



# **Neighbourhoods & Housing**

# **Complaint Handling Performance & Improvements 2023/24**

**1. Executive Summary**

Information in this report is based on analysis of feedback received through the Council’s formal feedback scheme and via official routes into the Council during 2023/24. This report fulfils the councils Obligations regarding the production of a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the Councils Complaint Handling performance in order to comply with the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling code.

**2. Background**

- The Neighbourhoods & Housing (N&H) feedback process is part of the wider HCC feedback scheme. Letters and documents to residents/complainants conform to corporate templates and the corporate GovService IT software is used to record Complaints, Concerns, Compliments and Suggestions.
  - Feedback within N&H is divided into 2 areas;
    - i. ‘Repairs’ – encompassing Asset Management and Compliance (HIS)
    - ii. ‘Non-Repairs’ – encompassing all other areas of N&H
- For ease and collective understanding, the terms ‘Repairs’ and ‘Non-Repairs’ are used throughout this document.
- Housing Repairs fall under the remit of the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS). Housing Non-Repairs fall under the remit of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
- Tracy Pocklington (External Relations Manager) manages Repairs feedback.
  - Iain Dixon (Customer Feedback manager) manages Non-Repairs feedback and has oversight of all N&H feedback.
  - Repairs and Non-Repairs each produce a quarterly Feedback Insight Report which is consider by their Senior Leadership Team.

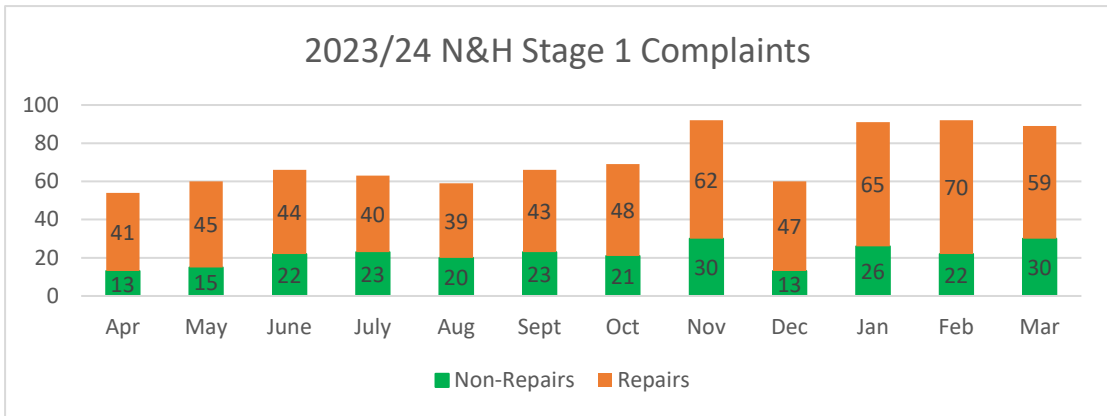
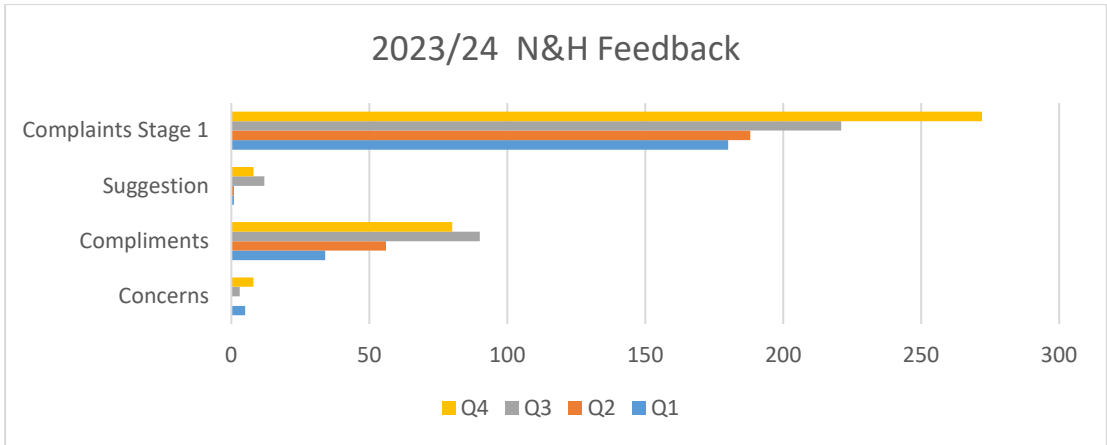
**3. Data and performance on formal feedback for Neighbourhoods & Housing 2023/24**

**3.1 Feedback by year and quarter;**

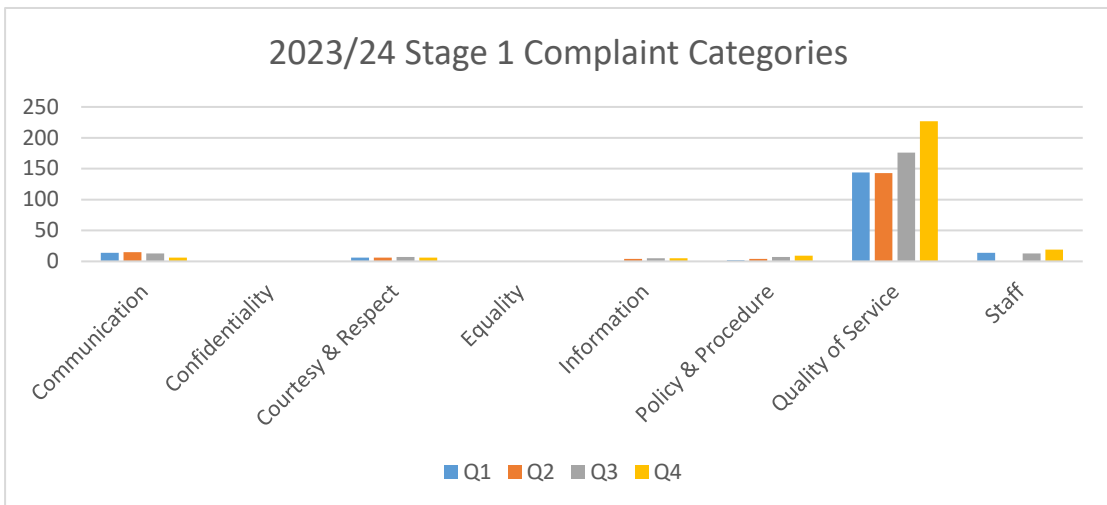
| Feedback Received                      | 2019/20    | 2020/21**  | 2021/22     | 2022/23    | 2023/24    |            |            |            |             |
|--|------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
|  |            |            |             |            | Q1         | Q2         | Q3         | Q4         | Total       |
| Comments                               | 26         | 20         |             |            |            |            |            |            |             |
| Concerns                               | 20         | 18         | 6           | 13         | 5          | 0          | 3          | 8          | 16          |
| Compliments                            | 137        | 101        | 124         | 116        | 36         | 56         | 90         | 80         | 262         |
| Suggestion                             |            | 6          | 13          | 11         | 1          | 1          | 12         | 8          | 22          |
| Complaints Stage 1                     | 791        | 746        | 908         | 754        | 180        | 188        | 221        | 272        | 861         |
| <b>Total</b>                           | <b>974</b> | <b>891</b> | <b>1051</b> | <b>894</b> | <b>222</b> | <b>245</b> | <b>326</b> | <b>368</b> | <b>1161</b> |
| Complaints Stage 2 (accepted/rejected) | 76         | 60         | 77/38*      | 71/30*     | 15/7*      | 23/10*     | 24/10*     | 20/10*     | 82/37*      |
| Informal Feedback                      |            |            | 1305        | 974        | 287        | 203        | 156        | 179        | 825         |

\* Stage 2 complaint investigations accepted/Stage 2 complaint requests rejected  
 \*\* Covid19 and lockdown

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| N&H Stage 1 Complaints by business area 2023/24 | Q1  | Q2  | Q3  | Q4  | Total |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Housing Investment Service                      | 36  | 45  | 81  | 59  | 221   |
| KWL   | 86  | 70  | 70  | 126 | 352   |
| Other Contractors                               | 8   | 7   | 6   | 9   | 30    |
| Strategy, Market Intervention & Growth          | 8   | 12  | 18  | 9   | 47    |
| Business Development & Change                   | 0   | 1   | 1   | 0   | 2     |
| Access & Wellbeing                              | 12  | 15  | 12  | 21  | 60    |
| Area & Neighbourhood Management                 | 30  | 38  | 33  | 48  | 149   |
|   | 180 | 188 | 221 | 272 | 861   |



3.1.2 Complaints continue to form the bulk of all feedback.

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- 3.1.3 The number of complaints (272) in Q4 has increased to the highest recorded all year. This increase has been experienced across HCC and is a seasonal trend.
- 3.1.4 The number of complaints (861) in 2023/24 is an increase from 754 in 2022/23. The reasons for this are believed to be the increased marketing of the complaints process, and the improved knowledge of the requirement to record expressions of dissatisfaction as complaints.
- 3.1.5 The overall number of Stage 2 Reviews is within expected parameters. On 1 April 2024, the revised HOS Complaint Handling Code and the new LGSCO Complaint Handling Code came into effect. The Codes state that all Stage 2 requests must be accepted and investigated. The consequence will be an increase in the number of Stage 2 Reviews.
- 3.1.6 The number of Compliments has increased markedly. The increase in Compliments is welcomed and is proportionally split between Repairs and Non-Repairs based on the total amount of feedback each area receives.
- 3.1.7 There are various reasons why the Council will not record and investigate a complaint. These are cancelled and categorised as duplicates (the complaint already exists), service requests (it's the first time the issue has been reported) or invalid (it's outside the jurisdiction of the Council or the Complaints process). In the period 2023-24, 110 complaints were cancelled. 20 were duplicates, 10 were service requests and 80 were invalid under the complaints scheme. Explanations are provided to all customers regarding why their complaint is not progressed.

**3.2. Stage 1 Complaints answered within target.**

KPI's

- answer Stage 1 complaints with 10 working days (HOS and LGSCO KPI)
- answer Stage 2 Reviews within 20 working days (HOS and LGSCO KPI)

- 3.2.1 81% of Stage 1 complaints in 2023/24 were answered within 10 working days. This is an increase from 77% in 2022/23. Performance in this area has steadily increased through the year as greater focus has been put on complaint handling and completing investigations expeditiously.

| 2023/24 N&H Stage 1 Complaint answered within 10 working days | Q1  | Q2  | Q3  | Q4  | Year       |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------|
| Within 10 working days  | 114 | 143 | 197 | 248 | <b>702</b> |
|   | 63% | 76% | 89% | 91% | <b>81%</b> |
| Over 10 working days  | 66  | 45  | 24  | 24  | <b>159</b> |
|   | 37% | 24% | 11% | 9%  | <b>19%</b> |

- 3.2.2 Repairs have improved their complaint completion rate as the year has progressed, achieving over 90% in Q3 and Q4. Non-Repairs have maintained a more consistent completion rate, with a year-end rate of 75%.

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| Stage 1 Complaints                 | Q1  | Q2  | Q3  | Q4  | Total |
|------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Non Repairs within 10 working days | 39  | 43  | 44  | 67  | 193   |
| Non Repairs over 10 working days   | 11  | 23  | 20  | 11  | 65    |
|                                    | 50  | 66  | 64  | 78  | 258   |
| Non Repairs completion rate        | 78% | 65% | 69% | 86% | 75%   |
|                                    |     |     |     |     |       |
| Repairs within 10 working days     | 75  | 100 | 153 | 181 | 509   |
| Repairs over 10 working days       | 55  | 22  | 4   | 13  | 94    |
|                                    | 130 | 122 | 157 | 194 | 603   |
| Repairs completion rate            | 58% | 82% | 97% | 93% | 84%   |

3.2.3 Within Non-Repairs, Strategy, Market Intervention & Growth's completion rate within 10 working days fell to 33% in Q4 (Q3 – 66%). Their annual rate has also fallen to 59% compared to 79% in 2022/23.

A summary of the reasons why complaints took over 10 working days to complete is below;

- 10 investigations extended due to AO leave/training/otherwise unavailable
- 10 investigations extended due to waiting information from contractors/other parties/requirement to review large volume of information.

Completion rates could be improved with better management of the investigation process, ensuring investigations are started without delay, and alternative officers can undertake investigations when the original officer is unable to.

**Implemented Recommendation - Strategy, Market Intervention & Growth improve the management of complaints, particularly concerning; 1) contingencies to cater for officer absence, and 2) reviewing large volumes of information.**

### 3.3 Stage 1 Complaints – Repairs

3.3.1 Q4 experienced a significant increase in the number of complaints concerning KWL and a decrease in the number concerning Housing Investment Service (HIS). The reasons for this were highlighted in the Q3 report and the data in Q4 supports the reasoning;

Q3 report

- 50% of the Contract Delivery Team are new to the service and clerical errors have been made. This is being addressed with in-house training.
- Some complaints have been incorrectly attributed to Housing Investment. It is not possible to update the closed records, but the errors have been recognised and measures put in place to ensure the incorrect recording does not continue.

3.3.2 Q4 has seen a return to more the more usual distribution of complaints within Repairs;

- 65% of all Repairs complaints in Q4 concerned KWL.
- 58% of all Repairs complaints in 2023/24 concerned KWL

3.3.3 KWL completed, 29,288 responsive repairs in Q4, of which 4,406 were gas servicing.

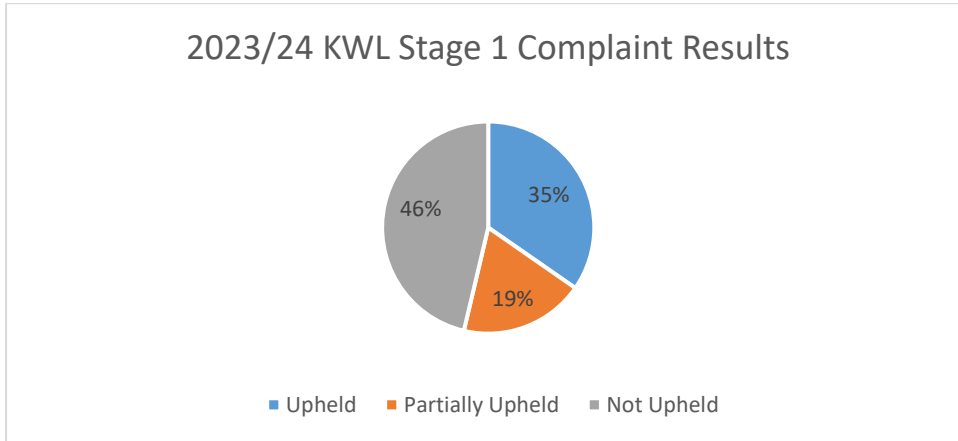
3.3.4 As per previous Insight reports, Quality of Service is the most common category of complaint concerning KWL. In Q4, 91% of all KWL complaints were categorised as Quality of Service, with the total 2023/24 figure slightly lower at 87%.

3.3.5 Whilst the threshold for recording a complaint is low it can be more insightful to focus on complaints that are either Upheld or Partially Upheld. These identify service

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failures and consequently areas where there is the potential to improve the service provided. It is also useful to focus on KWL as most complaints concern this contractor.

3.3.6 In Q4, 54% of complaints about KWL were either Upheld or Partially Upheld. This is the same as the overall figure for 2023/24

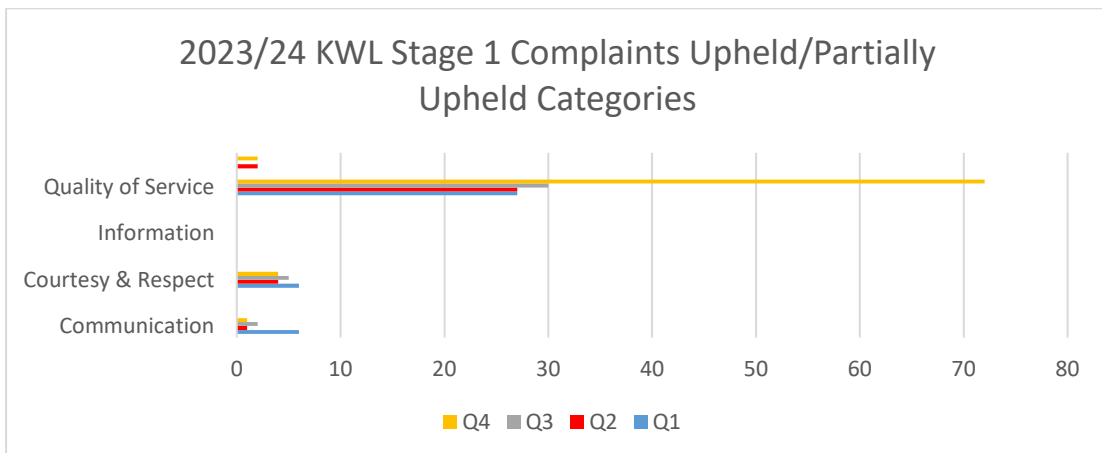


3.3.7 Q4 experienced a significant increase in the number of KWL complaints categorised as Quality of Service which were Upheld and Partially Upheld.

Of the 107 Stage 1 complaints upheld/partially upheld;

- 79 were attributed to KWL (73%)
- 7 were attributed to other contractors (6%)

During Q4 there was a trend showing service failures being attributed to ‘operational demands/influx of emergency orders.’ KWL have advised further resources are due in the planning team which should improve this situation.



3.3.8 A review of the upheld and partially upheld Quality of Service sub-groups reveals an improvement within the ‘Unhappy with Quality’ sub-group but the issues with response time/delays remain.

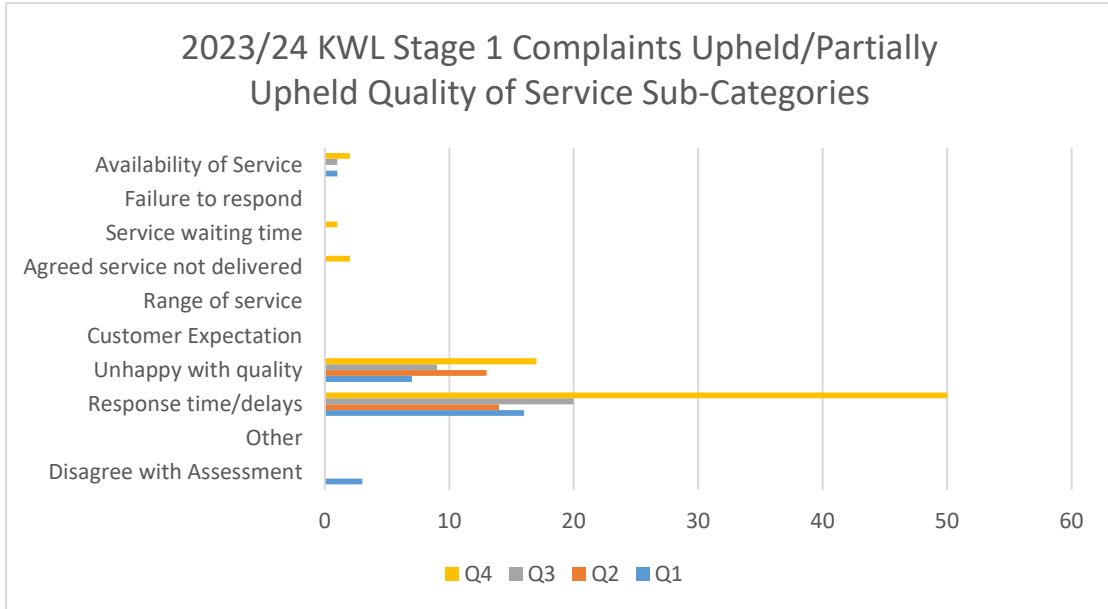
3.3.9 The joint learning carried out with KWL continues to identify improvements are required in the follow-on process (where KWL have attended but further works are required). This is contributing to delays in work being completed.

Issues identified include;

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- Orders being closed in error (work still outstanding)
- Customers having to chase follow-on work appointments/Operatives not adding notes to jobs so follow-on work is not picked up.

KWL have advised processes are in place to ensure regular communication with supervisors/operatives, so they understand the consequential impact on customers. Feedback in this area will continue to be monitored by the HIS External Relations Manager.



3.3.10 In Q4 there were 20 Stage 1 complaints linked to Gas. 10 complaints were upheld/partially upheld, 8 of which concerned KWL. These were for Quality of Service/Response Times/Delays.

3.3.11 Housing Investment have developed and delivered a series of bitesize customer feedback training sessions for the External Relations team. This training will continue with a view to improving the quality of feedback investigation and customer service.

3.3.12 Damp and Mould

In 2022/23 the Housing Ombudsman increased its focus on damp and mould (see Housing Ombudsman Spotlight report October 2021).

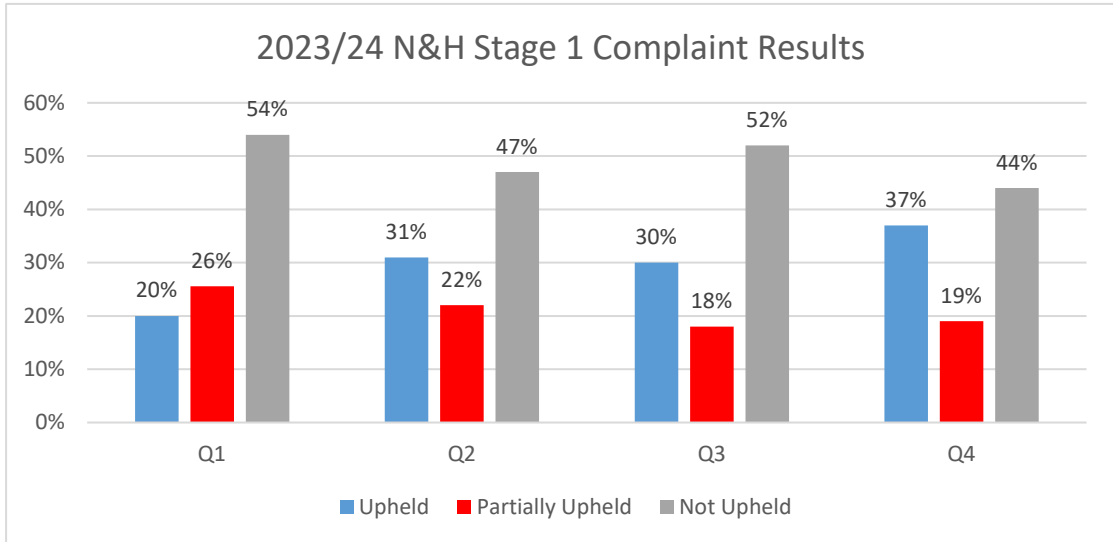
3.3.13 During Q4 42 complaints were logged where the complainant mentioned ‘damp and mould’. 15 were upheld/partially upheld due to Quality of Service – unhappy with quality/response times/delays in completing repairs.

3.3.14 The corporate IT system has been updated to enable the capture of complaints that are specifically linked to damp and mould.

**4. Stage 1 Complaints - Results**

4.1 52% of all N&H complaints in 2023/24 were either Upheld or Partially Upheld. This is consistent with previous years.

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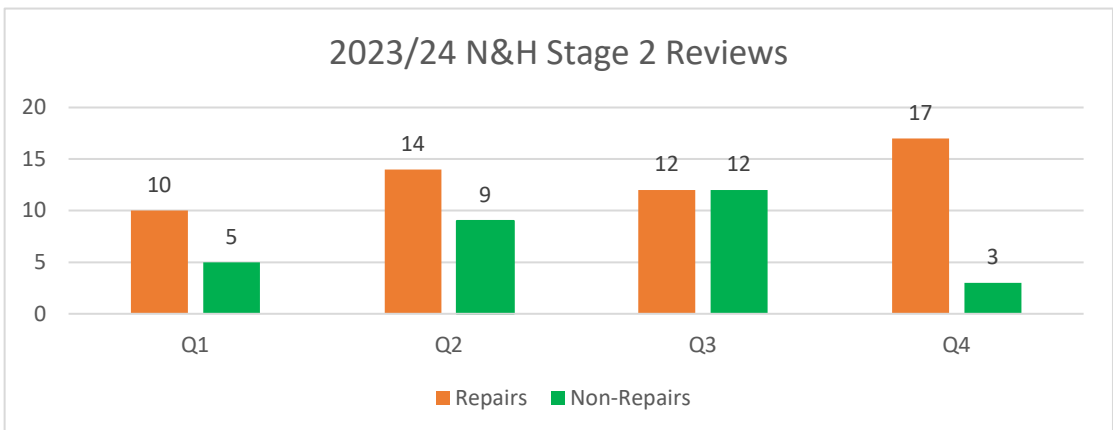
**5 Stage 2 Reviews**

5.1 Stage 2 Reviews are shown separately in the table at 3.1 as the original complaint is included in the Stage 1 data.

5.2 In Q4 30 complainants asked for their complaint to be considered for a Stage 2 Review, of which 20 were accepted.

- Non-Repairs – 3 accepted/6 rejected.
- Repairs – 17 accepted/4 rejected.

Q4 experienced a larger difference than usual in the distribution of Stage 2 Reviews between Repairs and Non-Repairs. The specific reasons for this are not known but the difference is due in equal parts to an increase in the number of Repairs Reviews and a decrease in the number of Non-Repairs.



5.3 The overall number of Stage 2 Reviews is within expected parameters. On 1 April 2024, the revised HOS Complaint Handling Code and the new LGSCO Complaint Handling Code came into effect. The Codes state that all Stage 2 requests must be accepted and investigated. Therefore, future reports will only report the number of Stage 2 Reviews.

5.4 Stage 2 Reviews answered within target.

KPI



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- answer Stage 2 Review’s within 20 working days (HOS and LGSCO KPI)

In Q4, 65% of Stage 2 Reviews were completed within 20 working days. This is a fall from 83% in Q3 but within normal performance variations.

5.5 For 2023/24, 73% of Stage 2 Reviews were completed within 20 working days. This is an increase from 66% recorded in 2022/23.

| 2023/24 N&H Stage 2 Complaint answered within 20 working days | Q1  | Q2  | Q3  | Q4  | Year |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| Within 20 working days  | 10  | 17  | 19  | 13  | 59   |
|   | 63% | 74% | 83% | 65% | 73%  |
| Over 20 working days  | 5   | 6   | 4   | 7   | 22   |
|   | 37% | 26% | 17% | 35% | 27%  |

| Stage 2 Reviews                    | Q1   | Q2  | Q3  | Q4  | Total |
|------------------------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Non Repairs within 20 working days | 5    | 7   | 11  | 3   | 26    |
| Non Repairs over 20 working days   | 0    | 2   | 1   | 0   | 3     |
|                                    | 5    | 9   | 12  | 3   | 29    |
| Non Repairs completion rate        | 100% | 78% | 92% | 100 | 90%   |
|                                    |      |     |     |     |       |
| Repairs within 20 working days     | 5    | 10  | 8   | 10  | 33    |
| Repairs over 20 working days       | 5    | 4   | 3   | 7   | 19    |
|                                    | 10   | 14  | 11  | 17  | 52    |
| Repairs completion rate            | 50%  | 71% | 73% | 59% | 63%   |

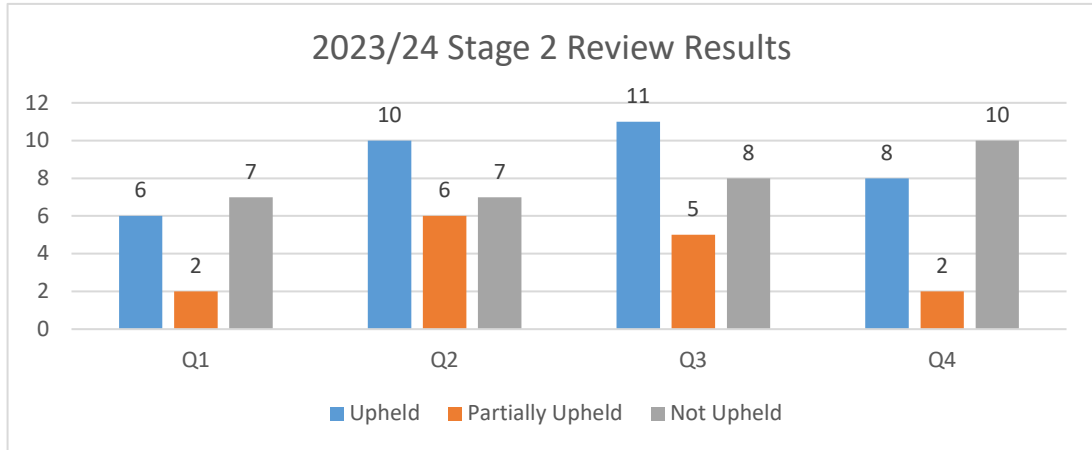
5.6 Repairs have an annual Stage 2 completion rate (within 20 working days) of 63%, compared to 90% for Non-Repairs. Whilst Stage 2 Reviews tend to be more involved than a Stage 1 investigation a number of reasons for Repairs low completion rate have been identified;

- External Relations Manager workload. The External Relations Manager conducts most Stage 2 Reviews. This is despite Job Descriptions for Repairs Managers including the investigation and response to Stage 2 Review. The External Relations Manager has defaulted to responding to all Repairs Stage 2 Reviews due to the historical difficulty in obtaining timely responses from appropriate managers.
- Efforts made to agree a positive outcome. The External Relations Manager endeavours to agree a positive outcome with the customer. This can take time, involving multiple interactions with both the customer and contractor.

**Implemented Recommendation – External Relations Manager and HIS Head of Service to review responsibility for conducting Stage 2 Reviews (Tracy Pocklington / Brad Smith).**

5.7 In Q4, 50% of Stage 2 Reviews were either Upheld or Partially Upheld. This is lower than the annual figure of 61%. The high percentage rate of results with Upheld/Partially Upheld findings reflects the scrutiny placed on all Stage 2 Review request before acceptance and the following greater level of investigation during the review. Stage 2 Reviews often involve more than 1 issue. If one of a number of issues is found to be Upheld then the final result will either be Upheld or Partially Upheld.

From 1 April 2024 the HOS Complaint Handling Code mandates that every request for a Stage 2 Review must be accepted. As a result, future reports are likely to record a lower Upheld or Partially Upheld rate for Stage 2 Reviews.



5.8 As per Stage 1 complaints, Quality of Service is the predominant category of Stage 2 Reviews that are Upheld or Partially Upheld. Stage 2 Reviews highlight the importance of ensuring remedial action agreed at Stage 1 is completed. Repairs continue to work with KWL to embed a process to ensure actions agreed at Stage 1 are monitored to completion.

**6. Customer Satisfaction with the feedback process**

6.1 The STAR survey is completed annually to gauge customer satisfaction with the complaints process. The results are published separately and not included in this report.

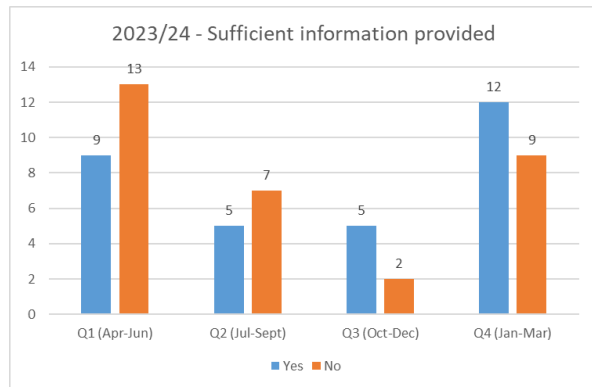
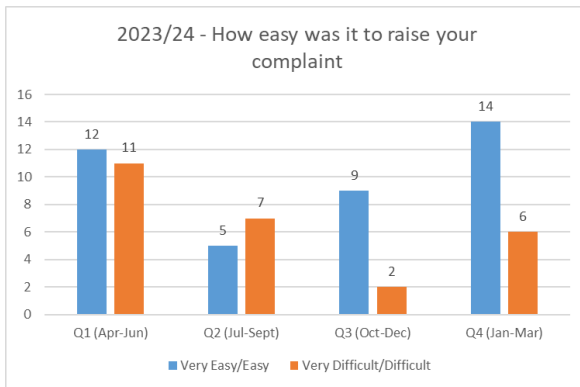
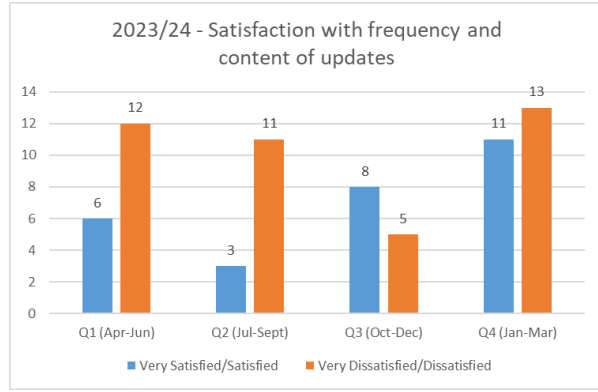
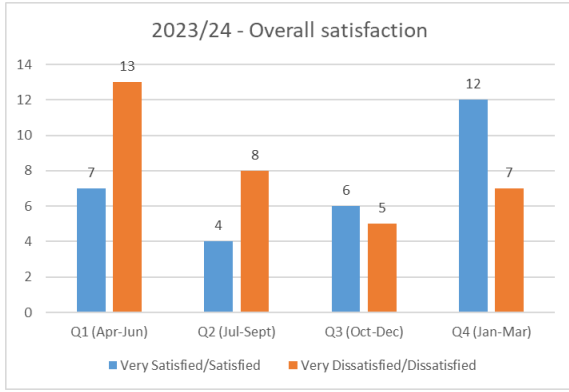
6.2 An additional effort is made to check customer satisfaction with the complaints process. The Customer Feedback officer sends complainants a Customer Satisfaction Survey (Csat) 4 weeks after a complaint is closed. This is intended to give more timely data and additional information to that provided by the STAR survey.

6.3 Unfortunately return rates are low (15%). Consequently, results are reported on an annual basis.

6.4 The data is shown below. In summary;

- 47% of respondents are either satisfied or very satisfied with the complaint process (this compares favourably to the 2023/24 STAR data which recorded an overall satisfaction rate to our approach to handling complaints of 38.6%).
- 61% of respondents felt it was easy or very easy to raise their complaint.
- 41% of respondents were satisfied with the frequency and content of complaint updates.
- 50% of respondents felt they received sufficient information about their complaint and how to contact the Ombudsman.

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6.5 Respondents have the opportunity to make free text comments on their survey returns. Examples are detailed below but a summary of the issues raised are; communication and ease of making a complaint. N&H have updated working practices since some comments were made, including mandating that Actioning officers ring a complainant to discuss their complaint, and the redesign of the HCC website.

Positive comments:

- “Responded very fast”
- “Good that complaints are taken seriously and have some sort of follow through procedure”
- “I was updated regularly”

Negative comments:

- “Had no communication what so ever”
- “They make it hard to complain so no one complains but they are happy taking rent money”
- “To find how to complain was initially difficult”

Areas we can improve on:

- “Regular communication is vital for some people and Hull City Council can improve on this.”
- “A phone call from housing would be better so that we can explain everything”
- “More thought and care should have been shown right at the beginning and more one to one conversations should have taken place thereby giving myself the opportunity to discuss certain aspects of the complaint instead of all communications being via email. This is dehumanising and open to many aspects being misinterpreted. I honestly feel that emails are being relied upon too much in

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every area of the Council and that more telephone conversations would be much more appropriate and achieve faster and better results”

- 6.6 The Csat also acts as a useful opportunity to ‘check-in’ with complainants. Following the sending of the Csat survey complainants will sometimes respond stating they have not received their Stage 1 response letter, or they are unhappy with the Stage 1 response. This then provides the opportunity for service recovery by re-sending the Stage 1 letter or enhancing our service delivery by opening a Stage 2 Review.

## 7. Learning from complaints

- 7.1 Through 2023/24 there has been;

- A direction from SMT toward the end of Q2 for all Actioning Officers to discuss a complaint with the complainants to fully understand;
  - the nature of the complaint
  - what outcome is sought
  - provide a more personal and specific response to complainants

This direction corresponds with comments made in the Csat survey (see 8.5).

Whilst there is no data to quantify the impact of this measure the Feedback Team have detected an improvement in the quality of written responses. In particular responses are more bespoke and personable, specifically referencing the discussion the Actioning Officer has had with the complainant and directly addressing the issues in the complaint. Moving forward this also supports the requirement for the Council to ‘define’ their understand of a complaint and the outcome wanted, which is a requirement of the Housing Ombudsman Service in the new Complaint Handling Code.

- An increased focus on responding to Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints within the HOS 10- and 20-day timescales. The data reveals an improvement in complaint response times through Q3 and Q4. This points to an improved service to complainants, which coupled with the impact of 1 above, has resulted in a much-improved complaint handling response.
- Adverse findings by the HOS in 2022/23 and early 2023/24 concerned Adaptations. In particular record keeping, keeping residents informed and the time taken to complete agreed work. As a result Adaptations have developed an improvement plan to address the identified short comings.

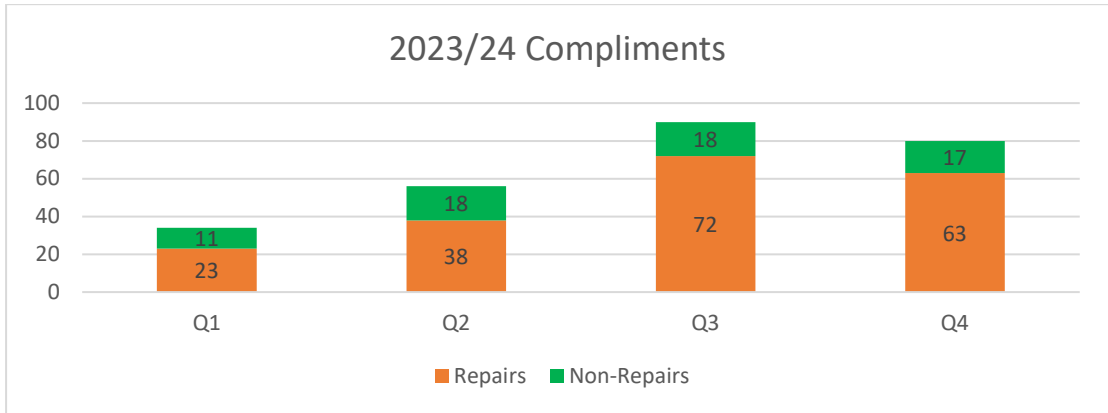
## 8. Designated Tenants Complaints Panel

- 8.1 There have been 0 complaints referred to the Designated Tenants Complaints Panel in Q3.
- 8.2 In August 2023 the Customer Feedback Manager presented the 2023 N&H Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment to the Designated Tenants Panel Scrutiny Panel. The Scrutiny Panel concluded that the Self-Assessment exceeded the expectations set out by the regulators in Complaint Handling Code published in March 2022.

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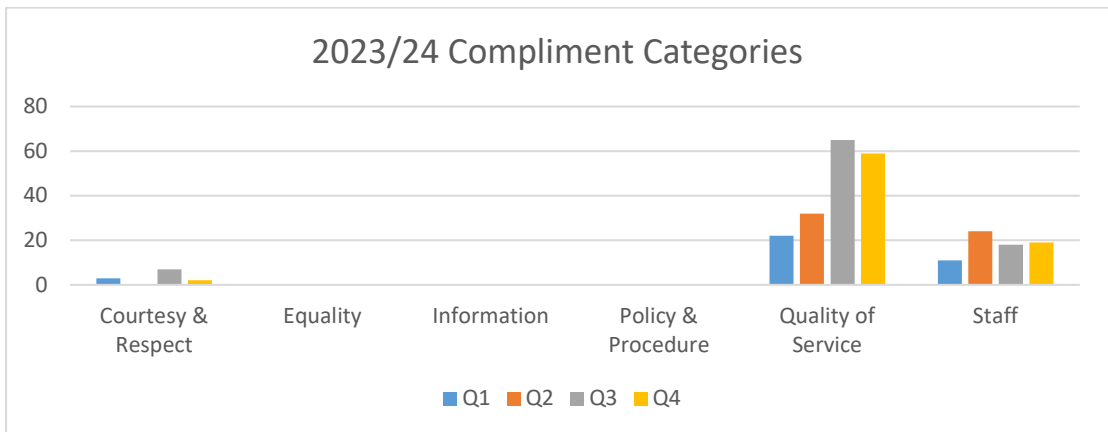
**9. Compliments**

9.1 There were 260 compliments in 2023/24. This is more than double that received in 2022/23 (see 5.1).



9.2 Compliment Categories

- Quality of Service (178) is the predominant reason for compliments to Repairs.
- Compliments about Staff (64) is the only reason for compliments to Non-Repairs.



9.3 All compliments have been passed on to the specific members of staff and their managers.

**10. Conclusions**

10.1 Feedback received by N&H continues to be well-managed and regularly reviewed to promote learning and meet the requirements of the RSH and Housing Ombudsman Service. SMT will continue to monitor complaint handling and completion times to ensure proper focus and prioritisation of complaint investigation and response.