

ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REVIEW 2019/20

Introduction

Onward Homes are committed to providing the best possible service to our customers and the wider communities within which we serve. We use complaints and compliments feedback to help us to continually improve our services and we share our performance and progress in an open and transparent manner.

This report includes information on how we performed against our key performance indicators last year. We have also included information regarding the most common types of complaints received, the measures we have taken to address and improve our performance, and our improvement plans for the coming year.

A summary of our performance

Complaints performance	Target	2018/19	2019/20
Complaints received	N/A	1,242	2,411
Average time taken to resolve complaints	10 Days	15	14
Complaints closed within target	80%	59%	57%
Complaints upheld / partially upheld	N/A	73%	80%
Compliments received	N/A	446	476

During 2019/20 Onward received 2,411 complaints compared with 1,242 received in 2018/19, an increase of 94%. The number of complaints received increased because of the challenges we have experienced during the implementation of our new responsive repairs and gas servicing contracts. These complaints account for 72% of all complaints received.

The most commonly reported repairs complaints were in relation to:

- Delays and excessive time taken to complete repairs
- Failure to attend pre-arranged appointments, rescheduling of appointments, and not attending appointments in a timely manner
- Communication and a lack of progress updates

Customer feedback also highlighted a need for improvement in the following areas:

- Services provided by our Contact Centre
- The quality of properties at the point of letting and our letting process
- Our estate services

Despite the increase in the number of complaints received, we did make some improvements in our complaint handling performance by reducing the average number of days taken to respond to complaints to 14 days. We also received 7% more compliments from customers than we received in 2018/19.

What have we learned?

- There are still areas of our repairs service which require improvement, particularly in relation to the time taken to fully complete repairs
- Our repairs contractors missed too many appointments causing our customers unnecessary inconvenience
- There are opportunities for us to improve the timeliness and effectiveness of our communication with customers
- Although we are improving, it is still taking us too long to respond to your complaints
- We must continue to use the feedback we receive from our customers to ensure the continuous improvement of our services

Our plans for the coming year

- We have recruited a Head of Customer Service Delivery, new role that is responsible for developing and delivering our customer resolution improvement strategy
- We will continue to work with our gas and responsive repairs contractors to improve the services we provide, sharing our plans and progress with customers regularly
- We will use technology to improve our communications with customers, making it easier for you to contact us
- We will increase our customer engagement initiatives, provide more opportunity to provide us with feedback and share our performance with you in an open and transparent manner
- We will update our complaints policy and procedures and re-train our colleagues to resolve concerns and complaints at the first point of contact
- We will use complaints satisfaction surveys to ensure we are actively responding to your feedback about our complaint handling service



Our commitment to you

We did not make the progress we expected to make in terms of improving our complaints performance during 2019/20, but 2020/21 has started much more positively. The number of customers who said they are satisfied with our service has increased from 81.7% last year to 87.3%¹. The average number of complaints received per month has also improved, reducing from 201 complaints per month last year to 80 per month this year².

However, we are not complacent. We are confident that the changes we have made and the improvement plans we have in place, will continue to improve our complaint resolution service.

We also feel that it is important that customers are able to hold us to account, therefore, we are making the following commitments:

- We will maintain compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code
- We will provide customers with more opportunity to provide us with feedback and share their experiences with us by reintroducing our Customer Complaints Forum
- Our colleagues will operate as the 'customer advocate' and will focus entirely upon delivering the most appropriate resolution for our customers
- We will prevent complaints from happening instead of reacting to them after the event
- We will use complaints insight to drive performance and continuous improvement, making our processes more customer focussed and efficient
- We will drive down the number of complaints by improving the way we handle customer concerns at the first point of contact
- Our colleagues will be provided with all of the tools they require to ensure that they are able to deliver customer focussed resolutions

For further information regarding our complaints procedures and policy, please visit our [website](#)



¹ Performance as of September 2020

² Performance as of September 2020