

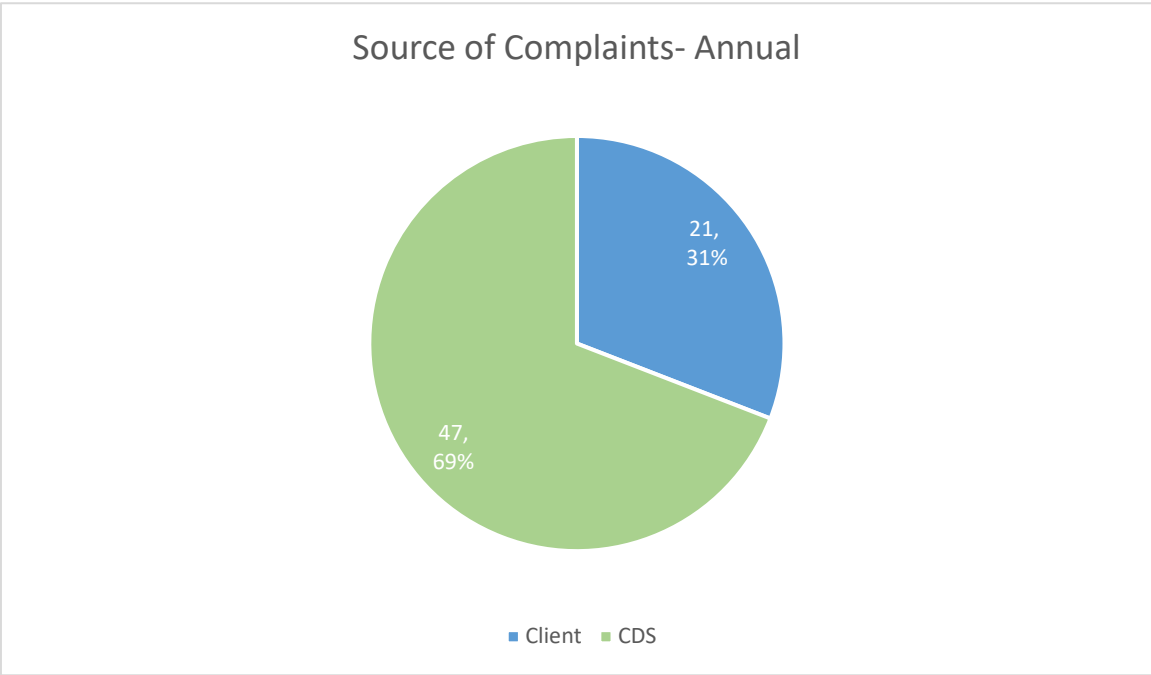
## Complaints Summary Report: Q4 and annual FY 23-24

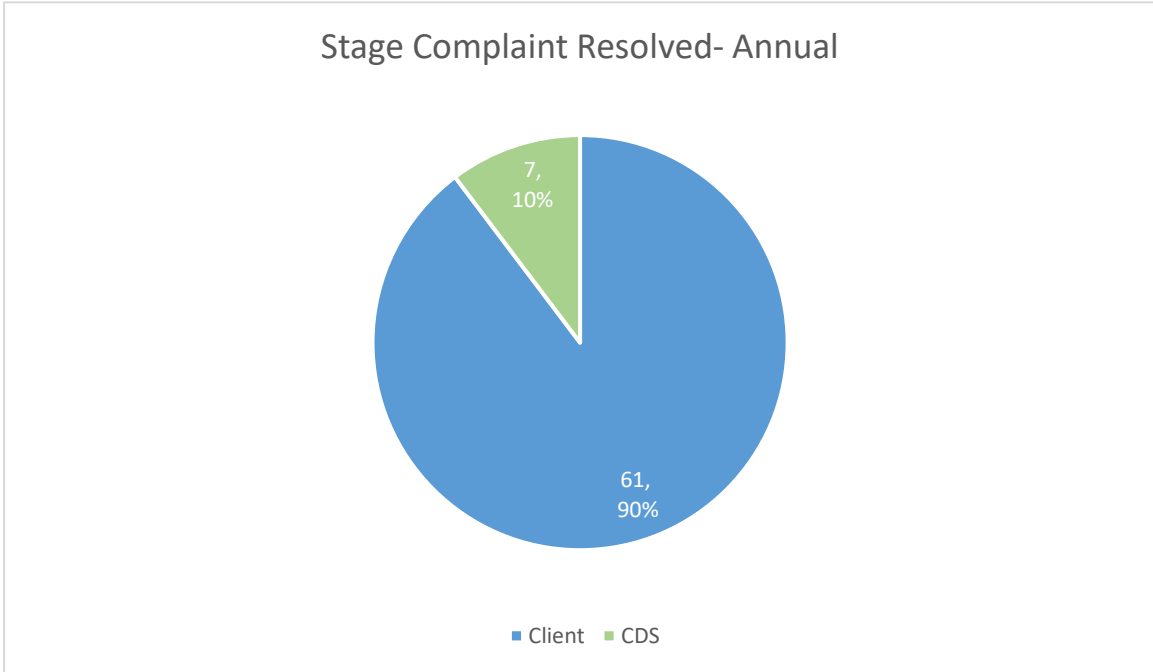
### 1. Executive Summary for Quarter 4

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to highlight Quarter 4 complaint handling performance and also provide an overview of complaints for the 2023/24 financial year which is covered in section 2 below.
- 1.2 Complaints increased from Quarter 3 (October to December 23) to Quarter 4 (January – March 24), from 22 to 27, an increase of just under 19%.
- 1.3 27 complaints were registered in the quarter, with one carried over from the previous quarter. 8 complaints were due for response in Q1 of 2024 – 25.
- 1.4 19 complaints were closed in Q4, of which 95% (18) were resolved at Stage 1, and one was escalated to Stage 2, which was also closed in Q4.
- 1.5 This quarter, we received one Housing Ombudsman’s investigation request in January. The evidence pack was sent to the HOS within the deadline and in collaboration with our independent complaint consultant to ensure our response met the HOS requirements. It relates to a complaint managed in 2022, with our Stage 2 final response issued in June 2023. We identified issues around how the complaint was handled back then in our stage 2 response, offered an apology, and paid compensation. We will inform the committee when a determination has been received. It is important to note that we have tightened our controls on complaints’ management since then and such situation would not occur now.
- 1.6 All the complaints closed in Q4 were responded to within the target time at Stage One.
- 1.7 15 of the complaints closed in Q4 (79%) were about our service as a landlord, and 4 were from co-op residents or committees.
- 1.8 Of the closed complaints in Q4, 13 (64%) were upheld. Of these, 10 (77%) were from CDS residents and three (23%) from client co-ops.
- 1.9 We awarded compensation to two complainants in Q4, and both complaints were related to repairs.

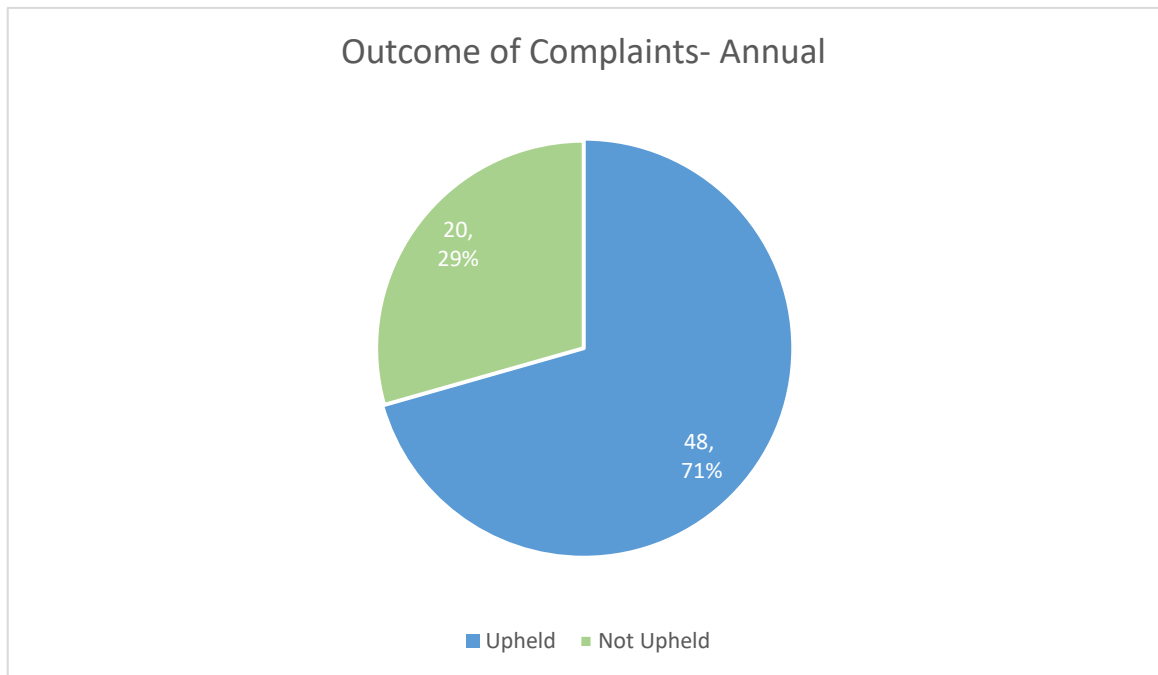
**2. Overview of complaints during 2023 /24**

- 2.1 At the end of the year, our complaint response time was 93%. While this is below our target of 95%, it represents an improvement of 6% on the previous year. This result supports our commitment to promptly resolving complaints.
- 2.2 During 2023/24, the number of new complaints received went down by 7.40% (75) compared to 2022/23 (81), but it was higher than the 45 recorded in 2021-22.
- 2.3 Despite the slight decrease in the volume of complaints in 23/24, the data reflect a trend in complex complaints, particularly related to repairs. However, we provided good quality responses that have led to 90.66% of received complaints being successfully resolved and closed at stage 1, compared to 86% in 2022 -23, representing an increase of 4.66%. Only 9.33% (7 complaints) required escalation to stage 2.
- 2.4 At year-end, we closed 68 complaints, compared to 79 closed complaints in the previous year; this is a drop of 13.92%.
- 2.5 47 of the complaints closed (69.11%) were from CDS residents, while 21 (31.88%) were from residents or committee members of client co-operatives. This year, we received 14.28% (3) more client cooperative complaints than last year.



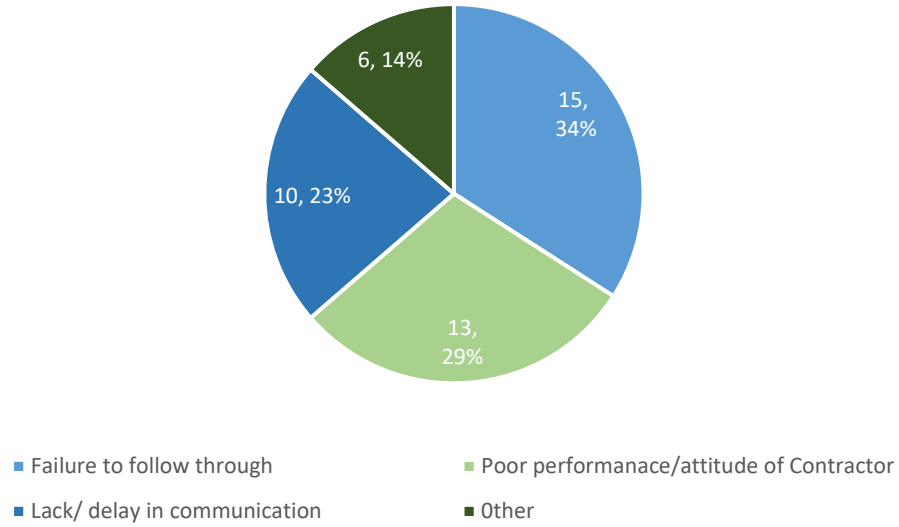


- 2.6 Of the 68 closed complaints, 64 (94%) received a response within the complaint handling Code timescale at stage 1, with four overdue. We responded to all stage 2 complaints within the complaint handling Code timescale. This year’s performance showed improvement in complaint response time compared to the previous year when we failed to respond to 15 complainants on time at stage 1.
- 2.7 48 of all closed complaints (71%) were upheld, a decrease from 63 (79%) last year. Of the 48 upheld complaints, 14 (29%) relate to complaints from clients or committee members, which means that 34 (71%) of all complaints about our landlord service were upheld.
- 2.8 Our aim is to address and resolve complaints promptly at stage 1. While most complaints were successfully closed at this stage, the complaint upheld target was not met similar to the previous year. Further work is needed to fully address the themes emerging from complaints, and ensure we embed lessons learnt in the business to reduce the number of upheld complaints.

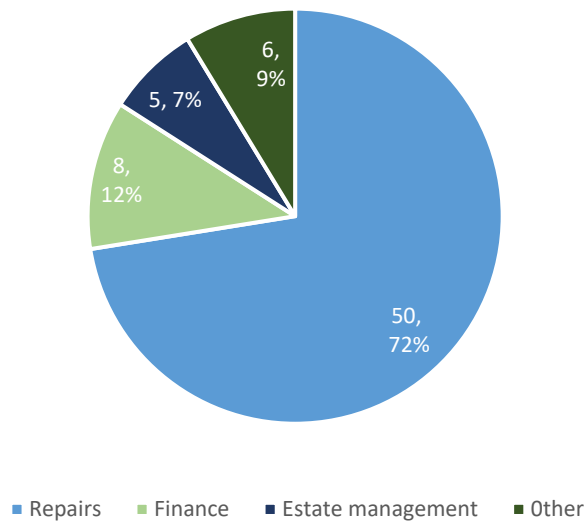


- 2.9 The repairs service received the highest complaints this year, which aligns with the previous year. 73% of the closed complaints related to the repairs service (50), which represents an increase of around 25% compared to the previous year. 11% concerned finance services (8), the same as last year. 7% related to Estate Management (5), similar to last year's number, while tenancy management, client service, and rent and service charges account for the remaining 9%.
- 2.10 Of the 50 repair-related complaints that were received, 30% (15) were about our failure to follow through, 26% (13) concerned poor performance/attitude of contractors, 20% (10) were about our lack /delay in communication, 12% (6) were about other repair-related issues, and the remaining 12% (6) related to unfair treatment and disagreement with decisions.

Cause of Upheld Repair Complaints- Annual



Service Areas - Annual



2.11 There were 8 complaints about Finance Service this year, making this service area the 2<sup>nd</sup> most complained about, same as last year. The complaints were made by client co-ops and were about late

payments. We have continued to experience issues after implementing a new payment system. Staff performance issues within the team also affected the timely payment of invoices. A new finance director joined the team recently and will work with staff to improve performance significantly.

2.12 In 17 cases, we made a compensation or goodwill payment, four instances more than the previous year.

### **3. What have we learnt?**

#### **3.1 Improving communication:**

Half of those who complained about our repair service (25) did so because we failed to respond to their request in a timely manner and follow through on our commitments. We recognise the importance of effective communication and acknowledge that more work needs to be done to ensure that our residents feel informed and are kept up to date with progress. We aim to fully utilize and make better use of our system by ensuring we are consistently recording our commitments to residents. Capturing these commitments will give us visibility within the business of actions we agreed to take as part of a complaint response and enable us to monitor them until completion. Heads of Services and their managers will take the lead in ensuring these commitments and the learning are added to the system and used to improve our performance.

#### **3.2 Developing a positive complaint culture.**

One of the changes made to the complaint handling code by the Housing Ombudsman Service from April 24 is a requirement that landlords must create a positive complaint-handling culture, which is integral to the effectiveness with which disputes are resolved.

We must see complaints as opportunities for development and improvement by shifting our perspective and foster a culture that views complaints as valuable feedback. To this end, we arranged complaint training sessions for complaint and non-complaint handlers in April /May 24 to encourage all staff members to embrace complaints as catalysts for positive change and emphasise the positive outcomes that can arise from customer dissatisfaction. There will be ongoing workshops and complaint-learning sessions throughout the year to help handlers feel more confident and comfortable managing complaints.

### **4 Actions for improvement.**

4.1 The repairs service was the highest-upheld complaint area. Although we resolved most of our complaints at stage 1, the number of upheld cases was noticeably 20% higher than our target and has remained at a high since the previous year. We know that we must consistently apply and embed the learning from complaints within the business to improve our service offer to our residents.

4.2 Significant staff turnover within our repairs team has undoubtedly impacted the service during the year. Two new Repair Advisors joined the team, and with the recent appointment of the Head of Property

Services, the team is fully staffed. An expectation of brilliant follow-through has been written into all staff 24/25 annual objectives to allow individuals to take ownership and be accountable for their area of work/patch.

4.3 The Housing Ombudsman Service updated the Complaint Handling Code, which became a statutory requirement on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. Registered providers like CDS must actively demonstrate that they meet the code requirements by completing a self-assessment statement. The new code represents a significant change, and led to our complaint policy being updated and a new action plan being put in place to address areas where we are not compliant. At their last meeting in May, the Board approved the changes made to the policy and the actions we intend to take to ensure we become compliant with the new code. They also approved the completed self-assessment statement, which will be published on our website before the end of quarter one.

## **5 Policy Implication**

5.1 We continue to be committed to handling complaints in line with the Board-approved Complaints Policy and the newly published Housing Ombudsman Service's Complaints Handling Code. This is to ensure that complaints are dealt with transparently and consistently, regardless of any identities or characteristics of the complainant or the subject of the complaint.

## **6 Equality Implications**

6.1 There are no equality and diversity issues arising from this report. We neither specifically maintain nor analyse demographic data on the complainants.

## **7 Risk Implications**

7.1 Complaints can be a reputational risk, particularly if they are not handled in line with policy or managed with integrity.

7.2 Our aim in managing complaints is to reduce the reputational risk of complaints by always acknowledging and apologising when appropriate. We aim to build trust with customers in this way that even if we get something wrong, we can be relied upon to make it right.

7.3 We also aim to reduce the reputational risk of complaints by learning from complaints and creating actions to reduce complaints over time.

## **9. Recommendation**

9.1 Members are asked to consider and comment on the findings in this report.

**Report created by:** Temi Awolaja

**Date report created:** May 2024