

Housing Services

**Annual Complaints Performance &
Service Improvement Report**

2023-24

INTRODUCTION

Stroud District Council is committed to delivering high-quality local services to support our communities, protect our environment and support the local economy. A copy of our Complaints and Feedback Policy can be found on our website [here](#)

We follow the Complaint Handling Code set by the Housing Ombudsman. This Code became statutory on 1 April 2024, meaning that landlords are obliged by law to follow its requirements. The Code aims to achieve best practice in complaint handling and ultimately to provide a better service to residents.

This is Housing Services' annual complaints report which provides information on our performance in responding to complaints covering the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

In addition to this annual report, we publish quarterly and annual performance dashboards and full performance reports on the complaints we receive, the actions we take, and areas for improvement we have identified. We also report on our performance in responding to complaints in terms of timescales and process.

PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Total complaints received:

The number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints received for 2023/24 have increased by 30% compared to the year 2022/23. 3 Stage 1 complaints were withdrawn by the complainant following their issues being resolved at first point of contact.

There were 5 referrals to the Housing Ombudsman; two related to Investment, and one each to Property Care, Housing Management and Independent Living.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Informal Complaints				
Service Requests	38	54	45	23
Formal Complaints				
Stage 1	64	87	129	171
Stage 2	12	9	21	24
Ombudsman	0	2	6	5

The number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints received per month:

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2023-24	15	17	13	20	14	15	27	13	16	16	13	16
2022-23	7	15	11	6	19	12	10	15	13	19	10	13
2021-22	2	3	7	5	8	6	8	12	10	9	15	11
2020-21	0	0	1	5	9	14	13	6	5	7	9	7

No. of Stage 1 complaints per 1,000 properties (year to date)



34.18

Upper Quartile: 40.38] indicative annual figures
Sector Average: 37.52] benchmarked against
Lower Quartile: 64.92] South Central peer group

No. of Stage 2 complaints per 1,000 properties (year to date)



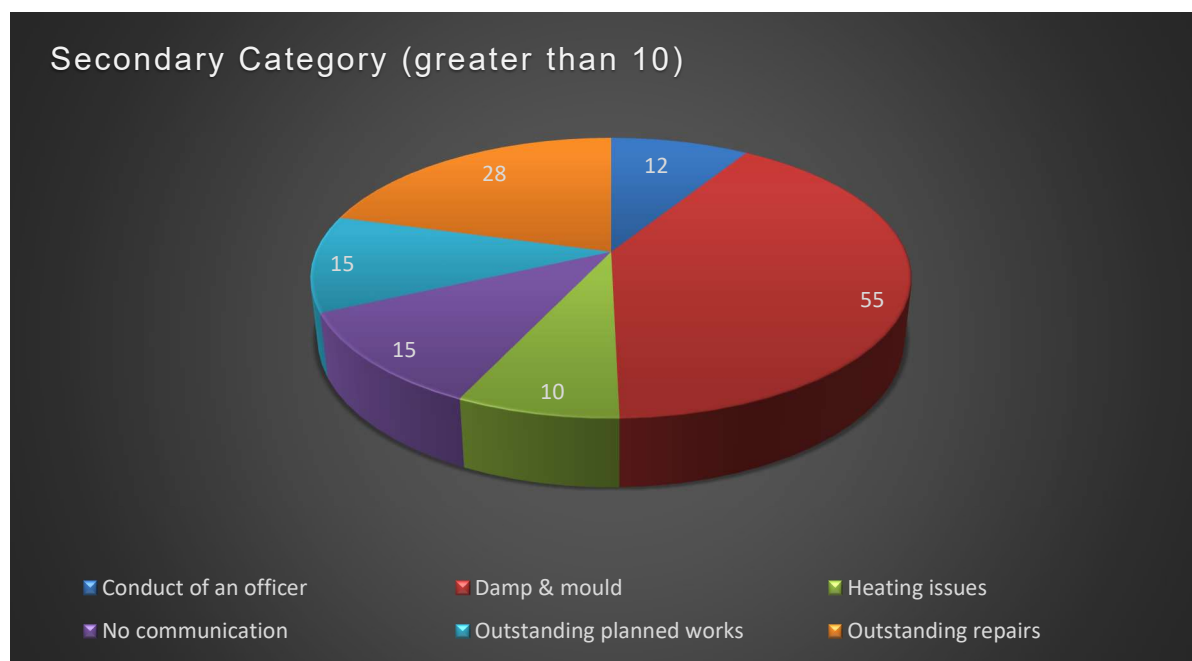
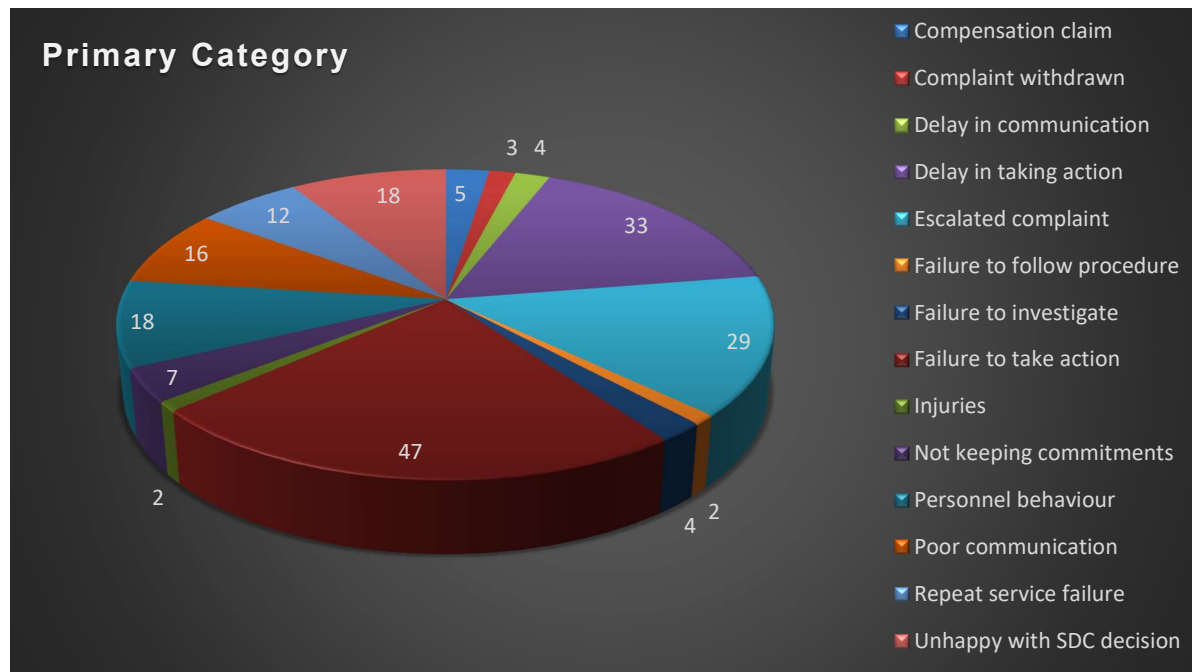
4.80

Upper Quartile: 4.14] indicative annual figures
Sector Average: 5.12] benchmarked against
Lower Quartile: 10.46] South Central peer group

How our community complained:

Complaints submitted via email direct to Housing Services is the most popular way that residents contact us, followed by complaints submitted online using the corporate complaints form. These two communication channels make up 86% of the way customers contact us about complaints.

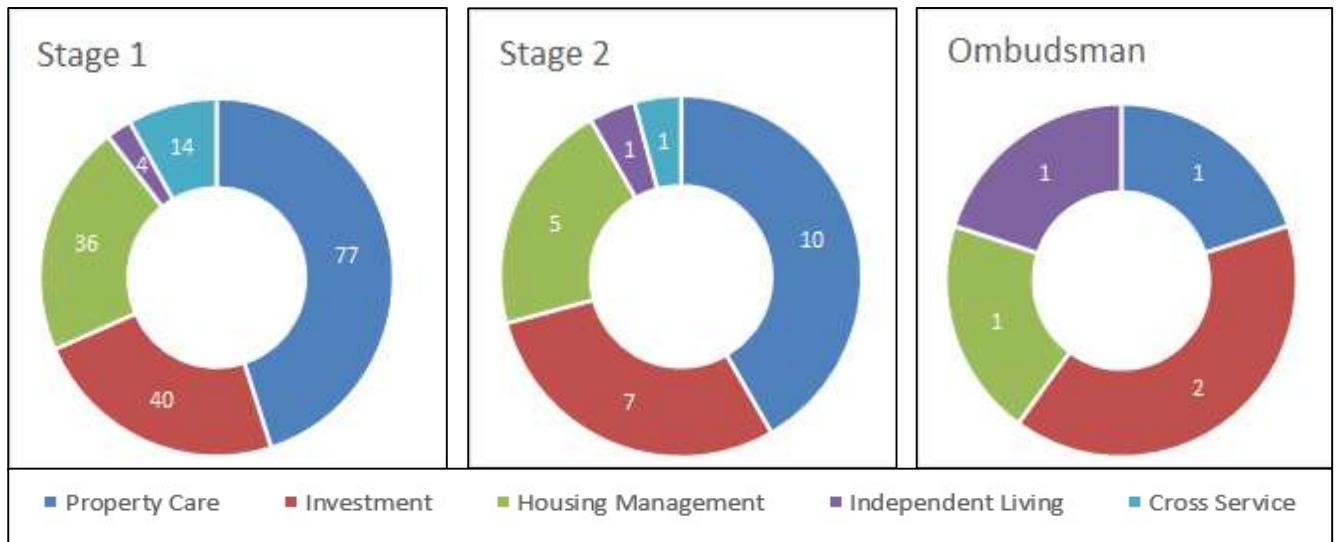
Why our community complained:



23.5% of complaints were associated with failure to take action and 16.5% were associated with delay in taking action. 14.5% of complainants escalated their complaint to the next stage.

27.5% of complaints were associated with damp and mould and 14% with outstanding repairs.

Complaints by team:

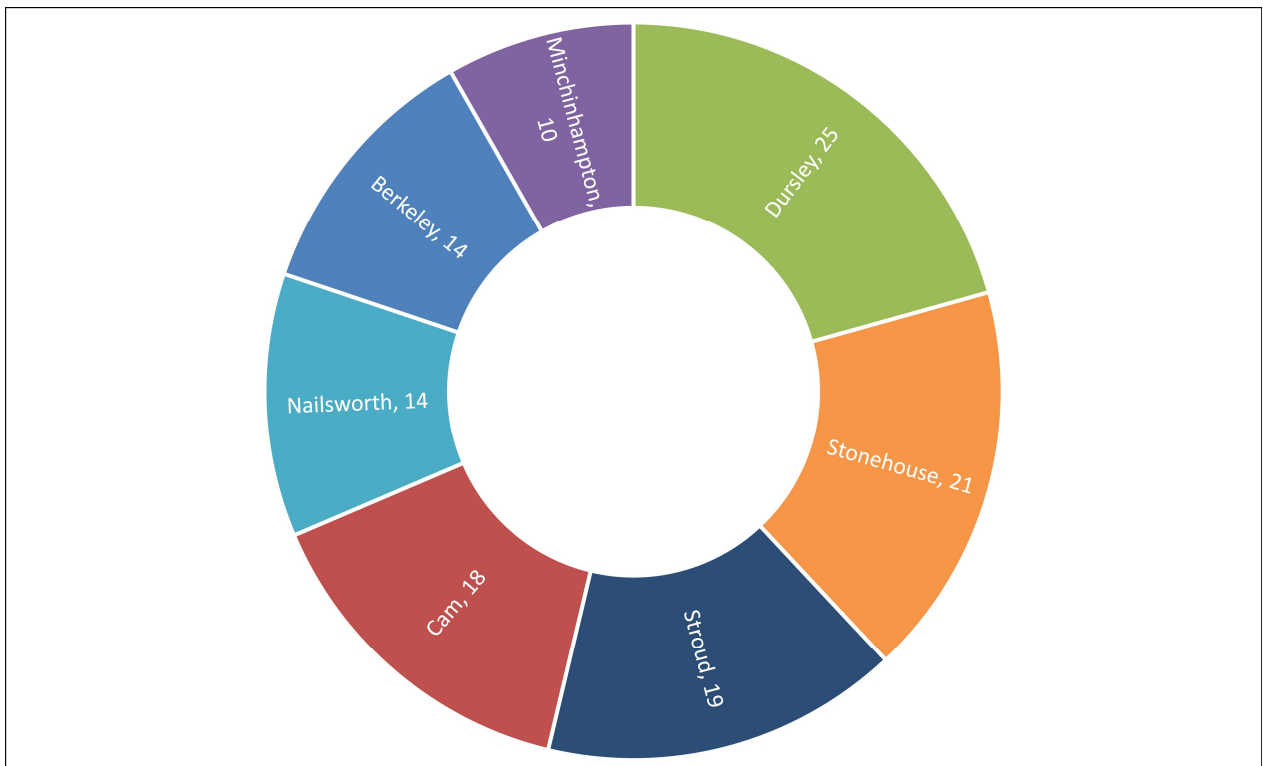


85.5% of complaints were dealt with at Stage 1 and 12% at Stage 2. There were 5 referrals to the Housing Ombudsman; these related to Property Care, Investment, Housing Management and Independent Living.

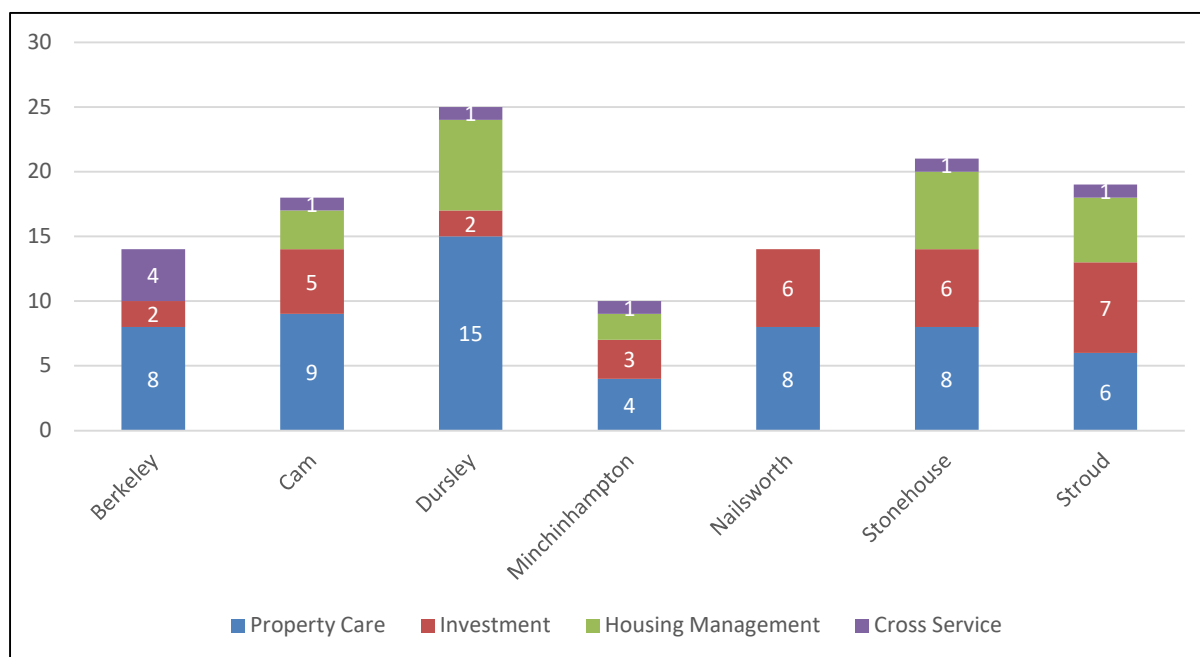
Stage 1 complaints have increased across all service areas when compared to 2022-23, apart from Income Management and Compliance & Assurance, who received no complaints this year.

The number of Stage 2 complaints received has stayed the same compared to 2022-23. Investment saw an increase in their Stage 2 complaints by 50%.

Parishes where complaints originated from (greater than 10)



Parishes with the highest number of complaints (greater than 10) by team:



Parishes with the highest number of complaints (greater than 10) by category:

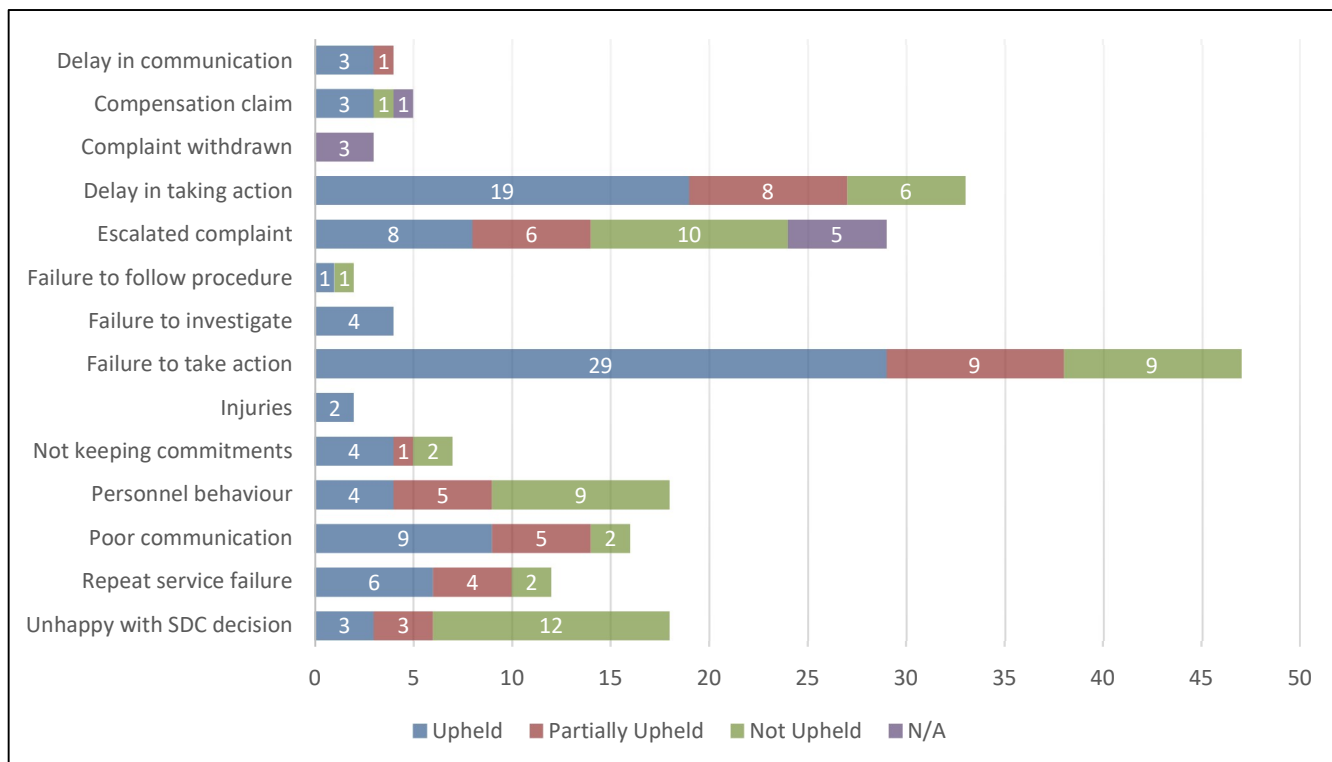
Berkeley	<p>14 complaints were received, of which 57% related to Property Care. The complaints fell into the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to take action (50%) • Escalated complaint (25%) • Injuries (12.5%) • Unhappy with SDC decision (12.5%) <p>75% of these complaints related to damp and mould.</p>
Cam	<p>18 complaints were received of which 50% related to Property Care. The complaints fell into the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay in taking action (22%) • Compensation claim (22%) • Escalated complaint (11%) • Repeat service failure (11%) • Unhappy with SDC decision (11%) • Failure to take action (11%) • Personnel behaviour (11%) <p>56% of these complaints related to damp and mould.</p>
Dursley	<p>25 complaints were received of which 60% related to Property Care. The complaints fell into the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay in taking action (33%) • Failure to take action (20%) • Poor communication (13%) • Escalated complaint (13%) • Repeat service failure (7%) • Not keeping commitments (7%) • Unhappy with SDC decision (7%) <p>33% of these complaints related to damp and mould.</p>

Minchinhampton	<p>10 complaints were received of which 40% related to Property Care. The complaints fell into the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to take action (50%) • Failure to investigate (25%) • Delay in taking action (25%) <p>25% of these complaints related to outstanding repairs.</p>
Nailsworth	<p>14 complaints were received of which 57% related to Property Care. The complaints fell into the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalated complaint (25%) • Repeat service failure (25%) • Poor communication (12.5%) • Failure to investigate (12.5%) • Failure to take action (12.5%) • Complaint withdrawn (12.5%) <p>38% of these complaints related to outstanding repairs.</p>
Stonehouse	<p>21 complaints were received of which 38% related to Property Care. The complaints fell into the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay in taking action (50%) • Failure to take action (25%) • Unhappy with SDC decision (12.5%) • Escalated complaint (12.5%) <p>50% of these complaints related to outstanding repairs.</p>
Stroud	<p>19 complaints were received of which 37% related to Investment. The complaints fell into the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay in taking action (43%) • Escalated complaint (29%) • Repeat service failure (14%) • Poor communication (14%) <p>57% of these complaints related to damp and mould.</p>

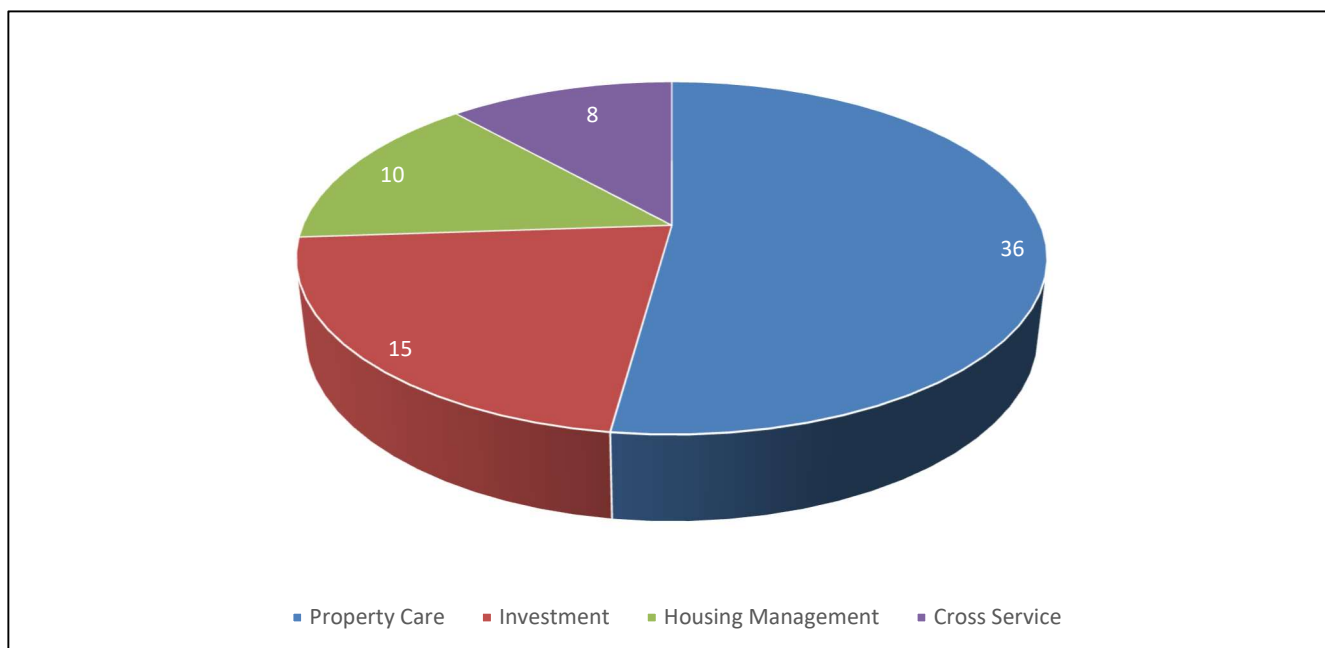
Complaints upheld, partially upheld and not upheld by team:

	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld
Stage 1	45% - Property Care 78% - Investment 19% - Housing Management 25% - Independent Living	23% - Property Care 15% - Investment 28% - Housing Management 25% - Independent Living	29% - Property Care 3% - Investment 53% - Housing Management 50% - Independent Living
Stage 2	20% - Property Care 71% - Investment 20% - Housing Management	10% - Property Care 29% - Investment 20% - Housing Management 100% - Independent Living	60% - Property Care 60% - Housing Management

Complaints upheld, partially upheld and not upheld by category:



Extensions by team:



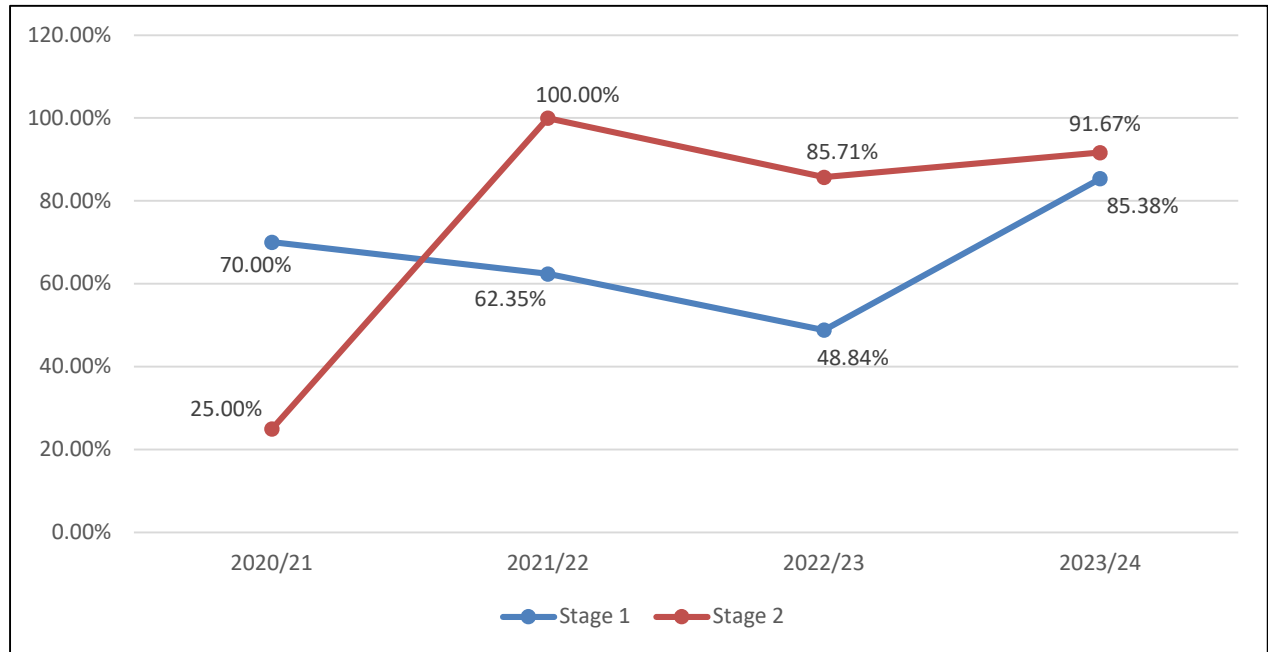
35% of formal complaints were granted an extension. 52% of these related to Property Care.

30% of Stage 1 complaints did not meet their extension target response time as set out in the Complaint Handling Code; 53% related to Property Care.

Two Stage 2 complaints were extended; both were related to Property Care and both were responded to within the timescales set out in the Complaint Handling Code.

Target Times:

The percentage of complaints answered within the target time compared against the last 3 years:



Overall, the percentage of Stage 1 complaints answered within target has increased compared to the year 2022-23; by approximately 75%. Our percentage of Stage 2 complaints answered within target has increased by approximately 7%.

Percentage of complaints responded to within target time (by team)

	Stage 1	Stage 2
Property Care	79.22%	100%
Investment	92.50%	71.43%
Housing Management	94.44%	100%
Independent Living	100%	100%
Cross Service	71.43%	100%

Percentage of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints resolved within timescale in year



Stage 1
88.30%

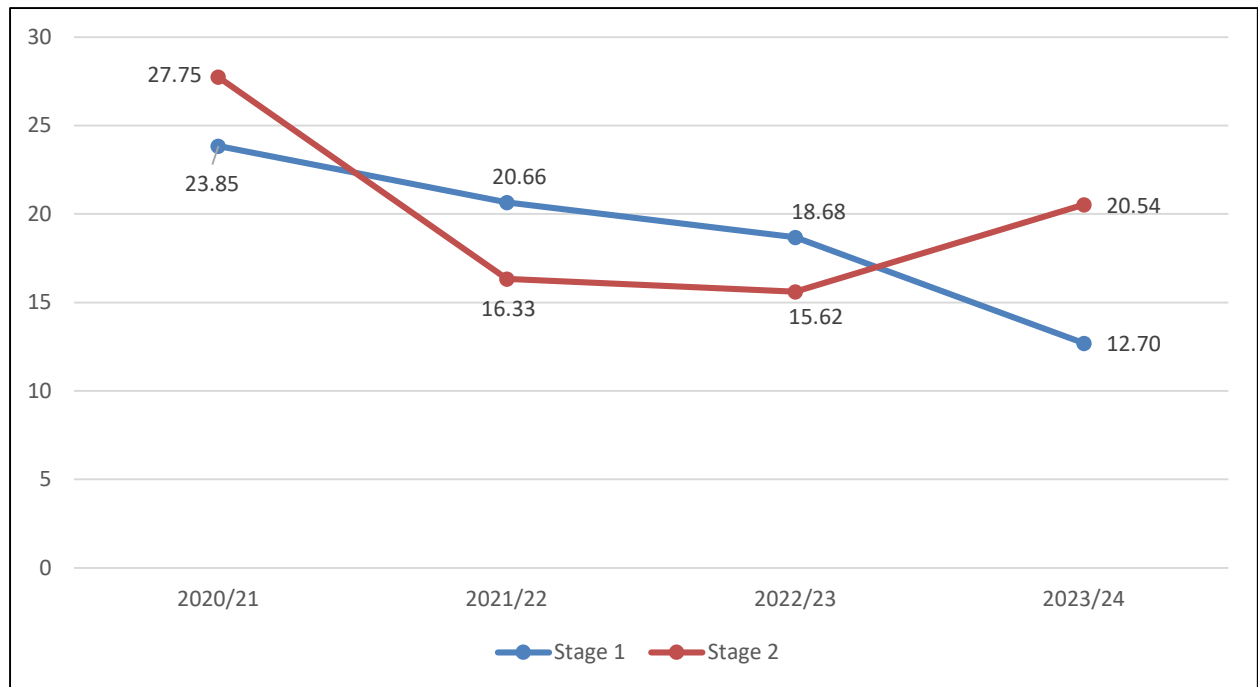
Stage 2
91.66%

Target: 100%

Upper Quartile: 99.16%] Stage 1 & 2 complaints (combined)
Sector Average: 87.92%] resolved within timescale benchmarked
Lower Quartile: 70.45%] against the sector as a whole

Turnaround Times:

The average time in working days for a response to be sent, compared against the last 3 years:



Our overall turnaround time for Stage 1 complaints has decreased by approximately 6 days compared to the year 2022-23.

Turnaround for Stage 2 complaints has increased compared to the year 2022-23; by approximately 5 days.

Average turnaround time in days, per team:

	Stage 1	Stage 2
Property Care	15.01 days	20.90 days
Investment	11.45 days	26.57 days
Housing Management	9.33 days	11.60 days
Independent Living	5.75 days	20 days
Cross Service	14.14 days	20 days

If we were to remove the complaints that were extended, then our target times and turnaround times would be as follows:

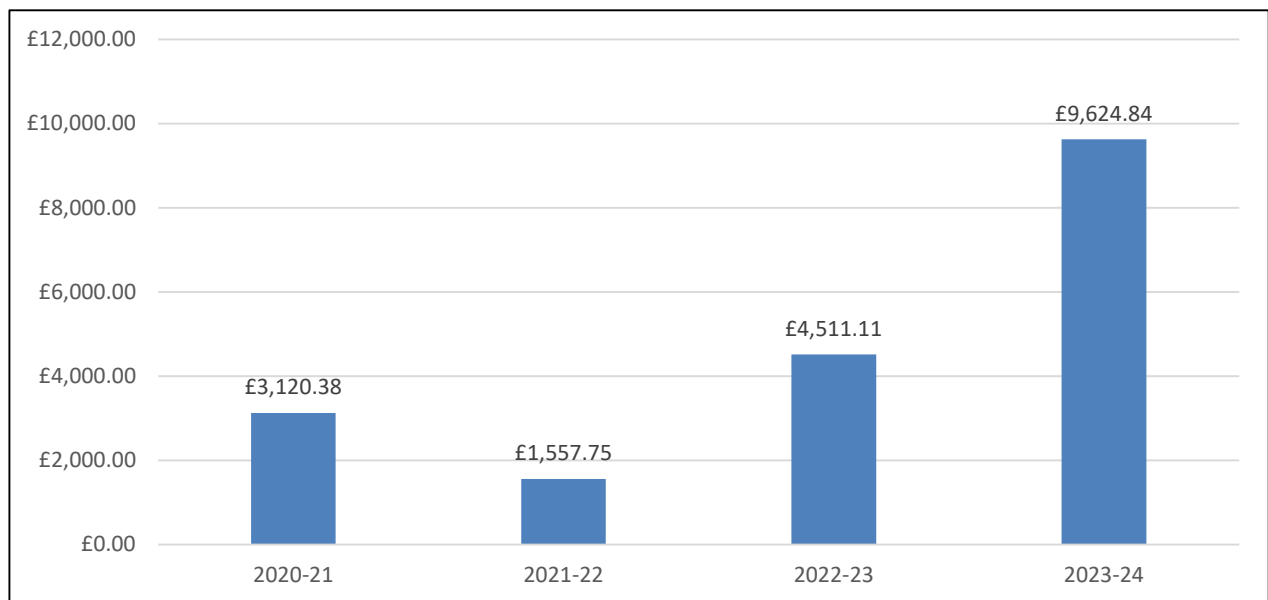
Target time:

Stage 1 complaints 93.33%
 Stage 2 complaints 100%

Turnaround times:

Stage 1 complaints 8.92 days
 Stage 2 complaints 16.84 days

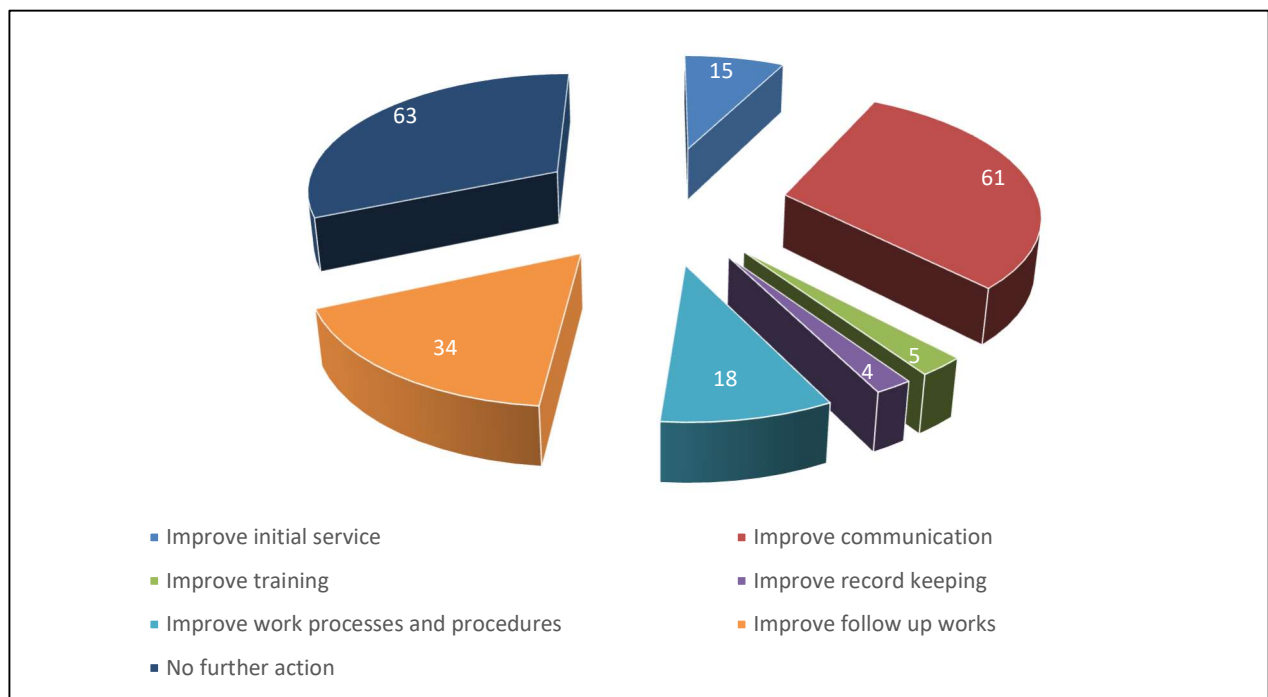
Financial redress payments year-on-year:



The total paid for 2023-24 was £9,624.84 of which:

- £2,200 were payments directed by the Housing Ombudsman; and
- £7,424.84 were remedy payments agreed by the Council.

Learning outcomes from complaints:



31% of complaints had a learning outcome result of 'improve communication'. 34% of these complaints related to Property Care. 95% were Stage 1 complaints, of which 70% were upheld.

17% of complaints had a learning outcome result of 'improve follow up works'. 65% of these related to Property Care. 100% were Stage 1 complaints of which 64% were upheld.

32% of complaints had a learning outcome result of 'no further action'. 43% of these related to Property Care of which 88% were not upheld and 41% related to Housing Management of which 83% were not upheld.

Service improvements made as a result of learning from complaints:

Improve communication:

- We have reviewed and updated our process maps to ensure that resident communication is detailed at each stage of the process.
- Last year, we had lots of change in resource which, unfortunately, contributed towards poor communication at times and resulted in complaints. We can confirm that we now allocate adequate resource from SDC for all planned projects to ensure continual communication is provided to residents, site inspections are made with tenant engagement and the handover process involves SDC, the contractor and the tenant. We also ensure that an SDC officer is responsible and sees through to completion any follow up works.
- We endeavour to ensure continual updates via letter/text messaging are sent out to residents on planned programmes of work as well as through resident information events. These inform residents of planned works in their area, commencement of work start dates and letters to inform them of any delays or challenges they are experiencing if there were to be any.
- It is on our forward plan this year to write a Tenant Engagement and Communication Strategy which will help us have an adaptive approach on how we communicate with our residents according to their needs.
- Staff have had refresher training on the processes around tenant communication, and we have also held a tenant communication and process mapping meeting with our contractors to review this and ensure that communication is key.
- We use our complaints monitoring log to record learning outcomes, which are fed back to contractors during monthly contractors' meetings, and to operatives and relevant housing staff during toolbox talks and team meetings.
- Weekly management teams meeting take place to review current issues and topics.
- Improvements made with the Investment team to pick up anything that falls between the services.
- Several Microsoft Teams' channels have been set up to report and share information quickly:
 - Communications Channel
 - Damp and Mould Channel
- Repairs surveys are saved on Teams so anyone can access the information.
- Updated documents placed on the communal Information Point board with revised details.
- Energy consumption figures and costs displayed on the communal Information Point board for all tenants and visitors to read.
- We have booked customer service training for the Housing Officers based around value and behaviours, to help them understand how important communication is.

Improve follow-up works:

- Material delivery logs are distributed twice a week.
- Resource Planners ensure that the operative with the relevant skill set attends responsive repairs to ensure works can be carried out.

Initial service:

- Operatives carry a van stock which is audited on a regular basis to ensure they carry the common materials required to resolve most response repairs on first visit.
- Operatives carry out their own material checks.
- Resource Planners are providing full details of reported defects to ensure the operatives can collect any materials that are not held as van stock.
- Use of sub-contractors to pick up backlog works during busy periods.

Improve record keeping:

- Equipment checks are carried out and recorded to ensure equipment is serviceable and staff are working safely.
- Notes are updated on NEC which provides a detailed audit trail to track common issues and recurring defects as well as current repairs.
- Click job notes are more concise so that information is complete and relevant.

Improve training:

- Operatives have regular toolbox talks to address themes from complaints.
- All staff carry out SDC training modules to raise awareness on topical and current issues.

Improve work processes and procedures:

- SDC have invested in new equipment, drones, and damp meters to improve diagnosis and defect analysis and given staff training on the equipment.
- We have recruited 2 x additional team leaders to the survey team which will improve initial service.
- Operational meetings are held monthly to review delivery.
- A damp and mould working group meets on a regular basis to review trends, issues and looks to make service improvements across the service.

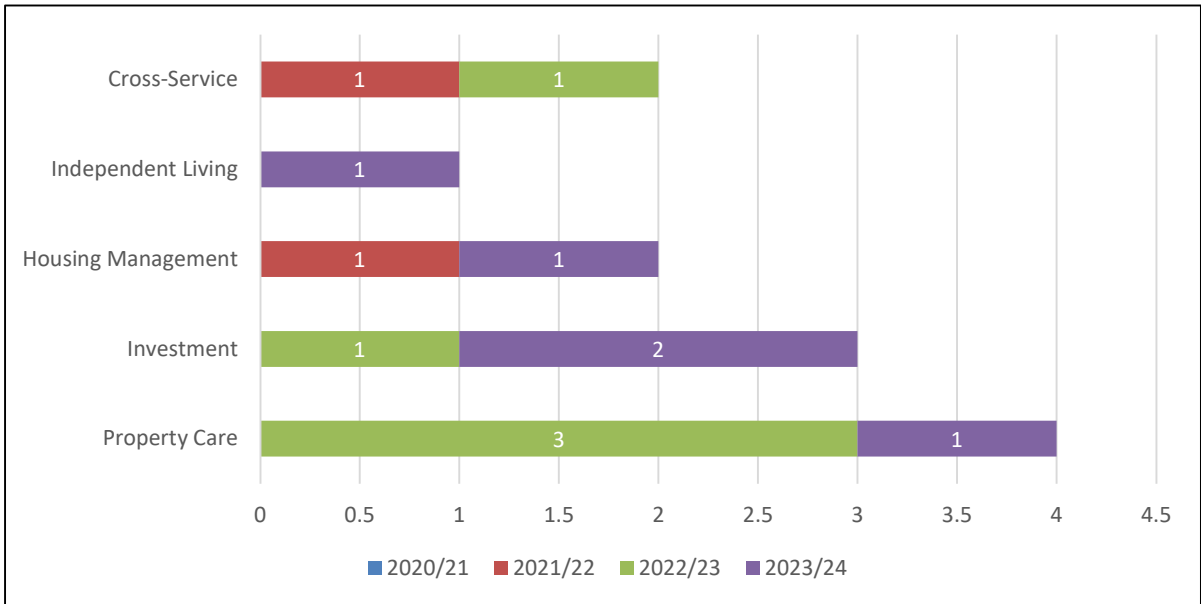
Case studies:

What happened	How we resolved things
A plumber was due to attend but did not turn up. The tenant called in to be told that the plumber had an emergency and would not be attending.	This was upheld due to service failure. Ensure tenants are kept informed of any change to appointments. Shared learning with Resource Planners.
Complainant was unhappy that no-one had inspected heating system, which had issues, despite repeated requests.	This was partially upheld Ensure all issues raised are addressed rather than assuming a contractor would provide the outcome. Staff learning outcome - to close the loop on works ordered to an external contractor.
Tenant followed correct procedure for booking a guest room but the key was not delivered in a timely way. The tenant was unsure as to whether the service was available to guests who had travelled a long	This was upheld. We identified that there was miscommunication within the team with regard to the guest room being prepared ready for use; this was because several

<p>way with a toddler. On receiving the key, the room was not as clean as expected.</p>	<p>people had different responsibilities. This led to the room not being prepared as per booking calendar and policy.</p> <p>An officer attended and carried out the cleaning and then delivered the key after hours (on the day of the booking). It was recognised this caused the tenant undue worry and stress.</p> <p>We have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changed the process of laundering linen and cleaning the room by ensuring this is done on the same day as keys are handed back. • ensured the booking calendar is checked daily for bookings – allocating set person to arrange key delivery. • added the process to the weekly compliance check sheet to ensure the room is regularly inspected.
<p>Neighbour dispute complaint and tenant unhappy with response to ASB as the complaint did not meet the criteria for an ASB case review.</p>	<p>We met with our partners and arranged a professionals meeting to review the ASB. We were then able to give a joint approach response to the complainant.</p>
<p>Tenant complained that follow up works were not completed by the contractor and they had to chase for this work to be completed.</p>	<p>This was upheld.</p> <p>We identified that at the time of the complaint, we had lots of change in resource and the management of the contractors on this particular property at that time were not managed to our usual standard.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Manager and a Site Manager from the Contractor carried out a joint inspection to identify what works were outstanding. • A schedule detailing all works that were outstanding was provided to the tenant with dates the work would be carried out and a point of contact of who was overseeing these works. • Upon completed works, SDC Manager and Contractor went out to handover works with the tenant to ensure they were happy with the completed works. <p>We have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed the process so that we now have a monitoring log of all outstanding works at any properties or sites. If any members of staff are not at work, then we can identify what properties still require work to their properties so we

	<p>can manage the contractor to progress these works</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We allocate adequate resource from SDC for all planned projects to ensure the contractor is progressing with the work and that continual communication is provided to residents. Site inspections are made with tenant engagement and the handover process involves SDC, contractor and the tenant. <p>We reviewed the communication process both internally at SDC and with the Contractors so that everyone was familiar with the process.</p>
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Housing Ombudsman complaints:



Team	Determination and Orders
2021/22	
Housing Management	<p>Determination - Upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maladministration and injustice <p>Order</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written apology to the resident. Compensation payment of £250 for distress and confusion caused. Review of our ASB policy and processes.
Cross-Service	<p>Determination - Not Upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The landlord provided reasonable redress with respect to communication with the resident. No maladministration by the landlord in respect of access to the property and possible damage.

2022/23	
Property Care	<p>Determination - Partially Upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No maladministration in the landlord's handling of the replacement shed roof. Service failings in the landlord's handling of repairs to the roof following leaks. Reasonable redress in the landlord's handling of the resident's concerns regarding the conduct of an operative. <p>Order</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compensation of £100 to be issued to the resident. Landlord should update the resident with a timescale for the repair works to be completed.
Property Care	<p>Determination - Not Upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasonable redress offered by the landlord for its service failure regarding its response to the resident's requests for kitchen improvements. <p>Order</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landlord to reiterate its offer of £100 compensation if not yet accepted.
Property Care	<p>Determination - Upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service failure by the landlord in respect of its handling of remedial works in the resident's property following a leak from the bath. <p>Order</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landlord to pay the resident £150 compensation in recognition of the inconvenience caused by the delays in resolving the repair issues.
Cross-Service	<p>Determination - Partially Upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No maladministration found in the management of the resident's property. No maladministration found in the landlord's overall response to the resident's known vulnerabilities and personal circumstances. No maladministration found in the handling of the resident's rent account. Maladministration found in the handling of the repairs at the resident's property. Maladministration found in the handling of the resident's complaint. <p>Order</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written apology to be issued to the resident Pay the resident £950 compensation Reoffer the original compensation payment of £233.50 if not previously paid.
Investment	<p>Determination – Upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severe maladministration in the landlord's handling of major works at the resident's property. Maladministration in the landlord's complaint handling <p>Order</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay the resident £1,900 compensation. Exterior of property to be cleared of all debris from the works. Written apology to be issued to the resident from the Chief Executive

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional steps to be taken to ensure that staff are equipped to be able to identify complaints and understand how to formally raise them when they arise.
2023/24	
Property Care	<p>Determination – Upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severe maladministration by the landlord in respect of its handling of planned works and repairs to the resident's property. Maladministration by the landlord in respect of its handling of the associated complaint. <p>Order</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay the resident £1400 compensation. Complete an inspection of the property. Landlord to write to the resident to confirm its intentions in respect of each specific repair. Carry out a review of our practices in relation to knowledge and information management and planned works, particularly with regard to communication with tenants and monitoring of contracts.
Property Care	<p>Determination – Upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maladministration in the landlord's handling of responsive repairs at the resident's property. Maladministration found in the landlord's handling of the resident's complaints and communication. <p>Order</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay the resident £800 compensation. Write to the resident with a plan to complete the outstanding repairs. Consider putting in place any immediate process changes to prevent the types of communication failings seen in this complaint. Consider reviewing its repairs policy
Investment	<p>Determination - Partially Upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No maladministration in the landlord's handling of the resident's reports on the conduct of the landlord's staff and contractors. Service failure in the landlord's complaint handling. <p>Order</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay the resident £75.00 compensation. <p>Determination has been challenged by the complainant and a review by the Ombudsman is currently being undertaken.</p>
Independent Living	Awaiting determination result
Housing Management	Awaiting determination result

Severe Maladministration: the most serious failings

Maladministration: a failure which has adversely affected the resident

Service failure: where there was minor failing but action is still needed to put things right

No maladministration: where the landlord has acted in accordance with its obligations and policies/procedures. Minor failings may have been found but these caused no detriment to the resident.

Complaint Handling Satisfaction:

When our residents complete our complaints form on our website, they can give consent to receive a Complaint Handling Satisfaction Survey following the outcome of their complaint. 20% of the surveys issued in 2023-24 were returned, the results of which are as follows:

