

# Housing & Landlord Services



## Annual complaints and service improvement report

2023-2024

### Co-authors:

- Lasha Wilson Policy & Engagement Manager, Housing & Landlord Services
- Garfield Horner Corporate Customer Relations Manager

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Appendices:
a) BCC self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Code April 2024
b) Housing Ombudsman Annual Performance report Bristol City Council 2022-23 <a href="#">Landlord-Report-Bristol-City-Council.pdf (housing-ombudsman.org.uk)</a> <a href="#">Landlord-Report-Bristol-City-Council.pdf (housing-ombudsman.org.uk)</a>
c) Other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord. <a href="#">Landlords with high maladministration rates 22-23 - Housing Ombudsman (housing-ombudsman.org.uk)</a>
d) Housing Ombudsman determinations 2023-24: <a href="#">Bristol City Council (202226249) - Housing Ombudsman (housing-ombudsman.org.uk)</a> <a href="#">Bristol City Council (202217447) - Housing Ombudsman (housing-ombudsman.org.uk)</a> <a href="#">Bristol City Council (202218917) - Housing Ombudsman (housing-ombudsman.org.uk)</a>



# Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

This is the Bristol City Council Landlord Service 'Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report', provided to and Hosing Delivery Policy Committee Chair, in line with requirements set out in the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Code.



the Homes  
Handling

1.2 Under section 8.1 of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (the Code), Bristol City Council (BCC), in its role as a social housing landlord, must produce an 'Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report' for scrutiny and challenge, which must include:

- a. an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Code to ensure our complaint handling policy remains in line with their requirements.
- b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of our complaint handling performance, which must include a summary of the types of complaints we have refused to accept.
- c. any findings of non-compliance with the Code by the Ombudsman.
- d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints.
- e. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and
- f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.

In addition, section 8.2 of the Code states that the annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

1.3 This report provides complaints performance by the landlord service between April 2023 – March 2024.

## Complaint cases received

2.1 Within Landlord Services, a total of 1514 complaints, 77 comments and 23 compliments were received. A breakdown by service area is shown in the table below.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Complaint</b>
<b>Estates &amp; Housing Management</b>	466
<b>Repairs &amp; Maintenance</b>	886
<b>Business Development</b>	5
<b>Housing Delivery (new homes)</b>	2
<b>Housing Options</b>	155
<b>Total</b>	1514

NB: The table above includes complaint cases for the Housing Options Service and Housing Delivery and may contain cases where the complainant is not a council tenant or leaseholder.

2.2 There were no complaints refused between April 2023-March 2024.

## Top 10 classifications for complaints

1. Delivery or non-delivery of a service (14%)
2. Application of a council policy (12%)
3. Other (12%)
4. Time waiting for works repair (11%)
5. Quality of appropriateness of a service (9%)
6. Quality of communication (9%)
7. Attitude/behaviour of staff (6%)
8. Site issues (3%)
9. Quality of workmanship (3%)
10. Lack of action (3%)

## Responses in target

During 2023-24, the Council's SLA for responding to non-statutory complaints was 15 working days, with a compliance target of 76%. The table below shows a summary of the performance by service area.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Within 15 day SLA</b>	<b>Outside SLA</b>
Estates & Housing Management	82%	18%
Repairs and Maintenance	73%	27%
<b>H&amp;LS Housing Services</b>	70%	30%
Housing Options	72%	28%
Housing Delivery	50%	50%

The Housing Ombudsman require landlords to respond to housing complaints within 10 working days.

Between April 2023 – March 2024, services were working towards the council's target of 15 (working) days to respond to stage one complaints, achieving 70%. 46% of stage one complaints were responded to within 10 days. This year a new performance target of 10 days for stage one complaints has been set, in alignment with the Housing Ombudsman code (now statutory). Staff training is underway and updates are being made to IT systems to support this new target. 82% of stage 2 complaints were responded to within 20 working days.

## Complaint resolution stages

88% of cases were resolved at stage 1. 12% of complaints were resolved at stage 2 and 1% progressed to Ombudsman stage.

## Outcomes

41% of complaints were not upheld, with 54% being upheld or partly upheld. 5% of complaints showed as other or no outcome.

## Customer satisfaction

### 7.1 Transactional satisfaction survey

84 complainants went on to complete a satisfaction survey following their complaint. The overall satisfaction rating for complaint handling is 38%. 53% of complainants were dissatisfied.

### 7.2 Tenant satisfaction measure (perception survey)

During 2023-24, 2309 residents (council tenants) responded to the annual resident satisfaction survey (TSM's). 33% of residents were satisfied with the how BCC (as a landlord) handled complaints.

## 2. Findings of non-compliance by the Housing Ombudsman

During 2023-24, there were no findings of non-compliance with the Housing Ombudsman code for Bristol City Council. However, during the same time period, the Housing Ombudsman reviewed 29 complaints against Bristol City Council. Of these, there were 5 cases where the Housing Ombudsman found maladministration and 4 cases where severe maladministration had been identified.

## Self-Assessment

A self-assessment against the Ombudsman Code is provided in appendix a. Below is a summary of the self-assessment findings:

Housing Ombudsman Code	Self-Assessment Score	Gaps identified
Section 1: Definition of a complaint	Compliant	1.6 more work underway
Section 2: Exclusions	Compliant	none
Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness	Partially compliant	3.1, 3.2, 3.4 and 3.5

Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff	Compliant	none
Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process	Partially Compliant	5.5, 5.10, 5.15
Section 6: Complaints Stages	Partially compliant	6.2, 6.3, 6.5 and 6.6
Section 7: Putting things right	Compliant	7.4 more work underway
Section 8: Putting things right	Compliant	none
Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement	Partially compliant	9.1 – 9.3 & 9.6-9.7

In addition to the Housing Ombudsman self-assessment, a review of BCC's performance against the social housing consumer standards by Savill's, also highlighted areas for improvement around complaints performance, oversight and governance. Savill's also recommended improving accessibility to complaint's information provided on the council's website. These recommendations will be address via the new Housing and Consumer Standards Programme.

## Service improvements made as a result of learning from complaints

A service improvement plan for complaint handling within Housing and Landlord Services has been in place since January 2024. The following improvements have been made or are underway:

### Improvements to complaint handling

- Case review meetings have been introduced as standard practice for all stage two complaints and housing ombudsman cases where BCC is found to be in maladministration.
- A new collaboration space has been created to monitor maladministration cases across the service, it includes new templates to help track actions for each case.
- The BCC complaints policy and procedures have been updated in line with the Code.
- Housing staff and the customer relations team are completing e-learning on damp and mould to improve knowledge and understand the legal requirements for housing.

### Anti-social behaviour case handling

We are taking steps to improve ASB case handling including:

- Improving case notes on the Civica IT system, including notes to ensure officers take into account the needs of residents and making reasonable adjustment when handling complaints.
- Keeping residents informed by text message throughout the case and making sure residents are notified by letter when cases are closed.
- Improved ASB training for housing officers in line with ombudsman recommendations following a finding of maladministration.

## Action plan for 2024-25

In addition to learning from complaints, we will continue our journey towards achieving our improvement plan objectives to:

1. Improve H&LS complaint handling processes.
2. Respond to complaints within timescales set in ombudsman code.
3. Ensure housing ombudsman orders from maladministration cases are actioned in a timely manner.
4. Raise awareness of updated Ombudsman codes and refresh staff training
5. Improve communication, reporting and compliance.
6. Reduce maladministration cases for ASB case management.
7. Update complaints policy and HO self-assessment.

We are taking steps to ensure compliance with the housing ombudsman code in all areas which includes:

- Updating the iCasework IT system to reflect the ombudsman requirements. Once established there will be additional capability to record and reporting on complaint acknowledgements as well as complaint responses.
- The Customer Relations Team are rolling out a refreshed complaint handling training course from July 2024. This course is mandatory for complaint handlers and attendance will be tracked and reported to service heads.
- Delivering webinars for housing staff to learn about the Housing Ombudsman's new role, the HO Code and powers
- New KPI's for complaint handling and new objectives for all housing staff in respect of complaint handling.
- Recruiting dedicated complaints resources to deal with housing complaints
- Improving complaints reporting to provide us with greater oversight of complaint handling performance across the service, including trends.
- Taking steps to accurately identify and understand the overall cost of complaints.
- Establishing a learning from complaints framework to capture learning across the business, once staff resources are in place to undertake the work.

As identified in the self-assessment, we will also:

- Work with colleagues to make complaints webpages more visible and accessible on the BCC website.
- Ensure our complaints policy is available in a clear and accessible format for all residents.
- Check contracts with any third party suppliers to ensure that they are handling complaints in line with the Code.
- Undertake and equality impact assessment of our complaints policy and review processes to ensure any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour is proportionate and shows regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.
- Re-establish a complaint handling communication plan and regular reporting on complaints performance and learning from complaints to the Member Responsible for Complaints, the Homes and Housing Delivery Policy Committee and residents.

## Recommendations

The chair of the Homes and Housing Policy Committee is invited to note this report and make formal comment/further recommendations prior to publication on the council website.

Co-authors:

Lesha Wilson, Housing and Landlord Services, Policy and Engagement Manager

Garfield Horner, Corporate Customer Relations Team Manager

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