

# ANNUAL HOUSING COMPLAINT PERFORMANCE & SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2023/24



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# INTRODUCTION

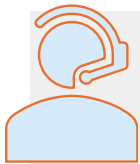
This Annual Report provides analysis of the complaints and compliments received from tenants during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

Housing services are delivered by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council to our tenants and their families living in **5,624** homes across the borough.



We are committed to meeting our obligations to be compliant with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 2024, and we want to achieve best practice in our complaint handling process and ultimately provide a better service to our tenants and leaseholders.

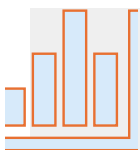
This report contains:



details of the council's housing complaint handling performance and compliance to the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code 2022



areas of good practice



complaints themes and trends



areas of learning and improvement and recommended further actions to be taken to improve the Council's performance and services delivery

During 2023/24 complaints were handled under the Council's Complaint Handling Procedure which had regard to the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code 2022, however, during Quarter 4 of 2023/24, a review of the Council's complaint handling procedures was undertaken. As a result, a new Complaint Handling Policy & Procedure was approved and adopted in preparation for the implementation of the new Complaint Handling Code taking effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. Details of other changes and improvements made are provided in the final section of this report.

## OUR HOUSING STOCK

To provide context, the borough of Nuneaton and Bedworth is one of five local authorities in the county of Warwickshire, the others being Warwick, Stratford-on-Avon, Rugby, and North Warwickshire. It covers 79 square kilometres and is a completely urban authority having no rural villages within its boundaries. The borough has experienced an increase in population and a rise in demand for social housing. The current number of council homes available in Nuneaton and Bedworth is **5,624**. The table below gives a breakdown of the number and type of stock that is currently owned by the Council:

Type	Nuneaton	Bedworth	Total
<b>General Purpose Dwellings</b>			
Bedsitter	92	29	121
Bungalow	58	82	140
House	1,882	855	2,737
Flats	955	252	1,207
Maisonettes	96	153	249
<b>Total General Purpose</b>			<b>4,454</b>
<b>Independent Living</b>			
Bedsitter	94	121	215
Bungalow	179	235	414
House	5	1	6
Flats	366	169	535
<b>Total Independent Living</b>			<b>1,170</b>
<b>Total</b>			<b>5,624</b>

### Stock Condition

Most of the Council's housing stock is ageing. With a significant number of properties over 50 years old the properties have required major maintenance and repair. The Council has successfully modernised the vast majority of its stock by delivering the following projects:

- Roof renewals to houses and flat blocks.
- External wall and loft insulation works.
- Re-wiring of properties.
- Concrete structural repairs to flat blocks which also included new balconies and staircases.
- Lift renewals to flat blocks.
- Replacement of external doors to uPVC.

- A rolling programme of central heating installations, fire detection and alarm installations.
- Renewal and modernisation of kitchens and bathrooms.
- Providing provisions for scooter housing at Independent Living accommodation.
- Installation of walk-in showers for older and disabled tenants.

As a result of the above projects, a stock condition survey carried out in 2023 reported that **98.32%** of the Council's homes meet the Decent Homes Standard.

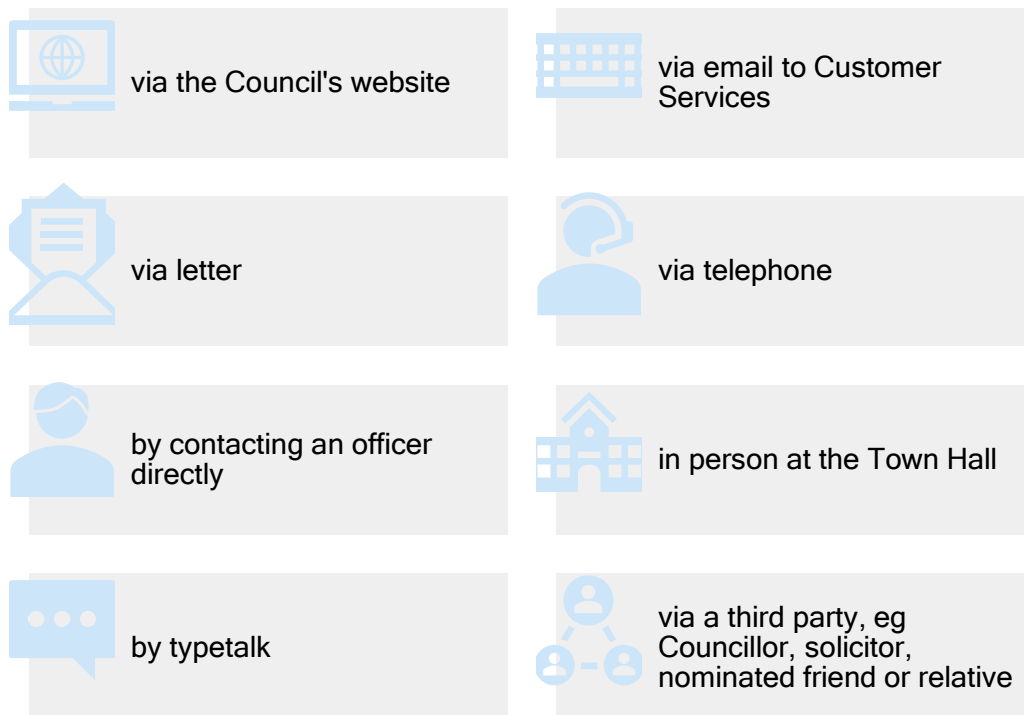
The Council is also continually looking for new acquisitions and new builds to replenish its housing stock.



# COMPLAINT HANDLING GOVERNANCE & PROCEDURES

## Policy & Procedure

The Council's [Housing Complaints Policy and Procedures](#) provide the framework for ensuring that formal complaints are handled consistently, fairly, effectively, confidentially and in a timely manner by competent complaint handling staff. Tenants can make a formal complaint to the Council through a variety of ways:



Good communication, both internally within the Council and externally with its tenants, is vital to our complaints service. It is important that our tenants understand what can or cannot be done in relation to a problem or complaint and our priority is to resolve concerns as soon as they come to our attention. The Council encourages any tenant or service user who has a concern to first approach the team or member of staff in the relevant service area or make a service request:

<p><b>CUSTOMER SERVICES</b> The corporate point of contact for all customer enquiries, feedback, notifications, comments, compliments and complaints.</p>	<p><b>HEART</b> Providing advice and assistance to deliver disabled adaptations and home improvements to keep tenants safe, secure and warm in their homes.</p>	<p><b>STRATEGIC HOUSING</b> Providing services such as homelessness, private sector housing and Housing Allocations.</p>	<p><b>LANDLORD SERVICES</b> Providing services such as tenancy management, estate management, anti-social behaviour, tenant support, tenant engagement and independent living.</p>	<p><b>PROPERTY SERVICES</b> Providing day to day repairs to the council's housing stock, including planned works, such as door and window replacements, kitchen and bathroom upgrades, roofing works, whilst ensuring homes are safe to live in.</p>
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If after raising concerns or requesting a service the tenant remains dissatisfied with the proposed resolution, tenants are then encouraged to make a formal complaint to the Council.

## Governance

Following the local elections on 2nd May 2024 and confirmed at the [Annual Meeting of the Council held on 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2024](#), the appointed Housing Portfolio Holder (who is also the new Leader of the Council) has taken over the responsibilities of the role of Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC).

A new [Overview & Scrutiny Panel](#) has been established to provide more dedicated focus on Housing and Communities matters; this will not only give the opportunity for more detailed scrutiny of the Council's housing services, but also hopefully encourage increased tenant attendance and involvement. Quarterly complaint handling performance reports are to be submitted to the new Housing and Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel providing details of key housing performance indicators, including:

- Number of complaints received.
- Percentage of complaints completed outside of the service level agreement.
- % of complaints responded to in full at Stage 1.
- % of complaints responded to in full at Stage 2.
- Number of complaints upheld.
- Housing Ombudsman cases.

Corporate complaint handling performance reports are presented quarterly to the Council's Senior Management Team consisting of the Chief Executive and four Strategic Directors. Detailed monthly complaint analysis reports are also reported to the Strategic Director for Housing & Community Safety and Assistant Directors for Housing, where complaint themes and trends are reviewed and any changes or improvement to service identified.



## Complaints Handling Team

The Council's chosen system for recording comments, complaints and compliments is the Granicus System. The corporate responsibility for administering the system is carried out by the Council's Information Technology & Communications Team. Corporate responsibility for system training and also monitoring the use of the system is held by the Customer Experience & Data Protection Officer. Complaint e-learning also forms part of the Customer Services staff mandatory induction training along with frontline staff communication training, covering how to communicate professionally with our customers, including those making complaints.

The Council's Complaint Handling Team consists of a combination of officers, with Customer & Client Services and Housing Services teams carrying out specific aspects of the 'Complaint Officer' role. The diagram below depicts the roles and responsibilities of individual members of the team.

### The Customer Experience & Data Protection Officer

Responsible for corporate Complaint Handling, performance reporting and overseeing the corporate use of the Granicus system. This role is also the Council's lead contact for the Housing Ombudsman & Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

### Customer Services Advisors

Responsible for logging complaints on the Granicus system and assigning complaints to the relevant service teams.

### Assistant Director of Social Housing & Community Safety

Responsible for assessing any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision and reporting to the governing body.

### Housing Team Leaders & Managers

Responsible for investigating and responding to complaints at Stage 1 and Stage 2.

### Housing Assistants

Responsible for assigning housing complaints to lead investigating officers, and monitoring progress of complaints through to response in line with complaint handling timeframes.

### Housing & Community Safety Business Performance officer

Responsible for analysing and reporting Housing complaint handling performance, trends and themes to Housing management.





# COMPLAINT HANDLING PERFORMANCE

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 the Council received **267** formal complaints from tenants – see Table 1 below.

	Total no. of complaints received	No. per 1,000 housing stock		Responded to within the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling timescales	
		Mid year	Year end	Mid year	Year End
<b>Stage 1</b>	267	53.80	47.5	79.9%	97%
<b>Stage 2</b>	35	8.17	6.2	71.7%	91%

Table 1: Housing Complaints 2023/24

Table 1 above indicates that there was a slight decrease in the number of formal complaints received during the second half of the 2023/24 reporting year.

Whilst eight Stage 1 and two Stage 2 complaints failed to be responded to within the complaint handling timeframes, figures also indicate that response performance against service level agreements improved during the second half of the year. The Council did not refuse to accept any formal complaints submitted during the 2023/2024 period.

The figures in Table 1 above also indicate a decrease in the number of formal complaints received from tenants and an improvement in the Council's complaint handling performance when compared with data from the previous reporting year, ie 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, as reported by Housemark – see Table 2.

	Total no. of complaints received	Responded to within the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling timescales	
		No.	%
<b>Stage 1</b>	303	242	79.87%
<b>Stage 2</b>	46	33	71.74%

Table 2: Housing Complaints 2022/23

## Stage 1 Complaints

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of complaints received by service area. By far the largest proportion of formal complaints (76%) were received for Property Services.

Figure 2 shows a breakdown of complaints received by theme. The chart below details the complaint trends for 2023/24. The top three areas requiring greater consideration and improvement are 1) repairs, 2) communication, and 3) officer conduct, behaviour and performance.

Figure 1: Complaints received by service area

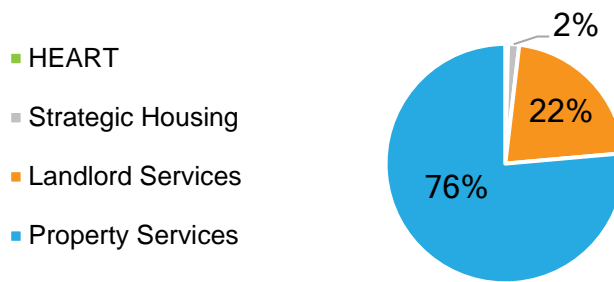
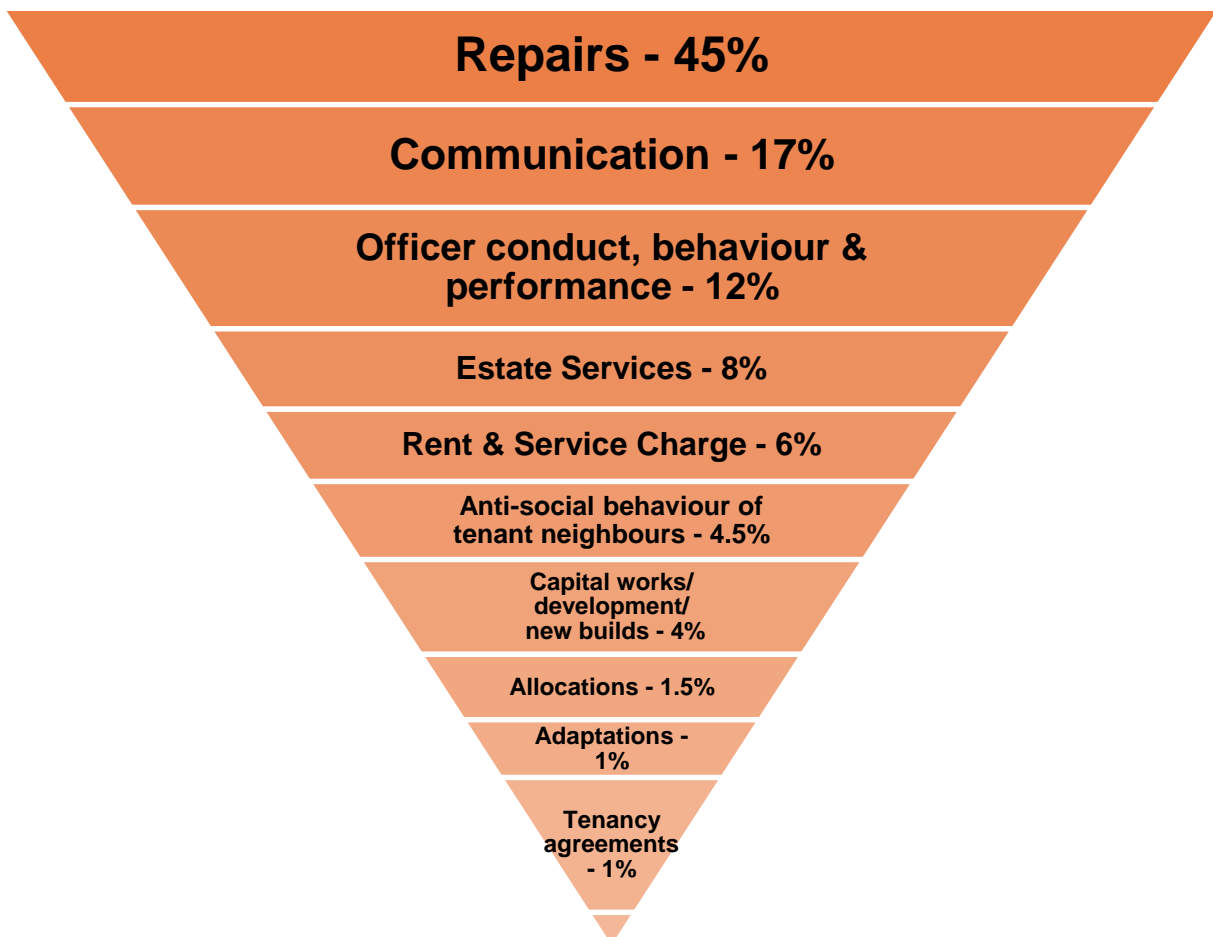
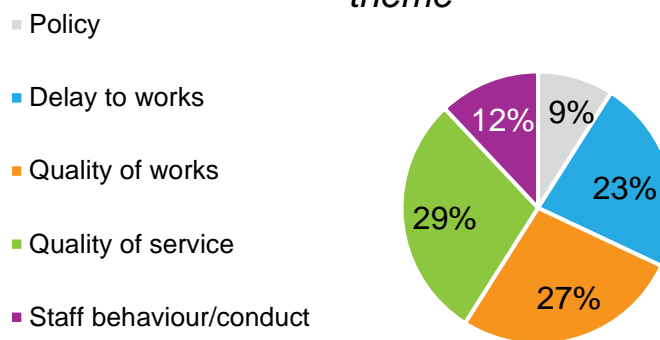


Figure 2. Complaints received by theme



32.2% of all formal Stage 1 complaints received were upheld/partially upheld. 60% of upheld complaints related to repairs, which included dissatisfaction with delays in works, the quality of works undertaken, and the quality of services provided.

### Stage 2 Complaints

Figure 3 shows the breakdown of Stage 2 complaints by service area. The largest number of escalated complaints were received by Property Services.

Figure 3: Escalated complaints by service area

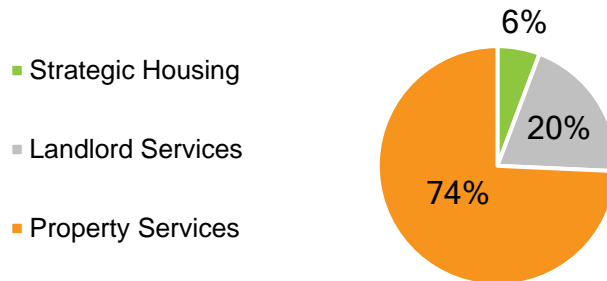
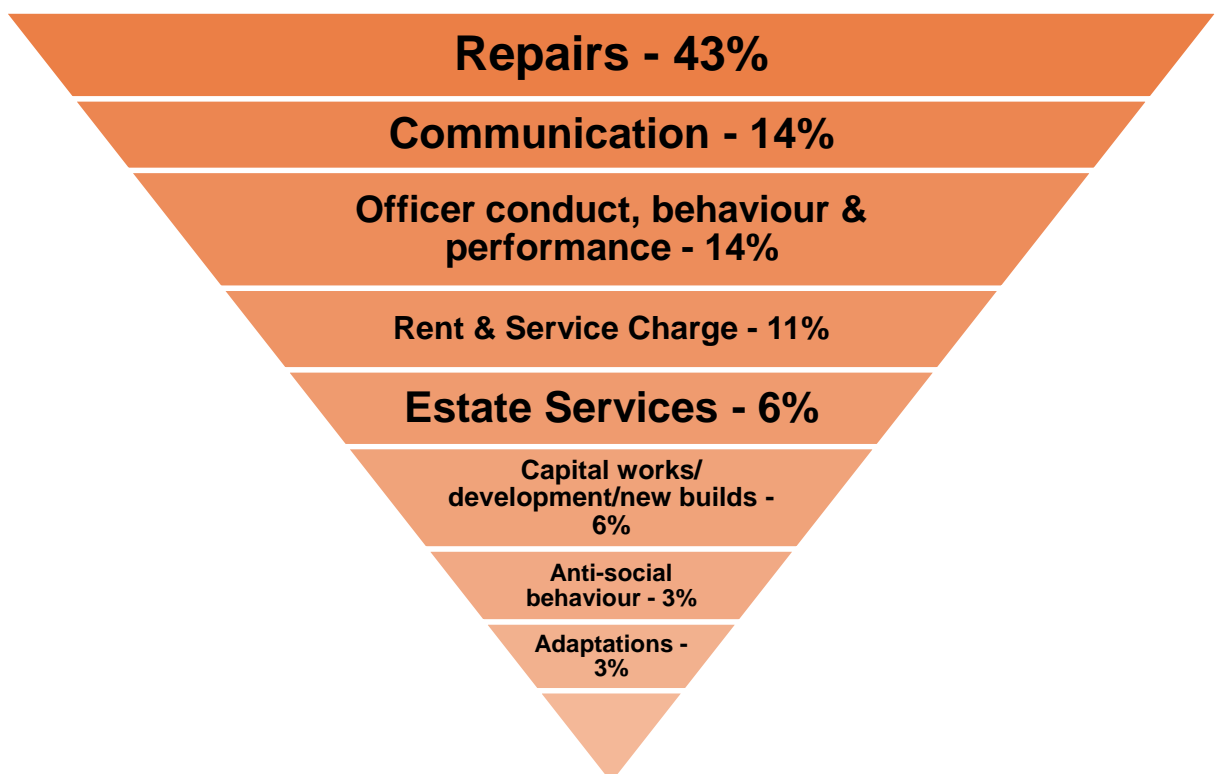
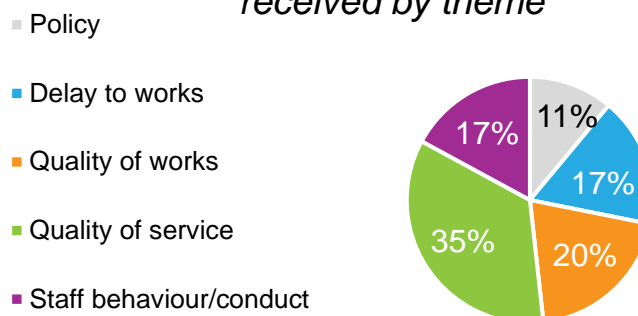


Figure 4 shows escalated complaints received by theme.

As with Stage 1, the top three areas requiring greater consideration and improvement are 1) repairs, 2) communication and 3) officer conduct, behaviour and performance.

Figure 4: Escalated complaints received by theme



## Complaints referred to the Housing Ombudsman

During 2023/24 six cases were investigated and concluded by the Housing Ombudsman. The Ombudsman found fault with two cases, both relating to repairs, and a total of **£3,095.94** was ordered to be paid by the Council in compensation.

The Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment is attached at [Appendix A](#).

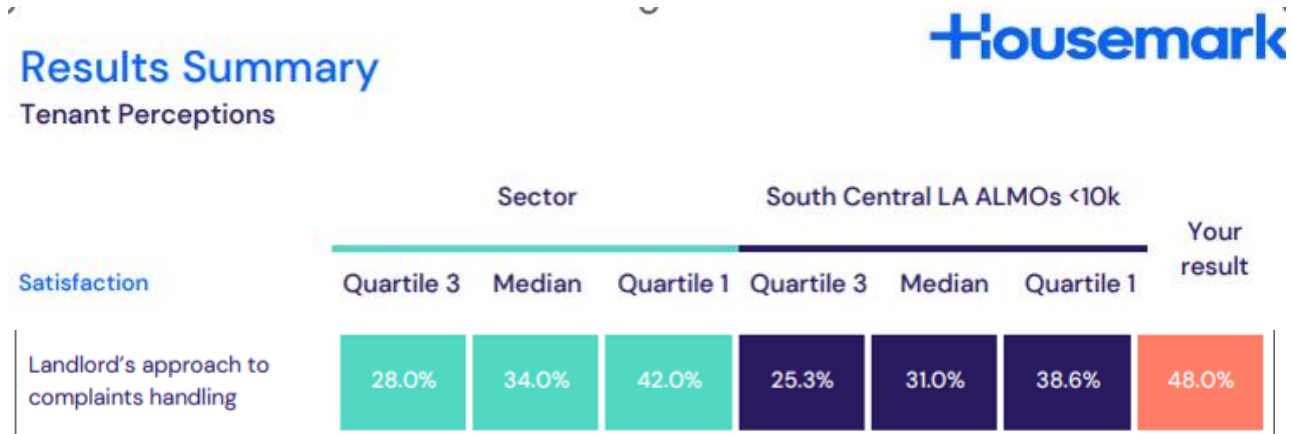


# LEARNING & IMPROVEMENT

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) indicate that **49.96%** of complainants were either very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the Council's approach to complaint handling throughout 2023/2024. The next Tenant Satisfaction Perception survey will be sent out to tenants in June 2024 with a closing date of September 2024.

## Benchmarking Against Peers

The Council is a member of [Housemark](#), which is a leading data and insight company for the UK housing sector. To help their members understand TSM results in context, they invited English registered providers to take part in a project to compare data during October 2023. In total, **189** landlords took part in this exercise, managing around 2.2 million properties – half of all social housing in England. Based upon results up to the **mid-point in the year (April-Sept 2023)**, the report is exclusive to participating landlords and shows our results compared to national figures and a peer group of similar organisations. The results relating to satisfaction with complaints handling are as follows:



This indicates that with a satisfaction result of **49.96%** Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council was exceeding top quartile performance at the mid-point in the year. However, the Council recognises that it has more to do to further improve its approach and learning in relation to complaints.

### What will the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures cover?

- Repairs
- Building Safety
- Complaints
- Customer Engagement
- Neighbourhoods

## Compliments

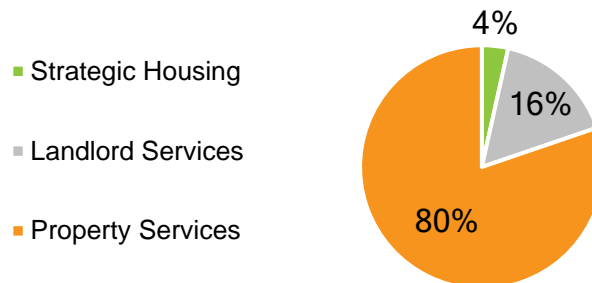
A total of **86** compliments were received during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

Figure 5 shows a breakdown of compliments received by service area.

**51%** of compliments received related to the quality of works.

**49%** of compliments received related to good customer care.

*Figure 5: Compliments received by service area*



## Complaint Handling Improvements

During 2023/24, internal complaint handling procedures and processes were reviewed against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Codes 2022 and 2024. As a result the Council has:

- reviewed and updated its complaint handling policy and procedures;
- provided additional resources to carry out more in-depth analysis and reporting of complaint handling performance, themes and trends;
- provided additional training to complaint handlers;
- improved the quality of responses;
- improved communications to tenants;
- improved system reporting capabilities; and
- introduced a reporting suite of KPI's so that complaint trends can be scrutinised.

## Service Area Improvements

The Council seeks to learn from complaints and pursues the implementation of service improvements/changes following complaint outcomes. During 2023/24 the following service improvement actions were carried out by the various housing teams.



## **LANDLORD SERVICES**

- In August 2023, the Housing Ombudsman ordered the Council to pay two of its tenants compensation as we failed to meet some of our repair obligations. In addition, our handling of those complaints was unsatisfactory. Those complaints highlighted the need for the Council to introduce a new [Decant Policy](#) so that all staff and tenants have a clear understanding of when a move to another property will be offered and in what circumstances. This provides clarification for our tenants and a better understanding for staff. This policy is now published on the Council's website.
- Following noise complaints at a particular block of flats, the Council introduced noise assessments to understand the noise transference between properties. In addition, we improved the sound proofing insulation to minimise disturbance. This will ensure that any current tenants and new tenants moving into the block of flats, will have minimal disturbance from tenants living in the flat above them.
- The team have received an increased amount of hoarding complaints which have also resulted in unkempt gardens. As a result, the Council has facilitated external training for the Landlord Services Team, in order to assist in the knowledge of dealing with these sometimes very complex cases. This will also ensure that cases such as these are dealt with efficiently and effectively to improve the wider neighbourhood and offer support to those tenants who are struggling to maintain their tenancies.

## **PROPERTY SERVICES**

- Following a complaint from a tenant who complained that the Council had failed to take account of his working pattern when scheduling the work required to the building; failed to understand the impact those works had upon him personally, causing suffering and loss of income; failed to discuss any appropriate alternative accommodation arrangements that may have alleviated the disruption he experienced; failed to communicate satisfactory and failed to address any of our tenants concerns in a timely and appropriate manner, the Council recognised the following learning points and made the following changes to our service:

- Letters advising tenants of works to buildings will now ask them to contact us directly if they believe those works will interrupt their daily life/work needs. This will allow for an early conversation to identify appropriate mitigations for the tenant, particularly where works to buildings are expected to continue for an elongated period of time. We will also arrange information sessions for tenants out on site providing an opportunity for tenants to ask questions, raise any concerns they may have, and allow us to ensure we are able to take account of those issues when undertaking any works.



Supporting Tenants Around Neighbourhoods  
STAN vehicle

- Ongoing Complaint Handling training for all relevant staff to be undertaken to ensure an improved response from the Council when tenants raise concerns; a quality check of those responses will be undertaken to ensure they are appropriate and properly address the concerns raised.
- As a result of complaints made from several tenants living in one particular block of flats, in respect of the Council's operatives leaving their work vans in the car park when they are not working onsite, a meeting was held with the Tenancy Management Officers and Tenancy Management & Engagement Team Leader, the Performance Officer and the relevant tenants to discuss the issues. Following the meeting new signage was erected in the car park and instructions were given to all operatives to advise them not to park there when carrying out works nearby. This ensured that tenants were able to park their vehicles without obstruction.
- The third most common complaint the Council received in 2023/2024 was in connection with the attitude, conduct and behaviour of some of the Council's operatives. In order to improve in this area, all operatives have attended Front Line Communication training to further develop their communication skills and emotional intelligence so that they are equipped to deal with difficult conversations and situations.



Further training such as 'Understanding your customer and the experience they need' is planned throughout 2024/2025.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICES**

- In October 2023, the Council's Customer Service team was awarded Customer Service Excellence accreditation. The [Customer Service Excellence](#) quality mark aims to make a tangible difference to service users by encouraging organisations to focus on their individual needs and preferences. The Council's Customer Service team was recognised as achieving Customer Service Excellence assessed against the five accreditation criteria outlined below:
  - Customer Insight.
  - The Culture of the organisation.
  - Information and access.
  - Delivery.
  - Timeliness and quality of service.

BUILDING  
a better  
BOROUGH



Nuneaton & Bedworth



Working in partnership,  
restoring pride in our borough

## 2024/25 Improvement Action Plan

Action Ref.	Improvement Action	Officer Responsible	Completion Deadline
1.	Carry out a programme of training for all housing staff to undertake and in house refresher customer services training.  Officers dealing with complaints are to receive external complaint handling training, e.g. Mary Gober, Housing Quality Network, Dispute Resolution (Housing Ombudsman Centre for Learning / Landlord Learning Hub).	Assistant Director of Social Housing & Community Safety	30 <sup>th</sup> September 2024
2.	Utilise the Supporting Tenants Around Neighbours (STAN) vehicle to engage with tenants in their communities. This will provide tenants with an opportunity to express views on any issues of concern, but also for council staff to discuss things such as building investment work including roofing programmes, window and door programmes, and paying rent, etc.	Landlord Services Manager / Tenancy Management & Engagement Team Leader / Tenant Engagement Officers	30 <sup>th</sup> September 2024
3.	Introduce a Housing Complaint Remedy & Compensation Policy	Assistant Director of Social Housing & Community Safety	30 <sup>th</sup> September, 2024
4.	Carry out a review of the process/handling of formal complaints made via Councillors through the Member Enquiry online portal.	Assistant Director of Social Housing & Community Safety	30 <sup>th</sup> September 2024
5.	Establish a group of tenants to review complaint outcomes and advise whether remedies have been satisfactory.	Landlord Services Manager / Tenancy Management & Engagement Team Leader / Tenant Engagement Officers	31 <sup>st</sup> December 2024
6.	Introduce a new Tenant Engagement Strategy, following consultation throughout July.	Landlord Services Manager	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025
7.	Preparatory work towards Tenant Participation Advisory Service Accreditation.	Landlord Services Manager	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025

8.	Undertake work required to achieve anti-social behaviour Resolve Standard Accreditation.	ASB Team Leader	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025
9.	Review the complaint handling ITC system to identify improvements to reporting capabilities.	Business Performance Officer	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025