

<b>Item:</b>	<b>Date of report: 8<sup>th</sup> November 2024</b>
<b>Report to: PCC</b>	<b>From: Mark Lake Director of Operations</b>

<b>For approval</b>		<b>For discussion/ scrutiny</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>For noting</b>	
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## Annual Complaints Performance and Contact Demand report for 23/24

### 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Housing Ombudsman requires all RPs to submit the annual complaint handling self-assessment along with an annual compliant performance report that has been scrutinised by Board.
- 1.2. Therefore, this report gives a breakdown of our complaints handling report for both Q4 and for the whole of 23/24
- 1.3. Our annual complaint handling self-assessment is due to be submitted by January 2025
- 1.4. A separate report to PCC and Board details the outcome of our self-assessment against the complaints handling code
- 1.1 This report details the summary outcome for complaints, ombudsman cases and contact demand management
- 1.2 In summary complaints performance for 23/24 is 74% completed in time, this is 9% above our tolerance target for 23-24.
- 1.3 Repairs and Maintenance saw the highest number of complaints in the year with 36% of our complaints being related to repairs and maintenance.
- 1.4 Email continues to be the chosen method of contact for customers when making a complaint with 75% of customers lodging their complaint via email.
- 1.5 We two new Ombudsman cases logged in Q4 and over the year we had 11 new cases logged. We received one severe maladministration in Q4 and more details are provided in section 5 of this report and in a separate report on this subject submitted to PCC.
- 1.6 We continue to receive a high number of contacts with 9946 contacts in the year. We have responded to over 91% of those contacts within our two working days target time.
- 1.7 We continue to make progress with our complaints improvement plan and are concentrating our efforts in the next quarter on embedding our new complaints letter templates and putting in place comprehensive complaints training for all our service managers and Heads of Service.

### 2 Impact

Impact on Risk	Complaints management is key to ensuring we resolve issues quickly for customers
Impact on Customer	Learning from complaints is key to ensuring services are improved
Impact on Budget/Cost	Effective complaints management helps reduce the cost of failure investigations and repeat issues
Impact on Value for Money	Complaints management is key to reduce waste and duplication, it is also key to achieving customer satisfaction and right first time.
Impact (other – define)	NA

### 3 Recommendation

3.1 It is recommended: that members note the contents of this report.

### 4 Complaints Management

4.1 Complaints management has now been mobilised into our new Housing Management system HomeMaster, we are using the system to report and manage complaints and run performance reports weekly to embed our Complaints Policy and Procedure. As lessons learnt from the Ombudsman CFHO and Severe Maladministration findings we have reviewed HomeMaster and developed an Ombudsman Case management workflow which will be mobilised as system development 23-24

4.2 Complaints investigations involve one to one conversation with customers who have received poor service or a poor customer experience. The lessons learnt from each interaction are used to improve service delivery.

4.3 Our complaint performance is improving month on month and our ombudsman escalations have decreased again. This is a positive sign that indicates the quality of our responses at stage 2 is improving. However, we recognise that there is still some work to do and to ensure quality and consistency in the way we respond to complaints we have developed a new complaints and compensation policy and procedure and new complaint response letter templates.

4.4 To increase accountability and ensure the right people are responding at each stage of our complaints process we will be providing complaints training, covering the Think Human culture, our new complaint letter templates and letter writing to all our service managers. Once this training has been completed, stage 1 complaints will be responded to by service managers and quality checked by Heads of Service with Stage 2 complaints being responded to by Heads of Service and quality checked by Directors.

4.5 The table below outlines the overall complaints performance for Q4 and for the full year

	Q4	23/24
Target	100%	100%
Tolerance	65%	65%
% complaints completed on time	75%	74%
Complaints relative to size of organisation – target = 5%	1.5%	1.8%

	Qtr. 1	Qtr. 2	Qtr.3	Qtr. 4	23/24
Complaints Stage 1	42	53	40	54	189
Complaints Stage 2	7	8	9	12	36
MP Enquiries	19	10	6	7	42

New Ombudsman Cases	5	3	4	4	16
Ombudsman cases resolved	0	0	0	8	8
Ombudsman cases resulting in maladministration	0	0	0	1	1

4.6 In summary our performance in responding to complaints on time in Q4 went down to 75%. This was mainly due to the high number of service charge disputes which were treated as stage 1 complaints. The dip in performance in Q4 has had a negative effect on our annual performance with 74% of complaints being responded to within the target time.

4.7 The table below shows the number of complaints upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld at Stage 1 and 2 of our process within the Qtr. and for the full year

Stage	Upheld Qtr. 4	Upheld 23/24	Partially Upheld Qtr. 4	Partially Upheld 23/24	Not Upheld. Qtr. 4	Not Upheld 23/24
1	25	123	16	16	13	50
2	5	20	0	8	04	8

4.9 The number of complaints upheld demonstrates that we are not achieving our right first-time culture as often as we would like and demonstrates that we are still not providing the right levels of service to our customers. One of the benefits of making service managers more accountable for resolving complaints is it will drive improvements in their services and therefore lead to less complaints being upheld at stage 1 and stage 2 of our complaints process.

4.10 The table below sets out the themes of the complaints we have received in Q4 and for the full year.

Complaint Themes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	23/24
Customer service	10	12	10	8	32
Repairs	23	33	26	12	82
Estates	4	9	5	2	18
ASB	3	3	0	0	6
Service Charge Dispute	4	1	2	42	49
Other	5	3	6	0	14
Total	49	61	49	66	225

4.11 In summary service charge disputes generated the highest number of complaints in Q4. The main cause of the service charge disputes we received was around the level of the increase and the standard of cleaning provided our contractor. Of the 42 service charge disputes received 11 were upheld.

4.12 Repairs and maintenance generated the highest number of complaints in the year with 36% of our complaints being related to repairs and maintenance.

4.12 The table below sets out the communication channels used by customers to lodge a complaint.

Communication Channel	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	23/24
Web portal	7	4	5	2	18
Email	33	44	32	60	169
Telephone	4	12	7	4	27
In Person	1	0	0	0	1
Other	4	1	5	0	10
Total	49	61	49	66	225

4.13 In summary, email is by far the favoured way for customers to lodge complaints, it is interesting to note that very small number of complaints are lodged through the customer web portal, in response to this we are going to review our portal as to how we can make this easier to use for customers.

## 5 Ombudsman case management

5.1 During Q4 two new ombudsman cases were logged with 4 of our outstanding cases resolved. 3 of these cases resulted in a determination in our favour. We did receive a severe maladministration case in Q4 related to the management of a residents rent account. The Board has received a full report on this case and an update report with completed actions following the determination as been submitted as a separate report.

5.2 The table below outlines a summary of our Ombudsman Case actions for the full year.

Ombudsman	Qtr. 1	Qtr. 2	Qtr. 3	Q4.	23/24
Total actions logged	4	6	1	2	13
% Actions in time	100%	80%	50%	100%	82%
Stages logged					
Total First Action	3	5	1	2	11
Total Second Action	1	1	0	0	2
Evidence	1	5	3	3	12
% in Time	100%	80%	50%	100%	82%
Total					
Total CHFO	0	0	0	0	0
Total Default CFHO	0	0	0	0	0
Total Full Investigation in Progress	4	10	11	10	10
Total Determination	1	0	3	3	5

5.3. In summary we have improved the logging of actions and providing evidence to the Ombudsman. In 23/24 we had a total of 13 complaints referred to the ombudsman and to this date only 4 have been closed. It is worth noting that it is taking up to a year for the ombudsman to investigate complaints referred to them.

## 6. MP enquiries

MP Enquiries	Qtr.1	Qtr. 2	Qtr.3	Qtr. 4	23/24
Volume	19	10	6	12	47
Completed in time	n/a	8	6	12	26

- 6.1 In Q4 we have had a mix of MP enquires. The biggest reasons for MP enquiries in the Qtr. are repairs and damp and mould issues with 8 of the enquiries being related to these issues. Over the year there doesn't appear to be any trend re the reason for an MP enquiry and they are a mix of tenancy management, repairs, damp and mould and supporting a resident to move to different accommodation.

## 7. Lessons learnt.

- 7.1 Feedback from customers in QTR 4 has focused lessons learnt in the following areas:

Issue	Learning	Mitigation
Service charge dispute	Ensure that are records up to date and the correct information is on homemaster	Service charge information has been amended and updated on the system

- 7.2. Over the year the feedback from customers through complaints has focused lessons learnt in the following areas:

- Repairs and Maintenance
- Customer contact and response times
- Anti-social behaviour
- Damp and Mould
- Service Charges

- 7.3. To ensure that we are using lessons learnt to improve services the table below details some of the improvements we have made

Area of complaint	Service Improvement
Customer Contact and Response	Head of Housing as put in place a system that means that a CST member is always on duty and cover can also be provided by the housing team
Repairs contractor performance	Introduced contractor KPIs and performance meetings
Damp and mould	Introduced a prioritisation process and better recording of damp and mould cases
Service Charges	Amended property information on our housing management system.
Anti- social behaviour	Reviewed our processes and will be running training for all housing management staff

**8. Complaints Service Improvement Plan.**

- 8.1 The complaints service improvement plan is attached as appendix 1 to this report. The service improvement plan identified 18 actions that when implemented would significantly improve our complaint handling and performance.
- 8.2 Of these actions only 5 have not been completed and will be carried over to next year. The actions outstanding relate to completing Think Human training with all operational staff, changes to homemaster and the development of a customer panel. For more information on the outstanding actions please refer to the complaints service improvement plan.

**9 Customer Contact Management**

- 9.1 There has been an overall improvement with the number of contacts responded to within our target time in Q4 compared Q3 with 92% of contacts receiving a response within our target time compared to 90% in Q3

	Qtr.1	Qtr. 2	Qtr. 3	Qtr.4	23/24
Number Of Contacts	1937	2300	2780	2610	9627
% Contacts responded to within target time	91	90	90%	92%	91%

- 9.2 The table above shows that we had 9627 contacts logged in the year. This does appear a high number for an organisation of our size. With the imminent change in our phone system, we will be aiming to review how these contacts are recorded and reported from Q1 24/25

- 9.3. The table below shows which channel customers have chosen to contact us through in this Quarter and for the full year

Type of contact	Qtr. 1	Qtr.2	Qtr. 3	Qtr. 4	23/24
Website	0	0	0	0	0
Email	1723	2300	2251	2193	8467
In Person	4	0	0	1	5
<b>Letters</b>	4	2	6	10	22
Telephone	206	317	523	406	1452
Text	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0

- 9.4. In summary the overwhelming preferred contact method for customers is email with 85% of our customers using email as a method of contact

**Appendices**

Appendix 1- Complaints Improvement Plan 23-24 Q3 update.



**Appendix 1 - Complaints Improvement Plan 23-24 Q3 updates**

## Complaint Handling Service Improvement Plan 2023-24

Topic	Actions	Due	%	RAG	Lead	Progress Update Q4 2023-24
<b>Goal 1: People</b>	1. Increased Customer Service and Compliant Handling training and e-learning for staff across the business to support understanding of the role we all play in delivering our customers an excellent service.	Feb 25	50%	A	DoO	We are working with Think Human and our Learning and Development Manager to pull together training that covers how to respond to complaints using the think human principles as well as letter writing training and training on how to use our new Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaint response letter templates. This training will be rolled out to all service managers and Heads of Service in Jan 25
	2. Deliver Customer Focus Group to fully understand and improve the customer experience, using the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment.	Mar 25	10%	A	DoO	We have not been able to complete this has we were unable to engage tenants in the process. However, we see this as a priority for the Customer Panel when its up and running in Feb 25
	3. Set lessons learnt case studies for teams to evidence and track learning as part of performance updates and service improvement planning	Aug 24	100%	G	DoO	Completed
	4. Deliver our customer engagement plan and introduce a Customer Complaints Review at the end of 23-24	Feb 25	50%	A	DoO	We are working with TPAS to recruit to a customer panel and aim to have a customer panel in place by the end of Feb 25
	5. Webinars on the Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and good practise to be attended as core training for all Directors, Managers and Team Leaders.	From Dec 23	100%	G	ET	Completed
<b>Goal 2 Systems</b>	1. Explore options to use home master effectively to store documentation and evidence produced throughout the complaint resolution process.	Mar 25	25%	A	Head of IT	A process mapping has been held to define the Ombudsman Case management in Home Master, we are meeting on the 9 <sup>th</sup> of January to design this as a workflow for implementation, this has been deferred to Feb 25 due to a review of the IT workplan
	2. Review the use of digital technology and home master to support to collection and reporting of transactional complaint satisfaction data.	Mar 25	50%	A	Head of IT	Capacity has been created in home master to collect satisfaction data for core service Recruitment of data resource in progress, deferred this objective to Feb 25 to allow for testing and training before go live
<b>Goal 3 Processes</b>	1. Review the Complaints Policy	Dec 24	100%	G	DoO	Completed
	2. Develop six monthly and annual complaints report for customers	Mar 24	100%	G	ET	Completed
	3. Review the Compensation Policy	Dec 24	100%	G	DoO	Completed
	4. Develop an Ombudsman case management process and procedure	Nov 23	100%	G	DoO	Completed
	5. Review all active Ombudsman cases with a view to actioning a resolution to mitigate escalation.	Nov 23	100%	G	DoO	Completed
	6. Review customer communications channels and determine which are suitable for information on our complaints process	Apr 24	100%	G	DoO	Completed
	7. CEO and DoO joint review of all live Ombudsman Cases	From Nov 23	100%	G	CEO & DoO	Completed
<b>Goal 4 Quality</b>	1. Review the template letters in home master to improve tone and adopt think human principles	Oct 24	NS	G	DoO	Completed
	2. Review process and procedure to introduce compulsory callbacks to establish facts and resolution expectation from customer	Dec 24	NS	G	DoO	Completed
	3. Develop case tracking to ensure post actions are completed	Dec 24	NS	G	DoO	Completed
	4. Develop case closed template letter for issue once all tasks are complete	Aug 24	NS	G	DoO	Completed