

## Compliments and Complaints

### Performance update: January – March 2024 - Quarter Four and Year End

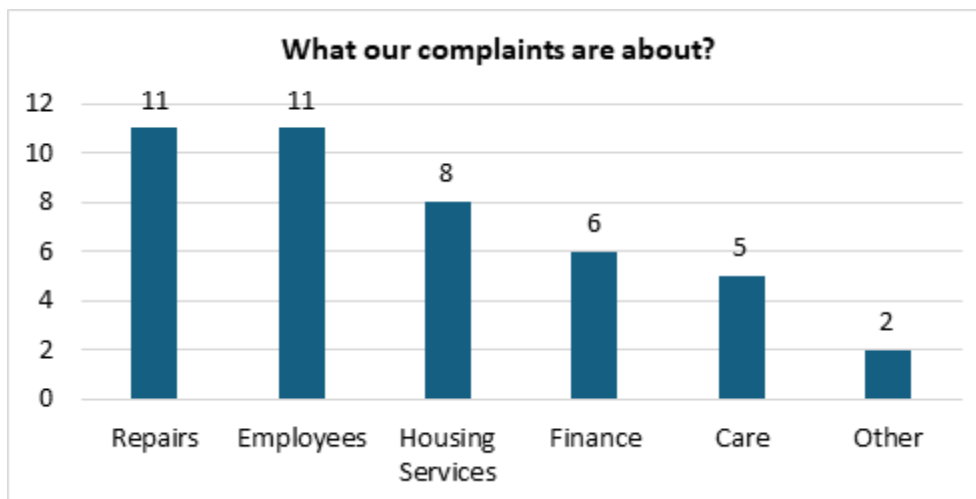
We received **43** formal complaints in quarter four: Retirement Living (21), Extra Care (21) and Property Services (1); and a total of **148** for the 23/24 year.

This is compared to **33** formal complaints in quarter four in the previous financial year; and a total of **126** for the year 22/23; 26 percent of all formal stage one complaints received have been escalated to stage two by the complainant.

#### Our performance

Our performance this quarter against the response targets which are set within the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code are as follows:

- Acknowledgement of stage one formal complaints within five working days
  - **We achieved 100 percent**
- Response to stage one formal complaints within 10 working days
  - **We achieved 100 percent**
- Response to stage two formal complaints within 20 working days
  - **We achieved 100 percent**



The types of complaints which are logged as 'Other' include: policy and failure to communicate.

#### Overall, our performance for the 23/24 year was:

Acknowledgement of stage one formal complaints within five working days

- **We achieved 99 percent (two outside target)**

Response to stage one formal complaints within 10 working days

- **We achieved 93 percent (11 outside target)**

Response to stage two formal complaints within 20 working days

- **We achieved 97 percent (one outside target of the 34 responded to\*)**

\* Four stage two escalations of formal complaints received in the year 23/24 (Retirement Living, three and Extra Care, one) were during April and in progress.

### **Learning from formal complaints**

Complaints are important to us, because if we get something wrong there may be changes, we need to make to improve our services. We call these 'lessons learnt.'

Learning from complaints is mainly related to local learning at schemes. A common theme no matter what the subject of the complaint is a failure to follow policy and procedure, such as complaints, anti-social behaviour, lettings or medication, which we are working to improve.

Some examples of local learning are:

- Team learning regarding raising internal safeguarding reports.
- Follow up on completion of repair works were undertaken with an investigation into the issues.
- Action plan developed to improve resident satisfaction at the scheme.
- Employee learning regarding complaint policy.
- Employee learning following concerns about explanation of finance issues.
- Introduction of alternative contact methods for prospective purchasers of new development properties e.g. Microsoft Teams or WhatsApp.
- Employee learning on the miscommunication of domestic service charges for the scheme and how it is calculated on the service charge.
- Employee learning on importance of letters being clear and relating to the issue and being clear about any allegations.

We continue to review how we learn from our formal complaints and make sure changes are actioned and recorded so we can see how services are improved. We are implementing changes through our internal complaints' groups, and a resident led complaints group. By way of example, as reported in the Housing Ombudsman Update below, we are looking to develop a new Housing 21 unacceptable behaviour policy to be adopted across the business.

### **Informal complaints**

During year 23/24, our local managers worked hard to try to resolve as many complaints informally as possible. This will change during the current year due to the change in the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, which has removed the ability to use an informal complaints category. Over the year we dealt with 691 informal complaints with 86 percent being responded to within 10 working days. The main areas of complaint are repairs (21 percent), care (21 percent), employees (15 percent) and housing issues (14

percent). However, we will still look to try to resolve as many concerns locally as service request if a resident does not wish to raise a formal complaint in the first instance, or it is the first time the issue has been reported e.g. a repair report, or nuisance issue.

Further details about our complaints policy and procedure can be found via our website at: <https://www.housing21.org.uk/resident-information/get-involved-engagement-and-feedback/feedback-and-complaints/complaints/>

## **Compliments**

We always welcome and value compliments about our employees and services. We have received a total of 285 compliments this quarter and a total of 1170 for the year. Overall, for the year, 74 percent were about employees/teams, 25 percent about services, and two percent about our contractors.

## **Housing Ombudsman Update**

The Housing Ombudsman looks at complaints from residents from different types of housing providers, if residents remain unhappy with the response from their landlord. Its work is funded by annual landlord subscription fees. Investigating these complaints is a free, independent and impartial service for residents about their housing related complaints.

We can receive initial enquiries, some of which may progress to a case where the Housing Ombudsman will review a formal complaint after it has completed the two-stage process.

A total of 13 enquiries (two in Extra Care and 11 in Retirement Living) and eight cases (five in Retirement Living and three in Extra Care) have been received.

Case requests can take many months for the Housing Ombudsman to process and so determinations can often relate to a previous financial year. Our target is zero at fault cases.

We received six determinations during 23/24. Regretfully, three of the determinations had aspects which were found at fault. Two of these were found at fault for service failure - one Extra Care (handling of anti-social behaviour and complaint handling) and one Retirement Living (anti-social behaviour handling, in particular the issue of an ASB warning letter and associated complaint handling) – and one (Retirement Living) was found as maladministration for failures in investigating a resident's concerns, complaint handling and record keeping.

The actions and recommendations included: training for employees in relevant procedures; review how we investigate complaints about employee conduct and reports of ASB, and to consider implementing a separate resident unreasonable behaviour policy. The latter is currently being developed alongside our Anti-social Behaviour Policy review. Residents will be involved through our resident engagement groups.

The Housing Ombudsman Service can be contacted at any point during the complaints process for advice and guidance using the following contact details:

**Please note these have recently been updated.**

- Contact us: [Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
- Telephone: 0300 111 3000 (9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday except Thursdays when the service closes at 3.30pm)
- Email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
- Address: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET