



Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2023-24

This report provides an overview of our complaints performance, lessons learnt and priorities going forwards

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report presents complaints performance trends for 2023/24, and a comparison of performance going forwards will be reported in this annual report, where applicable across stage 1 and stage 2 of Westminster City Council's (WCC) corporate complaint's procedure.

2. Background

- 2.1. WCC have been handling WCH complaints (as well as all housing management functions) since 2019 when the City Councils ALMO, City West Homes was brought back in house. Since 2019 WCC have been reporting WCH complaints with their own stock figures. Over the past year, we have been working with them and their IT department to set up new reporting so WCH can report and handle their complaints separately.
- 2.2. It has been challenging to receive WCH data disaggregated from WCC data during 2023 and 2024. It has been possible to now separate our data from WCC statistics as WCC have made system changes to the complaints data. Despite WCH properties being referenced with a unique identifier, the complaints system has historically utilised a different referencing methodology, making segregation impossible.
- 2.3. By the end of this year, we will receive regular update reports providing details of:
 - Year to date figures of completed/outstanding complaints
 - Theme, classification/reason for complaint
 - No. of complaints responded to on time (withing 10 working days)
 - No. upheld/ not upheld complaints
 - Reason for escalation to Stage 2
 - Total compensation paid to customers to date
- 2.4. These figures will be reported to residents on an annual basis.

3. Complaints procedure

- 3.1. As WCH Complaints are handled by Westminster City Council (WCC), we adopt their two stage complaints procedure which is as follows:
- 3.2. Stage 1 - Complaints are addressed by the local service delivery manager (10 working day target turnaround).
- 3.3. Stage 2 - A review by a senior officer delegated by the Chief Executive can be requested (20 working day target turnaround).

3.4. Housing Ombudsman - If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the stage 2 reply they can take their concerns to the Housing Ombudsman.

4. The Management of Complaints

4.1. As of April 2024, WCC now use a system called CRM which enables businesses to store and manage all customers' data. WCH Housing Management team already have access to CRM and requests for this to be extended to the wider WCH team is in progress. CRM helps organise, track, and manage customer issues with precision. Each complaint is assigned a unique ticket that will be allocated to the team responsible for the issue and it is monitored from start to finish. We expect this new system will have a positive impact of complaints handling going forwards.

4.2. As mentioned, there are some IT changes taking place so that WCC can provide WCH more details on complaint trends and compensation paid. WCH review and sign off any complaint that reaches stage 2 and respond to any new Housing Ombudsman Complaints directly.

5. Overview

5.1. 2023-24 had been a challenging financial year for WCH complaints with volumes increasing over the year. We have been working hard with WCC to reduce the problems which lead to residents complaining and have made good progress in this, especially on repairs (which we have requested sperate reporting on). This has been countered by an increased awareness from our tenants of their routes to redress. We welcome this but it has inevitably led to an increased demand for staff time, which we have responded to by increasing the size of our central logging team and reviewing our complaints handling processes. WCH have appointed a new surveyor to provide more support and escalate repairs complaint. As a result, turnaround times have improved even as volumes increase. This work is continuing into this financial year.

6. Performance headline findings

Type	2023/24
Stage 1 Complaints	57
Stage 2 Complaints	15

6.1. A total of 72 complaints were received across 2023/24.

6.2. As reported to the RSH earlier this year, in our TSM data return, we received 57 stage 1 complaints in 2023-24, 19 of which were responded to on time (33%). We also reported 15 stage 2 complaints, 4 of which were responded to on time (26%).

6.3. Complaint learning

6.3.1. Over half of all complaints relate to repairs, or delays in repairs being completed.

6.3.2. This level of performance falls below the standard we expect for our customers and mirrors WCC overall year end performance for dealing with complaints.

6.3.3. From April of this year, following significant work with the complaints team we are now able to receive WCH data separately.

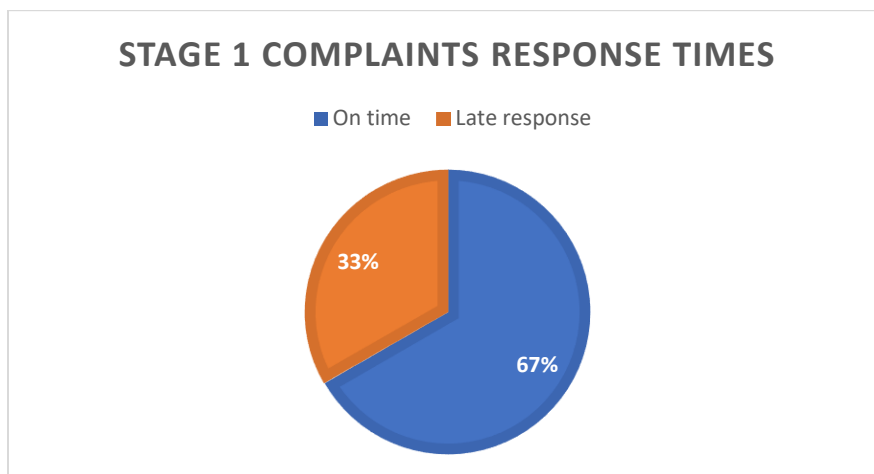
6.3.4. Following a review during the summer of the year end data we have also instigated a number of operational changes to improve performance and oversight. Key improvements include:

- The complaints procedure has been reviewed and amended for WCH.
- All complaint correspondence now makes it clear that WCC act as the managing agent.
- All complaints now make it clear that WCH is the landlord.
- All complaints are now reviewed by WCH.
- Stage 2 complaints are now reviewed and signed by the CEO of WCH rather than WCC.
- Learning reviews of cases are embedded as part of the review process and a close working relationship between the complaints and WCH teams established.
- Repairs data regarding delays is a work in progress to improve officer visibility of data.
- Live data reporting of complaint handling is now available by PowerBI reporting.

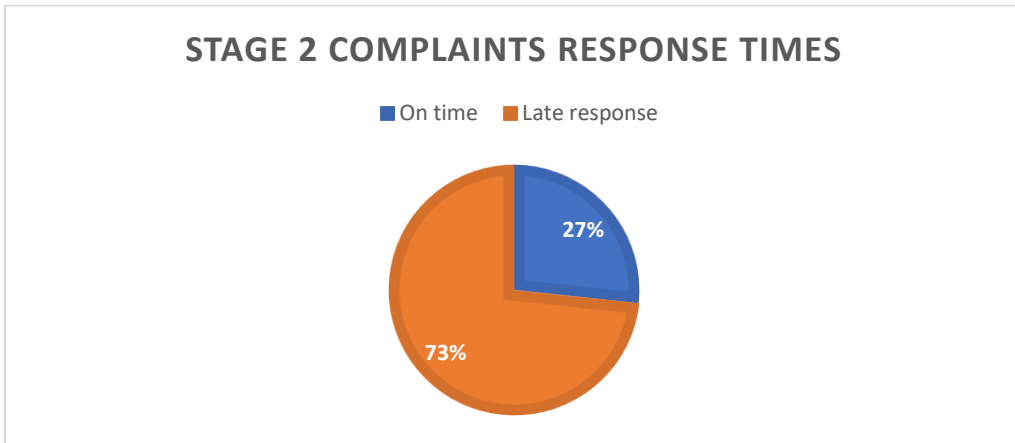
6.4. The impact of the above changes has led to 75% of complaints now being handled within the timescale.

7. 2023-24 Complaint Performance

7.1. We received 57 stage 1 complaints in 2023-24, and response times have been included below.



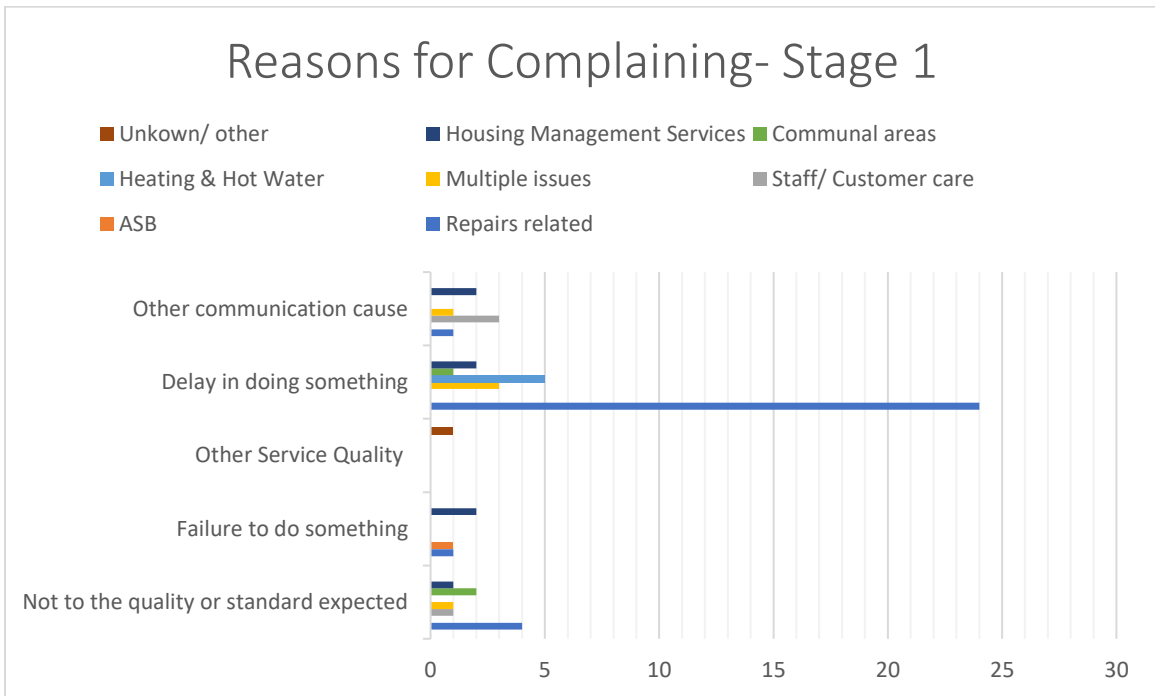
7.2. We also reported 15 stage 2 complaints, 4 of which were responded to on time.



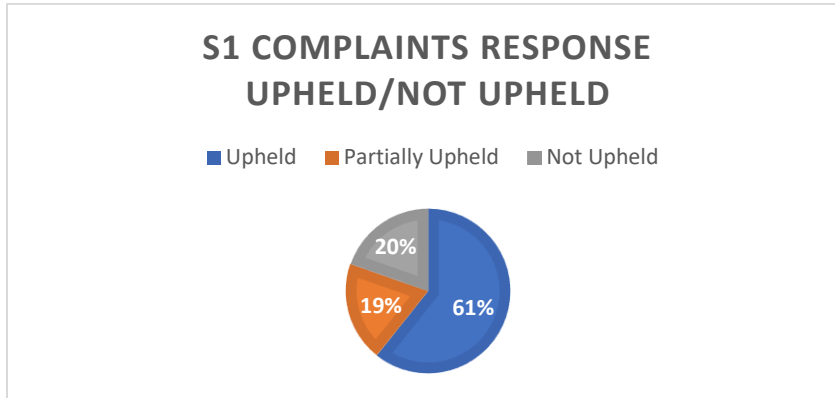
7.3. A lot of time was wasted on WCC complaints approaching the incorrect teams for complaint responses. Now that we are using CRM and WCH are notified when a complaint is made, this will improve our response turnaround times. More regular reporting will allow us to monitor the progress of these cases more closely.

8. Complaint Themes

8.1. This month, WCC have provided us with some information in relation to themes of our 2023-24 complaints.



8.2. The most common reason for complaints in 2023/24 was repairs related (52%) and housing management services (12%), with Heating and Hot water (8%), customer care and multiple issues (7%) being common. Remaining complaints relate to communal areas (5%) and ASB (1%). Unknown/Other (1%) refers to where the reason for complaint hasn't been recorded.



8.3. There have been 46 stage 1 complaints either upheld or partially upheld across the year of 2023-24. This represents an 80% service failure rate against those S1 complaints closed.

8.4. Partially upheld complaints refer to complaints where several points of complaint were made and a least one of these was upheld. While these are included in calculating the service failure rate, these aren't equal in failure to upheld complaints. For example, 5 points could have been raised in a complaint and only 1 upheld, with the others not upheld.

9. Housing Ombudsman

9.1. WCH check that WCC complete regular self-assessments against the Housing Ombudsman Code of Practice, and this was last completed in June 2023 and published on the website Housing services | Westminster City Council., this is attached to this report as Appendix A.

9.2. Their complaints service improvements are designed to strengthen compliance with the Code of Practice as well as ultimately improving the service we provide to residents.

9.3. WCH now receive HO escalations directly and will report on percentage compliance with the remedies ordered by the Ombudsman, with total compensation offered to residents on HO complaints.

10. Lessons Learnt and priorities for 2024-25

10.1. We acknowledge that our services and Housing Management from Westminster City Council need some improvement, and residents' feedback provides valuable information into how we can improve. Use of our own data is being used to inform the areas we need

to improve. The following table shows where we have identified areas what we have done or plan to do.

10.2. We have identified opportunities for learning in the following categories, the numbers represent the number of associated lessons learnt: Complaint Handling, Systems and Processes and Service Delivery.

Lesson Learnt	Action(s) being taken
Complaint Handling	
We weren't responding to complaints within our target response times.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WCC have increased the complaints logging team and WCH now have oversight of outstanding complaints, alerted when due date is approaching.
The complaints process wasn't always followed consistently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WCH now have their own complaints template, and this is to be reviewed frequently. WCC now have frequent staff training on to handle complaints in line with their policy and procedures.
Systems and processes	
It wasn't being made clear to residents that WCC Manage WCH properties and complaints.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All complaint correspondence now makes it clear that WCC act as the managing agent. All complaints now make it clear that WCH is the landlord. WCH complaints are now allocated to WCH Housing Management team on CRM.
WCH did not have enough oversight of complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All complaints are now reviewed by WCH. Stage 2 complaints are now reviewed and signed by the CEO of WCH rather than WCC. Learning reviews of cases are embedded as part of the review process and a close working relationship between the complaints and WCH teams established. Live data reporting of complaint handling is now available by PowerBI reporting/ CRM.
Service Delivery	
Residents are unsatisfied with length of time to resolve repair issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repairs data regarding delays is a work in progress to improve officer visibility of data. WCH appointed a surveyor to pick up and escalate repairs related complaints.