

**Annual Complaint  
Performance and  
Service Improvement  
Report  
2023/24**





## INTRODUCTION

Railway Housing Association views all feedback as incredibly valuable and has clear aspirations to actively listen to residents, recording their feedback, learning and improving based on it, and clearly communicating the resulting changes. Complaints, in particular, provide a significant source of insight and an excellent opportunity for the Association to address any issues and make necessary changes to improve the experience for our residents. Railway Housing Association aspires to be an organisation that places the resident voice at the centre of decision-making and be able to demonstrate direct service improvements as a result of listening and acting.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 introduced several changes to complaint handling for social landlords like Railway Housing Association, aiming to enhance how we manage feedback. This new legislation strengthened the Housing Ombudsman's role, enabling it to publish and monitor a mandatory code of practice for complaint handling from 1 April 2024.

Under this code, all social landlords, including Railway Housing Association, must complete and publish an annual self-assessment to demonstrate how we follow the code and any ideas to be improved upon. Additionally, we must produce an annual report detailing complaint handling performance and service improvements. This report should be evaluated alongside the published self-assessment.

## ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Railway Housing Association has set out a clear and exciting plan for 2024/25 with four key priorities:



### OUR RESIDENT EXPERIENCE

To provide an outstanding resident experience, reflecting our residents needs and aspirations.



### OUR HOMES

To provide safe, affordable and energy efficient properties that residents are proud to call home.



### OUR ORGANISATION

To be a well governed, financially strong and digitally enabled organisation.



### OUR PEOPLE

To create a high performing, resident focused culture that attracts and retains talented colleagues.

Listening and understanding the needs, wishes and aspirations of residents is a fundamental requirement for us to deliver on the four key priorities, which is why we are already making changes and improvements to the way feedback is heard and acted upon.

Within the Resident Experience priority, we have set out clear plans to improve the resident experience and approach to resident engagement, and this exciting work is already underway.

## OUR RESIDENT EXPERIENCE

### What we will do

- Improve our resident insight and engagement so that we hear and act upon our resident voice
- Hearing our residents feedback, set a clear vision for our future resident experience
- Ensure that our communications with residents is informative and engaging
- Treat complaints with the importance they deserve, driving improvement in resident satisfaction with complaints handling
- Hold accurate, relevant and informative information on our residents to tailor their services

### How we will do this

- Establish a resident committee reporting into our board so that we better understand our residents needs and aspirations
- Undertake a detailed strategic review, including resident engagement, to set a new resident experience strategy
- Rescope and deliver a service improvement plan for our repairs service
- Co-design a new approach to resident communications
- Review our complaints process and reporting focus to drive strategic improvement in customer satisfaction
- Improve the quality and depth of resident data to deliver improved resident insight



We are working with experienced consultants and our residents to design and deliver a new Resident Engagement Strategy, to put the resident voice at the centre of decision-making across the Association and the new strategy will be presented to Board in September for approval. We are also working to establish a Resident Committee that will report into our board, so that we can ensure that resident need and aspirations are really understood and acted upon and recruitment for the new Committee will begin in July 2024. The Committee will be a mixture of Board Members and up to six residents and is a formal committee of the governance structure and will have oversight of our approach to consumer standards, insight, complaint handling and driving forward the resident voice across the governance structure.

We have also committed to reviewing our complaints process and reporting processes so that we can drive improvements in customer satisfaction, and this review will be completed by September 2024.

### COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

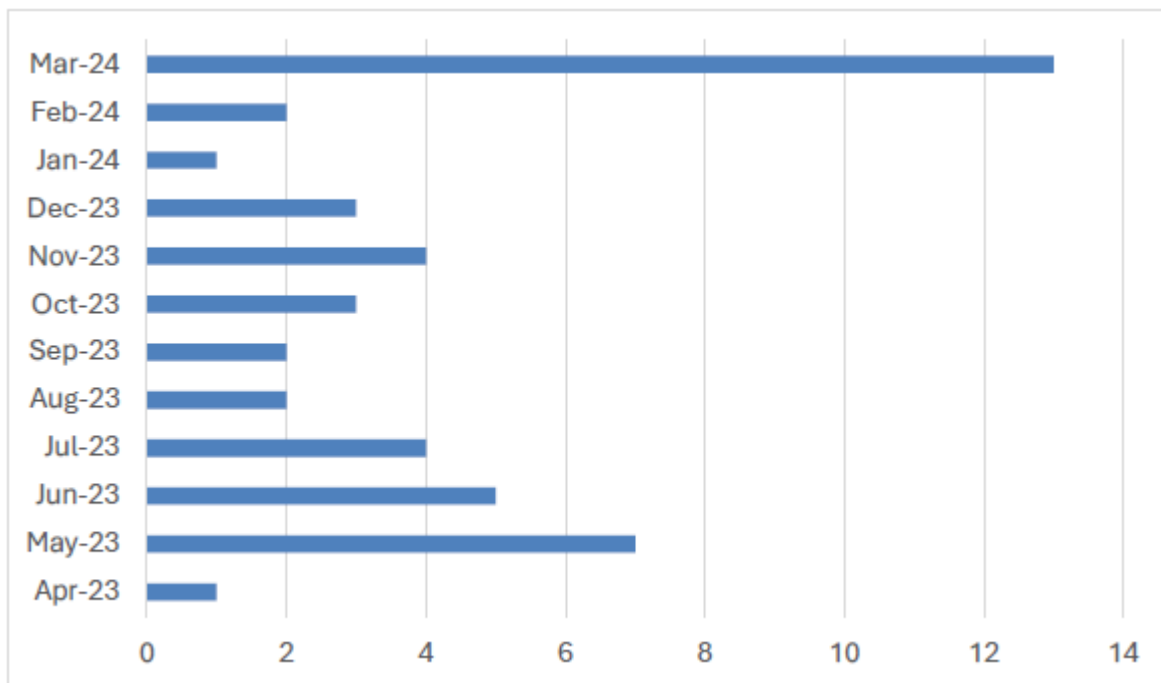
Throughout 2023/24, Railway Housing Association received 47 complaints and this definition is consistent with that used in the calculation of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures.



Of the 47 complaints raised by Railway Housing Association residents, four progressed to Stage 2 of the complaints process.

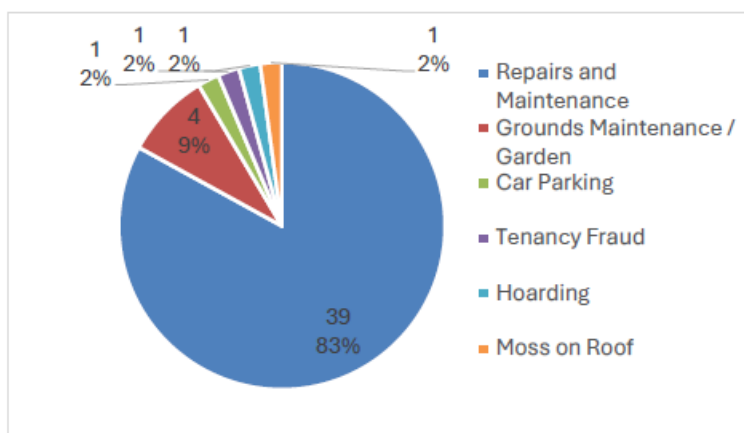
The number of complaints received per month throughout the year generally ranged between 1 and 5, however, May 2023 and March 2024 saw complaints numbers at 7 and 13 respectively. The increasing number of complaints in March 2024 follows a series of improvements and awareness raising sessions held for colleagues throughout March, reinforcing the importance and value of effective complaint handling.

The diagram below sets out the number of complaints received per month.



## COMPLAINT REASONS

The most common primary reason for a complaint in 2023/24 was repairs and maintenance, accounting for 83% of all complaints received. The remaining reasons for complaints included grounds maintenance or garden issues, car parking, tenancy fraud, hoarding and moss on a roof.



Two of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures measure satisfaction with repairs and maintenance, which are:

- TP02 – Satisfaction with Repairs – 76.2%
- TP03 – Satisfaction with the time taken to complete the most recent repair – 75.1%

The repairs and maintenance Tenant Satisfaction Measures are below the overall satisfaction scores for Railway Housing Association, supporting the complaint outcomes that improving the repairs service is a key priority for residents.

Further analysis demonstrates that of the complaints for repairs and maintenance shows that the top three trends are:

- Repairs that are ongoing and not fully resolved
- Repairs that have not been carried out
- Communication issues from the contractor

## STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS

Once the initial investigation has been completed and an outcome communicated to the resident in writing, a resident can escalate their complaint to Stage 2 if they are unhappy with the initial outcome. Stage 2 complaints are investigated by the Chief Finance Officer, Chief Operating Officer or the Chief Executive. Four of the original 47 complaints received progressed to Stage 2, as the resident was not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 response.

The four Stage 2 complaints outcomes were:

1. In the first case, the resident disagreed with the original decision not to move a boundary fence line. Following investigation at Stage 2, the Stage 1 decision was upheld and the resident was advised of the reasons for this.



2. In the second case, the resident was unhappy that works to their garden and repairs to their home had not been completed as promised. Those works were arranged and carried out in the summer of 2023.
3. The third case resulted following delays in the out of hours service and delays by us in arranging alternative accommodation for a resident. As a result of this complaint, we apologised and offered the resident compensation.
4. The fourth case related to moss growing on the roof of one of our homes which had fallen onto the path and the resident was unhappy that the original decision was to explain that it was the residents' responsibility to remove this. The decision was reviewed and works arranged by us to protect the resident and reduce the potential health and safety risks associated with the moss.

## COMPLAINT HANDLING TIMEFRAMES

The Housing Ombudsman set out timescales in which landlords should handle complaints in their Complaint Handling Code. Our complaints policy sets out the timescales that we have agreed to handle complaints by, and there are some slight differences in the definitions as shown below:

Stage	Housing Ombudsman Timescales	Railway Housing Association Policy Timescales
<b>Acknowledge Complaint</b>	Within 5 working days	Within 2 working days
<b>Stage 1 Response</b>	10 working days from the date the complaint is <b>acknowledged</b>	10 working days from the date the complaints is <b>received</b>
<b>Stage 2 Response</b>	20 working days from the date the request to escalate the complaint is received	20 working days from the date the request to escalate the complaint is received

For the purposes of this report, we will use the Housing Ombudsman definitions to monitor performance against timeframes to ensure that reporting with Tenant Satisfaction Measures is consistent with this report.

For 2023/24, we achieved the following performance for complaint handling (TSM Measure CH02)

- Stage 1 – 68.09
- Stage 2 – 16.67

Performance across the year has been below target and below the expectations of the Housing Ombudsman. We have analysed why performance has been below expectations and there are a number of issues that impacted on this, including:

- Not extending the deadline – there are a number of complaints where the investigating manager has kept a complaint open until the issue has been resolved



rather than a decision made, which is not aligned with the Complaint Handling Code. As a result, we have retrained our colleagues to either agree an extension with the resident if a longer timeframe is required and where a decision has been made, to close the complaint and monitor that the actions have been carried out. This is referenced within our self-assessment as an area that we need to improve and our guidance and policy are being reviewed by September 2024 to resolve this.

- Capacity within the investigating managers – in some cases, delays have been experienced when investigating managers have struggled to complete investigations because of competing priorities. To improve this, we have increased the number of managers that can investigate complaints and we have introduced a weekly complaints clinic with the Chief Operating Officer and all investigating managers to ensure that there are sufficient resources to fully investigate and respond to complaints on time. Since this has been introduced in March 2024, 100% of complaints have been responded to on time (March 2024 – May 2024).

Our Tenant Satisfaction Measures also shows us how satisfied residents are with our approach to complaint handling, and this measure (TP09) is 30.9%. This score represents the lowest of all of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures. Reviewing our complaints policy and procedure, a focus on ensuring that we respond on time and additional colleague training are commitments that we've made as we are committed to improving this measure, and a timeline for implementing these measures is set out at the end of this document. The Board are equally committed to improving our approach to complaint handling and quarterly complaint reporting will give the Board and Resident Committee additional oversight.

## HOUSING OMBUDSMAN DETERMINATIONS

In 2023/24, the Housing Ombudsman dealt with one complaint from a Railway Housing Association resident. The Housing Ombudsman upheld the original decision of Railway, however, as we had not responded to the Stage 2 complaint within the timescales, the Housing Ombudsman directed us to award compensation of £100 to the resident.

## SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

We are committed to learning from complaints and improving the service and following complaints received this year, we have introduced the following:

Theme	Service Improvement
Waste Collection	We have increased estate inspections, provided one off skips to clear and tidy the neighbourhood followed up by improved communication to residents to signpost to services that collect bulky items via letters posters and scheme meetings.
Parking Concerns	Where we have private roads and residents



	experienced parking issues, we contracted a private company to issue parking permits to our residents and ensure their safety by ensuring only vehicles with a valid permit are parked.
Contractor Management and Appointments	<p>We have instigated meetings to emphasise the importance of arranging appointments and giving at least 1 hours notice if appointment is to be on the same day. This has been added to the email template for works sent to contractors.</p> <p>We are also continually updating contact information for our residents so that contractors are aware if residents work full time, need to make school runs need longer to answer doors due to health needs.</p>
Emergency Out of Hours Service	<p>Our Emergency Out of Hours provider has an updated list of contacts for each area and if there are fallback contractors in case of unavailability of the first contractor the list to clearly include these.</p> <p>We have placed a Railway manager on call to support escalated queries from the Out of Hours Provider.</p>
Uncapping Gas	Reviewed/Improved the process for the uncapping of the gas supply for properties once tenancy has been signed to ensure it is completed in a timely manner.
Disabled Adaptations	<p>Reviewed/improved our process for ensuring minor disabled adaptations are completed in a timely manner.</p> <p>When we receive a disabled adaptation ensure that the correct alert is on the housing management system</p>

## IMPROVING OUR COMPLAINT HANDLING

Listening to feedback is really important to Railway and we believe that it's important to embrace the Regulator and Housing Ombudsman's approach to transparency and accountability with our residents. Our complaints performance for 2023/24 has not achieved the targets and standards that we would aspire and we have already introduced improvements to the way we handle complaints.

The improvements that we have put in place or have planned are set out below.

Theme	Actions	Timeframe	Expected Outcome
Improving	We have introduced a	Commenced	A weekly review of ongoing



Annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report  
2023/24



Response Timescales	weekly Complaints Clinic to review all open complaints to ensure resources are in place to respond on time.	March 2024	complaints will ensure that response times are achieved. For the period of March 2024 – May 2024, 100% of complaints have been responded to on time.
Definition of a Complaint	All colleagues have received additional training to improve understanding of the Housing Ombudsman definitions of a complaints.	March 2024	Following the training, we have seen an increase in the number of formal complaints, which we believe is a positive step.
Handling Dissatisfaction	All colleagues have received additional training from MGI on the most effective ways to manage dissatisfaction from residents to be able to immediately put things right where we can.	April 2024	Colleague feedback from the training has been positive, with a greater understanding of how to support residents when things have gone wrong.
Data and Records	Complaint handling is currently recorded on a spreadsheet. This will be moved into our Cx housing management system to improve the data governance and insight.	July 2024	We have already designed a new case management approach to complaint handling and this will be moved into our live system and launched in July 2024 to fully track all complaint progress and learnings.
Complaints Policy and Procedure	We are reviewing our complaints policy and procedure so we can strengthen our approach to complaint handling and better demonstrate how we meet the Housing Ombudsman Code.	September 2024	Our policy and procedure re-write will be followed with training to colleagues. Aligning the policy more closely with the expectations of the Code will help to improve our handling performance.
Single Point of Recording	We have introduced a single point to record and acknowledge all complaints to ensure that complaints meet the definition and are allocated to the appropriate person to investigate.	March 2024	Since we have introduced this, we have acknowledged all complaints on time.



## Appendix 1 – Governing Body’s Response

The Board and Member Responsible for Complaints acknowledge the Self Assessment and Annual Complaint Performance and Service Improvement Report and acknowledge the current performance around complaint handling. The Board acknowledges its responsibility for establishing a culture to ensure that all feedback is listened to and acted upon and that the resident voice is strengthened and amplified at all levels within the Association.

Performance for complaint handling in 2023/24 has been below the targets set by the Board and outside of the timescales and expectations of the Housing Ombudsman. As a result, the Board have given a clear direction to the Executive Team to drive improved performance. The Board acknowledge the additional measures and controls that have been put in place for 2024/25 and are encouraged to see that performance is improving. The Board will continue to review this performance on at least a quarterly basis. The Tenant Satisfaction Measure for complaint handling is lower than all other perception TSM measures and is a key focus for improvement.

The Board are supportive of the changes that the Executive Team have introduced and the plan to strengthen this further, including:

- Weekly Complaints Clinics to review and monitor performance
- Introducing case management within the CX Housing Management system to track, manage and monitor complaints
- A revised Complaints Policy and Procedure that is currently being developed
- Additional oversight of complaints by the new Resident Committee which will report directly into the Board
- More transparent performance and outcome reporting to the Resident Committee and Board on a quarterly basis to monitor complaint trends and learning outcomes

The Board are pleased to note the learnings and improvements that have been introduced throughout 2023/24 and the Board are keen to ensure that residents receive good quality feedback as learnings from complaints and feedback are implemented.

The Board also note a number of areas of the self assessment that require strengthening and look forward to working with the new Resident Committee to ensure that compliance is strengthened for 2024/25 and deliver better outcomes for residents.