



Annual complaints Performance & Service Improvement Plan Report

April 2023 – March 2024



Foreword from the Board

On behalf of Gravesend Churches Housing Association (GCHA) and as the nominated Board Member responsible for overseeing Complaints at GCHA, I am pleased to share our Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for the financial year 2023/2024 with our residents, colleagues, and key partners.

An updated self-assessment and annual complaints report was presented to GCHA's board in April 2024. Following a review of our Complaints Policy against the Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment Complaint Code 2024, we are pleased to advise we are 100% compliant with the Code which will be published alongside this report.

Our Corporate Strategy sets out core principles, that also support our vision, culture, and values. They are: -

1. Delivering good quality homes and excellent services in safe neighbourhoods
2. Maintaining high levels of resident satisfaction and engagement

This is demonstrated by the work our staff do, in collaboration with our 'Resident Scrutiny' Panel, to review complaints and implement solutions that matter and the ongoing support and scrutiny by Board Members.

The Executive Team also provide the Board with quarterly updates on Complaints Performance and discuss Complaints Performance and Lessons Learnt at monthly staff meetings.

As a Board we recognise the Complaints Performance requires areas for improvements which are summarised further in this report alongside a service improvement plan.

There were 33 complaints received in 2023/2024 of which 96% were acknowledged within 5 working days and 56% of complaints were responded to in 10 working days. This is against a target response time of 100%.

This report demonstrates the Board and GCHA staff commitment to continuous improvement, by working with residents, and partners to transform lessons learnt into homes and services that residents are proud to live in and staff are proud to work for.

Eileen Jordan (MRC)
GCHA Board Member



Introduction



Effective from April 2024, the Housing Ombudsman service (HOS) requires Social Landlords to produce a report annually on complaints performance and service improvement.

Our vision is 'Opening doors to safe, secure, and affordable homes', and GCHA's culture and core values of being **A**daptable; **R**esponsive; **I**nclusive; **T**rustworthy and **A**ccountable; These values apply across our organisation and act as our guiding principles in everything we do, especially when investigating and responding to complaints.

This report provides an update on GCHA's Complaint Handling performance over the last financial year and highlights changes we have made because of the lessons from complaints received.

While we recognise improvements have been made, we also acknowledge as an organisation that prides itself in delivering customer excellence, we have some work to do on improving initial response times and acting on our promises.



Complaints performance 2023/24

- During 2023/2024 we received and investigated 33 complaints of which 1 was carried over from 2022/2023.
- As of 31 March 2023/2024, there were 7 live complaints under investigation and 1 complaint with the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 31 of the 33 complaints received were acknowledged within 5 days (96%) and 14 were responded to within 10 days (43%).
- 25 complaints were closed at Stage 1. Of those, 24 were acknowledged in 5 days (96%) and 14 were responded to within 10 days (56%). Out of the 14 cases responded to and closed within 10 days, 2 were closed as resolved.
- The top three complaint types related to Contractor Services (50%), Customer Services (20%) and Damp and Mould (11%).

Summary of Complaints not accepted by GCHA

We are a small Housing Association and due to resource and capacity levels, we did not keep a separate record of complaints 'not accepted'. Where we have 'not accepted' a complaint, it has been with good reason. For example, where there is already an existing complaint in place; the complaint has already been responded to and resolved; or where the resident declines to accept a decision made on an existing complaint.

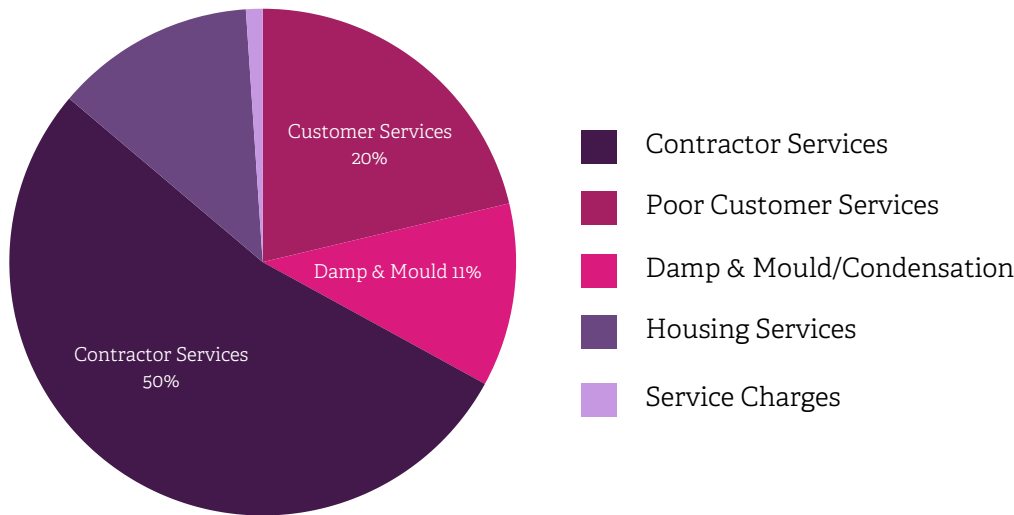
Any decision taken to 'not accept' a complaint was in accordance with our Diversity and Equalities policy and our Complaints policy, which was revised and written in line with the Housing Ombudsman complaint handling code.

We recognise recording complaints 'not accepted' and the reasons why is important moving forward. In 2024/2025, we will ensure all complaints 'not accepted' are recorded.



Complaints received

Number of complaints received by Type of Complaint



The table below summarises GCHA complaints 2023/2024

Complaints by Category	No. of Complaints
Complaints position as at 31 March 2024 (Q4) Number of live cases	33
Complaints carried over from 2022-2023	1
Complaints received 2023-2024	32
Live cases at Stage 1 as at 31 March 2023/24	7
Complaints closed at Stage 1	25
Acknowledged within 5 working days	24
Responded within 10 working days	14
Resolved and closed within 10 working days	2



Complaints received

Complaints by Category	No. of Complaints
Complaint closed at Stage 2	1
Stage 1 acknowledged within 5 working days	1
Stage 2 responded within 10 working days	1
Resolved and closed within 10 working days	0
Stage 2 request responded within 5 working days	1
Stage 2 Escalation responded to within 10 working days	1
Currently with the Housing Ombudsman	1

Housing Ombudsman Determinations

There was 1 Housing Ombudsman Determination made in February 2024. The first we have had. We felt the decision was fair and allowed us to reflect and learn from the case to help inform future service delivery.

Key feedback from residents

Following an analysis of resident feedback, where they had reported a complaint in the last 12 months, there were key themes from the feedback which is summarised below.

- GCHA should keep to their promises
- Keep residents informed and updated throughout the repair or complaint case
- Listen to residents more

According to our Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM), an annual survey sent to all our residents, only 34% of residents stated they were happy with GCHA's approach to complaint handling. While disappointed with the results, the feedback was based on resident 'perceptions' and not necessarily where a resident had made a complaint in the last 12 months. None the less, we welcome the feedback and will work with our staff, residents, and partners to improve residents perceptions of GCHA services.



Learning from customer feedback



**HO/HA's
Learning**



**Data
Analysis**



**Insight/
Learning**



**Resident
voice!**

If we are going to improve our complaints handling performance and achieve 80% customer satisfaction levels, it is important we take a step back and reflect on our complaints handling performance. For example, 50% of complaints received in 2023/2024 were about 'Contractor' services and performance.

Following a desk top analysis and review of contractor services, we identified most of the complaints related to our Repairs, Gas & Heating and Cleaning contractors. We held meetings with the contractors, reviewed Key Performance Indicator's, improved monitoring, reinforced our standards and expectations and now look forward to seeing a number of improvements in 2024/2025.

Learning from other Housing Associations and the Housing Ombudsman Spotlight reports has helped GCHA improve its policies and processes on damp and mould. More importantly, listening to our residents and taking on board their feedback has helped GCHA improve on its TSM satisfaction survey results by 6% in 2023/2024 compared to the previous year.



Service improvements

In 2023/2024, we made significant improvements to our complaints handling and performance. We established a Residents Scrutiny Panel to enhance our services, focusing on complaints. The panel reviewed our processes and received briefings on the Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment Code and new Consumer Standards.

Our Operations Team reviews and updates complaints weekly, ensuring progress towards positive solutions. Before closing complaints, they confirm resident satisfaction. Monthly staff meetings discuss Complaints Performance and Lessons Learnt, empowering staff to act on resident feedback and resolve issues efficiently.

The Senior Executive Team provides quarterly updates on complaint handling to the Board, which offers constructive feedback. We briefed staff on the Complaint Handling Code and will conduct refresher training in August 2024 to ensure full commitment to improved performance.

This year, we are launching a resident portal for online complaints, aiming to streamline communication and reduce emails and calls. The portal will ensure prompt responses and accessible information for all operational staff. We are also developing a 'Customer Promise' leaflet outlining response times for resident queries.

We introduced quarterly Transactional Customer Satisfaction surveys in 2023/2024 to capture real-time feedback. The overall satisfaction rate for year-end 2023/2024 was 76%, up from 67% the previous year. Our goal is to reach 80% satisfaction, and the current trend shows our improvements are effective.



Service improvement plan

This year we will



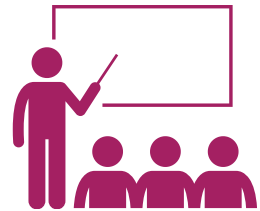
Enhance improvements



Prioritise Complaint Responses



Improve Communication



Complaints Training



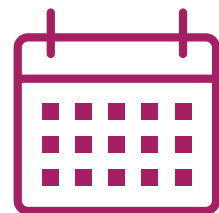
Clarify Purpose and Vision



Conduct a Gap Analysis



Optimise Complaint Process



Annual self-assessment



Annual Self-Assessment

The Housing Ombudsman Service Complaints Handling Code requires all members including GCHA to self-assess their complaint policy and processes against the requirements of the Code. The self-assessment must be reviewed and approved by the Board at least annually.

Once approved, the self-assessment will be published on our website along with this annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report.

This year's self-assessment can be viewed on our website and outlines our full compliance with the revised Code which came into effect from 1 April 2024. To ensure compliance, the Complaints Policy was updated in June 2024 and due to be reviewed and approved by the Policy Review Committee in July 2024. The Complaint Policy once approved will also be updated onto our website.

Useful Links can be found below:

- [To GCHA self-assessment code](#)
- [GCHA revised complaints policy](#)

