

**WOMEN'S PIONEER HOUSING LIMITED
ANNUAL COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

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Board Report

The Board of Women's Pioneer Housing (WPH) presents this report on complaints for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to inform the Board of WPH's performance in handling of complaints for year ending December 2023.

This report provides information about:

- The number of complaints received
- The issues highlighted
- Our performance on complaints handling
- Investigations undertaken by the Housing Ombudsman Service

Summary of overall performance in 2023

In terms of context, the social housing sector has experienced a surge in complaints for some time, partly as a result of a number of challenging media headlines about service quality, since Grenfell and the death of Awaad Ishak. The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 has strengthened the role of the Regulator and the Housing Ombudsman to ensure landlords meet high standards of safety, service quality, treat their residents with dignity and respect by listening and acting on their views.

In 2023, WPH received a total of 57 Stage 1 complaints, representing an increase of 63% on the previous year. Of the total complaints received, 18 (32%) were escalated to stage 2, which was 13% lower than the previous year, but still over 10 % above the tolerance (<20%).

The annual targets and tolerances were not achieved for response times and escalations.

The dip in performance coincides with a period of significant change at WPH, in particular, a restructure of customer facing teams and natural occurring vacancies, some of which took longer than usual to fill. However, once some of the key appointments were made and the new structures embedded, performance in complaints handling improved during the last quarter, with response times at 100% across stages 1 and 2.

Two-thirds of complaints were upheld or partially upheld and related to issues relating to poor communication, repair delays and poor contractor performance.

WPH also received 3 maladministration determinations all concerning complaints made in 2022. Staff have been worked closely with the Housing Ombudsman and complainants to resolve them, successfully

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The Resident Engagement and Resolution Officer is now established in post and along the new Customer Service Manager will be sharing a range of data and insights with residents and staff to enable the necessary improvements in the areas that matter most to residents.

Performance 2023

Complaints received:

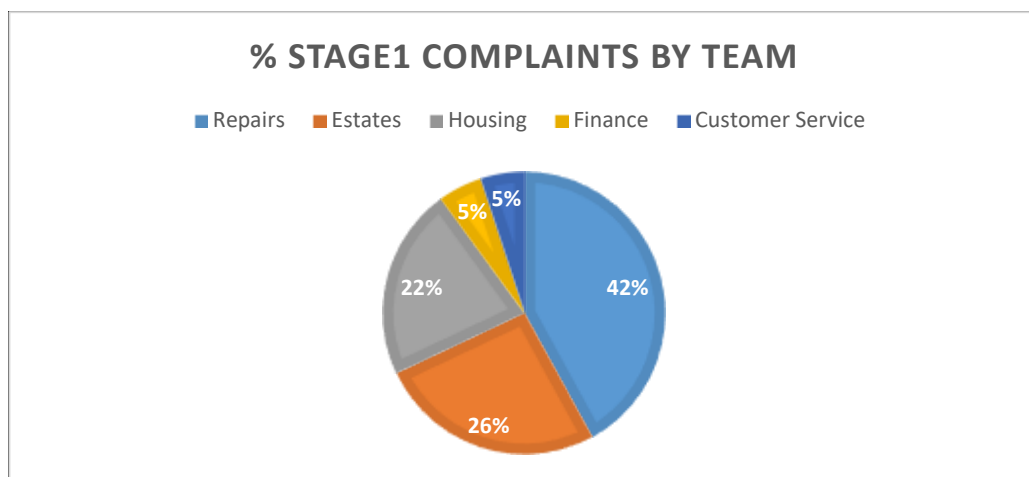
Of the 57 complaints received for between January and December 2023, 18 were escalated to Stage 2, representing an escalation rate of 32%.

The table below shows the Stage 1 complaints received for each service area between January – December, including those still open:

| Month | Repairs | Estates | Housing | Housing Inclusion | Finance/ Corporate Services | CS* | Total |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----|-------|
| January | 6 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | 8 |
| February | 3 | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | 7 |
| March | - | 2 | - | - | - | - | 2 |
| April | 1 | 2 | 1 | - | 1 | - | 5 |
| May | 2 | 4 | 3 | - | - | - | 9 |
| June | 2 | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | 6 |
| July | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 1 |
| Aug | 3 | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | 5 |
| September | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | - | 2 |
| October | 2 | 2 | 1 | - | - | - | 5 |
| November | 2 | - | - | - | 2 | - | 4 |
| December | 1 | - | - | - | - | 2 | 3 |
| Totals | 24 | 15 | 12 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 57 |

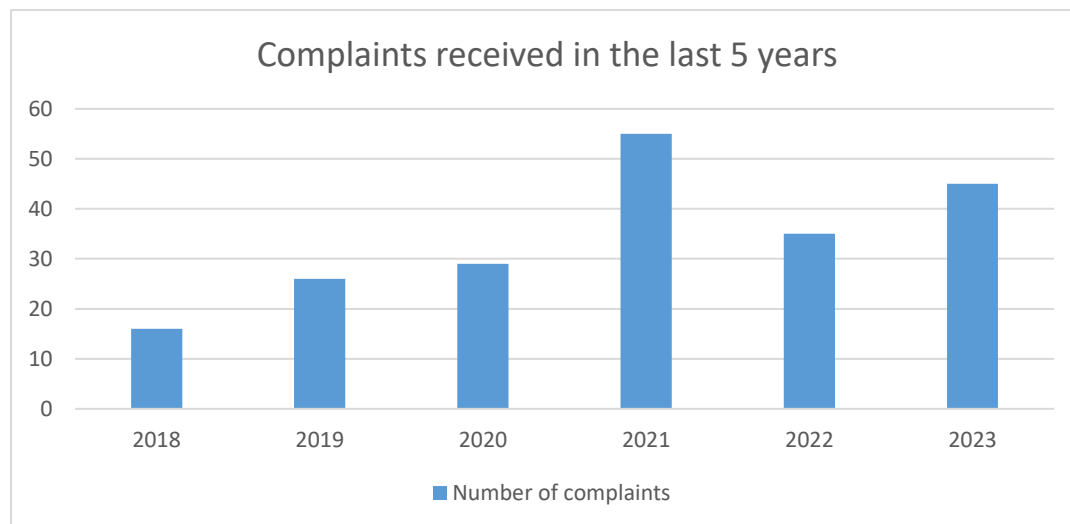
*Customer Services

Percentage of Stage 1 complaints by teams 2023



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The graph below shows a comparison of the number of complaints received over the past five years. Complaints have increased last year but comparatively, have reduced since 2021.



Response time for 2023

The table below show response rates for stage 1 and 2.

| | Actual | Target | Tolerance |
|---|--------|--------|-----------|
| Percentage of complaints responded to on time at Stage 1 | 84% | 98% | 95% |
| Percentage of complaints responded to on time at Stage 2 | 94% | 100% | 95% |

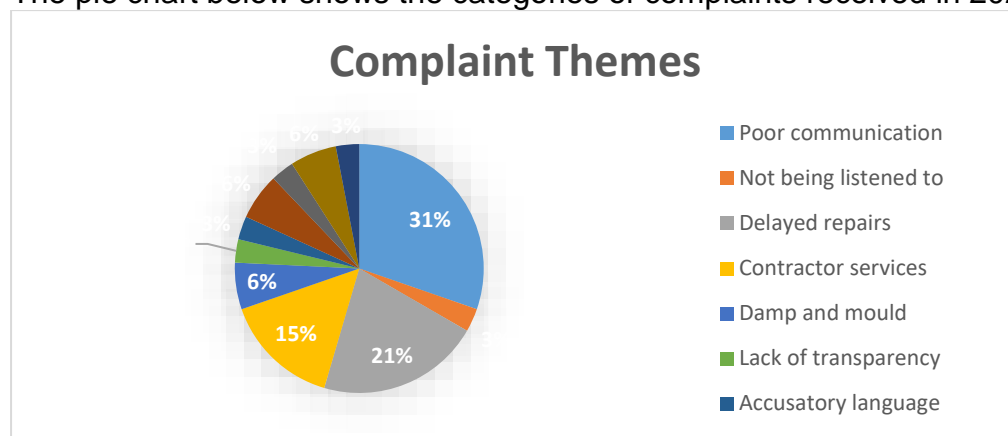
Response times for the year were below target for both stages. However, there was a marked improvement in performance during the last quarter of the year, when 100% response times were achieved across both stages.

Dips in performance were mostly due to a number of vacancies and recruitment difficulties, including three months without a specialist officer for complaints.

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Complaints Categories

The pie chart below shows the categories of complaints received in 2023



Poor communication relating to poor quality or lack of response was the main reason for complaints, which represented over a third of all complaints received during 2023. More specifically, residents complained about not being kept updated matters, such as repairs.

Delayed repairs (21%) also contributed to a high number of complaints. This relates to repairs not being dealt with in the appropriate timescales.

Contractor services represented 15% of all complaints. The new Head of Property, Compliance and Estate Services has introduced Key Performance Indicators for contractors, and contact anagement training has recently been delivered to staff to enable WPH to monitor and improve performance and tenant satisfaction in this area.

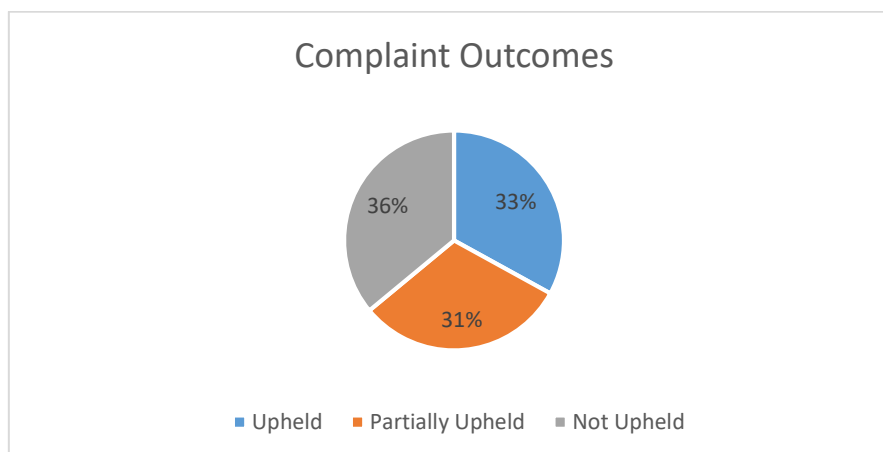
Complaint outcomes

Of the 57 Stage 1 complaints received between January – December, 0 remain open.

Nearly two-thirds of the complaints received for 2023 were either upheld or partially upheld and were mainly due to the reasons provided in the above chart – poor quality communication, lack of response and the performance and conduct of contractor.

| Outcome | 2023 |
|------------------|------|
| Upheld | 20 |
| Partially upheld | 18 |
| Not upheld | 21 |

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Satisfaction with handling of complaints:

Satisfaction with the handling of complaints is measured through quarterly perception surveys carried out independently, by Acuity, and transaction surveys, issued by the WPH's Resident Engagement and Resolution Officer, once a complaint has been closed.

The perception survey collects feedback on tenant satisfaction with the landlord's handling of complaints, which forms part of the Regulator's Tenant Satisfaction Measures (a new Consumer Standard) which were introduced following the Social Housing Regulation 2023. Social housing providers are required to report from April 2024.

Resident satisfaction with WPH's handling of complaints was 36% for 2023. However, for the last quarter to the year, satisfaction in this area increased by 4%.

Due to recruitment issues the sending out of satisfaction surveys to residents was paused during the early part of the year, but was resumed following the appointment of a new Resident Engagement and Resolution Officers (RERO) at the end of the summer.

The transactional survey is emailed to complainants, but the return rate is considerably low. The new Customer Service Manager will be looking at ways to improve this, and also whether the Acuity survey provides sufficient insights to meet the new TSM Consumer Standard.

Resident satisfaction with the overall service provide by WPH increased to 74% during 2023, but with just 36% satisfied with the handling of complaints and only 58% satisfied with how WPH listens to tenants' view and acts, a plan to deliver improvement in the above areas has been prioritised.

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Overview of lessons learned from complaints by service area

Repairs:

Lessons learnt for the repairs team are:

- Keeping resident updated especially of delays
- Avoid delays in assigning contractors to investigate leaks or carry out works
- Ensure staff placing works orders are knowledgeable about the contractors to use to carry out works, to avoid confusion and delays.
- The new customer services team to improve raising works orders correctly and in a timely manner.
- Phone resident to secure agreement to the resolution of their complaint.
- Ensure customer service advisors are instructing contractors to install humidistat extractor in bathrooms in specific circumstances
- Ensure provisions are made if we know the tenant is going to be without hot water for a long period of time.
- Improve understanding of complaint by contacting the tenant to find out what the issue is and not assume what it might be.

Estates

Lessons learnt for the estates team are:

- Prioritise bringing poor performing contracts to an end in good time.
- Contact with the tenant may have stopped a formal complaint.
- Manage expectations better e.g. not promising to end a contract until a decision is made to.
- Use resident dissatisfaction to improve existing process and to prevent similar complaints. A process was recently changed and documented as a result of information provided by a dissatisfied resident.

Housing

Lessons learnt for the housing team are:

- Ensure compliance with the ASB policy and procedure, particularly in relation to completing action plans, keeping the parties affected updated and in closing cases once they have been concluded.

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Customer Services

Lessons learnt for the newly formed customer service team are:

- Customer service advisors to ask for specific information about repairs so that contractors can attend properties properly equipped and achieve first-time fixes.
- Better handling of calls relating to damp and mould cases.

Housing Ombudsman

Between January and December 2023 there were 5 Housing Ombudsman determinations, of which 3 were determined as maladministration.

| | Complaint topic | WPH outcome | Team | Ombudsman determination |
|---------|---|--------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| Item No | | | | |
| 1 | Location of fire alarm panel (2022) | Not upheld | Repairs | No maladministration |
| 2 | ASB (2022) | Partially upheld | Housing | Maladministration (see below) |
| 3 | Handling of rent arrears (2023) | Partially upheld | Housing | Reasonable redress |
| 4 | Repairs multiple outstanding repairs (2023) | Upheld | Repairs | Maladministration (see below) |
| 5 | Handling of a complaint – multiple responses and escalation delays (2023) | Not upheld | Finance | Maladministration (see below) |

At the time of this report, there were no outstanding Housing Ombudsman investigations.

The determinations the Housing Ombudsman can make following an investigation are:

- **Maladministration** – this could be a finding of service failure, maladministration or severe maladministration , depending upon the seriousness of the failure and the impact on the resident
- **Reasonable redress** - There is evidence of service failure or maladministration however the landlord has identified and acknowledged this, either as part of our early resolution process or on its own initiative. It has taken steps, and/or made an offer of compensation, that puts things right.

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- **No maladministration** is made where the evidence demonstrates that the landlord acted in accordance with its obligations and there is no evidence of any significant failing or detriment to residents.
- **Partial maladministration**, where maladministration is found in relation to one or more element of the complaint, but not all.

Case no. 2

The Maladministration determination received in September 2023 is from a complaint lodged in January 2022. This is summarised below:

- The determination was due to a service failure in WPH's handling of the resident's reports of anti-social behaviour
- WPH was ordered to provide training on the management of reports of anti-social behaviour (completed during October and November 2023) and the implementation of its Good Neighbour policy

In addition to the above, another order was made to pay £498.90 in compensation which has been done:

- £150 for its failure to follow through the actions recommended as an outcome to its Stage 2 complaints process
- £200 for the distress and inconvenience caused by the failings identified in WPH's handling of her reports of ASB
- £123.90 for the loss of heating for the period 31 August to 30 September 2021
- £25 for our poor communication in respect of the residents request for her boiler and meter to be boxed in

The final order from this determination is to install post boxes in the building for each resident:

- We have received an extension for the deadline on this order so that we can conduct the consultation to ensure that this is something that the other residents would like.
- Following the consultation only post box was installed and that was for the complainant, as the other residents were happy with the existing arrangements.

Case no 4

This maladministration determination that was received in November 2023 and due to WPH's handling of the repair to the tenant's property, which included the replacement of the windows, repairs to a lintel in the kitchen, replacement of the kitchen units, blistering to a wall in the front room, cracks in the walls in the front and back room, and creaking floorboards.

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WPH was ordered to:

- Replace the kitchen, and carry out the repairs to the kitchen lintel, the snagging of the windows, the blistering of the party wall in the front room, the cracks in the front and back rooms, and the creaking floorboards
- Inspect all the windows at the resident's property and carry-out any necessary repairs
- Pay the resident £350

Case no 5

The Maladministration determination that was received in December 2023 was as a result of WPH's handling of the actual complaint. WPH had provided multiple responses, which unwittingly led to escalation and resolution delays.

WPH was ordered to:

- Pay the resident £200
- Carry out a review of complaints process and produce recommendations on how to avoid delays and multiple responses in future complaints.
- Provide a written apology to the resident

In addition, the Housing Ombudsman recognised that there was reasonable redress in WPH's handling of cleaning and maintenance of the external lower ground floor.

2023 complaint handling and auditing

An audit of WPH's complaints handling was introduced in 2023 to establish a leaning culture from complaints, which should enable improvements in response times, the quality of outcomes of complaint.

This activity was paused for a few months during the early part of the year, following the departure of the Resident Engagement and Resolutions Officer (RERO). Auditing resumed during the final quarter of the year, after the new RERO was appointed which resulted in an improvement in response times. .

All complaints are now audited by the Resident Engagement and Resolution Officer who appraises the complaint based on:

- Sent on time.
- Whether a phone call was made to the tenant
- Whether the Officer had to do a lot of chasing to ensure the complaint was sent

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- Grammar
- Resolution proposed/completed
- Lesson learned identified/implemented

Complaint responses need to score 75% to be of a good standard, no complaint can score 75% without both actions/resolutions identified and lessons learned identified.

Now that the restructure has been completed and the majority of posts are now filled, the RERO is now sharing the insights from this activity with the operational teams to secure improvements in complaints handling and overall resident satisfaction.

Future reporting will include an update on this activity.

Board Response to the Report

The Board noted there has been a surge in the number of complaints for 2023 however fewer were escalated to stage 2 and that the response time had improved in the last quarter of 2023 and that three maladministration determinations resulted from complaints made in 2022.

The Board were pleased to be advised that complaints satisfaction will be a focus for 2024 with the lessons learnt and audit forms used to support improvement of the complaints process throughout the year.

The Board reviewed the proposed complaints KPI's for 2024.

One change was to reduce the percentage of complaints responded to on time at stage 1 target from 100% to 98%. The CEO advised the Board that previously complaints extended over 10 working days with the residents agreement, and these were marked as on time. It was proposed that going forward this will not be the case with the aim to answer all stage 1 complaints within the 10 working days and those extended will be marked as outside of target.

The Board approved the Key Performance Indicators for 2024, including the target of 98% for stage 1 complaints on the proviso of a definition to explain the purpose.