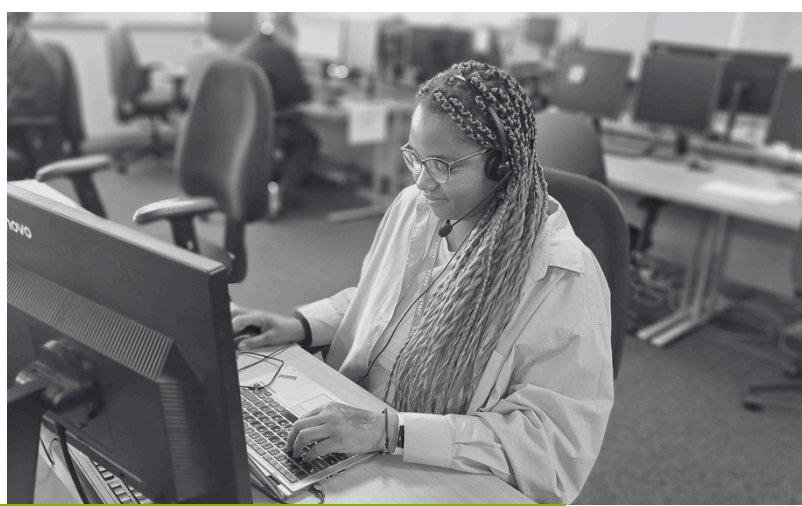
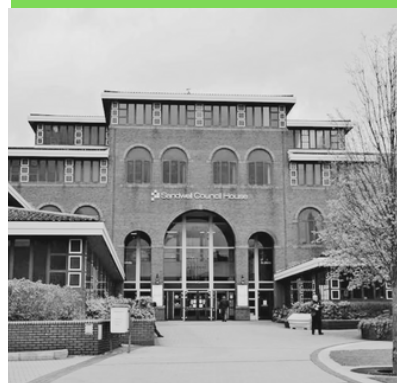
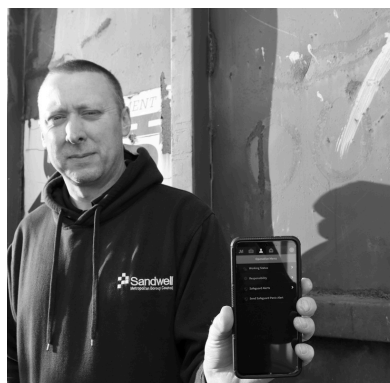
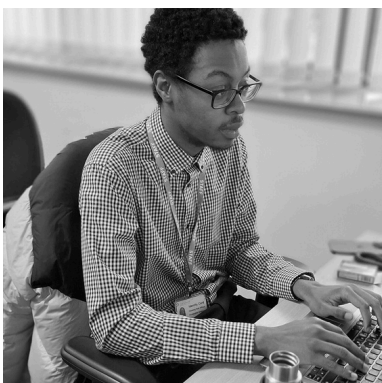


# ANNUAL REPORT HOUSING COMPLAINTS

2023  
-  
2024



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An introduction to this report

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To ensure that high standards are reached and maintained, we need you to have your say

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Dear Tenant

At Sandwell Council, transparency and accountability are at the heart of our commitment to delivering high-quality housing services. This annual complaints report is a crucial tool in that commitment, providing a clear and honest reflection of where we have succeeded and where we have room to improve.

By publishing this report, we aim to keep our tenants informed about the issues that have arisen over the past year, the steps we have taken to address them, and the lessons we have learned. It is important for us to share this information with you, as it not only demonstrates our responsiveness to your concerns but also reinforces our dedication to enhancing the services we provide.

Your feedback drives our progress, and this report is a testament to the value we place on your voice in shaping a better housing experience for everyone.

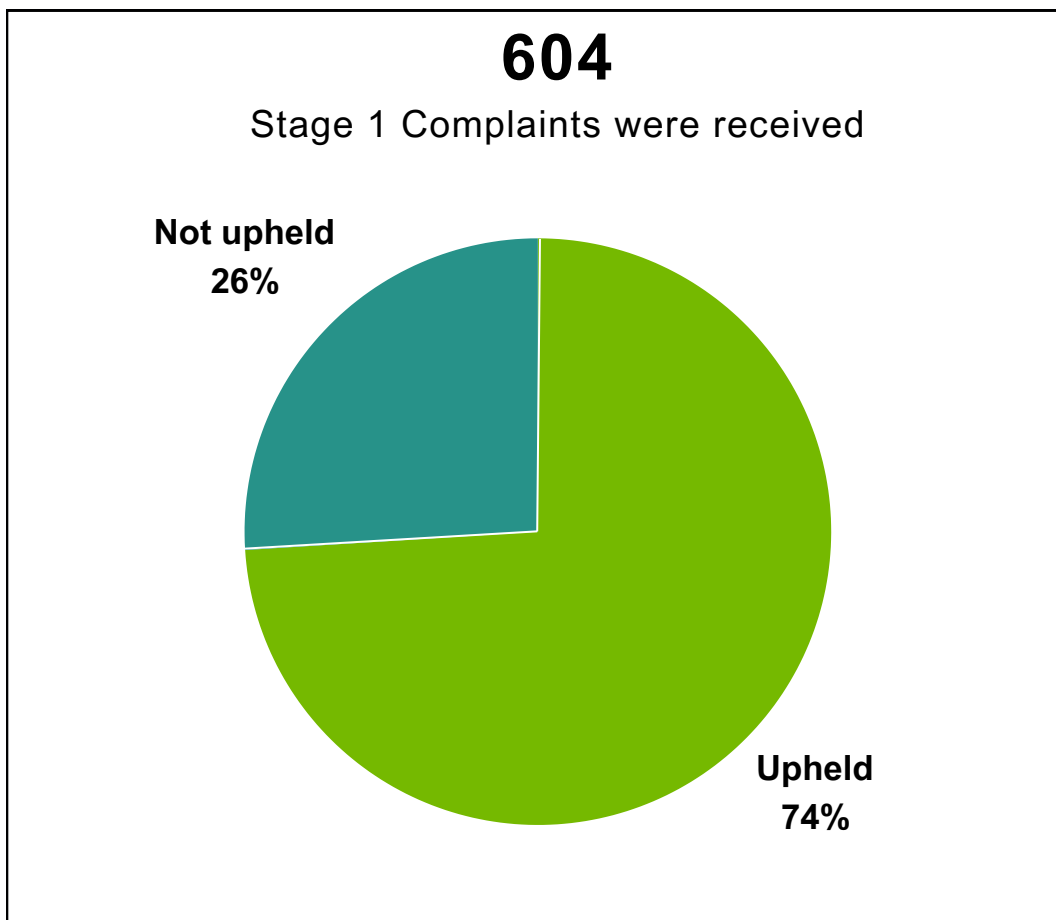




# 2. COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE

## Stage 1 Complaints

**Stage 1** is the investigations stage - when we receive a complaint we try to resolve it straight away, in cases where we can't we will investigate your complaint.



Closed within 10 working days: **397 (66%)**

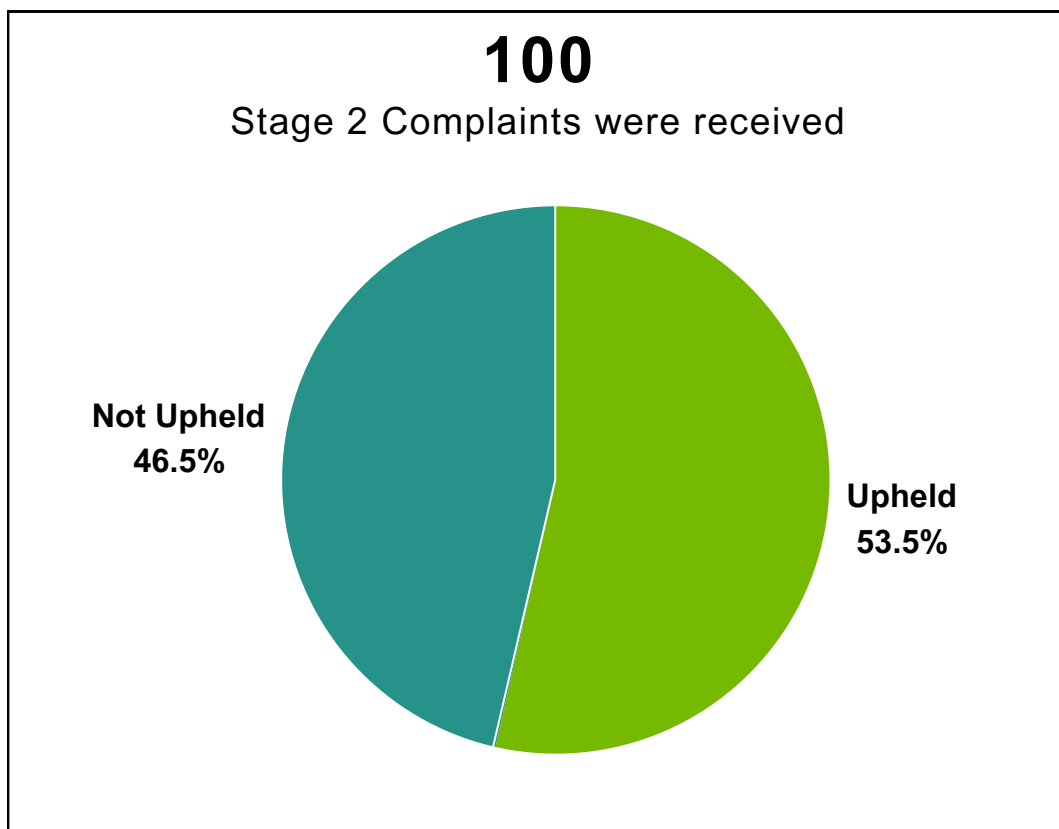


Average days to close: **13.4 working days**

## Stage 2 Complaints

**Stage 2** is the review stage - if you are unhappy with the outcome of the stage 1 complaint, you can ask that the outcome be reviewed.

You will need to tell us why you were unhappy about the stage 1 outcome - a senior officer will review your stage 2.



Closed within 10 working days: **70 (70%)**



Average days to close: **27.2 working days**

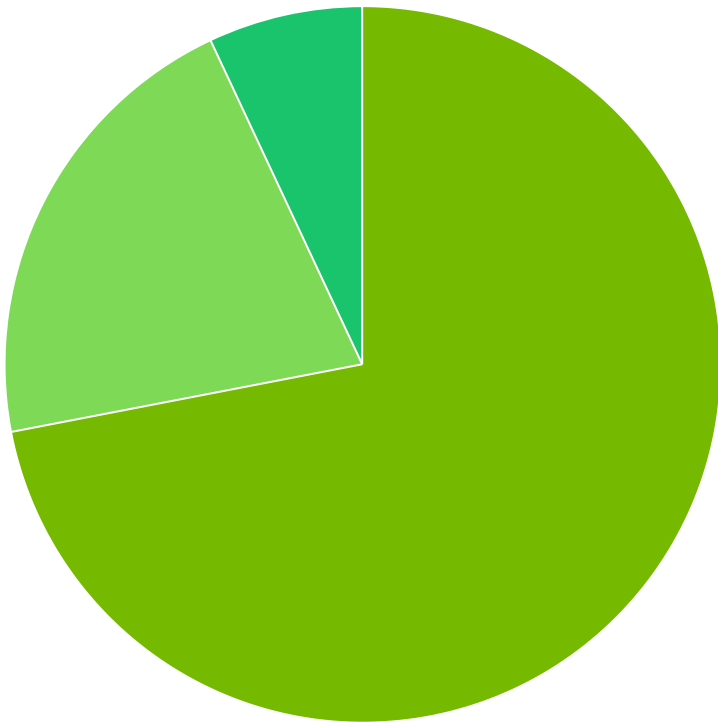




# 3. COMPLAINTS BY SERVICE AREA

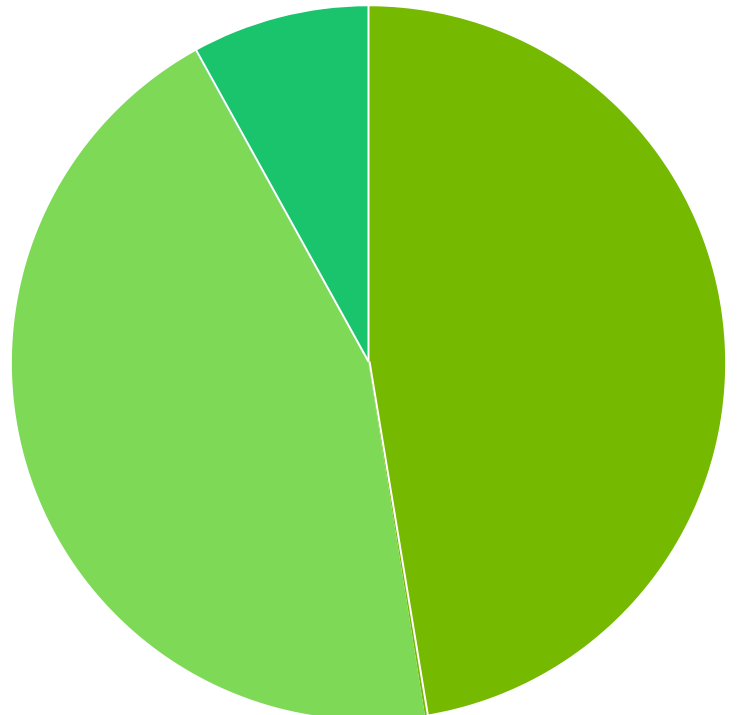
**Stage 1 complaints by service area**

- Asset Management and Improvement 72%
- Tenancy and Estate Management 21%
- Other 7%



**Stage 2 complaints by service area**

- Asset Management and Improvement 47%
- Tenancy and Estate Management 44%
- Other 8%





## Stage 1 Complaints - Top 5 reasons Asset Management and Improvement

Asset management and improvement services aim is to create good quality homes and environments that are well maintained and can last longer.

Delay in Procedure **29%**

Incomplete Work  
or Service **18%**

Unsatisfactory  
Behaviour **9%**

Work/Service not  
completed **7%**

Disagree with Policy **6%**

## Stage 1 Complaints - Top 5 reasons Tenancy and Estate Management

Tenancy and estate management services help tenants live in their homes and communities, and manage housing areas.

Disagree with  
Policy **23%**

Delay in  
Procedure **20%**

No  
Acknowledgement **10%**

Lack of  
Consultation **9%**

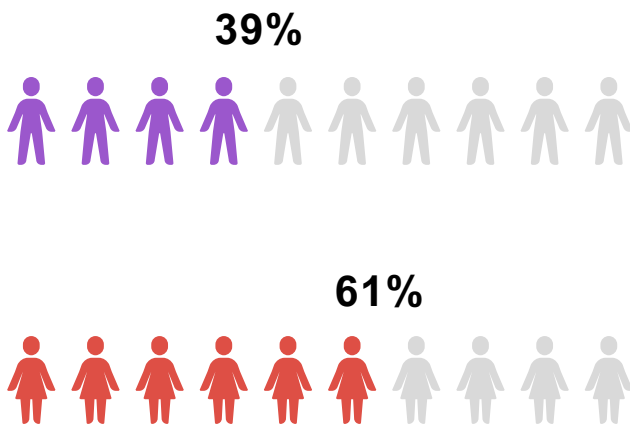
Lack of Support **6%**



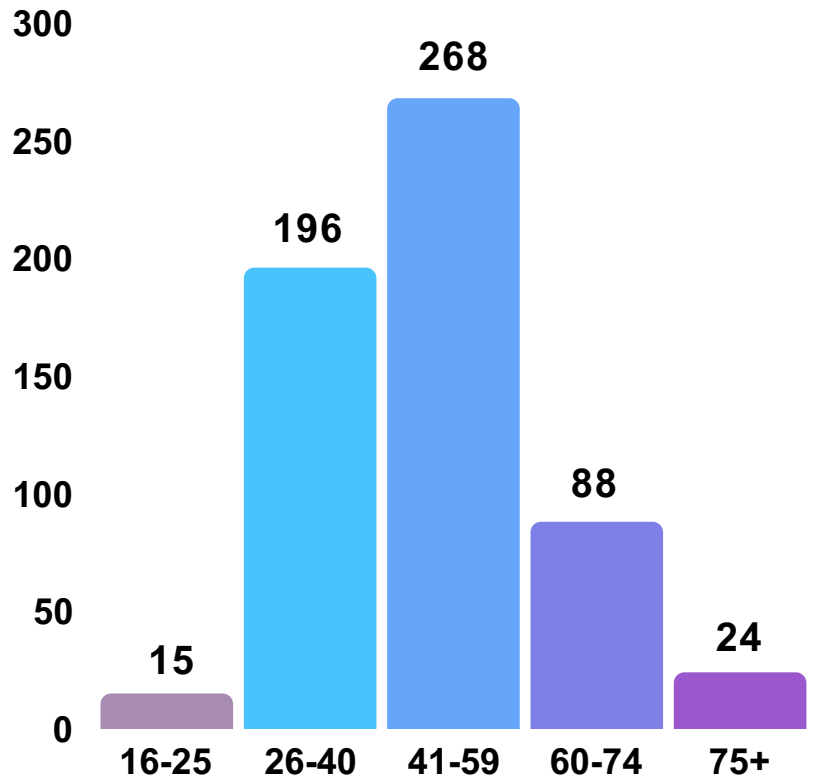


# 4. STAGE 1 DEMOGRAPHICS

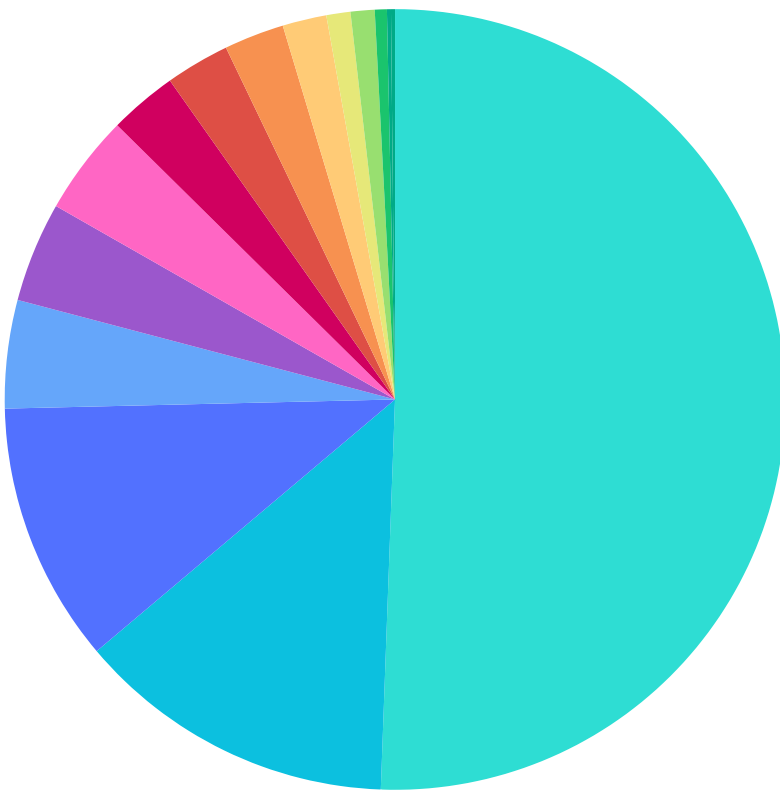
### Gender



### Age Range



### Ethnicity



White British	305
Refused	80
Black or Black British Caribbean	65
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	27
Asian or Asian British Indian	25
White Other	25
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	17
Black or Black British African	16
Asian or Asian British Other	15
Black or Black British Other	11
Mixed Other	6
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	6
Mixed White and Asian	3
White Irish	1
Mixed White and Black African	1







# 5. OMBUDSMAN CASES

The Housing Ombudsman Service is an independent, impartial, and free service for social housing residents.

They make the final decision on disputes between residents and landlords that are registered members of its Scheme - including tenants and leaseholders of social landlords.

The Ombudsman can only consider a complaint for investigation where they are satisfied that the complaint issues have been raised and investigated by a landlord through its dedicated complaint procedure and provided a final response.

They will also consider a complaint where they are satisfied that the resident has raised the issues and there has been failure by the landlord in its complaint handling.

**34** cases were received



**13** cases were completed



**21** cases are still open



The length of time it takes the Ombudsman to investigate cases means they may not always be received and closed within the same financial year.

## Outcomes

The Ombudsman can issue determinations and / or actions following their investigations.

## Determinations

Following investigations, the Ombudsman can find that there has been **maladministration**. This means the landlord has failed to do something, done something it shouldn't have or has delayed unreasonably.

5 cases were found to have no fault

A total of 8 maladministration determinations were received.

4

Maladministration - complaint handling



1

Maladministration - handling of damp and mould



1

Maladministration - response to ASB



1

Maladministration - structural damage



1

Severe maladministration – Did not take vulnerabilities into account



## Actions

The Ombudsman can also issue actions that the landlord must complete to prevent similar future failings.

A total of **10** actions were given, including **6** compensation awards.



Apologies



Share findings  
with officers



Mediation



Training



Provide policy



Review policy/  
decision

**£3050**

compensation paid





# 6. LESSONS LEARNT & IMPROVEMENTS

Sandwell see complaints as a opportunity to learn lessons and drive continuous improvement. The Council will acknowledge faults when they occur and take responsibility for putting things right and avoiding a reoccurrence.

The below table shows some of the issues and concerns raised from various sources including complaints, ombudsman cases and Tenancy Satisfaction Measures and the improvements made.

Learning	Improvement
There is lack of continuity in service delivery and response when Housing complaints are received.	The Housing Resolution Team were set up to handle all Housing complaints and the team is currently being expanded to enable them to cover more service areas.
There is low confidence in the current process for collecting and reporting of data.	An improvement plan is currently underway to address how complaints are logged and reported.
Compensation is rarely used as there is no clear process for this and there is a need to ensure that residents are not financially disadvantaged by service failures.	A compensation policy has been drafted and is currently being reviewed for feedback.
Customers do not always have a single point of contact for their complaint.	The Housing Resolution Team allocate a dedicated Officer for each complaint and every customer is contacted regarding their complaint. As the Housing Resolution Team expands, this will improve across all Housing Services.

Learning	Improvement
Policies need to be accessible and transparent, particularly if they are being used for decision making.	Policies will be addressed or written as the need becomes clear through complaints received.
There is no consistent process for learning feedback and action for improvements.	Internal meetings take place with different service areas to discuss improvements found and produce a plan of action for improvements identified.
Lack of communication is one of the main reasons for residents submitting complaints.	Where this is found training will be considered for staff around the importance of keeping customer informed and regular occurrences to be highlighted to managers for competency reviews.
When investigating a complaint it can be difficult to find all of the relevant information required due to poor record keeping.	Training for all staff on relevant systems will be provided, with reminders about the importance of record-keeping and the benefits for both officers and customers.
When carrying out consultation all residents were not receiving contact at the same time meaning some residents found out information before others.	There is now a better co-ordinated correspondence when undertaking consultation.
We have a legal obligation to ensure that customer vulnerabilities are acknowledged and considered when dealing with enquiries.	Reasonable adjustments policy was developed and introduced along with staff training.





# 7. GET INVOLVED

As a council tenant, or leaseholder, you have the right to be consulted on matters affecting your tenancy and the housing services you receive.

There are a number of methods available for you to have your say.



**Volunteer as part of a regularly meeting group**



**Get involved with specific subjects and tasks for a short term**



**Attend work shops for group discussions**



**Complete surveys and feedback requests**

If you would like to get involved would like more information on what is available, please call us on **0121 569 2537**.

You can also complete a short survey to express your interest.

**<https://forms.office.com/e/8QL19ARBWy>**

