

Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2024/25

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 Tenants and Communications Sub Committee. In addition, the information is also shared with the Tenants Advisory Group.

Trend in Complaints Made in 2023/25.

Stage	2023/24	2024/25
Stage 1	43	38
Stage 2	1	2
Grand Total	44	40

No responses exceeded the target response times.

Trends in Type and Outcome of Complaints

Complaint Type	Not Upheld		Partially Upheld		Upheld		Totals	
	23/24	24/25	23/24	24/25	23/24	24/25	23/24	24/25
3rd Party (Contractors)	1	1			3	1	4	2
Policy		1		1				2
Property Condition	5	4	4		1	6	10	10
Service (Failure to provide service)	5	2	1		1	3	7	5
Service (Response Delays)	2	1	2		1	6	5	7
Service (Standards)	4	7	6	1	8	6	18	14
Grand Total	16	16	14	2	13	22	44	40

Analysis

The number of complaints has been quite stable for the 2 years with a small decrease in 2024/5. In addition, in 2024/25 no complaints so far have been referred to the ombudsman following the complaints process (one was referred after stage 1).

The most significant change in the trend in the type and outcome of complaints is the increase in the number of complaints being upheld (13 in 23/4 to 22 in 24/5). This is likely to be a reaction to the advice given by the Ombudsman regarding the expectations under their code.

Issues emerging through complaints:

The most concerning element was the service delays that highlighted the problem of works being cancelled or stopped for various reasons. This was the cause of 17 of the upheld or partially upheld complaints and the most common causes were:

Access: Where there had been problems gaining access with the tenant, in these cases there was not clear evidence of the access problems or evidence that the tenant had been informed that the works were on hold until they confirmed access arrangements.

Follow on works not initiated: Works were completed, and another trade was required to finish the works (for example a plastered following a bathroom works)

Further enquiries not followed up: Where a problem needs further investigation to diagnose issues a different contractor or independent surveyor is used to provide more insight and recommendations. This process puts a break in the process and then officers have been slow to respond or hesitant to implement solutions because of cost and complexity.

Another area of concern was conduct of staff or contractors accounting for 3 upheld complaints. One tenant was justifiably unhappy with the communication from a staff member and one was unhappy about the lack of empathy shown by a contractor and the third because a contractor didn't use dust sheets.

The other 2 cases involved an error in calculating a rent refund and the state of a property when it was let.

Service Improvement Plan

1. Staff members have been subject to formal management instruction/disciplinary action.
2. The new principal contractor appointed needs to be managed to avoid a repeat of the problems.
3. The new computer system captures tasks and will not allow them to be closed until they are complete. Tasks can also be monitored by managers in real time.
4. Existing contractors are much more closely managed for the progress of works.
5. The new system puts the responsibility for monitoring the jobs onto the contractor and provides them with information about all outstanding works.

In response to the conduct issues a staff member decided to leave in the process of investigating one complaint otherwise they would have faced disciplinary action. In the other 2 cases contractors were warned about conduct.

In response to the ombudsman's guidance the payments have been made in 5 cases. Whilst we are cautious in issuing payments as it could lead to tenants "gaming" the system it does offer a form of redress which is popular and often justified.

The attached Dashboard reflects the data we collected on the old system the new system has much more scope to capture management data for example complaints refused, stage 2 actions, numbers of payments made and the amounts.

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