

**Housing**  
Ombudsman Service

**Annual Complaints Review**

**2020-21**

**March 2022**

## Contents

Ombudsman’s foreword .....	2
Key issues identified.....	4
Executive summary .....	5
Landlord performance analysis 2020-21 .....	6
Individual landlord reports .....	6
National analysis .....	6
Analysis by complaint category .....	9
Property condition.....	9
Complaint handling .....	10
Tenant behaviour .....	12
Complaint Handling Failure Orders.....	13
Annual Resident Panel Survey.....	14
Accessibility.....	14
Awareness .....	15
Positive complaints culture .....	17
Annual Landlord Survey .....	20

## Ombudsman's foreword

Welcome to our first annual review of complaints.

Complaints provide governing bodies with valuable insight into the quality of their landlord's homes, performance of their services and their relationship with residents. Our Complaint Handling Code calls for a positive complaint handling culture to ensure fairness and that learning is identified when things go wrong, to improve landlord services for the benefit of all residents.

Creating and embedding a culture that values complaints and gives them the appropriate level of priority requires strong leadership and management. While our analysis and the accompanying landlord reports will be of particular interest to complaint handlers, I strongly encourage senior leaders and governing bodies to use it to facilitate a wider discussion about their organisation's success in handling complaints and how it can develop its approach.

This review considers the period between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. It draws together insights from:

- our annual landlord performance reports – published for the second time alongside this review;
- the Complaint Handling Failure Orders (CHFOS) we have issued in the final quarter of the year; and
- our new annual surveys of our Resident Panel and landlord members.

Our analysis identifies the strategic and operational challenges to be overcome by the sector to achieve a positive complaint handling culture. It also contains a performance comparison by different types and sizes of landlord. In publishing this body of information, drawn from our unique and independent role as an Ombudsman, we are enabling landlords and residents to examine these insights in the context of their own intelligence and experiences.

The year examined by this report was dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which greatly affected residents and landlords; and it was also the year in which we published our Complaint Handling Code. This Code laid the foundations for a universal approach to complaint handling at a local level by social landlords, providing a consistent approach to defining a complaint, timescales for effective handling and expectation on the number of complaint handling stages. It also set expectations for putting things right and learning from outcomes to support landlords in developing their approach to complaint handling. A year on from the Code's publication, we have strengthened it in response to comments from landlords and residents, as well as our own experience; additionally, we have also updated our guidance on CHFOS and more details about both that can be found [here](#).

Introduced alongside the Code, CHFOS, and the associated escalation procedures prior to issuing them, aim to ensure a landlord's complaint handling is compliant with the requirements of the Code. The Ombudsman operated these in shadow when the Code was first published and went live on 1 January 2021. We have published [quarterly reports](#) on all CHFOS issued by type and whether they were complied with. In future reports, we will analyse the CHFOS we issued in the full year to provide further insight into complaints handling.

The introduction of the Complaint Handling Code and CHFOS, effective from 1 January 2021, has had a significant impact in the sector and on our service. Volumes for enquiries and complaints increased by 48% during the final quarter compared to the same period in 2019-20, while demand for formal investigations rose by 56%. The impact has continued unabated throughout

2021-22 with demand reaching unprecedented levels: an increase of 104% for all enquiries and complaints at the latest count; and an increase of 88% for formal investigations.

We believe the adoption of the universal definition of a complaint is a significant driver for this increase, demonstrating the latent demand for complaints processes. We also believe the required timescales have been a factor in bringing complaints through more quickly than had previously been the case.

While we expect the rate of growth in demand to stabilise over the coming year, we do expect growth to continue because of increased resident awareness, combined with the strategic challenges facing the sector, such as net zero and building safety; as well as the change to proactive consumer regulation. Our new corporate plan sets out the work we will do to help landlords improve complaints handling, including targeted engagement where needed and the creation of a Centre for Learning to increase the number of tools available to help all landlords develop their services.

**Richard Blakeway**  
**Housing Ombudsman**

## Key issues identified

We have identified the following key issues for all governing bodies.

Strategic issues:

- *Cultural*: not all landlords have adopted a positive complaint handling culture and see complaints as a vital window into the performance of their services. The unprecedented increase in demand for our service since the Code was launched indicates that complaints are now more likely to be recognised and dealt with on a timely basis, but there remain cultural challenges around putting things right and learning from outcomes.
- *Access*: the perceived ease of use and ease of access to landlords' complaints processes was rated as acceptable or above by over two thirds of survey respondents, but there were low levels of trust that complaining would make a difference and residents were clear that more needed to be done to raise awareness of both the landlord's procedure and the Ombudsman.
- *Procedural*: every complaint upheld represents at some level a procedural failing whether that is in the systems, policies, procedures or training. Uphold rates are particularly stark in relation to complaint handling and repairs which between them account for almost half of all complaints received. It is critical that the underpinning procedural aspects of service provision are kept under constant review to ensure they remain fit for purpose and the learning from complaints is acted on.

Operational issues:

- *Inadequate records*: a common finding across the spectrum of complaint categories is poor record keeping, particularly incomplete or missing repairs logs. This severely hampers landlords' ability to deal with individual issues effectively and efficiently and means subsequent complaints cannot be satisfactorily answered. For complaints handling, inadequate records will mean organisational oversight of complaint themes and trends will be limited and unreliable. This area is of particular concern given the proposed Access to Information Scheme for housing associations.
- *Missed or unproductive appointments*: too often, residents wait at home for an appointment to fix an issue only for the operative to not arrive or, if they do, lack the skills or equipment to deal with the issue reported.
- *Poor communication and lack of follow up*: we find consistently ineffective communication in our investigations, leading in a failure to manage residents' expectations, both in advising what will happen next and in any follow up to check that what was agreed has happened to the resident's satisfaction.

## Executive summary

### Landlord performance insight

In 2020-21, we investigated 2,185 complaints and made 3,872 findings. In 49% of cases, we found full or partial maladministration and, when individual findings are considered, 45% were upheld. These rates are high, and our analysis strongly suggests both complaints handling and service delivery need to be improved across our membership.

Responsive repairs is consistently the highest category of complaint we receive and represented 30% of the total in 2020-21 and was upheld at a rate of 45%<sup>1</sup>. If the number of reasonable redress findings are included, repairs services did not get things right first time in over 66% of the cases we handled. That is costly for landlords and frustrating for residents.

Our uphold rate of 66% for complaints handling sends a stark message that this is inadequate across our membership. Our Complaint Handling Code, the impact of which will be seen in the 2021-22 performance statistics, provides a universal set of expectations against which to determine complaints about complaint handling.

Complaints about the handling of tenant behaviour reports represented 12% of all complaints received in 2020-21, of which 34% were upheld. This suggests there might be a gap between the expectations residents have when reporting the behaviour to what is stated in the landlord's policy. Noticeably, larger landlords appear to have an uphold rate that is more in line our overall uphold rate – suggesting that residents of large landlords may be more informed about the likely outcome of a report of tenant behaviour and have their expectations managed and therefore only complain when there is basis for complaining that the report has been mishandled.

The reasons for upholding complaints are common – ineffective communication with residents, delayed and unsuccessful activities, and poor record keeping.

We issued 10 CHFOs in the final quarter of 2020-21 when they went live. They all related to failures to progress complaints through a landlord's process. Two of the CHFOs were not complied with and those complaints were taken into formal investigation at the Ombudsman's discretion.

### Landlord and Resident Panel survey insights

Our survey showed overwhelmingly that landlords found the Complaint Handling code easy to understand and apply. While just over half of the resident panel members surveyed agreed that complaints processes were effective and accessible, 70% felt there was more landlords could do to improve their complaint handling. Over 70% felt landlords could do more to raise awareness and accessibility, and 77% felt landlords could do more to learn from the complaints they received.

An effective process is not only accessible but also ensures landlords learn from the issues that arise in individual complaints to improve its services for the benefit all residents. To build trust and confidence with residents, we also encourage landlords to demonstrate this learning openly and set out any actions they have taken as a result.

---

<sup>1</sup> An individual case can concern several issues, reflected in our findings in each case. The figures for our upheld rate are presented based on the proportion of findings rather than cases. The analysis excludes findings outside jurisdiction or where an aspect of a complaint is withdrawn.

# Landlord performance analysis 2020-21

## Individual landlord reports

Alongside this report, we have published individual performance reports for those landlords who received five or more determinations during 2020-21. We have not created individual reports for landlords with fewer than five determinations as meaningful performance interpretation is not possible – their figures are published in a table on our [website](#). If a landlord does not have an individual report or does not present in that table, we did not make a formal determination for them in 2020-21.

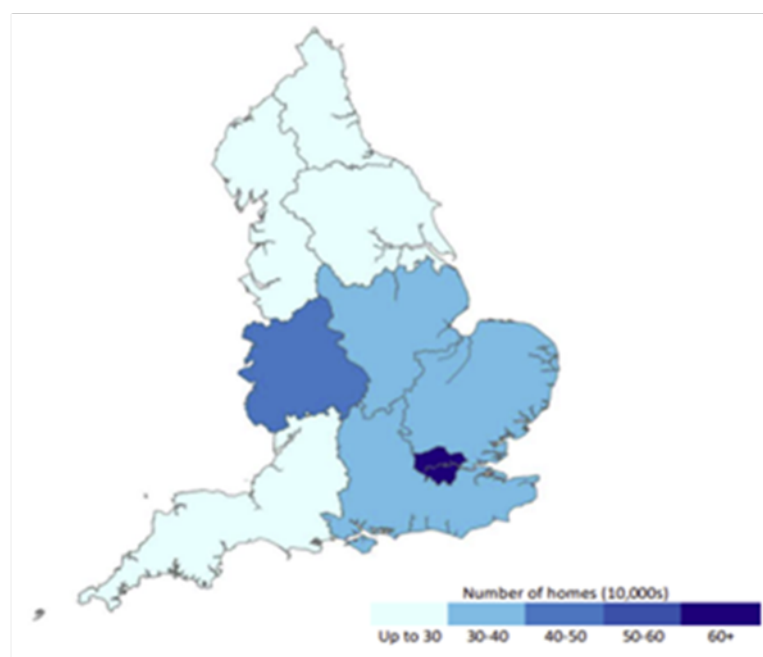
We have used housing association and local authority member data to analyse performance at a national level and draw out comparisons by both size and type. Voluntary members, as well as other types of mandatory members, such as Almshouses, have been excluded as they represented just 0.05% of all findings.

During our verification process for the individual performance reports, it became clear that there was a misunderstanding by landlords that a finding of ‘service failure’ does not represent maladministration. We will make it clearer in our reports that a ‘service failure’ finding is one of maladministration. Further guidance on our decisions can be found on our [website](#).

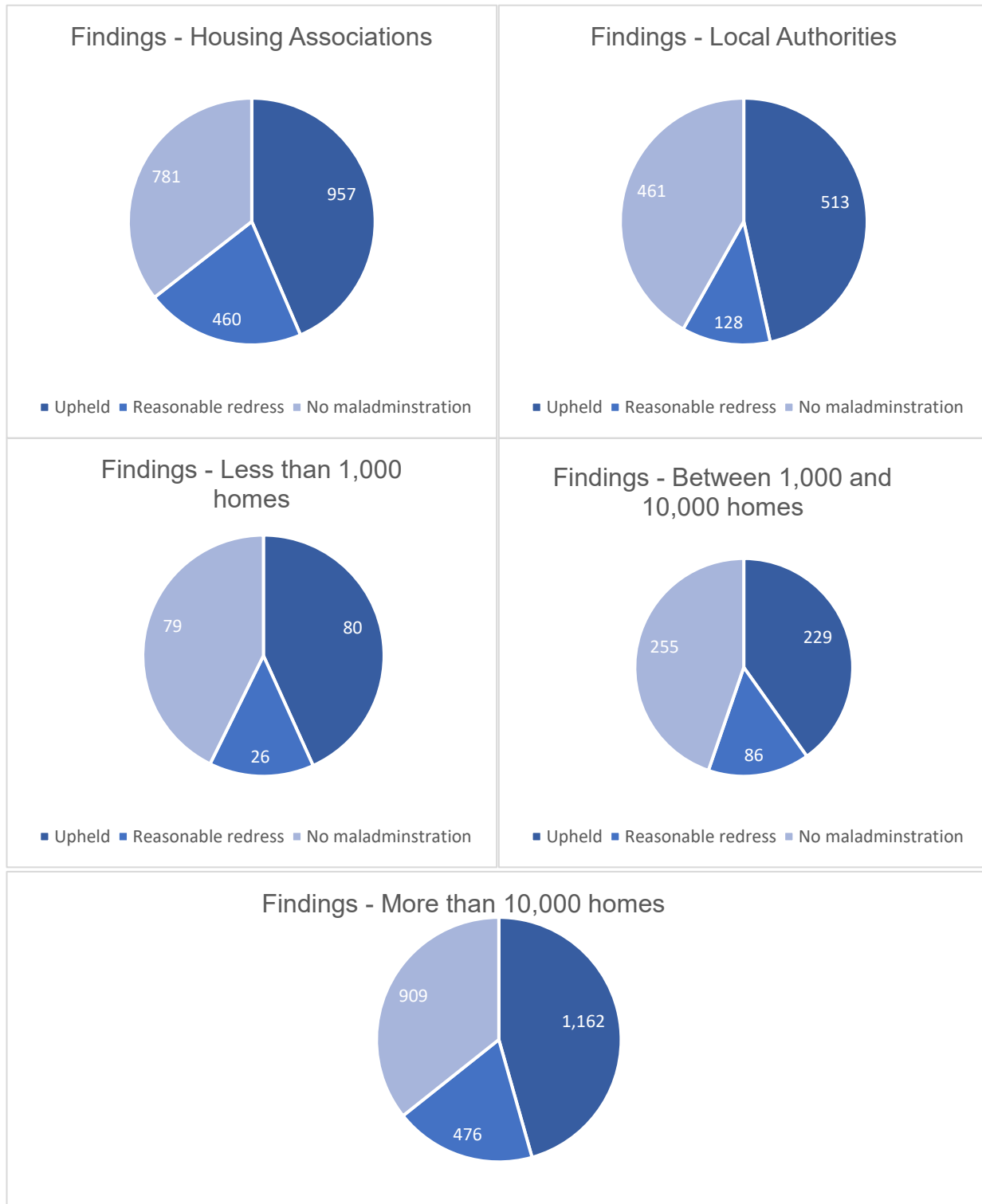
## National analysis

We determined 2,185 cases and made 3,872 findings for 320 landlords. The most cases determined for any one landlord was 122. There is an expected correlation between the number of complaints and landlord size – 76 (81%) of the landlords with five or more determinations are large landlords, managing or owning 10,000 homes or more. None of the landlords with five or more determinations owned fewer than 3,000 homes. As with last year, the number of determinations per 10,000 social homes was the highest in the London region.

### Rate of complaints brought to us by tenants and formally determined by the ombudsman per 10,000 social rent homes for each region



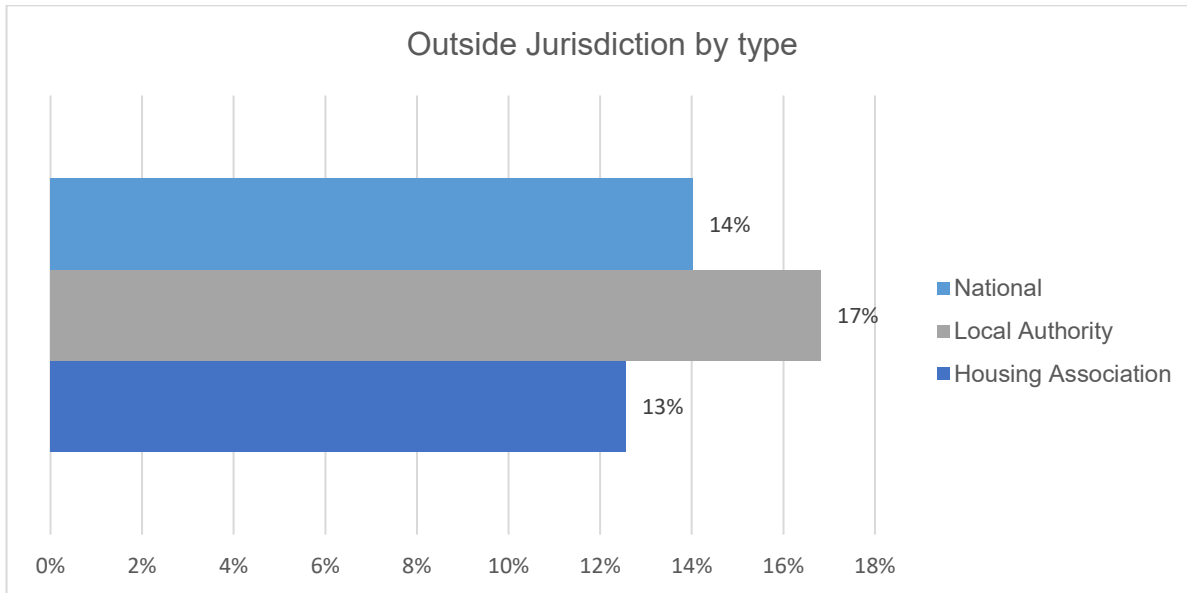
The Ombudsman upheld 49% of the cases investigated and 45% of the findings<sup>2</sup>. This rate is high and strongly suggests both complaints handling and service delivery needs to be improved across our membership; there is little difference in performance when analysed by landlord type or size. If, however, reasonable redress is taken into consideration – where something in the service provision went wrong but was recognised and subsequently put right on the complaints process – the failure to get things right first time is higher in housing associations (64%) compared to local authorities (58%) and large landlords (83%) compared to medium (55%) and small (57%) landlords.



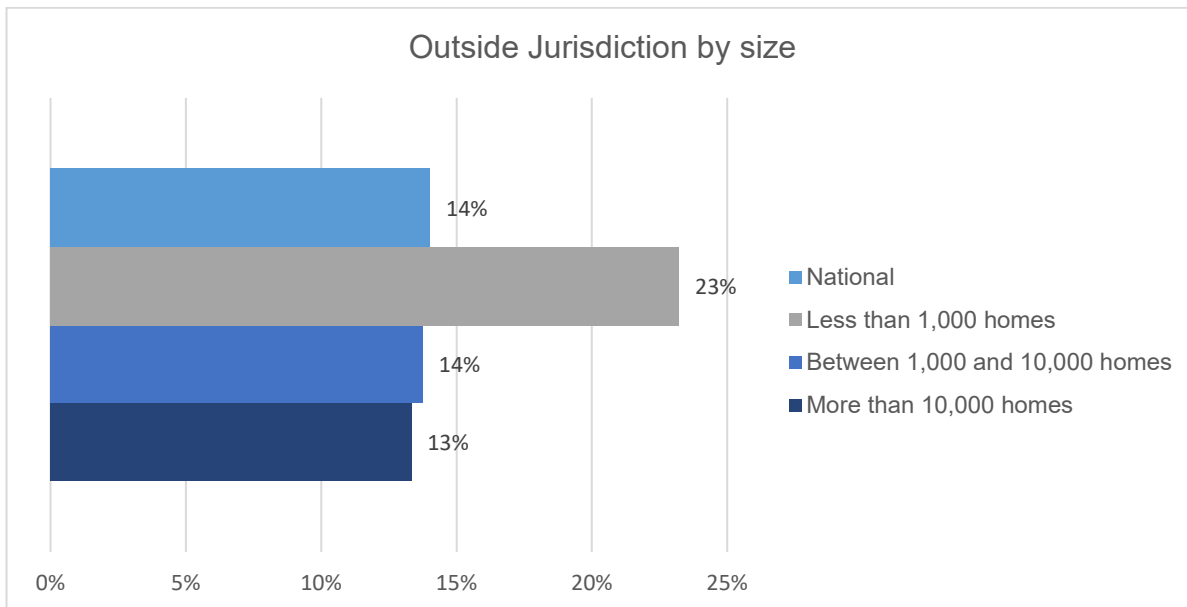
<sup>2</sup> a finding of service failure, maladministration, severe maladministration or settlement



We found a higher proportion of local authority complaints to be outside our jurisdiction to consider (17%) compared to those from housing associations (12%). Our remit for local authorities covers housing management only and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) covers other areas such as allocations and homelessness. We work closely with the LGSCO at both an executive and operational level, signposting to each other as appropriate. Over the coming corporate planning period, we will explore a ‘no wrong door’ to improve the customer experience.



The rate of outside jurisdiction complaints was also significantly higher in small landlords with 23% of the complaints brought being declared as outside our jurisdiction to consider. This may be a lack of awareness of what can be considered under our Scheme by smaller landlords who may have less contact with the complaints process.



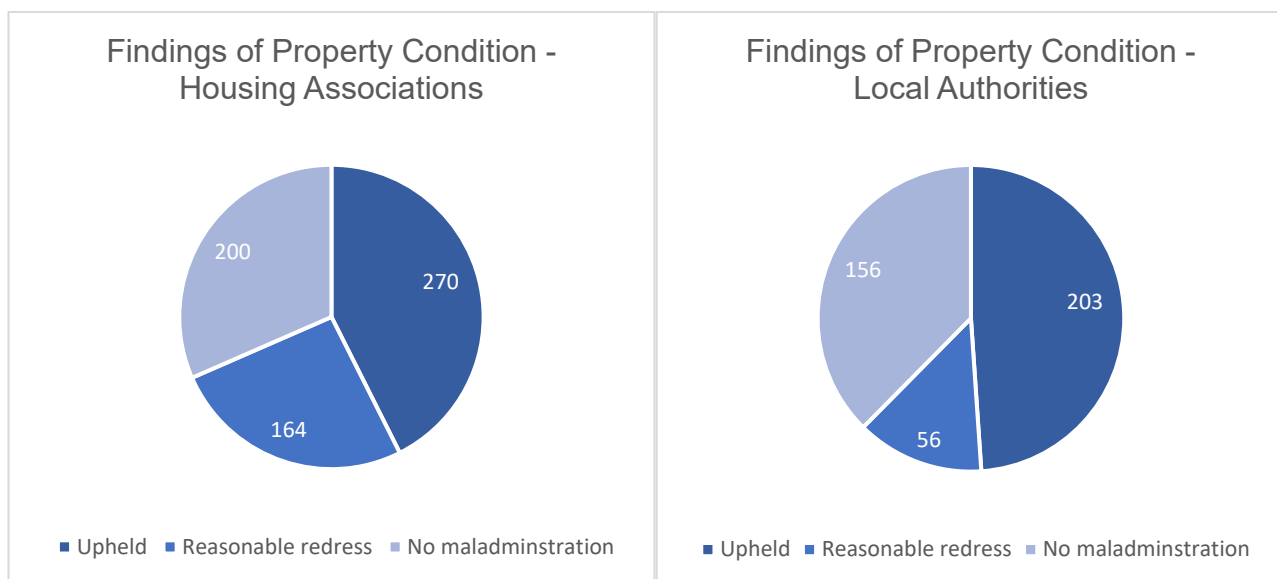
## Analysis by complaint category

The top three categories of complaint represented just over 60% of all complaints determined. We have revised our categories for 2021-22 and anticipate being able to provide more detailed analysis in future reports.

### Property condition

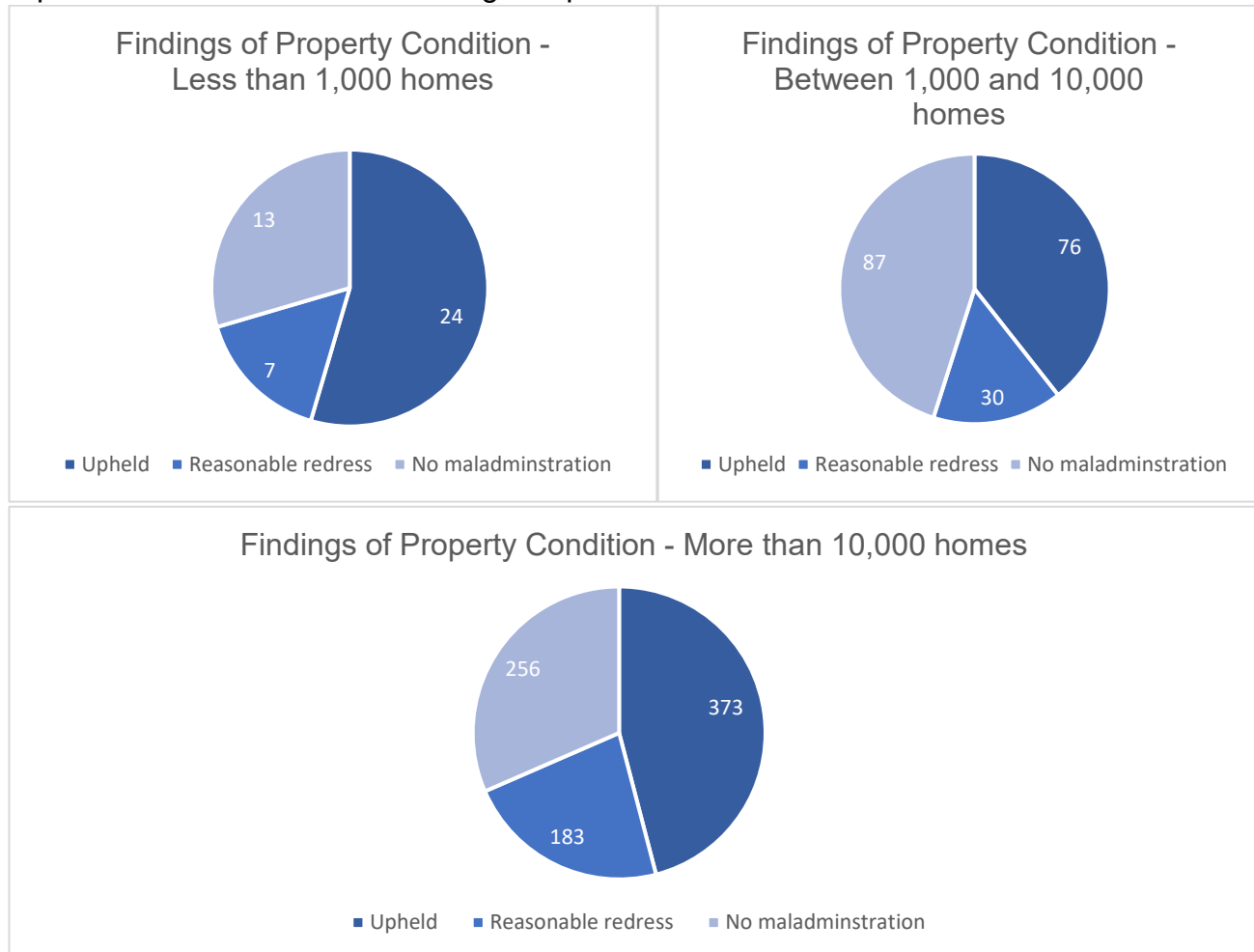
Complaints about property condition, including the responsive repairs to rectify the situation, are consistently the highest category of complaint we receive and represented 30% of the total in 2020-21. Uphold rates are consistent with the national average at 45% of findings and if the number of reasonable redress findings are included, repairs services did not get it right first time in over 66% of complaints, suggesting repairs services are not as effective as they should be - increasing costs for landlords and detrimentally affecting the landlord/resident relationship. We consistently found poor record-keeping, missed or unproductive appointments, poor communication, and lack of follow up as themes within repairs complaints. Ineffective repairs and missed appointments were a significant driver for maladministration in the Ombudsman’s [Spotlight report on heating and hot water complaints](#). Issue 6 of the Ombudsman’s [Insight Report](#) considered lessons on record keeping. Inadequate responses to repairs were found to be a driver for maladministration for shared owners and leaseholders, when the Ombudsman examined the issue in its [Spotlight report A new lease of life](#). In October 2021, the Ombudsman’s [Spotlight report on damp and mould](#) found that residents may complain because the issue had reoccurred after the landlord had previously taken action. Landlords must tackle these issues. Record-keeping should be of particular focus for housing associations given the creation of an Access to Information Scheme.

We determined more repairs complaints, and upheld them at a higher rate, from residents of local authorities than housing associations. However, it is notable that the proportion of reasonable redress findings in housing associations is double that in local authorities (26% compared to 13%). Taken together, upheld and reasonable redress findings indicate something went wrong in repairs 68% of the time in housing associations and 62% of the time in local authorities.



Medium sized landlords have the largest rate of property condition complaints – 34%, compared to 32% for large landlords and only 24% for small landlords. However, their upheld rate is the

lowest at 39% and even when factoring in their reasonable redress rate, medium landlords fail to get it right first time less frequently than large or small landlords – 55% as compared to 68% for large landlords and 70% for small landlords. It is concerning that regardless of landlord size the majority of complaints about property condition are being upheld. The significant difference between small/large and medium size landlords suggests there is important learning from complaints that could be applied to improve their services. It also indicates that residents of medium landlords are more likely to bring complaints about property condition, but that when looked into, the repairs service has sometimes performed adequately. There may be any number of drivers behind this but it is possible that communication and managing expectations of what a repairs service can deliver is driving complaints in medium sized landlords.

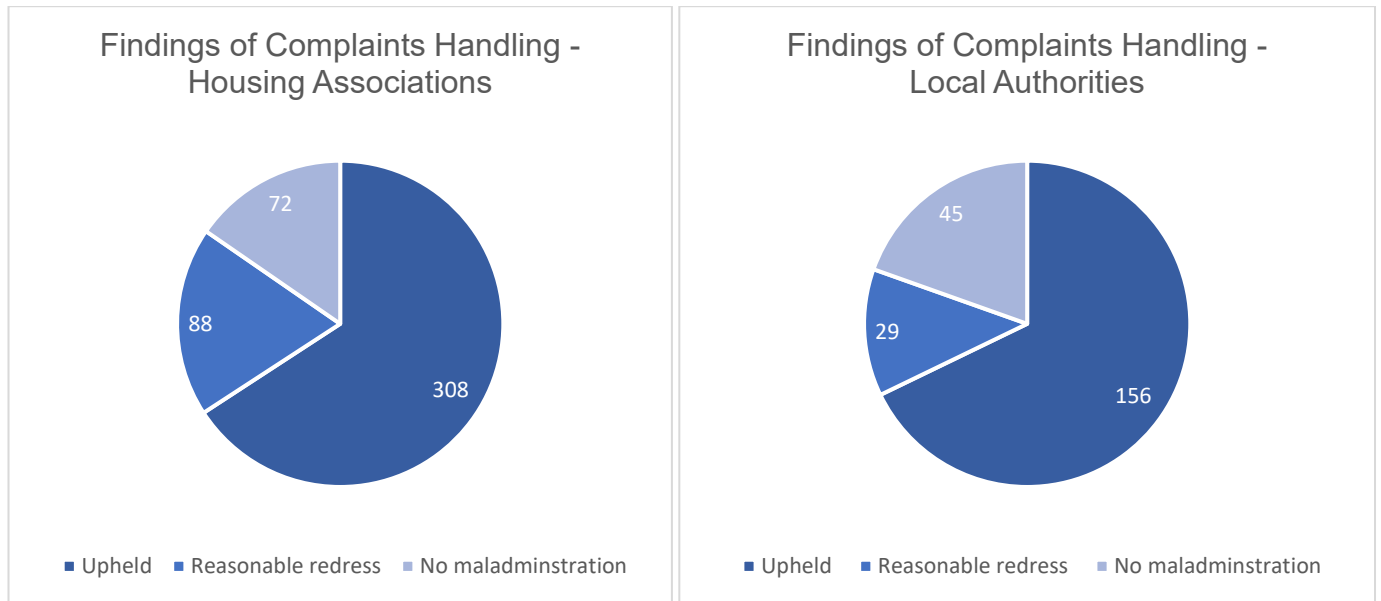


### Complaint handling

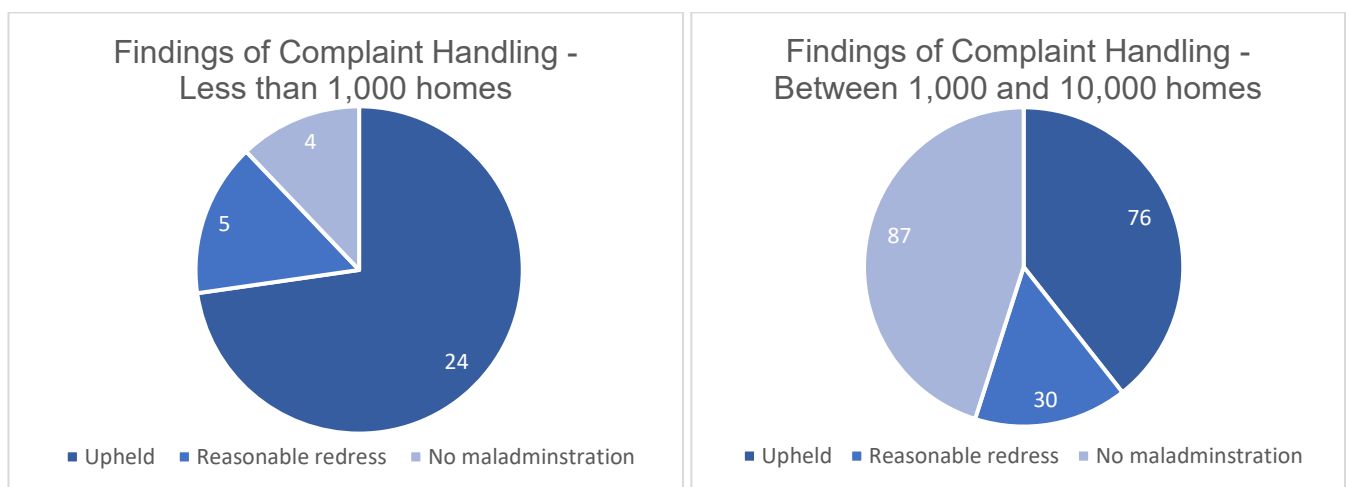
Complaints about complaint handling accounted for 19% of all complaints determined. The findings uphold rate of 66% sends a stark message that this is inadequate across our membership; poor complaint handling can considerably affect the trust residents have in their landlords to put things right. Common reasons for upholding complaints were a failure to address all aspects of the complaint, poor communication between the complaints team and other areas of the organisation, and unclear policies. In February 2021, the Housing Ombudsman published its Spotlight report on [complaints relating to heating, hot water and energy](#) where complaint handling featured significantly. Issue 8 of the Ombudsman’s [Insight Report](#) set out the importance of a clear compensation policy, which allows for discretionary payments to be made based on the merits of the case. The Ombudsman published a [Spotlight report considering complaints from shared owners and leaseholders](#) in September 2020 finding maladministration in

72% of cases where complaint handling formed part of the investigation. Our Complaint Handling Code, the impact of which we should see in the 2021-22 statistics, provides a universal set of expectations against which to determine complaint handling.

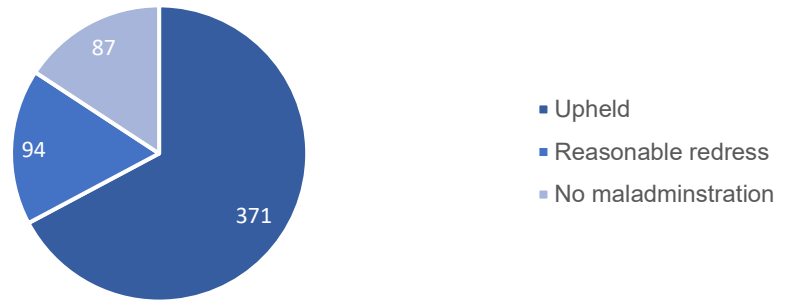
The analysis by landlord type shows little difference between housing associations and local authorities, both in terms of the overall proportion of complaints and upheld rates.



When considered by size, the proportion of complaints that are about complaint handling is relatively consistent across all sizes (18% for small, 20% for medium and 22% for large), but the rate of maladministration findings for medium sized landlords is noticeably lower at 39% compared to 73% for small landlords and 67% for large landlords. The high upheld rate amongst small/large landlords is concerning and there are significant lessons these landlords could learn from the complaints procedure to improve their services. An aspect of these complaints (noise) is something the Ombudsman is considering in a thematic report due to be published in 2022-23. As with property condition complaints, this may also indicate that medium sized landlords need to review their communication and how they manage expectations of the outcomes of making a complaint.



Findings of Complaint Handling - More than 10,000 homes

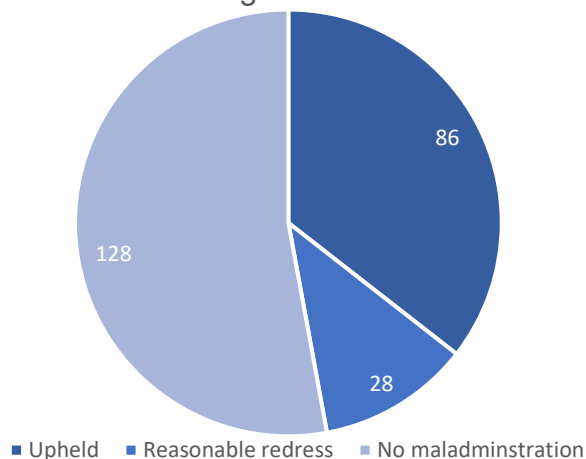


### Tenant behaviour

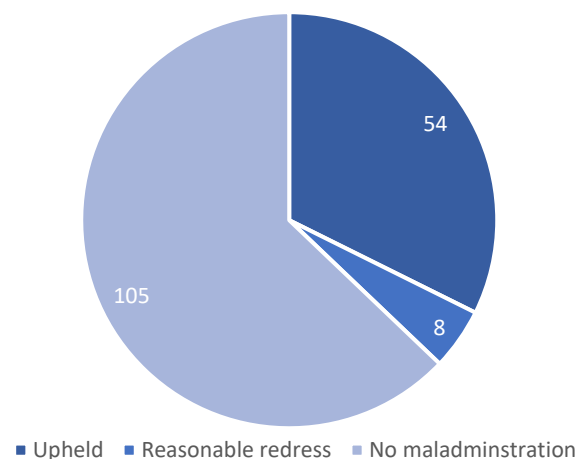
Complaints about the handling of tenant behaviour reports represented 12% of all complaints received in 2020-21, of which 34% of findings were upheld. This suggests there might be a gap between the expectations residents have when reporting the behaviour to what is stated in the landlord’s policy. We have commonly recommended better risk assessment and more regular updates to residents in relation to these complaints. Issue 7 of the Ombudsman’s [Insight Report](#) examined cases involving anti-social behaviour. As discussed in Issue 8 of our [Insight Report](#), landlords regularly offer mediation to residents involved in neighbour disputes which can be an effective way of resolving the issues. We intend to explore this further as part of our thematic work during 2022-23.

The proportion of these complaints received and upheld for local authorities and housing associations is broadly similar, but the rate of reasonable redress for local authorities is considerably lower – overall, local authorities are more likely to handle their tenant behaviour reports well, although, as stated previously, there is a potential issue with local authorities managing the expectations of residents about what will happen as a result of their report.

Findings of Tenant Behaviour - Housing Associations

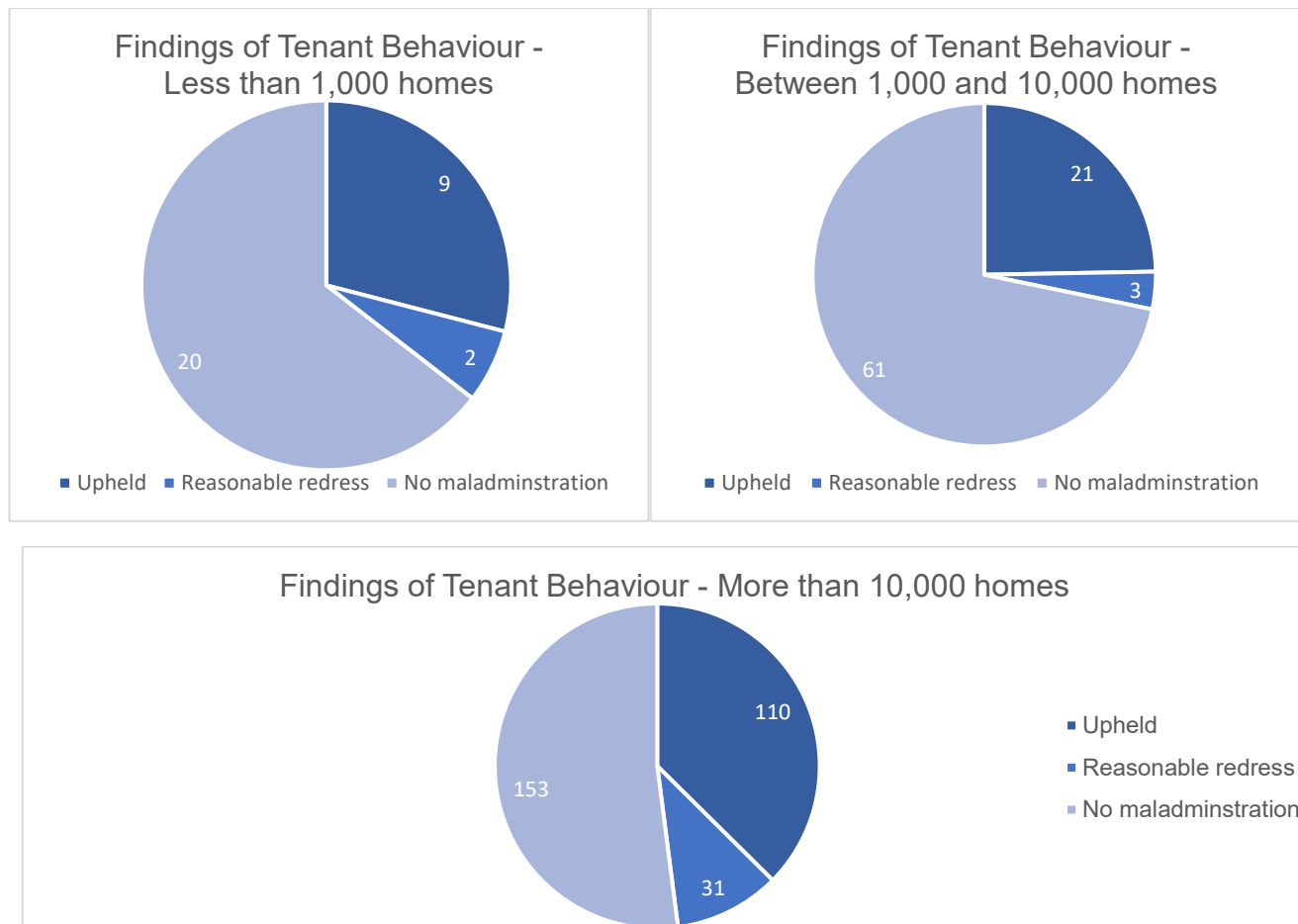


Findings of Tenant Behaviour - Local Authorities



When analysing by landlord size, large landlords had a marginally lower proportion of complaints (12% compared to 15% for medium and 17% for small) but had a significantly higher upheld and reasonable redress rate. This again suggests there is considerable learning these landlords could extract from their complaints for the benefit of service improvement. It may also indicate that the residents of large landlords are more informed about the likely outcome of a report of tenant behaviour and have their expectations managed. Accordingly, they only make a complaint when

they consider that the report of behaviour has been mishandled and the rate at which we find maladministration or reasonable redress is reflective of the fact that residents are well-informed about when they have a basis for a complaint.



### Complaint Handling Failure Orders

In the quarter from 1 January to 31 March 2021, we issued 10 CHFOS, all related to the speed with which landlords were progressing complaints through their complaints. Equal numbers were issued to local authorities and housing associations.

Eight landlords complied with these orders within the given timescales. Two local authority landlords did not comply and the Ombudsman exercised their discretion to take these complaints into its formal investigation stage, judging that the landlords’ complaints handling processes had failed.

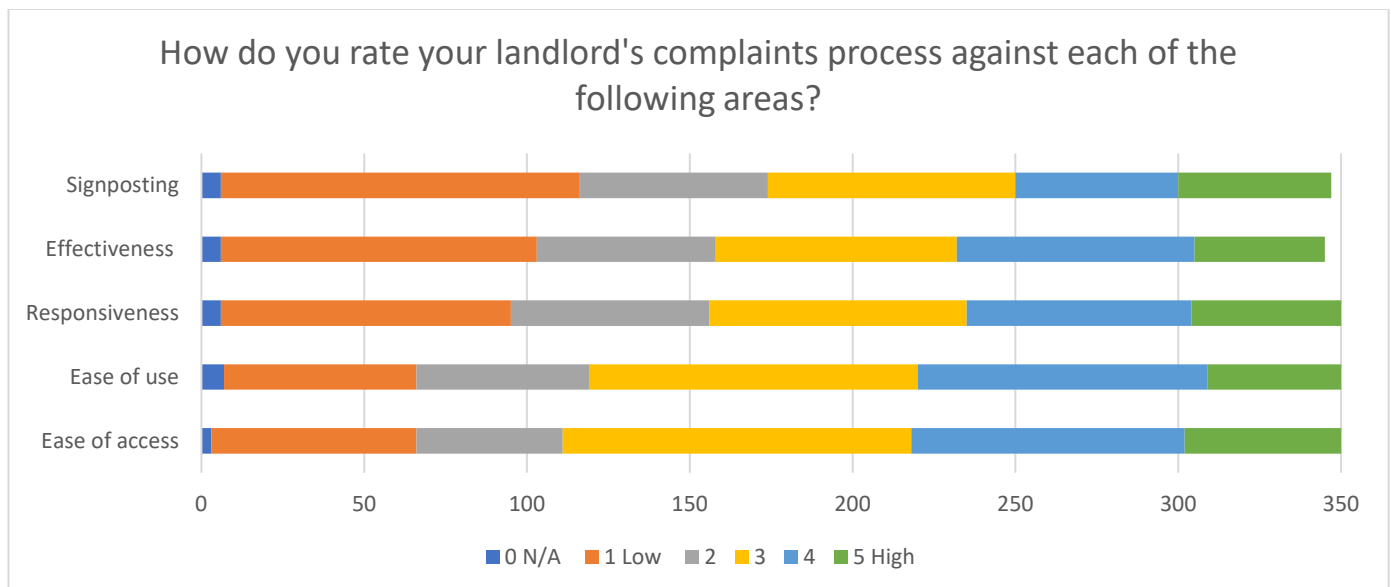
## Annual Resident Panel Survey

In 2021, the Ombudsman set up its first Resident Panel made up of more than 600 residents from across England. The Panel provides an opportunity for residents to be involved in the development of our service, as well as giving us direct feedback on their experience of using it. We invited all members to participate in our annual survey, asking their views on their landlords complaint handling, any changes during the previous period, and awareness of the Ombudsman, and received 350 responses.

### Accessibility

Access to the complaints process and ease of use scored relatively well with 68% and 66% of responses respectively rating these as acceptable or above. However, only 55% of respondents rated the responsiveness of their landlord's complaints procedure as acceptable or above, with its effectiveness rated at 54%.

Of particular concern, the lowest score in this section was signposting to the Ombudsman with only 50% of respondents rating this as acceptable or better. This is an area the Ombudsman has sought to strengthen through the changes to the [Complaint Handling Code](#).

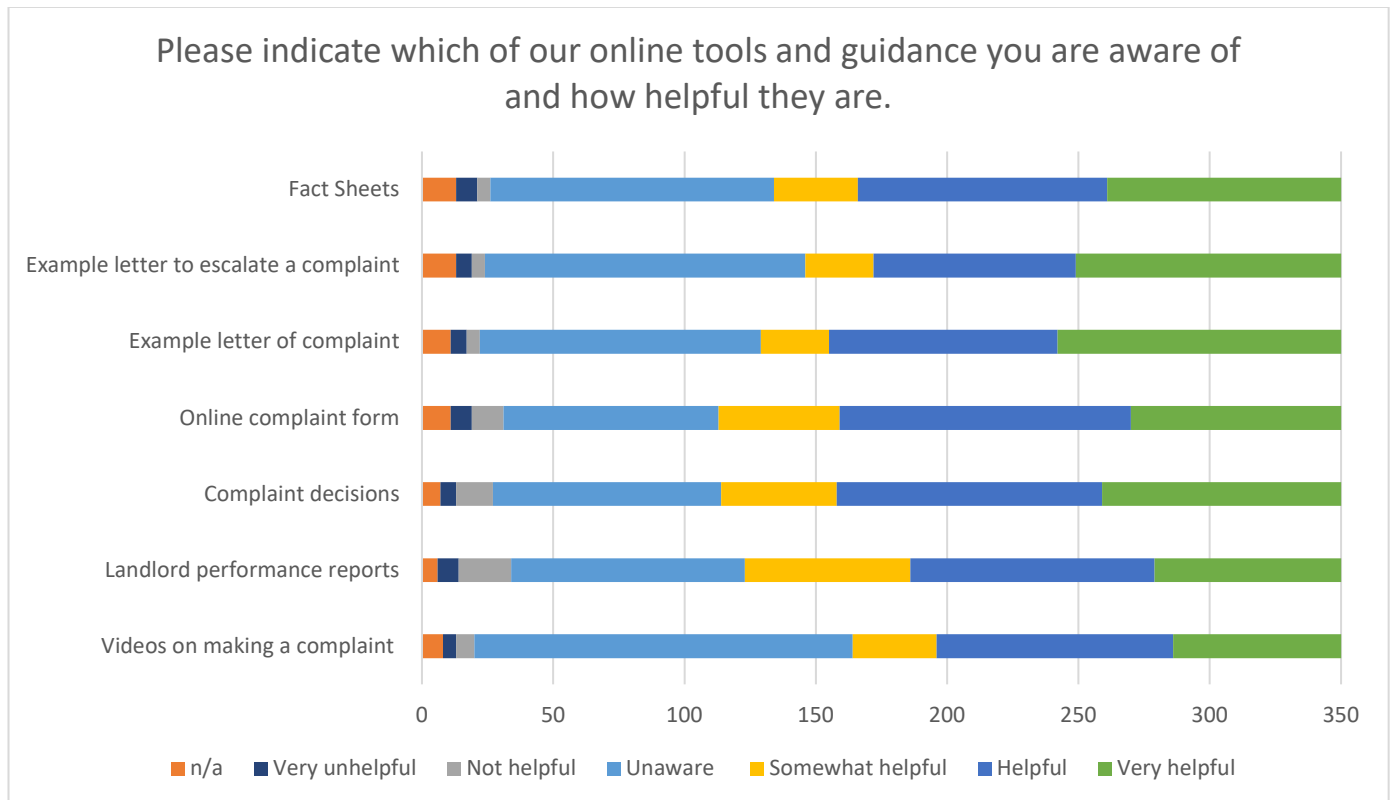


We asked the Panel why it thought residents may not escalate a complaint to the Ombudsman. Of the top three reasons cited by residents, awareness was again a feature but so too was a lack of confidence the complaints process would make a difference (18%) or that it would damage the relationship with the landlord or neighbours (17%).

The Ombudsman provides a range of tools and materials supporting residents to use the complaints process. This includes information to make and progress a complaint with a landlord, including example letters, an online complaint form and information, such as case reports and annual landlord performance reports, to promote accountability.

The most popular tools were the Ombudsman's online complaint form, landlord performance reports, example complaint letter and published decisions, with high scores for helpfulness. While respondents consistently said tools and material provided by the service were more helpful than not, awareness was lower for some of the information. This was notably the case for videos to support making a complaint and our fact sheets. We will continue to review the range of tools and

materials on our website throughout the three years of our next corporate plan, using this feedback to guide what we produce.



We also asked the Panel why it thought some residents may not be aware of the tools and information we provide. A general lack of awareness was identified by 34% of respondents, followed by concerns around digital exclusion and language barriers (24%). A significant proportion of respondents (18%) thought residents may seek advice or information from other bodies, such as advice agencies.

We also asked the Panel for their thoughts on residents, or groups of residents, who may especially struggle to access the complaints procedure. Several respondents raised concerns about elderly residents. Many also expressed concerns about residents with mental health problems and other health issues, such as impaired visibility. Digital exclusion and language barriers were also cited.

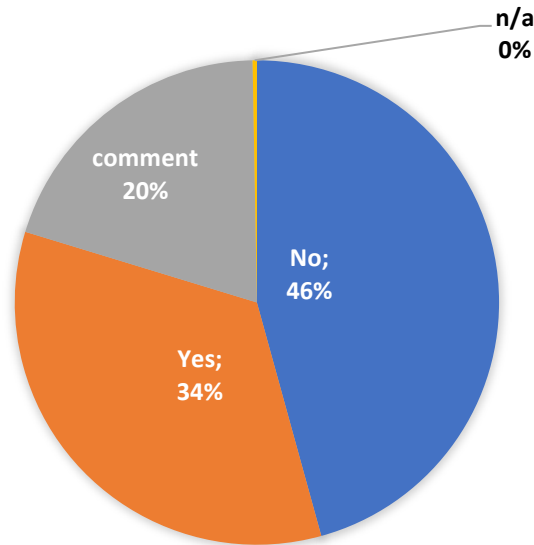
The Ombudsman has a project examining barriers to the complaints process and how access can be improved for residents or groups who may face specific challenges. We also plan to increase our awareness raising activities significantly over the next three years and will take all of these factors into consideration as part of our planning. We will also undertake further discussion with the Resident Panel.

## Awareness

We asked the Panel whether it thought their landlord had done more to promote its complaints process, and the Ombudsman, in the last year. Of those residents that answered this question in a binary fashion, 57% did not believe that their landlord had done more to promote the complaints process. This reinforces the importance of awareness raising and provides the rationale for the changes we have made to the Complaint Handling Code to strengthen the promoting of redress.

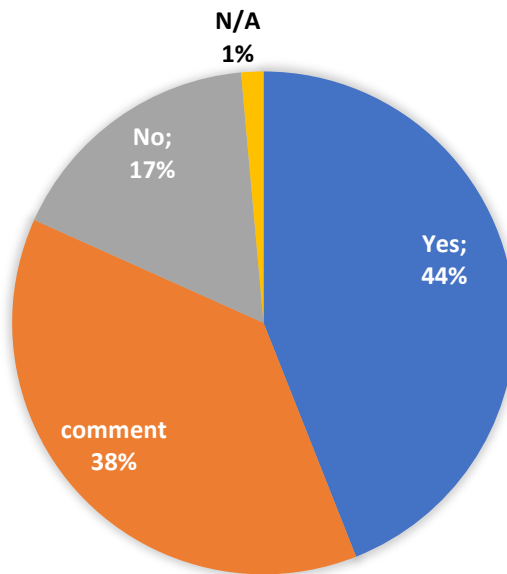


Landlord promotion of the complaints system and Housing Ombudsman in the last year



We also asked the Panel about their landlord’s role in increasing awareness of their complaints procedure and the Ombudsman. Over 70% of respondents who answered this question in a binary fashion felt their landlord could do more than it did.

Is there anything your landlord could do to increase awareness of its complaints process or the Ombudsman?



Seventy residents chose to submit qualified responses to the promotion question and 132 chose to submit comments on the awareness question. While some made encouraging comments about changes, others highlighted remaining challenges or thought things could be done better. Examples of these are:

*“My landlord sends out information if someone makes a complaint and there is a mention on the website but is not easy to find”*

*“Put a leaflet on notice board. Few read the board”*

*“There is only a tiny hidden reference about the Housing Ombudsman”*

*“Although the complaints team held specific training and awareness sessions on their complaints process and Complaint Handling Code... I feel that the wider resident base is still largely unaware the code.”*

*“I have never been made aware of the housing ombudsman by my landlord”*

There was a clear and consistent view amongst residents that the complaints process and the Ombudsman could be highlighted more clearly by landlords through newsletters, the website and social media. Residents raised concerns about only being told about the Ombudsman at the final stage of the process and the infrequency with which landlords made them aware of the procedure. Several suggested landlords should be made to do more to raise awareness of the Ombudsman. This is a condition of membership of the Scheme and fulfilling this more effectively is one of the issues addressed in changes to the Complaint Handling Code.

Some examples are:

*“It needs to highlight the Ombudsman not hide it away as the last procedure”*

*“Put detail on their website, maybe include a link factsheet linked to making a complaint produce newsletters which are sent out to residents not everyone has IT access or skills”*

*“I'd like to see the Housing Ombudsman referenced on the landlord's homepage”*

*“Make the public aware of the service it provides, advertise it”*

*“Force landlords to put details of Ombudsman Service on literature/website/letters”*

*“Leaflets through doors as not all customers have computers”*

*“Posters to signpost in landlords lobbies, and websites”*

*“Bigger campaign in media maybe? Highlight the idea that if you use Ombudsman you are not 'starting a big difficult legal process”*

*“... put on tutorials on YouTube”*

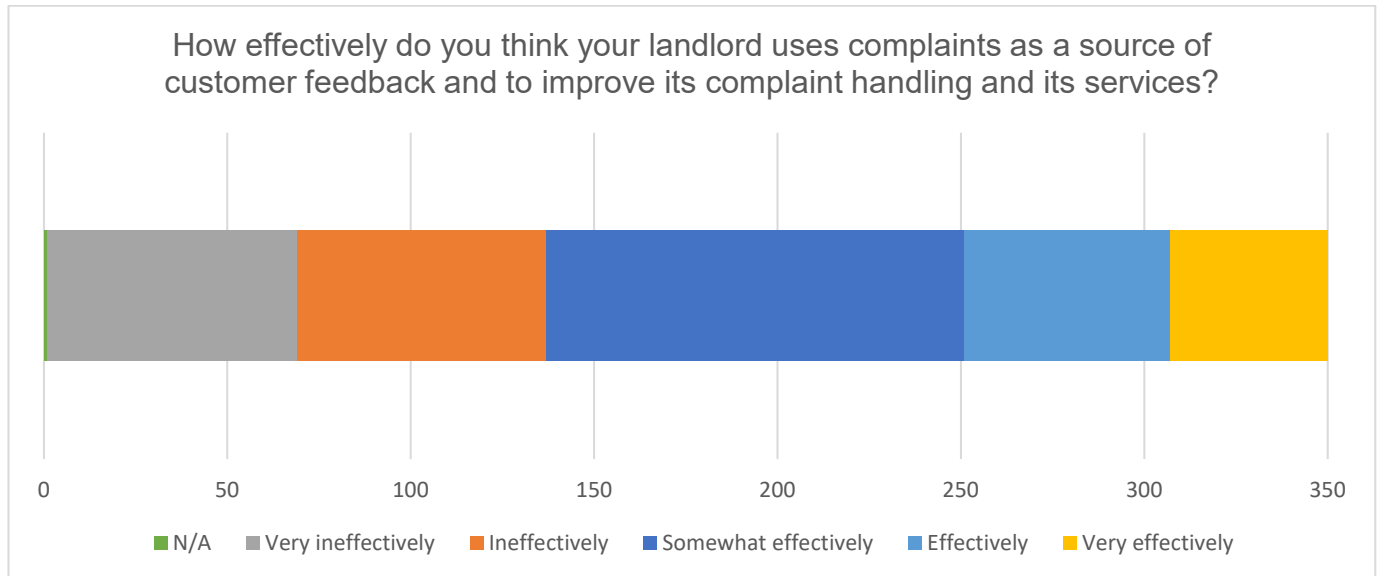
*“Leaflets / posters in Citizens Advice offices, in Health Centres (relating to housing issues causing health problems), in other local advice centres (such as centres for the elderly)”*

We further asked the Panel if there was anything we could do to improve awareness of the Ombudsman. Two thirds thought we could do more than we currently did. There was a strong desire amongst residents for more publicity about the Ombudsman through advertising and the media, and through posters and direct mailing, especially for residents with limited digital access.

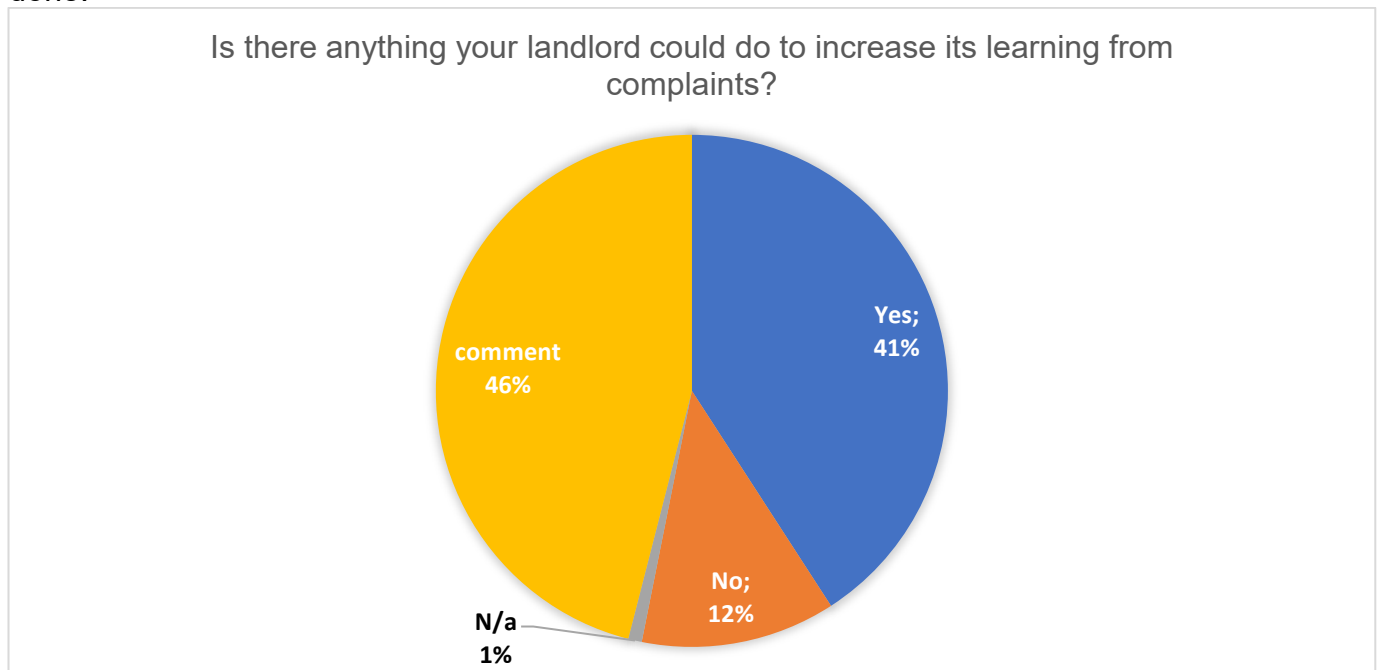
## **Positive complaints culture**

Residents were asked whether they thought making a complaint was more likely to make a difference compared to last year and 54% felt this would make no change or have less effect.

This is disappointing. The Ombudsman encourages landlords not to be defensive about complaints and to use the feedback to improve its complaint handling. However, at 61%, the majority of respondents did agree that landlords sought to use complaints as a source of feedback.



Learning from complaints is a critical part of a positive complaint handling culture. The Ombudsman has stressed the importance of this in its Complaint Handling Code and has provided numerous tools, from data to case studies, to encourage and enable landlords to do so more often and better. There was strong support from respondents for landlords to do more to learn from complaints – of the respondents who gave binary responses, 77% felt more could be done.



161 respondents gave qualified responses and suggested ideas and approaches to learning they would encourage landlords to consider, as well as encouraging the right behaviours to facilitate learning. Examples of these are:

*“Involve residents in looking at the complaints anonymised to look for trends”*

*“Be more transparent and open”*

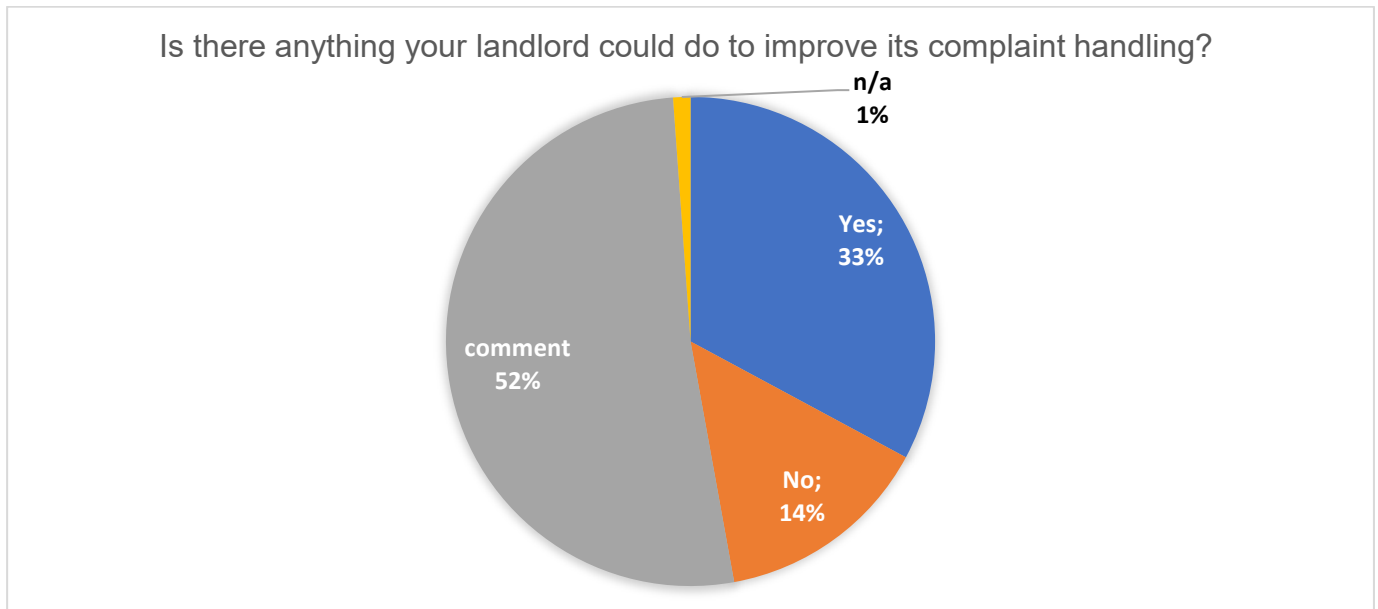
*“Greater use of the data”*

*“Publish ways they have rectified lessons learned”*

*“Bring it to the attention at managers meeting”*

*“Get the complaints-handling officers to train other officers”*

However, when we asked the Panel if landlords could do more to improve their complaint handling, of the respondents who gave binary responses, 70% felt more could be done.



181 respondents gave qualified responses and their comments often stressed the importance of landlords listening and strengthening communication. Timeliness was also frequently cited and well as the importance of continuous learning and improvement. Some examples are:

*“My landlord's staff appear to think a tenant complaint is an act of rebellion against our superiors, to which the only response is to try to prove the tenant is wrong. I genuinely don't know how they can correct this, as it's a symptom of a culture of overbearing bossiness seasoned with discourtesy.”*

*“Respond in a timely fashion, not make excuses and make improvements from complaints. Lastly do not use the same template letter for all complaints”*

*“Learn by common complaints and try to resolve complaints and then take preventive actions”*

*“Be less defensive and talk to residents, not just send a standard response. There should be some kind of accountability for the services provided”*

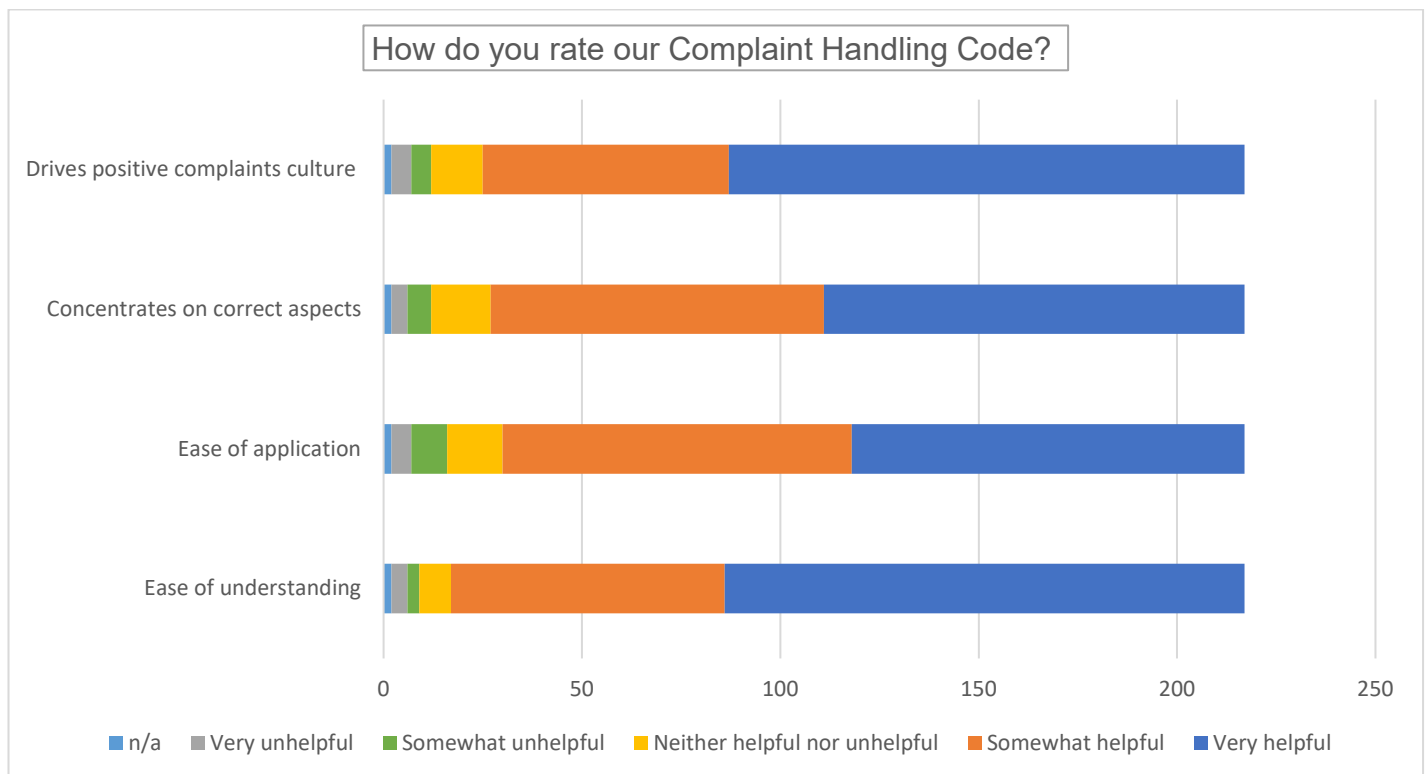
*“Train staff to know about complaints and most importantly, improve the service to reduce the need to complain”*

*“Needs to regularly promote access routes to the Housing Ombudsman including mail shots, social media and via meetings”*

## Annual Landlord Survey

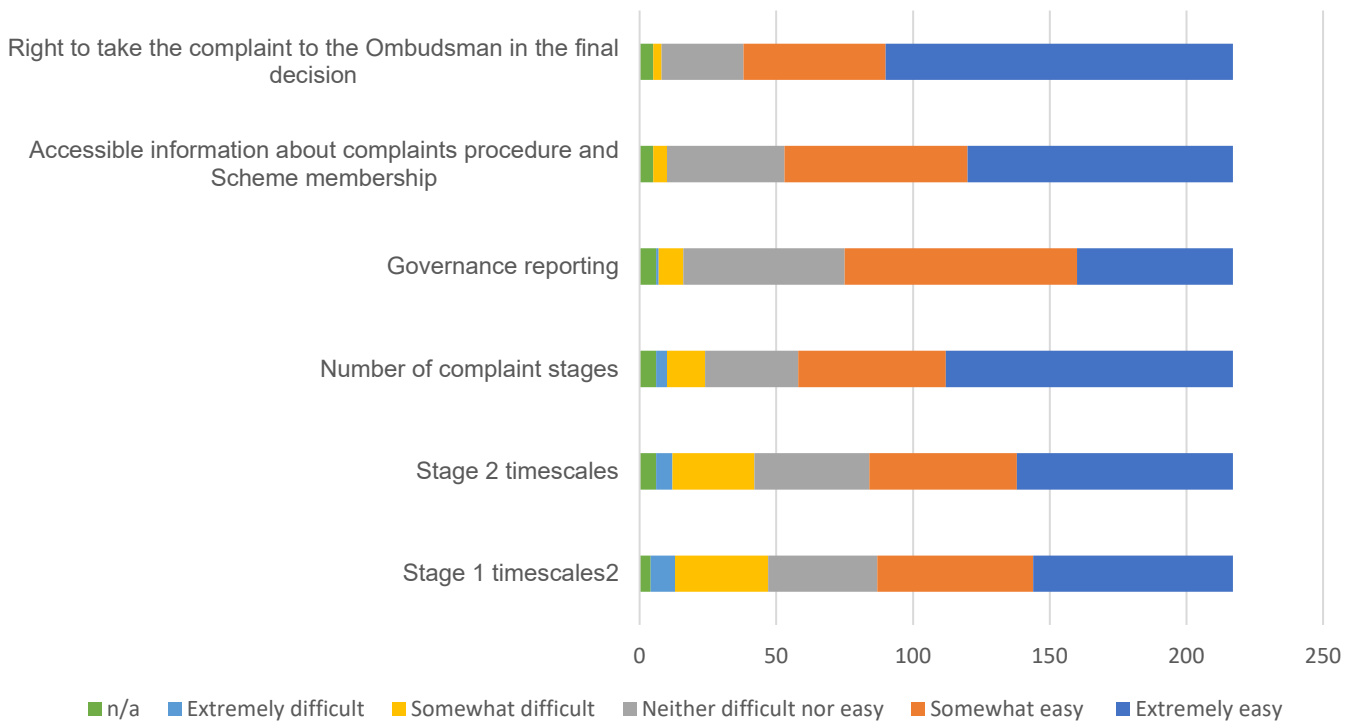
For the first time this year, the Ombudsman surveyed its member landlords about complaints and their engagement with our service. This will become an annual exercise. There were 215 responses to the survey, with a good spread across our membership: 43% of respondents were large landlords with more than 10,000 homes, 41% were medium sized with between 1,000 and 10,000 homes and 16% were small landlords with fewer than 1,000 homes. A number of the questions on the survey focussed on the Complaint Handling Code and the impact that had had on complaint handling.

We asked landlords whether they found the Code easy to understand, whether it focused on the right areas and how easy it was to apply. The response was strongly positive with 94% of landlords said it was easy to understand, 89% said it focused in the right areas, and 88% of landlords said it was easy to apply.



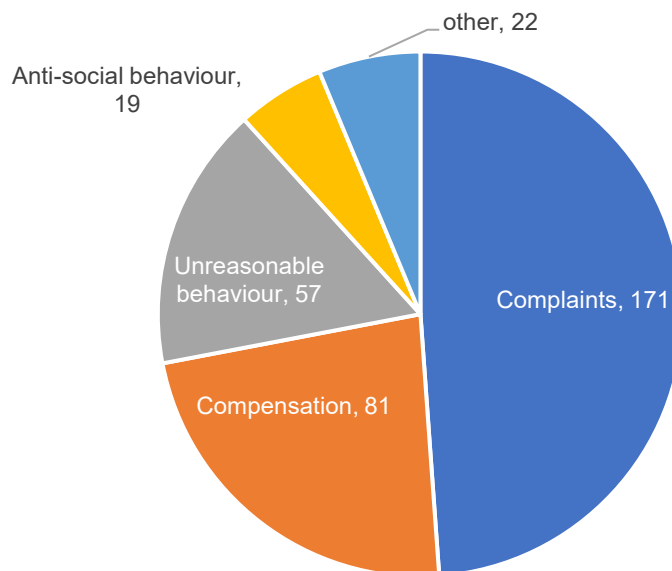
We also explored how easy landlords had found implementing different aspects of the Code. In every area, the clear majority of landlords reported it was either extremely easy or somewhat easy to implement the adjustments required to meet the Code and we have used this feedback in our review of the Code.

Any elements of the Complaint Handling Code that were difficult to implement?



We also asked landlords which policies had changed as a result of the Code. Landlords were able to select more than one area, with complaints, compensation and unreasonable behaviour scoring the highest and an average of 1.6 policy changes per respondent.

What policies have you changed or created as a result of the Code?



## **Further information**

**Complaint Handling Code:** For the Complaint Handling Code plus guidance and supporting information see our [website](#).

**Spotlight reports:** Find our Spotlight reports, including the report on damp and mould, on our [website](#).

**Decisions:** See the [Decisions](#) section of our website for reports on individual determinations that are now published every two weeks.

We would welcome your feedback on this report. Please let us know by completing this [short survey](#) or you can email [consultations@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:consultations@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

## **Housing**

Ombudsman Service

Exchange Tower, Harbour Exchange Square, London E14 9GE

t: 0300 111 3000

[www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

