

Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report **2023/2024**

This report summarises Black Country Housing Group's (BCHG) performance and learning from customer complaints during the year 1 April 2023 until 31 March 2024. There were 75 complaints recorded compared to 72 the year before. There were no Housing Ombudsman maladministration cases found against BCHG.

The key learning from complaints includes reviewing our approach to gas servicing, further training for colleagues, new policies on reasonable adjustments and remedies and resolution and reviewing our Complaints Policy at the Customer Scrutiny Conference.

In February 2024, we held a Customer Complaint Focus Group to support our learning for the annual self-assessment and to specifically understand how we could improve satisfaction with our complaint handling, which achieved 57% (transactional survey 17% response) and included:

- Improving feedback
- Showing empathy
- Being fair

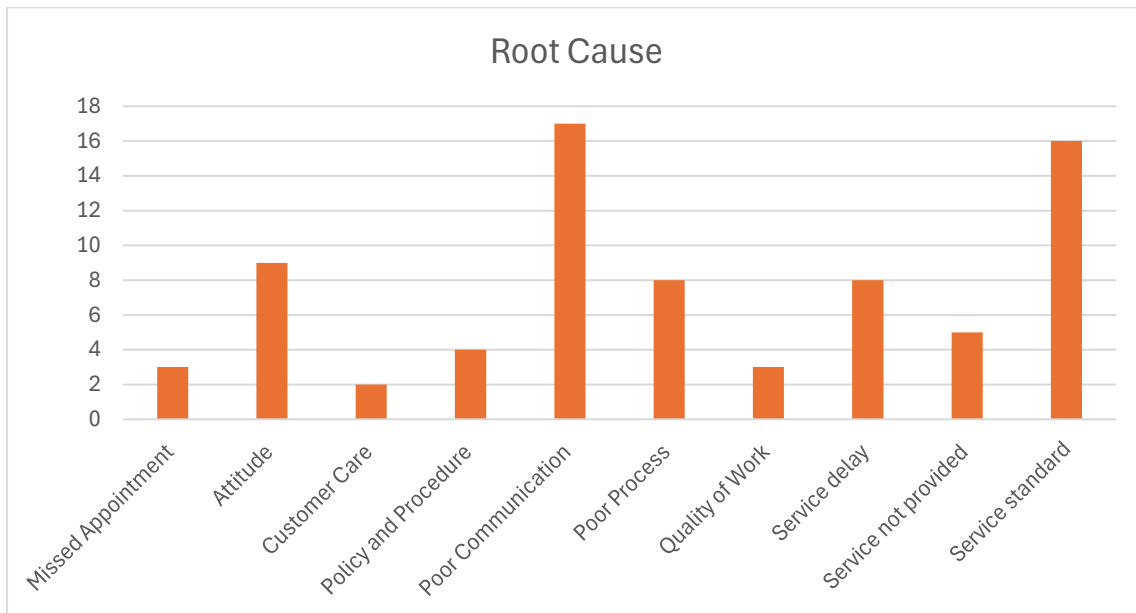
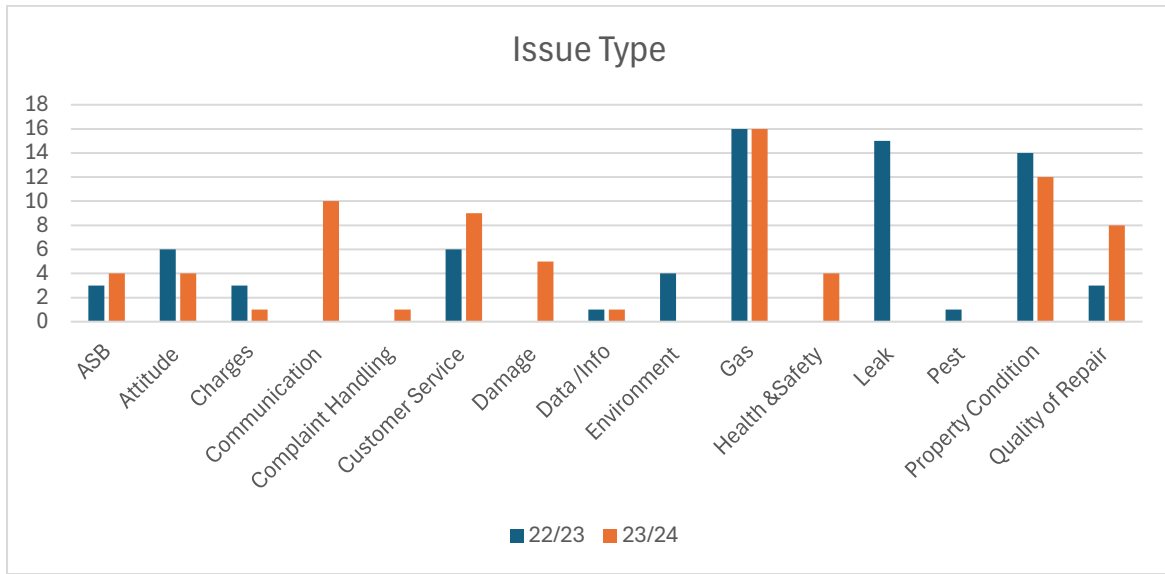
We are a values-based organisation that loves to learn from both positive and negative feedback to help improve our service delivery. This report aims to demonstrate the key areas we continue to improve from our learning and supports our annual complaint handling self-assessment.

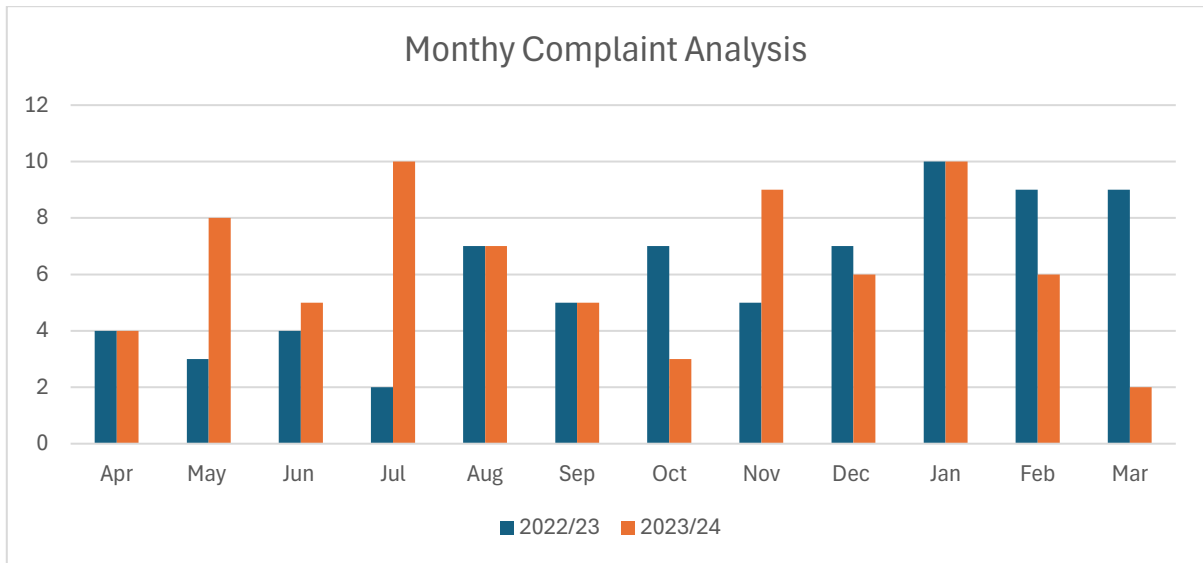
Governing Body Response

Over the last year we are satisfied that we have met our duties in relation to the complaint handling code. We have gained the necessary evidence-based assurance of our compliance through quarterly customer voice reports that included complaint and wider customer feedback. The Member Responsible for Complaints has gained further operational insight from attending our internal Customer Feedback Improvement Panel. Our Resident Scrutiny Voice Panel included the area of complaint handling in their service review of our Customer Relation Manager offer, and through the Partnership Board and annual Customer Conference, opportunities are provided to hear the customer voice direct. In reviewing compliance, we have adopted an improvement focus and have identified several improvement actions which we will progress during the year. To support effective implementation, these actions will form an Improvement Action Plan which will be monitored by the Board at agreed intervals to ensure successful achievement. As the Board of BCHG we are satisfied that we are compliant with the requirements of the code and have appropriate systems, management oversight in place but we are never complacent and sit on our laurels.

Complaint Performance 2023/2024

The key types of complaints are presented by the leading issue as some had more than one category and the root cause analysis shows the main causation linked to this.





The trend for gas relates to the performance of our Gas Contractor, which had a seasonal hike during the winter when the impact is more severe. Our investigation identified the cause was the service delay in obtaining parts, and the lack of empathy shown to customers. The quality of repair is higher than a year ago and the cause identified the service was not to the standard expected or agreed by customer.

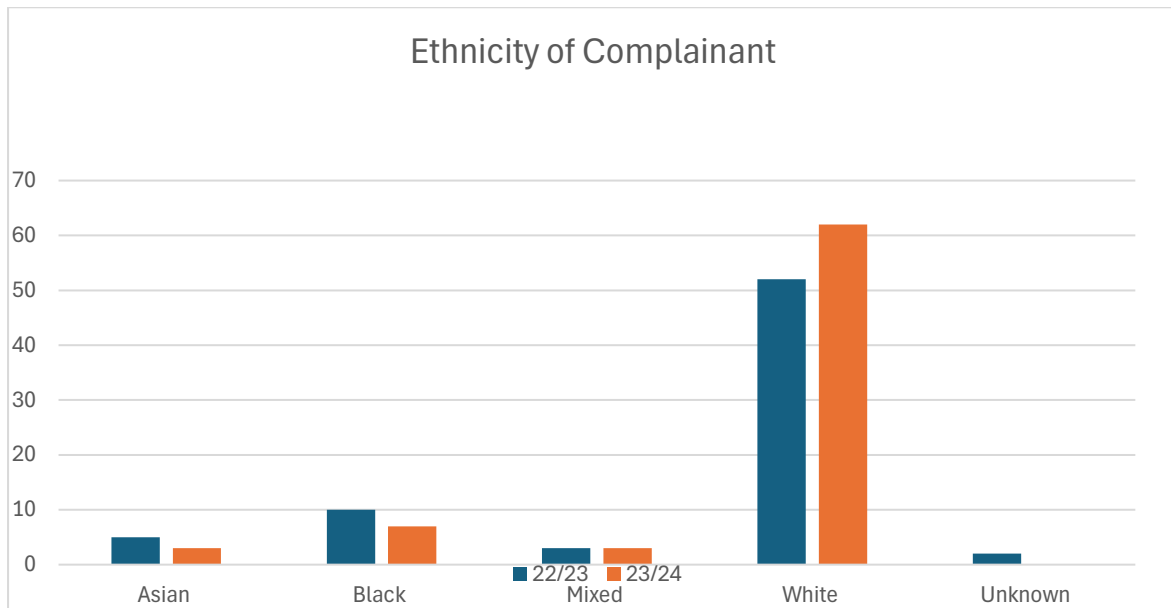
Complaint Categories

There are no orders from the Housing Ombudsman to report, and no complaint rejected or withdrawn during the year. 91% of cases closed at Stage One and 9% at Stage Two. No cases were carried forward. Fast Track is a Stage 1 complaint but where a health and safety risk is identified and requires mitigation within 48 hours. In the two cases, following an inspection, the risk was deemed to be low, with no cause for concern.

Our monthly analysis shows us that during summer when colleagues are more likely to be on leave more repair related issues featured. During the winter more heating related issues increased.

Service Area	Stage 1	Stage 1 extended	Stage 1 Fast Tracked	Stage 2	Ombudsman	Total
Repairs and Maintenance	29	5	1	2	0	37
Assets and Compliance	20	0	1	0	0	21
Housing Management	9	3	0	5	0	17
Total	58	8	2	7	0	75

Our Stage 2 review is undertaken by a senior manager and a trained member of the Resident Scrutiny Voice Panel. The number of cases escalated in the final quarter of the year reduced. Our average time to respond to Stage 1 complaints within 10 working days is at 79% and for Stage 2 responses 100% of cases are responded to within 20 working days.



The Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Report, “Relationships of Equals” highlighted a person-centred approach. There is recognition of vulnerability and ethnicity but for a few cases we dealt with identified our response could be strengthened.



Complaint Outcomes

- 40 complaints were upheld, where we apologised and took specific action to put things right.
- 20 complaints were partially upheld with some learning for BCHG.
- 15 complaints were not upheld.
- We paid £12,207 in compensation during the year.

What Customers have told us about our Complaint Handling

“I understand that BCHG did what they could to resolve matters, I was treated with fairness.”

“Because I ended up with an answer that was brushing the complaint under the carpet, nothing solved then was asked for a receipt to prove the work had been done by my friend because you out of hours operatives could not be bothered to answer the emergency phone for two days. The work done was waterproof and the job safe.”

“Did not cover all my complaint but handled straightaway. The compensation was miserly.”

What are we doing to improve our services.

Area	Action for 2024/5
Gas Servicing	We are reviewing our procurement of gas services to ensure future delivery is closer aligned to our values.
Repairs Delivery	We recruited repair operatives to fill vacant posts and have a full establishment in place and first-time fix rate improved. We are reviewing our work planning schedules for 2024/25 to ensure resources for repairs are better deployed.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	We have introduced a new Reasonable Adjustment Policy and a Resolution and Remedies Policy and put training in place in these two areas.



Black Country Housing Group

Complaint Handling	<p>We are supporting colleagues with training to respond when the answer is known.</p> <p>We have arranged for more colleagues and contractors to take direct learning from the Housing Ombudsman Centre for Learning.</p> <p>We are raising customer awareness through the Make Things Right campaign.</p> <p>Our first Customer Scrutiny Conference will review our complaint policy and we have invited the Housing Ombudsman as the keynote speaker.</p> <p>We are working to collaborate with our largest local authority to learn from common themes in our join areas. With two other landlords we aim to commission work on the customer for the future and how we can better respond to meet future needs.</p>
Shared learning	<p>Internally, our Complaint Feedback Improvement Panel is made up of colleagues who deal with complaints and come together every two months to understand the type of complaints made and the steps we need to take to respond.</p> <p>We are part of an online forum of landlords where we share learning.</p> <p>We also use the spotlight report and the Ombudsman Centre for learning to improve.</p>