

BRIGHTER FUTURES HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2023-2024



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Introduction.

Welcome to our annual complaints' performance and service improvement report. Brighter Futures Housing Association Ltd takes complaints seriously and we want to learn from them in order to continuously improve the services we offer to our customers. The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of our complaint handling performance, how we have learnt from complaints and what is next for complaint handling.

Background to the report: Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

Brighter Futures is a member of the Housing Ombudsman Service which is the body that investigates social tenants' complaints when they are not resolved internally. The Housing Ombudsman published an updated complaint handling code in February 2024 which set out its expectations of all landlords who are members of the Ombudsman's scheme. One of the key requirements is that we demonstrate learning in our annual report. The analysis includes statistics showing the volume of complaints, types of complaints as well as other details.

The report.

The report looks at our complaint handling performance over the period from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 and looks at our aims for 2024. In this this period there were twenty stage 1 complaints and only two complaints required a stage 2 investigation.

Complaint handling code self-assessment.

The Housing Ombudsman requires social housing providers to re-assess annually against the code. We have carried out this re-assessment and the latest self-assessment is published on our website.

Findings and publications by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

In 2023-2024 we:

- ✓ Have not been the subject of any Housing Ombudsman complaint investigations.
- ✓ Did not receive any findings of non-compliance by the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- ✓ Did not receive any Complaint Handling Failure Orders (CHFO).
- ✓ Did not receive any findings of maladministration in complaint handling.
- ✓ Have not been the subject of a Housing Ombudsman Service annual report as a landlord.
- ✓ Have not been the subject of any other relevant reports by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Our performance and learning from complaints.

By recording and analysing complaint data we can identify and address the root cause of complaints, identify any training opportunities and service improvements. This report will show how we have learned from the complaints we have received and how we have addressed issues raised through our complaints process.

The volume of complaints received in 2023/2024 (quantitative indicator).

- ✓ In 2023/2024 we received and closed 22 formal complaints, 20 at stage 1 and 2 at stage 2.
- ✓ This includes one anonymous complaint.
- ✓ We had no complaints reviewed externally by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

The volume of complaints received by quarter (quantitative indicator).

The table below details the volume of complaints per quarter over the reporting year 2023/2024.

Quarter 1 April – June 2023	Quarter 2 July – September 2023	Quarter 3 October – December 2023	Quarter 4 January – March 2024
6	5*	2	9*

**This denotes where the figure includes a stage 2 escalation request.*

The volume of complaints that were not accepted in 2023/2024 (quantitative indicator).

In the reporting year 2023/2024 there were no complaints that we did not accept. However, we do recognise that some issues are best dealt with outside of the complaints process, for, example, our anti-social behaviour policy (ASB) and these are directed to the Housing Management Team. Our Feedback Policy: complaints, comments and compliments provides examples of some situations, and circumstances, where we will deal with a complaint differently and our complaint handling awareness training supports staff to recognise the difference between a service request e.g. a first-time repair, a complaint and an ASB service request.

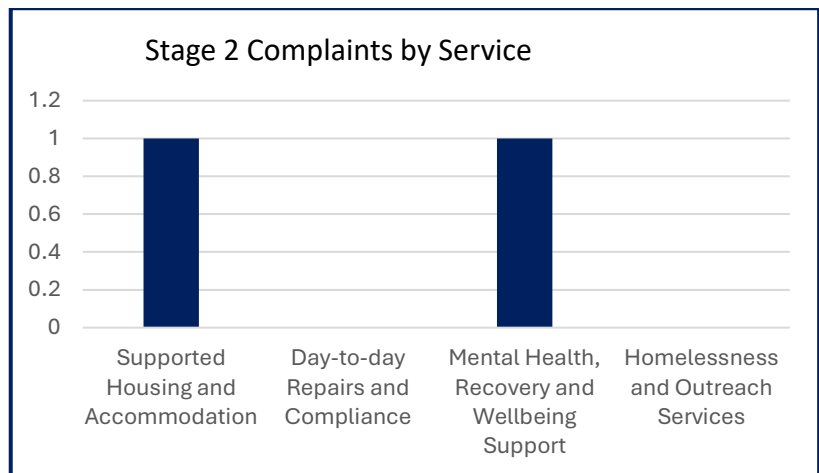
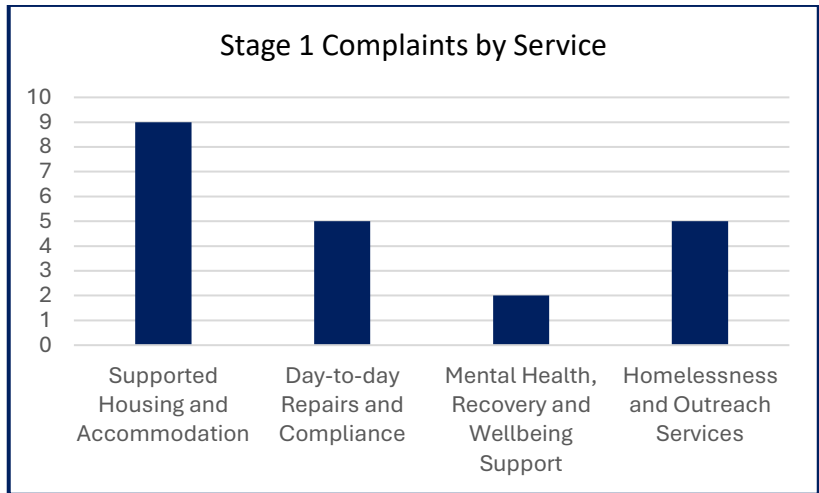
How were the complaints received for 2023/2024? (quantitative indicator).

We provide a variety of different communication channels for customers to submit complaints. In 2023/2024 we received complaints in the following ways:

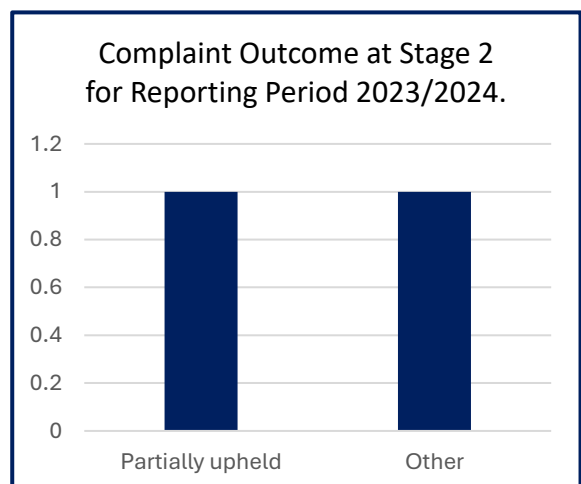
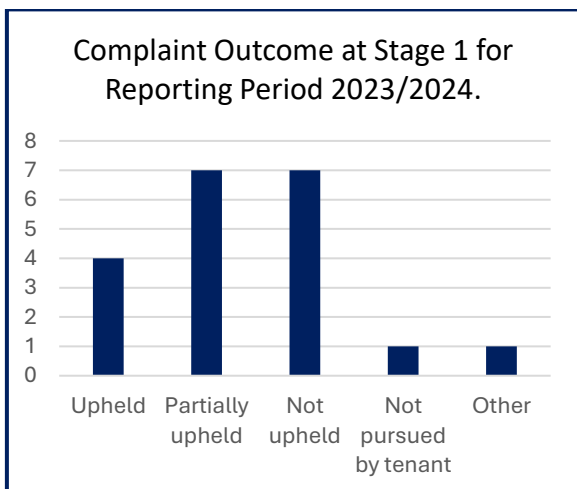
Way Complaint Was Submitted	Number
Complaints inbox	4
Over the telephone	7
Through the website	2
Complaint/feedback form	3
Letter	3
Email direct to lead of service area	1
Info inbox	2

Complaints by Service for 2023/2024 (quantitative indicator).

This section shows the number of stage 1 and stage 2 complaints received by service. There was one complaint regarding both day-to-day repairs and compliance as well as supported housing and accommodation.



Complaints outcomes for 2023/2024 (quantitative indicator).



Complaints outcomes per quarter (quantitative indicator).

This section shows the outcomes of the complaints we handled during 2023/2024. Once a complaint has been investigated the outcome of the complaint is categorised as upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.

Number of Complaints	Quarter 1 April – June 2023	Quarter 1 April – June 2023
Received	Number of Complaints received at Stage 1	Number of Complaints received at Stage 2
	6	0
Upheld	1	0
Partially Upheld	2	0
Not Upheld	2	0
Not Pursued By Tenant	1	0

Number of Complaints	Quarter 2 July – September 2023	Quarter 2 July – September 2023
Received	Number of Complaints received at Stage 1	Number of Complaints received at Stage 2
	4	1
Upheld	0	0
Partially Upheld	2	1
Not Upheld	2	0

Number of Complaints	Quarter 3 October – December 2023	Quarter 3 October – December 2023
Received	Number of Complaints received at Stage 1	Number of Complaints received at Stage 2
	2	0
Upheld	1	0
Partially Upheld	1	0
Not Upheld	0	0

Number of Complaints	Quarter 4 January – March 2024	Quarter 4 January – March 2024
Received	Number of Complaints received at Stage 1	Number of Complaints received at Stage 2
	8	1
Upheld	2	0
Partially Upheld	2	0
Not Upheld	3	0
Other	1	1

Learning from complaints for 2023/2024 (qualitative indicator).

Complaints are a valuable source of information about our services. Once we have dealt with complaints it is important that we review them as this help us to identify underlying or reoccurring issues and where potential improvements can be made. We also monitor complaints to identify any trends, this applies to whether the complaint was upheld or not. The following 'Customer said ... We did' identifies some of the lessons learnt and changes made from complaints in the last 12 months.

Customer Said..	We Did...
I am unhappy with the lack of case notes being provided despite previous requests...	The governance team have created a company guide on the process for dealing with Subject Access Requests (SARs). This will be communicated to all staff across the organisation within the forthcoming days.
I am unhappy with the property condition, including the roof...	All properties within this service have now been surveyed with roofing remedials carried out between February 2024 and March 2024.
I have not received notification of appointments or clear communication regarding repair service visits from both Brighter Futures own Staff or external contractors...	Since mid-January 2024, tenants are now offered the choice between an "AM" or "PM" appointments. We are also engaging with contractors to ensure where possible they offer appointments to work in line with our internal policy.
I have been treated differently when using a communal area...	We are introducing ground rules regarding the use of different communal areas within this service to ensure consistent and fair treatment of tenants. Tenants will be involved in the review/development of these rules.

Observations, themes and trends.

- ✓ The data shows that our customer submit complaints in a variety of ways. Therefore, it is important that we continue to provide different ways to complain allowing all our customers to access the complaints process.
- ✓ It is easy for customers to complain when they need to. We do not discourage complaints, we actively encourage them as a way of identifying issues and correcting them.
- ✓ The data shows that a high proportion of complaints were resolved at the first stage in the complaints process indicating that managers were able to resolve complaints effectively without appeals and further reviews being required.
- ✓ From the issues arising in the past 12 months, no re-occurring themes or trends have been identified.

Other actions taken in 2023/2024.

- ✓ We have introduced a suite of template letters which cover the details outlined in the Housing Ombudsman code.
- ✓ We have set up a central recording system where:
 - Complaints are given a reference number and a case file is created where the original complaint and all correspondence, photographs, survey's, report's etc are stored for audit purposes.
 - Complaints, including anonymous complaints, are logged on to the complaints progress tracker.
 - Records of any conversation that have taken place can be recorded on the call log.
 - The customer's preferred contact method and any reasonable adjustments/disabilities/vulnerabilities are recorded on the preferred contact method and reasonable adjustments/disabilities/vulnerabilities spreadsheet.
 - Lessons learnt and actions taken to prevent the issue from reoccurring are captured on the lessons learnt and outcomes spreadsheet.
 - Any outstanding works/repairs are logged on the outstanding works/repairs tracker and seen through to completion.
- ✓ On publication of the new complaint handling code, we published a frequently asked questions (FAQs) flyer for colleagues on complaints handling. This will be frequently circulated to ensure new staff to the organisation are aware of the timescales.
- ✓ We have designed and have rolled out a complaint handling awareness training programme to staff.
- ✓ We have improved communication about how residents can escalate a complaint to the Housing Ombudsman by displaying the Housing Ombudsman details on our website, in communal areas across our services/schemes and providing information in tenants welcome pack.
- ✓ We are encouraging investigating officers to initiate more direct contact with the customers early in the complaints process as possible to improve communication about the complaint.
- ✓ We have introduced a quarterly complaints, compliments and lessons learnt company newsletter.
- ✓ We have set up a new customer focus group to work on key issues, including the design and wording of an accessible how to complain guide and video.

What's Next.

This report highlights that there has been significant improvements over the last 12 months and we will continue to work hard to build on this.

- ✓ We strive to create a positive complaint handling culture and will continue to encourage customers to raise complaints.
- ✓ We will continue to roll out the complaint handling training to staff to ensure our customer's receive the best possible service when handling their complaints.
- ✓ We have introduced a complaint completion survey form to capture customers experience of the complaints process and the satisfaction of the outcome of their complaint.
- ✓ We have introduced the recording of the number of working days taken to acknowledge complaints and the number of working days taken to issue a full written response at both complaint stages.

- ✓ We will use this data to work out the average working days taken to acknowledge complaints and the average working days for a full written response to be issued at both complaints stages.
- ✓ In next year's annual report we will:
 - Provide information on what customers have said about their experience of how we handled their complaint and their satisfaction with the outcome.
 - Report the average working days taken to acknowledge complaints and the average working days taken to issue full written response at both complaint stages to demonstrate that we are complying with the timeframes set out in the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- ✓ We will continue to monitor completion of the actions recorded on our lessons learned and outcomes tracker to ensure that service improvements continue to be implemented.

Compliments.

Although all reporting requirements from the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman are focused on complaints, we believe at Brighter Futures it is just as important to recognise the positive feedback that comes from our customers when we get things right.

Compliments are shared in the Complaints, Compliments and Lessons Learnt quarterly update. This gives staff throughout the organisation an idea of what we do well and the positive impact they can have on our customers lives. We wanted to let you know about some of the compliments received in 2023/2024.

A carer from an external agency who was pleased with the out of hours service he received. In just over 2½ hours of reporting the boiler breakdown an engineer was at site (outside Stoke-on-Trent area).

A compliment received regarding our customer service team“Thanks so much for your email, I have only just found it! The info is great! It was so lovely talking to you, your knowledge was amazing! I am determined to explore further. Hope to meet you soon!”.

A compliment received about all the staff at The Clubhouse Network....“Hi, just to say a big thank you to the staff at the observatory for the support they have given me this year, it's been massive”

A compliment received about the Operational Manager of The Clubhouse Network...“Hi, thanks for your patience and understanding today” and the customer then went on to say “it meant a lot”.

A tenant called to say thank you to Brighter Futures for all the support that she has had this year. She then went on to say in a particular thank you to her support worker for all his help this year and said this 'from the bottom of her heart'.

To request this document in a different language or format such as large print or braille please contact us on 01782 40600 or email us at customerservices@brighter-futures.org.uk

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