

Title: Complaints Handling Performance

Authors: Roisin Donnelly/Ian Montgomery - with a supporting statement from Cllr Lennox, Member Responsible for Complaints

Meeting Date: 21 Nov 2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The service wishes to update the Board on activity related to the management of complaints, specifically:
- a) Recent complaints performance for Q1 and Q2 2024/25 including an analysis of complaints by type and issue
 - b) An overview of Ombudsman activity and our learning from complaints including a recently introduced Ombudsman 'Learning Log'
 - c) An update on our complaints' satisfaction monitoring
 - d) Our wider complaints management activity
 - e) A statement from the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)

2. Performance update

A summary of the services performance broken down into most recent four quarters is below:

Indicator	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2*
Stage 1 complaints received	543	696	631	558
<i>Previous year comparison</i>	655	668	590	532
Stage 1 responded in code (10 working days or with an extension)	88.2%	87.5%	90%	94%*
<i>Previous year comparison</i>	76.0%	73.2%	82.7%	93%

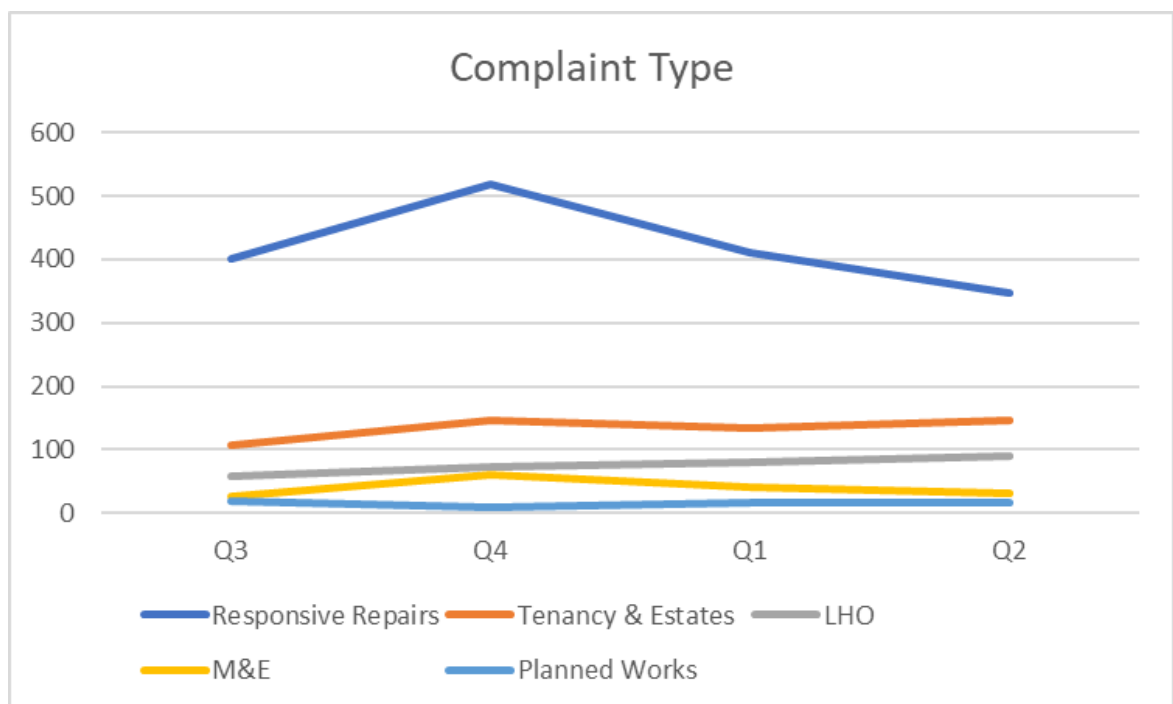
Indicator	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2*
Stage 2 complaints received	134	173	168	138
<i>Previous year comparison</i>	145	136	139	143
Stage 2 responded in code (20 working days or with an extension)	83.6%	90.8%	93%	99%*
<i>Previous year comparison</i>	67.6%	63.4%	88.5%	88.8%

* 24/25 Q2 performance currently only includes July and August 2024. This will be updated when September performance is available.

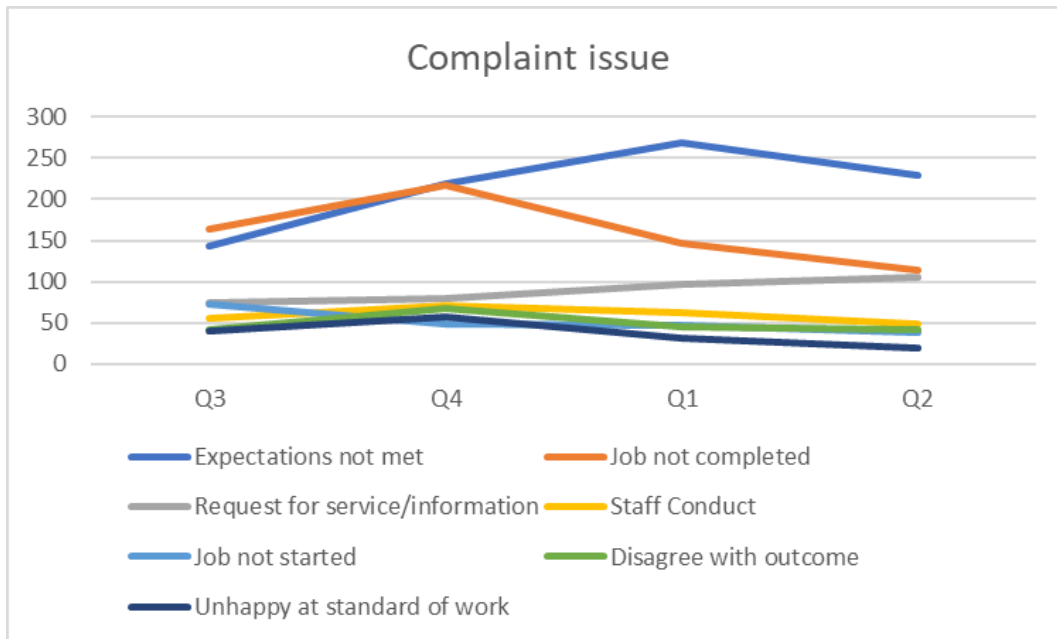
- 2.1. Tenant Satisfaction Measures (or TSMs) performance related to complaints will be provided to the board separately.
- 2.2. Performance in the last 12 months was positive, improving (or maintaining) from each quarter to the next. 89.4% of stage 1 complaints and 91.1% of stage 2 complaints received a response in timescale or were

compliant with the complaint handling code, an improvement from 80.5% (stage 1) and 77.1% (stage 2) in the preceding 12 months.

- 2.3. For August 2024, our latest full performance month, we are currently responding to 93.3% of stage 1 complaints within code requirements and 100% of stage 2 complaints.
- 2.4. The most common complaints by type remains those which relate to our day-to-day repairs service, reflecting the volume and nature of the activity undertaken, having completed over 204,000 repairs during 2023/34. Based on this volume, less than 1% of repairs result 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 – Responsive repairs, tenancy and estate management, Leeds Housing Options, mechanical and electrical and planned works.
- 2.5. The volume of complaints received in quarter 2 this year is similar to Q2 in 23/24; a little higher at stage 1 and a little lower at stage 2. Volumes received in the last 12 months show that complaint volumes were greater during the colder months in Q4 as repair related complaints increased.



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



- 2.8 To assist managers in identifying trends and to monitor individual service performance, managers have access to a 'complaints dashboard' which gives an overview of complaints by stage, area, type, issue, and sub-issue. They can filter this to produce meaningful information for their service area and highlight any trends and discuss opportunities for learning and improvement with their teams. The dashboard also records the date a complaint was received to help us monitor complaints responses in timescales.
- 2.9 In relation to making service improvements to tackle 'expectations not met', we have recently updated our [repairs web pages](#) to make it clearer how residents access the repairs service, our service standards and our responsibilities, and what to do if something doesn't go right. Residents can now also book non-emergency repairs through their Tenant Portal account. Whilst this may not cover all the issues within this complaint type, we hope this will give additional information to residents at the point in time when they start their customer journey and will have a positive impact.
- 2.10 In response to complaints that include residents feedback about the conduct our workers, and the communication around access to complete repairs, we will be undertaking a large-scale resident consultation throughout November. The consultation will capture insight and feedback that will allow us to make customer led improvements to these areas of the service.
- 2.11 Other examples of learning from complaints include the updating of the customer FAQ's related to the bungalows linked to the Extra Care Scheme in Middleton, to make the eligibility criteria clearer for potential applicants.
- 2.12 BITMO complaints are included in the overall performance figures at the head of this section. Across Q1 and Q2 all BITMO complaints received a response within Complaint Handling Code timescales.

2.13 Ombudsman cases, during Q1 and Q2 2024/25 we've received:

	HOS assessment	HOS Formal*	LGO assessment	LGO formal
Q3	9	10	0	1
<i>Q3 last year</i>	5	8	1	2
Q4	13	16	5	2
<i>Q4 last year</i>	4	10	3	3
Q1	20	22	3	6
<i>Q1 last year</i>	7	6	2	5
Q2	18	21	1	1
<i>Q2 last year</i>	7	10	3	6

*Formal cases are those which the Housing Ombudsman will investigate, whereas assessment requests are where the Housing Ombudsman asks us for information, and these may or may not progress to formal cases. The HOS are more likely to progress straight to formal investigation than the LGO.

2.12 Outcomes received during 2024/25 so far are:

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

In Q1 and Q2 the outcomes from Housing Ombudsman cases were:

- 20 cases where fault was identified (8 Maladministration & Service Failure, 10 Maladministration only and 2 service failure only).
- 8 cases were investigated found no fault.
- 3 additional cases were closed without full investigation and no further action required.

In the same period, the outcomes from Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman cases were:

- 3 cases identified fault/injustice.
- 2 cases were closed outside of jurisdiction.

2.14 On the 16th October the Housing Ombudsman published a [learning from Severe Maladministration report](#). This included severe maladministration cases from over 100 landlords, published by them ahead of Awaab's Law to help highlight and prevent future failings. Whilst Housing Leeds are not included in the main body of the report, due to the large number of damp and mould related cases reviewed by the Ombudsman two Leeds cases are included and listed within the supporting Annex.

- 2.15 Both these cases had an aspect related to damp and mould, with subsequent case reviews being completed by the service which identified number of learning points. Both cases pre-date the work within the service on improvement to our damp and mould management including the creation of a dedicated damp and mould team for responding to damp and mould reports, improved training for all customer facing staff, contractors and partners, and improvements to our resident engagement on damp and mould, improving the availability and quality of advice and support for residents.
- 2.16 Since the last update to the board, we have implemented a 'Housing Ombudsman Learning Log'. We are now using this to better monitor the outcomes, actions, and learning from Ombudsman cases. This helps strengthen our compliance with the requirements of the Complaint Handling Code and other requirements linked to Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Reports. It also allows us to better report outcomes to the management team, the board and seeks to put learning outcomes in one place so we can report back more proactively our learning to residents.
- 2.17 Since April this year there have been 5 policy related learning outcomes (e.g. updating our fencing policy to ensure takes into account customer disabilities or vulnerabilities when making decisions related to fencing requests), 2 service improvement related actions (e.g. to consider sharing copies of ASB action plans with victims to outline the steps we are taking) and 3 training related actions (e.g. identifying a training need in relation to a specific type of customer circumstances and the application of a 'direct let'). These and other actions are now being tracked to ensure completion.
- 2.18 In August the Housing Ombudsman released our Landlord Performance Report (see appendix 1). Based on the Housing Ombudsman's overall rating they view Leeds City Council as overall performing well when compared to similar landlords by size and type. Our maladministration and severe-maladministration levels being lower than other local authorities and those landlords with more than 59,000 units. In line with national trends, the total amount of compensation paid during 2023/24 was significantly higher than the previous year, however, with improved compliance against the Complaint Handling Code and improvements to complaint handling we hope to see this amount reduce in future years. The Housing Ombudsman has also recently published a sector wide [Annual Complaints Review](#) outlining national complaints management trends.

3. Satisfaction Monitoring

- 3.1. We continue to 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 who have had a complaint closed in the previous month. There were 271 responses informing the findings for 2022/23, 204 for 2023/24 and for the first quarter this year we have received 41 responses, which if this continues equates to 163 a year (the lowest since inception).

- 3.2. As the survey so far this year has been completed by a relatively small number of respondents there is a risk that the responses are unreliable, though it does appear that overall satisfaction has fallen from last year. We need to consider in more detail what is influencing the fall in response rates and if this reflects that more residents are having a more positive or negative experience. We have shared our approach to satisfaction monitoring with the Tenant Scrutiny Board as part of their review into how we learn from complaints and we hope to incorporate their feedback and any proposals for new approaches when they publish their report at the end of the year.
- 3.3. Information from satisfaction monitoring will continue to identify and provide practical advice and reminders for sharing with staff in our monthly learning from complaints feature in Housing Leeds Matters, the internal staff bulletin. It also helps identify those cases where satisfaction is poorest or if there is an issue outstanding so we can highlight to the relevant team and proactively intervene if value to the customer in doing so.



4. Wider complaints management activity

4.1. To strengthen our approach to complaints management:

- a) Continue to deliver monthly 'Investigating Officer' training/refresher sessions for investigating officers. This reminds investigating officers about good practice and requirements of the Complaint Handling Code, especially the importance of contacting the customer to fully understand their complaint so we can effectively respond.
- b) Promoted to residents and ward members the opportunity to take part in the 'call to evidence' for a future Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Report called '[Repairing Trust](#)'. The report aims to highlight some of the positive changes landlords have made to 'rise to the maintenance challenge and prepare for the introduction of Awaab's Law, which will set statutory repair timescales and record-keeping requirements. When published, the report will also include recommendations that will be used by Housing Leeds to inform our service improvement activity.
- c) We have volunteered to take part in some research led by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) linked to the national [Make Things Right campaign](#). This campaign sought to raise awareness for tenants in how to raise issues and make complaints if they have problems with their home or landlord. MCHLG are wishing to speak to landlords to hear their experiences of complaints management and to explore what could landlords with their work.
- d) The Tenant Scrutiny Board are now nearing the end of their current review into complaints, specifically, how we can ensure all complaints are responded to within compliance of the code, how we learn from complaints and how we share the learning from complaints back to customers. The board are likely to present to the service a range of recommendations. Their most recent meeting having looked at examples

from other landlords on how they share learning with residents that we may wish to adopt in Leeds.

- e) We will seek to include a more detailed benchmarking information in the annual complaints and performance improvement report that will be presented to the board after year end, however, mid-year benchmarking tell us that in comparison with other local authorities and ALMOs our performance is relatively strong, with a fairly wide range of performance being experienced across the sector.

Year 2024		Month September		Peer Group All LAs and ALMOs		KPI Multiple selections		
September 2024		Trend (last 12 months)	Previous Month	September	Quartile	Quartile 3	Median	Quartile 1
Customer Experience								
All LAs and ALMOs								
Formal Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints received per 1,000 properties			-	4.00	3	2.05	4.61	5.98
Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints resolved within timescale (%)			-	94.67	2	63.67	80.95	100.00

- f) The service is currently recruiting to the two tenant board member vacancies, undertaking 'taster' sessions for those that have expressed an interest. The taster session includes sharing information about complaints and our complaints performance as an example of an issue overseen by the board to help develop a strong learning from complaints culture.
- g) The service continues to receive compliments on its complaint handling for example, a recent compliment received in the Repairs Intervention Team, stated "I wanted to express my appreciation for the outstanding customer service provided by Lianne Vickers during my case. Her way of handling the situation with empathy and professionalism made a significant difference to the customer experience".
- h) Following review of repairs and maintenance related complaints earlier this year, changes have been made to improve the handling of property related complaints with a focus on strengthening consistency of approach, quality of resident engagement, and aftercare. The service are currently implementing the second phase of these changes by bringing in the complaint handling function from Leeds Building Services. The final phase of these changes will happen in the new year when one team, aligned to the Intervention Team, will take on the function of managing all property related complaints, including planned improvements and mechanical and electrical.

5. Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC)

- 5.1. The Code requires that a 'Member Responsible for Complaints' (or MRC) is appointed. The member is responsible for supporting a positive complaint handling culture and ensuring that insight on complaint handling and performance is shared with the 'governing body'.

5.2. Following additional advice from Legal Services the formal aspects of the MRC role will now be undertaken by Councillor Lennox, with support and working closely with Councillor Bowden. To meet the expectations of the [MRC role](#) this and future reports to the board will include a statement from the MRC about the report content.

5.3. Statement from the Member Responsible for Complaints:

It's positive to note that performance in terms of complaints responded to within timescales is improving consistently over time and thank the service for managing this more closely. Whilst we have focussed on ensuring a timely response in line with the Complaint Handling Code, it would be useful in future to also share with the Board the escalation rates from Stage 1 to Stage 2 so that we can use this as a measure of the quality of responses. Both factors are important.

I look forward to receiving the Tenant Scrutiny Board's recommendations as agree with their focus of trying to improve how we learn from complaints and crucially, how we share this back with customers to build trust in the service. I feel there is scope to do more on this and would like the service to consider including more detail about how we report outcomes to customers in future reports to this board.

Councillor Jess Lennox – Member Responsible for Complaints, Chair of the Leeds Housing Board and Executive Member for Housing.

6. Discussion Points

- 6.1. We have improved performance in terms of responses in timescales – but it's equally important for residents to receive quality responses. What future assurance could we provide to the Board to ensure high quality complaints responses?
- 6.2. Housemark have concluded that the volume of tenants saying they have 'complained in the last 12 months' in our tenant perception (TSM's) data, is greater than the volume of complaints landlords actually receive, or are entering the formal complaints process – why do we think this is the case?
- 6.3. Is there other information related to complaints the board would wish to see in future complaints reporting?
- 6.4. The Tenant Scrutiny Board will shortly be completing their review into complaints, how would the board like to be updated on the work of the Tenant Scrutiny Board and their complaints recommendations?

7. Recommendations

- 6.5. The Board are asked to note and comment on any information included in this report.
- 6.6. The Board note the clarification related to the MRC role and consider the statement on this latest period by the MRC.