

# ALMOND HOUSING ASSOCIATION

## ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2022-23

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# ALMOND HOUSING ASSOCIATION

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### Foreward

Welcome to Almond Housing Association's (AHA) 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 provide to our customers during the last year in terms of complaint handling remained consistently high. We have received less complaints in the period 2022-23 when compared with 2021-22 and 2020-21. However, it should be noted that the high number of complaints received in 2020-21 is possibly due to services resuming following the first UK-wide lockdown.

*John Davidson*  
July 2023

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## Our vision, culture and values

### Our vision

Striving to improve life experiences and opportunities.

### Our culture

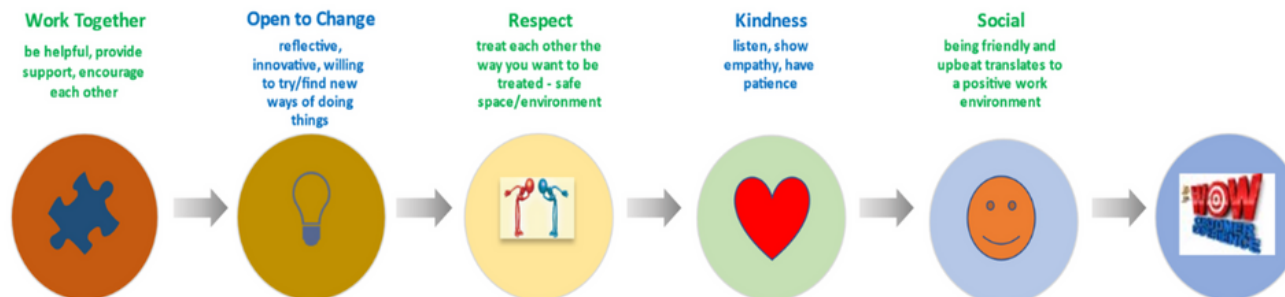
We're a Housing Association with a passion for excellent customer service. Our aim is to create a place where people can thrive and develop.

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 **262** Stage 1 complaints



Of all Stage 1 complaints received, we upheld **54%** of them



We completed our Stage 1 complaints in an average of **2.44** days



We completed **96%** Stage 1 complaints within the agreed timescales



We received **20** Stage 2 complaints



Of all Stage 2 complaints received, we upheld **35%** of them



We completed our Stage 2 complaints in an average of **14.15** days



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



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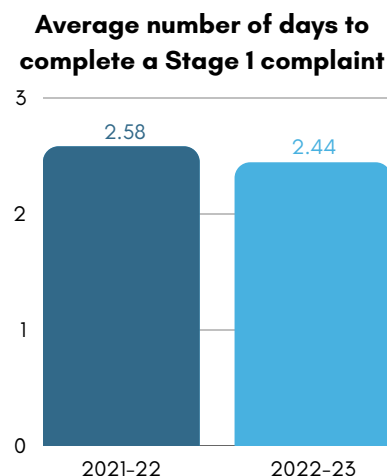
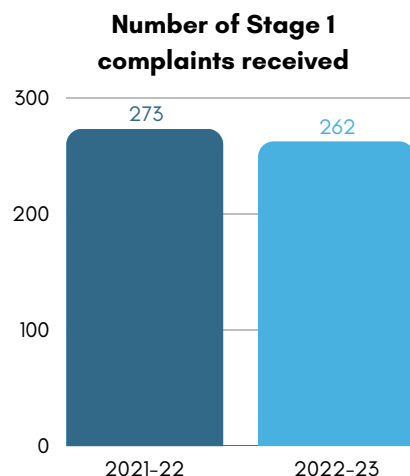


### Performance: Analysis

We will explain our performance results in more detail in this section. This includes benchmarking our performance to previous year's 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 2022-23 compared with 2021-22. The total number of Stage 1 complaints received in 2022-23 has continued to decrease to 262 from 273 in 2021-22 and 328 in 2020-21. However, it should be noted that the high number of complaints in 2020-21 was possibly due to services resuming following the first UK-wide lockdown.



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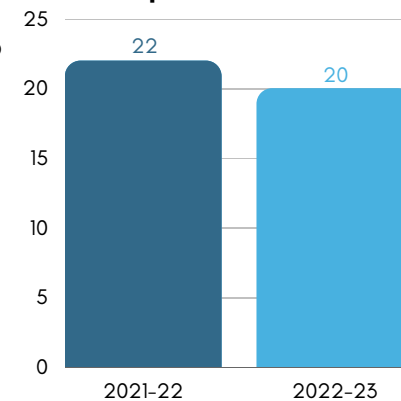
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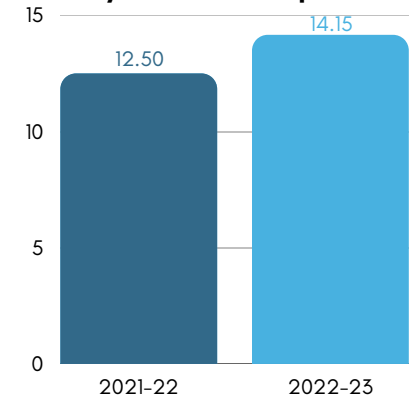
Whilst the total number of Stage 2 complaints received has decreased from 22 in 2021-22 to 20 being received this year, the average number of days to resolve has increased from 12.5 to 14.15 days. However, the complaints are still being resolved well within the SPSO targeted timeframe of 20 working days.

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.

**Number of Stage 2 complaints received**

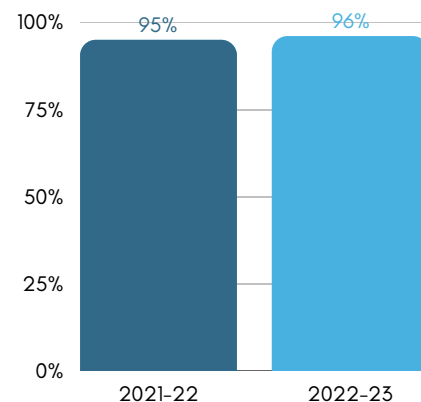


**Average number of days taken to complete**

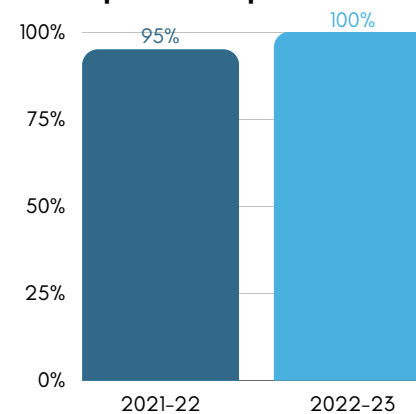


We continue to make complaints a main priority to ensure our customers are receiving a high-quality service from us.

**Percentage of Stage 1 complaints completed on time**



**Percentage of Stage 2 complaints completed on time**



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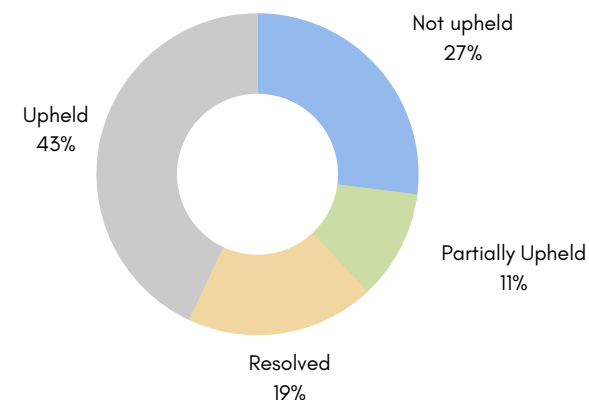
### Further complaints information

In this section we will show you in more detail the complaints we handled during 2022-23. 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.

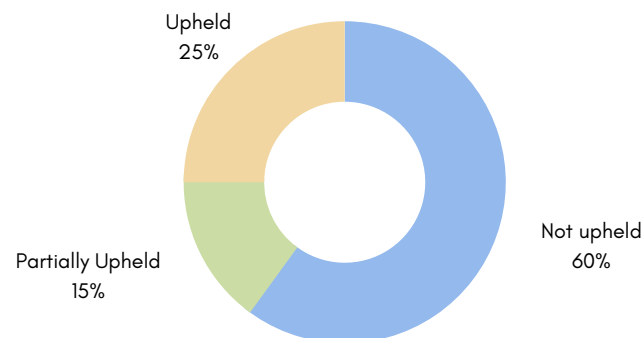
### Complaint Outcomes

The diagram to the right shows the outcomes for Stage 1 complaints closed in 2022-23. AHA consider “partially upheld” complaints to be the same as “upheld” complaints. Therefore, on this basis, 54% of Stage 1 complaints were upheld last year. In August 2021, the SPSO introduced an additional outcome code of Resolved. This is used where we have managed to agree follow up action directly with the complainant.

Stage 1 complaint outcomes



Stage 2 complaint outcomes



The diagram to the left shows the outcomes for Stage 2 complaints closed in 2022-23.

These diagrams show you the outcomes from our complaints. Using the same rationale as above in that we consider “partially upheld” complaints to be the same as “upheld” complaints, therefore 40% of Stage 2 complaints were upheld last year.



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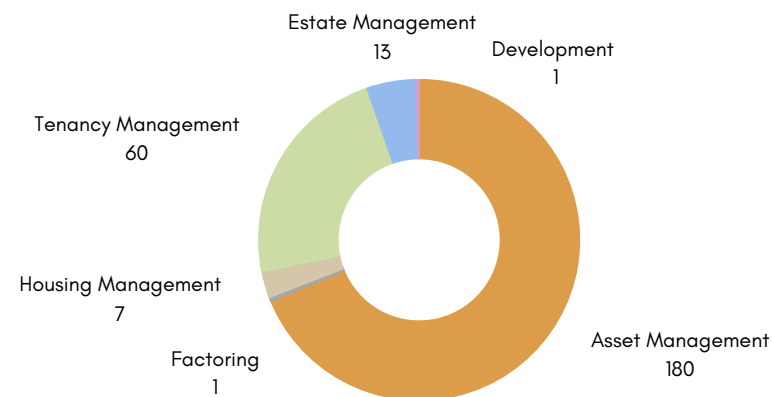
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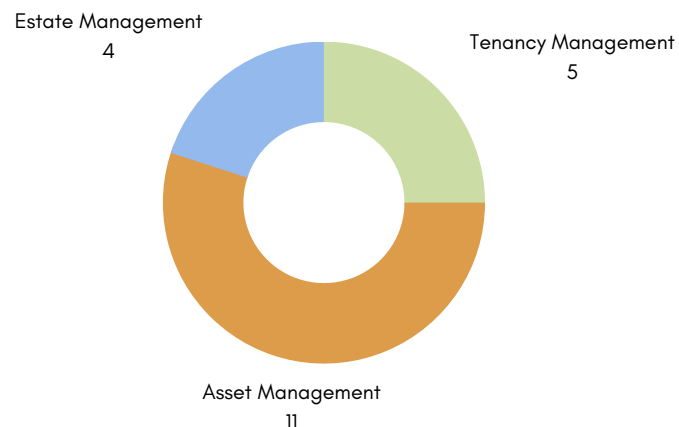
### Complaint Service Areas

This diagram to the right shows the number of Stage 1 complaints received against each of our services. There was one complaint against both our Development and Factoring teams and seven against our Housing Management team. We saw an increase in the number of complaints that we received for our Estate Management service in 2022-23, with thirteen complaints received. As you can see, we recorded the largest number of Stage 1 complaints against our Asset Management team and Tenancy Management team. This is consistent with the previous year's complaints and is also consistent within the housing sector.

Stage 1 complaints by service area



Stage 2 complaints by service area



The diagram to the left shows that we recorded that largest number of Stage 2 complaints for Asset Management. This area covers a large range of functions including reactive repairs, gas servicing and planned maintenance.

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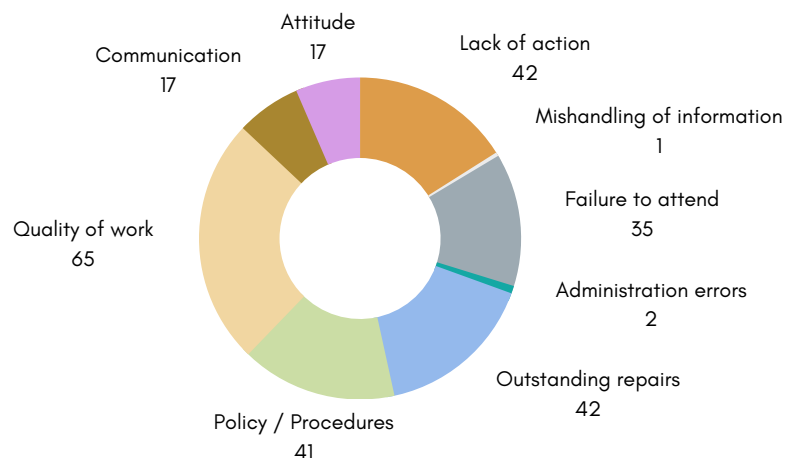
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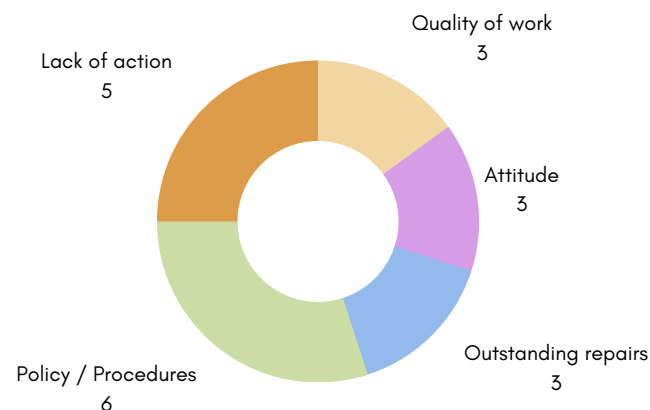
### Root Cause of Complaints

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.

**Stage 1 complaints**



**Stage 2 complaints**



The above diagram shows that the highest cause for Stage 2 complaints was in relation to our policies/procedures and the decisions made by AHA. Of these six complaints, only one was upheld as we acknowledged that the information that had been given to the tenant by a member of staff was incorrect.

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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 tenants. Here are some of the improvements we have made as a direct result of complaints.

Tenant was dissatisfied that they were not made aware of AHA's planned programme before they proceeded to upgrade their bathroom.



We have amended our internal policies/procedures to ensure that when an alteration request is received, the tenant is made aware of any planned works which may affect the work they would like to do.

We received several complaints from tenants who were unhappy with the length of time taken to action repairs.



We acknowledged the pressures that our contractor was facing and have arranged for members of AHA staff to attend their office and assist with appointment setting.

Tenants were dissatisfied with the maintenance of our landscaped areas.



We have increased the number of performance meetings that we have with our landscaping contractor. They have also provided the pruning schedule earlier than normal in order to make AHA staff aware of when work is scheduled to take place.

We received several complaints regarding the length of time taken to action repairs as a result of the cold weather.



We have made arrangements with our heating contractor for them to increase the materials that they will carry in their vehicles.

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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

Following a case of domestic abuse and police involvement, the tenant had spoken to her Housing Officer and been informed that AHA would not be able to provide any additional assistance with rehousing. Once she was in safe accommodation, she phoned to make a complaint as she felt that the way she had been advised was inconsistent with AHA's stated approach.

#### Findings

We should have provided assistance from the first phone call and liaised with specialists in the area to co-ordinate initial safe accommodation and actively explore re-housing as quickly as possible. The incident also should have been immediately reported to the Housing Support Manager to co-ordinate this.

#### Conclusion

Complaint was upheld and the tenant was actively assisted and re-housed by AHA and provided with the support to obtain floor coverings and furnishing. The tenant is now settled and happy. We recognised that staff required additional training on Domestic Abuse and our policy and procedure in this area and this had been implemented across the organisation.

#### Summary of Complaint

Tenant claimed that our tradesmen damaged their cooker during works that were taking place in their kitchen. The tenant also requested that AHA replace their cooker with a new one.

#### Findings

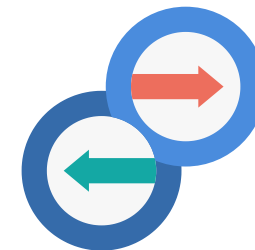
The contractors were interviewed and were able to provide evidence that the cooker was adequately covered whilst the work was being carried out. Members of staff from AHA also attended the tenants' home, however they were unable to see any visible damage and the tenant was unable to provide any evidence to suggest that any damage had been caused by the contractor.

#### Conclusion

After a thorough investigation, this complaint was not upheld due to the lack of evidence available to support the tenant's allegation.

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### Changes made to improve complaint handling

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

In the last year we changed the way that AHA monitors and reviews its complaint handling and the way that we manage complaints. The process of overall reviewing of complaints has been de-centralised and now sits with our frontline managers. They are the staff members best placed to acknowledge when there has been a failing and to make the necessary changes where required. There are weekly meetings to discuss the complaints that have been received and how lessons learned can be incorporated into working practices.

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 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 am delighted with my new fence and the manner and work ethic of the three workmen. I also want to highlight their great work, they were pleasant, polite and cleared up beautifully."

"I am a new tenant and I have been really happy with how smoothly everything has gone."

"The plumber and joiner who attended my property today done a fantastic job. They treated my home with dignity and were very respectful."

"I would like to say thanks for the work that was done when installing the new window at my home. There was a lot of work involved and I am extremely grateful."

"I love being able to phone Almond and talk with a person very quickly. Your problems are taken care of right away."

"I am very satisfied with the property I live in as well as the service Almond delivers."

"My Housing Officer is lovely and approachable. Nothing is a trouble and she always listens."

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### What's next?

During this coming year we will 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.