

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Your Comments Count Annual Report</b>	<b>Confidential</b>	No
<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Toni Allen Customer Services Manager</b>	<b>Report Status</b>	For Discussion / Information
<b>Report To</b>	<b>Customer Services Committee 16 May 2024</b>	<b>Officer Contact Details</b>	Toni Allen Customer Services Manager <a href="mailto:Toniallen@berneslaihomes.co.uk">Toniallen@berneslaihomes.co.uk</a>

<b>1. Executive Summary</b>	<p>This report summarises activities and outcomes under the 'Your Comments Count' policy for 2023/24:</p> <p><b><u>Key Concerns</u></b></p> <p>Whilst in the year we positively received Housemark accreditation for our complaint handling service and remained compliant with the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) Complaint Handling Code and scheme, this annual complaint handling summary presents a range of organisational challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A rise again this year in the volume of complaints, with an increase of 70% in the number of stage 1 complaints and a 90% increase in stage 2's. Whilst this part is a national trend and should not in itself be viewed as negative, we have a high proportion of upheld and/or avoidable complaints.</li> <li>• Our ability to respond in time has reduced through the year.</li> <li>• The long wait times for planned repairs and replacements and our ability to effectively manage this communication with customers is continuing to drive the highest volume of complaints.</li> <li>• Our ability to identify learning has been impacted by the pressure on the complaints service.</li> <li>• Our ability to implement learning quickly and effectively due to organisational capacity is resulting in a higher than acceptable common trend in complaint reason.</li> </ul>
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## 1. Executive Summary (Cont'd)

- Our ability to effectively resolve complaints at stage 1 of the process is generating a higher than peer average rate of stage two complaints per 1,000 properties.
- Transactional satisfaction with complaint handling has reduced.
- We received 7 negative determinations from the 22 made by the HOS.

### **Positive actions and outcome**

- We have complied with all orders made by the HOS.
- We have taken steps to improve employee awareness of the complaints process, accessibility, and effectiveness in complaint handling, through training and team briefs.
- We have continued to identify learning from complaints including cross-organisational and intelligence provided by the HOS.
- We have reviewed our Complaint Policy to align with the 2024 Housing Ombudsman Code and have completed our self-assessment.

### **Actions to improve complaint handling and learning**

- The change in approach to this year's investment planning should address the back log of repair and replacement works which is the main driver for complaints for the backlog of work which causes complaint.
- Planned maintenance officers have moved to a patch based model and this will improve complaint handing and accountability.
- We are increasing temporary resources within the Customer Services Team to co-ordinate and respond to complaints more effectively and timely at Stage 1.
- We are reviewing our Policy and Procedure Framework to ensure we are more proactive in their review, implementation and monitoring.
- We are increasing temporary resources in Property Services which should support them to manage the service more proactively and effectively, and consequently reduce the number of complaints. This is addition to the increase in resources and the setting up of a specialist Damp, Mould and Disrepair Team.

<p><b>1. Executive Summary (Cont'd)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are running a company wide Customer First training programme in the summer which aims to enhance our customer first culture.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Recommendation/s</b></p>	<p>It is recommended that Customer Services Committee do the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the positive compliance with the HOS Complaint handling code.</li> <li>• Note the revised complaint policy and self-assessment will be presented for approval at this committee.</li> <li>• Give feedback on the organisational challenges identified through our complaint handling service.</li> <li>• Be assured of the positive actions we are taking to improve our complaint handling service, in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ temporary resources and approach to improve the quality and speed of response.</li> <li>○ additional temporary resources in Property Services to respond to service requests right first time and improve communications.</li> <li>○ company wide Customer First and revised complaint handling awareness training.</li> <li>○ review of our Service Improvement Framework and our Policy and Procedure Framework to align with the revised regulatory and HOS Code duties.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Note the residual risks which will continue to be monitored.</li> </ul>

3. Background

- 3.1 We welcome all feedback about our services, including compliments, comments, complaints, or suggestions. They are managed under our 'Your Comments Count' framework. Co-ordination, monitoring, and review of Your Comments Count is carried out by the Customer Services Team.
- 3.2 The [23/24 HOS Complaint Handling Code](#) was introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 as part of the Ombudsman's powers in the Housing Ombudsman Scheme.
- 3.3 Our 'Your Comments Count' Policy for the period 2023/24 complied with the code and in August 2023 we received independent accreditation from Housemark for our complaint handling service.
- 3.4 Complaint handling is a significant focus for regulatory compliance with 3 of the 22 [Tenant Satisfaction Measures](#) relating to complaint handling. In February 2024 the HOS published the updated [Complaint Handling Code](#) which became statutory on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, meaning that landlords are obliged by law to follow its requirements. The focus of the former and newly revised code is not just about handling complaints but about learning from them and improving services as a result.

4. Current Position /Issues for Consideration

4.1. Key data for 2023/24



This section contains analysis of complaints activity, outcomes, actions, and issues for the 2023/24 period under our Your Comments Count Policy and the 2023/24 Housing Ombudsman Code.







Committee should note that a revised complaint policy and self-assessment against the new Complaint Handling Code and legal duties will be presented in a separate report.




**Table 1 - Summary Table**

(Appendix 1 – Summary April 2023 to March 2024)

*Note: Comparisons to 22/23*

Activity	Number	Outcomes	Action/Issue
Escalated Service requests.	1619 Up 69% 	We agreed with 75% of escalated service requests.	Under our new Complaint Policy, we will no longer have an escalated service request category. We will categorise as either a formal complaint or a service request, and where it is a service request we will have to record the customer's agreement. We anticipate many ESRs will now be categorised as formal stage 1 complaints.
Stage 1 formal complaints responded to.	692  Up 70%	Volume of complaints have continued to increase. We agreed with 85% and responded to 76% within Complaint Handling Code timescale (includes extension). 86% of complaints are repair related (597 of the 692 stage 1 complaints).	We must improve the speed of response to Stage 1 complaints as responding within timescales is now a legal duty. Additional temporary resources in recruitment. We have plans to reduce the wait times for planned repairs and improvements and have improved the communication to tenants awaiting work.

Stage 2 formal complaints.	133 Up 90% 	19% of stage 1 complaints have escalated to stage 2 of the procedure. We agreed with 82% and responded to 96% within Complaint Handling Code timescale (includes extension). 86% of stage 2 complaints are repair related (114 of the 133 stage 2 complaints).	Stage 1 response letters to be drafted by the Customer Services team to improve standard and reduce the number escalating. Promises made at Stage 1 to be closely monitored to reduce number of failed promises escalating.
Housing Ombudsman investigations and determinations	10 cases 	We received a total of 22 determinations relating to the 10 cases. See further details in Section 4.4 relating to HOS determinations.	Continue to notify Leaders and Board of concerns & risks.
Housing Ombudsman enquiries.	8 	Enquiries dealt with in line with our complaint's procedure.	None required.
Satisfaction with overall performance of the complaint service.	175 surveys 110 via the phone and 65 digital methods 	This is the first year that we have introduced the completion of digital surveys. The introduction of this method had a negative impact on overall satisfaction. When combining all methods of surveys, 61% of our customers were either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with the overall service. See Section 5.3.	Improve the standard of the stage 1 response letter as we have seen the highest reduction in satisfaction relating to the accuracy of the letter and ease to read.
Compliments registered.	1048 Down 8.79% 	During 22/23 the number of compliments reduced by 19% for this first time in 4 years, and we have seen a continued decrease this year in the number of compliments registered.	A new e-form has been developed and web content created to make it easier for tenants to make a compliment.
Compensation paid.	£82,247 Up 152% 	We paid compensation on 284 complaint cases which includes escalated service requests & formal. An increase was to be expected due to the increase in complaints.  Highest payment of £3850 compensation was related to a repair case.	Learning to be implemented to prevent repeat complaints about the same issue that results in compensation payments. Compensation budget to be increased.

Service Improvements identified in year.	36 Down 66% 	Although volumes of complaints are higher than previous years, the number of new service improvement actions identified is much lower. This is due to a large proportion of learning actions identified, already been carried from previous years. A total of 290 customer complaints related to service improvement actions from identified in previous year.	Discuss our ability to implement learning with EMT/SMT and develop actions to improve our learning capacity.
Reminders / training updates identified in year.	28 50% Down 	A positive reduction in complaints resulting in staff needing to be reminded of policy or procedures or attend further training.	None required.
Training and awareness activity.	2 In-depth complaint handling sessions.  4 company induction sessions.	Positive continuation of training to improve complaint handling, awareness, and culture, with 71 employees completing the annual refresher training via e-Learning which covers basic complaint handling and principles/awareness.	Scheduled complaint handling training throughout 2024/25 to include awareness sessions of the new policy.  Customer First training to be delivered during 24/25 to all employees.

**Table 2 – Top 5 complaint areas**

Top five complaint areas	Percentage
Planned Repairs	29%
Poor Communication	12%
Damp and Mould	11%
Delay in Carrying our Repairs	7%
Repairs Quality	7%

Property Services received the highest number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints, with 86% of the overall complaints at both stages. Planned Repairs continues to be the top reason for tenant dissatisfaction, and we have responded to over 200 Stage 1 complaints about them.

This was an expected outcome as:

- the repairs service is the most important service for tenants; and
- property conditions / repairs continue to be the most complained about category across the sector and received by the HOS.

**Table 3 – Reasons why complaints escalated to stage 2**

Reasons why complaints escalated to Stage 2	Percentage	Action
<p><b>Not happy with content of letter.</b>  <i>This includes tenants that felt the response letter was factually incorrect, disputed statements within the letter, felt the letter didn't respond to all points of the complaint or clearly explain findings or reason for decisions.</i></p>	38.30%	<p>The Customer Services Team are recruiting some temporary complaint handling staff and once in post they will lead on the production of our Stage 1 response letters once the relevant service area has completed its investigations.                      We will review the impact of this change.</p>
<p><b>Not happy with resolution provided.</b>  <i>This includes the level of compensation offered or the timescale offered to complete outstanding works.</i></p>	31.57%	As above.
<p><b>Promises made in stage 1 not fulfilled.</b></p>	21.80%	<p>The additional temporary resources in the Customer Services Team will enable closer monitoring of progress against promises made.</p>
<p><b>Not happy with Stage 1 decision.</b></p>	8.27%	As first row above.

4.2 Update on actions from 2022/23 annual complaint handling review

This section outlines progress made in delivering against the actions identified following the 2022/23 annual complaint handling review. Carried forward actions or new actions identified as a result of 23/24 complaint handling review are included in the Risk section 6.

**Table 4 – Update on actions from 2022/23 annual review**

Action	Update	Next steps
<p>Improve percentage of Stage 1 complaints that are responded to within timescales. Monitor this and services to respond to automated reminder.</p>	<p>Not achieved. Performance decreased compared to previous year. Volume of Stage 1 complaints increased by % which impacted performance.</p>	<p>The Customer Services Team are recruiting some temporary complaint handling staff and once in post they will lead on the production of our Stage 1 response letters once the relevant service area has completed its investigations. We will review the impact of this change.</p>
<p>Informal complaints to be removed from policy and replaced with escalated service requests.</p>	<p>Completed.</p>	<p>Committee to note that under the 2024 Housing Ombudsman Code there is no provision for ESRs and we are anticipating an increase in formal complaints</p>
<p>Implement key learning identified around planned works – key is keeping customers informed on a regular basis regarding delays, update website, forecast when work will be done etc.</p>	<p>Partly achieved – ongoing.  Although some communication was sent during 23/24 this was not as frequent as planned.  Web content reviewed and amended.</p>	<p>Although forecasting was not completed throughout 23/24, it is now complete, and communication will take place with customers throughout April and May 2024.  Over the past few months, we have introduced better communication with residents following maintenance inspections to confirm what work is ordered.</p>
<p>Complaints procedure to run in parallel with disrepair claims (pre-action protocol)</p>	<p>Completed and will continue.</p>	<p>Ongoing monitoring</p>
<p>Policy and procedures requiring review as a result of complaints to be prioritised by SMT and monitored.</p>	<p>Completed – work ongoing to update policies and procedures.</p>	<p>Still concern about the pace of reviewing and approving policy and procedures. A review of the Policy and Procedure Framework has commenced.</p>



Monitor the volume of withdrawn complaints and ensure learning still taking place.	Completed.  Guidance produced and staff briefed which resulted in a reduced in the volume of withdrawn complaints. This is no longer a concern.	Continue to monitor
Explore ways to capture compliments.	Completed.  Developed compliment Eform and created web content to make it easy for customers to register a compliment.  Developed staff user guide on how to register compliment on NEC to support accurate recording.	Continue to monitor
Weekly meetings with Maintenance Team to discuss complaints and offer advice around complaint handling and investigation.	Completed and will continue.	To continue
Continue to notify Leaders and Board of concerns and future risks.	Completed and will continue.  Quarterly reports presented to Leaders focusing on trends in complaints - what are customers telling us.	To continue
Monitor implementation of service improvements / learning from complaints in line with the Service Improvement Framework.	Service Improvement Framework in place to support learning from complaints, monitoring, and reporting. Quarterly reports presented to SMT relating to service improvements / learning from complaints.	Service Improvement Framework to be reviewed to improve learning identification
Deliver complaint handling training during 2023/24.	Completed and will continue.	To continue

#### 4.3 Benchmarking

- 4.3.1 We participated in a mid-year benchmarking exercise for the Tenant Satisfaction Measures which allowed us to compare our performance with other similar social housing providers.

Table 5 below summarises the mid-year position.

**Table 5 - Benchmark Data**

Measure	Peer Group Mid-Year			Berneslai Homes	
	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile	Mid-Year	Year End**
Stage one complaints received per 1,000 homes	30.61	19.14	15.97	19.57	45.43
Stage two complaints received per 1,000 homes	2.98	2.17	0.68	3.06	7.73
Stage one complaints responded to in target timescales	75.4%	83.2%	85.0%	83.2%	76.2%*
Stage two complaints responded to in target timescales	57.1%	80.5%	91.0%	96.7%	96.2%*
Satisfaction with landlords' approach to handling complaints	25.5%	28.0%	31.0%	43.1%	43.1%

\*Provisional data – will change once all complaints from 2023/24 are closed\*\*

\*\* Year end benchmark data is not yet available so as yet we cannot determine exactly how we compare to our peers.

#### 4.4 Compliance with the HOS code and Investigation determination orders

- 4.4.1 During 2023/24 we worked with Housemark who carried out an independent assessment, offering independent challenge of our complaint handling and service. In August 2023 we were awarded with a 3-year Complaint Handling Accreditation. The assessment was based on sector best practice and advice from the HOS. This gave independent assurance for Board, BMBC and our tenants on our processes, practices, and compliance with the HOS Code.
- 4.4.2 We have completed a self-assessment in April 2024 following the publication of the revised code in February 2024 and committee will receive a detailed update in a separate report in May 2024, along with our new complaint policy. The revised code states landlords must complete annual self-assessments. The assessment for 2024 will be published before 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024 in line with requirements.
- 4.4.3 We received 8 contacts from the HOS that did not escalate to a full investigation. We received 9 requests for evidence for cases that the HOS had accepted for full investigation. We complied with all enquiry and evidence requests within timescales provided.
- 4.4.4 We received 10 investigations back from the HOS during 2023/24, with a total of 22 determinations. We received negative judgement on 4 of the 10 cases with a total of 7 negative determinations out of the 22. The HOS made orders on 4 cases which we have complied with and responded to the HOS with evidence of compliance.

We have 4 cases that were submitted to the HOS during 2023/24 that are outstanding and awaiting determinations that will be carried over to 2024/25.

The below tables give further details around the HOS cases, complaint type, determination, orders, and recommendations along with compliance.

**Table 6 – Summary of determination outcomes**

Number of Cases Investigated	10
Total Number of Determinations received	22
Severe Maladministration	0
Maladministration	6
Partial Maladministration	0
Service Failure	1
Reasonable Redress	2
No Maladministration	10
Out of Jurisdiction	3

**Table 7 – Summary of HOS cases, orders made and compliance**

Complaint Investigation type	Date received and Outcome	Orders or recommendations	Compliance with orders
Time taken to fit insulated plaster boards and landlords' decision relating to stolen items.	8 April 2023 <b>2 determinations in total.</b> <b>1 No Maladministration</b> relating to time taken to carry out repair. <b>1 Out of Jurisdiction</b> relating stolen item.	No Orders.  Recommended to resume plaster boarding works.	N/A.  Yes.
Leaseholder - Landlords decision making and consultation on proposed repair works, if kept to the law, following procedures, and acted reasonably.	11 April 2023 <b>4 determinations in total.</b> <b>3 No Maladministration</b> relating to request to have trees cut back, handling of proposed guttering works and use of section 20 consultation procedure. <b>1 Out of Jurisdiction</b> relating to level of service charge	None.	N/A.

Handling of Damp and mould	8 June 2023 <b>2 determinations in total.</b>  <b>1 No Maladministration</b> relating to handling of damp and mould. <b>1 No Maladministration</b> relating to complaint handling	No Orders.  Recommended: Review the HOS Spotlight report on 'Knowledge and Information Management'.  Ensure works are pre-inspected to ensure damp fully resolved.  Discuss and make referral for additional financial support.	N/A.  Yes.  Yes.  Yes.
Handling of repairs in the property.	8 June 2023 <b>1 determination</b> received of <b>Reasonable Redress</b>	No Orders.  Recommended: Review record keeping, including inspection reports.  Carry out a new inspection on flooring.	N/A.  Yes.  Yes.
Handling of repairs and ASB.	1 August 2023 <b>2 determinations in total.</b>  <b>1 Maladministration</b> relating to repairs.  <b>1 out of jurisdiction</b> relating to ASB.	Ordered to: Pay £300 compensation.  Confirm to HOS how we will communicate effectively with residents about planned repairs to manage expectations.  Confirm to HOS what steps will take to improve record keeping.  Provide evidence to HOS that complied with these orders.	Yes.  Yes.  Yes.  Yes.
Landlords' decision not to renew the resident's kitchen and bathroom.	14 August 2023 <b>1 determination</b> received of <b>No Maladministration.</b>	No Orders.  Recommended write to resident to confirm when it anticipates replace the kitchen & bathroom.	N/A.  Yes.

Handling of replacement kitchen and complaint handling.	15 September 2023 <b>2 determinations in total.</b> <b>1 Maladministration</b> relating to planned repairs. <b>1 Reasonable Redress</b> relating to Complaint Handling.	Orders to: Pay £700 compensation.  Apologise in writing for the delays and impact.  Carry out a new inspection to review any issues with damp and mould. Review the flooring and carry out any required works.  Provide evidence to HOS that complied with these orders.	Yes.  Yes.  Yes.  Yes.
Handling of concerns about cost efficiency of ASHP, repairs relating to the ASHP and complaint handling.	1 February 2024 <b>3 determinations in total.</b> <b>1 No maladministration</b> regarding concerns about efficiency of ASHP.  <b>2 Maladministration</b> regarding repairs and complaint handling.	Order to: Pay £740 compensation.  Carry out outstanding repairs within 8 weeks.	Yes.  Yes.
Handling of a leak, reports of damaged tiles and request for a fence.	29 February 2024 <b>3 determinations in total.</b> <b>2 Maladministration</b> regarding handling of the leak and reports of damaged kitchen tiles.  <b>1 Service Failure</b> regarding the handling of a request for a fence.	Orders to: Pay £550 compensation.  Inspect the kitchen tiles and carry out any work identified.  Contact the resident and apologise for the failings.  Recommendations: Complete a risk assessment against for the ASB report and request for fencing.  Read the HOS Spotlight report on Knowledge and Information Management.	Yes.  Yes.  Yes.  Yes.  Yes.
Handling of VOIDS standard and the level of Customer Service received.	5 March 2024 <b>2 determinations in total.</b>  <b>2 No Maladministration</b> regarding void standard and Customer Service.	None.	N/A

## 4.5 Awareness

4.5.1 We feel confident that our complaints process is well publicised and we also welcome feedback and register complaints from other publicity campaigns around damp and mould, improvement work and repairs. Our posters which promote how to complain and the different channels residents can do this and displayed these in various community buildings across the borough.

In addition to our own publicity, the Government's national 'Make Things Right' campaign was first launched in March 2023, and they have heavily promoted this throughout 2023/24, which encourages social housing tenants to complain to their landlords.

4.5.2 We have reviewed our [website](#) content and made the information easy to find and clear to understand. We have also amended our complaint, comments, and suggestions eForm and bespoke this to complaints to increase ease of use for residents. We raise awareness in the tenants' annual report, Ebulletin newsletters to tenants and latest news page of the website.

4.5.3 We continued to train employees to ensure everyone supports effective complaint handling and culture. We do this through eLearning, in-depth complaint handling training and inductions/awareness sessions for all new employees joining the organisation. We also raised awareness of our complaints procedure and learning from complaints during team briefs and corporate communications.

4.5.4 We are in the process of amending training materials and launching a new eLearning training following the changes to our policy in April 2024 and the new regulatory and statutory requirements on us.

## 4.6 Learning from complaints

4.6.1 We use all feedback to ensure we are learning and to improve services. We identified 31 service improvements from complaints. In addition to this we issued 15 reminders to staff and identified 13 training opportunities. The number of new service improvements actions identified this year is lower than the previous year. There has been less learning identified compared with previous year, a large proportion of the learning identified are improvement actions carried from previous years. A total of 290 customers complaints related to service improvement actions carried from previous years.

4.6.2 We are reviewing the Service Improvement Framework to ensure it aligns with the Housing Ombudsman Code and regulatory framework. Whilst under review we have carried out a review of the Service Improvement log and ratified the actions. See Appendix 2 for further details of current improvement actions.

## Table 8 – Service Improvements Identified and Implemented

**Note –** The numbers in this table do not fully correspond to the detailed summary outstanding actions as this is a working document and smaller improvements are counted individually but may be added to an existing action.

Type of Improvement Actions	Number of improvement actions identified during 2023/24	Number of improvement actions implemented in year 2023/24	Number of improvement actions carried from previous years	Number of carried improvement actions implemented	Additional customer complaints received 2023/24 with carried improvement actions
Policy/Procedure/Process	31	13 <i>(1 not agreed)</i>	12	3 <i>(1 not agreed)</i>	261
Communication	5	3	3	1	29
Staff training	13	9 <i>(1 not agreed)</i>	1	0	0
Reminders to staff	15	13	3	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>290</b>

4.6.3 To ensure organisational learning we actively engage and refer to other organisations and intelligence provided by the HOS. The HOS publishes the determination reports on its website at <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk>, together with other useful Spotlight and Insight reports. Spotlights have been used when reviewing our own policies and procedures to highlight gaps and learn from others. In 2023/24 this included the development of our Good Neighbour Policy, our Insight and Engagement Strategy, and our Damp and Mould Policy.

### 5. Customer Voice/Impact

5.1 The Tenant Voice Panel receive regular information relating to complaints and have given views on the new policy. Tenants are involved in the Customer Services Team run Service Improvement panel meetings with the focus of learning from complaints.

5.2 During 2023/24 we contacted 5,000 tenants as part of the annual TSM perception survey and 1,891 responded. We asked about their satisfaction on our approach to complaint handling. 43% were satisfied, which is below our internal target, however we compare well to our peer group with the upper quartile for complaint handling satisfaction being 31%.

5.3 Complaint handling transactional surveys are completed on the close of complaints. Historically, 100% of these types of surveys have been conducted over the telephone by the Customer Insight Team. During 2023/24, to widen the tenant voice, we changed methodology and introduced SMS and email surveys, as well as telephone surveys. The results from this year's telephone surveys are positive with an increase in several areas of complaint handling, including overall satisfaction compared to the previous year. Analysis does however show that residents who completed the survey digitally were significantly less satisfied. When combined all methods of feedback the low satisfaction from tenants using digital method of feedback brought the overall satisfaction down to 2021/22 levels of overall satisfaction. Analysis shows that satisfaction is lower if the customer didn't get their preferred resolution / outcome, which is often the repair expedited. We have also seen a spike in the number of customers that are less satisfied with the accuracy of the stage 1 response letter, which is one of the top reasons why customers escalate to stage 2 of the procedure.

5.4 The following table summarises satisfaction in complaint handling during 2023/24.

**Table 9 – Complaint Handling Satisfaction in 2023/24**

What we asked: Thinking about your recent complaint, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following:	Overall results 2021/22 completed by telephone (41)	Overall results 2022/23 completed by telephone (95)	Overall results 2023/24 completed by telephone (110)	Overall results 2023/24 completed by digital SMS / email (65)	Overall combined results 2023/24 – all methods (175)	% increase or decrease overall compared to 2022/23
Easy to complain	81%	89%	83%	68%	77%	-12%
Complaint was handled	58%	66%	77%	46%	65%	-1%
Staff treated complaint fairly	59%	83%	87%	51%	73%	-10%
Staff listened & understood	64%	78%	84%	52%	72%	-6%
Kept informed	47%	58%	59%	40%	52%	-6%
Response letter was accurate & easy to understand	72%	85%	80%	34%	67%	-18%



Steps taken to put things right	57%	72%	84%	43%	68%	-4%
Outcome / resolution	49%	56%	55%	29%	45%	-11%
<b>Overall satisfaction</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>-11%</b>

6. Risk and Risk Appetite

The following table highlights for Committee any risks or concerns in terms of complaints, including handling, volume, and nature of complaints. It also highlights actions required to ensure we are compliant with the HOS code and our legal responsibility.

**Table 10 – Risk/Concern and action**

Category	Risk / concern	Action	Who	When
Concern & Risk	Compliance with regulatory and legal requirements – responding to complaints in line with code. Impacted by projected increase in volumes	We are recruiting additional temporary staff to increase our capacity respond within timescales.	Customer Services Manager	May 2024
		Customer Services Team to closely monitor compliance and escalate concerns to SMT/EMT.		Ongoing
Concern & Risk	Pace that service improvements are implemented is slow, particularly when they involve policy or procedure reviews.	Policy & procedure framework, database, and approval routes to be reviewed to align to the Consumer Standards.	Service Improvement and Regulation Co-ordinator	June 2024
		SMT to have responsibility for prioritising and monitoring improvements following learning.	SMT	Ongoing
		Customer Services Team to monitor and report, highlight areas of concern relating to service improvements.	Customer Services Manager	Ongoing

Concern & Risk	The volume of complaints escalating to stage 2 is high with high upheld rates. This increases the risk of cases escalating to HOS.	Customer Services Team to draft the stage 1 response letters following service leads investigation. To be implemented when additional temporary resources recruited to.	Customer Services Manager	Once recruitment completed
Concern	Capacity to identify learning from complaints	Review of Service Improvement Framework has commenced to streamline and align to the HOS code.	Service Improvement and Regulation Co-ordinator	Sept 2024
Concern	Volume of complaints relating to delays with planned works and damp mould and condensation, continue to be high until backlog cleared	Communication plan must be delivered in a timely manner.	Head of Repairs, Maintenance and Building Safety	May 2024 and then ongoing until cleared.
Ensure Customer Services and Contact Centre have information and aware of processes to be followed to deal with increased contact regarding planned works.		Head of Repairs, Maintenance and Building Safety	May 2024 and then ongoing until cleared.	
Planned Maintenance Officers move to patch based will increase accountability.		Head of Repairs, Maintenance and Building Safety	Ongoing	
Concern		The Damp Mould and Disrepair Team to embed new processes	Damp, Mould and Disrepair Manager	Ongoing
Concern	The volume of complaints escalating to stage 2 due to failed promises that were made at stage 1.	Review the promise log procedures and train all involved to clearly explain their responsibilities.	Customer Services Manager	June 2024

## 7. Strategic Alignment

7.1 Our approach to complaint handling fully aligns with our Hearing Customers ambition and to all our company values. We put *Customers First* and aim to resolve complaints by understanding their concerns and the impact on them. We are thorough and curious in our investigations, looking beyond face value to get things right and we are clear on what we can do to resolve issues fairly and identify learning. We take a 'Can-Do' approach and aim to resolve complaints without progressing through all stages.

## 8. Data Privacy

8.1 There are no data privacy issues associated with this report.

## 9. Consumer Regulatory Standards

9.1 Regulatory duties related to Complaint Handling is included in the [Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard](#) which requires landlords to be open with tenants and treat them with fairness and respect so that tenants can access services, raise complaints when necessary, influence decision making and hold their landlord to account.

## 10. Other Statutory/Regulatory Compliance

10.1 Compliance with the HOS Complaint Handling Code is a legal duty under the Social Housing Act. The review and publication of the new complaints policy along with the completion of the Complaint Handling Code Self-assessment, approval, and publication of this before June 2024 will contribute towards eliminating risk challenge from the HOS or RSH.

## 11. Financial

11.1 Failure to handle complaints effectively could lead to financial loss through compensation or legal challenge. The budget for compensation in 2023/24 was £25,000 and we spent £82,247.

This was expected due to the increase in complaints along with a high upheld rate.

## 12. Human Resources, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

### 12.1 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

Even though survey results for 23/24 show a reduction in people telling us that it was easy to complain (77%) we are still confident that there is an easily accessible range of ways to use the service. The updated [web content](#), e-form and national publicity about the service, will improve public awareness around complaints.

Analysis of 2023/24 complaints have been made by diversity strands and this shows no significant concerns. However, the volume of complaints made by BAME is too low to make meaningful analysis.

12.2 Human Resources

We have increased the support and supervision for staff handling complaints to recognise the increased pressure on individuals and the additional temporary resources in both Customer and Property Services will have a positive impact on staff wellbeing.

13. Sustainability Implications

13.1 There are no sustainability implications associated with this report.

14. Associated Background Papers

None.

15. List of Appendices

15.1 Appendix 1 – Public Version Complaints Summary 2023/4  
Appendix 2 - Current Service Improvements Actions

16. Glossary

16.1 HOS – Housing Ombudsman Service  
RSH – Regulator of Social Housing  
TSM – Tenant Satisfaction Measures