



# **Annual complaint performance and service improvement report**

**April 2023 – March 2024**

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# Background

This report looks in detail at the type and number of complaints we received between April 2023 and March 2024.

Customer feedback is important to us. We're committed to providing a great service for our customers but recognise that we may sometimes get things wrong. When this happens, the way we manage, resolve, and learn from our mistakes, is key to improving our services.

The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code requires housing associations to appoint a member of their Board as the lead for complaints, to support a positive complaint-handling culture.

At Alliance Homes, the Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) is Richard Gaunt, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee who oversee complaints from a governance perspective.

Over the last year, we've been working hard to improve our complaints performance. We have implemented a process within our internal systems to make sure that all elements of a customer's complaint are captured and that we are adhering to the Housing Ombudsman timeframes.

In response to the updated Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, and to make sure we are providing an improved experience to our customers, we've fundamentally changed the way we manage customer complaints.

We now have a centralised complaints team with two additional Full Time Equivalent (FTE) colleagues to manage all complaints centrally. This team manages the communication with our customers and works closely with service managers to ensure complaints are investigated fully and that service areas are taking responsibility for implementing learnings, delivering an improved experience for our customers.

Our complaints policy has been updated in light of this most recent self-assessment to ensure we are fully compliant with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

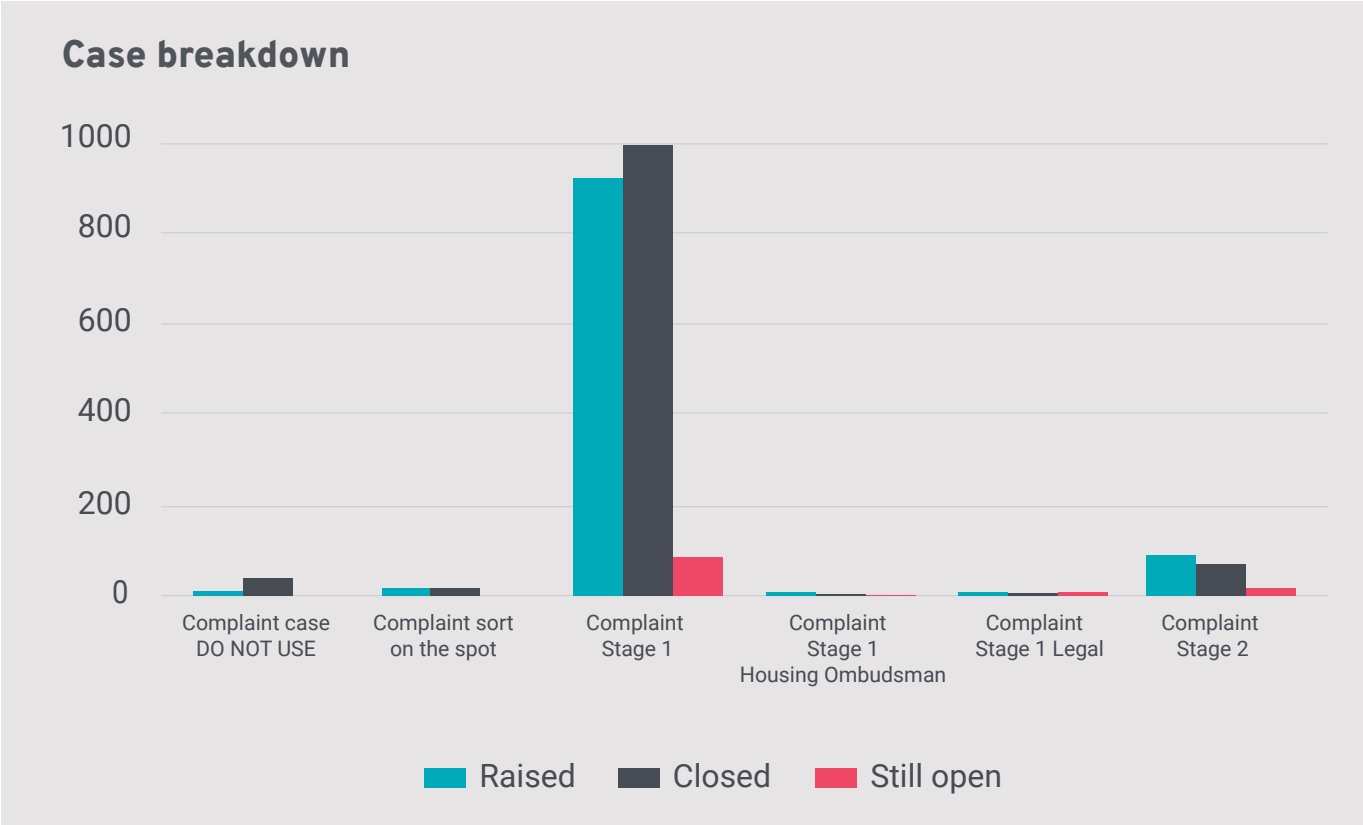
Additionally, we've trained our contact team to recognise complaints even when customers don't use the word "complaint", when there is dissatisfaction about the standard of service they have received. This training has also included how to resolve queries where possible before a formal complaint is recorded.

# Complaint volumes

Last year we received 1,050 complaints for Alliance Homes and 386 complaints for Brighter Places. These figures include complaints that have been raised at Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 1 legal complaints, Housing Ombudsman escalations and queries that have been sorted at first point of contact, we refer to these as “sort on the spot”.

The breakdown of these complaints is as follows:

## Alliance Homes



\* Please note ‘Complaint case DO NOT USE’ are complaints that were raised before our system change. The open complaints were as of 31st March 2024.

## Area of complaint

Service area	Number of complaints
Responsive repairs	418
Other	254
Compliance	85
Tenancy services	75
Major works	49
ACT	42
Assets and sustainability	25
ASB	23
Grounds maintenance	14
Voids / Empty homes	12
Community services	11
Income	11
Development	9
Rents and service charges	8
Leasehold	6
Complex works	3
Feedback	3
Business services	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,050</b>

Complaint service area “other” includes complaints that were raised before our system change and therefore not categorised as a specific area. This figure also includes Stage 2 Complaints and sort on the spot queries.

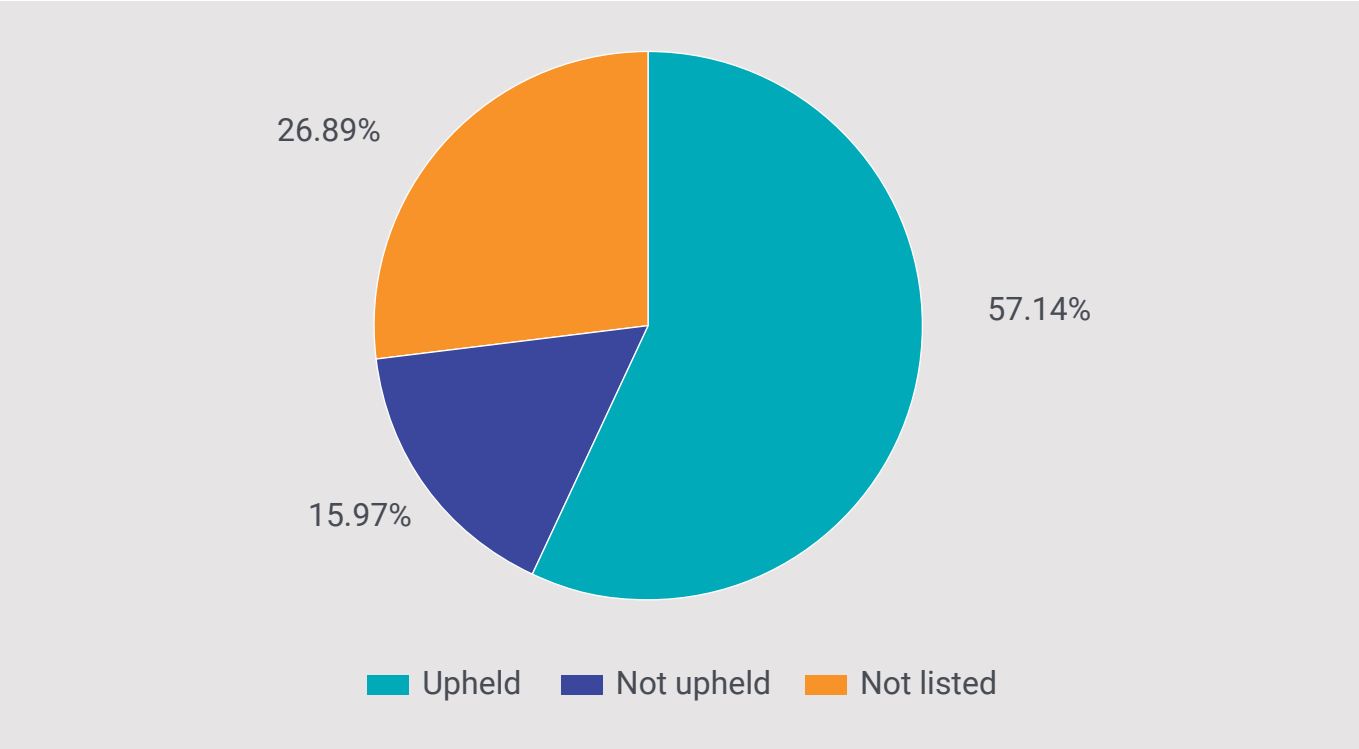
## Type of complaint

Complaint type	Number of complaints
Cancelled complaint	287
Length of time to complete repair	225
Communication	83
Staff conduct	72
Disrepair/Damp	69
Contractor	57
Unhappy with process	38
Customer experience	34
Other	27
Quality of repair	25
Damage/Mess	19
Chasing work	18
Tenancy related	18
Planning	15
Communal	14
Incomplete repair	14
ASB	10
Vermin/Pests	8
Health & safety	7
No show	3
Voids	3
Development	2
Adaptations	1
Fire safety	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,050</b>

Cancelled complaints are complaints that have either been resolved by the complaints team when acknowledging the complaint and the customer has chosen to cancel the complaint as they are happy with the resolution.

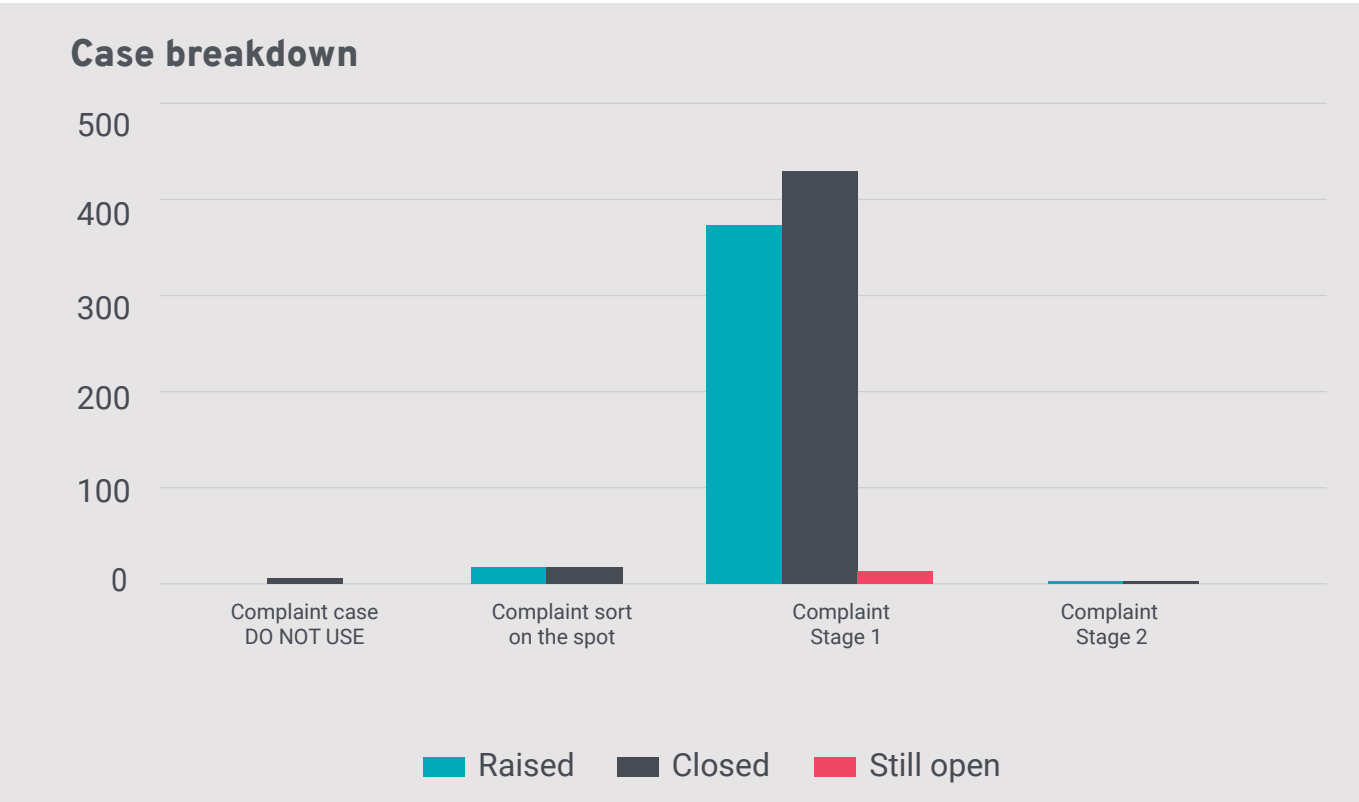
There are also cancelled complaints listed that have either been created in error or due to duplicated complaints raised due to a system issue.

# Complaint outcome



The capturing of complaint outcomes was introduced during the year meaning there are some complaints listed in this year’s report without an outcome. All outcomes are now captured as part of the complaints process. All future reporting to the Audit and Risk committee will have this information available.

# Brighter Places





## Area of complaint

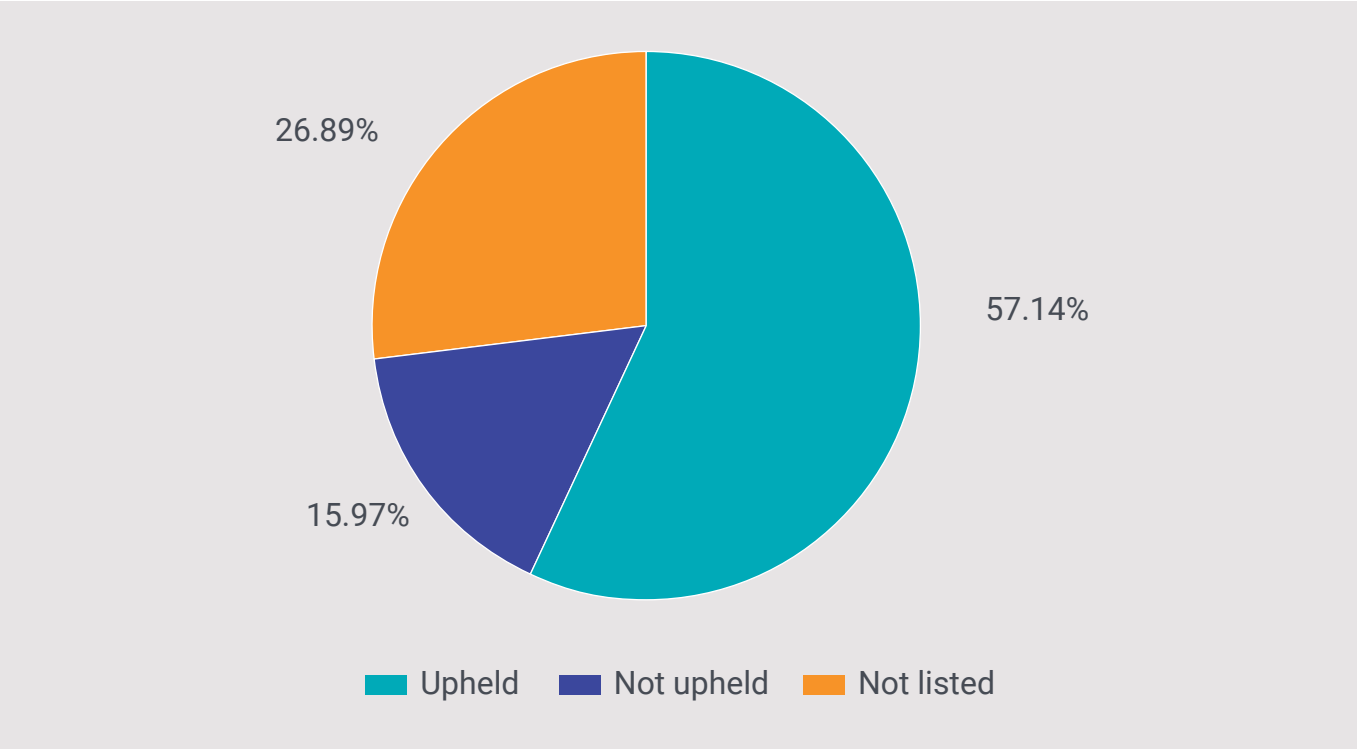
Service Area	Number of Complaints
Responsive Repairs	246
Compliance	60
Cancelled Complaints	57
ACT	19
Communications	1
Complex Works	1
Development	1
Feedback	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>386</b>

## Type of complaint

Complaint Type	Number of Complaints
Length of time to complete repair	141
Cancelled Complaints	71
Communication	42
Planning	28
Contractor	18
Staff conduct	14
Incomplete repair	13
No show	12
Unhappy with process	12
Customer experience	8
Quality of repair	6
Brighter Places Damp and mould	5
Damage/Mess	5
Other	5
Disrepair/Damp	4
Chasing work	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>386</b>



## Complaint outcome



## Closure times

On average, complaints took 40 days to close in the last year. These figures include stage 2 complaints and complaints that had an extension in place.

We have now introduced a new reporting tool that will take into account complaints that have an extension associated to them, this will ensure a more accurate time frame for the average number of days taken to resolve customer complaints.

The newly created centralised complaints team will also ensure that complaints are resolved within timeframes.

## Housing Ombudsman complaints

There have been four responses from the Housing Ombudsman for complaints that have been escalated to the Housing Ombudsman between April 2023 and March 2024.

# Complaint outcomes

Finding/Determination	Orders	Recommendations
1. In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was service failure by the landlord in its handling of the residents' request for roof repairs.	Pay the resident £75 in recognition of the impact of the record keeping failures.	It is recommended that the landlord contacts the resident to discuss any vulnerabilities he may have and updates its internal records accordingly, subject to any data protection requirements.
	Self-assess against the recommendations within our spotlight report on knowledge and information management	
2. In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was service failure in the landlord's response to the resident's request for compensation following a boiler breakdown	Pay the resident £165.76 in addition to any amounts already paid in recognition of the costs incurred due to the boiler breakdown and the inconvenience caused by its miscalculation	
3. In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was no maladministration in the landlord's response to the resident's request for repairs and adaptations to the outhouse shed and toilet.		If the outhouse shed window has not been replaced, the landlord could give the resident timeframes for when this will be done.
		It would be good practice for the landlord to consider referring the resident to disability charities if it has not already done so.

# Complaint outcomes

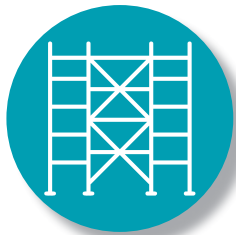
Finding/Determination	Orders	Recommendations
4a. In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman scheme there was service failure in the landlord's handling of reports of damp and mould.	Pay the resident a total of £350. The compensation comprises:  £100 for the landlord's handling of reports of damp and mould.  £250 for the landlord's complaint handling.	
	Engage a suitably qualified person such as an independent ventilation engineer to assess the recommendations in the 25 March 2022 surveyor's report, engaged on behalf of the resident, along with the appropriateness of an air vent grill in the cupboard door.	
	Review the operation of its repairs policy and consider training to ensure legal negotiations do not unduly delay reported repairs being investigated and processed.	
4b. In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman scheme there was maladministration in the landlord's complaints handling.	Write to the resident to apologise for the failures in its service	
	Review the operation of its complaints policy and consider training or other means to ensure complaints continue to be progressed in a timely manner in cases when legal negotiations are taking place.	

# Complaints learning

We are keen to learn from our customers when they tell us they have been dissatisfied with our service. We have held 'lessons learned' sessions following complaint investigations to ensure that things change, and so that we handle similar situations better in the future.

## Some of the lessons learned this year have been:

Further to roofing contractor complaints, we have recruited an additional roofer so that we can directly offer a better service to our customers



To improve communications, we have implemented a new process when any new scaffolding is required for communal areas customers affected will be notified of the works

A new process has been implemented whereby if a repair has been agreed verbally an email will be sent as a follow up



We have changed our text messages to customers for repairs appointments that will now also include the trade of the required repair to avoid any confusion

We have now implemented a new process whereby a report will be provided each week allowing us to monitor how each operative is driving. This will allow us to respond to and address any concerns immediately



When contractors are clearing gardens, a new process has been implemented to ensure awareness of what may be a communal garden

# Complaints not accepted

There were no complaints received that we did not accept.

## Plans for 2024/25

We will continue to monitor our performance against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code by reporting to our leadership teams and the member responsible for complaints on a range of measures including:

- Monitoring of complaints for each service and report monthly to the relevant meeting for discussion.
- Develop a more robust 'lessons learned' process to ensure actions agreed as part of the process are fully implemented and embedded across the relevant services.
- Continue to ensure all relevant colleagues have a clear awareness of the complaints process by embedding it as part of the induction of new starters and through regular refresher training and publicity on the intranet.
- Report quarterly to Audit and Risk Committee and onward to Board on feedback received, lessons learned, and any changes made as a result of customer feedback.
- Meet regularly with our Customer Panel to gain feedback on how we are managing complaints and work with this group to make improvements.
- Improve transparency and accountability around complaints with our customers by publicising more around our complaint numbers, lessons learned and ensuring customers know how they can complain to us.
- We have recently launched a new customer portal and will be working to ensure that is another effective channel of communication for customers to make a complaint.
- We are currently developing a vulnerability policy which focuses on tailoring services to meet customer needs, and this will apply to how we continue to tailor our complaints services as well as operational services.

# Governing body statement on complaints

The Alliance Homes Group Board are committed to ensuring complaints are handled effectively and in a timely manner, as listening and acting upon customer feedback is a key aspect of our strategic objective to deliver a great customer experience.

The Board routinely scrutinise complaints performance data, however, further focus has been applied this year through the introduction of the Member Responsible for Complaints ('MRC').

Richard Gaunt, Audit and Risk Committee Chair has been appointed to the role of MRC with duties dispatched via the Audit and Risk Committee to ensure there is a strong awareness of complaint performance throughout the wider Board team. This includes support to the Board with its annual review of compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, revisions to the Complaints Policy and consideration of emerging risks.

The Board recognise that further improvement is required with the responsive repair service as this is the number one driver for complaints, with the length of time to complete a repair as the most frequent issue. This aligns with the strategic risks under management, and the Board are closely monitoring performance in this area, with additional resources and strategies being deployed to improve service delivery.

As we look ahead to 2024-25, the Board aims to continually promote a positive complaint handling culture by enhancing its engagement with operational delivery teams and delving into the themes from complaints as an early warning of ineffective processes, policies, or behaviours.



**Andrew Willis**  
**Board Chair**

