

Annual Complaints Handling Report – 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016

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1. Executive Summary

This is the fourth edition of the Caledonia Housing Association annual complaints handling report. This report provides detailed information regarding complaints recorded through the association's Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP) during the 2015/16 reporting year (1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016).

The association's CHP is based on the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) Model Complaints Handling Procedure and was fully implemented by the association on 1 October 2012. Since its implementation, the association's CHP has been subject to regular reviews, and where necessary, key processes have been modified to ensure the CHP remains an effective tool for managing complaints.

Effective complaints handling is a key element of the Scottish Social Housing Charter with Outcome 2 (Communications) of the 'Charter' having a direct relationship with complaints handling.

The aim of this report is to provide the following:

- provide a wide range of facts and figures relating to complaints or statements of dissatisfaction recorded through the association's CHP during the 2015/16 reporting year;
- information regarding the outcome of complaints in terms of either being upheld, partially upheld or not upheld;
- an update on the SPSO position in relation to complaint handling in the social housing sector;
- an overview of how the association has used the CHP to bring about improvements in service provision by actively learning from complaints; and
- details relating to a number of improvement actions to be undertaken during the 2016/17 reporting year that will further strengthen the key processes that underpin the CHP.

1.1 Key CHP Achievement to Date

Although the CHP has now been in place within the association since October 2012, each reporting year has seen improvements made to it so that it remains an effective tool for complaints management and resolution. During the course of the 2015/16 reporting year there was a number of CHP-related achievements such as:

- significant improvements in regards to complaint performance in terms of efficiency as well as a reduction in the number of complaints received for the 2015/16 reporting year;
- as a result of effective complaint handling by departments, the association continued to have a very low number of complaints being escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2;
- the association working in conjunction with its learning and development partner developed a bespoke complaints handling training course that was delivered to a significant number of scheme staff and office-based staff;
- a significant number of improvements have been made as a result of action taken by the association to address common causes of complaints during the reporting year; and

- for the fourth reporting year running, there was no equalities-related complaints recorded through the association's CHP.

1.2 Complaints Performance Review – 2015/16

In order to gain a detailed insight into the association's performance in regards to complaints handling over the past twelve months, detailed analysis of complaints has been undertaken by the Business Services Department. This analysis has involved quantifying the number of complaints against each department, categorising those complaints into specific complaint themes and measuring the effectiveness of CHA in terms of adhering to complaint resolution timescales.

The analysis also confirms the outcome of complaints in relation to whether the complaint was upheld, not upheld or partially upheld. Another aspects of the analysis focuses on the efficiency of complaints handling in regards to resolving both Stage 1 and 2 complaints within their respective statutory timescales.

The analysis used in the production of this report highlighted the following findings:

- a total of 309 complaints (Stages 1 & 2) were recorded through the CHP during the reporting year which is a 18% reduction in complaint numbers when compared to the previous reporting year that had 377 complaints recorded through the CHP;
- repairs and maintenance complaints accounted for the highest number of complaints received during the reporting period with 58% (179 complaints) of total complaints being recorded in this category for Operations, and the Asset Management Departments – a 25% reduction of (61 complaints) when compared to the previous year's figure for that complaint category;
- for the fourth year running, Operations, and the Asset Management Departments accounted for the vast majority of complaints recorded through the CHP with 98.7% of total complaints received for the 2015/16 reporting year which is a very slight reduction when compared to the previous year figure (98.9%);
- 48% of total complaints (Stage 1 & 2) were upheld with 33% not upheld, 19% partially upheld - when compared to the 2014/15 reporting year, the 2015/16 figures show a 9.2% reduction in the number of upheld complaints, a 9.6% increase in the number of not upheld complaints, and 0.4% reduction in partially upheld for the 2015/16 reporting year;
- 71.4% of the Stage 2 complaints were not upheld by the association, with the remaining 28.6% of the Stage 2 complaints being split equally between upheld and partially upheld%;
- the association processed 93.4% of Stage 1 complaints within the stipulated SPSO timescales (5 days) with 85.7% of the Stage 2 complaints within the 20-day timescale which equates to a moderate improvement on the 2014/15 reporting year performance for complaints processing (87.3%, and 62.5% for Stage 1 & 2 complaints respectively);
- only one Stage 1 complaint was escalated to Stage 2 during the reporting year which is a significant reduction compared to 2014/15 which had five escalated complaints; and
- average time for Stage 1 complaint resolution was 2.6 days, with 19.9 days being the average timescale for Stage 2 complaints – average timescale performance for 2015/16 reporting year has improved in relation to the timescale results for the previous reporting year (3.7 days and 22.1 days).

1.3 Continuous Improvement Actions Undertaken During 2015/16

In order to maintain an effective and efficient complaints handling process, the association identified a number of areas which required further strengthening during 2015/16, with improvements made in the following areas:

- 1) Association staff were provided with specialist training on how to prevent customer complaints from escalating at the first point of contact.
- 2) Improvements made to the way complaints information is recorded and analysed in the association's housing information management system.
- 3) A training needs analysis was used to identify where there was gaps in knowledge across the association workforce in relation to complaints management which resulted in the development of a Complaints Learning and Development programme.

2. Valuing Complaints

The ability to effectively manage, and learn from customer complaints provides an important contribution to the following strategic aims of the association:

- Achieving Excellence
- Building Success
- Creating Innovation

The association recognises the importance of being a 'learning organisation', and actively promotes the exchange of information and best practice both internally between departments, and sharing best practice as members of the following best practice organisations:

- Scottish Housing Network
- HouseMark
- Housing Sector Complaints Handling Network

2.1 Complaints Handling Procedure

The association is committed to providing quality services that meet the individual needs of all who seek our assistance, support or advice. We set high standards and strive for excellence in all that we do. We also recognise the high expectations that our current - and future customers - have and the importance in understanding how the association can meet and where possible, exceed those expectations.

We know however, there can be occasions where we fall short of our standards or do not fully meet these expectations. The association's CHP is designed to help us resolve any customer dissatisfaction quickly and as close to the point of service delivery as possible. It is underpinned by our commitment to valuing and learning from complaints.

The complaints handling procedure implemented by the association on 1 October 2012 was based on the SPSO's model CHP. The development of the model CHP included input from other Scottish social housing providers, to ensure a standardised approach to handling

complaints across the sector. One of the key objectives of the model CHP was to ensure all customer needs were at the heart of the process and that their complaints were handled effectively and in a consistent manner through impartial and fair investigations.

Customers have a number of options in how they can record a complaint or statement of dissatisfaction through the association's CHP. These options include:

- making the complaint in person;
- over the telephone or in writing; and
- using email or through the association's website or social media sites (Twitter and Facebook).

The association has produced detailed guidance on the CHP for customer to use. Furthermore, each edition of the association's quarterly newsletter for customers (Caledonia News) contains updates on complaint performance as well as providing examples of how we are using complaints to improve service performance.

The association's website (www.caledoniaha.co.uk) is another key resource that is used to communicate information on complaints handling performance by the association. The website has a section dedicated to complaints handling, and provides a wealth of information, including access to quarterly and annual complaints performance reports.

In terms of reporting our complaints performance internally, the association uses a variety of communication channels to advise both staff and board members on how the association is managing complaints including the following:

- updates on complaints handling through the staff newsletter;
- the association's intranet site provides details relating to all the CHP-related key performance indicators, learning items, and compliments received from customers;
- complaints performance is discussed at individual monthly 1 to 1 meetings, and team meetings;
- discussed at the association's Operational Management Team (OMT), and Executive Management Team (EMT) meetings; and
- biannual reports provided to the association's governance body (Management Board).

2.2 Learning & Development

As part of the association's induction process, all new staff are provided with guidance on how to record complaints through the CHP. The induction process also provides the opportunity to explain to newly appointed staff why the association values complaint or statements of dissatisfaction and how this feedback can be used to make improvements.

The association also uploads the SPSO monthly reports to the association's intranet site so all staff can have access to the following complaints information provided by the SPSO:

- knowledge regarding the outcomes of housing-related complaints that have been escalated to the SPSO by customers for investigation;
- update on any best practice being put forward by either the SPSO or other registered social landlords for the purpose of making the CHP more effective and robust; and

- information from the SPSO on suggested methods for carrying out informal self-assessment exercises to measure levels of compliance with various aspects of the SPSO model CHP requirements.

In terms of sharing best practice in regards to complaint handling/resolution all association staff have the facility to record their own learning from complaints using the corporate intranet site. This approach to enabling staff to share their knowledge in a transparent and easily accessible way has contributed to ensuring the association remains a learning organisation.

2.3 Complaints Governance

The governance of the association's CHP has been delegated to the Operational Management Team (OMT) by the Executive Management Team (EMT).

The OMT have the following remits in regards to complaints governance:

- reviewing complaint performance at corporate and departmental level in relation to the suite of key performance indicators that relate to complaints handling;
- assessing the effectiveness of complaint resolution solutions put in place by departments/teams or staff and where appropriate advise EMT of any possible failure in relation to addressing common causes of complaints;
- reviewing the effectiveness of the process that underpin the CHP and supporting technology involved in complaint resolution;
- reviewing solutions put in place by departments relating to learning from complaints (Stages 1 & 2); and
- monitor progress of the delivery of the annual Complaints Handling Improvement Programme, and make EMT aware of any significant slippage in the programme.

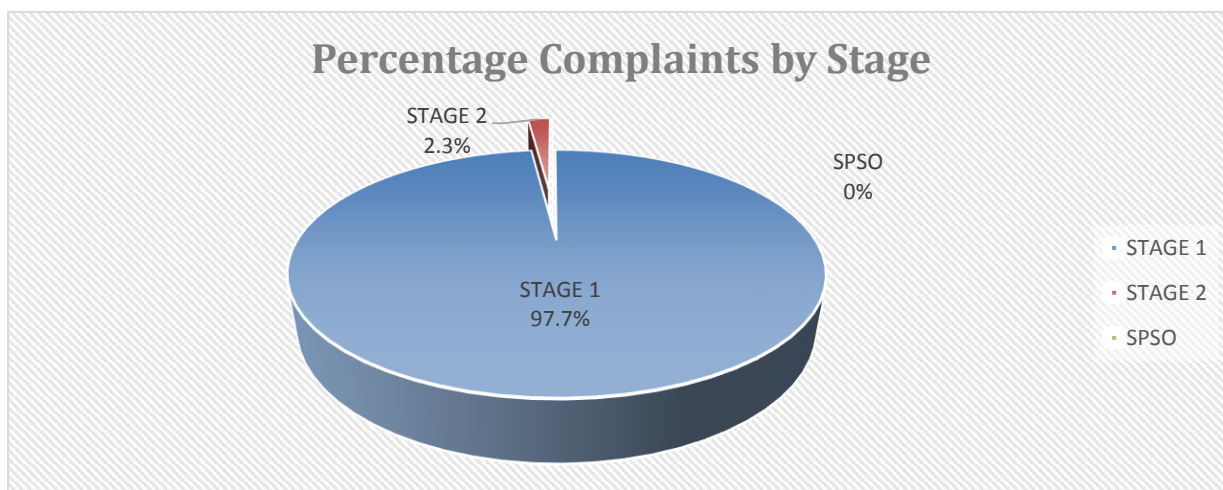
3. Complaints Analysis – 2015/16

Overview

During the reporting period from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 the number of complaints recorded through the association's CHP was **309**: 18% reduction when compared to the 2014/15 reporting year which had 377 complaints recorded through the CHP.

- Stage One Complaints 302 = 97.7% (362 for 2014/15 reporting year)
- Stage Two Complaints 7¹ = 2.3% (15 for 2014/15 reporting year)
- Escalated to SPSO 1 = complaint not upheld by the SPSO

¹ One of the seven Stage 2 complaints was an escalated Stage 1 complaint



Quarter	Stage One	Stage Two	Total
1 (1 April to 30 June)	76	1	77
2 (1 July to 30 September)	79	3	82
3 (1 October to 31 December)	72	1	73
4 (1 January – 31 March)	75	2	77
Total	302	7	309

Stage 2 Complaints – Escalation & Direct Recording

During the 2014/15 reporting year, seven Stage 2 complaints were recorded through the association’s CHP. Out of the seven complaints, six were recorded directly as Stage 2 with only one complaint being an escalated Stage 1 complaint.

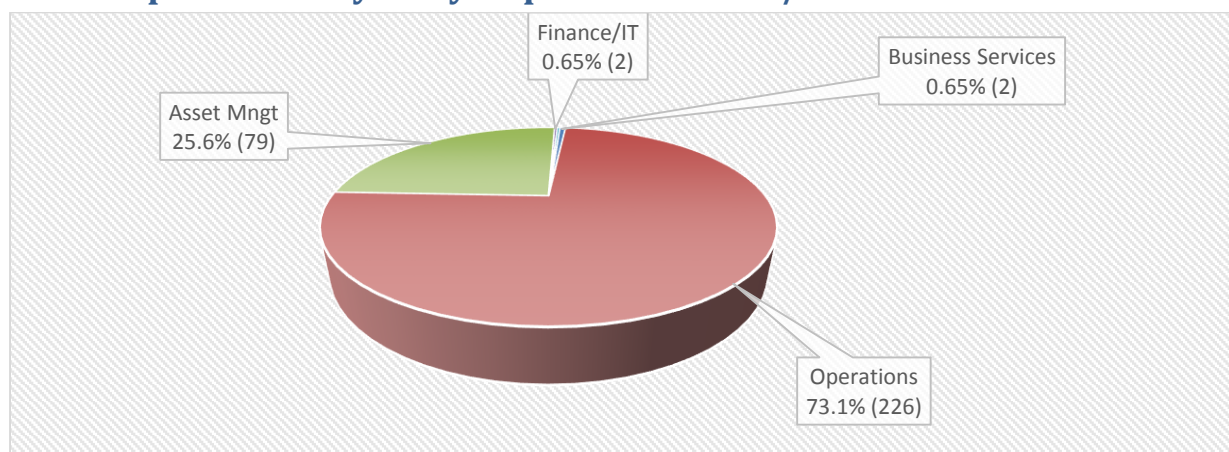
The 2015/16 reporting year showed a significant decrease in the number of Stage 2 received when compared against the previous year, with a 53% reduction (fifteen Stage 2 complaints were received in 2015/16). Furthermore, the 2015/16 reporting year had the lowest number of escalated Stage 1 complaints since the CHP was introduced in 2012 (2012/13 reporting year had the highest number of escalated Stage 1 complaints with seven being escalated to Stage 2 during that particular reporting year).

Complaints Made to the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman & Equality Related Complaints

The 2015/16 reporting year was the first year since the CHP was implemented that the association had a customer complaint investigated by the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO): the outcome of the investigation was that the complaint was not upheld by the SPSO. Furthermore, there was no improvement recommendations put forward by the SPSO in regards to how the association should have handled the customer complaint.

It should also be noted that during the reporting period no equality-related complaints were recorded through the association’s CHP (equality-related complaints is one of the SSHC indicators). This is the four reporting year where no equalities-related complaints have been recorded through the association’s CHP.

3.1 Complaints Analysis by Department 2015/16



Quarter	Stage One	Stage Two	2015/16 Total	2014/15 Total	Variance
1 (1 April to 30 June)	76	1	77	81	4
2 (1 July to 30 September)	79	3	82	113	31
3 (1 October to 31 December)	72	1	73	93	20
4 (1 January – 31 March)	75	2	77	90	13
Totals	302	7	309	377	68

The above table highlights the spread of complaints across the association with the majority of complaints being recorded against two departments - Operations (73.1%) and Asset Management (24.9%). Since the introduction of the CHP, the percentage split of complaints between Operations, and the Asset Management departments has been consistent with 73% - 80% of complaints being recorded against Operations, and Asset Management having approximately 20% – 27%

As reported in all previous CHP annual reports, given the high levels of interaction with customers as a result of the services provided by Asset Management, and Operations, it is understandable that these departments will receive the highest number of complaints. This situation is common with most customer facing departments in other social landlord organisations across Scotland.

Breakdown by Quarters for Stage 1 Complaints *(2014/15 results in brackets)*

Department	Quarter 1 (Oct – Dec)	Quarter 2 (Jan – Mar)	Quarter 3 (Apr – Jun)	Quarter 4 (Jul – Sep)	Total
Business Services	0	0	1	1	2
Finance/IT	1	0	1	0	2
Operations	50	51	52	68	221
Asset Management	25	28	18	6	77
Quarter Totals	76 (76)	79 (111)	72 (91)	75 (84)	302 (362)

Similar to all three previous annual complaints handling reports, the complaints category that had the most Stage 1 complaints recorded against it was the **repairs category**. A significant amount of the repairs complaints were in relation to issues such as poor communication

between the contractor and the customer, and the quality of the repair job carried out by the contractor. It should be noted that whilst a significant number of the complaints relate to the repairs services, this figure has to be taken in context with the high number of repair jobs carried out by the association's contractors. During the 2015/16 reporting year 9,643 works requests were issued by the association with only 1.8% of those repairs jobs having complaints recorded against them by customers.

Other Stage 1 complaints related to dissatisfaction around service provision as well as a number of complaints relating to the policies/procedures that underpin the various services provided by the association.

In terms of Stage 2 complaints, these complaints related to a variety of issues including repairs, policy decisions taken by the association.

Complaint Analysis by Department (Stages 1)

Business Services

Theme	Number of Complaints
Process	2
Total	2

1. **Narrative:** Complaints relating to information handling/presentation

Finance/IT

Theme	Number of Complaints
Unhappy With Service	2
Total	2

2. **Narrative:** Complaint related to method used for communicating with customers

Operations

Theme	Number of Complaints
Repairs & Maintenance	142
Unhappy With Service	57
Staff Attitude	5
Policy	9
Process	8
Total	221

3. **Narrative:** Complaints centred on repair and maintenance issues - mainly in relation to communication breakdown between contractor and tenant, and issues relating to the quality of repair work carried out by the appointed contractors

Asset Management

Theme	Number of Complaints
Repairs & Maintenance	30
Unhappy With Service	42
Staff Attitude	2
Policy	0
Process	3
Total	77

4. **Narrative:** Complaints mostly related to the grounds maintenance contractor's performance (grass cutting, quality of gardening services)

4. Complaints by Outcome -2015/16

1. Upheld: 148 = 47.9% (67 less upheld in relation to 2014/15 figure)
2. Not Upheld: 101 = 32.7% (13 more not upheld on 2014/15 figure)
3. Partially Upheld: 60 = 19.4% (13 less than 2014/15 figure for partially upheld)
4. **Total Number: 309² (Stage 1 & 2)**

Stage 1 & 2 Complaints by Outcome 2015/16



Stage 1 & 2 Complaints Per Quarter	% Upheld Per Quarter	% Not Upheld	% Partially Upheld	2014/15 Figures % Upheld/Not/Part
1 (1 Apr - 30 June)	58.4% (45)	29.9% (23)	11.7% (9)	60.8% / 17.7% / 21.5%
2 (1 July - 30 Sept)	45.1% (37)	40.2% (33)	14.7% (12)	54.9% / 25.7% / 19.4%
3 (1 Oct - 31 Dec)	47.2% (34)	26.4% (19)	26.4% (19)	46.9% / 24.5% / 28.6%
4 (1 Jan - 31 Mar)	41% (32)	33.3% (26)	25.7% (20)	68.6% / 24.4% / 7%
Yearly % & Total Number	47.9% (148)	32.7% (101)	19.4% (60)	57.2%(215)/ 23.4%(88) / 19.4%(73)

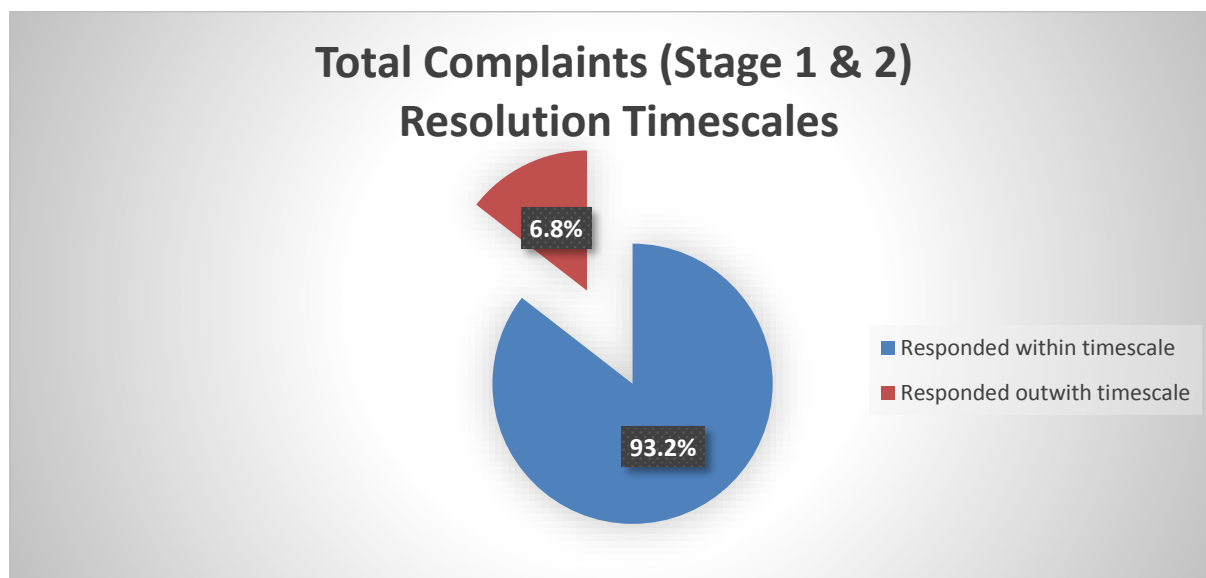
In terms of the outcome for the seven Stage 2 complaints recorded during 2015/16: one was upheld with two being partially upheld, and the remaining four Stage 2 complaints not upheld.

67.3% (208 complaints) of all Stage 1 & 2 complaints recorded through the association's CHP were either upheld or partially upheld which is a 9.3% reduction when compared to the previous reporting year figure. In terms of trends analysis since the CHP was implemented, there has been a year-on-year decline in the percentage of the number of complaints being upheld with a converse increase in the percentage of complaints being partially upheld over the same period. In regards to percentage of complaints being not upheld, there has been no obvious trend over the last four reporting years with the figure jumping between 23.4% and 32.7%.

The 2015/16 reporting year has seen the continuation in very low numbers of Stage 1 complaints being escalated to Stage 2 for further investigation with only one Stage 1 complaint being escalated (there was five in the 2014/15, and four in 2013/14). What makes the 2015/16 figure for escalated complaints more impressive was the fact that in this particular reporting year it had the lowest percentage of complaints upheld by the association: this would suggest customers understand the reason given by the association on why their complaint has not been upheld; however, the 2015/16 reporting year also had a higher number of partially upheld complaints which may have been one of the contributing reasons for the low number of escalated complaints for this particular reporting year.

² Total number of complaints figure also includes the Stage 1 complaint that was escalated to Stage 2

5. Complaints Resolution Timescales



Complaints Resolution Timescales

- Number of complaints resolved within SPSO timescale (Stage 1 & 2): **288 = 93.2%**
- Number of complaints resolved outwith SPSO Timescale (Stage 1 & 2): **21 = 6.8%**
- Average timescale to resolve Stage 1 complaints: **2.6 days**
- Average timescale to resolve Stage 2 complaints: **19.9 days**

93.4% of all Stage 1 complaints were responded to within their 5-day timescale during the 2015/16 reporting year. In respect to Stage 2, **85.7%** of all Stage 2 complaints were responded to within the SPSO stipulated timescale of 20 days. The overall combined performance for resolving all Stage 1 and 2 complaints within their respective timescales for the reporting year was **93.2%**, thus falling just short of achieving the association's ambitions target of 96% for resolving all Stage 1 and 2 complaints within their respective 5 and 20-day timescale.

The main reason for the majority of Stage 1 complaints not being resolved within the 5-day timescale was due to issues such as non-availability of key staff involved in resolving the complaint. The average timescale for completing Stage 1 complaints during the reporting year was **2.6 days**.

In terms of performance for resolving Stage 2 complaints within 20 days, the association managed to resolve six out of the seven received complaints within the target timescale; however, due to the small number of Stage 2 complaints received in the reporting year, the effect of having one late Stage 2 complaint had a disproportion impact on the final performance figure by taking performance down from **100%** to **85.7%**: this point is demonstrated by the fact that the average timescale for resolving Stage 2 complaints during the reporting year was **19.9 days** despite having one of the Stage 2 complaints taking longer to resolve than the 20 day target.

In comparison to the previous annual CHP report, the 2015/16 complaint resolution performance has increased by **6.7%** for the combined Stage 1 & 2 resolution timescale, going from **86.5%** to **93.2%**. This increase in complaints resolution timescale performance, during the 2015/16 reporting year, seen average timescales for Stage 1 complaints reduce from **3.7**

days for 2014/15 to **2.6 days** for 2015/16. Similarly, there was a modest decrease in the average timescale for Stage 2 complaints resolution with the average time of **22.1 days** in 2014/15 going down to **19.9 days** for the 2015/16 reporting year.

As a result of failing to meet the association's own challenging target for complaints resolution timescale performance, a number of improvement actions have been developed for implementation in the 2016/17 reporting year. The main objective of these improvements is to drive departmental efforts towards achieving the 96% target for complaints resolution performance.

6. Learning from Complaints

During the 2015/16 reporting year, a significant number of service improvements were implemented in response to complaints or statements of dissatisfaction expressed by customers.

Listed below is a number of the service delivery improvements that were introduced during the reporting period with the aim of reducing the likelihood of similar complaints being recorded by addressing the root cause relating to the original complaint.

- refinements made to contractor's customer management system so that all customer repair requirements can be easily accessed by the appropriate staff;
- new customer information card made up by contractors to advise tenants what parts are required for their repair, and dates relating to when the new part will be ready to be installed;
- new communication processes in place to notify customers in regards to planned work programmes, and availability of key association staff;
- association to review service charge schedules in 2016 as current system to produce schedules is unnecessarily complicated & open to administrative errors;
- new contractor appointed by the association to manage biomass system; and
- new arrangements in place to ensure contractors deploy sufficient resources for carrying out service on behalf of the association such as grounds maintenance/gardening.

7. Compliments Recording

Whilst there is no requirement within the CHP to record compliments, the association believe compliments recording plays a key part in its overall approach to providing excellent services. Compliments recording identifies where the association needs to improve service delivery, and compliments provides the evidence of where the association is getting it right in terms of meeting customer expectations.

During the reporting period 46 compliments were recorded by the association with a number of those compliments having a direct link to services that previously were receiving complaints from customers. Since the implementation of the CHP, the association has developed and embedded an effective process to enable learning from complaints to be achieved. The

information generated through the learning from complaints process has been utilised to improve services to the point that instead of those said services causing complaints they are now the source of positive feedback.

8. SPSO Benchmarking & Self-Assessment Indicators

The SPSO in conjunction with CIH, HouseMark, and the Scottish Housing Network has developed a range of complaints handling-related key performance indicators (KPIs). These KPIs provide the basis for carrying out self-assessment and/or benchmarking exercises with other registered social landlords (RSLs).

A number of the SPSO benchmarking & self-assessment KPIs are reported annually to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) as part of the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) which all RSLs complete and submit to the SHR every May

For this annual complaints report, the association used the following SPSO benchmarking/KPIs for the 2015/16 reporting year:

Indicator Description	2015/16 Performance
Total number of complaints received from social rented stock per thousand units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 85.8 complaints per 1,000 units
Number & % of complaints responded to in full at Stage 1 & Stage 2 that relate to equalities issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nil
Average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.6 Days for Stage 1 19.9 Days for Stage 2
Measures on reporting & learning from complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports to senior management and Management Board were issued quarterly during 2014/15 reporting year Complaint outcomes, trends and actions taken are published in the association's quarterly customer newsletter Fifteen services were changed/improved as a result of complaints feedback

11. Final Overview & Going Forward in 2016/17

This report has provided a detailed review of how the association has performed in 2015/16 in relation to complaints handling. There is no doubt that the CHP continues to be a key part of the association's overall performance management framework as a result of the improvements put in place as a direct consequence of learning from customer complaints.

The 2015/16 annual complaints handling report highlighted a number of positive aspects of the CHP such as the reduced number of overall complaints received (Stage 1 & 2); increased efficiency in relation to resolving complaints within the statutory timescales for complaint resolution as well as a drop in the number of upheld complaints during the reporting year.

As to ensure the association complaints handling procedure continues to provide the necessary information to drive performance - which in turn leads to increased levels of customer satisfaction in relation to service delivery - the following actions will be undertaken during 2016/17 as part of an overall CHP improvement plan:

- carry out a departmental review of CHP requirements with the aim of developing bespoke complaints handling processes that are appropriate to each department's specific CHP needs;
- modify QL reporting functionality so that it provides the necessary performance information to enable managers and staff to resolve complaints quicker;
- introduce various levels of performance reporting that provide the appropriate level of oversight for the complaints handling process within each department/team;
- put in place the necessary arrangements for collecting quarterly complaints performance information that will enable the association to maximise the SPSO quarterly/annual CHP benchmarking exercise;
- improve the quality and type of CHP-related information held on the association's website and social media channels; and
- develop and implement a more effective process for issuing customers with a complaints handling satisfaction survey (target is to provide customer with the survey form within 30 days of their complaint being initially recorded in the CHP).