



Complaints performance and service improvement report

For the financial year 2023/24

[Link to our complaints policy](#)

[Link to our Easy Read version](#)

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Introduction

This report is produced in compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code 2024 (the Code), as part of our duties under section 8 'self-assessment, reporting and compliance'. It is also representative of our commitment to look beyond the circumstances of an individual complaint and look at what wider service improvements can be made as a result of learning from complaints.

At Ability, we are committed to delivering excellent customer service and further committed to fostering a culture of accountability and transparency to ensure a positive complaint handling culture. Customer satisfaction is therefore key to how we measure the quality of our services. There will be times when customers feel that we have fallen short of the standards we set. We therefore welcome complaints about the quality of our services and will continue to use these in order to learn and improve.

Whilst the essence of an effective complaints management process has not changed, over the last year, there has been and continues to be, a greater emphasis on:

Learning

At Ability, we understand the importance of analysing and learning from good practice. We have implemented new ways of working internally to reflect upon our lessons learned, to drive continuous improvement throughout our service delivery.

Governance and Assurance

We are committed to the Board having ongoing oversight and keeping us accountable to delivering an effective complaints service.

The complaints handling code (CHC) advises that Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include:

- a. The annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements.
- b. A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the Landlord's complaint handling performance – this must also include a summary of the types of complaints the Landlord has refused to accept.
- c. Any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman.
- d. The service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints.
- e. Any annual report about the Landlord's performance from the Ombudsman.
- f. Any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the Landlord.

A detailed picture of our performance around complaints and compliments is outlined within this document.

Section 1: Complaints and Compliments Report

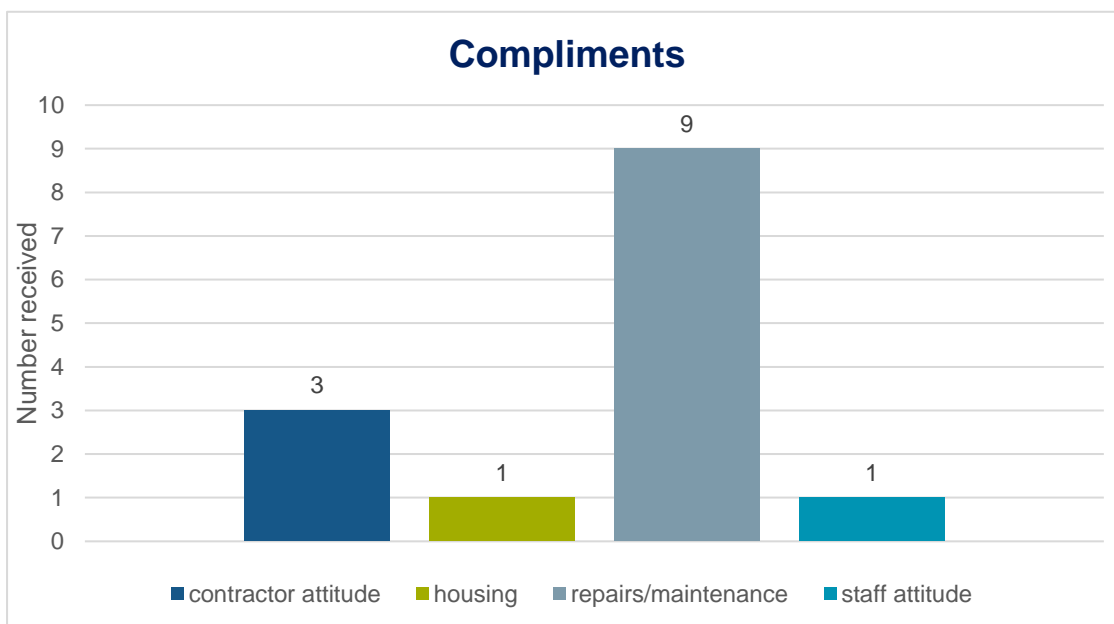
Compliments received in 2023/24:

The total number of compliments received for the year was **14**.

We identify this is an area we need to improve on in terms of increasing the awareness across the organisation of the importance of collecting compliments in a more formal manner and ensuring that staff members are logging compliments that have been received to them directly, through the correct formal processes.

The key themes from the compliments received, include happiness with timescales of repairs completion and happiness with housing and contact staff in their support and in their assistance with repairs.

The following (figure 1) shows the categories in which we received have compliments this year.



Complaints not accepted 2023/24:

Every complaint received this year was accepted.

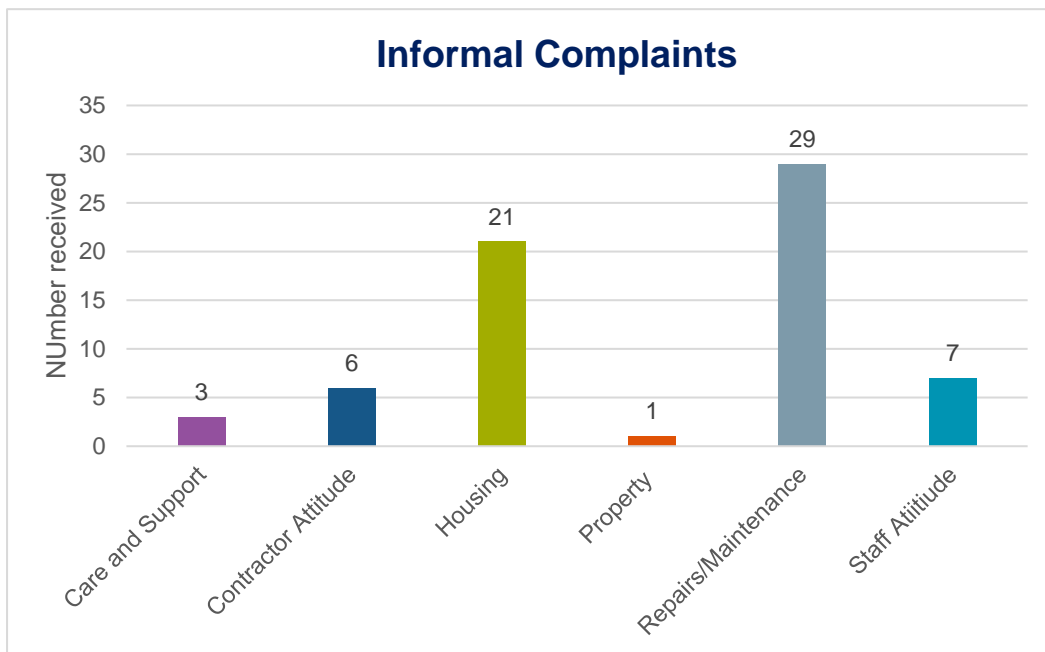
Informal Complaints 2023/24:

We received a total of **67** informal complaints in the year.

Some of the key themes identified within these, include unhappiness with behaviour of neighbours, dissatisfaction with contractor process of arranging appointments and unhappiness with repair delays.

These 67 informal complaints are inclusive of documented service requests and all of these we were resolved at the first point of contact.

The following (figure 2) shows the categories in which we received informal complaints.



Complaints by Stage 2023/24:

We received a total of **49** formal complaints in the year. The majority of our complaints, **89.76%**, were resolved at stage one.

The following (figure 3) shows the numbers of complaints broken down by stage:

Complaints by Stage	
Stage	Number Received
Stage One	44
Stage Two	5
Total	49

Complaints by Type 2023/24:

48.98% of our complaints were repairs related, with overdue repairs being the main driver. Housing management complaints was our second larger area of concern. This covers a broad range of reasons including issues such as payment disputes relating to rent and service charge increases.

Below (figure 4) provides the full breakdown of complaints received by type:

Complaints by Type	
	Count of Type
Care & Support	4
Behaviour	2
Missed Support	1
Service Failure	1
Housing	17
Behaviour	2
IHM	1
Missed Support	4
Payment Disputes	5
Service Charge	2
Service Failure	1
Tenancy Issue	2
Repairs/Maintenance	24
Missed Support	2
Repair Overdue	21
Service Failure	1
Staff Attitude	4
Behaviour	1
IHM	1
Missed Support	1
Tenancy Issue	1
Total	49

Complaints Resolution 2023/24:

Below (figure 5) breaks down the outcome of the complaint as to whether they were either partially upheld, upheld or not upheld.

Complaints Resolution	
Resolution	Count of Resolved
Not Upheld	14
Partially Upheld	17
Upheld	18

While we always try to see where we have got things wrong and put them right, several complaints were not upheld as we were unable to identify any service failures, and we had followed our policy and procedures

There is one ongoing complaint which we have been unable to fully resolve at this point in time, due to the customer being in long-term hospital admittance.

Complaints awarded compensation 2023/24:

Of the **35** complaints which were upheld or partially upheld we compensated **21** customers for the service failure they experienced.

A total amount of **£7,529.72** was awarded across the year.

Complaints escalated to the Ombudsman 2023/24:

We have had two complaints escalated to the Ombudsman, one of which was determined to have found no maladministration and the other currently still ongoing and yet to be determined by the Ombudsman.

Ombudsman Reviews	
Status	Determination
Resolved	No Maladministration Found - Was also re-reviewed October 2024 by Ombudsman as per tenant request, and decision upheld
Ongoing	Review still ongoing

Section 2: Service Improvements as a result of Learnings

Sources of Lessons Learned

Over the last year, we have strengthened our lessons learned process by implementing a 'Learning reflection form' which now enables the complaint handler to identify the following areas:

- The nature of the complaint and the learnings identified.
- The actions taken/being taken to resolve the complaint.
- The evidence to support the actions have/are being taken.
- Any changes that have been made organisationally or individually as a result of the learning.
- Identifying what could be done differently or improved upon.
- Identification of any training or support required.
- Identification of any actions or considerations that need to be taken/made in relation to any safeguarding or whistleblowing concerns relating to the complaint.

Significant areas of learning identified

Here are some of the key areas we identified for our areas of learning over the last year and what we have done to improve our service.

Detail of learnings identified	Evidence
<p><u>Regular advertising of our Repair Offer</u></p> <p>We have identified that we need to enhance our communication efforts to ensure all tenants fully understand the Repair Offer policy at the beginning of their tenancy and for the duration (i.e. regular communication and reaffirmation). This includes the circulation of varying resources, including easy-to-understand materials that outline tenant responsibilities regarding property maintenance and repairs (aligning with the new consumer standards).</p>	<p><u>What we did</u></p> <p>We have now provided our customers with a customer handbook which includes our repair offer policy. This is provided to all new customers when they commence a tenancy with Ability Housing Association. This is also published on our website, which can be found at: https://ability-housing.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Ability-Housing-Association-Repairs-Handbook-2024.pdf Reminders around our repair offer are also regularly printed within our Ability Newsletter and are similarly regularly provided by our housing colleagues when visiting customer.</p>
<p><u>Effective communication and monitoring</u></p> <p>It has been highlighted, the importance of timely and effective communication with contractors, the need for rigorous oversight and performance management of service providers, and the necessity of prompt</p>	<p><u>What we did</u></p> <p>We have identified through the review of lessons learned, general feedback, and the review of the consumer standards the importance of clear, concise and robust communication with our customers for</p>

<p>action on maintenance issues to prevent prolonged disruptions. It has further been identified, the value of accurate and timely information dissemination to tenants, the critical role of robust internal processes for managing and escalating complaints, and the importance of regular review and improvement of contractor management procedures. These 'lessons learned' will assist future practice developments to enhance customer service and operational efficiency.</p>	<p>matters relating to our repairs and maintenance services. This is recognised within the design and implementation of our working practices with our partnered contractors who deliver such services within customers homes.</p> <p>We have introduced tools to monitor maintenance activities which will allow us to provide clearer communication with our customers for matters relating to their home.</p>
<p><u>More timely resolution on repairs</u></p> <p>There is necessity for timely and effective resolution of maintenance issues, particularly those impacting living conditions (such as water penetration). It has also been highlighted the importance of thorough follow-up with contractors to ensure problems are fully resolved and the need for clear communication with tenants throughout the process.</p>	<p><u>What we did</u></p> <p>Repair processes formulated and implemented mean that such issues will be addressed in a much 'timelier' manner if they should arise.</p> <p>We have improved communication channels with our partnered contractors, meaning an immediate awareness known through daily contact, of matters where an enhanced response is required. This allows us to respond quicker.</p> <p>Our processes are regularly reviewed to ensure consistently improved service.</p>
<p><u>Prioritising and following up to resolve issues</u></p> <p>Prioritizing and effectively resolving issues, especially those affecting living conditions like damp and mould, and maintaining thorough documentation and follow-up for transparency.</p>	<p><u>What we did</u></p> <p>Through agreed processes and arrangements with our contractors, we closely monitor and manage works within customers homes. Within these processes, we recognise where enhanced management or follow-up is required. An example of this, is our damp and mould process which includes follow-up communications, contacts and assessments to ensure the success of our actions.</p>
<p><u>Ensuring a lettable standard is achieved</u></p> <p>It's been highlighted, the importance of ensuring that the Ability Housing Association lettable standard is achieved and ensured at every void completion stage, and that property-based issues are not present at the time of tenancy (i.e.</p>	<p><u>What we did</u></p> <p>We have implemented a new, more enhanced 'Void Process' for Ability Housing Association (including enhanced / descriptive void standard information, to support customers, colleagues, and contractors).</p>

<p>ensuring tenancies commence in the best possible position / removal of issues and associated dissatisfaction at early stages / endeavouring to ensure an engaged customer in the first instance as appose to the opposite). Clearly communicating responsibilities and expectations to tenants, ensuring reliable and effective use of Ability Housing Association contractors, and valuing tenant feedback to drive continuous improvement.</p>	<p>Our process now commences at the point of which the outgoing customer notifies us of them leaving and includes significant action within this period. This enhanced level of oversight and management continues throughout the process when the property is void and ensures that the property reaches the prescribed standard required. This same level of diligence is reflected within our allocations process, meaning the incoming customer is appropriately suited to the property. Upon commencing the tenancy, the customer is equipped with information relating to their home and our repairs and maintenance offering.</p>
<p><u>Managing expectations more effectively</u></p> <p>There is an identified importance of clear and timely communication with residents regarding service promises and policy changes to manage expectations effectively.</p>	<p><u>What we did</u></p> <p>We have established a more customer-focused environment through the introduction of a 'Resident Engagement Lead' and the integration of Tenancy Satisfaction Measures, ensuring that resident feedback directly informs our service improvements. Additionally, the adoption of new Consumer Standards mandates proactive communication and the transparent sharing of information about our services, roles, and responsibilities. The consumer standards will serve as the core principles in everything that we do. These measures are designed to enhance transparency and resident trust.</p>

Our focus for 2024/25

Learnings

Whilst we have taken significant leaps in reporting, recording and reflecting on our learnings and using these to develop areas where service improvements are needed, we are looking to strengthen this even further in the coming year.

We are now increasing the reviewing of learnings further by the introduction of quarterly 'Lessons Learned' meetings, which will be led by our Resident Engagement Lead due to pilot in February 2025. These meetings will include the staff members who have had complaints assigned to them within the year and included our Heads of services, whereby we will be able to review lessons learned, service improvements and identify any themes or systemic issues.

Policy Updates

As detailed in our Self-Assessment, we currently have a 'Managing Customer Behaviour' Policy in draft which requires amendments before submission to Board for approval. We look forward to having this policy in place this coming year.

Engagement

As this is our first year of producing a Complaints performance and Service Improvement report, we are keen to look at ways we can engage our customer in producing the 2024/25 year report to make it more accessible and meaningful for our residents.

This year, Ability has appointed a Resident Engagement Lead position within the organisation who will be taking the lead in organising project groups surrounding complaints and we are hopeful to be able to have more customer input in the formation of next years report.

Statement from the Board

“The Board has received, reviewed, and discussed the first complaints performance and service improvement report. We acknowledge that Ability has taken steps over the year to improve their approach to handling complaints. Additional efforts have been made through the implementation of new methods for overseeing and reviewing lessons learned from complaints.

As part of their commitment to continuous service improvement, Ability has identified areas where further improvement is needed. The Board will continue to provide constructive challenge where necessary to monitor their progress.

The Board is pleased to note that in the case that received a determination from the Ombudsman this year, no maladministration was found.

In line with clause 5.14 of their self-assessment, Ability is currently making amendments to their ‘Managing Customer Behaviour’ policy before submitting it to the Board for approval. We are otherwise satisfied that Ability has demonstrated compliance with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaints Handling Code, as indicated in their self-assessment.

Valuing customer feedback is one of our key priorities. We will continue to seek assurances that customers are being listened to when they raise concerns. The Board will hold Ability accountable for their complaints handling and performance, ensuring that their learnings are embedded and integrated into their policies and service delivery.”