

Housing Service: Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2024-25

1. Introduction

The Housing Ombudsman Service introduced a new Complaint Handling Code in April 2024. This code is mandatory and there is a statutory requirement place on all social landlords to produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report which must be reported to the Council as well as published to residents. This report will be presented to the Audit and Governance Committee who will provide a response, which is submitted to the Housing Ombudsman. This reports sits alongside the Council's Annual Report for Formal Complaints across the Council. The report includes a summary of the number and nature of the complaints made about Housing Services between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025.

There has been a focus on formal complaints in housing following the introduction of new powers given to the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman. This report shines a light on complaints and how these are being addressed.

2. Background

At the 31 March 2024, the Council owned and managed 6,546 properties. During this period 237 formal complaints were received, an increase of 97 complaints from 2023/24. The number of formal complaints had increased by 69.28% on the previous year received and the total number of complaints received equates to 3.6% of the entire Housing Stock.

This position is likely to have impacted on the increased number of complaints received in 2024/25, as more tenants are aware about how to make a complaint due to the promotion following the new Consumer Standards. Housemark reported the volume of complaints Up to March 2025, the average complaints volumes have increased by over 55% since April 2023. Tenants were understandably frustrated at waiting for minor repairs, as lack of action on day-to-day repairs accounts for the largest number of complaints.

3. Corporate Complaints Policy (Full Policy included at Appendix 1)

The Council has a 3-step procedure for complaint handling. Stage 1 of the procedure is for the appropriate Head of Service/Service Manager to respond to the complaint, escalating the complaint to stage 2 of the procedure ensures a review by the Council's Chief Executive is carried out and stage 3, the final stage, is referral to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) or Housing Ombudsman (HO).

Responding to Housing stage 1 complaints within 10 working days is measured as a Service Performance Indicator (SPI) with a target for 2024-25 of 70% of all stage 1 complaints to be responded to within 10 working days.

A formal complaint is defined as:

'An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.'

Both the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) launched new Complaint Handling Codes in February 2024, effective from 1 April 2024.

Whilst the new complaint handling code(s) are separate documents, they are aligned. 'This means that organisations that fall under the jurisdiction of both Ombudsmen should be able to provide a co-ordinated complaint handling process across services covered by both Codes.'

The Housing Complaint Handling Code is a mandatory and legal requirement. The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Code 'constitutes important advice and guidance to councils, rather than instructions.'

It should be noted however that the LGSCO 'expect local councils to carefully consider the Code when developing policies and procedures.' Furthermore, they 'may make a finding of maladministration where a local council, without good reason, does not meet the standards in the Code when responding to an individual complaint'

The Complaints Policy and Procedure has been updated to comply with the Code(s) and with cross referencing to the self-assessment completed and published in June 2024 in respect of the HOS Complaint Handling Code.

Stage 1 complaints which are dealt with by the Customer Experience Team and the relevant Service Manager have to be responded to within 10 working days from the acknowledgement. An extension can be arranged for complex cases as long as the reasons are outlined to the complainant and a response provided within the additional 10 days.

Stage 2 Stage 1 complaints which are reviewed through the Chief Executive's Office have to be responded to within 20 working days from the acknowledgement. An extension can be arranged for complex cases as long as the reasons are provided to the complainant and the response is sent within the additional 20 days.

The Member Responsible for Complaints ('MRC'): was introduced in April 2024 as a new requirement under the Code. The Cabinet Member for Housing is the Member responsible for Housing formal complaints (MRC). An annual conference was hosted by the Housing Ombudsman Service took place in Manchester in October 2024 to provide MRC with updates, training, and an opportunity to talk to other MRCs.

The Housing Ombudsman is working more closely with Regulator for Social Housing, sharing information that could initiate an inspection if there are concerns raised.

As well as submitting the annual Self-Assessment against the Complaint handling Code by 30th June, from 1st April 2025 a detailed Housing Complaint Report will need to be submitted as well.

The purpose of the code is to enable the Council:

'To resolve complaints raised by their residents quickly and to use the learning from complaints to drive service improvements. It will also help to create a positive complaint handling culture amongst staff and residents.'

The Housing Ombudsman has made further changes to the Code effective from 1st April 2024 and the Council has acted on these requirements. A self-assessment has to be submitted to the Housing Ombudsman Service by 30th June 2025, along with this report and a response by Members to the report. Bassetlaw District Council's Self-Assessment will be available on the Council's website and is also attached at **Appendix 2**.

Officers will continue to ensure that the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code are being adhered to and are required to self-assess against the code each year. Officers therefore routinely self-check the Service's response to complaints, in order to ensure that they remain in line with the required standards, this is done through quarterly Officer Complaint Meetings.

4. Formal Complaints

Complaints come into the Council through a number of different routes such as through the Contact Centre or Customer Services via telephone calls, online through our website or passed to front line staff when face to face. We also pick up complaints through emails and analysis of survey data. In 2024/025 the team handled 479 initial complaints of which 58 were converted into a request for service as this issue had not been previously requested or was still within our timescales.

Appendix 3 sets out more detail of the 237 formal complaints received in the Housing Service in 2024/25.

As can be seen the majority of complaints received relate to the Repairs Service and Tenancy and estates. When analysed further the majority of the repair complaints are due to lack of action (service delivery) relating to when the repair will be carried out. This due to a combination of delays due to the backlog of job created as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic and the availability of materials and the increase in reports of damp and mould of which is reflected in the increase in complaints. Many of the outstanding jobs are relating to fencing which we have now batched up with contractors to try and get the backlog down.

Tenancy and Estates interestingly had 38 complaints however only 15 were upheld. The table below shows the overall picture of the outcome of the complaints. More detail about reason for complaint and outcomes can be found in **Appendix 4**

Table 1 - Outcomes

Type	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Grand Total
Damp Issues	1	2	26	29
Engagement & Consultation	1			1
Estates and Tenancy Management	23		15	38
Heating and Service	4	1	9	14
Housing Register	11		3	14
Major Improvements	0		11	11
Neighbour related issues	15		0	15
New Property Issues	1		3	4
Repairs (day to day)	30	1	76	107
Supported Housing	2		2	4
	88	4	145	237

5. Stage 2 Complaints

Stage 2 complaints are referred to the Chief Executive's Office where the complaints are reviewed, and a response provided. There were 41 Stage 2 complaints referred to the Chief Executive's Office in 2024-25. Three were from 2023-24 and 38 were from 2024-25. There was 156% increase in Stage 2 complaints and 17.2% of the Stage 1 complaints went to stage 2. The outcomes of these complaints are;

- 23 Upheld
- 17 Not upheld
- 1 partially upheld

The main reason for the complaints was a lack of action and delay in completing the follow up works. As a result we have added reminders to our CRM system and taken a case load approach so that they can monitor the outstanding works and keep the tenants updated on a regular basis.

Type	No.
Contractors Attitude	1
Dissatisfied	6
Lack of Action	21
Lack of communication	2
Lack of Information	3
Lack of response	3
Officer Decision	1
Service Delivery delay	1
Standard of work	1

6. Ombudsman Complaints

During 2024/25 Complaint (0.15% of the stock) was dealt with and none were upheld by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

In addition to complaints the Housing Service had over **141,000 interactions** with tenants during 2024/25, in addition to those instigated or identified by Housing Services staff during the course of their duties. These include the following areas.

6. Service Issues

A service issue is defined as ***where a service user is chasing up an outstanding action but is not wanting to make a formal complaint***. During 2024/25 109 requests for service were received. A breakdown of these requests is attached at **Appendix 5**.

7. Complaints not accepted

Tenants can complete a formal complaint form online. However, these are not all accepted when they go through the triage process and have spoken to the Customer Experience Team. The reason being they may already have a complaint that is going through the process or that the issue has never been raised previously like a repair and the complaint then is changed to a request for service. Also some complaints come in anonymously and we are unable to respond without a name or contact. In 2024/25 there were 54 complaints that were changed to Request for Service and 4 that were anonymous. There were 5 duplicate complaints, 9 were already going through the complaints process.

8. Website Enquiries (ESB)

In addition to complaints and service requests, Housing Services also receive general enquiries, these can be made, in person, over the phone, in writing (letter or email) and via an on-line form. During 2024/225 there were 112,587 hits on the housing pages on the website (There was an

issue with Google Analytics last year which prevented data collection for Q2 (25 June to 15 October). There were 35,384 online enquiries were received.

9. Compliments

In addition to complaints, the Housing Service also receives compliments from service users. During 2023/24 119 compliments were received, these have been broken down by Service Area below.

Table 2 – Compliments by Service

Service	Number Compliments
Adaptations	3
Allocations	9
Damp	4
Engagement	4
Estates	12
Housing needs	4
Housing Support	4
Improvements	5
Rents	10
Repairs	55
Tenancy Sustainment	18

10. Responsive Repairs

During 2024/25 the Housing Service carried out 17,613 responsive repairs. This figure does not include Servicing, Repairs to Void Properties or Major Improvements.

11. Annual Services

During 2024/25 in addition to the above responsive repairs the Housing Service carried out 5,849 routine gas services and 69/69 solid fuel services, 23/23 oil heating services and 521 air / ground source services.

12. Telephone Contacts

This year we are unable to report a full year of data due to technical issues. The data we have relates to July to December 2024 and March 2025. During this period, the Housing Service received over 20040 direct telephone contacts. In addition the Contact Centre handled 37823 calls as the first point of contact.

These are broken down as follows;

Table 3 – Telephone calls by service

Team	Number of telephone calls received
Repairs, stores, and Sure Group	4422
Housing Management (Rents, Tenancy and Estate Management, Tenancy Sustainment and Supported Housing	4327
Allocations	1737
Property and Development, Adaptations and Leaseholds	1150
Housing Options	7412
Engagement & Strategy (Customer Experience, Tenant Engagement & Strategy)	992
Total	20040

13. Major Works

During 2023/24 £9.2 million of major improvements were carried out, including

Table 4 – Major Works

Type of Work	Number of Installations	Cost
Roofs	42	£622,580.94
Bathrooms	57	£361,352.24
Wet rooms	86	£561,701.81
Kitchens	110	£954,275.94
Windows and Doors	219 properties (inc. flats) -	£941,163.62
Boilers	204	£992,792.60
Rewires	136	£899,759.79
Insulation	276	£832,629.00

14. Tenant Engagement

The Tenant Engagement team is now well established and has been making good progress in providing a wide range of ways for tenants to be involved. In 49 tenant events/ groups taking place this year and reached 173 new tenants. There were 1639 in person interactions with tenants this year. Through our monthly newsletter and the six monthly In -Touch magazine we provide information on how to make a complaint and provide updates and information on improvements that has been as a result of tenant feedback. The team also contact those who have expressed dissatisfaction through the Tenant Satisfaction Measures and collect complaints when out in the community. We have now created a form to collect all information gathered to ensure no complaints get lost.

The Complaints Improvement group which includes tenants, and the Cabinet Member for Housing is now in place it meets bi-monthly to review the complaints at all stages of the process that have come in and how they have been handled. This year the Complaint Improvement group has

scrutinised 34 complaints selected by the panel. They highlighted learning around education for tenants about damp and mould

They receive information regarding the performance of complaints and the Tenant Satisfaction Measures and are updated on the learning and outcomes gathered from complaints. They are consulted on all matters relating to changes in the Complaints process, the Housing Ombudsman Self – Assessment and updates from the Housing Ombudsman.

15. Comparison with other local Providers of Social Housing

Last year we provided some benchmarking data for the year from neighbouring authorities. However, as this report is required earlier to meet the Housing Ombudsman Services timescales, this information is not available until later in the year. Housemark reported in April 2025 that average complaint volumes have increased by over 55% since April 2023, the increased rigour of proactive regulation, alongside additional powers for the Housing Ombudsman, led many landlords including Bassetlaw District Council to increase resources available to record and resolve service failure. Early indications suggest that satisfaction with complaint handling has improved to a median 1.7% in comparison to the previous year.

The information showing 2023/24 comparison with other local providers is in **Appendix 6**

16. Learning from Complaints

The Housing Service has a positive complaints culture. In order to improve service provision, complaints are received positively, and opportunities taken to learn from them. A full list of the improvements can be found at **Appendix 7**.

Improvements identified include;

- Additional staff in the Customer Experience Team were identified and are currently being recruited.
- Improvements made to the acknowledgement letter to include how tenants prefer to communicate with the Council throughout the Complaint Process.
- The response letter has been further updated with a section on monitoring outstanding works and how we will monitor this and keep tenants updated.
- We have adapted the CRM system to now include an automated reminders regarding outstanding works to ensure they are completed on time. .
- Review Compensation and Remedies Policies
- A new supplier identified for Air Source Heating to reduce the wait for units in the winter.
- New process put in place to test Air Source Heating prior to letting to new tenants and a planned schedule to replace units of a certain age to reduce breakdowns
- There has been considerable training with staff regarding the Complaint Handling Code and also the importance of identifying a complaint.
- We are also working closely with our contractors to ensure that the complaint handling code is embedded and there are regular meetings to talk about complaints.

We also utilise The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and Housing Ombudsman (HO) Spotlight Reports and real-life case studies to ensure best practice and continued learning.

At Stage 2 where there has been identified issues that have contributed to the service failure. We carry out a Service Improvement Review. The Head of Service will conduct the review and Identify

improvements . We have carried out three reviews in 2024/25. Some of the key improvements include:

- Contractors care when in tenants home
- Scaffolding checks
- Improve communication with contractors installing solar panel by utilising their Tenant Liaison Officer
- Contact Centre to have all the contact details for project managers
- Improve communication between contractors - through the project Contractor Portal to be launched in 2025
- Review of repairs timescales being carried out as part of the Repairs Policy Review
- Additional training for staff re Mutual exchange
- Revised procedure to include a Technical Officer to attend a joint inspection

17. Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) Perception Survey

From April 2023, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) required all social housing providers to collect Tenant Satisfaction Measure data annually, as part of the new Tenant Satisfaction Measure Standard, within the Consumer Standards. This data must be submitted to the RSH by June 2024 and then in each year after that.

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures, comprise of 22 individual measures, 10 performance measures and 12 perception measures, which will let tenants see how well their landlord is performing and allow the RSH to see which landlords might need to improve things.

Bassetlaw District Council appointed IFF Research to undertake the field work in respect of the Tenant Satisfaction – Perception Measures, on a rolling basis throughout the year, in accordance with strict methodology set out at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tenant-satisfaction-measures-standard>

IFF Research carried out 611 telephone surveys over the year as per the Regulator for Social Housing recommended sample size. **Appendix 8** provides how the representative sample is broken down against the population demographics. This approach gives validity to the survey results as it is both representative and a measurement over time as opposed to a snapshot measurement. A comparison with national figures released by Housemark (a Housing Benchmarking Company) have been provided below as a comparator, however a detailed report was presented to Cabinet in June 2025.

As can be seen from the table, despite some changes to satisfaction Bassetlaw scores in the top quartile across all of the TSM measures and is performing above average across all measures.

We will be submitting all of our TSM data in early June and the submission will be uploaded onto the Council's website. The figures below shows the data gathered on complaints which includes the perception survey response gathered from tenants using the prescribed questions provided by the Regulator for Social Housing. This information is gathered by IFF Research on behalf of the Council.

Table 5 – TSM Satisfaction Measures

Satisfaction Measure	2024/25 TSM Outcome (%)	2023/24 TSM Outcome (%)	2024/25 Benchmark Average (%)	Quartile
Overall Satisfaction with Landlord	76.8%	84.9%	73%	Top – 60% to 100%
Satisfaction that Home is safe and Secure	83.6%	89.8%	79%	Top – 70% to 100%
Satisfaction with quality of home	77.5%	86.8%	72%	Top – 70% to 100%
Satisfaction with the overall repairs service	81.1%	86.3%	75%	Top – 70% to 100%
Satisfaction that Council listens to views and acts on them	67.2%	74.4%	63%	Top – 60% to 100%
Satisfaction with how Council deals with Complaints	46.8%	46.6%	41%	Top percentile
Satisfaction with how the Council makes a positive contribution to your neighbourhood.	69.6%	79.5%	63%	Top – 70% to 100%
Satisfaction with approach to handling ASB	65.4%	75.2%	60%	Top – 60% to 100%
Satisfaction with Communal Areas	70.6%	77.1%	67%	Top - 60% to 100%

Table 6 -Tenant Satisfaction Measures – Complaints 2024/25

Tenant Satisfaction Measure Description	Measure
Stage 1 Complaints responded to within 10 working days	92.83%
Stage 2 Complaints responded to within 20 working days	99.16%
Stage 1 Complaints responded to within the Complaint Handling Code Timescale including a 10-day extension	86.4%
Stage 2 Complaints responded to within the Complaint Handling Code Timescale including a 20-day extension	100%
Stage 1 Complaints relative to the size of the landlord	36.21 per 1000 homes
Stage 2 Complaints relative to the size of the landlord	5.96 per 1000 homes
Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints (% of tenants satisfied)	46.8%