

2023/24 Annual Complaints Handling Report

Introduction

Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code requires landlords to produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge by the landlord's governing body and published on the website alongside the governing body's response to the report and submitted to the Housing Ombudsman.

The annual report itself must include:

- the annual self-assessment against this Code
- a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance, to include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept
- any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman
- the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;
- any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman;
- any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.

Whilst this report covers the housing related complaints the Customer Experience team also manage enquiries from MP (390 cases) along with complaints for Housing Applications and Homelessness (160 cases) in 2023 / 24 across both Lewes and Eastbourne.

Complaints Handling Code - self-assessment against this Code

2.1 Annual self-assessment against this Code

Appendix 1 of this report is the Council response to the self-assessment subject to approval of the new Corporate Complaints policy to be considered by Cabinet in July.

There are areas of the self-assessment that we wish to develop which include

- training for staff in relation to the
 - requirements of the complaints handling code
 - recommendations in the Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight report: Attitudes, Respect and Rights.
- our record keeping and data management which has been highlighted in two Housing Ombudsman determinations.

2.2 Analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance

The table below highlights the numbers of complaints received and closed during 2023-24 in respect of EHL key services; Property Services (including

repairs, asset & major works and estate services such as gas safety), Neighbourhood Housing (including retirement housing, rents and ASB) and Leasehold Services, along with details of the outcome of complaints.

Over the past 12 months we have not refused to investigate any complaints.

Stage 1 Complaints	Property Services	Neighbourhood Housing	Leasehold Services	Total
No of stage 1 complaints received	139	41	7	187
Complaints closed				
No of stage 1 complaints closed	87	30	3	120
Complaints upheld	29	2	0	31
Complaints partly upheld	22	6	2	30
Complaints not upheld	36	22	1	59
Informal Resolution	0	0	0	0

***The above figures include 3 stage 1 complaints completed in 23/24 from the previous year.

**The balance of complaints remain outstanding.

Stage 2 Complaints	Property Services *	Neighbourhood Housing	Leasehold Services	Total
No of stage 2 complaints received	27	9	0	36
Complaints closed				
No of stage 2 complaints closed	26	10	0	36
Complaints upheld	6	1	0	7
Complaints partly upheld	4	1	0	5
Complaints not upheld	13	6	0	19

**** The balance of complaints remain outstanding.

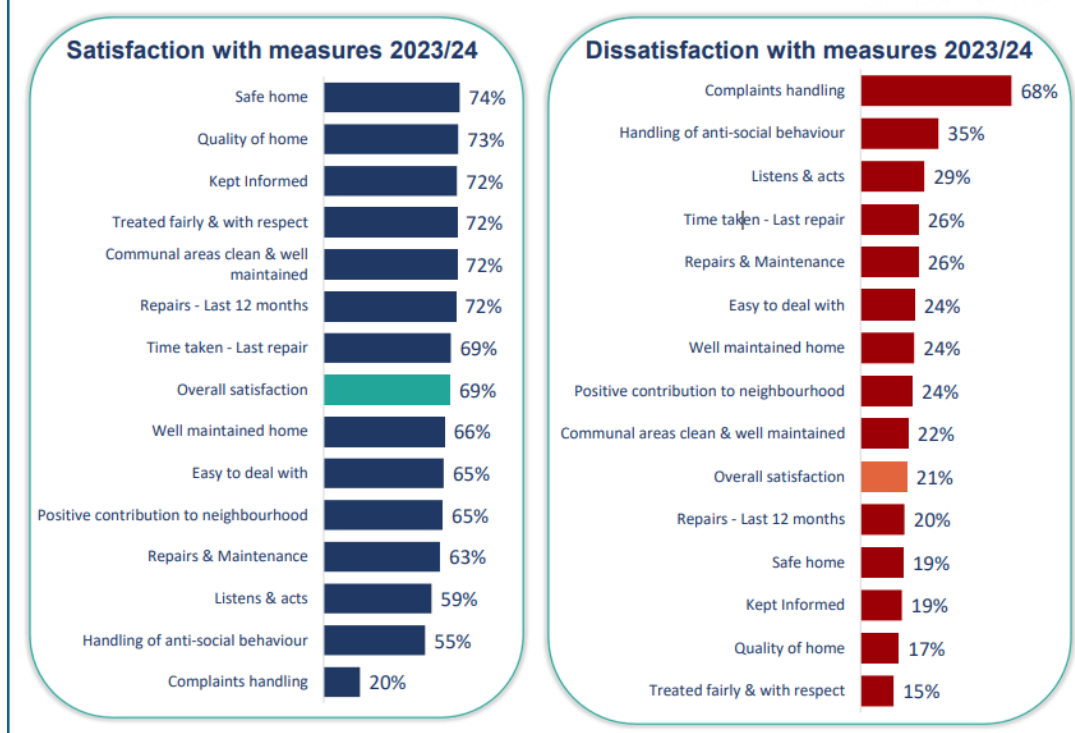
Stage 1 Complaints	Complaints closed	Complaints closed on time	%
No of stage 1 complaints including leasehold (closed)	120	73	61%
No of stage 1 complaints excluding leasehold	117	70	60%
Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints closed	Complaints closed on time	%
No of stage 2 complaints including leasehold (0 complaints)	31	18	58%
No of stage 2 complaints excluding leasehold	31	18	58%

2.3 Satisfaction with complaint handling

Table 1, is an extract from our perception survey and shows that satisfaction with complaints handling is the lowest of all services covered by the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, and at 20% is considerably lower than in 2022/23 during which we recorded 42% satisfaction. Dissatisfaction with complaints handling is the highest measure of dissatisfaction at 69% and higher than was reported in 2022/23 when the dissatisfaction level was 39%.

Table 1

Annual Satisfaction & Dissatisfaction



We continue to survey tenants in relation to satisfaction with complaint handling. Tenants who have raised a complaint with us will receive a survey in the month following closure of their complaint. We also ask about complaint satisfaction within our perception surveys with more general satisfaction questions about services provided.

During 2023-24, our transactional surveys captured feedback from 56 residents who had been through the complaints procedure at either Stage 1 or Stage 2.

Satisfaction has been impacted by staff changes and gaps. Complaints handling in relation to property services is lower than for other services and this has impacted overall satisfaction.

Our customer feedback and monitoring has identified the following as case management service improvement areas for the Customer Experience Team in 2024/25

- closing complaints on a 'promise of action' with a clear timeline and internal monitoring to ensure completion of this to improve complaint closed within timescales
- establishing the 'owner' of the issue upon receipt of the complaint and placing ownership on that individual to directly to resolve the issue.
- Improving accountability and monitoring and reporting to service areas
- clarity and responsibility for keeping the complainant informed of progress.

2.4 Housing Ombudsman Determinations

Of the three cases of maladministration were found all relate to repairs. The key themes

	Eastbourne
Upheld maladministration	3
Not upheld (2 repairs 1 neighbourhood housing)	3
Information only	5
Ongoing investigations as at 31.3.24	8

2.5 Service Improvements

In addition to the four 'case management' service improvement areas noted above since Quarter 4 we have set up a central record of service improvements and have focussed on 3 key areas.

Damp and Mould review – using complaints / survey feedback / and customer journey mapping we are piloting a new approach to Tenant Scrutiny we will share with all tenants via our newsletter.

Estate pop up – involving staff / stakeholders attending a location in Lewes district identified as an area of multiple and multifaceted concerns - leaseholder / repairs / ASB. We have combined our customer feedback to address collectively the issues raised. We have identified a similar area in Eastbourne but will use the learning from this event to shape similar activities.

Data management strategy We are now developing a revised scope for this piece of work, looking to resource our approach to data management and work.

We have also identified a number of 'quick wins' during Q4 in 2023/24 and will work with Service Leads to discuss these recommendations with the outcome being fed back in our newsletter Tenants Open Voice.

- Improved mutual exchange guidance
- clarification on remedies for complaints
- review of 'what is an essential repair' guidance on the website
- clarity for staff and tenants specifically over fence repairs / replacement on decanting residents for damp and mould works and redecoration schemes
- monitoring complaint cases through effective reports and directly with staff
- record keeping and confirming agreed works / timescales with tenants