

**Eden Housing Association
Annual Complaints Performance
& Service Improvement Plan
April 2025**

INTRODUCTION

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This report sets out a review of annual complaints performance and service improvement. The format of the report is aligned to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) Complaint Handling Code (the Code).

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/the-code-2024/>

In the latest published reports from the Housing Ombudsman, complaint handling remains one of the top 3 categories reported, it's the highest category in terms of service failure and maladministration findings, with 'communication' being one of the most significant factors.

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/reports/landlord-complaint-statistics/q1-quarterly-data-2024-25/>

Our overarching aim is to meet our statutory obligations, follow our policies, procedures and meet the individual needs of our tenants. We will do this by continually looking inwardly at what we do, to learn and to improve our communication and service delivery at every opportunity.

Our Complaints processes, scrutiny mechanisms and learning actions will ensure we achieve this aim whilst aligning to our organisational values.

ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE COMPLAINT HANDLING CODE

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We have completed the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code. In parallel we have completed a review of our Compliments, Complaints and Feedback Policy and associated documents to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Code.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF OUR COMPLAINT HANDLING PERFORMANCE - BETWEEN APRIL 2024 AND MARCH 2025

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Complaints Logged between April 2024 and March 2025 57

Complaints Closed Down between April 2024 and March 2025 56

Complaints still open as of the 31st March 2025 1

Formal Complaints referred to the Housing Ombudsman between April 2024 and March 2025 3

Formal Complaints Refused 0

During the past 12 months we have promoted a positive complaints culture, raising awareness of feedback mechanisms and what to expect when raising a complaint, including how we will listen to our tenants and learn from Formal Complaints. We hope tenants are now finding our Formal Complaints process much more accessible.

COMPLAINTS LOGGED AT EITHER STAGE 1 OR STAGE 2 BETWEEN APRIL 2024 AND MARCH 2025

	Stage 1	Stage 2		Stage 1	Stage 2
Q1 April to June 2024	18	2	Q2 July to Sept 2024	17	3
Q3 Oct to Dec 2024	7	4	Q4 Jan to March 2025	6	0
Total			48 9		

We aim to deal with all Formal Complaints within the following timescales:

- Stage 1 Formal Complaints = 10 working days from the date of acknowledgement (an extension of up to 10 further working days is permitted for complex complaints)
- Stage 2 Formal Complaints = 20 working days from the date of acknowledgement (an extension of up to 20 further working days is permitted for complex complaints)

COMPLAINTS CLOSED DOWN AND RESPONDED TO WITHIN OUR PUBLISHED TIMESCALES BETWEEN APRIL 2024 AND MARCH 2025

	Stage 1	Stage 2		Stage 1	Stage 2
Q1 April to June 2024	12	0	Q2 July to Sept 2024	17	3
Q3 Oct to Dec 2024	10	2	Q4 Jan to March 2025	7	1
Total			46 6		

COMPLAINTS CLOSED DOWN AND NOT RESPONDED TO WITHIN OUR PUBLISHED TIMESCALES BETWEEN APRIL 2024 AND MARCH 2025

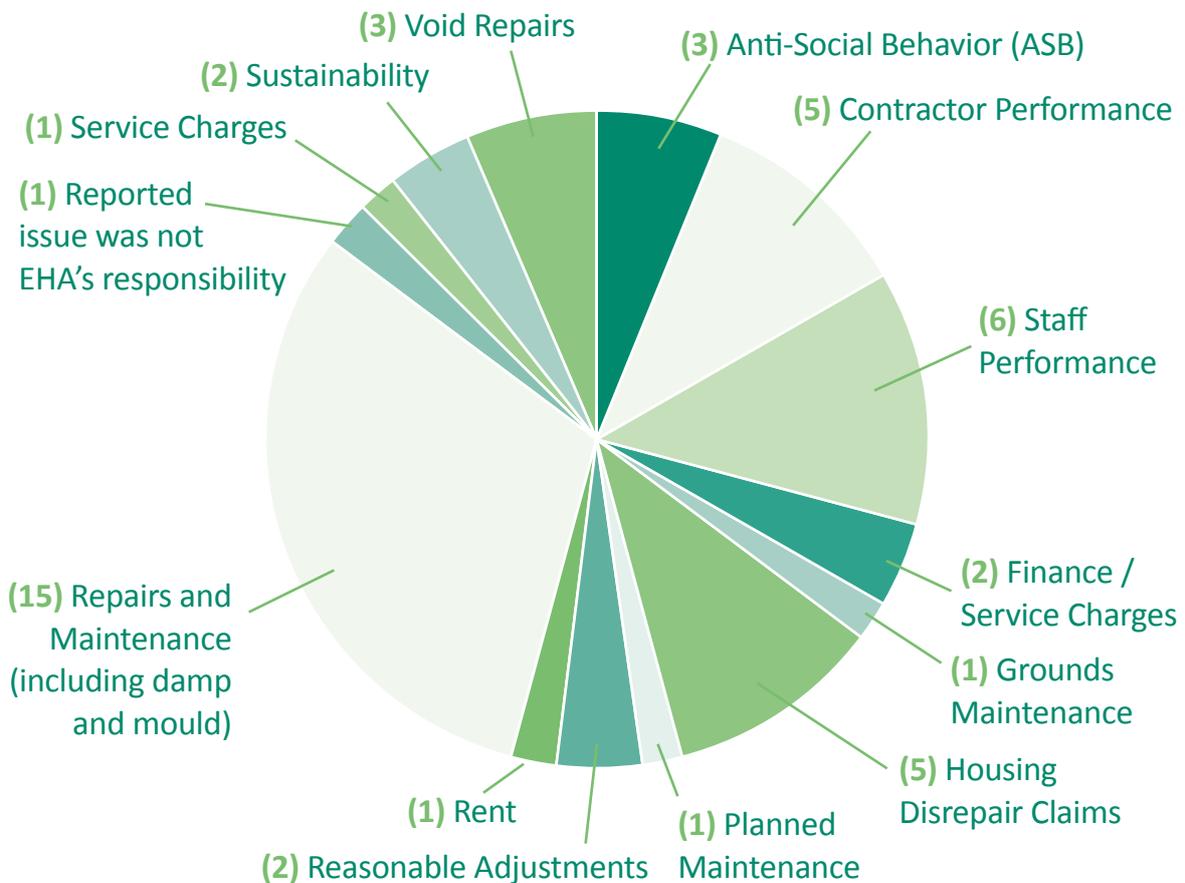
	Stage 1	Stage 2		Stage 1	Stage 2
Q1 April to June 2024	1	1	Q2 July to Sept 2024	1	0
Q3 Oct to Dec 2024	0	0	Q4 Jan to March 2025	0	1
Total			2 2		

At the end of March 2025, one Stage 2 format complaint remained open and under investigation.

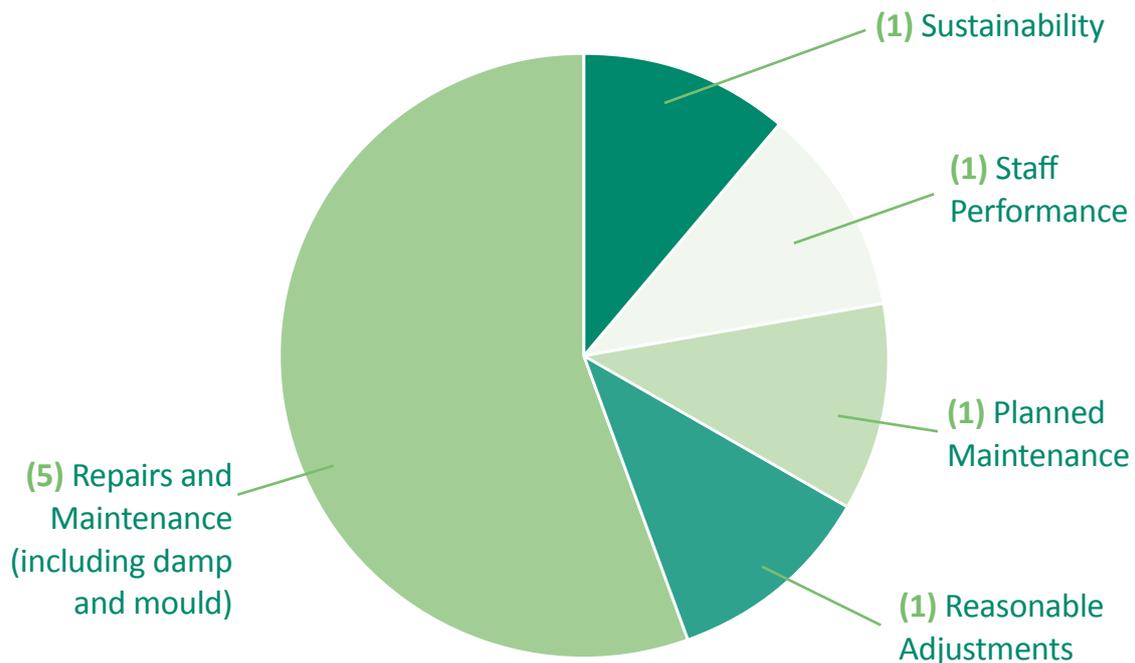
CLOSED COMPLAINTS – UPHELD OR NOT UPHELD

		Upheld	Not Upheld
Q1 April to June 2024	Stage 1	7	6
	Stage 2	1	-
Q2 July to Sept 2024	Stage 1	6	12
	Stage 2	2	1
Q3 Oct to Dec 2024	Stage 1	7	3
	Stage 2	1	1
Q4 Jan to March 2025	Stage 1	4	3
	Stage 2	1	1
	Total	29	27

THE GRAPH BELOW SHOWS THE NUMBER OF STAGE 1 FORMAL COMPLAINTS LOGGED BY CATEGORY BETWEEN APRIL 2024 AND MARCH 2025



THE GRAPH BELOW SHOWS THE NUMBER OF STAGE 2 FORMAL COMPLAINTS LOGGED BY CATEGORY BETWEEN APRIL 2024 AND MARCH 2025



QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF COMPLAINT HANDLING PERFORMANCE

Providing excellent customer service is one of our main objectives. We see the effective handling of complaints as a key element of our Customer Strategy and a means of monitoring, maintaining and improving the level and quality of the services we deliver.

We recognise the need to comply with the HOS Complaints Handling Code and the benefits that listening, reflecting, learning and self-assessment brings to maintaining positive relationships with our tenants and leaseholders. We also recognise the need to comply with other key areas of regulation.

The Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standard 'Tenant Involvement and Empowerment' states "...a registered provider shall have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly".

We closed two Stage 1 Formal Complaint outside of our published timescales. One was due to the complainant raising a Subject Access Request (SAR) during the complaint process. The decision was made to keep the complaint open whilst this request was processed. The second was due to the complainant's availability.

We closed two Stage 2 Formal Complaints outside of our published timescales. In the first instance the complaint was kept open allowing us to liaise with the complainant and their advocate. In the second instance the complaint was kept open beyond the extension period at the request of the complainant allowing them to raise additional concerns linked to their initial area of dissatisfaction.

We believe that our positive complaints handling approach ensures that we will:

- ✓ Display positive behaviours, in-line with our organisational values, by forging lasting relationships with all those who use our services - based on trust, openness and transparency
- ✓ Develop and train existing teams and support new colleagues in building a positive complaints culture from induction onwards
- ✓ Be compliant with all relevant legislation including the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code and the Regulator's Consumer Standards
- ✓ Promote a working environment where colleagues are confident to 'own' where mistakes have been made and in addition we are agile enough to adapt to changes to the landscape in which we operate.

In order for this strategy to be successful it is a priority for us to work collaboratively between internal teams so that we are consistent in our approach, and that customers feel valued and listened to.

We always seek to follow our Values which have been adopted following staff and tenant feedback – *Working as a team, Doing the right thing and Getting it right first time to improve our customers experience.* Our values help us by driving our behaviours. Our staff Away Day in July 2024 allowed us the opportunity to get together and discuss what living our values meant for us and how we deliver our services.

Over the past 12 months a priority area for us when handling complaints is to ensure we follow through with the actions identified when learning from our investigations. We believe that together this approach allows us to provide excellence by embedding a positive complaint handling and improvement culture.

The Complaints & Resolutions Officer role allows us to prioritise complaint handling, ensure consistency, compliance, accurate recording and monitoring of relevant processes. In addition we work collaboratively with service managers to identify learning, outcomes and implement relevant changes in service delivery.

In the last 12 months, we have completed the following pieces of work:

- ✓ Completed a full review of our Complaints Policy and all associated documents including letters and service standard
- ✓ Delivered 1:1 sessions with the Customer Service Team focusing on how they deal with complex cases and challenging individuals whilst still providing excellent Customer Service
- ✓ Set up a new more effective and streamlined Board reporting template which aligns with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code
- ✓ Completed 5 Sessions for all staff (CHAT sessions) raising awareness of the role of the Housing Ombudsman Service, the Regulator of Social Housing as well as our commitment to a positive complaints culture. *(Recordings of these sessions are now used during inductions for all new members of staff)*
- ✓ Worked closely with our Complaints Panel Members to share progress and act upon scrutiny and feedback. This included undertaking a 'deep dive' into the repairs and maintenance function in December 2024 *(further service areas planned)*
- ✓ Identified Formal Complaint 'Champions' within the Customer Service Team to lead on best practice and implementing improvements, for example piloting amended letters and ensuring contact and recording timescales are adhered to
- ✓ Working with our IT/Business Intelligence Officer to enhance and improve our complaints reporting module of our Housing Management system Orchard
- ✓ Introduced a new complaints dashboard and manager actions reporting tool
- ✓ Ensured that our first Self-Assessment against the HO Complaints Handling Code was completed and submitted in a timely manner
- ✓ Built relationships with our tenants, complainants and contractors whilst dealing with an increasing level of Formal Complaints
- ✓ Worked with Managers and our Executive Team to implement a process which ensures all learning and outcomes are recorded/actioned and complaints data is utilised to improve services going forward
- ✓ Carried out a Formal Complaints 'Scrutiny Taskforce' in November 2024 working with tenants to focus on improving service delivery

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We have continued to use a Complaints Action Plan to capture and manage pieces of work and projects where we have identified the need for improvement. Some of the areas identified have been implemented within teams and across the organisation whilst others are still in progress. *(full details in Section 5)*

Intelligence captured from complaints includes the following common themes for improvement:

- Communication with our customers and between departments/contractors
- Completing repairs correctly first time
- Sub-contractor performance
- Understanding and responding to customer need. *(for example, providing advice and guidance on new technology and processes such as the installation of air source heat pumps and other de-carbonisation projects)*
- Embedding learning via contractor core group meetings
- Listening to customers and seeking to understand
- Identifying customer needs and vulnerability

Following on from the staff training and organisational wide communication sessions (known as CHAT sessions) we have established regular training with new colleagues as part of their induction programme, as well as department specific interventions.

In spring 2024 we concluded a series of training and workshop sessions with the Customer Advisor Team on our Formal Complaints process, agreeing strategies and ways to communicate effectively with customers and internal colleagues. This included effective listening, managing customer expectations and professional boundaries. In September 2024 we carried out further training sessions with both our Customer Service and Repairs and Maintenance Teams focusing again on strategies to deal effectively with colleagues and customers. Our aim is to maintain the momentum by assessing and monitoring progress and identifying further training needs throughout 2025/2026.

We have adopted the complaints dashboard which we piloted and reviewed throughout 2024. This has demonstrated improvements in our response times, complaint planning and recording. We will continue to use, amend and adapt our dashboard to meet changing needs of our customers.

Examples of feedback:

Heating Repairs - "You have thoroughly addressed our concerns. You have put my mind at rest regarding any potential problems with the boiler"
(July 2024)

Repairs and Maintenance - "Thank you for everything you have done to listen to my mother's concerns and act on them, it's much appreciated"
(Daughter of tenant August 2024)

Repairs and Maintenance - Mrs ***** advised us (via a telephone call into the organisation) that she is very pleased with the outcome of the complaint and feels both listened to and valued
(December 2024)

Repairs and Maintenance - "We are happy with your response and feel that we've been listened to and that action has been taken to resolve our issues. Thank you for all your work on our behalf. Warmest wishes for Christmas and 2025"
(December 2024)

In order to learn further from listening to our customers we have produced a Formal Complaints Satisfaction Survey, this is a confidential survey which will be sent to all complainants following closure of their complaint. We will ask probing questions about our processes to see where we can improve. The survey will be conducted either online (via survey monkey), postal or over the telephone (whichever best suits the needs of our complainant).

WE HEARD WE DID – SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS MADE AS A RESULT OF LEARNING FROM OUR COMPLAINTS

Below demonstrates how we use our learning outcomes to look beyond individual complaints to identify improvements and the actions we are taking to address the shortfall in service delivery.

Repairs and Maintenance

Better monitoring of contractor and sub-contractor performance

Ongoing

- Regular case review meetings involving Repairs and Maintenance Manager and Complaints and Resolutions Officer
- Standard agenda item at monthly contractor core group meetings ensures regular review and accountability

Repairs and Maintenance

Listening to residents, recording and prioritisation of repairs

Completed

Training with staff on;

- Prioritisation of repairs
- How to request call recordings
- Dealing with complaints
- Providing excellent customer service
- Responding to customer enquiries within a reasonable timeframe

Repairs and Maintenance

Getting repairs completed on time and first time

Completed

- Restructure of service area, recruitment of manager/additional service delivery positions

Repairs and Maintenance

Communication and the Customer Journey

Completed

- Working in collaboration with our Business Intelligence Officer we have completed a comprehensive mapping exercise to track each contact, action and decision from receipt to completion (*resultant actions from this exercise remain ongoing and are under regular review*).

Housing Management

Incorrect information given to tenants and customers regarding boundary fencing

Completed

- Staff training completed
- Tenant permission form updated
- New process agreed with Local Authority

Asset Management

More information, advice and guidance required to share with customers prior, during and after air source heat pump/solar panel installation

Completed and Ongoing

- Upfront information reviewed and amended
- Actions agreed to improve service at Asset Team meetings
- Planned recruitment of new tenant liaison post
- Project *lessons learned* discussed at team meeting December 2024

Asset Management

Understanding needs of our customers when carrying out stock condition surveys

Ongoing

- Process review underway to review the way our survey visits/appointments are co-ordinated/managed

Finance

Clearer wording needed on annual on rent change letters

Completed

- Finance team have reviewed rent increase letters and amended the wording to improve information and provide clarity for following year

Compliance

Improve EPC process

Completed

- Interim additional checks and balances put in place by Housing and Customer Service Team
- Compliance Team to undertake EPC checks from April 2025

Housing Management

Clearer wording on tenancy breach letters

Ongoing

- A review of housing management letters planned to provide a clearer explanation which is tailored to the individual circumstances/needs of the tenant

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Supported Housing

Improve Out of hours contractor performance

Completed

- Review of out of hours contractor performance with revised service level agreement and named contact to monitor and assess performance

Finance

Leaseholder process requires clearer procedures and increased staff understanding

Ongoing

- Policy review currently in progress to improve the whole process this will include training for key members of staff

Finance

Local occupancy consent during property purchase process. Clearer procedures and better staff understanding needed

Ongoing

- Policy review currently in progress to improve the whole process this will include training for key members of staff

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ANY FINDINGS OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THE COMPLAINTS HANDLING CODE

There are no findings of non-compliance with the Complaints Handling Code.

HOUSING OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL LANDLORD PERFORMANCE REPORT

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The Housing Ombudsman is committed to openness and transparency. An important part of this is using data to provide our tenants and leaseholders with information, insight and learning for landlords to improve their services. The Housing Ombudsman publish individual landlord performance reports for landlords with 5 or more findings. In July 2024 the Ombudsman published a Landlord Performance report for Eden Housing Association covering April 2023 to March 2024.

The report contained 10 findings which included four maladministration findings:

- 1 service failure under the anti-social behaviour category
- 1 service failure under the (service) charges category
- 1 service failure under the handling of a window repair, and;
- 1 finding of maladministration in respect of how the complaint was handled.

The other six findings contained no findings of maladministration. Compensation of £550 was awarded to the complainant for the distress and inconvenience caused and the shortcomings in how the complaint was handled. All findings have been actioned to the satisfaction of the Housing Ombudsman.

The report can be viewed by going to www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords/ simply add Eden Housing Association in the Search by Name section. Alternatively, if you would like us to provide this report in a different format please contact our Customer Service Team on **01768 861400** or enquiry@edenha.org.uk

CONTACT FROM THE HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE BETWEEN APRIL 2024 AND MARCH 2025

Between April 2024 and March 2025 the Housing Ombudsman has contacted us regarding 3 complaint referrals.

Housing Ombudsman Reference Number	Contact from the Housing Ombudsman	Status
*****183	July 2024	Closed (at tenant's request)
*****071	October 2024	Closed (managed via EHA Formal Complaints process at Stage 1)
*****785	November 2024	Evidence gathering (No landlord tasks set to date)

Landlords have been advised by the Ombudsman there will be a lead time of 6 months or longer for their investigations to be completed. We are contacted via the Ombudsman's Landlord Portal regarding any relevant tasks or requests for information.

ONGOING TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

As we are continuously looking to improve our services we ensure that our Complaints & Resolutions Officer and relevant staff attend training to maintain their Continuing Professional Development (CPD). We keep fully up to date with Housing Ombudsman published documentation, such as the Spotlight Reports which concentrate on an area of service provision where they are currently seeing a high amount of failure through their casework. These reports examine the issues within the theme and set out recommendations for improvements which are always keen to learn from.

HOW TO COMPLAIN



We use complaints as an opportunity to learn and continually improve our services.

How to Make a Complaint

- Log in to My Account our Tenants Portal
- Ring us on **01768 861400**
- Email at ***enquiry@edenha.org.uk***
- Write to us at ***Blain House, Bridge Lane, Penrith CA11 8QU***

Our complaints process has two stages. This means you can explain your point of view, and your desired resolution before a final decision is reached and EHA closes the complaint. If you are not happy with our final decision, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman:

- Tel: **0300 111 3000**
- Email: ***info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk***
- Post: ***Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET***
- Online: ***www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk***

**Report Prepared April 2025 by Mark Barrow
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**Please direct any enquiries regarding the report to
enquiry@edenha.org.uk or 01768 861400**



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