



# **Annual Complaints Handling Report**

## **1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023**

Prepared by the Human Resources and Corporate Services Department

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## **Section 1 Executive summary**

This is the 8th Annual Complaint Handling Report for Argyll Community Housing Association Ltd (ACHA), covering 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

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 12<sup>th</sup> October 2022. 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. We are moving our current database across to Open Housing Contact Management with a proposed `Go Live` date of January 2024.

## **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](http://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 staff receive corporate induction information, but the formal induction and complaint handling training is currently being reviewed, considering virtual, face to face and hybrid options.

## 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.

In 2023/24 our newly formed Leadership Management Team will take over from the Senior Management Team to review and monitoring our complaint handling process.

## Section 3 Compliments recording

For 2022/23, we recorded 65 compliments, relating to the following: -

- 15 related to how repairs were carried out;
- 4 related to Welfare Rights, or arrears advice.
- 17 related to help with housing queries and advice;
- 8 related to improvement works i.e. a new kitchen, heating or bathroom;
- 10 related to grounds or tree Maintenance and winter works;
- 4 related to Aids and Adaptations;
- 1 related to chimney sweeping and gutter cleaning;
- 4 related to estate management;
- 1 related to a gas and electrical safety check;
- 1 related to recharges and finance help.

## Section 4 Complaints analysis – 2022/23 overview

### 4.1 Comparison of complaints received

Comparison of complaints received	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Trend
Stage 1 complaints	37	80	47	35	69	Higher
Stage 2 complaints	27	52	35	31	39	Higher
SPSO investigations	1	3	2	1	3	Higher
Total complaints	65	135	84	67	108	Higher

Complaints received in 2022/23	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	Total
Stage 1	18	16	19	16	69
Stage 2	12	5	7	15	39
Total	30	21	26	31	108

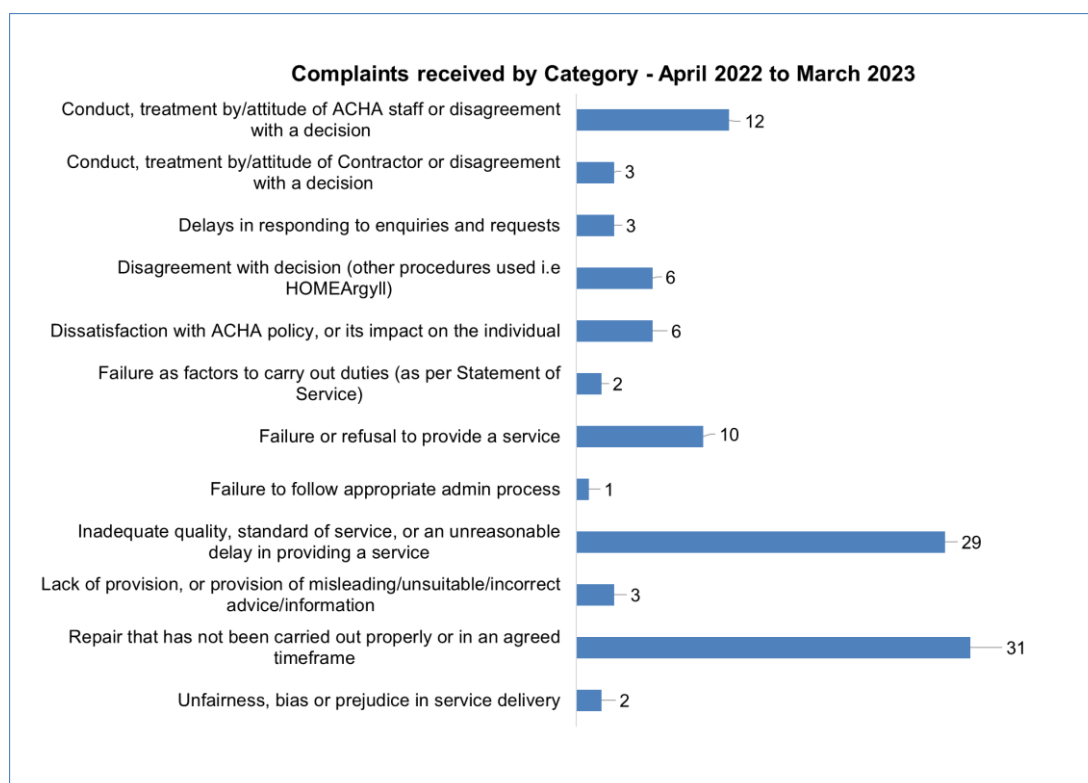
- 4.1.1 Of the 39 Stage 2 complaints received in 2022/23, 5 were customer requests to escalate their complaint due to dissatisfaction with how their complaint was dealt with at Stage 1. The other 34 complaints were directly escalated to Stage 2 as a result of the requirement for further investigation, due to the complexity or serious nature of the complaint.
- 4.1.2 During 2022/23 we dealt with 2 complaints which were recorded under our 'Unfairness, bias or prejudice in service delivery' category –
- 1 was related to recharges, and was Not Upheld. This complaint progressed to the Ombudsman, who did not follow it up;
  - The 2<sup>nd</sup> complaint related to an allocation of a property and was Not Upheld.
- 4.1.3 Every complaint closed at Stage 2 of the complaint handling procedure, is signposted to the Ombudsman if a person wishes to have their complaint independently reviewed.

## 4.2 Historical Information

The trend over the last 5 years is that complaints to the Ombudsman are generally reducing.

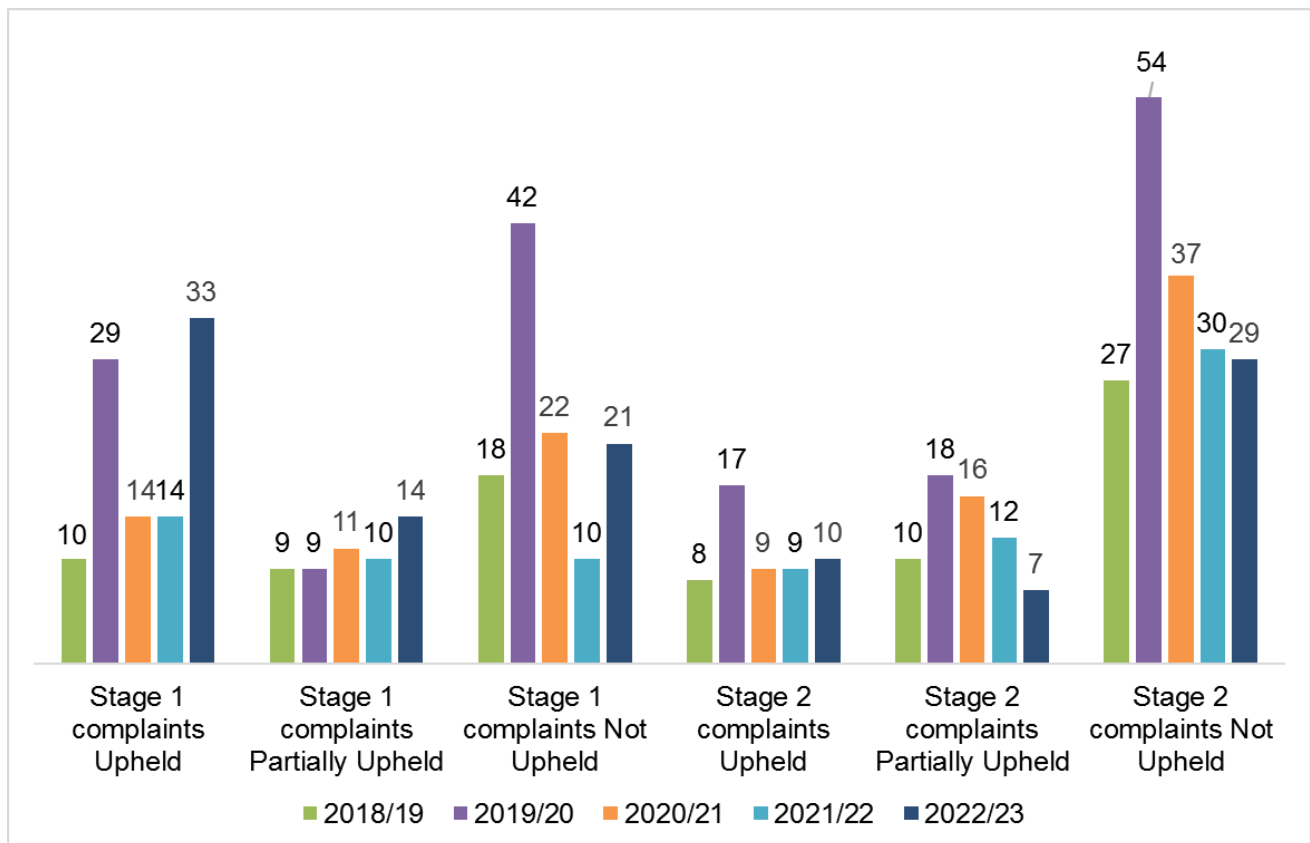
- 4.2.1 **In 2018/19**, 1 complaint was sent to the Ombudsman, the Ombudsman advised they would not be investigating the complaint.
- 4.2.2 **In 2019/20**, 3 complaints were sent to the Ombudsman, in all 3 the Ombudsman advised they would not be taking the complaints further. However, the Ombudsman felt that the Association handled one complaint poorly and advised that an apology should be issued.
- 4.2.3 **In 2020/21**, 2 complaints were sent to the Ombudsman, one of which the Ombudsman advised would not be taken forward. The second complaint was Not Upheld by the Ombudsman.
- 4.2.4 **In 2021/22**, 1 complaint was sent to the Ombudsman, which the Ombudsman advised would not be taken forward.
- 4.2.5 **In 2022/23**, 4 complaints were sent to the Ombudsman, who advised they would not be taking 3 of the 4 forward. The remaining complaint had originally been investigation in 2021/22 and was Not Upheld. In 2022/23 the complainant provided further information and requested that the Ombudsman re-investigate – following the re-investigation there was no change to the outcome.

## Section 5 Complaints received by category



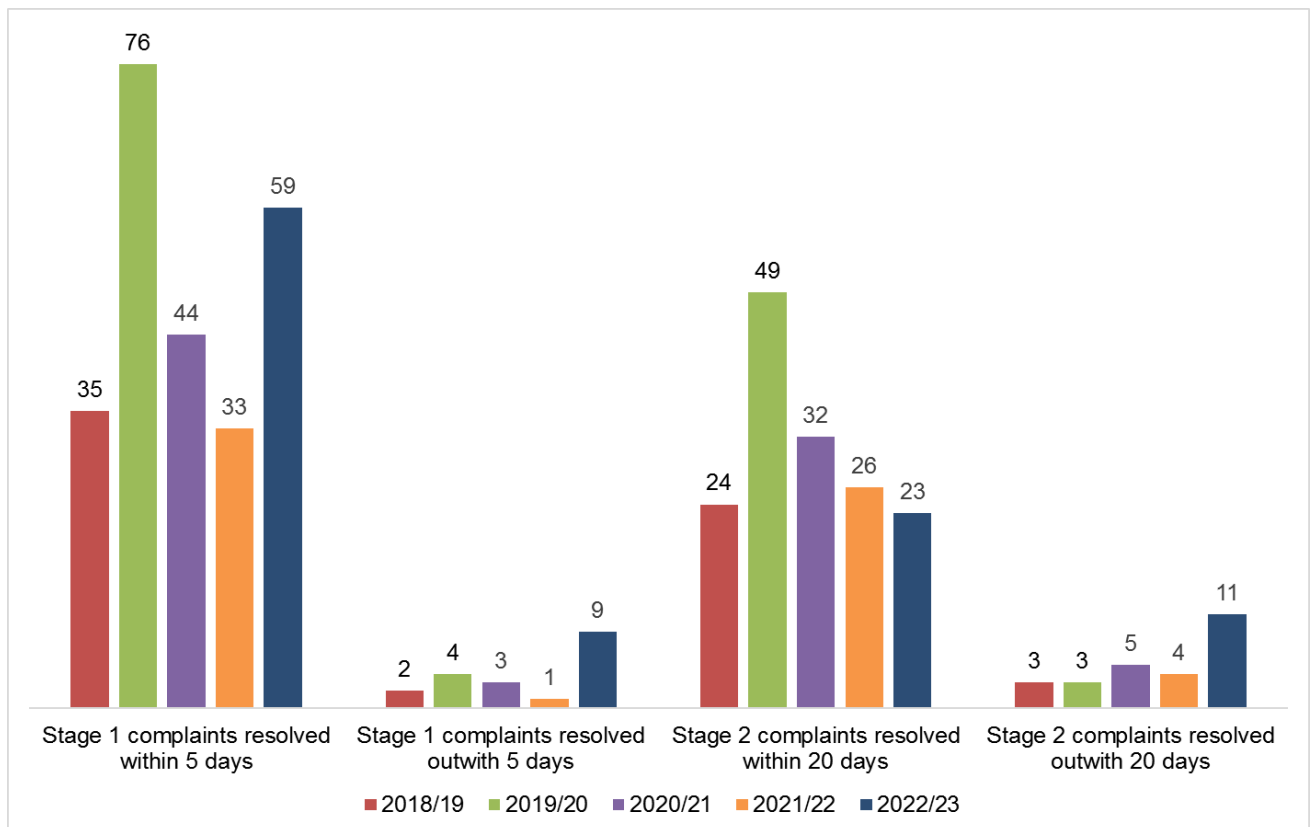
Complaint received by category	Bute & Cowal	Helensburgh & Lomond	Mid Argyll & Kintyre	Oban Lorn & Isles	All areas
Conduct, treatment by/attitude of ACHA staff or disagreement with a decision	5	3	2	2	12
Conduct, treatment by/attitude of Board member or disagreement with a decision	0	0	0	0	0
Conduct, treatment by/attitude of Contractor or disagreement with a decision	2	0	1	0	3
Delays in responding to enquiries and requests	1	1	0	1	3
Disagreement with decision (other procedures used i.e HomeArgyll)	1	1	2	2	6
Dissatisfaction with ACHA policy, or its impact on the individual	3	0	1	2	6
Failure as factors to carry out duties (as per Statement of Service)	0	2	0	0	2
Failure as factors to comply with Property Factoring Code of Conduct	0	0	0	0	0
Failure or refusal to provide a service	5	2	2	1	10
Failure to follow appropriate admin process	0	0	0	1	1
Failure to properly apply law, procedure, or guidance when delivering services	0	0	0	0	0
Inadequate quality, standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service	7	4	11	7	29
Lack of provision, or provision of misleading/unsuitable/incorrect advice/information	0	0	2	1	3
Repair that has not been carried out properly or in an agreed timeframe	11	5	3	12	31
Unfairness, bias or prejudice in service delivery	0	1	1	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>108</b>

## Section 6 Complaints by outcome



- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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.

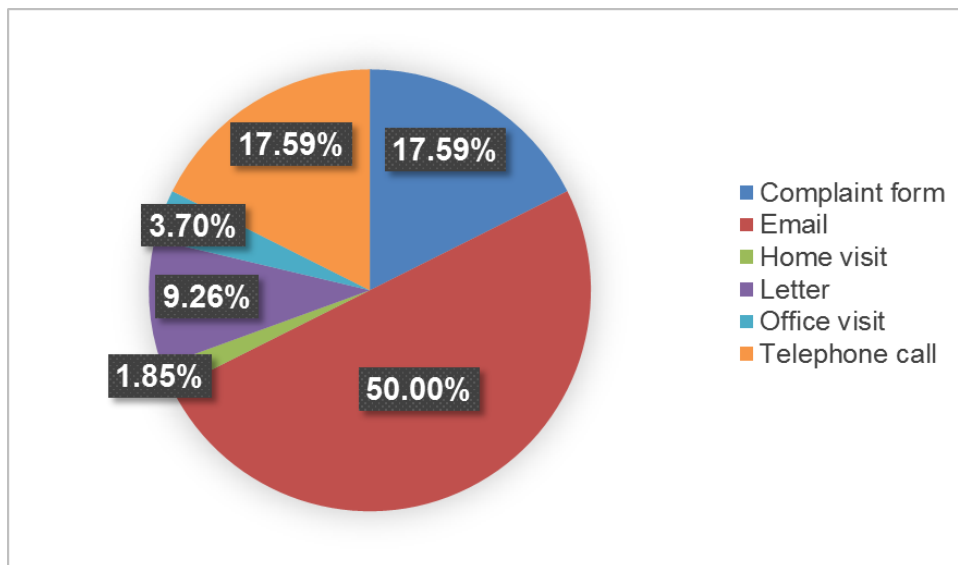
## Section 7 Complaint resolution timescales



- 7.1 In 2022/23 - 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 12%.
- 7.2 In 2022/23 - 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 54%.
- 7.3 Staff are reminded that if there is a requirement to extend a complaint beyond the target timeline, approval must be sought in advance.



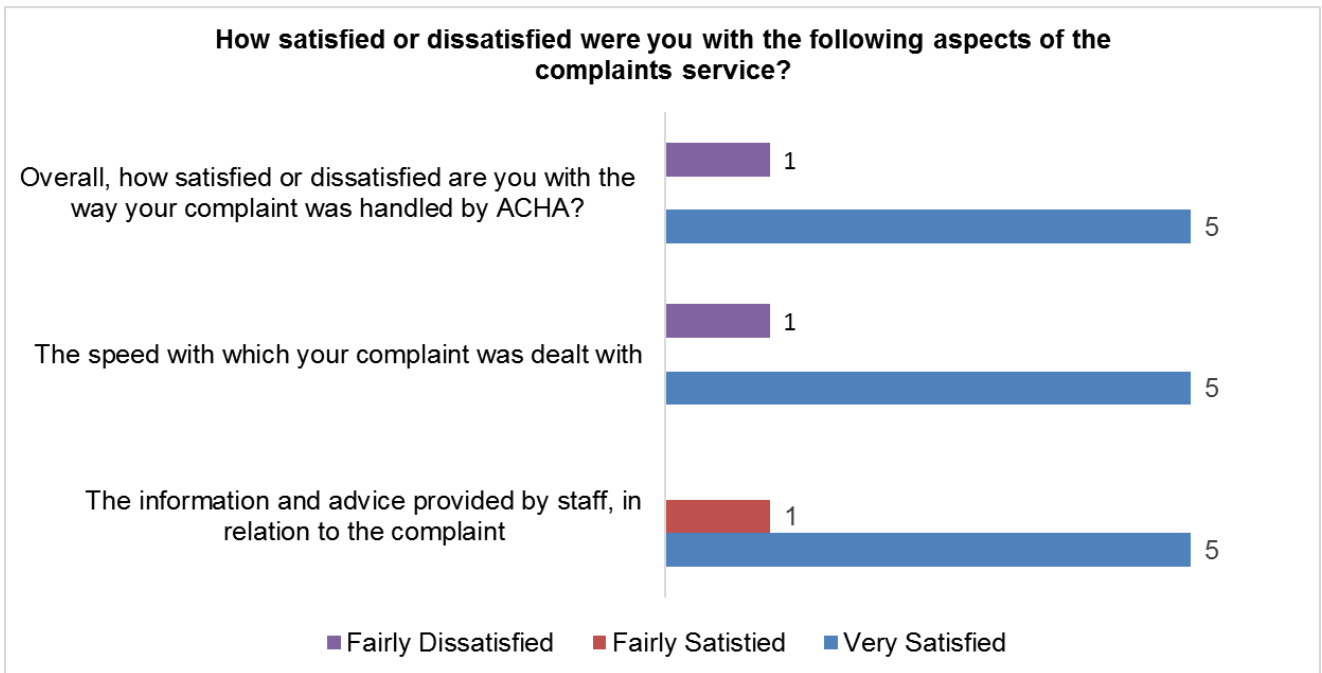
## Section 8 Complaints by source



- 8.1 The most common way complaints were received during 2022/23 was via email. Face to face interaction was the least preferred method of communication

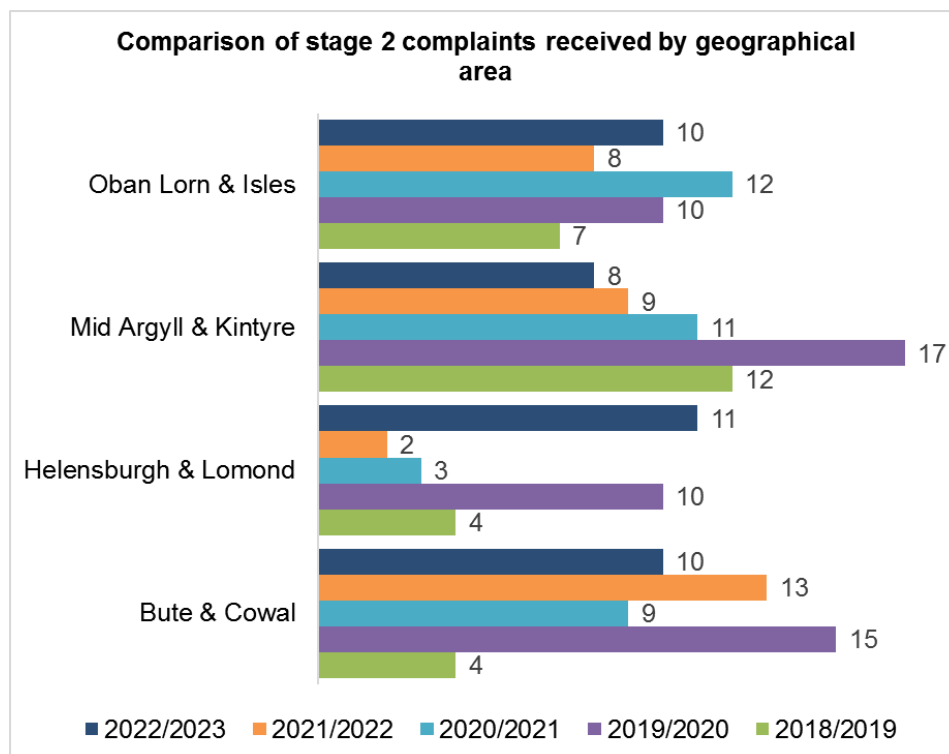
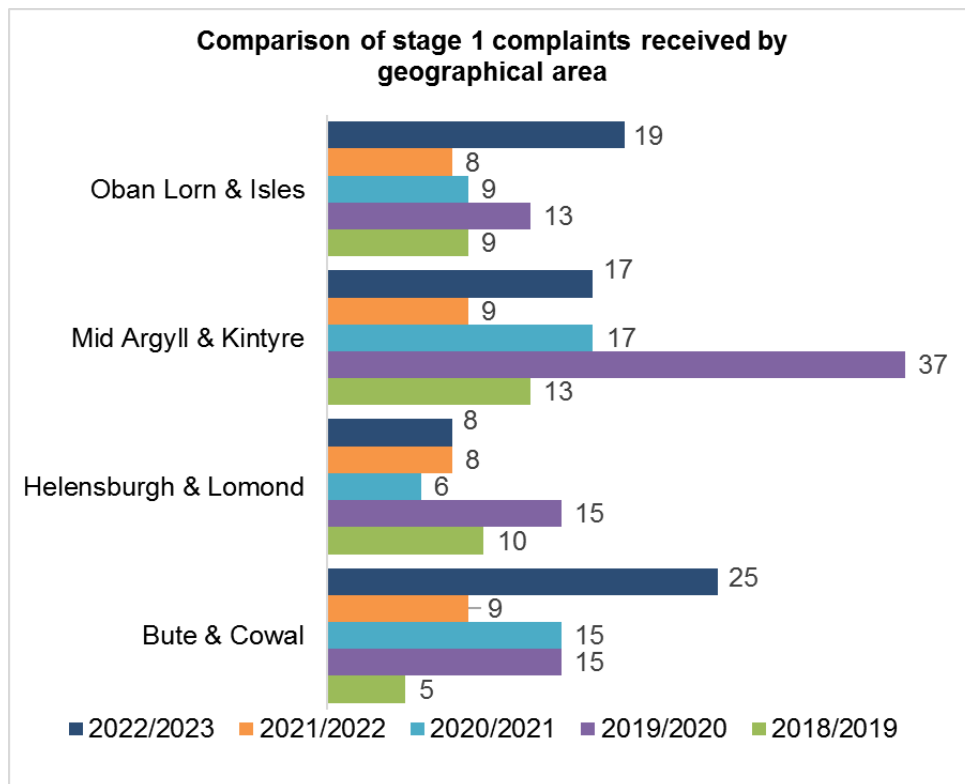
## Section 9 Customer satisfaction with complaint handling

- 9.1 We have been issuing Customer Complaint Satisfaction Surveys to anyone who had been through the complaint process via email with a link to survey monkey, since 2020; where required postal surveys are issued with a prepaid envelope included for convenience.
- 9.2 Any comments or suggestions we received were regularly considered by our Senior Management team – this has now been devolved to our Leadership Management team.
- 9.3 During 2022/23, 84 Customer Complaint Satisfaction Surveys were issued, with 6 completed forms being returned. This represents a return rate of 7.14% for the year.



9.4 Although one person stated they were fairly dissatisfied with the way their complaint was handled, having reviewed the return via the complaint handling review group, there was very little that could have been done differently. It is worth noting that if the outcome isn't in line with what the customer wanted, that they may rate the satisfaction as low.

## Section 10 Complaints by geographical area



We received the greatest number of complaints from the Bute and Cowal area and the smallest number from customers residing within the Helensburgh and Lomond area.

## **Section 11 Compensation and goodwill payments**

During 2022/23, we paid out approximately £1981.76 in compensation awards. We continue to log the reasons for the compensation awards.

## **Section 12 Learning from complaints**

We continue to work together with our colleagues 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 2022/23, we recorded 51 lessons learnt, mainly from complaints that were upheld or partially upheld (40% and 33% respectively) as they typically identify a potential need for improvement in our service.

Examples of lessons learned for the 2022/23 reporting year are as follows:

- Better communications with contractors, customers, private owners, internally within our own organisation and with external bodies;
- Issue has prompted a new procedure/change to existing procedure;
- Policies and procedures are to be followed timeously, with consistency, and reviewed regularly;
- Recording information - clear, concise and meaningful notes are to be recorded to allow clear trail of advice/ information given to customers;
- 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;
- Staff to be aware of how improvement works and repairs may impact on tenants and private owners in the surrounding area, especially vulnerable tenants and proactively seek alternative/interim solutions where possible;
- Staff to be more familiar with relevant policies, procedures, charters and admin/legal processes;
- Staff to be more proactive when dealing with complaints, recurring repairs and access for repairs - continually improving our service and ensuring to always provide good customer service;
- Staff to provide ID, ensure privacy when discuss personal matters; be aware face coverings may cause an issue and how a situation can escalate;
- Weakness in training process - process reviewed / additional training provided.

## **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
- Caledonia Housing Association
- Eidon Housing Association
- Grampian Housing Association
- Hebridean Housing Partnership
- Kingdom Housing Association
- Scottish Borders Housing Association
- Trust 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 were 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 2022/23 reporting year.

During 2022/23, the volume of compliments increased from 54 to 65.

The Complaint Handlers Network meets on a regular basis to discuss, in conjunction with the SPSO, better benchmarking and improvements to complaints processes. In 2023/24 a sub group of the network members, will create a set of questions to be asked for gathering customer satisfaction for the handling of complaints.



Argyll Community Housing Association Limited.  
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