



ANNUAL COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT

23/24

PLACES FOR PEOPLE

As the UK's leading Social Enterprise, we take the voice of our Customers very seriously so we can understand how to improve our services and drive change.

We believe that transparency and accountability are key components of our ethos, which is why we embrace initiatives like the annual complaints performance and service improvement report.

ENGAGEMENT WITH CUSTOMERS

Engagement with our involved Customers is important to us. Our National Customer Group receives regular complaints reports and has recently spent time with our Contact Centre Advisors in the Customer Hub. A session has been scheduled to review the report with key service leads.

WHAT IS THE ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT?

The Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report is an annual regulatory report that requires landlords and housing associations to report the number of complaints they've received that year, the lessons they've learned, and the results of their self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.

The results will then feed into the Housing Ombudsman's Annual Complaints Review, providing a comprehensive overview of the sector's performance, and promote key learnings with the broader sector.

HOW WE'RE LISTENING TO OUR CUSTOMERS

We have also published our Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM), which gave us an important overview of how our Customers felt about our services. Because we believe that all our Customers deserve a voice, we tried to survey as many Customers as possible to identify areas for improvement. From this survey, we discovered 57% of our Customers were satisfied with the overall service we provided, 65% were satisfied with our repairs service, and 73% were satisfied with their home's safety.

Our Board receive quarterly updates on the complaints handling and performance of our organisation, allowing them to thoroughly review the performance report and self-assessment against the complaint handling code. We remain committed to supporting the actions required to drive improvements and hope that these results, alongside this report, will give us the framework to provide the highest quality support to our Customers.



Scott Black

Chief Operating Officer

Customer survey results

As the UK's leading Social Enterprise, our Customers' opinion of our complaints handling service is of the utmost importance to us. As a result, we ask our Customers to complete a survey after a complaint is logged and closed to help us gain a better understanding how the complaint was managed, our strengths and areas of improvement.

Customers who got their complaints resolved appeared appreciative of the work our People do and were complimentary towards them, understanding that they are doing the best to resolve issues. Our People's attitude is a vital part of our culture, and the Complaints team behave in a manner that demonstrate they care for our Customers.

However, some of the feedback has provided room for improvement. Month on month, repairs is the consistent reason Customers raise complaints, with 81.2% of complaints relating to repairs. Customers often expressed frustration with poor communication along their journey. Notes on lack of communication once a complaint is closed, how the issue will be resolved, and updates on time frames and progress were all key areas for improvement.

In addition to routine surveys, in 2023–24 we worked with Housemark, the leading data and insight company for the UK housing sector, to survey 10,676 Customers to collect data for the Tenant Satisfaction Measures which provides a comprehensive set of performance measures including satisfaction with our complaint handling. From this feedback, we have established that our Customers Satisfaction rate with our approach to complaints handling is 22%. We acknowledge that this statistic is lower than we hoped and are making conscious efforts to improve on this score.

Our complaints handling performance

TSM CH01: Complaints relative to size of landlord (per 1,000 properties)

STOCK	65,548	1,000	PER 1,000 PROPERTIES
TOTAL	1,687	25.74	
STAGE 1	1,396	21.30	
STAGE 2	291	4.44	

CH02: Complaints responded to within Compliant Handling Code timescales

Number of complaints

STAGE 1	1,396	STAGE 2	291
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Volume and percentage closed in timescale

STAGE 1	918 (66%)	STAGE 2	143 (49%)
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*Data collected from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

COMPLAINT HANDLING TIMESCALES

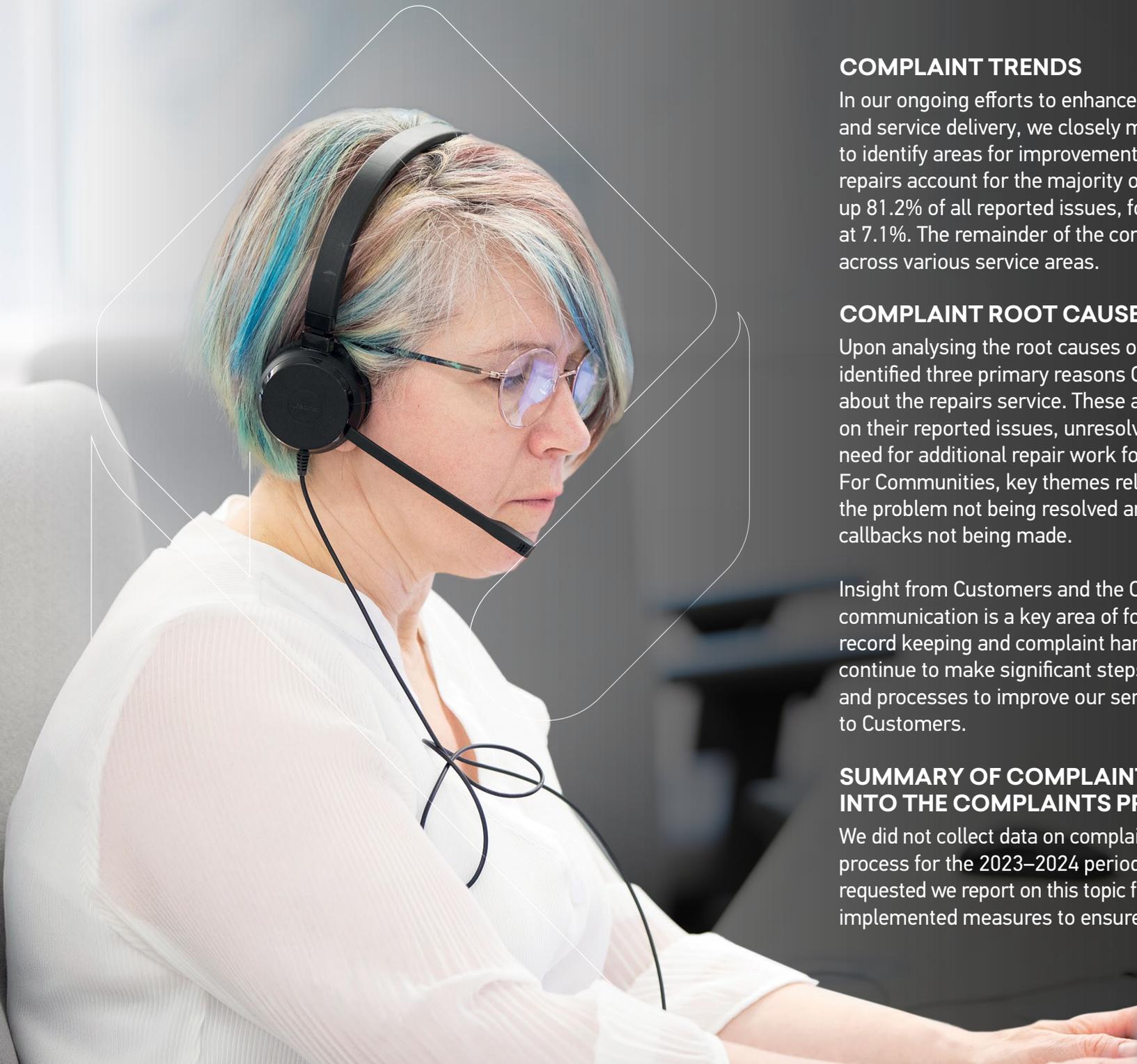
While we strive to maintain compliance with industry standards, and do so in many areas, there are sections of our organisation where we are yet to achieve full compliance in practice. This includes our complaint handling timescales. We remain committed to addressing these areas of concern and continually improving our processes.

Despite efforts to address complaints promptly, we acknowledge that our service levels have occasionally fallen outside of acceptable guidelines. To rectify this, we are investing in our Complaints Team and have received full support from our Board to do this.

In line with our commitment to enhance our Customers' experience, we are centralising our complaint handling service in 2024. We have recruited more Customer Resolution Coordinators from various teams within our organisation, increasing our expertise and improving our complaint resolution capabilities.

By September 2024, we'll strengthen our team with 25 new Early Resolution Coordinators and enhance our complex case and Ombudsman casework team. We've also strengthened complaints insight and reporting by hiring Data Analysts, enabling us to analyse trends and root causes. Through weekly reporting and collaborative discussions with service leads, we're actively addressing specific complaint issues to minimise Customer dissatisfaction.





COMPLAINT TRENDS

In our ongoing efforts to enhance Customer satisfaction and service delivery, we closely monitor complaint trends to identify areas for improvement. Our data indicates that repairs account for the majority of complaints, making up 81.2% of all reported issues, followed by Communities at 7.1%. The remainder of the complaints made were split across various service areas.

COMPLAINT ROOT CAUSES

Upon analysing the root causes of complaints, we have identified three primary reasons Customers raise concerns about the repairs service. These are a lack of updates on their reported issues, unresolved repairs, and the need for additional repair work following an initial visit. For Communities, key themes relate to a lack of updates, the problem not being resolved and still ongoing, and callbacks not being made.

Insight from Customers and the Ombudsman tells us that communication is a key area of focus for us, along with record keeping and complaint handling. We have made and continue to make significant steps to improve our systems and processes to improve our services and communication to Customers.

SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS NOT ACCEPTED INTO THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

We did not collect data on complaints not accepted into the process for the 2023–2024 period. However, the HOS has requested we report on this topic from April 2024, so we have implemented measures to ensure the collection of this data.

Non-compliance with the Code

COMPLIANCE WORK WITH THE OMBUDSMAN

In November 2023, we worked with the Ombudsman Compliance Team to improve elements of our complaints policy and information to Customers.

- Updated our complaints policy to remove some outdated clauses and ensure all Customers start the complaints process at stage 1.
- Improved consistency with our complaints policy and complaint handling information to Customers.
- Amended our website to make it clear how to report anti-social behaviour (ASB) or a complaint about ASB.
- Updated our self-assessment against our degree of compliance with the Complaint Handling Code.



COMPLAINT HANDLING FAILURE ORDERS (CHFO)

We received a Type 2 CHFO in September 2023 for non-compliance with a Determination Order and a Type 1 CHFO in March 2024 for delays in processing a Customer's complaint. We fully accept the Orders and are expanding our Housing Ombudsman Casework Team to strengthen oversight with three additional posts in Q3 2024.

FINDINGS OF MALADMINISTRATION

During this process, the Ombudsman will investigate whether the landlord or housing association has been responsible for maladministration. Maladministration can be described as the inefficient or unethical management and execution of duties by a government body or public official. Examples of maladministration may include but are not limited to; failure to comply with relevant legal obligations or codes of practice, failure to apply its own policies and/or procedures, unreasonable delays when dealing with a matter, unfair or unreasonable behaviour towards the complainant in a heavy-handed, unsympathetic or inappropriate manner.

We received 49 determinations from the Housing Ombudsman, with 6% of these cases receiving an outcome of severe maladministration, 67% having an outcome of maladministration and 19% service failure. These results left us with an overall maladministration rate of 92%. Each determination undergoes a case review to extract insights and learning for service leads and senior leaders.

We are disappointed by this outcome and are actively working to implement provisions to ensure we live up to our People Promise to 'Do The Right Thing. Always.'

Key areas for improvement

COMPLAINTS INSIGHT AND ANALYSIS

Throughout 2023–24, we made significant progress in our complaints insight and reporting through recruiting Data Analysts. We carry out regular reviews of complaint volumes, trends, and root causes, sharing these insights with service leads and senior leaders.

Our commitment to improving Customer satisfaction extends beyond reporting; we actively engage with various business areas to address specific complaint root causes and implement proactive measures to mitigate dissatisfaction among our valued Customers.

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE SERVICE

Effective from May 1, 2024, we've restructured our repairs and maintenance teams to improve management, governance, and process standardisation in each region. This initiative aims to improve systems, Customer communication, and repair timescales.

COMMUNITIES

In our Communities, we're creating closer relationships with our Customers by reducing the number of homes our team supports and instead recruiting more Customer-facing Colleagues who will be able to provide more tailored support.

COMPLAINT HANDLING

We are on track to centralise and expand our complaint handling team by the end of 2024, which should improve complaint handling timescales for our Customers.



Service improvements

In 2023–2024, we launched our new Customer and internal People Promises. We will continue to use our complaints insight to improve and do the right thing for our Customers. Based on Customer feedback, survey responses, and Ombudsman determination insight.

To ensure these learnings improve our services for our Customers, we have logged and tracked a number of service improvements. Some examples include:



ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB)

- We launched a new ASB policy and procedure framework in November 2023, which included mandatory risk assessments and written action plans.
- We also launched a new case management system in November. It provides a more straightforward process for logging, triaging, and managing cases and allows for better record-keeping.

LEASEHOLDERS AND SHARED OWNERS

- A dedicated support team now provides specialist service to Customers who have purchased a new home from us through shared ownership or outright sale.
- We've also implemented Homes England's requirement to supply Key Information Documents (KIDs) at the appropriate stages of an initial sale of a shared ownership property, thus further ensuring Customers are given all the information they need both prior to and following the completion of their purchase.

REIMBURSEMENT FOR CUSTOMER NEEDED TO MOVE TEMPORARILY

- Improved guidance on what living expenses Customers can claim under the decant policy.

MANAGING AGENTS

We reviewed operational processes with our managing agent Resident Management Group (RMG), which resulted in an action plan with outcomes including:

- Implementing improvements to complaints guidance on the RMG website.
- Amending the Service Level Agreement with RMG to oversee the handling of complaints better.
- Overseeing and signing off RMG complaint responses
- Holding regular meetings to manage the progress of Section 20 consultations.

DEVELOPMENTS

- We have reviewed our process for failed target dates for repairs, and should any repairs now fail the target date, a 7-day notice is now issued to a contractor. An alternative contractor will be appointed if an appointment is not made and kept within this period.

COMPLAINT HANDLING

- Introduced a new complaint triage assessment checklist to ensure we capture reasonable adjustments or communication preferences.
- We have improved our complaints handling system to track promised complaint actions.
- We have improved the compensation process for our Customers by removing a form to complete, therefore making the process more straightforward.

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

- We trialed The Homes Quality Promise, the new and improved standard for rented homes. It is active in Sheffield and is planned for a national rollout.
- We rolled out a new repairs system for our Field Service operatives in November 2023, with our operatives in the North West. The lessons learned are being reviewed ahead of a national rollout.
- We are proactively planning a series of operational and system improvements to the existing responsive Damp and Mould process.

MUTUAL EXCHANGE

- We have reviewed the policy to improve the pre-exchange inspection process, ensuring wherever possible inspections are carried out in person, the property meets the relevant standard and photos are taken.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Our Landlord Performance Report produced by the Ombudsman for 2022-23

Throughout 2022–2023, we received 18 determinations, with a 45% rate of maladministration. Encouragingly, our compliance rate with the orders set was a solid 100%. However, property condition and complaints handling emerged as key areas where we fell short, with anti-social behaviour also posing challenges.

We acknowledge the areas that demand our attention and efforts. The sector has presented significant challenges, especially concerning delivering a repairs and maintenance service that aligns with the expectations of our valued Customers. However, we continue to improve our services to provide a better quality of homes and Communities to our Customers. We await our 2023–2024 Performance Report and will use this insight to continue making improvements.



If you need information about your home, such as how to report a repair, money advice or wellbeing support — please get in touch with us and we will help you. Visit our website

www.placesforpeople.co.uk

[#WeAreCommunity](https://twitter.com/WeAreCommunity)