



ANNUAL COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE & SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2024

Every year, we publish a report which sets out how we're doing around complaints and how we're responding to feedback from our customers.

In this report, we will share an update on complaints received from customers between April 2023 and March 2024. Customer feedback is important and helps us to deliver improvements in our services. We know that there is work to be done, so this report sets out the lessons we have learnt and the actions required to improve how we respond to complaints and deliver our services.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all customers that have taken the time to give us their feedback this year.

The table below shows how we've performed around complaints this year compared to last.

Performance indicator	2022/23 Performance	2023/24 Performance	Difference
Number of complaints received	1,380	1,388	+0.6%
Number of Housing Ombudsman complaints	33	27	-18%
Complaints closed within 10 days	90.2%	81%	-9%
Average time taken to resolve complaints	Average 9 working days	Average 9 working days	No difference
Number of complaints upheld	76%	77%	+1%
Number of customer compliments received	459	378	-18%
Complaints per 1,000 properties	45.5	48.9	+7%
Complaints not accepted	75	67	-11%
Number of complaints escalating to Stage 2	202	158	-22%

THE THREE MAIN THINGS YOU HAVE COMPLAINED ABOUT.

Your top reasons for complaining to us will help us focus on improving where we need to.



Time taken to complete repairs
(516 2022/23, 679 2023/24).



Incomplete repairs
(52 2022/23, 99 2023/24).



Property condition or damage
(146 2022/23, 77 2023/24).

The time taken to complete repairs continues to be the most common cause of complaints this year. In 2023/24, incomplete repairs replaced inaccurate and inadequate information being provided as a top cause of complaints.

Sometimes, we reject some of the complaints we receive. This year, we have rejected 67 complaints for different reasons including a lack of information being received to progress the complaint; customers reporting issues that are not a complaint; or customers reporting something that is already being dealt with through the courts.

OUR PERFORMANCE AT A GLANCE.

- After a 35% increase in the number of complaints last year, this year we have seen less than a 1% increase, which shows the impact of our improvement plans.
- We are encouraged to see that fewer complaints escalated to Stage 2, with a 22% reduction this year compared to last.
- Despite the Ombudsman reporting a 91% increase in the number of complaints referred to their service in the first nine months of the year, we are pleased that the number of our cases referred to the Housing Ombudsman has reduced by 18%.
- This year, we received 395 WOW Award nominations and 68 awards. The WOW Awards are voted for by customers to recognise excellent customer service.

How we're responding to complaints.

We are pleased to see that the number of complaints escalating to the next stage or to the Housing Ombudsman has decreased over the last twelve months, which shows that we are delivering a more targeted response at the first point of contact.

We have already made changes to improve customers' experiences of our complaints service but know that there is more work to be done. Your feedback is important to us and we have a clear plan for where we need to do better.

Our Customer Resolution Forum helps us to improve our complaints handling process using customer feedback and insights. Working with our Customer Resolution Forum, involved customers, and using the insight gathered from complaints, we have:



Reviewed our Complaint Resolution Policy to make it easier for customers to understand how we will handle complaints and the support available to them. Alongside this we have created an 'easy read' guide to improve the accessibility of information around our complaints service.



Introduced a summary of learning outcomes every time we respond to a complaint. These learning outcomes are tailored to each complaint and outline the action we intend to take as a result of the issues highlighted by the customer, so that we can drive continued improvements in our service.



Delivered training to all colleagues responsible for investigating, resolving and issuing complaint correspondence, to help improve the quality of our complaint investigations and resolutions.

We have also delivered training on record keeping, focused on capturing customer enquires in a timely and consistent way, along with mandatory training for colleagues to provide further information about the Housing Ombudsman's service and Complaint Handling Code.



Increased the size of our Complaint Resolution Team to create more capacity for learning and improvement activities. We have introduced measures to improve collaboration between the Customer Resolutions Team and our Repairs & Maintenance colleagues. These measures have helped us to be more responsive and tailor our approach based on local knowledge.



Reviewed our internal complaints process and introduced regular meetings with colleagues from our Property and Neighbourhood teams to ensure the information and actions required to resolve a complaint are provided in a timely manner, so that we can respond more quickly to customers.

We have also built into this process a check for whether a case is particularly high risk for a customer, which means that we can respond more promptly and tailor our approach.



Introduced a special circumstance check within our introductory call process to ensure that we are taking into account the individual needs of customers, as well as any specific vulnerabilities which may need to be considered during the complaints process. Alongside this we have developed an approach to reasonable adjustments so that we can ensure we are tailoring our response to customers' different needs.



We have also doubled the size of our Customer Resolution Forum from four to eight members. The Customer Resolution Forum enables customers to get involved and work with us to review how we have responded to complaints and offer suggestions on how we can improve our service. Having more customers involved gives us better representation of our customer base and mix of views, which we will use to drive ongoing improvements.



We know that repairs is an important issue for our customers, which is reflected in the performance data shared in this report.

As well as making improvements to how we handle complaints around repairs, we have also taken the major step to deliver the repairs service ourselves in Greater Manchester. Repairs for Greater Manchester are now being delivered by Onward Repairs, which also carries out repairs in Lancashire. We have also invested in more resources and capacity in Merseyside.

These important changes will enable us to deliver a more efficient service and be more flexible to your feedback.

What next in our improvement plan?

We have a clear action plan in place to deliver ongoing improvements to our complaints service. This includes:

- Introducing training and support around early intervention. This will focus on contacting customers proactively to understand how we can support them and means we can resolve issues more quickly and tackle the causes of dissatisfaction at an earlier stage, before this escalates to a complaint.
- Introducing an alternative approach to dispute resolution for customers who have started the legal disrepair process. The formal legal route can be lengthy, so this alternative approach is designed to speed up the resolution for customers and give us an opportunity to engage with them directly so that we can understand their concerns.
- Creating a new complaint case management process that will improve our record keeping and reporting capabilities, provide quality information and help us learn from customer complaints.

Compliance with the Complaints Handling Code.

Every year, we are required to complete a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaints Handling Code and have worked with our Customer Resolution Forum to review compliance against the Code. You can view this [here](#).

We have not had any findings of non-compliance with the Code and have maintained 100% compliance with orders issued to us by the Housing Ombudsman.

