

NOTTINGHAM CITY HOMES

ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT

NCH BOARD

3 JULY 2024

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT AND HEAD
OF NCH REGISTERED PROVIDER**

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides insight into the complaints received from tenants and licensees of the NCH Group.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Board **note and comment** on the report.

3 REPORT

3.1 It is important that tenants and licensees of NCH have easy access to making complaints or comments about the services they receive.

3.2 Nottingham City Council (NCC) provide the complaints handling service under the NCC/NCH Service Contract.

3.3 Board members are provided with the numbers of complaints received each quarter within the Performance report, but not details of the reasons for dissatisfaction or the learning that has been made from tenant and licensee feedback.

3.4 The NCC annual report of complaints received from NCH Group tenants and licensees is in Appendix 1.

3.5 Complaint numbers are low and most dissatisfaction is in relation to delays and the repairs service. This is in line with complaints from Council tenants about the service they receive.

3.6 NCH officers are reviewing the NCC responses to the Housing Quality Network Regulatory Compliance toolkit as described in the Regulatory Update report to follow. Action plans to address compliance issues will be completed and monitored.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications stemming from this report.

5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Regulator of Social Housing requires all providers to seek tenant's views and provide opportunities to complain about services they are dissatisfied with. The Group must ensure that any learning outcomes are implemented to mitigate against further involvement from the Regulator or the Ombudsman.

6 IMPLICATIONS FOR NOTTINGHAM CITY HOMES' OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 Effective monitoring of tenant satisfaction and learning from it is critical to ensure the delivery of homes and places where people want to live.

7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Has the equality impact of these proposals been assessed?

Yes (EIA attached)

No (this report does not contain proposals which require an EIA)

8 BACKGROUND MATERIAL AND PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Complaints Annual Report, 2023/24.

Contact officers

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Date

20 June 2024

Appendix 1

NOTTINGHAM CITY HOMES GROUP

COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

JACQUIE BEACROFT, CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND INSIGHT MANAGER

SUMMARY

This report is intended to provide insight into the issues affecting tenants in NCH Group properties and the handling of their complaints for the period April 2023 until March 2024.

The report provides an overall summary of complaint volumes, performance against targets for response, outcomes of complaints, root causes driving complaints and learning. These are set alongside previous years for comparison.

Statistically, due to the low numbers involved, it is not possible to derive a sound evidence base to depict any meaningful trends and insight from the data and volumes involved.

However, it's important to note that the report provides a positive review. Overall, this year has seen improvements when compared to previous in terms of a reduction in the number of customers feeling dissatisfied and making a formal complaint for investigation. This trend is more significant in consideration of the overall increase in complaint volumes in Council owned homes.

SECTION 1 – COMPLAINT VOLUMES

Table 1 below shows Stage 1 complaint volumes by property category over the last 3 years for all NCH Group Properties

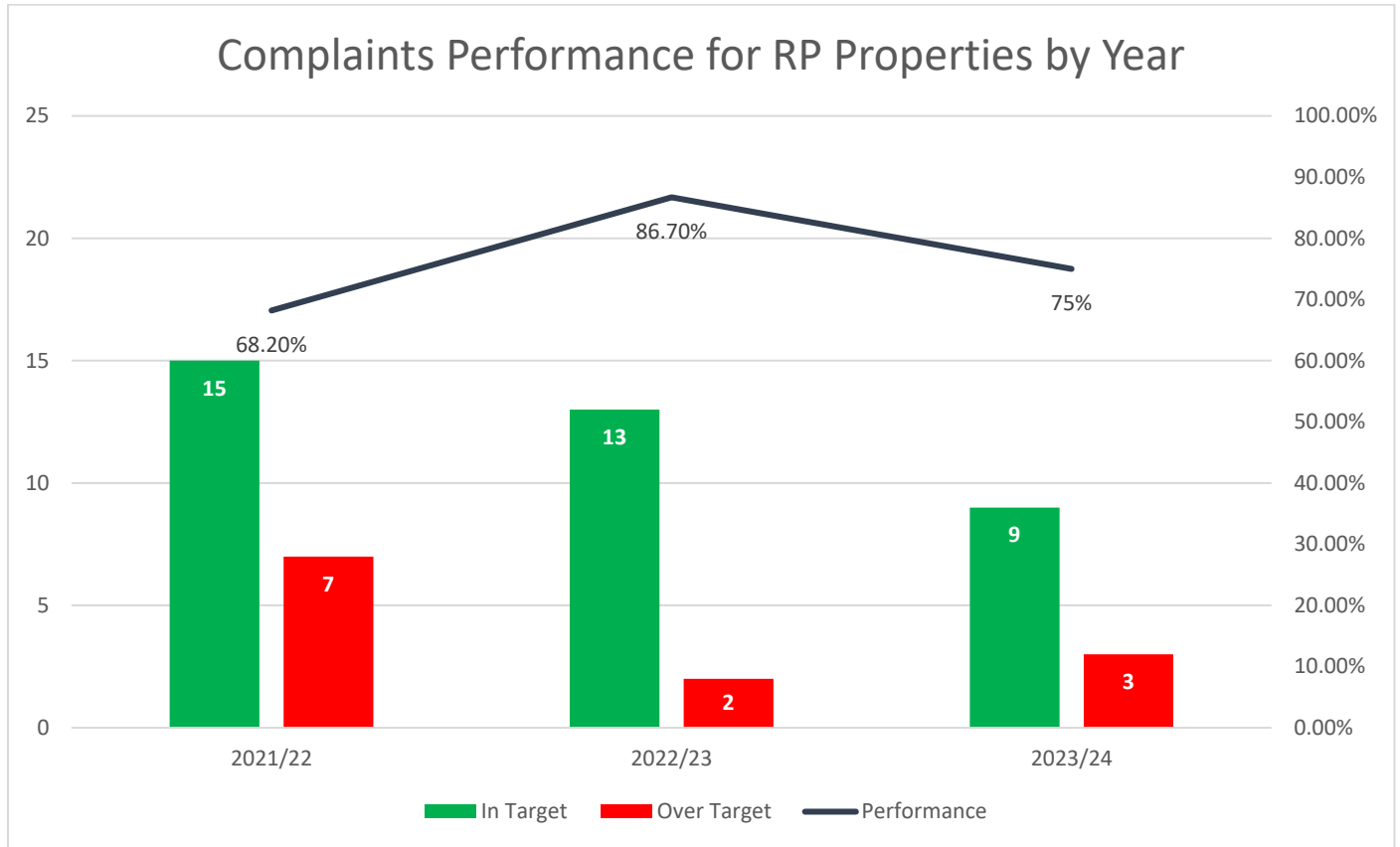
Table 1	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
NCH RP Social and Affordable Rent	0	3	1
NCH RP Temporary Accommodation	14	7	2
NCH Social Rent Homes	8	5	9
TOTAL	22	15	12

While overall volumes have dropped from 2022/23, the volume for Social Rent Homes has increased but not by a significant amount. Analysis of these complaints show that 8 of the 9 complaints for Social Rent Homes relate to repair issues and this increase is in line with the general levels of complaints across the wider business in relation to repair performance.

None of the above figures for this year's report suggest any major areas of concern, with volumes remaining low.

SECTION 2 - COMPLAINTS RESPONSE PERFORMANCE

Chart 1 below shows Stage 1 complaint volumes responded to, in and out of target, and overall performance for the previous 3 years for NCH Group properties. The blue Performance line indicates the percentage of complaints answered in target (10 working days) for each year.



While performance has dropped a little from 2022/23, it is important to note that the overall low volume means that 25% of complaints answered out of target equates to just 3 complaint responses. Analysis of these three indicate the matters were of a complex nature, necessitating additional time to ensure full resolution to a satisfactory level.

Performance management for all Complaint Handling to ensure compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code remains a key objective for the business. Continuous improvements are in place to attempt to push us towards 100% in the future.

SECTION 3 – COMPLAINT OUTCOMES

Table 2 below shows the justification of all complaints from NCC Properties for the past 3 years. 'Upheld' means fault is found on behalf of NCH. 'Partially Upheld' means matters that are not specific faults but could have been handled more effectively to achieve a better outcome. 'Not Upheld' means issues where no fault has been found on behalf of NCH.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Upheld	10 45%	7 47%	10 83.4%
Partially Upheld	9 41%	3 20%	2 16.6%
Not Upheld	3 14%	5 33%	0 0%

While the absence of any 'Not Upheld' complaints is a significant change compared to the wider business, it is important to note that from such a small pool of data it may not be accurate to draw any firm conclusions on trends. Although comparison to 2024/25 will indicate whether this is a trend, for now it is important to note that all complaints for RP properties within this reporting period were either partially or fully indicative of a fault on behalf of the business. The section below goes further into the causes.

SECTION 4 – COMPLAINT REASONS

Table 3 below shows the reason drawn by the investigating officer handling the complaint at the end of the complaint process. The main cause for the complaint being logged is listed in the table and shows the pattern the previous 3 years. Complaints are categorised into one of the 5 main headings, to give an overarching picture of the complaint causes, while the sub-categories are used to narrow down issues into actionable conclusions.

	Complaint Reason	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Delay	Caused by Customer	2	2	0
	Caused by Process	4	2	5
	Caused by Staff	6	3	0
	Caused by Sub-contractor	3	2	0
Staff	Accidental Damage	0	0	1
	Administrative Error	0	0	0
	Behaviour (Conduct)	2	1	0
	Communication	2	4	1
Service	Missed Appointment	1	0	0
	Recurring unresolved issue	0	2	1
	Work not completed	1	0	3
Quality	Quality of individual's work	1	0	0
	Dissatisfied with service standards	0	0	1
Policy	Dissatisfied with policy decision	0	0	0

Top Cause

Second Cause

With 14 possible complaint reasons against such a small volume of complaints (12), it is difficult to provide conclusive analysis of key causes. However, with 41.6% relating to delays, it is apparent this is a primary driver of dissatisfaction with NCH customers.

When considered alongside the secondary reason, 'Work not completed' as well as analysis of the business areas they relate to, it becomes apparent that the overall driving factor behind these complaints is with the repairs service being offered. With 11 out of 12 complaints relating to repair issues, it is clear that this is where NCC Housing Services had not met the desired standards. This outcome is in keeping with the complaints business-wide for 2023/24.

Work to improve the speed, efficiency and quality of our repairs service remains in progress and any improvements will apply to NCH properties equally, hopefully resulting in a reduction of complaints in the next reporting period.

SECTION 5 - ESCALATIONS

Stage 2 Complaints

If unhappy with the outcome of a Stage 1 Investigation, customers have the right to escalate to a Stage 2 Review, which is overseen by Directors. During 2023/24 no complaints for RP properties were escalated to Stage 2.

Housing Ombudsman

One NCH RP complaint was escalated to the Housing Ombudsman in relation to damp and mould in temporary accommodation. The ombudsman found NCH RP liable, as the landlord, but acknowledged it was a failure of the property owner (corporate leasing) to deal with the damp and mould in accordance with their policy. Beyond being liable by landlord status, the ombudsman did not find for the complainant on any other matter she raised. £500 compensation was awarded and this is being sought from the property owner.

SECTION 6 – LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENTS

Process improvements have been implemented this year to link learning outcomes from complaints and trends. These will contribute to better services, improving customer satisfaction levels and reduced instances of complaints. These improvements and learnings include:

- Integrated systems to record and retrieve information more effectively and provide contemporaneous details
- Dedicated Resolution Officer for complaints in Property Services
- Implementation of a weekly complaint clinic within Property Services to discuss and resolve complaints and identify key learnings or trends
- Directors taking the lead role in serious case reviews from Housing Ombudsman determinations. This has included reviews of policies and service delivery around areas including:
 - Tenant Vulnerability
 - Record keeping
 - Contactability
 - Service offer around communal areas
 - Void system planning
- Complaints now form part of monthly check-ins with colleagues
- Training around empathy, customer care and effective letter writing
- Training on Housing Ombudsman Spotlight reports and themes
- Complaint handling training through e learning

Jacquie Beacroft
Customer Experience and Insight Manager
Nottingham City Council Housing Services
12 June 2024