

4OC

Birmingham City Council

Review of Housing Complaints – CLT Report

22nd November 2022



Complaints Trends

New Complaints

- Housing complaints have fallen since Jan 22 driven by a large fall in volume of repair complaints
- Housing Solutions & Support (HS&S) and Housing Management complaints have had small increases since May 22
- Note - Members enquiries are not included in these figures (there were 302 in Sept 22)

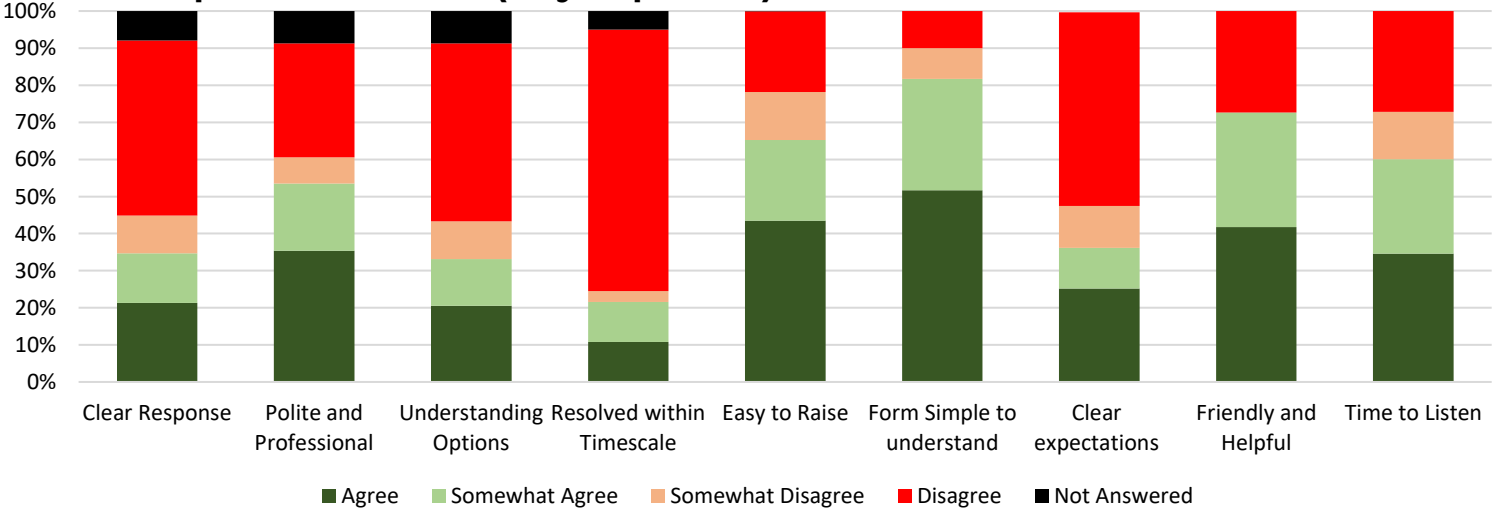
Backlog and Work in Progress (WiP) that has exceeded the SLA target

- Two significant reductions – in 2021 and early 2022 after new policy / process implemented, and after June 2022 when Wates contract was terminated
- Now static at 750 WiP past SLA date. Note – backlog includes both complaints and Member enquiries

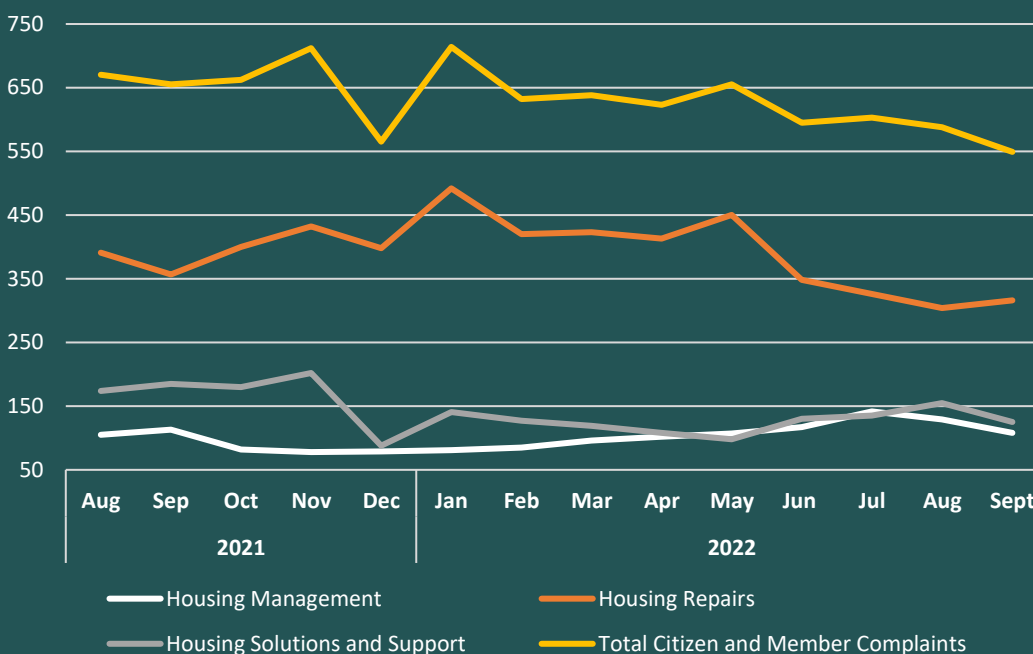
Complaints SLA response time performance (Sept 22)

- Repairs Stage One response times are met 54% and Stage Two met 45%
- Housing management Stage One response times are met 46% and Stage Two met 40%
- HS&S Stage One response times are met 65% and Stage Two met 55%

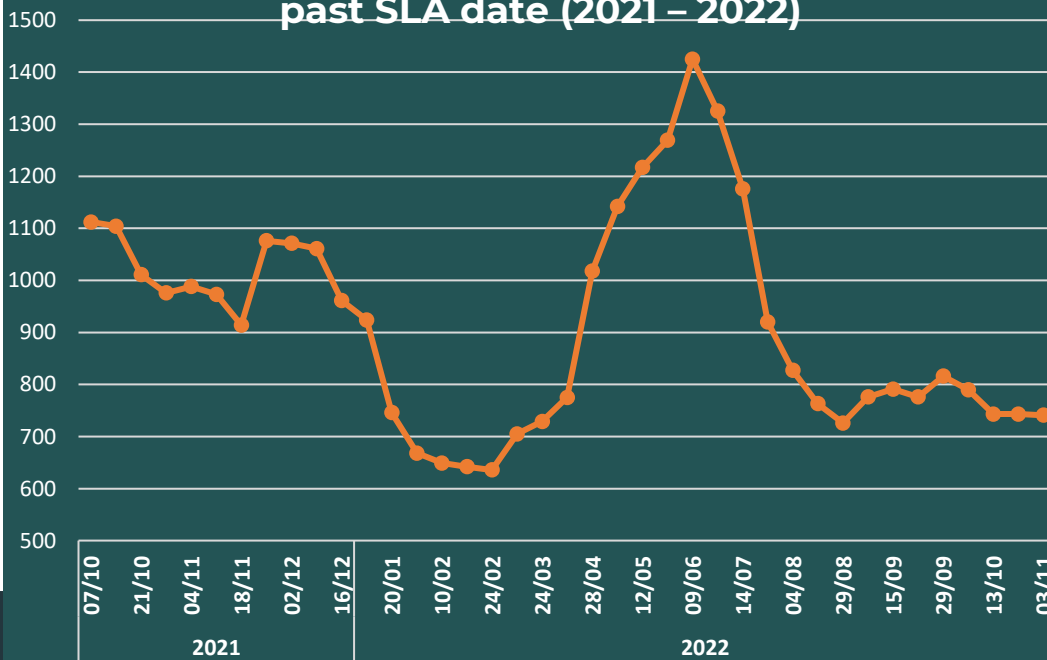
CSAT complaints feedback (July-Sept 2022)



Total number of Citizen and Member Complaints by Service Area



Complaint & Enquiries Backlog and WiP past SLA date (2021 – 2022)



Housing Ombudsman Para 49 Cases

**Number of Cases
Analysis:**
14

**Housing Ombudsman*
Report Range:**
Oct 2017 – Mar 2021

**Primary
Maladministration Type:**
Complaint Process

**Total Compensation
Ordered:**
£6,963.00

City Housing has **self-assessed** as
compliant against the **Housing
Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
for 2021 and 2022**

Housing Ombudsman Case: Root Causes

- In an initial analysis it can be suggested that half of the cases are directly related to ‘Housing Repairs’ (e.g., heating system errors, mouse infestation, communal water pipe breakages), whilst the other half are issues relating to shortfalls in investment (e.g., old kitchen units, leaks in roof cause of disrepair, damp/mould)

Summary of Maladministration types

- 60% of maladministration can be directly attributed to BCC Complaint Handling process/systems (e.g., Handling complaint and compliant response, handling of compensation* and record keeping)
- 40% of maladministration can be attributed to handling of repair/replacements through the complaints process and implementation by contractors
- 2 severe maladministration were directly related to handling of residents reports of complaint points

Investigation and Orders

- There are failures within the ‘record keeping’ process, with 27% of recommendations relating to this
- A systematic failure illustrated within the Ombudsman cases relates to Complaint Handling for Case/Repairs (18%), and poorly justified decision making on outcomes (18%)

Wider Triangulation of Data

- Reflected in the Ombudsman cases, 21% of cases failing to investigate reports/complaint aspects which may correlate to the CSAT feedback (available since July 22) which reports 58% of individuals ‘disagreeing’ or ‘somewhat disagreeing’ with ‘Understanding Options’
- In addition, 19% of cases failing to address residents concerns and manage expectations which can be directly related to the 63% of individuals within the CSAT feedback whom disagree that expectations are clear from BCC communication
- Many of the Ombudsman cases showed significant elapsed time and some lack of empathy/sympathy with the citizen. Extracting this through 4OC’s Case Review, there seems to be an issue relating to the tone of response in certain cases. As a result the tone of response should be examined through a human-centric approach rather than a technical response

*** These were all Housing Ombudsman cases, not Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman cases. The dates are from the initial complaint to the Ombudsman and preceded the implementation of the new complaints process.**

Progress Made

Quality and process

- A new complaints and enquiries processes was implemented in April (Citizens) and May (Members) 21
- Weekly progress meetings from May 22 with Housing SRO (Steve Wilson)
- Targeted focus on Stage 2 complaints to avoid referrals to Ombudsman
- Delegated authority to two BCC complaints managers to award compensation up to the value of £250 without approval from senior management
- Focus on 'resolved no further action' as the first response
- Extra focus on backlog / WiP – temporary, re-allocated resource recently agreed, weekly monitoring and resolutions, dedicated leads in service areas

Root Causes

- Analysis of root cause has been started with service areas but needs to expand
- Each service area to have a dedicated service improvement action plan starting with one of the top 5 reasons, once addressed another top 5 reason will be action planned in the same way (further analysis currently being undertaken)
- Contractor focus - lead contacts for each contractor; more direct, senior contact
- Repairs contract change - Wates contract ended March 22 with Equans starting April 22
- Pre-emptive meeting with Ombudsman about Wates backlog



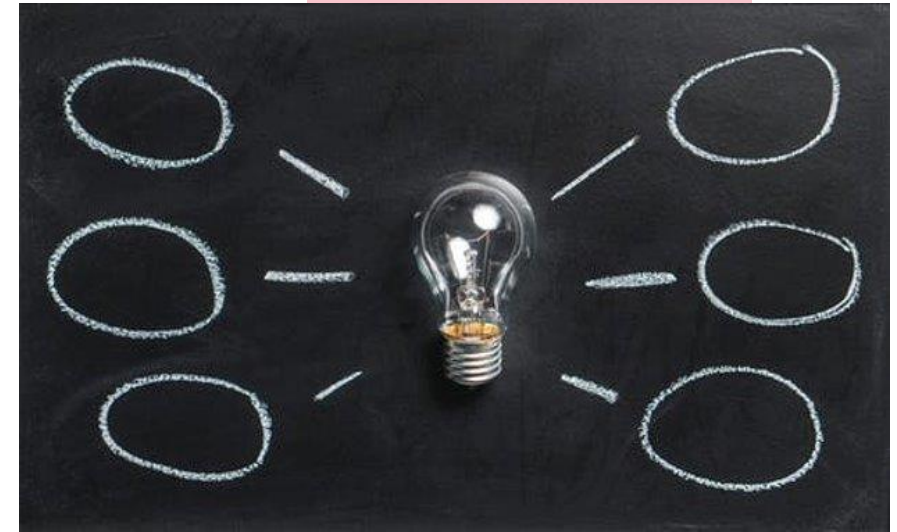
Complaints Learning – quality and process

Summary

- Progress is being made – the Complaints team are highly regarded and seen as going the extra mile, but there are process and quality-of-response issues from City Housing teams still to resolve

Focus:

- Improve the quality of some responses e.g. acknowledge root causes and difficulties with options, and consistently reflect BCC Customer Charter through empathy and understanding
- Complaints response times are only 40-65% met, showing the need for targeted improvements on the process, technology and use of automation
- Members enquires make up 35% of all complaints and enquiries handled by City Housing (Sept 22). Proactive engagement with Members should be a focus, to explain relevant policies helping to reduce these numbers, manage expectations and reinforce the correct processes to follow
- The RSH and Ombudsman will focus on how BCC manage citizen expectations and outcomes which, from CSAT feedback available since July 22, score relatively poorly
- Greater support for City Housing staff on quality-of-response from the Complaints and Enquiries Team to understand what is a good complaint response



Complaints Learning - root causes

Summary

- Progress is being made – backlog reduced, numbers more manageable and reducing in some areas, but root causes need more focus

Focus:

- Current 'complaints-management' focus and inadequate complaints categorisation means that root cause analysis is not yet being easily and consistently analysed and addressed
- Greater analysis and insight on the root will drive service improvement, lead to investigation of quality of homes and influence investment, approach to TA or operating model
- Complaints and Enquiries team and service leads need to continue collaborating on this and aligning it with other BCC improvement work
- Specifically, more scrutiny is needed of the impact of the overall Quality of Home, the 39% non-decent homes and the decision to prioritise building safety work. From our analysis of ombudsman reports (roofs, leaks) and the sample of complaints (multiple boiler failures), this is negatively impacting on the number of complaints
- The 'Quality of Home' underlying cause of complaints is a focus for the Regulator / Ombudsman and the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures, so this needs to be identified and addressed

Next steps

- Action plan for City Housing produced based around all these findings

