

Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2024/25

Summary

Complaints occur when things go wrong, however an effective complaints process enables Amplius to learn from issues that arise and then to improve its services as well as provide appropriate and effective redress. Complaint handling is an important strategic role for any organisation, providing vital information and insight into performance, culture and service improvements.

As part of its compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, Amplius is required to publish annually its performance in respect of complaints as well as service improvements that have arisen from learning from complaints. The sections within the report cover the following areas:

- Our Stage One performance.
- Our Stage Two performance.
- Benchmarking and Compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
- Details of any 'refused' complaints
- Customer Satisfaction
- 'You Said, We Did'. Overall learning themes from our complaints and what we've done to enhance our services using the customer voice.

Themes arising from Complaints

Amplius has seen a significant improvement in its complaints handling in the last 12 months. Over 83% of complaints at Stage 1 were responded to within timescale and over 74% complaints at Stage 2 were responded to within timescale. The number of complaints received has also reduced significantly, with a reduction of over 2,000 complaints. Amplius. Whilst there has been positive progress, Amplius acknowledges that further work is required to provide the level of service that it expects and that our customers deserve.

Challenges with Amplius repairs contractors has proven to be the largest source of complaints with over 75% either being in respect of a repair or repair related. Issues in respect of grounds maintenance due to the mobilisation of two new contractors have also seen high levels of complaints during the spring and summer period.

Amplius has worked hard and focussed upon improving its performance in this area; more details are provided later in the report in respect of the learning and changes that have been made to services.

Complaints Performance

Under the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Code, a complaint is defined as:

‘An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.’

Stage 1

As the table below highlights, we received 3,716 Stage 1 complaints in 2024/25. The figure includes complaints carried over from the previous year.

Stage 1 Complaints	
Number Received	3716
Number Resolved	3844
Total Number Resolved Within Agreed Timescales (including extensions)	3136
Total % of Complaints Resolved Within Agreed Timescales (including extensions)	81.60%
Percentage Upheld in the Period	61.66%

We resolved 81.6% of the Stage 1 complaints within timescale against the service level agreement response time documented within the Complaint Handling Code. This figure also includes any extensions in line with the Code that were agreed with our customers.

Of all Stage 1 complaints, we upheld 61.66% of these, demonstrating an acceptance of a service failure and a subsequent opportunity for us to learn and put things right to prevent reoccurring complaints.

Stage 2

As the table below highlights, we received 997 Stage 2 complaints in 2024/25, which also includes any Stage 2 Complaints carried over from the previous year.

Stage 2 Complaints	
Number Received	997
Number Resolved	1092
Total Number Resolved Within Agreed Timescales (including extensions)	774
Total % of Complaints Resolved Within Agreed Timescales (including extensions)	73.61%
Percentage Upheld in the Period	70.88%

We resolved 73.61% of the Stage 2 complaints within timescale against the service level agreement response time documented within the Complaint Handling Code, which includes any Stage 2 complaints that were extended in line with the Code and with the agreement of the customer.

Benchmarking and Compliance

Findings of Non-Compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

The Housing Ombudsman has assessed 56 cases up to and including 31 March 2024 and has made 129 determinations against these cases. The table below breaks down the determinations issued by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Housing Ombudsman Performance 2024-25			
Determinations (YTD)	Total number of <u>cases</u> with determinations received during the year (to date)	56	
	Total number of determination findings received	129	
Analysis of Determination Findings	Finding Category	No.	%age
	Severe maladministration	9	7.0%
	Maladministration	62	48.1%
	Service failure	30	23.3%
	Mediation	3	2.3%
	Redress	14	10.9%
	No maladministration	6	4.7%
	Maladministration Rate	81.5%	
	Outside Jurisdiction	4	3.1%
	Withdrawn	0	0.0%

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

One of the areas in which Amplus can benchmark itself is against other housing providers' performance; by looking at the number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 formal complaints received during 2024/25. This measure is part of the suite of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

Amplus performance is detailed below:

Measure	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile	Amplus (Mar 2025)
Formal Stage 1 & 2 complaints received (per 1,000 units)	2.98	4.68	7.64	8.38
Percentage of Stage 1 & 2 complaints resolved within timescale	69.81%	91.62%	100.0%	77.60%

*** full annualised figure for 24/25.*

As the table above highlights, Amplus received more complaints than the sector's average benchmark in respect of complaints received per 1,000 properties. Whilst Amplus over the

financial year 2024/24 ranked as lower quartile for complaints closed within target, there was a trend of improved performance throughout each quarter. Quarter 1 saw 39% of complaints closed within the timescale; quarter 4 saw 99% closed within the timescale, an improvement of 60% from lower quartile to near upper quartile performance.

Refused Complaints

Amplius 'refused' 42 complaints in 2024/25, which is a very small percentage compared to all complaints received. It reflects that Amplius ensures that customers are transitioned into the complaint's procedure effectively. In all instances the reason as to why was clearly explained to the customer verbally and followed up by a letter confirming the refusal.

In the majority of cases, refused complaints were duplicated and had already been resolved.

Customer Satisfaction

The table below shows customer satisfaction with Amplius Complaints Service. This data is taken from customers who had made a complaint to Amplius and were then contacted afterwards to rate their experience.

Satisfaction KPI's	2024-25 Q1	2024-25 Q2	2024-25 Q3	2024-25 Q4	2024/25 Target
Complaint Handling	67%	70%	73%	67%	65%
Complaint Outcome	57%	57%	58%	67%	65%

Throughout the year, Amplius has been above target in respect of satisfaction with it's complaint handling, with an average of 69% of customers happy with how their complaint has been handled, against a target of 65%.

For satisfaction in respect of the outcome of the complaint, an average of 59.75% of customers stated that they were satisfied with the resolution provided, 5.25% below the target metric for the year. Whilst this is disappointing, the last quarter of the year saw a significant increase in satisfaction with this metric, demonstrating positive service improvement.

Learning from Complaints

Amplius knows that learning from complaints and using the customer voice to improve our services when we have got things wrong is key to stopping complaints from re-occurring but also demonstrates to our customers that we listen and act on their feedback. Complaints are a vital piece of insight from our customers. As well as our own customers, we have responded to the recommendations with the Ombudsman's Spotlight reports such as the Attitude, Respect and Rights report, Damp and Mould and Repairs and Maintenance reports.

As a result, we have made some significant changes to how we deliver our services and how we respond to and handle complaints. Learning and listening to customer feedback, and utilising a 'You said, we did' approach we have:

<i>You Said</i>	<i>We Did</i>
Based on the feedback received from Customer Focus Groups and via Lessons Learnt from Complaints, it was clear that customers often struggle to find information relating to their tenancy and there is no centralised point of reference for this type of information.	<p>We have developed a New Customer Information Sign Up Sheet. This document contains all information related to the tenancy and is very informative and detailed. This Customer Sign Up Sheet will be utilised at all tenancy contract meetings; this copy will be left with the customer and a photograph taken by the Housing Officer.</p> <p>In addition, this will ensure continuity in Housing Officer discussions with all new customers.</p>
A customer did not understand why they were asked to provide certain information at pre-tenancy before the home has been offered as an allocation.	<p>We have updated our Lettings Policy with the below information to make it clearer for our customers:</p> <p>"Our lawful basis for collecting applicant personal data during the pre-tenancy and post-tenancy processes is contractual necessity. This means we require this personal data to assess the housing application to check that the applicant meets affordability and suitability criteria in accordance with the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing."</p>
A customer fed back to us that the way that their call was handled by one of our Out of Hours providers, Appello, was not acceptable. The customer told us that effective questioning was not used, customer expectations not managed, correct processes not followed, and seriousness of customers situation not appreciated or considered.	<p>We have implemented further training for our Out of Hours call handlers which has included more extensive guidance on electrical issues and have formal raised in contract management meetings, asking for further quality assurance checks to be completed.</p>
Incorrect information was stated on a Stage 1 complaint response in respect of a grounds maintenance contractor, which meant incorrect information was put on the investigation form for Stage 2. The complainant was from a private homeowner, who would not be aware of the contractors that Amplius use and can only go off the information they were given, leading to a poor customer experience.	<p>A detailed workshop was held with the Complaint Team in respect of the importance of ensuring the correct information in respect of external contractors is noted when completing complaint investigations. Additional quality assurance checks have also been implemented.</p>

<p>A survey was sent out to a deceased customer by mistake. There was no notification to stop the survey going to a customer if the record was marked as deceased.</p>	<p>We have added a 'toggle' to our housing management system that can be checked that will then stop any surveys, newsletters, etc... to any customers who are unfortunately deceased.</p>
<p>Customers told us that Amplius should consider communicating with customers to explain we will be applying for direct payments when rent payments have been missed and arrears occur for those customers claiming Universal Credit. This would be in the context of keeping tenants informed.</p>	<p>We have updated and added to the direct payment process that colleagues will communicate with customers to explain we will be applying for direct payments.</p>
<p>Customers told us that there were delays in actioning and completing repairs to a home that was undergoing work through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) because the repair was sent in error to our normal contractor instead of the SHDF contractor.</p>	<p>Our SHDF Team have also implemented extra resources to ensure that our customers have a direct point of contact to handle queries and issues reported in a timely manner.</p>
<p>A customer escalated their complaint to Stage 2 because they were not spoken to via the telephone before the Stage 1 complaint was responded to formally via letter and the case closed.</p>	<p>We have now trained all complaint handlers that to carry out two phone calls at different times of the day to maximise the chances of reaching customers on the telephone.</p> <p>In addition, there is a new procedure in place which states specific guidance and best practice in respect of outbound calls to the customer, which includes the above.</p>
<p>Our customers have fed back that there have been failures in regular and consistent communications from our contractors in respect of the social housing decarbonisation fund (SHDF) work that has deviated away from the customer</p>	<p>A 'Lessons Learnt' session has now been scheduled as part of the whole SHDF project close out activity when the project completes in March 2025. However, customer feedback from complaint has already been used to improve current engagement services delivered to customers by both Amplius and the contractors through the introduction of customer liaison touchpoints.</p>

engagement strategy in place for the programme.	
Customers told us that there is a lack of communication from the Estates Team, not giving them enough notice to move cars when works are planned.	<p>Our Estates Team are reviewing their processes to ensure customers have a dedicated point of contact so they can be assured that any issues raised are in hand.</p> <p>As part of the review, this will ensure that letters, where customers need to move vehicles, are sent out in a timely manner to give enough notice to ensure planned works can go ahead.</p>
Customers have fed back that they are informed at the start of April 2024 that any planned programme work will be completed within that 12-month period with a date given. As this can be so far into the future, with no reminders, they can forget, and life circumstances can change. Customers are only informed via a letter with no reminder comms issued.	We will be changing our procedures to ensure customers are communicated to in respect of planned works via a range of different methods and reminders are sent closer to when the works are to be completed. Customer consultation will form part of this process in respect of the journey and the content of correspondence.
Customers have asked for a callback option on the telephones during busy periods.	A callback option is now live, when customers have been waiting for longer than five minutes, they can have the option of receiving a call back that day. This is monitored for compliance and quality with a 98% success rate to date.
A trend has been identified in respect of delays raising works with contractors due to miscommunication regarding what works need to be completed.	New processes have been implemented to ensure reports and repairs are raised within a specific timescale following Surveyor visits. This includes our Repair Coordinators monitoring the Surveyor appointments and cases to ensure all appropriate actions are completed.

A customer had been reporting that their home is cold and not retaining heat due to the radiators in their home being too small for the space.	We have reviewed internal processes and changed them to ensure heating calculations are requested at our customers' homes when it is reported that their homes are not heating efficiently to speed up any work that may need to be done to resolve the issue.
A customer had multiple repairs on her boiler following several reports of issues. The customers' child has a disability where maintaining heat is essential in the home.	Training has been given to our heating contractors on disabilities awareness to ensure that similar situations do not occur again with multiple repairs needed where there are vulnerabilities in the home and to ensure vulnerabilities are prioritised and understood.
Trends have been identified following customer complaints and engaging with Grounds Maintenance contractors following missed scheduled appointments that they had not got full maps of the specific areas that they are scheduled to maintain.	Amplius have located and uploaded the missing scheme maps to contractor systems to eliminate the risk of areas on schemes being missed.
Customers have told us that they have not been aware of Surveyors visiting their homes of complete end of tenancy inspections, leading to missed appointments.	Our procedures have been updated to ensure that Surveyors contact customers in advance of scheduled inspections, confirming the time and reason for the visit to eliminate missed appointments and any confusion for the customer.

Future Plans

We have introduced a Service Improvement Plan for our Complaints Service for 2025/26, which focuses on the following key aims and objectives:

Aims:

- To reduce repeated occurrences of complaints by 20%.
- Increase customer satisfaction by 20%.
- Develop and implement standardised procedures for complaint handling to ensure consistency and efficiency across the team.
- Provide regular training sessions for team members on effective complaint handling, empathy, and communication skills.
- Establish a system to analyse feedback from complaints to identify trends and areas for improvement within Amplius.
- Encourage a culture that prioritises customer experience and views complaints as opportunities for improvement.

- Enhance our current case management system to facilitate efficient complaint management and tracking.
- Improve our communication regarding complaints and their resolution.

Objectives:

- Achieve a measurable reduction in the repeated occurrences of complaints received.
- See an increase in the % of customer satisfaction specifically related to the complaint handling process.
- Implement documented procedures that are followed by all team members, leading to greater consistency in handling complaints.
- Increased awareness of complaint handling obligations for Amplius.
- Improve our services by regularly reporting on complaint analysis to provide visible insights.
- Enhanced communication and collaboration resulting in a more consistent team approach.
- Improve efficiency by implementing case management solutions that streamline the complaint handling process.
- Improved communications lead to an increase of awareness of our complaint performance for our customers and staff.