

Directorate of Housing

Brief description of Directorate and Service Framework

Caerphilly Homes is the brand name for the council's housing division. Some of the services delivered by Caerphilly Homes include Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS), Estate Management, Tenancy Enforcement, Rents and Tenancy Support, Tenant and Community Involvement, Older Persons' Housing, Housing Repair Operations, Housing Advice, Homeless Prevention and Common Housing Register, Private Sector Housing, Grants and Loans, Housing Strategy, Affordable Housing and Adaptations

1. Number of complaints by stage type, service, and targets met

Table showing summary of complaints by stage type reference

| Stage Type | Count | Count Completed in Target Times | Percentage Completed in Target Times |
|-----------------------------|-------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Stage 1 | 132 | 58 | 43.9% |
| Stage 2 | 3 | 3 | 100.0% |
| Escalated from Stage 1 to 2 | 25 | 14 | 56.0% |
| Totals | 160 | 75 | 46.9% |

*Target response rates for first 6-month period of 2022/23 were 69.9%

Tables showing summary of complaints by service, for each stage type

| Service | Count Stage 1 | Count Completed in Target Times | Percentage Completed in Target Times |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Adaptations | 1 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Allocations | 16 | 11 | 68.8% |
| Antisocial Behaviour | 3 | 2 | 66.7% |
| Enforcement | 2 | 1 | 50.0% |
| Grants | 2 | 2 | 100.0% |
| Homelessness | 3 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Housing Management | 29 | 14 | 48.3% |
| Leaseholder | 1 | 1 | 100.0% |
| Heating | 7 | 3 | 42.9% |
| Private Landlord | 1 | 1 | 100.0% |
| Rents | 2 | 2 | 100.0% |
| Response Repairs | 61 | 18 | 29.5% |
| Sheltered Housing | 1 | 1 | 100.0% |
| WHQS External | 1 | 0 | 0.0% |
| WHQS Internal | 2 | 2 | 100.0% |
| Totals | 132 | 57 | 43.9% |

| Service | Count Stage 2 | Count Completed in Target Times | Percentage Completed in Target Times |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Allocations | 3 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Grants | 2 | 2 | 100.0% |
| Housing Management | 11 | 8 | 72.7% |
| Heating | 2 | 1 | 50.0% |
| Response Repairs | 10 | 6 | 60.0% |
| Totals | 28 | 17 | 60.7% |

Generally, where target response times were not met, it has been identified that it was due to awaiting further information from other officers, other departments, or the complainants themselves. There is a notable drop in the compliance rate from the previous 6-month period. Two key areas are Response Repairs where the target figure significantly dropped from 80% to 29.5%. There are ongoing issues with a backlog of repairs which is having a negative impact on the target rate due to managers, supervisors and operatives turning their attention to reducing the backlog and placing their focus on this area as a key priority. Recruitment issues have also been experienced within this area which is strongly felt throughout this service, evidencing the knock on effect witnessed with investigation times and target rates. Housing Management also have a notable decrease in target rate from 62.5% in the first 6 months to 48.3%. Key members of the Housing Management team have also been involved in the planning and implementation of the changes required for Caerphilly Homes to successfully introduce the Renting Homes Act 2016. This was initially due to be completed by the 15th of July 2022 however this had been postponed until the 1st December 2022 and has now been successfully implemented. The introduction of this legislation is paramount and therefore has taken priority over some other duties. The Housing Department has also commissioned a new computer system called CX. Managers and officers have been involved with the building and testing of the system via workshops and group meetings, this new system was introduced in October 2022 and ongoing testing, adjustments and implementation continue to ensure Caerphilly Homes has an efficient housing recording system. These changes have been managed whilst operating on a reduced staffing capacity due to recruitment challenges which are being experienced nationwide. To encourage improvements in target response times, data will be provided monthly to managers and directors who attend SMB and HMT to discuss cases which fall short of meeting the target deadlines and to establish if trends can be identified in this area. Managers/Officers have attended training sessions provided by the CSA to ensure consistency and customer focus, ultimately improving quality of complaint investigations, and reducing escalation of complaints. Managers/Officers will be provided with a list of open cases for their section on a fortnightly bases which will include brief details of the case when it was received and the target date for closure. This approach will be monitored to see if this has a positive impact on our target time percentages.

Table showing how the complaints were received.

| By source | Count Stage 1 | Count Stage 2 | Count Escalated Stage 1 to Stage 2 |
|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---|
| Telephone | 60 | 2 | 8 |
| Email | 57 | 1 | 17 |
| Letter | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| On-line | 12 | 0 | 0 |
| Contact Centre | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 132 | 3 | 25 |

*In 2021/2022, the main source of contact was via e-mail however this has now changed, the main method of contact is via the telephone.

2. Key complaints - identified by type or theme

- Resident unhappy with the quality of works completed in back garden following WHQS upgrade.
- Delay in payment for decoration allowance.
- Missing information on completed housing application, possibly jeopardising opportunity to be allocated a property.
- Residents concerned with delays in visible action following reports of a neighbour's garden being overgrown and time it takes to implement the garden procedure.
- Incorrect information provided by Housing Advice Officer.
- Resident unhappy with the service they have received from the Housing Repairs Operations team including delays in undertaking repair work, not allocating enough time to complete repairs, and missing agreed appointments without prior notification.
- Resident concerned with delay in considering succession application and the impact it has claiming housing benefit payments.
- Increased concerns relating to potential damp and mould issues in properties following increased media coverage.

In terms of identified trends, the re-let standard of some properties were identified as poor. Going forward meetings between managers were scheduled to discuss potential training needs and to agree the focus of awareness raising sessions with team members who are responsible for ensuring that our Lettings Standard is met and that there is a clear understanding of Tenant Maintenance responsibilities (Tenants Handbook). These changes worked hand in hand with updates required to meet the Renting Homed Act 2016.

Number by Category(Commissioner Case Type)

Table showing complaints by Commissioner Case Type, for prescribed Categories

| | Category | Count Stage 1, Stage 2 & Escalated 1 to 2 |
|-----|---|---|
| 1. | Collaborative Working | 1 |
| 2. | Decision Making | 13 |
| 3. | Delay in Service Provision | 23 |
| 4. | Officer/Contractors Conduct with public (including sensitivity/empathy of staff/politeness) | 9 |
| 5a. | Following Council Policies | 3 |
| 5b. | Following relevant Legislation | 1 |
| 6. | Accessibility of Services | 0 |
| 7. | Clarity/Accuracy/Timeliness of information | 7 |
| 8. | Quality of Work | 102 |
| 9. | Openness/ Fairness and Honesty | 1 |
| 10. | Compliance with Complaints procedure | 0 |
| 11. | Combination | 0 |
| | Totals | 160 |

*Quality of work (8) remains the most common category for reason for contact.

3. Number by Outcome and lessons learned comments

Table showing complaints by Outcome Data sets as categorised by the Complaints Standards Authority.

| Outcome Data | Count Stage 1, Stage 2 & Escalated 1 to 2 |
|---------------|---|
| Upheld | 52 |
| Not upheld | 93 |
| Totals | 145 |

*Please note, 15 complaints were withdrawn

The following table shows more information regarding the complaints counts above, that were, Upheld, Not Upheld, Non-specific, Investigation Not Merited and Investigation Discontinued, by Service Area.

Stage 1 Complaints

| Service | Upheld | Not Upheld |
|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Adaptations | 0 | 1 |
| Allocations | 4 | 11 |
| Enforcement | 0 | 2 |
| Energy Works | 0 | 0 |
| Grants | 0 | 2 |
| Homeless | 0 | 1 |
| Housing Management | 15 | 11 |
| Leaseholder | 0 | 1 |
| Private Landlord | 0 | 1 |
| Rents | 2 | 0 |
| Response Repairs | 23 | 34 |
| Sheltered Housing | 0 | 1 |
| WHQS External | 0 | 1 |
| WHQS Internal | 2 | 0 |
| Heating | 0 | 4 |
| Antisocial Behaviour | 0 | 3 |
| Homeless Prevention | 0 | 1 |
| Totals | 46 | 74 |

Stage 2 Complaints

| Service | Upheld | Not Upheld |
|--------------------|----------|------------|
| Allocations | 1 | 2 |
| Grants | 0 | 2 |
| Housing Management | 2 | 8 |
| Response Repairs | 3 | 6 |
| Heating | 0 | 1 |
| Totals | 6 | 19 |

List of lessons learned. Comment on key findings resulting from the complaints in this reporting period, that may help curtail, prevent, or impede future repeats.

| Details of Case | Lessons Learned | Category |
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|-----------------|-----------------|----------|

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| <p>Resident unhappy with the quality of the works carried out under WHQS in his back garden.</p> | <p>Unfortunately, the poor service and quality of works received by the resident was due to the contractor ceasing trading.</p> | <p>8 Quality of work</p> |
| <p>Resident has raised a number of issues including delay in decoration payment - discretionary housing payment confusion - unfinished repairs - query over tenant's handbook and the meaning of it</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Gas central heating system was not operational for the first 6 weeks of the tenancy - Internal systems have now been changed by the Principal Contracts Officer and these will be reviewed by Housing Operations Manager to ensure that they are robust and will prevent this happening in future. •Standard of the new home – discuss potential training needs and to agree the focus of awareness raising sessions with team members who are responsible for ensuring that our Lettings Standard is met and that there is a clear understanding of Tenant Maintenance responsibilities (Tenants Handbook). •Delay in redecoration BACS Payment – The current procedure for making payments to tenants will be reviewed to ensure that any payments are processed as quickly as possible. •Tenant Handbook change to wording – This has already been amended for the new supply that are currently on order. | <p>8 Quality of work</p> |
| <p>Resident completed housing application, but we had missing information on our system and the information communicated was incorrect. Resident concerned they may have missed out on an offer of a property.</p> | <p>Discussions held with Clerical Officers to ensure they check applications before replying.</p> | <p>7 Clarity/Accuracy/Timeliness of information</p> |
| <p>Resident unhappy with the service received whilst having the wall between the kitchen and lounge injected with damp course and replastered - also still waiting for decoration allowance payment</p> | <p>Improved communication requirements identified between us CCBC, the Contractor and the Contract Holders. HRO operatives will be reminded of the importance of this. The Contract Holder should have been advised of the duration of works and access restrictions to parts of her</p> | <p>8 Quality of work</p> |

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| | property prior to and while the works were being undertaken. | |
| Reported neighbouring garden being overgrown and damaging his property on a number of occasions but issue is still not resolved | Covid limited any actions or investigations at that time, however Officers were reminded that photos should have been requested from the customer to see the issue and to bear this in mind to provide a more efficient service. The resident had been complaining for some time and we didn't act promptly enough to resolve it. | 3 Delay in Service Provision |
| Incorrect information provided by Housing Advice Officer | A meeting was held with the case officer, and we talked through the information that was shared regarding CAP and former tenancy debt and to ensure that they double checked facts / figures and CAP before engaging in the conversation to avoid the scenario happening again. A workshop is being held with staff to review and reinforce pathways for service delivery and as part of this a session on the CAP and a refresher for all the team is being arranged | 7 Clarity/Accuracy/Timeliness of information |
| Resident unhappy with the mess in the area and feels the garden procedure takes too long and the emo is not acting quick enough | We acknowledge the length of time to deal with this request and note EMO's have been less active in the community due to Covid restrictions, but meetings are being held to rectify this as restrictions are now lifted. | 3 Delay in Service Provision |
| Contract holder contacted to advise they are unhappy with the repairs service they have received. | On this occasion we should have renewed the door earlier due to the number of repairs that were undertaken on the door. We do have a Lesson learnt procedure in place at the moment, that is if the same repair is reported on three occasions, then the Foreman would go out to check and advise if the repair has been carried out correctly. I know this did happen at least once at this property, but the number of repairs recorded against the front door should have acted as a warning for the door to be renewed. | 8 Quality of work |
| Contract holder gained succession and it was backdated leaving them with an arrears balance and | Arrange to meet with the relevant EMO and talk about sending of the correct letters in a timely manner. This matter will be raised | 8 Quality of work |

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| <p>backdated Housing Benefit cannot be claimed due to receiving Universal Credit</p> | <p>with EMO Teams meeting, as the introduction of Renting Home Wales Act 2016 (RHW) 1st December 2022 there will be stringent timescales</p> | |
| <p>Contract holder told she could partition bedroom, but now informed consent is required so has to wait whilst her and the children are sleeping downstairs. Not happy by the way I have just been forgotten about as a contract holder and I'm not happy the way that I've been spoken to.</p> | <p>We receive calls from frustrated customers regularly and dealing with us as a council can be a bureaucratic process. We can't expect customers to know every one of our procedures and we need to be understanding of that, and respond supportively rather than assuming customers are trying to circumvent our procedures We need to do more training on providing excellent customer service and improving the experience of our customers who contact us. We have started this with the restorative training and I'm hoping to continue by looking at customer journeys. When we get call recording, we can use this for training purposes.</p> | <p>7 Clarity/Accuracy/Timeliness of information</p> |
| <p>Housing register application being closed down again</p> | <p>Manager has raised the inaccuracies of the tenancy rent reference with the relevant department and further training will be offered to the team to hopefully alleviate any future mistakes. We will also look to update the Tenancy Reference Form which rents are sent so the information required is easy to process.</p> | <p>7 Clarity/Accuracy/Timeliness of information</p> |
| <p>Following chimney being removed 2 months ago bags of rubble still left on garden. Tenant has called 5 times to request removal but has still not been removed</p> | <p>There was a definite breakdown in communication between us and the contractor, and the tenant should have been informed that there was a possibility that the waste would not be collected within a reasonable timescale. Moving forward we will ensure tenants are kept updated with any potential delays in service.</p> | <p>3 Delay in Service Provision</p> |
| <p>Contractors working on property and left cans and food in house.</p> | <p>The Engineers that carried out the work on our behalf have failed to meet our standards within the agreed Tenant's Charter of Trust by respecting yourself and your home. To avoid any instances of this nature reoccurring the Contractor has held Toolbox talks with their</p> | <p>4 Officer/Contractors contact with public.</p> |

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| | Engineers and have assured us that this will not happen again going forward. We will also request that in house Surveyors carry out more spot checks and visits on future installations, this would ensure that Engineers are acting in a professional manner whilst undertaking the work | |
| Contract holder requesting review of decision not to renew kitchen - disagrees with signing the form to opt out of new kitchen | Although the customer did refuse works previously and had signed an opt out form, this should not have stopped the surveyor as the customers' needs had changed, hence moving forward we need to focus on why the customer is now asking for the work to be done. In this instance the customer had asked for the tumble dryer to be relocated into the kitchen from a shed in the garden as a member of their family has health issues this was achievable by removing an old pantry, The surveying team needs to understand that at any given time the customer has the right to reverse their decision. The surveyors line manager has been informed that on this occasion we failed the needs of the customer we have asked the line manager to hold a toolbox talk with all the surveyors highlighting that if an opt out form has been signed the customer is still entitled to reverse their decision, this will also be communicated throughout the Housing Technical department. | 9 Openness/fairness and Honesty |
| Private owner of unhappy that the garden of a contract holder is overgrowing with grass and brambles and coming into his garden causing damage to plastic around shed this has been ongoing for many years | The need to identify whether service requests for garden conditions when received for this location, are seasonally recurring and, if so, consider previous responses/cumulative impact when determining a reasonable response to requests, whilst we identify a longer-term solution to a recognised issue. Officers reminded of the need to consider file histories when determining our responses to concerns raised about garden conditions in this location | 8 Quality of work |
| Contract Holder was due to have two windows fitted in the kitchen on 24/10, tenant | to ensure materials are available before making an appointment for a repair and to ensure when | 8 Quality of work |

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| called twice to confirm the fitters were calling, they did not attend and on final call was told appointment was mistake. | communicating with the Contract Holder checks are made to ensure the information we provide is correct. | |
| Contract Holder raised concerns as having issues with damp and mould and wants them investigated. | After investigation it was established the MDF used was damp. Operatives advised this must not be repeated. | 8 Quality of work |
| Contract Holder reported damp and wet walls for previous 7 years and the issue is still not resolved. | To ensure an in-depth Inspection is carried out for issues of recurring damp, to ascertain the actual cause and treat accordingly. | 8 Quality of work |
| Contract Holder required another appointment to fit an extractor fan when they thought it would be completed in same day. | Established that SOR code for fitting fans does not cover coring out hole for fan which takes longer. A request has been made for this to be included to the surveying team who are responsible for the SOR codes. This should no longer happen for future repairs of this nature. | 3 Delay in Service Provision |
| Contract Holder reported they had been living in damp property with rising damp for three years. To undertake the necessary works to rectify this, they have been decanted to another property which is also very damp. | Ongoing problem with our void's inspections identified. Improvements have been made to start rectifying this issue. | 8 Quality of work |
| Son of Contract Holder unhappy with letters father has received regarding rent arrears as they have previously made contact with the Rents Department to make a complaint, but this was not recorded appropriately. | identified some staff are not fully aware of the corporate process of receiving and logging complaints and differentiating between a service request and a complaint. We should not rely on sending letters when we are awaiting information but telephone tenants to discuss matters. | 8 Quality of work |
| Contract Holder unhappy with quality of finish following WHQS works, they reported it a while ago but now had to log some repairs. Contract Holder did not sign the work off as satisfactory so wants to know who did. | investigations indicated the contractor walked off site and did not return to complete the remedial works as the Contract Holder refused access. The WHQS works were completed 4 years previous. | 8 Quality of work |
| Housing applicant is unhappy with banding as feels due to medical conditions they should be in a priority banding. | it was recognised that there were no real misgivings on how this case was approached however noted that maybe reviewing the rent account sooner to ensure a | 8 Quality of work |

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| | collaborative response was provided along with requesting up to date medical history information. | |
| Contract Holder contacted to advise they have numerous unresolved repairs still outstanding. | it was acknowledged that poor communication and inconsistent inspection/surveys were the root of the problem, so toolbox talks were arranged to discuss the issues raised. | 3 Delay in Service Provision |
| Contract Holder unhappy as thought sewerage in kitchen should have been initially logged as an official complaint and wants to investigate why it took 6 weeks to sort out. | £200 compensation offered for delay in arranging another appointment. Officers were reminded of the importance of follow up calls to ensure appointments. | 3 Delay in Service Provision |
| Contract Holder unhappy with stage 1 response in relation to failures with replacing his kitchen after a leak. | Due to a number of ongoing issues including this complaint, the Contract Holder met with Christina Harray and Rob Tranter and an offer of £5000 was made and accepted along with an offer of an alternative property to better suit the Contract Holder's needs. | 3 Delay in Service Provision |
| Contract Holder had an appointment to fit windows. Operatives didn't turn up and was not contacted to let her know it had been cancelled and rearranged. | relevant member of staff reminded of procedure which must be followed to ensure accurate communication is provided. | 3 Delay in Service Provision |
| Contract Holders have been waiting for 2 years to have door fitted. Both are very ill and cancelled a hospital appointment for door to be replaced and no one turned up or called to cancel the appointment. | relevant member of staff reminded of procedure which must be followed to ensure accurate communication is provided. | 3 Delay in Service Provision |
| Contract Holder unhappy with the re-let standard of the property and concerned with the amount of mould. | Poor communication and inconsistent inspections/surveys. Review of Void Process and letting standard and reissue updated version to all Staff involved in the completion and letting of empty homes. | 8 Quality of work |

4. Identified relationships to Equalities or Welsh Language

Table showing a count and list of findings resulting from the complaints in this reporting period, that specifically relate to the Equalities or Welsh Language protected characteristics.

| Characteristic Strand | Count Stage 1, Stage 2 & Escalated 1 to 2 |
|-----------------------|---|
| Age | 0 |

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Disability | 4 |
| Gender Reassignment | 0 |
| Marriage and Civil Partnership | 0 |
| Pregnancy and Maternity | 0 |
| Race | 0 |
| Religion/Belief or Non-belief | 0 |
| Sex | 1 |
| Sexual Orientation | 0 |
| Welsh Language | 0 |
| Totals | 5 |

Extracts from cases linked to the Disability characteristic:

- Following shower being fitted the boiler was adjusted to ensure hot water was coming from shower. This has caused water from the hot water tap to be deemed too hot for her daughter concerned daughter will scald herself. This issue was considered at both stage 1 and Stage 2 and was not upheld.
- Contract Holder advised they were unhappy with the banding they were placed on the Common Allocations Register due to their medical conditions and feel they should have a priority banding. This complaint was considered at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 and was found to be upheld with lessons learnt.
- Resident raised issues of sexism within Housing Solutions Team as there would be more options available to him if were female. The resident later decided to withdraw this complaint.

5. Annex – Referrals to Ombudsman, complaints resulting from appeals and examples of relevant items (points to note) specific to this reporting period

Identify how many referrals to the Ombudsman and list and append any relevant supplementary information here, namely, points to note, or an example data set.

Twelve cases were referred to the Ombudsman for Housing in this reporting period. The Ombudsman decided not to investigate and subsequently closed their records. The first Ombudsman case related to a delay in providing a Stage 2 response however even though the response was provided out of timescale, the Ombudsman felt it was justified to provide an in-depth response. The second Ombudsman case was regarding the banding for a housing application. The Ombudsman confirmed that the procedure was followed, and they will not investigate a properly made decision. The third contact was from a family member on behalf on their parents. They were disputing the 50% contribution for costs to replace the fencing. The Ombudsman confirmed they cannot investigate a complaint for which there is a remedy by way of proceedings in a court of law. The fourth related to mess in the resident's estate and the time it takes to exhaust the garden procedure, the Ombudsman reported it cannot investigate complaints about a properly made decision that a public body or a provider of public services is entitled to make. The fifth was of a similar nature regarding a neighbouring fence which the Ombudsman felt was a property made decision. The sixth was in relation to a garden fire which damaged a neighbour's garden furniture. The Ombudsman decided it cannot determine cause of liability and therefore would be remedied by the way of court proceedings. The seventh case related to a delay in outstanding repairs which we apologised for and communicated with the Contract Holder, considering this, the Ombudsman noted are efforts and agreed there were not further actions for us to take. The remaining five complaints were made prematurely to the Ombudsman and were dismissed due to the complainant not completing the complaints process available to them.

For further information, please contact

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