



Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2023/24

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Introduction

Customer feedback gives us important information about how our customers view our services. It helps us see where we're doing well and where we can improve.

This report covers complaints and how we've responded to them from April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024. It includes both qualitative (descriptive) and quantitative (numbers-based) analysis of our complaint-handling performance. We'll also talk about how we've followed the rules set by the Housing Ombudsman Service, any changes we've made to our services based on what we've learned from complaints and any compliments we've received during the same period.

We looked at the complaint data following the rules laid out in the Complaint Handling Code of 2022 and our previous Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy. Both have been reviewed and updated to match the new Complaint Handling Code of 2024.

Number of complaints received

In 2023-24 we received **319** formal complaints, of which **55** were escalated to Stage 2 review. No complaints were refused during this period:



This means we received **40** complaints for every **1,000** properties managed by Salix Homes.

We resolved **83%**¹ of the complaints at **Stage 1**, showing that our investigations were fair and thorough.

Apart from formal complaints, we also resolved

234



complaints at an early stage when customers decided not to continue with the formal process.

However, we have stopped resolving complaints this way following the new Complaint Handling Code 2024. In the future, we will report on service requests as outlined in the Code, as well as complaints.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

To make sure our complaints process is accessible, fair and transparent for everyone, we keep track of the demographic details of our complainants, if available. If we notice anything unusual, we investigate further to ensure fairness in how we treat our customers.

By looking at the themes of complaints across different customer groups, we gain insight into how consistent our service standards are across various customer characteristics.

We currently record and analyse the following characteristics in relation to customers making a complaint: **age, gender, ethnicity, primary language and disability.**

In 2023/24, the age distribution of complainants was similar to that of the wider tenant population.



The largest group of complainants fell within the **41-50** age range. While there were fewer complainants in the **56-60, 61-65, and 66-70** age groups compared to the tenant population, the difference was very small.

Regarding gender and disability status, the demographics of complainants matched those of the tenant population. However, in terms of ethnicity, there were **4%** fewer complaints from customers of **'Black/Black British – African'** origin compared to the tenant population, although the numbers were very low.

Most complainants' primary language was recorded as English, which aligns with the tenant population. However, there were also complainants who primarily spoke **Portuguese, Polish, Arabic, Farsi, Somali, Shona, and French**, indicating that language is not a barrier to making a complaint.

When we looked at complaints from individuals of **'Black/Black British – African'** origin and analysed them by theme, we found that the most common

complaints were about 'unresolved issues' (**2.52%**) and 'time taken' (**1%**). These themes were among the top three for all complaints, suggesting that ethnicity didn't affect how our services were delivered.

It's important to mention that the number of complaints is quite low, so this needs to be considered in any analysis. We've been proactive in gathering demographic information about our customers through surveys like 'Getting to Know You', tenancy audits, and neighbourhood events. We'll keep gathering this data to understand our customers better, which will help us offer services that meet their needs more effectively.

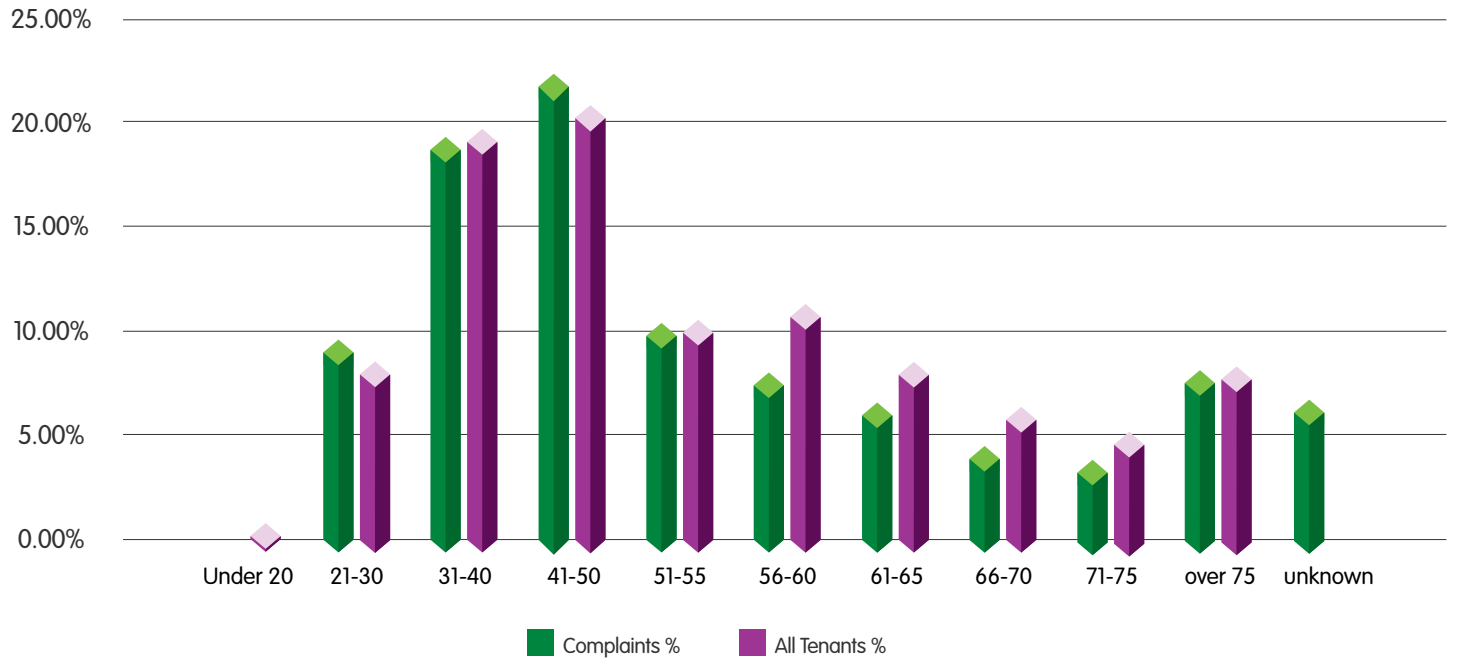
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The most common complaints from Black/Black British – African customers were about 'unresolved issues' (**2.52%**) and 'time taken' (**1%**).

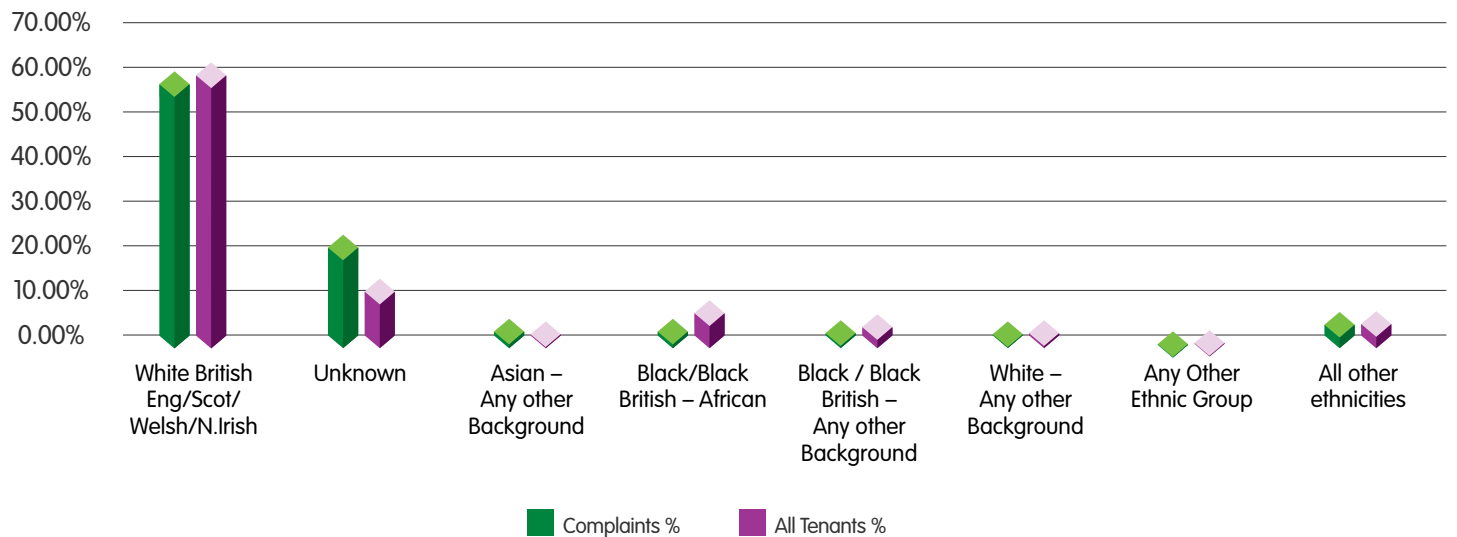
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The age and ethnicity demographic details of our complainants 2023-24

Graph 1: Complaints measured by Age 2023/24



Graph 2: Complaints measured by Ethnicity 2023/24

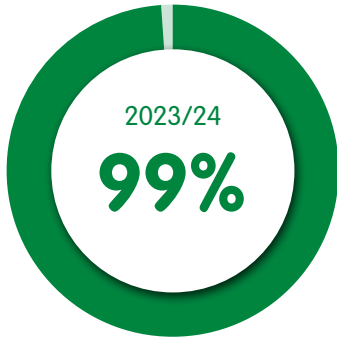




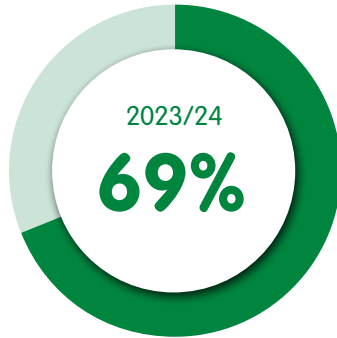
Complaints Performance

We evaluated our performance below based on the Complaint Handling Code 2022, but since the guidelines have been recently updated, we will assess ourselves against the new Complaint Handling Code 2024 going forward.

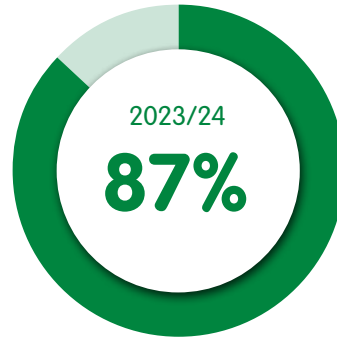
Complaint Handling Code 2022 Targets



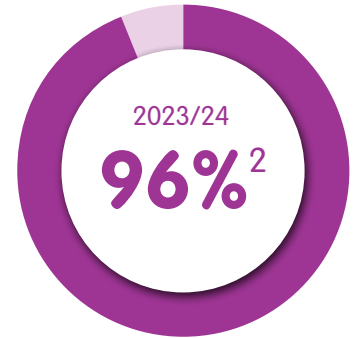
Stage 1
acknowledgements within 5 working days of receipt.



Stage 1
responses within 10 working days of acknowledgement.



Stage 1
responses within Code compliant timescales¹.



Stage 2
responses within 20 working days of escalation.

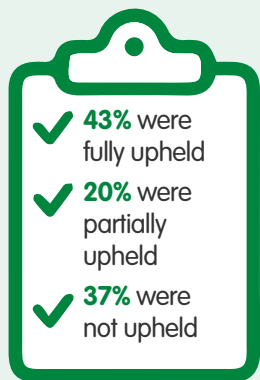


Complaint Outcomes

Stage 1

Where our investigation finds that we are at fault in some way, we will partially or fully uphold the complaint. We'll also inform customers about what we've learned and any steps we'll take to avoid similar issues in the future.

Here are the overall outcomes of our formal complaints in **2023/24**:



In **63%** of complaints we accepted partial or full responsibility. Some complaints are complicated and include more than one complaint part within them, each of which receives its own investigation outcome.

You can see the details below: **46%** of complaint parts were fully upheld.

5% of complaint parts were partially upheld.

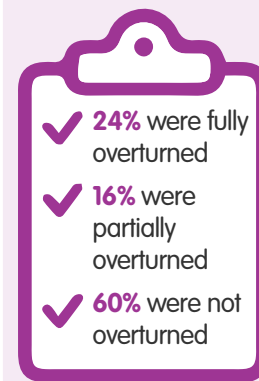
49% of complaint parts were not upheld.

Therefore, in 51% of each complaint part we accepted partial or full responsibility.

Stage 2

When a complaint is escalated to review by a more senior manager, they will assess whether the investigation was fair and thorough. They may agree or disagree with any outcome from Stage 1.

In **2023/24** 55 complaints were reviewed with the following outcomes:



At Stage 1, **11** complaints were upheld, and **100%** of these were still upheld at Stage 2.

17 complaints were partially upheld at Stage 1. **29%** were changed to fully upheld at Stage 2.

27 complaints were not upheld at Stage 1. Out of those, **59%** were still not upheld after being reviewed. **30%** were overturned to be fully upheld, and **11%** were partially overturned at Stage 2.

¹ Code compliant = extension deadlines met within an additional 10 working days with Code compliant reason for extension.

² 53 out of 55 S2 responses sent within 20 days (2 over 20 days with compliant extension letter).



Complaints by Team

The repairs teams received the most complaints (44%), followed by our housing teams with 27% of all complaints. This includes three complaints about caretaking and cleaning in our apartment blocks. The graph below illustrates the number of complaints received by each team:

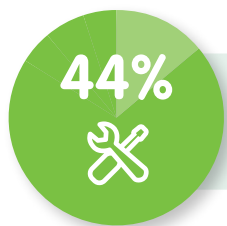
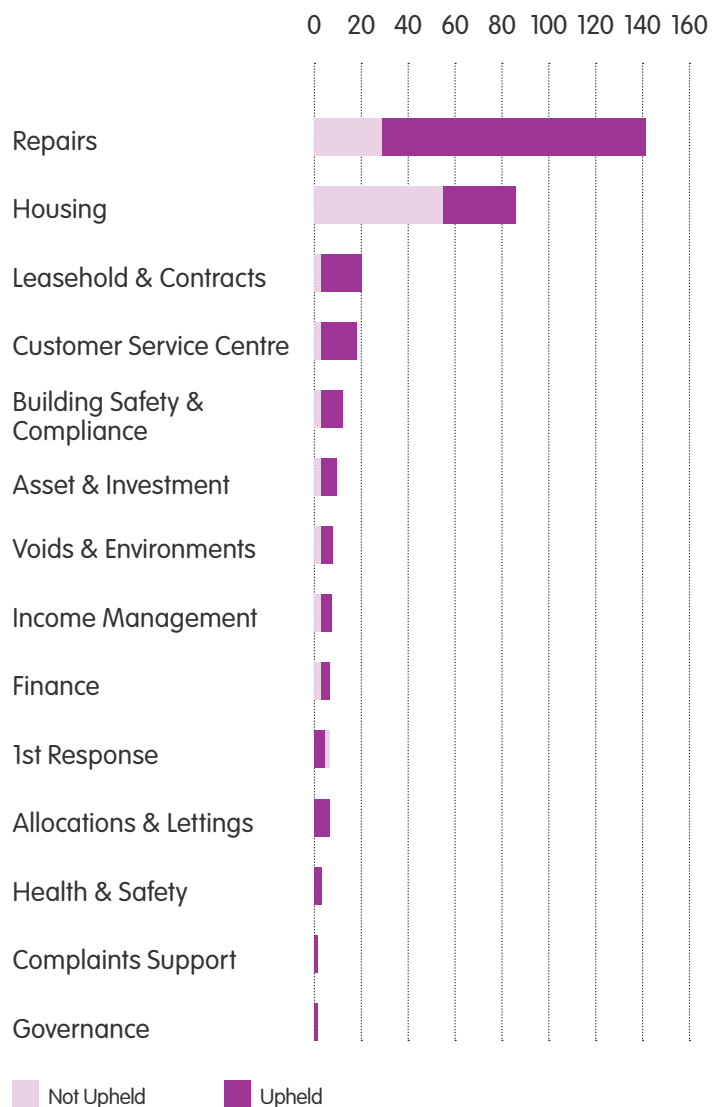
Graph 3: Complaints by Team 2023/24



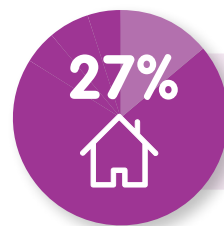
Outcomes by Team

It is useful to understand where a team has accepted full or partial responsibility for a complaint. The graph below shows where we have upheld a complaint by team, including where it may only be partially upheld:

Graph 4: Outcomes by Team 2023/24



The **repairs teams** received the most complaints



The **housing teams** received the second highest number of complaints



Complaints by Theme

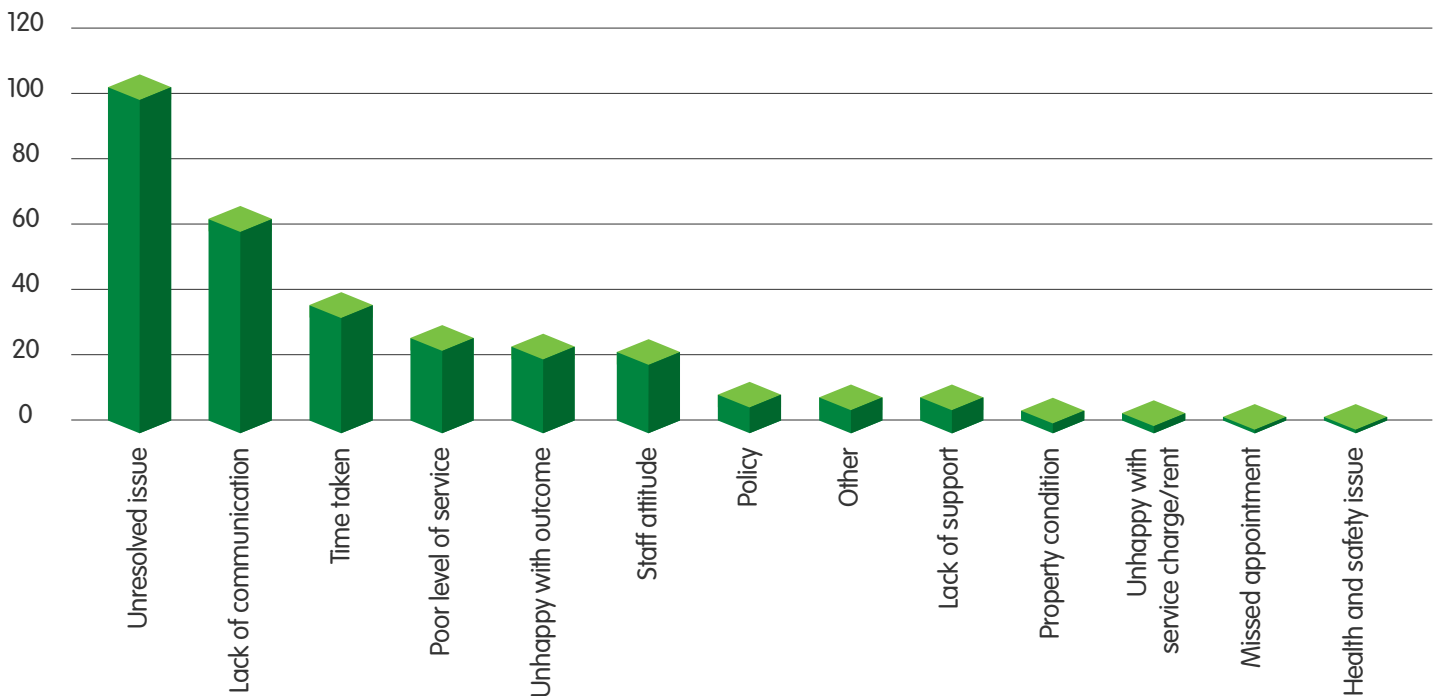
The top three themes for complaints in 2023/24 can be found in the graph below. These are:

- **Unresolved Issue** – where an issue is ongoing to a customer’s dissatisfaction.
- **Lack of Communication** – insufficient or ineffective communication with a customer.
- **Time Taken** – unsatisfactory time taken to complete a repair or other service request.

Out of the complaints concerning unresolved issues, 55 (53%) were related to the repairs team.

Regarding complaints about lack of communication, 23 (37%) were related to the repairs team, and 12 (19%) were about the leasehold and contracts team. Of the complaints about time taken, 32 (86%) were related to the repairs team. The remaining complaints were spread among several other teams.

Graph 5: Complaints by Theme 2023/24



unresolved issues concerned the repairs team.



lack of communication concerned the repairs team and 19% were related to the leasehold and contracts team.



time taken were related to the repairs team and 14% other teams.

Outcomes by Theme

Looking at complaints by theme where the overall outcome was either fully or partially upheld helps us identify areas needing improvement in each department. We conducted a more detailed analysis to break down the highest category of upheld complaints, which is 'unresolved issues'.

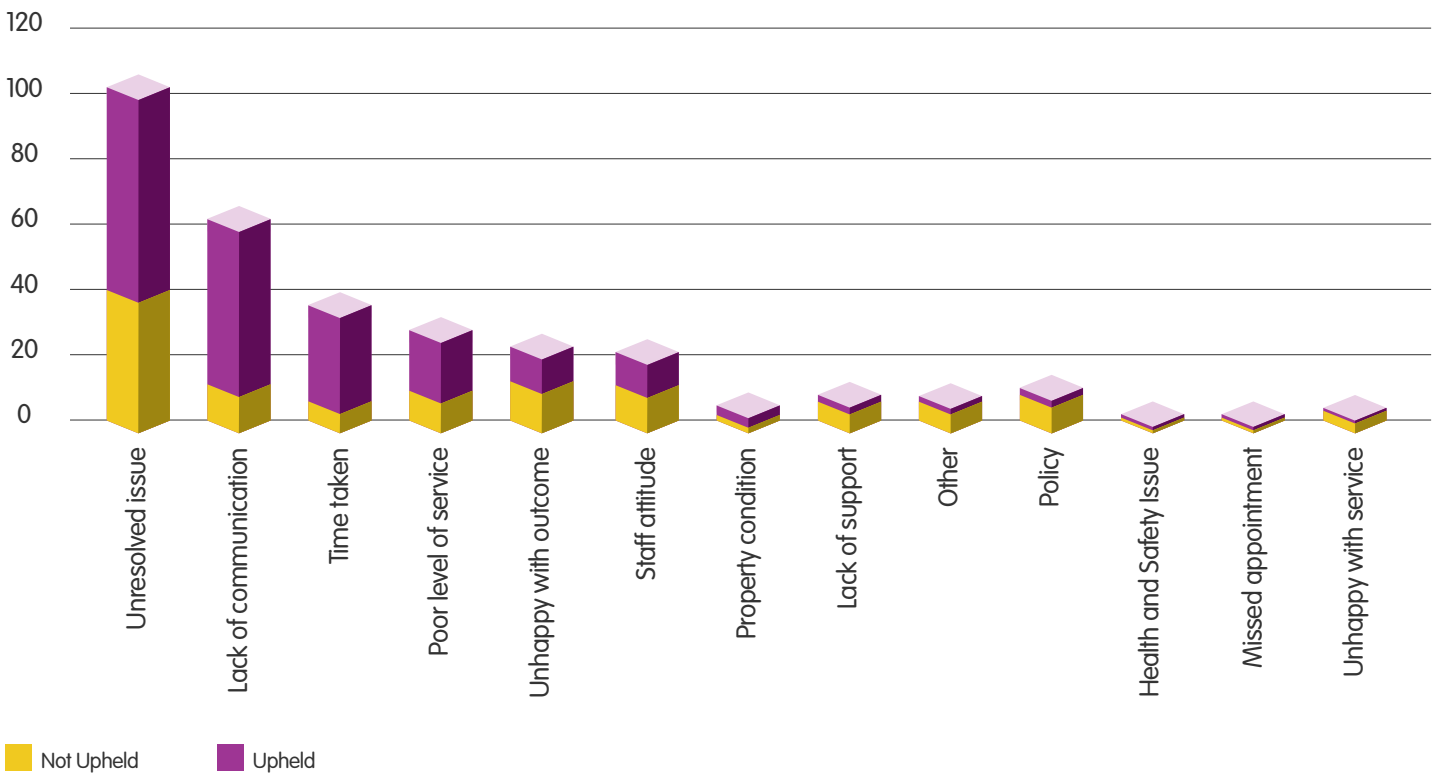
For complaints fully upheld regarding 'unresolved issues', nearly three-quarters were linked to the repairs service.

The highest areas of concern related to the treatment of damp and mould and unresolved leaks. Action has been taken to improve our handling of ongoing damp and mould issues (see learning tracker on page 11).

We have also allocated extra plumbing resources to address the rise in unresolved leaks and improved our process by rescheduling jobs if a leak cannot be located instead of closing them down.

The graph below illustrates the outcomes of complaints by theme throughout 2023/24:

Graph 6: Complaints Outcomes by Theme 2023/24



Housing Ombudsman Service

We received three Housing Ombudsman determinations in 2023/24 which contained four findings of maladministration. The maladministration determinations related to:

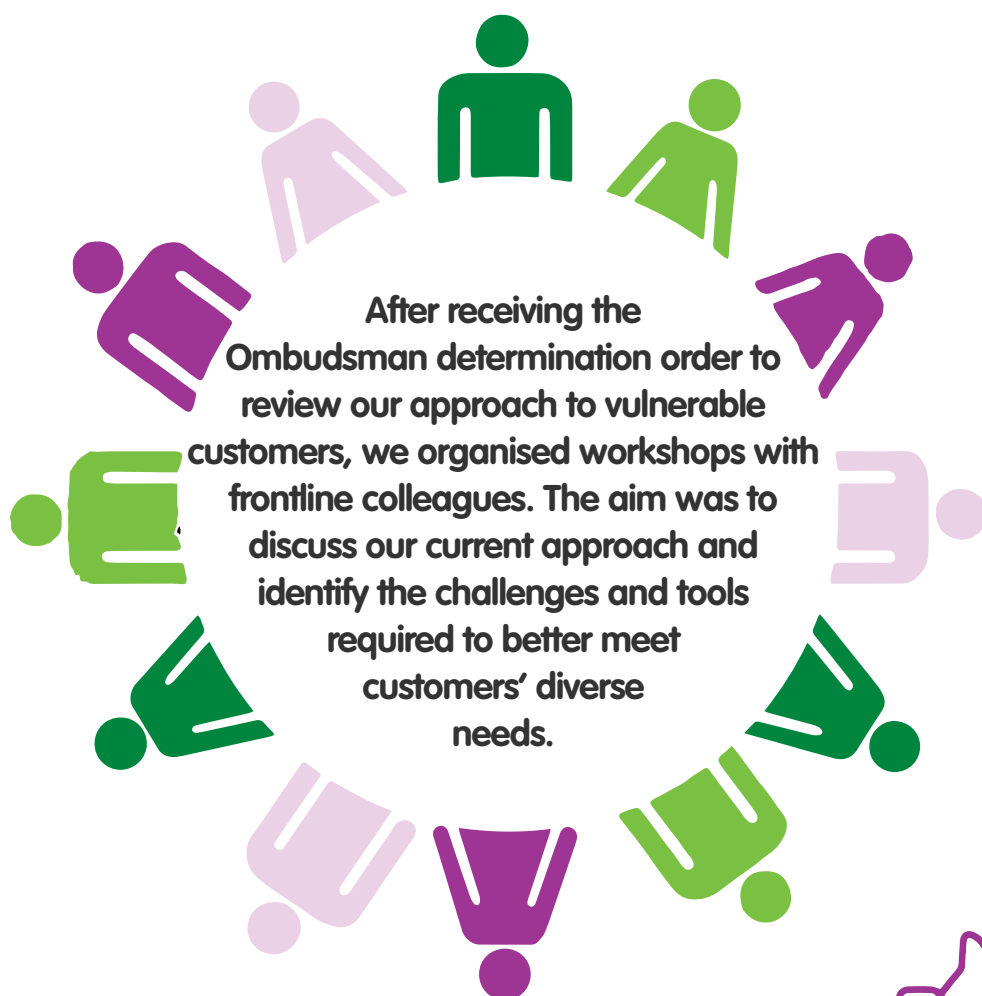
- Failure to find a lasting solution to a heating issue.
- Outstanding repair works after completion of a mutual exchange.
- Call handling when speaking to a vulnerable customer.
- Complaints investigation response.

Within the determinations, Salix Homes received 10 orders and complied with 100% of these.

Compensation amounting to £1,770 was awarded by the Housing Ombudsman across the three determinations. This was paid to customers in full.

We did not receive any additional reports from the Housing Ombudsman regarding Salix Homes' work. However, we have used information and research from the Ombudsman Spotlight publications to evaluate and improve our services. For instance, we have applied this insight to improve how we handle damp and mould issues, manage knowledge and information, and develop a new proposed approach for addressing noise nuisance complaints.

After receiving the Ombudsman determination order to review our approach to vulnerable customers, we organised workshops with frontline colleagues. The aim was to discuss our current approach and identify the challenges and tools required to better meet customers' diverse needs through reasonable adjustments. We incorporated this feedback into a separate review of how data is displayed in our customer relationship management system, using input from colleagues. This will serve as the basis for developing a new policy and procedure on managing vulnerabilities.



Learning from Complaints

In 2023/24 we placed an even greater focus on learning from feedback and complaints, to ensure that we are listening to the customer voice and making the necessary improvements to our service provision as a result. We accept that we do not always get things right, but we are committed to learning from our mistakes, sharing the learning with other internal departments and customers, and making positive changes to prevent the same issues from happening again.

This year we launched our internal **'Lessons Spotlight'** campaign which focusses on one theme at a time, with 'putting yourself in the customer's shoes' as a thread running through all the Spotlights. Our first theme was 'Communication' and incorporated a hard-hitting

campaign about the importance of effective communication and the impact on customers when we do not get this right. We also shared success stories to ensure that good practices were understood and adopted by different areas of the organisation.

We made complaints and learning a regular agenda item in our monthly meetings with service managers. During these sessions, we review the latest performance and share any identified learning points. We collaborate to determine actions that can enhance our overall performance. Additionally, we have introduced a **'Learning Tracker'** to monitor the progress and assess the impact of our actions on future complaint themes, as shown in the table below:

Learning Action Tracker 2023/24

Lesson Learned	Actions	Progress	Owner
Time taken to complete repairs is too long.	Repairs Review: Temporary increase of operative resource and overtime approved.	Only 2 complaints about 'time taken' received in quarter 4. <u>Reduced</u> from 12 in quarter 2.	Repairs manager
Lack of communication when changing/cancelling repairs.	Repairs Review: Trial of enhanced communication, process & technology review.	Lack of communication category <u>reduced</u> to 3 complaints in February from 10 complaints from the previous month.	Repairs manager
Lack of communication: customer call backs exceeding 24 hours per the Customer Charter.	Monthly monitoring of customer call backs.	92% customer callbacks made in 24 hours (Feb) <u>increased</u> from 52% in July.	All service teams
Unresolved issues of Damp & Mould (D&M).	Additional resource added to D&M team. Installed 'Switchee' devices in properties to monitor humidity.	Internal audit <u>completed</u> April – positive outcome.	Repairs manager



Our customer callback performance has risen from under 70% in September 2023 to 92% in February 2024.

As a result, we have already seen positive outcomes for customers, both in terms of reduced complaints in specific areas and improved overall service performance.

For instance, in quarter three of 2023, we received 14 complaints about 'lack of communication', particularly concerning delays in returning calls and not informing customers about changes to repair appointments. In response, we began closely monitoring our call-back

performance to ensure it aligns with our Customer Charter commitments. This data is now shared monthly and discussed in operational manager meetings. We also implemented a proactive communication approach in the repairs team as part of a comprehensive service review. Both initiatives improved performance and customer service while also decreasing the number of related complaints. Our customer callback performance has risen from under 70% in September 2023 to 92% in February 2024.

We have been rigorous in our efforts to embed the importance of learning from customer feedback into our service culture. This includes training for colleagues on how to identify and record learning as well as taking action to improve services as a result.

Additionally, improvements and positive actions resulting from feedback are discussed in our 'Complaints Oversight Group', which is one of our customer sub-groups.

We also commissioned an independent external review of our complaint handling process which was carried out by Housemark in 2024. In their final report, Housemark commented:



In the context of learning from complaints, in line with our other findings of this review, we found evidence that Salix has a well-thought-out approach, which is robust and embedded.



Further examples of positive action we have taken to improve services as a direct result of learning lessons from complaints feedback can be found below:

You said

- There was confusion about how to apply a policy concerning pest infestations in a shared loft space.
- The customer's working schedule wasn't properly communicated to the contractor, causing them to miss an appointment.
- A customer said that we did not adequately address their vulnerabilities during a call to the customer service centre.
- There can be a lack of communication with customers when changing or cancelling repairs.
- Multiple customers were complaining about the length of time taken for certain repairs to be completed.
- A customer struggled to understand a new device that had been installed in their property.

We Listened, We Improved

- ✓ We revised and updated our policy to clearly include treatment of infestations in shared loft spaces.
- ✓ We improved our process by adding an extra step to ensure that the contractor receives complete information about customers' availability.
- ✓ We have reassessed our approach to supporting vulnerable customers. This involved collaborating with colleagues and customers to create a new policy, along with implementing systems and tools to assist officers when customers share sensitive information.
- ✓ As part of our comprehensive repairs review, we experimented with providing customers with improved communication before appointments. We also examined and updated our processes, along with exploring the use of technology.
- ✓ Within our repairs review, we assessed demand against our resources to recruit additional trades operatives as well as offering customers additional appointments out of office hours.
- ✓ We enhanced our information and training on the device to ensure that this was clear and easy to understand for all customers.

Compliments

In 2023/2024, we received a total of 288 compliments, 145 of which were recorded in our CRM system. The Repairs team received the most compliments (49%), followed by the customer service centre (16%). Compliments were also given for various service areas and individuals, including those in income management, environmental services, and subcontractor teams. Most compliments were about the standard of service (81%), while others praised the quality of work, staff attitude, and speed of service. Additionally, we received 124 customer compliments from call satisfaction surveys and 19 positive comments in the Tenant Satisfaction Measure surveys.

Examples of compliments received from customers can be found below;

“
Would like to say a big thank you to Amy on your team for all the help, reported a repair for my heating and Amy was so helpful, so patient with me over the phone. Amy Thank you for listening and helping with my repair to radiators upstairs in our home. It's all been fixed and radiators are now working again. Also Thank you to the young man who came out to fix them. Salix Thank you so much.
Customer Service Centre”

“
Salix have always been extremely respectful, helpful and responsive whenever I have had any issue. For example, I was recently stressed about rent arrears that were building up, but Salix were excellent in organising a plan with me to resolve the issue and reassured me that it would be done swiftly.
Income Management”

“
A huge thank you to the new housing officer and caretaker team including Richard who works hard keeping the grounds clean, the block already feels quieter and safer. They are all visible approachable and friendly. Of all the staff, the team are listening. Please keep supporting it's easy to complain but a good job by all is being done here.
Housing and Caretaking & Cleaning”

81%
of the compliments we received were about the standard of our service.

“
I am really impressed by how attentive Salix are regarding damp and mould. Whenever I call up to report a repair, the staff on the phone ask whether I have mould or damp in my home, which indicates they take this issue seriously.”
Repairs”

“
Everyone that I have spoken to from Salix is very respectful and the staff are always very helpful with any matter or query that I come to them with so I am very happy with Salix as a landlord.”
Salix Staff”



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