

# Listening to you

## Complaints Insight Report – October 2023 to March 2024

We are committed to delivering an excellent customer experience and listening to your feedback to improve our services. We believe in being open and honest and building trust through a transparent feedback process.

This is the seventh edition of our Complaints Insight Report which is published twice a year and made available for our customers. We highlight any trends, the lessons we have learnt and any changes we have made to our services to provide a clear view of the feedback we receive. We also give you an overview of any complaints which have been escalated to the Housing Ombudsman.

Complaints Data	Apr 2022 - Sep 2022	Oct 2022 - Mar 2023	Apr 2023 - Sept 2023	Oct 2023 - Mar 2024
Total no. of complaints	82	95	69	131
% of complaints resolved at stage 1	95.2%	92.5%	92.7%	85.5%
Responded to within Ombudsman timescales?	73%	98%	100%	100%
% of complaints resolved at stage 2	4.8%	7.5%	7.3%	14.5%
No. of complaints escalated from stage 1 to stage 2	2	5	5	19
Main areas for complaints:	1. Outstanding Repairs 2. Poor Communication	1. Quality of Repair 2. Poor Communication	1. Outstanding Repairs 2. Poor Communication	1. Outstanding Repairs 2. Poor Communication
No. of complaints escalated to the Housing Ombudsman	3	3	2	4

Over the past six months, we have seen an increase in complaints at stages one and two. More customers have accessed our stage two appeal process in line with the Housing Ombudsman Services who encourage residents to complete their landlord's complaints process in full.

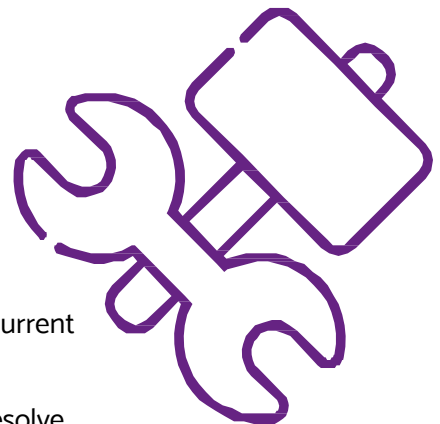
The current areas of most dissatisfaction are outstanding repairs and overall poor communication. We continue to address our backlog of repairs, managing repairs as per the timescales in our Responsive Repairs Policy and focusing on improving communication with our customers. We have increased our workforce and are seeing improvements to our satisfaction with repairs which has moved from 71.4% to 74.4% during this reporting period. We have also seen increased satisfaction with the time taken to complete repairs, which has moved from 66.7% to 70.8%. We acknowledge we are slightly behind our key repair targets and have seen an increase in repair complaints. We are working hard to improve our repair services and key service changes are highlighted below.

## As a result of the complaints, what are we doing to improve?

### Repairs

Following complaints and feedback from customer satisfaction surveys:

- ✓ Our Repairs team have been actively recruiting across all trades to support the clearing of backlog jobs and some key posts have already been filled.
- ✓ We are updating our [repairs website](#) page frequently to reflect our current timescales against each trade.
- ✓ We have been collaborating with the Customer Relations Team to resolve complaints, and address any customer concerns and repairs, and prioritise these accordingly.
- ✓ Our Repairs Team Leaders are completing pre- and post-inspections and Management are undertaking spot audits of works.
- ✓ We have improved our repairs reporting suite and have live data on open repairs to maximise our first-time fix. We are reviewing complaint customer demographics data to spot any key trends to implement service change.



### Outstanding repairs and timescales

We continue to work on our action plan to address ongoing repairs. We have increased our contractor base to utilise resources and keep completion times within target. We are on the right track and have seen an improvement in our response times. Our first-time fix rate has improved from 81.7% average in Quarter 1 and 2 to an average of 84.4% in Quarters 3 and 4. We continue to encourage customers to book their repairs on their online accounts as the first port of call, 24hrs per day.

TIAA, our internal auditors, undertook a Review of Complaints and Lessons Learnt and we received Substantial Assurance for that audit.

Key findings were:

- ✓ Updated Customer Feedback Policy and Procedure in line with the Housing Ombudsman Code.
- ✓ Regular training sessions have been completed with investigating managers.
- ✓ All complaints at stage one and stage two were acknowledged and responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's timescales.
- ✓ Data relating to complaints, grumbles and compliments is recorded on our housing management system.
- ✓ Weekly complaints and compliments report is share with the Leadership Team to progress complaints to resolution and review lessons learnt.

## Communication

- ✓ A letter, with a copy on our website, was sent to all customers titled "How we're supporting our customers this winter". This letter details information on repairs and our current wait times for different jobs, what to do if you have a repair outstanding, what we are doing to improve our services for you, what to do if you have damp and mould in your home and what support we are offering for customers who need a little extra help.
- ✓ Text and web messages have been sent to customers with a link to a new repairs status page: [Repairs | Watford Community Housing \(wcht.org.uk\)](https://www.wcht.org.uk/Repairs)
- ✓ We have created a contractor postcard for carded appointments so customers can rebook with ease.
- ✓ All requests from customers wishing reschedule / query their repairs appointment are now trackable through CRM (Customer Relations Management) system to our Resource Planning Team..
- ✓ We have completed an audit of our CRM system – we are responding to customer enquiries as per our service standards.
- ✓ Complaint investigating managers are calling customers to understand their concerns. We are working with our customers to ensure our complaint responses meet any needs such as learning difficulties, different languages and also offering a customer advocacy service.
- ✓ Customer-facing staff are recording customer contact by using a mobile housing app while out on visits.
- ✓ We have updated our repair call scripts to our Out of Hours Provider, to ensure our customers received continuity of service.
- ✓ We have sent out regular communications by email and SMS to keep customers up to date on repairs and service issues.
- ✓ We update our website and telephony system to ensure customers are made aware of high call volumes and staff training.
- ✓ We have implemented a call-back facility on our main Customer Service number. This will enable customers to leave their contact details rather than waiting in the queue and a call-back will be made retaining their queue position.

- ✓ Our first call resolution scores from customers completing post call surveys have improved over the past 6 months, averaging at 72.7%. We have also seen excellent scores in our Customer Service Officers being polite and knowledgeable at 94.7%.



## Other changes we have made following your feedback

- ✓ We have identified training needs for our Contact Centre around offering a better first-time resolution. From feedback collated from our post call surveys, we recognise the need to make sure our customers can resolve issues when they call first time. This includes more training on direct debits, damp and mould enquiries, welfare concerns, repairs diagnostics and using our digital platform.
- ✓ The Contact Centre has recently participated in an 'Difficult Conversations' course, and completed in-house training on direct debits, rents and service charges.
- ✓ Our Gateway Membership Team (GMT) selected and led a customer scrutiny session in February 2024 on our "Repairs Contractor Services". Feedback from this session led Watford Community Housing organising a "Guttering Day" at the Radlett Road Estate. We have also updated our complaint categories to clearly define a contractor's complaint so we can raise any non-performance issues with our contractor base.
- ✓ We have retendered our Estate Services and are pleased to announce Accuro will be continuing to service our estates with communal cleaning, grounds maintenance and assisted gardening.
- ✓ Following customer feedback we have renewed our Applications for Alterations policy, this policy has been simplified detailing what changes customers can make to their homes.
- ✓ Our Housing Management Team, with the assistance of our customers, have been updating our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, and Panel Guidance and Succession Policy to streamline the procedures to improve the customers' experience. They are also working on the Mutual Exchange Policy and if you

have moved through a mutual exchange recently, you may be asked to complete a short survey so we can obtain your feedback to improve this process.

- ✓ Following the Housing Ombudsman’s spotlight report on noise complaints “Time to be Heard”, we have created a Good Neighbour Policy and introduced the [Noise App](#)
- ✓ We have identified continuous training is required with our complaint investigating managers and will be holding a “complaints lunch and learn” session in quarter one to ensure investigating managers are responding to complaints in line with the new Housing Ombudsman code and remedies guidance.



## Housing Ombudsman Complaints

We want to provide you with an honest and clear view of our complaints, including those cases which are escalated to the Housing Ombudsman. To view landlord annual performance reports or to seek advice, please visit: [Home - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

The Housing Ombudsman is collaborating with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to adopt a joint complaint-handling code. We have participated in the consultation process and will complete a new self-assessment once the code goes live as well as updating our Customer Feedback Policy.

We are also actively sharing Housing Ombudsman complaint determinations and press releases with our Leadership Team to drive a positive complaints culture, as well as providing weekly complaints and compliments report to our Leadership Team. The table below provides details of the reasons why a case was reviewed by the Housing Ombudsman, whether the case is still open or closed and any final determinations provided by the Housing Ombudsman.

Details of case	Status	Ombudsman's determination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landlord's handling of the resident's request that their property be adapted.</li> <li>• Landlord's handling of the resident's complaint.</li> </ul>	Maladministration	<p>Orders:</p> <p>Pay the resident compensation for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Its failure in its handling of the residents request for adaptations.</li> <li>II. Its failure in its handling of the associated complaint.</li> </ol> <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>It is recommended that the landlord carry-out staff training in relation to complaints to ensure that its complaint responses address all points raised and clearly state the reasons where it cannot consider a complaint.</p> <p>We contacted the resident to apologise for the handling of their complaint and request for adaptations to their property and paid the resident the compensation. We have completed training with the Customer Relations and Repairs Team to ensure all complaint responses address all customers concerns and that we clearly state our reasons to why we cannot consider a complaint as per our Customer Feedback Policy and Procedure.</p> <p>We have complied with the orders and the Housing Ombudsman has closed the complaint.</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The landlord's handling of the rent account in respect of a garage.</li> <li>• The level of the increase of the rent for the garage.</li> <li>• The Ombudsman is unable to investigate the level of rent or service charge. They will review how the landlord handled the enquiry and the issues raised.</li> </ul>	<p>Maladministration</p>	<p>Orders:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Landlord should apologise for its handling of the rent and its complaint handling.</li> <li>II. Pay the resident compensation for: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>III. The delay, distress and inconvenience caused to the resident by the landlord's handling of the rent account.</li> <li>IV. The distress and inconvenience caused by the landlord's complaint handling.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>We contacted the resident by phone and sent a formal apology regarding the handling of the complaint and rent account. The resident has received a compensation payment.</p> <p>We have complied with the orders and the Housing Ombudsman has closed the complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The landlord's response to the resident's concerns about structural issues of the building.</li> <li>• The landlord's handling of the resident's reports of anti-social behaviour (ASB).</li> </ul>	<p>Awaiting outcome of appeal</p>	<p>Outcome Due April 2024</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The landlord's handling of damp and mould.</li> <li>• The landlord's handling of repairs to the: roof, heating, hot water and cracks to the outside of the property.</li> <li>• The landlord's handling of the resident's mutual exchange.</li> <li>• The landlord's handling of the resident's report of anti-social behaviour (ASB) from a neighbour.</li> <li>• The level of compensation offered.</li> </ul>	<p>No Maladministration for the handling of damp and mould and cracks to the outside of the property.</p> <p>Service Failures for the handling of the roof repairs, mutual exchange request and handling of complaint and compensation offered.</p> <p>Maladministration for the handling of heating repairs, approach to EPC certificate and ASB</p>	<p>Orders:</p> <p>Pay the resident compensation for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Distress and inconvenience caused by its handling of roof repairs.</li> <li>II. Distress and inconvenience caused by its approach towards the EPC certificate.</li> <li>III. Distress and inconvenience caused by its handling of a mutual exchange request.</li> <li>IV. Distress and inconvenience caused by the handling of the resident's reports of ASB.</li> <li>V. Service failure in the amount of compensation offered to the resident.</li> </ol> <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>The landlord is to consider the findings of the Ombudsman's Spotlight Report on Knowledge and Information Management <a href="#">Knowledge and Information Management (KIM)   Housing Ombuds (housing-ombudsman.org.uk)</a></p> <p>The landlord is to share the findings with relevant staff and its management committee, including training where appropriate and to provide this Service with a report on its findings</p> <p>We have contacted the resident to apologise for the handling of their complaint and have paid the resident compensation. We will be reviewing and providing training to all key staff on how data is created, stored, used and shared (record keeping) in line with our GDPR policy and procedures.</p>
---	---	--



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The landlord’s handling of reports of damp and mould in the bedroom, bathroom, and around windows.</li> <li>• The landlord’s handling of a complaint that it had insulated the property from the inside of the property, as opposed to the outside.</li> <li>• The landlord’s handling of reports of a lack of ventilation in the bathroom, and of the resident being unable to open the windows to the bathroom and landing.</li> </ul>	<p>Maladministration</p>	<p>Orders:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. The landlord must write to the resident with an action plan to complete: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Complete works to insulate the porch area from the outside.</li> <li>II. Complete works to solve the issue of damp and mould</li> </ol> </li> <li>II. Landlord must consider whether the other properties in the development require any remedial works to address damp and mould.</li> <li>III. Landlord to pay the resident compensation for: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Distress and inconvenience caused by its handling of the works to insulate the porch area.</li> <li>II. Distress and inconvenience caused by its handling of resident reports of damp and mould.</li> <li>III. Loss of room and loss of enjoyment of their home.</li> </ol> </li> <li>IV. Landlord to review case learnings to ensure that service errors do not reoccur. The outcome of the review must include a process for defects identified during the defect liability period and latent defects.</li> </ol> <p>Compensation has been paid to the resident and we have provided the Ombudsman and resident with an action plan. We have organised for an independent surveyor to provide us with a detailed scope of work in which we will keep the resident and Ombudsman updated until all works have been</p>
---	--------------------------	---

		<p>completed.</p> <p>We have provided the Ombudsman with two reports:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Update on other properties within the development requiring remedial works</li> <li>II. Case learnings has included a new Defects Policy to be reviewed by Executive Management Team and Gateway Membership Team.</li> </ol>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The landlord's handling of a boiler repairs.</li> <li>• The landlord's response on staff conduct.</li> </ul>	Awaiting outcome	Outcome due October 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The landlord's handling and response to the residents reports of anti-social behaviour.</li> </ul>	Awaiting outcome	Outcome due October 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The landlord's handling of reports of issues with drainage on communal</li> <li>• Grounds.</li> <li>• The resident's associated reports of damp and mould in the property</li> </ul>	Awaiting outcome	Outcome due October 2024

## Customer Representatives

At present, we have four volunteer Customer Representatives who collaborate with the Leadership Team or Director as part of our stage two complaints process. The Customer Representative provides input into the complaint from the customer perspective and ensures a fair outcome has been achieved. We offer opportunities for all Watford Community Housing customers to become involved in customer complaints-handling under our Involvement Menu.

Customers who express an interest in this area of our work are required to undergo relevant training. This is currently delivered by TPAS under a regular training programme. If this role is of interest to you and you would like more information, please contact the Customer Relations Team by emailing [Feedback@wcht.org.uk](mailto:Feedback@wcht.org.uk).