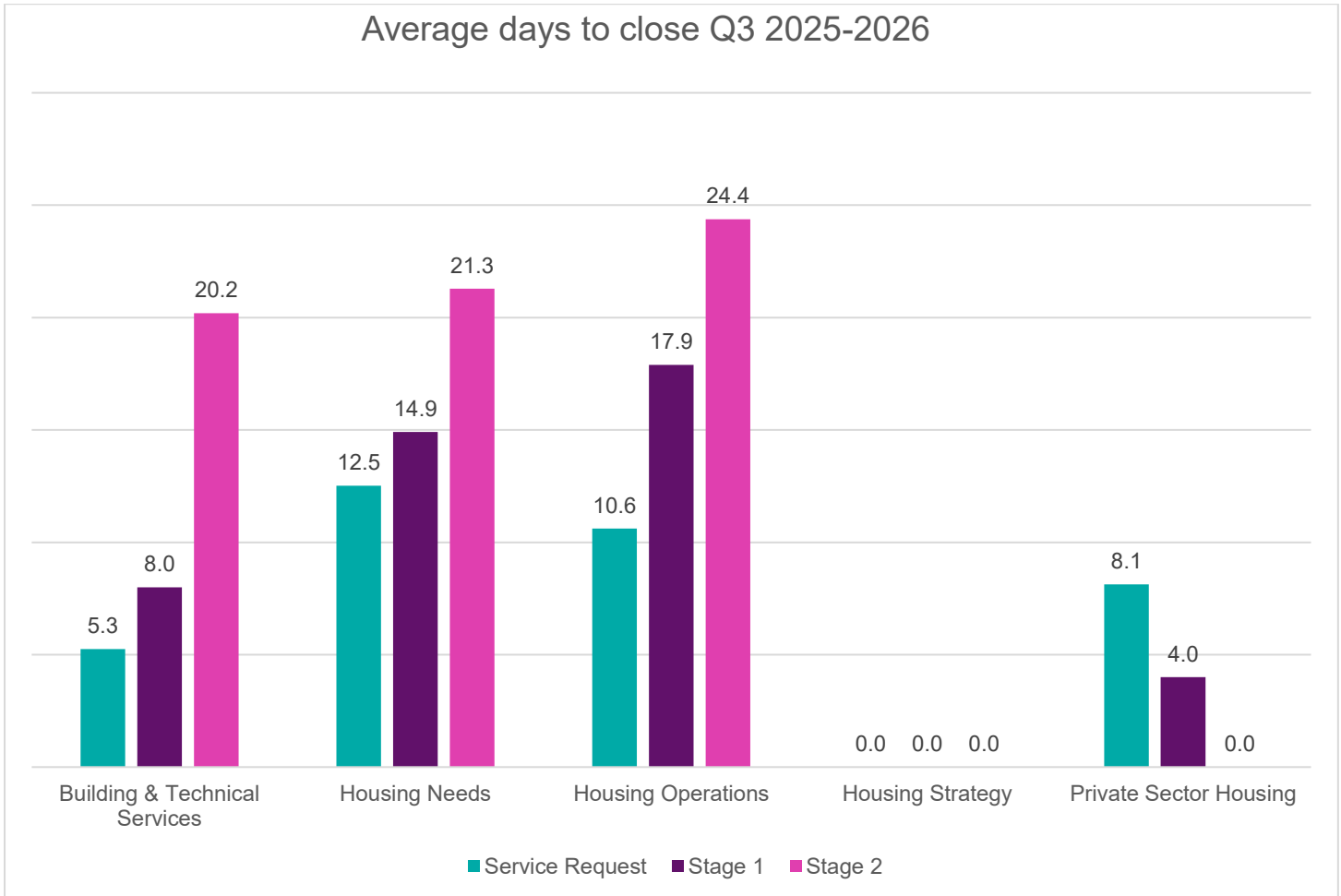
This data evaluates the efficiency and responsiveness of the service units.

- Improvement in Promptness: In Q3 25-26, Stage 1 complaints saw a high success rate for timeliness, with 69 cases completed on time and only 17 late.
- Stage 2 Efficiency: The services has significantly improved Stage 2 response times; in the current quarter, 19 cases were on time while only 1 was late.
- Service Request Performance: While service requests are meant for quick resolution, 11 cases were still completed late this quarter compared to 62 on time.

Lessons Learned

- Efficiency Gains: The dramatic reduction in "Late" Stage 2 responses compared to previous years (e.g., Q3 24-25 where 8 were late and only 7 were on time) shows that management has successfully prioritized the most serious escalated cases.
- Early Resolution Value: The high volume of "Service Requests" across all data proves that capturing issues early prevents the formal complaint system from becoming overwhelmed.

Average days to close Q3 2025-2026



Average Days to Close (Q3 2025-2026)

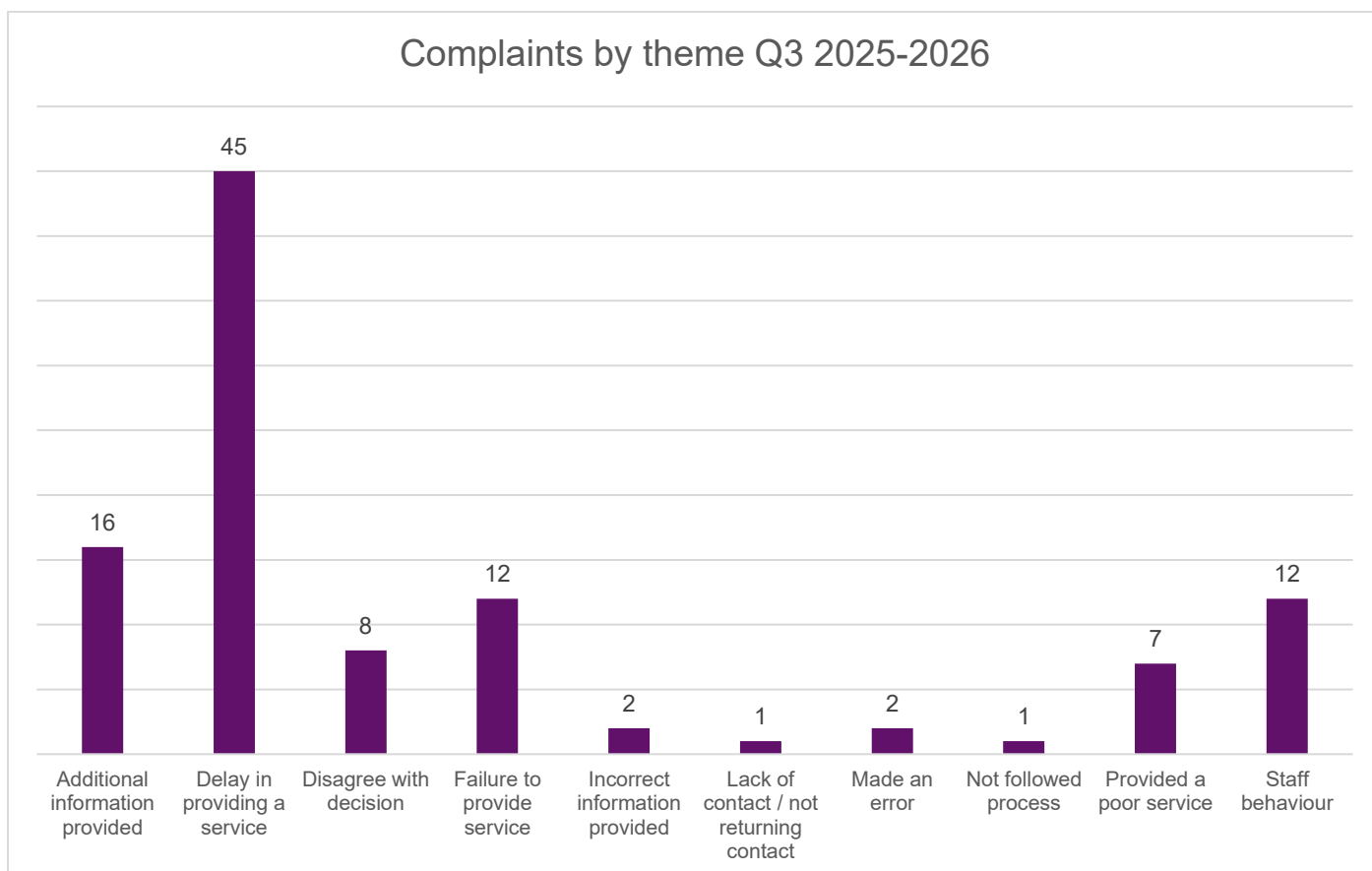
This graph shows the actual speed of resolution for each service area:

- **Housing Operations:** This area takes the longest to resolve inquiries, averaging 24.4 days for a Stage 2 complaint and 17.9 days for Stage 1.
- **Housing Needs:** Resolves Stage 2 complaints in an average of 21.3 days and Stage 1 in 14.9 days.
- **Building & Technical Services:** Is the fastest among the major departments, resolving Stage 1 complaints in just 8 days and service requests in 5.3 days.
- **Housing Strategy:** Reported 0.0 days across all categories, indicating no active cases or immediate closures during this period.

Lessons Learned

- **Efficiency Gains:** The services units have successfully reduced the ratio of "Late" to "On Time" cases compared to the previous year, particularly in formal complaints.
- **Targeted Improvement:** Housing Operations requires focus to reduce its average closure times, as it currently has both the longest resolution times and the highest rate of Stage 2 escalations.
- **Early Resolution Value:** The high volume of service requests handled quickly (especially in Building & Technical Services) demonstrates that early intervention is preventing a larger backlog of formal complaints.

Complaints by Theme



	Q1 24-25	Q2 24-25	Q3 24-25	Q4 24-25	Q1 25-26	Q2 25-26	Q3 25-26	Q4 25-26
Additional information provided	16	12	15	27	13	20	16	
Delay in providing a service	24	31	46	48	47	55	45	
Disagree with decision	6	3	4	2	4	9	8	
Failure to provide service	8	12	10	18	9	13	12	
Incorrect information provided	3	3	2	0	3	4	2	
Lack of contact / not returning contact	12	12	10	4	7	4	1	
Made an error	3	1	1	1	1	1	2	
Not followed process	1	1	3	1	2	5	1	
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Provided a poor service	3	4	22	7	5	4	7	
Requesting information on behalf of customer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Staff behaviour	6	9	11	10	10	9	12	

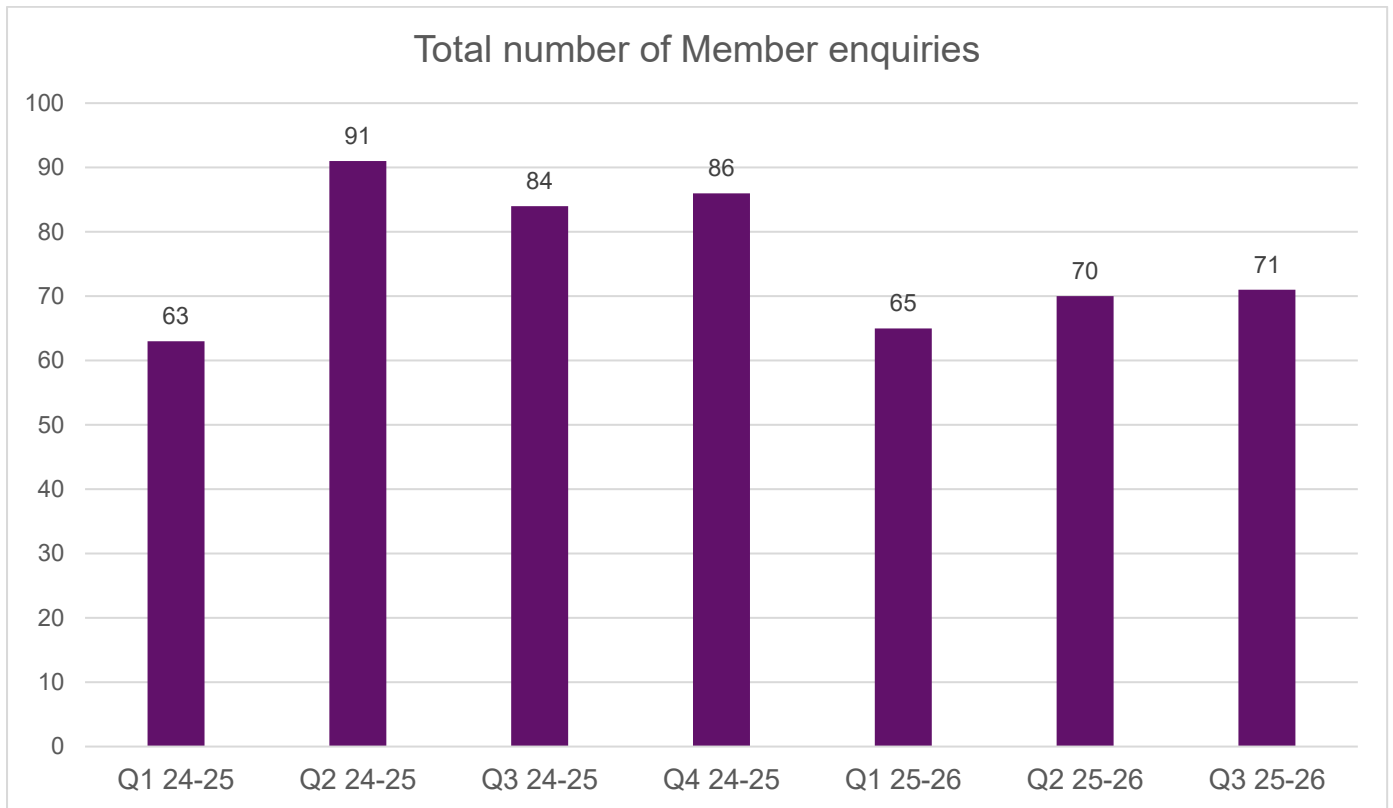
Complaints by Theme (Q3 2025-2026)

This identifies the root causes of dissatisfaction for the current quarter.

- Primary Issue: "Delay in providing a service" is the most frequent complaint theme by a wide margin, appearing in 45 cases.
- Additional information provided (16), Failure to provide service and "Staff behaviour" (12) are the next most common drivers of complaints.

- Minimal issues: "Lack of contact / not returning contact" and "Not followed process" were the least frequent, with only 1 case each.

Member Enquiries



The data shows a distinct "hump" in volume during the middle of the 24-25 period, followed by a stabilization at a lower volume in the 25-26 period.

- Q1 of 24-25 indicate a baseline of 63 cases while in the Q2 24-25 has it peak volume of 91 which is a 44% increase from the previous Q.
- The Q3 & Q4 of 24-25 sustained high volume, while Q1 25-26 had a significant drop return to baseline to 65 enquiries.
- The last quarters of 25-26 Q2 & Q3 shows a steady incremental growth of 70/71.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

1. Identify the "Peak" Driver

The spike in Q2 of 24-25 (91 enquiries) suggests a specific event or external factor occurred during that window.

Recommendation: We must identify and document what caused this spike (e.g., a policy change, a specific campaign, or an annual renewal cycle) to ensure the team is staffed and prepared for similar surges in the future.

2. Stabilization is Healthy

While volume dropped significantly in Q1 25-26, the subsequent quarters show very stable, controlled growth (70 to 71).

Lesson Learned and recommendation: The current period (25-26) suggests a more "predictable" environment. This is the ideal time to focus on quality of response and process refinement rather than just "putting out fires" as might have been the case in 24-25.

3. Year-on-Year Seasonality Check

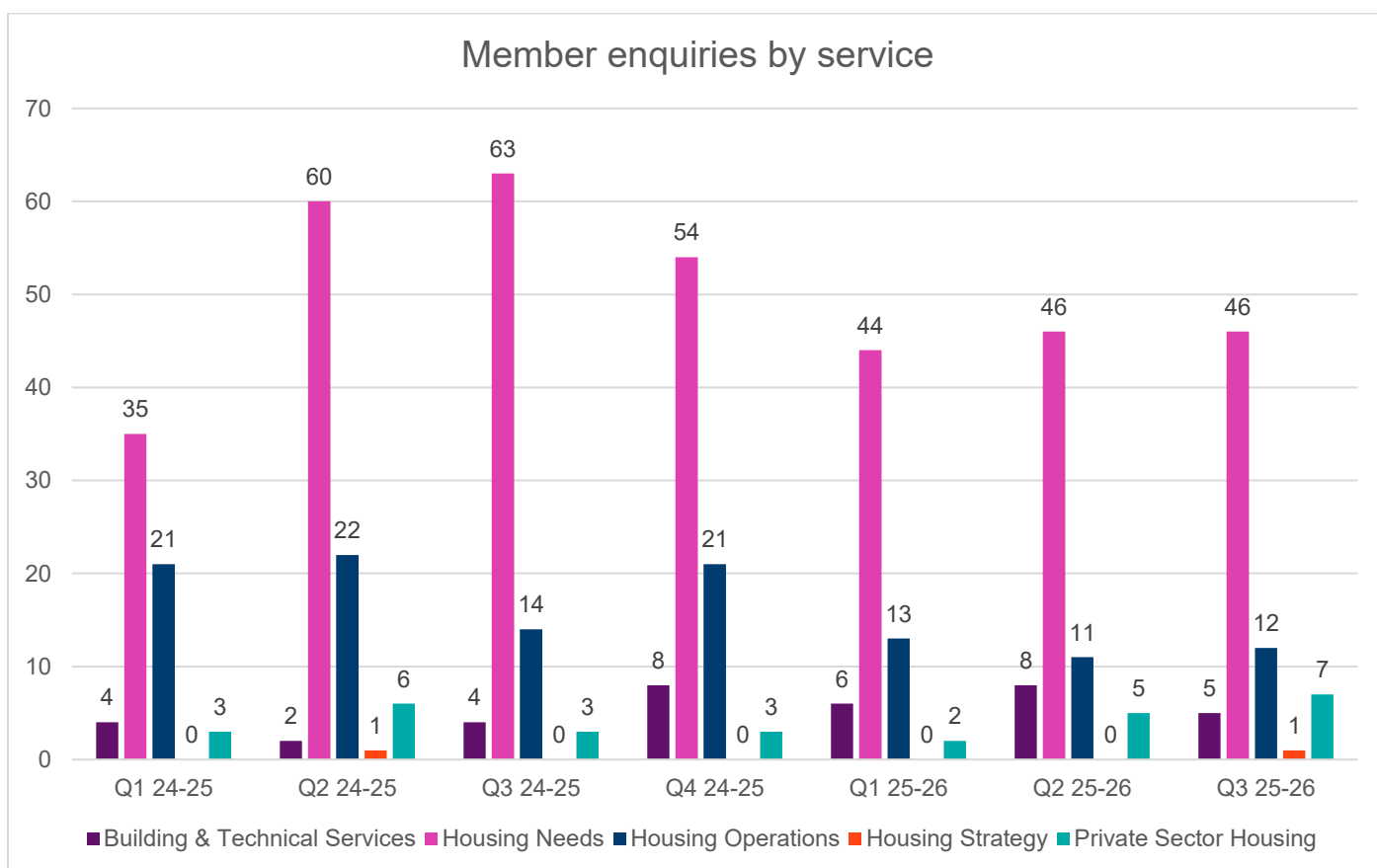
Comparing Q2 24-25 (91) to Q2 25-26 (70) shows a 23% decrease.

Lesson: Because the numbers for the same quarter across two years are so different, we cannot yet conclude that our enquiry volume is purely seasonal. This suggests that the high volume in 24-25 was likely reactive (responding to an issue) rather than cyclical (happening every year).

4. Resource Allocation

The data shows we have moved from a high-pressure environment (averaging 87 enquiries over three quarters in 24-25) to a lower-pressure environment (averaging 69 in 25-26).

Lesson: If resources were increased to handle the 24-25 surge, there may now be an opportunity to reallocate that capacity toward proactive member engagement or resolving more complex, long-standing enquiries.



The graph of the member enquiries by service shows the following:

1. Housing Needs Dominance

- Housing Needs consistently accounts for the vast majority of all member enquiries.
- There was a sharp surge in this category during the 24-25 period, specifically jumping from 35 in Q1 to 60 in Q2, and peaking at 63 in Q3.
- While volume dropped in 25-26, it remains the primary concern for members, holding steady at 46 enquiries for the last two quarters.

2. Housing Operations Fluctuations

- Housing Operations experienced two notable peaks: 22 enquiries in Q2 24-25 and 21 enquiries in Q4 24-25.
- In the most recent year (25-26), the volume has settled into a lower, more consistent range of 11 to 13 enquiries per quarter.

3. Emerging Growth in Private Sector Housing

- While overall enquiry numbers have decreased since the 24-25 peaks, Private Sector Housing has shown a slight upward trend in the most recent quarter (Q3 25-26), reaching a high of 7 enquiries.

4. Minimal Strategy Engagement

- Housing Strategy appears to generate almost zero member enquiries, with 0 recorded in five out of the seven quarters shown.

Observation

The workload for member enquiries is heavily concentrated within Housing Needs and Housing Operations. The "surge" seen in the middle of the 24-25 fiscal year was almost entirely driven by a spike in Housing Needs enquiries.

Member Enquiries Completed Timescale

The following analysis of Member enquiries Late and On time breaks down performance trends and identifies critical lessons for future management.

The "Late" Crisis (24-25 Period)

- During the 24-25 fiscal year, the volume of late enquiries was high, exceeding on-time responses in Q1, Q2, and peaking at 54 late enquiries in Q3.
- In Q3 24-25, late enquiries (54) were nearly double the number of on-time enquiries (30).

The Performance Pivot (25-26 Period)

- There was an improvement starting in Q4 24-25, where on-time responses rose to 54 and lates dropped to 32.
- Performance reached its peak efficiency in Q1 25-26, with only 11 late enquiries compared to 54 on time.
- However, the most recent data (Q3 25-26) shows a slight regression, with late enquiries creeping back up to 20.

Lessons Learned

1. Capacity Thresholds

The data from 24-25 suggests that the system was pressured when total enquiry volume surged, the "Late" bar grew disproportionately.

- Lesson: We must identify the specific "tipping point" in enquiry volume where staff can no longer maintain on-time service levels to trigger additional support earlier.

2. Sustainability of Recovery

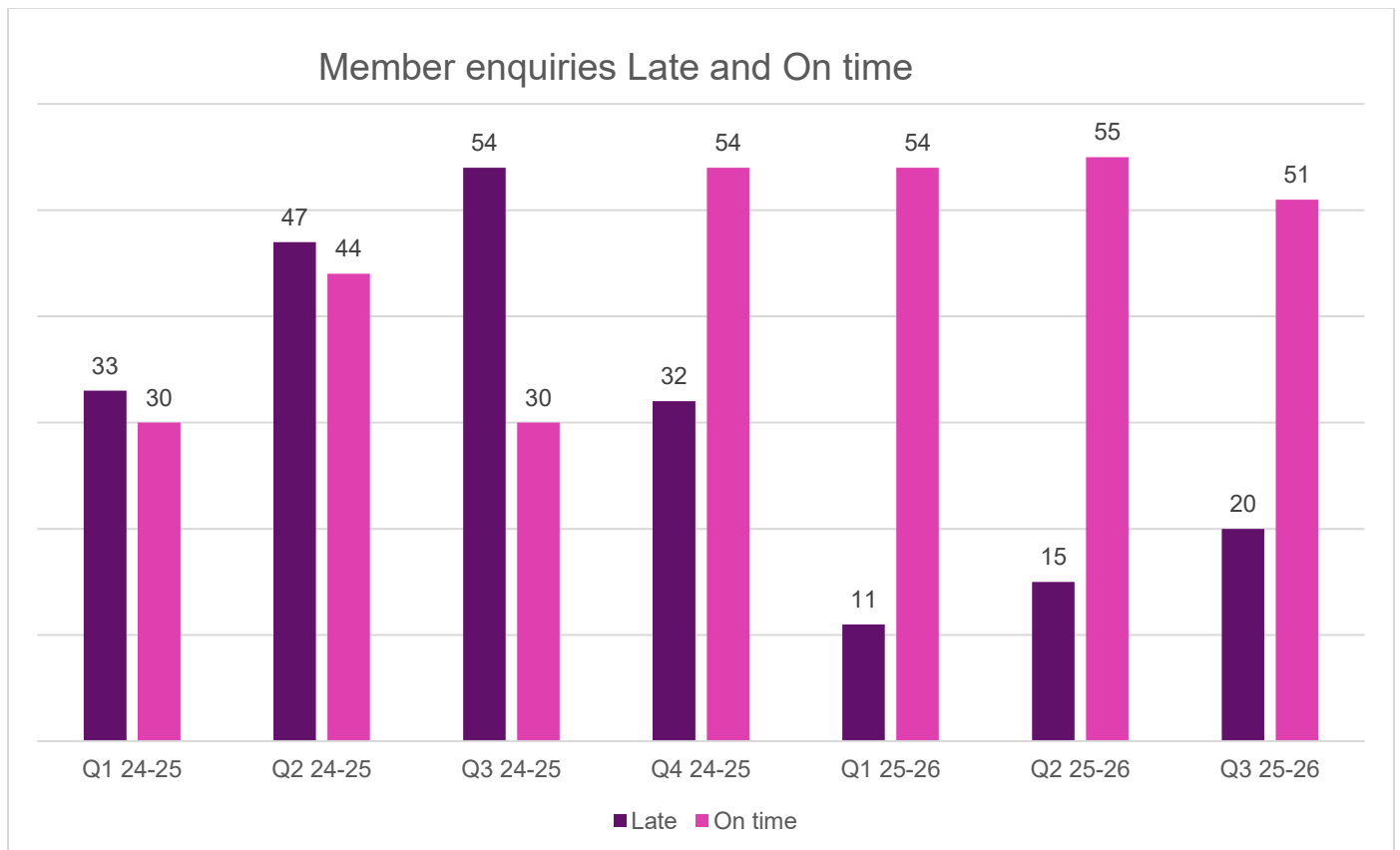
The massive improvement seen in Q1 25-26 (where on-time responses dominated) proves that the team is capable of high performance.

- Lesson: The recent upward tick in late enquiries (from 11 to 20 over the last three quarters) suggests that the "fix or benchmark" implemented in early 25-26 may be losing effectiveness or that volume is beginning to outpace resources again.

3. Response Prioritization

The period of Q3 24-25 represents a significant reputational risk, where more enquiries were late than on-time.

- Lesson: To prevent a repeat of Q3 24-25, a "backlog management" protocol is needed to ensure that even during high-volume periods, a minimum threshold of on-time delivery is maintained.



Average number of calendar days to close Q3 2020-2026

The chart illustrates the average time taken to resolve member enquiries across five distinct housing service areas during the third quarter of the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

- Housing Operations recorded the longest resolution time, taking an average of 22.09 calendar days to close an enquiry.
- Building & Technical Services followed closely, with an average resolution time of 20.25 calendar days.
- Housing Strategy and Private Sector Housing showed moderate performance, with average closing times of 14.00 and 13.83 calendar days, respectively.
- Housing Needs was the most efficient service area during this period, closing enquiries in an average of 11.87 calendar days.

Lessons Learned

1. Target Resources toward Complex Operations

Housing Operations and Building & Technical Services both exceed the 20-day mark for resolutions.

- Lesson and suggestion: These service unit likely handle more complex, multi-stage technical issues compared to others. We should investigate if these timelines are due to necessary technical lead times, staffing issues and capacity or if there are administrative bottlenecks that can be streamlined.

2. Leverage "Housing Needs" Best Practices

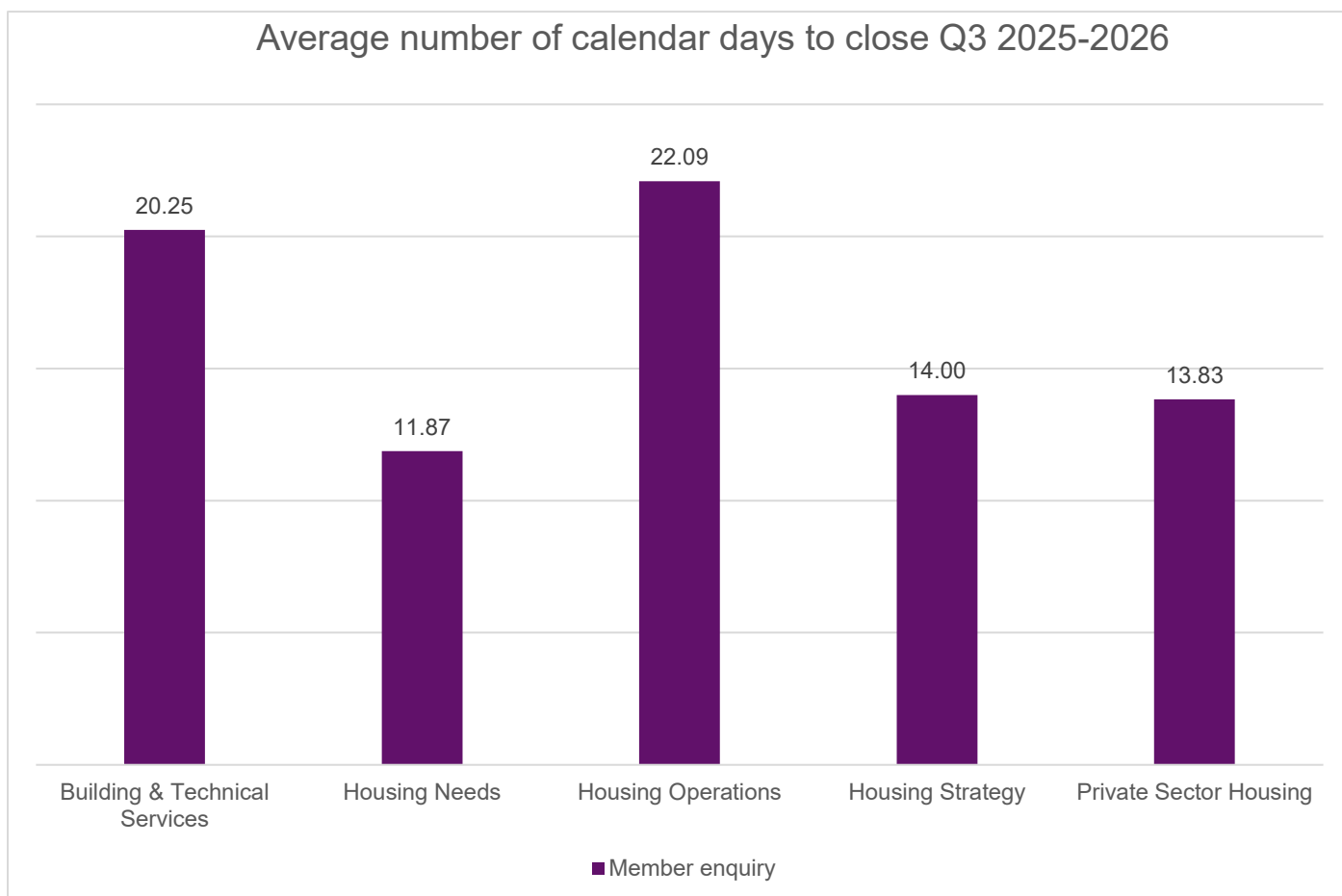
Despite typically handling the highest volume of enquiries (as seen in previous trends), Housing Needs has the fastest turnaround time at 11.87 days.

- Lesson: The processes or staffing models used in the Housing Needs service will be reviewed to see if automated workflows or triaging methods used here that could be adapted to speed up responses in other service areas.

3. Reviewing the 14-Day Baseline

The majority of services (3 out of 5) are taking approximately two weeks or longer to resolve issues.

- Lesson: If the organizational goal is a 10-day turnaround, most services units are currently underperforming. Managers need to ensure that the timescales within the complaints handling code are followed, especially for services areas that take over three weeks to complete tasks.



The table tracks eight distinct themes of member enquiries over seven consecutive quarters.

- Dominant Theme: "Delay in providing a service" is the most significant driver of enquiries, peaking dramatically at 64 in Q4 24-25.

- **Significant Improvement:** Enquiries regarding "Provided a poor service" dropped from 11 in Q1 24-25 to just 1 consistently throughout the 25-26 period.
- **Rising Friction:** "Disagree with decision" enquiries have reached their highest level of 6 in the most recent quarter (Q3 25-26).
- **Minimal Issues:** Themes such as "Staff behaviour," "Made an error," and "Lack of contact" remain negligible, often reporting 0 enquiries per quarter.

Lessons Learned

1. Prioritize Timeliness Over Quality Perceptions

The data shows that members are far more likely to complain about how long a service takes rather than the quality of the service itself.

Lesson: While "Provided a poor service" has been successfully mitigated, the massive spike in "Delay in providing a service" in late 24-25 suggests that operational speed is the primary factor impacting member satisfaction. Future efforts should focus on reducing lead times.

2. Manage Expectations During Peak Delays

There was a massive surge in delay-related enquiries between Q3 24-25 (29) and Q1 25-26 (38), with a major outlier of 64 in Q4 24-25.

Lesson: The sharp decline in these enquiries by Q3 25-26 (down to 6) indicates that recent interventions or process changes were effective. We must document what changed in Q2/Q3 25-26 to maintain this low level of service delays.

3. Address the Trend in Decision Disputes

While other categories are shrinking, "Disagree with decision" has seen a slow but steady increase from 1 in Q1 24-25 to 6 in Q3 25-26.

Lesson: As service speed improves, members may be shifting their focus to the outcomes of their enquiries. We may need to improve how decisions are communicated or justified to members to prevent this category from continuing its upward trend.

4. Information Request Stability

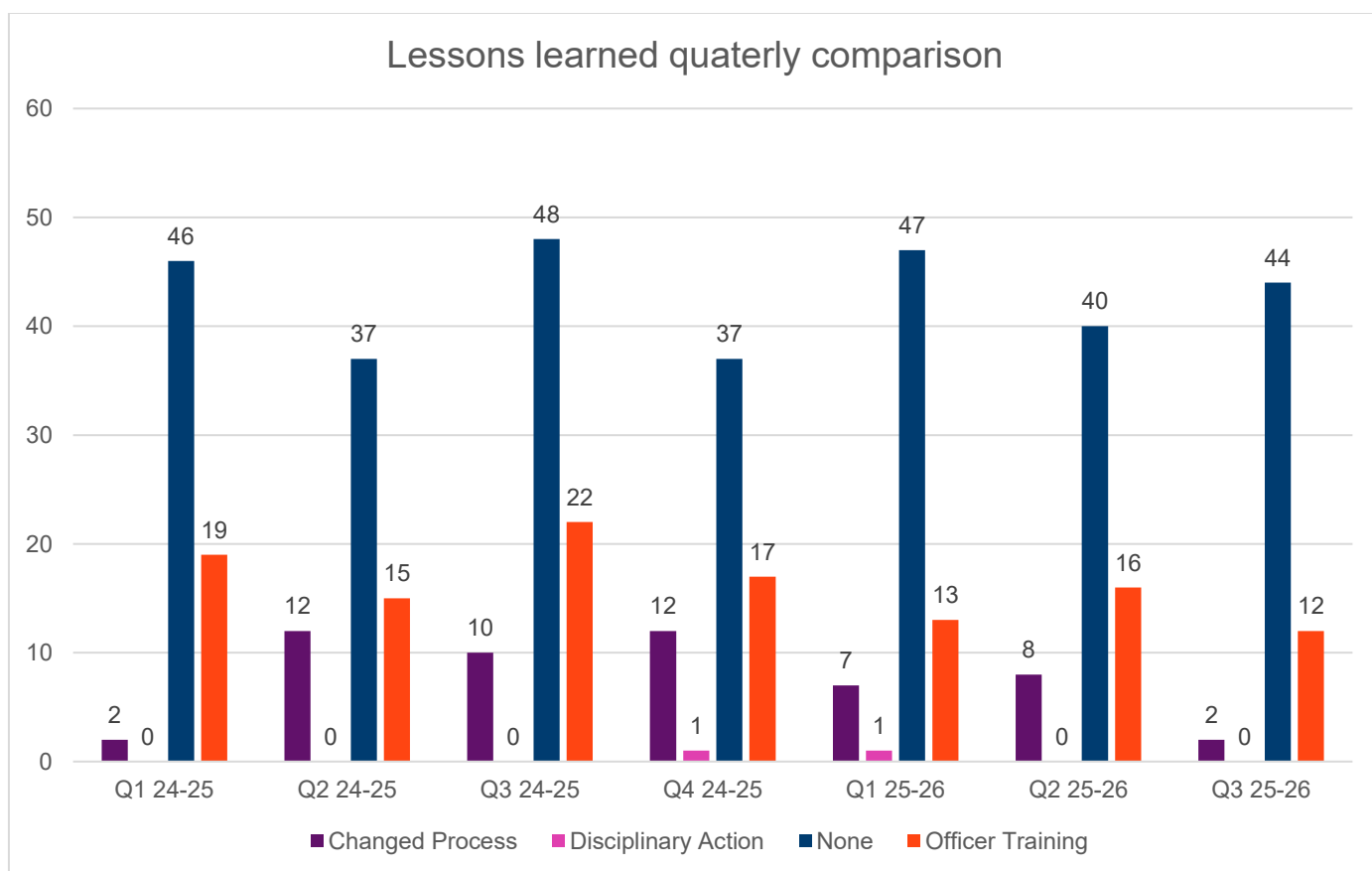
"Requesting information on behalf of customer" fluctuates between 0 and 5.

Lesson: This remains a consistent, low-level baseline. It suggests a portion of the workload is purely administrative and unlikely to be eliminated by process improvements alone.

Member Enquiries by Theme

	Q1 24-25	Q2 24-25	Q3 24-25	Q4 24-25	Q1 25-26	Q2 25-26	Q3 25-26	Q4 25-26
Any	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Delay in providing a service	11	4	29	64	38	21	6	
Disagree with decision	1	2	2	4	3	4	6	
Lack of contact / not returning contact	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	
Made an error	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	
Provided a poor service	11	4	3	2	1	1	1	
Requesting information on behalf of customer	3	2	2	0	5	2	3	
Staff behaviour	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	

Lessons Learned



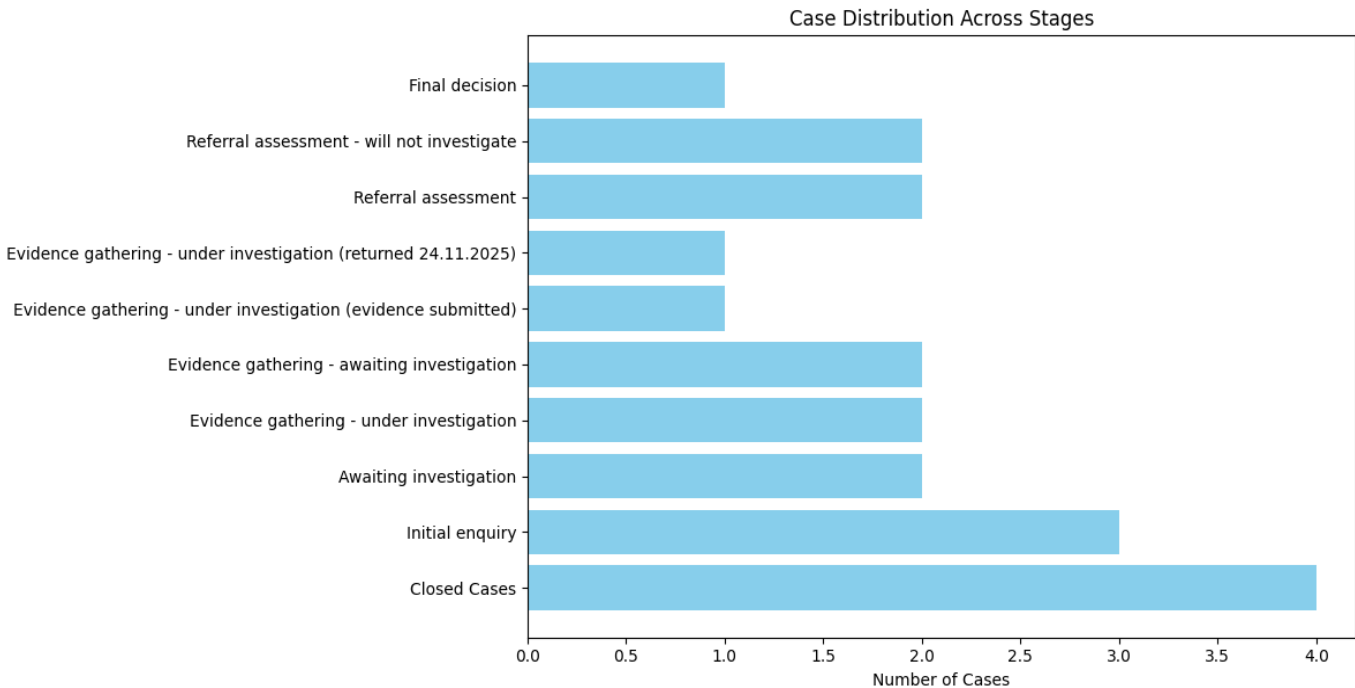
“None” does not include cases where the lesson learned section was not completed on a case.

The "Lessons Learned Quarterly Comparison" identifies how we are addressing the root causes of these enquiries.

- Training vs. Process Change: We consistently rely on Officer Training as a primary corrective measure, averaging between 12 and 22 instances per quarter.

- **Process Maturity:** Changed Processes peaked in 24-25 (up to 12 in Q2 and Q4) but have dropped to only 2 in the most recent quarter. This suggests our core workflows are becoming more established.
- **Untapped Learning:** A high number of enquiries (44 in Q3 25-26) are still categorized as having "None" for lessons learned. This represents a missed opportunity for further service improvement.

Case Distribution Across Stages on Housing Ombudsman



- 4 closed cases,
- 3 cases at the Initial enquiry stage,
- 2 cases are awaiting investigation.
- 4 Evidence gathering case
- 2 Referral Assessment 2 cases
- 1 Final Decision