

Listening to you

Complaints Insight Report – October 2024 – March 2025

We are committed to delivering a great customer experience and listening to your feedback to improve our services. We believe in being open, honest and building trust through a transparent feedback process.

This is the ninth edition of our Complaints Insight Report which is published twice a year and made available for our customers on request. It highlights any trends, the lessons we have learnt and any changes we have made to our services due to feedback we've received. It also contains an overview of any complaints which have been escalated to the Housing Ombudsman.

Complaints Data	Apr 2023 – Sept 2023	Oct 2023 – Mar 2024	April 2024 – Sept 2024	Oct 2024 – Mar 2025
Total no. of complaints	69	131	78	127
% of complaints resolved at stage 1	93%	85%	80%	83%
% of complaints resolved at stage 2	7%	15%	20%	17%
No. of complaints escalated from stage 1 to stage 2	5	19	16	22
Main areas for complaints:	1. Outstanding repairs 2. Poor communication	1. Outstanding repairs 2. Poor communication	1. Outstanding repairs 2. Poor communication	1. Outstanding repairs 2. Poor communication
No. of complaints escalated to the Housing Ombudsman	2	4	2	3
Responded to within Ombudsman timescales?	100%	100%	100%	100%

Over the past six months we have seen:

- more customers using our stage two appeal process compared to 2023/24. We had 22 complaints reviewed by our Customer Representatives
- our Tenant Satisfaction Measurement for complaint handling improve from 35.7% in 2023/24 to 37.8% in 2024/25

The root cause of most dissatisfaction is outstanding repairs and overall poor communication. We continue to manage our repairs and aim to achieve the timescales in our Responsive Repairs Policy and focus on improving communication with our customers. We have increased our workforce and are seeing improvements in our satisfaction with repairs which, has moved from 69% to 76% during this reporting period.

We have also seen increased satisfaction with the ease of reporting repairs, which has moved from 70% to 75%. Our data also shows us that 70% of customers were satisfied with the time taken to complete their most recent repair after it had been reported which has improved by 9% compared to April-September.

We acknowledge we cannot always meet our key repair targets and have recorded dissatisfaction due to waiting times. We are working hard to improve our repair services and key service changes are highlighted below.

As a result of the complaints, what are we doing to improve?

Repairs

We are in the testing phase of implementing a new repair system that will integrate with our current platforms. The new system will enable us to record, plan and manage a repair job effectively and will assist with ease of reporting, first-time fix and customer satisfaction. As we prepare to implement our 2025-2030 Business Plan, Making a Difference, we have made changes to the Operations Directorate to include a new External Contracts Managers role that will focus on managing third-party contractors and changes to the structure of our Voids Team.

We have simplified our repair codes and priority timescales to make it easier for customers and staff to book repairs.

We regularly update our [repairs website](#) page to reflect current timescales against each trade and have changed the way we deliver feedback to our operatives by creating trade-specific talks where we discuss customer feedback and best practices.

Our void properties have pre- and post-inspections to ensure they meet our lettable standards and 90% of customers are satisfied with their moving in experience through our 'Welcome and Settle' survey.

We have reviewed and implemented a new Charges Policy which sets out a clear process to recharge customers for repairs, where applicable, and unauthorised application for alterations.

Whilst we do not manage repairs during the defect period in new builds, we now have a new Quality Manager who will ensure our customers receive proactive care until the building is handed over to our Gateway Repairs Team.

Outstanding repairs and timescales

We have an action plan to address ongoing repairs. We have increased our use of contractors to utilise resources and keep completion times within target. We are on the right track and have seen an improvement in our response times.

Our average first-time fix rate between October and March has increased from 83% to 84%. Our Customer Service Team have completed multiple training sessions with our Repairs and Resource Planning Teams, and external providers, to ensure repairs are recorded accurately to assist with first-time fix.

We continue to encourage customers to book their repairs using their online accounts in the first instance as this can be done 24-hours-a-day. From October to March the percentage of customers who have an online account increased from 50% to 56%.

Communication

As a Community Gateway Organisation, we provide a range of opportunities for our customers to get involved and ensure their voice is heard. To ensure that this is felt by our newer customers from our transfers of engagement we undertook a "Mini Big Door Knock" of the 140 customers that transferred over from Hendon Christian Housing Association in February.

From the data collected:

- 86% of customers were satisfied with the services being provided by Watford Community Housing.
- 88% of customers knew how to raise a complaint.

We gathered information about contact preferences and disabilities. 48% of these customers informed us they would prefer to contact us via email, with 24% preferring phone contact.

We also delivered our Winter 2024 edition of our Voice newsletter which told customers how to

escalate complaints.

All customers who raise a complaint will receive a call from the manager that has been assigned to investigate that complaint to understand their concerns. We are working with our customers to ensure our complaint responses meet any accessibility requirements and we offer a customer advocacy service.

The Customer Relations and Customer Services Team have participated in internal training to understand the difference between a service request and a complaint in relation to our Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy and the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Code.

We are supporting customers who don't use English as their first language and have translated documents into the required languages.

In March we held a workshop with our visually impaired customers to understand their communication needs and are creating an action plan to provide better services.

We have updated our repair call scripts to our out-of-hours provider to ensure our customers receive continuity of service during evenings and weekends.

We have created an external contractors survey through our customer engagement platform, CX Feedback, and send out regular communications by email and SMS to keep customers up to date on repairs and service issues.

We have increased the resources of our Customer Service Team to meet customer demand and have added service messages to our phone system, which encourage customers to check their heating during the Autumn / Winter months, and to acknowledge busy call periods.

635 post-call surveys were completed during this period, with an average score of 73% for first call resolution, 92% for 'happy overall', and 96% acknowledging that our Customer Service Officers are polite and knowledgeable.

To ensure we are providing our customers with a great service, our Customer Service Team Leader frequently completes call evaluations to ensure that Customer Service Officers are using correct greetings and customers' names, whether calls are resolved first time, how calls are closed, whether digital service options are discussed with customers and more.



Other changes we have made following your feedback

Our Gateway Membership Team (GMT) selected and led a customer scrutiny session in January 2025 on customer contact and getting back to our customers. This generated a new set of Service Standards which have been launched with our 2025-30 Business Plan. As part of this process the scrutiny team undertook a deep dive into service requests and complaints to review current dissatisfaction trends, including two cases that had been through the complaints process where there had been communication challenges.

We successfully launched our 'Love Your Neighbourhood' campaign to work with our residents to create cleaner, greener neighbourhoods that we can be proud of. Staff and residents recently volunteered to litter pick in the Meriden, Woodside and Boundary Way areas.

We understand that our customers need support, and we have completed just under 500 support referrals through our Financial Inclusion Team. In 2024/25 our customers were £1.2million better off thanks to the team providing support to customers to claim the correct benefits.

Due to the popularity of Jimmy's Jackets – a free lunch club at our Leavesden Green Community Hub – we have extended the contract with Communities First to support in this area, as well as Nifty 50's and Meriden coffee morning.

We have identified training needs for our Contact Centre to ensure a better first-time call resolution.

From feedback collated from our post-call surveys we recognise the need to make sure our customers can resolve issues when they call first time. This includes more training on damp and mould enquiries, repairs diagnostics, setting clear expectations and using our digital platform. The Contact Centre has recently completed external training with City and Guilds on damp and mould, and with Mind on mental health awareness.

Following customer feedback from our 2024 Big Door Knock campaign we upgraded the play space in Foxhill thanks to a grant of £12,500 from Watford Borough Council. We will also be upgrading another play space in Croxley View in 2025.

Our Housing Managers regularly review Housing Ombudsman case determinations with the Housing Team to discuss case learnings and to ensure best practice is followed in line with our Anti-Social Behaviour and Good Neighbourhood Management Policies.

We have identified that continuous training is required to aid managers with complaint investigating and we will be hosting a complaints training session in quarter two. This will ensure that investigating managers are responding to complaints in line with the new Housing Ombudsman code and remedies guidance.

We know that shared owners are our most dissatisfied group and we focused on the areas of concern that have been highlighted to us through our Tenant Question Time sessions. We have attended Housing Ombudsman webinars to share best practice and review our use of managing agents. An example of this is improvements we have made to the process for communicating service failures with First Port, the managing agents at Willow Lodge, and customers will be receiving a formal apology. We will continue to focus on the learning in this area and hope to see this reflected positively in 2025/26 Tenant Satisfaction Measure results.



Housing Ombudsman Complaints

We want to provide you with an honest and clear view of our complaints, including those cases which are escalated to the Housing Ombudsman. To view landlord annual performance reports or to seek advice, please visit: [Home - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

We share our Housing Ombudsman determinations quarterly with our Customer Experience Committee and Gateway Membership Team. This ensures senior staff are held to account and that lessons learnt are being implemented.

We are also actively sharing Housing Ombudsman complaint determinations and press releases with our Leadership Team to drive a positive complaints culture, as well as providing weekly complaints and compliments report to our Leadership Team. The table below provides details of the reasons why a case was reviewed by the Housing Ombudsman, whether the case is still open or closed and any final determinations provided by the Housing Ombudsman.

Details of case	Status	Ombudsman's determination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landlord's handling of reports of issues with drainage on communal grounds. • The resident's associated reports of damp and mould in the property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landlord has made an offer of redress in its response to the resident's reports of communal drainage issues, prior to investigation which, in the Ombudsman's opinion, resolves the complaint satisfactorily. * • No maladministration with the landlord's response to the resident's reports of damp and mould. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The resident was paid the goodwill amounts offered at stage one and two.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The complaint is about the landlord's handling of ongoing repairs to the property, including the kitchen, bathroom and porch. • The landlord's handling of missed appointments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awaiting Determination 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The complaint is about the landlord's handling of the resident's request to be moved to a property more suitable to their needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awaiting Determination 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The complaint is about the landlord's administration of the residents rent and service charge accounts and the information provided to assist them to understand the charges. • The information provided to the resident to assist them to understand their energy accounts, and to access their utility meters. • The resident is dissatisfied with the process for auditing service charge accounts. • The landlord has refused to communicate with the resident's representative, citing unacceptable behaviour and unreasonable levels of contact. The resident disagrees with the landlord's decision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awaiting Determination, the complaint case was managed by the former landlord, West Herts Homes. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The resident's complaint is about: The landlord's handling of a complaint about the internal temperature of the resident's property. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The complaint was managed by the resident's former landlord, Hendon Christian Action Housing. • Maladministration in the landlord's response to the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watford Community Housing took transfer of 140 homes from Hendon Christian Action Housing in October 2024. The determination is against Hendon Christian Action Housing but as the new landlord, Watford Community Housing are responsible for the orders.

	<p>resident's reports of cold indoor temperatures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaint handling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write to the resident to apologise for its failures identified on the investigation report. Pay the resident the awarded compensation Contact the resident to ascertain if any disrepair issues at the property. Arrange a heat loss survey Carry out calculations to estimate the wattage required for the heating to establish and maintain and indoor temperature of 21 C.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The complaint is about the landlord's handling of repairs, including cracked tiles and water stains. Their concerns about staff conduct. The landlord's complaints handling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maladministration in the landlord's handling of the residents: Request for a repair Concerns for staff conduct Complaint. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A written apology to the resident by a senior manager referencing the failures from the investigation report. The resident was awarded a goodwill gesture. Contact the resident to see if they wish to pursue a complaint relating to staff conduct in May 2023. We will be offering a mediation service to this resident to rebuild our relationship.

Customer Representatives

At present we have three volunteer Customer Representatives who collaborate with the Leadership Team or a Director and have assisted with 16 stage two complaints. The Customer Representatives provide input into the complaint from the customer perspective and ensure a fair outcome has been achieved. We offer opportunities for all Watford Community Housing customers to become involved in customer complaint-handling through our Involvement Menu.

Customers who express an interest in this area of our work are required to undergo relevant training. This is currently delivered by TPAS under a regular training programme.

If this role is of interest to you and you would like more information, please contact the Customer Relations Team by emailing Feedback@wcht.org.uk.