

Annual Complaints Performance & Service Improvement Report (2023/24)

Complaint Volumes

In the year 2023/24, we received a total of 1,016 complaints, 62 of which advanced to Stage 2 of our complaints process.

Compared to the previous year (2022/23), this marked a notable 36% increase in Stage 1 complaints. However, the percentage of complaints escalating to Stage 2 decreased slightly by 1.27%.

Year	Stage 1	Stage 2	% which escalated
2022/23	691*	55	7.37%
2023/24	954	62	6.10%

*Including Expressions of Dissatisfaction (which were removed from our policy in June 2022/23)

Over the past year we have not refused any complaints. Our high volumes show that residents are aware of and benefit from our complaint handling process.

Complaints Performance and Outcomes

Complaint Stage	% resolved within timescale	resolved target	% resolved within compliant deadline	Average working days to resolve
Stage 1 (10 working days)	56%		80%	13.56
Stage 2 (20 working days)	59%		73%	22.30

Eastlight has a positive complaints culture, and residents feel empowered to raise their concerns. This is shown in the increased complaint volumes over the past year; the TSMs show that we are in the upper quartile for complaints received relative to our size.

We established the Customer Experience Team in October 2023. We've placed an emphasis on resolution which has resulted in a decreased proportion of complaints escalating to Stage 2.

That said, we recognise the need to improve our complaint response times. We have targeted 100% compliance in 2024/25, and a reduction in our average response time to below 10 working days. We have also increased the resources in the Customer Team to resolve issues at the point of initial contact.

69% of Stage 1 complaints were upheld in 2023/24. We paid compensation in around 25% of complaint cases, with an average compensation payment of just over £250.

Complaint Reasons & Service Improvement

Upon closure, complaints are categorised by root cause, with 8 categories to choose from. Some complaints may cut across multiple categories but only the primary one is chosen.

Root Cause	%
Poor communication	23%
Standard of service	21%
Contractor Service Failure	20%
Policy	13%
Staff attitude of behaviour	7%
Waiting time	6%
Mould, damp, or condensation	6%
Missed or late appointment	4%

The top three issues which prompt complaints are poor communication, standard of service, and contractor service failure.

Most complaints about poor communication or service failure relate back to repair appointments (e.g., customers being unaware about a change to their appointment, or not being told about follow-on works). It remains the case that improving our repairs service should be a priority.

Complaint theme	Service Improvement Action Taken
Standard of service /Waiting time for repairs	We restructured the Repairs Team so that staff have more support to enable them to complete work within timescales. This enhanced productivity. In April 2023, we improved our target time for routine repairs from 40 days to 28. Since then, we've increased

	the number of repairs we complete within this target, from 56% to 82%. Repairs performance receives regular scrutiny by our Customer Influence Committee and Board.
Communication	In March 2023, we launched our patch-based approach to repairs. This supports enhanced productivity as staff have a defined geographic patch which reduces travel time between jobs. This also gives our repairs teams the chance to build relationships and trust with our residents in their local area.

Complaints about contractor service failure generally relate back to heating repairs or servicing, with 15% of all complaints in 2023/24 related to this issue.

In response to this we have:

Complaint theme	Service Improvement Action Taken
Contractor service failure	When customers' heating fails and we issue temporary heaters, we now proactively offer reimbursement of the additional costs whilst works are progressing.

It is worth noting that although only 6% of complaints have been categorised with damp & mould as a root cause, the issue was mentioned in 15% of complaints over the past year. This remains a significant issue for our customers and is repeatedly the cause of dissatisfaction.

Complaint theme	Improvement
Damp & mould	In October 2023, using learning from complaints, feedback, and from the Ombudsman's Spotlight on Damp & Mould, we launched our new Healthy Homes team to provide an improved service to our customers experiencing damp issues in their homes. Upon a customer request, the team will check the levels of damp, moisture and humidity in the home before cleaning affected areas. They will complete minor repairs and book any they cannot do on the spot. Customers are allocated a liaison officer and we use third party assurance on complex or reoccurring cases to ensure building defects are remediated. The Team aim to complete the first visit within 10 days. Our

	Customer Influence Committee reviewed the service in October 2023 and undertake regular monitoring of performance.
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Housing Ombudsman Determinations

We received four Housing Ombudsman determinations in 2023/24. Each of these carried maladministration or service failure, though we received no findings of severe maladministration.

As well as complying with any orders made by the Ombudsman, we've learned lessons from these complaints:

Date of determination	Details	Learning & improvement
August 2023	The Ombudsman found maladministration for the way in which we treated damp & mould in the customer's home, commenting that we didn't offer a decant soon enough and our communication wasn't consistent.	<p>Our Healthy Homes team provides an improved service to our customers when they experience damp & mould in their home.</p> <p>In developing this service, we used our complaints data, wider feedback from residents, property data, and learning from the Housing Ombudsman, including their Spotlight report on Damp & Mould.</p> <p>The service is described above.</p>
February 2024	The Ombudsman found maladministration for the way in which we handled a resident's repair request, service failure for our communication, and service failure for our complaint handling. They commented that we'd delayed an important repair for too long, failed to update the	We've made several improvements to our repairs service – improving how we meet target timescales, introducing local patches for our repairs teams, and ensuring we have a robust process for booking and completing repairs appointments. Satisfaction with repairs along

	resident properly and missed an element of their complaint when we responded at Stage 2.	with repair response times are closely monitored.
February 2024	The Ombudsman found maladministration with our ASB service, and maladministration with our complaint handling. This was because we failed to raise the resident's ASB case promptly and, when we did so, our record keeping was poor. We then missed an opportunity to raise a complaint because we mislaid paperwork.	The Ombudsman found deficiencies in our complaint handling on several occasions in 2023/24. In response, we've reviewed our Complaints and Compensation policies, factoring in learning from these Ombudsman judgements and the new Complaint Handling Code.
March 2024	The Ombudsman found maladministration for the way in which we handled a resident's repair request, maladministration for how we handled their complaint, as well as service failure relating to our sharing of asbestos information with contractors, and service failure in the conditions we applied to the acceptance of compensation.	We've carried out a review of our process for delivering repairs appointments, and ensuring information about asbestos and reasonable adjustments are conveyed to contractors.

Housing Ombudsman Live Cases

As of 30 April 2024, we have a further 9 cases under investigation from the Ombudsman for which we are awaiting an outcome. Three of these cases were initially raised in 2022/23, with 6 from 2023/24.

This means that the proportion of complaint cases which escalate to the Housing Ombudsman has decreased since 2022/23:

Reporting year	Total complaints	% which have escalated to the Housing Ombudsman (to date)
2022/23	746	0.94%
2023/24	1,016	0.59%

We did not receive an individual performance report from the Ombudsman in 2022/23, and do not expect to receive one in 2023/24 as we received fewer than five determinations.

Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Reports

Over the past three years, the Housing Ombudsman have published several high-profile Spotlight reports which stem from their own case management and the themes they see in complaints.

<p>Damp & Mould – it’s not a lifestyle (October 2021)</p>	<p>This report focussed on the systemic issues which persist across damp & mould complaints in the sector. The report asked providers to be proactive rather than reactive, take responsibility, and learn from complaints to provide an improved service.</p> <p>In response, we launched a new damp & mould service in October 2022, which enabled Eastlight to respond more effectively to reports about damp & mould. We refreshed this service in early 2023, using data to determine which properties we should proactively target, alongside customer feedback from complaints and a qualitative survey.</p> <p>In August 2023, we invited Rochdale Boroughwide Housing to speak about the tragic death of Awaab Ishak and the impacts of these sad events on their organisation. This was made available to all staff as a learning and development opportunity to underpin our values and culture relating to accountability and inclusivity.</p>
<p>Noise Complaints – Time to be heard (October 2022)</p>	<p>This report focussed on noise nuisance, highlighting that reports about household noise are often categorised as Anti-social Behaviour, when in fact this leads to inconsistent and unreasonable decisions.</p>

	<p>We take a customer-centric approach to complaints about noise nuisance, considering the impact on the customer and any vulnerabilities in their household.</p> <p>However, our recent TSM results show that customers feel our Anti-social Behaviour service needs improvement, and we've committed to review this service in 2024/25. We have planned a transactional survey which will help us to identify how our customers experience this service, and what we need to improve.</p>
<p>Knowledge & Information Management (May 2023)</p>	<p>In this report, the Ombudsman made 21 recommendations looking at governance, repairs and recording standards. The report recognises that the housing sector's difficulties with data and reporting have led to delays for residents, missed appointments, vulnerabilities being missed and residents facing financial detriment.</p> <p>We aim to be a data-led organisation and have reviewed the way in which we record and store information. Particularly in relation to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, we've conducted our own psychographic study to supplement our demographic data and are using this to improve services.</p> <p>We plan to develop our data strategy and the technology we use to record and report information. We aim to develop our technology to provide a single view of the customer, which will aid service delivery.</p>
<p>Attitudes, respect, and rights – a relationship of equals (January 2024)</p>	<p>The Ombudsman's most recently published report focuses on how residents experience the services their landlord provides. Amongst other issues, the report focuses on vulnerability, reasonable adjustments, discrimination, and complaints.</p> <p>Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) is a keen focus for Eastlight. We have an EDI strategy with customer actions which are directly overseen by our Customer Influence Committee (CIC). The CIC is a governance committee made up exclusively of Eastlight residents, which scrutinises and challenges performance.</p>

	<p>Our governance structure is heavily influence by the customer voice and 40% of our non-executive directors are Eastlight residents.</p> <p>We have already reviewed our Complaints & Resolutions Policy to provide a more robust approach to reasonable adjustments, ensuring there is fair access to our complaints process and that residents feel supported when they raise a complaint.</p> <p>We have developed a Customer Segmentation model which helps us to understand our customers better, and we have a good level of demographic data which supports this research.</p>
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