

2023/2024 Complaints Summary

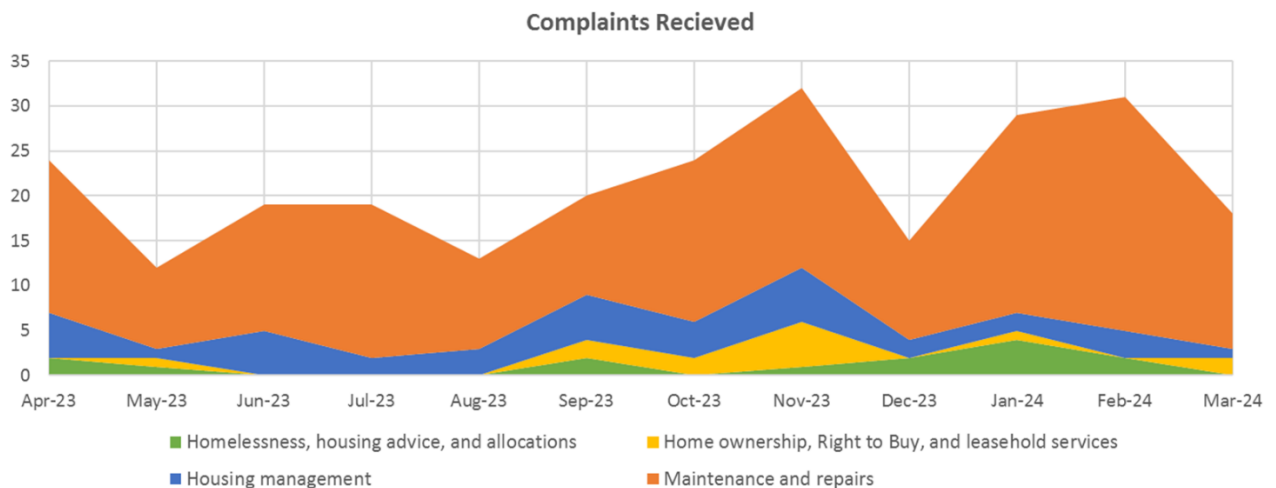
Background

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.

Waverley has a two stage complaint process. When a complaint is received it is first investigated by a Housing Manager as a level one complaint and responded to within 10 working days. If the resident is not satisfied with this response, then they can choose to escalate the complaint to level two. At this stage the Assistant Director reviews the level one response, carries out any necessary further investigations, and provides a response within 20 working days. If the resident remains dissatisfied after the level two response, they can escalate their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman. The Housing Ombudsman is a free service that provides a free, impartial, and independent service to investigate complaints and resolve disputes involving the tenants and leaseholders of social landlords.

2023/24 Overview

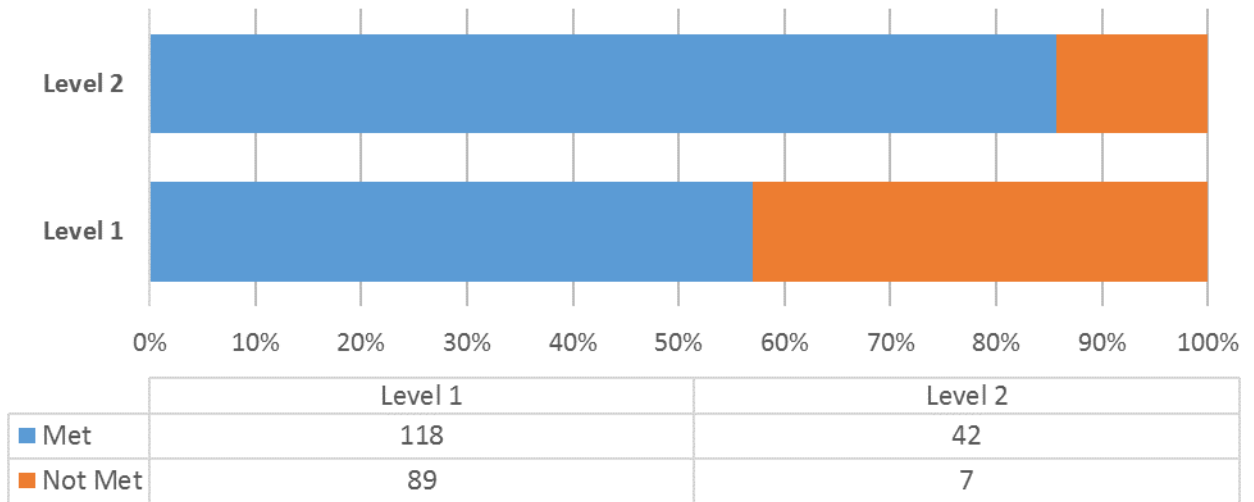
Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, the Housing Service received 207 level one complaints and 49 of these were escalated to level two complaints. Waverley also received determinations from the Housing Ombudsman on eight complaints that had been escalated to them. The service also received 20 contacts that were enquiries or service requests.



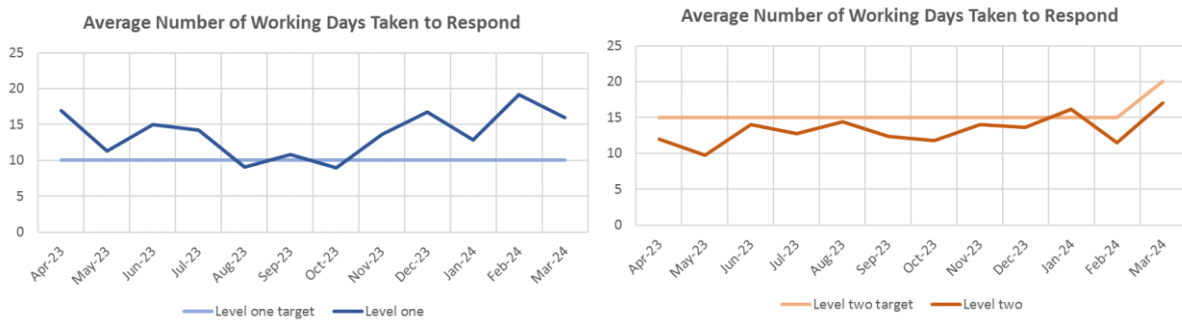
Response Time

On 1 March 2024 the response time targets in the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code were introduced. This maintained a target of 10 working days for level one complaints and increased the target for level two complaints from 15 working days to 20 working days.

Percentage of Complaints Responded to Within Target Timescales



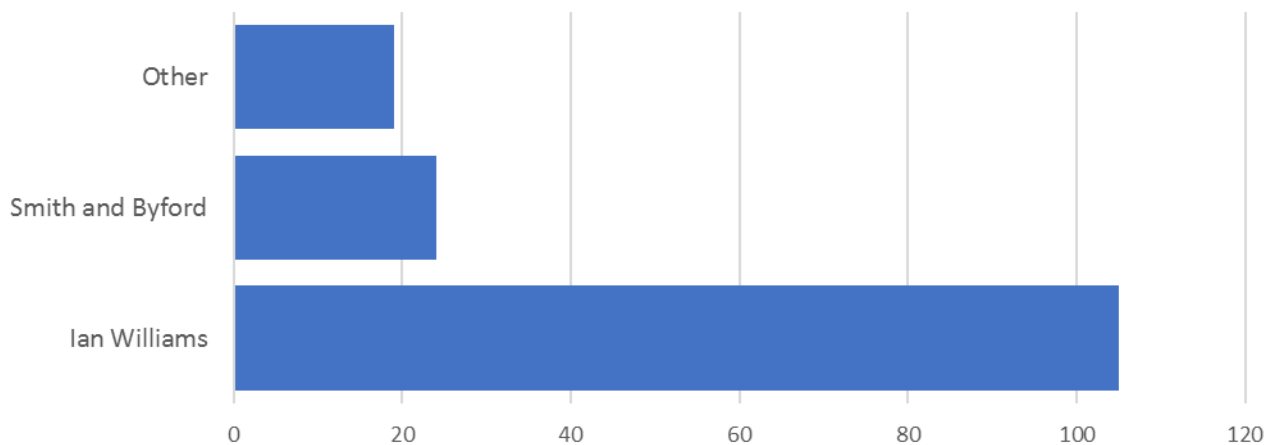
Across the year, it took 14 working days on average to respond to both level one and level two complaints. The graphs below show how this changed across the year.



Maintenance and Repairs

There were 190 complaints related to maintenance and repairs, which is 76% of total complaints received. 148 of these complaints were upheld which is 78%.

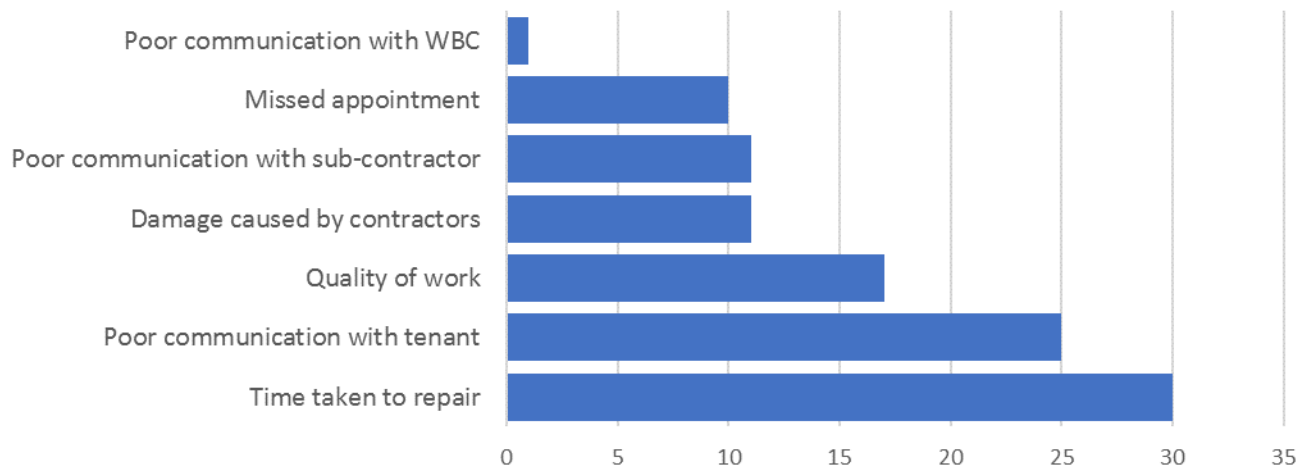
Upheld Maintenance and Repairs Complaints



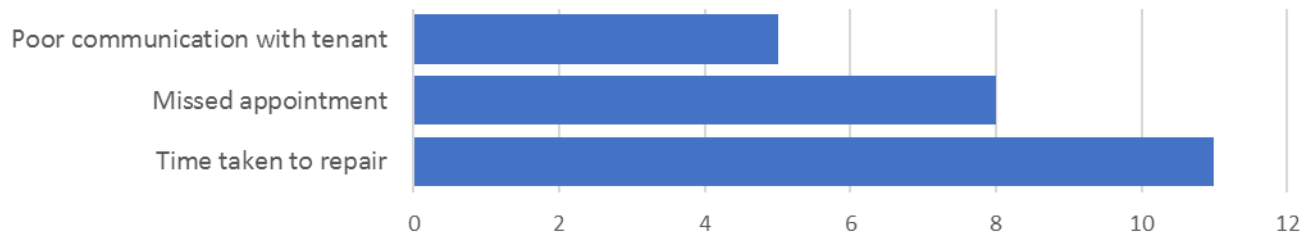
71% of upheld maintenance and repairs complaints related to work completed by Ian Williams. However, this is proportionate to the amount of work that they complete, in comparison to Smith and Byford.

The 'other' category is for contractors who carry out other smaller programmes of work such as electrical testing and for complaints which relate to former contractors.

Upheld Ian Williams Complaints



Upheld Smith and Byford Complaints



Communication was a common theme as 48% of complaints related to poor communication with tenants, sub-contractors, or Waverley or missed appointments. These complaints are typically where a tenant reports a repair and then does not hear anything and must continually chase to get information because they received no proactive communication about delays.

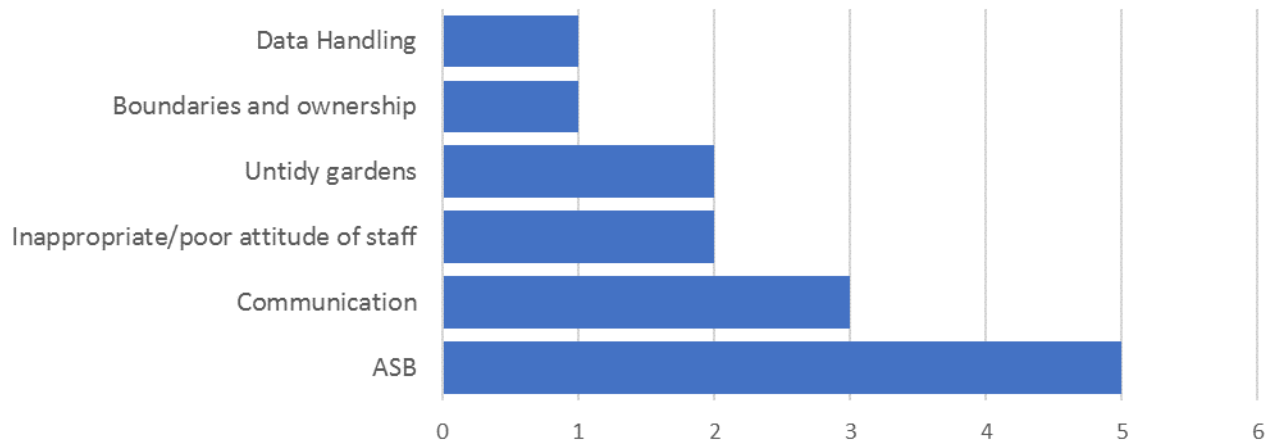
The biggest category for both contractors was time taken to repair. As these are upheld complaints, this means that following the investigation it was found that the repair was not completed within the target timescales. The most common reason for this was that multiple appointments were needed to identify the cause of the issue. This was worsened in some cases where follow up appointments were attended without the information that was identified in the previous visit leading to duplication of work and further delays.

There is a third theme in Ian Williams' complaints around the workmanship as 22% of their upheld complaints related to quality of work or damage caused by contractors. This was across a range of different types of work including external decorations, drainage, void works, bathroom and kitchen replacements, and window repairs.

Housing Management

Housing Management upheld complaints covered a range of topics. Common across most of the complaints was frustration because the complainant thought that no action was being taken to resolve an issue that they had reported.

Upheld Housing Management Complaints



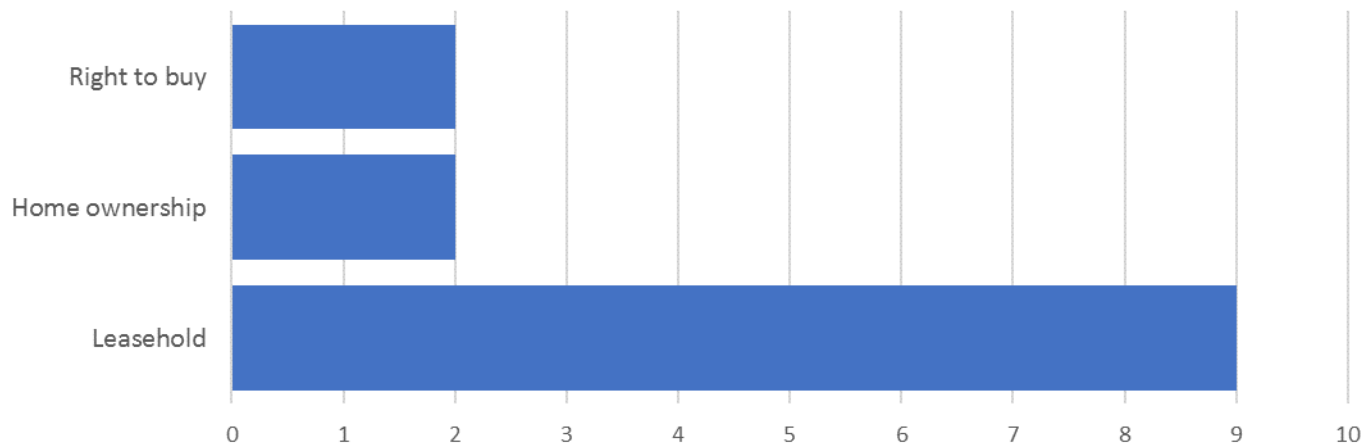
Homelessness, Housing Advice, and Allocations

All 14 of the complaints received about this service area were not upheld. All the complaints were disputing their banding on the Housing Register or alleging that the allocations process was not fair. For each one, their case was reviewed and concluded that the proper processes had been followed.

Home Ownership, Right to Buy, and Leasehold Services

12 of the 13 complaints received in this area were upheld. Most complaints related to not receiving a response to their request for information about their lease. This was because resourcing issues in this team meant that it took longer than normal to respond to these enquiries. The team is now fully staffed.

Upheld Home Ownership, Right to Buy, and Leasehold Complaijps



Housing Ombudsman Determinations Received

As mentioned above, between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, Waverley received eight determinations from the Housing Ombudsman about complaints that had been escalated to them because of the tenant remaining dissatisfied following the level 1 and level 2 investigation carried out by Waverley.

In each case the Ombudsman carries out an investigation and determines if there was:

Determination Type	Description	Number received by Waverley 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024
No maladministration	Waverley acted in accordance with its obligations, both contractual (lease or tenancy agreement) and relevant policies/procedures.	3
Service failure	There was minor failure by Waverley in the service it provided and it did not appropriately acknowledge these and/or fully put them right.	2
Maladministration	There was a failure which adversely affected the resident and Waverley has failed to acknowledge its failings and/or has made no attempt to put things right. Or Waverley has acknowledged failings and/or made some attempt to put things right but this was not proportionate to the failings identified.	3
Severe maladministration	There was a single significant failure in service or a series of significant failures which have had a seriously detrimental impact on the resident. Waverley's response to the failures exacerbated the situation and further undermined the landlord/resident relationship.	0

The Ombudsman determinations received between April 2023 and March 2024 and any service improvements made as a result are summarised in the table below:

Complaint Detail	Ombudsman Determination and Recommendations	Service Improvements
Resident concerned about the way in which Waverley handled a leak and the necessary repairs following the leak.	No maladministration Recommendation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay tenant £600 in compensation for delay to completion of work and failure to investigate every aspect of complaint at level 1 	Refresher training on complaints handling was given to member of staff who handled level 1 complaints. The period of retention for call recordings was extended from 30 to 60 days.
Resident concerned about Waverley's decision to use part of a communal car park as a storage and welfare area for its contractors.	No maladministration Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waverley should work with the resident to establish if the contractor was using the car park at unsocial hours • Waverley should provide the resident with an update on when the contractors compound would be removed from the car park • Waverley should support the resident to access the complaints procedure if they remain dissatisfied. 	All recommendations implemented.
Resident concerned about Waverley's response to their complaint about the handling of a rat problem in their garden.	No maladministration.	
Resident dissatisfied with Waverley's response to their concerns about leaks and damp and mould in their wet room.	Service failure in handling of report of leak Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay tenant £400 in compensation • Arrange inspection of property 	Damp and Mould Officer has been recruited to manage all damp and mould works. Review and self-assessment was completed against the Housing Ombudsman's Damp and Mould report. This resulted in a project to implement a new case management system to monitor ongoing works.
Resident concerned about Waverley's handling of reports of noise nuisance from a neighbouring property.	Service failure in handling of the residents report of noise nuisance and the handling Recommendations:	Recommendation implemented

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay £7500 in compensation for soundproofing works carried out by the tenant 	
Resident concerned about Waverley's response to their reports of anti-social behaviour and queries about their garden boundary.	<p>Maladministration in complaint response</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay resident £950 in compensation • Carry out a risk assessment and develop action plan with resident to resolve ASB issue • Provide written response to resident about garden boundary • Provide staff training about ASB policy and complaints handling • Review and update the ASB policy to include 3 step warning process 	All recommendations implemented.
Resident concerned about Waverley's handling of their report of kitchen repair issues and the handling of their complaint.	<p>Maladministration in handling of repair and complaint</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay resident £1050 in compensation • Send the resident an apology for the handling of the kitchen repairs and the impact of this • Contact the resident to discuss the pest issues and confirm in writing what actions would be taken and when 	All recommendations implemented.
Resident concerned about Waverley's handling of tenancy breach warning letter and the use of their communal washing facilities by residents	<p>Maladministration in handling of tenancy breach warning letter</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with resident to discuss any support needs they have • Apologise to the tenant for not having a discussion about support needs when the letter was sent • Apologise to the tenant about the insufficient response to their 	All recommendations implemented

	complaint about the laundry facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay the resident £450 in compensation 	
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Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Reports

Throughout the year the Housing Ombudsman released several Spotlight Reports. These focus on a topic that the Ombudsman has seen in a high proportion of their recent casework. The reports highlight common issues and recommendations about how landlords can minimise these issues to improve their service.

Damp and Mould

This spotlight report was released in October 2021 and a follow up report was released in February 2023. In May 2022 a self-assessment against the actions recommended in the spotlight was carried out and an action plan was created based on the gaps identified around taking proactive action, record keeping, and following up on completed work to ensure that the problem is resolved. This action plan was completed in 2023 including the introduction of an updated Damp and Mould Policy and Procedure in July 2023 and the recruitment of a Damp and Mould Officer.

Knowledge and Information Management

This spotlight report was released in May 2023 and made 21 key recommendations around the creation, storage, use, and sharing of information. In response to the KIM report we carried out a self-assessment against the recommendations and identified there was a lot of work to do in this area. Two projects have taken place this year to implement the recommendations of this report. Firstly, we carried out a stock condition survey which has improved the accuracy of the information that we hold about our homes. Secondly, a project is ongoing to implement a new asset management system. This is the software that holds all the information about the physical condition of our homes. This project will empower officers by ensuring that the databases are easy to interrogate and that the data can be extracted and used, which improves risk management and planning for future maintenance programmes. To improve the quality of data and maintain the integrity of the new data we have on our homes a wider change programme has been approved which includes developing and implementing a housing wide data management strategy.

Service Improvements

Each complaint is an opportunity to learn from the experiences of tenants and improve the Housing Service. Below is a summary of the service improvements that were made between April 2023 and March 2024 because of lessons learned from complaints.

Complaints Handling

Complaint handling is a key area for improvement because only 57% of level one complaints and 86% of level two complaints were responded to on time across the year. There is currently a Corporate Complaints Officer whose role focuses on supporting Assistant Directors with responding to level two complaints, runs training for Housing Managers about complaints handling, and handles any complaints which are escalated to the Housing Ombudsman. The Housing Service has now appointed a Housing Complaints Officer to provide support to Housing Managers when responding to level one complaints. The aim of this change is to make an improvement to the consistency of the quality of complaint responses and reduce the time taken to respond. This role will also have a broader focus

on analysing the trends in complaints and encouraging a positive culture in which complaints are seen as an opportunity to learn and make improvements to the Housing Service.

Maintenance and Repairs

As 76% of all complaints received related to maintenance and repairs, this was a key focus of improvements made to the service over the year. The three trends that emerged from the complaints were communication, time taken to repair, and the quality of work. The service improvements are categorised by these trends below.

Communication

- Reviewed and enhanced Ian William's Customer Liaison Officer role to focus on working with tenants to understand and resolve issues and working with Waverley to respond to complaints and embed lessons learned.
- Recruited a Housing Operations Support Officer to organise and take minutes at all operational meetings between Waverley and Ian Williams to ensure a comprehensive record of all decisions and actions is kept.
- Continued with the project to improve the interface between Waverley's and Ian Williams' IT systems so that Officers have greater oversight of ongoing works.

Time taken

- Waverley have agreed an interim solution with Ian Williams to resolve the backlog of scaffolding jobs. Work is ongoing to find a permanent solution.
- Ian Williams have hired additional operatives to improve their team resilience.
- Ian Williams have improved the management of their sub-contractors by increasing communication.

Quality of work

- Waverley's team of inspectors was expanded to increase the amount of work completed that Waverley post-inspects
- Waverley is working with Ian Williams to improve the transparency of their own post-inspection process.

Housing Management

Almost all the upheld complaints in this service area related to issues around timely communication with tenants about concerns they had reported with their home or neighbourhood. The team has changed its structure to include a Housing Manager, two Senior Housing Officers, and five Housing Officers. The introduction of the role of Senior Housing Officer provides support to Housing Officers with more complex and time consuming cases and provides support to the Housing Manager in managing the Housing Officer team to effectively follow processes.

Home Ownership, Right to Buy, and Leasehold Services

All upheld complaints in this service area were about the time taken to respond to enquiries about leaseholds and Right to Buy applications. The delayed responses because the only Officer able to respond to these enquiries had an extended period of absence and it took time to arrange agency cover. Now the team is aware of this low resilience in this area and the impact that it can have on service delivery they are better prepared to arrange agency cover for any future periods of absence.

Aids and Adaptations Review

In 2022/23 Housing Ombudsman investigated a complaint from a tenant about the Aids and Adaptations service and made a maladministration finding. This report from the Ombudsman, with their determination and recommendations, was received right at the end of March 2023 so the improvements in response have happened in the April 2023 to March 2024 year covered by this report. Waverley has implemented all of the Ombudsman's recommendations. This included carrying out a comprehensive review of the policy and procedure based on feedback provided by 50 tenants. This review identified that the policy and procedure was fit for purpose but that the teams involved would benefit from refresher training on their contents and legal advice on which requests are defined as 'reasonable'. The current process requires that all requests estimated to cost over £15,000 are reviewed by a panel of Officers to determine whether the request is 'reasonable'. This ensures consistent judgements are made.

Other actions taken to improve the aids and adaptations process:

- The Aids and Adaptions Officer role who manages this process was vacant between December 2023 and May 2024. A qualified surveyor has been recruited to role and their expertise will support the team in scrutinising the quality of work and managing the contractors.
- There is now an Officer within the Housing Operations Support Team to support with the case management process and communication with tenants.
- The role of the Ian Williams Customer Liaison Officer has been reviewed and their focus on communicating with tenants to proactively resolve issues has been enhanced.
- Monthly meetings are held between the Aids and Adaptations Officer and the person who manages this workstream at Ian Williams to facilitate communication about ongoing works.
- The information provided on the website and the online application form have both been reviewed to ensure that they are easy to access and to understand.
- A common cause of delays in the aids and adaptations process is that Waverley rely on the Occupational Therapist assessment services provided by Surrey County Council which have long waiting lists. Several options for resolving this are being considered, including procuring a specific contractor.

Decants Process Review

A decant is when a tenant must temporarily move to an alternative home while repair work is carried out to their original home. Following a complaint about the decant process, a review of the process was carried out. After discussion with tenants who have experienced decants and with the Officers who manage them, the updated procedure included more detailed requirements for communication such as assigning a single point of contact 'decant officer' and a description of the communication that should take place before the decant to set expectations and gather the necessary information about the tenant's needs. This project is ongoing as the updated procedure needs to be embedded within the team.