



## **Housing Services**

### **2024-25 Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report**

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## 1. Overview and context:

- 1.1 Since 2020, The Housing Ombudsman Service, among other landlord regulation, has prescribed requirements for the Councils Housing Service to ensure we respond effectively and fairly to complaints. These are defined in Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. The purpose of the Code is to enable landlords to resolve complaints raised by residents quickly and use the data and learning from complaints to drive service improvements.
- 1.2 The Complaint Handling Code aims to achieve best practice in complaint handling and ultimately to provide a better service to residents and drive a positive complaint handling culture.
- 1.3 From 1 April 2024, the Code became statutory meaning that member landlords are required by law to follow its requirements.
- 1.4 The Housing Service must also report on performance, using accurate data, to drive learning and continuous service improvements, that improve landlord and tenant relations.
- 1.5 If the Ombudsman decides that the housing service has not handled a complaint in accordance with the code, and our procedure, then the service risks the issue of a Complaint Handling Failure Order (CHFO) for maladministration, and the Ombudsman will order the Service to put things right and ensure compliance with the code. The Ombudsman publishes a report on CHFOs quarterly, and the Housing Service will be inspected by the Regulator every four years.

## 2. 2024/25 Annual Self-assessment

- 2.1 We are required to publish the mandatory self-assessment of our Housing Complaints Policy against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code to ensure that it remains in line with their requirements. This is a positive experience and ensures the Council is meeting its statutory requirements and provides quality services to our tenants.

The Self-assessment - Complaint Handling Code 2025 - Housing Ombudsman and Housing Services Complaints & Enquires Standard 2022 will be available and can be found at: <https://www.redditchbc.gov.uk/residents/my-home/housing-complaint-or-enquiry/i-am-a-council-tenant>

- 2.2 Complaint performance is presented to the Portfolio Holder for Housing quarterly to enable regular oversight for members on our performance and identified learnings.
- 2.3 The below summarises our submission showing we that we are fully complaint with the Complaint Handling Code, following the observations and changes identified that were made.

- **Section 1: Definition of a complaint**

We are fully compliant with this section which refers to recognising and defining a complaint.

- **Section 2: Exclusions**

We are fully compliant with this section which is regarding the decisions to not accept a complaint.

- **Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness**

We are fully compliant with this section, which reminds us that high volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.

- **Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff**

We are fully compliant with this section. We have a dedicated, suitably experienced, and qualified Complaints Officer that oversees the complaint handling process and all officers operating within it.

The Complaints Service is part of the Housing Database & Performance Team which sits within the Strategic Housing Service to provide greater independence in managing and reporting of the complaints process.

- **Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process**

We are fully compliant with this section, where the Complaint Handling Code stipulates that the complaint process is a clear two-stage formal process, there is no informal stage.

- **Section 6: Complaints Stages**

We are fully compliant in our illustration of the two-stage complaint process.

- **Stage 2 complaints**

We are fully compliant with this section in which the Ombudsman has stipulated that residents must not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. However, we recognised that there have been occasions where we have made the decision to not accept an escalation, for the wrong reasons. The Complaints Standard has therefore been updated with the following paragraph:

*If we have accepted the complaint and responded at Stage 1, we would only refuse to escalate the complaint to Stage 2 for either of the following reasons:*

- *If the complaint should not be looked at further because it could compromise legal proceedings to do so.*
- *If it has now become clear that this complaint has previously exhausted the complaints process.*

- **Section 8: Putting things right**

We are fully compliant with this section which was regarding redress and the production of the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for scrutiny and challenge.

We deemed that the following points remained not applicable again this year as we had not had any instances:

- a. Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.
- b. If a landlord is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, they must inform the Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on their website Landlords must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.

### **3. Tenancy Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)**

- 3.1 The Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard requires all registered providers to generate and report tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs) as specified by the regulator. The central aims of the TSMs are to provide tenants with greater transparency about their landlord's performance and inform the regulator about how a landlord is complying with consumer standards.
- 3.2 We were required to provide TSMs generated from management information for housing complaints data for the full period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. For this purpose, I used the quantitative data from the Housing Complaints Tracker, as the data on the Corporate System is not reliable.

This produced the following:

**TSM measure CH01 Complaints relative to the size of the landlord (based on housing stock of 5541) as follows:**

- 1) **22.37** Stage 1 complaints per 1000 homes (2023/24: 22)
- 2) **3.79** Stage 2 complaints per 1000 homes (2023/34: 1.21)

**TSM measure CH02 Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales as follows:**

- 1) **62%** Stage 1 responses responded within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescale. (2023/24: 58.2%)
- 2) **80%** Stage 2 responses responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescale. (2023/24: 57.14)

## 4. Analysis of our complaint handling performance 2024-2025

- 4.1 The Housing Ombudsman code states that landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent). Their Complaint Handling Code refers to that person or team as the ‘complaints officer.’
- 4.2 We currently have a Senior Complaints Officer who administers all housing complaints, responsible for ensuring timely contact with the customer to acknowledge and respond to the complaint, requesting and tracking the investigation, and monitoring and reporting on complaint types, outcomes and learnings, themes and trends, and these are delivered at monthly Housing Services Meetings. As part of a service review two additional complaint handling officers are to be appointed.
- 4.3 For the purposes of this Annual Report we have provided detailed data and analysis from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

## 5. Stage 1 complaints

- 5.1 The following tables provide qualitative statistics around quantity and types of Stage 1 complaints received, numbers closed and upheld, and the percentage responded within the timescale set out by the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code:

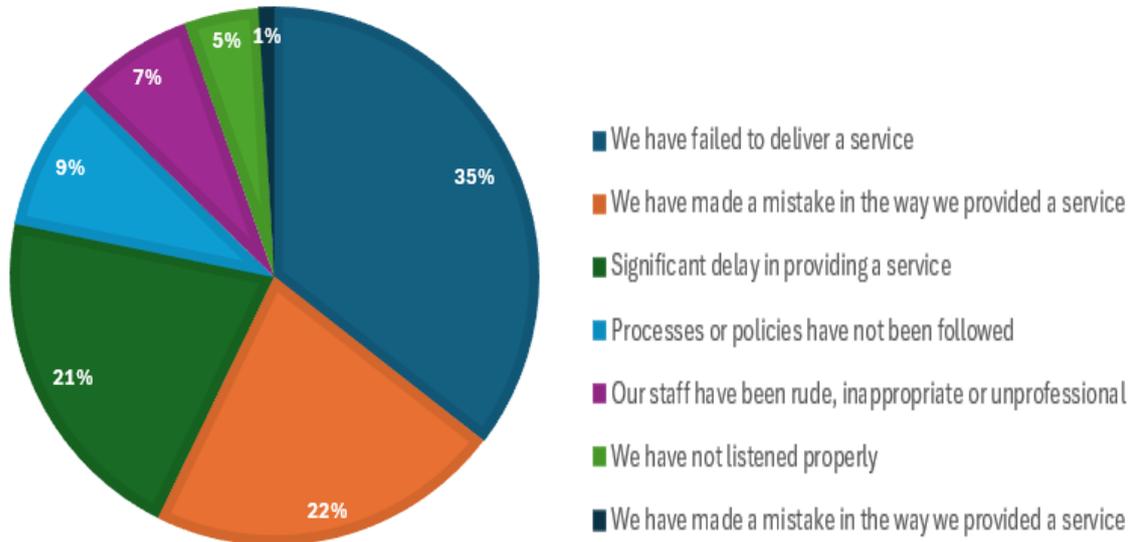
Complaints	Housing Services			Housing Property Services			Total
	N&T	V&A	Revenue	A&A	R&M	Capital	
Stage 1 Received	21	1	4	3	71	19	124
Stage 1 Closed	23	2	5	3	74	17	127
Stage 1 upheld/partially upheld	5	1	2	2	39	7	56
Stage 2 received	6	0	1	0	11	3	21
Ombudsman received	2	0	0	0	7	1	10

N&T = Neighbourhood & Tenancy  
V&A = Voids & Allocations

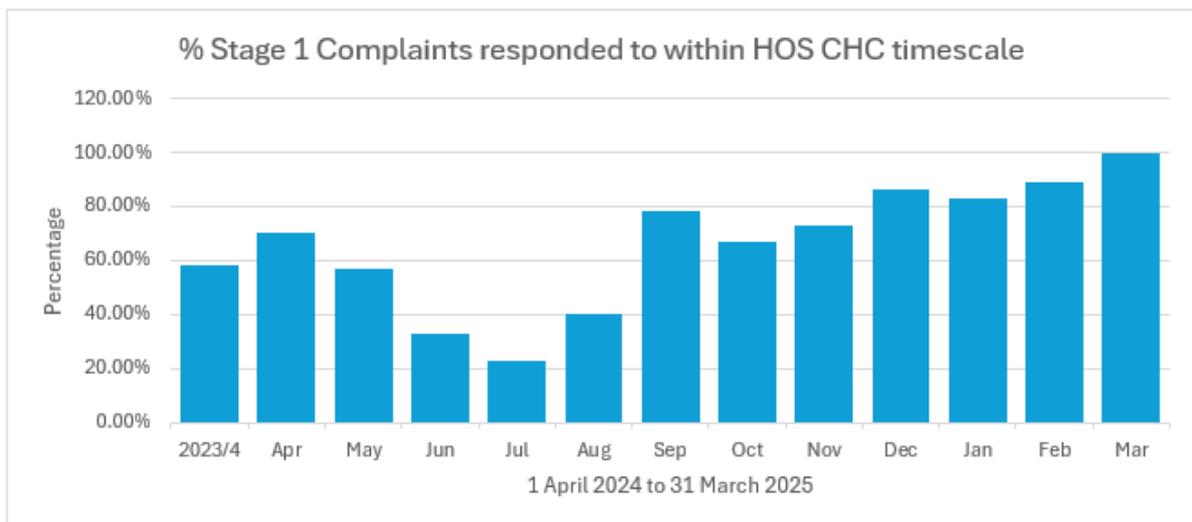
A&A = Aids & Adaptations  
R&M = Repairs & Maintenance

5.2 The following chart shows that the most common reason for making a complaint is where we have failed to deliver a service, for which there were 47, 35 of these being for Repairs & Maintenance.

Complaint Types:



5.3 The graph below shows the percentage of complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman code requirements including the years figure for 2023/24 for comparison. Due to the declining performance in the first quarter a dedicated complaints investigator was introduced in Housing Property Services from August 2025 to improve complaints handling performance.



- 5.6 We received 11 complaints but not accepted for the following reasons:
- 3 were found to be service requests, whereby the complaint was not about the service but about an issue that was being raised for the first time.
  - 8 were withdrawn by the complainant
- 5.7 A total of 55 complaints needed to be extended to the 20 working days acceptable timescale. 25 complaints breached the 20-day timescale, equating to 19.7% of all complaints received. 19 of the 25 complaints that were not responded within the timeframes were for Housing Property Services (HPS) who were affected early on due to closing end of year accounts, setting up new contracts and a major recruitment drive. This then caused a backlog of complaints and enquiries. The introduction of a dedicated complaints investigator resulted in the average number of complaints responded to within 10 working days to improve from 41% for the first half of the year to 76% for the second half.
- 5.8 Compensation was paid to complainants in 9 Stage 1 complaints totalling £1795.21.

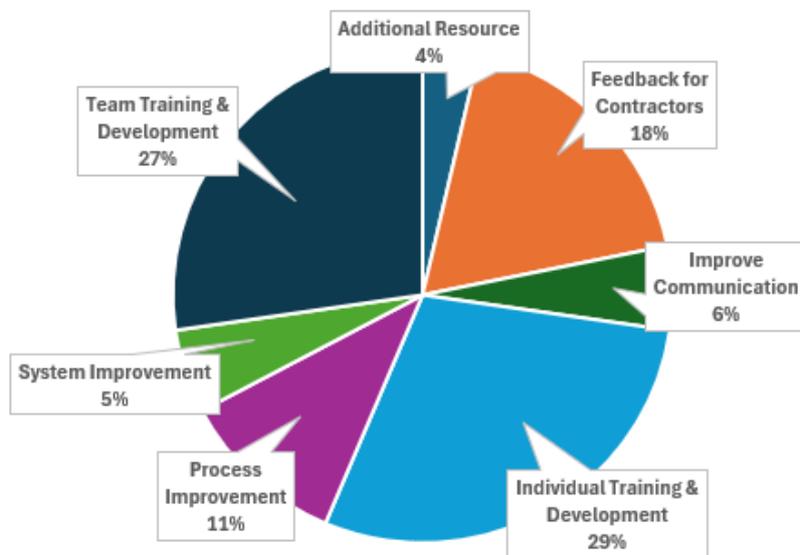
## 6. Stage 2 Complaints

- 6.1 A total of 21 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 and 15 of them were accepted as formal Stage 2 complaints, 3 for Neighbourhood & Tenancy, 2 for Housing Capital, 1 for Revenues and 9 for Repairs & Maintenance. Of these, 1 of the Stage 2 complaints resulted in a further/different outcome:
- 6.2 Following the Stage 1 response, a tenant remained unhappy about delays in conducting work to her loft, non-response to telephone call backs requested and Health and Safety concerns from Council Officers through the delivery of insulation works. The stage 2 complaint provided the Council with an opportunity to gain experience from this. Firstly, to ensure we send the correct officers to complete the works required, that we communicate more effectively in person and also via telephone. Finally, we advised that we would review the Health and Safety concerns and if there are actions resulting from this, we would implement them in due course. We offered her a goodwill payment of £50 due to the impact on service delivery and delays in responses, and a further £50 due to upset caused.

## 7. Learning from Complaints

- 7.1 The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code stipulates that we must look beyond the circumstances of an individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made because of any learning from the complaint. A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes. Landlords must use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.

- 7.2 This year has been focused on not only capturing the learning and understanding trends but also seeking assurance that steps have been taken to address the learning. This should not only seek to eliminate further complaints about a same occurrence but can be utilised during training and development of new staff and demonstrates continuous service improvement.
- 7.3 Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, 55 learning outcomes were recorded as a result of complaints that were fully and partially upheld, the learning types and number presented as follows:



- 7.4 **Process Improvement for Capital:** In the past, RBC conducted EICRs on a ten-year rolling program. We changed our policy around four years ago and now conduct these reports on a five year turn around. A complaint was made that revealed that this change had caused some to fall outside of this five-year target. Housing Capital have asked for a review of all (EICR) data to be undertaken to ensure that the electrical installations undergo periodic inspection and testing, and that works are issued to contractors in a timely manner to allow continuity and compliance.
- 7.5 **System Improvement for R&M:** A complaint had been received regarding a delay in addressing a leak to a water tank leaving a tenant without heating and hot water. We were able to advise the tenant that the council are investing in a new and more comprehensive asset management and repairs system which is based around providing better customer engagement and also management of components like the central heating systems.
- 7.6 **Feedback for Contractors:** A complaint had been received regarding the fitting of a light, poor workmanship and delays. We recognised that Citrus should have spoken to RBC, prior to commencing the repair, to find out the previous job's history, which would have enabled him to stock up on the appropriate fittings needed to carry out the job. This would have ensured there

was a smooth and seamless process in place and saved any further delays in carrying the works out. We recognise that a better communication process needs to be put in place by Citrus, for example a spreadsheet to be implemented, to include previous jobs and appointments. Citrus have agreed to this, which will include previous works history and updated new appointment times to share with RBC to stop delays in any work.

- 7.7 **Training and Development for R&M:** There were a large number of complaints upheld for R&M highlighting that communication had been poor with loss of paperwork and admin errors which caused delays in getting repair requests completed. R&M have had a lot of temporary staff working within the department within the last two years and have had a huge turnover of staff. Moving forward, all temporary staff are put through a thorough an improved induction training programme to make sure they are fully trained on IT repair software and working practice and policy, to enable us to provide a seamless service.

## 8. Ombudsman: Landlord Performance Reports and Interventions

- 8.1 Individual landlord performance reports are published for landlords with 5 or more cases determined within a full financial year. They have now published the Landlord Performance Report for Redditch Borough Council for 2023-24, where they determined that we performed well when compared to similar landlords by size and type regarding maladministration.
- 8.2 Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 we received 3 determinations where the Housing Ombudsman fully or partially upheld a complaint following intervention:

- **28<sup>th</sup> May 2024:**

The Housing Ombudsman upheld a complex complaint finding maladministration in response to the resident's reports of mould and damp, reports of an unidentified ticking noise, non-damp and mould repairs and complaint handling. The Housing Service were ordered to pay the resident £3114.95 for our failures. All relevant staff completed the learning modules on the Ombudsman's Landlord Learning Hub for noise complaints, Knowledge and Information Management (KIM) and attitudes, respect and rights and attended Supporting Vulnerable Tenants Training

- **30<sup>th</sup> July 2024:**

The Housing Ombudsman made a determination regarding a longstanding complaint with events dating back to 2015. They found maladministration in our handling of the resident's concerns of staff conduct and his reports of discrimination, maladministration in our handling of the resident's reports of bacteria in his previous property affecting his health, including his transfer application based on medical needs and maladministration in our complaint handling and record keeping. We found ourselves out of time to appeal and therefore had to accept the determinations. Compensation of £1600 was

ordered, and we were able to reflect on the significant improvements to complaint handling over the last 12 months, a new Integrated Housing Management System that we continue to improve and develop, a new Housing Allocations System and digitalisation of historic paper files for improved record keeping. Together with the free e-learning complaint handling courses that are available on the Housing Ombudsman's Learning Hub, we also explored additional further enhanced training opportunities through the Housing Quality Network for key members of staff.

- **4<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

The Housing Ombudsman made a further determination for the same resident as above, finding maladministration in response to reports of assault against the resident, complaint handling and record keeping. We were unsuccessful in our appeal and were ordered to pay the resident £1100 in compensation and we assured the Ombudsman that further training has taken place with all staff members to ensure that appropriate processes and reporting take place in the future.

## **9. Recommendations**

9.1 Housing Services Complaints & Enquiries Standard updated, to be approved.