



**HOUSING DIRECTORATE  
COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2022-2023**

## **Introduction**

Complaints and compliments are reported monthly on the performance scorecard. This information is then taken to the Housing Senior Management Team (HSMT) and brought for review to the Housing Briefing every 6 months.

Following the implementation of the system iCasework improvements have already started to take effect, the service has the opportunity to review complaints when they are first received and take action to remedy at first point of contact. Work will continue over the next 12 months to provide a quick response to those complaints received where the remedy is an easy fix.

As the Customer Resolution team continue to use the new system we are looking forward to the opportunity of working closely with the Organisation to improve on tenant interactions and reporting on complaints.

The new Somerset Council Complaints Policy was effected on the 1 April 2023. This Policy provides a better service alignment with the Housing Ombudsman Code. It has provided clarity to improve working practices. Within the Complaint Policy section 12 which is specific to Housing you can find detailed content for Housing Complaints.

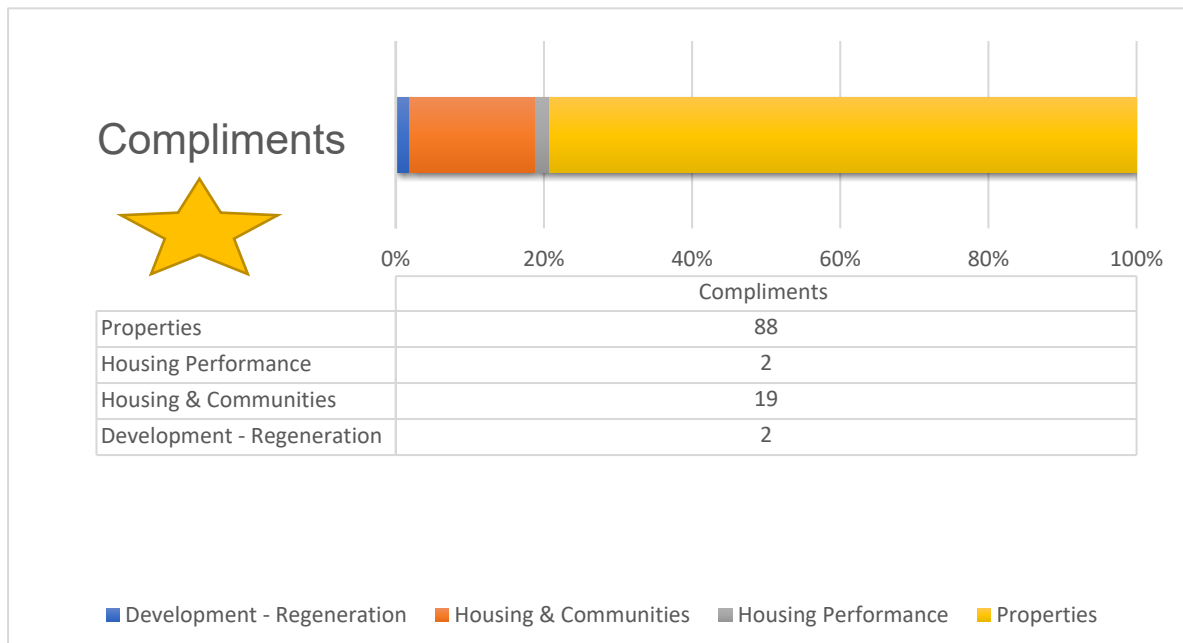
Shared below is a link to Somerset Council Complaints Policy

[SCC - Public - Somerset Council Complaints Policy v1.0 FINAL \(1\).pdf - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Previously we would only contact the complainant in the initial stages of a stage 1 complaint if we didn't have enough information to investigate the complaint. As part of an ongoing commitment to improve complaint handling, all complainants are now contacted in the early stages of a stage 1 complaint investigation to discuss their complaint. We feel that this has improved our communication with complainants, and we are providing action to remedy complaints.

## Compliments

The amount of compliments received this year totals 111, we value this positive feedback. There has been an 18% increase in the amount of compliments received from that of last year.



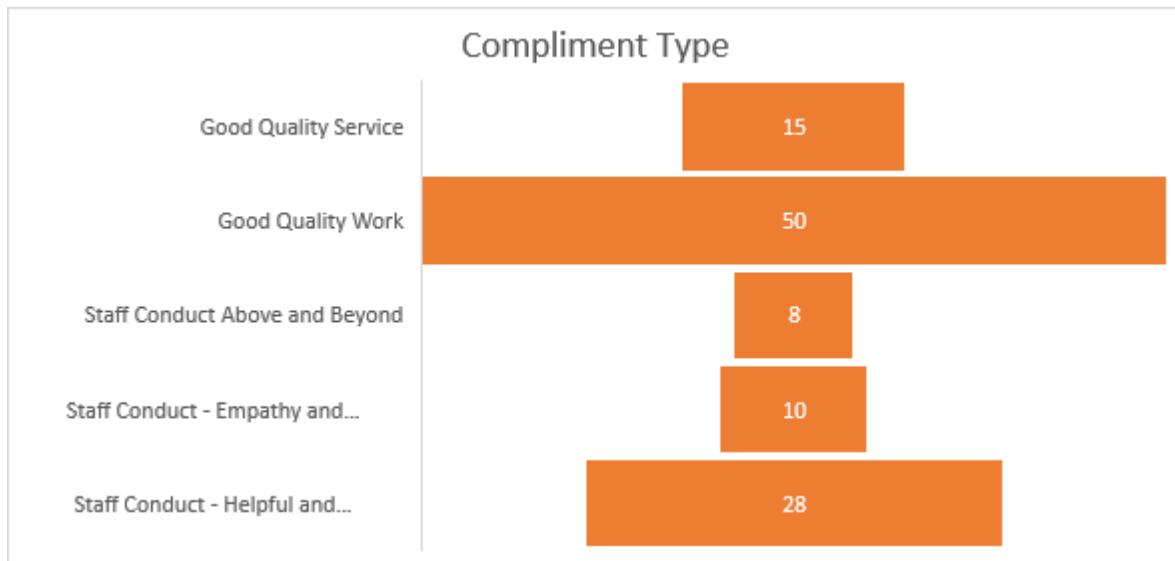
## Testimonials

“Me and my family would like to say thank you for your help and support you have been exceptional and professional in the way you have guided us, you are a credit in your profession.”

“They did an excellent job in installing my shower, very professional and very happy with the service. Thank you.”

“I’d like to say a big thank you to both ladies for the support at another difficult period for us. They have helped relieve a bit of the pressure and have been a great help. Thank you from both myself and my husband.”

The graph below gives you a breakdown of the compliment types received;



It is encouraging that we have received almost half as many compliments as stage 1 complaints in the Housing Directorate. The majority of compliments reflect Good Quality Works followed by Staff Conduct – Helpful and Professional

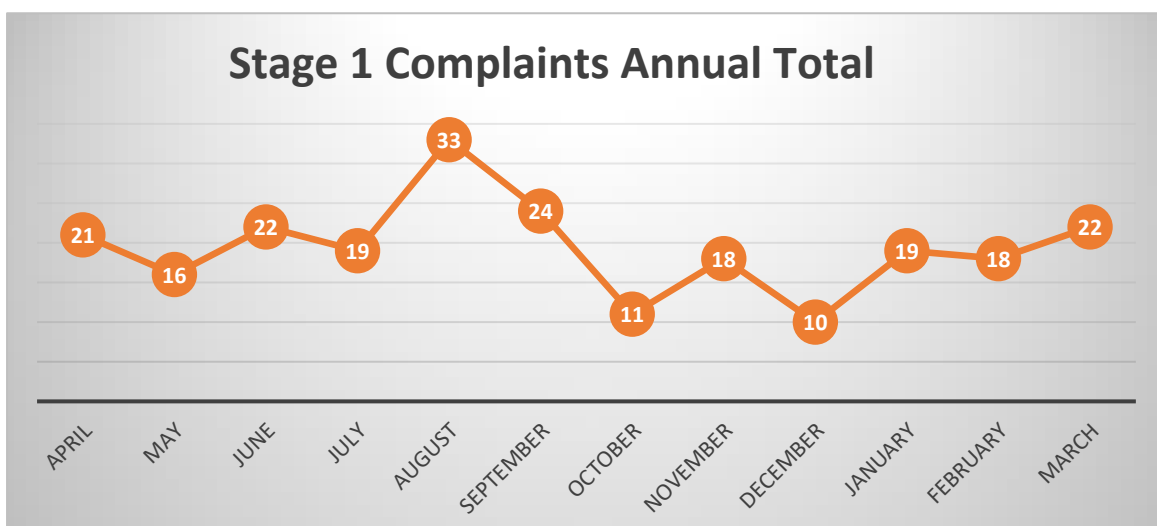
### Stage 1 Complaints, Volumes and Response Times

The Housing Directorate received 270 complaints during 2022/23

Stage 1 Complaints 233

Stage 2 Complaints 37

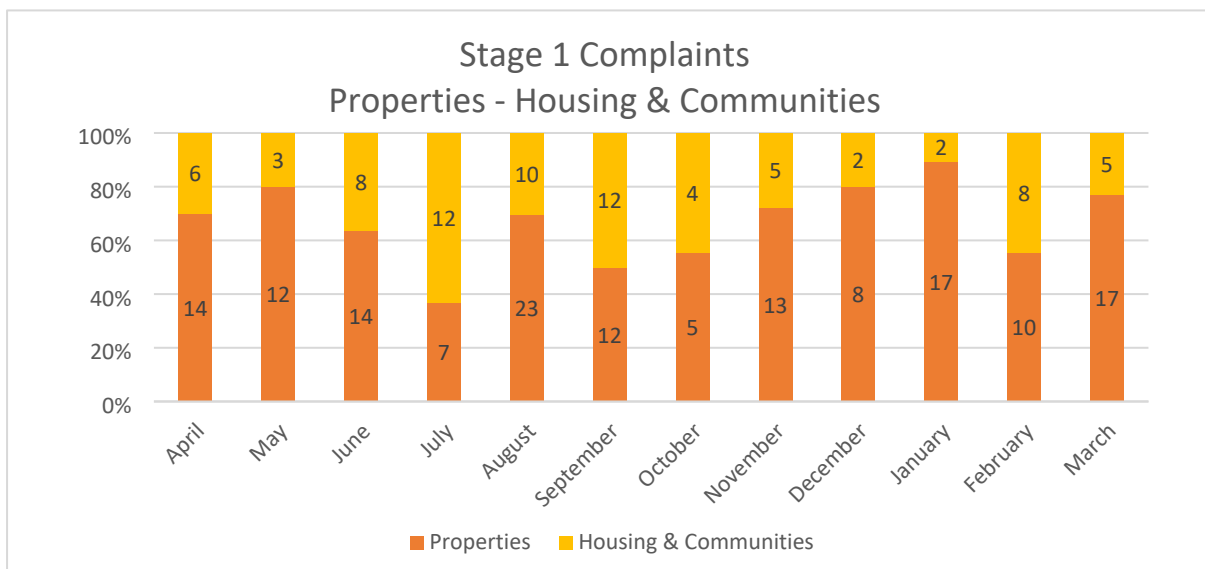
The graph below provides you with the total annual stage 1 complaints which have been received within the Housing Directorate



This year has seen a 30% decrease in the amount of complaints received over the year (331 stage 1 complaints closed in 2021/22). It is a reassuring that our complaint numbers have dropped. As a service we are regularly promoting how tenants can make a complaint, it is encouraging that we have still seen a reduction from the previous year.

Data which is presented from the Pulse report from Housemark provides a figure of a 78% increase in complaint volumes from early March across the sector which aligns with what the Housing Ombudsman is reporting. This is encouraging supporting data to show that complaints at stage 1 have decreased over the year within the Housing Directorate, contrasting the national trend.

The volume of complaints received in the Housing Directorate was for Properties and Housing & Communities, receiving 99% of the complaints accepted. The below graph indicates where the complaints have been received throughout the year between the service areas.

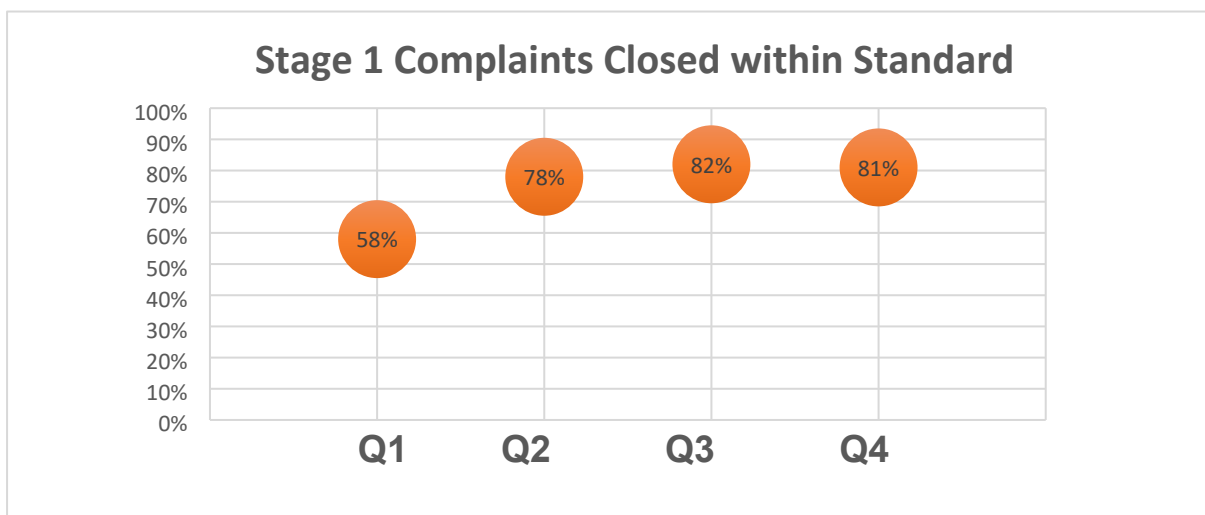


During the month of August there was an increase in complaints received within our Properties Compliance team. This was due to a number of letters sent to our tenants as we needed to undertake an asbestos survey. This feedback helped us to review and consider how we relay important information to our tenants. Following a further mailing of an amended asbestos survey letter in September, we did not receive any further complaints.

Complaint numbers have reduced at Stage 1 over the past 12 months, work has taken place to review jobs that have been raised incorrectly on an inhouse system Firmstep which totalled approximately 800. The Housing Performance team have worked to now action and remedy these incorrect jobs raised. Following this the team now monitor entered in error Firmstep cases regularly. This is to ensure that they are closed and actioned correctly. This may have stopped a communication from being unanswered and possibly preventing a complaint.

As a directorate, for the year we have responded to 73% of stage 1 complaints within the agreed 10 day timeframe. This figure is up from last year where it was 68% and previously 51% in 2020/21. It is reassuring that the numbers have improved.

The chart below indicates the complaints that have been closed in standard for Quarter 1 (Q1) – Quarter (Q4), you will see since the start of the year there has been progress.



Pulse data generated has shown progressions in the amount of stage 1 complaints that have been answered within the agreed timescales. It has confirmed that in Quartile 1 the data is reflecting 93% which is where we are aiming to continue improving to achieve this.

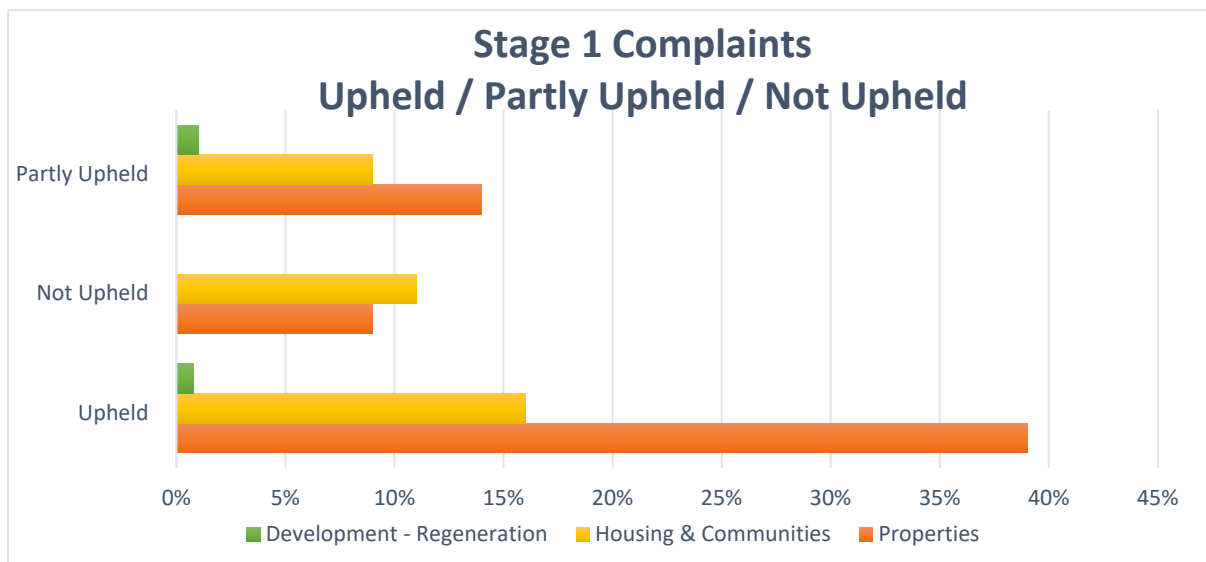
## Stage 1, Complaint Outcomes

The below tables provide you with a comparison of stage 1 complaints that were upheld, not upheld, or partly upheld.

Of the volume of the complaints received;

Stage 1 Complaint Outcomes 2022/23 (%)		Stage 1 Complaint Outcomes 2021/22 (%)	
Upheld	56%	Upheld	47%
Partly Upheld	24%	Partly Upheld	29%
Not Upheld	20%	Not Upheld	24%

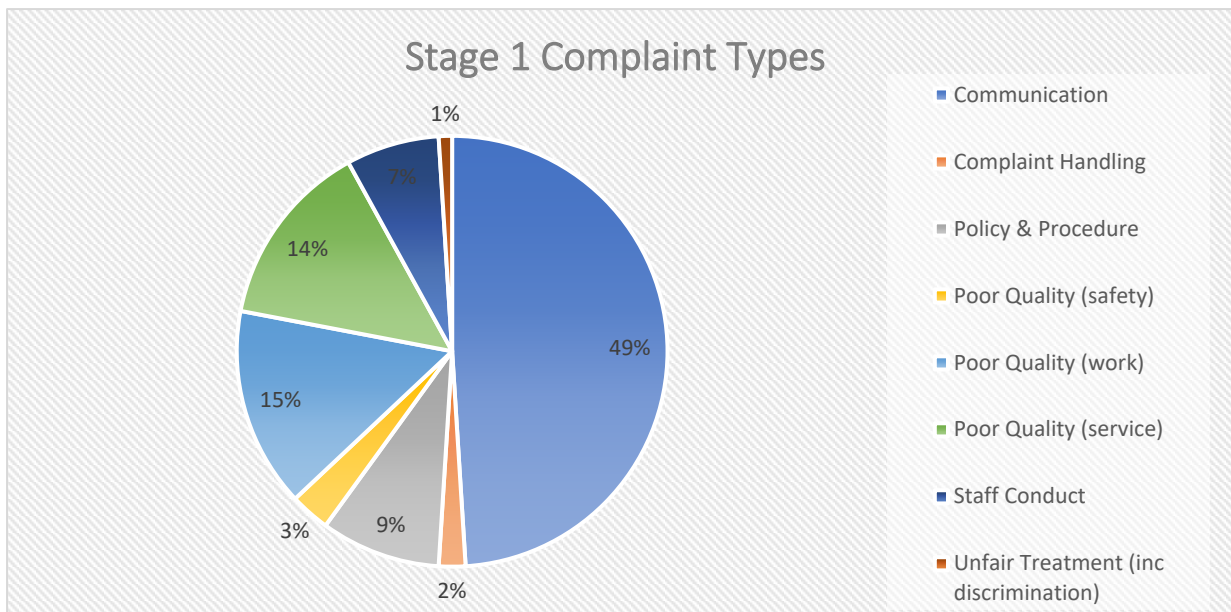
To further provide a breakdown of the service areas complaint outcomes a graph below has been provided;



The data shows that although there has been an increase overall to the amount of complaints upheld, there has been a decrease in the amount for the service areas separately, with Housing & Communities upholding 41% and Properties upholding 61% of complaints closed last year 2021/22.

## Stage 1, Complaint Types and Trends

The chart below shows a breakdown of the complaint types that were received in the Housing directorate in 2022/23



To date communication is the highest complaint type with almost half of all stage 1 complaints received relating to communication with our tenants and leaseholders.

Staff conduct attributes to 14% of complaints received, this has seen a reduction since 2021/22 where it was recorded to reflect 18% of stage 1 complaints received. Personal accountability for individuals has been championed by the Housing Service, pressures in the previous year with new working practices during COVID could have caused tensions in the working environment as well as difficulties with the pressure to action the backlog of work. It is positive to note the reduction in these complaints.

Poor Quality Work and Poor Quality Service contributes to 29% of stage 1 complaints received. The Housing Performance team will be looking at more detailed analysis of the complaints received over the next year. Following the implementation of the new complaints system iCasework, new root causes will be captured to log a complaint.

The root causes categories are listed below;

Communication
Service Quality
Payments or disputed charges cause
Service Failure
Staff Conduct Causes
Policy and Procedure
Legal and Regulatory

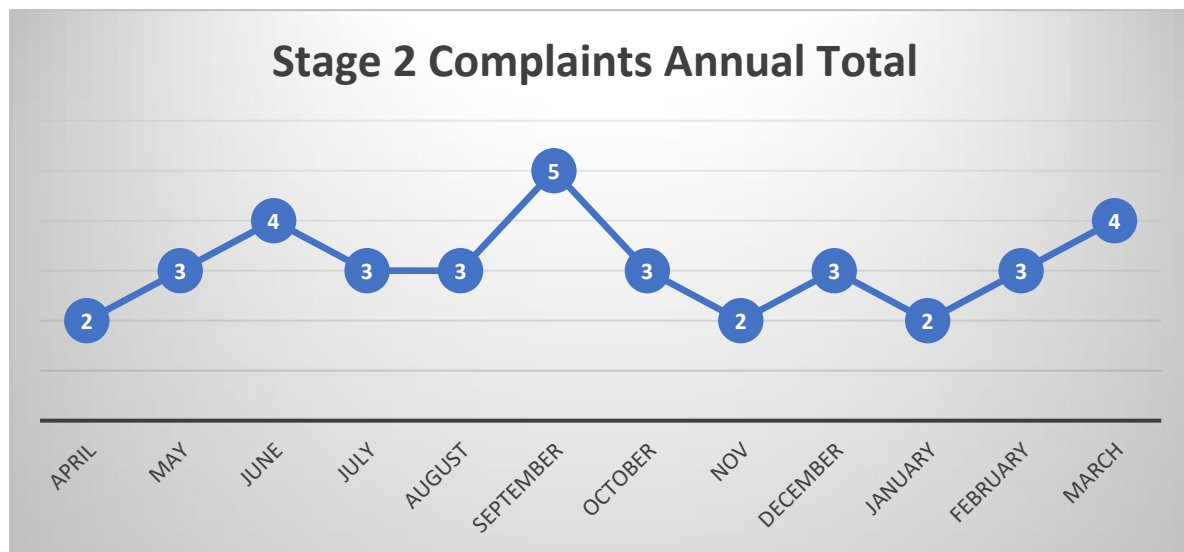


Further breakdown will provided in the 6 Month Complaint and Compliment Report

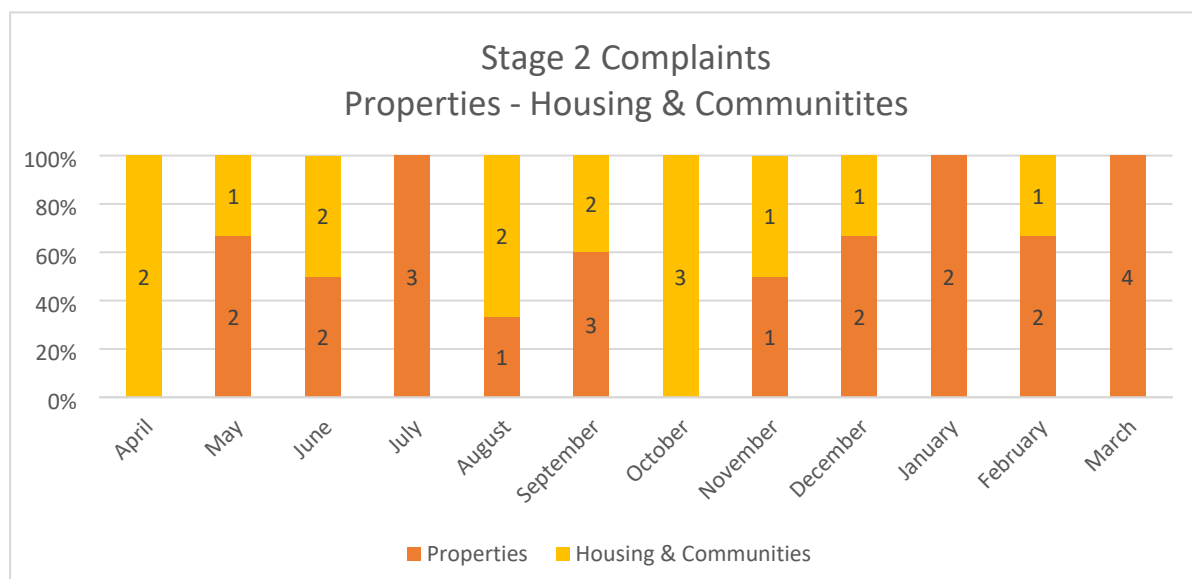
### Stage 2 Complaints, Volumes and Response Times

This year the Housing Directorate has seen an increase in the amount of complaints that have been escalated to Stage 2.

Stage 2 complaints received 37

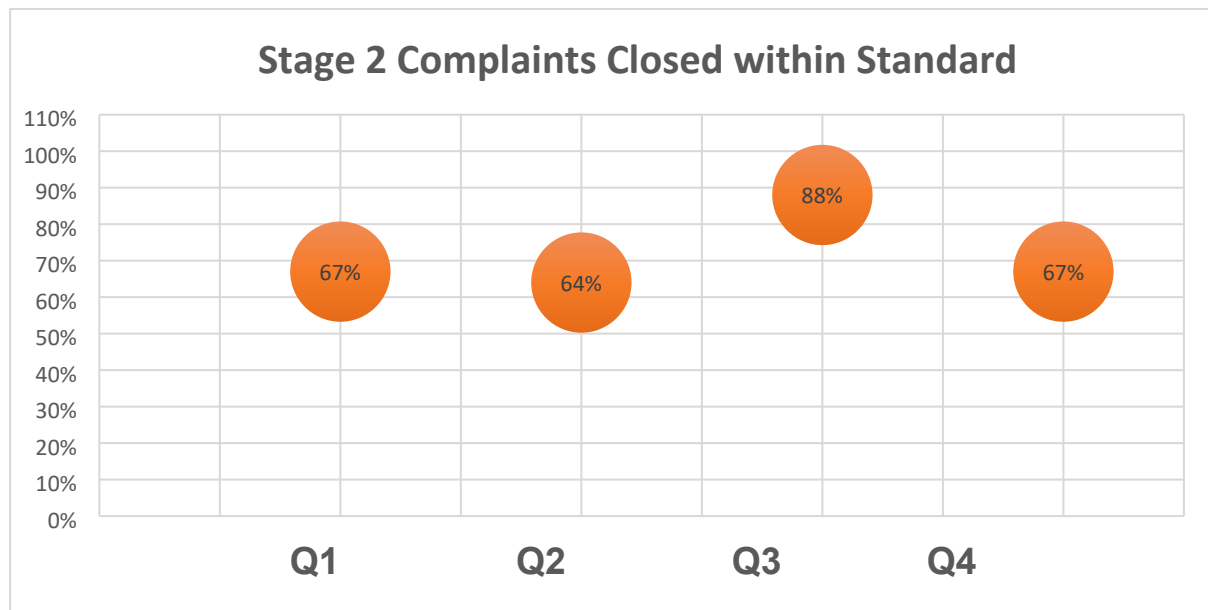


The volume of stage 2 complaints received has been further broken down in the graph below;



The Housing and Communities team received 15 stage 2 complaints with Properties receiving 22 for 2022/23. From the data presented where there is a spike in complaints being escalated there have been key staff vacancies in the Directorate.

The chart below indicates the complaints that have been closed in standard for Quarter 1 (Q1) – Quarter (Q4).



During the next 12 months the Housing Performance team will be working with the service areas, to collectively support getting stage 2 responses sent out within the agreed timescales of 20 working days.

### Stage 2, Complaint Outcomes

Out of the 37 stage two complaints answered 16 were upheld, with 10 of these having their decision overturned following the stage 1 response.

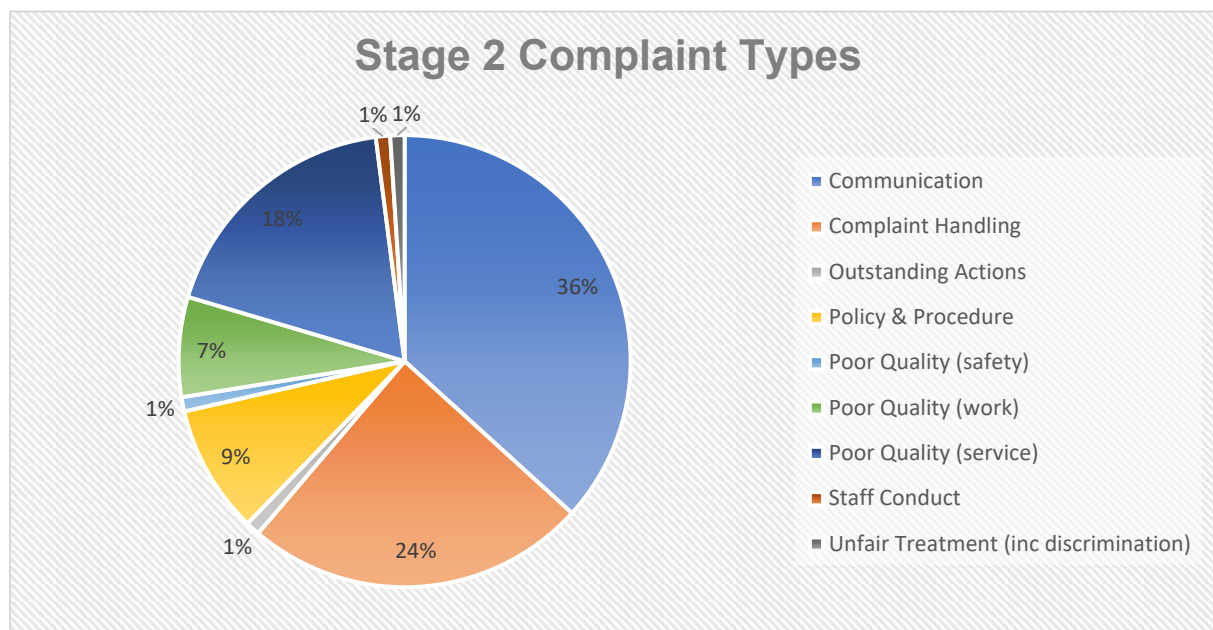
Stage 2 Complaint Outcomes 2022/23 (%)		Stage 2 Complaint Outcomes 2021/22(%)	
Upheld	43%	Upheld	41%
Partly Upheld	33%	Partly Upheld	32%
Not Upheld	24%	Not Upheld	26%

Work will continue over the next year to get the complaints right at stage 1 in the complaints process. Following the decline in the number of complaints received at stage 1, we are hopeful that with working on getting it right at stage 1 there will be a reduction for the need to escalate to stage 2.

Some complaints received relate to actions that have not been carried out as agreed within the complaint reply. Working practices have been put into place to track these outcomes. The Housing Assistant Directors will receive a monthly update of any agreed actions when not completed. We believe that this will also support a decline in the need to raise a complaint at stage 2.

### Stage 2, Complaint Types and Trends

The chart below shows a breakdown of the complaint types that were received by the Housing directorate in 2022/23



To further provide analysis on the above the three highest complaint types have been listed below.

#### Communication – Complaint Handling – Poor Quality Service

As we continue to utilise the new complaint system and having more detailed root causes further analysis can help to seek improvements for the need to raise a complaint.

We have recorded tracking actions as part of the improvements that can be made with complaint handling.

## Housing Ombudsman Service

In 2022/23 we did not receive any Housing Ombudsman complaint investigations.

In the previous year 2021/22, 5 cases were investigated by the Housing Ombudsman.

The department work in line with the codes of practice set out by the Housing Ombudsman, just recently reviewing the self-assessment, and making improvements to ensure compliance. Following the implementation of the iCasework system the service area now acknowledge all Housing Complaints received. This has meant that we have the opportunity to request clarification quicker and easier in line with the self-assessment.

The service regularly attends webinars and will keep up to date with spotlight reports, sharing this information with the service areas.

Opportunity to raise awareness of the Housing Ombudsman will continue over the next 12 months. We ensure that contact details are included at every step of the complaints process explaining that the Housing Ombudsman is on hand to help at any point.

With the changes to the democratic filter being removed we recognise that there is a possibility to see more complaints escalated to the Housing Ombudsman in the next year.

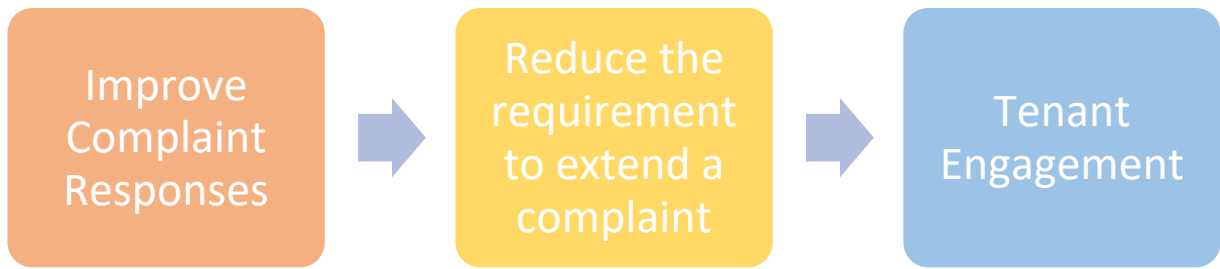
The Housing Ombudsman publish information on their website so that residents can see how their landlord is performing:

Link; HO Landlords Archive - Housing Ombudsman ([housing-ombudsman.org.uk](https://housing-ombudsman.org.uk))  
[Landlords Archive - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

As mentioned already in this report; over the next year the service will look in more detail at learning from complaints to implement any improvements when applicable.

## **12 Month Forecast**

Over the course of the next year below is the proposed action plan for continued growth and improvement within the Housing Directorate.

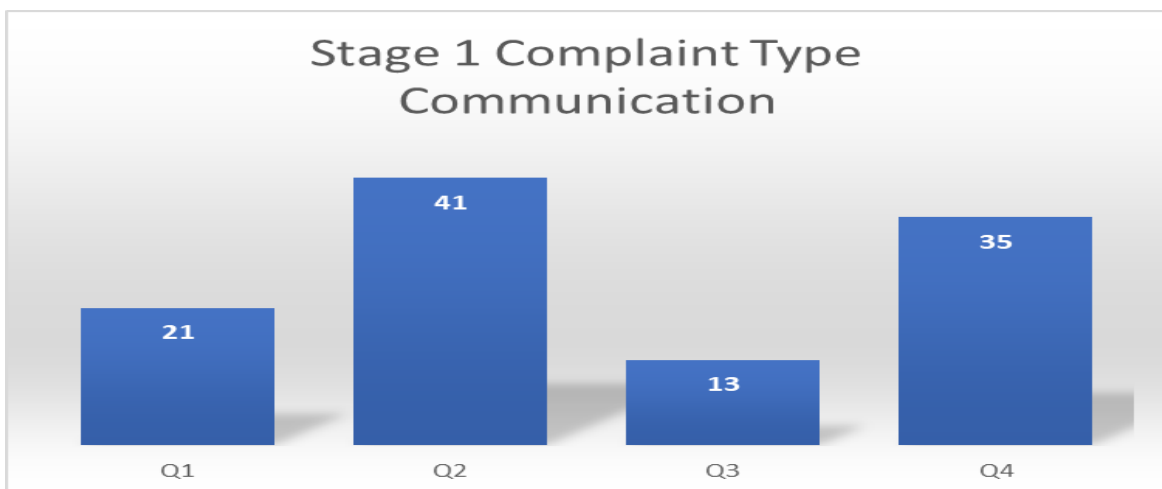


Positive work has started to implement, identified lessons learnt from complaints. The Housing Performance team provide this feedback to managers, who are taking proactive steps to make changes within their service areas where appropriate. We hope to continue with this trend moving forward.

### Communication

Following the 6 Month Complaints Review it was requested that a further analysis on complaints received which are categorised within our communication option.

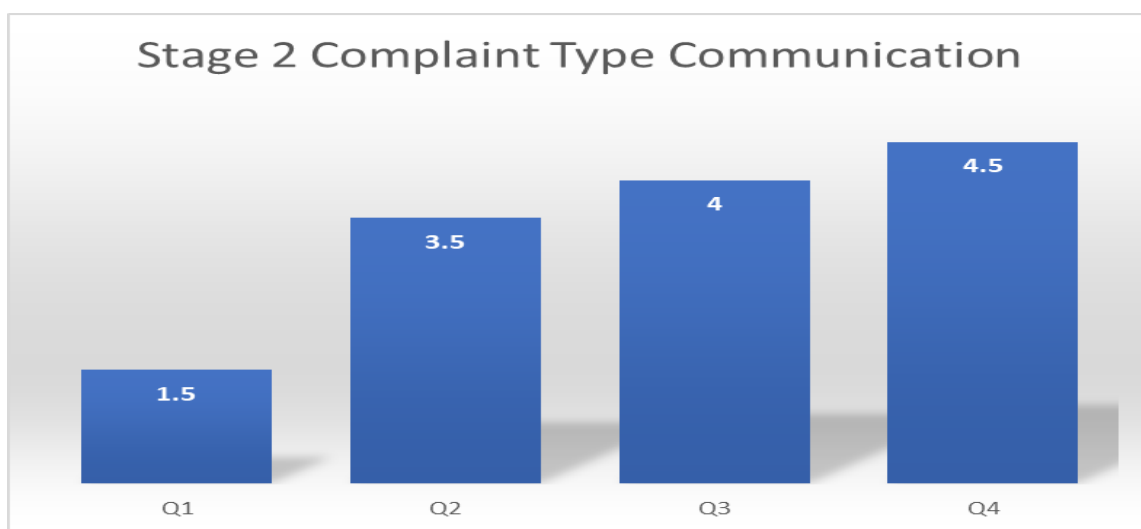
The below graphs indicate the number of complaints received and logged which relates to dissatisfaction with communication



Overall, 49% of complaints recorded at stage 1 have been categorised as failure to communicate.

To provide further review please see the below chart to further analysis this data

No response from the service area following request made	34
Contractor has failed to communicate	16
Poorly written communication	10
Missed Appointments	21
Waiting for an appointment	11
Incorrect Information provided	4
Other	14



Stage 2 complaints received and recorded as failure to communicate is 36%.

To provide further review please see the below chart to further analysis this data

No contact made to schedule agreed outcomes following stage one reply	4
No updates from the service area	5
Contractor has failed to communicate	4

Within the Housing Directorate advances are being worked on to improve communication with our tenants. Open Housing our inhouse system will include the function to text tenants with regular updates.

The online portal is currently being worked on to provide an option for the tenant to directly report their enquiries.

## **Conclusion**

Over the next 12 months there will be many opportunities to support change within the team. This will provide the independence to steer the direction of complaint handling in the department.

This report highlights that there have been significant improvements in our management of complaints and there are some elements that we are doing really well.

We believe that we are heading in the right direction but recognise that there is still work to do. We have clear goals to strengthen our complaint handling and will continue to work hard to achieve this.