

Title: Complaints Handling Performance

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1. Introduction

1.1. The service wishes to update the Leeds Housing Board on activity related to the management of complaints, specifically:

- a) Complaints performance for Q1 and Q2 2023/24
- b) An overview of complaints by type and issue
- c) Complaints' satisfaction monitoring findings
- d) Our wider complaints management activity

2. Performance update for Q1 and Q2

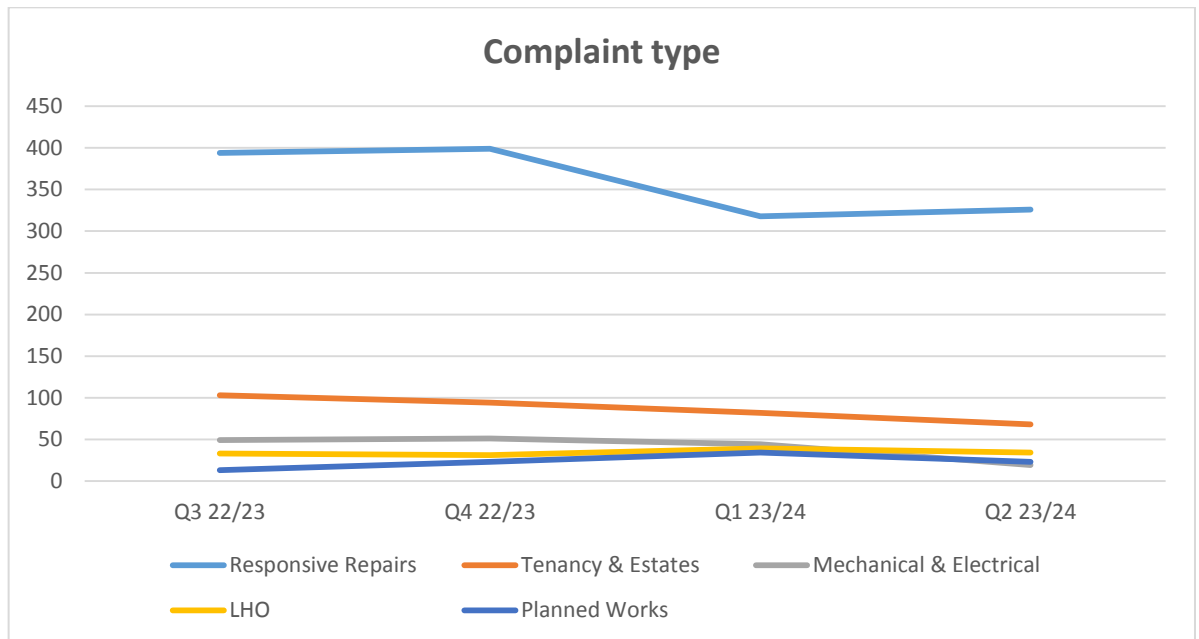
A summary of performance is below:

Indicator	Apr – Jun 2023	Jul – Sep 2023	Total to date
Stage 1 complaints received	590	530	1,120
<i>Previous year comparison</i>	553	535	1,088
Stage 1 responded in 10 working days	80%	86%	83%
<i>Previous year comparison</i>	59%	61%	60%

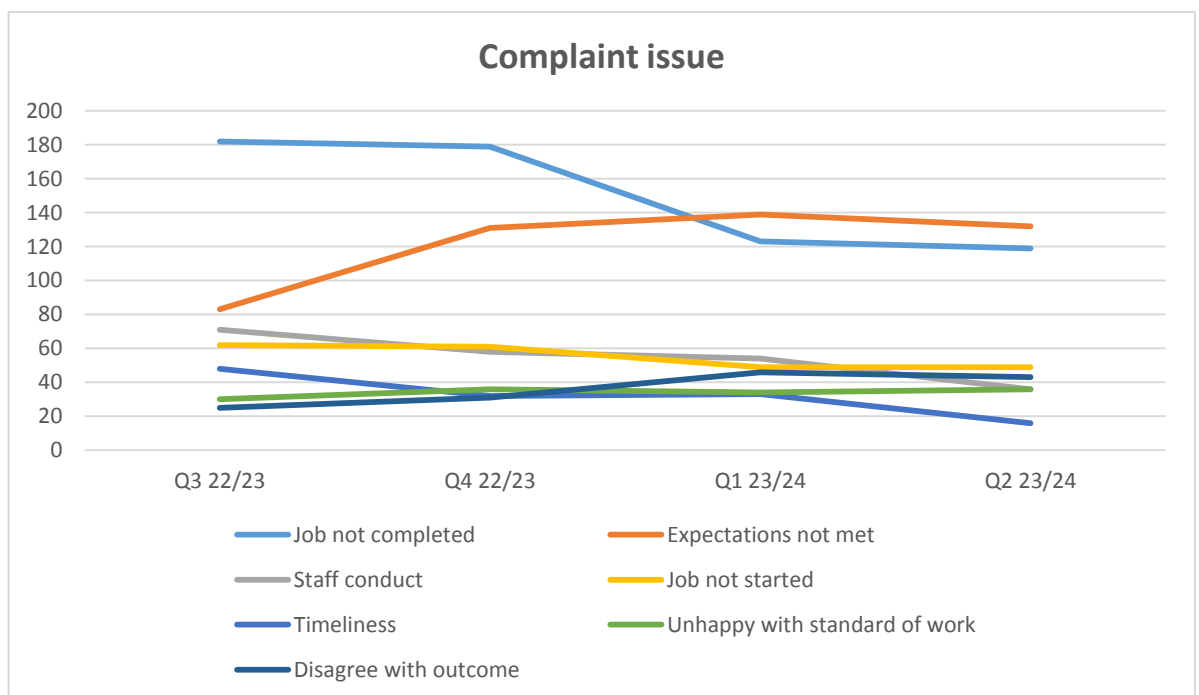
Indicator	Apr – Jun 2023	Jul – Sep 2023	Total to date
Stage 2 complaints received	139	143	282
<i>Previous year comparison</i>	114	118	232
Stage 2 responded in 20 working days	80%	76%	78%
<i>Previous year comparison</i>	61%	67%	65%

- 2.1. From April 2023, we are reporting to the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code timescales – 10 days at stage 1 and 20 days at stage 2. There remains an increased focus on timescales by the HOS, who are currently also consulting councils on a joint code with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
- 2.2. Performance for the first two quarters has increased from year end 2022/23 and is significantly improved from the same period last year. Please see the update on wider management activity below.
- 2.3. For September 2023, our latest full performance month available, we responded to 90% of stage 1 complaints within timescale (provisionally 87% for October) and 87% of stage 2 complaints in timescale (provisionally 100% for October). This is an indication that performance is improving and that the measures put in place to improve are having an impact.

2.4. Complaints by type - The largest complaints by type relate to our day-to-day repairs service, reflecting the volume of activity undertaken. We undertake approximately 200,000 repairs a year, with less than 1% of repairs resulting in a stage one complaint being received. The chart below presents complaints by volume over the last four quarters for the five highest service areas.



2.5. For each complaint received, we record the key issue in terms of what has led to the failure or complaint being received.



2.6 All managers have access to a complaints dashboard which gives an overview of complaints by stage, area, type, issue, and sub issue. Teams can filter this to produce meaningful information for their specific area and highlight any trends or concerns. The dashboard also records the date a complaint was received for managers to monitor complaints responses in timescales.

2.7 A summary of BITMO performance for the same period is below:

Indicator	Apr – Jun 2023	Jul – Sep 2023	Total to date
Stage 1 complaints received	10	10	20
<i>Previous year comparison</i>	4	1	5
Stage 1 responded in 10 working days	90%	90%	90%
<i>Previous year comparison</i>	25%	100%	40%
Indicator	Apr – Jun 2023	Jul – Sep 2023	Total to date
Stage 2 complaints received	3	2	5
<i>Previous year comparison</i>	2	1	3
Stage 2 responded in 20 working days	100%	100%	100%
<i>Previous year comparison</i>	100%	0%	67%

2.8 In terms of Ombudsman cases, during Q1 and Q2 2023/24 we received:

	HOS assessment	HOS Formal*	LGSCO assessment	LGSCO formal
Q1	7	6	2	5
<i>Q1 last year</i>	8	14	0	5
Q2	7	9	3	6
<i>Q2 last year</i>	7	11	1	1

*Formal cases are those which the Ombudsman will investigate, whereas assessment requests are where the Ombudsman asks us for information, and these may progress to formal cases. The HOS are more likely to progress straight to formal investigation than the LGSCO.

2.6 Outcomes received so far during 2023/24 are*:

- 10 cases were closed after the initial enquiry with no further action required or were outside of jurisdiction
- 4 cases were not upheld
- 15 cases were upheld (with a decision letter and remedies outlined)
- 11 cases the HOS found a service failure (with a decision letter and remedies outlined)

* These cases date back to January 2022 onwards – length of time to receive an outcome is dependent on how long it takes the HOS/LGSCO to

investigate and formally close a case when recommendations have been completed.

Outcome decision	
Closed after initial enquiry – no further action	6
Closed after initial enquiry – out of jurisdiction	4
HOS (Housing Ombudsman Service) service failure	11
Not upheld – no further action	2
Not upheld – no maladministration	2
Upheld – maladministration, no injustice	3
Upheld – maladministration and injustice	10
Report issued – upheld, maladministration and injustice	2

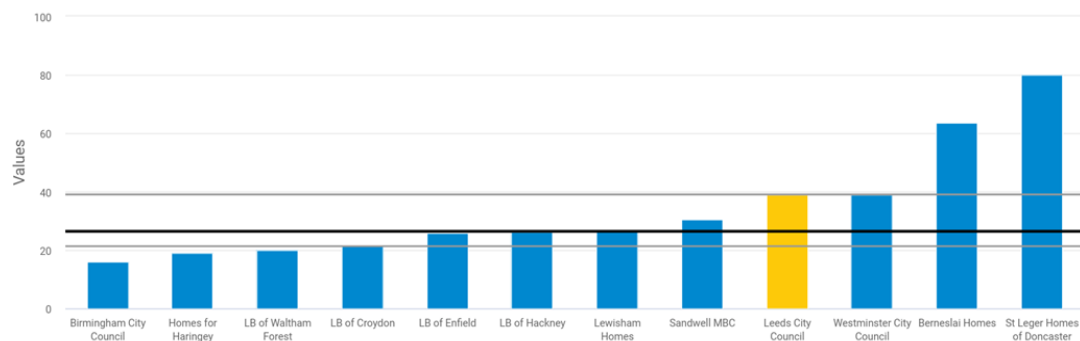
3. Satisfaction Monitoring

- 3.1. The Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code requires all social landlords to create a ‘*positive complaint handling culture through continuous learning and improvement*’. To help do this, we undertake monthly satisfaction surveys to try and better understand the customer experience of the complaints process. In the second week of the month, a text message is sent with a survey link to those customers who have had a complaint closed in the previous month. There were 271 responses informing the findings for 2022/23. For Q1 2023/24 (Apr-Jun) we received 42 responses. Data is currently being processed for Q2.
- 3.2. The survey is likely to achieve lower results by the nature of the topic and how it is difficult to separate the complaint outcome (which may or may not be upheld) with the overall quality of the process. The survey design is therefore focused on the quality of the process in terms of how well we communicate, listen, and respond to the complaint – not about the complaint outcome. The survey is also completed by a relatively small numbers of residents, and we know residents are more likely to complete if they remain unhappy. We therefore use the results as a guide to identify learning opportunities.
- 3.3. **Summary from Q1 2023/24**
- 3.4. When comparing satisfaction for Q1 to year end 2022/23, the key findings from our own internal satisfaction monitoring are that:
- **Overall satisfaction** with how we handle complaints has **increased** from 20% to 26%
 - Satisfaction with the **speed with which we manage complaints** has **risen** from 28% to 33%
 - Satisfaction with how **well we have kept a resident informed** about the progress of their complaint has **risen** from 21% to 38%
 - Satisfaction with **how well we listened and understood** a person's complaint has **risen** from 21% to 34%

- Satisfaction with how well we took a **resident's individual circumstances into account** has **risen** from 18% to 29%
- Satisfaction with **how much we cared about putting the complaint right** has **risen** from 17% to 24%
- 88% of respondents said they would **feel confident making a complaint again**, which is an **increase** of 21% from last year's 67%.
- The survey includes a final question, "Is there anything you would like to tell us about how we managed your complaint?" In Q1 **33%** of respondents had something **positive to say**, which is up from 8% last year.

3.5. The service is currently submitting data to contribute to the national Housemark mid-year 2023/24 data collection exercise what will give us more information about how our complaint management performance compares to others. However, when looking at the available data from participating landlords at the end of 2022/23, we compare similarly, or slightly above a number of London Boroughs and large stock retaining councils.

Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints - LCRA



3.6. Information from recent satisfaction monitoring has helped us to:

- Provide practical advice and reminders that we share in a monthly learning from complaints feature in Housing Leeds Matters, the internal staff bulletin.
- Identify those cases where satisfaction is poor or if there is an issue outstanding so we can highlight to the relevant team and proactively intervene if there is value or benefit for the customer in doing so.
- Make changes to the standard response templates to help Investigating Officers to write clearer, customer friendly responses that:
 - acknowledge the customers concerns and the impact that this has had on them,
 - apologise for any service failures,
 - put things right for the customer with agreed timescales and actions,
 - acknowledge any wider learning for the service and how the customer can feed into service improvements more generally.

4. Analysis of high-rise related complaints

- 4.1. Related to the Building Safety Act and to seek a more systematic approach to learning from complaints, we have undertaken an analysis of all complaints from high rise residents between April 2022 and August 2023. The analysis aims to identify any patterns or trends related to building safety that may not be visible to the service when responding to individual complaints and to help highlight any building safety concerns.
- 4.2. This initial exercise was useful, with key officers involved in the response to the Building Safety Act drilling down into different types of high rises, customers, and complaint types. In this first analysis, no specific building safety issues were identified, with any trends being in proportion to the scale of work or prevalence of block(s). For example, higher volumes of complaints in certain wards with the highest number of blocks or blocks with additional complaints where we have undertaken major improvement work compared to those with no works taking place. We are considering further how we best carry out this analysis on a regular basis going forward, in line with the commitments in our high rise resident engagement strategy and can report a summary of findings when in a more regular pattern of analysis to the board in future.

5. Wider complaints management activity

- 5.1. To strengthen our approach to complaints management we have undertaken the following actions:
 - a) In the most recent appraisal window, all staff have been set a complaints related objective.
 - b) We continue to deliver monthly 'Investigating Officer' training/refresher sessions for investigating officers from across the service. This reminds investigating officers about good practice and requirements of the complaints process, especially the importance of contacting the customer to understand their complaint so we can effectively respond. We will continue to offer training and support for those staff and teams who need this.
 - c) Over the last 18 months, the service has undertaken several Quality Assurance checks on a sample of complaints responses. These checks compare our responses to the requirements of the Complaint Handling Code and have been used to identify service improvements, training needs and content for regular reminders about good complaints handling in the staff bulletin. The most recent Quality Assurance exercise undertaken in September identified we were achieving high adherence to the standards of the code, with only some minor learning points that we picked up with individual teams.
 - d) Each December, we complete the Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment and [publish a summary on the website](#). To strengthen our self-assessment further, the service would welcome the input of the tenant members of the Board to help be our critical friends as we undertake our self-assessment in late November/early December.

- e) BITMO will undertake their own self-assessment against the code (in line with good practice), however, Housing Leeds remain responsible for BITMO's management of complaints as whole. We will ensure reporting and compliance against the code from BITMO as part of our future assurance framework with them.
- f) The Housing Ombudsman continue to share 'Spotlight' reports and cases of severe maladministration from social landlords nationally that are reviewed by the service to identify lessons learnt and integrate this within existing service improvement plans. In May the HOS published a Spotlight report on '[Knowledge and Information Management](#)'. This includes twenty-one recommendations for landlords to improve how the sector records, manages and uses data so we have the knowledge we need to develop services and ensure high levels of customer care. This is currently being reviewed by the service. In addition the service has promoted to tenants the opportunity to take part in consultation for a future spotlight report on [communications, relationships and vulnerability](#).
- g) The Tenant Scrutiny Board has reviewed a number of published damp and mould related cases from the HOS to inform their recent review into the advice and support we give to residents to help inform their recommendations for improvement.
- h) We continue to collect and monitor performance against the Tenant Satisfaction Measures. The percentage of tenants who have made a complaint in the last 12 months at 22/23 year end was 32% which reduced to 28% taking both Q1 and Q2 into account. In terms of the linked question, and if so 'how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your landlord's approach to complaint handling.' For 2022/23 our satisfaction was 24%, with cumulative Q1 and Q2 satisfaction increasing slightly to 27%.
- i) The service is participating in a mid-year benchmarking exercise via Housemark for us to understand how our complaints performance compares with similar landlords and will be able to provide more information to the board in due course. Earlier benchmarking with a smaller group of landlords suggests Housing Leeds performance is similar to other large urban councils, and somewhat above that of a number of London Boroughs.
- j) We continue to engage with other landlords through the Housing Quality Network (HQN) to discuss and share best practice.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1. The Leeds Housing Board is asked to note and comment on the data included in this report.
- 6.2. For the Board to consider a request for tenant board members to support the forthcoming HOS self-assessment.

