



ASH SHAHADA
HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

Ash-Shahada Housing Association
Annual Complaints Performance and
Service **Improvement Report 2023-24**

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Overview

Ash-Shahada has been diligently addressing the issues that lead to resident complaints, making significant progress, especially in the area of repairs.

In response, we've introduced new pillars in our strategies which include the Customer Service Strategy and the Digital Transformation Strategy. We have also expanded our team, provided regular training to enhance knowledge and reviewed our complaints handling processes. As a result, our engagement has improved. This effort will continue into the next financial year. There are increased demands on social landlords in an ongoing challenging economic and regulatory environment while the financial resilience continues to be difficult. Resourcing is something that we will continue to review and act upon from a strategic perspective.

Many of the learning points identified through these cases have already been addressed via our complaints and repairs improvement workstreams. However, we continue to seek new areas of learning and collaborate with the Ombudsman to address them.

Report Purpose

This report offers a thorough overview of the performance concerning complaints and Ombudsman determinations managed within Housing and Safer Communities, specifically those under the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman ("landlord complaints"). This is defined as:

- Rent and service charges
- Property condition (including repairs)
- Tenant satisfaction
- Estate management

This report provides further details on the complaints received, outcomes, engagement with the Ombudsman etc.

Top Level Summary

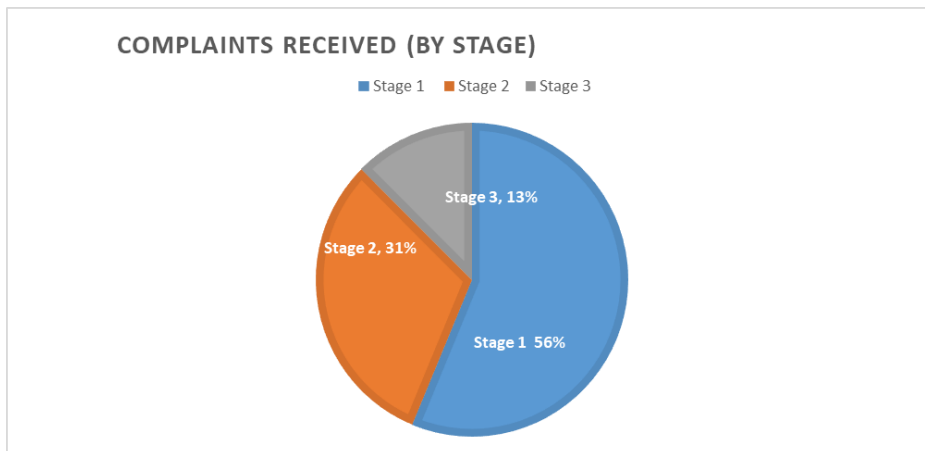
Type	2023/24
Stage 1 Complaints	9
Stage 2 Complaints	5
Stage 3 Complaints	2

- A total of 9 complaints were received across 2023/24, this equates to 0.23% across all our properties, of which 3.46% relate to general needs and hostel accommodation and 0.05% to our supported exempt accommodation.
- The Central Repairs team received a total of 4 complaints. In comparison, cluster representatives received 3 complaints related to ASB and succession.
- The proportion of Stage 1 complaints responded to within target times was 88%. Compliance with target times for Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints was 100%.

Improvements in compliance with target timescales are likely due to the expansion of our central repairs logging team, the introduction of a new complaints procedure, and the implementation of the new cluster representative system to reconcile complaints ahead of the launch of our new complaints system.

- Across both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints, holding responses had a large positive impact on meeting target times. In some instances, compliance remained consistent, suggesting that we responded promptly without needing to issue holding responses.
- A full list of 6 key lessons learnt from complaints can be found on pages 7 to 8. Some of the actions we have taken in response to these lessons include:
 - Introduction of two new strategies – Customer Service Strategy and Digital Transformation Strategy
 - Centralized the complaints team and assign designated cluster representatives in Repairs & Investment to ensure timely responses to complaints.
 - Implemented a new internal complaints procedure to ensure clarity and consistency in handling landlord complaints.
 - Enhancing the focus of cluster reps on record keeping to ensure a better understanding of the importance of notes for both complaints handling and general use.
 - Dedicated maintenance and repairs officer to increase accountability.

Complaints



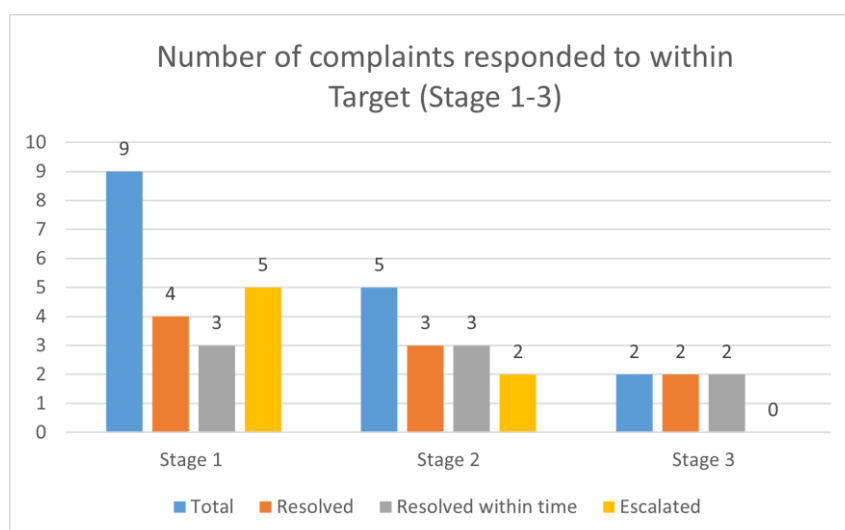
The complaints received are categorized as follows:

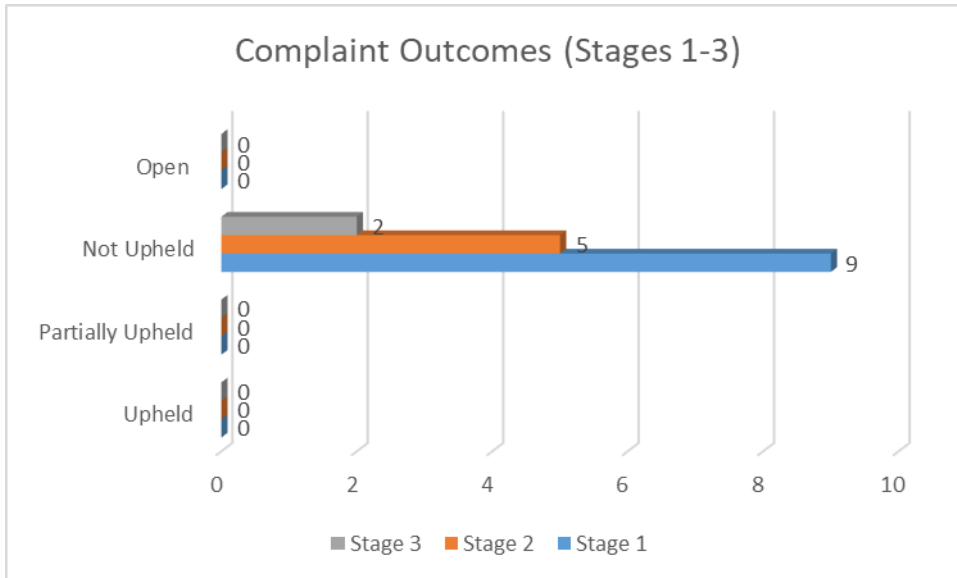
- Stage 1 complaints 56%
- Stage 2 complaints 31%
- Stage 3 complaints 13%

The aim is to resolve the complaints at stage 1 but where the tenants are not satisfied with the responses, they are able to escalate it to the next stage.

Two of the complaints received have resulted in the Housing Ombudsman wanting to investigate the handling of the complaints further. However, the Housing Ombudsman confirmed that one of the complaints could not be investigated further as there had been court proceedings and the court decided in favour of the Association.

This table illustrates the number of complaints addressed within the target response time. Notably, there were no delays in response times for Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints. However, one Stage 1 complaint experienced a delay due to a staff bereavement period and staffing shortages.



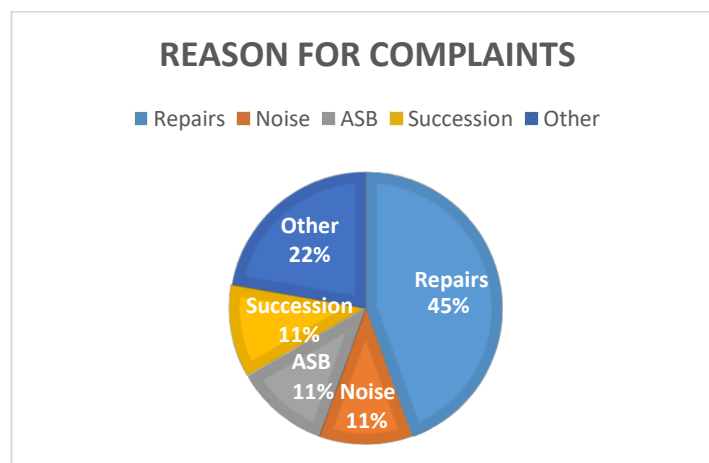


Out of the 9 complaints received, none were upheld. Thorough investigations revealed no evidence to support the complaints. All procedures were meticulously followed, confirming the integrity of the decisions made. In the process of handling all complaints, resolutions were offered to ensure that Ash-Shahada could continue to support tenants despite not upholding any complaints.

We recognise that the responses being provided to the tenants were not being copied to the Housing Ombudsman and due to oversights these led to the CHFOs from the Ombudsman. However, several actions have been taken to address this issue and these are covered in the lessons learned. It is important to understand why things have turned out the way they have, justifiable or not, to reflect on how we have approached handling the complaints.

Learning From Complaints

It is important for the organisation to learn from the complaints it receives to reduce the potential for future complaints in the same areas. Whilst it may not always be possible to do so, we can learn from what went well and went wrong when dealing with complaints from tenants. Understanding the underlying issues can help improve the service delivery.



The most common reason we had for complaints were our repairs services (45%), but complaints also included our handling of Succession, ASB & Noise (11%). A mix of complaints have been categorised as other.

Lessons Learnt

We acknowledge that we may not always get things right on the first attempt. Residents' feedback is invaluable in helping us enhance our services. Additionally, we utilize our own data to identify areas for improvement. The following table outlines the areas we have identified for improvement and the actions we have taken or plan to take to address them.

We've identified opportunities for learning in the following categories, the numbers represent the number of associated lessons learnt:

Lesson Learnt	Action(s) Taken	Impact
Complaint Handling		
We were not meeting all our target response times for complaints.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Complaints management centralised to a dedicated manager. 2) Dedicated cluster representatives responsible for their own group of tenants that informs residents all repairs and query updates. 3) To facilitate effective internal communication, weekly performance reports are provided to management and daily reports are issued to managers, highlighting complaints due within a fixed period of time to assist with time management. 4) Regular training through the Housing Ombudsman on complaints handling and sharing of reports issued. 	As a result, logging and response times have become better and there is increased accountability and visibility for tenants. This has also resulted in a fewer complaints being escalated.
Systems and Processes		
Our systems were slowing down due to an older version being installed. Some elements of the software were not being properly used and historical non-usage of features had to be addressed.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) We have implemented our Customer Service Strategy and Digital Transformation Strategy. 2) Integrated all data from stock conditions surveys into housing management system to ensure we are as data driven as possible. 3) All historical gaps in the software were resolved and closed. 4) Training for staff to ensure that any knowledge/skills gaps have been addressed. 5) Upgrade of our system to the new version has been scheduled. 	<p>We can now better manage repairs and maintenance quicker and provide information with an enhanced understanding.</p> <p>In late 2024/25, we will start to realise and leverage the benefits of the new systems in particular the Tenant Portal System.</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6) Approval from the Board to start and beta test a Tenant Portal System with tenants for tenants. This will allow tenants better interaction and swifter communication with the staff. 7) Beginning the design of our new website to facilitate additional interactive options for reporting of repairs. We intend to launch our new website at the end of the year. 	
Revising repairs and maintenance structure.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Use of independent consultants where necessary incl. surveyors. 2) A damp and mould guide booklet was created and circulated to tenants. 3) Revised our repairs/maintenance categories for job orders to be clearer. 4) Training for staff to ensure that any knowledge/skills gaps have been addressed. 5) We have created an internal procedure to prioritise damp and mould repairs with a RAG rating for high/medium/low to reflect the urgency of repairs. 6) We identified areas for improvement following the Ombudsman's spotlight report on damp and mould, as well as the rise in complaints received. 	The backlog of appointments for damp and mould reports has been reduced. A systematic approach has been implemented, allowing for quicker attendance to these cases.
General Learning		
There are some actions which have been taken to facilitate the above that are more strategic in nature.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A restructure of staffing to include new director level staff. 2) Additional formal training for staff and board members to ensure they have the right knowledge to make decisions for tenants 3) Board member recruitment to enhance robust oversight. 4) A new and improved complaints policy approved in 24/25 to encompass learning and changes for all new complaints to be dealt with under the new policy. 	This will support enhanced service delivery, scrutiny and tenant involvement.

In April 2024, we updated our complaints management system. This change has enabled us to directly incorporate lessons learnt, learning actions, and progress updates into each complaint.

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment

- In accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, we are required to produce and publish a self-assessment based on the code's requirements. This is accessible on the ASHA website.
- We plan to review our self-assessment with residents to keep them informed and gather their feedback on the document.
- Our new Complaints Policy (April 2024) is available on the ASHA website.