

# RHP Annual Complaints Report 2023-24

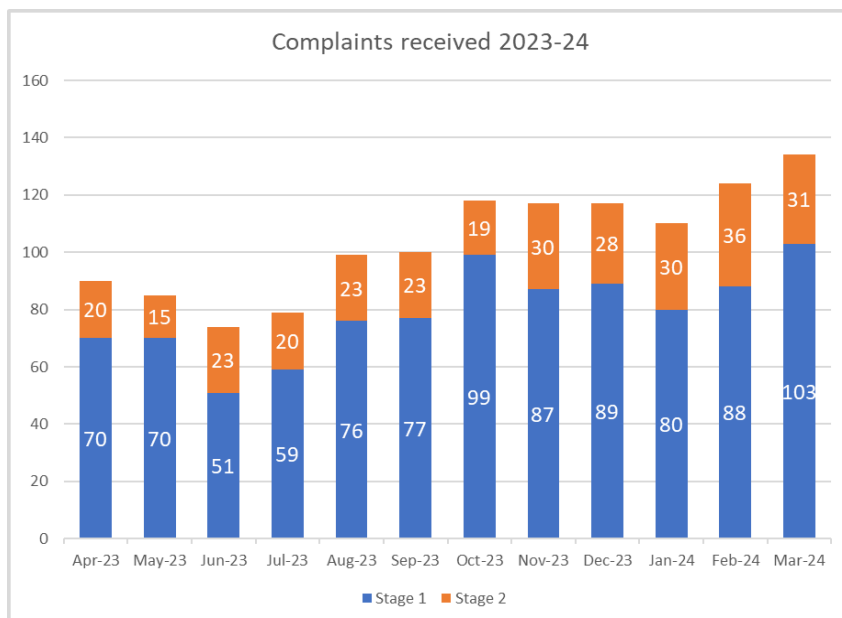
In 2023/2024 we continued to see volumes of complaints increase from 601 (2022/23) to 960 (2023/2024) at stage one and 147 to 300 at stage two. These volumes continue to put pressure on the service teams and complaints team to handle complaints as set out within our policy.

Complaints performance is reported as part of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM). There are three measures relating to complaints.

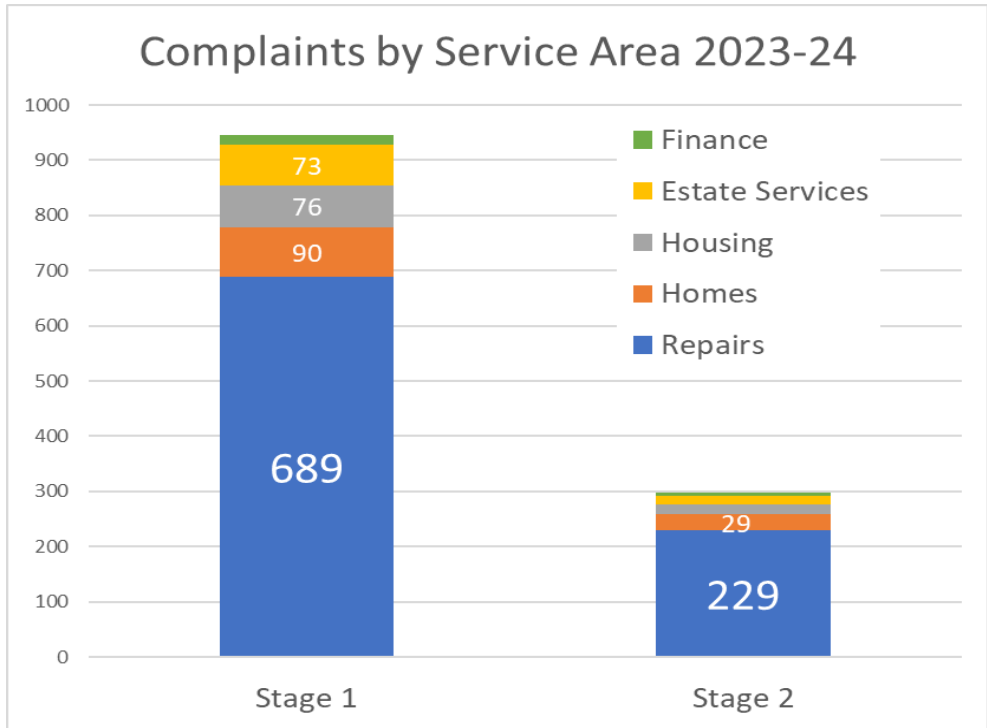
- Stage one complaints completed within service level agreement (SLA) 75.1%.
- Stage two complaints completed within SLA 46.5%. (This data includes CO-OP Homes as part of the RHP Group. Without Co-op stage one SLA 75.1%. Stage two responses 46.9%).
- Satisfaction with complaints handling. This is what the customer considers is a complaint not necessarily one that has been through our complaints policy. The score was 25.2%

In relation to complaint handling as part of the TSM measures, if either the acknowledgement or response is sent out of SLA this counts as not met. Due to the volumes of complaints and resource issues throughout last year meeting these measures has been difficult. However, since April there has been a significant improvement in overall complaints management.

The table below sets out the breakdown of complaints handled at each stage. This shows that the majority are resolved at Stage 1. However, within the last six months, we have seen an increase in cases escalating to stage two.



The table below sets out the service area for complaints during 2023/24. The majority continue to relate to the repairs service and we have yet to see a significant improvement in the repairs Service since the launch of RHP Home in July 2023.



The main reasons for dissatisfaction at stage one are:

- The communication throughout the repairs process and not keeping the customer updated.
- The time taken to carry out the repair and the repair/works outstanding or not completed.
- A lack of case ownership of repair cases to ensure works have been completed, not updating customers, and managing contractors to ensure works are completed.

The increase in complaints escalating from stage 1 to stage 2 are:

- **Communication** – Failure to keep customers informed of progress, driven by failures within the repairs customer journey. Delays in responding to customers communication and no response from teams to update customers or internal colleagues to provide updates to customers.
- **Ownership** – A lack of case ownership of repair cases to ensure works have been completed, not updating customers where there are delays and managing contractors to ensure works are completed. We are often informed by customers that work hasn't been completed by contractors, rather than us managing contractors to ensure work is completed.
- **Length of Time** – Customers remain dissatisfied with the length of time it is taking for work to be completed and that multiple surveyors or contractors are appointed and then change leading to lengthy delays in completing works.

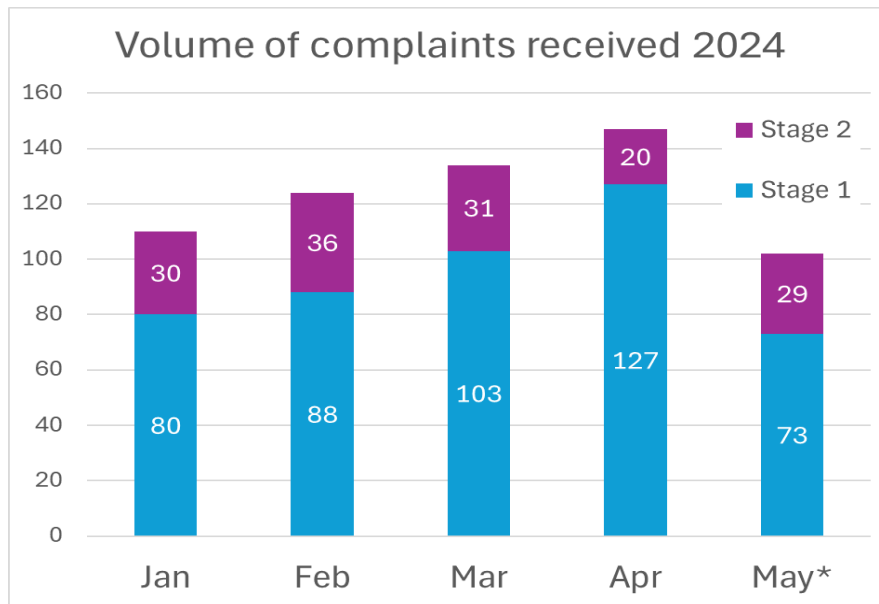
The focus in 2024-25 for complaints management are detailed in the table below.

Complaints Management 2024/25 Improvement Plan	By When	Status
Improving response times at both acknowledgement and final response to ensure that	Immediate	Since 01/04/2024, responses are back within SLA in line with the code, and

Complaints Management 2024/25 Improvement Plan	By When	Status
90% plus meet the timescales.		performance in back on track. This is being monitored Daily via a CRM Dashboard, and weekly by the Executive Group to ensure we remain on track throughout the year.
Strengthening the Complaints Team so that they are permanent employees, and more are recruited to handle the increased volume of complaints. This will also involve moving to a case management model of managing complaints and tracking all actions through to resolution.	June/July 2024	In progress
Reviewing and strengthening our compensation policy in line with the Housing Ombudsman guidance to ensure compliance in this area.	July 2024	In Progress
Improve the quality of stage one and stage two responses through ongoing training and coaching.	Ongoing	Ongoing.  May 2024 - Complaints and Complex Case Manager now in post to coach and train complaint handlers to review and improve responses in line with the complaint handling code.  May 2024 – Tone of Voice/Complaints training completed with the team to improve quality of response.
Improve repairs case management through ensuring there are case handlers for each complaint to prevent complaints escalating	May-July 2024	April 2024 – Complaints team are case managing all cases through to resolution. June/July 2024 – Project to improve Repairs customer journey, with the aim to ensure customers are kept up to date throughout their repair journey.

Complaints Management 2024/25 Improvement Plan	By When	Status
Set up a customer Complaints Service Review Group as part of our customer engagement strategy to review our performance and approach to complaints management.	July 2024	In Progress
Make further changes to the way we use our customer management system (CRM) to case manage ensuring all records are up to date and information is recorded, inline with HOS spotlight on Knowledge and Information Management.	Jun-September 2024	In progress.
Make changes to the customer management system to better record a customer's service adjustments and vulnerabilities.	July 2024	In progress. Customer Data group are working on requirements and implementation plan currently.

## Current Position 2024/25



From April 2024 we have improved our performance in complaints management to ensure that responses at stage one and two are acknowledged and responded to on time in over 90% of cases. We have moved to a case management approach to managing complaints to prevent escalation through the formal complaints process. All cases remain open and actions are being tracked via our CRM dashboard through to completion.

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

The complaints policy is reviewed annually and the proposed new policy is attached as appendix 1. The policy has been updated to reflect the changes to the new Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code from April this year. Once approved by the Executive Group this will need to be approved by the Board.

## NEW COMPLAINT HANDLING CODE SELF ASSESSEMENT

The Housing Ombudsman introduced a strengthened Complaint Handling Code from April 2024. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 places a duty on us to monitor compliance against the Code, in policy and practice. As part of the Code, the Ombudsman has greater powers, and they will be working alongside the regulator to step in if they aren't satisfied that landlords are complying with the code.

The self-assessment against the code is attached at appendix 2. This was considered by the Executive Group in April and the attached builds on feedback from this last review.

## HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE UPDATE

During 2023/2024 the Housing Ombudsman issued RHP with 16 determinations for complaints it had investigated. One of these, was a finding of severe maladministration and the remainder were a combination of service failure and or maladministration. The details of these complaints and determinations are set out within appendix 3.

There are a number of common themes / lessons learnt from the orders and recommendations received that fall within the following areas:

- Communication & Case Management
- Training and policies
- Knowledge and information management
- Vulnerabilities and service adjustments

We received a complaint handling failure order from the Ombudsman in September 2023 for a failure to provide timely information following a determination relating to compliance with the orders they had made. As a result of this we have implemented the following measures to reduce the risk of this happening again.

- All cases are now managed and tracked via the Housing Ombudsman's own portal.
- We have strengthened our case management to report and track on compliance with orders.
- Regular performance updates to the Executive Group on complaints performance
- Restructure of the complaints team to ensure there is greater oversight of managing cases.

The Housing Ombudsman wrote to all landlords in October 2023 in relation to their annual performance reports for 2022/23. The letter highlights that during 2022/23 they made six findings for RHP with a maladministration rate of 83.3%. They have highlighted that this is higher than the national average with only 25 landlords with a rate over 75%. The six cases referred to were reported to SDTC during this period upon receipt of the determinations, with confirmations of actions and learnings completed. For context, although we received 6 findings from the Ombudsman these are a small number compared to the 749 complaints we received during 2022-23. However, our maladministration rate has increased significantly during 2023/24 and we had our first severe maladministration finding in January 2024, and have received a second in April 2024.

We received a further letter from the Housing Ombudsman in February 2024 advising us that they had seen an increase in cases referred to them from RHP customers and a significant increase in our maladministration rate. As a result of this, members of the senior leadership team met with the Housing Ombudsman to discuss this. We are continuing to review the current cases with the Ombudsman to try and resolve them although this will not significantly impact the determination. The overwhelming majority of these cases are linked to our repairs service and ongoing delays in completing repairs.

Since 01 April 2024 to date we have received 14 determinations from the Ombudsman. In two of these cases we received determinations of reasonable redress.

In 3 of these cases we have received findings of severe maladministration. A summary of these cases and the orders and recommendations can be found below. We will ensure that all orders are complied with.

Case Summary	Determination	Orders & Recommendations
<p><b>Case 1</b></p> <p>Customer reported a roof leak into her home in 2022 which was causing associated damp and mould. We failed to act to fix the leak permanently. The family have now been permanently decanted to a new home, and the roof scheduled for replacement through our planned works programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was severe maladministration in respect of the landlord's response to the resident's reports of leaks from the roof and the associated damp and mould.</li> <li>• In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was service failure in respect of the landlord's handling of the resident's complaint.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apologise to the resident. The Chief Executive must make the apology in writing after reviewing this report.</li> <li>• In addition to the £500 compensation already awarded by the landlord in its stage 2 complaints response, the landlord must pay the resident a further £2495.85 compensation. This is broken down as: i. £394.85 for the loss of the use of a bedroom as outlined in paragraph 51 of this report. £2000 for the time, trouble, distress and inconvenience caused to the resident as a result of the landlord's handling of the resident's reports of leaks from the roof and the associated damp and mould. iii. £100 for the distress and inconvenience caused to the resident by its complaint handling failures.</li> <li>• If the landlord has not been able to decant the resident it must consider and discuss interim measures such as dehumidifiers and mould washes with the resident to help support her while she waits for permanent accommodation to become available.</li> <li>• Within 8 weeks of the date of this report the landlord must complete a case review on the</li> </ul>

Case Summary	Determination	Orders & Recommendations
		issues identified in this report and its overall failures and provide a copy of the case review to this Service.
<p><b>Case 2</b></p> <p>The customer had reported damp and mould for a number of years prior to their complaint but the Ombudsman’s investigation focussed on the way this was handled from November 2022. We carried out a number of inspections to assess the damp and mould throughout 2023. The customer also reported concerns regarding asbestos in their home. A roof leak was identified as the probable cause of the leak. The Ombudsman stated that we did not follow our repairs policy and our actions throughout show a delay in progressing repairs and a lack of evidence with regards to any meaningful action being taken. There was also a failure to provide clear actions with timeframes of when and what is intended to do or any evidence of us adopting a proactive approach to mitigating damp and mould within the property. Additionally, we failed to assess the risk level of the impact of the damp and mould on the customer and her family despite being repeatedly informed that they were sleeping in their living room due to the damp, and of their health concerns. These failures were over a significant period of time, which would have understandably caused considerable distress and inconvenience to the resident.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After carefully considering all the evidence, this complaint, about the landlord’s response to the resident’s complaint regarding damp, mould, and multiple repair issues in December 2021, is not within the Ombudsman’s jurisdiction under Paragraph 42(b).</li> <li>• In accordance with paragraph 54 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was severe maladministration by the landlord in its response to reports of damp and mould in the resident’s property in November 2022.</li> <li>• In accordance with paragraph 54 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was maladministration by the landlord in its response to roof and guttering repairs to the property.</li> <li>• In accordance with paragraph 54 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was maladministration by the landlord in its response to the resident’s concerns about the presence of asbestos in her property.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a. Arrange for an apology to be given to the resident by the chief executive.</li> <li>• b. Pay the resident a total of £2,739.21 compensation. This amount is inclusive of the £390 previously offered and is made up of: i. £1,000 for its failures in respect of its response to the resident’s reports of damp and mould in her property. ii. £600 for its failures with regards to its handling of the repairs to the resident’s roof and guttering. iii. £600 for its failures with regards to its response to the resident’s concerns about the presence of asbestos in her property. iv. £539.21 the loss of the use of a bedroom during the 24 week period covered by this report i.e. between 17 November 2022 to 4 May 2023. c.</li> <li>• To review its handling of the damp and mould in this case against the new Damp and Mould policy it issued in January 2024. The landlord is then to provide this Service with a summary of what learning it has taken from this case and what actions, if</li> </ul>



Case Summary	Determination	Orders & Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In accordance with paragraph 54 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was maladministration by the landlord in respect of the level of compensation offered.</li> </ul>	<p>any, it intends to take as a result.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. To review its record keeping processes and procedures light of both the findings in this report and the recommendations made in this Service’s Knowledge and Information Management (KIM) report. The landlord is then to provide this Service and the resident with the outcomes of its review and details about what actions it intends to take as a result. The landlord does not need to undertake a full self-assessment against the Spotlight recommendations, if it can demonstrate it has done one since the report’s publication.</li> <li>e. To arrange for a senior member of staff to carry out an inspection of the resident’s property to establish the current position with regards to the damp and mould, asbestos, roof and guttering at the resident’s property. If any of these issues have not been resolved the landlord is to put together a plan of action, with timescales, as to how it intends to seek a long-term solution to tackle them. This is be agreed with the resident and her representative, and</li> </ul>

Case Summary	Determination	Orders & Recommendations
		<p>then shared with this Service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• f. Accept a new formal complaint from the resident if she remains dissatisfied with its response with regards to the damp and mould in her property following its final response of 4 May 2023.</li> <li>• g. Confirm that it has complied with these orders.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Case 3</b></p> <p>This relates to a number of issues including ongoing repairs, access to the building and property due to the customer's disabilities, reports of antisocial behaviour and how we responded to his vulnerabilities and health and welfare concerns. There was a finding of severe maladministration in our response to the resident's vulnerabilities, health and welfare concerns. We record information about vulnerabilities on our system and recognise the importance of capturing service adjustments. The Ombudsman's report highlights the need for strong record keeping in evidencing the actions that we have taken to support customers appropriately.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was severe maladministration by the landlord in its response to the resident's vulnerabilities, health and welfare concerns.</li> <li>• In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was maladministration by the landlord in its handling of the resident's reports of broken floorboards.</li> <li>• In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was maladministration by the landlord in its handling of the resident's concerns about accessing the building and his property given his disabilities.</li> <li>• In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within four weeks of the date of this report, the landlord's chief executive is ordered to offer an apology to the resident for the failings set out in this report. A copy of the apology must be shared with this Service.</li> <li>• Within four weeks of the date of this report, the landlord is ordered to pay the resident £3,300 compensation. This must be paid directly to the resident and made up as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. £750 for the for the distress and inconvenience caused to the resident in its response to his vulnerabilities, health and welfare concerns.</li> <li>b. £800 for the distress and inconvenience caused to the resident in its handling of his reports of broken floorboards.</li> <li>c. £500 for the distress and inconvenience caused to the resident in its handling of his concerns</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Case Summary	Determination	Orders & Recommendations
	<p>Scheme, there was maladministration by the landlord in its handling of the resident's reports of ASB.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was maladministration by the landlord in its handling of the resident's complaint.</li> <li>• In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was maladministration by the landlord in its handling of the resident's requests for a radiator to be fitted in the kitchen.</li> <li>• In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was no maladministration by the landlord in its handling of the resident's requests for adaptations in the bathroom.</li> <li>• In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was no maladministration by the landlord in its handling of the resident's request for the windows to be cleaned.</li> </ul>	<p>about accessing the building and his property given his disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• d. £350 for the distress and inconvenience caused to the resident in its handling of his request for a radiator to be fitted in the kitchen.</li> <li>e. £150 for the distress and inconvenience caused to the resident in its handling of his reports of ASB.f. £150 for the distress and inconvenience caused to the resident in its handling of his complaint.g. £600 previously offered to the resident by the landlord, if not already paid.</li> <li>• Within four weeks the landlord should contact the resident to discuss his health conditions and ensure its records to accurately reflect the residents' vulnerabilities.</li> <li>• Within four weeks of the date of this report, the landlord is ordered to contact the resident and agree a plan of action to resolve the issues with the floor and arrange for the work to be completed within 6 weeks. A copy of the action plan must be shared with this Service.</li> <li>• Within four weeks of the date of this report, the landlord is ordered to clarify whether the resident's service charge includes provision for</li> </ul>

Case Summary	Determination	Orders & Recommendations
		<p>window cleaning, and if so arrange for the windows to be cleaned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within four weeks of the date of this report, the landlord is ordered to confirm with the resident the timescales for completing lift repairs and ensure this information is accessible to other residents.</li> <li>• In accordance with paragraph 54(g) of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, within eight weeks of the date of this report, the landlord should conduct a senior management review of this case. The review should be presented to the senior leadership team and shared with the Ombudsman. The review must include (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. An exploration of why the failings identified by this investigation occurred, including its lack of consideration of the impact the situation had on the resident.</li> <li>4 b. A review of its working practices and staff training arrangements in relation to the failings set out in this report to ensure it better responds to its vulnerable residents and meets its obligations under the Equality Act, 2010.</li> <li>c. A review of its record keeping processes, in light of the findings in this report and this Service's spotlight</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Case Summary	Determination	Orders & Recommendations
		review on knowledge and information management.

The learnings and key themes from recent determinations are listed below. Which we have captured in our lessons learnt and improvement plans setting out the action we are taking to improve these areas.

- Completing outstanding repairs
- Reviewing the handling of the complaints/cases against policies and the Ombudsman code and relevant spotlight reports.
- Increasing the initial compensation offered due to further delays in resolving the complaint and the impact this has had.
- Set out our plan to improve our repairs service offer to customers.
- Improve case ownership and management. As part of this keeping customers informed and a single point of contact.
- Review how we record/adjust our services due to vulnerabilities.
- Review our approach to Knowledge and Information management in line with the Ombudsman’s guidance.

We currently have 90 cases on the Ombudsman portal. The portal is the Ombudsman’s own management system that enables landlords to also monitor how cases are being progressed and allows for direct communication with the Ombudsman on specific cases. 39 of these cases are currently formal investigations.

Lessons Learnt from our complaints and Ombudsman case determinations are captured below in section 6.

**COMPENSATION**

We paid £127,697 in compensation in 2023/24 compared to £160,480 in 2022/23.

Compensation has been paid to RHP customers as a result of failure in either the service delivered or complaints management. Complaints management is not a reflection generally of the way the complaint response it is to do with not delivering on the commitments made within the response. The compensation is primarily due to delays in completing repairs, and the level of risk and service failures identified.

We are reviewing our compensation policy as set out above in 2024 to ensure this is in line with the Ombudsman guidance, to strengthen our compliance in this area.



Improvement Area	Feedback	Actions Required	Progress
	<p>updates on repair completions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure complaints are managed and tracked through to resolution of all actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New positions/structure created in the Repairs team to address this and manage contractors and update customers through case management.</li> <li>Complaints cases are tracked via a Complaints Dashboard via the complaints team, who will track and monitor actions and cases through to resolution.</li> <li>Review of Complaints Service to ensure an independent case management approach is implemented.</li> <li>Create a complaints dashboard now data can be pulled from CRM to ensure stronger governance across all teams for complaints due/completed, with a quality management system in place for closed stage 2 complaints (audit action)</li> </ul>	<p>Implemented April 2024 – Ongoing</p> <p>In progress April 2024- July 2024</p>
Time Taken to complete Repairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repair cases that escalate through to the formal complaints process are usually due to the length of time or failure to complete work in a timely manner.</li> <li>Determinations from the HOS detail mal-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce the length of time complex repairs take.</li> <li>Review of all Repairs Complaints weekly until volumes of complaints reduce.</li> <li>Complaint cases are to remain open and monitored by the Repairs Head of</li> </ul>	<p>Repairs Service Review – Ongoing April 2024-July 2024.</p> <p>Ongoing – Implemented March 2024.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

Improvement Area	Feedback	Actions Required	Progress
	<p>administration in the handling of repairs due to delays in completing work.</p>	<p>Service and the complaints Team to monitor actions through to resolution before complaints are closed.</p>	
<p>Training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determinations from the Housing Ombudsman have ordered refresher/retraining of key staff in Complaint handling/ASB/Vulnerabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refresher training for all customer facing employees on compliance with the complaints policy and code.</li> <li>• RHP participating in 'Complaints Lab' project with 5 other HAs to review and improve current complaint handling policies and responses to lead on providing sector leading service in complaints handling that complies with the HOS Complaint Handling Code.</li> <li>• Requested Galaxy system access and training across all repairs teams to be compliant with the complaint handling code and to ensure there is a clear audit trail of a complaints journey or repairs case.</li> <li>• ASB Training for all relevant employees following Severe Maladministration in finding</li> </ul>	<p>Completed March and April 2024. Annual training to take place for all employees.</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed March 2024</p>
<p>Recording Vulnerabilities/Service Adjustments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ombudsman has identified that we need to understand or record vulnerabilities or service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update our customer management system to clearly show service adjustments and customer vulnerabilities have been considered.</li> </ul>	<p>In development/ deliver by September 2024</p>



Improvement Area	Feedback	Actions Required	Progress
	adjustments in our handling of some complaints.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a policy detailing our approach to supporting vulnerable customers.</li> </ul>	Completed
Knowledge/Information Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on case handling/actions taken has not been recorded on customers CRM cases files, leading to poor communication with customers and Mal-administration findings based on evidence provided in the handling of cases.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement learnings from the Housing Ombudsman spotlight report on knowledge and information management.</li> </ul>	In progress – April 2024-September 2024
Updating Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following determinations from the Housing Ombudsman review/implement the following policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review Complaints Policy in line with HOS Code</li> <li>Self-Assess against the complaint handling code.</li> <li>Review of ASB Policy/Reports of Noise Nuisance.</li> <li>Supporting Vulnerable customers/service adjustments</li> <li>Review Compensation Policy inline with Housing Ombudsman guidance.</li> </ul>	<p>Completed – April 2024</p> <p>Completed – September 2023/April 2024</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Review of Policy in progress – June/July 2024</p>