



Annual Complaints Handling Report

1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020

Prepared by the Human Resources and Corporate Services Department

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Section 1 Executive summary

This is the fifth Annual Complaint Handling Report for Argyll Community Housing Association Ltd (ACHA), covering 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

We have been providing quarterly updates to our Board of Management since our Complaints Handling Procedure was implemented, in October 2012. Our procedure is based on the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) Model which was required to be adopted by all Registered Social Landlords in Scotland.

We report on our annual complaints performance to advise staff, Board of Management members, tenants, other customers and the public, on our performance. It also allows us to facilitate benchmarking and improvement for ourselves, and across the sector.

Effective `Complaints Handling` is a key element of the Scottish Social Housing Charter, with Outcome 2 (Communications) having a direct relationship with complaints handling.

1.2 Key achievements

We attend the Scottish Complaint Handlers Network, which is attended by representatives from across the sector and allows members to promote and share best practice.

We issue complaint satisfaction surveys, following the conclusion of all complaints, to assess the performance of our complaints process. We have identified that complainants are more likely to be dissatisfied if the outcome is not as expected. Our Senior Management will be reviewing our complaint handling satisfaction survey form, in the near future.

1.3 Performance

Scotland`s Housing Network has provided an annual Performance Analysis update to our Board members over the last few years and was run virtually on 20th October 2020.

Scotland`s Housing Network have advised further ongoing work to standardise the way complaints are recorded across the sector.

1.4 Continuous improvement

We continue to make improvements on; tracking and monitoring feedback in terms of suggestions and satisfaction with complaints, tracking and demonstrating learning outcomes from complaints, and tracking and communicating suggestions and compliments. Long term we plan to move our complaint recording on to our new Housing Management System.

Section 2 Introduction

2.1 How to make a complaint

If anyone is unhappy with the service they have received, they can make a complaint by using the Complaints Handling Procedure. Copies can be obtained at any ACHA office or by contacting us. The procedure and associated information is also available on our website www.acha.co.uk home page by clicking on the button "I want to make a Complaint".

Complaints can also be made in writing, in person, by telephone, by email or online, or by having someone complain on behalf of a customer.

2.2 Training / learning and development

All new staff members receive Corporate Induction training, and a mandatory training session on complaint handling.

Refresher training is provided to every staff member on at least a two yearly basis, or sooner where required.

A number of staff have undergone additional training to allow them to become “Customer Experience Ambassadors”. These staff are able to offer guidance to any staff member dealing with formal complaints, and general customer care issues, in order to provide great service.

2.3 Complaints governance

The Association’s Senior Management Team hold a monthly review meeting to review performance at both corporate and departmental level.

They review the effectiveness of responses and the process, as well as monitoring progress and response times.

Further tracking and monitoring arrangements were introduced to assist management in further reviewing solutions that have been put in place, and ensuring key learning actions are communicated to staff and implemented effectively.

Section 3 Complaints analysis – 2019/20 overview

3.1 Comparison of complaints received

| Comparison of complaints received | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | Trend |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| Stage 1 complaints | 104 | 98 | 75 | 37 | 80 | Higher |
| Stage 2 complaints | 70 | 48 | 39 | 27 | 52 | Higher |
| Stage 3 complaints | 4 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 3 | Lower |
| Total | 178 | 153 | 118 | 65 | 135 | Higher |

| Complaints received in 2019/20 | 1 st Quarter | 2 nd Quarter | 3 rd Quarter | 4 th Quarter | Total |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------|
| Stage 1 | 24 | 18 | 13 | 25 | 80 |
| Stage 2 | 15 | 12 | 13 | 12 | 52 |
| Total | 39 | 30 | 26 | 37 | 132 |

3.1.1 Of the 52 Stage 2 complaints received in 2019/20, 22 were customer requests to escalate their complaint due to dissatisfaction with their complaint at Stage 1. The

other 30 complaints were directly escalated to Stage 2 as a result of the requirement for further investigation, due to the complexity or serious nature of the complaint.

3.1.2 During 2019/20 we dealt with 1 equality related complaint.

3.1.3 Every complaint closed at Stage 2 of the complaint handling procedure, is signposted to the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO), if a person wishes to have their complaint independently reviewed.

3.2 Historical Information

With exception of 2016/17, complaints to the Ombudsman have reduced year on year.

3.2.1 **In 2015/16**, in 2 of the 4 complaints sent to the Ombudsman, the Ombudsman advised they were unable to assist further. Both related to disputes over grounds maintenance/grass cutting charges.

The other 2 were both upheld and recommendations were made and put in place as follows;

3.2.1.1 Dampness – rent charges removed, independent dampness survey commissioned, further rent reduction applied until repairs completed.

3.2.1.2 Tenancy termination issues – cancel charges for rechargeable repairs to a previous property, feedback to staff regarding the importance of checking evidence available before responding to complaints, remind staff of the pre-termination procedure and the importance of thorough record keeping, cancel two weeks rent following the termination of a tenancy, apologise for the failings identified in Ombudsman's letter, reflect on how to inform tenants of possible recharges and further rent charges after termination.

3.2.2 **In 2016/17**, in 2 of the 7 complaints sent to the Ombudsman, the Ombudsman advised they were unable to assist further. Both related to disputes over repairs charges.

The other 5 were all investigated. Of these, 4 were not upheld, with 3 relating to anti-social behaviour issues and 1 relating to repairs charges.

1 complaint was upheld and recommendations were made and put in place as follows;

3.2.2.1 Repairs deadlines – ensure that we adhere to the deadlines for repairs as laid out in the organisation's repairs and maintenance policy. Review of current repairs work to ensure works are completed within appropriate timescales.

3.2.3 **In 2017/18**, in 3 of the 4 complaints sent to the Ombudsman, the Ombudsman advised they were unable to assist further. The other 1 was investigated and not upheld.

3.2.4 **In 2018/19**, 1 complaint was sent to the Ombudsman, the Ombudsman advised they would not be investigating the complaint.

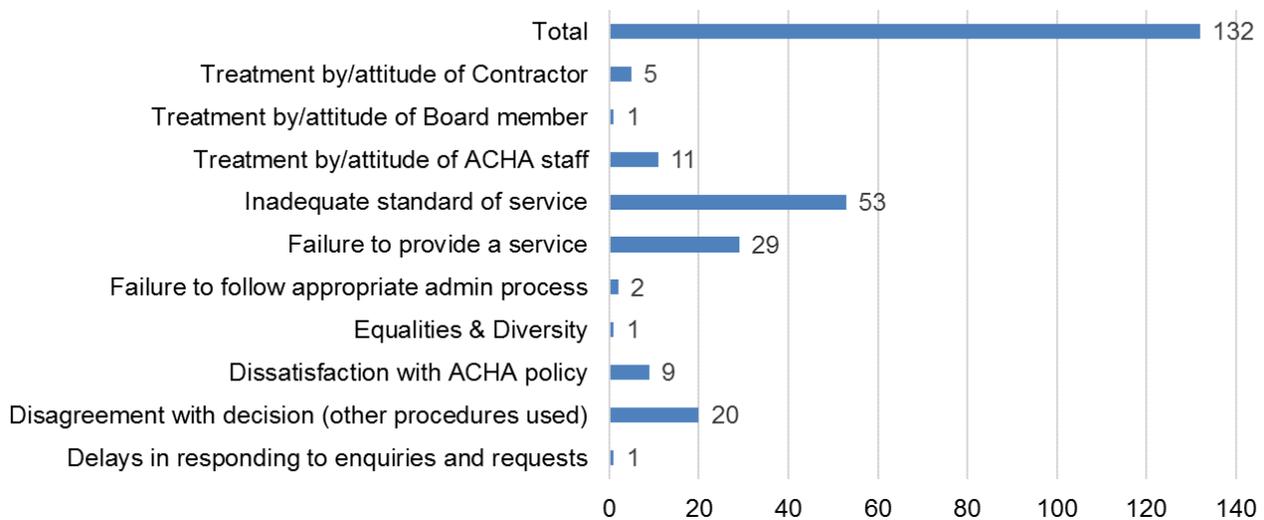
3.2.5 **In 2019/20**, 3 complaints were sent to the Ombudsman, in all 3 the Ombudsman advised they would not be taking the complaints further. However, the Ombudsman

felt that the Association handled one complaint poorly and advised that an apology should be issued.

Section 4 Complaints received by category

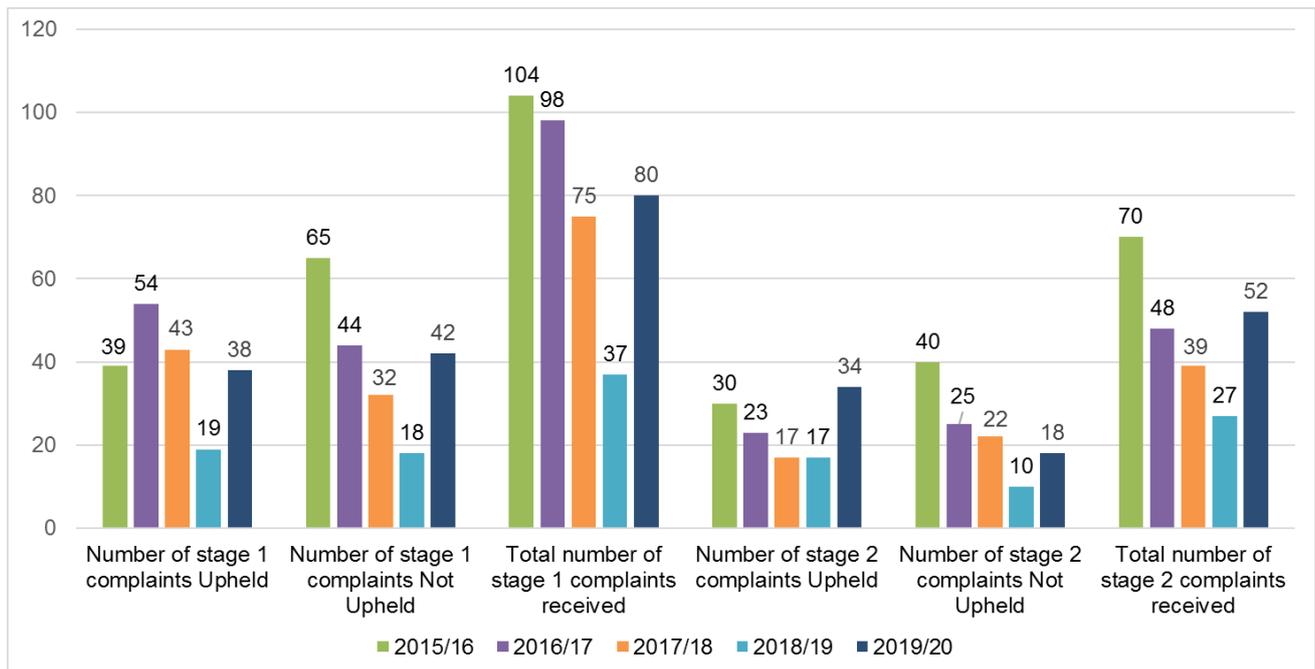
4.1 The Complaint Handling Network that we attend are carrying out further ongoing works to standardise the categories used by different organisations across the country, to better benchmark and analyse performance.

Complaints received by Category



| Complaint received by category | Bute & Cowal | Helensburgh & Lomond | Mid Argyll & Kintyre | Oban Lorn & Isles | All areas |
|--|--------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------|
| Delays in responding to enquiries and requests | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Disagreement with decision (other procedures used) | 5 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 20 |
| Dissatisfaction with ACHA policy | 3 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 9 |
| Equalities & Diversity | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Failure to follow appropriate admin process | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Failure to provide a service | 3 | 2 | 15 | 9 | 29 |
| Inadequate standard of service | 16 | 10 | 21 | 6 | 53 |
| Treatment by/attitude of ACHA staff | 1 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 11 |
| Treatment by/attitude of Board member | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Treatment by/attitude of Contractor | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 5 |
| Total | 30 | 25 | 54 | 23 | 132 |

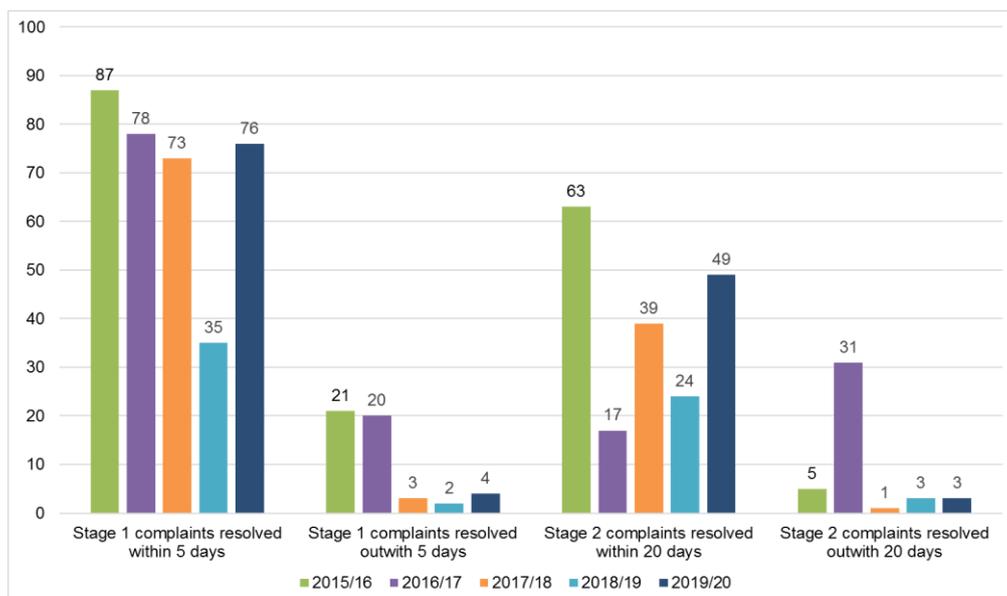
Section 5 Complaints by outcome



5.1 Where complaints were upheld or partially upheld this means that the service we provided did not reach the standard a reasonable person could expect in these cases.

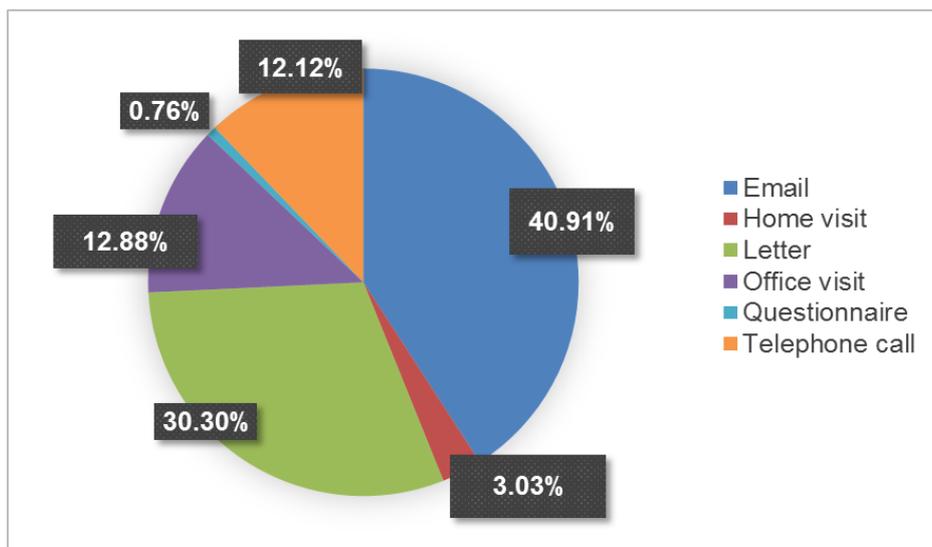
5.2 Where complaints were not upheld, this means that in these cases, the service provided was of a standard that a reasonable person could expect, and we do not believe there were grounds for the complaint.

Section 6 Complaint resolution timescales



- 6.1 In 2019/20 - Stage 1 complaints, where an extension to the 5 working day timeline has been authorised as a % of all stage 1 complaints responded to in full was 0%.
- 6.2 In 2019/20 - Stage 2 complaints, where an extension to the 20 working day timeline has been authorised as a % of all stage 2 complaints responded to in full was 0%
- 6.3 Staff are reminded that if there is a requirement to extend a complaint beyond the target timeline, approval must be sought in advance.

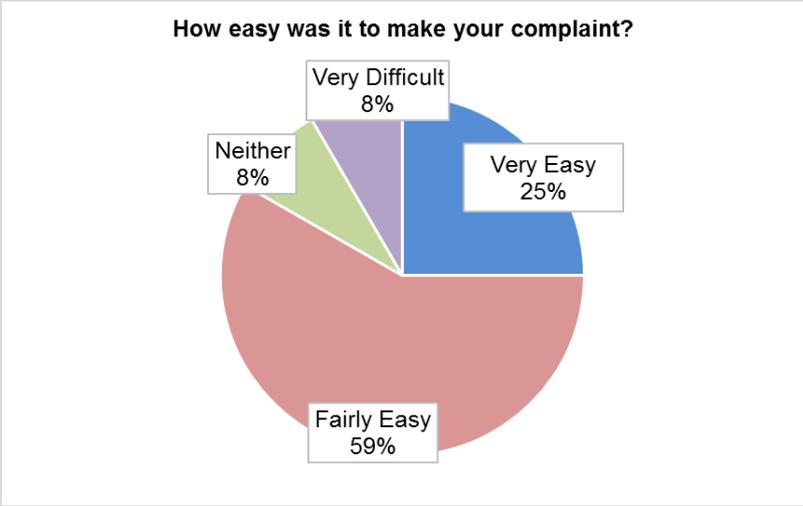
Section 7 Complaints by source



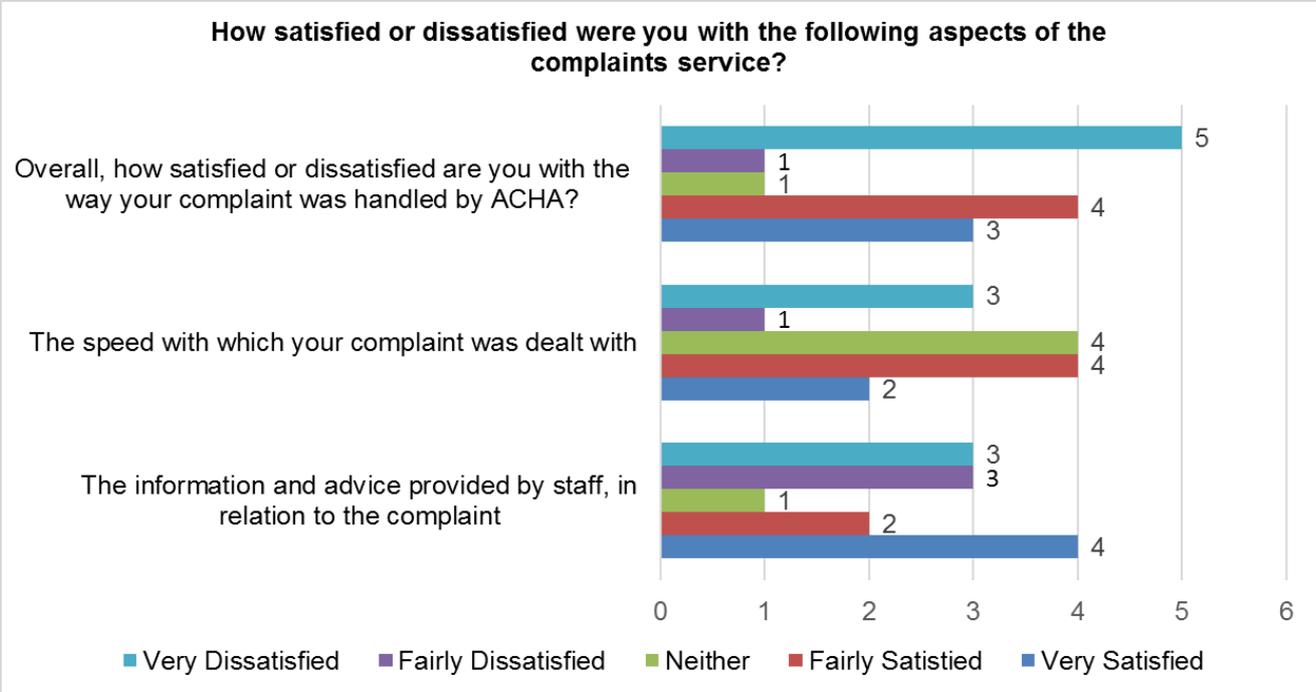
- 7.1 The most common way complaints were received during 2019/20 was via email.

Section 8 Customer satisfaction with complaint handling

- 8.1 Since July 2016 we have been issuing Customer Complaint Satisfaction Surveys to anyone who had been through the complaint process, enclosing a prepaid envelope for their convenience.
- 8.2 Any returns we receive are acknowledged with the comments or suggestions submitted being considered by our Senior Management team, at their monthly complaints review meetings.
- 8.3 During 2019/20, 104 Customer Complaint Satisfaction Surveys were issued, with 14 being returned. This represents a return rate of 13.7% for the year.

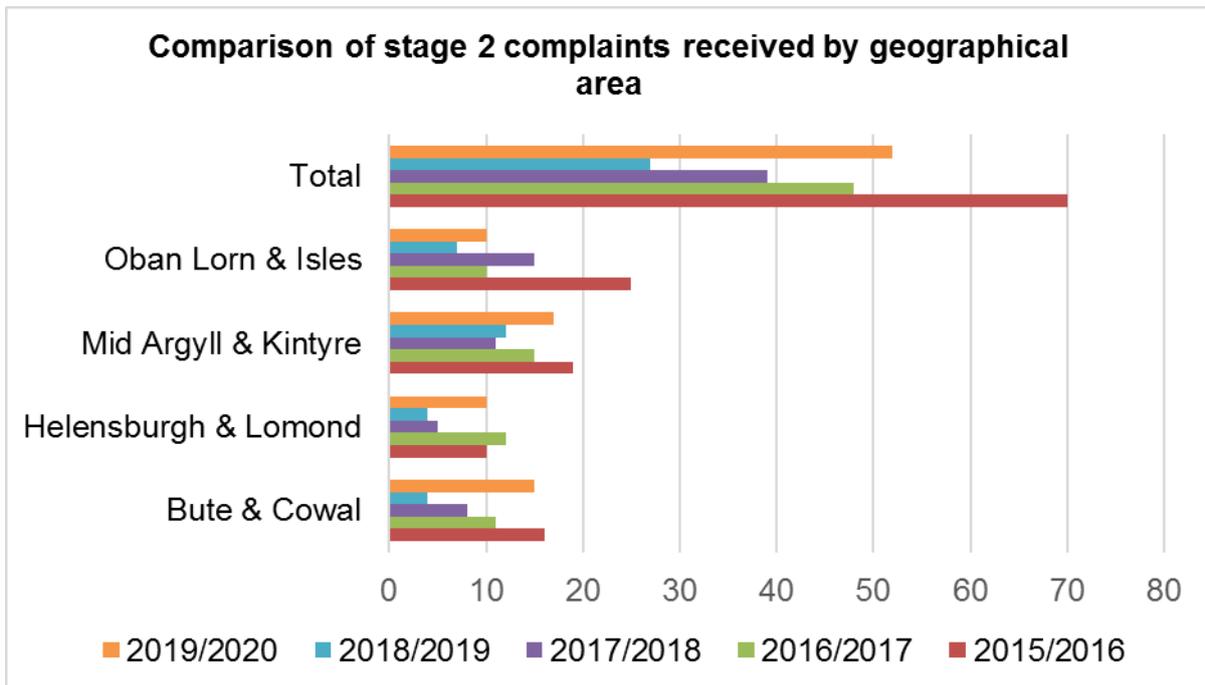
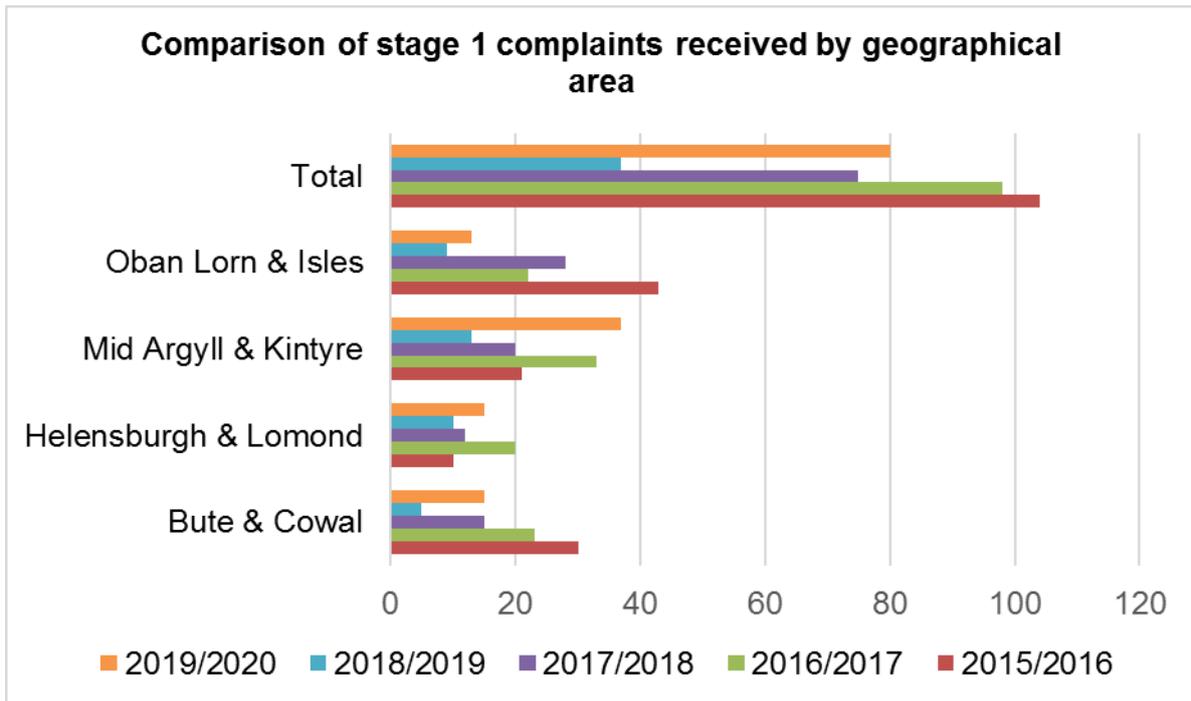


In 2019/2020, 2 respondents chose not to respond to this question.



One respondent chose not to respond to the question about the information and advice provided by staff, in relation to their complaint.

Section 9 Complaints by geographical area



We received the greatest number of stage 2 complaints from the Mid Argyll & Kintyre area and the smallest number from customers residing within the Helensburgh & Lomond area, and Oban, Lorn and the isles.

Section 10 Compensation and goodwill payments

During 2019/20, we paid out approximately £5466 in compensation awards. We continue to log the reasons for the compensation awards.

Section 11 Learning from complaints

The internal database used to log and monitor complaints was updated in February 2015 to capture learning from complaints. We have been working together with our colleague's in other housing associations to determine and develop the best way to record and report upon the lessons learned from complaints as this process is still relatively new.

For the reporting year 2019/20, we recorded 64 lessons learnt, mainly from complaints that are upheld as they typically identify a potential need for improvement in our service.

Some examples of lessons learned for the 2019/20 reporting year are as follows:

- Better communications with contractors, customers, private owners, internally within our own organisation and with external bodies;
- Repairs - ensure repairs are completed timeously and to the standard required - outstanding/ongoing issues to be monitored, detailed information on serious issues to be recorded, appropriate signage to be used to make public aware of potential hazard;
- Issue has prompted a new procedure/change to existing procedure;
- Policies and procedures are to be followed timeously, with consistency, and reviewed regularly;
- Recharge details to be accurate, meaningful and include supporting documentation if required;
- Staff to be more familiar with relevant admin processes;
- Staff to be aware how a situation can escalate;
- Staff to be more proactive when dealing with complaints and recurring repairs - continually improving our service and ensuring to always provide good customer service.

Section 12 Compliments recording

For 2019/20, we recorded 62 compliments:

- 12 related to Welfare Rights;
- 11 related to housing matters;
- 9 related to customer service;
- 8 related to the Grounds Maintenance team;
- 8 related to investment works carried out;
- 5 related to assistance sorting out arrears;
- 4 related to how repairs were carried out;
- 4 related to Estate Management;

- 1 related to a donation made to a local foodbank.

Section 13 Benchmarking and self-assessment indicators

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, in conjunction with the Chartered Institute of Housing, HouseMark, and Scotland’s Housing Network developed a range of high level indicators for monitoring complaints. These indicators provide the basis for carrying out self-assessment and benchmarking activities with other social landlords.

We have agreed with SHN to benchmark against a bespoke peer group for ourselves. The housing organisations we benchmark against are:

- Albyn Housing Association
- Berwickshire Housing Association
- Dumfries & Galloway Housing Partnership
- Dunbritten Housing Association
- Fyne Homes
- Hebridean Housing Partnership
- Lochaber Housing Association
- Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association
- River Clyde Homes
- Scottish Borders Housing Association
- West Highland Housing Association

| |
|---|
| A number of the SPSO benchmarking and self-assessment indicators are ones that are reported annually as part of the Scottish Social Housing Charter Indicator Description |
| Total number of complaints received from social rented stock per thousand units |
| Number and % of complaints responded to in full at Stage 1 and Stage 2 that relate to equalities issues |
| Average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage |
| Measure of customer satisfaction with the complaints service |
| Measures on reporting and learning from complaints |

Section 14 Unacceptable actions

Argyll Community Housing Association Ltd has an Unacceptable Actions by Complainants Policy.

This Policy sets out our approach to the relatively few complainants whose actions or behaviour we consider unacceptable. The term complainant includes anyone acting on behalf of a complainant or who contacts us in connection with a complaint.

This year restriction of contact under the terms of the policy was not placed on any complainants.

Section 15 Final overview / going forwards

This report has provided a detailed review of how well we have performed during the 2019/20 reporting year.

We are still looking at how we can improve negative responses to the complaint satisfaction survey results. The survey form was modified in an attempt to avoid focussing on the outcome of the complaint, but to gain feedback on the way the complaint was handled.

During 2019/20, the volume of compliments has increased to 62. This may be down to better logging, or that we are receiving more compliments.

A number of staff were trained as Customer Experience Ambassadors. The workshop was primarily for frontline and support staff, whose actions can have a huge impact on an organisation's reputation and customer satisfaction.

We encourage members of the public as well as employees to nominate staff for Employee of the Season awards. The objective of the "Employee of the Season" scheme is to give recognition and reward to employees who have performed particularly well each quarter.

The scheme is an essential part of the reward strategy of the organisation. It aims to motivate employees to achieve high standards, encourage innovation, promote high levels of customer service and celebrate success.



Argyll Community Housing Association Limited.
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