

<b>Board:</b>	<b>EMH HOMES BOARD</b>
<b>Meeting date:</b>	<b>07 JUNE 2024</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>2023-24 ANNUAL COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE &amp; SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT</b>
<b>Author:</b>	<b>ANNETTE DUNWELL- MORGAN (HEAD OF QUALITY &amp; PERFORMANCE)</b>

### 1.0 Purpose

This report provides members with an overview of complaints performance, lessons learned and service improvements in the 2023/24 financial year.

### 2.0 Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment/emh Complaints Policy

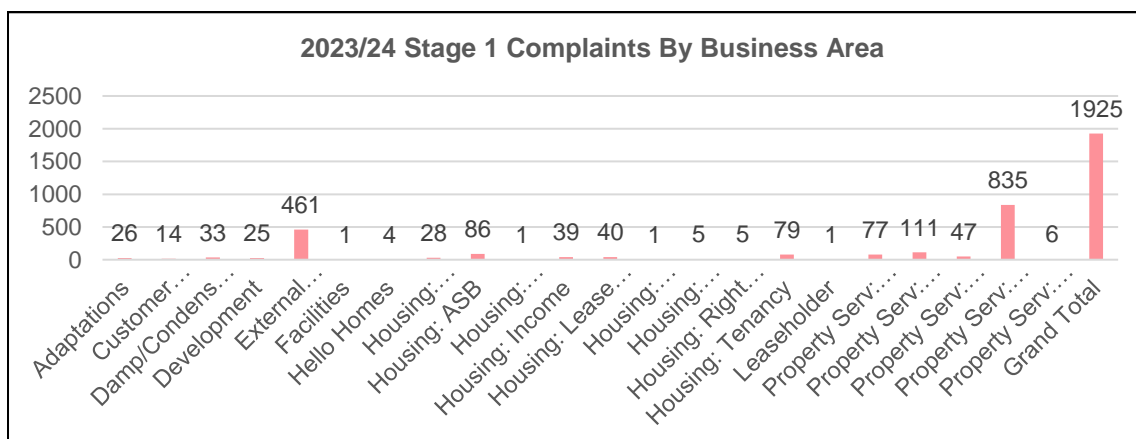
- 2.1 The Annual Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment was completed in May 2024 to ensure emh Complaints Policy compliance with the new Code's requirements. (See Appendix 1: emh Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment and Appendix 2: emh Complaints Policy).
- 2.2 Overall, we are largely compliant with the new Complaint Handling Code and believe we are not compliant with only two of ninety plus criteria.

### 3.0 Stage 1 Complaints

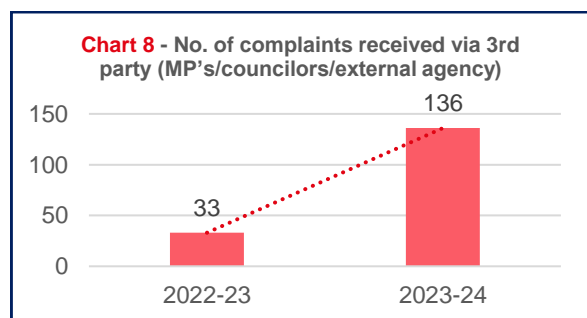
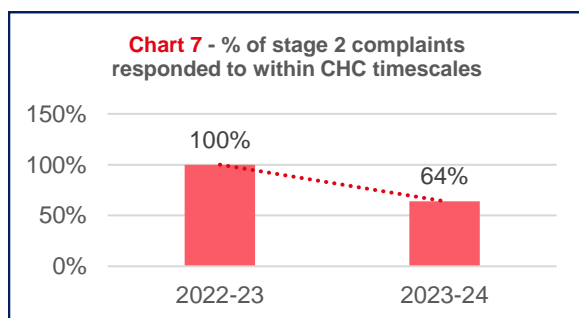
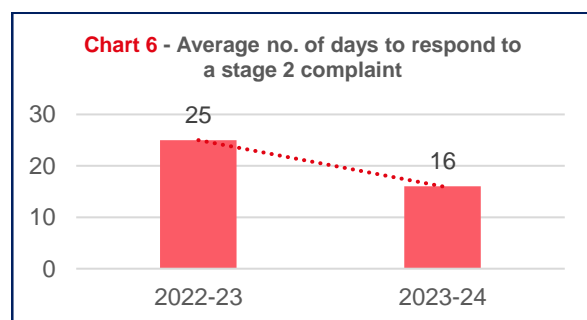
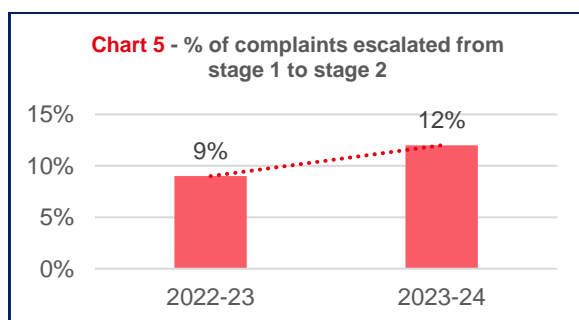
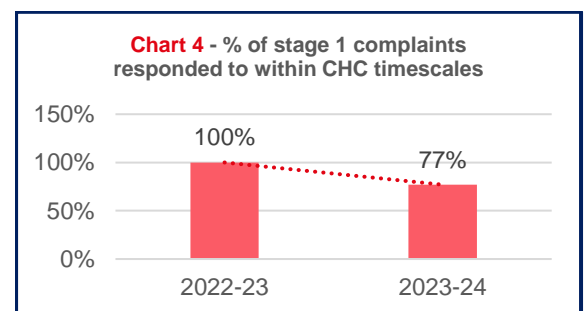
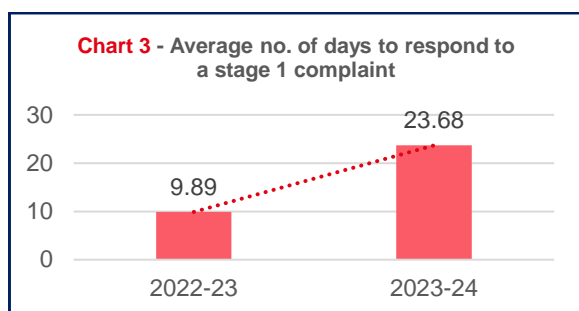
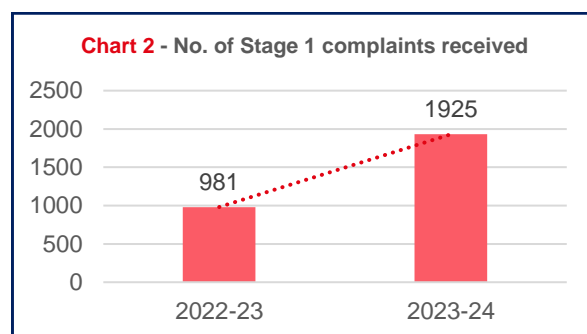
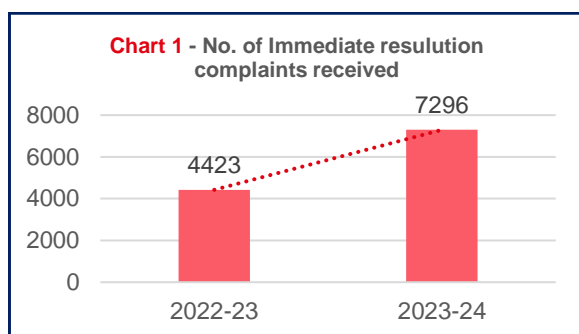
3.1 In 2023/24, the total number of stage 1 complaints totalled 1925. This represents a 97% increase compared to 2022/2023 (981). Chart 1 shows that the three top areas for complaints in 2023/2024 were external contractors (Liberty Gas), Property Services – Reactive Repairs and Property Services – Inhouse Team. This was the same in 2022-23.

<b>2022/23</b>	<b>981</b>	stage 1 complaints received for year ending 2022/23.
<b>2023/24</b>	<b>1925</b>	stage 1 complaints received for year ending 2023/24.

### 3.2 Chart 1 Showing 2023/24 Formal Complaints by Business Area



## 4.0 Complaint Volumes, Trends and Analysis



## 5.0 Stage 1 Complaints Analysis

5.1 Chart 2 shows the number of stage 1 complaints doubled between 2022-23 (981) and 2023-24 (1925). This was due to several factors - a widespread government campaign encouraging residents to complain, our strict adherence to the Housing Ombudsman's requirement to record service requests as complaints after two customer call backs and lastly, a substantial increase in gas complaints at the end of 2023 and in early 2024.

5.2 Chart 3 shows the average time to respond to a stage 1 complaint increased substantially in 2023-24 (24 days) compared to 10 days in 2022-23. The 2023-24 increase was due to the winter seasonal backlog which commenced in late November. Between November 23 and January 24, the volume of new weekly complaints averaged at around 55 and peaked at 81 in early December. In non-winter months, the normal volume of weekly complaints would sit between 20-30. With advisors working at full capacity, the 150% increase in complaints led to an inevitable backlog.

## Gas Complaints - Key Causes

- 5.3 Between December 2023 and March 2024, gas and boiler issues/repairs were the key causes of complaints. Service failure areas included missed appointments, time taken to resolve the service issue, repeat breakdowns, lack of parts and insufficient communication.

### Actions Taken to Prevent Seasonal Complaints Backlog

- 5.4 In November 2023, proactive action was taken to prepare for the seasonal increase in complaints. Additional processes were implemented, and three additional staff members recruited to log and acknowledge complaints. As complaint volumes increased and the backlog grew, the Team was hit by three experienced staff members going on long-term sick leave. Despite the Team's efforts, the backlog ensued, and it was not possible to respond to stage 1 complaints within the 10-day complaint handling code timescale.

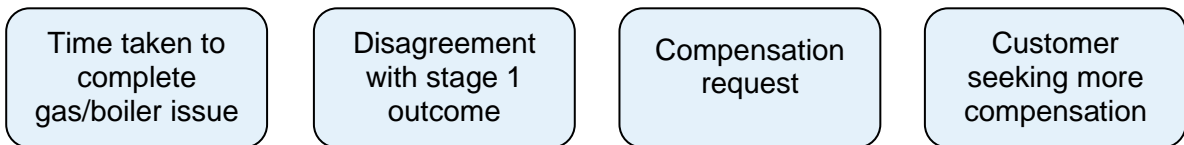
### Stage 1 Complaint Root Causes

- 5.5 In 2023-24 the main complaint root causes were: communication, limited or delayed contact, length of time to carry out a job/arrange repair, unclear information or advice, poor emails/letters, and quality of work.

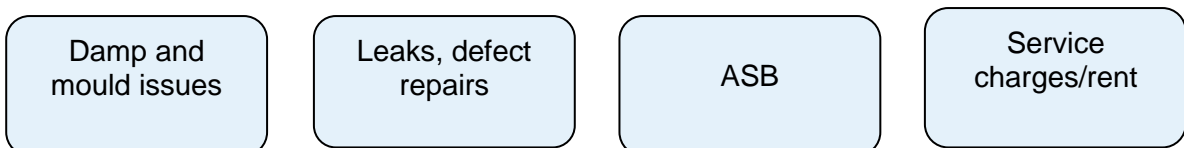
## 6.0 Stage 2 Complaints

- 6.1 Chart 7 shows that the percentage of stage 2 complaints responded to within complaint handling code timescales was substantially lower in 2023-24 (64%) compared to 2022-23 (100%). The 2022-23 figure reflects the percentage of stage 2 complaints responded to within a timeframe, which included an approved extension agreed with the customer. In line with the new Complaint Handling Code, the 2023-24 figure (64%) does not include extensions. 89% of 2023-24 stage 2 complaints were responded to within an extension timeframe agreed with the customer.

- 6.2 In 2023-24, on average, 12% of stage 1 complaints were escalated to stage 2. Most stage 1 escalations were linked to gas and reactive repairs. The top four escalation reasons included:



Additional stage 2 complaint themes included:



## 4.0 Ombudsman Enquiries, Information Requests and Determinations

- 4.1 2023-24 Ombudsman enquiries, information requests and determinations.

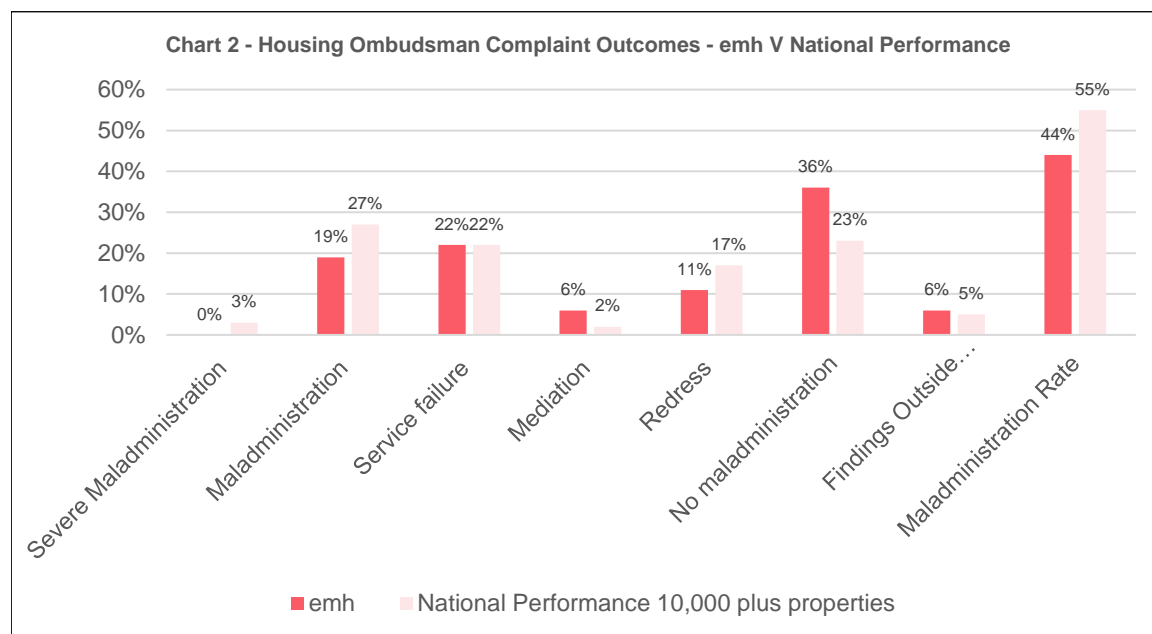
<b>2023/24</b>	<b>Enquiries</b>	<b>Information Requests</b>	<b>Determinations</b>
	<b>26</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>

## 5.0 Annal Housing Ombudsman Landlord Performance Report

- 5.1 The Annual Housing Ombudsman Service Landlord Performance Report provides data showing how individual landlords have performed in relation to: the number of cases determined, maladministration findings, orders made, compensation paid to residents following Ombudsman intervention and the maladministration rate.
- 5.2 The emh 2022/23 Annual Housing Ombudsman Service Landlord Performance Report is the organisation’s most recent HO publication and shows that emh received 16 determinations, 25 recommendations and was ordered to pay £7,595 compensation. Non-maladministration was found in 36% of complaint cases referred to the Housing Ombudsman. See **Appendix 3** to view the full report.
- 5.3 Table 2.0 shows that in 2022-23, emh performed better than the national average, in key areas, when compared to similar sized landlords.

Table 2.0 – emh 2022-23 Annual Housing Ombudsman Performance Report Results

Complaint Outcome	emh	National Performance Landlords 10,000+ Units
Severe Maladministration	0%	3%
Maladministration	19%	27%
Service failure	22%	22%
Mediation	6%	2%
Redress	11%	17%
No maladministration	36%	23%
Findings Outside Jurisdiction	6%	5%
Maladministration Rate	44%	55%

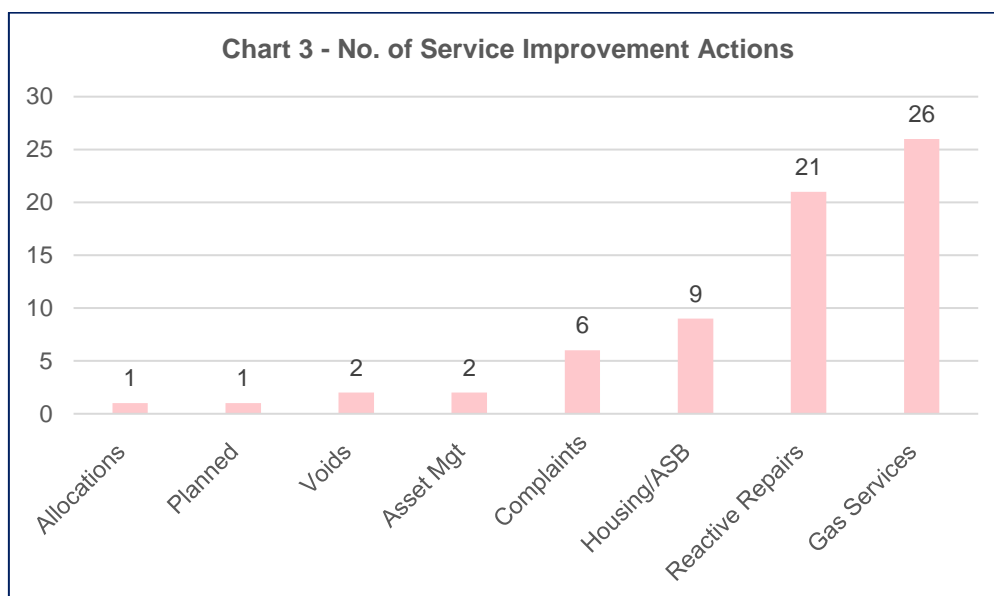


## 6.0 Learning from Complaints and Service Improvements

- 6.1 Between July 2023 and March 2024 nine lessons learned meetings took place, involving teams from gas services, reactive repairs, voids, housing/ASB, asset management, allocations, and planned repairs. Attendees included heads of service, service managers and members of the complaints team.

6.2 During the meetings, Stage 2 and Housing Ombudsman complaints were reviewed and lessons learned identified. The complaint review process resulted in 68 service improvement actions being discussed, agreed, implemented, and monitored. These included local operational improvements and actions, which were picked up as part of larger improvement projects such as the Reactive Repairs Big Project and Stage 1 and 2 Complaints Review. See **Appendix 4** for an overview of service improvements arising from learning from complaints – 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

6.3 Chart 3 shows the number of lessons learned service improvement actions agreed during stage 2 and Housing Ombudsman complaint review meetings.



6.4 Lessons Learned themes, across all departments, centred around the timeliness of repairs, complaint handling processes, communication / keeping residents informed, compensation, communication between departments, contractor issues and repairs processes.

## 7.0 Complaints Customer Feedback

7.1 Between July 2023 and 31 March 2024, 130 customers responded to a survey asking for their views on the outcome of the complaint and complaint handling process.

### Complaints Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

Performance Indicator	
% of complainants satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the complaint outcome	<b>65%</b>
% of complainants satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the handling of the complaint	<b>54%</b>
% of complaints who felt the advisor who dealt with the complaint treated them with fairness and respect	<b>80%</b>
% of complainants who felt they received the right amount of communication from logging their complaint to receiving a response letter	<b>67%</b>

## 8.0 Complaint Handling Process Developments / Service Improvements

8.1 As a result of self-identified improvement requirements, customer feedback, learning from internal stage 2 and Housing Ombudsman complaint reviews and Housing Ombudsman service failure

determinations, the following improvements were made to our complaint handling processes during 2023-24:

- Divided the Complaint Resolution Team into specialist areas to help develop their knowledge and understanding and aid investigation within specific service areas.
- Delivered enhanced staff training in how to manage cases from start to finish including creating draft letters throughout the process and ensuring they maintain contact with the resident.
- All Complaint Resolution Advisors attended two development workshops delivered by an external consultant to help improve their letter writing skills and approach to complaint handling.
- Reviewed and amended stage 1 and 2 complaints processes and complaints policy to ensure compliance with Housing Ombudsman complaint handling requirements.
- Reviewed ombudsman cases with advisors, during team meetings, to increase their awareness of the importance of investigating all areas of the complaint and providing a comprehensive response.
- Discussed with scrutiny panel members how we can reengage customers in stage 1 and 2 complaint handling processes.
- Commenced quality assurance checks to improve the standard of stage 1 response letters issued from Complaint Resolution Team. Coaching and additional support was put in place for the Complaint Resolution Advisor's (CRAs) whose responses require improvement following the checks. We now have more confidence that the letters issued by CRAs are of a high quality, investigation is detailed and there is a justified summary and resolution offered.
- Recruited and trained 5 residents from our core groups who will play a key role in observing, monitoring, and reviewing our stage 1 and 2 complaint processes, and lessons learned procedures.

## **9.0 Complaints Not Accepted**

- 9.1 In 2023-24, 12 resident complaints were not accepted by emh. 5 complaints were excluded due to the issue occurring over 6 months ago. A further 5 complaints were excluded due to the dissatisfaction arising from a policy issue, which is not addressed through the complaints process. **See Appendix 5** for a full summary of complaints not accepted and the rationale for exclusion.

## **10.0 Business Wide Service Improvement Projects**

### **Scrutiny Panel Complaints Investigation and Service Improvement Plan**

- 10.1 Emh scrutiny panel commenced a complaints review in January 2022. The final report incorporated 43 service improvement actions. Scrutiny panel monitored completion of the improvement actions from start to finish, periodically meeting with staff from across the business to discuss progress and providing regular updates to Homes Board.

### **Big Project – Reactive Repairs Service Improvement Programme**

- 10.2 The Big Project, which began in 2023, involved a review and redesign of the reactive repairs service to improve the customer and colleague experience. Key repairs processes were reviewed, in conjunction with residents, and lessons learned from repairs complaint reviews incorporated. From their findings, targeted improvement areas included workflows, no access visits, emergency jobs, system configurations and gas contactor processes. 120 service improvement actions were identified over 3 phases. 69 service improvement actions were completed during phase 1 and 2, and the remaining actions will be addressed in Phase 3 which will commence in May 2024.

## **11.0 Recommendations**

- 11.1 That members discuss and provide a written response to this paper.