

Learning from complaints

We always want to provide the best service possible, but we know that sometimes things go wrong. When this happens, we are committed to putting things right quickly, learning from what went wrong and using these lessons to improve our services.

In October 2021, we created a central complaints team dedicated to supporting residents and frontline teams to get complaints resolved swiftly and fairly. We've been working hard to improve how we handle complaints and ensure that we are always compliant with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. You can see our latest self-assessment against the Code here:

www.settlegroup.org.uk/how-we-handle-complaints

Complaints received				Complaint outcomes			
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3		Upheld	Partially upheld	Not upheld
Q1	178	19	197	Q1	110	46	28
Q2	219	25	244	Q2	169	33	27
Q3	148	19	167	Q3	131	17	17
Q4	175	11	186	Q4	121	15	18

The Housing Ombudsman

The best way to get your complaint resolved is by talking to us directly. However, you can also contact the independent Housing Ombudsman for help and advice at any time.

The Housing Ombudsman is an independent watchdog that exists to resolve complaints between social housing tenants and landlords. If you've exhausted our complaints process and remain unhappy with the outcome, you can refer your complaint to the Ombudsman and they will consider investigating it for you.

Between April 2021 and March 2022, we received 6 investigations from the Housing Ombudsman. These related to property condition, our handling of anti-social behaviour, occupancy rights and information and data management. We also received one determination of maladministration for our handling of a report of damp and mould. You can see what changes we've made to handling damp and mould below.

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Maintenance

What have we heard?

We know that a fast and reliable repairs service is one of the things that matters most to residents, but we've heard from complaints that wait times before appointments are too long and that resolving an issue can take multiple visits.

What are we doing?

- We've introduced a new smart scheduling system to help us plan in repairs in the quickest and most efficient way
- So that more jobs can be completed by a member of the settle team, we've expanded our in-house repairs team, including Homes and Maintenance Partners who oversee specific locations.

Condensation, damp and mould

What have we heard?

We know that having problems with condensation, damp and mould in your home can be a difficult and distressing experience. We heard that residents feel worried and don't always feel listened to, sometimes feeling like we were leaving them to resolve the problem themselves.

What are we doing?

- We've introduced a damp and mould policy that emphasises our zero-tolerance commitment to tackling damp and mould problems
- We've brought in a dedicated damp and mould team
- We are tracking all damp and mould cases at a monthly Building Safety panel chaired by our chief executive.

Housing management

What have we heard?

You've told us that we need to be open and honest and manage expectations so that you are clear about what to expect from us.

When something goes wrong, take ownership and pro-actively seek a resolution to put things right.

Communicate clearly so that you do not have to chase to find out what's happening.

When you request a call back, we need to be clear about when this will happen.

What are we doing?

- We have introduced colleague principles for query handling. We're monitoring closely how many times residents contact us about the same thing and making sure that there are clear escalation routes when things go wrong.
- We've developed a customer offer to set out clearly what to expect from us.
- We have introduced a customer hub and we're working to improve queries at first contact.

Property condition

What have we heard?

We know that having problems with condensation, damp and mould in your home can be a difficult and distressing experience. We heard that residents feel worried and don't always feel listened to, sometimes feeling like we were leaving them to resolve the problem themselves.

What are we doing?

- We invested £8.3 million in improving our existing homes – up from £4.9 million in the previous year – and we're expecting to spend around £13 million this year.
- We are working to improve how we proactively communicate to residents when planned maintenance is scheduled.
- We formed the Greener Herts partnership with two other Hertfordshire-based housing associations to accelerate our work to improve the energy efficiency of our homes.