

Complaints performance and service improvement report 2023-24

Introduction

This report presents an overview of Local Space's complaints handling performance from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. We have used data analysis and insights from customer complaints to set out actions to improve services to our customers.

Complaint handling performance

Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, **81%** of complaints were resolved at stage one of our complaints process. We dealt with:

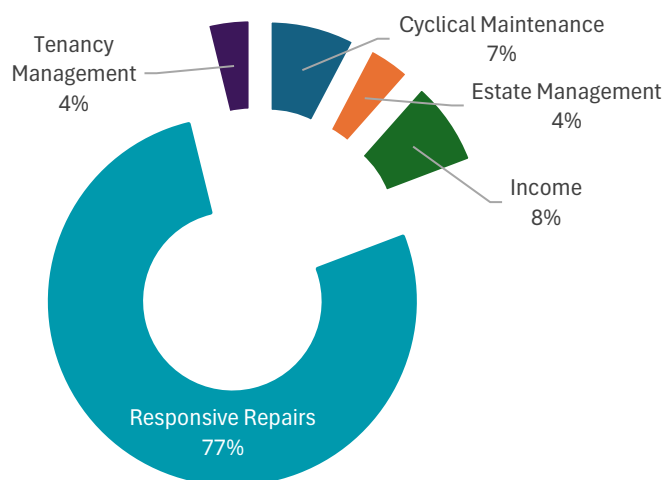
- **42** early resolution stage enquiries (an issue that could be resolved within the acknowledgement period for a formal complaint).
- **26** stage one complaints.
- **Six** stage two complaints.

All six stage two complaints were resolved and no complaints escalated to the Housing Ombudsman.

39% of our stage one complaints were responded to on time, in accordance with Housing Ombudsman timescales, and **83%** of our stage two complaints were responded to on time.

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, we recognise that our performance in responding to stage one complaints has not met our established standards. To address this, we are taking the actions set out in 'Lessons learned and service improvement' below.

Complaint themes



The most common reasons for customer complaints centre around our repairs service, with **77%** of complaints relating to delayed repairs, multiple repair visits, and the time taken to complete work.

Recognising that the efficiency and responsiveness of our repairs service significantly impact overall customer satisfaction, we are prioritising improvements in this area.

Additionally, **8%** of our complaints relate to income and cyclical maintenance, while the remaining complaints are distributed among estate management and tenancy management issues. Our focus remains on addressing these areas to enhance customer experience and satisfaction.

Lessons learned and service improvement

Our approach to resolving complaints aligns with the Housing Ombudsman's principles of apologising, rectifying issues, and learning from our mistakes.

Ensuring customer dissatisfaction is treated as a complaint

One of the lessons we learned was the importance of ensuring all expressions of dissatisfaction are logged as complaints and ensuring management have the tools to report on complaints performance effectively. To address these issues:

- The Operations Management team conducted several workshops and focus groups to identify and deliver improvements. As a result of this work, all operational colleagues completed dispute resolution online training provided by the Housing Ombudsman.
- The responsibility for monitoring complaints performance was transferred to the newly created Service Improvement and Customer Voice team in February 2024 to improve consistency of quality and maintain compliance with our target timescales for resolution.

Updating our complaints policy

We are required annually to review our compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.

Therefore, our complaints policy was updated in 2024 to reflect the latest requirements of the code.

Making reasonable efforts to understand customer dissatisfaction

According to the code, customers are not required to provide reasons for requesting escalation to stage two of the complaints process. It is now the responsibility of the landlord to make reasonable efforts to understand why a resident remains dissatisfied during the stage two response. Therefore, we have:

- Updated our complaints policy to ensure that a response to a complaint will be provided as soon as the resolution is known, rather than waiting for the completion of outstanding actions. The policy explicitly details the required content of the response, ensuring it addresses all points raised in the complaint and provides clear justifications for decisions, with references to relevant policies, laws, and best practices as needed.
- Amended our policy to state that we will have regard to the Housing Ombudsman's Remedies Guidance in making assessments about appropriate remedies and offers, including compensation payments in the resolution of complaints. This is in line with the Complaints Handling Code, which mandates that landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.
- Recruited a Senior Insight Analyst to provide both quantitative and qualitative analyses of our complaints performance on a monthly basis.
- Developed interim solutions for monitoring our complaints performance while we work on developing automated dashboards.

- Updated and simplified our customer database, Civica (CX), to ensure that complaints are logged accurately, categorised correctly, and have a clear timeline for providing customer updates and responses.

To continuously learn from complaints and monitor performance, we hold regular focus groups to identify trends and ongoing issues, using root cause analysis and pattern recognition. The information gathered is used to develop continuous improvement initiatives, such as training programmes or collaboration with our contractors to enhance repair responsiveness.

Undertaking a comprehensive review of repairs delivery model

Recognising that most of our complaints relate to repairs, we are undertaking a comprehensive review of our repairs delivery model to enhance overall performance and reduce issues for our customers. Through root cause analysis, we have identified key areas requiring improvement: customers having trouble reaching us by telephone, lack of timely updates on repair progress and delays in completing repairs.

These insights are guiding our efforts to implement targeted solutions that will improve our responsiveness and communication. So far, we have:

- Engaged consultants to provide an independent review of our property services function. They are assisting in reviewing our property services delivery model to identify the most effective structure in delivering our high-performing reactive repairs and maintenance vision. Their expertise will ensure that our approach is both sustainable and aligns with our commitment to excellence in service delivery.
- Collaborated with our contractor to expedite repair completion times and improve responsiveness in their call centre. Notably, the percentage of repairs completed on schedule increased from **73%** in Q1 to **88%** in Q2, maintaining a steady **90%** in Q3 and Q4. The call centre service level dropped from **92%** in Q3 to **86%** in Q4 due to staffing issues and these have since been resolved. These enhancements underscore our commitment to providing timely updates and efficient services, thereby ensuring higher levels of customer satisfaction.
- Implemented a new telephone system, Ring Central, to ensure effective call monitoring and adequate resource allocation. Since the implementation of Ring Central in January 2024, we have observed a **16%** increase in customer satisfaction, with more customers agreeing that Local Space are easy to deal with.

Monitoring our complaints performance

We commission a third-party survey provider, IFF Research, to conduct customer satisfaction surveys on our behalf, contacting customers who have made a complaint.

Since the monitoring of complaints performance was transferred to the Service Improvement and Customer Voice team, **60%** of our customers reported satisfaction with our approach to handling complaints as of 31 March 2024. This is a significant increase compared to May 2023, when only **33%** of our customers were satisfied with our complaint handling approach.

Housing Ombudsman Determinations

Local Space has not had any findings of non-compliance by the Housing Ombudsman in relation to the Complaint Handling Code. We have not received an annual report regarding our performance from the Ombudsman.