

SNG Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2023/24



Foreword by Barbara Brownlee, member of the SNG Board responsible for complaints

Complaints have been an area of focus for the SNG Board during the year. Complaints are reported to us at each Board meeting and we have looked in detail at the service throughout the year, and will continue to do so.

In April 2024, I was appointed as the Board Member Responsible for Complaints and I recognise how critically important it is for us to provide an effective complaints management service, whilst continually learning and improving the service we provide to our customers. I'm therefore delighted to be able to introduce this first annual performance and service improvement report.

The Housing Ombudsman Service has a Code that defines best practice for handling complaints and the Board has signed off our latest annual self-assessment against this (which you can read on our website). We have also taken steps to ensure we're meeting the new Housing Ombudsman Code from April 2024.

While complaints performance has improved, it isn't where the Board wants it to be it. But we are confident that the service will continue to further improve through 2024/25.

As a Board, we are committed to ensuring that SNG provides the best possible service for our customers and that, when things do go wrong, we put them right and respond to any complaint quickly, supporting our customers along the way.

In addition to our own regular reviews, we've also done the following.

- Asked our Resident Engagement Groups to check that lessons learnt from Housing Ombudsman Service reviews are completed.
- Asked for an internal audit on complaints to be carried out to give us additional assurance.

I hope you will find this report informative, and I look forward to seeing how some of the measures explained here will further help to improve this key service.

Barbara Brownlee

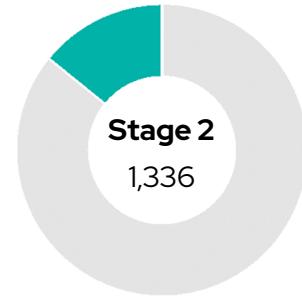
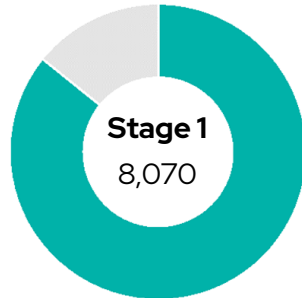
SNG Board Member



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Total complaints received
9,406
23% up on 2022-23

Number of complaints by stage



Top 3 reasons for complaints

Responsive Repairs

5,285 complaints (56%)

- How long we take to address an issue
- Lack of appointment availability
- Delayed or cancelled work

Communication

840 complaints (9%)

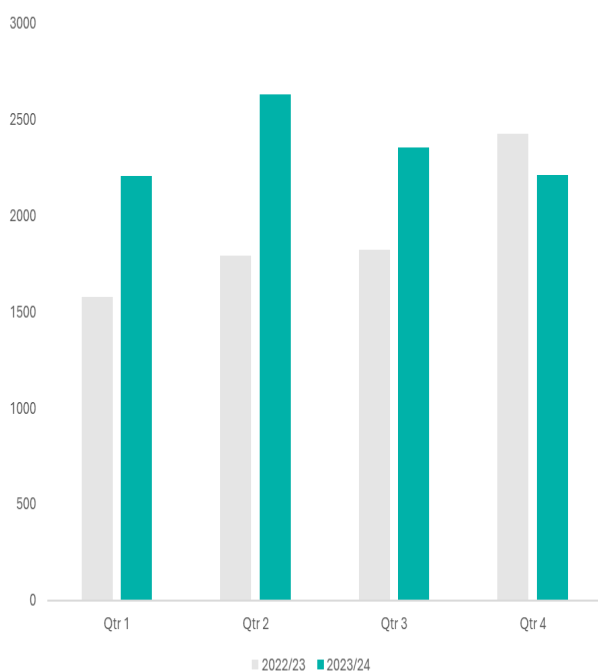
- Not keeping customers informed
- Unclear communication
- Not contacting customers when we said we would

Planned Works

749 complaints (8%)

- Poor quality work
- Not resolving the issue
- Not completing work on time

Year on year complaint volumes



Complaints volumes

Overall, the number of complaints increased by 23% in 2023/24 - from 7,619 to 9,406.

We recognise and support our customers' right to complain and our complaints policy is designed to make it easy and straightforward for our customers to raise a complaint with us.

Whilst we do not want to give customers a reason to complain, we always welcome feedback and look to learn from it, so that we can improve our services.

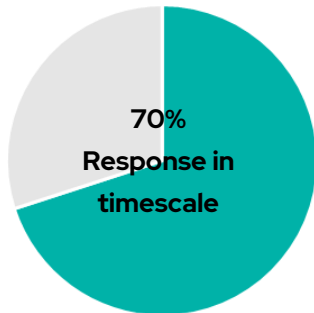
Escalations

We look to do everything we can to resolve a complaint at Stage 1. However, if a customer is not happy with the outcome, they can escalate their complaint to Stage 2. During 2023/24 we saw 14% of customers escalate their complaint to Stage 2.

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Complaint outcomes

Stage 1



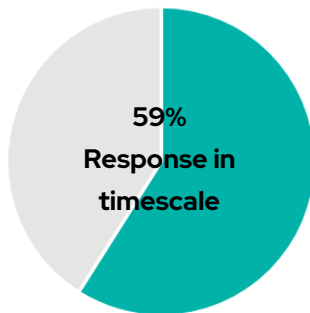
75% of complaints were Upheld or Partially Upheld

55% Upheld

20% Partially Upheld

25% Not Upheld

Stage 2



Compensation paid

£624,472

81 complaints were raised with the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) during 2023/24 - 33 more than in 2022/23.

HOS made **200 determinations** and found fault with our service in 147 instances (74%) and no fault in 53 instances (26%). A single case can receive multiple determinations.

Determinations where SNG was at fault:

- 15 - Severe Maladministration
- 87 - Maladministration
- 45 - Service Failure

We received **three** Complaint Handling Failure Orders, which were due to unreasonable delays in progressing complaints.

Internal review

At the request of the HOS, we completed an internal review which focused on our repairs service, contractor performance, record keeping, complaint handling and how we consider customer vulnerability.

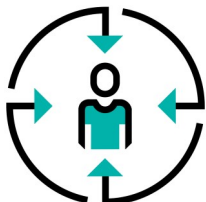
The review resulted in:

- **two** recommendations to improve repairs performance and quality
- **three** recommendations to improve record keeping and the consideration of vulnerability
- **two** recommendations to improve complaint handling

An action plan was created and progress is being monitored by the Customer Senior Leadership team and our Resident Engagement Groups.

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Complaints handling improvements during the year



A change of approach

- In September 2023, we moved to a **centralised complaints team** to manage cases more effectively, whilst delivering a better experience for our customers.
- We completed a detailed resource forecast and began recruitment to increase the size of the team, in addition to appointing a dedicated **Head of Complaints**.

As a direct result, we've seen a significant improvement in our response times for customers.



Being accountable

- In April 2024, Barbara Brownlee (SNG Board Member) was appointed as the **Board Member Responsible for Complaints**.

- Where a customer has taken a complaint to the HOS and they've identified areas for improvement, we completed **Lessons Learned reviews** with steps being taken to address any failings.
- We also conducted **weekly complaint review meetings**, which were attended by relevant managers from across the business, to discuss complex cases. This ensured we considered all factors impacting the customer and were proactive in resolving complaints.
- We held ourselves to account and reported our performance to the **SNG Board**, and to our **Resident Engagement Groups**. Learnings were also shared with operational teams to ensure best practice was embedded.



Continually improving

- We continuously looked to improve and so developed **Service Improvement Plans**. Each plan contains a number of recommendations and is overseen by a Director, who monitors progress.

- In February 2024, we undertook an **Internal Complaints Audit**, which underpinned a number of improvement actions including training, process improvement and quality assurance. As a result, additional letter writing and empathy training were completed, work flow systems have been improved and further quality checks implemented for Stage 1 and Stage 2 responses.
- We embraced **learning opportunities** - our complaints team regularly reviewed cases to ensure we were providing the right support for our customers.
- We trialled a new process, called **Close the Loop**, where we proactively contacted customers to discuss any concerns raised in their survey feedback. Following successful testing, roll out is planned for 2024/25.