



Wythenshawe
Community Housing Group

Annual Complaints Report

1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

Contents

1. Summary: Our complaints 2023/24
2. Complaints
 - a) How many complaints did we receive?
 - b) What were the complaints about?
 - c) How quickly did we respond?
 - d) Were customers satisfied with how we handled their complaint?
 - e) How easy is it for customers to complain?
 - f) Did we refuse to take any complaints?
 - g) How do we know reporting is accurate?
3. Service improvements
 - a) Issues and trends
 - b) Service improvements
 - c) Enhancing our positive complaint handling culture
4. Housing Ombudsman
 - a) Determinations
 - b) Landlord Report
 - c) Reporting requirements
 - d) Why are the numbers reported to the Regulator of Social Housing different to the numbers in this report?
5. How to find out more

Summary: Our complaints 2023/24

Complaints have increased

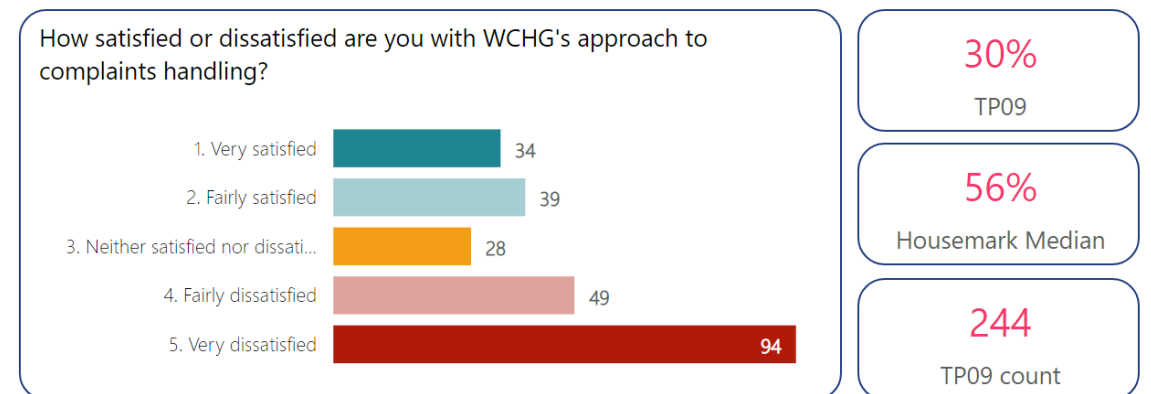
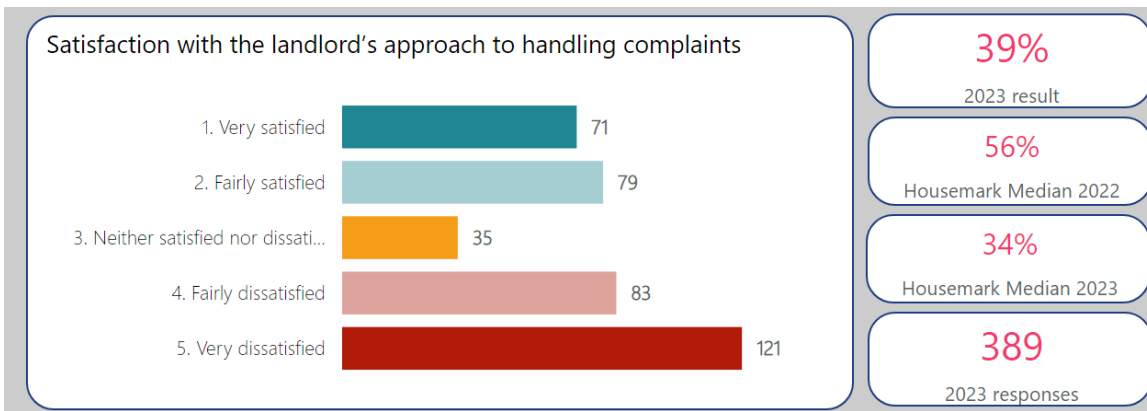
- Following our 'Make it Right' campaign to record every time a customer expresses dissatisfaction, the total customer expressions of dissatisfaction have increased by 72% in the last year from 1,096 to 1,885.
- Within this, stage 1 complaints have increased by 79% from 216 to 386.

	2023/2024	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
MP and Cllr enquiries	461	412	336	383	397
Informal complaints	1,038	468	358	289	226
Stage 1 complaints	386	216	167	105	119
Total expressions of dissatisfaction	1,885	1,096	861	777	742

- Whilst we are recording dissatisfaction better, stage 1 complaints remain low compared to the sector at 26 complaints from tenants per 1,000 properties. This may indicate that more complaints should be formalised.

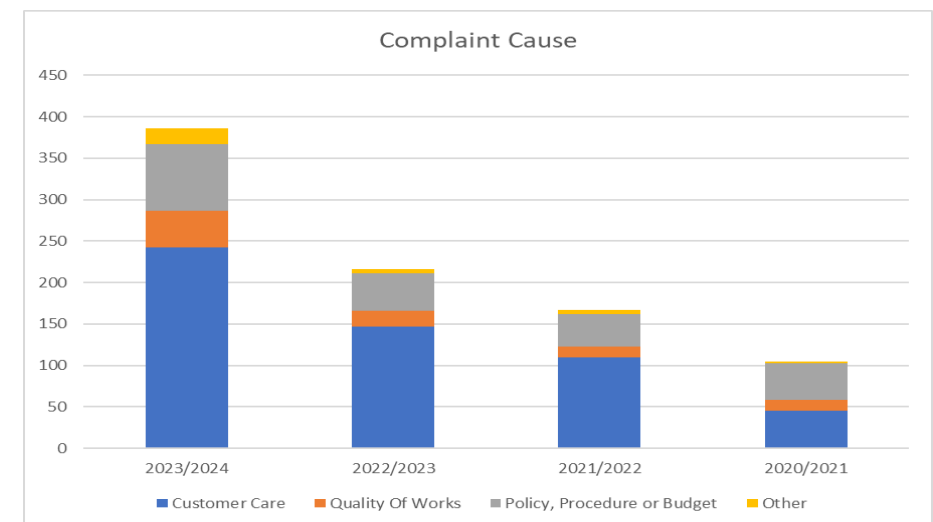
We're getting better at listening

- Using our Tenant Satisfaction Survey data, we estimate that we heard 76% of the total expressions of dissatisfaction from all tenants (up from 40% in 2022) . Of these tenants, 39% were satisfied with the way the complaint had been handled (up from 30% in 2022).
- **This shows significant improvement** compared to both last year's performance and the performance of other social landlords reporting to the benchmarking group, Housemark.
- WCHG has seen a 9 percentage point improvement in tenant satisfaction with complaint handling since last year. This brings performance to 5 percentage points above average.



Customer care is improving, more needs to be done

- Customer Care is still the single biggest driver of customer complaints, specifically:
 - being able to get things resolved quickly
 - a lack of communication or action
 - how we have communicated with customers
- Significant investment has been made in improving Customer Care including:
 - Customer First training and embedding activities for all staff (2022 and 2023)
 - Introduction of text communications for repairs appointments (launched July 2023)
 - £4 million investment in systems (launching in July 2024) – benefits include: single view of customer (resolving things quickly); and case management (improved communication & action)
- Investments may be beginning to have an effect, as a percentage of complaints overall Customer Care type complaints have reduced by 5% compared to last year



Complaints

How many complaints did we receive?

We received 1,885 expressions of dissatisfaction during the year. Of these 386 were stage 1 complaints. We agreed or partially agreed with customers in 270 cases (70%).

We will be reporting **26 complaints per 1,000 properties** to the Regulator of Social Housing. This number excludes complaints from non-tenants (which are included in all other figures in this report). The Housemark sector average for 2022/23 was 42 per 1,000 properties.

	2023/2024	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Stage 1 complaints	386	216	167	105	119
% responded to in target	99%	100%	99%	100%	99%
% closed at first stage	83%	87%	81%	80%	87%
% upheld	70%	77%	58%	46%	62%
% satisfaction	76%	73%	75%	76%	85%

Informal Complaints

During 2023-24 we logged 1,038 informal complaints, this is a 122% increase on the previous year 468, this increased capture of dissatisfaction was a result of a proactive campaign that we ran called 'Making Things Right'

The majority of informal complaints are in relation to Day-to-Day repairs, Surveyors, External Contractors, Neighbourhoods & Grounds Maintenance which is reflective of overall customer demand & requests for service

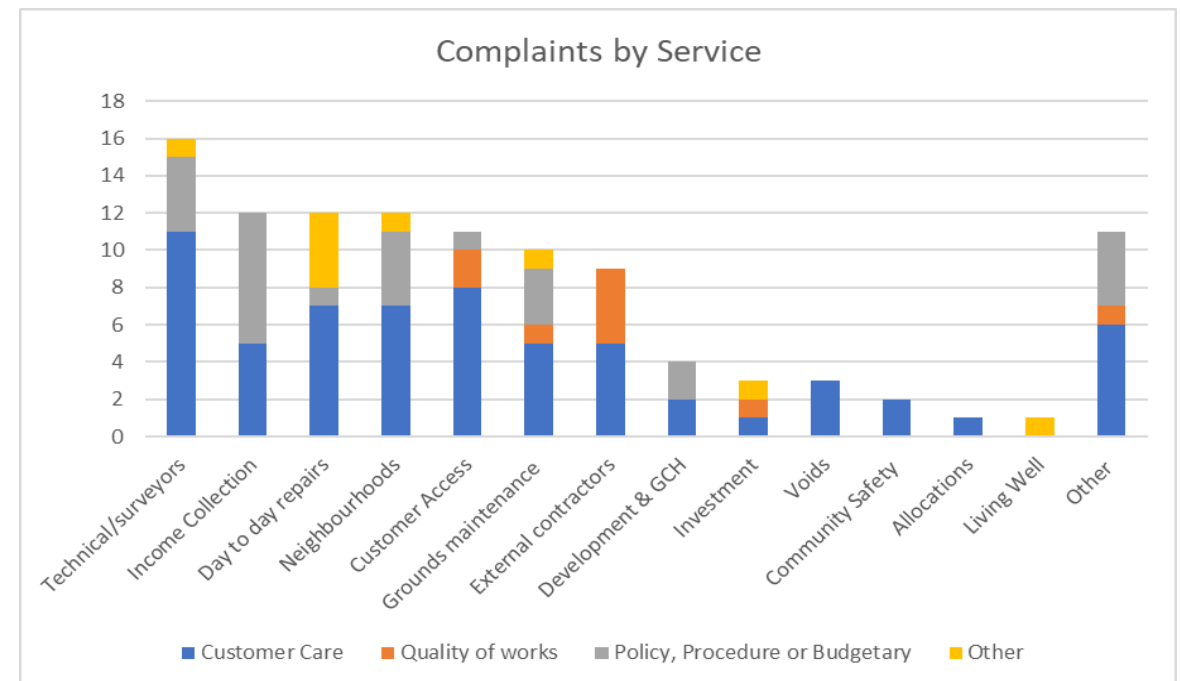
Informal complaints happen when a customer doesn't want to make a formal complaint but just wants an issue resolving quickly and are resolved within two days

Informal complaints remain the most common way of resolving dissatisfaction 23-24

From 1st April 2024 informal complaints will either be categorised as service requests that will be resolved quickly or will become 'quick fix' stage 1 complaints to ensure compliance with the Complaint Handling Code

What were the complaints about?

- The majority of MP and Cllr enquiries relate to allocations and are reflective of Manchester's growing waiting list, currently standing at 16,000 households waiting for a home
- Customer Care remains the single biggest cause of both informal and stage 1 complaints
- The surveying team received a disproportionate number of stage 1 complaints and too many of these are in relation to customer care. The team have received training in customer care to support them in having challenging conversations.
- Income complaints predominantly relate to service charges
- The 'other' category includes multi-service complaints where more than one service is included in the complaint. They also include complaints about our out of hours service, complaints regarding communal areas for Facilities and the Adaptations service.



By tenure

- 15 complaints from leaseholders
- 5 leaseholders progressed their complaint to Stage 2

Themes 23/24

- Level of service charges & dissatisfaction with the quality of associated service cleaning, grounds maintenance & repairs
- Leaseholders this year also challenged how we managed neighbouring tenancies

Learning from leaseholder complaints during the year have included:

- Additional supervisory visits introduced to inspect/check cleaning services and additional an detail/breakdown of service charges is available to leaseholders upon request
- We revised section 20 notifications and will be conducting a full review of calculation of service charges for leaseholders

How quickly did we respond?

2023-2024 data

386 stage one complaints

Of these:

326 were responded to within 10 working days (84%)

57 were responded to within 20 working days (15%)

Commentary on extensions - two stage one complaints were responded to within 34 & 23 working days (1%) as reasonable adjustments or at customer request;

Complaint 1 - *the customer had a disabled child & requested a visit after a certain time period to assess work to resolve a complaint*

Complaint 2 – *the customer suffered with severe anxiety and struggled to engage or allow access for an independent surveyor to assess work required*

A further **two stage 1 complaints were out of target**: one was responded to but not issued to the customer correctly by email until we were notified by the Ombudsman some 211 days later; the other was sent directly to a officer and not logged as a complaint until the Ombudsman notified us 86 days later

Where an extension beyond 10 working days is required, the Customer Feedback Team issues an interim response to the customer therefore complaints were responded to 99% of the time within the required target time

How quickly did we respond?

2023-2024 data

64 stage two complaints

Of these:

40 were responded to within 10 working days (63%)

23 were responded to within 30 working days (36%)

- All but one of the stage two complaints were responded to within 30 working days of the complaint being escalated in line with the complaint handling code. One stage 2 complaint was responded to in 47 days, at the request of the customer to allow for him to be accompanied to a meeting by a third party
- **One stage 2 complaint** missed the required target date by 1 day and was therefore recorded as **out of target** (despite being within the 30 days set by the Ombudsman). This was due to human error & it not being escalated within the new system which resulted in a failure of the automated reminder

Stage 2 complaints have increased this year in line with the higher volume of stage 1 complaints. First time resolution has reduced from 87% in 22/23 to 83% 23/24 – this is likely due to the increased number of stage 1 complaints & the ability for managers to resolve

Were customers satisfied with how we handled their complaint?

This year we started surveying all customers who had made formal complaints to us via email or telephone & we randomly sampled customers who had made informal complaints. The response rate was 15%.

Complaint Satisfaction Results

58 surveys completed with complainants 2023-24

- 56% of customers were satisfied with complaint outcome
- 81% of customers said it was easy to make a complaint
- 76% of customer were satisfied with the complaint handling process

From October 2023 we moved to the Pulse system & completed a reduced number of telephone surveys in quarter 3 & 4 as an automated email survey in Pulse was in development, we hope to be using this very soon. We have moved away from surveying customers by telephone within the Team to ensure objectivity and this year we are planning for a telephone survey to be conducted by a third party for those customers without email addresses.

How easy is it for customers to complain?

81% of complainants said that it was easy to make a complaint.

In terms of diversity of our complainants:

- 15% of complaints are from people with a disability (18% of our tenants tell us that they have a disability)
- 11% of complaints are from people from a non-white British background (15% tell us that they are not White British)
- 70% of complaints are from women, this is reflective of our tenant base

Overall, access to the complaints service seems to be good across all groups. However, we are receiving fewer complaints than we would expect from people: with a disability or people from a non-white British background.

During 2024/25 we will continue to consult with residents and promote the accessibility to all WCHG services & the complaints service.

Complaint outcomes & resolution

We had 8 complaints that were resolved at stage two which the Customer Feedback Team assessed managers could have resolved at stage one which we will focus on with managers in the coming year;

- ✓ Confidence & empowerment of first line managers to resolve customer concerns at stage 1
- ✓ Communicating with senior managers during stage 1 investigations to fully understand options available to resolve a complaint e.g. What the stage 1 manager is able to do to resolve the complaint

Overall first time resolution for complaints has decreased from 87% to 83% which we would expect with the increased volumes at stage 1 & the ability to resolve & provide a quality response - the increased resource within the Customer Feedback Team should assist with this

Extensions & refusals

- We had 84 requests by managers to extend the deadline for responses, compared to 34 last year
- **Of those extended there were 3 that exceeded the Ombudsman timescales (two at Stage 1; and one at Stage 2)**
- The increase in extensions is likely due to the increase in number of complaint investigations required by managers and their capacity to be able to respond in time. Whilst the reasons for extensions were varied incomplete investigations were the main reason
- We need to ensure that we are only extending response times if the customer request or agrees to this, to ensure a discussion or meeting takes place with the customer or if the case is complex and requires further investigation prior to response.
- We **refused one complaint**, where the matter had already been dealt with by a Court.

Compliments

247 customer compliments this year

Main reasons for compliments

- Repairs completed quickly & to a high standard
- Customer Access staff helpful, professional supportive and friendly
- Grounds Maintenance Service quality of service which is highly valued by customers

‘The tradesman was professional & the standard of work is some of the best plastering I have ever seen! Five stars for this plasterer. He is the best. Thank you!’ – Mrs Lloyd

‘Plumber came out to fix toilet issue but fixed shower as well before he left. He didn’t have to do this and I appreciate it a lot, he did a great job!’ – Mr Booth

‘Gardeners attended on the date agreed and have done a great job!’ – Mrs Chappell

‘The receptionist was kind patient and took her time to get to the bottom of my rehousing enquiry!’
– Mrs Parren

‘The Hub advisors are so helpful and sorted out my heating problem and I wanted to make sure they are recognised. If they are ever in the Gardeners Arms he will buy them a drink!’ – Mr O’Donnell

How do we know reporting is accurate?

- In May 2023 the CX Committee was approved WCHG's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code
- This self-assessment needs to be completed each year and published on our website
- The committee recommended we seek assurance that we had completed the self-assessment correctly and were compliant with the Code
- As a result the team has undertaken two activities:
 1. Shared our self-assessment with another housing association (Platform Housing Group) who conducted a peer review of how we had completed the self-assessment
 2. Commissioned an audit of our self-assessment which was conducted Oct-Nov 2023 by our internal auditors RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP, the audit tested 10 mandatory requirements within the self-assessment

Both activities confirmed that WCHG is compliant with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

- Two **improvements** were suggested: RSM suggested adding the word 'yes' to two of the boxes (this has been completed); and Platform suggested removing reference to 'informal' or 'quick fix' complaints, which is also a requirement of the new complaint handling code from 1 April 2024

Assurance: Tenant Review of Complaints

The Scrutiny Group conducts regular checks of complaints to ensure that we are complying with our Complaints Policy & during this year it included assessing the quality of stage 2 complaints

- Scrutiny Group findings during 2023-24 were that compliance with policy was excellent & the quality of stage 2 responses was good
- Reports detailing Scrutiny Group findings have been shared with CX Committee
- Any actions identified through Scrutiny Group reports will be monitored by Group Audit & Risk Committee through to completion
- Any feedback or recommendations for improvement are also shared with the Complaints Quality Network
- In 24/25 Scrutiny Group would like to review compensation guidelines as part of the review of complaints

Service improvements

Learning from complaint trends

Issue

Customer Care: Too often customers do not receive a quick, accurate response to their query or service request. We don't not have a 'single view of the customer' and our computer systems do not support staff well in providing quick, accurate answers.

Improvement

Following a 'systems thinking' review, we have been working on simplifying our processes across the organisation. This is being supported by a £4 million investment in a new customer relationship management system (Pulse) being launched in July 2024. This will provide colleagues with a single view of the customer, allowing:

- Customer Service Advisors to see information about previous contact with a customer and updates on any open repairs or support cases all in one place
- An improved App for customers which will show progress of all requests and queries
- Customers to 'tell us once' and for this information to be available to relevant colleagues to improve service delivery.

Learning from complaint trends

Issue

Customers tell us we're not communicating with them in the right way and frequency. Too often, we fail to respond to individual needs.

Improvement

We launched a dynamic scheduling system (AccuServ) in Summer 2023, this has enabled us to send text messages ahead of a repair and has increased transactional customer satisfaction by 4%.

The new Pulse system has an improved way of logging any additional needs and helps us to better record reasonable adjustments. It prompts colleagues if updates are not being provided to a customer e.g. due to sickness absence.

We also continue to embed the Customer First principles across the organisation through continued team huddles and training. There is a particular focus on providing regular updates to the customer.

Learning from complaint trends

Issue

We have a large number of expressions of dissatisfaction about the length of time housing applicants wait on the housing register before being able to choose a property.

Improvement

We continue to set ambitious development targets for new homes and delivered 200 new homes last year. This however in no significant way meets the needs of the 16,000 households waiting for a home in Manchester.

The improvement we have made is to better communicate with housing applicants on how long households wait for a home on average at the moment. We are now better sharing this accurate and factual information with our colleagues, in social media and with stakeholders.

Learning from complaint trends

Issue

Customers tell us that they are not satisfied with our fencing service. It can currently take up to 12 months for new fencing if a customer needs more than 2 panels. The price of fence panels and contractor labour has increased over inflation, so the budget allocated is insufficient. This is more of an issue for some customers than others, for example one family with an autistic child had an acute need for secure outside space.

Improvement

In 2023/24 a £1.2 million has been allocated to fencing to help the teams reduce the backlog. By the end of the year the team hopes to have a 6-8 week waiting time for more than 2 fence panels.

We have also improved the way we assess individual needs and clarified how we can agree reasonable adjustments.

Learning from complaints

Issue

Customers complained about tenants misusing communal bin areas and not recycling as they should

Improvement

We conducted recycling days at specific blocks, arranged for some additional recycling collections & have installed CCTV at problematic locations

Issue

Customers raised concern that they were not made aware when external repair works had been completed when they weren't home (e.g. gutter repairs)

Improvement

We have created an external works completion card to be posted through tenants letterboxes to let them know that this type of work has been done whilst they were out

Learning from complaints

Issue

Customers reported that a certain damp & mould specialist contractor was not performing in line with WCHG expectations

Improvement

We reduced the work issued to the specific contractor and highlighted our expectation in relation to progress of work & communication with customers

Issue

Where third parties (non-tenants) reported vermin in communal areas our Customer Hub was unable to progress & arrange the required pest control service

Improvement

All third party reports of vermin from non-tenants in communal areas that may pose a health and safety risk will be accepted and pest control services arranged

Learning from complaints

Issue

A customer complained about the level of support they received when reporting domestic abuse to WCHG

Improvement

Training was delivered to the Customer Hub regarding Domestic Abuse and the support WCHG offers to those reporting this. The Living Well area of the website was improved to provide direct contact information for this service.

Issue

A customer was unhappy with WCHG's response to their request for a fuel vouchers

Improvement

WCHG updated its website to clearly set out the eligibility criteria for fuel vouchers which is limited to a maximum of 2 per year (April – March)

Positive complaint handling culture

Enhancing our culture

A number of projects have been delivered with the aim of enhancing the positive complaints handling culture at WCHG. These have included:

- Make Things Right campaign
- Complaints Quality Network
- Workshops with managers
- Workshops with Leadership Team
- New Customer Conduct Policy
- New Complaints Policy
- Supporting teams with additional complaint handling resource

Make Things Right campaign

The pilot Tenant Satisfaction Measure survey in October 2022 showed us we didn't have the full picture of how dissatisfied our customers are with services.

Formal complaint satisfaction was at 73% compared to TSM data where only 30% of customers were satisfied with complaint handling

Customers had expressed dissatisfaction but an actual complaint had not been recorded or processed i.e. customers thought they had complained but their dissatisfaction was not captured or routed anywhere

In partnership with the Customer Experience Committee and tenant-led Scrutiny Group, we launched **Make Things Right** Campaign in May 2023

Make Things Right campaign

Customer Campaign

- Customer weekly drop-in session at Wythenshawe House
- Weekly social media messages encouraging feedback July & Aug 2023
- Revised the Customer Feedback leaflet
- Posters to display in WCHG site communal areas



HM Government

Housing
Ombudsman Service

Make things right

Highlighting the importance
of listening to our customers
and what you can do if
you're not happy with us.

If you want to get in touch with us to try
and resolve things, you can:

Call us:
0800 633 5500

Email us:
complaints&praise@wchg.org.uk

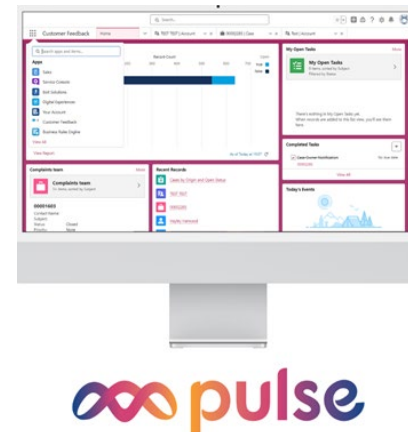
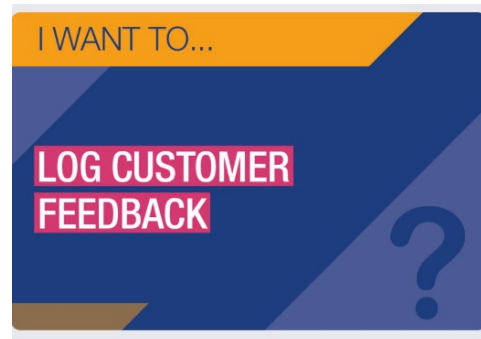
Visit us:
Wythenshawe House,
8 Poundswick Lane,
Wythenshawe, M22 9TA.

Wythenshawe
Housing Group

Make Things Right campaign

Colleague Campaign

- Launched a new internal colleague Customer Feedback form
- Briefing for teams including Customer Hub
- Communicated to Team Leaders/Managers
- Considered the 'to be' process for recording dissatisfaction in new 'Pulse' system



Make Things Right campaign

- Shared analysis of complaints data received to managers of service areas with the most complaints
- Customer Experience team met with these teams to review key themes or issues
- Considered the learning from these themes & identified service improvements to prevent future complaints



Make Things Right campaign outcomes

- Following campaign launch April – September 2023 there was a 94% increase in expressions of dissatisfaction compared to same time in 2022 or 92% increase compared to the previous 6 months
- Three times as many informal complaints recorded/captured
- Twice as many stage 1 complaints received Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey results show a 9% improvement
- Specific learning actions from complaints during the campaign:
 - ✓ Improving communications to customers in relation to Manchester Move rehousing wait times
 - ✓ Revisiting fencing offer in preparation for Spring/Summer and how we manage the demand in the Customer Hub to prevent complaints
 - ✓ Notifying in advance all assisted gardening recipients of what and when they can expect the service

Make Things Right campaign outcomes

- ✓ Communications to customer about kitchen and bathroom renewals and the timescales associated – being clear if not renewal it is a repair
- ✓ Pulse Knowledge articles will support clear messaging to customers regarding services & will reduce hand offs to managers
- Complaints data will now be reviewed quarterly by Leadership Team & Operational Managers to consider learning & service improvement
- In response to the increase in the capture of complaints we have increased Customer Feedback Team resource which will allow us to provide more support to managers in complaint handling
- We have the mechanisms in place to continue supporting the government's Make Things Right campaign in relation to social housing complaints



Complaints Quality Network (CQN)

A group of colleagues from across the organisation regularly come together with the aim of improving complaint response quality. During 2023-24 the CQN have;

- Completed a review of Damp & Mould complaint responses to ensure they are aligned to Ombudsman expectations
- Supported the Make Things Right campaign to increase the centralised capture of customer dissatisfaction
- Devised a Customer Conduct Policy & Procedure to manage any unreasonable behaviour more consistently

In 2024-2025 we plan to.....

- Support wider colleagues in complaint handling & with responses
- Relaunch the Network to widen colleague membership
- Review & update the managers toolkit for complaint handling which includes, an investigation checklist, complaint response guidance, letter templates, compensation guidance to ensure it is aligned to the Complaint Handling Code
- Support & drive forward service improvement from complaint learning

Next Steps

During the next 12 months there are a number of key actions which will support & improve WCHG complaint handling & learning from customer feedback:

- Implementing changes with the increased resource within the Customer Feedback Team & embedding new processes to maximise complaint resolution & compliance with the Code
- Moving all managers onto the Pulse system for complaint handling to ensure a holistic approach to complaint management
- Training for all managers in relation to the Complaint Handling Code & the new WCHG Complaint Policy
- Developing a Vulnerabilities Policy to enhance managers' knowledge and use of reasonable adjustments

Work is continuing on the following projects as a result of customer feedback:

- Business transformation: including the Repairs & Maintenance Project & Customer Hub Projects, including customer self-service which will encompass ICT system requirements
- We will continue to embed Customer First principles across WCHG as part of the Culture Change programme with Mary Gobar International
- Quarterly workshops with teams where high-levels of complaints

Housing Ombudsman

Housing Ombudsman determinations

The Housing Ombudsman Service issued two determinations in relation to complaints this year;

- One determination related to a complaint from an applicant about WCHG's management of their housing application. The Ombudsman determined that WCHG had offered reasonable redress (22 Aug 2023, complaint number 202210636)
- Another related to a complaint about how WCHG managed a rent account. The Ombudsman determined that WCHG had offered reasonable redress (28 Sept 2023, complaint number 202117043)

Landlord report – the Ombudsman has only produced a Landlord Report for landlords with 5 or more determinations. Therefore the Ombudsman has not produced a specific report for WCHG.

Housing Ombudsman - 2023/24

The Housing Ombudsman Service published its new [Complaint Handling Code 2024](#). This became statutory on 1st April 2024.

The Ombudsman has not produced any reports specifically in relation to the work of WCHG, however we note the following best practice 'spotlight' reports that have been published during the year 2023/24:

- [Spotlight on: Knowledge and Information Management \(KIM\)](#); published in May 2023
- [Spotlight on attitudes, respect and rights – relationship of equals](#); published in January 2024

Other reports that may be of interest to members include:

- [Insight on data and individual cases April to June 2023 \(issue 15\)](#); published September 2023
- [Insight on service charges and the Ombudsman's jurisdiction \(issue 16\)](#); published December 2023

Reporting variances

For the first time this year we will be reporting the number of complaints we have received to both the Housing Ombudsman and the Regulator of Social Housing. These numbers will be different because of the way that they are defined.

The regulator has asked for the number of complaints received from tenants, as part of its broader Tenant Satisfaction Measures standard. Whereas the self-assessment we publish on our website for customers includes the number of complaints from all customers including non-tenants, such as leaseholders or community members.

The figures we will be reporting to the Regulator are on the following page.

Report to Regulator of Social Housing

CH01	Number of stage one complaints made by tenants in the relevant stock type during the reporting year per 1,000 homes.	26.19
CH02	Proportion of stage one complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales.	98.87%
CH01	Number of stage two complaints made by tenants in the relevant stock type during the reporting year per 1,000 homes.	4.07
CH02	Proportion of stage two complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales.	98.18%

How to find out more

How to find out more

- You can read a copy of our Complaints Policy [here](#)
- You can request copies of this policy in accessible formats when you contact us
- Our Scrutiny Group is a group of tenant volunteers who:
 - Read stage 2 complaints to check that we handle complaints correctly
 - Advise us on developing policies relating to complaints
 - Conduct a review of Complaint Handling each year and report their findings to Customer Experience Committee
- If you are interested in finding out more about joining our Scrutiny Group, email getinvolved@wchg.org.uk or speak to our reception or Customer Hub

Who has lead responsibilities for complaints?

- The Member Responsible for Complaints (the MRC) is a member of our governing body (the WCHG Board) who is appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. As at February 2024, this is **David Nuttall**, Board member and Customer Experience Committee member.
- The senior lead person is a senior manager who is accountable for complaint handling. This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision. As at February 2024, this is **Sarah Klueter**, Director of Customer Experience.
- Our Head of Assets and Building Safety is responsible for ensuring any building safety complaints are dealt with appropriately. As at February 2024, this is **Robert MacDougall**.
- The complaints officer is a manager who takes responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to our governing body (the WCHG Board). As at February 2024, this is **Kerry Wood**, Customer Experience Manager

Contact us

Phone

- 0300 111 0000 (local rate from a mobile)
- 0800 633 5500 (free from a landline)

Email

- customerenquiries@wchg.org.uk

Write to

- Complaints Team, Wythenshawe Community Housing Group, 8 Poundswick Lane, Wythenshawe, Manchester, M22 9TA