

Service improvements and learning from complaints

The Engagement and Feedback Team has analysed upheld complaints received in Quarter 4 to identify recurring themes and trends based on customer feedback. This insight enables Derby Homes to implement targeted service improvements that benefit our customers.

This approach represents a new and developing process for Derby Homes. As an organisation, we are still learning how best to embed customer feedback into our service improvement strategies, drawing on both internal experience and external best practices. Since the start of 2024/25, we have delivered training to service managers to clarify expectations around using customer feedback to drive meaningful change.

Regular meetings and discussions are held with managers to review insights from both the complaints team and our customers. These conversations help identify areas of concern and explore where changes in practice may be needed.

Having now reviewed all feedback up to the end of Quarter 4, we are beginning to see consistent trends, while also recognising that some issues are isolated incidents. These one-off cases are being monitored to determine whether they indicate emerging concerns. Where relevant, service improvements have been identified and discussed with managers to ensure continuous learning and development.

The Engagement and Feedback Team has also focused on identifying lessons learned and potential service improvements from a range of other feedback sources. These include comments from the Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) survey, results from transactional and consultation surveys, and, more recently, case reviews from the Housing Ombudsman. Starting in Q1 2025–2026, the team will also analyse trends in service requests received by the Complaints and Feedback Team to help identify areas where services can be improved to ensure customers have better access from the outset.

The team will continue to monitor complaints and feedback, document any resulting actions, and share updates with customers on a quarterly basis via the *Let's Talk Derby Homes* platform (<https://lets-talk.derbyhomes.org/hub-page/you-said-we-did>). In the interest of transparency, the team also highlights any actions that could not be taken forward, providing explanations where possible. These instances are reported on the *Let's Talk* platform as they arise.

The table below summarises key discussions held with managers regarding lessons learned from customer feedback and the actions agreed to support service improvements.

Quarter 4

No.	Recommendation	Reason for recommendation	Comments from management/ update
1.	Reviewing the Welfare Adaptations policies and procedures	Gaps in the adaptations process were identified in a Housing Ombudsman maladministration order.	The Welfare Adaptations policy was reviewed, consulted on, and updated in Q3 and was approved by the Operational Committee in Q4. There has been clarification on the use of private Occupational Therapists, and a review of the Major Adaptations, New Build and Extensions (MANBE) group.
2.	Improve on the number of responsive repairs going out of target	Delays in repairs and responsive repairs going out of target is the largest complaints category.	<p>The Repairs Head of Service and Managers advised that in Q4 there are 50% less repairs going out of target than in previous quarters, and repair lead in times have halved in 2024-25.</p> <p>A recurring trend in Q4 complaints was follow on jobs not being reported back or raised. The repairs team explained the process, and specific examples were presented. It was identified that some of these were human error and there were no cases of one operative or team not following procedure more than once. Where patterns had been identified, these have been dealt with on an individual level. This will be monitored quarterly and considered again if the problem arises.</p>
3.	Proactively work with Carelink to improve overall service	The main trend in Customer Service- related complaints were concerning Carelink rather than the Derby Homes Customer Service Team.	This is an on-going action from Q3, and the Customer Service Manager has provided an update for this in Q4. The manager been holding regular meetings with Carelink management to improve the service. During the most recent meeting in April 2025, it was agreed that the Customer Service manager would arrange a training session on raising emergency repairs on Open Housing, the use of video calling, and checking inclusion attributes on Open Housing. The Manager has also started to create flow-charts for actions on common

			repairs so that Carelink staff are clear on the correct procedures to follow each time. Going forward, the Engagement and Feedback team will attend these meetings, and complaints levels will be monitored.
4.	Improving Customer Service Team complaint handling by asking team to include their name	Customer complaints are not passed on with enough information for the complaints process to log a complaint without needing to ask the customer for clarity. This can be frustrating for customers who feel that they are having to repeat themselves. Following this recommendation the team will be able to follow up directly with the team member if required.	The Customer Service Manager has agreed to this recommendation and will discuss this in the upcoming team meeting. The manager has also asked for the Complaints and Feedback team to provide examples of forms that do not provide sufficient information so that this can be discussed with individual Customer Service Advisors in 121s.
5.	Quality monitoring calls in the Customer Service Team	Quality monitoring assists in identifying potential gaps in the service.	As noted in previous reports, quality monitoring was reintroduced in Q3. In addition to regular quality monitoring, the Senior Customer Service Advisor listens to new Customer Service Advisors to ensure the service given is consistent and to a high standard. It was agreed that the next round of quality monitoring will focus on ensuring Customer Service advisors are answering the phones in a consistent manner, and it will be discussed in the next team meeting. The Manager advised that Carelink do not currently have call recording but there is a discussion underway to see what options are possible for the future. The Income Team Manager has confirmed that quality monitoring of calls will be reintroduced in the future,

			<p>and Team Leaders do listen in on calls when in the office with Income Officers.</p> <p>The Housing Options Manager confirmed that quality monitoring is carried out as both spot-checks and targeted when issues have been identified.</p>
6.	<p>Ensure customers individual needs are taken into account in all of our interactions with them</p>	<p>There are fewer complaints which mention inclusion attributes throughout Q4, however, some customers stated that their diverse needs were not met by our services.</p>	<p>The Quality and Inclusion team have launched the 'About You' survey early October 2024 to gather information on our customers and their needs. The team is working to record this information on the system, and has built new attribute codes to record these. There have been 1358 responses to the survey at the end of Q4.</p> <p>It has been agreed with the Head of Repairs that it will be discussed with operatives in upcoming Toolbox Talks about using clear language and not using jargon or technical language in our interactions with customers.</p>
7.	<p>Reduce use of jargon and technical language when communicating with customers</p>	<p>There were complaints in which customers explained they did not understand the work plan or further work that was required following their initial repair appointment.</p>	<p>This was discussed with the Repairs Head of Service and Managers and the specific examples were shared with them. This will be added to Toolbox talk agendas, and will also be discussed with other service areas in Q1, where applicable.</p>

8.	Review how contractors are managed by the Repairs team	There were a number of complaints that involved contractor work in Q4, including delays in repairs. There were some complaints that involved customers calling multiple times for updates due to these delays, which Derby Homes were unable to provide due to limited information being available on Open Housing.	<p>The Repairs Manager is going to plan in regular meetings with contractors. Topics that will be discussed include ensuring that contractors are following the same procedures as Derby Homes when it comes to contacting customers and making appointments, and ensuring they are keeping within our repairs priority timescales.</p> <p>Further, updating the contractor portal with job updates in a prompt manner will be discussed as this will allow for the Customer Service Team to give updates to customers if they call for an update. This will also allow the Repairs team to monitor repairs which go out of target. There were also instances where follow-on work was not raised by contractors, contributing to a delay in repairs. Again, the updating of the contractor portal will allow the Repairs managers to monitor this.</p> <p>The Head of Service and Manager advised that a new surveyor has been employed to perform spot checks on contractor work and also processing invoices. This will help Derby Homes with quality monitoring of jobs and will also improve the service to customers.</p>
9.	Review Ali chatbot feedback and identify improvements	Negative comments about AI chatbot Ali in Customer Survey comments have been a recurring trend throughout Q1-Q4.	The Derby City Council webbot Darcie has been updated with 9 new languages and has undergone significant improvements as of March 2025. Improvements to the phone version of Darcie are set to follow in the coming weeks. The Ali digital helper will be getting these improvements later in the year. The Engagement and Feedback will continue to monitor levels of comments and complaints on the subject, and feed these back to the Council's IT team.

10.	Using Open Housing to update information	<p>There were several complaints that were exacerbated by the lack of information, or incorrect information, on Open Housing. There were also cases where customers were provided with incorrect information, such as dates when their kitchen is due for a refurbishment, causing a perceived delay when work was not started within the timeframes originally given.</p>	<p>The Capital Works Head of Service agreed that the updating of Open Housing by teams in her service had room for improvement. The Engagement and Feedback gave examples of where poor record-keeping and communication contributed to complaints being made. Moving forward, the Head of Service has asked the Engagement and Feedback team to attend a team meeting with managers in the service area to discuss these issues.</p> <p>The Repairs team advised of issues with how Leasehold properties are identified in Open Housing, which had caused some delays when attempting to rectify some leaks in flats. The Engagement and Feedback team will explore this on Open Housing and update if any changes can be made.</p>
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Quarter 3

No.	Recommendation	Reason for recommendation	Comments from management/ update
1.	Provide training to all Customer Service Advisors on how to repressurise a boiler. The team will also be trained again on where to find the guidance and videos for boilers.	A customer waited over a week for an appointment before calling again, and the Customer Service Advisor advised how to repressurise the boiler over the phone.	The video and guidance for boilers was discussed with all Customer Service Advisors in one-to-ones to refresh their memory and the Customer Services Manager advised a refresher will be sent out to all staff in Q4. The possibility for other repairs-based knowledge training with staff was also discussed and will be considered. Currently, the Manager advised that they are carrying out monitoring emergency 24-hour repairs to see if advice given on calls is correct and if any repeated issues are identified, further training will be considered.

2.	Quality monitoring calls in the Customer Service Team.	3 complaints in Q2 and Q3 where reviewing call recordings would have helped with the investigation. 5 complaints about service when calling Carelink.	The Manager confirmed call monitoring is now in use as it was reintroduced again in Q3. In addition to regular quality monitoring, the Senior Customer Service Advisor listens to new Customer Service Advisors to ensure the service given is consistent and to a high standard. The Manager advised that Carelink do not currently have call recording but there is a discussion underway to see what options are possible for the future.
3.	Ensure customers individual needs are taken into account in all of our interactions with them.	There were 17 complaints across all service areas where customers felt that we did not take inclusion attributes into account in our interactions with them. In some instances, Derby Homes did not have any information of the customer's inclusion attributes on record.	The Quality and Inclusion team have launched the 'About You' survey early October 2024 to gather information on our customers and their needs. The team is working with other departments within Derby Homes to record this information on the system. There have been 741 responses to the survey at the end of Q3. The Quality and Inclusion Manager attended a Customer Service team meeting to discuss inclusion attributes and training, and these complaints will be reviewed to monitor the success of the project.
4.	Discuss inclusion attributes with Carelink.	There were 2 complaints about customers who called the out of hours service (with Carelink) to report repairs, and Carelink did not take into account inclusion attributes. This was because the attributes were not on the system, and the repairs were not treated as emergencies subsequently. This is not best practise, and does not capture data as expected.	The Customer Services Manager has taken this feedback on board and will discuss with Carelink at their next meeting in January.

5.	Extra time to get to the door.	31 out of 70 requests for support needs in the 'About You' survey (to date) were for operatives to allow extra time for the customer to get to the door due to mobility issues. This requirement was also discussed in the Missed appointments payments consultation meeting with the Customer Voice.	The Repairs Head of Service said that inclusion attributes, warnings, and additional information would be discussed with operatives in Toolbox talks. Inclusion attributes were also discussed in the Staff Briefing by the Quality and Inclusion Manager.
6.	Allow customers to book their own repair appointments.	Customers comments show a preference to book appointments online. There were 5 comments from in Q2 and Q3 where complaints might have been mitigated if the customer was able to book or move their repair appointment online, and 4 mentions in Customer survey comments.	The Customer Services Manager advised that customers are now able to book appointments for certain repairs online when they report them. The online booking service went live in November 2024 and as such more communication and marketing need to be shared with customers. To date, approximately 80 customers have used the service so far. There will be a campaign in Q4 to advertise the service to customers. The next phase of this project is to allow customers to move appointments, but this is in the development phase and there is no set timescale for sharing.
7.	A repair priority which allows for appointments to be made for external repairs when a customer tells us access is required.	There has been a decrease in these complaints from Q1, however, as previously identified the Engagement and Feedback team and Head of Service agree this would improve the service provided.	The Head of Service and Manager agreed to revisit this idea in Q1 2025/26 after the online repair appointment booking system. The Customer Services Manager has been asked to remind the Customer Service Team to make sure access details are on jobs so ensure that the planning team can take these into account.

8.	Easy-read or customer friendly versions of front-facing strategies and policies	This was a recommendation by the Customer Voice in their Quality of Home report that Derby Homes produce an easy-read and visual Lettable Standard booklet.	It was agreed that the Engagement and Feedback team would meet with Repairs and Communications teams to progress this. A meeting will be set up in Q4 and progress reported by the Customer Voice, who are presenting to Operational Committee in June 2025. More broadly, this is something that could be applied to various policies, and will be included in consultations going forward to ascertain if the policy or strategy could benefit from this.
9.	Review Ali chatbot feedback and identify improvements	70 negative comments about AI chatbot Ali in Customer Survey comments in Quarters 1 to 3.	The Customer Service Manager has advised that as issues are reported, the transcripts are sent to be investigated. The Ali chatbot has been developed in conjunction with Derby City Council and there are further updates being worked on which will improve the system. The City Council's webbot is launching improvements in February 2025 which should mitigate many of the concerns raised. The changes will then be applied to Derby Homes from Q1 2025. Feedback has been shared with the Council's IT team for noting as the product is developed.

Quarter 1 + 2

No.	Recommendation	Reason for recommendation	Comments from management/ update
1	Explanation of process and when to expect contact in initial automated email when customers sign up to the housing register	There were 5 complaints concerning a lack of communication from customers on the Housing Register	Manager receptive of idea and is already in process of updating email and sees value in adding this to manage expectations.
2	Manage expectations on contact at the beginning of the process when customers are assigned a homelessness advisor	There were 5 complaints concerning a lack of communication from customers on the Housing Register	Customers are advised to contact Derby Homes if there is a change in circumstances. The Manager is exploring with the Head of Service adding information into emails for customers to reaffirm regular contact with any change of circumstances to help deliver this message. Another member of the team is reviewing the Customer Journey, and the use of the self-serve module to see if any improvements may be made. This would allow customers to get updates on their file without having to speak to a housing advisor.
3	Repair appointment texts for plastering and glazing jobs to say that measurement might be required	Customers have said it is not always clear that their appointment is for a measure only	Head of Service agreed that adding this information would help manage customers' expectations
4	Provide training to all Customer Service Advisors on how to repressurise boiler	A customer waited over a week for an appointment before calling again and the Customer Service Advisor advised how to repressurise the boiler over the phone	Manager has confirmed this will be included in the upcoming team meeting; a video will be created as well as a step-by-step guide. The Customer Service team also sit in the same office as the gas team so the team will be reminded of this. Going forward, this will be included in the formal e-learning for all new starters.

5	Discuss vulnerabilities with Carelink	There were 2 complaints about customers who called the Derby Homes out of hours service Carelink to report repairs, and Carelink did not take into account their vulnerabilities because they were not on the system, and the repairs were not treated as emergencies. This is contrary to Derby Homes practice, where if a customer advises us of a vulnerability during a phone call, the call taker should take it into account and add it on to the system.	Manager has agreed to meet with Carelink in November to outline Derby Homes' expectations. Currently, if a customer advises Carelink of a vulnerability that is not on the system Carelink make a note of this on the repairs spreadsheet for Derby Homes to update.
6	Reminding Customer Service Advisors to check vulnerabilities	There were 2 complaints from customers who had called the Derby Homes contact centre and the Customer Service Advisor had not taken their vulnerabilities into account when raising a repair	Manager has advised that the new Quality and Inclusion team are attending the Customer Service Team meeting on 21/10/2024 and the agenda will include a discussion around vulnerabilities and how they affect repairs.
7	An appointable external priority for when customers tell us access is required to complete the job	There were a number of complaints about delays to repairs, some external repairs that the customer had told us we would require access for but an operative attended without an appointment.	Head of Service has agreed the service here could be improved. We are asking the question about access but are not currently using that information to improve the service. This action is being progressed and monitored.

8	Improve communication with customers regarding planned maintenance jobs, especially with doors	There were 4 complaints about a lack of communication about door repairs. Upon investigation, the issues have arisen once the repairs team has reported back that a repair is not possible and a new door is required.	The Head of Service has recommended that Open Housing is used to log jobs for new doors and new windows, so that customers can be advised more clearly when they enquire about updates. This action is being progressed and monitored.
9	Local supplier to purchase materials from other suppliers when required to meet demand	A complaint was made by a customer who had scaffolding up at the property for 6 weeks and they had to keep chasing when the roof would be getting repaired. Every time they contacted Derby Homes, they were told that the materials were out of stock. They had two children who had severe learning disabilities, and the scaffolding was seen as a danger to them.	Manger has advised that Derby Homes' local supplier have been instructed to purchase materials from other suppliers if materials are repeatedly out of stock. This means that there should be less instances of repairs being delayed due to out-of-stock materials going forward.