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Title:	Housing Complaints Analysis
Contact Officer:	Elizabeth Leslie, Quality Officer Emma Richardson Director of Supported Housing
Executive Summary	Review of complaints and lessons learned
Areas of Significant Risk	Adherence to the code of practice for complaints handling. Delays in responses and procedural compliance with timescales.

## 1.0 Introduction

This report provide analysis of complaints received within 2024-2025. Identifying key trends, reoccurring issues, areas of concern and recommendations in improving housing services in line with the Ombudsman's expectations and the complaints handling code.

Complaints handling was highlighted as an area of weakness with the 2023-24 TSM's with overall satisfaction in complaints handling being 77%

## 2.0 Complaints

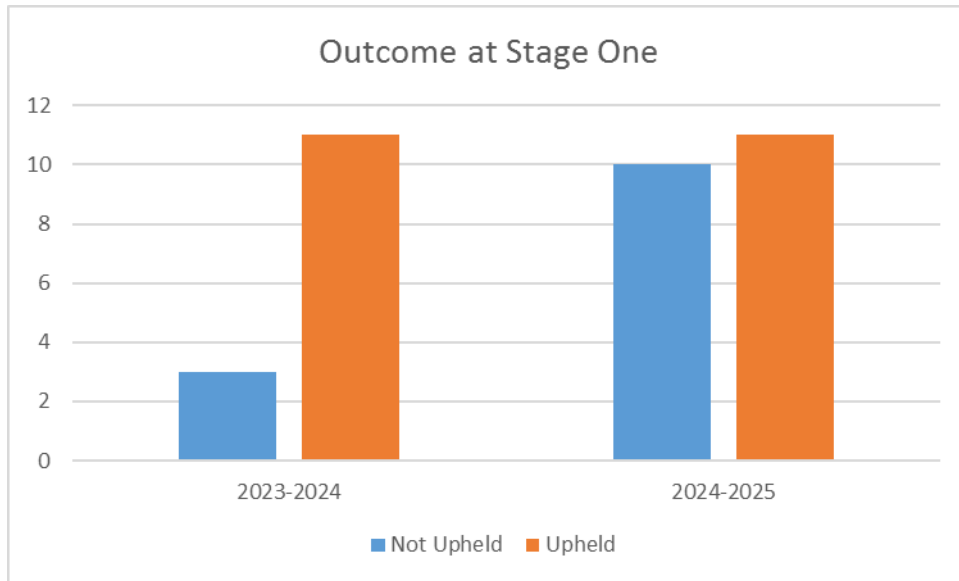
Complaints have increased in 2024-2025 by 57% in comparison 2023-24. This continues to be a trend seen across social housing, according to Acuity benchmarking report for 2023-24 noted the average complaints overall satisfaction level at 35% with the higher level of satisfaction being 71% and the median being 33%.

Whilst the increase in complaints received, is significant Outward welcome complaints to aid service improvement. It is also important to note that whilst the total number of complaints has increase to 21 this represents 3.4% of units within Outward's management.

Following a review of the complaints policy in 2024 to ensure compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's standards categories were categorised to upheld or not upheld. Complaints are no longer considered to be partially upheld, with stage 3 of the complaints process removed from Outward's policy. This change is evident when comparing the results of complaints outcomes for

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2023-24 and 2024-25

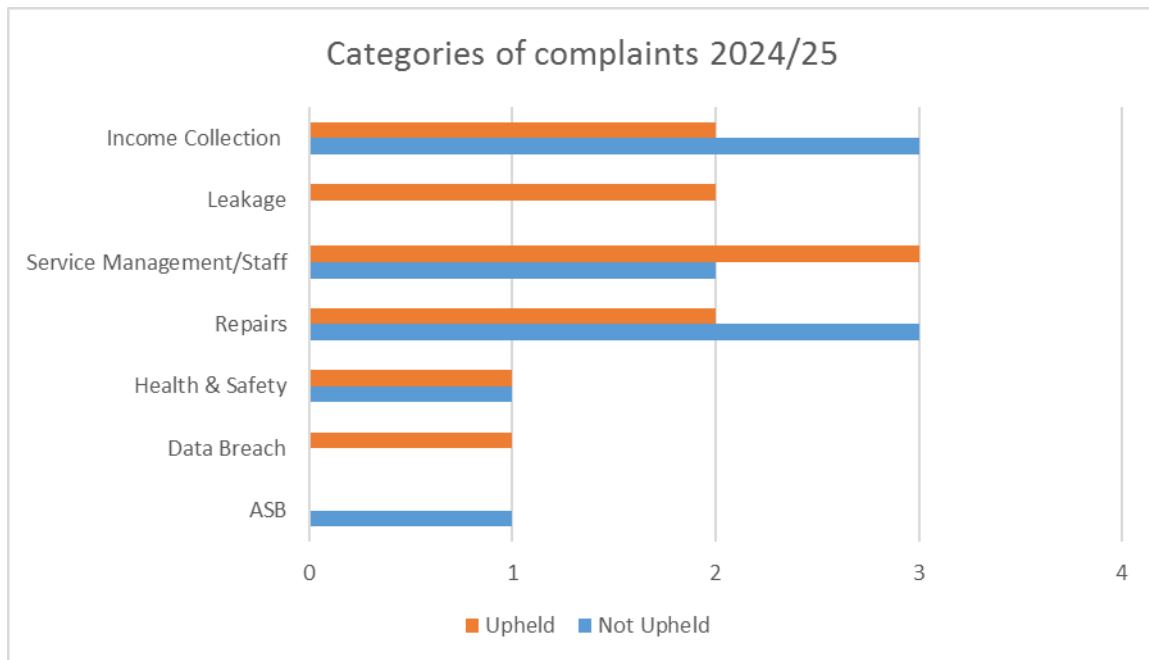


	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Total complaints received	14	21	7
Complaints resolved at stage 1	13	20	5
Average Resolution time (days)	11	11	8
Escalated to Stage 2	1	2	2
Ombudsman Referrals	0	0	0

## 2.2 Categories of Complaints:

2.3 Below can be seen the common themes of complaints received in 2024/25

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2.4 5 complaints were received related to Income Collection with 5 recorded. 2 complaints in this category were found to be upheld. Below are summaries of all complaints received in this category.

The below were found to be upheld.

- A complaint was received in relation to rent arrears that accrued on a tenant's account when a former tenant fell ill and moved to a care home. A Notice of Vacation was not signed due to the uncertainty of the move in date and a Notice to Quit was implemented. The tenant sadly passed away and there was a period where their Housing Benefits ceased and the Notice to Quit was in place. This resulted in rental arrears. The complaint was found to be upheld and the arrears were written off.
- A complaint was lodged on behalf of a tenant who subsequently passed away during the investigation. It was claimed that there was a credit balance on the tenant's account but refund on the overpayment was refused when contacting the Outward Team. It was established that it had been requested from the tenant sign an overpayment release form which was not received. The complaint was found to be upheld as it was identified that the overpayment should have been resolved more quickly. The overpayment was released to the executor of the will.

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The below complaints were found to be Not Upheld:

- A relative to a deceased former tenant lodged a complaint relating to payments made whilst they were residing in an Outward property. It was identified that the payments made were to another property not managed by Outward and the complainant was directed to Hackney Client Affairs Team & the property involved. They also complained that a payment had been paid twice on their rent account. This was established to not be the case and they were directed to Hackney.
- A complaint was received relating to service charges which the tenant believe to be related to laundry facilities. This was found not to be upheld as the tenant had interpreted the service charge breakdown as an additional fee.
- A complaint was lodged relating to a YP who formerly resided in Cadogan Terrace. They stated that they had been receiving letter relating to rent arrears on their account and lodged a complaint that their key worker at the time had not assisted them with applying for Housing Benefits. The Stage 1 of this investigation established that payments had begun on the arrears following a payment plan but were later stopped. The arrears were then written off. The YP was also identified to have been working during the time and the complaint regarding arrears and support were found to be not upheld. The complaint was raised to Stage 2 as the complainant felt that some of the information in the Stage 1 response was incorrect and they believed they had agreed to pay less each month. Stage 2 of the investigation concluded with the same outcome of Not Upheld and it was reiterated the licence was signed obligating the YP to pay the licence fee. It was also confirmed that the arrears had been written off.

## **2.6 Performance Responses on time:**

Below is an outlined on the performance against timeframes for 2023-24 and 2024-25.

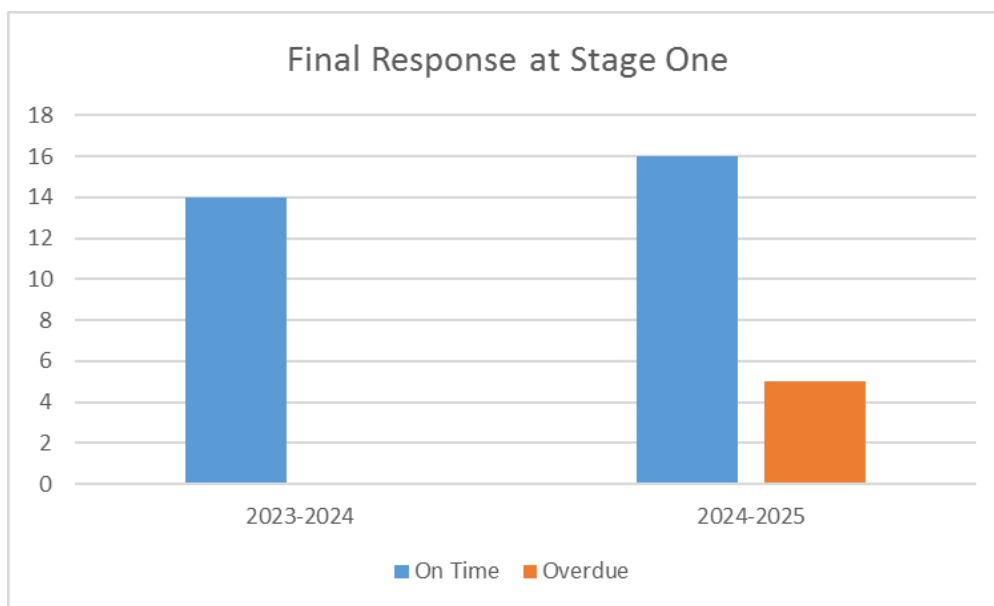
	Acknowledgement Response 2023/24	Final Response 2023/24	Acknowledgement Response 2024/25	Final Response 2024/25
Overdue	3 (21%)	1 (7%)	1 (5%)	5 (24%)
Not Recorded as an initial response or evidenced.			4 (19%)	
On Time	11(79%)	13 (93%)	16(76%)	16 (76%)

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2.7 There was one incidence recorded of an Initial Response being sent after the due date by one day recorded in 2024/2025. This Final Response letter for this complaint was issued on time.

2.8 There were four recorded complaints that information on the Initial Response time and has not been sent to the Quality Team. Three of which received the Final Response within the timeframe.

2.9 Of the five incidence of Final Responses being overdue, four received an initial response within timeframes and no Holding Letters were received by Quality.



2.9 Below is a summary of the complaints that were overdue at stage 1:

- A tenant at Older Person's extra Care scheme complained that the furniture in the communal area has been soiled and not cleaned. This complaint was found to be upheld and a deep clean was carried out and furniture was to be regularly monitored going forward.
- A resident complained about alleged uninhabitable living conditions due to pest control, cooking smells and lack of support. They requested a move to an different location. This complaint was found to be not upheld
- A resident complained that a member of staff within the Housing Team was rude to them. This complaint was found to be upheld, it was also raised to a stage 2 complaint and £150 in compensation was offered.

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- Three Young Person's service complained that the Wi-Fi connection was down which impacted their job applications. This was found to be not upheld as the service agreement stated that the Wi-Fi was provided 'as-is'.
- A Young Person's washing machine became stuck for one week resulting in their clothes being damaged and inability to attend college due to lack of clothing. This was found to be upheld however it was repaired within the 20 day timeframe for non-emergencies. £200 compensation was offered.

2.10 There was 1 incident of a Holding Letter being issued in 2024/25 and the Final Response letter was issued with timeframes.

### **2.11 Stage 2 complaints:**

2.12 2 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 in 2024/25, both were responded to within the timeframe. There was no change of outcomes between Stage 1 and 2. However, one complainant was offered £150 in compensation. These complaints were regarding staffing conduct and rent arrears.

In 2023-24 there was one complaint escalated to Stage 2 however, this was cancelled at Stage 2.

### **2.13 Referrals to Housing Ombudsman**

2.14 No complaints were escalated to the Ombudsman.

## **3.0 Recommendation**

- It is recommended that Lesson Learned be clearly identified on the final response letters to enable analysis and prevent recurrence. Also reinforcing confidence with residents.
- Improve internal controls, ensuring cases move through stages as per the policy.
- Proactive repairs management- Track outstanding jobs and enforce Landlord/contractor accountability. This will be easier once the housing team have access to Power BI
- Review staff training- Target training in the complaints handling code and engagement with vulnerable residents.
- Quality team to issue initial complaint acknowledgement letter, creating a workflow for complaints officer with timescales references.
- Consideration to complaints dashboard with Dynamics to review performance monthly.
- Tenant satisfaction surveys post resolutions to aid lessons learned.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

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The report's findings reflect areas of genuine concern, particularly around delays, record-keeping, and procedural adherence. While efforts have been made to improve systems and outcomes, further work is required to restore confidence and demonstrate full compliance with the Ombudsman's complaint handling code. It is noted that on a number of complaints, the registered officer was on leave and this impacted response times. Consideration needs to be given on how complaints are managed in the absence of the designated complaints officer.