

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a black headset with a microphone. She is wearing a light-colored, textured sweater over a white collared shirt. A small red pin is visible on her sweater. The image is overlaid with a dark blue gradient. A vertical light blue bar is on the left side of the page, and a diagonal orange bar is at the bottom.




HILLCREST HOMES

ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT

2021-22

This document can be produced in different formats, for example, in larger print or audio format, and in other languages, as appropriate. We promote equality through seeking to eliminate unlawful and unfair forms of discrimination.

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Foreword

Welcome to Hillcrest's Annual Complaints Report.

This report will provide you with a summary of our overall complaint handling performance, how we have learnt from our complaints and what we have planned for the future in terms of complaint handling.

We value each complaint we receive as this is our chance to hear from you when we don't get things quite right. We can use this information to put things right and, if necessary, make changes to our services to prevent the same issues happening again. We continue to make complaints a main priority for our organisation to ensure our customers are receiving a high quality service from us.

I am pleased to report that the service we provide to our customers during the last year in terms of complaint handling remained consistently high. We received substantially less complaints in the period 2020 to 2021 which we can assume is due to COVID 19 and the restricted services we were providing. During 2021 to 2022 we can see that the number of complaints has risen back to the amount we would normally expect to receive.



Angela Linton
Hillcrest Chief Executive



Our vision, key aims & values

Our vision

We are a strong effective Scottish organisation, providing sustainable homes and creating positive futures.

Our key aims

- Provide good quality, well maintained housing at affordable rents;
- Contribute to building sustainable communities where people want to live and are able to thrive;
- Assist in the relief of homelessness and contribute to achieving the Scottish Government targets;
- Provide quality, creative, responsive care and support services to people with a range of varying needs;
- Contribute to wider, social, economic and environmental wellbeing.

Our key values



Inclusion - We listen to other people's points of view, learn from best practice and engage with our customers and communities as we recognise we are stronger and can contribute more if we have shared goals and collective efforts.

Respect - We value our staff and customers and empower them in a positive way to participate, adapt and be inspired to take ownership and make positive change.

Excellence - We are ambitious for what our organisation and customers can achieve and strive to deliver the highest quality and value possible.

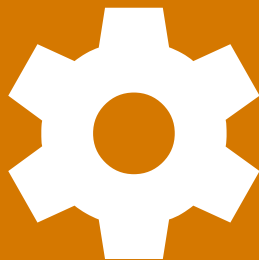
Innovation - We look for new ways of solving problems, strive for continuous reflection and improvement, and promote others to do the same.

Performance: Overview at a glance

This section provides you with an overview of how we have performed over the last year when handling your complaints.



We received **685**
Stage 1 complaints



Of all **Stage 1** complaints
received, we upheld
49% of them



We completed our **Stage 1**
complaints in an average of
3.1 days



We completed **88.8%**
Stage 1 complaints within
the agreed timescales



We received **18**
Stage 2 complaints



Of all **Stage 2** complaints
received, we upheld
39% of them



We completed our **Stage 2**
complaints in an average of
18.4 days

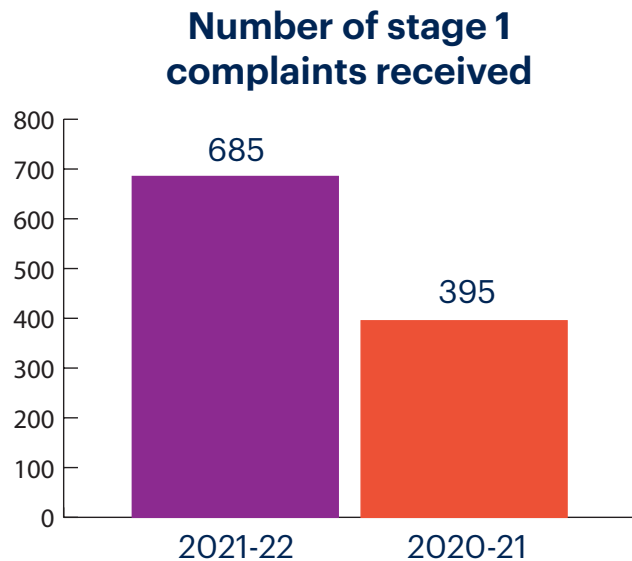


We completed **88.9%**
Stage 2 complaints within
the agreed timescales

Performance: Analysis

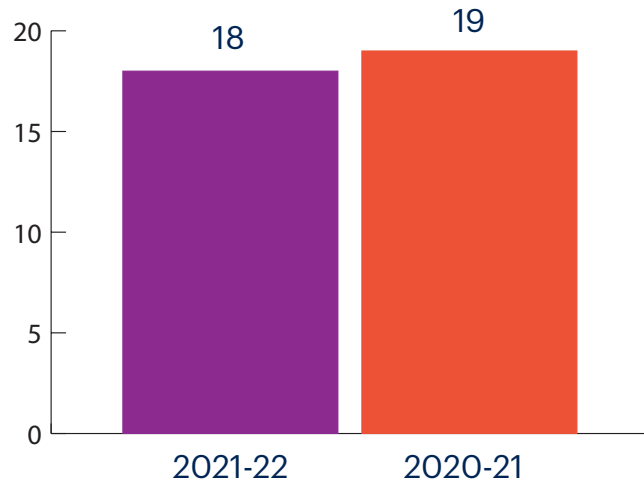
We will explain our performance results in more detail in this section. This includes benchmarking our performance to the previous year's target timescales. Our target for completing complaints are as follows:

- Stage 1 complaints is 5 working days.
- Stage 2 complaints is 20 working days.

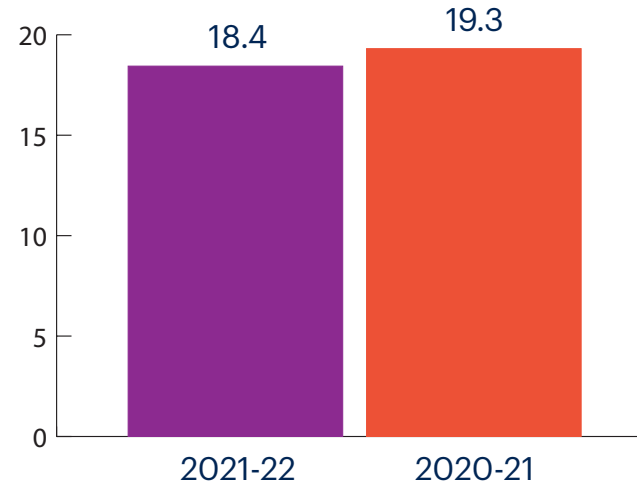


The above charts show we received much less stage 1 complaints during 2020-21 compared to this year. We can only assume that this was due to Covid-19 and lockdown restrictions. It took us slightly longer to complete complaints this year, however given the large increase in the number of complaints we handled, this is to be expected and is still well within our target timescale of 5 days.

Number of stage 2 complaints received

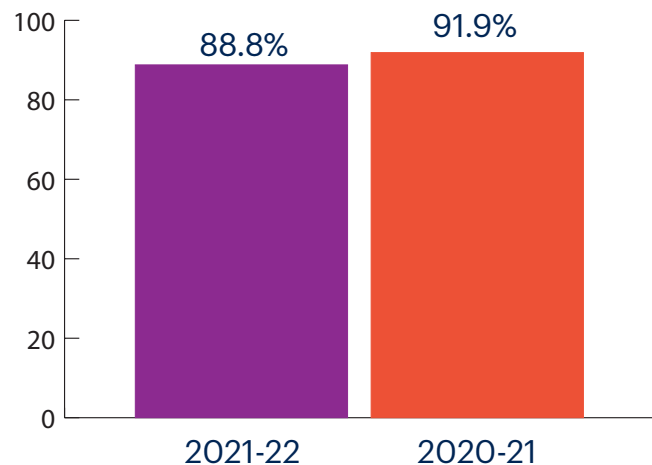


Numbers of days to complete stage 2 complaints

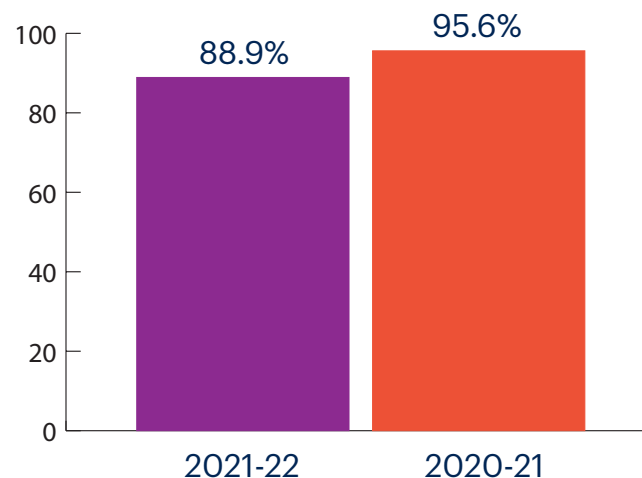


The above charts show that we received a similar number of stage 2 complaints over the last two years. There has been a slight improvement in the length of time it took us to resolve stage 2 complaints in the last year. It is hoped this will continue to improve due to a new role we have introduced to our complaints team to investigate stage 2 complaints. For more information on this role, see section '*Changes made to improve complaint handling*' later in this report.

% of stage 1 complaints completed on time



% of stage 2 complaints completed on time



The above charts show how well we completed stage 1 and stage 2 complaints within our target timescales. There may be times when a complaint is not completed on time and this can be due to a number of reasons such as the complexity of the complaint or difficulty making contact with customers and contractors to resolve the issues raised.

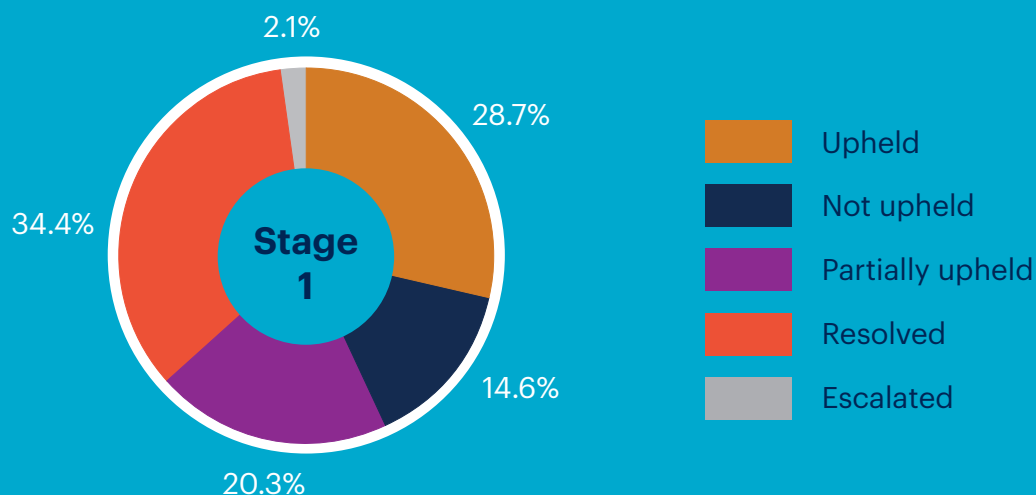
We continue to make complaints a main priority to ensure our customers are receiving a high quality service from us.

Further complaints information

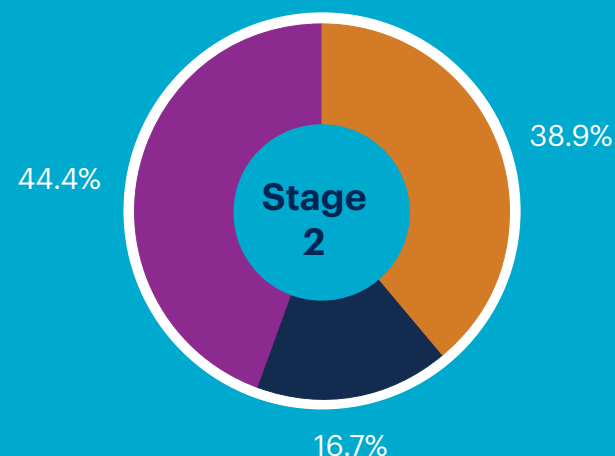
In this section we will show you in more detail the complaints we handled during 2021-22. We will show the outcomes from our complaints, the number of complaints we received for each service area and the root causes of those complaints.

Complaint outcomes

The diagram below shows the outcomes for stage 1 complaints closed in 2021-22. Hillcrest considers “partially upheld” complaints to be the same as “upheld” complaints, so on this basis, 48.98% of stage 1 complaints were upheld last year.



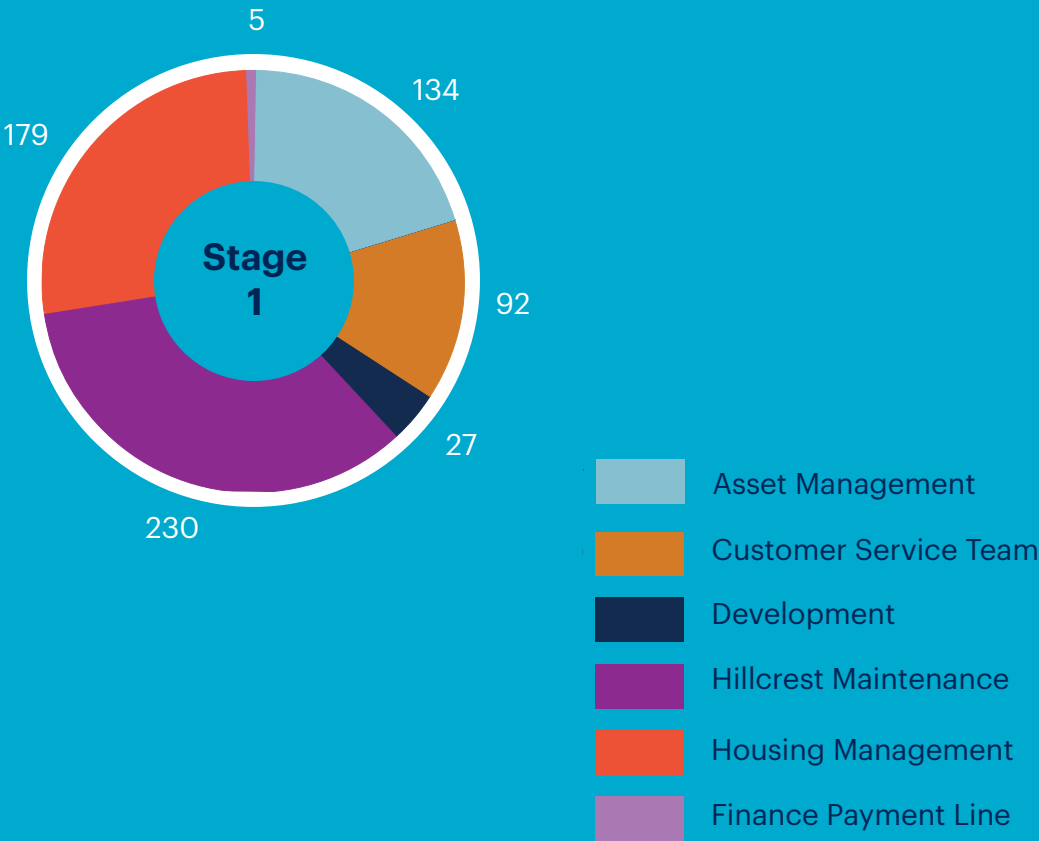
The diagram below shows the outcomes for stage 2 complaints closed in 2021-22. Using the same rationale as above in that we consider “partially upheld” complaints to be the same as “upheld” complaints, 83.33% of Stage 2 complaint were upheld last year.



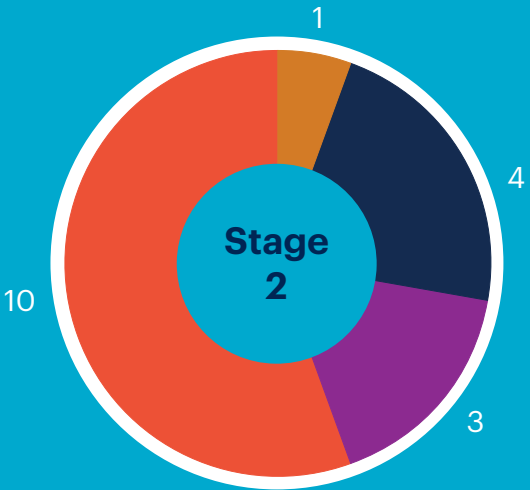
**Upheld complaints are where we have found that we were at fault. Where we have found that we were at fault for some parts of a complaint and not other parts, this is classed as partially upheld.*

Complaint service areas

The diagram below shows the number of stage 1 complaints received against each of our services. There was one complaint against our corporate services department, however this value is too low to show within the diagram. As you can, see we recorded the largest amount of stage 1 complaints against our maintenance department, Hillcrest Maintenance. This is consistent with previous year’s complaints and is also consistent within the housing sector.



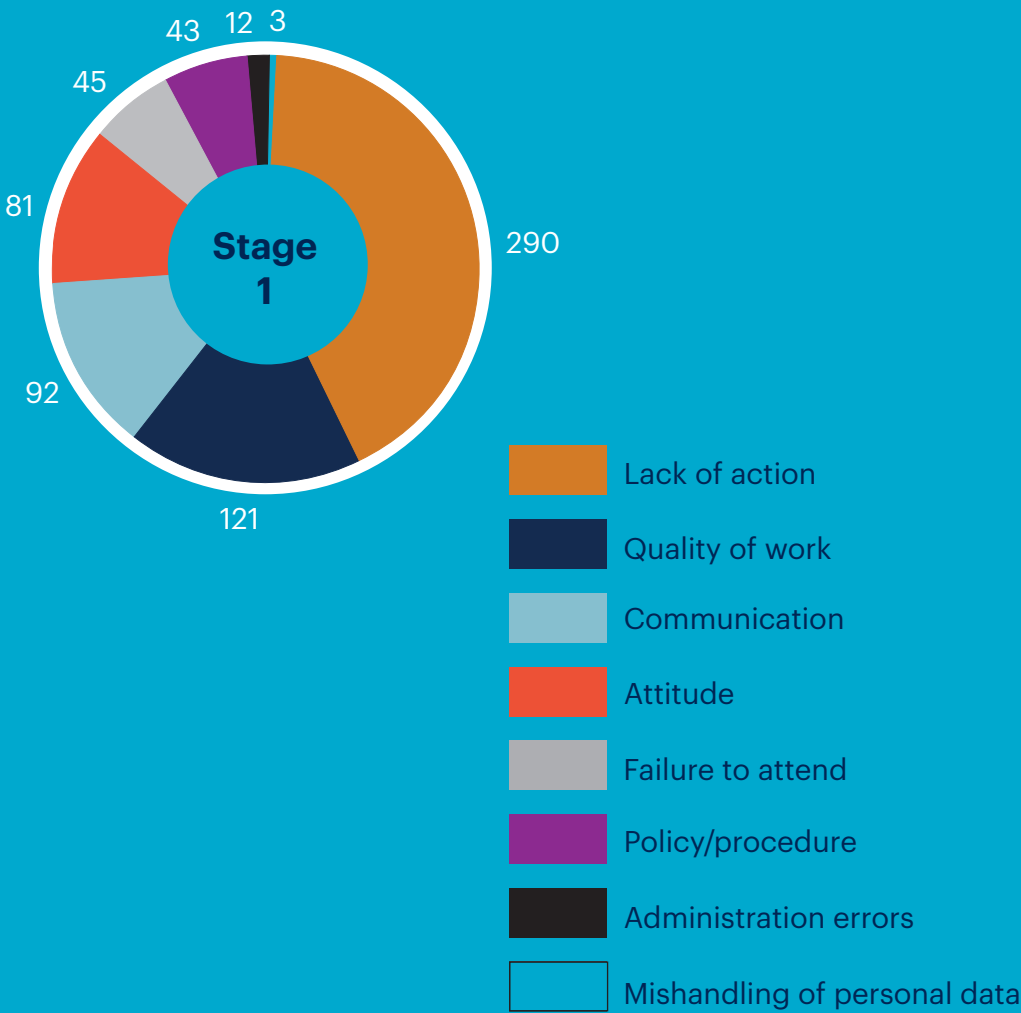
The diagram below shows that we recorded that largest amount of stage 2 complaints against housing management. Housing management covers a range of functions including income management, tenancy administration and tenancy support.



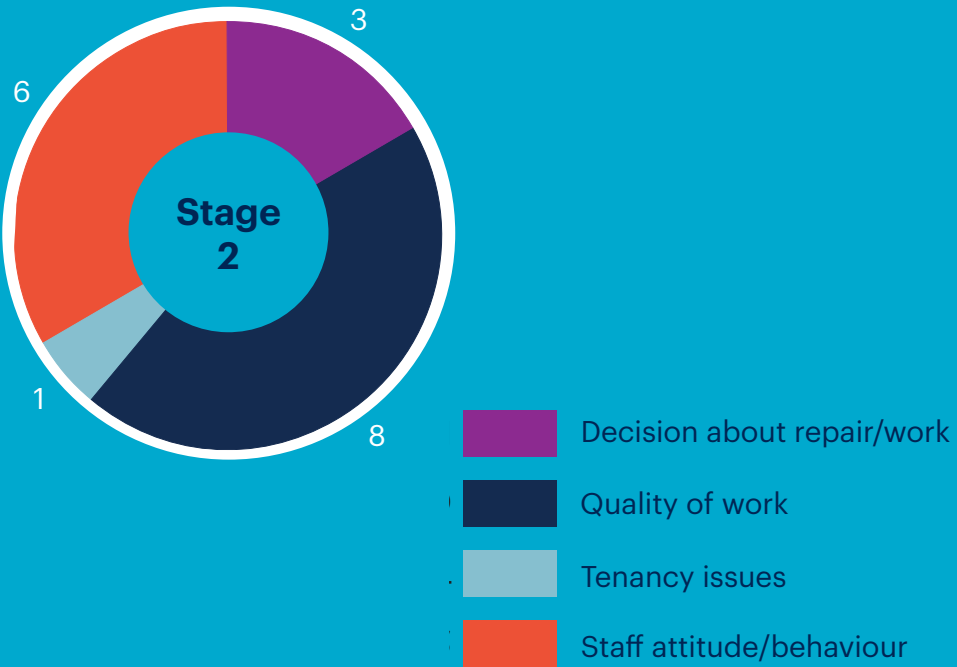
Root cause of complaints

This section will show you the number of complaints we received last year based on their subject or root cause.

As you can see from the diagram below the highest cause for complaints at stage 1 was due to our lack of action. The majority of these complaints related to repairs, external contractors or our out-of-hours service.



The below diagram shows that the highest cause for stage 2 complaints was regarding the quality of work that was carried out in tenants' homes. All but one of these complaints was upheld and Hillcrest followed up on the works to ensure they were rectified and that our tenants were happy with the work carried out.



Improvements made as a result of complaints

Hillcrest welcomes all complaints as it provides us with invaluable information about the services we provide. They highlight where we may not be getting things quite right and this allows us the opportunity to make changes to our processes and services. Here are some of the improvements we have made as a direct result of complaints we have received.

Tenant was unhappy with lack of explanation about service charges and how they can increase.



We have amended the tenants' handbook to explain fully how service charges are calculated and that they can fluctuate.

Tenant was unhappy with the way their anti-social behaviour (ASB) complaint had been handled.



We have created a focus group of interested tenants who we can approach for suggestions and feedback around various matters which will include ASB.

Tenant unhappy with length of time taken to repair leaks into property.



We had a shortage of tradesmen in this particular location so carried out a recruitment drive to secure more contractors to prevent further issues in this area.

We received several complaints about unacceptable wait times when calling out of hours repairs line.



We reviewed the service and have appointed an alternative provider to manage the calls. They have given assurance that calls will be answered quickly.

The self-service section for tenants on our website was removed and tenants were not aware of this.



We had a notice on our website for one month to notify tenants that the service was being removed. We now realise this was not enough and we should have done more to communicate this. In future we will also use social media and our newsletter to highlight changes of this type.

Case studies

We would like to share with you some of the stage 2 complaints we handled during the last year. You should note that these do not contain any personal information of those involved.

Summary of complaint

Approximately a year after moving into a new property the tenant found that their door was buckled and needed replaced. The tenant was told they would be contacted to arrange this, but heard nothing. They chased this up several times and still heard nothing back.

Findings

Hillcrest held the wrong contact details for the tenant and had been unable to contact them to discuss the issue. The further delay to the door being replaced was due to lockdown delays.

Conclusion

Complaint was upheld due to Hillcrest's administration errors which caused unnecessary delays to replacing the door. This meant the works were outstanding for longer than we would consider acceptable.

Summary of complaint

The tenant complained that when our tradesmen visited her property to investigate a leak they damaged her washing machine. The tenant would like Hillcrest to replace her washing machine with a new one.

Findings

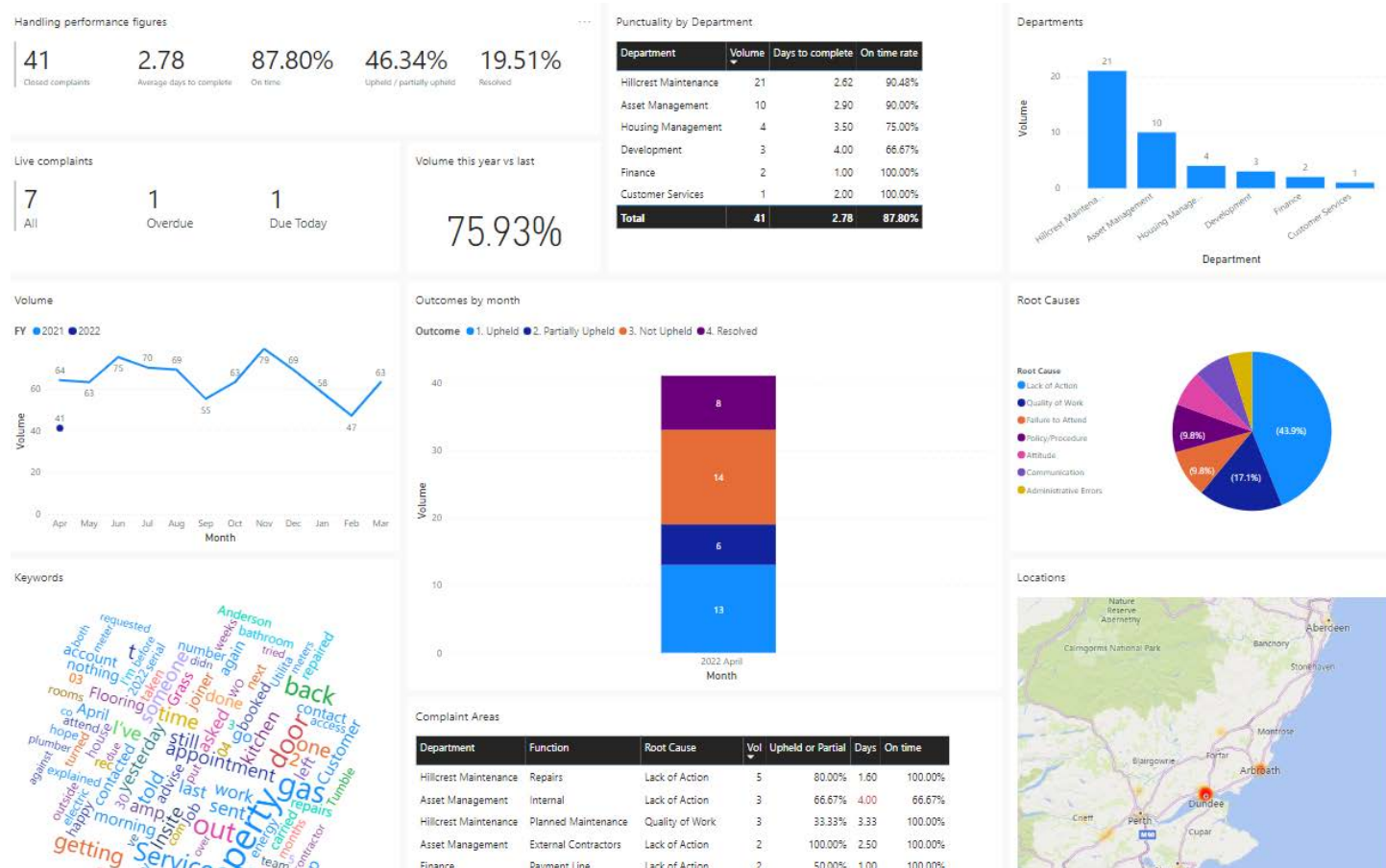
During our investigations we interviewed all staff who attended the property. Staff confirmed that the washing machine had a defective hose which was taped up when they arrived and this was what was causing the leak. Staff replaced the hose for the tenant which stopped the leak and left the washing machine in working order.

Conclusion

The complaint was not upheld due to the evidence that the washing machine was already damaged and leaking when staff arrived at the property.

Changes made to improve complaint handling

We continually look for ways in which we can improve how we handle complaints. During the last year we introduced a complaints dashboard which provides managers with a complete overview of complaints performance for Hillcrest. We have found this to be a really useful tool and use the dashboard to monitor performance and look for trends in complaints. It is very important that we continue to monitor complaints, as the more focus we put on our performance, the better service we can provide to our customers. Below is an example of our dashboard.



We have also recruited a customer complaints officer who investigates stage 2 complaints. We felt it was important to have one dedicated person to investigate the majority of stage 2 complaints as it provides us and our customers with a consistent approach around the handling of these complaints. This is a pilot for 12 months and we will monitor its success with the hope to make this a permanent role in the future.

The function of complaints is now managed by our customer service team. This is also a pilot for 12 months and will be reviewed to measure its success.

We remain focused on learning from our complaints and have introduced an improved system for staff to record and monitor any learning outcomes identified from our stage 2 complaint investigations. The new system will help us ensure that all improvements are actioned on time.



Customer Complaints Officer



Complaints Review Group

Our complaints review group meet every quarter to discuss complaints and any particular areas of concern. This group is attended by the operation managers for our organisation and they identify any areas of improvement and changes required to our complaint handling. We are always looking at who we have on this team to make sure all departments are represented.

Complaint handling network

Our customer complaints officer is part of the wider complaint handling network. This is made up of all registered social landlords across Scotland who meet quarterly to share best practice and any common issues across complaints in housing. Hillcrest is a key contributor at these meetings where we suggest items for discussion and reflection.

Staff from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) are also in attendance and they too share any areas of interest and add items for discussion.

These meetings are of huge benefit as we can gather feedback and advice from our peers and use this to improve the service and support we provide to our staff and customers in terms of complaint handling.



Compliments

It is important to also let you know about the compliments we receive. Last year we logged 103 compliments.

It means so much to our staff to receive these and can really boost morale and motivation. We monitor compliments and use this information to recognise and reward staff who go above and beyond in their role. Here are some of the compliments we received the last year:

"I would like to say how happy I am with the service I received today. Your tradesperson was professional, understanding and went above and beyond".

"I'm so glad I spoke to your staff. I'd like to say they've helped me a lot and it really took a weight off my shoulders as I had been anxious during this period. Thank you for being understanding and helping me."

Tenant would like to pass on her gratitude and thanks for the recent works done on her bathroom. The tenant says she is thrilled with the outcome and her bathroom is beautiful.

"We would definitely recommend Hillcrest to anyone looking for help when seeking accommodation. The service is great as are any tradespeople sent to carry out any repairs".

"Thank you for being so kind and tolerant".

"The flat has been great and you guys have been incredible so I would like to thank you all for your help from start to finish".

"My housing officer is so supportive. I know I can be a challenge, but he always tries to help".

What's next?

During this coming year we will roll out further training to our frontline staff on complaint handling. This will ensure we are providing you with the best service possible when handling your complaints.



We will also provide staff with complaint handling videos that they can access at any time as a refresher on handling complaints.



We are currently investigating how we can gather information from our customers on how satisfied they are with the way we have handled your complaints. We think it is really important that we use this information to identify areas where we can improve the service we provide and the outcomes you receive. All going well we hope to have this up and running this year.



We will continue to carry out call monitoring within our customer service team with increased focus on complaint calls. We will identify any areas where our staff may need training or support to provide you, our customers, with the best possible service.



We will roll out our complaints dashboard to all staff so they can stay updated with our complaints performance.