

Listening to you

Complaints Insight Report – April 2023 to September 2023

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

This is the sixth edition of our Complaints Insight Report which is published twice a year and made available for our customers. We highlight any trends, the lessons we have learnt and any changes we have made to our services to provide a clear view of the feedback we receive. We also give you an overview of any complaints which have been escalated to the Housing Ombudsman.

Complaints Data	Oct 2021 – Mar 2022	Apr 2022 – Sep 2022	Oct 2022 – Mar 2023	Apr 2023 – Sept 2023
Total no. of complaints	68	82	95	69
% of complaints resolved at stage 1	98.5%	95.2%	92.5%	92.7%
% of complaints resolved at stage 2	1.5%	4.8%	7.5%	7.3%
No. of complaints escalated from stage 1 to stage 2	3	2	5	5
Main areas for complaints:	1) Outstanding repairs 2) Poor communication	1) Outstanding repairs 2) Poor communication	1) Quality of repair 2) Poor communication	1) Outstanding repairs 2) Poor communication
No. of complaints escalated to the Housing Ombudsman	0	3	3	2

Over the past six months, we have seen a decrease in complaints. The current areas of most dissatisfaction are outstanding repairs and overall poor communication. We continue to address our backlog of repairs, managing repairs as per the timescales in our Responsive Repairs Policy and focusing on improving communication with our customers. We have increased our workforce and are seeing improvements to our satisfaction with repairs which has moved from 67.3% to 76.1% during this reporting period. We have also seen increases to satisfaction with the time taken to complete repairs, which has moved from 62.5% to 69.7%.

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

Repairs

Following complaints and feedback from customer satisfaction surveys:

- ✓ Our Repairs team have been actively recruiting across all trades to support the clearing of backlog jobs and some key posts have already been filled.
- ✓ Two contractors have been approved, with a focus on aged complaint cases.
- ✓ We have been working closely with the Customer Relations Team to resolve complaints, and address any customer concerns and repairs, and prioritise these accordingly.
- ✓ Our Repairs Team Leaders and Management are completing pre- and post-inspections and spot audits of works.
- ✓ Teams have been actively visiting Watford Community Housing estates, completing visual inspections to ensure communal repairs that may not have been previously reported are raised and addressed.
- ✓ We have created a Repairs Contractors Team to support contractor repair enquiries.



Outstanding repairs and timescales

We continue to work on our strategy to address ongoing repairs. We have increased our contractor base 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 first-time fix rate has improved from 78% in

April to 82% in September. We continue to encourage customers to book their repairs on our DTS system as the first port of call, 24hrs per day.



Communication

- ✓ A letter has been sent to all customers titled “How we’re supporting our customers this winter”. This letter details information on repairs and our current wait times for different jobs, what to do if you have a repair outstanding, what we are doing to improve our services for you, what to do if you have damp and mould in your home and what support we are offering for customers who need a little extra help.
- ✓ Text and web messages have been sent to customers with a link to a new repairs status page: [Repairs | Watford Community Housing \(wcht.org.uk\)](https://wcht.org.uk/Repairs)
- ✓ We have created a contractor postcard for carded appointments so customers can rebook with ease.
- ✓ All requests from customers wishing to speak to their housing officers are now trackable through a CRM (Customer Relations Management) system which is monitored by our Area Housing Managers.
- ✓ We have completed an audit of our CRM system – we are responding to customer enquiries as per our service standards.
- ✓ Complaint investigating managers are calling customers to understand their concerns.

- ✓ Customer-facing staff are recording customer contact by using Orchard mobile while out on visits.
- ✓ We have updated our Customer Service queue system, by decreasing the number of queue options to reduce wait time. We have also updated the on-hold music and customers will also be informed of their call position.
- ✓ We have implemented a call-back facility on our main Customer Service number. This will enable customers to leave their contact details rather than waiting in the queue and a call-back will be made retaining their queue position.



Other changes we have made following your feedback

- ✓ We have identified training needs for our Contact Centre around offering a better first-time 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 direct debits, damp and mould enquiries, welfare concerns, repairs diagnostics and using our digital platform.

- ✓ The Contact Centre has recently participated in an 'UpKeep repair reporting skills' course, a 'Samaritans suicide prevention' course and completed in-house training on direct debits and damp and mould.
- ✓ Our Gateway Membership Team (GMT) selected and led a customer scrutiny session in February 2023 on our "Out of Hours Service". Feedback from this session led Watford Community Housing to retender for this service and in March we completed tender evaluations with the help of our customers. We awarded "Lemon" the contract and went live with the provider in June 2023. To date our customers have received reduced queue wait times and improvements in repair diagnostics which has overall reduced the number of emergency repairs.
- ✓ We have also launched our new customer feedback system, CX Feedback, to collect customer feedback around our key services such as Repairs, Grounds Maintenance, Communal Cleaning and Moving into your Home. The system enables us to send out surveys via a phone call, text, or email so we can listen to tenants' views on lots of different subjects. The system can also text/email customers directly with updates and messages about their local area. We will be able to target this so the information that we send will be very detailed and just relate to the tenant and their neighbours.
- ✓ Our Housing Management Team, with the assistance of our customers, have been updating our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, Good Neighbour Policy, and Panel Guidance and Succession Policy to streamline the procedures to improve the customers' experience.
- ✓ Following the Housing Ombudsman's spotlight report on noise complaints "Time to be Heard", a project group has been formed to create a new policy to manage noise issues.
- ✓ Following our successful Big Door Knock event on 15 June 2023, we knocked on 4366 doors and completed 1261 surveys. One of the survey questions asked customers if they knew how to raise a complaint. 80% of customers told us that they know how to make a complaint if they need to. We also asked customers if they had any damp and mould concerns in their homes which generated 450 enquiries.
- ✓ We have also created a postcard that provides information on our new survey provider, CX Feedback, how to give us feedback, where to find our Customer Feedback Policy and contact details for the Housing Ombudsman.





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. As Watford Community Housing has had less than four Housing Ombudsman determinations in 2022/23, the Housing Ombudsman has not issued an annual performance report. To view landlord annual performance reports or to seek advice, please visit: [Home - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

The Housing Ombudsman is collaborating with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to adopt a joint complaint-handling code. We have participated in the consultation process and will complete a new self-assessment once the code goes live and well as updating our Customer Feedback Policy.

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"> Landlord's handling of the resident's request to remove a ramp from their property. Landlord's handling of the resident's complaint. 	Maladministration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The landlord to pay the resident £200 compensation for its handling of the resident's request to remove the ramp. The landlord to pay the resident £200 compensation for its complaint handling. <p>We have contacted the resident to apologise for the handling of their complaint. We have also completed training with staff regarding the mutual exchange process to ensure that residents are made aware of their responsibilities for repairs and non-standard fittings.</p> <p>We have complied with the orders and the Housing Ombudsman has closed the complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landlord's handling of the resident's repairs. Landlord's response to the resident's request for more extensive redecoration works. 	Maladministration	<p>Within four weeks of the date of this report the landlord is to apologise in writing to the resident for its failings in this case, and to provide this Service with a copy of its response.</p> <p>Within four weeks of the date of this report (if it has not done so already) the landlord is to agree in writing with the resident a date on which it will take the necessary steps to clear any moss from the roof. Once the above actions have been completed, the landlord is to agree in writing with the resident a date on which it will redecorate the whole of the affected room.</p>

		<p>Within four weeks of the date of this report, the landlord is to pay the resident £800 compensation which reflects the time, trouble, inconvenience and distress the resident has suffered in this case.</p> <p>It is recommended that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landlord is to review its repairs policy and clearly outline its position in relation to clearing moss from the roofs of its properties. • The landlord to review its approaches to damp and mould cases and to consider the Ombudsman’s spotlight report on damp and mould (housing-ombudsman.org.uk) – The landlord to self-assess its position and to share the findings with relevant staff, including training where appropriate and to incorporate the findings of this report in its management of reports of damp and mould in future. <p>We have written to the resident to apologise for the handling of the complaint. We have completed all repairs required in the property and the resident has been compensated. We are currently updating our Repairs Policy to reflect the Ombudsman’s recommendations for this case.</p> <p>We have complied with the orders and the Housing Ombudsman has closed the complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlord’s handling of the resident’s request that their property be adapted. 	Awaiting outcome	Overdue January 2023

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlord's handling of the resident's complaint. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlord's handling of repairs – balcony door, window and communal intercom system. • Landlord's handling of reported fly-tipping. • Landlord's handling of the resident's queries about moving to a new property. • Landlord's handling of the resident's complaint. 	Case withdrawn	Case withdrawn and closed following no contact from the resident.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landlord's handling of the rent account in respect of a garage. • The level of the increase of the rent for the garage. • The Ombudsman is unable to investigate the level of rent or service charge. They will review how the landlord handled the enquiry and the issues raised. 	Awaiting outcome	Overdue March 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landlord's response to the resident's request for the repairs to the; damp and mould, bathroom flooring and skirting board. 	Maladministration	Orders: A. Pay the resident compensation of £1150 comprising of: I. £750 previously offered to the resident if it has not been accepted and previously paid.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The length of time taken to complete repairs. • The length of time taken to respond to the customers complaint. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> II. £200 for the delays and communication issues around the repairs III. £200 for its complaint handling failure. <p>b. Provide proof of compliance with these orders.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>The landlord should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Completing an inspection of the resident's property and identify any outstanding repairs and provide the resident with a schedule of works with timescales for completion. B. Reviewing its stage 2 escalation requirements and consider if they are restrictive and limiting the appropriate acceptance of escalations. C. Providing breakdowns of what its compensation awards are paid for, to allow for better clarity. <p>We have contacted the resident to apologise for the handling of their complaint and have paid the customer compensation. We have also instructed a surveyor to complete an inspection of the property and have made changes to our Goodwill Gesture Policy to reflect the Ombudsman's recommendations.</p> <p>We have complied with the orders and the Housing Ombudsman has closed the complaint.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landlord's response to the resident's concerns about structural issues of the building. • The landlord's handling of the resident's reports of anti-social behaviour (ASB). 	Awaiting outcome	Outcome Due February 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landlord's handling of damp and mould. • The landlord's handling of repairs to the: roof, heating, hot water and cracks to the outside of the property. • The landlord's handling of the resident's mutual exchange. • The landlord's handling of the resident's report of anti-social behaviour (ASB) from a neighbour. • The level of compensation offered. 	Awaiting outcome	Outcome due February 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landlord's handling of reports of damp and mould in the bedroom, bathroom, and around windows. • The landlord's handling of a complaint that it had insulated the property from the inside of the property, as opposed to the outside. 	Awaiting outcome	Outcome due October 2024

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The landlord's handling of reports of a lack of ventilation in the bathroom, and of the resident being unable to open the windows to the bathroom and landing.		
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Customer Representatives

At present, we have four volunteer Customer Representatives who collaborate with the Leadership Team or Director/Assistant Directors as part of our stage two complaints process. The Customer Representative provides input into the complaint from the customer perspective and ensures a fair outcome has been achieved. We offer opportunities for all Watford Community Housing customers to become involved in customer complaints-handling under 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.