



Housing complaints performance and service improvement report 2023-24

Section 1: Introduction

Norwich City Council welcomes feedback from residents.

Handling complaints effectively allows us to address issues, learn from them and prevent future occurrences.

The Housing Ombudsman is responsible for investigating complaints about social housing providers.

In April 2024, the Housing Ombudsman introduced a new complaint handling code to ensure complaints are addressed fairly, effectively and promptly.

This report includes our self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman complaint handling code, as well as providing information on the complaints we received during 2023-24, some examples of service improvements we have made as a result of learning from complaints and an overview of our Housing Ombudsman cases.

Section 2: Annual self-assessment

We have completed a self-assessment (June 2024) against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

This ensures we align our policies and practices to provide a prompt and effective complaints service.

[Our full self-assessment is published online.](#)

The areas where we need to improve are:

- We do not routinely keep residents informed about their complaint if we are unable to fully respond within the timescale.
- We do not currently have a process to prioritise complaints by the complexity of the complaint or by the residents' personal circumstances.
- We do not acknowledge 100% of our complaints within 5 working days of receipt.
- We do not respond to 100% of our stage 1 complaints within 10 working days of receipt.
- We do not currently have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties.

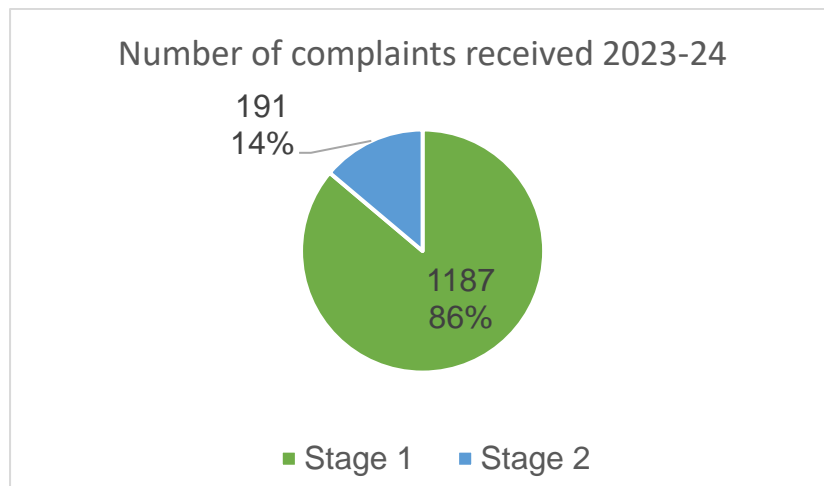
Section 3: Performance

Overall

We received 1,378 complaints about council housing between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.

1,187 complaints were responded to at stage 1 of our complaints process.

191 were escalated to stage 2.



The Housing Ombudsman and the Regulator of Social Housing both regard effective complaint handling and listening to tenants as important.

There has been high media coverage of some failings in the social housing sector and the Housing Ombudsman has run publicity campaigns such as 'make it right' to raise the profile of making a complaint.

We embrace a positive complaints culture as this is key to enhancing and improving our services.

During 2023-24 we have not kept a record of any complaints we refused to accept in line with the exclusions in our published complaint policy. From April 2024 we will be keeping a record of these complaints.

Stage 1 complaints

Of the 1,187 stage 1 complaints received, 532 (45%) were responded to within the Housing Ombudsman timeframe of 10 working days.

This does not meet the Housing Ombudsman requirement to respond to all stage 1 complaints within 10 working days. As part of monitoring our performance against the response time, processes were reviewed during quarter 4, which resulted in quarter 4 performance improving to 63% responded to within 10 working days. We are committed to improving this performance during 2024-25.

Responsive repair issues represented the largest proportion of stage 1 complaints (45%)

Stage 1 complaint category	Percentage
Responsive repairs	45%
Tenancy and neighbourhood issues	12%
Contractors	10%
Planned maintenance and upgrades	9%
Antisocial behaviour	4%
Rent and service charges	4%
Lettings	3%
Building safety	2%
Garages	2%
Leasehold and right to buy	2%
Other	7%

The most common theme was:

Stage 1 complaint theme	Percentage
Standard of service provided	43%
Failing to provide an agreed service	25%
Service requested but not provided	20%
Employee or contractor attitude or conduct	3%
Other	9%

781 (66%) of stage 1 complaints were upheld.

Stage 2 complaints

Of the 191 stage 2 complaints received, 124 (65%) were responded to within the Housing Ombudsman timeframe of 20 working days.

This does not meet the Housing Ombudsman requirement to respond to all stage 2 complaints within 20 working days.

Responsive repair issues represented the largest proportion of stage 2 complaints (53%).

Stage 2 complaint category	Percentage
Responsive repairs	53%
Contractors	6%
Planned maintenance and upgrades	6%
Antisocial behaviour	5%
Tenancy and neighbourhood issues	4%
Lettings	3%
Rent and service charges	3%
Building safety	2%
Garages	2%
Leasehold and right to buy	2%

Stage 2 complaint category	Percentage
Other	14%

The most common theme was:

Stage 1 complaint theme	Percentage
Standard of service provided	35%
Failing to provide an agreed service	28%
Service requested but not provided	19%
Employee or contractor attitude or conduct	2%
Other	16%

97 (51%) of stage 2 complaints were upheld.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

During 2023-24 we commissioned a market research organisation, called Viewpoint, to carry out an independent satisfaction survey of our tenants.

One of the questions asked respondents “how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Norwich City Council’s housing service complaint handling?”. Of the 224 respondents who answered this question, 21% were satisfied.

This falls short of our own aspiration and tells us we are not meeting the standard you expect from us.

The early results of this standardised survey from other large housing providers reflect that this figure is low across the housing sector, but this does not make it acceptable, and we recognise the need for improvement.

Section 4: Learning and service improvement

Managers in the housing service meet on a quarterly basis to review the quality of complaint handling, to ensure timely responses are being provided and to share learning from cases.

Stage 2 cases are sampled by an independent officer to check for consistency and fairness.

Improving the learning and insights from complaints is a priority for the housing service.

During 2024-25 we will be implementing a new IT system to help us handle complaints more effectively and capture themes, outcomes and learning more easily.

Here are some examples of the learning points for us from complaints received during 2023-24:

You said our rent arrears team did not take known personal circumstances into account when pursuing a debt after a tenancy has ended. We have changed our recovery procedure to ensure we balance the debt recovery with any personal circumstances and particularly in cases of domestic abuse.

You said our standard letters were not always easy to understand. We have started to review all our standard letter and email templates. We are engaging with local voluntary and community organisations on the content and will be setting up a customer feedback panel to ensure you are involved in the review process.

You said waste and recycling bins were not always present when you move into one of our homes. We now ensure we have requested these ahead of your tenancy starting.

You said the different rates we charge for garages were confusing. We have now made the charges for garages much simpler and no longer base charges on the demand in the area.

You said our antisocial behaviour officers did not reply to contact about noise nuisance. We have improved our working practices and will ensure communication is dealt with during periods when an officer involved in a case is absent.

You said our antisocial behaviour officers did not always show ID and official communication was not always on headed paper. We have reminded all officers to always show ID and use headed paper to reassure residents that our letters are genuine.

You said the lift at a tower block was frequently breaking down. Our contractor has made adjustments following advice from the drive supplier and a senior officer is liaising with our contractor over future improvements.

You said our out of hours service did not take your health issues into account when prioritising an urgent repair. Our contractor sincerely apologised for this and has reminded call handlers to take into account customer's personal circumstances.

You said sometimes your interactions with our repairs operatives fall short of your expectations. We meet regularly with our repairs contractors to monitor performance and remind them to adhere to the standards and codes of conduct expected of them.

Section 5: Housing Ombudsman findings

If a tenant is not satisfied with our response after a stage 2 final response has been issued, they have the right to approach the Housing Ombudsman and request an impartial review.

The Housing Ombudsman published two determinations against Norwich City Council housing service during 2023-24.

[Case 1 \(click to view full published report\)](#)

For our handling of a report of damp and mould in a property, a finding of 'severe maladministration' was found by the Ombudsman. The finding related specifically to our failure to show we took appropriate and timely action to resolve the reported damp and mould, and this resulted in significant and unreasonable distress and inconvenience to the resident. There was also a finding of 'maladministration' in respect of how we handled the complaint, with the Ombudsman determining we had been dismissive, lacked empathy and had not sought to learn from the residents' experience.

A sincere apology was given to the resident along with financial recompense. We have since independently reviewed this case, alongside reviewing our record keeping and information we publish in relation to our repairs timeframes.

[Case 2 \(click to view full published report\)](#)

For our handling of a report of antisocial behaviour, a finding of 'service failure' was found by the Ombudsman. The finding related specifically to our failure to respond within the timeframes in our Antisocial behaviour policy.

Compensation was given to the resident for the distress and inconvenience caused and our process for responding to reports of antisocial behaviour has been amended.

Annual report

The Housing Ombudsman publishes an annual report on any Landlord with more than 5 findings against them in a year.

The Housing Ombudsman publishes these reports in September each year.

We received a report for the year 2022-23:

[Housing Ombudsman report on Norwich City Council \(click to view full published report\)](#)

Section 6: 2024-25 action plan

In order to improve our complaint handling, the following actions have been identified and will be implemented:

Action to be taken	By whom	By when
Introduce a procedure to keep residents informed about their complaint if we are unable to fully respond within the timescale.	Executive director of communities and housing	31 March 2025
Make changes to our IT system so we can prioritise complaints by the complexity of the complaint or by the residents' personal circumstances.	Executive director of communities and housing	31 March 2025
Improve our performance to acknowledge 100% of our complaints within 5 working days of receipt.	Executive director of communities and housing	31 March 2025
Improve our performance to respond to 100% of our stage 1 complaints within 10 working days of receipt.	Executive director of communities and housing	31 March 2025
Improve our performance to respond to 100% of our stage 1 complaints within 20 working days of receipt.	Executive director of communities and housing	31 March 2025
Introduce a standard objective in relation to the expectations for complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties.	Executive director of communities and housing	31 March 2025