

Complaints Annual report 23/24

Executive Summary

Context

It is a Housing Ombudsman (HOS) requirement that we produce an annual performance report, to ensure a comprehensive overview of our company's complaints performance and outlook.

This report is being shared with our Board and will be shared on our website (our complaints by numbers) and by making such figures available, it allows us to demonstrate transparency and accountability to our customers, our Board and key stakeholders and regulatory bodies.

This annual report details improvements we have made over the past year. Our concerted efforts have focused on enhancing service delivery, increasing efficiency, and improving our customer experience with complaint handling. Below, we highlight the key areas of improvement and the impact these changes have had on our organisation and stakeholders.

Strategic Goals

This report provides details of Homegroup's annual performance on complaints, which aligns to our internal and external KPI's and our Complaints Policy which links in with our strategic goal of delivering for our customers and communities as well as getting the basics right, consistently.

Questions this report addresses.

1. What does our annual performance look like?
2. What changes have been made and the impact of such changes?
3. What does the future look like for complaint handling in Homegroup?

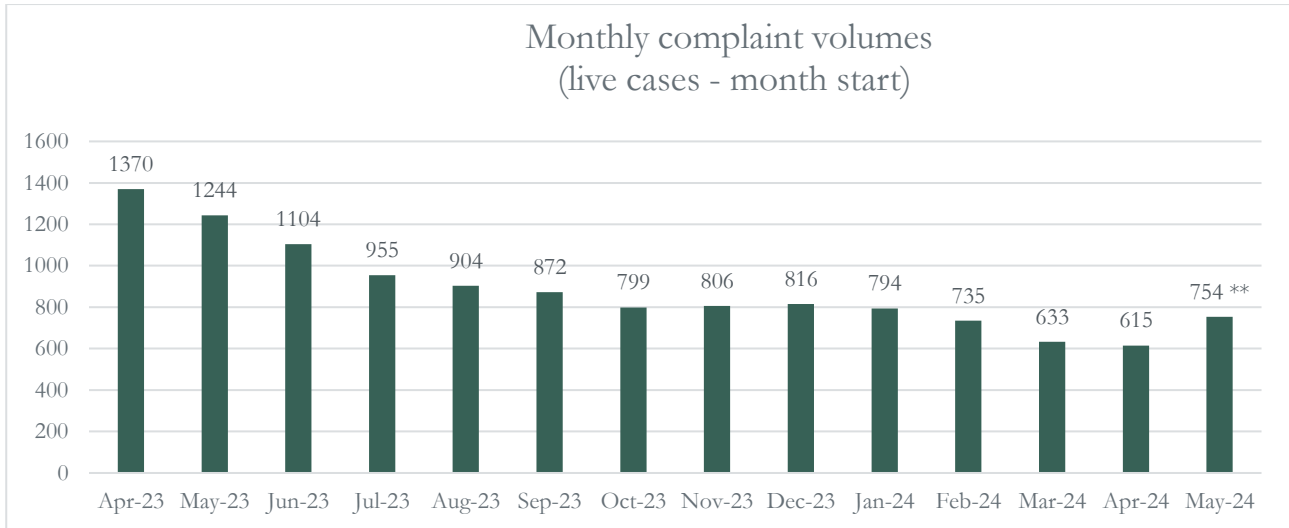
Conclusions

- 1 Our annual performance and all key KPIs have improved, including the overall number of new complaints received year on year.
- 2 We have seen improvements that have strengthened our service delivery, operational efficiency, and customer experience for complaint handling. These advancements are a testament to our commitment to continuous improvement.
- 3 We will continue to build on these successes, continuously improving our processes, and engaging with our customers to deliver even greater value.

The Report

1. What does our annual performance look like for complaints?

1.1. Around 45% reduction in complaints within the financial year of 23/24. Complaints were recorded at 1370 (live cases) in April 2023 reduced to 615 (live cases) April 2024. This is a significant shift, and customers are starting to reap the rewards, with increased communication and more timely resolutions on complaints. Below table shows the progression throughout 23/24 period.



1.2. Please note the below graph is shared beyond financial year to show a spike in volume due an overall review on reporting within our complaints system.

1.3. ** During a recent review of our complaints system and reporting parameters to ensure we continually improve, it was identified that there are some additional complaints that, disappointingly, were not part of the current reporting distributed weekly as part of the complaint updates.

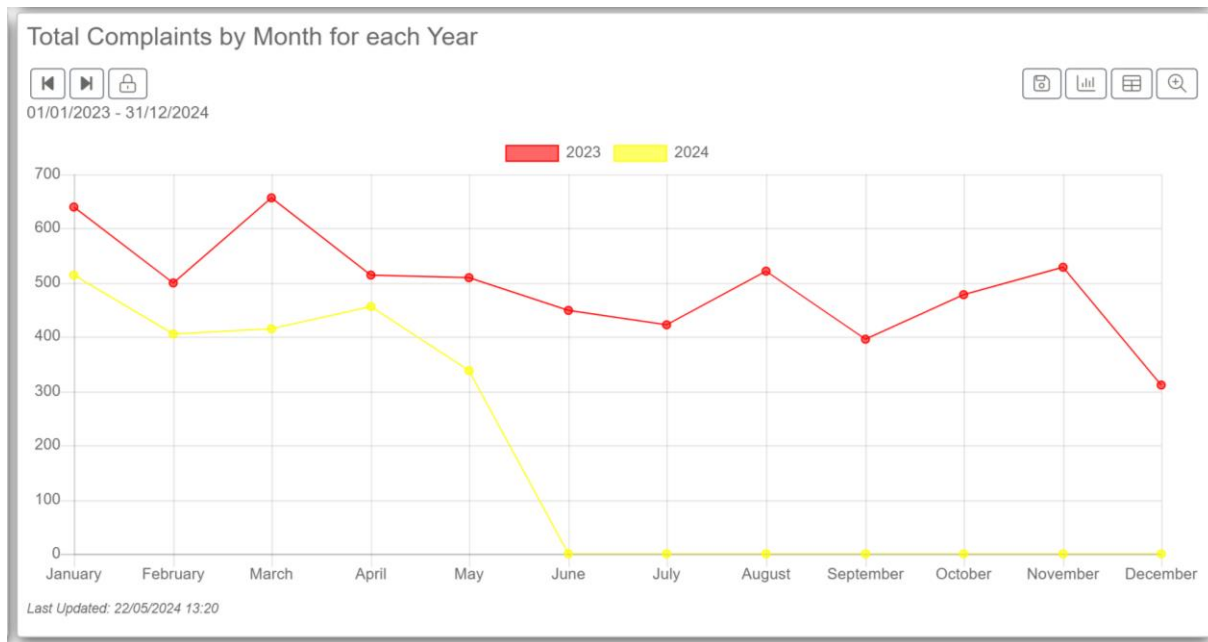
1.4. Around 150 cases were identified swiftly, and more stringent controls were put in place including daily checks against the live system to ensure that the number live customer complaints match any reporting. These complaints were actively being managed, despite not being visible in the report.

1.5. We have seen increase in Damp and Mould and missed appointments complaints, which is predominantly seen in the London and Southeast location. There are some performance related issues with our contractor in this area which is being addressed. Alternative contractors are being explored to prevent further dissatisfaction in this location.

Category	2022-23	2023-24	Comments
D&M	5%	9%	Increase in Cumbria & Lancashire / London & Southeast
Missed Appointments	4%	7%	Increase in London & Southeast
Outstanding Multiple Repairs	5%	4%	Increase in London & Southeast
No Heating/Hot Water	8%	7%	No Change or reduction in regions
Leaks	5%	4%	

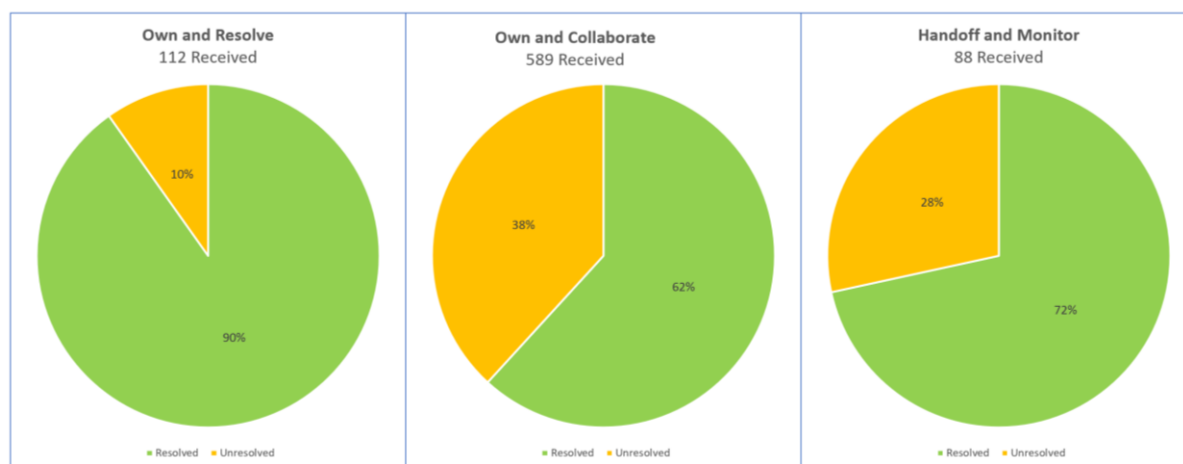
2. What changes have been made and the impact of such changes?

- 2.1. Recognising that we were failing customers within the complaints journey, there has been some significant changes to the complaints process and team.
- 2.2. One of the key changes is stepping up our customer contact and creating a far more personal experience. This started with Stage 1 of the process and the complaint handler will:
 - Investigate and resolve complaints compared to the administration of a complaint.
 - A shift in accountability and ownership with increased problem-solving skills.
 - Being the main point of contact for the customer throughout the complaint and being accountable for accurate record keeping and the creation of all letters.
 - Increased stakeholder relationships between departments for more timely resolutions to complaints
- 2.3. Stage 1 process continues to be embedded with new employees in the team and continued capability and skill building the improvement is encouraging with the overall demand reducing in comparison to previous year as shown below.



- 2.4. Stage 1 re-design has also seen an improved resolution rate of 90% of complaints raised, resolved within "own and resolve" bucket within the team. This is where we act quicker than ever before to resolve queries without the need of the experts in our business. Please see below table for detail. Further focus sessions are in place with other areas of the business to improve the same level of resolution.

% of complaints closed by stage – 01.02.24 - 30.04.24



2.5. Our Housing Ombudsman code KPI's performance improvement is shown in the below table. This was achieved through more focused work to improve complaints performance, improved reporting, better collaboration across our organisation and more robust quality assurance framework which is now in place.

England	% Apr - Jan 24	% Feb 24 - April 24
Stage 1 acknowledged 5 days	87	94
Stage 1 responded 10 days	77	94
Stage 2 acknowledged 5 days	90	97
Stage 2 responded 20 days	87	99

2.6. Increased attendance in customer scrutiny groups is proving successful. Marc Innes (Head of customer Service Centre) and Nusheen Hussain (Executive Director for Customer and Communities) provide regular updates on complaints and customers share their experiences.

2.7. One involved customer commented "this new way of working is shaping up for better experiences. The lady I spoke to was superb and you can tell the new design with the right people will make a difference to the customer experience and ultimately improve our overall KPI's".

2.8. We have conducted a revised self-assessment to ensure our policies comply with the new complaint handling code and ensured all training programs are updated to reflect the revised policy. We have also updated our internal complaints hub and our public website for customers will be revised accordingly.

3. What does the future look like for complaint handling in Homegroup?

3.1. Since our last complaints update to Board, where we had 1 previous severe maladministration, we have received 3 further severe maladministration (2 relate to one customer) from the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS). These date back to complaints from 2021 and 2023 respectively (HOS has a backlog and therefore determinations are still coming through for older referrals), although cases are assessed and prioritised on

severity. Whilst receiving 3 severe maladministration's is extremely disappointing, we are implementing more stringent controls to ensure escalations are minimised through continuous improvements and lessons learnt, as well as through compliance with the new Housing Ombudsman Code for complaint handling, (which came into effect in April 2024). We recently had a visit from Rick Blakely from HOS, who stated that our HOS referrals and determinations were much lower than other housing associations of our size and geographical spread. We will continue to benchmark our performance against others, seek best practice and look to reduce escalations by focus on efficient customer resolution.

4. What does the future look like?

- 4.1. Whilst stage 1 process re-design and re-structure in the team to improve the process is complete, we will now move onto the other parts of the complaints re-design and that will concentrate on process and right sizing at stage 2, Housing Ombudsmen and MP & Executive contacts. The aim is to improve the process and improve the customer and colleague experience.
- 4.2. Root cause analysis and lessons learned will also be part of a larger initiative taking complaint learning to combine with other lessons learned within the customer journey to ensure we learn and improve for sustainable change.
- 4.3. Our newly designed complaints quality assurance framework will enhance the level of checks in our process completion ensuring we have a strong record of compliance with regulatory standards, minimising risks and enhancing our ability to resolve complaints with confidence and reduce the risk of severe maladministration. The below table shows the level checks in place for colleagues.

Line of Defense	Role	Responsibilities
First LOD – Complaints Team and CSC Quality and Improvement Team	Ensure management controls are in place to ensure compliance to process and highlight any control breakdown.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures in place that are compliant to the Complaints Policy and Guidance • All Complaint Handlers adequately trained in role. • Sample checks of letters and cases to provide evidence of compliance to process. • Annual self-assessment
Second LOD – Risk and Compliance Team	Support process compliance, identification of any emerging risks and support the risk management approach adopted by the operational team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample check cases. • Sample check of the complaint response letter • Sample check the HOS letter. • Annual self-assessment insight • Annual complaints report insight
Third LOD – Audit Team	Independent Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit Reports