

**South Yorkshire Housing Association
Group Board Meeting
12 June 2024**

Annual Complaints Performance and
Service Improvement Report 2023/24

1. Recommendation

The Board is asked to:

- **NOTE** the report; and
- **APPROVE** SYHA's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code 2024

2. Links to Strategic and Business Plans

Links to the following strategic themes:

- Doing the Basics Brilliantly
- Governance

3. Financial Implications, including VFM

The main costs related to complaints are staff time and compensation. Good management of complaints performance limits the staff time needed and the compensation we pay linked to putting service failures right.

Analysis of complaint themes and service failures helps identify areas we need to put resources into and areas where we can make savings.

4. Link to Risk Appetite Statement and Risk and Assurance Register

The relevant risks in the SYHA Risk and Assurance register are:

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Governance,
Regulation and
Compliance | Failure to meet RSH standards (other than H&S)
results in negative impact on customer, regulatory
downgrade or reputational damage |
|---|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

5. Impact on Our People

No people considerations have been identified through this report.

6. Impact on Customers

Performance on complaints impacts customer satisfaction significantly. Dealing with complaints well builds customers' confidence and trust in South Yorkshire Housing Association. It demonstrates we listen and care about our customers and contributes to achieving our purpose of our people living well, settling and realising their potential.

Analysis of reasons for complaints may also identify issues and service failures that we need to put right for other customers.

7. Implications for SYHA’s Policies on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Further information is detailed at point 5.7 in the main body of the report.

8. Sustainability

There are no sustainability considerations that have been identified in this report.

9. Marketing and Communications Considerations

Subject to Board review and feedback the information will be shared within the organisation and published on the SYHA website.

There is a requirement for Board to provide a response to the Annual Report on Complaints and Complaint Handling Code self-assessment. Following the meeting the Head of Governance will take Board’s feedback and will draft a response for approval.

Executive Summary:

This is the second full financial year the revised Complaints Policy has been in place. For this report complaint performance will be presented in line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 2022 which was in place from the 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

Key points to note are:

- The overall number of complaints this year is 261. A 9% reduction on 2022/23 and continues the trend of a more stable volume of complaints after the pandemic year of 2020/21, and a reduction in complaints from the pre-pandemic levels.
- The number of complaint reviews completed this year is 18. This is a sizeable reduction from the previous year, 29 reviews, and demonstrates more complaints are resolved to the customer's satisfaction at the complaint response stage.
- Property Services (which incorporates repairs and maintenance) continues to be the department with the highest proportion of complaints. This is predictable as it is the area where we see the most customer transactions. 77% of complaints were attributed to this department, a reduction from last year's 83%.
- Year-on-year a similar volume of complaints has been recorded in Customer Connect, Landlord Services and LiveWell, and we have seen a relatively small increase in complaints related to the work of Development. One complaint in 2022/23 to seven complaints in 2023/24.
- 67% of complaints (excluding hold time) were responded to within policy timescales. Factoring in estimated hold time, performance is 90% of complaints were responded to in timescale which meets the target of 90%. In 2022/23, 56% of complaints (excluding hold time) were responded to within policy timescales. Factoring in estimated hold time, performance was 78%.
- Customer Satisfaction with complaint handling is 80% which exceeds our target of 75%, and the first time it has been achieved in over 5 years.
- The Housing Ombudsman published a revised complaint handling code in February 2024. Following submission to Board in May 2024 of SYHA's draft self-assessment against the revised code, further review has taken place, taking account of Board feedback and supported by advice from DTP. The final assessment is that SYHA is compliant with the Complaint Handling Code, with a clear plan to roll out identified further improvements within 6 months. The updated full assessment of compliance is presented at Appendix 2 (in the Board document library). Appendix 1 to this report provides updated assessments of those areas which were assessed as potentially not being fully compliant in the report presented to Board in May 2024. The updated assessment reflects feedback from Board, advice received from DTP and the improvement work which has taken place in the interim.

Main Report:

1. Introduction

An annual complaint performance and service improvement report is a requirement of the revised Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 2024. It builds on previous reporting to the Board that shared qualitative and

quantitative analysis and the improvements SYHA makes following learning and insight gained from complaints received.

2. Performance

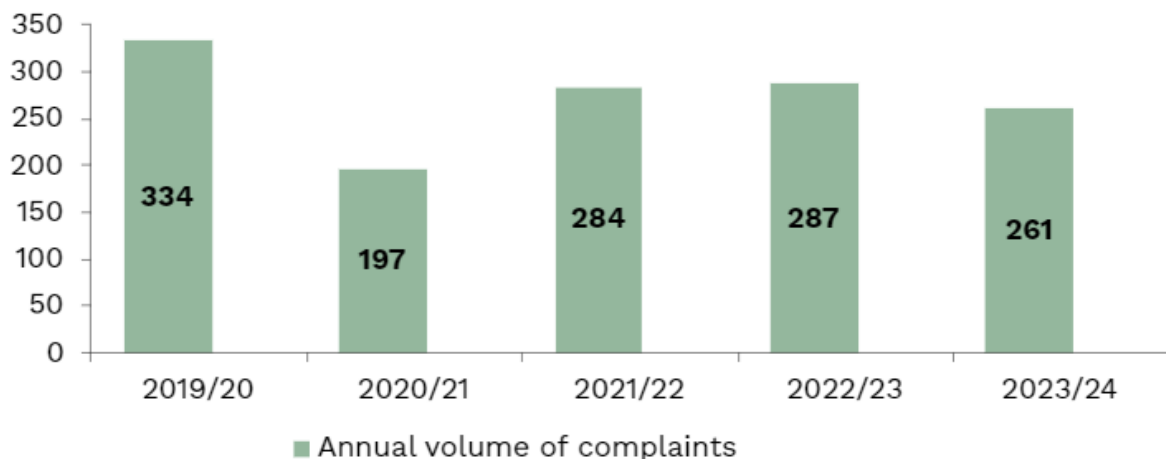
2023/24 is the first year of collecting data for the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). Three of the twenty-two measures relate to complaints. They are:

- CH02. Complaints relative to the size of the landlord
- CH03. Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales
- TP09. Satisfaction with the landlord’s approach to the handling of complaints

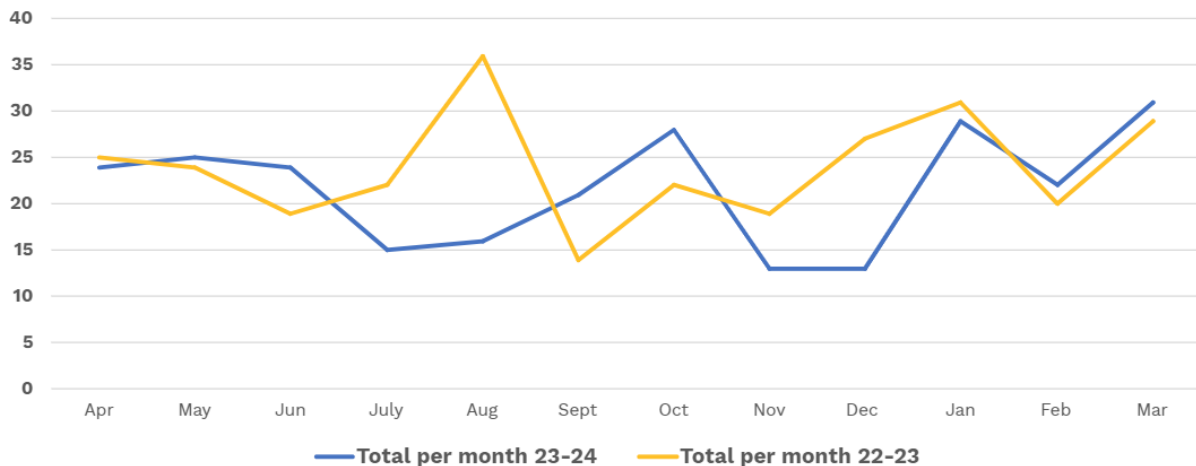
The sections below show complaint volumes, performance and satisfaction data. It is worth noting the data submitted for the TSMs excludes some complaints which are dealt with by our complaint policy and are included in this report. For TSM reporting purposes complaint data relates to customers who are asset-based only. The numbers are small and should have a low impact on figures when compared with TSM data.

2.1 Complaint – Stage 1 volumes

The graph below shows the volume of complaints in 2023/24 and comparisons over the past five years.



The graph below shows the volume of complaints received month on month.



Since launching the new complaints policy in September 2021 this is the second full financial year of data and enables better comparison. Setting aside the spike in complaints recorded in August 2022, due to poor performance from our gas contractor, the volume of complaints received month-on-month track in a similar pattern.

Lower in the summer months, rising in the autumn followed by a fall towards the Christmas period and rising again in January.

Heating and hot water issues mainly contribute to the peaks and troughs. The warmer summer months reduce the number of complaints while the colder months, and people switching on heating in the autumn, result in some boiler and heating issues which can see an increase in complaints.

2.2 Complaint Reviews - Stage 2 Volumes

The Complaints Policy contains two stages; responding to a complaint and reviewing the response if the customer remains dissatisfied.

This year 18 complaints went to the review stage, a sizable decrease from the 29 recorded in 2022/23. This means 93% of complaints were resolved at the first complaint stage, 235 complaints.

Last year this was an area identified for improvement, to resolve more complaints at the first stage. It is encouraging to see progress has been made. Supporting complaint owners through training and regular communication to handle complaints better and more consistently has had a positive impact. We plan to build on this by continuing to use learning from reviews and making sure complaint owners have the training and support to resolve complaints at the first stage and avoid escalation.

The mode average of reviews per month is one. The outliers were July and March when 3 reviews were received. There are no identifiable themes to explain these increases.

Analysis of the complaints that went to review does not identify any particular service area themes. However, more generally the reason offered

by the customer for requesting the complaint to be reviewed often relates to one or a mix of the following:

- when responding to the complaint the customer felt we did not get to the bottom of the issue/s.
- the amount of compensation offered didn't match the amount the customer hoped to receive.
- the customer disagreed with the decision or actions SYHA has agreed to complete or not.

2.3 Exclusions

In 2023/24 two complaints were excluded from the complaints process. Both complaints related to services provided by Crucible and were passed on to them to respond.

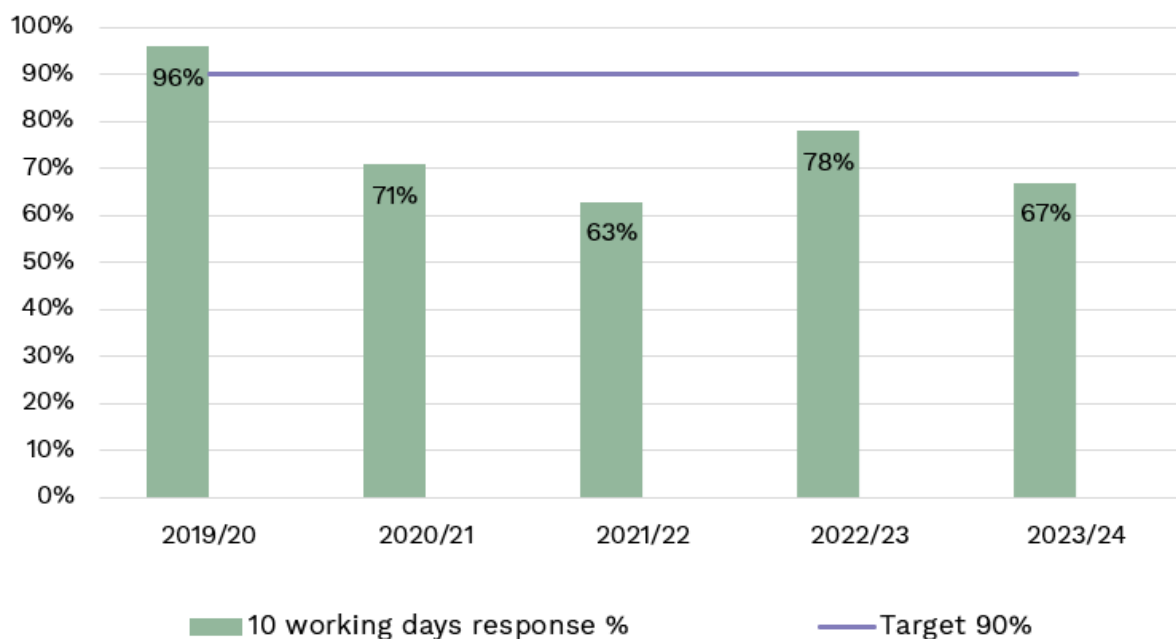
2.4 Complaints relative to the size of the landlord

Performance for 2023/24, Low Cost Rental Accommodation, is 49.6 complaints per 1000 homes (stage 1) and 3.6 reviews per 1000 homes (stage 2). We are waiting for HouseMark and the RSH to share aggregated year-end data to compare with other social landlords.

3 Response Times

SYHA's target is to respond to 90% of complaints within 10 working days (14 calendar days) or by a mutually agreed extended deadline. If more time is needed to respond to a complaint it is referred to as an extension. In Cx, (the system we use to record and manage complaints) this is known as 'hold'. The updated Complaint Handling Code offers more guidance on the use of extensions. The Customer Experience Team will be training complaint owners and reviewers on the appropriate use of an extension and how to communicate with the customer about it. From the 1 April 2024 they began monitoring the use of extensions to make sure they comply with the Complaint Handling Code.

Complaints Response stage 1 (excluding extensions)



This table offers an overview of performance excluding and including extension time.

Performance Response Times	Excluding estimated extension time	Including estimated extension time
Complaint Response (stage 1)		
Completed on time (10 working days)	67%	90%
Completed late	33%	10%
Review (stage 2)		
Completed on time (20 working days)	100%	100%
Completed late	0	0

3.1 Complaint Response – Stage 1

The graph illustrates the performance of complaints responded to within a 10-working day timeframe, including and excluding extensions. The Complaint Handling Code is prescriptive about how extensions should be used, communicated and recorded. For 2023/24 related to recording issues in Cx a figure including extensions can be calculated, however its accuracy cannot be guaranteed, hence offering the estimated figure. When estimated extension time is included the 90% performance target has been achieved. We are currently working with our software provider, Civica, to determine the best way of automating complaint handling performance time which takes account of any agreed extensions. The figure requires manual calculation

which might result in challenges on data robustness. Therefore, we are committed to ensuring automation that includes the calculation of agreed extension times.

Analysing performance reveals a mixed picture with many examples of timely complaint handling but also pockets of poorer performance. Suggested reasons for complaints not being dealt with in a timely way include, complaint owners dealing with competing workload priorities, dealing with too many complaints at the same time, and complaint owners delaying starting their investigation which eats into the 10-working day timeframe. A range of reasons for extensions exists including at the request of customers or to ensure a comprehensive response from subcontractors. A Complaints Working Group, chaired by the Director of Corporate Services, will be established to ensure transparency and joint working to overcome issues and barriers, where possible. See section 7.1 which outlines future activity to improve performance.

3.2 Complaint Review – Stage 2

Of the 18 Complaint Reviews completed in 2023/24 all met the Complaint Handling Codes timeframe of the customer receiving a response within 20-working days.

4. Satisfaction

4.1 Tenant Satisfaction Perception Measure

For TP09, satisfaction with the landlord’s approach to handling of complaints, people are first asked if they have made a complaint in the last 12 months. Of the customers who said they had made a complaint, 45% were satisfied which differs from the customer satisfaction collected from customers who have made a complaint to SYHA, see 4.2 *Transactional complaint handling satisfaction data*. It is the lowest scoring perception measure question and a trend that is seen across the sector.

As TSM data for the year 2023/24 is not yet available we cannot benchmark performance for TP09, however, mid-year HouseMark benchmarking shows SYHA in the upper quartile.

	SYHA mid-year	Quartile position	North & Mids Trad. HA's	Northern RP's <10k	Mid-year sector median
TP09 Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints	46.0%	1	35.8%	40.2%	33.9%

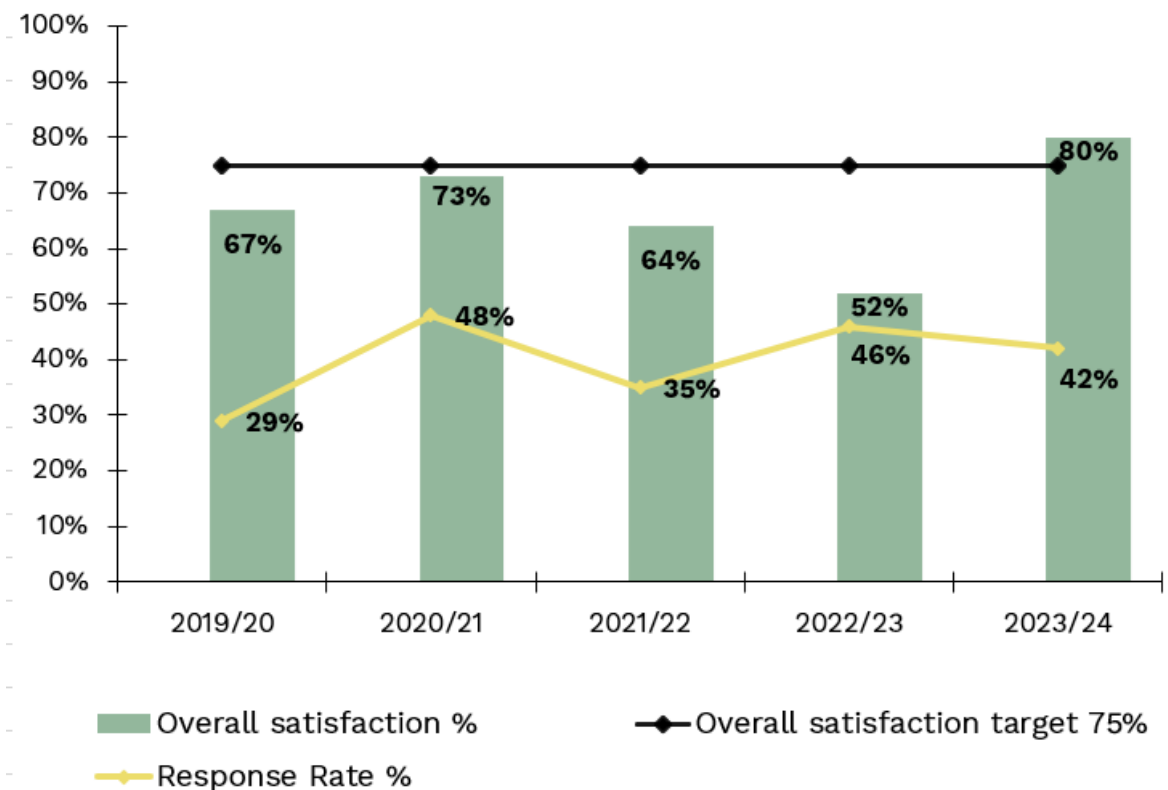
Analysis shows that the volume of customers who state they have made a complaint does not match our records, suggesting some discrepancy between what customers may view as a complaint. As quarterly data is received it is analysed and it has indicated some customers have reported ASB to SYHA and may be seeing this as a complaint, and customers who have

previously made a complaint but it was not in the reporting year 2023/24. In 2024/25 we are considering including a supplementary survey question to gain more information about a customer's issue to determine the action to take.

4.2 Transactional Complaint Handling Satisfaction Data

Once a complaint has been responded to, we invite the customer to complete a survey and share how satisfied they are with how we handled their complaint. Every complainant is invited to complete the survey by phone or email. We received responses from 42% (107) of the people who made a complaint last year. This achieved our target of gathering satisfaction data from 40% of people who have made a complaint.

Overall satisfaction with how we handled complaints was 80% exceeding the target of 75%. The table below shows satisfaction data over the past five years.

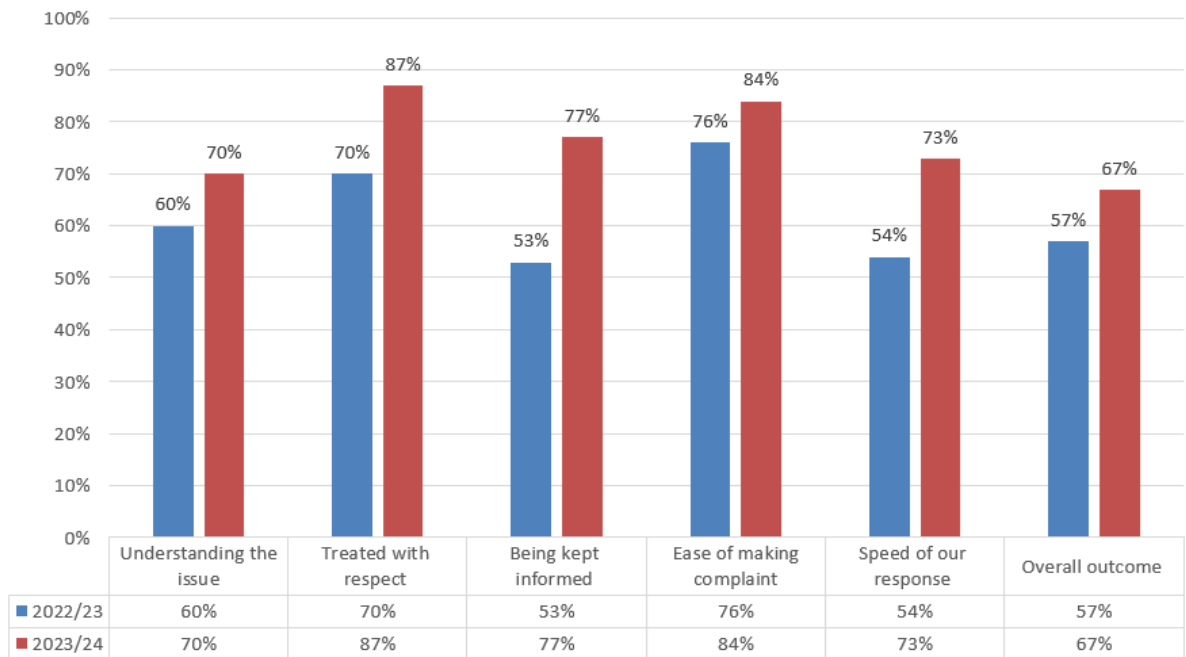


When we survey our customers we ask them:

- did we understand the issue?
- did we treat the resident with respect throughout the process?
- did we keep them informed of the progress of their complaint?
- how easy was it to make a complaint?
- the speed of our response?
- satisfaction with the overall outcome?

Overall performance across the six questions is shown in the graph below.

Complaint satisfaction survey responses



It is brilliant to see that in response to all questions, customers have indicated significant improvement from SYHA when compared to the previous year. The question with the biggest increase is *Being kept informed* which is an aspect of complaint handling the Customer Experience Team has spotlighted over the past year, training and reminding all complaint owners of the importance and value of keeping customers informed of progress and agreeing when updates will be shared.

4.3 Improving Complaint Handling Performance

In 2023/24 to facilitate improving complaint handling performance we have:

- Increased the visibility of live complaints by sharing weekly performance data including any calls to action
- Made complaint data and performance more visible to managers and complaint owners by sharing a monthly email containing themes, learning and areas for improvement
- Agreed an approach for regularly sharing complaint performance with the Executive Leadership Team
- Introduced quarterly complaints handling performance improvement sessions with Property Services, Landlord Services, Customer Connect and Livewell Heads of Service.
- Carried out analysis of reviews to understand the causes for escalation and identify areas of improvement in complaint handling to make sure fewer complaints are escalated to review
- Improved how the Customer Experience Team facilitates reviews, provides support to reviewers and ensures reviews are handled in line with policy
- Introduced a method for accurately calculating extension time. With more accurate records we are confident a greater number of complaints will meet the requirements of the Code.

- Improved resources for writing complaint communications

To build on the improvements we are:

- Reviewing training materials and making sure people receive training before dealing with a complaint or review
- Continuing work on the new complaint and review cases in Cx to support owners to better handle complaints, keeping more accurate records and improve reporting
- Reviewing reporting requirements to make sure reports give access to the right data and are easier to access and analyse
- Encouraging a more even distribution of complaints to different owners in the Property Services department, where we see the highest number of complaints.

5. Complaints Data and Insight

5.1 Complaints by Service Area

The graph below shows the number of complaints received by the service area in 2023/24.



For Customer Connect, LiveWell and Landlord Services the volumes of complaints recorded remain on par with 2022/23 with only 2-3 complaint variance per department, though the total number of complaints year-on-year has reduced. The Customer Connect Team has dealt with two complaints involving more than one business area.

Service Area	No. of complaints	
	22/23	23/24
Customer Connect	5	7
LiveWell	23	21
Landlord Services	23	26
Property Services	235	200

Development	1	7
Total	287	261

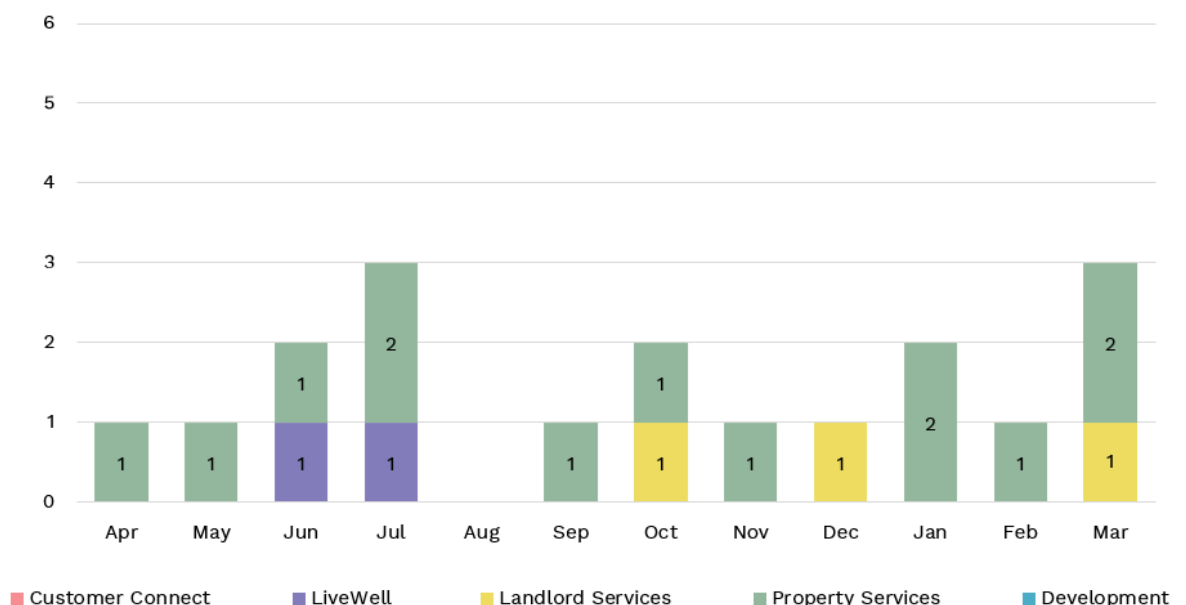
The two departments with the most movement were Property Services with 15% fewer complaints, 200 in 23/24 and 235 in 22/23, and Development with seven complaints in 23/24 compared to one in 22/23.

77% of all complaints relate to property services & maintenance (including HMT and contractors). Historically, this service area has always received a higher volume of complaints, a pattern reflected in the housing sector. Repairs are the transaction where there is the most contact with our customers and, therefore, a greater risk of dissatisfaction leading to a complaint. The Property Services department delivers our customers' repairs and other regulatory maintenance services. It is encouraging to see a reduction. Quicker response times may be contributing to reducing the number of complaints in this area and driven by changes made to geographical patch areas of Property Services Officers in 2022/23. These changes were made to improve capacity and enable better workload management.

3% of complaints related to Development, while the total number is low it is an increase on the previous year. This increase was a result of two separate defects affecting more than one household. A boundary/fencing issue affected three customers, and faulty patio doors affected two customers. The increase is viewed positively demonstrating that complaints are recorded centrally and tracked, and the development team is following the complaints process.

5.2 Reviews by Service Area

The graph below shows the number of reviews received by the service area in 2023/24.

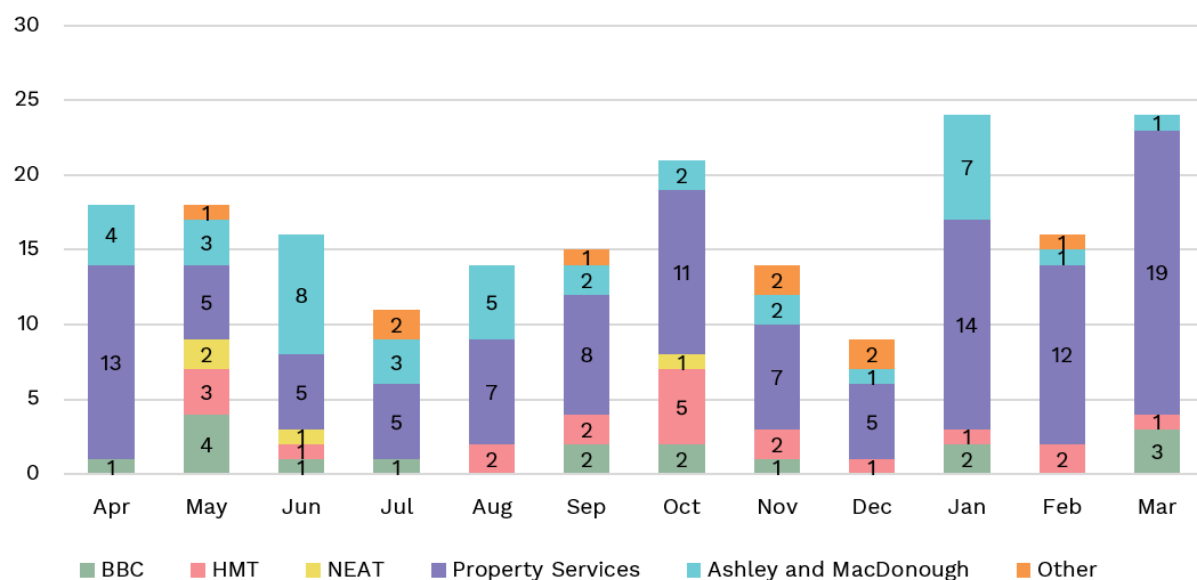


Of the 18 reviews, 12 were Property Services, maintenance and contractor related, accounting for 75% of reviews. This is a similar pattern when compared with 22/23, where the number of Property Services, maintenance and contractor related stage 2 reviews requested was 79%, (23/25). It is also proportionate as 77% of complaints received in 23/24 relate to Property Services.

Though Property Services is the area with the most reviews, based on 200 complaints recorded for Property Services, only 12 of these went to review, 94% were resolved at the complaint stage, 188 complaints.

5.3 Complaints by Contractor

The graph below shows the breakdown of complaints for Property Services and maintenance services by team or contractor and month by month.



The following table gives a brief description of the works carried out by the above contractors.

Ashley and McDonough	Day-to-day repairs and out-of-hours repairs (for heating and hot water) Gas servicing Planned works (SIP)
Burngreave Building Company (BBC)	Day-to-day repairs and out-of-hours repairs (for properties outside of the SCR). Void works
Home Maintenance Team (HMT)	Day-to-day repairs Void works Planned works (SIP) Cyclical maintenance
NEAT	Estate Maintenance e.g. gardening and cleaning works Void Works

Others (any other 3 rd party contractor used by SYHA)	Examples of work completed are: Asbestos surveys Fixed electrical tests Painting and decorating on DMC cases Damp works Legionella testing Fire works (alarms, emergency lighting)
Property Services	Day-to day Inspections and ordering works Disrepair DMC cases Void inspections and ordering Asset Management work Stock condition surveys Planned works Fire Risk Assessments

Due to the volume of complaints recorded for Property Services, maintenance and our contractors, we have analysed these further. As mentioned, the total volume of complaints has reduced year-on-year, with Property Services, maintenance and contractors receiving fewer complaints. See *5.1 complaints by service area*.

As in previous years, we continue to see a higher volume of complaints over the winter months. January to March volumes remain at a similar level, 63 complaints recorded in 2024 and 66 complaints recorded in 2023.

However, the distribution of complaints has shifted with a greater proportion of complaints for Property Services vs contractors. From January to March, Property Services made up 71% of complaints in 2024, and 50% in 2023. It is unclear why, and an area to give some focus to in 24/25.

5.4 Property Services

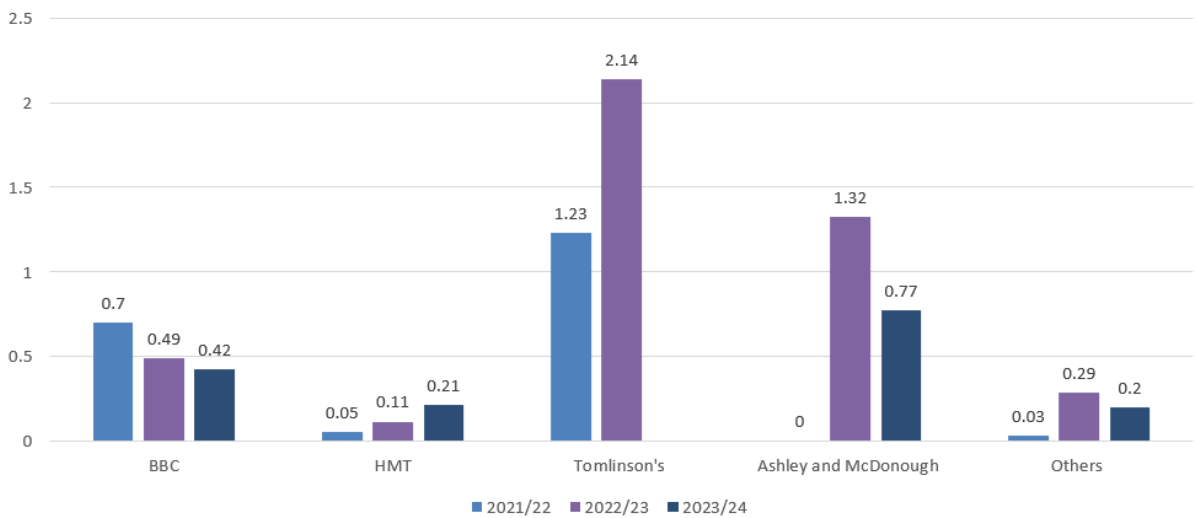
We have looked at the reasons that underpin why Property Services receive complaints. This year Quality of Housing is the number one reason customers make a complaint in this service area and responsiveness is number two.

2023/24 is the first full financial year SYHA's Decent Homes Taskforce has been in place. It is a cross-departmental task force group developed to address critical property condition issues such as disrepair and tackling dampness, mould and condensation. Taking a proactive approach to raise awareness with customers and tackle issues head-on is contributing to an increase in complaints with particular root causes, see *5.6 Root Causes*.

5.5 Contractors

As some of our contractors carry out more work than others for SYHA, it is important to look at the number of complaints per 100 orders raised. The graph below shows the comparison to the last two years.

Number of complaints per 100 orders

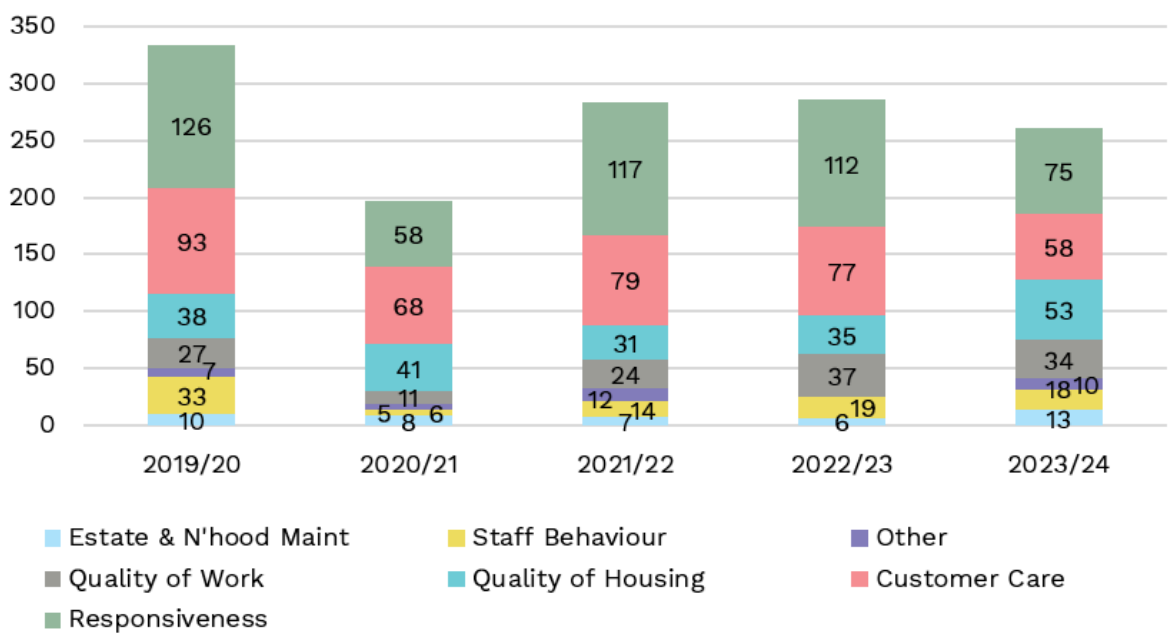


After changing our gas contractor in March 2023, it is pleasing to see our new contractor, Ashley & McDonough has received fewer complaints, 0.77 complaints per 100 orders, compared with 2.14 complaints per 100 orders for the previous contractor in 22/23. Both BBC and Others have seen fewer complaints with a slight increase for HMT.

5.6 Root Causes

The Complaints Policy is built on learning, therefore we categorise and analyse complaints for the root causes represented in the graph below.

Root cause of complaints recorded



Responsiveness remains the single highest root cause of complaints, with 75 recorded last year, 29% of all complaints. However, this is a notable

reduction from the previous year when 112 were recorded, 39% of all complaints.

As mentioned, in 2022/23 changes were made to geographical patch areas for Property Services Officers, reconfiguring to improve capacity and enable better workload management. The changes appear to have had a positive impact on reducing complaints relating to responsiveness.

The second highest root cause of complaints is customer care, 22% of all complaints, again a reduction on the previous year, 27% of complaints.

Most root causes have seen a reduction, or similar volumes year-on-year. Two root causes that have seen increases are, Quality of Housing and Estate and Neighbourhood Maintenance, making up 20% and 5% of complaints respectively. As mentioned in 5.4 *Property Services*, Quality of Housing is now the number one root cause for complaints in the Property Service area.

The work started by the Decent Homes Taskforce in addressing issues of damp, mould and condensation may be contributing to this increase with 20 complaints recorded. The complaints are about our responsiveness to deal with the issue and customers saying the fix has not rectified the problem. 30 complaints relate to boiler issues, often with customers dissatisfied with the length of time taken to fix or stating the boiler is not fit for purpose (too old and/or had multiple repairs). 15 complaints relate to fencing repairs and 9 relate to doors and windows. There may be a link between these with some customers waiting longer than they expected for replacements.

An increase in complaints should be viewed as positive evidence that customers have greater awareness of how to make a complaint and SYHA processes for making and recording complaints are robust to ensure we are hearing dissatisfaction and taking action.

5.7 Diversity and Complaints

Our systems allow reporting of age, gender, race, faith and belief, sexual orientation and disability for tenancy holders. We have used this data to compare the diversity characteristics of people who complained in 2023/24 with all our current tenancy holders.

The table on the next page shows data on our racially and ethnically diverse customer complainants. The complainant profile for 2023/24 is broadly the same as our customer profile, reassuring us that our process is inclusive. That said, it is worth noting Other White: white & black Caribbean is higher than the SYHA population. We will investigate further and will be reviewing the 9 complaints to identify if anything stands out that would suggest why there has been a higher percentage of complaints from these customers.

Race	Number SYHA	Percentage SYHA	Number Complainants	Percentage Complainants
Unknown	874	14.2%	28	10.7%
White: British	4163	67.6%	179	68.5%
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	151	2.5%	10	3.8%
Black: African	186	3.0%	7	2.6%
Refused	2	0.0%		
White: Other	124	2.0%	3	1.1%
Mixed: White & Asian				
White: Irish	20	0.3%	3	1.1%
Asian/Asian British: Any Other Asian Background	83	1.3%	6	2.2%
Asian/Asian British: Indian	11	0.2%	1	0.0%
Other Ethnic Group: Arab	26	0.4%		
Any other Ethnic Group	22	0.4%	3	1.1%
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	7	0.1%		
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	43	0.7%		
Black: Any Other Black/African/Caribbean background	36	0.6%	2	0.7%
Black: Caribbean	69	1.1%	2	0.7%
Did not answer the question	59	1.0%	4	1.5%
Mixed: White & Black African				
Mixed: White & Black Caribbean	1	0.0%		
Other White: White and Asian	14	0.2%	2	0.7%
Other Ethnic Group: Other	110	1.8%	2	0.7%
Other White: Any other	11	0.2%		
Other White: Mixed multiple	59	1.0%		
Other White: White and Black African	16	0.3%		
Other White: Any other mixed/Multiple	11	0.2%		
Other White: White and Black Caribbean	54	0.9%	9	3.4%
Prefer not to say	16	0.3%		
White: Gypsy/ Irish Traveller	3	0.0%		
Asian/Asian: British Chinese				

When looking at diversity data, it is worth noting complainants' profile in relation to disability. The table below shows the number of customers who made a complaint and shared they have a disability. Data shows there is a disproportionate number of customers with disabilities who made a complaint. However, this is based on a small sample size and disability data is unknown for 92% of customers. In the absence of a fuller data set, we cannot ascertain if this is representative or not.

Whenever a complaint is acknowledged the Customer Experience Team makes the most of the opportunity to talk to the customer and to ask if they have any needs they want to make us aware of. Therefore, for customers who have made a complaint SYHA may hold more accurate information about disabilities. In addition, structured conversations with customers about reports of damp, mould and condensation are capturing any health conditions, including disabilities that may be impacted by living with DMC.

Disability	Number of Customers	Percentage	Number of Complaints	Percentage
Disabled	390	6.3%	47	18%
Not Disabled	96	1.6%	2	0.70%
Unknown	5681	92.1%	212	81%

When looking at the age profile of complainants, there is no concern about age groups. The percentage of complaints received by age band is broadly the same as the SYHA population.

Age Band	Number Customers SYHA	Percentage SYHA	Number Complainants	Percentage Complaints
<16	10	0.2%		
16-24	101	1.6%	2	0.7%
25-34	830	13.5%	30	11.4%
35-44	1198	19.4%	58	22.2%
45-54	1106	17.9%	57	21.8%
55-64	1105	17.9%	42	16.0%
>=65	1487	24.1%	62	23.7%
Unknown	330	5.4%	10	3.8%

6. Housing Ombudsman and SYHA

6.1 Compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

In June 2023 following SYHA regulatory judgement, the Housing Ombudsman reviewed SYHA's complaints policy and procedure, self-assessment against the Code.

They stated they were pleased to note the landlord's broad compliance with the Code and the actions points noted on the self-assessment.

They made three observations and recommendations which were responded to in July 2023, together with a report for the Executive Team.

To meet the requirements of the revised Code, published in February 2024, a review of SYHA's Complaints Policy was completed and approved by the Board in March 2024.

6.2 Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment

Since 2021 we have been required to carry out a self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code. An updated version of the self-assessment was confirmed in February 2024 and a requirement to share the self-assessment with the Housing Ombudsman was introduced. RPs are required to submit an assessment confirming compliance status by 30 June. A draft self-assessment was shared with the Board in May 2024 and feedback received that the assessment of nine areas as being non-compliant may have been harsh. We have since revisited the nine requirements that needed additional

work and received advice from DTP. They recommended the following actions:

- Highlight any areas that will benefit from enhancing and strengthening along with a timescale for completion
- A mid-year review

The nine requirements have been reviewed and additional detail added, see Appendix 1. SYHA's self-assessment against the revised code, shows the organisation as compliant, with a clear plan to roll out identified enhancements to meet all requirements within six months. A Complaints Working Group, chaired by the Director of Corporate Services, will oversee the implementation of identified enhancements and conduct the mid-year review in December 2024.

6.3 Contact with Housing Ombudsman

In January 2024 SYHA arranged and held a Meet the Housing Ombudsman event. The event was well publicised and well-received and helped raise awareness of the service and may have contributed to the increase in Housing Ombudsman activity we have seen.

Following the event SYHA received the first complaint investigation in over 5 years from the Ombudsman. This demonstrates customers have a greater awareness of the Ombudsman. We are consistently sharing information about the service and their contact details at key contact points, for example at the end of our complaints process and this along with publicising the event we feel is contributing to the increased awareness about the service. The Ombudsman has stated that no contact with customers from a provider may be an indicator that a Landlord is failing to inform and promote the service to their customers.

7. Service Improvements

7.1 Learning from complaints

We are working on further building a culture of learning from complaints. This year we have:

- made it easier for Managers of services to access the learning outcomes captured by complaint owners and reviewers.
- included complaints data as one of the pieces of customer voice each service department reviews to identify themes and action plan how to tackle them.
- updated the format of complaint reviews to give greater focus to learning when complaint reviews are discussed.
- created a [page](#) on our website that shares examples of learning as it is important that customers know how we are learning from complaints. We aim to update the page quarterly with new examples.

Some other examples of learning we haven't shared on the website include:

- Early feedback from our customers, some of which resulted in complaints, suggested dissatisfaction with one of our main repair contractors. This feedback was used in discussions with the contractor and was a key driver in our decision to seek a new contractor. We have since seen more significant satisfaction levels with the new contractor.
- Feedback from our customers, particularly on areas of fencing have helped to shape our fencing replacement programme in 2024/25. Financial challenges meant that non-safety critical replacement fencing budgets have required to be scaled back for the past two years, resulting in increased complaints. Customer feedback has been a crucial input within our budget setting discussion and approval process.
- Feedback and complaints related to infestations have been used to build on our offer related to dealing with infestations and to refresh training for people dealing with contacts about infestations at the first point.

7.2 Looking Forward

Section 4.3 details where we are focussing to improve performance. We want to build on the gains achieved this year, with fewer complaints escalating to review and high levels of customer satisfaction, together with making improvements in performance in responding to our complaints within policy timescales. A Complaints Working Group, chaired by the Director of Corporate Services, will be established to ensure transparency and joint working to overcome issues, barriers and improve performance.

The work already started to improve the quality of complaint handling includes the following:

- Confirming the complaint definition each time a complaint is acknowledged setting out SYHAs understanding of the issue
- Increase the number of complaints responded to in time
- Tracking when extensions are used and they are correctly applied
- Developing new Cx complaint and review cases to support better complaint handling and better data collection
- Complying with the Code self-assessment
- Ensuring that lessons learned from complaints are understood and the resulting changes and improvements (to process, policy etc) are tracked and implemented
- Raising awareness of complaint handling and recording across all customer-facing teams
- Supporting complaint owners to improve written communications with customers
- Encouraging a more even distribution of complaints to aid improved complaint handling
- Making sure reviewers understand their role, allocate them evenly across departments and who is completing them.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Summary of updated areas of compliance with the Complaint Handling Code

Appendix 2: [Full assessment of compliance with the Complaint Handling Code \(In the Board document library\)](#)

Kevin Noone: Customer Connect Manager

22 May 2024