

CITY OF LONDON HOUSING DIVISION ANNUAL COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE & SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT



2023-24

Introduction

The City of London Corporation Housing Service is a compulsory member of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme. The Ombudsman provides an independent and impartial service which investigates complaints from tenants and leaseholders of social landlords in accordance with the rules set out in the Housing Ombudsman Scheme.

The Housing Ombudsman's expectation of social landlords in complaints handling has changed, with a new Complaints Handling Code, which is now statutory following the passing of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

The Housing Ombudsman monitoring of compliance with the code now includes a requirement for landlords to produce an Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report. Additionally, all landlords are required to conduct the annual self assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling code to understand their position against the expectation of the code ([link to self assessment](#)).

Summary from Peta Caine

Assistant Director for Housing Management

Our new Housing Strategy, which is currently going through our governance processes, demonstrates our commitment to improving our services, listening to residents and valuing feedback. We see the work that we are doing with Complaints as a key driver for harvesting feedback and using this to drive service delivery improvements.

We have identified the steps we need to take in 2024/25 as a result of the complaints we have received and the work we have done with them. These next steps are now a key element of our operational delivery plan.

As Senior Lead Person responsible for complaints handling, I see this area as a key part of my role moving forward as the new Assistant Director of Housing at the City of London Corporation.



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Stage 1	2023-24
Stage 1 complaints received	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 110 Tenant • 15 Leaseholder
Stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days or within the extended deadline agreed with the resident	77.6%
Stage 1 complaints upheld	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 64 Tenant • 10 Leaseholder
Stage 1 complaints not upheld	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 Tenant • 0 Leaseholder
Stage 1 complaints partially upheld	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 Tenant • 5 Leaseholder

Stage 2	2023-24
Stage 2 complaints received	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 29 Tenant • 2 Leaseholder
Stage 2 complaints responded to within 20 working days or within the extended deadline agreed with the resident	64.5%
Stage 2 complaints upheld	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19 Tenant • 2 Leaseholder
Stage 2 complaints not upheld	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Tenant • 0 Leaseholder
Stage 2 complaints partially upheld	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 Tenant • 0 Leaseholder
Total discretionary compensation paid	£9,221.61 - This figure includes some substantial amounts of compensation that were payable by contractors.

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Increases

The 2023/24 reporting year saw a 45% increase in Stage 1 complaints and a 55% Stage 2 complaints over the previous year.

Reasons for increase include:

- More frequent communication about how to make a complaint in the @home monthly newsletter
- National Make Things Right Campaign '[Social housing issue? Know how to complain](#)'
- National press coverage of damp and mould cases
- Poor contract management
- Poor contractor performance
- Delivery of repairs and maintenance has declined due to the aging housing stock and a lack of a planned maintenance programme

Top 10 reasons for complaints

- Disrepair (16 cases)
- Communication (16 cases)
- Leaks (15 cases)
- Damp and mould (12 cases)
- Customer service (11 cases)
- Water (9 cases)
- Staff conduct (9 cases)
- Contractors (9 cases)
- Major Works (6 cases)
- Heating (6 cases)

If a complaint is not accepted, the team provides an explanation to the customer setting out the reasons and what actions will be taken to resolve the issues raised. If an issue is not accepted as a complaint, it does not mean it is ignored, it is passed on to the relevant team.

At any stage of a complaint, a resident can escalate, each case is investigated by the Housing Ombudsman Service. The purpose of the investigation is to assess whether a landlord has responded appropriately to a given situation and to decide whether its actions were fair and reasonable – when taking all the circumstances of the case into account

Ombudsman	2023-24
Complaint Handling failure orders	0
Cases referred to the Ombudsman	2 - 1 of the 2 cases did not fall under the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman and was not investigated
Findings of maladministration	0
Service Failure Determination (Evidence of a minor failing, but action is still needed to put things right. Service failure is a form of maladministration)	1

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Changes implemented 2023-24

- Officers set up a Complaints Learning Panel to review outcomes of complaints from residents. The purpose of the Complaints Learning Panel is to identify themes, trends and potential service improvements (including amendment to policies and procedures) arising out from resident complaints. Any identified actions will be tracked by the responsible officers .
- In line with the Complaints Handling Code we raised resident awareness of how to make a complaint by promoting the service and policy changes, including updating webpages, ways to make a complaint, attending estate drop-ins and placing articles in @home residents' newsletters.
- The changing requirements of the Complaints Handling Code and improved awareness among officers has meant that complaints investigators are now clearer on the expectations regarding service failures which have caused distress and inconvenience to residents.
- Recruited a temporary Complaints Investigation Officer to support with backlog of complaints whilst short staffed
- 69 members of staff attended Customer Services training



Next steps 2024-25

- In compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code we now have a Member Responsible for Complaints. This role will be undertaken by the Chair of the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee (HMASC). They will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on the Housing Service complaint handling performance.
- The Assistant Director of Housing Management will act as a 'Senior Lead Person' responsible for complaints handling, assessing any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks or policies and procedures that require revision. For 24/25 the Complaints Learning Panel will be chaired by the Assistant Director.
- Housing Complaints Reports will be submitted to each HMASC committee from April 2024 outlining performance and key information on complaints.
- We will be procuring a new Repairs and Maintenance Service Provider with a rigorous tender process and improved contract management
- Recruitment of key roles, including a new Head of Repairs and Head of Major Works who are due to join in Autumn 2024
- Improvements in tracking and monitoring of complaints received
- Further training for staff on complaint handling

