

Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report

Introduction

In accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code this report provides an overview of complaint numbers, performance, key themes, and formal Housing Ombudsman determinations received between 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024.

The report forms part of our annual self-assessment for the Complaint Handling Code which we have completed, and we can confirm that our complaints handling arrangements and our Compliments, Complaints and Feedback Policy complies with all areas of the Code.

The report includes:

Complaint handling performance:

- A qualitative and quantitative analysis of our complaint handling performance.
- A summary of the types of complaints we have refused to accept.
- Any findings of non-compliance with the Code by the Housing Ombudsman.

Service Improvements:

- The service improvements made because of our learning from complaints.
- Our actions following the annual report about our performance from the Housing Ombudsman.
- Our actions following any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Housing Ombudsman in relation to the work we do at LiveWest.

COMPLAINT HANDLING PERFORMANCE

Overview

From 1 April 2023 – 31st March 2024, we:

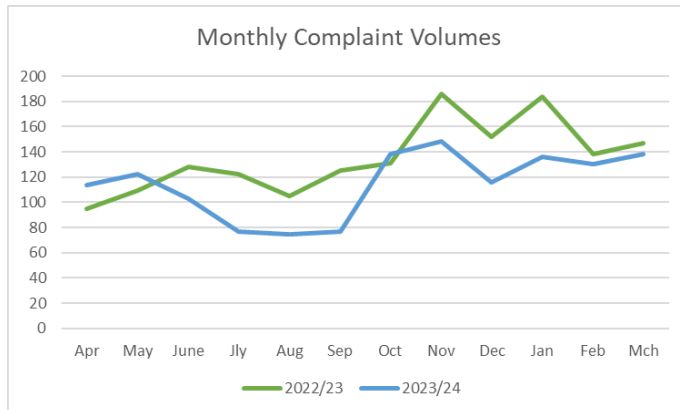
- Received **1,373** new complaints
- Resolved **1,599** complaints
- Received **987** compliments

By improving our complaint handling process, reviewing business processes, introducing remote diagnostics and enhancing our systems we have seen reductions in the number of complaints received.

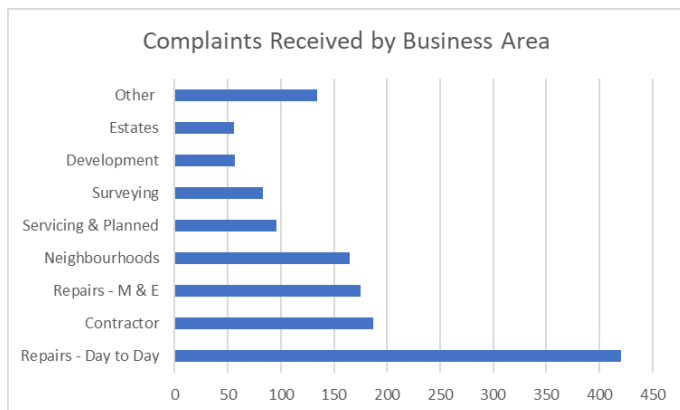
We can see that we generally receive higher volumes of complaints during the autumn and winter months, primarily due to seasonal property related issues, for example, boiler issues or increased reporting of damp and mould.

By understanding this we have been able to undertake some targeted work to address issues more directly and therefore reduce the volume of complaints in these areas. The

table below shows the trend in complaint numbers over the past twelve months compared to the previous year:



Complaints related to repairs, or the condition of our customers' homes continue to generate the highest level of complaints from our customers and this remains a priority focus area for us. We recognise the need to improve our response times and communicate with customers during repairs periods, particularly whenever there is a delay, and to respond more effectively to complex repairs reports.



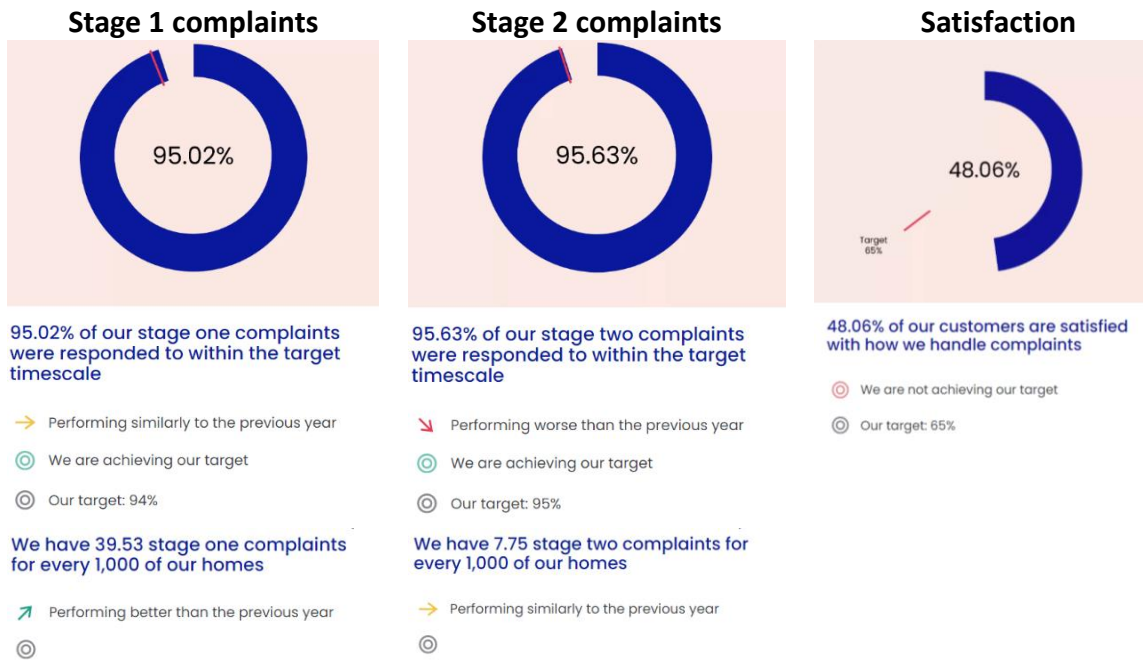
Tenant Satisfaction Measures

To help us improve our services, we review our performance regularly and appreciate all feedback received. We recognise the importance of our customers and want to know how they feel about our services.

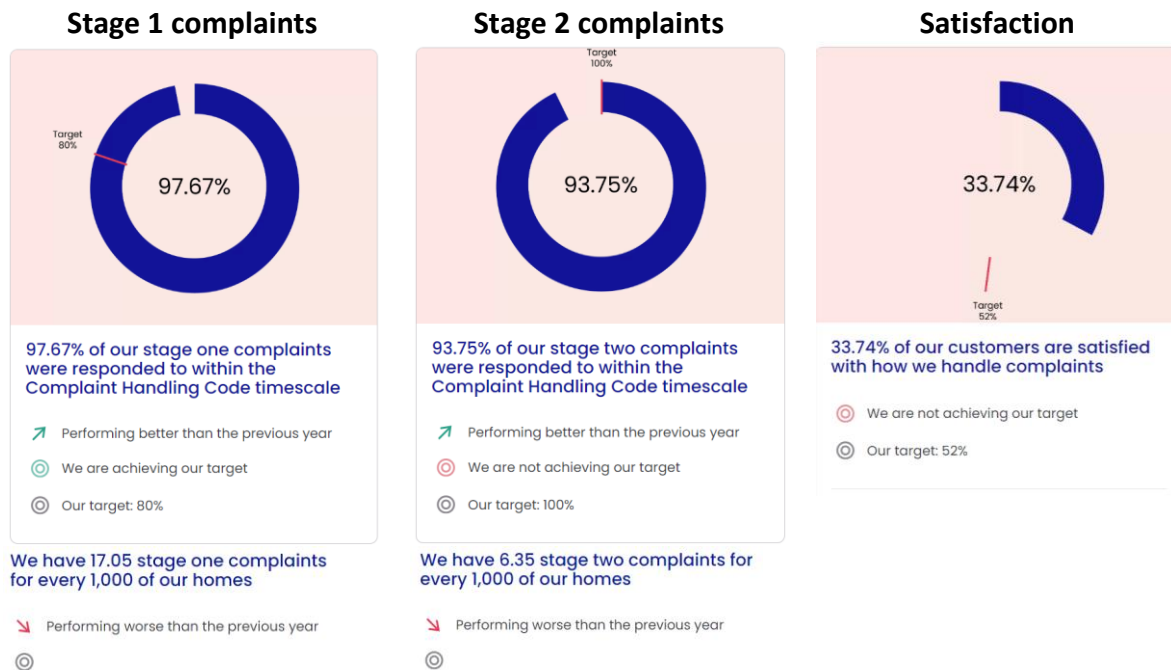
Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's) were introduced as part of the Social Housing Regulation Act. The Regulator of Social Housing uses the measures to make sure that all social landlords are looking after homes and neighbourhoods, keeping people safe, effectively handling complaints, and treating customers with fairness and respect.

Our TSM complaints performance as reported for the year ending 31 March 2024 is:

Rented Homes



Homeowner



For rented homes, our performance for stage 1 complaints has improved month on month and compares to a performance of 49.5 complaints per 1,000 in March 2023. We are tracking broadly in line with the average performance in the sector for this measure. Our performance for stage 2 complaints is higher than our March 2023 performance where we have seen fewer complaints resolved at stage 1. About 1 in 8 complaints are being escalated by our customers

where the quality of our stage 1 investigations and customer responses are areas of focus for us to improve.

Aside from the TSM measures, we also conduct surveys with our customers after a complaint has been closed. From the survey process, the rolling 12-month complaint satisfaction performance for the year to March is 54.55%, which is below our target of 65% and shows a decline in performance of 8.2% year on year.

Exclusions

Our complaints policy states that we will accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. Our complaints policy also provides details of situations where matters might be excluded. During the year we have excluded complaints for matters which:

- Should be reported to the police
- Have already been fully considered within our complaints service and therefore able to be investigated by the Housing Ombudsman Service
- Relate to an insurance decision for a liability claim
- Relate to court proceedings

Housing Ombudsman Decisions

We received 26 formal determinations during the year.

Of these:

- 4 had **no maladministration**
- 2 were identified as having received **reasonable redress**
- 19 have resulted in either a **maladministration** or **service failure**
- 1 case resulted in a **severe maladministration**.

We have fully complied with all actions required by the Housing Ombudsman and have not received any findings of non-compliance with the Code.

Where the Housing Ombudsman has identified learnings, these have been shared across LiveWest to improve services, achieve consistency, and adjust ways of working. All Housing Ombudsman news updates and spotlight reports continue to be shared regularly with senior managers to disseminate this knowledge and information to their teams.

In January 2024 we received a maladministration finding from the Housing Ombudsman, which included a wider order to carry out a review into our complaint handling by an independent senior manager. The findings from the review included several recommendations relating to wider complaint handling and a process for monitoring and measuring delivery of the actions for improvements identified.

SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

ANNUAL REPORT FOR LEARNING

Our approach to raising concerns and complaints in customer focussed. We listen to our customers to understand what's gone wrong and learn from our mistakes in order to improve our services, increase customer satisfaction and reduce the number of complaints received.

Our learning from complaints and key themes can be categorised in three main areas.

Communication

This is still the main cause of customer dissatisfaction. In talking to our customers we understand that many complaints stem from our failure to call at agreed times or provide timely updates for ongoing works or any known delays. We also recognise that we need to review and update our housing system to record up to date customer contact preferences and any requests for reasonable adjustments.

Quality of work

Our customers have told us through their complaints that the quality of work carried out by LiveWest or our contractors is not acceptable, with some repairs having to be carried out numerous times. We recognise that repeat visits inconvenience customers, especially when customers have needed to arrange to have time off work to allow us access to their homes.

Service delivery

Our customers have also told us that colleagues not managing customers enquiries or initial contact appropriately is a common trigger for complaints. We understand that it is vital that our teams manage their services in line with our Service Standards, respond to customer queries in a timely manner with appropriate advice, provide regular updates, and keep our customers informed.

What have we done?

Improved our process

We have:

- Reviewed and revised our complaints policy and procedure, in line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling code.
- Made changes to the structure of the Service Improvement team with a key focus on learning from complaints to support service improvement within complaint handling and across our service delivery areas.
- Started to implement new processes and ways of working to embed complaint learning, which will be delivered through training and focus on culture changes.

- Introduced additional support guidance for our colleagues involved in complaints handling.
- Developed and rolled out a new training module focused on recognising customer concerns.
- Introduced service standards for customers when Contacting LiveWest.
- Developed an approach to managing vulnerabilities within complaint handling, taking into account reasonable adjustments and appropriate signposting.
- Introduced a requirement for face-to-face de-brief meetings with involved colleagues following decisions made by the Housing Ombudsman.

Operational Improvements

We have:

- Implemented a new contractor management process, based on setting targets, developing action plans, and monitoring performance, supported by rolled out contract management training to all contract managers.
- Introduced new *'The Way We Work in Our Customers Homes'* guidance for contractors to follow when visiting customers.
- Reminded colleagues about referring matters to the Health and Safety team, and about to the Risk and Insurance team along with advice about providing information to customers about making a claim.
- Conducted 'aids and adaptations' refresher training.
- Reviewed our arrangements for managing ASB and conducted refresher training.
- Reviewed our ending of tenancy guidance to clarify communication requirements and arrangements for collecting keys and changing locks.
- Reviewed our Vulnerable Persons Policy with customers and our customer engagement group (InFocus).
- Updated our Service Offer in January to include target timescales for repairs completion.
- Updated our Damp and Mould policy and procedure to include clear processes for managing and acting on reports of damp and mould, along with timescales, communication arrangements, responding to category 1 hazards and recognising customer vulnerabilities and those at higher risk.

What are our future plans?

We are committed to continuing to improve complaint satisfaction by embedding learning and a positive complaint handling culture, with the aim of achieving our target of 65% complaints satisfaction for 2024-25.

To do this we are:

- Regularly reviewing complaint handling against the HOS complaint Handling code.

- Continuing to review and introduce ongoing improvements, taking into account customer feedback, complaint learning and support needs for colleagues.
- Recognising and reviewing guidance issued by the Housing Ombudsman and feedback provided within individual decisions.
- Holding weekly meetings with Heads of Service and monthly reviews with Directors to review complaints.
- Demonstrating complaint learning within our complaint responses.
- Continuing to implement and embed the improvements identified by our independent review into complaint handling.
- Developing and embedding Culture training for all colleagues.
- Actively recruiting members to join our new Customer Complaints Panel, which will review customer satisfaction with the complaints process and make recommendations on improvements to complaint handling.

Actions following Annual Report

There are no additional actions required from the Annual Report.

Service Improvements made

The actions identified above incorporate learning points and actions required from individual decisions and from the Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight Reports, including:

Attitudes, respect and rights – relationship of equals
Knowledge and Information Management
Damp and Mould – it's not lifestyle
Noise complaints – Time to be heard

We recognise that learning from complaints is a continuous process and will be drawing on any best practice findings and future guidance issued by the Housing Ombudsman.