



2023/24 ANNUAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Annual Complaints Report meets the expectations of section 8.1 of the Complaints Handling Code which relates to 'self-assessment, reporting and compliance'

The first part of the report, will form the 2023/24 published LDC annual report on complaints.

The second part of this report provides additional context for the report findings.

1.2 The requirement of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code is for landlords to produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge. This must be reported to 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 (2.1 of the report)
- 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 (2.2 of the report)
- any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman (2.3 of the report)
- the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints (2.4 of the report)
- any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman (none received)
- any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord (none received).

1.3 Whilst this report covers the housing related complaints dealt with in Lewes it is of note that the Customer Experience team dealt with 390 MP (Member of Parliament) enquiries and 160 complaints related to Housing Applications and Homelessness in 2023 / 24 across Lewes and Eastbourne. Team members also coordinate Subject Access and Freedom of Information Requests. Whilst the detail of this work is not covered in this report this workload has impacted on housing related complaint performance.

2 Compliance with the Housing Ombudsman complaints Code

2.1 Annual self-assessment against this Code

Appendix 1 of this report is the Council's response to the Self-assessment. We have demonstrated compliance although of note, satisfactory compliance is subject to approval of the new Corporate Complaints policy being considered by Cabinet in July, therefore a number of requirements have been identified as partial.

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 and the 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 during 2023-24 in respect of Lewes DC key services; Property Services (including repairs, asset & major works and estate services such as gas safety), Neighbourhood Housing (including retirement housing, rents, tenancy support and ASB) and Leasehold Services.

Over the past 12 months we have no recorded complaints that have not been accepted.

Stage 1 Complaints	Property Services	Neighbourhood Housing	Leasehold Services	Total
No of stage 1 complaints received	146	60	3	209
Complaints closed				
Complaints upheld	36	4	0	40
Complaints partly upheld	20	8	1	29
Complaints not upheld	44	24	1	69
Total completed stage 1 complaints				138

*The balance of complaints outstanding is 84

Stage 2 Complaints	Property Services *	Neighbourhood Housing	Leasehold Services	Total
No of stage 2 complaints received	35	12	2	49
Complaints closed				
Complaints upheld	6	1	0	7
Complaints partly upheld	7	1	0	8
Complaints not upheld	13	8	0	21
Total completed stage 2 complaints				36

*The balance of complaints outstanding is 13



Lewes District Council

The following is an area that will be a focus of 2024/25 we are looking to change our internal processes focussing on

- closing complaints on a 'commitment of action' with a clear timeline and internal monitoring to ensure completion of this
- establishing the 'owner' of the complaint upon receipt of the complaint and placing ownership on that individual to directly resolve the issue.

Stage 1 Complaints	Complaints received	Complaints completed on time	%
No of stage 1 complaints including leasehold	209	81	39%
No of stage 1 complaints excluding leasehold	206	79	38%
Stage 2 Complaints	Complaints received	Complaints completed on time	%
No of stage 2 complaints including leasehold (0 complaints)	49	16	33%
No of stage 2 complaints excluding leasehold	47	16	34%

Satisfaction with complaint handling

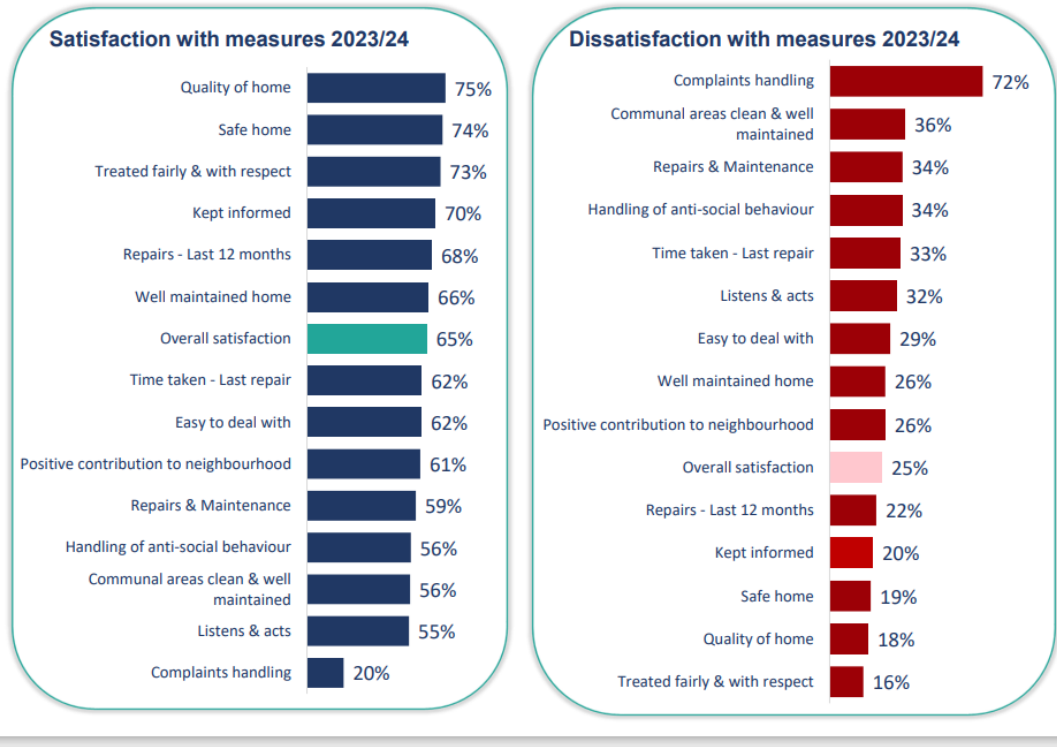
We continue to survey tenants in relation to satisfaction with complaint handling. Tenants who have raised a complaint with us will receive a telephone survey in the month following closure of their complaint. This is done by Acuity who undertake our customer feedback surveys. We also ask about complaint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

Table 1, is an extract from our perception survey. In terms of questions to our tenants about satisfaction the table shows that satisfaction with complaints handling is the lowest of all services at 20%. This compares for example with satisfaction with the quality of 'your home' being the highest.

The second part of the table highlights where tenants are most dissatisfied with our service provision and dissatisfaction with complaints handling is the highest measure of dissatisfaction at 72%.



Annual Satisfaction & Dissatisfaction



During 2023-24, our transactional surveys captured feedback from 55 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 identifies the key drivers to improve satisfaction and this will be a key area of improvement in 2024 /25 focussing on

- closing complaints on a 'commitment of action' with a clear timeline and internal monitoring to ensure completion of this, to improve our ability to close complaints 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.



2.3 Housing Ombudsman Determinations

There was one case in the year 2023/24 where maladministration was found which relates to a repair issue.

	Lewes
Upheld maladministration	1
Not upheld	1
Information only	1
Ongoing investigations	5

2.4 Service Improvements

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 together with our Tenant Scrutiny Panel 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.

In addition to we have identified a number of 'quick wins' during Q4 in 2023/24 and will work with Service Leads to discuss these recommendations with the outcomes 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