

The board **noted** this report on 6/7/23.

Meeting: Board meeting, 6 th July 2023	Authors: Darren Bird - head of housing, customer support and repairs Alex Clark – customer complaints specialist
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Subject: Compliments and complaints annual summary report

Background

This document presents data and analysis on how Selwood Housing dealt with complaints in the year 2022/23. It also covers disrepair claims, complaint learning, compliments, and service improvements to address shortcomings.

The group operations director has overall responsibility while the head of housing & customer support provides management and internal assurance of these services. To meet these responsibilities the organisation has an appointed customer complaints specialist to be responsible for managing the procedure for handling and considering complaints in accordance with our rules.

This document assures the board that we manage complaints in line with The Housing Ombudsman complaint code.

A copy of the Housing Ombudsman code can be found here:

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Complaint-Handling-Code-Published-March-2022-1-1.pdf>

Summary

Some of the highlights this year are:

- Overall complaints increased by 4% year on year.
- Acknowledgement rates maintained at 100% for second year running.
- Response rates within timescale increased from 82% to 86%, however still work to be done to keep this going in the right direction.
- Timescale responding to complaints outside the timescale reduced to 3.2 days, although this should not happen at all.
- Improved training available to our staff with the option to complete it on the app which is particularly important to our operative colleagues.

- Launched our customer complaints forum to review our complaint handling and improve standards.
- No complaint failure orders from the Ombudsman, despite a significant increase in the sector.
- No significant increase in disrepair claims.

This year has been stable for us, but we still have room for improvement. One of our main challenges as an organisation is to ensure effective and consistent complaint handling. Our complaints handling team consists of more than 80 different case managers, this diversity brings benefits, such as a wider range of perspectives and solutions, but also poses some difficulties in maintaining consistent quality standards across the board. We are working hard to address these challenges and ensure that our customers receive the best possible service, by providing regular training, feedback and support to our case managers, as well as streamlining our processes and procedures.

Recommendation

That the board note the report.

Appendix I – Number of complaints and compliments.

Appendix II – Response rates + Rant & Rave feedback.

Appendix III – Complaint reasons & well-founded complaints.

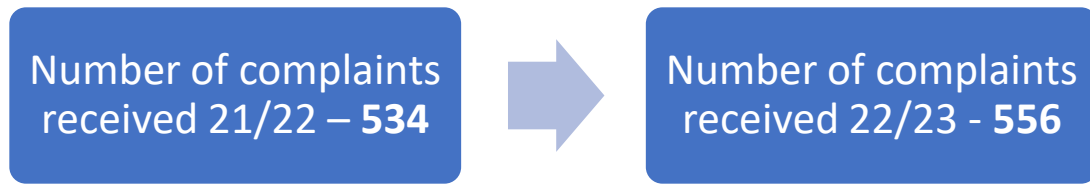
Appendix IV – Learning outcomes & service improvements.

Appendix V – Learning outcomes & service improvements cont & Customer complaints forum

Appendix VI – Policy complaints and Housing ombudsman.

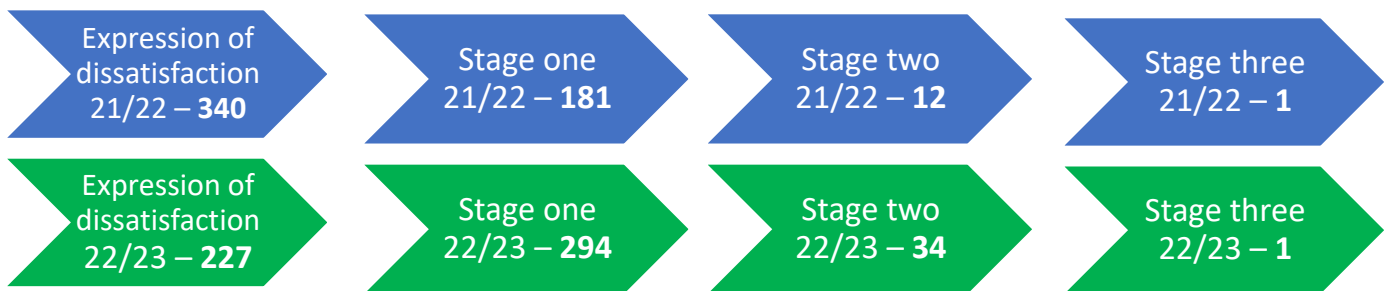
Appendix VII – Disrepair. & comparable data.

Appendix I – Number of complaints and compliments



We offer different options for customers to express their concerns, we receive complaints and compliments via our website, social media accounts, email, in writing, phone call or face to face with our staff. We have seen a small increase in the number of complaints (4%) received year on year.

The reduction in expressions of dissatisfaction and increases in stage 1 and 2 from last year are expected because we have changed our approach to start more complaints at stage 1 rather than as expressions of dissatisfaction. This is in line with the recommended approach from the ombudsman and speeds up the process for the customer.



Compliments

We value the positive feedback from our customers, as it reflects the high quality of our staff's performance. This year, we received less compliments, but this could be explained by the rant & rave system that enables customers to share their service experience via the text message or email they receive. Previously, compliments were collected through calls, emails, and social media channels.

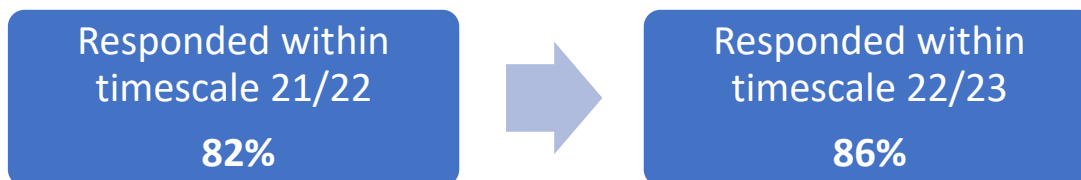


We have received nearly 6000* scores through rant and rave transactional surveys during the year, the number of customers scoring 4 or 5 (out of 5) was over 5200.

* ASB, Caretaking, Complaints, Electrical testing, Gas service, Grounds maintenance, Lettings, Planned, Repairs, Voids, Customer service

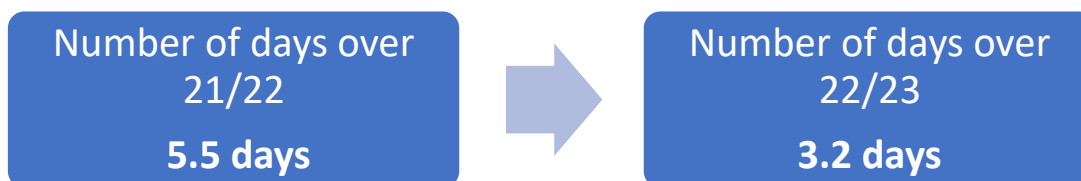
Appendix II – Acknowledgement and response rates

We acknowledge complaints effectively and within 5 days, in line with our policy. We have a dedicated customer complaints specialist who allocates each complaint to the appropriate person based on the nature and severity of the issue. The customer receives a letter with the case manager's identity and contact details, as well as the expected time frame for resolving the complaint.



We have implemented a system of automated reminders to ensure timely resolution of complaints. Case managers and their line manager receive a notification 24 hours before the deadline for an action, and another one if the complaint becomes overdue. This has helped us improve our performance, but we acknowledge that there is still room for improvement.

There were 76 complaints that were not dealt with within our published timescale, these were the average days it actually took to respond (over and above the target):



Our managers that deal with complaints are spread out across the business, this does present challenges to get high levels of consistency, there were 28 of them that had at least one complaint that was not resolved within the expected time frame.

Rant & rave

We use this platform to collect feedback from our customers after they have received a service from us. We send them a text or an email to ask them to rate the service on a scale of 1 to 5.

This is a summary of these scores:

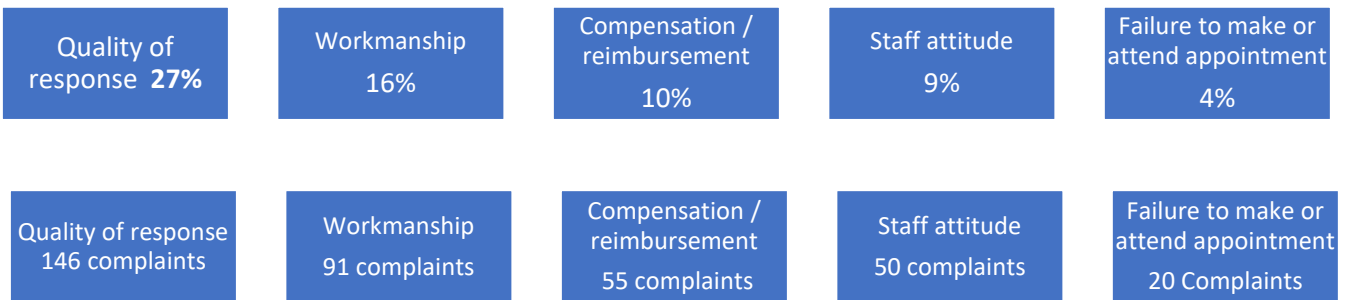
Score	1	2	3	4	5	Grand total
Number of scores	315	173	291	453	4783	6015
% of total	5%	3%	5%	8%	80%	100%

We contact customers who rate us 1 or 2 to understand their feedback and resolve any pending issues. A paper is coming to board in October with more detail on Rant & rave.

Appendix III – Complaint reasons

Complaint reasons

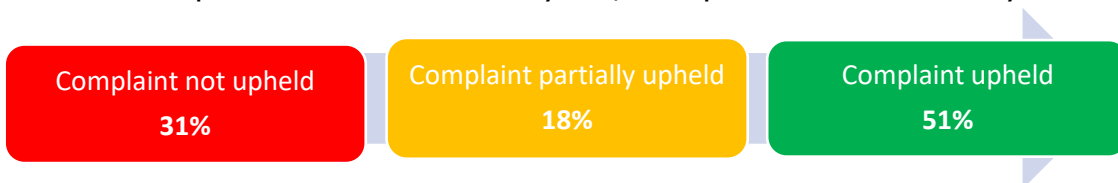
Complaints are categorised by representing the most common causes of complaint or dissatisfaction. The five categories that have the largest number of complaints account for 66% of the total complaints received. Workmanship has been the main complaint category for the previous two years, linked to repairs which is in line with the industry. This year, however, the quality of response is the most common reason for complaints.



- **Workmanship** – The feedback we have received for workmanship has particularly highlighted high level of complaints in the following areas (some of which are obviously subjective). Poor workmanship, communication during time on site and in relation to further actions, general conduct of operatives.
- **Compensation** – The most regular and highest compensation payments are the result of failed air source heat pumps. This includes time without heating and hot water, the length of time it has taken to carry out a repair and the extra costs a customer incurs when supplied with temporary heating. Our compliance team have identified a trend in the premature failure of two heat pump modules. A plan has been approved to replace these modules within the next year.
- **Quality of response** – We have identified that many complaints are due to multiply site visits which are a result of a failure to fix first time. To improve our service, we are reviewing van stock efficiency and upskilling operatives to prevent follow-up works and the need for further appointments.

Well-founded complaints.

A complaint is considered well founded if it is either upheld or partially upheld. This means that the complaint has some merit and validity. The percentage of well-founded complaints was 69% this year, compared to 59% last year.



Learning outcomes and service improvements

In response to complaints made, case managers are required to log learning outcomes that enable further insight and recommendations on improving service and customer experience.

We have made significant progress in addressing the issue of missing learning outcomes for well-founded complaints. Two years ago, this was a major problem, as 21% of such complaints did not have a clear learning outcome. Last year, we reduced this percentage to 6%, which was a commendable achievement. This year, we have further improved our performance, with only 0.70% of well-founded complaints lacking a learning outcome.

The following changes have been implemented as a result of a learning outcomes:

- We have streamlined our tenancy termination process to allow customers to submit their notice online when they decide to end their tenancy.
- We have revised our credit balance policy to better serve our customers in light of the rising cost of living. We are now pro-actively issuing credit balance refunds more frequently.
- We have updated our communication process for our potential shared ownership customers. We want to provide them with clear and accurate information on the expected duration of the process.
- We amended our lettings procedure to work more closely with occupational therapists to make minor adaptations to our properties before they are occupied. This way, we can ensure that our customers' needs are met and that they can live comfortably and safely in their new homes.
- We have initiated conversations with local authorities to learn how they handle the needs and preferences of larger families. This will help us update our lettings policy and improve our service quality.
- Service improvements adopted to a customer journey approach for cleaning in our sheltered schemes. This means we look from the viewpoint of our customers and strive for uniform standards across all of them. We also monitor the work done by each member of our caretaking team to ensure quality and efficiency.

Appendix V – Learning outcomes and service improvements (cont) & Customer complaints forum

- We engaged support contractors who assisted us with response repairs. This helped us increase our capacity and reduce the waiting time for appointments.
- Implemented a more rigorous approach with our third-party contractors, this will enforce adherence to our policy and procedures and deliver high-quality work.
- Introduced a new decanting process. It will help us to identify and assign the roles and responsibilities of all the staff involved in the decanting. It will also ensure that we complete all the necessary steps and follow up with the customer after the decanting.

Customer complaints forum

As part of our commitment to the Housing Ombudsman complaint code and improving our complaint handling, we have set up a new customer complaints forum this year.

The purpose of the forum is to review closed complaint cases quarterly, ensuring that we follow the expectations of the Housing Ombudsman complaint code, and they are dealt with sympathetically and with fair resolutions.

The forum is provided with ten anonymised complaint cases that have gone through our complaints process and are now closed.

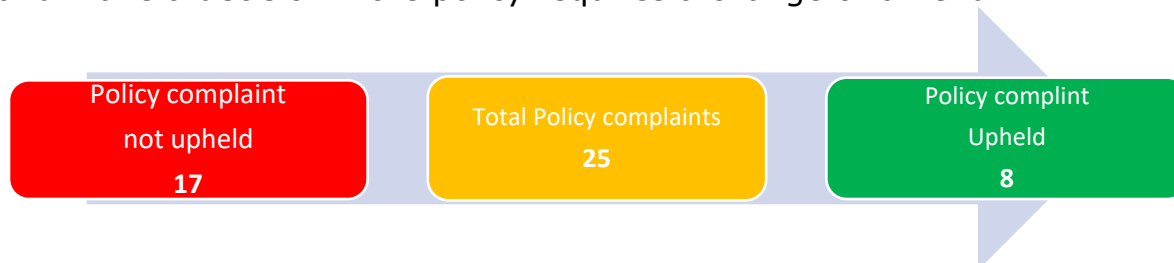
The group will agree on five cases and receive fuller details, including all the notes, correspondence, outcomes, and learnings. They are then required to individually score and assess our handling of those complaints. After the forum has scored and provided feedback on the cases, a log of agreed actions is created and is reviewed at the next quarterly forum.

Once the group are satisfied the action has been completed, they will approve its sign off. This keeps us accountable and ensures we continue to learn from feedback, making adjustments where needed.

Details of our work with the forum and their results and findings are published on our website. The link is here: <https://www.selwoodhousing.com/news/our-first-customer-complaints-forum/>

Policy complaints

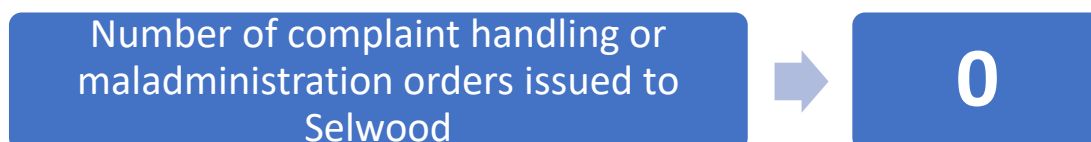
The number of policy complaints increased significantly this year, the number last year was 18. The increase is linked to the rent increase that was applied to customer rent. Policy complaints are referred to the policy owner who can review and make a decision if the policy requires a change or amendment



There were no changes to existing policies as a result of these complaints, the biggest reason related to Health & safety which we were not prepared to compromise.

Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman service is set up by law to look at complaints about Housing associations that are registered with them. Selwood Housing is a member of the scheme, we pride ourselves on working within the framework principles and promote the Ombudsman service to our customers. All complaint response letters clearly advise complainants of their right to refer their complaint to the Ombudsman and provide the Ombudsman's relevant contact details.



The Ombudsman has published its latest report on the complaints it receives and reviews from tenants. The report shows that there is a rising trend in the number of complaints that are escalated to the Ombudsman for further investigation. As a result, the Ombudsman has issued more than 140 complaint handling failure orders in the last 12 months, which are sanctions for poor or inadequate complaint management. We have seen more requests and queries from the Housing Ombudsman, we have been transparent and responsive in our communication with the ombudsman and have addressed any issues promptly and satisfactorily.

We currently have one complaint that is being assessed by the Housing Ombudsman, we are awaiting their findings.

Appendix VII – Disrepair & Comparable data

Disrepair

We received nine claims this year, most of these claims were related to damp and mould issues, which we have been working hard to address and prevent. None of the claims have proceeded to Court this year.

The table below details the trends per year:

Year	Number of Cases	Liability Accepted	Liability Denied	Compensation paid
2020/21	6	0	6	£17,384
2021/22	7	1	6	£28,000
2022/23	9	0	9	£1,000
Total	22	1	21	£46,384

Comparable data

We are a member of Vantage complaints working group, who are an organisation who work with social housing landlords to help deliver sustainable change.

The enclosed table are the results of seventeen social housing landlords (including Selwood Housing) in the different complaint areas for 2022/23.

Metric	Selwood	Average
% of complaints acknowledged within 5 days	100%	95%
% of complaints responded to within 10 working days	86%	82%
% of Stage 1 complaints extended	24%	25%
% of extended Stage 1 complaints responded within time	100%	67%
% of complaints resolved at Stage 1	87%	84%
% of Stage 2 complaints responded to within 20 days	99%	80%
% of Stage 2 complaints extended	37%	29%
% of extended Stage 2 complaints responded within time	100%	81%
% of HO requests delivered within 15 days	100%	88%
Number of complaints received in the year as a % of stock	8%	6%
Average maladministration orders from HO	0	2