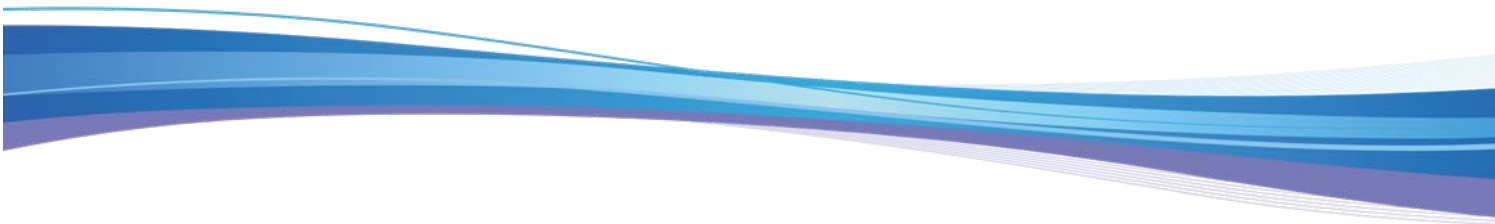




Housing with Care

LACE HOUSING LIMITED

**COMPLAINT HANDLING PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE
IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2023/24**



1.0 Introduction

Our mission is to provide and maintain a high standard of specialised housing and support services for older and vulnerable people, delivered through a strong brand, service excellence, and meaningful partnerships. Our complaint policy plays an important role in building and maintaining trust in the LACE brand and allows our front-line teams and our Board of Management to identify opportunities for service improvement.

This report provides an overview of our statutory responsibilities as a member of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme introduced by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. It provides an overview of the complaints we received during 2023/24, along with the learning obtained from reviewing each complaint. It also provides details of our complaint performance collected as part of a series of metrics introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing, known as Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

Response from our Board of Management.

We are committed to ensuring that our residents receive a high standard of customer service but sometimes things can go wrong.

Complaint performance, alongside feedback obtained during resident meetings with members of our operational management team, provides vital intelligence on our performance and reputation.

As a Board we will review, consider and ensure any learning is utilised from individual complaints and resident engagement meetings to continually improve the services we provide to our residents.

The Housing Ombudsman plays an important role in monitoring and improving landlord services. We take our responsibilities to the Housing Ombudsman seriously and we ensure that our culture, policies, procedures, and actions comply with the Housing Ombudsman Code.

This Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report demonstrates that we are compliant with the Housing Ombudsman Code. We identified six actions for our operational management team to strengthen compliance so that we continue to resolve dissatisfaction promptly and continue to provide you with the best possible service.

Carol Liggins

Member Responsible for Complaints

LACE Board of Management

2.0 Our responsibilities to the Housing Ombudsman Service

We are a member of the [Housing Ombudsman Service](#) who provide a free, independent, and impartial service to investigate complaints and resolve disputes involving tenants and leaseholders of housing associations and other landlords. The Housing Ombudsman Service can request us to act if they decide we have not managed customer complaints properly.

As part of our membership, we are expected to comply with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code introduced in 2020. The Complaint Handling Code became statutory from the 1st of April 2024, and we now have a legal duty to comply with the requirements of the Code. This includes producing an annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report and completing a self-assessment against the Code.

The Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report and our completed self-assessment must be published on our website by the 30th of June each year. This report must include the following:

- a) The annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure our complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements.
- b) A qualitative and quantitative analysis of our complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints we refused to accept.
- c) Any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman.
- d) The service improvements made because of the learning from complaints.
- e) Any annual report about our performance from the Ombudsman; and
- f) Any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to our work.

3.0 Analysis of our complaint handling performance

Table 1: The number of complaints received, per complaint stage.

	2023/24		
	The way we did, or said something	Waiting Allocation	List/ Finance/ Payments
Complaints refused	0	0	0
Service Request	1	0	0
Stage One	1	1	1
Stage Two	0	0	0
Total	2	1	1

We did not refuse to accept any complaints during 2023/24.

A **'Service Request'** is when a customer contacts to let us know of a problem and allows us the opportunity to investigate and fix their concerns. An example is when a resident contacts us requiring action from us to put something right i.e. the repair contractor did not visit as arranged. Our priority is to try and put things right locally and informally to allow a quick and effective solution to be reached. Service Requests are not complaints, but will be logged in our computer system, ensuring accurate records are maintained and the proactive monitoring of the 'Service Request' until resolution is reached.

A complaint occurs when a customer raises dissatisfaction with our response to their 'Service Request,' or where the complainant specifically requests that their contact with us is logged as a complaint.

The Complaint Handling Code requires a two-stage complaint policy. We consider 'Stage One' to be a formal investigation, with 'Stage Two' being an internal review of the decision reached at 'Stage One.' For further details please see our [complaint policy](#) and our [complaints factsheet](#).

Table 2: The number of complaints received, per category/function.

The table below details the complaints we recorded under our complaint policy, by department, during 2023/24 and compared to 2022/23.

	2023/24		2022/23		
	Housing	Finance	Housing	Hospitality	Grounds
Service Request	1				
Stage One	2	1	4	1	1
Stage Two					
Total	3	1	4	1	1

Table 3: The % outcome of complaints (upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld*)

	2023/24			2022/23		
	Upheld*	Partially Upheld*	Not upheld*	Upheld*	Partially Upheld*	Not upheld*
Service Request	1					
Stage One	1	1	1		3	3
Stage Two						
Total	2	1	1		3	3

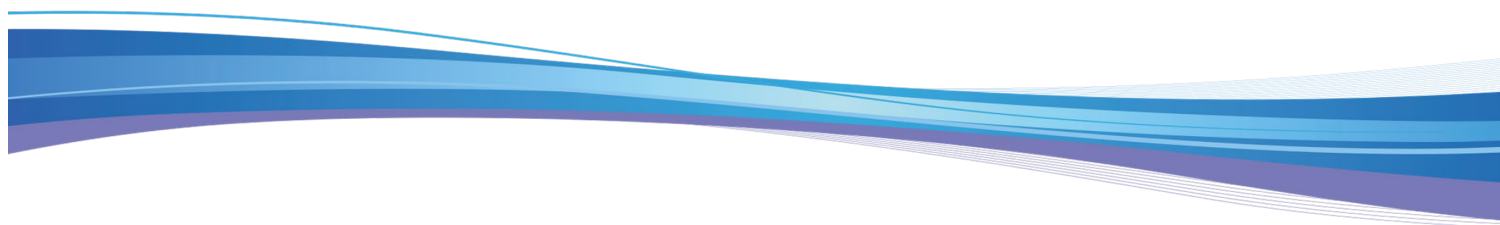
* When we determine a complaint as being 'upheld' we are agreeing with the complainant i.e. we failed to deliver a service in accordance with our policies or with the intended outcomes. Partially upheld means we agreed with some, but not all elements, of the complaint made. 'Not upheld' means we did not find any fault with our service delivery.

Table 4: The % of complaints received and resolved at Service Request or Stage One

	2023/24		2022/23	
	Successfully resolved	Progressed to next stage	Successfully resolved	Progressed to next stage
Service Request	100%	0%		
Stage One	100%	0%	100%	0%

Complaint performance requested by the Regulator of Social Housing

In April 2024, the Regulator of Social Housing, introduced a series of performance metrics known as Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). There are twenty-two individual metrics and three of these assess our complaint performance. The results of our TSMs will allow residents to compare our performance with other landlords operating in our area. As a small housing provider, with less than 1000 homes, we do not provide details of our TSMs to the Regulator. But we will shortly publish all our TSMs performance for 2023/24 on our website. We will compare our performance to similar sized housing associations once performance is published across the housing sector.



The next three tables provide details of our TSMs complaint performance.

Table 5: Complaints relative to the size of the landlord

	2023/24			2022/23		
	No of units	Number of Complaints	No of complaints per 1000 units	No of units	Number of Complaints	% of stock
*Service Request	372	1	2.69	332	0	0
Stage One		3	8.06		6	18.07
Stage Two		0	0		0	0

Service Requests are not reported as a Tenant Satisfaction Measure but have been included for context on our overall complaint performance. We do not view high levels of complaints as a negative but as the sign of an accessible complaints process.

Table 6: Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales

	2023/24		2022/23	
	Within timescale	Outside timescale	Within timescale	Outside timescale
Acknowledgement (All)	100%	0%	100%	0%
Stage One response time	100%	0%	83%	17%
Stage Two response time	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

We obtained approval from one of the 'Stage One' complainants to extend their complaint response time by four working days due to the availability of a colleague involved in the investigation. However, we sent our response within the original target date.

Table 7: Satisfaction with the landlord’s approach to handling complaints 2023/24

The number of residents, who responded to our 2023/24 Tenant Satisfaction Measure resident survey, who had made a complaint in the last 12 months, who were satisfied.	44%
--	-----

This question was asked during our resident survey. The satisfaction recorded was less than the responses to all other TSM questions. Whilst we are aware that high levels of satisfaction with complaint handling is hard to achieve, we need to understand what we are getting wrong, so that we can improve. We have listed some of the initial ways we will investigate this satisfaction in section 5 of this report. To give some additional context we have provided a summary of overall resident satisfaction recorded during the 2023/24 resident survey.

Table 8 Overall resident satisfaction with our landlord services 2023/24

TSM Metric	Overall satisfaction	
TP01	Overall satisfaction	93%
TP06	Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenants views and acts upon them	86%
TP07	Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	96%
TP08	Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	95%
TP11	Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	92%
	Theme: Keeping properties in good repair	
TP02	Satisfaction with repairs	94%
TP03	Satisfaction with the time taken to complete the most recent repair	91%
TP04	Satisfaction that the home is well maintained	96%
TP10	Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	96%

The Housing Ombudsman Service

Customers can refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service. This is generally where customers have allowed us the chance to use our two-stage complaint process but are not happy with our response.

However, customers can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service for help, support and advice at any time, and in fact they strongly recommend that customers go to them for free advice rather than using solicitors.

As part of this report, we must provide a summary of any interventions by the Housing Ombudsman Service. None of our complainants asked the Ombudsman to review the outcome of our complaint investigations and we had no other interventions from the Housing Ombudsman in 2022/23 or 2023/24 regarding complaints or our compliance with the Complaint Handling Code.

Table 9: Housing Ombudsman performance

	2023/24	2022/23
Number of cases logged with the Ombudsman	0	0
Cases determined		
Cases upheld		
Cases not upheld		
Any complaint reports about our performance	N/A	N/A
Complaint Handling Failure Orders		
Any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to our work.		

4.0 Lessons learnt

We either agreed or partially agreed with three, out of the four complainants, that we failed to deliver a service in accordance with our policies or with our intended outcomes. Of these, one was a complaint from a tradesperson acting on behalf of a resident, one was a potential applicant for our waiting list and two were from residents or a family member.

This table summarises the main reasons for the service failure and the actions we took to improve our services.

The way we did or said something.

This was a factor in two out of the four complaints. For one customer this was how and when we communicated a summary of a policy, and the second, unlikely to be repeated, is how we spoke to a tradesperson acting on behalf of a resident.

Waiting List/ Allocation

As a result of this case, we made two changes to our allocation/pre tenancy procedures and have used this complaint as a case study for engagement with our housing and support team and with Adult Social Care.

Finance/Payments

We already had an action plan in place to improve the method of payment of meals purchased in our restaurants. At the time of the complaint, we were trialling a new payment method in one of our extra care schemes and were consulting with residents about these proposed changes. Following the complaint, we accelerated the roll out of this new procedure across all schemes, offering improved customer service and internal financial control.

5.0 Complaint Improvement Plan

This table identifies actions to improve our complaint handling performance.

Complaint Handling Performance

Of the residents, who responded to our 2023/24 tenant satisfaction measure survey, and said they had made a complaint in the last 12 months, only 44% were satisfied.

We are disappointed with this level of satisfaction, and we would like to see this metric improve when we next complete our resident survey. When considering the number of complaints received and the overall levels of satisfaction with the service provided it is possible that only a small number of residents answered yes to this question and/or may not have made a formal complaint to allow us to investigate their concerns.

To achieve improvements, we will listen and explore our approach to complaint handling through resident meetings and through complaint closure meetings.

Complaint Handling Performance

We invested time in verbally communicating outcomes to two of the four complainants with records kept of these discussions. We choose to conclude the complaint through verbal communication rather than through written communication. The 2024 Complaint Handling Code requires a written response to all complaints.

We will provide support to the Complaints Officer to follow up any verbal acknowledgement of a complaint and subsequent resolution in writing. We have prepared standard letter templates to comply with the Complaint Handling Code.

Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Reports

To ensure best practice and wider learning across the social housing sector is reflected in our policies and procedures we will review the Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Reports during the remainder of 2024.

The Operational Management Team will:

- review the Spotlight on attitudes, respect, and rights – relationship of equals (January 2024)
- review the Spotlight on: Knowledge and Information Management (KIM) (May 2023)
- Amend the anti-social behaviour policy to reflect the spotlight report on noise complaints.

Systems and workflows

To ensure that all contact with our residents is logged on our housing management and finance software system to enable effective complaint handling and high-quality record management.

To cascade training to front line teams on ensuring that a new contact is created for inbound and outbound communication with our residents.

Resident engagement

To continue the resident engagement meetings with existing schemes and expand to all schemes.

To expand engagement from July 2024 across Brighton Place, Roman Gate Court, Collinson Court, Chapman Court, Wellington View, The Burrows.

Resident engagement

For greater transparency and promotion of a positive complaint culture we will publish quarterly complaint performance on our website starting from September 2024.

We will publish complaint performance on our website once the Board of Management and the Member Responsible for Complaints have reviewed the quarterly complaint report.

6.0 Self-assessment against the 2024 Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

Our completed self-assessment is available on our website, please [click here](#).