



Complaints Scrutiny 12 Month Report 2025

Introduction

Starting in December 2024, Home Group's national complaints scrutiny panel comprising nine customers from all tenures and regions and Scotland, carried out a 12-month scrutiny review of complaints relating to missed appointments. This review was commissioned by the Director of customer experience.

Most complaints at Home Group relate to repairs and missed appointments is one of the biggest complaint drivers. Missed appointments can occur when customers' circumstances change on the day, repairs operatives run out of time and can't make the scheduled appointment, parts are unavailable on the day, or emergency repairs take priority and scheduling changes. Missed appointments directly affect service quality, customer trust, and repairs performance.

The decision to ask the scrutiny panel to review missed appointments strongly aligns with current regulatory requirements, especially:

- the regulators' emphasis on resident-led scrutiny and accountability
- the new consumer standards and Tenant Satisfaction Measures
- legal duties around transparency, complaints handling, and service quality
- the government's agenda to ensure residents' voices shape improvements in social housing

Scope and methodology

Home Group asked the complaints scrutiny panel to investigate how it can increase customer satisfaction and reduce complaints relating to missed appointments

Customer scrutiny panel members met 11 times on Teams and once in person, and used a range of methods to carry out their review, including

- review of complaints, customer satisfaction and repairs performance data
- in-depth complaint case reviews
- review of Home Group's systems and processes for handling repairs appointments and communicating appointments with customers
- review of the Housing Ombudsman spotlight report 'repairing trust'
- call listening at the customer service centre, listening to calls made by Home Group's outbound calls team and tracking improvements through the implementation of this approach
- interviews with maintenance colleagues about repairs and maintenance contract management and how Home Group works in partnership with contractors to support improvements

- Shadowing a repairs and maintenance contract management meeting to observe how contract management is delivered in practice
- Interview with colleagues from Home Group's procurement team to explore the procurement process and review the tender questions in relation to customer service, communication and customer vulnerabilities.

Key findings

Scrutiny panel members identified five key themes – repairs scheduling, communication, customer information and vulnerabilities, customer experience and procurement and contract management.

Scheduling

- Repairs appointments are booked via the customer service centre and sent to the contractor interface. If the contractor can't meet the scheduled appointment, they are obliged to contact the customer directly and ask if they can move the appointment.
- It is the responsibility of the planner to check that appointments are on track and reschedule appointments where necessary, however this is often down to the operative and communication with customers is inconsistent.
- Not all contractor information is feeding into Home Group's system in a timely way.
- In cases where multiple repairs are required, improved planning, coordination and oversight from Home Group would reduce the number of appointments and therefore mitigate the risk of missed appointments.

Communication

- There isn't a consistent mechanism for contractors to keep customers up to date about their appointments, for example, text message to let customers know that they are delayed or that they are on their way with an estimated time of arrival.
- Customers receive an appointment at the time of booking and a text message to confirm the booking, however there is a gap in communication after this.
- When booking communal repairs, customers receive a job reference number but no appointment.
- Home Group and their contractors don't currently have the right software or system compatibility to deliver real-time communication with customers, for example, appointment timeframes and contractor tracking and option to click on a link and reschedule an appointment.

Customer vulnerabilities

- The impact caused by missed appointments increases for customers with vulnerabilities for whom a central point of contact and clear communication is particularly important.
- Home Group needs to know more about customers to be able to provide proactive support and, where customers declare vulnerabilities, this information must be shared with contractors.

Understanding customer experience in real-time

- Home Group and their contractors do not gather real-time customer feedback on repairs, for example, via a brief text survey immediately following a repairs appointment. Such surveys would enable Home Group and contractors to receive real-time information about appointments and whether appointments are kept, delayed or missed.
- Home Group and their contractors could consider carrying out text surveys a month following completion of repairs to find out customer feedback on quality, follow up works or contractor behaviour.

Contract management

- Contract delivery must be actively monitored and managed, and structured support provided to contractors to ensure they can deliver their contractual obligations and reduce the number of missed appointments.

Home Group response

Scheduling

Home Group uses a dynamic resource scheduler (software for managing repairs appointments) which advises the best appointments where there are already repairs at a property, and customer service advisors are trained to group appointments, where possible.

Planning, coordination and oversight from Home Group where multiple repairs or trade appointments are required at individual properties is easier to manage where direct labour organisations are in operation. Home Group Repairs Services have full oversight of diaries and can manually move jobs and lock into specific time frames where various dependencies on other trades exist. Work in progress reports can identify where same trade works have been duplicated at the point of being raised and jobs can be consolidated into one appointment.

Communication

Based at Home Group's customer service centre, the outbound calls team of customer service advisors receive a daily data report of missed repairs appointments that have been closed as 'no access.' Advisors make proactive calls to each customer to check the reason for the missed appointment and reappoint the work. This process

- Prevents customers from chasing Home Group – providing better customer service and reducing call volumes into the customer service centre.
- Gets to the heart of contractor performance issues
- Helps to identify customer vulnerabilities.

Early successes include contact with over 50% customers with missed repairs and maintenance appointments, re-raising the jobs. Home Group identified 84 customers to contact following the repairs and maintenance customer satisfaction surveys, spoke to 80%, chased and rebooked works and prevented five complaints from escalating.

Customer scrutiny panel members attended the customer service centre to observe the outbound calls team and listen to customer calls where they identified successes and challenges. Home Group responded to scrutiny panel recommendations and

- carried out a refresh exercise at the customer service centre to ensure all customers are asked for their preferred method of contact and preferred language (where

appropriate) when contacting the customer service centre. This information is captured in Salesforce and included on all job tickets.

- confirmed that Salesforce has the ability for automatic text enablement (text function to follow up unanswered calls) however, this functionality is not currently available.
- carried out a software review to explore options to improve call quality. Current software contract is in place until 2026.
- implemented good practice template for all outbound calls and included it in the quality assurance framework.
- rolled out the outbound calls model to leasehold customers regarding service charge arrears and to vulnerable customers reporting emergency repairs.

Home Group's contractors do not currently have a mechanism for contacting customers with real time information about appointments and links to track operatives. This requires additional system functionality and Home Group is working with Plentific and Salesforce to understand how this can be achieved. This is one element of a broader discussion in terms of system improvements for customers.

Customer vulnerabilities

When customers contact the customer service centre, customer service advisors gather any additional information regarding customer vulnerabilities and this information is added to the job tickets, so contractors are aware up front. Colleagues may also send a short description to contractors so they can make the best attempt to gain access to customers' properties.

When customer vulnerability is identified on site and customers require additional support during complex follow on works, Home Group assigns estate liaison officers to attend the property at points throughout the follow-on works being completed to ensure customers' needs are met.

For difficult to access properties, housing managers and maintenance colleagues take a collaborative approach and work with customers to understand their needs and circumstances, and gain access to their properties.

By declaring my vulnerabilities, the way I've been treated is better. Operatives have shown more understanding of my needs, and it has made a big difference.

Understanding customer experience in real-time

This is a longer-term project. Home Group is rolling out Salesforce in stages and repairs will eventually be part of the roll out. Home Group is also carrying out work with contractors to understand what communication goes out to customers and how this can be improved.

Contract management

Home Group takes a robust and structured approach to working with contractors to ensure they fulfil their contractual obligations around the delivery and communication of repairs appointments.

Tender Scoring

- 60% price / 40% quality (customer service is a major factor).

Contracts

- Standardised with addendums for customer care and information technology.
- Contractors must maintain visible diaries, contact customers within 48 hours, and

confirm appointments.

Performance Monitoring

- Weekly service delivery meetings.
- Monthly operational meetings.
- Senior-level core meetings for escalations.
- Standard operating procedure with clear timescales.
- Training for contract managers
- improvement plans to address performance issues and low customer satisfaction

Disputes regarding access

- Contractors provide photo evidence (before/after, missed appointment cards).

Non-Performance

- Financial penalties and reallocation of work (with admin fee).
- 28-day wait before reassignment (except emergencies).
- Recall contractors for poor-quality work.

Bonuses

- Annual, based on Key Performance Indicators (e.g., right first time), communication, customer promise, and social value.
- No bonus if targets missed.

Performance Management

- Focus on improving poor performers and praising high performers.
- Direct Labour Organisation sets benchmark standards.

Regulatory & Tech Changes

- Contractors must adapt to new tech and regulations.
- Changes tested with Direct Labour Organisation before rollout.

Customer scrutiny panel members attended and observed an operational contract management meeting for East Coast and Yorkshire and found, in the main, that Home Group's approach to contract management is robust. Customer experience is shared in the form of customer satisfaction data and complaints; however, panel members recommend that Home Group provides a regular opportunity for customers to attend contract management meetings to bring customer experience to life.

Following the complaints scrutiny review of Home Group's standard invitation to tender (ITT) questions relating to communication and customer service, Home Group's procurement team agreed to include customer questions about planning for customer vulnerabilities and communicating with customers at the interview stage of the procurement process. Customer scrutiny panel members will shape these questions and participate in the procurement of the repairs and maintenance contract for London (North and South) in February 2026.

Conclusion

We're all seeing and saying the same thing. Home Group has recognised this and appears to be on track to getting a good solution.

Our review of complaints relating to missed appointments has identified weaknesses or gaps within Home Group and their contractors' systems capabilities, methods of communication and approach to capturing and sharing customer vulnerabilities

information. It has also shown that there is a disparity in both communication and repairs delivery between Home Group's regions and between contractors and direct labour organisations.

At the same time, our review highlighted that Home Group has recognised these gaps and weaknesses and is working to make improvements, particularly around proactive communication with customers, information technology and systems, robust contract management processes and in capturing, understanding and sharing information about customers' needs and vulnerabilities.

Our observations of the outbound calls team and contract management have shown us that there are colleagues delivering excellent practice and helping others to improve by passing on their knowledge and expertise. We would like Home Group to harness the qualities of these colleagues and share their good practice.

If everybody did what Jamie does, the customer service centre would be magical.

Overall, it has been great to carry out a deep dive into one specific theme driving complaints, over 12 months. It has given us time to really work on it and put forward our recommendations which we can see Home Group has taken on board and progressed.

Recommendations

We have identified the following short, medium and longer-term recommendations for Home Group's consideration:

Short term

1. Provide the complaints scrutiny panel with a full performance update on the work carried out by the outbound calls team by end March 2026.
2. Involve complaints scrutiny panel members in the procurement of the repairs and maintenance contract for London (North and South) by February 2026.

Medium term

3. Use the findings from this scrutiny review to shape the standard invitation to tender questions (ITT) on customer care and communication and include planning for customer vulnerabilities.
4. Involve customers in shaping procurement interview questions around communication and vulnerabilities.
5. Consider regularly involving customers at contract management meetings as standard, to bring customer experience to life. Work with customers to shape Home Group's approach to involvement at these meetings.

Longer-term

6. Explore software and IT options and feasibility to enable real-time tracking and rescheduling of appointments.
7. Explore software and IT options and feasibility to enable real-time or monthly follow up text surveys to customers following repairs appointments

We request that Home Group provides the panel with a full response to the above recommendations within three months with positive examples of actions taken.