

**HOUSING DIRECTORATE
COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS
SIX- MONTH REVIEW
2022 - 2023**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been created using data extracted from our monthly reported Compliments and Complaints scorecard, this covers Quarter 1 (Q1) and Quarter 2 (Q2) between the months of April 2022 - September 2022.
- 1.2 This data gives the Housing Directorate the opportunity to review complaints received with the view to explore –
- Trends
 - Correlation
 - Improvements
- 1.3 Changes within the Customer Resolution Team has meant two new appointments (refocusing some existing roles), a Senior Case Manager, and a Case Manager as an additional full-time member of the team. The full team has been in post since the end of August 2022. In this time, you will see from reviewing the data that there has been an increase in complaints being answered and closed within standard time.
- 1.4 The Housing Ombudsman made changes to the way in which customers can access their service. These changes came into effect from the 1 October 2022, meaning that tenants would no longer have to contact a designated person or wait eight weeks before referring their complaint directly to the Housing Ombudsman, should they remain dissatisfied at the end of the complaint process. With this change we are expecting to see a higher number of cases be taken to the Housing Ombudsman for investigation.
- 1.5 With work underway for Somerset to become a unitary authority (LGR), replacing the current County Council and four District Council's, work is underway with Somerset County Council to put together a comprehensive Policy and Procedure for complaints.
- 1.6 With systems evolving through LGR, the department will likely use iCasework after April 2023 when receiving and responding to a Complaint or logging a Compliment.



- 1.7 This system will make working practices easier a few examples of how are listed below:
- Tracking the complaint through the complaint process
 - Storing Information
 - Comprehensive and accurate data overview, supporting reporting on complaints

2.0 Compliments

2.1 Positive comment's count, providing feedback on what has gone well and encouraging continual improvements over the last 6 months. The number of compliments received was 50 during Q1 and Q2 of this year.

2.2 The number of compliments is up on this time last year, where only 36 had been received at the same point this time last year.

Compliment Examples

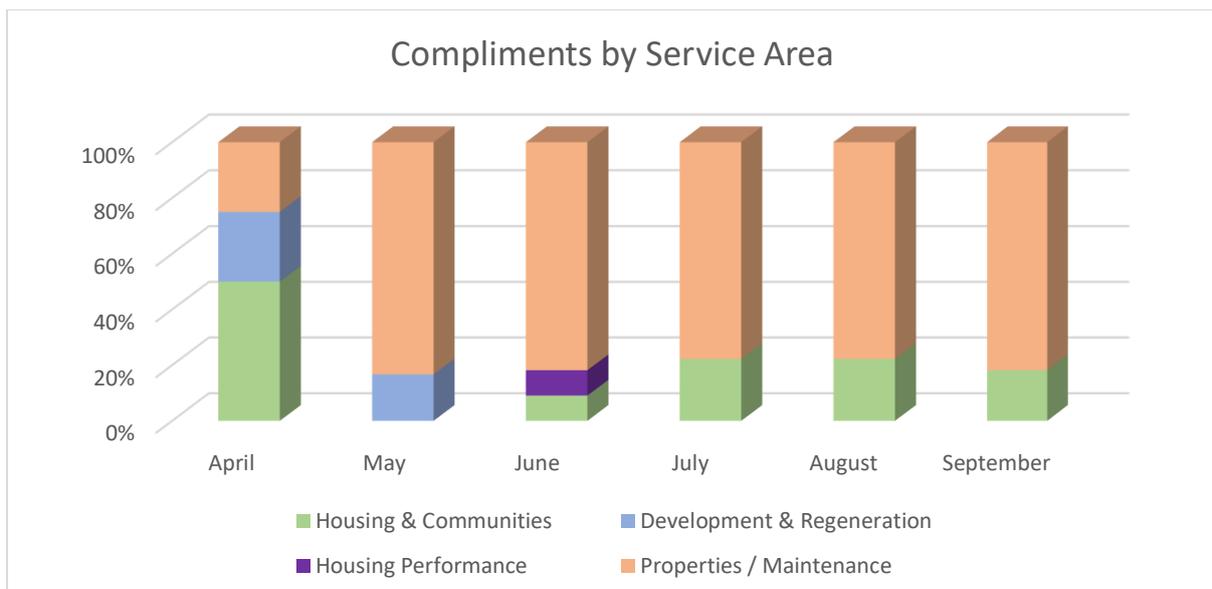
"We all sincerely thank you for all the time and dedication you designated us, in attempting to make life marginally better. I will personally remember your compassion towards my family for the rest of my days, it is a rarity."

Housing and Communities

"Plumbing team - tenant was overwhelmed with how good the service was. The two gents that attended were so respectful, professional and did a brilliant job. The service has been fantastic and she is ever so grateful for our assistance and support." Assets Team

"The young gentleman in a small white van in Eastwick Road, Taunton at 12.30 today. A huge thank you for stopping and getting my dogs safely off the road. I am so grateful" Responsive Repairs

2.3 The below graph shows compliments received across the service areas.



2.4 As you can see from the graph Properties and Maintenance received the highest total in their service area. This service area accumulates a higher number of both compliments and complaints.

2.4 Much of the feedback received relates to staff and how they have positively conducted themselves during interactions with the public. This is a credit to the work that we do as representatives for Somerset West and Taunton Council.

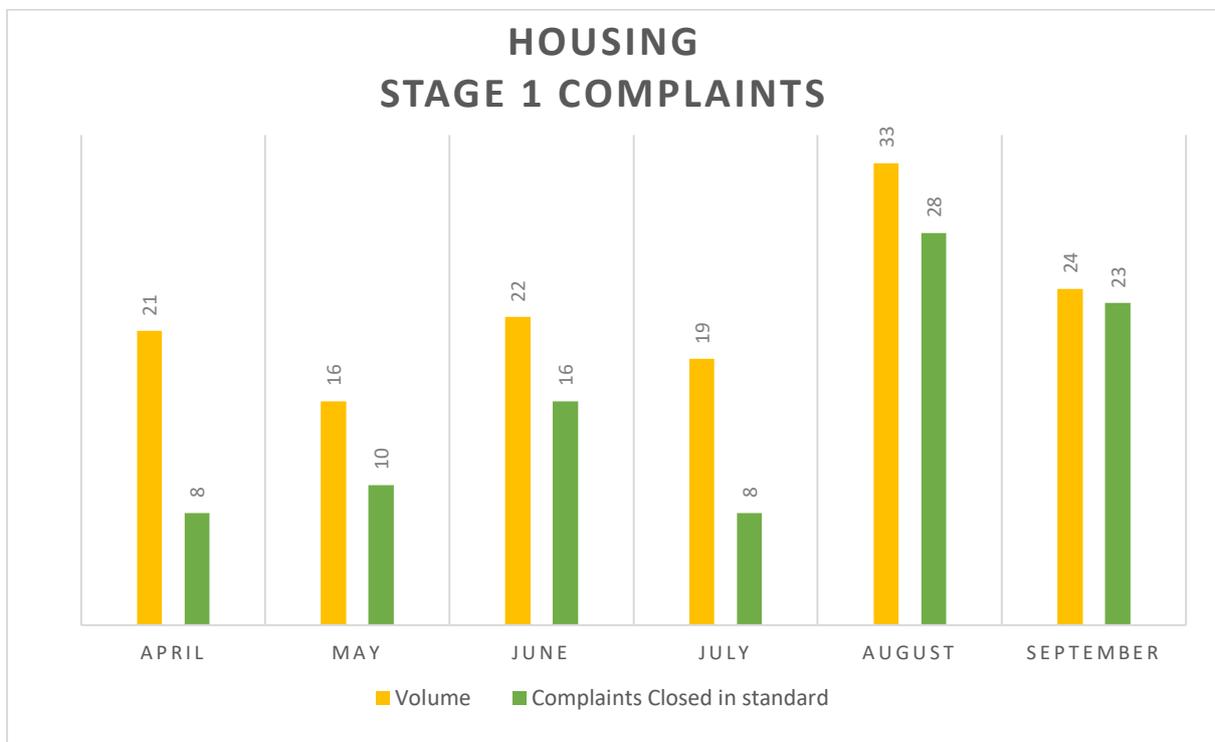
2.5 Work will be taking place to encourage services to pass on all compliments from their departments. We are aware that many compliments are received but are just not formally logged. Having this feedback is significant as it promotes positive morale, it provides feedback to departments giving managers the opportunity to see what is working well and what we are getting right.

3.0 Stage 1 Complaints: Volumes and Response Times

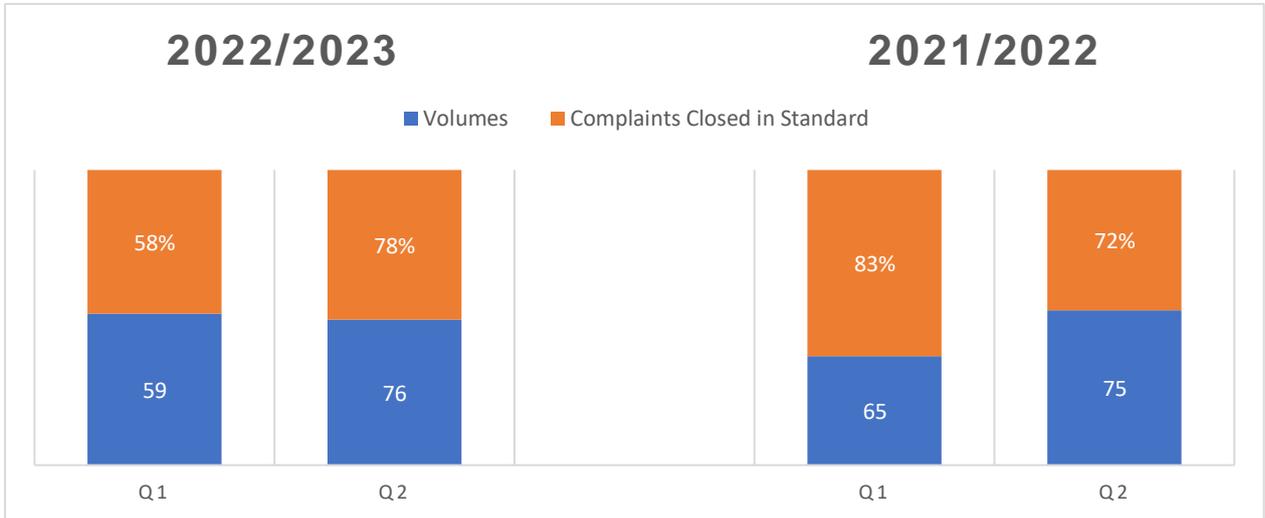
3.1 The number of complaints received between April 2022-September 2022 totals 155.

- 135 Stage 1 Complaints
- 20 Stage 2 Complaints

3.2 The graph below is reporting on volumes received and the number of complaints closed within 10 working days for Q1 – Q2 for stage 1 complaints.



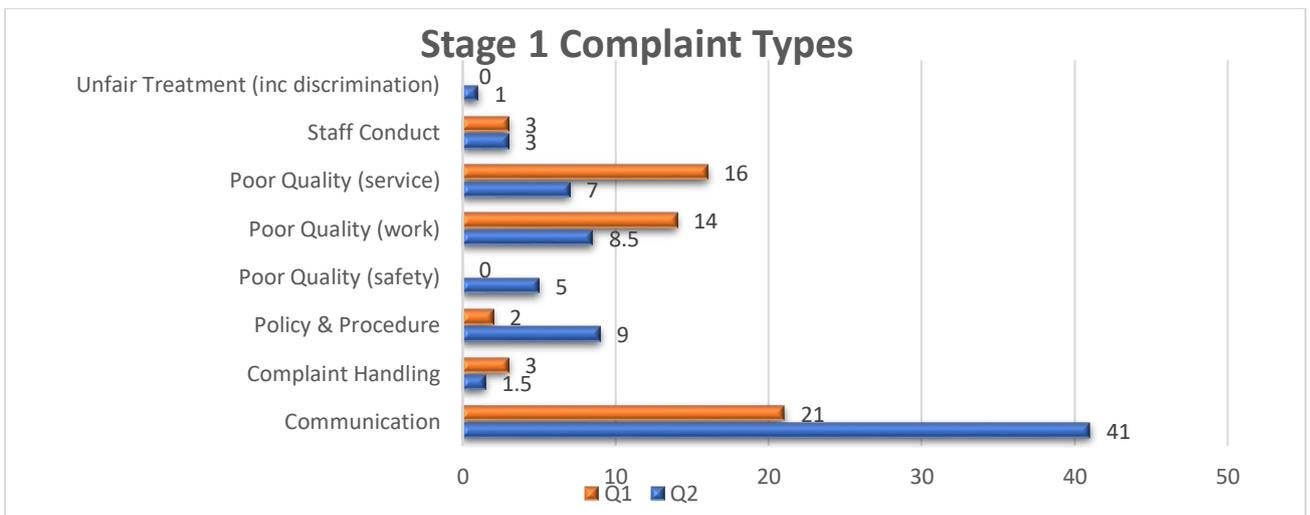
3.3 The below graph shows the comparison for stage 1 complaints received and responded to in standard for Q1 & Q2 in the first 6 months of the year.



3.5 The comparison for Q1 and Q2 in the first 6 months of this year shows a similar comparable to that of the previous year. The start of this year has been met with challenges, vacancies in key positions also leave has been a factor in complaints not being closed within standard.

3.6 HRA response times for complaints in standard have been 85% for August and 96% for September this year already. Changes have been implemented and we are confident that the customer resolution team will continue to support the service areas, so complaints are met within the timescale therefore minimising further escalation.

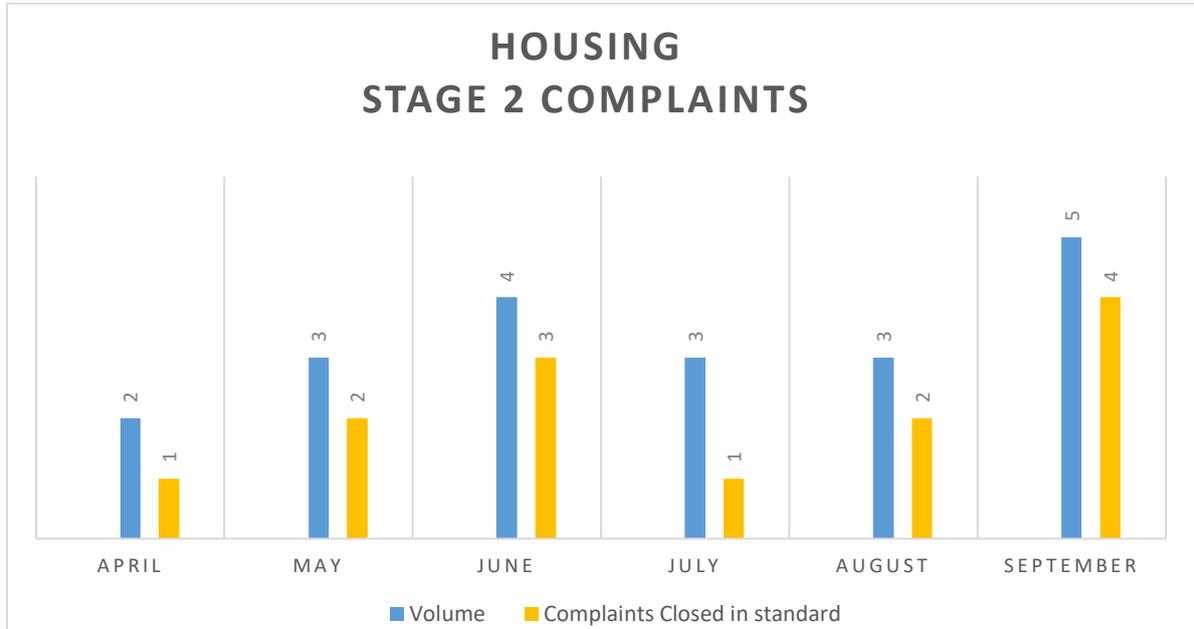
3.7 The stage 1 complaint types highlighted in the graph for Q1 and Q2 for this year below indicate what types of complaints have been received.



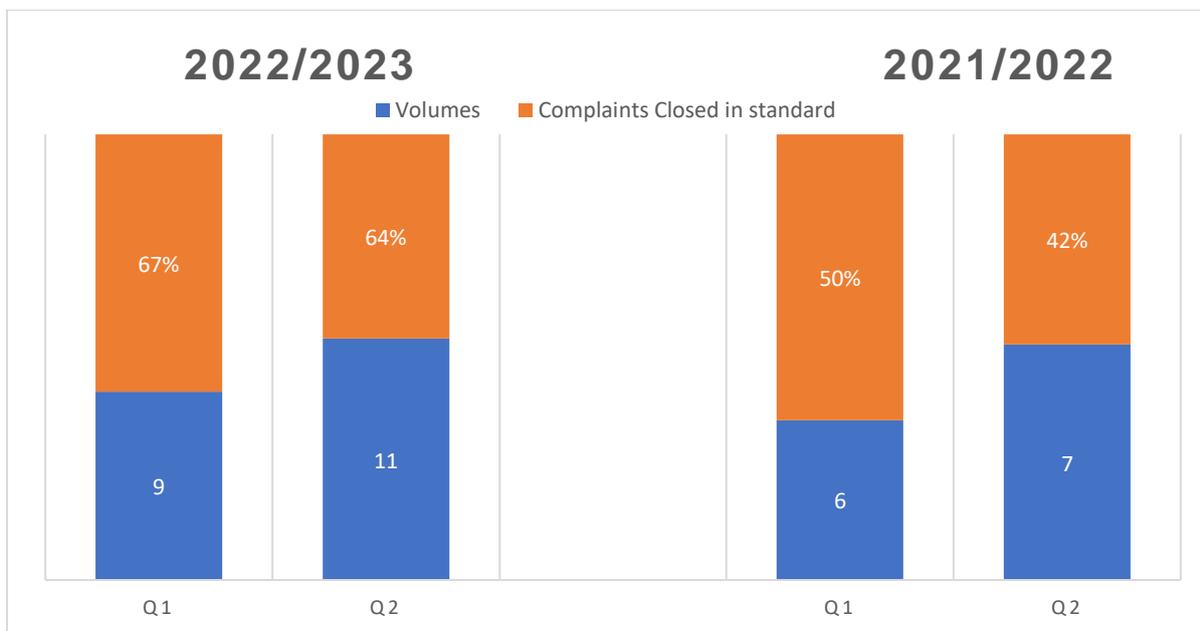
4.0 Stage 2 – Volumes and Response Times

4.1 At this point in the year from the 135 stage 1 complaints received there have been 20 that have been moved on to the second stage of the complaints process.

4.2 The graph below is reporting on volumes received and the number of complaints closed within 20 working days for Q1 – Q2 for stage 2 complaints

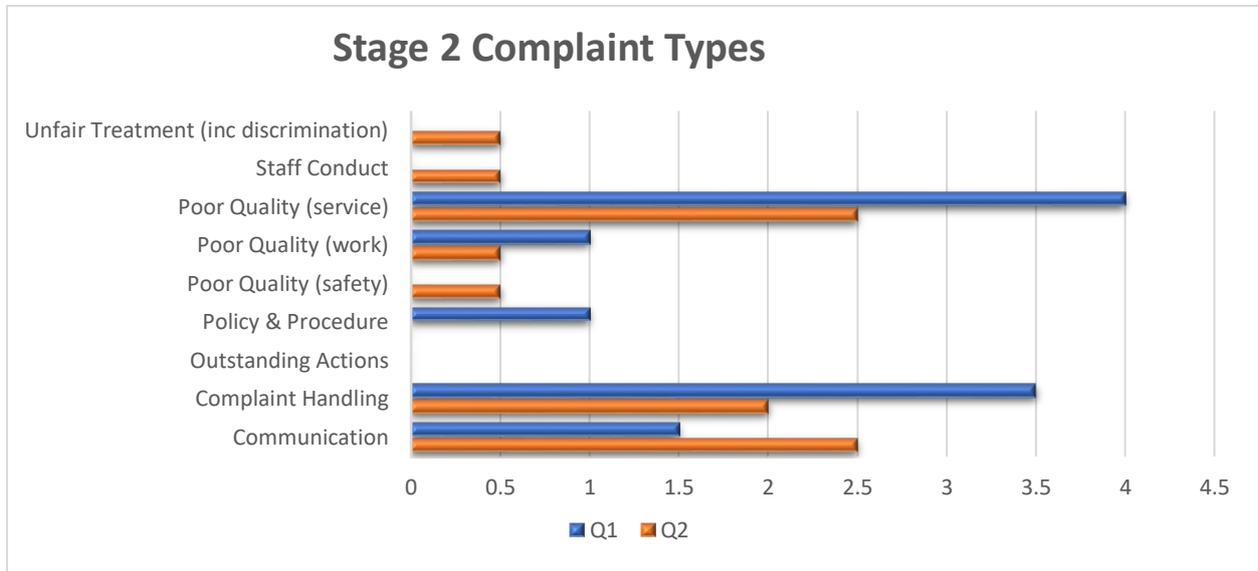


4.4 The below graph shows the comparison for stage 2 complaints received and responded to in Q1 & Q2 for the first 6 months of the year.



4.5 Although you can see that there has been an increase in the number of complaints escalated to a stage 2, it is encouraging that we have made improvements on last year in the time taken to reply within the 20 working days timeframe.

4.6 The below graphs indicate the complaint types received in Q1 and Q2 for stage 2 complaints.



4.7 Overall, the Housing Directorate upheld half of the stage 2 complaints received in Q2 for this year. From further analysis of the data, commonly complaints have been escalated as we haven't answered in full the enquires raised at stage 1. Poor Quality service generally relates to a let-down in the service provided. This will be addressed as part of our ongoing commitment to ensure that we have compliance within our Complaints Policy and the Housing Ombudsman's Code of Conduct.

4.8 The team will continue to work with the departments ensuring to get the complaint response right at stage 1, new working processes have been implemented to support this.

4.8.1 Amendments have been made to forms which are sent to officers answering a complaint received, the customer resolution team are bullet pointing the key points to answer to ensure that this has been included in the response.

4.8.2 For complaints received that are complex at day 6 of the complaint response an appointment is scheduled with the answering officer along with the customer resolution team to discuss progress of the response to the complaint, and if there is a need to extend the complaint deadline it can be discussed at this point in the complaint response.

We are confident that these changes will continue to see a decline in the number of complaints being escalated to stage 2 in the complaints process.

4.9 Over the next 6 months continued improvements will be monitored looking at complaint trends providing feedback to the tenant throughout the process of responding to a stage 2 complaint.

5.0 Housing Ombudsman Complaints

5.1 During both Q1 and Q2 no investigations have been received by the Housing Ombudsman.

5.2 An investigation took place for a case received by The Local Government Ombudsman relating to ASB – Noise Nuisance, the complaint received was upheld and remedy agreed. Work has been carried out to strengthen collaborative practices between Tenancy services and Environmental service procedures. Although this case was investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman as it relates to practices used by the Housing Tenancy team it has been mentioned for reference in this report.

5.3 Upon review of last years data, 4 Housing Ombudsman investigations had been received during the first 6 months of 2021/2022. This year, 2022/2023, has seen a reduction from the Ombudsman since this time last year. It is pleasing to note that with the work being implemented to improve the standard of complaint handling no further escalation has been required.

6.0 The next 6 Months

6.1 Projects which will be driven on over the next 6 months are listed below

6.1.1 **Response Times** - reducing the need to extend a complaint and answer within deadline.

6.1.2 **Complaint Responses** – providing comprehensive responses to a complaint received

6.1.3 **Tracking actions** - ensuring to make the improvements from lessons learnt and that the agreed outcomes have taken place.

6.1.4 **Tenants Panel** – working with the residents to create a scrutiny panel for complaints we would like to see this set up for April 2023 (with detailed plans drawn up to ensure feasibility)

6.1.4 **Working with Somerset County Council** – work will continue to have a robust Housing Complaints Policy ready for the new unitary Council, we are expecting that this will be signed off in early 2023.

6.2 As you can see from the data presented, the first six months of the year has seen improvements. With the number of complaints received reducing we are working to drive compliance and response over the next six months, we are looking forward to providing a full analysed annual report for 2022/2023 providing comprehensive figures for the year.