

Octavia Housing Association

# Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report

2023-2024



# Octavia's 2023-2024 complaints performance and service improvement

In accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint code, we must conduct a self-assessment of our complaints handling against the code each year to ensure compliance and drive continuous improvement.

Octavia Housing Association values resident feedback as it helps us identify areas where our services or properties can be improved and the opportunity to learn when our services have not met our standards. Regardless of the complexity of the cases, we strive to ensure our service teams address concerns promptly.

While we endeavour to resolve issues on the spot, there are instances where further investigation is necessary. In such cases, the complaint will be handled according to Stage 1 of our Complaints Policy, ensuring transparency and accountability in our processes. Our Complaints Policy is readily available to view online [here](#), outlining what residents can expect when they make a complaint to us.

To make a complaint or share concerns, residents can reach us via email, phone or in person. Where complaints are raised by social media, we will reply and ask that we are messaged directly to ensure the complaint can be logged, and privacy is maintained.

## Annual self-assessment against the Octavia Complaint Handling Code

Octavia's annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code can be found [here](#).

# Performance

## Analysis of Octavia's complaint handling performance

During the year, we received 265 complaints (+41 compared to the previous year).

The table below shows the comparative data with the number of complaints received last year:

	2022-23	2023-24	% Increase
Total number of complaints received	224	265	18%

The breakdown of complaints received by stages is:

Stage of Complaint	Number
Complaints received at Stage 1	220
Complaints received at Stage 2	45
Total	265

On average, Octavia received 4 stage one complaints per 1,000 homes, per month.

The performance for both stock types - Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) and Low Cost Rental Accommodation (LCRA) - is shown in the table below:

LCRA & LCHO combined	2022-23	2023-24
Stage 1	24%	34%
Stage 2	16%	26%

## Complaint handling timescales

- 45 complaints were escalated in year to Stage two
- Escalation rate from Stage one to Stage two was 20%

## Redress

- Across 265 complaints, we offered an average of £152.35 in redress

## Complaint case outcomes

- Stage one: 61% upheld (153 closed, 93 upheld)
- Stage two: 24% upheld (31 closed, 8 upheld)

## Complaint handling satisfaction - Tenant Satisfaction Measures

LCRA	LCHO
21%	8%

# Performance across the year overall

During the 2023/24 financial year, Octavia saw complaints volumes at Stage one increase by 18% compared to the previous year (41 complaints). Complaints are taken seriously by operational teams who are committed to identifying areas for improvement across our services.

The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code is clear that high volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process (section 3.3). To comply with the Code, our complaint process has been made accessible on our website, is publicised in newsletters and on estate

noticeboard QR codes, and in tenant welcome packs.

The top 3 themes for complaints related to:

- Repairs (inadequate service delivery and communications)
- Property compliance (delays with door entry, gas and lift works)
- Customer service issues (lack of timely responses and empathy)

Our overall aim is to ensure that resident concerns are resolved promptly and effectively, without the need to complain, and all teams across Octavia will be working towards this in the coming year.

The table below outlines complaints numbers received by month over the year:

	Stage one	Stage two	Housing Ombudsman investigation requests?
April 23	8	3	0
May 23	9	5	0
Jun 23	10	2	1
Jul 23	6	0	2
Aug 23	8	3	0
Sep 23	12	1	0
Oct 23	13	3	1
Nov 23	21	8	1
Dec 23	17	8	0
Jan 24	41	5	2
Feb 24	49	6	1
Mar 24	26	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>9</b>

## Refused to accept reasons

Octavia considered each complaint on its own merit. In accordance with Octavia's Complaint Handling Policy, which can be found on its website, the only complaints Octavia refused to accept where:

- When the cause of the complaint occurred more than 12 months ago
- When it concerns matters that are, or have been, the subject of legal proceedings
- When a complaint had already been fully handled under our Complaints Policy
- The complaint related to an insurance claim (unless the complainant was unhappy about how we or the insurance company was handling a claim)
- The complaint involved reports of anti-social behaviour (these are handled under our ASB Policy)
- The complaint was about a rent increase, service charges or their reasonableness (these were handled under our rent and service charge dispute process)

If Octavia had valid reasons to deal with a complaint differently, or to not accept it at all, it will have given evidence as to why and explained the reason to the customer. It will have advised how it intended to deal with the matter or will have explained why the matter is not suitable for Octavia's complaints process. Octavia will have explained the customer's right to escalate the complaint, including to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

## Service improvements required to improve our complaint handling

Octavia's complaint handling performance was adversely impacted in 2023/24 by significant resource challenges, the procurement of three key property related service contracts and the temporary deployment of service delivery employees in response to a major incident.

## Repairs and property compliance works

Enhanced resources and expertise, particularly in relation to the robust contract management and communication of our repair services, will ensure that our customers' experiences improve in 2024/25.

Better use of repairs data has been highlighted as an area where Octavia can identify potential issues, review` appointments, works orders, overdue jobs and job cancellations. This will result in the better control of our contractors and a more accurate deployment of our resources in response to priorities. As many calls to the Customer Contact Centre relate to follow-up repairs calls, it is hoped that this will also help reduce chase up calls and overall Contact Centre response times.

## Customer Service

Our Complaints policy and procedure have been updated to comply with the new Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. Further tailored complaints training for new and existing colleagues has been developed with our Learning and Development team. The content has been prioritised through engagement with our customer facing colleagues. The training will be delivered on a phased basis starting in July 2024.

Colleague training sessions will aim to foster more timely and empathetic responses from staff when assisting residents and each other, facilitating further effective communications and collaboration between teams. This training will positively improve and embed a more consistent customer-centric approach towards complaint handling. This service needs to be delivered in a respectful manner that meets the diverse needs of our customers. It will also provide a more consistent approach to record keeping and the use of Octavia's customer relationship management system.

Octavia's ASB policy has been updated to reflect our approach to risk assessment and working with external agencies. We have incorporated the Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight to promote best practice and adopted a harm-centred approach that supports and prioritises actions to meet residents' varying and complex needs.

## In progress

We are reviewing our approach to vulnerability and reasonable adjustments to ensuring that our staff are clear on their roles and responsibilities and how our customers' requirements must be recorded and our services adapted to meet these needs. This is an area that requires more in-depth work and training for staff.

# Ombudsman Spotlight Report

The Housing Ombudsman produced Spotlight Reports on several areas, outlining learning from cases and best practice. The Spotlight reports have focused on:

- Damp and Mould
- Noise
- Knowledge & Information
- Respect, Attitude and Equality

## Damp and mould

Following the publication of the Damp and Mould Spotlight report, Octavia has developed a new policy and procedure using the experiences of its involved residents, its Resident Panel, and relevant colleagues receiving related training. However, further improvements are being made in our management processes and our ultimate delivery of services.

## Noise complaints

The Spotlight Report on Noise Complaints and some of the key improvements implemented are:

- Customer Contact colleagues have received training and triage resident complaints relating to noise nuisance. This provides a standard approach to handling these conversations and increases the opportunities for good customer outcomes.
- Octavia subscribes to a noise app that residents are able to download and use as an evidencing tool to monitor incidents of noise nuisance and where appropriate to support with any necessary remedial action.

## Knowledge and Information and Relationship of Equals

With reference to the most recent Knowledge & Information Management and Relationship of Equals Spotlight Reports, we are assessing the recommendations to ensure Octavia's approach aligns with best practice.



# Annual reports about Octavia’s performance from the Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman has not produced any annual reports about Octavia’s performance.

When we receive a determination from the Ombudsman, it is shared with the Executive Team, including the Chief Executive, and reviewed by senior managers to improve our services.

Regular performance reports on complaints are provided to Octavia’s Service Quality Committee, which also include an update on our deep dive reviews into complaints.

The table below shows a summary of the Housing Ombudsman’s investigations received, determinations, complaint handling failure orders and outcomes:

Octavia Ombudsman investigations and outcomes 2023/24				
Month	Investigations received back from HOS	Determinations	Outcomes	CHFO
April 23	0	0	0	0
May 23	0	0	0	0
Jun 23	1	1	1 no maladministration	0
Jul 23	2	2	1 sufficiently redressed and 1 maladministration for complaint handling/no maladministration for service failures	0
Aug 23	0	0	0	0
Sep 23	0	0	0	0
Oct 23	0	0	1	0
Nov 23	0	0	0	0
Dec 23	0	0	0	0
Jan 24	1	2	1 maladministration for complaint handling/no maladministration for service failure	1
Feb 24	0	0	1	0
Mar 24	1	1	No maladministration	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>1</b>

# Other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to Octavia

Octavia is committed to working with the Housing Ombudsman to ensure requests for information are fully supported and that determination orders and recommendations are acted upon promptly. Below is a summary of the Housing Ombudsman's published investigations in respect of Octavia, together with the outcome types.

The below publications can be found on the Housing Ombudsman's website:

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/decisions/octavia-housing-202105707>

- June 2023

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/decisions/octavia-housing-202108938>

- July 2023

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/decisions/octavia-housing-202128280>

- December 2023