

Annual Complaints Report

Year: 2010/11

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The annual complaints report is intended to provide the senior management team and the board of management with a summary of the complaints received during the year from tenants, members of independent co-operatives, management committees and others.

The report considers all the complaints received during the year to 31 March 2011.

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Executive summary

A summary of the key results from this year's complaints survey:

1. Residents, committees and others made a total of 42 complaints during the year, an average of 10.5 each quarter. This represents a small decrease from the 45 complaints recorded in the previous year. The long to medium term trend in complaint numbers is downwards.
2. The majority of complaints were resolved at the first stage of the complaints procedure, but six were taken to stage two. No complaints were taken to stage three and no complaints were made to the Housing Ombudsman.
3. CDS tenants made the most complaints (40%), despite making up less than 25% of the total resident population. Members of independent co-ops made 33% of the complaints received. Complaint rates for CDS tenants are now much higher than for other tenure types and the discrepancy increased substantially compared to the previous year.
4. Performance on responding to complaints within the target time was down on 2009/10, but only marginally so (from 87% to 83%). Over the medium term (past 5 years), there is a small, but significant improving trend. The average time taken to respond to stage 1 complaints rose from 8.4 to 11.8 days, but over the medium term the trend is one of gradual improvement.
5. More than two-thirds (69%) of the complaints received were about repairs and maintenance issues – up from 67% in the previous year. Although most complaints concerned responsive repairs, there were noticeably more complaints about planned and cyclical maintenance.
6. 40% of complainants wrote a letter of complaint, with 36% sending an email. There was also an increase in the proportion of tenants who used a complaints form (19%). Very few complaints are made by telephone (just 5%). The continuing rise in the proportion of complaints made by email may be a cause for concern because emails (unlike conventional mail) are not monitored. This may mean that some complaints have been missed because staff have not alerted their manager (or the ESO) that a complaint has been received.
7. BME complainants comprised 17% of the total, down from 22% the previous year. BME are still more likely to make a complaint than White British residents, but the discrepancy is less than it has been. The reason for the discrepancy is not entirely clear, but may simply reflect lower levels of satisfaction amongst residents in London. Lower satisfaction is usually recorded in London on most measures (not simply in respect of complaints), irrespective of ethnicity. London residents are much more likely to be from a BME community.
8. Of the complaints resolved during the period 59% were upheld (meaning that most or all of the complainant's points were accepted). This is substantially less than in previous years. While in previous years a greater proportion of complaints about maintenance issues were upheld than for other services, during 2010/11 the proportion upheld for maintenance and non-maintenance complaints was roughly the same.
9. Only 25% of those responding to the complaints satisfaction survey were satisfied with the way their complaint was handled. However the sample (4) was very small.

1 Number of complaints received

The Society received a total of 42 complaints last year (**table 1** below). This compares with 45 complaints received during the previous year (2009/10).

The number of complaints made by residents has now been broadly stable for three years, although the number of properties managed by the Society has been gradually increasing.

Table 1

Quarter	Complaints
Stage 1	42
Stage 2	6
Stage 3	0
Housing Ombudsman	0

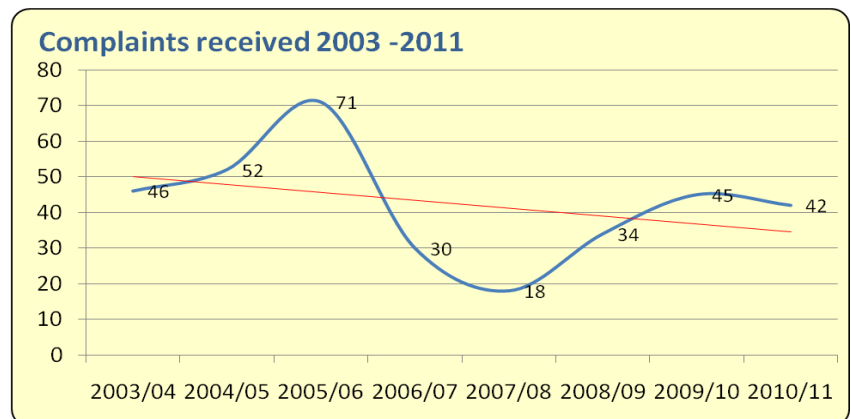
Of the 42 complaints received, six were taken to stage two of the complaints procedure (the same number as in the previous year), but none went to stage 3 (down from three in 2009/10).

There were no complaints to the Housing Ombudsman.

Chart 1 shows the number of complaints recorded each year between 2003/04 and 2010/11.

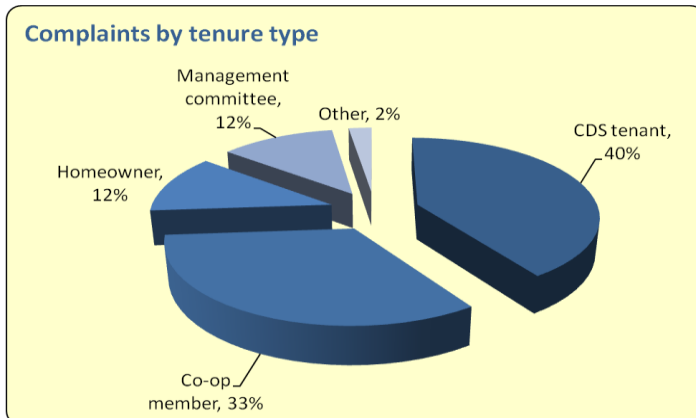
The trend-line (red) shows that the long term trend is gradually downwards, although not consistently so.

Chart 1



2 Who complained

Chart 2



It has been known for some years that tenants of CDS Co-operatives are more likely to make a formal complaint than other types of resident. Last year's complaints report looked at the respective "complaint rate" (measured as *complaints per 1000 tenancies*) for different tenure types in some detail.

I have not repeated this analysis for a second year, but it is clear from the data that the pattern not only continues, but has intensified.

Almost two thirds of the complaints were made by female residents, with men making just a quarter. The remaining 13% were made by couples. This is consistent with the make up of the wider population living in homes managed by CDS Co-operatives (approximately two thirds of tenancies are held by women).

Excluding committee complaints, 83% of complaints were made by people of "white British" origin, while the remainder (17%) were from people of other ethnic backgrounds ("BME"). This broadly reflects the ethnic origins of the wider tenant population.

Chart 2 shows that tenants of CDS Co-operatives made the most complaints (40% of the total), followed by members of independent co-ops.

The proportion of complaints made by management committees rose from 4% in 2009/10 to 12% last year. Homeowners made fewer complaints (down from 20% to 12%).

Table 2

Tenure type	Complaints
CDS tenant	17
Co-op member	14
Homeowner	5
Management committee	5
Other	1

Chart 3

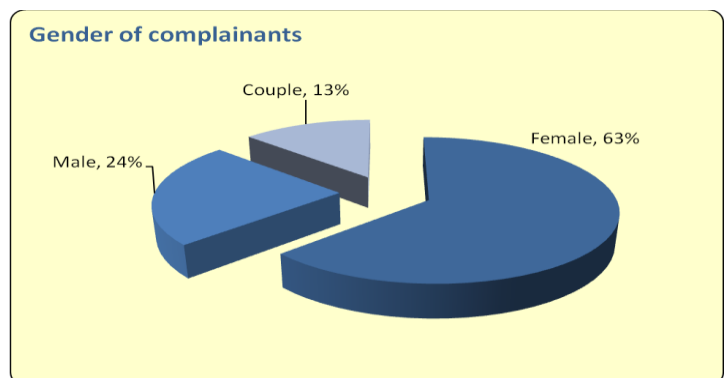
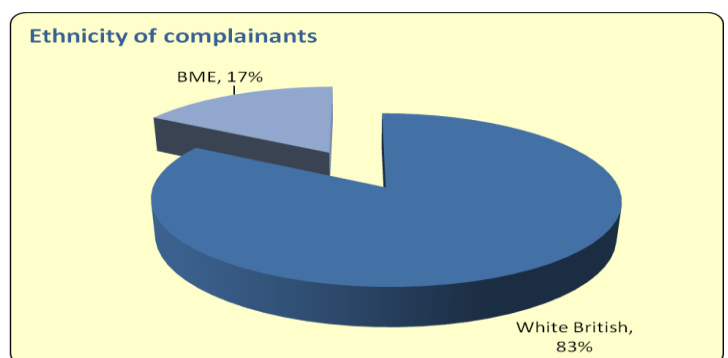


Chart 4



3 Complaints performance

Of the 42 stage one complaints received last year, 35 (83%) received a response within the target time of 14 days (10 working days). This reflects a fall in performance compared to 2009/10 when 87% of replies were on time.

Table 3

Stage 1 response	No	%
On time	35	83%
Late	7	17%

Chart 5

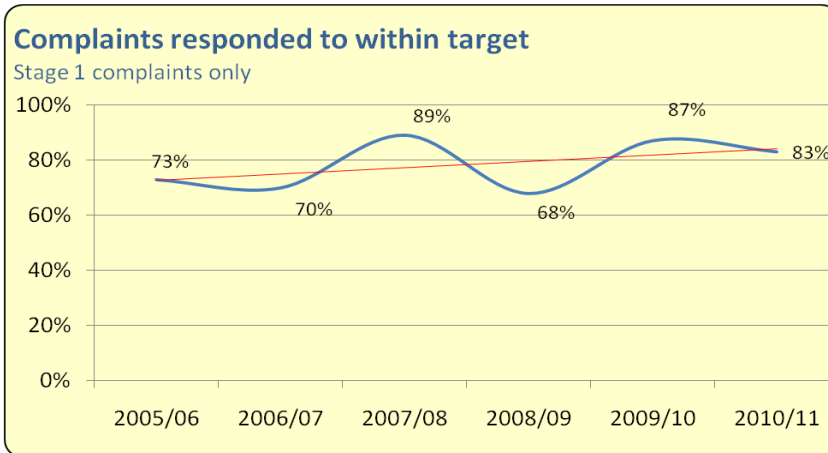
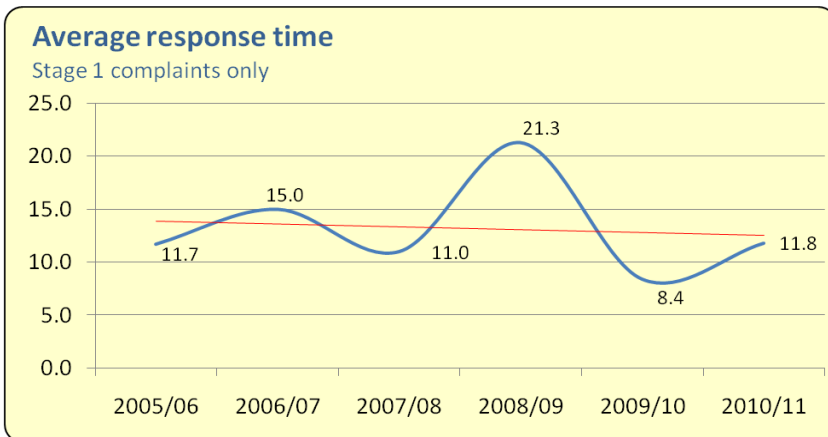


Chart 3 illustrates performance on complaint responses over the past 6 years. Performance has been somewhat erratic on a year to year basis, but the trend-line (red) indicates that there has been a small, but sustained improvement in performance over time.

Chart 6



The average time to respond to a stage one complaint rose from 8.4 days to 11.8 days (**chart 4**).

However, this indicator has also been rather erratic, and the long term trend (red line) remains downwards.

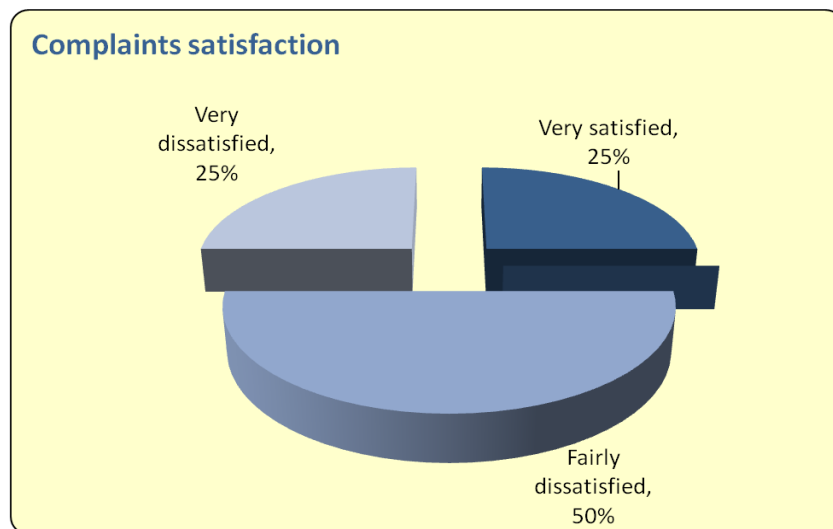
4 Satisfaction with the complaints process

Only four complaints returned a complaints satisfaction form (around 10% of those who made a complaint).

Table 3

How satisfied?	No	%
Very satisfied	1	25%
Fairly satisfied	0	0%
Neither	0	0%
Fairly dissatisfied	2	50%
Very dissatisfied	1	25%

Chart 7



Of those complainants who expressed an opinion, only 25% were satisfied with the way that their complaint was handled. The others were either very dissatisfied or fairly dissatisfied.

5 Complaints by service

Table 5 shows the relative frequency of the complaints received about each of the core services provided by CDS Co-operatives. **Chart 7** below illustrates the same information graphically.

As in previous years, a large proportion of complaints (69%) are about repairs and maintenance issues.

With the exception of tenancy management (mostly complaints related to the way antisocial behaviour has been handled), there are relatively few complaints about other services.

Table 5

Service	%
Responsive maintenance	52%
Planned & cyclical maintenance	17%
Arrears control	5%
Estate management	2%
Tenancy management	12%
Lettings	5%
Financial services	2%
Other	5%

Chart 8

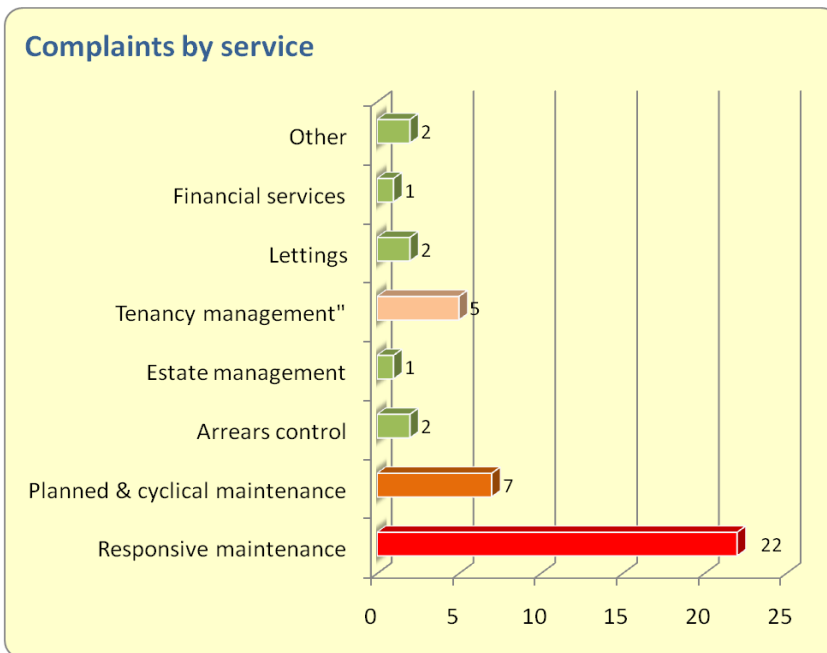
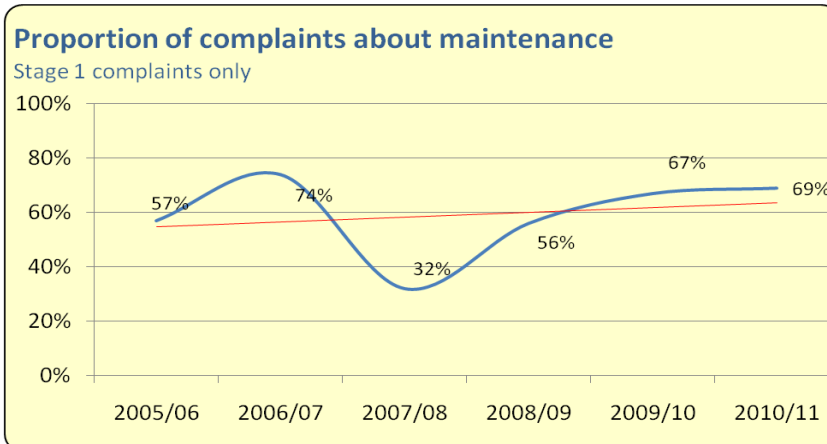


Chart 9



The proportion of complaints that relate primarily to repairs and maintenance has been rising (albeit erratically) for several years (albeit erratically) for several years (**chart 8**). The trend-line (red) on the chart illustrates the medium term trend.

Nevertheless, it is quite usual for housing providers to receive more complaints about repairs than about any other service, and we have no comparative data that would indicate that this is a matter for concern.

6 Location of complainants

Table 6 shows the location of complainants. By far the largest number of complaints (43%) came from members of co-operatives and tenants of CDS owned properties in the London area.

The complaint rate for amongst London residents is very much higher than for any other region.

NB: Regions do not correspond to those used in last year's complaints report, but are more equally sized.

Table 6

Region	No	%
Dartford	6	15%
Kent	4	10%
London	17	43%
Bexley	3	8%
Other	10	25%

Chart 10

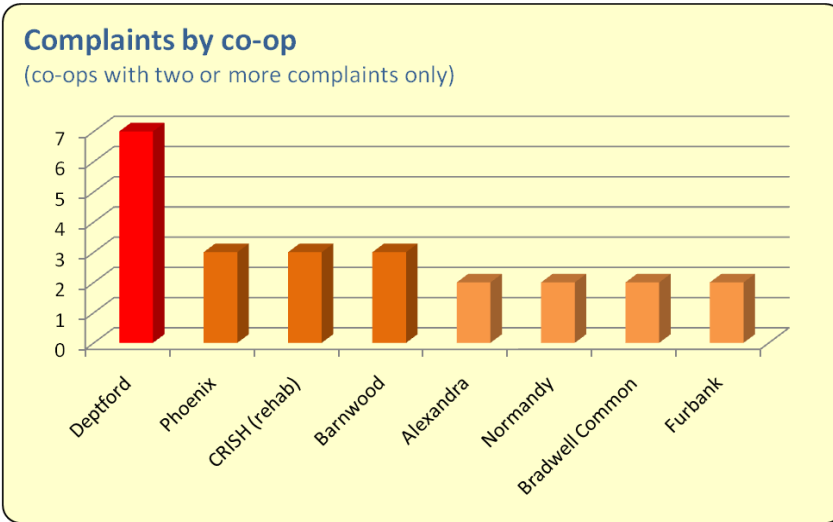
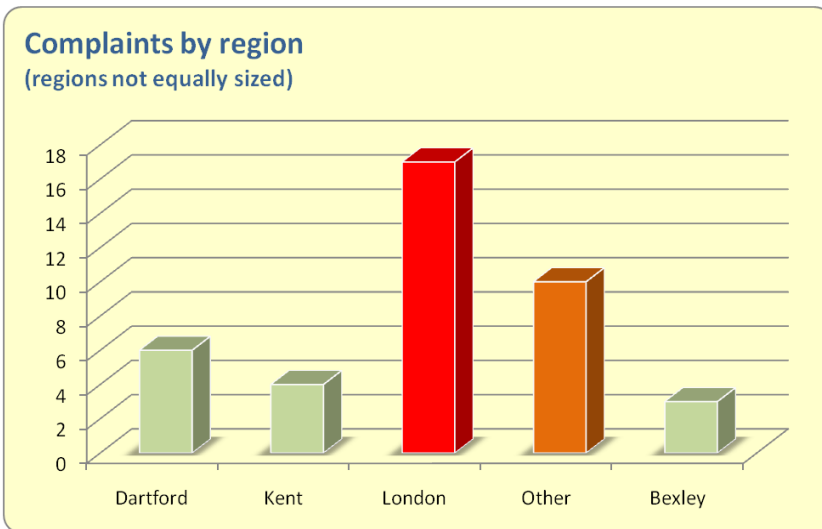


Chart 9 shows the co-ops and estates where residents made at least two complaints.

Members of Deptford Housing Co-operative made a significant proportion (17%) of the total number received last year. This was also the case the previous year.

Although residents of the Phoenix estate (all co-ops) made three complaints, the estate is large and the number of complaints received is not disproportionate.

Chart 11



By far the largest number of complaints originated from residents of co-operatives in London (**chart 10**). Residents of other areas were much less likely to complain.

Although London has previously exhibited a relatively high rate of complaints compared to other regions, the disparity is greater than in recent years (43% of the total).

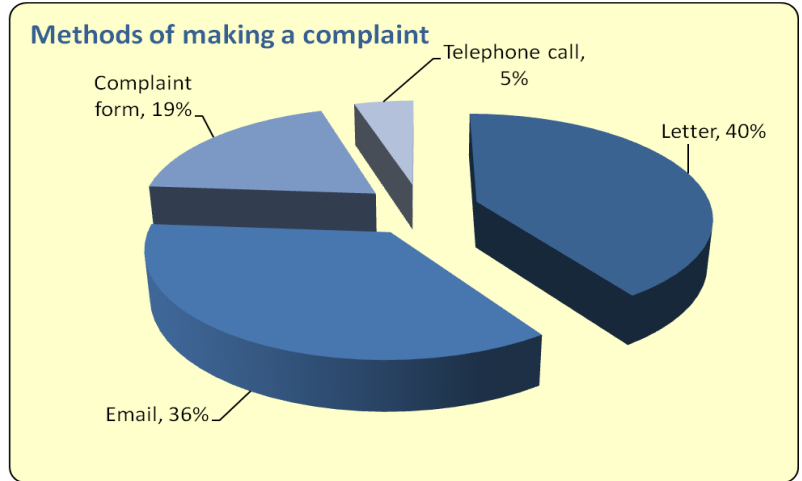
Complaints were received from residents of several different London co-operatives and also from two management committees.

7 What methods did people use to complain?

The largest fraction of complaints (40%) were, once again, received in the form of the traditional “letter of complaint”. However, the popularity of email continues to increase, with 36% of complaints being made by email last year. The remaining complainants used a complaints form or telephoned.

The rising number of complaints made by email (and the fall in the number made by letter) reflects the increasing popularity of electronic forms of communication in society as a whole.

Chart 12



Because emails are not recorded centrally and there is no system to assist managers to identify complaints made by email (staff are expected to take the initiative and report any complaints they receive by email to their line manager), there is an increasing risk that complaints will be missed.

8 Resolving complaints

Most complaints were upheld while just over a quarter were rejected (chart 13). A smaller number were considered irresolvable.

Chart 13

