

## ANNUAL COMPLAINT HANDLING REPORT 2023-24

### 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This is the first stand-alone annual complaint handling report by CHS. It is linked to our annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code.

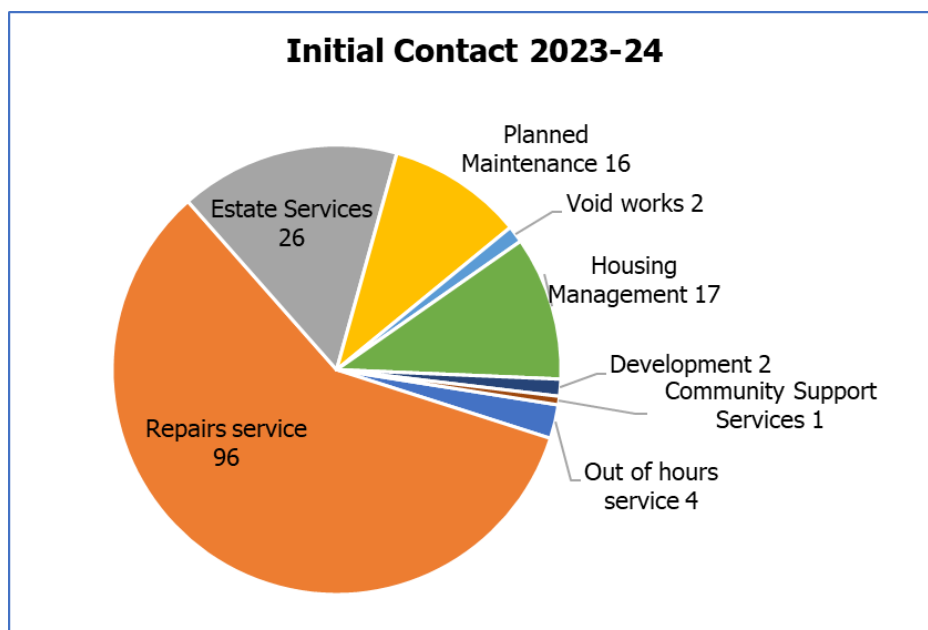
1.2 We aim to:

- Summarise the number and types of complaints we handle including the issues raised by customers which we have been able to resolve to the first point of contact.
- Note any complaints we have declined to consider and the reasons.
- Summarise the learning and service improvements resulting from complaints.
- Set out any findings from the Housing Ombudsman during the year.
- Note the data to be submitted with our annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures data to the Regulator on complaints (numbers of complaints per 1,000 homes, responses made within target timescales, satisfaction with our approach to complaint handling.)

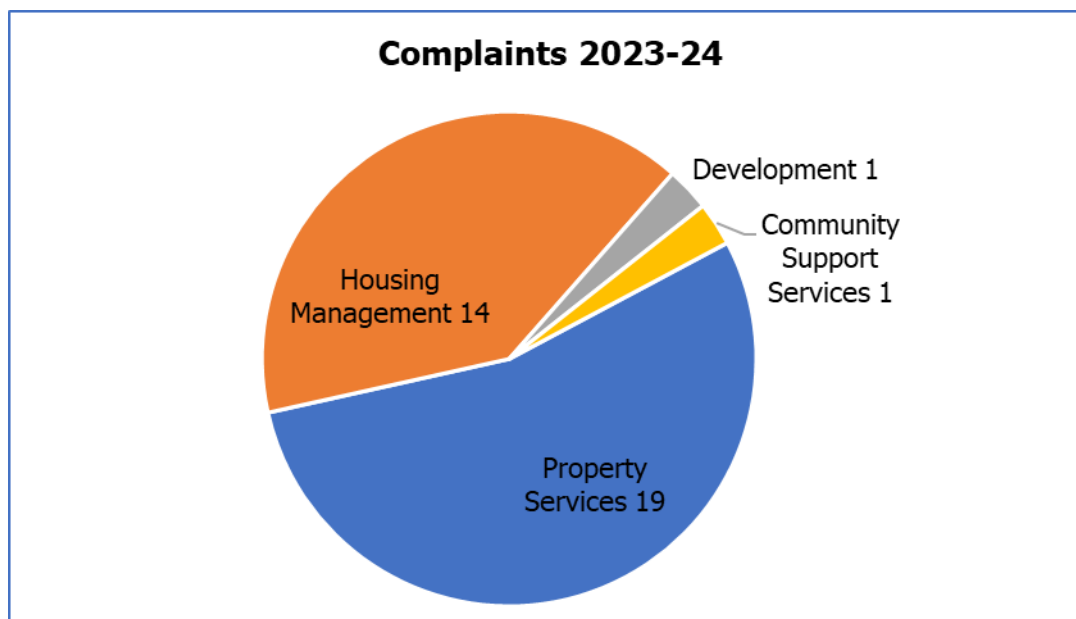
1.3 We work closely with the Customer Complaints Panel to review our performance in complaint handling, to learn from completed complaints and to review how well we communicate with all customers to encourage them to make complaints.

### 2.0 Initial Contact (resolved at first point of contact) – 164

2.1 We try to resolve an issue when a customer first raises it with us, and we let them know that if they are still dissatisfied or wish to make to a complaint in any case, we will give a formal response.



### 3.0 Total number of Complaints – 35



3.1 The number of complaints made at stage 1 has increased from 24 during 2022 – 2023. Five of these complaints were also escalated to the stage 2, all of them property related. 28 complaints were made by tenants, and 7 were made by shared owners. We did not refuse to accept any complaints.

### 4.0 Tenant Satisfaction Measures

4.1 Our annual submission to the Regulator of Tenant Satisfaction Measures for our rented homes includes:

- The number of stage one complaints received per 1,000 homes – 11.1.
- The number of stage two complaints received per 1,000 homes – 1.9.
- The proportion of stage one complaints responded to within the Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code timescales – 92.8%\*.
- The proportion of stage two complaints responded to within the Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code timescales – 100%.

\*2 out of 28 complaints from tenants received a final response that was one day overdue.

4.2 When the TSM results are published later this year by the Regulator for 2023/24 we will be able to see how our numbers of complaints compare with the sector.

### 5.0 Complaint outcomes

**(excluding those still open at the year-end)**

Fully upheld – 12.

Partially upheld – 16.

Not upheld – 4.

## **6.0 Satisfaction with complaint handling**

- 6.1 Satisfaction after completion of stage 1 or 2 complaint – 59% (this is an automated phone survey carried out soon after completion of any complaint. 10 out of 17 who replied were satisfied).
- 6.2 Tenant Satisfaction Measure – we ask all tenants whether they have made a complaint in the last 12 months and if so, how satisfied they were with complaint handling.  
April 2023 – March 2024: 44.1%.
- 6.3 The Tenant Satisfaction Measure improved each quarter between April 2023 and March 2024. The benchmark satisfaction level for the housing sector was 34% for the six months from April 2023. 125 tenants said they had made a complaint in the last 12 months. Of the 46 tenants who were dissatisfied, 23 gave the reason that the issue had not been resolved and 9 said they felt CHS did not take their complaint seriously enough. This shows there is more to do to increase satisfaction and we will continue to work with customer facing teams and contractors to improve awareness of our expectation in complaint handling.

## **7.0 Learning from complaints**

- 7.1 Each time we complete a complaint we note the learning from it and any steps we need to take to improve services for customers. They are summarised here:
- We should chase contractors earlier for the completion date of repair.
  - Any customer contact should be met with a timely response and agreed follow-up actions should be delivered. (This was a case regarding anti-social behaviour)
  - We should review the process for handling requests to carry out alterations to make sure expectations of what is permitted are clear and records fully reflect what has been discussed and agreed.
  - Lessons learned for Foster Property Management in terms of better supervision of planned works - additionally toolbox talk held to manage issue of operatives discussing other residents' works with others.
  - We should identify issues of loss of hot water immediately as a complicated job where necessary, to ensure oversight of works by CHS employee.
  - Complicated repair orders need close supervision by a Surveyor or Contracts Manager and communication to the customer may be improved by greater CHS involvement.
  - We should ensure the Property team and contractors are aware repairs may be more urgent at Extra Care schemes, due to support needs of residents.
  - We should ensure that relevant information such as Enduring Power of Attorney is available for staff on the housing IT system.
  - We should keep customers informed of the status of long-term works; ensure earlier consideration of need for specialist review of complex works; and ensure better overview of works where sub-contractors are involved.
  - We should ensure that complaints about neighbours are managed with clarity; when we have stated that we will not be able to get involved the reasons should be fully explained and the circumstances under which we can get involved should be made clear. After that we should be consistent in our responses.

- It is important to check whether other neighbours are affected by noise nuisance where the evidence is disputed.
- The Development team should inform the Lettings team when any detail of new build rent level changes before advertising on Home Link; and these should be highlighted in any offer letters to new tenants.
- Incomplete record keeping had led to uncertainty about whether CHS had given consent for the complainant to operate a business from home.

## **8.0 Themes identified in handling complaints**

- Customers and CHS staff don't always immediately identify when a complaint is being made about the contractor's handling of their initial complaint.
- Repairs data isn't always being used proactively to alert repairs staff to performance issues and early warnings.
- The contractor is not aware of complaints trends, particularly themes relating to operatives' skill and conduct.
- Repairs staff were sometimes recording complaints as Informal and response timescales are in excess of the timeframe set out in CHS' Complaints Policy.
- Contractors and repairs staff are not post inspecting works to check the standard of planned installations.

## **9.0 Actions taken to improve complaint handling during 2023-24**

- We have carried out awareness raising sessions with customer facing teams to ensure they know the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and the CHS Complaints policy.
- We have trained key staff in logging complaints accurately to help us to keep to timescales including responses times and to record the learning more fully from complaints.
- A surveyor has been allocated to the planned work programme and works closely with the contractor to agree completed work.
- Daily reports for emergency repairs past target are sent to repairs staff who escalate these immediately.
- Reports of no heating and hot water are sent to the repairs team to investigate follow on work and timescales.
- Repairs staff meet weekly to discuss complaints issues, themes and share good practice.
- Repairs staff attend internal department team meetings to promote communication and highlight things that work well or not so well.
- Our Performance and Quality team have taken on more responsibility for complaints investigations and communicating regularly with customers.
- Our Performance and Quality team attend monthly contractor meetings to present complaints trend data and areas for improvement.
- Names and faces of our contractors' complaints team has been shared through our tenant newsletter (including how to escalate contractor complaints with CHS).
- Long-term repairs are logged as complicated jobs on our housing management system and allocated to a surveyor to monitor progress.
- Repairs staff attended Housing Ombudsman complaints training.
- Repairs staff complaint handling procedures were updated to formally record complaints at Stage 1 and respond to these within the policy timeframe.

## **10.0 Housing Ombudsman Investigation Report**

- 10.1 The Housing Ombudsman carried out an investigation after a complaint was escalated by the person making the complaint. The Ombudsman's report was received on 29 February 2024 regarding a housing management case involving anti-social behaviour and property alterations.
- 10.2 The Ombudsman found that CHS had acted in line with its policy on anti-social behaviour by acting quickly on reports of racist abuse by a neighbour and acted appropriately by speaking to the neighbour. The Ombudsman also found that CHS acted appropriately in line with its stated position on property alterations as outlined in the tenancy handbook; and that CHS acted in line with its policy on managing unreasonable customer behaviour.
- 10.3 However the Ombudsman found that when the tenant clearly expressed dissatisfaction with a property alteration request CHS should have started the complaint process and it did not do so - therefore there was maladministration. The Ombudsman also found that CHS could have discussed the tenant's support needs at an earlier date than was the case. The Ombudsman ordered CHS to pay the tenant £200 in compensation.