



OUR COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT 2021/22

Every year we publish this summary of our complaints performance; shining a light on the good, and the not-so-good, and showing you how we plan to learn and improve. This Report presents information about how we have managed your complaints from April 2021 to the end of March 2022.

If you made a complaint during this period, thank you for your feedback and we promise to do everything we can to give you a better experience this year. If you got in touch to compliment a member of our team, equally we will make sure that your response results in more good experiences for more people.

Performance indicator	2020/21 Performance	2021/22 Performance	Difference
Number of complaints received	991	1,027	+ 4%
Complaints closed within 10 days	77%	95%	+ 18%
Average time taken to resolve complaints	Average 11 working days	Average 8 working days	3 Days
Number of complaints upheld	69%	67%	-2%
Number of customer compliments received	549	509	-7%

THE THREE MAIN THINGS YOU HAVE COMPLAINED ABOUT.

Your top reasons for complaints are the same as last year and in similar numbers:



Time taken to complete repairs
(**423** 2020/21, **466** 2021/22).



Late or missed appointment
(**83** last year, **66** this year).



Property condition or damage
(**83** 2020/21, **91** 2021/22).

HOW DID WE DO?

- Overall complaints rose by 4%, after dropping by 59% the previous year.
- We resolved complaints more quickly, taking 8 days on average, compared to 11 days the year before and 14 days the year before that.
- Top reasons for complaints are the same as last year and were reported in similar numbers
- The number of compliments we received fell by 7%, but you still complimented us more than 500 times – thank you

Although we resolved complaints more quickly this year, it is not good enough that a similar number of people complained, and about the same things, as in the previous year. So we have a clear idea of what we need to do better. In response, we are accelerating plans to invest in your homes and improve your repairs service.

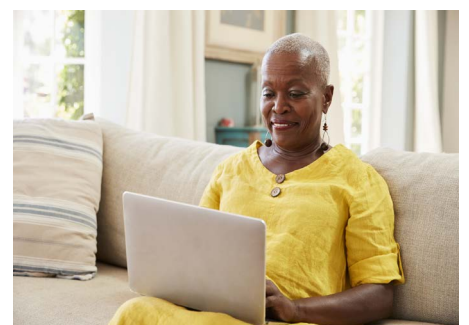
Last year we found it increasingly difficult to secure the parts, materials and labour we need to give you an excellent repairs service. Although this has driven many of the complaints, we are determined not to lean on excuses and we know there are some things we can do better.

WHAT DID WE DO LAST YEAR TO IMPROVE?

- Reviewed and updated our policy for resolving complaints, including a clear two-step process that can be found [here](#)
- Introduced the opportunity to discuss your complaint ‘face to face’ via digital methods and provided progress updates via text message
- Accelerated plans to invest in improving homes with longstanding problems and the most urgent need
- Introduced a new approach to tackling damp and mould, helping us to sort these issues out more quickly for more people
- Put in place a new system to keep a better record of your contact with us, so you don’t have to repeat the same information to different people
- Took on new contractors so we can sort out your repairs more quickly and effectively
- Set up a new Complaints Forum of real customers, meeting quarterly to check up on how well we are doing

NEW COMPLAINTS TEAM A SUCCESS.

In 2019 we introduced a new Escalation Support Team to resolve small complaints quickly and allow us to spend more time on more complex problems. Now the majority of complaints are resolved informally and much more quickly. Last year 959 complaints were dealt with informally and sorted out faster than two days on average.



LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS TO DELIVER BETTER SERVICES.

Over the last year our Customer Resolution team has worked to build upon the progress reported in last year's [Annual Complaints Report](#). We are determined to make every complaint an opportunity to learn how to do better, using data and personal stories to understand what our customers want and expect.

LEARNING AND OBSERVATIONS	IMPACT	ACTION TAKEN
Sometimes the information we capture in our internal systems isn't always as detailed or up to date as it should be	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to keep customers adequately informed • Can present challenges when colleagues are investigating and deciding the appropriate course of action to take • We may miss opportunities to help customers to sustain a positive tenancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 'back-to-basics' training programme has been developed and will help colleagues to utilise our housing management system more effectively • We have created a 'Customer contact handling' training package which is being rolled out to all operational colleagues • We have improved our internal procedures to ensure that colleagues capture and record information in a more effective and consistent manner
Following a 'mystery shopper' exercise undertaken by members of our Customer Complaints Forum, we received feedback that customers required more information about the informal complaints process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some customers were unclear if their concerns were being treated as a formal or informal complaint • Customers may be unclear about the options available to them when making a complaint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have updated the Customer Resolutions policy to provide more clarity on the informal complaints process • Colleagues are now using scripts at the point of contact to ensure that they explain the process to customers in a clear and consistent manner • Guidance has been issued to colleagues on when, how, and who to escalate customer concerns to and when an informal complaint may/may not be appropriate

LEARNING AND OBSERVATIONS	IMPACT	ACTION TAKEN
The way we resolved and closed complaints at Stage 1 required improvement. Often, we were issuing a written response to customers without discussing the outcome with the customer first	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lack of communication was causing complaints to escalate to Stage 2 unnecessarily Complaint outcomes were being delayed whilst negotiations with the customer were ongoing The delays and confusion was impacting customer satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All customers are now contacted by telephone to discuss the complaint outcome prior to the written response being issued If the customer is unhappy with the Stage 1 outcome and a solution cannot be agreed, the case is immediately escalated to Stage 2 We have improved the way we report on complaints which escalate from Stage 1 to Stage 2. This is helping us to better understand why cases escalate, improve our service, and to develop the skills of our colleagues
There was some inconsistency in the complaint resolution targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers were receiving an inconsistent level of service depending upon which route they used to complain i.e. direct to Onward, or via their Councillor or MP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> complaint resolution targets are now consistent across all complaint channels and types of complaint Our Complaint Resolution Policy has been updated to reflect the changes To improve accessibility to our complaints service we have introduced a dedicated email mailbox for Councillor and MP enquiries mp-enquiries@onward.co.uk



LEARNING AND OBSERVATIONS	IMPACT	ACTION TAKEN
More information on complaint remedies and financial redress was required. Whilst internal guidance was already being utilised , the document required review to ensure alignment with the Housing Ombudsman's Guidance on remedies .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to align with the Housing Ombudsman's Guidance on remedies may result in non-compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code Not providing customers with access to the internal guidance may result in customers being unaware of their rights around both statutory and company level redress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A comprehensive review of our Remedies and Financial Redress Guidance has been conducted and is now published on our website The Remedies and Financial Redress Guidance is also referenced in our Complaint Resolution Policy
We identified opportunities for improvement when dealing with reports of damp and mould in our customers' homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes cases of damp and mould were being misdiagnosed Where damp and mould issues were being identified, the root cause of the issue was not always being effectively addressed Some customers were experiencing issues over a prolonged period of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In December 2021 we commenced a 3 month pilot which significantly changed the way we respond to cases of damp and mould. Following the successful pilot, the process is now being embedded as business as usual



WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO NEXT?



- For the most complex and serious complaints, we will offer a face-to-face service to give customers the opportunity to meet the Onward person dealing with their complaint
- We will embed and extend our new approach to dealing with cases of damp and mould in customer homes, delivering better results for more customers, more quickly
- We will get ahead of complaints before they are made, by using data and customer feedback to improve the homes and services most in need of attention

Recognising good customer service

Although the number of customer compliments received fell slightly last year, our colleagues still received more than 500 compliments, around half as many as the complaints we received.

Now the introduction of the [WOW Awards](#) colleague recognition scheme will make it easier for customers to recognise colleagues when they provide great customer service. This feedback will help us to give good examples to other colleagues and make sure we build on things when they go well.