

ALMOND HOUSING ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2023-24



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Foreward

Welcome to Almond Housing Association's (AHA's) Annual Complaints Report.

This report will provide you with a summary of our overall complaint handling performance, how we have learnt from our complaints and what we have planned for the future in terms of complaint handling.

We value each complaint we receive as this is our chance to hear from you when we don't get things quite right. We can use this information to put things right and if necessary make changes to our services to prevent the same issues happening again. We continue to make complaints a main priority for our business to ensure our customers are receiving a high-quality service from us.

I am pleased to report that the service we provided to our customers during the last year in terms of complaint handling remained consistently high. We have received less complaints in the period 2023-24 when compared with the previous 2 years.

John Davidson
May 2024

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Our vision, culture and values

Our vision

Striving to improve life experiences and opportunities.

Our culture

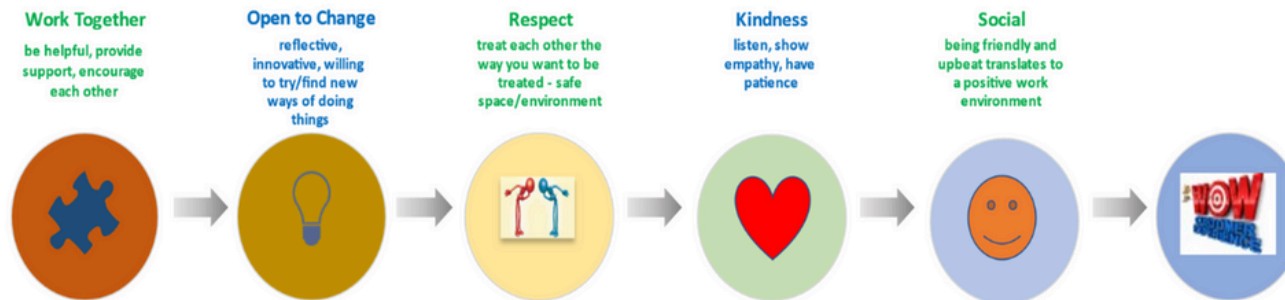
We're a Housing Association with a passion for excellent customer service. Our aim is to create a place where people can thrive and develop.

We employ people to do a job and trust them to get it done. Our approach is agile and flexible, enabling colleagues to deliver great results in a way which works for them and for our customers.

Our focus is on how we do things as much as what we do. We take personal responsibility for our decisions, our actions and our performance, and get things done by working collaboratively.

We care about results but we also care about people and we ensure that our interactions and behaviours are guided by our values.

Our values



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Performance: Overview at a glance

This section provides you with an overview of how we have performed over the last year when handling your complaints.

We received **238** Stage 1 complaints



Of all Stage 1 complaints received, we upheld **44%** of them



We completed our Stage 1 complaints in an average of **2.84** days



We completed **92%** Stage 1 complaints within the agreed timescales



We received **24** Stage 2 complaints



Of all Stage 2 complaints received, we upheld **58%** of them



We completed our Stage 2 complaints in an average of **13.71** days



We completed **100%** Stage 2 complaints within the agreed timescales



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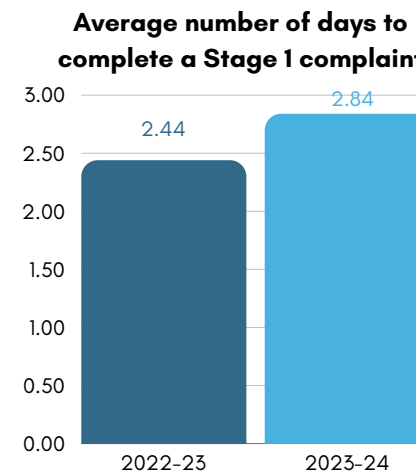
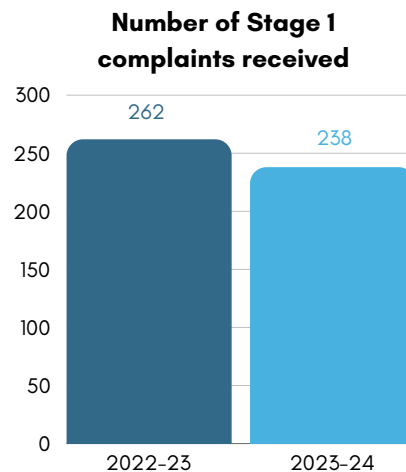


Performance: Analysis

We will explain our performance results in more detail in this section. This includes benchmarking our performance to previous years target timescales. We aim towards resolving all the complaints that we receive within the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) target timeframes. They are:

- 5 working days to resolve Stage 1 complaints
- 20 working days to resolve Stage 2 complaints

The graph below shows the average number of days taken to close complaints in 2023-24 compared with 2022-23. The total number of Stage 1 complaints received in 2023-24 has continued to decrease to 238 from 262 in 2022-23 and 273 in 2021-22. However, it should be noted that the high number of complaints in 2021-22 was possibly still the fallout from services resuming following the Covid lockdown.



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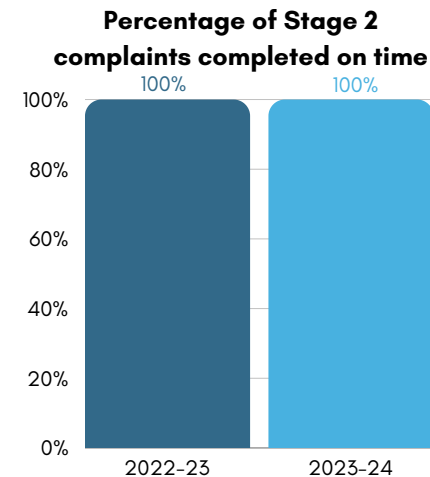
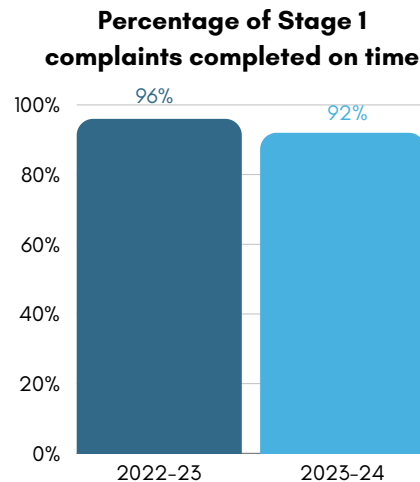
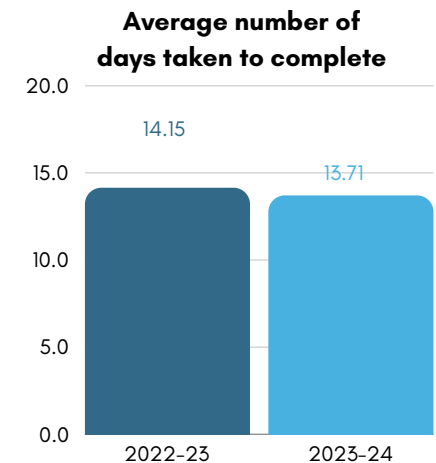
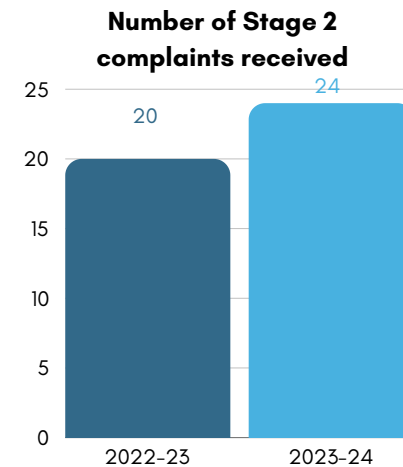
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Whilst the total number of Stage 2 complaints received has increased from 20 in 2022-23 to 24 being received this year, the average number of days to resolve has decreased from 14.15 to 13.71 days.

The charts below show how well we completed Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints within our target timescales. There may be times when a complaint is not completed on time and this can be due to a number of reasons such as the complexity of the complaint or difficulty making contact with customers and contractors to resolve the issues raised.

We continue to make complaints a main priority to ensure our customers are receiving a high-quality service from us.



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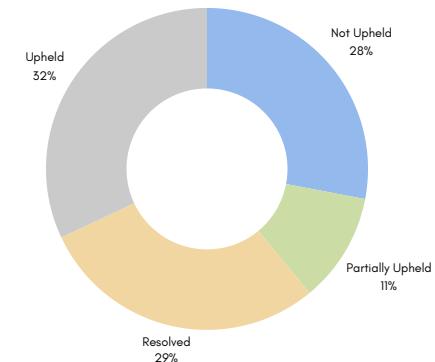
Further complaints information

In this section we will show you in more detail the complaints we handled during 2023-24. We will show the outcomes from our complaints, the number of complaints we received for each service area and the root causes of those complaints.

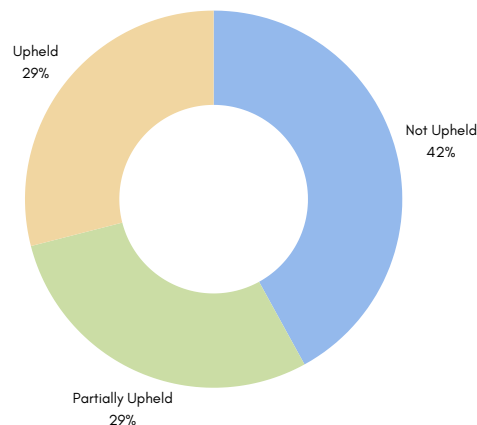
Complaint Outcomes

The diagram to the right shows the outcomes for Stage 1 complaints closed in 2023-24. AHA consider “partially upheld” complaints to be the same as “upheld” complaints. Therefore, on this basis, 44% of Stage 1 complaints were upheld last year, this is a reduction from 54% that were upheld in the previous year.

Stage 1 complaint outcomes



Stage 2 complaint outcomes



The diagram to the left shows the outcomes for Stage 2 complaints closed in 2023-24.

Using the same rationale as above in that we consider “partially upheld” complaints to be the same as “upheld” complaints, therefore 58% of Stage 2 complaints were upheld last year. This is an increase from 40% that were upheld in the previous year.

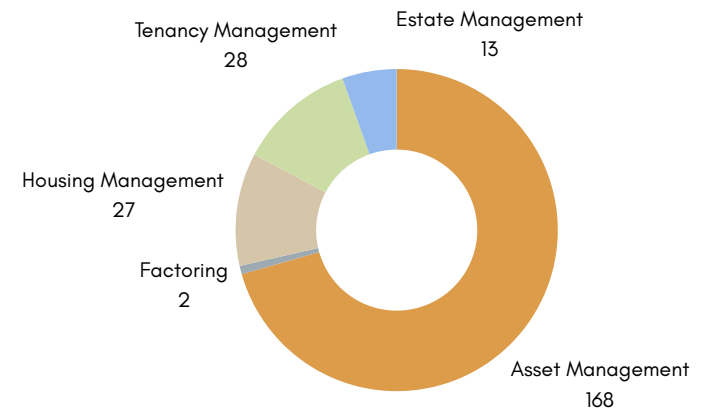
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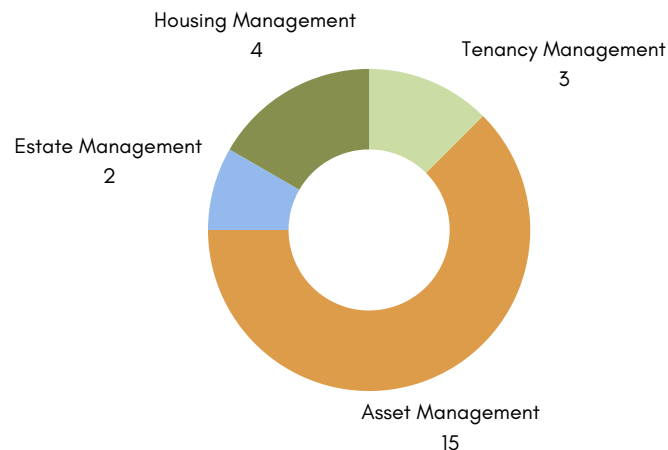
Complaint Service Areas

The diagram to the right shows the number of Stage 1 complaints received against each of our services. There were two complaints against the factoring team which is similar to the previous year. We also received a similar number of complaints regarding estate management. Due to the nature of the work that AHA does, our Asset Management team receive the largest proportion of complaints. However, this year we have noticed a decrease in the number of complaints received with only 168 being received in 2023-24, down from 180 the previous year.

Stage 1 complaints by service area



Stage 2 complaints by service area



Whilst we have noticed a decrease in the number of Stage 1 complaints that our Asset Management team received, the graph to the left shows that we received 15 Stage 2 complaints, which is an increase from the 11 complaints we received in 2022-23. However, we do acknowledge that this team covers a large range of functions including reactive repairs, gas servicing and planned maintenance.

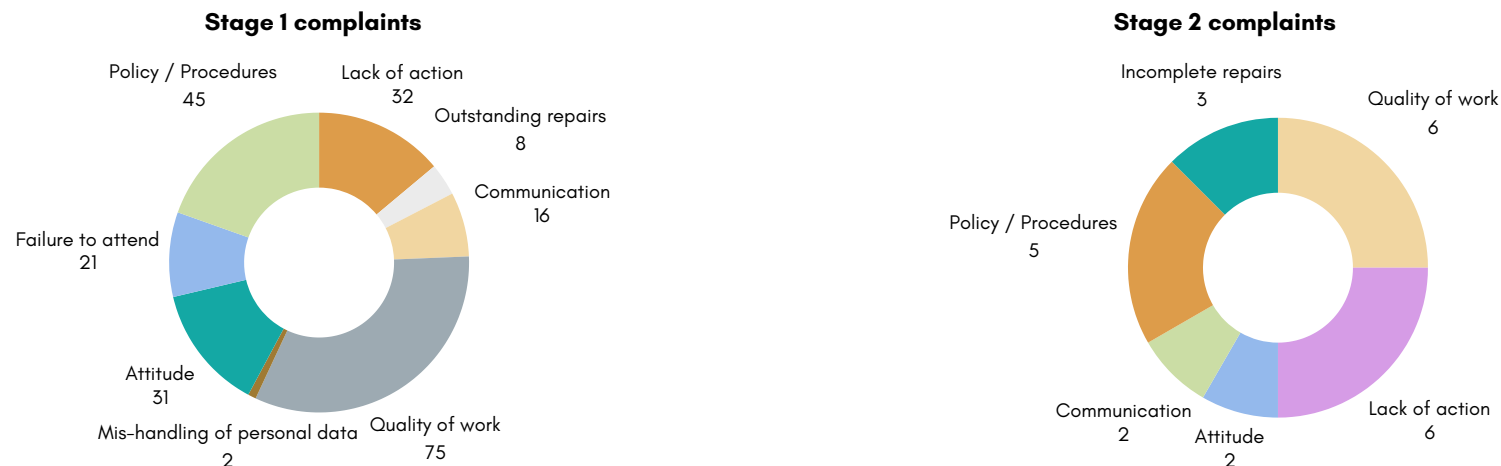
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Root Cause of Complaints

This section will show you the number of complaints we received last year based on their subject, or root cause. The largest number of complaints in the year were in relation to Quality of Work which is also consistent with 2022-23.



The above diagram shows that the highest cause for Stage 2 complaints was in relation to both Lack of Action and Quality of Work. Of these twelve complaints, 75% were complaints that had been escalated from a Stage 1 complaint. Also, of the 24 stage 2 complaints that we received, 58% were either upheld or partially upheld. This is an increase from 35% which were upheld in the previous year.

We have acknowledged the high number of complaints that we were receiving regarding quality of work and a number of actions were raised to address this matter which included regular meetings with our main reactive repairs contractor and increased partnership working with them. Our contractor has also appointed a Working Foreman who will carry out inspections on completed jobs and at present they are prioritising jobs that have been completed by operatives that they have had reports of poor workmanship.

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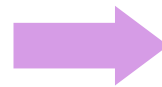
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Improvements made as a result of complaints

AHA welcomes all complaints as they provide us with invaluable information about the services we provide. They highlight where we may not be getting things quite right and this allows us the opportunity to make tangible service improvements that can be evidenced and reported back to customers. Here are some of the improvements we have made as a direct result of complaints we have received.

Tenant was dissatisfied with the length of time taken to complete a damp survey. The delay was caused as we were using a specialist contractor who had to travel up from England.



Although we did not uphold the complaint as we were following our procedures, we acknowledge that better service could be provided and have since started to use an alternative local contractor.

A tenant was concerned about their neighbour's use of a Ring doorbell and AHA did not have a policy in place that covered this matter.



Guidance on Ring doorbells was developed and can now be found on Almond HA's website.

We received complaints from tenants who had received correspondence from the Associations payment merchant addressed to the late joint tenant, despite AHA being aware of their passing.



We agreed that all Direct Debits/Automated Payments would be cancelled and then reapplied following the passing of a joint tenant to prevent any future letters being issued by the payment merchant in the late tenants/account holder's name.

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Case Studies

We would like to share with you some of the complaints we handled during the last year. You should note that these do not contain any personal information of those involved.

Summary of Complaint

We received two separate complaints from tenants as they felt that we should not have disclosed information about them to their emergency contact / next of kin.

Findings

We found that in both cases we were right to share the type of limited information that we did in the interests of Health & Safety.

Conclusion

Whilst this complaint was upheld, we recognised the need to develop a more robust process to record the tenant's consent to share information with a third party. We then developed our Mandate to Represent form which is completed by the customer and allows them to identify what information we may share and with whom. Customers can also revoke this at any time.

Summary of Complaint

Tenant expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the quality of their property, specifically the condition of the wet floor bathroom, the quantity of repairs required as well as lack of action / delays in repairs being carried out. The tenant also complained that they felt their initial Stage 1 complaint had been disregarded as they hadn't received a response.

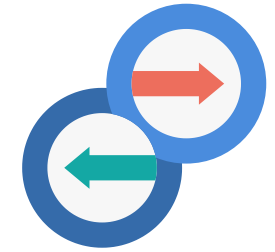
Findings

Following an investigation, we discovered that an internal failure had led to one colleague assuming another colleague would respond. We also established that a number of repairs had been carried out recently at the property, with a few falling outside of the target time. There was also a delay in receiving a drainage survey back from our main contractor's sub-contractor.

Conclusion

This complaint was partially upheld due to the failings of the tenant's Stage 1 complaint, and the delay in carrying out repairs to the property. However, issues relating to discolouration to the wet floor bathroom were not upheld.

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Changes made to improve complaint handling

We continually look for ways in which we can improve how we handle complaints.

We recognised throughout the year that there had been an inconsistent approach in terms of how we log any complaints that we receive into the Association. Therefore, we reviewed the categories which we use and agreed that there were too many for staff to choose between. An overhaul then took place and we reduced the available categories from 13 to 6. Having the reduction in the number of available categories provides consistent reporting throughout the different areas of the business and also allows the management team to review and identify any trends and also highlight any possible changes that should be made.

We acknowledge how important it is to continue to monitor complaints, as the more focus we place on our performance, the better service we can provide to our customers.

Complaint handling network

Our Governance and Business Improvement Officer is part of the wider Complaint Handling Network. This is made up of Registered Social Landlords across Scotland who meet quarterly to share best practice and any common issues across complaints in Housing. Staff from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman are also in attendance, and they too share any areas of interest and add items for discussion. These meetings are of huge benefit as they allow us to gather feedback and advice from our peers and use this to improve the service and support we provide to our staff and customers in terms of complaint handling.

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Compliments

Whilst receiving complaints is important to highlight where we might need to improve, it is equally important to record compliments to understand where tenants feel we have got things right.

It means a great deal to our staff and contractors to receive compliments and can really boost morale and motivation. We monitor compliments and use this information to reward and recognise staff and contractors that go above and beyond in their role. We wanted to let you know about some of the compliments we received in the last year:

"I have to write and tell you the really good job the new gardeners are going cutting the grass. We really do appreciate it and we are grateful for this service."

"Always had a good a friendly service."

"I would like to say a big thank you to the CTS engineer who attended, he was very kind, helpful and explained everything in great detail."

"AHA advisors are always polite and take the time to support tenants."

"Thank you to the plumber and joiner who attended my property today. They did a fantastic job and treated my home with dignity and were very respectful."

"Thank you for the winter check parcel. I am really grateful to have AHA attend check in on my property"

"I always find when I have a problem it's always dealt with promptly and in an extremely friendly way."

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What's next?

During this coming year we will continue roll out further training to our frontline staff on complaint handling. This will ensure we are providing you with the best service possible when handling your complaints.

We are currently reviewing a better way of obtaining feedback from complainants regarding how satisfied they are with the way we have handled their complaint. It is important for us to identify areas where we can improve the service we provide.

We will continue to provide additional support to our repairs contractors by attending their office to assist with appointment making. The intention is to help reduce the number of outstanding repairs that need to be carried out in order to deliver a better service to our tenants.

We will be looking at how we can improve our focus on lessons learned, by raising awareness amongst staff where improvement is required and ensuring that any service improvements are implemented going forward.