

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	65	28	43.1%
Stage 2	4	3	75.0%
Escalated from Stage 1 to 2	5	1	20.0%
Totals	74	32	43.2%

*Target response rates for the period of 2022/23 were 46.9%

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	1	100.0%
Allocations	2	2	100.0%
Antisocial Behaviour	3	3	100.0%
Grants	2	2	100.0%
Homelessness	3	1	33.3%
Housing Management	13	4	30.8%
Leaseholder	2	0	0.0%
Heating	3	2	66.7%
Private Landlord	3	3	100.0%
Response Repairs	33	11	33.3%
Totals	65	28	44.6%

Service	Count Stage 2	Count Completed in Target Times	Percentage Completed in Target Times
Adaptations	1	0	0.0%
Housing Management	3	2	66.7%
Response Repairs	4	2	50.0%
WHQS External	1	0	0.0%
Totals	9	4	44.4%

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. In the previous report there is a notable drop in the compliance rate from the previous 6-month period. One of the key areas noted was the Response Repairs team, where the target figure significantly dropped from 80% to 29.5%. This has slightly improved to 33.3% however, as mentioned previously, 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. Managers and Officers have been participating with the working groups for Mobilising Team Caerphilly to see if future efficiencies can be achieved in this area. 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. The Repairs Operations Team have also had a number of well experienced staff retire within the last 6 months, highlighting the importance of 'succession' preparation in recruitment going forward. Housing Management also had a notable decrease in target rate from 62.5% in the first 6 months to 48.3%.in the last report and this rate has continued to decrease slightly to 30.8%. As previously mentioned, key members of the Housing Management team continue to be involved in the planning and implementation of the changes required for Caerphilly Homes to successfully introduce the Renting Homes Act 2016. This legislation has now been successfully implemented however continued monitoring and further changes have continued to pull resources. The introduction of this legislation was 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 will continue to be offered training sessions provided by the Complaints Standards Authority (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. It was agreed this approach would be monitored to see if this has a positive impact on our target time percentages and it is important to note key areas in which target time response rates have improved. Since the last report, our Heating department has improved their response rates from 42.9% to 66.7%, the Allocations department from 68.8% to 100% and the Tenancy Enforcement Team from 66.7% to 100%.

Table showing how the complaints were received.

By source	Count Stage 1	Count Stage 2	Count Escalated Stage 1 to Stage 2
Telephone	34	1	2
Email	24	2	3
Letter	4	1	0
On-line	3	0	0
Contact Centre	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
Totals	65	4	5

*In 2022/2023, the main source of contact was via telephone and this has remained unchanged.

2. Key complaints - identified by type or theme

- Residents unhappy with delay in works being initiated for damp/condensation and mould.
- Quality/lack of support for housing applicants/homeless applicants.
- Motorhome/general cars being parked on grassed housing land – grass not being maintained. Carpark and general grassed area not being maintained at rear of property.
- Residents concerned with leaks in their private properties following works being carried out in an adjoining council property.
- Condition of property prior to a mutual exchange – unidentified repairs required before new contract holder took over.
- Delays with fitting exterior doors.
- Resident concerned with delay in re-banding of housing application as allocations officer absent due to sickness.
- Family member unhappy with letter sent regarding empty private property following family death.
- Leaseholder unhappy with the services received from Leasehold Services and Housing Repairs Operations team.

In terms of key identified trends, reports of damp and mould within the home has been highlighted. In response, Caerphilly homes has produced a procedure which will ensure that wherever possible, customers are not adversely affected by the causes of damp and mould and will drive forward an agenda of proactive action to tackle/manage the causes of damp and mould. We will ensure that all employees have an awareness of the procedure and receive adequate training to enable them to report issues of damp mould & condensation and to support our customers. Technical staff will be trained and competent in the diagnosis of damp, condensation, and mould issues; to include HHSRS, specialist damp training and the use of specialist damp equipment.

The procedure is designed to ensure Caerphilly Homes has a robust effective way of managing damp and mould cases within its housing stock and will be monitored to ensure the procedure is meeting the needs of our contract holders.

By way of an update, a key trend identified within the last report, the re-let standard of some properties were highlighted as poor. Going forward meetings between managers were held and training needs were considered and arranged. They agreed the requirement for focus of awareness raising sessions with team members who are responsible for ensuring that our Lettings Standard is in line with the Renting Homes Act. Reviewing the complaints received within this 6 month period, it is positive to note the re-let standards have improved and in fact, we have received praise from a Contract Holder who wished to acknowledge the outstanding quality of decoration within a home they were offered.

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	0
2.	Decision Making	5
3.	Delay in Service Provision	16
4.	Officer/Contractors Conduct with public (including sensitivity/empathy of staff/politeness)	1
5a.	Following Council Policies	0

5b.	Following relevant Legislation	2
6.	Accessibility of Services	0
7.	Clarity/Accuracy/Timeliness of information	1
8.	Quality of Work	49
9.	Openness/ Fairness and Honesty	0
10.	Compliance with Complaints procedure	0
11.	Combination	0
	Totals	74

*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	13
Not upheld	55
Totals	68

*Please note, 6 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	1	1
Grants	0	2
Housing Management	2	10
Leaseholder	0	1
Private Landlord	1	2
Response Repairs	7	24
Heating	0	2
Antisocial Behaviour	0	2
Homeless Prevention	0	3
Totals	11	48

Stage 2 Complaints

Service	Upheld	Not Upheld
Adaptations	0	1
Housing Management	1	2
Response Repairs	1	3
WHQS External	0	1
Totals	2	7

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
Contract holder had chimney removed which has now allegedly resulted in an on-going leak into the private property next door which it is believed is privately rented.	Lessons learned from the complaint; Contractors should declare any damage caused. Conversations were held with the scaffolders regarding the damage caused.	3.Delay in Service Provision

<p>The kitchen wall cupboard fell off injuring contract holder and a young family member.</p>	<p>Lessons learned from the complaint; Tradespeople to ensure they use the correct fixings. Foreman met with the tradespeople to discuss and to consider additional training requirements.</p>	<p>8. Quality of work</p>
<p>Contract holder advised property not inspected prior to mutual exchange (ME) deeming it not fit to live in and still waiting for repairs to be completed</p>	<p>Ensure that proper and full inspections are completed prior to allowing mutual exchanges to take place. Conversations with Housing Repair Operations about prioritising Mutual Exchange inspections to prevent this happening again</p>	<p>8. Quality of work</p>
<p>Inspector visited in January in relation to damp/condensation and sent report through for works to be completed. Still waiting for any work to begin</p>	<p>We need a better means of conveying supplementary information to the surveyor (in this case a Damp report) than simply relying on email. In this case it was assumed the same surveyor would recall after the no access due to COVID however when the recall came the surveyor was absent at the time and someone else called. If supplementary information could be added to the associated documents in Total, then it could be delivered with the job to the surveyor's tablet.</p> <p>This is something we should consider for Civica moving forward.</p>	<p>3. Delay in Service Provision</p>
<p>Operatives called out to Contract Holder property to install trickle vents, but they were not able to install them as they were the wrong size. This was the 4th or 5th time this had happened. The Contract Holder wanted a rent arrears reduction considered due to mould in the property.</p>	<p>Lessons learned from the complaint; Initial Inspections must contain full description and measurements of materials required. Inspectors will be advised of this going forward.</p>	<p>3. Delay in Service Provision</p>
<p>Occupier complained about motorhome parked on housing land which stops the grass from being cut and is an eyesore - this has been reported before.</p>	<p>No lessons learned – isolated incident</p>	<p>8. Quality of work</p>
<p>Owner Occupier unhappy as works carried out on neighbouring property causing their guttering to leak</p>	<p>Cleck of works (COW) to check alinement of gutters prior to signing off works. This is to be included in ongoing toolbox talks with Clerk Of Works.</p>	<p>2. Decision Making</p>

Issues and delays with fitting front door.	Lessons learned from the complaint; measurements should be accurate before orders are placed and information given to Contract Holders must also be accurate. Future Doors will be surveyed and measured by the supplier.	3. Delay in Service Provision
Applicant waiting to be re banded but officer absent with no one else able to undertake work.	Mental Health Assessor was on long term absence and there was no replacement who could step in. Potentially consider using agency staff if in similar situation again, to be agreed by Head of Housing.	3. Delay in Service Provision
Family member unhappy with letter sent regarding father's property left empty following his death.	The letter will be reviewed to address the concerns raised. A statement to be added to the standard letter to clarify the date of the information. This would hopefully avoid any upset. The letter can be reviewed to clarify that anyone actively dealing with their empty property or has genuine reasons for the property being empty can ignore that part of the letter.	8. Quality of work
Contract holder unhappy with service received whilst trying to organise the wallpapering of daughter's bedroom.	Lessons learned from the complaint; to ensure resources are available to complete a repair in reasonable time.	8. Quality of work
Resident remains dissatisfied with the state of the area at the rear of their property.	Lessons learned will be that early verbal communication is key to achieving a resolution before the matter is escalated to the corporate complaint's procedure.	8. Quality of work
Leaseholder unhappy with the services received from Leasehold manager and Housing Repair Operations - asked for complaint to be escalated before stage 1 investigation completed.	Ensure Leaseholders follow insurance procedure. In this case communication is key with Leaseholder and Housing Repair Operations officers.	3. Delay in Service Provision

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	6
Gender Reassignment	0
Marriage and Civil Partnership	0

Pregnancy and Maternity	0
Race	0
Religion/Belief or Non-belief	0
Sex	0
Sexual Orientation	0
Welsh Language	0
Totals	6

Extracts from cases linked to the Disability characteristic:

- Following a toilet cistern being fitted in July 2021, an increase in the water bills were noted approx. 12 months later due to a possible leak. Investigations revealed at least 18 months had passed before the Contract Holder had reported this issue. The son said we had not considered the Contract Holder's vulnerabilities whilst investigating however our records showed the Contract Holders had reported other issues to the response repairs department during the same period. This issue was considered at both stage 1 and Stage 2 and was not upheld.
- Friend of homeless applicant concerned for their welfare and their pregnant daughter. The applicant has autism and his friend felt this was not being considered. We advised the case officer assigned the case was specialised in working with people who have mental health issues and ADHD. This complaint was considered at Stage 1 and was found to be not upheld.
- Contract Holder advised contractor took bathroom floor up and they have been left unable to use their shower. Both residents are registered disabled and need access to the shower. This contact was recorded as a stage 1 complaint and was not upheld as the repair was carried out in a timely manner.
- Son of Contract Holder made contact to advise his visually impaired mother fell over tools which were left on the floor by the gas engineer. This was recorded as a stage 1 complaint and not upheld as evidence did not conclude the cause.
- Contact Holder raised a number of issues which were investigated as a stage 2 complaint. These issues included car parking issues, alleged anti-social behaviour from neighbours and their children and harassment from CCBC staff. Following in-depth investigations into all aspects of the allegations, the complaint was not upheld.

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.

Six cases were referred to the Ombudsman for Housing in this reporting period. The Ombudsman decided not to investigate and subsequently closed their records for five of these cases. One case was investigated and upheld by the Ombudsman.

The first Ombudsman case related to a delay in completing repairs reported and acknowledged some of the repairs should have been undertaken before the property was allocated. As part of our investigatory procedure, we apologised to the Contract Holder, updated them on the one outstanding repair and offered a £108.00 payment redress for decoration. Considering this the Ombudsman decided not to investigate the complaint as they felt our actions were fair in redressing the issues raised.

The second Ombudsman case was regarding a Contract Holder reporting the presence of damp and mould in a property before it was allocated. Following the internal investigation responses provided to the Ombudsman, it was decided no further action was required by Caerphilly Homes as they had acted appropriately.

The third case was prematurely taken to the Ombudsman regarding a car remaining on axle stands. The ombudsman passed this contact to Caerphilly Homes for us to engage with the resident and undertake our own investigations.

The fourth case was of a similar nature as it was prematurely passed to the Ombudsman when our internal procedures had not been exhausted. An owner/occupier advised they had been experiencing damp patches in their bedroom following works undertaken on the neighbouring property.

The fifth contact with the Ombudsman was relating to planning regulations, this was not considered by the Ombudsman due to lack of evidence and contact from the complainant. The ombudsman decided they were not furnished with enough evidence for them to consider their concerns.

The sixth complaint was regarding the placement of a fence in the rear garden. The Contract Holder disagreed with the decision and request to move the fence, and this was initially logged as a Service Request. Following the Ombudsman's consideration, it was decided to accept actions to conclude an early resolution which included an apology for not logging the original contact as a Stage 1 complaint and to investigate and provide a stage 1 response to the Contract Holder as per our internal procedure. These actions were completed, and the complaint is now resolved.

For further information, please contact

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