

Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2023/24

From April 2024 the Housing Ombudsman Service now requires landlords to produce an Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report.

The association shares complaint information and service improvement action from complaints at the quarterly Tenants and Communications Sub Committee. In addition, the information is also shared with the Tenants Advisory Group.

Complaints Made in 2023/24.

Complaint Type	Acknowledged	Stage 1	Stage 2	Total
Contractors Conduct	1	2		3
Property Condition	2	9	1	12
Service Failure	1	9		10
Service Response Delay	1	5		6
Service Standards	3	18		21
Grand Total	8	43	1	52

No responses exceeded the target response times.

Outcome of Complaints

Complaint Type	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Total
Contractors Conduct	1		2	3
Property Condition	7	4	1	12
Service Failure	8	1	1	10
Service Response Delay	3	2	1	6
Service Standards	7	6	8	21
Grand Total	26	14	13	52

Analysis

The importance of making it easy to complain, managing complaints effectively and learning from them has increased significantly over recent years. In particular, the central role of complaints as a means of listening to tenants and providing a means of redress has been led by The Housing Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman has published a Complaints Handling Code; which we are expected to comply with and which we have demonstrated our compliance through a self-assessment. This was validated in a recent Tenants and Communications Sub Committee with no recommendations arising from their analysis of it.

In the recent Tenant Measures Perception Survey, using the standardised question wording stipulated by the Regulator, we asked “How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with WMHA’s approach to complaints handling?”

- **Very Satisfied: 11.6%**
- **Fairly satisfied: 18.6%**
- **Neither : 22.1%**
- **Fairly dissatisfied: 27.9%**
- **Very Dissatisfied : 19.8%**

This provided a satisfaction score of 30% which is 1% higher than the average score amongst our peer group of 23 other Housing Associations; where scores ranged from 12% to 50%.

A significant minority of respondents were dissatisfied, however it should be noted that this question was not restricted to those who made a complaint. A separate question on the survey showed that 26.5% of respondents had made a complaint. It is also possible that there might be a correlation between the outcome of a complaint and tenants’ perceptions of our “approach.”

Complaint Issues Raised

The majority of complaints were repair service queries which revolved around breaks in communication with jobs being reported and not completed or delays in completing work from some time ago. In addition, the quality of workmanship and a perceived misdiagnosis of problems.

Several complaints referenced the mess contractor had left after works had been completed and the performance of these contractor has subsequently been closely monitored.

Some of the repair issues were about requests for replacements that were refused.

Some complaints were regarding component replacements that had been promised and not been delivered. Some of these were paused during COVID and not picked up, and some were booked with HMS towards the end of the financial year, then a major contractor withdrew from this work. Communication with the tenants could have been better during this period, however in the case of the works it was not clear that this work had been abandoned for some time. All this work is now in train and will be completed before the end of June.

Of the staff attitude elements 2 were regarding the treatment from previous staff members, 1 from a decision they did not agree with and 1 stated we were not “empathetic”.

3 complaints were about the standard of gardening and window cleaning at the communal schemes and particularly the mess left by a gardening contractor. These were followed up and service contractors are now monitored through monthly scheme inspections.

The ASB complaints relate to issues not being resolved over time and the association being ineffective in this area. These are often very difficult issues to resolve and the association needs support from a range of other stakeholders and agencies to try to tackle these issues.

Service Improvement Plan

1. Complete a comprehensive Stock Condition Survey and create a programme to replace all key components at the end of their life cycles. This will replace elements like windows, kitchens and bathrooms on a priority basis in a way that is affordable to the association.
2. Plot predicted lifecycles of key components in tenants' properties to give better information on the likely replacement timescales.
3. Inspect all communal areas every month and complete a written report on their condition including reference to cleaning, fly tipping and any repair issues.
4. Complete a process to find a high-quality customer focussed volume repairs and maintenance contractor to undertake the majority of day-to-day repairs.

5. Monitor contractors closely to ensure they provide the associations tenants with a better service.
6. Inspect all properties for damp and mould address every instance and deliver our commitment to zero tolerance to damp and mould.
7. Link with agencies and organisation in areas to more effectively tackle ASB in areas and contribute to local cooperation and build neighbourhood resilience.
8. Map networks of existing community and voluntary support groups and organisation to ensure tenants are effectively referred into them and that they receive the associations support.
9. To improve the management of customer journeys, implement a new computer system with better workflows.

10. To facilitate better communication between tenants and associations officers implement a new telephone system that enables better linkage of officers and tenants and records all calls to ensure information does not get lost.

Reporting and review:

This improvement plan was created in response to the complaints and the Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey and will be scrutinised by the Tenants Advisory Group and be approved at the Board in December.

Approved by Board of Governance 10th December 2024