



**BasildonCouncil**

# Housing Complaints Annual Report 2023/24

Welcome to Basildon Borough Council's Complaints Annual Report 2023/24.

As part of the Council's commitment to openness and transparency, this report sets out the Council's handling of complaints that have been received by our tenants in respect of Housing Services, for the year 2023/2024. The report will provide an overview of the number of complaints received and how these were dealt with.

The Council is keen to be open and transparent about its handling of residents complaints and compliments and the Council are striving to improve residents experience across all services

## Social Housing Regulator

The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 was introduced in April 2024.

The Social Housing Regulation Act aims to balance the relationship between landlords and their residents by facilitating a new, proactive approach to regulating social housing landlords on consumer issues. The Act aims to drive landlords compliance with the consumer standards by empowering the regulator with new enforcement powers to tackle failing landlords. The Social Housing Charter detailed what social housing residents should be able to expect from their landlords, including feeling safe in their homes, knowing how their landlords are performing and having their complaints dealt with promptly. Below, we summarise how the Act sets out to deliver against each of the following commitments.

### To know their landlord is performing

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- The Act has implement a set of policy measures to ensure that residents know how their landlord is performing and are able to hold them to account.
- It provides an access to information scheme enabling tenants to access information concerning the management of their homes.
- Registered providers are required to collect and provide information in relation to the Regulator's Tenant Satisfaction Measures that will enable residents to know how their landlord is performing.
- Registered providers must inform the regulator on all material issues that relate to non-compliance or potential non-compliance with the consumer standards

### To have their complaints dealt with promptly

- The Act adds measures to formalise the relationship between the regulator and the housing ombudsman; building on the current Memorandum of Understanding to facilitate co-operation and provide better protection for tenants.
- The Act empowers the Housing Ombudsman to issue a code of practice about the procedures social housing providers should have in place for considering complaints against them
- The Housing Ombudsman is also empowered to issue guidance as to good practice and order a social housing provider to annually self-assess that their policies and practices are consistent with the guidance issued. The Act enables the regulator to gain entry and conduct a survey of the condition of properties more quickly by reducing the notice period which must be given to 48 hours.

## Housing Ombudsman Service – Complaint Handling Code

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (the Act) empowered the Housing Ombudsman to issue a code of practice about the procedures social housing providers should have in place for considering complaints.

It also placed a duty on the Ombudsman to monitor compliance with the code of practice issued.

The definition of a complaint must be defined as:

*'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.'*

A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction the Council must give them the choice to make complaint.

## Complaint Stages

### Stage 1

The Council must have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further investigation. The Council must consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the resident.

### Stage 2

If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's procedure. Stage 2 is the Council's final response.

## Self-Assessment

45 Landlords are required to complete the self-assessment in full and support all statements with evidence, with additional commentary, as necessary.

The Council completed the self-assessment in June 2024, which can be viewed via the link below:

[Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self Assesment 1nmacs917o3m1.pdf \(basildon.gov.uk\)](#)

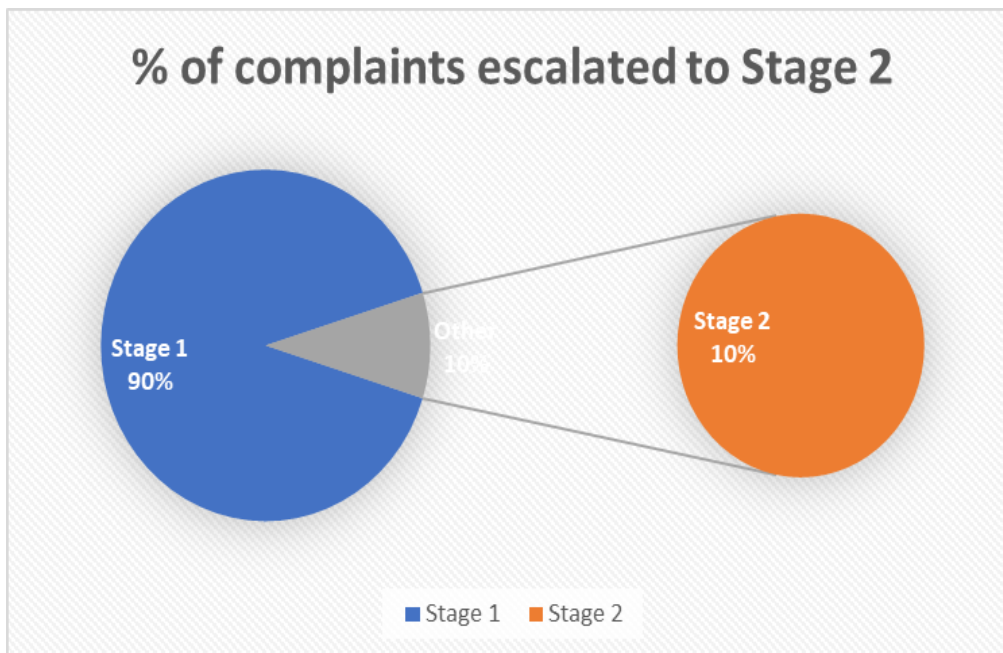
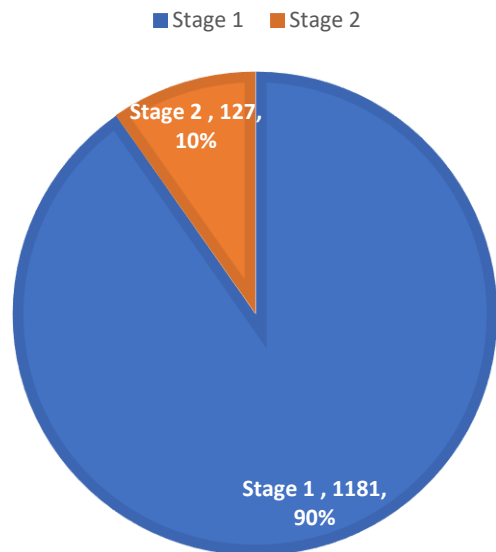
The Council must publish the self-assessment as part of the annual complaint performance and service improvement report on our website. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

## Overview of Complaints

### Total Housing Complaints Received – 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

The graph below shows the total number of complaints that was received by Housing Services. It shows that there was a total of 1,308 complaints received for the year 2023/2024, of which 1181 were recorded as stage 1 complaints and 127 Stage 2 complaints. 65 residents indicated in their complaint that they required some additional support as a result of a disability or mental health.

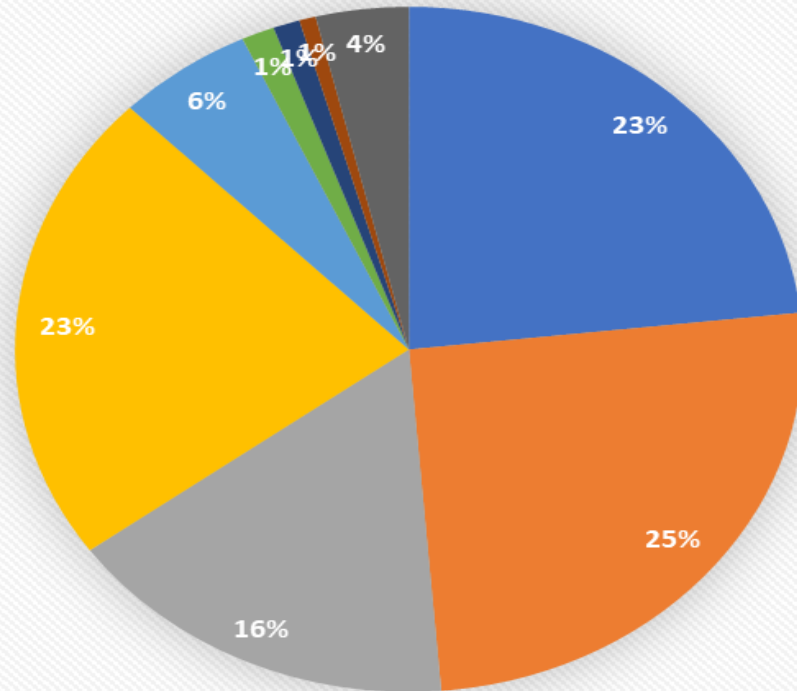
#### TOTAL COMPLAINTS RECEIVED



## Stage 1 complaints – outcome and status

The graph below outlines the outcome or status of the complaints that have been received and dealt with at Stage 1. 48% of the overall complaints received were either upheld or partially upheld by the services and 16% were not upheld. 29% of complaints received were resolved as a service enquiry or used as customer feedback (recorded as customer statement). 6% did not progress to the complaint process as they were either a duplicate, cancelled or did not meet the complaint policy criteria. 1% of cases were still in progress at the end of the reporting year and therefore an outcome could not be recorded at that stage.

### Outcome and Status



■ Upheld	■ Partially Upheld	■ Not upheld
■ Service Enquiry	■ Customer Statement	■ Duplicate
■ In Progress	■ Cancelled	■ other

## Stage 1 complaints – method of contact

Stage 1 complaints are made to the Council by various avenues and of the total complaints received the council website (portal) was the most popular method with 76% of complainants using this service, with letter contact the less preferred method.

- Portal - 894 complaints received
- Email - 196 complaints received
- Phone – 53 complaints received
- Letter – 38 complaints received

## Stage 1 complaints – by service area

The highest proportion of complaints were in relation to the councils housing property / repair service (86%). The repairs service raised a total of 43,141 work orders during 2023/24 with the number of complaints received this would suggest between 2% to 3% resulted in a complaint (number could vary as some complaints relate to multiple repair requests).

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Stage 1 Complaints by service area	
Service Area	Total number of stage 1 complaints
Council Property Services	1014
Council Estate, tenancy and Rent Management	134
Council Leaseholder Services and Right to Buy Applications	33

## Stage 1 complaints – reasons for complaint by service area

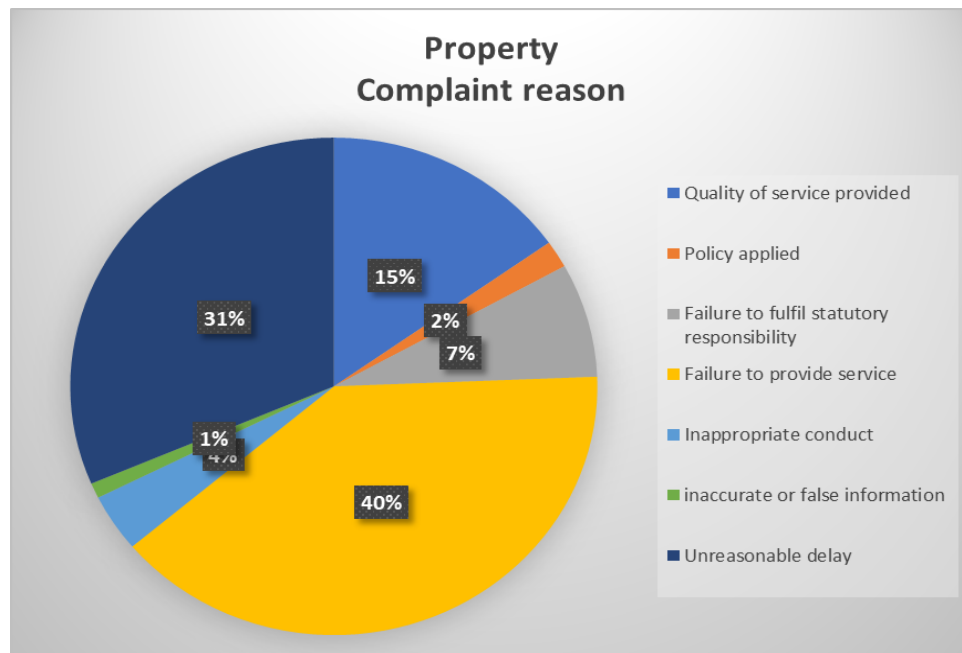
Stage 1 complaints are recorded under the following categories:-

- Dissatisfaction with the way the policy has been applied
- Failure to fulfil our statutory responsibilities
- Unreasonable delays in providing a service
- Concerns about the quality provided by a service

- Inappropriate conduct of staff or contractors
- Provision of inaccurate or false information

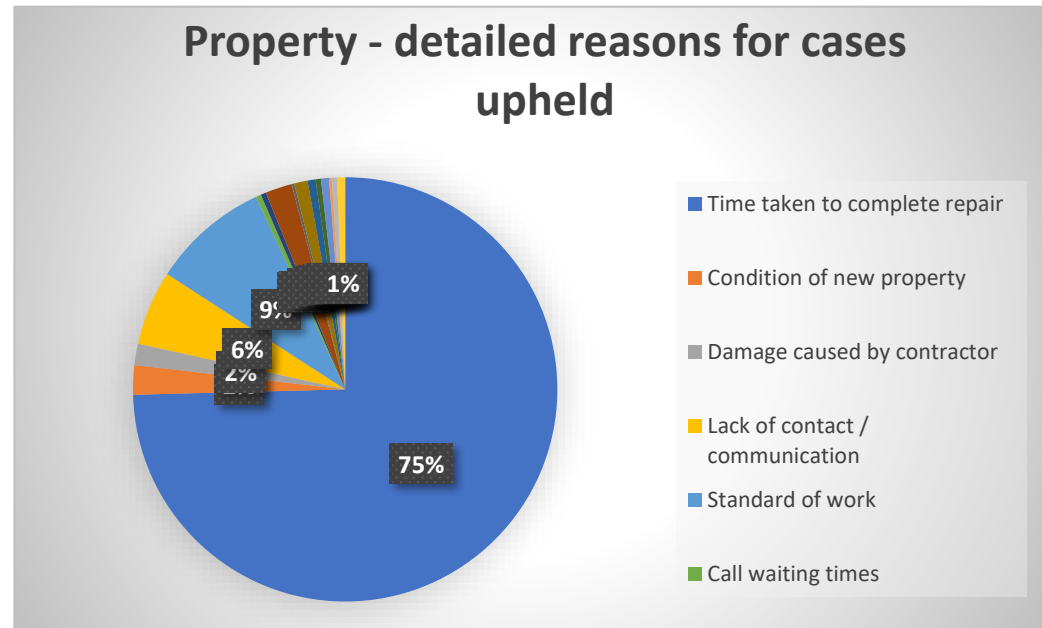
### Property / Repairs Service

The main reasons for complaint relate to failure to provide a service or unreasonable delays, these categories make up 71% of complaints received.



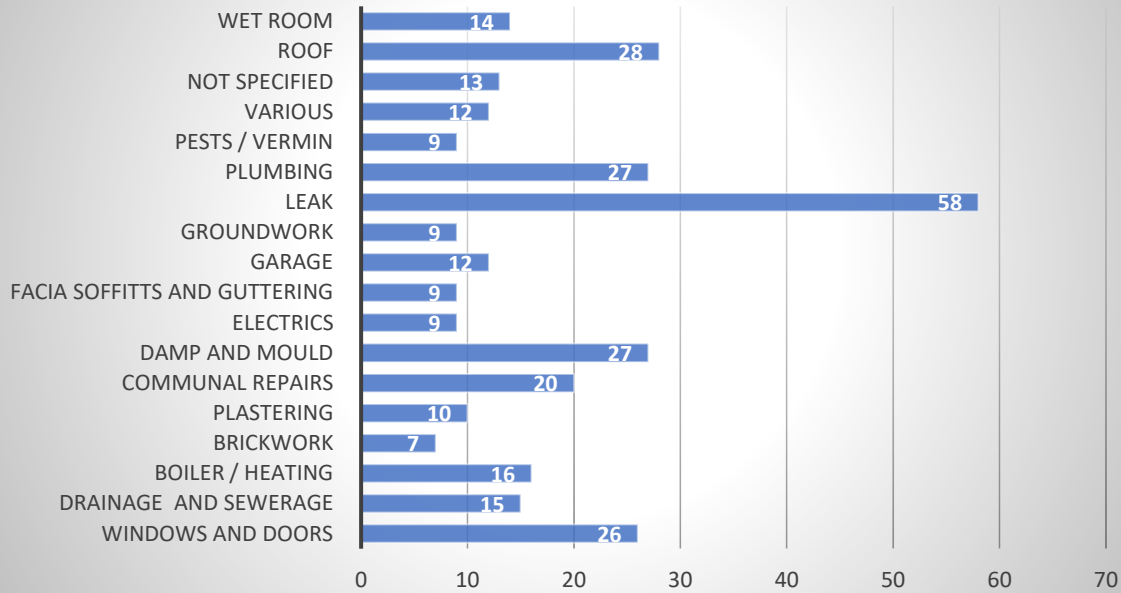
When looking at the reasons in more detail for the repair service Stage 1 cases either upheld or partially upheld the main reason related to the length of time taken to complete repair (75%) and standard of work (9%)

More detailed analysis of the repair types for time taken to complete show that our response to managing leaks / water ingress was the highest level experiencing delays and for standard of works this was for roof repairs.



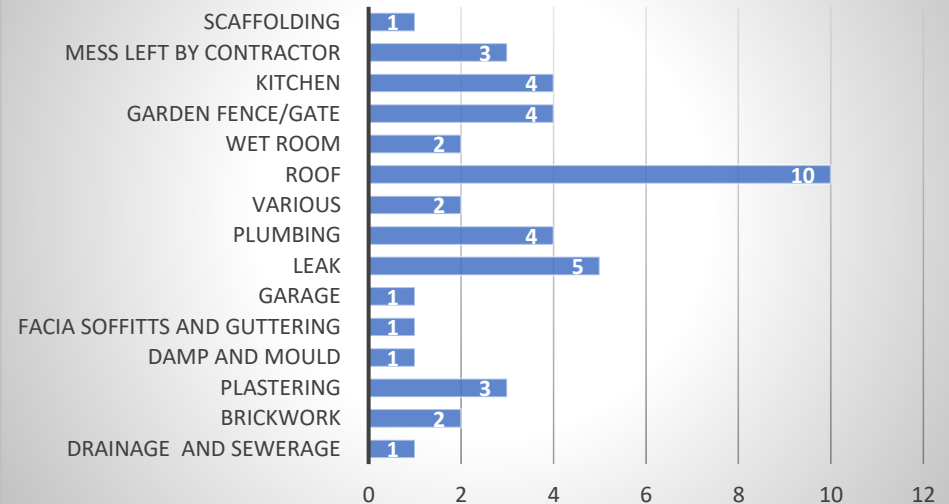


### Time taken to complete repair by repair type

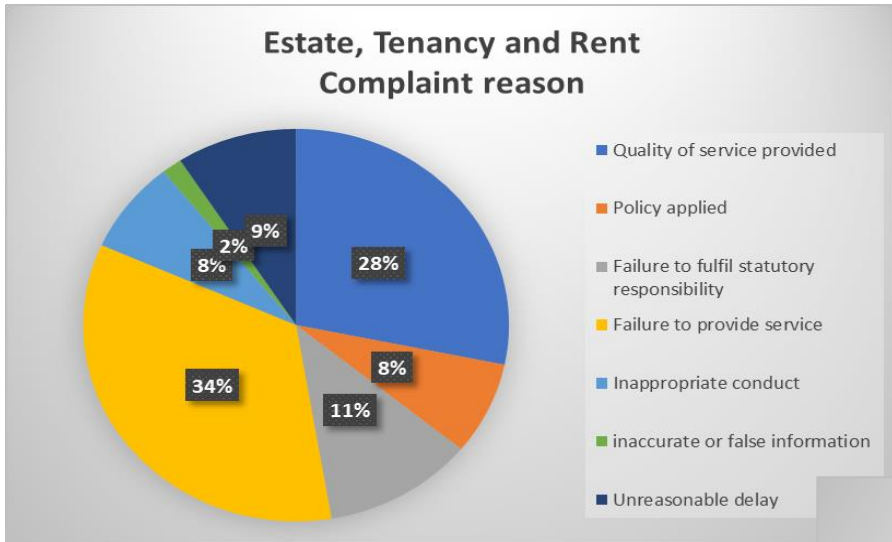


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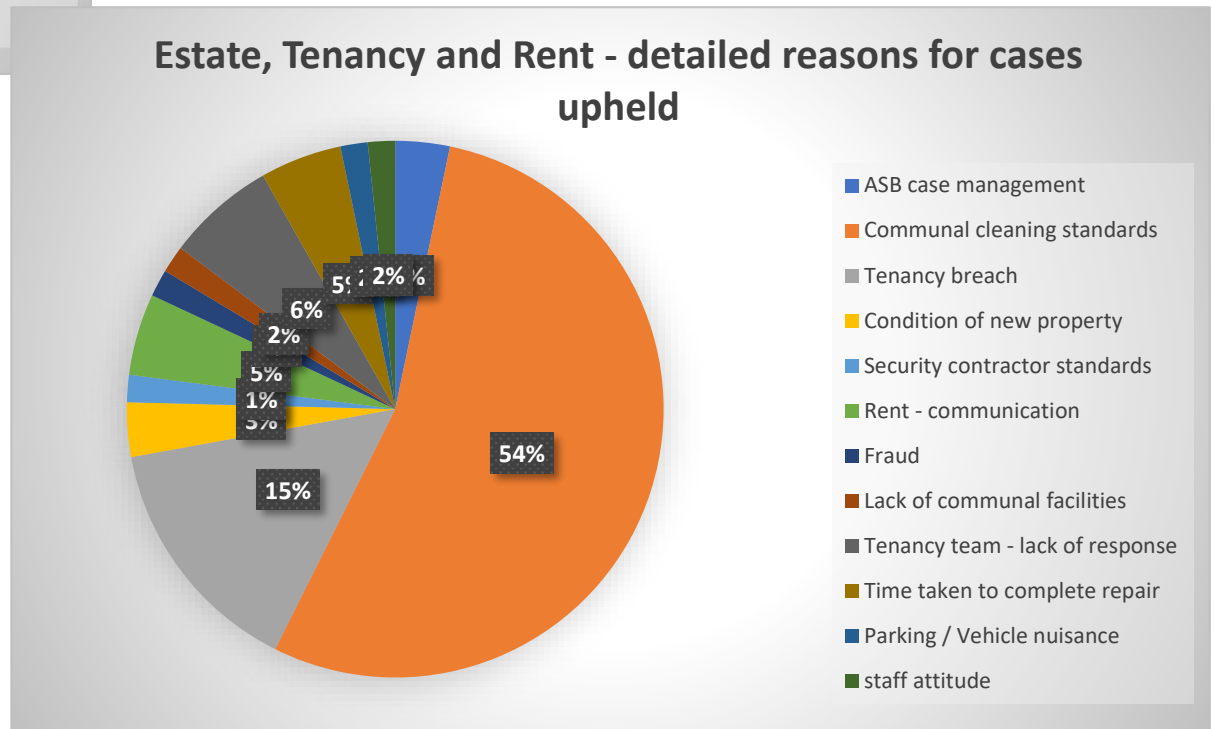
### Standard of work by repair type



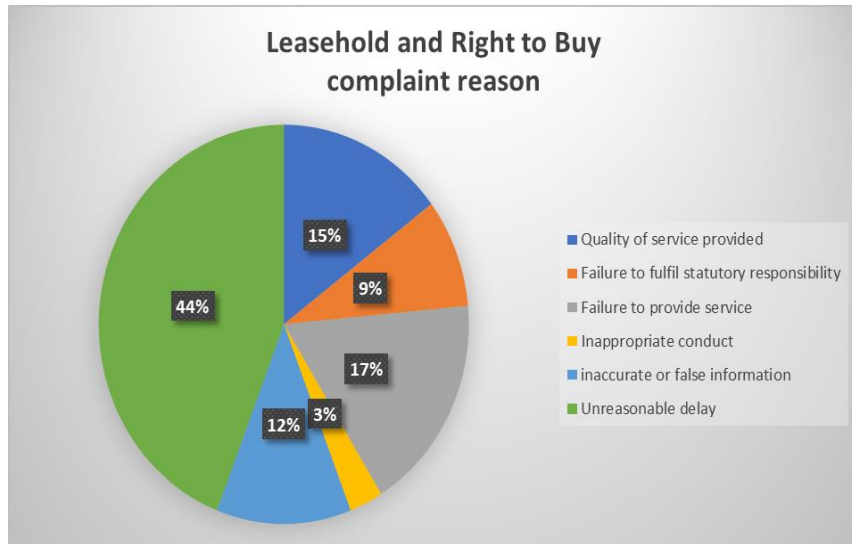
The main reasons for complaint relate to failure to provide a service and quality of service provided with these categories make up 72% of the complaints received.



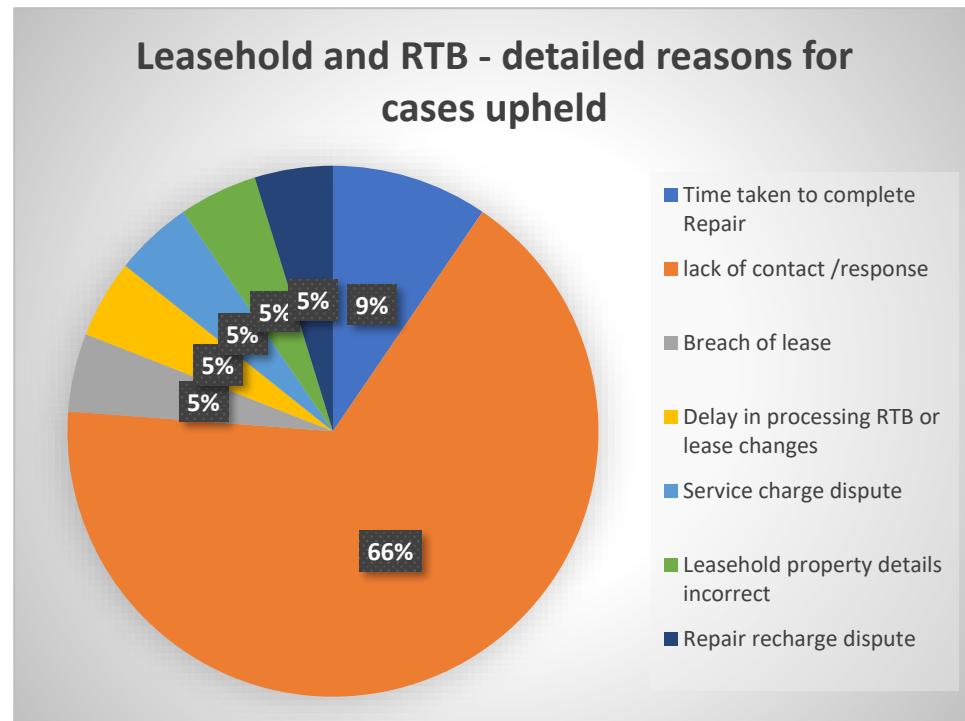
When looking at the reasons in more detail for the estate, tenancy and rent service Stage 1 cases either upheld or partially upheld the main reason related to communal cleaning standards (54%) and enforcement of a tenancy breach (15%) - condition of property or garden or alterations without landlord permission



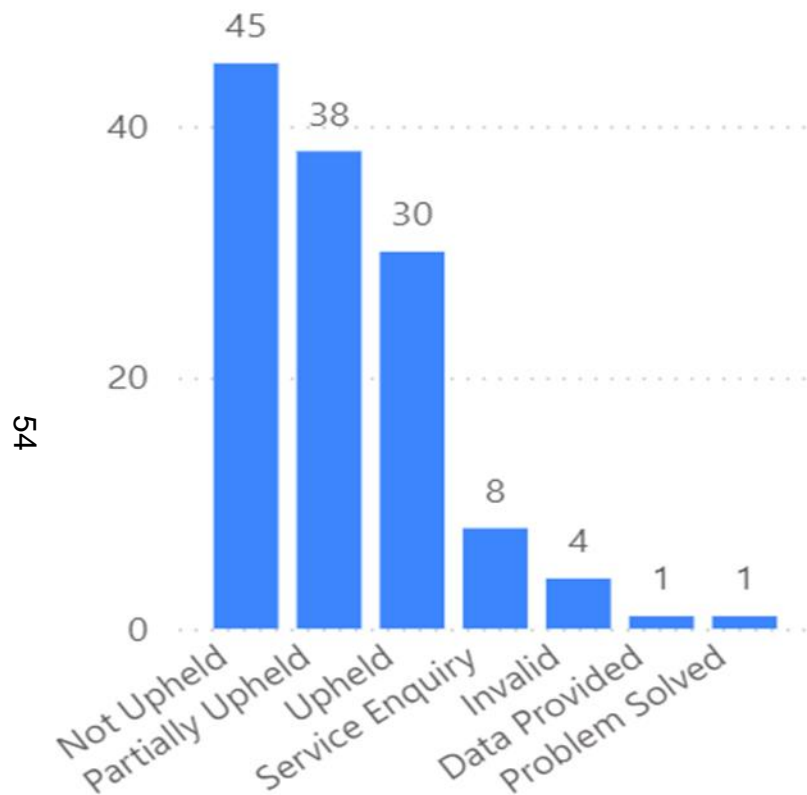
The main reasons for complaint relate to unreasonable delay in providing the service and quality of service provided with these categories making up 69% of the complaints received, although it is recognised that these relate to a much smaller number of complaints received (33 in total)



When looking at the reasons in more detail for the Leasehold and Right to Buy Service Stage 1 cases either upheld or partially upheld the main reason related to lack of contact/response (22 cases).



There was a total of 127 Stage 2 Complaints received between the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024. The graph below shows the number of Stage 2 complaints received but also the outcome of those complaints. A total of 45 Stage 2 complaints were 'Not Upheld', which equates to 35% of the total complaints received. In addition 68 were either upheld or partially upheld, which indicates that this is 54% of the total complaints handled. 14 cases did not progress to Stage 2 as they related to new service enquiry requests, were providing some requested information or the problem was resolved prior to request to escalate being received.



Stage 2 complaints – reasons for escalation

The table shows that 127 requests to escalated their case to Stage 2 were received. The main reasons for this request was that there had been no improvement in the issue raised or agreed actions within the Stage 1 response remained outstanding.

Stage 2 Complaint Escalation Reasons, by Service Area				
Escalation Reason	Council Property Service	Estate, Tenancy and Rents	Leasehold and Right to Buy	Total
Do not agree with Outcome	27	6	-	33
Information in stage 1 incorrect	11	1	1	13
No improvement	65	6	-	71
Response did not fully cover complaint	6	2	-	8
New Information provided	1	-	-	1
Requested further information	1	-	-	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>127</b>

## Housing Ombudsman investigations

The Housing Ombudsman looks at complaints about registered providers of social housing. The Housing Ombudsman is focused on helping to resolve individual complaints made by tenants, shared ownership and leaseholders about their landlord. The Housing Ombudsman can now look beyond individual disputes and consider the wider and potentially systemic issues responsible for generating complaints.

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The Regulator of Social Housing is focused on ensuring that the landlord meets the standards set for social housing providers.

The Council recorded 6 cases, whereby investigations were undertaken by the Housing Ombudsman during 2023/24. The table below outline the determination outcome of these investigations:

Determination Date	Determination Outcome
29 June 2023	Partial Maladministration
29 June 2023	No Maladministration
30 June 2023	Mediation
25 September 2023	Maladministration
21 December 2023	Partial Maladministration
13 March 2024	Outside Jurisdiction

Maladministration determinations were issued in 3 cases and summary and reasons are as follows:-

- Case 1

- Complaint related to a dispute over responsibility for repairs following water ingress at the residents leasehold property, which was managed by a third party . The determination was made for the element of the complaint regarding complaint handling and engagement with the complainant. The Council were ordered to pay £300 compensation and to complete a spotlight self-assessment on engagement with managing agents. This was completed and considered by the Place Scrutiny committee in February 2024. –
- Case 2
  - Complaint related to the landlords handling of response to residents reports of repairs to their property, including damp and mould. 2 determinations were made; maladministration for property condition and responsive to repair request and maladministration for complaint handling delay in escalating complaint. The Council were ordered to pay £1750 compensation and review its approach to managing damp and mould cases. Specialist disrepair team implemented subsequently
- Case 3
  - Complaint related to the landlords handling of response to residents reports of repairs to their property, including damp and mould, toilet and roof. The maladministration determination was made for the response to damp and mould in the property and record keeping. The council were ordered to pay £350 compensation and recommended a review of its record keeping processes.

In 2022/23 the council received 8 maladministration determinations demonstrating an improvement on the previous year.

### Tenant Satisfaction Measures – Perception survey outcome on complaint handling

The results of the tenancy perception survey carried out in February/March 2024 identified 169 respondents were very dissatisfied with the way the council handled their housing related complaint, 98 were fairly dissatisfied and 53 were neither satisfied or dissatisfied.

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<p><b>Satisfaction with the landlords approach to handling complaints</b>          Proportion of respondents who report making a complaint in the last 12 months who are satisfied with their landlords approach to complaint handling          Based on 376 responses</p>	<p><b>13%</b></p>
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### Tenant Satisfaction Measures – Management information on complaint handling

The management information submitted to the Regulator of Social Housing in June 2024 indicates that the council need to improve the response times for complaints to ensure that they are compliant with the Housing Ombudsman complaint handling timescales.

Measure	Basildon calculation	Outcome
<b>Complaints relative to the size of the landlord</b>  Number of: 1. stage one complaints and 2. stage two complaints received per 1,000 homes:	Stage 1 complaints received - 1181 Divided by 10,918 (number of dwelling units owned) Multiplied by 1000  Stage 2 complaints received – 127 Divided by 10,918 (number of dwelling units owned) Multiplied by 1000	Stage 1 complaints – 108.2 per 1000 properties  Stage 2 complaints – 11.6 per 1000 properties
<b>Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales</b>  Proportion of: 1. stage one complaints responded to <i>and</i> 2. stage two complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales.	Stage 1 complaints responded within target - 914 Divided by number of complaints received – 1181 Multiplied by 100  Stage 2 complaints responded within target – 73 Divided by number of stage 2 complaints received – 127 Multiplied by 100	Stage 1 complaints responded in target –  <b>77.4%</b>  Stage 2 complaints responded within target –  <b>57.4%</b>

## Learning and Improvements.

The Council recognise there is work to do to improve the way we handle residents complaints. We welcome the feedback residents have provided as this will be used to shape our improvement plans over the coming months.

Our priorities will be

- Communicate with tenants on the things that matter most to them and keep them informed
- Reduce the time taken to repond to complaints and service enquiries
- Reduce the time taken to complete a repair
- Improve contractor standard of work
- Make every contact count

The learning already in progress as a result of this feedback has been focussed on improving our response times, particularly on completing repairs. An improvement plan was implemented with Morgan Sindall, our repairs provider partner in June 2024 with the following progress been made:

- 19% reduction in the number of aged jobs being completed. has identified areas and opportunities from which learning can be taken from the complaints and the compliments process to improve future service delivery.
- 85% of outstanding jobs have appointments booked
- Allocation of resources to work in progress (WIP) team
- Staff training on work planning and call handling completed

- Weekly monitoring and reporting on performance
- Monthly performance reviews with sub-contractors

In addition to this we have introduced weekly monitoring of outstanding complaint responses at a Senior level within the council. This is resulting in quicker response times.

## ACTION PLAN

Priority	Action	Timeframe
Communicate and keep residents informed	Issue at least monthly communication campaigns focussed on tenant issues and feedback.	Commence in October 2024 – ongoing
	Maximise use of all communication platforms to keep residents informed of how to access housing services	Autumn 2024
	Campaign to encourage residents to provide updated contact details and preferred methods of communication	Autumn / Winter 2024 /2025
Reduce time taken to respond to complaints and service enquiries	Continue weekly monitoring of outstanding complaints	Ongoing
	Complete recruitment campaigns to ensure teams fully resourced to respond to service enquiry demands	October 2024
	Set and publish response standards	Autumn 2024
Reduce time taken to complete a repair	Further implementation of Repair Partner improvement plan to reduce outstanding jobs and sustain work in progress to acceptable levels	March 2025
	Assess the reasons for increased level of emergency repairs, impacting resources to attend to routine repairs and implements actions where necessary to reduce	March 2025
Improve Contractor Standard of work	Increase on site monitoring of block cleaning standards	September 2024
	Publish cleaning schedules in all flat blocks	September 2024
	Review processes to identify source of water ingress and follow up work to complete any remedial works as a result of damage caused by a leak.	Winter 2024/25
	Review processes and target timescales to manage tenancy breach reports	Winter 2024/25
Make every contact count	Mandatory complaint handling training for staff involved in taking, reviewing or responding to a complaint	October / November 2024
	Awareness campaign to empower all staff to detect and resolve potential complaints whilst visiting tenants in their homes	November 2024



	Staff training on interacting with residents with support needs such as, dementia, mental health and learning difficulties	Winter 2024/25
	Implement a Vulnerabilities strategy, to include the 3 R's, Recognise, Respond and appropriately record vulnerabilities	March 2025

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