

# Annual Complaint and Service Improvement Report – 23/24

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Listening to and learning from feedback from our customers, about the services we provide, whether the feedback is positive or is pointing out where we need to work differently through our complaint's procedures, is important to us.

Just as important, is demonstrating to customers that we deal with complaints fairly, put things right and learn from the complaints we receive.

We have a statutory requirement, set out by the Housing Ombudsman's Office, not only to advise our customers how we are performing against the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Code to publish this report on a section of our website relating to complaints. We also have a requirement to report performance to the Housing Ombudsman and to our governing body (or equivalent), which is our Board, and to publish the Board's response. In addition to these statutory requirements, we also want to ensure that other customers, who are not a tenant or leaseholder, are aware of our performance when dealing with complaints.

This report therefore includes performance data on all the complaints we have received from both tenants and other customers and this data has been considered by our Board. The report also shows, separately, the data for complaints from tenants and leaseholders only and has been considered by the Member Responsible for Complaints.

The report includes examples of where we have learnt from complaints and changed the way we have delivered our services, as well as setting out some of the key data in respect of the number of complaints we receive, what they were about and how quickly we responded.

To ensure we are compliant with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Office the report includes the following:

- ✓ A copy of our annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.
- ✓ Analysis of our performance on responding to complaints within timescales set by the Housing Ombudsman;
- ✓ A summary of the type of any complaints we have refused to accept;
- ✓ Any findings of non-compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Code;
- ✓ Service improvements we have made as a result of learning from complaints;
- ✓ Actions following any annual report about our performance from the Ombudsman or other relevant reports or publications produced by the Housing Ombudsman in relation to the services we provide;

## 2. BACKGROUND

Our definition of a complaint is compliant with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Code and is set out in our Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy which states that a complaint is *"an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by St Leger Homes, its own staff, or those action on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of customers"*

We have a statutory requirement, enforced by the Housing Ombudsman, to deal with complaints in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Code.

The purpose of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Code is to ensure we:

- Provide a **universal definition** of a complaint.
- Provide **easy access** to and awareness of our complaints procedure;
- Ensure our tenants know how to access the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- Have a **structured complaints procedure** with clear timelines for responses.
- Are fair in how we handle complaints, using a process that is focused on the complainant.
- Take action to **put things right** and provide appropriate remedies.
- Create a **positive complaint handling culture** through continuous learning and improvement, throughout the organisation.
- Demonstrate how we have learnt from complaint in the Annual Complaint and Service Improvement Report.
- Ensure we conduct an **annual self-assessment** against the Code.

## 3. OUR COMPLAINT STAGES

Our complaints policy sets out our approach to dealing with complaints in two stages. Stage 1 involves a formal investigation of a complaint by a Service Investigating Officer in the relevant department. This will usually be a Team Leader or Service Manager responsible for providing the service. If a customer is not happy with the Stage 1 response the complaint can be reviewed at Stage 2 of our procedures. This is undertaken by a Head of Service.

During 23/24 we changed the way we deal with complaints at Stage 2 of our processes. These were previously investigated by a Tenant Appeal Panel. This was changed in October 2023 to involve the relevant Head of Service reviewing stage 2 complaints. This was done to embed a positive complaints culture across the organisation and to ensure ownership and learning from complaints within teams.

Our aim in 23/24 was to respond to Stage 1 complaints within 10 working days and Stage 2 complaints within 20 working days.

Complaints are investigated by the relevant department to ensure ownership and learning, and anyone in the organisation can log a complaint. This helps to promote a positive complaints culture.

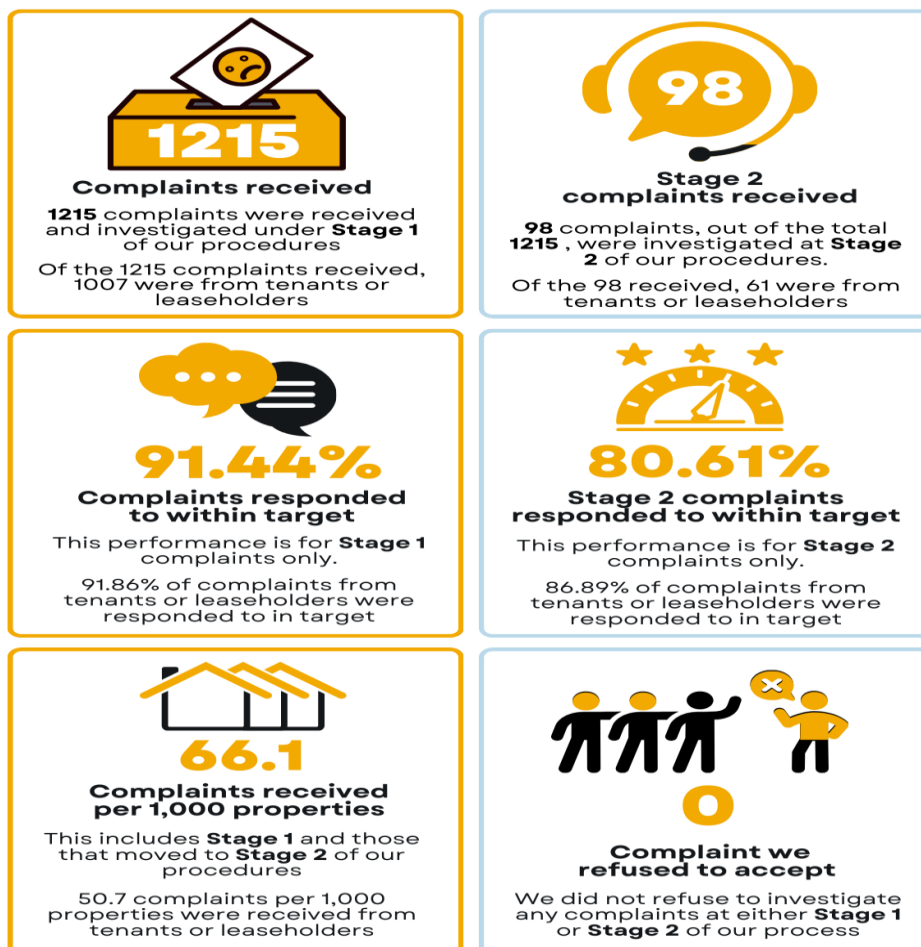
## 4. PUBLISHING OUR PROCEDURES

Our complaints procedures are published in our HouseProud magazine, on our website and in our offices; to make it easy for customers to complain. Complaints can be received using any media and all employees can log a complaint.

We also carry out an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Code and report this to our Board to ensure both scrutiny and challenge against our compliance with the Code. A copy of our self-assessment against the Code can be found on our website [here](#). We provide additional scrutiny by involving Tenant Scrutiny Panel members in our self-assessment against the Code.

## 5. KEY HEADLINE DATA FOR 23/24

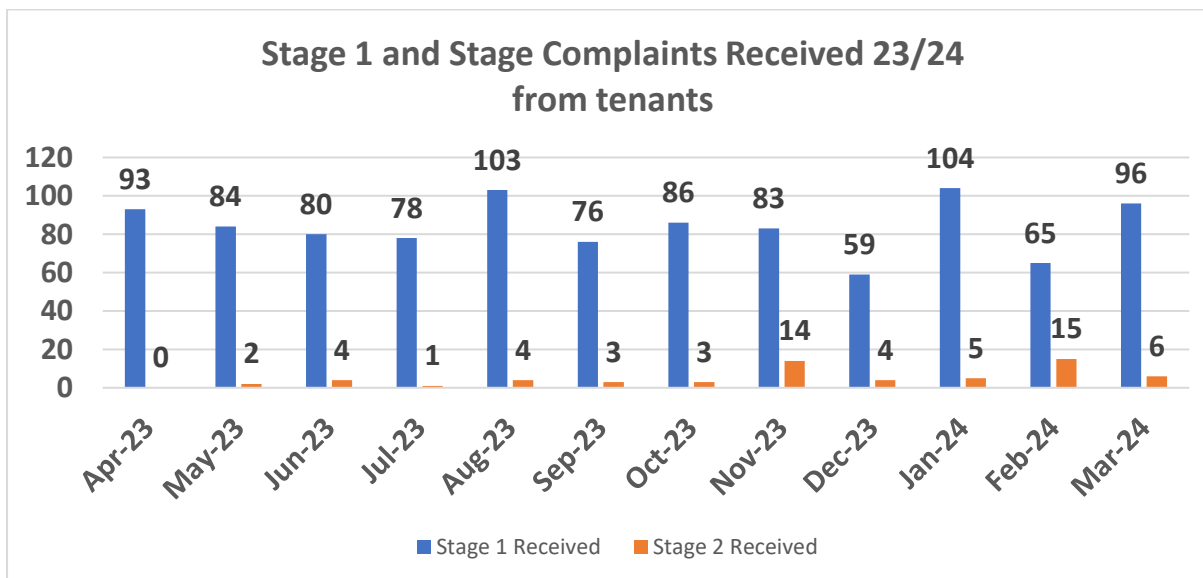
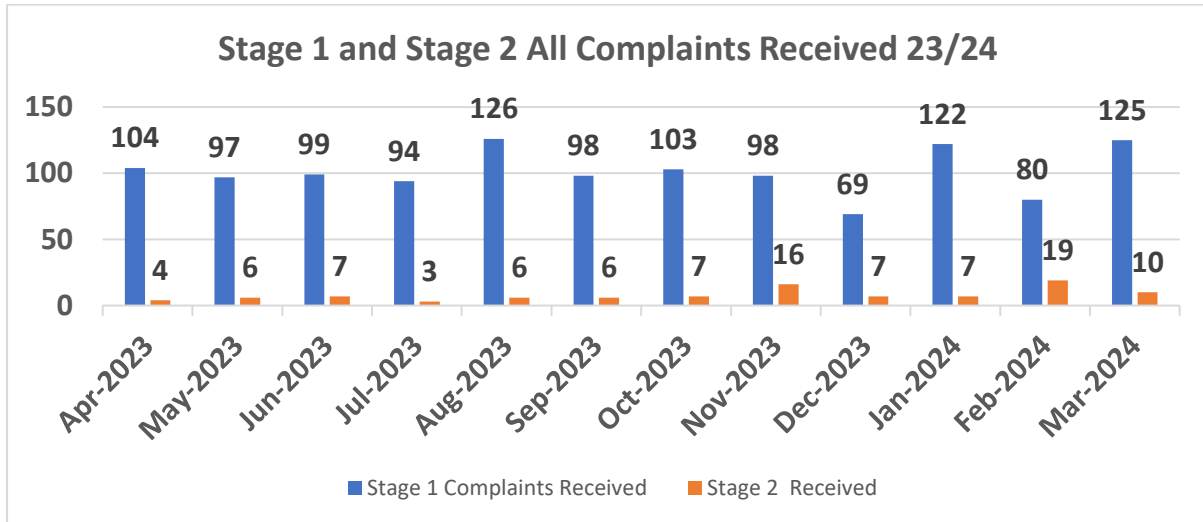
The data provided in this report relates to **all** complaints received at Stage 1 and Stage 2 of our complaints process, between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. The data for complaints received from customers and leaseholders only, is shown separately in each of the info graphics below.



## 6. OVERVIEW and ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE

### 6.1 Number of Complaints

The graphs below show the number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints received in 23/24 and the monthly trend. The first graphs shows **all** complaints received. The second graph shows, out of all the complaints received, the numbers which were from tenants/leaseholders only.



We received a total of 1215 Stage 1 complaints in 23/24, of these 98 were reviewed as part of our Stage 2 complaints process. The number of complaints we received per 1,000 properties in 23/24 was 66.1. Out of the 1215 complaints received, 1007 were complaints from tenants/leaseholders.

Overall, we received fewer complaints in 23/24 then we did in 22/23, reducing by 6.7%.

The percentage of **all** complaints we received where we were asked to review at Stage 2 of our procedures is low, this was 8.06% of all complaints received and for complaints made by tenants/leaseholders only, 6.06%. This suggests complainants are largely satisfied with the Stage 1 responses we are sending.

Out of the 1215 of **all** complaints received, Property Services received the highest proportion of complaints in 23/24, 71.6% of **all** complaints about this service area. Out of the 1007 complaints received from tenants and leaseholders only, 78.75% were about Property Services. Housing Services received 28.07% of all complaints, and 20.85% of complaints from tenants/leaseholders only. Corporate Services Teams received 0.32% and 0.40% of all complaints from tenants and leaseholders only .

Learning from these complaints and actions we have taken to reduce are included at Section 10, below.

The number of complaints we receive throughout the year remained fairly constant, with occasional peaks in numbers. We experienced an increase in complaints in August, January and in March 2024, linked in part to national news about damp, mould and condensation and additional publicity, locally and nationally about how to complain. We regularly publicise our complaints procedures using a variety of media to make it easy for customer to complain. Complaints fell in December 2023 due to the seasonal closure of offices and as a result increased in January 2024.

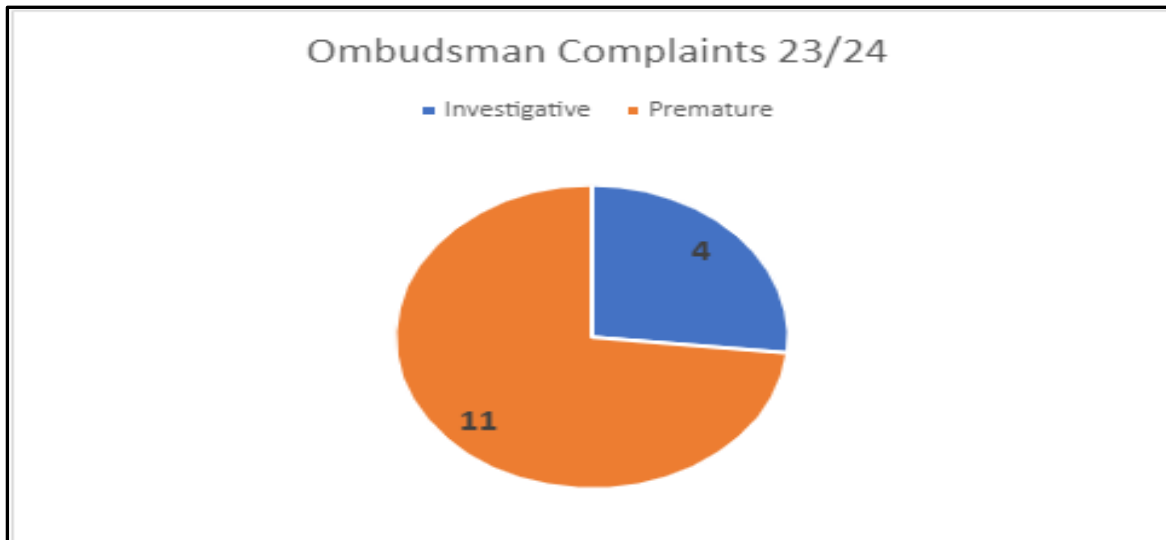
We did not refuse to accept any complaints in 23/24.

## 6.2 How Quickly We Respond

Our year end cumulative performance for 23/24 was 91.44% for all complaints at Stage 1 responded to in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Code. Performance increases slightly to 91.86% for complaints from tenants/leaseholders only. Our response times for dealing with **all** complaints at Stage 1 has been improving throughout the year with Stage 1 complaints responded to in target increasing from 94.23% in April 2023, to 98.40% in March 2024. It is a similar picture for the 1,007 complaints from tenants/leaseholders only, increasing from 95.70% responded to in target in April 2023, to 98.96% responded to in target in March 2024.

Our performance on dealing with all Stage 2 complaints fell in April 2023 from 100%, due to resource issues within the team which co-ordinates and manages complaints processes, but has been rising throughout the year, to a cumulative year end figure in 23/24 of 80.61% this despite an increase in complaints at Stage 2, increasing from 17 in Q1 23/24 to 36 in Q4 23/24. The trend is the same for the 61 Stage 2 complaints from tenants/leaseholders only, with performance increasing from 50% responded to in target in Q1 23/24, to 100% responded to in target in Q4 23/24 and a cumulative outturn figure of 86.89%

## 7. HOUSING OMBUDSMAN REFERRALS



Four Housing Ombudsman determinations were received during 23/24. Further detail is shown below. Where recommendations have been made these have been fully complied with and confirmed to the Housing Ombudsman.

Determination 1.

In this case maladministration was found with regard to how we handled a repair. No maladministration was found with regard to how we dealt with a report about a bee infestation. Service failure was found in how we handled the complaint.

Determination 2.

In this case maladministration was found in relation to the handling of a report of anti-social behaviour and service failure was found in how we handled a report from a tenant regarding a satellite dish and wiring on a neighbour's flat.

Determination 3.

In this case no maladministration was found about the noise complaint regarding building work. No maladministration was found in how we handled a request for re-housing. Maladministration was found in how we handled the complaint.

Determination 4.

In this case maladministration was found regarding communication associated with a request for re-housing. No maladministration was found regarding the allocation of properties and maladministration was found in how we handled the complaint.

We also received 11 requests from the Housing Ombudsman's Office to deal with referrals received, through our own complaints procedures.

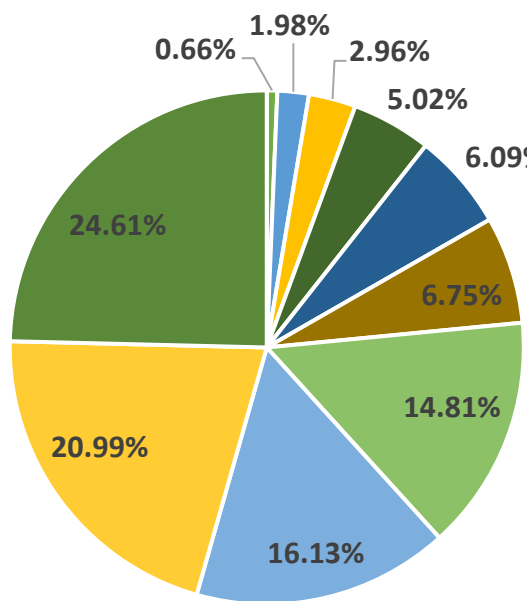
## 8. COMPLAINT THEMES

We carry out thematic analysis of the complaints we receive to help inform learning and changes to services delivery. The complaints received cover a range of issues and are for similar themes across all areas of the business. The actions we have taken to improve our services following this feedback are shown at Section 10, below.

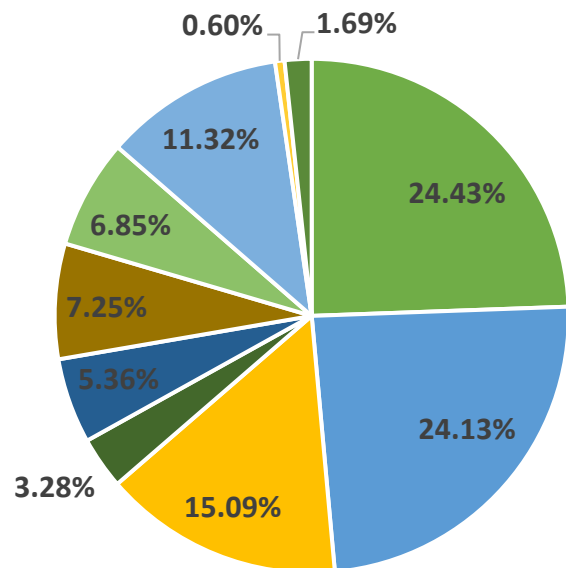
The chart below, for all complaints, shows that the main reason for Stage 1 complaints is related to policies – 24.61% of all complaints were about this aspect; out of this figure around two thirds were about services delivered by Property Services and around a third about policy linked to the delivery of housing and customer services.

When looking at the main reason for the 1,007 complaints from tenants/leaseholders only in the chart below, this shows time taken to respond/deliver services were 24.43% of the reasons for these complaints. Out of this figure, the majority related to complaints regarding services provided by Property Services.

### All Complaints



### Tenant/Leaseholder



- |                    |                       |                       |                    |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| ■ Rubbish Left     | ■ Damage              | ■ Time Taken          | ■ Policy           |
| ■ Workmanship      | ■ Outstanding Repairs | ■ Staffing            | ■ Workmanship      |
| ■ Broken Promises  | ■ Communication       | ■ Outstanding Repairs | ■ Broken Promises  |
| ■ Service Delivery | ■ Staffing            | ■ Communication       | ■ Service Delivery |
| ■ Time Taken       | ■ Policy              | ■ Rubbish Left        | ■ Damage           |

## **9. MONITORING PERFORMANCE**

Our self- assessment against the requirements of the Complaints Code was approved by our Board in April 2024.

Performance on the number of complaints, how quickly we respond and the reasons for complaints is monitored internally using a live system which is accessible by all teams across the organisation.

Our Executive Management and Leadership Teams receive regular reports on performance. Our Performance and Improvement Committee reviews performance on a quarterly basis; a member of the Committee is also a Board member.

We report to the City of Doncaster Council's Officer Liaison Board and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. We will enhance this approach in 24/25 by also reporting, every six months, to the Member Responsible for Complaints.

We introduced a new process in May 2024 for a sub-group of our Tenant Scrutiny Committee to review and challenge on a sample of complaints of their choosing to ensure we are compliant with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Code and to ensure we are identifying learning.

We publish our performance on our website, which also includes a You Said, We Did section which included learning and changes made as a result of some of the complaints we have received.

## **10. LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS**

We undertake thematic analysis learn from complaints, breaking down the reasons for complaints at Directorate, Service and Team level. This information is available across the organisation to support a learning and change culture.

We routinely report learning from the Spotlight reports to our Executive Management Team, highlighting, carrying out a self-assessment against the reports and identifying areas for action that need to be taken corporately or within individual Directorates. Actions arising from the reports are monitored by our Executive Management Team and owned by Heads of Service to ensure delivery.

Housing Ombudsman annual reports and review reports for other organisations are shared with relevant teams to promote learning. The quarterly Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Failure Order reports, which covers reporting across all member organisations, are shared with our Leadership team, to promote wider learning and review.

We share a sample number of complaints with our sub-group of our Tenant Scrutiny Panel who review the complaint received, the response made, and the remedy provided to ensure that is fair and compliant with the Complaints Code. Feedback is shared with Heads of Service.



Some examples of the changes we have made as a result of learning from the complaints we have received are set out below:

- ✓ We changed the way we deliver scheduled repairs to improve communication with tenants and to make increased use of trade staff resources. Previously these repairs were done as part of a batched approach to delivery with tenants being on a monthly delivery date. We now inform our customers of their appointment date at the first point of contact.
- ✓ We improved the way we communicate with our customers accessing our repairs service by sending a confirmation and reminder text message for every responsive repair and by telephoning customers as trade staff set off to carry out the repair.
- ✓ We used feedback from complaints to review and inform policies. Examples include the review of our Repairs and Maintenance Policy and the implementation of a new Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy.
- ✓ We set up a new team to specifically deal with all requests related to damp and mould. This is a dedicated team carrying out damp and mould inspections and ensuring the reporting of follow on work.
- ✓ We implemented a corporate wide training on Customer Excellence. This training was mandatory for all employees and included a focus on positive behaviours to reduce complaints and improve customer service.
- ✓ We have undertaken a signification transformation in our Housing and Customer Services Directorate, moving towards a more seamless and joined up service. We restructured in our Housing Services to create a dedicated team of officers to deal with reports of high level anti-social behaviour and restructured our housing officer services to increase support to our customers in the localities. This has resulted in improved response times can customer satisfaction when dealing with high and medium risk reports of anti-social behaviour.
- ✓ We have increased the number of resources we have in our Customer Relations Team to support the timely processing of complaints.
- ✓ When our customer complained they were having difficulty accessing our HomeChoice service, following the implementation of a new customer portal, we produced a video to help support access.
- ✓ We delivered training for all employees involved in the investigation of complaints to ensure compliance with the Complaints Code.
- ✓ We implemented a new website in October 2023 with improved contact capabilities to make it easier for our customers to communicate with us.

- ✓ We automated the way we distribute complaints at Stage 1 to better track and monitor performance by Investigating Officers – this has helped improve our performance. We are currently in the process of implementing a similar process for Stage 2 complaints