

To be first for housing

2023/24 Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report

June 2024

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 At Your Homes Newcastle (YHN), we value feedback from all of our customers, as it helps us identify areas where our services can be improved.

Annually, we conduct a self-assessment of our complaints handling against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint (HOS) Complaint Handling Code (CHC) to ensure compliance, and to drive continuous improvement. You can view our [self-assessment here](#).

To make a complaint or share concerns, our customers can contact us via email, phone, in person, or through our social media channels. For more information about making a complaint to YHN [please visit our website](#).

This report has been published to provide an overview of the YHN Group's complaints performance and service improvements we have made.

2. Annual self-assessment

- 2.1 We completed our self-assessment in March against the Complaint Handling Code as outlined by the Housing Ombudsman. The new Code has been developed following consultation with more than 600 individuals and landlords nationally. The new code is aligned with the new Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and follows the Social Housing (Regulation) Act in an effort to provide a single set of standards for complaints procedures. The Code aims to achieve earlier resolution of complaints directly by the landlord.

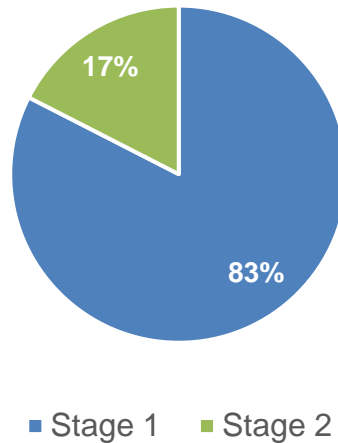
Our assessment ensures that our complaint handling policy and process remains fully aligned with the provisions set out in the Code.

3. Complaints performance

- 3.1 YHN (including Repairs and Construction Services) received 555 stage 1 and 2 complaints during the 2023/24 financial year (April 2023 – March 2024).

458 complaints were raised at Stage 1, with 97 of these being escalated to Stage 2 following continued dissatisfaction being expressed by our customers. The below chart shows this breakdown in complaint stages.

2023-2024 complaints received at each stage

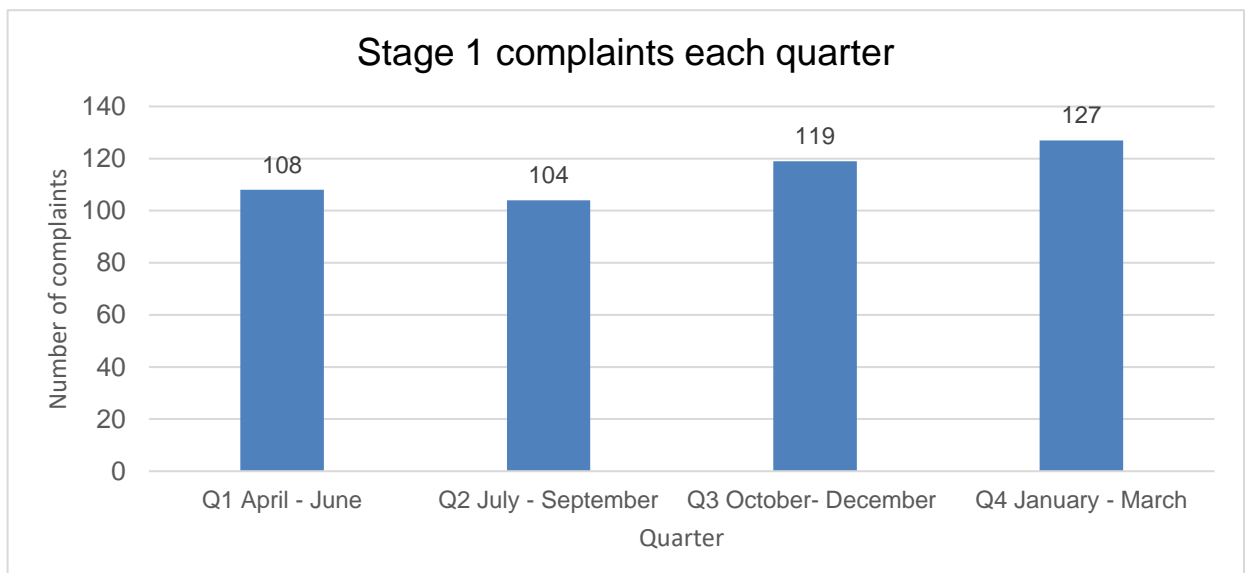


The number of complaints received by YHN has increased compared to the year 2022/23. In 2022/23 we received 367 stage 1 complaints and 52 stage 2 complaints. This represents a 32.5% increase in complaints received this year.

There are a number of reasons why complaints have increased this year including:

- The increasing importance of hearing your views and acting on your concerns. Both the Housing Ombudsman and the Regulator of Social Housing have made this a priority for landlords.
- The government's 'Make Things Right' campaign was launched last year, empowering social housing tenants to report issues and make complaints as part of efforts to improve social housing conditions.
- Media coverage of landlords across the country where their services have failed tenants nationally.
- Increased communication between YHN and customers raising awareness of how to complain about our services.
- Increased awareness raising amongst YHN staff about complaints and the Housing Ombudsman Service.

3.2 The below graph shows when our customers have complained to us across the financial year 2023/24.



To monitor our complaints handling performance, and to meet the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Satisfaction Measure standard, we have recorded how our complaint handling performance performs against the Complaint Handling Code.

Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales	
Stage 1 complaints responded to in target time	61.31%
Stage 2 complaints responded to in target time	58.43%

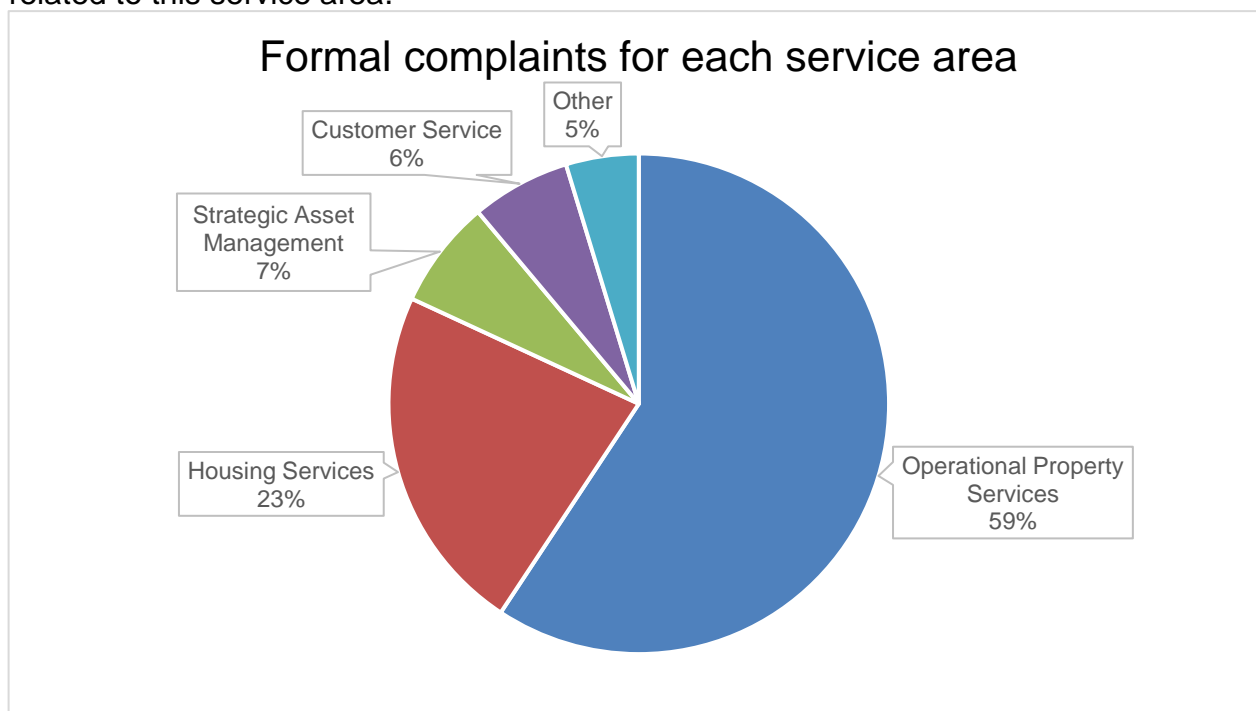
In 2023/24, the average number of working days to investigate a complaint was 11.28 days. This is higher than the target set by the Complaint Handling Code of 10 days.

The table below shows how our timescales have varied across the year. In two quarters of the year, we were averaging close to, or meeting the 10-day target, however timescales have not been met consistently throughout the year.

Average number of working days to investigate a complaint	
Q1 April - June	12.7 days
Q2 July - September	10.8 days
Q3 October- December	10 days
Q4 January - March	11.6 days

3.3 YHN services receiving complaints

Operational Property Services (including our Repairs Service) was the most complained about YHN service in 2023/24, with 59% of complaints being made about this service. Housing Services is the second most complained about service, with 22% of complaints related to this service area.



3.4 Why customers complain to YHN

When our customers make a complaint to YHN we record the reasons why, so we can address the issue and make sure we prevent issues from reoccurring. During 2023/24, we have been making changes to how we record the reasons for our customers complaints, to provide more robust insight.

Typically, YHN has recorded complaints into 3 main categories to define the reason for why customers complain. These three categories were;

- Delay in providing service
- Poor quality of service
- Complaint about a member of staff

Throughout this year, we have added 5 more categories to record complaints to further understand the root cause of complaints.

Following this review, the categories for complaints are now as follows:

- **Poor communication**
This covers instances of miscommunication, incorrect information to customers, not listening to customers and therefore not responding appropriately.
- **Failure(s) to communicate**
Opportunities missed (not sending letters or texts when we could/should have) or service failures, not setting realistic expectations for responses, not being proactive in communication, not responding to communications from customers or not meeting agreed timescales.
- **Safety**
Issues related to health and safety or compliance failures, customers not feeling safe in their own home or environment around their home, instances of poor maintenance to their home, or opportunities missed to maintain home or communal areas. Safety also covers instances of anti-social behaviour failures, neighbour disputes failures etc.
- **Complaint about a member of staff**
Any complaint about a member of staff.
- **Delay in providing service**
This could include complaints where we have not met our agreed timescales, or the expected timescales we communicated (missed, cancelled or late appointments), not provided the right tradesperson, or not resolved the issue first time.
- **Poor quality of service**
Service or work which has not been completed first time to our standard or the customer's satisfaction. Repeat issues or issues not resolved first time which are because of poor standard of work.
- **Policy or procedure**
When customers dispute policy or the lack of policy to cover their circumstance. Customer feels let down or dissatisfied about the policy or how the policy was enforced. Or when we are failing to enforce a policy or adhere to a standard set within a policy.
- **Accessibility**
These could be complaints about call wait times, not being able to speak to the right person at the right time, not being able to access online or digital methods, or the expectation these are to be used to access services.

The table below shows the different reasons for customers complaining to YHN in 2023/24.

Formal complaints – theme	2023/24
Delay in providing service	175
Poor quality of service	143
Complaint about a member of staff	101
Safety	13
Policy or procedure	8
Poor communication	12
Failure to communicate	4
Accessibility	0
Other	2
Total	458

Using these new themes to categorise complaints has provided YHN with data that we can now use to further investigate and explore opportunities for learning to improve services for customers.

4 Complaint outcomes and exclusions

- 4.1 During 2023/24, 72% of stage 1 complaints were upheld, and 28% were not upheld by YHN.

12 complaints were excluded from our complaint handling process. The below table sets out why these complaints were excluded following our [Complaints Procedure](#).

Reason	Number of exclusions
The issue which gave rise to the complaint happened outside of our timescales for investigating a complaint.	2
The issues raised have already been considered under the complaints procedure.	2
The complaint did not fall within the remit of our complaints procedure (for example, where another policy or procedure has an appeals mechanism in place, such as allocations).	8

5 Housing Ombudsman Service Determinations

- 5.1 The Housing Ombudsman Service investigates complaints and resolves disputes involving the tenants and leaseholders of social landlords (housing associations and local authorities).

This year, YHN received 10 determinations from the Housing Ombudsman Service. In four of these cases, the Housing Ombudsman Service determined that we had handled

the complaint correctly and attempted to put things right for the customer. In the other 6 cases, they found 'maladministration' or 'service failure', meaning that YHN had not handled that situation correctly.

Across the remaining 6 cases the Housing Ombudsman Service made the following determinations:

- Service failure in our handling of reported structural issues
- Service failure in our handling of a customer's concerns about restricted light from trees
- Service failure in relation to our response to reports of ground heave at a customer's property
- Maladministration in our handling of complaints (5 cases)
- Maladministration in our handling of repair works
- Maladministration in relation to the handling of a customer's reports of increased unit usage for district heating
- Maladministration in relation to damage to a customer's carpets, bed, and laptop
- Severe maladministration in our handling of reports of damp and mould at a customer's property

YHN takes all Housing Ombudsman Service decisions very seriously. We are committed to ensuring that the failings identified do not happen again. It is important that all our customers have access to an independent body that will investigate their complaints and we will always cooperate fully with the Housing Ombudsman Service to make sure we're doing right by our customers.

This year, we have addressed a number of our policies and processes to ensure that none of our other customers experience these issues, and we will continue to work with our customers and staff to put right the things that have gone wrong.

6 Service improvements

- 6.1 We regularly report on our complaints performance and how we are learning from complaints to the YHN Board. YHN uses the learning from complaints in different ways across the organisation to improve our customers' experience. From the feedback we receive through complaints and other sources of feedback, we have been producing monthly insight reports which are shared with managers across YHN.

In May 2023, following a customer recruitment exercise, YHN launched a new customer Complaints Panel. The Panel has been set up to offer customers the opportunity to look at and understand YHN's complaints handling processes and practices, review historic complaint handling, and provide customer insight into how complaints are managed in YHN. We also use different tools, such as customer journey mapping and our reflective learning practice, to gain a deeper understanding into why things have gone wrong. For more information about how you can get involved with YHN and help us to make further service improvements, [please visit our website](#).

Below are some examples of how improvements have been made this year to address the main reasons that customers make complaints to YHN.

Delay in providing service

- Recruited new Customer Service Assistants
- Reviewed how we use email communications in our contact centre to ensure the best use of staff time

- Feeding back to service areas across the organisation where customers are waiting for a response, to avoid customers having to contact us multiple times
- Reviewing our timescales across the organisation so customers know when they will receive response from us

Poor quality of service

- Addressing our culture to avoid the passing around of a customer query
- Trialled a number of different approaches to booking follow on works and carrying out pre-work inspections
- Carried out good practice visits to see how other landlords manage their services and to gain learning
- Developed several DIY customer videos for the website
- Made improvements to the call scripting software to aid better diagnosis of repairs issues and improve the quality of follow on works for customers

Complaint about a member of staff

- Developed in-depth repairs call training for our contact centre
- Rolling out further customer service training to all repair's operatives
- Relocated teams to improve relationships and information flow
- Delivering complaint handling training to all relevant staff across the organisation

For more information about our complaints performance, you can visit the [Housing Ombudsman's website](#) for any annual landlord's performance reports.

To contact us to make a complaint, please [visit our website](#).